

harmonious development of the king's bishop and the entire kingside in turn. If she pokes her head out to b6 or a5, she comes under fire from a pawn advance b2-b4 or a sleek ♖d2 or ♙e3. If she obstinately tries to beat the queen's rook to the punch with a premature ...♙c7, White's queen's knight can harass her with ♖b5 (or even the sacrificial ♖d5) and White's queen's bishop can also get into the act with ♙f4. And if she ever plays it too cool on b8, the entombed rook on a8 will pay dearly for her cowardice. As you can see, finding a harmonious square for the queen is Black's main headache in the Morra Gambit, and if he can solve this problem, he often solves the Morra riddle. Let us now witness some queen hunting in action.

Chase #1

The following example, which made a great impression upon me as a young Morrophile, can be found in Graham Burgess's groundbreaking 1994 Smith-Morra Gambit book. Burgess featured the sequence to explain why Black cannot make simple developmental moves in the Morra Gambit and survive. We will be viewing it from a different lens, with an eye for rabidly chasing the black queen to and fro.

1.e4 c5 2.d4 cxd4 3.c3 dxc3 4.♖xc3 ♖c6 5.♖f3

In every example in this book, White's king's knight will develop to its natural f3-square.

5...d6 6.♙c4

Likewise, White's king's bishop takes aim on the aggressive "Italian" diagonal in almost all cases.¹²

6...e6

Black adopts the solid Scheveningen structure alluded to earlier, and so the gambiteer readies for the standard 0-0, ♙e2, ♝d1 plan.

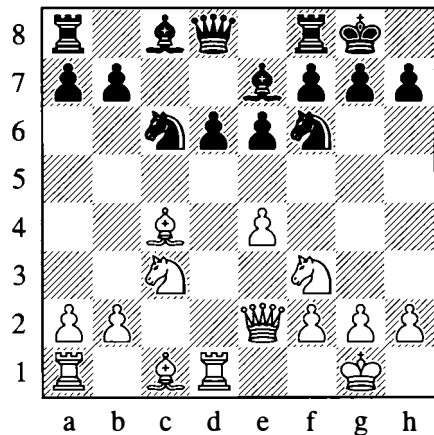
7.0-0 ♖f6 8.♙e2 ♙e7 9.♝d1

The chase begins. If the queen flees to c7, White's cavalry keeps stalking her via b5.

Here the old main line of the Morra Gambit, 9...e5, prevents White's e4-e5 thrust but consequently weakens the d5-square forever.

The passive 9...♙d7 also blocks the d-file pin but interferes with the queen's guard of d6. There are just no easy answers against the Morra's flowing compensation.

9...0-0?



10.e5!

Black is scolded for his carelessness, and must retreat to a fallback position.

10...♖e8 11.exd6 ♙xd6

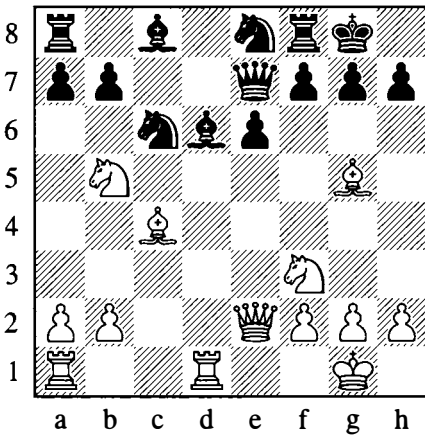
11...♖xd6 12.♙f4+— and the crushing pin decides. 12...e5 (12...a6 13.♙xd6 ♙xd6 14.♖e4+—) 13.♖xe5 only prolongs the inevitable.

12.♖b5! ♙e7

The hapless queen runs, but she cannot hide.

12...a6 13.♖xd6 ♖xd6 14.♙f4±

13.♙g5!



The queen has already been harried by both White's knight and rook. But now the bishop gives her the treatment, thus forcing a critical kingside weakness which will decide the outcome shortly.

13...f6 14.♙e3!

Not just any random retreat! The bishop intends further mayhem after ♖xd6 and ♙c5.

14...♙b8 15.♞ac1!

The heavy piece storm never relents. The Morra rooks reach their natural squares, and the game of hide and seek nears its conclusion. The gambiteer now menaces ♙c5 followed by ♙xe6†, winning.

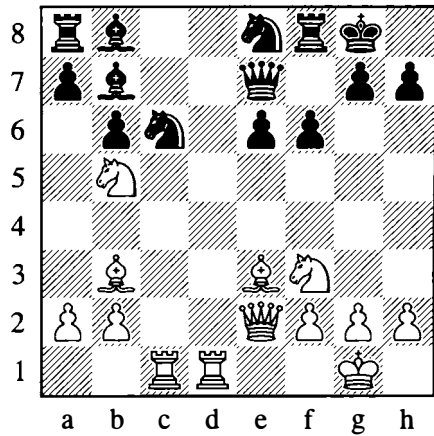
15...♞f7, seeking refuge near her king, would still fail to ♙c5.

15...b6 16.♙b3!

White remains a pawn down, but the rooks are chewing up the board, creating decisive threats against Black's minor pieces. Black is bullied to the back rank, a theme you will see throughout the book.

16...♙b7

16...♙d7 17.♙c5 bxc5 18.♞xd7! ♞xd7 19.♙xe6†+– Chasing down the queen one last time.



17.♙c5! bxc5 18.♙xe6†

18.♞d7?! suggests itself. But the prosaic yet stronger text gives up less material for the queen.

18...♞h8 19.♞d7!

And the hunt finally ends. White's forces doggedly swarmed the queen, never letting her out of their sights.

Chase #2

In our next example the black queen has mischief on her mind early on. She aims to end the game immediately before White's pieces swirl about.

1.e4 c5 2.d4 cxd4 3.c3 dxc3 4.♖xc3 e6 5.♗f3 ♗c6 6.♙c4 ♞c7 7.0–0 ♗f6

