**Béné Meillon, Nov. 2016**

**Thème**

That morning at the end of May/late in May, while the thermometer read 28/83 degrees in the shade, there was on the fifth floor a man playing chess, sitting in the shelter of the awning/canopy (out) on his balcony. He was all alone. He was pondering/meditating over a chessboard. To heighten/enhance the verisimilitude effect/to make it seem more realistic/convincing, he went so far as to change seats as he changed players/sides of the game and as he did so/while he was at it/meanwhile, he would seize/take up a pipe and start sucking on it. He would lean forward, sigh, pick a piece up, put it back down, sigh again, pick the piece back up/pick it up again, move it, nod, and then he would put the pipe down and move across to/go sit in the other chair.

He was of average height/size and he looked impeccable/very neat/was well-groomed, with light brown hair and chestnut eyes. The pleat in his pants fell perfectly straight, his shoes shined as if brand new/straight out of their box, the rolled-up sleeves of his shirt let show fine/slim forearms and wrists/you could see his fine forearms and wrists bared by his rolled-up shirt-sleeves, and his fingernails had the gloss and shine/polish and gloss which you can only get with/from a careful manicure. He had a slight tan which you could/might guess was permanent, and which gave the final touch to the beige, blondish air about him. He looked like one of those toy cardboard figurines they sell/which come in their socks and underwear, and which children can dress (up) with any costume/outfit they like – a pilot, a hunter, an adventurer. He was the kind of man who would fit/you could/one might include/slip into a catalog décor to inspire faith/to make it look reliable and to underline/promote the soundness/quality of the furniture on display.

His face suddenly lit up with a smile. “Checkmate,” he whispered to his imaginary/fictitious friend. That’s it, man !/ Old sport! Game over./You’re done for. And I bet you didn’t see that (one) coming!” Pleased with himself, he shook his own hand (smugly), and inflected/adjusted his voice (in order) to congratulate himself. “Good job, Tonio! You played really well/You played a hell of a game!.”

**Translated from Katherine Pancol, Les yeux jaunes des crocodiles, 2006.**