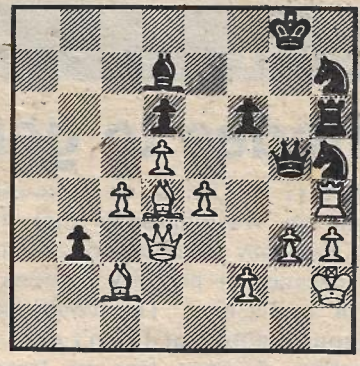


Missed in action

A BEAUTIFULLY played game of chess is something we all admire, and over the years many such encounters between leading masters have found their way into this column. But there is also a side to tournament play that the public rarely sees — the games where grandmasters are demoted to mere mortals, the games containing blunders and miscalculations that a rabbit might have avoided.

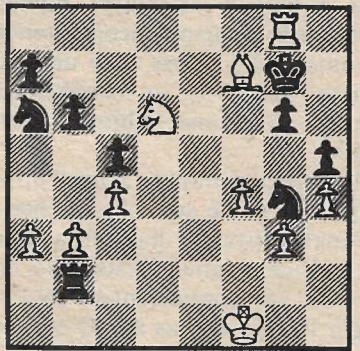
While such disasters should be less aesthetically pleasing than brilliant sacrifices or positional masterpieces, it is reassuring to see that even the greatest occasionally stumble. And then there is the gruesome fascination exerted by a good swindle, when a player artfully escapes from a lost position.

Below are four positions that fooled masters, grandmasters and New Zealand internationals. The traps they fell into, as it happens, are all fairly subtle, but you may be able to do better. Solutions are upside down at the end of the column.



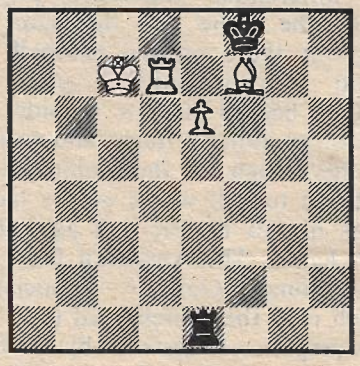
(3) White to play, Hubner-Portisch, Tilburg 1981.

Top Hungarian grandmaster Lajos Portisch has been swindled by West German world title candidate Robert Hubner so many times it is amusing to see him getting his own back. The position is unclear — White has three pawns for his piece — but here Hubner got just a little too greedy. He snatched a fourth with 46.Bxb3, and allowed Portisch an inspired combination.



(4) Black to play, Alexandria-Chiburdanidze, USSR 1981.

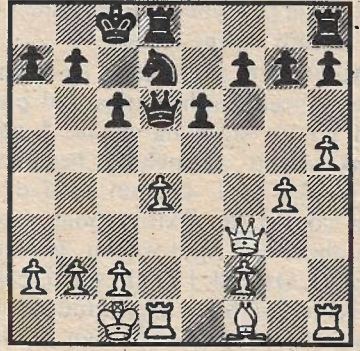
The championship tussle between these two Georgians was so close it ended in an 8-8 tie, meaning Chiburdanidze just retained her title. Alexandria may have missed her big chance as early as game two in a double-blunder sequence. Chiburdanidze (playing Black in the diagram position) responded to the check on her king by moving 38...Kh7? Alexandria replied 39.Rxg6? and later drew. Could you have found what Alexandria missed, and perhaps become women's world champion?



(1) White to play, Velickovic-Velimir, Yugoslavia 1981.

I remember watching this adjourned game, between an international master and a grandmaster, at the Vrsac tournament. Young Velickovic, a bishop and pawn up, had spent the adjournment with friends, but probably hardly bothered to analyse. White would simply march his king to d8 and march the pawn forward.

Can you guess what White played next — and how the game then went?



(2) White to play, Spiller-Garbett, Waitakere Trust Open 1981.

This and the next position both feature White eating a pawn more poisoned than Snow White's apple. Here leading Auckland player Paul Spiller captured with 18.Qxf7. What happened next?

Solutions

(1) Play continued 18.Kd8? Rx6! came in later to see him unsuccessfully put it mildly, very surprised when they stalemate. Velickovic's friends were, to and Black later drew, as 109.Bxe6 is (after 47.Rxf4 Rxf4 ch 48.Kg2 Qxf4! 19.gxf4 Rxd3 wins) 47...Nxh3 48.Bd4 Rxf4 49.Bxd7 (if 49.gxf4 Qg1 mate) 49...Ng1 dis ch! 50. Resigns. A fantastic trap: 50.gxf4 Nxh3 ch or 50.Kxg1 Qcl ch 51.Kg2 Qh1 mate. (4) White missed 39.Ne4 with the unstoppable threat of 40.Ng5 ch (or 40.Nf6 ch) Kh6 41.Rxg6 mate.

(2) After 18.Qxf7 Garbett trapped the pawn had gone! trying to win with rook and bishop v rook, and couldn't work out where his (1) Play continued 108.Kd8? Rx6!

MURRAY CHANDLER