

Sherlock Holmes and the Curious Case of the Chess Bomb

Sherlock was on his way to the annual retrograde chess convention in Tennessee. On the way his car broke down and he stopped by the nearest house to ask to use their phone.

The lady of the house, Maybel, recognized him as the famous retrograde chess detective Sherlock Holmes, and shouted, "Thank God you're here! there's been an emergency! We were playing a game of chess, and little did we know, each time a piece was taken, Moriarty grabbed the missing piece and used it to arm this pipe bomb! He left a note saying that the only way to defuse the bomb was to take the pieces out in the same order that they were put in! But alas we cannot remember the order!"

"Of course!" replied Sherlock, "Moriarty must have put a time-release sugar packet in my gas tank, knowing that I would be driving by this house at this very minute!"

"But how does one arm a pipe bomb with chess pieces?" asked Watson curiously.

"Always missing the simplest of clues my dear Watson," laughed Sherlock. "Do you not see that these chess pieces are metal? And have you never seen a movie where they have to cut the wires in the right order or the bomb will explode? This is exactly like that, but with chess pieces."

"I might remind you that time is ticking!" said Maybel frantically, "Can you help us disarm the bomb or not?"

Sherlock studied the board intently for a minute, but said it was impossible... Unless Maybel could remember any more information about the game...

"Alas Moriarty knows that I have a horrible memory," replied Maybel. "Oh wait, I remember something! Moriarty left these clues for you!"

1. Each king has castled and has not moved since.
2. The bishop on c8 has never left its home square.
3. The black queen captured twice, but neither black knight captured at all."

“You could have given me these clues before I wasted all this precious time!” snapped Sherlock. “Of course it would not be possible to distinguish between the two knights as they could replace each other at the beginning. But of course Moriarty has clearly made the knights in the bomb interchangeable... This one is a doozie, I may need a pen and paper for this one...”

Maybel and her husband watched intently, and increasingly nervously, as Sherlock studied the board and scribbled notes and chess symbols. With only one minute remaining on the timer, Sherlock shouted, “Eureka! I have found the solution.”

Sherlock ran over to the bomb, and removed the pieces in exactly the order they were taken. How did he figure it out?

The board:

