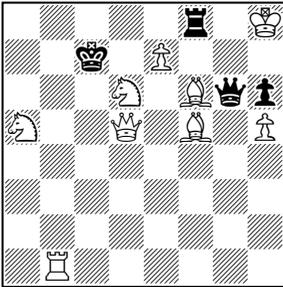


Chapter 6

Joke compositions

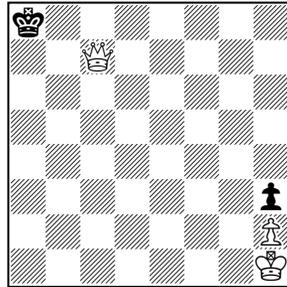
By its very nature, there is no precise definition of a joke composition. If there were, it would not be a joke. Sometimes the joke is merely in the presentation, sometimes, indicated by “(perhaps)”, the normal rules are to be bent a little ...

6.1



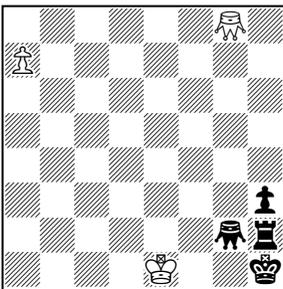
White to play and win (perhaps)

6.3



Fuddled men; mate in two

6.2



Grasshopper Chess
White to play and win (perhaps)
(a) as set, (b) White Pa7 to b7

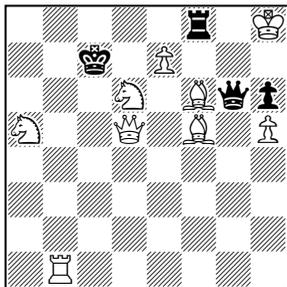
We met the Grasshopper in 4.8. In 6.2, promotion is to GRBN but not to Q.

In 6.3, the men have had a little too much to drink: not s'mush azh t'totally incaPASHitate'm, y'unnershtan', but enough to slow them down a bit. More precisely, a fuddled man cannot make two moves in succession; having moved, it must wait a move to get its wits back before it can move again.

When I was running the *BCM* problem column, I used to print an “April Fool” problem each year. One year, I set the question, “Put a White king on g1, White man on c1, Black king on c3, Black man on g3, White to play and win.” Well?

Answer as 6.4 overleaf.

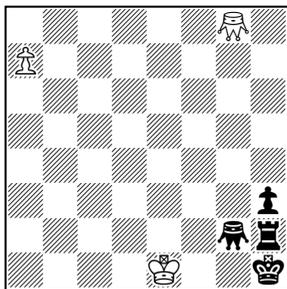
6.1



White to play and win (perhaps)

Try 1 exf8R: no, this puts an extra guard on d8, and 1...Qg7+ forces stalemate. Try 1 exf8N: no, extra guard on d7, and 1...Qh7+ forces stalemate. 1 exf8B Qg8+ similarly (extra guard now on d6). But if White plays **1 exf8 remaining a pawn** we have 1...Qg7+ 2 Bxg7 releasing d8, 1...Qh7+ 2 Bxh7 releasing d7, and 1...Qg8+ 2 Qxg8 releasing d6, while 1...Qxf6+ destroys the stalemate at once and White will win as soon as the checks have run out.

6.2



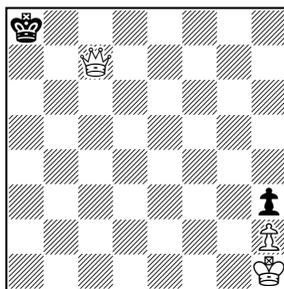
Grasshopper Chess
White to play and win (perhaps)
(a) as set, (b) White Pa7 to b7

As set, **1 a8G mate**, and no “perhaps” about it.

With the pawn on b7, any promotion will leave Black stalemated, and if say 1 Kf1 then 1...Ga8 and Black’s rook is free. But the stipulation does say “perhaps”: **1 b8, promoting to a Black grasshopper**. This gives Black a move, and play unfolds **1...Gh8 2 Kf1 Gf8 3 Ge8 Gd8 4 Gc8 Gb8 5 Ga8 mate**.

A pawn on the eighth rank was once explicitly allowed to remain a pawn by the laws of the game. Promotion to an opposing piece has never been deliberately allowed, though some early codes did not explicitly forbid it.

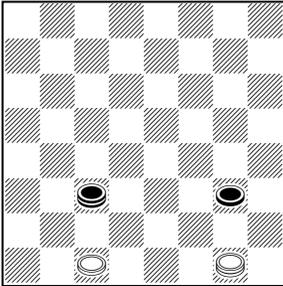
6.3



Fuddled men; mate in two

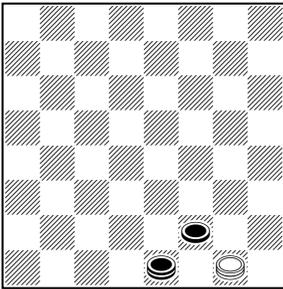
White playzh – hic! – sorry, plays **1 Qb6**, which temporarily immobilizes her and allows the Black king to move: **1...K~**. White now plays **2 Kg1**, after which his queen, having recovered her wits, sees that she can now capture the Black king, so this is check; and Black’s king, being temporarily immobilized in his turn, cannot move out of check, so it is mate.

6.4 (April Fool)



White to play and win

It's draughts! (This is the game which is known as "checkers" in America.) Play **1 g1-h2 g3-f2** (else White will capture, crown his remaining man, and play out the book win with two kings against one) **2 c1-d2! c3^e1 3 h2-g1 :**



Black must now play **3...e1-d2**, and he loses both his men.

We may note that White must play his moves in the right order. If he plays **1 c1-d2 c3^e1 2 g1-h2**, hoping for **2...g3-f2 3 h2-g1** and the same, Black has **2...e1-f2**, and after **3 h2^f4 f2-g1** he has reached the double corner with a draw.

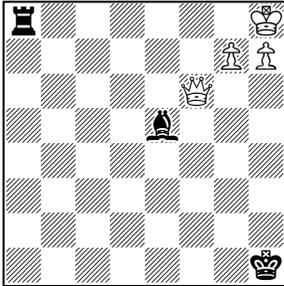
In one of the early hands in Victor Mollo's book *Bridge in the Menagerie*, which we shall meet again, the Rueful Rabbit, defending against Four Spades, discarded when any sane defender would have ruffed, thus (as the cards lay) denying declarer a later entry to dummy and leaving him with no play for a contract which against normal defence would have been cast-iron. How had the Rabbit produced such an inspired double-dummy defence, almost as if he could see through the backs of the cards, "not that such a gift could normally help him to any great extent"? It turned out that he had thought he was defending against 3NT, and so had succeeded in breaking an unbreakable contract because he did not know what it was.

This started me thinking: can we do something similar at Kriegspiel? In Kriegspiel, a player sees only his own men, and an umpire tells him whether the move he is trying is legal (if it isn't, he takes it back and tries another). The umpire also announces checks (as "on the file", "on the rank", "on the longer diagonal through the king", "on the shorter diagonal", or "from a knight") and captures.

Therefore, if Black is down to a bare king (which White knows, because the umpire has announced captures) and the umpire announces "Black has moved", is it possible for the White men to be in a position such that he can mate the Black king in one if and only if he does not know where it is?

Answer as **6.5** overleaf.

6.9 (version by Noam Elkies)



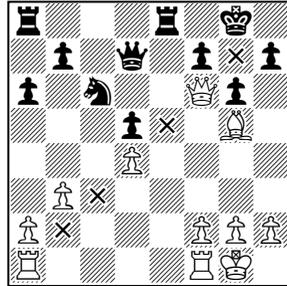
White to play and save the game
(perhaps)

In 6.9, you are playing with an ancient and venerable chess set in an ancient and venerable club and you appear to be hopelessly lost, but there is (perhaps) a way out of the morass...

As everyone knows, the Loch Ness Monster has two properties: (a) it undoubtedly exists; (b) nobody has actually seen it. In Loch Ness Chess, the long black diagonal from b2 to g7 represents the dark and mysterious loch, and as long as a man on the loch is observed by another man (of either colour), it is perfectly safe. However, as soon as it is no longer observed, the monster appears and swallows it. A pawn “observes” the squares it can capture to. From the game array, play 1 d4 (safe, White’s queen observes d4) e5 (also safe, White’s Pd4 observes e5), and if 2 dxe5 the monster swallows the now unobserved pawn on e5.

In 6.10a to 6.10d, the task is to solve the given problem both in ordinary chess and in Loch Ness Chess.

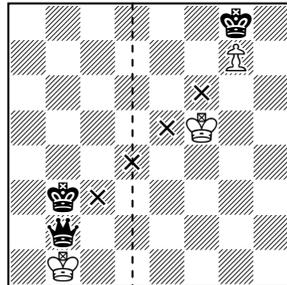
6.10a



White to play and win

6.10b, left

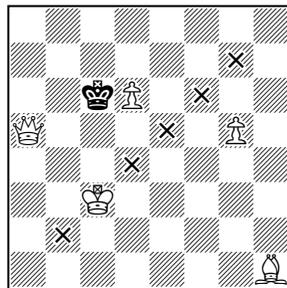
6.10c, right



6.10b: Is White mated?

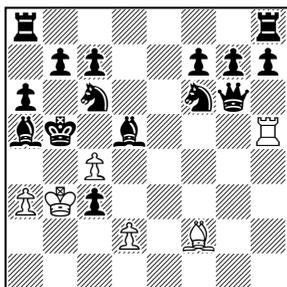
6.10c: White to play and win

6.10d



What was the last move?

6.6



Cylinder Chess; should White resign?

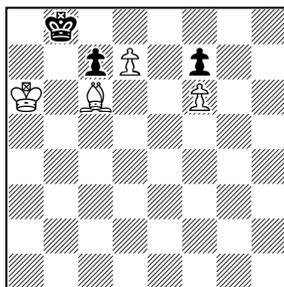
First thoughts: no, of course he shouldn't, he has just given mate.

Second thoughts: where did the mating pawn come from? Not from d3, which would have involved two captures and Black has only lost one man. So it must have come from c2, and Black must be in the middle of taking it *en passant*. The completion of this move will leave White mated (the Black queen is pinning the rook on h5), so the answer is "yes".

Correct answer: **No**. It is not polite to resign before your opponent has finished moving.

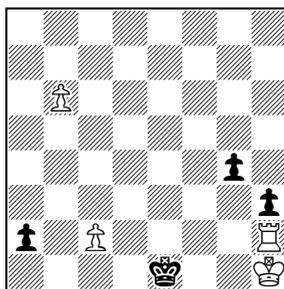
6.7 (top of next column). As set, **promote to king**; with a Black rook added on c8, **promote to a Black king**. The original version of this was submitted as a joke entry to a tourney for stalemate problems which were unorthodox in some way, and the judges awarded it a "Dishonourable Mention" of which I was immensely proud. Noam Elkies subsequently improved the construction.

6.7 (version by Noam Elkies)



Stalemate in one (perhaps)
(a) as set, (b) add Black rook on c8

6.8

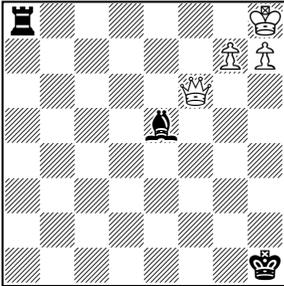


1 b7 a1R intending 2...0-0-0 mate;
now what?

Echo Black's promotion by **2 b8R**, and now you can meet **2...0-0-0** by playing **3 RxR en passant**.

A few years ago, there was a vogue for problems incorporating each of the "odd" moves of modern chess (underpromotion, castling, *en passant* capture). Well, what those who take themselves seriously can treat as a serious exercise, those of us who are less serious can use as the medium for a joke ...

6.9 (version by Noam Elkies)

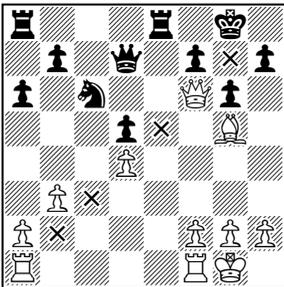


White to play and save the game
(perhaps)

move on g7. This doesn't work in Loch Ness chess because the bishop's move leaves the queen unobserved, but now there is no need for White to bring up a second man to guard g7; he can play **1 Qg7 mate** at once. The logic is the same as that which we saw after 1 d4 e5 2 dxe5 (e5 off) from the game array; the queen is safe from the monster since she is observed by the Black king, but if Black takes the queen he will be unobserved and the monster will swallow him.

Well, we did say you were playing with an ancient and venerable set in an ancient and venerable chess club, so play **1 g8N**, discreetly making sure that you take a loose-headed knight from the box. You can now meet 1...Bxf6+ by 2 Nxf6, carefully picking up the knight by its head and leaving the base behind to block the pin line...

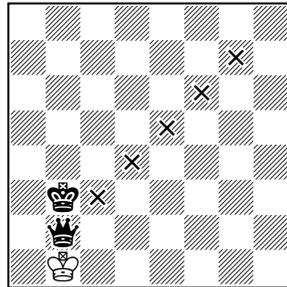
6.10a



White to play and win
(a) ordinary chess, (b) Loch Ness Chess

In ordinary chess, **1 Bh6** with mate next

6.10b



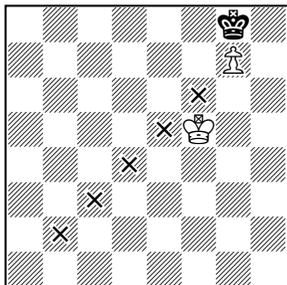
Is White mated?

(a) ordinary chess, (b) Loch Ness Chess

In ordinary chess, obviously **yes**. In Loch Ness chess, perhaps not, on the grounds that after White has played KxQ Black's recapture KxK would allow his own king to be eaten by the monster, and surely this is not something that he can permit?

But Black doesn't have to recapture with his king. He can withdraw his king by say Kb4, and let the monster do his work for him. So again the answer is **yes**.

6.10c

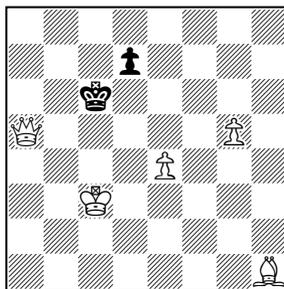


White to play and win

(a) ordinary chess, (b) Loch Ness Chess

In ordinary chess, **1 Kf6** with 1...Kh7 2 Kf7 to follow. In Loch Ness chess, **1 Ke6** (to stop 1...Kf7) and the same. Not however 1 Kg5 hoping for 1...K~ 2 Kh5 Kg8 3 Kh6 and once more the same, because 1...Kf7 threatens 2...Ke7 withdrawing observation of the pawn. This forces White to play 2 Kh6 at once, and after 2...Kg8 3 K~ Kf7 the game is drawn.

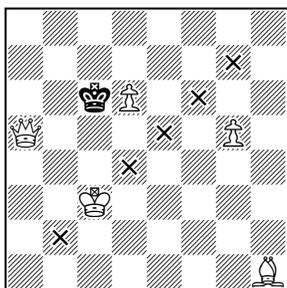
In ordinary chess, **e5xd6 e.p.**+, preceded by d7-d5 and e4-e5+ :



From here, 1 e4-e5+ d7-d5 2 e5xd6 produces the given position.

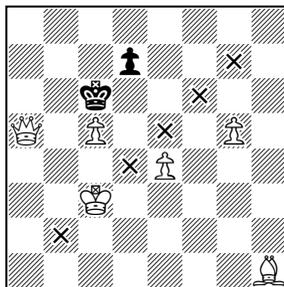
This couldn't have happened in Loch Ness chess because Black's d7-d5 would have cut off the queen's observation of the pawn on e5, but White could have played **c5xd6 e.p.**+ instead. Again the queen's observation of e5 would have been cut off, and his previous move could have been with a pawn, knight, or rook moving to this square to discover check, say :

6.10d



What was the last move?

(a) ordinary chess, (b) Loch Ness Chess



Now 1 e4-e5+ (e5 off) d7-d5 2 c5xd6 duly produces the given position.