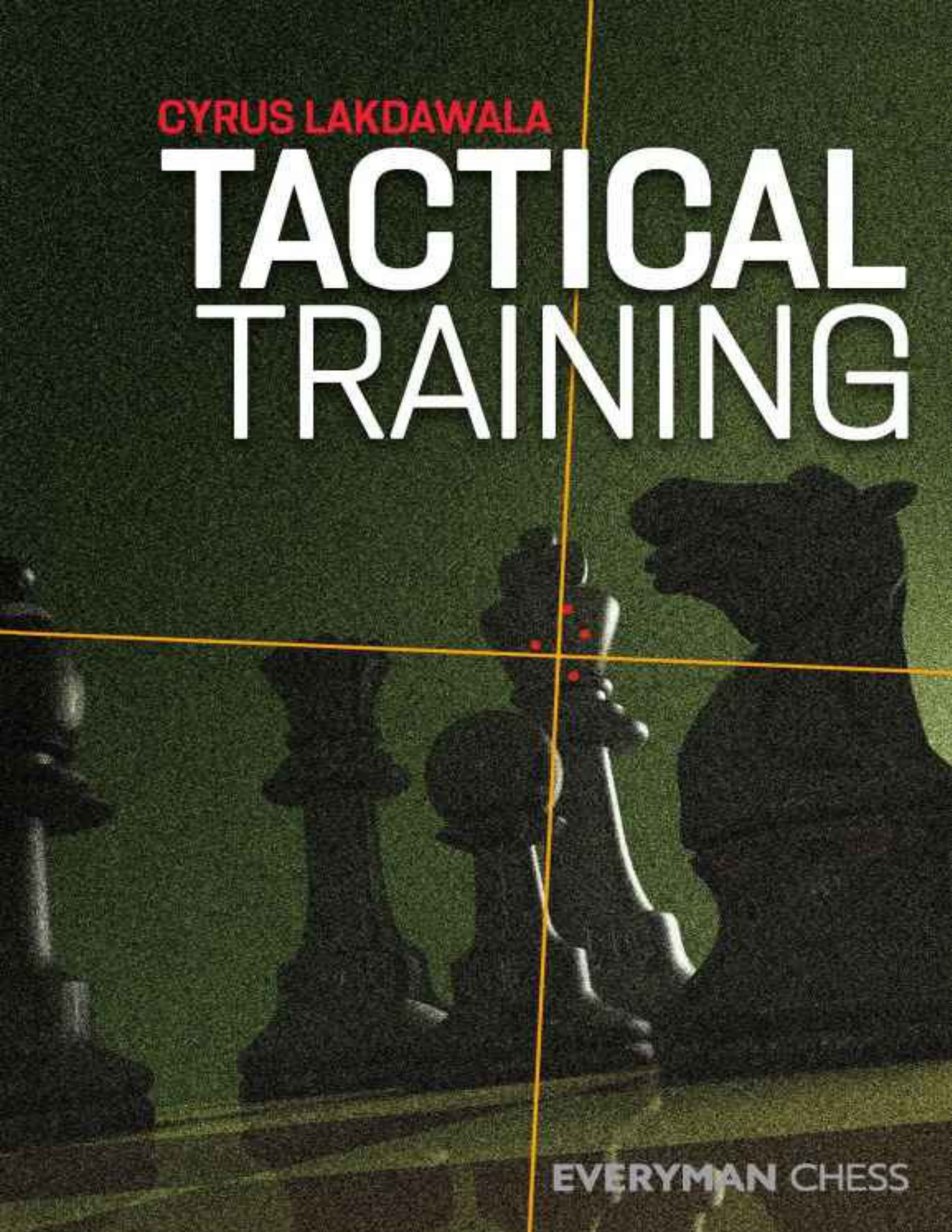
CYRUS LAKDAWALA

TACTICAL TRAINING



EVERYMAN CHESS

CYRUS LAKDAWALA

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www.everymanchess.com

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About the Author

Cyrus Lakdawala is an International Master, a former National Open and American Open Champion, and a six-time State Champion. He has been teaching chess for over 30 years, and coaches some of the top junior players in the U.S.

Also by the Author:
1 ... b6: Move by Move
1 ... d6: Move by Move
A Ferocious Opening Repertoire
Anti-Sicilians: Move by Move
Bird's Opening: Move by Move
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The Four Knights: Move by Move
The Modern Defence: Move by Move
The Nimzo-Larsen Attack: Move by Move
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Introduction

“On the chess board, lies and hypocrisy do not survive long. The creative combination lays bare the presumption of a lie; the merciless fact, culminating in the checkmate, contradicts the hypocrite.” - Emanuel Lasker

If the goddess Caissa granted you the choice, which would you pick?

a) Perfect knowledge of the openings.
b) Perfect strategic understanding.
c) Perfect vision to spot and accurately calculate tactics and combinations.

If you picked choice ‘c’, then congratulations. It means you understand the essential nature of chess. We chess players routinely over-invest in opening study and chronically under-invest in tactical training. Lower-rated club players especially are shackled by lack of familiarity with basic tactical themes, yet they study and fuss over the 23rd move of a line in the Dragon, which they likely will never reach over the board.

In the opening we are chained to the knowledge we wield. The more we memorize, the less likely we are to veer from Theory’s norm, since we lack the will to overthrow that which gives us comfort. The same principle applies for tactical pattern recognition. The more we study them, the greater our power in a tournament or online game. We have within ourselves the power to go any place we want and the way we study is our ‘anywhere’.

There is a psychologists’ term called “proportionality bias”, where most of us believe that huge events (i.e. boosting your rating from 1799 to 2000+) must have behind them huge causes. In reality, even a tiny shift contains the power to create big change - for worse or better.

This is what this book attempts: to get you to shift your study focus to training in tactics, combinations and calculation. In chess we quickly learn that to believe in the inevitability of a foreseeable future, brought on by decisions in the present, is a mirage, since our games rarely go the way we plan. We have a clear view of a future, which inevitably mutates into something we did not foresee. With growing tactical power, we can alter this fate, to allow us to mold our own future on the board, via superiority of tactical vision, the ability to spot combinations and the ability to confidently

and accurately calculate complex variations.

By doing so we also eliminate our Groundhog Day repeated errors. Students show me their games and in the vast majority miss basic tactical opportunities in almost every game. The aperture of opportunity closes quickly. Miss your combination - or your opponent's combination against you - and we can easily flip a win into a draw or loss.

I roomed with IM Professor David Strauss at a tournament 35 years ago. David opined that chess below the professional level is not great art, but instead a trade which anyone with reasonable ability can learn to be proficient. Chess is naturally tilted towards tactics, over opening knowledge and strategic ability. Combinations are not something which arise in the naturally gifted alone. They are simply geometric patterns which, through repeated study, can be mastered by *anyone*. David felt that if a player could reach a 1600 rating level, then this same player could also become a Master or strong Expert, rated over 2100.

Superiority in tactics turns a player into a coiled viper. Wait long enough in a game and a tactical opportunity invariably arises. Every week students ranging from 900 to 2300 show me their tournament games (or pandemic online games). Rare is a game where either my student or their opponent fails to get at least two chances to win the game or hold the draw through some missed tactic. The wasted opportunity nearly always stems from lack of tactical alertness, a problem we aim here to address and fix.

This book categorizes mating patterns and tactical themes, and is also designed as a training workbook. Unlike most other books on tactical training, this one contains a huge number of composed mating (i.e. White forces mate in 3 moves) problems and also endgame studies. Composed works will be our muse, which we have lost, if previously we only studied basic online tactical puzzles and worked feverishly on our openings, to reach positions we never actually get in real games.

Here is our curriculum:

Chapter 1: We identify various mating patterns. There is no greater educational priority than mastery of fundamental mating patterns.
Chapter 2: We cover shorter mates in 2, 3 and 4 moves.
Chapter 3: Longer mates, from 5 moves to mate in 50 (believe it or not, the mate in 50 is actually *not* a difficult problem to crack!).
Chapters 4 through 32: We cover various tactical themes in alphabetical

order, starting with Annihilation of Defensive Barrier and ending with Zwischenzug.

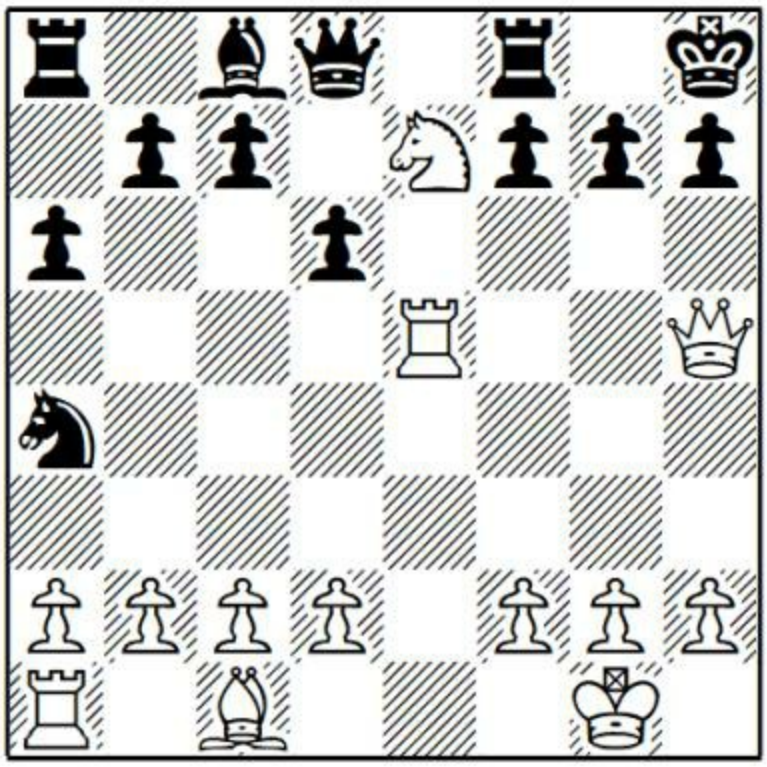
Chapter 33: Chess history isn't over due to Covid-19. It is still being written, via online play. The final chapter covers the Magnus Carlsen Chess Tour's final epic online match between world champion Magnus Carlsen and American super-GM Hikaru Nakamura. The nail-biting match came down to the final game and was the most watched online chess event in history. I go through most of their decisive games and it's basically a pop quiz where you attempt to solve the combinations they saw (or missed!). In this chapter we don't know the tactical theme beforehand, simulating an over-the-board game situation.

A combination often contains many henchmen, yet only a single mastermind at its core. So a single problem, study or game fragment combination in the book may contain four or five different themes, yet will be placed in the chapter of the dominant theme. I could have easily added 10 extra chapters to the book but didn't, because they were in effect sub-divisions of a pre-existing category. For example, I didn't place a chapter on Double Check, since the theme is too minor to merit its own chapter. Due to space limitations I doubled up on some chapters, like Decoy/Removal of the guard, and Obstruction/Interference, since the theme pairs are nearly geometrically synonymous.

Unlike my book on composed works, *Rewire Your Chess Brain*, in this book I label both the theme and difficulty level of the problem. For example: You are in the Double Attack chapter and it says "Level 3" which means you know to look for a double attack. Level 3 is a problem an 1800-rated player should solve without breaking too much of a sweat. Level 1 is kind of a no-brainer problem which should be solved in seconds. Level 2 is a basic tactical theme. Level 3 has been described. Level 4 gets steeply more difficult and even a 2000-rated player may have trouble solving it. Levels 4.5 to 5 means that even a 2400-rated player may sweat to solve it.

Here are a couple of examples from the book:

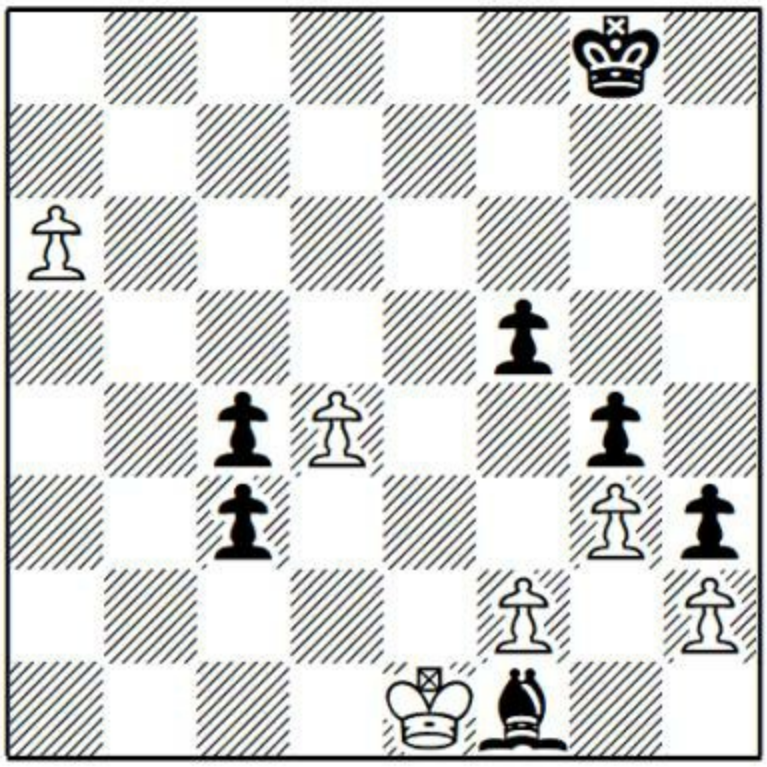
W.Berryman-E.Straat
Hastings 1919



This is an example of a Level 2 problem, meaning White to move. It isn't so tough to solve this mate in 2, the answer to which is 1 Qxh7+! Kxh7 2 Rh5 mate. This is an example of Anastasia's Mate.

Prepare yourself, because here comes an example of a Level 5 + problem. This is a portion of a Smyslov study. White's nearly impossible goal is to reach a fortress draw. The answer is embedded within the book.

Vasily Smyslov
Moi Etyudy, 2000



In many of the game fragments and composed works, you may have multiple chances to solve with the degree of difficulty usually lessening as the game or study moves along. My suggestion is to go through the book once, mark your score and then come back to the book a month later. For success to arise we must first endure failure, both over the board and in our training sessions.

Don't stress if you are unable to solve some (or even many) of the exercises in this book on your first try. I guarantee you that on your second reading, your tactical imprints will gain muscle, your internal database will be more entrenched, and your score and solving time more accurate/faster.

Unlike Rewire Your Chess Brain, I didn't fill this book only with impossibly brilliant combinations. Masterpiece combinations, mating problems and endgame studies are unsullied by age and in this book there are many. Yet I also chose to include examples of the mundane, since these minor combinations occur so much more frequently in our own games - and which we tragically miss!

As such, it's going to be a feast (Levels 1, 2 and 3) and famine (Levels 4

and 5) format where one problem may be trivially simple, while the next may be murderously difficult. So you correctly solve a Level 1 or Level 2 and think “This is easy!” and then you get walloped with a Level 5, which will be miserably difficult - if not impossible - to solve, for an average club level player. From the primitive, arises the complex.

Living a thing is very different to studying it. In this book we are given cues. What other move are you going to look at in the Greek Gift chapter, but 1 Bxh7+ or 1 ... Bxh2+? In real life nobody taps you on the shoulder and warns that you - or your opponent - has a combination in the position. The eventual goal is to try and solve without any cues at all (then read *Rewire Your Chess Brain*!).

What is a Combination?

A combination is a truth, uttered out loud, which the victim left unconsidered. The essence of a combination is that we settle our issues with our fists, rather than through compromise or subtle diplomacy. Contrary to popular belief a combination - however deep - is not a curving, endless labyrinth of mist and illusion. No matter how complex, combinations are merely a collective of basic themes. If we master identification of these themes and their quirky mechanics, then *any* club level player can easily spot *any* short-range combination, and hopefully, some long-range ones as well.

Why are combinations difficult to see? After all, a combination, by its very nature is never anti-logical. The reason they are difficult to see is that all combinations are geometric anomalies, otherwise the move wouldn’t deserve an exclam. When we master tactical patterns until they become - dare I say it? - routine, then in a way they cease to be anomalies. A combination, unlike a stylistic or strategic decision, is not a matter of opinion.

Solving comes in two parts:

1. We need to find the idea and theme, which are dreams.

2. Implementation/calculation, which puts flesh, blood and bones to our dream.

When we are winning, our natural inclination may be to do nothing, hoping the opponent self-destructs. This scenario is unlikely to happen, since our desperate opponents are at their most inventive when they have nothing to lose. To put the opponent away, we must be willing to get our hands dirty. If we see a sacrificial combination, then it’s critical that we trust our instincts/calculation and strike without doubt in our abilities. Some of us

believe that tactics arise from some form of mystical intuition. Maybe this was true in the 19th Century, with chess knowledge still in its infancy. Today, no mystical intuition is required. All it takes to master tactics are the following factors:

1. Be familiar with and able to identify specific mating or tactical patterns.

2. Practice tactics by working daily on puzzles, composed mating problems and endgame studies. Our job is to fill our internal dossiers with patterns - lots of them! Constant practice gradually alters our mind to become preternaturally attuned to even the most subtle geometric anomaly.

3. Just as important as solving a combination is the timing - the when - of a combination. If we practice, our spidey senses begin to tingle at the approach of a combination.

4. Another key factor is the final assessment. In my first rated tournament I found a 'combination' which won my opponent's queen. It only cost me two rooks and a bishop to 'win' it. Needless to say I lost the game due to a moronic misassessment, even though the combination's calculation was totally accurate.

5. Unlike the subjects of politics and religion, with combinations, there can be no differences of opinion. When launched, a combination cannot partially work. It must work 100%. We all mourn our bungled games, as we would a cherished friend who is senselessly killed in a random, freak accident. If we are truthful, we realize that our chess loss may not have been a random event, but one directly traced to our weakness: an inability to either see, or correctly calculate, a combination. It was there all along. We just failed to work our way through the ramifications.

6. When we grow more adept tactically, we are also kept safer, since we develop the defensive skill of sniffing out our opponent's deceits and dirty tricks, long before they can be sprung on us. In other words, the polarity is reversed and we see potential combinational threats against our own position.

That's it. If you do these things diligently, it isn't so difficult to jump a full class, due to your superiority to your opponent in the realm of tactics. So let's stop attributing magical properties to tactical skill. At club level it is nothing more than a learned trade, rather than an art form. That which was once considered an arcane secret, is now an open public library, for us to peruse.

This book is an attempt at the de-mystification process. In the crisis

portion of a game, when our clock is low and our hearts pound at a dangerously quickening pace which would worry any cardiologist, that is the place when words and logic grow quiet and our mind functions on symbols and geometric expressions alone. That is when our tactical training kicks in and from potential folly and ruin, arises our single path to victory.

The Importance of Composed Endgame Studies and Composed Mating Problems

When we first learn chess, even a completely unremarkable rote combination is the source of wonder and enchantment. Then we become stronger players and our overfamiliarity with standard combination patterns becomes ... well ... ordinary. If you take up the solving of composed works, I promise that your sense of childlike wonder of what can be achieved on the chess board will return.

I began the Facebook group Chess Endgame Studies and Compositions with my friend GM Max Illingworth in late 2019 (it approaches 13,000 members, as I write this and will probably reach 15,000 members by the time you read this book). Each day members post composed mating problems and endgame studies, and each day I gasp in wonder at an impossibly unlikely pattern displayed in the answer.

Lower-rated students often show me their 'brilliant' combinations and are then instantly offended by my lack of appreciation of the alleged beauty. The fact is in today's chess world, basic combinational patterns have become so routine, that many of them reach the level of tactical clichés. Our goal in this book is to master the basics and then look deeper into a position's geometric secrets.

This is where composed works come in. At first our minds are mundane, full of rules and regulations. Composed works have a way of untying mental knots of geometric orthodoxy. My students constantly tell me: "They are too hard!" I ask them why they are so forbearingly patient with their own tactical limitations? Why are we satisfied to be the unremarkable student - neither intelligent, nor stupid - who is perfectly content with a row of B's punctuated with an occasional A and C grade? Enough of that. Let's go for straight A's.

It's human nature to be frightened of things which we don't understand. Composed works are not reality shows for people who don't like reality. Their benefit is directly applicable to our over-the-board training. The vast majority of 4 and 5 difficulty level problems in this book are composed

works, which take us to places where no mere tactics puzzles can follow.

When it comes to teaching, my philosophy is overtraining - pushing the student past their comfort zone. This is where composed mating problems and endgame studies enter. When it comes to composed works, the average player tends to be intimidated by the complexity level and feels left out, as if from an elite group whose members alone know the secret handshake. Some combinations come with two separate solutions. Not so with composed works. Unlike our styles and choices of openings, when it comes to composed works, it's a monolithic culture without factions or choices. There is only a correct equation and an incorrect one.

Attempting to solve these strains us to our limits. There is no bs'ing involved with studies i.e. "This move looks right. Maybe it will work." We should not allow petrifaction of the mind by only sticking with basic puzzles, which merely provide a shallow base. Composed works tend to be deeper both conceptually and mathematically, than normal over the board combinations. Their depth pushes us to our limits to solve - which we normally don't achieve.

With composed works it's *not* the solving which is the important thing. It's the process of attempting to solve, usually failing, and then looking up the answer, which provides the real benefit. Why? Because now our mind is imprinted with a completely unorthodox pattern, the seed of which may one day arise in one of our own tournament games. In the case of the vast majority of endgame studies in the book, I truncated a composer's original study into a portion to turn a murderously difficult study into a more doable semi-murderous study.

I especially loaded up the book with works from two of my favorite composers, Vasily Smyslov and Alois Wotawa, whose composing styles are as far apart as Smyslov's games to Tal's. Smyslov's studies, although always profoundly deep, tend to be similar to the way he played chess. The solutions are always in harmony with logic. Wotawa's studies are the exact opposite, full of crazy anomalies and jarring patterns we wouldn't have thought of in a million years.

Genes Don't Matter

Is chess destiny fixed, or is our fate fluid? The effect of genetics made us who we are, when it comes to our level of natural chess ability. There are three varieties of capabilities in chess:

1. The naturally gifted.
2. The average, which makes up the overwhelming majority of us.
3. Those who struggle, even with the basics.

It doesn't matter which one you fall under. If you labour on your tactical skills, you will rise. I give you my written promise on this. Destiny is in *our* hands and not predetermined by our genes. If you are a 1400 player who dreams of cracking the 1600 barrier, or an 1850 player who aspires to break 2000, or a 2100 who aspires to masterhood, there is no doubt you can achieve it if you put in the time and master tactics. May you all grasp your goals, via tactical mastery!

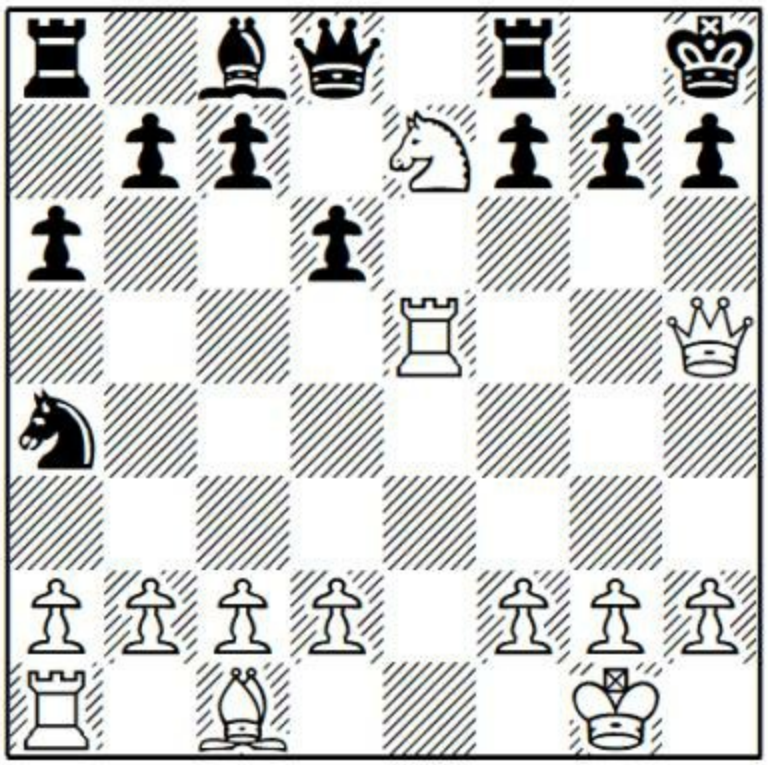
Cyrus Lakdawala,
San Diego,
January 2021

1) Various Mating Patterns

In chess, there is no higher educational priority than becoming familiar with and mastering fundamental mating patterns. In this chapter, we identify some of the most commonly occurring ones, the origins of which sometimes trace back to centuries past.

Anastasia's Mate
Anastasia's Mate is a rook-knight pattern, always on an open h- or a-file. The rook delivers mate, while the knight cuts off the escape squares g8 and g6 (on the queenside the knight would cut off b8 and b6), while the defender's g7-pawn (or b7-pawn) obstructs the king's escape. The name arises from an 1803 novel by W. Heinse, *Anastasia and Chess*.

1) W.Berryman-E.Straat
Hastings 1919



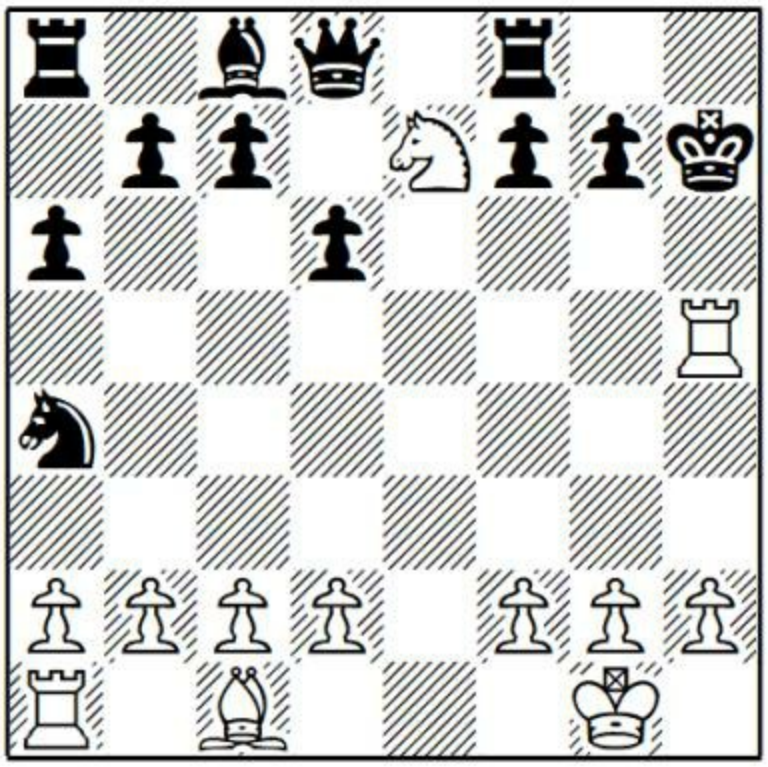
White to play

Level 2

The seeds of Black's decay are planted and in this position, White forces mate in 2 moves, with Anastasia's Mate:

Answer: Queen sacrifice. We begin with coercive action.

13 Qxh7+! Kxh7 14 Rh5 mate

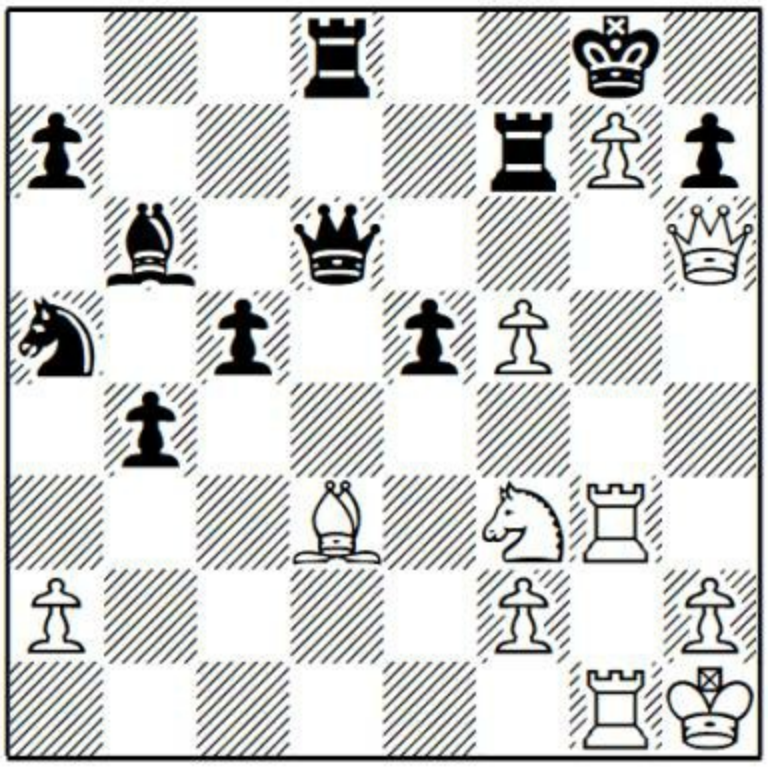


Anderssen's Mate

This mate is named after Adolf Anderssen for his mating pattern from a game against Johannes Zukertort. With Anderssen's mate, a queen or rook is sacrificed, supported by a diagonally capturing piece (pawn, bishop or queen). The diagonally capturing piece draws the defending king out and then a rook or queen delivers a back rank mate. This explanation becomes a lot less confusing when we look at the original sacrifice.

2) A.Anderssen-J.Zukertort

Barmen 1869



White to play

Level 3

White to play and force mate in 5 moves at most.

Answer: Step 1: Queen sacrifice. First we draw Black's king out to h7.

29 Qxh7+! 1-0

Play would have concluded:

29 ... Kxh7 30 f6+!

Step 2: Interference. This move cuts out a ... Qh6 defence.

30 ... Kg8

30 ... Qxd3 31 Rh3+ Kg8 32 Rh8 mate

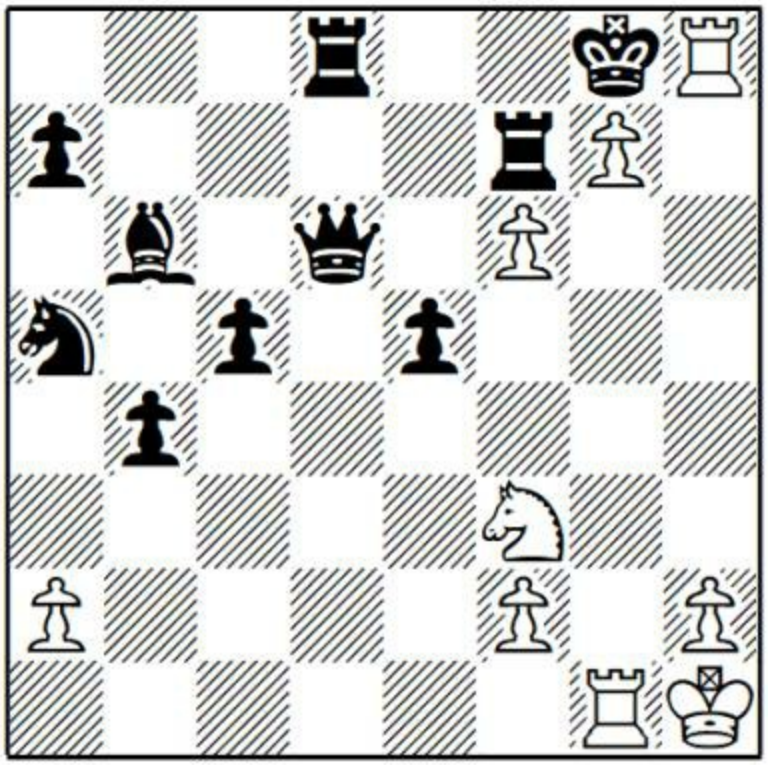
31 Bh7+!

Step 3: Attraction. Anderssen continues to sacrifice without any sense of remorse or loss.

The wonderful thing about truth is that belief plays no role in its existence. This is why all magic is based upon illusion. If the audience refuses to believe, then the magic fails. 31 Rh3?? allows Black to escape after

31 ... Rxf6 32 Rh8+ Kf7. White's position struggles to remain upright and his attack goes dead.

31 ... Kxh7 32 Rh3+ Kh8 33 Rh8 mate



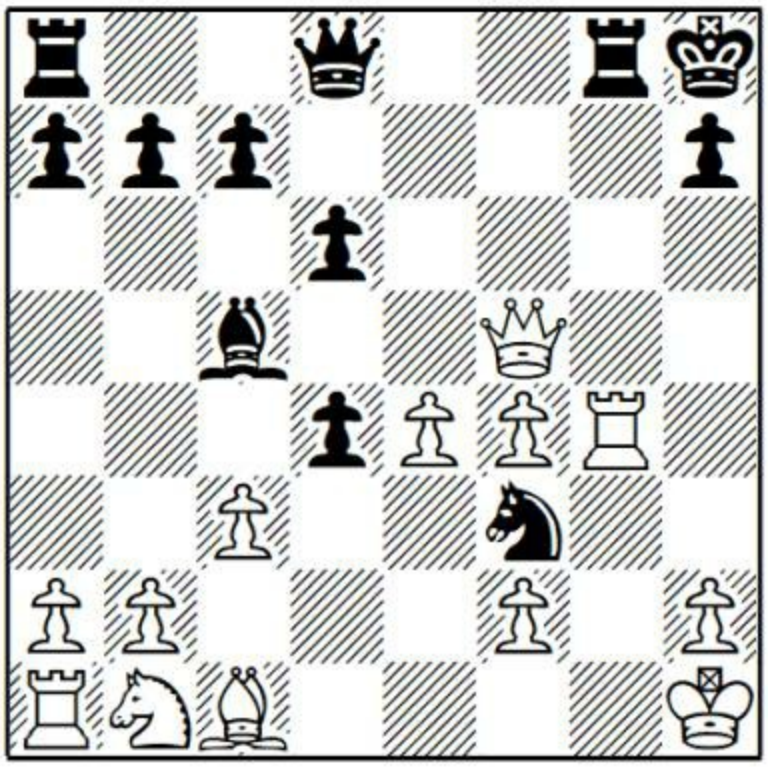
Step 4: Mate on the back rank, supported by the g7-pawn.

Arabian Mate

It's named Arabian Mate because the tactic was inherited from the early Arab nations. An Arabian mate is given with the queen, protected by her knight.

3) Reiner-W.Steinitz

Vienna 1860



Black to play

Level 3

White is grossly behind in development and it shouldn't surprise us that White is getting mated.

Answer: Queen sacrifice/weak back rank/Arabian mate.

16 ... Qh4!

This is not bluster. Black threatens an Arabian mate (mate with a rook, supported by a knight) on g1, if the queen is taken. 16 ... Qe7 is still winning for Black, yet is guilty of a failure of imagination.

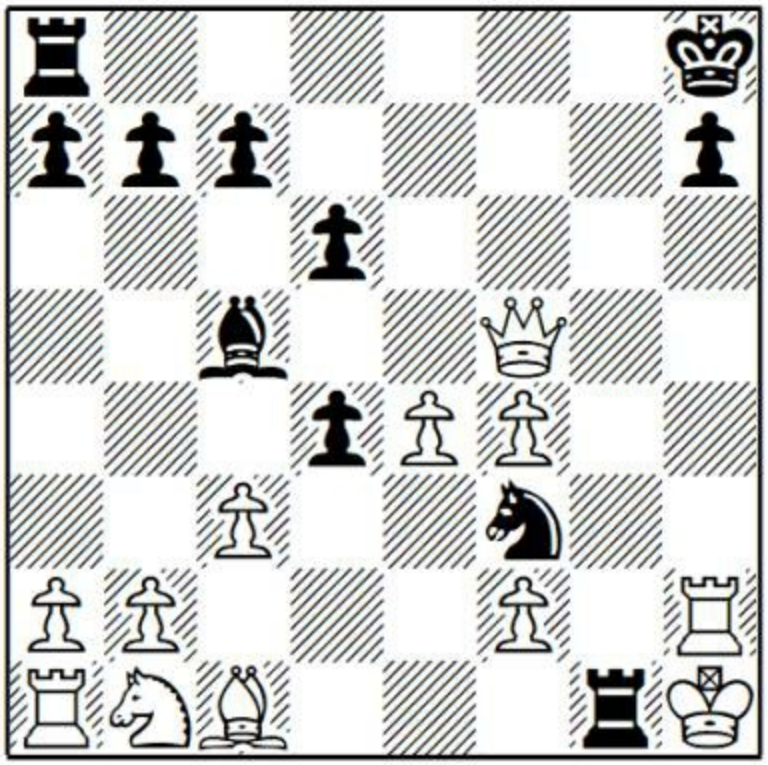
17 Rg2

Now Black has mate in 2 moves. Alternatively: 17 Rxh4 Rg1 mate or 17 Kg2 Rxg4+ 18 Kxf3 Qh3+ 19 Ke2 d3+ 20 Kd2 Bxf2 White's king won't escape mate for long.

17 ... Qxh2+!

Steinitz obviously considers his queen expendable property, with a second queen sacrifice, followed by mate on g1.

18 Rxh2 Rg1 mate



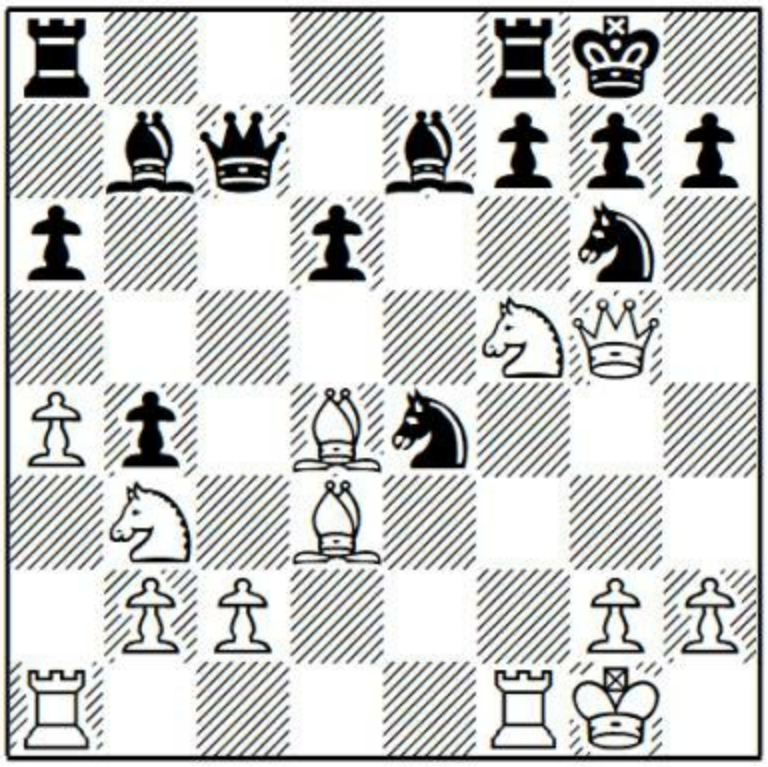
There we have it. This is an example of an Arabian mate.

Blackburne's Mate

Blackburne's mate is given with either a pair of bishops and a knight delivering the mate, or with queen and bishop, with a knight delivering mate.

4) B.Spassky-J.Marsalek

Leningrad 1960



White to play

Level 2

Spassky's pieces swarm Black's king. How did he deliver mate?

Answer: Queen sacrifice/Blackburne's mate.

21 Qh6! 1-0

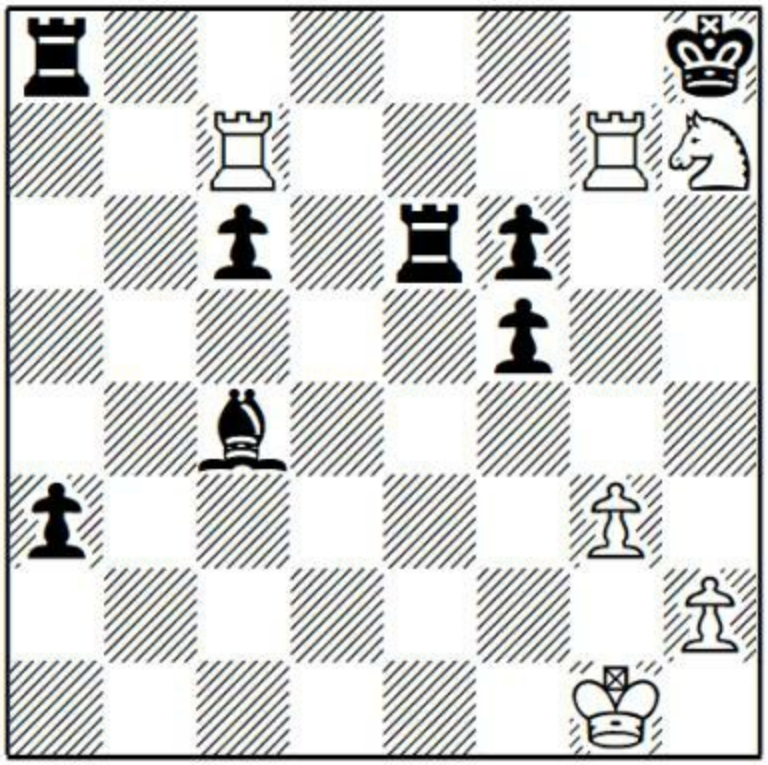
After 21 ... Bf6 (21 ... gxh6 22 Nxh6 mate) 22 Bxf6 Black is mated in 3 moves at the most, after a few spite checks.

Blind Swine Mate

As a not-so-charming kid playing blitz with friends, when my rooks invaded the opponent's seventh rank, I would gloriously proclaim: "Pigs on the seventh!" A Blind Swine mate is where the attacking side has access to a mating combination, based on rooks doubled along the seventh rank.

5) P.Morphy-C.Maurian

Paris 1863



White to play

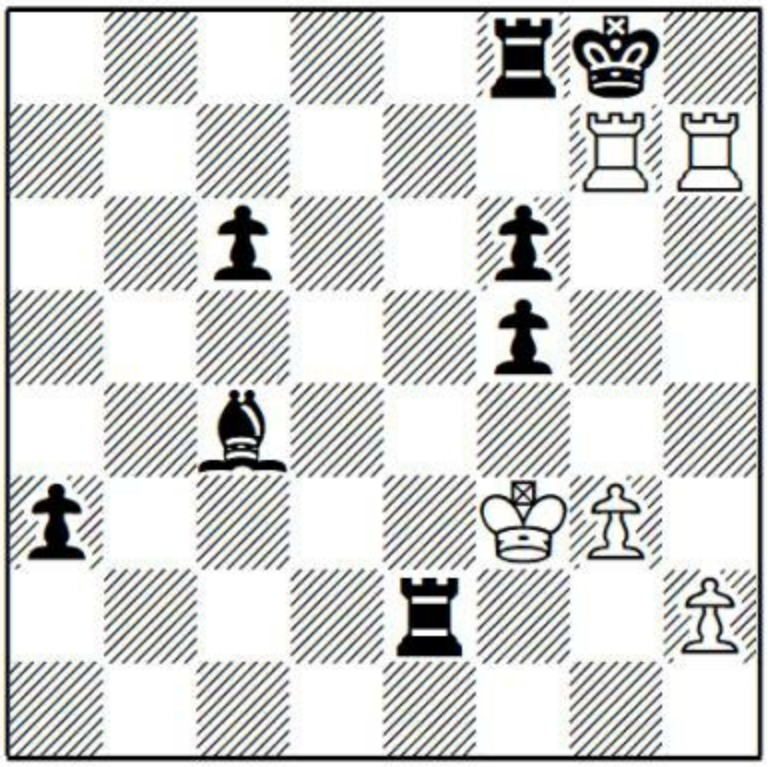
Level 2

Paul Morphy, who rose through the ranks at an unequal pace from his colleagues, forced mate:

Answer: Clearance/Interference.

36 Nf8! 1-0

Threat: Ng6 mate. When Black's rook takes the knight on f8, this interferes with the black king's escape square on that same square: 36 ... Re1+ (36 ... a2 37 Ng6 mate) 37 Kf2 Re2+ 38 Kf3 (Black ran out of useless checks) 38 ... Rxf8 (When our opponent upends us, we have an emotional stake in proving him wrong; Black's move fails to do this since now f8 is sealed as an escape square for Black's king, but if 38 ... a2 39 Ng6 mate) 39 Rh7+ Kg8 40 Rcg7 mate.

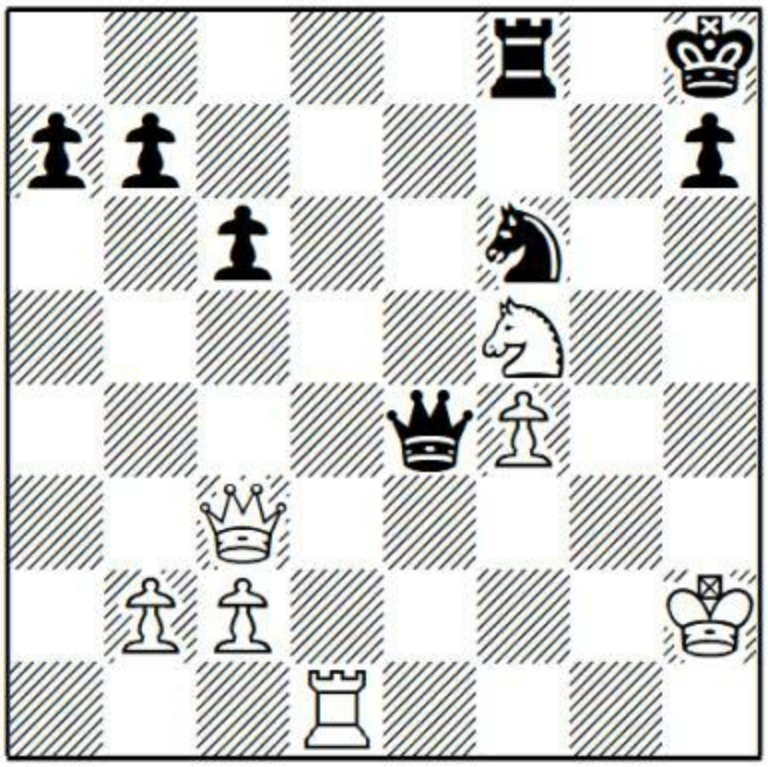


Backrank Mate

A Backrank mate is always delivered by a major piece (queen or rook) on the defender's back rank. The Great Romantics were designed for war, rather than diplomacy

6) H.Bird-J.Zukertort

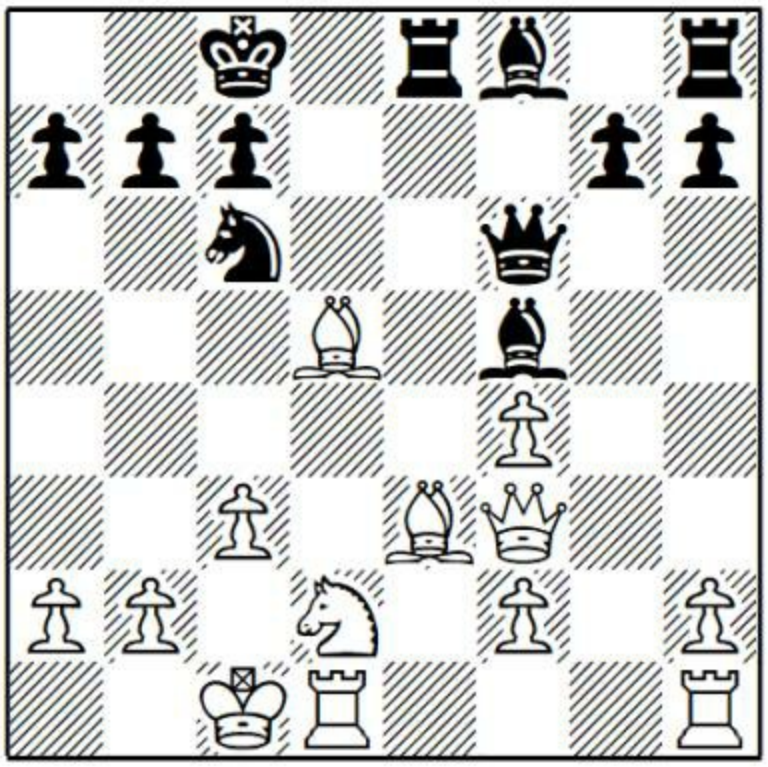
Nottingham 1886



White to play
Level 1
How does White deliver mate in 5?
Answer: Queen sacrifice/decoy/backrank mate.
37 Qxf6+! 1-0
37 ... Rxf6 38 Rd8+ and mate in 2.

Boden's Mate

7) R.Schulder-S.Boden
London 1853



Black to play

Level 2

Boden's Mate involves a pattern of crisscrossed bishops (here on f5 and a3), while a major piece (usually a queen) delivers a line-opening sacrifice, allowing one bishop to deliver the final mate.

Answer: Queen sacrifice/clearance.

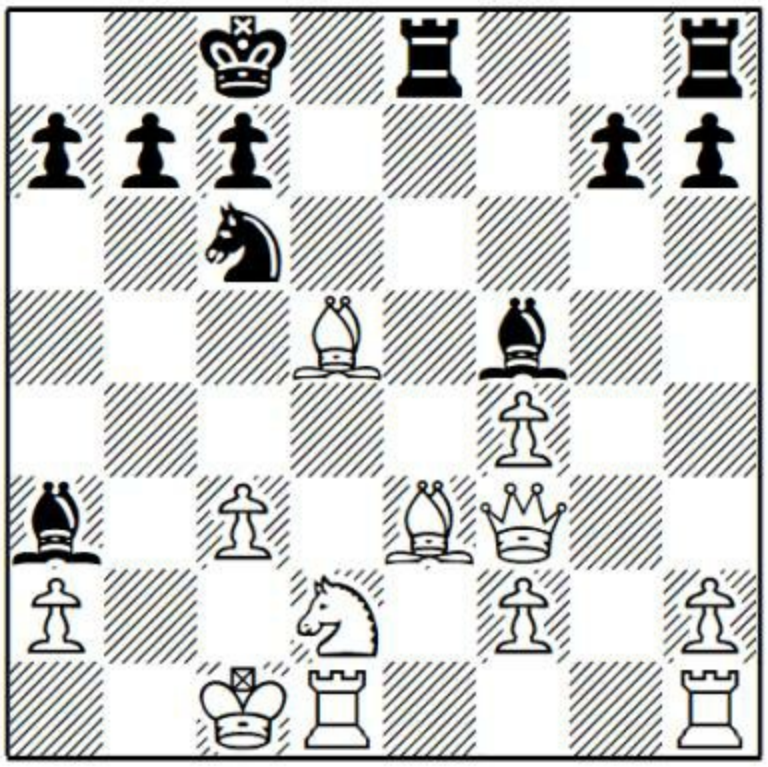
14 ... Qxc3+!

White's position buckles under the impact.

15 bxc3

"Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live," advises Exodus 22:18.

15 ... Ba3 mate



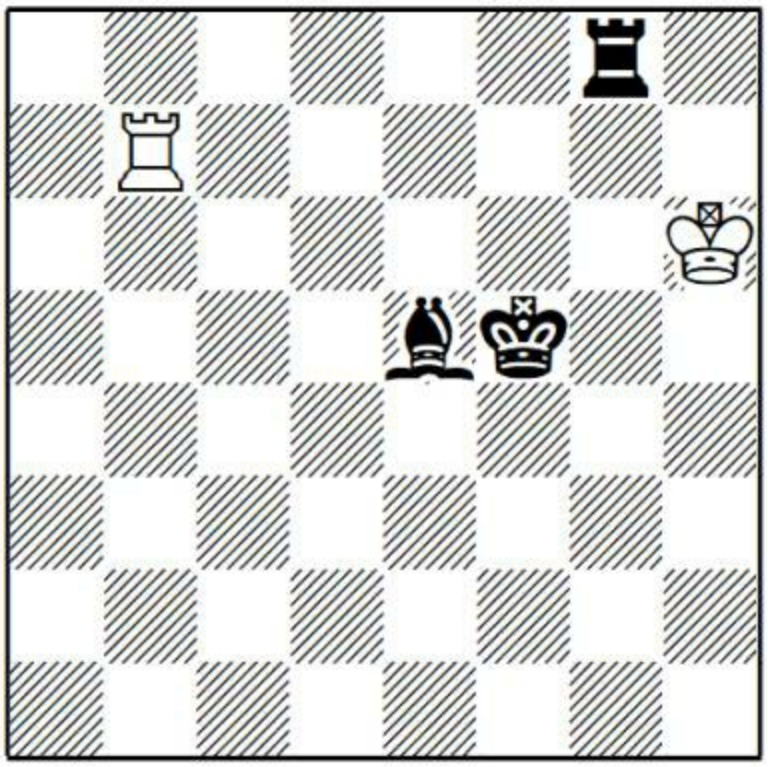
This is a typical Boden's Mate.

Box Mate

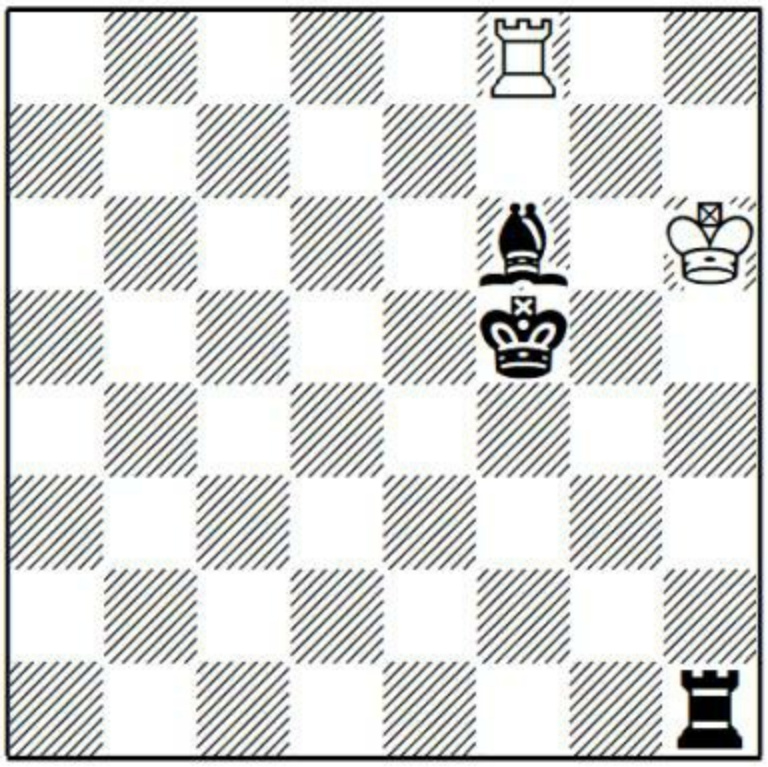
A Box mate is accomplished with a rook, either vertically or horizontally, where the defending king's escape routes are blocked by our king, sometimes with the help of another piece.

8) M.Radojcic-V.Tomovic

Yugoslav Championship, Ljubljana 1947



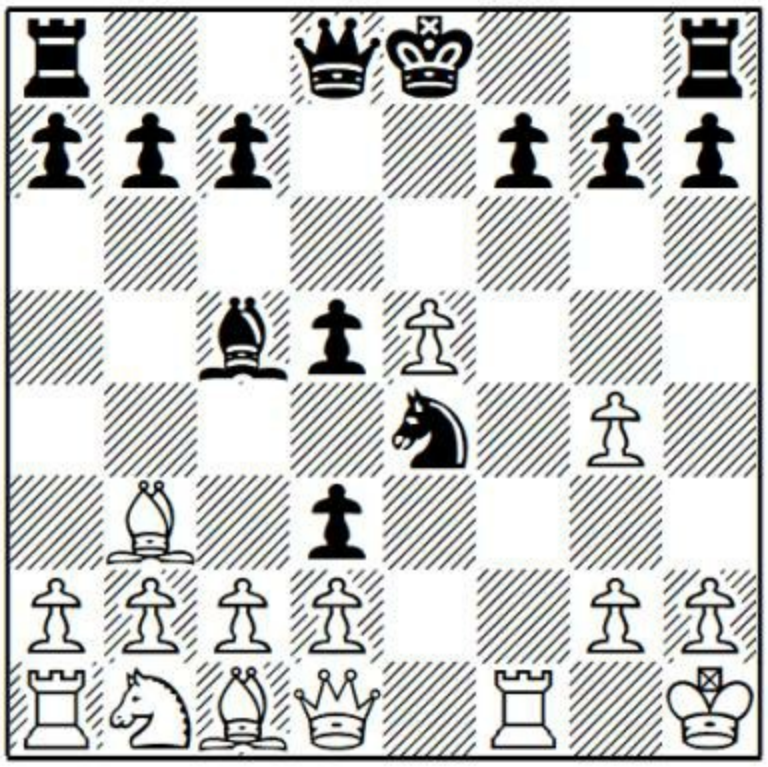
Black to play
Level 2
84 ... Rg1!
Black can also play 84 ... Rg3! or 84 ... Rg2!.
85 Rf7+ Bf6!
Black walls off all exit routes around White's king.
86 Rf8
86 Rxf6+ stalls mate, which isn't much of an accomplishment.
86 ... Rh1 mate



Black's rook is one of those cowboys who has no ethical issues with shooting his enemies in the back. Here is a snapshot of a typical Box mate.

Clearance Mate
Clearance mate occurs when a piece is sacrificed to open an attacking line.

A.Anderssen-M.Lange
Breslau 1859



Black to play

Level 4

Herr Professor Anderssen got greedy and neglected his development - to the grave detriment of his king. How did Black force a win?

Answer: Line opening.

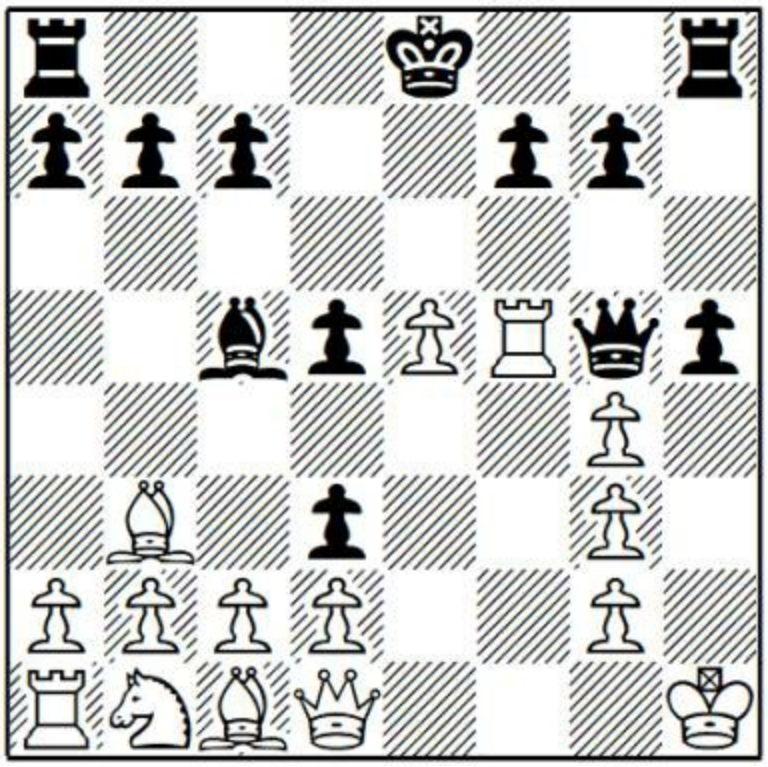
11 ... Ng3+!!

A person without inhibitions makes the world a more dangerous place. The idea is to open the h-file, then play ... Qg5, followed by ... h7-h5! creating a mating net.

12 hxg3 Qg5!

Threat: ... Qh6 mate.

13 Rf5 h5!

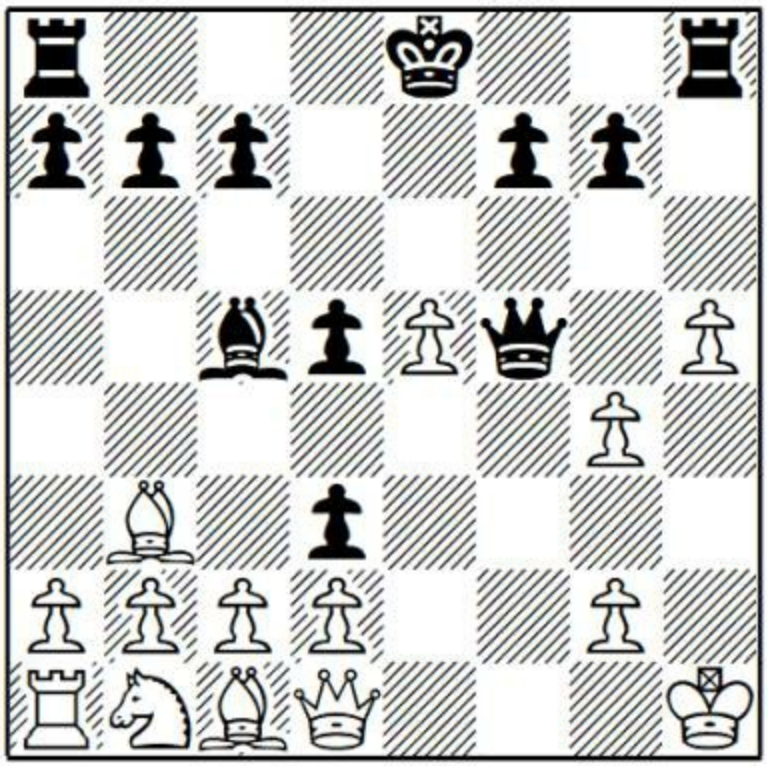


Threat: ... hxg4 mate.

14 gxh5

We back down when our will to survive outstrips our embarrassment. Pretty much forced, since 14 Rxg5 hxg4+ 15 Rh5 Rxh5 is mate.

14 ... Qxf5 15 g4



Black to play

Level 2

Black to play and force mate in 6 moves:

15 ... Rxh5+!?

Spectacular, and completely unnecessary.

Answer: Black mates faster with 15 ... Qf2! (threat: ... Qh4 mate) 16 Ba4+ Kd8 17 g3 Qxg3 18 Qf1 Qxg4 and forced mate in 2 moves.

16 gxh5 Qe4!

Threatening mate on h4.

17 Qf3 Qh4+ 18 Qh3 Qe1+ 19 Kh2

Now Black forces mate in 3.

19 ... Bg1+! 0-1

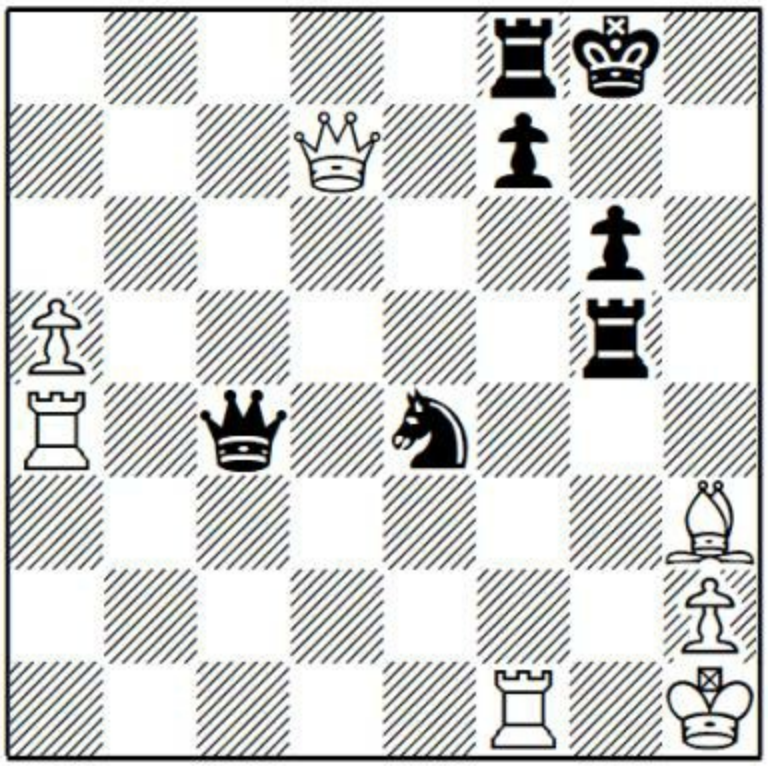
If 20 Kh1 Bf2+ 21 Kh2 Qg1 mate.

Corner Mate

A Corner mate is delivered with a knight, while a rook cuts off the remaining

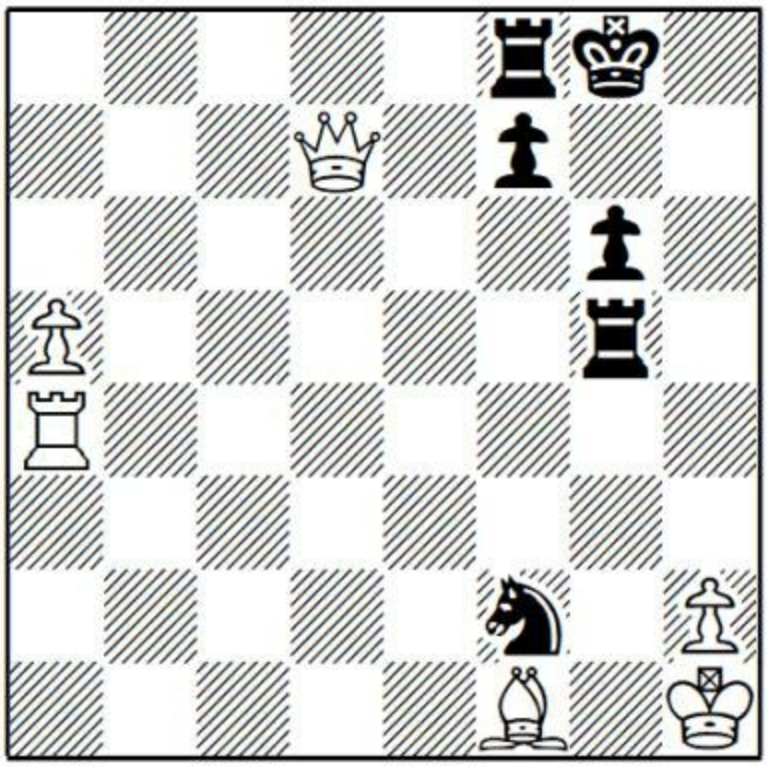
flight squares.

10) H.Myers-D.Poliakoff
U.S. Open, Long Beach 1955



Black to play
Level 2

Black forced mate in 2:
Answer: Queen sacrifice/undermining/corner mate. The defender of f2 is destroyed.
48 ... Qxf1+!
With this move Black reminds his opponent of an unpleasant truth: f2 needed more protection.
49 Bxf1 Nf2 mate

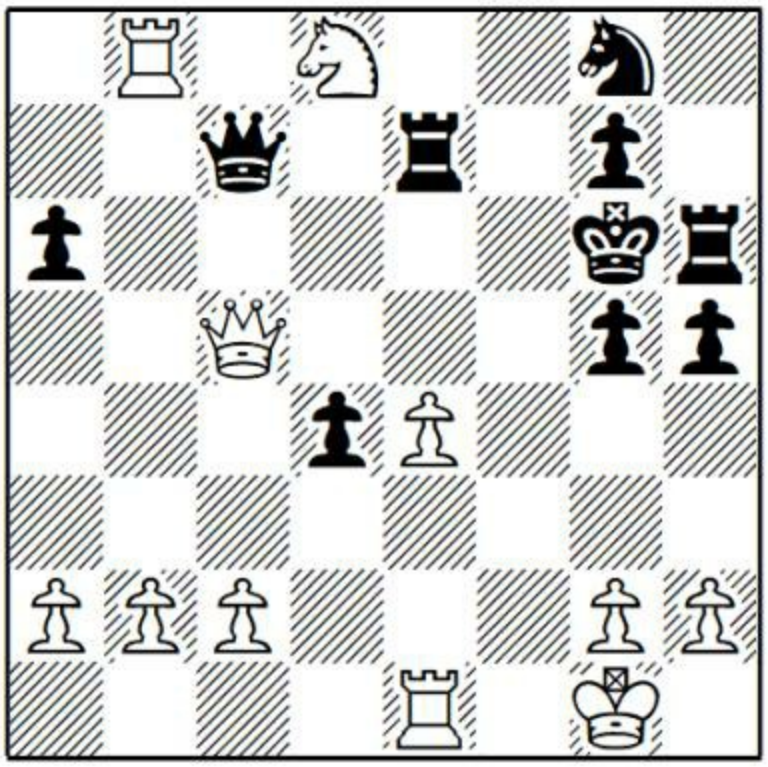


Cozio's Mate (also called Dove's Tail Mate)

In Cozio's mate a queen delivers mate, while guarded by its own king, pawn or bishop, as a hook.

11) P.Keres-F.Koberl

Szczawno-Zdroj 1950



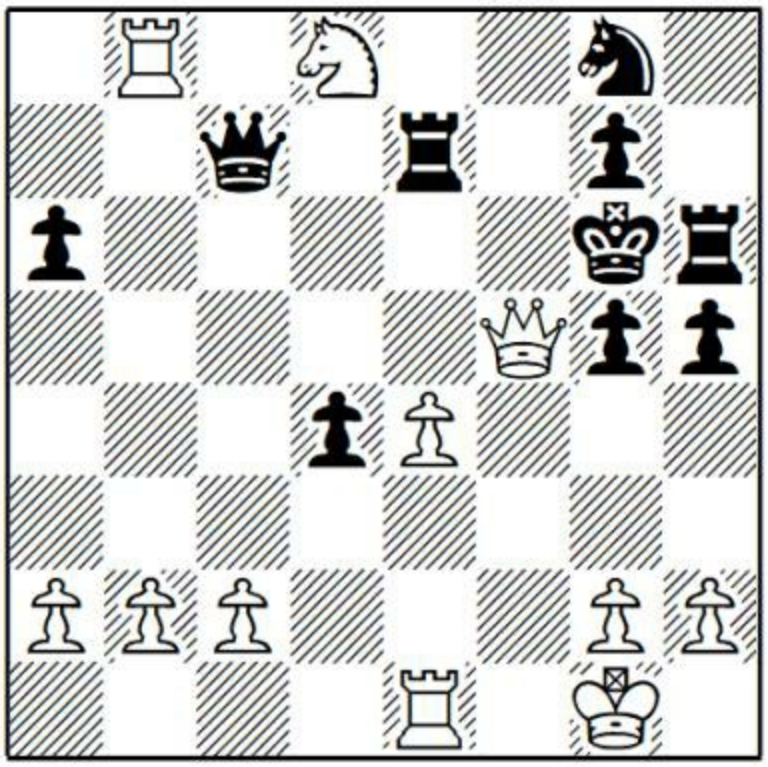
White to play

Level 1

The complexity of this position is not some endless night of confusion. A difficulty level of one is too high for this problem. I wish I had an option for Difficulty Level 0.5! White to play and deliver mate:

Answer: Slide the queen to f5, delivering Cozio's mate.

28 Qf5 mate

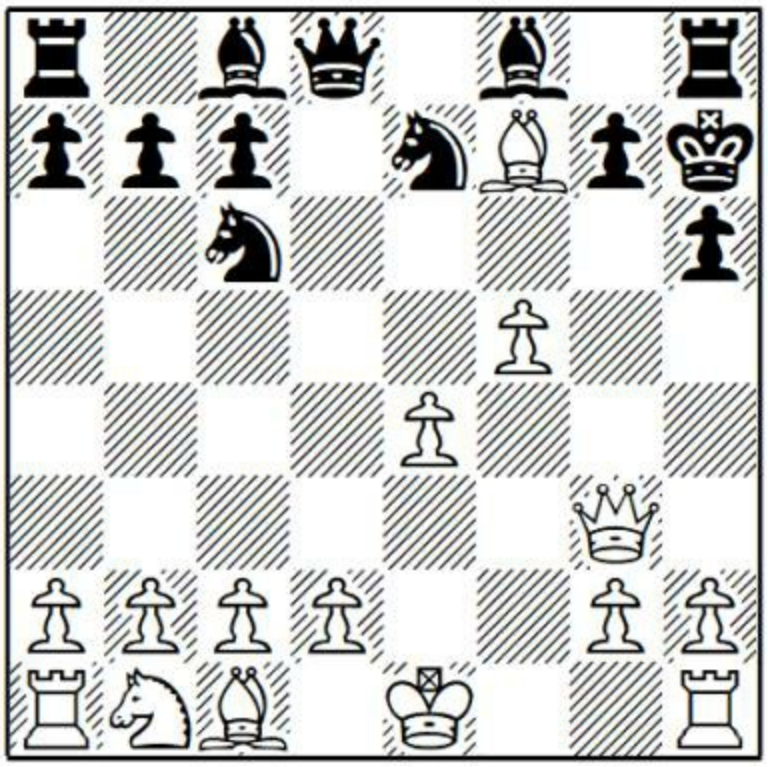


Damiano's Mate

With Damiano's mate, the attacking queen delivers the final mate, with the help of a hook pawn or bishop.

12) P.Damiano-NN

Rome 1512



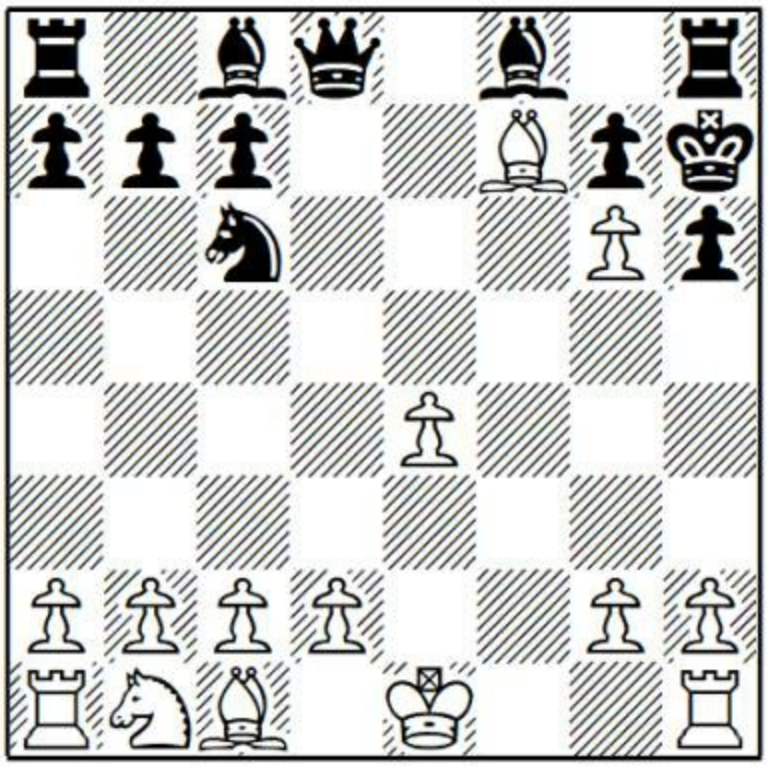
Black to play

Level 2

The name ‘NN’ is synonymous with being a chess dunce. Have you ever seen NN win or draw a single chess game? Me neither. How did Damiano put his illustrious opponent away?

Answer: Queen sacrifice/Damiano’s mate.

12 Qg6+! Nxg6 13 fxg6 mate

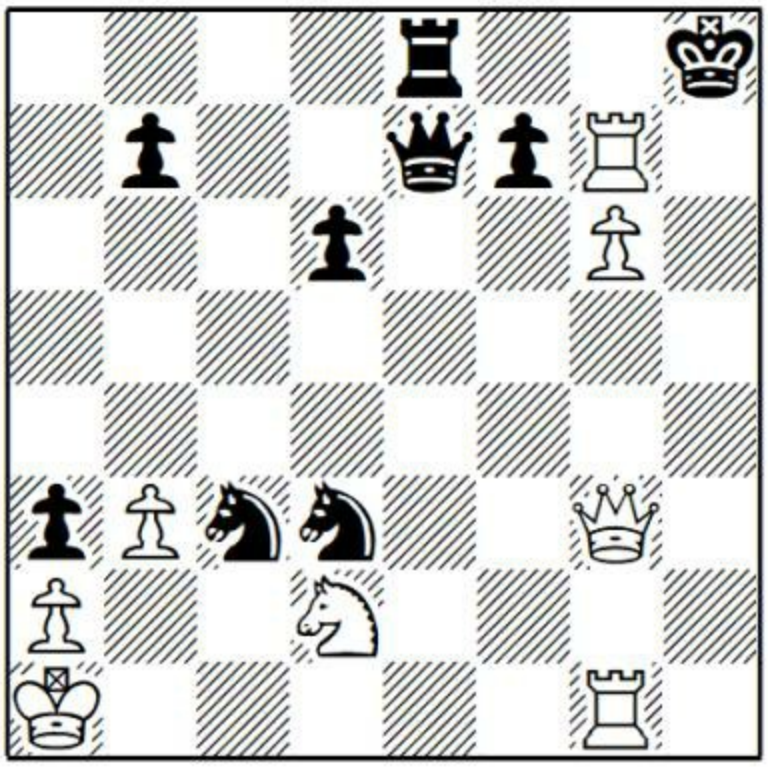


Desperado

A desperado tactic is when your position is toast and there is no defence, except one: take action designed to confuse your opponent, even if it's objectively dubious or outright unsound.

13) L.C.De La Bourdonnais-A.McDonnell

London 1834



Black to play

Level 5

What is Black's best for a swindle here?

Answer: Play the desperado 33 ... Qe1+! and pray that your opponent gets confused.

33 ... Qe1+!

33 ... Kxg7? is suicide. Black is mated after 34 gxf7+ Kf6 (if 34 ... Kxf7 35 Qg6+ Kf8 36 Qg8 mate or 34 ... Kf8 35 Qg8 mate) 35 Qg7+ Ke6 36 Qg4+! (principle: *when hunting the enemy king, don't chase, but cut off flight* squares; this move prevents an escape via d7) 36 ... Kd5 (or 36 ... Kf6 37 Rf1+ Ke5 38 Nf3+ Kf6 39 Nd4+ Nf2 40 Rxf2+ Ke5 41 Rf5 mate) 37 Qc4+ Ke5 38 Nf3+ Kf6 39 Qh4+! Kxf7 (39 ... Ke6 40 Qg4+ Kxf7 41 Qg6+ Kf8 42 Qg8 mate) 40 Qh5+ Ke6 (40 ... Kf8 41 Qh6+ Kf7 42 Qg6+ Kf8 43 Qg8 mate) 41 Qg4+ Kf7 42 Qg6+ Kf8 43 Qg8 mate.

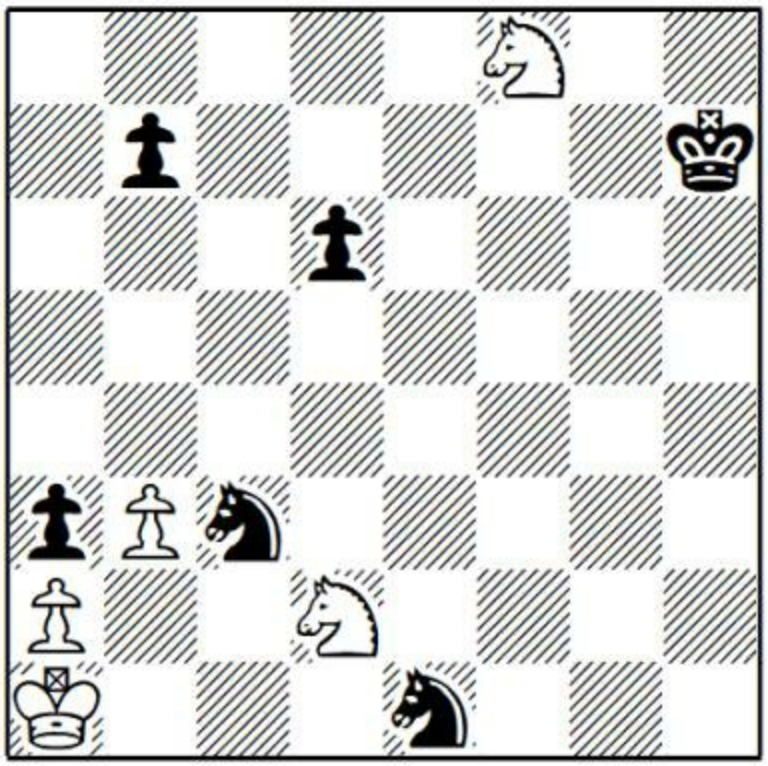
34 Rxe1??

The hinges of this mechanism are caked with rust. Paul Morphy,

undoubtedly shaking his head, wrote: “White as suggested by the *Chessplayer’s Chronicle* (Vo.II, p.361) might now have won in the following manner. 34 Nb1 Qxg3 35 Rh7+ Kg8 36 gxf7+ Kxh7 37 Rh1+ Kg7 38 fxe8Q and White easily scores the game.”

After 34 Nb1! Kxg7 (Morphy didn’t mention this move, which also loses for Black; 34 ... Qxg3 is the line Morphy cited when 35 Rh7+ Kg8 36 gxf7+! Kxh7 37 Rh1+! Kg7 38 fxe8Q Ne5 39 Qe7+ Kg6 40 Qxd6+ Kg7 41 Qc7+ Kf6 42 Qxc3 consolidates and wins) 35 gxf7+ Qxg3 36 fxe8N+! (underpromotion/zwischenzug) 36 ... Kf8 37 Rxg3! Black has to resign.

34 ... Rxe1+ 35 Qxe1 Nxe1 36 Rh7+ Kg8 37 gxf7+ Kxh7 38 f8N+



White’s battle-weary position continues to deplete. La Bourdannais may have originally planned 38 f8Q and then saw to his horror that Black had 38 ... Nc2 mate.

38 ... Kh6

There is no defence to the coming ... Nc2 mate.

39 Nb1 Nc2 mate

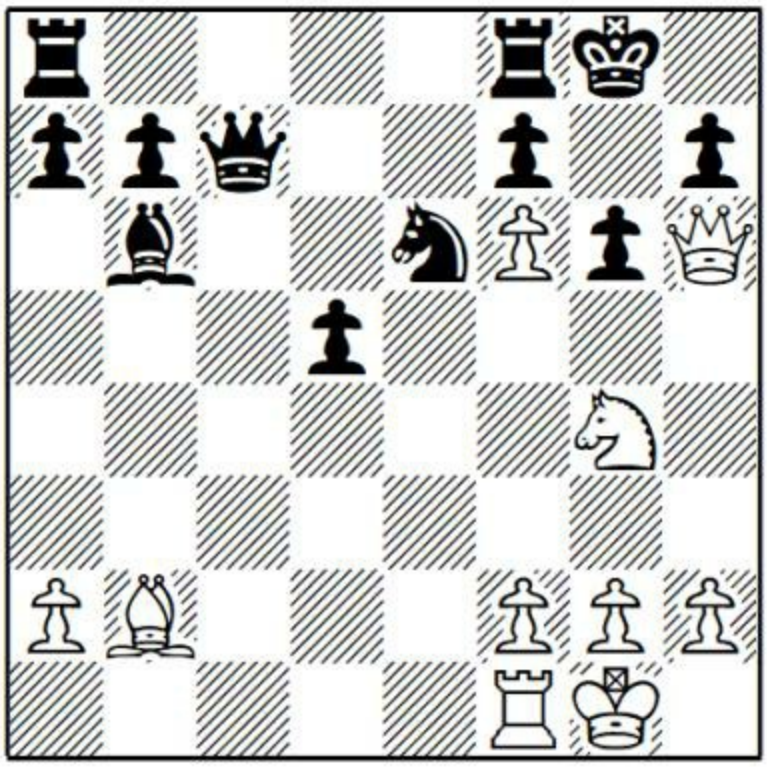
An army isn’t much of an army, unless it happens to deliver checkmate.

David and Goliath Mate

As you may have guessed, a pawn which delivers mate plays the role of David, while the unfortunate mated king is Goliath.

14) H.Bird-Pinkerley

London 1850



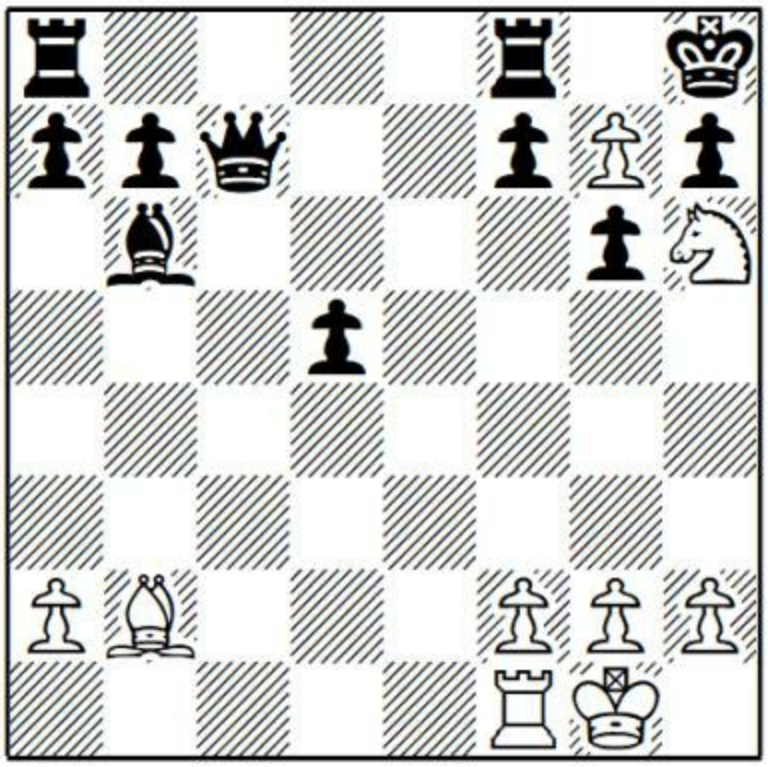
White to play

Level 2

In this position Bird finished with a sparkling 3-move David and Goliath mate:

Answer: Step 1: Queen sacrifice/clearance. The queen is sacrificed on g7, clearing h6, making room for the knight's next move.

22 Qg7+! Nxg7 23 Nh6+ Kh8 24 fxg7 mate

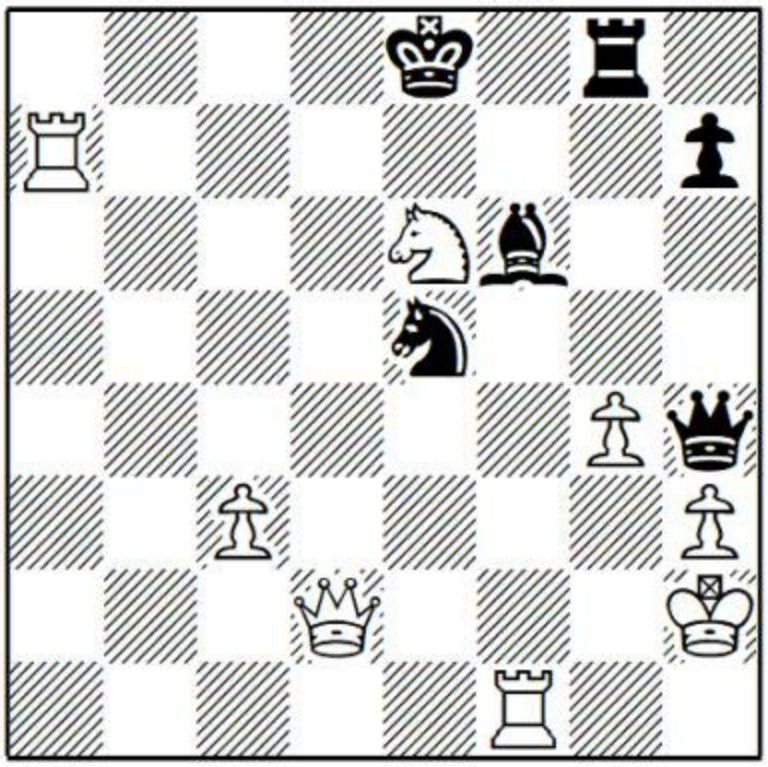


Epaulette Mate

Epaulette mate is when the mated king is pilloried between a pair of friendly pieces.

15) Del Rio

Sopra il Giuoco degli Scacchi, 1750



White to play

Level 3

How does White deliver Epaulette mate in 3 moves?

Answer: Start with a queen sacrifice on d8, which clogs the escape square on d8 with a black piece.

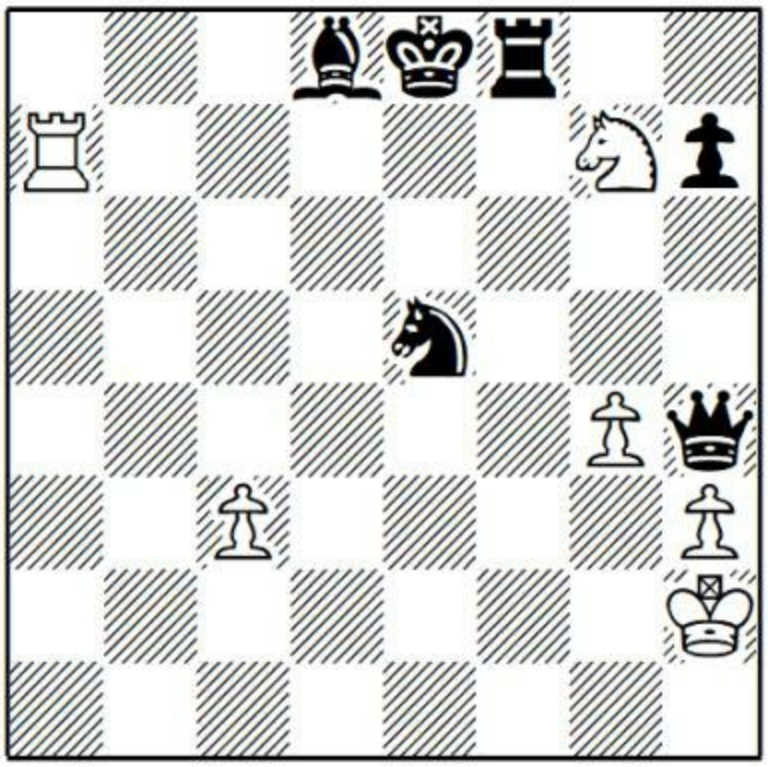
1 Qd8+!

Attraction/queen sacrifice. Instead, 1 Nc7+? Kf8 2 Qd8+ Kg7 3 Ne8+ mates in 5, which is in violation of our mate in 3 stipulation.

1 ... Bxd8

Now let's do the same thing for f8.

2 Rf8+! Rxf8 3 Ng7 mate



An Epaulette mate!

Fool's Mate

Fool's mate is the one which is the quickest possible mate in 2 moves from the starting position: 1 f3 (or 1 f4) 1 ... e5 2 g4?? Qh4 mate. Of course, there are many more complicated versions which essentially end with the mating side giving a queen or bishop check (or checkmate), which cannot be blocked out with a defending piece or pawn. In case you didn't know it, Frederic Lazard was one of the all-time greatest endgame study composers, who specialized in fortress draws. I used many of his compositions in my book *Rewire Your Chess Brain*, which is about utilizing the power of composed mating problems and endgame studies as a training tool.

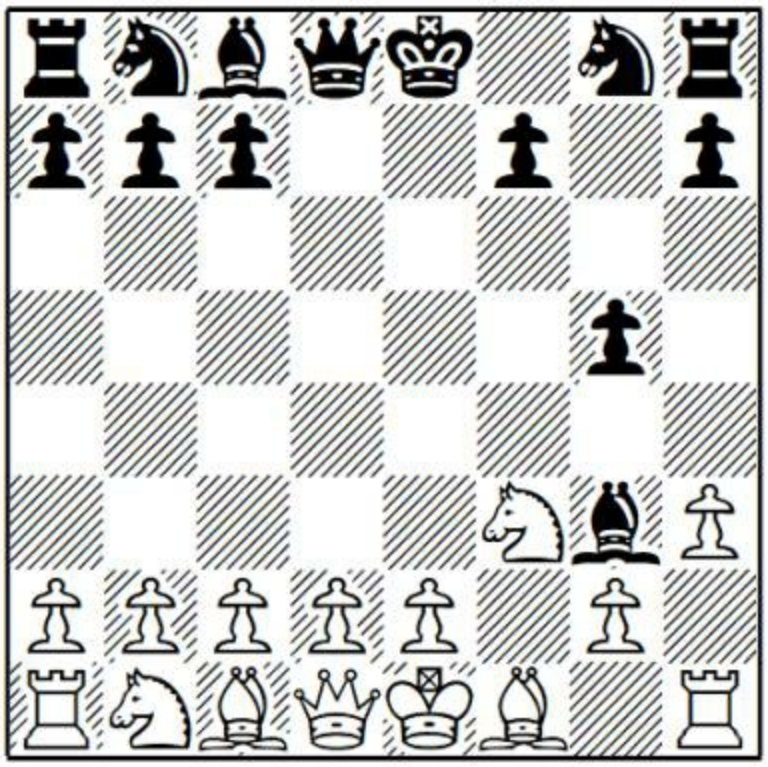
16) A.Gibaud-F.Lazard

Paris 1924

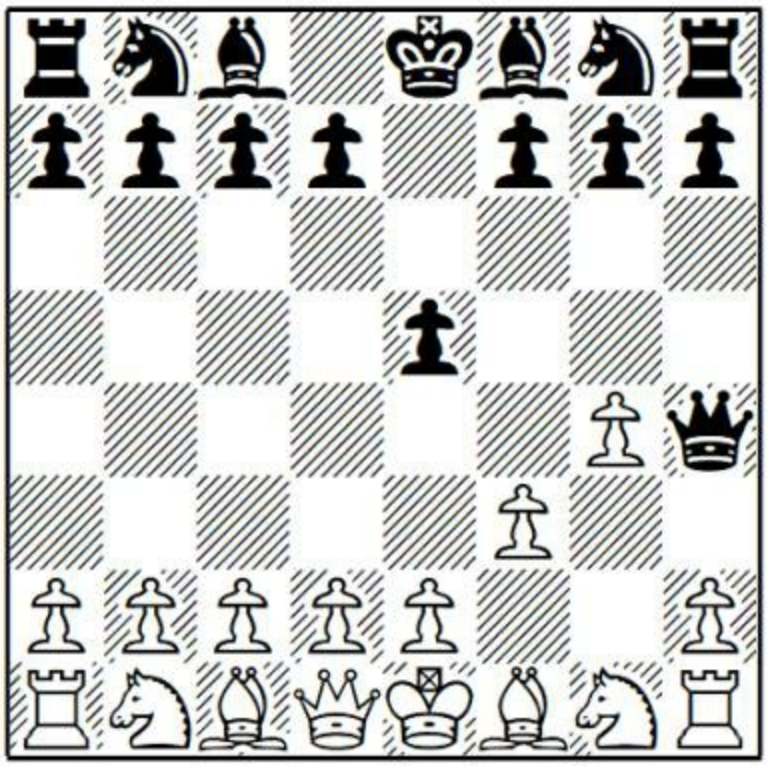
Irregular Opening

1 d4

I remember one evening around 40 years ago, my friend Bud (Buddyboy) Morris, then a D- or E-rated player played the white pieces against a friend. The game went: 1 f4 e5 2 fxe5 d6 3 exd6 Bxd6 4 Nf3 g5 5 h3 Bg3 mate.



“Dammit!” said Bud. Then something incredible happened a few games later: he played White and got mated the exact same way, forgetting about his previous Fool’s mate! 1 f3 e5 2 g4 Qh4 mate.



Fool's mate in its purest, most idiotic form.

1 ... Nf6 2 Nd2!?

Welcome to my humble abode, with an emphasis on the word 'humble'. I also play this mousy move, which tends to enter lines of the Colle. Study of modern opening theory turns us all into Communists, in that we all obey state-mandated rules, while rejecting the individual imagination. The majority happily embrace conformity, fearful that our own ideas fall short of the group-think of Big Brother Theory. This is why I play offbeat openings, since it takes a booked-up opponent out of their comfort zone, and they are forced to think on their own. I have played this bizarre move on occasion, having used it to draw with GM Akobian in the 2004 U.S. Closed Championship.

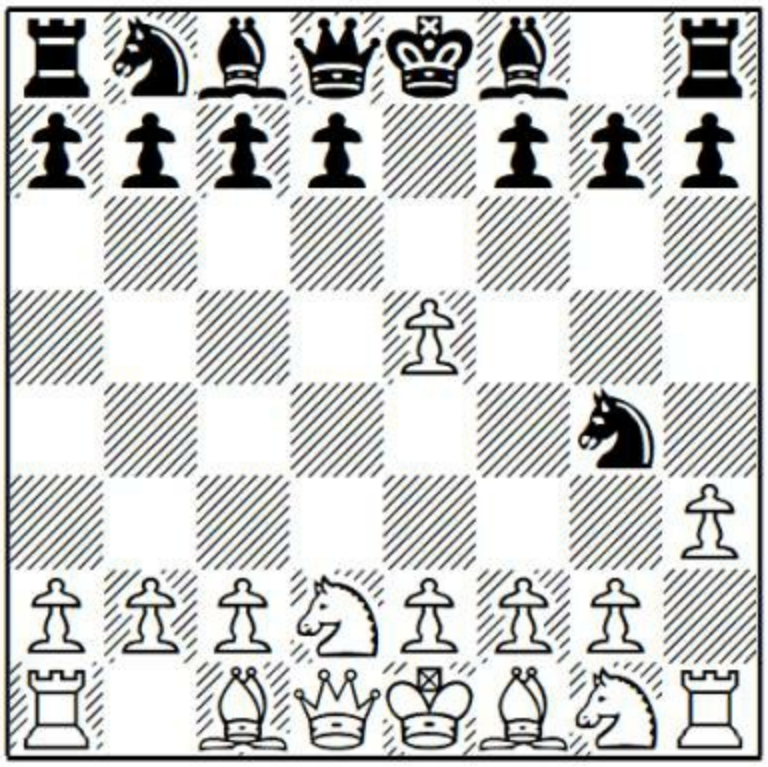
2 ... e5?!

This is a dubious idea which works brilliantly. 2 ... d5 3 Ngf3 Bf5 4 e3 e6 5 Ne5 h6! (5 ... Nbd7 6 g4! favours White) 6 Bd3 Nbd7 7 0-0 Bd6 8 Ndf3 c6 9 b3 Ne4 10 Nxd7 Qxd7 11 Bb2 Bg4 12 h3 Bxf3 13 gxf3 Nf6 14 Kg2 g5 15 c4 0-0-0 16 Qc2 Rdg8 17 Rh1 Kb8 18 Bc3 h5 19 c5 Bc7 20 b4 g4 21 hxg4 hxg4 22 Rxh8 Rxh8 23 f4 Qd8 24 Rh1 Rxh1 25 Kxh1 Nh5 26 Be1 f5 27 Kg1

Nf6 28 a4 Kc8 ½-½ was the aforementioned C.Lakdawala-V.Akobian, U.S. Championship, La Jolla 2004.

3 dxe5 Ng4 4 h3??

White stands better after 4 e4! Nxe5 5 f4 Ng6 6 Nb3.



Black to play

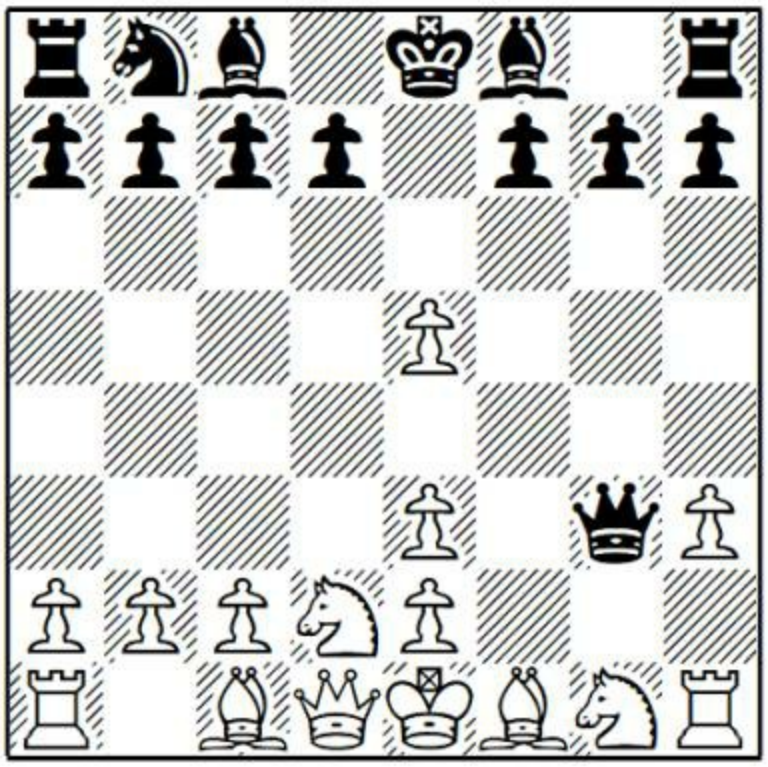
Level 2

White's last move was innaccurate, since Black can either win White's queen, or force a Fool's mate:

Answer: Sink the knight into e3.

4 ... Ne3! 0-1

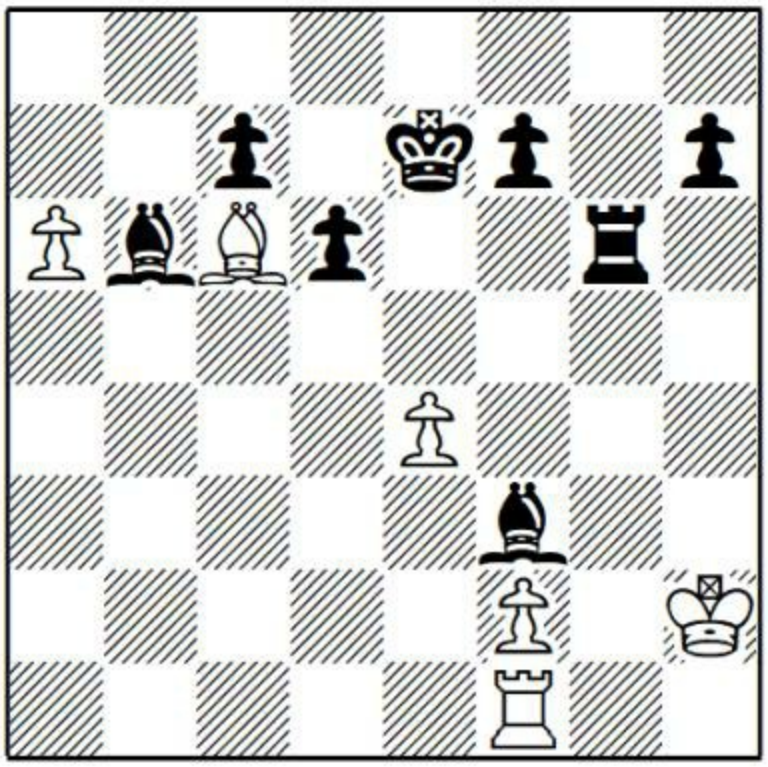
If 5 fxe3 (after 5 Ngf3 Nxd1 White's Janet Leigh-like queen is the character who we care about most, who is suddenly and brutally murdered, 30 minutes into the movie) 5 ... Qh4+ 6 g3 Qxg3 mate.



A classic Fool's mate.

Greco's Mate
Greco's Mate is delivered by a rook, with the help of one or two bishops.

17) T.Barnes-P.Morphy
London 1858



Black to play

Level 3

How did Morphy force Greco's mate in 4 moves?

Answer: Bring the dark-squared bishop into the attack, via d4.

27 ... Bd4!

Threat: ... Be5+ and ... Rh6 mate.

28 Kh3

Alternatively, if 28 a7 Be5+ 29 Kh3 Rh6 mate or 28 Rg1 Be5+ 29 Rg3 Rh6+ (White's rook is pinned and is unable to interpose on h3) 30 Kg1 Rh1 mate.

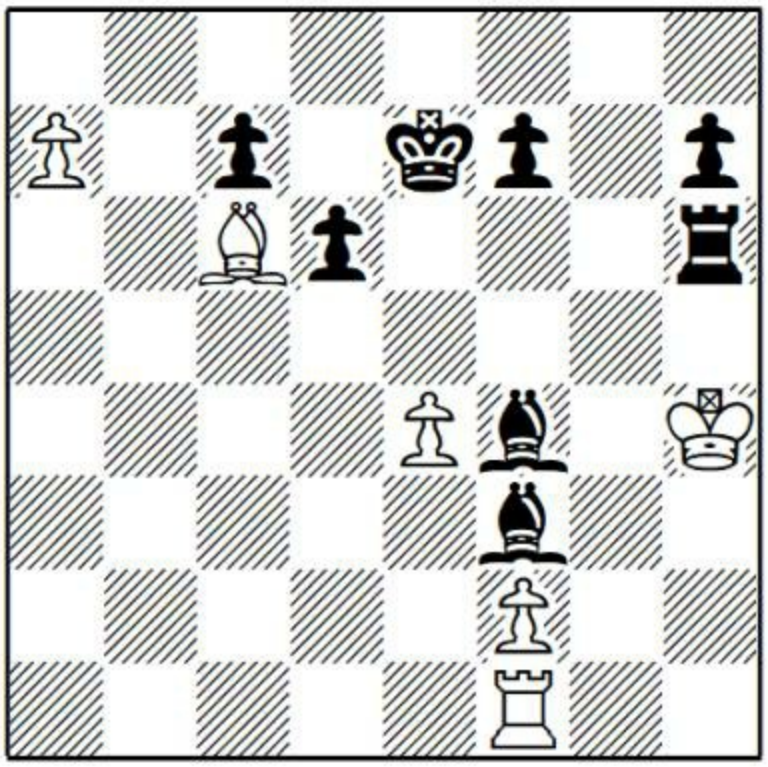
28 ... Be5!

The bishop cuts off g3, enabling ... Rh6 mate.

29 Kh4 Bf4!

Control of g5 is seized and now there is no halting mate with ... Rh6.

30 a7 Rh6 mate

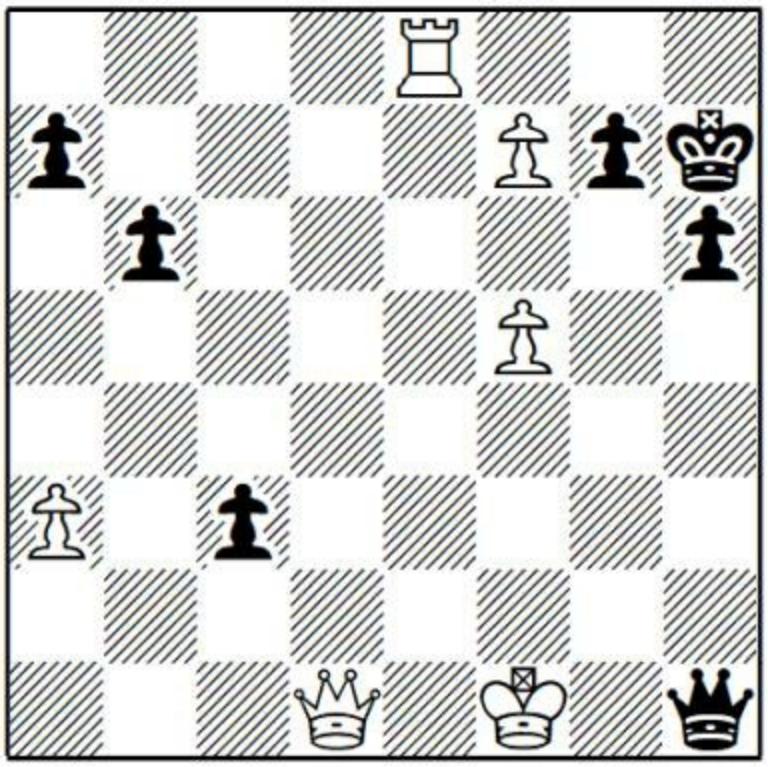


Hook Mate

Hook mate is similar to an Arabian mate, in that it is given by a rook, supported by a knight. The only difference with Hook mate is that the supporting knight is supported itself, usually by a pawn.

18) F.Marshall-W.Napier

Brooklyn 1898



White to play

Level 4

Marshall is faced with a dilemma: If he plays 49 Ke2, then 49 ... Qh5+ follows, and if he wants to hang on to his queen, he must then repeat the position by retreating his king back to e1. How did Marshall get around this issue and deliver a Hook mate?

Answer: Queen sacrifice/underpromotion/Hook mate.

49 Kf2!!

Step 1: Give away the queen. It's vanity to believe we all play equally well in all styles. Put Marshall in a dull or clogged position and he reminds us of the patzer in our club who never learns; place Marshall in an attacking position or a position rich in combinational opportunity, and we see the supreme master of his craft in action.

49 ... Qxd1

After 49 ... Qh2+ 50 Ke3 Qg3+ 51 Ke4 Qg2+ 52 Ke5 Qg3+ 53 Ke6 Qe3+ 54 Kd7 Black's checks ran out, except for one possibility: 54 ... Qd2+ 55

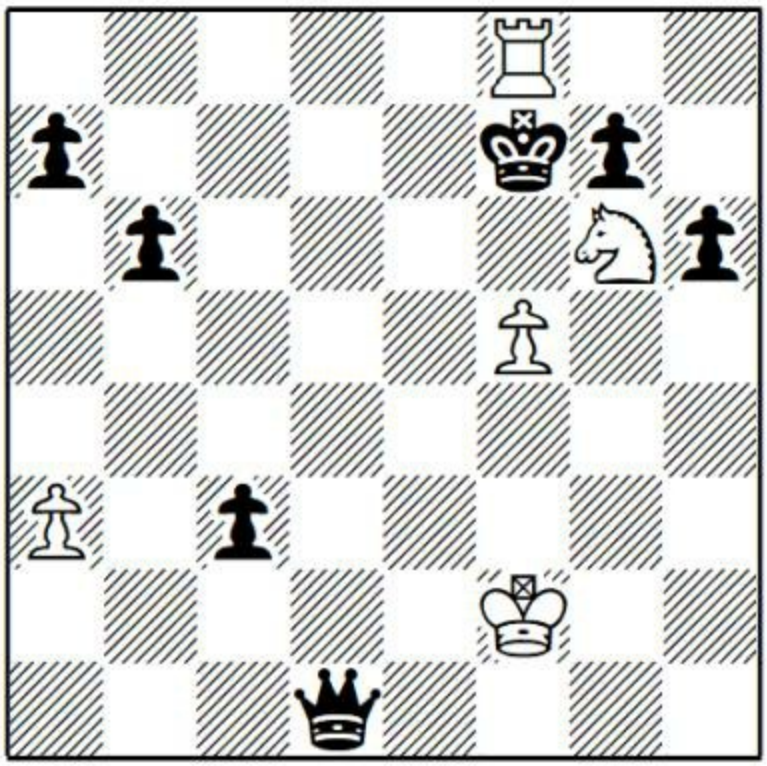
Qxd2 cxd2 56 f8N+! (underpromotion/hook mate) 56 ... Kg8 57 Ng6+ Kf7 (57 ... Kh7 58 Rh8 mate) 58 Rf8 mate.

50 f8N+!

Step 2: Underpromotion.

50 f8Q? allows Black perpetual check with 50 ... Qd2+ 51 Kf3 Qd3+ 52 Re3 Qf1+ 53 Ke4 Qc4+ 54 Kf3 (not 54 Ke5?? c2 and it is Black who wins) 54 ... Qf1+.

50 ... Kg8 51 Ng6+ Kf7 52 Rf8 mate



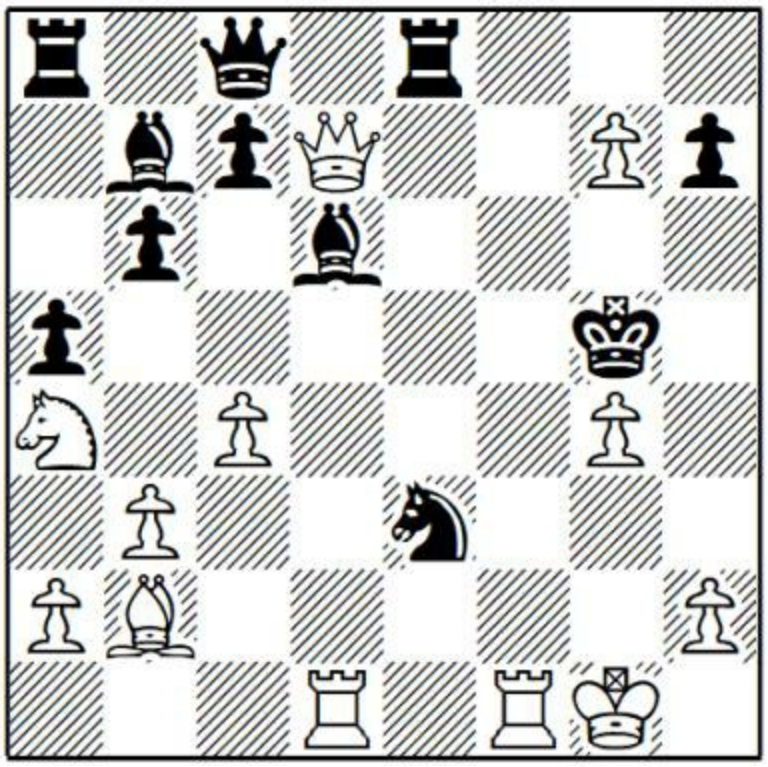
And there we go: Hook mate.

Killbox Mate (also called Railroad or Triangle Mate)

A Killbox mate is when a queen and rook escort the defending king into a mating net.

19) F.Vallejo Pons-A.Romero Holmes

Spanish Championship, Ayamonte 2002



White to play

Level 5

I give the reader full permission to be alarmed. I gave this position to several students, including a pair of 2200 players and one 2300-rated player. Out of maybe 10 students who gave it a crack, only the 2300 solved it. So don't beat yourself up if you fail to find White's mate. In this position Vallejo Pons forced mate in 10 moves!

Answer: Clearance. Promote the g7-pawn to give White's queen access to h7.

24 g8Q+!!

We view a dark reflection of White's intent.

24 ... Rxg8 25 h4+!

Step 2: Play h2-h4! + to drive Black's king further up the board.

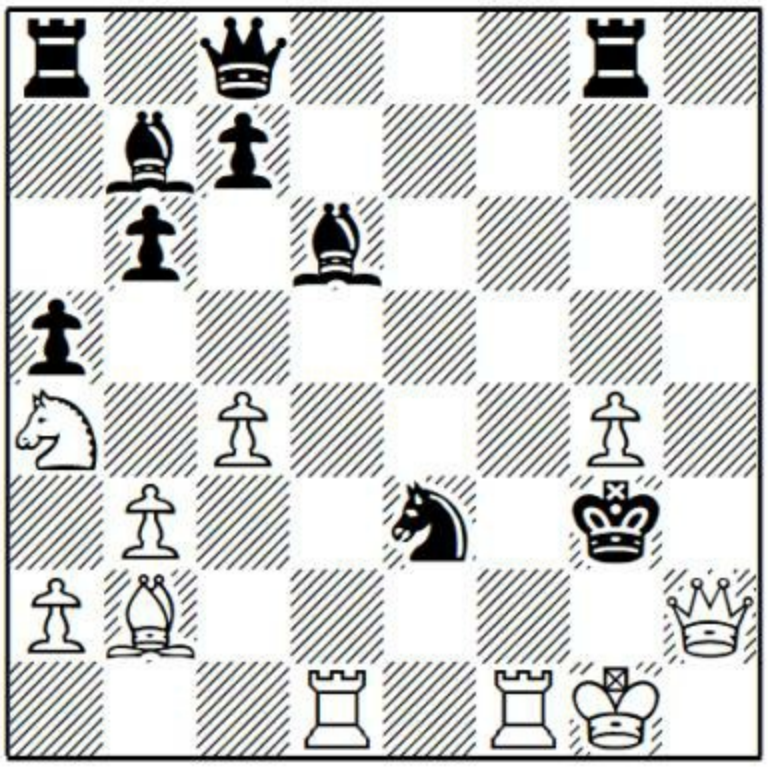
25 ... Kxh4

Avoiding 25 ... Kh6? 26 Rf6+ Rg6 27 Rxg6+ hxg6 (or 27 ... Kxg6 28 Qg7 mate) 28 Qg7 mate.

26 Qxh7+ Kg3

What is life without dreams? Is Black's king safe? The answer is: no. However, if 26 ... Kg5? 27 Qh5 mate.

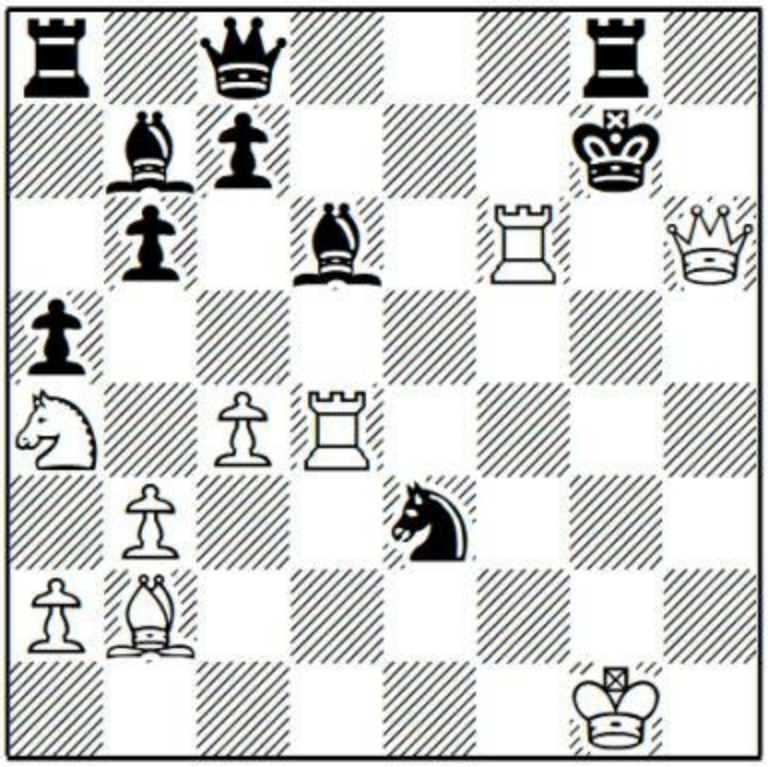
27 Qh2+!



Step 3: Now we drive Black's king the other way with a queen check on h2.

27 ... Kxg4 28 Rd4+! 1-0

Step 4: Lift the d1-rook into the attack, via d4: 28 ... Kg5 29 Qh4+ (now we begin to see the Killbox pattern emerge) 29 ... Kg6 30 Rf6+ Kg7 31 Qh6 mate.

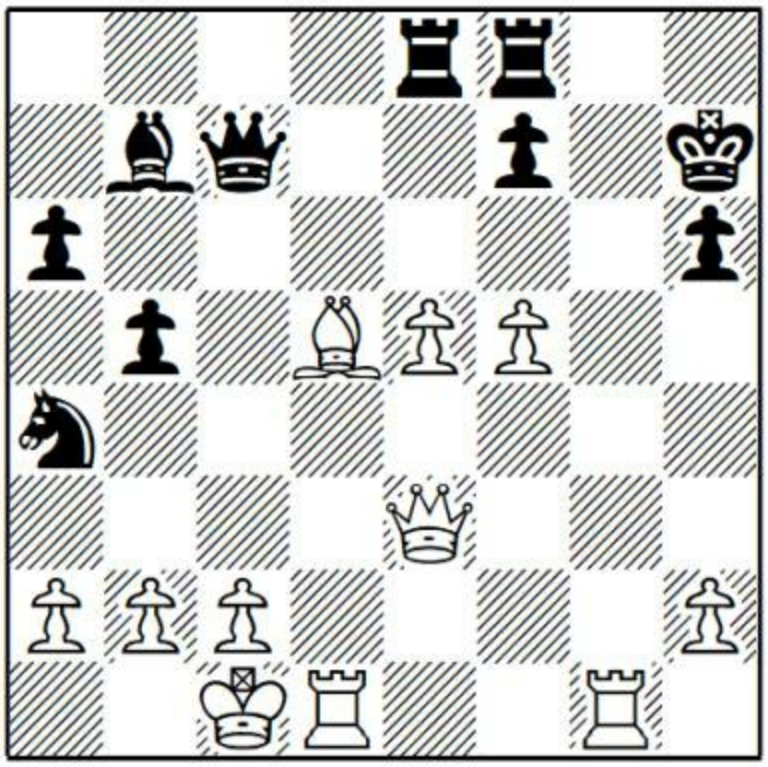


Ladder Mate (also called Rook Roll mate)

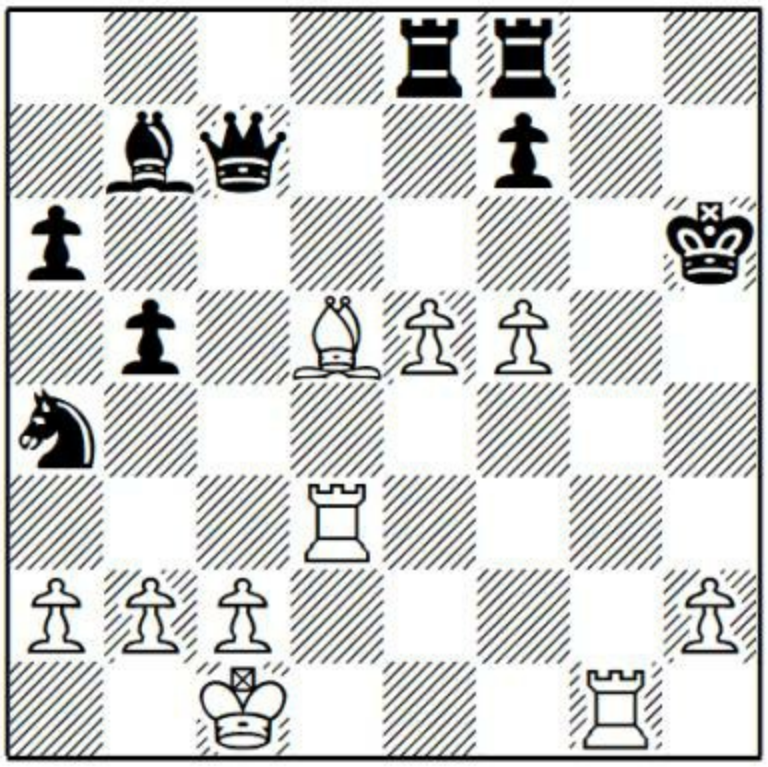
A pair of rooks delivers the enemy king's demise in Ladder mate. I always called it Trombone mate, but nobody ever listens to me.

20) J.Klein-B.Marcussi

Argentinean Championship, Buenos Aires 1963



White to play
Level 3
How did White force mate in 8 moves at the most?
Answer: Step 1: Queen sacrifice.
25 Qxh6+! Kxh6 26 Rd3! 1-0



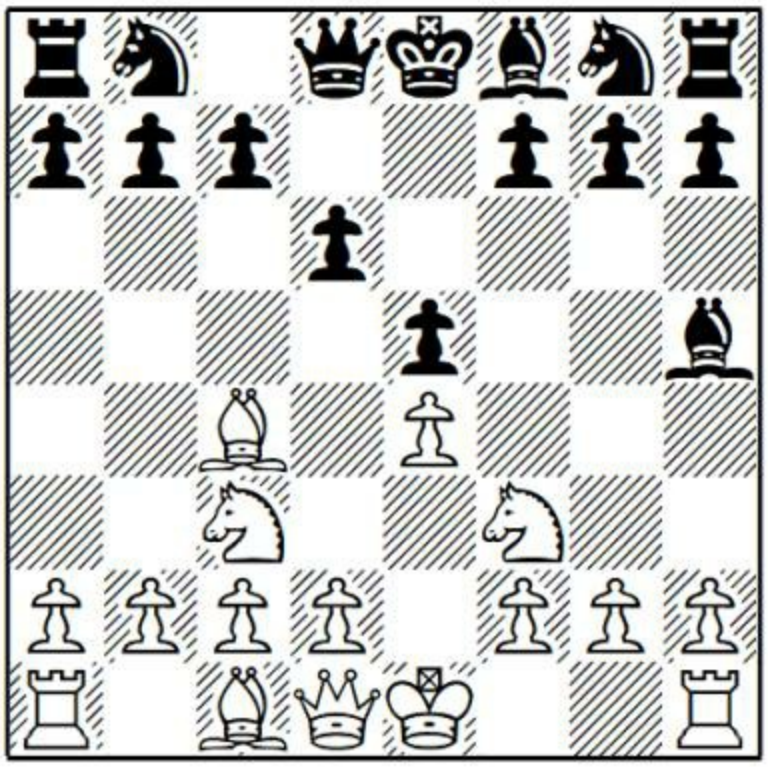
Step 2: Rook lift. There is no halting an eventual rook mate on h3. Black can only stall with a spite queen-give away on c2.

Legal's Mate

Legal's mate arises when one side offers a queen sacrifice. If the queen is accepted, then Legal's mate is delivered with a pair of knights, with the bishop delivering mate, either on f7 or f2.

21) O.Bjarnason-V.Dittler

Bad Woerishofen 2001



White to play

Level 2

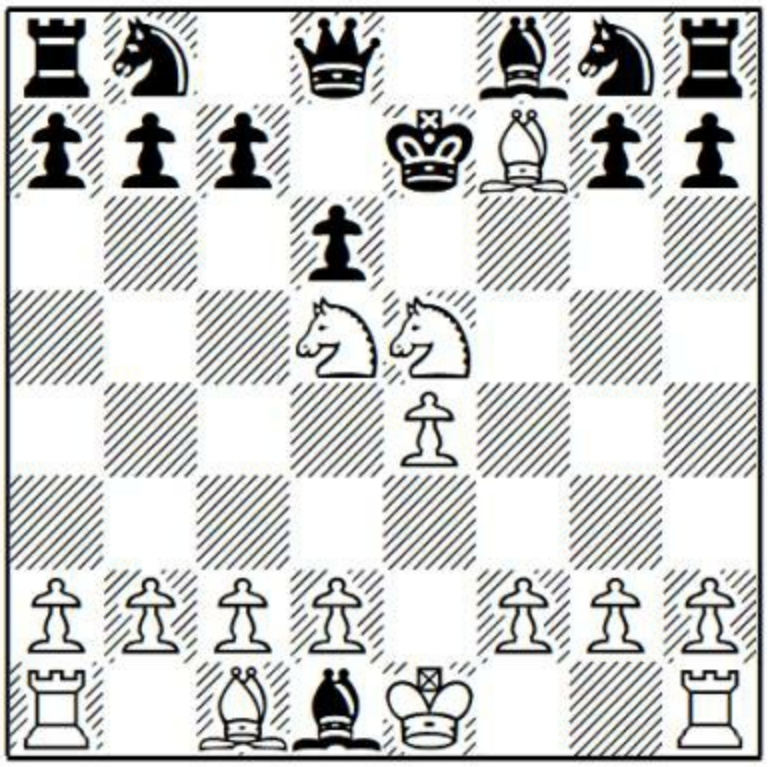
How should White continue?

Answer: Offer the queen and chop the e5-pawn.

5 Nxe5! Bxd1?

5 ... dxe5 6 Qxh5 Qe7 is awful for Black, who is down a pawn and pathetically behind in development, but at least it's not mate.

6 Bxf7+ Ke7 7 Nd5 mate

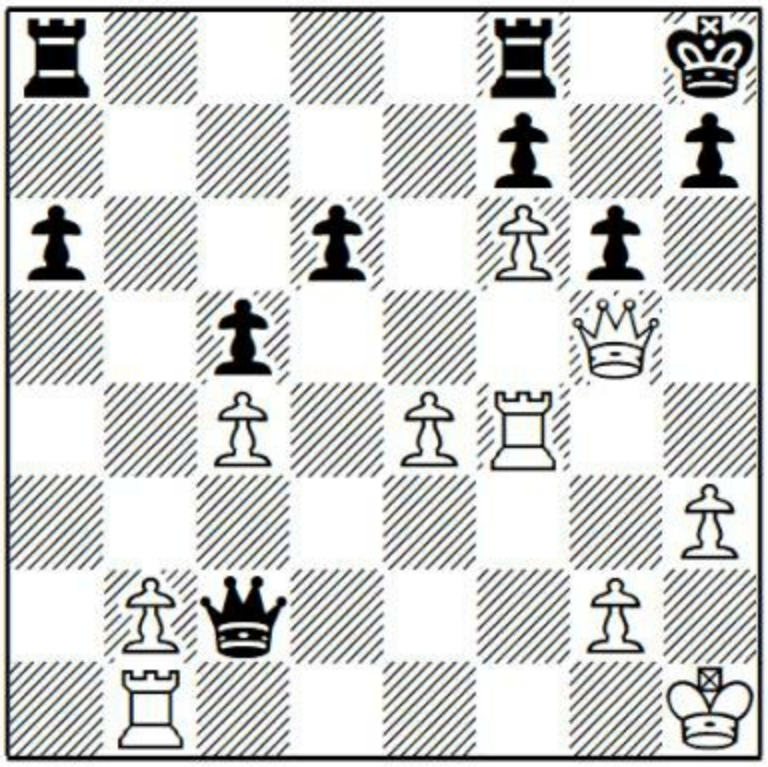


Lolli's Mate

Lolli's mate is given with a queen, supported by a pawn.

22) D.Bronstein-P.Keres

Budapest Candidates 1950



White to play

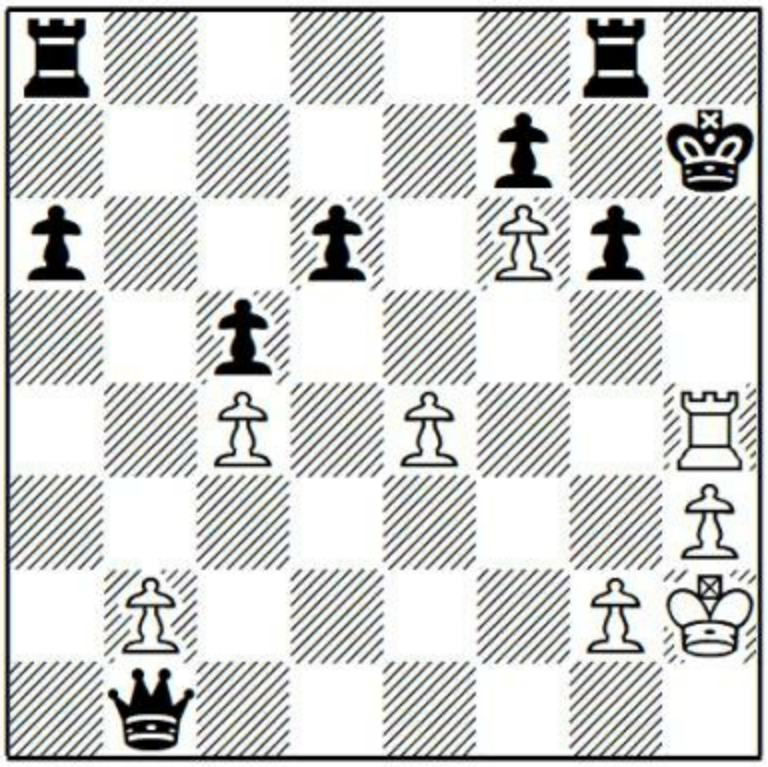
Level 2

Bronstein trailed Keres by a half point in the 1950 Candidates' tournament. Desperate for the win, Bronstein sacrificed a pawn earlier in the game and in this position the gamble paid off with a forced mate for White:

Answer: Ignore the hanging rook (with check!) on b1 and slip the queen into h6, threatening Lolli's mate on g7.

33 Qh6! 1-0

The intent was 33 ... Qxb1+ 34 Kh2 Rg8 35 Qxh7+! (Step 2: Queen sacrifice/line opening) 35 ... Kxh7 36 Rh4 mate.



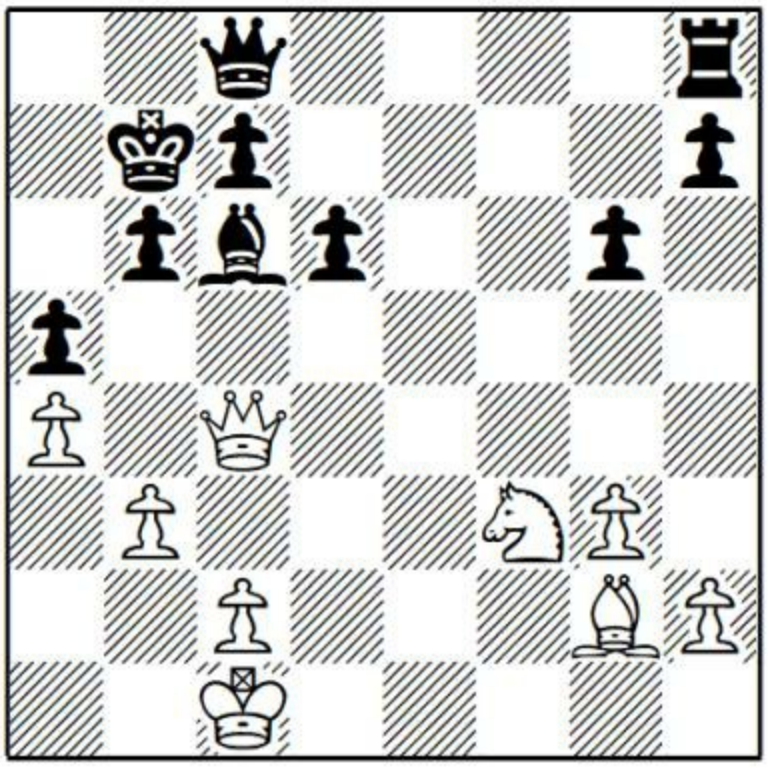
To turn back with the meek 33 Rbf1? is to allow Black to escape with 33 ... Qd2! 34 Qh6 Rg8. Suddenly White is faced with a dilemma, since 35 Rh4? allows Black to swap queens with a winning ending, while 35 Qxh7+?? fails to mate after 35 ... Kxh7 36 Rh4+ Qh6 37 Rxh6+ Kxh6, leaving Black up a rook.

King Chase Mate

The name is self-explanatory. With a king chase mate we drag the enemy king either up or down the board to deliver the final mate.

23) G.Kasparian-Manvelian

Yerevan 1939



White to play

Level 3

The passage of time confers a level of sacredness to past great games. The diagrammed position is actually imprinted upon an Armenian stamp. Black is up an exchange and a pawn. How did the great endgame composer finish the game in study-like fashion?

Answer: Attraction/queen sacrifice. Let's start by sacrificing the queen on c6.

1 Qxc6+! Kxc6

Black's king is renowned for his love of adventure. Now White forces mate. Declining with 1 ... Kb8 2 Nd4 is also hopeless for Black: 2 ... Qa6 3 Qd7 Qc8 4 Nc6+ Ka8 5 Ne7+ wins Black's queen.

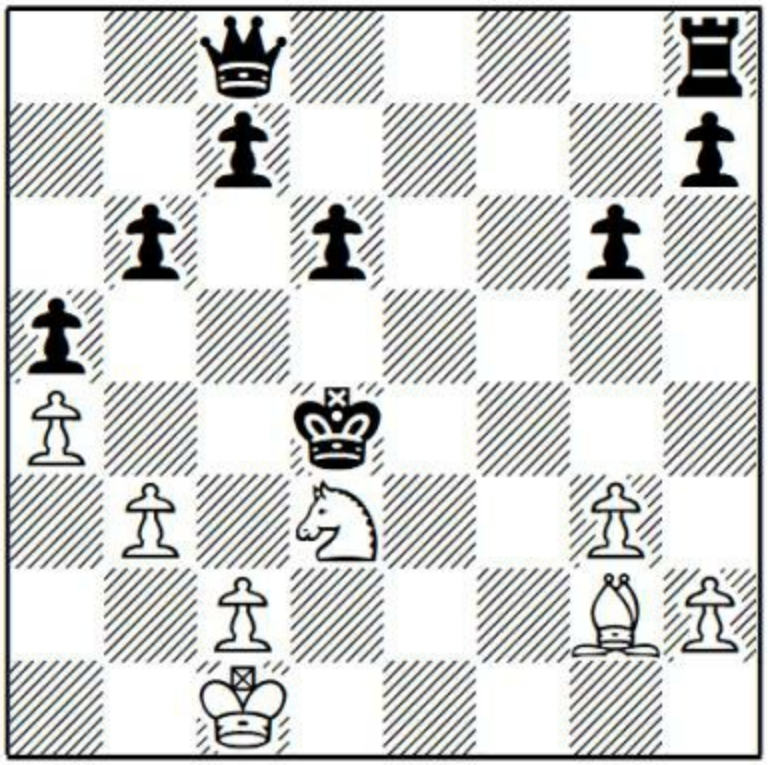
2 Ne5+

Step 2: Double check. Black's king is dragged up the board, kicking and screaming.

2 ... Kc5 3 Nd3+

Step 3: Give check on d3, driving Black's king to d4, his final resting place.

3 ... Kd4



White forces mate in 2: The two kings intersect, after which there is no defence to c2-c3 mate.

4 Kd2! 1-0

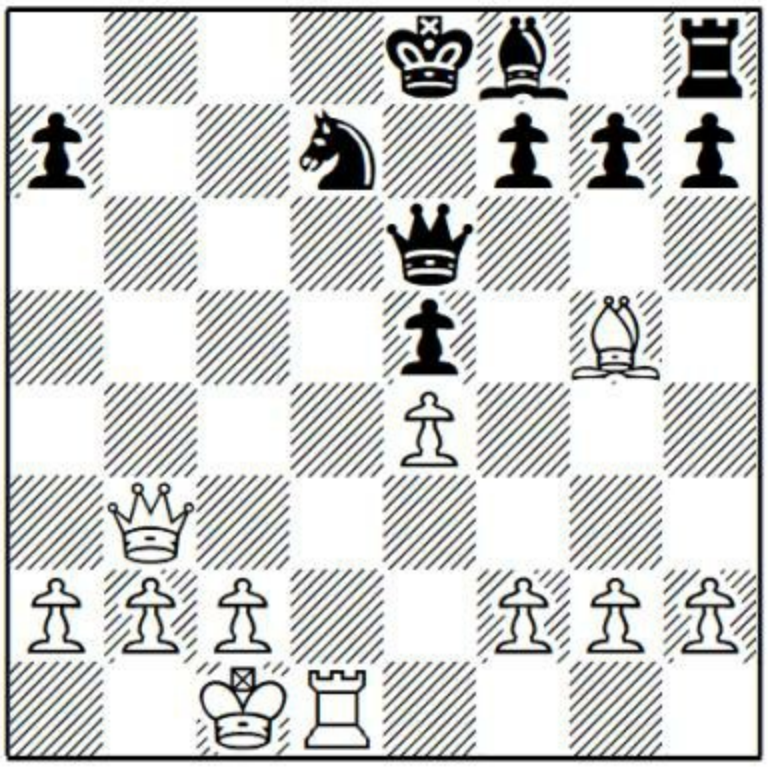
If 4 ... Qf5 5 c3 mate.

Opera Box Mate

An Opera Box mate is given by a rook, supported by a bishop. The name Opera Box mate was born when Paul Morphy beat a tandem team of aristocrats in a Paris opera box.

24) P.Morphy-Brunswick & Isouard

Paris 1858



White to play

Level 2

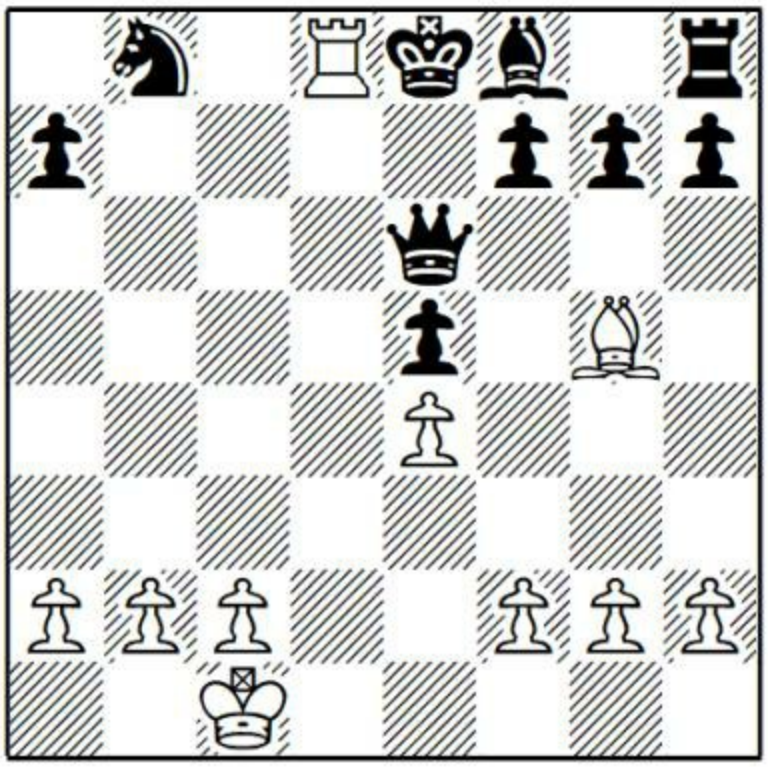
How did Morphy deliver mate in 2?

Answer: Queen sacrifice/decoy/weak back rank.

16 Qb8+!

Now we see Morphy's not-so-hidden agenda. Queen sacrifice/decoy/back rank mate.

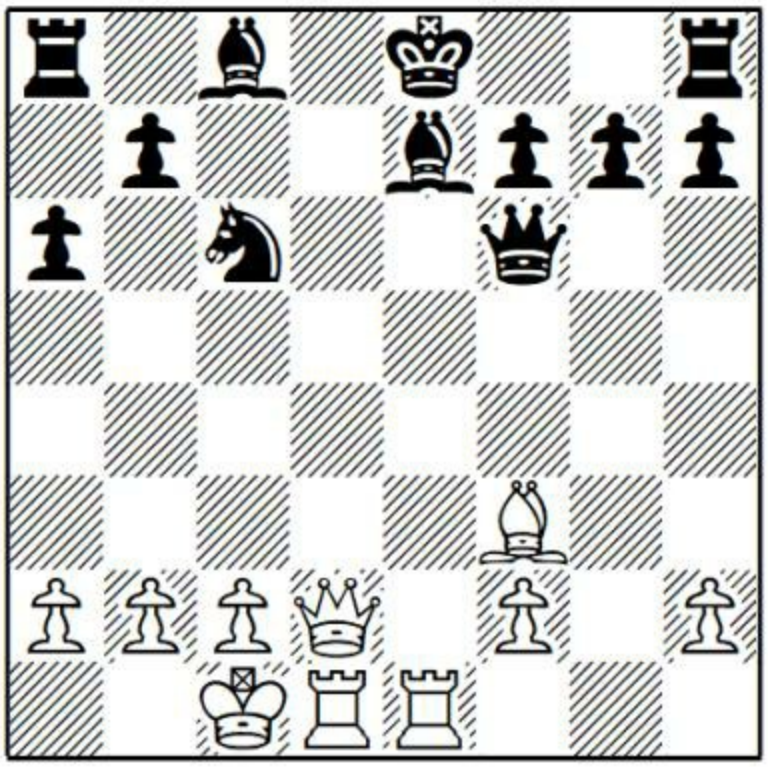
16 ... Nxb8 17 Rd8 mate



“Money can’t buy me love,” sang the Beatles. Black is up a queen and knight and it didn’t do a damned bit of good.

Mayet’s Mate
Mayet’s mate is delivered by a rook, supported by a bishop.

25) A.Nimzowitsch-S.Alapin
St. Petersburg 1914



White to play

Level 3

How did Nimzowitsch force mate in 5 moves at the most?

Answer: Removal of the guard/pinned piece/weak back rank.

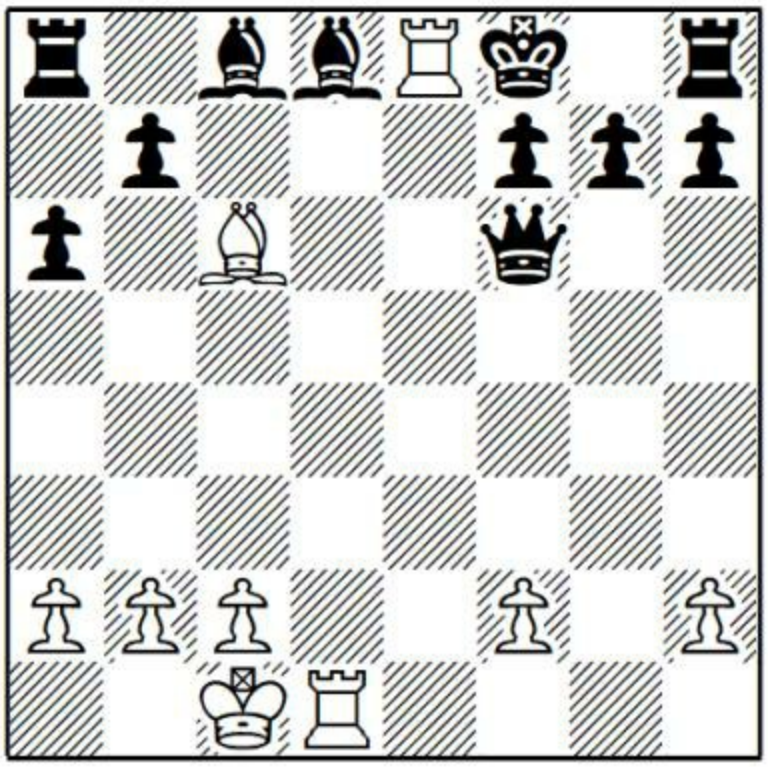
16 Bxc6+! Kf8

Alternatively, if 16 ... bxc6 17 Qd8 mate or 16 ... Bd7 17 Qxd7+ Kf8 18 Qd8+! Rxd8 19 Rxd8+ Bxd8 20 Re8 mate.

17 Qd8+!

Step 2: Queen sacrifice/decoy/back rank mate. Shades of Paul Morphy in the Opera Box.

17 ... Bxd8 18 Re8 mate

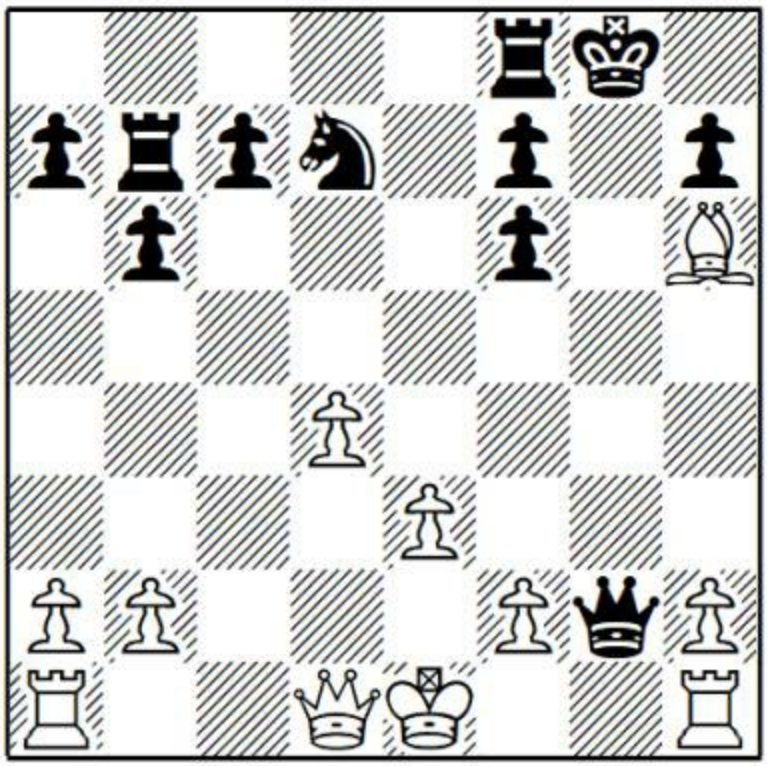


Pillsbury's Mate

Pillsbury's mate is delivered by a rook, with a bishop assisting. The bishop cuts off the defending king's corner square escape route.

26) H.Pillsbury-F.Lee

London 1899



White to play

Level 2

What is White's winning move?

Answer: Queen sacrifice/decoy.

1 Qf3! Qxf3

The queen has big dreams. And look where they got her. Our opponent's silence can also be interpreted as an invitation. Also hopeless is 1 ... Qg6 2 Bxf8 Kxf8 3 Qxb7.

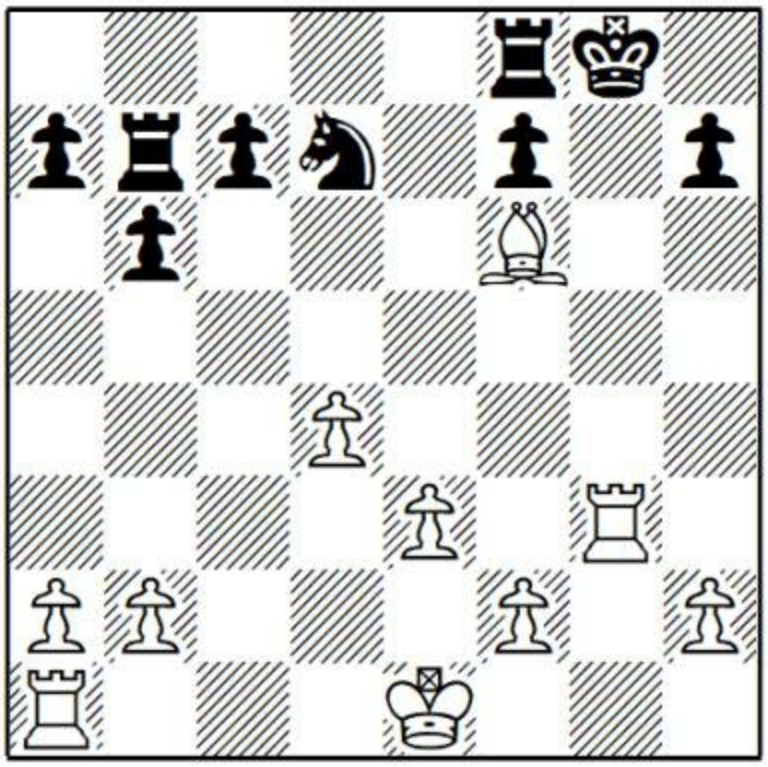
2 Rg1+ Kh8

2 ... Qg2 stalls for only a move longer.

3 Bg7+ Kg8 4 Bxf6+ Qg3

Is Black expecting 5 hxg3?

5 Rxg3 mate

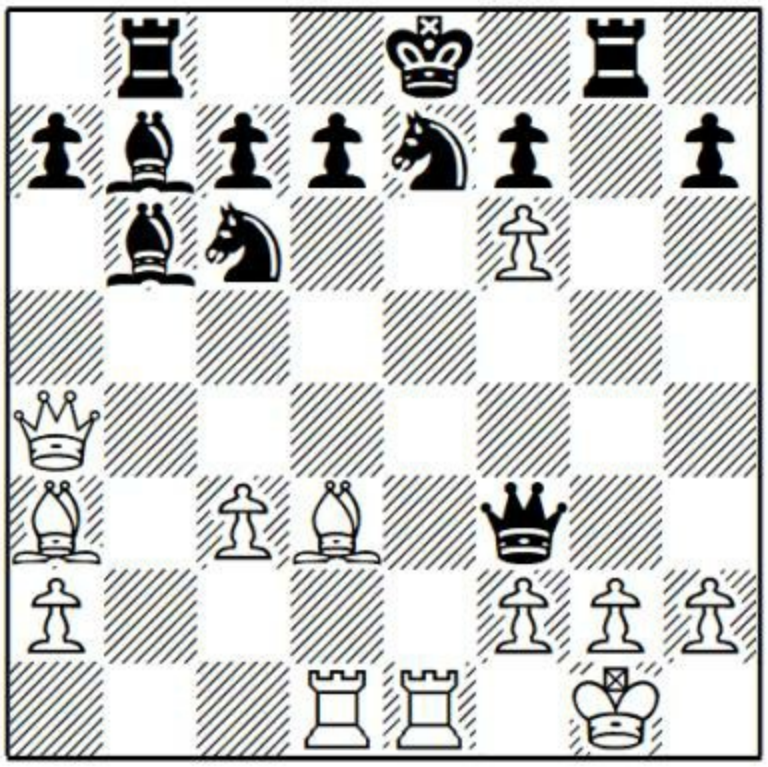


Raking Bishops Mate

You guessed it: a mate which involves a pair of bishops is called the Raking Bishops mate.

27) A.Anderssen-J.Dufresne

Berlin 1852



White to play

Level 5

Many of you have already seen Anderssen's sparkling combination from his famous Everygreen Partie. For those who forgot it, or haven't seen it, here it is:

20 Rxe7+!

Decoy.

20 ... Nxe7

Now it's mate in 4 moves. Instead, 20 ... Kd8 21 Rxd7+! Kc8 22 Rd8+!! Nxd8 (otherwise, 22 ... Rxd8 23 gxf3 wins Black's queen and wins, while after 22 ... Kxd8 23 Be4+ Nd4 24 Bxf3 Bxf3 25 g3 Bxd1 26 Qxd1 Black is busted, since the knight falls as well) 23 Qd7+!! Kxd7 24 Bf5+ (double check) 24 ... Kc6 (or 24 ... Ke8 25 Bd7 mate) 25 Bd7 is mate.

21 Qxd7+!

Queen sacrifice/attraction.

21 ... Kxd7

Our excuses to explain away our losses are about as lame as that time Mike Tyson rationalized why he bit off a chunk of Evander Holyfield's ear. I can just hear Dufresne telling a friend of how he was up a queen, rook and piece, while threatening mate two different ways, but his opponent got there first and stole the game.

22 Bf5+

Double check.

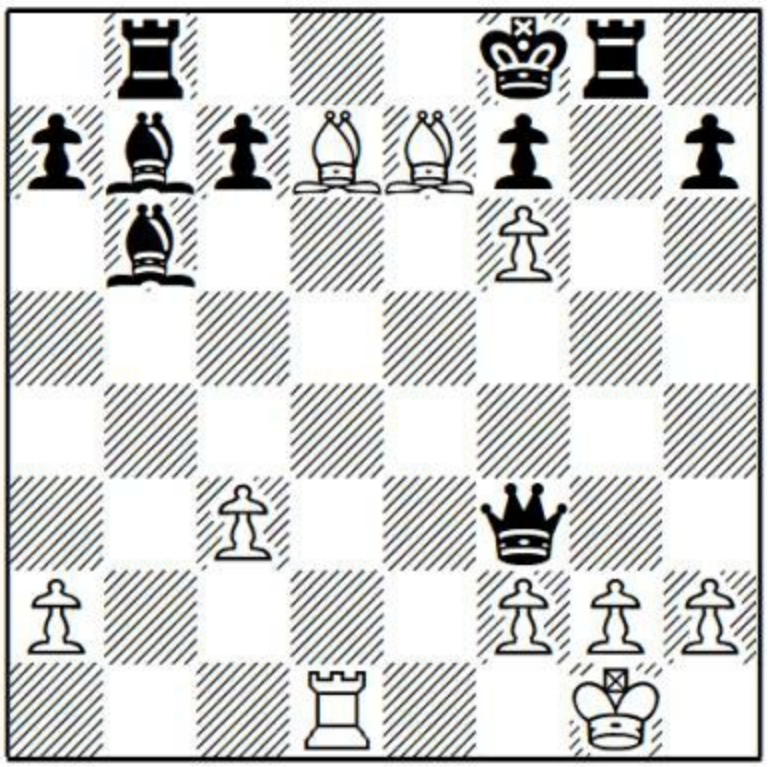
22 ... Ke8

If 22 ... Kc6 23 Bd7 mate.

23 Bd7+ Kf8

Or 23 ... Kd8 24 fxe7 mate.

24 Bxe7 mate



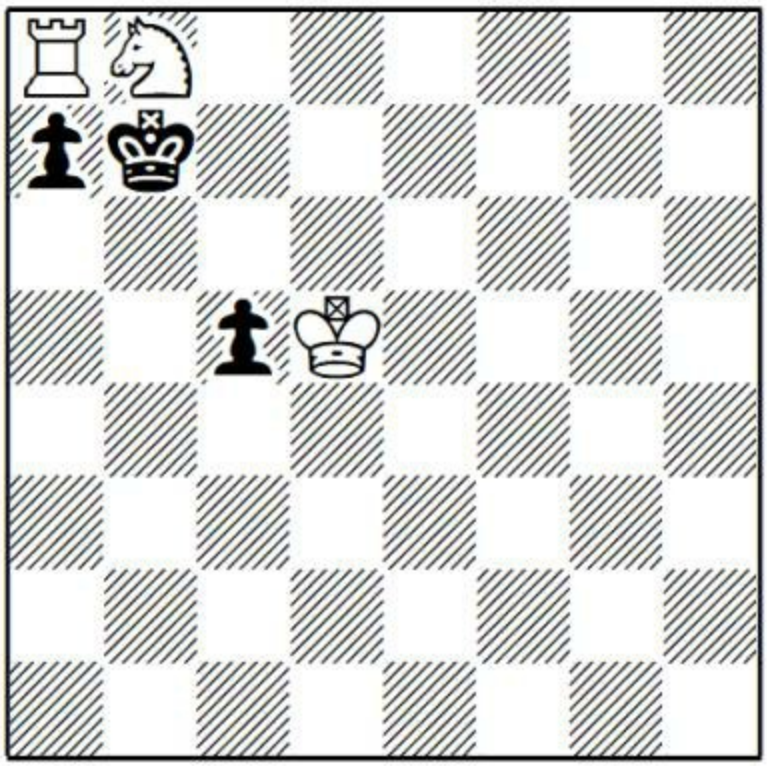
This is the prettiest example I have ever seen of a Raking Bishops Mate.

Sarcophagus Mate

Here is the official definition of a sarcophagus: "A box-like funeral receptacle for a corpse, most commonly carved in stone, and usually

displayed above ground, though it may also be buried."

28) J.Kaiev
64, 1939



White to play
Level 4

We as White are about to lose our rook and everyone knows that a lone knight is unable to force mate against an enemy king - unless there is a geometric sargophagus-like exception, as in this case. How does White force mate?

Answer: Entombment.

1 Na6!! Kxa8

1 ... Kxa6 is a case of quantity over quality. Black is left down a rook.

2 Kc6!

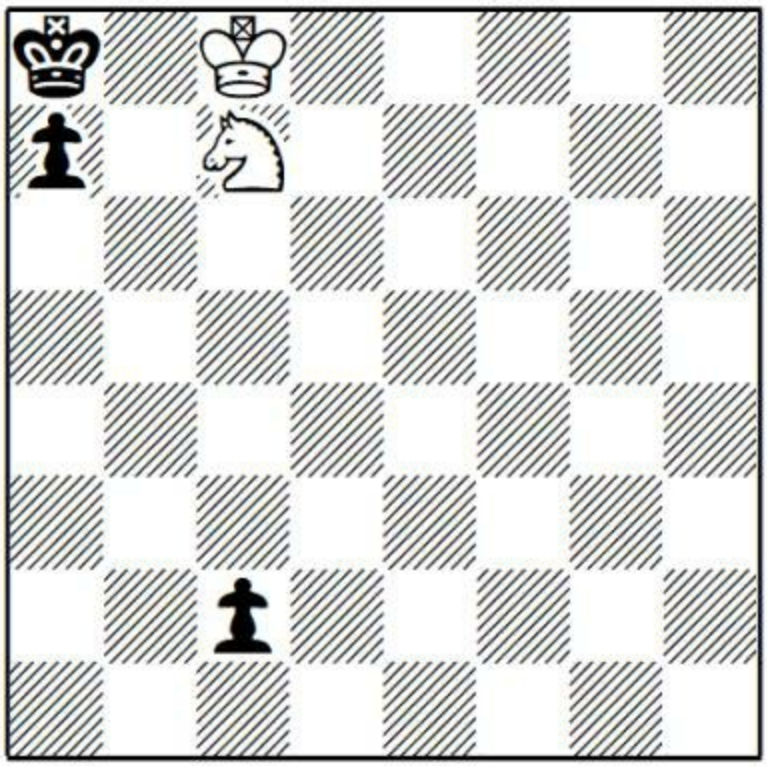
There is no defence to the coming mating pattern Kc7, Kc8 and Nc7

mate. Not 2 Kxc5?? Kb7 and we let Black's king out of his sarcophagus.

2 ... c4 3 Kc7 c3 4 Kc8

White's king is getting a bit Big Brothery.

4 ... c2 5 Nc7 mate



Scholar's Mate

Scholar's mate is delivered by a queen/bishop combination, on either f7 as White or by Black on f2 If you fall for Scholar's Mate, it's generally a sign that chess may not be your strong suit and that perhaps you should take up tic-tac-toe.

29) J.Spencer-Takacs

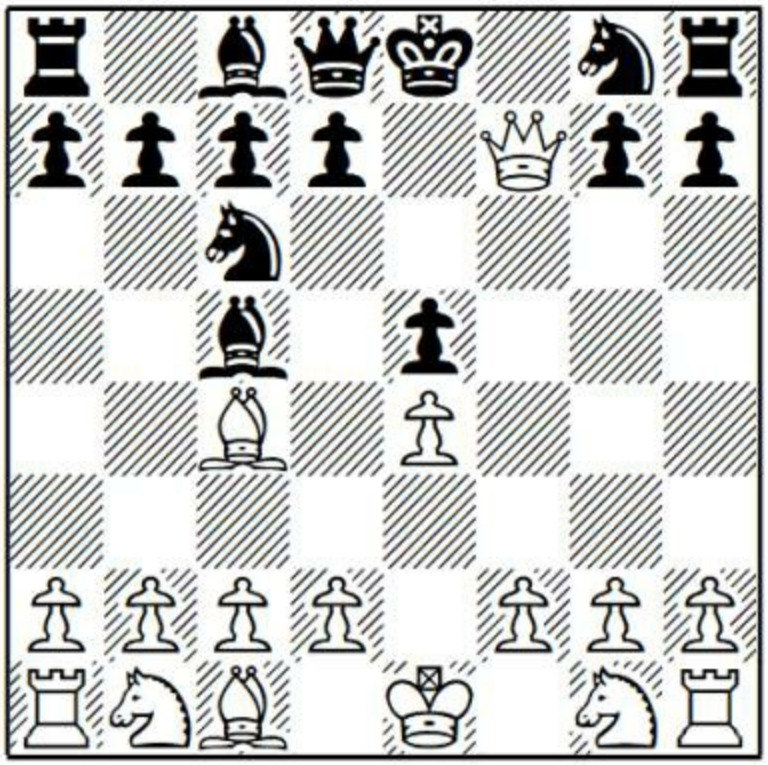
Dayton 1981

English Opening

1 c4

It's time for a humiliating confession: here is my very first chess game, played against my father, who before the game, told me he would checkmate

me in 4 moves. I was outraged at this false charge and told him to prove it. Our game proceeded 1 e4 e5 (after 1 ... e6!! I would like to see dad pull off Scholar's mate in 4 moves!) 2 Bc4 Bc5 3 Qh5. Now mein sly papa helpfully pointed out that his queen was attacking my e-pawn and he suggested that I protect it by developing my knight to c6: 3 ... Nc6?! it all seemed so logical to me) 4 Qxf7 mate.



1-0, F.Lakdawala-C.Lakdawala, Montreal, 1968. Oh, you sneaky so and so! So my chess career got off to a not-so-auspicious start when I fell for Scholar's mate.

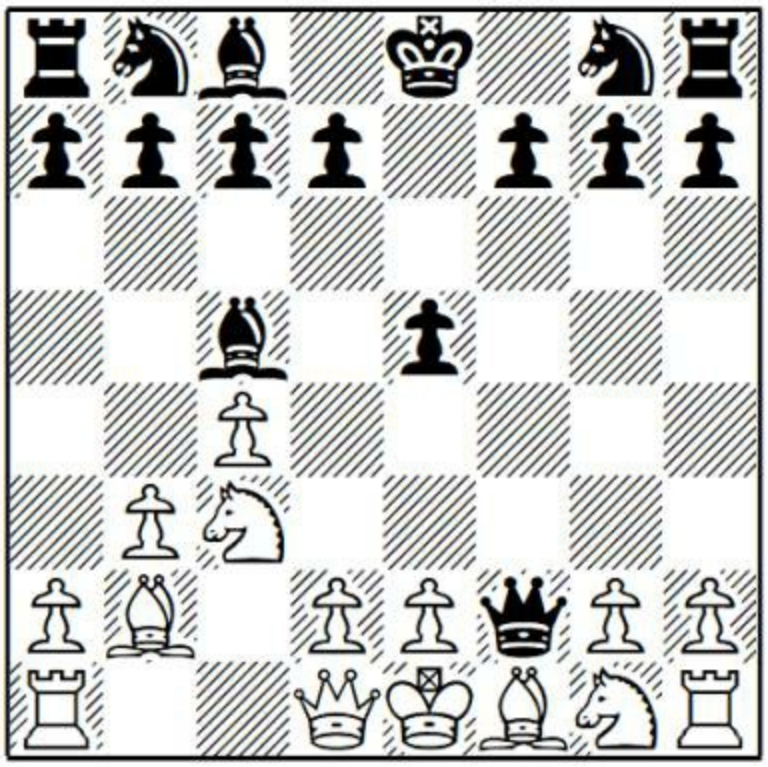
1 ... e5 2 b3 Bc5 3 Nc3 Qf6?!

This is actually a weak move since White can pick up bishop-pair with 4 Ne4, or just proceed with 4 e3, when Black's queen looks idiotic on f6. Instead ...

4 Bb2??

Dubious! This is the danger of a pre-planned developing move. White fell asleep.

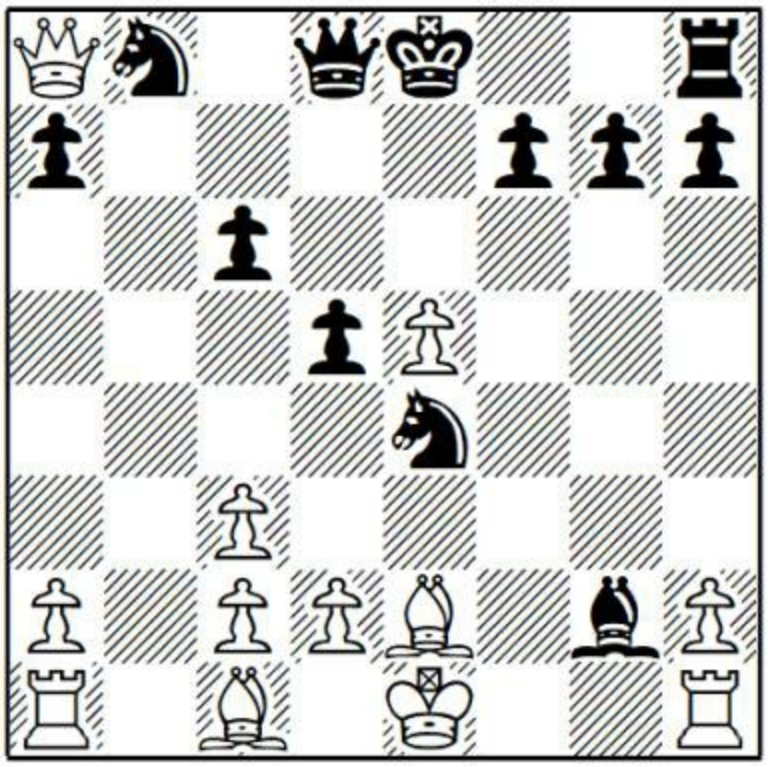
4 ... Qxf2 mate



Scholar's Mate!

Smothered Mate
Smothered mate is accomplished with a knight. The mated king is smothered by friendly pieces on his own team.

30) Samsonov-R.Nezhmetdinov
Kazan 1929



Black to play

Level 2

Once in a delightful blue moon, we get to deliver a smothered mate on our opponent. Black forces mate in 5 moves:

Answer: Give check on h4.

11 ... Qh4+

I hope there aren't any readers who disgraced themselves with the greedy 11 ... Bxh1? 12 Ba3 Qb6 13 0-0-0. Black is winning, but at least White avoided the humiliation of smothered mate.

12 Kd1 Nf2+ 13 Ke1 Nd3+

Double check.

14 Kd1

Black now mates in 2 moves.

14 ... Qe1+

The queen wisely liquidates her holdings. We of the modern era are not easy to impress. Sorry, not even a single exclam for this queen sacrifice,

which is today so familiar, that it is almost a tactical cliché.

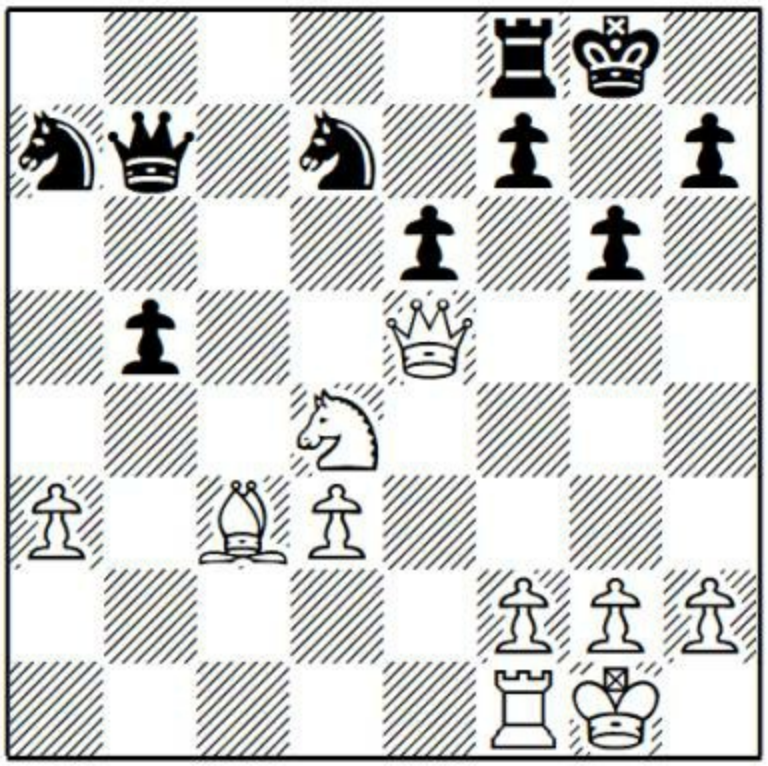
15 Rxe1 Nf2 mate

Suffocation Mate

A Suffocation mate is delivered by a knight, while a bishop cuts off the defending king's escape squares.

31) E.Sveshnikov-R.Scherbakov

USSR Championship, Moscow 1991



White to play

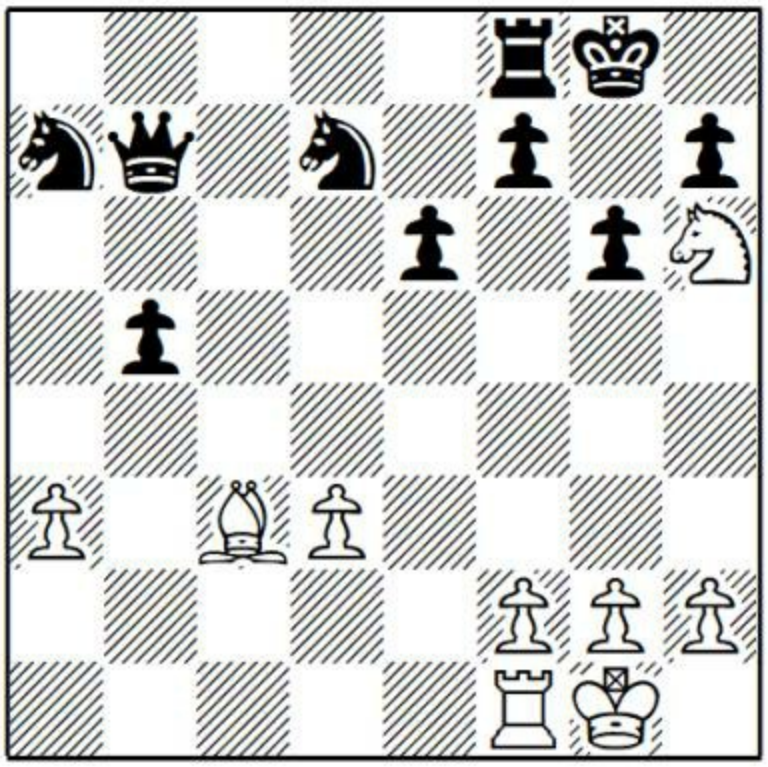
Level 2

How did GM Sveshnikov deliver Suffocation mate?

Answer: Queen/sacrifice/double check.

24 Qg7+! 1-0

If 24 ... Kxg7 25 Nf5+ Kg8 26 Nh6 mate.

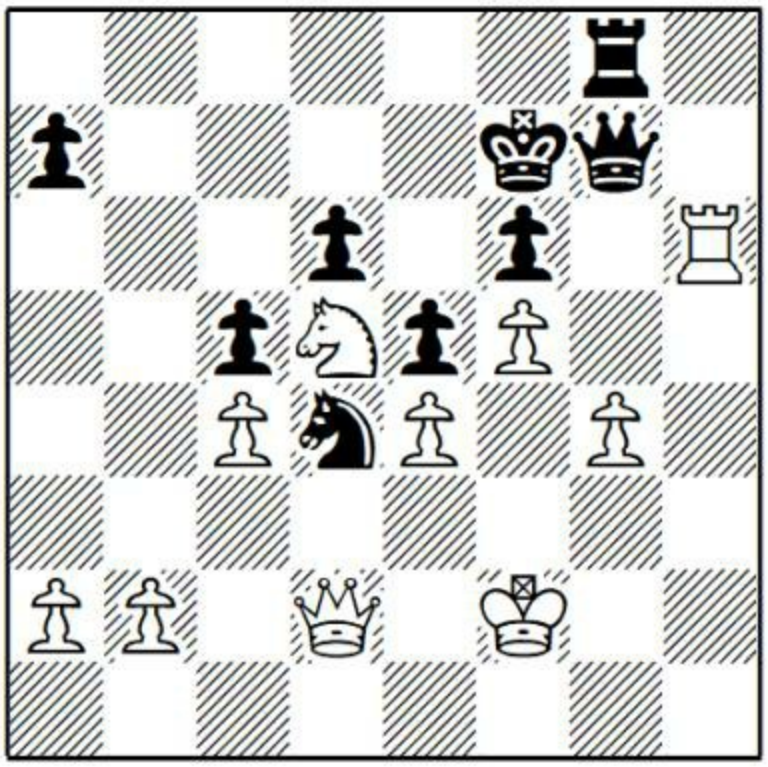


(Or 26 Ne7 mate.)

Wrong Direction Mate

I kind of just made this one up, but it seems to need a category. A wrong direction mate is where the solution lies on the opposite side of the mated king. A wrong direction mate can also include a counter-intuitive retreat, from a position of attack, which somehow forces mate

32) R.Reti-C.Carls,
Baden-Baden 1925



White to play

Level 3

Prove why Black's king is in far greater danger than White's:

Answer: Swoop into a5, the opposite direction of Black's king, who lacks a defence to White's mating threats. This move is psychologically difficult to find, due to a pair of natural aversions:

1. We 'hang' our rook.

2. Black's king resides in the centre/kingside, so our eye isn't attuned to an attacking move in the opposite direction, the queenside.

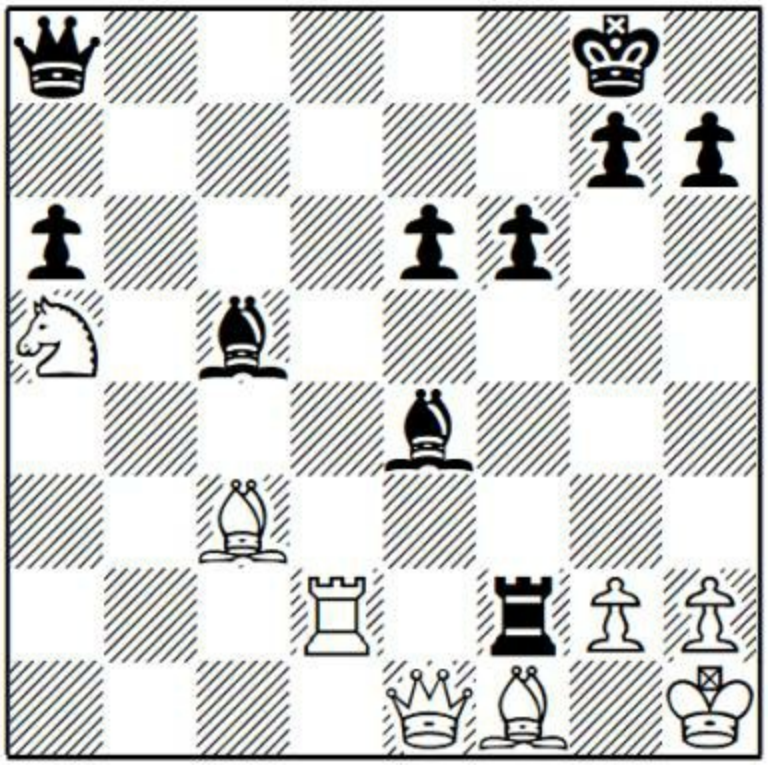
35 Qa5! 1-0

White fails to make progress after 35 Rg6 Qh7 36 Rh6 Qg7, but 35 Qa5! Qxh6 (if 35 ... Qxg4 36 Qc7+ Kf8 37 Qe7 mate or 35 ... Nc2 36 Qc7+ Ke8 37 Qc8+ Kf7 38 Qd7+ Kf8 39 Qd8+ Kf7 40 Qe7 mate) 36 Qc7+ Ke8 37 Qe7 is mate.

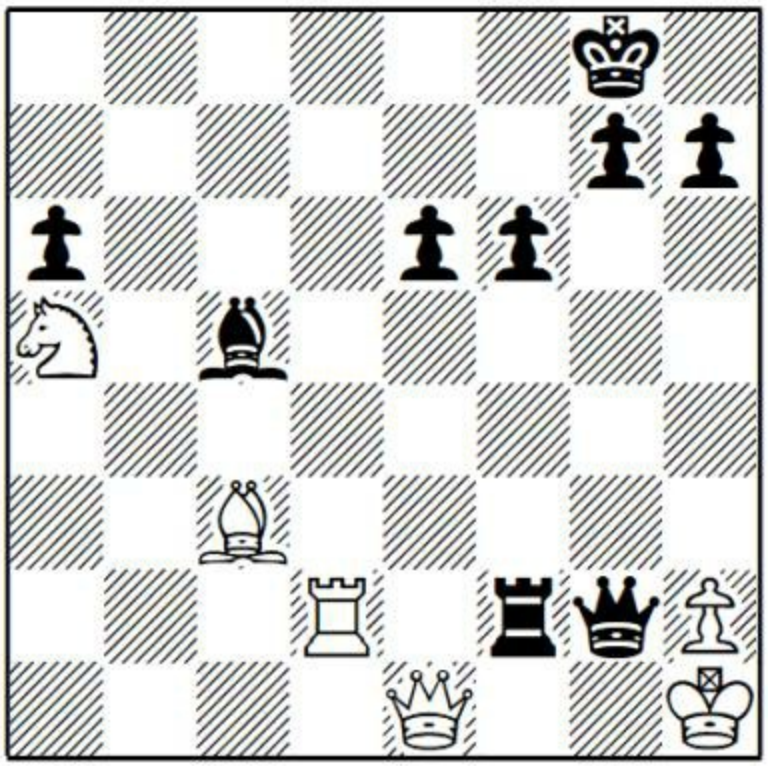
X-Ray Mate

An X-ray mate is essentially an optical illusion, when one side misbelieves that the mating square is covered. The problem is the mate is delivered 'through' the defensive piece's field.

33) A.Riazantsev-M.Carlsen
Warsaw 2005



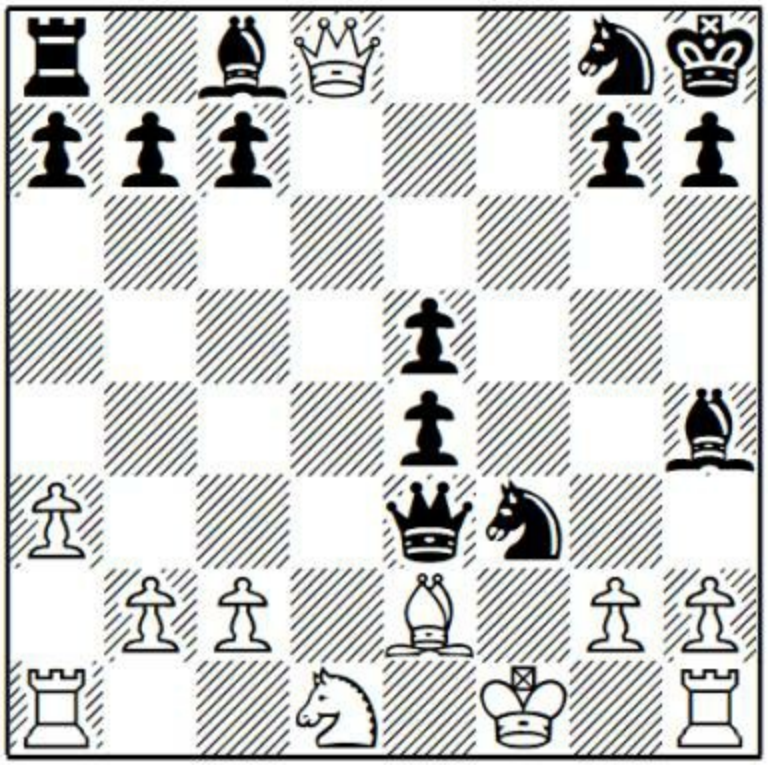
Black to play
Level 1
How did Magnus force mate?
36 ... Bxg2+! 0-1
Answer: X-ray attack. White's d2-rook isn't covering g2 at all, as if 37 Bxg2 Qxg2 mate.



2) Shorter Mates

In this chapter we work on shorter mates, in 2, 3 and 4 moves.

34) G.Lolli-D.Ercole Del Rio
Modena 1755

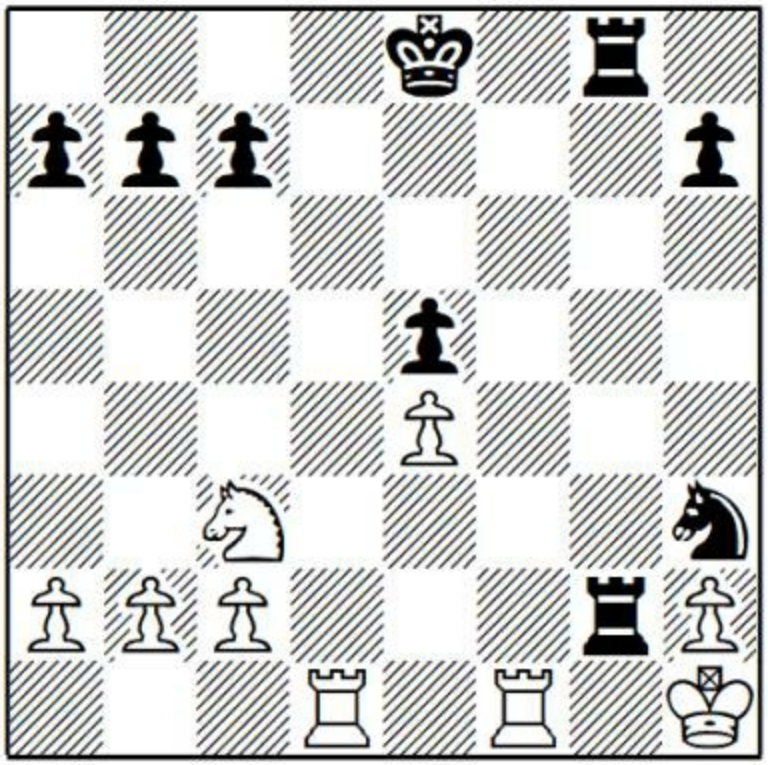


Black to play
Level 2
Here the inventor of Lolli's mate falls victim to another kind of mate. Black mates in 2:
Answer: Queen sacrifice/decoy.
18 ... Qg1+! 19 Rxg1
A terrible implication begins to take hold: the former guard of h2 has

been lured away.

19 ... Nxh2 mate

35) J.Cochrane-H.Staunton
London 1841



Black to play

Level 2

White seems to have covered mating threats on g1. Yet Black has another way of forcing mate in 2:

Answer: Decoy/smothered mate.

19 ... Rg1+!

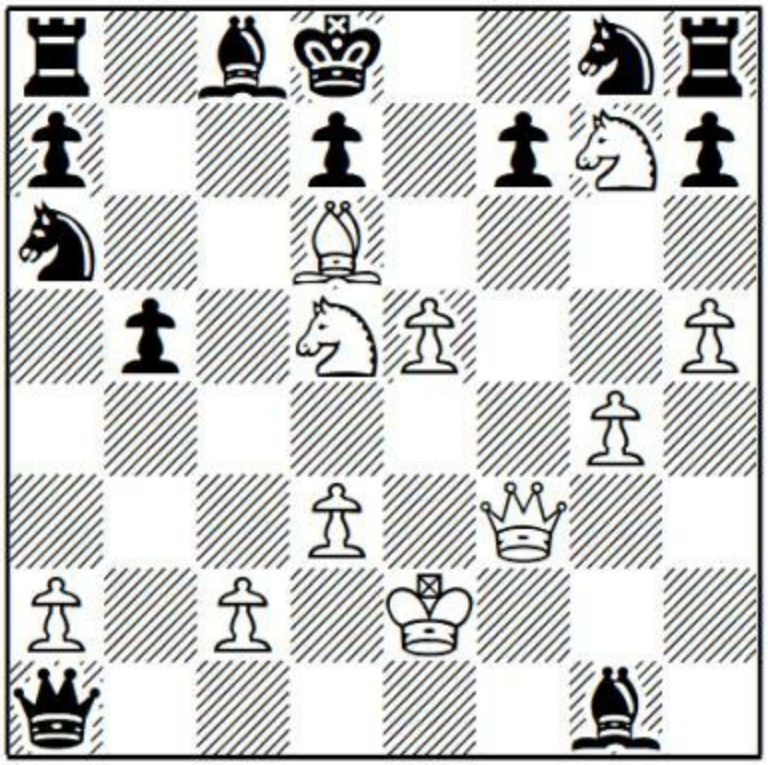
White's rook is decoyed from coverage of f2.

20 Rxg1

Most of us at this point would have said "I've seen enough" and resigned, but in the era of the Great Romantics, they loved to play on until mate.

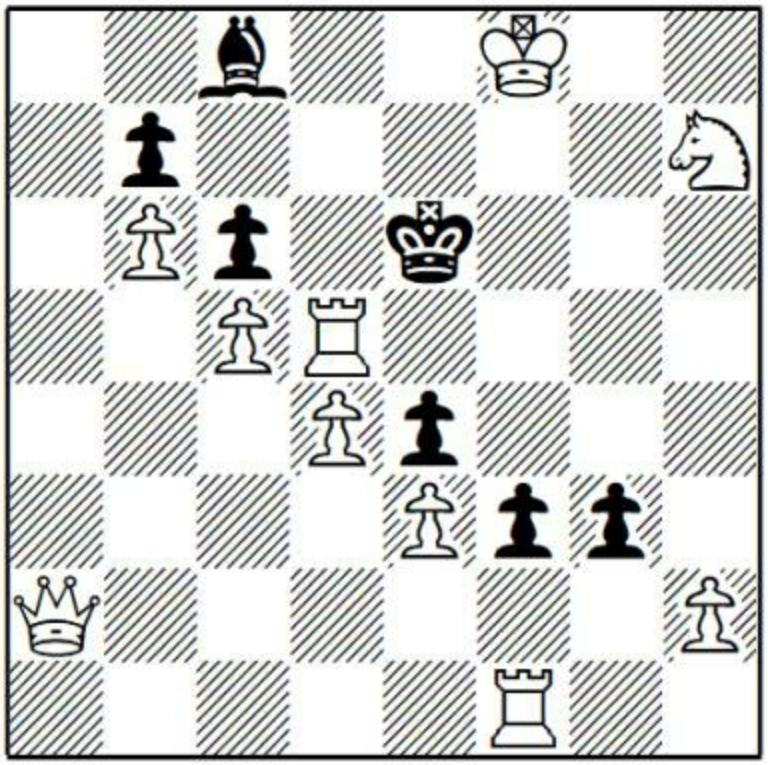
20 ... Nf2 mate
Smothered mate.

36) A.Anderssen-L.Kieseritzky
London 1851



White to play
Level 2
There seems to be a perception gap between the players. Black believes he will win due to his two extra rooks, while Anderssen believes his attack will overcome all obstacles. Prove Anderssen's assertion correct:
Answer: Queen sacrifice/decoy.
22 Qf6+! Nxf6
The knight has been lured away from coverage of e7.
23 Be7 mate

37) P.Blake
British Chess Magazine, 1892



White to play
Level 4.5

You are on your gym treadmill and the screen in front shows scenes from the Swiss Alps. You know in your heart that you are not in the Alps. This is how many view composed mating problems. Some of them, like this one, smack of artificiality. This chronic disdain among a decent percentage of chess players is a delusion. Please, please trust me on this one: composed works - even artificial ones - are incredibly beneficial to our tactical training. I use the first half of most of my lessons with students on them and their more natural cousin, endgame studies. Anything we don't understand is labeled 'magic'.

Find one pretty zugzwang idea and White forces mate in 2:

1 Qg2!!

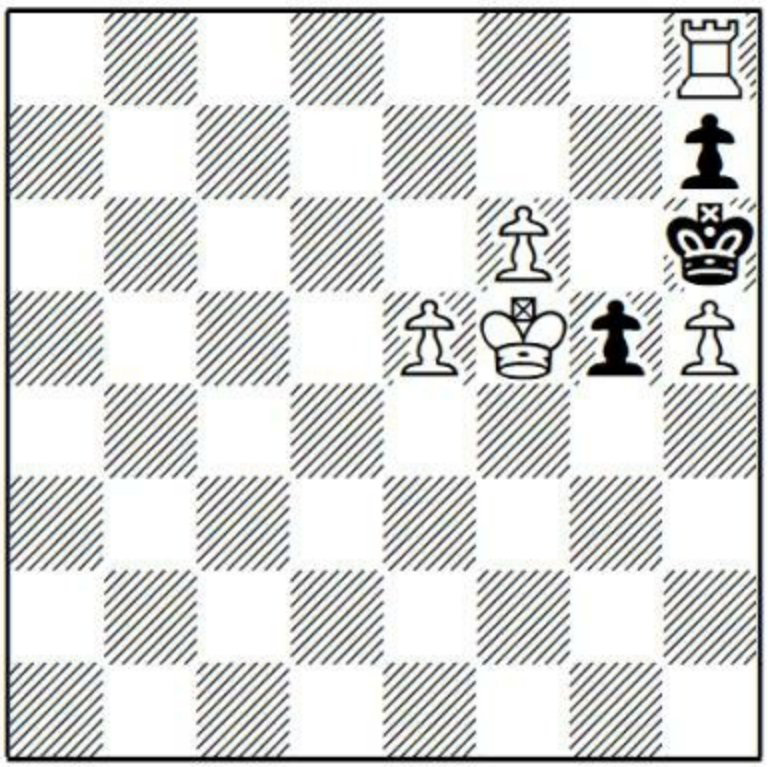
Queen sacrifice/zugzwang. A spy shouldn't make a splashy entrance, attracting attention, yet White's queen does just that. 1 Qa8? fails the 2-move mate stipulation: 1 ... g2 2 Rd6+ Kf5 3 Qxc8 mate.

1 ... fxg2

Alternatively, 1 ... f2 2 Qxe4 mate, 1 ... Kxd5 2 Qa2 mate (in chess studies this manoeuvre is called a 'switchback'), 1 ... gxh2 2 Qg8 mate or 1 ... cxd5 2 Qh3 mate.

2 Rd6 mate

38) F.Amelung
Duna Zeitung, 1897



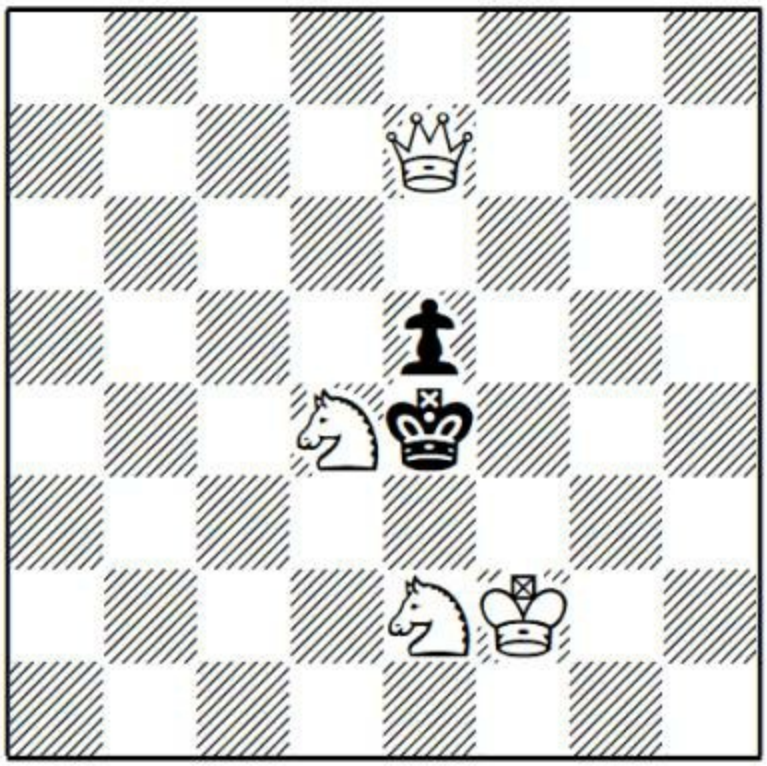
White to play

Level 1

This mate in two is a bit of a trick question. All you need to do to solve it is to remember a chess rule:

Answer: Capture *en passant* on g6 (Black's last move was ... g7-g5).
1 hxg6!
Zugzwang.
1 ... Kh5 2 Rxh7 mate

39) G.Legentil
Manhattan Int., New York 1908



White to play
Level 4
Mate in 2:
1 Nf4!
This move represents the end of the beginning. Black's king must take one of the knights since he is denied entry to either d5 or f5 escape routes.

Two lines which fail the mate in 2 stipulation are 1 Qb7+? Kd3 2 Qb1+ Kd2 3 Nb3 mate and 1 Qe6? Kd3 2 Qb3+ Ke4 (2 ... Kd2 3 Nf3 mate) 3 Qf3

mate.

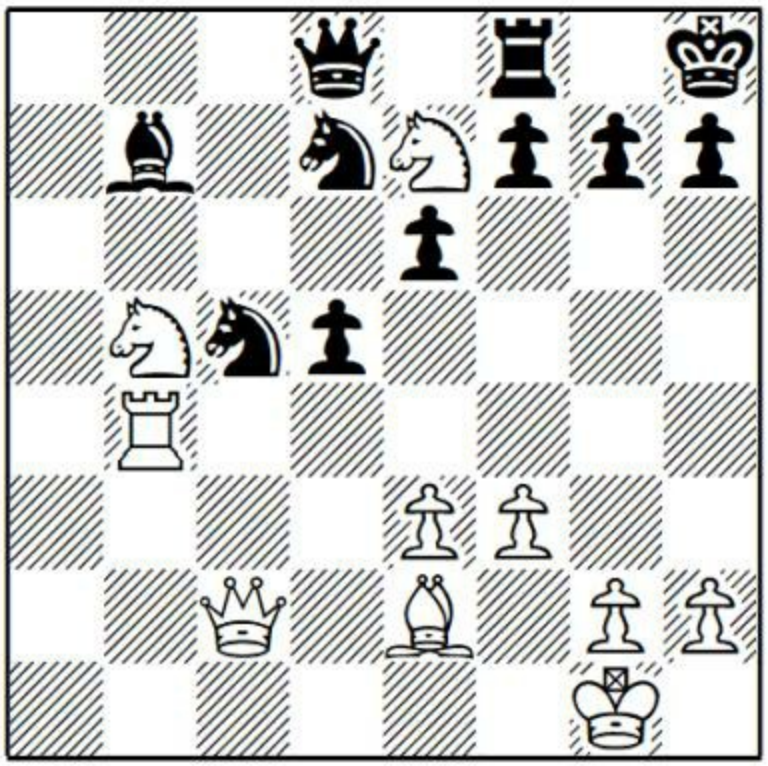
1 ... Kxf4

Or 1 ... Kxd4 2 Qb4 mate.

2 Qh4 mate

Don't you love the symmetrical irony?

40) A.Alekhine-P.Leonhardt
Hamburg 1910



White to play

Level 2

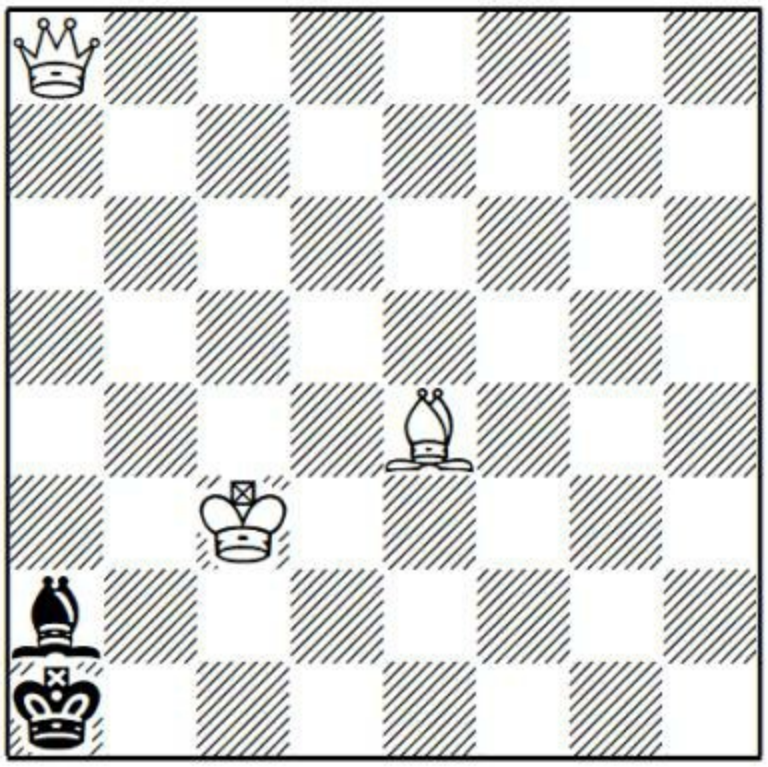
Alekhine's e7-knight is trapped. How should White respond?

Answer: Who cares about the trapped knight when we can deliver Anastasia's mate!

27 Qxh7+! 1-0

If 27 ... Kxh7 28 Rh4 mate.

41) L.Koefoed
Dagbldet Snallposten, 1921



White to play

Level 4

With composed mating problems, always look for the least likely move first, since it is often the answer.

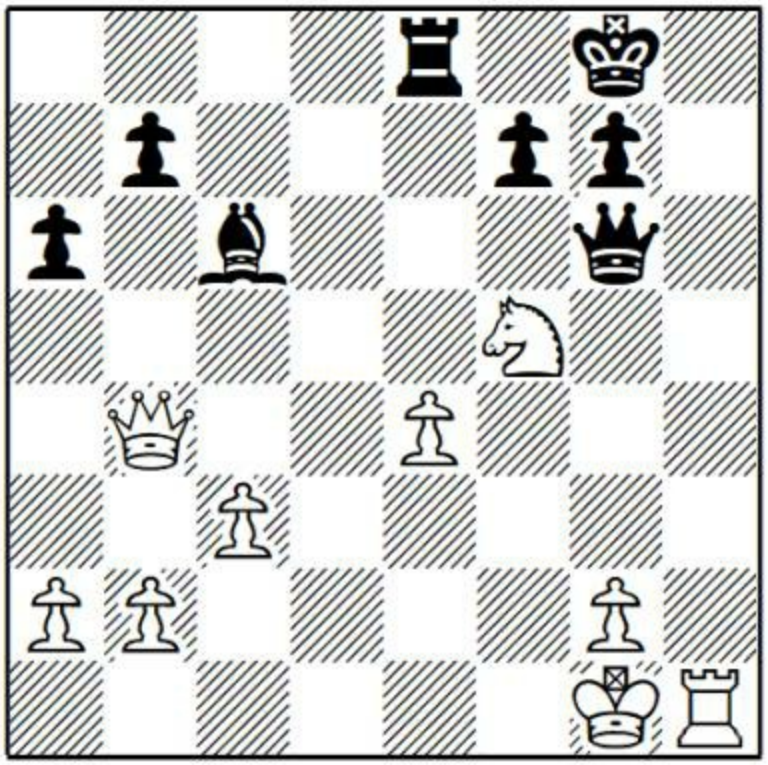
1 Bb1!

Answer: Attraction/clearance. White's bishop attracts Black's king to b1, while clearing h1 for the queen to swoop in. Black has only one legal move.

1 Bd5? is one move too long. 1 ... Kb1 2 Qxa2+ Kc1 3 Qa1 mate.

1 ... Kxb1 2 Qh1 mate

42) Romanovsky-NN
1946



White to play

Level 3

1 Ne7+ wins the exchange. Do you see a far stronger move to mate in 2?

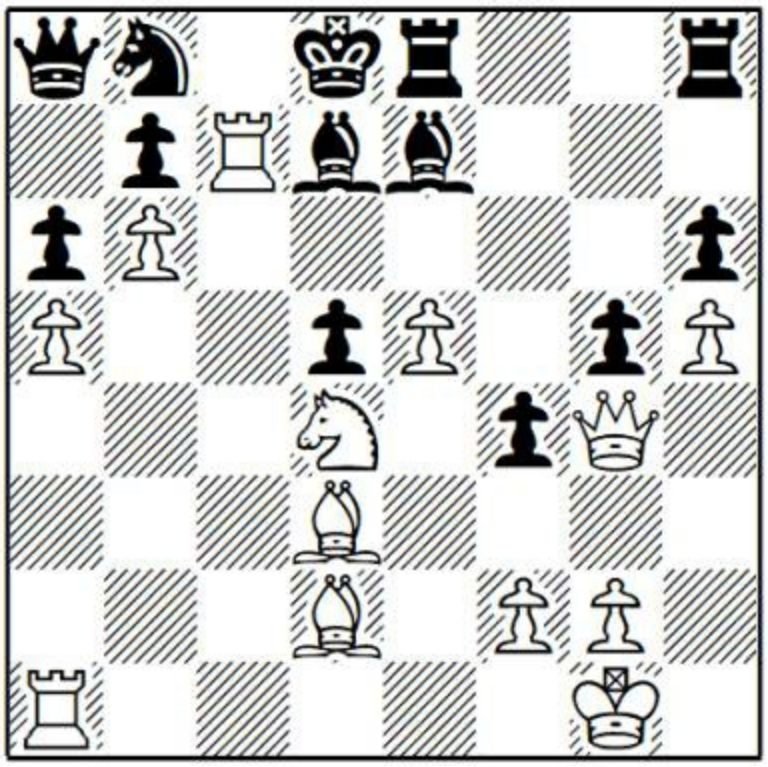
Answer: Queen sacrifice/smothered mate/weak back rank.

1 Qf8+! 1-0

The queen comes over for a visit and she is not asking permission. 1 ... Rxf8 (1 ... Kxf8 2 Rh8 is Backrank mate) 2 Ne7 is smothered mate.

43) A.Nimzowitsch-A.Hakansson

Kristianstad 1922



White to play

Level 2

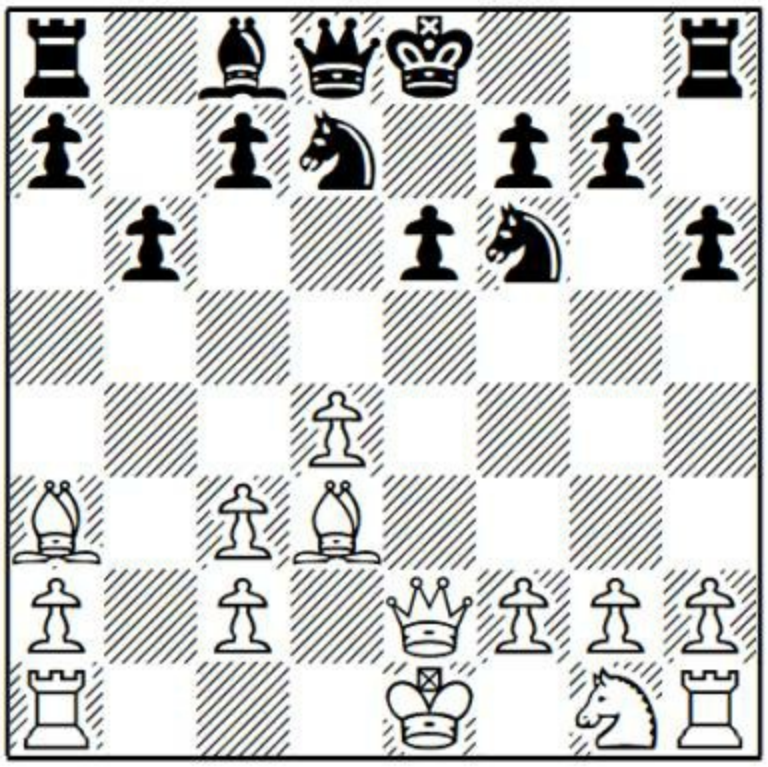
Nimzo may have subscribed to heretical theories in the opening, but if you gave him an attack, he became an old-fashioned Great Romantic, who was ready, willing and able to sacrifice for mate. I vividly remember this game since I was surreptitiously reading a Nimzowitsch game collection in Mrs. Richardson's 8th grade science class, looking at this exact position. The humourless Mrs. Richardson busted me and took away my beloved Nimzowitsch book, only returning it after class. How did Nimzo force mate in 2?

Answer: Queen sacrifice/smothered mate.

27 Qxd7+! Nxd7 28 Ne6 mate

44) A.Alekhine-Vasic

Banja Luka (simul) 1931



White to play

Level 2

For Alexander Alekhine, chess supplanted religion. We immediately sense a combination when we see Alekhine's raking bishops. Mate in 2:

Answer: Queen sacrifice/ clearance.

10 Qxe6+!

This opens g6 for White's bishop to deliver mate.

How many of us in a tournament game would play the automatic 10 Nf3? oblivious to the mating pattern, which lies just outside of our range of perception?

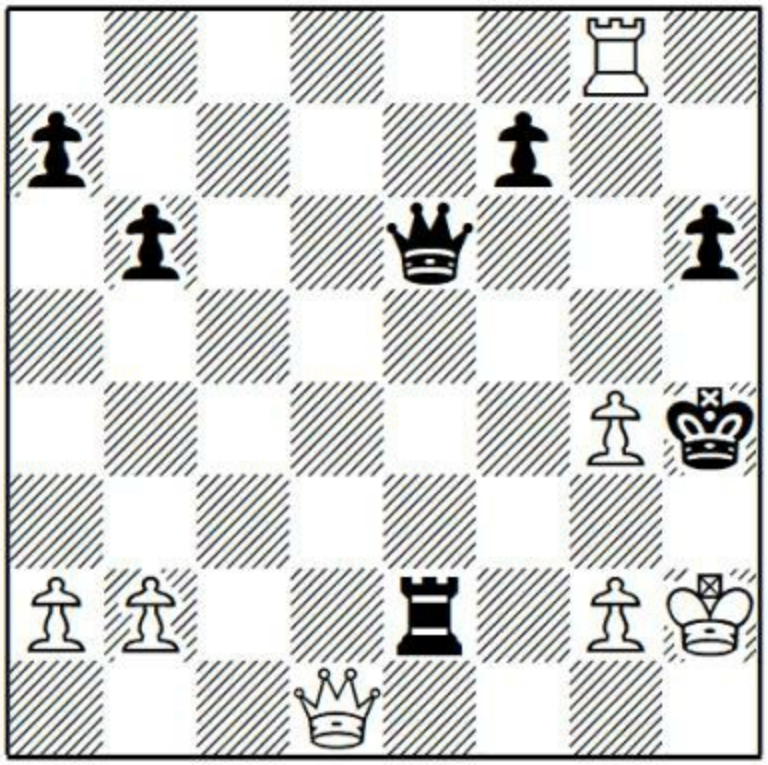
10 ... fxe6

10 ... Qe7 isn't going to slow White down much: 11 Qxe7 mate.

11 Bg6 mate

45) G.Stahlberg-A.Becker

Buenos Aires 1944



White to play

Level 2

If given a move, Black will play ... Qe5+, followed by ... Re1+, winning White's queen. How should White respond? Mate in 2:

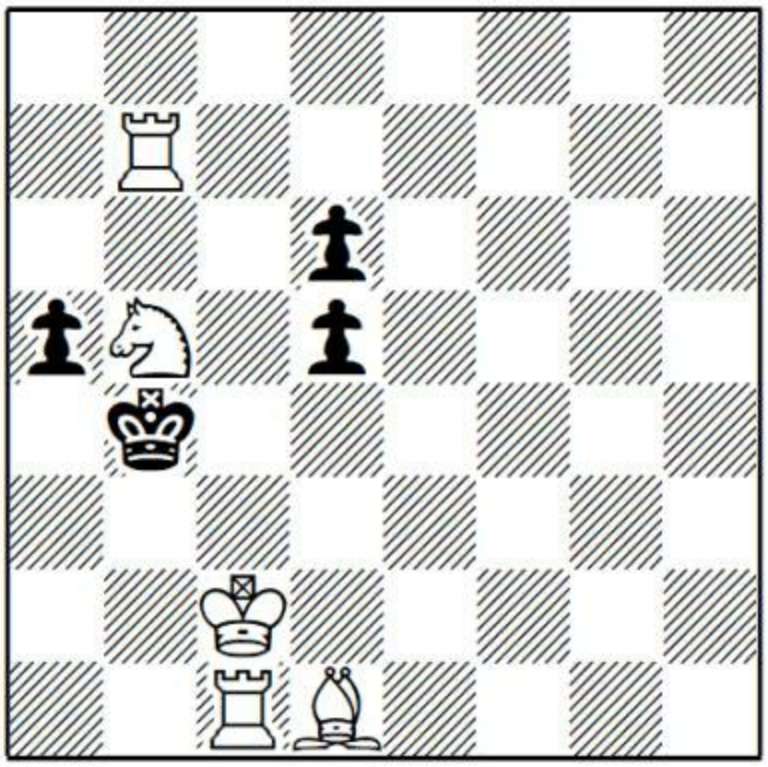
Answer: Queen sacrifice/decoy/unpinning.

48 Qe1+! 1-0

If 48 ... Rxe1 (48 ... Rf2 49 Qxf2 mate) 49 g3 mate.

46) M.Lipton

Probleemblad, 1957



White to play

Level 4

In general, a composed work is going to be more devious - and therefore more difficult to solve - than naturally occurring combinations from tournament games.

1 Na3+!

I have always found a retreating-move mate attractive, since we appreciate the tranquilizing, soft, lullaby-like quality which masks secret aggression.

The following variations fail the 2-move mating stipulation:

a) 1 Kb2? a4! (freeing a5 as an escape route for Black's king) 2 Nc7+ Ka5 3 Rb5 mate.

b) 1 Kb1? a4! 2 Nc7+ Ka3 (2 ... Ka5 3 Rb5 mate) 3 Rc3 mate.

c) 1 Na7+? Kc4 2 Kd2+ Kd4 3 Re7 a4 4 Nb5 mate.

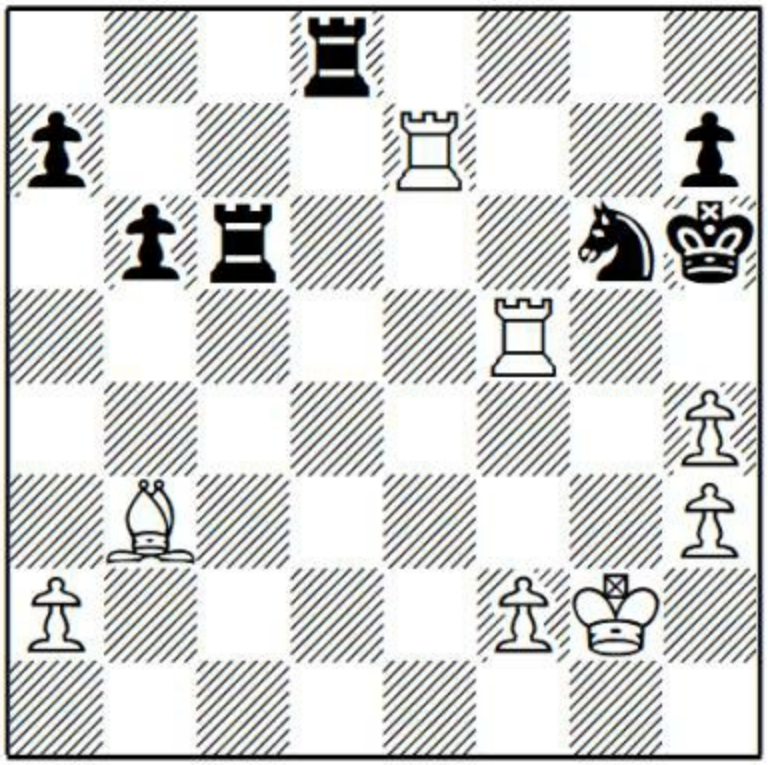
1 ... Kc5

Alternatively, if 1 ... Ka4 2 Kb2 mate or 1 ... Kxa3 2 Ra1 mate a

Trombone mate!

2 Kd3 mate

47) W.Lombardy-N.Spiridonov
Krakow 1964



White to play

Level 2

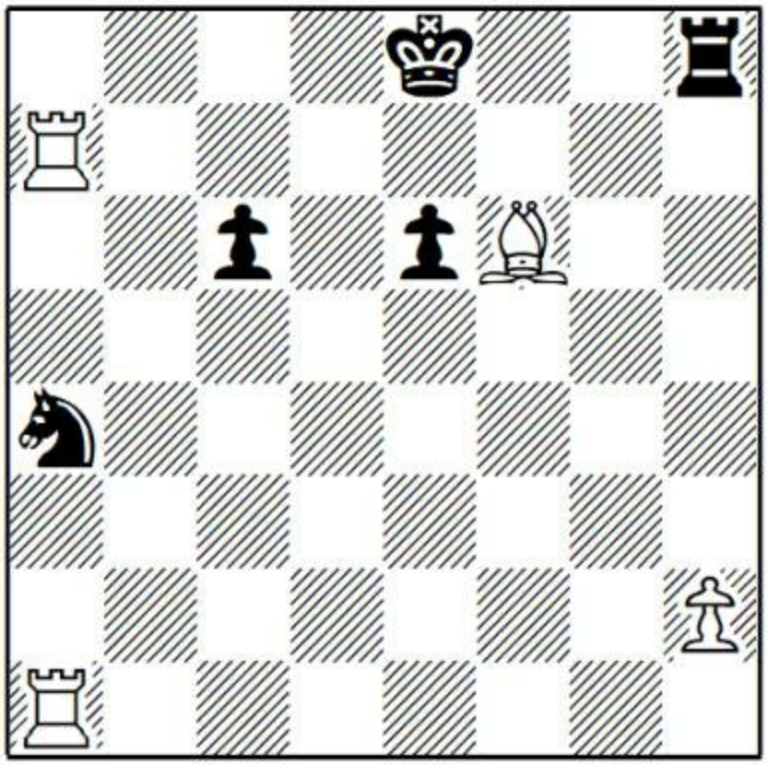
Find one powerful blow to and Black's 'everything-is-fine' narrative begins to fall apart. Mate in 2:

Answer: Lure the king to h5 and deliver mate on h7.

33 Rh5+! 1-0

Attraction. If 33 ... Kxh5 34 Rxh7 mate.

48) R.Kofman
Vercherny Leningrad, 1968



White to play

Level 5

I'm hoping you can help me out. I was playing White against a friend in the coffee shop and about to deliver mate in 2. Then I accidentally knocked over my king. The problem is neither me nor my opponent can remember which square the king was placed (I'm getting so forgetful in my old age). So your task is twofold:

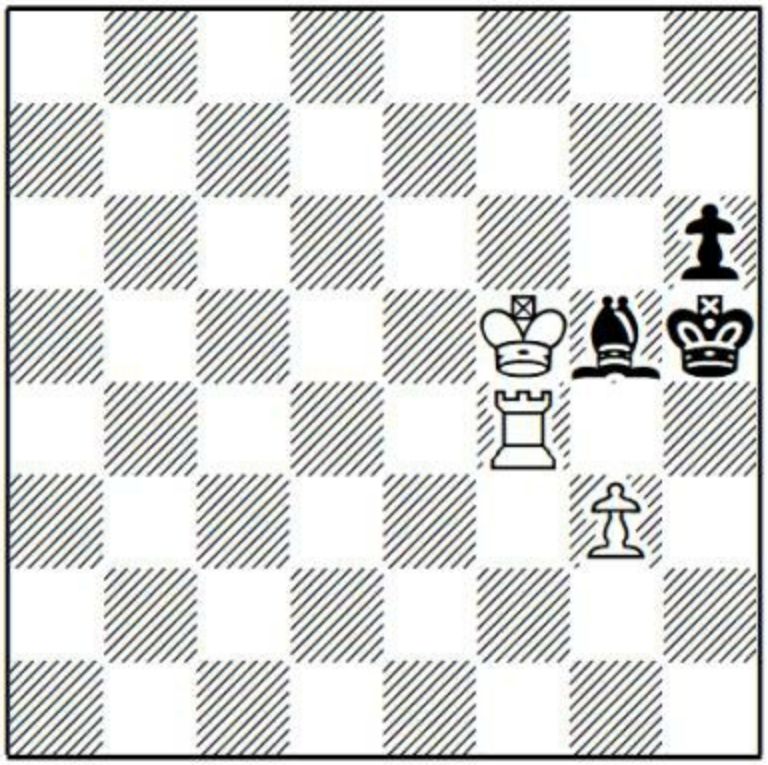
1. Figure out which square White's king was on, before it got knocked to the ground.

2. When you figure out the square, then what move will White make to force mate in 2?

Answer: White's king was on e1 and White's mate in 2 begins with 1 0-0-0!.

49) C.Lakdawala-NN

Canadian Open 1977



White to play

Level 2

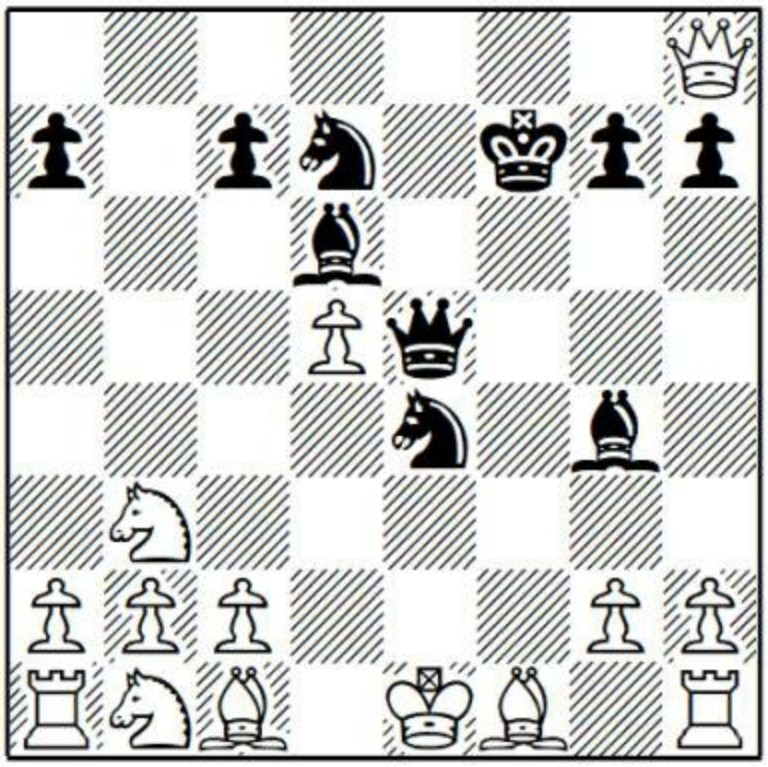
I lost the score sheet to a game when I was a gifted 16-year-old (rated 1750!). I've long forgotten the name of my opponent, but do remember this position where I delivered mate in 2 moves:

Answer: Interference/rook sacrifice.

1 Rh4+ Bxh4 2 g4 mate

I beamed with pride when later on GM (then IM) Kevin Spraggett who had walked by the game and glanced at the position, asked me: "Did you mate your opponent with your g-pawn?"

50) NN-E.Diemer
correspondence 1978



Black to play

Level 2

It's great to be up two rooks, but not when the opponent leads overwhelmingly in development. Black mates in 2:

Answer: Queen sacrifice.

14 ... Qg3+!

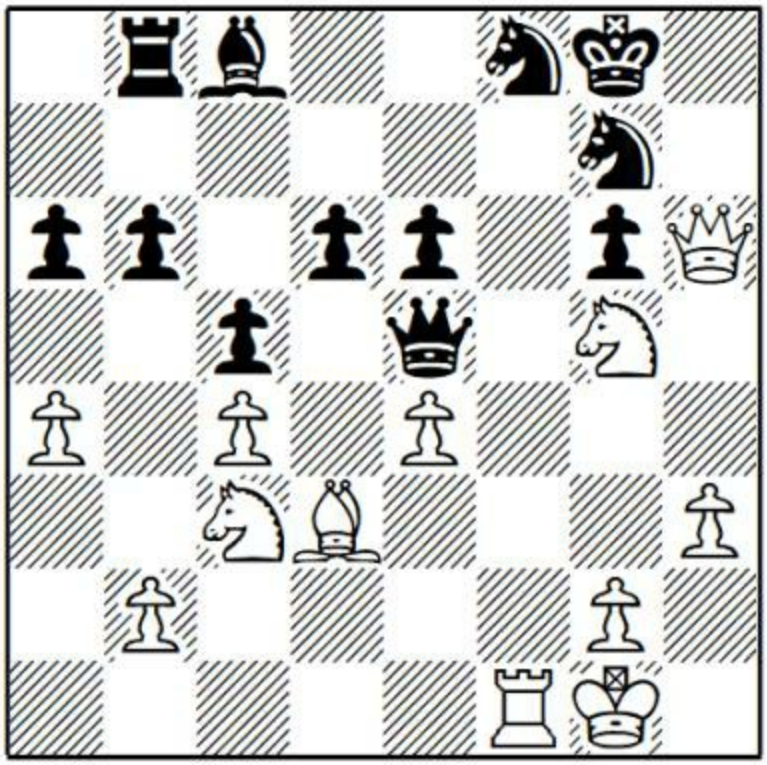
Our power is that much more effective when it is not perceived by our opponent.

15 hxg3

This was a correspondence game and White may as well allow the mate, since he would still need to pay for a stamp and postcard to write his opponent: "Good game! I resign!"

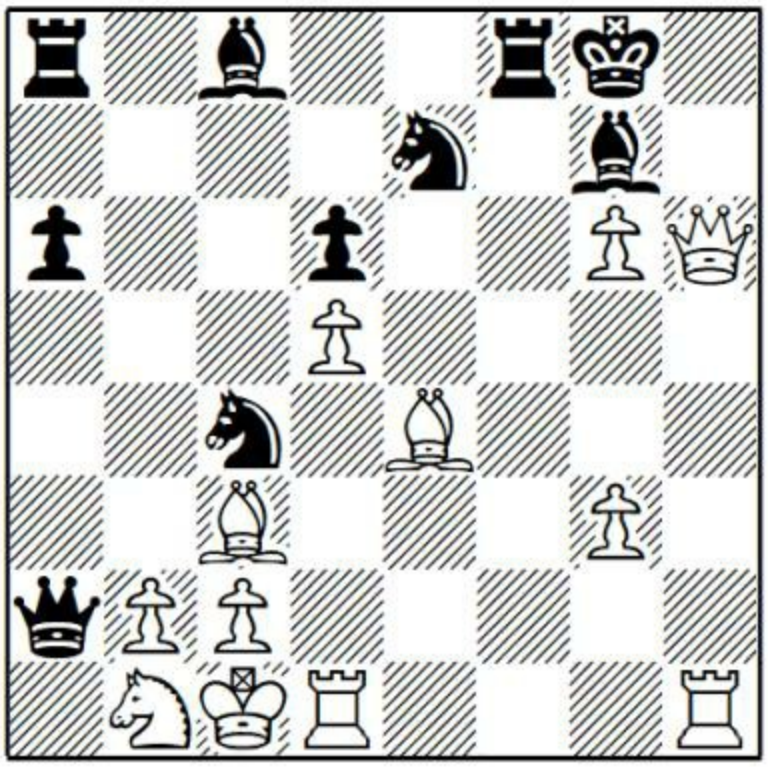
15 ... Bxg3 mate

51) P.Boll-A.Timmerman
correspondence 1978



White to play
Level 2
This is not the moment for subtlety. Mate in 2:
Answer: Attraction/queen sacrifice/weak back rank.
22 Qh8+!
Gravity wins the fight.
22 ... Kxh8 23 Rxf8 mate

52) S.Platzack-J.van Baarle
Buesum 1967



Black to play

Level 2

On his last move White just sacrificed his queen on h6, which as it turns out, is more of a parlour trick than an actual combination. Where did White miscalculate? Mate in 2:

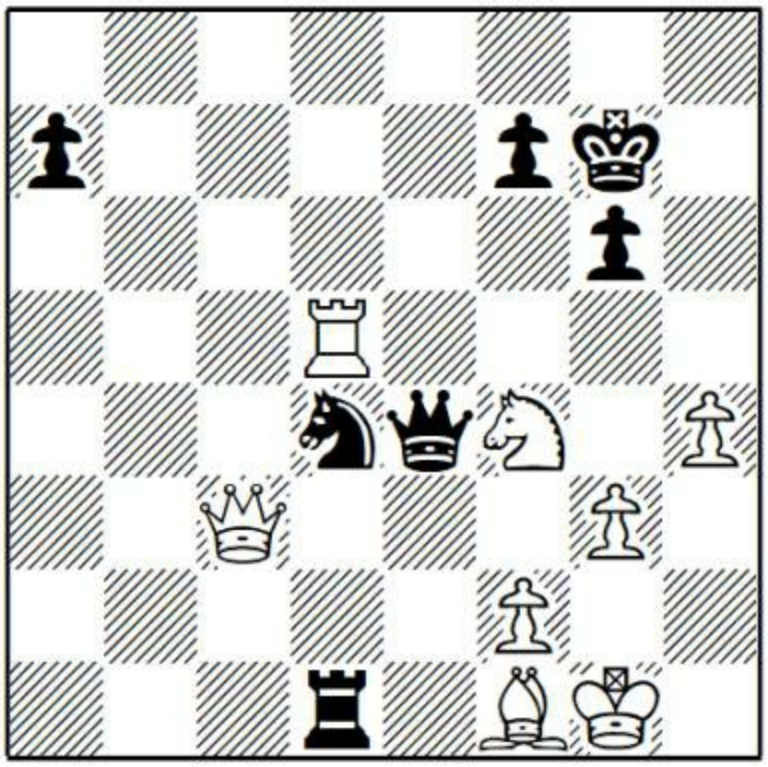
Answer: Queen sacrifice/X-ray mate.

24 ... Qxb2+! 0-1

If 25 Bxb2 Bxb2 mate.

53) V.Topalov-G.Kasparov

Sofia (rapid) 1998



Black to play

Level 2

How rare it is to be beating a reigning world champion, which makes bungling our position that much more painful. Up a piece and easily winning, Topalov on his last move played 46 Rxd5??. What is the problem with his move?

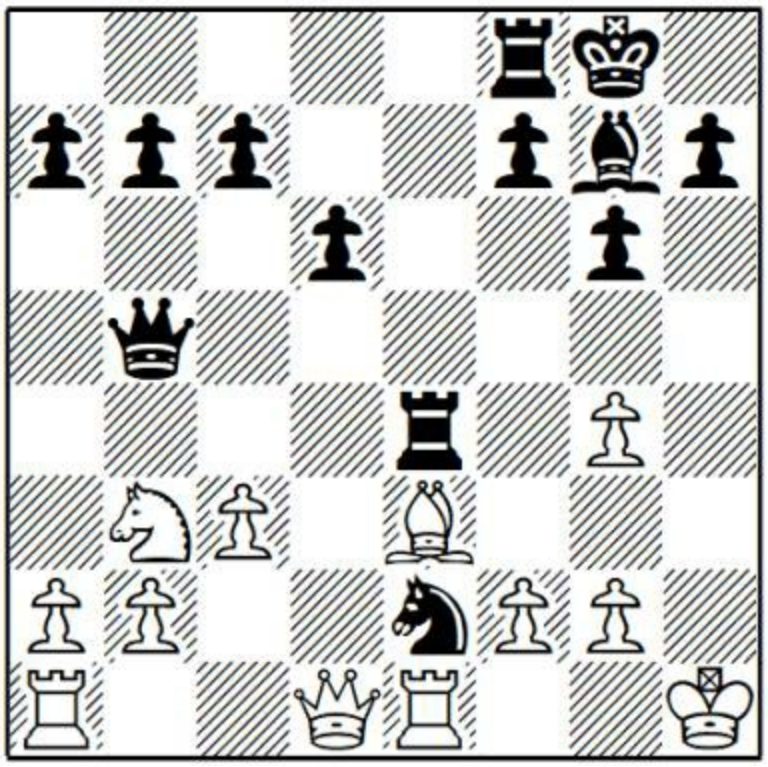
Answer: Attraction.

47 ... Rxf1+! 0-1

White's king position is folded into a geometric mating origami: 48 Kxf1 (or 48 Kh2 Rh1 mate) 48 ... Qh1 mate.

54) J.Hammer-M.Carlsen

Halkidiki 2003



Black to play

Level 2

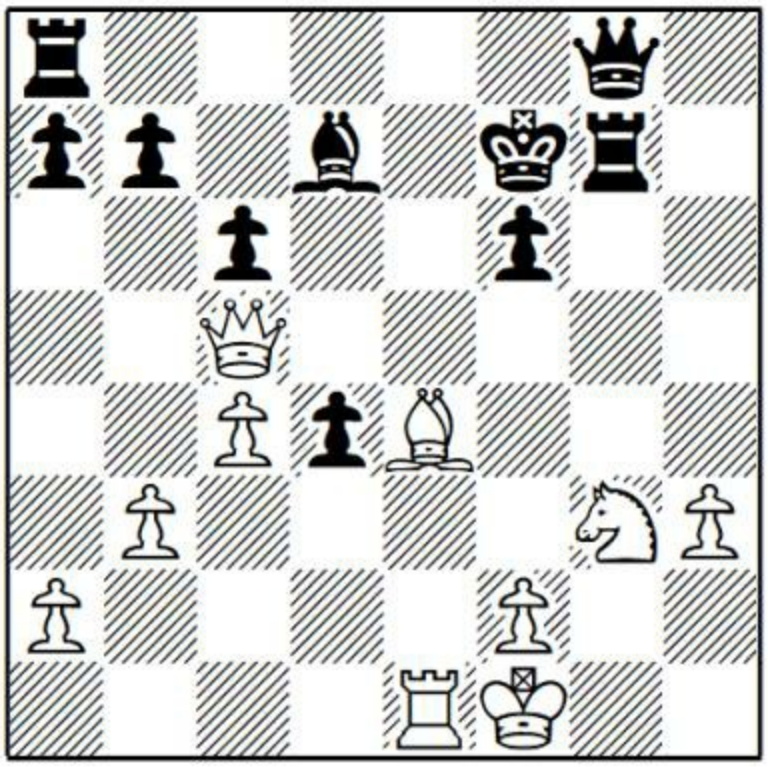
Such a combination is easy to see if we are told that it exists. But to find it cold over the board is a completely different matter. How did Magnus force mate?

17 ... Qh5+! 0-1

Answer: Clearance. A single move turns White's king position into a tomb, as if 18 gxh5 Rh4 mate. And there we have it: Anastasia's mate!

55) M.Carlsen-H.Gretarsson

Rethymnon 2003



White to play

Level 2.5

In this position Magnus probes the position with terrifying accuracy/alertness. He found a sweet mating pattern:

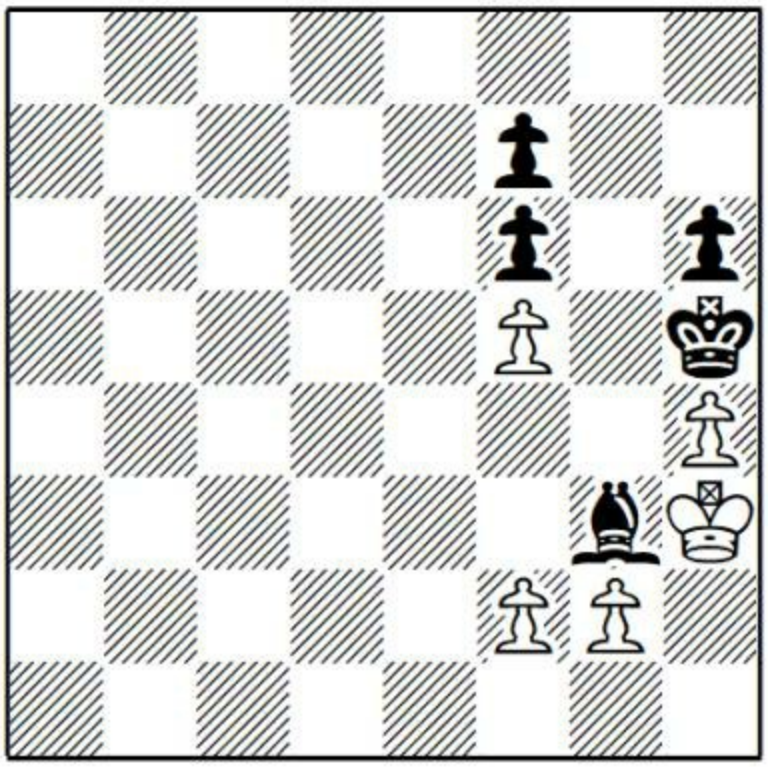
Answer: Decoy/interference.

32 Bg6+! 1-0

If 32 ... Kxg6 (the king travelled a great distance in just a single, small step, but if 32 ... Rxg6 33 Qe7 mate) 33 Qh5 mate.

56) G.Amann & M.Minski

The Problemist, 2010



White to play

Level 3

This is the end of a study by Amann and Minski. White forces mate in 2 moves:

Answer: Zugzwang.

5 f4!

Not 5 f3? Bxh4 6 f4 Bg3! (now it is White who is in zugzwang) 7 Kxg3, which is stalemate, as are 5 Kxg3?? and 5 fxg3??. It was Saint Paul who warned that love of money is the root of all evil.

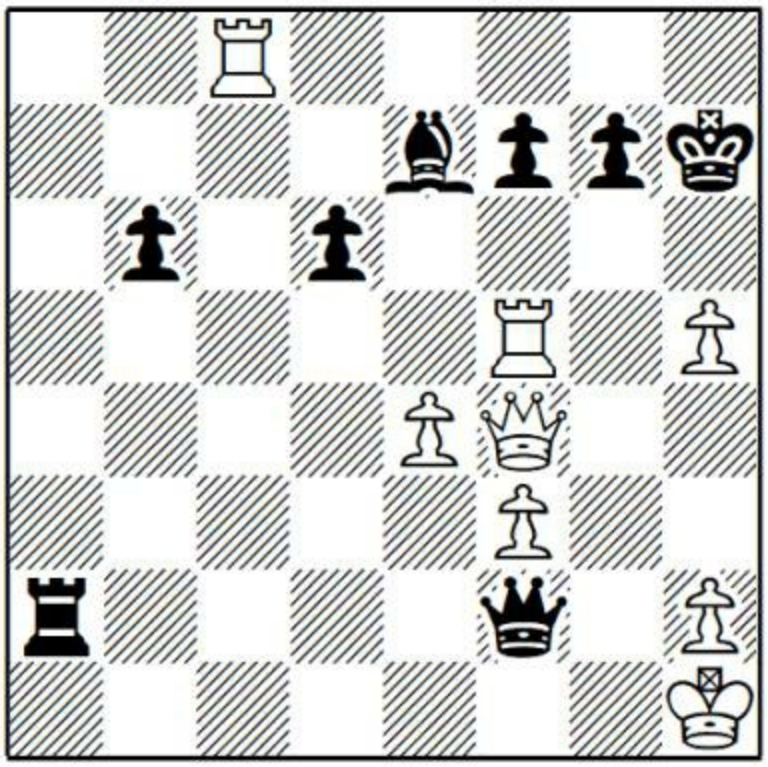
5 ... Bxf4

Or 5 ... Bxh4 6 g4 mate.

6 g4 mate

57) M.Carlsen-S.Karjakin

World Championship (Game 16, rapid), New York 2016



White to play

Level 3

I watched this one live and my mouth hung stupidly open in shock at Carlsen's next move. The mate is not deep. It's just jaw-droppingly shocking.

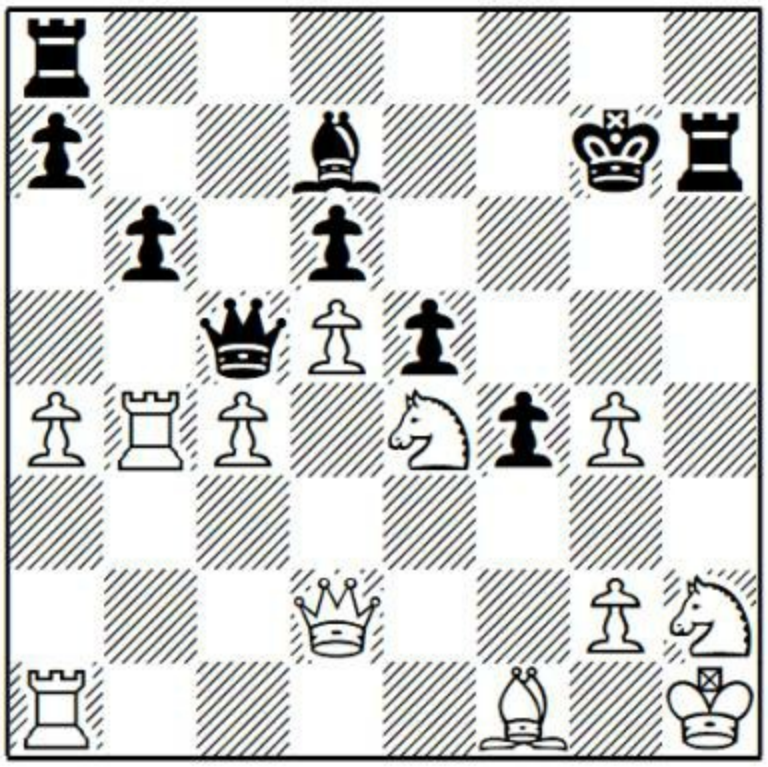
Answer: Queen Sacrifice/attraction/clearance.

50 Qh6+!! 1-0

This blow stuns Black to immobility. 50 ... Kxh6 (or 50 ... gxh6 51 Rxf7 mate) 51 Rh8 mate.

58) D.Trippold-S.Milliet

Antalya 2019



Black to play

Level 1

Black is down two pieces yet dark-square power is the only commodity through which Black's net worth is assessed. Mate in 2:

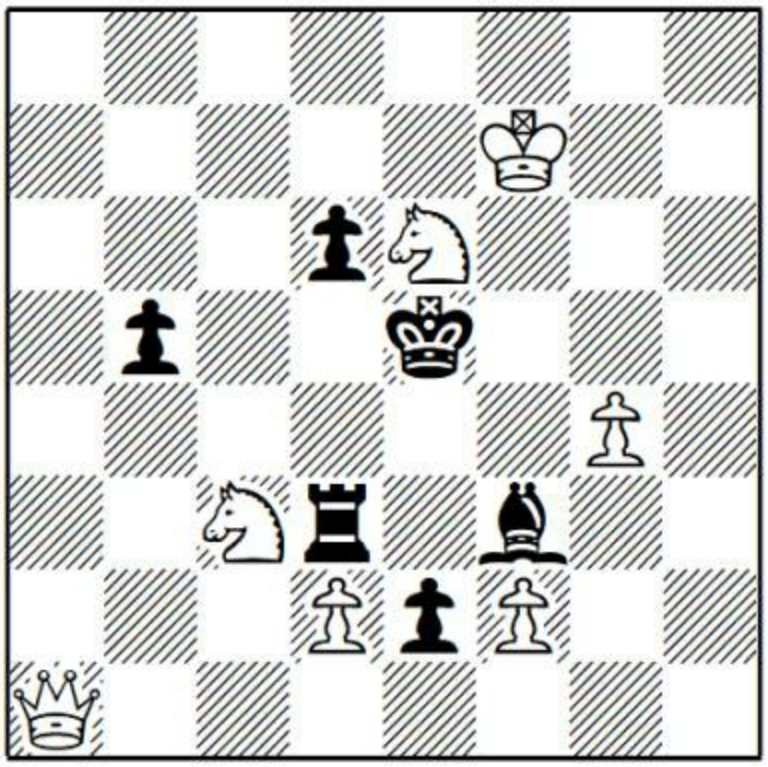
Answer: Simply remove White's final defender on h2 and then deliver mate on the open h-file.

28 ... Rxh2+! 0-1

If 29 Kxh2 Rh8 mate.

59) S.Dowd

Chess Endgame Studies and Compositions, 2020



White to play

Level 4

My buddy professor, Steven Dowd, who is also an admin on my Facebook group Chess Endgame Studies and Compositions, is one of the world's top mating problem composers. He does all his composing on his exercycle, so the more art he produces, the more in shape he gets! Mate in 2:

1 Qa8!!

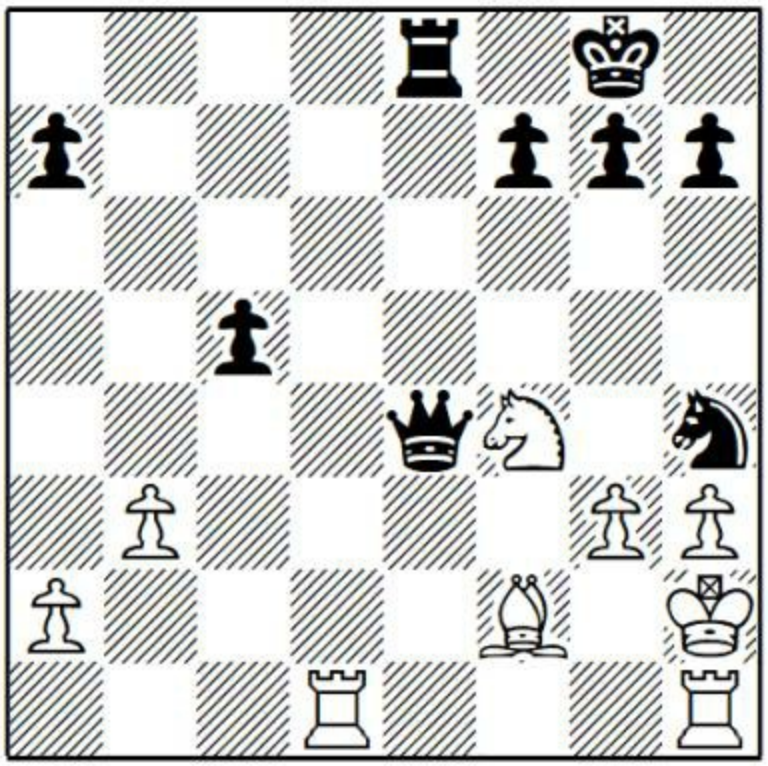
I fell for a temptation, which Steven deviously wove into the position: 1 Qh1?. Principle: *Don't point your gun in the enemy's direction if you are unable to pull the trigger.* Black's queen can't be taken and Black also threatens mate on h2, h5 and h8. I was so certain this had to be the answer, until I noticed Black's defence 1 ... Rxc3!. This trick pushes the mate to 3 moves, which passes the 3-move stipulation: 2 Qh5+ Ke4 3 Qf5 mate. Damn, that is mate in 3, not 2.

1 ... Bxa8

Alternatively, 1 ... b4 2 Qh8 mate or 1 ... d5 2 Qb8 mate.

2 f4 mate

60) A.Chullikkad-S.Pillai
Internet (rapid) 2020



Black to play

Level 2

My Facebook friend Sanjay sent me this one. How did Black force mate in 2 moves?

Answer: Queen sacrifice/smothered mate.

1 ... Qg2+!

It's safe to assume that the element of surprise is missing, but who needs stealth when you own a club?

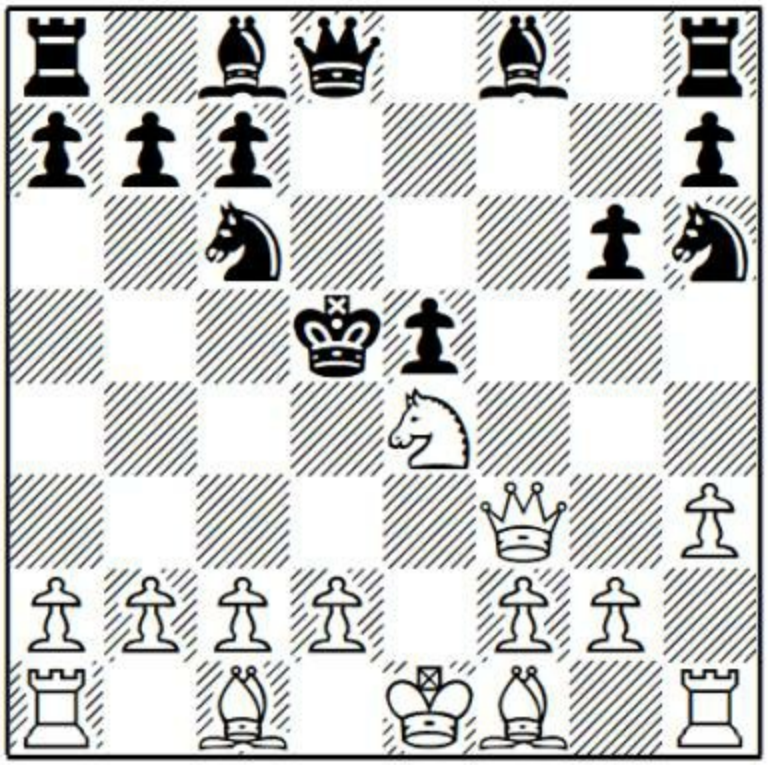
2 Nxg2

It isn't such a painful blow if you already knew it was coming. White's knight is attracted to g2, gumming up the white king's escape route.

2 ... Nf3 mate

Let's now move on to mates in 3.

61) N.Bonaparte-Mmme. De Remusat
Chateau de Malmaison (Mate in 3) Rueil-Malmaison FRA, 1804



White to play
Level 2

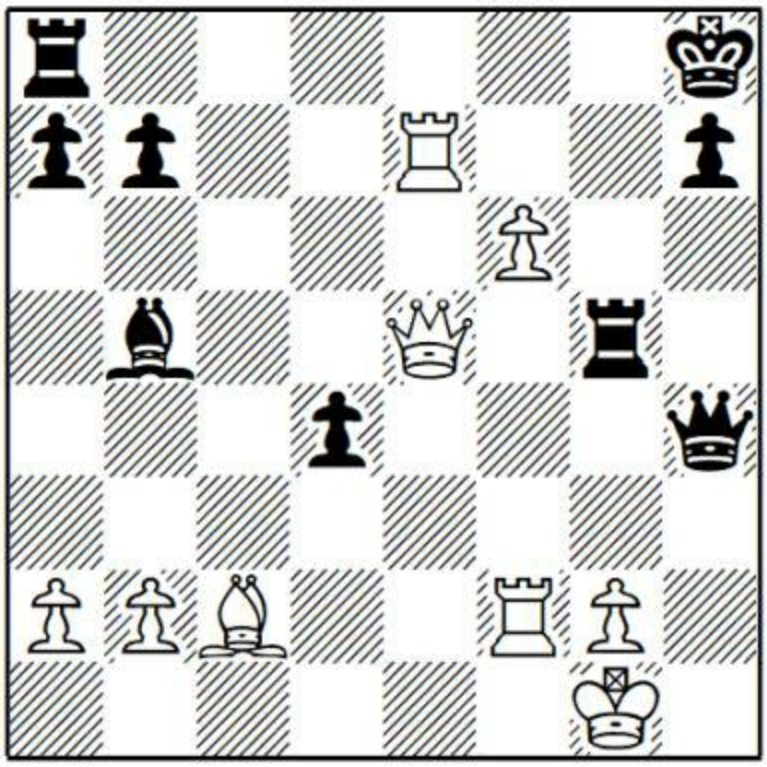
The road to hell is paved with a combination of good intentions and flawed logic. Madame De R got a touch greedy against her war-loving opponent, grabbing pieces at the cost of stranding her king in mid-board. Even the greatest players in history, like Morphy, Lasker, Capablanca and Madame De Remusat can have bad days. How did Napoleon force mate in 3?

12 Bc4+!

Decoy.

12 ... Kxc4
Or 12 ... Kd4 13 Qd3 mate.
13 Qb3+! Kd4 14 Qd3 mate
Vive la France!

62) L.C.De La Bourdonnais-A.McDonnell
London 1834



White to play
Level 2

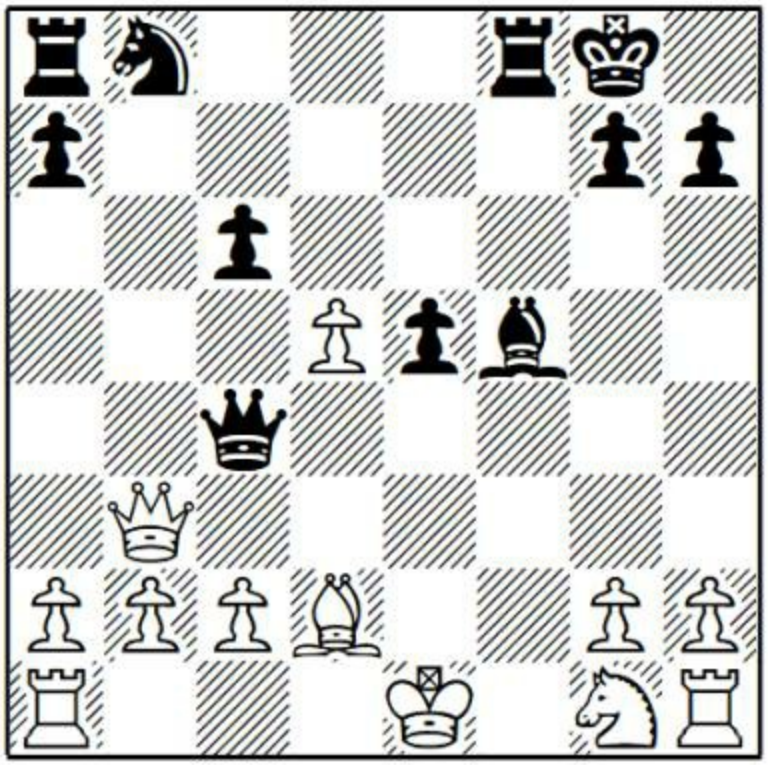
The passage of time has erased many of the answers to the questions we have about Louis de la Bourdonnais and his great rival Alexander McDonnell. Yet we still have their magnificent match games to replay over and over. How did White force mate in three moves?

Answer: Queen sacrifice/pawn promotion/weak back rank. Easy. Just keep pushing the f-pawn.

34 f7+! 1-0

If 34 ... Rxe5 (I suppose it's better to die rich, than die poor) 35 f8Q+ Rxf8 36 Rxf8 mate.

63) J.Schulten-B.Horwitz
London 1846



Black to play

Level 2

Bernhard Horowitz was one of the great early composers. I'm currently going through all his endgame studies - all 774 of them! He was also a strong over-the-board player. How did Black exploit his development lead and open f-file?

Answer: Attraction/discovered check/double check.

15 ... Qf1+!

Only with this move can Black poison the town's well.

16 Kxf1

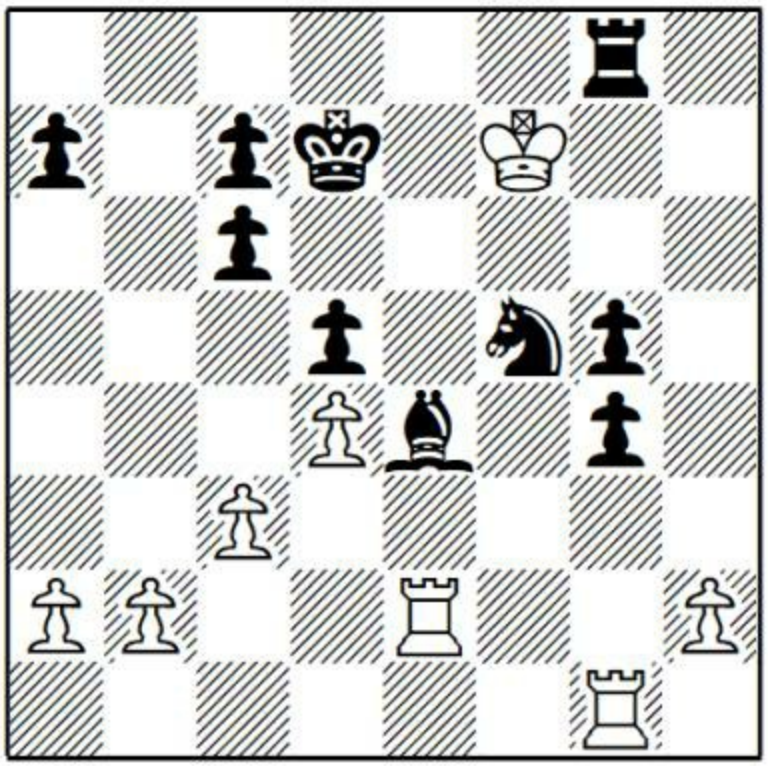
There is no talk of neutrality on the matter. White's king has no choice but to accept Black's queen sacrifice and go to his death.

16 ... Bd3+

Double check, which means that White cannot block the f-file with Nf3.

17 Ke1 Rf1 mate

64) J.Lowenthal-A.Anderssen
London 1851



Black to play

Level 3

White's king inadvertently wandered into a bad area of town. Work out Black's mate in 3:

32 ... Nh6+!

The check on h6 covers Black's rook. Or 32 ... Nd6+ 33 Kf6 Rg6+ 34

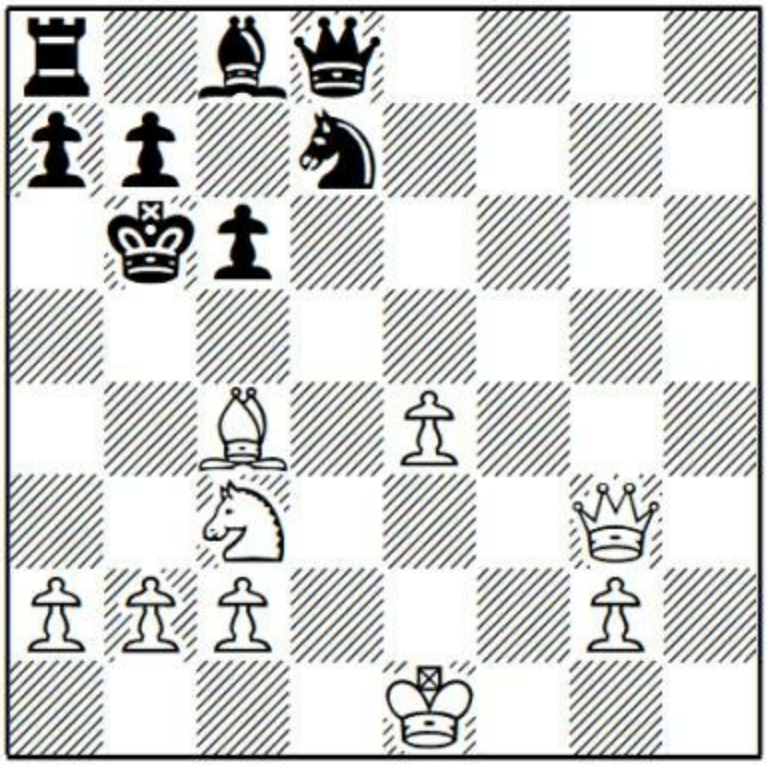
Ke5 Nf7 mate.

33 Kf6 Rg6+! 34 Ke5 Re6 mate

Or 34 ... Nf7 mate.

65) H.Staunton-NN

1855



White to play

Level 2

Separation follows coming together. There isn't a black defender in sight to help out the king.

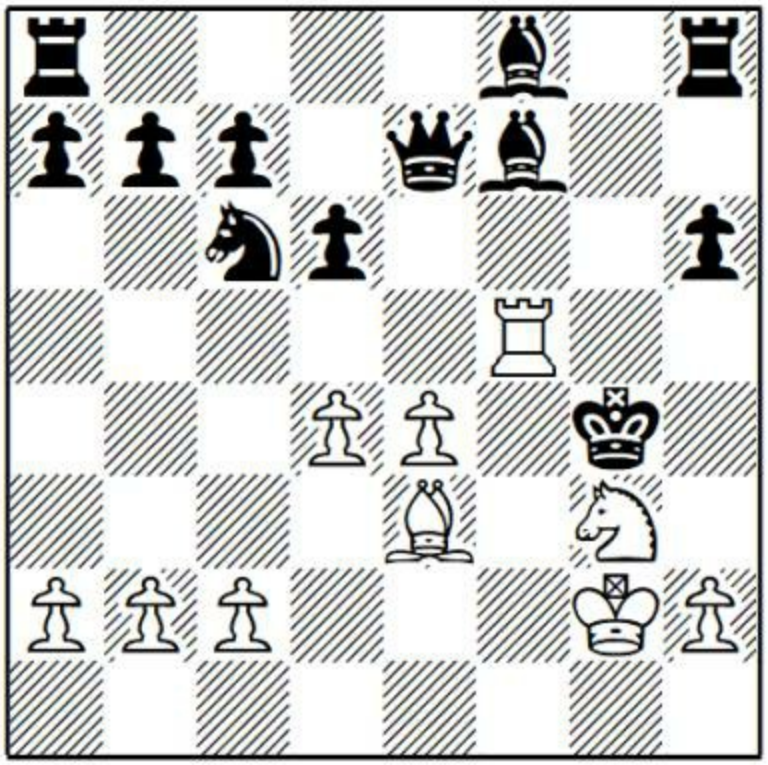
27 Na4+ Ka5 28 Qc3+!

Phase II begins. Attraction.

28 ... Kxa4 29 Qa3 mate

66) M.Lange-Schierstedt

Breslau 1856



White to play

Level 3

White's position is a hammer, in search of a nail. Mate Black in 3:

19 h3+

Not 19 Rf4+?? (this move falls under the old saying: patzer sees a check, patzer plays a check!) 19 ... Kg5 20 Rxf7+ Kg6. There is no mate and White can resign.

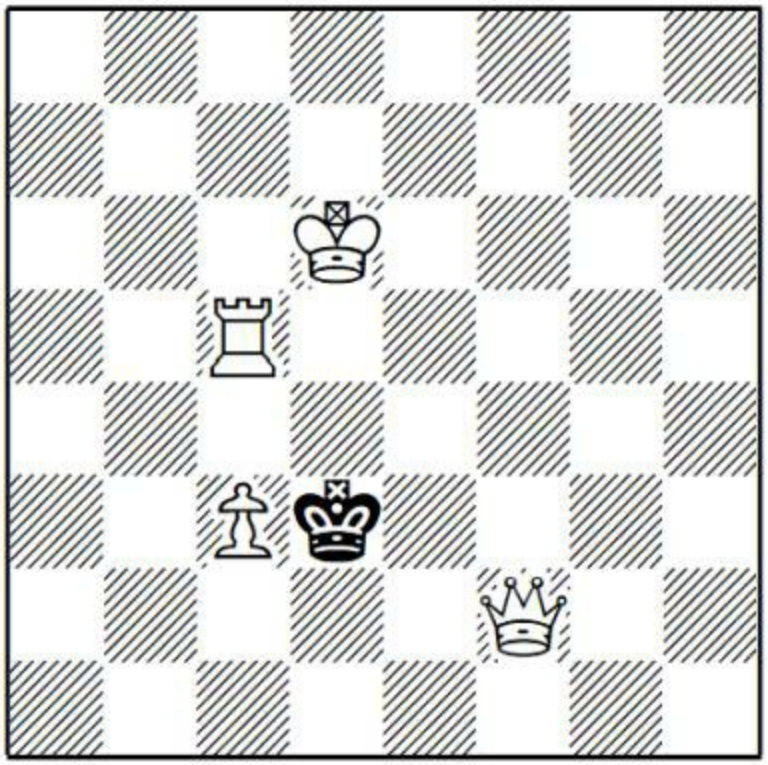
19 ... Kh4 20 Rh5+!

Step 2: Clearance/interference. This move clears f5 for mate with the knight, while clogging h5 as an escape route for Black's king.

20 ... Bxh5 21 Nf5 mate

67) F.Healey

1858



White to play

Level 5

The solution is completely counterintuitive. White mates in 3:

Answer: Move your king *away* from the action!

1 Kd7!!

The genie computer is free and will never again agree to reenter the lamp. This study took me around 10 minutes to solve, while showoffy *Stockfish 12* solved it instantaneously. If you are experiencing perplexity, then you aren't alone. This is literally the last move we would normally consider.

1 Rc7? fails the 3-move mate stipulation: 1 ... Ke4 2 Qg3 Kf5 3 Rf7+ Ke4 4 Rf4 mate.

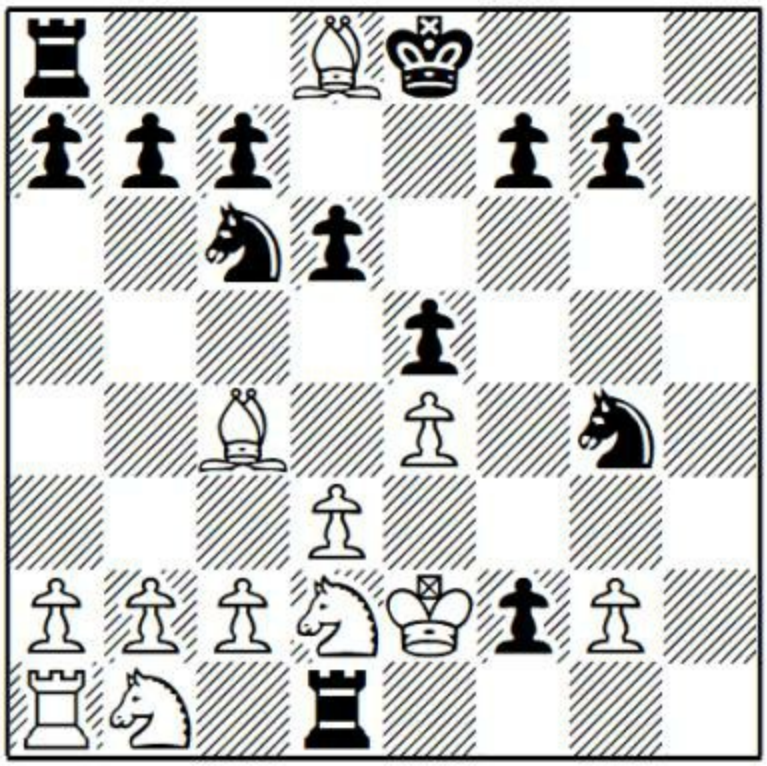
1 ... Ke4 2 Rd5!!

Attraction/zugzwang. This is the beautiful point: Black's king is forced to capture the loose rook.

Not 2 Qe2+? Kf4 3 Ke6 Kg3 4 Rg5+ Kh3 5 Qh5 mate.

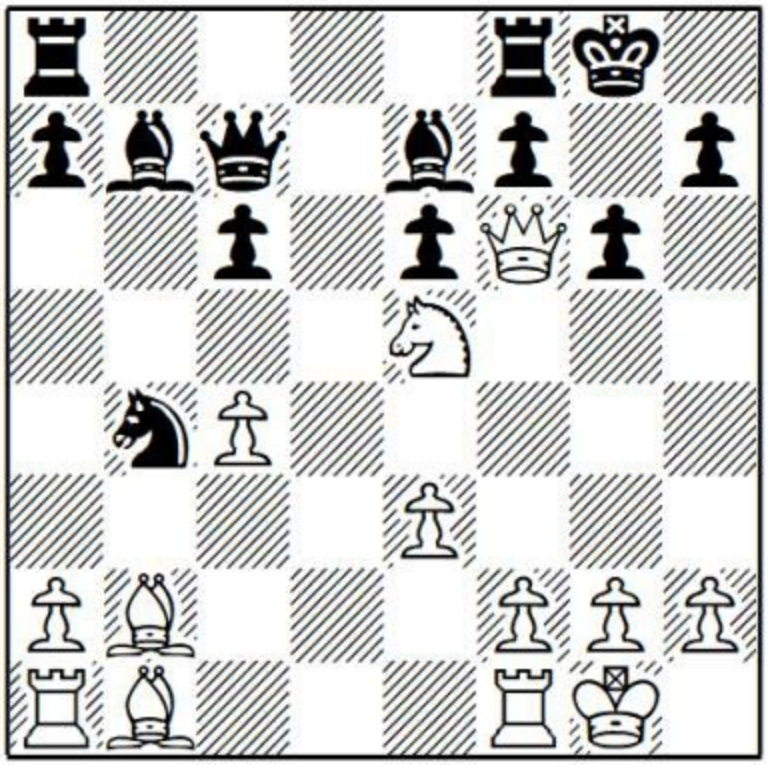
2 ... Kxd5 3 Qd4 mate

68) J.Smith-G.Derrickson
Philadelphia 1860



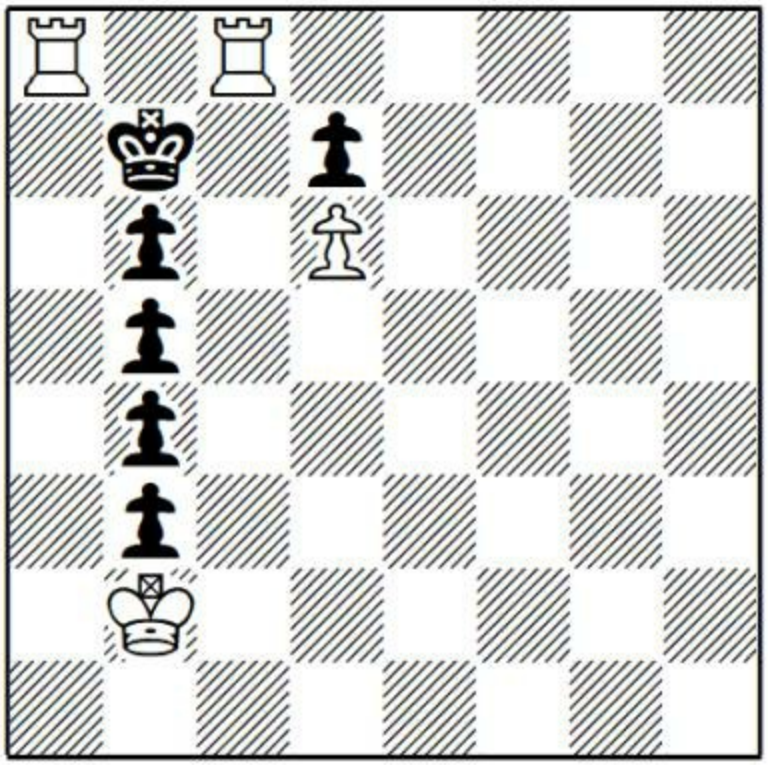
Black to play
Level 2
Mate in 3:
Answer: Just keep giving knight checks until we smother mate White's king.
15 ... Nd4+
The knight is but a single cog in a larger machine. Winning is not the same as immediately mating. Therefore inferior is 15 ... Re1+?! 16 Kf3 f1Q+ 17 Nxf1 Rxf1+ 18 Kxg4 Rxd8. Black wins, but isn't mate better?
16 Kxd1 Ne3+ 17 Kc1 Ne2 mate

69) E.Delmar-NN
New York 1898



White to play
Level 2
Mate in 3:
Answer: Queen sacrifice/attraction/suffocation mate.
18 Qh8+!
Did you fall for 18 Qg7+??. This misfires to 18 ... Kxg7 19 Ng4+ f6 and Black wins.
18 ... Kxh8
Every one of Black's moves are will-less and forced.
19 Nxf7+
Now the knight sneaks in when nobody is watching.
19 ... Kg8 20 Nh6 mate

70) W.Shinkman
Canterpera, 1911



White to play

Level 3.5

This Shinkman problem would fall into the 'relatively easy' category for a composed work. It isn't so difficult to win with White. But can you force checkmate in 3 moves and no more?

1 Ra6!

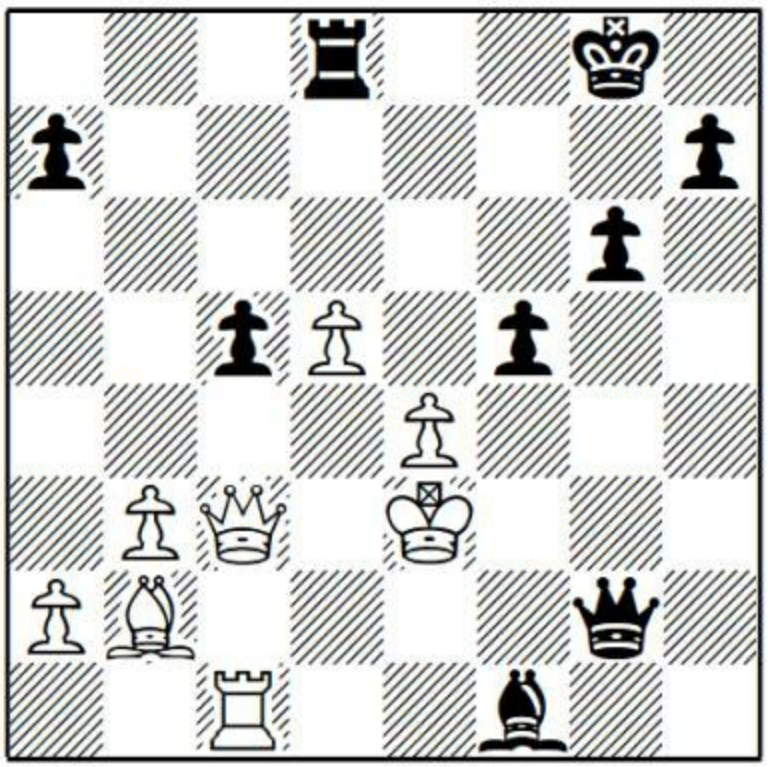
Oh, the malicious joy of duplicity on the chessboard. This move, hanging both White rooks, is the only way to checkmate Black in 3 moves. 1 Rab8+? fails the stipulation: 1 ... Ka7 2 Kxb3 Ka6 3 Rc7 Ka5 4 Ra8 mate.

1 ... Kxa6

Or 1 ... Kxc8 2 Rxb6 (zugzwang) 2 ... Kd8 3 Rb8 mate.

2 Rc7 Ka5 3 Ra7 mate

71) A.Nimzowitsch-S.Tarrasch
St. Petersburg 1914



Black to play

Level 3.5

Bits and pieces of information trickle into Tarrasch's mind, yet not enough to form the quicker conclusion. At this point Tarrasch missed a mate in 3, but still found a longer mate. Can you do better?

28 ... f4+

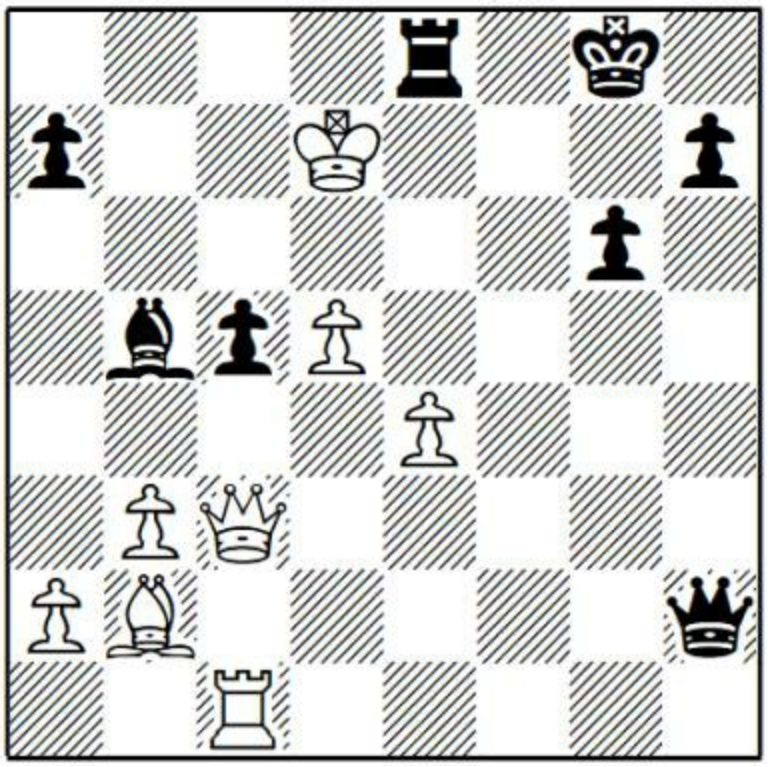
This still mates, but faster is:

Answer: 28 ... Qg3+! 29 Kd2 Qf2+ 30 Kd1 Qe2 mate.

29 Kxf4 Rf8+ 30 Ke5

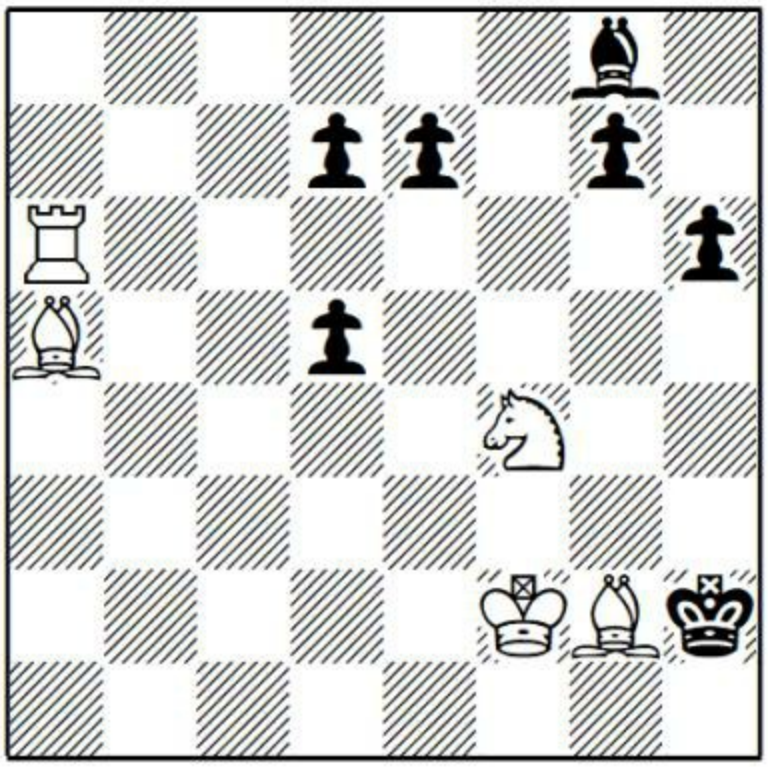
After 30 Ke3 Black has a choice of four separate mates in 1.

30 ... Qh2+ 31 Ke6 Re8+! 32 Kd7 Bb5 mate



The sleeping giant finally awakens. X-ray mate.

72) N.Schalit
Schweizrische Schachzeitung, 1919



White to play

Level 5

I derived great glee from making many of my students sweat over this one. Black's king is tantalizingly close to mate, via Rh1 mate, or Rh3 mate, or manoeuvring the knight to f3, or somehow delivering mate with the dark-squared bishop. Only one of these ideas mates in 3. Which one?

1 Rc6!!

Threat: Rc1 and Rh1 mate.

Most of my students tried 1 Bc7? which fails the 3-move mate stipulation by one move. It begins with a faulty assumption and then seeks 'evidence' to corroborate it. 1 ... Bh7! 2 Nxd5+ (or 2 Ra1 Bb1! - dammit; this blows the stipulation - 3 Rxb1 d4 4 Rh1 mate) 2 ... d6 3 Nxe7 Be4 4 Bxd6 mate. Too slow. That is 4 moves, not 3.

1 ... dxc6

Or 1 ... d4 2 Rc1 Bd5 3 Rh1 mate.

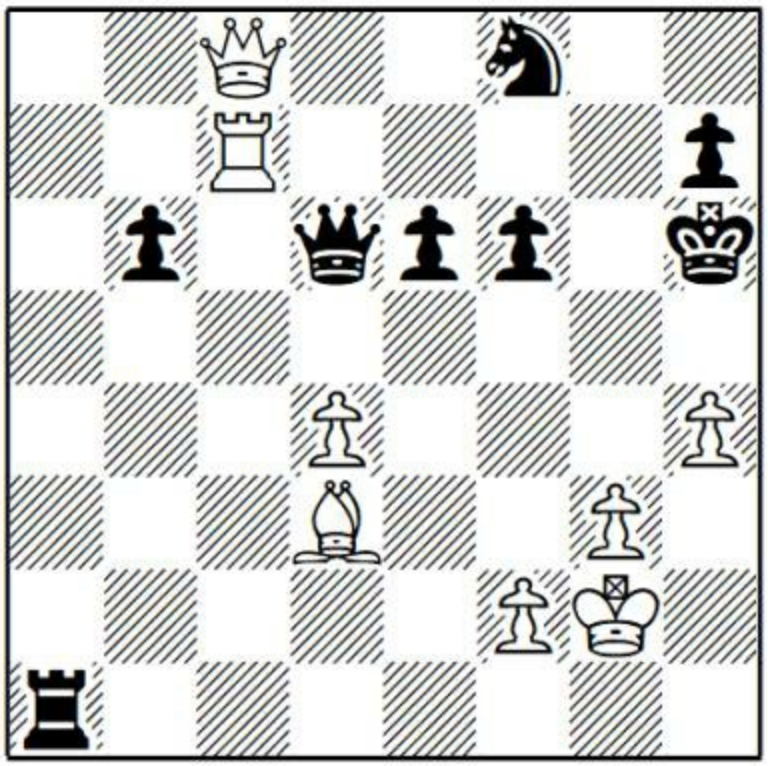
2 Ne6!

Interference. Now do you see why we played 1 Rc6? Black's d7-pawn got shifted to c6 and can no longer block White's bishop check on c7, with ... d6.

2 ... Bxe6 3 Bc7 mate

White's bishops and king speak with a single voice.

73) J.Capablanca-E.Lasker
World Championship (Game 11), Havana 1921



White to play

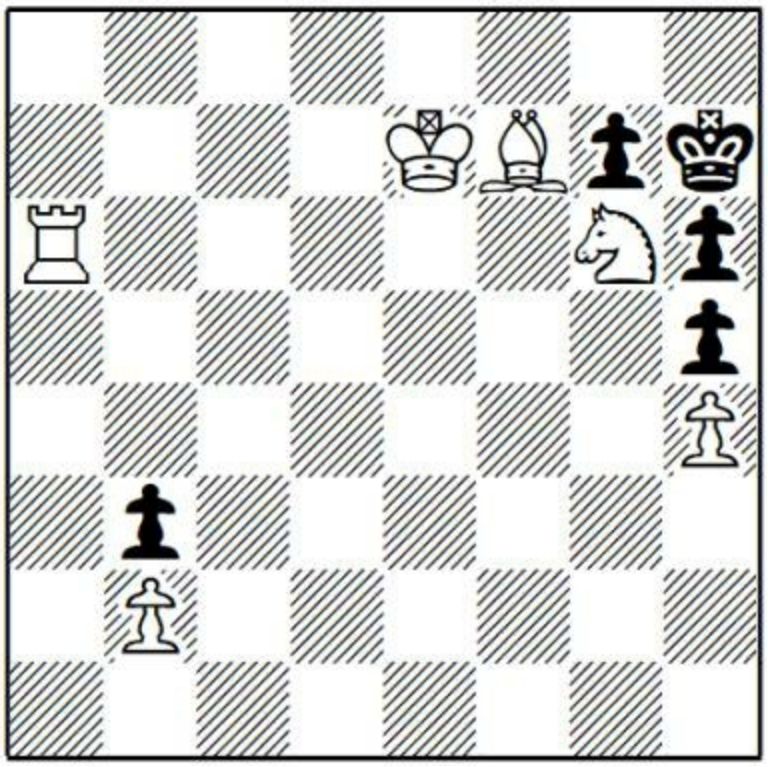
Level 2

Lasker walked into a mate in 3:

48 Qxf8+! 1-0

Queen sacrifice/decoy. The knight is Black's Judas piece, who sold itself to betray its king. If 48 ... Qxf8 (or 48 ... Kh5 49 Rxh7+ Kg4 50 f3 mate) 49 Rxh7 mate.

74) F.Giegold
1952



White to play
Level 5

My buddy, IM Paul Littlewood, posted this little beauty by Fritz Giegold, who is my favorite mating problem composer. Paul had the nerve to say the solution was "easy"! Believe it or not, Paul is actually correct. Giegolds *are e*asy to solve, if you understand his composing style. There is no reason to wander, hopelessly lost in a maze of corridors when solving a Giegold problem. The trick is to first look for the most insanely unlikely move on the board, and it will probably be your solution. I solved this problem in less than five seconds, and the solution move was my very first choice! You need to think outside the box for this one.

White only has 3 moves and no more, to force mate:

Answer: **1 Ra2!!**

Attraction. Black's king is in a stalemate position and needs air. 1 Nf8+? is one move too slow: 1 ... Kh8 2 Bg6 Kg8 3 Ra8 Kh8 4 Ne6 mate.

1 ... bxa2 2 Bxa2

Attraction/zugzwang. Black's only legal move is to take our knight.

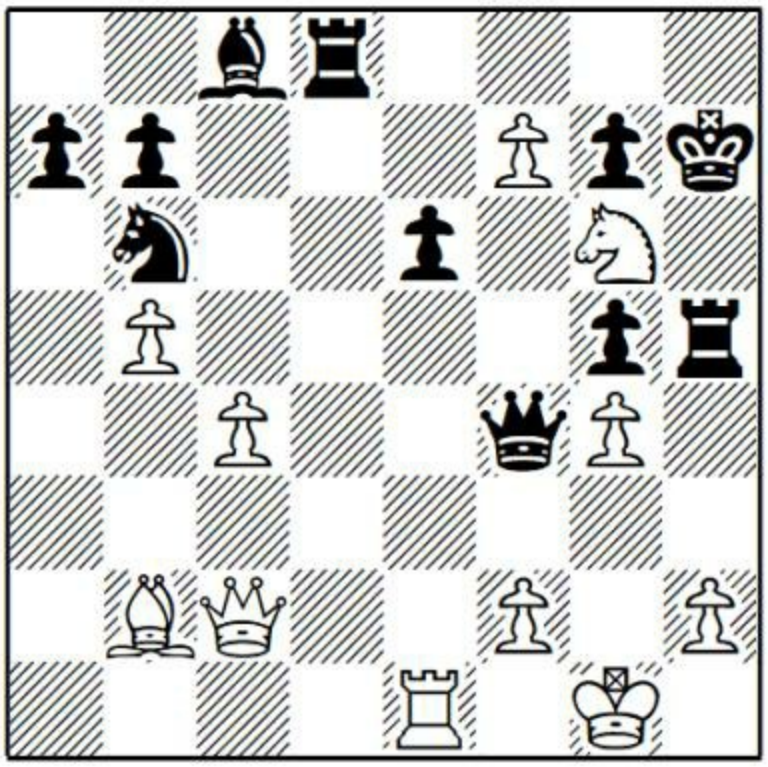
2 ... Kxg6

White's position contains one more lie left in it, taking advantage of Black's defensive gap next move.

3 Bb1 mate

And there we have it!

75) F.Sämisch-O.Menzinger
Marktoberdorf 1953



White to play
Level 2

Sämisch found himself in a happy place, where he can take Black's queen with check, and then Black's rook. But mate in 3 is so much better, isn't it?

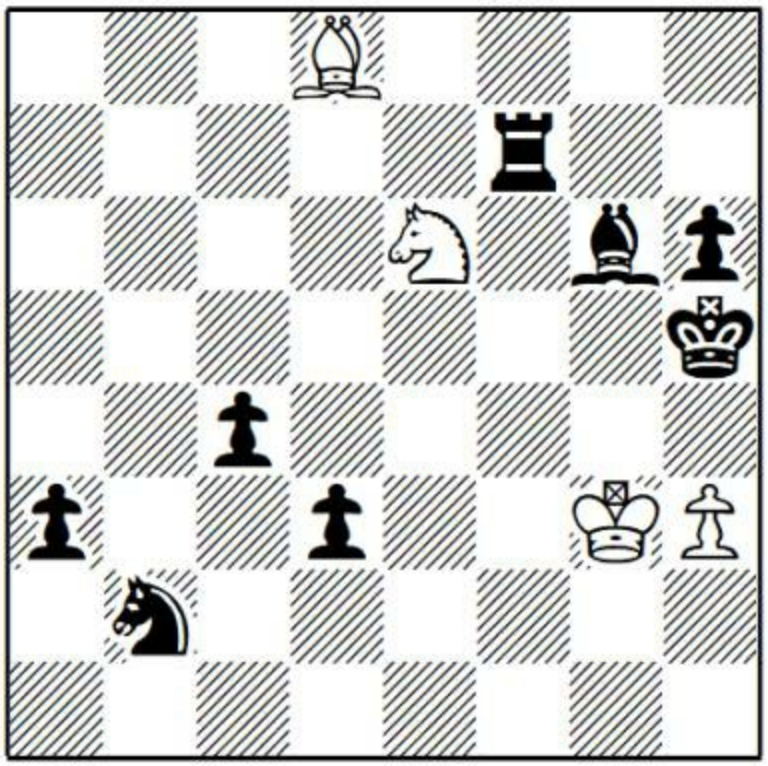
Answer: **28 Nf8+! Kh8 29 Qh7+!**

Queen sacrifice/smothered mate.

29 ... Rxh7 30 Ng6 mate

Fantasy gives way to realism.

76) A.Wotawa
Deutsche Schachzeitung, 1956



White to play

Level 4

Is the black king's death overdue, or is he unkillable? With just a tiny shift Black's defences come crashing down, almost without firing a shot.

Answer: Interference/overloaded defender.

1 Bf6!!

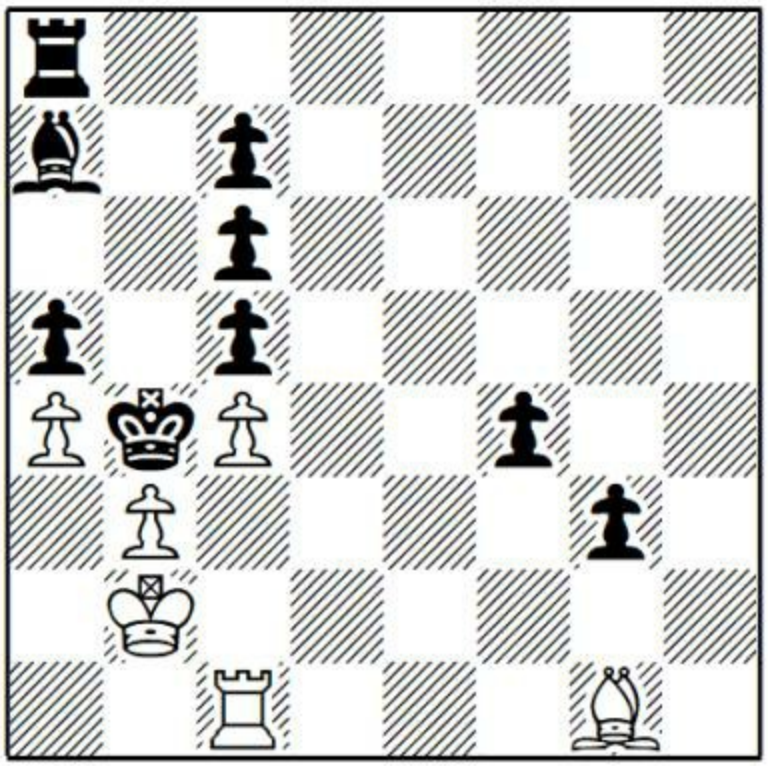
The bishop, once on the outside, looking in, suddenly takes charge of the position with a single shift. Threat: Nf4 mate.

1 ... Rxf6

The rook is overloaded, unable to cover both g7 and f4. 4 ... Bf5 5 Nf4 mate.

2 Ng7+ Kg5 3 h4 mate

77) A.Wotawa
Deutsche Schachzeitung, 1959



White to play
Level 4
How does White get to Black's king in just 3 moves?
Answer: Transfer the bishop to d3 (threat: Bc3 mate).
1 Bd4!!
Love is blind. White's bishop moves to d4 anyway, even though the

square is covered by Black's c5-pawn.

1 ... cxd4

A door Black worked so hard to slam shut, is now opening. If 1 ... f3 2 Bc3 mate.

2 c5!

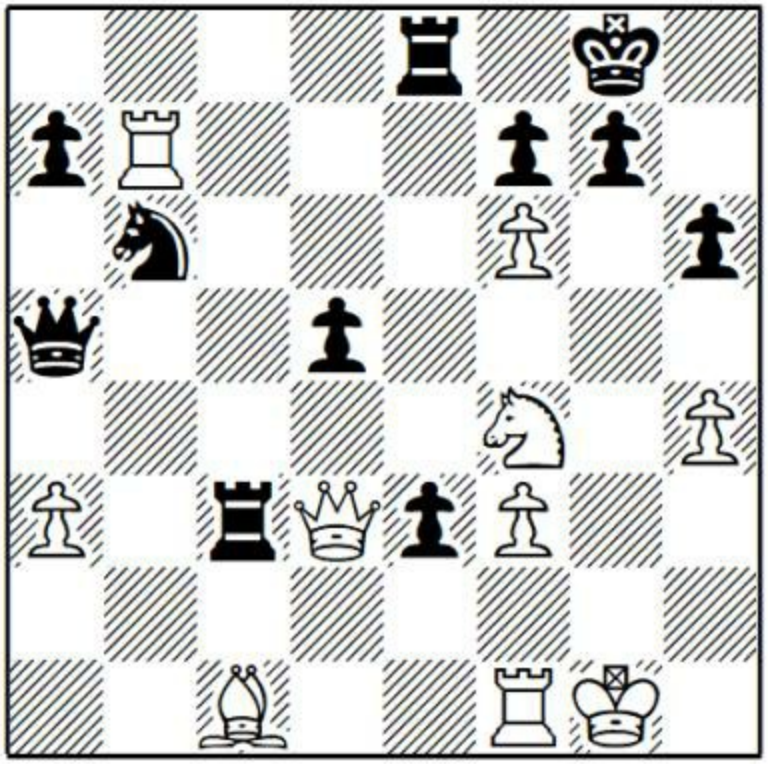
Clearance number two. There is no stopping Rc4 mate next move.

2 ... Bxc5

Misery loves company. Nothing else evaded the coming mate.

3 Rc4 mate

78) D.Bronstein-E.Geller
USSR Championship, Moscow 1961



White to play

Level 3.5

The mating combination is not deep, yet would be so easy to miss in a

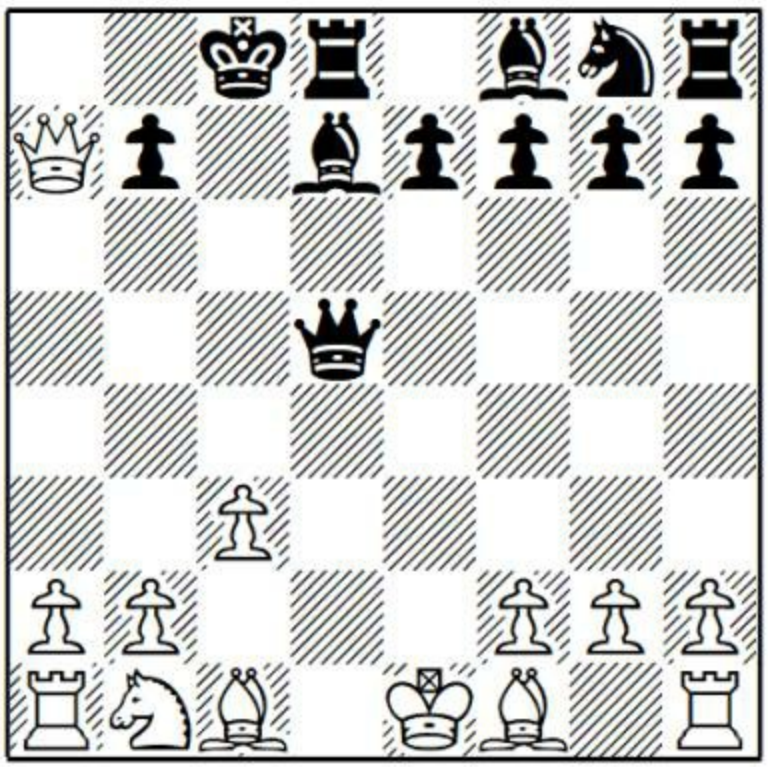
tournament game. Bronstein's next move is a dominating expression of his superiority in the position.

Answer: Queen sacrifice/clearance.

20 Qg6!! 1-0

Pain is the universal teacher. Once we receive it, we correct our old, inferior habits. Geller must have thought he had the initiative before Bronstein's stunning shot. 20 ... fxg6 (this capture clears the white rook's path to g7) 21 Rxg7+ Kh8 22 Nxg6 is mate.

79) Dutch-J.Sugden
Coulsdon & Purley 1964



Black to play
Level 2
Black mates in 3 with one of two outcomes resulting:
1. Reti's mate.

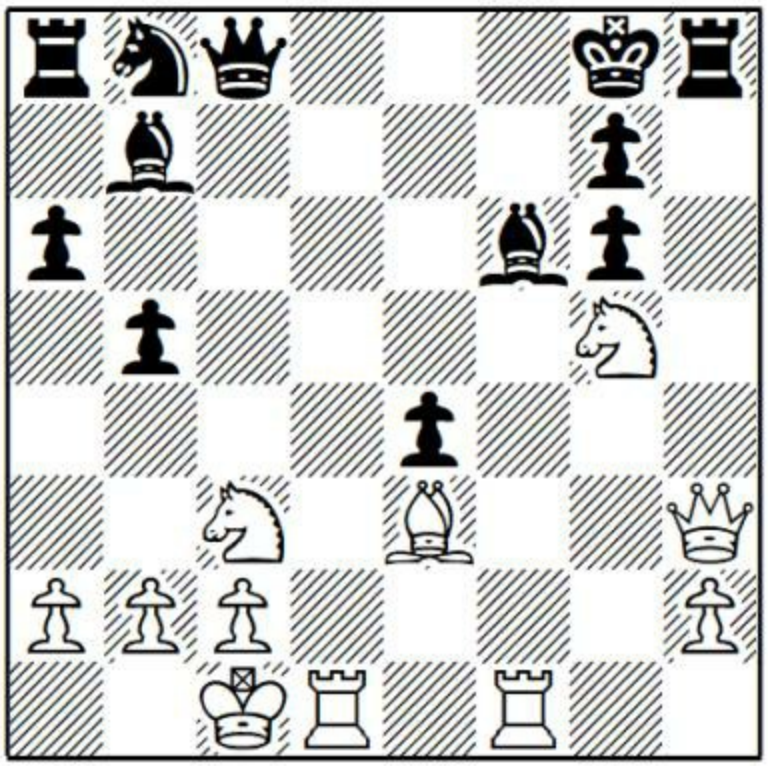
2. Opera Box mate. White's choice!

Answer: Queen sacrifice.

10 ... Qd1+! 11 Kxd1 Bg4+ 0-1

The end of the adventure is unclear, since White has the dubious choice of which way he wants to be mated: 12 Kc2 Bd1 is Reti's mate and 12 Ke1 Rd1 is the Opera Box mate.

80) L.Kavalek-G.Khodos
Sinaia 1965



White to play

Level 3

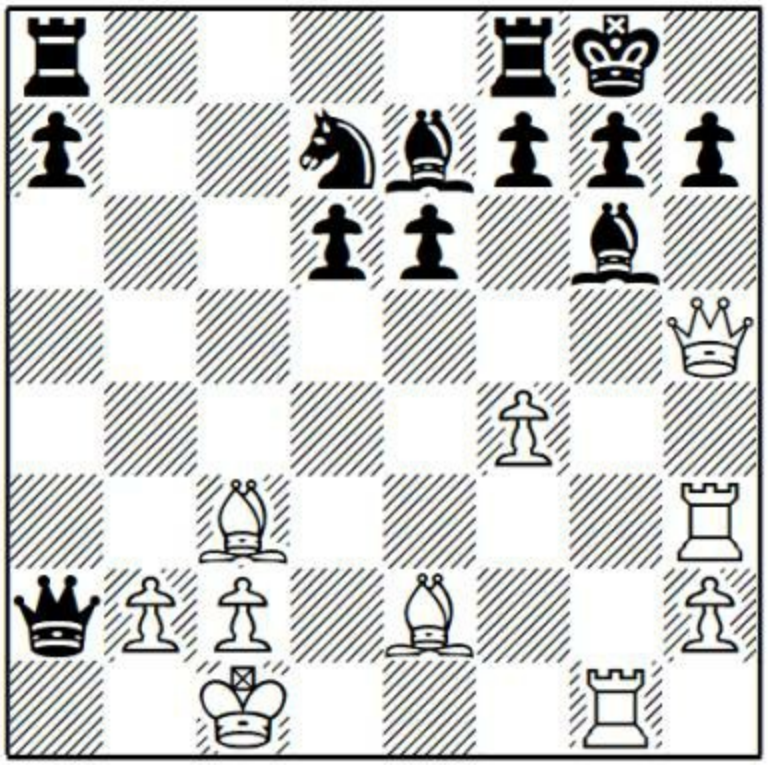
Black's fearful king sleeps with one eye open. Where is White's home invasion route?

Answer: Decoy/interference.

22 Rd8+! 1-0

If 22 ... Bxd8 (or 22 ... Qxd8 23 Qe6+ Kf8 24 Qf7 mate) 23 Qxh8+! (decoy) 23 ... Kxh8 24 Rf8 mate. Black's d8-bishop interferes with his queen's protection of f8.

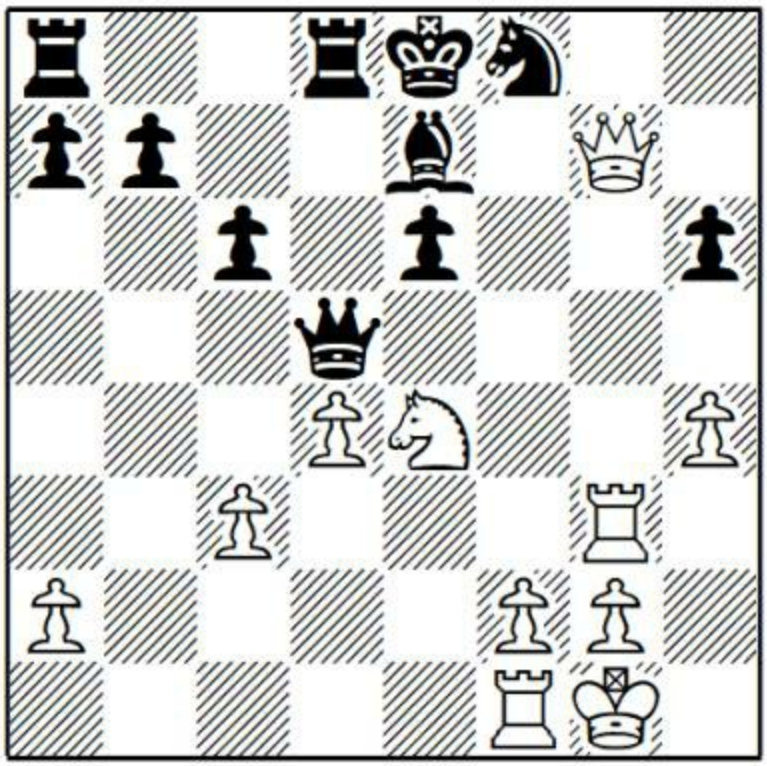
81) M.Tal-A.Koblents
USSR 1965



White to play
Level 2
Mate in 3:
Answer: Queen sacrifice/decoy/clearance.
20 Qxh7+!
There was nothing else to bargain with!
20 ... Bxh7 21 Rxg7+
I don't want to insult you by stating the obvious: maybe Black should have considered resignation.

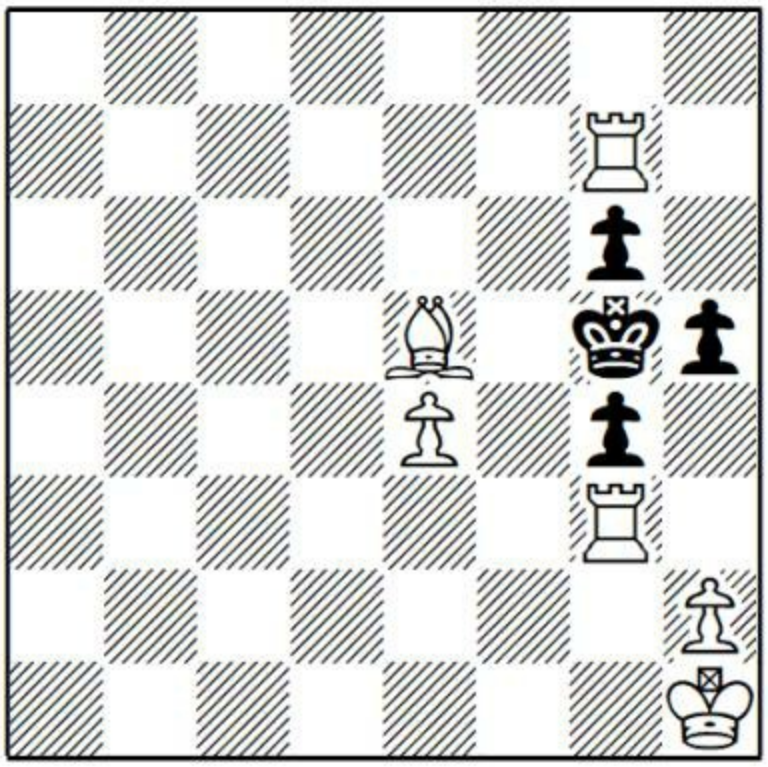
21 ... Kh8 22 Rhxh7 mate

82) V.Korchnoi-A.Petersons
USSR Championship, Kiev 1965



White to play
Level 2
Now is the time to strike, before Black has an opportunity to organize a defence. Mate in 3:
Answer: Queen sacrifice.
32 Qxe7+! 1-0
32 ... Kxe7 33 Rg7+ Ke8 34 Nf6 is mate.

83) V.Nabokov
The Problemist, 1969



White to play

Level 4.5

Yes, it's that Nabokov. In my youth I remember reading Vladimir Nabokov's third novel, *The Luzhin Defense*, about a grandmaster who loses touch with reality and descends into madness, due to his obsession with chess. This was prophetic, since the novel was written before Fischer's slow lurch toward mental illness. What I didn't know was that Nabokov was a strong chess player himself, who actually composed problems. Here is a pretty mate in 3 by the great man himself:

Answer: Move your e-pawn up one square.

1 h3!!

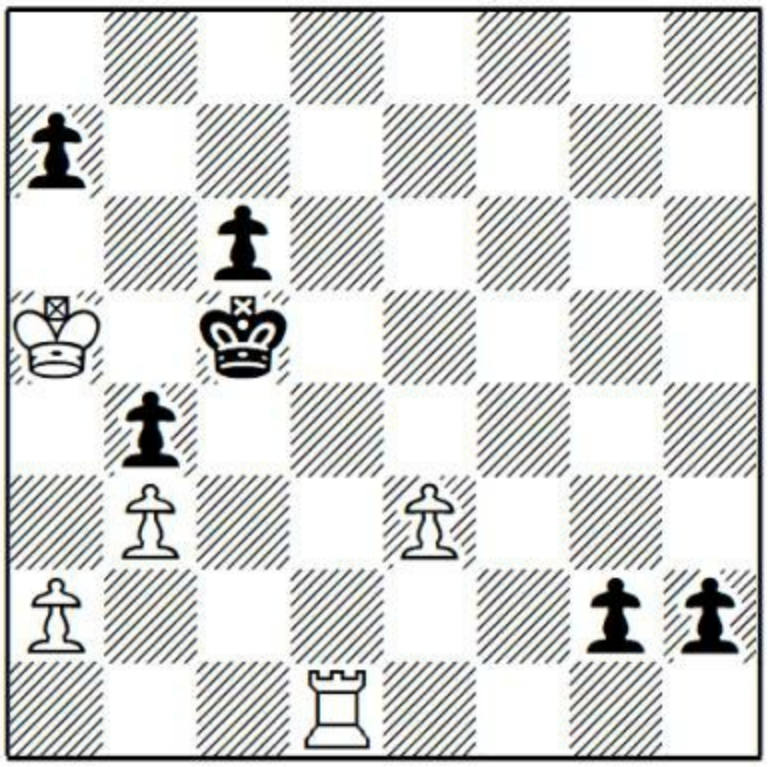
One move too slow is 1 Rg1? g3 2 Rxg3+ Kh4 3 Bf6+ g5 4 Bxg5 mate.

1 ... h4

Alternatively, 1 ... Kh4 2 Rxg6 gxh3 3 Bf6 mate or 1 ... Kh6 2 h4! g5 3 hxg5 mate.

2 Rh7! hxg3 3 h4 mate

84) A.Wotawa
Deutsche Schachzeitung, 1969



White to play

Level 4

Black is about to promote to a new queen and we have no time to lose. In reality Black's position is the apartment just above the meth lab. Construct an ingenious mating net for Black's king:

Answer: Push the a-pawn one square.

1 a3!

Reversing the order ruins it for White. 1 Rd4?? g1Q 2 a3 Qe1! 3 axb4+ Qxb4+ 4 Rxb4 h1Q and Black wins.

1 ... bxa3

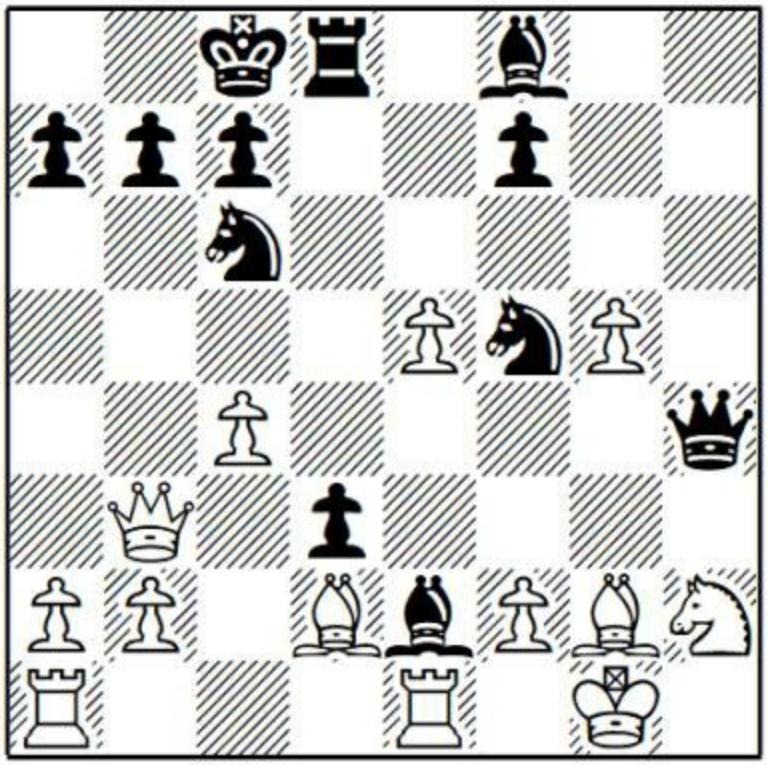
Black has no choice. 1 ... g1Q 2 axb4 mate.

2 Rd4!

Step 2: Lift the rook to d4. Why? Because then the c4-square is covered, allowing White to push the b-pawn to the fourth rank to deliver mate.

2 ... g1Q 3 b4 mate

85) E.Formanek-D.Oshana
Chicago 1970



Black to play

Level 2

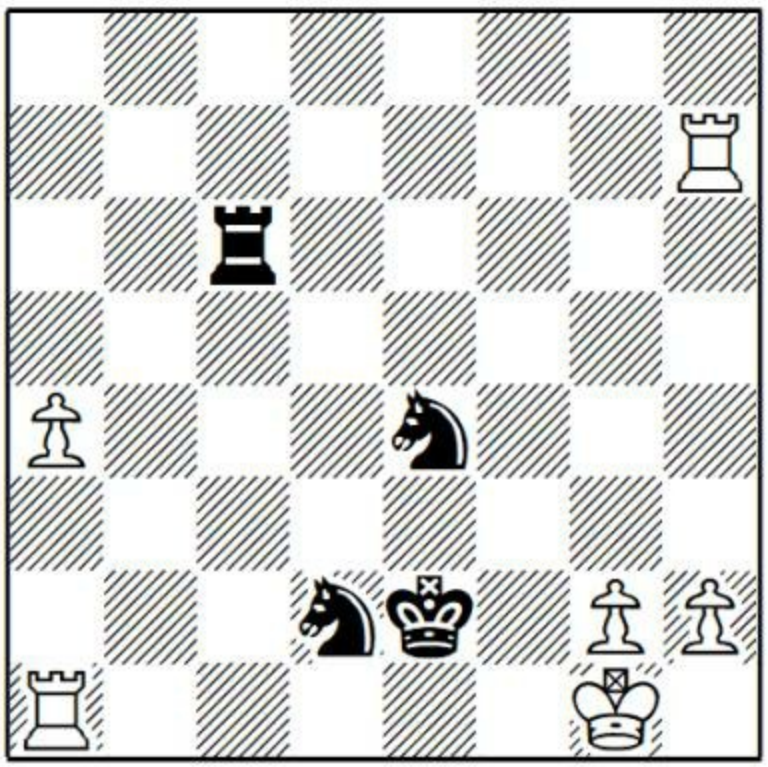
White is obviously in trouble. What is Black's strongest continuation?

Answer: Queen sacrifice/annihilation of defensive barrier.

19 ... Qxf2+! 0-1

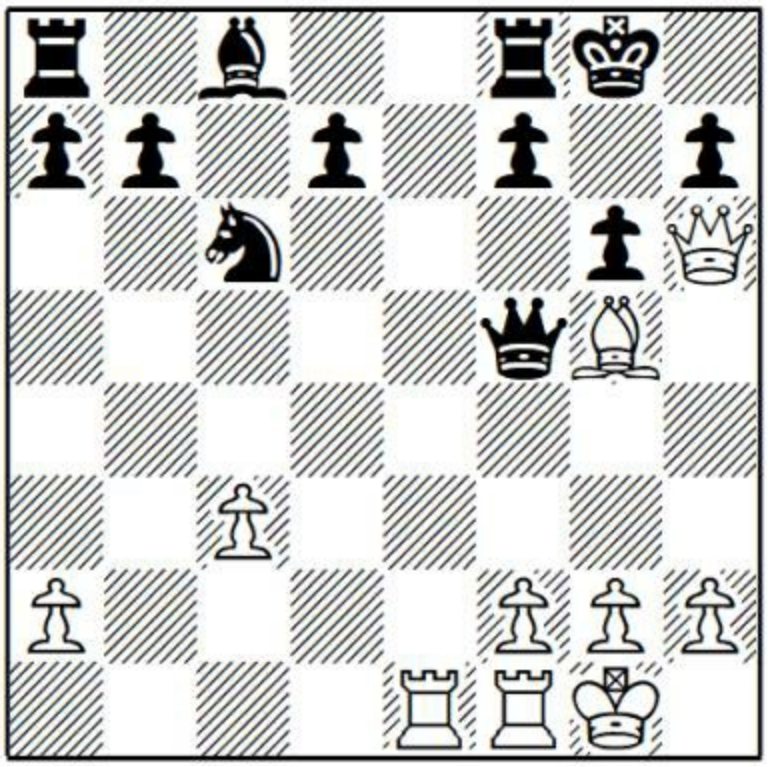
A queen for a pawn is normally an affront to the normal rule of law, but not when we deliver mate. White resigned here, seeing 20 Kxf2 (20 Kh1 Ng3 is smothered mate) 20 ... Bc5+ 21 Be3 Bxe3 mate.

86) V.Korchnoi-A.Karpov
World Championship (Game 17), Baguio City 1978



Black to play
Level 2
Korchnoi blundered into a mate in 3, in an otherwise equal ending:
Answer: Clearance.
39 ... Nf3+! 0-1
No more Mr. Nice Guy. So much for maintaining a low profile! 40 gxf3 (or 40 Kh1 Nf2 mate) 40 ... Rg6+ 41 Kh1 Nf2 is mate.

87) J.Polgar-P.Chilingirova
Thessaloniki Olympiad 1988



White to play

Level 2

We can be in a war of dynamic versus static advantages, yet the two contradict each other. Black is up a load of material (static advantage), yet it is no match for White's massive development lead and dark square power (dynamic advantage). How did Judit force mate in 3 moves?

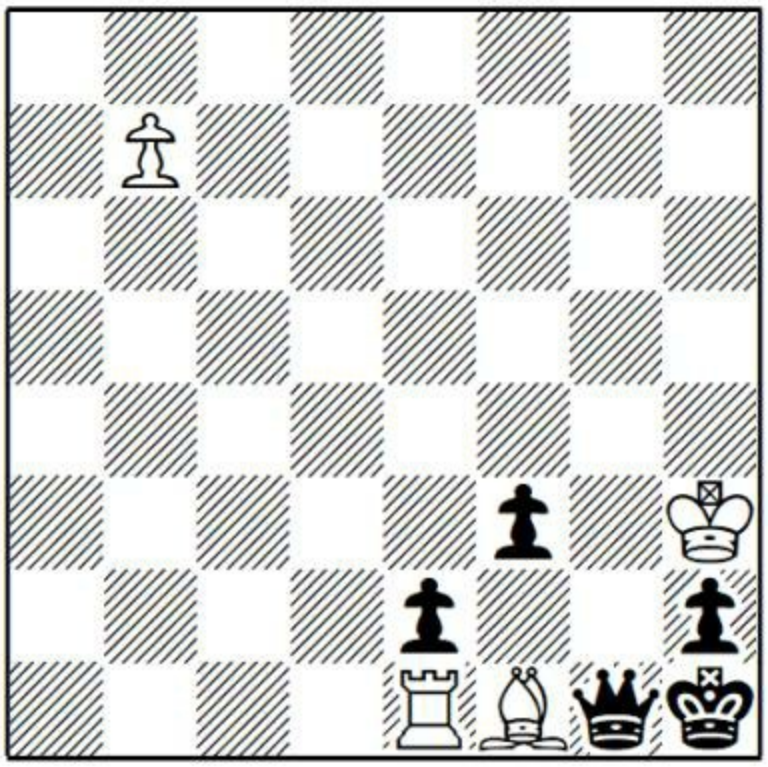
Answer: Queen sacrifice/weak back rank.

17 Qxf8+! 1-0

If 17 ... Kxf8 18 Bh6+ Kg8 19 Re8 mate.

88) V.Smyslov

64, 2000



White to play

Level 3.5

Smyslov contended for the world championship candidates' matches in his 60's - an unrivaled feat of chess longevity, and then he began a prolific composition career in his retirement. As mentioned in the introduction to this book, I loaded it up with Smyslov's studies. White forces mate in 3:

Answer: Step 1: Clearance.

1 Bg2+! fxg2 2 b8Q

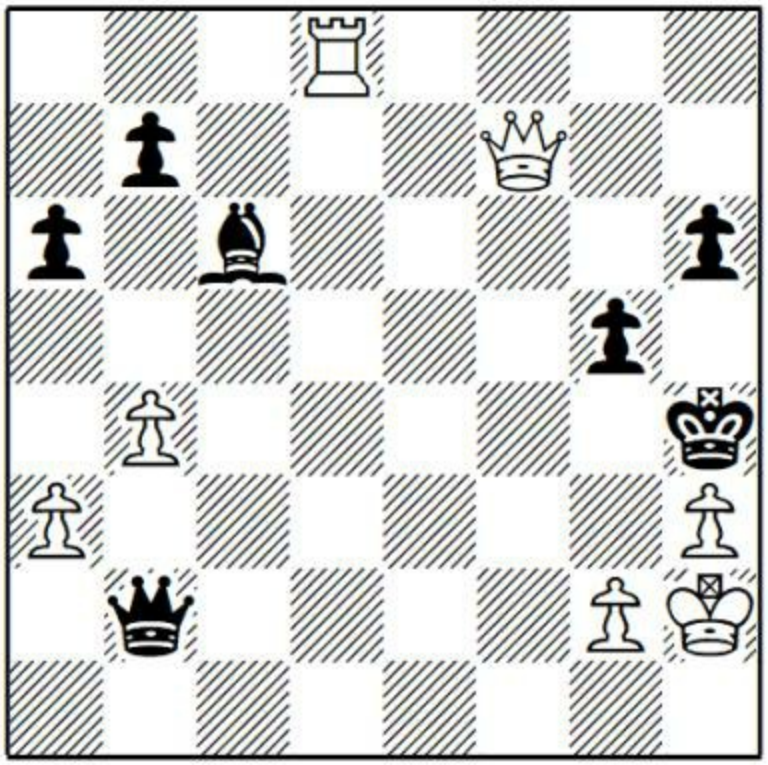
Step 2: Zugzwang. Black's queen is forced to move away from her coverage of h2.

2 ... Qxe1

This is not much of a temporary act of resistance. 2 ... Qe3+ would be great, except for the fact that it's an illegal move, and if 2 ... Qf1 3 Qxh2 mate.

3 Qxh2 mate

89) K.Lagno-M.Etmans
Wijk aan Zee 2004



Black, who threatened mate on g2, became a victim of Hurricane Kateryna (I stole this joke from chessgames.com). How did White force mate in 3 moves at the most?

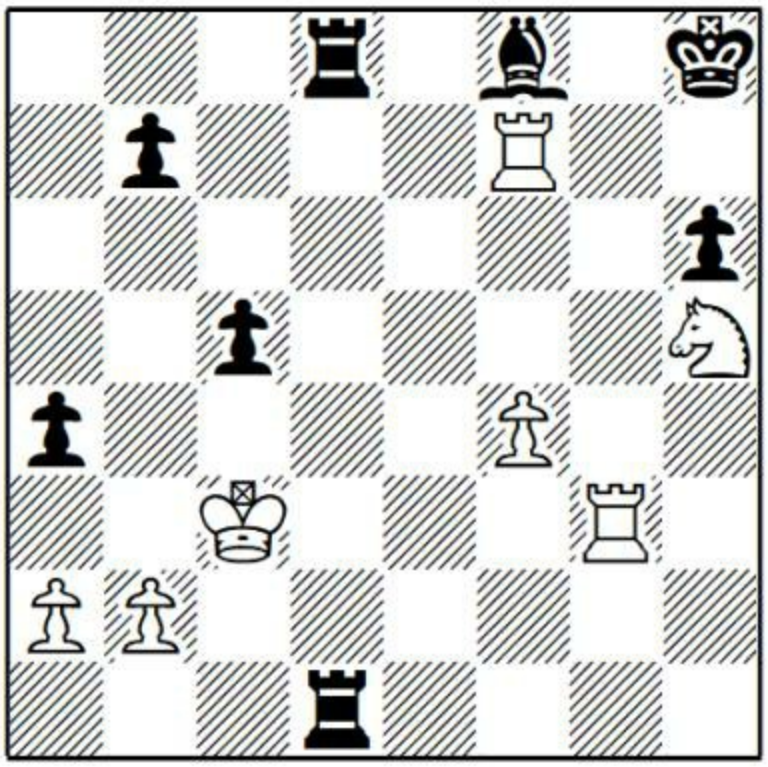
Answer: Deflection/removal of the guard/unpinning.

60 Rd4+! Qxd4

Or Black can stretch it out to three moves with spite blocks: 60 ... Be4 61 Rxe4+ g4 62 Rxg4 mate.

61 g3 mate

90) V.Kotronias-F.Vallejo Pons
Budva 2009



White to play

Level 2

One defender to three attackers is an unpromising ratio for Vallejo Pons. My friend GM Vasilios Kotronias is a frequent guest of my Endgame Studies Facebook group and is an accomplished solver. He must have seen his mate in 3 in a nano-second in this game:

Answer: Step 1: Rook sacrifice/attraction/Arabian mate.

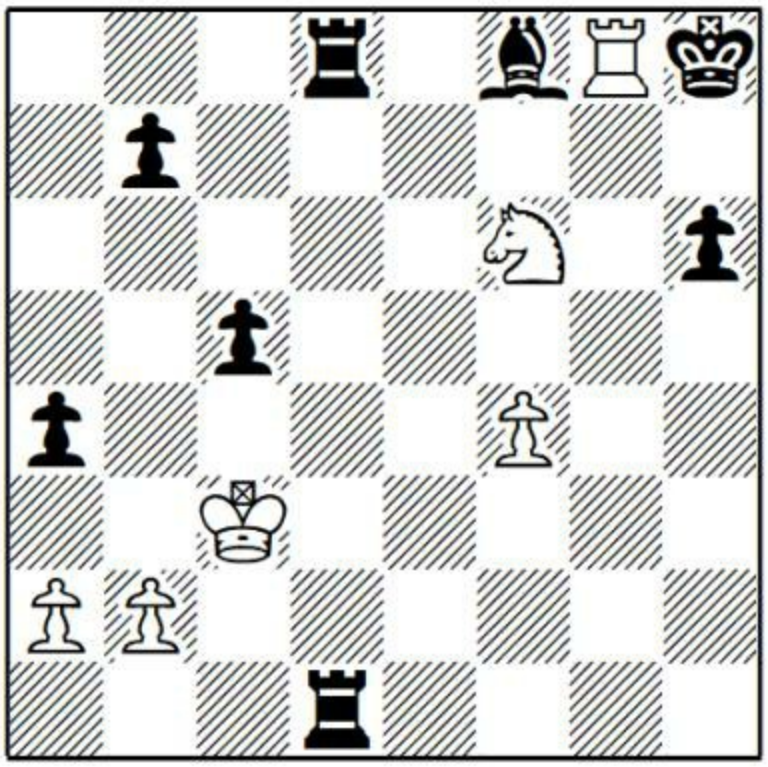
42 Rh7+!

Such combinations are easy to see when someone informs us that they are there, yet so easy to miss in our actual games. Someone in the group pointed out the "alternative win" with 42 Nf6?? threatening Rh7 mate, which is too slow since Black responds with 42 ... Rc1 mate.

42 ... Kxh7 43 Nf6+ Kh8

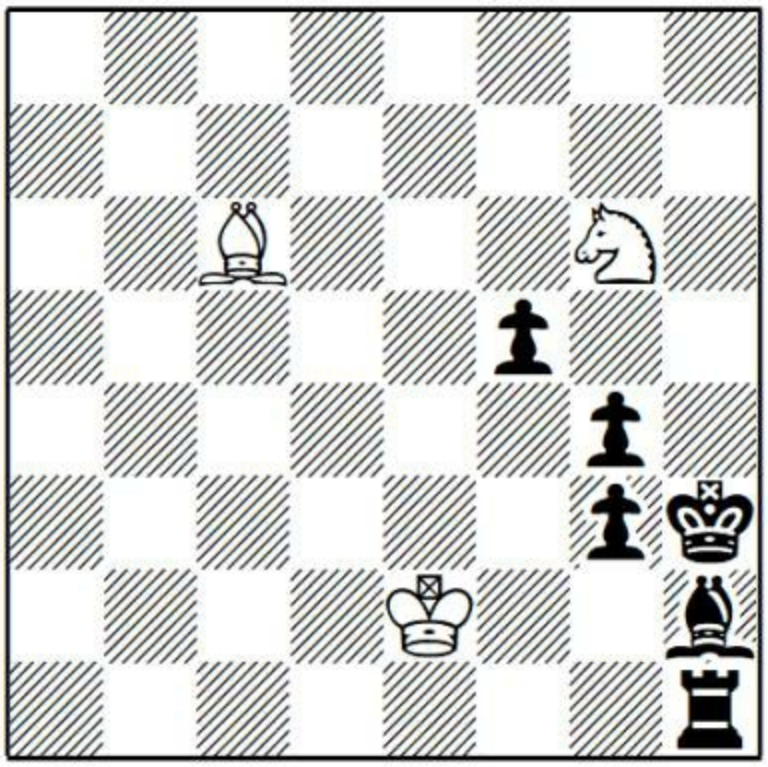
A wall can protect us from every direction, except one: above!

44 Rg8 mate



Arabian mate!

91) A.Troitzky
Novoye Vremja, 1897



White to play

Level 4

We move to mates in 4. Alexey Troitzky was one of the first great endgame study composers, of no less stature than Morphy or Capablanca. In his creations, we begin to believe in the impossible. In this portion of a study, Black's king is unsafe. Prove it by forcing mate in 4:

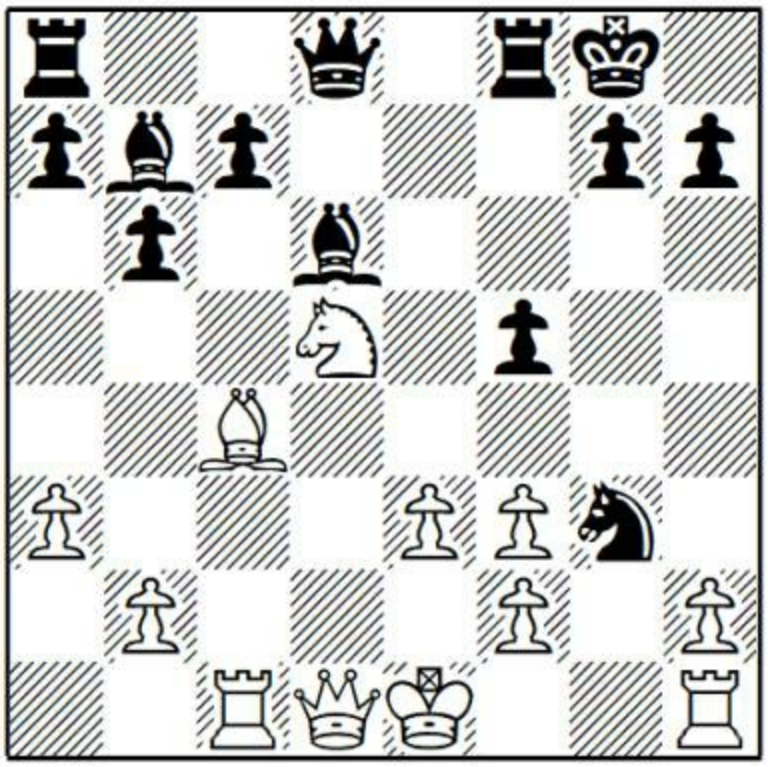
Answer: Attraction. Black's king must be lured to first g2, then g1.

3 Bg2+! Kxg2 4 Nf4+ Kg1 5 Ke1!

Zugzwang.

5 ... g2 6 Ne2 mate

92) S.Johnston-F.Marshall
Chicago 1899



White to play

Level 3

You know that voice in your head which begs: “Please, please, don’t do this!” but then of course you defy the wise voice and do it anyway? Well, that just happened to Marshall, who on his last move played 14 ... Nxg3??, expecting White to recapture. He overlooked a powerful pair of zwischenzugs which forced mate in 4:

15 Ne7+!

Double check/zwischenzug. Black may survive the lackluster auto-capture 15 hxg3? Kh8.

15 ... Kh8

Black’s king is an unwilling and unsympathetic audience.

16 Ng6+!

Zwischenzug/clearance.

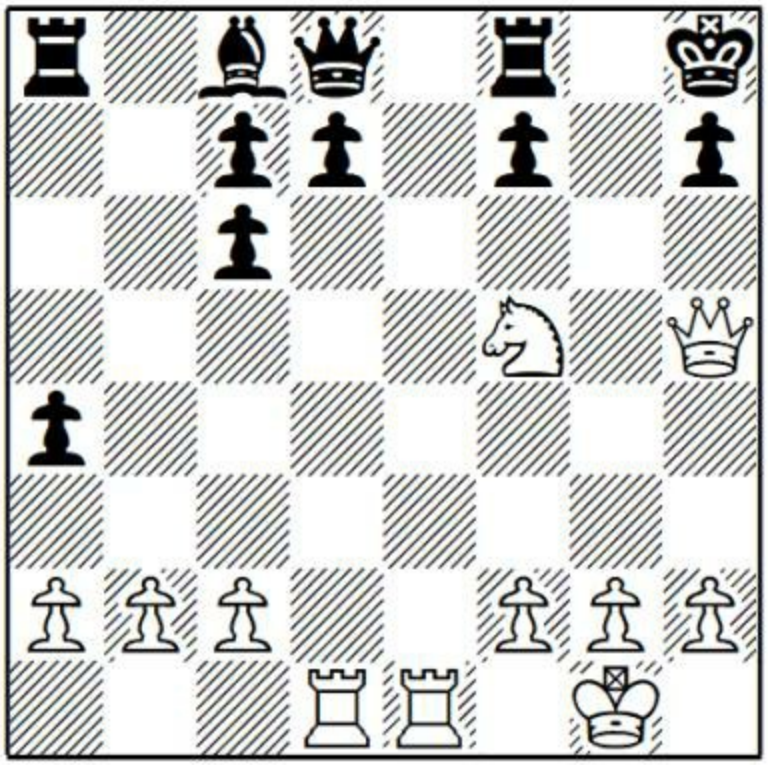
16 ... hxg6 17 hxg3+ Qh4

Really? You didn’t consider resigning? Did you think your opponent

would miss the mate in one and make a waiting move?

18 Rxh4 mate

93) A.Fox-A.Clerc
Paris 1901



White to play

Level 2

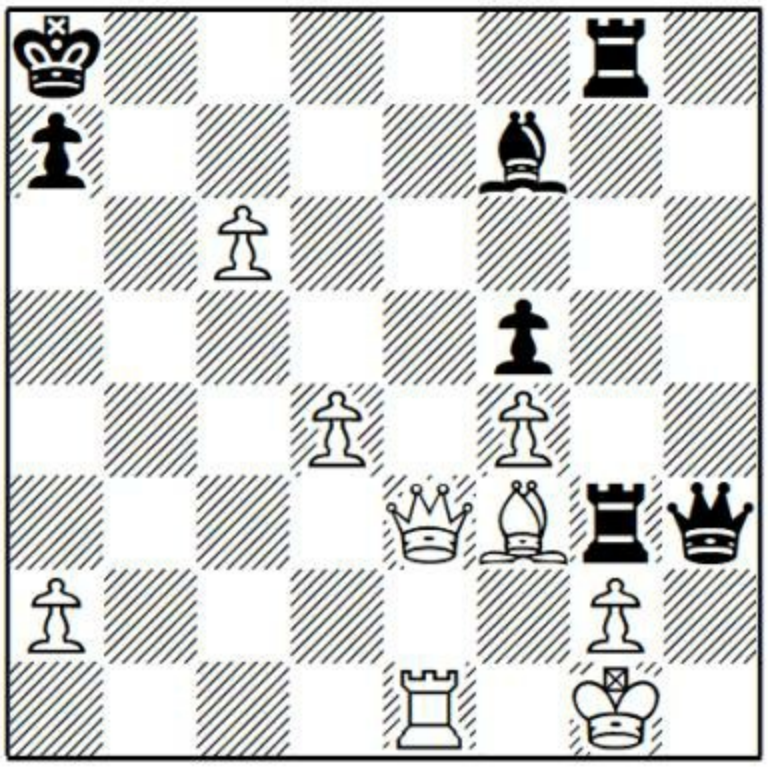
White forces mate in 4:

Answer: Start with sliding our queen to h6.

21 Qh6 Rg8 22 Re8! 1-0

Step 2: Overloaded defenders. Threat: Qg7 mate and Black has to play the obviously suicidal 22 ... Qg5 to evade immediate mate (if 22 ... Qxe8 23 Qf6+ Rg7 24 Qxg7 mate or 22 ... Rxe8 23 Qg7 mate), but this move falls under the heading: better to stay silent and allow people to suspect that you are stupid, than to speak and remove all doubt: 23 Qxg5 Rxe8 24 Qg7 mate.

94) J.Mieses-C.Von Bardeleben
Barmen 1905



White to play

Level 4

Mieses has a mate in 4:

30 c7+

It isn't that Mieses suffered from any failure of imagination. Instead, he botched the move order. This is a mate in 10. Faster is to invert the move order with:

Answer: Queen sacrifice/weak back rank/pawn promotion. 30 Qe8+! amplifies White's message: 30 ... Rxe8 31 Rxe8+ Bxe8 32 c7+ Rxf3 33 c8Q mate.

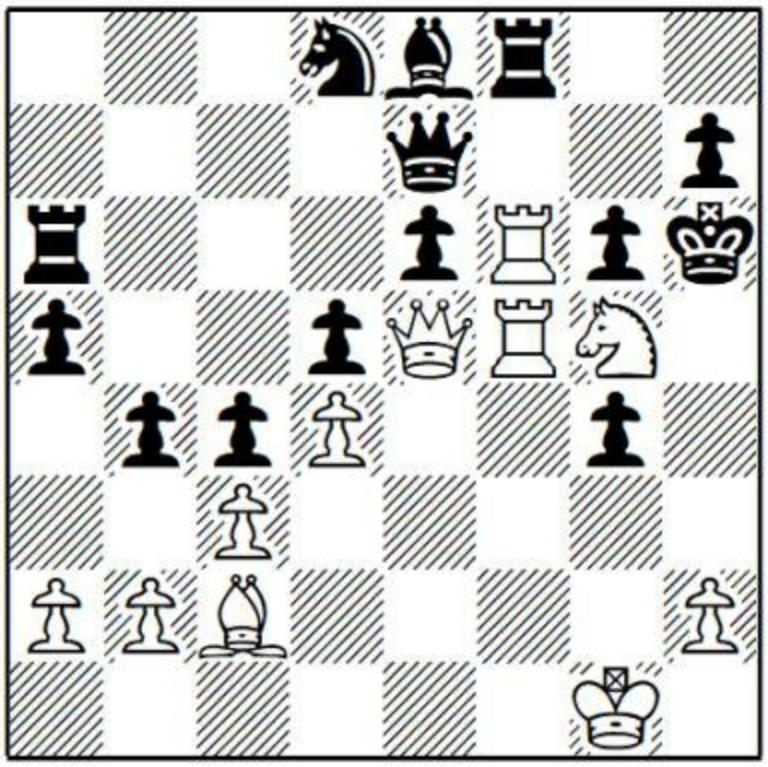
30 ... Rxf3 31 Qe8+!

Interference.

31 ... Rxe8 32 Rxe8+ 1-0

If 32 ... Kb7 (it's difficult to call this a last straw, since there have been so many straws for Black, but if 32 ... Bxe8 33 c8Q mate) 33 c8Q+ Kb6 34 Qc5+ Ka6 35 Qc6+ Ka5 36 Re5+ Kb4 37 Qc5+ Ka4 38 Qa5 mate.

95) L.Forgacs-S.Tartakower
St. Petersburg 1909



White to play

Level 3.5

Black's king faces a confluence of crises. Force mate in 4 moves:

Answer: Let's start with a clearance sacrifice on f5. This enables Rh5+ tricks.

26 Nf7+! Qxf7

Or 26 ... Nxf7 27 Rh5+ Kg7 28 Rxg6 mate. Double check and mate!

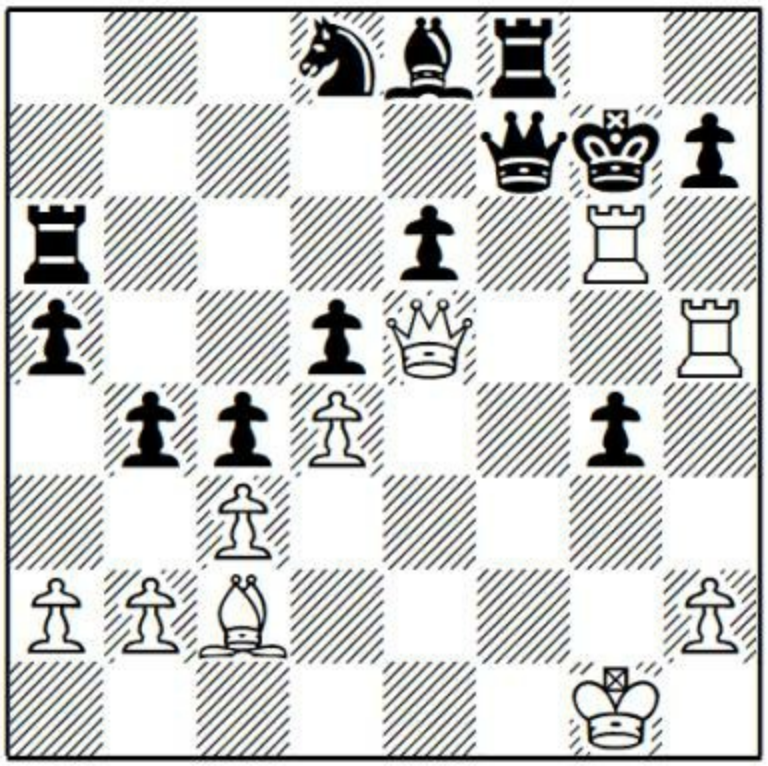
27 Rh5+!

Forgacs is not interested in Tartakower's queen, yet nothing can be done since his position simply isn't rigged to deal with all of the defensive issues.

27 ... Kg7

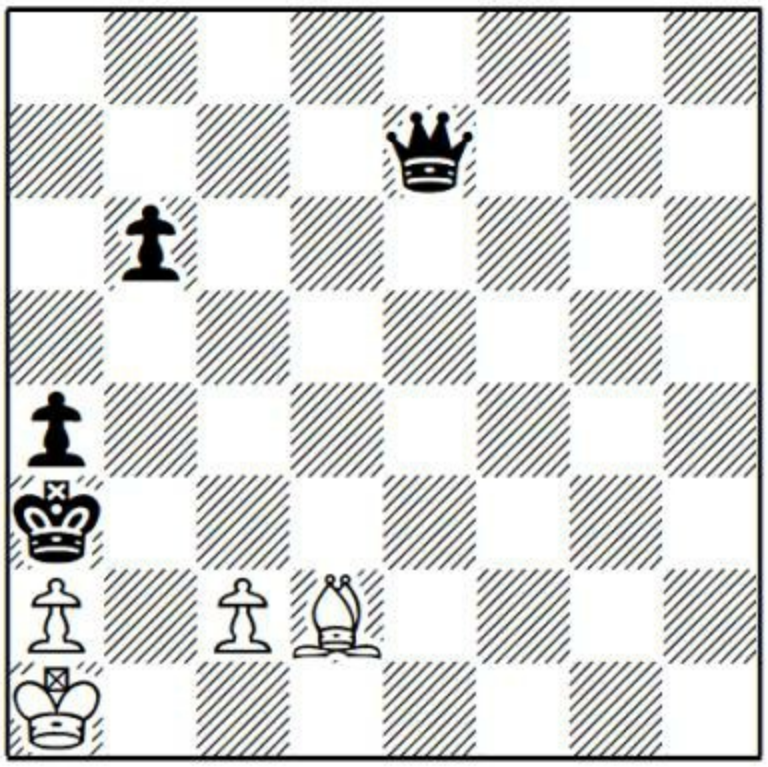
27 ... gxh5 is an illegal move, due to the pin of the f6-rook.

28 Rxg6 mate



You don't see this too often: Double checkmate!

96) A.Wotawa
Wiener Schachzeitung, 1935



White to play

Level 3.5

Black's insecure king position outweighs the extra queen for a piece. Mate in 4:

Answer: Play c2-c3!, utilizing the Principle: *When hunting the enemy king, don't chase him. Instead cut off flight squares.*

1 c3!

Forcing lines are not conducive to interpretation by a rugged individualist. Amateurish would be to chase with 1 Bc1+? Kb4. Black wins, since the king is now safe.

1 ... Qe1+

Our opponent's lack of an answer often provides us insights. When we are faced with mate, there is no line we are unwilling to cross. This is a desperate attempt to stave off mate. It fails due to the fact that Black owns the unwanted b-pawn, which provides moves. White mates slightly quicker after 1 ... Qe2 2 Bc1+ Qb2+ 3 Bxb2 mate.

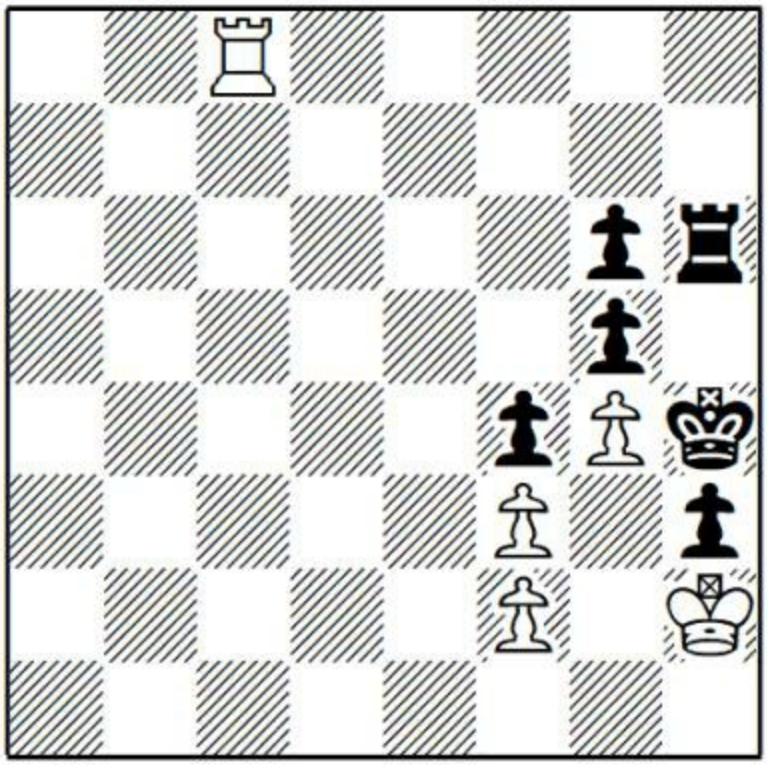
2 Bxe1 b5 3 Bd2

Nothing can be done about the upcoming mate on c1.

3 ... b4 4 Bc1 mate

97) A.Wotawa

Wiener Schachzeitung, 1935



White to play

Level 3

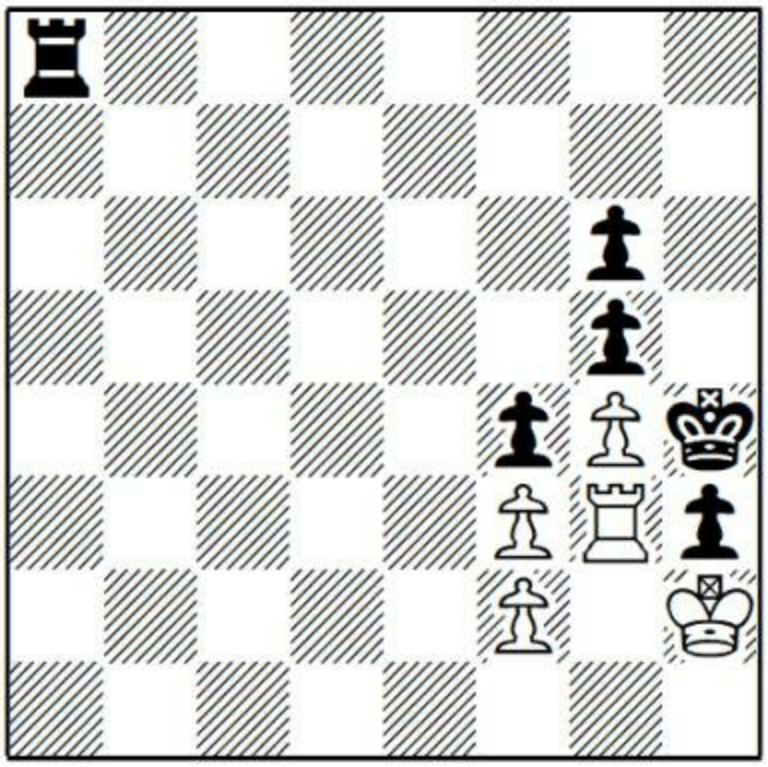
Do you know that feeling when the data/logic says everything is fine, yet our intuition says it isn't? Black's king is trapped, but seemingly safe since White can never zugzwang Black's rook off the h-file. So then what is our plan to force mate on the gummed up black king?

1 Rc1!

Answer: We enter Black's house via the back door, retreating our rook to c1, intending Rg1!, Rg3! and Rxh3 mate, to which there is no defence.

1 ... Rh8 2 Rg1! Ra8 3 Rg3!

Now Black's king feels the torment of exclusion and nothing can save him.



3 ... fxg3+

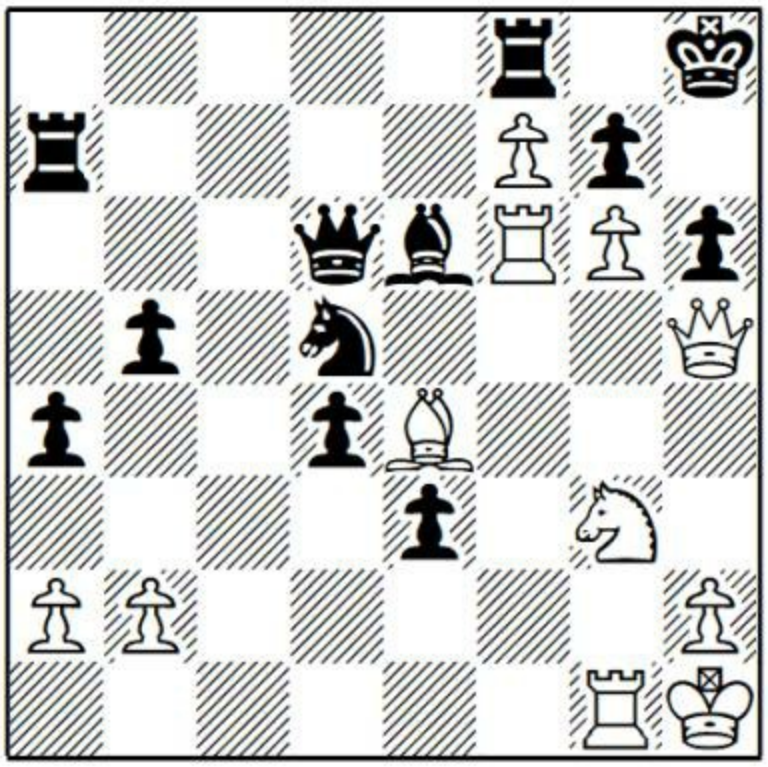
3 ... Ra2 isn't so tough to deal with either: 4 Rxh3 mate.

4 fxg3 mate

David and Goliath mate.

98) H.Berliner-S.Elias Almgren

Pittsburgh 1946



White to play

Level 3

White's entire army encircles Black's king. Where is the breakthrough?

Step 1: Queen sacrifice/annihilation of defensive barrier.

32 Qxh6+!

If you want to go after someone, there are two ways:

1. Call the law and take your enemy to court.

2. Embrace rougher means, outside the law.

White's queen chooses number 2 on the list. The inferior 32 Rxe6 gives White a winning position after 32 ... Qxe6 33 Bxd5 Qf6 34 Be4, but mate is better!

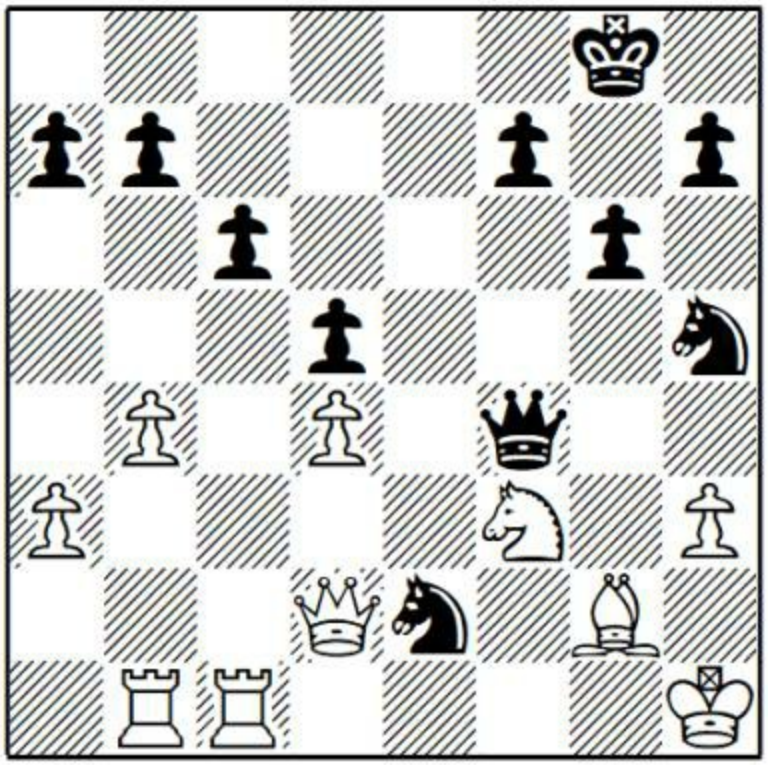
32 ... gxh6 33 g7+!

Attraction.

33 ... Kxg7 34 Nh5+ Kh8 35 Rxh6 mate

Trombone mate.

99) B.Siff-I.Kashdan
New York 1948



Black to play

Level 3

We see Black's two knights and queen, all hovering around White's weakened dark squares. Mate in 4:

30 ... Nhg3+ 31 Kh2 Nf1+

Double check. Politicians taught us that if you repeat a lie over and over with great fake conviction, people start to believe in the fiction. Kashdan is down a load of material. Is he going to take perpetual check?

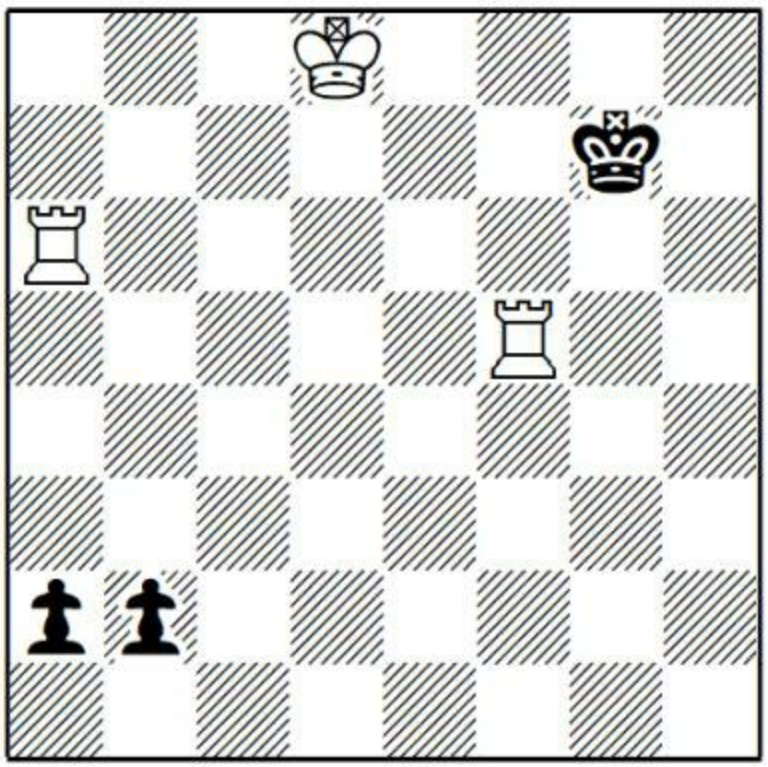
32 Kh1 Qh2+!

Mate in 2 is better than a perpetual check.

Step 2: Queen sacrifice/interference/smothered mate.

33 Nxh2 Nfg3 mate

100) A.Wotawa
Österreichische Schachzeitung, 1952



White to play

Level 4

White is unable to halt promotion of one of Black's passed pawns. How do we deliver mate with our two rooks and king, before Black's coming queen can inflict damage?

1 Rg5+

After 1 Rxa2? b1Q 2 Rg2+ Kh6 3 Rfg5 Qb6+ Black draws.

1 ... Kf7

1 ... Kh7 is best met by 2 Ra3! Kh6 3 Rg2 and 4 Rh3 mate.

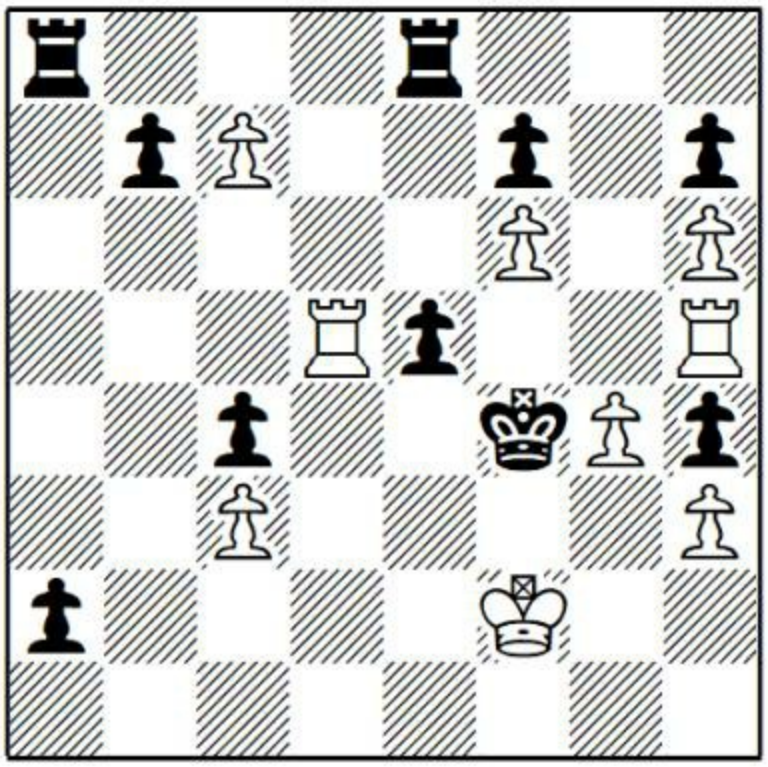
2 Rgg6!

Do you see the pattern? The a6-rook is coming to f6.

2 ... b1Q 3 Raf6 mate

Ahab's corpse is dragged under by not one, but by two white whales.

101) A.Wotawa
Tidskrift for Schack, 1962

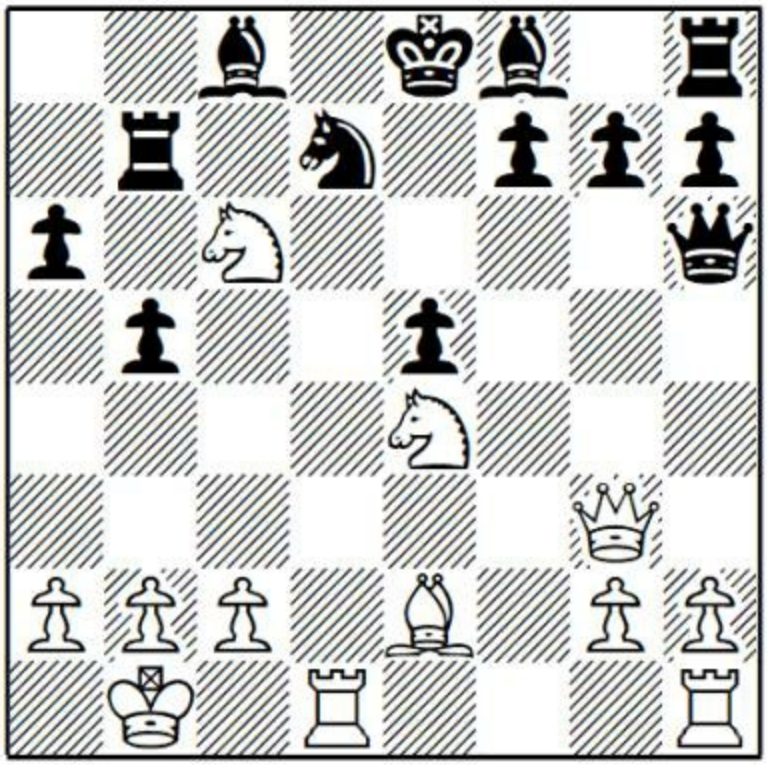


White to play
Level 3.5
Black is about to promote, so we don't have much time to lose in finding our mate in 4:
1 Rf5+
We start with a rook check on f5.
1 ... Ke4 2 Rfxe5+!
White's rook is auditioning for a low-budget martial arts movie.
Step 2: Rook sacrifice/attraction/interference. Black's own rook clogs the black king's potential escape square.
2 ... Rxe5

Or 2 ... Kf4 3 Rf5+ Ke44 Rd4 mate.

3 Rd4 mate

102) F.Zimmermann-W.Hübner
Germany 1977



White to play

Level 4.5

Such a position requires a battering ram, rather than nuance.

18 Qxe5+!

This queen sacrifice is not so difficult to spot. It is White's next move which is far more difficult to see.

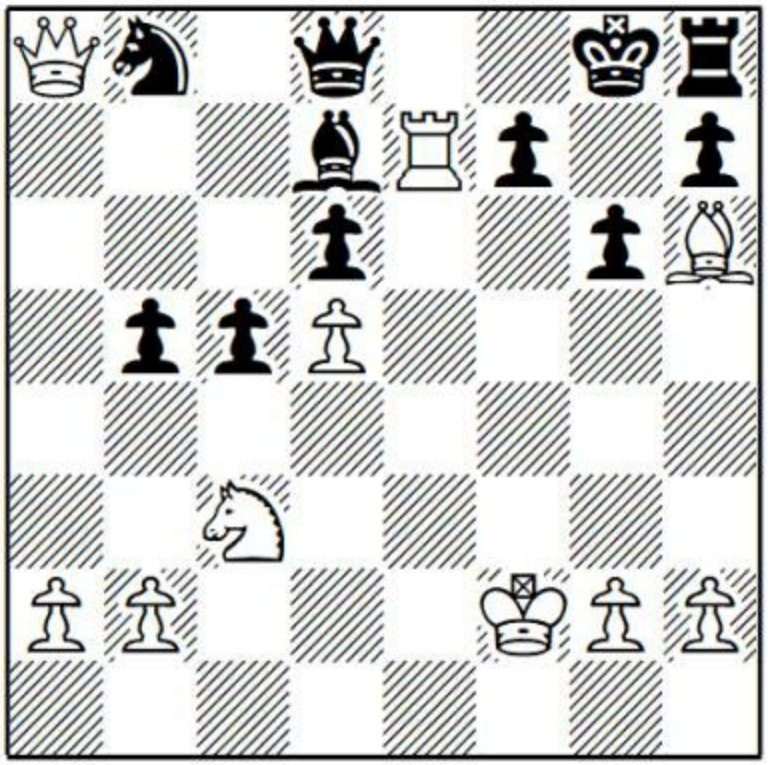
18 ... Qe6

Of course the phony cardboard cutout version 18 ... Nxe5? is met with the simple 19 Rd8 mate.

19 Nf6+!! 1-0

Decoy. This move is difficult to see in advance. Black's g-pawn is turned into an f-pawn, allowing White to deliver mate on h5: 19 ... gxf6 (19 ... Nxf6 20 Rd8 mate) 20 Qxe6+! fxe6 21 Bh5 mate.

103) Su.Polgar-P.Hardicsay
Hungarian League 1985



White to play

Level 3

Black is for all purposes down a rook. How did White put her opponent away? Queen sacrifice/decoy.

21 Qxb8!

If this is a joke, Black's queen isn't laughing. She is lured away from coverage of f6.

21 ... Qxb8

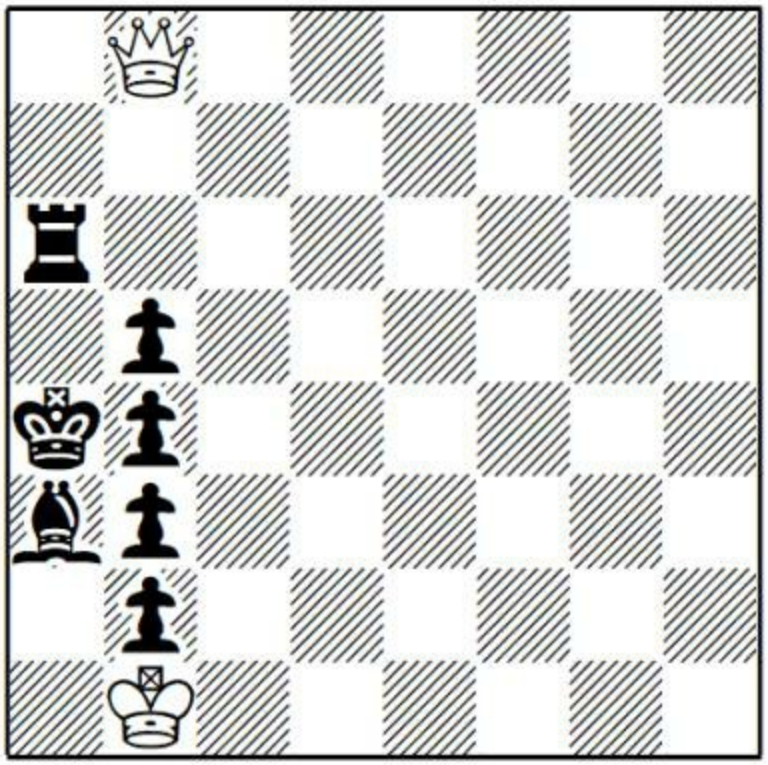
21 ... Bc8 22 Ne4! mates in 2.

22 Ne4 1-0

Humpty Dumpty had a great fall. Nothing can stop Nf6 mate next move.

104) G.Jahn

Die Schwalbe, 1989



White to play

Level 4

Utilize zugzwang to force mate in 4 moves:

Answer: Only by moving to c7 can we zugzwang and force mate in 4.

1 Qc7!

Not 1 Qb7? Ka5 2 Qc7+ Ka4 and it becomes clear that we will not achieve our mate in 4 stipulation.

1 ... Ra8 2 Qb6! Ra5 3 Qb7!

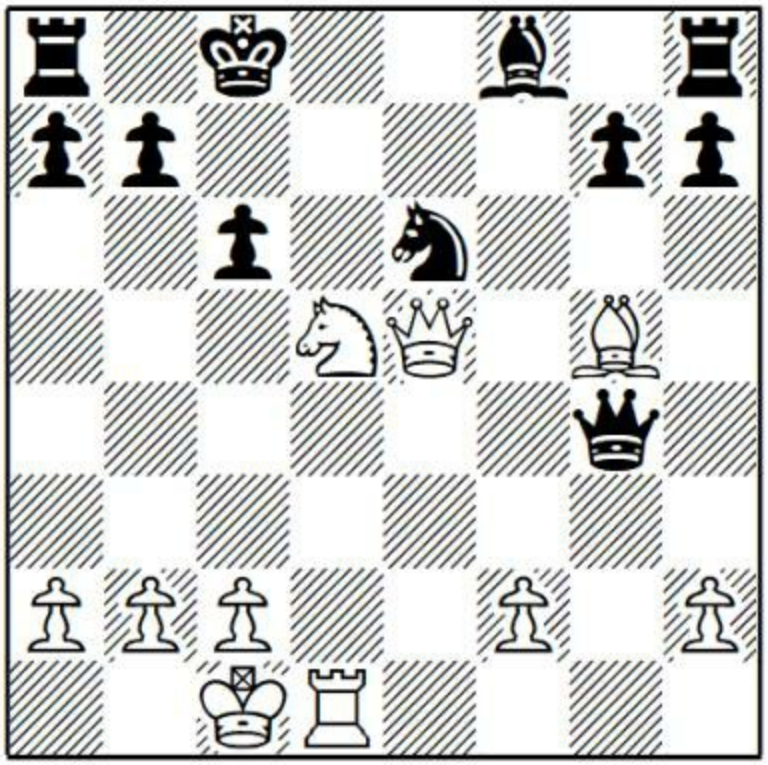
Zugzwang.

3 ... Ra6

The shambling wreck on a6 isn't going anywhere. Not much different are 3 ... Ra7 4 Qxa7 mate and 3 ... Ra8 4 Qxa8 mate.

4 Qxa6 mate

105) F.Manca-F.Braga
Reggio Emilia 1992



White to play

Level 3

We look longingly at d8 and dream of mate. How do we accomplish it?

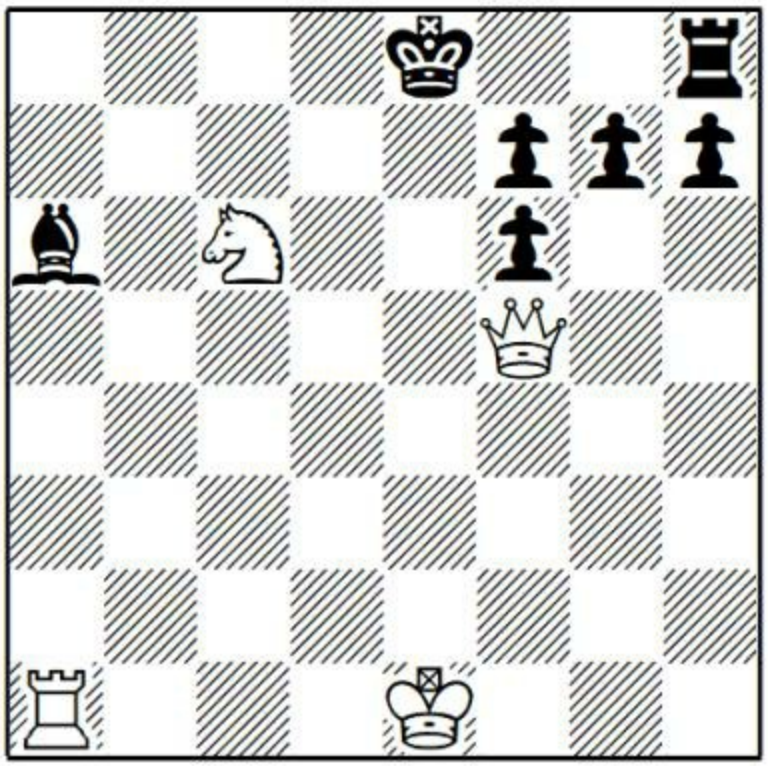
Answer: Queen sacrifice/interference.

20 Qc7+! 1-0

Violent change sometimes requires violent sacrifice. If 20 ... Nxc7 (not only does the knight lose coverage of d8, but it also clogs c7 as an escape square for Black's king) 21 Nb6+! (clearance; burn baby, burn!) 21 ... Kb8 (or 21 ... axb6 22 Rd8 mate) 22 Rd8+ Qc8 23 Nd7 mate. Smothered mate or

just 23 Rxc8 mate.

106) M.Degenkolbe
Freie Presse, 1992

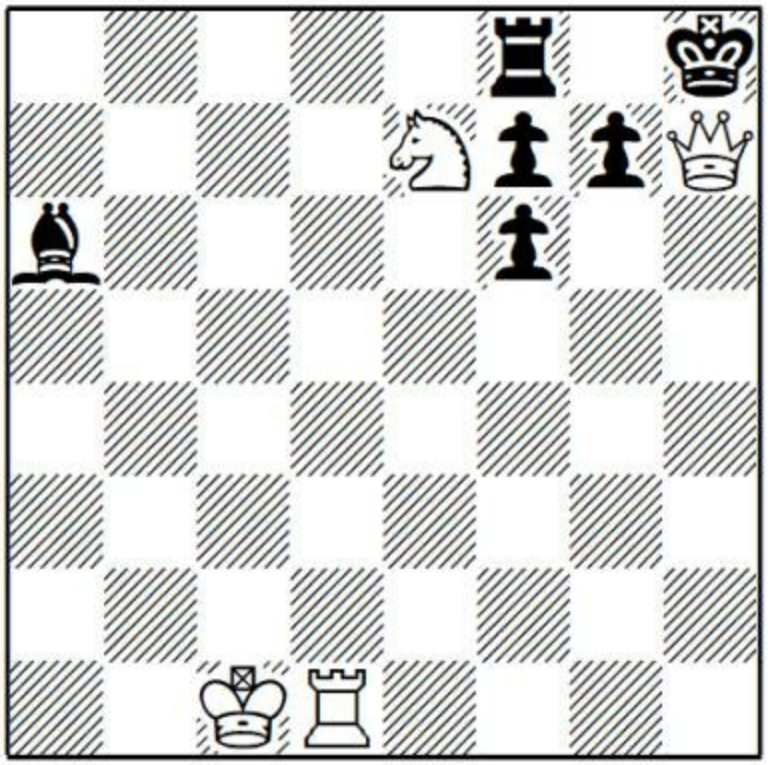


White to play
Level 4
Look for a version of Anastasia's mate and you find your mate in 4:
1 0-0-0!
Threat: Rd8 mate.

A choice of castling and playing Rd1?is not a stylistically selective issue. The problem with 1 Rd1? is that White's king obstructs a rook shift over to the h-file later on: 1 ... 0-0 2 Ne7+ Kh8 and the queen sacrifice on h7 doesn't work, since our oafish king is in the way on e1, obstructing Rh1.

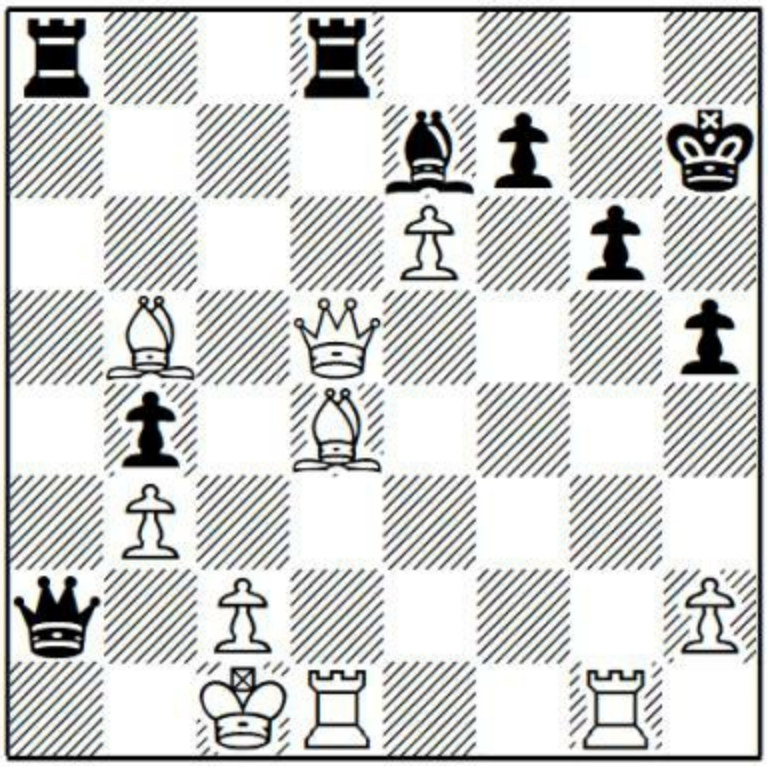
Instead, 1 Qc5? Kd7 2 Rd1+ Kc7 3 Ne7+ Kb8 4 Qb6+ Bb7 5 Rd7 Re8 6 Qxb7 mate fails our 4-move mating stipulation.

1 ... 0-0 2 Ne7+ Kh8 3 Qxh7+!



Here comes Anastasia's mate!
3 ... Kxh7 4 Rh1 mate

107) P.Svidler-V.Kramnik
Internet (blitz) 1999



White to play

Level 2

Svidler's mating combination is pretty, but not difficult to find. It's mate in 4:

30 Qxh5+!

Queen sacrifice/clearance. The g-file is blasted open.

30 ... gxh5

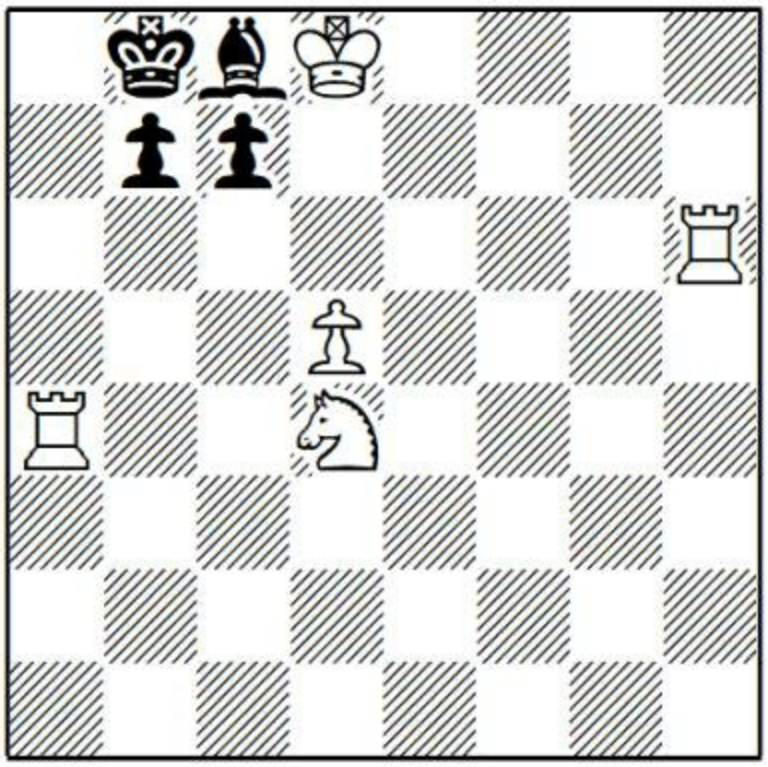
Or 30 ... Kg8 31 Qh8 mate.

31 Bd3+ 1-0

The black king's expiration date draws near. If 31 ... f5 32 Bxf5+ Kh6 33 Bg7 mate.

108) S.Dowd

Chess Endgame Studies, 2000



White to play

Level 4.5

White forces mate in four moves, culminating in an Arabian Mate:

Answer: Shift the h6-rook to a6.

1 Rha6!!

Most of my students went for 1 Rh1? which qualifies as invalid input: 1 ... Bd7! (this move ruins the 4-move mating stipulation) 2 Kxd7 b5 3 Rb1 c6 4 Nxc6+ Kb7 5 Rxb5 mate. The mate comes one move too slowly.

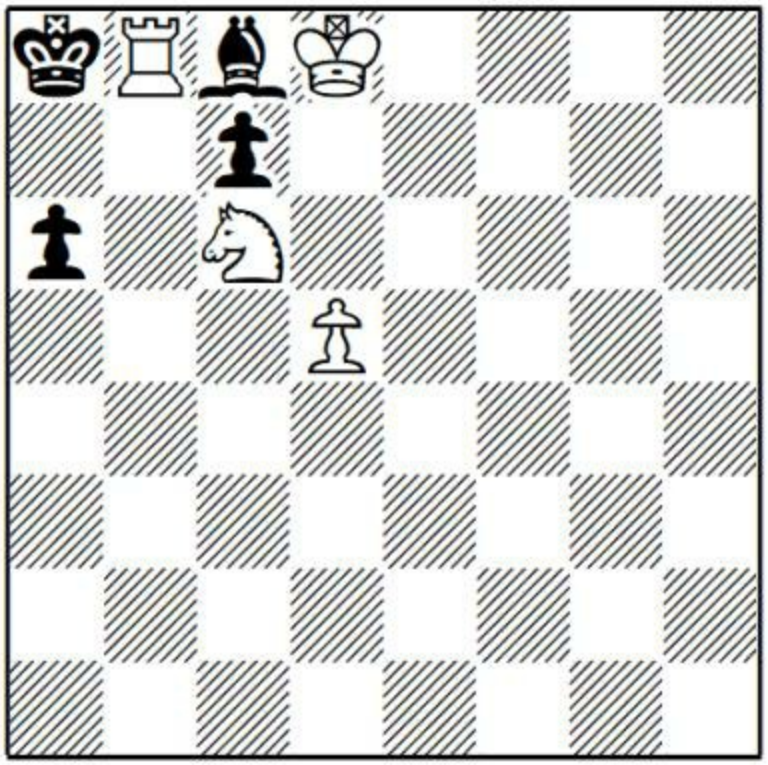
Likewise, 1 Rc6? bxc6 2 Nxc6+ Kb7 3 Rb4+ Ka6 (3 ... Ka8? 4 Rb8 mate) 4 Kxc7 Bb7 5 Rb6 mate is, again, one move too slow.

1 ... bxa6

Who would object to such a reasonable request? Black may as well take the rook.

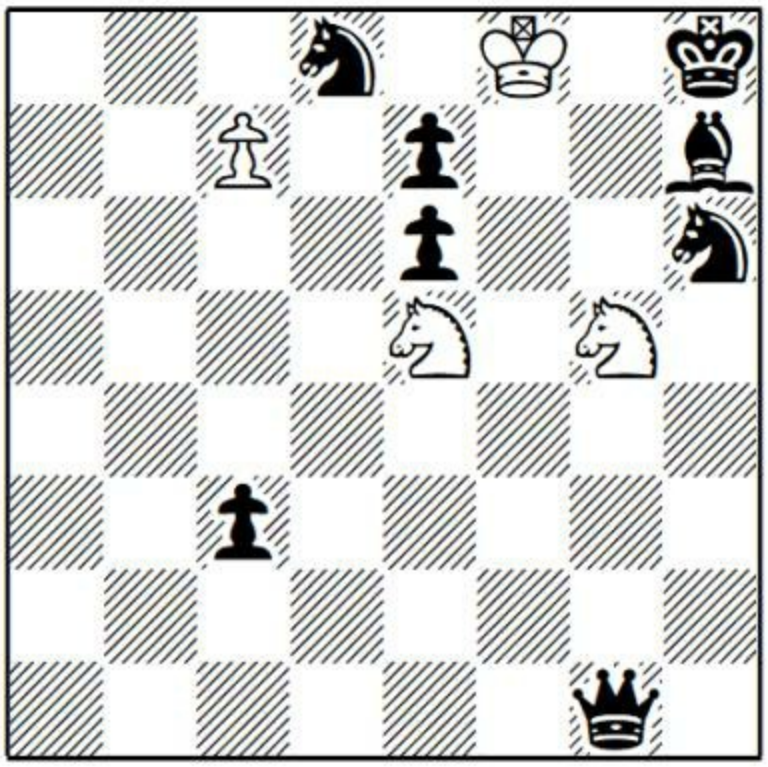
1 ... b6 allows two separate mates in two with 2 Nc6+ (2 Ra8+ Kb7 3 R4a7 mate) 2 ... Kb7 3 Ra7 mate, or 1 ... b5 2 Rb6+! cxb6 3 Nc6+ Kb7 4 Ra7 mate. Arabian mate/hook mate.

2 Nc6+ Kb7
If 2 ... Ka8 3 Kxc8 a5 4 Rxa5 mate.
3 Rb4+ Ka8 4 Rb8 mate



Arabian mate!

109) V.Smyslov
Moi Etyudy, 2000



White to play

Level 3

Where is White's mating pattern?

Answer: On f7, so we must begin with an underpromotion.

1 cxd8N!

Not 1 cxd8Q?? (we court disaster when we allow the opponent to dictate the site of the battle) 1 ... Qxg5 and Black wins.

1 ... Qf1+

1 ... Bb1 fails to clear h7 as an escape route for Black's king: 2 Nef7+ Nxf7 3 Ndxf7 mate

2 Ngf7+

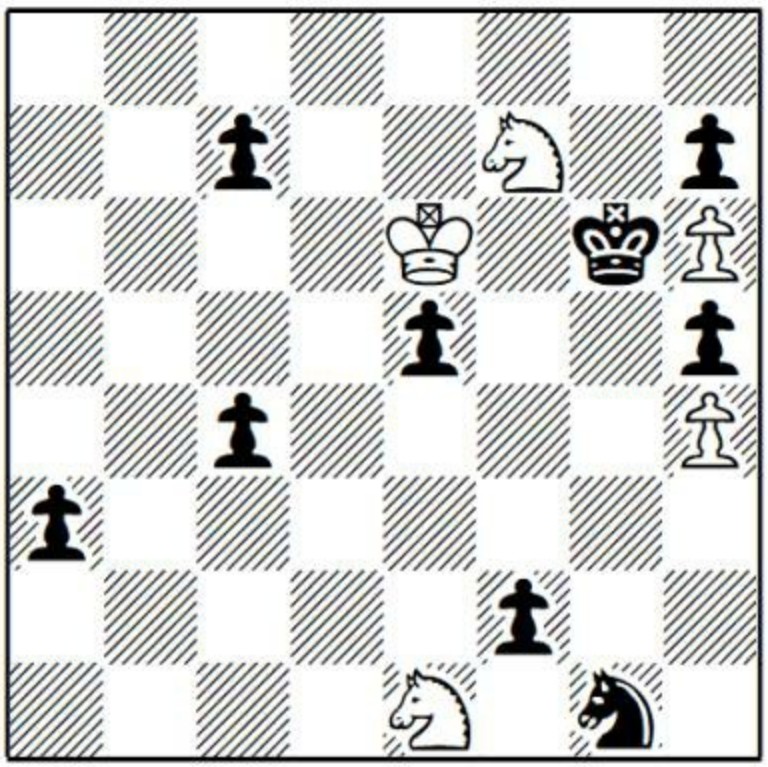
Any knight to f7 forces mate. 2 Nef7+ mates in 2, as does 2 Ndf7+.

2 ... Nxf7 3 Ndxf7+

Or 3 Nexf7+.

3 ... Qxf7+ 4 Nxf7 mate

110) V.Smyslov
Moi Etyudy, 2005



White to play

Level 5

Answer: Interference. Black's knight on f3 interferes with the new queen's ability to deliver a check on White's king, along the f-file, therefore White plays:

1 Nf3!! Nxf3

If 1 ... f1Q 2 N3xe5 mate.

2 Nh8+ Kxh6 3 Kf6!

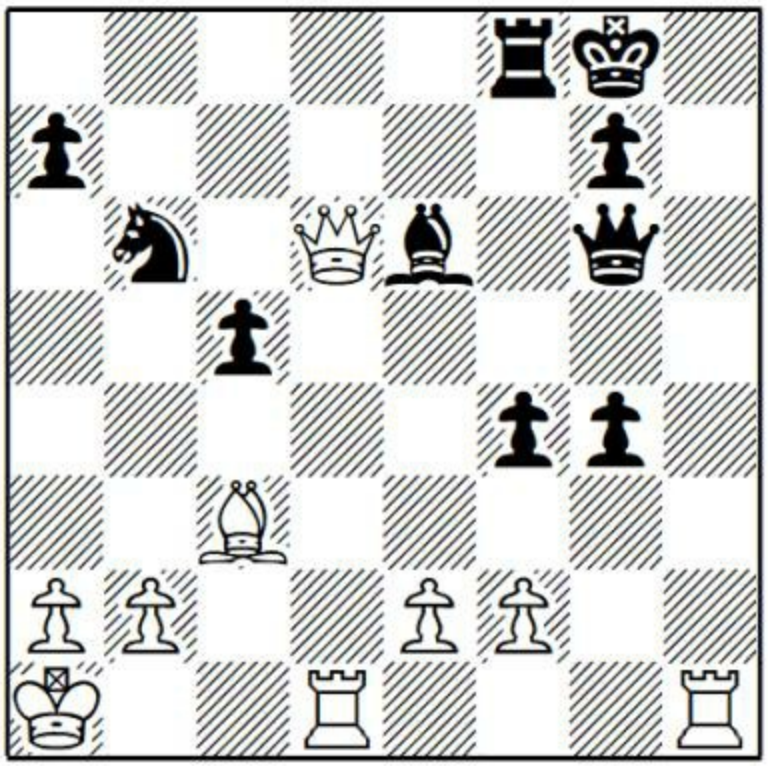
This wouldn't work if Black's knight were elsewhere, since then Black would promote the f-pawn with check.

3 ... f1Q

3 ... Ng5 prevents Nf7 mate, but that is the only good thing which can be said about the move. 4 hxg5 is mate.

4 Nf7 mate

111) M.Carlsen-A.Giri
Legends of Chess (online rapid) 2020



White to play
Level 2

This position proves there is hope for us all. Here World Champion Magnus Carlsen played 24 Qe5? and won anyway. Can you do better than a world champion and find mate in 4?

Answer: Attraction. Start with a rook check on h8.

24 Rh8+!

The game went 24 Qe5?. Do you want the vulgar actuality, or would you prefer the polite euphemism? OK then, we will go with the euphemism. "Holy crap!" (I didn't use the word 'crap') I exclaimed out loud, when I saw this move, since even I saw the mate. Magnus is our king and the leader of

the chess world, yet his last move doesn't appear all that leaderish. Only after 24 ... g3 25 fxg3 Nc4 26 Qh5 Qxh5 27 Rxh5 Ne3 28 Rg1 Bf5 29 b3 fxg3 30 Rxg3 Bg4 31 Rxc5 Rf1+ 32 Kb2 Nd1+ 33 Ka3 Nxc3 34 Rxg4 did Giri resign.

24 ... Kxh8 25 Qxf8+ Kh7

Or 25 ... Bg8 26 Rh1+ Qh7 27 Bxg7 mate.

26 Rh1+

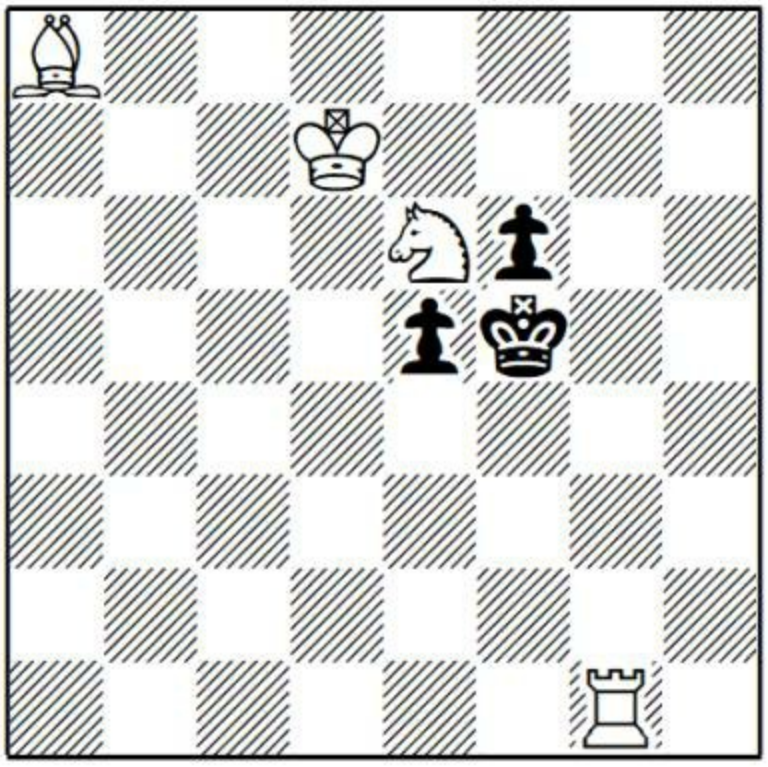
Step 2: Obvious. Give a rook check on h8.

26 ... Qh6 27 Qxg7 mate

Step 3: Pinned piece. White can take advantage of the fact that Black's queen is pinned and not actually defending g7.

112) S.Dowd

Chess Endgame Studies and Compositions, 2020



White to play

Level 5

White's position is the modern world while Black's is a society still in the hunting/gathering stage of its evolution. It is, of course, an easy win for White, but not when you only have a 4-move stipulation:

1 Bh1!!

Only moving the bishop to h1 forces mate in 4:

a) 1 Bc6? e4 2 Kd6 e3 3 Kd5 e2 4 Be8! e1Q 5 Bg6 mate is one move too many.

b) 1 Kd6? e4 2 Bc6 e3 3 Bf3 e2 4 Rg4! e1Q 5 Nd4 mate is too.

1 ... e4 2 Kd6! e3 3 Kd5!

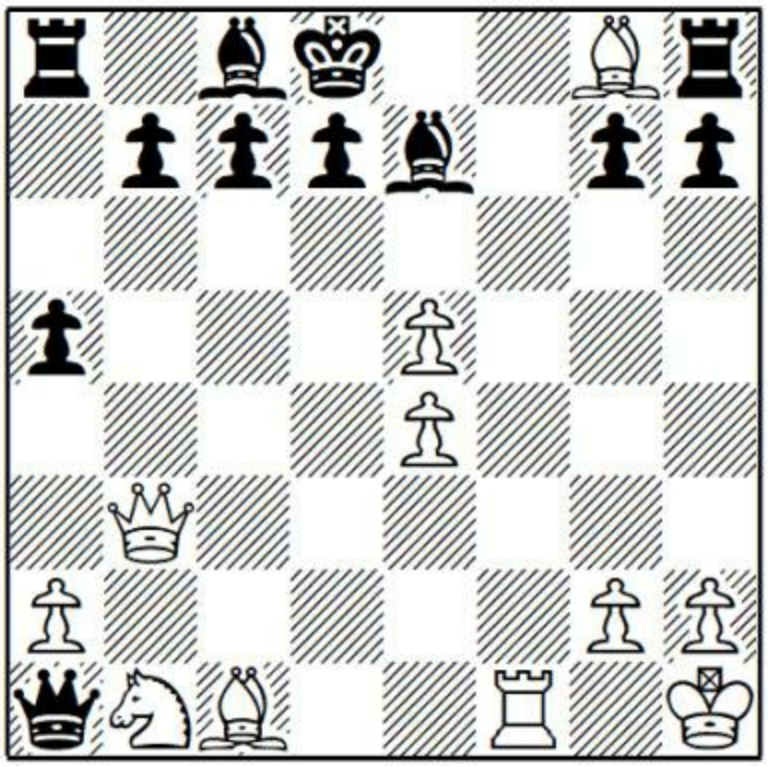
White's king seizes control over the key e4-square.

3 ... e2 4 Be4 mate

3) Longer Mates

In this chapter we look at mates which are five moves and beyond. Don't be intimidated. Longer doesn't necessarily mean more difficult.

113) N.Bonaparte-G.Bertrand
St. Helena 1820



White to play
Level 3

Black's position is an unwinnable war. Who among us have not made and broken vows, when it comes to not falling behind in development? Bb2 wins General Gatien's queen. But Napoleon saw a mate in 5 instead:

Answer: Rook sacrifice/decoy.

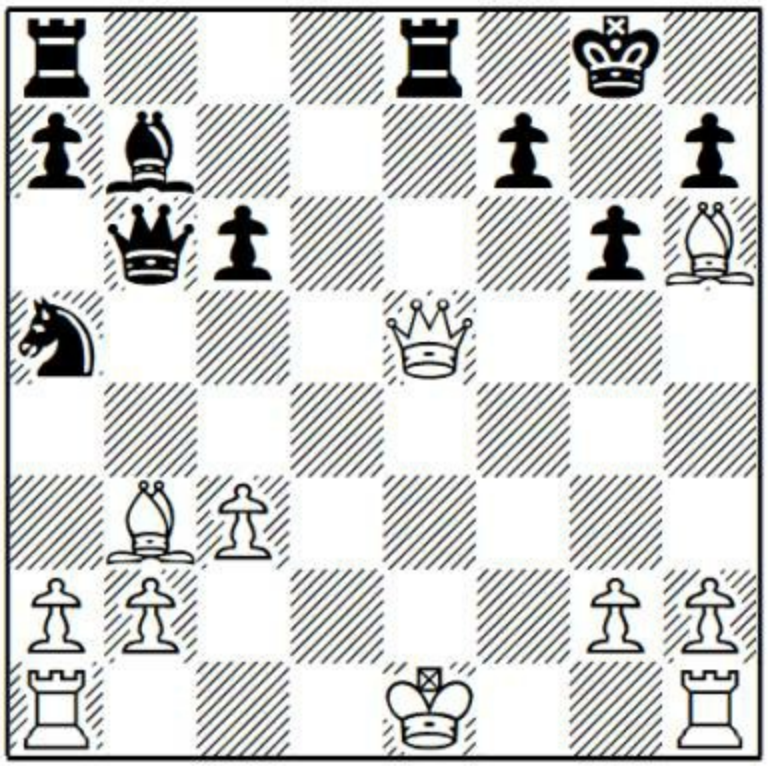
14 Rf8+! Bxf8 15 Bg5+ Be7

Or 15 ... Ke8 16 Bf7 mate.

16 Bxe7+ Kxe7 17 Qf7+ Kd8 18 Qf8 mate

Napoleon took on all comers, yet no fully worthy candidate emerged, mainly since they were afraid of execution in case they beat him.

114) Anonymous-Sonnenschein
London 1938



White to play

Level 3

Anonymous, seeing that Qg7 mate is an illegal move, resigned here, since his or her queen is pinned. Resigning was a disastrous decision. After the game Sonnenschein was forced to make an embarrassing disclosure: Anonymous blew it, since he or she had a forced mate in five moves at this point:

Answer: Step 1: Sacrifice the bishop on f7.

1 Bxf7+!

Principle: *Don't fall into despair from the opponent's small nuisance.* This appears to be no more than a spite check. It isn't. White, not Black, is winning.

1 ... Kxf7 2 Rf1+

Step 2: Give check on f1.

2 ... Kg8

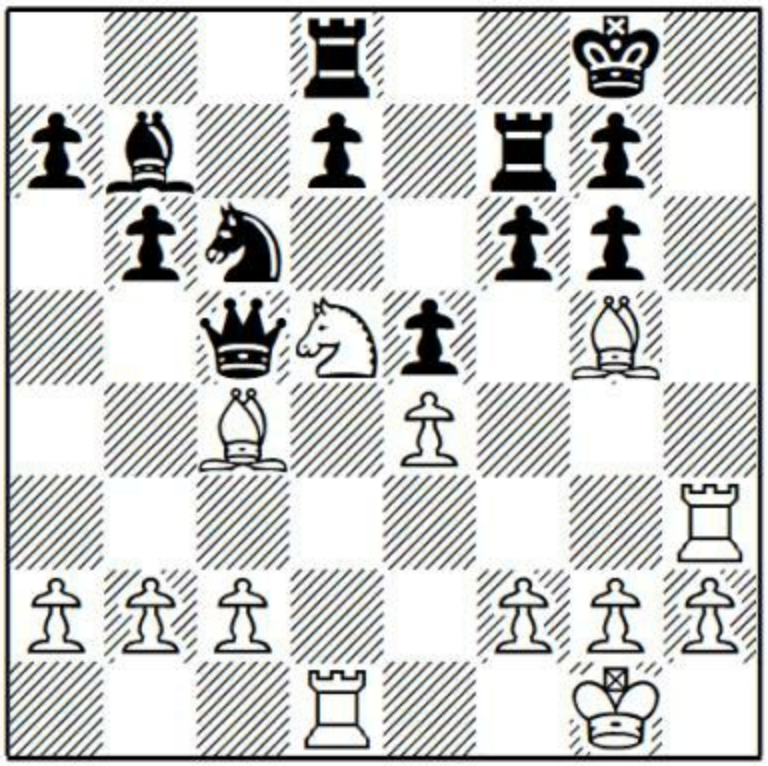
But now what? Black can stretch out inevitable mate a move longer with the spite-giveaway 2 ... Qf2+ 3 Rxf2+.

3 Rf8+!

Step 3: Unpinning.

3 ... Rxf8 4 Qg7 mate

115) J.Capablanca-S.Campos
Sao Paulo (simul) 1927



White to play

Level 3

Capa was the kid who worked out the answer to the math problem in his head, while the rest of us required three sheets of paper and still got the answer wrong. The power of his intuition was unfathomable. He was also a deadly calculator, as displayed in this mate in 5:

Answer: Piece sacrifice/pinned piece.

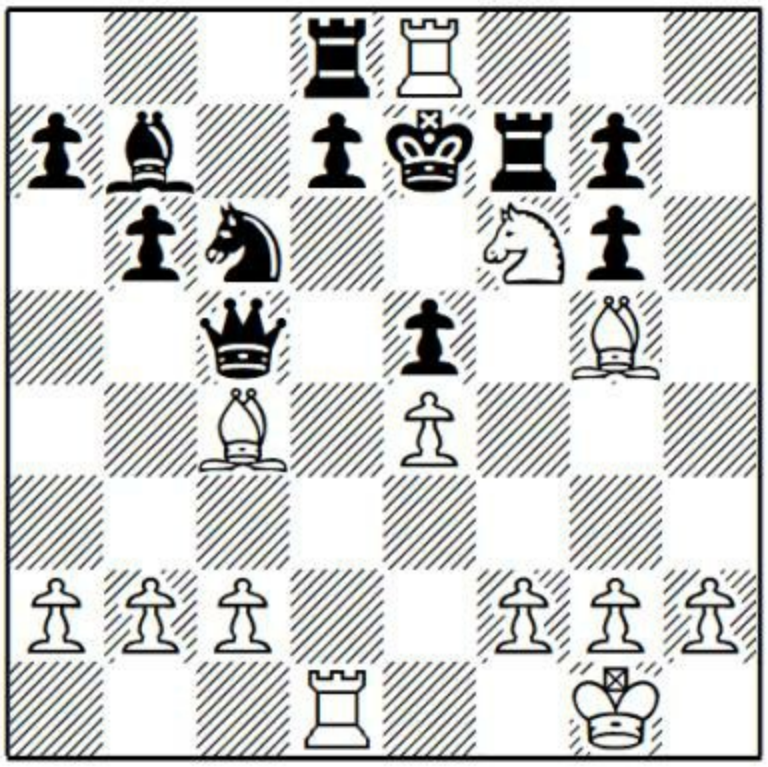
21 Nxf6+! Kf8

After 21 ... gxf6 22 Bxf6 there is no answer to the rook coming mate on h8.

22 Rh8+

Step 2: Drive Black's king to e7, preparing for a deadly discovered check.

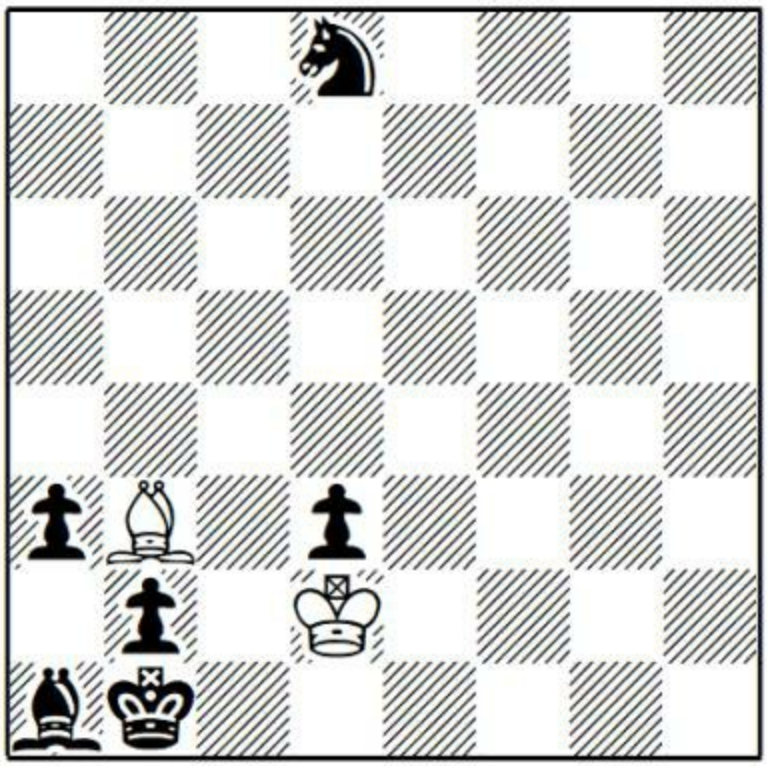
22 ... Ke7 23 Re8+! 1-0



Step 3: Removal of the guard: 23 ... Rxe8 24 Rxd7+ Kf8 25 Rxf7 mate.

Also mating is 23 Ng8+! (double check) 23 ... Ke8 24 Nh6+! (discovered check/double attack) 24 ... Rf8 25 Bf7 mate.

116) H.Fahrni
Schweizerische Arbeiter-Schachzeitung, 1940



White to play
Level 5
Black's king is in danger. This is what we need to do:
1. Win Black's knight via zugzwang.
2. Force Black to play ... a3-a2, sealing in the black king.
3. Deliver a bishop mate along the b1-h7 diagonal, factoring in Black's stalemate tricks.
White forces mate in five moves:
1 Bd5!
Zugzwang. Black's light squares appear as the colour of bruises.
1 ... a2
Or 1 ... Nc6 2 Bxc6 Ka2 3 Bd5+ Kb1 4 Bc4 a2 5 Bxd3 mate.

2 Kd1!

Zugzwang number 2. White's king is the mob boss who lives in a mansion, with millions in offshore back accounts and surrounded by people who are willing to kill for him, yet on paper he makes a middle class income as a 'contractor'.

2 ... Nf7

The knight wanders off, as if in remembrance of an appointment. Black has no choice but to hand over the knight, as if 2 ... d2 3 Be4 mate.

3 Bxf7

Zugzwang number 3.

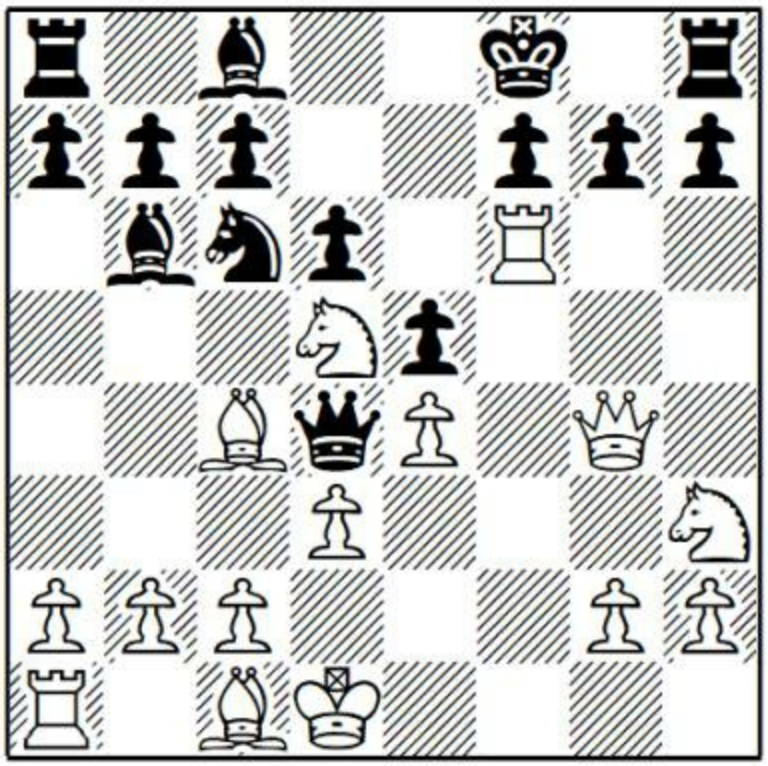
3 ... d2

Well, that was anti-climatic.

4 Bg6 mate

117) I.Horowitz-NN

Los Angeles 1940



White to play

Level 3

I know I have seen this mating combination before somewhere. Was it in Reinfeld's *1001 Brilliant Checkmates* book? I'm too lazy to go through the entire book to confirm, so you will have to do it for me.

Answer: Queen sacrifice/attraction.

11 Qxg7+! Kxg7 12 Bh6+ Kg8 13 Rg6+!

Here comes part II: Clearance.

Or 13 Ne7+ Nxe7 14 Bxf7 mate.

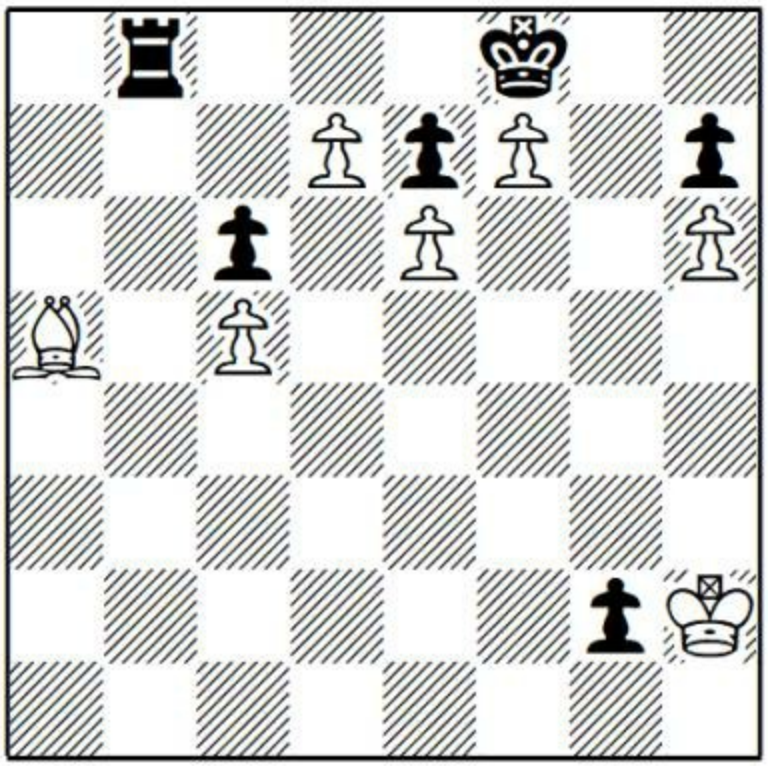
13 ... hxg6

If 13 ... fxg6 14 Ne7 mate or 14 Nf6 mate.

14 Nf6 mate

118) A.Wotawa

Österreichische Schachzeitung, 1952



White to play

Level 4.5

What is White's winning plan to force mate in 5? Be careful: you will blow this with superficial play.

1 Bb4!

Answer: Interference. Only with this move does White avoid Black's Mad Rook/stalemate trap.

If you said to yourself: "This problem is easy!" and played 1 Bc3?? intending Bg7 mate, this proves to be a false lead and you fell for Black's trap: 1 ... g1Q+! 2 Kxg1 Rb1+ 3 Kh2 Rh1+! ("Oh no!" are the two worst words we can mentally utter in a chess game; prepare for disillusionment as White fell for the Mad Rook trap) 4 Kg3 (4 Kxh1 is stalemate) 4 ... Rg1+ 5 Kf2 Rg2+ 6 Ke1 Re2+ 7 Kd1 Rd2+ 8 Kc1 Rc2+ 9 Kb1 Rb2+! 10 Bxb2 is stalemate.

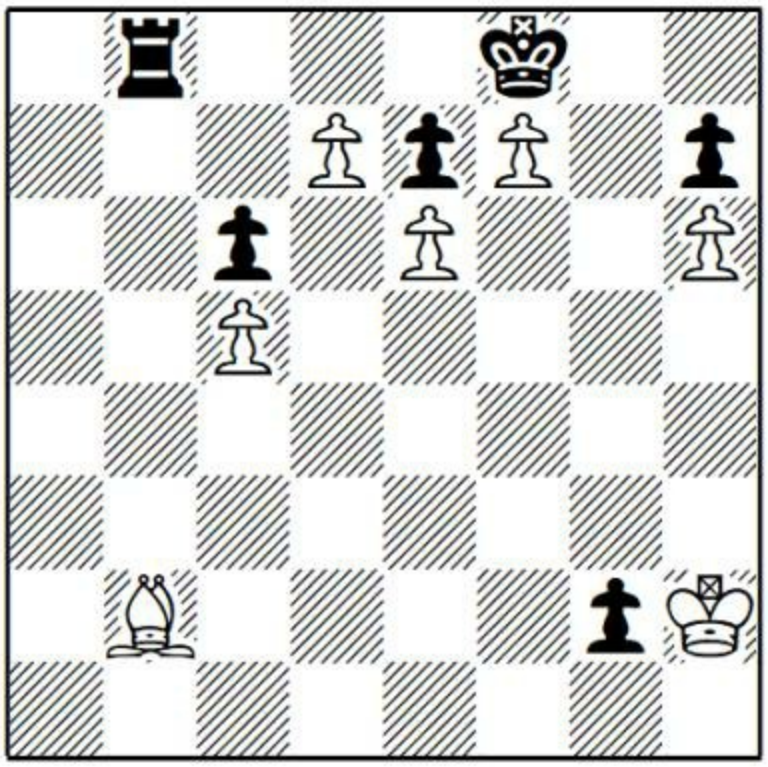
1 ... Ra8

After 1 ... Rxb4?? we have a choice of two no-brainer mates on the back rank by promotion to either rook or queen.

2 Ba3!

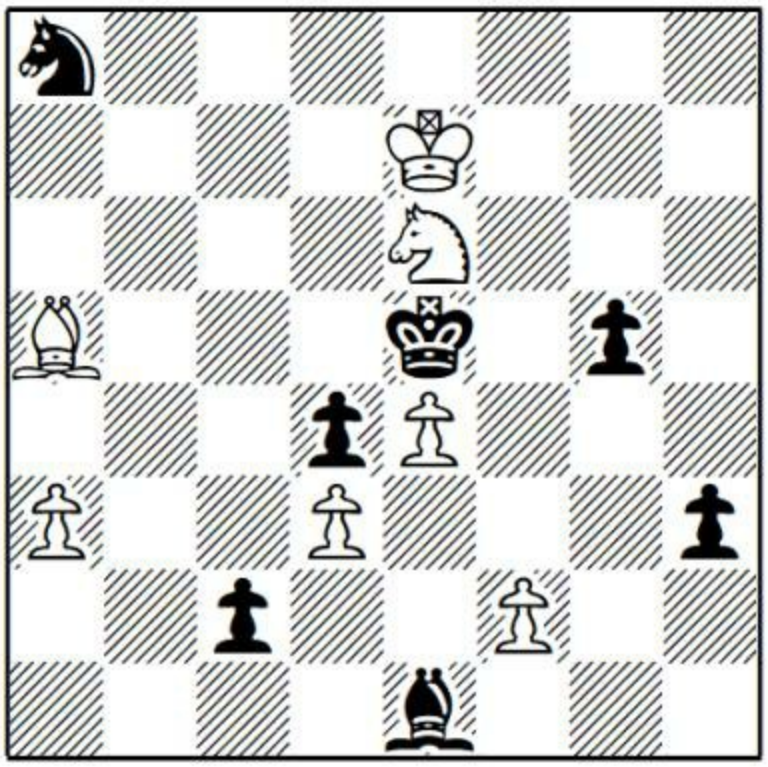
The bishop must zigzag his way through the boredom and pain. Again, 2 Bc3?? blows it and the Mad Rook/stalemate idea is once again activated with 2 ... g1Q+! 3 Kxg1 Ra1+ 4 Kg2 Ra2+ 5 Kg3 Rg2+! and you know the rest: draw.

2 ... Rb8 3 Bb2!



Zugzwang. This way we dodged Black's Mad Rook drawing scheme. Black's position reaches the tipping point of collapse. White threatens Bg7 mate and Black's rook is unable to take the bishop due to the d7-pawn's threat to promote to a rook or queen and back rank mate: 3 ... g1Q+ 4 Kxg1 Threat: Bg7 mate. 4 ... Rxb2 5 d8R mate.

119) A.Wotawa
Deutsche Schachzeitung, 1969



White to play

Level 5

White forces mate in 5:

Answer: Step 1: Transfer the bishop to d2, threatening f2-f4+.

1 Bd2!! Bxd2

Alternatively, 1 ... c1Q 2 Bxc1 Bxf2 3 Nf8! Bh4 4 Ng6 mate or 1 ... Bxf2 2 Bb4! c1Q 3 Bd6 mate.

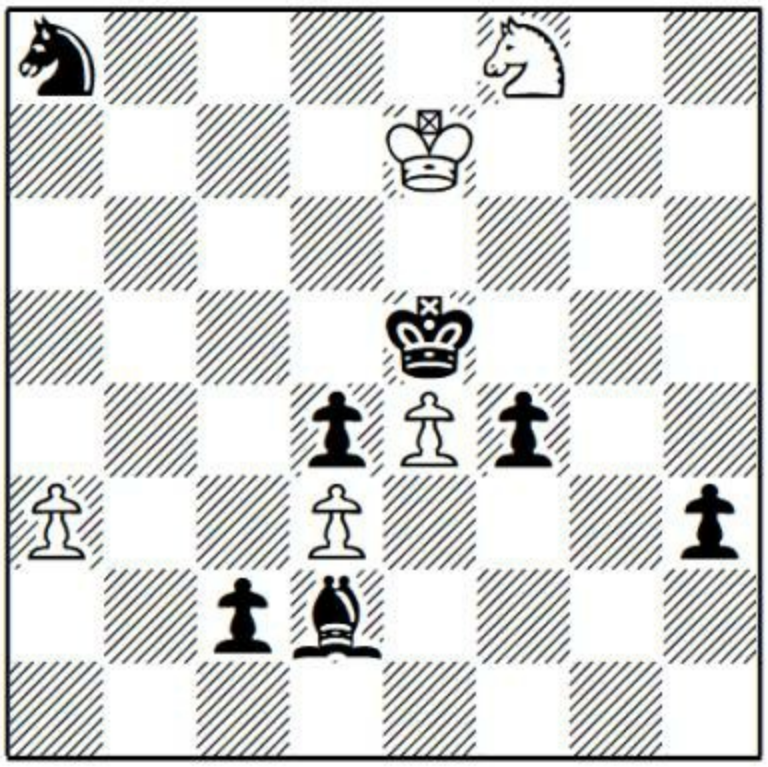
2 f4+!

Step 2: Interference. We must plug f4 with a black pawn.

2 ... gxf4

If 2 ... Bxf4 3 Nf8! c1Q 4 Ng6 mate.

3 Nf8!



When an animal is at the top of the evolutionary food chain, teeth and claws is the solution to any problem it faces.

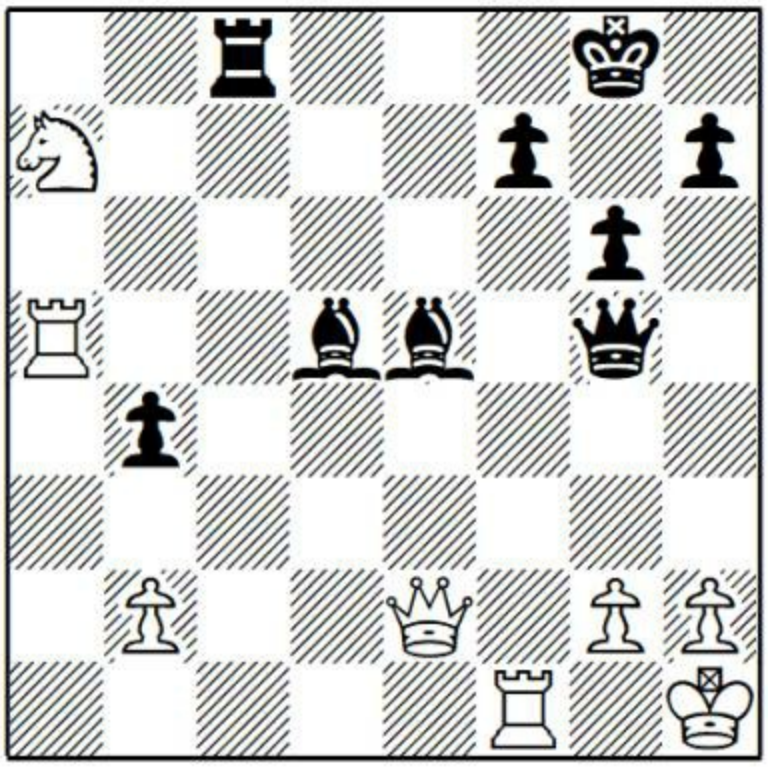
Step 3: Transfer the knight to f8, threatening mates on g6 and d7.

3 ... f3

Black is mistaken in the belief that the king will escape via f4. Black can stall mate for a move with the spite check 3 ... Bb4+ 4 axb4 f3 5 Ng6 mate.

4 Ng6 mate

120) B.Larsen-L.Ljubojevic
Milan 1975



Black to play

Level 4

Not only is Ljubojevic down an exchange, but his rook on c8 and d5-bishop hang simultaneously. However, we sense a pair of tactical factors heavily in Black's favour:

1. Both Black bishops and queen are aimed at White's vulnerable h2- and g2-squares.

2. Far more subtly, White's back rank may be weak if we can lure White's queen away.

Mate in 5:

Answer: Move the queen to h4, threatening mate on h2 and hanging a third piece.

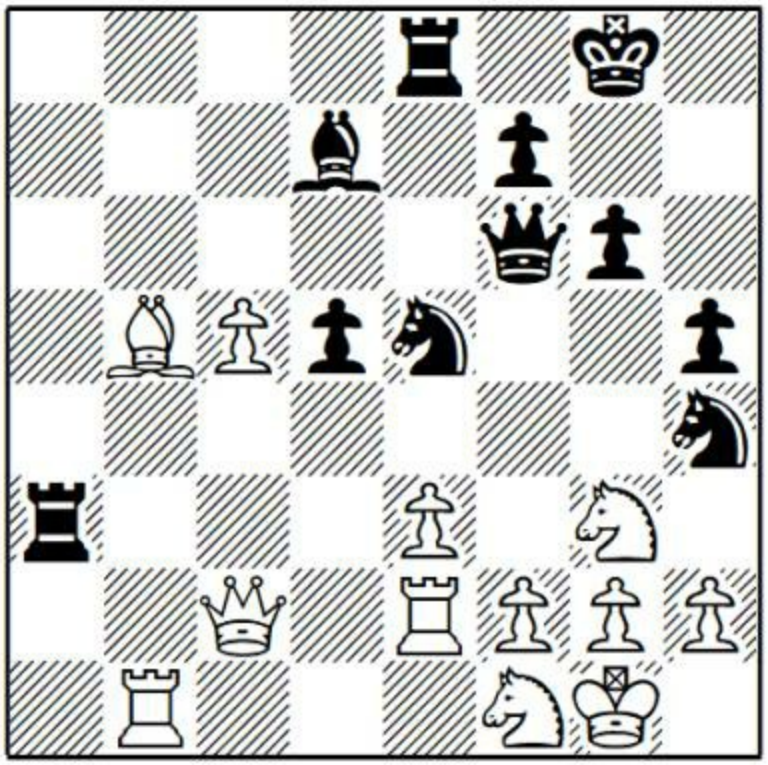
26 ... Qh4! 27 Qxe5

27 h3 Qxh3+ 28 Kg1 Bd4+ 29 Rf2 Qxg2 mate takes advantage of the pinned f2-rook to deliver mate.

27 ... Qf2! 0-1

Step 2: ‘Sacrifice’ your queen on f2: 28 Rg1 (or 28 Rxf2 Rc1+ 29 Qe1 Rxe1+ 30 Rf1 Rxf1 mate) 28 ... Qxg2+! (step 3: queen sacrifice/weak back rank) 29 Rxg2 Rc1+ 30 Qe1 Rxe1 mate.

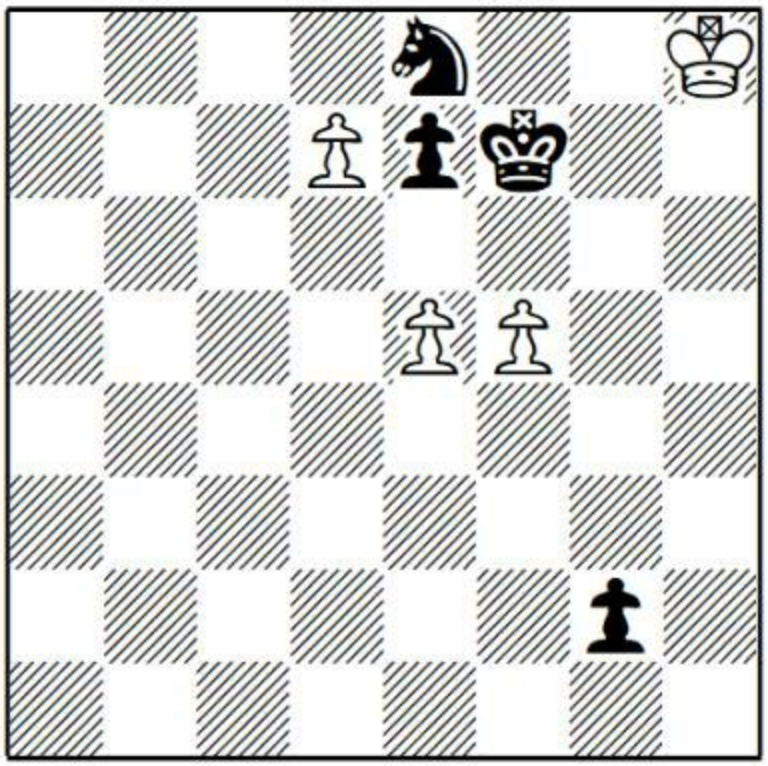
121) G.Andruet-B.Spassky
German Bundesliga 1988



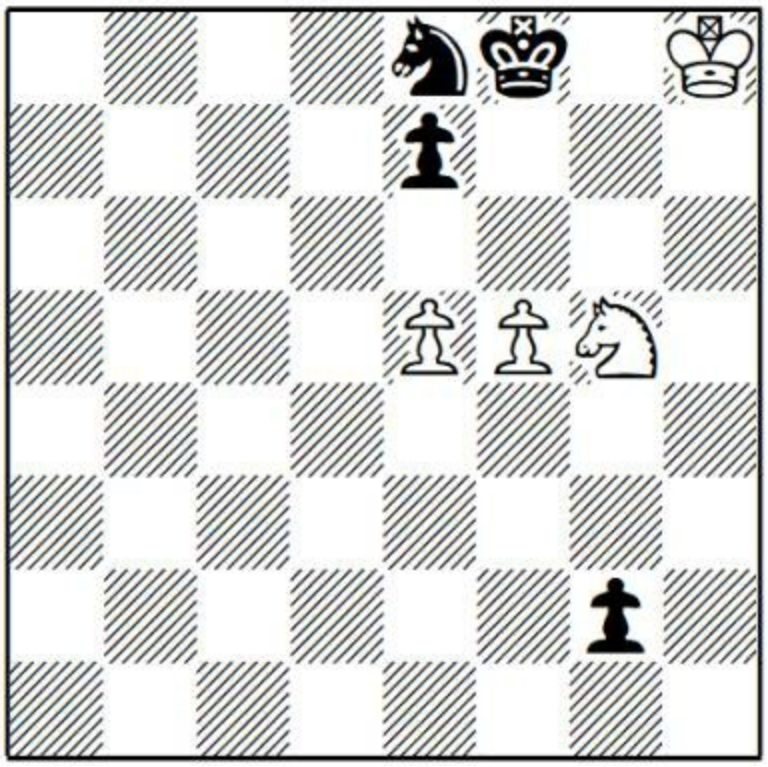
Black to play
Level 3
Spassky, playing Black, is down a pawn, with White’s king fortified with quite a few defenders. Yet we note a dangerous gathering of attackers around White’s king. Black to play and force mate:
Answer: Queen sacrifice/Blackburne’s mate.
28 ... Qf3!! 0-1
White’s hope drops into the chasm. He is mated after 28 ... Qf3!! 29 gxf3 Nexf3+ 30 Kh1 Bh3. There is no defence to mate on g2, and I’m not counting

White’s brilliant spite-counter sacrifice on g6.

122) R.Waldteufel
The Problemist, 1992



White to play
Level 4
How should we continue to mate in 5?
1 d8N+!
Our first move is obvious enough. But we need to calculate it to the finish.
Not 1 d8Q?? g1Q and it is White’s king that is mated.
1 ... Kf8 2 Ne6+ Kf7 3 Ng5+ Kf8



White to play

Level 2

Is there something better than retreating our knight to halt Black's promotion?

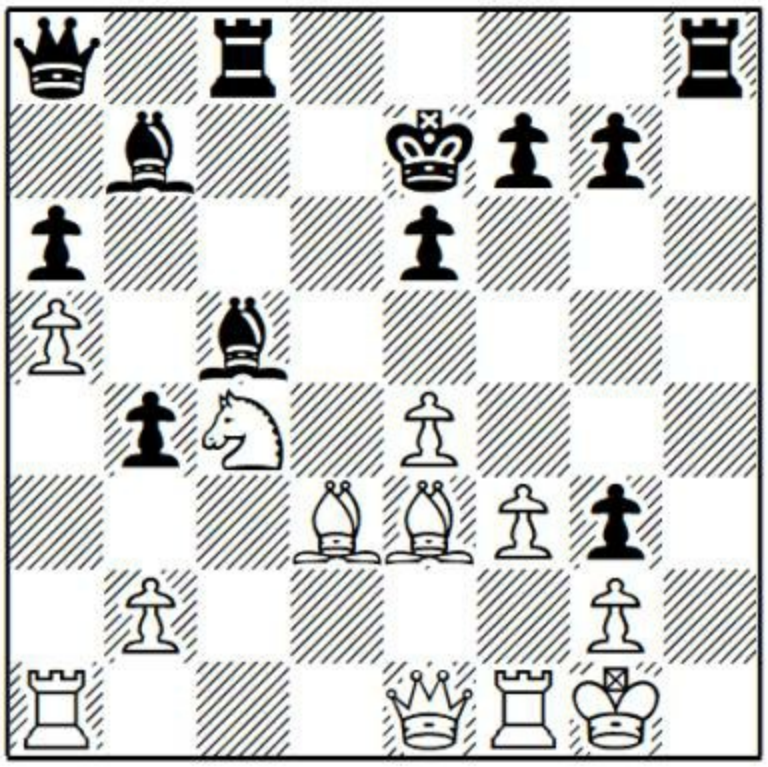
Answer: We have mate in 2!

4 Nh7+! Kf7 5 e6 mate

Black's Judas knight blocks the king's escape to e8.

123) A.Baburin-U.Adianto

Liechtenstein 1993



Black to play

Level 2

Black's coming mate is pretty, yet not so tough to see.

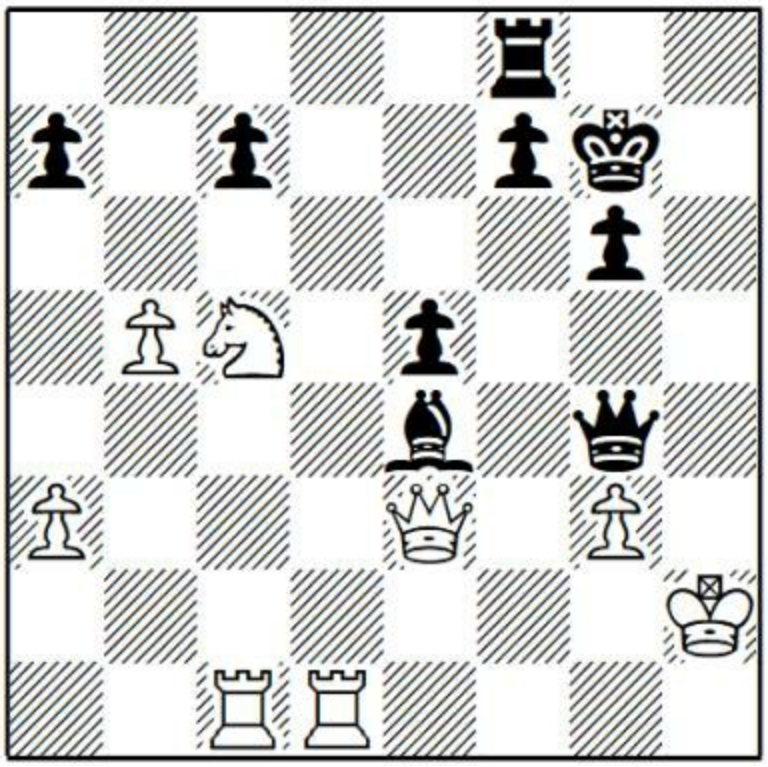
Answer: Give away both rooks, then transfer the queen to h8 and then to h2.

24 ... Rh1+! 0-1

There is something satisfying about the nuanceless, brute power, battering ram, head-on approach. Black's rooks and queen are elevated to positions of power. Damiano's mate is coming on h2: 25 Kxh1 Rh8+ 26 Kg1 Rh1+! (and again) 27 Kxh1 Qh8+ 28 Kg1 Qh2 mate.

124) M.Cebalo-M.Tseitlin

Ljubljana 1995



Black to play

Level 3

Continue Black's attack to force mate:

Answer: Queen sacrifice/attraction.

39 ... Qh3+!

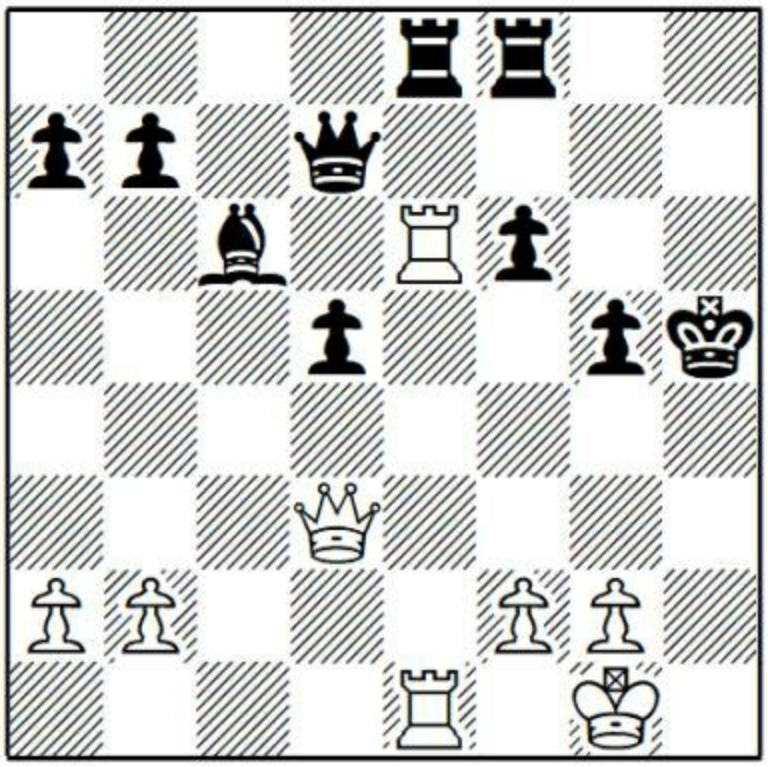
Don't expect to win a war without spilling even a drop of blood. Unconvincing is the superficial 39 ... Rh8+? 40 Kg1 Rh1+ 41 Kf2 Qf5+ 42 Ke2 Rh2+ 43 Ke1 Bf3 44 Nd3 Re2+ 45 Qxe2 Bxe2 46 Kxe2 e4 47 Ne1 Qxb5+ 48 Kf2. *Stockfish 12* assesses at dead even.

40 Kxh3 Rh8+ 0-1

If 41 Kg4 (White can also spite-block with 41 Qh6+) 41 ... f5+ 42 Kg5 Rh5 mate.

125) M.Zelic-M.Cebalo

Makarska 1995



White to play

Level 3

White's position is a living, walking arsenal. Go after Black's king and force mate in 5:

Answer: Lift the e1-rook to the third rank, sacrificing the e6-rook.

25 R1e3! d4

The idea is to cover White's mating threat on f3.

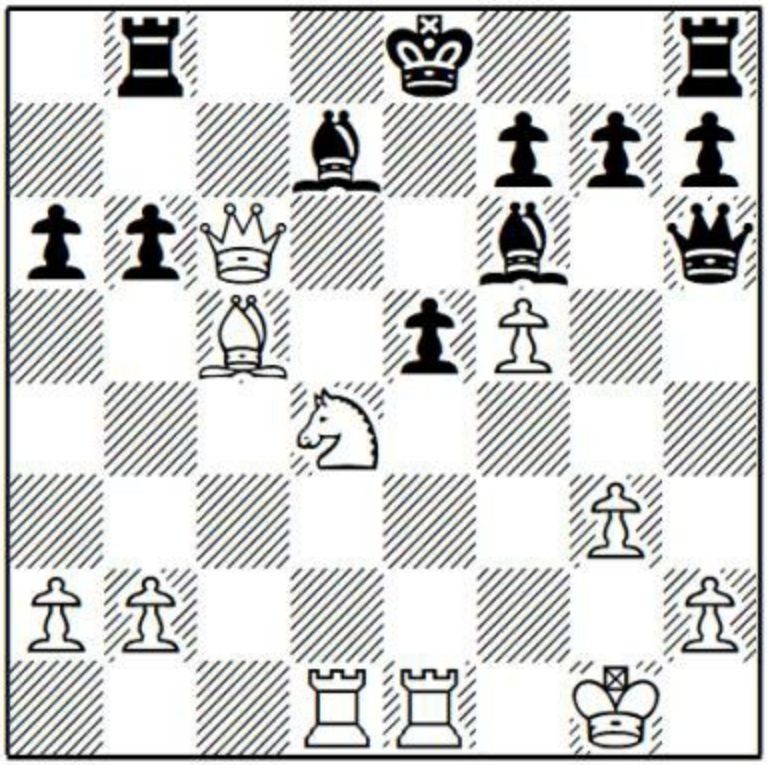
Instead, if 25 ... Rxe6 26 Rh3+ Kg4 27 Qf3 mate or 25 ... g4 26 Qf5+ Kh6 (or 26 ... Kh4 27 Rh3+! gxh3 28 g3 mate) 27 Qxg4 when there is no remedy to the coming shift of the rook to h3.

26 Rh3+ Kg4 27 f3+! 1-0

If 27 ... Kf4 (27 ... Bxf3 28 Qxf3 mate) 28 g3 mate. David and Goliath mate.

126) M.Krasenkow-U.Adianto

Koszalin 1998



White to play

Level 3

White queen and bishop hang simultaneously, yet our intuition screams that there is a mating combination for White:

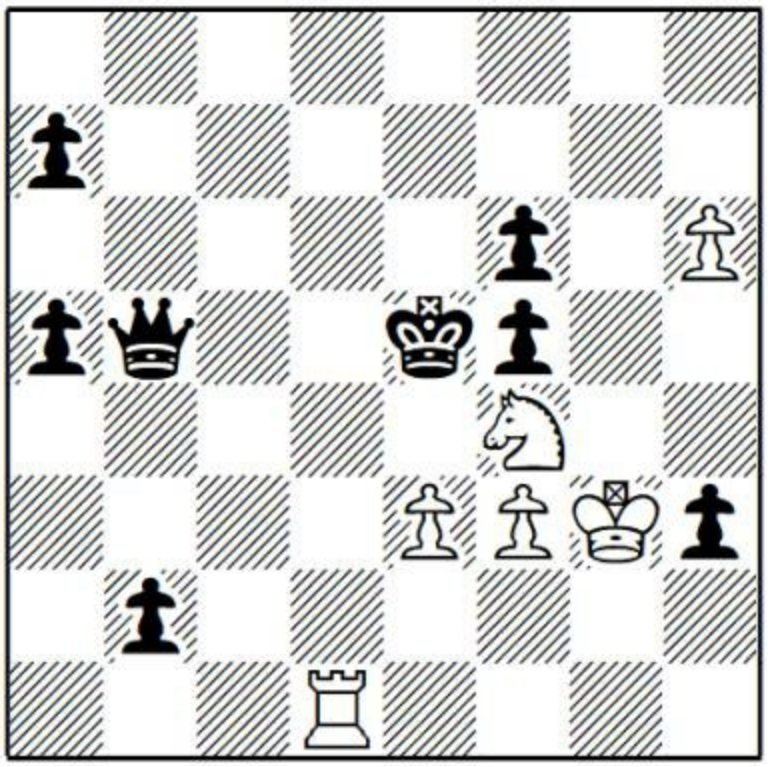
27 Ne6! 1-0

Queen sacrifice/discovered attack.

If 27 ... Bxc6 28 Nc7 mate, 27 ... fxe6 28 Qxd7 mate or 27 ... Rd8 28 Nc7 mate, and 27 ... Qe3+ stalls mate a bit, but spite doesn't really count as a strategy.

127) V.Smyslov

Moi Etyudy, 2000



White to play

Level 5

It isn't easy to keep track of the multiple plotlines. Find a way to mate Black, before the promotion on b1 inflicts damage to White's position.

1 h7!

Not 1 Rb1? Kd6 2 h7 Qe8 3 Rxb2 a4 4 Rb7 a5 5 Rf7! (overloaded defender) 5 ... a3 6 Rxf6+ Kd7 7 Ra6 Qxe3 8 h8Q Qe1+ 9 Kh2 (not 9 Kxh3?? Qh1+ and discovered attack; White's queen falls) 9 ... Qf2+ 10 Kxh3 Qxf3+ 11 Kh2 Qxf4+ is perpetual check.

1 ... b1Q

If this was intended to intimidate, then it didn't succeed.

2 h8N!

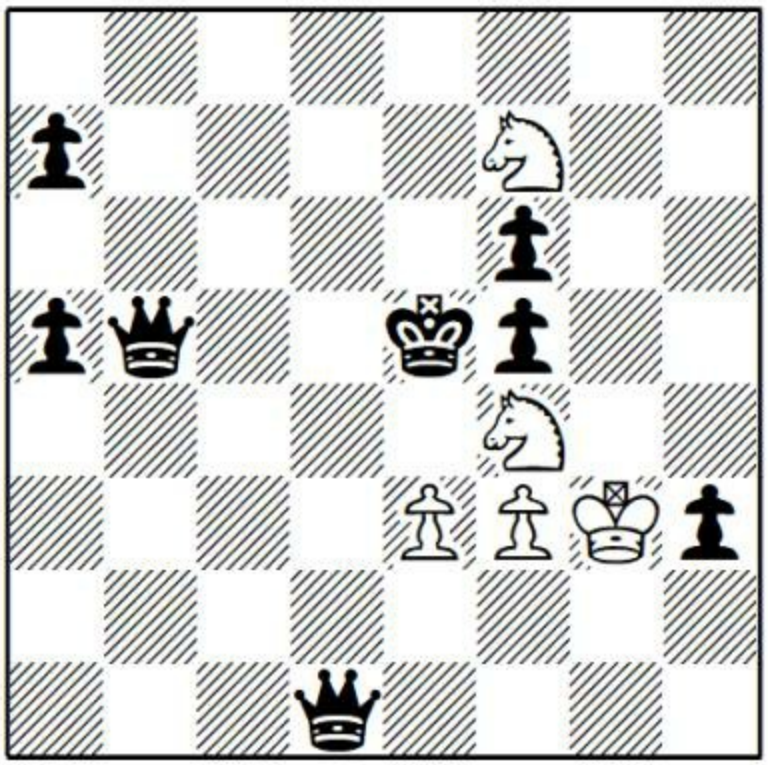
Form follows function. *Only* promoting to a knight mates Black. Threats: Ng6 mate and Nf7 mate. I hate the fact that we live in an era where our tools are smarter than we are. *Stockfish* saw the underpromotion instantly, while we humans need time to absorb the details.

Instead, after 2 Rxb1? Qxb1 3 h8Q Qe1+! 4 Kh2 (not 4 Kxh3?? Qh1+ and White loses the queen) 4 ... Qf2+ 5 Kxh3 Qxf3+ 6 Kh2 (6 Kh4?? Qg4 mate) 6 ... Qxe3 Black can't lose, while after 2 h8Q? Qxd1 3 Ng6+ Ke6 4 Nf4+ Kd7 5 Qg7+ Kc8 6 Qf8+ Qd8 White ran out of checks and is down a queen.

2 ... Qxd1

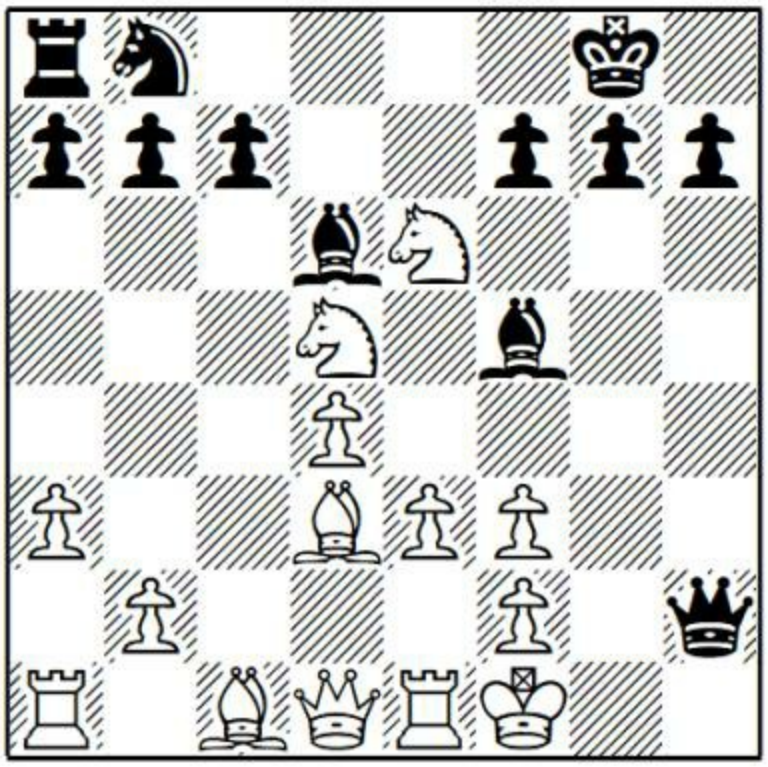
2 ... Qe8 covers both g6 and f7, at the cost of losing control over d5: 3 Rd5 mate.

3 Nf7 mate



128) L.Van Wely-P.Acs

Hoogeveen 2002



Black to play

Level 4

GM Acs reached the break-glass-in-case-of-emergency moment. And it is indeed an emergency since Black is down a rook and a piece, so a capture on e6 is too slow. How did Acs force mate from this position?

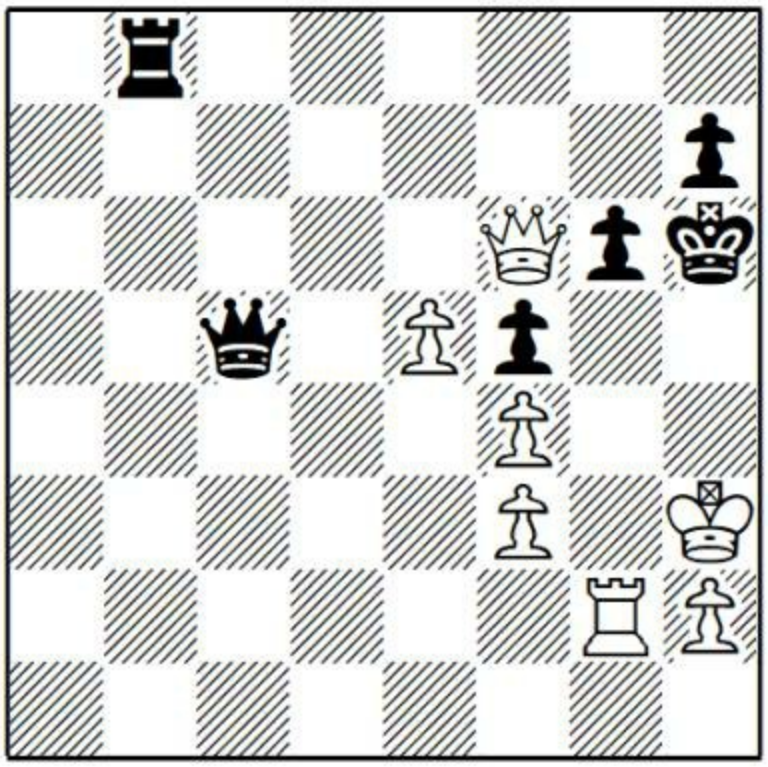
Answer: Line opening. Sacrifice yet another piece on g3 to open the second rank.

18 ... Bg3!! 0-1

As chess players we are all familiar with what it means to gain wealth and then lose everything. Despite White's vast material plus, van Wely is unable to evade mate.

129) A.Giri-F.Caruana

Internet (rapid) 2020



White to play

Level 2.5

As we all understand, the arc of the chess universe does not always bend in the direction of justice. Caruana must have thought he could hold a draw. He can't, since Black's king is unexpectedly mated:

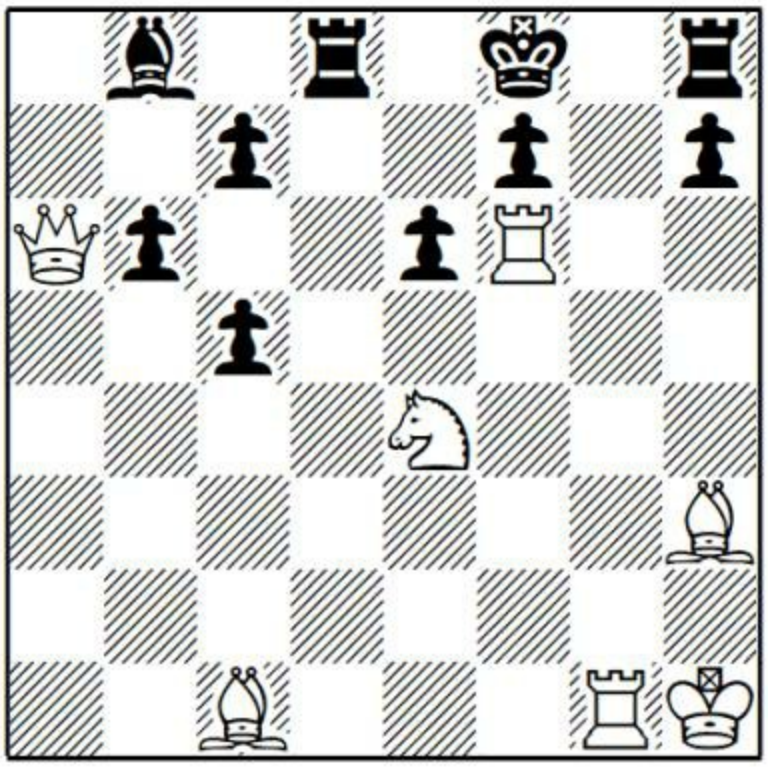
Answer: Move the rook to g5, after which there is no answer to Rh5+ and Qg5 mate.

1 Rg5! 1-0

If 1 ... Qf8 (It's a bad sign for Black that *Stockfish* wants to give away a free queen to stall mate with 1 ... Qe7) 2 Rh5+! Kxh5 3 Qg5 mate.

130) B.Djurasevic

The Problemist, 2020



White to play

Level 5

I like this composed problem for its game-like quality. White has only 5 moves to deliver mate. The problem is murderously difficult and calls for a large investment of capital.

1 Qc8!!

Queen sacrifice/decoy. The idea is to remove ... Rd7 defences.

1 ... Rxc8

The offer cannot be ignored. With 1 ... Ke7 Black's king (mis)applies the Principle: *When the enemy has you outnumbered, then try and sneak out the back door*: 2 Rxe6+! (annihilation of defensive barrier/clearance) 2 ... fxe6 3 Qxe6+ Kf8 4 Bh6 mate.

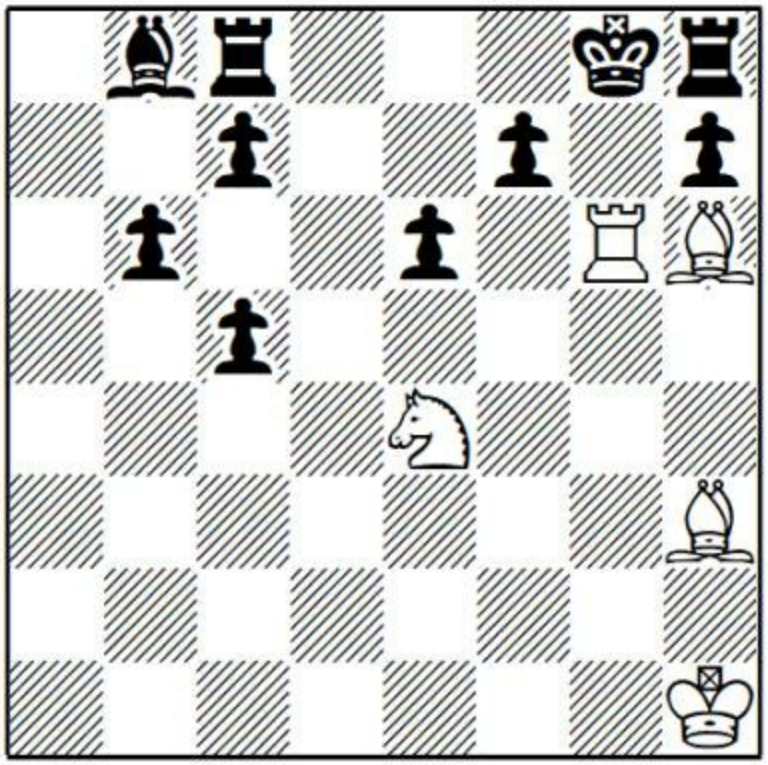
2 Rg7!!

Attraction.

2 ... Kxg7

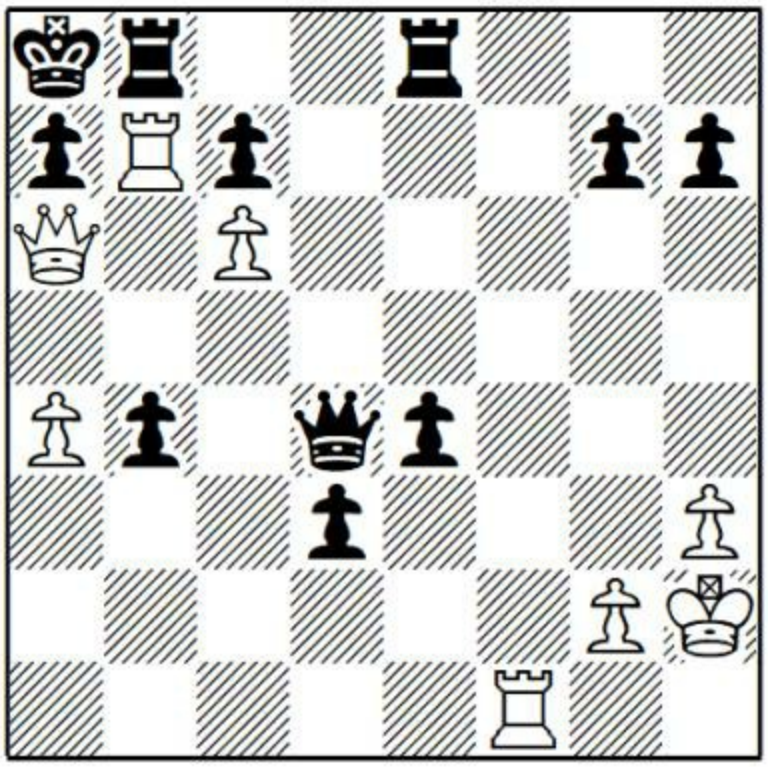
Or 2 ... c6 3 Rfxf7+ Ke8 4 Nf6+ Kd8 5 Rd7 mate.

3 Bh6+ Kg8 4 Rg6+!



Clearance.
4 ... fxg6
4 ... hxg6 5 Nf6 mate.
5 Bxe6 mate

131) J.Capablanca-R.Raubitschek
New York 1906



White to play

Level 2

Capa's opponent is on the verge of promoting his central passed pawns. Luckily, Capa has a mate in 5:

Answer: Lift the rook to f5, preparing to swing over to a5.

31 Rf5! e3

31 ... Qd6+ 32 Kh1 Qd4 33 Rxa7+! is the same.

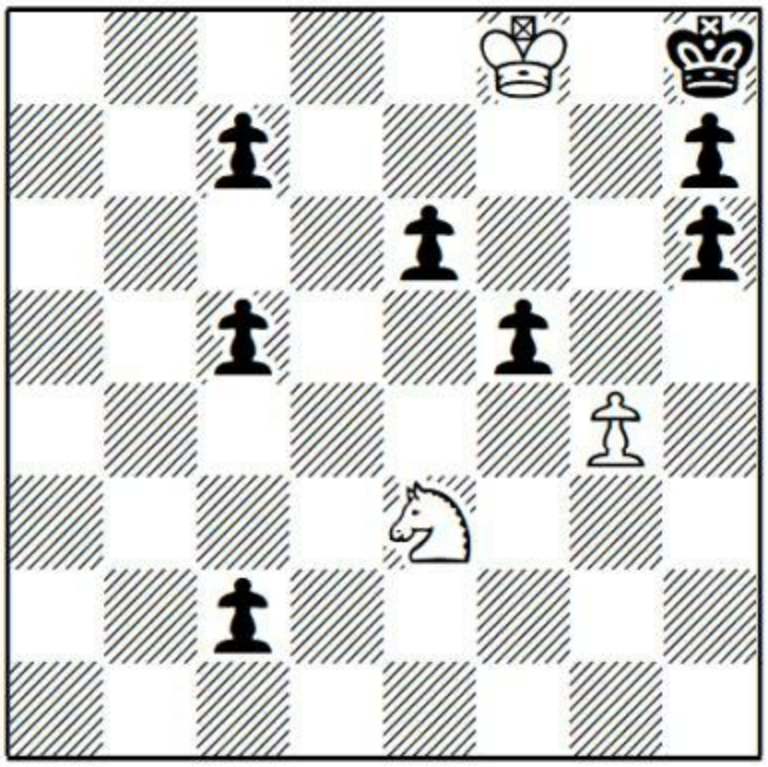
32 Rxa7+!

Annihilation of defensive barrier.

32 ... Qxa7 33 Ra5! Qxa6 34 Rxa6 mate

132) V.Smyslov

New in Chess Magazine, 2000



White to play

Level 5

Black's king is trapped in the corner. This factor outweighs Black's armada of passed pawns. Work out White's forced mate in 5:

Answer: Ignore Black's impending pawn promotion and head the knight for the mating square f7.

1 Nc4!

Threat: Ne5 and Nf7 mate.

1 ... h5

After 1 ... c1Q? White mates even faster with 2 Ne5 Qg5 3 Nf7 mate.

2 g5!

We must find this key move. 2 Ne5? allows Black's king to make air with 2 ... h6 3 Ng6+ Kh7 4 Kf7 c1Q 5 Nf8+ Kh8 6 Ng6+ Kh7, which is perpetual check.

2 ... c1Q

It never occurs to the hunter than she may be the prey. Black's extra

queen is unable to help her king, but if 2 ... h6 3 g6 c1Q 4 g7+ Kh7 5 g8Q mate.

3 Ne5

Threat: Nf7 mate. Black's queen is curiously worthless as a defensive piece.

3 ... h6

Or 3 ... Qxg5 4 Nf7 mate.

4 g6!

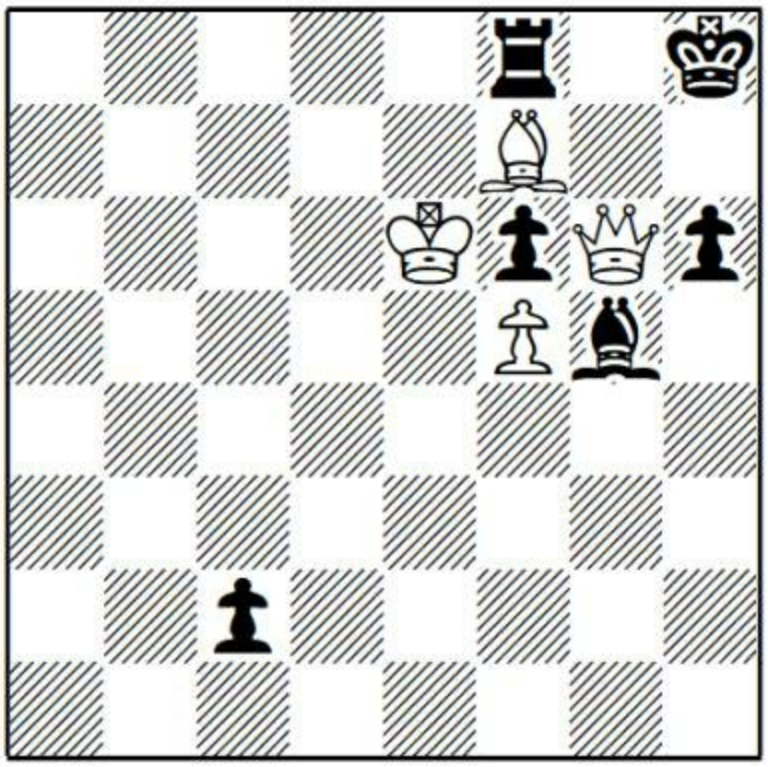
The g-pawn seizes control over the key h7-square and now there is no halting mate next move on f7.

4 ... Qd2

We are reminded of General Custer's last stand, and also by 4 ... Qg5 5 Nf7 mate.

5 Nf7 mate

133) B.Lasker
Deutsches Wochenschach, 1890



White to play

Level 4.5

Now we reach mates in 6. You know Emanuel Lasker and you even know his cousin Edward. Have you heard of Emanuel's older brother, Berthold Lasker? He was a chess master, physician and a dabbler in composed mating problems. Black is about to promote to a new queen and will then be up a rook. White must act quickly. We can force mate in six moves. How?

Answer: Clearance: Move the bishop to g8, clearing f7 for White's king.

1 Bg8!!

Not 1 Ke7?? Rb8 2 Bg8 Rb7+! (the rook covers mates on g7 and h7) 3 Kf8 c1Q when White has no mate and Black wins.

1 ... Rxg8 2 Kf7!

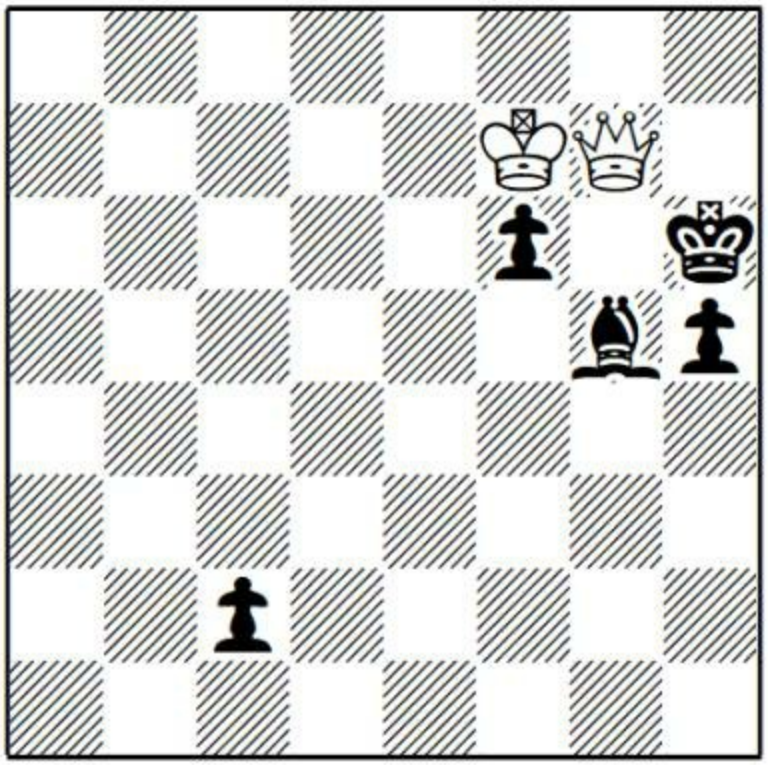
Step 2: Queen sacrifice. To deem this sacrifice as unsound is an alarmist narrative. White's remaining pawn becomes the hero of the study.

2 ... Rxg6 3 fxg6 h5

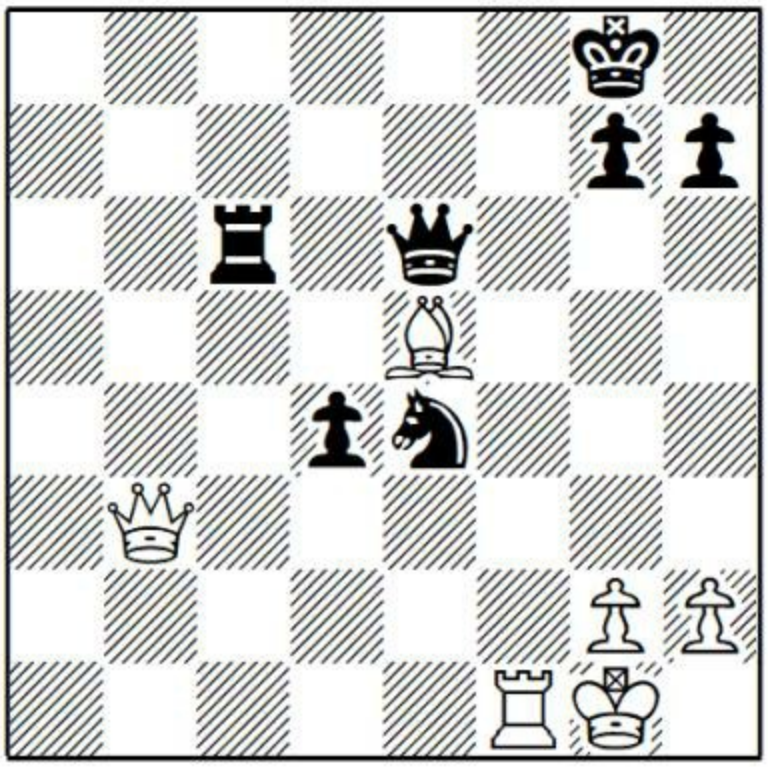
This creates air for Black's king on h6.

If 3 ... c1Q (what this move says is: “If the truth is bad news, then I don’t want to hear it!”) 4 g7+ Kh7 5 g8Q mate.

4 g7+ Kh7 5 g8Q+ Kh6 6 Qg7 mate



134) B.Lasker
Source unknown, 1894



White to play

Level 4

This is another one by Emanuel's brother, who composed this problem, which closely resembles a position arising from a tournament game.

Exercise (combination alert): White has a shot which mates in 6. How?

1 Bd6!

Answer: Double attack/interference. We marvel at the transformation by such a slight shift. White threatens mate on f8 and also cuts off Black's support for the now dangling queen on e6. When we throw a punch at our opponent, it generally carries with it an implication of reciprocity. In this case Black is unable to hit back in any meaningful way.

1 ... h5

Or, if 1 ... Qxb3 2 Rf8 mate, 1 ... Ng5 2 Rf8 mate or 1 ... Rxd6 2 Qb8+ Qc8 3 Qxc8+ Rd8 4 Qxd8 mate.

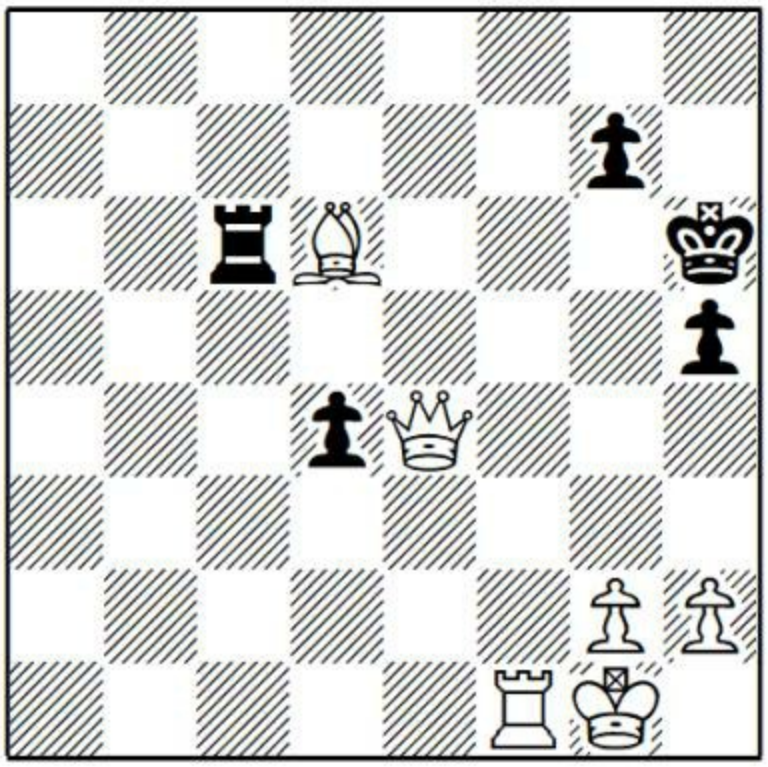
2 Qxe6+ Kh7

2 ... Kh8 3 Qe8+ Kh7 4 Qxh5+ Kg8 5 Rf8 is mate and we beat our

stipulation by one move.

3 Qxe4+ Kh6

In a normal tournament game Black would, of course, resign. But this is a problem with a stipulation of mate in 6 moves, so we have no time to lose.



White to play

Level 2.5

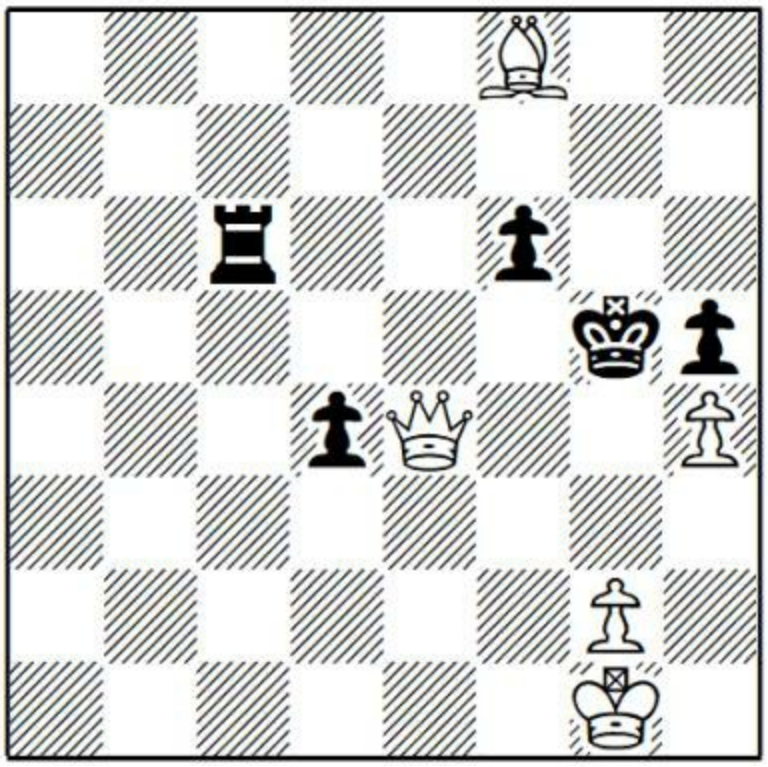
How does White deliver mate in three moves?

Answer: Deflection, which allows White's bishop to slip into f8 with check.

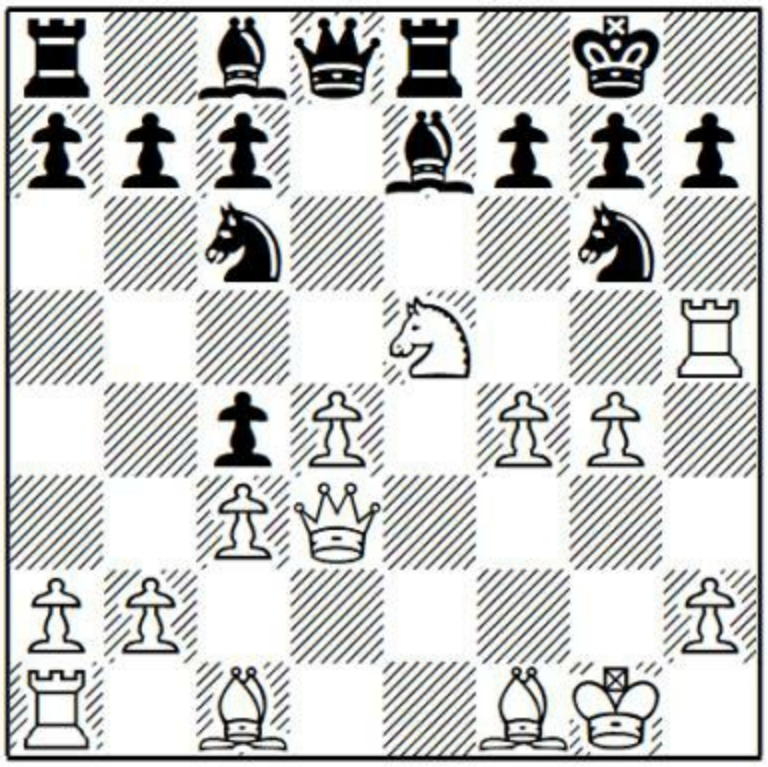
4 Rf6+! gxf6

If 4 ... Kg5 5 Rg6 mate (or 5 Qf4 mate).

5 Bf8+ Kg5 6 h4 mate



135) A.Fox-H.Bauer
Antwerp 1900



White to play

Level 4

This is the old black and white war movie pre-ambush scene where the Sergeant delivers the line: “It’s quiet. Too quiet.” White found an explosive way to deliver mate in 6:

Answer: Queen sacrifice/clearance.

18 Qxg6!!

After 18 Qxc4?? Ncxe5 19 fxe5 Bxg4 White’s rook has no safe place and the attack goes dead.

18 ... hxg6

Or 18 ... fxg6 19 Bxc4+ Kf8 20 Nxg6+! (clearance) 20 ... hxg6 21 Rh8 mate.

19 Nxg6!

Threat: Rh8 mate.

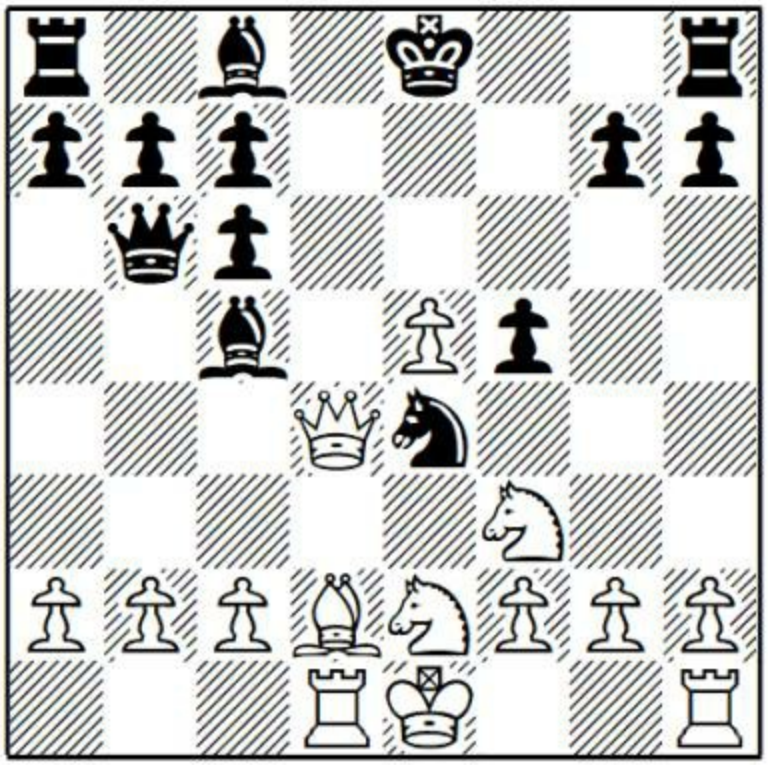
19 ... fxg6

The knight cannot be ignored. If 19 ... Be6 20 Rh8 mate, while it’s a bad

sign that *Stockfish* wants 19 ... Qxd4+ which is a spite-stall.

20 Bxc4+ Kf8 21 Rh8 mate

136) V.Vukovic-S.Deutsch
Zagreb 1920



White to play

Level 3.5

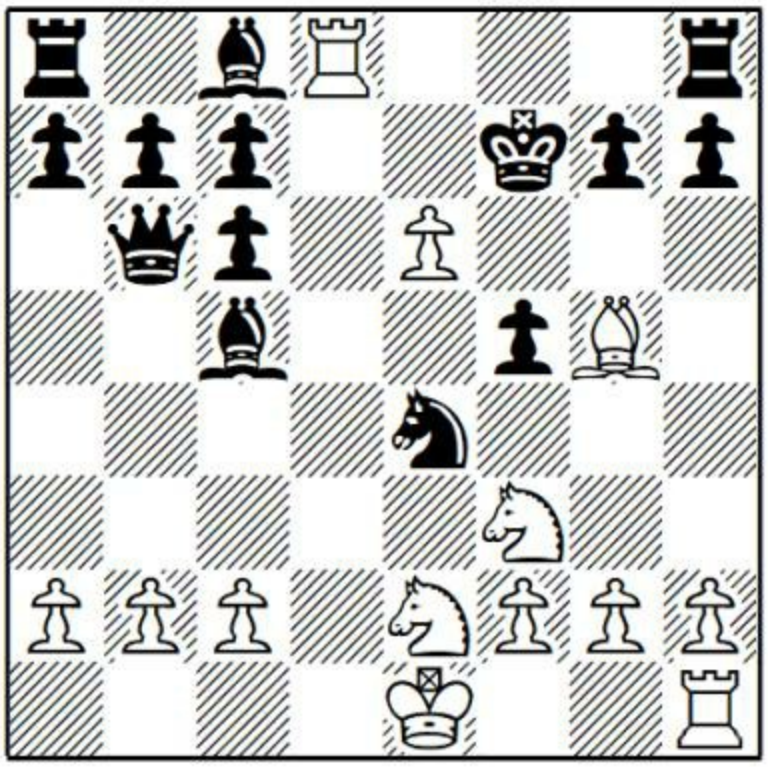
Mate in 6:

Answer: Queen sacrifice/attraction/double check.

13 Qd8+!

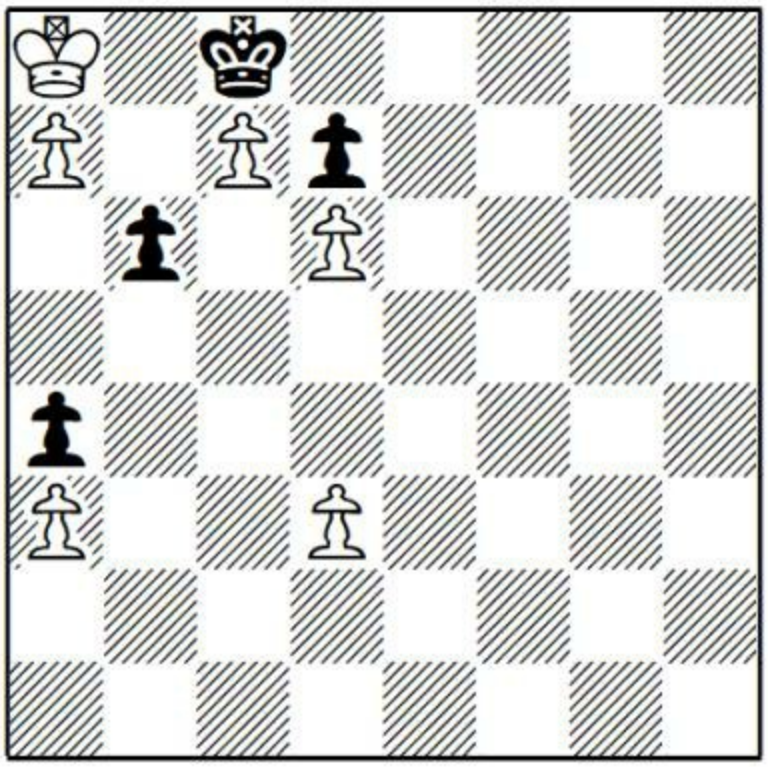
Now is not the time to chicken out with 13 Qc4?? Bxf2+ 14 Kf1 Bh4! (threat: ... Qf2 mate) 15 Ned4 Be7 when White is busted.

13 ... Kxd8 14 Bg5+ Ke8 15 Rd8+ Kf7 16 e6+!



Clearance. This is a key move in our initial calculations.
16 ... Kxe6
Or 16 ... Bxe6 17 Ne5 mate.
17 Nf4+
White's knights are homicidal Kangaroos, killing with each jump.
17 ... Kf7 18 Ne5 mate

137) V.Ropke
1945



White to play

Level .0000000001

Are you tired of difficult problems and in need of a mental vacation? This is not one of those cryptic problems which defy translation of intent. This amusing problem can be solved, merely if you know how pawns move! White to mate in 6 - whether you want to or not! This kind of problem is called a No Brainer, which is designed to *force* the solver to get the correct answer. They are amusing, yet deceptively difficult to actually compose.

1 d4

This is White's only legal move.

1 ... b5

The only legal move.

2 d5

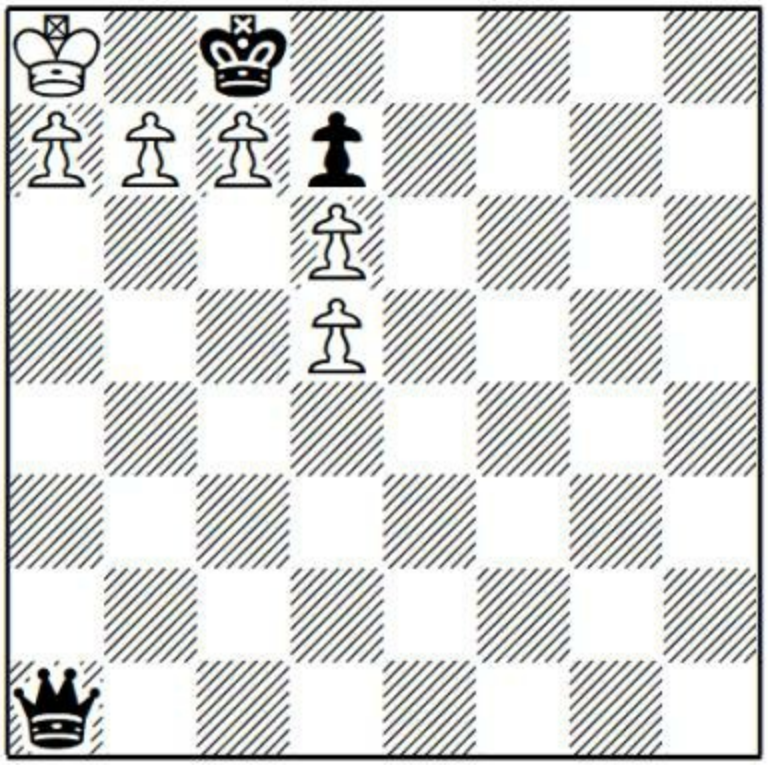
OLM (Only legal move!) and so on ...

2 ... b4 3 axb4 a3 4 b5 a2 5 b6 a1Q

The Force is not so strong in this one. Decisions, decisions. Black may as

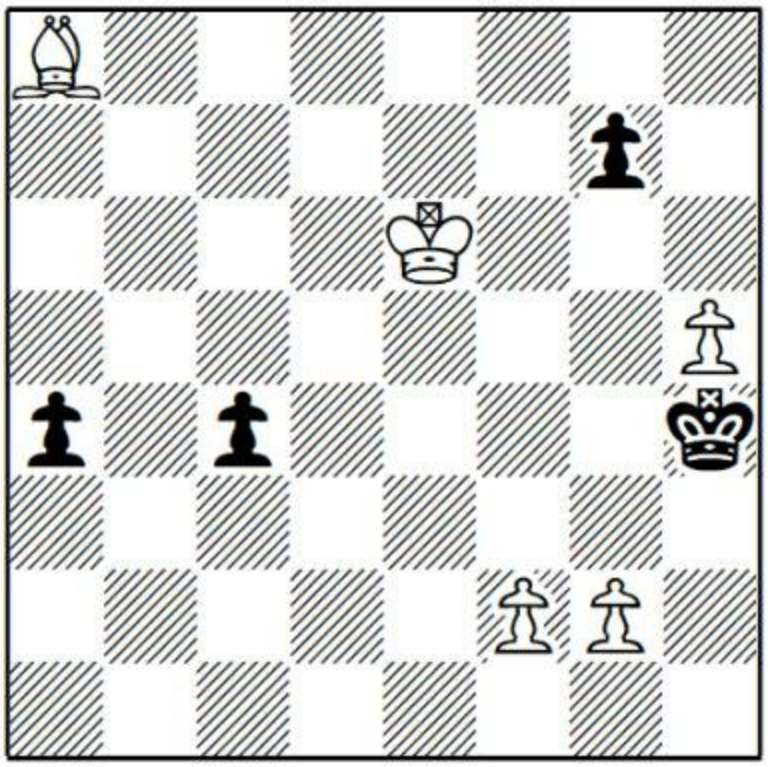
well go big, since underpromotion isn't a great way to evade mate either.

6 b7 mate



The problem is crazy and at the same time, so very reasonable!

138) A.Wotawa
Österreichische Schachzeitung, 1953



White to play

Level 5

Our task is to cage and checkmate Black's king before Black promotes and inflicts damage with the new queen. Mate in 6:

Step 1: Give away our h-pawn, which seals h6 as an escape square for Black's king.

1 h6!

The sequence must be exact. After 1 Kf5?? Kxh5 Black wins, while 1 Bf3?? Kg5! 2 Be4 a3 3 Bb1 c3 4 Kd5 a2 (overloaded defender) 5 Bxa2 c2 sees him promoting and winning.

1 ... gxh6 2 Kf5

Step 2: Box in Black's king.

2 ... a3 3 Bf3!

Step 3: Move the bishop to f3, intending Bg4! and g2-g3 mate.

A Facebook friend suggested 3 Bd5?, intending Kf4 and Be6, g2-g3+ and Bf7 mate. The idea is too slow by a move: 3 ... a2 4 Be6 a1Q 5 Kf4 (threat:

g2-g3 mate) 5 ... Qd4+ 6 Kf5 Qxf2+ and Black wins.

3 ... h5

If 3 ... a2 4 Bg4! a1Q 5 g3 mate.

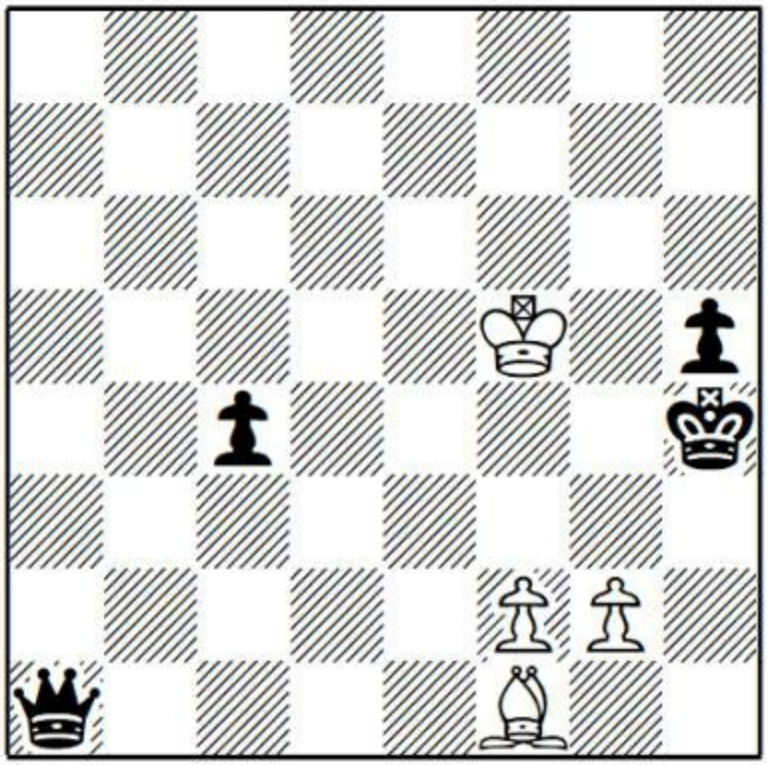
4 Be2!

Step 4: Transfer the bishop to f1, which controls the key h3 escape square for Black's king.

4 ... a2

We frown at the a-pawn's display to garner attention, as when a child interrupting adults, speaks out of turn, since White is the one who delivers the mate.

5 Bf1! a1Q



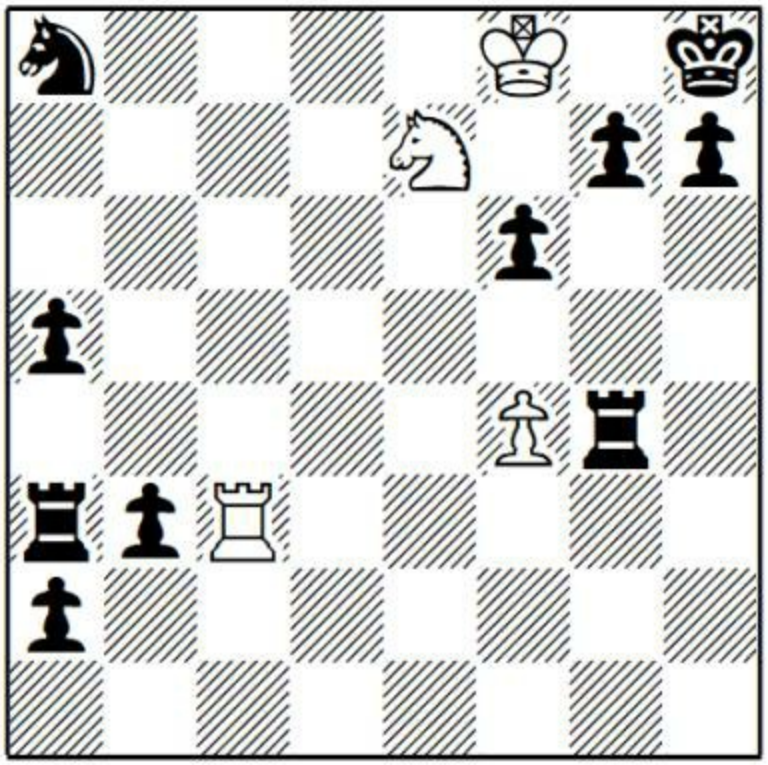
Easy come, easy go. Black is up a queen for only half a move.

6 g3 mate

Step 5: Push the g-pawn one square.

139) A.Wotawa

Deutsche Schachzeitung, 1957



White to play

Level 5

Mate in 6:

Answer: Deflection/clearance. Black's rook must be lured to g6, where it impinges upon the black king's ability to escape.

1 Ng6+!!

In case you accuse White of questionable business acumen, keep watching.

Not 1 Rc8?? Nb6 2 Re8 h5 3 Kf7+ Kh7 and Black wins.

1 ... Rxg6

If 1 ... hxg6? 2 Rh3+ Rh4 3 Rxh4 mate.

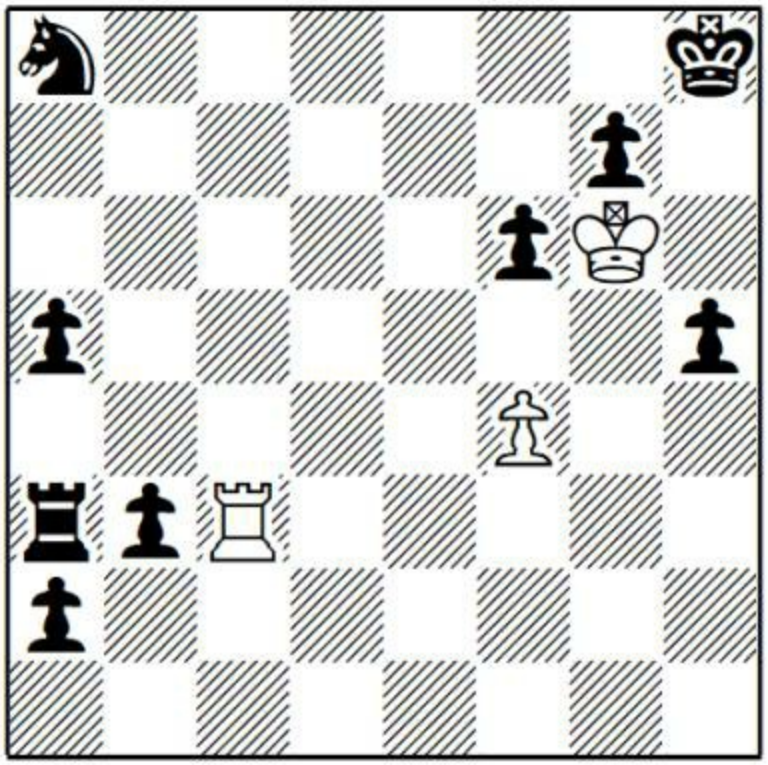
2 Kf7!

Threat: Rc8 mate.

2 ... h5

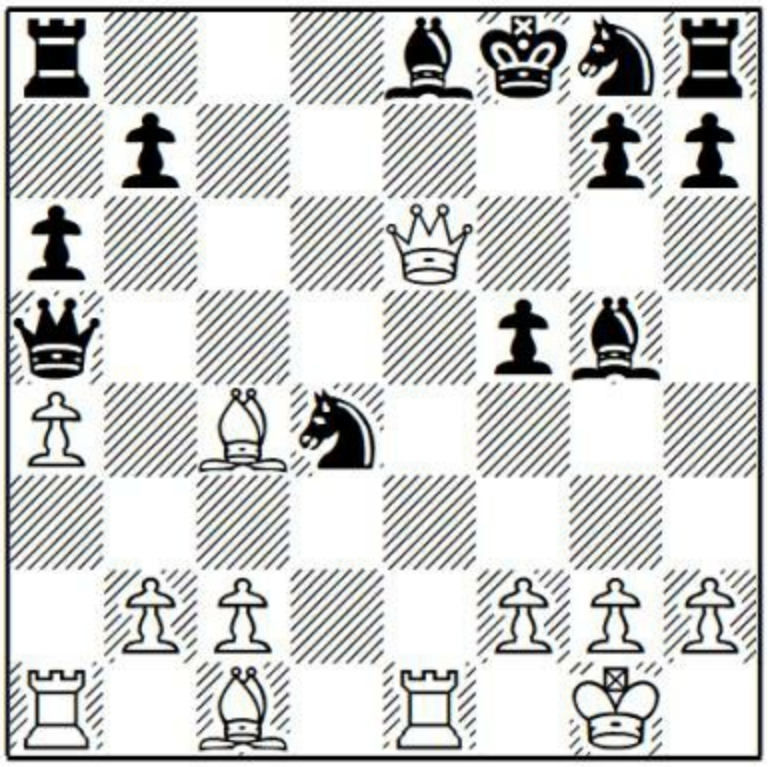
2 ... a1Q 3 Rc8 mate.

3 Kxg6



Nothing can stop the coming back rank mate.
3 ... Nb6 4 Rd3! Nd7
Black can only stall.
5 Rxd7 a1Q
Wealth we are unable to spend is theoretical wealth.
6 Rd8 mate

140) P. Ofstad-W.Uhlmann
Halle Zonal 1963



White to play

Level 4

Who among us doesn't feel awkwardly self-conscious when we feel the scrutiny of hostile eyes. White's pieces are dangerously close to Black's king. How do you deliver mate in 6?

Answer: Clearance.

18 Qd6+! Be7

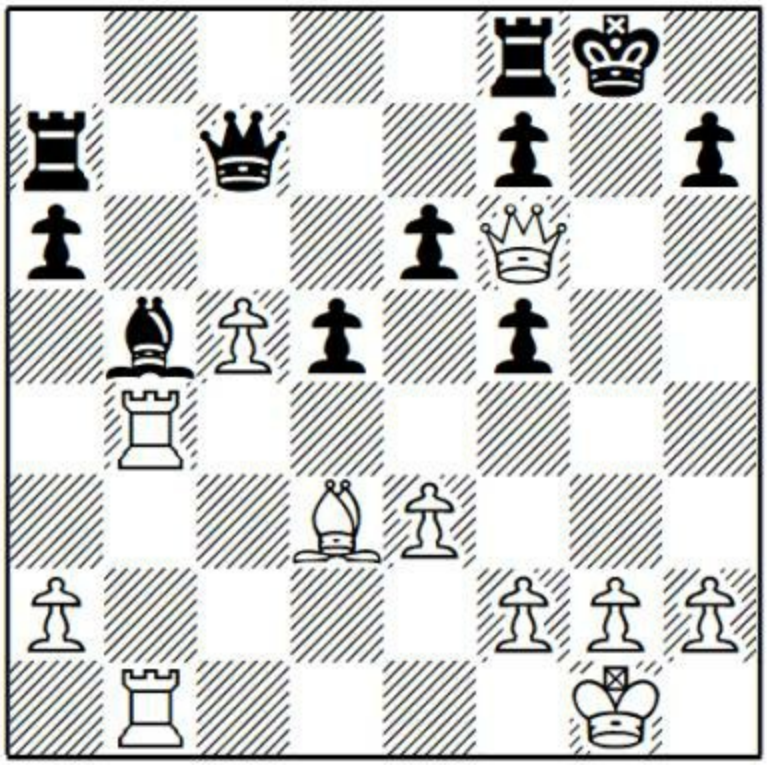
18 ... Ne7 19 Bxg5 mates.

19 Rxe7! 1-0

It becomes clear this is not going to be a stealth mission for White. Down two pieces, White continues to sacrifice: 19 ... Nxe7 (the computer wants to prolong mate with a spite queen block on d5, followed by a spite knight check on f3; instead, if 19 ... Qd8 20 Rf7 is double check and mate) 20 Qf6+! gxf6 (20 ... Bf7 21 Qxf7 mate) 21 Bh6 mate. Boden's mate!

141) V.Hort-L.Portisch

Madrid 1973



White to play

Level 3.5

I remember playing over Hort's beautiful combination from *Canadian Chess Chat Magazine*, when I was 13 years old, wishing I too could finish off my wounded opponents in such dramatic fashion. It's mate in 6:

Answer: Rook sacrifice/annihilation of defensive barrier/clearance/. The opening of the b1-h7 diagonal is fatal for Black.

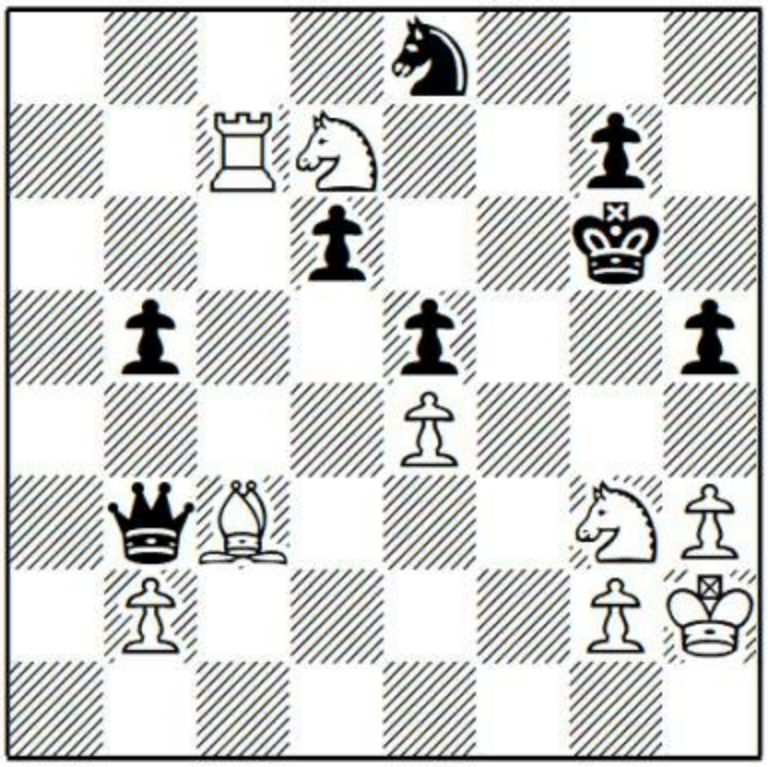
30 Rg4+!

Weak would be to take perpetual check with 30 Qg5+ Kh8 31 Qf6+ Kg8 32 Qg5+?. Why offer to lay down arms when you are winning?

30 ... fxg4 31 Qg5+ Kh8 32 Qh6! 1-0

Now the monsters cannot be driven out. Double attack. White threatens simultaneous mates on h7 and f8, and Black only has spite checks on h2 and g3 to stall: 32 ... Bxd3 (or 32 ... f5 33 Qxf8 mate) 33 Qxf8 mate.

142) F.Visier Segovia-M.Tal
Las Palmas 1977



White to play

Level 4

For we, the ordinary, it is a thrill of our chess lifetime to play a world champion. I got my wish at the age of 16, when I got a chance to play Mikhail Botvinnik in a simul in 1977. To my complete shock, I outplayed him strategically, and then quite predictably, bungled it horribly when he complicated. How much more of a dream to play a world champion across the board and beat him in brilliant fashion, as Segovia did to Tal in this game.

Exercise: As a visualization exercise, try and work out White's forced mate in 6 moves in our mind's eye, before moving the pieces or looking up the answer.

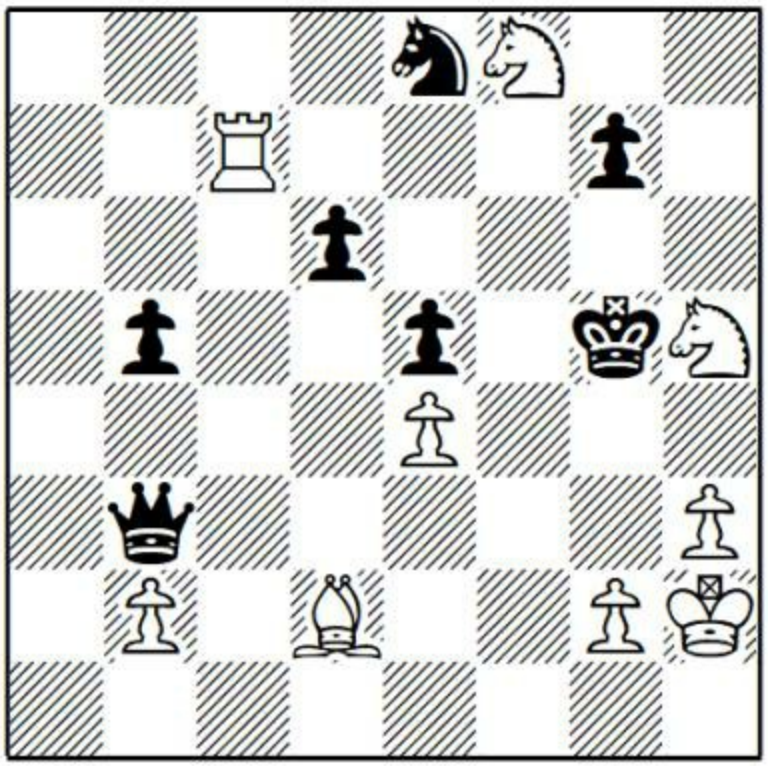
Answer: Start with a knight check on f8.

36 Nf8+ Kf6

Tal's king is caught in a nightmare, unable to awaken.

Alternatively, 36 ... Kg5 37 Bd2+ Kh4 (37 ... Kf6 38 Nxh5 mate) 38 Ng6 mate or 36 ... Kh6 37 Bd2+ g5 38 Rh7 mate.

37 Nxh5+ Kg5 38 Bd2+!



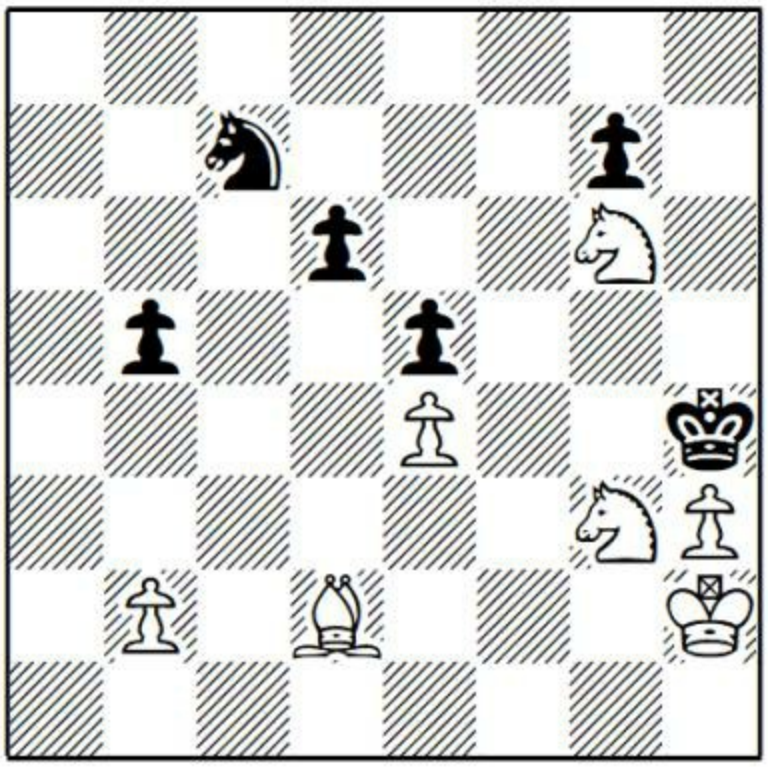
Step 2: Give up a piece to bring the bishop in and fight for control over the kingside dark squares.

38 ... Kh4

The king, unenamored by wealth, walks on incuriously. He gets mated, whether he chops Black's knight or not: 38 ... Kxh5 39 g4+ Kh4 40 Ng6 mate.

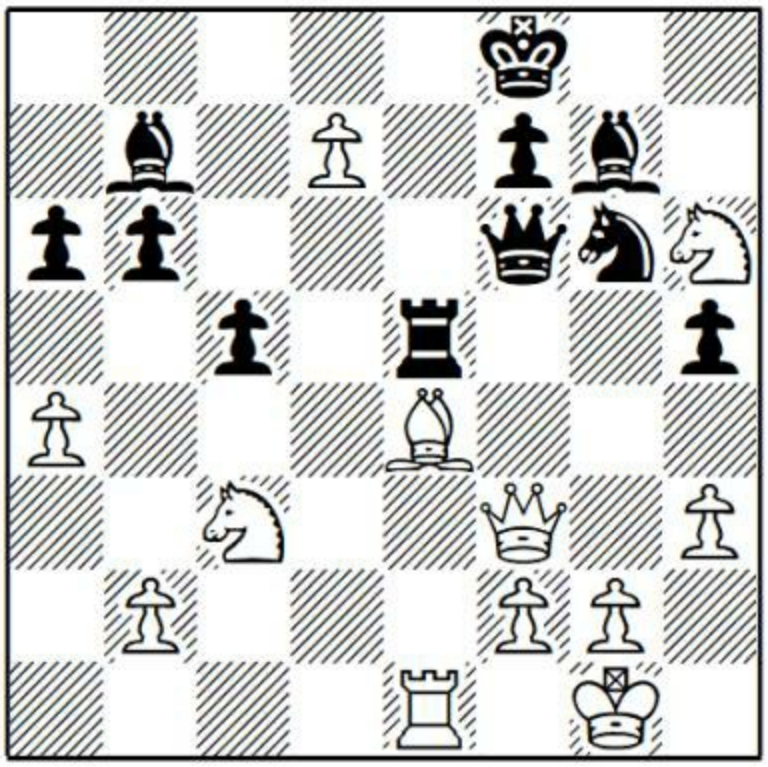
39 g3+ 1-0

If 39 ... Qxg3+ (39 ... Kxh5 40 g4+ Kh4 41 Ng6 mate) 40 Nxg3 Nxc7 41 Ng6 mate.



Congratulations if you visualized this position in advance.

143) J.Piket-S.Martinovic
Groningen 1989



White to play

Level 2.5

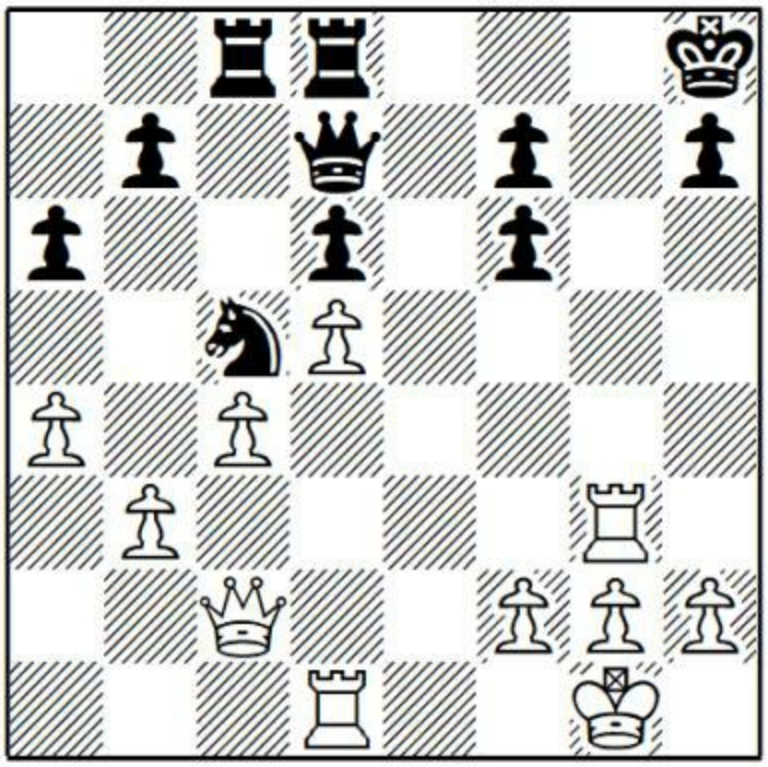
Mate in 6:

Answer: **31 d8Q+! 1-0**

Overloaded defender/pawn promotion. The new queen is the position's apex predator and Black is mated: 31 ... Re8 (if 31 ... Qxd8 32 Qxf7 mate) 32 Qxe8+! (even more accurate than 32 Qdxf6) 32 ... Kxe8 33 Bc6+! (double check) 33 ... Kd8 34 Qd5+ Kc7 35 Qd7+ Kb8 36 Qxb7 mate.

144) V.Tkachiev-W.Watson

London 1993



White to play

Level 2.5

Mate in 6:

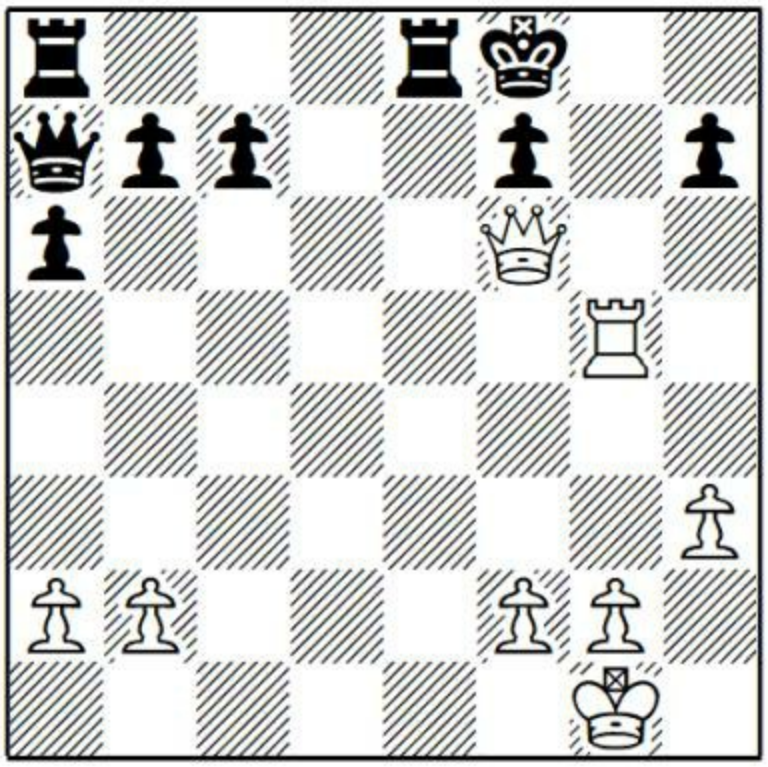
Answer: Queen sacrifice/clearance. The queen sacrifice eliminates the black king's pawn cover.

24 Qxh7+! Kxh7 25 Rd4! 1-0

Step 2: Rook lift. There is no stopping the trombone mate on h4: 25 ... Ne4 26 Rxe4 Qh3 (Black's pieces are obviously on angel dust) 27 gxh3 Rxc4 (running away is not the same as being free; OK, Black's spite blocks are really getting annoying) 28 Rxc4 Re8 29 Rh4 mate.

145) V.Bologan-B.Heberla

Plovdiv 2008



White to play

Level 3

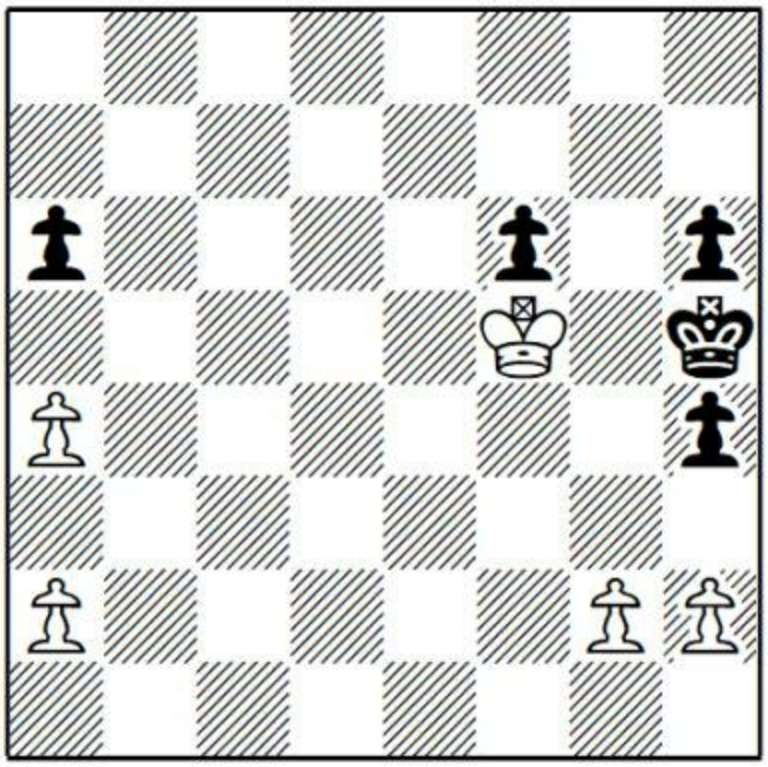
The war is underway. Go after Black's king:

Answer: 28 Qh6+! Ke7 29 Re5+ Kd7 30 Qd2+ (White's queen and rook stick to the black king like burrs on a shaggy dog) 30 ... Kc6 (30 ... Kc8 31 Rxe8 mate) 31 Qd5+ Kb6 32 Qc5 mate.

Answer no.2: 28 Rf5! 1-0 was played in the game, which mates one move slower: 28 ... Re1+ 29 Kh2 Ke8 30 Qxf7+ Kd8 31 Rd5+ Kc8 32 Qd7+ Kb8 33 Qd8 mate.

146) M.Lewitt

Berliner Schachzeitung 1896

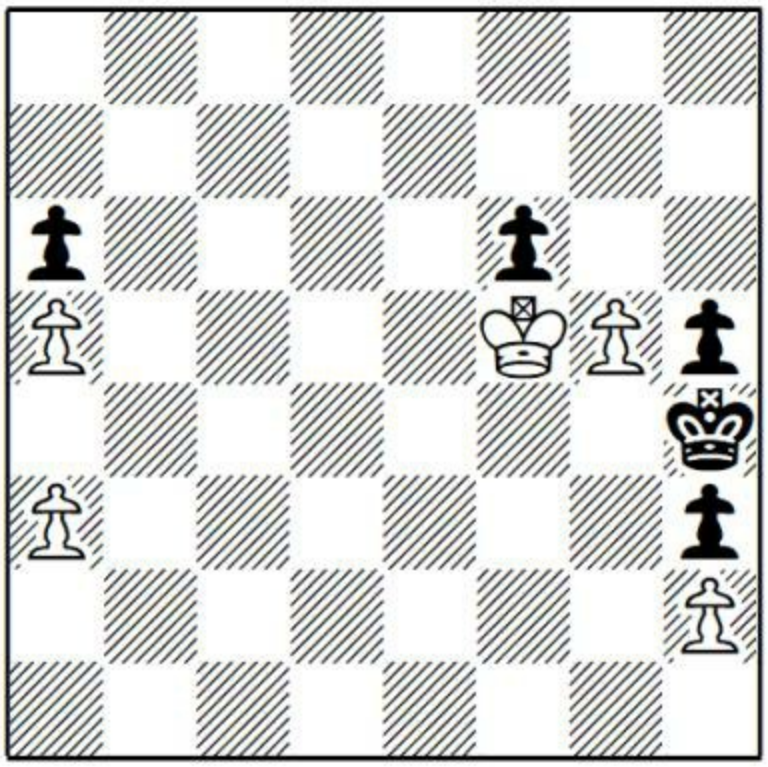


White to play

Level 4.5

This one isn't easy. White can actually force mate in 7 moves:

1 a5! h3 2 g4+ Kh4 3 a3 h5 4 g5!!



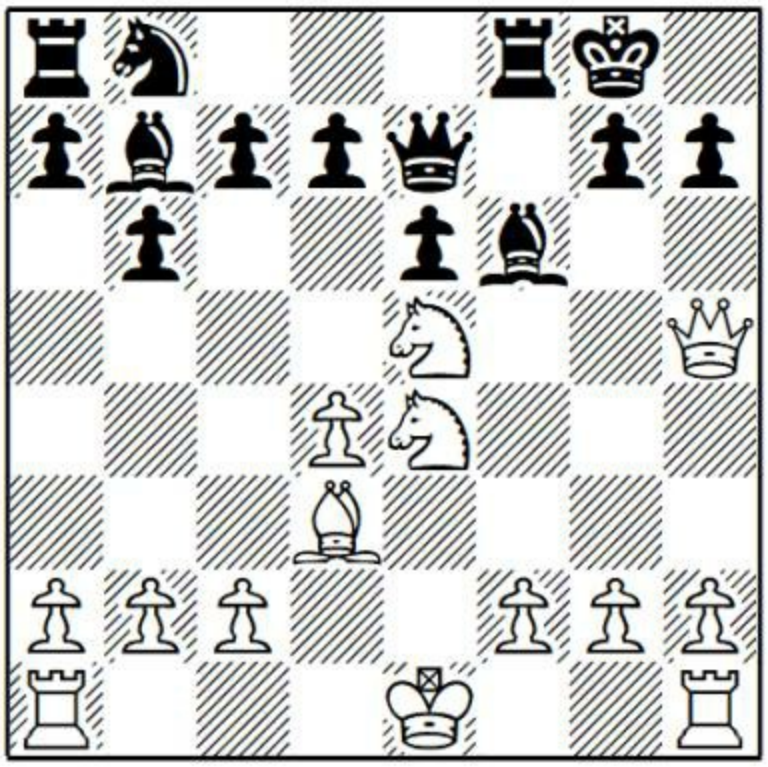
This conflicted looking move is the only way to force the mate in 7. 4 gxh5? Kxh5 5 Kf4 Kh4 is drawn.

4 ... fxg5 5 a4 g4 6 Kf4

Zugzwang.

6 ... g3 7 hxg3 mate

147) Ed.Lasker-G.Thomas
London 1912



White to play

Level 5

This is one of the most famous king chases of all time. How did Edward Lasker teach his opponent the art of attack?

Answer: Queen sacrifice/king chase mate.

11 Qxh7+!

Bye! Safe journey to g1! As an exercise, try and visualize the next 7 moves, all the way to the mate.

Not 11 Nxf6+? gxf6 and h7 is defended.

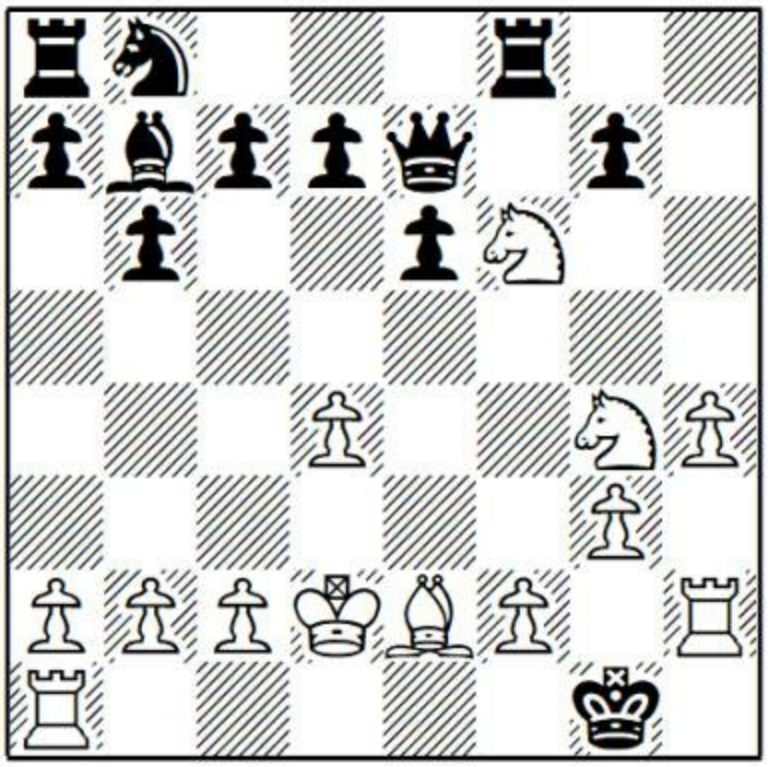
11 ... Kxh7 12 Nxf6+

Double check.

12 ... Kh6

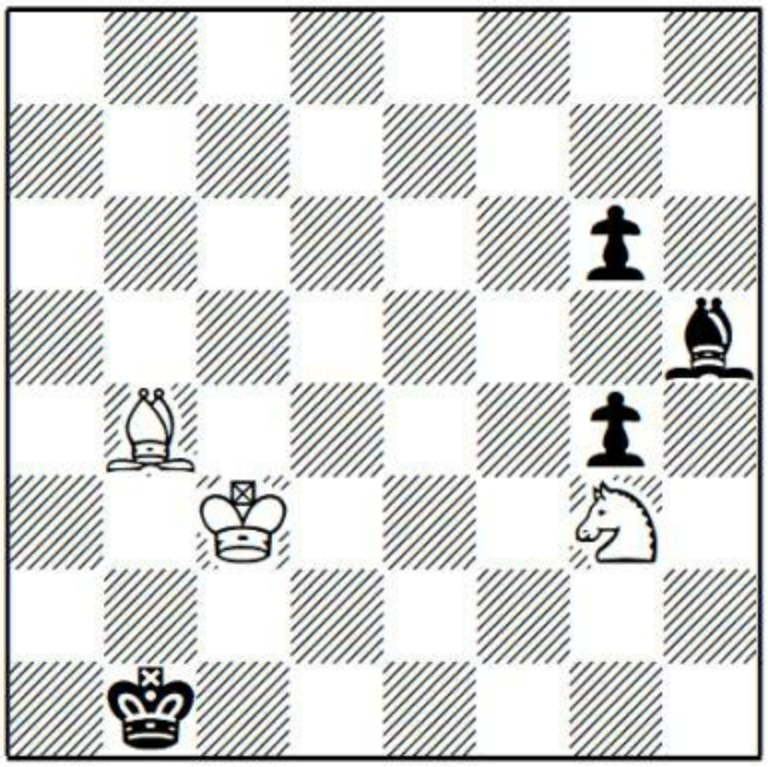
12 ... Kh8? 13 Ng6 mate.

13 Neg4+ Kg5 14 h4+ Kf4 15 g3+ Kf3 16 Be2+ Kg2 17 Rh2+ Kg1 18 Kd2 mate



No, no, no! Double question mark! Why did Lasker refuse the chance to castle, while delivering mate? 18 0-0-0 mate.

148) A.Troitzky
Sydsvenska Dagbladet Snällposten, 1912



Try this as a visualization exercise. Without moving the pieces, mate Black's king in 7 moves.

Answer: Our plan:

1. Stalemate Black's king, leaving Black with the only option of ... g6-g5.
2. Capture Black's now loose h5-bishop.
3. Capture Black's forward g-pawn.
4. Race the knight to the queenside and mate Black's king with our knight, before Black promotes the final g-pawn.

Here is how it's done:

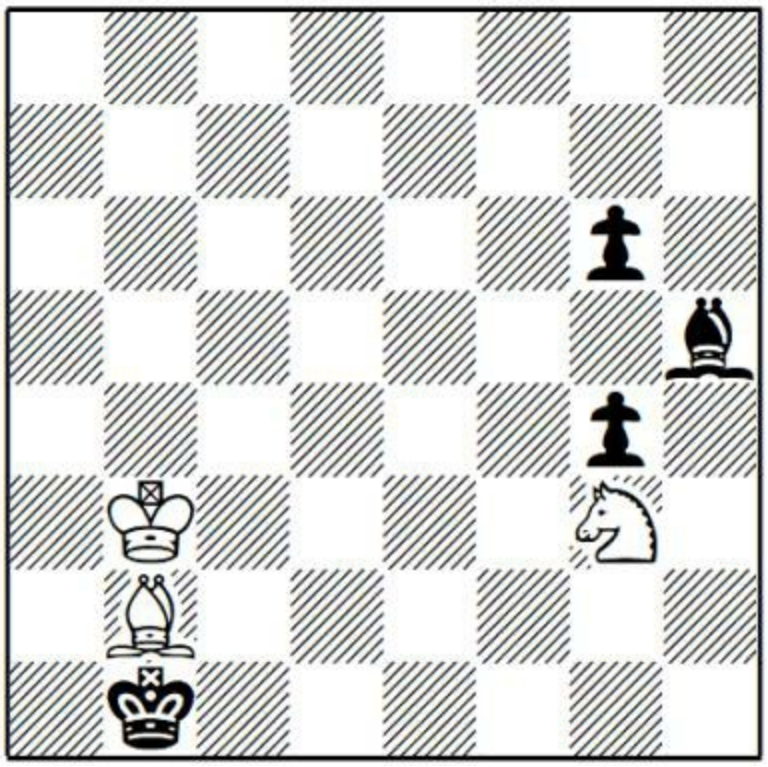
1 Ba3!

This way we cut off c1 as an escape route for Black's king.

1 ... Ka2

Or 1 ... Ka1 2 Bb2+ Ka2 3 Kc2 g5 4 Nxh5 g3 5 Nxg3 g4 6 Ne4 (or 6 Ne2) 6 ... g3 7 Nc3 mate.

2 Bb2 Kb1 3 Kb3



Zugzwang.

Step 1 completed. Black's king is stalemated and now the h5-bishop is lost due to zugzwang.

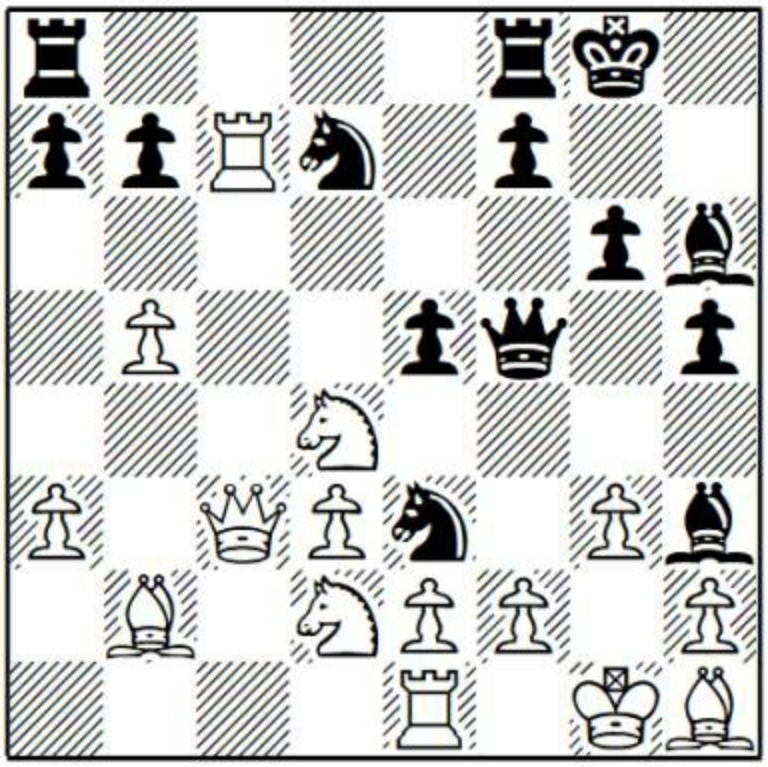
3 ... g5 4 Nxh5 g3 5 Nxg3 g4 6 Ne4

The knight is the lab rat in the maze, well-practiced at finding the chunk of cheese. Your writer delights in stating the obvious: the final mate is not so difficult to find, since there are so many of them. 6 Nf1 g3 7 Nd2 mate or 6 Ne2 g3 7 Nc3 mate both working too.

6 ... g3 7 Nd2 mate

Or 7 Nc3 mate.

149) A.O'Kelly de Galway-P.Devos
Brussels 1937



Black to play

Level 5

Mate in 7!

Answer: **21 ... Qxf2+!!**

Money isn't necessary if you don't plan to pay for the items you desire. This is not one of those situations where you check your bank account and a hacker drained it down to zero. White's king is driven up the board, against his will. Not the lame 21 ... exd4?? 22 Qxd4 when White threatens both Qh8 mate and f2xe3.

22 Kxf2 Ng4+ 23 Kf3

Side-stepping 23 Kg1?? Be3 mate.

23 ... e4+!

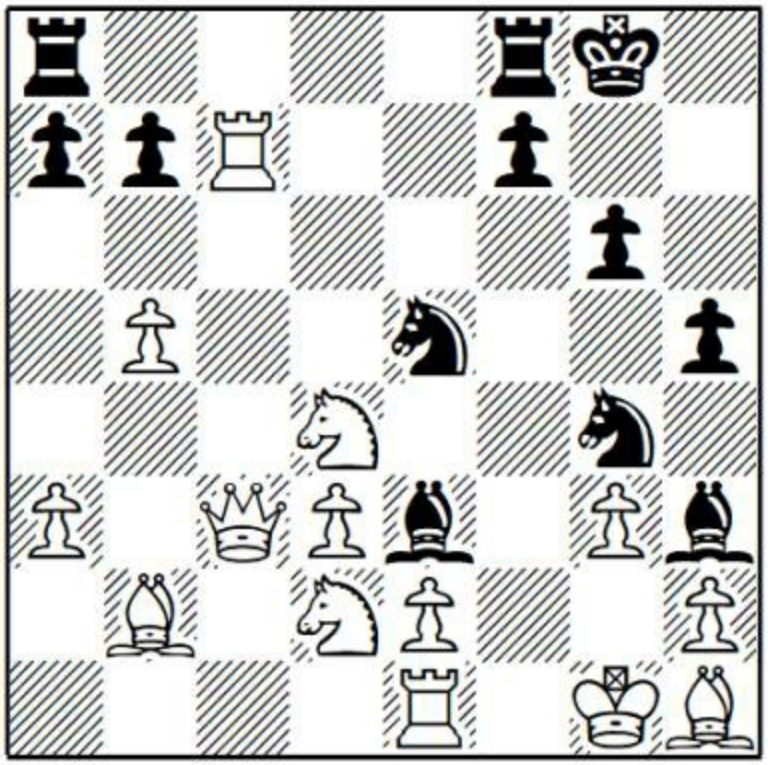
Step 2: Line opening.

24 Kxe4

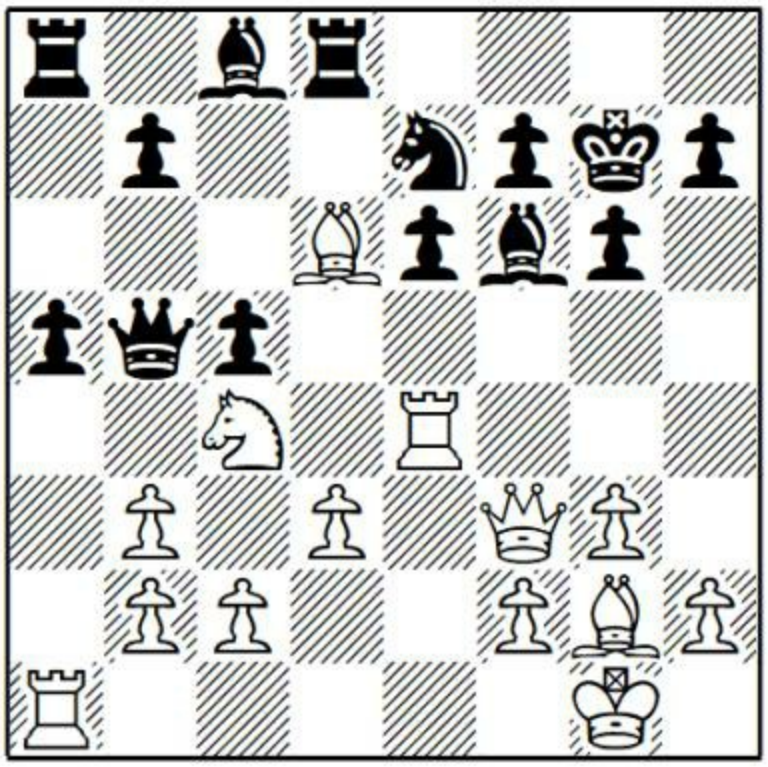
If 24 Nxe4? Nde5 mate or 24 dxe4? Nde5 mate.

24 ... Ndf6+

Or 24 ... Ngf6+ 25 Kf3 Ne5+ 26 Kf2 Nfg4+ 27 Kg1 Be3 mate.
25 Kf3 Ne5+ 26 Kf2 Nfg4+ 27 Kg1 Be3 mate



150) T.Petrosian-L.Pachman
Bled 1961



White to play

Level 4

Petrosian forced a pretty mate in 7:

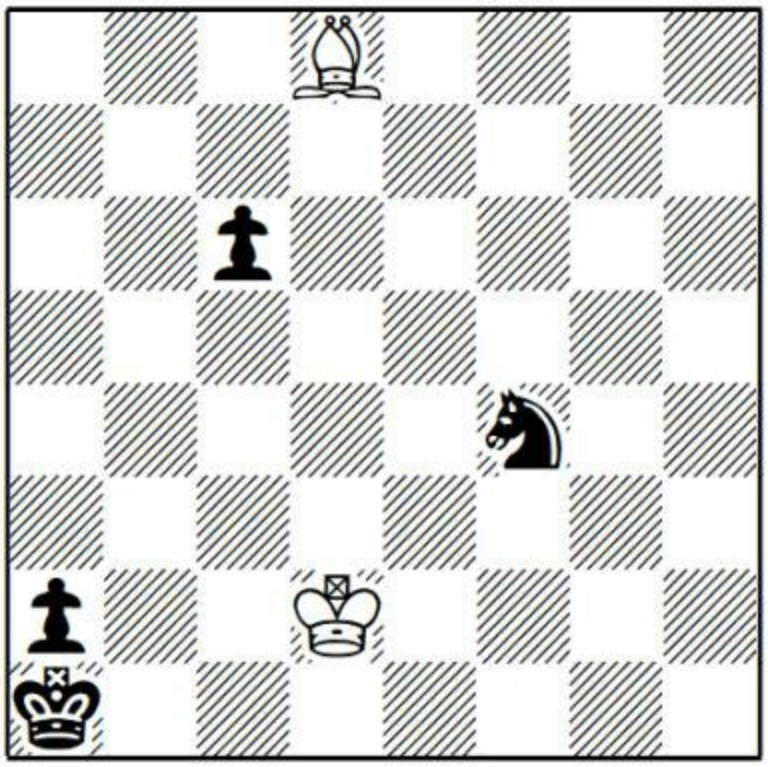
Answer: Step 1: Queen sacrifice.

19 Qxf6+!! Kxf6 20 Be5+ Kg5 21 Bg7! 1-0

"This is a real problem move," wrote Bobby Fischer. It follows the Principle: *When hunting the enemy king, don't chase him. Instead, cut off flight squares.* Now h6 is cut off and there is no defence to White's plan of h2-h4+, followed by Bf3: 21 ... e5 (sacrificing the rook on d3 stretches out the mate by a move) 22 h4+ Kh5 (hell feels like a vacation after what Black's king went through) 23 Bf3+ Bg4 24 Bxg4 mate.

151) A.Miller

The Problemist, 1972



White to play

Level 5

Black's king is boxed in. Now deliver mate in 7:

1 Kc2

Threat: Bf6 mate. 1 Kc1? Ne2+ 2 Kc2 Nd4+ 3 Kc1 is drawn by perpetual check.

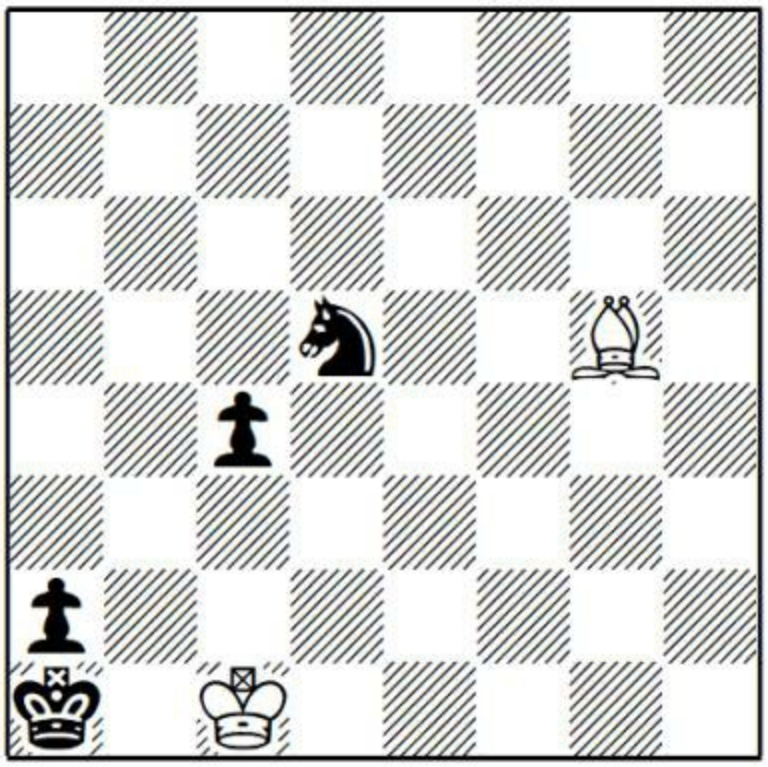
1 ... Nd5 2 Kc1!

This is a high-powered waiting move. 2 Ba5? allows Black to hold the game after 2 ... c5 3 Kc1 Nb4 4 Bd8 Nd3+ 5 Kc2 Ne1+ 6 Kc1 Nd3+ and perpetual check.

2 ... c5 3 Bg5!

3 Bh4? c4 4 Be1 c3 5 Bh4 Nf4 6 Bf6 Ne2+ 7 Kc2 Nd4+! 8 Bxd4 is stalemate. If White refuses to capture the knight, then Black delivers perpetual check.

3 ... c4



White to play and force mate in 4 moves:

4 Bd2!

The secret is to simply wait Black out.

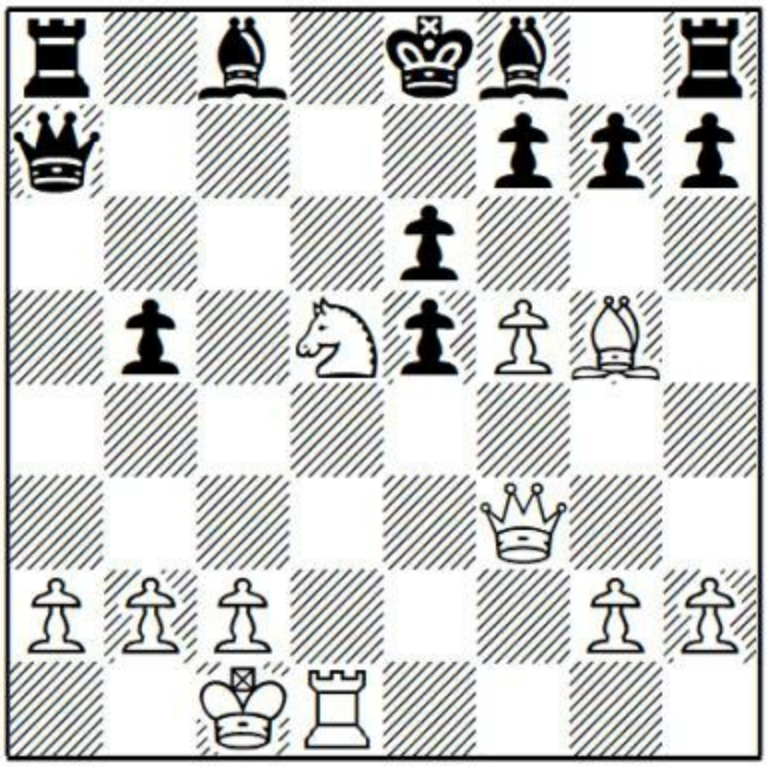
4 ... c3 5 Be1! c2 6 Bd2!

Zugzwang. Now the c3-square is the bishop's chew toy.

White must be careful. Any old move won't do. The error 6 Ba5? causes the very effect which White hoped to prevent. It allows Black to hold a draw with 6 ... Nb4! 7 Bc7 (7 Bxb4 stalemate) 7 ... Nd3+ 8 Kxc2 Nb4+ 9 Kc1 Nd3+ is perpetual check.

6 ... Nb4 7 Bc3 mate

152) A.Laster-R.Gahtan
Lincoln 1975



White to play

Level 2.5

How did Laster mate his opponent Firster?

Answer: Start with a clearance check on c7.

17 Nc7+!

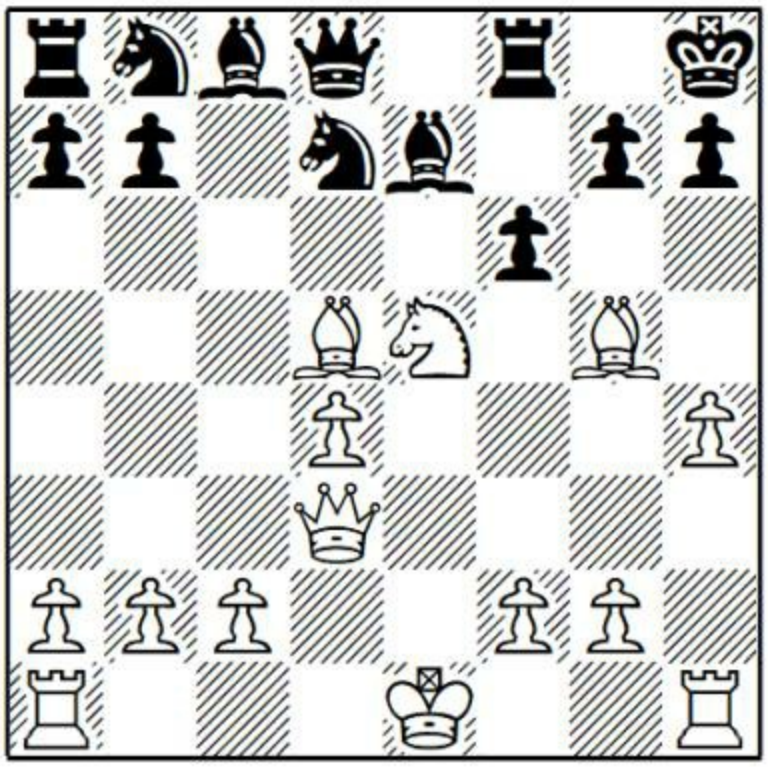
This is the first act of piracy, with more to follow.

17 ... Qxc7 18 Qc6+! 1-0

Step 2: Queen sacrifice/decoy/weak back rank: 18 ... Qd7 (if 18 ... Qxc6 19 Rd8 mate or 18 ... Bd7 19 Qxc7 Be7 20 Qxd7+ Kf8 21 Qxe7+ Kg8 22 Rd8+ Rxd8 23 Qxd8 mate) 19 Rxd7 Bxd7 20 Qxa8+ Bc8 21 Qxc8 mate.

153) J.Benjamin-H.Carter

London 1982



White to play

Level 4

How should White continue?

Answer: Sacrifice the knight on g6, instead of winning the exchange with a knight check on f7.

13 Ng6+!

Clearance. After 13 Nf7+? Rxf7 14 Bxf7 Nc6 Black looks fine.

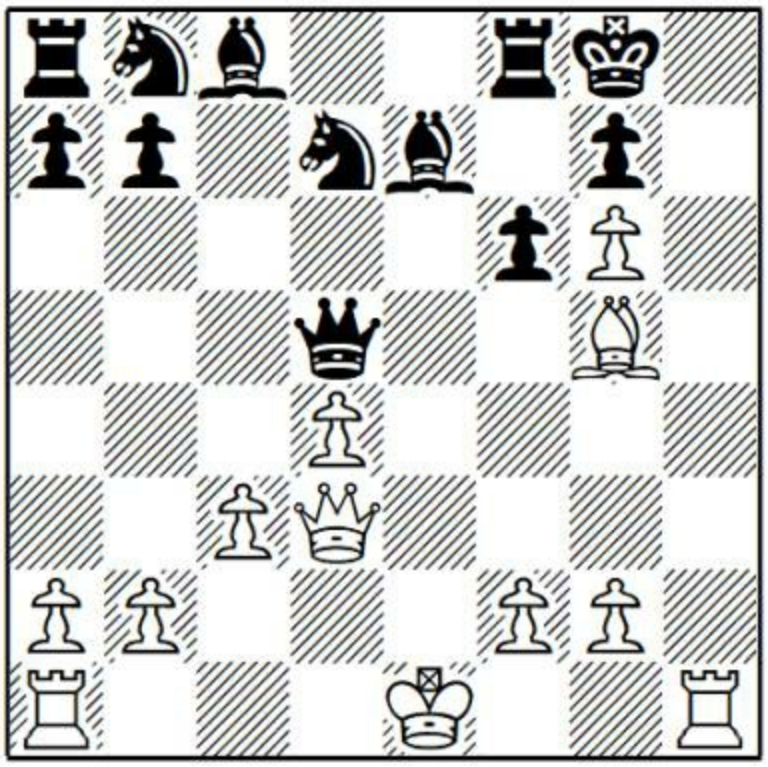
13 ... hxg6 14 h5! Qa5+

Not 14 ... fxg5?? 15 hxg6 mate.

15 c3 Qxd5

Has White been outwitted, since Black's king now has access to g8? We must turn to a higher power (the engine!) to reveal the truth: Black is still mated in four moves.

16 hxg6+ Kg8



Joel forced mate in 3:

Answer: Attraction.

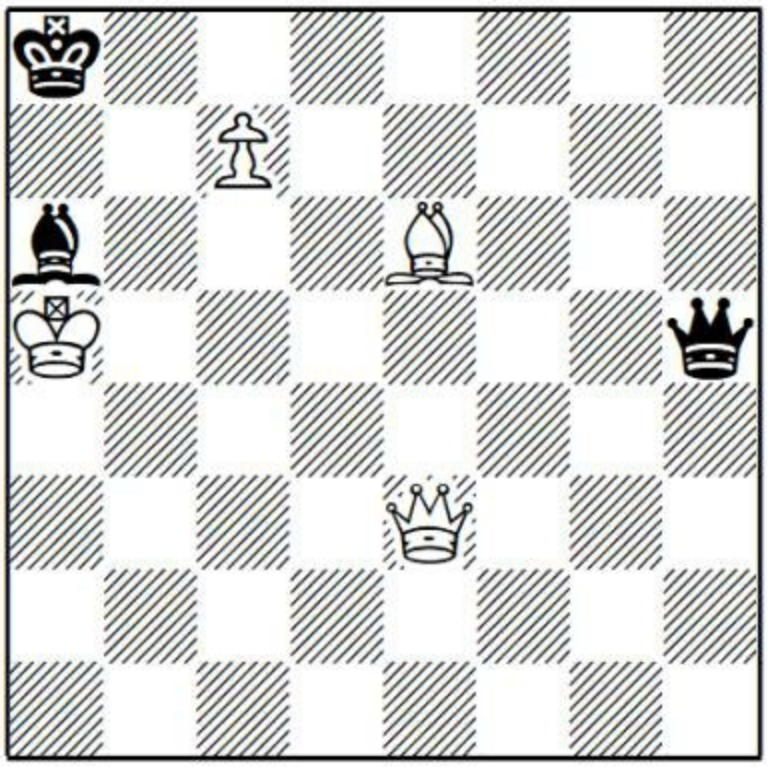
17 Rh8+!

Attraction, which allows White's queen to slip into h3, with check. You need to see this trick when you begin the combination on move one!

17 ... Kxh8 18 Qh3+ Kg8 19 Qh7 mate

154) P.Joitsa

Revista de Romana de Sah, 1984



White to play

Level 5

If any of you are familiar with Mitrofanov's Deflection, which is perhaps the most famous chess study of all time (it's annotated in *Rewire Your Chess Brain*), then you will get this one.

Answer: Queen sacrifice/deflection. Black's queen is thrown off her light square track.

1 Qg5!!

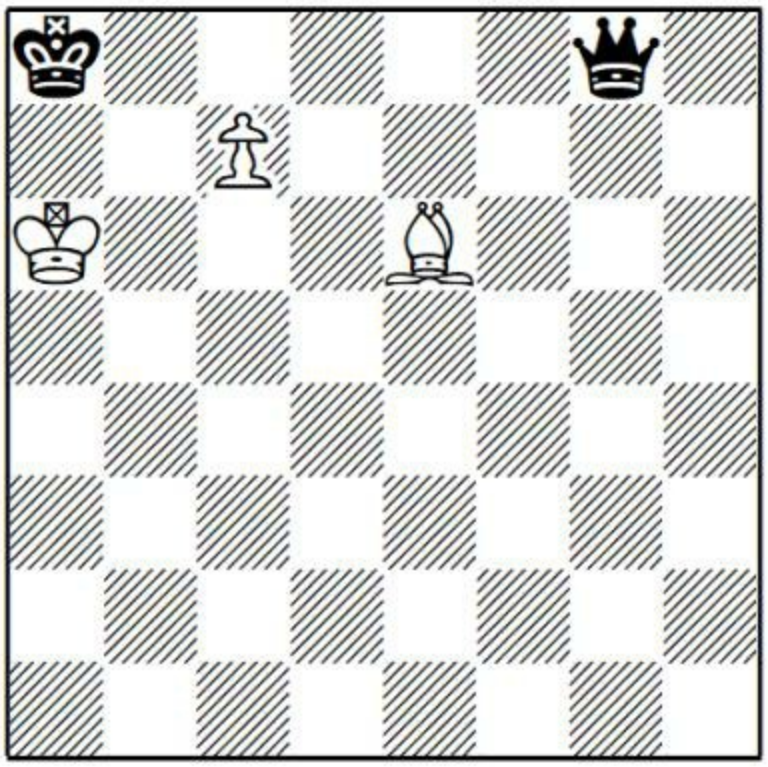
Mothers worldwide ask: "If your friend jumped off a bridge, would you do it too?" White's answer is: "Absolutely!"

Not 1 Kxa6? Qe2+! 2 Ka5 Qa6+! 3 Kb4 (3 Kxa6 is immediate stalemate) 3 ... Qb6+! 4 Qxb6 stalemate.

1 ... Qxg5+ 2 Kxa6

Threat: c8Q or c8R mate.

2 ... Qg8!



Oh you rotten sneak! If we take Black's queen it's stalemate. White can still mate in two moves. How?

Answer: Decoy.

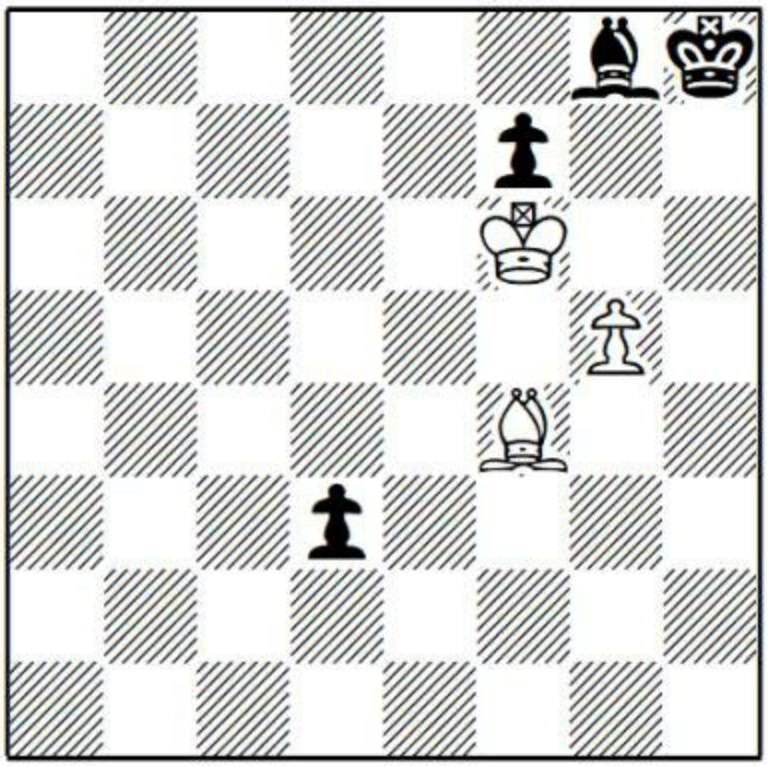
3 Bd5+!

Not 3 Bxg8 and stalemate, and 3 c8Q+? is dumb too, since a lone bishop is unable to deliver mate: 3 ... Qxc8+ 4 Bxc8 is a draw.

3 ... Qxd5 4 c8R mate

Or the more vulgar 4 c8Q mate.

155) V.Smyslov
Shakhmaty v SSSR, 1987



White to play

Level 4

Despite appearances, Black's king is in grave danger. How does White exploit this factor?

Answer: Don't worry about Black's passed pawn and set up a mating attack by transferring the bishop to e5.

1 Be5!

The most dangerous person in the world is a true believer. Such a move takes confident calculation that we will mate Black if our opponent pushes the d-pawn to d2 next move.

1 ... Kh7

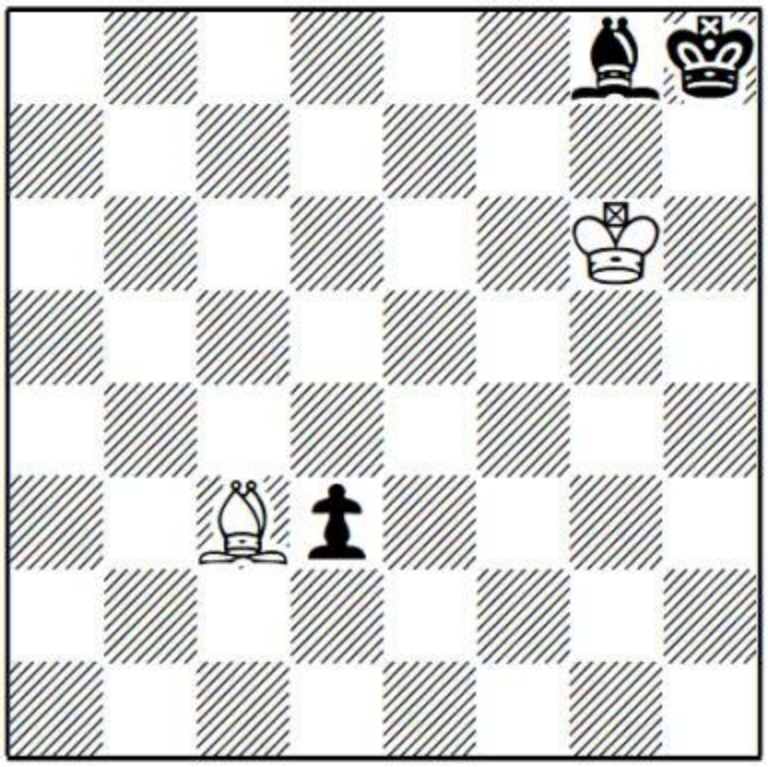
Alternatively, 1 ... d2 2 g6 d1Q (2 ... fxg6 3 Kxg6 mate) 3 Kg5+ f6+ 4 Bxf6 mate or 1 ... Bh7 2 Kxf7 mate.

2 Bc3 Kh8

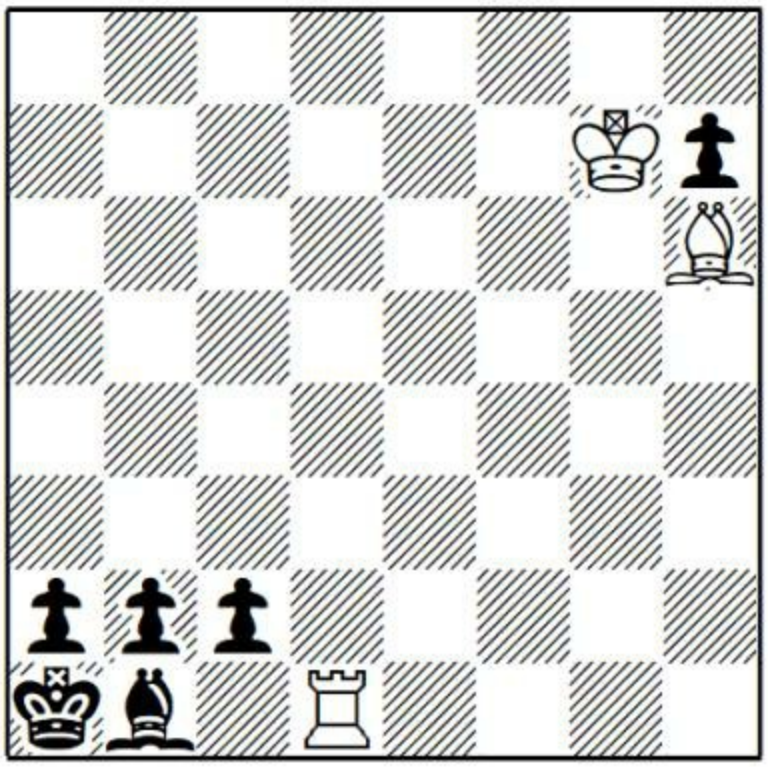
Or 2 ... d2 3 Bxd2 Kh8 4 Bc3 Kh7 5 Bb2 Kh8 6 g6 fxg6 7 Kxg6 mate.

3 g6!

Step 2: Push the g-pawn, seizing control over Black's escape square, h7.
3 ... fxg6
If 3 ... d2 4 Kf5+ f6 5 Bxf6 mate.
4 Kxg6 mate



156) V.Smyslov
Moi Etyudy, 2005



White to play

Level 5

This is a completely conceptual mating problem and if you spot the mating idea, you will solve it quickly. Miss the geometry and the mate in 7 will feel impossible:

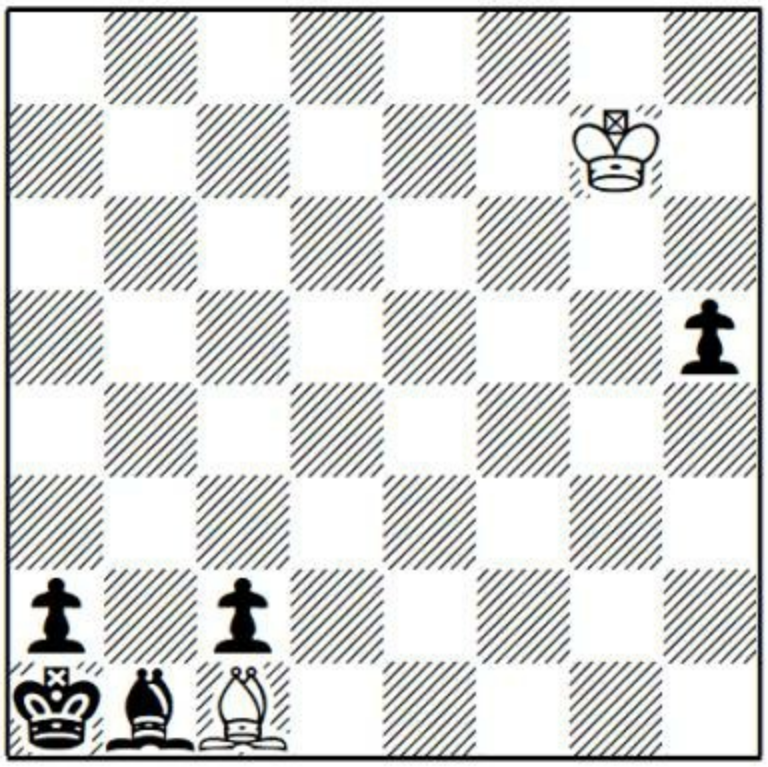
Answer: Move the rook to c1, forcing Black to capture. Then simply move our king to c3 and play Bb2 mate.

1 Rc1!!

Black has only one legal move, which opens the a1-h8 diagonal.

Not 1 Rg1?? c1Q 2 Rxc1 bxc1Q 3 Bxc1 h5 4 Bf4 (threat: Be5 mate) 4 ... Bc2 5 Kf6 h4 6 Kg5 h3 7 Kg4 Kb1 8 Be5 a1Q 9 Bxa1 h2 when Black wins.

1 ... bxc1Q 2 Bxc1 h5



3 Kf6!

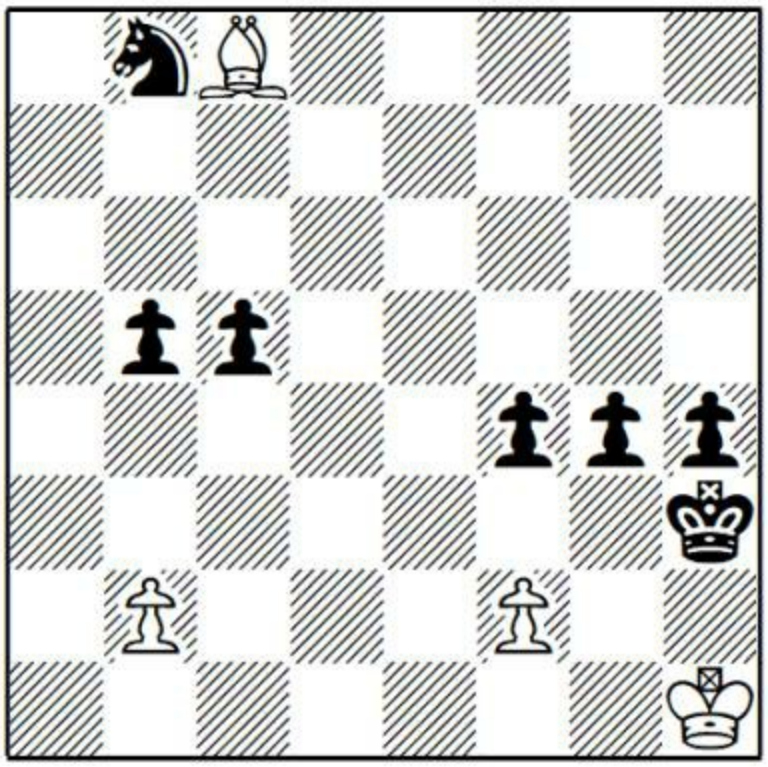
Here I began humming ‘Somewhere Over the Rainbow’. White’s king simply marches to c3 and then Bb2 mate follows.

3 ... h4 4 Ke5 h3 5 Kd4 h2 6 Kc3 h1Q

Enjoy your new queen.

7 Bb2 mate

157) V.Smyslov
Moi Etyudy, 2005



White to play

Level 5

If we somehow transfer our bishop to f1, it's mate. The details of implementation are the real issue.

Answer: Waiting move.

1 b3!!

Unintended consequences are what make chess such a scary game. The direct path to f1 fails, as 1 Bf5? intending Bd3 and Bf1 mate, turns a win in to a loss: 1 ... c4 2 b3 Na6 3 bxc4 bxc4 4 Be6 Nc5 5 Bxc4 g3 (note that Black's knight now covers e6) 6 f3 g2+ 7 Kg1 Kg3 and Black wins.

1 ... f3

1 ... c4 2 bxc4 bxc4 3 Be6 c3 4 Bc4 c2 (4 ... g3 5 Be6 mate) 5 Bf1 mate.

2 Bf5!

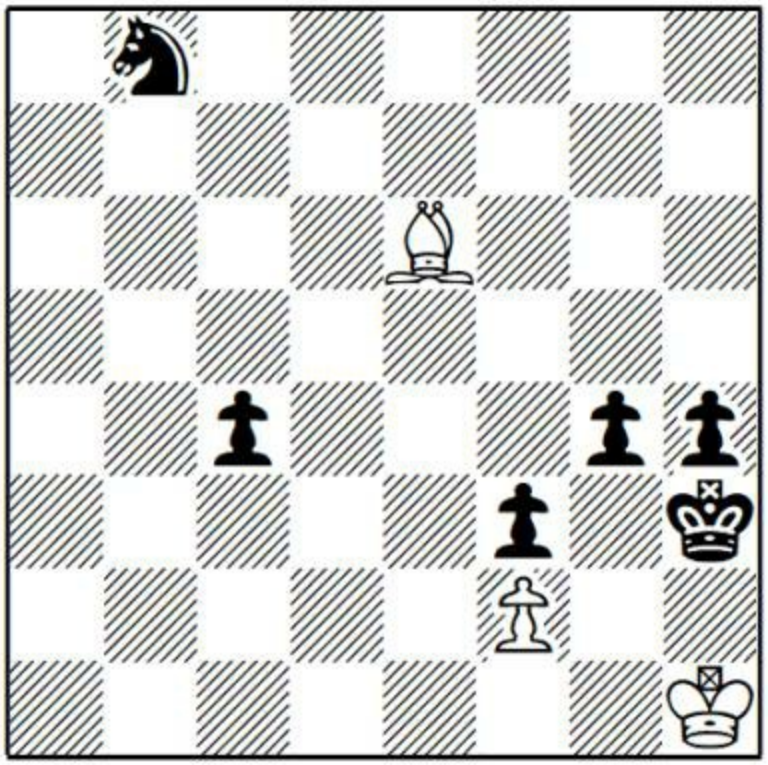
Threat: Bd3 and Bf1 mate.

2 ... c4

This move frustrates the white bishop's attempts to reach f1. Instead, if 2

... Nc6 3 Bd3 (threat: Bf1 mate) 3 ... g3 4 Bf5 mate.

3 bxc4 bxc4 4 Be6!



4 ... Nc6

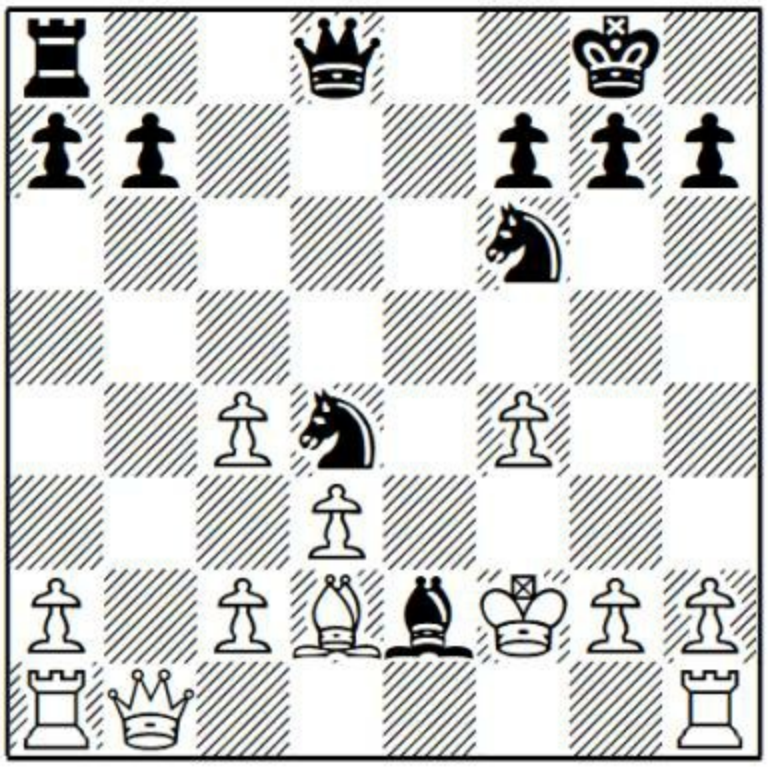
If 4 ... c3 5 Bc4 g3 (5 ... c2 6 Bf1 mate) 6 Be6 mate.

5 Bxc4 Nd4

It really doesn't count as an 'option' if both your choices lead to your own loss, the other being 5 ... g3 6 Be6 mate.

6 Bf1 mate

158) J.Schulten-P.Morphy
New York 1857



Black to play

Level 4.5

Our climb gets steeper. We move to mates in 8.

Morphy was the only grown-up in a world of children. He understood that development and initiative were more important than material and chasing fantasy, while his contemporaries often fell woefully short of such understanding.

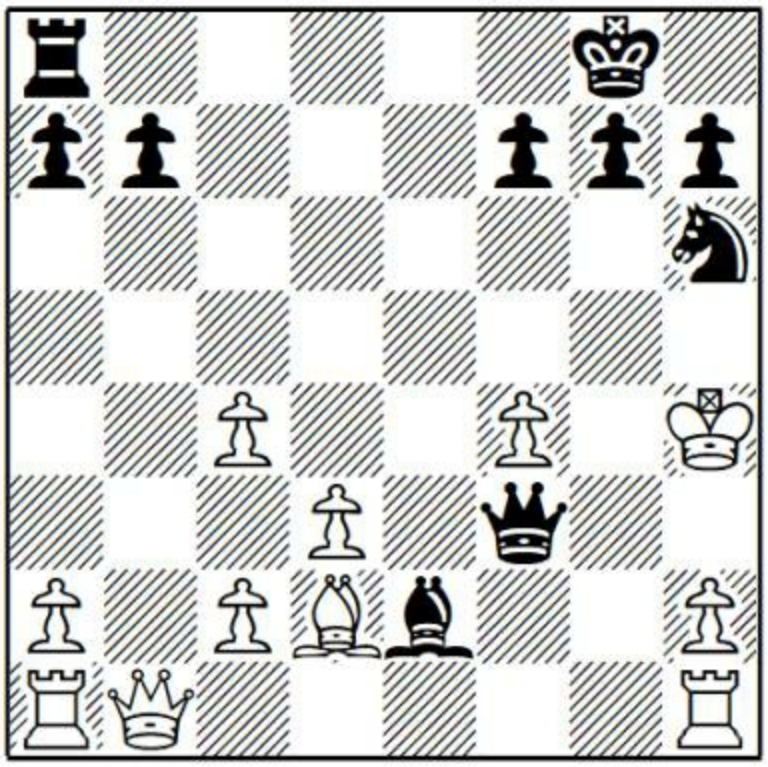
Answer: **16 ... Ng4+ 17 Kg1**

17 Kg3? Nf5+! 18 Kh3 Qh4 mate.

17 ... Nf3+!

Annihilation of defensive barrier/clearance. Now d4 opens for Black's queen to enter the attack.

18 gxf3 Qd4+ 19 Kg2 Qf2+ 20 Kh3 Qxf3+ 21 Kh4 Nh6!



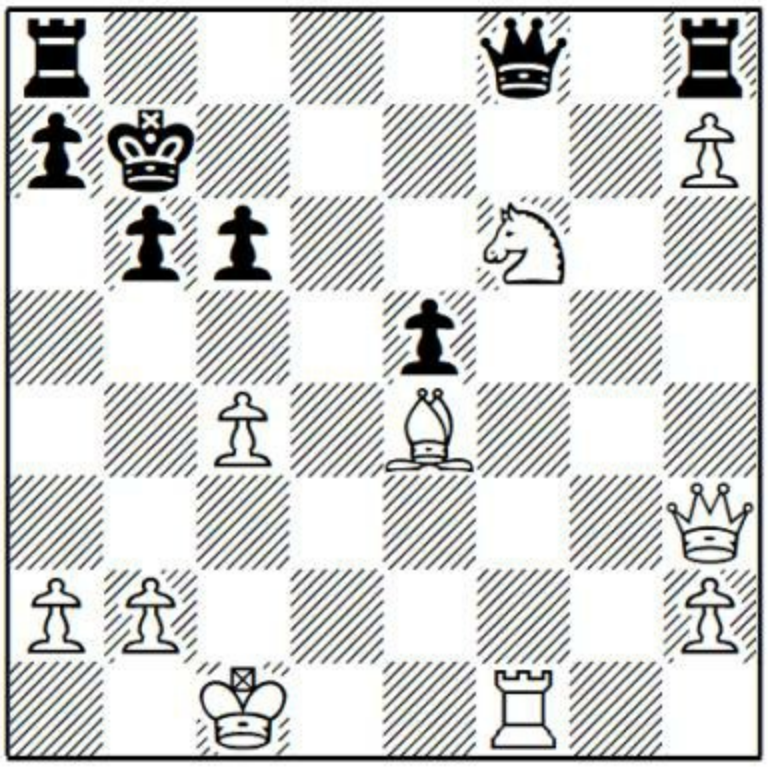
Dual threats: ... Qg4 mate and also ... Nf5+, followed by ... Qh5 mate. 21 ... Ne3! also works, and if 22 Qg1 Nf5+ 23 Kg5 Qh5 mate.

22 Qg1

This covers g4, but not h5.

22 ... Nf5+ 23 Kg5 Qh5 mate

159) W.Browne-A.Miles
Tilburg 1978



White to play

Level 3

Work out Walter's mating attack:

***Answer:* 28 Bxc6+! 1-0**

Attraction/annihilation of defensive barrier. After the shot 28 Bxc6+! Black's position never gets the luxury of a rest period:

a) 28 ... Kb8 29 Nd7+ Kc7 30 Nxf8 and White mates if 5 moves, if Black bothers to play on: 30 ... Rd8 31 Rf7+ Kxc6 32 Qe6+ Kc5 (or 32 ... Rd6 33 Qc8 mate) 33 Qxe5+ Kxc4 34 Rf4+ Rd4 35 Rxd4 mate.

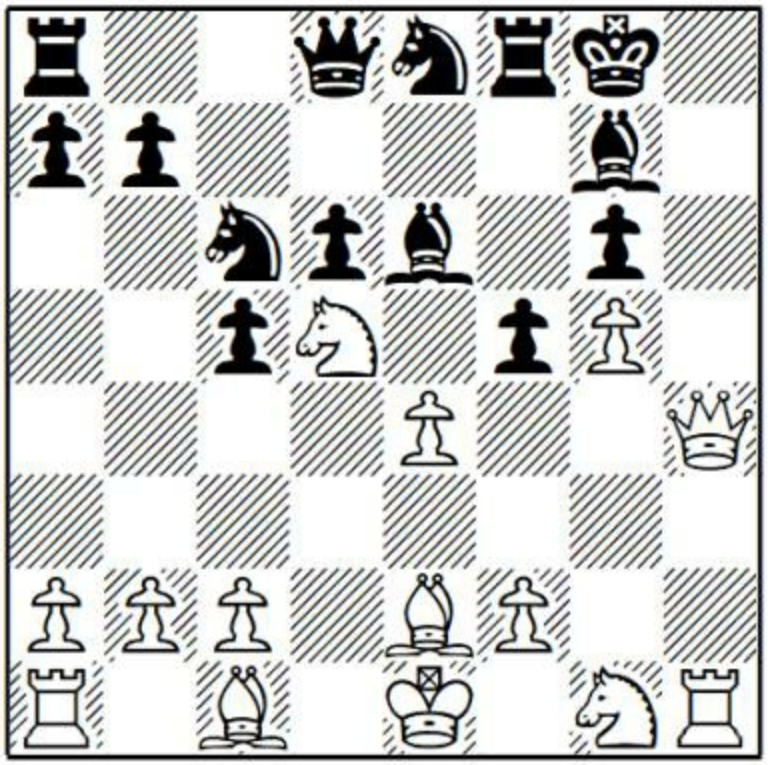
b) 28 ... Kc7 29 Qd7+ Kb8 30 Qb7 mate.

c) 28 ... Ka6 29 Rf3! b5 30 cxb5+ Ka5 31 Ra3+ Kb6 32 Nd5+ Kc5 33 Rc3+ Kd6 (or 33 ... Kd4 34 Qe3 mate) 34 Qd7 mate.

d) 28 ... Kxc6 29 Qd7+ Kc5 30 Qd5+ Kb4 (we all wish Black's sickly king would be dropped off at a no-kill animal shelter) 31 Qb5 mate.

160) L.Wenzhe-J.Donner

Buenos Aires Olympiad 1978



White to play

Level 5

This one is called the Chinese Immortal. Before the game Donner boasted that there was no way he could lose to a Chinese player (at the time China was a relatively weak chess country). So of course, the Universal Law of Irony kicked in, when Donner lost the game to a memorable mating combination:

Answer: **15 Qh7+ Kf7 16 Qxg6+!!**

Queen sacrifice/attraction. This is stronger than the also winning continuation 16 Nf4 Ne7 17 Bh5!.

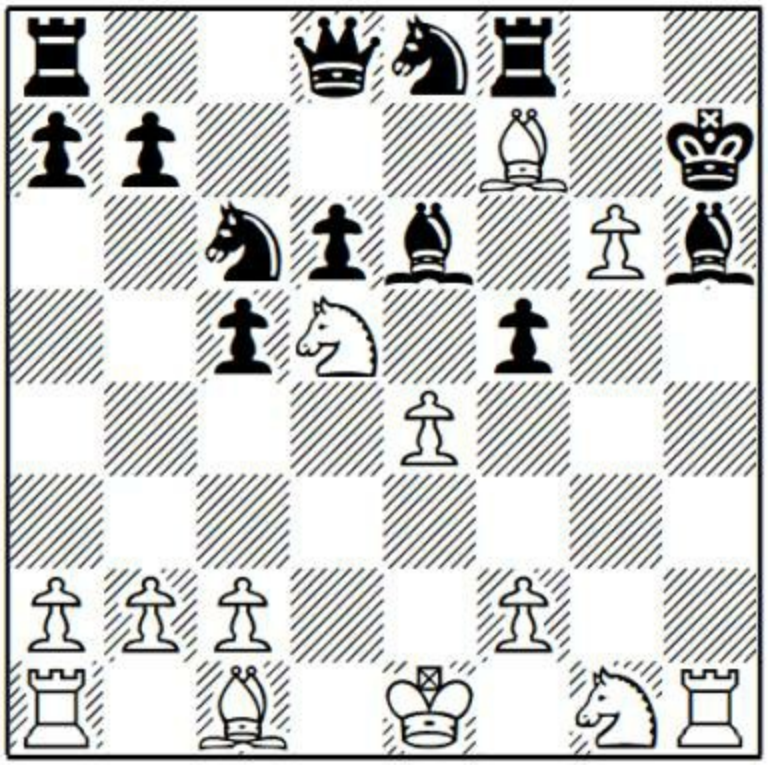
16 ... Kxg6

He may as well accept, as if 16 ... Kg8 17 Qh7+ Kf7 18 g6 mate.

17 Bh5+ Kh7 18 Bf7+!

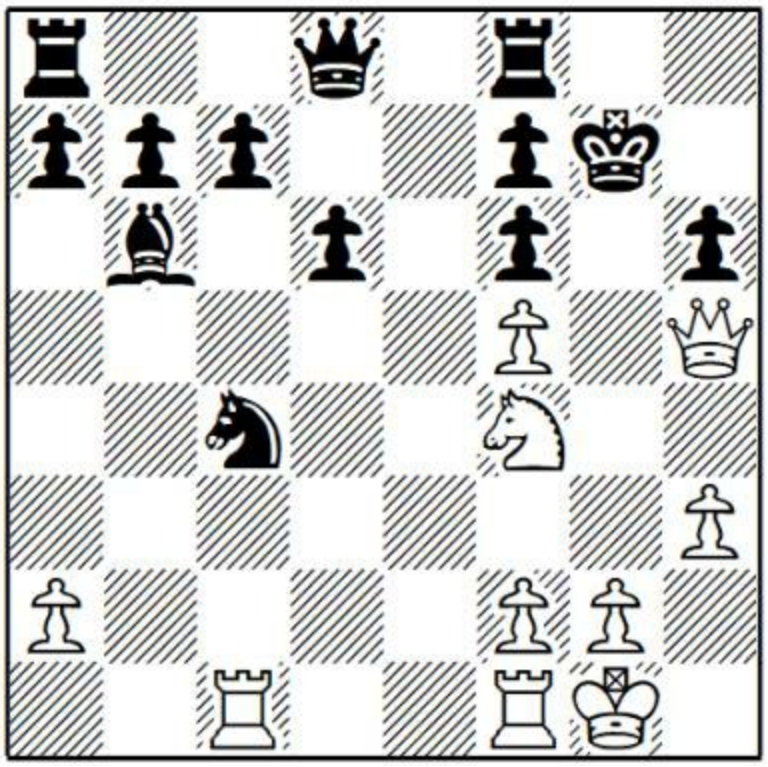
Cutting off the black king's escape on g8.

18 ... Bh6 19 g6+!



Zwischenzug. Not 19 Rxh6+? Kg7 20 Bxe6 fxe4 and Black stands better.
19 ... Kg7 20 Bxh6+ 1-0
If 20 ... Kh8 21 Bxf8+ Qh4 22 Rxh4 mate.

161) A.Anderssen-G.Medley
London 1851



White to play

Level 4

Go after Black's king to mate in 8:

Answer: Decoy.

21 Ne6+!!

This move is more accurate than 21 Rxc4 Rg8 22 Nd5 Qf8 23 Rg4+ Kh8 24 Nxf6 Rxg4 25 Nxg4 when White has a winning attack. Instead, 21 Rc3? blows it to 21 ... Ne3! (interference) 22 fxe3 Qe7 23 Rf3 Qe5 24 Rg3+ Kh7 25 Kh1 Qxc3 26 Rg6 fxg6 27 Qxg6+ and perpetual check.

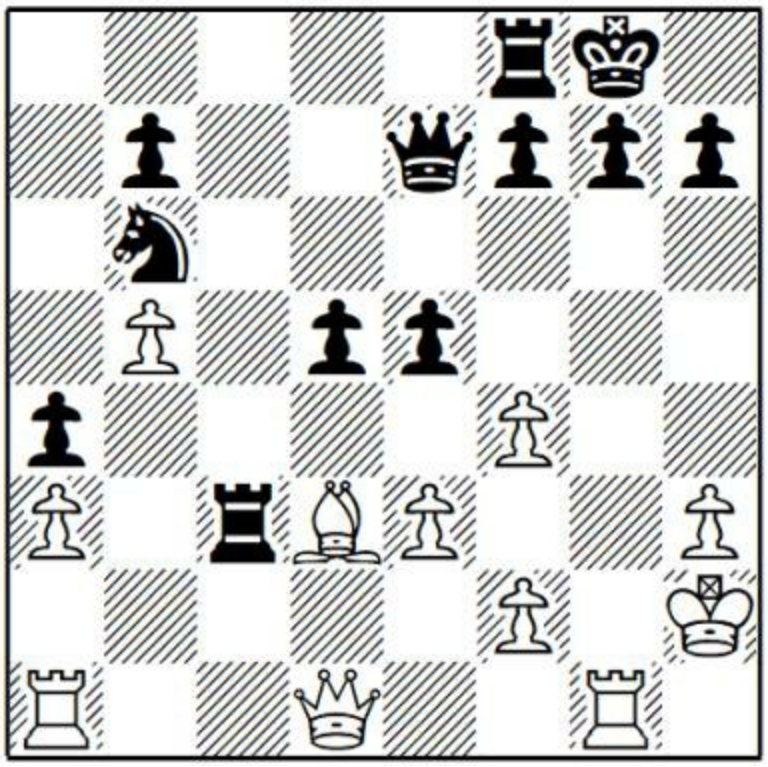
21 ... fxe6

It feels as if an old wound reopens and begins to bleed, but if 21 ... Kh7 22 Rxc4! (threat: Qxh6+ and Rh4 mate) 22 ... fxe6 23 Qg6+ Kh8 24 Qxh6+ Kg8 25 Qg6+ Kh8 26 Rh4 mate.

22 Qg6+ 1-0

After 22 ... Kh8 23 Qxh6+ Kg8 24 Qg6+ Kh8 25 Rxc4 Black can only stall with spite-blocks until Rh4 mate arrives.

162) M.Matanovic-Nedelkovic
Belgrade 1950



White to play

Level 5

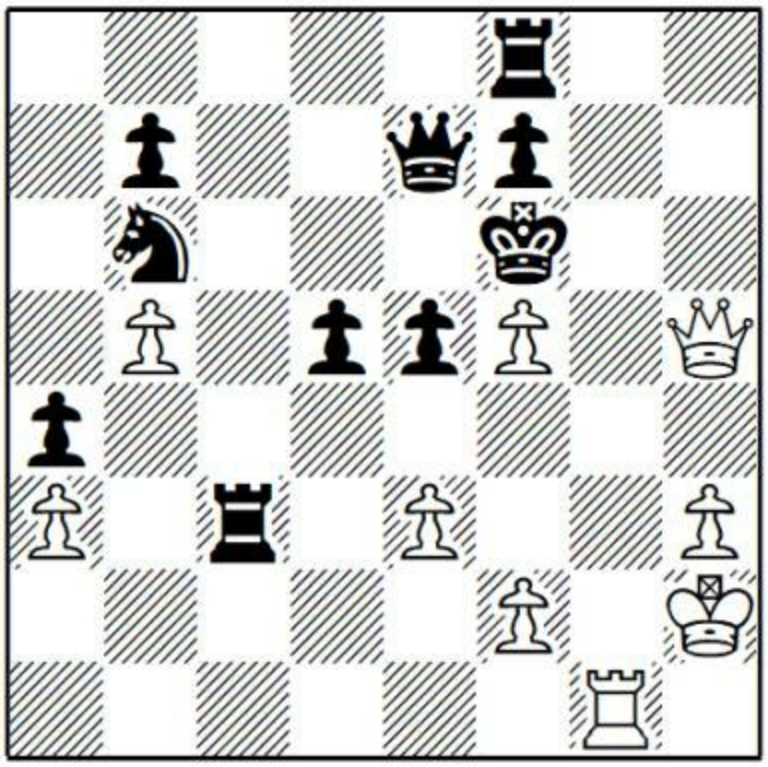
My friend Dan Scoones posted this on Facebook. “This position appeared in the puzzle section of *Shakhmaty Riga mate10/1964*. It is White to play and win. Prove the win.”

Answer: Greek gift sacrifice.

1 Bxh7+! Kxh7 2 Qh5+ Kg8 3 Rxg7+!

Step 2: Annihilation of defensive barrier.

3 ... Kxg7 4 Rg1+ Kf6 5 f5!!



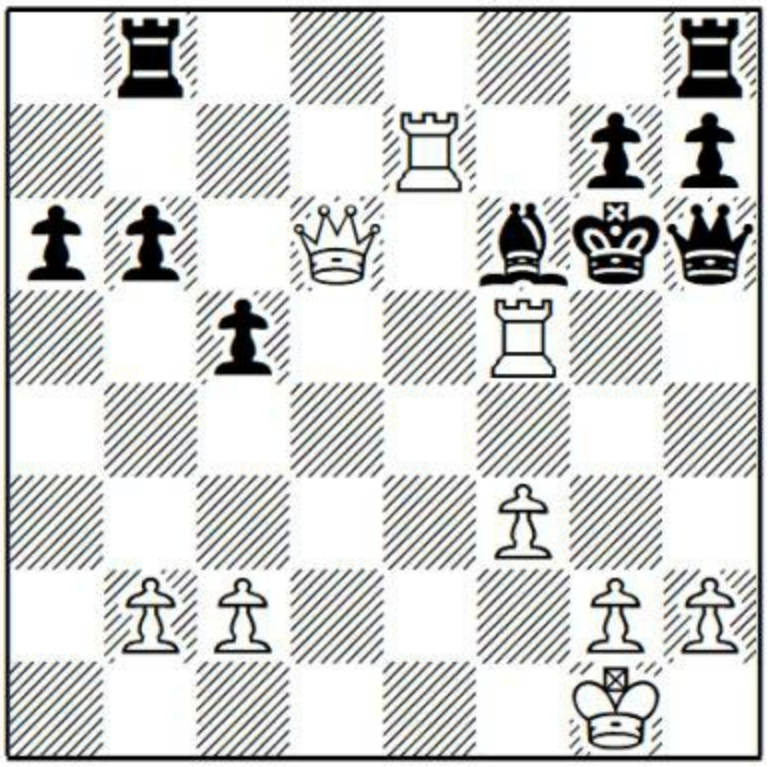
This is the most difficult move of the combination to see in advance. White threatens both Rg6+ and also Qg5 mate.

5 ... e4

5 ... Rg8 stalls one move longer.

6 Qg5+ Ke5 7 Qxe7+ Kxf5 8 Rg5 mate

163) E.Rozentalis-Y.Dokhoian
Tallinn 1986



White to play

Level 4.5

Continue, and mate in 8:

***Answer:* 30 Qg3+!**

Winning, but not immediately mating is 30 Rxf6+ gxf6 31 Qd3+ Kh5 32 Qf5+ Qg5 33 Rxh7+ Rxh7 34 Qxh7+ Qh6 35 g4+ Kg5 36 f4+, which wins Black's queen.

30 ... Bg5

This walks into mate in 2. Longer is 30 ... Qg5 31 Rxg5+ Bxg5 32 f4 h6 33 Qd3+ Kh5 (or 33 ... Kf6 34 Qd6+ Kf5 35 Qe6+ Kxf4 36 Qe4 mate) 34 Re6! Bxf4 35 Qf5+ Bg5 36 Qf3+ Kh4 37 Qh3 mate.

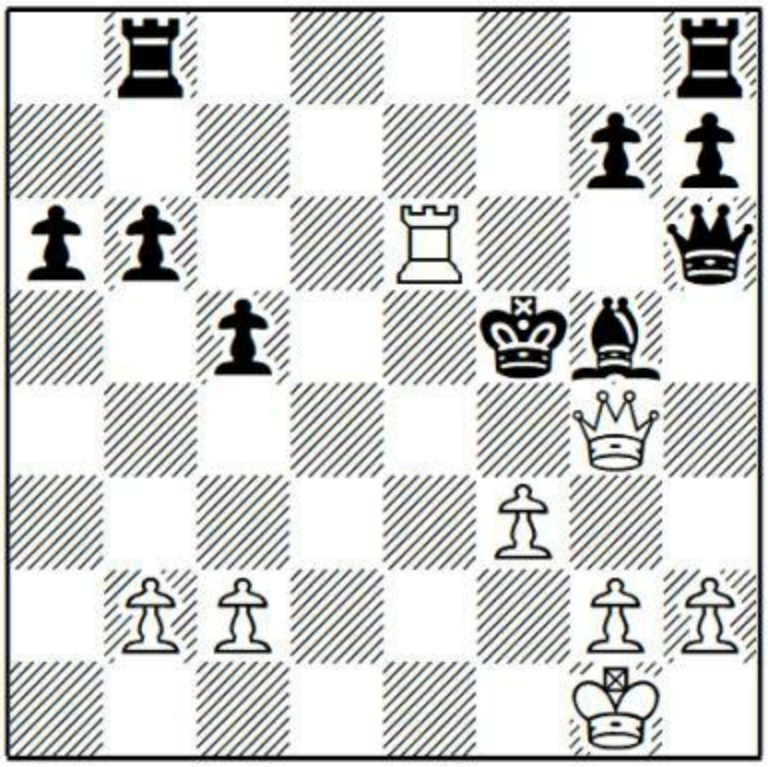
31 Re6+!

Attraction.

31 ... Kxf5

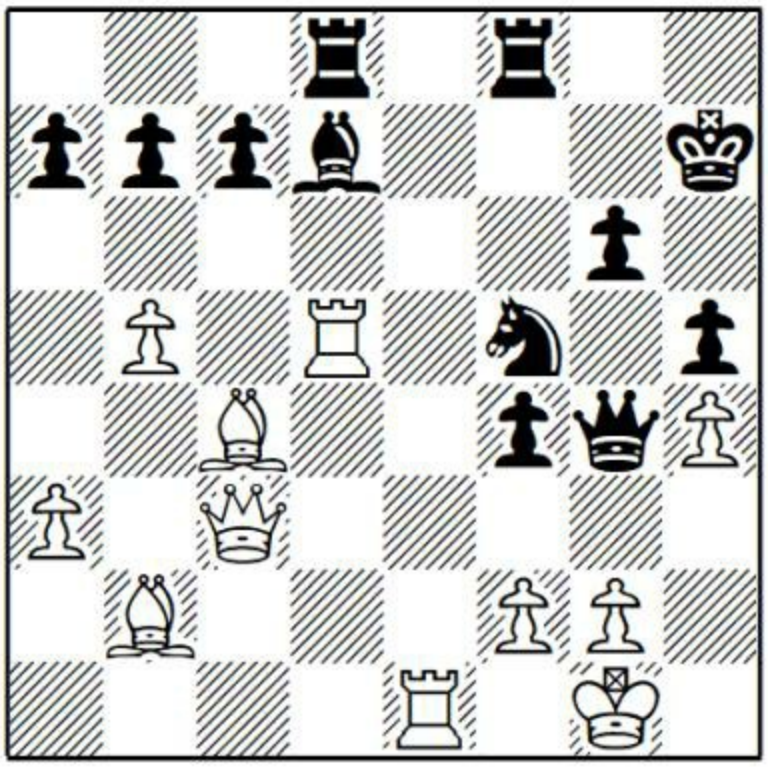
Or 31 ... Kh5 32 Qg4 mate.

32 Qg4 mate



X-ray mate. Oh that satisfying click, when the final move of the puzzle inserts itself into the slot.

164) C.Hansen-G.Bagaturov
Biel Interzonal 1993



White to play

Level 5

We cannot hide inside and hope that the world remains outside. Go after Black's king:

36 Re7+!

Overloaded defender.

36 ... Kh6

Not 36 ... Nxe7?? 37 Qg7 mate.

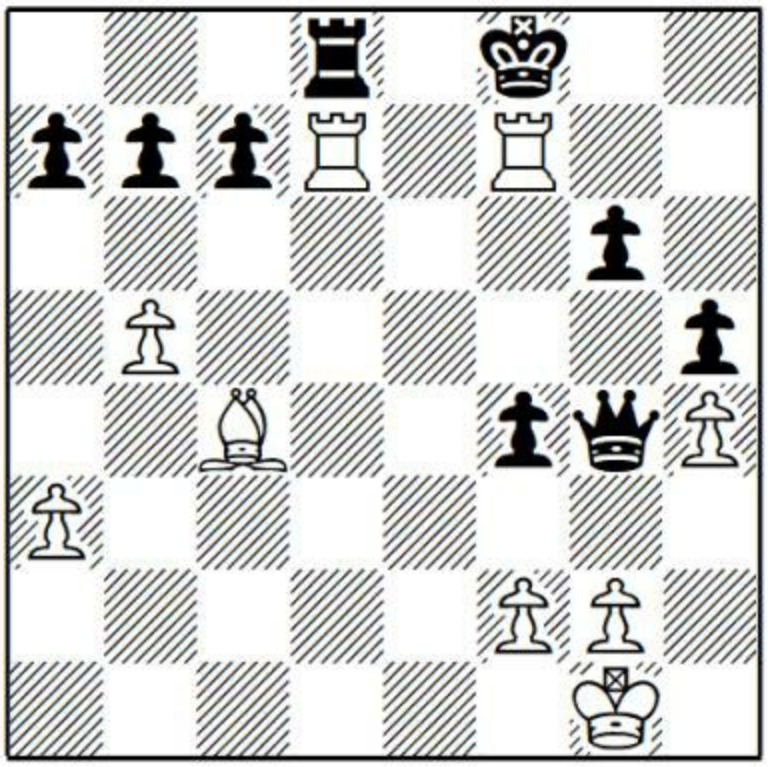
37 Qg7+!

Wow. What a dramatic entrance! Queen sacrifice/decoy.

37 ... Nxg7 38 Bxg7+ Kh7 39 Bxf8+ Kg8

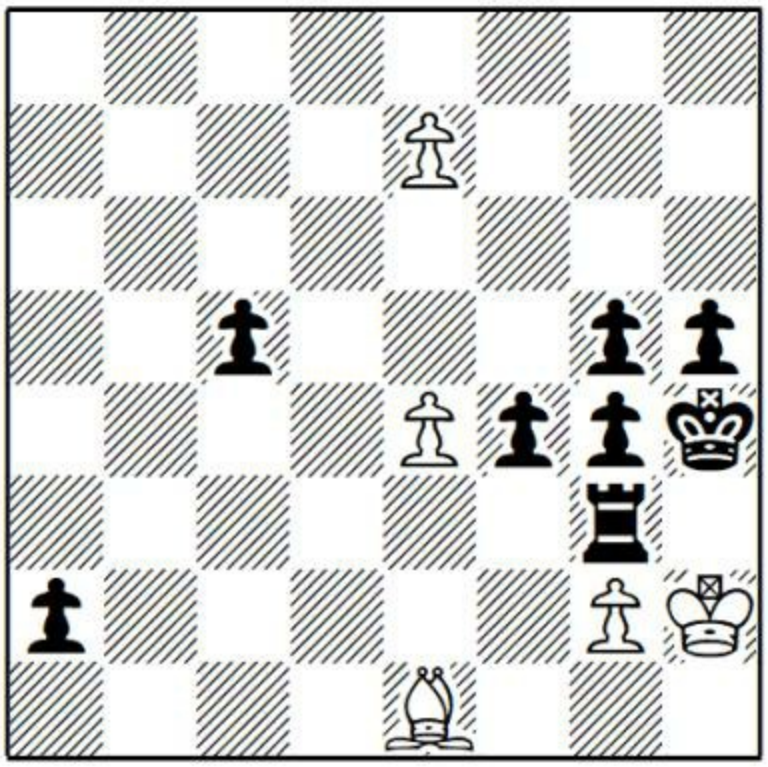
Or 39 ... Kh8 40 Bg7+ Kh7 41 Bf6+ Kh6 42 Bg5+ Qxg5 43 hxg5 mate.

40 Rdxd7+ Kxf8 41 Rf7+ 1-0



We place an ear on the black king's chest and fail to detect a heartbeat. 41 ... Kg8 (or 41 ... Ke8 42 Rde7 mate) 42 Rxd8 is mate.

165) V.Smyslov
Moi Etyudy, 2005



White to play

Level 5

Black's king, rook and kingside pawns are paralyzed. We can turn this to our advantage and force mate in 8. To which piece should White promote (hint: don't make a queen!) to mate in 8?

Answer: We must lower our intent to a whisper and underpromote to a knight. All other promotions lose.

1 e8N!

Threat: Nd6 and Nf5 mate.

Not 1 e8Q??. Principle: *Don't allow yourself to be seduced by a soothing falsehood.* This is the blind move of a player who sees only what they want to see, despite the evidence: 1 ... a1Q 2 Bf2 Qf1! and it is White who is mated.

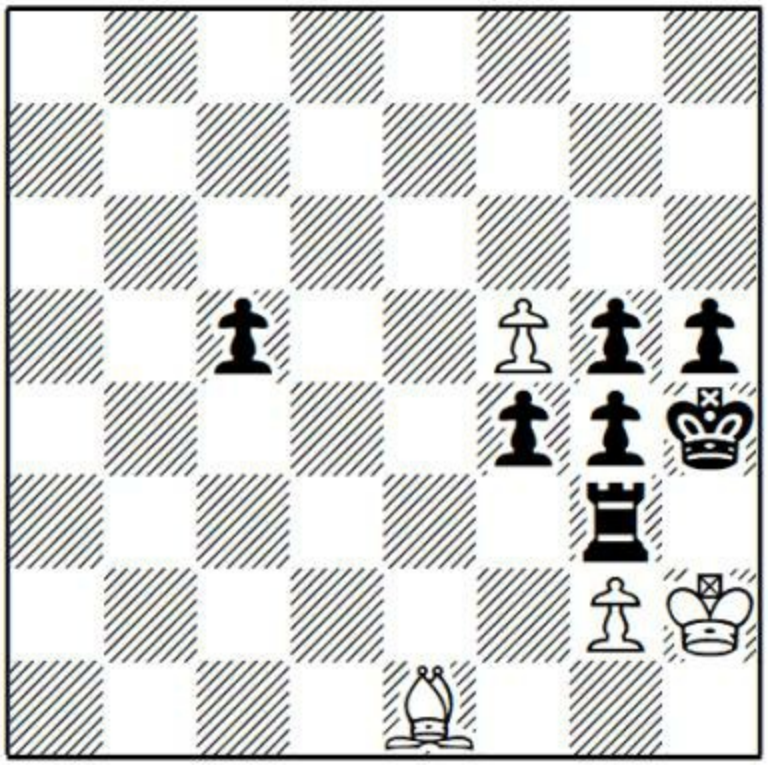
1 ... a1Q 2 Nd6!

Threat: Nf5 mate.

2 ... Qe5

If 2 ... Qxe1? 3 Nf5 mate.

3 Nf5+ Qxf5 4 exf5



Now we reach a second promotion race.

4 ... c4 5 f6 c3 6 f7 c2 7 f8N!

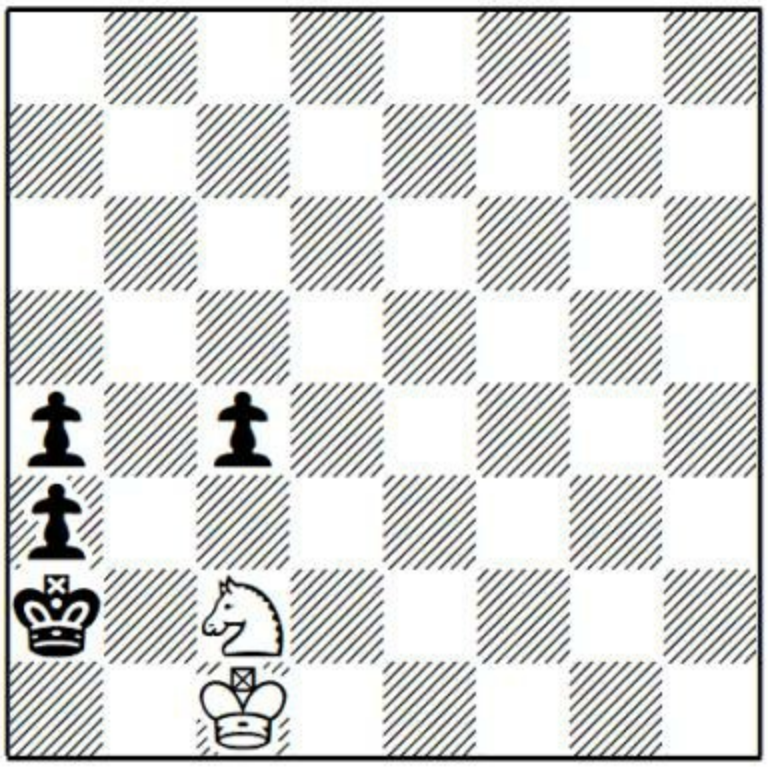
You guessed it: another under promotion. This time Black is defenceless against Ng6 mate.

7 ... c1Q

Or 7 ... f3 8 Bxg3 mate.

8 Ng6 mate

166) V.Smyslov
Moi Etyudy, 2005



White to play

Level 4

This one is all logic and no real tactics. A lone knight cannot beat a lone king, unless the lone king's escape route is blocked by friendly forces. Mate in 8:

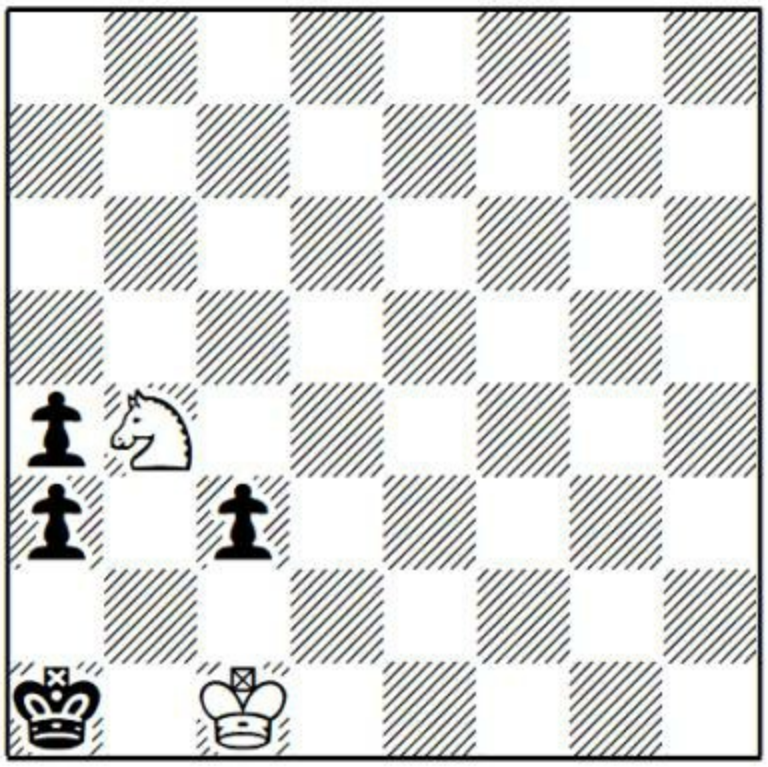
1 Nd4!

Black's king is unable to shake off his unwanted chaperone. He must not be allowed to escape via b3.

1 ... c3 2 Kc2 Ka1 3 Nc6 Ka2

Or 3 ... a2 4 Nd4 (zugzwang) 4 ... a3 5 Nb3 mate.

4 Nb4+ Ka1 5 Kc1

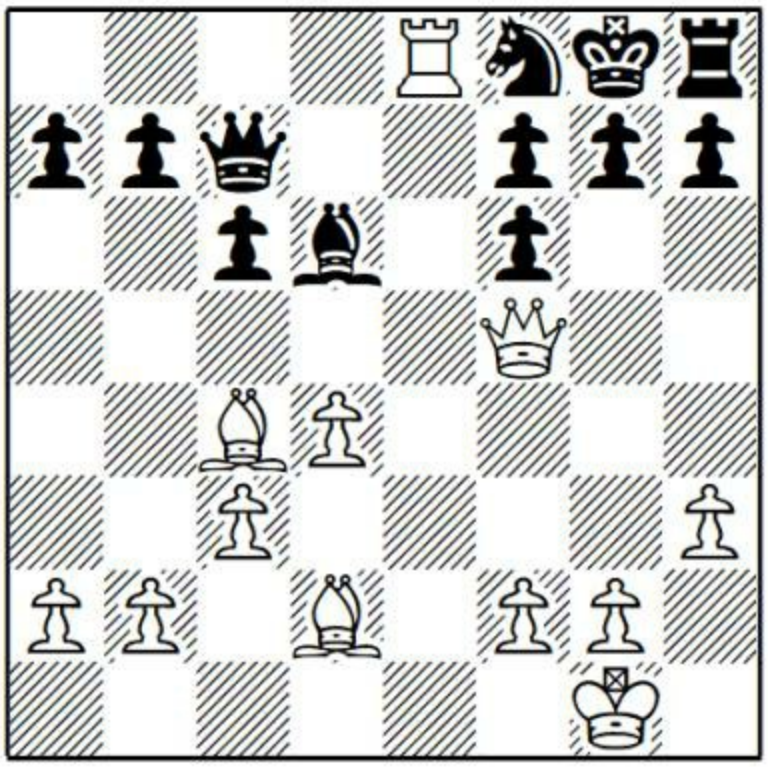


5 ... c2 6 Kxc2!

This mates faster than 6 Nxc2+ Ka2 7 Nd4 Ka1 8 Nc6 Ka2 9 Kc2 Ka1 10 Nb4 a2 11 Kc1 a3 12 Nc2 mate.

6 ... a2 7 Kc1 a3 8 Nc2 mate

167) J.Blackburne-W.Grundy
Hastings (simul) 1909



White to play

Level 5

Yipes. Mate in 9!

Joseph Henry Blackburne's nickname was 'The Black Death', due to his uncanny attacking skills. In this game Black's king is surrounded by defenders, yet is not as safe as he appears. Prove why:

Answer: Move the bishop to h6 to deflect Black's g-pawn.

20 Bh6!!

The threat is Qg4, loosening Black's pawn front.

20 ... c5

Principle: *Counter in the centre when attacked on the win*g. Principles tend not to work when your opponent has a forced mate, though! The bishop is taboo, though, and there is no good defence:

a) 20 ... gxh6?? 21 Qg4 mate. There is no block since Black's knight is pinned.

b) 20 ... b5 21 Bb3 Bh2+ 22 Kh1 Bd6 23 Qg4 g6 24 Qf4! is similar to the

game continuation. Black can only evade mate for five more moves with the hopeless 24 ... Qe7.

c) 20 ... Be7 21 Qg4 g6 22 Qe6!! is the prettiest mate of the entire combination. Black is mated in 3, no matter how he proceeds.

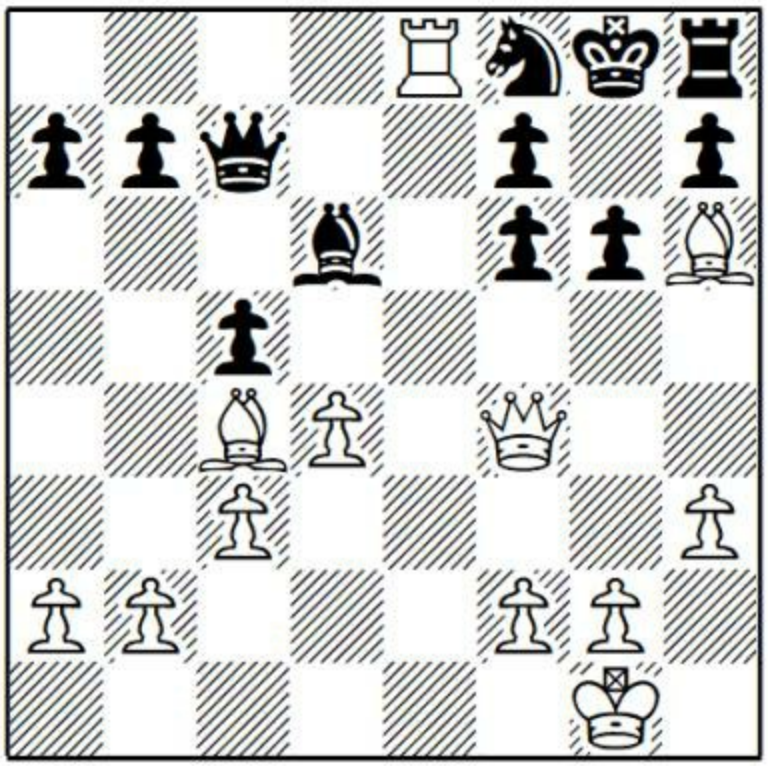
21 Qg4

Threatening mate on g7.

21 ... g6

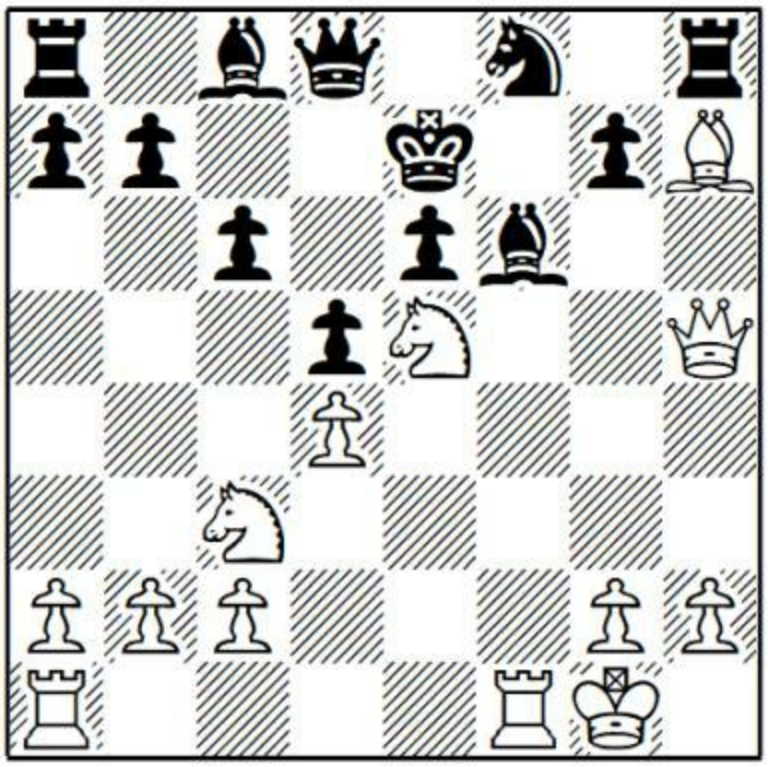
It becomes clear the wound will never heal.

22 Qf4! 1-0



Overloaded defender. If 22 ... f5 23 Qe5! and mate next move. Alternatively, 22 ... Bxf4 (belated regret is worse than none at all) 23 Rxf8 mate, while 22 ... Qe7 prolongs the mate, but not by much: 23 Rxe7 Bxe7 24 Qe4 Bd6 25 Qe8 Bh2+ (yay, spite check!) 26 Kxh2 b5 27 Bxf7 mate.

168) J.Capablanca-Masyutin
Kiev 1914



White to play

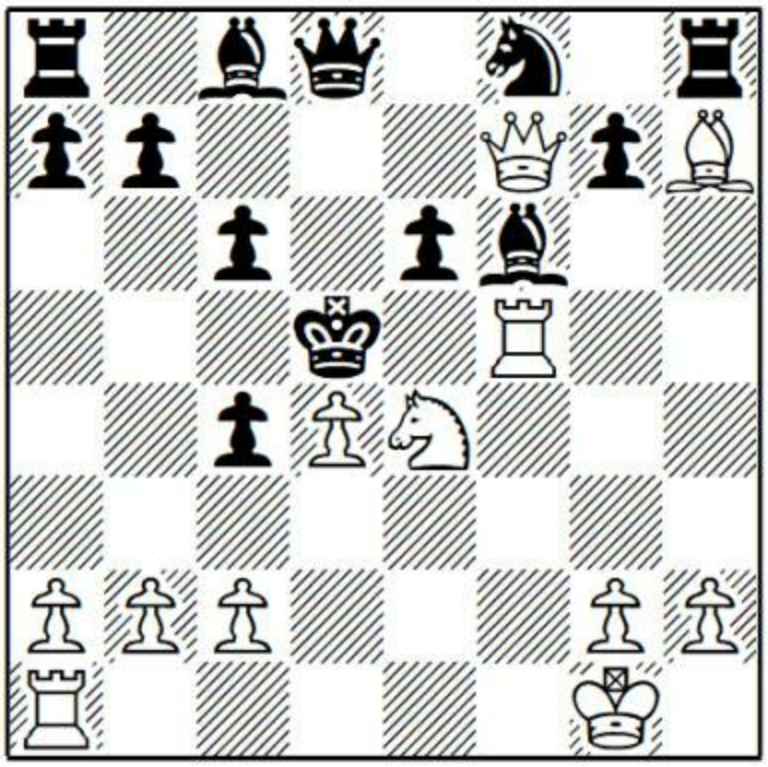
Level 5

For Black's king it's a long walk to the scaffold. Before you move the pieces, try and visualize the entire attack in your mind's eye, as a calculation exercise. Capa's mate in 9 is not so easy to see at this point.

Answer: **13 Qf7+ Kd6 14 Nc4+!**

Leaping in the direction of danger is the job of heroes. Clearance. This sacrifice makes way for a coming Ne4+.

14 ... dxc4 15 Ne4+ Kd5 16 Rf5+!

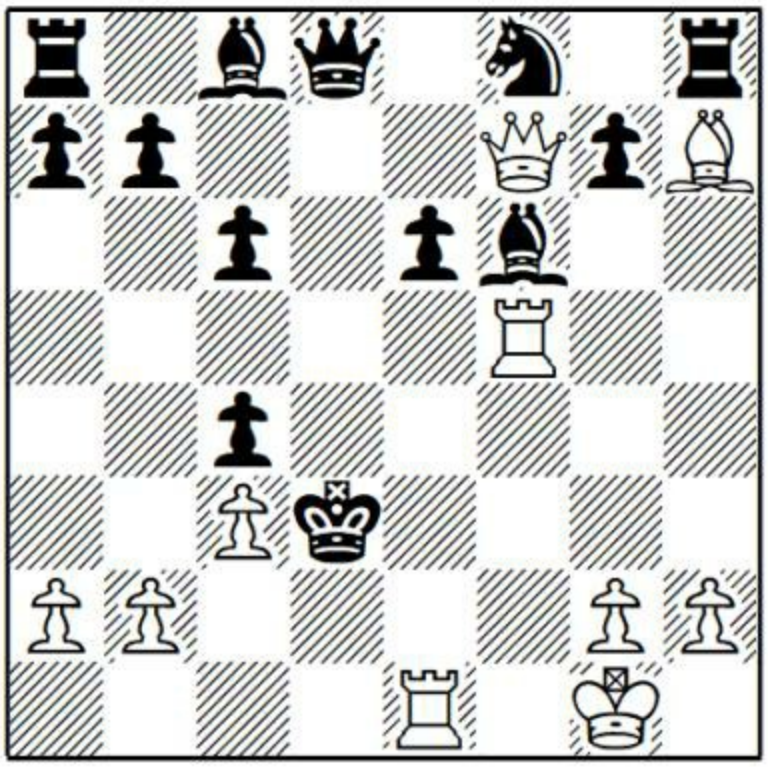


Principle: *Don't operate on a scarcity mentality in a time of attacking plenty.* Pinned piece/decoy.

16 ... Kxe4

Or 16 ... Kxd4 17 c3+ Kd3 18 Rf3+ Kc2 19 Rf2+ Kd3 20 Nc5+ Ke3 21 Re1 mate.

17 Re1+ Kxd4 18 c3+ Kd3



White to play

Level 1

This is not the case where the waiter asks you to pick between the cheesecake and the pie and you answer: “Yes please!” to both. There is only a single mate in one in the position:

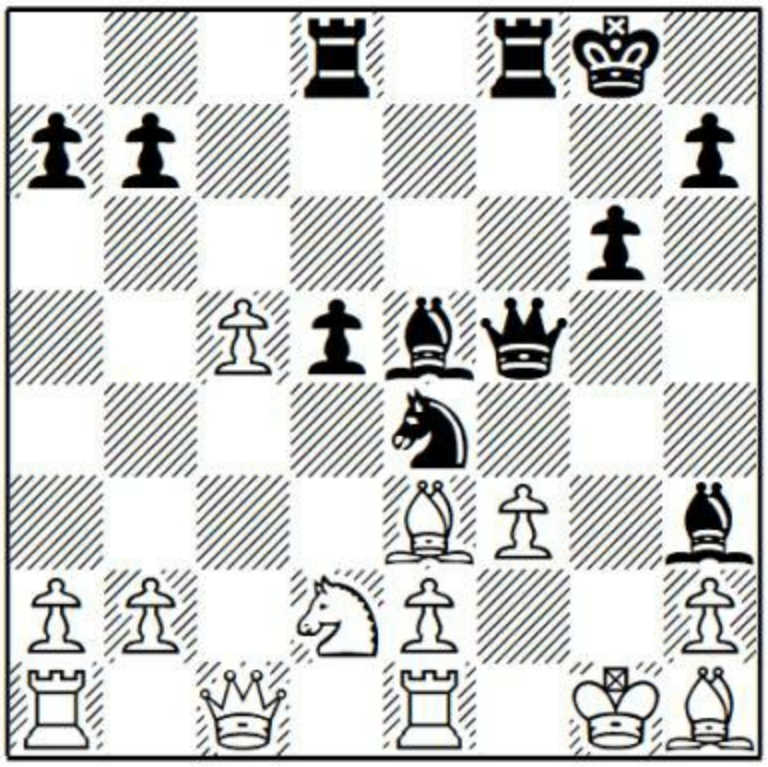
Answer: Only the double check on d5 gets the job done.

19 Rd5 mate!

Double check and mate! Congratulations if you visualized this position in your mind, at the start of the game.

169) M.Kapelan-J.Tarjan

Vrsac 1983



Black to play

Level 5

Jim Tarjan was the first GM I ever drew (I was rated 2198 at the time, so it was a huge upset). Jim is deadly on the attack, as he proves here, when he forced mate in 9(!) moves. Black's win is entirely conditional upon your ability to calculate accurately.

Answer: Annihilation of defensive barrier. Begin with a bishop sacrifice on h2. From this point on White's king lives in a universe of punishment and pain, devoid of joy or reward.

23 ... Bxh2+!! 24 Kxh2 Qe5+!

Another piece is offered.

25 f4

25 Kxh3?? Qg3 mate.

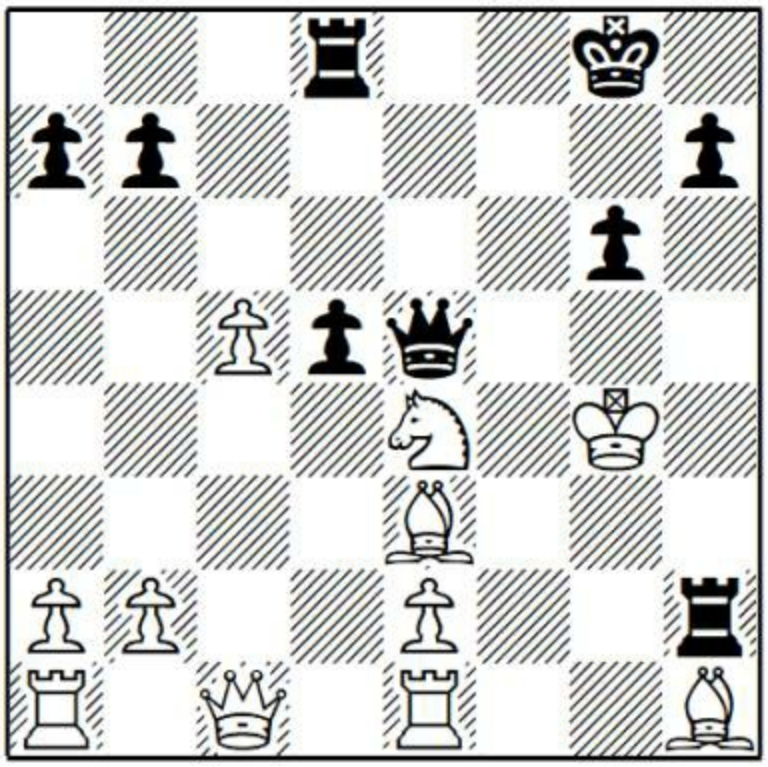
25 ... Rxf4!

And another!

26 Nxe4

Alternatively, 26 Bxf4 Qxf4+ 27 Kg1 Qf2 mate or 26 Nf3 Rxf3+ 27 Kg1 (White can stretch out the mate two move moves with spite blocks on f4) 27 ... Qg3+ 28 Bg2 Qxg2 mate.

26 ... Rf2+ 27 Kxh3 Rh2+ 28 Kg4



White to play

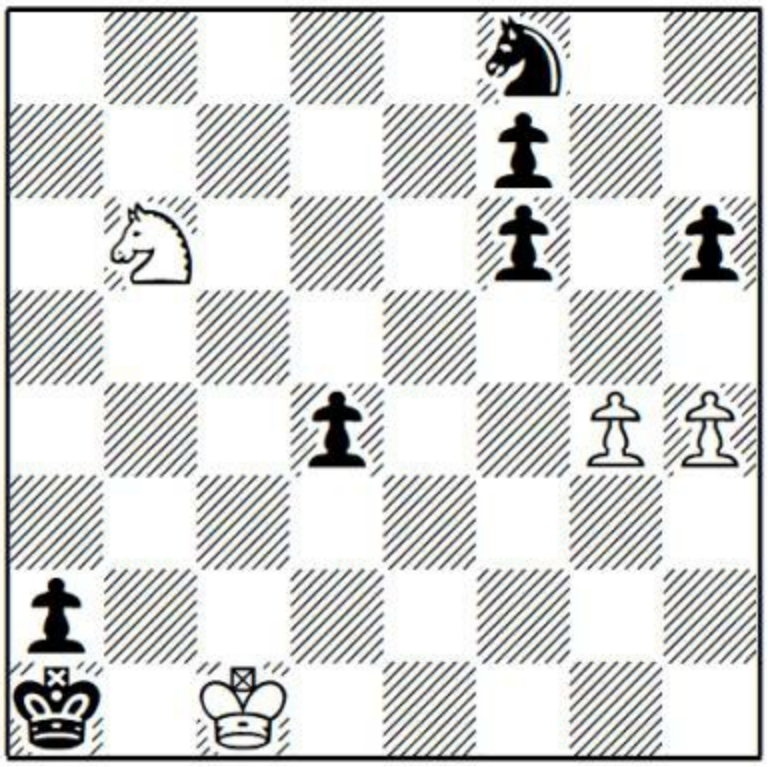
Level 1

Now Jim delivered mate in 2, with a pawn mate!

Answer: **28 ... h5+ 29 Kf3 dxe4 mate**

170) V.Smyslov

Moi Etyudy, 2005



White to play

Level 5

Black's king is sealed in his prison and all we need to do to deliver mate is to give check. Try and work out the details:

1 Nc4

Threat: Nd2 and Nb3 mate. Black must meet this threat by transferring the f8-knight to c5.

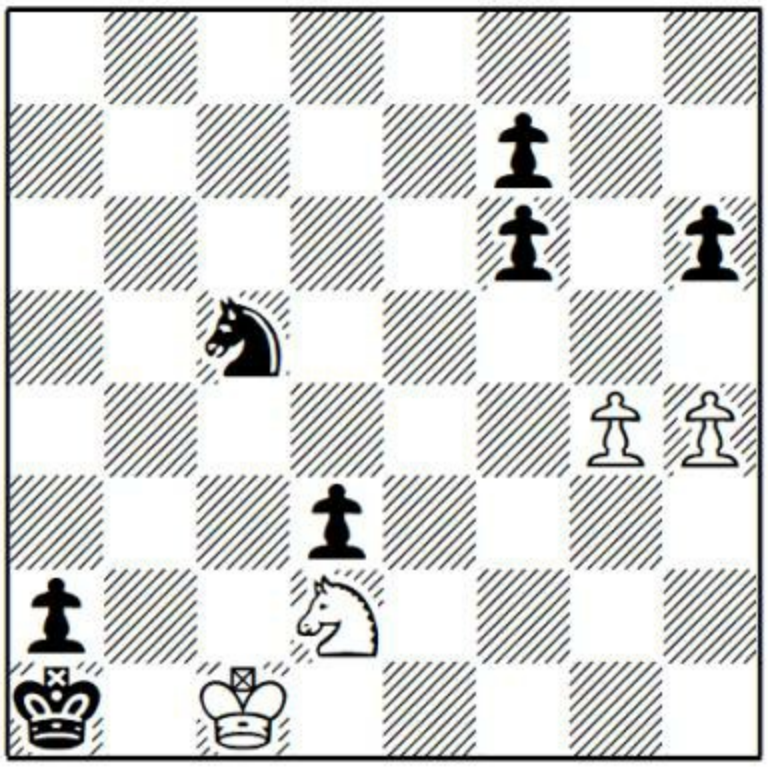
1 ... Ne6 2 Nd2 Nc5

Now the b3 mating square is covered.

3 Kc2!

More deadly than an overt threat is the insidiously quiet one, which creeps up on the opponent. This finesse is crucial. After 3 h5?? d3! suddenly it is White who is in zugzwang: 4 Nf3 Nb3+ 5 Kd1 Kb2 when Black promotes and wins.

3 ... d3+ 4 Kc1



Zugzwang.

4 ... h5

Alternatively, 4 ... f5 5 gxf5 h5 6 f6 (zugzwang) 6 ... Nd7 7 Nb3 mate, or 4 ... Ne6?? 5 Nb3 mate.

5 gxh5 f5 6 h6 f4 7 h7

White keeps moving the ball down the field.

7 ... f6 8 h8B

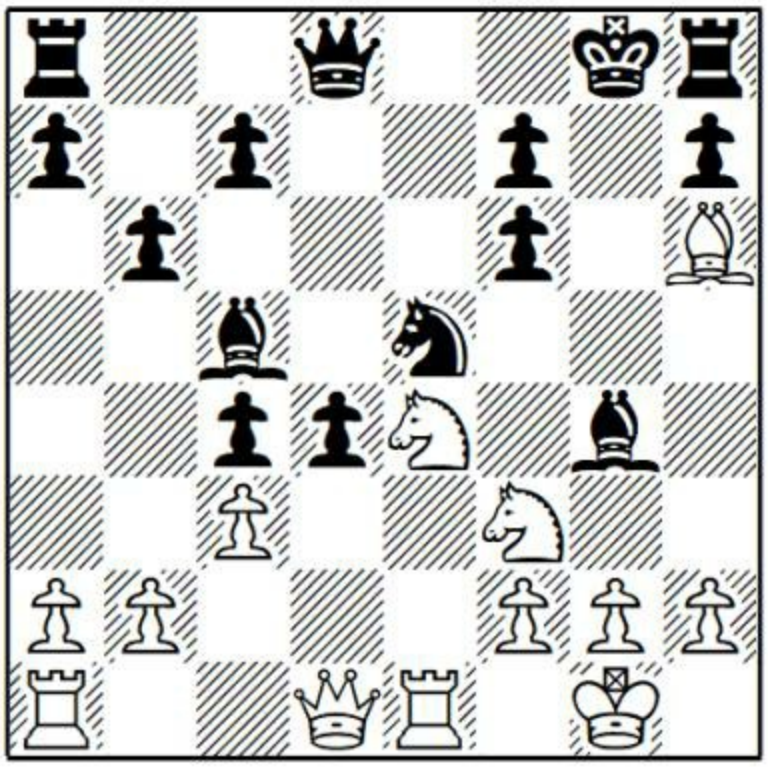
Sure, we can make a queen, but I prefer the showoffy underpromotion. Threat: Bxf6 mate. Black is in zugzwang and must cede control over b3. Our underpromotion is a bit classier than the also winning 8 h8Q.

8 ... Nd7

Or 8 ... f3 9 Bxf6 mate.

9 Nb3 mate

171) B.Kazic-B.Vukovic
Yugoslavia 1940



White to play

Level 5

Oh, you have to be kidding. We are up to mate in 10!

Answer: Unpinning/queen sacrifice.

14 Nxe5!!

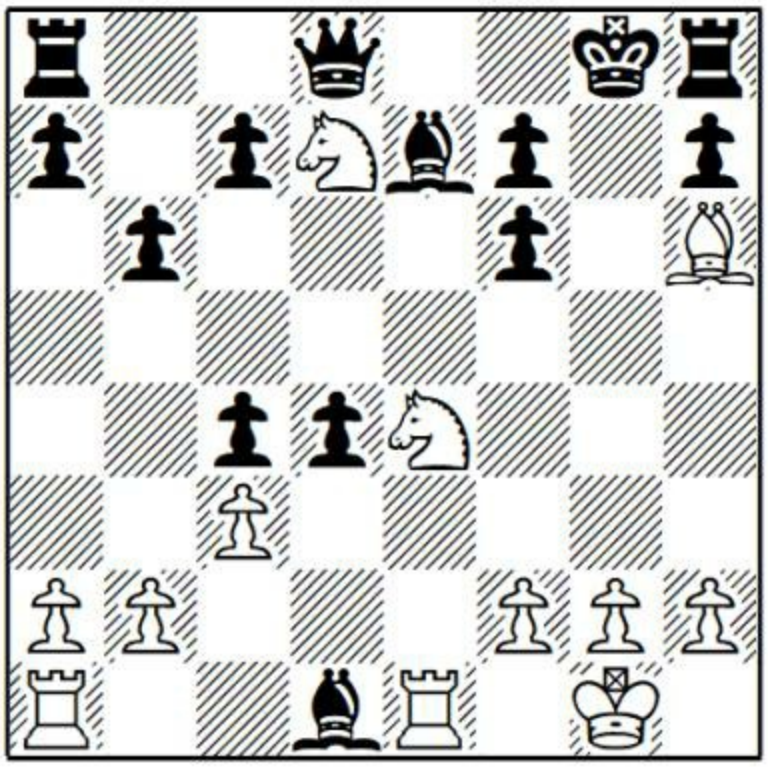
Kazic's last move is met with a burst of loving oratory from your writer, since who among us doesn't find joy in a deeply conceived queen sacrifice? This is not the kind of move we should make with zero analytical verification. The mate must be worked out in or mind's eye, beforehand, or we could later find ourselves down a queen, with no mate in sight.

14 ... Bxd1

The faithful are summoned to prayer, which for Black, won't be answered.

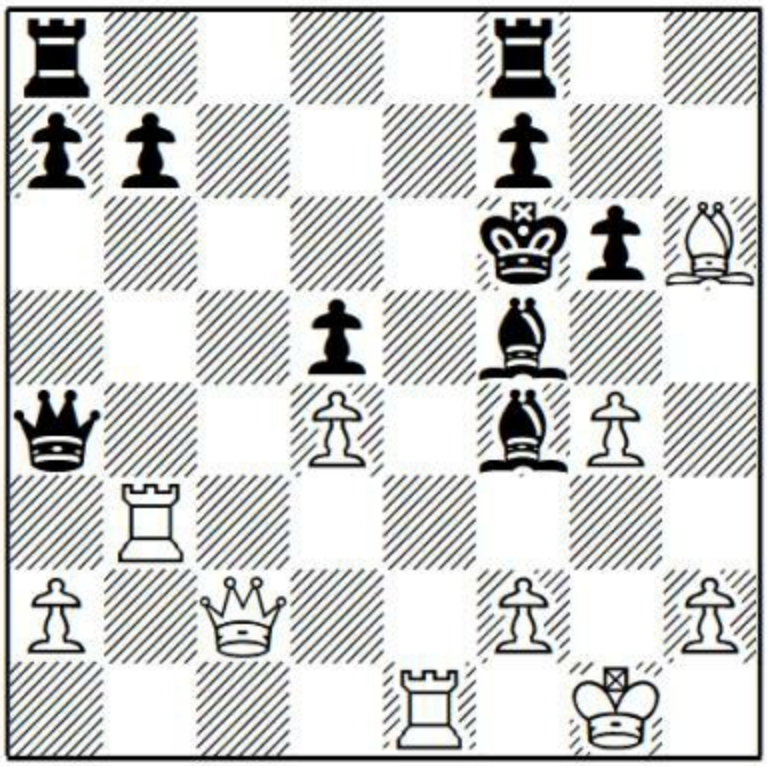
Instead, 14 ... Bf5 fails to 15 Qg4+!! Bxg4 (or 15 ... Bg6 16 Nd7 Be7 17 Nexf6+! - decoy/clearance - 17 ... Bxf6 18 Re8+! Qxe8 19 Nxf6 mate) 16 Nxg4 Be7 17 Nexf6+! Bxf6 18 Re8+! Qxe8 19 Nxf6 mate.

15 Nd7!
Step 2: This move is the one you needed to see in advance.
15 ... Be7
And not 15 ... Qxd7?? 16 Nxf6 mate.



White to play
Level 2
Force mate in 3:
Answer: **16 Nexf6+!**
Step 3: Clearance.
16 ... Bxf6 17 Re8+!
Step 4: Decoy.
17 ... Qxe8 18 Nxf6 mate

172) D.Paravyan-S.Golubov
St. Petersburg 2018



White to play

Level 5

I thought this was the best combination of any over the board game of 2018. How do we conduct White's attack?

Answer: Queen sacrifice.

24 Qc7!!

Obviously, such a decision carries with it a huge level of analytical liability. One miscalculation and White may lose.

Paravyan's move is stronger than 24 g5+?! Bxg5 25 Qc7 Bxh6 26 Qe5+ Kg5 27 Rg3+ Kh4 28 Qf6+ Kh5 29 Re5 Qd1+ 30 Kg2 Qg4! 31 Rxg4 Kxg4 32 Rxf5 gxf5 33 Qxh6 f4. Black still may have a prayer to survive.

24 ... Bxh6

Not 24 ... Bxc7?? 25 g5 mate or 24 ... g5 25 Qe7+ Kg6 26 gxf5+ Kh7 27 Bxf8 when Black is mated in 7 moves.

25 Qe5+ Kg5 26 h4+!

Attraction. The players head for the same direction, for completely

opposite reasons. White to deliver mate and Black to survive. Also mating is 26 Rg3! Kh4 27 Rh3+ Kg5 28 Qe7+ f6 29 Qe3+ Kxg4 30 Qg3 mate.

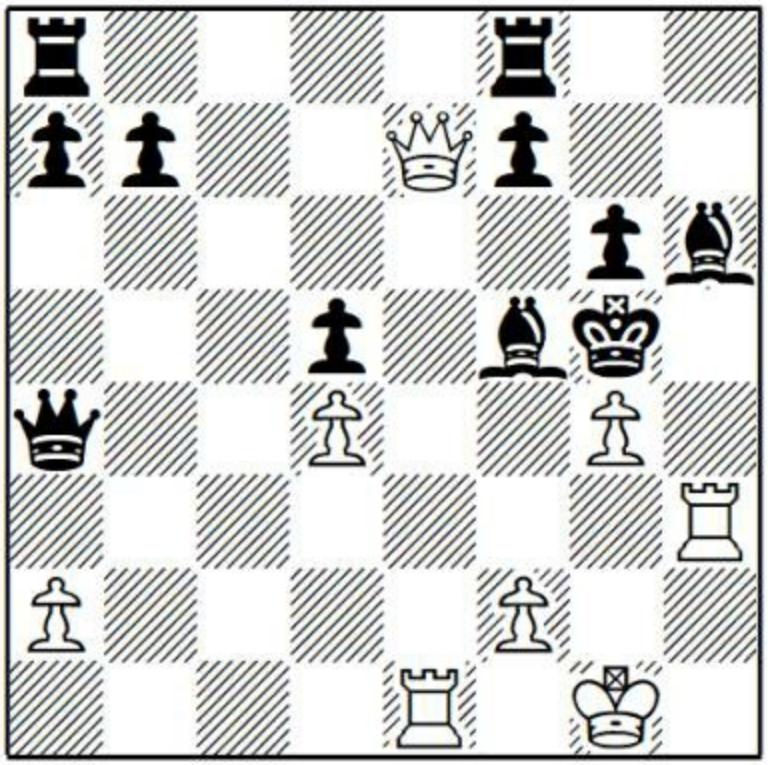
26 ... Kxh4 27 Rh3+!

Decoy.

27 ... Kg5

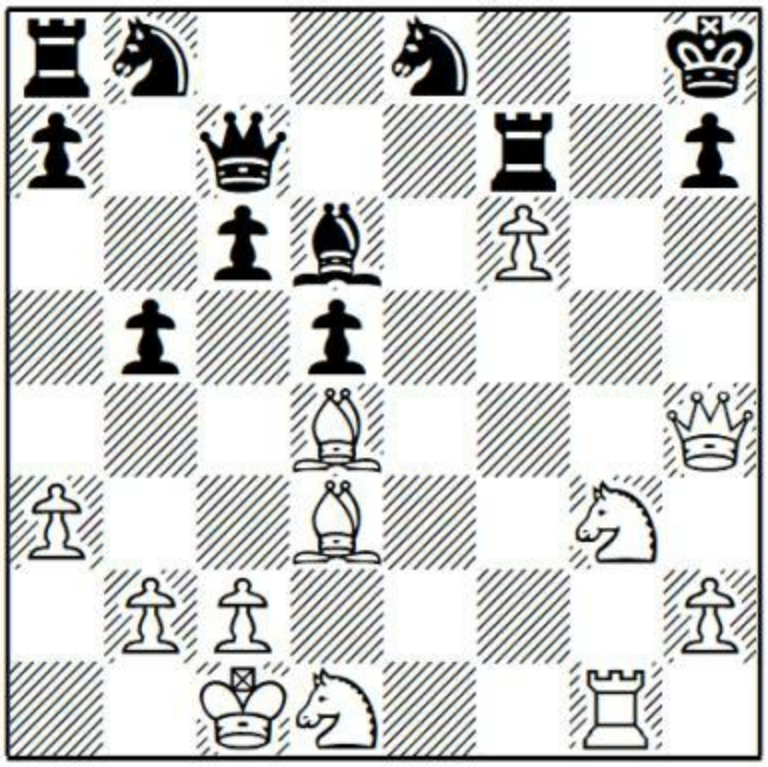
Or 27 ... Kxh3 28 Qg3 mate.

28 Qe7+! 1-0



Interference. This seals f6 as an escape square for Black's king: 28 ... f6 29 Qe3+ Kxg4 30 Qg3 mate.

173) V.Anand-F.Txabarri
Madrid 1993



White to play

Level 4.5

The number of moves to mate keeps rising. Mate in 11:

Answer: **24 Bxh7!!**

Step 1: Piece sacrifice/annihilation of defensive barrier/discovered check.

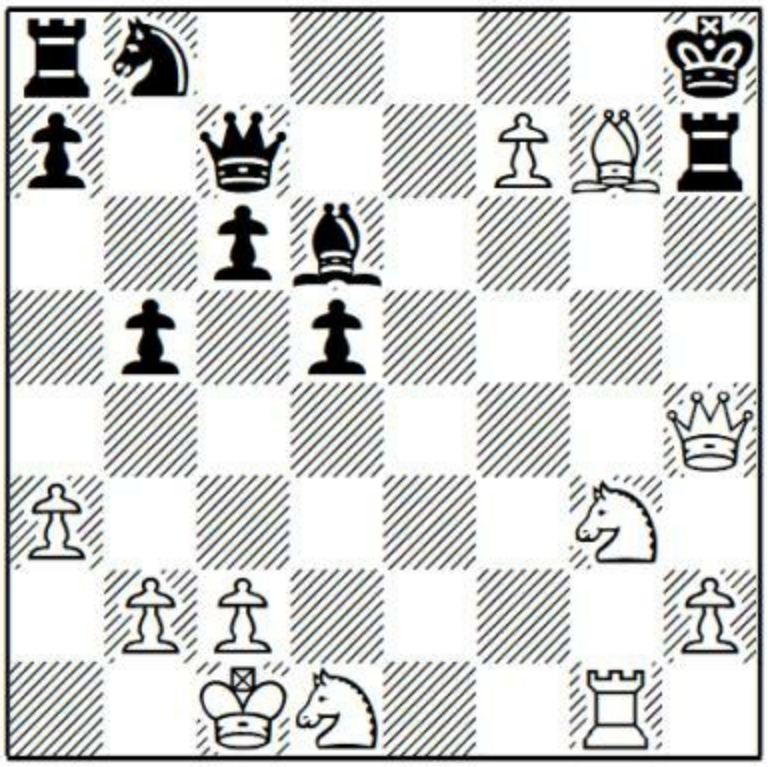
24 ... Rxh7 25 f7+

Discovered attack.

25 ... Ng7

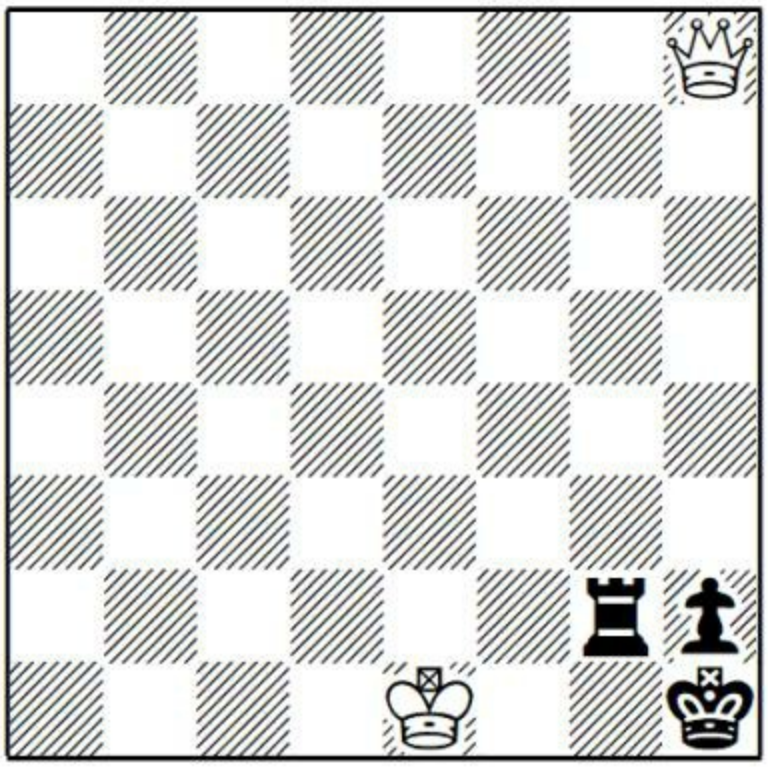
If our opponent takes suicidal action, we should be happy to oblige with all the help we can give. Black's bishop cannot block the check: 25 ... Be5?? 26 f8Q mate.

26 Bxg7+! 1-0



Attraction. Black's resources fail to support his desire to survive the assault: 26 ... Kxg7 27 Nf5+ (double check) 27 ... Kxf7 28 Qxh7+ Ke6 29 Nd4+ Kf6 (or 29 ... Ke5 30 Qf5+! Kxd4 31 Qf2+! followed by 31 ... Ke5 32 Re1 mate or 31 ... Kc4 32 b3 mate) 30 Qf5+ Ke7 31 Qe6+ Kd8 32 Rg8+ Bf8 33 Rxf8 mate.

174) H.Rinck
La Stratégie, 1917



White to play

Level 2

Henri Rinck was one of the early giants of composed endgame studies. This work of elegant simplicity took me only around six seconds to solve (when I made this claim on my Facebook feed, a 2200-rated friend declared that he solved it in 5.9 seconds!), since every move on both sides is self-evident. White forces mate in 12:

Answer: Start with the uber-obvious pin on a8.

1 Qa8!

The only way:

a) 1 Kf1? blows it since Black can play on a stalemating trick with 1 ... Rf2+! 2 Ke1 (2 Kxf2 is stalemate) 2 ... Kg2 3 Qg4+ Kh1 when White is unable to make progress.

b) 1 Qd4? Rf2! (that annoying stalemate trick again) 2 Qg4 (after 2 Qe4+ Kg1! 3 Qe3 Kh1! White is unable to make progress) 2 ... Rf1+! (now the Mad Rook theme kicks in) 3 Ke2 Rf2+ 4 Ke3 Rf1 and White has no way to

win.

c) Someone on my Facebook page claimed that 1 Qh3? mates even faster than 12 moves (in other words, he believes he sees a mate that the 3700-rated engine missed!). The claim fails to 1 ... Rf2! 2 Qh5 (2 Kxf2 is stalemate) 2 ... Kg2 3 Qg4+ Kh1 when White cannot win.

1 ... Kg1 2 Qa7+!

Step 2: Now we begin a ladder motion to creep our queen closer and closer to Black's king.

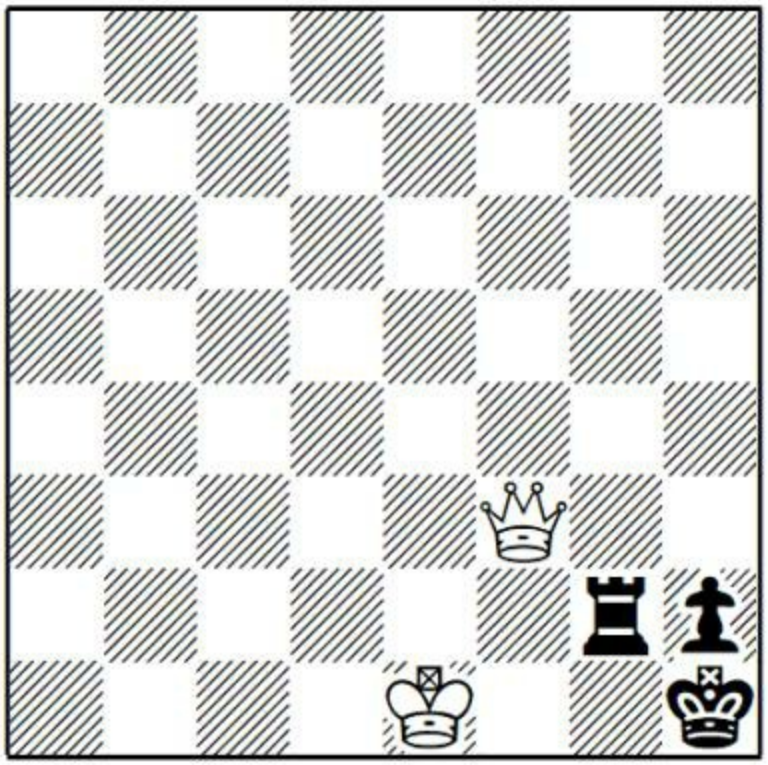
2 ... Kh1 3 Qb7

Not 3 Kf1?. No, no, no! This will fall for the dirty trick: 3 ... Rf2+! 4 Ke1 (or 4 Qxf2 and stalemate) 4 ... Rf1+! 5 Ke2 Rf2+! 6 Ke3 Rf3+ 7 Ke4 Kg2 8 Qg7+ Kh1! and it's a draw.

3 ... Kg1 4 Qb6+ Kh1 5 Qc6 Kg1 6 Qc5+

And so on. The electoral map is clearly being gerrymandered in the ambitious queen's favour.

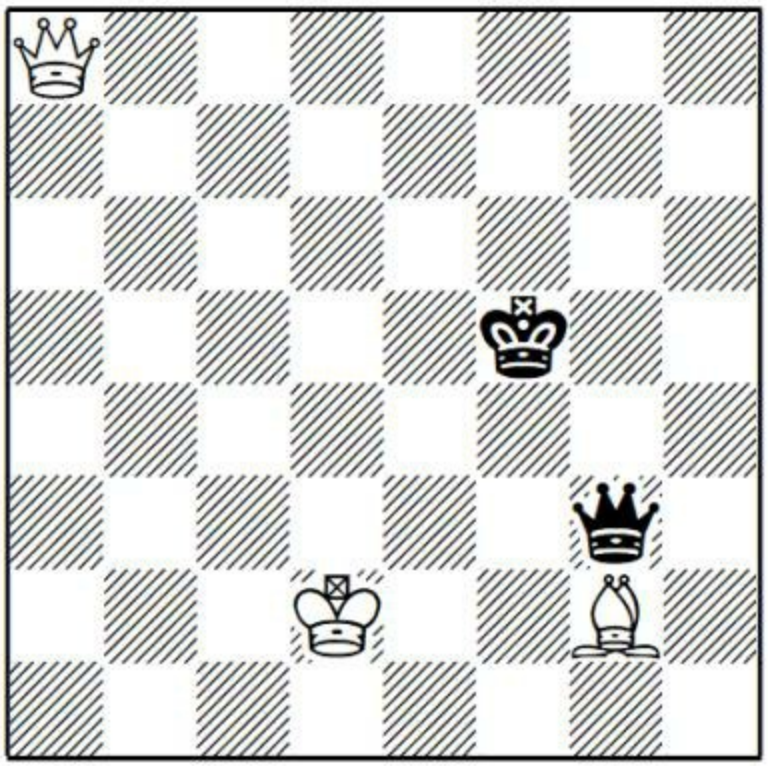
6 ... Kh1 7 Qd5 Kg1 8 Qd4+ Kh1 9 Qe4 Kg1 10 Qe3+ Kh1 11 Qf3!



For Black's king, there is no place to breathe in this crowded tenement.

11 ... Kg1 12 Qf1 mate

175) H.Rinck
Deutsche Schachzeitung, 1902



White to play
Level 5

This mate in 13 is far more difficult to solve than Rinck's mate in 12, from the last game. Queen and bishop against lone queen is a draw ... unless it's from a Rinck study and there exists some completely freaky *Twilight Zone* geometry. From this starting position White can actually force mate in 13 moves:

***Answer:* 1 Bh3+!**

After 1 Qc8+? Kg5 2 Qg8+ Kf4 White can't make progress.

1 ... Kf4

The only move to evade instant death:

a) 1 ... Qxh3 allows the skewer 2 Qc8+ Ke5 3 Qxh3.

b) 1 ... Ke5 2 Qb8+ is another skewer.

c) 1 ... Kg6 2 Qg8+ wins with a discovered attack.

d) 1 ... Kf6 2 Qf8+ Kg5! 3 Qg7+ Kf4! (or 3 ... Kh4 4 Qh6 mate) 4 Qc7+ Kf3 5 Qc6+ Kf4 6 Qd6+ Kf3 7 Qd3+ Kf4 8 Qf5 mate.

e) 1 ... Kg5 2 Qg8+ Kh4 3 Qh8+ Kg5 4 Qg7+ Kf4 5 Qc7+ Kf3 6 Qc6+ Kf4 7 Qd6+ Kf3 8 Qd3+ Kf4 9 Qf5 mate.

2 Qb8+!

This pseudo-skewer forces Black's king up the board.

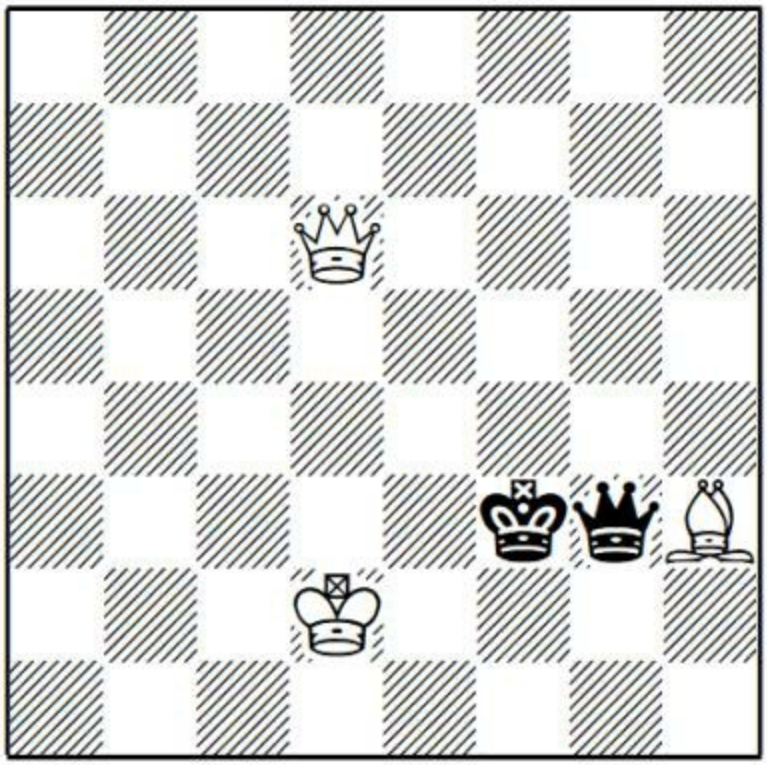
2 ... Kf3 3 Qb7+ Kf4!

Not 3 ... Kf2?? 4 Qb6+ Qe3+ 5 Qxe3 mate.

4 Qc7+ Kf3 5 Qc6+

This is not a matter of throwing spaghetti on a wall, hoping that something sticks. White begins a deliberate crab-like lateral/ladder motion, creeping the queen closer and closer to Black's king.

5 ... Kf4 6 Qd6+ Kf3



White to play

Level 2

White forces mate in 2:

***Answer:* 7 Qd3+! Kf4**

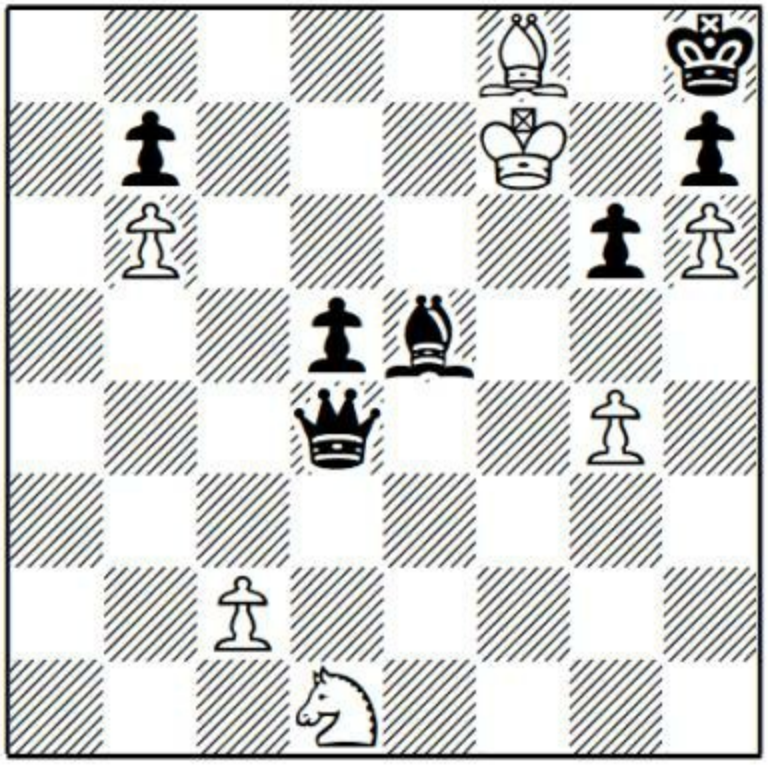
Or 7 ... Kf2 8 Qf1 mate.

8 Qf5 mate

Have you ever met your spouse's old boyfriend or girlfriend? I had to endure this ordeal once and I was prepared to despise him, even before I met him, just as White's queen feels about Black's king.

176) V.Smyslov

Shakhmaty v SSSR, 1938



White to play

Level 5

Black threatens to consolidate with ... Qf4+ and ... Kg8. What should

White do about it? It's actually mate in 16!

Answer: Overloaded defender/interference. Black's queen and bishop are tied down to covering g7. If either gives way, then White mates with Bg7+ and hxg7 mate.

1 Ne3!! Qf4+

Otherwise:

a) 1 ... Qa1 2 g5! (intending Ng4! and Nf6, followed by mate on g7) 2 ... Qd4 3 Ng4! Qf4+ 4 Nf6 Bxf6 5 gxf6 (now Black must hand over the queen to evade Bg7 mate) 5 ... Qxf6+ 6 Kxf6 Kg8 7 Bd6 d4 8 Bc5 and mate in 8.

b) 1 ... Qxe3?? (a fish is more likely to bite if the bait wiggles) 2 Bg7+ Bxg7 3 hxg7 mate.

c) 1 ... Qb2 drags out the mate to the full 16 moves: 2 g1 Qa1 3 Ng4 Qf1+ 4 Nf6 Bxf6 5 gxf6 Qxf6+ 6 Kxf6 Kg8 7 Bc5 g5 8 Ke7! g4 9 Bd4 g3 10 c3 g2 11 Bg1! d4 12 cxd4 Kh8 13 d5 Kg8 14 d6 Kh8 15 d7 Kg8 16 d8R mate.

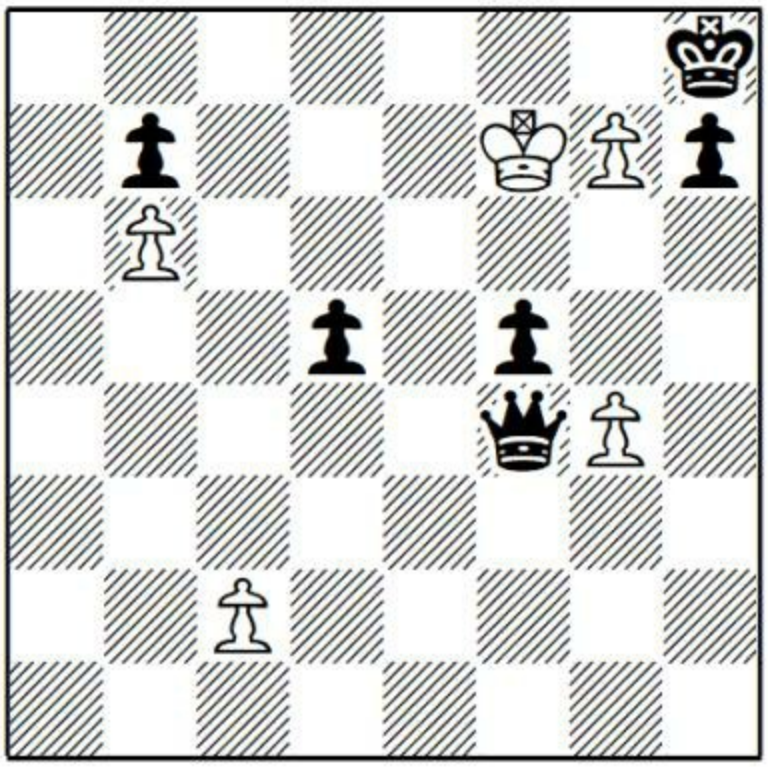
2 Nf5!

Interference. Mutation renders this subspecies more dangerous than its predecessor.

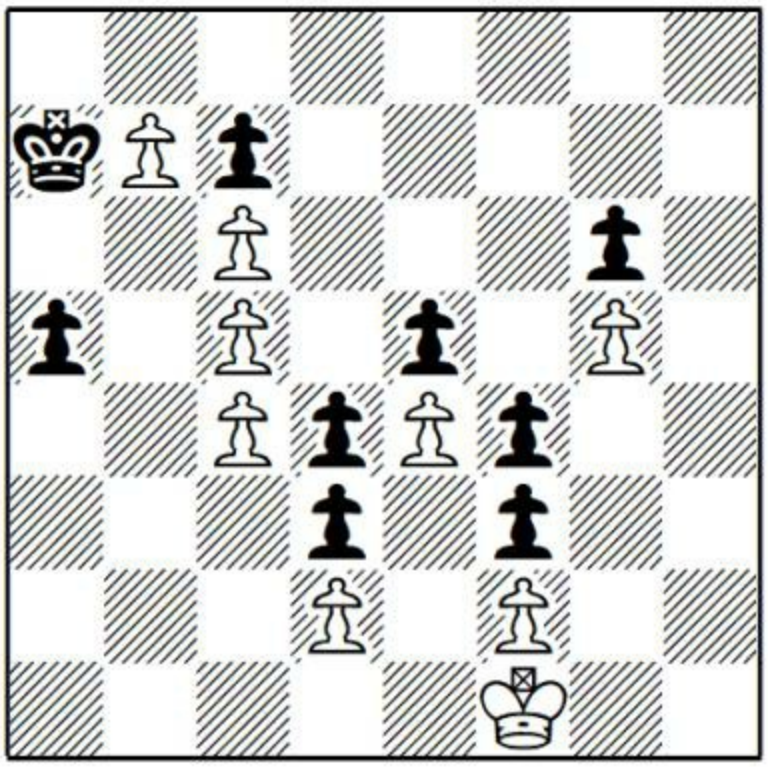
2 ... gxf5

Or 2 ... Qxh6 3 Nxh6 g5 4 Be7 d4 5 Bf6+! Bxf6 6 Kxf6 d3 7 Kf7! dxc2 8 Kf8 c1Q (I learned early on in my career, that mate beats the opponent's new queen) 9 Nf7 mate.

3 Bg7+ Bxg7 4 hxg7 mate



177) G.Reichhelm
source unknown, 1913



White to play

Level 3

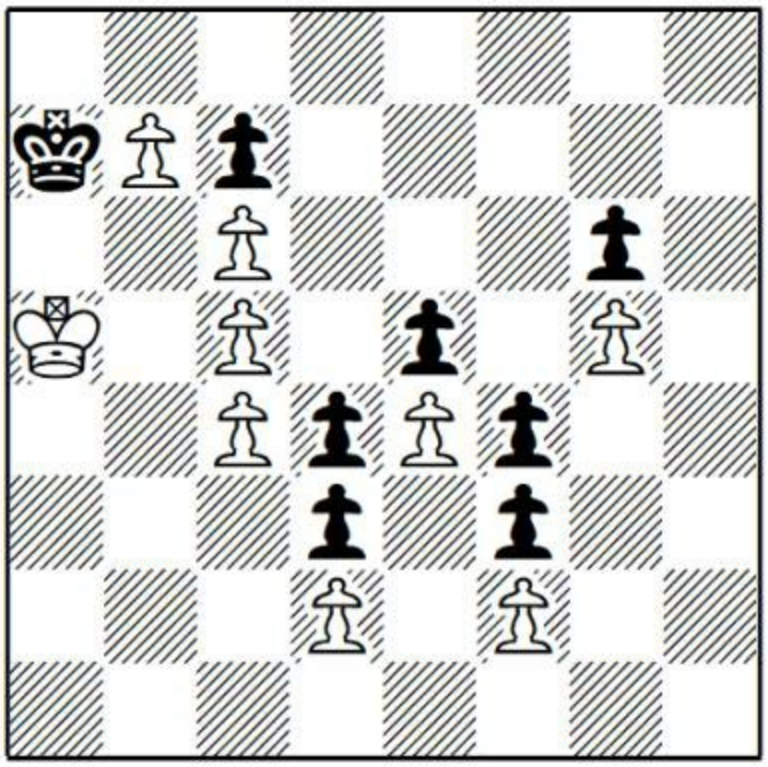
This mate in 50(!) moves problem is an example of why we should *not* be intimidated by lengthy solutions. The problem is completely conceptual, with almost zero need for analysis. I solved it in less than a minute, since every step is obvious and follows naturally after the other, even though right now a win looks impossible for White. So here goes: White to play and mate in 50 moves!

Step 1 is obvious: Walk over and chop Black's a-pawn.

1 Ke1 Kb8 2 Kd1 Ka7

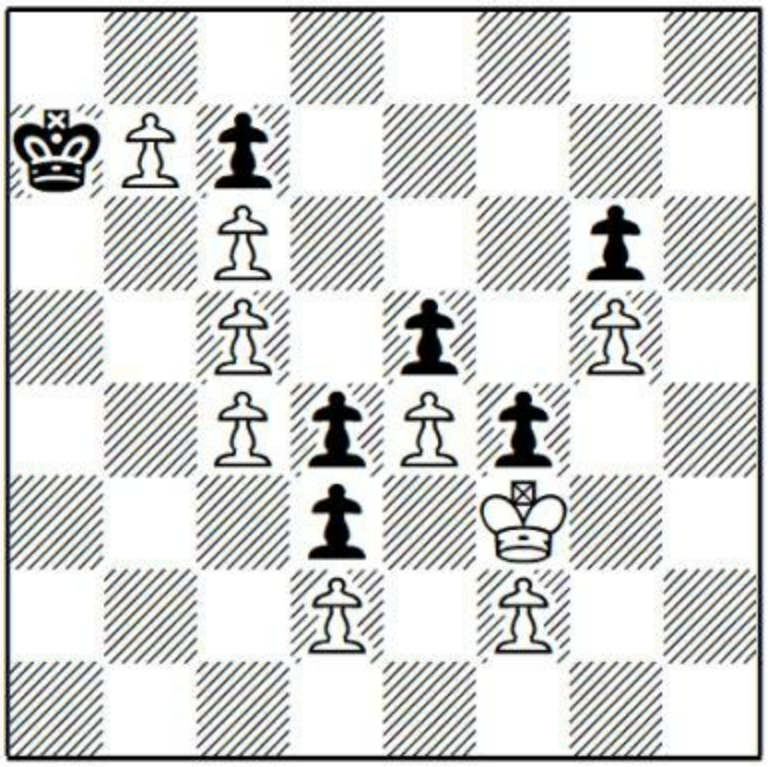
Of course, Black's king has no choice but to remain mute and mindlessly shuffle between b8 and a7.

3 Kc1 Kb8 4 Kb2 Ka7 5 Kb3 Kb8 6 Ka4 Ka7 7 Kxa5



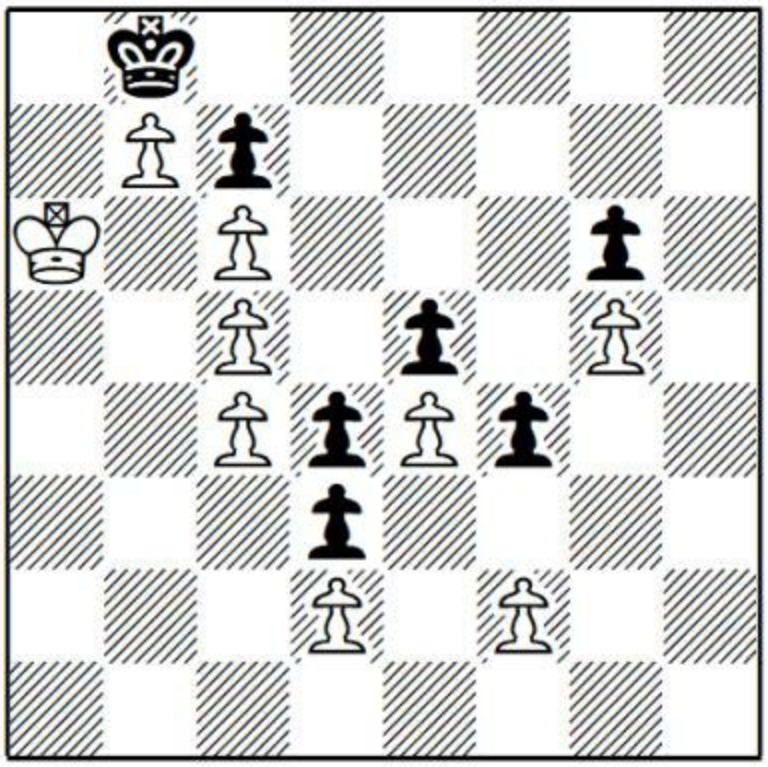
Step 2, also obvious, is to transfer the king to g4 and pick up Black's loose f3-pawn.

7 ... Kb8 8 Kb4 Ka7 9 Kb3 Kb8 10 Kb2 Ka7 11 Kc1 Kb8 12 Kd1 Ka7 13 Ke1 Kb8 14 Kf1 Ka7 15 Kg1 Kb8 16 Kh2 Ka7 17 Kh3 Kb8 18 Kg4 Ka7 19 Kxf3



Step 3: Move our king to a6 and zugzwang/temporarily stalemate Black's king. This in turn forces ... f4-f3, which artificially isolates Black's f-pawn.

19 ... Kb8 20 Kg2 Ka7 21 Kf1 Kb8 22 Ke1 Ka7 23 Kd1 Kb8 24 Kc1 Ka7 25 Kb2 Kb8 26 Ka3 Ka7 27 Kb4 Kb8 28 Kb5 Ka7 29 Ka5 Kb8 30 Ka6!

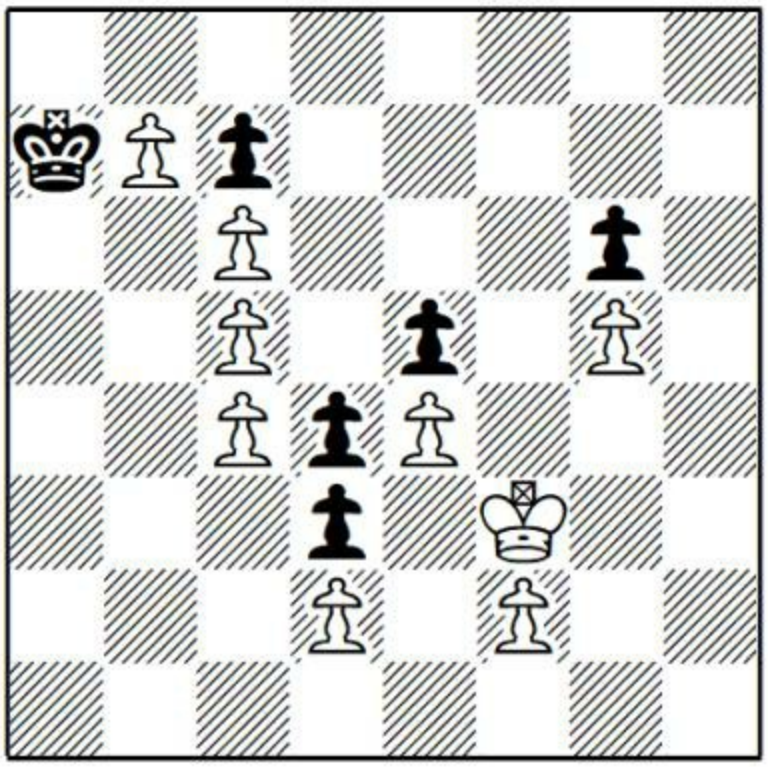


It’s zugzwang, *not* stalemate, since Black must play ... f4-f3.

30 ... f3

I read that an accident victim can be injured further, when moved. Step 4 is a no-brainer: Walk the king back over to the kingside and pick up Black’s loose f3-pawn.

31 Ka5 Ka7 32 Kb4 Kb8 33 Kb3 Ka7 34 Kb2 Kb8 35 Kc1 Ka7 36 Kd1 Kb8 37 Ke1 Ka7 38 Kf1 Kb8 39 Kg1 Ka7 40 Kh2 Kb8 41 Kg3 Ka7 42 Kxf3



Step 5: Also simple: Just move the king out of the way and play f2-f4, creating a passed pawn.

42 ... Kb8 43 Kg4 Ka7 44 f4 exf4 45 e5 f3 46 Kxf3

Step 6: Promote the e-pawn (watching for stalemates) to a rook or queen and deliver mate on a8.

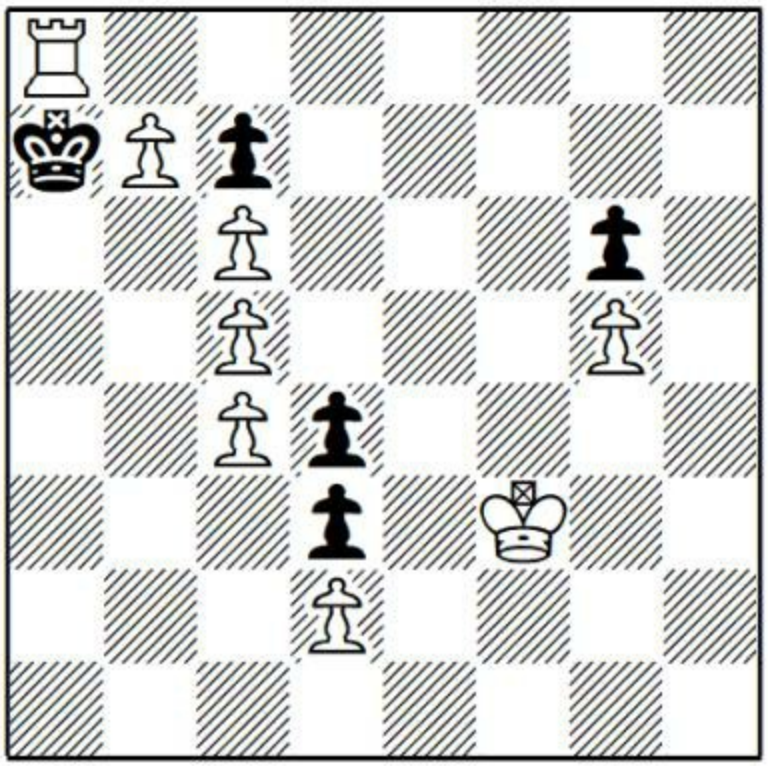
46 ... Kb8 47 e6 Ka7 48 e7 Kb8

If 48 ... Ka6 49 b8Q Ka5 50 Qb5 mate.

49 e8R+

Or 49 e8Q+ Ka7 50 Qa8 mate.

49 ... Ka7 50 Ra8 mate

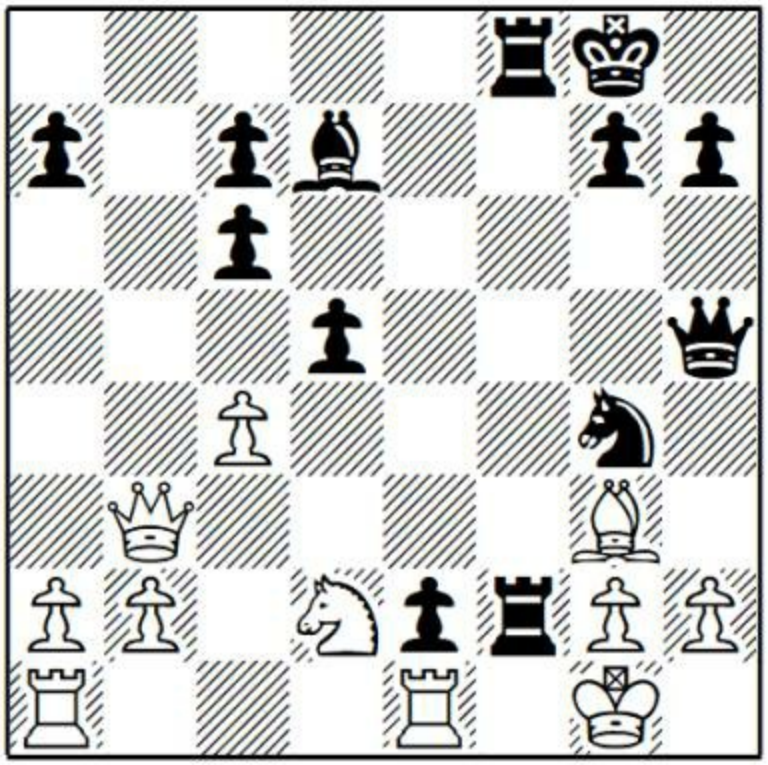


That was easy!

4) Annihilation of Defensive Barrier/Obliteration/Demolition of Structure

Our dream in life is to have available the straight path to our goal, where we simply kick down the opponent's door. The theme is also sometimes referred to as Obliteration or Demolition of Structure. In this chapter we smash through the defence with a baseball bat, which results in either a winning position or a forced mate.

178) M.Hewitt-W.Steinitz
London 1866



Black to play

Level 4.5

We can just feel it. Where is Steinitz's winning combination?

Answer: Annihilation of defensive barrier.

20 ... Rxg2+! 21 Kxg2 Qh3+!!

Step 2: Queen sacrifice/attraction. So brutal is the finish, that Steinitz's spectacular move qualifies as a hate crime.

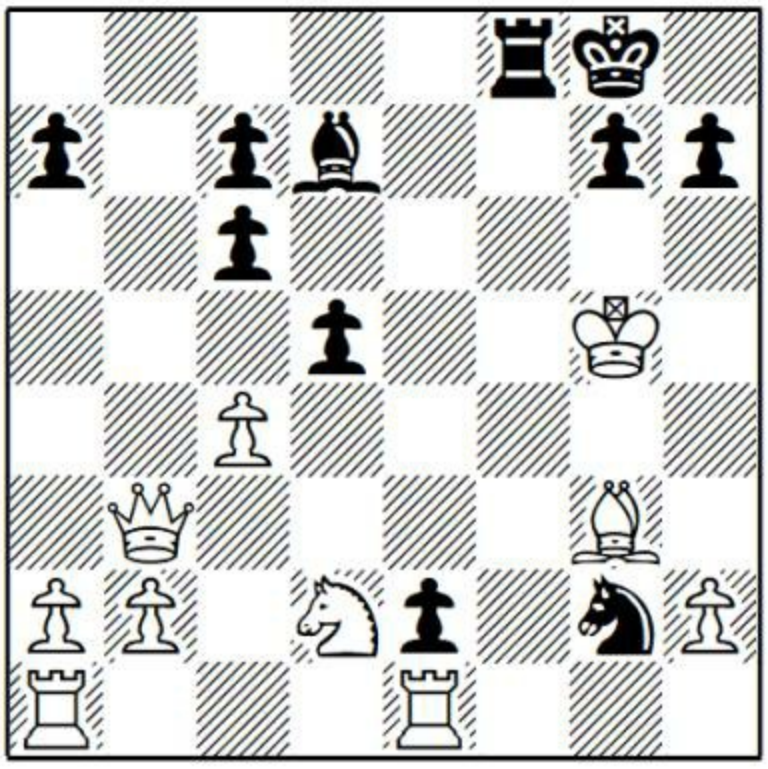
22 Kxh3

Once our king is pushed up the board, it's kind of a reversed slippery slope, where the king has a bad habit of rising higher and higher, into the arms of his enemies, but if:

a) 22 Kh1 Rf2!. Overloaded defender. White must resign.

b) 22 Kg1 Rf2! is the same.

22 ... Ne3+! 23 Kh4 Ng2+ 24 Kg5



Black to play

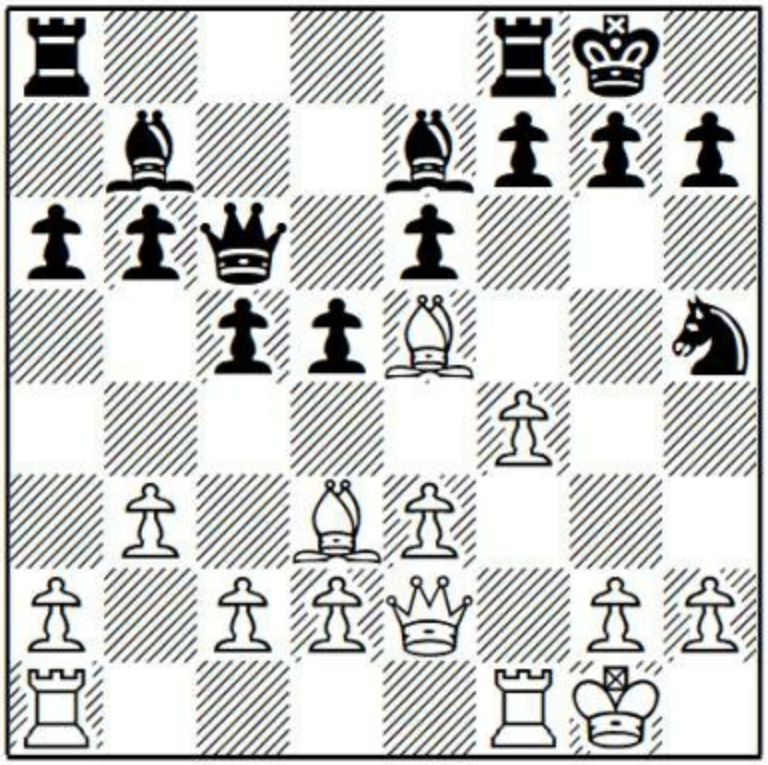
Level 2

Steinitz forced mate in 3:

Answer: **24 ... Rf5+ 25 Kg4 h5+ 26 Kh3 Rf2 mate**

This move conveniently covers g2.

179) E.Lasker-J.Bauer
Amsterdam 1889



White to play

Level 3

This is one of Lasker's greatest hits, so many of you may have already seen the combination. If so, can your work out all the details in advance in your mind's eye, without moving the pieces?

Answer: Start with a Greek Gift sacrifice on h7, but it's not a real Greek Gift, since there is no white knight to give check on g5 next.

15 Bxh7+! Kxh7 16 Qxh5+ Kg8 17 Bxg7!

Annihilation of defensive barrier. Black's pawnless king is left shivering

in the wind. In 1889, Lasker's double-bishop sacrifice stunned the onlookers. Today, such denuding sacrifices are automatic and the great majority of club players would spot this in an instant.

17 ... Kxg7 18 Qg4+!

Details matter. Black's king must be first pushed to the h-file before a rook is lifted into the attack. After 18 Rf3? Rh8! 19 Rg3+ Bg5!! (interference/decoy) 20 Qxg5+ (not 20 Rxg5+ Kf6 21 Qg4 Ke7 and wins) 20 ... Kf8 21 Qf6 Rg8 22 Rxg8+ Kxg8 23 Rf1 d4 24 Rf3 Kf8 25 Rg3 Re8 26 Rg6! dxe3 27 Qg5 (threat: Rg8 mate) 27 ... Qxg2+! 28 Qxg2 Bxg2 29 Rxg2 exd2 30 Rxd2 Ke7 the game should be a draw.

18 ... Kh7

Not 18 ... Kf6?? 19 Qg5 mate.

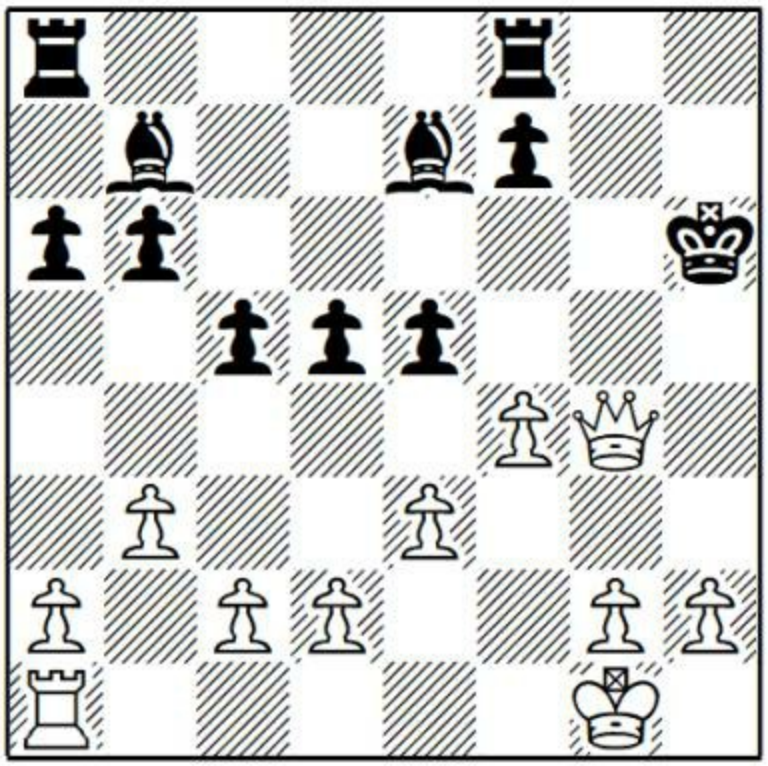
19 Rf3!

The rook lift wins Black's queen.

19 ... e5

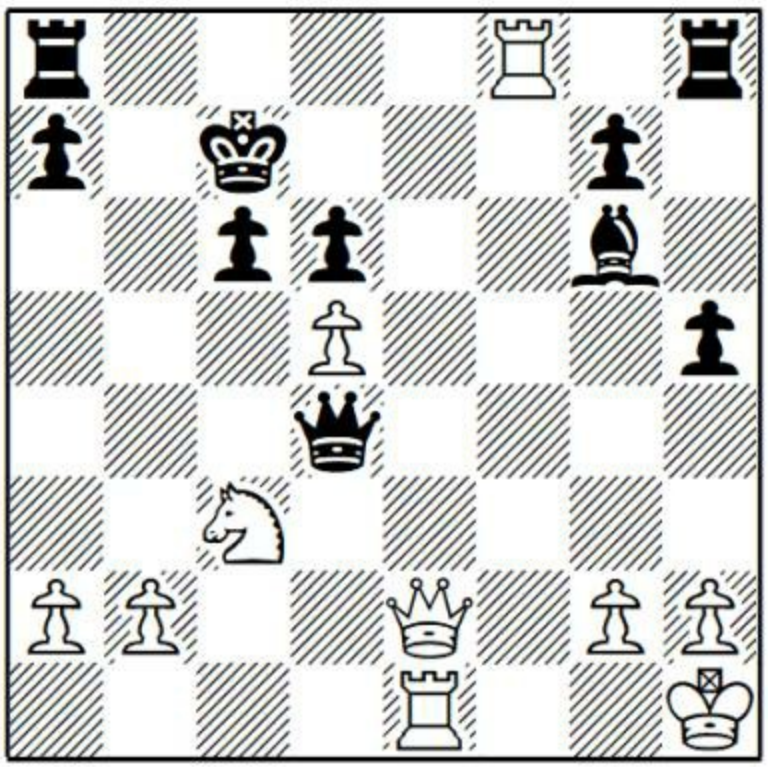
Forced. Black's queen must give herself away with a block on h6.

20 Rh3+ Qh6 21 Rxh6+ Kxh6



White to play
Level 1
Find the final move of Lasker's combination:
***Answer:* 22 Qd7!**
Double attack. Black loses another piece.
22 ... Bf6 23 Qxb7
And Lasker easily converted.

180) D.Bronstein-V.Mikenas
Rostov on Don 1941



White to play
Level 4
It's a big leap to transfer an idea in our imagination to the accounting of the board in front of us. How did Bronstein go after Black's wounded king?

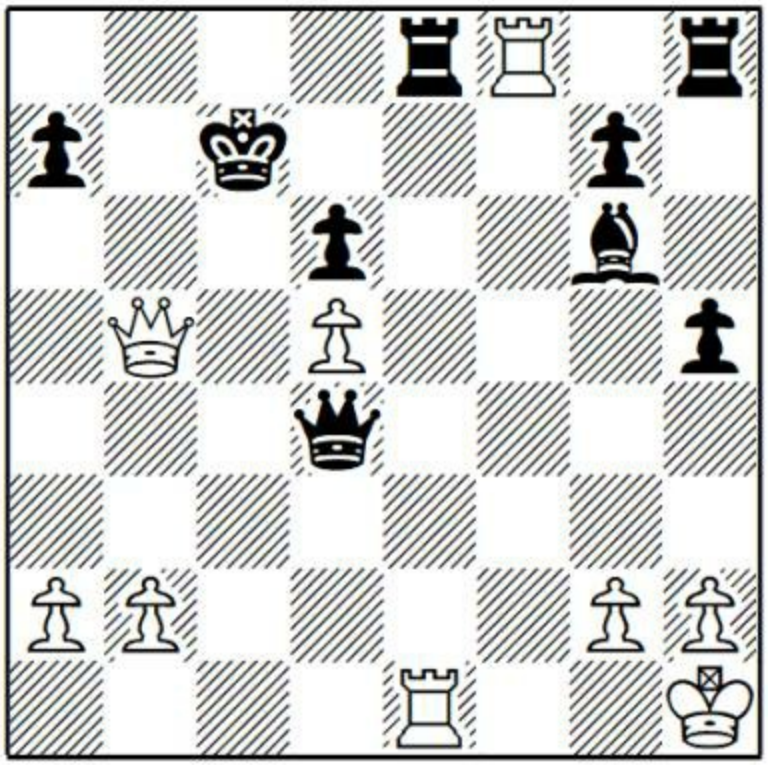
Answer: Knight fork/annihilation of defensive barrier. The fact that it is a knight fork obliges Black to accept.

22 Nb5+! cxb5 23 Qxb5!

Bronstein ignores his hanging f8-rook.

23 ... Re8

Or if 23 ... Rhxf8 24 Re7+ Kc8 25 Qd7+ Kb8 26 Qc7 mate (or 26 Qb7 mate).



White to play

Level 3.5

How did Bronstein force mate in 3?

Answer: Decoy Black's rook up one file.

24 Re7+!

24 Qc6+ is a move slower: 24 ... Kb8 25 Rexe8+ Bxe8 26 Qxe8+ Kb7 27 Qc6 mate.

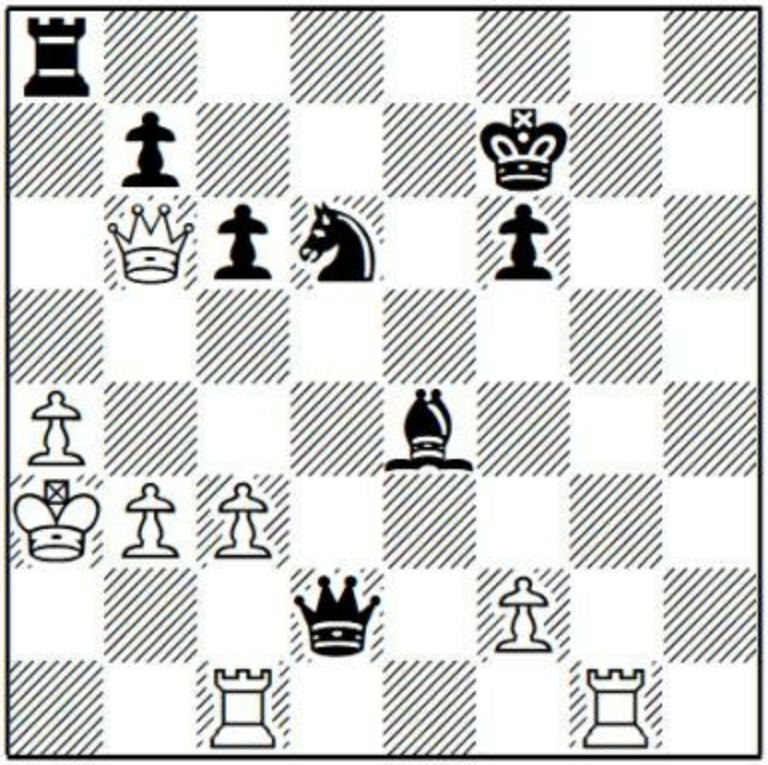
24 ... Rxe7

If you assumed that Mikenas should have resigned, then you assumed

correctly.

25 Qc6 mate

181) S.Tartakower-M.Euwe
Venice 1948



Black to play
Level 4.5
What is Black's most forceful continuation?
Answer: Annihilation of defensive barrier.
39 ... Nc4+!

Euwe was a mathematician, so he knew how to count. His great strength was concrete calculation, where he was almost without peer (I say 'almost', since we must factor in Alexander Alekhine and Mikhail Botvinnik). Also winning, but not as decisively is 39 ... Nb5+ 40 Kb4 Qa2 41 Qxb7+ Ke6 42 Qxa8 c5+! (discovered attack) 43 Kxc5 Bxa8 44 axb5 Qxb3 when Black still

has some work to do.

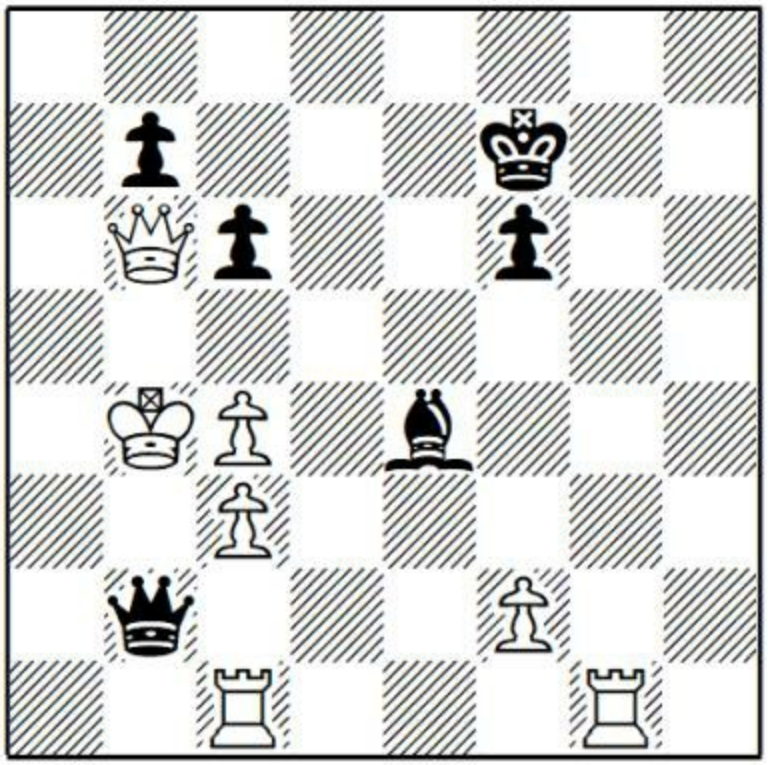
40 bxc4

40 Kb4?? isn't much of a consideration due to 40 ... Nxb6.

40 ... Rxa4+!

Step 2: Rook sacrifice/attraction.

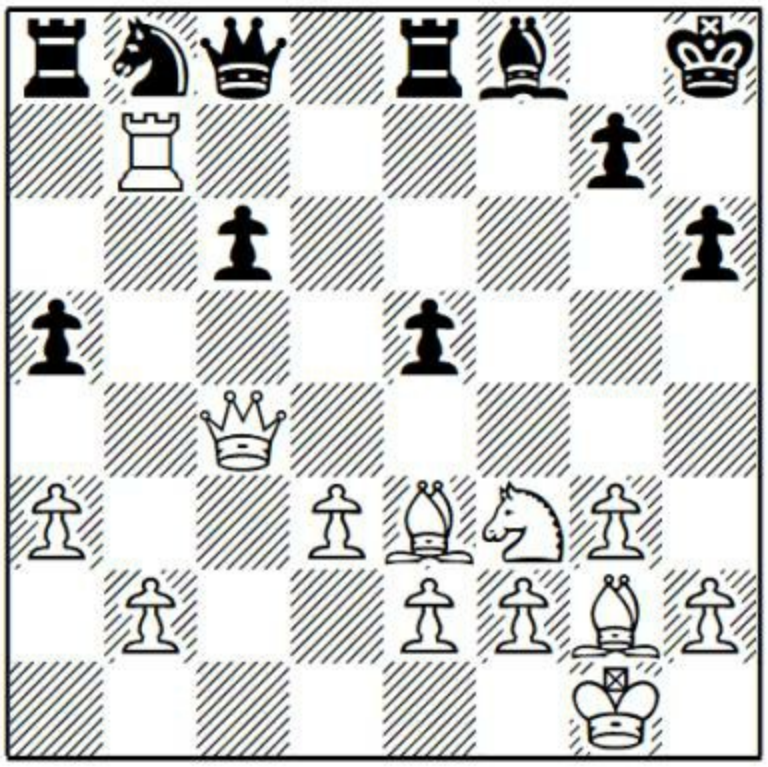
41 Kxa4 Qa2+ 42 Kb4 Qb2+! 0-1



Have you ever seen a queen as efficient as Black's? White loses his queen by force: 43 Kc5 (if 43 Ka5 Qa3 mate or 43 Ka4 Qxb6 and wins) 43 ... Qxf2+ 44 Kb4 Qxb6+ wins.

182) M.Botvinnik-L.Portisch

Monte Carlo 1968



White to play

Level 5

How did Botvinnik take full advantage of the weak light squares around Black's king?

Answer: Rook sacrifice/annihilation of defensive barrier. White's knight and light-squared bishop are a dangerous attacking duo.

21 Nh4!!

Nobody believes the impossible is possible, until it happens. Then we all say: "It was inevitable!" Botvinnik gives a beautiful demonstration of the art of attack, from this point on.

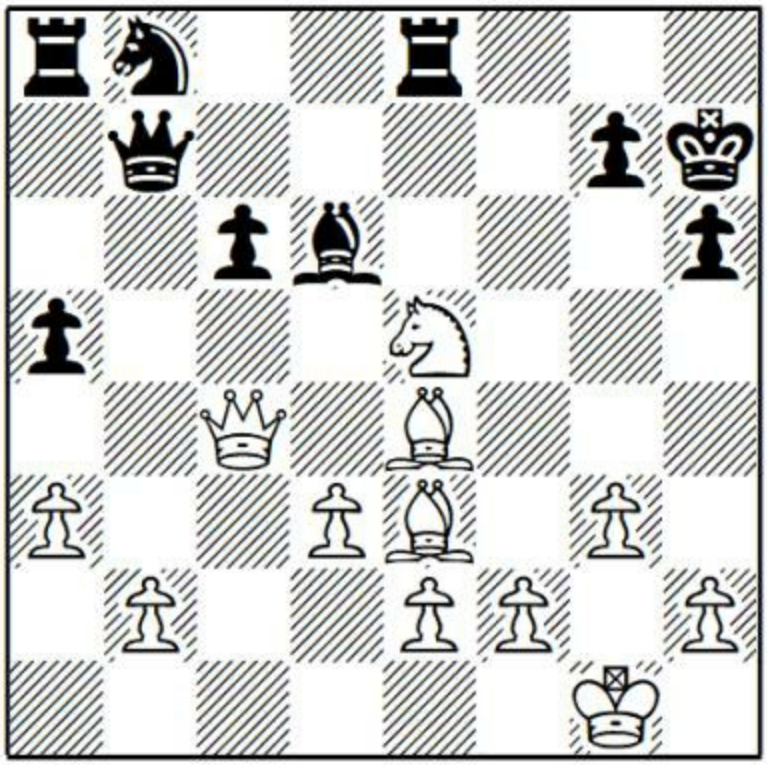
21 ... Qxb7

Declining doesn't help either: 21 ... Qe6 22 Qe4 Nd7 23 Qg6! Nf6 (23 ... Nc5 24 Bxc5 overloads the defender of g7) 24 Bxh6! gxh6 25 Bh3! (the defence is short circuited) 25 ... Qd6 26 Qf7 and Black is mated since 26 ... Re7 is met with 27 Ng6 mate.

22 Ng6+ Kh7 23 Be4!

White threatens horrible discovered checks.

23 ... Bd6 24 Nxe5+



24 ... g6

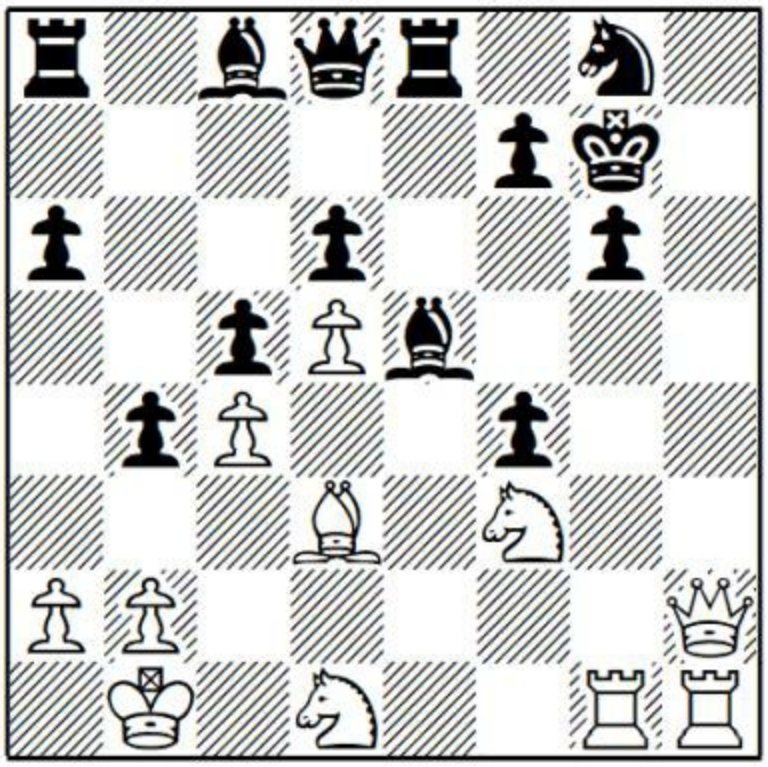
24 ... Kh8 25 Nf7+ wins Black's queen.

25 Bxg6+ Kg7 26 Bxh6+! 1-0

Annihilation of defensive barrier. Black is unable to escape retribution. 26 ... Kxh6 27 Qh4+ Kg7 28 Qh7+ Kf8 29 Qxb7 wins.

183) T.Ghitescu-L.Popov

Siegen Olympiad 1970



White to play

Level 4.5

Continue White's attack:

Answer: Annihilation of defensive barrier. Sacrifice on g6 first with the bishop.

25 Bxg6!

You can also reverse the order with the also winning 25 Qh7+! Kf8 26 Bxg6!.

25 ... fxg6 26 Rxg6+!

And again. Some people just can't keep their tempers in check!

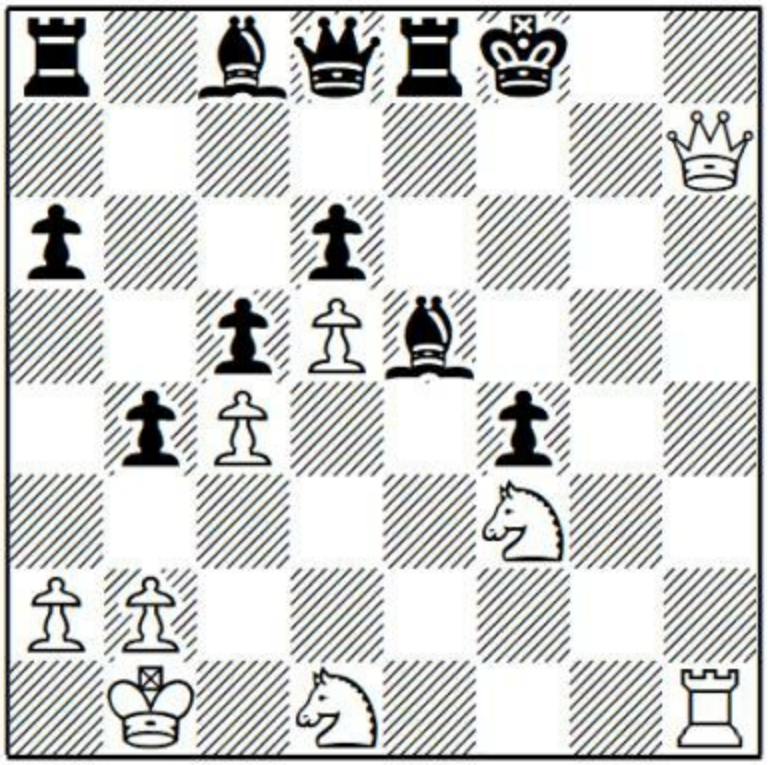
26 ... Kf8

Alternatively, 26 ... Kxg6 27 Rg1+ Kf7 (or 27 ... Kf5 28 Qh7+ Kf6 29 Qg7+ Kf5 30 Qg6 mate) 28 Qh7+ Kf6 (28 ... Kf8 29 Rxg8 mate) 29 Qg7+ Kf5 30 Qg6 mate.

27 Rxg8+!

And again!

27 ... Kxg8 28 Qh7+ Kf8



White to play

Level 3

How does White force mate in 6?

Answer: Removal of the guard.

29 Nxe5!

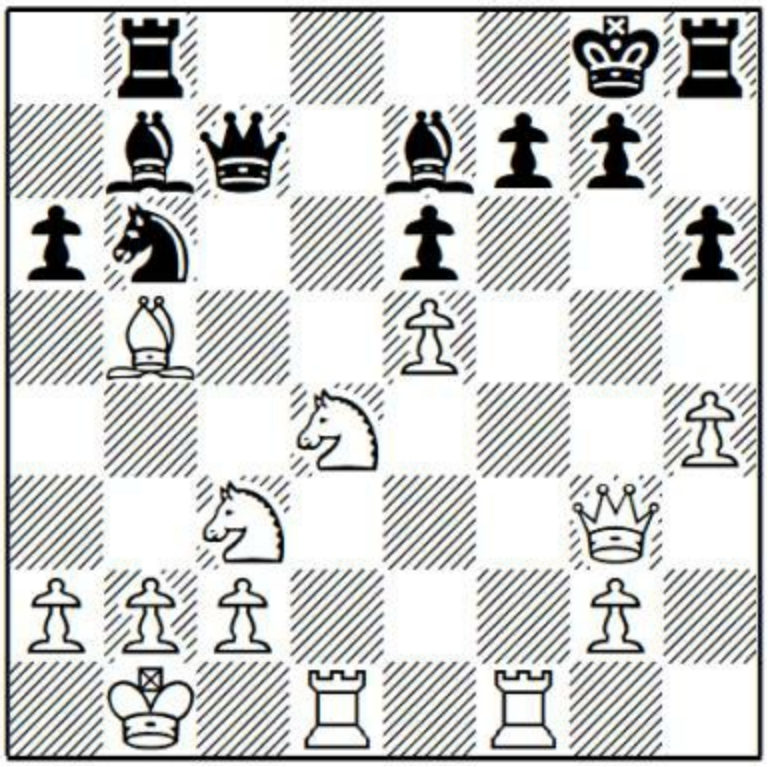
Removing the steward of Black's dark squares is instrumental to White's victory. Instead, 29 Rg1? Bf5+! 30 Qxf5+ Qf6 31 Qh7 Qf7 32 Qh6+ Bg7! 33 Qxd6+ Kg8 and it's anybody's game.

29 ... dxe5 30 Rg1! 1-0

Threat: Rg8 mate, and if 30 ... Bf5+ 31 Qxf5+ Ke7 32 Qe6+ Kf8 33 Rg8 mate.

184) H.Hecht-B.Kristjansson

Reykjavik 1970



White to play

Level 5

21 Be2 looks promising for White. Do you see something even stronger?

Answer: Annihilation of defensive barrier. What the Hecht, let's go for a rook sacrifice!

21 Rxf7!! Kxf7 22 Nxe6!

The second piece must be accepted as well, since Black's queen and g7 are simultaneously attacked.

22 ... Kxe6

Or 22 ... Qc8 23 Rf1+ Kxe6 (23 ... Bf6 24 Qxg7+! Kxe6 25 Qxf6 mate) 24 Qg4+ Kxe5 25 Qf4+ Ke6 26 Re1+ Be4 27 Rxe4 mate.

23 Qg6+ Bf6 24 exf6 gxf6

Not much choice, as 24 ... Qe5 25 fxg7+ Ke7 26 gxh8R Rxh8 27 Qxb6 wins.

25 Re1+ Qe5

Black decides that petty animosity must be placed aside from the business

of survival. He must hand over the queen to evade mate: 25 ... Kd6 26 Qxf6+ Kc5 27 Qf2+! (now White has two attractive variations which lead to David and Goliath mates) 27 ... Kb4 (or 27 ... Kd6 28 Qf4+ Kc5 29 b4 mate) 28 a3+ Ka5 29 b4 mate. David and Goliath mate!

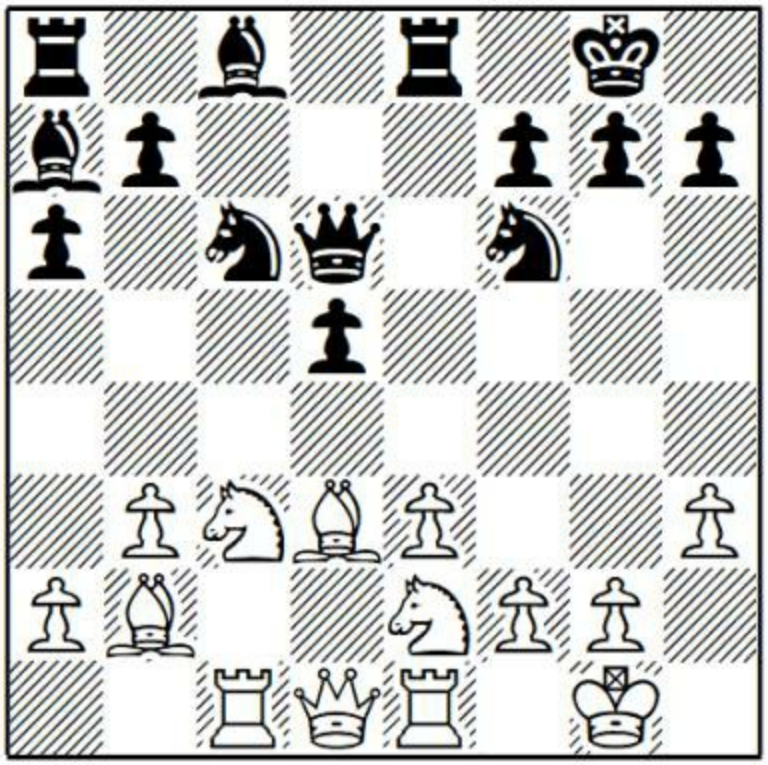
26 Rxe5+ Kxe5 27 Qg3+! Ke6 28 Qe3+!

Double attack.

28 ... Kf7 29 Qxb6 axb5 30 Nxb5 Bxg2 31 Nd6+ 1-0

By the miracle of economics Hecht managed to turn his venture into a handsome profit. The finish could run: 31 ... Ke6 32 Nb7+ Kf7 33 Qc7+ Ke6 34 Nc5+ Kf5 35 Qd7+ Kf4 36 Nd3+ Kg3 37 Qd6+ Kxh4 38 Qxf6+ Kg4 39 Ne5+ Kg3 40 Ng6! Rhd8 41 Qf4+ Kh3 42 Qh4 mate.

185) S.Hjorth-O.Kinnmark
Sweden 1970



Black to play

Level 3.5

What I learned from the COVID-19 pandemic: If you spend enough time in isolation, you begin to forget there is a world out there. This happened to White's king, who feels safe, but isn't. The position appears normally arisen from a standard isolani position. One shift means that White mishandled it and allowed Black a combination:

Answer: Annihilation of defensive barrier. White's misplaced knight on e2 (rather than f3) allows Black a sacrifice on e3.

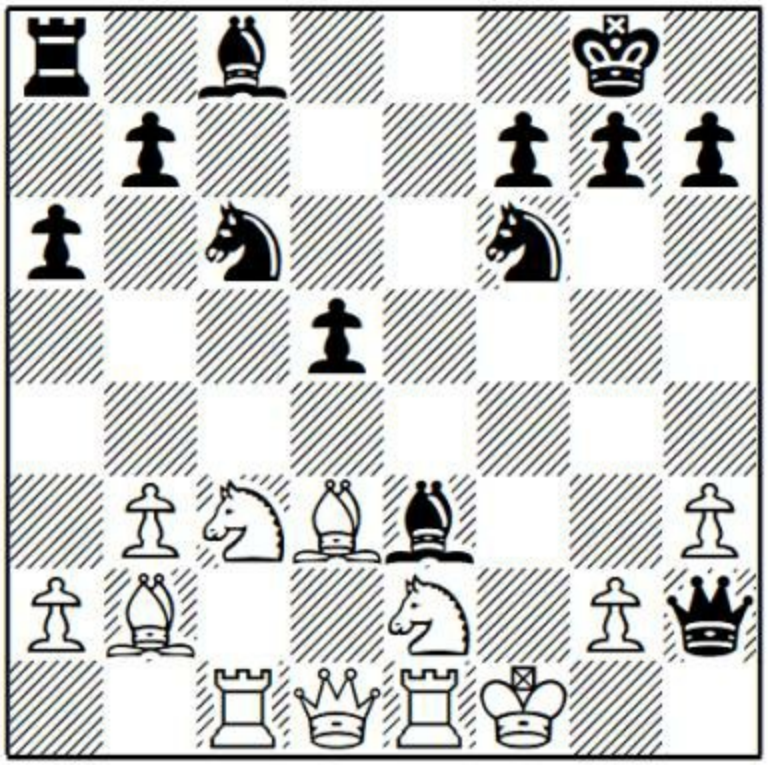
14 ... Rxe3!! 15 fxe3

15 Qd2 Bxh3! is winning for Black: 16 fxe3 Ng4 17 Nf4 Qxf4 18 gxh3 Nxe3 and White is crushed.

15 ... Bxe3+ 16 Kf1

Instead, 16 Kh1 Ng4! (threat: ... Qh2 mate) 17 g3 (or 17 hxg4 Qh6 mate) 17 ... Nf2+ forks and wins.

16 ... Qh2!



White is mated.

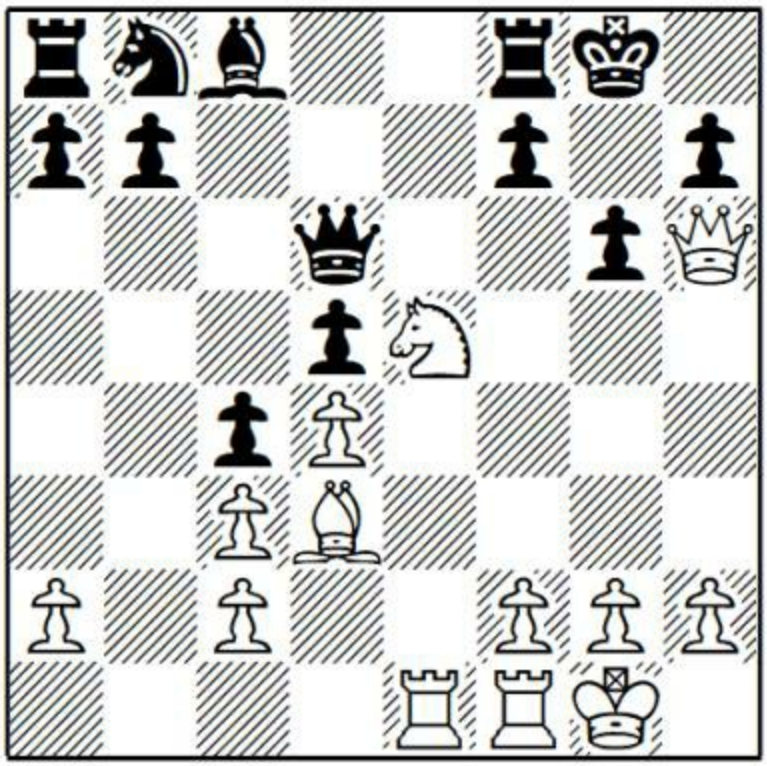
17 Nf4

This is less than a confidence-inspiring gesture, but there was no chance to save the game anyway, as 17 Qc2 Bxh3! mates.

17 ... Qg1+ 0-1

If 18 Ke2 Nd4 mate (or 18 ... Qf2 mate).

186) N.Krogius-O.Chernikov
Kuybyshev 1970



White to play

Level 3

White is way ahead in development and also has a number of attackers aimed in the black king's direction. It would be a shame to retreat with 14 Be2. Do you see anything bolder?

Answer: Annihilation of defensive barrier.

14 Nxf7!

After 14 Be2?! Nc6 15 f4 Qd8 White has an attack brewing, but no

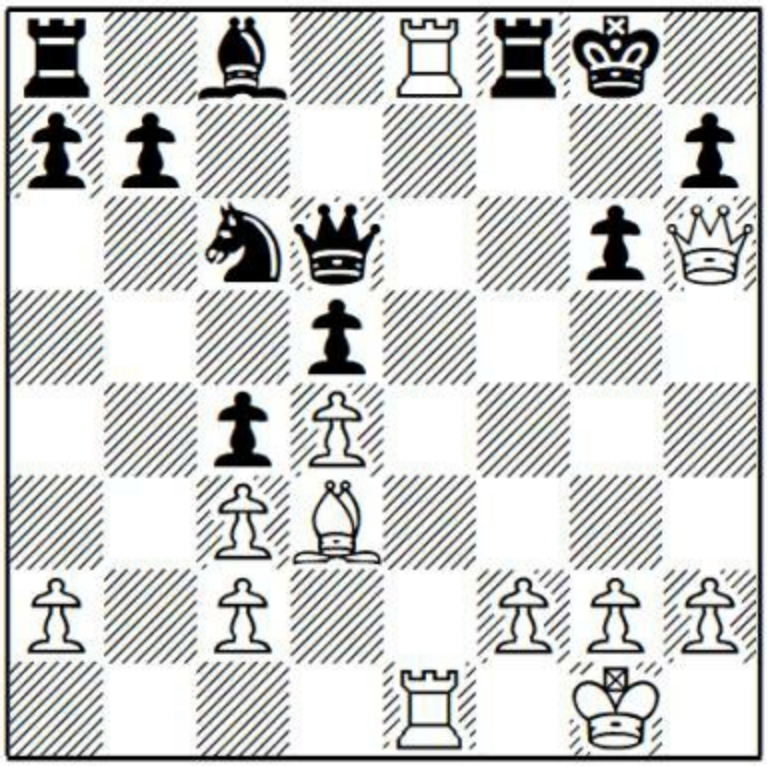
immediate win.

14 ... Rxf7

I can understand why Black rejected the depressing decline 14 ... Qf6 (14 ... Kxf7?? walks into a direct mate in two after 15 Qxh7+ Kf6 16 Qxg6 mate) 15 Ng5 Qg7 16 Qxg7+ Kxg7 17 Be2, which leaves him down a pawn and struggling.

15 Re8+ Rf8 16 Rfe1 Nc6

After 16 ... Bd7? 17 Bxg6! (overloaded defender; Black's queen is unable to capture on g6) 17 ... hxg6 18 R1e7! Qxe7 19 Rxe7 Rf7 20 Qxg6+ Black is mated.



White to play

Level 2.5

How should White continue?

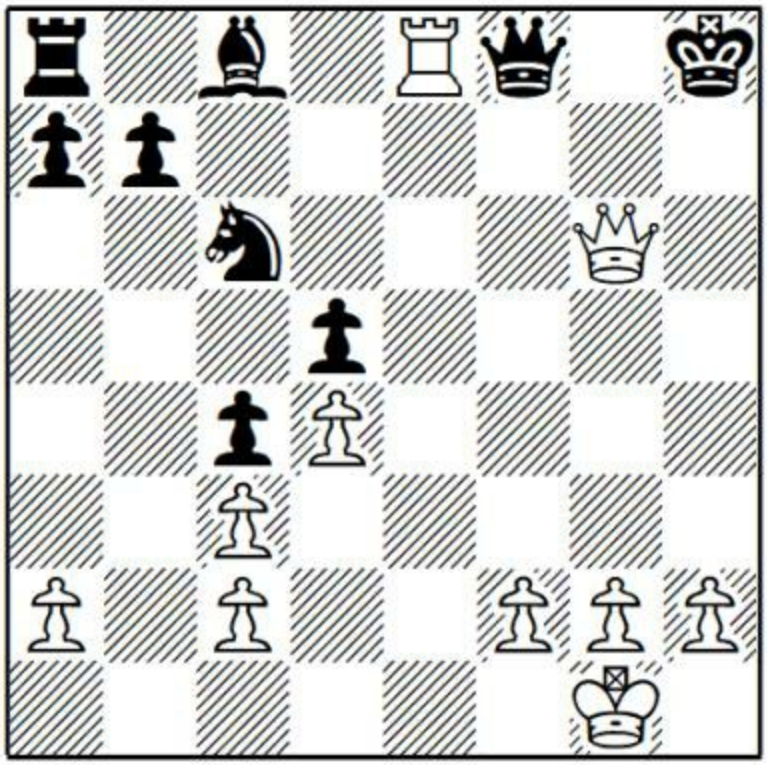
Answer: Step 2: Annihilation of defensive barrier/overloaded defender.

17 Bxg6!

Matters continue to escalate and there is no sacrifice too great to go after

Black's king. If Krogius is trying to impress us, it's working!

17 ... hxg6 18 Rxf8+ Qxf8 19 Qxg6+ Kh8 20 Re8



Step 3: Pinned piece. White gets a queen and three pawns for Black's rook and two minor pieces, which is way too much, since Black's king remains in peril.

20 ... Qxe8 21 Qxe8+ Kg7 22 g4 Rb8

Now ... Bxg4 is a threat.

23 Qh5 Be6 24 f4!

Principle: *Passed pawns should be pushed.*

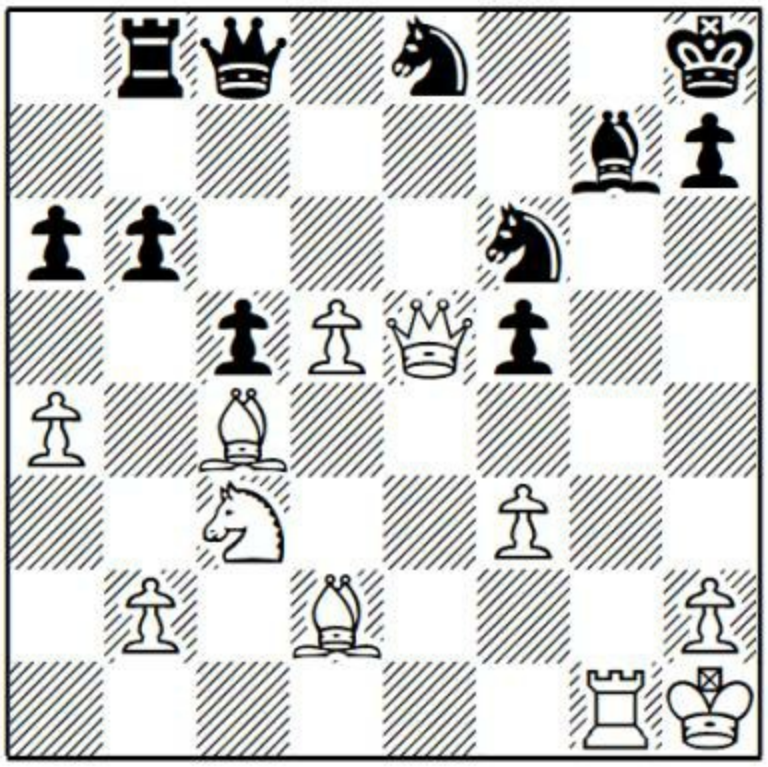
24 ... Bf7 25 Qg5+ Kf8 26 h4 Re8 27 h5!

White's winning plan is resolved: push the h-pawn all the way to its promotion square.

27 ... Re7 28 f5 Bg8 29 Qh6+ Ke8 30 g5 Rd7 31 g6 1-0

187) T.Petrosian-L.Schmid

Zurich 1961



White to play

Level 4

Petrosian generated a winning attack by molding the position's current confusion into something knowable and certain:

Answer: Exchange sacrifice/annihilation of defensive barrier. The obliteration of the opponent's barrier isn't always a pawn. Sometimes it can be for a defender who is a key steward of one colour. Now Black is fatally weakened on the dark squares.

29 Rxg7! Kxg7

Or 29 ... Nxg7 30 Qxf6 when Black can resign.

30 Qe7+! Kg6

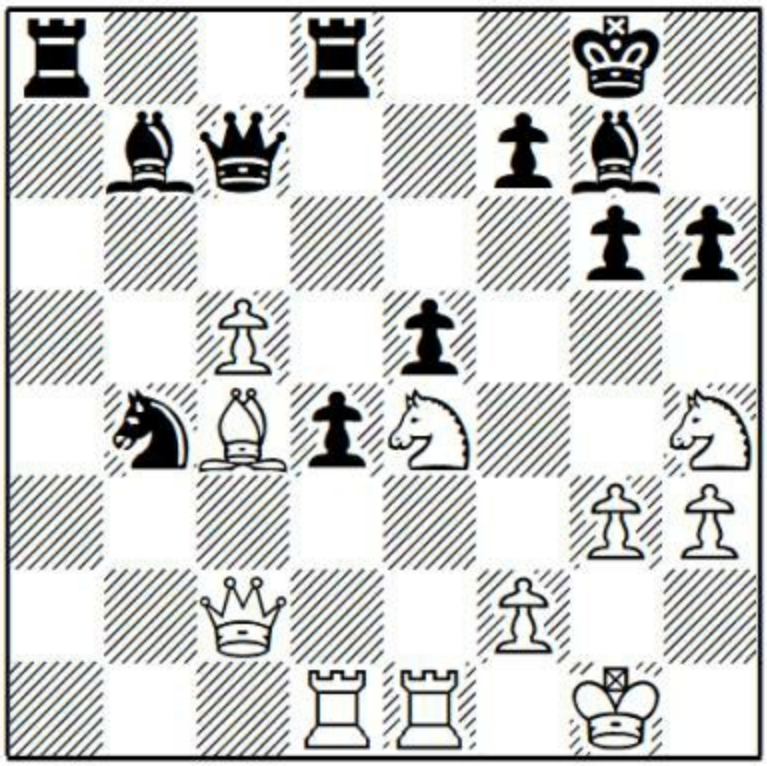
After 30 ... Kh8 31 Bf4! Qd8 32 Qf8+ Ng8 33 Bxb8 Qxb8 34 d6 Black must hand over his queen to evade immediate mate.

31 d6! 1-0

Step 2: Clearance. Threat: Qf7 mate, and if 31 ... Qb7 32 Qe3! (Step 3: Launch the dark-square attack with a retreat of the queen to e3; threat: Qg5

mate) 32 ... Kg7 33 Qh6+ Kh8 34 Qf8+ Ng8 35 Qxg8 mate.

188) M.Mihalchisin-P.Benko
Sarajevo 1970



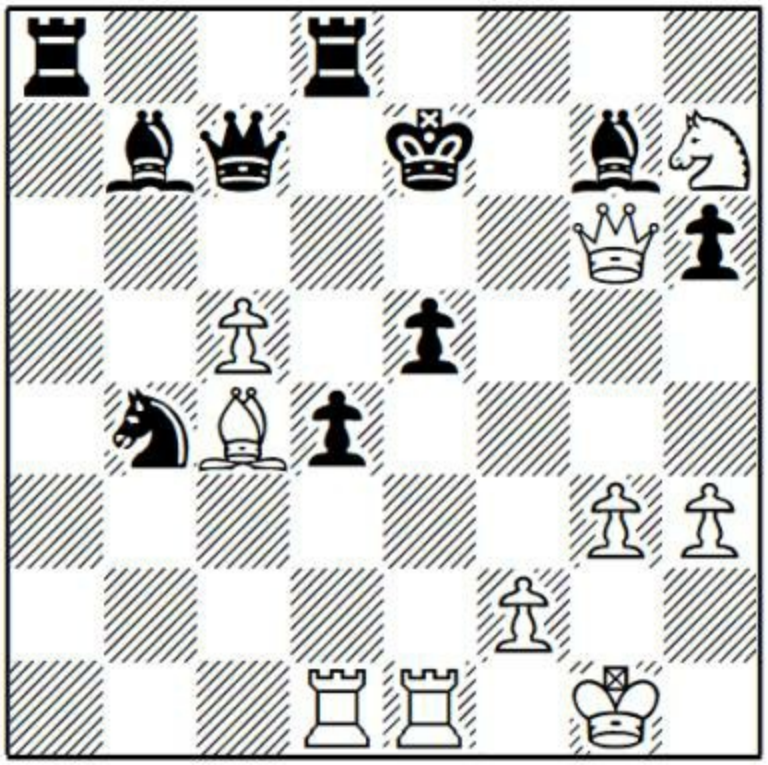
White to play
Level 5
How did White storm Black's king?
Answer: Start with a knight offer on f6.
27 Nf6+!
Clearance/pin. The white queen's path to g6 opens.
27 ... Kf8
Benko is forced to settle for the lesser version. After 27 ... Bxf6? 28 Qxg6+! Bg7 29 Nf5 Black's king gets fried, or 27 ... Kh8? 28 Qxg6! fxg6 29 Nxg6 mate.
28 Nxg6+!

Step 2: Annihilation of defensive barrier.

28 ... fxg6 29 Nh7+!

Zwischenzug. This check should come before Qxg6, since it drives Black's king out into the open. 29 Qxg6? Nd5 30 Nh7+ Kg8 31 Nf6+ Kf8 32 Nh7+ is only perpetual check.

29 ... Ke7 30 Qxg6



Double attack. White threatens Qe6 mate and also Qxg7+.

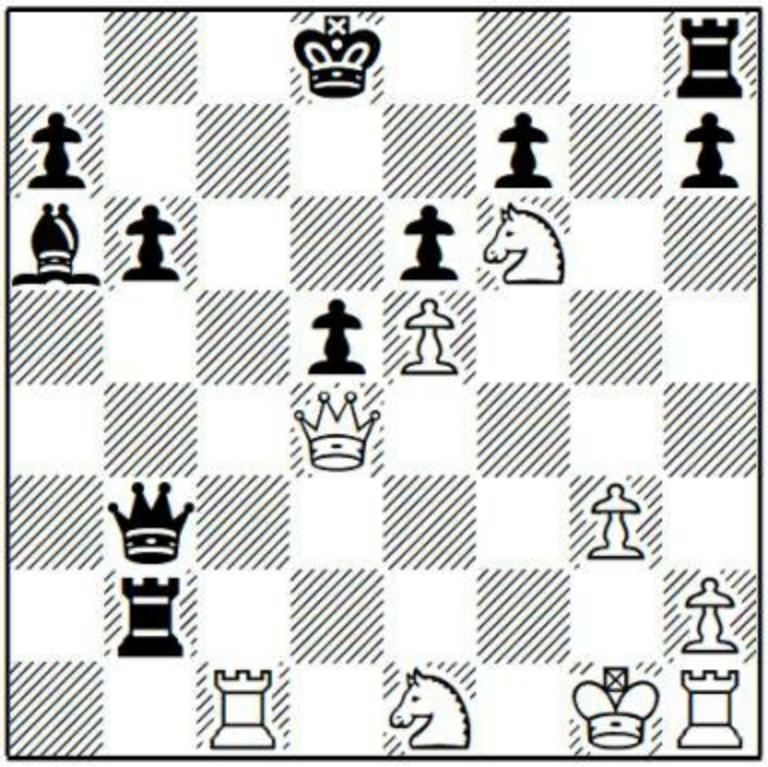
30 ... Qxc5

30 ... Nd5 is Black's final line of defence, yet it too fails to hold, so goes his position: 31 Qxg7+ Ke8 (pr 31 ... Ke6 32 Qxc7) 32 Nf6+! (overloaded defender) 32 ... Nxf6 33 Rxe5+! (removal of the guard) 33 ... Qxe5 34 Qf7 mate.

31 Qe6 mate

189) V.Anand-A.Dreev

6th matchgame, Madras 1991



White to play

Level 5

Anand is up a piece for three pawns, yet his king appears to be in danger and his h1-rook is totally out of play. With his next move he snatched the initiative and whipped up a decisive attack:

Answer: Piece sacrifice/clearance/overloaded defender/annihilation of defensive barrier.

29 Nxd5!! exd5

After 29 ... Qxd5 30 Qxb2 Bb7 31 Ng2 White consolidates.

30 e6!

This discovered attack fatally exposes Dreev's king.

30 ... Ke7

If 30 ... Rf8 31 Qe5! With deadly threats on e7, d6 and b8: 31 ... fxe6 32 Qb8+ Ke7 33 Rc7+ Kd6 34 Rc8+ Ke7 35 Qc7+ Kf6 36 Rxf8+ Kg6 37 Qf7+ Kh6 38 Qxe6+ Kg5 39 Rf5+ Kg4 40 Re5 mate.

31 Rc3!

The comps all screamed for 31 Rc7+ Kxe6 32 Qf4 Rf8 33 Rc6+ Kd7, but here they just kept cycling with endless checks.

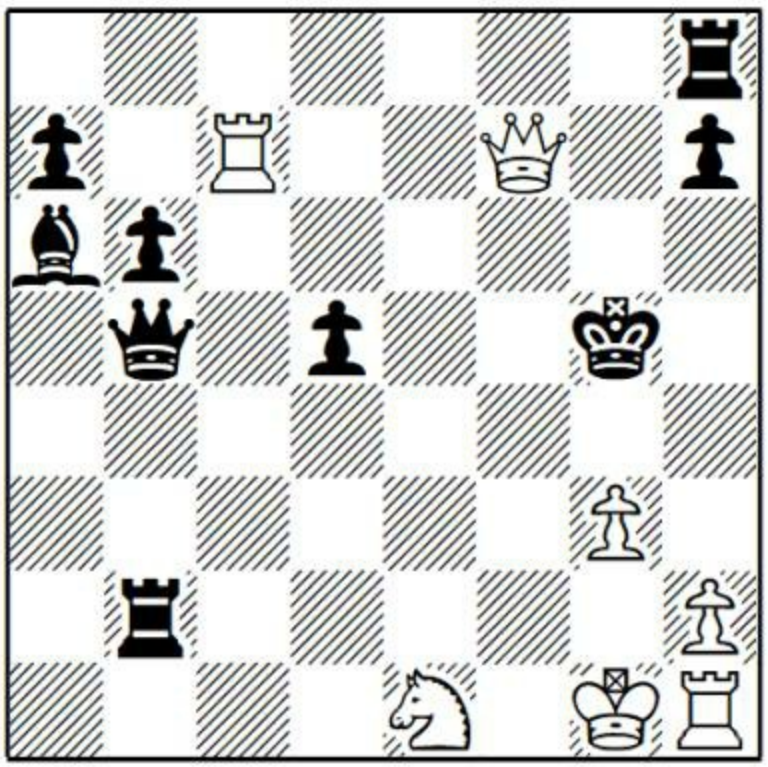
31 ... Qb5

Alternatively, 31 ... Qb4 32 Qxh8 Bc4 33 Nd3!! Bxd3 34 Rc7+ Kd6 35 Rd7+ Kc5 (instead, 35 ... Kc6 36 Qa8+ Kb5 37 Qxd5+ wins, or if 35 ... Kxe6 36 Qe8+ Kf5 37 Rxd5+ Kg6 38 Qg8+ Kf6 39 Qg5+ Ke6 40 Qe5 mate) 36 Qf8+ Kd4 37 Qxb4+ Rxb4 38 e7 wins.

32 Rc7+ Kxe6

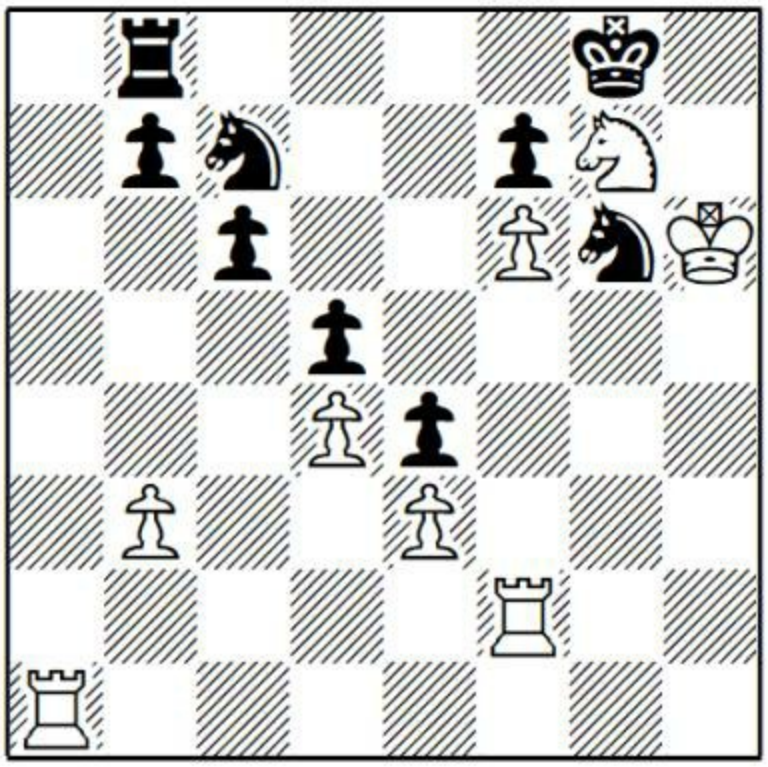
Instead, 32 ... Kd8 33 Rd7+ wins on the spot and 32 ... Kd6 33 Qf4+ Kxe6 34 Qxf7+ Ke5 35 Nf3+ Ke4 36 Qf4+ Kd3 37 Qd4+ Ke2 38 Re7+! Kxf3 39 Re3 is mate.

33 Qe3+ Kf6 34 Qe7+ Kf5 35 Qxf7+ Kg5 1-0



Resigning before 36 Nf3+ Kh6 37 Qf4+ Kg6 38 Qg5 mate.

190) I.Dorfman-Y.Razuvaev
Elenite 1992



White to play

Level 4

Black's king is in grave danger. Come up with an attacking idea for White.

Answer: Shift a rook to g2 and then sacrifice the exchange on g6, which creates a mating net.

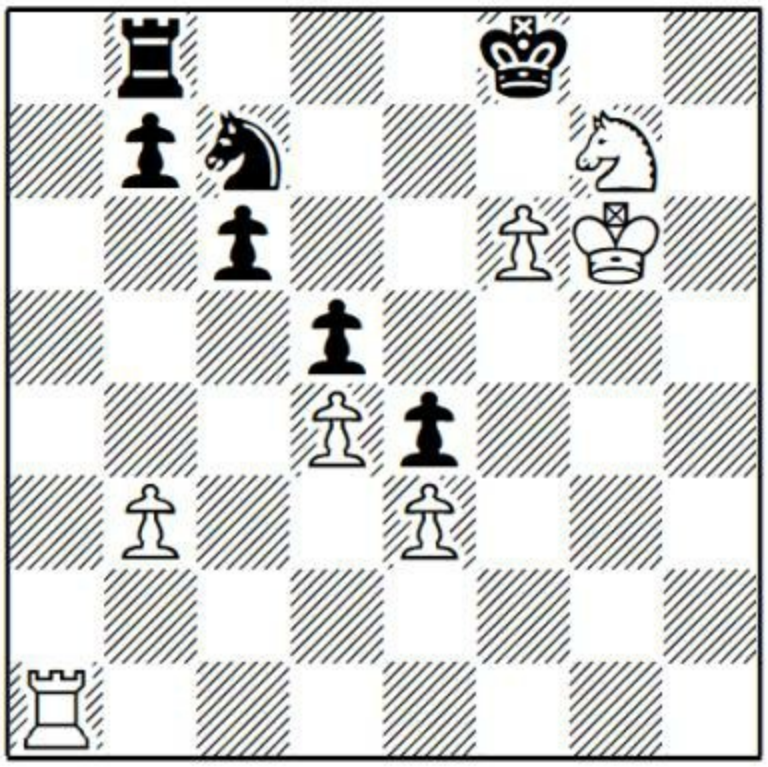
45 Rg2!

Some of our plans are motivated by impulses, just below the level of our conscious mind. I can't work out the details of what follows, yet I'm certain that the exchange sacrifice on g6 will lead to a win for White.

Answer no.2: Also winning is the slower method 45 Kg5!, intending to double rooks on the h-file: 45 ... Rc8 46 Rh2 b6 47 Nf5 Ne6+ 48 Kg4 c5 49 Nh6+ Kf8 50 Kf5 cxd4 51 Nxf7! (annihilation of defensive barrier) 51 ... Kxf7 52 Ra7+ Nc7 53 Rh7+ Ke8 54 Kxg6 dxe3 55 Raxc7 Rxc7 56 Rxc7 e2 57 f7+ Kd8 58 Ra7 e1Q 59 f8R mate.

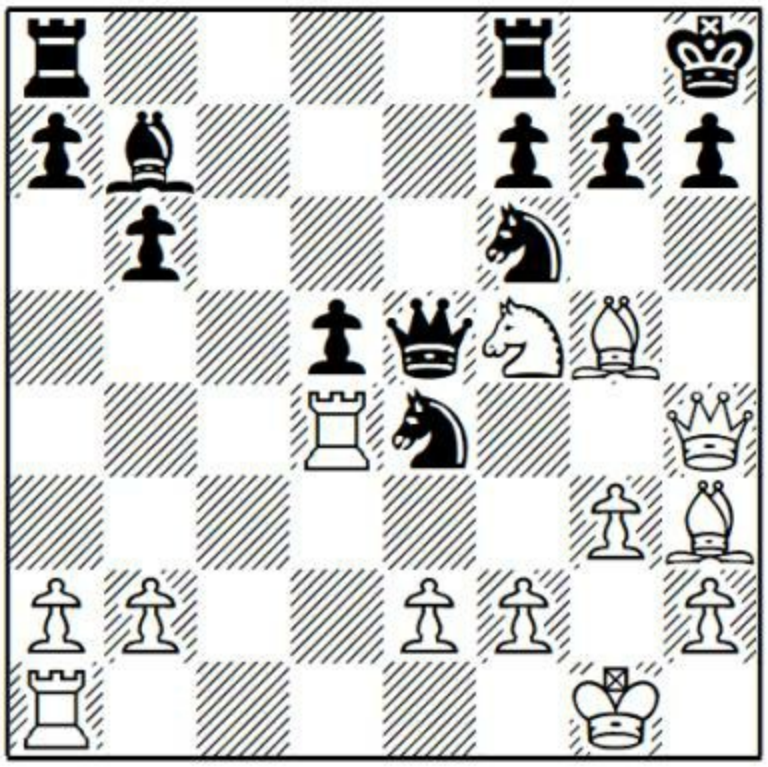
45 ... Kf8

45 ... Ra8 46 Rxa8+ Nxa8 47 Ra2 wins too.
46 Rxg6!
Annihilation of defensive barrier.
46 ... fxg6 47 Kxg6 1-0



Black is helpless: 47 ... Kg8 (47 ... Ne8 48 Ne6+ Kg8 49 f7+ mates) 48 f7+ Kf8 49 Kf6! (threat: Rh1 and Rh8 mate) 49 ... Rd8 (intending a rook check on d6) 50 Ne6+! Nxe6 51 Kxe6 Rb8 52 Rg1 mates.

191) C.Lakdawala-O.Palos
Los Angeles 1997



White to play

Level 4

How does White pursue the attack?

Answer: Step 1: Chase away a key defender of the f6-knight.

20 Bf4! Qe8 21 f3!

Step 2: Chase away another defender.

21 ... Nc5 22 Nxg7!

Step 2: Annihilation of defensive barrier. C. Freddy Lakdawala, as you may have guessed, is a man disinclined to take flight from the opponent's challenge. Actually I chicken out all the time. The only times I tend to sacrifice is when the details can all be worked out, as in this position. It's easy to see that the knight sacrifice - not exactly a nerve-tingling gamble - works.

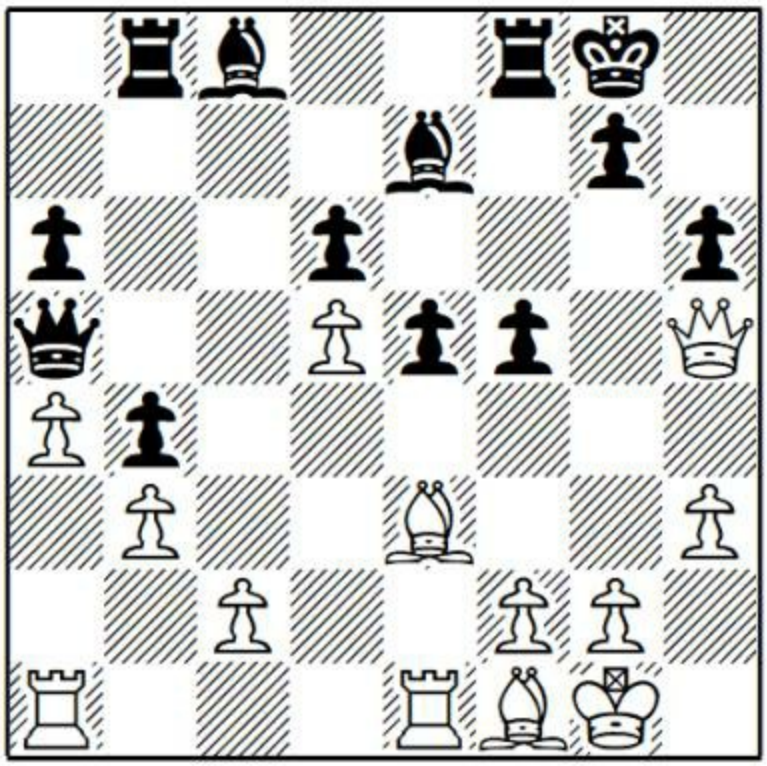
22 ... Qd8

22 ... Kxg7 23 Bh6+ forces mate in two moves.

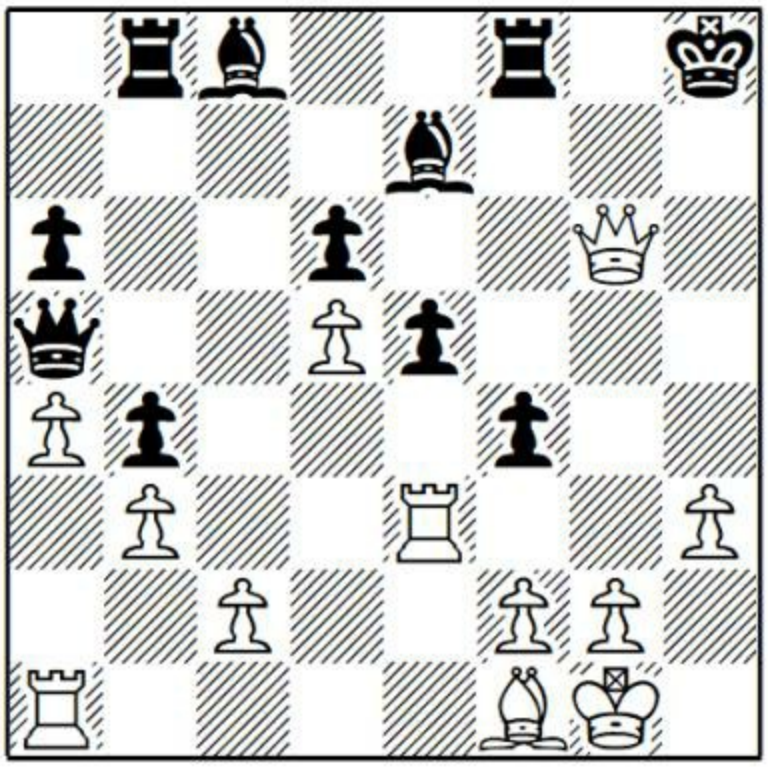
23 Bg5! 1-0

23 ... Kxg7 24 Qh6+ forces mate.

192) S.Karjakin-L.Van Wely
Foros 2007



White to play
Level 4
Proceed with White's attack:
Answer: Start with a line opening piece sacrifice on h6.
26 Bxh6! gxh6?
Acceptance loses by force. Black should have just conceded a pawn and played 26 ... Qc7 27 Qg6 Bf6 28 Rac1 with an extra pawn for White.
27 Qg6+ Kh8 28 Qxh6+ Kg8 29 Qg6+ Kh8 30 Re3!
Rook lift, threatening Rg3 and mate on g7 or h6.
30 ... f4
Instead, 30 ... Bh4 31 Qh6+ Kg8 32 Qxh4 is hopeless for Black.



White to play

Level 3

Continue White's attack:

Answer: Line opening sacrifice number 2.

31 Rxe5!

Threat: Rh5 mate, so the sacrifice must be accepted this time.

31 Bd3?, threatening mate on h7, fails to 31 ... Bf5! 32 Bxf5 Rxf5 and White has nothing better than to take perpetual check with 33 Qh6+ Kg8 34 Qg6+ Kh8 35 Qh6+.

31 ... dxe5 32 Qh6+ Kg8 33 d6!

Line opening number 3, which enables Bc4+.

33 ... Rf7

Instead, if 33 ... Qd8 (33 ... Bxd6 34 Bc4+ Rf7 35 Qg6+ Kh8 36 Bxf7 mates) 34 Bc4+ Rf7 35 dxe7 Qxe7 36 Qg6+ Kf8 37 Bxf7 Qxf7 38 Qd6+!. Double attack. White picks off the loose b8 rook.

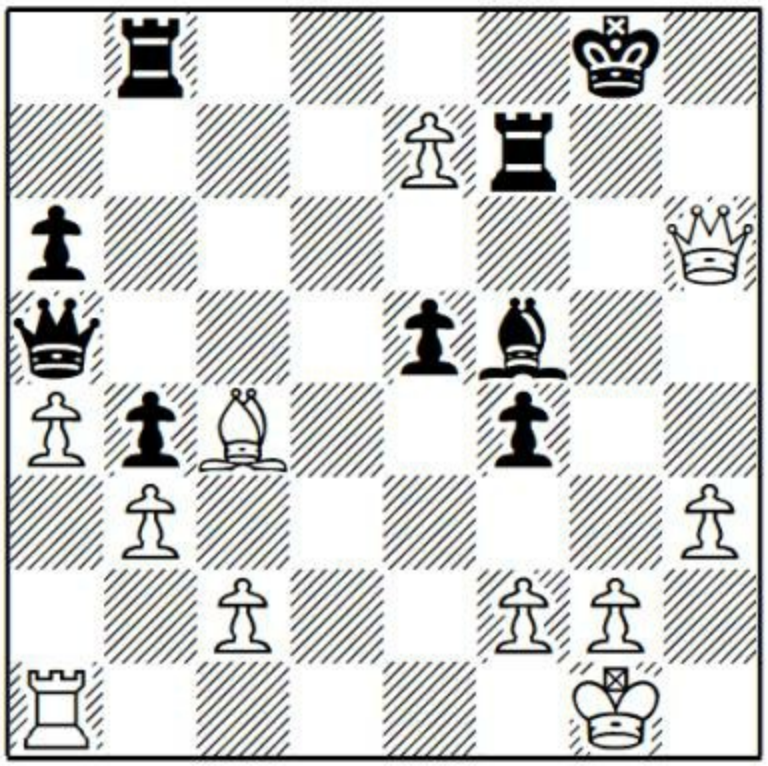
34 Bc4

Threats: dxe7 and also Qg6+.

34 ... Bf5

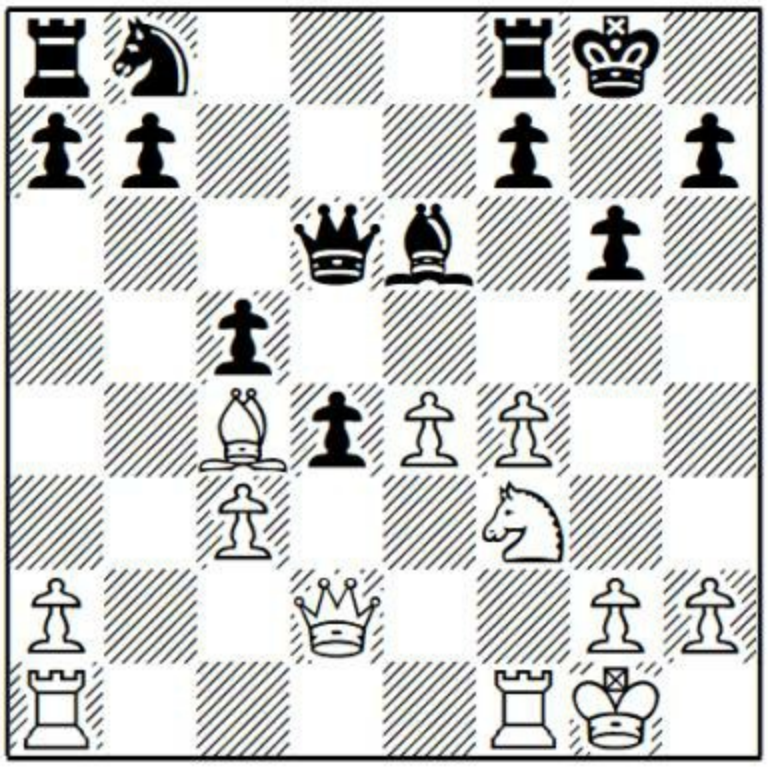
34 ... Qd8 35 dxe7 Qxe7 36 Qg6+ Kf8 37 Bxf7 Qxf7 38 Qd6+! is a repeat of the line shown above.

35 dxe7 1-0



After 35 ... Qc5 36 Qg5+ Kh8 37 Bxf7 Black is crushed.

193) V.Anand-I.Nepomniachtchi
Internet (rapid) 2020



White to play

Level 5

How would you continue White's mating attack?

Answer: Piece sacrifice/annihilation of defensive barrier.

15 f5!!

The idea is to threaten Lolli's mate with f5-f6, followed by Qh6. When Black defends mate on g7 with ... Rg8, then White follows with Ng5, with unstoppable mate.

15 ... Bxc4

Both argue that they are correct, yet one has to be wrong. Either Black will defend and win with the extra material, or White will deliver mate.

Instead, 15 ... gxf5 16 Qg5+ Kh8 17 Qf6+ Kg8 18 Ng5 Nd7 19 Qh6 wins.

16 e5!

For every fallen white attacker, two more appear.

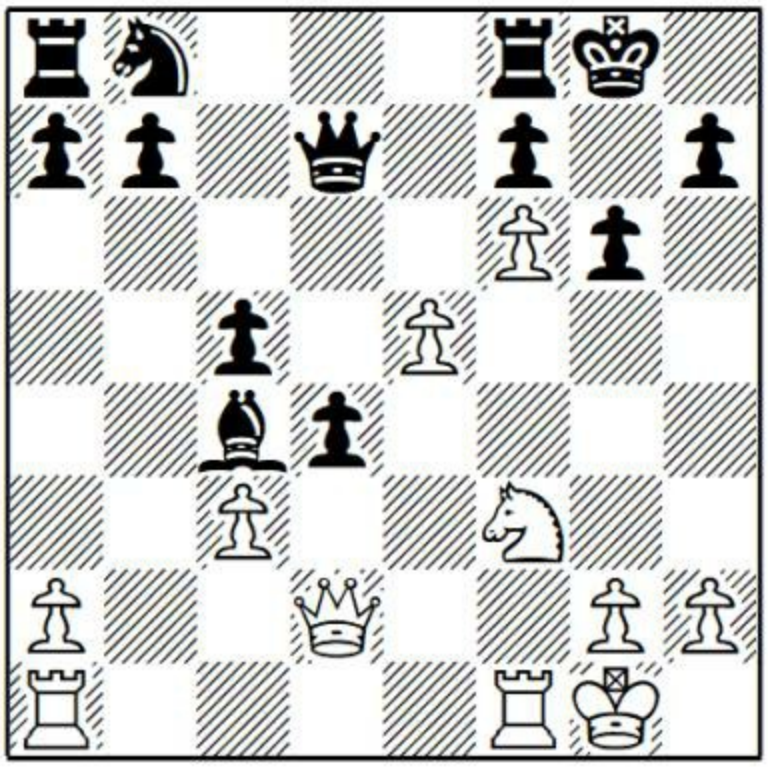
Step 2: Tempo gain. This move is essentially a deadly double attack. Black's queen is threatened and as mentioned earlier White also menaces

Lolli's mate f5-f6, followed by Qh6 and then Ng5.

16 ... Qd7

16 ... Bxf1 17 exd6 Bb5 18 cxd4 is also easily winning for White.

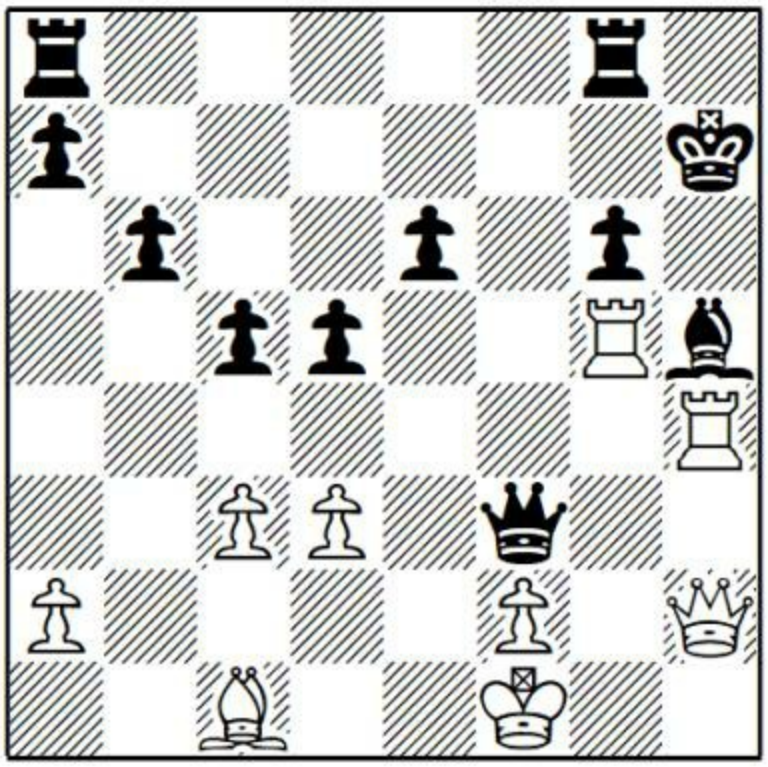
17 f6! 1-0



Step 3: A staggering force is arrayed against the black king. Threat: Qh6 and Qg7 mate, and if 17 ... Kh8 18 Qh6 Rg8 (the black king's nakedness is not spared by this flimsy fig leaf) 19 Ng5 with unstoppable mate in two. Black only has the spite-stall 19 ... Qh3 20 gxh3 Nd7 21 Qxh7 mate.

194) M.Muzychuk-H.Koneru

St. Louis 2020



There are some combinations/sacrifice which are so apparent, that they scream out to be played. It's obvious that White should sacrifice the exchange on h5. But be careful: it's White's second move which you need to find to make the combination work:

Answer: Annihilation of defensive barrier. Black's king can't survive without cover. So obvious is the move, that it doesn't even deserve a single exclam.

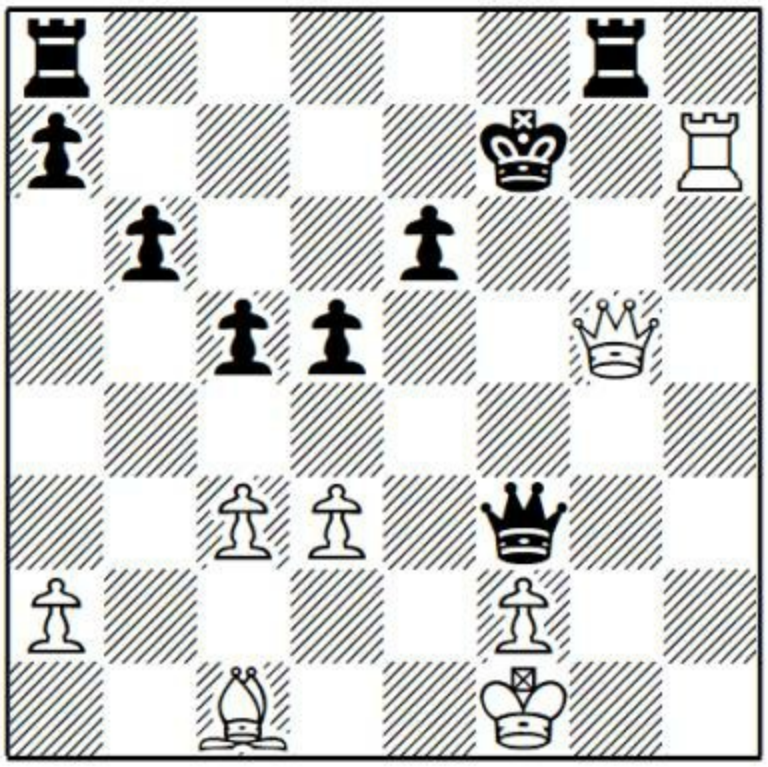
29 Rhxh5+ gxh5 30 Qc7+!

This is the crucial move to see. I will bet a percentage of the readers went astray with 30 Rxh5+? Kg6 31 Rh6+ Kf5! (not 31 ... Kf7?? 32 Qc7+ Kf8 33 Qd6+ Kg7 34 Qe7+ Qf7 35 Rg6+!!; attraction/pinned piece, and White forces mate) 32 Rh5+ Kg6 33 Rh6+ Kf5. We reach an unsettling conclusion: White has nothing better than to take perpetual check.

30 ... Kh8!

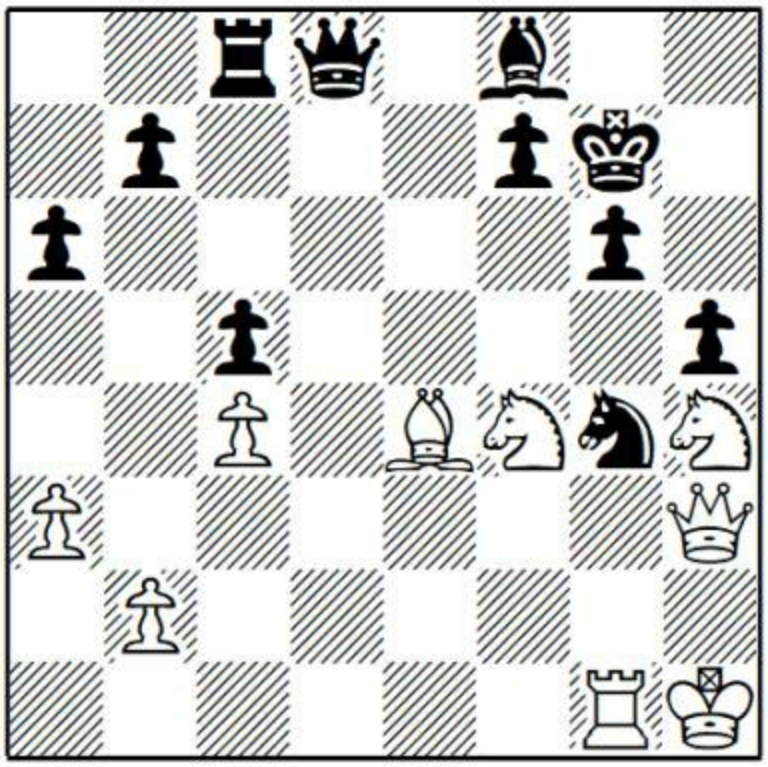
Not 30 ... Kh6?? 31 Rxg8+ Qf4 32 Bxf4 mate.

31 Qe5+ Kh7 32 Rxh5+ Kg6 33 Qg5+ Kf7 34 Rh7+ 1-0



If 34 ... Ke8 35 Qe7 mate.

195) F.Caruana-K.Alekseenko
Yekaterinburg Candidates 2020



White to play

Level 4

This game was from the COVID-19 Candidates, which had to be postponed midway, due to the pandemic. As I write this, I still don't know who won the tournament, since it hasn't resumed. Our intuition tells us that there are just too many white attackers around Black's underprotected king. Yet Faith and mathematics don't mix well together. Work out the exact details:

Answer: Annihilation of defensive barrier.

30 Nxh5+!

Answer no.2: 30 Rxg4! also wins: 30 ... hxg4 31 Qxg4 and Black is weirdly helpless against a piece sacrifice on g6.

30 ... gxh5 31 Bf5

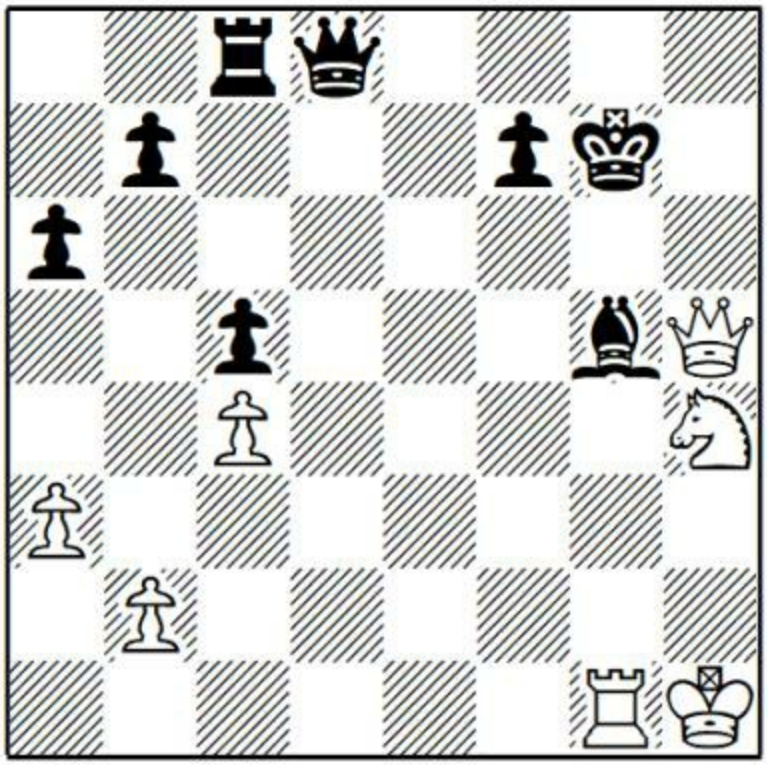
31 Nf5+ Kf6 32 Rf1 is also winning.

31 ... Be7 32 Bxg4 hxg4 33 Qxg4+ Bg5

Or 33 ... Kh6 34 Qg7+ Kh5 35 Qh7 mate, 33 ... Kf6 34 Qf5 mate or 33 ...

Kf8 34 Qg8 mate.

34 Qh5! 1-0

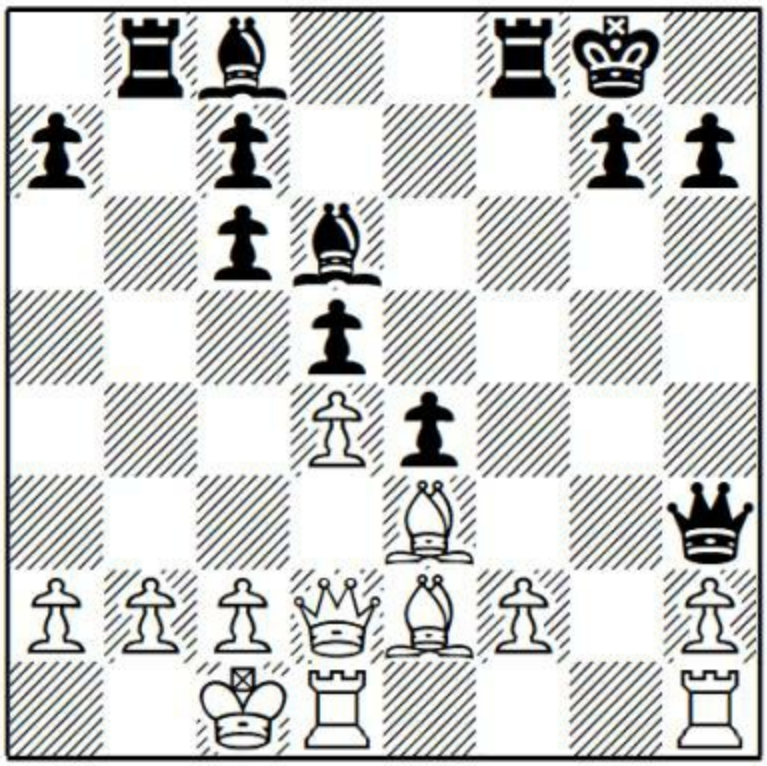


Fabi isn't interested in a won ending. 34 ... f6 35 Nf5+ Kf8 36 Qh8+ Kf7 37 Qh7+ Kf8 (pr 37 ... Ke6 38 Re1+ Be3 39 Rxe3 mate) 38 Re1! forces mate in 3. The move follows the attacking Principle: *In a king hunt, don't chase. Instead, cut off the enemy king's flight squares.*

5) Clearance/Line Opening

Clearance, also known as Line Opening, is achieved when one side sacrifices material with the intention of clearing a path open to either a file, diagonal or critical square.

196) H.Bird-P.Morphy
London 1858



Black to play
Level 5

Morphy is up a pawn and has a clear strategic advantage with virtually any quiet move. Instead, he undertook a calculation gamble, which puts an enormous defensive strain upon his opponent.

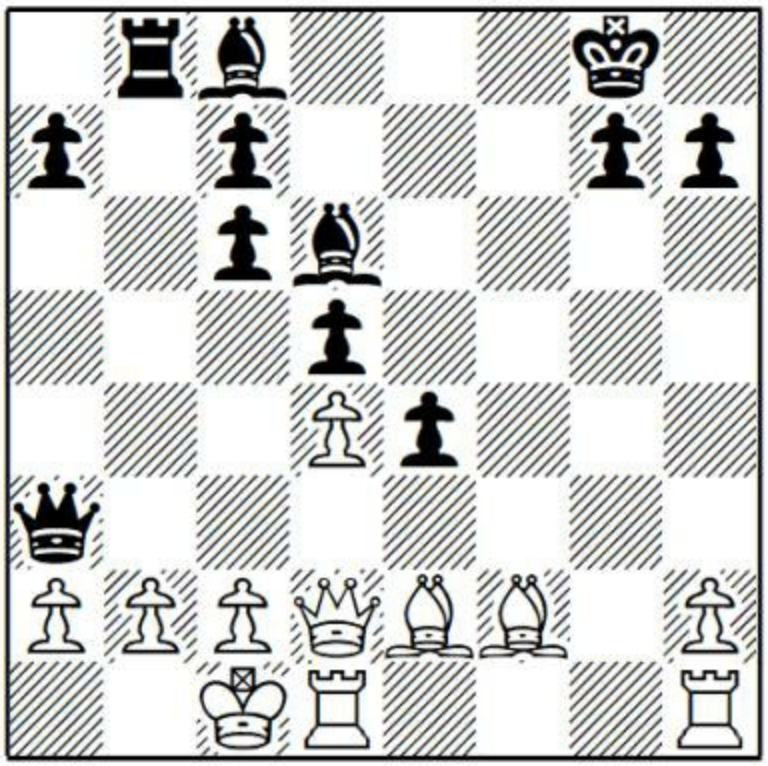
Answer: **17 ... Rxf2!!**

Rook sacrifice/clearance. But ‘clearance’ to where?

18 Bxf2

A beggar lacks the prideful luxury of reusing the almsgiver.

18 ... Qa3!



The answer is to a3! The queen obviously can’t be taken, yet White’s position requires accurate defence and ‘accurate defence’ does not describe the Great Romantics.

19 c3

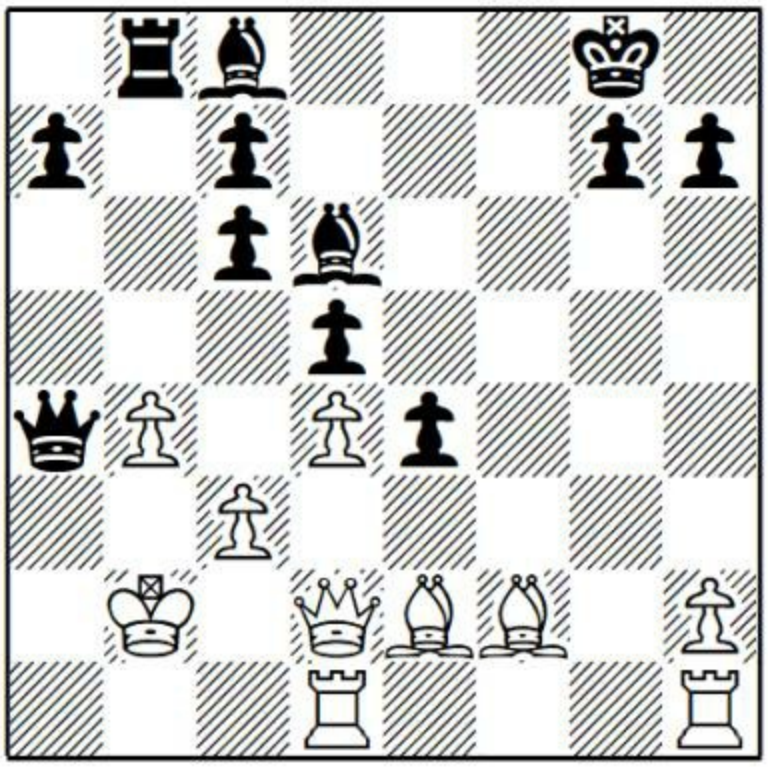
So far so good, and not 19 bxa3?? Bxa3 mate or 19 Qc3?? Qxa2 20 Rhg1 Rxb2! when White is crushed.

19 ... Qxa2 20 b4!

Avoiding 20 Rhg1?? Qa1+ 21 Kc2 Rxb2 mate.

20 ... Qa1+ 21 Kc2 Qa4+ 22 Kb2??

Correct was 22 Kc1 Bf5 (the line opening ... e4-e3 is in the air) 23 Be3 Bxb4! 24 cxb4 Rxb4 25 Qc2 Qa3+ 26 Kd2 Rb2 27 Qxb2 Qxb2+ 28 Ke1 when White is fighting for his life, yet remains alive.



Black to play

Level 2

Hope turns to disillusionment and finally, to grief. Oops. We all knew it was a matter of time before the defence cracked. How should Black continue the attack?

***Answer:* 22 ... Bxb4!**

Annihilation of defensive barrier. And certainly not 22 ... a5?? 23 Ra1 (trapped piece) 23 ... Rxb4+ 24 cxb4 Qxb4+ 25 Qxb4 Bxb4 when Black is down two rooks.

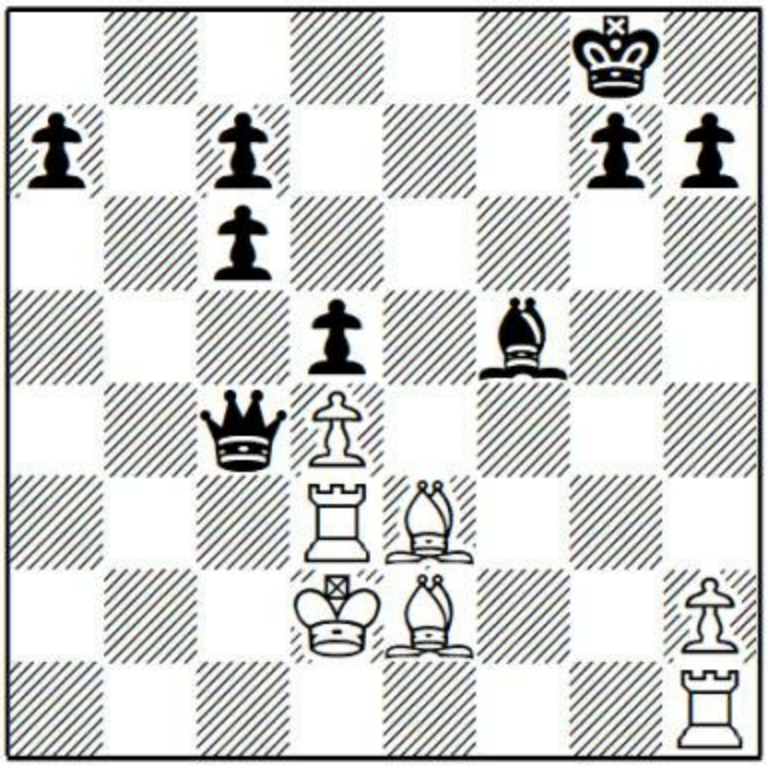
23 cxb4 Rxb4+ 24 Qxb4 Qxb4+ 25 Kc2 e3!

Line opening.

26 Bxe3 Bf5+ 27 Rd3

Alternatively, 27 Bd3 Qc4+ 28 Kb2 Bxd3 with a winning attack for Black or 27 Kc1? Qc3 mate.

27 ... Qc4+ 28 Kd2



Black to play

Level 2

Black has a stronger continuation than to merely chop the rook:

Answer: Give check on a2.

28 ... Qa2+!

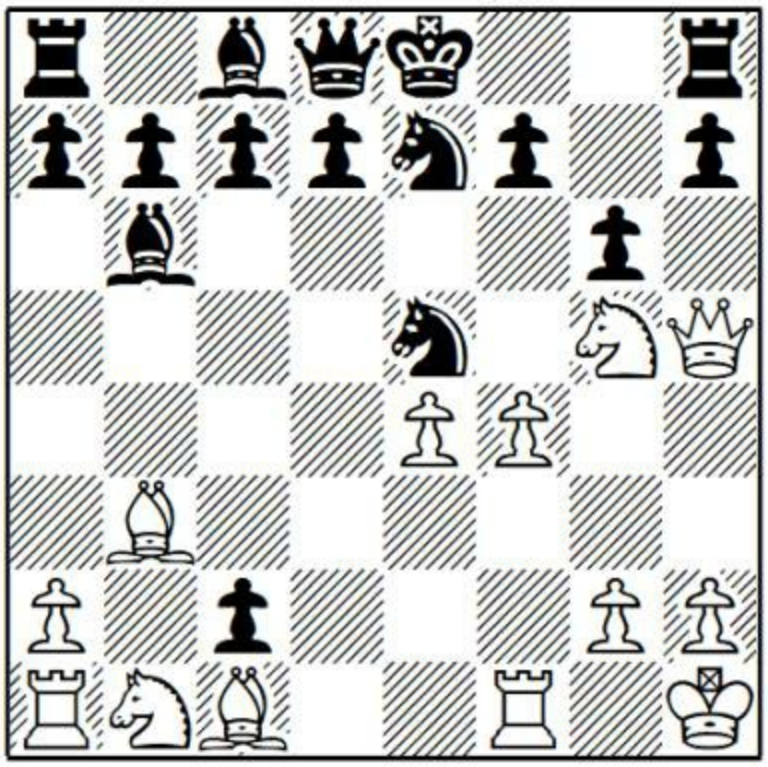
Instead, 28 ... Bxd3?! 29 Bxd3 Qa2+ 30 Bc2 c5! 31 Rb1 (31 dxc5 d4 32 Bxd4 Qd5 wins) 31 ... Qa5+ 32 Kd1 c4 is probably adequate for Morphy's purposes, yet great players tend to be dissatisfied with mere 'adequate'.

29 Kd1 Qb1+! 0-1

Discovered attack/double attack. White's rook in the corner falls: 30 Kd2 (or 30 Bc1 Bxd3) 30 ... Qxh1.

197) S.Rosenthal-Allies

Paris (blindfold) 1887



White to play

Level 3

There are levels of chess gods, demi and above. Samuel Rosenthal fits the demi-god category. Most people haven't heard of him, yet if he could pull off a combination this dashing, without sight of the board, we can conclude he was a formidable player for his era.

Answer: The queen sacrifice screams to be played, since it opens the f-file and White's pieces come crashing into f7.

13 fxe5! gxh5?

The Allies can see the board and pieces, while Rosenthal can't, since this was a blindfold game, yet the sighted still goofed it up. Acceptance leads to mate in 3.

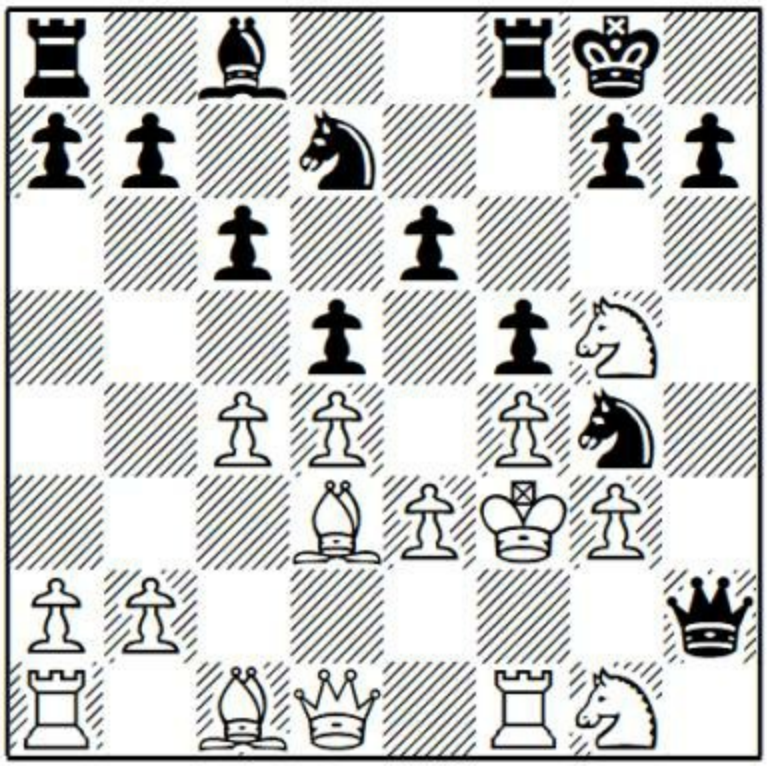
Instead, after 13 ... d5 14 Qh6 Be6 15 Nc3 Qd7 16 exd5 Nxd5 17 Nxe6 fxe6 18 Nxd5 exd5 19 e6! (clearance) White has a winning attack.

14 Bxf7+ Kf8 15 Ne6+!

Clearance.

15 ... dxe6 16 Bh6 mate

198) B.Glucksberg-M.Najdorf
Warsaw 1929



Black to play
Level 5

I tested this one on several students, including three masters. Only the 2300-rated one found the solution, so this is a really tough one! I loved the Najdorf Sicilian, until I got to know her better and she betrayed me (over and over again!). My love for the games of Miguel Najdorf remains intact, however. Any time the word 'immortal' is used to describe a chess game, we know in advance that the solution won't be so easy! This game is the Polish Immortal. Najdorf is down a piece and attacking. White's king looks safe enough, yet every Eden contains its serpent. Continue Black's attack:

Answer: Piece sacrifice/clearance. Black essentially blasts his way to

piece activity from the blocked position.

15 ... e5!!

Failed tries:

a) 15 ... Qh5 16 N5h3! when Black has no great discovered check and White should consolidate.

b) 15 ... Qh1+? 16 Ke2 Qg2+ 17 Ke1 Qxg3+ 18 Kd2 Nxe3 19 Rf3! Nxd1 20 Rxg3 Nf2 21 Nxe6 and Black is busted.

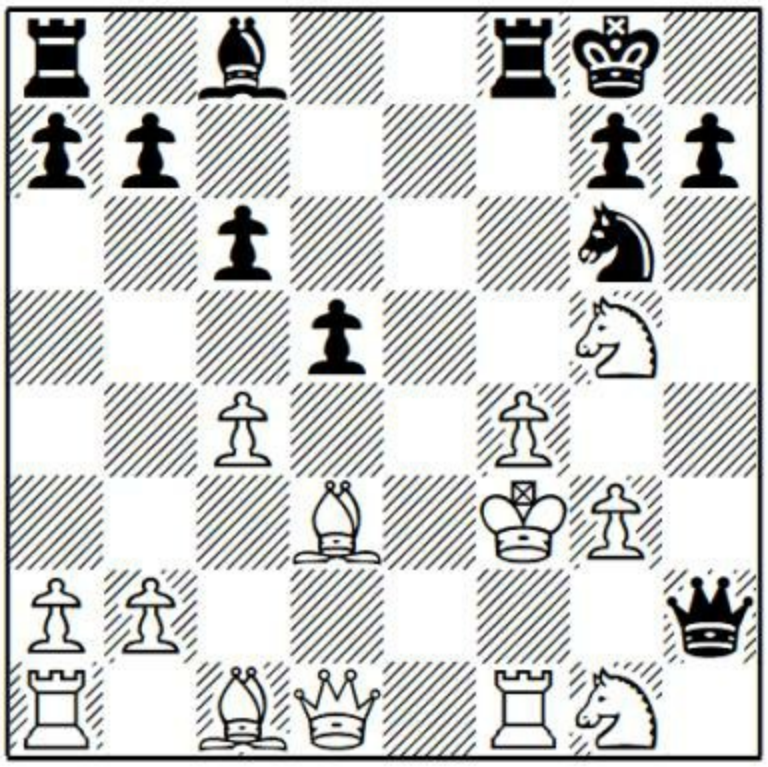
16 dxe5

There is no declining: 16 Bxf5? e4+ 17 Nxe4 Nde5+! 18 dxe5 Nxe5+ 19 fxe5 Rxf5+ 20 Kg4 h5 mate.

16 ... Ndxe5+! 17 fxe5 Nxe5+ 18 Kf4 Ng6+! 19 Kf3 f4!

Another clearance/line opening sacrifice. Of course Najdorf isn't interested in perpetual check with 19 ... Ne5+ 20 Kf4 Ng6+.

20 exf4

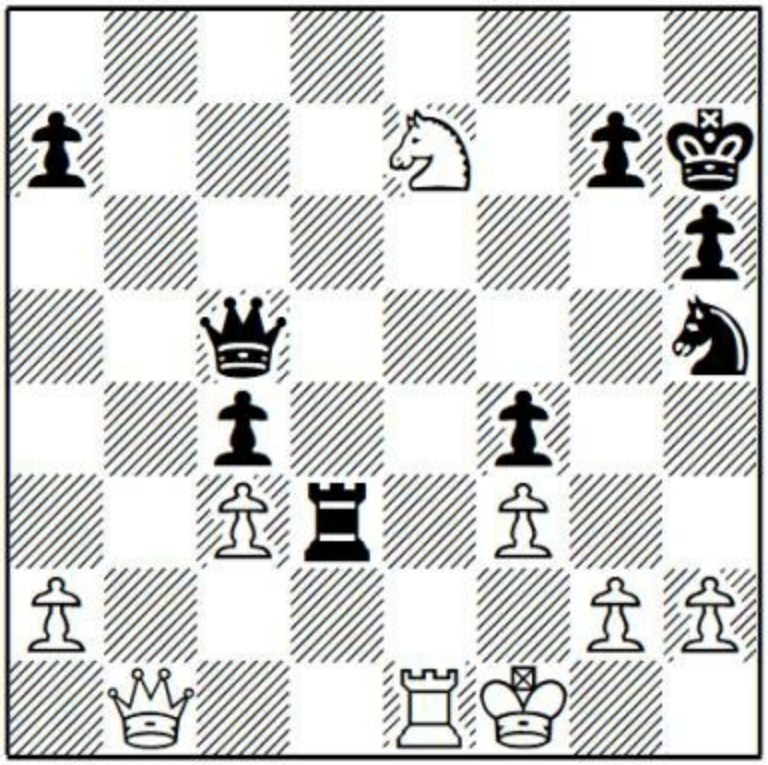


Black to play

Level 4

What is Black's most crushing continuation?
Answer: Attraction.
20 ... Bg4+!! 21 Kxg4
21 Ke3 Bxd1 wins.
21 ... Ne5+!
Clearance!
22 fxe5 h5 mate

199) C.Ahues-M.Sultan Khan
Liege 1930



Black to play
Level 3

Who in your opinion was the most naturally talented player in chess history? Most of us would say Capablanca, Fischer, Kasparov or Carlsen. But were they? Mir Sultan Kahn may really be in the number one spot. Without

any study he became a world class player. Here he finishes off Ahues. How?

Answer: Clearance. Start with a sacrifice of the knight on g3, which does two things:

1. It creates the g3 pawn hook needed to set up a potential Damiano's mate.

2. The knight vacates h5, which clears the way for ... Qh5 and onward to h1.

44 ... Ng3+!

Just because you didn't see the threat, doesn't mean it wasn't there. Ahues obviously missed this powerful shot.

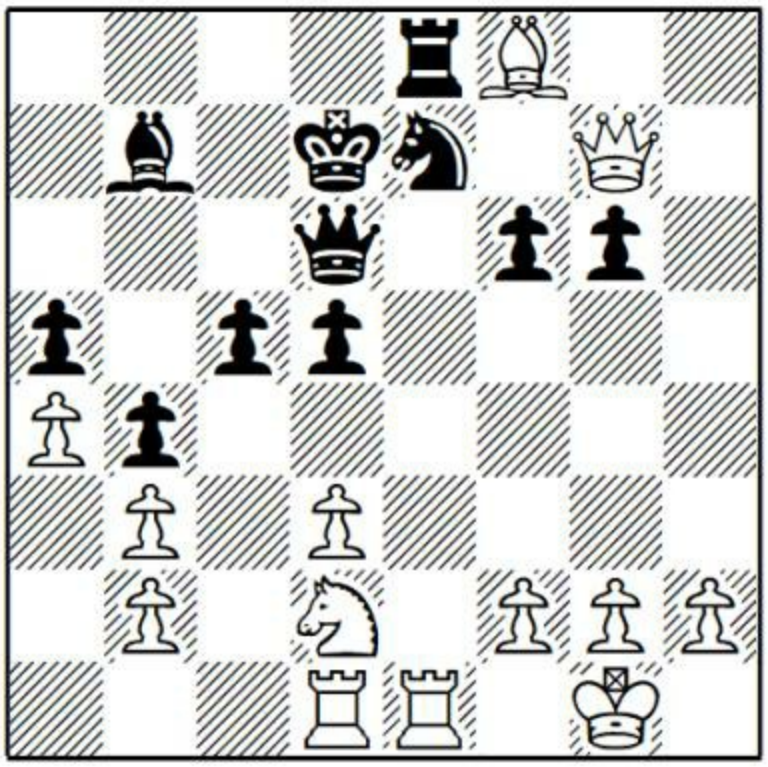
45 hxg3 fxg3 46 Qc2

Or 46 Re2 Qh5 47 Rf2 Qh1+ 48 Ke2 Qxb1 and mate in two more moves.

46 ... Qh5 0-1

White's king is not where he wants to be. After 47 Ke2 Qh2 White must give up the queen to evade mate.

200) A.Einstein-R.Oppenheimer
Princeton 1933



White to play

Level 2.5

We should take it as a promising sign that both Einstein and Oppenheimer realized that chess teaches us how to transcend the limitations of our ordinary mind. Maybe this was the highest collective IQ game ever played. Einstein has two ways to win. You just need to find one of them:

Answer: Clearance/pinned piece/overloaded defender.

21 Nc4!

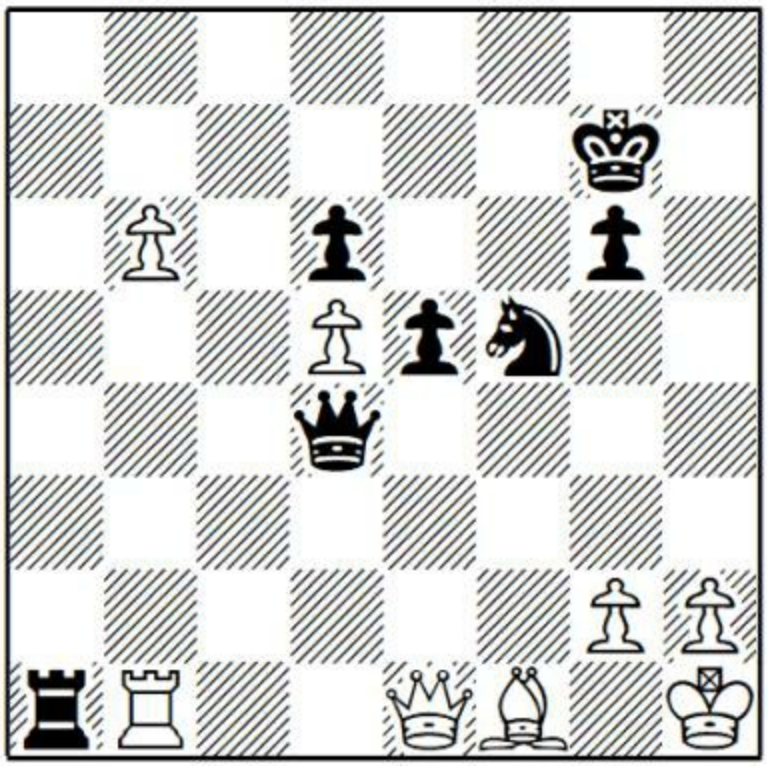
If Black takes the knight, then the d-file opens with a queen/king pin; if Black declines and moves the overloaded queen, then Black's e7-knight falls.

Answer no.2: Also winning is 21 Ne4! Qc6 22 Nxf6+ Kd8 23 Rxe7.

21 ... dxc4 22 dxc4 Qxd1 23 Rxd1+ Kc8 24 Bxe7 1-0

201) A.Karpov-M.Taimanov

Leningrad 1977



Black to play

Level 3.5

Anatoly Karpov did not lose too many chess games when he reigned as world champion. Even more rare was a Karpov loss with the white pieces. White's position is the happy chipmunk who saved enough food for the coming winter's famine, yet fails to notice the viper nearby in his hole in the ground. Karpov must have thought he was winning due to his passed b-pawn. How did Taimanov prove him wrong?

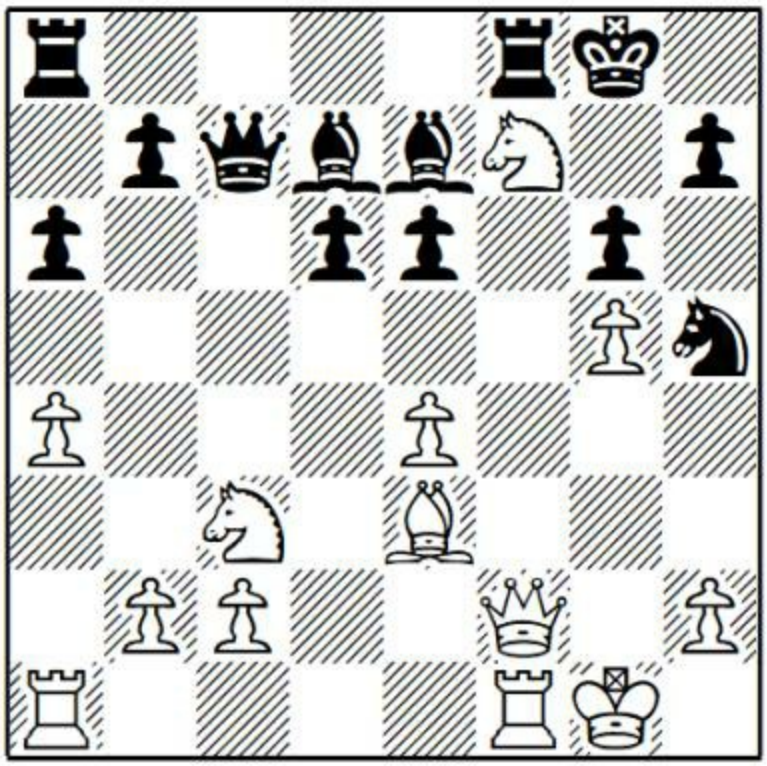
Answer: Step 1: Piece sacrifice/annihilation of defensive barrier/clearance/overloaded defender.

38 ... Ng3+! 0-1

After 39 hxg3 (when we are unable to mount an organized defence, don't place your hopes on a disorganized one; also hopeless for White is 39 Qxg3 Rxb1 40 Qf3 e4 41 Qf4 Qd2 42 g3 e3 43 Kg1 e2! when Black forces mate) 39 ... Ra8! there is no reasonable defence to yje coming threat of ... Rh8 mate. Deadly retreats are so difficult to see, since we are hardwired to look

ahead, not behind us.

202) E.Geller-Y.Anikaev
USSR Ch (Clearance) Minsk BLR, 1979



White to play
Level 5

Paul Keres once introduced Efim Geller to a friend with the words: “This is my friend Geller. He always plays for mate!” This game proves it. How should Geller continue his attack?

Answer: Clearance. By moving the knight to d5, Geller forces ... exd5. This means that he has enabled Nh6+ and Bd4+, without allowing Black an ... e5 blocking defence.

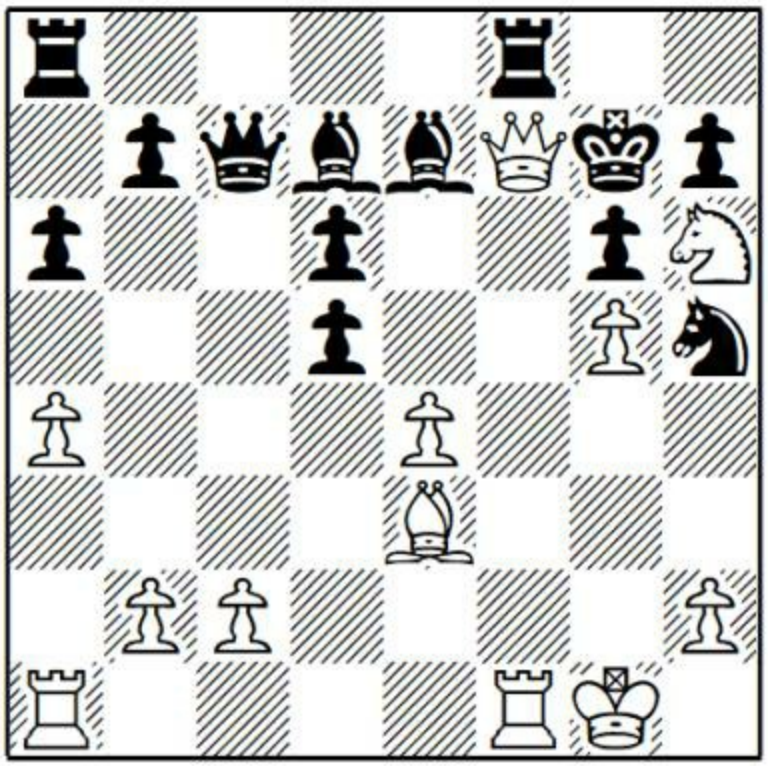
22 Nd5!!

The attacking side tends to benefit more from dramatic change, than the defender.

22 ... exd5

22 ... Qb8 23 Nxe7+ Kg7 24 Bd4+ e5 25 Nxe5! dxe5 (25 ... Rxf2 26 Nxd7+ Kf7 27 Rxf2+ Kxe7 28 Nxb8 Rxb8 leaves White up a piece) 26 Qxf8+! Qxf8 27 Bxe5+ Nf6 28 Bxf6+ Kf7 29 Bd4+ Bf5 30 Bc5 wins.

23 Nh6+ Kg7 24 Qf7+!



Step 2: Queen sacrifice.

24 ... Rxf7 25 Rxf7+ Kh8 26 Bd4+ Bf6

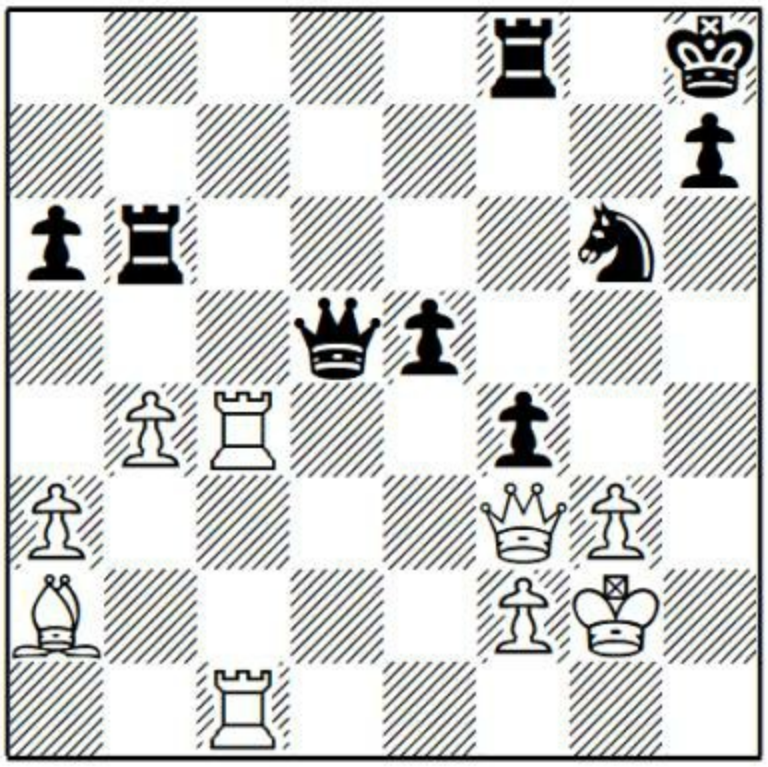
26 ... Nf6 is met with 27 Rxf6!.

27 Rxf6! 1-0

If it's a battle between a determined will to survive, versus an attacker with overwhelming odds of success, I place my bet on the latter: 27 ... Ng7 (27 ... Nxf6 28 Bxf6 mate) 28 Rf7 Rg8 29 Bxg7+! (decoy) 29 ... Rxg7 30 Rf8+ Rg8 31 Rxg8 mate.

203) P.Leko-A.Grischuk

Cap D'Agde (rapid) 2003



Black to play

Level 2

The odds will never be better and it's time for Black to strike. How did Grischuk immediately end the game with a winning combination?

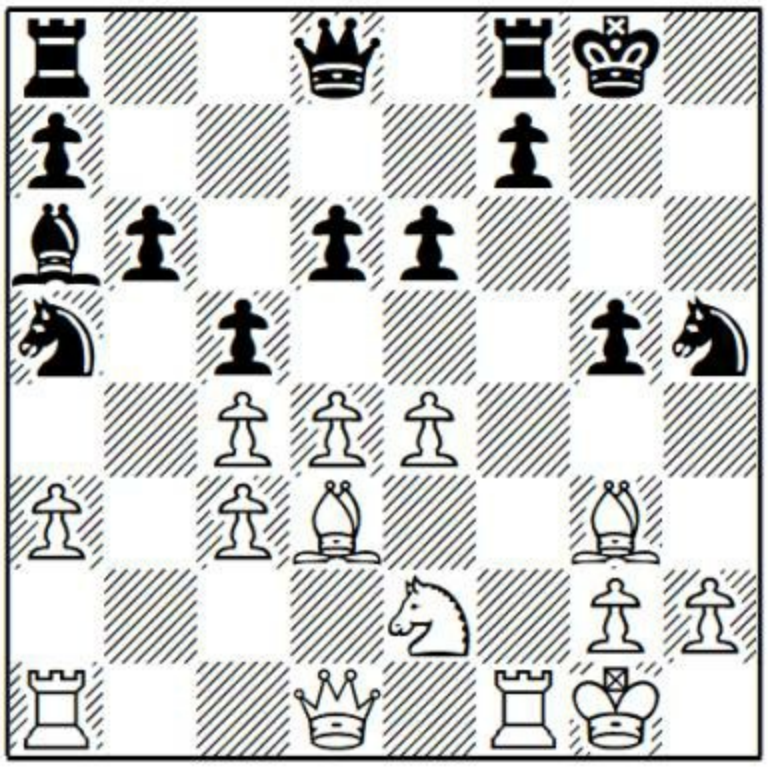
Answer: Step 1: Clearance via a line opening sacrifice.

36 ... Nh4+! 0-1

After 37 gxh4 Rg6+ White's king is disconnected from protection of his queen, and 38 Kf1 Qxf3 wins.

204) Zhao Jun-Xiu Deshun

Chinese Championship, Xinghua 2011



White to play

Level 5

Actually, Level 5 is grossly inaccurate. This game is a difficulty level 9.5! Prepare for a breathtaking attack. How did White exploit the fact that the black king's cover is scant? There are two winning attacking ideas here for White. Find either of them:

Answer: Clearance/attraction/piece sacrifice.

16 Bxd6!!

Answer no.2: 16 Nf4!! (clearance sacrifice) 16 ... Nxf4 17 Bxf4 f6 (17 ... gxf4 18 Qg4+ Kh8 19 Rf3 mates) 18 Qh5 Qe8 19 Qh6 Bxc4 20 Bxg5! fxg5 (after 20 ... Bxd3 21 Bxf6 Rxf6 22 Rxf6 Qf8 23 Qg5+ Kh7 24 Rg6 Be2 25 Re1 Black is mated) 21 Qxg5+ Kh8 22 Rxf8+ Qxf8 23 Qh4+ Kg8 24 Rf1 Qg7 25 Rf3 Bxd3 26 Rxd3 cxd4 27 Rg3 wins Black's queen.

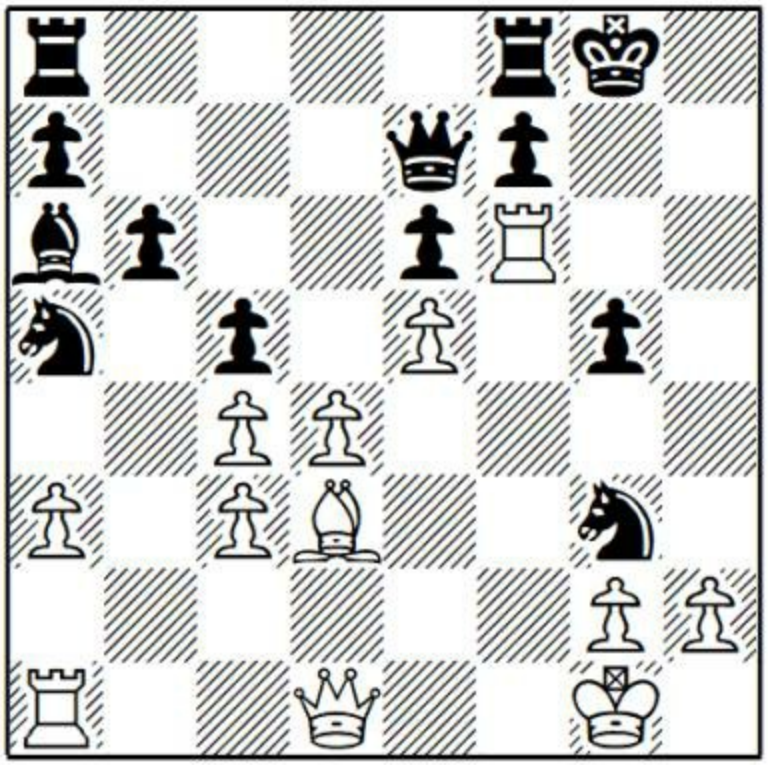
16 ... Qxd6 17 e5

White opens lines with gain of tempo, while creating a hook for a potential future Rf6.

17 ... Qe7 18 Ng3 Nxg3

Or 18 ... Ng7 19 Ne4 with a winning attack for White.

19 Rf6!!



Zwischenzug.

19 ... Kg7

Black hopes to escape with ... Rg8 and ... Kf8. 19 ... Nf5 fails to 20 Qh5 Bxc4 21 Bxf5 exf5 22 Qxg5+ Kh7 23 Rh6 mate.

20 Qg4!

GM Zhao still doesn't bother to capture the loose g3-knight.

20 ... Rg8 21 hxg3

Finally!

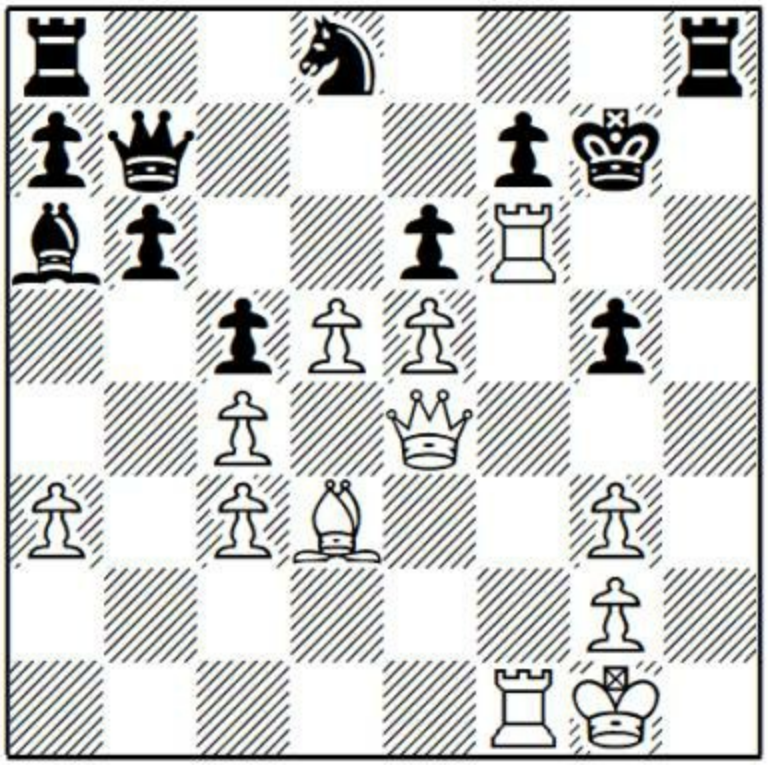
21 ... Nb7

Intending ... Nd8. After21 ... Bxc4 22 Bxc4 Nxc4 23 Raf1 Kf8 24 Qh5 Rg7 25 Qh8+ Rg8 26 Rxf7+ Qxf7 27 Rxf7+ Kxf7 28 Qf6+ Ke8 29 Qxe6+ Kf8 30 Qxc4 White's central pawns win easily.

22 Raf1 Nd8 23 Qe4

Attacking the a8-rook, while covering e5, in preparation for d4-d5.

23 ... Qb7 24 d5 Rh8



White to play

Level 5

Jun completed his attacking masterpiece with a forced mate in 9:

Answer: Queen sacrifice. Black's king is carried/dragged up the board.

25 Qg6+!!

For those who don't have the stomach for brutality, you may want to avert your eyes.

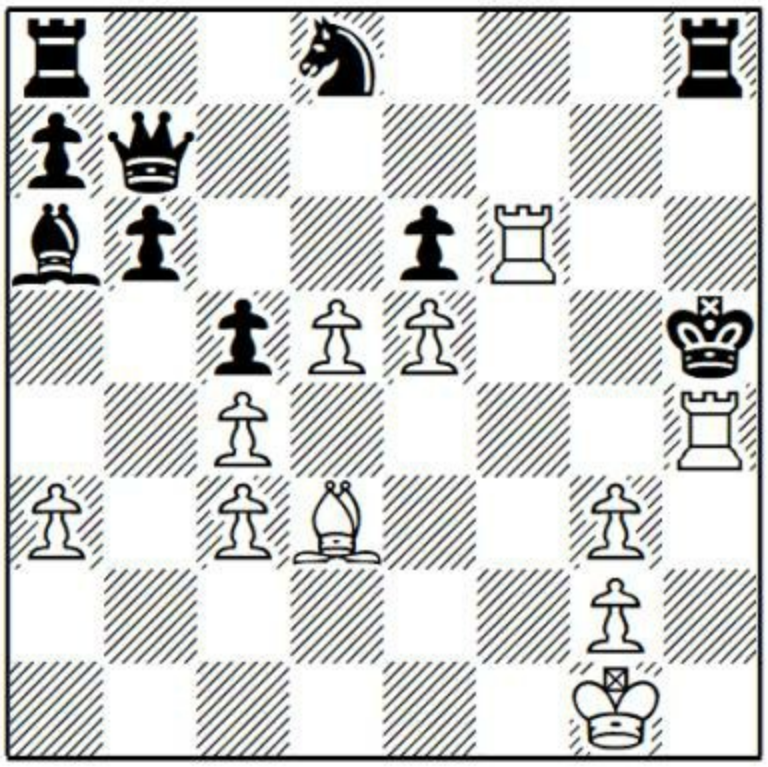
25 ... fxg6 26 Rxg6+ Kh7

By now Xiu must have felt the trembling certainty of his coming defeat.

27 Rxg5+ Kh6 28 Rg6+ Kh7

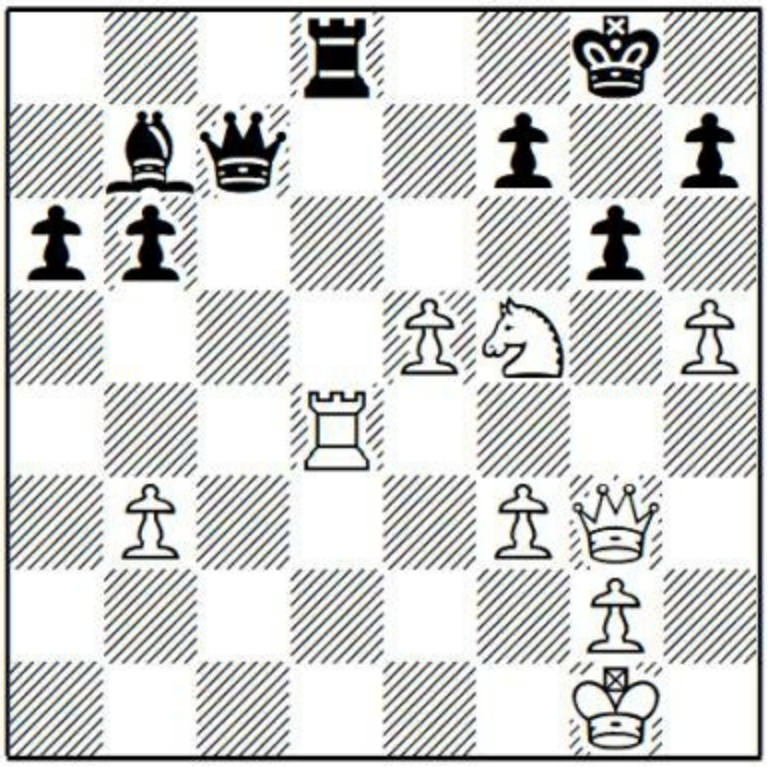
Or 28 ... Kh5 29 Kh2! Bxc4 30 g4+ Kh4 31 g3 mate.

29 Rg4+ Kh6 30 Rf6+ Kh5 31 Rh4+ 1-0



If 31 ... Kg5 32 Rg6 mate.

205) M.Carlsen-A.Giri
Chessable Masters (online rapid) 2020



White to play

Level 4.5

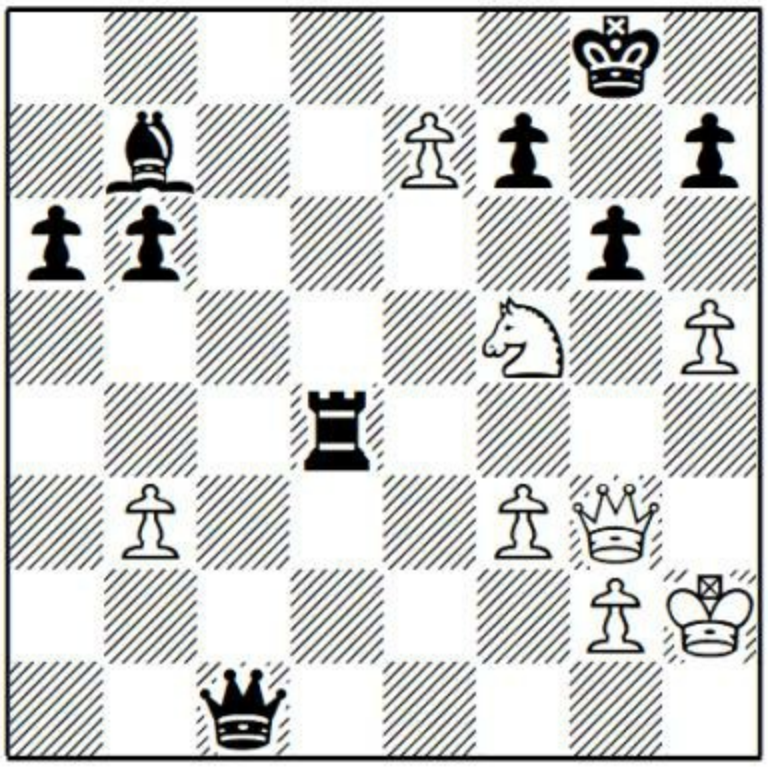
Magnus' hawk eye spotted geometric anomalies to produce a deep combination here. Do you see it?

Answer: Step 1: Discovered attack/overloaded defender/weak back rank.

30 e6!! Qc1+

Not 30 ... Qxg3?? 31 Rxd8 mate, while 30 ... Qc5 31 Qe5! (threatening mate on g7) 31 ... gxf5 (31 ... Qxe5 32 Rxd8 mate) 32 Qxc5 (this swap destroys Black's pin) 32 ... bxc5 33 Rxd8+ wins.

31 Kh2 Rxd4 32 e7!



Step 2: Zwischenzug.

32 ... Qc8 33 Qe5!

Step 3: Double attack/mating net/pawn promotion. Mate is threatened on g7, pawn promotion is threatened on e8 and to make matters even worse for Black, his rook hangs as well.

33 ... Rh4+

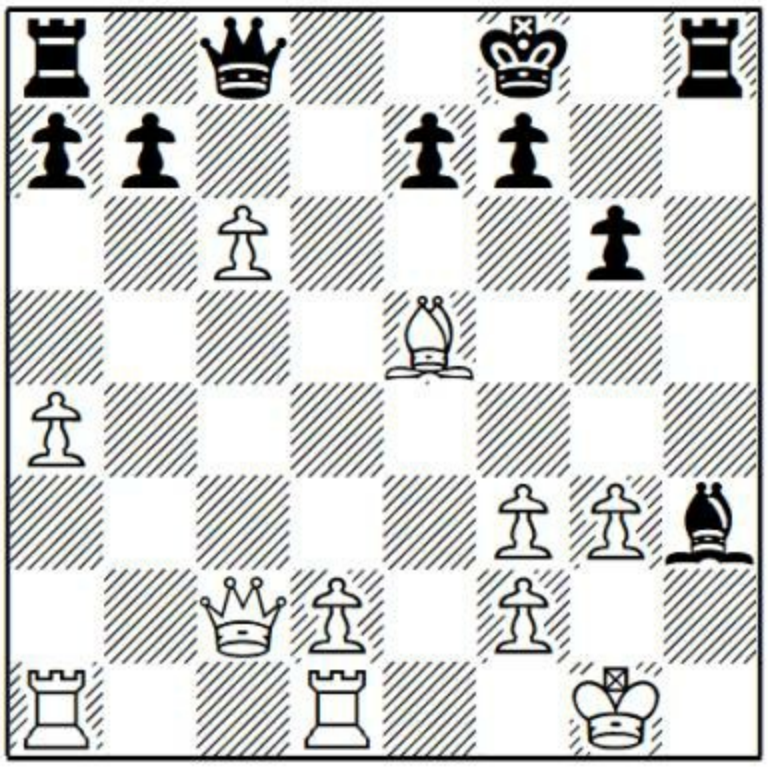
This desperado check is nothing more than spam, which will be deleted with Carlsen's next move. 33 ... gxf5 loses to the simple promotion 34 e8Q+.

34 Kg3! 1-0

Step 3: Zwischenzug. Now Black's position is an empty void, where hopes go to die. 34 ... gxf5 35 e8Q+ wins.

206) Ding Liren-D.Dubov

Lindores Abbey (online rapid) 2020



Black to play

Level 2

Principle: *Opposite-coloured bishops favour the attacker.* Death on your weak colour is the occupational hazard of a position of opposing attacks, coupled with bishops of opposite colours. How did Black make decisive inroads into White's weakened kingside light squares?

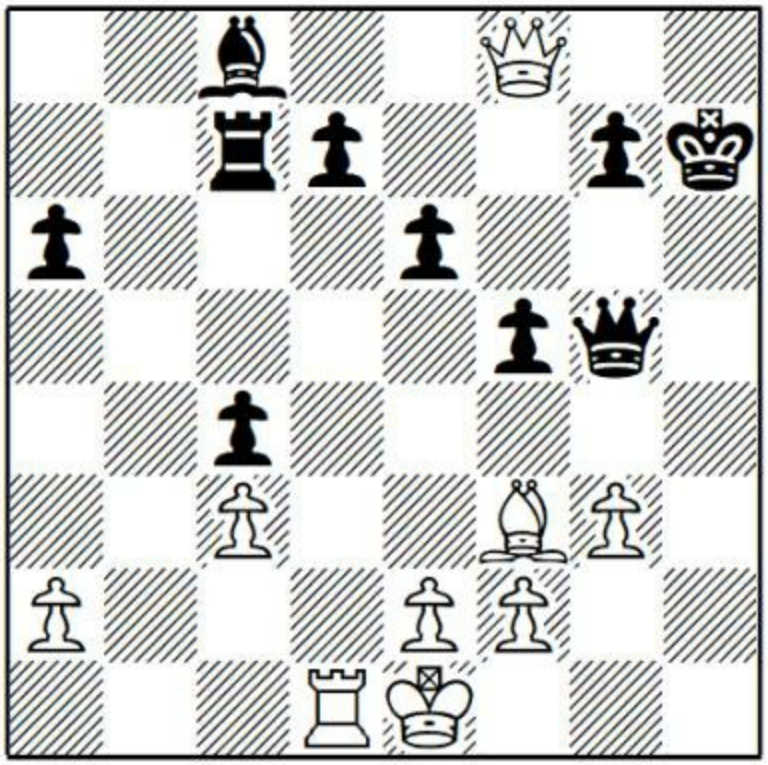
Answer: Clearance. Black makes room on h3 for his queen to enter the attack.

21 ... Bg2! 0-1

Ouch! Truth is generally not what the losing side wants to hear. This trick falls under the headings clearance (of h3) and is also called the zigzag theme. 22 g4 (or 22 Kxg2 Qh3+ 23 Kg1 Qh1 mate) 22 ... Bxf3 23 Bxh8 (23 Qc4 Rh1 mate) 23 ... Qxg4+ 24 Kf1 Qg2+ 25 Ke1 Qg1 is mate.

207) Analysis by John Emms

ChessPublishing, 2020



White to play

Level 3.5

This was John's analysis from one of his ChessPublishing posts, which he then transferred to his Facebook page. What is White's strongest attacking continuation?

Answer: Transfer the king to g2, via f1, which in turn clears the shift of the d1-rook to the h-file.

1 Kf1!

The white king operates under a cloak of darkness, pretending to make a defensive gesture, when in reality this is an attacking move. Many of my students (and unfortunately me too!) fell for 1 Qd6? (1 e4?, intending Ke2 and Rh1+, runs into 1 ... Qf6 2 Qxf6 gxf6 3 exf5 exf5 4 Rd6 when Black should hold the game after 4 ... Kg6) 1 ... Qd8 2 Qxe6. I saw this 'combination' in three seconds (in self-inflicted time pressure, we go with feel, over facts), and mistakenly believed it to be the solution and proudly

posted it on John's Facebook feed, only to be informed that it was a false path! White wins back a pawn, yet it is not pertinent to the task of winning the game. After 2 ... dxe6 3 Rxd8 Kg6 Black has decent chances to hold the game.

1 ... Bb7

1 ... Qf6 fails to save Black: 2 Qe8 g6 (2 ... Qg6 3 Qd8 wins) 3 Kg2 Kg7 4 Rh1 e5 (4 ... Qf8 5 Rh7+ Kg8 6 Rh8+ wins) 5 Qh8+ Kf7 6 Rh7+ Ke6 7 Qg8+ Kd6 8 Qd5 mate.

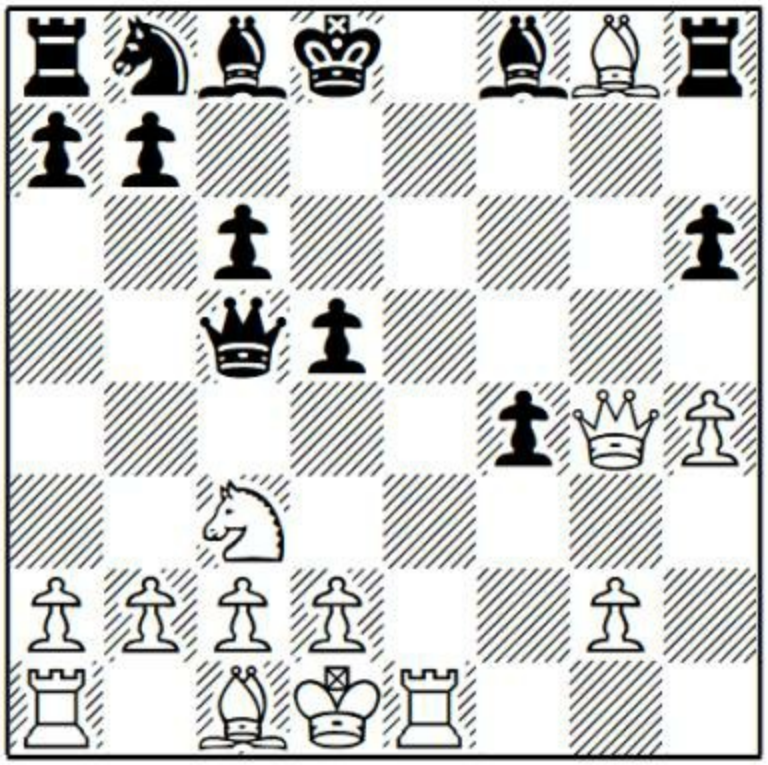
2 Kg2 Bxf3+ 3 exf3 1-0

And Black must resign since the queen is lost, due to the coming Rh1+.

6) Decoy/Attraction/Removal of the Guard

I initially labelled this chapter Decoy, but it's really both Decoy and Attraction, which are synonyms. These themes can be described as moves, often featuring a sacrifice, which lure an enemy piece to a poisoned square. Removal of the guard, which is self-explanatory, is a close cousin and is added to this chapter.

208) P.Morphy-E.Rousseau
New Orleans 1849



White to play
Level 3.5
It doesn't really feel like Morphy leads in development, yet he does. 14

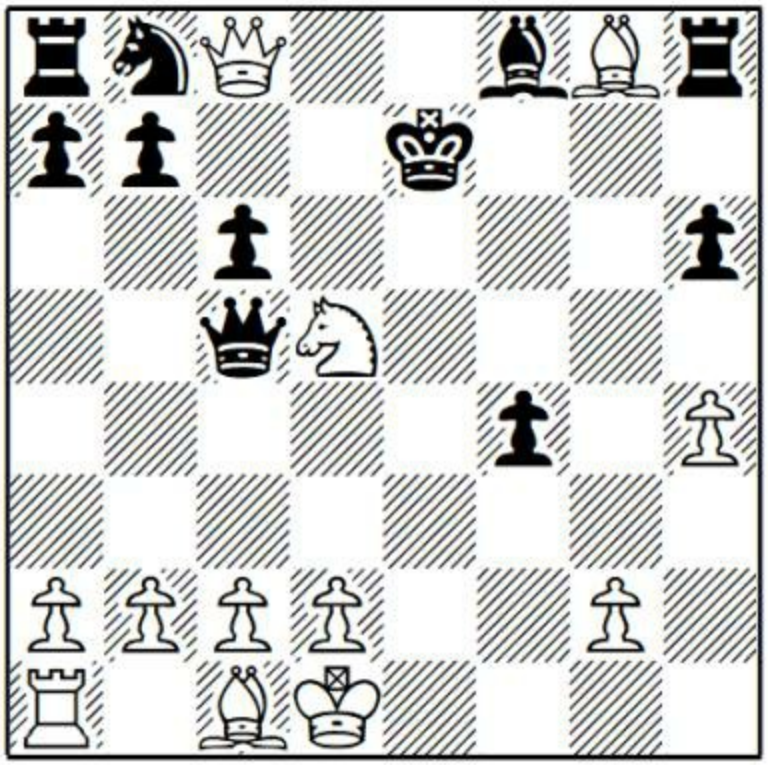
Qg6 looks good for White. Do you see a continuation which is far stronger?

Answer: Rook sacrifice/decoy.

14 Re8+!

Morphy on the attack decides to forgo small talk and go right after Black's king with a decoy sacrifice to allow his queen infiltration.

14 ... Kxe8 15 Qxc8+ Ke7 16 Nxd5+!



Careful with that axe, Eugene (only Pink Floyd fans will get this reference).

Step 2: Pinned piece. Black's c6-pawn is pinned.

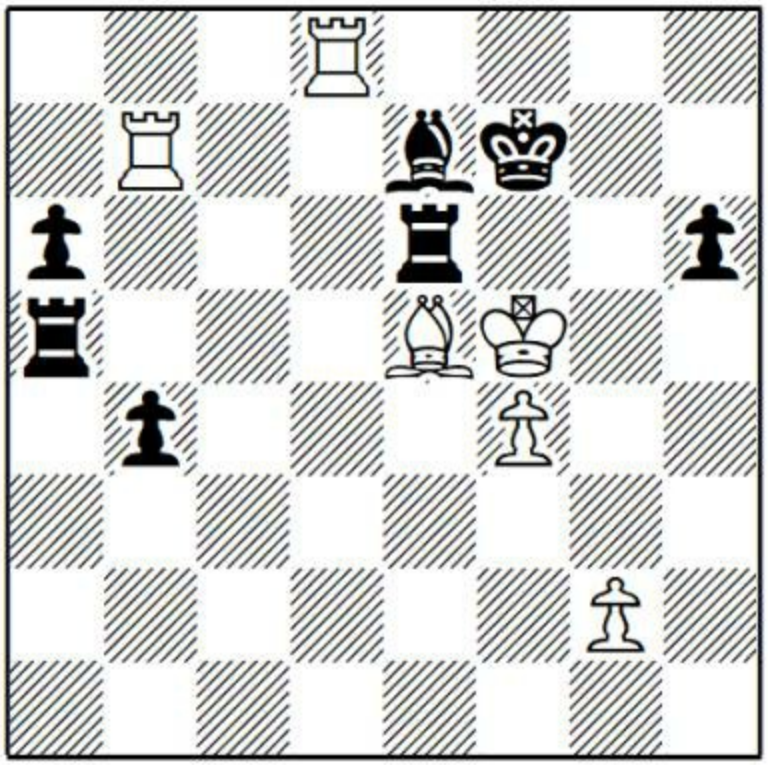
16 ... Kd6

We can safely say that Black's position, despite his extra rook, failed to reach the pinnacle of success, since he is now mated next move, but if 16 ... Qxd5 17 Bxd5 cxd5 18 Qxb7+ Nd7 19 Qxa8 and game over, as is the case after 16 ... cxd5 17 Qxc5+.

17 Qc7 mate

209) A.Nimzowitsch-R.Spielmann

San Sebastian 1912



White to play

Level 3

We sense trouble for Black. How did Nimzowitsch put his opponent away?

Answer: Attraction/pinned piece/weak back rank.

43 Rf8+!

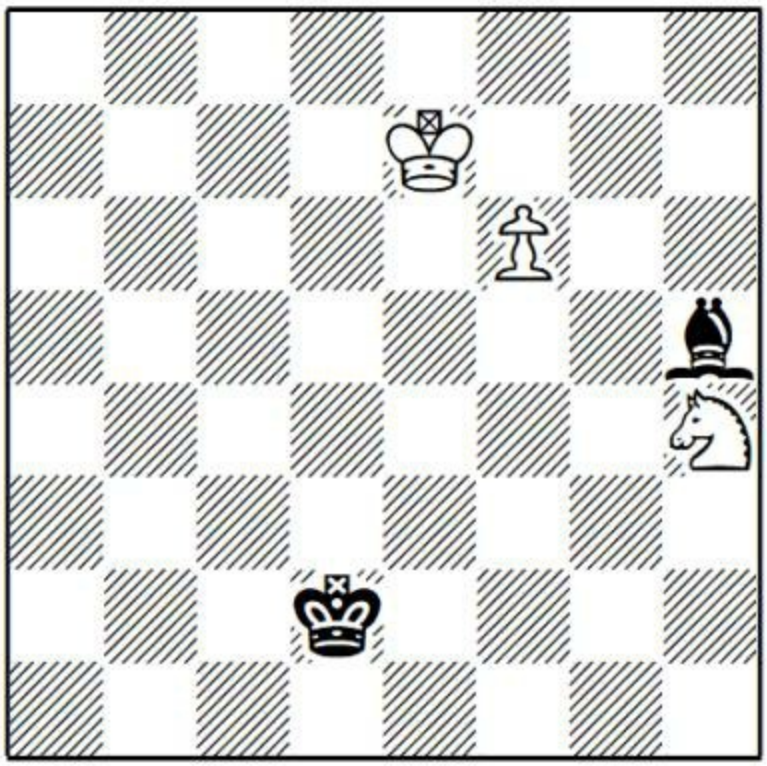
Black's king is ambushed by forces at his back.

43 ... Kxf8 44 Kxe6 1-0

White's king has enjoyed an economic boom at the patronage of his previous rook sacrifice. This is not a case of White will win in an eternity, give or take a few hours. White mates before Black's pawns can promote. So Spielmann resigned here, seeing that White's back rank threat on b8 forces Black to hand over the exchange: 44 ... Rxe5+ 45 Kxe5 a5 46 f5 a4 47 f6 Bc5 48 Ke6 (threat: Rb8 mate) 48 ... Kg8 49 Rg7+ Kh8 (49 ... Kf8 50 Rc7 wins

the bishop and mates quickly) 50 Kf5 b3 51 Kg6 b2 52 Rb7 a3 (Black's pawns continue to thrash forward with the ill temper of teething babies, but they are too slow: White mates before they promote; or if 52 ... Bf8 53 Rh7+ Kg8 54 f7 mate) 53 Rb8+ Bf8 54 Rxf8 mate.

210) V.Kosek
La Stratégie, 1922



White to play
Level 2
White can't allow Black to sacrifice the bishop for the final pawn. Work out a way to chase away Black's bishop from the h5-e8 diagonal. How does White force pawn promotion?
Answer: Removal of the guard/decoy, via transference of the knight to f4.
1 Ng2!
1 Nf5? is a false path, allowing Black to draw. 1 ... Kd3 2 Ng7 Bg6 3 Ne6

Ke4 (White's knight cannot move to f4 anymore) 4 Kf8 Kf5 5 Kg7 Be8 6 Nc7 Bh5 and White can't make progress.

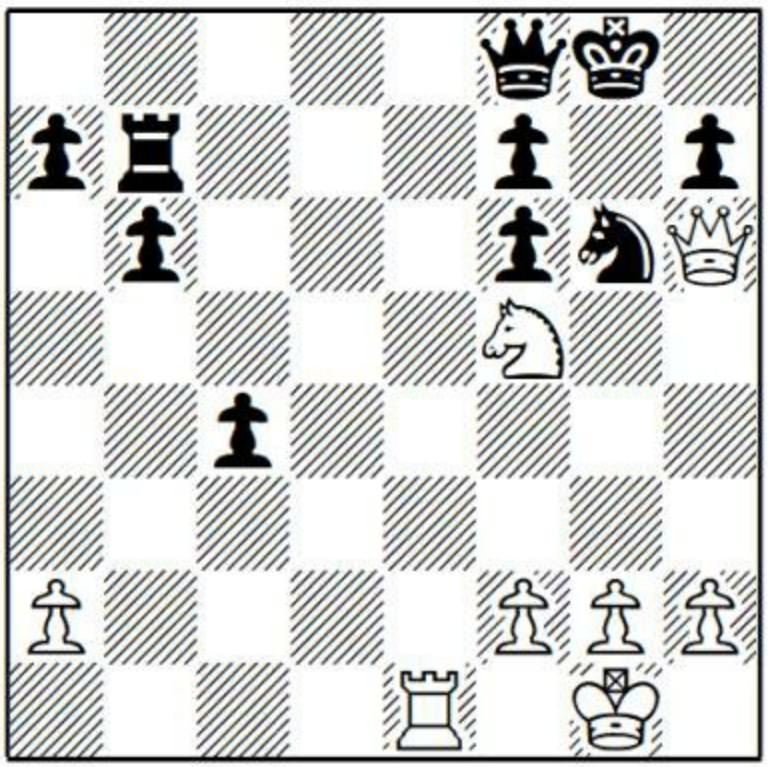
1 ... Kc3

1 ... Kd3 gets forked with 2 Nf4+.

2 Nf4 1-0

How wonderful when business and pleasure coincide. Well, that was easy. Black's bishop, who has overstayed his welcome, is run off the h5-e8 diagonal and White's f-pawn soon promotes.

211) A.Alekhine-A.Frieman
New York (blindfold simul) 1924



White to play

Level 1.5

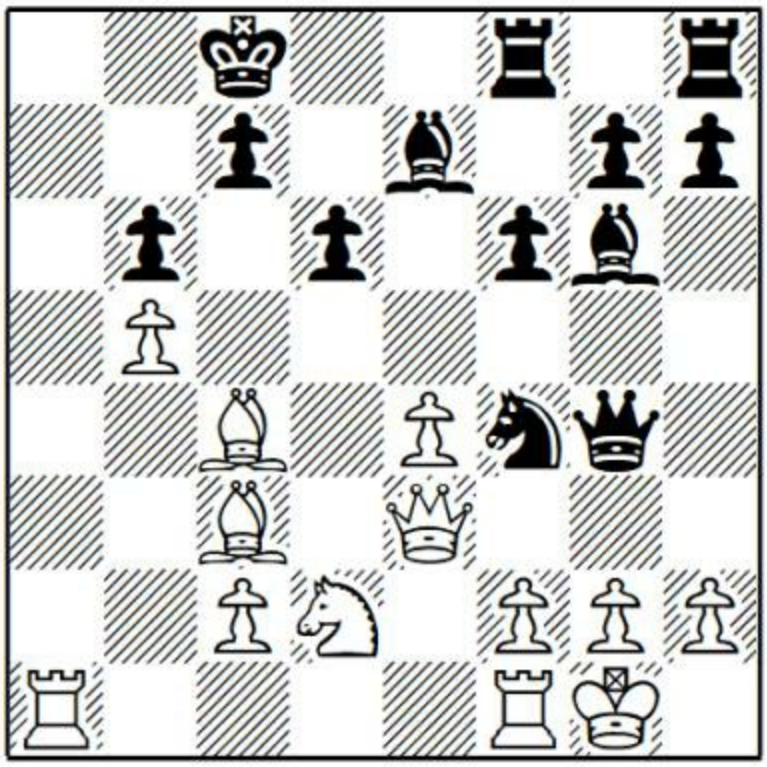
Alekhine saw the mate without sight of the board, so we should all be able to do it sighted:

Answer: Decoy/overloaded defender.

24 Re8! 1-0

If 24 ... Qxe8 (or 24 ... Rb8 25 Qg7 mate; Black's pinned queen is a fake 'defender') 25 Qg7 mate.

212) C.Torre Repetto-N.Banks
Detroit 1924



White to play

Level 4.5

Black threatens mate on the move, yet if you find Torre's stunning response, it is White who receives the winning attack.

Answer: Removal of the guard/queen sacrifice/decoy. In a single move White removes both defenders of the light squares, e6 and d5, in Black's camp.

22 Qxf4!!

Impossible and Improbable are close cousins. White's queen simulates the posture of an invalid, while secretly plotting violence. Torre was a conjurer of spells in tactical positions. Amazingly, this queen sacrifice places Black's king into a light squared prison.

Instead, 22 Qf3? Qxf3 23 gxf3 Kd7 is fine for Black.

22 ... Qxf4 23 Be6+ Kb7

Or 23 ... Kb8 (not 23 ... Kd8?? 24 Ra8 mate) 24 Ra4 c6 25 Rfa1 d5 26 bxc6 Bc5 27 Ra8+ Kc7 28 R8a7+! Kd6 29 Bxd5 with deadly mating threats on d7 and c4.

24 Bd5+ c6

The only move. After 24 ... Kc8?? 25 Bc6! Black is mated on the back rank.

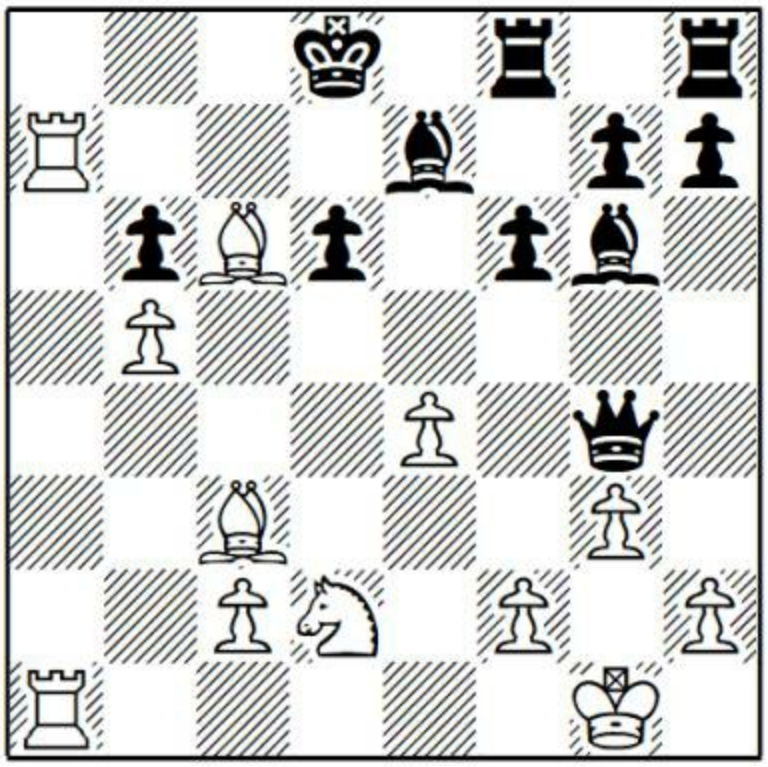
25 Bxc6+ Kc8 26 Ra8+ Kc7 27 Ra7+ Kc8 28 g3

28 Nc4! Bd8 29 Ra8+ Kc7 30 Bd4! is mate in 2.

28 ... Qg4 29 Rfa1

29 Nc4! again forces mate: 29 ... d5 30 Nxb6+ Kd8 31 Nxd5 (threat: Ba5 mate) 31 ... Bd6 32 Ba5+ Bc7 33 Bxc7+ Kc8 34 Nb6 mate.

29 ... Kd8



White to play

Level 3

Torre forced mate in 4. How?

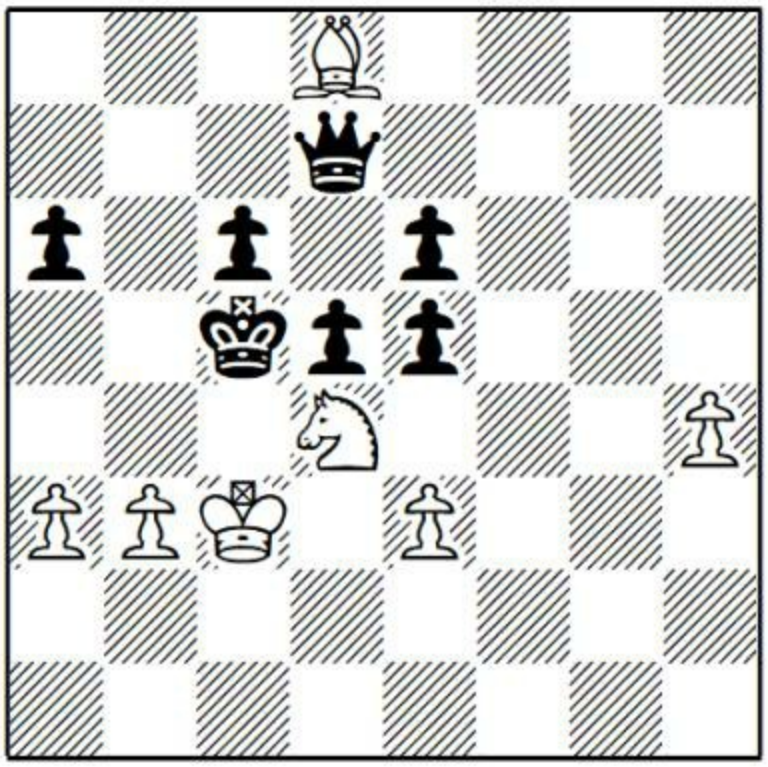
Answer: Transfer the bishop to d4, taking aim at b6.

30 Bd4! 1-0

If 30 ... Kc8 (or 30 ... d5 31 Bxb6+ Kc8 32 Ra8 mate) 31 Ra8+ Kc7 32 R1a7 mate.

213) V.Smyslov

64, 1938



White to play

Level 5

My chess hero Vasily Smyslov did something no other chess player did: he reached the pinnacle in over the board play by becoming the world chess champion, and then to top it off, he produced masterpiece after masterpiece, with his endgame studies. His volume of work was 149 endgame studies, all of which I studied and annotated for use in lessons with students.

In this book, Smyslov's and also Alois Wotawa's endgame studies take precedence over all others, and I promise you that their works strain credulity, in that they make the impossible a reality. In this portion of a study (the entire study is impossible to solve!), White's bishop, knight, king and queenside pawns form a deadly attacking team, which outweighs Black's extra queen. Proceed:

Exploit Black's vulnerable king position to win the game.

Answer: Transfer the bishop to c7.

6 Bc7!!

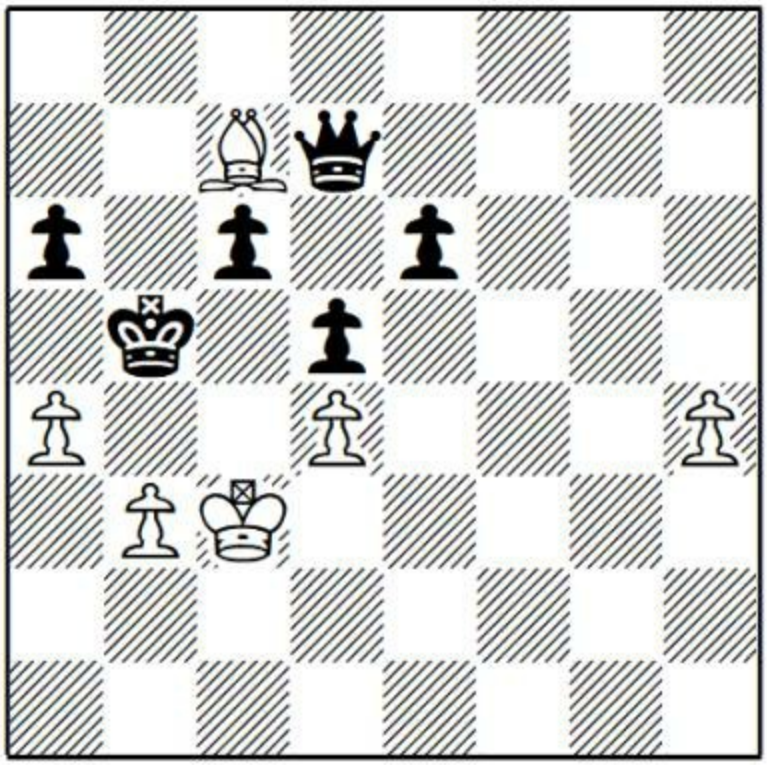
Black's annoyed king and queen can feel the white bishop's merry, internal ridiculing laughter.

Decoy/knight fork/mating net. d6 is cut off as an escape route for Black's king and White threatens b3-b4 mate. This is no indulgence in an unwarranted extravagance, since the bishop, if taken, leads to a dead lost king and pawn ending for Black.

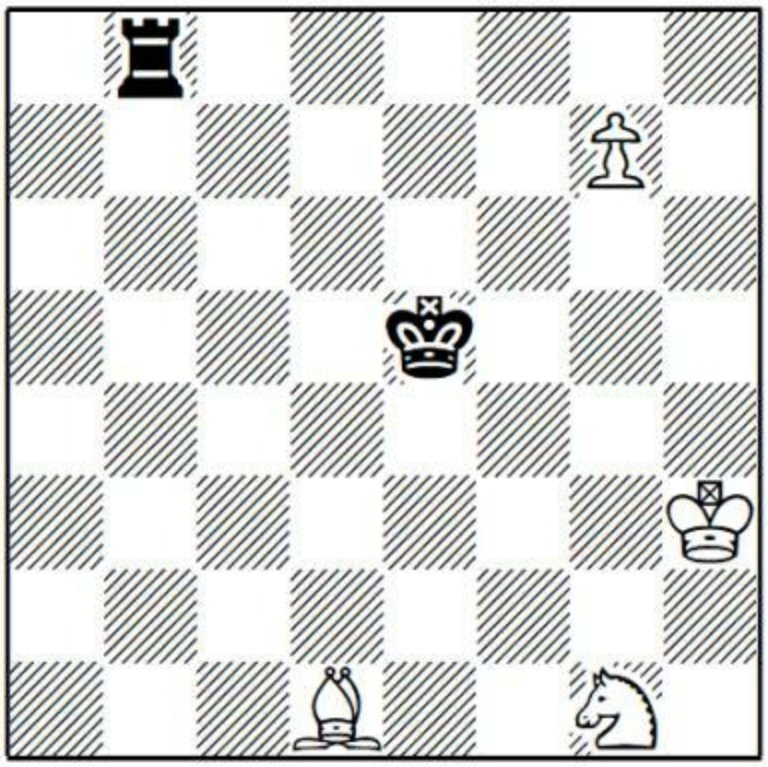
6 ... exd4+

After 6 ... Qxc7 7 Nxe6+ Kd6 8 Nxc7 Kxc7 (8 ... a5 9 Na6 isn't going to help Black either) 9 h5 White's h-pawn promotes to a new queen, since Black's king is out of range to catch it.

7 exd4+ Kb5 8 a4 mate



214) A.Wotawa
Österreichische Schachzeitung, 1953



White to play

Level 5

Black threatens ... Rg8 and ... Rxg7, leading to a draw. It feels as if there is no way to stop this. Look closer: White can either win Black's rook for the g-pawn, or force a queen versus rook ending. How?

Answer: Decoy by moving our bishop to b3 and allowing it to be taken, with check!

1 Bb3!!

Playing dead is an underrated chess talent. For Wotawa's studies, impossible looking moves and patterns are a familiar heresy.

Not 1 Nf3+? Kf6 2 Kg3 Kxg7. Forget it. The game is drawn.

1 ... Rxb3+

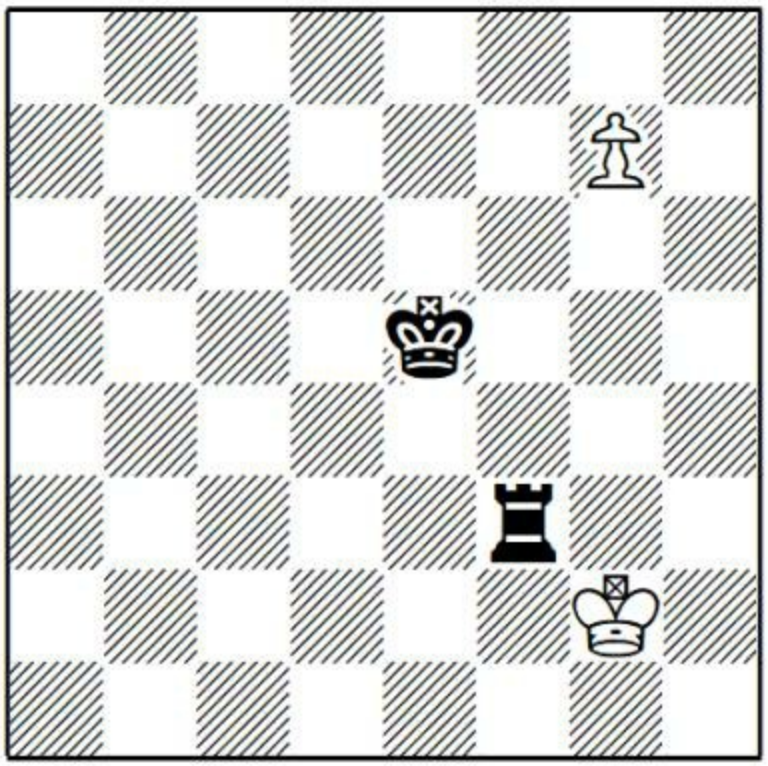
After 1 ... Kf6 2 g8Q Rxg8 3 Bxg8 the composer assumes you can mate with bishop and knight against lone king. What? You don't know how to mate there? Let me see if I can come up with a solution ... let me think ... let me think. Oh, a solution to your problem just came to me! You can order my

book *First Steps: Fundamental Chess Endings*, which shows you how.

2 Nf3+!

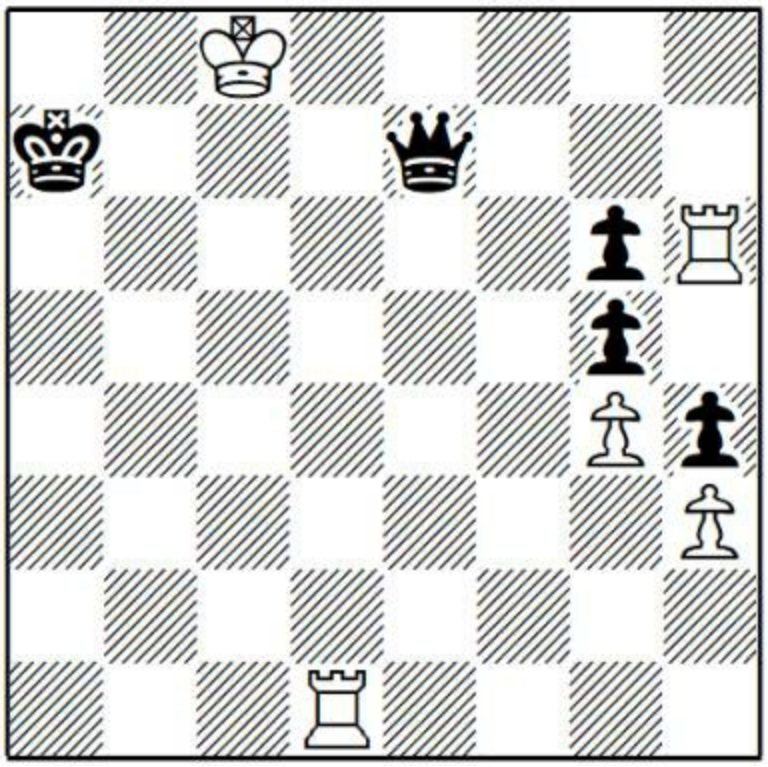
Decoy number 2: Check! The knight must be taken, or else White promotes.

2 ... Rxf3+ 3 Kg2! 1-0



A sense of exhaustion envelops Black's position and White forces promotion. We must avoid Black's trap 3 Kg4?? Rf1! and Black wins via discovered check if White promotes. 4 Kg5 is too slow: 4 ... Rg1+ 5 Kh6 Kf6 wins the g-pawn. Instead, after 3 Kg2! Ke4 4 g8Q the composer assumes you know how to deliver checkmate with queen versus the opponent's rook. What? You don't know how? Let me see if I can come up with a solution ... let me think ...

215) D.Petrov
Platov MT, 1963



White to play

Level 5

A while back someone posted this beauty on my Facebook group Chess Endgame Studies and Compositions. It took me about 10 minutes to crack (after a few flubs!). So if an over the hill IM can do it, then so can you.

Answer: Attraction/double attack. Move the rook to h7.

1 Rh7!!

If this is a crime, then it's a White collar, non-violent offence.

Did you fall for 1 Rd7+? The move chases an illusion, while ignoring the real. This couldn't possibly be the solution in a level 5 problem. A bunch of my students fell for it, preceded by the ironic words: "This study is easy!" Black has a dirty trick at the ready with 1 ... Ka8!!. Our worst case scenario has just been activated: 2 Rh8 (2 Rxe7 is stalemate) 2 ... Qe5! (threat: ... Qb8 mate, as well as ... Qxh8) 3 Rdd8 Qg7 and White is unable to deliver mate, since our own king is in the way.

1 ... Qxh7 2 Rd7+

Double attack/simplification. Our idea is to reach a won king and pawn ending.

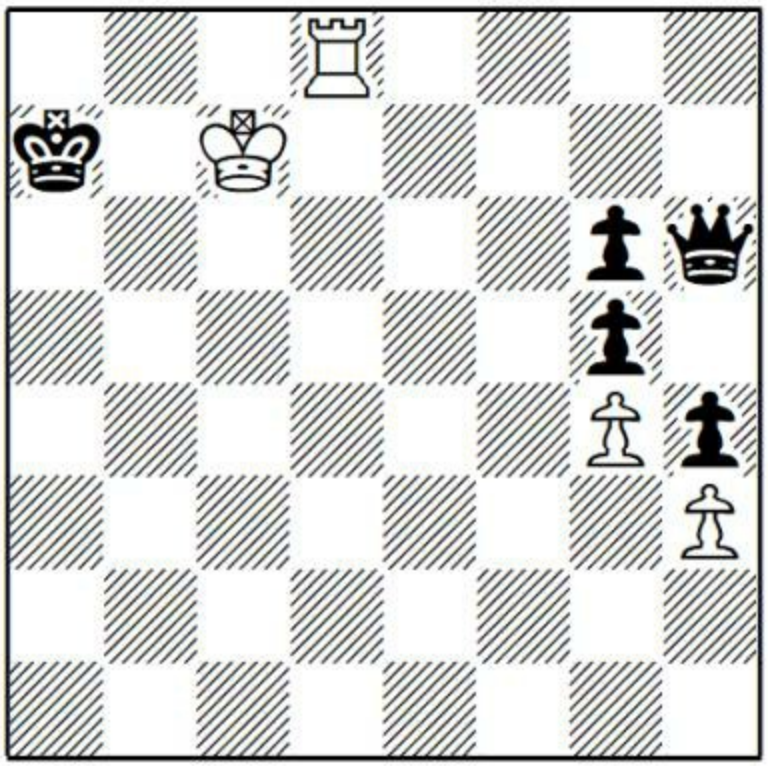
2 ... Ka8!

Oh no, not again! It's that same dirty stalemating trick! We easily win the king and pawn ending if Black cooperates with 2 ... Qxd7+ 3 Kxd7 Kb7 4 Ke7 Kc7 5 Kf6. White wipes out all of Black's pawns.

3 Kc7!

3 Rxh7? is, again, stalemate.

3 ... Qh6 4 Rd8+! Ka7



White to play

Level 2

We only need to find one strong move to win:

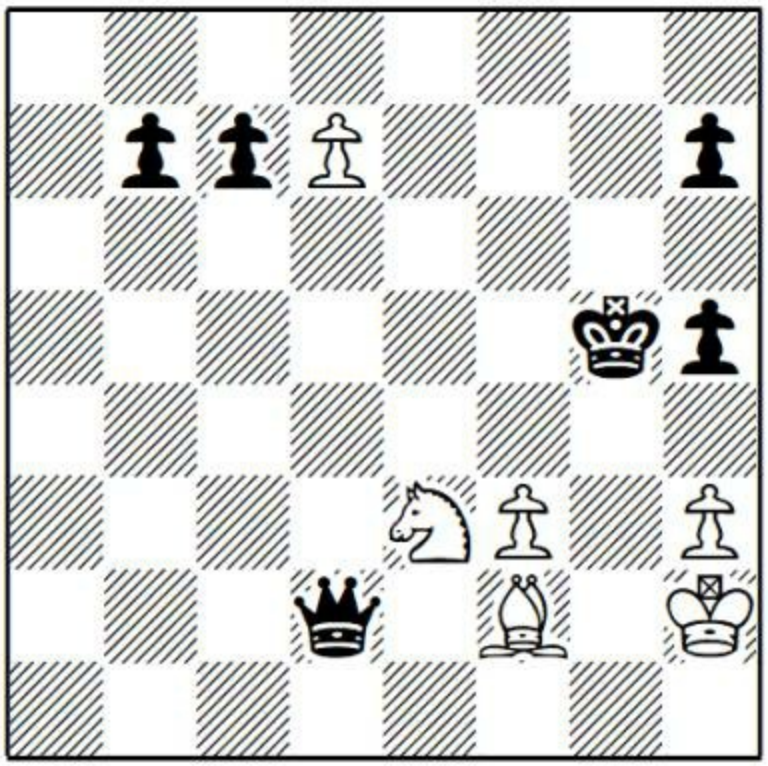
Answer: Zugzwang/double attack/simplification/mating net.

5 Kc6! 1-0

After 5 ... Qg7 (5 ... Ka6 allows a mating net with 6 Ra8 mate) 6 Rd7+ Black lacks stalemating tricks, since our king is no longer on c8: 6 ... Qxd7+

7 Kxd7 and we win the king and pawn ending.

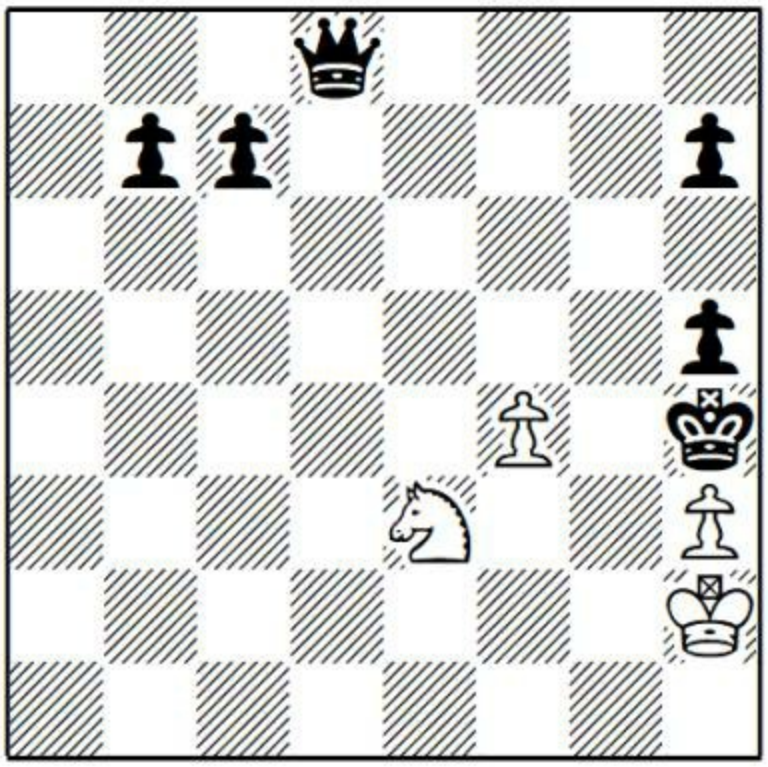
216) G.Papp
Magyar Sakkélet, 1965



White to play
Level 5
How can White exploit Black's unfavourable geometry with a pair of attraction combinations?
Answer: Promote on d8, decoying Black's queen to that square.
1 d8Q+! Qxd8 2 Bh4+!
Step 2: Attraction. Give away a bishop to lure Black's king to h4. As with all composed works, we should be willing to sign all our wealth away, to receive our desires.
2 ... Kxh4
Or 2 ... Kf4 3 Bxd8 Kxe3. A flash of sunlight passing over a glacier is a

symbol of warmth, without much actual warmth. Black has no chance to save the game with the queenside passers: 4 Kg3 c5 5 Bb6 Kd4 6 f4 Kd5 7 Kf3 Kc6 8 f5! and game over, since 8 ... Kxb6 9 f6 White promotes.

3 f4!



Step 3: Mating net. White threatens both Ng2 mate and Nf5 mate, which in turn forces Black to give away the queen for the knight, leading to a winning king and pawn ending for White.

3 ... Qd2+

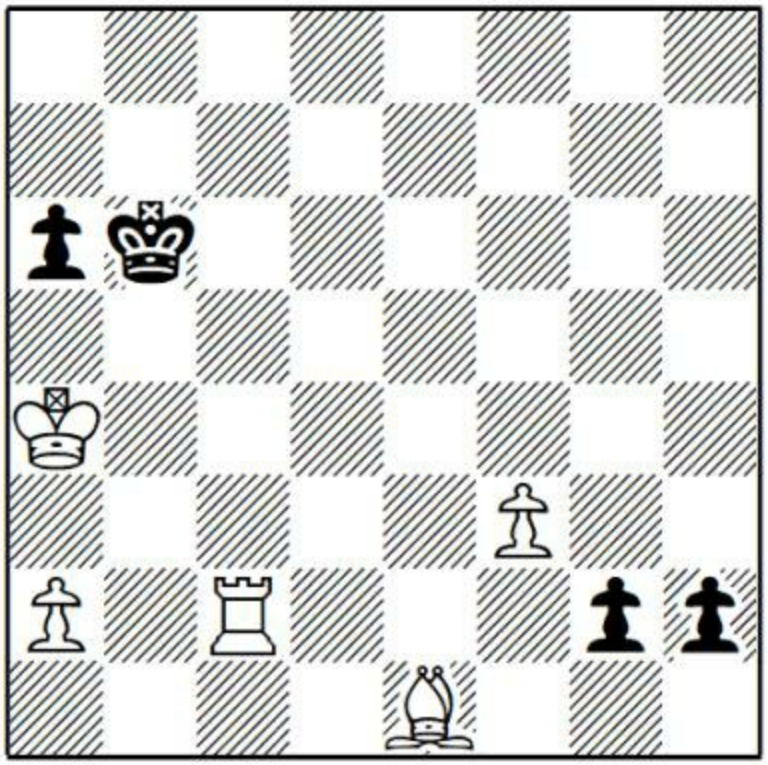
3 ... b5?? is blissfully ignorant of White's dual mating threats: 4 Ng2 mate. Like a sudden, fatal heart attack, death comes unannounced to Black's oblivious king (or 4 Nf5 mate).

4 Ng2+ Qxg2+ 5 Kxg2

Black's king is stuck and White easily wins the promotion race: 5 ... c5 6 Kf3 b5 7 Ke4 c4 8 Kd4 Kxh3 9 f5 Kg4 10 f6 h4 11 f7 h3 12 f8Q Kg3 13 Ke3 and White mates in four moves.

217) A.Wotawa

New Statesman, 1970



White to play

Level 5

Believe it or not, White can halt Black's seemingly inevitable pawn promotion by weaving a completely unexpected mating net:

Answer: Decoy/double attack.

1 Rc7!!

Given time, science fiction turns real. I wasn't joking about the magical properties of Wotawa's endgame studies. The rook move looks completely nonsensical, since it can be taken, or ignored and Black can promote. Now look a bit deeper.

1 ... a5

Black gives the king air, but not enough! Instead, if 1 ... g1Q 2 Ba5 mate or 1 ... Kxc7 2 Bg3+ (double attack/skewer) 2 ... Kc6 3 Bxh2 and wins.

2 Bf2+!

I insist!

2 ... Kxc7

Or 2 ... Ka6 3 Ra7 mate. Wotawa hyphenates his intent by producing the second mating net.

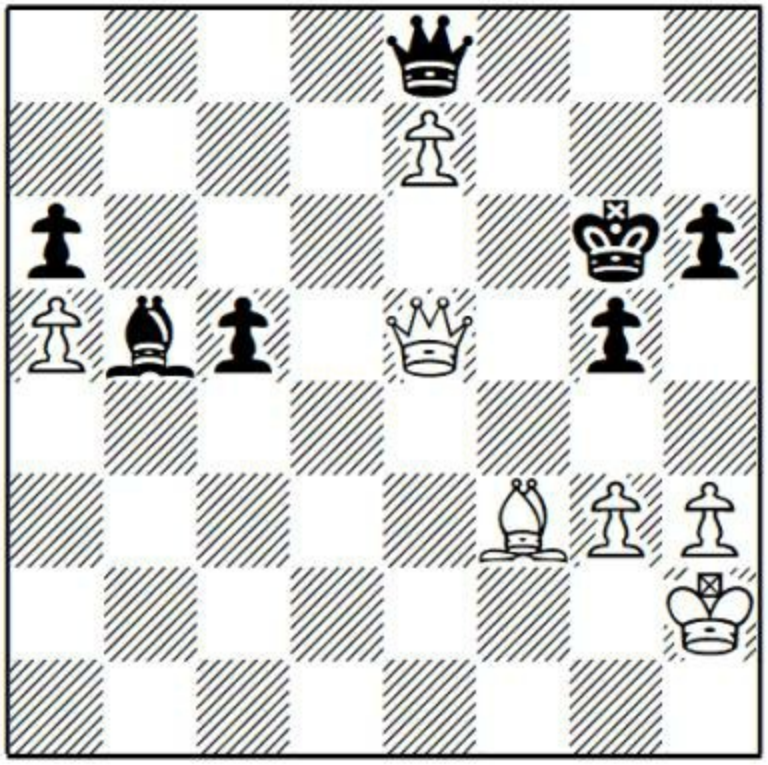
3 Bg3+

Double attack. For Black's king, this is where the cop pulls you over and says: "Sir, I'm going to need to see some ID."

3 ... Kc6 4 Bxh2

And the win is clear.

218) M.Suba-S.Kindermann
Beersheba 1984



White to play

Level 4.5

Part of the goal of this book is to not only get you more adept at finding

combinations, but to also help you recognize *when* to look for a combination. Can you feel it here? My intuition says there is one here for White, with advanced e-pawn and Black's awkward king/queen placement:

Answer: Attraction/skewer.

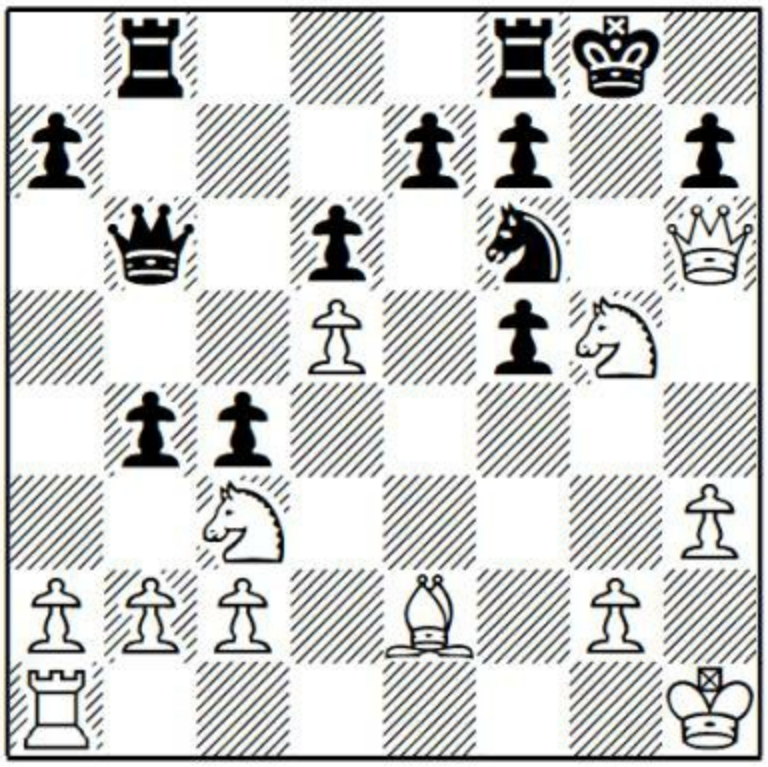
64 Bh5+!! Kxh5

Obviously there is no declining. From this point on Black's king is the factory worker, devoid of dreams, except one: survival.

65 Qf5! 1-0

Principle: *When hunting the enemy king, cut off flight squares.* The variation I saw was 65 Qe6! Be2! (or 65 ... c4 66 g4+ Kh4 67 Qe1 mate) 66 Qe4! Bd1 67 g4+ Bxg4 68 hxg4+ Kh4 69 Kg2 c4 70 Qf3! Qxe7 (the engine wants the humiliating 70 ... Qa8!?) 71 Qg3 mate (or 71 Qh3 mate), and after 65 Qf5! Be2 66 Qe4 Bd1 67 g4+ Bxg4 68 hxg4+ Kh4 69 Kg2 we have transposed to that line.

219) M.Tal-M.Quinteros
Sant del Esterol 1987



White to play

Level 4

Going over one of Tal's attacks is a scene in the movie where the character walks past an ATM machine at night, with nobody in sight. All of a sudden the machine malfunctions and begins to spit out $20 bills. The question for Tal's opponent is: do you call it into the police, or do you collect all the bills and attempt to make a clean getaway? Tal's opponents invariably grabbed the cash and paid the price. How did Tal storm Black's king and win?

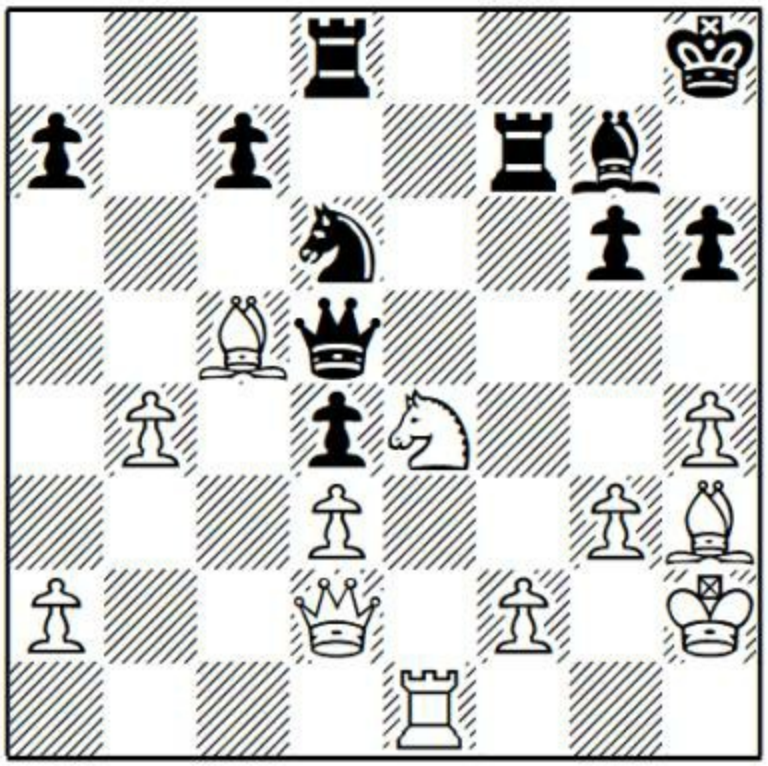
Answer: Decoy/clearance (of the f-file)/annihilation of defensive barrier.

22 Nce4! 1-0

Tal's greatest achievements were not built upon legality, yet this time everything is perfectly sound. GM Quinteros resigned, seeing 22 ... fxe4 (22 ... Nxe4 isn't much of a consideration due to 23 Qxh7 mate) 23 Rf1! (threat: Rxf6, followed by Qxh7 mate) 23 ... Qe3 (or 23 ... Rfc8 24 Rxf6 exf6 25 Qxh7+ Kf8 26 Qxf7 mate) 24 Rxf6 Qxg5 (forced) 25 Qxg5+ Kh8 26 Rh6

with an overwhelming material advantage for White.

220) G.Serper-Y.Balashov
Miedzybrodzie 1991



White to play
Level 3
How did Serper exploit an unfortunate geometry in Balashov's position?
Answer: Attraction/skewer/discovered attack.
26 Be6! Qxe6
After 26 ... Nxe4?? 27 Rxe4 Black will lose a full rook, or his queen.
27 Nxd6
Discovered attack. Black chose to hand over his queen.
27 ... Rxd6
The black position's Google search function just doesn't work. Black ends up in a bad situation, whichever way he picks: 27 ... Qd7 28 Nxf7+

Qxf7 29 Re7 Qf3 30 Rxc7 and if 30 ... Re8, threatening ... Re2, White wins with the second shot 31 Bxd4! (overloaded defender) 31 ... Bxd4 32 Qxh6+ Kg8 33 Qxg6+ Kf8 34 Qd6+ Kg8 35 Qxd4.

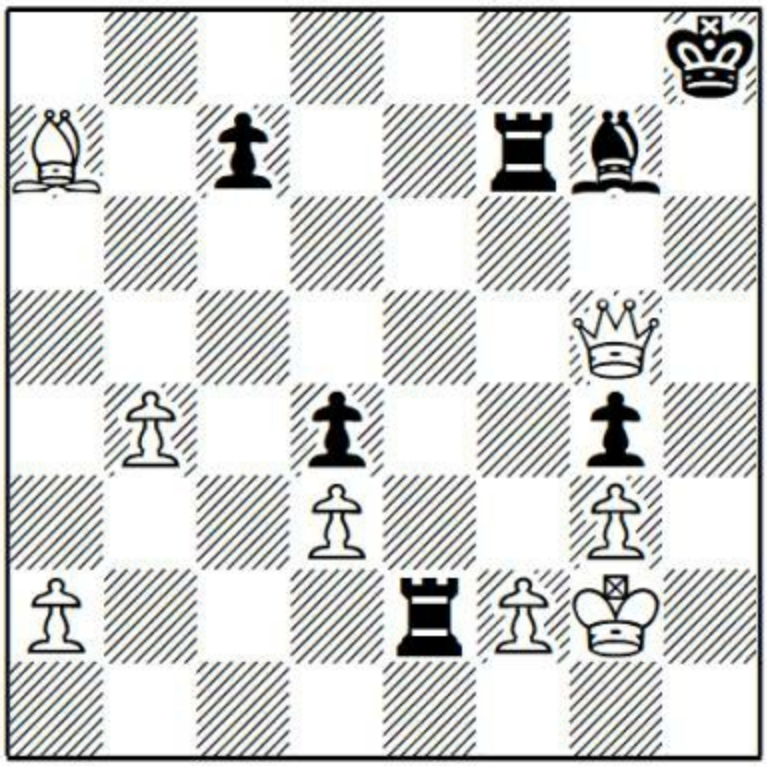
28 Rxe6 Rxe6 29 Bxa7

White's passed a-pawn will be decisive.

29 ... g5

Desperation.

30 hxg5 hxg5 31 Kg2 g4 32 Qg5 Re2



White to play

Level 2

How can White protect f2?

Answer: Chop the d4-pawn.

33 Bxd4! Bxd4

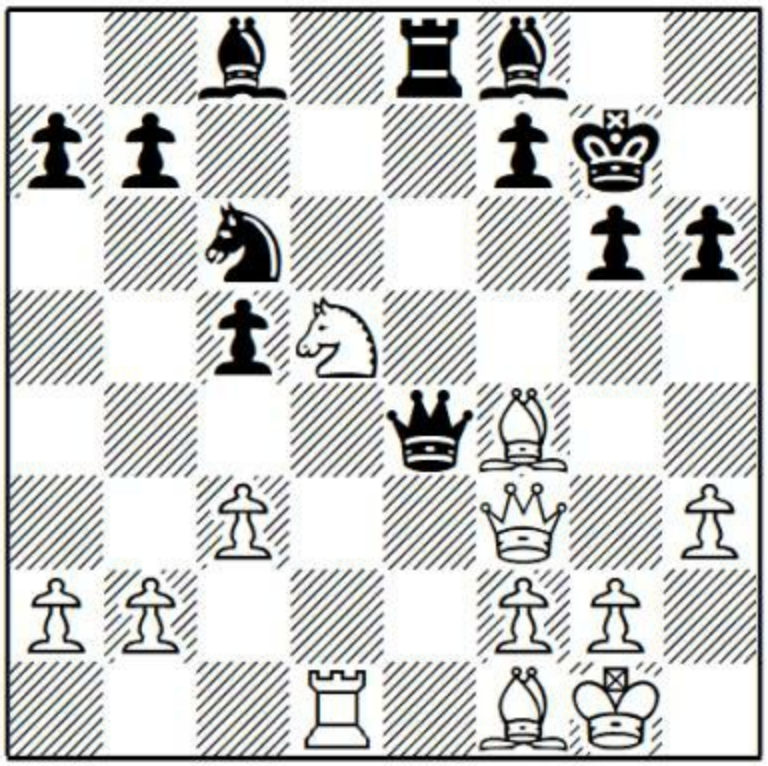
I suppose the fires of hell don't burn quite as hot for a person who steals a slice of pizza, over that of a murderer. This is not really a mistake since everything is hopeless. Indeed, 33 ... Re6 34 Qh5+ Kg8 35 Qxg4 is equally

hopeless.

34 Qh4+! 1-0

After 34 ... Rh7 (34 ... Kg7 35 Qxg4+ Kf8 36 Qxe2 wins) 35 Qd8+ (double attack) 35 ... Kg7 36 Qxd4+ Kf8 37 Qxg4 White picked up too many pawns.

221) A.Karpov-V.Topalov
Dos Hermanas 1994



White to play

Level 5

Karpov found an exquisite combination against a future world champion. How should White proceed?

Answer: If you begin a war, then be prepared for people to get hurt. Sink the knight into f6. Black loses material, no matter which way he goes.

30 Nf6!!

Knight fork/ zwischenzug/ attraction/ double attack.

30 ... Kxf6

Alternatively:

a) 30 ... Qxf3?? hangs a full rook to the zwischenzug 31 Nxe8+.

b) 30 ... Qe7 31 Bxh6+! Kh8 (31 ... Kxh6 32 Ng8+ forks black king and queen) 32 Qf4! Rd8 33 Qh4 when Black is mated.

c) 30 ... Qe6 31 Bc4! Qxc4 (31 ... Qxf6 hangs the queen to the overloaded defender shot 32 Bxh6+!) 32 Nxe8+ and Black is busted.

31 Be5+!

Double check/attraction.

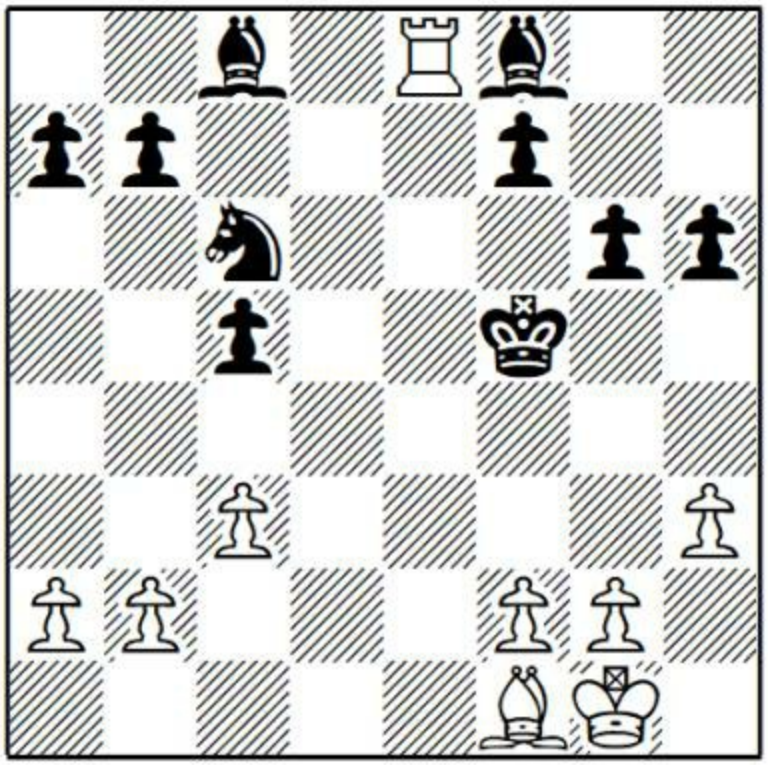
31 ... Kxe5 32 Qxe4+!

Simplification.

32 ... Kxe4 33 Re1+

Discovered attack. By this point Black's poor king is a reversed-ghost, with body intact, yet spirit missing.

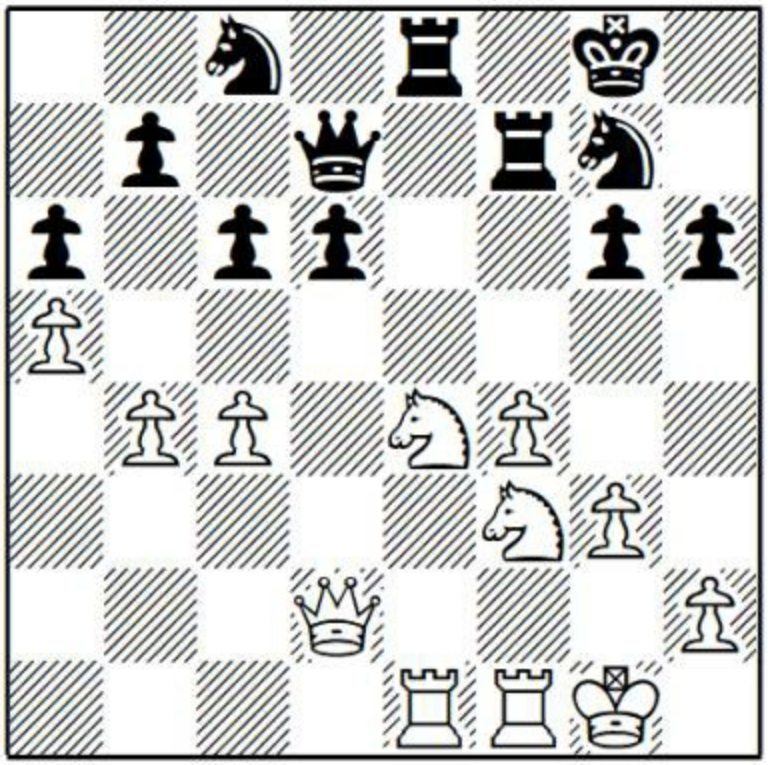
33 ... Kf5 34 Rxe8



Amazing. All the letters and words fall perfectly into place in the

crossword puzzle. Black loses a second piece via a double attack and Karpov won in just a few more moves.

222) N.Davies-C.Duncan
British Championship, Scarborough 1999



White to play
Level 2.5
How did Nigel win material from this position?
Answer: Step 1: Decoy. We want Black's rook to move over to d7.
27 Ne5!
We are only poor when we believe we are. White soon regains the investment, with interest.
27 ... dxe5
But the knight can be taken!
27 ... Qc7 28 Nxf7 is also hopeless for Black and 27 ... Rxe5 28 fxe5 is

lost.

28 Qxd7

Step 2: Swap queens, attracting Black's rook to d7.

28 ... Rxd7 29 Nf6+

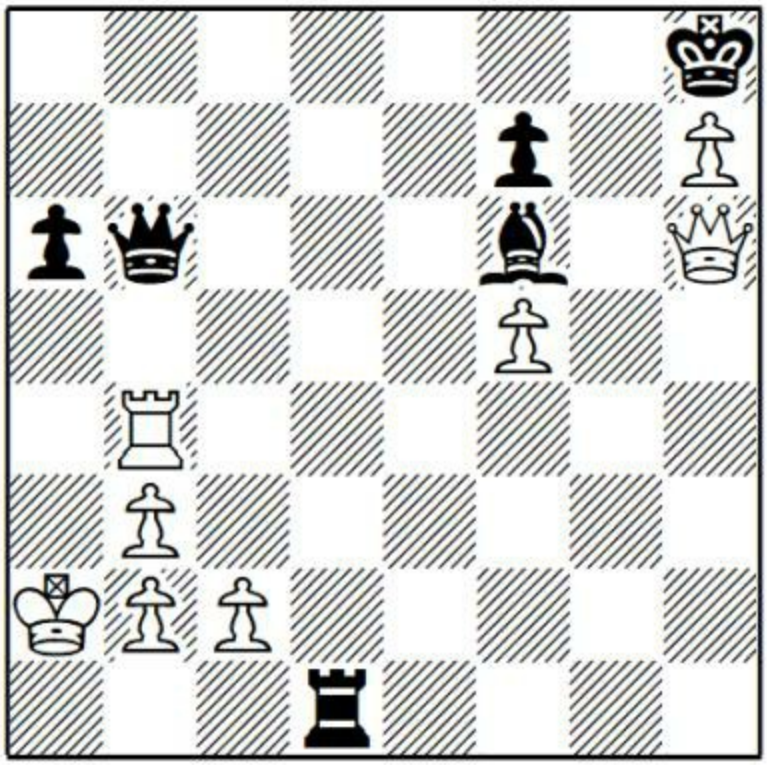
Step 3: Knight fork.

29 ... Kh8 30 Nxd7 1-0

White is up a full exchange in the ending.

223) T.Fogarasi-D.Breder

Czech Open, Pardubice 2000



Black to play

Level 3

Sometimes we do everything we are supposed to do, all by the book and it still goes wrong. On the surface it feels as if White is in good shape and that it is Black who must scramble to draw. In reality Black can win decisive

material:

Answer: Attraction/discovered attack.

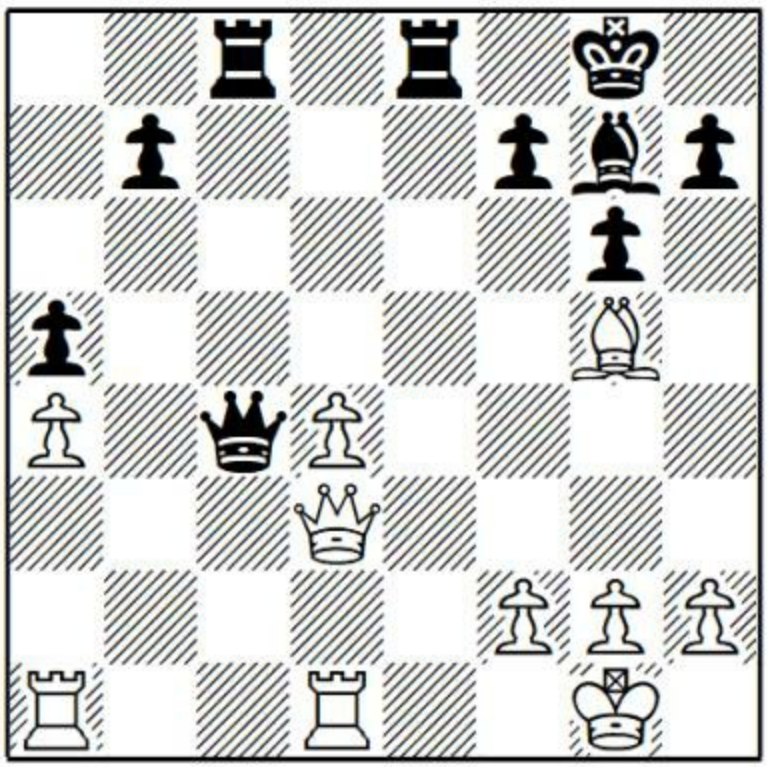
44 ... Ra1+!

This is not going to be business as usual. White must have expected a repetition draw with the fault line 44 ... Qa5+? 45 Ra4 Qd8 46 Rg4 (threat: Rg8+) 46 ... Qa5+ 47 Ra4 Qd8 48 Rg4.

45 Kxa1 Bxb2+! 46 Kxb2 Qxh6 0-1

White resigned just a move later.

224) L.Aronian-P.Svidler
Tal Memorial, Moscow 2006



Black to play

Level 1

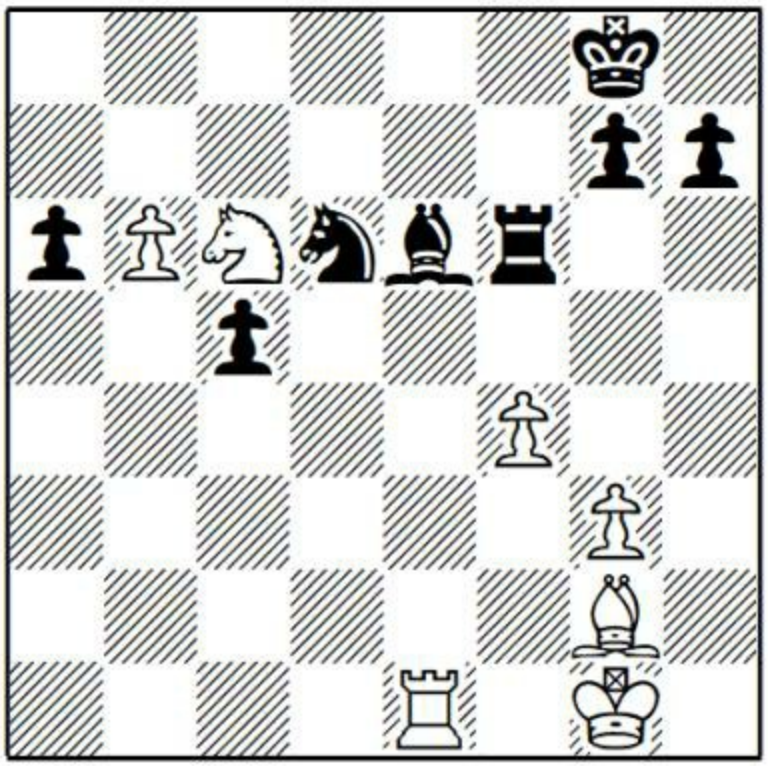
Even great players sometimes overlook the simple. What did Aronian overlook?

Answer: Bang down a rook on e1, overloading the defender of White's queen.

24 ... Re1+ 0-1

My mother taught me to count to 10, in order to calm down when I am angry. I have a bad feeling Levon needed to count to one million, for overlooking this simple tactic. 25 Rxe1 Qxd3 wins.

225) Wang Yue-S.Agdestein
Amsterdam 2008



White to play

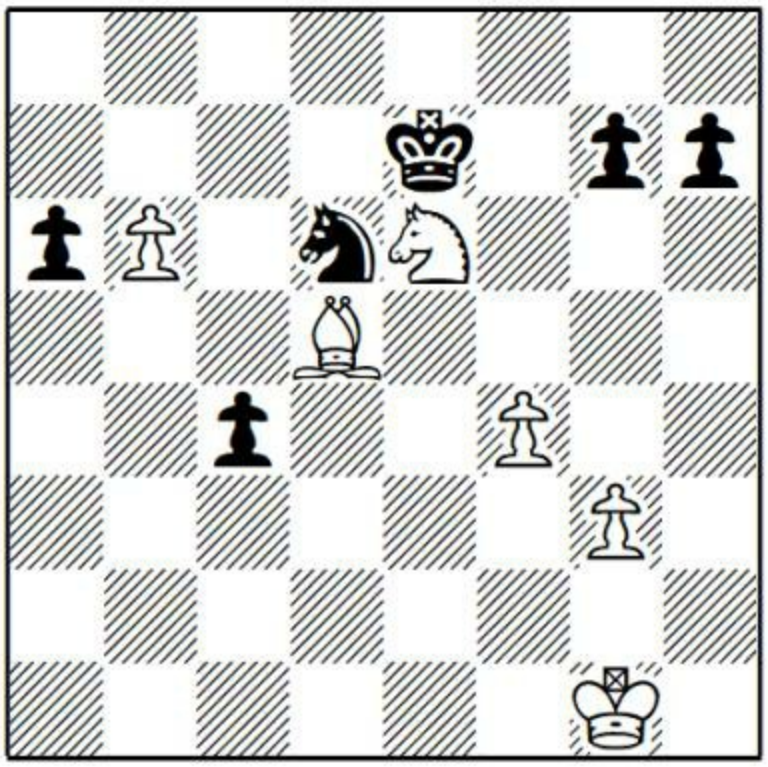
Level 2.5

This is the kind of position which controls the players, and not the other way around. How did White force a win?

Answer: Step 1: Decoy Black's rook to e6 with an exchange sacrifice.

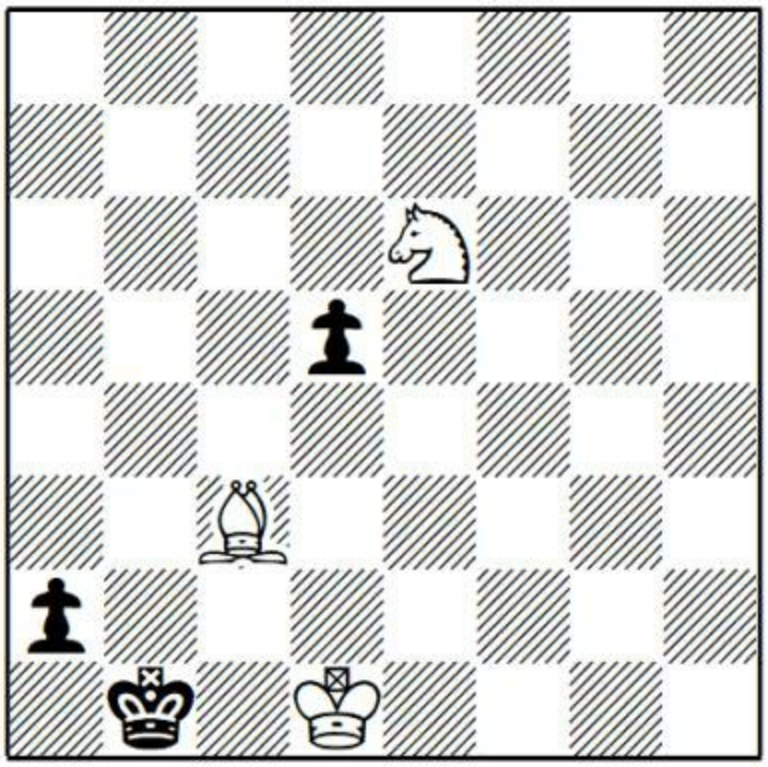
31 Rxe6! Rxe6 32 Bd5

Step 2: Pin Black's rook.
32 ... Kf7 33 Nd8+
Step 3: Double attack.
33 ... Ke7 34 Nxe6 c4



White to play
Level 1
The c-pawn needs to learn that it really doesn't work when you try to lie to someone smarter than you. What is White's strongest move?
35 Bxc4! 1-0
Answer: Step 4: Overloaded defender/pawn promotion. The bishop can't be touched since 35 ... Nxc4 36 b7 promotes.

226) M.Minski
Topko JT, 2015



White to play

Level 4

Black threatens an immediate draw by promoting the a-pawn. Can White win?

Answer: Attraction.

1 Ba1! d4!

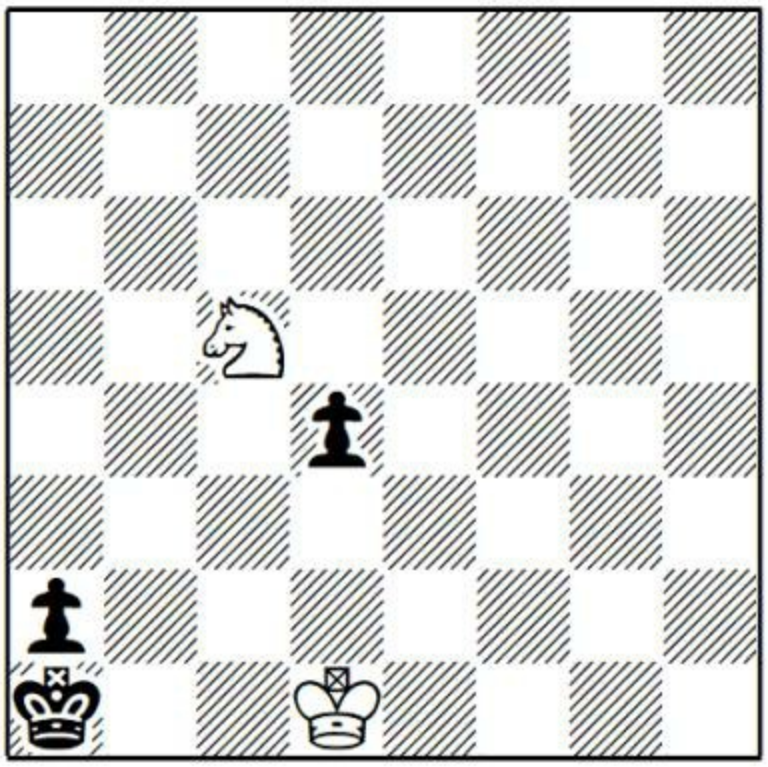
Or 1 ... Kxa1 2 Kc1 d4 3 Nc5 d3 4 Nb3 mate.

2 Nc5!

2 Nxd4? Kxa1 3 Kc1 is stalemate.

2 ... Kxa1

With 2 ... d3 3 Nb3 d2 4 Bd4 a1Q 5 Nxa1 White picks up the final black pawn and will mate with bishop and knight.



White to play

Level 2

We can still blow it if we get careless. What is White's correct continuation?

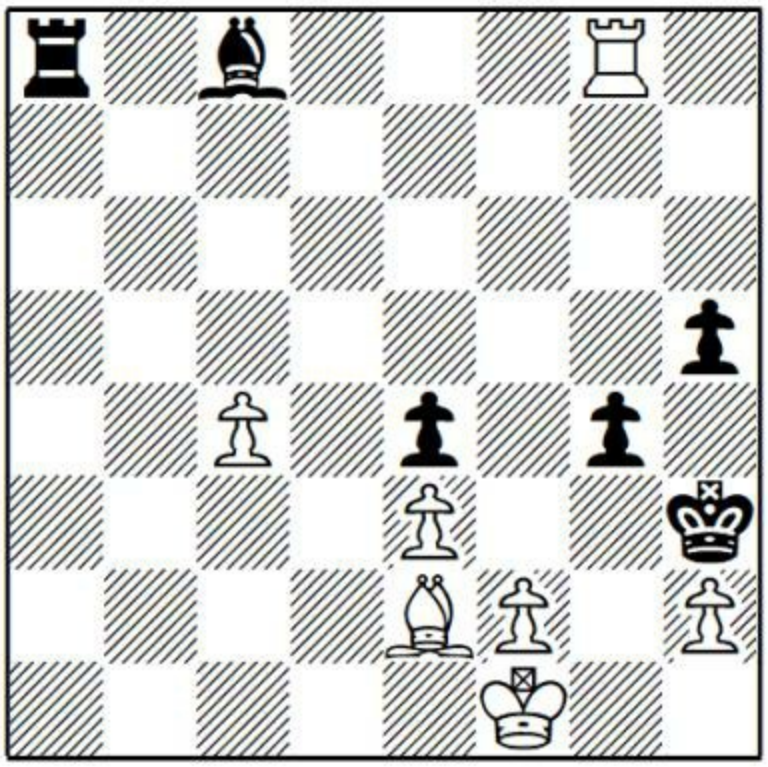
Answer: **8 Kc1!**

The king must move to c1, since c2 allows Black a draw after 8 Kc2?? d3+! 9 Nxd3 and stalemate.

8 ... d3 9 Nb3 mate

227) J.Duda-Yu Yangyi

Hamburg 2019



White to play

Level 3

Whose king is more vulnerable, Black's or White's? The answer is Black's king. How did GM Duda either force mate, or a decisive win of material?

Answer: Decoy/pinned piece.

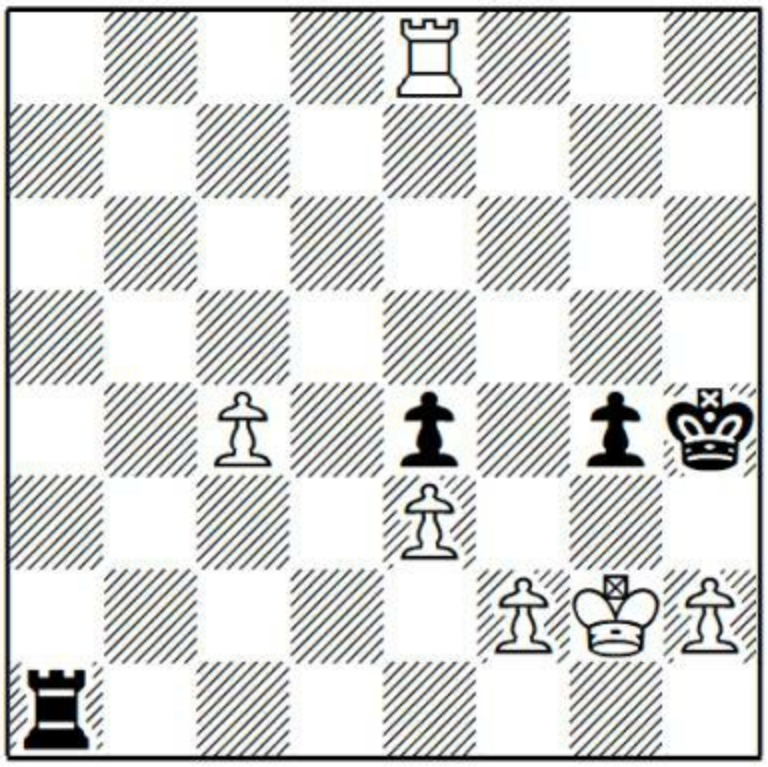
33 Bxg4+! Kh4

Instead, 33 ... Bxg4 loses to 34 Rxa8. Even worse is the line opening 33 ... hxg4??. What did Darwin say about *un*natural selection? This move says: "Let's get this over with, shall we?" 34 Rh8 mate.

34 Rxc8 Ra1+ 35 Kg2 hxg4

35 ... Kxg4 36 Rf8! followed by Rf4+ and Rxe4 wins the e4-pawn.

36 Re8! 1-0

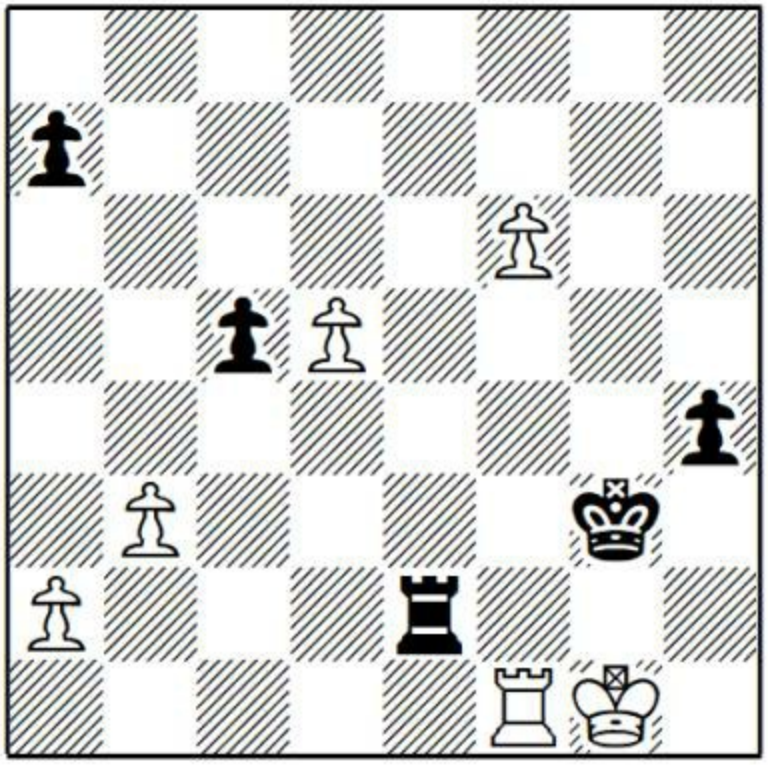


Black will soon be three pawns down.

7) Defensive Combinations

You are storming the beach at Normandy, with bullets whizzing around you, killing and wounding your comrades with alarming frequency. Then your sergeant yells: “Take cover!”. That is where we are in this chapter. When we use the term ‘heroism’ we automatically think of a brave, offensive action. Yet there also exists defensive heroism, when one side is willing to incur risk to benefit elsewhere on the board.

228) M.Euwe-J.Addicks
Amsterdam 1923



White to play
Level 3

Black threatens to negate White's surging passed f-pawn with perpetual check. How did Euwe deal with this issue and force a win?

Answer: Rook sacrifice/defensive move/interference.

39 Rf3+!

How annoying for Black when his opponent refuses to comply on demand. Giving away the rook dislocates Black's attempted perpetual check threat. Secondly, White clogs the f-file with Black's king blocking ... Rf2 ideas.

Instead, 39 f7? ignores the issue and 39 ... Rg2+ 40 Kh1 Rh2+ 41 Kg1 Rg2+ is perpetual check, and 39 Rd1? Rg2+ 40 Kh1 Rh2+ 41 Kg1 Rg2+ 42 Kf1 Rf2+ 43 Ke1 Rxf6 44 d6 Rf8 45 d7 Rd8 46 Kf1 Kf4 47 Kg2 Ke5 48 Kh3 Ke6 49 Kxh4 Rxd7 50 Rxd7 Kxd7 51 Kg4 Kd6 52 Kf4 Kd5 53 Ke3 c4 54 bxc4+ Kxc4 also leads to a draw.

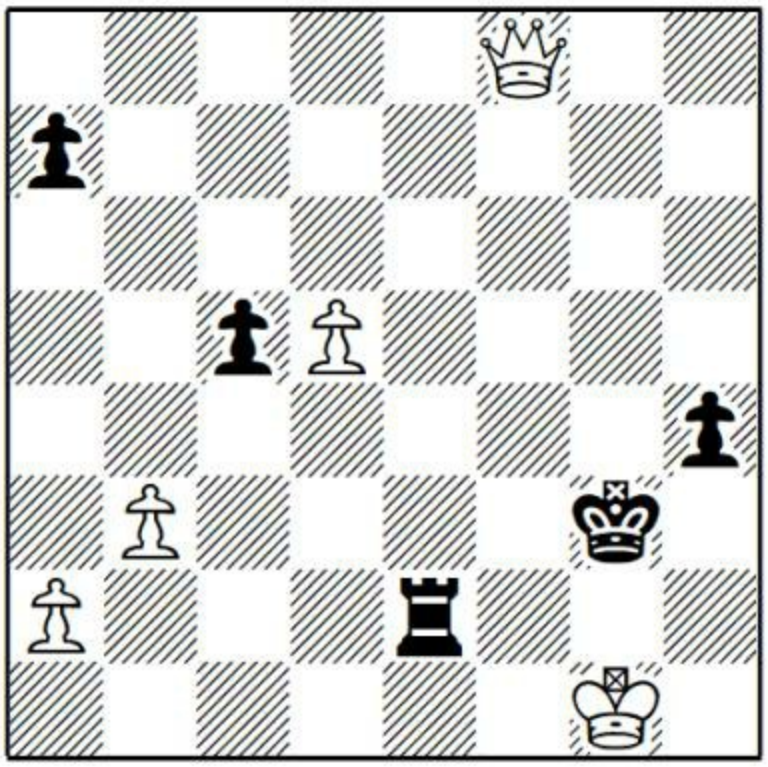
39 ... Kxf3

Black's unfortunate king is the child who stands on tiptoes, unable to view the parade, since the crowd of adults is in his way. On f3, he interferes with the black rook's attempt to halt the f-pawn's promotion.

40 f7 Kg3

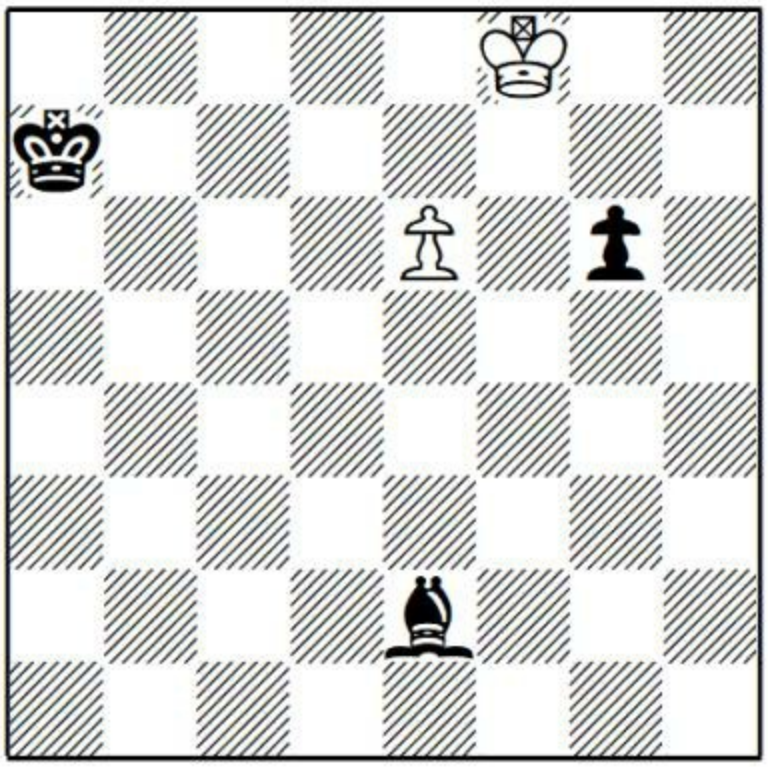
After 40 ... Re1+ 41 Kh2 Re2+ 42 Kh3 Black's checks run out.

41 f8Q! 1-0



Following 41 ... Re1+ 42 Qf1 Rxf1+ 43 Kxf1 h3 44 Kg1! Kf4 45 d6 White promotes.

229) R.Reti
Kölnische Volkszeitung, 1928



White to play

Level 5

White's king is unable to catch Black's passed g-pawn, while Black's bishop easily stops the promotion of White's e-pawn. Don't despair. White has a hidden route to save the game:

Answer: Start with an unnatural move which actually blocks our own passed pawn.

1 Ke7!!

The only drawing path: 1 e7? Bb5 2 Kf7 g5 wins for Black, as does 1 Kf7? g5 2 e7 Bb5.

1 ... g5 2 Kd6!

Not 2 Kf6? g4 3 e7 Bb5 and Black wins.

2 ... g4

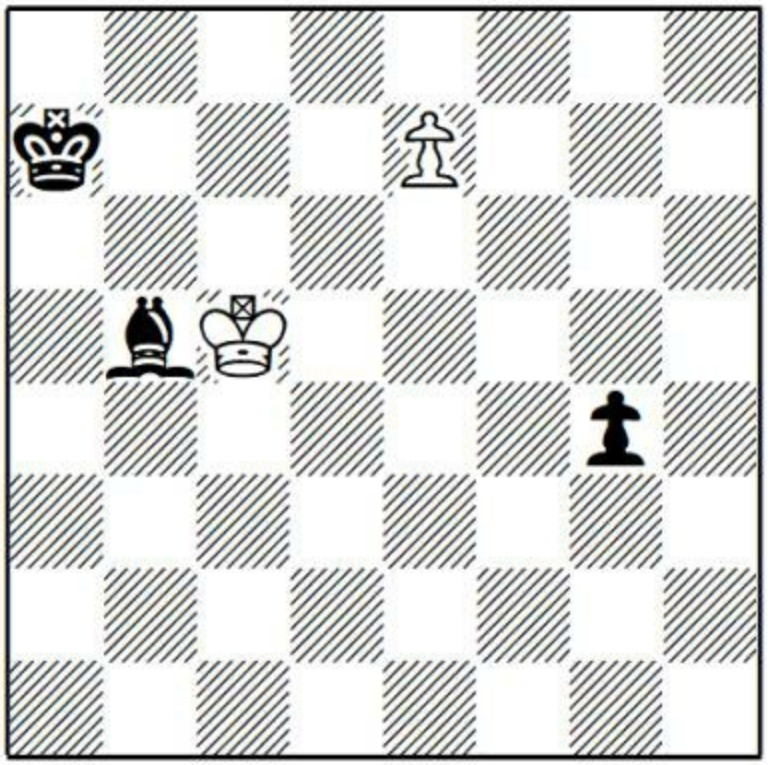
Alternatively:

a) 2 ... Bh5 3 Ke5 (threat: Kf5) 3 ... Bg6 (3 ... g4 4 Kf4 Kb6 5 e7 Kc7 6 e8Q Bxe8 7 Kxg4 draws too) 4 e7 g4 5 Kf4 Bh5 6 e8Q! (removal of the

guard) 6 ... Bxe8 7 Kxg4 draws.

b) 2 ... Bb5 3 Ke5 g4 4 Kf4 is a draw too.

3 e7 Bb5 4 Kc5!



This is the move which binds Reti's defensive combination together, since it gains a crucial tempo.

4 ... Bd7 5 Kd4

White's king is now within the square of Black's lone passed pawn.

5 ... Kb6

Or 5 ... g3 6 Ke3 Bc6 7 e8Q! Bxe8 8 Kf3 and draws.

6 Ke3 Kc5 7 Kf4 Kd6 8 e8Q!

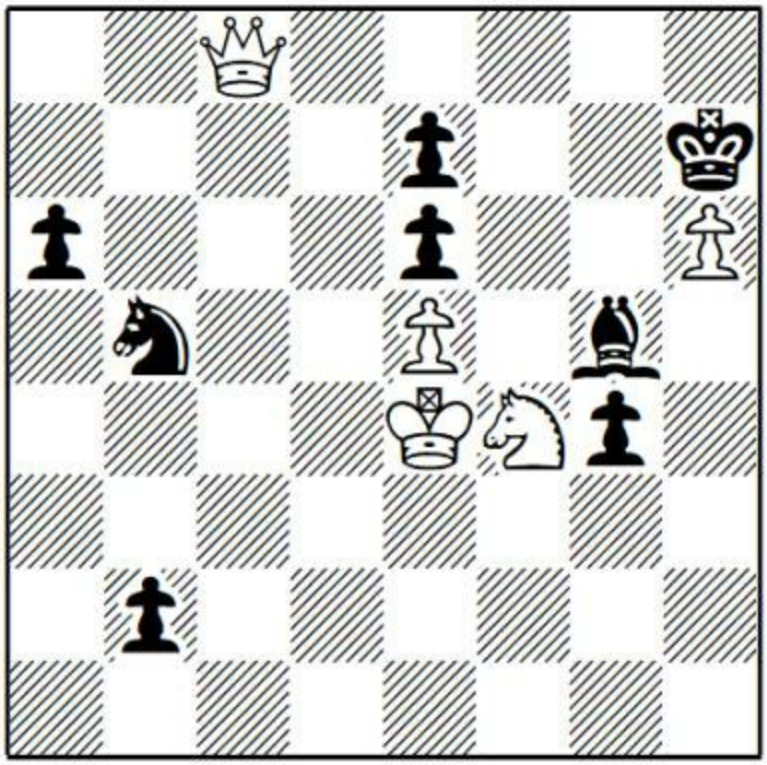
Removal of the guard. Just in time!

8 ... Bxe8 9 Kxg4

When someone loses a limb, the prosthesis is just not as efficient as the once whole limb. Black's extra piece doesn't do a damned bit of good if the final pawn has been removed from the board.

230) H.Mattison

Schweizerische Schachzeitung, 1923



White to play

Level 5

Herman Mattison lived a tragically short life, passing away at age 38 of tuberculosis and I weep at the thought of the lost, incredible studies he would have produced had he lived to old age. I'm currently going over all his studies, which are some of the most complex creations ever produced by the human mind. When everything shockingly comes together at the end, the study almost feels like a chance happening, rather than one with foresight of thought. How he produced these without the help of a chess engine is beyond my comprehension.

(It's actually about a level 6!) Black threatens to promote on b1. If we try and stop the pawn then Black can promote to a new queen and then when we take Black's queen, we get forked on c3. How do we solve this dilemma and draw as White?

Answer: Deliberately fall for Black's trap!

1 Qc2!!

The only way:

a) 1 Ke3? Bxf4+ 2 Kxf4 b1Q 3 Qxe6 Qc1+ 4 Kxg4 Qxh6 5 Qxe7+ Qg7+ 6 Qxg7+ Kxg7 and Black wins.

b) 1 Nd3? b1Q 2 Qg8+ Kxg8 3 h7+ Kf7!! (this clever non-capture totally throws off our stalemate trap; 3 ... Kxh7?? is stalemate) 4 h8Q Nc3+ 5 Kd4 Ne2+. Now all of the white king's projected flight paths fail: 6 Ke4 Qb7 mate, 6 Kc4 Qb5 mate or 6 Kc5 Qb5 mate,

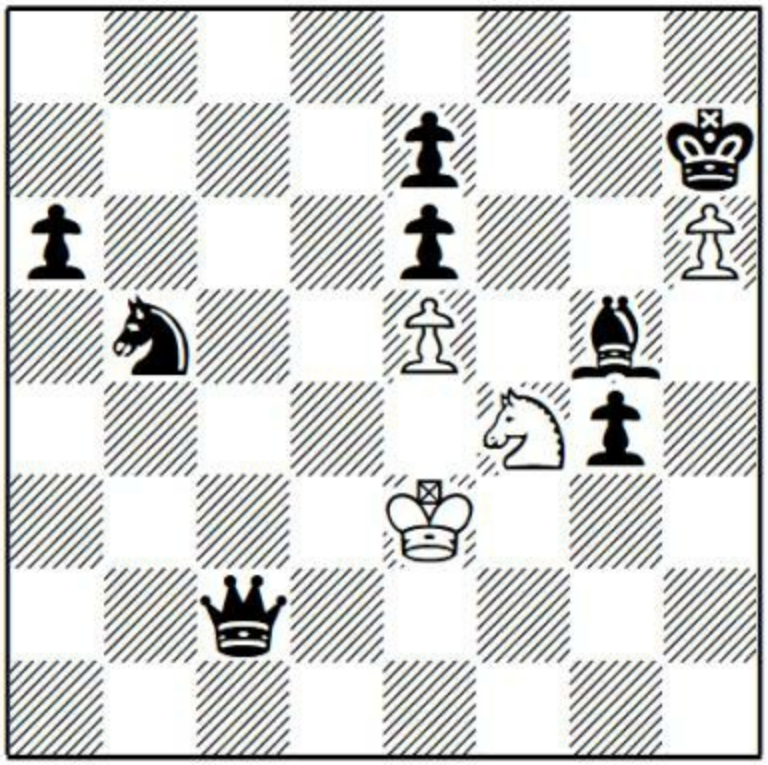
1 ... b1Q!

1 ... b1B is met with 2 Nd3!! Bxc2 stalemate (after 2 ... Nd6+?? 3 exd6 Bxc2 4 d7 Bxd3+ 5 Kxd3 g3 6 d8Q g2 7 Qd4! Kxh6 8 Qg1 White wins).

2 Ke3+!!

If the tumour is benign, then does it really need to be removed? 2 Qxb1? is met with 2 ... Nc3+ 3 Kd4+ Nxb1. Black wins.

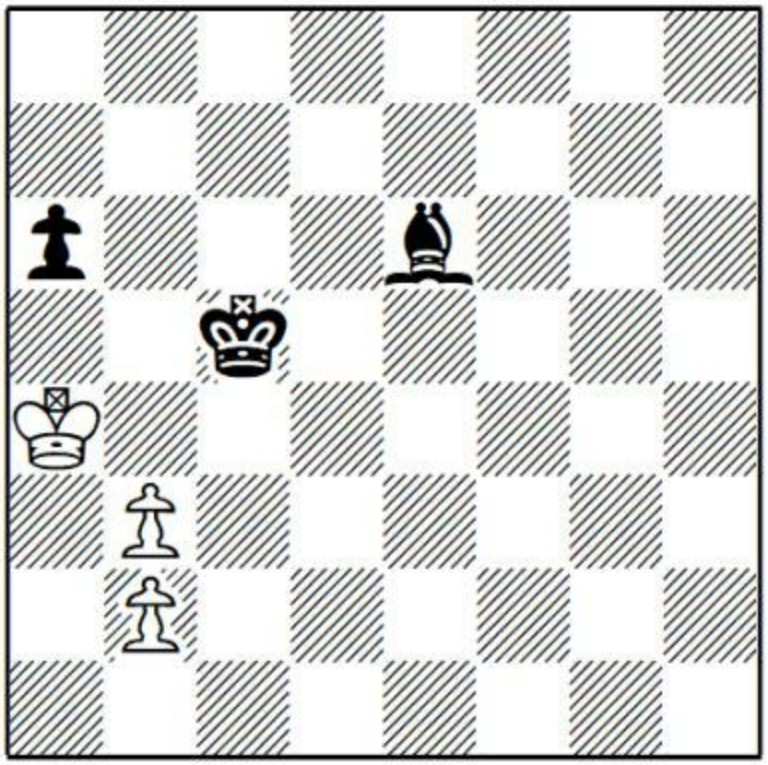
2 ... Qxc2



Black's desire is dearly bought. Stalemate! I was originally going to post

this one in the Stalemate chapter, yet the incredible defensive sidelines convinced me that it actually belonged in this chapter.

231) A.Wotawa
Schachzeitung, 1935



White to play
Level 5

This is an absolutely remarkable study, in that throughout, the side with inferior force seems to dominate and bully the side with the extra piece. It's almost as if Wotawa altered the expression to: Beggars *can* be choosers!

If White had no pawns and the king was on a1, the game is dead drawn, due to bishop and wrong colour rook pawn. However, White's pawns on the board greatly complicate the issue. How does White surmount this obstacle to hold the draw?

Answer: **1 Ka5!**

Timing is everything. After 1 b4+? Kb6 2 b3 Bf5 3 Ka3 Kc6 4 Ka4 Bd3 5 Ka3 Kd5 6 Kb2 Kd4 7 Ka2 Kc3 8 Ka3 Kc2! (8 ... Bb5 9 Ka2 Kxb4?? - material is not the be-all, end-all in a chess game; Black actually needs White to keep the b-pawns for a while - 10 Ka1 Ka3 11 Kb1 Bd3+ 12 Ka1 Be4 13 b4 Bd3 14 b5! draws, since one capture leads to stalemate, while the other leaves a theoretically drawn rook pawn and wrong-coloured bishop ending) 9 Ka2 Kc1 10 Ka3 (10 Ka1 Bb1! 11 b5 axb5 is not stalemate; White still has a move and after 12 b4 Bd3 there's no more wrong-coloured rook pawn and bishop, so Black wins) 10 ... Kb1 11 Ka4 Ka2 12 Ka5 Kxb3 13 Kb6 Kxb4 the a-pawn promotes and Black wins.

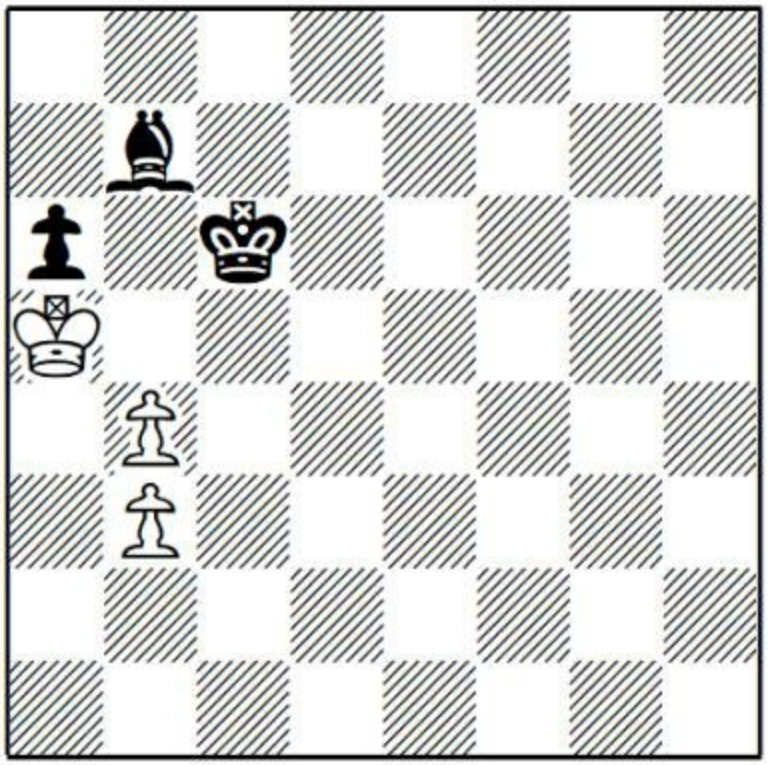
1 ... Bc8 2 b4+ Kc6!

2 ... Kc4? allows White to draw immediately with 3 b3+! Kxb3 4 b5, eliminating Black's final pawn.

3 b3!

Not 3 b5+? axb5 4 b4 Bd7!. No more stalemate. White loses.

3 ... Bb7



White to play

Level 4

How does White force the draw?

Answer: **4 b5+!!**

If your venture is modest, then your overhead will be low. 4 Ka4? throws it away: 4 ... Kb6 5 Ka3 Be4 6 Kb2 Kc6 7 Ka3 Kd5 8 Ka4 Bd3 9 Ka3 Kd4 10 Kb2 Be4 11 Ka3 Kc3 12 Ka2 Kc2 13 Ka3 Bd3 14 Ka2 Kc1 15 Ka3 Kb1 16 Ka4 Kb2 17 Ka5 Kxb3 18 Kb6 Kxb4 and Black promotes the a-pawn.

4 ... axb5 5 b4!

A leper can still weaponize his open sores. Unbelievably, the side with the extra piece is the one in zugzwang.

5 ... Ba8

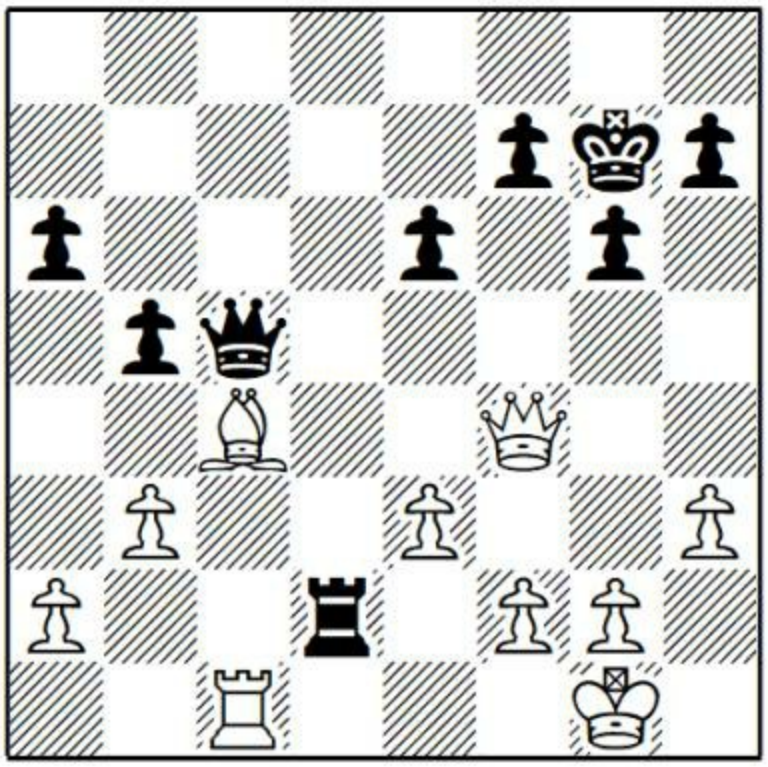
5 ... Bc8 is immediate stalemate.

6 Ka6 Bb7+ 7 Ka5

Black is forced to either stalemate by moving the bishop to c8, or take a repetition draw by endlessly shuffling the bishop from b7 to a8 and back.

232) B.Gelfand-Y.Balashov

USSR Championship, Sverdlovsk 1987



White to play

Level 2

Gelfand reached the sink-or-swim moment. Balashov will draw if White loses his extra piece. White's extra bishop is pinned. Do you see a way for White to hang on to his extra piece?

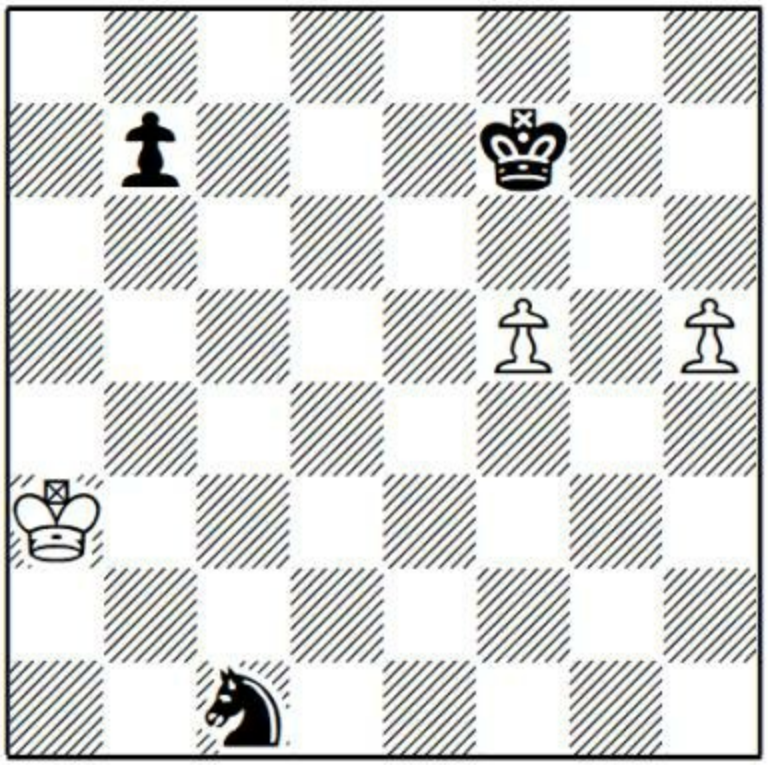
Answer: Defensive move/discovered attack/clearance.

33 e4! 1-0

Have you ever believed you owned something and then realized you never owned it at all? This is that moment for Balashov. He will not regain his lost piece, as he may have previously believed. This gains a tempo on Black's rook, but also creates a connection for White's queen to the c1-rook, effectively unpinning. After 33 ... Qd4 34 Bf1 White stays up a piece, 33 ... Rxa2 34 b4! picks off the a2-rook, via a discovered attack and 33 ... Rb2 34 Bxe6! is another discovered attack, and wins.

233) B.Gulko-N.Short

Novgorod 1995



Black to play

Level 3

Gulko's position is not on its knees just yet, if his king can win Short's final pawn. Black's king cannot be of assistance to the b7-pawn, since he is tied down defending against White's kingside passers. So logic tells us the hero will be Black's knight. How did Nigel save his final pawn?

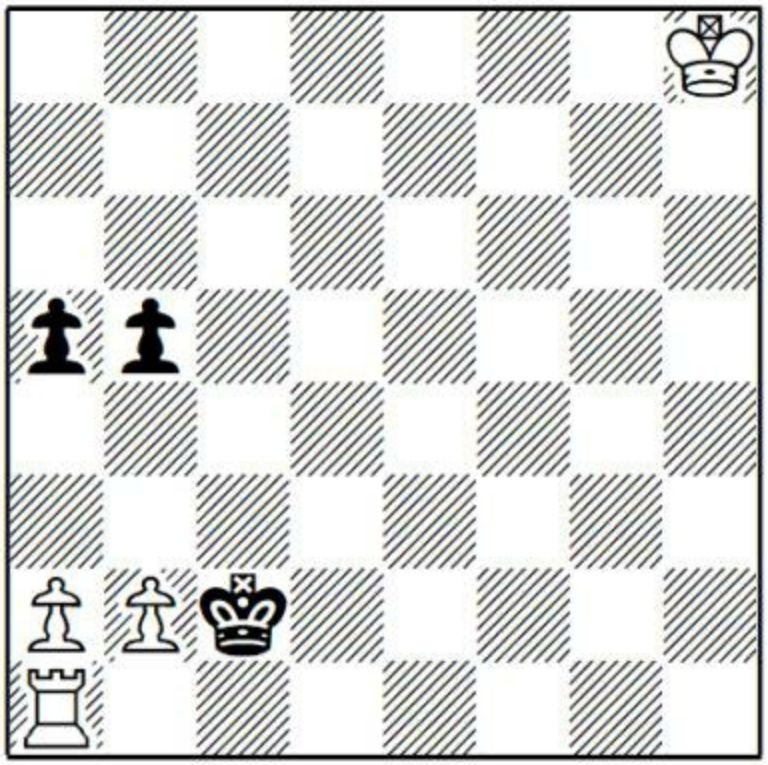
Answer: Manoeuvre the knight to d6.

56 ... Ne2! 57 Kb4 Nd4 58 Kc5 Nxf5 0-1

After 59 Kb6 Nd6 (whew! love conquers all, even if it sometimes requires a bit of assistance) 60 Kc5 (or 60 Kc7 b5! when Black promotes) 60 ... Nc8! Black secures the b-pawn and White is left destitute.

234) P.Benko

Vergio, 1999



White to play

Level 5

My buddy and former editor GM John Emms posted this on his Facebook page. Normally when he posts, I look at the position for three seconds and blurt out an idiotic answer. Not this time. I knew that when it involves a study by Pal Benko, deceit of the highest order awaits. So I took my sweet time, solved it and posted (for once!) the correct answer.

Wait a minute. Why are *we* as White defending, when we are up a rook? Some dangers are unseen, yet felt. Take a look at the position of the kings. Our king is on vacation a million miles away, while Black's king is about to gleefully dine on our queenside pawns. There is only a single path to victory. How should White proceed?

Answer: Start by pushing our a-pawn two squares.

1 a4!

The cautious 1 b3? allows Black to hold a draw with 1 ... Kb2 2 Rh1

Kxa2 3 Rh5 (or 3 Rh3 Kb2! 4 Kg7 a4 5 b4 a3 6 Kf6 a2 7 Rh2+ Kb3 8 Rh1 Kxb4 9 Ke5 Kb3 10 Kd4 Kb2 11 Rh2+ Ka3 12 Rh1 Kb2 and a draw) 3 ... b4! 4 Rxa5+ Kxb3 5 Kg7 Kc3 6 Kf6 b3 7 Ke5 b2 8 Rb5 Kc2, as does 1 Rh1? Kxb2 2 Rh5 Kxa2 3 Rxb5 a4 4 Kg7 White's king is too slow. 4 ... a3 5 Kf6 Ka1 6 Ke5 a2 and, again, it's a draw.

1 ... Kxb2

Instead, 1 ... b4 2 Rh1 Kxb2 3 Rh5 Ka3 4 Rxa5 b3 5 Kg7 b2 6 Rb5 wins.

2 Ra3!!

Defensive move/attraction. In composed works it's a myth to believe that we *decide* how we are going to play chess. In positions of 100% mathematical precision, there is only one correct answer. This move is exceptionally difficult to find. The move gains a tempo in the mutual promotion race.

2 axb5? is a distracted peripheral issue: 2 ... Kxa1 3 b6 a4 4 b7 a3 5 b8Q a2 is a draw.

2 ... Kxa3

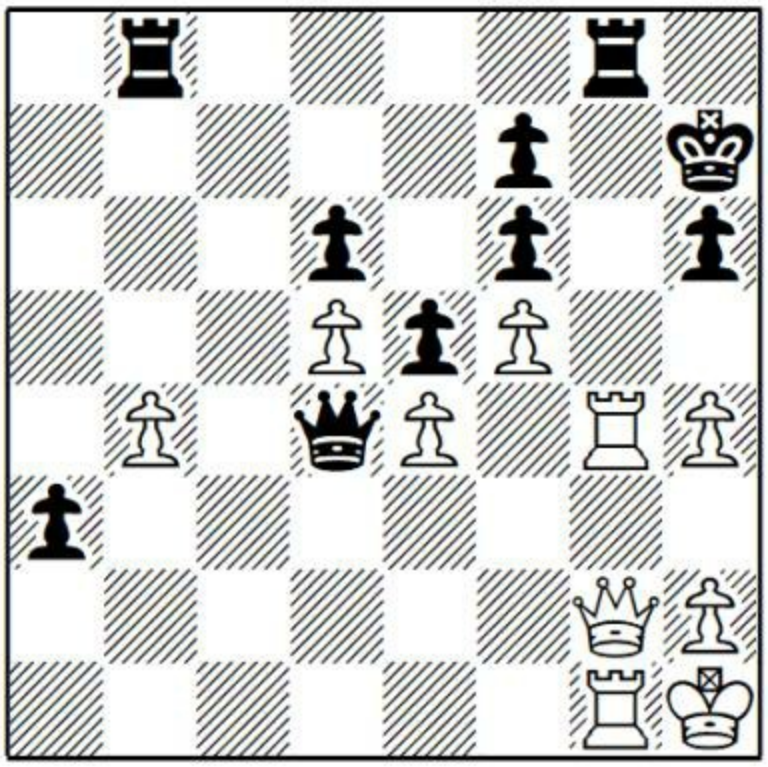
A chess player should think long before accepting a gift from an enemy. Declining the rook also fails: 2 ... b4 3 Rh3 b3 4 Rh5 Ka3 5 Rxa5 b2 6 Rb5 wins.

3 axb5 a4 4 b6 Kb2 5 b7 a3 6 b8Q+

White wins. If Black's pawn were on a2, this would be a draw, but here 6 ... Kc2 7 Qe5 Kb1 8 Qb5+ Kc2 9 Qa4+ Kb2 10 Qb4+ Ka2 11 Kg7 is zugzwang. Black's a-pawn falls.

235) B.Kreiman-L.Christiansen

U.S. Championship, Seattle 2002



Black to play

Level 4

The darkening sky above Black's position threatens rain as Larry's eyes anxiously glance above. Christiansen appears dead lost, since he must give up his queen to stave off mate. Yet he found a miracle save:

34 ... Qxg1+!!

The key defensive idea is to give up the queen, *before* swapping rooks on g4. Black loses if he inverts the order with 34 ... Rxg4??. This is a case of plowing the field and then not bothering to later plant seeds: 35 Qxg4 Qxg1+ 36 Qxg1 Ra8 (36 ... a2 37 Qa7 wins) 37 b5 a2 38 Qa1 when White pushes the b-pawn and wins.

35 Qxg1 Rxg4 36 Qxg4

Do you see the difference between this line and the variation where Black plays 34 ... Rxg4? In this version White's queen is offside on g4, while in the other, White gained a crucial tempo by having his queen stationed on the first rank, where it was able to halt and win Black's passed a-pawn.

36 ... a2

Don’t you hate it when some little snot begins to take on airs? White is actually quite fortunate that he can even draw here.

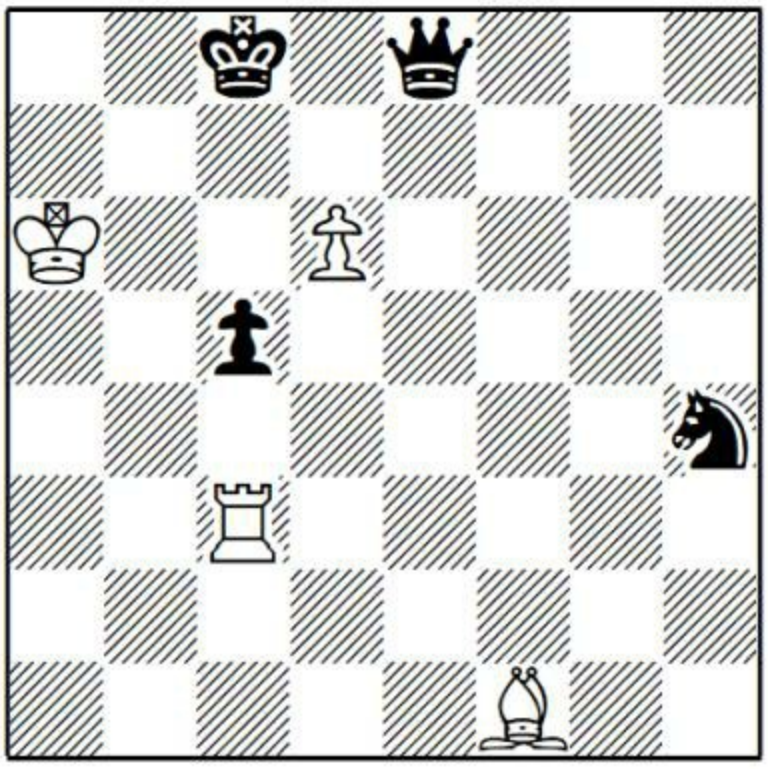
37 Qg1! ½-½

Kreiman finds the only way out, avoiding 37 Qd1?? Rxb4 38 Kg2 Rb1 39 Qh5 Kg7! 40 Qg4+ Kf8. No more queen checks and it’s time for White to resign.

After 37 Qg1! Rxb4 (threat: ... Rb1) 38 Qa7! (double attack on f7 and a2) 38 ... Rb1+ 39 Kg2 a1Q White is forced to deliver perpetual check with 40 Qxf7+.

236) L.Kubbel

Rigasche Zeitung, 1907



White to play

Level 4

White is down a queen. How can we still draw?

Answer: Step 1: Attraction.

1 d7+! Qxd7

1 ... Kxd7?? would be a gift: 2 Bb5+ Kd8 3 Rd3+ Ke7 4 Re3+ and it is White who wins.

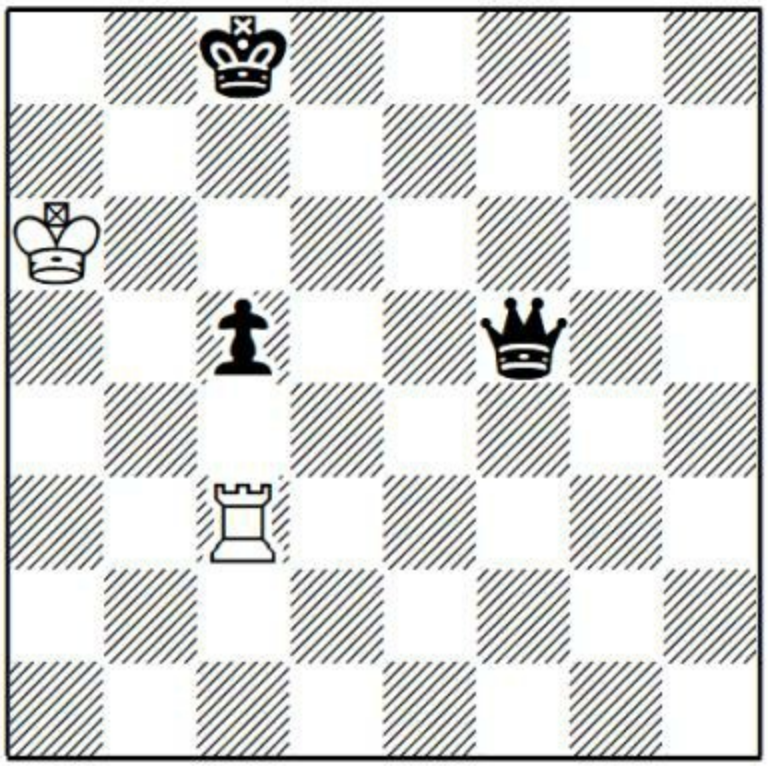
2 Bh3

OK, but Black has can still block the pin.

2 ... Nf5 3 Bxf5!

More clear than the also drawing 3 Rxc5+ Kd8 4 Bxf5.

3 ... Qxf5



White to play

Level 1

You need to find just one strong move to seal the draw. Fail to do so and you lose.

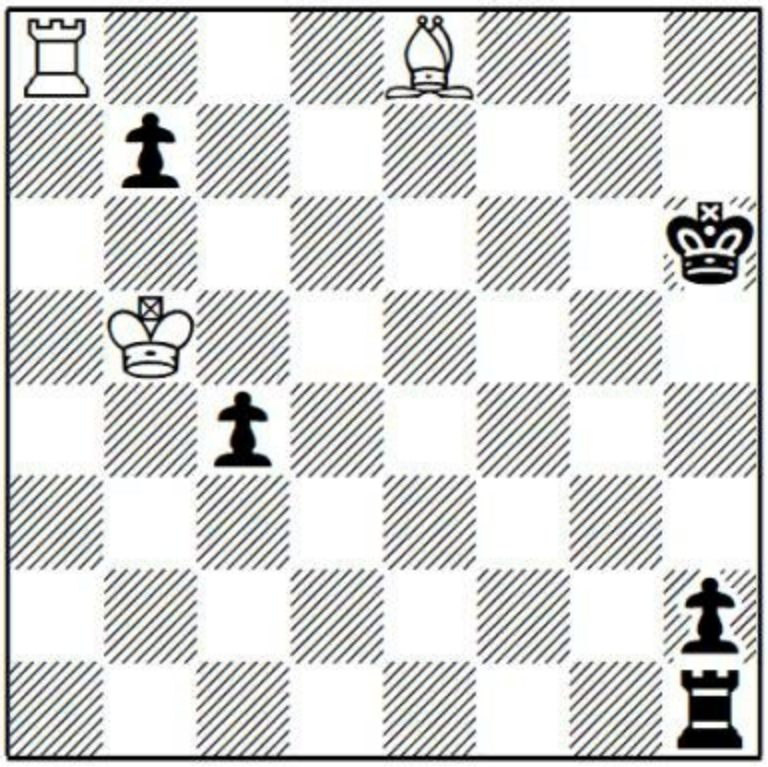
4 Rxc5+!

Answer: Attraction/stalemate.

4 ... Qxc5 ½-½

Don't always expect fair wages for your labours on the chess board. Black's extra queen does no good if it's stalemate. Meanwhile, White's lucky king walks away unharmed, from the smoking, twisted belly of the crash site.

237) V.Smyslov
Moi Etyudy, 2005



White to play

Level 5

White appears hopelessly lost. Look deeper and you may find White's miracle drawing idea:

Answer: Interference. Transfer the bishop to c6, which covers Black's promotion attempts.

1 Bc6!!

Blind luck can make us look ever so wise in our ignorance. When I first

attempted to crack this problem, I was 100% certain this was the first move. I had no idea why, though. Even though White sinks even further into debt, the move accomplishes the following:

1. Black is forced to capture, thereby breaking up the queenside passers.

2. White's king is given a safe zone, protected from black rook checks from above and below:

a) 1 Kc5? b6+! 2 Kc6 (if 2 Kxb6 Rb1+ 3 Bb5 Kh7! 4 Ra7+ Kg6 or 2 Kd6 Rd1+ 3 Kc7 h1Q) 2 ... Re1 3 Bd7 h1Q+ and Black wins.

b) 1 Bd7? Kg7! (cutting off Rh8+) 2 Kc5 Rc1 when Black promotes and wins.

1 ... bxc6+

We always feel a bit better when we are able to inflict even slight suffering upon our opponent. Black's once connected queenside pawns are broken and vulnerable. 1 ... Rb1+ 2 Kxc4 Rc1+ 3 Kb3 bxc6 4 Rh8+ Kg5 5 Rxh2 is also drawn.

2 Kc5!

White's suffering is unremitting, yet somehow still endurable. This trick deprives Black of ... Rb1 check and then ... h1Q tricks, unlike:

a) 2 Kxc4?? Rc1+ 3 Kb3 h1Q wins.

b) 2 Kxc6?? Kg5 3 Ra2 Kf4 4 Kc5 Ke3! (White is in a kind of semi-zugzwang) 5 Rg2 Kd3 6 Rg3+ Kd2 7 Rg2+ Kc3 8 Rg3+ Kb2 9 Rg2+ Kb3 10 Rg3+ c3. The interference push wins.

2 ... Kg5

Instead, 2 ... c3 3 Ra2 is similar to the study's continuation and 2 ... Rc1 3 Rh8+ Kg5 4 Rxh2 c3 5 Kd4 Kf4 6 Re2 c5+ 7 Kd3 Kf3 8 Re3+ Kf2 9 Re2+ Kf1 10 Re3 c2 11 Kd2 Rd1+ 12 Kxc2 is drawn.

3 Ra2!

This ties Black's rook down to the h-pawn.

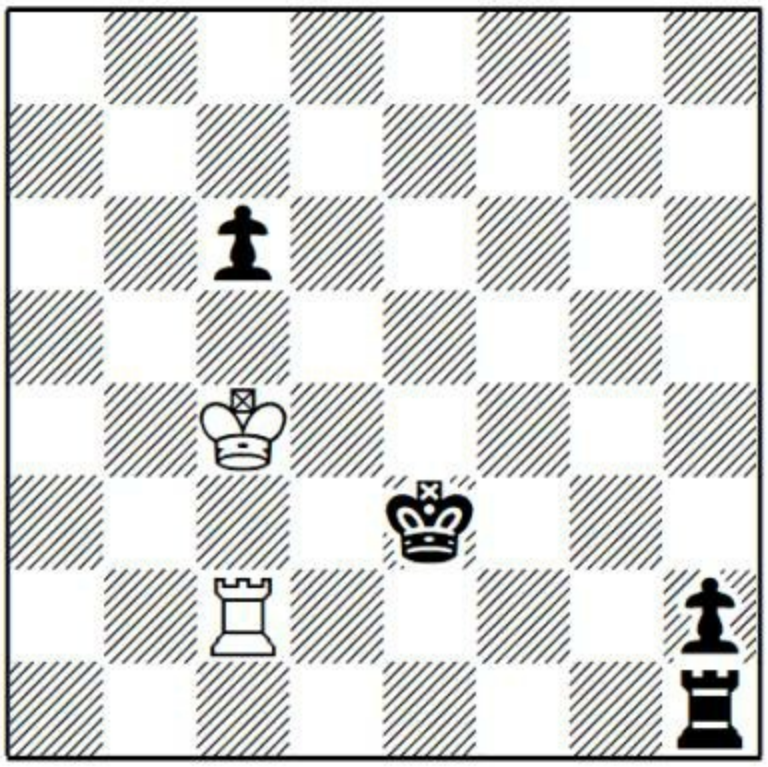
3 ... Kf4 4 Rc2!

Now Black's forward c-pawn can be captured by White's king, since Black is deprived of ... Rc1+ and ... h1Q tricks.

4 ... Kg3

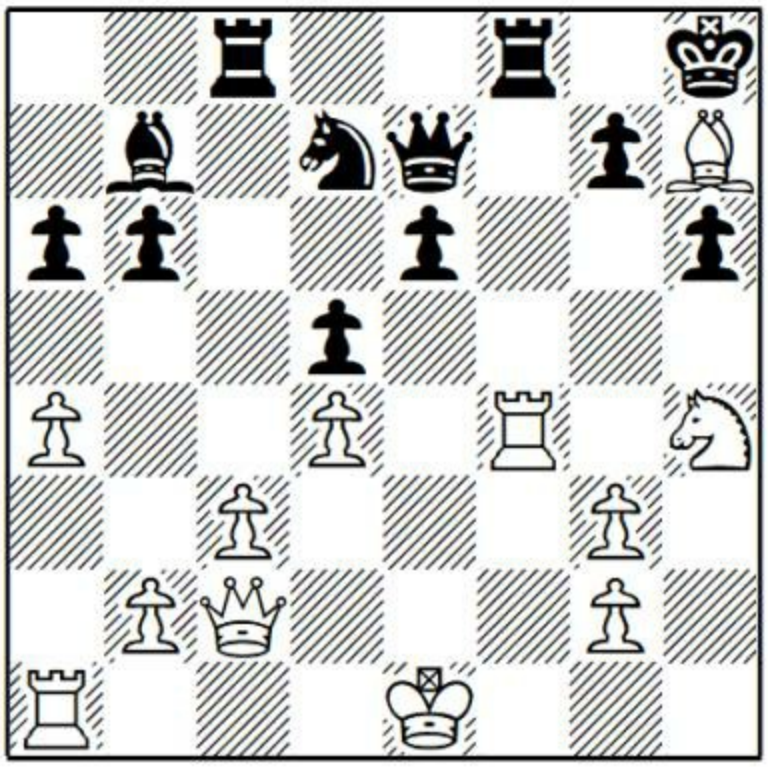
After 4 ... Ke3 5 Kxc4 White holds the draw with 5 ... Kf3 6 Kc5 Kg3 7 Rc3+ Kg4 8 Rc4+ Kg5 9 Rc2. Black is unable to make progress.

5 Rc3+ Kf2 6 Rc2+ Ke3 7 Kxc4



Black is unable to make progress since the rook is frozen on h1. If it moves away and White wins the h-pawn, the game is an easy draw: 7 ... Rd1 8 Rxh2 Rc1+ 9 Kb3 c5 10 Rh3+ Kd4 11 Kb2 Rg1 12 Kc2 c4 13 Ra3 Rg2+ 14 Kc1 c3 15 Ra8! is a standard Philidor's draw in the rook ending.

238) M.Carlsen-L.Aronian
St. Louis (rapid) 2019



Black to play

Level 4

Defeat is not a familiar experience for a reigning world champion. Like Tal before him, logic and caution were both victims in Magnus' divine madness, especially since even the unsound ideas and sacrifices often left their opponents hopelessly befuddled - but not always! Occasionally, especially in blitz or rapid games, Magnus allows his imagination to commandeer control over the game, no matter what the cost.

Carlsen played 21 Nh4? on his last move, threatening a mega-fork on g6. As it turns out, his plan is unsound. What should Aronian do about it?

Answer: Allow it! Black actually gets a material plus by deliberately losing his queen!

21 ... Rxf4!

Let's go feral! Instead, 21 ... Rf6? 22 Ng6+ Rxg6 23 Bxg6 leaves Black down the exchange and losing.

22 Ng6+ Kxh7 23 Nxe7+ Re4+!

Interference/zwischenzug. Black's rook isn't hanging after all.

24 Qxe4+

Expect disappointment when expectations were set too high at the outset. Magnus realized at this stage that his combination begun with 21 Nh4? had gone horrible awry. If 24 Kf2 Re8 (trapped piece) 25 Re1 Rxe7 26 Rxe4 dxe4 when Black has too much for the queen.

24 ... dxe4 25 Nxc8 Bxc8

Magnus is busted since he only has a rook for two minor pieces. Aronian converted efficiently:

26 b4

He hopes to generate counterplay by creating a queenside passed pawn.

26 ... Kg6

Black's king rushes over to the other side to help.

27 c4 Kf7 28 b5

White's rook needs open lines. Therefore White can consider 28 a5 bxa5 29 bxa5 Nf6 30 Rb1 Ke7 31 Rb8 Kd7 32 Kd2 Ne8 33 Ke3 Nd6 34 c5 Nc4+ 35 Kxe4 Kc7 36 Rb4 Nxa5 37 Rb6 Nc6. White is still busted, just not as much as in the game's continuation.

28 ... e5! 29 dxe5

After 29 d5 a5 Black's knight will sit beautifully on c5, tying White's rook down to the defence of a4.

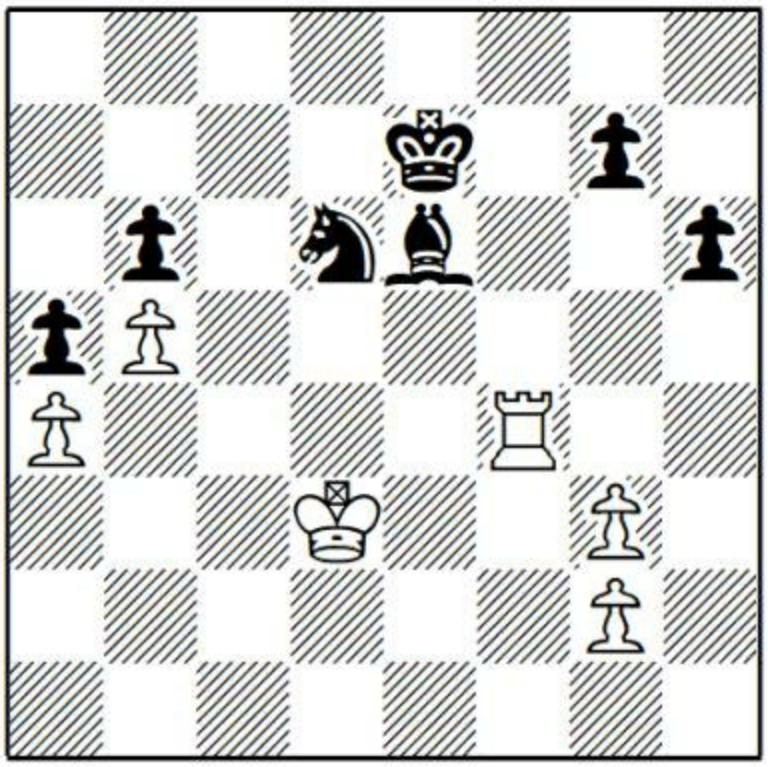
29 ... a5! 30 Rd1

Or 30 Rc1? Nxe5 and White's hoped for push to c5 is rudely met with a knight fork on d3.

30 ... Nxe5 31 Rd4

It doesn't help to invade the seventh rank: 31 Rd8 Be6 32 Rb8 Nxc4 and everyone is covered.

31 ... Be6 32 Rxe4 Nxc4 33 Ke2 Nd6 34 Rf4+ Ke7 35 Kd3



Black to play

Level 2

Come up with a winning plan for Black:

Answer: Transfer the knight to c5 and then win the a4-pawn by ganging up with ... Bb4 and ... Bxa4.

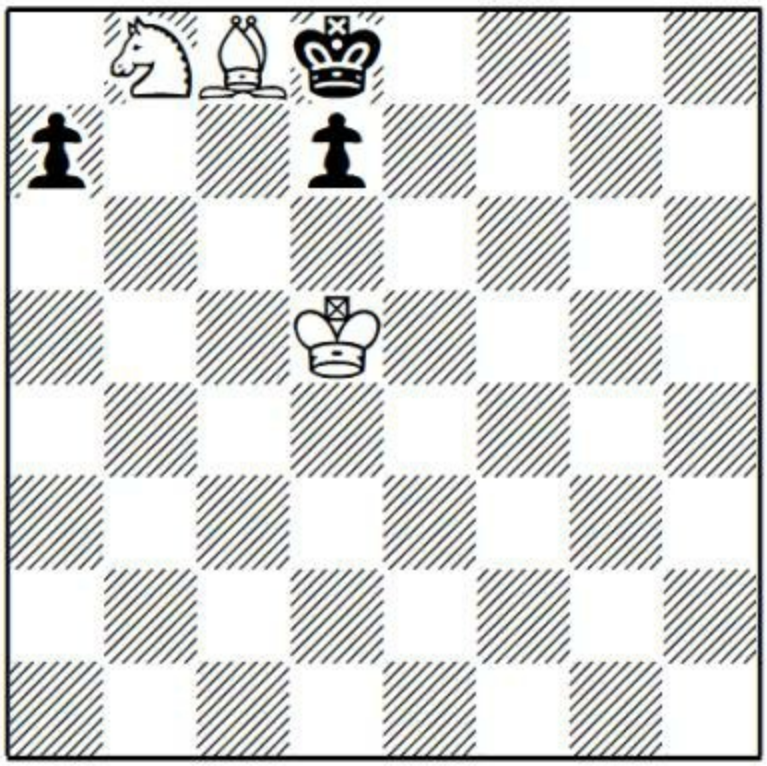
35 ... Nb7! 0-1

After 36 Ke3 Nc5 37 g4 Bb3 White's queenside pawns fall.

8) Deflection

Deflection is when one side forces an enemy defender to evacuate the occupied rank, file or square. In doing so the aggressor puts in danger either the enemy king, or a piece.

239) J.Gunst
Das Illustrierte Blatt, 1922



White to play
Level 4.5
This study shows the mystery embedded within our game. How can White possibly win, since our cranky, twisted position must lose one of the remaining minor pieces?

Answer: Step 1 *lose* a tempo by moving our bishop to b7 (rather than a6) to attract Black's king to c7.

1 Bb7!!

Not 1 Ba6? Kc7 2 Kc5 d6+!. This zwischenzug saves the game for Black: 3 Kd5 Kxb8 4 Kxd6 (or 4 Kc6 d5! 5 Kxd5 Kc7 and a draw) 4 ... Ka8! when White is unable to force mate in the corner since 5 Kc7 is stalemate.

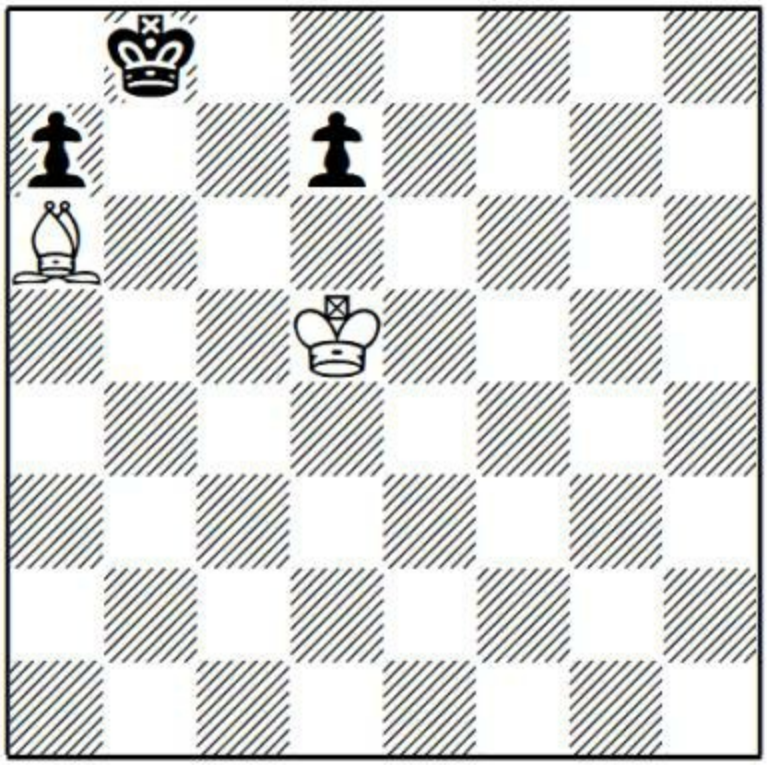
1 ... Kc7

Double attack. Now what? Both our pieces hang.

2 Ba6!

Only now do we move it to a6.

2 ... Kxb8



White to play

Level 1

White forces mate in 3:

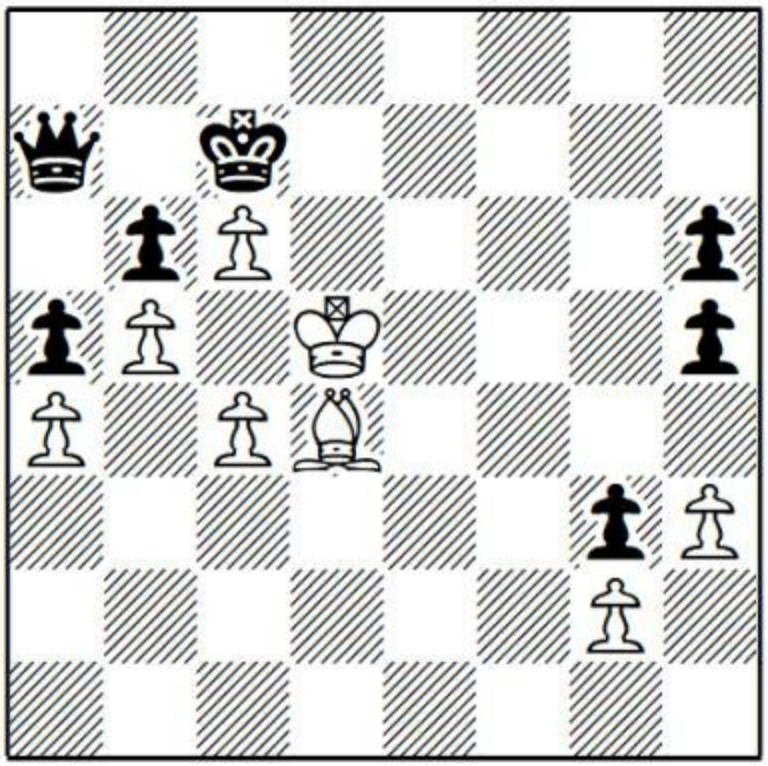
Answer: **3 Kd6!**

We simply drive Black's king into the corner and deliver mate on b7.

3 ... Ka8 4 Kc7 d5 5 Bb7 mate

Wait, this is the devil's work! Everyone knows that a lone king and bishop are unable to force checkmate upon a lone defending king. But the defending king isn't alone, is he? The exception, of course, is when a friendly pawn (Black's a-pawn) obstructs escape for the enemy king.

240) S.Kozlowski
Glos Poranny, 1931



White to play

Level 5

I tormented students with this study. Most eventually solved it, with hints from the teacher and lots of thinking time. White king and bishop dominate, except for one issue: Black is up a queen for a piece! How does White win?

Answer: Deflection/attraction.

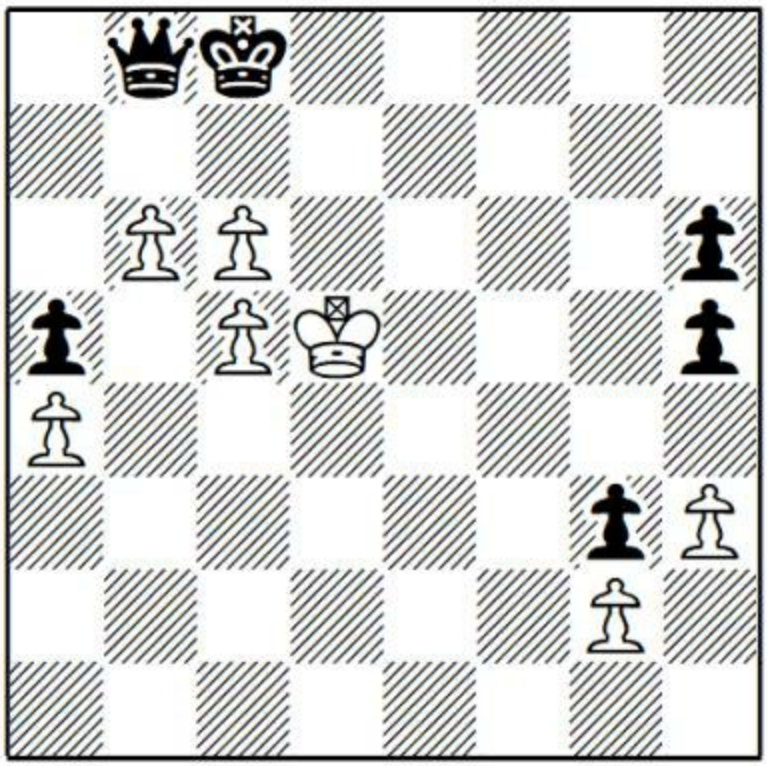
1 Bxb6+!!

The vast majority of my students went with the faulty 1 c5?, which is exactly the kind of mundane move we would make if we were White in a tournament game. The great benefit of training with composed works is that it opens our eyes to the hidden magic of our game, just beyond sight of the mundane, where most of us live. After 1 ... Kc8! 2 cxb6 Qf7+ Black's queen can give perpetual check.

1 ... Qxb6

1 ... Kxb6? goes down without a fight: 2 c5+! Kc7 3 b6+ Qxb6 4 cxb6+ Kxb6 5 Kd6 and wins.

2 c5 Qb8 3 b6+ Kc8



White to play

Level 2

We reach a critical phase of the study. How does White force the win?

Answer: Black's queen *must* be kept imprisoned. Therefore our king must guard the potential escape squares e5 and f4.

4 Ke4! h4

Instead, 4 ... Qa8 5 b7+ wins or 4 ... Kd8 5 c7+ and once again we win the king and pawn ending easily.

5 Kf5!

Only with this move do we maintain control over e5 and f4.

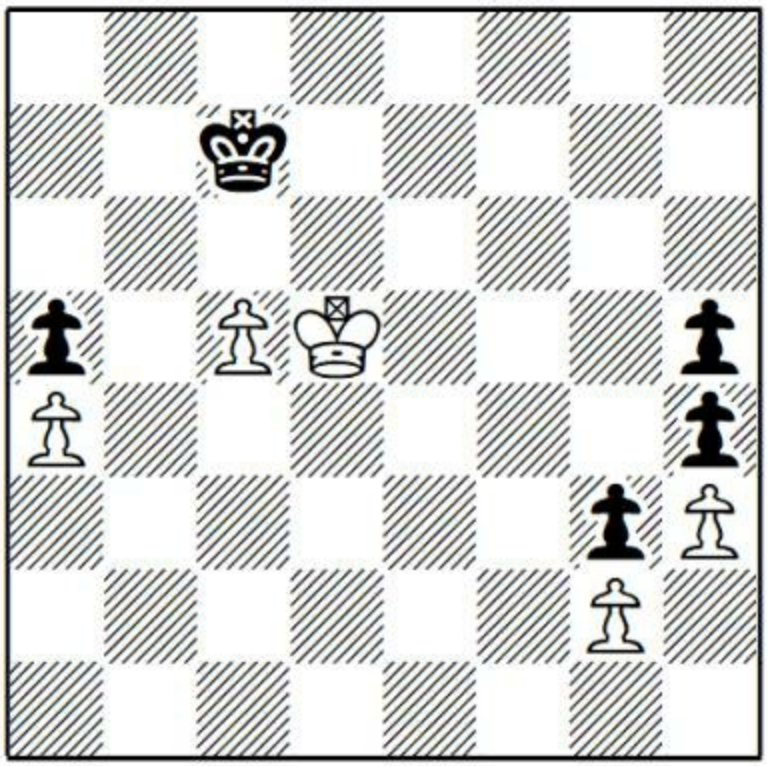
5 ... h5 6 Ke4!

We can do this all day. Black just ran out of stalling pawn moves.

6 ... Kd8

Or 6 ... Qa8 7 b7+ and wins.

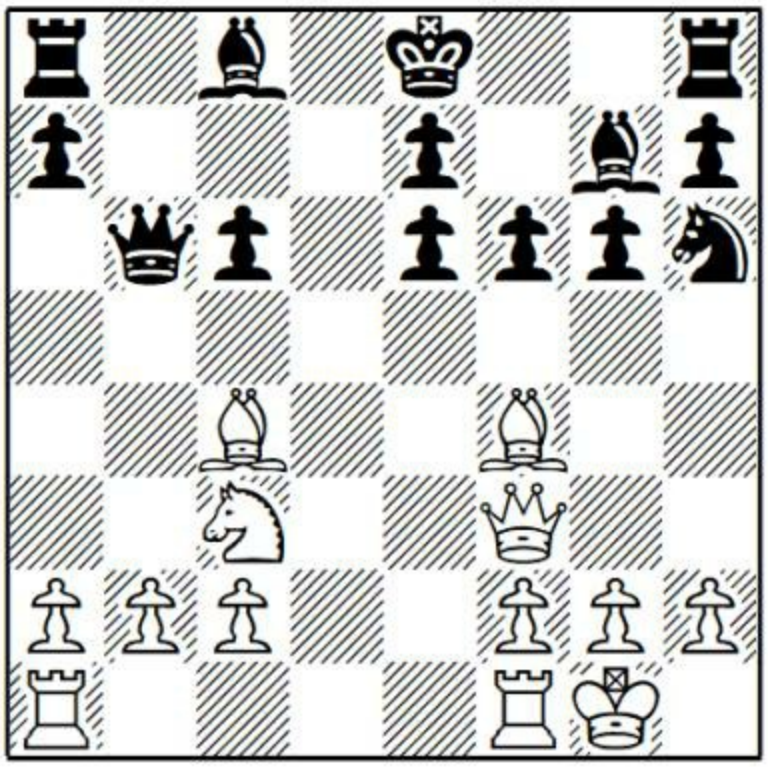
7 c7+ Qxc7 8 bxc7+ Kxc7 9 Kd5



Black's extra h-pawn is worthless since there is no way to produce a passed pawn from Black's kingside pawn majority. This means White is essentially up a pawn, with king position, with a trivially easy win. After 9 ... Kd7 10 c6+ Kc7 11 Kc5 Kc8 12 Kb6 we pick up the a-pawn as well.

241) R.Fischer-E.Bhend

Zurich 1959



White to play

Level 3.5

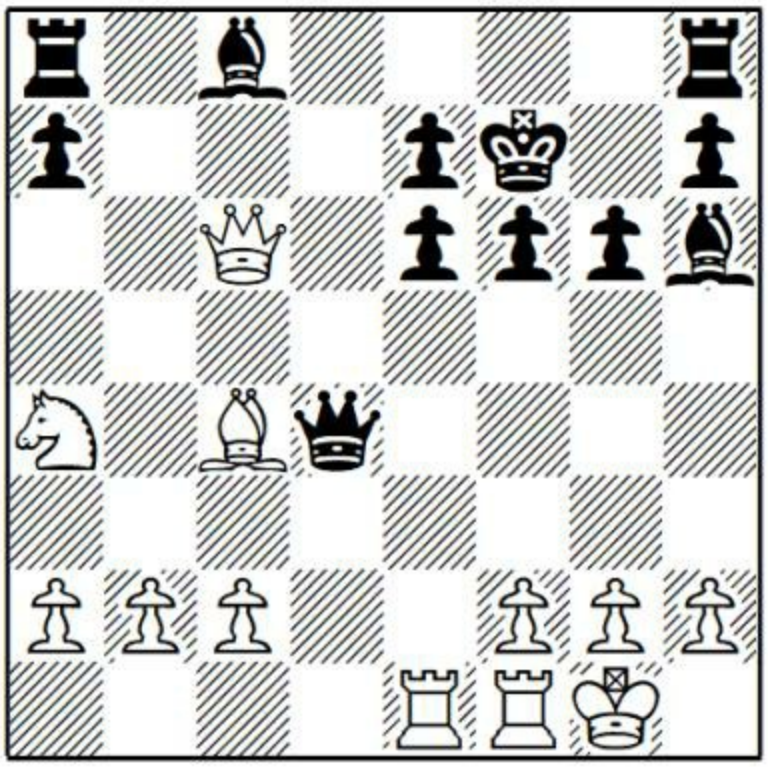
The question often arises: should we integrate and embrace trendy theory, or should we veer to non-theoretical side paths to essentially circumvent the opening? I have always sided with the latter (your writer isn't universally considered a profile in chess courage), while Bobby always went for the sharpest, trendiest theoretical paths for his era. Here he out booked his opponent in the opening. Now we need to come up with a plan. How did Fischer achieve a winning position?

Answer: Deflect the Black queen's control over c6 and c5.

13 Na4! Qd4

After 13 ... Qb7 14 Nc5 (double attack) 14 ... Qb6 15 Nxe6 Bxe6 16 Bxe6 Nf7 17 Be3! Qc7 18 Rad1 (threat: Rd7) 18 ... Rd8 19 Rxd8+ Nxd8 20 Bb3 Black is strategically busted, leaking on the light squares, unable to castle and nursing two isolanis on the queenside.

14 Bxh6! Bxh6 15 Qxc6+ Kf7 16 Rae1!?



Targeting e6. Bobby prefers initiative over material. White is also winning with the grubby 16 Qxa8 Qxc4 17 Qxa7.

16 ... Rb8 17 Bxe6+ Kg7 18 Bd5!

Threat: Rxe7+.

18 ... Bg5

Alternatively:

a) 18 ... Kf8 19 Rxe7! (annihilation of defensive barrier) 19 ... Kxe7 20 Qc7+ Bd7 21 Re1+ Kf8 22 Qd6+! Kg7 23 Qe7 mate.

b) 18 ... Rf8 19 Rxe7+ Kh8 20 Qc7 Qxd5 21 Rxh7+ Kg8 22 Rxh6 Bd7 23 Nc5 Rbd8 24 Rxg6+ Kf7 25 Rg3 when Black is crushed.

c) 18 ... e5?? 19 Qc7+ wins.

19 Re4

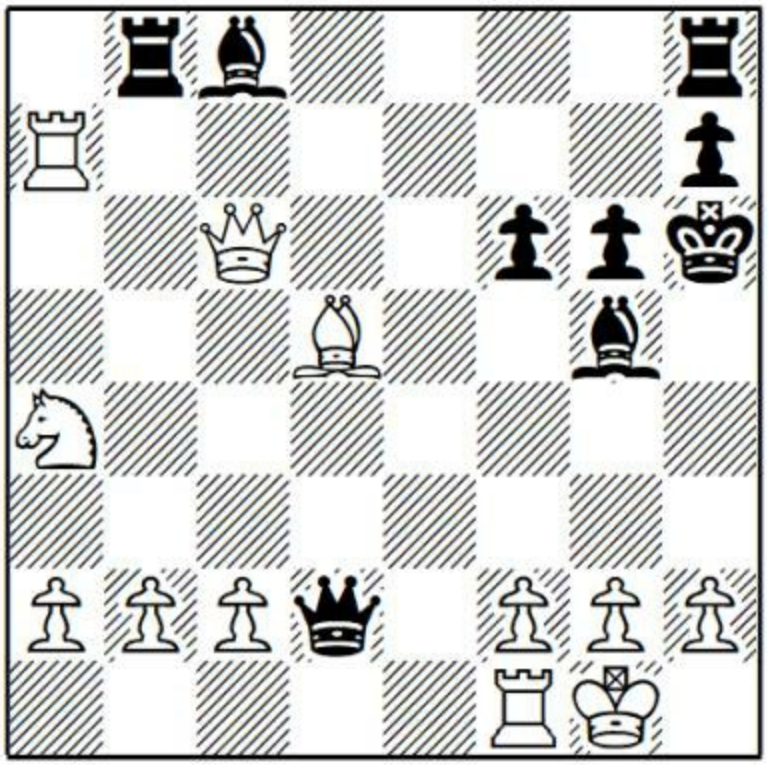
Also easy is 19 Rxe7+ Kh6 20 c3 Qd2 21 f4! (undermining; Black cannot allow White's queen to chop the f6-pawn) 21 ... Bh4 22 g3 Bh3 23 gxh4! Bxf1 24 Qxf6! Qxd5 25 Qg7+ Kh5 26 Re5+ and wins.

19 ... Qd2 20 Rxe7+ Kh6

This is not pleasant to watch and reminds us of the point in the movie

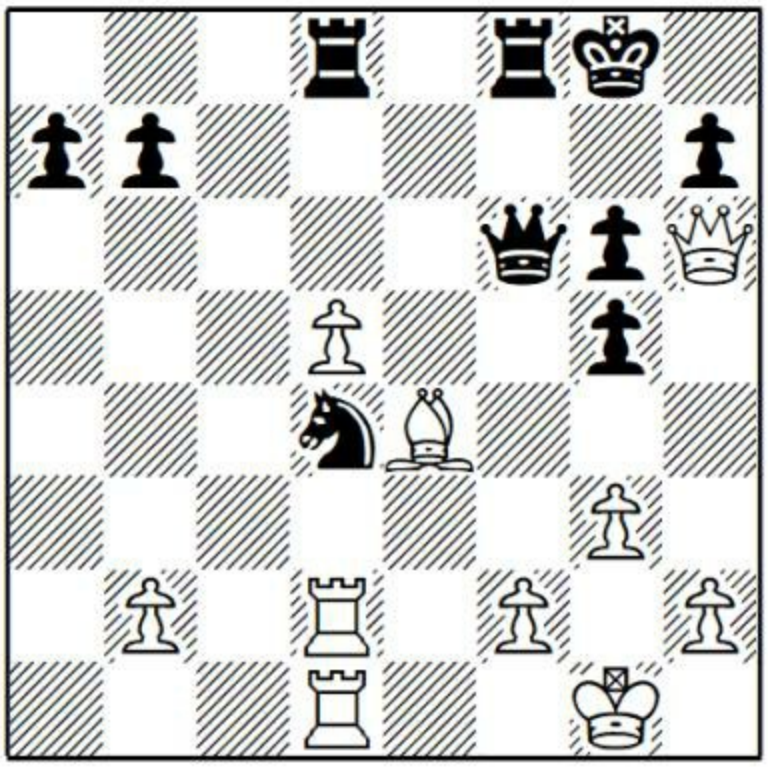
where the school bully (Bobby!) grabs the nerd and turns him upside down to shake lunch coins from pockets.

21 Rxa7 1-0



Bobby, like me, was always an unrepentant pawn grabber, especially when he could get away with the crime. Black found himself down three pawns and crushed.

242) G.Agzamov-M.Tal
Moscow 1981



Black to play

Level 4.5

We all want to be Tal, yet so few of us are. In fact, there was only one. White looks slightly better. Look deeper. He is completely lost if you find Tal's sequence:

Answer: Begin by ignoring the hanging knight and shifting the d-rook to e8.

29 ... Rde8!! 30 Bg2

Even in chess, there are some things which just can't be bought. Agzamov realizes that the knight is poison. So he continues in resolutely sober fashion, perhaps still believing his position is okay. It isn't. 30 Rxd4?? Qxf2+ 31 Kh1 Rxe4! (decoy) 32 Rxe4 Qf3+ 33 Kg1 Qxd1+ 34 Kg2 Qf1 is mate

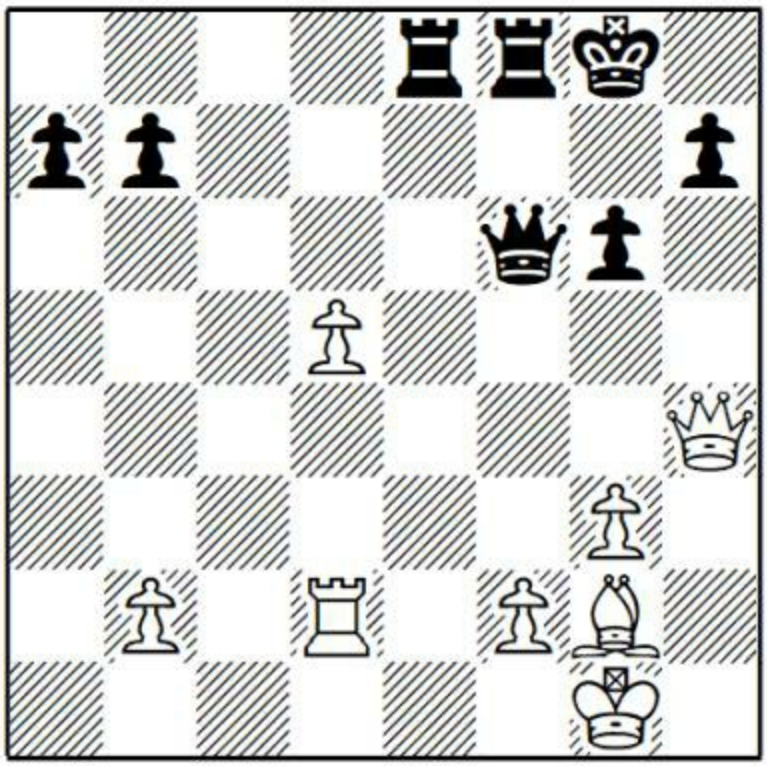
30 ... Nb3!

The white car's 'check engine' light flashes red. White is unable to protect f2 and his rook.

31 h4

Desperation, as if 31 Rc2 Qf5! (White's c2-rook can no longer protect f2) 32 Rc7 (threatening mate on both g7 and h7; the trouble is Black mates faster) 32 ... Qxf2+ 33 Kh1 Re1+ 34 Rxe1 Qxe1+ 35 Bf1 Qxf1 mate.

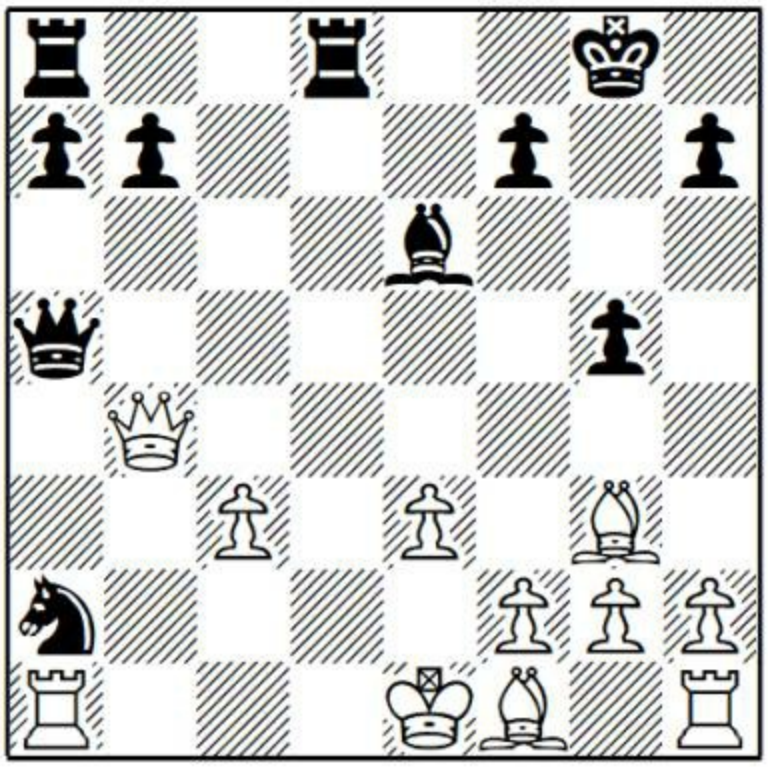
31 ... Nxd2 32 Rxd2 gxh4 33 Qxh4



Tal won a full exchange and converted.

243) M.Suba-L.Portisch

Thessaloniki Olympiad 1984



Black to play

Level 3

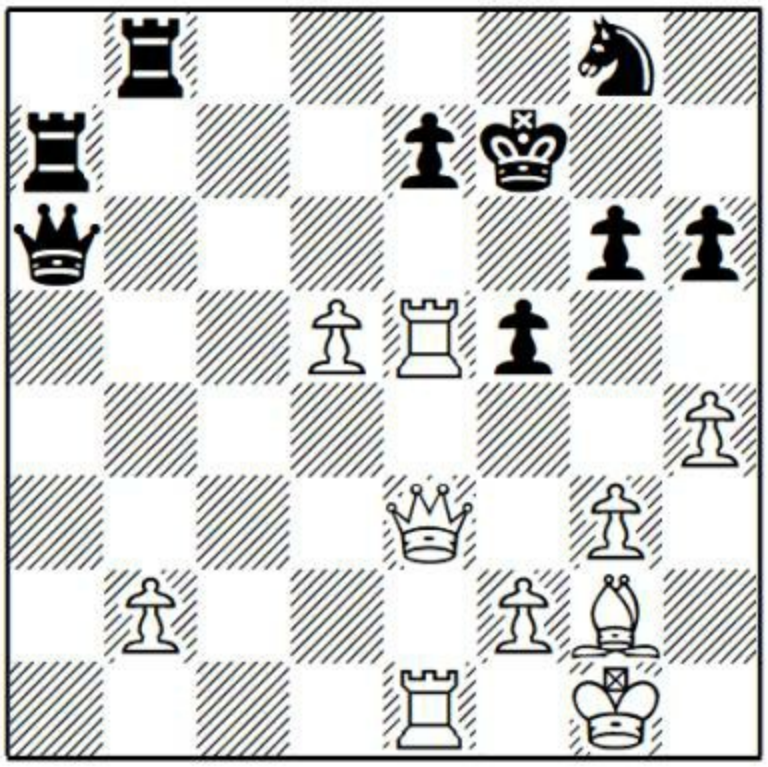
There can be no reward or retribution if a preceding cause doesn't exist. GM Suba found himself disastrously behind in development against Portisch. When attacking, it is so easy to start strong and then flounder, allowing our position's energy to wane. Black must strike and do it now. Find one clever shot and White's game collapses:

Answer: Deflection/overloaded defenders.

20 ... Rd1+! 0-1

21 Rxd1 (or 21 Kxd1 Nxc3+!, undermining; once again White's queen falls) 21 ... Nxb4 wins White's queen.

244) R.Hübner-Su.Polgar
Munich 1991



White to play

Level 3

Few words are exchanged during a chess game. Yet we all know that silent communion which is felt when one side understands that they are winning, while the other resigns themselves to the fact of their inevitable loss. We reach that stage in this game. One glance and it becomes clear that Black's position bleeds profusely, yet the wound is not fatal - yet. We need just that little push to send Black's game over the edge. White has two methods of cracking Black's defence:

Answer: Step 1: Clearance. Sacrifice the d-pawn to open the e-file and clear d5 for White's bishop.

32 d6!

Answer no.2: Also crushing is 32 Re6!. Deflection, and if 32 ... Qa5 33 h5! (undermining) 33 ... g5 34 Qe5. Annihilation of defensive barrier. Black's position collapses.

32 ... exd6

Forced. 32 ... Qxd6?? is a case of overloaded defender since Black's a7-rook now hangs: 33 Qxa7 wins.

33 Re8!

Step 2: Move the rook to e8, threatening Qe6+ and Qxg8+.

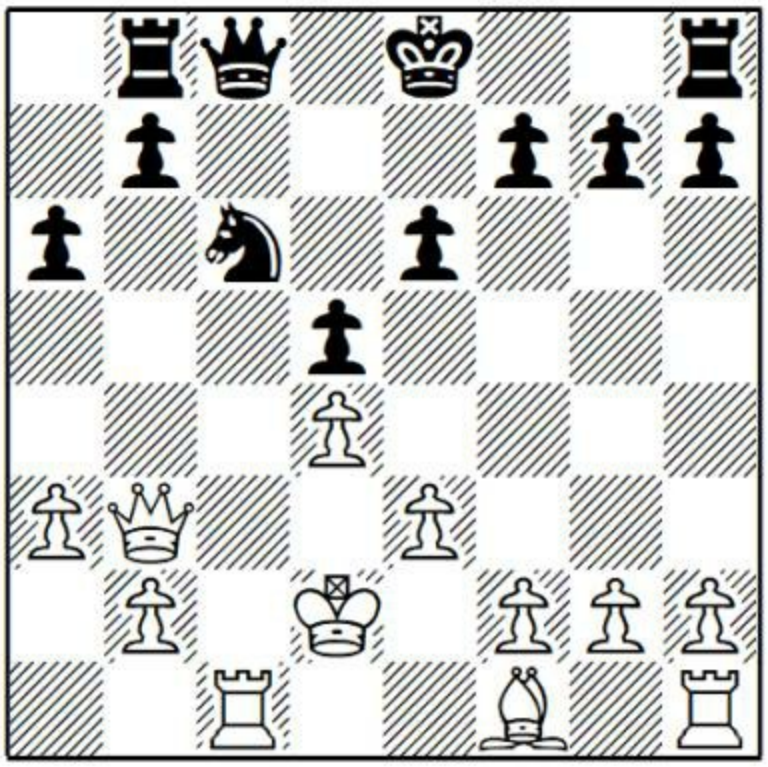
33 ... Rxe8

Or 33 ... Rab7 34 Qe6+ Kg7 35 Qxg8+.

34 Qxe8+ Kg7 35 Bd5! 1-0

Removal of the guard. White if the knight moves, then seizes control over e7: 35 ... Nf6 36 Re7+ Rxe7 37 Qxe7+ Kh8 38 Qxf6+ Kh7 39 Qf7+ Kh8 40 Qg8 mate.

245) V.Akobian-A.Wojtkiewicz
Philadelphia 2004



White to play
Level 3

This is one of those combinations most of us will see, since we are told there is a combination. Yet if we played White's position in a tournament game, most of us would not be alert enough to spot it. How easy it would be for any of us to make a building move like 17 Rc5, or an automatic developing move like 17 Bd3? Both would be inferior. Do you see White's combination?

Answer: Step 1: Chop the a6-pawn, which seemingly loses a piece and also puts White's queen under attack, should Black recapture.

17 Bxa6!

The annoying do-gooder bishop pokes his head into everyone's business.

17 ... 0-0

Black's position loses a great measure of its free will and my late friend Alex resigns himself to playing a pawn down, with zippo compensation. After 17 ... bxa6? 18 Rxc6! (step 2: overloaded defenders) White remains up a pawn and in control over the only open file after 18 ... Qd8 19 Qc3.

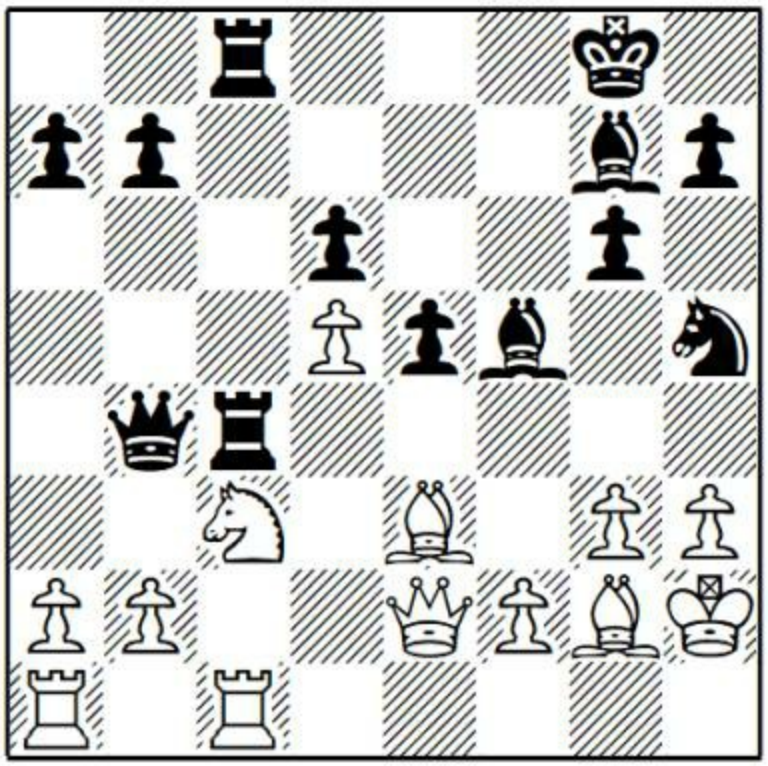
18 Be2

Varuzhan stole a clean pawn and converted without too much trouble.

9) Desperado

Desperado isn't officially a tactical theme, yet I thought it should be added to the book. A desperado falls into the realm of psychology, rather than objectively strong continuation. If our desperation to evade the natural course learns to blend in with the position's natural background, then we can disguise our malice as either innocence or stupidity, with a desperado continuation. A desperado is more about street smarts, rather than an empirically strong move.

246) M.Botvinnik-M.Tal
World Championship (Game 6) 1960



Tal didn't like the way the game was going and sensed that Botvinnik's control over e4 would slowly squeeze him. So next move he played what is

perhaps the most famous desperado of all time - and with the world chess championship at stake. So Tal calmly plonked his knight down on f4, offering a piece for the initiative, thereby flustering the great Mikhail Botvinnik.

21 ... Nf4!?

It was David Bowie who sang: "We can be heroes, just for one day."

"Don't expect confusion from an inferior position, if you are on a budget," I wrote in *Tal: Move by Move*: "Tal's move accomplishes the following:

"1. Tal sweeps Botvinnik away from a strategic game - a position in which he excelled - into a gnarled mess - the type of game where Tal (who hated dry positions devoid of highs and lows) was the unquestioned ruler.

"2. The position may be winning for White if Tal was playing a computer, but in this case it's not at all easy for a human to navigate the complex lines laid out before him.

"3. After such a move, Botvinnik is a virtual certain candidate for time pressure, increasing Tal's practical chances even further.

"4. Apparently the spectators in the auditorium erupted so loudly after Tal's move, that the game actually had to be moved to an inner room to avoid disturbing the players' concentration. I'm certain this factor flustered Botvinnik psychologically, while Tal exalted in the energy, since Tal got the audience on his side with his bold sacrifice."

22 gxf4 exf4 23 Bd2?

Tal's gamble yields immediate dividends. The computer's assessment swings from '+2.34' to '0.00' - dead even! Botvinnik missed the powerful zwischenzug.

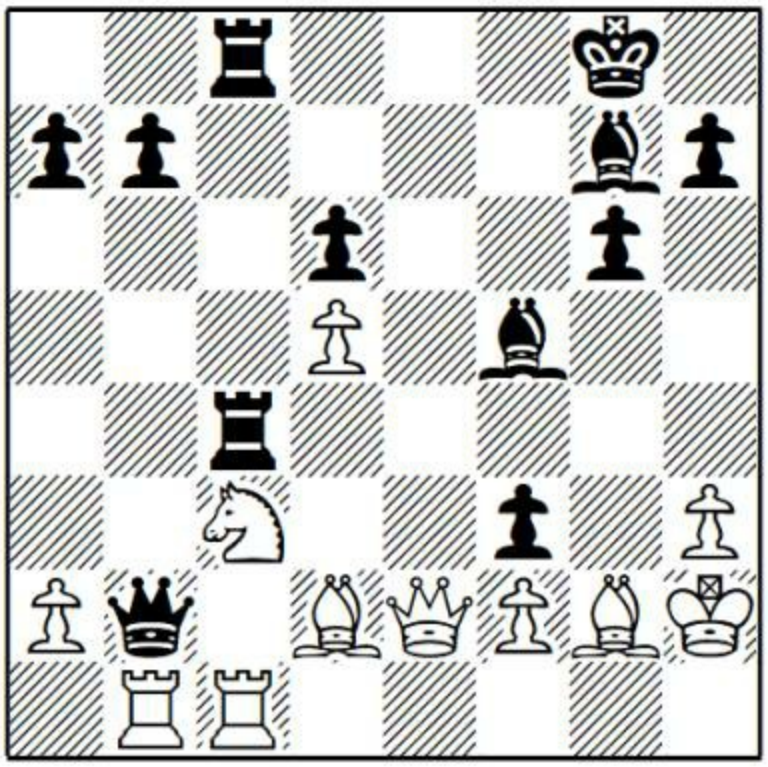
After 23 a3! Qb3 24 Bxa7! Be5 25 f3 b6 26 a4! Rb4 27 Nd1! White is consolidating and *Stockfish* says Black just doesn't have enough for a piece.

23 ... Qxb2?

Aaak! Tal meets Botvinnik's blunder with his own blunder. Now White is winning again! Tal actually wrote down the correct 23 ... Be5!, but then changed his mind. Threat: ... f4-f3, discovered check, and if 24 f3 Qxb2 25 Nd1 Qxa1 26 Rxa1 Bxa1 when Black gets a pair of rooks and three pawns for White's queen and extra minor piece. The comp rates it at even.

24 Rab1 f3!?

24 ... Bxb1 25 Rxb1 is also in White's favour.



Black to play

Level 4

Tal is doing his best to confuse the hell out of everyone, including himself! Make a decision: would you play 25 Rxb2, or 25 Bxf3. One version gives White a winning position, while the other flips the assessment.

25 Rxb2?

The blissfully unaware fly tangles itself into the spider's web. Botvinnik's clock was ticking down and it's psychologically understandable that he was desperate to swap queens.

Answer: White is still winning with 25 Bxf3! Bxb1 26 Rxb1 Qc2 27 Rc1 Qf5 28 Bg4! Qe5+ 29 Qxe5 Bxe5+ 30 f4 Rxf4 (or 30 ... Bxc3 31 Bxc8 and Black resigns) 31 Bxc8 Rd4+ 32 Kg1 Rxd2 33 Ne4 when White will convert his extra piece.

25 ... fxe2 26 Rb3 Rd4!

Step 1: Chase White's bishop to e1.

27 Be1

27 Be3?? loses to 27 ... Rxc3 28 Rbxc3 Rd1!.

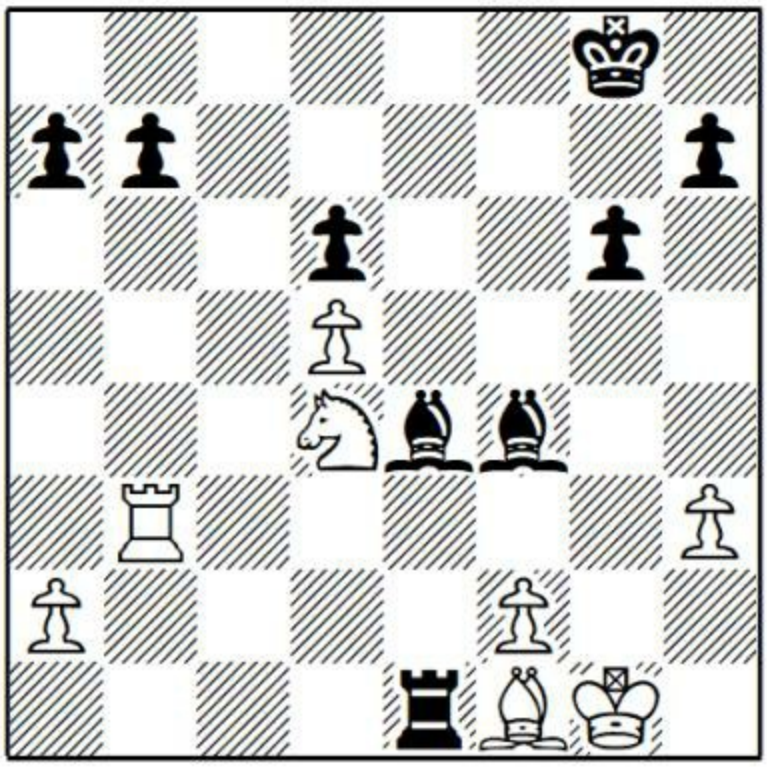
27 ... Be5+!

Step 2: Transfer the dark-squared bishop to f4, via e5, where it harasses White's c1-rook to a geometrically unfavourable square.

28 Kg1 Bf4! 29 Nxe2!

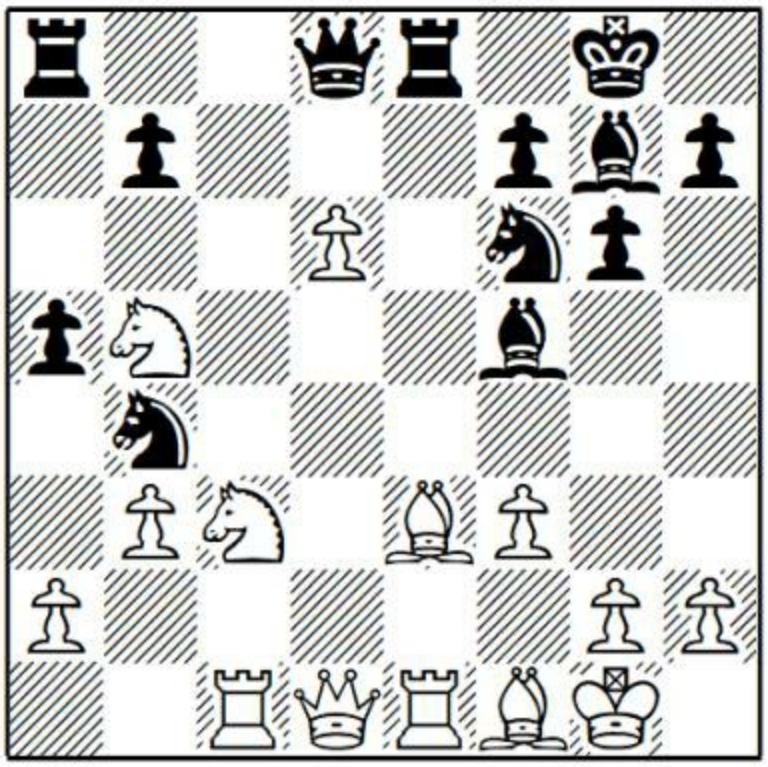
The only way to play on. If Botvinnik had played 29 Ra1? then comes: Step 3: 29 ... Rxc3! (decoy) 30 Rxc3 Rd1 and wins.

29 ... Rxc1 30 Nxd4 Rxe1+ 31 Bf1 Be4



Tal converted easily, with an extra pawn plus monster bishop-pair in an open position.

247) I.Nei-T.Petrosian
Leningrad 1946



Petrosian is down a pawn and completely busted. What is his best practical chance to mix it up?

18 ... Rxe3!

Answer: With a surge of near-death adrenaline, Petrosian hands over a full exchange. We stop fearing death when we don't believe we have a future. This way at least Black may generate chances on the dark squares. *Komodo* has White at '+2.56' here. From a human perspective, it isn't all that easy to defend White since Black's pieces are so active.

19 Rxe3 Bh6 20 Re1 Rc8!

Petrosian isn't interested in regaining the exchange and correctly retains his dark-squared bishop.

21 Nd4??

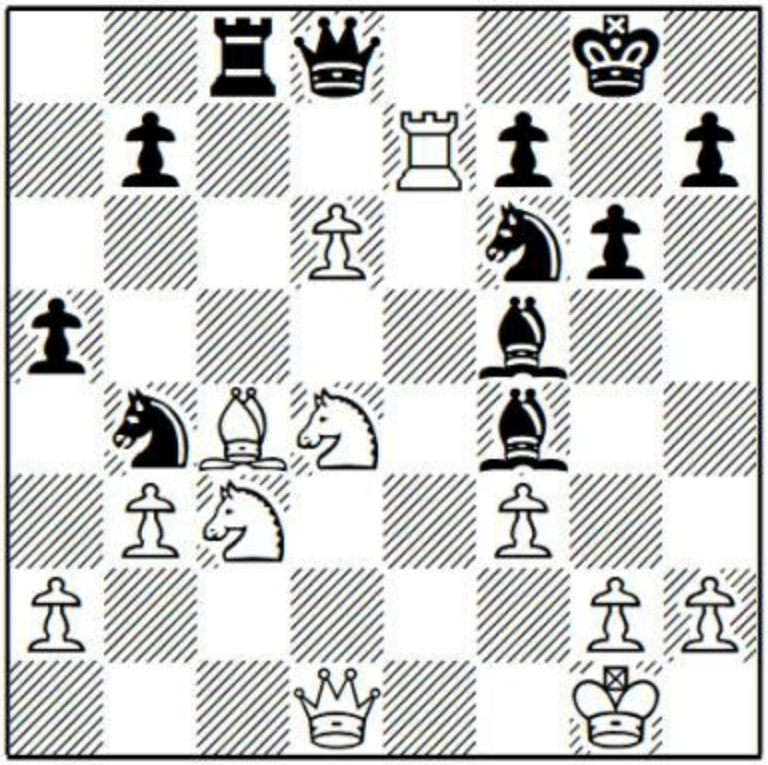
This twitchy gyration costs White the game. Soon White's position is stripped of all which made it livable. White retains control of his position with 21 Qd4! which fights for the dark squares.

21 ... Bxc1 22 Bc4?

Nei had to try 22 Nxf5 Rxc3 23 Qd4 gxf5 24 Qxc3 Bf4 25 d7 Nxd7 26 g3

when White can fight on. Instead, he undoubted planned the blunder 22 Qxc1?, but then saw 22 ... Qb6! 23 Qe3 (if 23 Qd2 Nc2! 24 Rd1 Nxd4 25 Qxd4 Qxd4+ 26 Rxd4 Rxc3 and Black won a piece) 23 ... Re8! (discovered attack; overloaded defender) 24 Qf2 Rxe1 25 Nxf5 Qxf2+ 26 Kxf2 Rxf1+! (zwischenzug) 27 Kxf1 gxf5, which leaves White down a piece.

22 ... Bf4 23 Re7?



23 ... Qxd6

Good enough. Also winning is 23 ... Bxh2+! 24 Kh1 Bxd6.

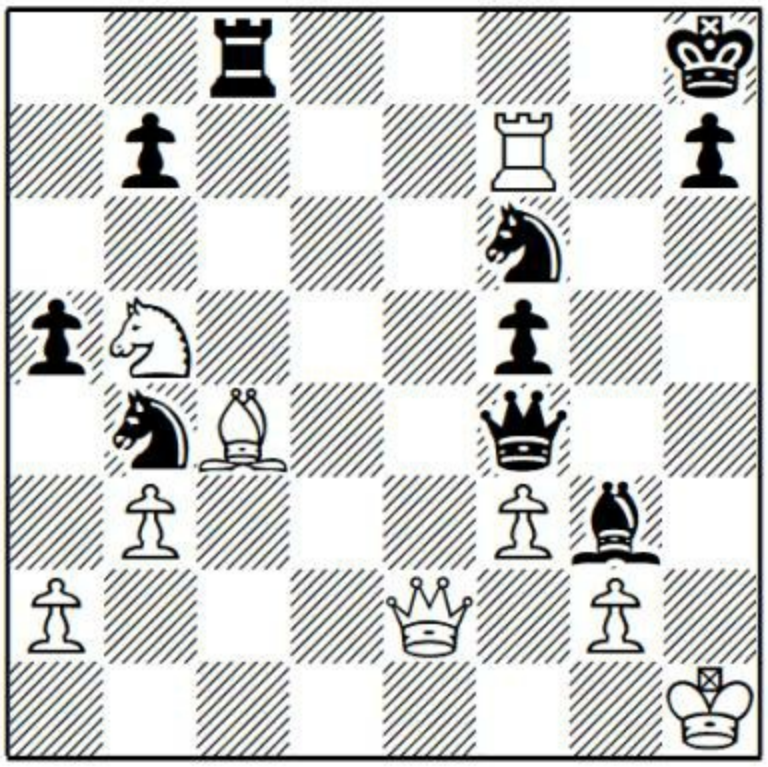
24 Nxf5 Bxh2+ 25 Kh1 gxf5 26 Qe2 Bg3!

White's king is in far greater danger than Black's.

27 Rxf7 Kh8 28 Nb5

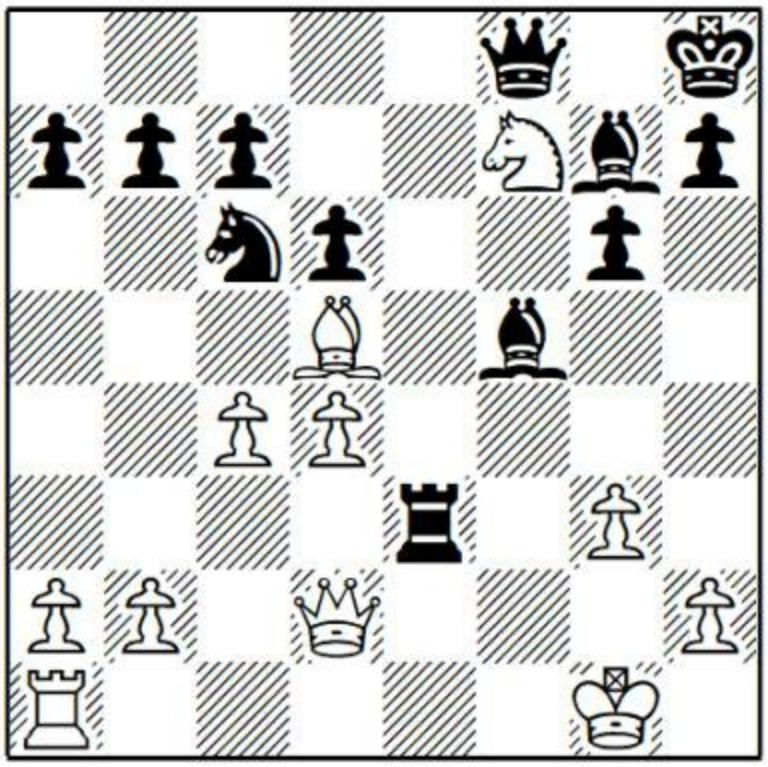
Or 28 Qe7 Qxe7 29 Rxe7 Nbd5 and White can resign.

28 ... Qf4! 0-1



The queen is heading for h4.

248) R.Albero-M.Tal
Oberhausen 1961



Black to play

Level 3

Tal's opponent just forced perpetual check and the game is drawn. Or is it ...

***Answer:* 18 ... Qxf7!**

If you start a war, don't forget that you need to pay for it. Tal is willing to hand over his queen for only two minor pieces. He actually gets full compensation due to his immense piece activity and White's insecure king. 18 ... Kg8 19 Nh6+ Kh8 20 Nf7+ and a repetition is what a more cautious player would have opted for.

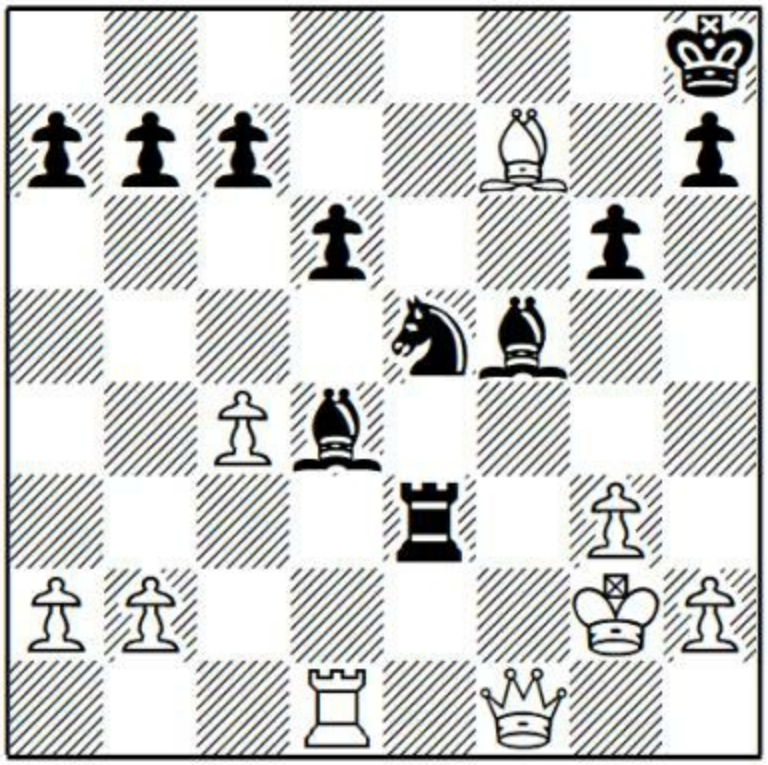
19 Bxf7

Santa Clause may or may not exist in life, but on the chess board he is nothing but a myth. If your opponent (especially Tal) offers you material via a sacrifice, be careful. It is highly unlikely he or she does so out of a spirit of generosity and good will.

19 ... Rd3 20 Qe2?!

After 20 Qe1! Bxd4+ 21 Kg2 Ne5 22 Bd5 c6 23 Rd1! cxd5 24 Rxd3 Bxd3 25 Qb4 White should be able to deliver perpetual check.

20 ... Bxd4+ 21 Kg2 Ne5 22 Rd1 Re3 23 Qf1?



23 Qd2 was necessary.

23 ... Be4+

Tal's pieces have completely usurped the centre and at this point breathe fire.

24 Kh3

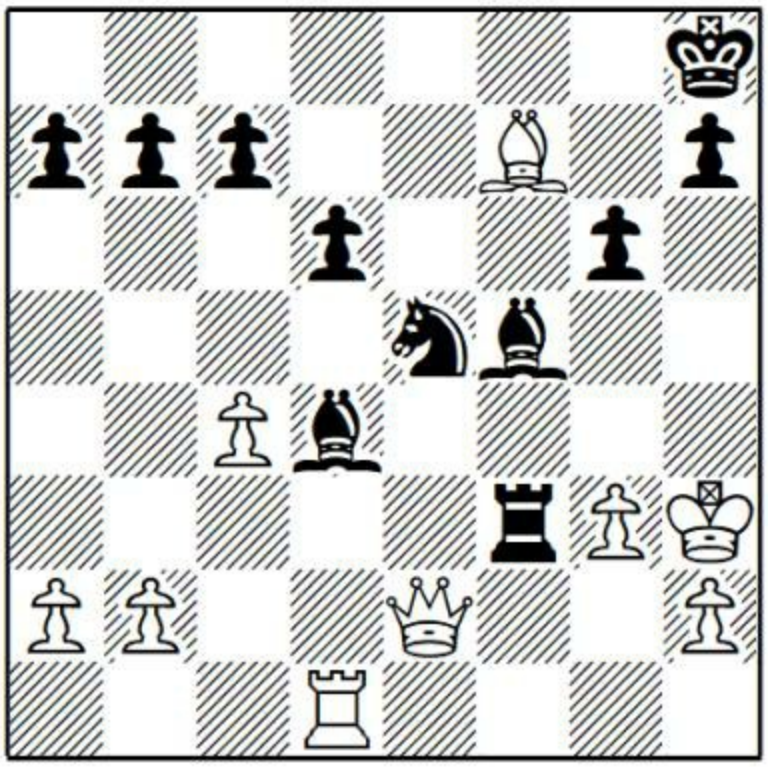
"You're not the boss of me!" I tell my wife Nancy, in full Alpha male mode, when she disrupts my writing by ordering me to take out the trash. I invariably end up taking out the trash. Somehow White's pathetic king reminded me of this.

24 Kg1?? isn't such a great option for White, in view of 24 ... Rxg3 mate.

24 ... Rf3

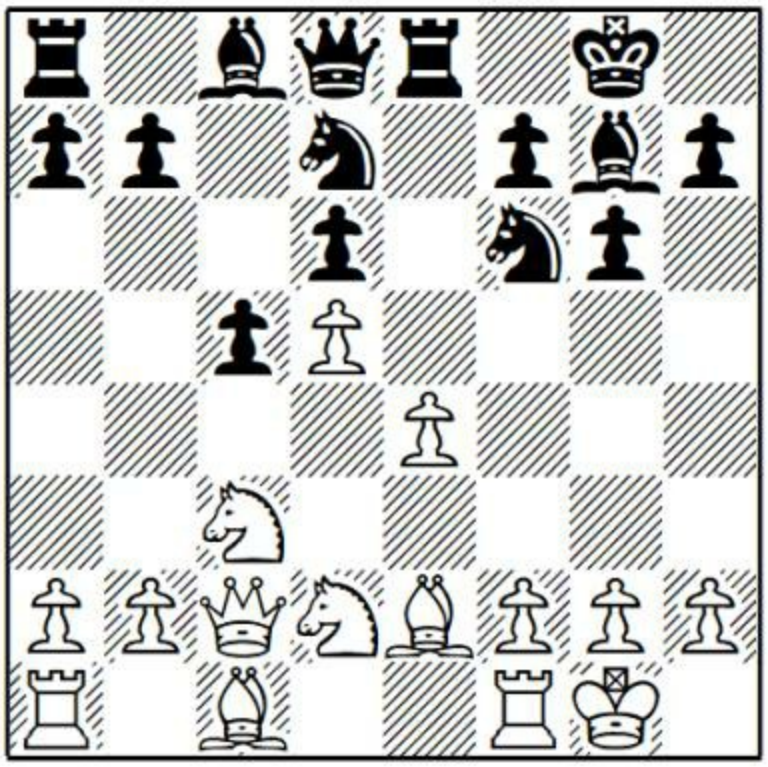
Double attack.

25 Qe2 Bf5+! 0-1



26 Kg2 (pr 26 Kh4 Be3! 27 Bd5 g5+ 28 Kh5 Bg6+ 29 Kh6 Ng4 mate) 26 ... Rf2+ 27 Qxf2 Bxf2 28 Kxf2 Nxf7 is an easy win for Black.

249) B.Spassky-R.Fischer
World Championship (Game 3), Reykjavik 1972



Black to play

Level 3

When Fischer defeated Spassky and ended decades of Soviet domination, toasts were drunk and optimistic speeches of a new era being ushered in, were uttered. And then as soon as Bobby became world champion, he vanished, as did the opportunity to greatly popularize our game in the West.

Answer: **11 ... Nh5!?**

"That the king (George III) is insane is now old news," wrote Thomas Paine. This was one of the most strategically jarring decisions ever made in a world championship match game. Here is what I wrote about it in *Fischer: Move by Move*: "I don't believe it stands up against modern day computer analysis, and would label it '?!' if played today. But for single-game ambush value, it worked like a charm against the obviously shell-shocked Spassky. Normally, when we deliberately play a strategically suspect move, we first discriminate between likely and unlikely candidate moves. When all the 'likelies' fail, only then after winnowing, by default, do we seek out the

‘unlikelies’. In the position before Fischer’s last move, however, Black had loads of perfectly playable ‘likelies’, so his move is probably based solely on a psychological gamble -which in this instance worked. I guarantee you, Spassky would have played a completely different game if Fischer was crazy enough to repeat his objectively dubious novelty later in the match.”

11 ... Ne5 scores well for Black, yet Spassky would have been prepared for it, theoretically.

12 Bxh5

Of course. Spassky mangled his opponent’s structure, handing Black a pair of doubled, isolated h-pawns. In return Fischer got the bishop-pair in an open position, plus some potential to attack along the now opened g-file with ... Kh8 and ... Rg8 in the future. Objectively this isn’t enough, yet who knows how the decision affected Spassky psychologically, since he didn’t put up his customary resistance in this game.

12 ... gxh5 13 Nc4

Also logical is 13 h3, intending to meet ... Ne5 with f2-f4, without allowing Black ... Ng4 tricks. Black may continue 13 ... f5!? I prefer White, but only by a bit.

13 ... Ne5 14 Ne3

Spassky fights for control over f5. 14 Nxe5 Bxe5 15 Qd3 Bd7 16 f4 looks slightly better for White to my human eyes, while the comp calls it even.

14 ... Qh4?!

Now ... Ng4 is in the air. The trouble is White can prevent it next move. Bobby should have gone for the immediate 14 ... Ng4!.

15 Bd2?!

Spassky should secure control over g4, with GM Robert Byrne’s suggestion 15 f3! with a pleasant strategic advantage for White.

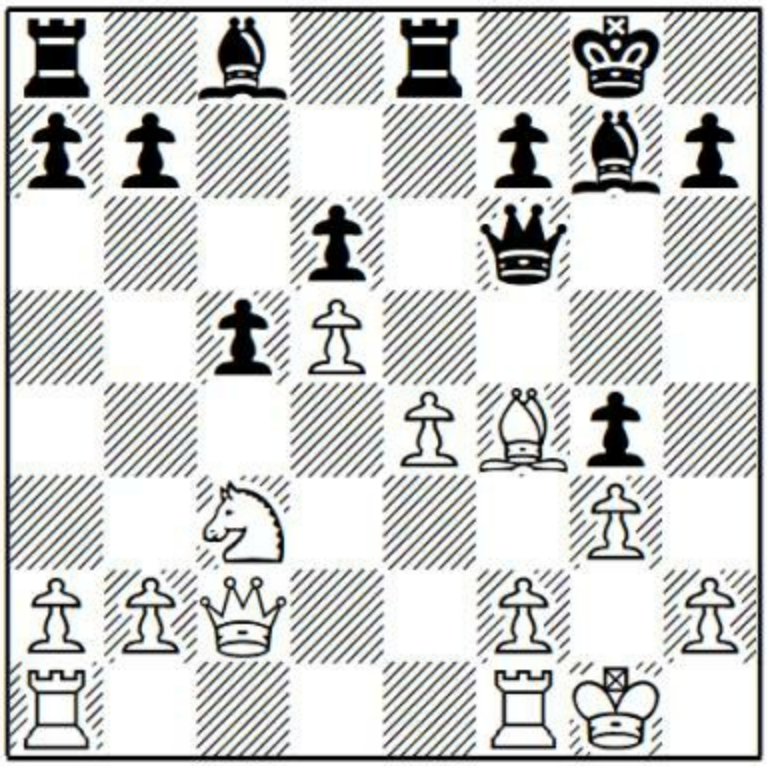
15 ... Ng4!

Fischer encourages an undoubling of his h-pawns.

16 Nxg4

If 16 h3 Nxe3 17 Bxe3 when White would have to be on guard for attacks down the g-file and sacrifices on h3, after 17 ... Kh8! after which I slightly prefer Black, although the computer says White is fine.

16 ... hxg4 17 Bf4 Qf6 18 g3?



Just as in life, our mistakes on the chess board are followed by the shadow of retribution. Principle: If we are given a choice of two concessions, then give away the more dispensable one. Here are the problems with White's last move:

1. White created a hole on f3 and by default also e5, since now f2-f4 can be met with an en passant capture.

2. White's last move artificially isolated his e4-pawn, which is now weak and a perpetual target, since White can no longer back up e4 with f2-f3.

18 Bg3 was correct. Spassky may have feared a coming ... h7-h5 and ... h5-h4. I only slightly prefer Black after 18 ... Bd7 19 Rae1 h5 20 f3 Qg6.

18 ... Bd7

Intending to activate his queenside majority with ... b5.

19 a4 b6! 20 Rfe1 a6

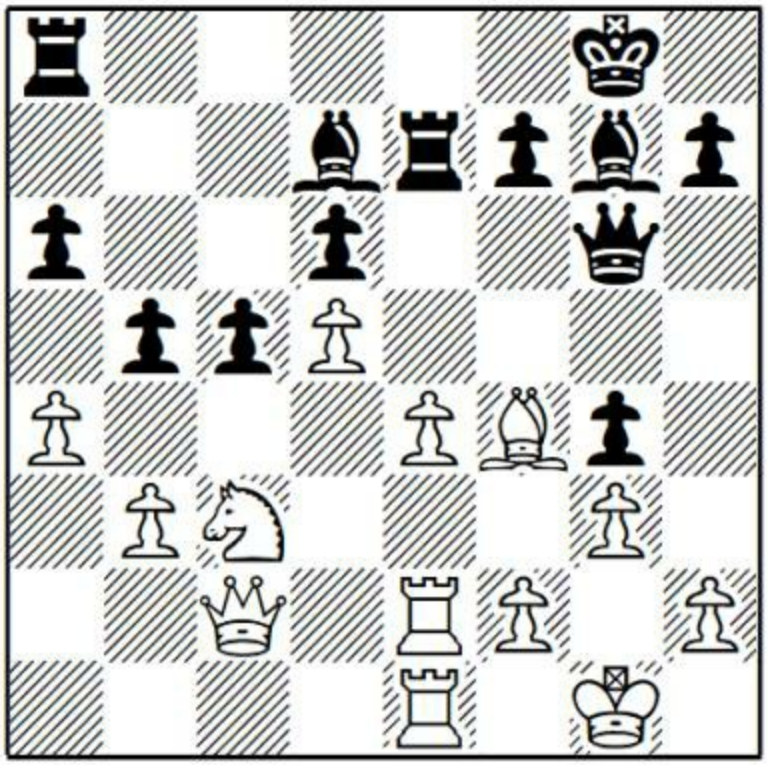
Intending to undermine White's e4-pawn with a coming ... b6-b5 and ... b5-b4.

21 Re2 b5

Black already stands better. Now White must be on constant guard for the

undermining ... b5-b4.

22 Rae1 Qg6! 23 b3 Re7!



Rooks will be doubled, adding further pressure to e4.

24 Qd3! Rb8!

Admirable restraint. Fischer isn't willing to sell his strategic assets for a mere pawn. Fischer can win a pawn here, but correctly rejects 24 ... Rae8? 25 axb5 Bxc3 26 Qxc3 Bxb5 27 Re3 Rxe4 28 Qc2! Rxe3 29 Qxg6+ hxg6 30 Rxe3 Rd8 31 Bg5 Rd7 32 Bf6!. Black is too tied down to convert.

25 axb5 axb5

Now ... b5-b4 is in the air.

26 b4!?

This allows Fischer a protected passed c-pawn, but 26 Nd1 Ra8! is also miserable for White.

26 ... c4!

After 26 ... cxb4? 27 Na2! White is OK again.

27 Qd2 Rbe8! 28 Re3

28 Bg5?? loses to 28 ... Bxc3. Overloaded defender.

28 ... h5!

Now 28 ... Bxc3? 29 Qxc3 Rxe4 30 Rxe4 Rxe4 31 Rxe4 Qxe4 32 Bh6 Qg6 33 Qe3 doesn't look so easy for Black to win.

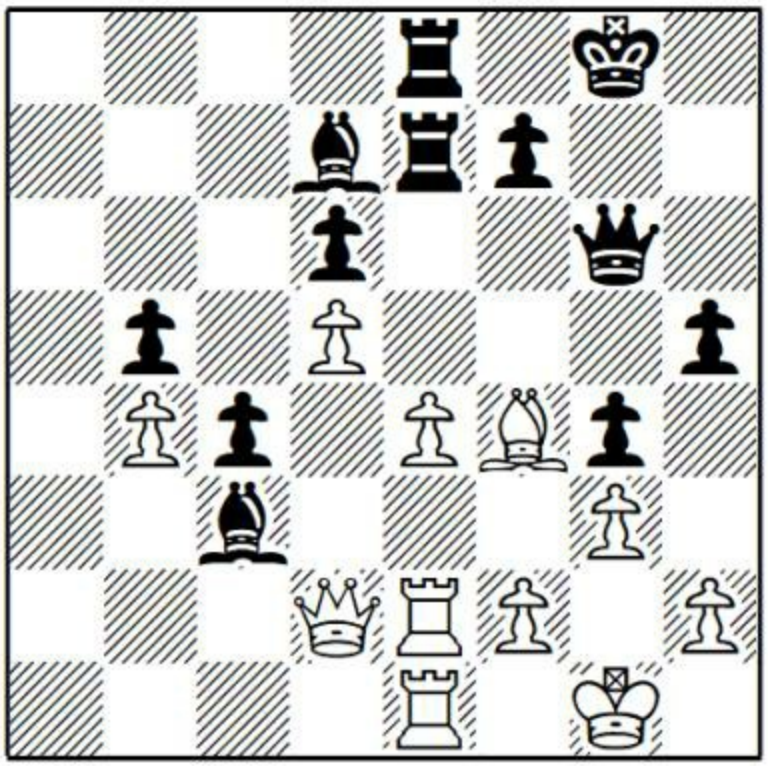
29 R3e2

White can only wait.

29 ... Kh7 30 Re3 Kg8

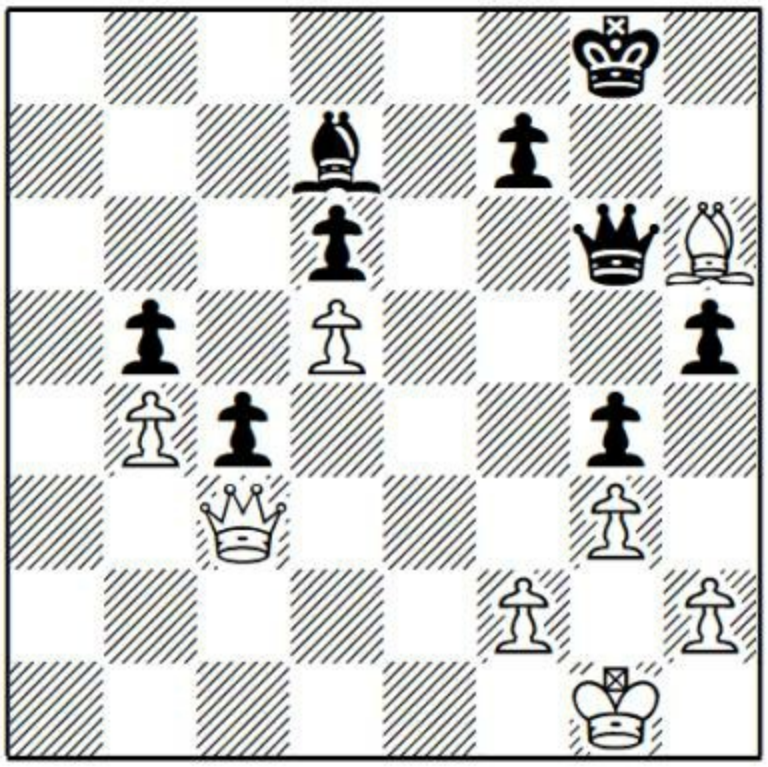
Not 30 ... Bxc3? 31 Qxc3 Rxe4 32 Rxe4 Rxe4 33 Rxe4 Qxe4 34 Qf6 Qxd5 35 Qxd6 and White will draw due to the bishops of opposite colours.

31 R3e2 Bxc3!



Like Capablanca before him, Fischer had a perfect sense of timing when he struck.

32 Qxc3 Rxe4 33 Rxe4 Rxe4 34 Rxe4 Qxe4 35 Bh6 Qg6



Black won a pawn. The main factor, however, is the Principle: Opposite-coloured bishops favours the attacker, who in this case is Black, not White.

36 Bc1

Spassky wants to play Bb2 next move. 36 Qe3?, intending Qg5, is met with 36 ... Kh7 37 Bf4 Qb1+ 38 Qc1 Qxb4, winning a second pawn.

36 ... Qb1

Which Fischer disallows. The attacking power of bishops of opposing colours is less of an asset than Spassky had hoped for. White's hoped for battery along the a1-h8 diagonal is decommissioned from active duty.

37 Kf1

This allows Black a decisive attack, based on the bishops of opposite colours. Also hopeless is 37 Qe1 f6 38 Bd2 Qh7 39 Bc3 Kf7. The trouble is d5 eventually falls, although even there, I played out some scenarios where White held the draw two pawns down when queens came off the board.

37 ... Bf5!

When we play video games we know to be on guard when the opponent's dangerous avatar enters the screen. It is Black - not White - who will benefit

from the attacking properties inherent in bishops of opposite colours.

38 Ke2 Qe4+ 39 Qe3 Qc2+!

Fischer avoids a pair of traps:

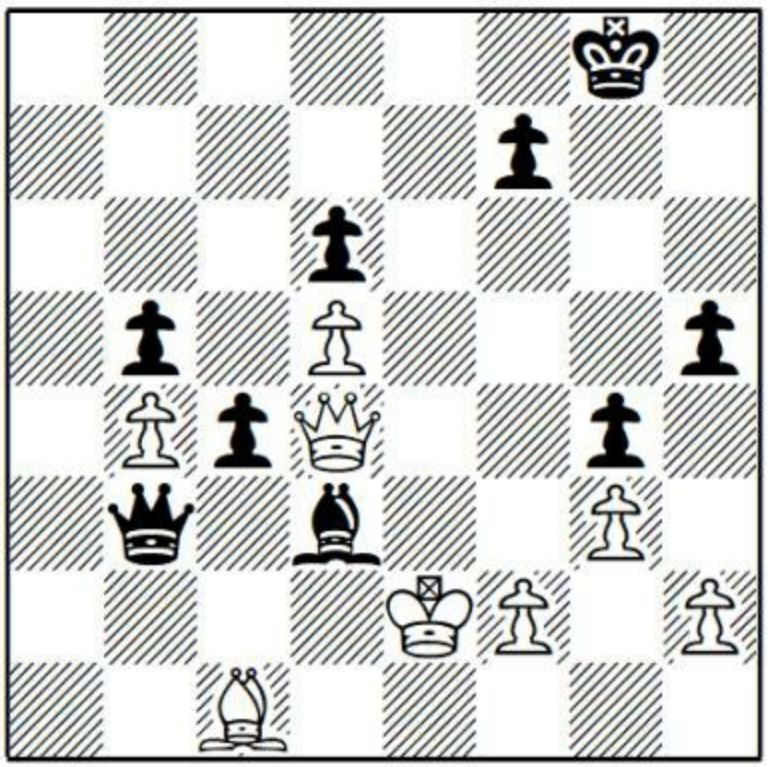
a) 39 ... Qxd5?? 40 Qg5+ is a trap, where White draws after 40 ... Kh7 41 Qh6+ Kg8 42 Qg5+ with perpetual check.

b) 40 ... Kf8?? loses to 41 Qd8+ Kg7 42 Bb2+! Kg6 43 Qf6+ Kh7 44 Qg7 mate.

40 Qd2 Qb3

It's crucial for Black to retain queens, which is a non-negotiable demand, since White invariably draws with them off the board. Indeed, 40 ... Qxd2+?? 41 Bxd2 Be4 42 Bf4 is a draw.

41 Qd4 Bd3+! 0-1

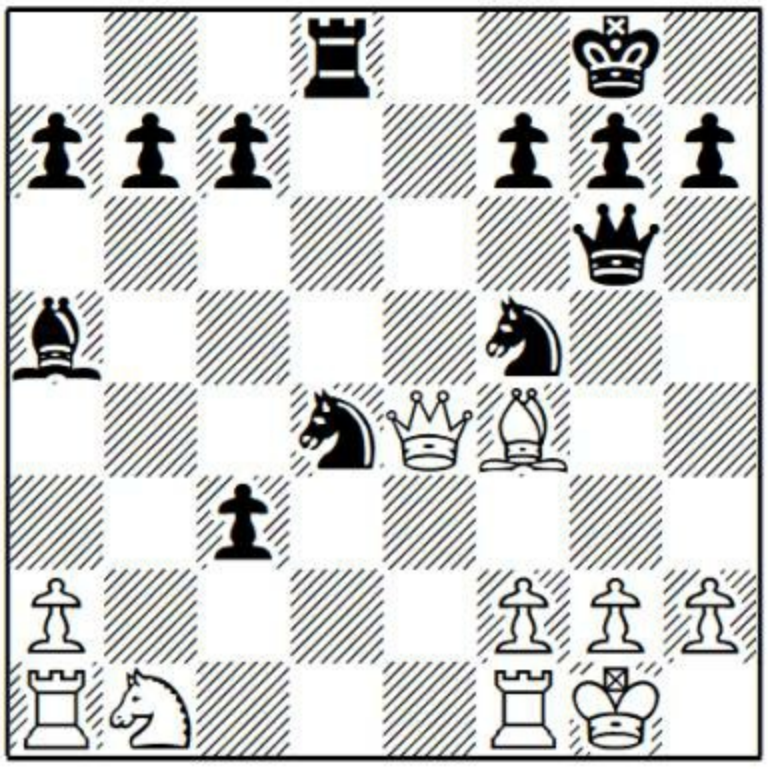


The finish could be 42 Ke1 (or 42 Ke3 Qd1 when Black threatens mate on e2 and also ... Qxc1+, and if 43 Qb2 Qf3+ 44 Kd4 Qe4+ 45 Kc3 Qe1+! 46 Bd2 Qe5 mate) 42 ... Qxb4+ 43 Kd1 Qb3+ 44 Ke1 b4, which wins since 45 Bh6 is met with 45 ... Qb1+ 46 Kd2 Qc2+ 47 Ke3 Qc1 mate.

10) Discovered Attack

Discovered attack occurs when one of the aggressor's pieces moves out of the way, to reveal an attack from another behind it.

250) N.Marache-P.Morphy
New Orleans 1857



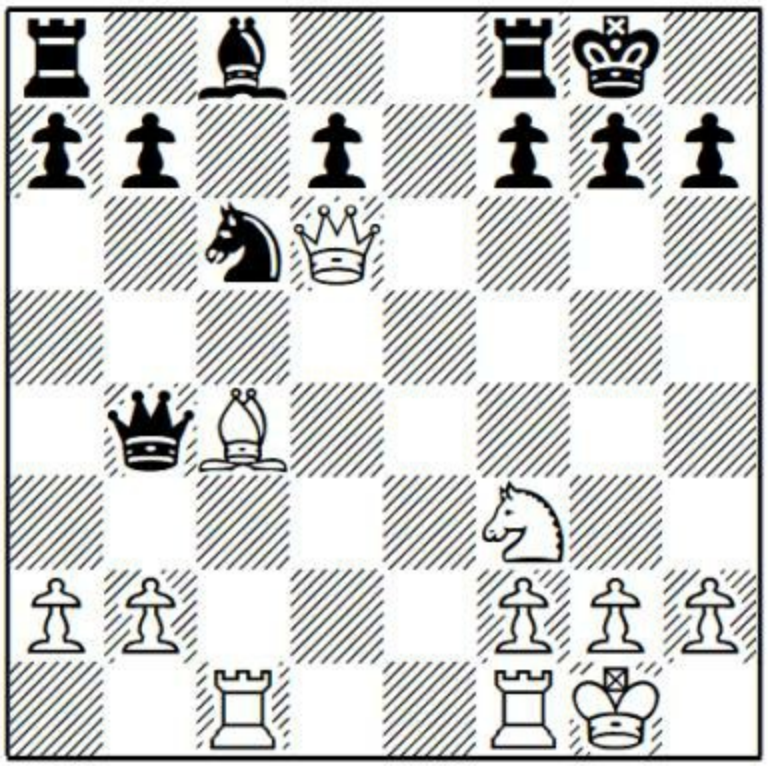
Black to play
Level 2
Morphy has many ways to win. Find Black's most crushing and most elegant solution:
Answer: Discovered attack.
19 ... Ng3! 20 Qxg6

Principle: *If your luck seems too good to be true, then it probably is.* 20 Qe3 costs White his queen: 20 ... Nde2+ 21 Qxe2 Nxe2+ 22 Kh1 Nxf4 mates in 4.

20 ... Nde2 mate

It's just intuition, but one gets the feeling that Morphy may have gotten the wee bit better of the transaction.

251) K.Traxler-O.Duras
Veseli 1902



White to play

Level 3.5

There are two kinds of chess players:

1. Penny pinchers, who are willing to take on some suffering in exchange for material or strategic compensation.

2. Dollar tossers, who are willing to pay for initiative or attack.

If you believe your poor position is just fine, you won't do anything, because you believe there is nothing to improve. Sure, White enjoys a huge development lead. But Duras may have thought he was OK. After all, he is up a pawn and if White refuses to swap queens, then Black's queen can grab the b2-pawn and be two pawns up. White's coming combination yields a clear strategic advantage:

Answer: Discovered attack. The bishop's sacrifice on f7 clears the way for the coming Rxc6! undermining trick.

16 Bxf7+! Rxf7 17 Rxc6!

Undermining. White kicks the legs out from the supporter of Black's queen.

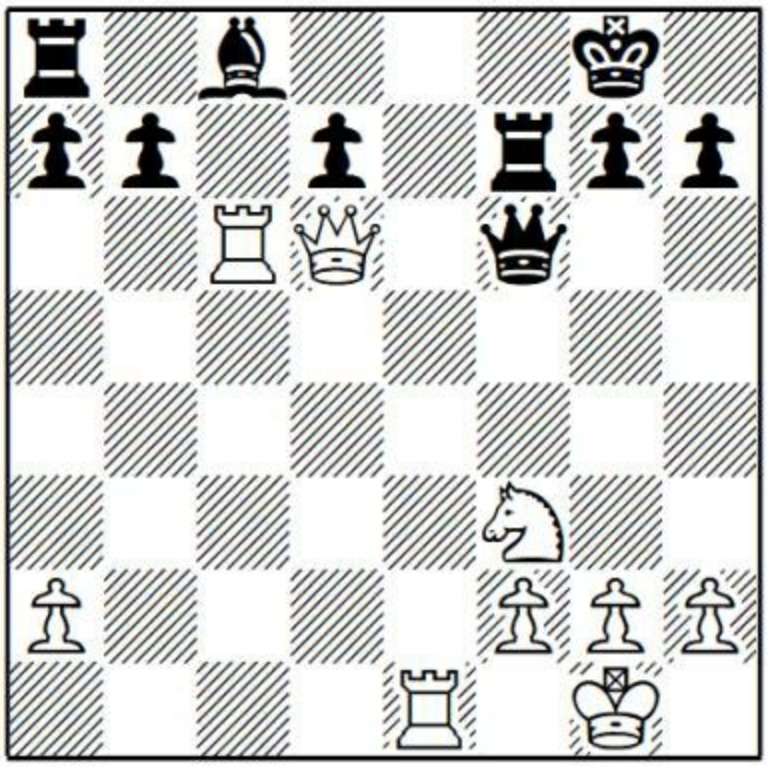
17 ... Qxb2??

Did I mention that penny pinchers sometimes pay horribly for their avarice? Black won't survive the development lag. It isn't too late for a burst of contrition. Black should settle for an inferior endgame with 17 ... a5 18 a3 Qxd6 19 Rxd6 Ra6 with a wretched but still playable ending.

18 Re1

Threat: Re8 mate.

18 ... Qf6



White to play

Level 2

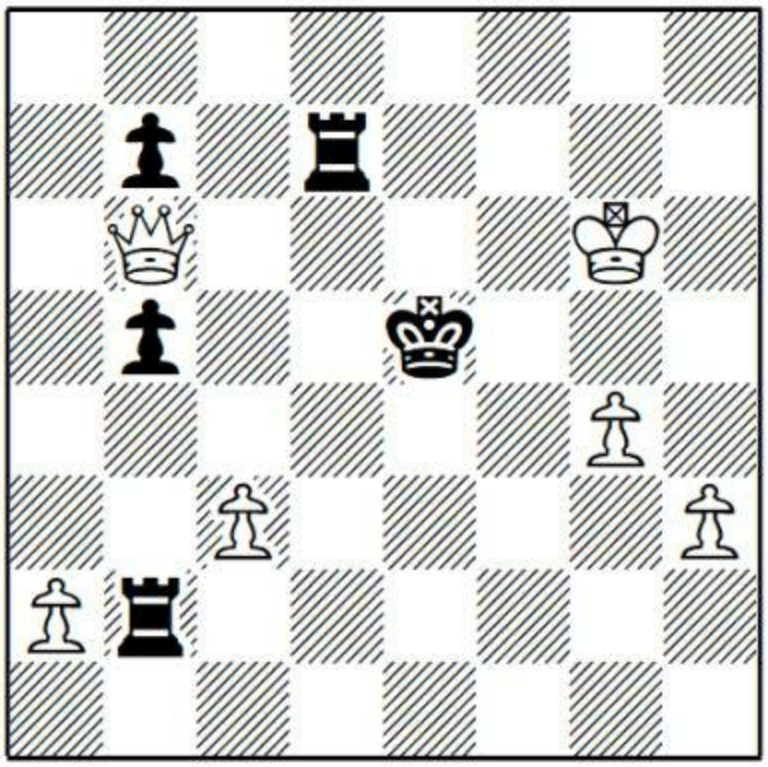
Find White's most efficient path to the win:

***Answer:* 19 Qd5! 1-0**

Pinned piece/weak back rank. Threat: Re8 mate, and 19 ... Qd8 (19 ... dxc6 20 Re8 mate) 20 Ng5 forces mate.

252) O.Duras-E.Cohn

Ostend 1907



White to play

Level 2

Loose, unprotected pieces are trouble when facing a roving enemy queen. White can force the win of one of Black's rooks:

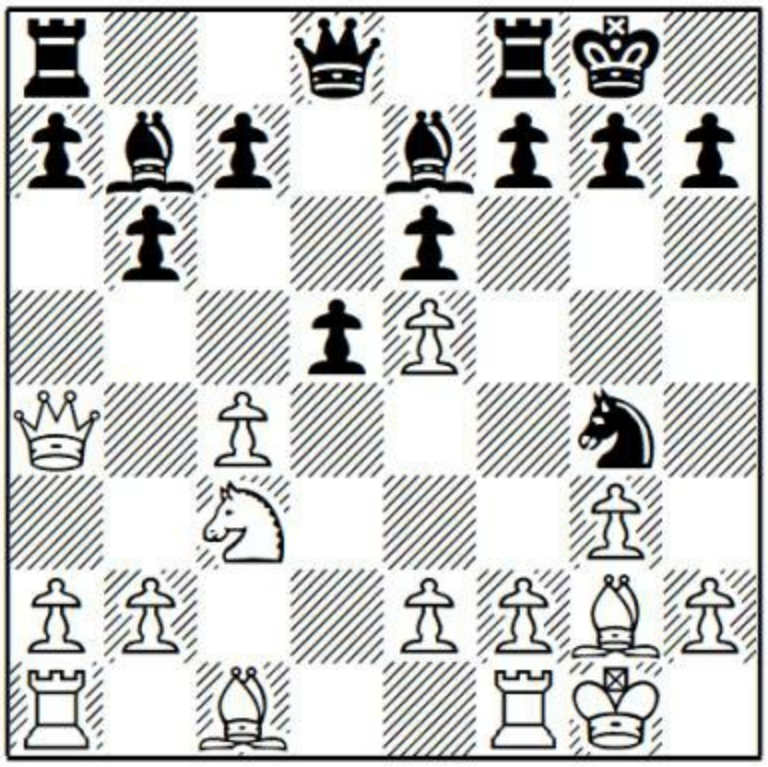
Answer: Step 1: First give check on f6, luring Black's king to the unfavourable squares e4 or d5.

40 Qf6+! 1-0

If 40 ... Ke4 41 Qf5+. Double attack. The d7-rook falls. Or 40 ... Kd5 41 c4+! (discovered attack; it doesn't count as philanthropy when you give something small to get back something of far greater value) 41 ... bxc4 42 Qxb2 and wins.

253) M.Heinicke-Seitz

Bad Salzuflen 1934



White to play

Level 2

Something just doesn't appear right about Black's position. Prove why:

Answer: Step 1: Capture on d5, which is a discovered attack on the loose g4-knight.

11 cxd5 Nxe5

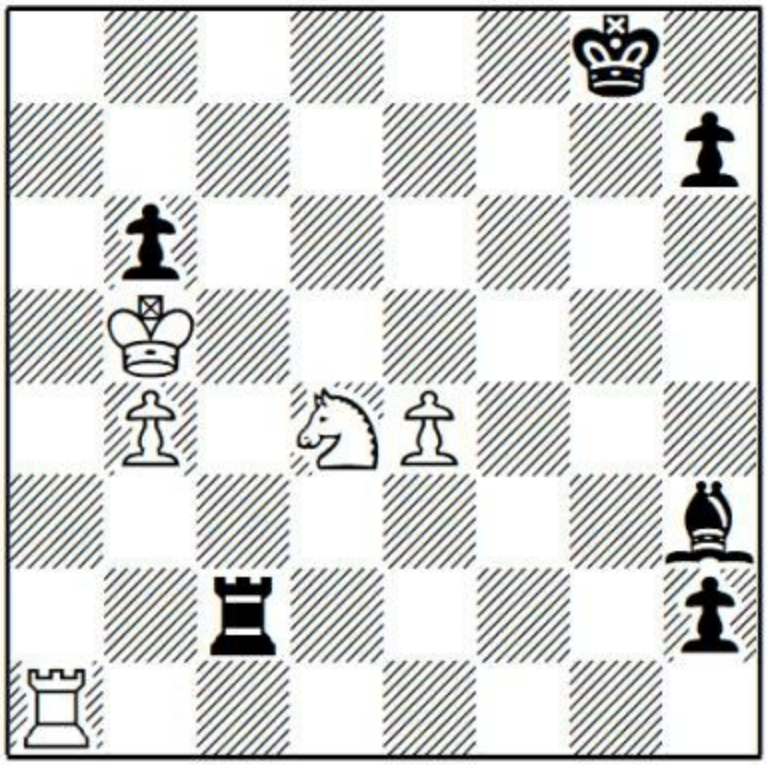
It may appear that Black has skirted dangerously close to the edge, without falling off. Next move he falls off. A single move is all it takes to eradicate Black's resistance.

12 d6! 1-0

This is Black's weak link. The second discovered attack wins a piece: 12 ... Bxg2 (the eyes of the innocent are unaccustomed to duplicity; now White wins a piece with an in-between capture) 13 dxe7 (zwischenzug) 13 ... Qxe7 14 Kxg2 leaves White up a piece for only a pawn.

254) I.Kan-M.Botvinnik

Moscow 1936



Black to play

Level 3.5

This looks like a pawn promotion theme. Actually the dominant theme is discovered attack. How did Botvinnik force the win?

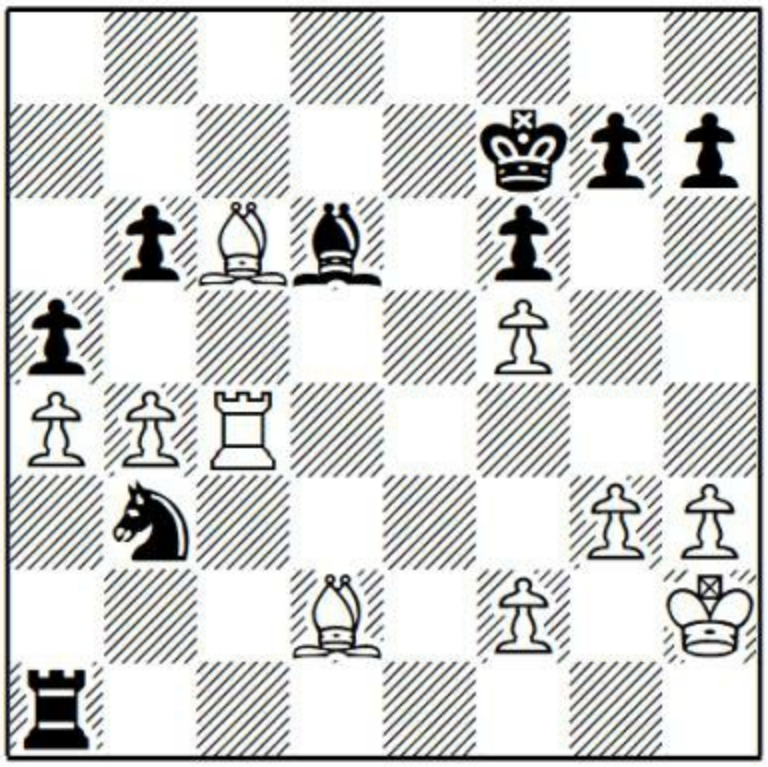
Answer: Step 1 move the rook to f2, threatening ... Rf1.

48 ... Rf2! 0-1

49 Rh1 is forced, yet it arrives too late to save White: 49 ... Bg2! (this is the real combination) 50 Rxh2 Bf1+!. The bishop leads a charmed life and the discovered attack picks off Black's loose h2-rook and White is condemned to a life of penury.

255) S.Gligoric-P.Bidev

Yugoslav Championship, Ljubljana 1947



White to play

Level 2

When your internal voice whispers into your mind, make certain it's your own voice and not the devil's. On his last move Black listened to the false voice and moved his knight from d4 to b3. Prove why this was a game-losing blunder:

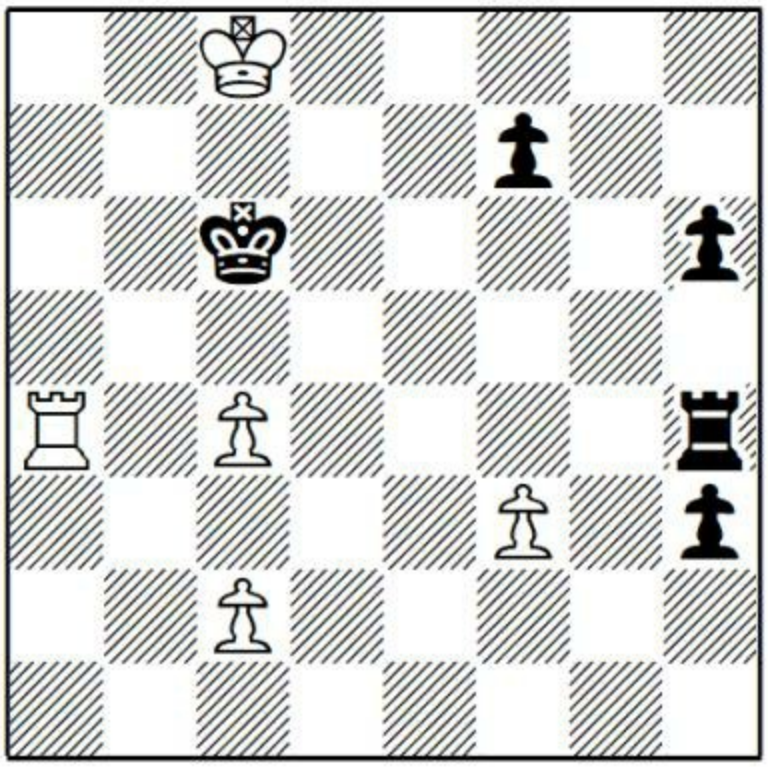
Answer: Step 1: Give a bishop check on d5.

37 Bd5+! 1-0

If 37 ... Ke7 (or 37 ... Kf8 38 Rc8+ Ke7 39 Bxb3) 38 Re4+. Step 2: Discovered attack. Black loses the knight: 38 ... Kd7 39 Bxb3.

256) A.Wotawa

Österreichische Schachzeitung, 1953



White to play

Level 5

"This is black magic!" wrote a member of Chess Endgame Studies, when I posted the solution to this partial study by Wotawa. We must weave mating nets with discovered attack themes to win the game for White:

***Answer:* 1 c3!!**

1 Ra1?? is too slow: 1 ... Rxc4 2 Rh1 Rh4 3 Kd8 h2 4 Ke7 Kd5 5 Kxf7 Ke5 6 c4 Kf4 7 c5 Kxf3 8 c6 Kg2 wins.

1 ... h2

Beware your delusion of superiority in your inferior position. I can just see this position in a tournament game, where the player with the black pieces may think they are winning, when in reality, they are dead lost. All of Black's king moves lose to discovered attacks, or a mating net.

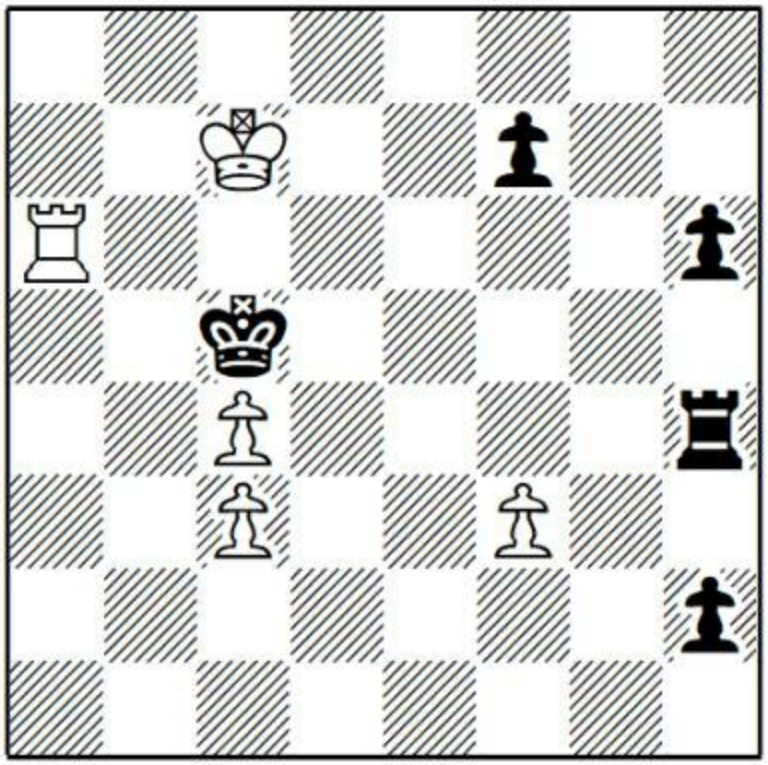
a) 1 ... Kd6 2 c5+! (discovered attack) 2 ... Kxc5 3 Rxh4 wins.

b) 1 ... Kb6 meets with the same fate: 2 c5+ wins.

c) 1 ... Kc5 2 Kc7! h2 3 Ra5+! (attraction; we lure Black's king to c4) 3 ...

Kxc4 4 Ra4+ (discovered attack) 4 ... Kxc3 5 Rxh4 wins.

2 Ra6+! Kc5 3 Kc7!



3 ... h1Q

Your new queen is small consolation if your king is mated next move, but if:

a) 3 ... Kxc4 4 Ra4+ (discovered attack) 4 ... Kxc3 5 Rxh4 wins the rook and even worse, prevents Black's forward h-pawn from promotion.

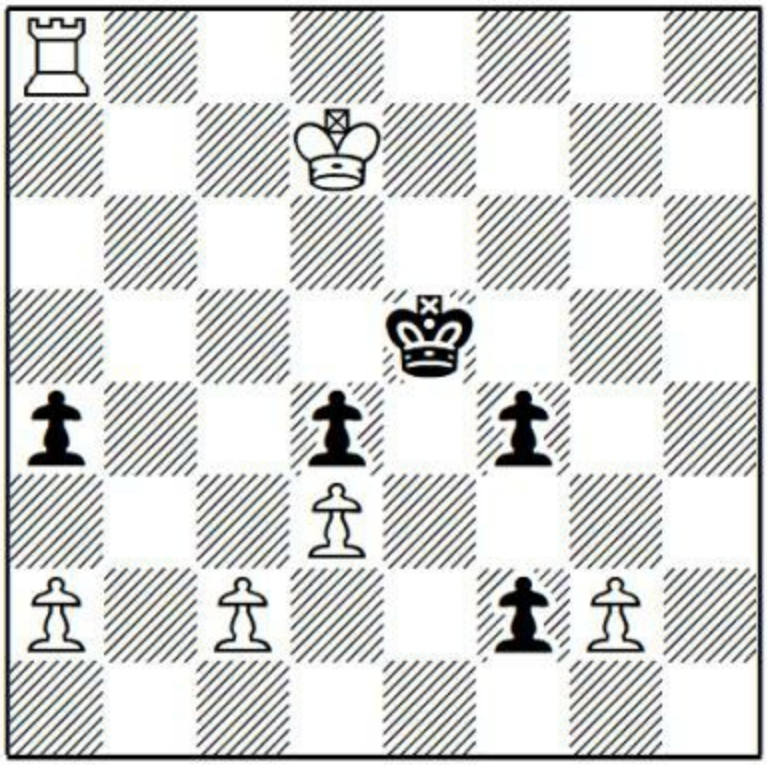
b) 3 ... Rxc4. Interference. This move clogs c4 as a run square for Black's king, allowing 4 Ra5 mate. This variation is not easy to see in advance, simply because we just don't believe White can mate from such stark simplicity.

4 Rc6 mate

As in all of Wotawa's anomalous studies, it always feels as if the winning side is the luckiest player in the history of the world.

257) A.Wotawa

Deutsche Schachzeitung, 1970



White to play

Level 5

Black is about to promote to a new queen and it's time for us to resign ... unless it's a Wotawa study, where White actually wins! How?

Answer: Mating net/discovered attack.

1 Rf8!!

Wotawa, as is his habit, is in full Mad Hatter mode, calmly shifting the rook to f8, as if it doesn't bother him a bit if Black promotes to a new queen next move.

Not 1 Ke7? (threat: Ra5 mate). We all occasionally play for cheapos, which we know in our hearts to be unchaste desires. I originally thought this was the solution, until I noticed the simple 1 ... f3!. Interference. Black wins, since it dissolves the Ra5 mating threat. After 2 g3 Kf5! Black promotes and wins, but not here 1 ... Kf5 2 Rg8!! f1Q 3 g4+! and wins or 1 ... f1Q?? 2 Ra5 mate.

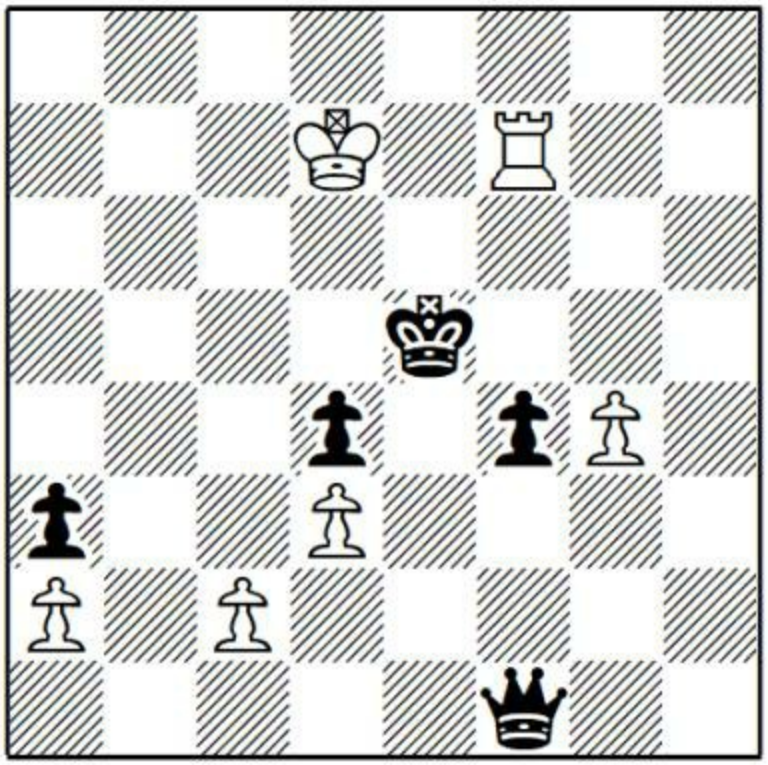
1 ... a3

After 1 ... f1Q 2 g4! Black must either get mated or lose the queen through a discovered attack if Black captures en passant.

2 Rf7!

Zugzwang. Not 2 g4? fxg3 and it is Black who wins.

2 ... f1Q 3 g4!



Threat: Rf5 mate, which can only be halted if Black gives up the new queen.

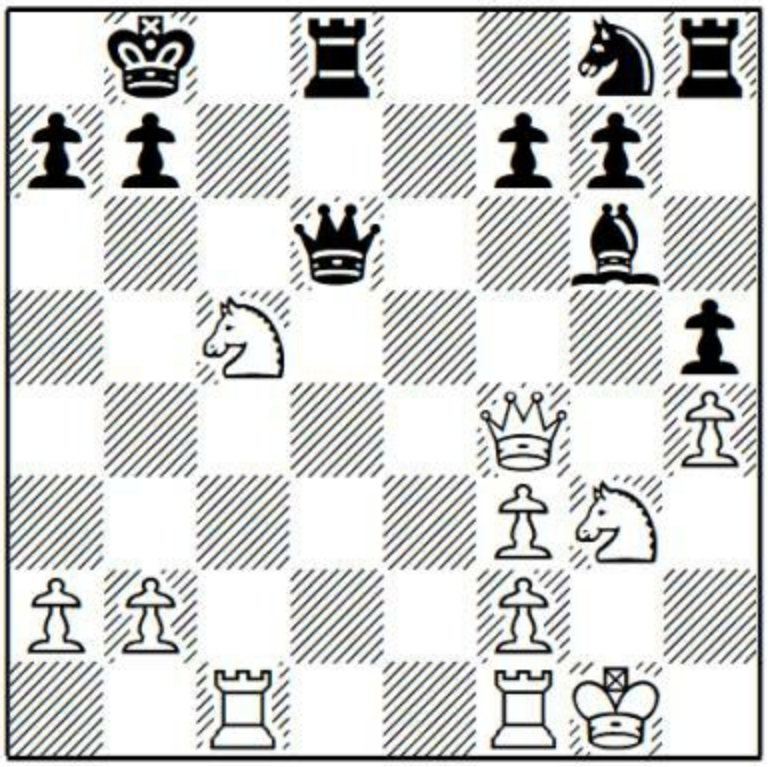
3 ... fxg3

Discovered attack. The bizarre part is that it was *Black*, not White, who suicidally discovered the attack against Black! But if 3 ... Qh3 4 Rf5 mate.

4 Rxf1 and White wins.

258) N.Bloch-P.Milbers

Siegen Olympiad 1970



White to play

Level 2

We don't immediately suspect a terminal illness in Black's position, yet it's there, due to the fact that Black lags in development and his rooks are yet to be connected.

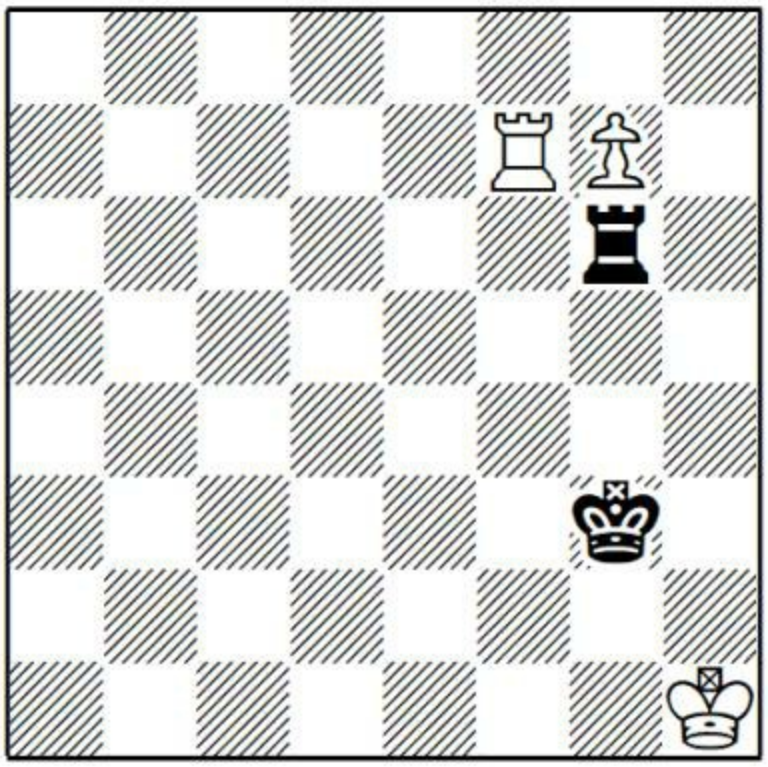
Answer: Queen sacrifice/discovered attack/double check/knight fork.

24 Rfd1! Qxf4 25 Rxd8+ 1-0

With 25 ... Kc7 26 Ne6+ the knight's jerky marionette motion confounds the defence. What a nasty double check/fork. Not only does it regain the sacrificed queen, but it just happens to cover White's loose d8-rook. 26 ... Kb6 27 Nxf4 leaves White up a rook and about to win another piece.

259) Kvezereli & Martsvalashvili

Golden Fleece, 1986



White to play

Level 5

Let's work out the position's geography. If given time Black's king will back up to h6 and then win White's extra g-pawn. White can prevent this plan and force the win of Black's rook:

Answer: Step 1: Move the rook to f1, threatening Rg1+ and Rxg6.

1 Rf1! Rh6+

1 ... Kh4 2 Rg1 wins.

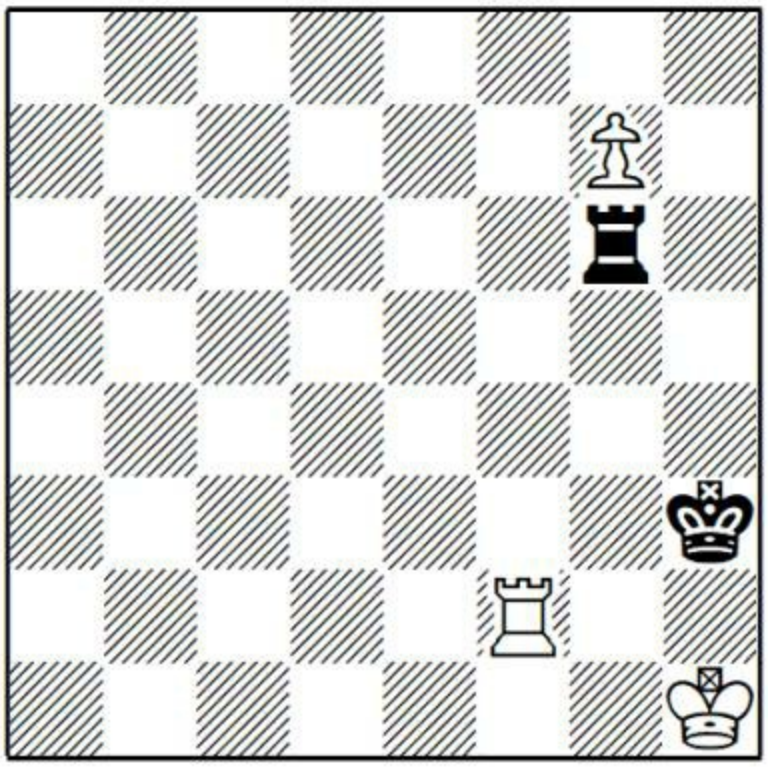
2 Kg1 Rg6 3 Rf2!

Step 2: Lift the rook to the second rank, threatening Rg2+.

3 ... Kh3+

3 ... Kh4+? is met with 4 Rg2 and 3 ... Rxg7? loses the rook to the simple 4 Rg2+ Kf4 5 Rxg7.

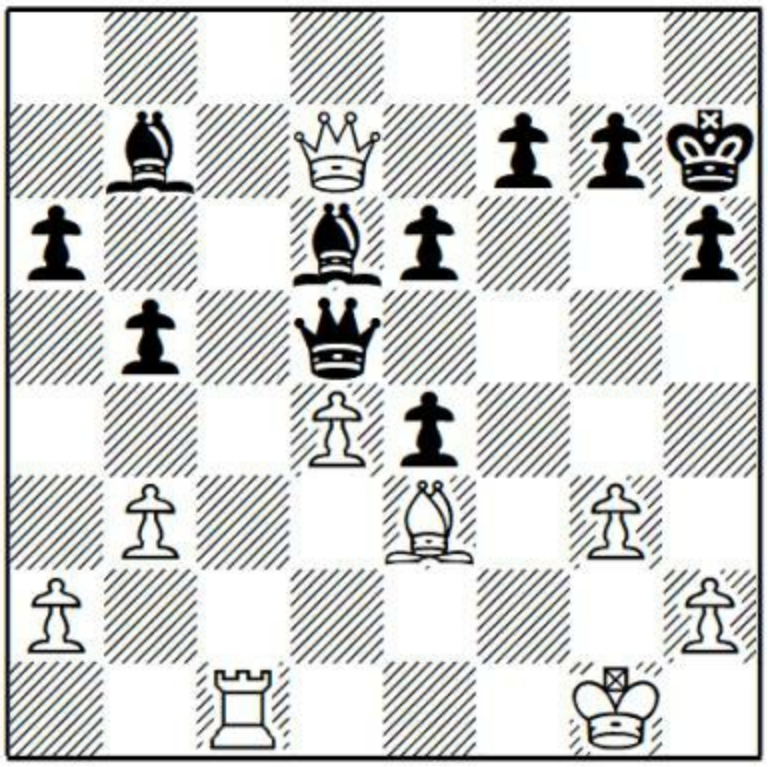
4 Kh1!



Who among us is above unashamed larceny on the chess board, especially since it's so much more satisfying to settle, over sweating for a dollar? This trick shakes the foundation of Black's belief in a coming draw. There is no defence to the coming Rh2+ and Rg2+.

4 Kf1?? throws it all away, since Black can safely play 4 ... Rxg7 and the game is a draw, but 4 Kh1! Kh4 5 Rh2+ Kg5 6 Rg2+ Kh6 7 Rxg6+ Kxg6 8 g8Q+ wins.

260) Y.Seirawan-A.Shirov
Buenos Aires 1993



Black to play

Level 2

Black obviously has compensation for the exchange, yet my crafty friend Alexey Shirov, whose mind swims in the tactical opportunist's expedient, proved that it was in reality an easy win for Black:

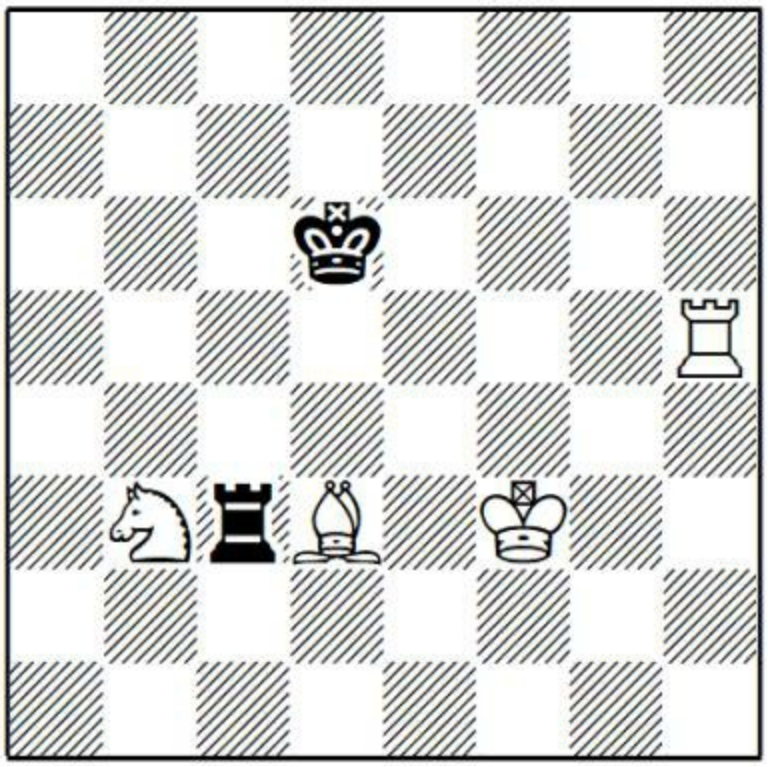
Answer: Move the bishop to f4, which costs White a full piece due to the discovered attack/double attack.

32 ... Bf4! 0-1

A priest friend of mine once told me that a former sinner makes the best priest. Discovered attack/double attack: 33 Qxd5 Bxe3+ (zwischenzug) 34 Kf1 Bxd5 with a completely hopeless ending for White.

261) Y.Afek

Magyar Sakkélet, 1997



White to play

Level 5

My friend IM Yochanan Afek is a world class, award winning endgame study composer. He was the one who talked me into writing my book *Rewire Your Chess Brain*, which is how working on composed mating problems and endgame studies can be turned into a deadly training tool. If Black wins one of White's pieces cleanly, then our opponent will hold a draw. How does White retain a winning material superiority?

Answer: **1 Nd4!!**

White allows the bishop to be taken with check. This move is totally counterintuitive, since a rook and knight cannot beat a lone rook, while with rook and bishop against lone rook, at least the extra piece side has practical chances. So our natural instinct would be to protect our bishop, rather than the knight. When I posted this partial study on my Facebook page, GM Keith Arkell confessed that if he had White in a tournament game, he would maybe not have seen the combination and could have settled for 1 Ke4? Rxb3 and

then aimed to grind Black in the objectively drawn rook and bishop versus rook ending. I make exactly the same confession!

1 ... Rxd3+ 2 Ke4

Unbelievably, Black's rook has no safe spot on the board. For example:

2 ... Rd1

Alternatively:

a) 2 ... Rd2 3 Rd5+! is the same as the main continuation, where White wins.

b) 2 ... Rc3 3 Nb5+ forks.

c) 2 ... Ra3 3 Nb5+ is another fork.

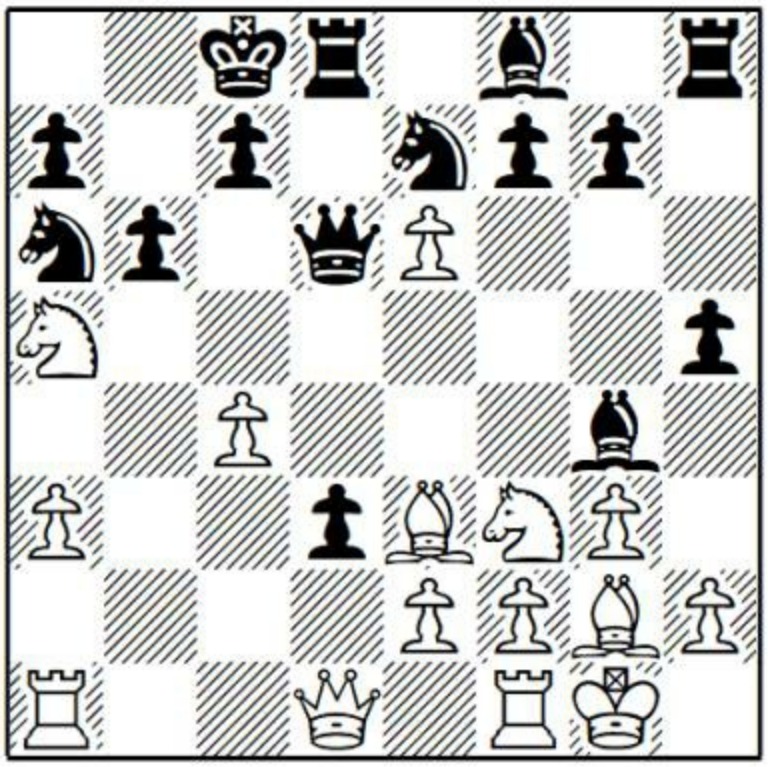
d) 2 ... Rg3 3 Nf5+ and another!

3 Rd5+! 1-0

The cadaver is almost ready for burial. Black loses the rook to a discovered attack next move, no matter where the king moves: 3 ... Ke7 (or 3 ... Kc7 4 Ne6+ Kc6 5 Rxd1) 4 Nf5+ Kf7 5 Rxd1.

262) J.Van der Wiel-S.Tiviakov

Groningen 2001



White to play

Level 5

This is an odd discovered attack combination, in that it is the winner of the game who allows a discovered attack on his *own* position. 15 exd3 is strong, yet White has an even stronger attacking continuation:

Answer: Move the knight to g5, allowing Black to win a full rook with the double attack/discovered attack 15 ... d3xe2.

15 Ng5!!

Calculation is a wonderful substitute for prayer. Chamomile tea isn't going to cut it to calm this knight down. What is really needed is a prescription strength sedative. With this move White deliberately allows his opponent a seemingly powerful discovered attack.

Instead, 15 exd3 is heavily in White's favour, yet every missed combination is wasted potential.

15 ... dxe2

Discovered attack. White loses a rook, yet wins the game.

16 Qa4!

Not 16 Qxd6?? exf1Q+ (zwischenzug) 17 Rxf1 Rxd6 18 Nxf7 bxa5 19 Nxh8 Bxe6 when Black is up a piece and will easily consolidate.

16 ... exf1Q+ 17 Rxf1

Tiviakov may be up a rook, but that is all the praise his position gets. White threatens both Nb7! and also Nxf7.

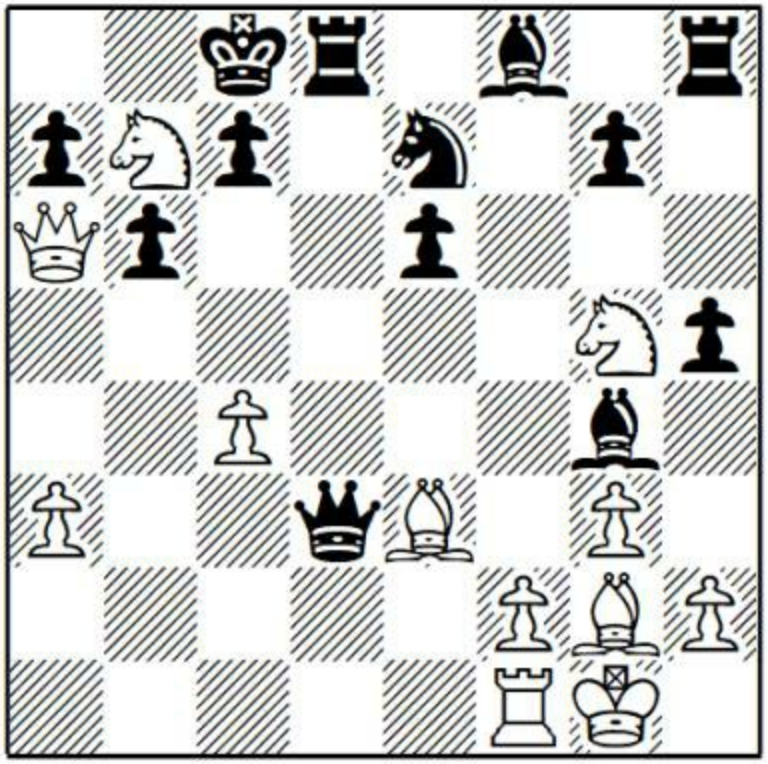
17 ... fxe6

Instead, 17 ... Bxe6 18 Nb7! (discovered attack/double attack) 18 ... Qd7 19 Qxa6 Kb8 20 Nxd8 threatens mate on b7, while leaving White up heavy material.

18 Nb7!

Triple attack.

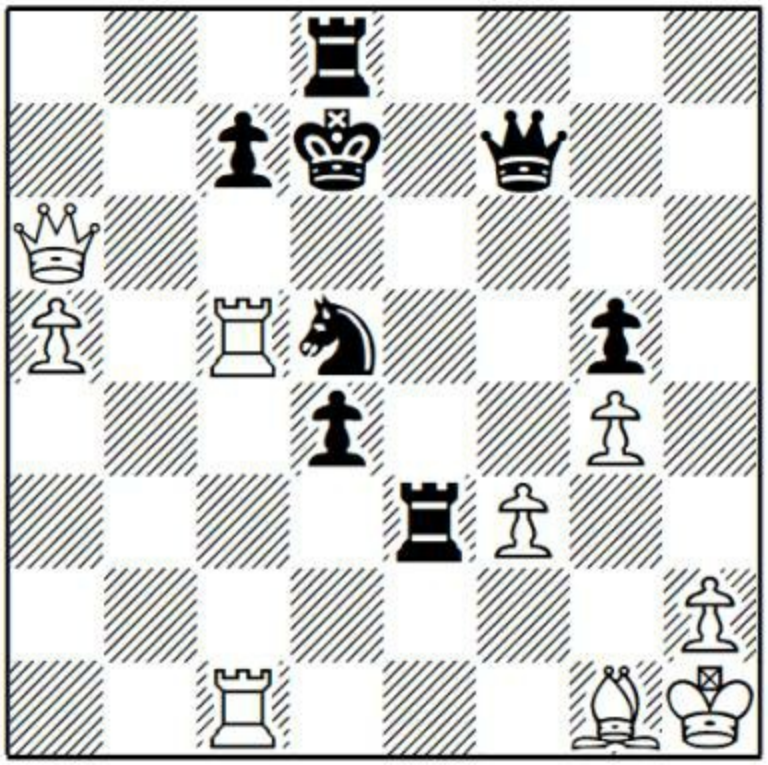
18 ... Qd3 19 Qxa6 1-0



After 19 ... Kd7 20 Qa4+ c6 21 Nxd8 Kxd8 simplest is 22 Nf7+ (the perfectionist comp wants 22 Qxa7!) 22 ... Ke8 23 Nxh8 and wins.

263) Y.Shulman-A.Savage

World Open, Philadelphia 2002



Black to play

Level 2.5

Black's position is a failed state. How can White win heavy material?

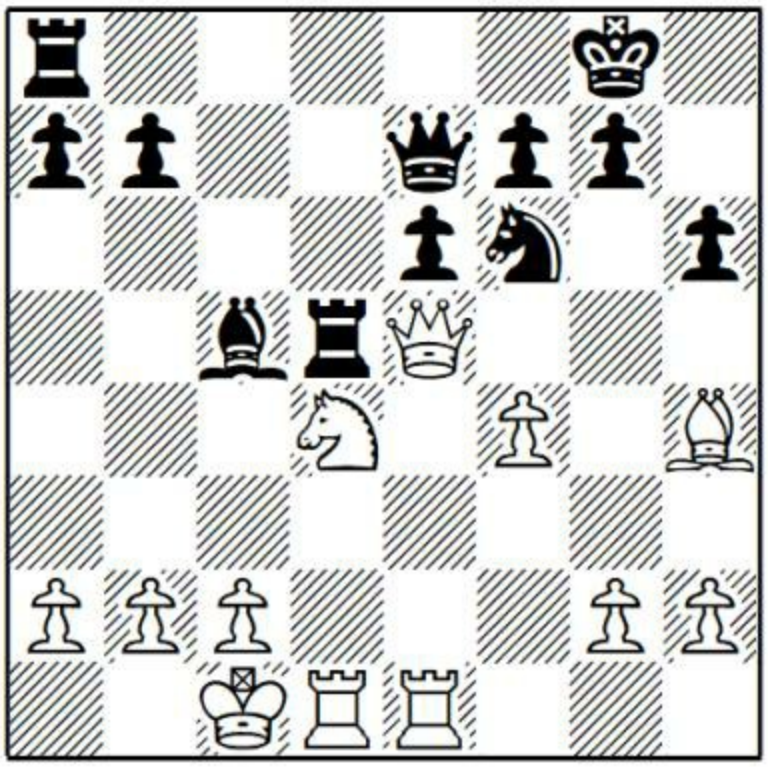
Answer: Sacrifice both rooks on c7 then discover an attack on Black's queen with a queen check on a7.

35 Rxc7+! Nxc7 36 Rxc7+ Kxc7 37 Qa7+ Kc8 1-0

38 Qxf7 Rc3 39 a6 is hopeless for Black.

264) V.Anand-M.Gurevich

Bastia (rapid) 2004



Black to play

Level 3.5

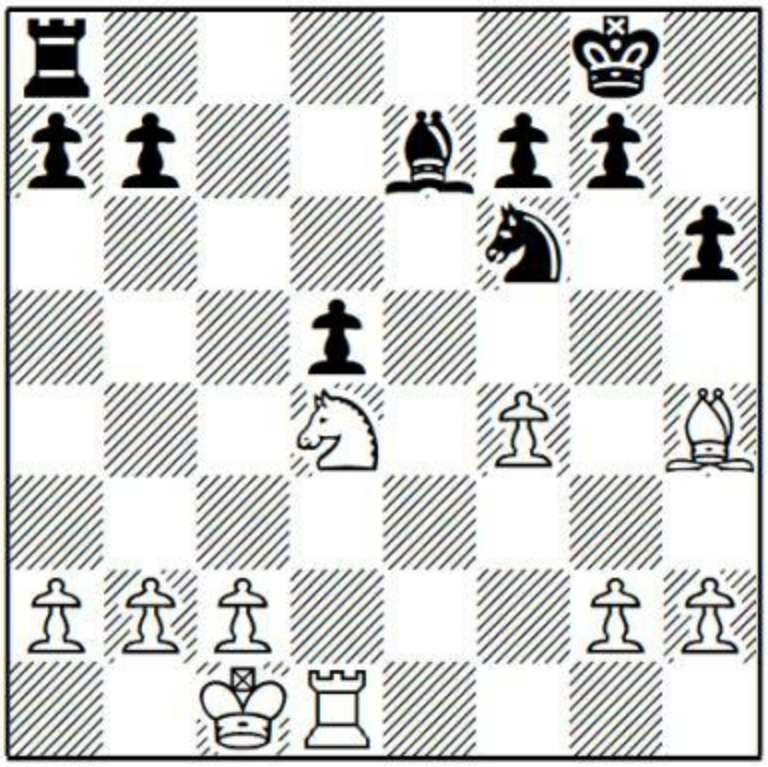
On his last move Gurevich played ... Rd5, hoping to shake off Anand's pressure. Anand found a way to win a clean pawn, with initiative. How?

Answer: Queen sacrifice/discovered attack/pinned piece/simplification.

17 Qxd5! exd5

Unfortunately, Black must immediately return the queen with a self-inflicted discovered attack. 17 ... Nxd5? just leaves White up a full exchange after 18 Bxe7 Bxe7 19 g3.

18 Rxe7 Bxe7



White to play

Level 2

Now comes the second stage of Anand's combination, which wins the d5-pawn.

19 Nf5!

Discovered attack/double attack.

19 ... Bd8 20 Bxf6

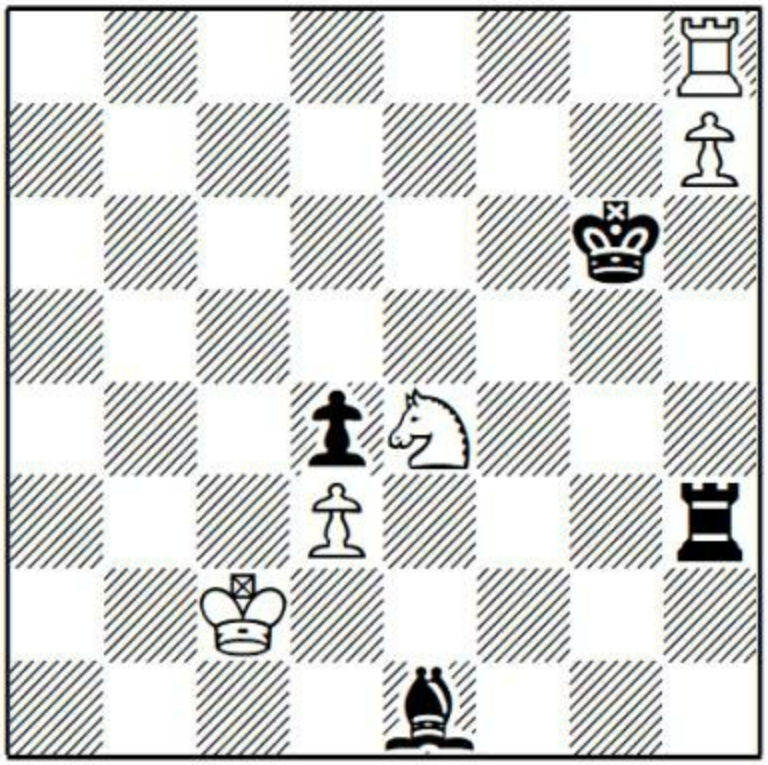
Removal of the guard..

20 ... Bxf6 21 Rxd5 Re8 22 c3 h5 23 Nd6 Rd8 24 Rd2 1-0

The most helpless situation on the board is when we know exactly what our opponent plans, yet are completely helpless to affect the outcome. This is not a premature resignation by Black, since playing on takes us to that situation where some Facebook 'friend' you barely know begins with: "I know you are busy, so I will keep this short," and then drones on for the next 15 minutes of your life, which you will never get back. It's better to just disconnect and get on with our lives. After 24 ... b6 25 Nb5 a6 26 Nc7 a5 27

Nd5! (double attack) 27 ... Rd6 28 a4 White is a pawn up with the dominant minor piece, with a relatively simple technical win.

265) M.Carlsen-H.Nakamura
Magnus Carlsen Invitational (online rapid) 2020



I posted this on Chess Endgame Studies and Compositions. About 30 seconds later my friend GM Alexey Shirov posted the correct answer. How did Magnus win material?

Answer: Step 1: Give away the h7-pawn to lure Black's king to the h-file.

1 Rg8+! Kxh7

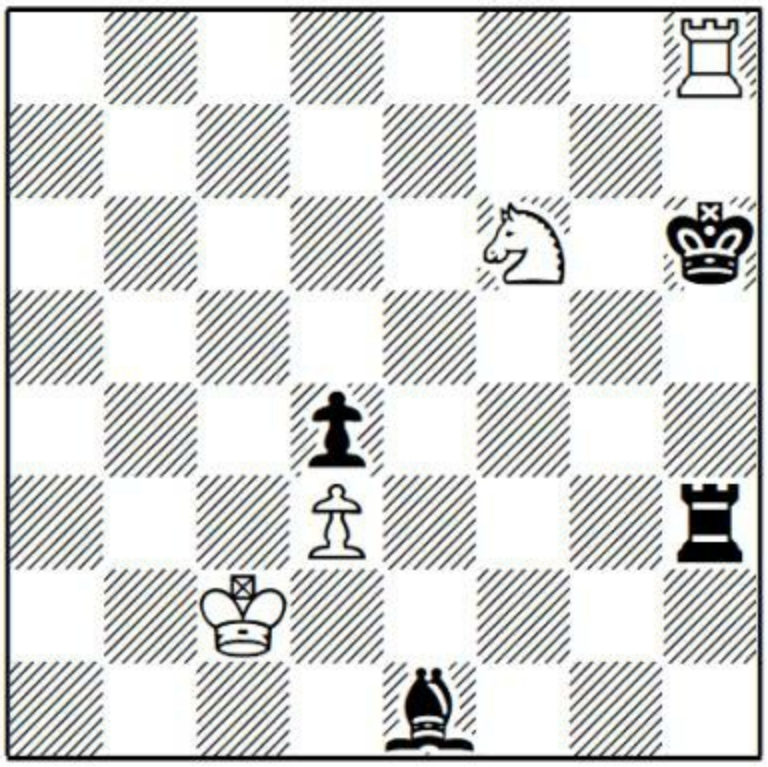
"I refuse to be pushed to the back of the line," says Black's king, who is forced to the back of the line.

2 Nf6+!

And now he is gently nudged forward one step.

Step 2: Black's king must be forced to f6.

2 ... Kh6 3 Rh8+



Step 3: Discovered attack. White wins a full exchange.

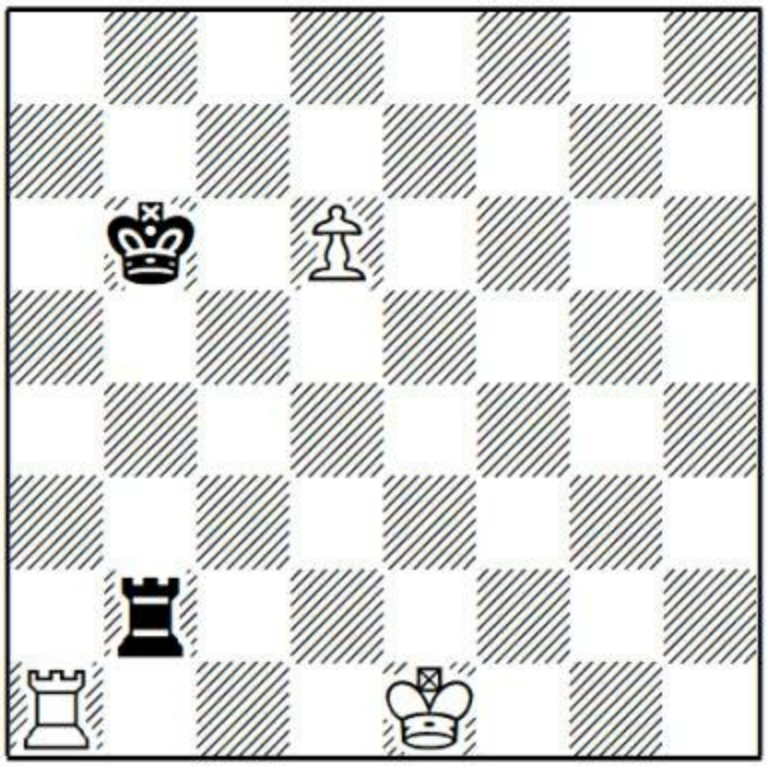
3 ... Kg6 4 Rxh3

It makes no sense to try and resurrect something which is already dead. Playing on against Magnus down a full exchange would be a time-wasting exercise. The winning technique goes like this: 4 ... Kxf6 5 Rh2! (this prevents Black's king from moving to the e-file, due to a double attack check on e2) 5 ... Bg3 6 Re2 Be5 7 Kb3 Ke6 8 Kc4 Kd6 9 Re4 Ke6 10 Kc5! (Black's king must be first thrown out of position, before capturing on d4; 10 Rxd4?? is premature: 10 ... Bxd4 11 Kxd4 Kd6 is a standard opposition draw) 10 ... Kf5 11 Rxd4! (it's time to remove the odious wart on d4) 11 ... Bxd4+ 12 Kxd4 Ke6 13 Kc5 and wins.

11) Double Attack

Double attack is self-explanatory, where we make a move which threatens simultaneous enemy pieces, only one of which can be defended.

266) A.Selezniev
Tidskrift for Schack, 1921



White to play
Level 4

White's d-pawn looks too unprotected to be saved. In truth White can win Black's rook by force:

Answer: Start by pushing our passed pawn.

1 d7!

False paths:

a) 1 0-0-0? Ra2! 2 d7 Ra1+! 3 Kc2 Rxd1 4 Kxd1 Kc7 draws.

b) 1 Ra8? Kc6 2 Rd8 Rb5 3 Ke2 Rd5 wins White's final pawn and draws.

1 ... Kc7

Now a slow seep of geometric poison corrupts Black's position.

2 d8Q+!

Step 2: Attraction.

Instead, 2 0-0-0? Rb8 3 Kc2 Rd8 draws, as does 2 Rd1? Kd8 3 Kf1 Rb7.

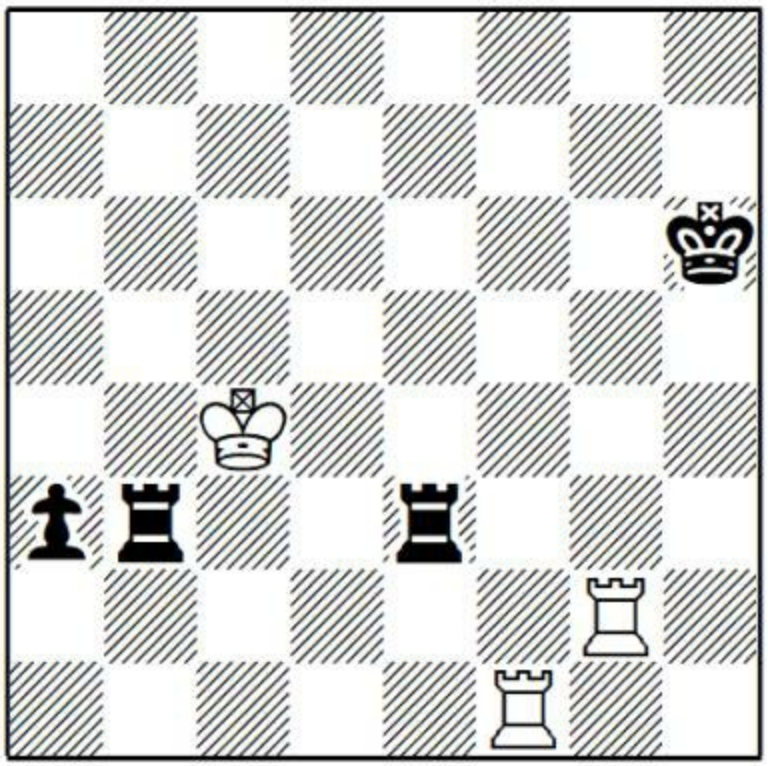
2 ... Kxd8 3 0-0-0+!

Step 3: Double attack. Are you staring uncomprehendingly? I assure you that castling is legal.

3 ... Kc7 4 Kxb2

And wins.

267) A.Mandler & E.Konig
Wiener Schachzeitung, 1924



White can disconnect Black's rooks and win one of them. How?

Step 1: Attraction: Give check on the h-file and lure Black's rook to h3.

1 Rh1+!

After 1 Rf8? Rec3+ 2 Kd4 Rd3+ 3 Ke4 Re3+ 4 Kd4 White only draws.

1 ... Rh3 2 Rgh2!

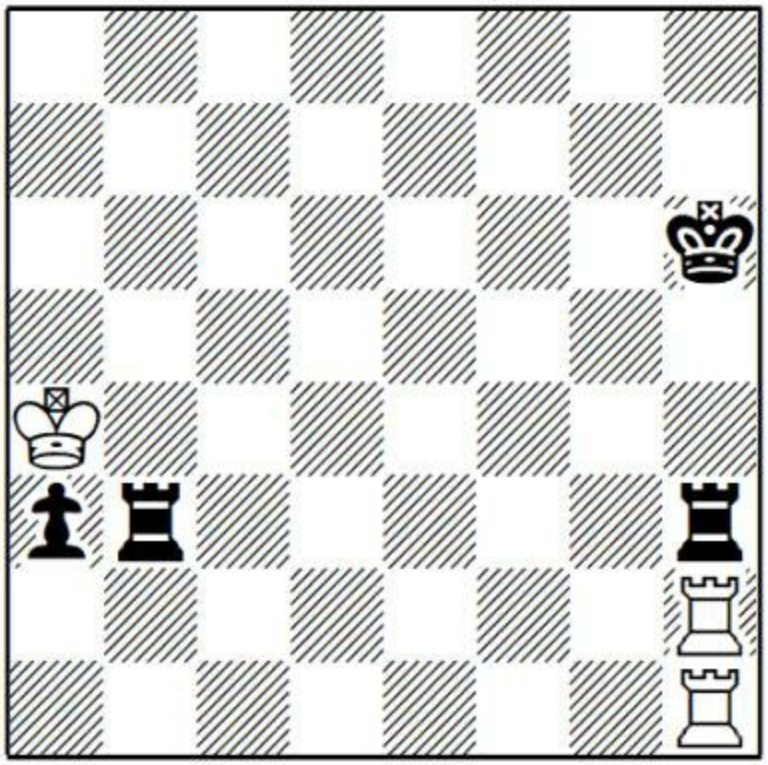
Now Black's fortunes decline ominously.

Step 2: Load up on the h-file.

2 ... Rbc3+

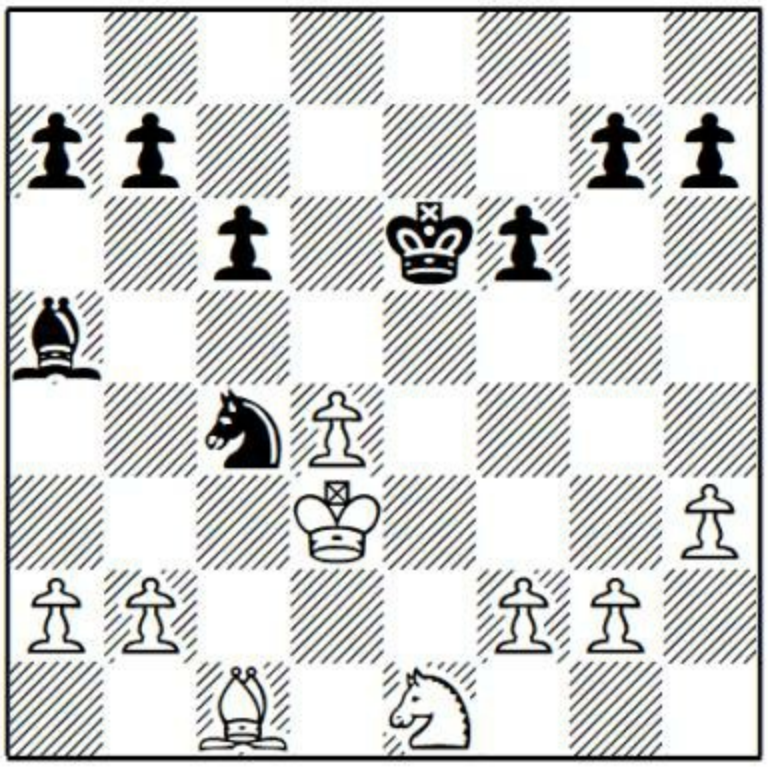
You may believe you are fixing something and completely miss the future downstream effect of your 'fix', which in this case is useless. Black's attempt at perpetual check will fail since White's king has a hiding place on a4. Note that the position would be drawn if Black's a-pawn didn't exist, since then Black could deliver perpetual check. 2 ... Rxh2 3 Rxh2+ Kg5 4 Kxb3 also wins.

3 Kb4 Rb3+ 4 Ka4!



Black will lose a rook: 4 ... Rxh2 5 Rxh2+. Double attack. Black loses the remaining rook.

268) E.Lasker-M.Euwe
Nottingham 1936



White to play

Level 2

Even world champions are human. Euwe stood minusculely better and was pressing for a win in an objectively drawn position, until he overplayed his hand with his last move, 23 ... Ba5??. Prove why the move was a catastrophic error:

Answer: Step 1: Play b2-b4, attracting Black's bishop to b4.

24 b4!

"The rest of the game requires no comment," wrote Alekhine in the tournament book.

Instead, 24 Kxc4?? Bxe1 25 Be3 is a likely draw, despite White's isolani and slightly bad bishop. Undoubtedly, this is the continuation Euwe expected

when he blundered on his 23th move.

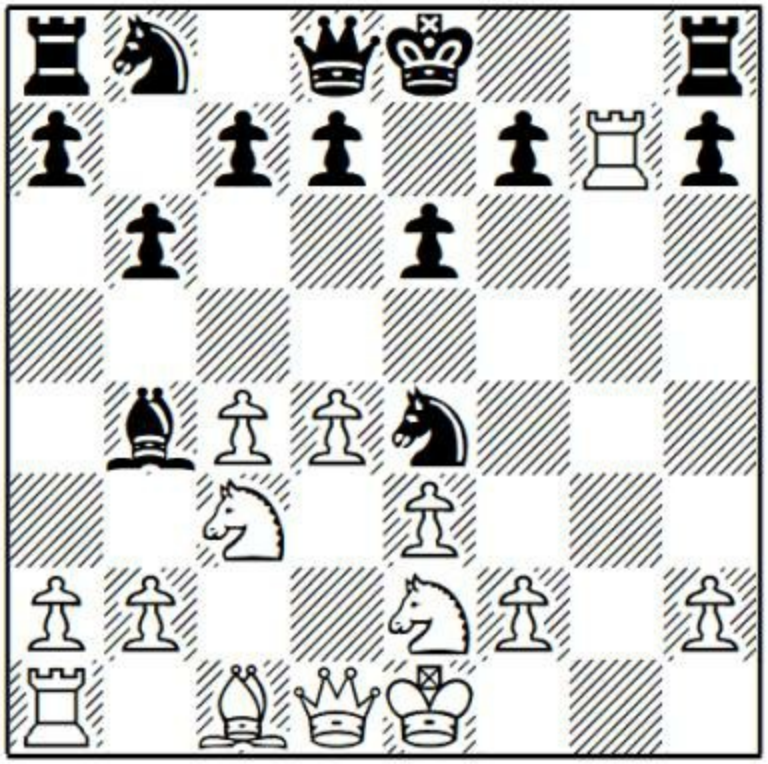
24 ... Bxb4

Starvation breeds desperation. No worthy alternative exists. Black loses a piece, no matter what he does. Surely at this point Euwe was in mental agony, knowing he threw away the game.

25 Nc2! 1-0

The irony doesn't escape us. Oh, that crafty Lasker. He managed to swindle a world champion. Double attack. Suddenly both black pieces hang. Euwe shuffled around for a few more moves before resigning.

269) R.Fine-A.Dake
New York 1931



Black to play
Level 3.5

Industry is not rewarded when we labour for a false goal. White's rook

chopped a pawn on g7. How did Dake take advantage of White's loose g7-rook, with a double attack shot?

Answer: Sacrifice on f2 and if White's king takes it, Black responds with ... Qf6+, with a double attack on White's king and g7-rook.

9 ... Nxf2!

9 ... Qf6? is a false double attack, on f2 and g7, since White can cover everyone with the simple 10 Rg2 with a playable position.

10 Qc2

Not 10 Kxf2?? Qf6+. Double attack. White's rook falls.

10 ... Qh4! 11 Kf1

It isn't easy to metabolize the data:

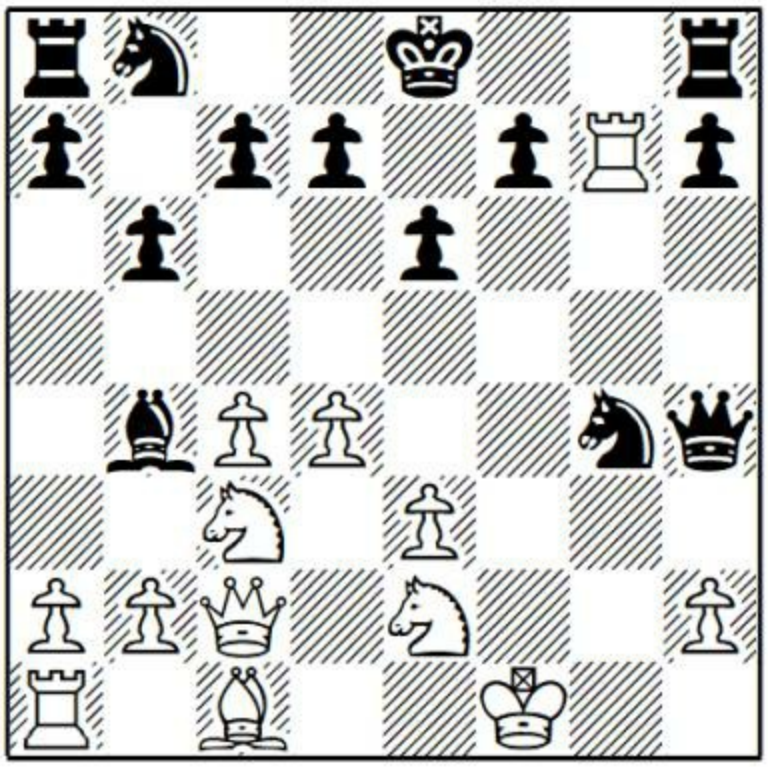
a) 11 Ng3 Bf8! wins the exchange.

b) 11 Rg3 Ne4! sees Black exploit the pin on the c3-knight and win material.

c) 11 Rg2 Nd3+! (double check) 12 Kd2 (moving the king to f1 or d1 allows Black mate on the move on e1) 12 ... Ne1! 13 Qd1 Nxg2 wins.

d) 11 Rg1 would see the Incredible Hulk from g7, transformed into the Incredible Sulk, on g1. Maybe objectively this is White's best try, yet it's still quite awful for Fine: 11 ... Ne4+ 12 Kd1 Nf2+ 13 Kd2 Nc6 14 a3 Bd6. In this version White saved the exchange yet his position is delirious and babbling. He is down a pawn and hopelessly tangled.

11 ... Ng4!



Here is a second double attack, threatening both ... Qf2 mate and also ... Qf6+, followed by ... Qxg7.

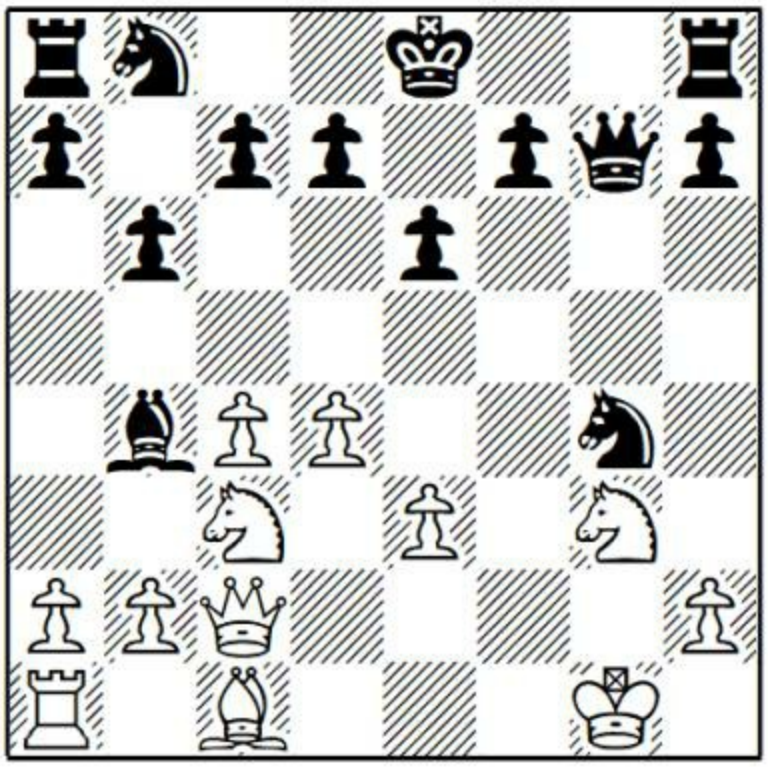
12 Ng3

12 Nf4 Bf8 wins the exchange after all.

12 ... Qf6+

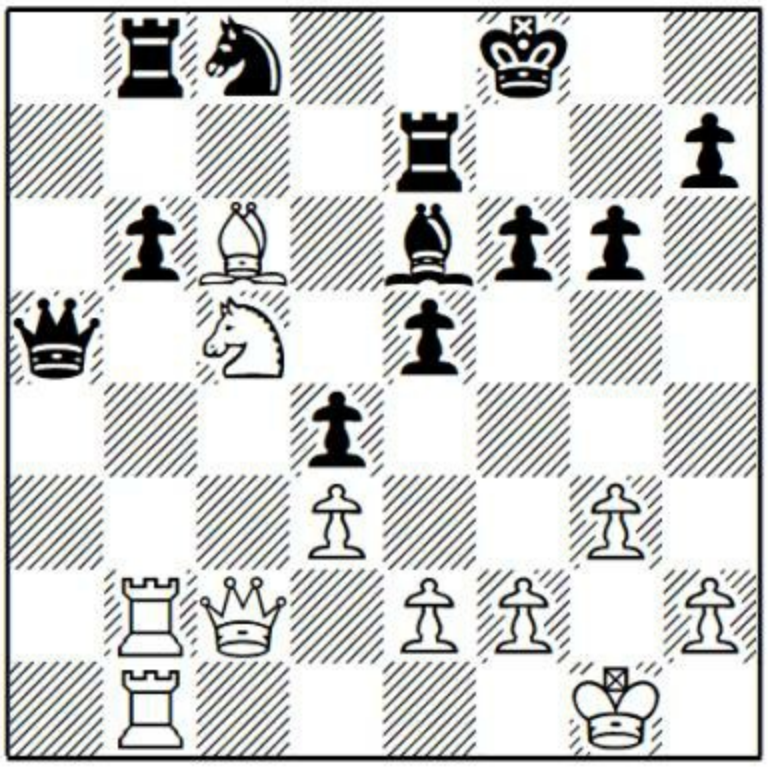
Double attack.

13 Kg1 Qxg7 0-1

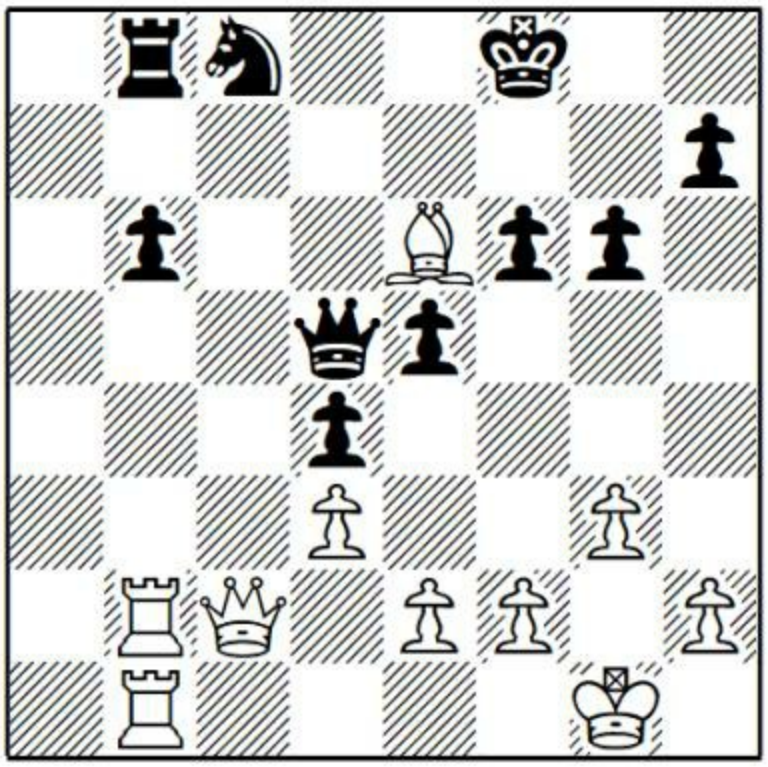


Black consolidated and won in a few moves.

270) V.Korchnoi-L.Pachman
Buenos Aires 1960



White to play
Level 4
How did Korchnoi force the win of material?
Answer: Step 1: Trade on e6, attracting Black's rook to that square.
29 Nxe6+! Rxe6 30 Bd7!
Step 2: Double attack on e6 and c8.
30 ... Qd5 31 Bxe6!



The scriptures remind us that while the spirit may be willing, the flesh is weak. Korchnoi doesn't fall for the obvious yet incoherent response 31 Bxc8?? Rc6! when Black regains the lost piece and is fine.

31 ... Qxe6 32 Qc7!

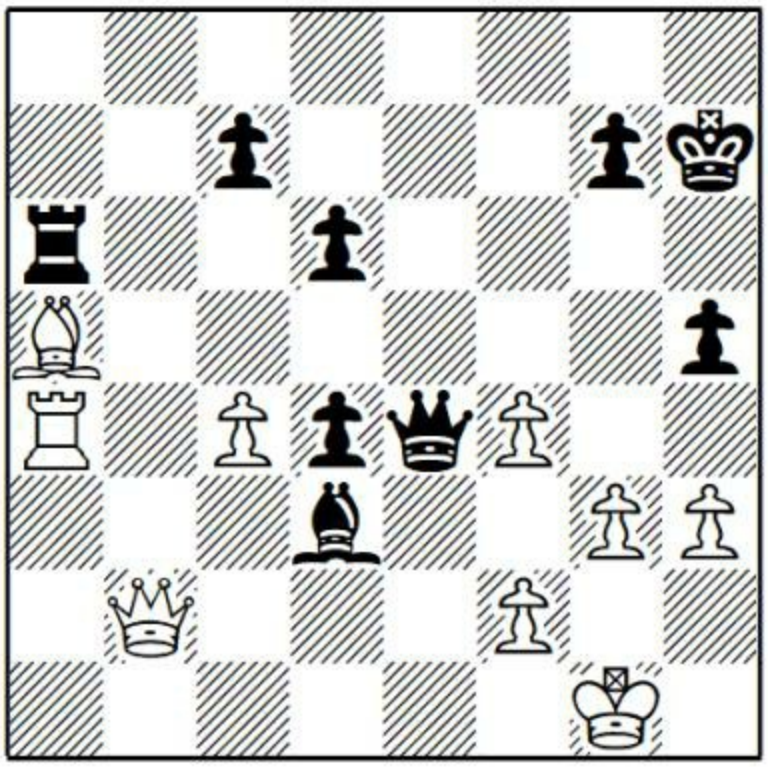
Korchnoi continues to deliver disquieting truths to his opponent.

Step 3: Double attack, once again, this time on b8 and h7.

32 ... Qd6 33 Qxh7

Korchnoi easily converted his full exchange.

271) A.Saidy-R.Fischer
New York 1968



Black to play

Level 2

My friend Tony's position is punctured on the light squares. On top of that he has an even bigger problem. How did Bobby win material in this position?

Answer: Step 1: Exchange sacrifice/attraction/double attack.

33 ... Rxa5!

When we launch our combinational sacrifice, it is often an odd mixture of exaltation/terror, since the unknown can be either joyful or miserable. Not here though, since it probably took Bobby .0000001 seconds to spot the combination and see with 100% assurance that it works.

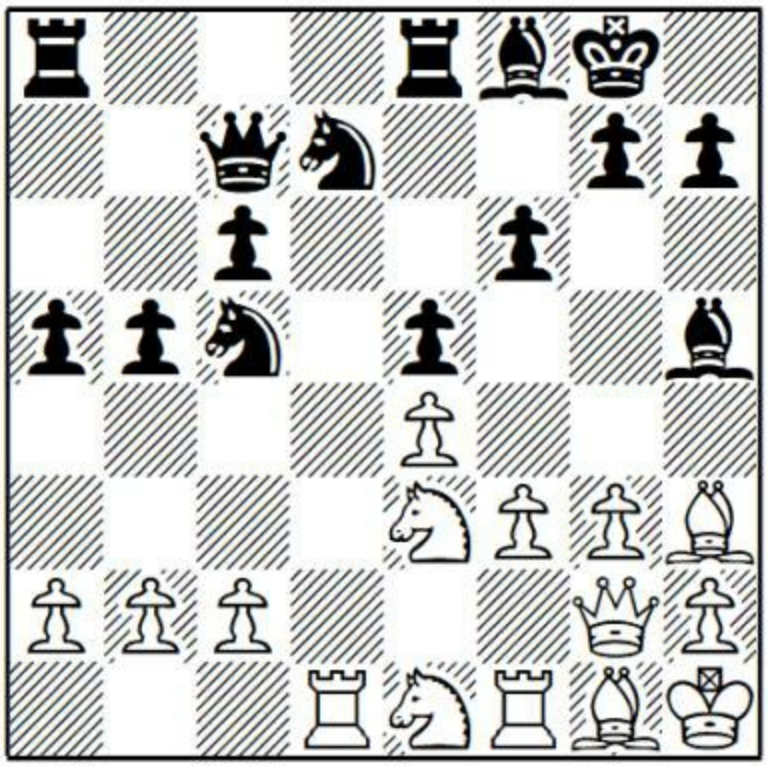
34 Rxa5

White's rook, having been attracted to a5, is set up for a double attack on Bobby's next move.

34 ... Qe1+ 35 Kh2 Qxa5 0-1

White just lost an irreplaceable asset and must resign.

272) V.Korchnoi-K.Langeweg
Wijk aan Zee 1971



White to play

Level 2

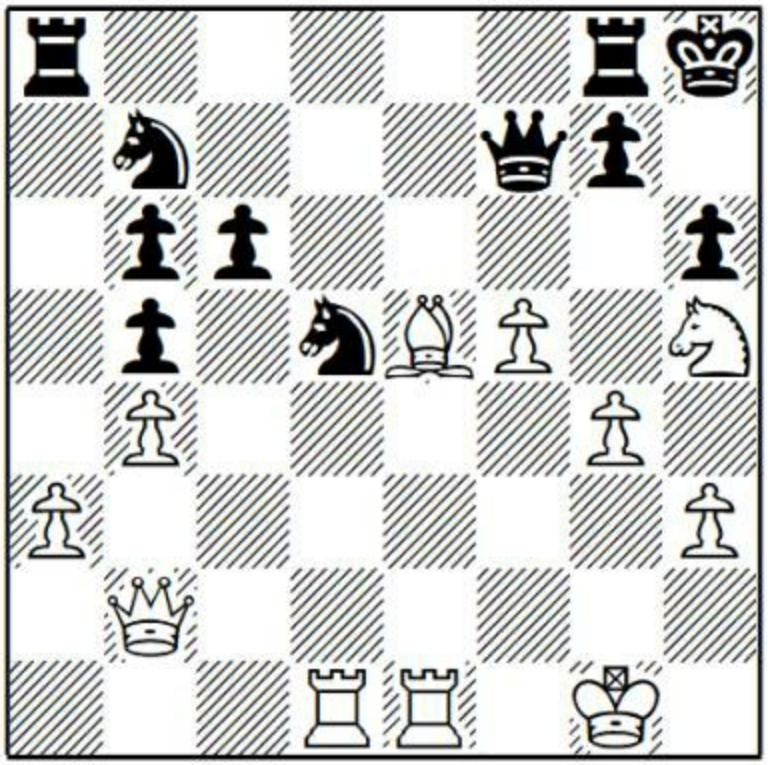
Korchnoi's combination is easy to see when we are told that it exists. I promise you that it doesn't require nuanced thought. Yet it would be so easy to miss it in a tournament game. White to play and win decisive material:

Answer: Exchange on d7.

21 Bxd7! 1-0

21 ... Nxd7 22 Qh3! sees the queen emerges from her lair in search of fresh victims. Step 2: Double attack on h5 and d7. Black loses a piece.

273) M.Taimanov-V.Hort
Tallinn 1975



White to play

Level 2

A spy's ideal vantage point is one where she observes others, without being observed in return. Find one sneaky shift and Black's position cracks:

Answer: Move the queen to c1, with a deadly double attack on h6 and c6.

32 Qc1! Kh7

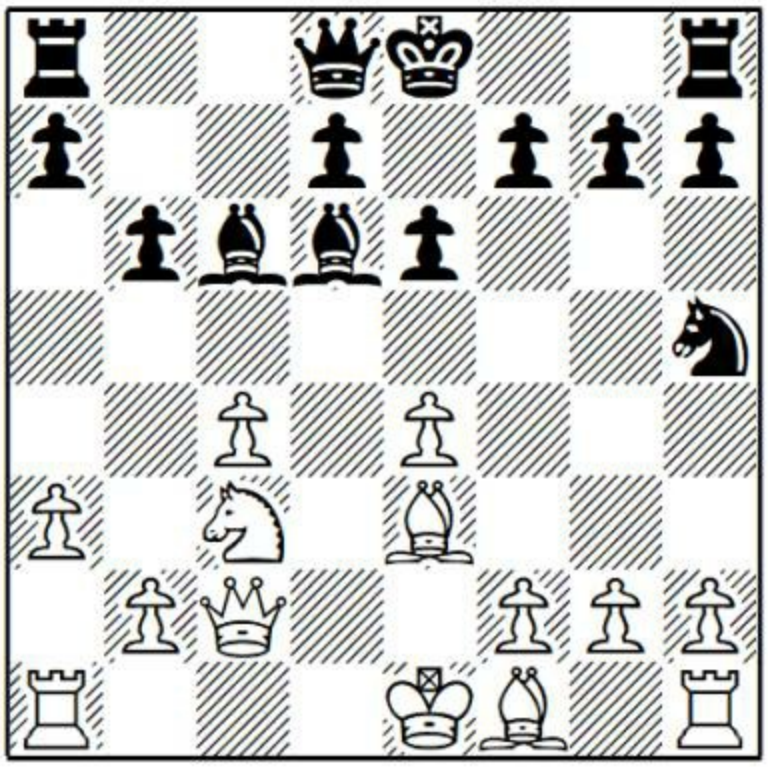
Black must allow the base of his pawn chain to fall, since 32 ... Rac8?? is even worse: 33 Qxh6 mate and the black king's humiliation is complete.

33 Qxc6 1-0

33 ... Rad8 34 Qxb5 leaves White up two pawns with a dominating position.

274) L.Christiansen-A.Karpov

Wijk aan Zee 1993



White to play

Level 1

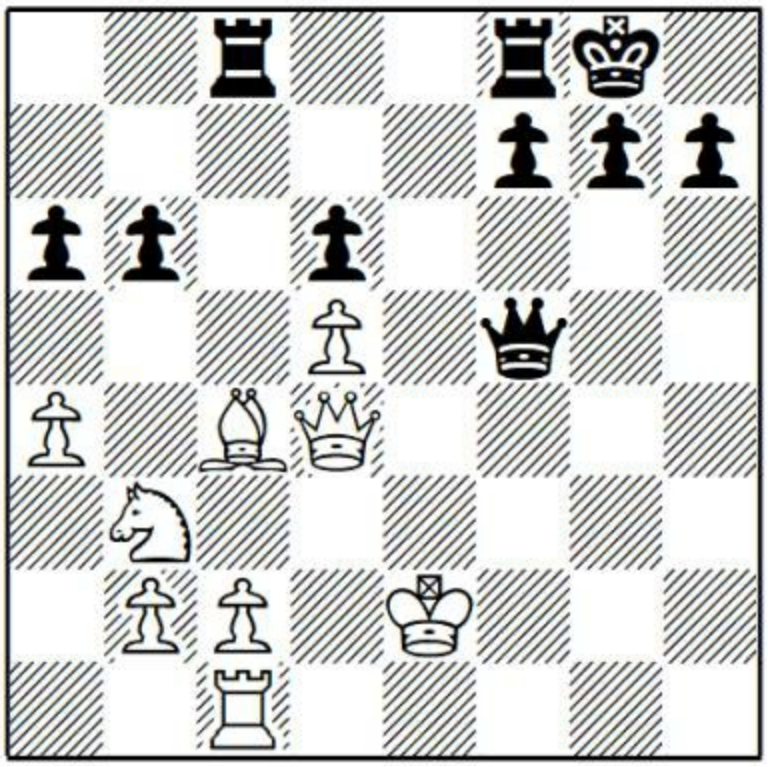
Why is it that we invariably bang down our '??' blunders with an air of ease and assurance? Blunders, especially from incredibly strong players, often arise from inattention, rather than lack of knowledge. On his last move, Karpov carelessly played his bishop to d6 instead of c5. This was an unfortunate decision. Why?

Answer: A simple double attack with a queen retreat to d1. It's not every day that a former world champion loses in 12 moves, from a perfectly good position!

12 Qd1! 1-0

275) H.Nakamura-M.Carlsen

Magnus Carlsen Invitational (online rapid) 2020



Black to play

Level 2

In this position Magnus proved quite conclusively that his attack was unstoppable. How should Black continue?

Answer: Step 1: Activate the f8 rook, with tempo.

31 ... Rfe8+

Obvious enough.

32 Kd2

Or 32 Kd1 Qf3+ 33 Kd2 Rxc4! 34 Qxc4 Qe3+ 35 Kd1 Qe1 mate.

32 ... Re4!

Step 2: Double attack. White's bishop falls.

33 Qd3 Qf4+

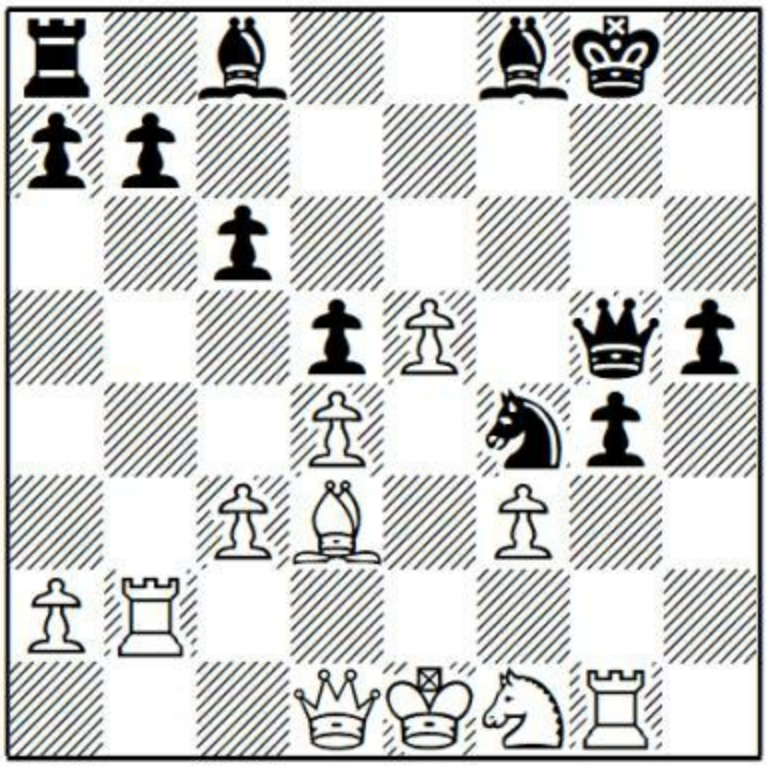
Unpinning.

34 Kd1 Rcxc4 35 Nd2 Rcd4 0-1

Pinned piece. Now White's queen falls as well. If White tries to keep his queen with 36 Qc3 then Black exploits the pin with 36 ... Qf1 mate. In this

version Cinderella certainly ‘gets’ her prince.

276) M.Carlsen-A.Giri
Magnus Carlsen Invitational (online rapid) 2020



Black to play
Level 2

The initiative is a bit like milk, in that it tends to have a short expiration date, before it sours. On his last move Magnus, thinking he was still attacking, got a little excited with 25 f2-f3??. What did he overlook?

Answer: **25 ... Nxd3+!**

Step 1: Swap away the d3-bishop, which does two things:

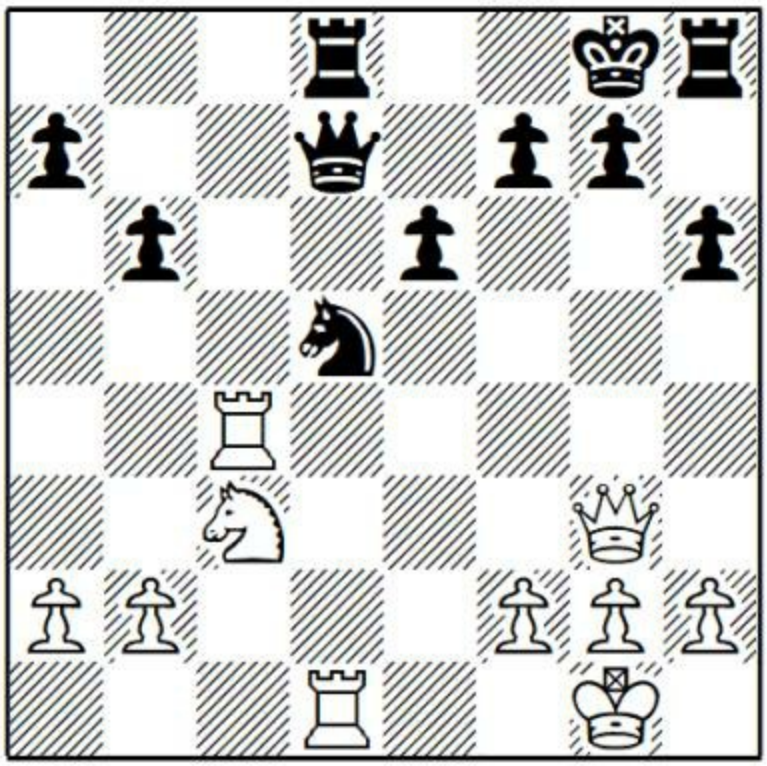
1. White’s queen is lifted away from protection of c1.
2. The black queen’s h6-c1 diagonal is opened.

26 Qxd3 Qc1+ 0-1

Step 2: Double attack. White loses a full rook and there is no perpetual

check. There is no other feeling like that engulfing horror when our opponent whacks us over the head with a simple combination, whose existence we were previously oblivious. After 27 Kf2 Qxb2+ 28 Ke1 Bg7 Black consolidates.

277) K.Griffith-C.Lakdawala
San Diego (rapid) 2012



Black to play

Level 2

On his last move my opponent played his rook to d1. Why was this an error?

Answer: Discovered attack/zwischenzug/knight fork.

23 ... Nxc3! 0-1

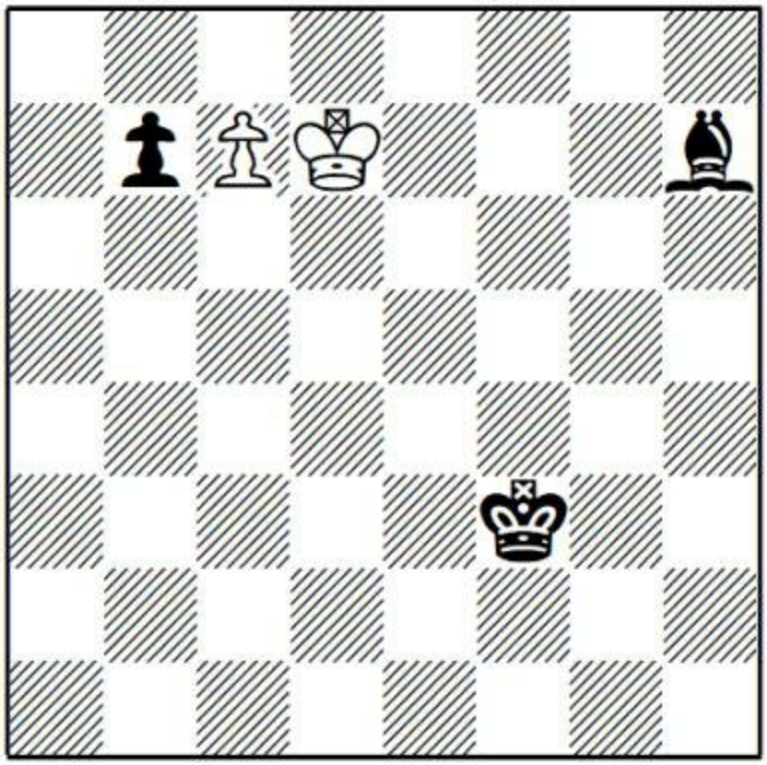
There is no way to disbelieve an incontrovertible truth. White just hung a full rook: 24 Rxd7 (24 Re1 hangs the queen to a weak back rank combination: 24

... Ne2+!) 24 ... Ne2+ (zwischenzug) 25 Kf1 Nxg3+ is *check*. White doesn't have time to pick up Black's loose rook on d8, so 26 hxg3 Rxd7 leaves White down a rook.

12) Drawing Combinations

There is one unforgivable crime our opponent can commit when we believe we are winning: they survived. This is the anti-matter chapter, where one side resurrects the dead and saves a seemingly dead lost position with a hidden drawing combination.

278) A.Sarychev & K.Sarychev
Shakhmatny Listok, 1928



White to play
Level 5

If you are familiar with Reti's pawn endgame drawing study, then you will be able to solve this one, since the same principle is applied:

Answer: Step 1: Move our king counter-intuitively *behind* our own passed pawn.

1 Kc8!!

World class chess composer and friend Steffen Slumstrup Nielsen called this "The most spectacular chess move of all time."

Do you feel you are living the life of an attendant in a mental institution? The fundamental axiom of solving composed problems and studies is: Don't reject any move, merely because it looks illogical. Compositions thrive on anomaly, so the illogical should be examined. No law is absolute, except for checkmate, to which there are no exceptions.

Instead:

a) 1 Ke6? Ke4! (now promotion is met with ... Bf5+) 2 Kd6 Bf5 3 Kc5 Ke5 4 Kb6 Bc8 consolidates and wins.

b) 1 c8Q? allows the skewer 1 ... Bf5+ 2 Kc7 Bxc8 3 Kxc8 b5 promoting.

c) 1 Kd6? Bf5 2 Kc5 Ke4 3 Kb6 Bc8 4 Ka7 b5 wins.

1 ... b5

Or 1 ... Be4 2 Kb8! Bf5 3 Kxb7 and a draw.

2 Kd7!!

This appears insane, since we just gave Black two free tempi, yet this anomaly is White's only drawing path. The idea is that the b-pawn is safe on b7, since Black can play ... Bf5 and ... Bc8. On b5 it is vulnerable. Watch:

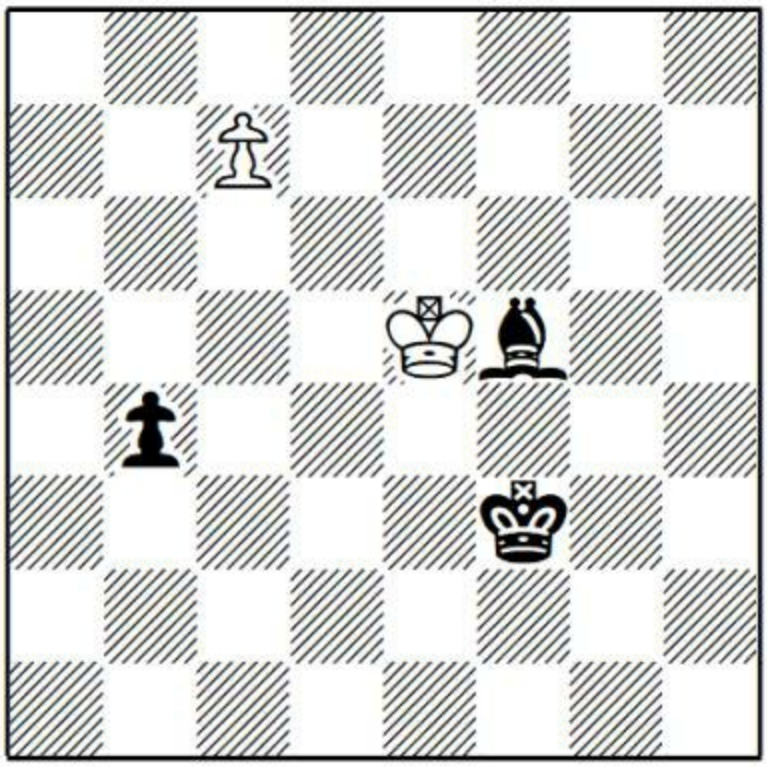
2 ... b4

Instead, if 2 ... Bf5+ 3 Kd6! b4 (or 3 ... Ke4 4 Kc5 Bd7 5 c8Q - removal of the guard - 5 ... Bxc8 6 Kxb5) 4 Ke5!. This move gains a crucial tempo on Black's bishop, transposing to the actual study.

3 Kd6!

Not 3 Ke6? Ke4 4 c8Q Bf5+.

3 ... Bf5 4 Ke5!



Do you see what White just did? We accomplished a key tempo gain which allows White to draw.

4 ... Kg4

4 ... Bc8 5 Kd4 Be6 6 c8Q! (removal of the guard) 6 ... Bxc8 7 Kc4 is also a draw.

5 Kd4

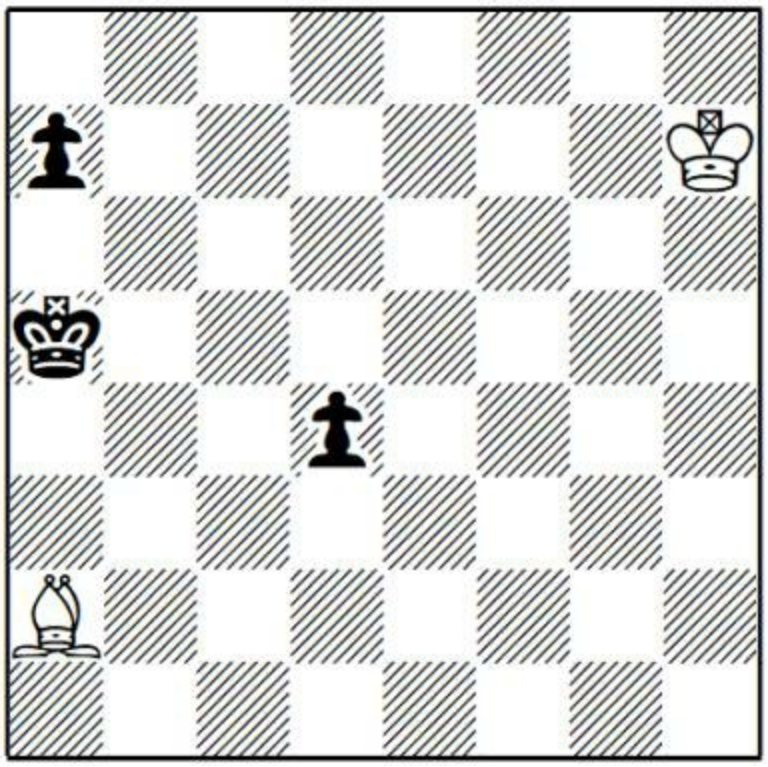
Black's final pawn will fall:

5 ... Be6 6 c8Q!

Deflection.

6 ... Bxc8 7 Kc4

279) W.Mees
Probleemblad, 2001



White to play

Level 5

Can White's king get back in time?

***Answer:* 1 Bc4!!**

Not 1 Kg6? Kb4 2 Kf5 a5! 3 Ke4 Kc3 4 Bb1 a4 winning, as White's bishop is overloaded. 1 Bb1? Kb4 2 Bd3 a5 3 Kg6 Kc3 4 Bb5 d3 5 Kf5 d2 6 Ba4 Kb4 7 Bd1 a4 8 Ke4 a3 9 Kd3 a2, which promotes.

1 ... Kb4 2 Ba6!

It's critical to block the a-pawn.

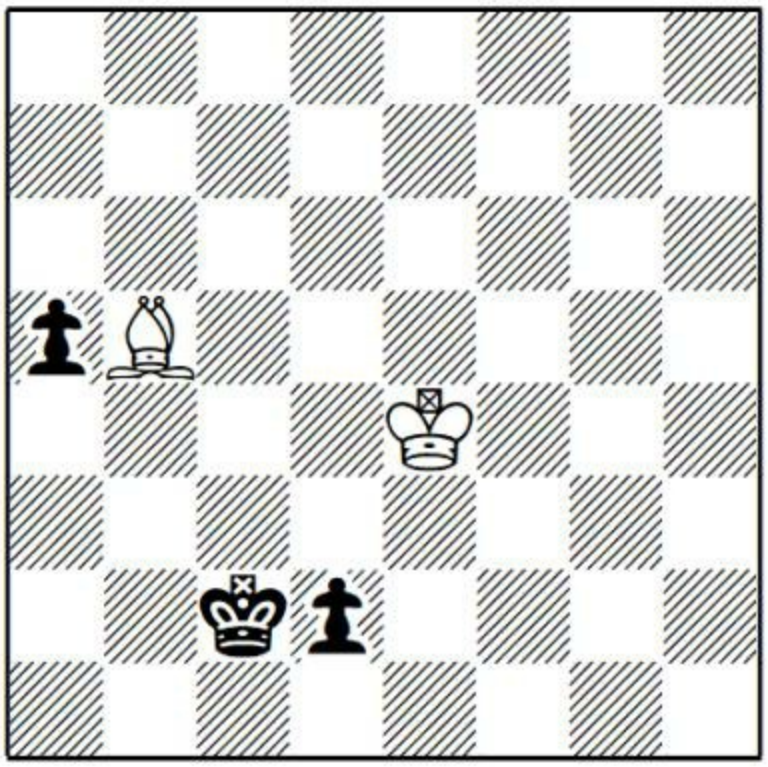
2 ... Kc3 3 Kg6 d3 4 Kf5 d2 5 Be2 Kc2

Also after 5 ... a5 6 Bd1 Kb4 7 Ke4 a4 8 Kd3 a3 9 Kc2! White holds the draw.

6 Ke4 a5

6 ... d1Q 7 Bxd1+ Kxd1 8 Kd3 is drawn too.

7 Bb5!



Not 7 Kd4? a4 and Black wins.

7 ... Kb3

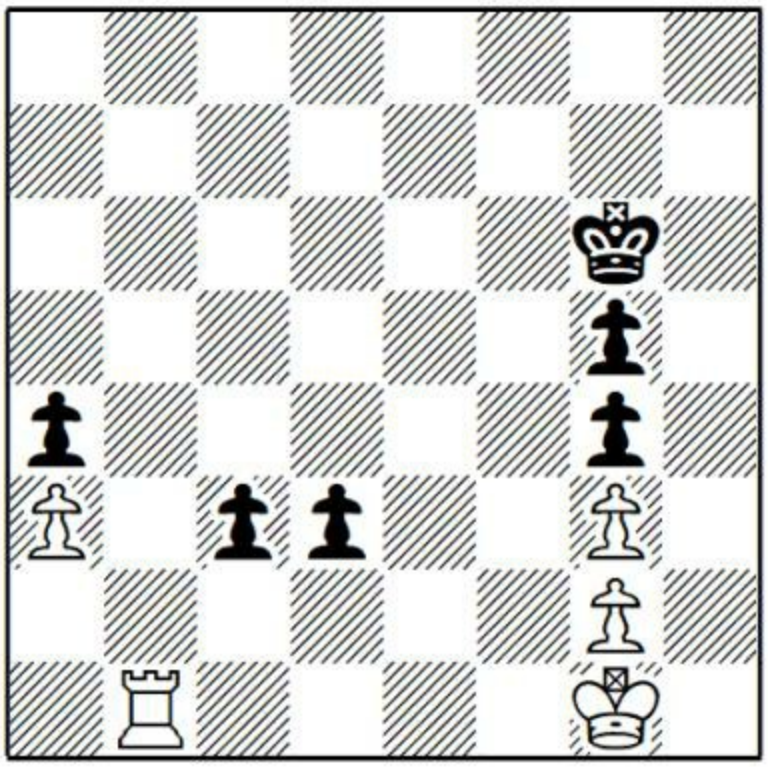
Black can't win either after 7 ... d1Q 8 Ba4+ Kc1 9 Bxd1 Kxd1 10 Kd3.

8 Be2 a4 9 Bd1+ Kb4 10 Kd3 a3 11 Kc2!

Miraculously, both black pawns are caught.

280) V.Smyslov

Krasnaja Zvezda, 2005



White to play

Level 4

White's rook appears overwhelmed by Black's surging passed pawns. There lies a hidden way to hold a draw:

Answer: Step 1: Move the rook to f1, cutting off Black's king from the f-file.

1 Rf1!

Not 1 Kh2? Kf5 when Black wins.

1 ... d2 2 Kh2!!

No child has ever dreamed: "When I grow up, I want to wash floors and scrub sinks and toilets!" yet it feels that this is exactly the aspiration of White's humble rook and king.

Step 2: Now it becomes clear that White is attempting to set up a stalemate/perpetual check trick, once Black promotes to a queen.

2 ... Kg7!

This is Black's best practical try. Instead, 2 ... c2 3 Rf8 (3 Rd1? is too

clever for its own good: it's stalemate if Black captures and promotes to a new queen or rook, but the plan is short circuited with under promotion with 3 ... cxd1B! or 3 ... cxd1N!) 3 ... Kg7 4 Rf5 Kg6 5 Rf8 d1Q 6 Rf6+ (Mad Rook!) 6 ... Kg7 7 Rf7+ Kg8 8 Rf8+ Kxf8 is stalemate.

3 Rf2!

A pattern emerges: Do you see the Mad Rook stalemate idea coming?

3 ... Kg6

Alternatively:

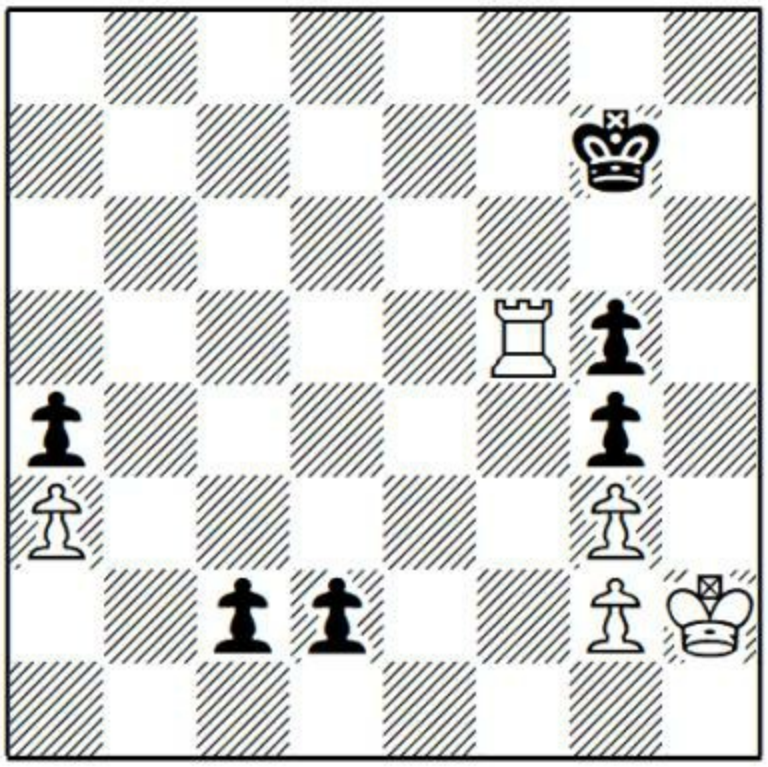
a) 3 ... d1Q 4 Rf7+. The Mad Rook theme is once again activated and it is either perpetual check or stalemate if the rook is taken, since 4 ... Kxf7 is stalemate.

b) 3 ... c2 4 Rf5! transposes to our main line, and not 4 Rxd2? c1Q 5 Rd7+ Kf6 6 Rd6+ Ke5 7 Rd5+ Ke4 8 Rd4+ Ke3 9 Rd3+ Ke2 when Black wins due to 10 Re3+ Qxe3! or 10 Rd2+ Qxd2! which un-stalemates White's king and wins.

4 Rf1 c2 5 Rf8! Kg7

After 5 ... c1B? 6 Rd8 Kf5 7 Kg1 Ke4 8 Kf2 Bxa3 9 Rxd2 Bc5+ 10 Ke2 a3 11 Rd8 if anyone is going to win, it will be White.

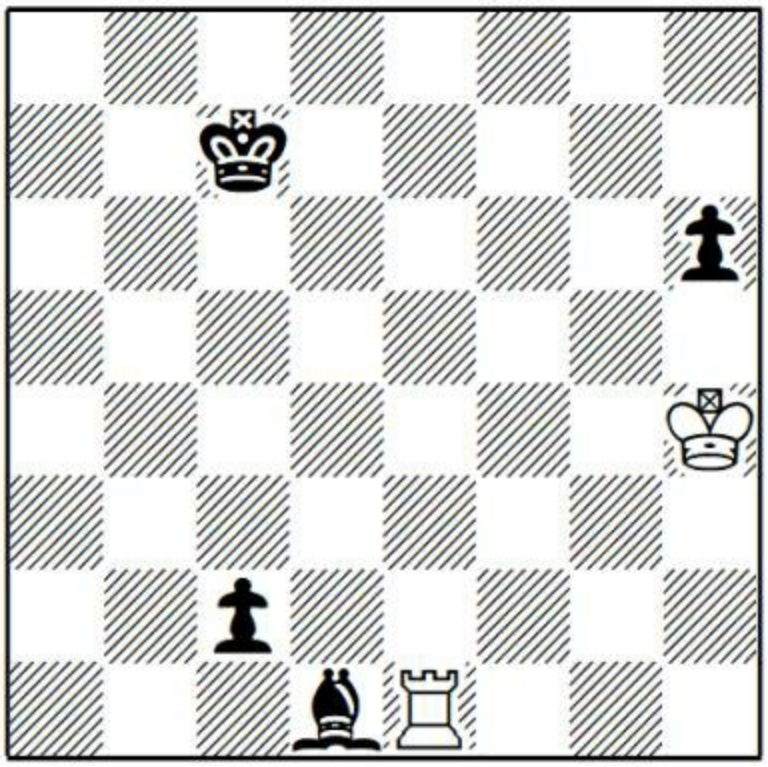
6 Rf5!



6 ... Kg8 7 Rf6 Kg7 8 Rf5!

Black is unable to make progress as after 8 Rf5 d1Q 9 Rf7+we get the Mad Rook stalemate draw, although White must avoid the trap 8 Rf1? d1B! winning.

281) V.Smyslov
Moi Etyudy, 2005



White to play

Level 4

It's fine to theorize upon the abstract, yet when our plan is formed then comes time for the calculation of the details. What is White's drawing idea and what is its implementation?

Answer: Lift the rook to e3, destination: c3.

1 Re3! Kd6

Or 1..c1Q (curiosity is a deadly lure; underpromoting to a rook is the same stalemate, while underpromotion to a minor piece just loses it to the double attack Rc3+) 2 Rc3+! (attraction) 2 ... Qxc3 stalemate.

2 Rc3 Ke5 3 Rxc2!

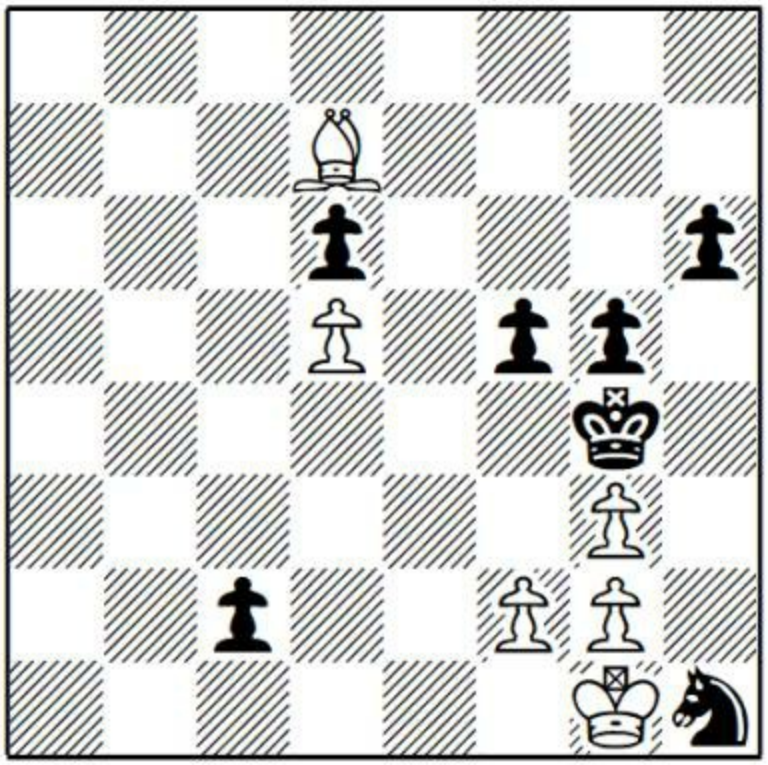
Removal of the guard.

3 ... Bxc2 4 Kh5

Black loses the final pawn.

282) V.Smyslov

Moi Etyudy, 2005



White to play

Level 5

I presented this exquisite drawing study to several students and was shocked at how many of them (eventually!) solved it, when given enough hints.

***Answer:* 1 Kh2!!**

After 1 Kxh1? c1Q+ 2 Kh2 Qe1! 3 f3+ Kh5 4 Bxf5 Qe5! 5 Be4 g4! Black wins, since the king is given luft.

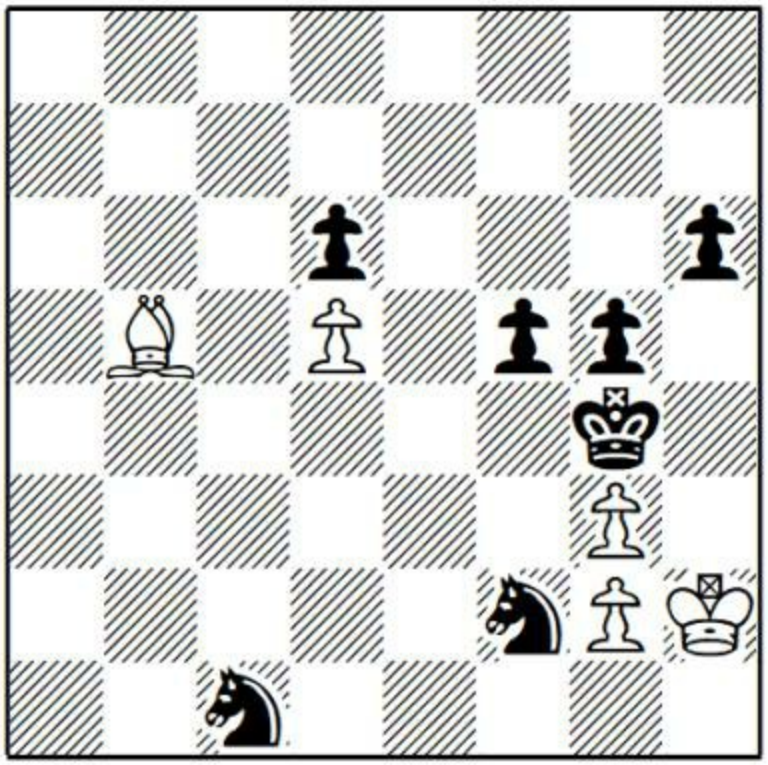
1 ... Nxf2

Alternatively:

a) 1 ... Nxg3 2 fxg3 c1Q 3 Ba4! (3 Bb5? fails to 3 ... Qe1 when a bishop check doesn't work, since Black's queen lifts the stalemate on a capture) 3 ... f4 (3 ... Qe1 4 Bd1+! Qxd1 is stalemate) 4 Bd7+ Kh5 5 Be8+ Kg4 6 Bd7+ is perpetual check.

b) 1 ... c1Q?? 2 f3+ Kh5 3 Be8 mate.

2 Bb5! c1N!



White to play

Level 2

The mating threat on e2 is covered (and not 2 ... c1Q?? 3 Be2 mate). White to play and draw:

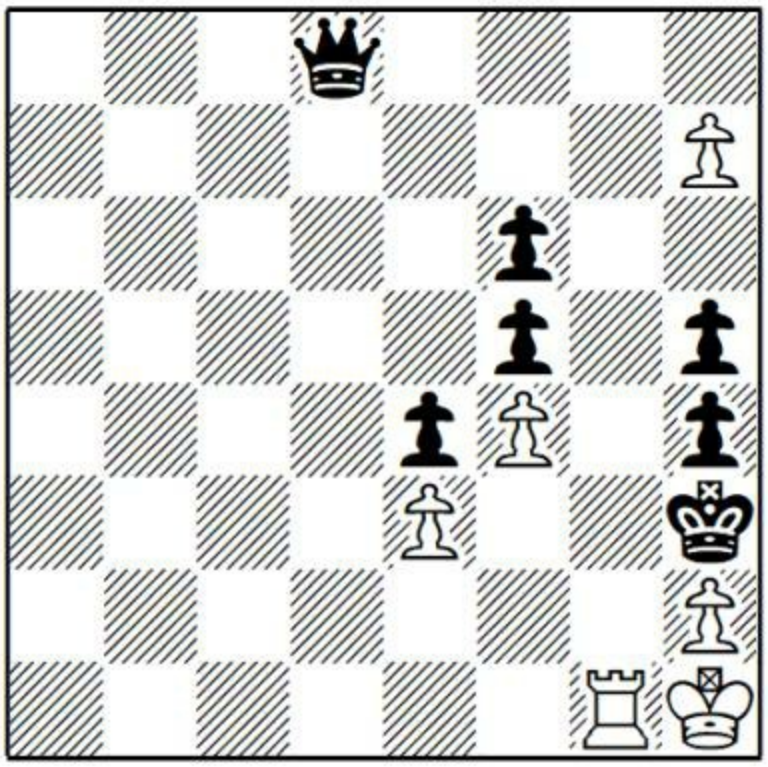
Answer: Attraction/stalemate.

3 Be2+! Nxe2

A beautiful cage is still a cage. Everyone is unhappy, except for White's delighted king. Black is stalemated. What a final position!

283) V.Smyslov

64, 2006



White to play

Level 4

How does White force a draw?

Answer: Step 1: Attraction. Promote to a new queen.

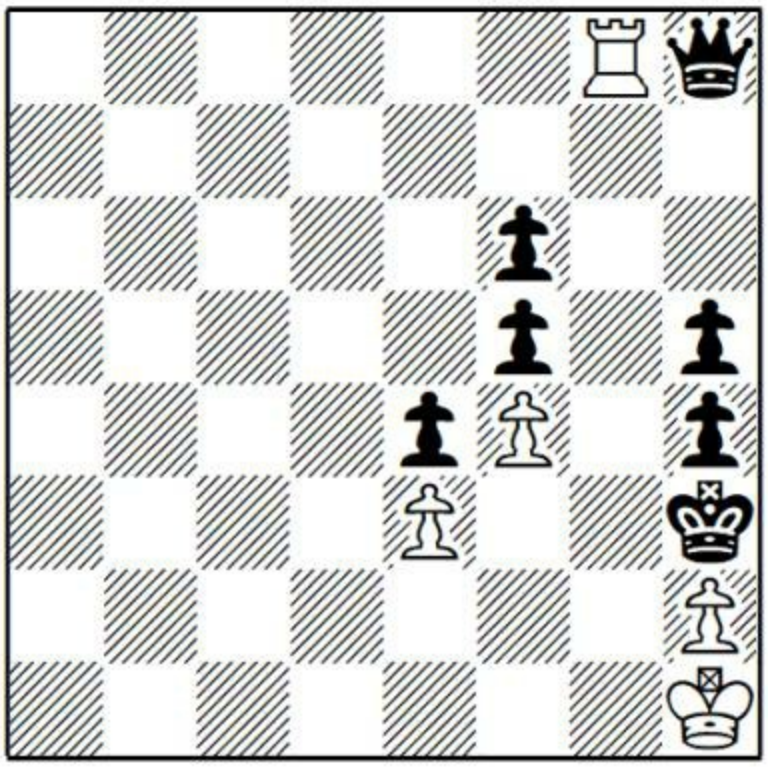
1 h8Q!

Instead, 1 Rg8?? walks into mate in three after 1 ... Qd1+ 2 Rg1 Qf3+ 3 Rg2 Qxg2 mate, and a waiting move also fails: 1 Rf1?? Qd2 2 Rg1 Qxh2 mate.

1 ... Qxh8

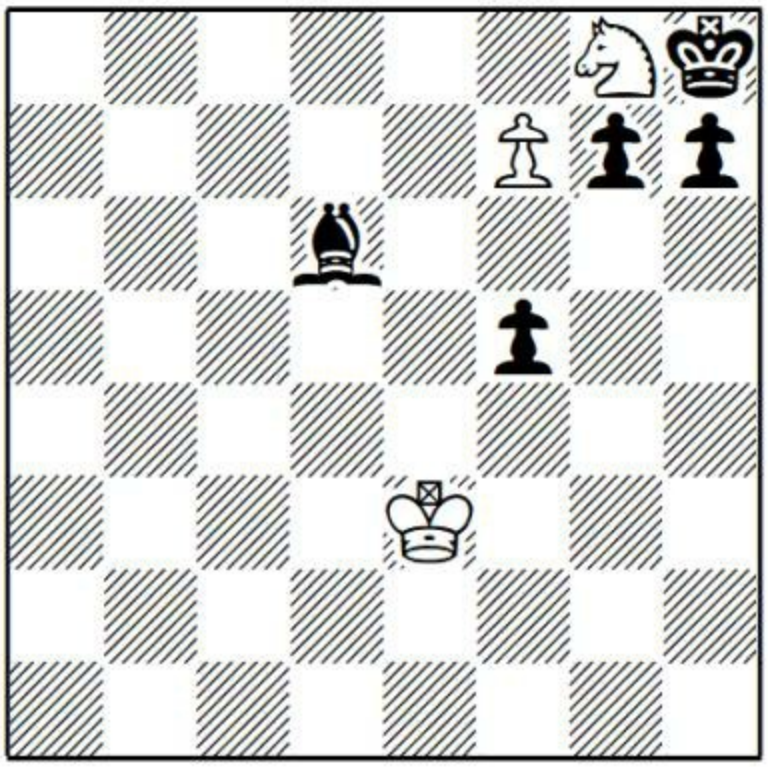
1 ... Qd2??, threatening mate on h2, is met with 2 Rg3+! (clearance) 2 ... hxg3 3 Qxh5 mate.

2 Rg8!



Step 2: Stalemate/perpetual attack.
2 ... Qh7
2 ... Qxg8 is stalemate.
3 Rg7!
The Mad Rook again!
3 ... Qh6 4 Rg8!
Black's queen is 'trapped' into endless repetition, or instant stalemate.

284) P.Kiryakov & M.Minski
2017



White to play

Level 4.5

Co-author GM Kiryakov posted this one in Chess Endgame Studies and Compositions. Not only is White down two pawns, but Black threatens the plan ... h7-h5, ... Kh7, ... Kg6, ... Kxf7 and ... Kxg8. Do you see White's miracle drawing idea?

Answer: Piece sacrifice/bishop and wrong-coloured remaining rook pawns.

1 Nh6!!

We sell our knight at a dear cost to Black.

Doing nothing is suicide for White: 1 Kf3?? (silence can be peaceful and it can also be dangerous, as when we enter our house and there is a silent/hidden intruder awaiting us) 1 ... h5 2 Ke3 Kh7 3 Kf3 Kg6 4 Ke3 Kxf7. To make matters even worse for White, the knight is trapped.

1 ... gxh6

1 ... g6 2 Nxf5! gxf5 3 f8Q+! (decoy) 3 ... Bxf8 4 Kf4 Kg7 5 Kxf5 is a

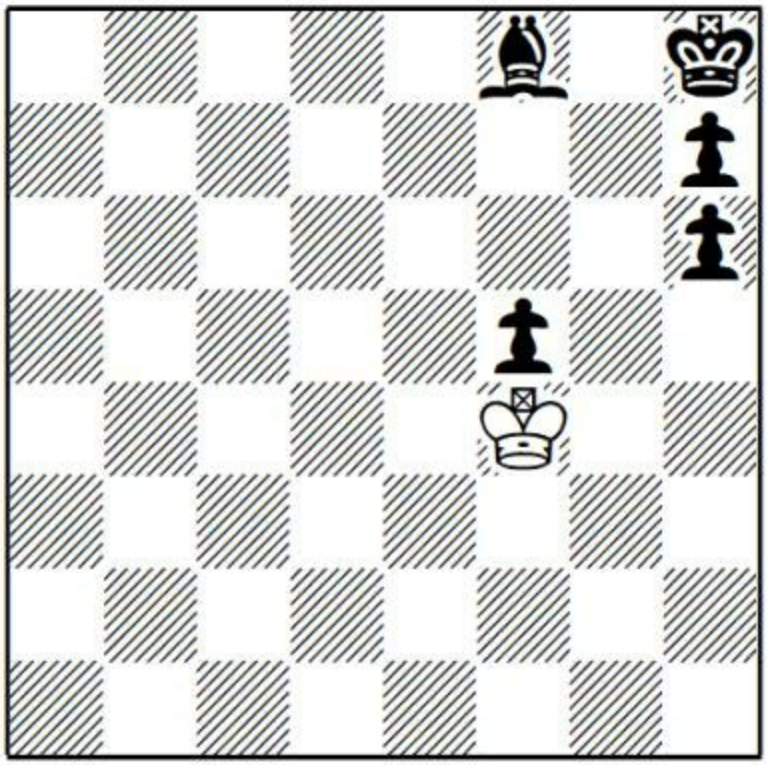
theoretical draw, since Black's bishop is the wrong colour to the h-pawn's promotion square.

2 f8Q+!

Step 2: Removal of the guard.

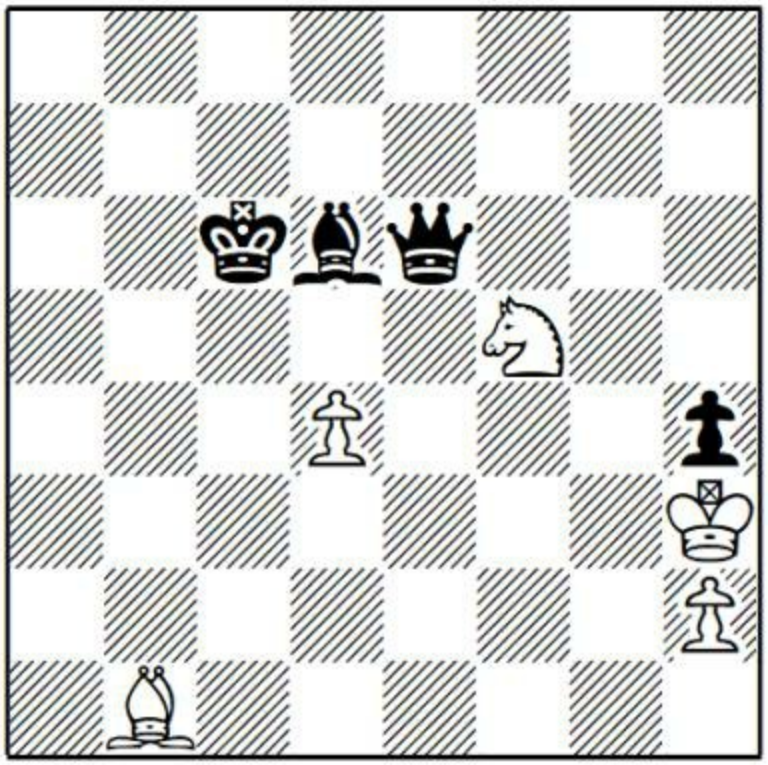
2 ... Bxf8 3 Kf4

Have you ever gone to bed in perfect health and then woken the next morning with that disorienting sensation of your entire body wracked with aches? This is how Black feels now. Draw. Black is left with the wrong-coloured bishop and doubled rook pawns. For those readers who don't believe me, here is how the game may proceed if Black stubbornly plays it out: 6 ... Kg7 7 Kxf5 Be7 8 Kg4 (we simply head for h1 and wait: Black won't make progress) 8 ... Kg6 9 Kg3 Kg5 10 Kg2 Kg4 11 Kh1 Kg3 12 Kg1 h5 13 Kh1 h4 14 Kg1 h3 15 Kh1. Now what? We can't push to h2, since that would be stalemate. Black is unable to make progress.



285) M.Pasman

Magyar Sakkvilag, 2019



White to play

Level 5

My friend IM and Michael Pasman has had a short (yet incandescent!) career in composing, yet what a great light he burns around him. In just a few years he created many award-winning studies. This one is a portion of one of his elegant drawing studies. How can White force a draw?

Answer: Step 1: Attraction.

1 d5+! Qxd5

1 ... Kxd5? 2 Ba2+ skewers, to win the queen and draw.

2 Ne7+!!

A skilled general knows when to take and when to give, in order to mend.

Step 2: Let's give away all our stuff! Black has no choice but to accept, since the knight forks black king and queen.

2 ... Bxe7 3 Be4!

White’s needy pieces, starved for attention, continue to make a nuisance of themselves.

Step 3: Attraction/stalemate/rook pawn and wrong-coloured bishop.

3 ... Kd6

3 ... Qxe4 is stalemate.

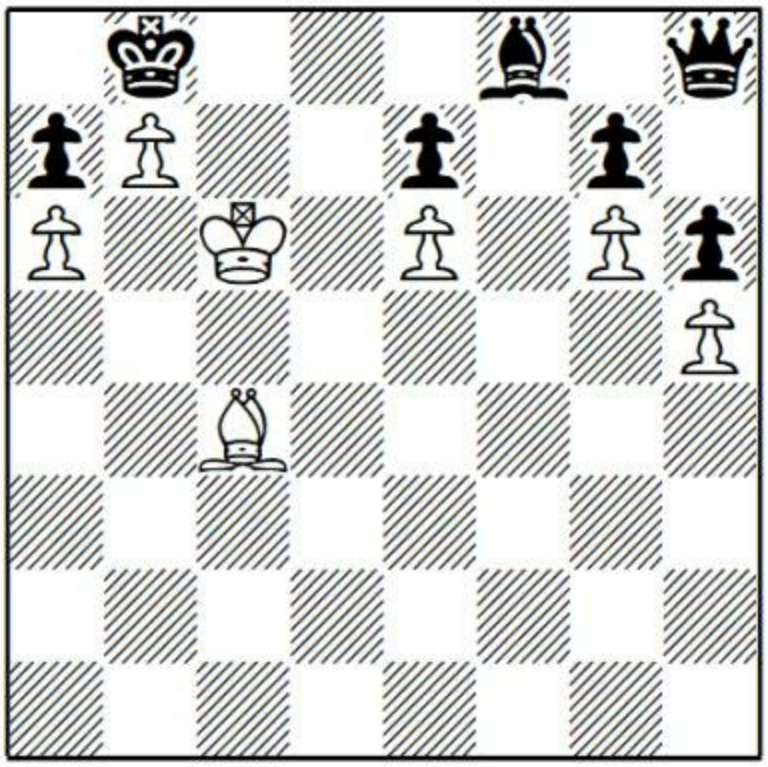
4 Bxd5 Kxd5 5 Kg2 Ke4 6 h3 Kf4 7 Kh1 Kg3 8 Kg1 Kxh3

It’s again a draw due to Black’s wrong-coloured bishop and rook pawn.

13) Fortress

A fortress is a position where one side sets up an impenetrable defensive zone of protection. In this chapter, we are going to look at fortresses which hold the draw and also attempted fortresses which fail to draw.

286) B.Horwitz
The Chess Monthly, 1885



White to play
Level 5

It's odd to think that Black, up a queen, is the one attempting to hold the draw with a fortress. The f8-bishop is completely worthless and Black's queen can only uselessly shuffle from h8 to g8. Come up with a plan for

White to break the attempted fortress and win for White:

Answer: Step 1: Maneuver a bishop to f7, which zugzwangs Black's queen and leaves Black with only king moves. But first things first. We get our king out of the way of Bb5, Be8 and Bf7.

1 Kd5 Qg8 2 Bb5! Kc7 3 Be8! Qh8 4 Bf7 Kb8 5 Kc6

Zugzwang.

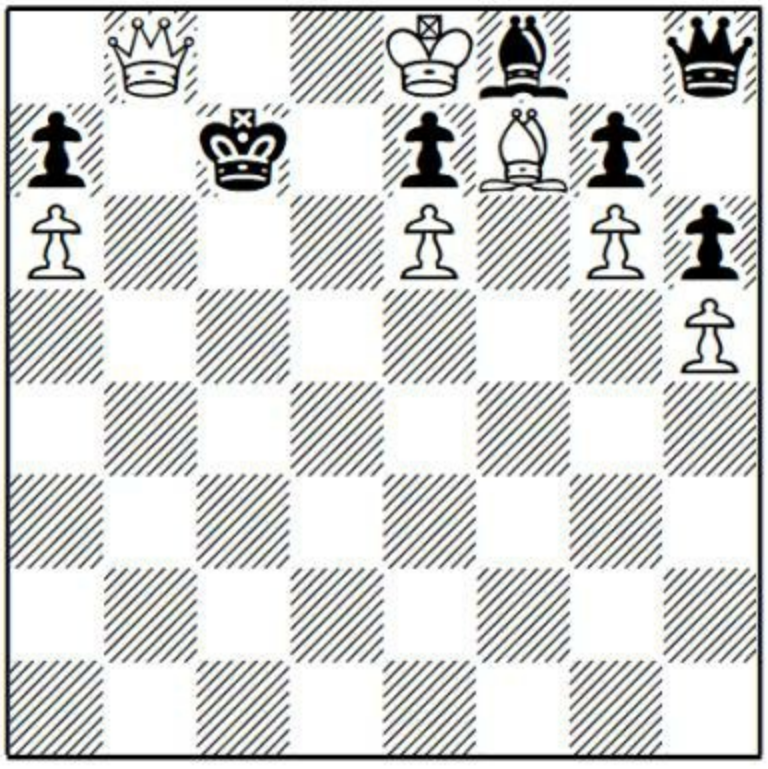
5 ... Qg8!

What a nasty trick. It's stalemate if we take Black's queen, so for now we must ignore it.

6 Kd7 Qh8

Black's position constricts to the point of a suffocated throat, with an attacker's choke-hole around it. 6 ... Qxf7? fails: White is faster after 7 gxf7 g5 8 hxg6 h5 9 Ke8 Bg7 10 f8Q Bxf8 11 Kxf8 and wins the promotion race by a mile.

7 Ke8 Kc7 8 b8Q+!



Sometimes forced moves are also good ones.

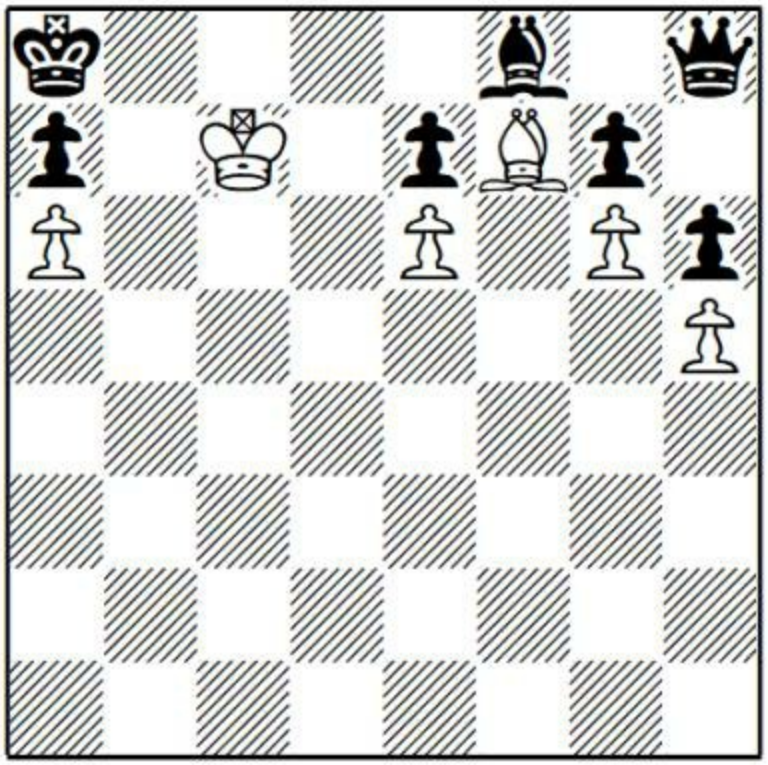
Step 2: Force Black's king into the a8 mating corner.

8 ... Kxb8 9 Kd8 Ka8 10 Kc8 Qg8 11 Kc7!

Not 11 Bxg8?? stalemate.

11 ... Qh8

Or if 11 ... Qxf7 12 gxf7 g5 13 Kd8 g4 14 Ke8 Bg7 (or 14 ... g3 15 Kxf8 g2 16 Kxe7 g1Q 17 f8R mate) 15 Kxe7 g3 16 f8Q+ Bxf8+ 17 Kxf8 g2 18 e7 g1Q 19 e8R mate.



White to play

Level 1

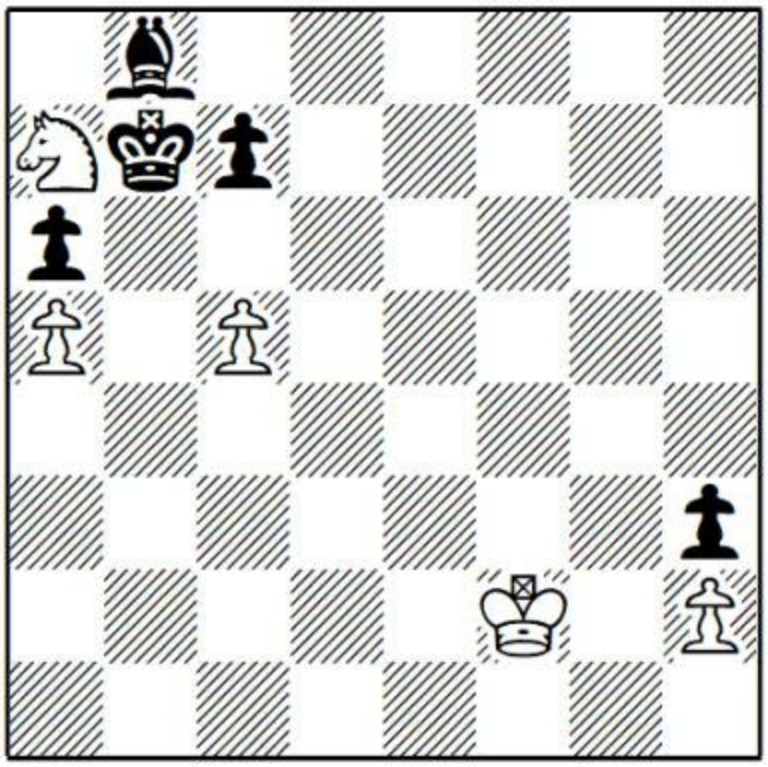
Attackers gaze at Black's king with hateful fixity. Now we can force mate in 2:

Answer: Simple. Just transfer the bishop to c6.

12 Be8! Qg8 13 Bc6 mate

287) W.Vollmer

Südwest-Schach, 1950



White to play

Level 4.5

White's knight is trapped. How can White create a fortress draw from this position?

Answer: Start by pushing the c-pawn.

1 c6+!

I'm pretty sure the saying is "Let's get ready to rumble!" not 'tumble'. At first sight this just appears to hand over the knight for no reason. But there is indeed a good reason: we just created an escapeless tomb for Black's king and bishop.

1 ... Kxa7 2 Kg1!!

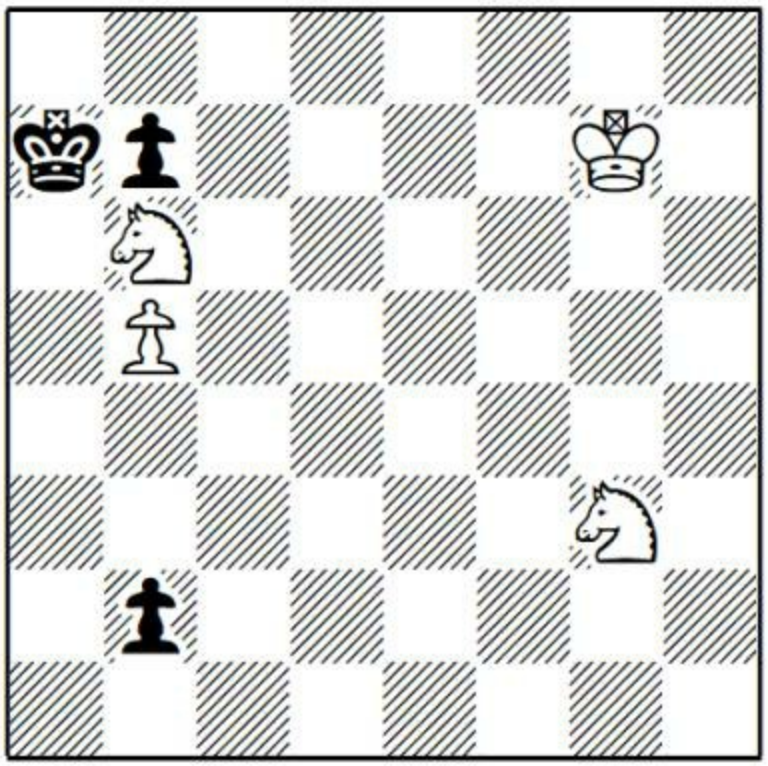
This is the key move to the draw. Our king will hide in the corner, preventing Black's bishop from emerging along the g1-a7 diagonal.

Not 2 Kg3? Ka8 3 Kxh3 Ba7 4 Kg4 Bd4 5 h4 Bc3 6 h5 Bxa5 7 h6 Bc3 when Black wins.

2 ... Ka8 3 Kh1! Ka7 4 Kg1 Ka8 5 Kh1

Black is unable to make progress.

288) V.Smyslov
64 Shakhmatnoye Obozrenye, 1998



White to play
Level 5

White is unable to prevent Black's promotion of the b-pawn, which is inevitable. But what happens when the inevitable fails to take place? Black can indeed promote, yet Black cannot win the game. Our job is to construct a fortress, which makes Black's new queen a useless asset.

Answer: Start by moving the knight to d5.

1 Nd5!

1 Ne4? fails: 1 ... b1Q 2 Nc8+ Kb8 3 Ned6 Kc7 wins, since Black's king escapes his prison.

1 ... b1Q 2 b6+ Ka6

After 2 ... Kb8 3 Nh5! Qg1+ 4 Kf7! Kc8 5 Nhf6 Kd8 6 Ke6! (6 Kf8? Qg6! is zugzwang, so Black wins) 6 ... Qh2 7 Kf7 Black is unable to make progress, since the king is trapped on d8, unable to escape its box, as it is cut off from e8, e7, d7 and c7: 7 ... Qh3 8 Kg6 Qe6 9 Kg7 and a draw.

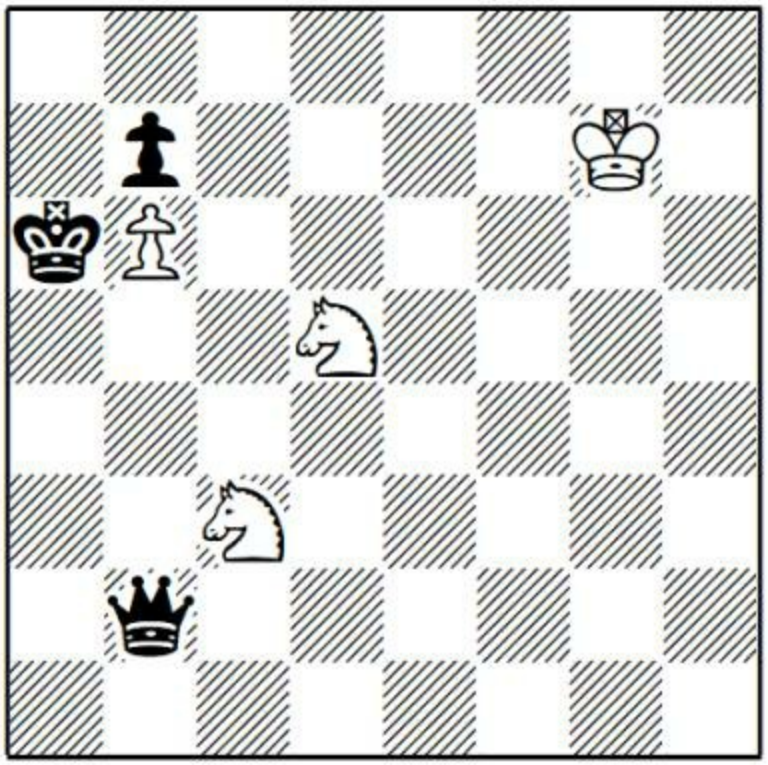
3 Ne2! Qb2+

Alternatively:

a) 3 ... Ka5 4 Nec3 is still drawn.

b) 3 ... Kb5? would be a delightful gift: 4 Ndc3+! (4 Nec3+? Kc5 5 Nxb1 Kxd5 6 Nc3+ Kc5 7 Na4+ Kb5 is drawn) 4 ... Kxb6 5 Nxb1. Two knights is a draw against lone king. Here, Black's awful luck is that the b-pawn remains and it's a win for White. A possible continuation could run: 5 ... Kb5 6 Nd2 Kb4 7 Kf6 b5 8 Ke5 Ka5 9 Nd4 b4 10 N2b3+ Kb6 11 Kd6 Kb7 12 Kd7 Kb6 13 Kc8! Ka7 14 Kc7 Ka6 15 Kc6 Ka7 16 Nc5 b3. Now White mates in four with 17 Kc7! b2 18 Nb5+ Ka8 19 Na4 b1Q 20 Nb6 mate.

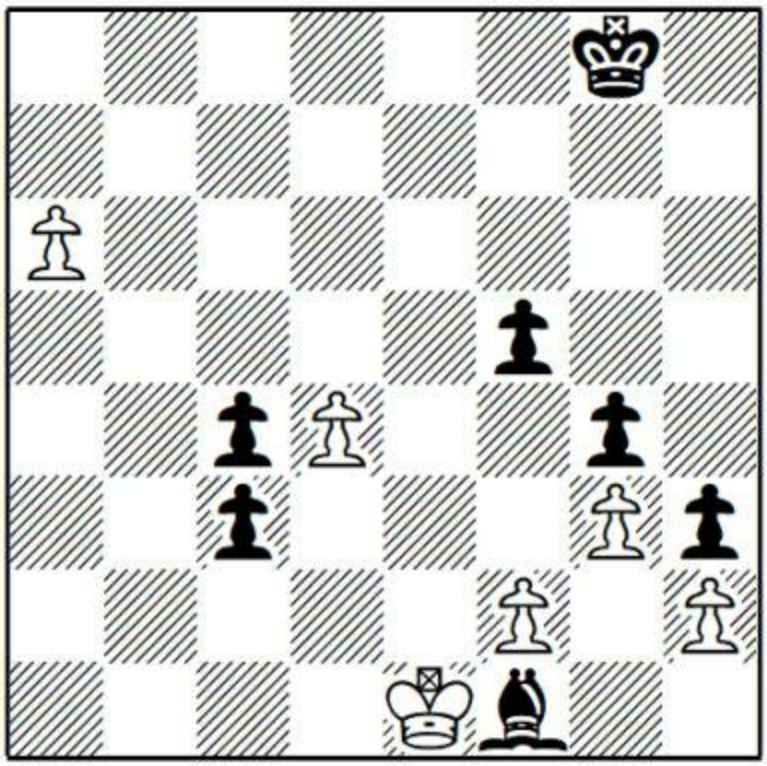
4 Nec3!



Just because we speak in a soft tone, doesn't mean the utterance is inconsequential. Black's king is frozen to a6 and a5 and Black is unable to

make progress since there is no way to corral and zugzwang White's king.

289) V.Smyslov
Moi Etyudy, 2000



White to play
Level 5

Matters appear bleak for White and Black's position glows with malefic radiance. After all, Black is up a clean piece and White's passed pawns are halted by Black's king and extra bishop. Look deeply and you may find White's miracle fortress draw:

Answer: Play f2-f4, freezing Black's kingside pawns. Why does this even matter? Because now the game is a fortress draw if White can win both black queenside pawns. And we can do just that.

1 f4!!

This makes the structure rigid, which is crucial for our coming fortress

draw.

1 ... Bg2

Instead, 1 ... gxf3?? clogs the bishop's coverage of the a8 promotion square and 2 a7 wins, while after 1 ... c2 2 Kd2 c3+ 3 Kxc2 Bxa6 4 Kxc3 White's king simply shifts back to g1 and Black is unable to make progress.

2 Kd1!

Threat: Kc2 and Kxc3.

Not 2 a7?? Bf3! 3 d5 Bxd5 4 Kd1 Be4 5 a8Q+ Bxa8 6 Kc2 Kf7 7 Kxc3 Bd5. Halfway to heaven is also halfway to hell. Black wins, since White failed to win the c-pawn.

2 ... Be4 3 a7 Kf7 4 d5!

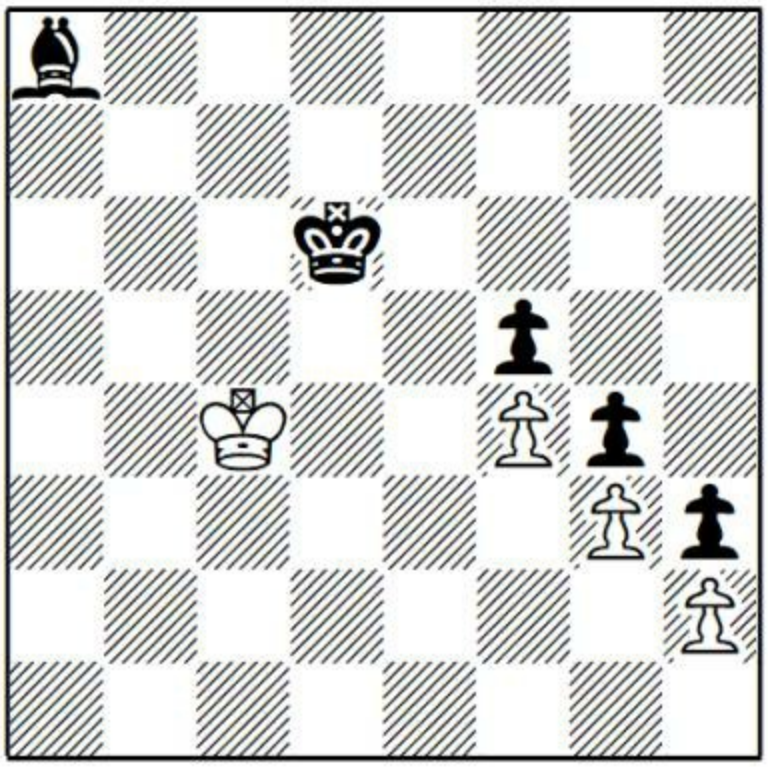
Decoy. This way our king gets access to the forward c-pawn.

4 ... Bxd5 5 Kc2 Ke6 6 Kxc3 Kd6 7 a8Q!

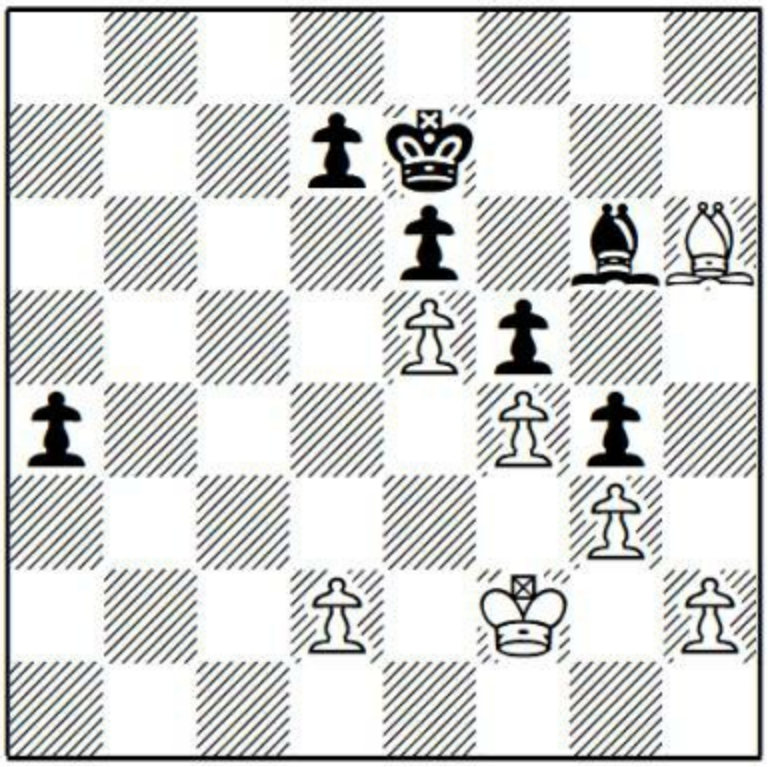
Decoy number 2.

7 ... Bxa8 8 Kxc4

A wrathful opponent is nothing to fear if he lacks the power to back up his resentment. A once clear premise of Black's inevitable win, ends in confusion. The 'damage' to White's position is completely cosmetic. White's king moves to g1 and no progress can be made. Test this out for yourself: 8 ... Be4 9 Kd4 Kc6 10 Ke3 Kc5 11 Kf2 Kd4 12 Kg1 Ke3 13 Kf1 Kf3 14 Kg1 Bd3 15 Kh1 and Black can't make the slightest headway.



290) V.Smyslov
New in Chess Magazine, 2002



This may be my all-time favourite Smyslov study. Black's a-pawn is only three unstoppable squares from promotion to a new queen. How on earth is White going to hold a draw here?

Answer: Step 1: Give check on g5. This cuts Black's king off from entry to the queenside, via d8.

1 Bg5+!

After 1 d4? Kf7! Black promotes and wins.

1 ... Ke8

1 ... Kf7 allows the bishop to slip out with 2 Bd8 a3 3 Ba5 a2 4 Bc3, just in time. White holds the draw.

2 d4!!

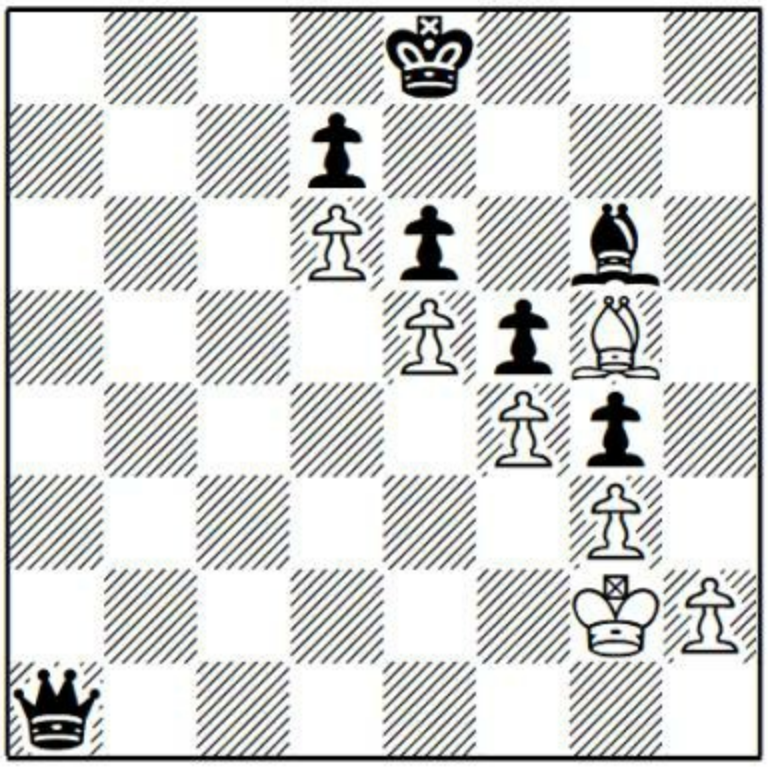
Step 2: Push the d-pawn all the way to d6.

2 ... a3 3 d5! a2

Instead, 3 ... exd5 4 e6! allows White's bishop access to f6, after which White can blockade the dark squares and hold a draw: 4 ... dxe6 5 Bf6 Kd7 6 Ke3 Kc6 7 Kd3 Kb5 8 Kc3 Ka4 9 Bd4 Be8 10 Be5 Bb5 11 Bd4 Bc4 12 Be5 Kb5 13 Bd4 a2 14 Kb2 Kb4 15 Kc2 Bb3+ 16 Kd3! sees White king and

bishop skillfully dance away from the opponent's intended blows. Unbelievably, the black king is unable to enter and the game is drawn, despite Black's three extra pawns.

4 d6! a1Q 5 Kg2



Black's position is cold as a mausoleum, to the point where we can't ever imagine warmth within it. White's king can never be zugzwanged off the g-file, since he has bishop moves. An extra queen is usually viewed as a winning tool. Not here though, since she lacks even a single target. Play this out for yourself. Black has no way to win.

5 ... Qa8+

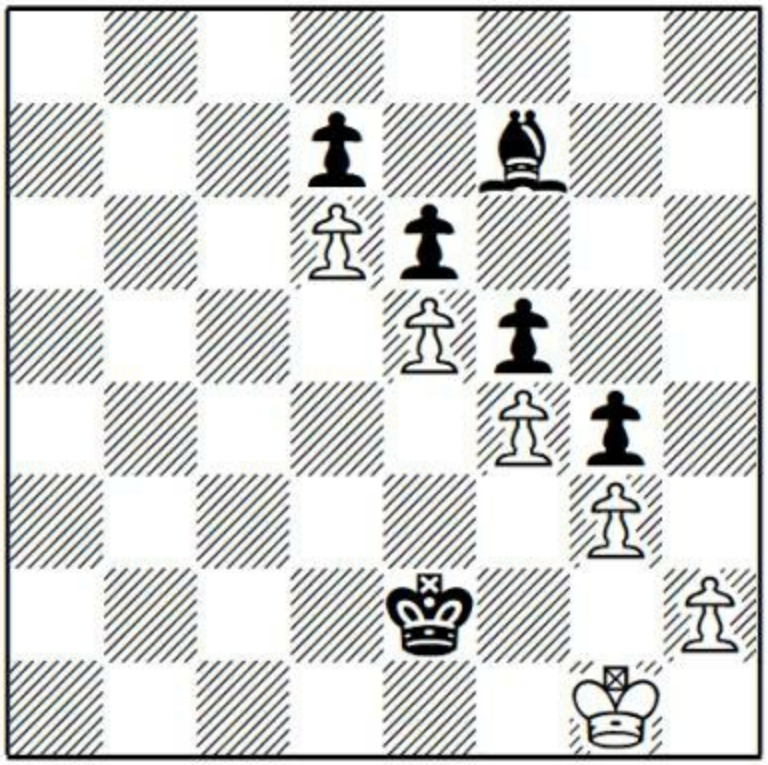
Let's try a plan of sacrificing our queen for White's bishop, in order to break the blockade of d8.

6 Kg1 Qd8

Or 6 ... Kf7 7 Bf6 Qg8 8 Bh4 Qh8 9 Bg5 Qh5 (threat: ... Qxg5) 10 Bf6! (oh no you don't!) 10 ... Ke8 11 Kg2 Qh7 12 Kg1 Qf7 13 Bg5. Nope, I won't let you play ... Qxf6! Black is unable to make progress.

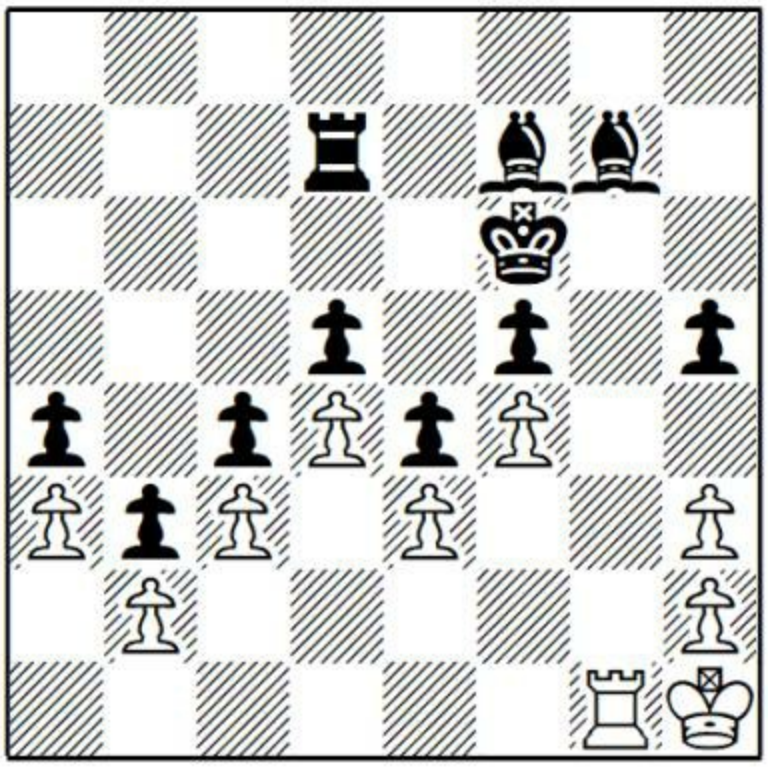
7 Bxd8 Kxd8 8 Kf2 Kc8 9 Kg1 Kb7 10 Kf2 Kc6 11 Kg1 Kd5 12 Kf2

Ke4 13 Kg1 Kf3 14 Kf1 Be8 15 Kg1 Ke2 16 Kg2 Bf7 17 Kg1



To be happy about Black's extra queen is the love-starved guy who thinks: "That stripper I just gave $20.00 must really like me, since she smiled." In chess, as in life, people have many desires, without attaining even a single one of them. Black will not win. As you can see, Black's extra bishop is equally useless. White draws.

291) V.Smyslov
Moi Etyudy, 2005



White to play

Level 4

Come up with a clear fortress plan for White:

Answer: Give away our rook and then hide our king on h1.

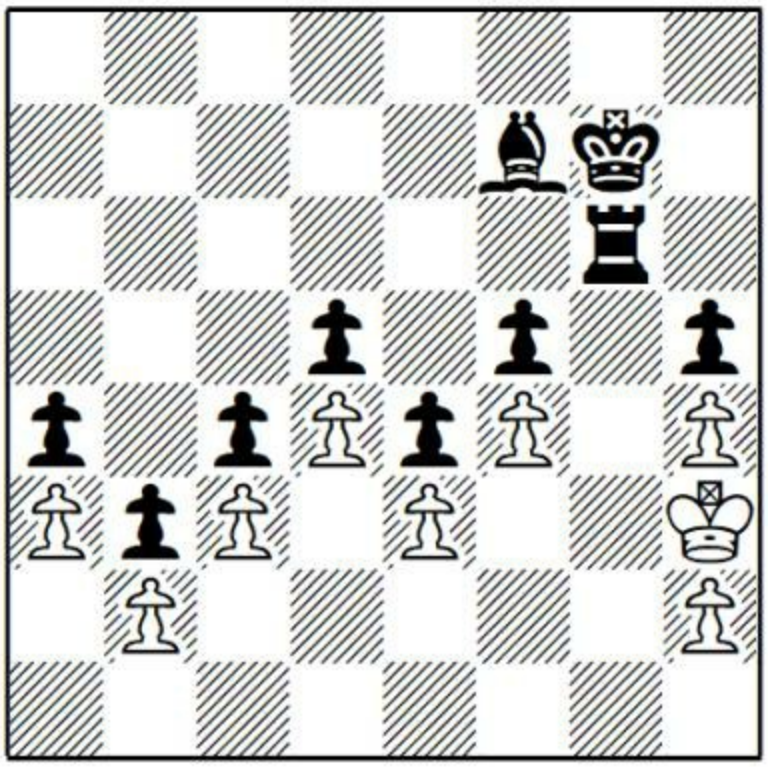
1 Rxg7!!

Having become a huge fan of composed works, what I have learned from them is that an honest person can never succeed in chess!

1 ... Kxg7

Declining doesn't help: 1 ... Rd8 2 h4! Rh8 3 Rg5 Rg8 4 Rxg8! Bxg8 draws, since Black's king can never enter White's position.

2 h4! Rd6 3 Kg2! Rg6+ 4 Kh3!

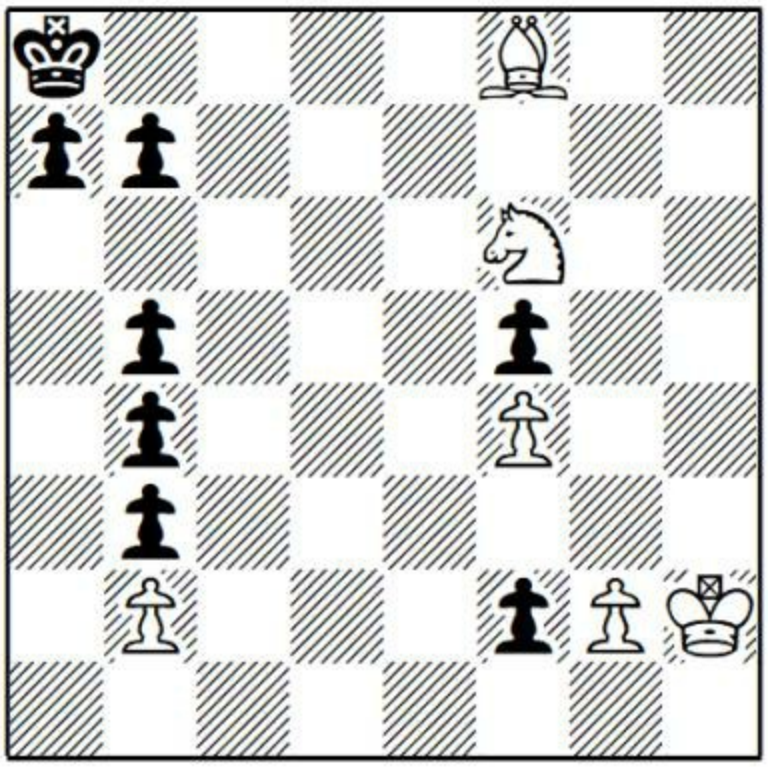


The snowman is inexplicably brought to life by Frosty's magic top hat. Black's extra rook and bishop are useless for winning purposes.

4 ... Rg1

It's stalemate, but if 4 ... Rf6 5 Kg3 and no progress can be made.

292) V.Smyslov
Moi Etyudy, 2005



White to play

Level 5

We can do nothing about the coming f-pawn's promotion to a new queen. Then how does White hold a draw?

Answer: Transfer the knight to b6, via d5, in order to construct a fortress.

1 Nd5!

Move order matters. After 1 Nd7? a5! Black wins.

1 ... f1Q

It's now or never for promotion. If 1 ... Kb8?? 2 Ne3 we prevented promotion and win.

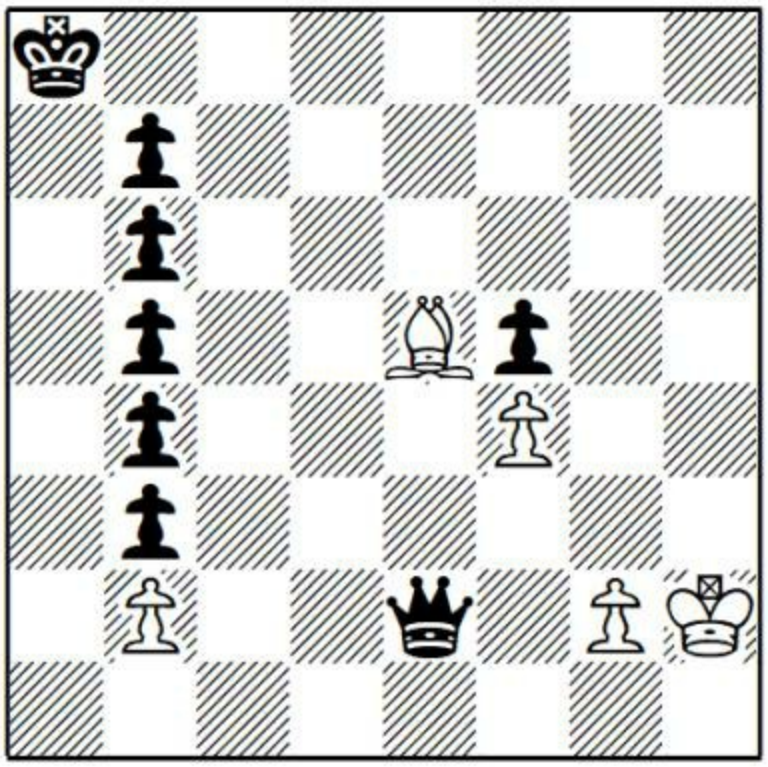
2 Nb6+!!

Step 2: Sacrifice our knight on b6, in order to make Black's queenside structure rigid, which in turn boxes in the black king.

2 ... axb6

Declining is not an option. 2 ... Kb8?? 3 Bd6 mate is a sweet mating net.

3 Bd6 Qe2 4 Be5

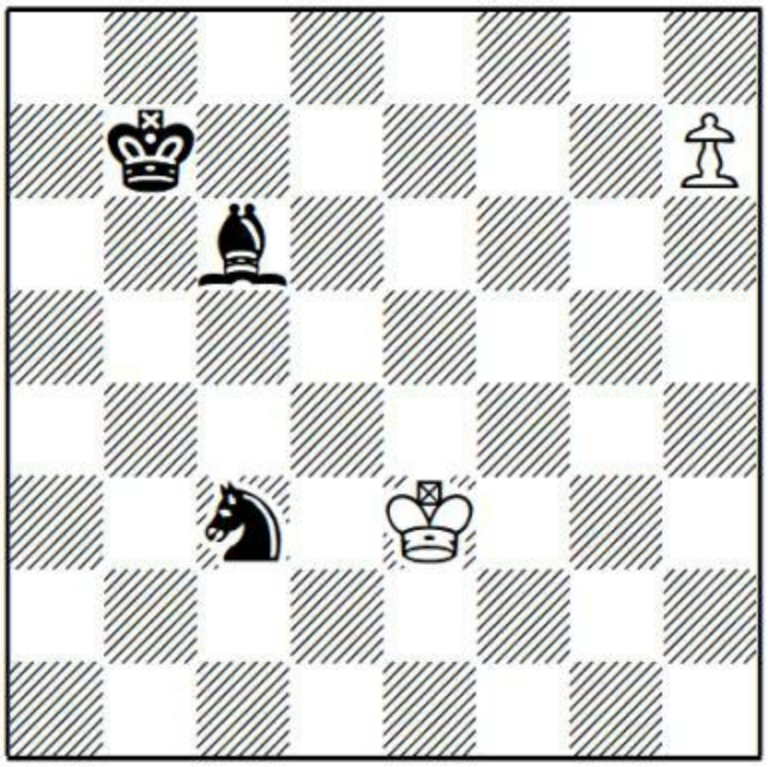


When it comes to our own pieces and pawns, there are two kinds:

1. Pieces which are eager to help.

2. Loser, Judas pieces who either refuse to help, or even worse, actively work to mess up our plans. Black's b-pawns are just such Judas pieces. Without them, Black would have an easy win, but here Black cannot make progress since White's king can never be zugzwanged. Black's king can walk all the way to a4, but it's only for exercise, since he can't get out of his box.

293) A.Zakharov
Problemist Ukraini, 2015



White to play

Level 5

White will promote the h-pawn and Black will end up with bishop and knight. Our job is to *prevent* Black from formulating a fortress. What should White play?

Answer: Postpone promotion and centralize our king.

1 Kd4!!

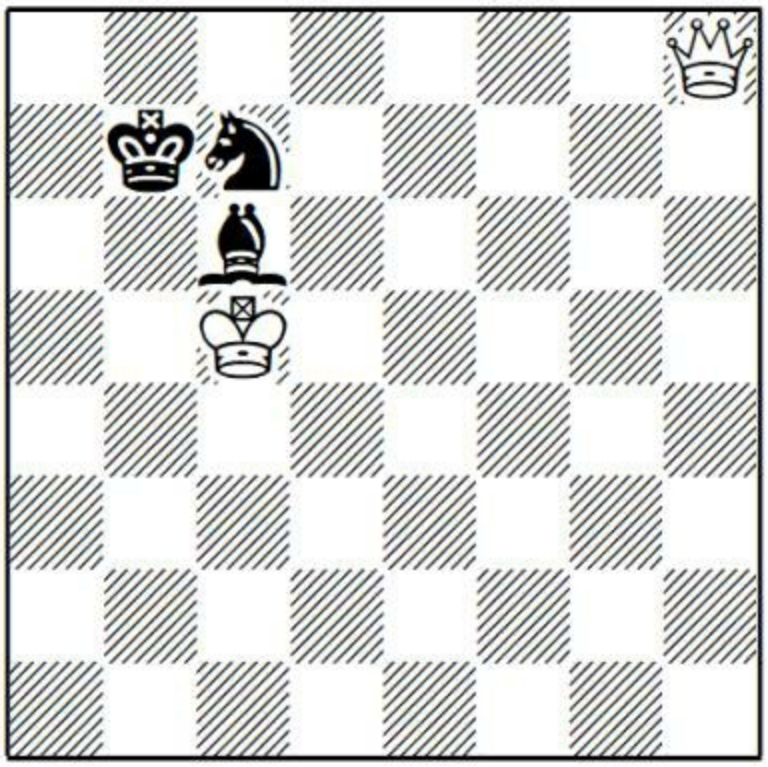
We cannot allow our opponent's king, knight and bishop to perform their therapeutic powers upon the position: 1 h8Q? (this move plants an inedible crop) 1 ... Nd5+ 2 Kd4 Ka7! 3 Kc5 Bb7. Conundrum: We are up a queen for two pieces, yet the position is drawn since Black created a fortress.

1 ... Nd5 2 Kc5!

We still don't promote, since our future queen isn't running away. The key is to disallow the fortress.

2 h8Q? is hasty: 2 ... Ka7! 3 Kc5 Ba8. Yup, fortress and draw.

2 ... Nc7 3 h8Q



The study ends here. Black can no longer create a fortress. Let's continue to see the winning technique:

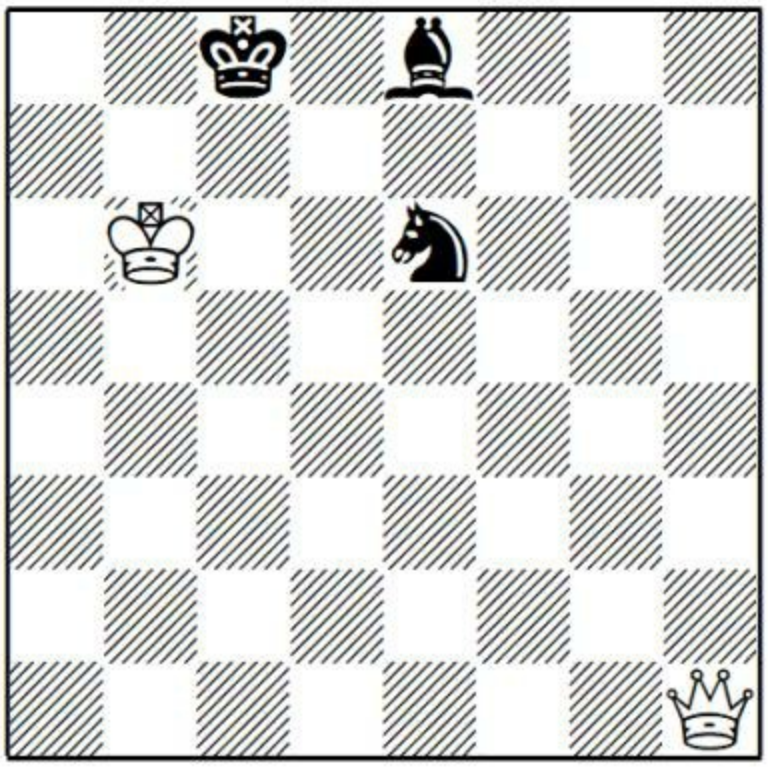
3 ... Ba4 4 Qa1 Be8

Or 4 ... Bc6 5 Qg7 Be4 6 Kd6 and wins.

5 Qh1+!

Seizing control over c6.

5 ... Kc8 6 Kb6 Ne6



White to play

Level 3

Work out a path to either win one of Black's pieces, or force mate:

Answer: Move the queen to d5.

7 Qd5! Bd7

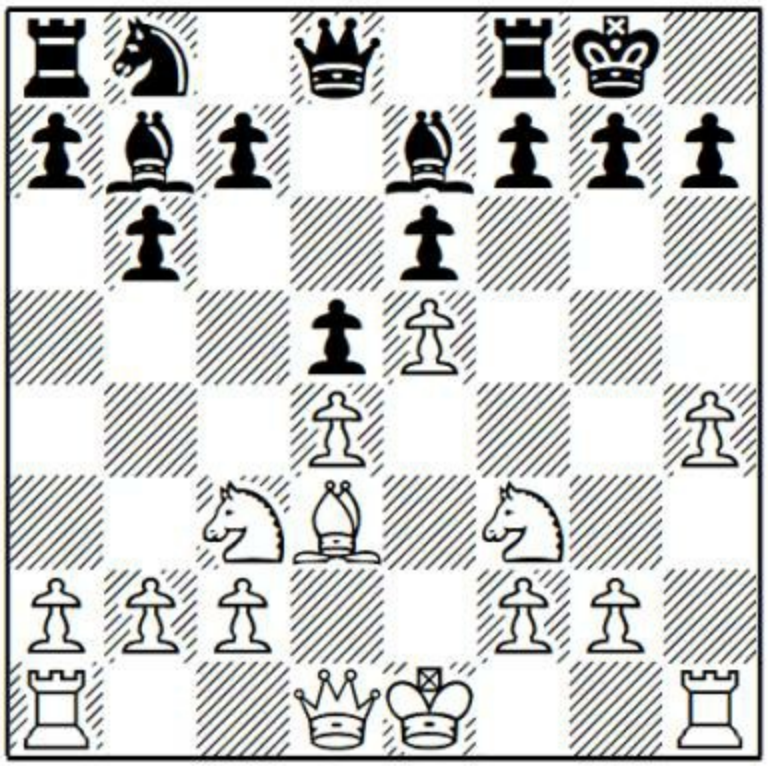
Alternatively, 7 ... Nc7 8 Qb7+ Kd7 9 Qxc7+ wins, as does 7 ... Bf7 8 Qb7+ Kd8 9 Qxf7.

8 Qa8 mate

14) Greek Gift Sacrifice

A Greek Gift sacrifice is when a bishop is sacrificed on either h7 or h2, usually in conjunction with a knight check, which brings the enemy king out of his lair. Now you may be thinking: “Oh boy! I will score 100% in this chapter, since the starting move is always going to be 1 Bxh7+!” Not so fast. In this chapter I may be placing a game or games where the Greek Gift is *unsound*, as well as sound. So think each one through before deciding to sacrifice or not sacrifice.

294) A.Fritz-J.Mason
Nuremberg 1883



White to play

Level 2

Should White play 10 Bxh7+, or should White refrain?

Answer: The Greek Gift works this time.

10 Bxh7+! Kxh7 11 Ng5+ Kg6?

Alternatives were:

a) 11 ... Kg8?? walks into mate in 5: 12 Qh5 Re8 (or 12 ... Bxg5 13 hxg5 f5 14 g6 with mate to follow) 13 Qh7+ Kf8 14 Qh8 mate.

b) 11 ... Kh6! is Black's most tenacious defence, although after 12 Qd2 Qc8 13 0-0-0 c5 14 Rh3 g6 15 Nxe6+ Kh7 16 Nxf8+ Qxf8 17 dxc5 Black is busted.

12 Ne2!

Threatening to transfer the knight to f4.

12 ... Bxg5

After 12 ... Kh6 13 Nf4 g6 14 h5! White's attack is unstoppable.

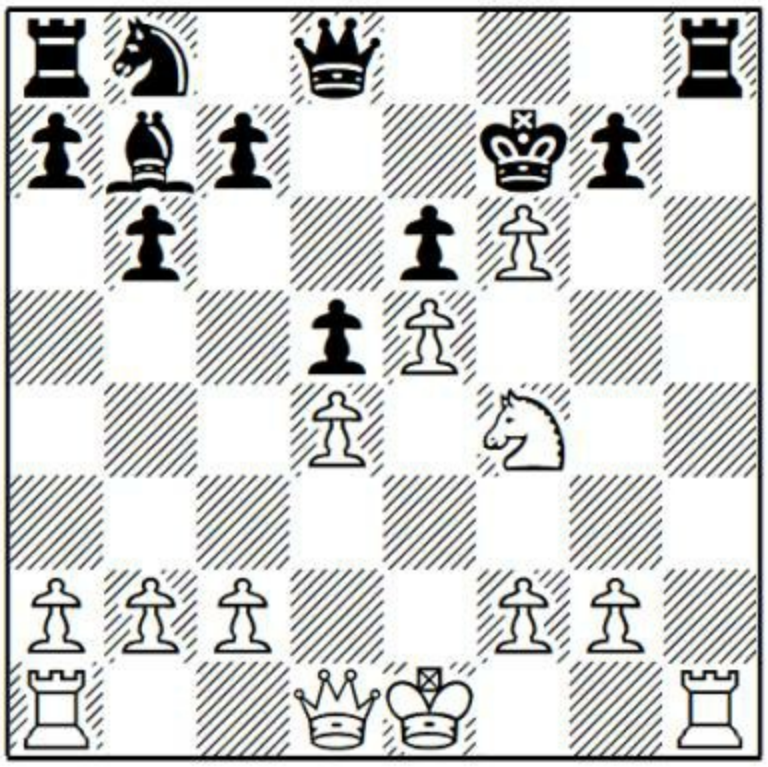
13 hxg5 f5 14 gxf6

Also good enough is 14 Nf4+ Kf7 15 Qh5+ Ke7 16 Qg6, with a winning attack.

14 ... Rh8

Or 14 ... Kf7 15 Nf4 and Black won't survive.

15 Nf4+ Kf7



White to play

Level 4

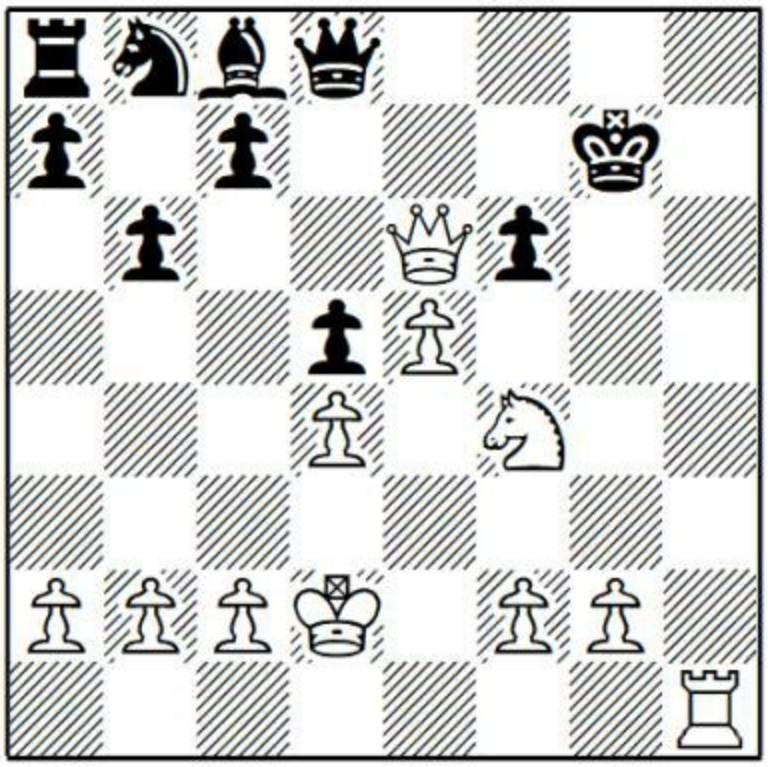
Black's king is about to undergo one of those medieval false 'confessions', extracted in the dungeon. White forces mate in 8:

Answer: Double rook sacrifice!

16 Qg4!! Rxh1+ 17 Kd2 gxf6

Accepting the second rook leads to instant mate: 17 ... Rxa1?? 18 Qxe6+ Kf8 19 Ng6 mate.

18 Qxe6+ Kg7 19 Rxh1 Bc8



White to play

Level 2

We can get to Black's king by tunneling under the foundation. White mates in 3:

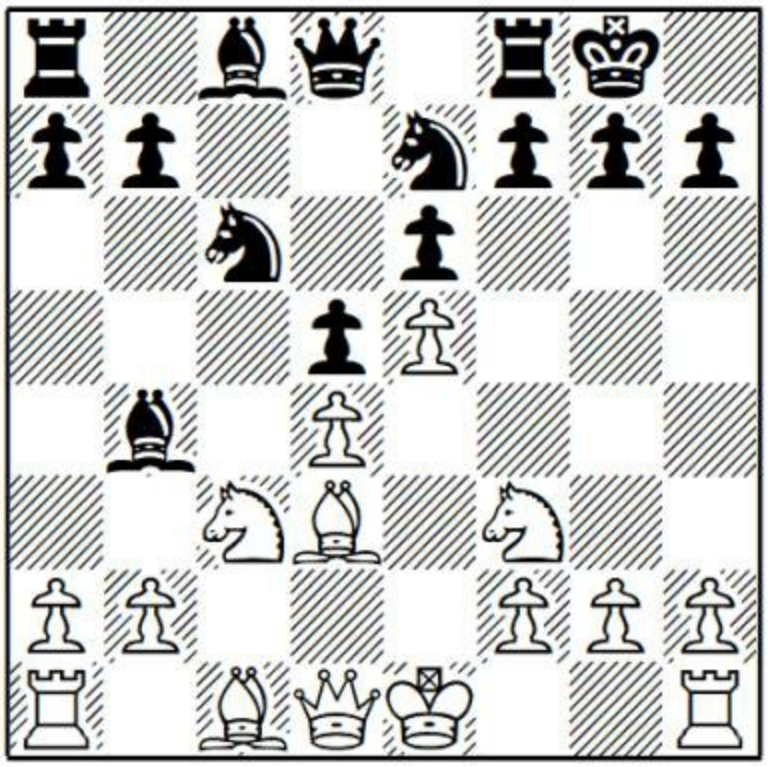
Answer: Rook sacrifice/attraction.

20 Rh7+! Kxh7 21 Qf7+ 1-0

And mate next move: 21 ... Kh8 (or 21 ... Kh6 22 Qg6 mate) 22 Ng6 mate.

295) G.Gundersen-A.Faul

Melbourne 1928



White to play

Level 3

Since this is the Greek Gift chapter, most of you won't be sorely tested on White's next move.

***Answer:* 9 Bxh7+!**

Yup. This one is sound.

9 ... Kxh7 10 Ng5+ Kg6

Or 10 ... Kg8 11 Qh5 Re8 12 Qxf7+ Kh8 13 0-0 Bd7 14 Qh5+ Kg8 15 Rd1 Nf5 16 Rd3 Nh6 17 Qg6 Ne7 18 Qh7+ Kf8 19 Qh8+ Neg8 20 Rf3+ Nf5 21 g4 with a crushing position.

11 h4

Now Black must factor in h4-h5+.

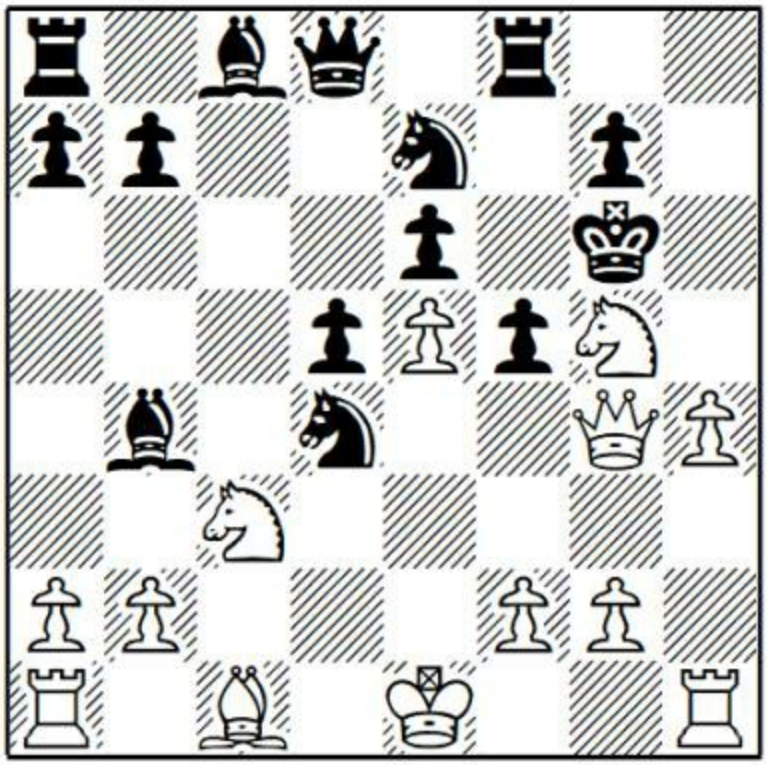
11 ... Nxd4 12 Qg4!?

One by one, the villagers are bitten on the neck and transformed into lower-level vampires, by the head vampire. There is no negotiating with a fanatic. White is interested in mate alone, not material. I would have gone for

the grubbier but no less strong 12 Qxd4.

12 ... f5

Instead, 12 ... Ndf5 13 h5+ Kh6 14 Nxf7+ wins Black's queen.



White to play

Level 2

White to play and force mate in 3:

Answer: Step 1: Drive the king to h6.

13 h5+ Kh6 14 Nxe6+

Step 2: Discovered check.

14 ... g5

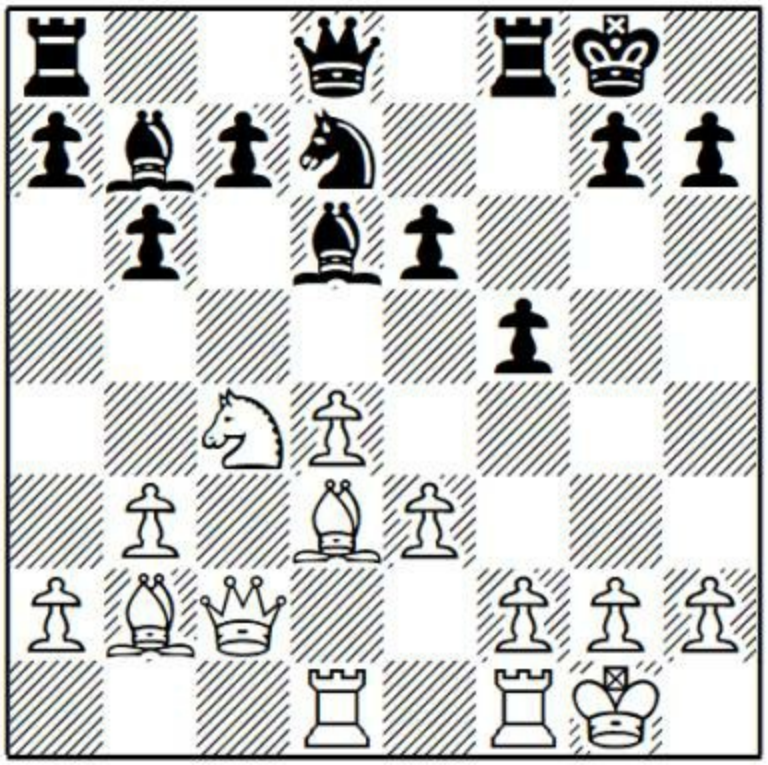
Or 14 ... f4 15 Qxg7 mate.

15 hxg6 mate

Mate with en passant is a rare occasion on the chess board.

296) E.Dizdarevic-A.Miles

Biel 1985



Black to play

Level 5

Can a Greek gift work when there is no attacking knight to move to g4?

Answer: It works due to a brilliant interference shot in a few moves.

13 ... Bxh2+! 14 Kxh2 Qh4+ 15 Kg1 Bf3!!

Interference. We are accustomed to fighting with fists and feet. Now it's time to introduce military-grade weaponry to our arsenal. This is the move Tony had to see in advance, since after 15 ... Rf6? 16 d5! Rh6 17 f3 Bxd5 18 Bxf5! Black is busted.

16 Nd2

16 gxf3?? makes it too easy for Black: 16 ... Qg5+ 17 Kh2 Rf6 and White is mated.

16 ... Bxg2!

Annihilation of defensive barrier. A home invasion cannot be committed in a genteel manner.

17 f3

Or 17 Kxg2 Qg4+ 18 Kh1 Rf6 19 Qxc7 e5!. Interference. White is mated, since there is no stopping a coming ... Rh6 mate.

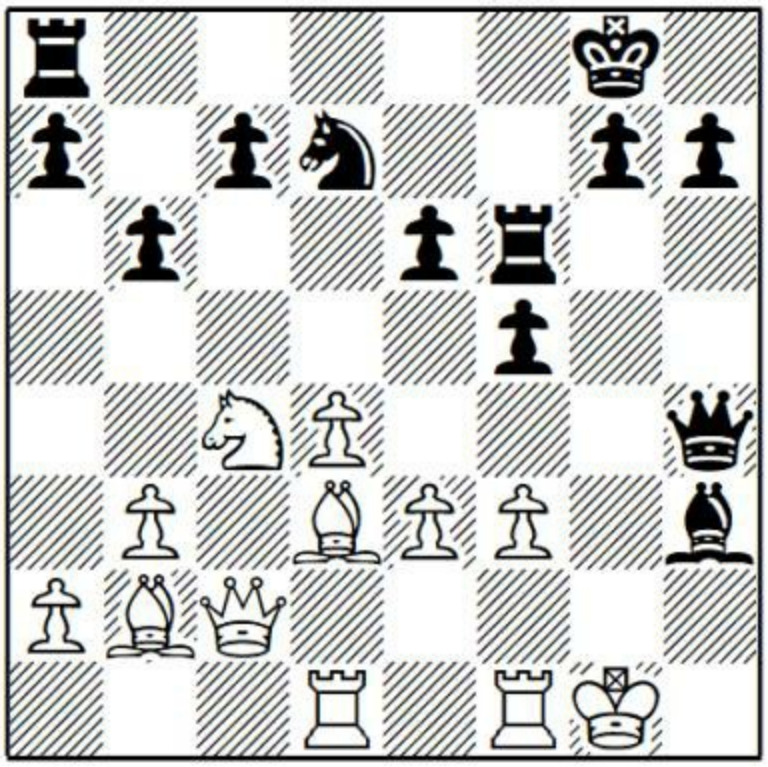
17 ... Rf6!

Threatening to shift over to g6.

18 Nc4

If 18 Rf2 Qh1 mate.

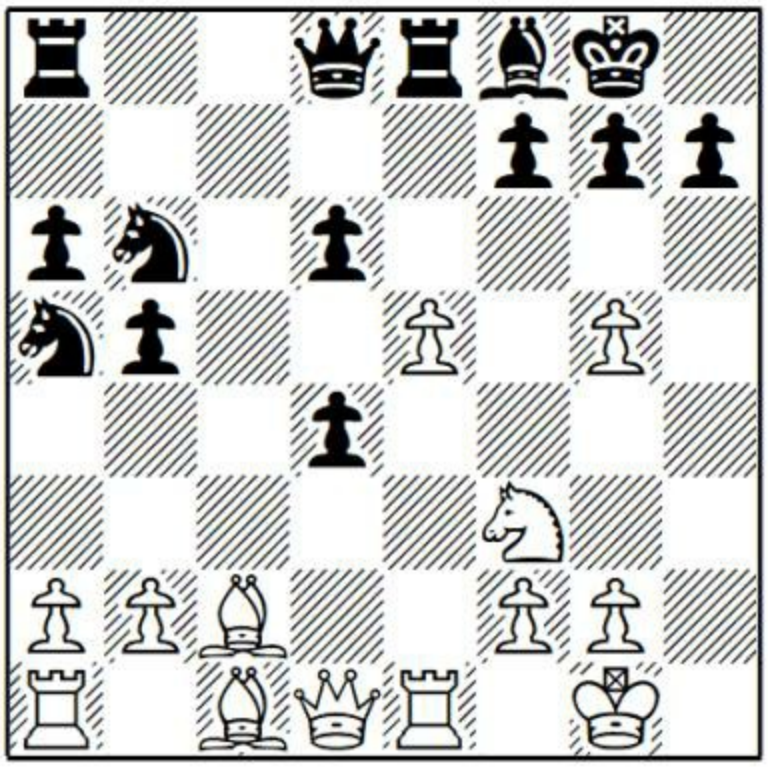
18 ... Bh3! 0-1



19 Rd2 Rg6+ is deadly for White.

297) B.Spassky-E.Geller

Riga Candidates 1965



White to play

Level 4

Should Spassky go for the Greek Gift sacrifice? The trouble is, the auto-pilot Ng5+ isn't available since White's g5-pawn is on the square. Would you play 20 Bxh7+, or would you refrain?

Answer: The Greek gift works, even with the pawn on g5, since it can be pushed to g6.

20 Bxh7+!

There is only one solution to making certain your enemy can never harm you ever again: kill him!

20 ... Kxh7 21 g6+!

Clearance.

21 ... Kg8

After 21 ... fxg6 22 Ng5+ Kg8 23 Qf3 Ra7 24 Qh3 Black must hand over the queen to avoid mate, since 24 ... Be7? 25 Qh7+ Kf8 26 Qh8 is mate, while 21 ... Kxg6? 22 Qd3+ f5 (or 22 ... Kh5 23 Qh7+ Kg4 24 Nh2 mate) 23

exf6+ Kxf6 24 Bg5+ wins Black's queen.

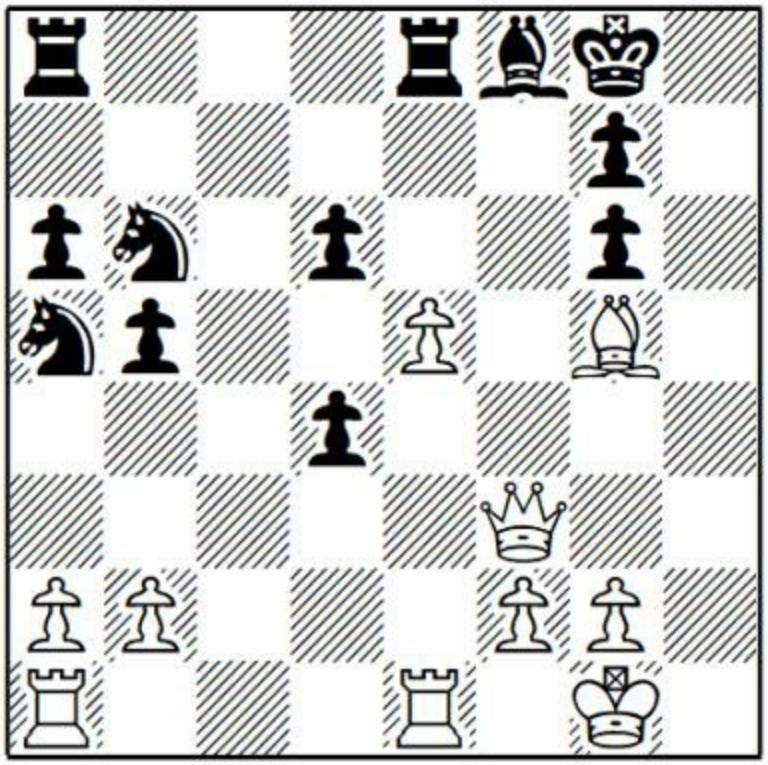
22 Ng5

22 gxf7+ Kxf7 23 Ng5+ Ke7 24 e6 Qc8 25 Qxd4 also looks grim for Black.

22 ... fxg6 23 Qf3 Qxg5

23 ... Ra7 is no improvement due to 24 Qh3 Qxg5 25 Bxg5.

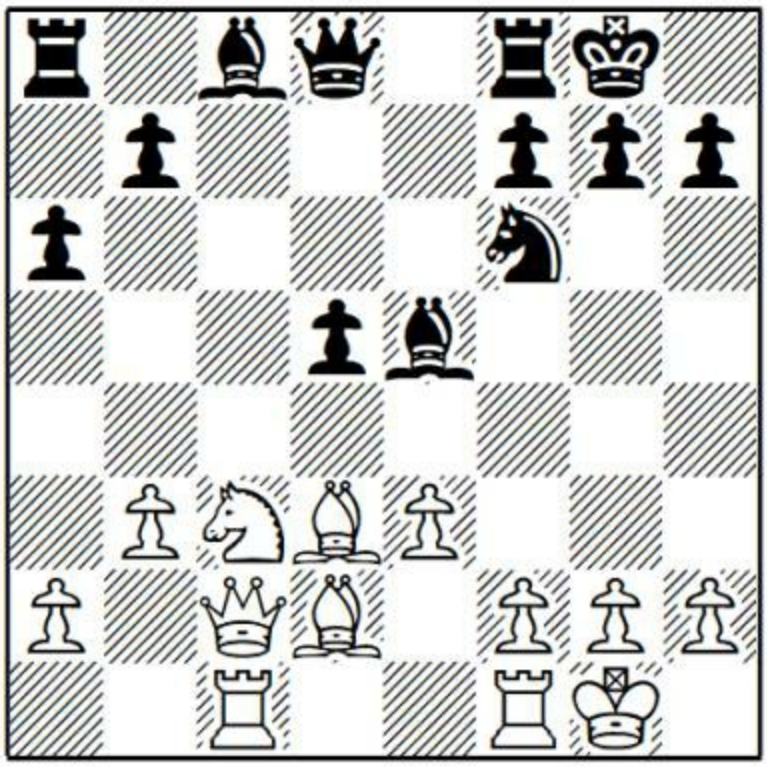
24 Bxg5



You don't always get mate with a successful Greek Gift sacrifice. Sometimes we must make do with a drabbly functional win of material. Spassky went on to convert his material advantage.

298) C.Lakdawala-E.Montany

San Diego (rapid) 2009



Black to play

Level 3

Should Black go for the Greek gift sacrifice on h2, or should he refrain?

Answer: This Greek gift sacrifice is unsound, since Black lacks sufficient attackers to seriously threaten the white king.

14 ... Bxh2+?

The game is dynamically balanced after 14 ... Re8.

15 Kxh2 Ng4+ 16 Kg3

Was I afraid? Ha! Of course not, since courage under fire is the birthright of a Lakdawala.

But not 16 Kg1?? Qh4, and if 17 Rfd1 Qxf2+ 18 Kh1 Qh4+ 19 Kg1 Qh2+ 20 Kf1 Qh1+ 21 Ke2 Qxg2+ 22 Ke1 Qf2 mate.

16 ... h5

After 16 ... Qg5 17 f4 Qd8 18 Bxh7+ Kh8 19 Rh1 White is up a piece and attacking.

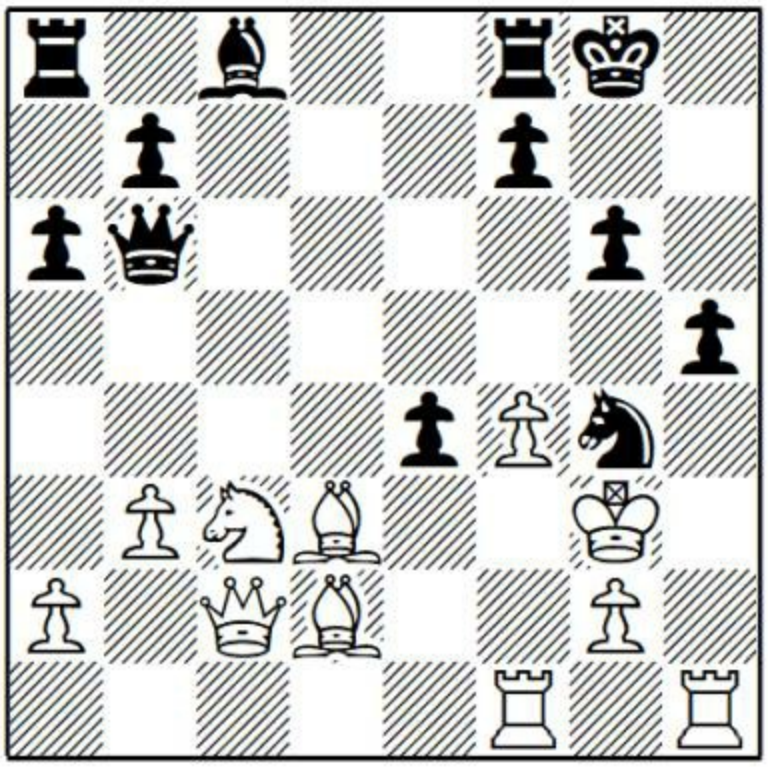
17 Rh1 Qd6+ 18 f4 g6 19 e4!

Principle: *Counter in the centre when attacked on the wing.*

19 ... Qb6 20 Rcf1

Covering f2.

20 ... dxe4



White to play

Level 3

White's choices are 21 Bxe4 and the more tricky 21 Nd5. One of the moves consolidates and wins, while the other allows Black back into the game. Which one would you play?

Answer: 21 Bxe4 is totally hopeless for Black.

21 Nd5?

While it is universally acknowledged that your writer's understanding of chess is as vast as the sky and as deep as the ocean, I fear that here I may have fallen a wee bit short. At this time I was wondering why my opponent was playing down a full piece for no compensation. His next move totally threw me!

21 ... exd3!!

He is willing to be a full rook down in an ending. The amazing part is that he is not worse here!

22 Nxb6 dxc2 23 Nxa8 Bf5?

A natural move, but incorrect. In positions of initiative and attack, sloth is a mortal sin. Often failure to act vigorously leads to downfall, via inaction.

Eric later pointed out that Black has a subtle idea of keeping the f5-square open for his knight with 23 ... Rd8! 24 Bc1 Rd3+ and now White must take the draw after 25 Rf3! (not 25 Kh4? f6 26 f5 Bxf5 27 Nb6 Kg7 28 Nc4 Be4 29 Rhg1 g5+ 30 Bxg5 fxg5+ 31 Kxg5 Rd5+ 32 Kh4 b5 33 Nb2 Kg6 and White is busted) 25 ... Rd1 26 Rff1 (after 26 Rhf1? Bd7 27 Nb6 Bc6 White is busted) 26 ... Rd3+ 27 Rf3 with a repetition draw.

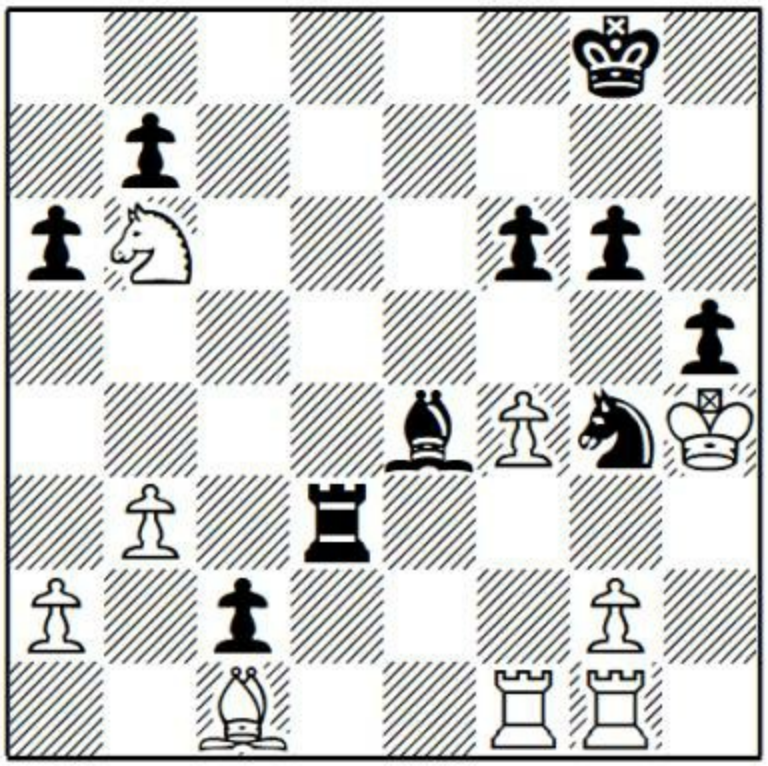
24 Nb6

Now White is winning again.

24 ... Rd8 25 Bc1 Rd3+ 26 Kh4!

Correctly playing for the win.

26 ... Be4 27 Rhg1 f6!



Black plays for four mating/attacking ideas:

1. Play ... Nh6 and ... Nf5 mate.

2. Play ... Kg7, ... Kh6 and engineer ... g5+.

3. Look for bishop sacrifices on g2, followed ... Rh3 mate (with the help of his knight).

4. Look for tricks involving ... Nh2, then sacrifice on g2 and play ... Nf3+.

Thank God I was ahead on the clock!

28 Nc4 Nh2!

I banked on the line 28 ... Nh6?! 29 g3! Bf5 30 Ne3 Bd7 31 Nxc2 Nf5+ 32 Kh3 Nd4+ 33 Kh2 Nxc2 34 Rd1 when White will consolidate.

29 Ne3!

White has to be very careful not to stand worse here: for example, 29 Re1? Bxg2! 30 Rxg2?? (after 30 Ne3 Nf3+ 31 Kg3 Nxe1 32 Rxe1 Be4 the chances are even) 30 ... Nf3+ 31 Kh3 Nxe1+ 32 Rg3 Kf7 and White is busted.

29 ... Kh7?

Too ambitious. He is playing for mate, but White's king can slip out eventually. Better would be 29 ... Nxf1! 30 Rxf1 a5 when it won't be easy for White to unravel.

30 Re1 Kh6 31 Kh3

31 Ng4+! was also strong: 31 ... Nxg4 32 Rxe4 Rd1 33 Ree1 Rd3 34 Re2 Rd1 35 Rge1 and White will consolidate.

31 ... Ng4 32 Re2 g5 33 g3 Bf3 34 fxg5+ fxg5 35 Ree1 Nf2+?

He was down to just a few seconds on the clock by now. I expected the line 35 ... Rxe3 36 Bxe3 c1Q 37 Rxc1! (37 Bxc1?? Nf2+ 38 Kh2 Ng4+ is perpetual check) 37 ... Nxe3 38 Rge1 when White will convert.

36 Kh2 Ne4 37 Nxc2

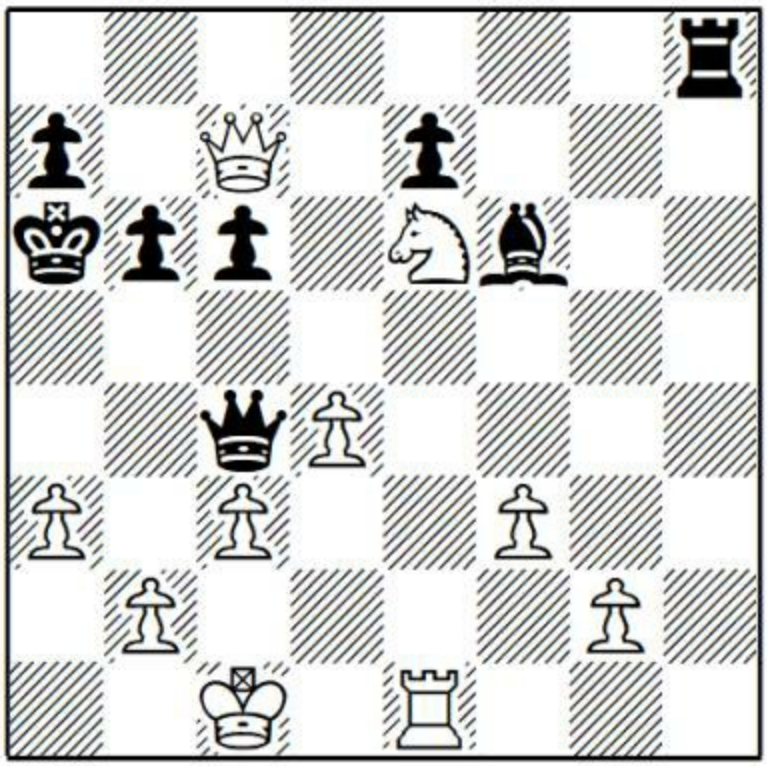
Black's mating threats have evaporated and White has also eliminated the deadly c2-pawn.

37 ... h4 38 gxh4 1-0

15) Interference/Obstruction

Interference occurs when we interrupt the flow of our opponent's idea - sacrificially or otherwise - with a clogging mechanism.

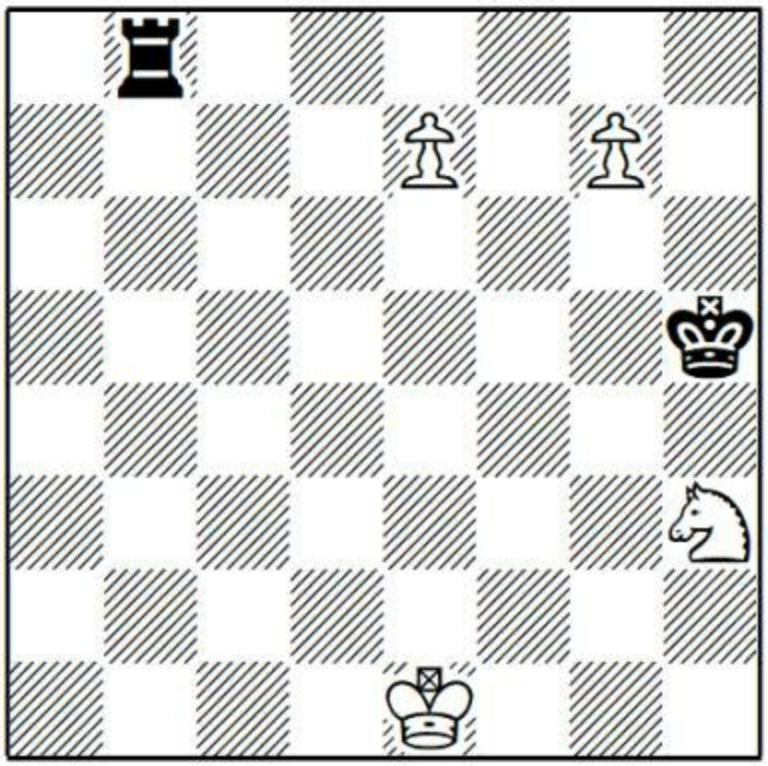
299) E.Lasker-J.Ryan
New York (simul) 1892



White to play
Level 2
How did Lasker force the win?
Answer: A knight check on c5 obstructs the black queen's coverage of c6.
33 Nc5+! 1-0

You aren't an expert marksman just because you saw Jason Bourne pick off an enemy with a sniper's rifle. This combination is straightforward and doesn't require Lasker-like calculation ability. After 33 ... bxc5 (33 ... Kb5 34 a4+ Ka5 35 Qxa7+ mates next move) 34 Qxc6+ Ka5 35 b4+ cxb4 36 axb4+ Black must hand over the queen and is mated quickly following 36 ... Qxb4 37 cxb4+ Kxb4 38 Kc2.

300) F.Lazard
Shakhmatnoye Obozrenye, 1910



White to play
Level 5
How does White force one of the pawns through to promotion? I originally thought this was an easy study and fell for the composer's trap on move 4! So be warned: the study is difficult to solve.
***Answer:* 1 Nf4+! Kh6 2 Ne6!**

Threat: Nd8 and e8Q

2 ... Re8

After 2 ... Rg8 3 Nf8 (interference) 3 ... Kxg7 4 e8Q Rxf8 White wins, while after 2 ... Kh7 3 Nd8 White promotes.

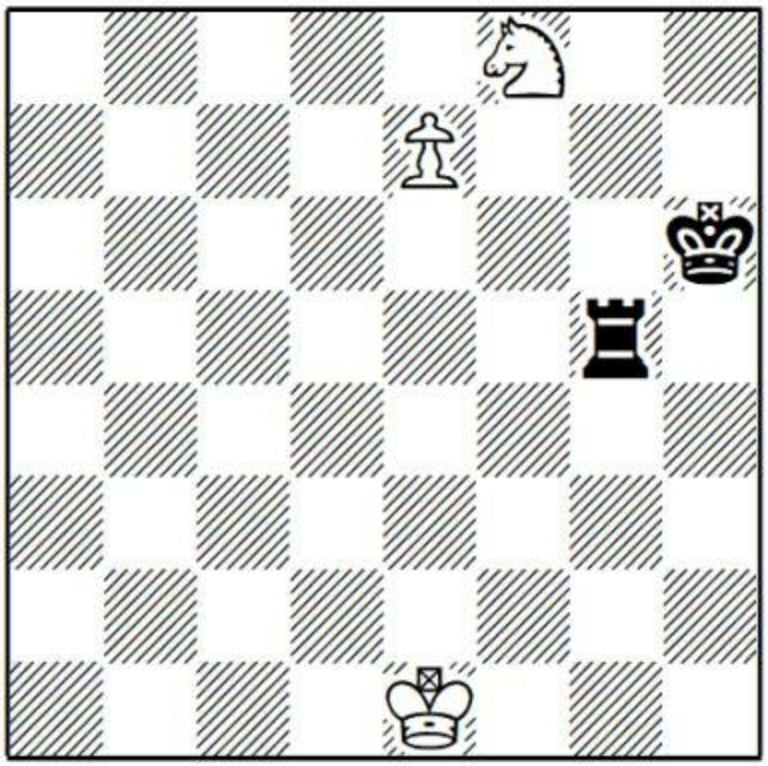
3 g8Q!

Decoy.

3 ... Rxg8 4 Nf8

Interference. Here I thought I had solved the study. I missed Black's next move resource/swindle try.

4 ... Rg5!

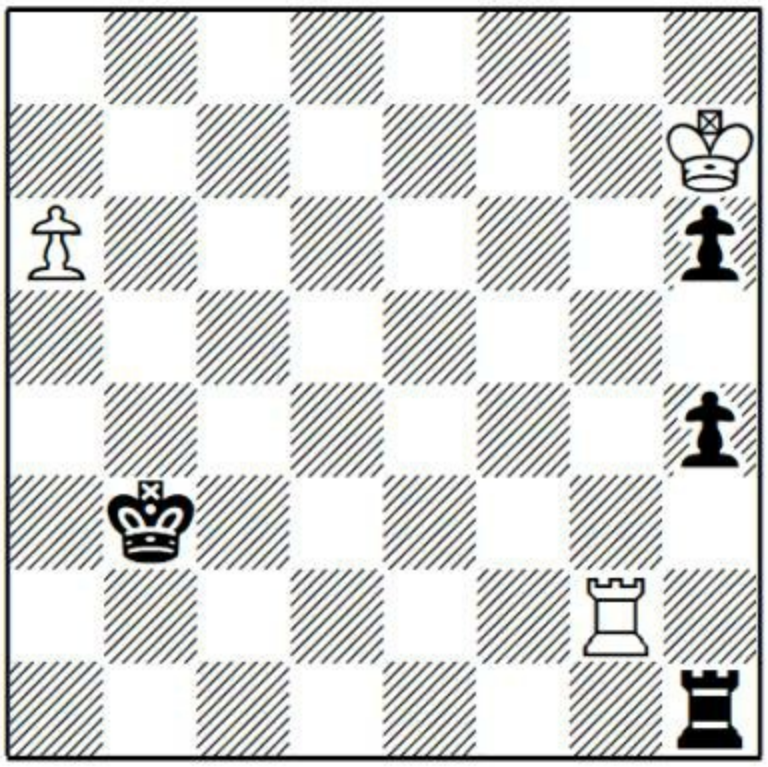


We have ended the information-gathering stage and are ready to strike. What should White play?

5 Ng6!!

Winning, as if 5 ... Rxg6 6 e8Q. Are you familiar with the Jedi mind trick? This move is exceptionally difficult to see. It is so easy to fall for 5 e8Q? Re5+! 6 Qxe5, which is stalemate, or 5 Nd7, which allows Black to repeat with 5 ... Rg8 6 Nf8.

301) R.Reti
Date Unknown



White to play

Level 2

Richard Reti along with Aron Nimzowitsch were two founders of the Hypermodern movement, which went from being a radical concept (from the edges we slowly erode our opponent's centre), to a mainstream status quo in our present day.

This is a fairly simple Interference/obstruction idea. How does White win?

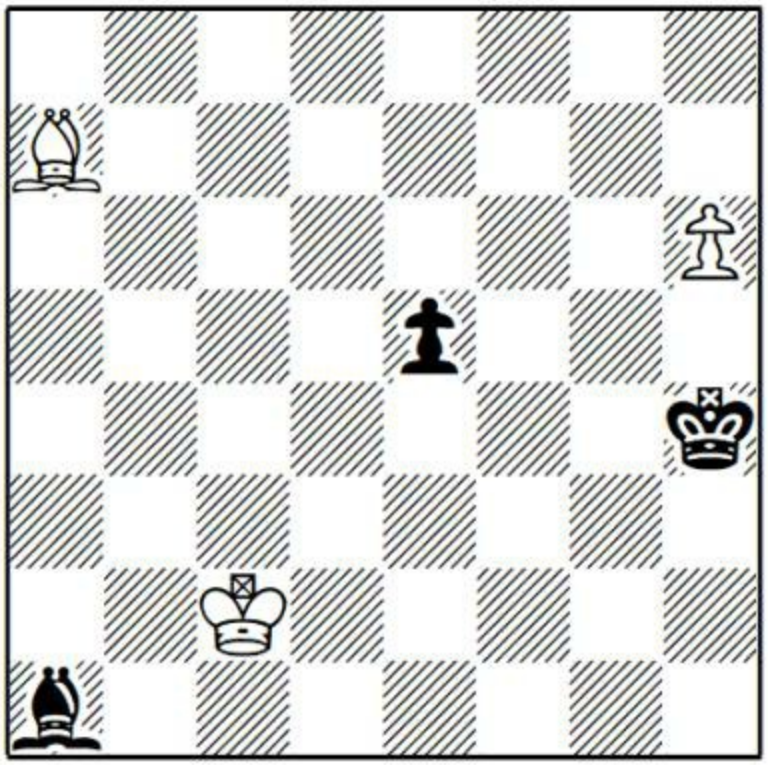
Answer: Gum up the works by moving the rook to a2.

1 Ra2!

Reti refuses to contradict his own Hypermodern convictions and moves a rook to the wing.

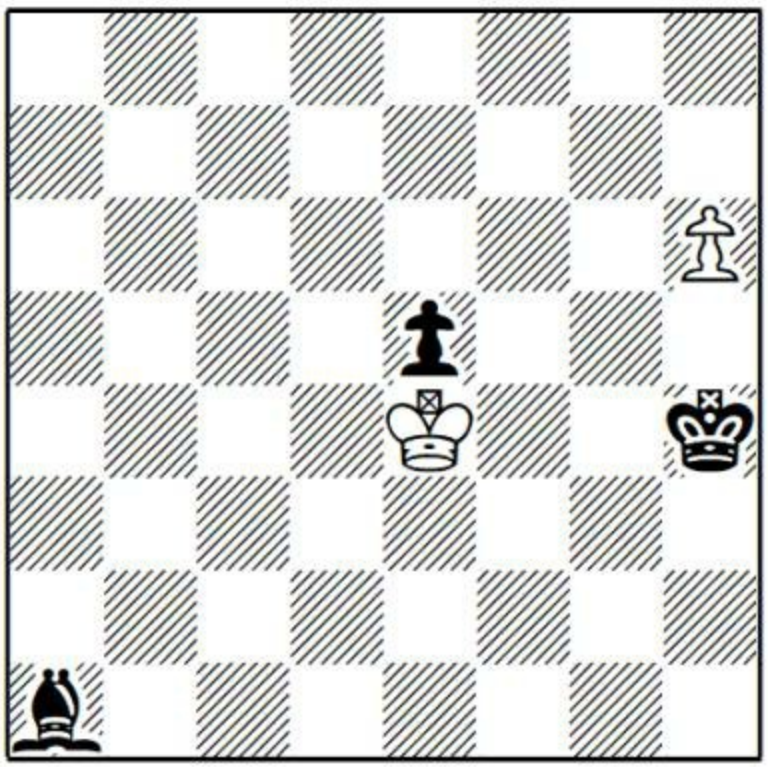
1 ... Kxa2 2 a7 1-0
White promotes.

302) P.Heuacker
Neue Freie Presse 1930



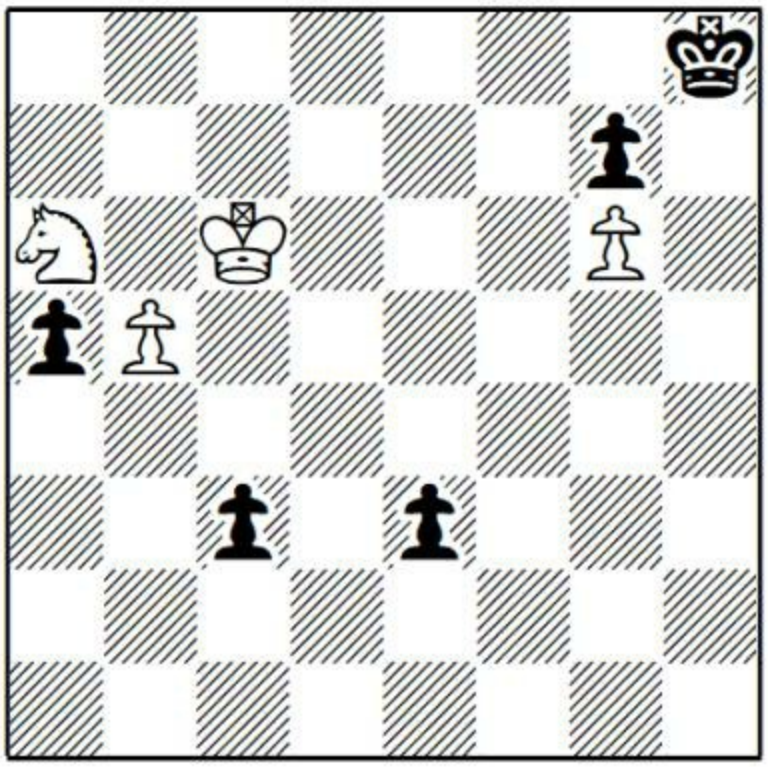
White to play
Level 4
How does White force a win?
Answer: Move the bishop to d4, where it can be taken two ways.
1 Bd4!!
It's so satisfying to rout our opponent's wishful conjecture with painful facts. This most anomalous of moves forces the promotion of White's h-pawn.
1 ... Bxd4
After 1 ... exd4 2 Kd3 the h-pawn promotes.

2 Kd3! Ba1
2 ... e4+ doesn't quite cut it since White has 3 Kxd4.
3 Ke4!



Interference for the second time. White obstructs the bishop's control over h8 and promotes.

303) S.Kozlowski
Glos Poranny, 1931



White to play

Level 5

When faced with a threat, we have two options:

1. Ignore it and defend ourselves if attacked.

2. Launch a pre-emptive strike ourselves.

This is a case of number 2 on the list.

Answer: Interference.

1 Nb4!!

After 1 Nc5? e2 2 Nd3 c2 3 b6 e1Q Black wins the promotion race and the game.

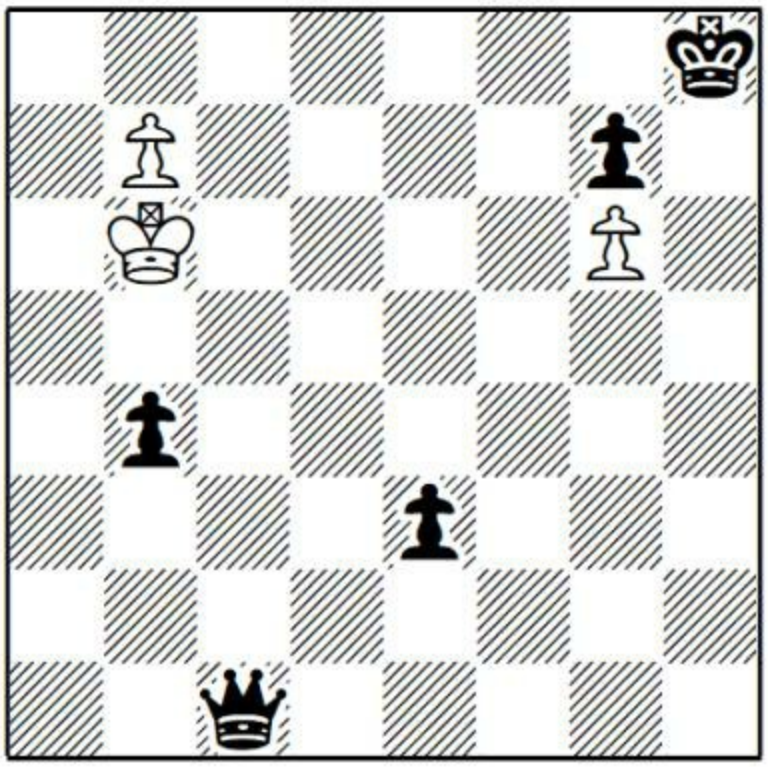
1 ... axb4

Following 1 ... e2 2 Nc2 Black's passed pawns are contained.

2 b6 c2 3 b7 c1Q+

Wait a minute. Black promoted first and with check. Look closer. White forces mate in 4:

4 Kb6!



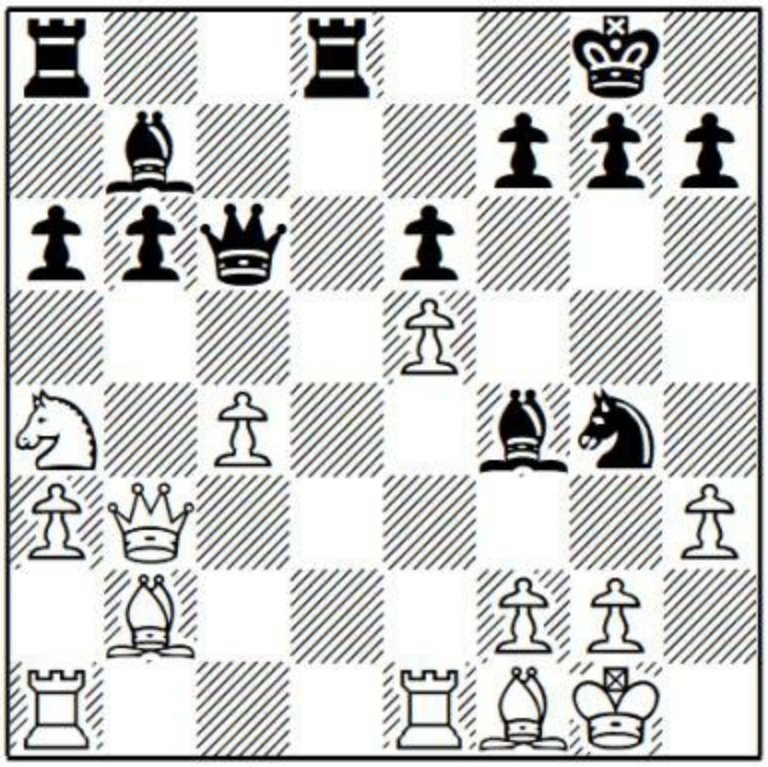
Nothing enrages the loser of a chess game more than the winning side's mockery. Now we see the reason for White's knight sacrifice on move 1. Black's own b- and d-pawns obstruct, and Black lacks a single meaningful check. Meanwhile White threatens to promote and mate on the back rank.

4 ... Qc4 5 b8Q+ Qg8

The black queen interferes with her king's escape route.

6 Qh2+! Qh7 7 Qxh7 mate

304) K.Gerasimov-V.Smyslov
Moscow 1935



Black to play

Level 4

All of Smyslov's pieces are in perfect harmony. Where is the knockout blow?

Answer: Interference/attraction/knight fork/overloaded defender. Lift the rook in d3, which short circuits the defence.

19 ... Rd3!! 20 Qxb6

Would you rather fight, or accept inconvenience and back down? The answer depends upon the size and strength of your opponent. In this case defenders scamper away for safety like terrified mice, when the house cat enters the kitchen.

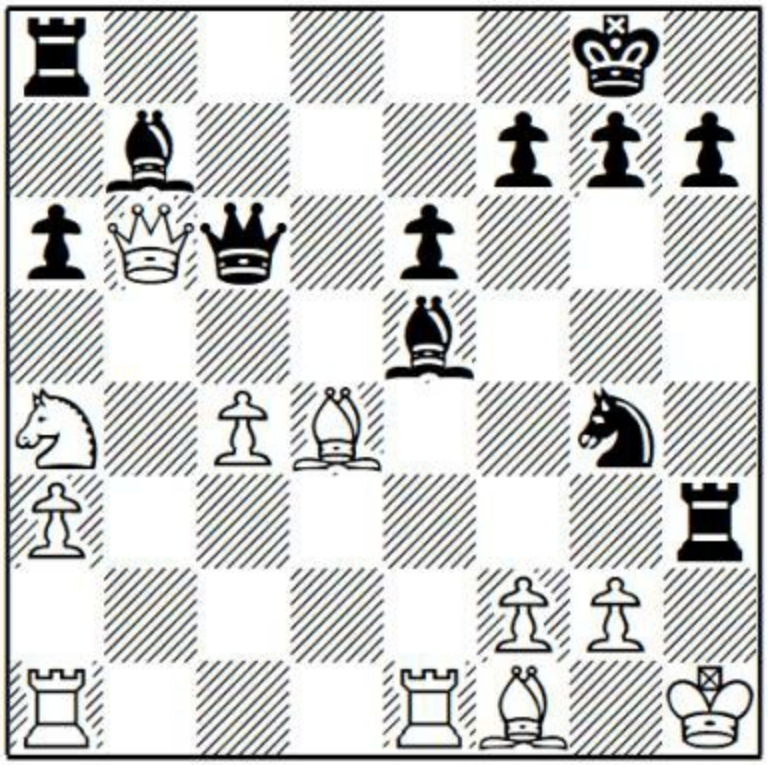
After 20 Qxd3 Bh2+ 21 Kh1 Nxf2+ 22 Kxh2 Nxd3 White is unable to recapture due to the mate threat on g2, or if 20 Bxd3?? Qxg2 mate.

20 ... Rxh3!

Annihilation of defensive barrier. The second rook sacrifice is deadly.

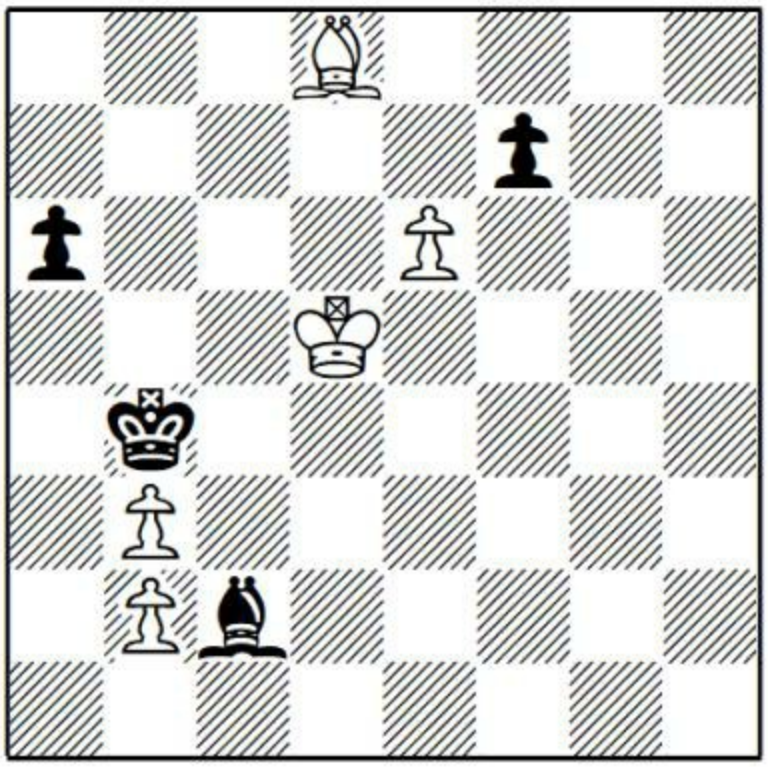
21 Bd4

White desperately attempts to cover f2.
Instead, 21 Qxc6 Bh2+ 22 Kh1 Nxf2 is mate, as is 21 gxh3 Bh2 mate.
21 ... Bh2+ 22 Kh1 Bxe5+ 0-1



White's queen falls after 23 Kg1 Bh2+ 24 Kh1 Bc7+. Discovered attack.

305) L.Prokes
Schweizerische Arbeiter-Schachzeitung, 1948



White to play

Level 4.5

If White plays the immediate 1 e7? then Black draws with 1 ... Bxb3+ and 2 ... Ba4. How can White short circuit this plan and win the game?

Answer: Decoy/interference/vulnerable king.

1 Ba5+!!

Not 1 e7? (Principle: *Don't mistake Fool's Gold for a precious metal*) 1 ... Bxb3+ 2 Kd6 Ba4, which is drawn.

1 ... Kxa5

Instead, 1 ... Kxb3 2 e7 promotes, since Black's king interferes with the ... Ba4 defence, while after 1 ... Kb5 2 e7 Bxb3+ 3 Kd6 once again Black's king is in the way of the ... Ba4 defence.

2 e7!

Now is the correct timing.

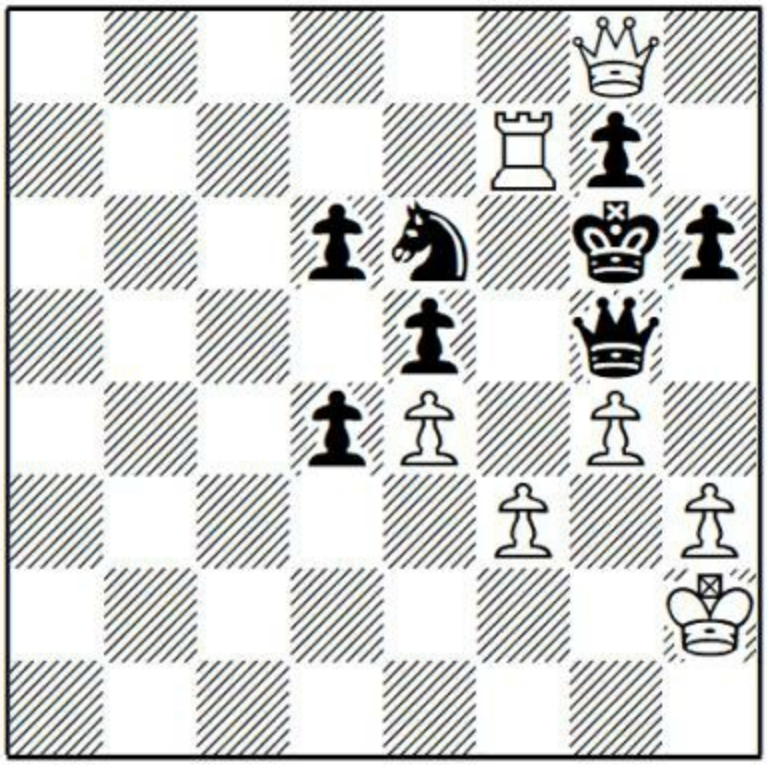
2 ... Bxb3+ 3 Kc5! Ba4

Black's bishop, the skunk at the picnic, halts promotion at a steep price: it

obstructs a4 which is an escape square for Black's king.

4 b4 mate

306) V.Smyslov-H.Müller
Venice 1950



White to play

Level 3

How did Smyslov deal with Black's threat to deliver perpetual check?

Answer: Interference. Black's own pawn on f4 will clog plans of perpetual check.

62 f4!

There is no greater euphoria-killer than watching your once winning position sour, when we failed to deliver a knockout combinational blow. The move 62 Qe8? is too slow since Black has perpetual check after 62 ... Qd2+ 63 Kg3 Qe1+.

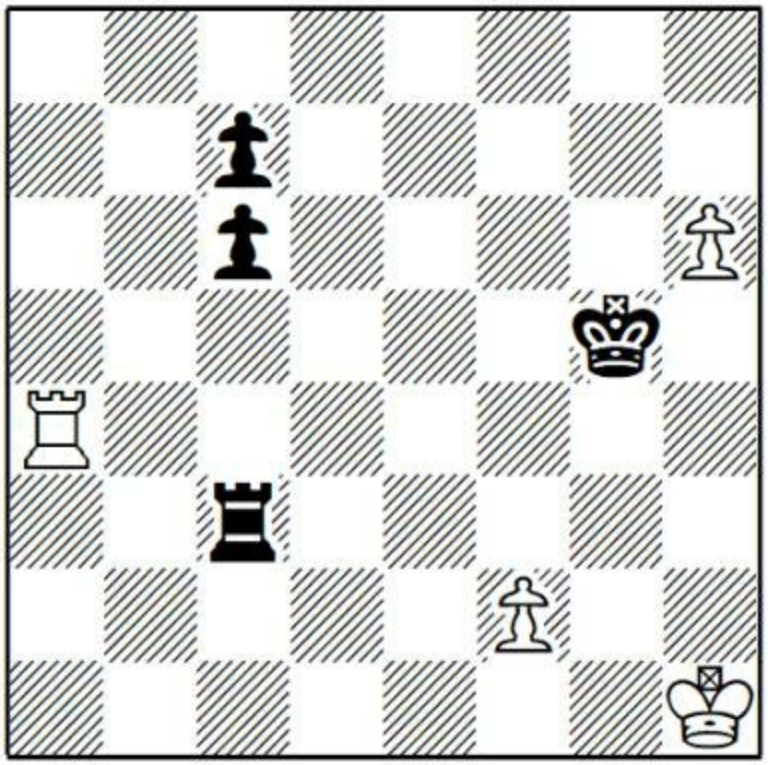
62 ... exf4

After 62 ... Nxf4 we are reminded of the scene from horror movie where the teen says “Whew! That was a close one,” just as the slasher stands right behind her. 63 Qxg7 is mate.

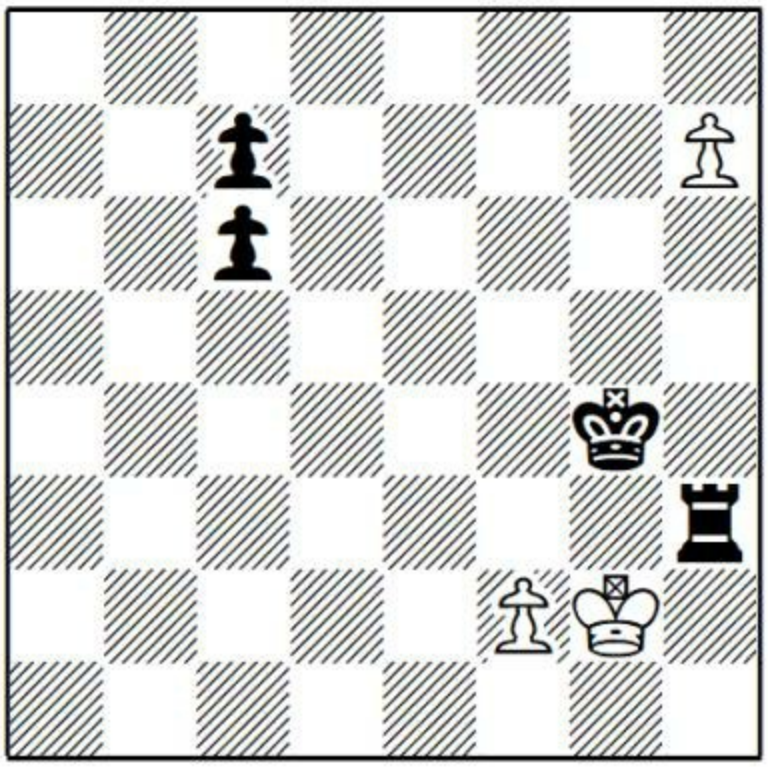
63 Qe8! 1-0

Threat: Rf8+ and Rh8 mate, i.e. 63 ... Nc5 (or 63 ... Nc7 64 Rxc7+) 64 Rf8+! Kh7 65 Rh8 mate.

307) A.Wotawa
Deutsche Schachzeitung, 1952



White to play
Level 4
How does White force promotion?
Answer: Step 1: Rook sacrifice/interference.
2 Rh4! Kxh4 3 h7 Rh3+ 4 Kg2 Kg4



White to play

Level 1

Is your mind infected with doubts? Did White miscalculate terribly? The answer is no. White still wins.

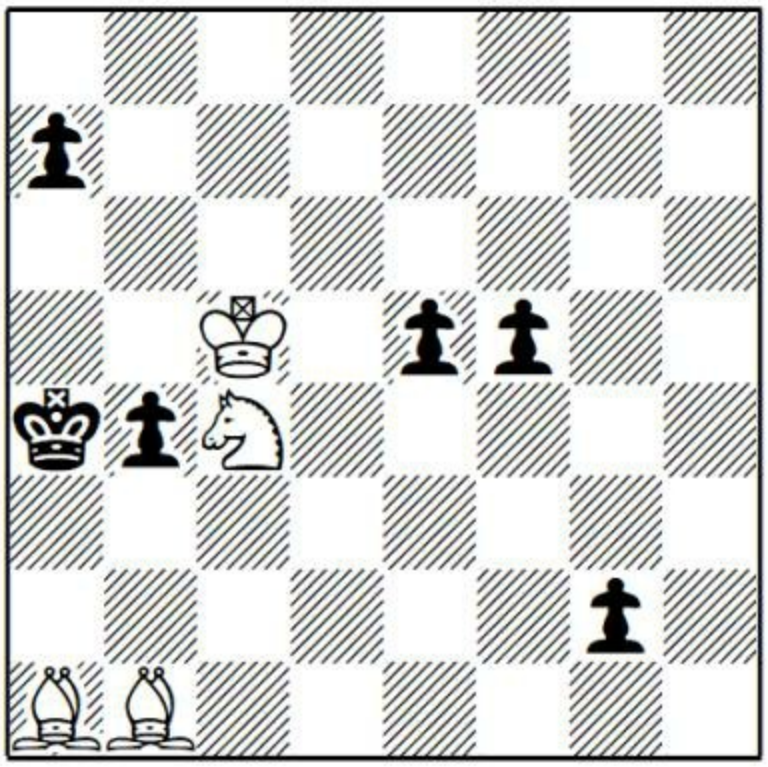
Find one strong move and White wins.

Answer: **5 f3+! 1-0**

Overloaded defender/interference. 5 ... Rxf3 6 h8Q is a technical win for White.

308) A.Kakovin

L'Italia Scacchistica, 1961



White to play

Level 5

In studies, unnatural does not always equate to weak. How does White force a win?

Answer: Move the bishop to d4, so that when Black does later promote, it won't be with check, since d4 will be obstructed with a black pawn.

1 Bd4!!

Answer: Interference. Black no longer will promote with check. After 1 Bc2+ b3 2 Bxf5 g1Q+ wins.

1 ... exd4 2 Bc2+!

White seals b3 with a black pawn.

2 ... b3 3 Bxf5

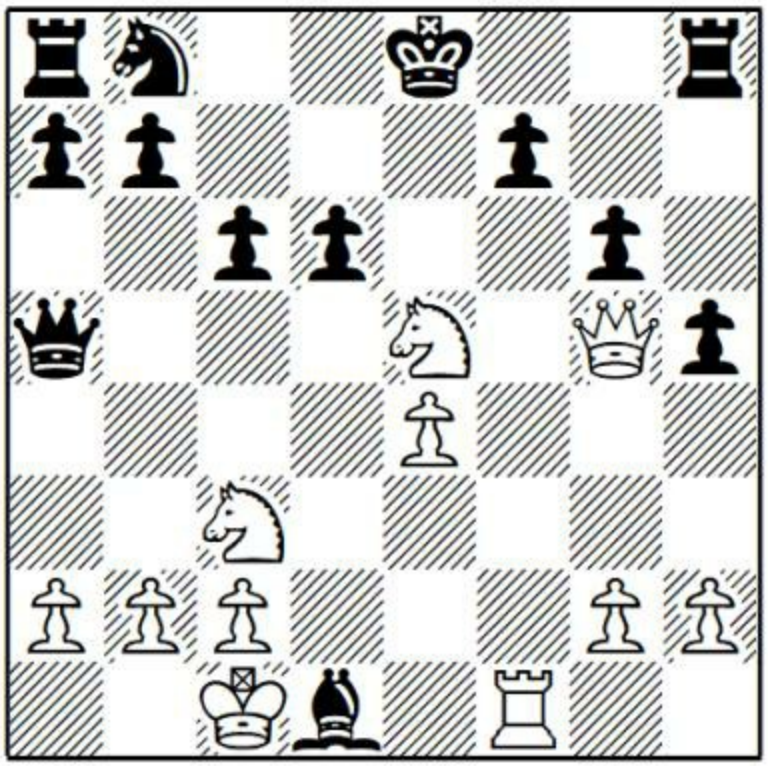
Threat: Bd7 mate. There is a would-be cure, but it's just as fatal!

3 ... g1Q

Without the interfering black d4-pawn, this would be check. Now it's not, but if 5 ... b2 6 Bc2 mate.

4 Bd7 mate

309) J.Gallagher-J.Bellin
London 1984



White to play
Level 4
White is down a full rook, so it's a now-or-never situation to come up with a combination:
Answer: Piece sacrifice/obstruction.
19 Nd5!!
Threat: Qe7 mate. After 19 Qf6? Qxe5 20 Qxf7+ Kd8 21 Qxb7 Bg4 22 Qxa8 Ke7 Black is up a piece and winning, while 19 Nxf7? Qxg5+ 20 Nxg5 Bg4 leaves Black up a rook.
19 ... cxd5
Instead, 19 ... Qd8 20 Nf6+ Kf8 (20 ... Ke7 21 Nxh5+ Ke8 22 Ng7+ Kf8

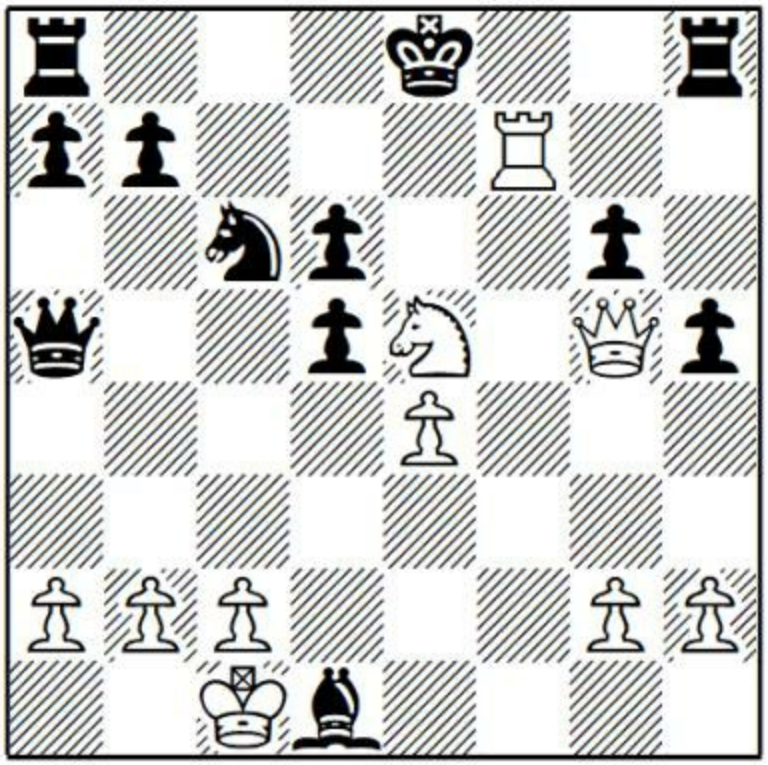
23 Rxf7+ mates in 2) 21 Nxg6+! fxg6 22 Qxg6 Ke7 23 Nd5+! (clearance) 23 ... Kd7 24 Qf5+ Ke8 25 Qf7 is mate.

20 Rxf7

The mate threat on e7 is once again activated.

20 ... Nc6

Likewise, 20 ... Qd8 21 Qxg6 is awful for Black.



White to play

Level 3

Black's position is on valium. How can White force mate in 4?

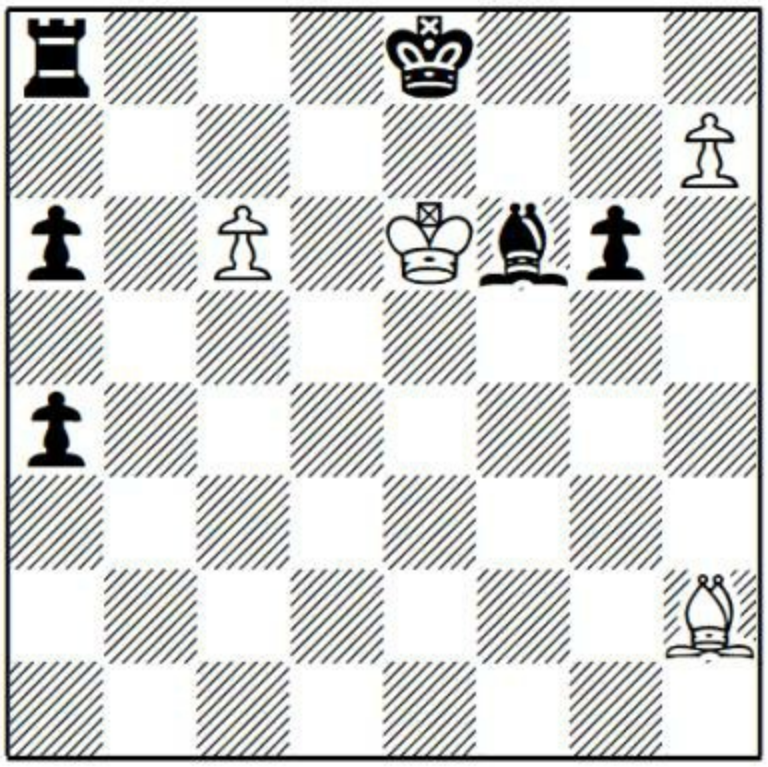
Answer: Slide the queen into f6.

21 Qf6! 1-0

If 21 ... dxe5 22 Qe6+ Kd8 23 Qd7 mate.

310) V.Smyslov

Central Chess Club Bulletin, 1987



White to play

Level 4

Smyslov was an artist who depicts objects represented by reality. This study portion looks as if it was born from a real tournament game. Do you see White's hidden win?

Answer: Move the bishop to b8, disrupting Black's castling.

1 Bb8!!

Interference. 1 Kxf6? 0-0-0! 2 Be5 Rh8 3 Kxg6 Rxh7 4 Kxh7 a3 5 Kg6 a2 6 Kf6 a1Q 7 Bxa1 Kc7 is only a draw.

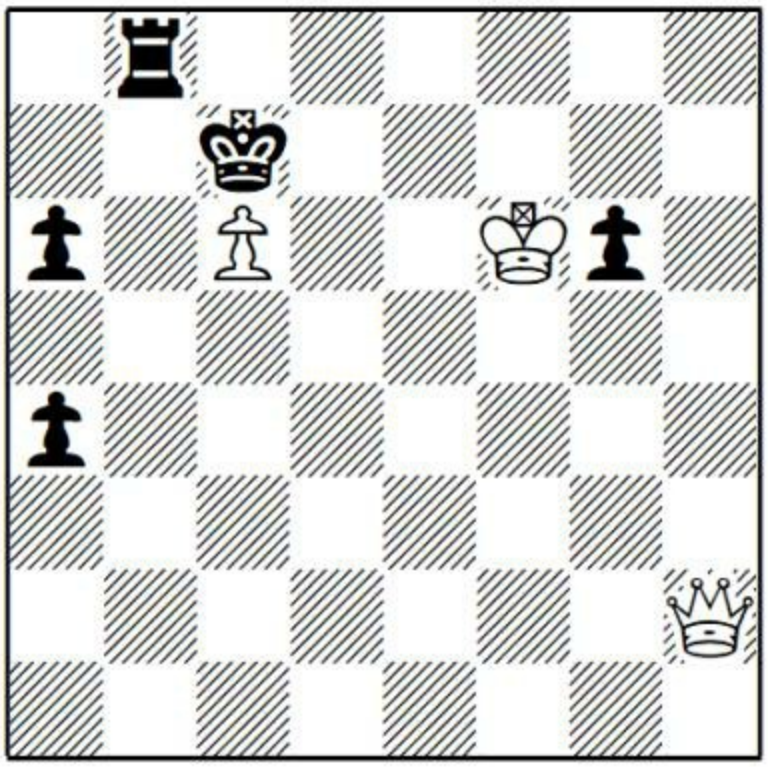
1 ... Rxb8

Instead, 1 ... a3 2 c7 promotes and 1 ... Bh8 2 c7 is the same.

2 Kxf6

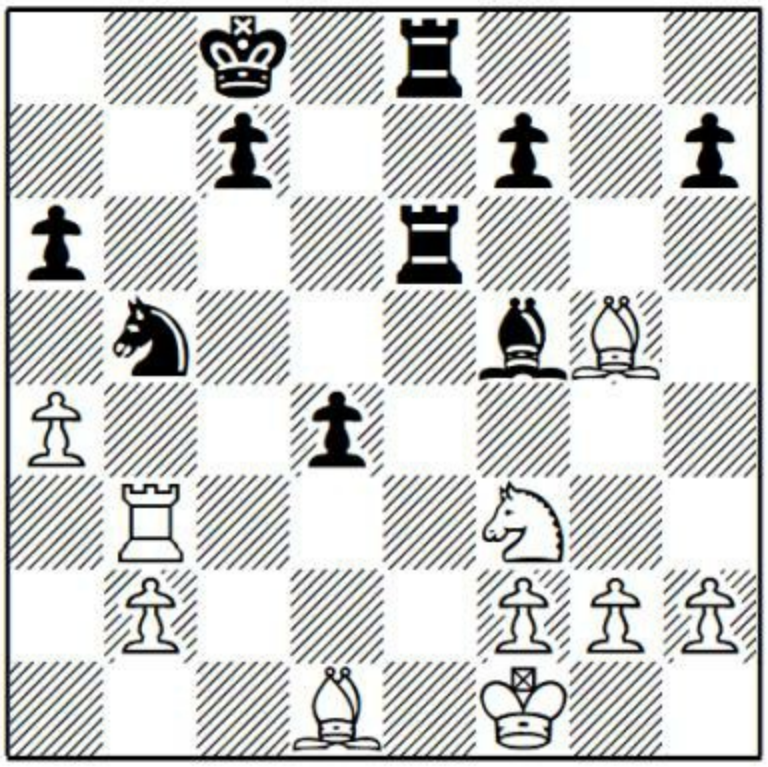
Threatening to mate via promotion. Now Black is unable to castle!

2 ... Kd8 3 h8Q+ Kc7 4 Qh2+!



4 ... Kc8
Or 4 ... Kxc6 5 Qxb8.
5 Qd6!
White mates in 6.

311) A.Morozevich-V.Ivanchuk
New York 1995



Black to play

Level 3.5

How did Ivanchuk exploit White's wobbly king situation?

Answer: Interference/weak back rank. The knight on c3 threatens ... Nxd1, but at the same time Black is now ready for ... Bd3+.

31 ... Nc3!

Interference/weak back rank.

32 g4

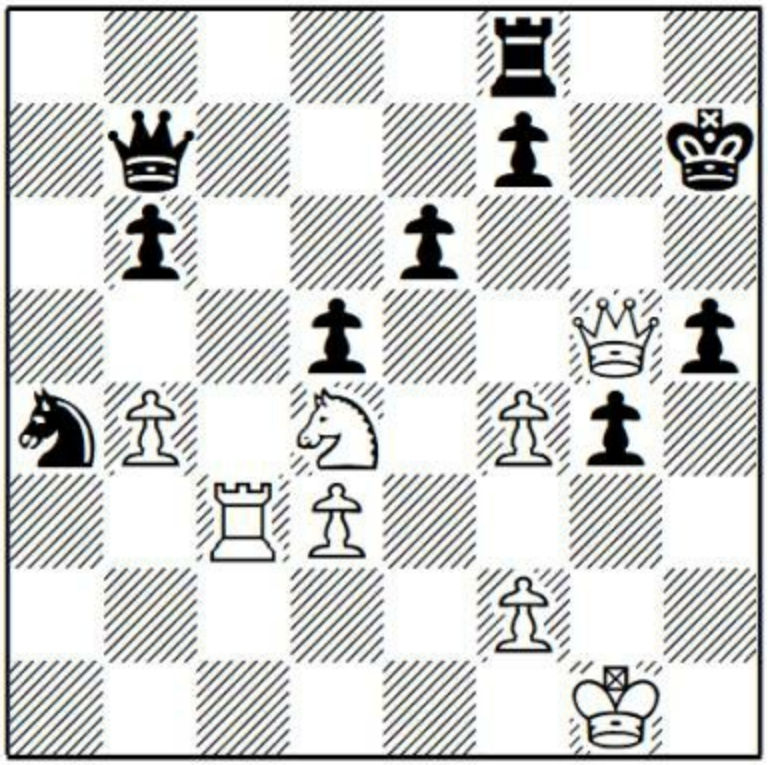
Instead, 32 bxc3 Bd3+ 33 Be2 Rxe2 (threat: ... Re1 double check and mate) 34 g4 Rb2+ picks up the loose rook on b3.

32 ... Bxg4 0-1

White must lose a piece or get back-ranked by 33 bxc3 (or 33 Nxd4 Bh3+ 34 Kg1 Re1 mate) 33 ... Bh3+ 34 Kg1 Re1+ 35 Nxe1 Rxe1 mate.

312) C.Lakdawala-E.Ilfeld

Koltanowski Memorial, San Francisco 2000



White to play

Level 4

The opening began with a quiet London System, yet genetic variability led to mutation. We don't really know we have faith (in our ability not to choke!) until it gets tested. I desperately needed to win this game for an IM norm, so your normally mild-mannered writer attacked with uncharacteristic savagery. Continue White's attack:

Answer: The f-pawn transforms into another attacker. The loose rook on c3 can be ignored.

29 f5! Rg8

Black gets mated if he takes the rook: 29 ... Nxc3?? 30 f6! (Interference) 30 ... Rg8 31 Qxh5 mate.

30 Qxh5+ Kg7 31 Qg5+

Paradoxically, Black's g4-pawn shields White's king.

31 ... Kh7

If 31 ... Kf8, there follows 32 Nxe6+! (annihilation of defensive barrier) 32 ... fxe6 33 Qf6+ Ke8 34 Qxe6+ Kf8 when the simplest is 35 Rc8+, winning.

32 Qh4+

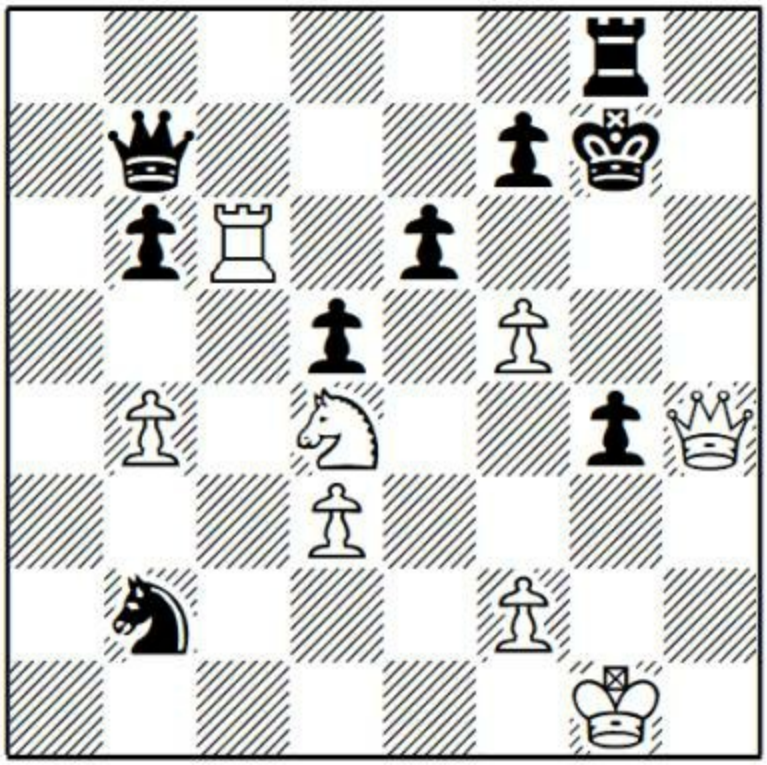
I wanted the queen to keep watch over the dark squares.

32 ... Kg7 33 Rc6!

Annihilation of defensive barrier. Each step flows as a logical extension of its predecessor. Black's king will have no cover when e6 gets blasted open.

33 ... Nb2

He wants to return his knight back into the game and doesn't have time.



White to play

Level 2

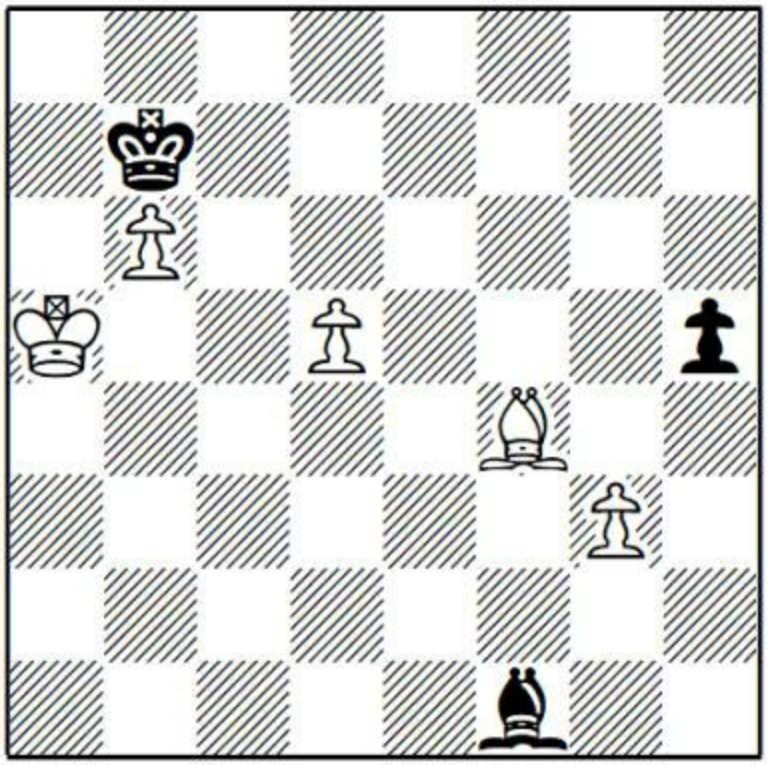
How does White force mate in 8 moves at the most?

Answer: Sacrifice on e6.

34 Nxe6+! fxe6 35 Rxe6 1-0

If 35 ... Rf8 36 Qh6+ Kg8 37 Rg6+ Kf7 38 Rf6+ Ke7 39 Qxf8+ Kd7 40 Qd6+ Kc8 41 Rf8 mate.

313) I.Saric-V.Topalov
Kozloduy (rapid) 2013



White to play
Level 2
How does White force the win, despite the bishops of opposite colours?
Answer: Push the g-pawn which clogs an important diagonal and destroys Black's defensive infrastructure.
1 g4!
There is no such thing as a jointly held asset in chess. Either one side owns it, or the other, or nobody owns it. This way White robs Black of ownership of the h3-c8 diagonal, whereas after 1 d6? Bh3 Black blockades the light squares and draws.

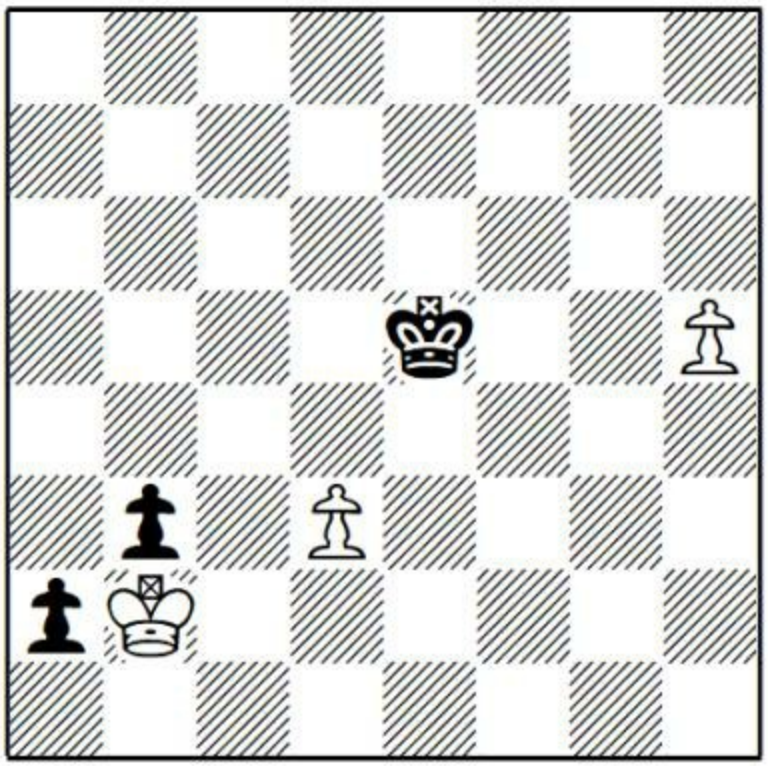
1 ... hxg4

Instead, 1 ... Bh3 2 gxh5 Bf5 3 h6 Be4 4 d6 Bf5 5 h7! (overloaded defender) 5 ... Bxh7 6 d7 promotes, as does 1 ... h4 2 d6 Kc6 3 b7 Kxb7 4 d7.

2 d6 1-0

2 ... Kc6 3 b7 (or 3 d7) 3 ... Kxb7 4 d7 promotes.

314) J.Emms
2019



Black to play

Level 5

This is the only Black to play and win study in the book, since it actually arose from a real game. My old Everyman editor and friend GM John Emms had this position come up in one of his lessons. At first it appears as if Black is dead lost, since White's split pawns cannot be simultaneously caught by the black king. The plan 1 ... Kd4 2 h6 Kxd3 3 h7 a1Q+ 4 Kxa1 Kc2 fails

miserably to 5 h8Q, which covers the b2-square. How can Black actually win the game?

Answer: Black's clever solution is to actually waste a tempo to provoke White into d3-d4. What does this accomplish? With White's pawn on d4, rather than d3, when White promotes on h8, it isn't with check.

1 ... Kf5!!

The only way:

a) 1 ... Kd4? (consistency is the playground of the rigid mind; this move is both logical and a blunder) 2 h6 Kxd3 3 h7 a1Q+ 4 Kxa1 Kc2 5 h8Q wins, since the queen covers the b2-square.

b) 1 ... Ke6? 2 d4 Kf6 3 d5 Ke5 4 h6 Kf6 5 d6 Ke6 6 h7 and White promotes.

2 d4

This pawn push to d4 clogs/interferes with the h8-a1 diagonal, a fact which will prove crucial later on. However, if 2 h6 Kg6 3 d4 Kxh6 4 d5 Kg6 when Black's king is within the square of White's remaining pawn. The winning technique is as follows: 5 d6 Kf6 6 d7 Ke7 7 d8Q+ Kxd8 8 Ka1 Kd7 9 Kb2 Kd6 10 Ka1 Kd5 11 Kb2 Kc4 12 Ka1 Kd3 13 Kb2 a1Q+! 14 Kxa1 Kc3 (and most certainly not the boneheaded 14 ... Kc2? which stalemates White) 15 Kb1 b2 16 Ka2 Kc2 and wins.

2 ... Ke4!

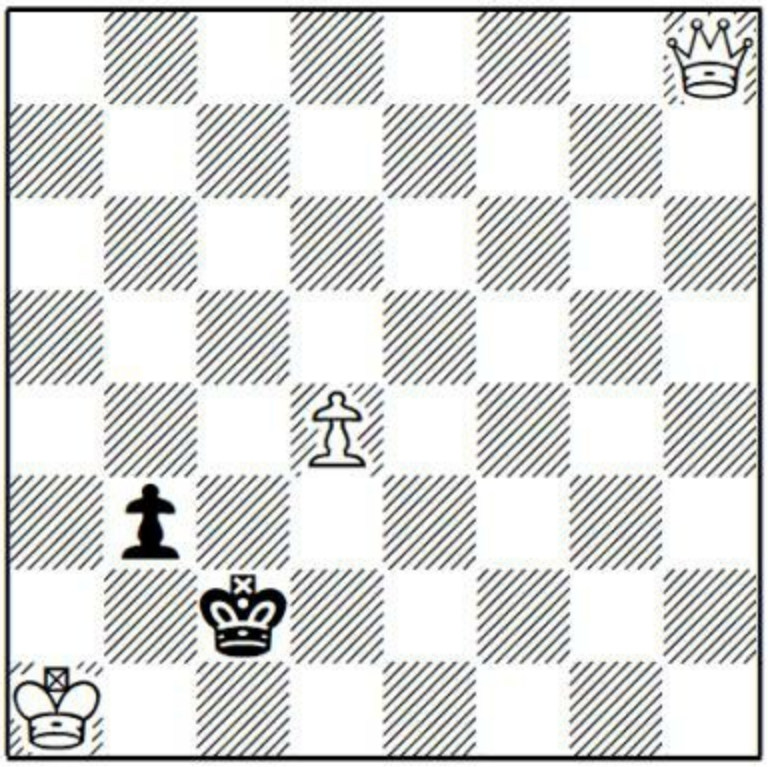
What? Isn't Black in violation of the Principle: *Don't contradict your own assertion*? The answer is no. Black deliberately gave White the free move d3-d4, to obstruct the a1-h8 diagonal. In a few moves we will see how critical this is.

And not 2 ... Kg5?? 3 d5 Kxh5 4 d6 when White wins, since the black king is outside the square of White's passed d-pawn.

3 h6 Kd3 4 h7 a1Q+!

White's king is stuck in his overcrowded prison.

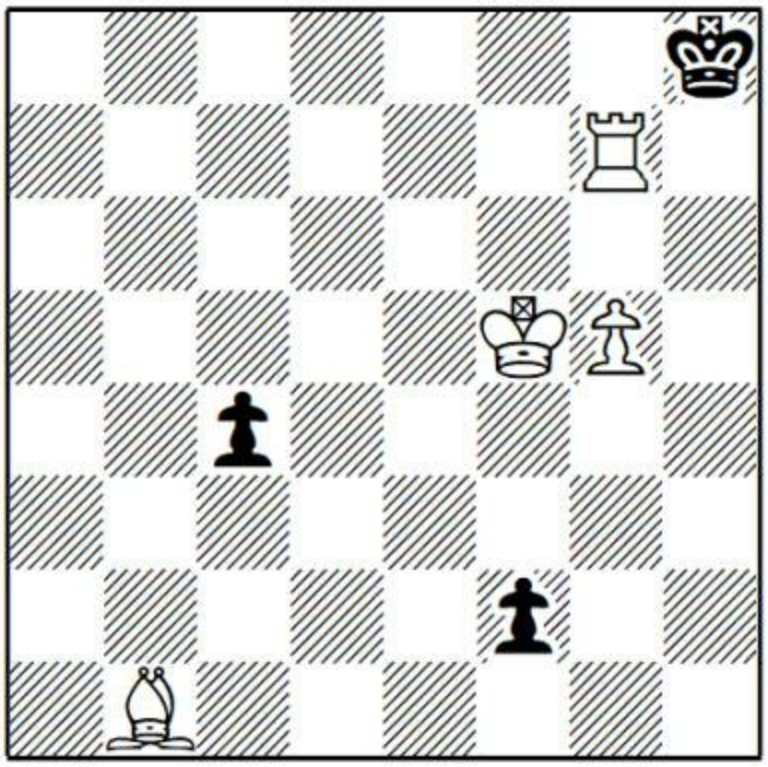
5 Kxa1 Kc2 6 h8Q



Note that White loses *because* the d4-pawn blocks the new queen's coverage of b2.

1**6 ... b2+ 7 Ka2 b1Q+ 8 Ka3 Qb3 mate**

315) A.Avni & M.Minski
The Problemist, 2020



White to play

Level 5

Grandmaster of Chess Composition Martin Minski posted this co-authored gem on my Facebook group, Chess Endgame Studies and Compositions.

There is no way for White to halt promotion. How do we win anyway?

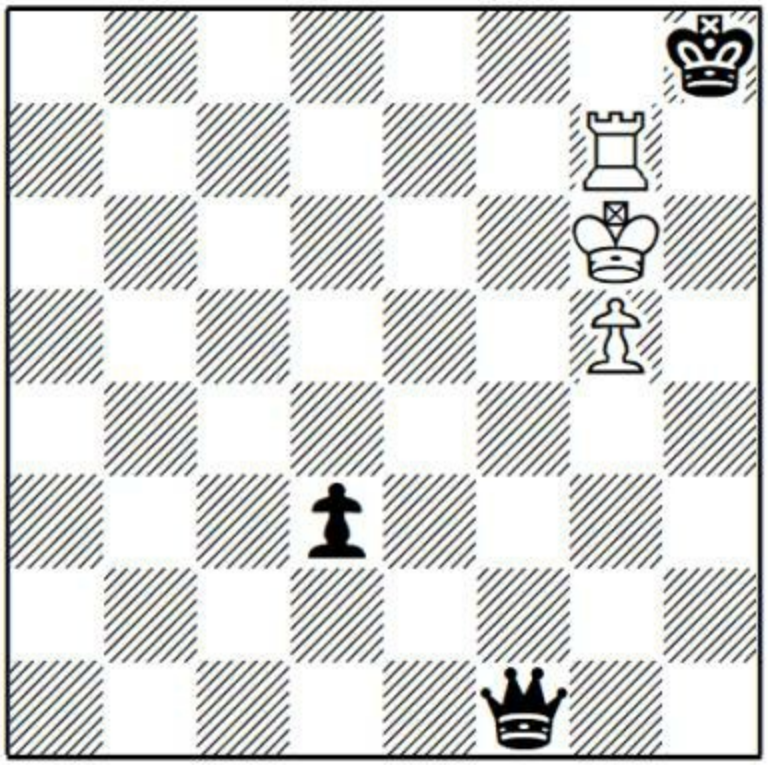
Answer: Interference. Black's pawn on d3 prevents the future black queen's check on the b1-h7 diagonal.

1 Bd3!!

Did the bishop undershoot his target? It appears as if he leads his forces into an unwinnable war - and then he wins it! The bishop clogs d3 on the b1-h7 diagonal, where Black's future queen will not be able to deliver a saving check to White's king.

Instead, 1 Kg6? f1Q 2 Be4 (2 Bf5 Qxf5+! 3 Kxf5 Kxg7 is also a draw) 2 ... Qd1 3 Re7 (threatening mate on the back rank) 3 ... Qd6+ 4 Kf7 Qf4+ 5 Kg6 Qd6+ is perpetual check.

1 ... cxd3 2 Kg6! f1Q



White to play

Level 2

It appears as if White is dead. What is the next step?

Answer: Double attack/simplification. If Black's queen moves then Rf8 is mate; if Black's queen chops the rook, then Black's king is mated in the promotion race.

3 Rf7! Qxf7+

Or 3 ... Qb1 4 Rf8 mate

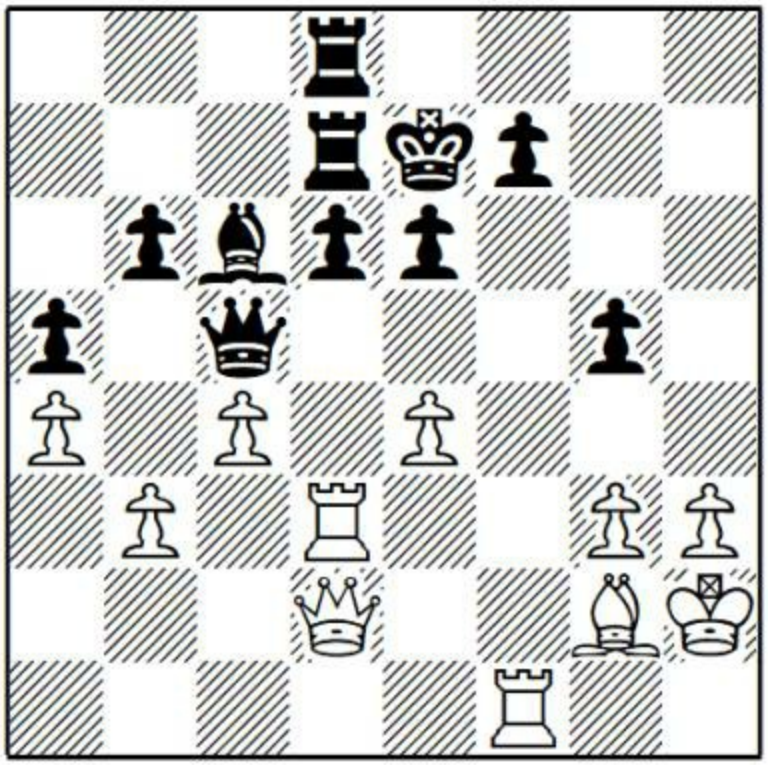
4 Kxf7 d2 5 g6

The similarities between the promotion races is purely superficial, since Black's king will be mated.

5 ... d1Q 6 g7+ Kh7 7 g8Q+ Kh6 8 Qg6 mate

316) V.Artemiev-L.Aronian

Online Nations Cup (rapid) 2020



White to play

Level 5

There are those who complain of the world around them, yet take no action to fix it. At first glance it feels as if it is Black who owns all the strategic trumps, yet Black's king isn't as safe as he looks. How did GM Artemiev exploit it?

Answer: Rook sacrifice/interference.

32 Rd5!!

The age of voluntary anarchy is upon us. The rook obstructs the black queen's coverage of g5. Believe it or not, Black's position is no longer salvageable.

32 e5?! is not as strong: 32 ... Bxg2 33 Qxg5+ Kf8 34 Kxg2 dxe5 35 Qg6! Ke8 36 Rxf7! Rxf7 37 Rxd8+ Kxd8 38 Qxf7 Qe3 when White still has a lot of work to do to convert.

32 ... Bxd5

After 32 ... exd5 33 Qxg5+ Kf8 34 Qh6+ Ke8 (or 34 ... Kg8 35 Rf4 f5 36 exf5 and Black is mated) 35 Qh8+ Ke7 36 Qh4+ Kf8 37 exd5 Bb7 38 Qh8+ Ke7 39 Re1+ Qe3 40 Rxe3 mate.

33 Qxg5+ Kf8 34 cxd5!

Even stronger than 34 exd5 since White's e-pawn will disrupt further with its push to e5.

34 ... Re7

If 34 ... e5 35 Rf6 Re7 36 Rh6! (threatening back rank mate) 36 ... Ke8 37 Qf5! (this move cuts out the black's king escape route via d7) 37 ... Red7 (or 37 ... Rc7 38 Rh8+ Ke7 39 Qg5+ and mate next move) 38 Rh8+ Ke7 39 Qg5+ f6 40 Qg7 mate.

35 e5!

Line opening/interference. A rationalist tends to dismiss the supernatural, yet this is an impossibly brilliant attacking play from Artemiev.

35 ... Rc8

Or 35 ... dxe5 36 dxe6 Qc7 37 Qh6+ Kg8 38 exf7+ Rxf7 39 Rxf7 Qxf7 40 Qg5+. Double attack. White wins.

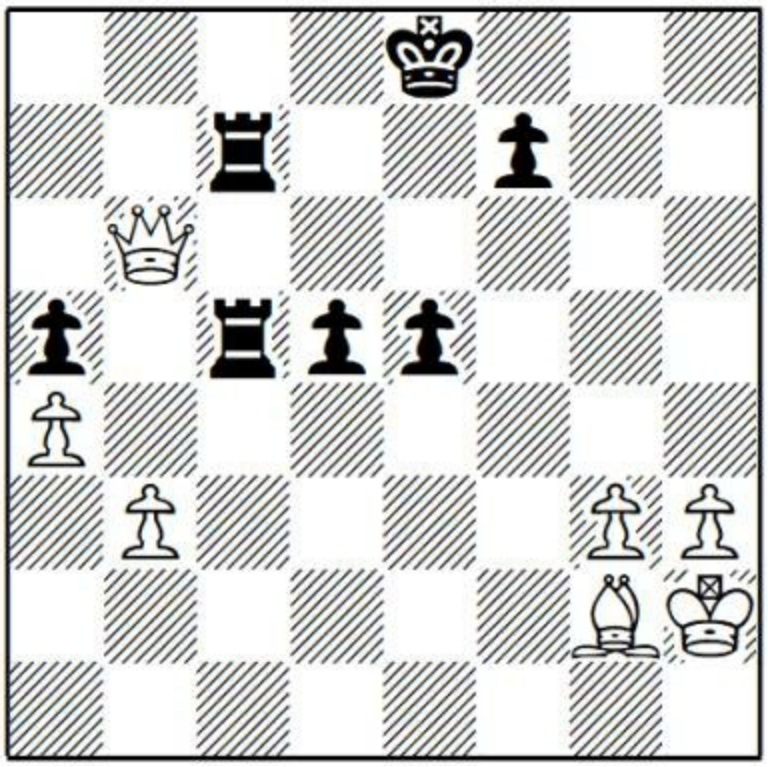
36 Rf4!

With the dual threats of Rc4 and Rh4.

36 ... dxe5

Aronian gives up his queen, as 36 ... Qc7 37 Rc4 Qb7 38 Rh4 Ke8 39 exd6 wins, since Black's rook is unable to shift to d7, due to back rank mate.

37 Rc4! exd5 38 Qh6+ Ke8 39 Rxc5 Rxc5 40 Qxb6 Rec7



White to play

Level 2

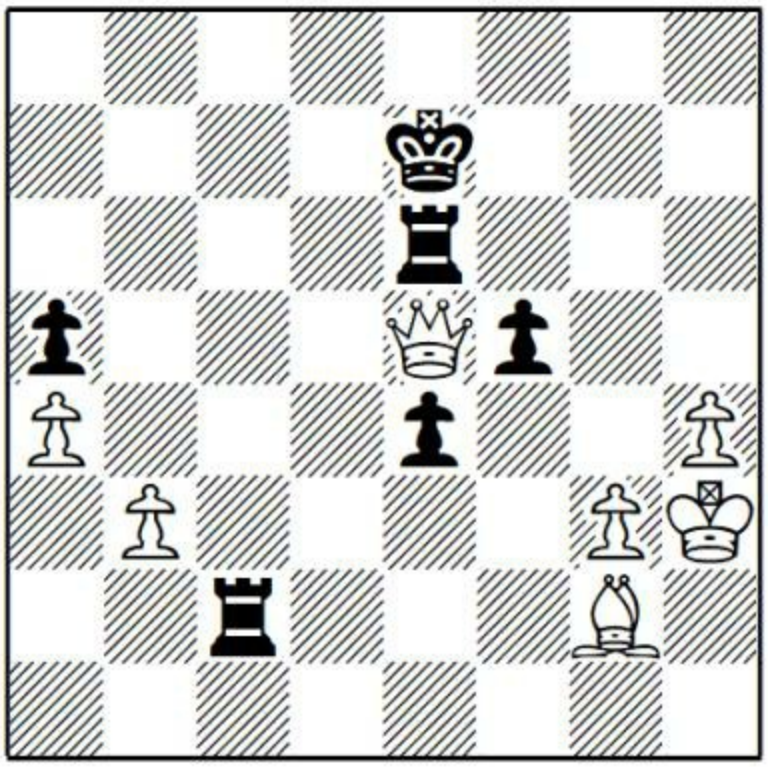
Black hopes to generate counterplay by pushing his passed d-pawn. It won't work, since Artemiev found yet another shot:

Answer: Overloaded defender.

41 Bxd5! Rc2+ 42 Bg2 e4 43 Qb5+ R7c6 44 h4 Kf8

Instead, 44 ... e3 45 Kh3 unpins the bishop and picks off the c6-rook.

45 Qb8+ Ke7 46 Kh3! f5 47 Qe5+ Re6



White to play

Level 4

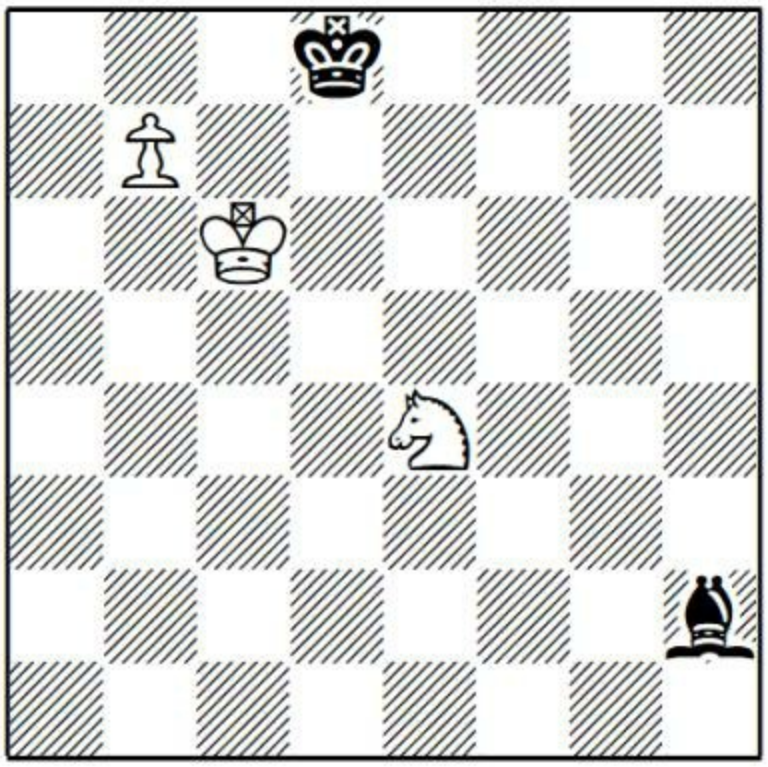
Calculate the line 48 Qxf5 e3 49 Qxc2 e2. Is White then forced to take perpetual check, due to Black's imminent promotion? Or does White have a way to halt promotion and win?

48 Qxf5! 1-0

Answer: If you worked out why 48 Qxf5! works, then well calculated. Artemiev sees that Black will not promote: 48 ... e3 49 Qxc2 e2 50 Qc5+ Kd7 (50 ... Kf7 51 Qf5+ Ke7 52 Bd5! e1Q 53 Qxe6+ wins the king and pawn ending) 51 Bc6+! (decoy) 51 ... Rxc6 52 Qd4+ Rd6 53 Qa7+! Ke8 54 Qe3+ (with Black's king off the second rank, Black is unable to interpose his rook on the e-file) 54 ... Kf7 55 Qxe2 wins.

317) M.Carlsen-I.Nepomniachtchi

Magnus Carlsen Invitational (online rapid) 2020



Black to play

Level 2.5

Black's position is at its most vulnerable. Magnus is doing his best to obstruct the black bishop's coverage of b8 and promote his final pawn. Black has multiple ways to draw. Find one of them! But beware: Black also has a couple of ways to lose. How would you continue with Black?

Answer: 77 ... Bc7! and 77 ... Ke7! hold the draw, while 77 ... Bb8?? and 77 ... Bf4?? lose.

77 ... Bb8??

Let's check the alternatives:

a) 77 ... Bc7! 78 Nc5 Bb8 79 Na6 Bg3 and White has no way to make progress.

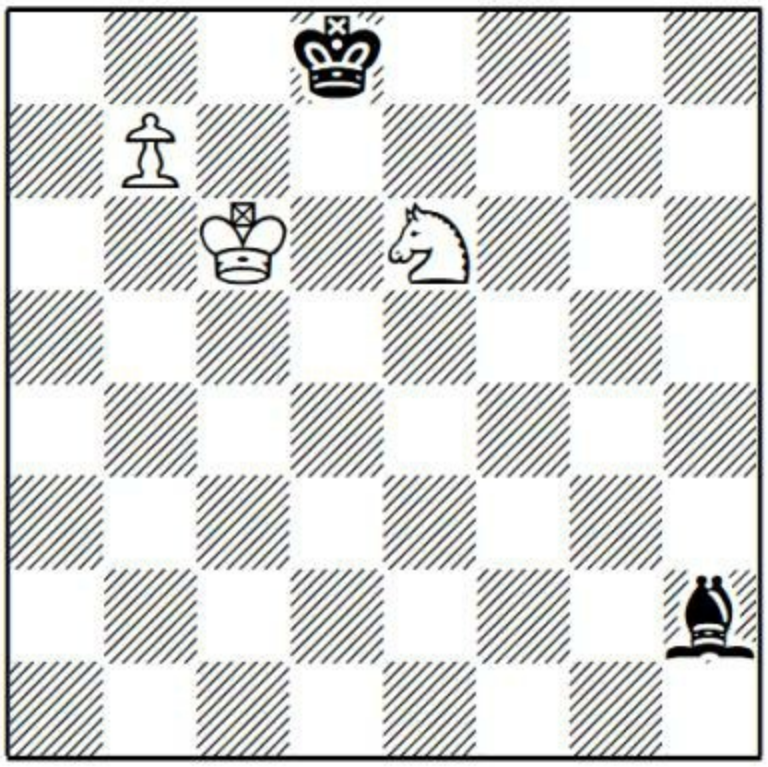
b) 77 ... Bf4?? 78 Nd6 when Black loses control over the promotion square.

c) 77 ... Ke7! also draws. White can make no progress after 78 Nd2 Bg3 79 Nc4 Bf4 80 Nb6 Kd8 81 Nd5 Bg3.

78 Nc5 Bh2

Instead, 78 ... Ba7 79 Na6 Ke7 80 Kc7 Ke6 81 Nb4 Bg1 82 Kc8 Bh2 83 Na6 Kd5 84 Nc7+ Kc6 85 b8Q wins.

79 Ne6+! 1-0

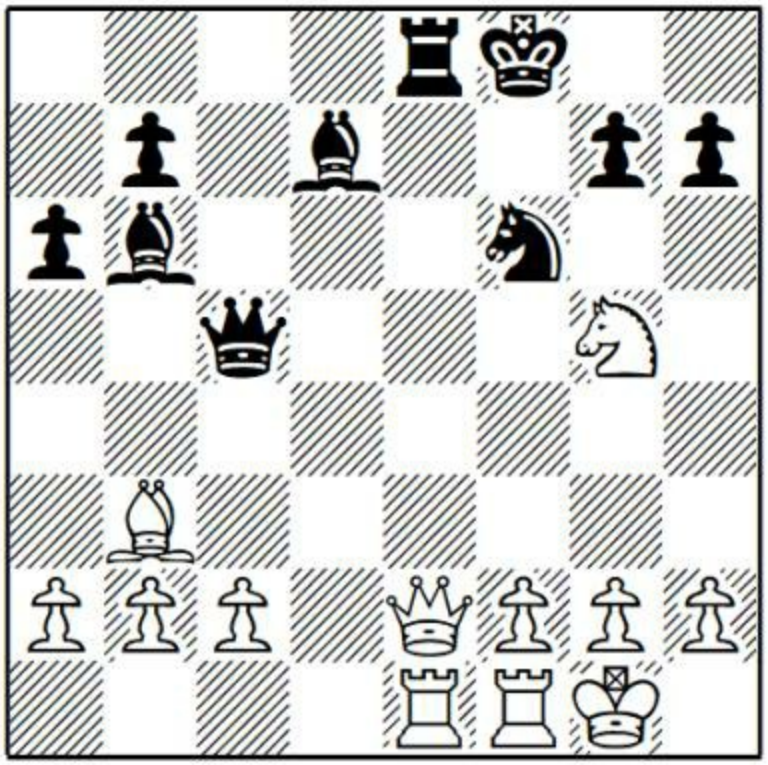


It gets worse. An interference is coming to c7. After 79 ... Ke7 80 Nc7 White obstructs the bishop's control over b8 and promotes.

16) Knight Fork(s)

Everyone reading this already knows what a knight fork is, but since Everyman is paying me good money, here is my official explanation: A knight fork is a theme where our knight simultaneously attacks two or more enemy pieces.

318) J.Cochrane-H.Staunton
London 1841



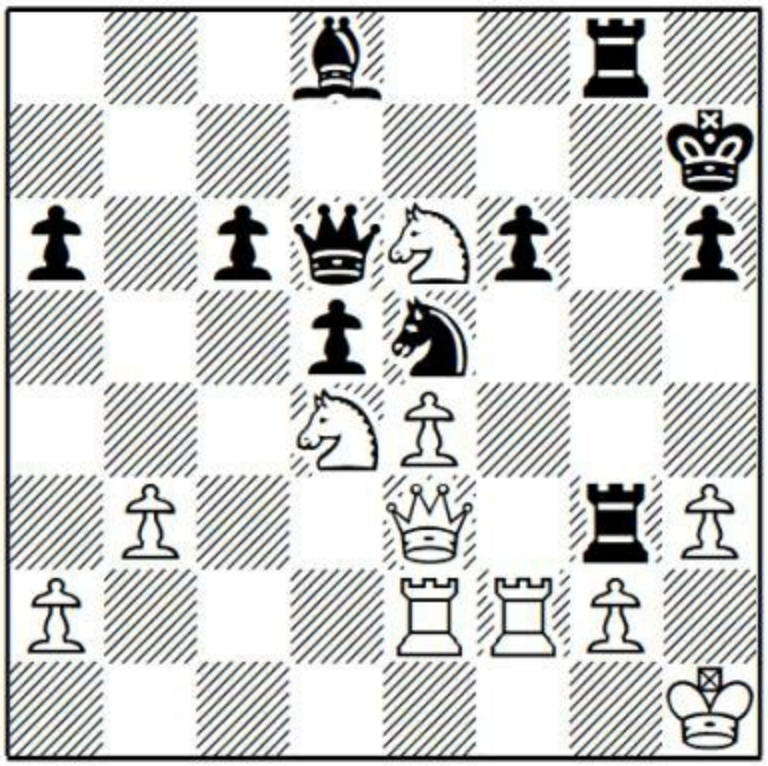
White to play
Level 2
How did OJ Simpson's lawyer take down Staunton?
Answer: Queen sacrifice/decoy/knight fork.

19 Qxe8+! Nxe8

OK, sure, let's walk into a mate in 1. However, 19 ... Bxe8 20 Ne6+ forks and picks up Black's queen: 20 ... Kf7 21 Nxc5+ with an overwhelming material advantage for White.

20 Nxh7 mate

319) A.Alekhine-J.Foltys
Margate 1937



White to play

Level 2

Alekhine's combination netted him a clean pawn and a decisive advantage:

Answer: Queen sacrifice/knight fork/simplification.

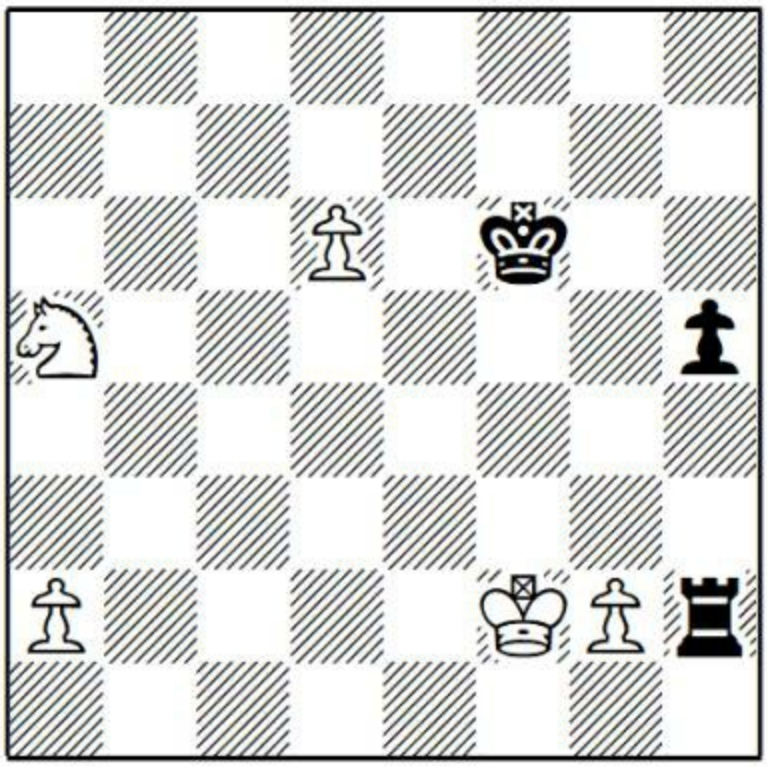
35 Qxh6+! Kxh6

What a warm feeling of redemption, when we realize our previous paranoia was fully justified.

36 Nf5+ Kh7 37 Nxd6 1-0

White is up a pawn with a strategically won game.

320) L.Kubbel
Niva, 1911



White to play

Level 5

Believe it or not, Black's rook will be lost to a knight fork. How do we engineer this?

Step 1: Attraction. Push the d-pawn, forcing Black's king to the geometrically unfavourable e7-square.

1 d7!

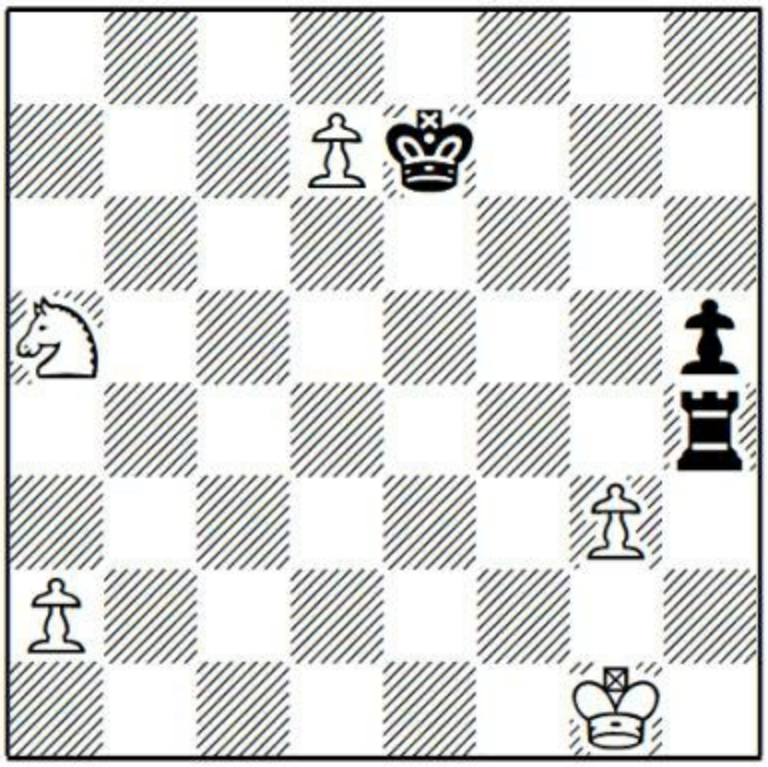
After 1 Kg1? Rh4 2 d7 Rd4 White's d- and a-pawns fall and Black is

winning.

1 ... Ke7 2 Kg1!

Step 2: Retreat our king, forcing Black's rook to h4.

2 ... Rh4 3 g3!



Step 3: Chase the rook again with push of our g-pawn. Unbelievably, the rook has no safe haven, despite the open board and the apparent abundance of choices.

3 ... Ra4

Alternatives are:

a) 3 ... Rg4 4 Nc6+! Kxd7 5 Ne5+ forks, winning the king and pawn ending easily after 5 ... Kd6 6 Nxg4 hxg4 7 Kf2 Kc5 8 Ke3 Kb4 9 Kf4. It's not even going to be close. White's g-pawn will promote.

b) 3 ... Re4 4 Nb7! (threatening to promote the d-pawn) 4 ... Kxd7 (4 ... Re1+ 5 Kf2 Rd1 6 d8Q+ Rxd8 7 Nxd8 Kxd8 8 Kg2 wins the h-pawn and the game) 5 Nc5+ forks.

c) 3 ... Rb4 4 Nc6+ forks.

d) 3 ... Rd4 4 Nc6+ is another fork.

e) 3 ... Rh3 4 Kg2 traps the rook.

4 Nb7!

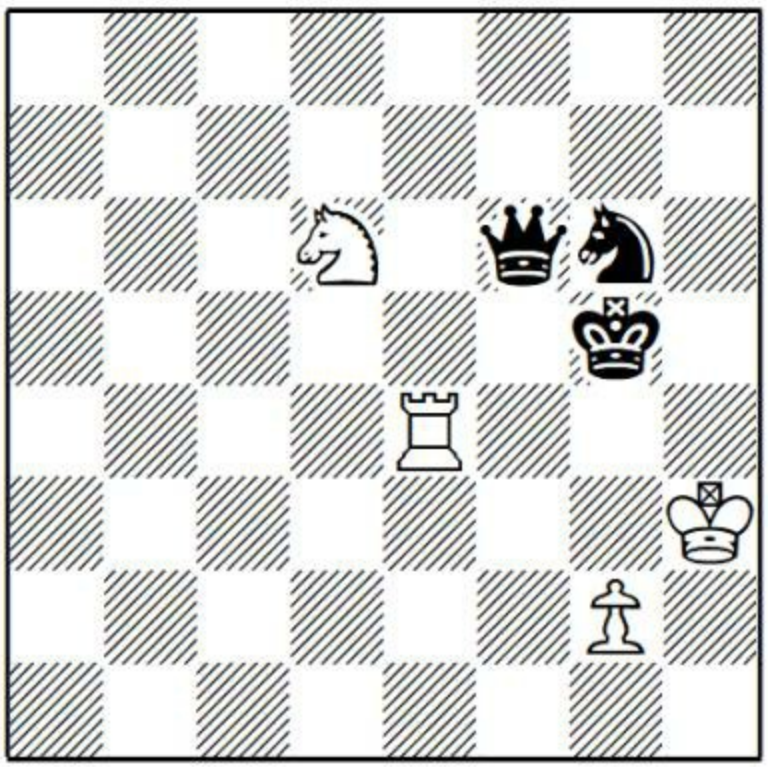
Threatening to promote.

4 ... Kxd7

The Titanic sails at dawn. In case you accuse Black's king of questionable business acumen, 4 ... Rd4 also loses to 5 d8Q+ Rxd8 6 Nxd8 Kxd8 7 Kg2 wins.

5 Nc5+

321) E.Pogosyants
Shakhmatnaya Moskva, 1959



White to play

Level 5

My buddy and prolific chess writer Carsten Hansen kindly sent me a book on the studies of the great composer Ernest Pogosyants, as a gift. Ever

since then, I became a big Pogosyants fan. This was the final published study of his life. Pogo was incredibly prolific and I count 2,178 total studies to his name. Apparently Pogosyants and Tal were close friends and worked on solving studies together.

How can White draw the game utilizing forking tricks?

Answer: Give a rook check on the least likely square on the board, e5.

1 Re5+!!

Clearance (of e4)/knight forks. The easiest way to lure the opponent is to appeal to their desires. This time the 'free' rook isn't so free.

1 ... Kh6

Subtlety meets brute force. Black's position doesn't yet buckle under impact and it seems as if Black is still winning if he declines to take the cheapo/bait on e5.

Instead, 1 ... Nxe5? 2 Ne4+ forks and draws, as does 1 ... Qxe5? 2 Nf7+.

2 Rh5+!

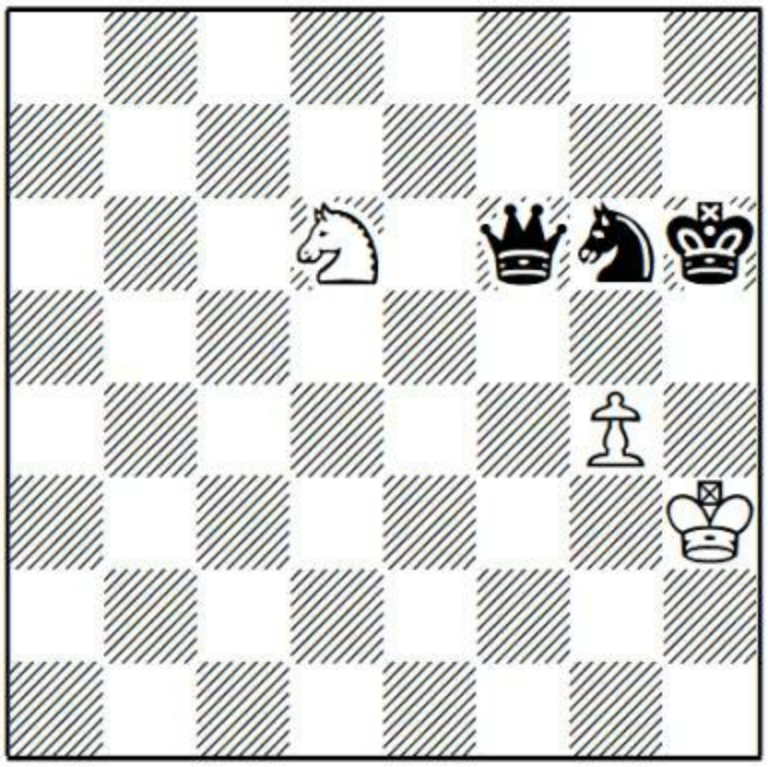
And again!

2 ... Kxh5

After 2 ... Kg7?? 3 Ne8+ Kf7 4 Nxf6 Kxf6 5 Rh6 Kg5 6 Rxg6+! White easily wins the king and pawn ending, since the opposition has been broken.

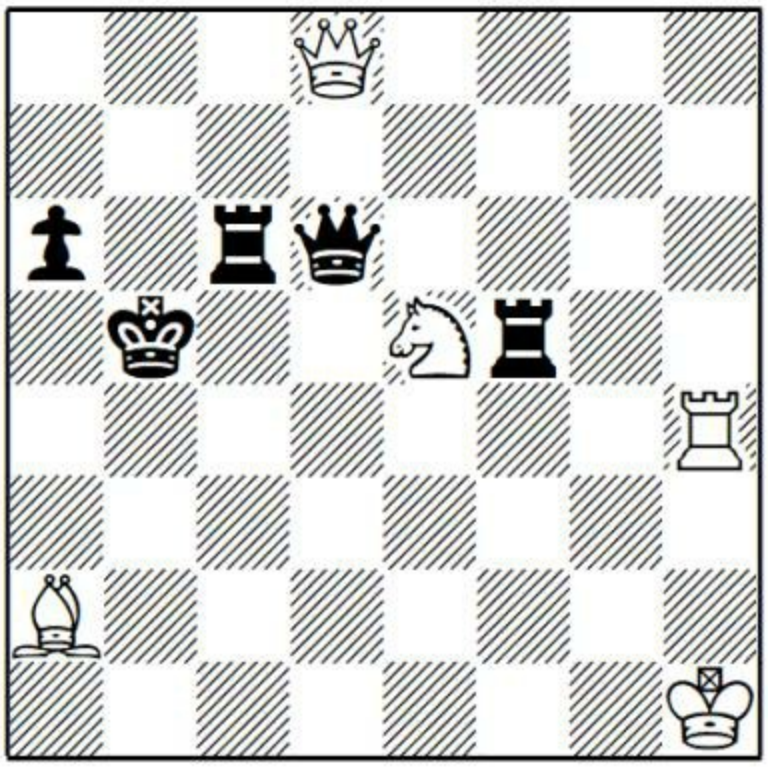
3 g4+ Kh6

Or 3 ... Kg5 4 Ne4+.



White to play
Level 2
Find one final shot and White earns a draw.
Answer: Attraction/knight forks.
4 g5+! Kxg5
4 ... Qxg5 5 Nf7+ Kh5 6 Nxg5 is also a draw.
5 Ne4+ Kf5 6 Nxf6

322) E.Pogosyants
Shakhmatnaya Moskva, 1959



White to play

Level 5

White has a beautiful sequence which forks the living daylights out of Black's position:

Answer: Step 1 Decoy. Lure Black's rook to c4.

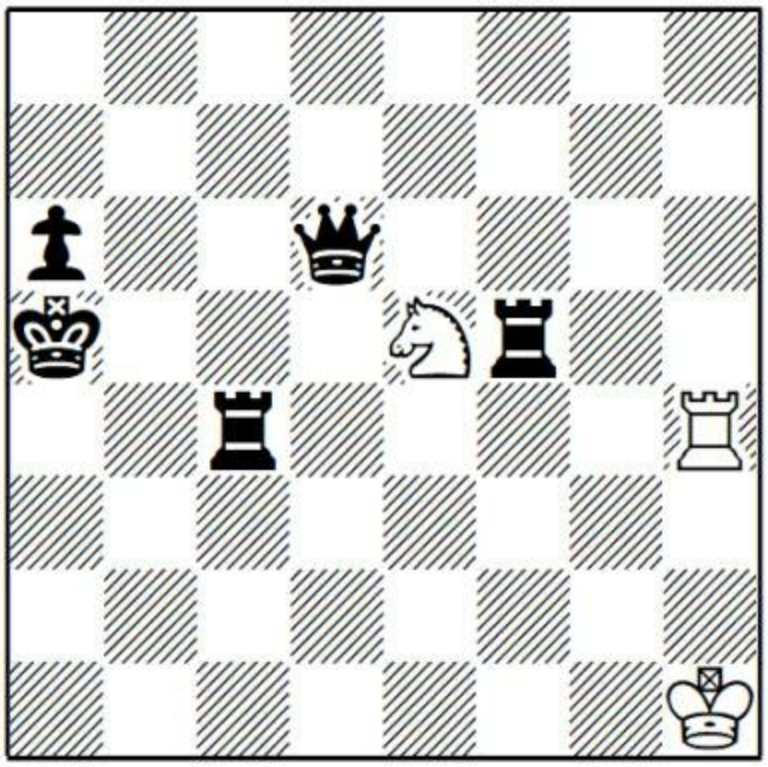
1 Bc4+!! Rxc4

Alternatively, 1 ... Kb4 2 Qxd6+ Rxd6 3 Bd3+ picks up the loose rook, 1 ... Kc5 2 Qa5 is mate and after 1 ... Ka4 2 Bd5+ Black is mated with 2 ... Kb5 3 Bxc6+ Kc5 4 Qa5 mate.

2 Qa5+!

Queen sacrifice/attraction/knight fork. To solve well, we must first embrace paradox.

2 ... Kxa5



Do you remember that time when you played checkers with a far superior player and he jumped three of your pieces? Well this is about to happen to Black.

3 Nxc4+

Fork number one. This knight represents the greatest threat to Black's assets.

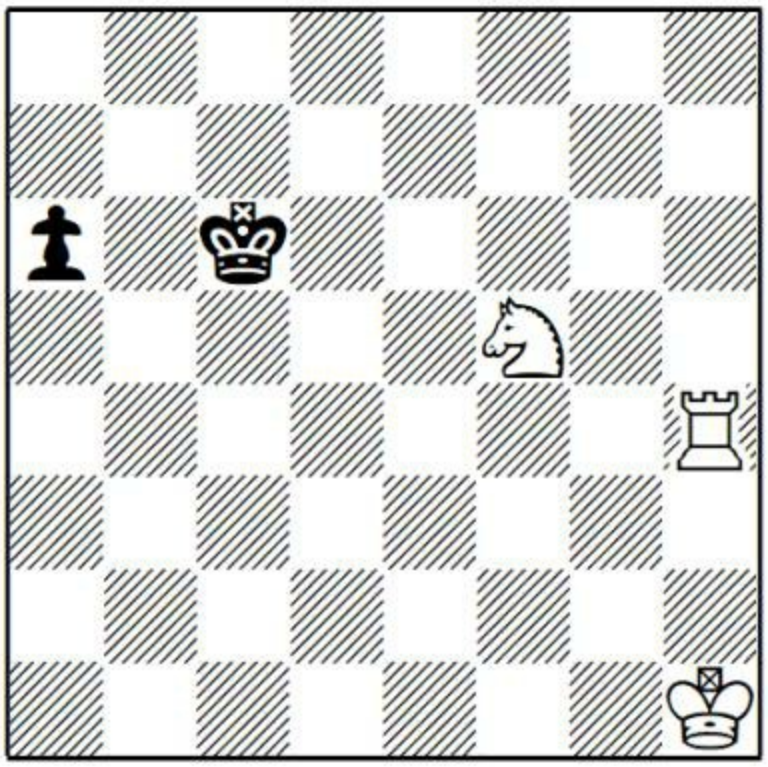
3 ... Kb5

Or 3 ... Kb4 4 Nxd6+ Kc5 5 Nxf5.

4 Nxd6+

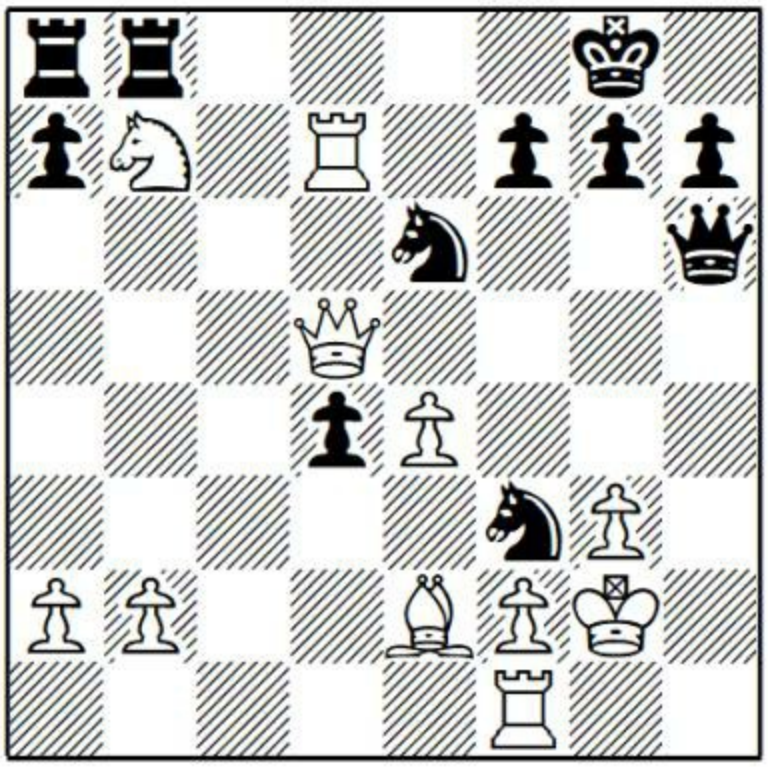
Fork number two.

4 ... Kc6 5 Nxf5



One by one, the sentries have all been picked off. What happened to Black's army?

323) A.Dreev-P.Svidler
Russian Championship, Elista 1997



Black to play

Level 3

Svidler found a winning combination:

Answer: Knight fork/mating net.

26 ... Nf4+! 27 gxf4

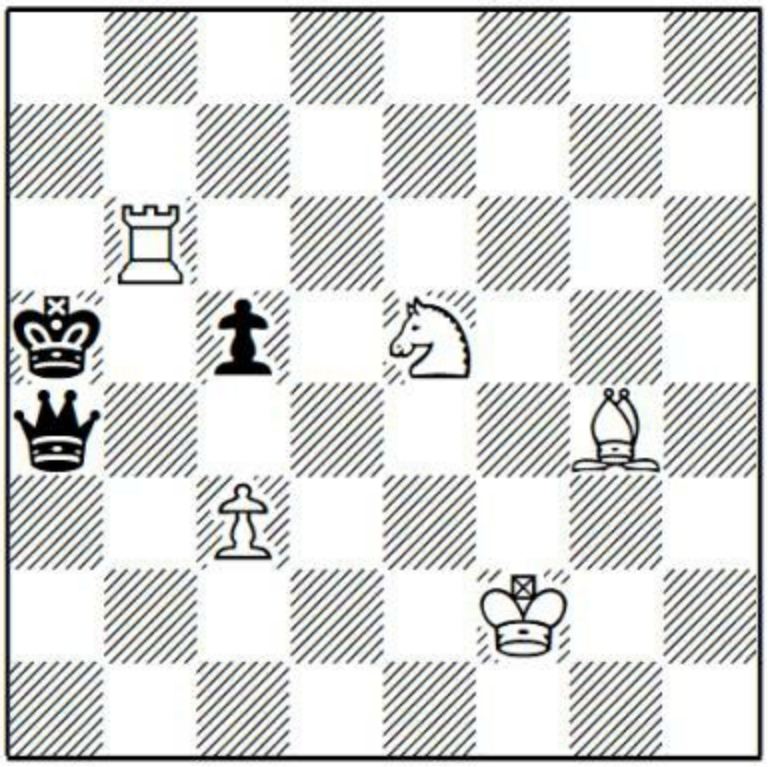
Being right is thin comfort when you lose the game anyway. In the game Dreev gave up his queen with 27 Kxf3 Nxd5 28 exd5 Rxb7! (attraction) 29 Rxb7 Qh5+! 0-1. Dreev resigned here, seeing that he either loses his bishop or his b7-rook to a ... Qxd5+ double attack.

27 ... Qh2+! 28 Kxf3 Qh3 mate

Epaulette mate!

324) A.Zhukov

6th UAPA, 2017



White to play

Level 5

Look for an absolute shocker on the first move:

Answer: Offer the rook on b5, which at first glance, appears to be either a mouse slip, or a random move from a beginner.

1 Rb5+!!

The universe of composed works is one where irrationality prevails. Externally, this move appears insane.

In a tournament game, the vast majority of us would not suspect a combination and play the mundane 1 Re6? Qc2+ 2 Kf3 Qxc3+ 3 Kf4 when Black won't lose.

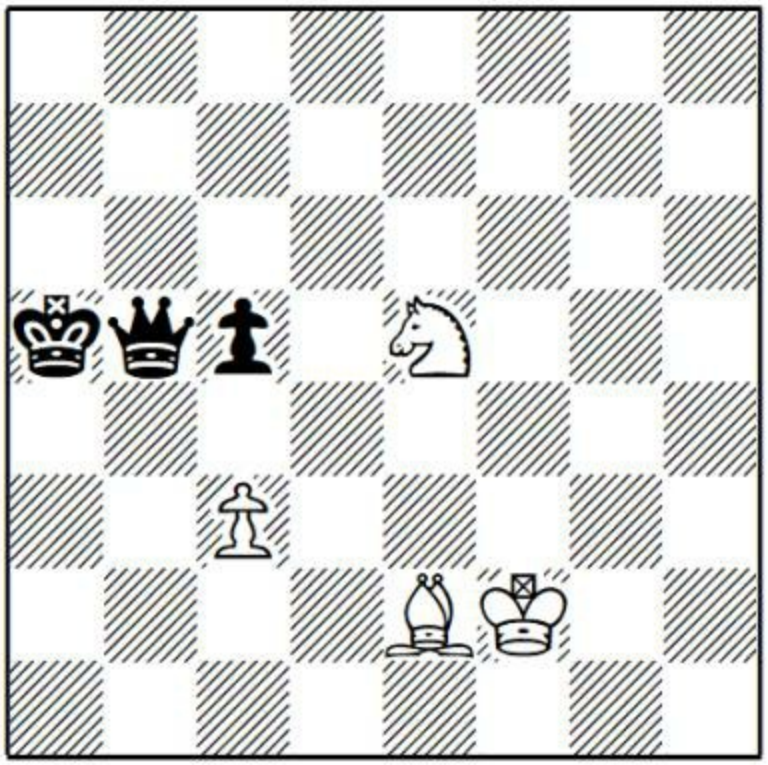
Instead, 1 Bd1?? works, but only if Black's queen takes the bishop: 1 ... Qf4+! (not 1 ... Qxd1?? 2 Nc4+ Ka4 3 Nb2+ and wins) 2 Nf3 Kxb6 when Black wins.

1 ... Qxb5

Likewise, 1 ... Kxb5 2 Bd7+ Ka5 3 Bxa4 wins or if 1 ... Ka6 2 Bc8+! Ka7

3 Nc6+ Ka8 4 Bb7 mate (or 4 Rb8 mate).

2 Be2!



2 ... Qe8

Unbelievably, there is no square on the board where Black's queen can safely move to without getting forked.

a) 2 ... Qa4 3 Nc4+ Ka6 4 Nb2+.

b) 2 ... Qb2 3 Nc4+ Ka4 4 Nxb2+.

c) 2 ... Qb1 3 Nc4+ Ka4 4 Bd1+! Qxd1 5 Nb2+ Kb3 6 Nxd1.

d) 2 ... Qb6 3 Nc4+ Kb5 4 Nxb6+.

e) 2 ... Qb7 3 Nc4+ Ka4 4 Bd1+ Kb5 5 Nd6+/

f) 2 ... Qb8 3 Nc6+ Kb6 4 Nxb8.

3 Nc4+ Ka4 4 Bd1+!

The bishop, to make a nuisance of himself, herds Black's king to a forkable square.

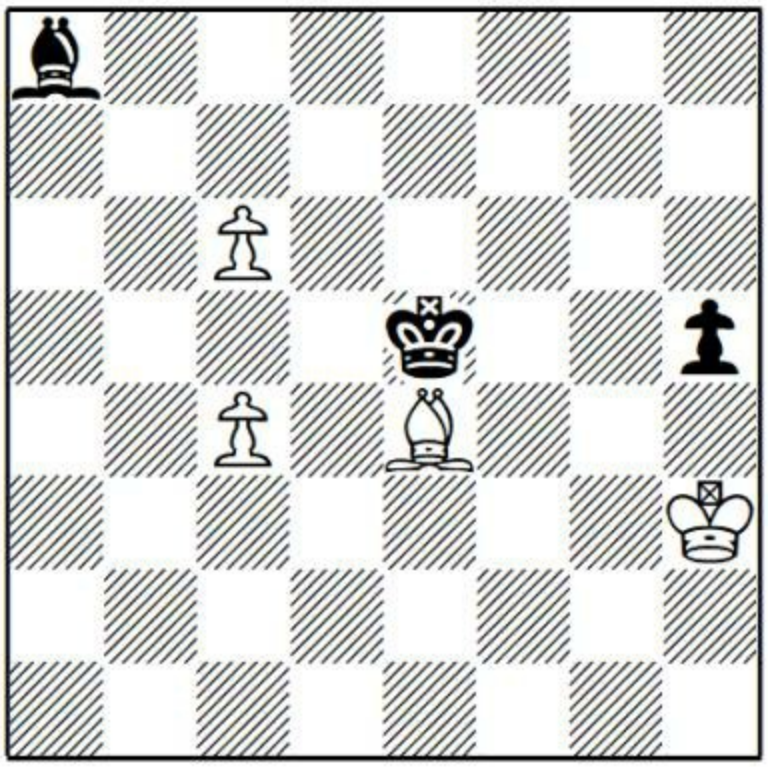
4 ... Kb5 5 Nd6+

Winning.

17) Overloaded Defender(s)

With the overloaded defender theme the enemy defensive piece is forced to take on a secondary defensive assignment which is impossible to fulfill, without short circuiting the original defensive task.

325) V.Platov & M.Platov
Sbornik Shakhmatnikh Etyudov, 1914



White to play
Level 4
What is White's winning move? Our sense of timing must be impeccable, or we blow the win.

Answer: Only by moving the bishop to h1 can White avoid all of Black's

drawing tricks.

1 Bh1!!

Essential, as we can see from:

a) 1 Bd5? leads to unwanted and unanticipated ramifications, favourable for Black, who holds a draw with 1 ... Kd6 2 c7 Bxd5! 3 c8Q Be6+.

b) 1 Bf3? Kd6 2 c7 Bxf3! 3 c8Q Bg4+ draws.

c) 1 Bg2? Kd6 2 c7 Bxg2+ 3 Kxg2 Kxc7 also draws; as does

d) 1 c7? Bxe4! 2 c8Q Bf5+ 3 Qxf5+ Kxf5.

1 ... Kd6

Now our c-pawn and bishop pull off a gravity-defying feat.

2 c7!

Discovered attack/overloaded defenders/double attack. White threatens promotion, as well as Bxa8 and Black must shed a piece.

2 ... Kxc7

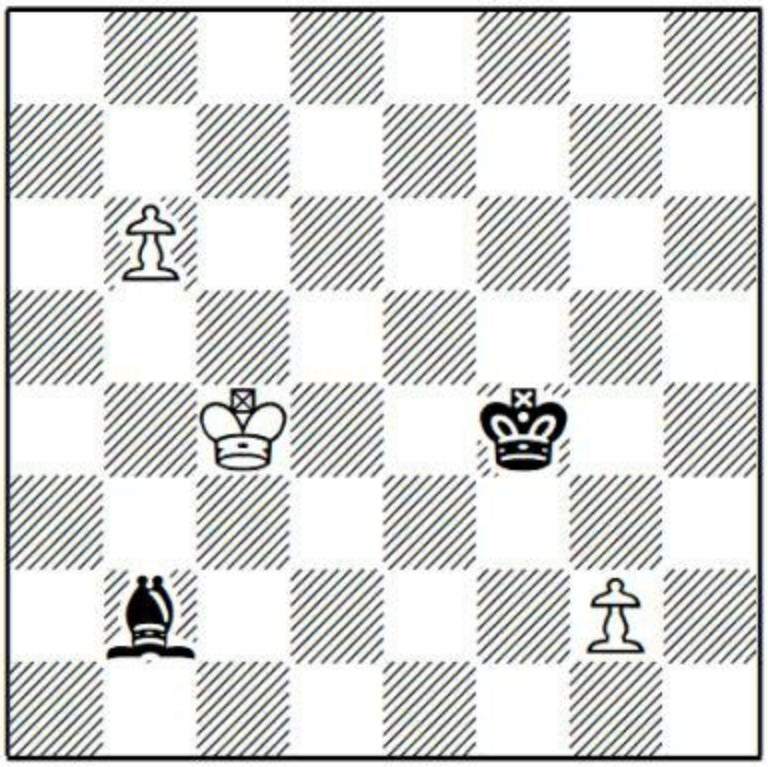
Or 2 ... Bxh1 3 c8Q and wins.

3 Bxa8

And the win is obvious**.**

326) H.Rinck

Basler Nachrichten, 1937



White to play

Level 3

I love this study, since it kind of solves itself, with logic. How can White force promotion?

1 Kd5!

Failed lines, all of which lead to draws: 1 g3+? Kxg3 2 Kd5 Kf4 3 b7 Be5, 1 g4? Kxg4 2 Kd5 Kf4 3 b7 Be5 and 1 b7? Be5 2 Kd5 Bb8.

1 ... Be5 2 g3+!

From now until the end of the study, Black's poor king is ruthlessly overworked.

Instead, 2 g4? Bb8 is a draw and 2 b7? Bb8 has the same issue.

2 ... Kf5 3 g4+! Kf6

Or 3 ... Kf4 4 g5! Kf5 5 g6! Kf6 6 g7! and wins.

4 g5+!

And not 4 b7? Bb8.

4 ... Kf5 5 g6!

The careless 5 b7?? allows 5 ... Bb8, holding the draw.

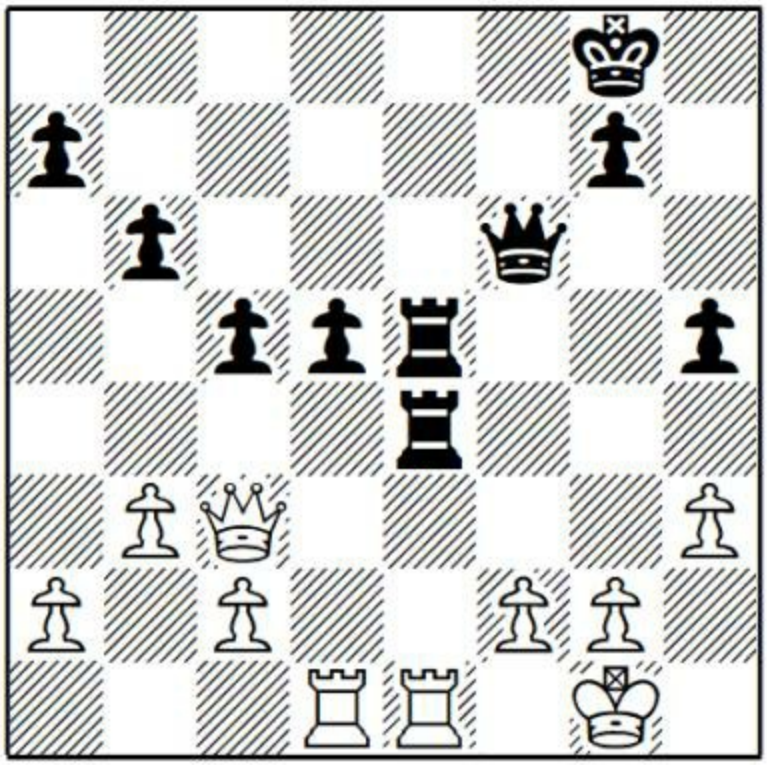
5 ... Kf6

Do Hell's damned scream eternally, or can they speak their complaints to the devil? If your run of bad luck refuses to end, it may actually be a curse. Also losing for Black are the lines 5 ... Bg3 6 g7 and 5 ... Bb2 6 b7.

6 g7!

White must avoid 6 b7? Bb8. Black's king is overloaded.

327) V.Bagirov-R.Kholmov
USSR Championship, Baku 1961



Black to play

Level 3

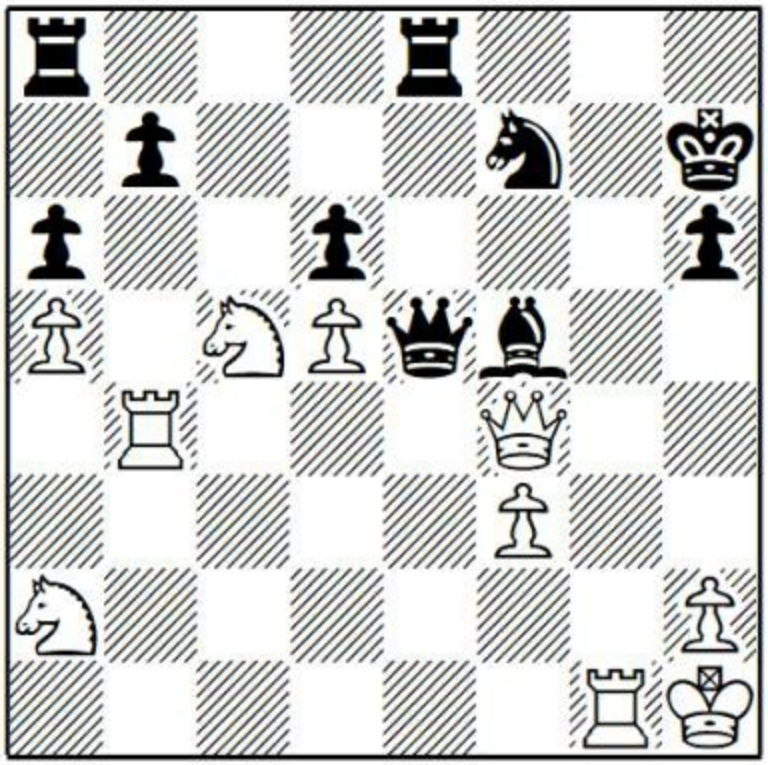
The trouble with being half right, of course, is the other half. On his last move White logically challenged Black's control over the e-file with 24 Rfe1??. Prove why Bagirov's move loses by force:

Answer: Step 1: Swap one pair of rooks.

24 ... Rxe1+! 25 Rxe1 Re2! 0-1

Step 2: Stop short on e2, rather than swap. Overloaded defender/zwischenzug. 26 Rxe2 Qxc3 wins, while 26 Qxf6 Rxe1+ (zwischenzug) 27 Kh2 gxf6 leaves White down a rook. There's also 26 Qa1. Someone pointed out this "defence" on a Facebook post, forgetting about a small detail: White is mated in 2 after 26 ... Qxf2+ 27 Kh2 Qxg2 mate.

328) V.Korchnoi-T.Ghitescu
Bucharest 1966



White to play

Level 3

How did Korchnoi force the win of decisive material?

Answer: Overloaded defender/knight fork.

31 Nd7!

Violence is always an efficient argument to convince someone to see things our way. This shot costs Black heavily.

31 ... Qxf4

Black's queen was attacked and had no choice but to swap, since retreating it hangs the f5-bishop, and 31 ... Bxd7?? allows White to force mate with 32 Qxf7+ Kh8 33 Rh4. Black's overloaded queen cannot simultaneously cover g7 and h6.

32 Rxf4 Bg6

32 ... Bxd7?? 33 Rxf7+ Kh8 34 Rxd7 wins.

33 Rfg4

Also winning is the immediate 33 Nf6+.

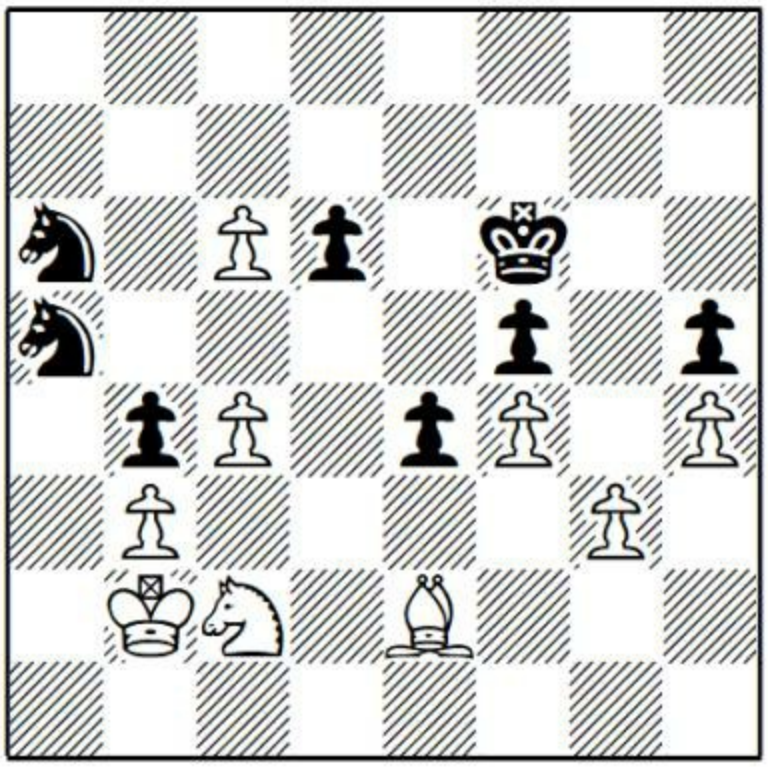
33 ... Ng5

33 ... Rg8 loses to 34 Nf6+.

34 Nf6+ Kh8 35 Nxe8

Korchnoi converted easily.

329) K.Spraggett-D.Ross
Winnipeg 1994



White to play

Level 1

My childhood friend GM Kevin Spraggett planned a sneak attack. How did White immediately end the game?

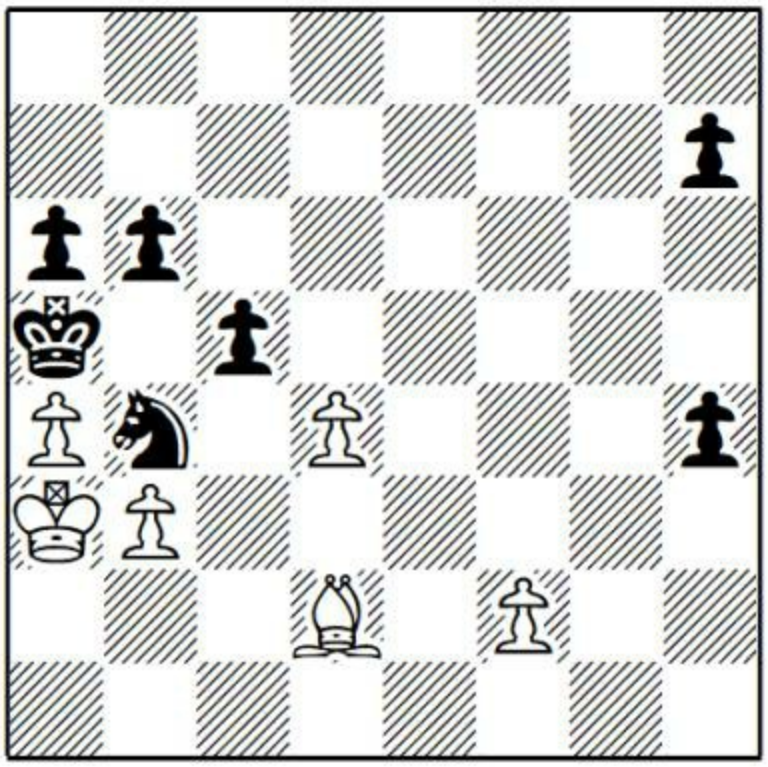
Answer: Chop the b4-pawn, overloading the a6-knight.

65 Nxb4! 1-0

To make matters even more awful, after 65 ... Nc7 (or 65 ... Nxb4 66 c7 and White promotes) 66 Nd5+ Nxd5 67 cxd5 Black loses a second piece to 67 ... Ke7 68 b4. Trapped piece. Black's position is an empty vessel.

330) V.Smyslov

New in Chess Magazine, 2000



White to play

Level 5

Brace yourself for one of the most difficult studies of the entire book. IM Paul Littlewood, who is an admin on my Facebook group Chess Endgame Studies and Compositions, is one of best solvers in the world. He puts wannabe solvers like your writer to shame with his speed and accuracy in solving composed endgame studies and mating problems. He said that this study is completely counterintuitive, because all appearances suggest that White is dead lost. White in fact wins, via three hidden factors:

1. Black's king is far more unsafe than initial appearances suggest.

2. White's bishop is more potent than Black's passed h-pawns.

3. Black's knight soon finds itself overloaded, when attempting to defend its king.

***Answer:* 1 Bf4!!**

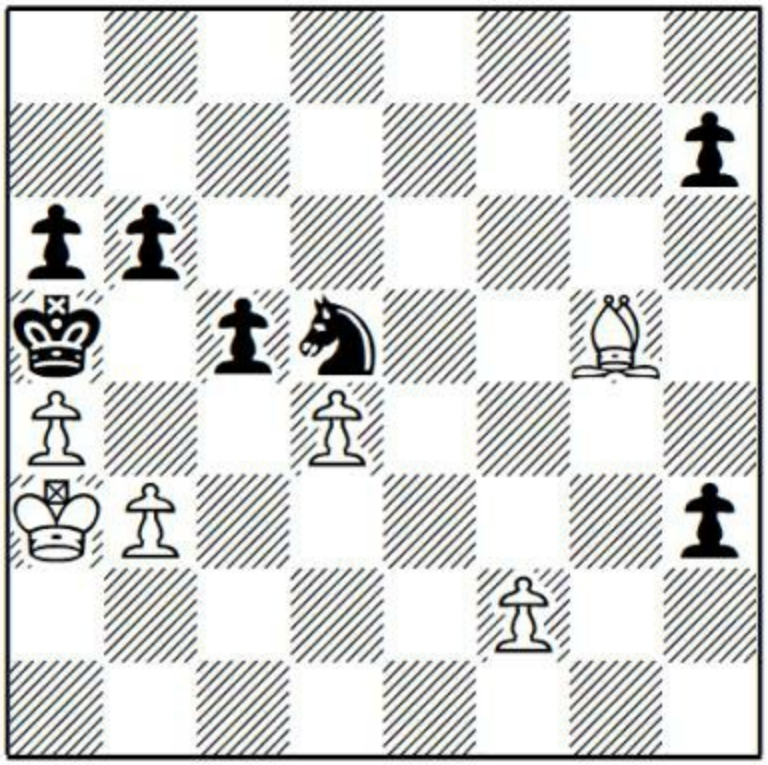
It's important not to capture on c5, which allows Black's king an escape route: 1 dxc5? bxc5 2 Bg5 (threat: Bd8 mate) Nc2+ 3 Kb2 Nd4 4 Bxh4 Kb6

and only Black can win.

1 ... Nd5

Instead, 1 ... cxd4 2 Bd2 b5 3 Bxb4+ Kb6 4 f3! h3 5 Bd6 bxa4 6 bxa4 d3 7 Kb3 d2 8 Kc2 Ka5 9 Kxd2 Kxa4 10 Ke2 a5 11 Kf2 Kb3 12 Kg3 a4 13 Kxh3 a3 14 f4 a2 15 Be5 wins.

2 Bg5 h3



White to play

Level 4.5

Our questions only multiply. How on earth can White get to Black's king, before Black promotes and gives mate with the new queen?

***Answer:* 3 Bd8!!**

3 dxc5? bxc5 4 Bd8+ Nb6 5 Be7 (threat: b3-b4+ and Bxb4 mate) 5 ... Nd7 6 Bd8+ Nb6 7 Be7 is a repetition draw.

3 ... c4

This is a subtle form of confession by Black, admitting to a serious lack of king safety, as if:

a) 3 ... cxd4 4 Be7!!. Overloaded Defender. White mates in 2 moves.

b) 3 ... Nb4 4 dxc5 Nc2+ 5 Kb2 h2 6 cxb6! h1Q 7 b7+ Kb4 8 b8Q+ Kc5 9 Qb6+ Kd5 10 Qb7+! and the skewer picks off Black's queen.

c) 3 ... h2 4 dxc5 h1Q 5 Bxb6+! (decoy/overloaded defender) 5 ... Nxb6 6 b4 mate.

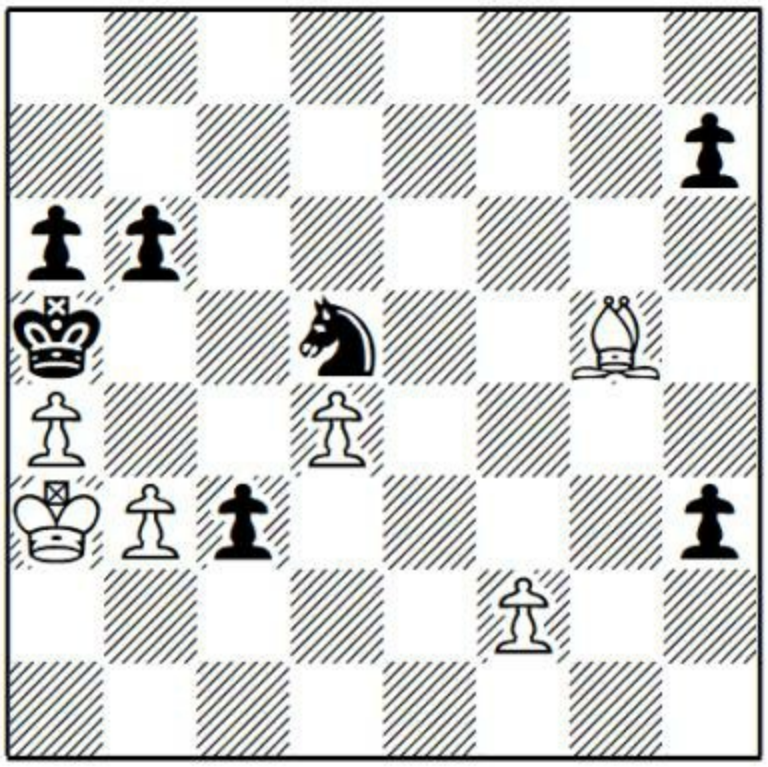
4 Bg5!

Threat: Bd2+.

4 ... c3

Instead, 4 ... Nb4 5 Bd2 b5 6 Bxb4+ Kb6 7 Bd6 Kc6 8 Be5 cxb3 9 Kxb3 bxa4+ 10 Kxa4 Kd5 11 Ka5 h5 12 Kxa6 h4 13 Kb5 h2 14 Bxh2 Kxd4 15 f4 Ke4 16 Kc5 Kf5 (16 ... Kf3 is too slow: 17 f5 Kg2 18 Bd6 wins) 17 Kd4 Kg4 18 Ke3 Kh3 allows White to force mate in 9 moves by ignoring the hanging bishop and pushing the f-pawn: 19 f5! Kxh2 20 f6 h3 21 f7 Kg2 22 f8Q h2. Lone rook pawn versus queen is normally a draw. Not here though, since White's king is close by to assist in the mating attack: 23 Qf3+ Kg1 24 Qf2+ Kh1 25 Qf1 mate.

White also mates after 4 ... h2 5 Bd2+ c3 6 Bxc3+! (decoy) 6 ... Nxc3 (or 6 ... Nb4 7 Bxb4 mate) 7 b4 mate.



White to play

Level 2

White forces mate in 3 moves:

Answer: Overloaded defender. Threaten b3-b4+, to which there is no defence.

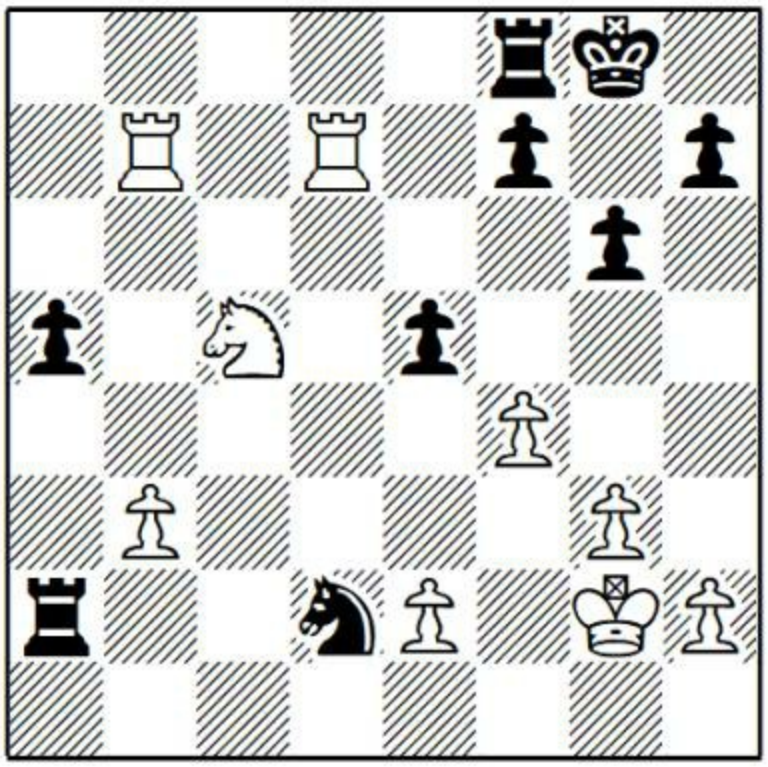
5 Be7!! h2

If 5 ... Nxe7 6 b4 mate or 5 ... b5 6 Bd8+ Nb6 7 b4 mate.

6 b4+ Nxb4 7 Bxb4 mate

331) V.Ivanchuk-L.Aronian

Morelia 2006



White to play

Level 3

Ivanchuk found a nice Arabian Mate, via an overloaded defender theme:

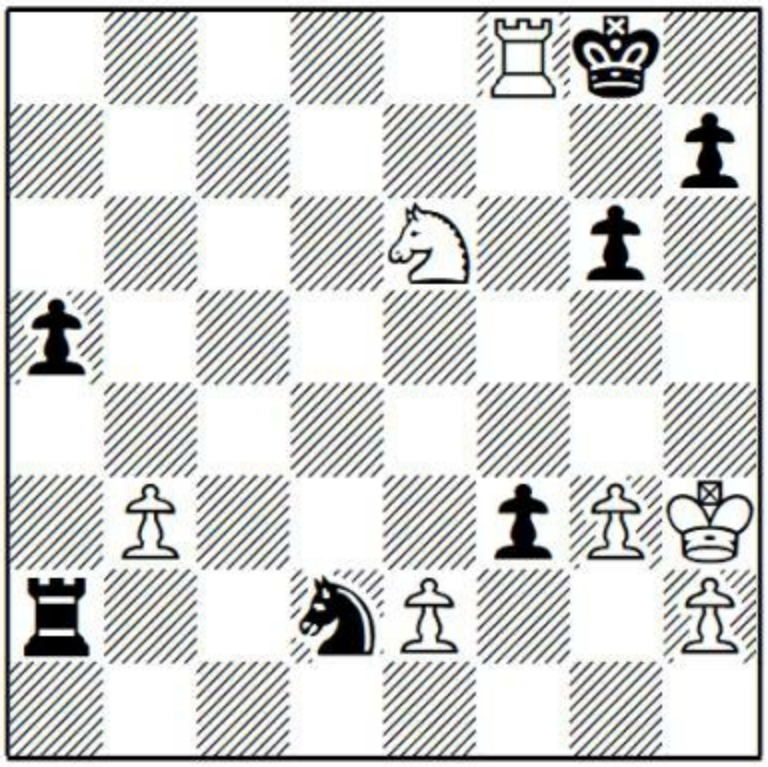
Answer: Overloaded defender. Sink the knight into e6.

44 Ne6! exf4

Alternatively, if 44 ... fxe6 45 Rg7+ Kh8 46 Rxh7+ Kg8 47 Rbg7 mate or 44 ... Rc8 45 Rxf7 Ne4 46 Rg7+ Kh8 47 Rxh7+ Kg8 48 Rbg7 mate.

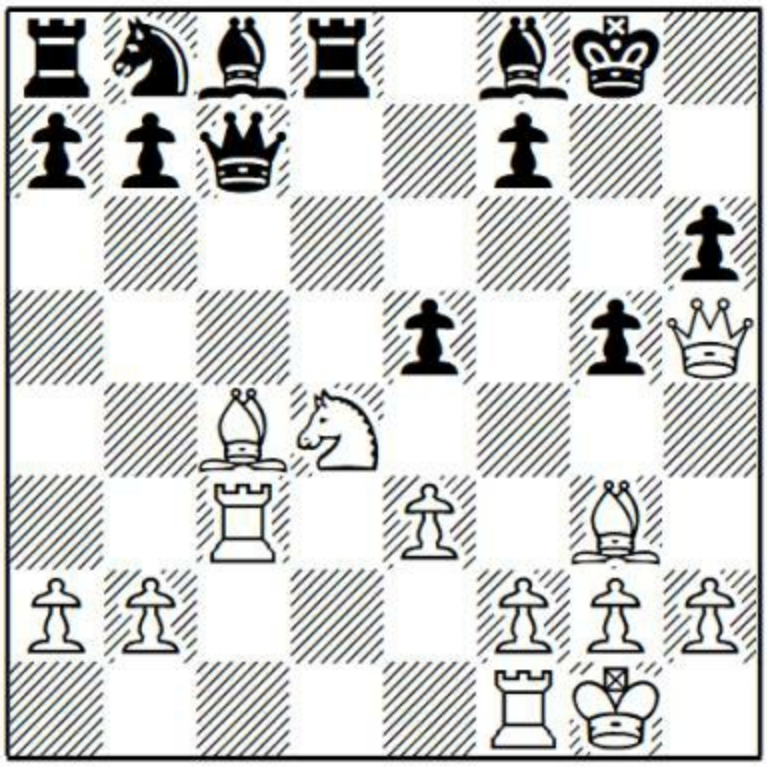
45 Rxf7! 1-0

Step 2: Rook sacrifice/Arabian mate. The net tightens and White brings more bad news to his opponent's position: 45 ... f3+ (Black is anxious to change the subject, but White can just ignore this by moving the king to h3) 46 Kh3! Rxf7 (or 46 ... Re8 47 Rg7+ Kh8 48 Rxh7+ Kg8 49 Rbg7 mate) 47 Rb8+ Rf8 48 Rxf8 mate.



Arabian mate!

332) D.Dubov-H.Nakamura
Magnus Carlsen Tour Final (online rapid) 2020



White to play

Level 1

It isn't surprising that Black's grossly under-developed position, with weakened king, fell apart in a single move:

Answer: Piece sacrifice/overloaded defender.

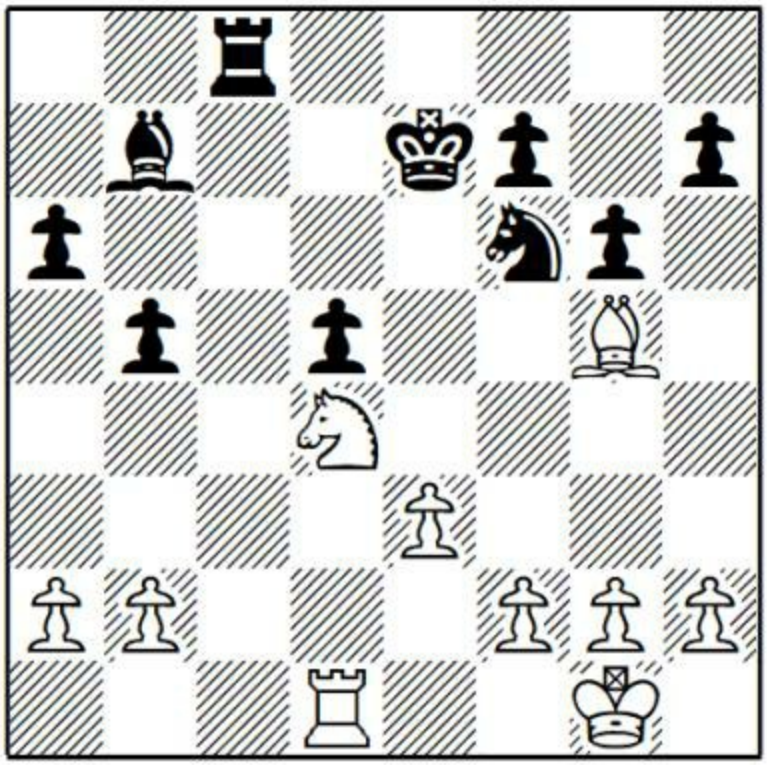
17 Bxe5! 1-0

All attempted black counters are laughably ineffective: 17 ... Qxe5 18 Qxf7+ Kh8 19 Qg8 mate, 17 ... Qe7 18 Qg6+ Bg7 19 Qxg7 mate or 17 ... Qxc4 18 Rxc4. OK, fine, Black evaded immediate mate, but is down a queen for a piece.

18) Paralysed Piece(s)

We don't always require ruthless skullduggery to win. Sometimes all which is needed is to simply reach out and pick up that which our opponent dropped. This chapter looks at various combinations and ideas to either trap a piece, or pick one up, if the opponent hung it.

333) J.Capablanca-R.Teichmann
Berlin 1913



White to play
Level 5

An isolani is a double-edged sword. We take one on in the opening, hoping for an initiative and attack ... and then 20 moves later we find

ourselves in a drab, joyless ending, defending our isolani and the square in front of it, which is what has happened here to Teichmann. Sometimes the most natural move on the board can be a double exclam, if you see a deep idea behind it. How did Capa force the win of a pawn in this position?

Answer: Play 23 f2-f3!!, intending Kf2, g2-g4, Kg3, Kf4 and Ke5, winning Black's pinned knight. The only way out for Teichmann is to hand over his h-pawn to break the pin. I hate to be a killjoy. You do not get credit for the correct answer *unless* you saw White's king march idea to e5. I could just see myself playing f2-f3, yet remaining completely oblivious to the king march to e5 idea.

23 f3!! h6!?

Let's see what happens if Black does nothing and waits:

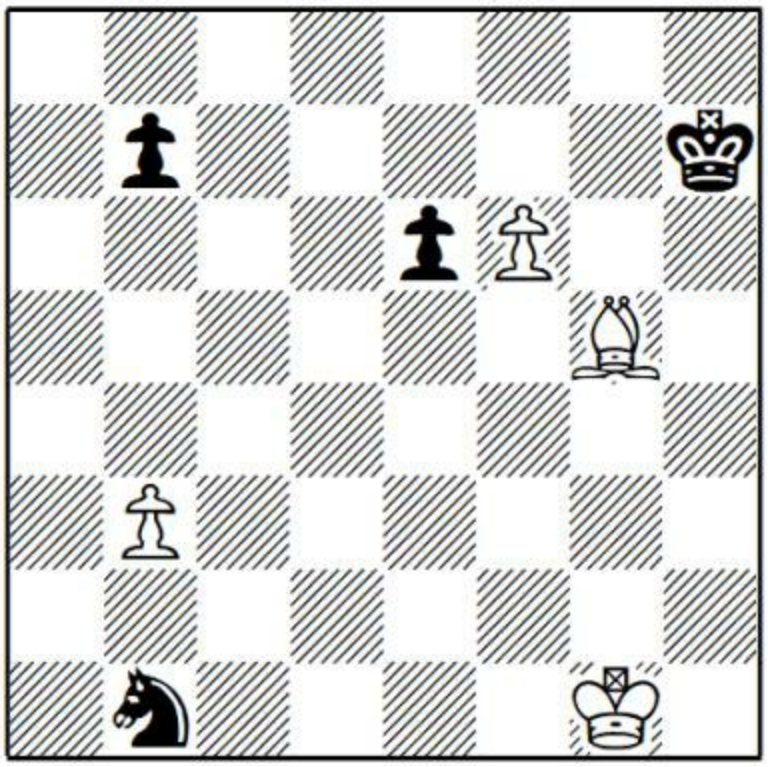
a) 23 ... Rc7 24 Kf2! Bc8 25 g4 Bd7 26 Kg3!! Rb7 (the idea is to defend the knight by transferring the rook to b6) 27 Rc1 Rb6 28 Rc7 Ke8 29 Ra7 Bc8 30 Bxf6 Rxf6 31 g5 Rb6 32 Rc7 Bd7 33 Kf4 Kd8 34 Ra7 Be8 35 Ke5 Bd7 36 Kxd5 with an extra pawn and total domination.

b) 23 ... Rh8 (intending ... h7-h6) 24 Rc1 (threat: Rc7+) 24 ... Rc8 25 Rxc8 Bxc8 26 Kf2! Bd7 27 b4 Bc8 28 g4 Bd7 29 Kg3!, intending to walk over to e5 again. Black must hand over a pawn all the same with 29 ... h6 30 Bxh6 Ne8 which is similar to the game continuation.

24 Bxh6

As only he could, Capa converted smoothly.

334) T.Dawson
1925



White to play

Level 4

This is an example of a mathless, completely conceptual study. From the starting position we can trap and win Black's knight. Work out how:

Answer: Step 1: Clearance. We need to actually give away our f-pawn to activate our bishop.

1 f7 Kg7 2 Be7!

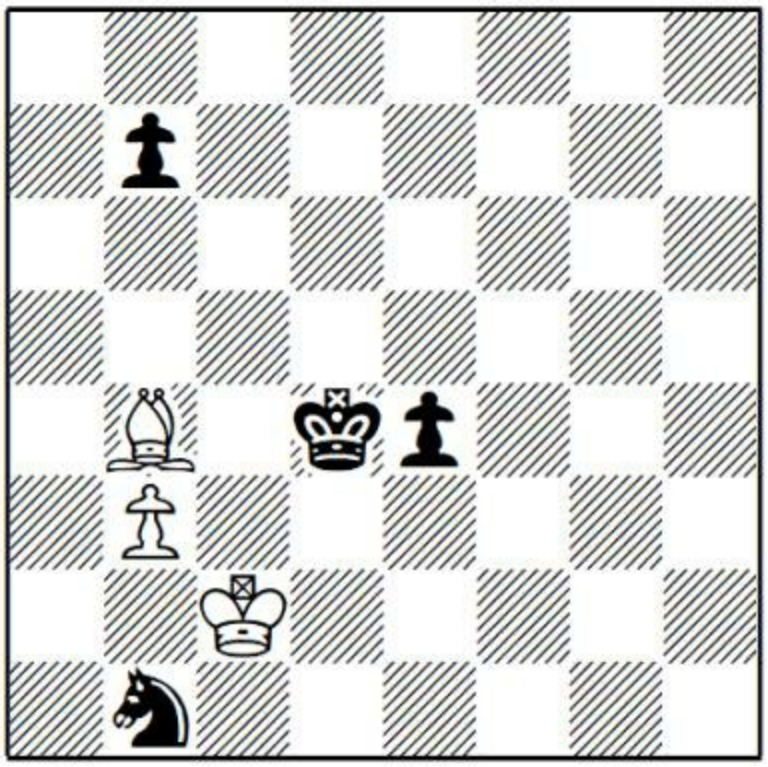
Step 2: Our bishop transfers to b4, cutting off the knight's escape squares.

2 ... Kxf7 3 Bb4! e5 4 Kf2

This is a land of banditry.

Step 3: Our king must walk over and take the knight.

4 ... Ke6 5 Ke3 Kd5 6 Kd3 e4+ 7 Kc2 Kd4



Black's motto: If you are unable to rescue, then avenge, just doesn't cut it here.

8 Kxb1 Kd3 9 Kc1 e3 10 Kd1 e2+ 11 Kc1 Ke3 12 Be1 Kd3 13 Kb2 Ke3 14 Kc3

Step 4: We are going to walk over and win Black's b-pawn.

14 ... Ke4

Instead, 14 ... Kf3 15 Kd3 wins the d-pawn.

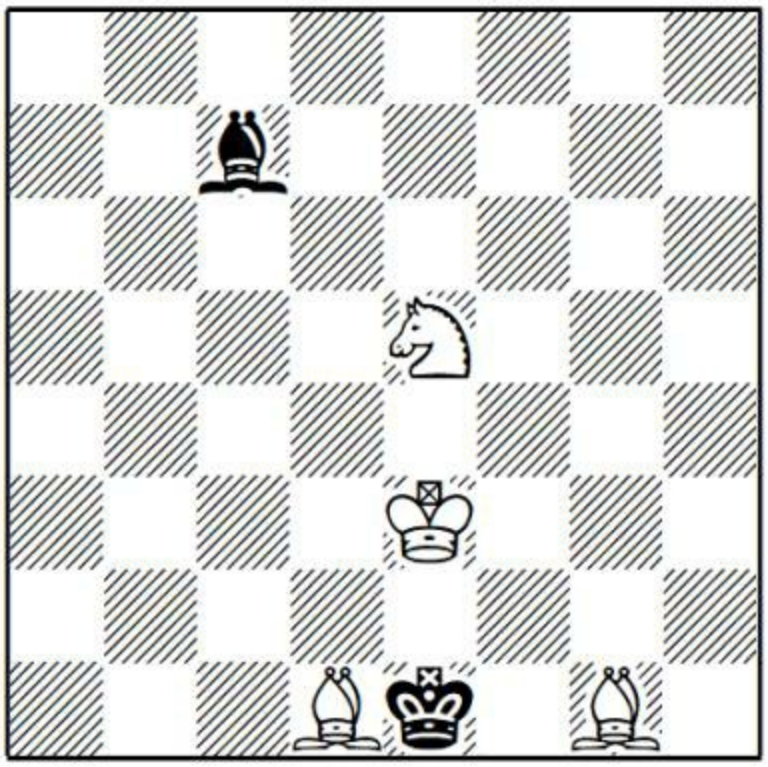
15 Kb4 Kd5

Or 15 ... Kd3 16 Kc5 Kc2 17 b4 Kd1 18 Bf2 e1Q 19 Bxe1 Kxe1 20 Kb6 Kd2 21 Kxb7 when White's b-pawn promotes.

16 Kb5 Kd6 17 Kb6 1-0

White picks up the b-pawn and wins.

335) A.Gherbstman
Shakhmaty Listok, 1927



White to play

Level 5

The game appears to be headed for an uneventful draw, despite White's two extra pieces. Black simultaneously threatens: 1 ... Bxe5, 1 ... Kxd1, and also 1 ... Bb6+, followed by 2 ... Bxg1. If White loses a piece and Black is able to retain the lone bishop, the game will be drawn, since two minor pieces cannot force mate on the opponent's single bishop. How does White extricate from this situation and still win?

Answer: Move the bishop to g4, ignoring Black's 'threats' on e5 and g1.

1 Bg4!! Bb6+

Sometimes we believe we are being crafty with our secret plan, when in reality we may as well have typed out our loony itinerary and nailed it to our opponent's front door. 1 ... Bxe5?? walks into mate in 2 with 2 Bf2+ Kf1 3 Bh3 mate.

2 Kf4! Bxg1

White's only constant - the two extra pieces - has been removed.

Normally two minor pieces cannot beat one - unless there lies a geometric anomaly.

3 Nf3+!

Double attack/attraction.

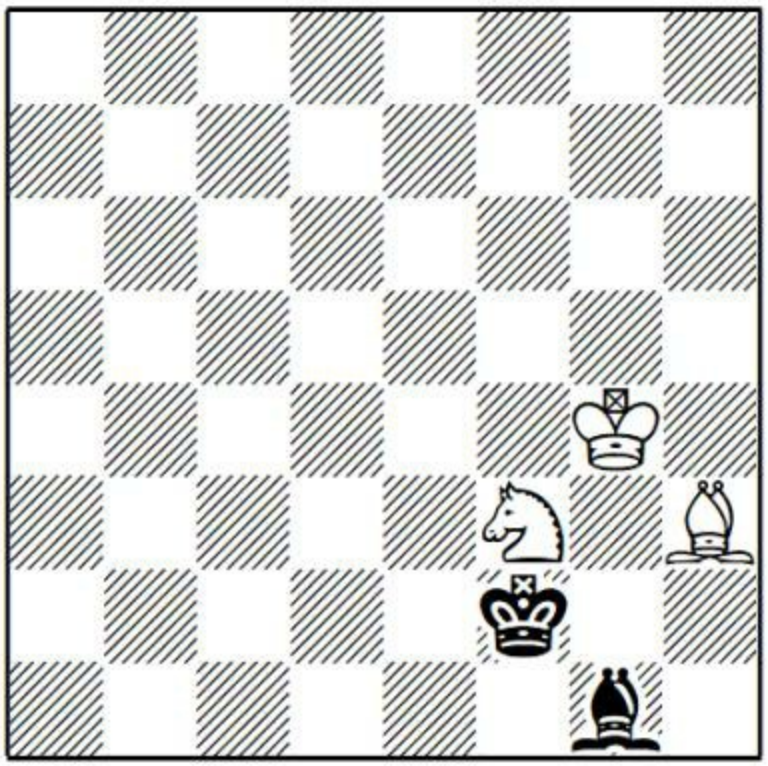
3 ... Kf1

Instead, 3 ... Kd1 allows 4 Nxg1+ when bishop and knight mate Black's lone king, and 3 ... Kf2 4 Bh3! is zugzwang. Black loses the bishop.

4 Bh3+! Kf2

Suddenly Black is completely tangled up and disharmonized.

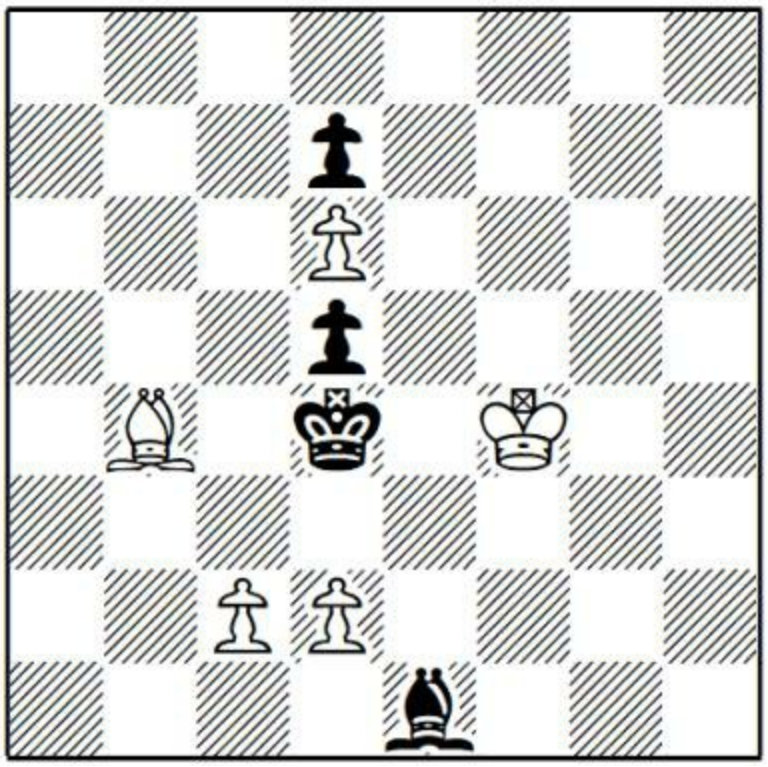
5 Kg4!



Zugzwang. Black must lose the bishop next move.

336) L.Kubbel

Shakhmantny Listok, 1928



White to play

Level 4.5

In this case White wins due to the tactically fragile position of Black's king and bishop. Hint: a strong sense of discovered attack and skewer runs through the study.

Answer: Move the bishop to a5, placing Black in a pseudo-zugzwang.

1 Ba5!!

Not 1 Kf3? Kc4! 2 Ke2 Bg3 3 Ba3 Bf4 when the bishop escapes capture and Black holds the draw.

1 ... Bh4

In defending such a position, there is no way to tame it. You simply ride it and pray that you don't get thrown to the ground. In this case Black can only delay - not avert - defeat. Other moves immediately lose Black's bishop:

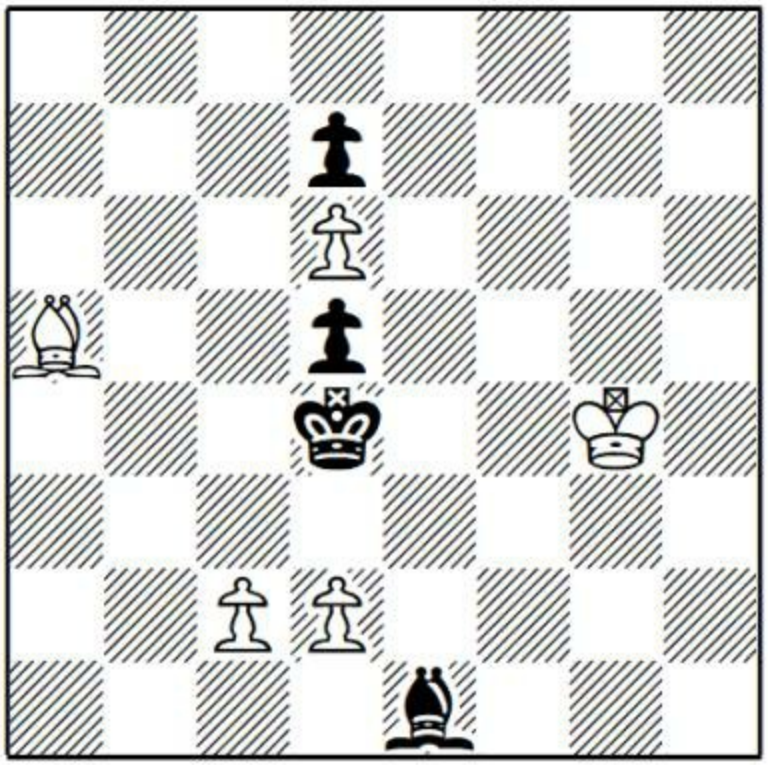
a) 1 ... Kc4? 2 d3+ (discovered attack) 2 ... Kc5 3 Bxe1.

b) 1 ... Kc5? 2 d4+! (discovered attack) 2 ... Kxd4 3 Bxe1.

c) 1 ... Bf2? 2 Bb6+ (skewer) 2 ... Kc4 3 Bxf2.

2 Kg4! Be1

Instead, 2 ... Bf6 3 Bc3+ skewers, as does 2 ... Bf2 3 Bb6+.



White to play

Level 2

Find one powerful move and we place Black in zugzwang, where we win the e1-bishop.

Answer: Move our king to h3, running Black's bishop out of room on the entire board.

3 Kh3!

Zugzwang. Black loses the bishop, no matter where it, or Black's king, moves: 3

a) 3 ... Ke5 4 d4+! (discovered attack, a theme we see repeated over and over again in the following lines) 4 ... Kxd4 5 Bxe1.

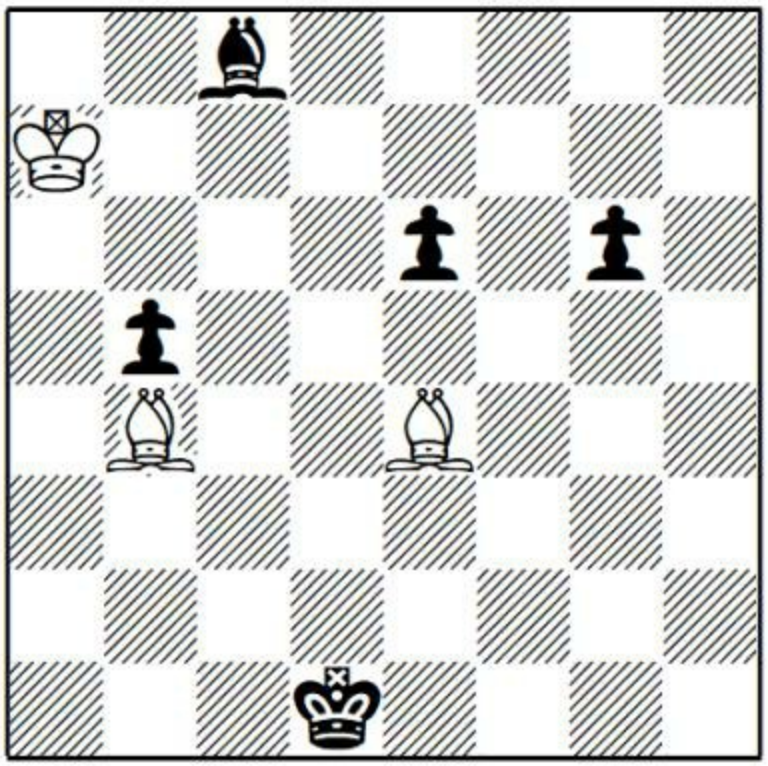
b) 3 ... Kc5 4 d4+ Kxd4 5 Bxe1.

c) 3 ... Kc4 4 d3+ Kc5 5 Bxe1.

d) 3 ... Bf2 4 Bb6+.

e) 3 ... Ke4 4 d3+ Ke3 5 Bxe1 Ke2 6 Bg3 Kd1 7 c4 wins.

337) A.Troitzky
1234 Studies (Dover edition), 1938



White to play
Level 5
This study is in two parts:
1. We must trap and win Black's bishop.
2. We must find a way to stop Black from promoting a pawn.
Answer: Trapped piece. Start with chasing the bishop.
1 Kb8 Ba6!
This move puts up the greatest resistance:
a) 1 ... Bd7 loses without a fight: 2 Kc7 Be8 3 Kd8 Bf7 4 Ke7 Bg8 5 Kf8 Bh7 6 Kg7 g5 7 Kxh7 g4 8 Kg6 g3 9 Kf6 Ke2 10 Kxe6 Kf2 11 Bc5+ Kf1 12 Bd3+ Ke1 13 Bxb5 wins.

b) 1 ... g5 2 Kxc8 g4 3 Kd7 g3 4 Kxe6 Ke2 5 Kd5 Kf1 6 Bc5 g2 7 Bd3+ wins.

2 Bxg6 e5

Instead, 2 ... Ke2 3 Bf7 e5 4 Bd5! Kd3 5 Be6 e4 6 Ka7 e3 7 Kxa6 Ke2 (or 7 ... e2 8 Kxb5 and wins) 8 Kxb5 Kf1 9 Bc4+ e2 10 Be7 Ke1 11 Bg5 Kd1 12 Bb3+ Ke1 13 Be3 Kf1 14 Bc4 Ke1 15 Kb4 Kd1 16 Bb3+ Ke1 17 Kc3 Kf1 18 Bc4 Ke1 19 Kc2 Kf1 20 Kd2 wins.

3 Bf5 Ke2 4 Ka7 Bc8! 5 Bxc8

Part one has been accomplished. Now we move to the second phase, which is to win Black's pawns.

5 ... e4 6 Bd7 e3 7 Bxb5+ Kf2 8 Be7! e2 9 Bh4+!

White does, indeed, make progress, but in faltering steps, with the proverbial two forward, one back.

9 ... Kf1

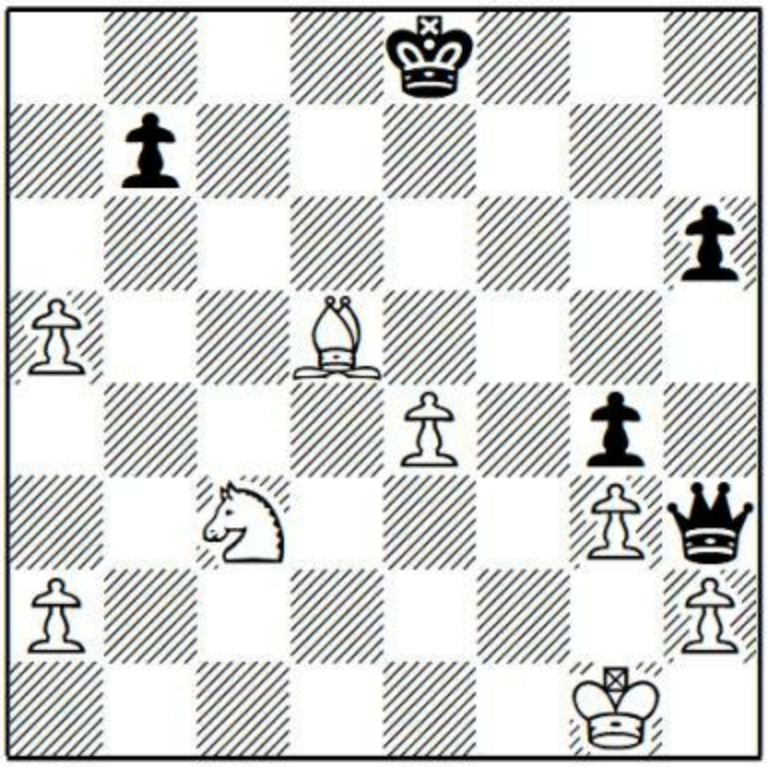
Or 9 ... Ke3 10 Be1 and wins.

10 Kb6

Zugzwang.

10 ... Kg2 11 Bxe2

338) A.Wotawa
Schach Echo, 1962



White to play

Level 5

We can either trap Black's queen, or force a won endgame from this position:

***Answer:* 1 a6!!**

The idea behind this move is twofold:

1. It gains us a precious tempo with a bishop check on c6.

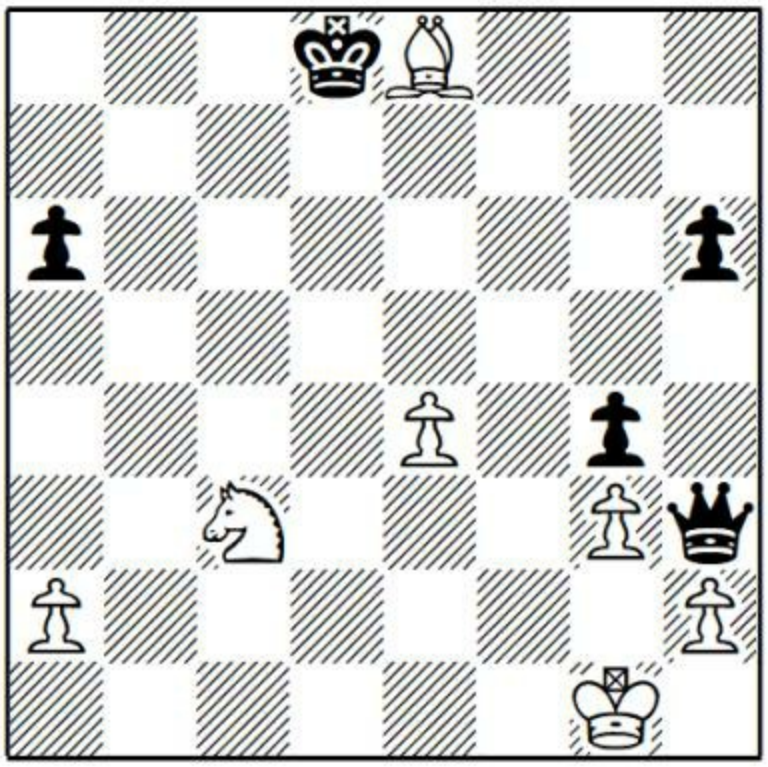
2. By checking on c6, we enable ideas like Nd5, followed by Nf4, trapping Black's queen.

Not 1 Bxb7?? Qh5 (dual threats of ... Qc5+, double attack, and also ... Qxa5) 2 Bd5 Qg5 (threat: ... Qc1+) 3 Ne2 Qe3+ 4 Kf1 Qf3+ 5 Ke1 Qa3 when I don't believe White will even hold a fortress draw.

1 ... bxa6

1 ... Qh5 2 a7 wins.

2 Bc6+! Kd8 3 Be8!!



It was Oscar Wilde who said “every portrait that is painted with feeling is a portrait of the artist, not of the sitter.” Wotwawa’s mysteriously beautiful creations are distinctive of his style, which highlighted geometric anomaly to its deepest extremes.

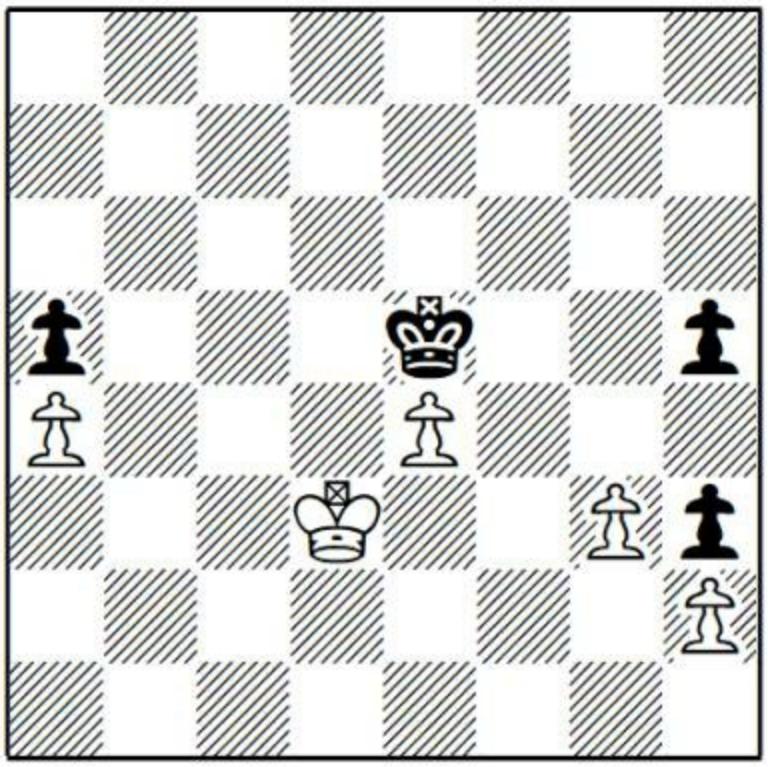
Attraction. This one is impossibly difficult to spot, as:

1. White cuts off ... Qh5 escape ideas.
2. Black’s king is attracted to a tactically unfavourable square.

3 ... Kxe8 4 Nd5!

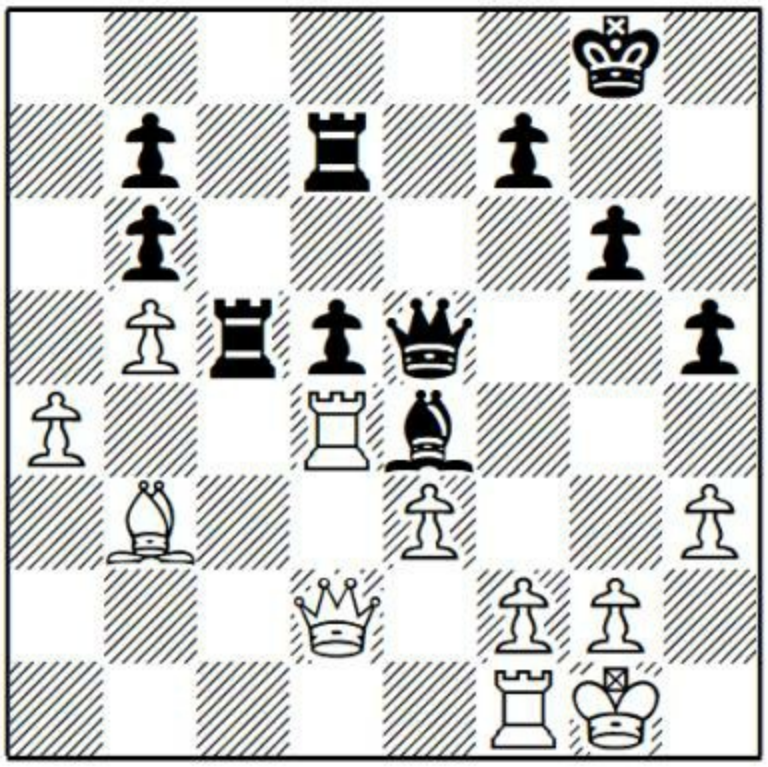
Black’s queen cannot move to h5 and White threatens Nf4, trapping her.

4 ... Kf7 5 Nf4 Kf6 6 Nxh3 gxh3 7 Kf2 Ke5 8 Ke3 h5 9 Kd3 a5 10 a4



Zugzwang. Black's king must give way when the king and pawn ending is an easy win for White.

339) Y.Seirawan-V.Korchnoi
Brussels 1986



White to play

Level 4

In this position Seirawan trapped one of Korchnoi's pieces:

Answer: Step 1: Play f2-f3 and chase Black's bishop to f5.

30 f3 Bf5 31 e4!

Step 2: Utilize the pin of Black's d-pawn and chase the bishop to e6.

31 ... Be6

31 ... dxe4 32 Rxd7 Bxd7 33 Qxd7 leaves White up a piece.

32 f4!

We don't sense much genial warmth when our opponent pushes us around like this.

Step 3: Play f2-f4, with tempo on Black's queen.

32 ... Qf6 33 f5!

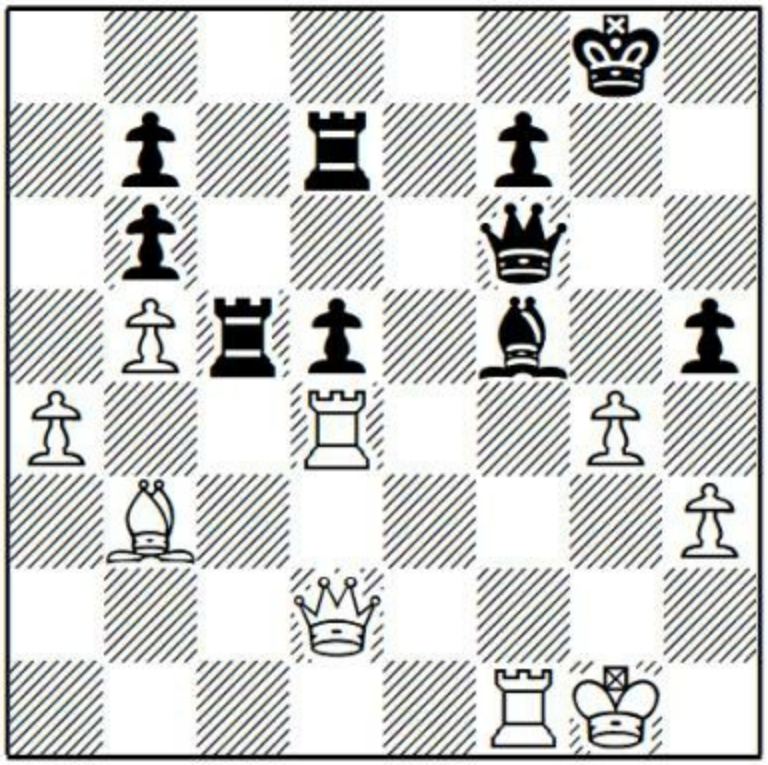
Step 4: Keep pushing the f-pawn.

33 ... gxf5

Or 33 ... dxe4 34 Rxd7 Bxb3 35 fxg6 Qxg6 36 Rd8+ Kh7 37 Qb2!.

Double attack, threatening mate on h8 and also the loose bishop, which leaves White up a full rook.

34 exf5 Bxf5 35 g4!

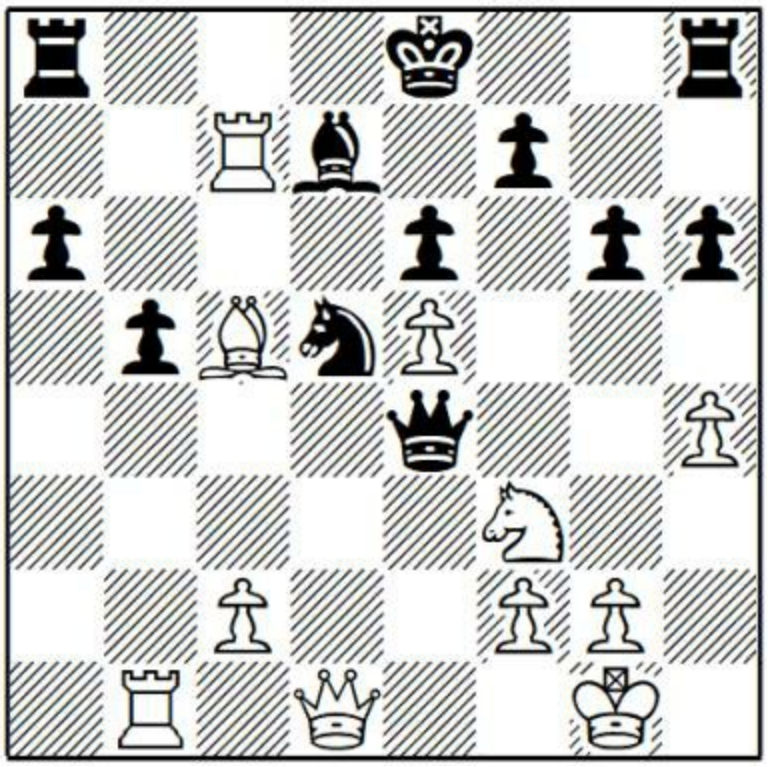


Step 5: Pinned piece. Black loses his bishop. Seirawan's move is far more accurate than 35 Rdf4? Qh6! pinning the f4-rook and saving Black's bishop.

35 ... hxg4 36 hxg4 Qd6 37 gxf5

Korchnoi played on down a piece, but had no chance to save the game.

340) V.Anand-P.Nikolic
Groningen 1997



White to play

Level 3.5

There is only a sliver of daylight between daring and reckless. After reckless comes lawless, which is where we are now. Earlier in the game Nikolic allowed himself to fall far behind in development in order to make strategic gains. He has two pawns for the exchange and a powerfully entrenched knight on d5, which on paper all looks fine. Anand found a forcing line which won material:

Step 1: Exchange sacrifice, pinning Black's knight.

27 Rxd7! Kxd7

Instead, 27 ... Qc4 appears to regain the lost material. It doesn't: 28 Rc7! Rd8 (after 28 ... Nxc7 29 Qd6! Black must hand over his queen to evade mate) 29 Rc6 Ne7 30 Qxd8+! (queen sacrifice/attraction) 30 ... Kxd8 31 Bxe7+ Kxe7 32 Rxc4 bxc4 33 Rb7+ wins.

28 Rb4!

Step 2: Queen trap. Black's queen is trapped in mid-board, since the d5-

knight is pinned.

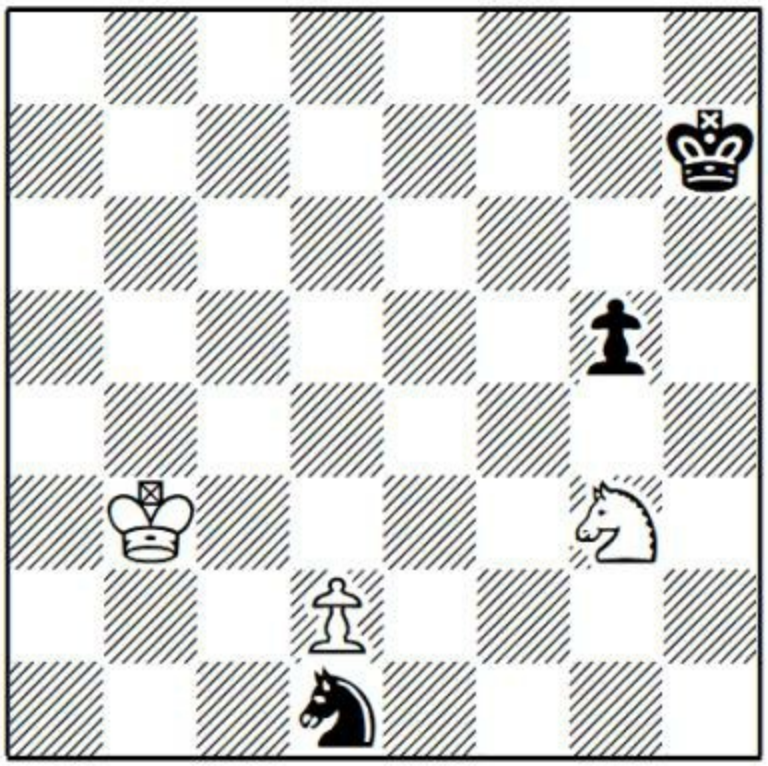
28 ... Qxb4

Or 28 ... Qf5 29 g4 and the queen is trapped all the same.

29 Bxb4

Anand easily converted.

341) S.Tkachenko
Uralski Problemist, 2007



White to play
Level 4.5
What conclusion can we extract from the data?
1. We must trap Black's knight.
2. After we trap the knight, we must hang on to our final pawn.
3. We can give away our knight later on, as long as we win the king and

pawn ending.

So our first move must be either Ne4, or Nh1. Only one works. Calculate the ramifications of both and pick one:

Answer: Only moving to e4 works.

1 Ne4!!

You blew it if you picked 1 Nh1? g4 2 Kc2 g3! (decoy; threat: ... g3-g2), so White has no choice in the matter: 3 Nxg3 Nf2 when Black's knight escaped and the game is drawn.

1 ... Kg6 2 Kc2 Kf5 3 Ng3+!

Not 3 Nxg5? Nf2! when Black draws.

3 ... Kg4 4 Nh1!

Only by decentralizing does White force Black to lose too much time to capture the knight. When we solve, exclams and blunders tend to mix indiscriminately. 4 Ne4? tamely submits to the opponent's wishes: 4 ... Kf4! 5 Nxg5 Nf2! is drawn.

4 ... Kf3!

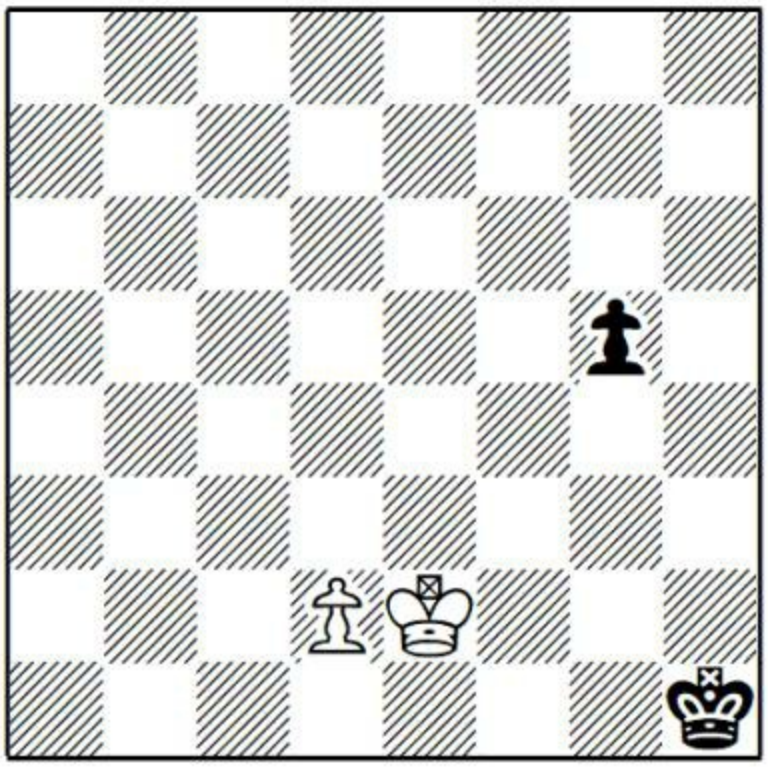
Threat: ... Kg2 and ... Kxh1.

5 Kxd1 Kg2 6 Ke2!

And not 6 d4? Kxh1 7 d5 g4 8 d6 g3 9 d7 g2 10 d8Q g1Q+ with a draw.

6 ... Kxh1

Instead, 6 ... g4 7 Nf2 g3 8 Ne4 wins.



White to play

Level 1

A new phase begins. White wins the king and pawn ending with exact play:

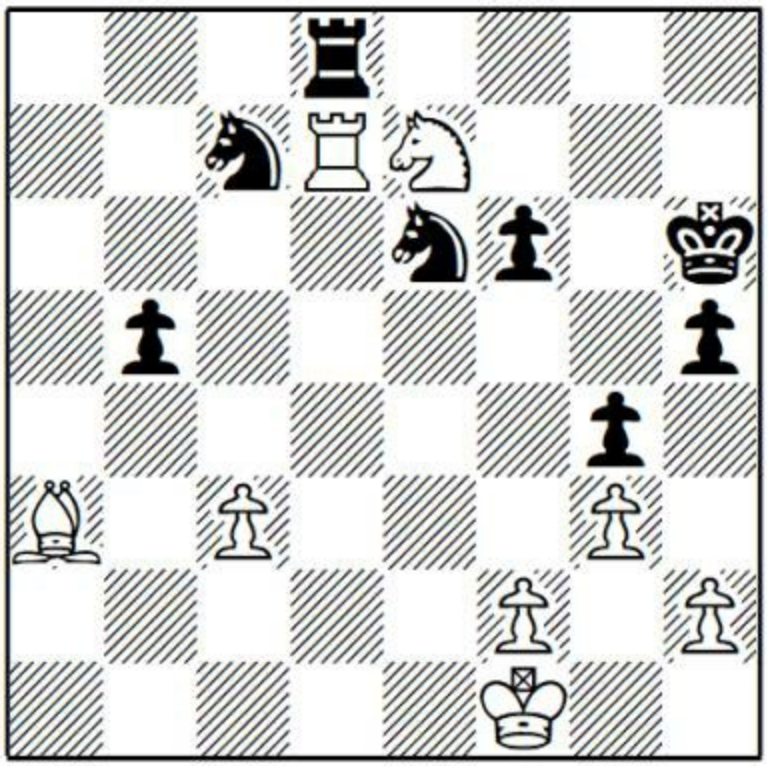
Answer: Take king position and win Black's g-pawn. Our passed d-pawn is out of range for Black.

7 Kf3! Kh2 8 Kg4! 1-0

Now Black's fears amplify, since the position cannot be held, whereas 8 d4?? throws the win away after 8 ... Kh3! 9 d5 g4+ and it's a draw.

342) R.Mamedov-V.Petkov

European Team Championship, Warsaw 2013



White to play

Level 4

You can win Black's rook by force if you skillfully weave mating threats.

Answer: Start with a knight check on f5.

43 Nf5+ Kg5 44 Nh4!! 1-0

At first we may look upon this decision with blank incomprehension, since it 'hangs' our rook on d7. In reality, white knight and bishop bedevil Black's king. Mamedov's point: White threatens Bc1 mate, and if Black makes air for the king with ... f6-f5, then Be7+ wins Black's rook. The rook is en prise and Black quite lost:

a) 44 ... Rxd7 45 Bc1+ Rd2 46 Bxd2+ Nf4 47 Bxf4 mate.

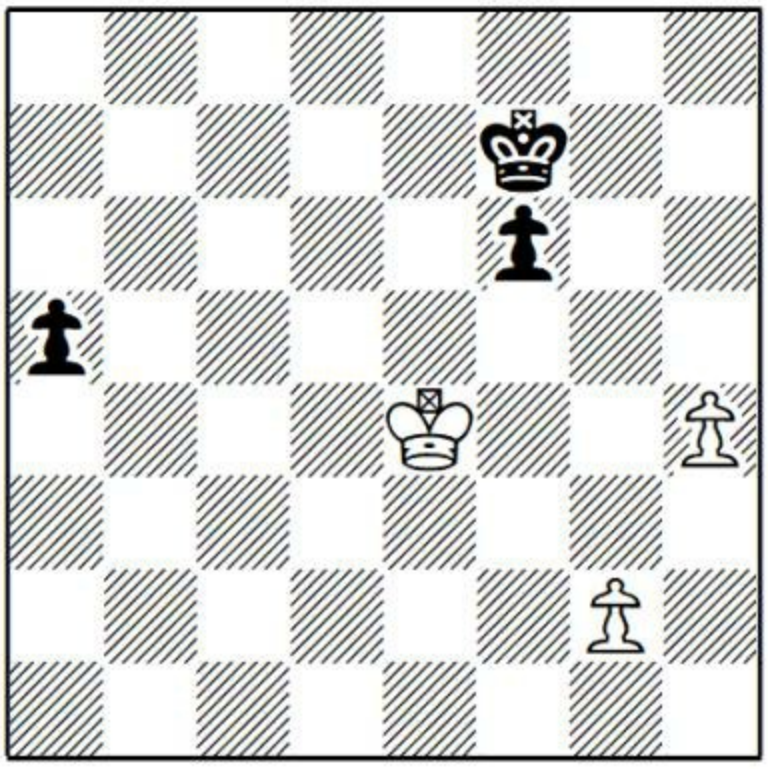
b) 44 ... Kh6 45 Bc1+ (removal of the guard; Black's e6-knight must abandon protection of the d8-rook) 45 ... Ng5 46 Rxd8 wins.

c) 44 ... f5 45 Be7+ and bye, bye d8-rook.

19) Pawn Promotion/Pawn Breakthrough

In this chapter I doubled up on promotion of a passed pawn, and also winning pawn breakthroughs.

343) A.Nimzowitsch-S.Tarrasch
San Sebastian 1911



Black to play
Level 4

In the opening our attention to detail can be dulled, via overfamiliarity. It's the exact opposite in king and pawn endings, which to my mind are the most difficult of any category. Mathematical precision is required on every move. Black has only a single move which wins. Our choices: 1 ... Kg6, 1 ...

Ke6, 1 ... f5+ and 1 ... a4. Calculate accurately!

Answer: Only the push of the f-pawn wins, since it either lures White's king out of the square of Black's passed a-pawn, or it fixes White's kingside pawns as future targets.

39 ... f5+!! 0-1

Let's take a detailed look:

a) 39 ... a4? 40 Kd4 a3 41 Kc3 f5 42 Kb3 Kg6 (42 ... f4 43 Kxa3 Kg6 44 Kb3 Kh5 45 Kc3 Kxh4 46 Kd3 Kg3 47 Ke4 is also a draw) 43 Kxa3 Kh5 44 g3 Kg4 45 Kb3 Kxg3 46 h5 f4 is drawn.

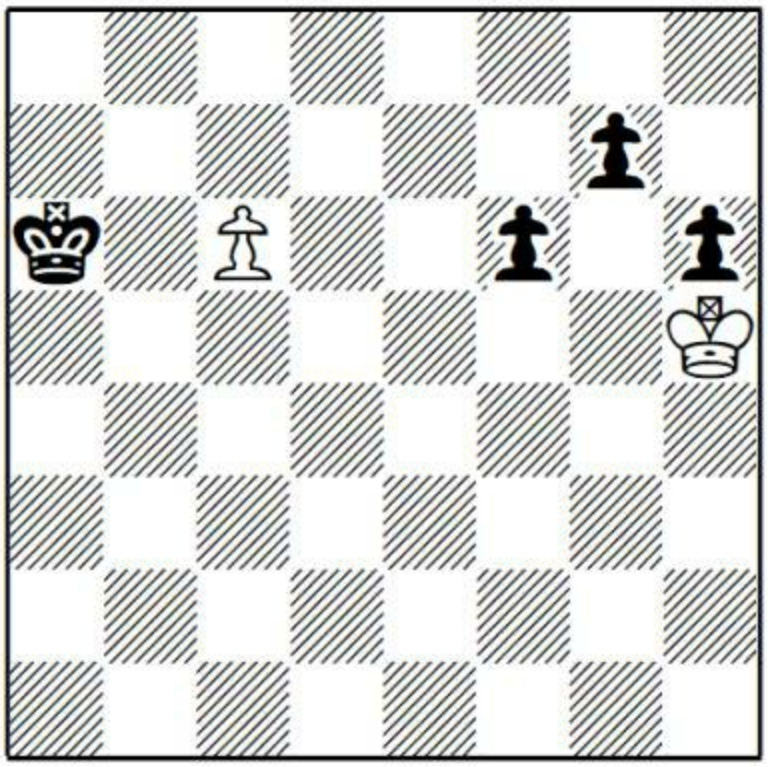
b) 39 ... Kg6? 40 g4 a4 41 Kd4 a3 42 Kc3 and Black has nothing better than to take a draw with 42 ... f5 43 gxf5+ Kxf5 44 Kb3 Kg4.

c) 39 ... Ke6? 40 Kd4 Kf5 41 Kc4 Kg4 42 g3! f5 43 Kb5 Kxg3 44 h5 is a draw too.

d) 39 ... f5+!! 40 Kd5 (after 40 Kxf5 a4 White's king is outside the square of Black's passed pawn: 41 g4 a3 42 g5 a2 43 g6+ Kg7 and White is just way too slow) 40 ... a4 41 Kc4 f4! (this critical step prevents White from a g2-g3 defence, but 41 ... Kg6? blows it: 42 g3! Kh5 43 Kb4 Kg4 44 Kxa4 Kxg3 45 h5 f4 46 h6 f3 47 h7 f2 48 h8Q f1Q is only a draw) 42 Kb4 Kg6 43 Kxa4 Kh5 44 Kb3 Kxh4 45 Kc2 Kg3 46 Kd2 Kxg2 and Black promotes.

344) R.Reti

Deutsch Österreichische Tageszeitung, 1921



White to play

Level 5

We as White can violate the laws of physics and hold our own in the promotion race. “What promotion race?” you may be asking. My response is that circumstantial evidence is not the same as a confirmed truth. If you put this position into an engine, it will tell you ‘0.00’ - dead drawn! Watch how White holds a draw:

***Answer:* 1 Kg6!**

OK, the first move looks obvious enough. But so what? Black’s king will take our pawn and we are dead, aren’t we?

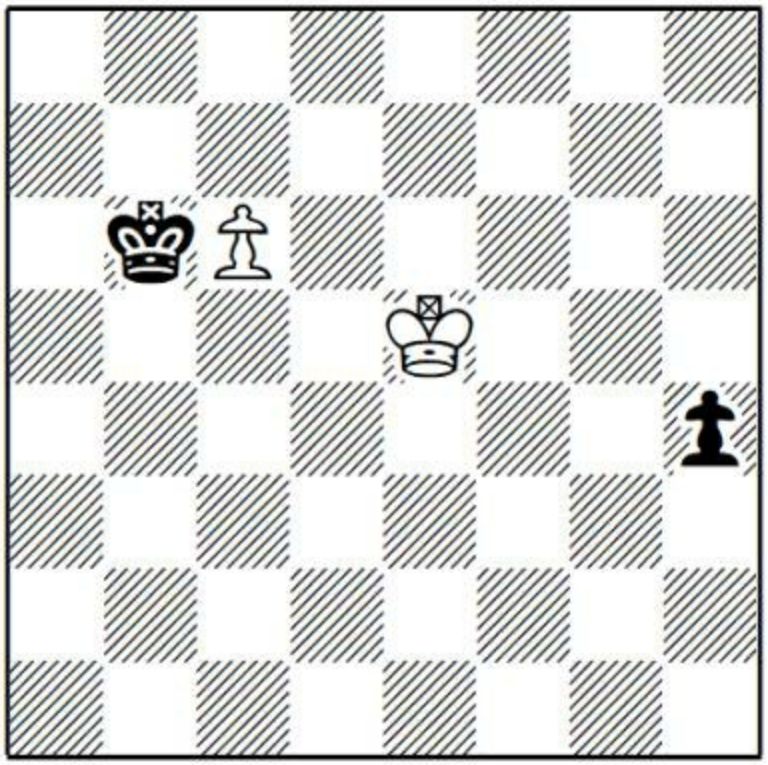
1 ... Kb6

Instead, 1 ... h5 2 Kxg7! (2 Kxh5? Kb6 wins) 2 ... h4 3 Kxf6 Kb6 4 Ke5! Kxc6 (4 ... h3 5 Kd6 is also drawn) 5 Kf4 draws, as does 1 ... f5 2 Kxg7! f4 3 Kf6 f3 4 Ke7 f2 5 c7 f1Q 6 c8Q+.

2 Kxg7!

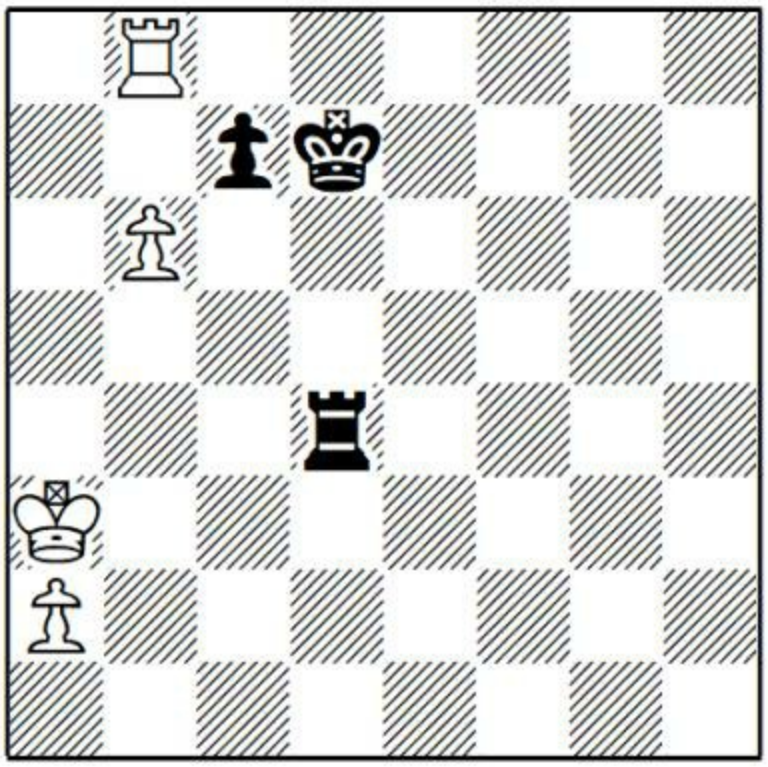
Now do you see that White has a glimmer of hope?

2 ... h5
Or 2 ... f5 3 Kf6 f4 4 Ke5! f3 5 Kd6 f2 6 c7 f1Q 7 c8Q with a draw.
3 Kxf6 h4 4 Ke5!



Dual threats: Kd6, which helps promote the c6-pawn, and Kf4, catching Black's final pawn.
4 ... h3
4 ... Kxc6 5 Kf4 catches the h-pawn.
5 Kd6 h2 6 c7 Kb7 7 Kd7 h1Q 8 c8Q+
The draw is obvious.

345) J.Moravec
Rijen, 1925



White to play

Level 4

White's rook is unfortunately posted in front of the passed b-pawn. How can White overcome this issue and still win?

Answer: Rook sacrifice/clearance. The rook was in the way of our b-pawn's promotion, so let's give it away!

1 Rd8+!!

False paths are 1 b7? Kc6 2 Kb3 Rd5 3 a4 Kb6 4 Kb4 c6 5 Kb3 Kc7 6 Rh8 Kxb7 with a draw, and 1 Rb7? Kc6 2 Rxc7+ Kxb6 is an easy draw for Black, since White's extra pawn is a worthless rook pawn.

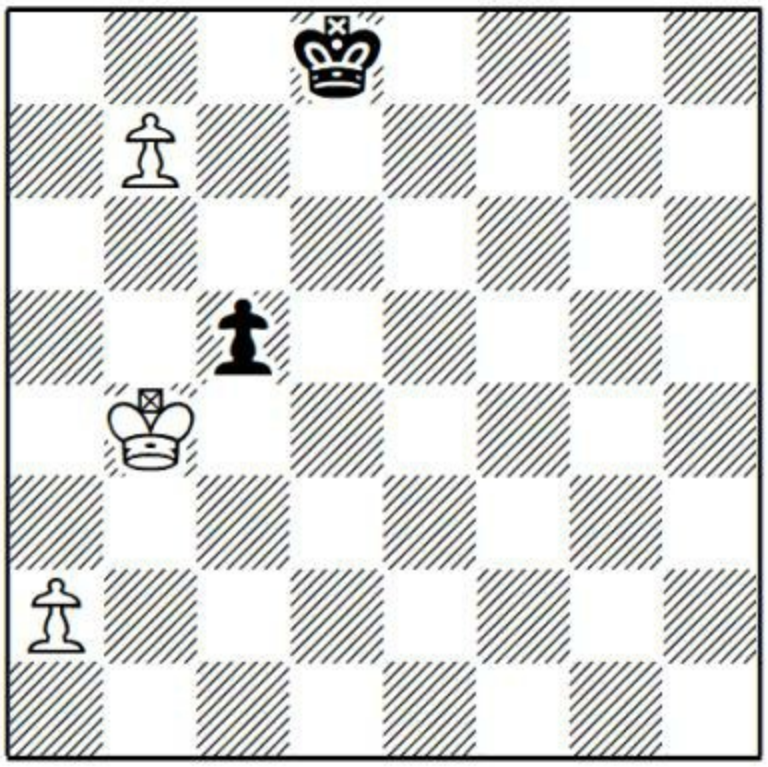
1 ... Kxd8 2 b7

Step 2: Pawn promotion. Black has one last trick though.

2 ... Rb4!

Oh, no! Where did that come from?

3 Kxb4 c5+!



White to play

Level 3

Our king has three options: chop the c5-pawn, move to b5 or move to a5. Pick one and work out White's win, all the way to the end:

***Answer:* 4 Kb5!**

This wins, as does 4 Ka5!, but the greedy 4 Kxc5?? blows it. Black draws with 4 ... Kc7 5 Kb5 Kxb7.

4 ... Kc7 5 Ka6!

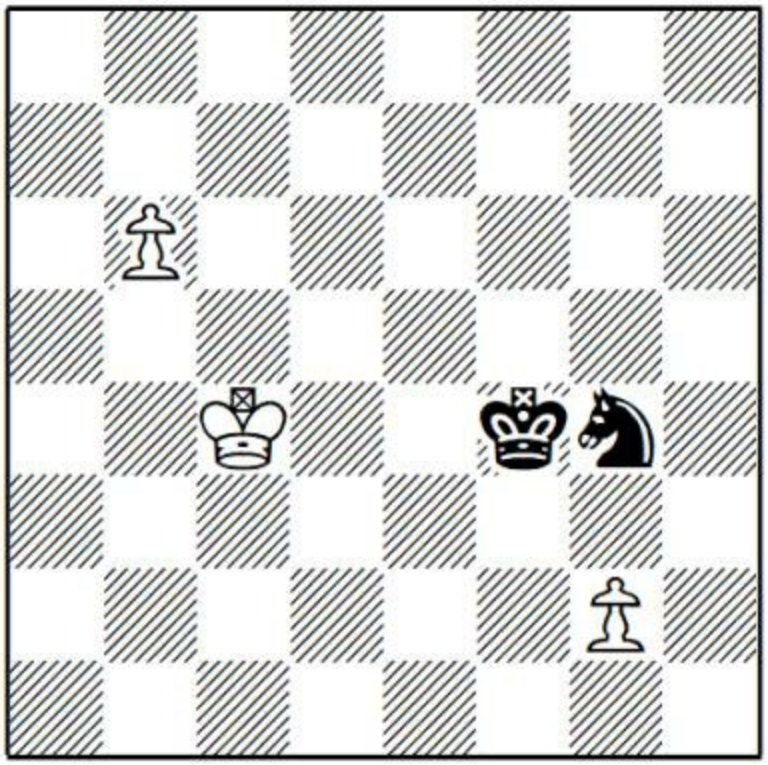
We must be a confident calculator to make a move like this, since a single miscalculation can reverse the result. White wins the promotion race, via a David and Goliath mate.

5 ... Kb8 6 Kb6 c4 7 a4 c3 8 a5 c2 9 a6 c1Q 10 a7 mate

Go David, go! Is there anything sweeter in the world than when we deliver a David and Goliath mate?

346) H.Rinck

Basler Nachrichten, 1937



White to play

Level 4.5

White forces promotion with exact play. Once you spot the theme, you can reel in the win without risk of mishap:

***Answer:* 1 Kd5!**

The first move is crucial, since there are so many ways to go wrong:

a) 1 b7? Ne5+! 2 Kd5 Nd7 3 Kd6 Nb8 4 Kc7 Na6+ 5 Kb6 Nb8 draws.

b) 1 g3+? Ke4! 2 Kc5 Ne5 3 Kd6 (3 b7 Nd7+ 4 Kd6 Nb8 is also a draw) 3 ... Nc4+! 4 Kc7 Nxb6 5 Kxb6 Kf3 does too.

c) 1 Kc5? Ne5 2 Kd6 Nc4+ 3 Kc7 Nxb6 and, again, it's a draw.

1 ... Ne5

If 1 ... Ne3+ 2 Kc5 when White promotes, as happens after 1 ... Nf6+ 2 Kc6.

2 g3+!

Overloaded defender, and the only way to win. Not 2 g4? Nd7 3 b7 Kxg4 or 2 b7? Nd7 with a draw.

2 ... Kf5 3 g4+!

Overloaded defenders. 3 b7? Nd7 is again drawn.

3 ... Kf6

Alternatively:

a) 3 ... Kf4 4 g5! (we echo the same theme) 4 ... Nd7 5 Ke6 Nc5+ (5 ... Nxb6 6 g6 Na4 7 g7 Nc5+ 8 Ke7 wins) 6 Kd6 Nb7+ 7 Kc7 Nc5 8 g6 Kf5 9 g7 Ne6+ 10 Kd6 Nxg7 11 b7 Ne8+ 12 Kc6 and White promotes.

b) 3 ... Nxg4 4 b7 Nf6+ 5 Kc6 promotes.

4 g5+! Kf5 5 g6!

But not 5 b7? Nd7 or 5 Kd6? Nc4+.

5 ... Kf6

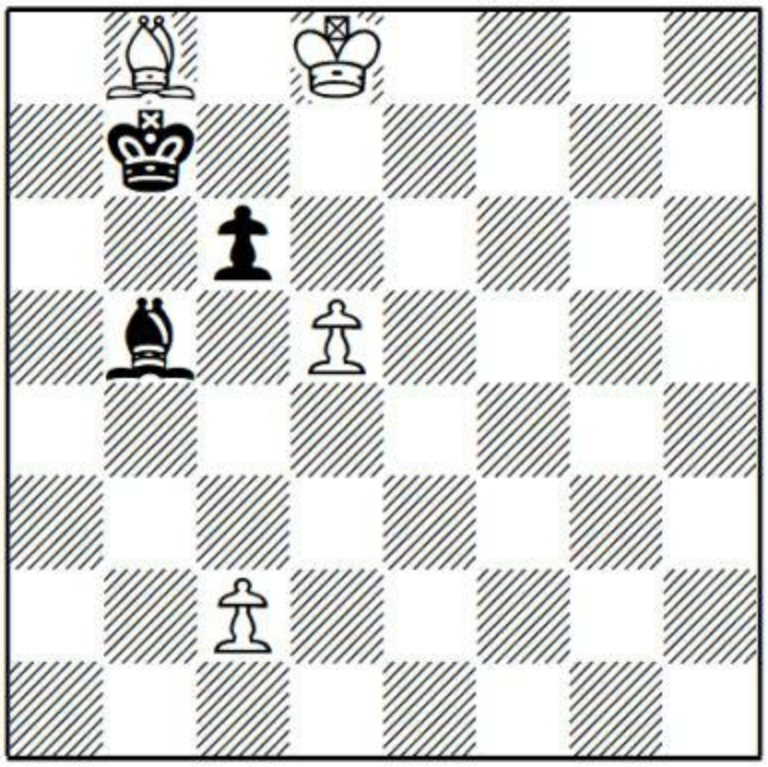
5 ... Nxg6 6 b7 Ne7+ 7 Kd6 promotes.

6 g7! Kxg7 7 Kxe5

The b-pawn will queen.

347) L.Prokes

Národní Osvobození, 1948



White to play

Level 4

Force White's win:

Answer: Piece sacrifice/pawn promotion.

1 d6! Kxb8

After 1 ... c5 2 Bc7! c4 3 d7 c3 4 Ke7! Bxd7 5 Kxd7 Ka6 6 Kc6 White wins.

2 c4!

As in all composed works, we don't believe in a fair fight. This crucial step cannot be missed. 2 d7? c5 3 Ke7 Bxd7 4 Kxd7 c4 5 Kc6 c3 6 Kc5 Kc7 7 Kc4 Kc6 8 Kxc3 Kc5 is an opposition draw.

2 ... Ba4

Or 2 ... Bxc4 3 Ke7!, when White cuts off ... Be6 and promotes.

3 c5!

Interference. Black is denied a ... c6-c5 defence.

3 ... Bd1 4 d7 Bg4 5 Ke7 Bxd7

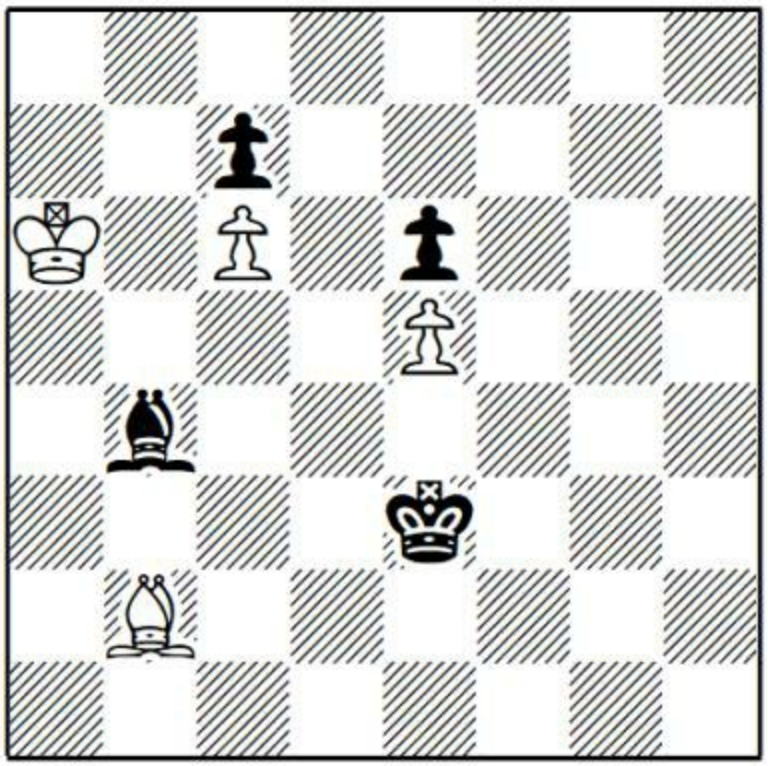
This is but a temporary reprieve, since White wins the king and pawn ending.

6 Kxd7 Kb7 7 Kd6

Zugzwang. 7 ... Kb8 8 Kxc6 Kc8 9 Kb6 Kb8 10 c6 Kc8 (10 ... Ka8 11 Kc7! avoids Black's stalemate trap and after 11 ... Ka7 12 Kd7 White promotes) 11 c7 Kd7 12 Kb7 promotes.

348) L.Prokes

Sachové Umenie, 1948



White to play

Level 4

In some composed works the complexity level is so high that an explanation by the writer almost falls outside the scope of human language. Not here though. White's winning plan is fairly straightforward. How does White force promotion?

Answer: Step 1: Attack the c7-pawn with our king.

1 Kb7!

For some bizarre reason, several of my students thought the solution was 1 Ba3?? (maybe the lure of adventure is too powerful to resist?) 1 ... Bxa3 2 Kb7 Ke4 3 Kxc7 Kxe5 4 Kd7 Bd6 when Black wins.

1 ... Ba5 2 Ba3!

Step 2: Prepare to transfer our bishop to d6.

2 ... Ke4 3 Bd6! cxd6

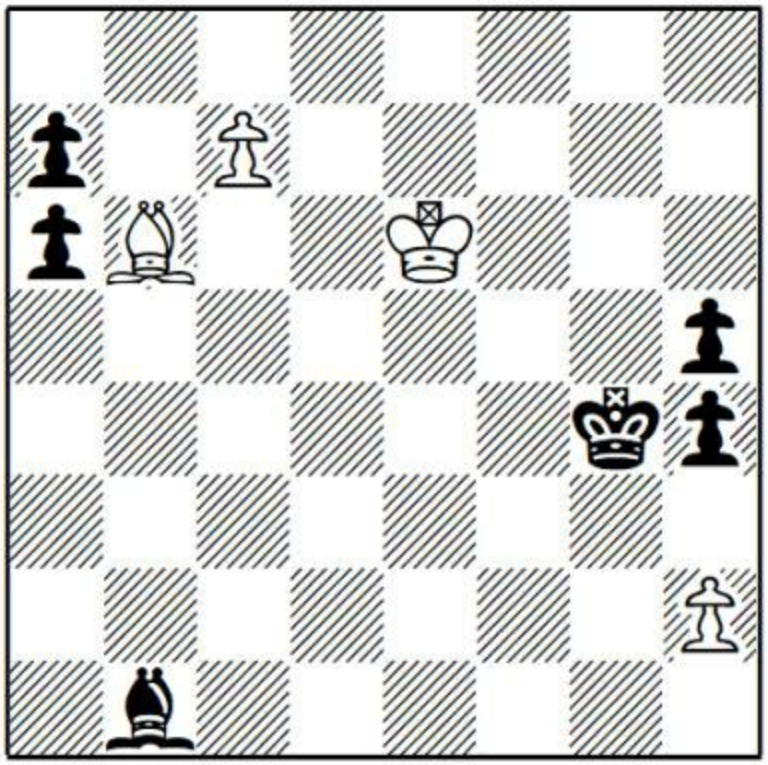
Or 3 ... Kd5 4 Bxc7 Bc3 (after 4 ... Bxc7 5 Kxc7 Kxe5 6 Kd7 Black is way too slow in the promotion race) 5 Bd6 Ba5 6 c7 and wins.

4 exd6

There is no remedy to the coming c6-c7.

349) A.Wotawa

Österreichische Schachzeitung, 1953



White to play

Level 4.5

White can either force promotion of the c-pawn, or force mate.

Answer: Step 1: Attraction. Push our h-pawn and force Black's king to g5.

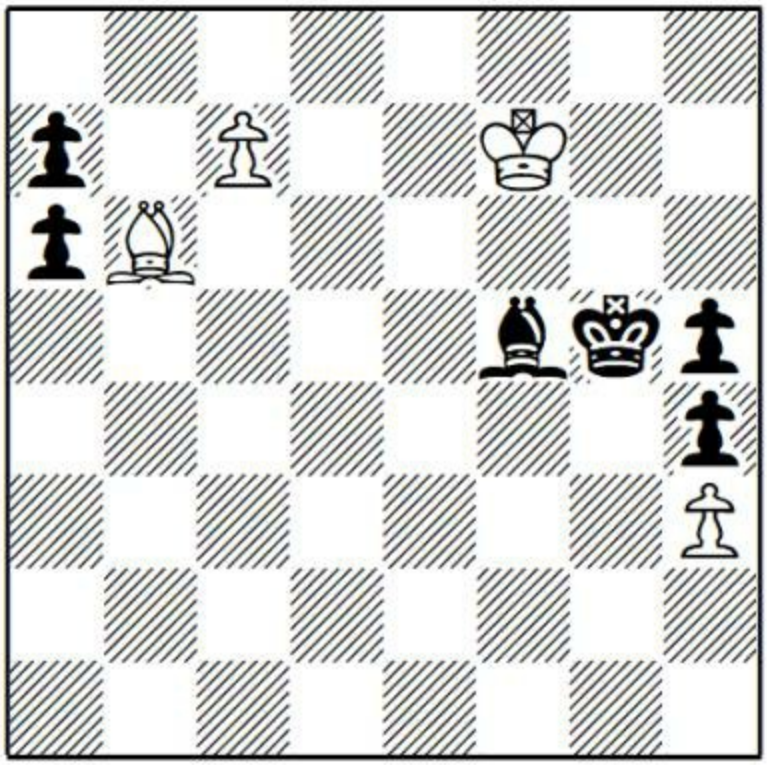
1 h3+!

Not 1 Bxa7? Bf5+, which allows Black to draw.

1 ... Kg5 2 Kf7!

Step 2: Move our king to f7, threatening to promote to a new queen next move. 2 c8Q?? loses the new queen instantly to 2 ... Bf5+.

2 ... Bf5

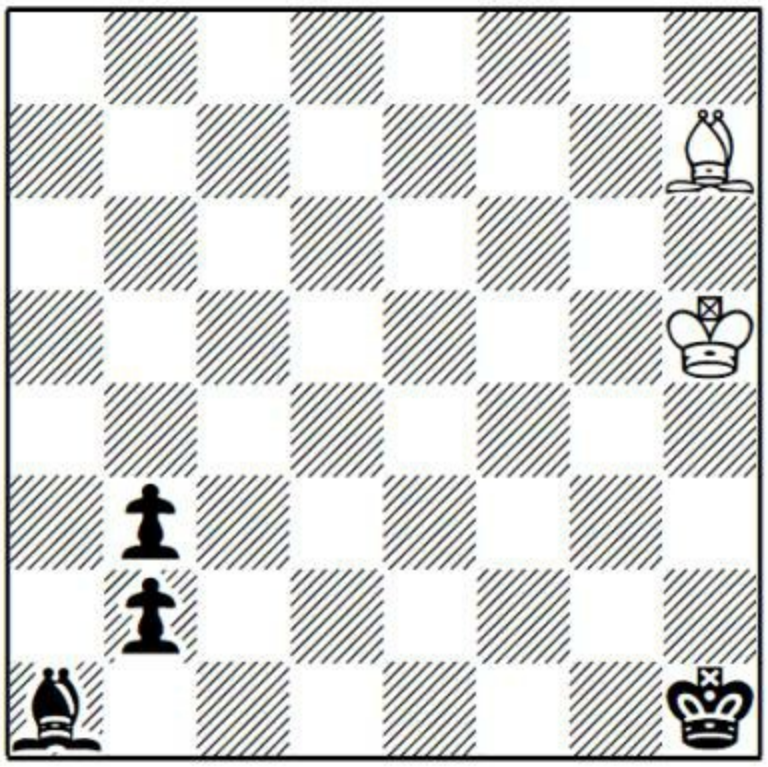


At this point you may be thinking: "So what? Black halted White's promotion and appears to be drawing at a minimum." If so, please proceed to White's next move:

3 Be3 mate

"Where the hell did that come from?" is my most uttered phrase, when attempting to solve any Wotawa study.

350) F.Richter
Ceskoslovensky Sach, 1960



White to play

Level 5

If our king can reach c4 after Black's king reaches c1, then White draws. The only problem is the implementation, which is not so easy to engineer:

***Answer:* 1 Bf5!!**

The only way:

a) After 1 Kg4? Kg2 2 Kf4 Kf2 White's king cannot move to e5, since then Black will promote with check. Neither can he move to e4, since then Black again promotes. As such, Black's king will reach c1 and White's king has no quick route to c4, so White loses.

b) 1 Be4+? Kg1 2 Kg5 Kf2 3 Kf5 Ke3 4 Bb1 Kd2 wins.

c) 1 Bb1? (the trouble with this try is that Black gains a crucial tempo

with a future ... Kc1) 1 ... Kg2 2 Kg4 Kf2 3 Kf4 Ke2 4 Ke4 Kd2 5 Kd4 Kc1 wins.

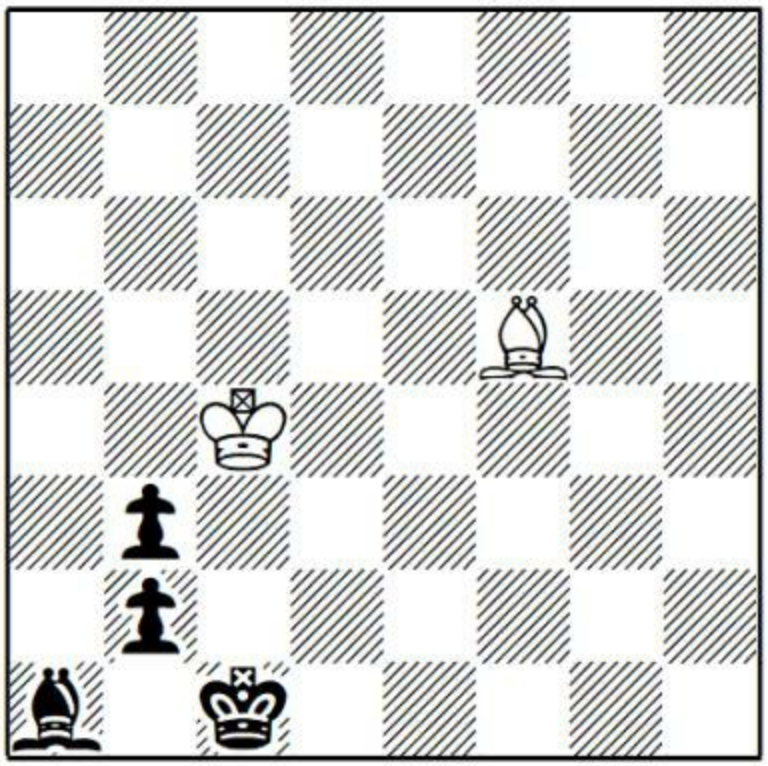
1 ... Kg2 2 Kg6!

The only route is to go through the light squares. After 2 Kg5? Kf3 once again White's king cannot move to f6, so Black wins.

2 ... Kf2 3 Kf7!

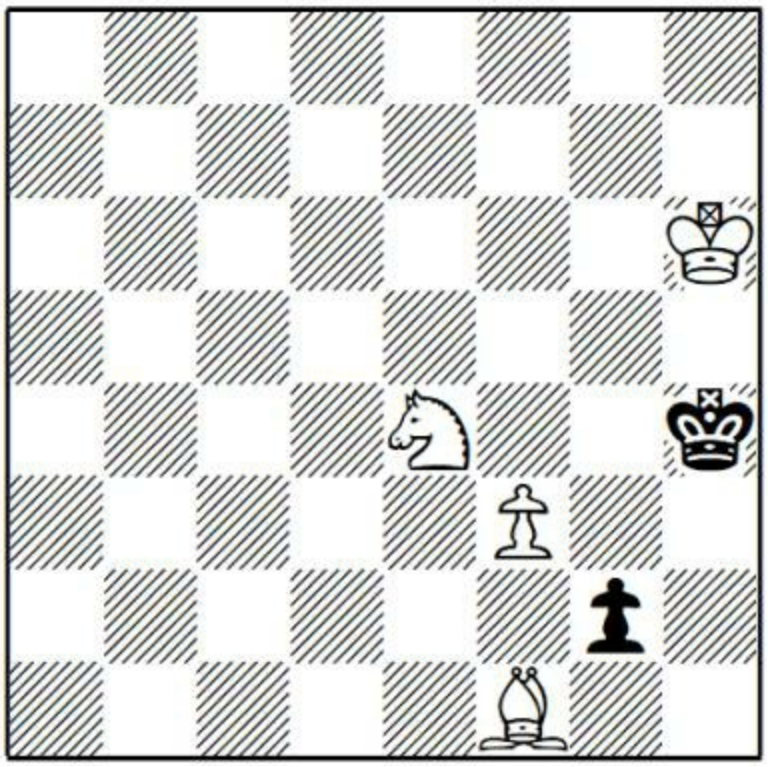
The king zigs and also zags, exclusively through the light squares. 3 Kf6?? is met with b1Q+.

3 ... Ke3 4 Ke6 Kd2 5 Kd5 Kc1 6 Kc4



Black cannot win. Pythagoras was apparently wrong about his straight-line theory!

351) E.Pogosyants
Shakhmatnaya Moskva, 1961



White to play

Level 4.5

This is kind of an anti-promotion problem, in that the side that promotes, loses! White's problem:

1. If we play Bxg2, it's instant stalemate.

2. If we ignore it with either Nd2 or Ng3, then Black promotes to a new queen.

3. If we move our bishop away, Black promotes to a new queen. So how on earth does White win?

Answer: Play Ng3!!, creating a mating net.

1 Ng3!!

We humans, unlike chess engines, don't process via a series of zeros and ones. Keep working on composed studies and that may change! 1 Bxg2? is instant stalemate.

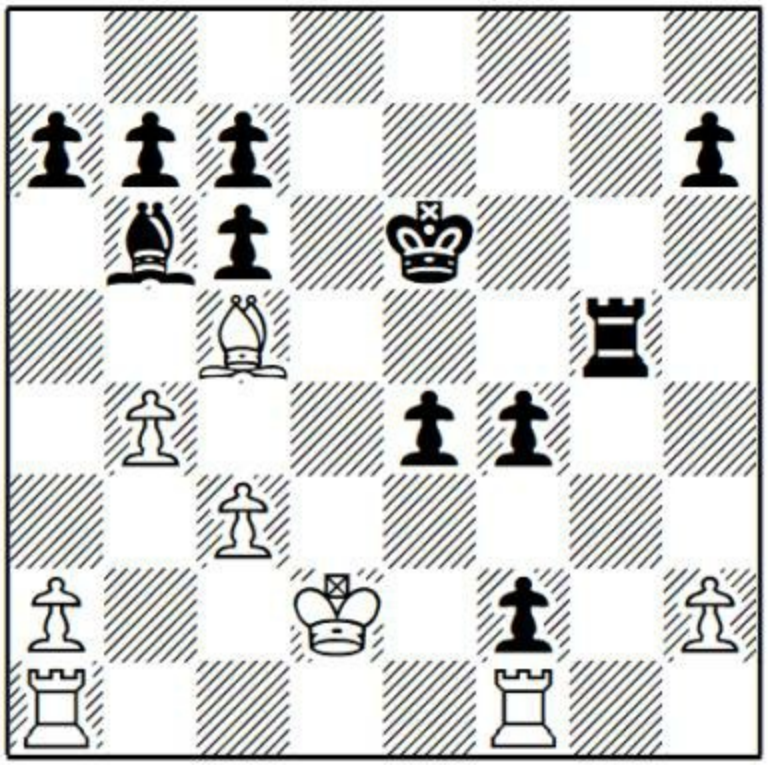
1 ... g1Q

Instead, 1 ... gxf1Q 2 Nxf1 sees White keep the f-pawn and win, while

after 1 ... Kxg3 2 Bxg2! Kxg2 3 f4 White's f-pawn wins the game.

2 Nf5 mate

352) E.Gufeld-L.Kavalek
Marianske Lazne 1962



Black to play

Level 4

The endgame is a maze of darkly lit, twisting streets - unless you discover Black's correct plan. Then all becomes clear.

Answer: Exchange sacrifice. Black's bishop is more important than Black's rook, since it controls e3.

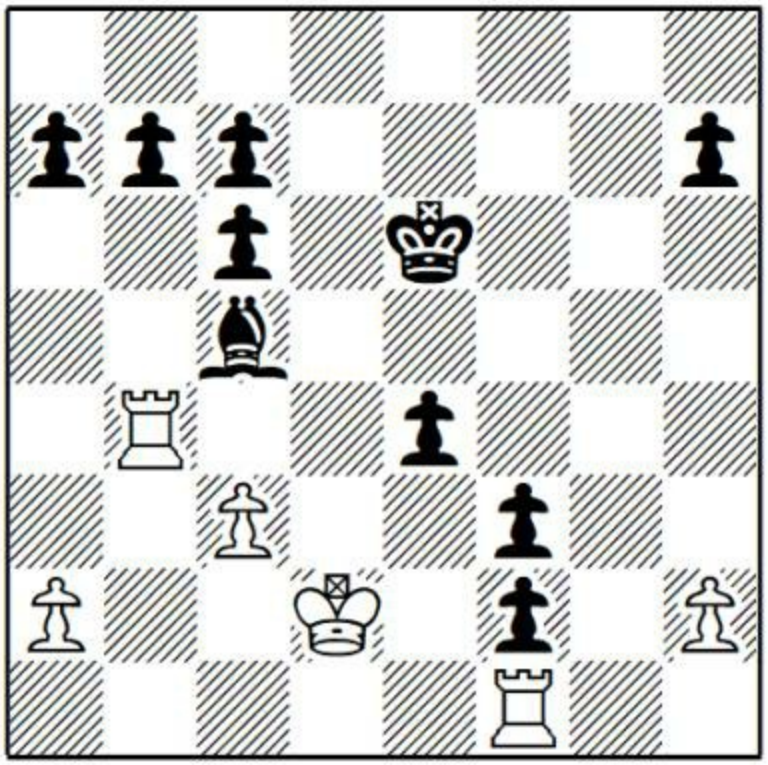
27 ... Rxc5!

27 ... Bxc5?! 28 bxc5 e3+ 29 Ke2 Rxc5 offers White chances to save the game.

28 bxc5 Bxc5 29 Rab1 f3!

Nothing can stop Black's passed pawns.

30 Rb4



Black to play

Level 2

What is Black's best move?

***Answer:* 30 ... Kf5!**

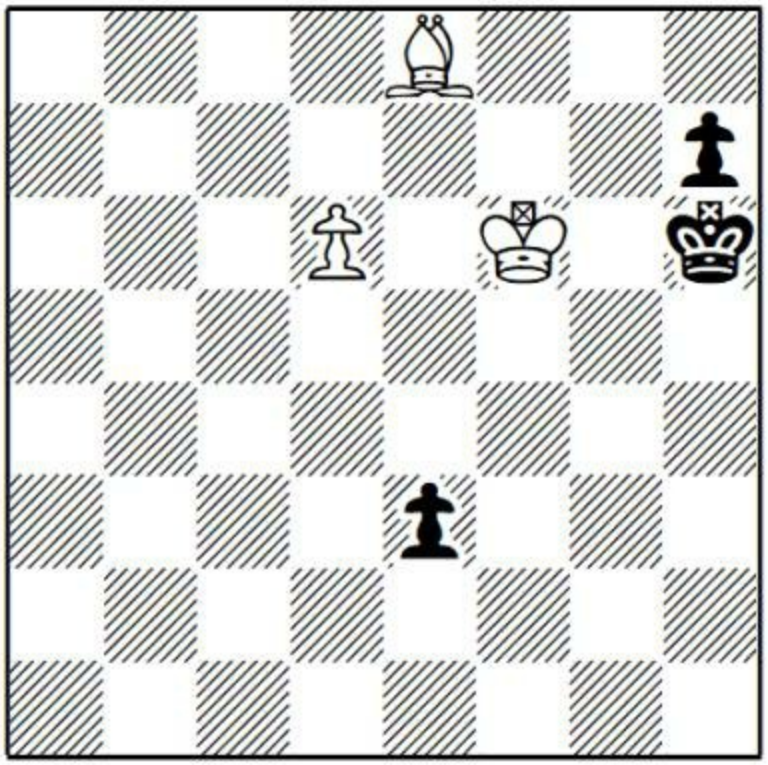
Not 30 ... Bxb4?? 31 cxb4 Ke5 32 Ke3 when Black is busted and 30 ... e3+ is less accurate than the move Kavalek played in the game, yet should still win after 31 Kd3 e2 32 Re4+ Kd5 33 c4+ Kd6 34 Rxe2 fxe2 35 Kxe2 Bd4. Black will eventually create passed pawns on the queenside and convert.

31 Rd4 Bxd4 32 cxd4 Kf4 0-1

After 33 Rxf2 e3+ 34 Ke1 exf2+ 35 Kxf2 a5 Black easily wins the king and pawn ending.

353) E.Pogosyants

Shakhmatnaya Moskva, 1964



White to play

Level 5

This one looks easy for White. It isn't. Beware of Black's drawing trap! How should White continue?

Answer: Ignore Black's promotion and promote our own passed pawn.

1 d7!!

I bet many readers fell for 1 Bb5? e2! 2 Bxe2 and stalemate. Beware of the superficial.

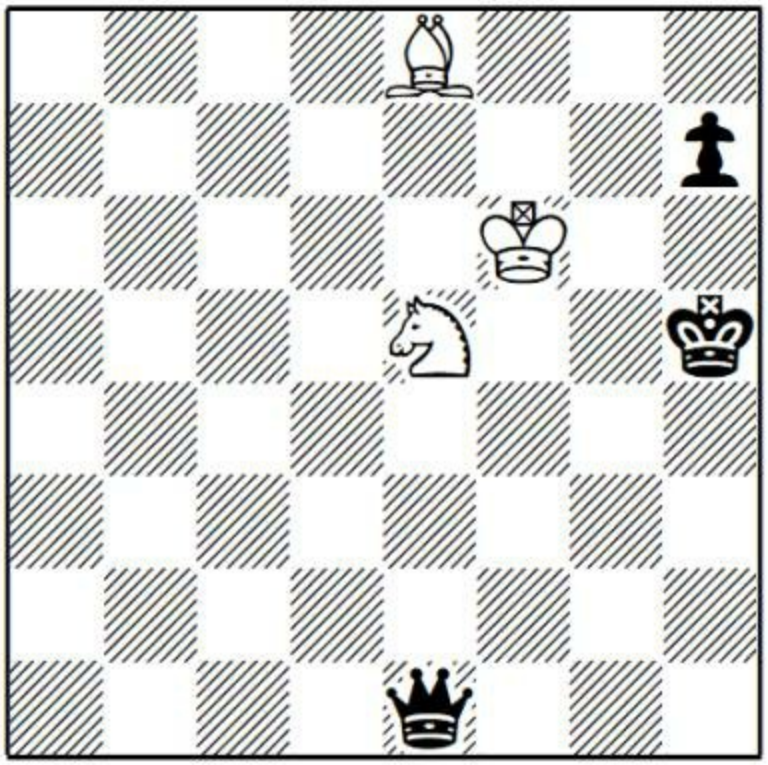
1 ... e2 2 d8N!!

Only a paradoxical underpromotion to a knight wins. 2 d8Q? e1Q is drawn.

2 ... e1Q

Or 2 ... e1N and we weave our mating net the following way: 3 Nc6! Ng2 4 Ne7! Ne3 5 Ng8 mate.

3 Nf7+ Kh5 4 Ne5+!



The Inquisition's goal was to root out heretics and deliver them for God's justice. Black's harried king is forced into a king/queen fork, or a mate.

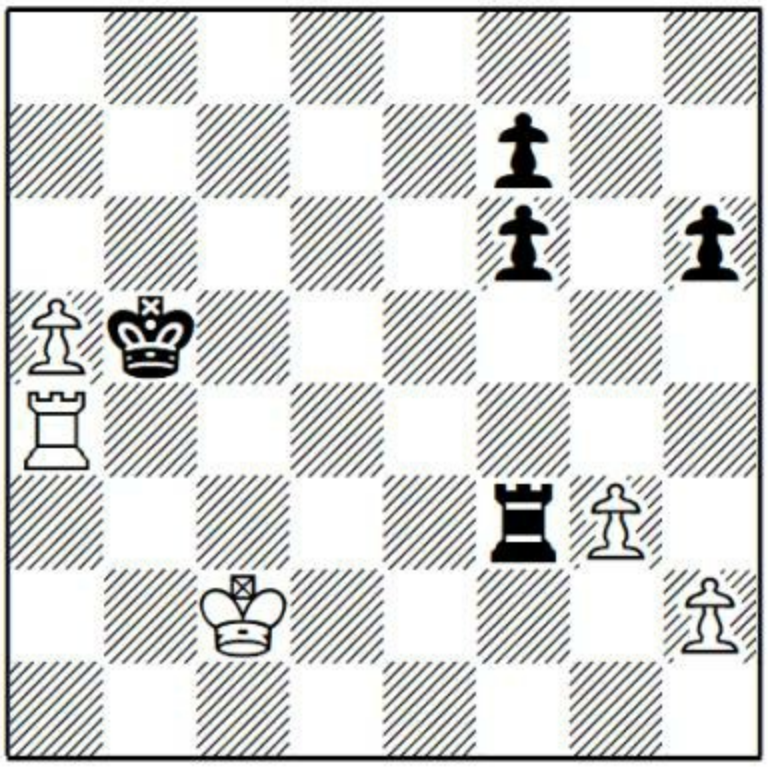
4 ... Kh4

Or 4 ... Kh6 5 Ng4 mate.

5 Nf3+ Kg3 6 Nxe1

White will pick up the h-pawn then win with bishop and knight against king.

354) V.Korchnoi-V.Antoshin
Sochi 1966



White to play

Level 1

Time for a little vacation with an easy one. How did Korchnoi force the win?

Answer: Rook sacrifice/pawn promotion. Just push the a-pawn and leave the a4-rook hanging.

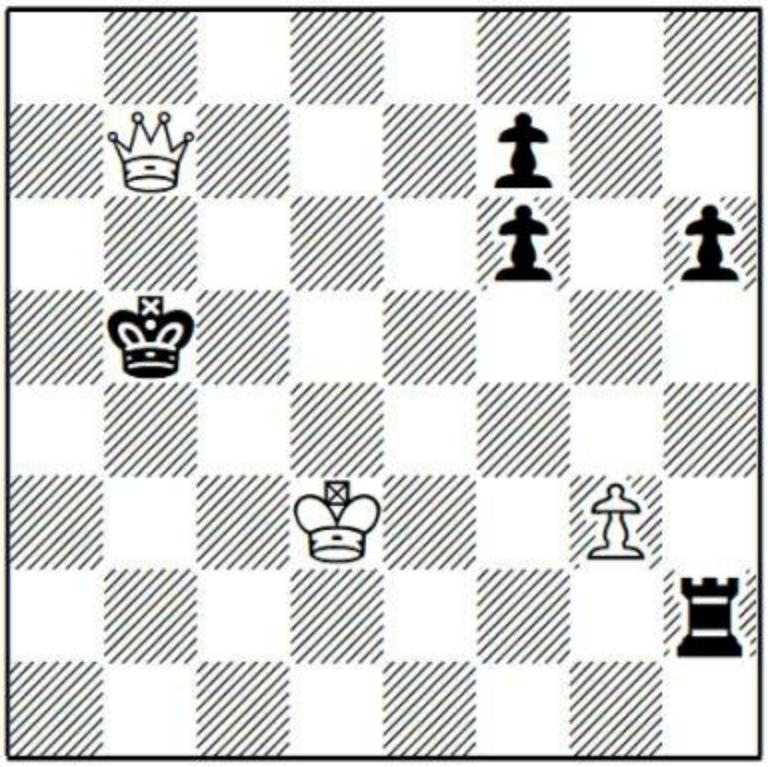
48 a6!

This is pretty, but certainly not difficult to find.

48 ... Kxa4

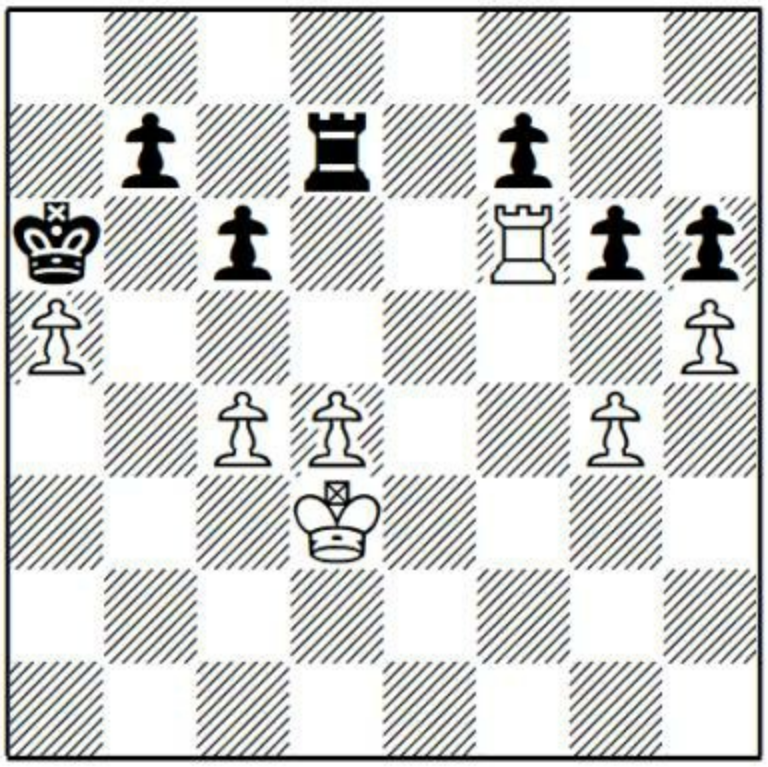
48 ... Re3 doesn't cut it: 49 a7 Re8 50 a8Q Rxa8 51 Rxa8 with an extra rook for White.

49 a7 Rf2+ 50 Kd3 Rxh2 51 a8Q+ Kb5 52 Qb7+



Double attack.
52 ... Kc5 53 Qxf7 Kb6
Or 53 ... Rf2?? 54 Qa7+. Skewer, winning the rook.
54 Qxf6+
Antoshin resigned in a few moves.

355) A.Karpov-V.Hort
Tilburg 1979



White to play

Level 4

Hort reconciled himself to defence of a difficult rook ending. d4-d5 looks strong. Do you see an even stronger plan for White?

Answer: Push the g-pawn, creating a deadly passed h-pawn which wins the rook and pawn ending.

61 g5!

This move drops all pretenses of diplomacy. If you thought Karpov was temperamentally unsuited to live the life of an outlaw, you would be wrong.

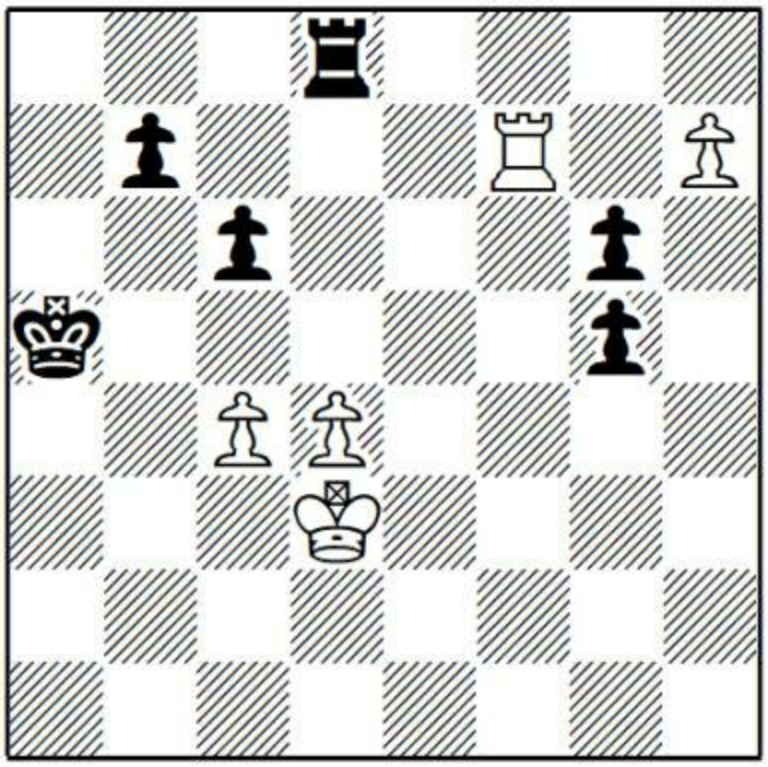
Instead, 61 hxg6? allows Black decent drawing chances: for example, 61 ... fxg6 62 d5 (or 62 Rxg6 Kxa5 63 Rxh6 Rg7 64 Rh4 b5 65 cxb5 cxb5 66 d5 Kb6 67 Kd4 b4 68 Kc4 b3 69 Kxb3 Kc5 when Black draws) 62 ... Kxa5 63 d6 h5 64 g5 h4 65 Rxg6 h3 66 Rh6 Rg7 67 Rh5 b5 68 cxb5 Kxb5 69 Ke4 c5 70 Kf5 Kc6 71 Rxh3 Kxd6 and it's a draw.

61 ... hxg5

Taking this pawn is a joyless, unsatisfying meal for Black, but if 61 ...

gxh5 62 gxh6 h4 63 h7 Rd8 64 Rh6 Rh8 65 d5 Kxa5 66 d6 Kb6 67 Kd4 f6 68 Rxh4 f5 69 Rh6 f4 70 c5+ Kb5 71 d7 f3 72 Ke3 Kxc5 73 Rg6! when there is no defence to the coming Rg8.

62 h6! Kxa5 63 h7 Rd8 64 Rxf7



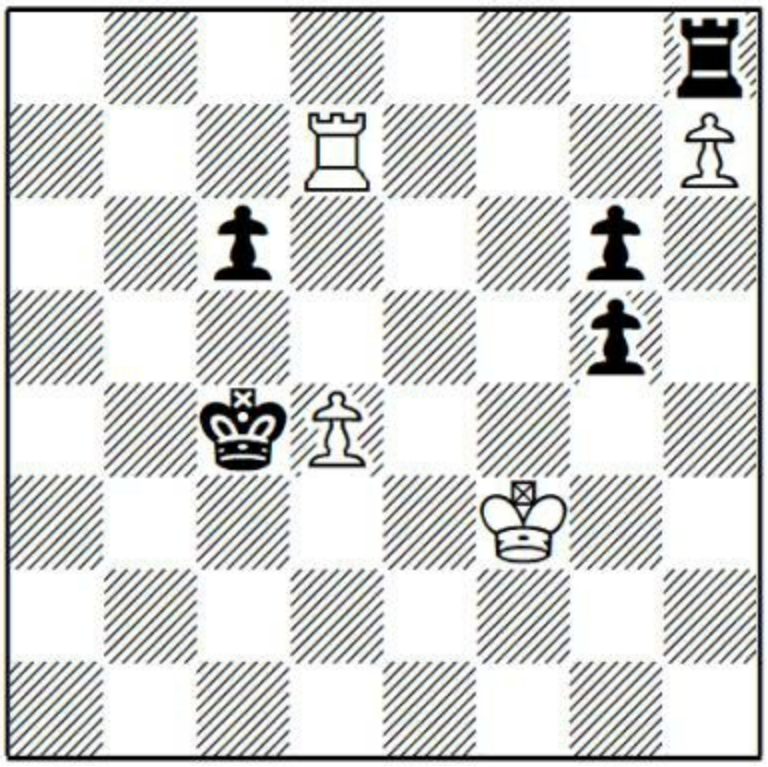
64 ... b5 65 cxb5 Kxb5

After 65 ... cxb5 66 Rg7 (threat: Rg8) 66 ... Rh8 67 d5 Kb6 68 d6 Kc6 69 d7 g4 70 Ke3! (more accurate than the also winning 70 Rg8 Rxh7 71 d8Q Rd7+) 70 ... b4 71 Rg8 White promotes.

66 Rb7+!

This little trick tosses Black's king on to the a-file.

66 ... Ka6 67 Rg7 Rh8 68 Ke4 Kb5 69 Kf3 Kc4 70 Rd7

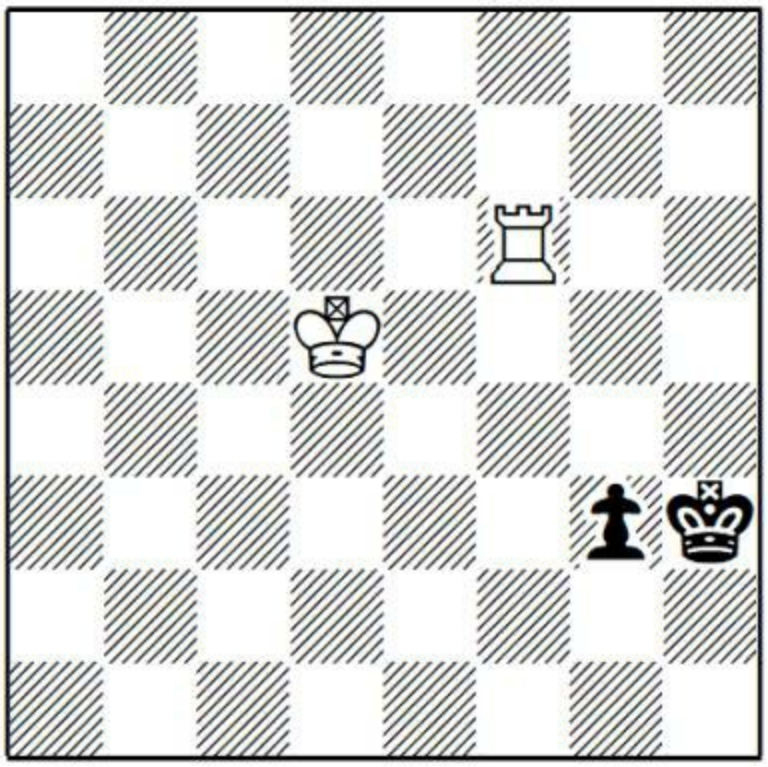


Oh no you don't. Both remaining white pawns are safe.

70 ... Kd3 71 Kg4 Rxh7 72 Rxh7 Kxd4 73 Rd7+ 1-0

After 73 ... Ke4 74 Rc7 Kd5 75 Kxg5 c5 76 Kf4 c4 77 Ke3 g5 78 Rg7 Black's pawns are not going anywhere.

356) P.Benko
Chess Life & Review, 1987



White to play

Level 4.5

We can give a rook check on h6, or we can move our king closer with Ke4. Only one version wins:

***Answer:* 1 Ke4!**

Only the king move wins. 1 Rh6+? Kg2! 2 Ke4 Kf2 3 Rf6+ Ke2! 4 Ra6 g2 5 Ra2+ Kf1 6 Kf3 g1N+! is a theoretical draw.

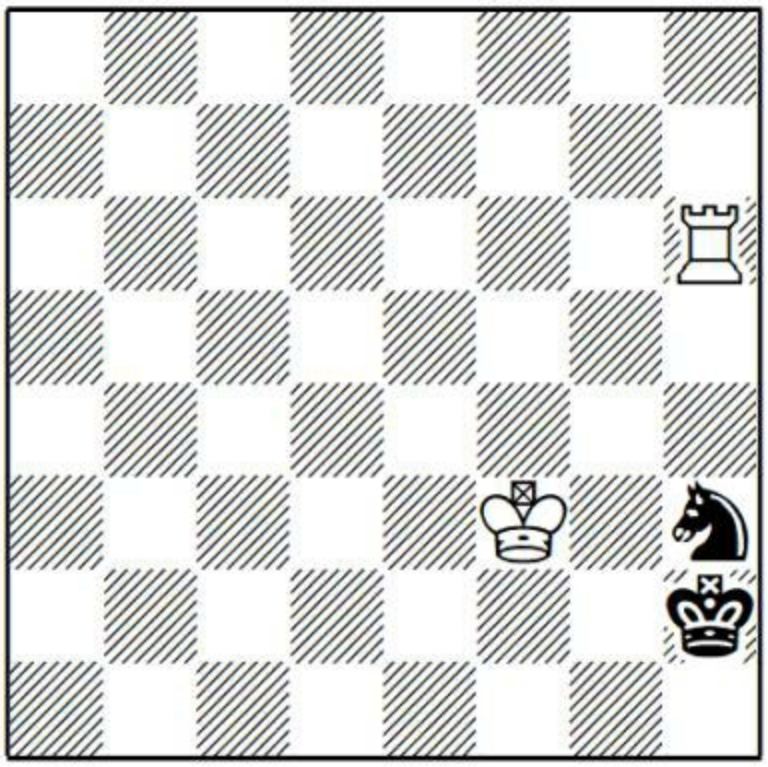
1 ... g2 2 Kf3!

We must be prepared to burn everything to the ground. After 2 Rg6? Kh2 3 Kf3 g1N+! 4 Kf2 Nh3+ 5 Kf1 Kh1 6 Rh6 Kh2 White can't make progress.

2 ... g1N+

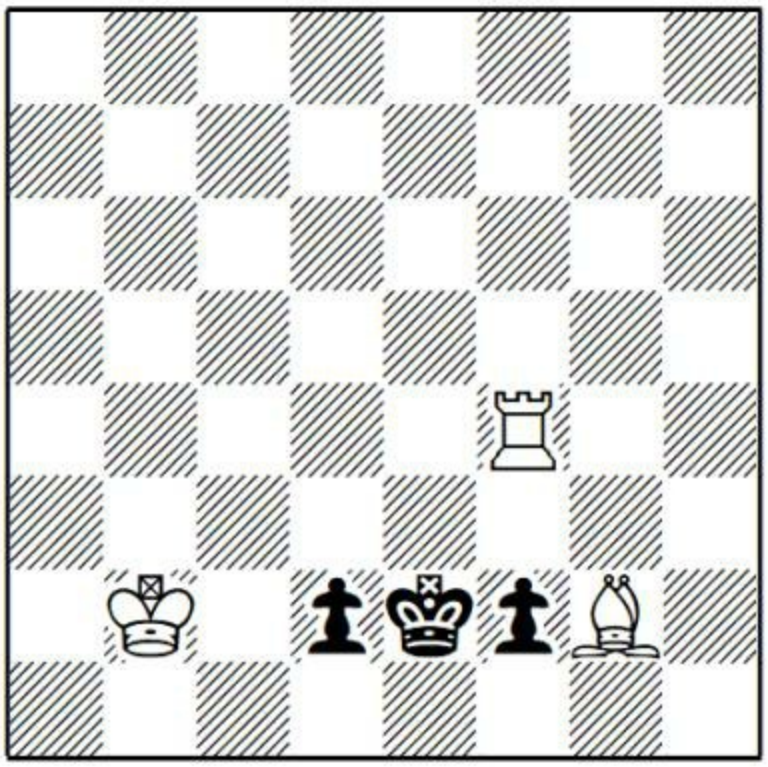
If 2 ... g1Q? 3 Rh6 mate and 2 ... Kh2 3 Rh6+ Kg1 4 Rg6 Kh1 5 Kf2! wins (we won't fall for 5 Rxg2?? and stalemate).

3 Kf2 Kh2 4 Rh6+ Nh3+ 5 Kf3



Zugzwang. Black king and knight are unstrung marionettes, crumpled in the corner of the room, never to rise again.

357) J.Rusinek
The Problemist, 1988



White to play

Level 4.5

Black's passed pawns are deep and about to promote. White's position demands swift action. How do we deal with them and win?

Answer: Allow Black to promote, if in return, we weave a mating net around the black king.

1 Kc3!

Instead, 1 Re4+? only draws after 1 ... Kd3 2 Rd4+ Kxd4 3 Kc2 Ke3 4 Bf1 and 1 Bf3+?? Ke3 2 Bd1 Kxf4 3 Be2 Ke3 (overloaded defender) sees Black promote.

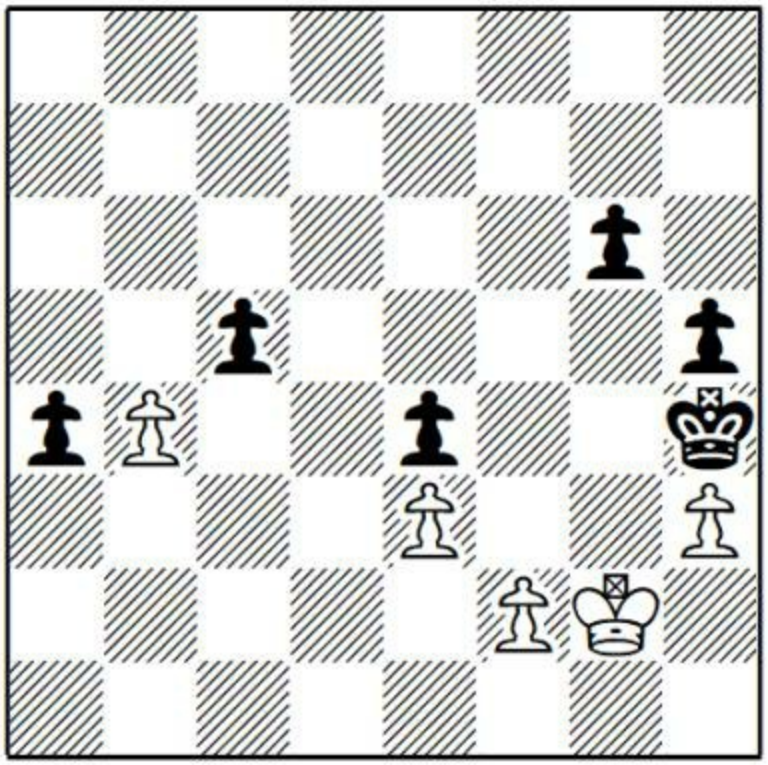
1 ... d1Q

Even worse than falling for our opponent's trap is the painful realization that we are a shallow thinker. The spoils of war are not so great for Black. Promotion to a new queen hastens the arrival of a future which won't be to Black's liking. Underpromotion also fails with 1 ... d1N+ 2 Kd4 Nb2 (2 ... Ne3 3 Re4 f1N 4 Bxf1+ Kxf1 5 Rxe3 wins) 3 Re4+ Kd2 4 Bf1 Nd1 5 Re2+

Kc1 6 Kc4 Nb2+ 7 Kb3 Nd1 8 Rc2+ Kb1 9 Rc7 Ne3 10 Bd3+ and mate in three moves at the most.

2 Re4 mate

358) V.Smyslov
Moscow ty, 1998



White to play

Level 3

Without moving the pieces, work out if White should play b4xc5, or if White should bypass with b4-b5.

Answer: Only the bypass wins the promotion race, since we *must* promote on a dark square and the h1-b8 diagonal.

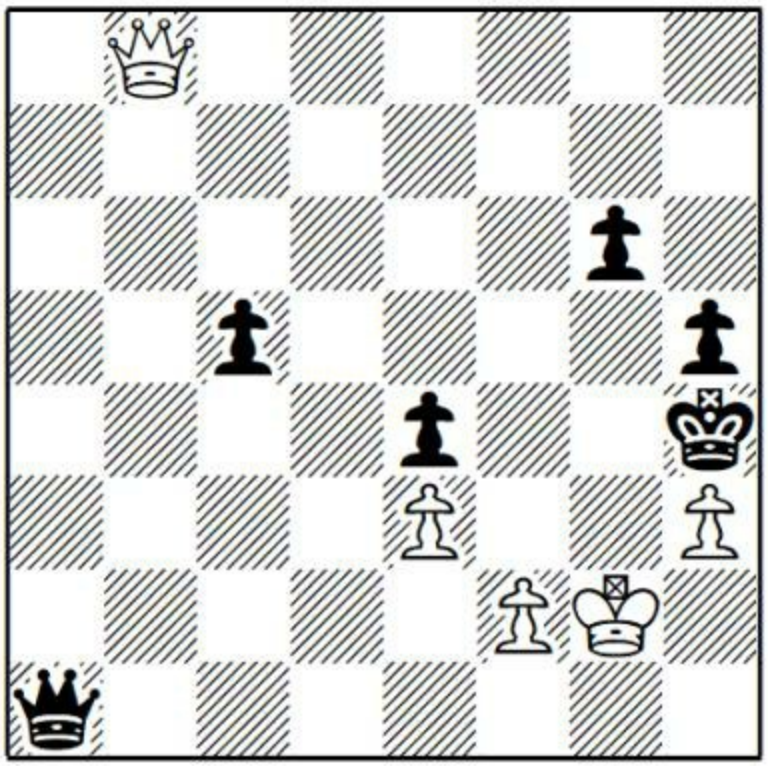
1 b5!

Instead, 1 bxc5? is a draw after 1 ... a3 2 c6 a2 3 c7 a1Q 4 c8Q Qf6.

1 ... a3

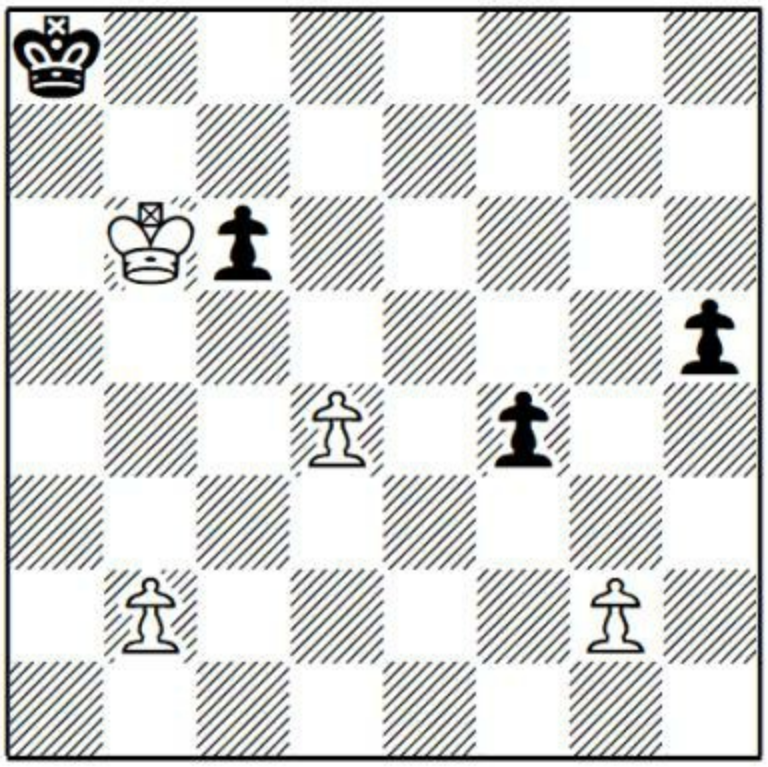
A person threatens you with blood-curdling descriptions of damnation, unless you change your evil ways. Are you scared, or not? The answer to that is that you are scared only if you believe in damnation. In this case, Black should indeed believe, since his king is about to be sent to hell.

2 b6 a2 3b7 a1Q 4 b8Q



Here is the problem. There is no defence to the dual threats to mate on g3 and f4.

359) V.Smyslov
Moi Etyudy, 2000



White to play

Level 5

We are in a pawn promotion race. White wins, but only if you play computer-perfect. Our choices are: 1 Kxc6, 1 d4-d5, 1 b2-b4 and 1 Kc7. Three of the choices lose, while one double exclam move wins. Let's test your calculation ability. Without moving the pieces, work out which one of the four wins:

Answer: Only the last named wins.

1 Kc7!!

Let's check:

a) 1 Kxc6? h4 2 d5 Kb8 3 d6 Kc8 4 b4 h3 5 gxh3 f3 6 b5 f2 7 b6 f1Q 8 b7+ Kb8 when Black wins.

b) 1 d5? Kb8! 2 Kxc6 h4 3 d6 Kc8 4 b4 f3 5 gxf3 h3 6 b5 h2 7 b6 h1Q 8 b7+ Kb8 9 d7 Qxf3+ wins.

c) 1 b4? f3 2 gxf3 h4 3 Kc7 h3 4 d5 h2 5 d6 h1Q 6 d7 Qh2+ 7 Kc8 (or 7 Kxc6 Qd2 8 Kc7 Qf4+ 9 Kc6 Qxf3+ and wins) 7 ... Qb8 mate.

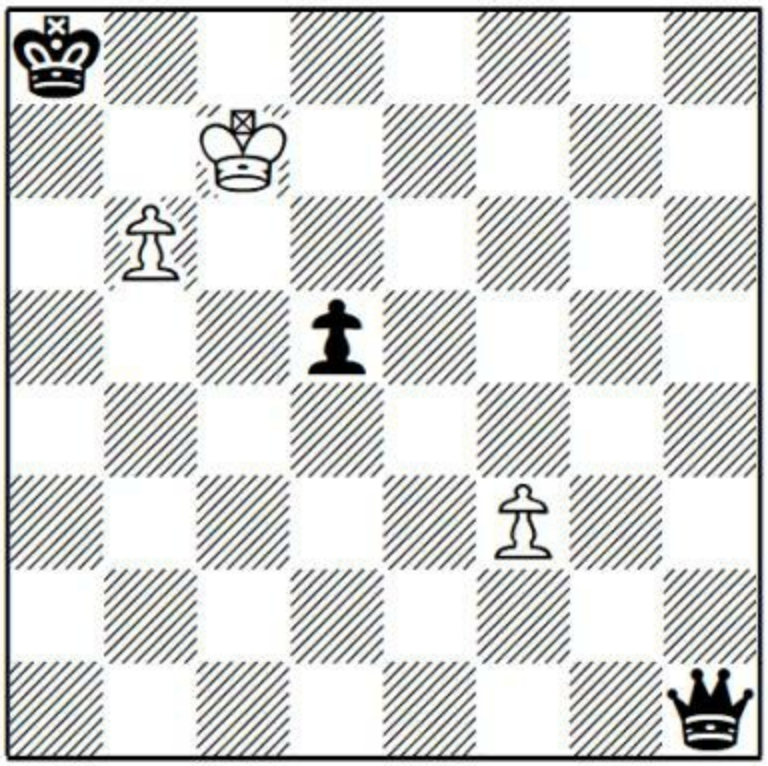
1 ... h4

Alternatively, 1 ... Ka7 2 b4 h4 3 d5! h3 4 gxh3 f3 5 d6 f2 6 d7 f1Q 7 d8Q Qf4+ 8 Qd6 Qf7+ 9 Qd7 Qf4+ (of course a queen swap also fails miserably for Black) 10 Kxc6+ Ka6 11 Qb7 mate.

2 d5! cxd5

If 2 ... f3 3 gxf3 h3 4 d6 h2 5 d7 h1Q 6 d8Q+ Ka7 7 Qb8+ Ka6 8 Qb6 mate or 2 ... h3 3 gxh3 cxd5 4 b4 f3 5 b5 f2 6 b6 f1Q 7 b7+ Ka7 8 b8Q+ Ka6 9 Qb6 mate.

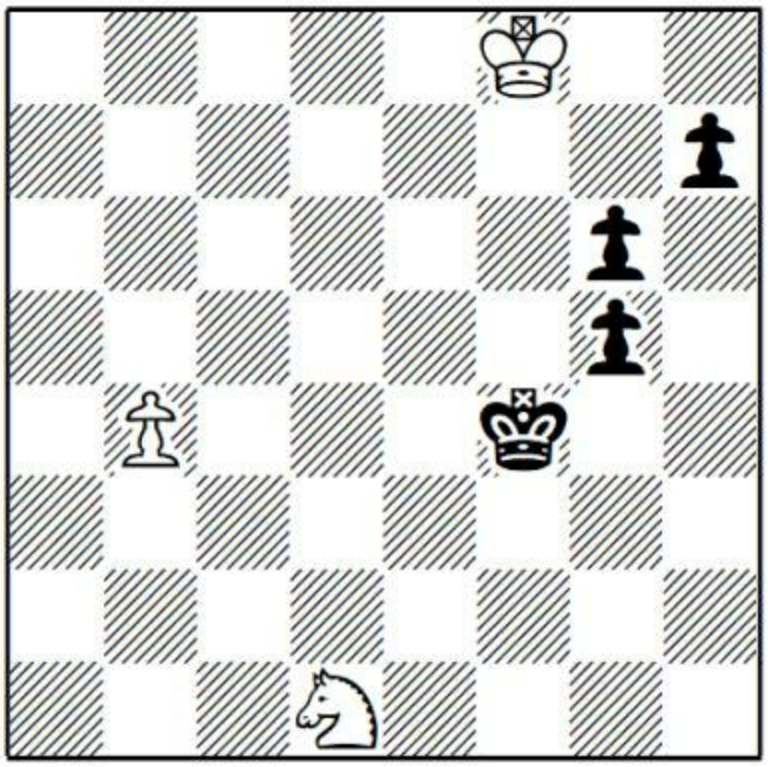
3 b4 f3 4 gxf3 h3 5 b5 h2 6 b6 h1Q



Black's harvest is good this year and the granaries are full. Suddenly, from this point, things begin to go terribly wrong. Black promotes first, while we mate first.

7 b7+ Ka7 8 b8Q+ Ka6 9 Qb6 mate

360) V.Smyslov
Moi Etyudy, 2000



White to play

Level 5

It's promotion; a race between White's b-pawn plus extra knight, and Black's passed pawns.

Answer: Attraction. By moving the knight to e3, we set up a future queen skewer.

1 Ne3!!

The routine move fails: 1 Ke7? g4 2 b5 g3 3 b6 g2 4 b7 g1Q 5 b8Q+ is drawn.

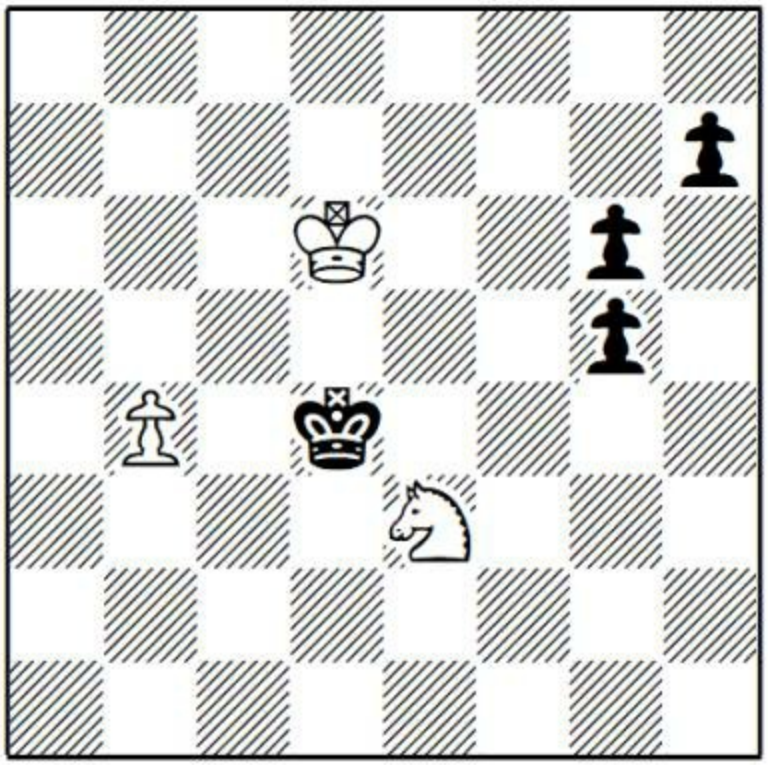
1 ... Ke5

Black's king makes a beeline for White's remaining pawn, yet now difficulties arise for Black: White's knight cuts off the light squares c4 and d5, while our king will cut off the black king's access to d6, next move. However, if 1 ... Kxe3 2 b5 g4 3 b6 g3 4 b7 g2 5 b8Q g1Q 6 Qa7+! and now we see the point of White's earlier Ne3!!: skewer. White wins.

2 Ke7!

2 b5?? blows it: 2 ... Kd6 3 b6 Kc6 4 Nc4 g4 5 Kg7 g3 6 Kxh7 g2 7 Ne5+ Kxb6 8 Nf3 is only a draw.

2 ... Kd4 3 Kd6!



Attraction. Go ahead punk: make my day. We set up our skewer theme once again.

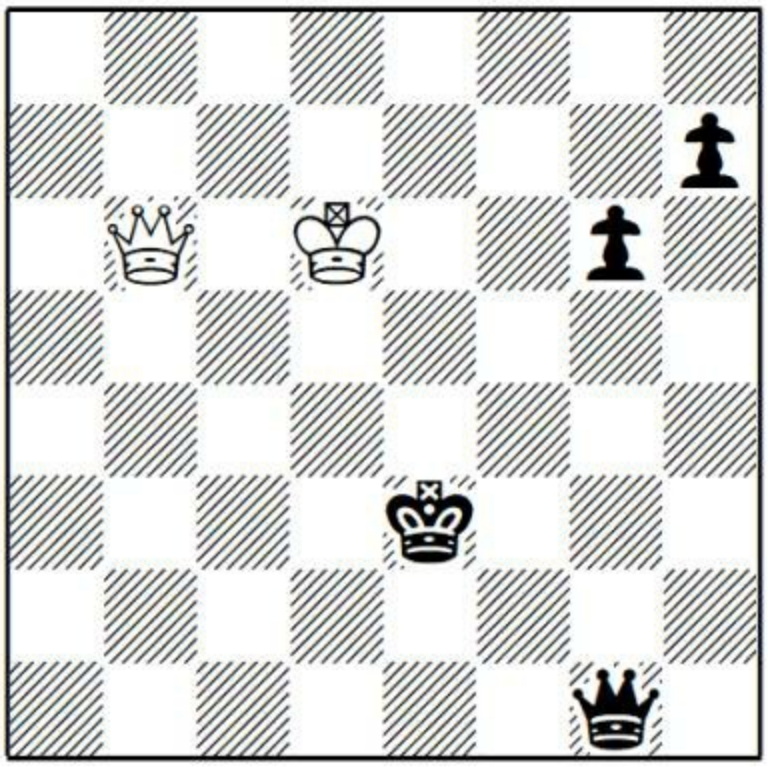
3 ... Kxe3

Or 3 ... h5 4 b5 g4 5 Nxg4! hxg4 6 b6 g3 7 b7 g2 8 b8Q g1Q and, yes, you guessed it. Skewer coming: 9 Qb6+ and White wins.

4 b5 g4 5 b6 g3 6 b7 g2 7 b8Q g1Q

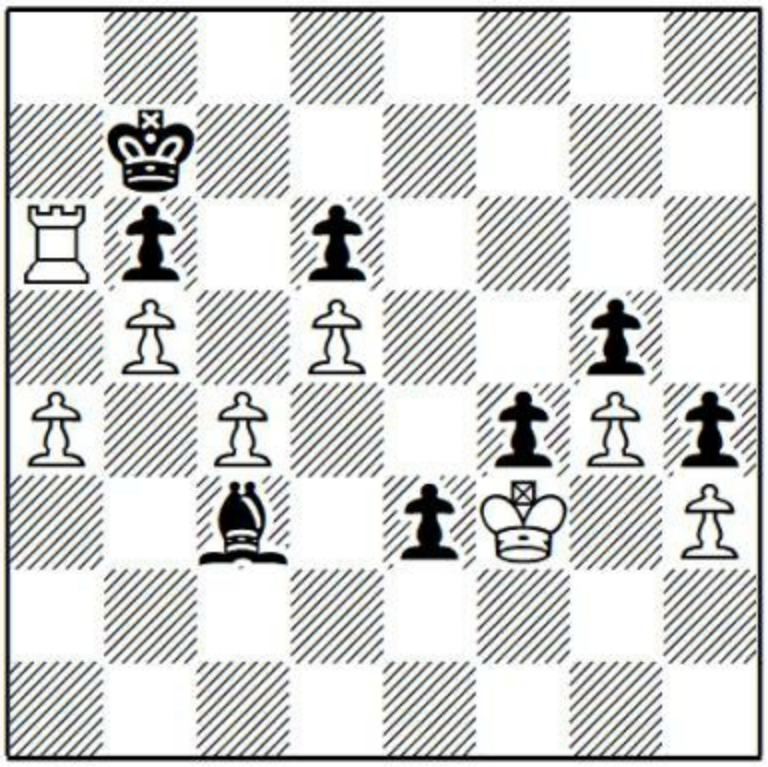
There is no way for this slow burning curse to be lifted.

8 Qb6+



Skewer! We win Black's queen. Or 8 Qa7+.

361) K.Bischoff-S.Mamedyarov
European Team Championship, Leon 2001



White to play

Level 4

It feels as if White's position is not calibrated for war. White's king is tied down by Black's passed pawns, while White's rook is poor company for Black's king, since it is walled in on a6. How did GM Bischoff win the game, despite these obstacles?

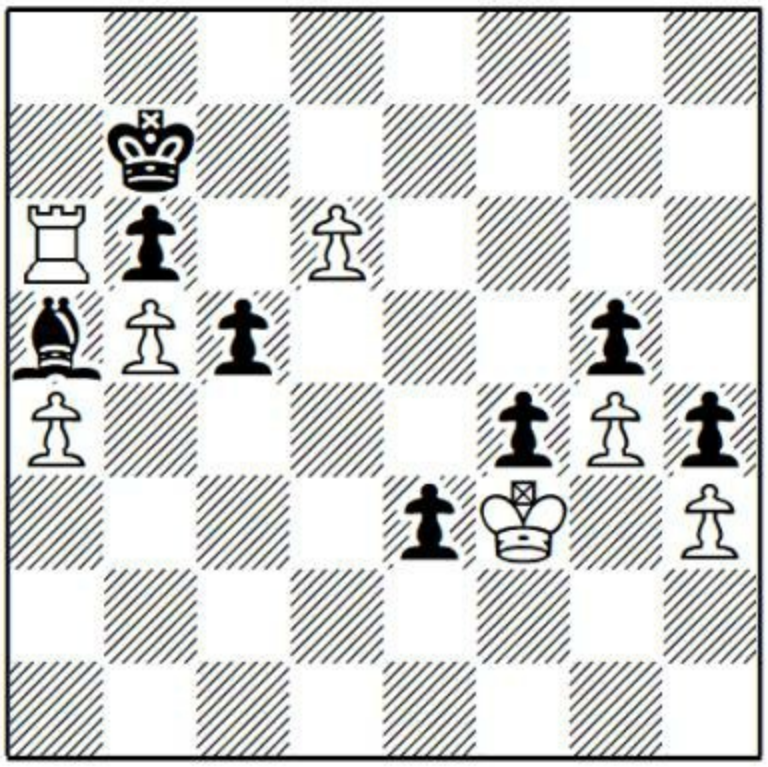
Answer: Clearance/pawn breakthrough. Black's rook is given room to escape its prison.

61 c5!! dxc5

Change tends to be messy. 61 ... bxc5 62 Rxd6 is easily won for White.

62 d6 Ba5

After 62 ... Bf6 63 a5 the second pawn breakthrough frees the trapped rook: 63 ... bxa5 64 Rxa5 Kb6 65 Ra8! c4 66 Rf8! c3 67 Rxf6 c2 68 d7+ and wins.



White to play

Level 1.5

Find White's winning move:

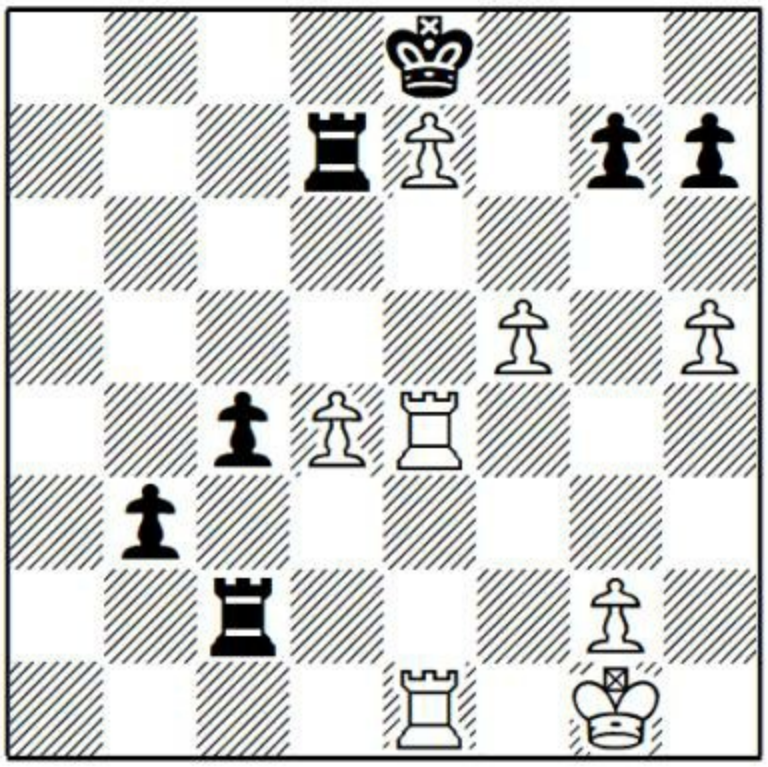
***Answer:* 63 Ra8! 1-0**

Removal of the guard/pawn promotion. After 63 ... Kxa8 (63 ... Bc3 64 d7 Bf6 65 d8Q wins) 64 d7 White promotes.

Answer no.2: 63 Ra7+! also gets the job done.

362) D.Swiercz-M.Zavortink

Internet (rapid) 2017



White to play

Level 1

How did White win the promotion race?

***Answer:* 37 h6!**

Pawn breakthrough. Push the h-pawn, creating an unstoppable passed f-pawn.

37 ... gxh6

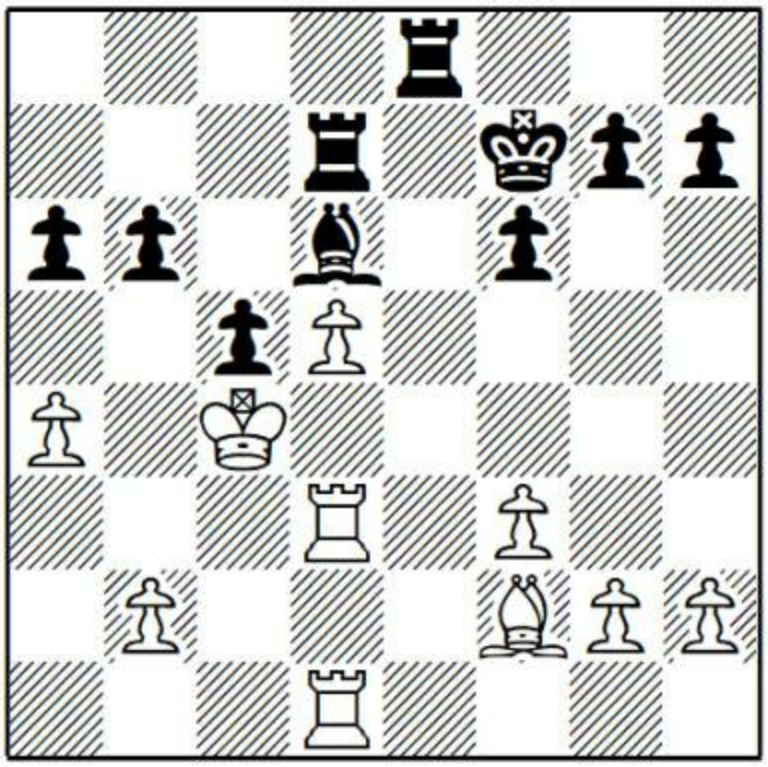
37 ... b2 is too slow: 38 hxg7 and White promotes with check.

38 f6 1-0

Black's king faces a long list of usurpers. 38 ... b2 39 f7+ Kxf7 40 e8Q+ mates in 3.

363) A.Costello-C.Lakdawala

San Diego (rapid) 2017



Black to play

Level 4

White's last move 26 Kc4 was overly optimistic. It lands White into a lost position if you find Black's idea:

Answer: Pawn breakthrough.

26 ... b5+!

Black activates his majority and wins a pawn at a minimum. If White accepts the sacrifice, then his king is at grave risk.

27 axb5 axb5+ 28 Kxb5?

How odd when one side willingly agrees to their own king's internment. Alex thought he could get away with this. He can't, since crossing our fingers doesn't constitute a healthy plan.

Instead, 28 Kb3?? drops a rook to 28 ... c4+, but 28 Kc3! is probably White's most tenacious defence, yet won't hold in the long run after 28 ... Be5+ 29 Kc2 c4 30 Re3 (30 R3d2? Bf4! wins the exchange, since if White lifts the rook, then ... Re2+ is decisive) 30 ... Red8 when White's valued

asset, his passed d-pawn, falls.

28 ... Rb8+ 29 Kc6!?

Hey, it's a free country. IM Alex Costello is an optimistic man.

After 29 Kc4 Rb4+ 30 Kc3 Be5+ 31 Kd2 Rxb2+ 32 Ke1 c4 33 Re3 (33 R3d2? Bc3 pins and wins) 33 ... c3 White is busted or 29 Ka4?? Ra7 mate.

29 ... Ke7

Threat: ... Rc7 mate.

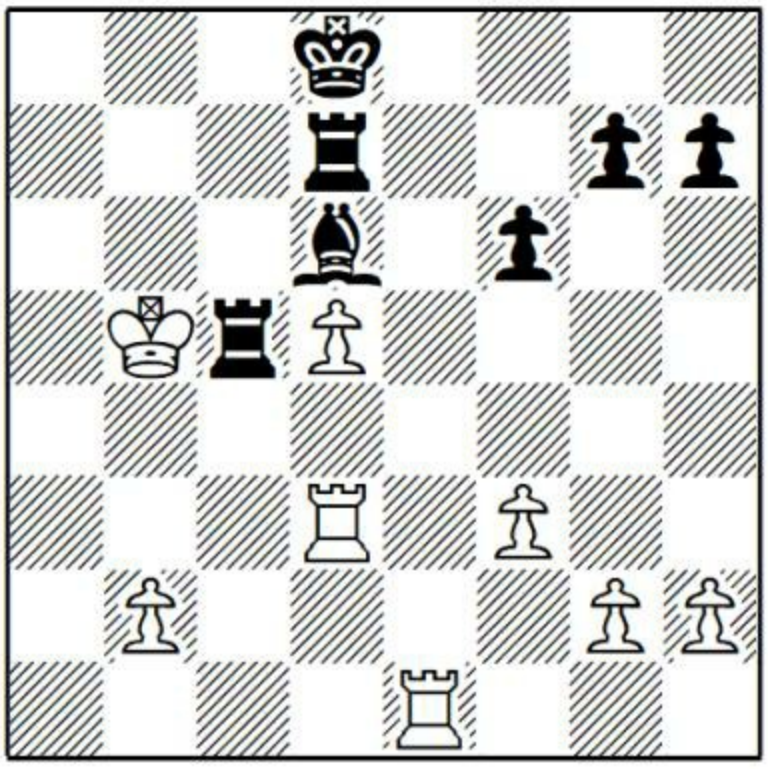
30 Re1+ Kd8

Even on d8, the black king participates in the mating attack.

31 Bxc5

Alex told me he originally intended 31 Rde3?? and then realized I had 31 ... Rc7+! 32 Kxd6 Rb6 mate. The mating theme reappears, the way shadow follows form.

31 ... Rc8+ 32 Kb5 Rxc5+

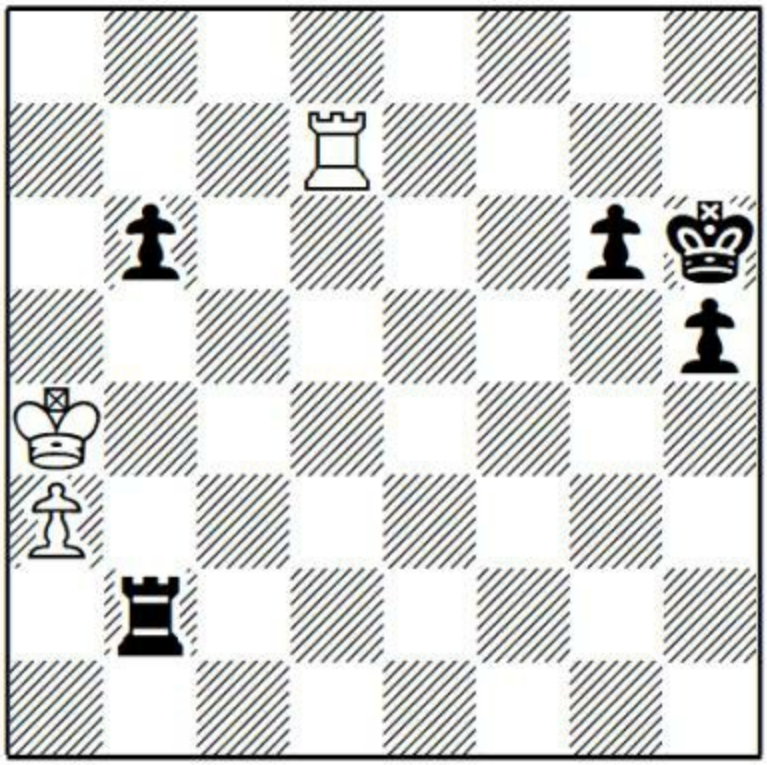


I won in a few moves with the extra piece.

20) Perpetual Check

In this chapter the seemingly lost side pulls out a miraculous draw, via a hidden perpetual check. Janowski was a notorious bitter ender, who often refused to resign. Here his non-resignation policy was rewarded handsomely with a draw, when down two clean pawns:

364) D.Janowski-E.Grünfeld
Marianske Lazne 1925



White to play
Level 2
How can White hold a draw?
Answer: Mad Rook/stalemate. One glance tells us that White's king and

pawn are unable to move. If White rids himself of his rook, then it will be stalemate; if the rook isn't taken, then White delivers perpetual check.

61 Rh7+!

"Only a fool would fall for a trap as simple as this one," I thought, as I recalled the multiple tournament games where I fell for this theme.

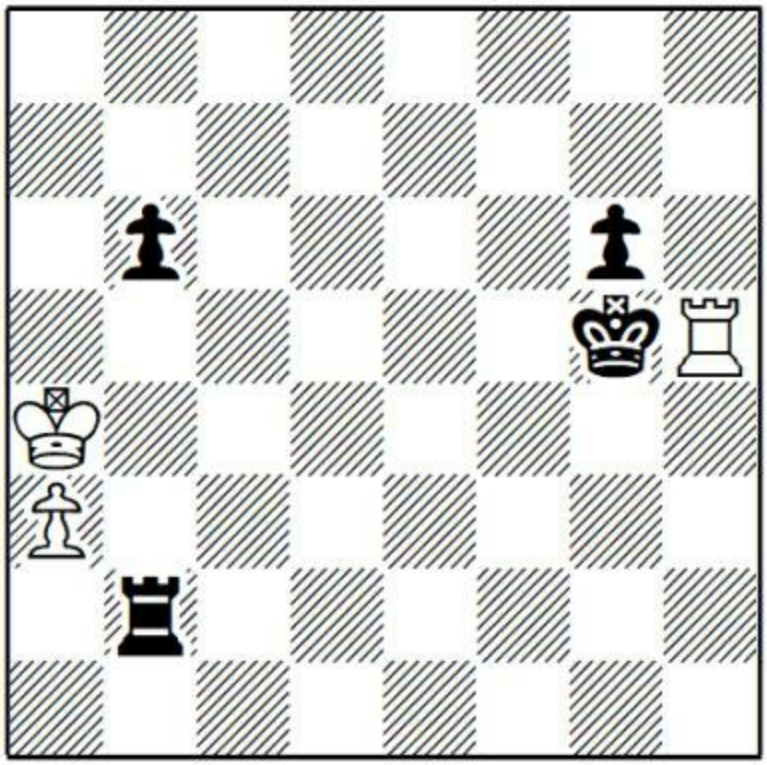
61 ... Kg5

61 ... Kxh7 is immediate stalemate.

62 Rxh5+! Kf6

Or 62 ... Kf4 63 Rf5+ Ke3 64 Re5+ Kd3 65 Re3+ Kc2 66 Re2+ Kb1 67 Re1+ Ka2. Safe at last? No! 68 Ra1+! Kxa1 is stalemate.

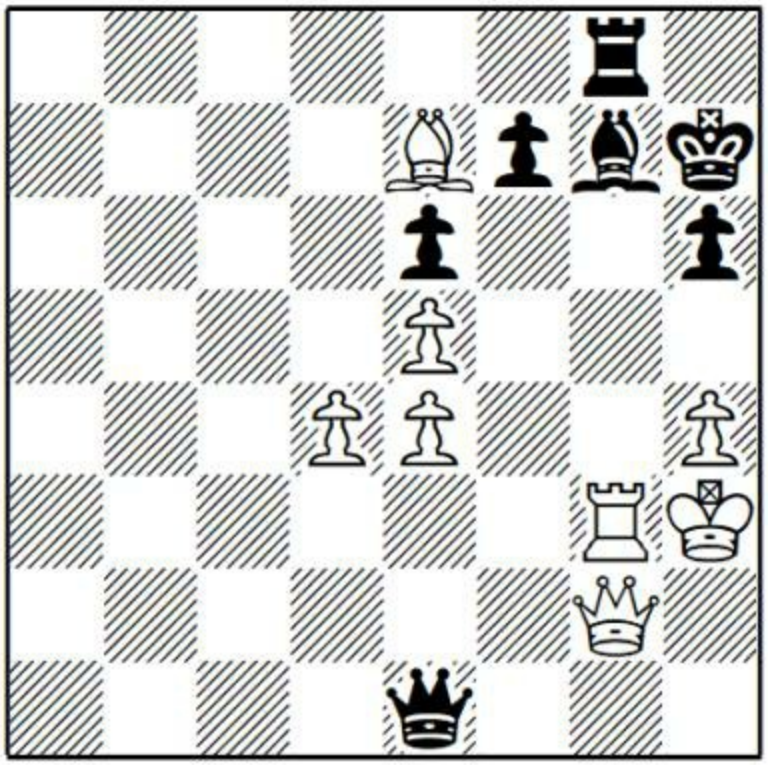
63 Rf5+! Kg7 64 Rf7+ Kh6 65 Rh7+ Kg5 66 Rh5+



Black is unable to evade perpetual check and agrees to stalemate next move.

66 ... gxh5 ½-½

365) Z.Ribli-O.Romanishin
Novi Sad 1982



Black to play

Level 4

Black is totally tangled up and White is about to pile up on the pin with Bf6 next. Romanishin's prayers were answered with a deep, defensive combination:

***Answer:* 52 ... Bf6!!**

At first the move appears insane, since it hangs both bishop and rook.

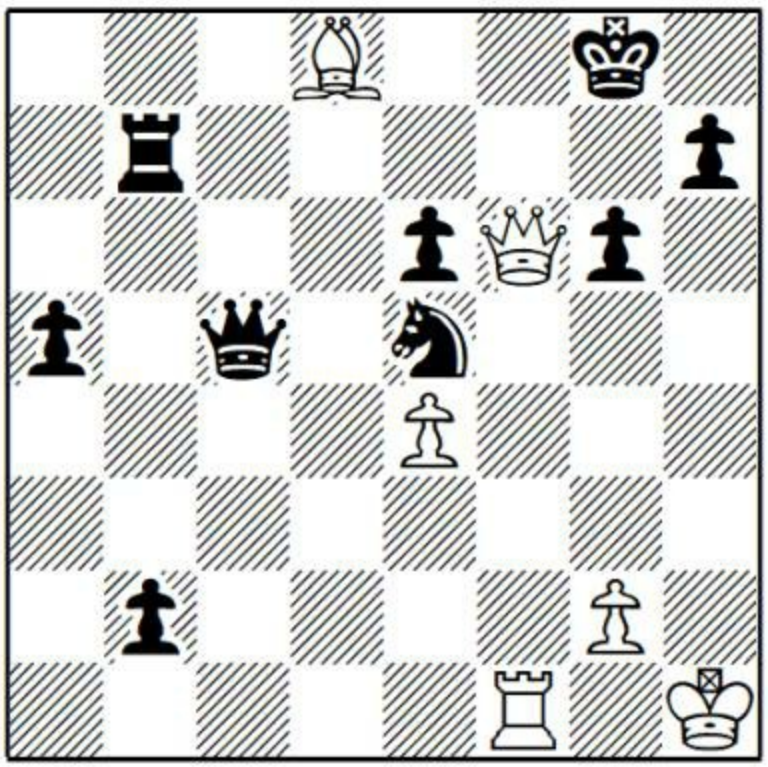
53 Bxf6

53 Rxg8?? is a catastrophic error: 53 ... Qxh4 mate.

53 ... Rxg3+ 54 Qxg3 Qh1+ ½-½

Black has perpetual check: 55 Qh2 Qf3+ 56 Qg3 Qh1+ 57 Kg4 Qxe4+ 58 Qf4 Qg2+ 59 Qg3 (not 59 Kh5?? Qg6 mate) 59 ... Qe4+ 60 Kh5 (60 Kh3 Qh1+ repeats) 60 ... Qf5+ 61 Bg5 (this puny harem eunuch is no match for Black's heavily muscled queen) 61 ... Qg6+ 62 Kg4 Qf5+ 63 Kh5 Qg6+.

366) G.Kasparov-V.Tukmakov
Kislovodsk 1982



White to play

Level 4

Black is about to promote and his second and first ranks appear to be adequately covered. Kasparov found a study-like interference shot which allowed him to deliver perpetual check:

Answer: Interference.

43 Bc7!!

After 43 Qxe6+?? Nf7 44 Qe8+ Qf8 Black defends and wins.

43 ... Rxc7

Tukmakov has nothing better than to accept the coming perpetual check:

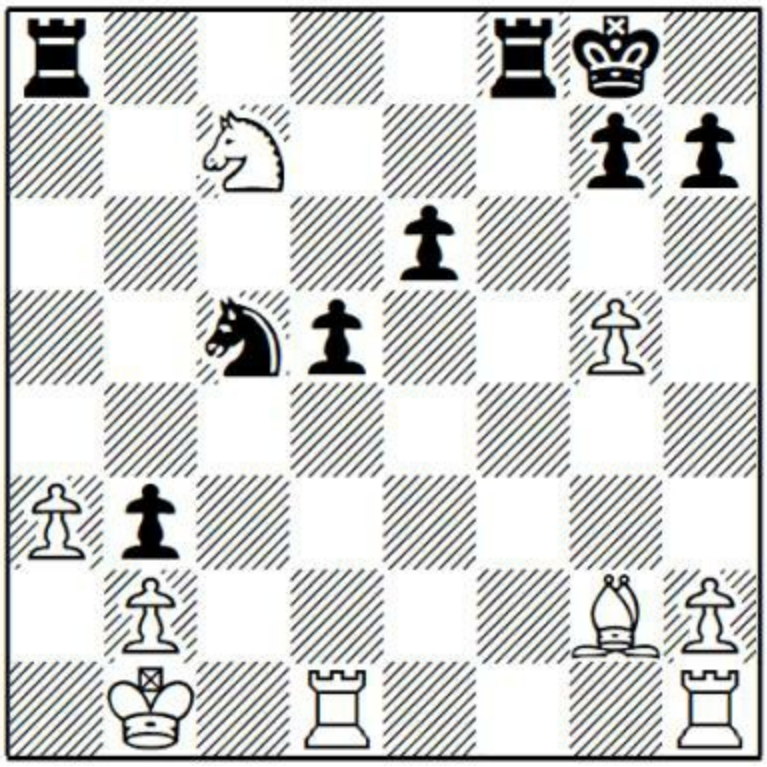
a) 43 ... b1Q?? 44 Qd8+ Kg7 45 Bxe5+ Qxe5 (45 ... Kh6 46 Qh4 mate) 46 Qf8 mate.

b) 43 ... Qxc7?? 44 Qf8 mate.

c) 43 ... Ng4 44 Qd8+ Kg7 45 Be5+!! (overloaded defenders) 45 ... Nxe5 (not 45 ... Qxe5?? 46 Qf8 mate) 46 Qf6+ Kh6 47 Qh4+ Kg7 48 Qf6+ Kg8 49 Qd8+ is perpetual check.

44 Qd8+ Kg7 45 Qf6+ ½-½

367) P.Svidler-R.Kasimdzhanov
FIDE World Championship, San Luis 2005



Black to play

Level 4

It looks like Black must resign. Not only is he down a piece, but his a8-rook is under attack and White also threatens Nxe6! followed by Bxd5. Do you see Black's miracle save?

Answer: Give up the a8-rook and go for a counterattack/perpetual check by targeting b2.

32 ... Rf2!!

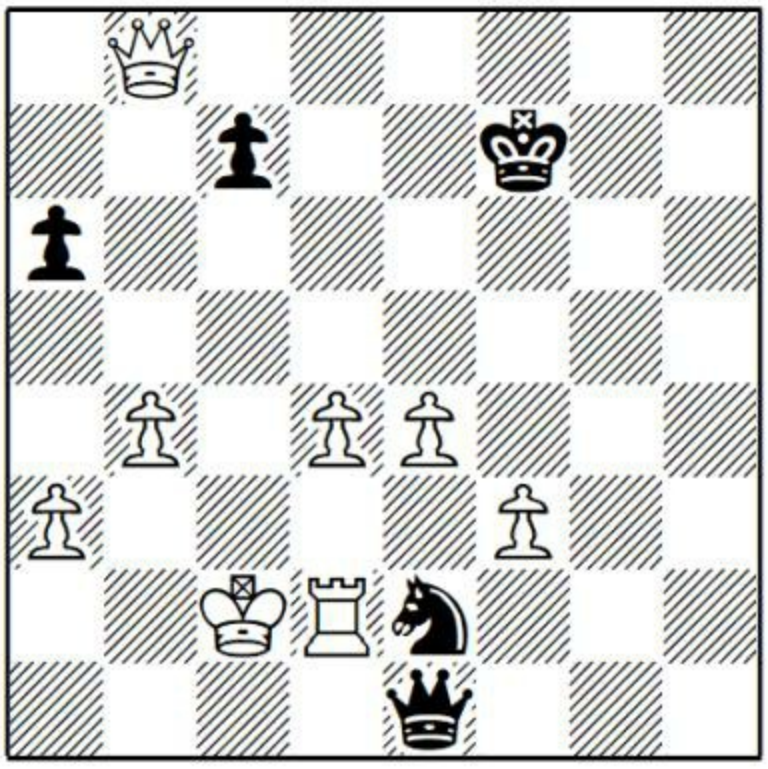
It is generally considered unwise to threaten war with a tanking economy, but there are exceptions.

If 32 ... Rac8?? 33 Nxe6! Nxe6 34 Bxd5 Rfe8 35 Rde1 Kf7 36 Rhf1+ White wins the pinned knight and the game.

33 Nxa8 Na4! 34 Rd3 ½-½

Not 34 Bxd5?? Rxb2+ 35 Kc1 Rc2+ 36 Kb1 Nc3+ 37 Ka1 b2 mate (or 37 ... Ra2 mate), whereas 34 Rd3 Rxb2+ 35 Ka1 Ra2+ 36 Kb1 Rb2+ 37 Kc1 Rc2+ is perpetual check. If White attempts to evade it with 38 Kd1?? he gets mated with 38 ... Nb2+ 39 Ke1 Nxd3+ 40 Kf1 (40 Kd1 Nf2+ 41 Ke1 b2 promotes and mates) 40 ... b2, which promotes and mates in 3.

368) J.Stocek-I.Smirin
Czech League 2005



White to play
Level 3

How did Black force a draw?

***Answer:* 32 ... Qc1+ 33 Kd3**

Or 33 Kb3 Qxd2 34 Qxc7+ Kg6 35 Qd6+ Kg5 36 Qxa6 Nxd4+ 37 Ka4 (37 Kc4?? walks into a skewer with 37 ... Qe2+!) 37 ... Qd1+ 38 Ka5 Qxf3 39 a4 Qxe4 when the position is drawn.

33 ... Nf4+ 34 Ke3 Ng2+!

The knight can give check on g2, since White's rook is pinned.

35 Ke2 Nf4+ 36 Ke3 Ng2+

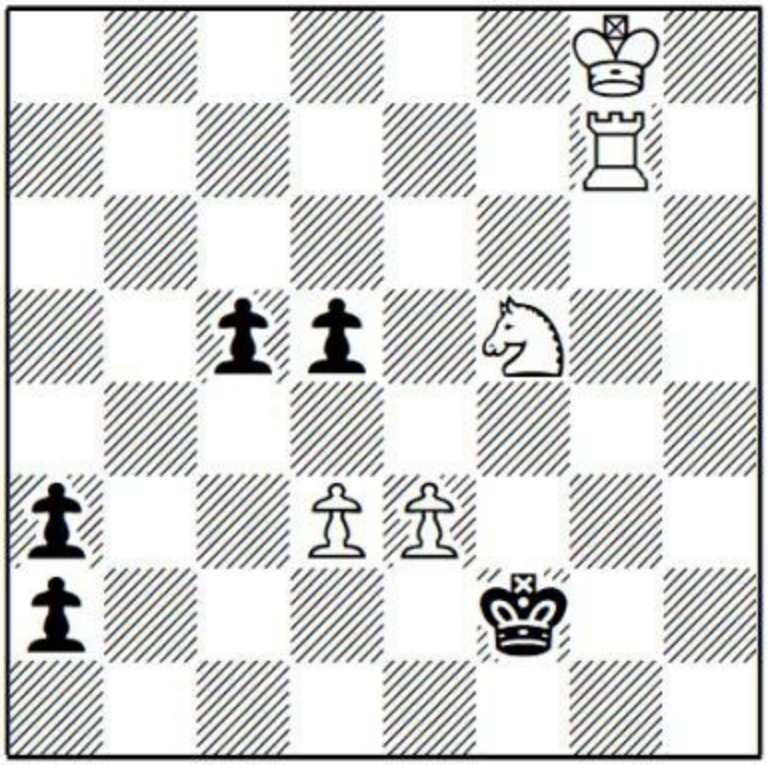
The knight is a hero who saves the day, straight out of central casting.

37 Ke2 ½-½

The game ends in perpetual check.

369) V.Smyslov

Moi Etyudy, 2005



White to play

Level 5

There is no way for White to halt Black's promotion to a new queen. We don't have to when perpetual check is available:

***Answer:* 1 Rf7!!**

White calmly allows promotion.

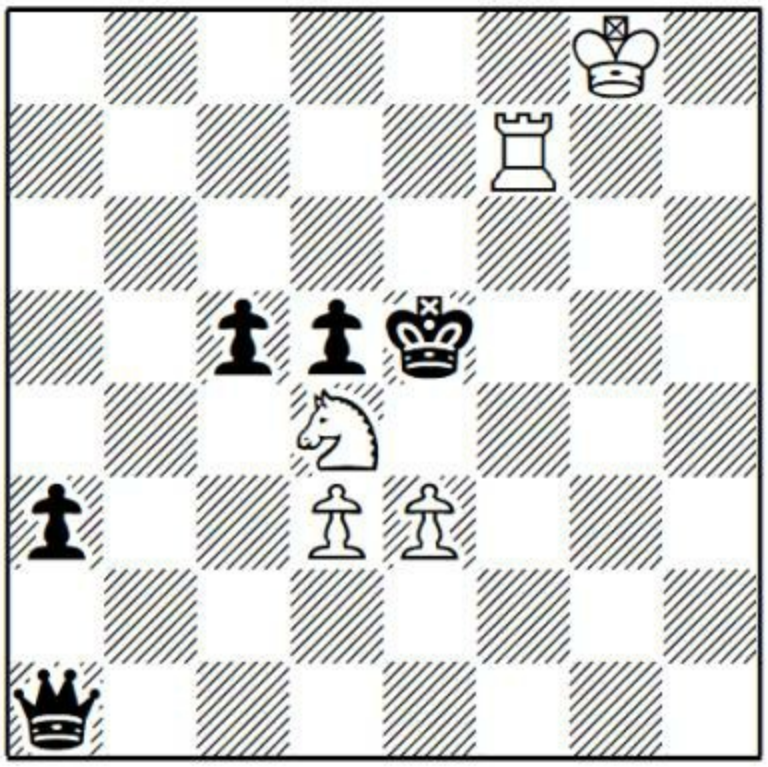
1 ... a1Q

Instead, 1 ... Ke2 2 Ng3+ Kxd3 3 Rf1 Kc3 (not 3 ... Kxe3?? 4 Ra1 c4 5 Rxa2 d4 6 Rxa3+ c3 7 Kf7 Kd2 8 Ne4+ Kd3 9 Nf2+ Ke2 10 Ra2+ Ke3 11 Ke6 d3 12 Nd1+ Kd4 13 Ra4+ when White wins) 4 Kf7 Kb2 5 Rf2+ Kb3 6 Rf1 is a repetition draw.

2 Nd4+! Kg3

Avoiding 2 ... Kxe3?? 3 Nc2+, which forks king and queen and 2 ... Ke1?? 3 Nc2+ has the same problem.

3 Rg7+ Kh4 5 Rh7+ Kg5 5 Rg7+ Kf6 6 Rf7+ Ke5



White to play

Level 3

We must keep a grasp on the position's nuances. Should White's rook check on e7 or f5? Only one move works.

***Answer:* 7 Rf5+!**

The check on f5 is correct. After 7 Re7+?? Kd6 8 Re6+ Kd7 White just ran out of checks.

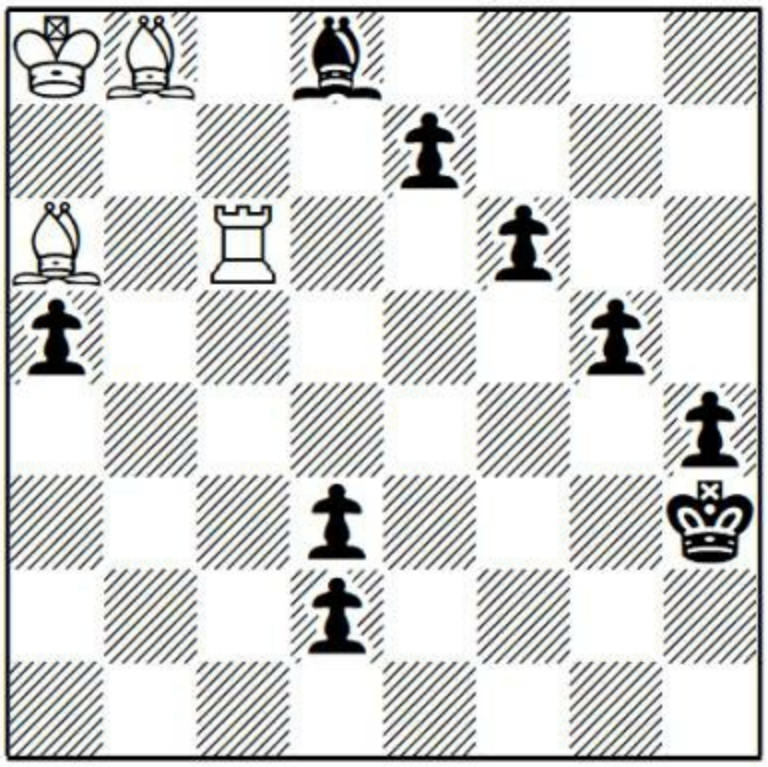
7 ... Kd6 8 Rf6+ Kc7 9 Rf7+ Kb6 10 Rf6+ Kc7

But, but, but this is unconstitutional. Black's king is barred from escape via a5: 12 ... Ka5?? is not possible due to the forking 13 Nb3+.

11 Rf7+

Perpetual check.

370) V.Smyslov
Moi Etyudy, 2005



White to play
Level 4

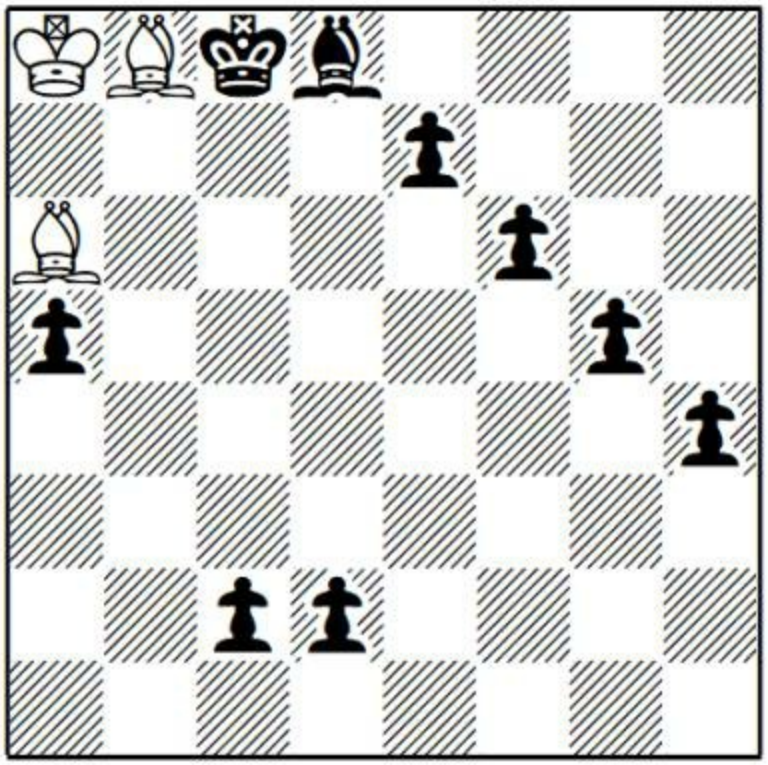
All you need to do is find one shocking move and White holds the draw:

Answer: Move the rook to the unlikely square, c2.

1 Rc2!! dxc2

Not 1 ... d1Q?? (if a nuclear warhead detonates within our country, we are not going to be reassured if your president suggests that we carry on life as usual) 2 Bc8+ e6 3 Bxe6+ f5 4 Bxf5+ g4 5 Rh2 mate.

2 Bf1+ Kg4 3 Be2+ Kf5 4 Bd3+ Ke6 5 Bc4+ Kd7 6 Bb5+ Kc8 7 Ba6+

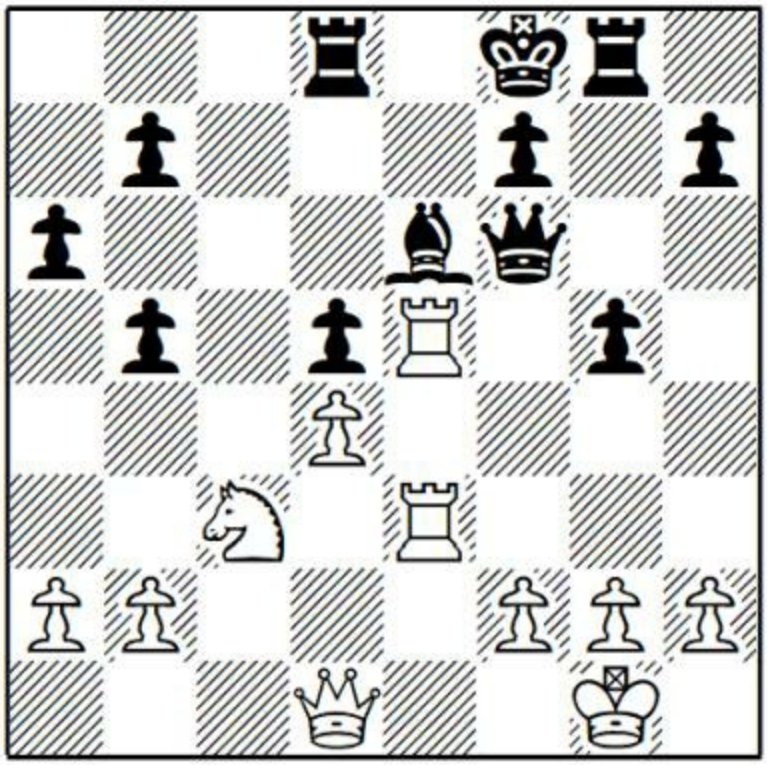


And so on and so forth!

21) Pins

The official description of a pin is one where our attacking piece paralyzes a defending piece, which is unable to move without exposing a more valuable piece on its other side. If a defending piece is pinned to the king, then it is illegal to move away the pinned piece, if in doing so the defending king is exposed to check. But you all knew this!

371) P.Morphy-A.Anderssen
Paris 1858



White to play
Level 1
Let's start with a simple example. Anderssen's position is the dirty

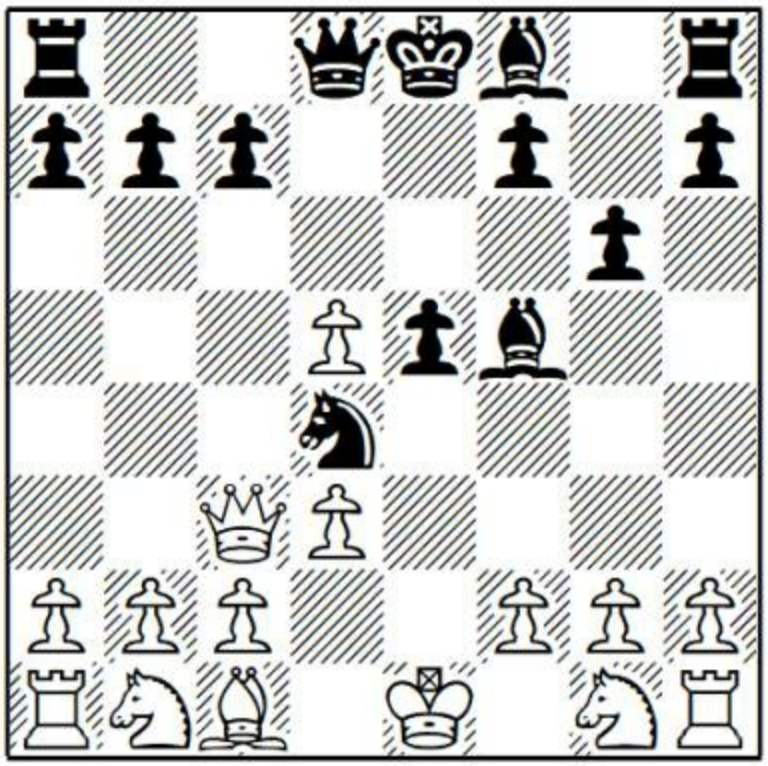
windshield where someone writes: “Wash me”. How did Morphy put Anderssen’s wobbly position away?

Answer: Chop on e6 and then pin the queen with Rf3 next.

20 Rxe6! 1-0

20 ... fxe6 21 Rf3 wins.

372) Adow-Borissow
St. Petersburg 1889



Black to play

Level 1

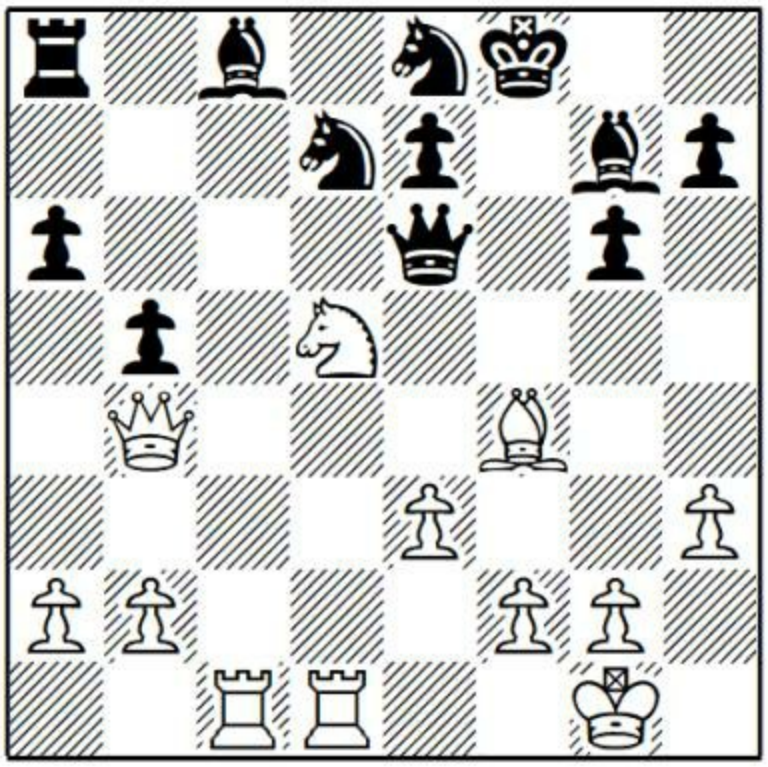
White is grossly behind in development and just one not-so-tough-to-find move ends the game.

Answer: Pin/knight fork.

9 ... Bb4! 0-1

10 Qxb4 Nxc2+ loses the queen all the same.

373) M.Tal-S.Johannessen
Riga 1959



White to play

Level 4.5

Tal was the man who made the world believe in magic again. I really didn't know what chapter to place this game into, since there are so many tactical themes within it. I placed it in the Pin chapter since it seems to be the most dominant theme. Tal began a series of combinations. How would you continue as White?

Answer: Let's begin with an overloaded defender trick by transferring the rook to c6.

21 Rc6! Qf7

Not 21 ... Qxc6?? 22 Qxe7+ Kg8 23 Qxe8+ Bf8 24 Ne7+ (knight fork) 24 ... Kg7 25 Nxc6.

22 Nc7! Nxc7

After 22 ... Bb7 23 Ne6+ Kg8 24 Rxd7! Bxc6 25 Rxe7 Bf8 26 Nxf8 Black is unable to recapture, as 26 ... Qxf8?? is met with 27 Qb3+ Kh8 28 Be5+ Nf6 29 Qe6, forcing mate.

23 Rxc7 Qe6

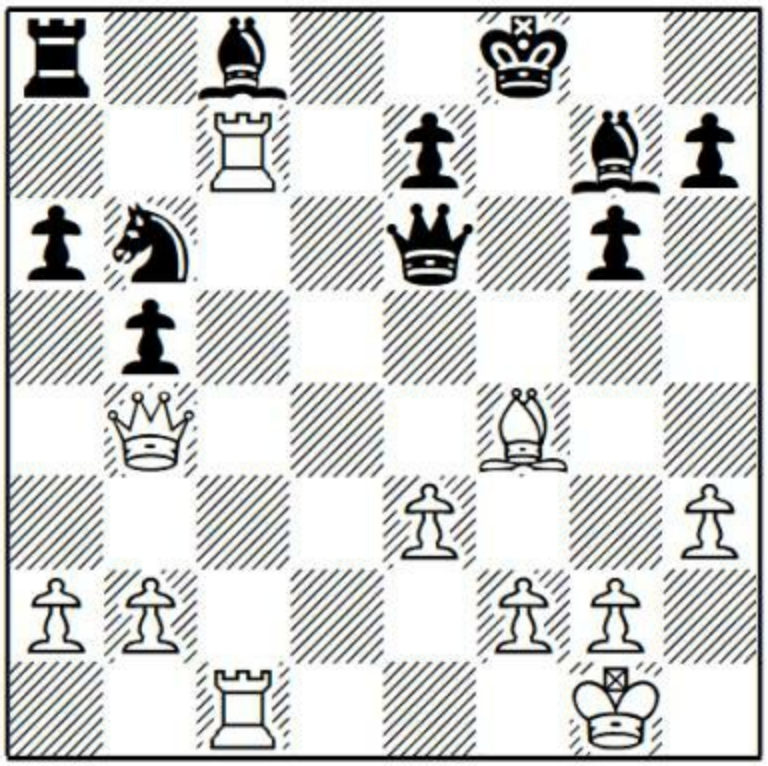
23 ... Nf6 24 Rd8+ Ne8 25 Rxe7! Qxe7 26 Bd6 wins Black's queen.

24 Rdc1

Threat: Rxc8, forcing Black's knight to move.

24 ... Nb6

24 ... Nf6 is met with the same trick.



White to play

Level 3

Do you see White's shot?

Answer: Pin. The rook is immune.

25 Rxe7!

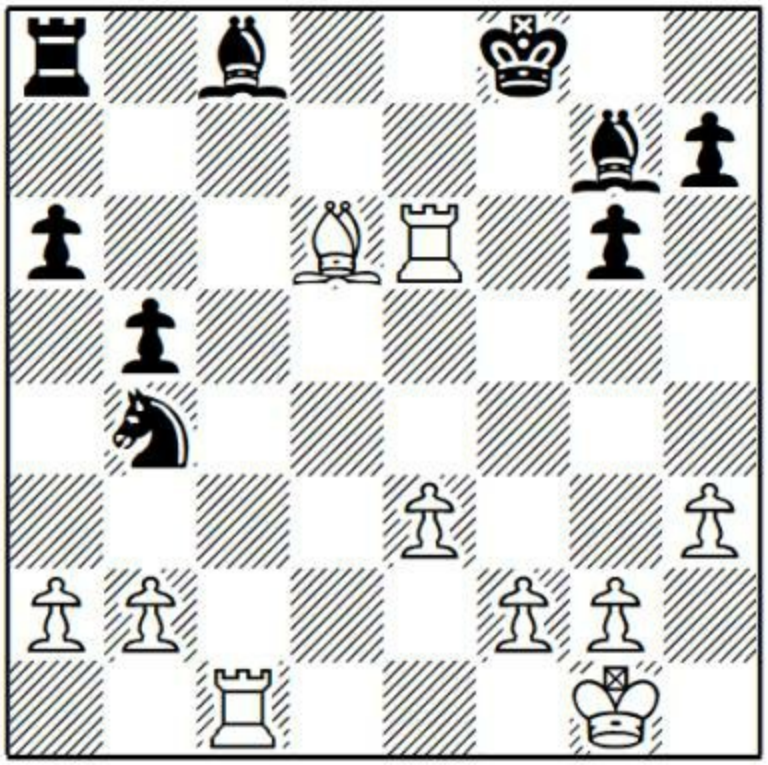
Tal's move is even stronger than the also winning 25 R7c6! Nd5 26 Qc5.

Too many black pieces hang simultaneously. This is sort of the spoiled-sport, no fun version which wouldn't appeal to Tal's endless sense of adventure. I would have picked this way, since it is easier to calculate, but maybe that is why Tal is Tal and I am just me.

25 ... Nd5

Or 25 ... Qxe7 26 Bd6 and game over.

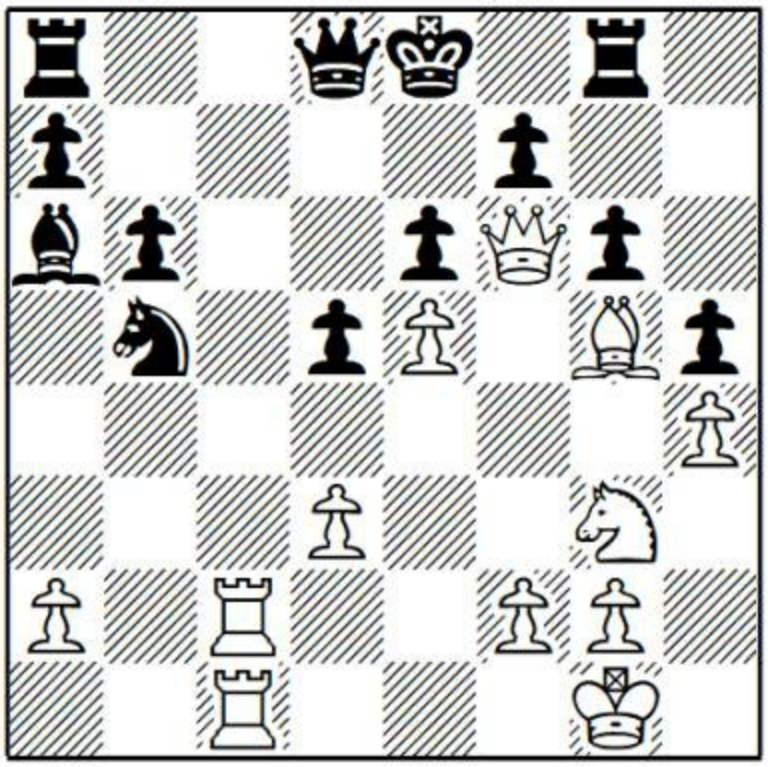
26 Rxe6+ Nxb4 27 Bd6+! 1-0



Double attack. After 27 ... Kf7 28 Re7+ Kg8 (or 28 ... Kf6 29 Bxb4 Bf5 30 Rc6+ Kg5 31 Rxg7) 29 Rcc7! Bf8 (29 ... Bxb2 30 Re8 mates) 30 Re8 Bb7 31 Rxa8 Bxa8 32 Rc8 White wins two pieces.

374) D.Bronstein-B.Goldenov

Kiev 1944



White to play

Level 3

Bronstein can win the exchange by swapping on d8. Do you see a continuation which is far more devastating for Black?

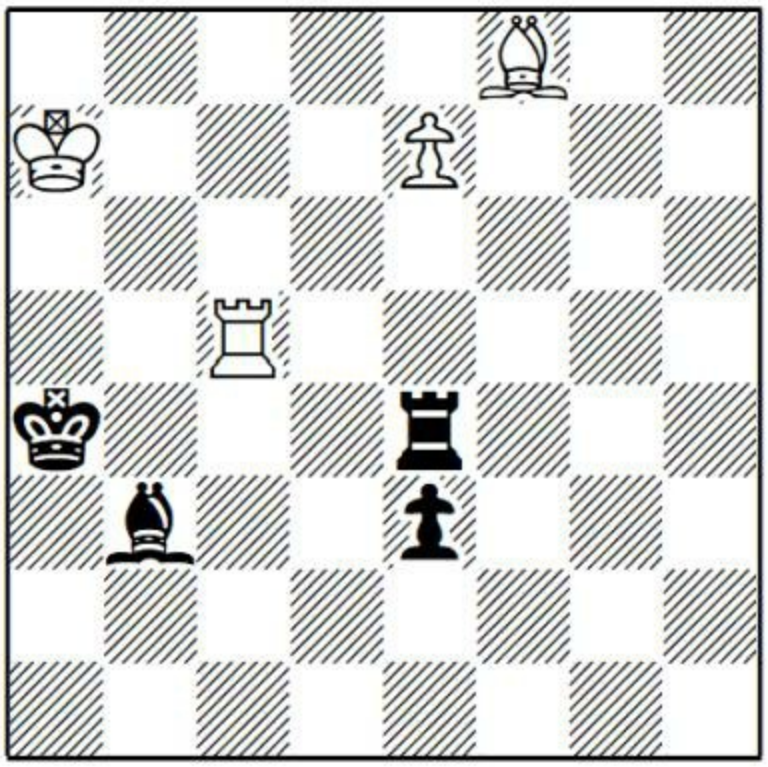
Answer: Pinned piece/overloaded defender.

24 Rc8!! 1-0

After 24 ... Rxc8 25 Rxc8 neither black bishop or queen can take the rook, due to the mating threats on d8 and e7. Bronstein's shot is far more aesthetically pleasing than the lethargically unimaginative (yet still winning) 24 Qxd8+ Rxd8 25 Bxd8 Kxd8 26 a4 Nd4 27 Rc7.

375) M.Botvinnik

Shakhmaty v SSSR, 1949



White to play

Level 4.5

Vasily Smyslov is not the only over-the-board world champion composer in this book. Botvinnik said he got the seed of the idea from a Gulyaev study from the previous year. It's a mutual promotion race where White looks lucky to try and hold a draw. Look deeper and you may find White's hidden win:

Answer: Swing they rook laterally to f5, in preparation for Rf4!.

1 Rf5!!

After 1 Rc1? e2 2 Re1 only Black can win.

1 ... e2

Alternatively:

a) 1 ... Bf7 2 Rxf7 Kb3 (2 ... e2 3 Rf4! e1Q 4 e8Q+! wins) 3 Rf4! Re6 4 Rb4+ Kc2 5 Rb8 e2 6 e8Q e1Q (in such positions, the player to move nearly always wins) 7 Rc8+ Kd1 8 Rd8+ Kc2 9 Qa4+ Kb2 10 Rb8+ forces mate in 4 moves at the most.

b) 1 ... Re6 2 Rf6! Re5 3 Rf4+ Kb5 4 Rf5! wins.

2 Rf4!

This rook is The Flash on crack. Black promotes first, yet loses.

Step 2: Removal of the guard/pinned piece.

2 ... e1Q

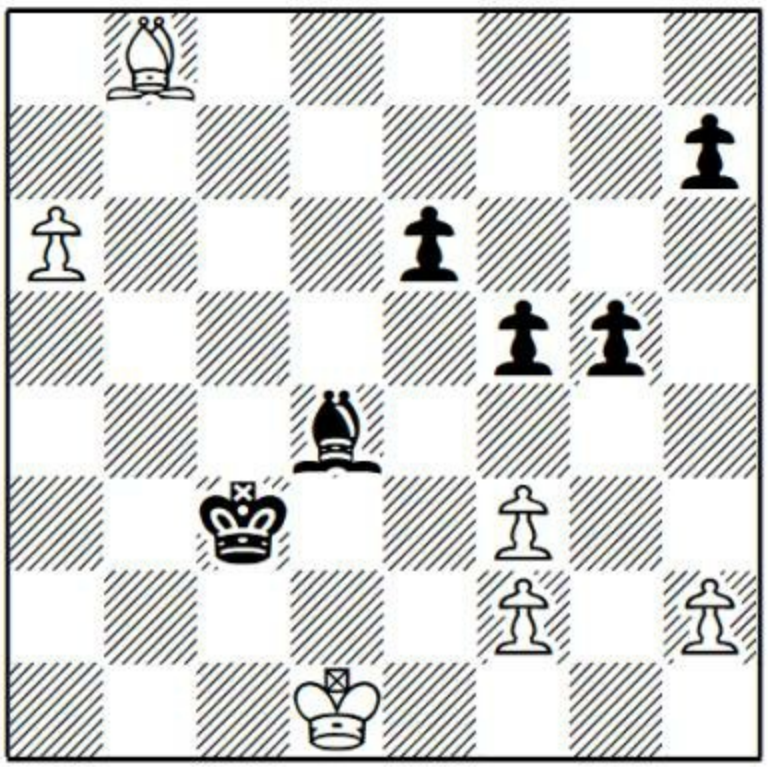
Or 2 ... Rxf4 3 e8Q+ Ka5 4 Qe5+ Ka4 5 Qxf4+ and mate in 3.

3 e8Q+

3 ... Ka5 4 Rf5+! forces mate in 4.

376) R.Fischer-Euwe

Leipzig Olympiad 1960



White to play

Level 2

Euwe's position is a feeble, sputtering candle, whose life can be extinguished by a single gust of wind from an open window. 35 a7 wins a

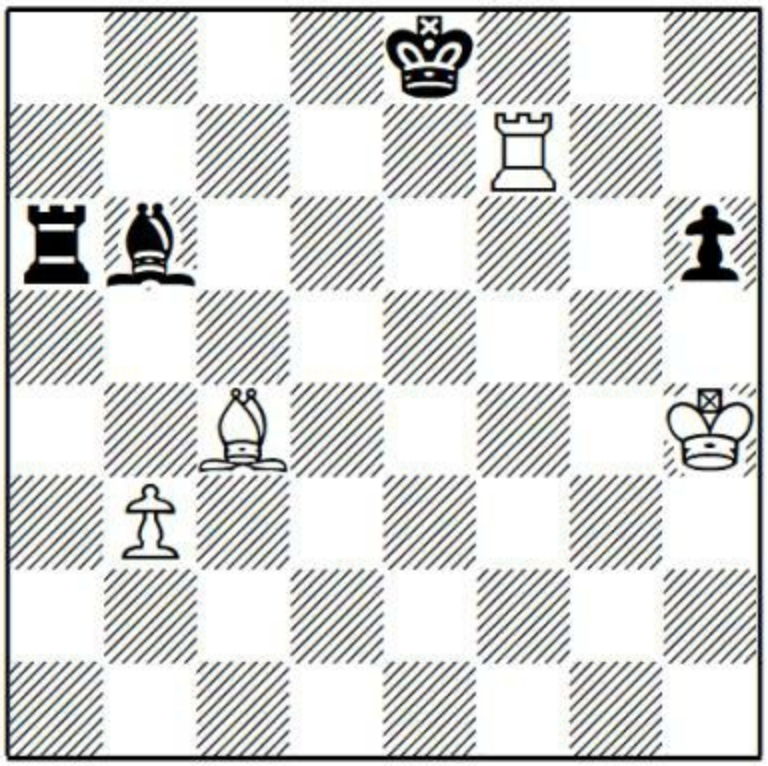
piece. Yet Emanuel Lasker advised that if we find a good move, we should keep searching, since there may be an ever better one. Is there an even more efficient way for Bobby to win?

Answer: Pinned piece/pawn promotion.

36 Be5! 1-0

After 36 ... Bxe5 37 a7 White makes a new queen.

377) A.Kakovin
Olympic ty Schach, 1960



White to play

Level 4.5

The final combination is not deep, yet it isn't easy to see, since it is so counter-intuitive.

Answer: **1 Rf6!!**

It isn't easy to unlearn a habit. This is why composed works are so

valuable. They free our minds from the trap of orthodoxy. The vast majority of us (including me), would never consider such a move, since it walks into a simple pin with ... Bd8.

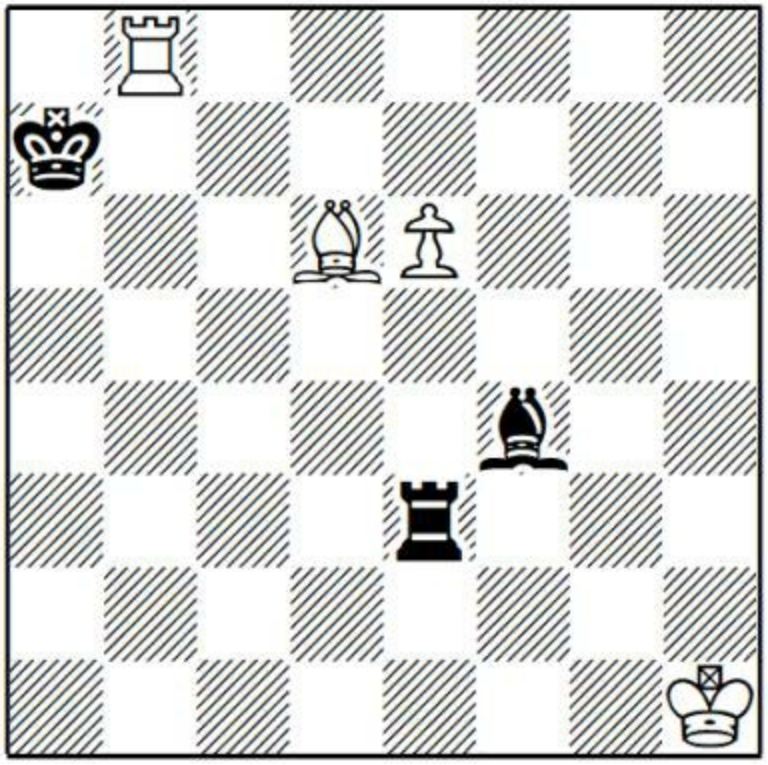
1 ... Bd8 2 Bb5+!

Ah yes, checks and balances. Zwischenzug/interference. This is the key move. Black's king is forced to move to e7, which obstructs the pin on the f6-rook.

2 ... Ke7 3 Rxa6

Winning.

378) A.Kakovin
L'Italia Scacchistica, 1961



White to play
Level 4.5
Be careful not to stumble into a theoretical draw:

Answer: **1 Bc5+!!**

1 Bxf4? Rxe6 is a theoretical draw.

1 ... Kxb8 2 Bxe3

Black must move the bishop to d6, in order to try and halt White's e-pawn.

2 ... Bd6

The bishop backpedals faster than a Cirque du Soleil cyclist, to try and halt White's promotion. 2 ... Kc7 3 Bxf4+ Kd8 4 Bd6 is an easy win for White.

3 Bf4!

Step 2: Pinned piece/removal of the guard.

3 ... Kc7

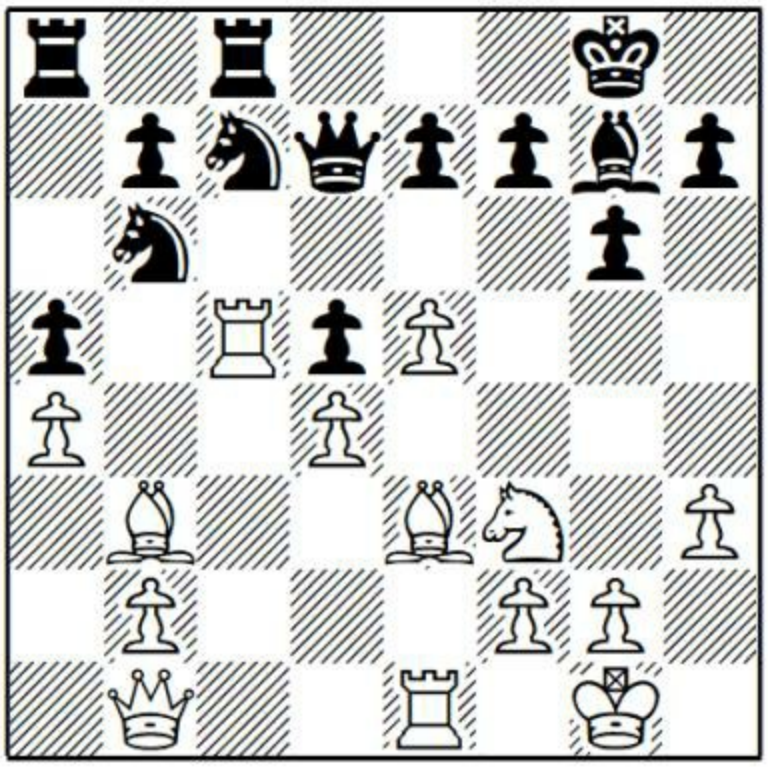
3 ... Bxf4 4 e7 promotes.

4 e7! Kd7 5 Bxd6

And White wins.

379) D.Bronstein-A.Vaisman

Tbilisi 1974



Black to play

Level 1

Should Black play ... Nxa4?

Answer: Absolutely nyet! Taking the pawn loses the c7-knight due to a pile up pin along the c-file.

23 ... Nxa4??

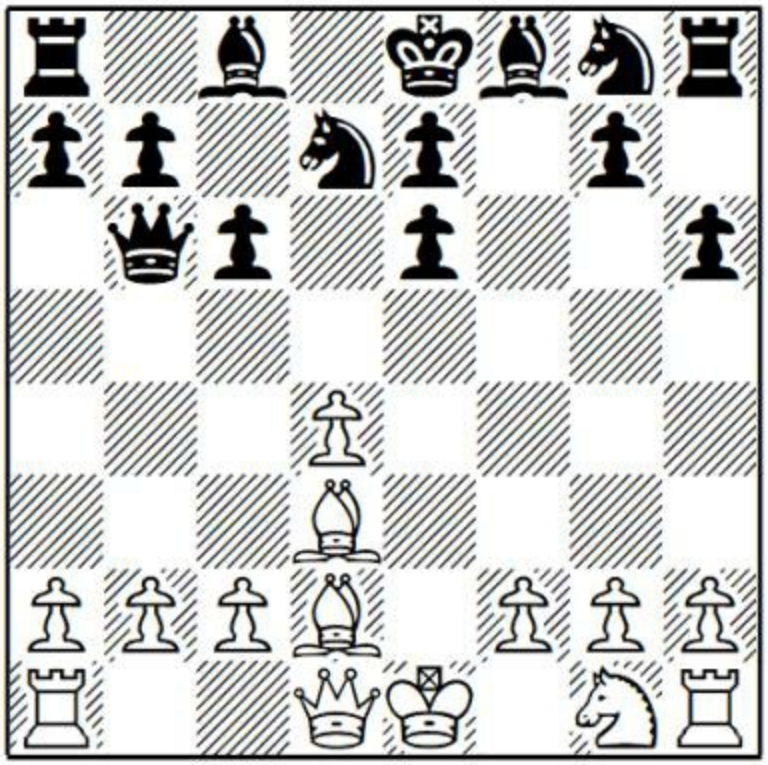
A self-inflicted gash is more painful than one inflicted by an enemy. Normally thought precedes action, but not if you are in time pressure or fatigued. Black should have been more careful and simply unraveled with 23 ... e6 24 Rec1 Bf8 25 R5c3 Ne8 with an inferior but playable position.

24 Bxa4 Qxa4 25 Rec1 1-0

Sometimes a game just ends in anticlimax. There is no defence to the coming Qc2, which wins the c7-knight.

380) J.Nunn-K.Georgiev

Linares 1988



White to play

Level 2.5

Black is up a piece, yet his position is tormented by discordant conditions, with precariously placed king and zero development. Last move Black grabbed White's not-so-hanging knight on e6. Prove why this was a blunder:

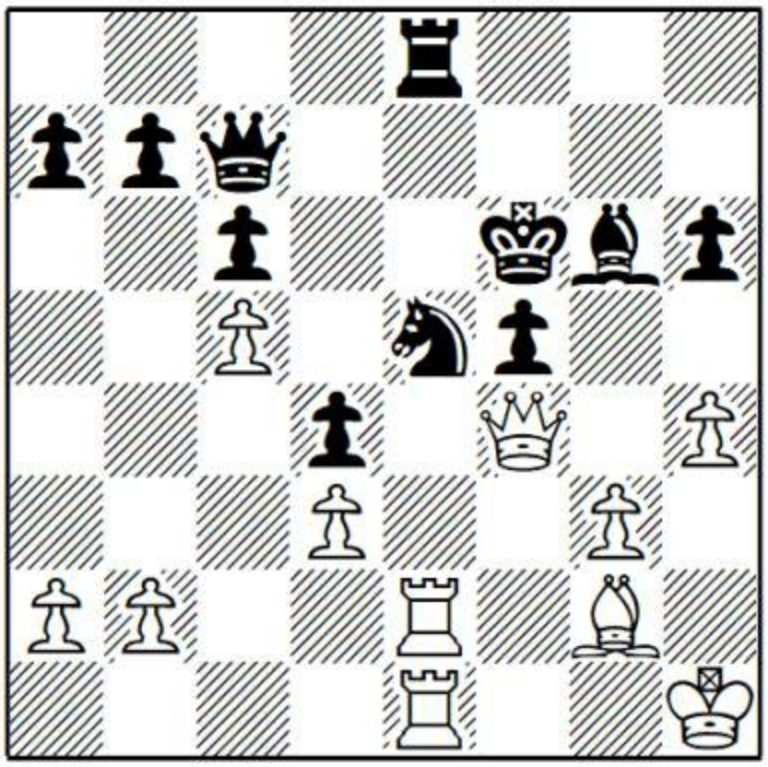
Answer: Start with the obvious queen check on h5.

9 Qh5+ Kd8 10 Ba5!

Step 2: Pin Black's queen via a5. This move isn't so easy to spot, since our attention naturally veers to the kingside and centre. Georgiev played on and lost.

381) L.Psakhis-E.Ragozin

London 1994



White to play

Level 2

Black's position is in a sorry state, since he is stuck with the irksome duty of protecting his pinned knight. All Black's position requires to go over the edge is one small shove from White. How did Psakhis put his opponent away and win more material?

Answer: Push the g-pawn, exploiting dual pins. There is no answer to g4-g5+, which chases Black's king away from defence of the pinned e5-knight.

36 g4! Re7 37 g5+

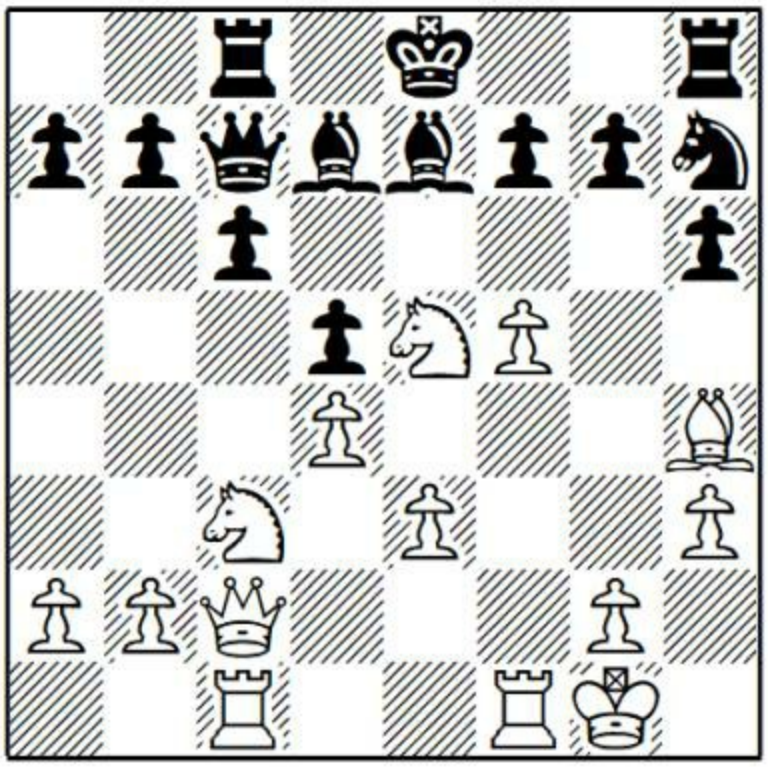
Removal of the guard. Black's knight falls.

37 ... hxg5 38 hxg5+ 1-0

After 38 ... Kg7 39 Rxe5 Black finds himself down a rook.

382) H.Olafsson-Bj.Thorfinnsson

Reykjavik 2001



White to play

Level 2

White ended the game with a simple combination:

Answer: Step 1: Exchange on e7, luring Black's king to e7.

20 Bxe7

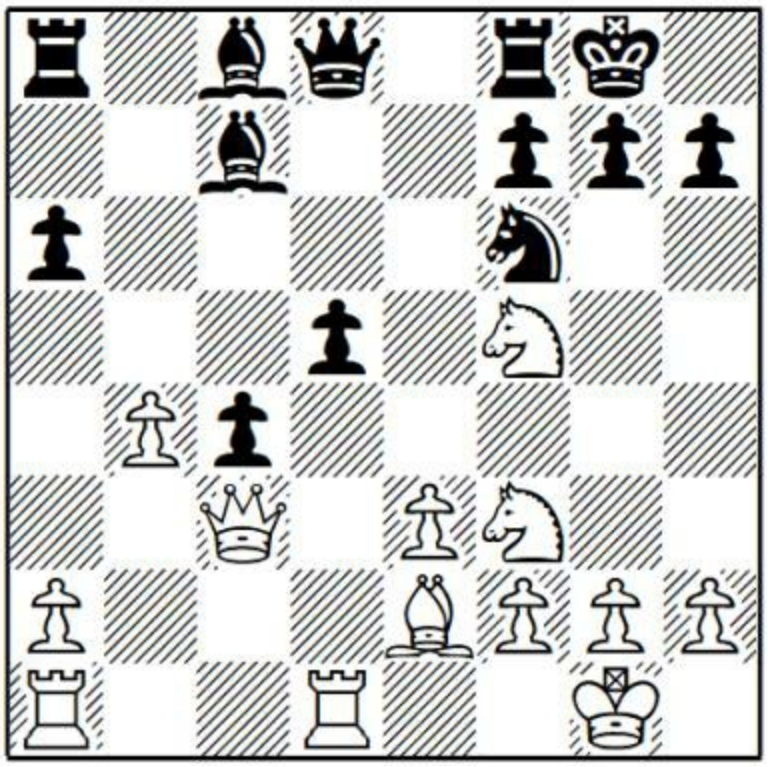
Answer no.2: Also winning is to reverse the order with 20 Nxd5! cxd5 21 Qxc7 Rxc7 22 Rxc7 Bxh4 23 Nxd7. White won a full exchange, with a crushing position.

20 ... Kxe7 21 Nxd5+! 1-0

Step 2: Pinned piece/knight fork. There is no benefit in administering medical care to the dead, so Black wisely resigned. 21 ... cxd5 22 Qxc7 Rxc7 23 Rxc7 Nf6 24 Rxb7 is completely hopeless.

383) A.Huzman-G.Kasparov

European Club Cup, Rethymnon 2003



White to play

Level 1.5

Tactical ability does not arise in occult intuition. It is simply a matter of increasing the number of patterns in our internal database. Yet there is a secondary factor: alertness. If Kasparov had the white pieces here, he would have seen Huzman's combination in a flash. Yet as Black, his attention wandered and allowed it. Kasparov's position looks OK. It isn't. What did he overlook?

Answer: Pinned piece/knight fork.

21 Rxd5!

The d5 point is the weak link. The f6-knight is unable to capture due to the mating threat on g7 and the queen is unable to capture due to the fork on e7.

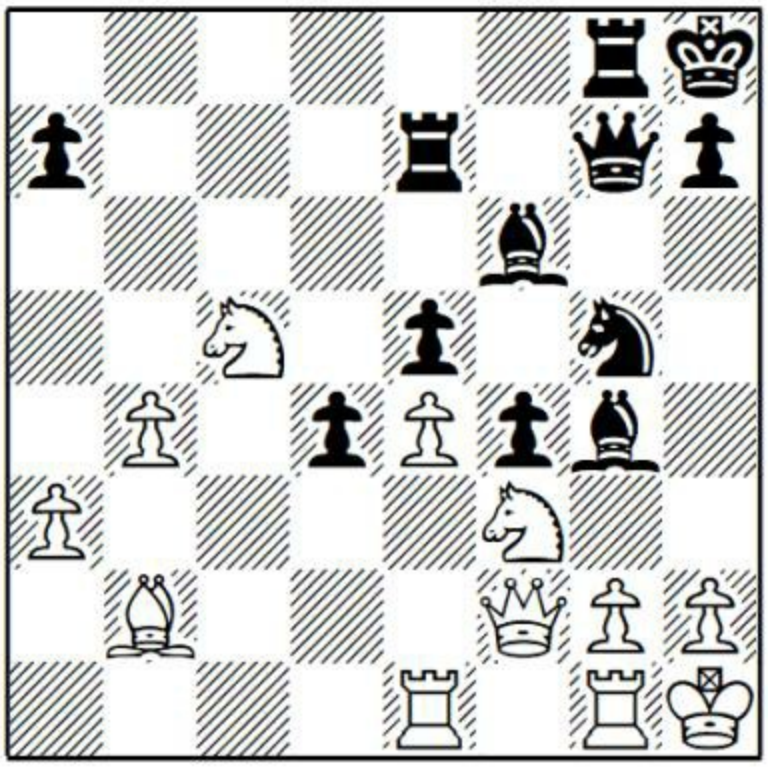
21 ... Qe8

If 21 ... Nxd5 (pinned piece) 22 Qxg7 mate or 21 ... Qxd5 22 Ne7+ (knight fork) 22 ... Kh8 23 Nxd5.

22 Bxc4 1-0

White won two clean pawns without compensation and Kasparov resigned. Black is unable to win back material with 22 ... Be6 23 Rc5 Bb6? due to the crushing 24 Nxg7!.

384) B.Ahlander-L.McShane
Malmo 2003



Black to play
Level 2
How did Black win material?
Answer: Step 1: Chop the f3-knight with the bishop.
36 ... Bxf3! 37 gxf3 Nh3!
This knight is not to be trusted around a cash register.
Step 2: This unpinning shot wins a full exchange.
38 Qg2

38 Rxg7? loses even more material after 38 ... Nxf2+ 39 Kg2 Rexg7+ 40 Kxf2 Rg2+ 41 Kf1 and now the simplest is 41 ... Rxb2.

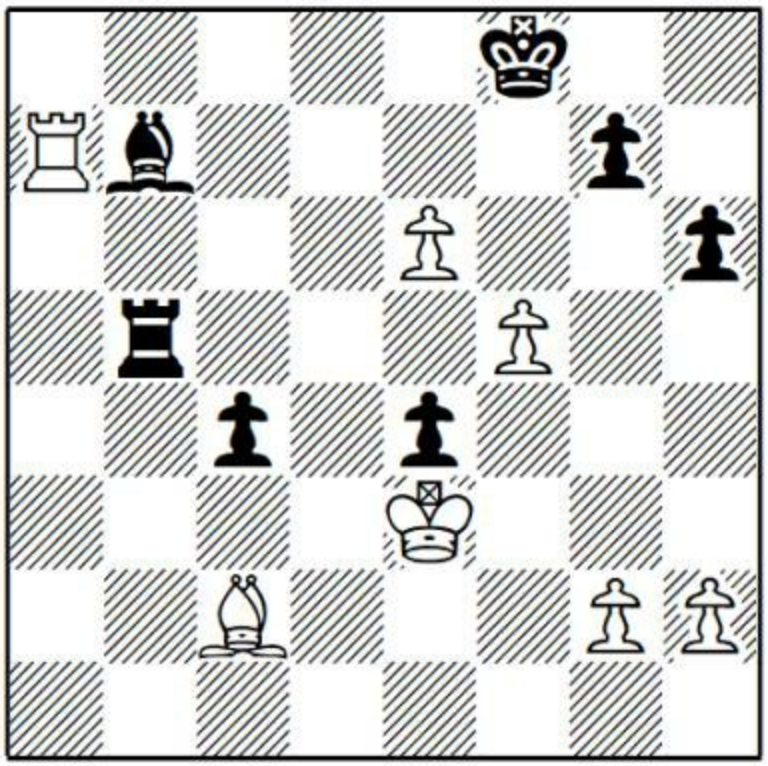
38 ... Nxg1 39 Rxg1 Qxg2+

Black is up a full exchange and is happy to simplify.

40 Rxg2 Rxg2 41 Kxg2 Rc7 0-1

42 Kf1 Be7 43 Nd3 Rc2 is completely hopeless for White.

385) A.Morozevich-E.Alekseev
Moscow 2008



White to play

Level 2

Make one powerful move and unstoppable threats assail Black's position:

Answer: Attraction/pin.

39 e7+! Kxe7

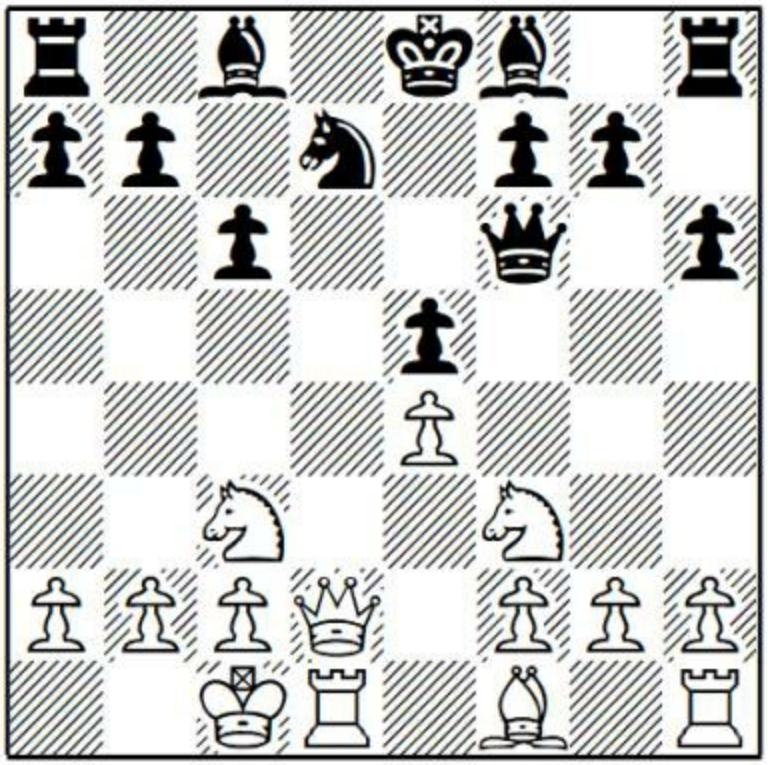
Or 39 ... Kf7 40 Ba4! Bc6 41 Rc7! and wins.

40 Bxe4 1-0

The pinned b7-bishop is lost.

386) C.Lakdawala-J.Banawa

Southern California State Championship 2010



White to play

Level 5

Black owns the bishop-pair and control over the dark squares. If White continues quietly, my position will go downhill. Violence is necessary. How should White continue?

Answer: Pin. We can play out knight to b5, since the cost of Black's taking it is too high.

10 Nb5!

Cryptomnesia "occurs when a forgotten memory returns without its being recognized as such by the subject, who believes it is new and original." After

the game, I was convinced that I pulled off a Morphy-like masterpiece - until I consulted the database and saw that 18 other people beat me to it (now the number is up to 20!). You aren't the genius you believed yourself to be, if 18 others beat you to the idea.

10 ... Kd8!

IM Banawa found the path of greatest resistance after a 40-minute think. He hopes to eventually eject the b5-knight and then hide his king on c7. His alternatives are disastrous:

a) After 10 ... cxb5? 11 Bxb5 Qe6 12 Nxe5! White keeps playing on the pin and the game is over. If 12 ... Qxe5?? 13 Bxd7+ Ke7 14 Bxc8 Rxc8 15 Qd7+, winning the c8-rook.

b) 10 ... Rb8 11 Nxa7 (threat: Nxc8 and Qxd7 mate) 11 ... Qf4 (or 11 ... Qe6 12 Bc4! - decoy - 12 ... Qxc4 13 Nxc8 Qe6 14 Nxe5!; overloaded defenders, and White wins) 12 g3! Qxd2+ 13 Rxd2 Nc5 14 Nxc8 Rxc8 15 Nxe5 when Black, who can't take on e4 (more pins!), found himself down two pawns for no compensation in I.Rogers-I.Glek, Linz 1997.

11 Qa5+!

White must be more forceful than 11 Bc4? Bc5 when Black is OK.

11 ... b6!

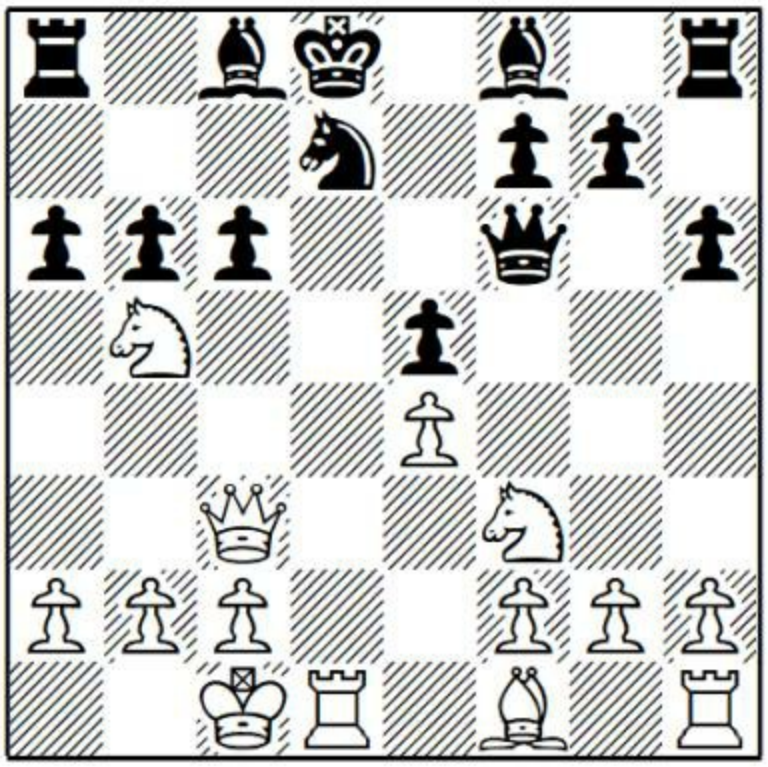
Again Joel finds the best defence. After 11 ... Ke7? 12 Nd6 Nb6 13 Nxc8+ Rxc8 (or 13 ... Nxc8 14 Qc7+ Ke8 15 Qd7 mate) 14 Qxa7 Black has to resign.

12 Qc3!

Double attack on c6 and e5.

12 ... a6

Instead, 12 ... cxb5? 13 Bxb5 Bc5 14 Bxd7 Bxd7 15 Nxe5 wins, while 12 ... Bc5 was tried in E.Rozentalis-V.Nithander, Gothenburg 2012. Now White played 13 b4! with a winning position.



White to play

Level 3

How should White continue the attack?

Answer: Interference/double attack.

13 Nd6! Bxd6

Instead, 13 ... Kc7?? 14 Ne8+ forks king and queen, while 13 ... c5 14 Nxc8! Kxc8 15 g3! (threat: Bh3) 15 ... Kc7 (15 ... Qe6 16 h4! alters nothing: 16 ... Qxa2 17 Bh3 Qa1+ 18 Kd2 Qa5 19 Qxa5 bxa5 20 Ke2 and wins) 16 Bh3 Rd8 17 Rxd7+ Rxd7 18 Bxd7 Kxd7 19 Rd1+ Bd6 20 Nxe5+ Kc7 21 Rxd6! wins, since 21 ... Kxd6 (21 ... Qxd6 22 Nxf7 is an easy win for White) 22 Qd3+ Ke7 23 Qd7+ Kf8 24 Qc8+ wins.

14 Qxc6

Double attack on a8 and d6.

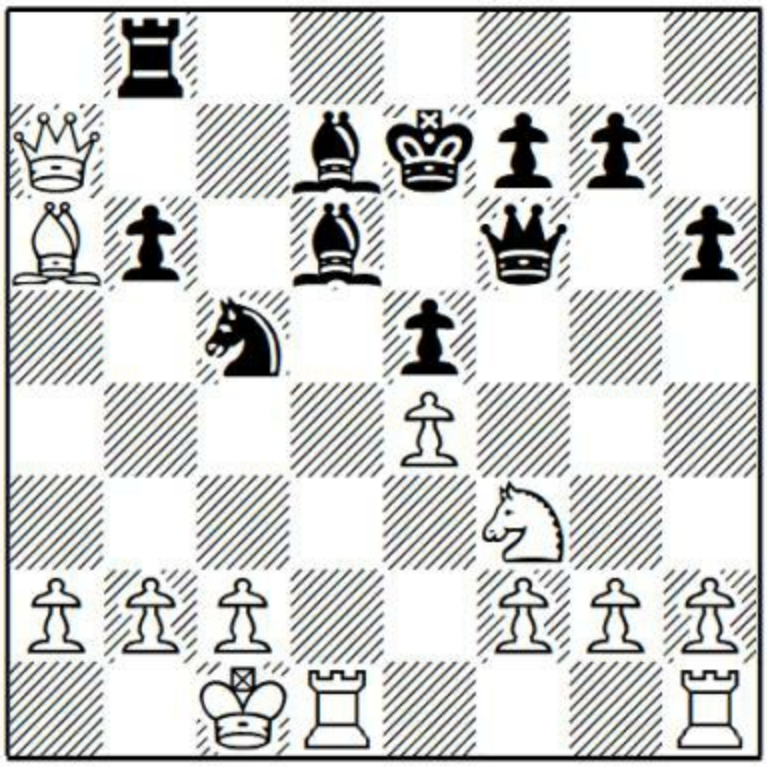
14 ... Ke7

14 ... Bb7 15 Qxb7 is also lost for Black.

15 Qxa8 Nc5 16 Qa7+

Theoretical novelty, except I had no idea that we were still in book! 16 Bc4 b5 17 Qa7+ Bb7 was S.Drazic-B.Damljanovic, Podgorica 1996, with a completely winning position for White.

16 ... Bd7 17 Bxa6 Rb8



White to play

Level 2

How does White win more material?

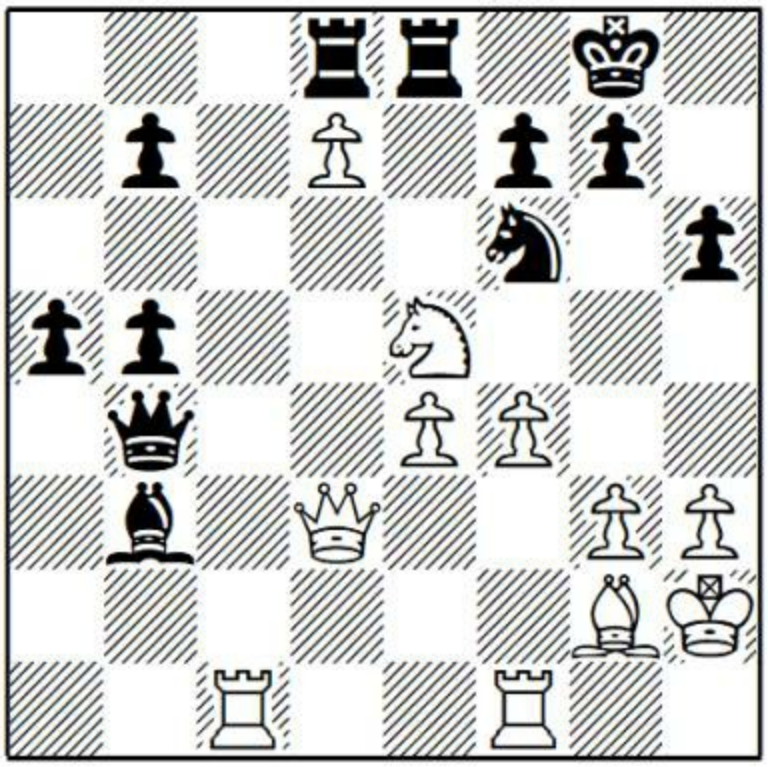
Answer: Decoy/overloaded defender.

18 Rxd6! Qxd6 19 Rd1 1-0

Black's queen is unable to protect her rook.

387) Ding Liren-M.Carlsen

Chessable Masters (online rapid) 2020



Black to play

Level 4

On his last move Ding unwisely pushed his d-pawn to the seventh rank, hoping to receive dynamic benefit from its presence. We must train ourselves - receive a premonition - of *when* a combination comes into existence. Magnus experienced just such a premonition after Ding pushed his d-pawn to the seventh rank. How did Magnus exploit Ding's overly ambitious last move?

Answer: Just capture the d7-pawn. White's knight is pinned and won't escape.

27 ... Nxd7!

Magnus avoided:

a) 27 ... Re7?? 28 Rc8 Rexd7 29 Rxd8+. X-ray attack. White wins.

b) 27 ... Rf8? (this variation is in the placebo group section of the clinical study) 28 Rc7 Bc4 29 Nxc4 bxc4 30 Rxc4 Rxd7 31 Rxb4 Rxd3 32 Rxb7 when White stands at least equal in the ending.

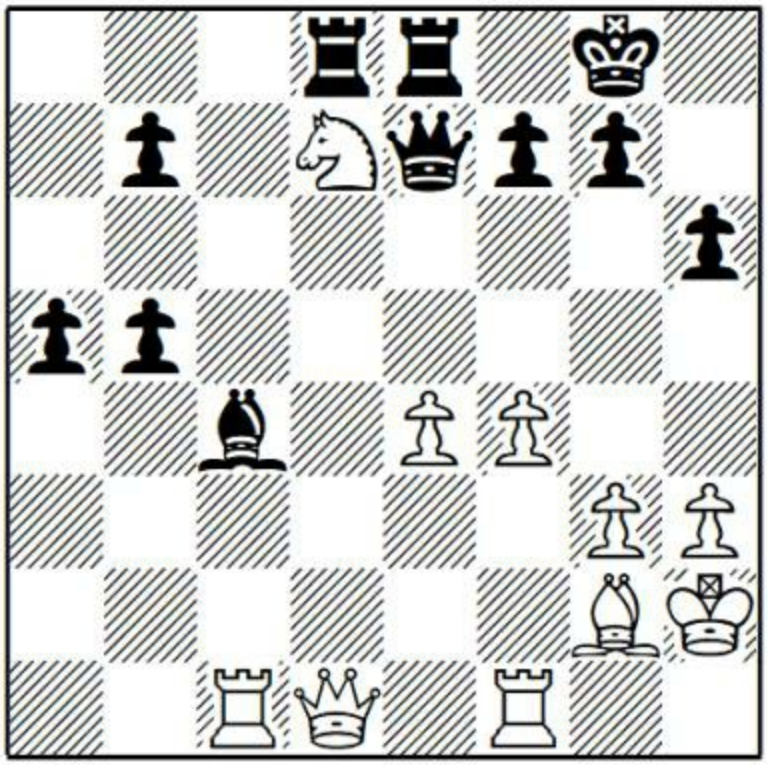
28 Nxd7 Bc4!

Zwischenzug.

29 Qd1

Or 29 Rxc4 bxc4 30 Qd5 Qe7 31 Rd1 c3! 32 Qxb7 c2 33 Rc1 Rxd7 34 Qb2 Qb4 35 Qxc2 Rd2 36 Qc6 Qxe4!. Not again! Another pin trick. Black is up an exchange and a pawn, and wins easily.

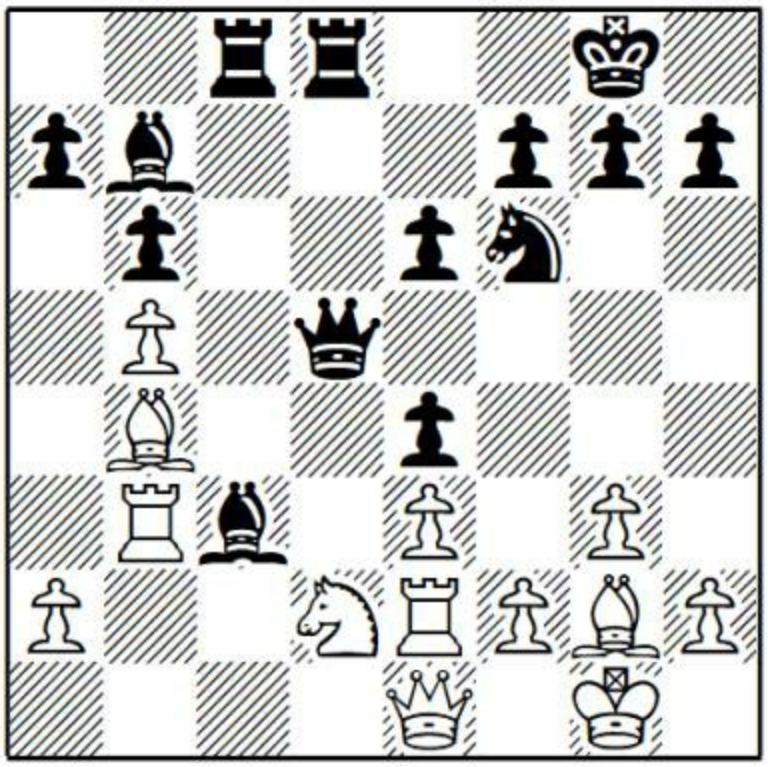
29 ... Qe7! 0-1



Step 3: Pinned piece. Black regains the sacrificed piece and remains too many pawns up.

388) D.Dubov-M.Carlsen

Chessable Masters (online rapid) 2020



Black to play

Level 4

Find Magnus' crushing blow and White's hopelessness becomes apparent.

Answer: Queen sacrifice/removal of the guard.

22 ... Qxb3!!

Some combinations pop up at us, dripping with prismatic illumination. Carlsen soon demonstrates White's complete hopelessness.

23 axb3 Bxb4

White's queen is eternally pinned. If it moves, the d2-knight falls.

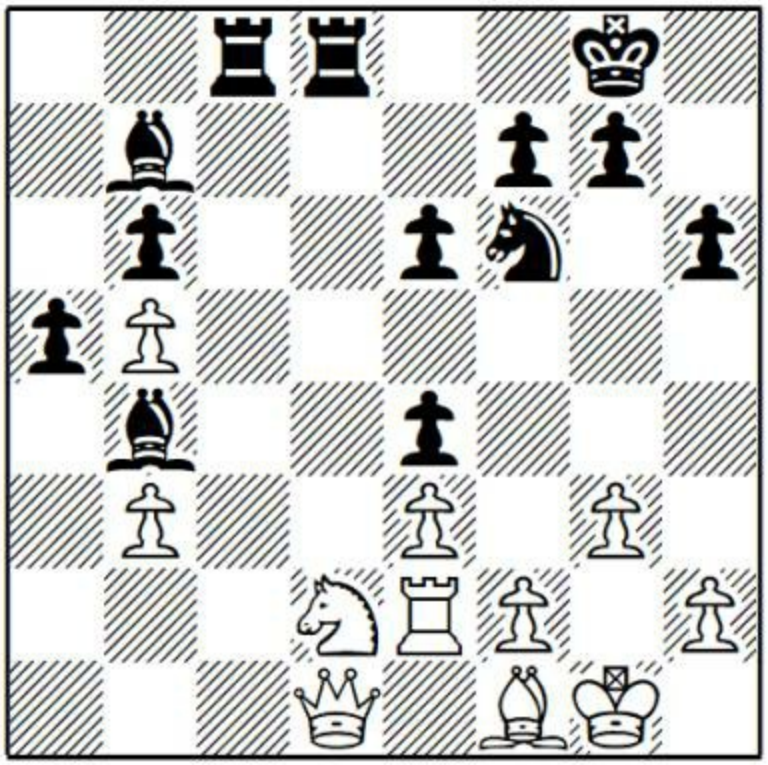
24 Bf1

Or 24 Qa1 Bxd2 25 Qxa7 Rd7 26 Qa2 Rc1+ 27 Bf1 Bc3. Threat: ... Rdd1, to which there is no defence, since 28 Rc2 Ra1 traps White's queen.

24 ... a5!

Masterful strategic play. Now White is even deprived of desperate ideas like Qa1 and Qxa7.

25 Qd1
25 bxa6 Bxa6 is disastrous for White.
25 ... h6 0-1

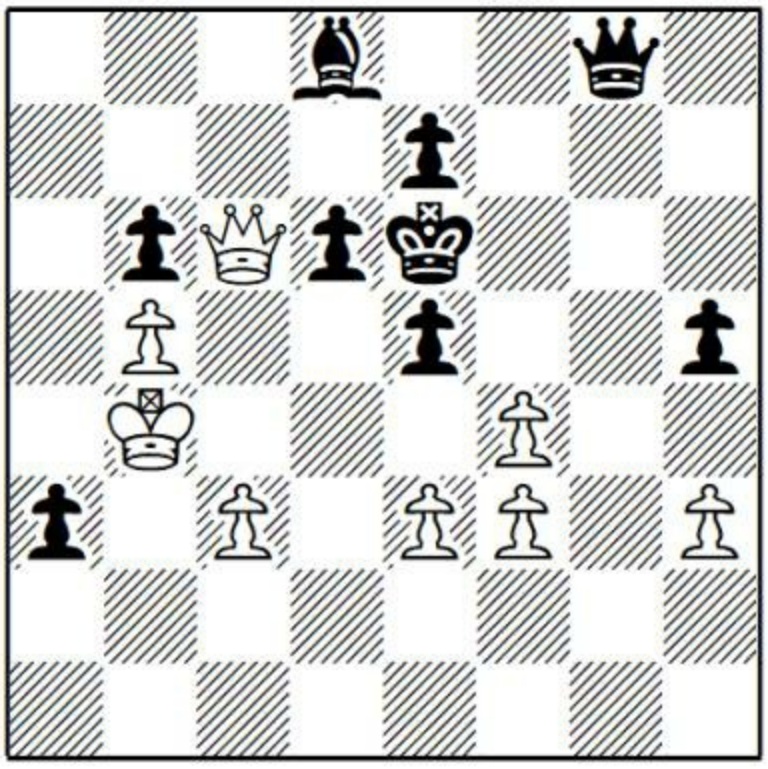


Magnus calmly gives air for his king. White is helpless to prevent the doubling of rooks on the d-file, so White loses his knight and Black gets way too much for the queen.

22) Queen Sacrifice

This is everyone's favourite chapter, since we all dream of sacrificing our queen brilliantly, to end the game.

389) L.Kubbel
Bakinski Rabochi, 1927



White to play
Level 4
Force White's win:
Answer: Queen sacrifice/attraction. We lure Black's king to d5.
1 Qd5+!!
The faint of heart never engage in risky speculation which makes them

either rich or poor. This sacrifice is *not* speculation, since the resulting lines are completely clear.

1 ... Kxd5

Acceptance is forced, or Black hangs the queen on g8.

2 f5!

Step 2: We cut off the e6 escape route. Now White threatens c3c4 mate.

2 ... e4 3 f4!

Now we seize control over the e5 escape route.

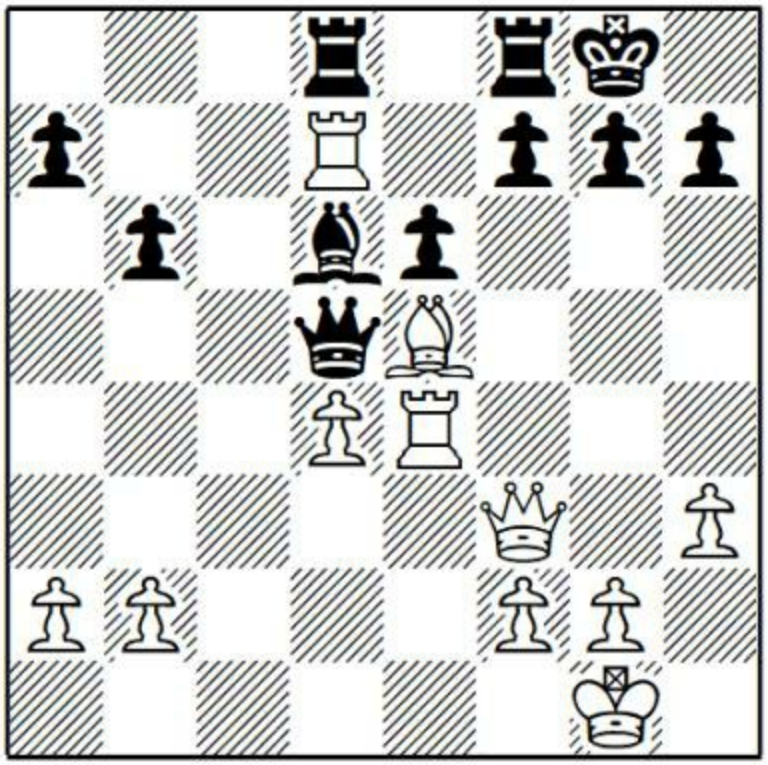
3 ... Qg1

Or any other move on the board and the result is the same.

4 c4 mate

David and Goliath mate.

390) A.Nimzowitsch-V.Nielsen
Copenhagen 1930



White to play

Level 4

If a pure strategist looked at the position, blissfully unaware of the position's dynamic element, there is no sense that a calamitous event awaits Black. Nimzowitsch finished the game in brilliant fashion. Continue for White:

Answer: Step 1: Sacrifice the exchange on d6, strengthening White's grip over the kingside dark squares.

22 Rxd6!!

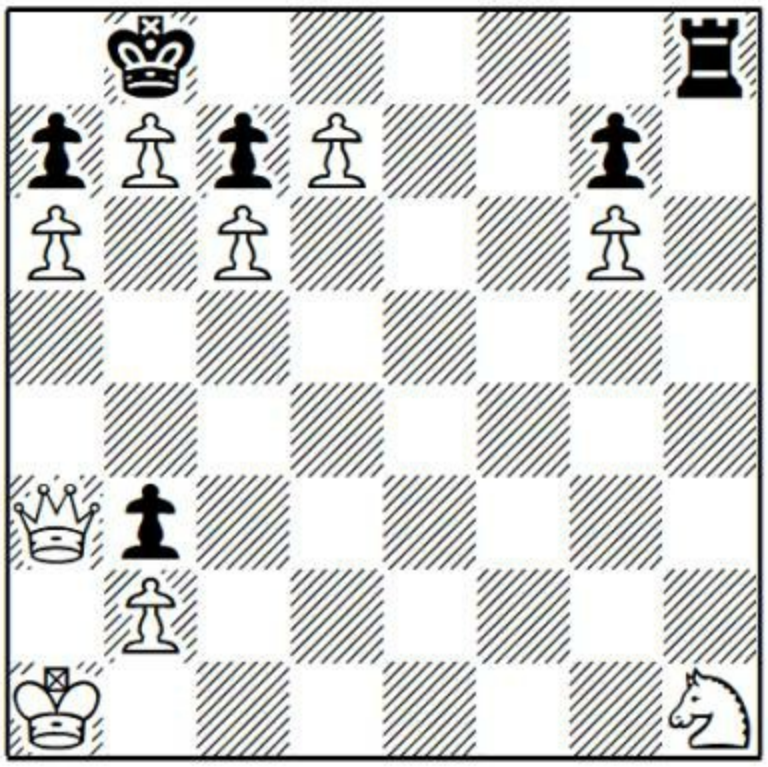
The dark-squared bishop on e5 is more valuable than White's d7-rook.

22 ... Rxd6 23 Qf6! 1-0

Step 2: Queen sacrifice. It is Black who must hand over his own queen to evade mate. Chess is that terrible universe where the wicked flourish and the just suffer. Wicked = tactically acute, while Just = excellent strategists who routinely bungle the game via tactical ineptitude. I lived on the Just side for decades, got tired and defected. 23 ... gxf6 (23 ... Qxe5 24 Qxe5 wins) 24 Rg4+ Kh8 25 Bxf6 is mate.

391) T.Gorgiev

Schackvärlden, 1937



White to play

Level 5

Before Black is a desert, a blazing sun, sand, stone and poisonous snakes. But be careful. This isn't so easy for White to win as you may initially believe. Look closer. Black has no king moves. If Black can eliminate the rook, then the game will end in stalemate. How would you continue for White?

Answer: The queen must be sacrificed on f8, in order to buy time.

1 Qf8+!!

Natural moves fail.

a) 1 Qxb3? Rxh1+ 2 Ka2 Ra1+! 3 Kxa1 is stalemate.

b) 1 Ng3? Rh1+! There it is again: 4 Nxh1 stalemate.

1 ... Rxf8 2 Nf2! Rh8

Black's rook is tied down to its first rank: 2 ... Rxf2 3 d8R mate.

3 Nh3!

Apparently there is a secondary win with 3 Nd1! which all composers

dread, since then the problem is ‘cooked’. In the world of chess composition, cooked = immoral. For us non-composers, a cook isn’t the end of the world, for training purposes.

3 ... Rf8 4 Nf4 Rh8 5 Nh5 Rf8 6 Nf6!

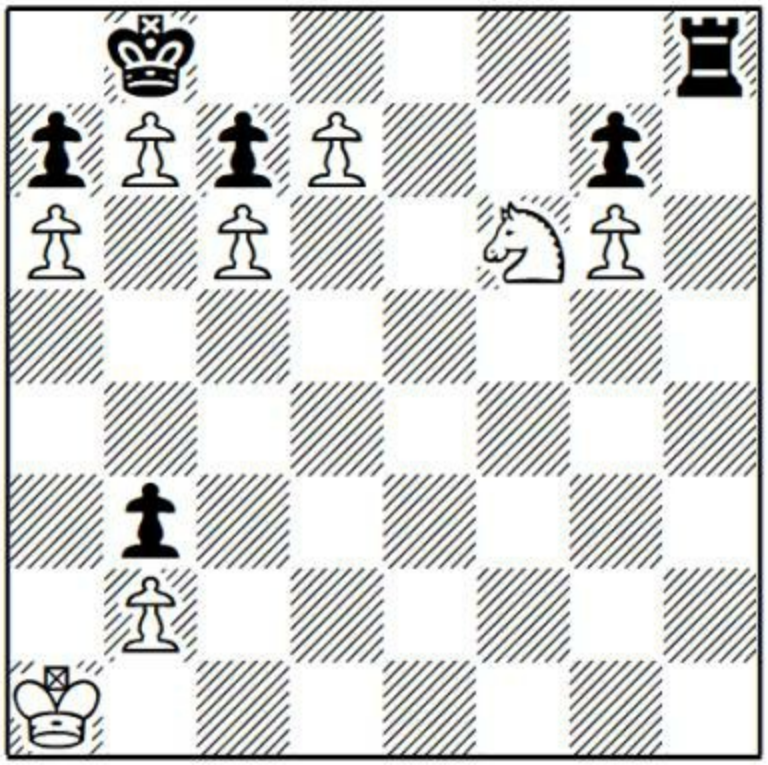
Interference.

6 ... Rh8

Alternatively:

a) 6 ... gxf6 7 g7 Rg8 8 Kb1 f5 9 Kc1 f4 10 Kd2 f3 11 Ke3 f2 12 Kxf2 Rd8 13 Ke3 Rg8 14 Kd4 Rd8 15 Kc4! Rg8 16 Kxb3 Rd8 17 Kc4 Rg8 18 Kd5 Rd8 19 Ke6 Rg8 20 b4! (not 20 Kf7?? Rxg7+! 21 Ke6 Rg6+ 22 Ke7 Re6+ 23 Kf7 Rf6+ with a Mad Rook Draw) 20 ... Rd8 21 b5! Rg8 22 b6! (do you see the idea now? we give Black’s king air, eliminating stalemate ideas) 22 ... axb6 23 Kf7 Rd8 24 g8Q mates quickly.

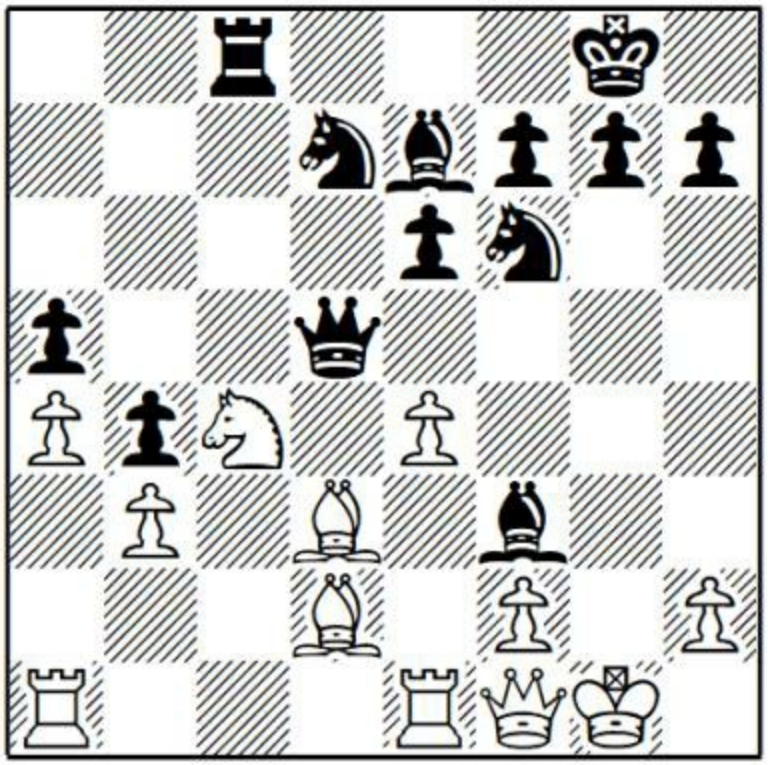
b) 6 ... Rd8 7 Ne8! (zugzwang) 7 ... Rxd7 8 cxd7 (no stalemate) 8 ... c5 9 d8R mate.



White to play

Level 2
Finish Black off:
7 d8Q+
Answer: Step 1: Clearance.
7 ... Rxd8 8 Nd7+
Black is forced to take the knight, lifting the stalemate threat.
8 ... Rxd7 9 cxd7 c5 10 d8Q mate

392) B.Molinari-L.Cabral
Montevideo 1943



Black to play
Level 5
This is the Uruguayan Immortal. It's full of blurred edges and confusing ambiguities, yet not when you plug in the engine, who says Black has a crushing attack. It may well be the most profound over the board combination

in the book and is as difficult as a composed study. How should Black continue? Start with a queen sacrifice, except that Black kept his queen the entire game!

Answer: **24 ... Rxc4!!**

A typical gang initiation/entry act is for the wannabe gang member to commit a crime against an innocent person, just to gauge the level of ruthlessness.

25 bxc4

Not 25 exd5?? Rg4+ 26 Qg2 Rxg2+ 27 Kf1 Rxh2 and mate in 2, while after 25 Bxc4 Qxd2 White can resign.

25 ... Qh5

Threat: ... Qg4+.

26 Bf4 Ng4

Even better was 26 ... Bd6!! 27 Bxd6 (27 Bg3 Ng4 28 e5 Nxh2!! 29 Bxh2 Nxe5 30 Be4 Nd3! wins) 27 ... e5 (interference) 28 h3 Qg5+ 29 Kh2 Ng4+! 30 hxg4 Qh4+ 31 Qh3 Qxf2+ 32 Qg2 Qxg2 mate.

27 Be2 Nde5!

Attackers flood White's kingside.

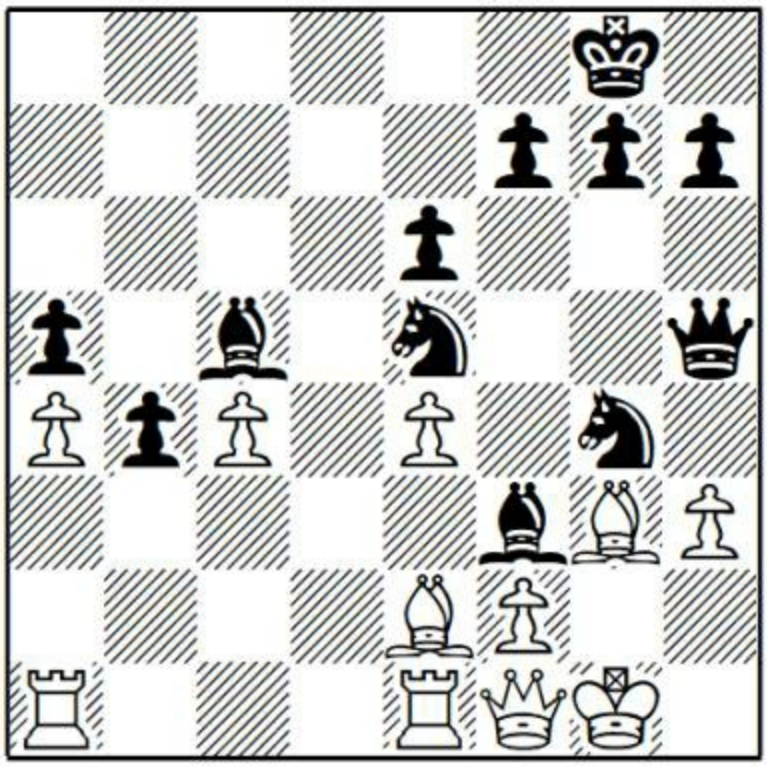
28 h3

After 28 Bxf3 Nxf3+ 29 Kg2 g5 30 Bg3 Ngxh2 31 Bxh2 g4!! (zwischenzug) 32 Qg1 Qh3+ 33 Kh1 Nxg1 34 Rxg1 Qf3+ 35 Rg2 Qxe4 White is again completely busted.

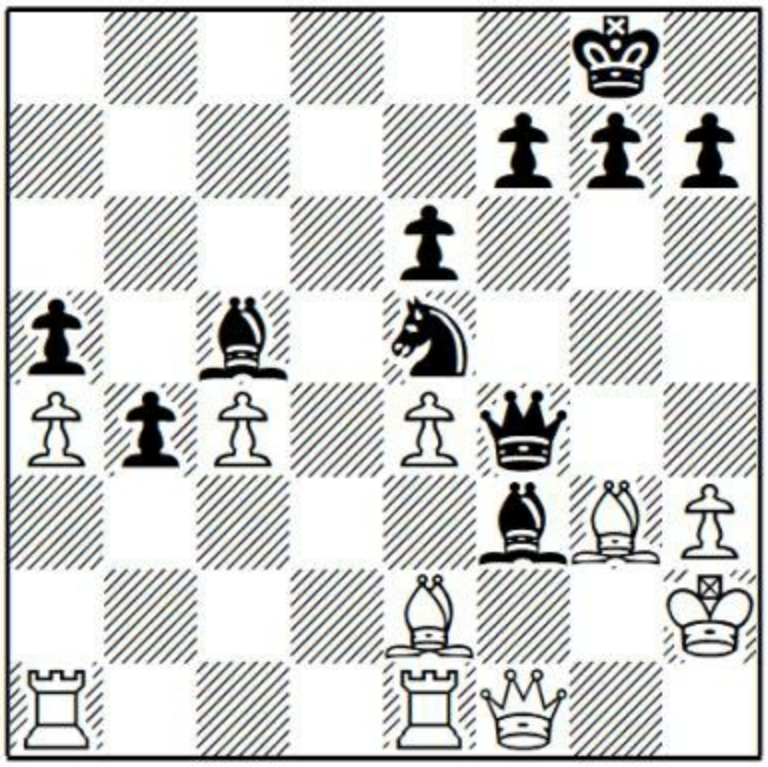
28 ... Bc5!

Going after f2.

29 Bg3



Black to play
Level 4.5
What is Black's strongest continuation?
Answer: Annihilation of defensive barrier.
29 ... Nxf2!! 30 Bxf2 Qg5+ 31 Kh2 Qf4+ 32 Bg3



Black to play

Level 3

Cabral ended his masterpiece with a mate in 4:

Answer: Decoy.

32 ... Bg1+!

Answer no.2: 32 ... Ng4+ also mates in 4: 33 hxg4 Bg1+! (decoy) 34 Qxg1 Qh6+ 35 Bh4 Qxh4 mate.

33 Qxg1

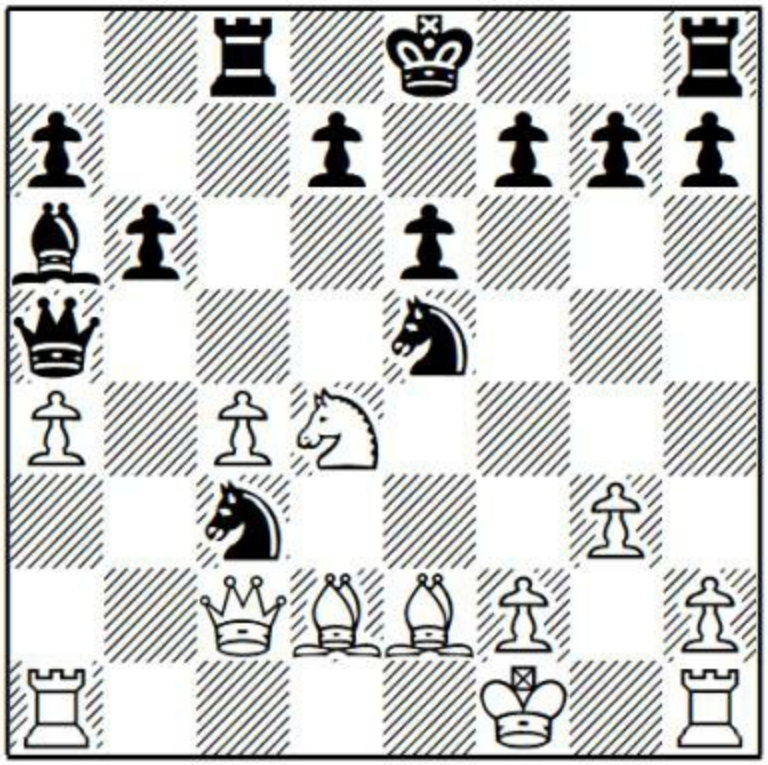
Or 33 Kxg1 Qxg3+ 34 Qg2 Qxg2 mate.

33 ... Ng4+! 0-1

Clearance. 34 hxg4 Qh6+ 35 Bh4 Qxh4 is mate. Intuition is a cognition which lies beyond the reach of pure intellect. I doubt very much if Cabral worked all this out in advance of his masterpiece, yet his intuition kept finding the correct continuation, until White was finally mated.

393) T.Fox-J.Timman

Islington 1970



Black to play

Level 5

Black's massive development lead means a lot more than the fact that the c3-knight is pinned and lost. Black has two winning continuations. Find one of them:

Answer: Queen sacrifice.

15 ... Nxe2!

The gladiators would chant to the Roman emperor: "We who are about to die, salute you." Timman goes for the more artistic version, giving up his queen in exchange for multiple pieces.

Answer no.2: Also winning is 15 ... Rxc4! 16 Bxc4 Nxc4 17 Bxc3 Ne3+ (double check/discovered attack) 18 Kg1 Nxc2 19 Bxa5 Nxd4 20 Bb4 Nc2 21 Rb1 Nxb4 22 Rxb4 Bb7 23 Rc4 Kd8 24 h4 Bxh1 25 Kxh1 when Black is up three clean pawns.

16 Bxa5 Nxd4 17 Qb2 Rxc4

Threatening horrible discovered checks.

18 Kg2

Instead, 18 Ke1?? Nd3+ forks king and queen, while 18 Kg1 bxa5! 19 Qb8+ Rc8 gives Black three minor pieces for the queen and a completely winning position, since White cannot play 20 Qxe5?? due to 20 ... Nf3+, forking.

18 ... Bb7+

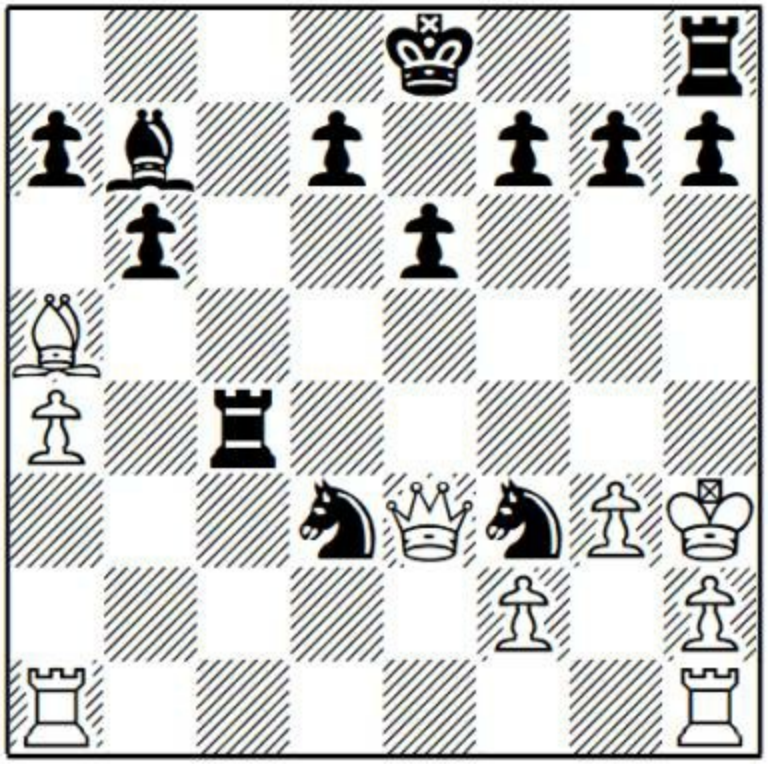
The light squares around the white king look sickly.

19 Kh3

19 Kg1 0-0 is also God-awful for White.

19 ... Nd3 20 Qd2 Nf3! 21 Qe3

Or 21 Qxd3 Ng5 mate.



Black to play

Level 2

White's queen is not a beautiful woman, by anyone's standards. How did

Timman force mate in 2?

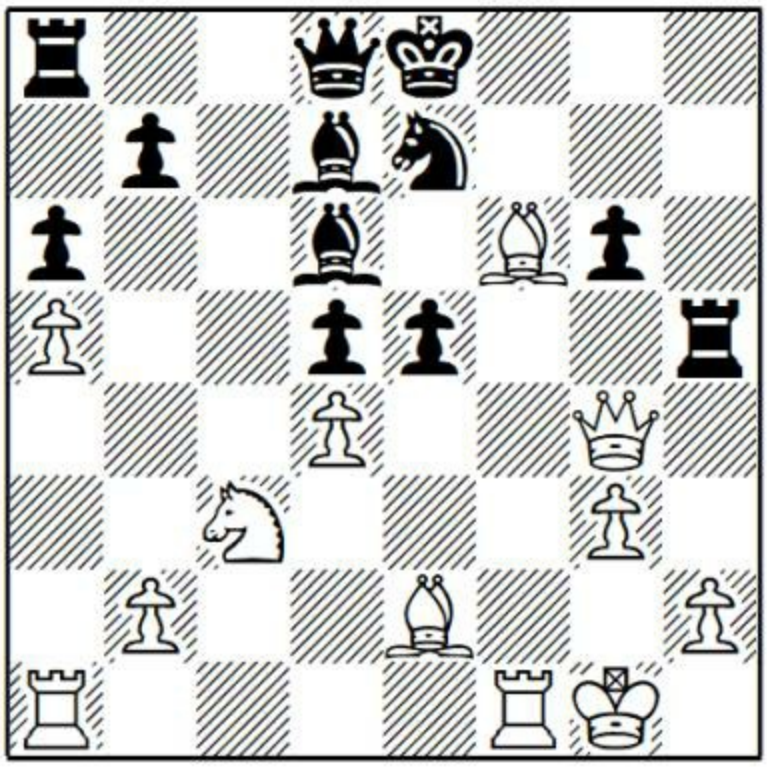
Answer: Removal of the guard.

21 ... Ng5+! 0-1

If 22 Qxg5 Nxf2 mate.

394) C.Lakdawala-I.Ivanov

Continental Open, Los Angeles 2000



White to play

Level 4

Time pressure, like a dangerous experimental drug, comes with the following effects:

1. Loss of reason.
2. Bouts of anger/depression/fear.
3. Hallucinations.
4. Paranoia.

My GM opponent and I were down to our last two minutes on our clocks, living off our five-second time delays. I sensed that White must strike here. How would you continue?

Answer: Queen sacrifice/annihilation of defensive barrier.

26 Qxh5!

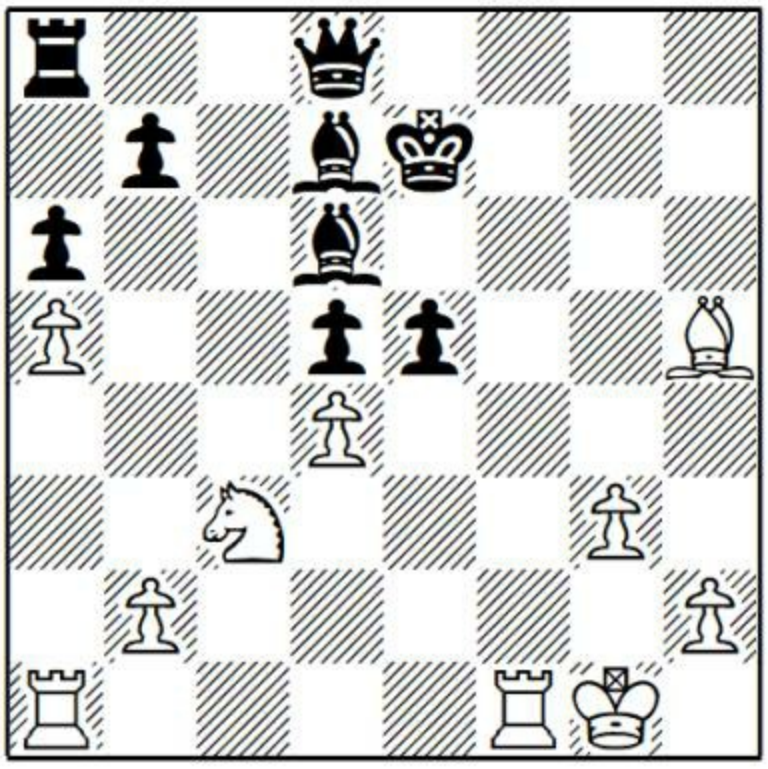
The queen sacrifice is stronger than 26 Qxg6+ Nxg6 27 Bxh5 Qb8 28 Bxg6+ Kf8 29 Bxe5+ Kg8 30 Bf7+ Kh7 31 Rae1. White is also winning here.

26 ... gxh5 27 Bxh5+ Kf8 28 Bxe7+!

Step 2: Attraction. Igor told me after the game that he had only counted on the line 28 Bxe5+? Bf5! with a completely confusing position, which is still better for White.

28 ... Kxe7

Instead, 28 ... Kg8 29 Bxd8 Rxd8 leaves Black down a full rook.



White to play

Level 1

Now I forced mate in 2:

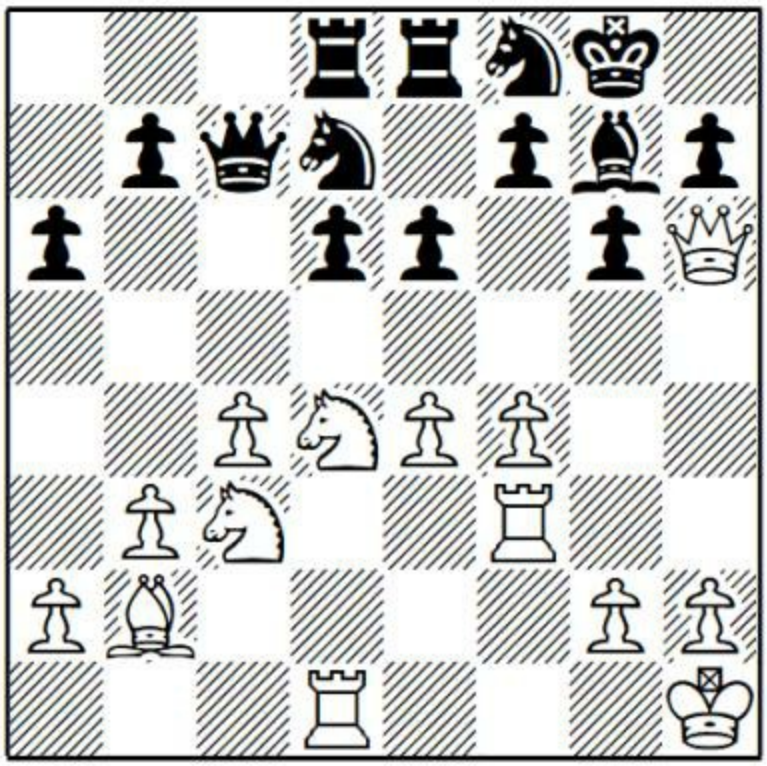
Answer:

29 Nxd5+ 1-0

If 29 ... Ke6 30 Bf7 mate.

395) R.Antonio-Dao Thien Hai

Kuala Lumpur 2005



White to play

Level 2

Our eye automatically looks at the g7-square. Does it work? (Hint: We are in the Queen sacrifice chapter, so it's a pretty good bet it does work!).

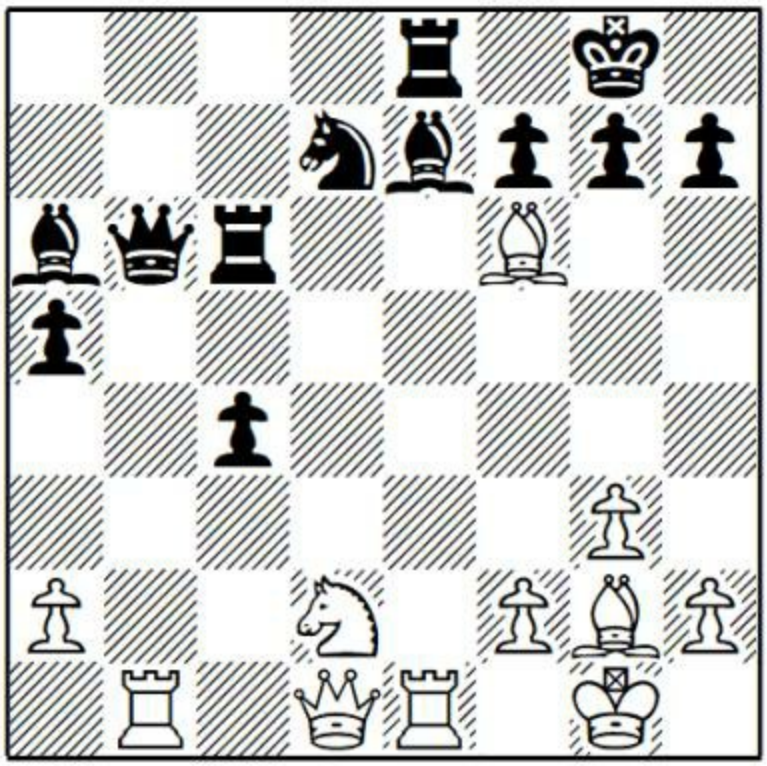
Answer: **19 Qxg7+!**

Queen sacrifice. Orthodoxy leads to a safe life, yet sin is so much more interesting. This sacrifice is easy to work out.

19 ... Kxg7 20 Nd5! 1-0

Clearance. If 20 ... exd5 (or 20 ... Kg8 21 Nxc7 Re7 22 Ba3 Nc5 23 Ndxe6! when 23 ... fxe6 24 Bxc5 Rxc7 25 Bb6 wins and 23 ... Ncxe6 24 Nd5! Red7 25 Nf6+ Kg7 26 Nxd7 Rxd7 27 Rxd6 leaves White up an exchange and two pawns in the endgame) 21 Nf5+ Kg8 22 Nh6 mate.

396) M.Krasenkow-H.Nakamura
Barcelona 2007



Black to play
Level 5

Hikaru's queen, c6-rook and e7-bishop are all hanging. Why didn't this worry him? Black's first move is obviously forced. It's what comes after which is an analytical nightmare.

Answer: Queen sacrifice/annihilation of defensive barrier. White's king is kidnapped, placed in the trunk of a car and taken for an unpleasant ride.

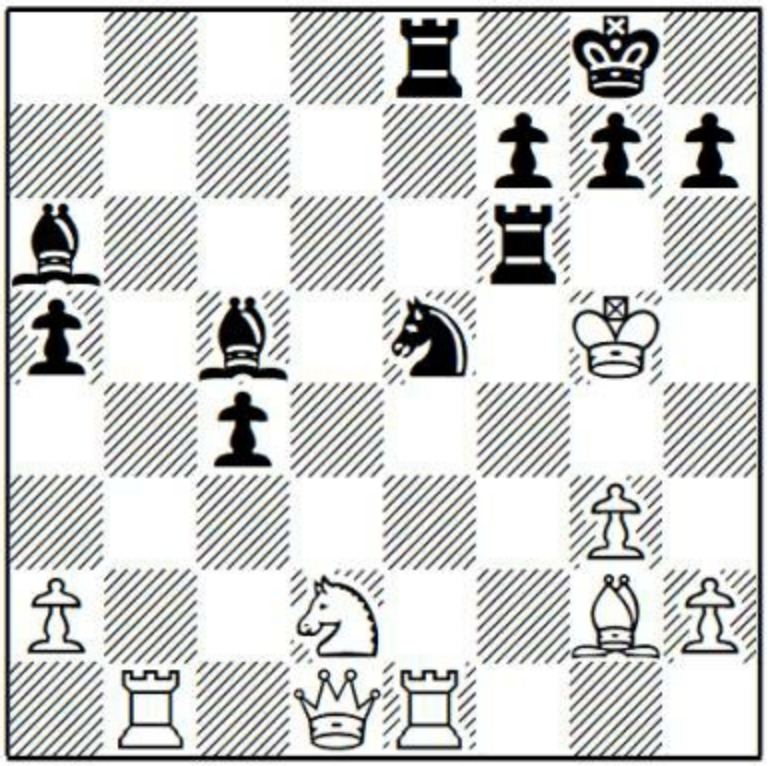
21 ... Qxf2+!

If not for this queen sacrifice, Black must resign. Of course, Hikaru saw the queen sacrifice well in advance of this position. 21 ... Qc7?? 22 Rxe7 Rxe7 23 Bxe7 leaves White up a piece.

22 Kxf2 Bc5+ 23 Kf3

Instead, 23 Kf1 c3+ 24 Re2 c2! (attraction) 25 Qxc2 Bxe2+ 26 Ke1 Bd3+ 27 Kd1 Bf2!! (threat: ... Re1 mate) 28 Nc4 Bxc2+ 29 Kxc2 Rxc4+ 30 Kd3 Ra4 31 Bc6 Ra3+ 32 Kd2 Nxf6 33 Bxe8 Rxa2+ 34 Kd3 Nxe8 leaves Black up two pieces.

23 ... Rxf6+ 24 Kg4 Ne5+ 25 Kg5



The general rule of thumb: If your king finds himself on the fifth rank in a crowded position, it's considered a bad sign. Now Black has a forced mate in 9:

Answer: **25 ... Rg6+!**

Answer no.2: 25 ... Bc8! is less forcing yet also forces mate in 9.

26 Kh5

Or 26 Kf5 Bc8+ 27 Ke4 Rd6! (this way White's king is not allowed to the d-file) 28 Kf4 Nd3+ 29 Kg5 Rxe1 30 Qxe1 Rg6+ 31 Kh5 Rh6+ 32 Kg5 f6

mate.

26 ... f6

Threat: ... Rh6 mate. Instead, 26 ... Bc8! forces mate in 7, or if 27 h3 Be7! 28 Rxe5 Rh6 mate.

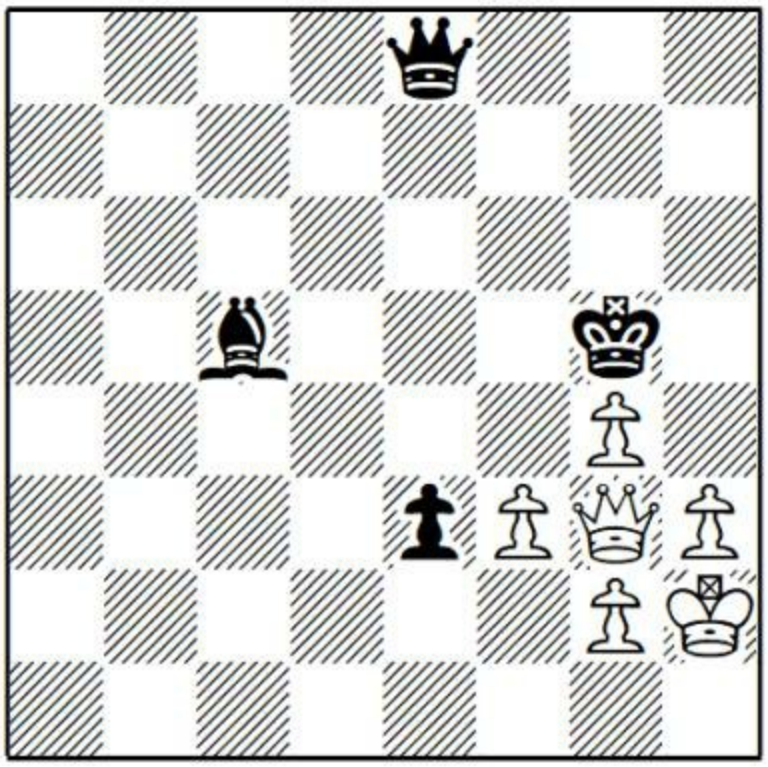
27 Rxe5

27 Bd5+ Kf8 28 Kh4 Rh6+ 29 Qh5 g5+ 30 Kh3 Rxh5+ 31 Kg2 Rd8 wins a second piece.

27 ... Rxe5+ 28 Kh4 Bc8! 0-1

All Black needed was another attacker to cover kingside light squares. 29 Nxc4 Rh6+ 30 Qh5 Rhxh5 is mate.

397) A.Zhukov
Source unknown



White to play

Level 3

My friend GM Melik Khachian posted this problem on Facebook. He and someone else said the problem may be by the Russian composer Alexandr Zhukov, but I couldn't find either date or publication. It's too nice a problem to leave out of the book, due to incomplete information, so here it is.

It looks as if White is forced to take perpetual check starting with h3-h4+. Do you see something better?

Answer: Queen sacrifice/attraction/zwischenzug.

1 Qh4+!!

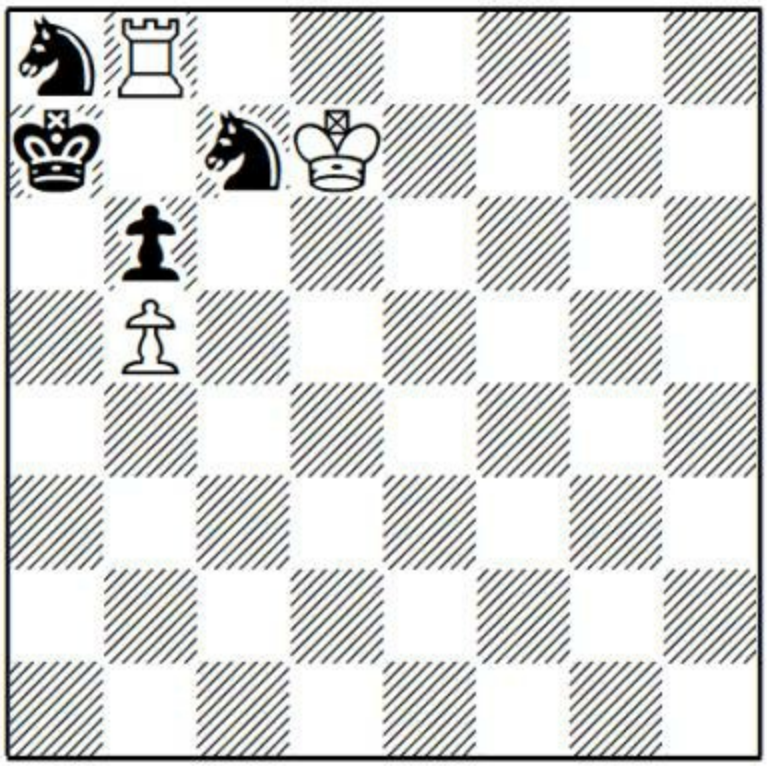
What a shocker! Acceptance is a death sentence, as is declining: 1 ... Kxh4 (1 ... Kg6 loses the queen to the skewer 2 Qh5+) 2 f4. Zwischenzug. There is no stopping 3 g3 mate.

What is the more powerful force? The desire for revenge, or the need for self-preservation? Many players if they were White in a tournament game would miss the queen sacrifice, would be worried about losing and would have gone for the inferior line, just to avoid a loss: 1 h4+? 1 ... Kg6 2 Qc7 e2 3 h5+ Kh6 4 Qf4+ Kg7 5 Qg5+ Kf7 6 Qf5+ is only perpetual check.

23) Simplification

Simplification tends to be a sacrifice which turns a complex, problematic win, into a no-brainer one. In this chapter, in each situation, your job is to transform the complex and messy, into a simple win.

398) J.Capablanca-E.Lasker
Czecheslovakia (blitz) 1914



White to play
Level 3.5

Over the last 50 years I keep running back to Capablanca's games, the way a loving dog only sees his beloved master. Capa lived his chess life with the premise: listen to intuition. There were few who could prove him wrong.

What some people don't know is that in his heyday, he was probably the most accurate calculator in the world, barring his current opponent, Emanuel Lasker. This was a blitz game between the two giants. Capa can draw, but can he actually win?

Answer: Simplification by giving away the full rook. White soon reaches a winning king and pawn ending.

1 Rxa8+!! 1-0

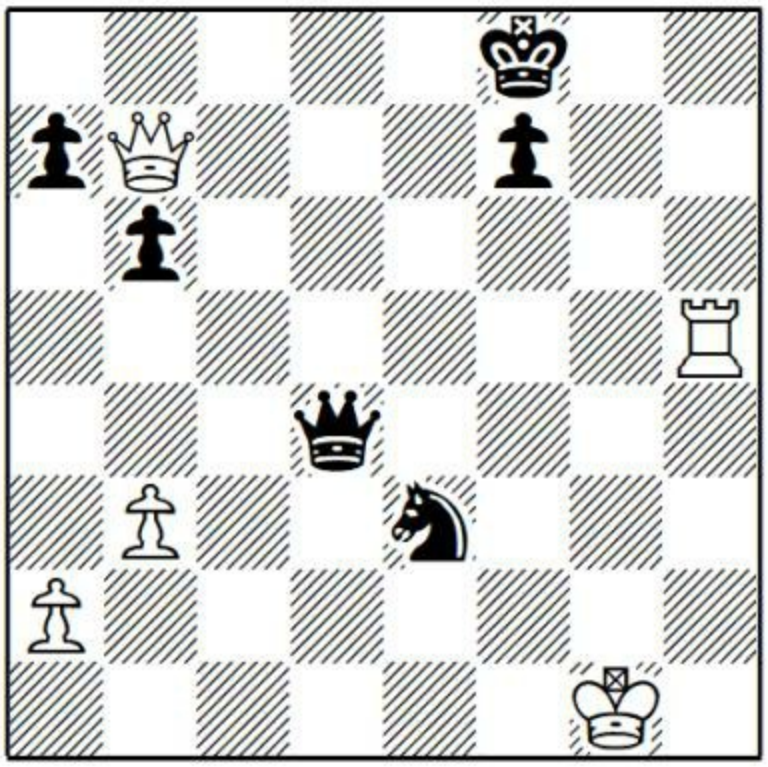
White wins in all lines:

a) 1 ... Kxa8 2 Kxc7 Ka7 3 Kc6 (zugzwang) 3 ... Ka8 4 Kxb6 Kb8 5 Kc6 Kc8 6 b6 Kb8 7 b7 Ka7 8 Kc7 wins.

b) 1 ... Nxa8 2 Kc8! (zugzwang) 2 ... Nc7 3 Kxc7 Ka8 4 Kxb6 and as in line 'a' White easily wins.

b) 1 ... Kb7 2 Ra7+! (removal of the guard/simplification) 2 ... Kxa7 3 Kxc7 Ka8 4 Kxb6 wins.

399) J.Capablanca-E.Lasker
World Championship (Game 5), Havana 1921



White to play

Level 2

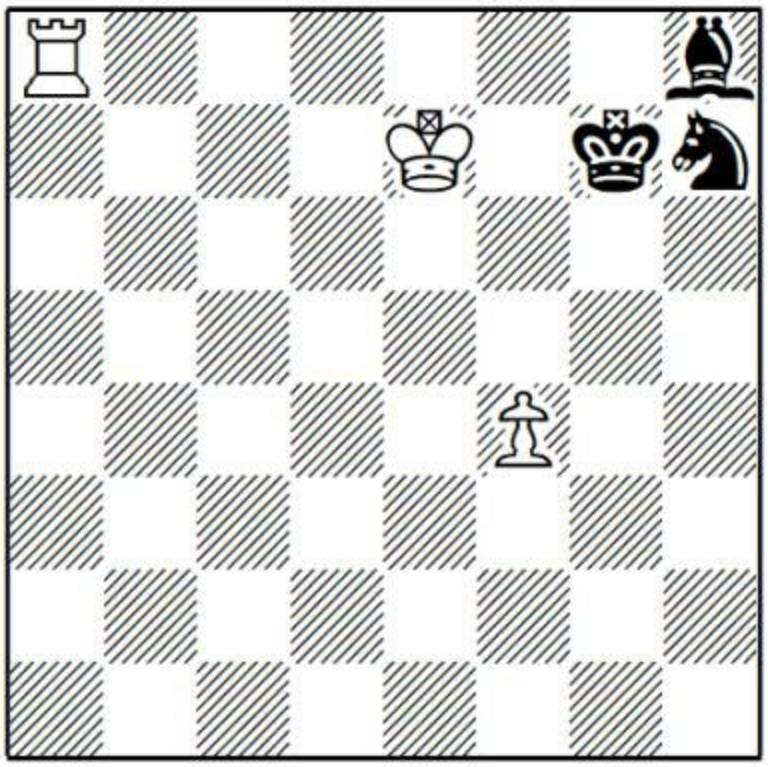
At first glance it feels as if Black's position, although lean, is also one of wiry strength. After all, Lasker's queen and knight pose great danger of perpetual check for Capa's king. If only queens could be removed from the board ...

Answer: Simplification/double attack. Deliver check on b8, followed by another check on e5, swapping queens and winning Black's loose e3-knight.

46 Qb8+! 1-0

After 46 ... Ke7 (46 ... Kg7 47 Qh8+ skewers Black's king and queen) 47 Qe5+! 4Qxe5 48 Rxe5+ not only did queens get removed from the board, but Black's knight is next.

400) G.Zakhodyakin
64, 1930



White to play

Level 3

If Black can unravel, the game will end in a draw. We need to act on the moment. What is White's clearest path to beat Black's claustrophobic position?

Answer: Step 1: Give up the exchange on h8.

1 Rxh8!

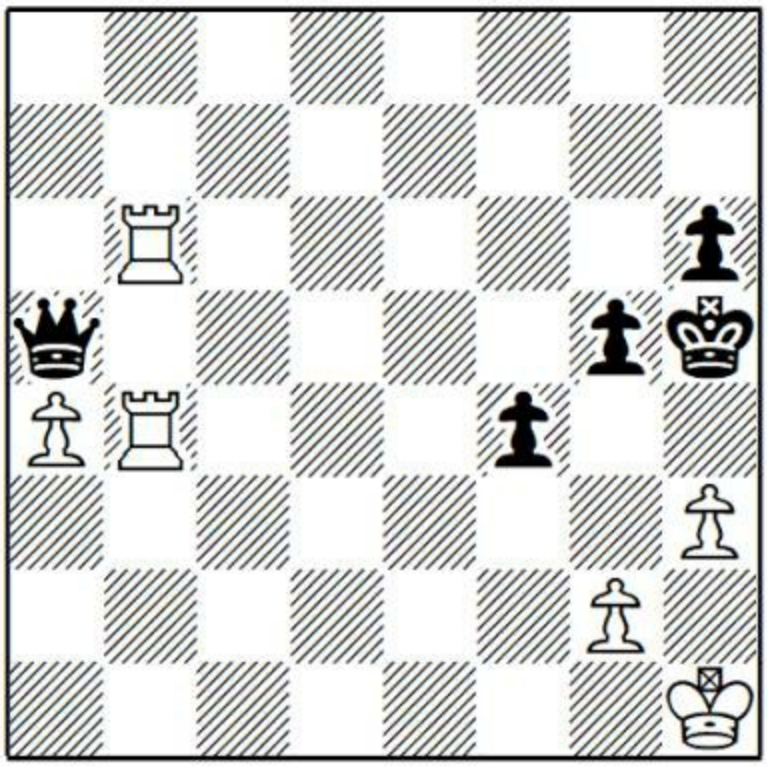
This move drops a truth bomb on Black's position. The trouble is the knight can't be saved and White wins the king and pawn ending.

1 ... Kxh8 2 Kf7 1-0

Step 2: Zugzwang. Black loses the knight and then the king and pawn ending after that.

401) J.Mieses-NN

1935



White to play

Level 4

The dashing Jacques Mieses gave the impression he was attempting to catch up with an era which already ended. He was a Great Romantic, who just missed the age. How did Mieses outwit NN to force a won king and pawn ending?

***Answer:* 1 g4+!!**

Clearance.

1 ... fxg3

1 ... Kh4?? gets Black's king mated: 2 Kh2! h5 3 Rh6! Qxb4 4 Rxh5 mate.

2 Rh4+!

Decoy.

2 ... gxh4

Or 2 ... Kxh4 3 Rxh6 mate.

3 Rb5+!

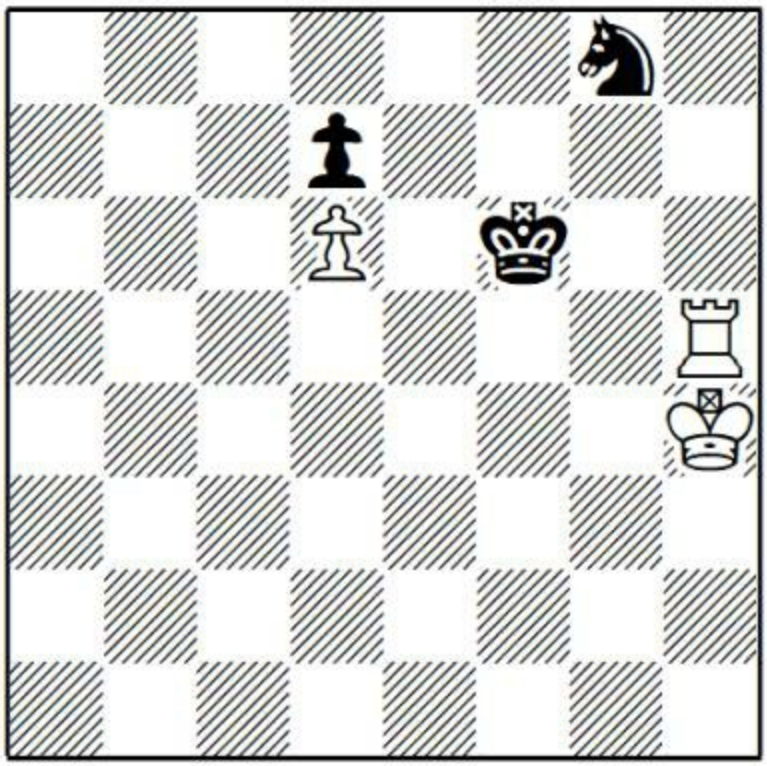
Simplification.

3 ... Qxb5 4 axb5 1-0

Black's king is outside the square of White's passed pawn and White will promote.

402) E.Pogosyants

Alma Atinskaja Pravda, 1961



White to play

Level 4.5

I may have to share royalties from this book with Carsten Hansen, since I'm using so many of the Pogosyants studies he sent me!

If Black wins our final pawn the game is drawn. Find a simplifying combination:

Answer: 1 Rh8!

Let's start by driving Black's king back.

1 ... Kg7 2 Kg5!!

We can't tolerate bullies, unless we are the ones doing the bullying. Simplification. Work on enough endgame studies and we teach ourselves to sniff out a potential combination, the way a hungry predator smells the prey's blood on the wind. White gives up a full rook to win the king and pawn ending.

2 ... Kxh8

Alternatively, 2 ... Nf6 3 Rd8! Ne4+ 4 Kf4 Nf6 (or 4 ... Nxd6 5 Rxd7+ Nf7 6 Kf5 Kg8 7 Kf6 Nh6 8 Kg6; double attack when White threatens mate on the back rank and Black's knight, and so wins) 5 Kf5 Kf7 6 Rf8+! (removal of the guard/simplification) 6 ... Kxf8 7 Kxf6 Ke8 8 Kg7 Kd8 9 Kf7 Kc8 10 Ke7 Kb7 11 Kxd7 and wins.

3 Kg6 Nh6 4 Kxh6

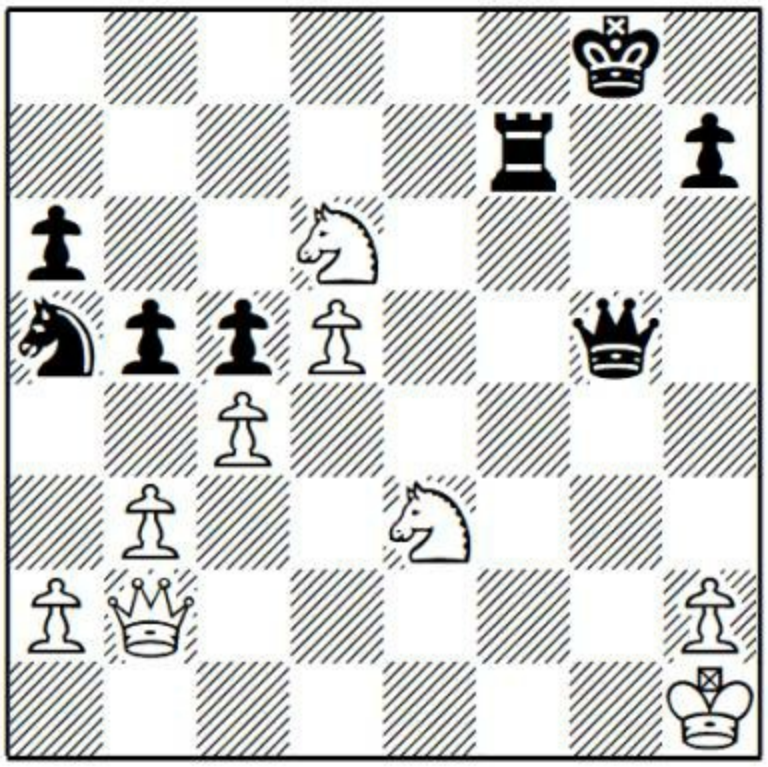
Black loses due to White's overwhelming king position.

4 ... Kg8 5 Kg6 Kf8 6 Kf6 Ke8 7 Kg7

Black will eventually lose the d7-pawn, as shown in the above line.

403) T.Petrosian-B.Spassky

World Championship (Game 10), Moscow 1966



White to play

Level 2

An old classic. Black is not quite starving, nor is he eating well. What is White's clearest line?

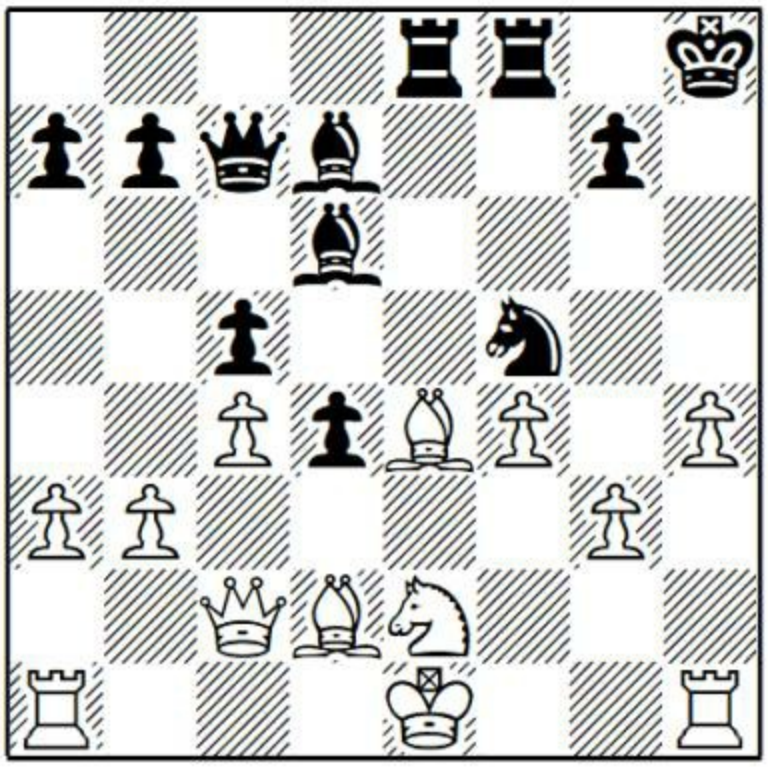
Answer: Attraction/knight fork/simplification.

30 Qh8+! 1-0

After 30 Nxf7? Qxe3 31 Ne5 Qe1+ 32 Kg2 Qe4+ it won't be all that easy for White to convert, whereas 30 Qh8+! Kxh8 31 Nxf7+ Kg7 32 Nxg5 leaves White up a piece and a pawn.

404) Magnus-E.Schallopp

Hamburg (blindfold simul) 1868



Black to play

Level 2

No, it's not *the* Magnus, since I'm almost certain that Magnus Carlsen was born after 1868. How did Schallopp (without sight of the board) win material?

Answer: Exchange sacrifice/decoy/skewer.

22 ... Rxe4! 23 Qxe4 Bc6

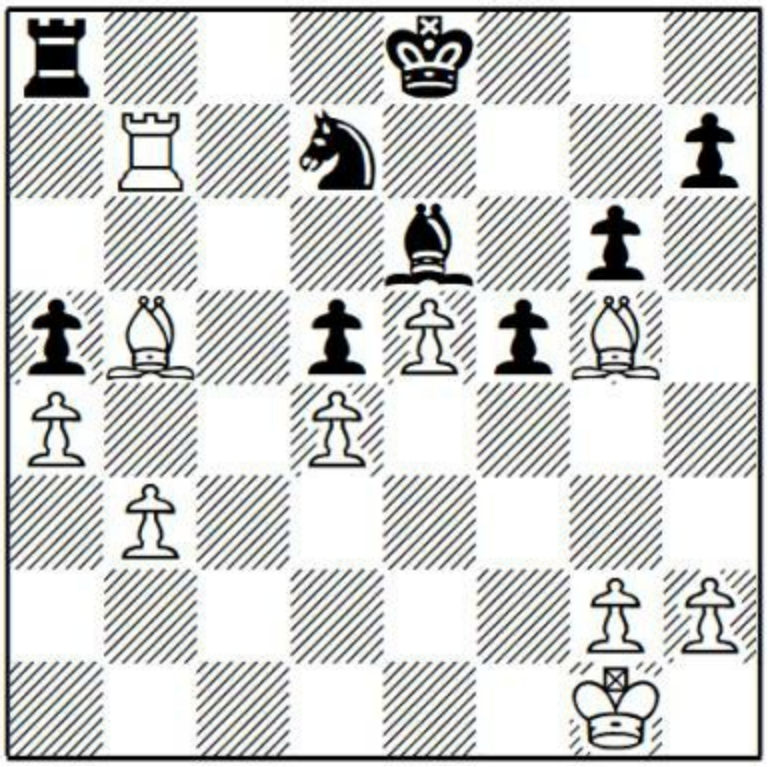
Black's bishop raises an avenging blade and the h1-rook is skewered.

24 Qd3 Bxh1

White's position is one of melancholic abandonment. Black converted his extra piece easily. After 25 g4 Nh6 26 0-0-0 Qc6 White has nothing for the piece.

405) J.Capablanca-Allies

Bradford 1919



White to play

Level 2

Black's position may be severe and humourless, but is it a forced loss? Nobody questions Capa's dominance in the position and his strategic advantages carry wealth even a billionaire would envy. What is White's cleanest path to the win?

Answer: Simplification. The advantageous side often has an aversion to giving up the bishop-pair and entering an ending of bishops of opposite colours, yet here this is White's most efficient path to the win.

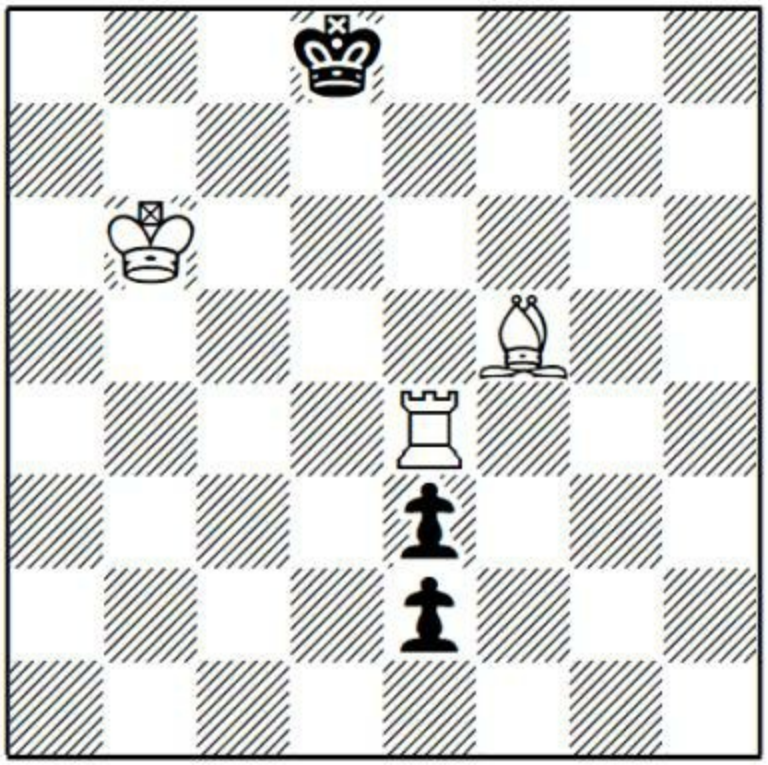
Answer: Enter an opposite-coloured bishops ending.

37 Bxd7+! Bxd7 38 e6! 1-0

Step 2: Pawn breakthrough. Now the root of defence's life force is severed. After 38 ... Bc8 (38 ... Bxe6 hangs a piece to 39 Re7+) 39 Rxh7 (threat: Rh8 mate) 39 ... Bxe6 40 Rh8+ Kf7 41 Rxa8 White is up a rook.

406) R.Reti

Kölnische Volkszeitung, 1928



White to play

Level 5

White has a big problem: Black is about to promote the forward e-pawn. If we play 1 Rxe3? we stalemate Black. How does White get around this issue and still win?

Answer: Simplification. Give away our bishop *and* allow Black to promote.

1 Bd7!!

Not 1 Rxe3? e1Q! 2 Rxe1 and stalemate.

1 ... e1Q

Now the cost of living is too high for Black, but 1 ... Kxd7 2 Rxe3 isn't stalemate for Black, so White wins.

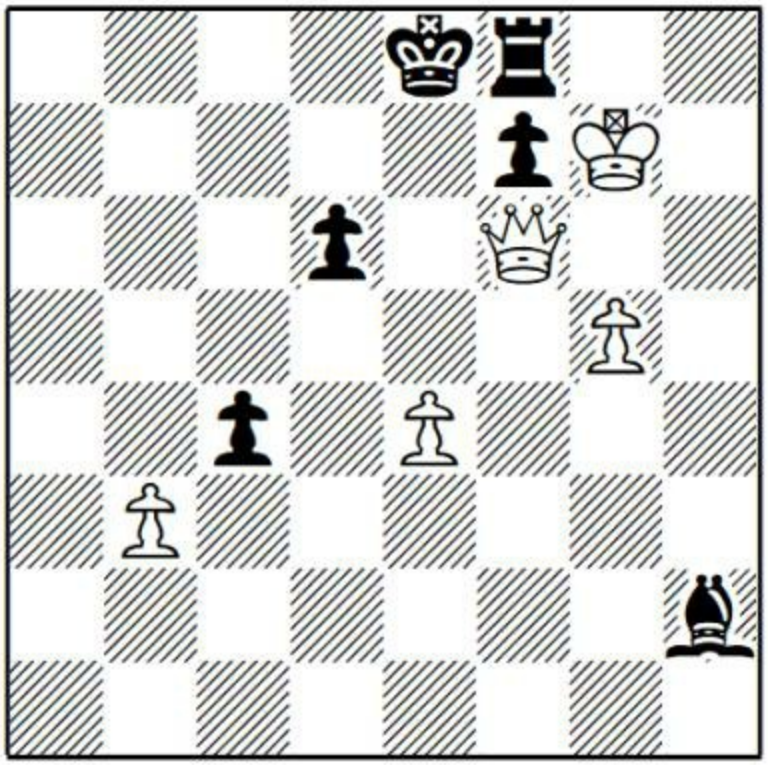
2 Bb5!

Black ran out of checks (not counting the spite check on a5!) and has no

answer to the coming Re8 mate.

2 ... Qc3 3 Re8 mate

407) R.Reti
Shakhmaty, 1928



White to play

Level 5

Black threatens to pin our king and queen with ... Be5. If we move our king, then Black plays ... Be5, followed by transferring the rook to h8. Instead of resigning, find White's deeply hidden win:

Answer: Simplification. We allow Black to win our queen, then force a winning king and pawn ending.

1 e5!!

One way to kill a monster is to breed a larger monster. Please pin me. I insist!

Not 1 bxc4? Be5 2 c5 Bxf6+ 3 gxf6 dxc5 when White has to resigns or 1 Kh6? Be5 2 Qf5 Rh8+ when Black wins.

1 ... Bxe5

If you seek salvation, be certain not to swallow a lethal dose. No choice here though:

a) 1 ... dxe5 loses to 2 Qc6+ Ke7 3 Qc5+, winning the rook.

b) 1 ... cxb3 2 exd6 wins.

c) 1 ... d5 loses to 2 Qc6+ Ke7 3 Qd6+ and wins.

2 bxc4 Bxf6+

Instead, 2 ... Bh2 3 c5! Be5 (3 ... dxc5 4 Qc6+ Ke7 5 Qe4+ wins) 4 cxd6 Bxf6+ 5 gxf6 is zugzwang.

3 gxf6!

Zugzwang. Black loses the rook and if that isn't bad enough news, Black also loses the king and pawn ending.

3 ... Rh8 4 Kxh8 Kd7 5 Kg8!

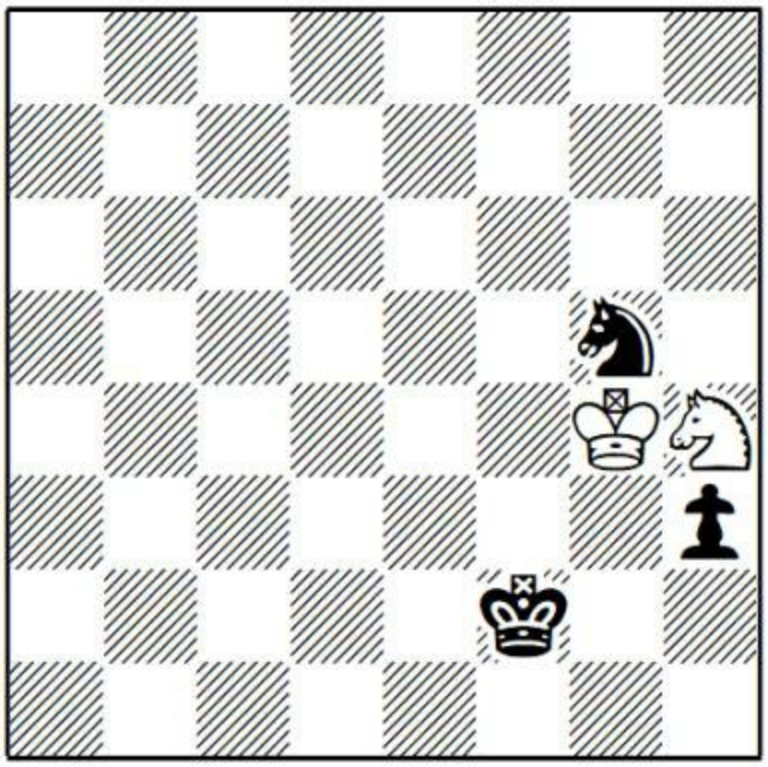
The position still requires precision. 5 Kh7! wastes a tempo, yet also wins, as 5 ... Kd8 6 Kg8 Ke8 7 Kg7 is zugzwang, but after 5 Kg7?? Ke6 it is Black who wins.

5 ... Ke6 6 Kg7

Zugzwang. The f7-pawn falls.

408) R.Reti

Sämmtliche Studien, 1931



White to play

Level 3

Black threatens ... h3-h2. What do we do about it?

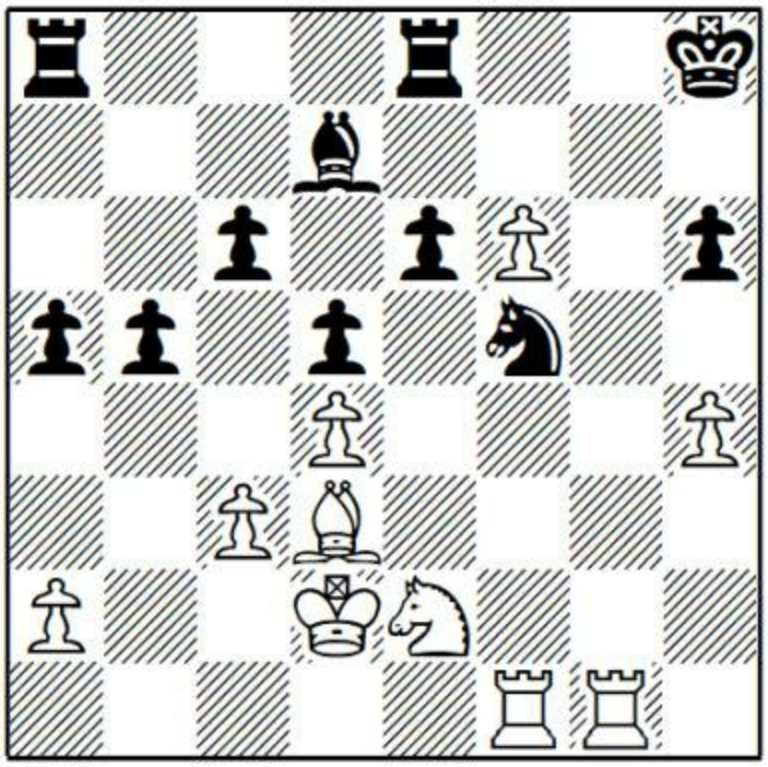
Answer: Simplification. Place our knight on f3, even though it is covered by Black's knight.

1 Nf3!

1 ... Kg2 (or 1 ... Nxf3 2 Kxh3) 2 Nh4+ Kf2 3 Nf3! is a repetition draw, but 1 Nf5?? is an underwhelming response, since it evades a key defensive responsibility: 1 ... h2 2 Ng3 Kg2 3 Kf4 (or 3 Kh4 Nf3+ 4 Kg4 Nd2! and there is no answer to the coming ... Nf1) 3 ... Nf3 4 Kg4 Nd2! 5 Kf4 Nf1!. Removal of the guard. Black promotes.

409) T.Petrosian-H.Corral

Montevideo 1954



White to play

Level 2

Sometimes the line between a strategic plan and tactics blur. I'm not even sure if Petrosian's continuation qualifies as a combination, since no sacrifice is involved. It's more a forcing line. There are no dirty dealings afoot. With clarity, find Petrosian's easiest path to victory?

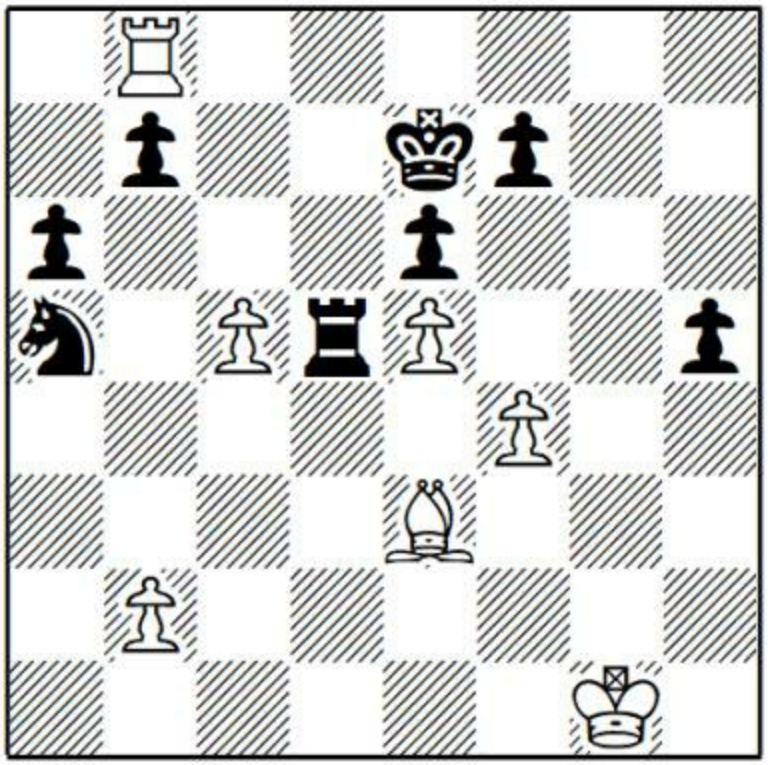
Answer: Simplification. Just chop the f5-knight and then the rook infiltrates to g7, with dual threats to take the bishop and also Nf4 and Ng6 mate.

28 Bxf5! exf5 29 Rg7 1-0

Double attack. The bishop is attacked, yet White also threatens Nf4 and Ng6 mate. After 29 ... Be6 30 Nf4 Black must hand over the bishop and is soon mated.

410) L.Dominguez Perez-F.Caruana

Internet (blitz) 2020



Black to play

Level 2

Just like last game, this is not a combination, but a plan. Find Black's most efficient conversion plan:

Answer: Simplification. White's position is completely hopeless if we swap off White's only active piece, his rook.

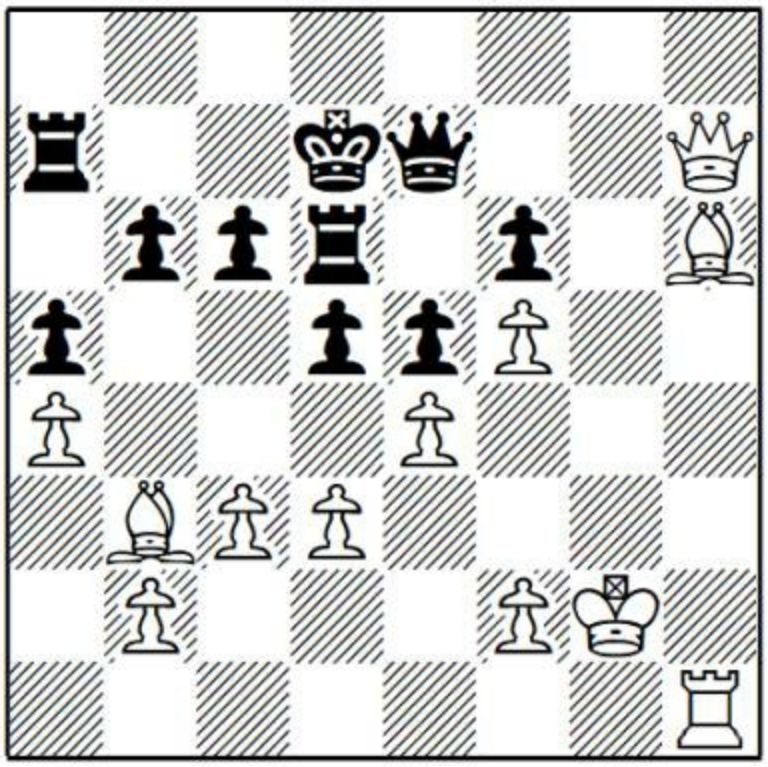
35 ... Rd8! 36 Rxd8 Kxd8 0-1

If 37 Kg2 Nc6 38 Kg3 Ne7!. Oh, no you don't. This is not a reassuring sign for White: 39 Kh4?? is unplayable due to the knight fork on f5 and 39 Bf2 Nf5+ 40 Kf3 Kd7 41 Ke4 Kc6 42 Bg1 Kb5 43 Kd3 Kb4 44 Kc2 h4 45 b3 h3 46 Kb2 Nd4! (overloaded defender) 47 Bh2 (47 Bxd4 h2 promotes) 47 ... Nf3 48 Bg3 (the biblical Job cursed the day of his birth, just as White's bishop does here) 48 ... h2 wins White's bishop.

24) Skewer

A skewer is similar to a pin, except in reverse, where the more valuable defending piece is the one under direct attack. Behind it, sits the less valuable piece. A skewer can only be given by a bishop or a queen.

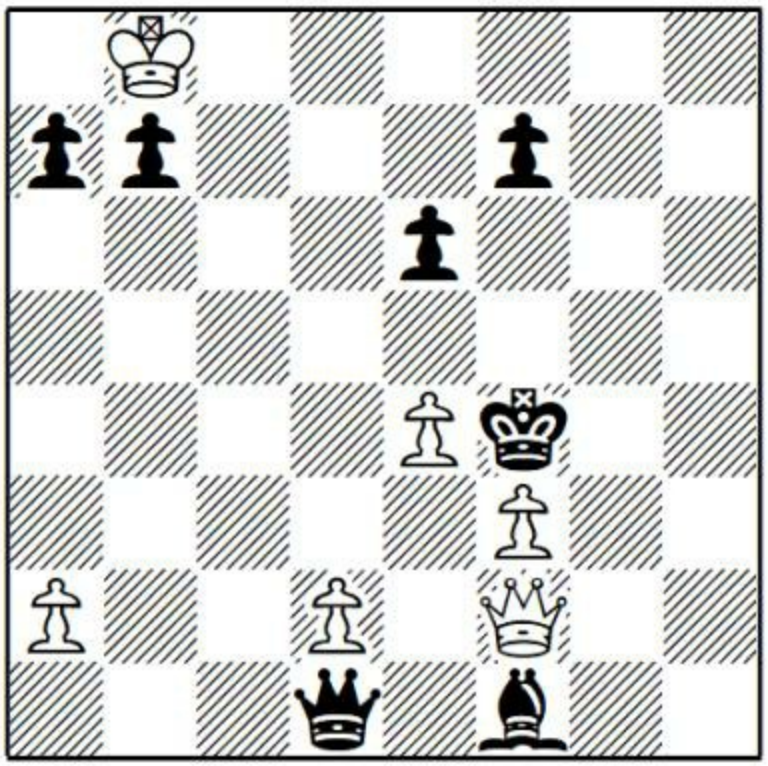
411) J.Capablanca-F.Marshall
Morristown 1909



White to play
Level 1
I promise you that this is no double exclam brain-buster. Find one simple move and Black's defence collapses. Swapping queens wins comfortably, but Capa found a continuation which wins even more material:

Answer: Skewer/discovered attack.
36 Bf8! Qxh7 37 Rxh7+
Discovered attack.
37 ... Ke8
Really? You don't want to resign here?
38 Rxa7 Kxf8 39 Kf3 1-0

412) L.Kubbel
Bohemia 1910



White to play
Level 5
This beautiful study by Kubbel is murderously difficult. Embedded within are endless skewer themes.
Answer: Start with a queen check on h4, driving Black's king to e5.
1 Qh4+! Ke5

1 ... Kxf3? 2 Qh5+ skewers black king and queen.

2 d4+!

Interference/attraction.

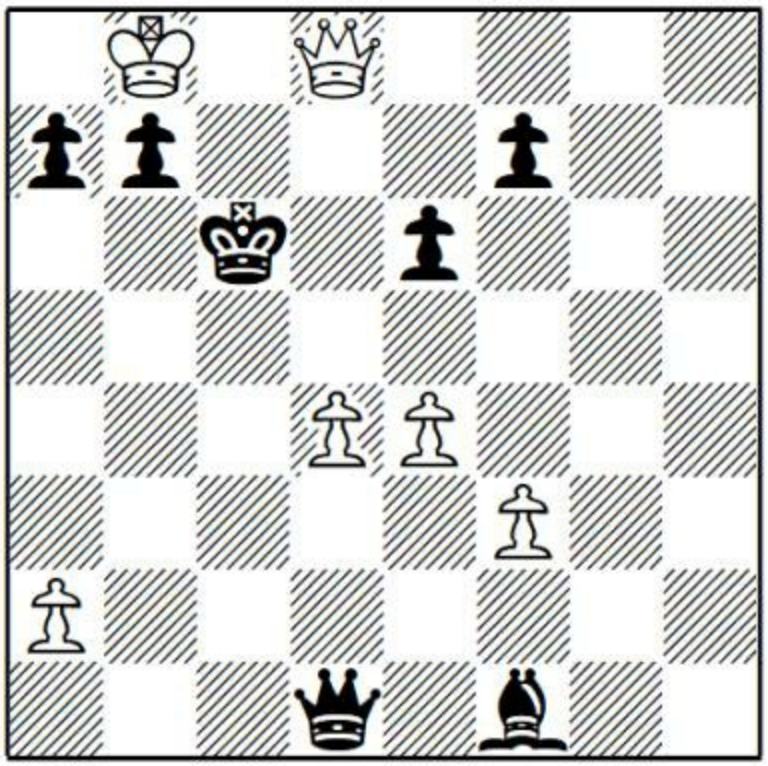
2 ... Kd6

Or:

a) 2 ... Kxd4? 3 Qd8+. Discovered attack, winning Black's queen.

b) 2 ... Qxd4? 3 Qh8+. Skewer, but doesn't Black have a block with the f-pawn? Apparently not, since then White gets an Interference mate: 3 ... f6 4 Qh2 mate.

3 Qd8+ Kc6



White to play

Level 4

What is White's winning move?

Answer: Attraction/skewer/mating net.

4 a4!!

Principle: *When hunting the enemy king, don't chase him. Instead, cut off*

escape routes. White threatens Qc7 mate, so Black has no choice but to chop the a-pawn, allowing a skewer on e8.

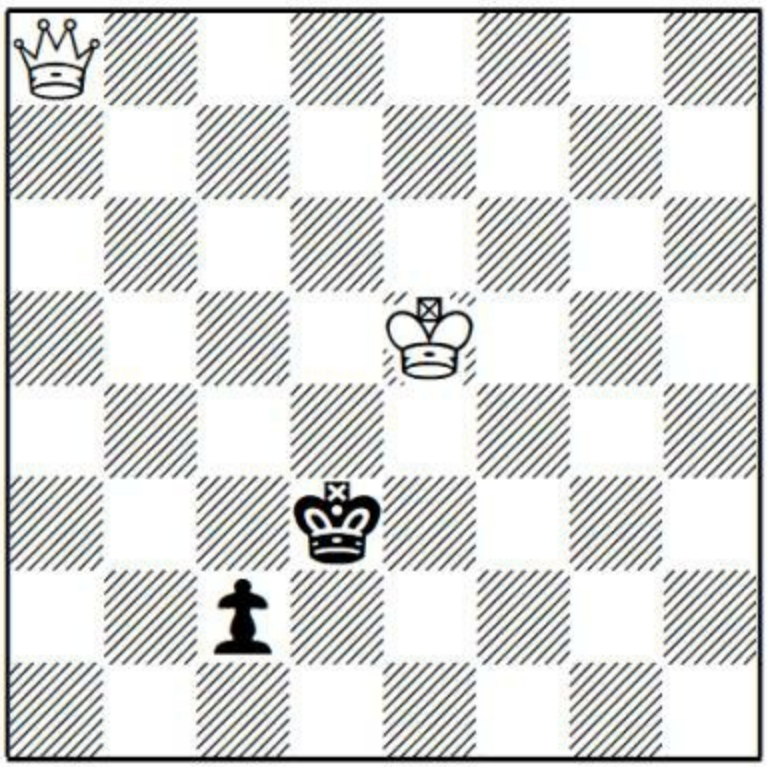
4 ... Qxa4

This is where your deadbeat friend walks over to borrow more money from you and even before he can say a word, your answer is "No!", but if 4 ... Qd2 5 Qc7 mate.

5 Qe8+

Bye, bye black queen, due to the skewer.

413) N.Grigoriev
Shakhmaty v SSSR, 1932



White to play

Level 5

We can scarcely see in the position's feeble grey light. Normally a queen versus bishop pawn on the seventh is drawn. The exception is when the

queen-up side's king is close, as in this case. We must continue with absolute precision.

Answer: Step 1: Only with a check on d5 can White win.

1 Qd5+!

Instead, 1 Qa1? Kd2 2 Qa2 Kc3! is a draw, while after 1 Qa3+? Kd2 2 Qa2 Kc3! White is unable to make progress.

1 ... Ke3

Here 1 ... Kc3 2 Qd4+ Kb3 3 Qa1 halts Black's intended promotion or if 1 ... Ke2 2 Qa2! Kd1 3 Kd4! (or 3 Ke4!) 3 ... c1Q 4 Kd3 and mate in three.

2 Qg2!

Step 2: Allow Black to promote.

2 ... c1Q

2 ... Kd3 3 Qg5! Kc3 4 Qc1 wins.

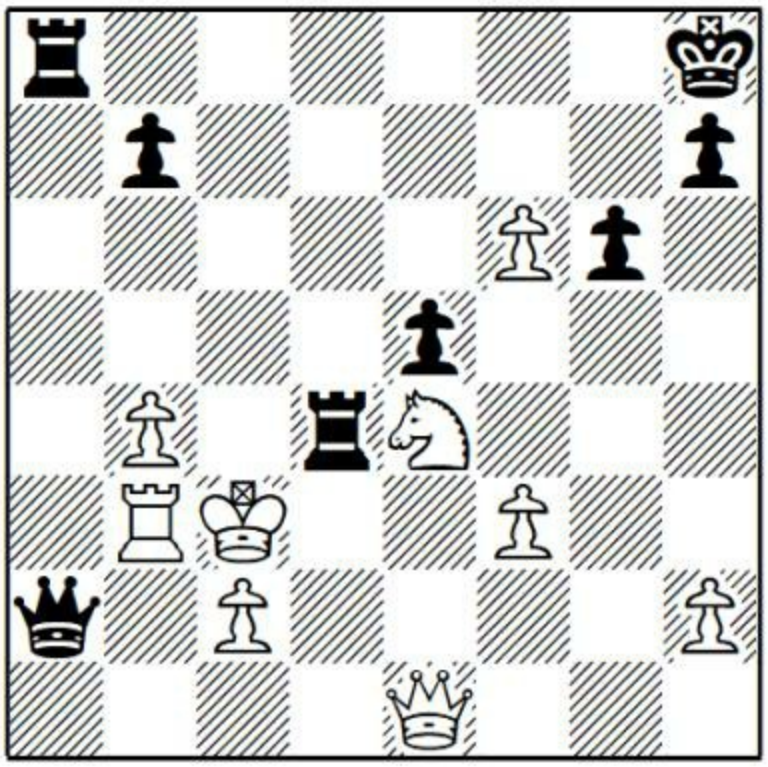
3 Qg5+!

White's Tarzan-like queen, who swings from vine to vine, is more ape than human.

Step 3: The skewer picks up the Black's new queen.

414) S.Khodzhibekov-V.Korchnoi

Frunze 1956



Black to play

Level 3

Korchnoi won White's queen here. How?

Answer: Step 1: Attraction: Drive White's knight to c5 with a rook check on c8.

35 ... Rc8+

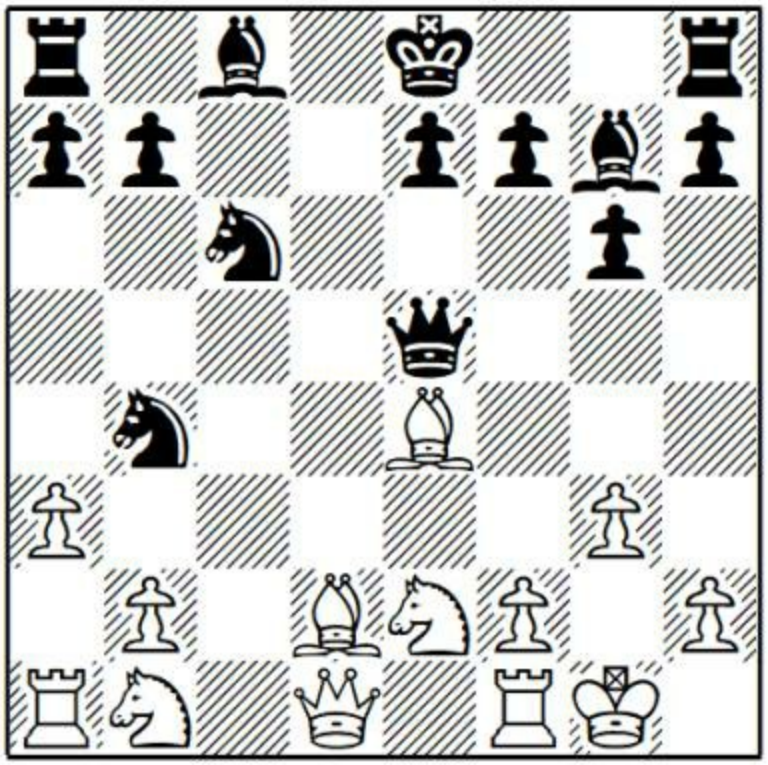
Answer no.2: 35 ... b5! (threat: ... Rc4+ and ... Qxc2+) 36 Qb1 Rc8+ 37 Nc5 Rxc5+! 38 bxc5 b4+! (now White's position is clubbed into sprawling incoherence) 39 Rxb4 Qa5 40 f7 Qxc5+ wins the house.

36 Nc5 Rxc5+! 0-1

Step 2: Set up the skewer with an exchange sacrifice, clearing the e1-a5 diagonal. If 37 bxc5 Qa5+. How inconsiderate, a skewer, and if 38 Kb2 Qxe1 with an extra queen.

415) V.Korchnoi-S.Witkowski

Krakow 1959



White to play

Level 1

Time for a little snooze break with an easy one. How did Korchnoi win?

Answer: Step 1: Eliminate the loose-ended e4 bishop by swapping on c6.

1 Bxc6+!

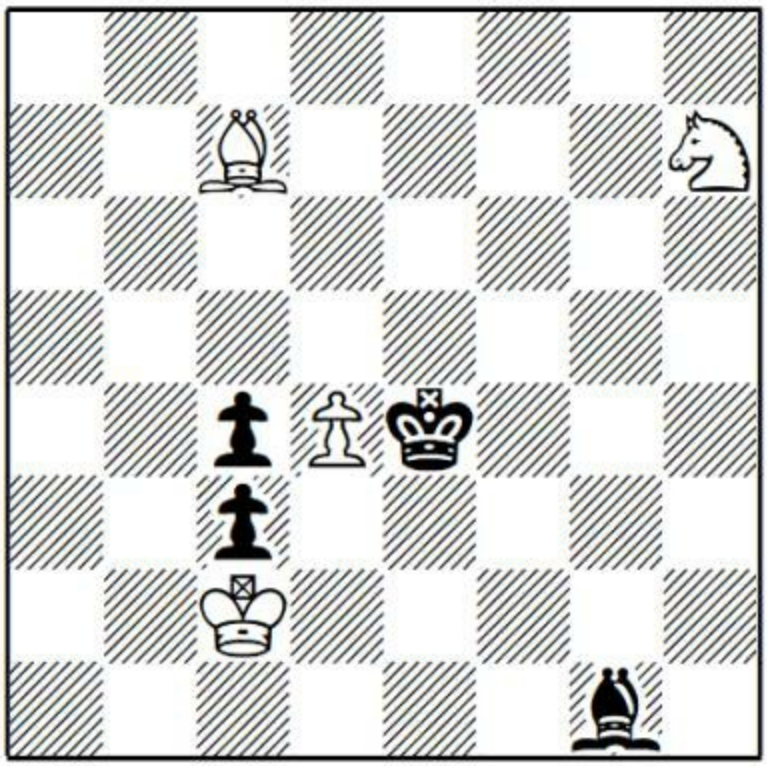
Far less accurate is 1 Bc3? (the novel's main character is caught in a negative narrative) 1 ... Qxe4 2 Bxg7 Bh3 3 Nf4 Bxf1 4 Bxh8 Nd3 5 Nd2 Qf5 6 Nxf1 Nxf4 7 gxf4 f6 8 Qb3 Qg4+ 9 Ng3 0-0-0 when Black is still in the game, despite White's extra piece.

1 ... Nxc6 2 Bc3 1-0

Step 2: Transfer the d2-bishop to c3. Skewer. Black's g7-bishop falls.

416) A.Gurvich & E.Pogosyants

Alma Atinskaja Pravda, 1961



White to play

Level 5

Outwardly the position appears toneless, as if we understand all there is to know about it in a single shallow glance. Black is about to achieve a draw by eliminating White's final pawn and we can't save it. We can still win if we can somehow hang on to the pawn, or win Black's bishop. How do we do it?

Answer: Give check on f6, inviting Black's king to capture our final pawn.

1 Nf6+! Kxd4

After 1 ... Kf5 2 Be5 we eat both of Black's remaining pawns. Finally, our d-pawn costs Black the bishop and we mate with bishop and knight versus lone king.

2 Bb8!

In unclear positions our choices are rarely straightforward. In composed works it is the opposite, where there is but a single path to its truth. We *must* delay the skewer. 2 Bb6+? is hasty: 2 ... Ke5 3 Nd7+ (or 3 Ng4+ Kf4) 3 ...

Kd6 4 Bxg1 Kxd7 is a draw.

2 ... Be3

Or 2 ... Bf2 3 Ba7+ Ke5 4 Ng4+ Kf4 5 Nxf2 and wins.

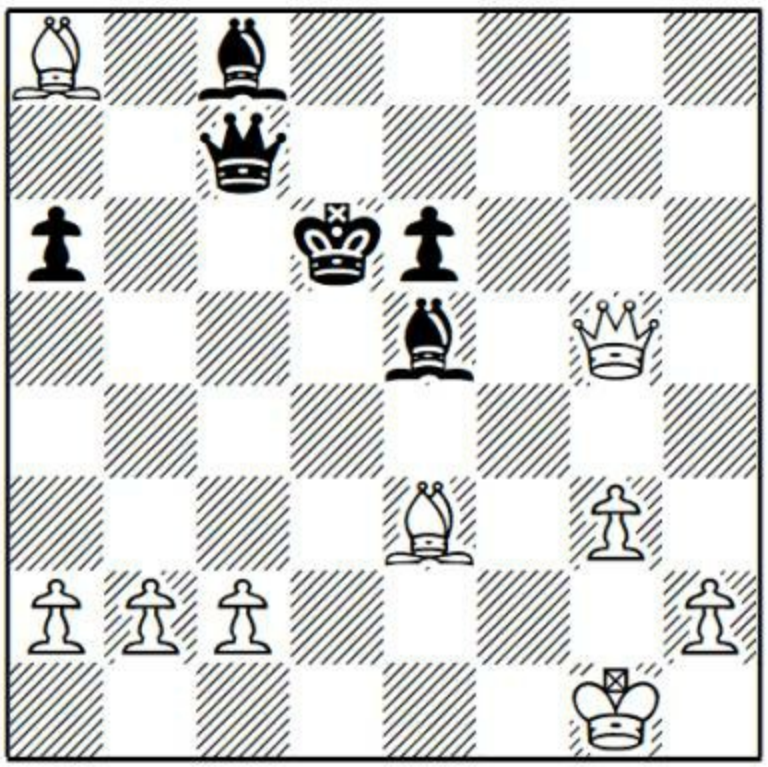
3 Ba7+ Ke5 4 Ng4+

Knight fork.

4 ... Kf4 5 Nxe3

White cleans up Black's remaining pawns and delivers mate with bishop and knight versus lone king.

417) W.Unzicker-M.Tal
Milan 1975



White to play

Level 1

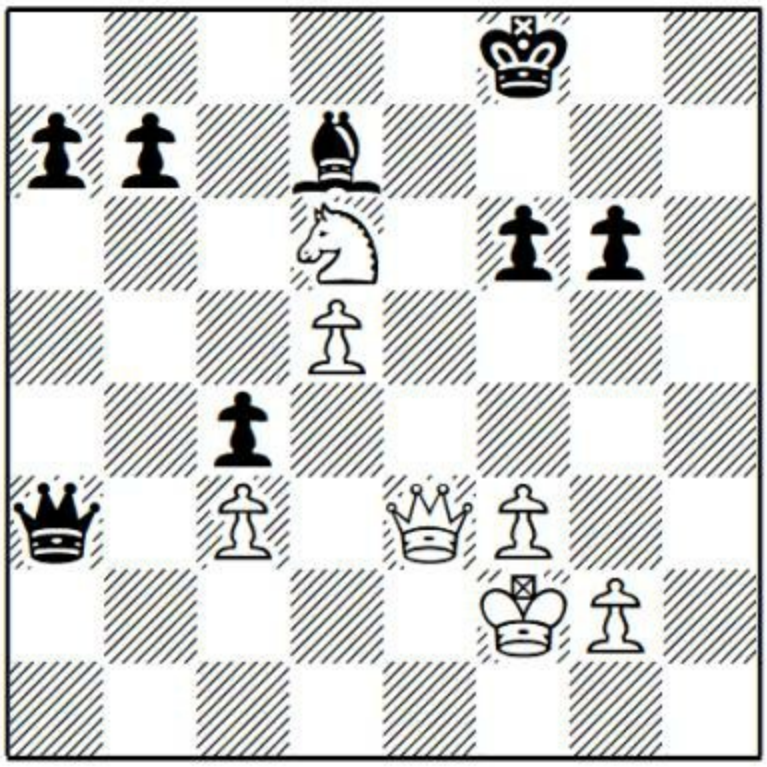
Tal found himself down three pawns and refusing to resign. How did GM Unzicker help him change his mind?

Answer: Queen sacrifice/skewer.

32 Qxe5+! 1-0

32 ... Kxe5 33 Bf4+ Kf5 34 Bxc7 leaves White up a piece and three pawns.

418) G.Kasparov-S.Tatai
Dubai Olympiad 1986



White to play

Level 3

The perfect trap should be beguilingly innocent on the outside and ruthlessly cunning on the inside. Black fell for a trap which loses his queen by force:

Answer: Keep checking until we get to Qf8+, with a skewer or a discovered attack on Black's queen.

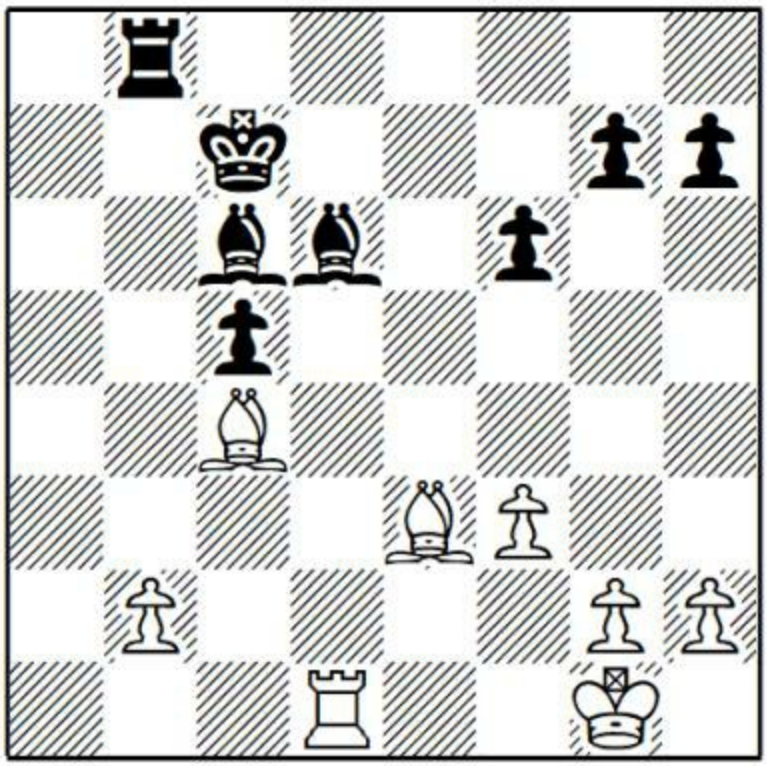
39 Qh6+ Ke7 40 Qg7+! Kxd6

Or 40 ... Kd8 41 Qf8+ Kc7 42 Ne8+ (discovered attack) 42 ... Bxe8 43 Qxa3 and wins.

41 Qf8+ 1-0

Skewer. Black loses his queen.

419) H.Nakamura-S.Muhammad
U.S. Championship, San Diego 2004



White to play

Level 1

In an otherwise drawish position, Black fell asleep and played 27 ... Rb8??. It should take you exactly one second to see why this move loses instantly:

Answer: Just take the d6 bishop, intending to skewer on f4.

28 Rxd6! 1-0

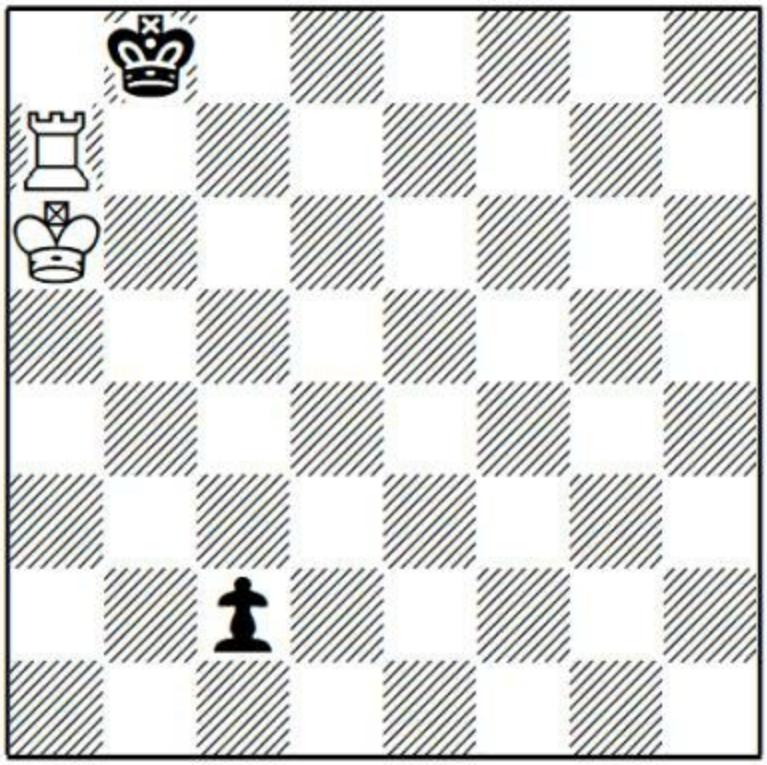
The promise of free stuff has a wonderful way of stimulating our interest.

After 28 ... Kxd6 (or 28 ... Rb4 29 Bf4! Rxc4 30 Rd4+, with a discovered attack and 30 ... Kb6 31 Rxc4 leaves White up a rook) 29 Bf4+ (skewer) 29 ... Kd7 30 Bxb8. White is up a full piece.

25) Stalemate

It drives me crazy when a world conflict gets bogged down, with neither side making progress and then the chess-ignorant news anchor calls it a "stalemate". We chess player know better. A stalemate occurs when *one* side is to move and lacks even a single legal move.

420) E.Cook
Handbuch des Schachspiels, 1864



White to play
Level 3

This is an earlier model, less sophisticated than the problem which follows next. From the primitive arises the complex. How does White force a

stalemate draw?

***Answer:* 1 Rb7+ Kc8**

1 ... Ka8 2 Ra7+ only repeats the position and is of no benefit for Black.

2 Rb5! c1Q

2 ... c1R isn't exactly an optimal solution for Black.

3 Rc5+!

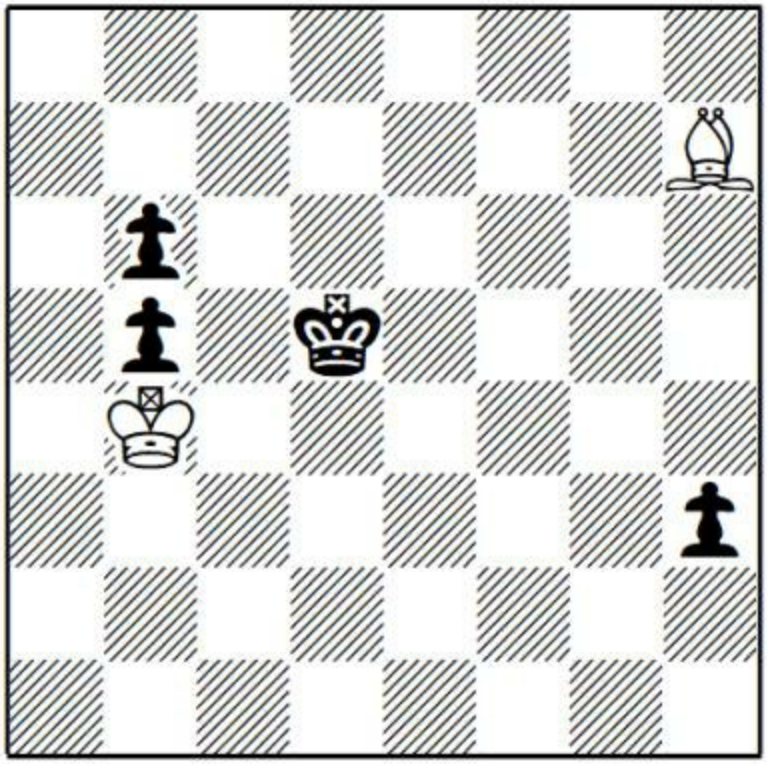
Attraction.

3 ... Qxc5

Stalemate.

421) P.Larsen

Tidskrift for Schack, 1897



White to play

Level 5

The DNA of endgame studies gets passed down over the decades, where

progeny studies evolve into greater subtlety and sophistication. Yet saying that, this is a sophisticated study for the year of 1897. We are unable to halt Black's promotion, yet can still hold the draw:

Answer: Step 1. Move the bishop to f5, attacking Black's h-pawn.

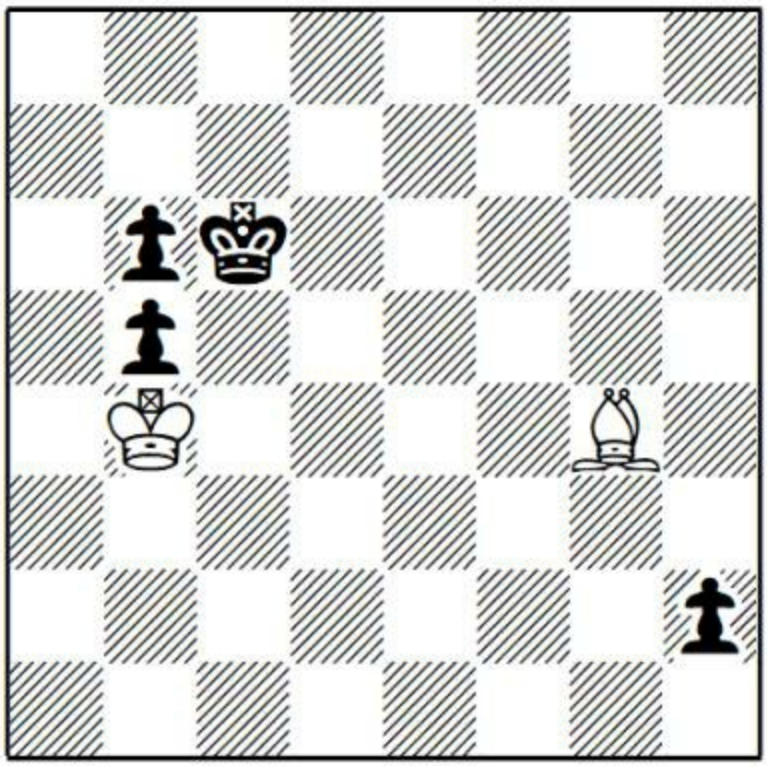
1 Bf5 h2 2 Bc8!

Step 2: Transfer the bishop to c8, threatening Bb7+.

2 ... Kc6

Or 2 ... h1Q 3 Bb7+. Bye, bye new queen. Draw.

3 Bg4!



Step 3: Transfer the bishop to g4, setting up our future stalemate.

3 ... h1Q

3 ... h1B 4 Be2 Be4 5 Bxb5+ is a dead draw.

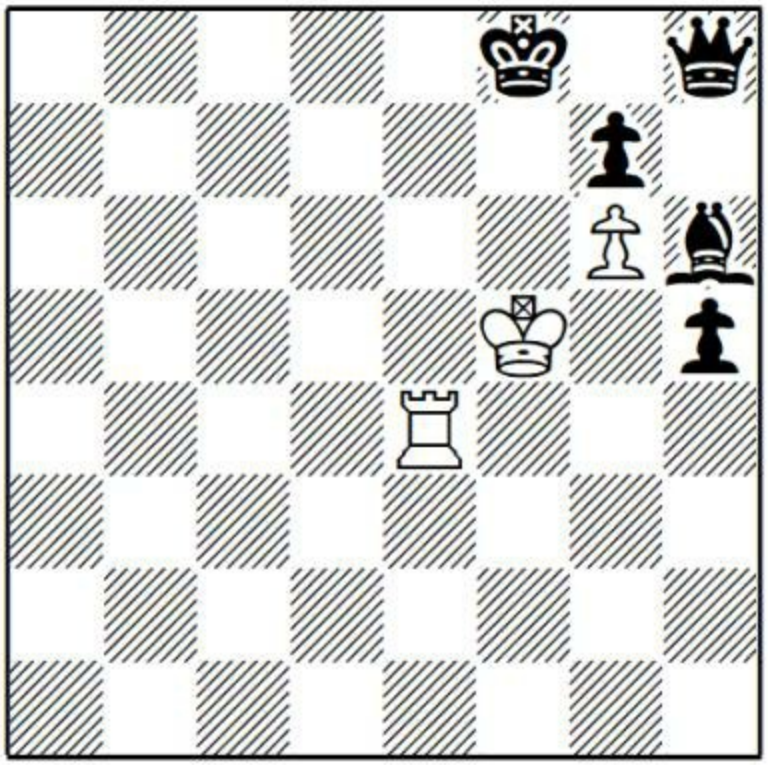
4 Bf3+!

Step 4: Attraction/stalemate.

4 ... Qxf3

Stalemate.

422) L.Kubbel
Rigaer Tageblatt, 1911



White to play

Level 5

It's amazing enough that White can draw here. What is even more amazing is that Black would win if a black rook stood on h8, rather than the queen. The solution is short, yet exceedingly difficult to find. How on earth can White force a stalemate here?

Answer: Step 1: Transfer the rook to a4 and threaten Ra8+, followed by Rxh8. Black's response is forced.

1 Ra4!! Ke7

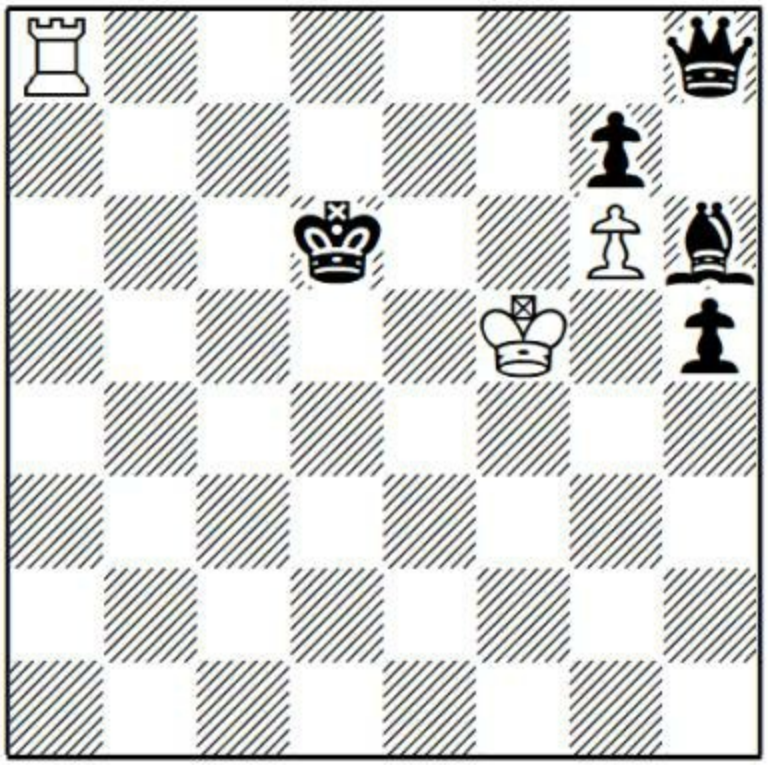
Once again no choice since White threatened Ra8+ and Rxh8.

2 Ra7+ Kd6

Any king move to the back rank is out of the question due to 2 ... Kf8?? 3

Ra8+ Ke7 4 Rxh8 and it is White who wins.

3 Ra8!!



The rook behaves a bit differently from how people expect him to behave.

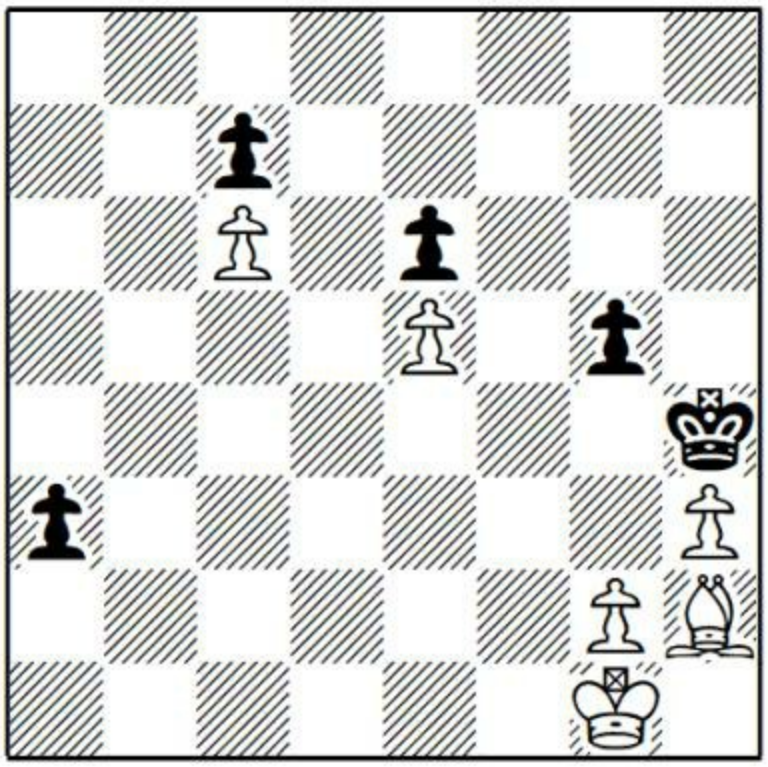
Step 2: Attraction. Force Black's queen to capture the rook on a8, which delivers stalemate.

3 ... Qxa8

Stalemate.

423) L.Kubbel

Smena, 1916



White to play

Level 5

Matters look grim for White. After all, Black threatens to promote to a new queen - with check! - in just two moves. Most of us would resign here. Look deeper and you may find White's miracle save, based on a stalemate:

Answer: Step 1: Push the g-pawn two squares.

1 g4! Kxh3

First things first. Black must take the h3-pawn to save the king. 1 ... a2?? is a disastrous blunder since then Black's king is caught in a mating net after 2 Kg2 a1Q 3 Bg3 mate.

2 Kh1!

Step 2: Move the king to h1, clearing the way for Bg1.

2 ... a2

After 2 ... Kxg4 3 Bg1 Kf4 4 Bd4 Ke4 5 Ba1 Kd5 6 Kg2 Kxc6 7 Kf3 Kd5 8 Kg4 Kc4 9 Kxg5 c5 10 Kf6 Kd5 11 Ke7 c4 12 Kd7 a2 13 Ke7 Ke4 14 Kxe6 Kd3 15 Kd7 c3 16 e6 c2 17 e7 c1Q 18 e8Q Qxa1 19 Qg6+ White will

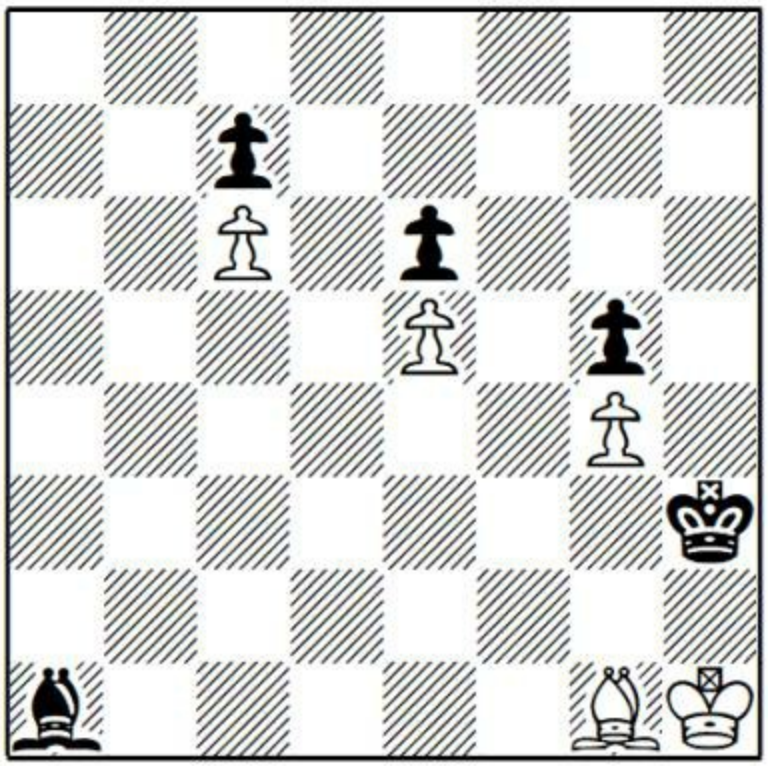
deliver perpetual check.

3 Bg1!

Step 3: Move the bishop to g1.

3 ... a1B

The underpromotion is an attempt to evade stalemate, which fails. However, promotion to queen or rook is an instant stalemate, while after 3 ... a1N White has access to a pawn promotion combination: 4 Bb6! Nb3 (of course the c7-pawn can't touch the bishop, otherwise White's c6-pawn promotes) 5 Bxc7 Nd4 6 Bd8! Nxc6 7 Bxg5 Kxg4 8 Bd2 Kf3 9 Kg1 Nxe5 10 Kf1 with an easy draw for White.



White to play

Level 2

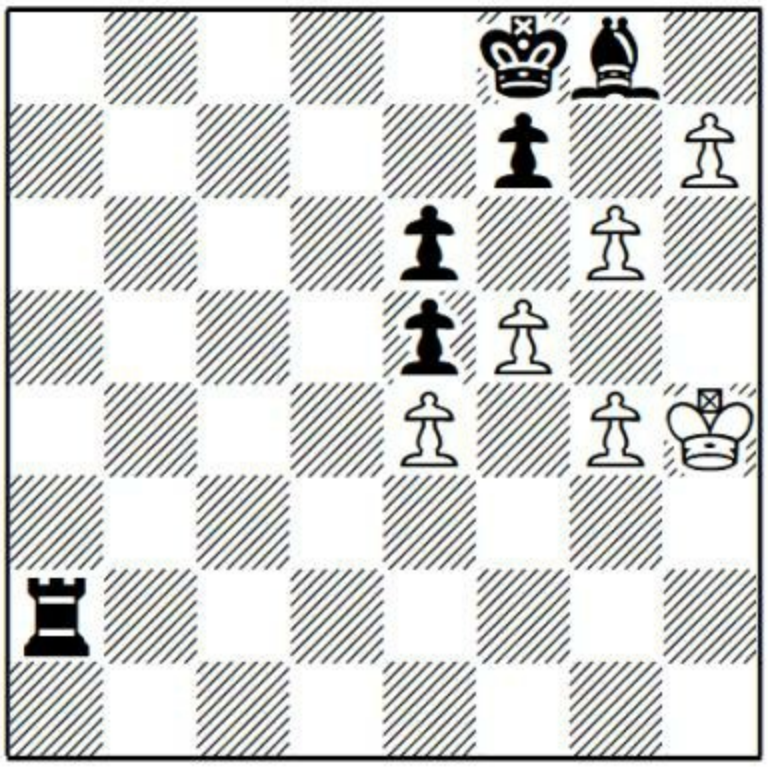
Find one powerful move and White forces the draw:

Answer: Attraction/stalemate.

4 Bd4! Bxd4

Stalemate. By now Black is too exhausted for surprise.

424) G.Bagdasarian
Szachmaty in SSRR, 1937



White to play

Level 4.5

White leads a bare subsistence existence. If we promote right away, then Black has ... Rh2+ and ... Rxh8. What do we do?

Answer: Deliberately fall for Black's trap.

1 h8Q! Rh2+

The ill-tempered rhinoceroses prepares his charge, but we are ready for him.

2 Kg5 Rxh8 3 g7+!

Now we get rid of all extraneous pawn moves.

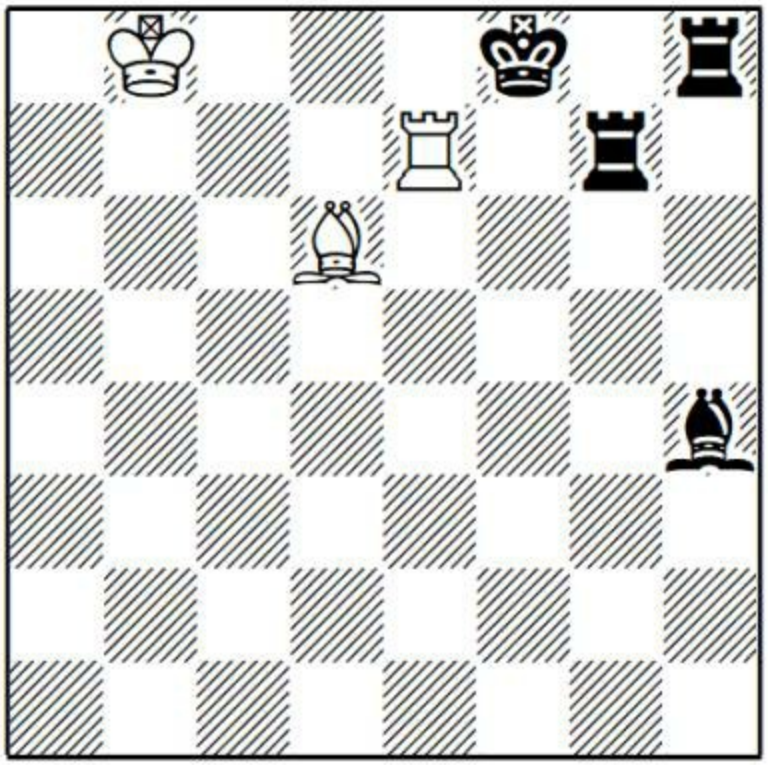
3 ... Kxg7 4 f6+ Kh7

4 ... Kf8 is stalemate.

5 Kh5

Stalemate. What a bizarre anomaly. Notice that it is *Black*, not White, who is stalemated!

425) A.Kakovin
Tijdschrift v.d. KNSB, 1960



White to play

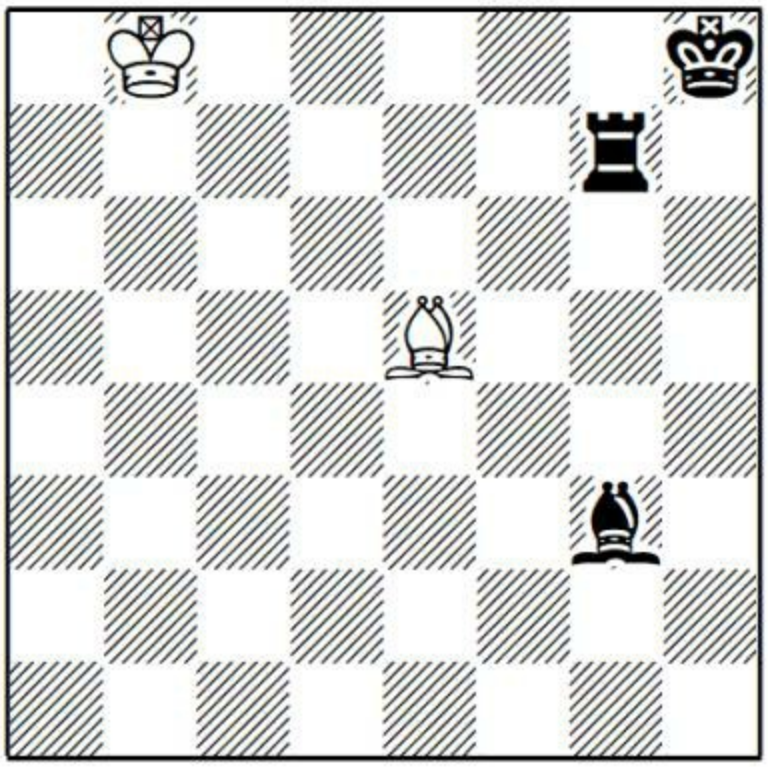
Level 4.5

We are down a rook yet can force a draw utilizing stalemate as a weapon:

***Answer:* 1 Rc7+ Kg8 2 Rc8+ Kh7 3 Rxh8+ Kxh8 4 Be5**

But wait a minute doesn't Black have a counter-pinning trick with ... Bg3, winning on the spot?

4 ... Bg3!



White to play

Level 1

We can hold the draw. Hint, hint, we are in the Stalemate chapter!

Answer: Hide your king on a8.

5 Ka8!

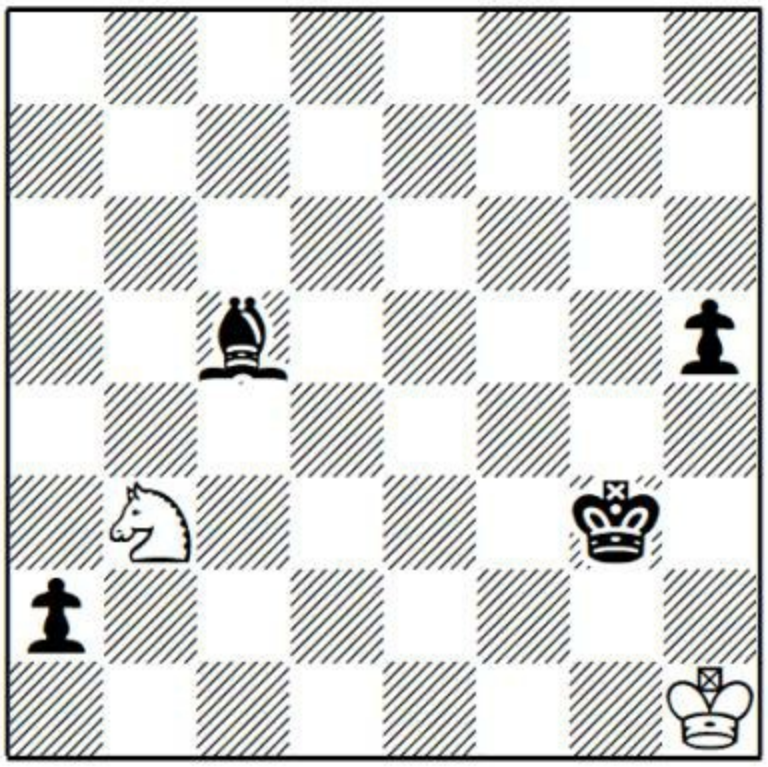
The spirit refuses to be constrained by the body's physical design. Would you have found this in a tournament game? Or would you have missed it and mistakenly resigned as White?

5 ... Bxe5

Stalemate. 5 ... Kh7 6 Bxg7 is also a draw.

426) S.Furman-J.Smejkal

Talllin 1971



White to play

Level 4.5

Furman found himself down two pawns in the ending and then lost prosaically. Who could blame him for losing heart, since White's position appears hopeless, which in truth is an erroneous conclusion. Then after the game, Tal showed a way for Furman to hold the draw. Furman could have reached this position in the game. White to play and hold the draw:

Answer: Just move the knight away and allow Black to promote!

1 Nc1!!

According to the Roman historian Suetonius, mad emperor Caligula wanted to promote his horse to a position in the Senate. Caligula knew the value of a knight. Threat: Nxa2. But so what? Black will promote.

1 ... a1N

There is no such thing as a one-size-fits-all promotion. Black can promote to any piece he likes and every one of them leads to a draw!

1 ... a1Q is stalemate, as is promotion to a rook, while 1 ... a1B 2 Nb3

Bcd4 3 Nxd4 Bxd4 is also stalemate. It's even a draw without the stalemate, since it's wrong-coloured bishop and rook pawn.

2 Nb3!

Attraction/stalemate.

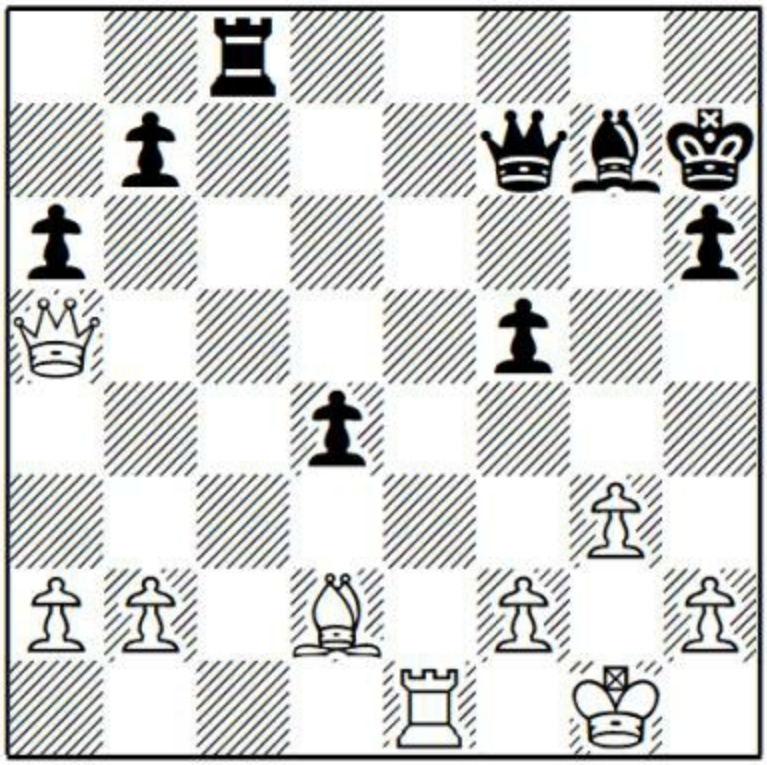
2 ... Nxb3

It's still stalemate!

26) Undermining/Removal of the Guard

Undermining, also known as Removal of the Guard occurs when the opponent's defensive piece is either captured or disrupted from its post, which in turn leaves another of the defender's pieces undefended or, if it's the king, under-defended and vulnerable to attack or mate.

427) R.Fischer-F.Olafsson
Mar del Plata 1960

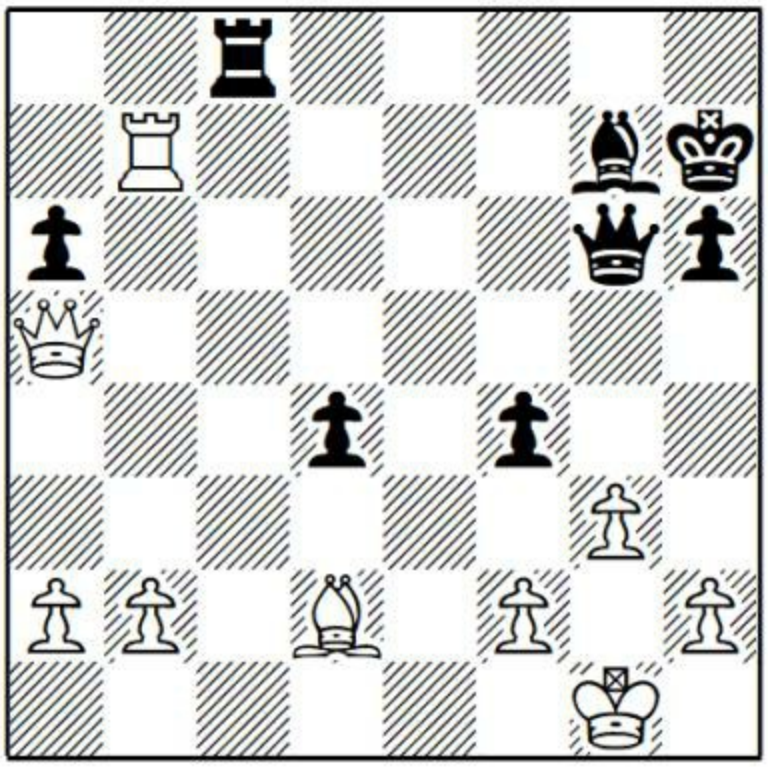


White to play
Level 3
How did Fischer win material?
Answer: Removal of the guard/double attack.

34 Re7! Qg6

If 34 ... Qxe7 35 Qxf5+ (double attack) 35 ... Kh8 36 Qxc8+ Kh7 37 Qc2+ Kh8 38 Qg6 with both an extra pawn and initiative for White.

35 Rxb7 f4



Olafsson refuses to continue with a policy of peaceful cooperation. Fischer won a clean pawn and so Olafsson attempts to muck it up a bit by offering a second pawn for the attack, with his next move. Should White accept the pawn?

Answer: No! The pawn is poisoned.

36 Qd5!

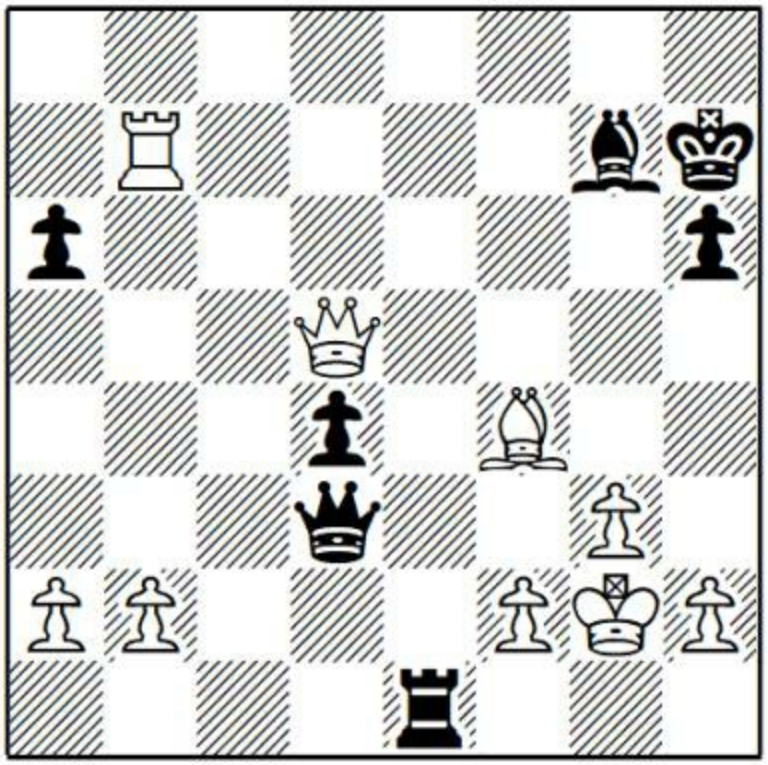
The sides vie for a precious resource: control over the light squares. Black's attempt at magic meets with science. This powerful defensive move/centralization covers White's vulnerable light squares, unlike 36 Bxf4?? Qb1+ 37 Kg2 Qe4+ (double attack) 38 Kh3 Qxb7 when Black won a rook, while securing his own rook from Qf5+ and Qxc8.

36 ... Re8 37 Bxf4

Now the pawn is safe to chop. Also strong was 37 Qxd4 f3 38 h4 and

Black is busted.

37 ... Re1+ 38 Kg2 Qd3



White to play

Level 2.5

Calculate 39 Be5. Does it work, or should we refrain?

Answer: It's another trap and we should refrain.

39 Kh3!

Principle: *Don't mistake strategic evasion for timidity*. Fischer avoids the trap 39 Be5?? Qf1+ 40 Kf3 Qh1+ (skewer) 41 Kg4 Qxd5 when Black wins.

However, 39 Rxg7+! also wins after 39 ... Kxg7 40 Be5+ Rxe5 Forced. 41 Qxe5+ Kf7 42 Qd5+ Ke7 43 a4 with a won queen ending. I prefer the path Fischer took in the game.

39 ... Qg6 40 Rd7!

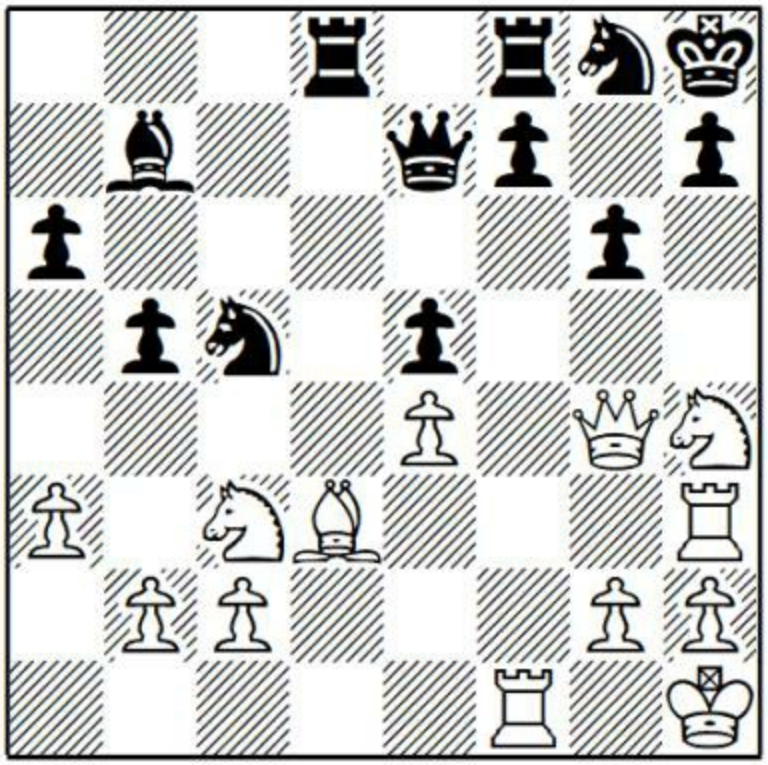
Seizing control over d3.

40 ... h5 41 Kg2 h4 42 Rd6 1-0

Taking on d4 was also winning, while here 42 ... Qe8 43 Qg5 Qe4+ 44

Kh3 hxg3 is met with 45 Be5! (overloaded defenders) 45 ... Qxe5 (or 45 ... Bxe5 46 Rh6 mate) 46 Qg6+ Kg8 47 Rd8+, winning a full queen.

428) U.Andersson-K.Rogoff
Olot 1971



White to play
Level 4

From a strategic standpoint, White endures a bare sustenance existence in his comfortless world. White is stuck with a bad light-squared bishop and Black exerts pressure on e4. Yet the Principle states: Strategic considerations must bow to tactical might. White *must* find a forcing continuation, or he will stand worse. How did Ulf win decisive material?

Answer: Undermining/annihilation of defensive barrier.

22 Rxf7!!

Now g6 is fatally weakened, which leads to a discovered attack/knight

fork which wins Black's queen.

22 ... Qxf7

The sacrifice cannot be declined: 22 ... Qe6?? 23 Qxe6 Nxe6 24 Nxg6 mate or 22 ... Rxf7? 23 Nxg6+ Kg7 24 Nxe7+, winning Black's queen with check.

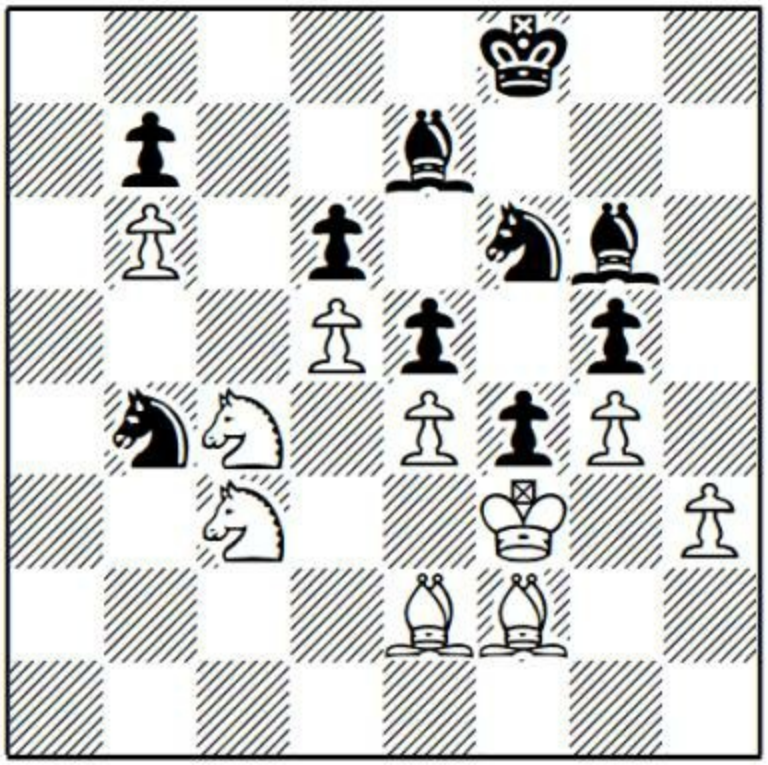
23 Nxg6+ Qxg6

Or 23 ... Kg7 24 Nxe5+ Kh8 (24 ... Qg6 25 Rxh7+! Kxh7 26 Qxg6+ Kh8 27 Nf7+ Rxf7 28 Qxf7 wins) 25 Nxf7+ with a winning material advantage for White.

24 Qxg6

Black has no time for back rank tricks, since White threatens mate on h7. Ulf went on to convert without trouble.

429) G.Kacheishvili-J.Fedorowicz
New York 1999



Black to play

Level 2

If given time, White will play Na5 and Nxb7. What should Black do?

Answer: Undermine a crucial defender of e4.

48 ... Na2! 49 Be1

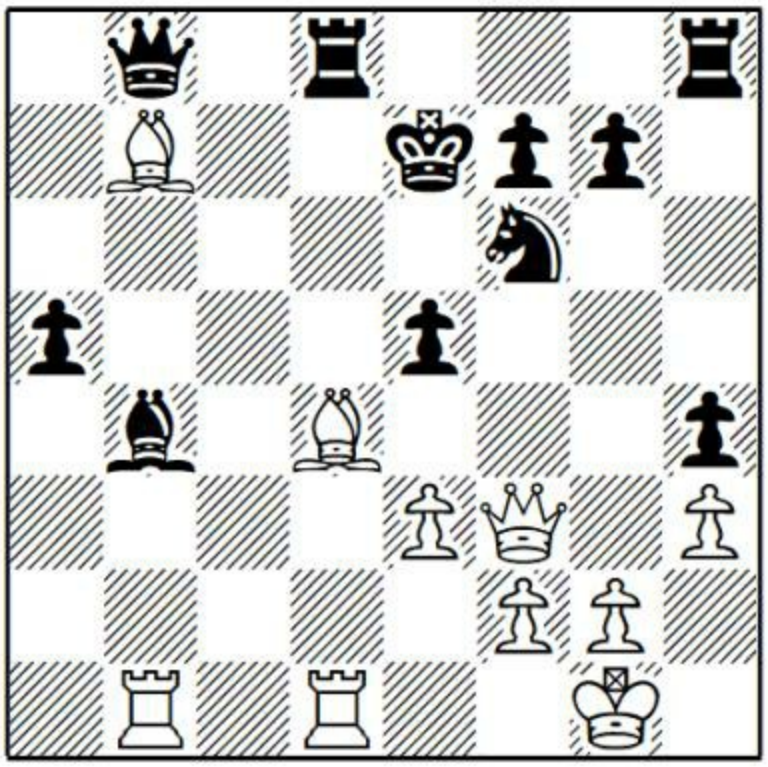
With 49 Nxa2 Bxe4 mate Black's bishop delivers the last rites to White's king.

49 ... Nxc3 0-1

After 50 Bxc3 Bxe4+ 51 Kf2 Bxd5 leaves Black up two pawns, with three connected central passed pawns.

430) M.Carlsen-L.Aronian

Bilbao 2008



White to play

Level 4.5

Magnus sacrificed two pawns for the initiative and bishop-pair. Here he found a combination which seals White's advantage. How?

Answer: With the exchange sacrifice White undermines Black's control over the dark squares and if accepted, Aronian's king becomes exposed.

27 Rxb4!! axb4?

We are reminded of the phrase: too much of a good thing. This is a serious misjudgement/miscalculation. The black king cannot survive the acceptance of the exchange sacrifice. My simple motto for defence is this: Endure. No matter how bad the pain is now, if you last long enough, opportunity will inevitably arise. Aronian had to try 27 ... exd4! 28 Rbxd4, even though White regained both sacrificed pawns and continues to hold a strategic advantage.

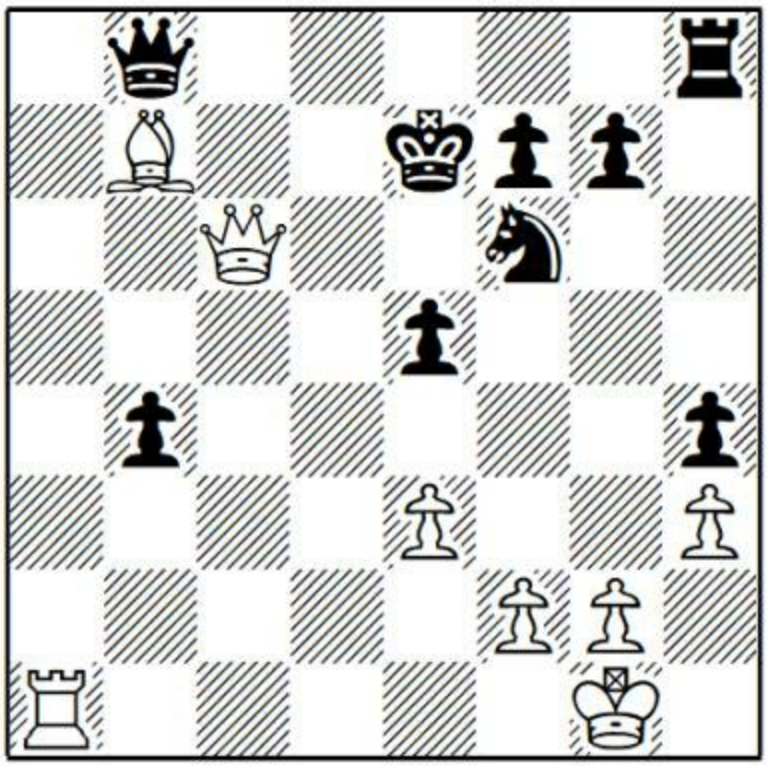
28 Bc5+ Ke6 29 Ra1!

Threatening a devastating check on a6.

29 ... Rd6 30 Bxd6 Kxd6

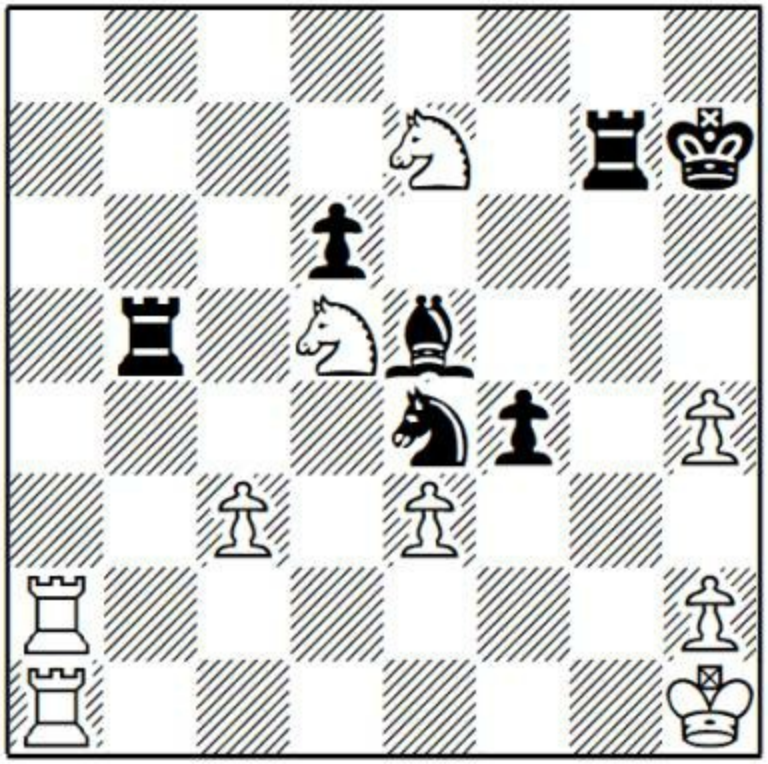
30 ... Qxd6?? 31 Ra6 pins and wins Black's queen.

31 Qc6+ Ke7



White to play
Level 1
How did Magnus make a decisive material gain?
Answer: Discovered attack.
32 Ra8! Qd6 33 Qxd6+ Kxd6 34 Rxh8 b3 35 Ba6!
Black's b-pawn is not destined to promote.
35 ... Nd7 36 Rxh4 Nc5 1-0
36 ... Nc5 37 Bc4 b2 38 Ba2 wins.

431) V.Ivanchuk-M.Carlsen
Leon (rapid) 2009



Black to play
Level 4
If we become adept at identifying geometric corruption, we become adept

at spotting the anomaly. Some combinations are not deep, yet still quite difficult to spot, since the geometry is so unnatural to our normal instincts. Our previously beautifully played game can so easily be marred by a missed combination. Even if we do happen to win, the missed combination always leaves a feeling of regret. In this position Carlsen missed a forced win and allowed Ivanchuk to eventually draw. Can you find the winning continuation a future world champion missed?

Answer: Undermining/overloaded defender. Magnus missed a move of cool indifference with the stunning:

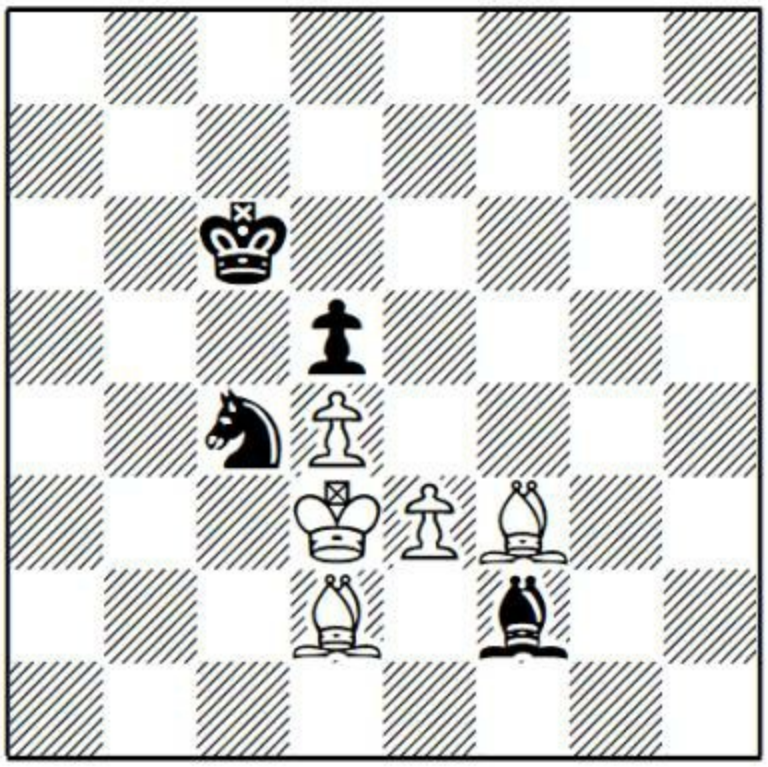
38 ... Ra5!!

Threat: ... Nf2+, to which there is no defence. Indeed, White must give up a full rook to avoid mate.

Instead, 38 ... Nxc3? was played in the game continuation where after 39 exf4 Nxd5 40 fxe5 Nxe7 41 exd6 Magnus was not able to convert, since all his pawns had been swapped away.

Answer no.2 38 ... fxe3! with the threat: ... Nf2+, also wins after 39 Rg2 Nf2+ 40 Kg1 Rf7 41 Re1 Rb2 42 Nc6 Nh3+ 43 Kh1 Rff2!.

432) A.Morozevich-J.Smeets
Wijk aan Zee 2009



White to play

Level 2

Being up two pawns against one is often a draw in such situations. Not this time. White to play and win:

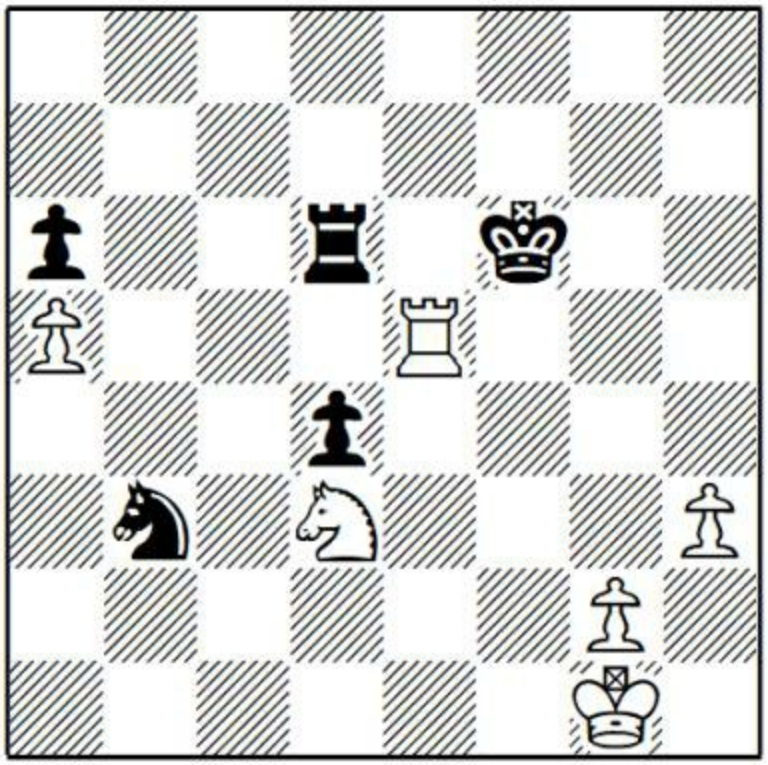
Answer: Undermine the defender of c4.

49 Bxd5+! 1-0

Petty larceny can be fun! White immediately regains the sacrificed piece and is two pawns up and winning. After 49 ... Kxd5 50 e4+ Ke6 51 Kxc4 White must be careful not to allow Black to sacrifice his bishops for both remaining pawns. Here is the technique: 51 ... Bg3 52 Bc3! (and not the idiotic 52 e5?? Bxe5 with a draw) 52 ... Kd6 53 e5+ Ke6 54 d5+ Ke7 55 Kc5 Kd7 56 e6+ Ke7 57 Kc6 Bh2 58 Bb4+ Kf6 59 e7 Kf7 60 d6 and White promotes.

433) R.Kasimdzhanov-G.Kamsky

Mainz (rapid) 2010



Black to play

Level 1.5

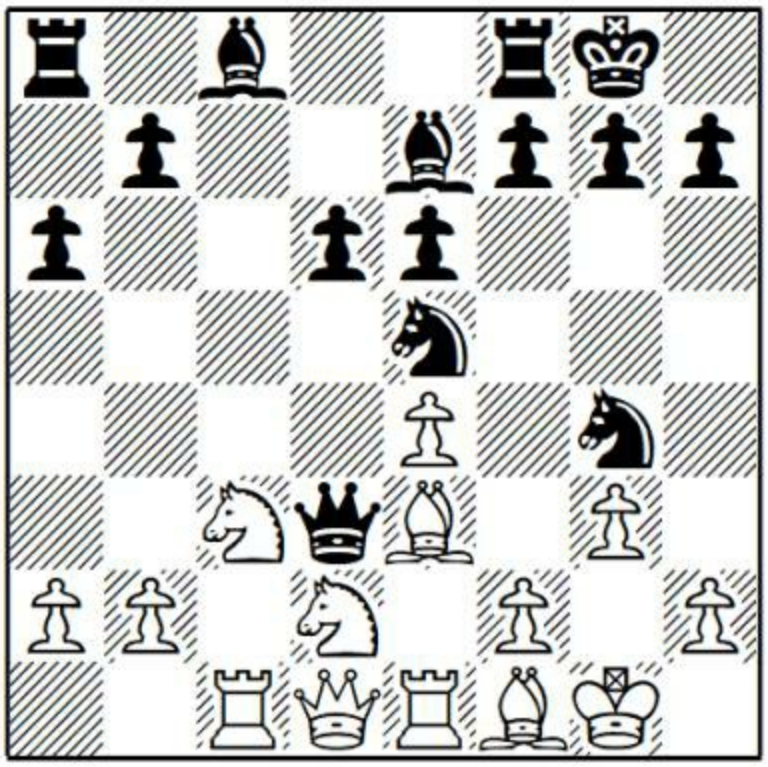
White's position is the roaring 20's, right before the stock market crashed. On his last move White shifted his rook from e7 to e5. Show why e5 was the wrong square:

Answer: Removal of the guard. Shift the knight to c1, removing the guard of e5.

70 ... Nc1! 0-1

434) M.Mulyar-L.Van Wely

World Open, Philadelphia 2011



Black to play

Level 3

Is Black's queen trapped? If not, how do you extricate it?

Answer: Step 1: Chop the bishop on e3.

15 ... Nxe3 16 fxe3?

This move is both logical and a blunder, since not only does Black extricate his queen, he also wins material. White had to agree to a pawn down position with weak dark squares with 16 Rxe3 Qd4.

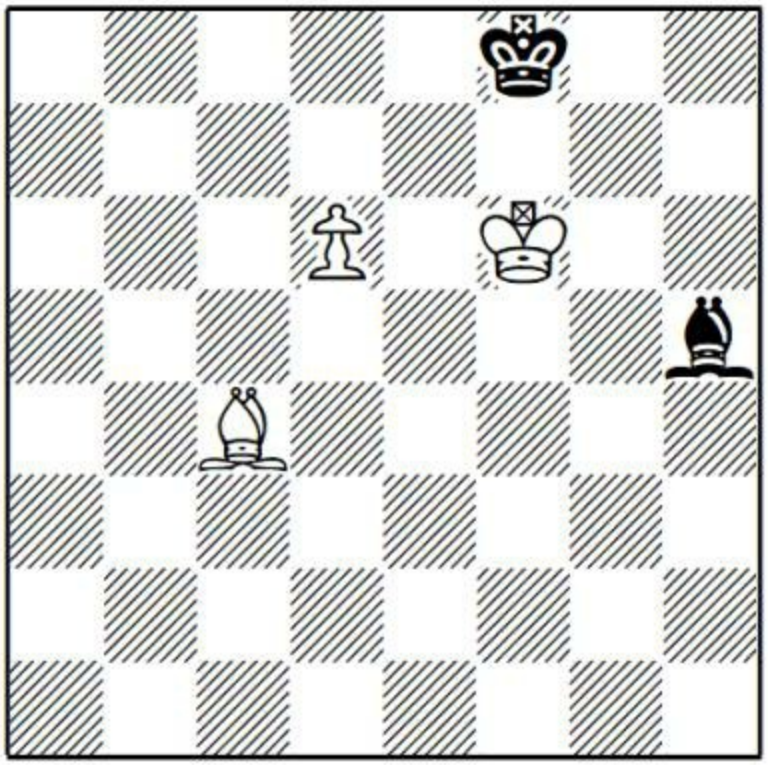
16 ... Qxd2! 0-1

Step 2: Undermining/attraction/knight fork. GM Mulyar resigned because the way things are going, White will soon end up in debtor's prison: for example, 17 Qxd2 Nf3+ 18 Kg2 Nxd2 19 Bd3 (Black's wayward knight cannot be trapped) 19 ... b5 20 b3 Bb7 21 Re2 b4! and Black remains up a piece.

27) Underpromotion

Physicist Richard Feynman once used the example of underpromotion in chess to illustrate how the universe may contain deeply hidden laws which we clueless humans are not aware of and don't understand, since they occur as anomalies. In this chapter there is only one move you should not consider: promotion to a full queen!

435) O.Dehler
Leipziger Tageblatt, 1921



White to play
Level 4.5
At first glance this seems like a ridiculously easy win for White. After all,

we just push the d-pawn and Black cannot prevent promotion and must resign, right?

Answer: **1 d7**

Not 1 Bd3?? Ke8 when Black's king sits on d8, with an instant draw.

1 ... Be8!

Not so fast! Black pulls out a clever resource. White has only one way to win.

2 d8B!

Monkey see, monkey do! Discretion is a practiced trait of the naturally cautious. Only via underpromotion to a bishop does White win:

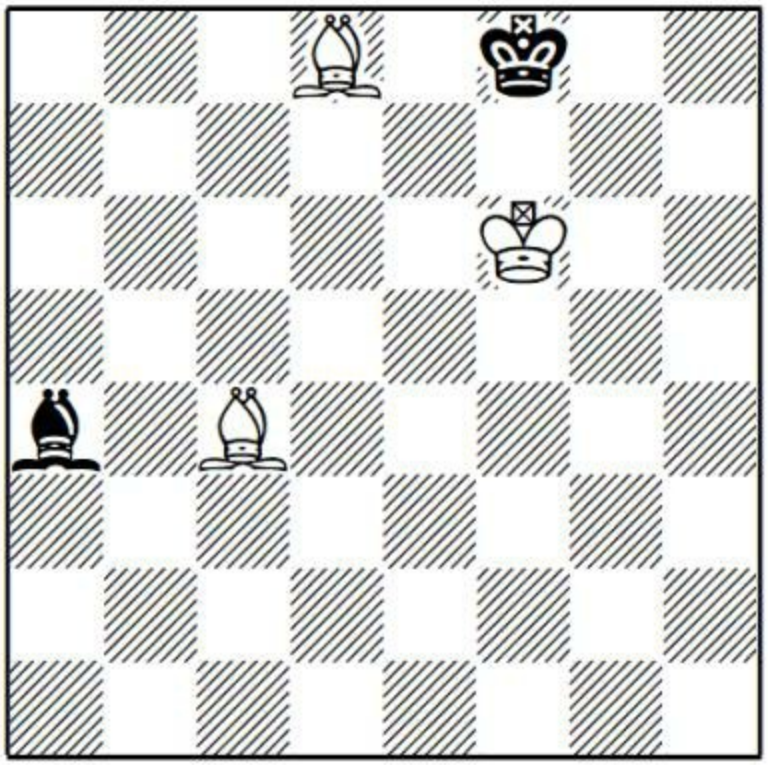
a) 2 d8Q? is stalemate. Promoting to a rook is also obviously stalemate.

b) 2 d8N? Ba4! is drawn.

c) 2 dxe8Q+? is just plain dumb, because even kindergarteners understand that a lone bishop can't win after 2 ... Kxe8.

2 ... Ba4

If 2 ... Bh5 3 Be7+ Ke8 4 Bb5 mate.



White to play

Level 1

White forces mate in two moves:

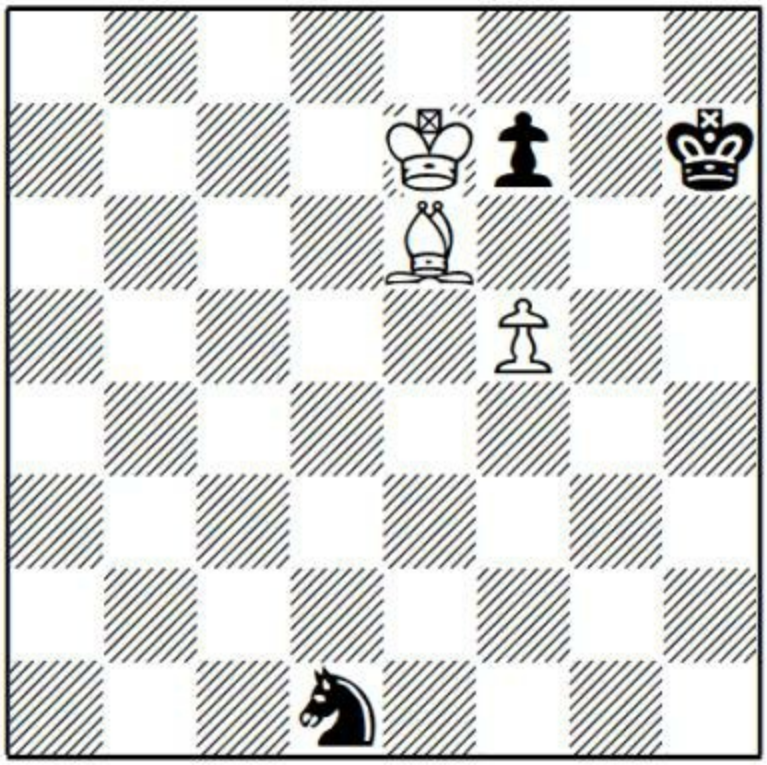
***Answer:* 3 Bf7!**

Now e8 is under White's control and there is no defence to the coming mate on e7.

3 ... Be8 4 Be7 mate

436) S.Filaretov

Shakhmatny Listok, 1925



White to play

Level 5

We are down to our last pawn and must be oh so very careful to not allow Black to sacrifice the knight for it. The winning technique requires absolute precision.

Answer: **1 f6!**

Not 1 Kxf7? Nf2 2 f6 Ne4! 3 Bf5+ Kh8 4 Bxe4 and stalemate, while 1 Bxf7? Ne3 2 f6 Nf5+ 3 Ke6 Nh6 4 Be8 Ng8! 5 f7 Kg7! 6 Bb5 Nh6 is also a draw.

1 ... Nf2!

The right defensive try:

a) After 1 ... Ne3 2 Kxf7 Black cannot halt promotion in view of 2 ... Ng2 3 Ke8 Nf4 4 Bf5+!. Zwischenzug, seizing control over g6. White promotes.

b) 1 ... fxe6?? (when we fall into a trap this ridiculous, we consider that maybe death would be preferable) 2 f7 and it isn't so difficult to calculate that White promotes.

2 Bxf7!

In chess, as in life, each of our decisions comes with consequences, painful, neutral or happy. Not 2 Kxf7? Ne4! 3 Bf5+ Kh8 4 Bxe4 stalemate.

2 ... Ng4

Alternatives:

a) 2 ... Ne4 3 Bg6+! (clearance) 3 ... Kxg6 4 f7 promotes.

b) 2 ... Nd3 3 Bg6+! wins.

c) 2 ... Nh3 3 Bg6+! is the same trick.

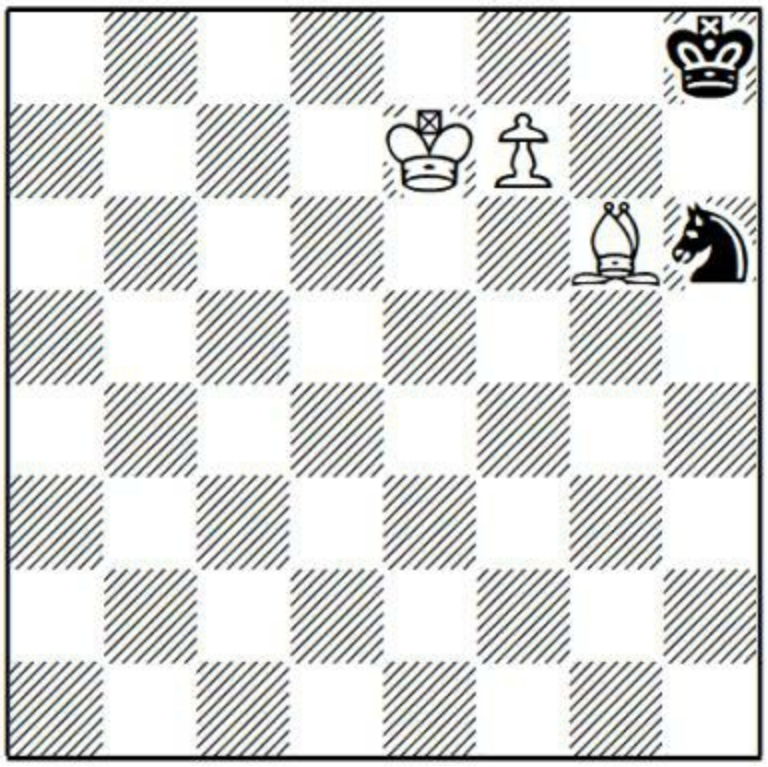
3 Bg6+!

Clearance, and not 3 Bg8+? Kh8 4 f7 Ne5! 5 f8Q Ng6+ 6 Ke8 Nxf8 7 Kxf8 stalemate.

3 ... Kh8!

3 ... Kxg6 4 f7 wins.

4 f7 Nh6!



White to play

Level 2.5

The knight's dirty tricks are unfailingly amusing. In chess, strange to say, one of our goals is to manipulate the opponent's beliefs by feeding them false data. When you attack with an air of assurance of strength, from a position of inferiority, there is a name for it: a bluff. What is our only winning move? (hint: don't make a queen!).

Answer: Underpromote to a bishop.

5 f8B!

And not 5 f8Q+? Ng8+ 6 Ke8 stalemate or 5 f8R+? Kg7 6 Be4 (6 Bf7 Nf5+ 7 Ke8 Nd6+ 8 Ke7 Nf5+ is perpetual check) 6 ... Ng8+! 7 Ke8 Nf6+ 8 Ke7 Ng8+ when White's extra rook is of no use and Black draws.

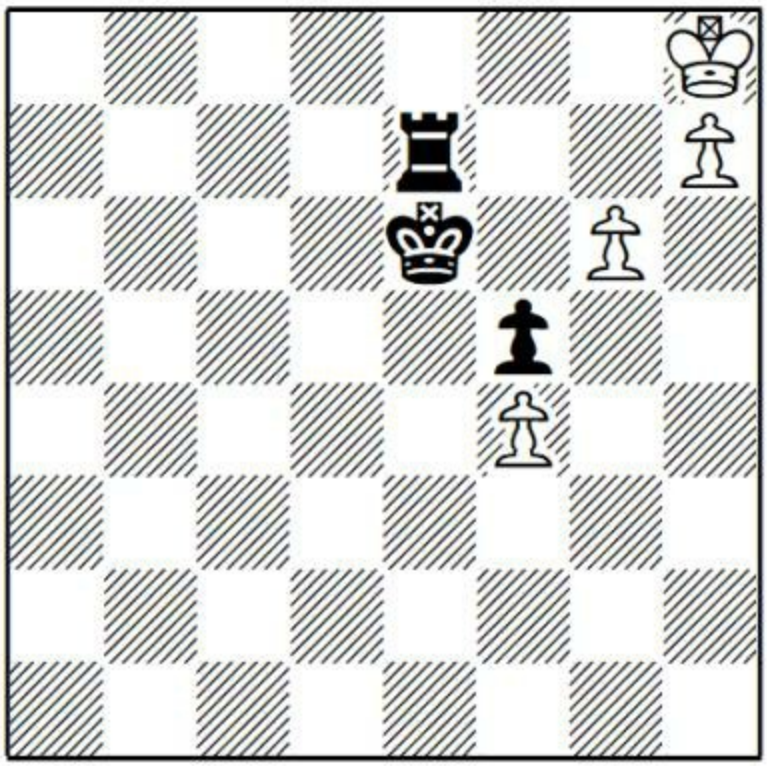
5 ... Ng8+

Or 5 ... Ng4 6 Bf5 Ne5 7 Kf6 Nf3 8 Be4 Nd4 9 Bc5 Ne2 10 Kf7 Nf4 11 Bd4 mate.

6 Ke6

Zugzwang. Black loses the knight and is mated in six moves at the most.

437) L.Kubbel
Shakhmaty v SSSR, 1940



White to play
Level 4.5
How does White win, based on an underpromotion?
Answer: Step 1: Push the g-pawn.
1 g7!
Instead, 1 Kg8? fails to 1 ... Kf6 2 h8Q+ Kxg6 3 Kf8 and now Black has the dirty stalemating trick 3 ... Re8+! 4 Kxe8 Stalemate.
1 ... Re8+
After 1 ... Kf6 2 g8N+! Ke6 3 Nxe7 Kxe7 4 Kg7 White promotes and wins, but not here 2 g8Q? Re8! 3 Qxe8, which is stalemate, or 2 g8R? Rf7! 3 Ra8 Re7 4 Kg8 Rg7+ 5 Kf8 Rf7+! with a draw (but not 9 ... Rxh7?? 10 Ra6

mate; I'm afraid I must make an uncharitable remark about falling for this trap).

2 g8R!

2 g8Q+? allows Black to escape via stalemate with 2 ... Kf6!. Zugzwang. We are forced to take Black's rook and self-stalemate with 3 Qxe8.

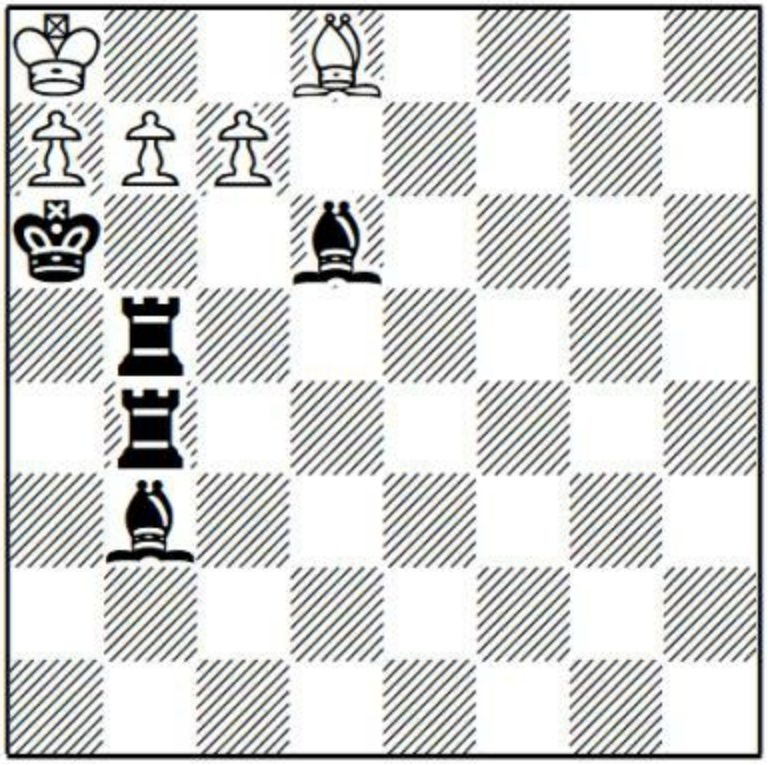
2 ... Re7

Or 2 ... Kf7 3 Rxe8 Kxe8 4 Kg7 and wins.

3 Rf8!

There is no stopping Kg8, which frees the h-pawn for promotion.

438) A.Wotawa
Österreichische Schachzeitung, 1954



White to play
Level 5

Be careful reader. It's Wotawa! The natural move loses. White has only

one path to the draw:

Answer: Underpromote to a knight and then keep underpromoting to more knights!

1 b8N+!!

Into the lion's den! The natural promotions lose:

a) 1 c8Q?? (principle: *Luxury is the enemy of efficiency*) 1 ... Bd5! (targeting b7, the square of White's not-so-secret sorrow) 2 Bc7 Rxb7! 3 Bxd6 Rc4! 4 Bc5 Bf3! is zugzwang. Black mates after 5 Qxb7+ (or 5 Qf5 Rxc5! 6 Qxc5 Rb5+ 7 Qc6+ Bxc6 mate; I call this 'a television mate', where one character loudly proclaims "Check!" and then his opponent smugly responds with "Checkmate!") 5 ... Bxb7+ 6 Kb8 Rxc5 7 a8Q+ Bxa8 8 Kxa8 Rc8 mate.

b) 1 b8Q?? Bd5+ 2 Qb7+ Bxb7+ 3 Kb8 Bg2+ 4 Kc8 Bh3 mate.

1 ... Rxb8+

Forced, as if 1 ... Ka5?? 2 c8Q+ Ka4 3 Qa6+ Ra5 4 Qxa5 mate.

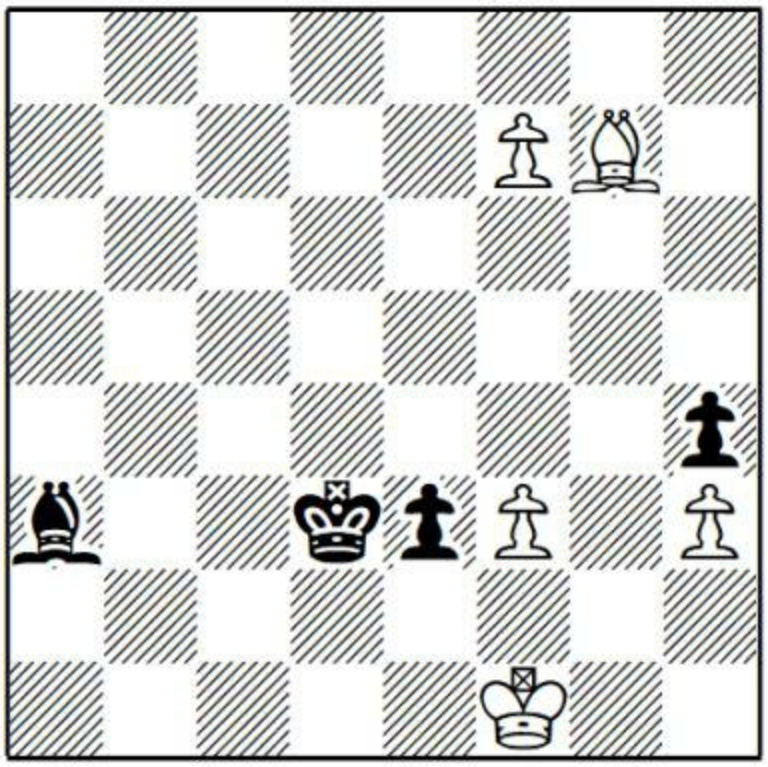
2 axb8N+! Rxb8+

Or 2 ... Kb5 3 c8Q Bd5+ 4 Ka7 Bc5+ (after 4 ... Ra4+?? 5 Na6 White even consolidates and wins) 5 Qxc5+! (attraction/skewer) 5 ... Kxc5 6 Be7+ Kc4 7 Bxb4 Kxb4 with a draw.

3 cxb8N+!

White draws with the third straight underpromotion to a knight. Were you tempted by 3 cxb8Q?? Bd5+ 4 Qb7+ Bxb7 mate?

439) V.Smyslov
Pravda, 1976



White to play

Level 5

How does White proceed?

Answer: Only underpromotion to a bishop works.

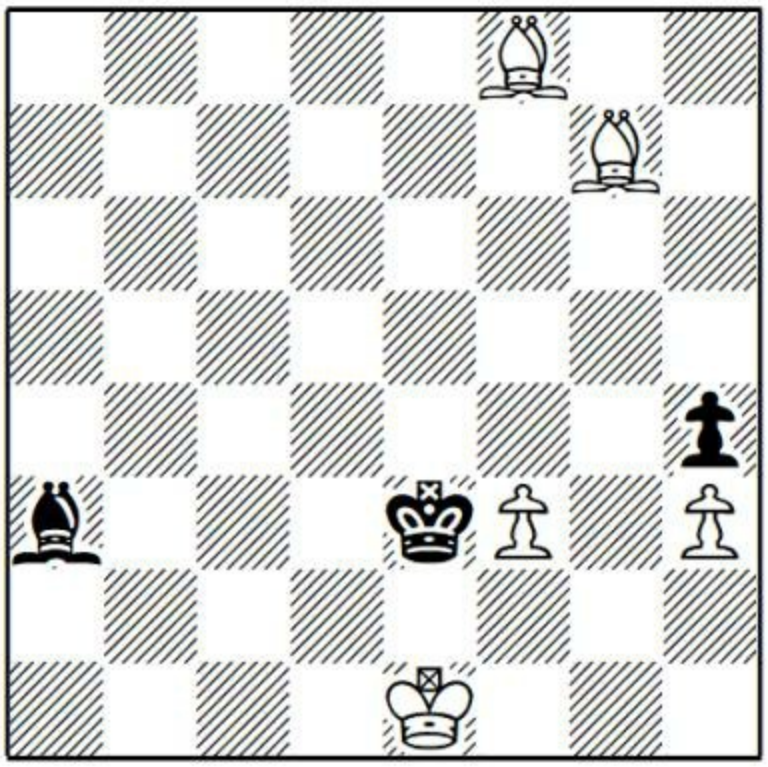
1 f8B!!

Not 1 f8Q? e2+ 2 Kf2 Bc5+! (attraction/stalemate) 3 Qxc5 (or 3 Ke1 Bxf8 4 Bxf8 Ke3 5 Be7 Kxf3 6 Bxh4 Kg2 with a draw, since White's final pawn falls) 3 ... e1Q+! 4 Kxe1 stalemate.

1 ... e2+

After 1 ... Bc1 2 Bh6 Bd2 (2 ... e2+ 3 Kf2 Bd2 4 Bxd2 Kxd2 5 Bb4+ wins) 3 Kg2 Be1 4 Bc5 e2 5 Bf2 Bb4 6 Bxh4 e1Q 7 Bxe1 Bxe1 White will convert with two extra pawns.

2 Kf2 e1Q+! 3 Kxe1 Ke3!



White to play

Level 4

Although sinners may be seen by the Divine Eye, sinners on the chess board seem to get away with all kinds of crap. Black sets up a trap and threatens to wipe out all our pawns. Our two dark-squared bishops will be useless for winning purposes. How should we proceed?

Answer: Clearance. We must hand over our f-pawn to secure f2 for our king, who in turn protects our final h-pawn.

4 f4!

Principle: *Risk should be commensurate with gain*. After 4 Bxa3?? Kxf3 White is unable to protect h3 and two dark-squared bishops are unable to deliver mate.

4 ... Kxf4 5 Kf2!

Retention of the h3-pawn is essential.

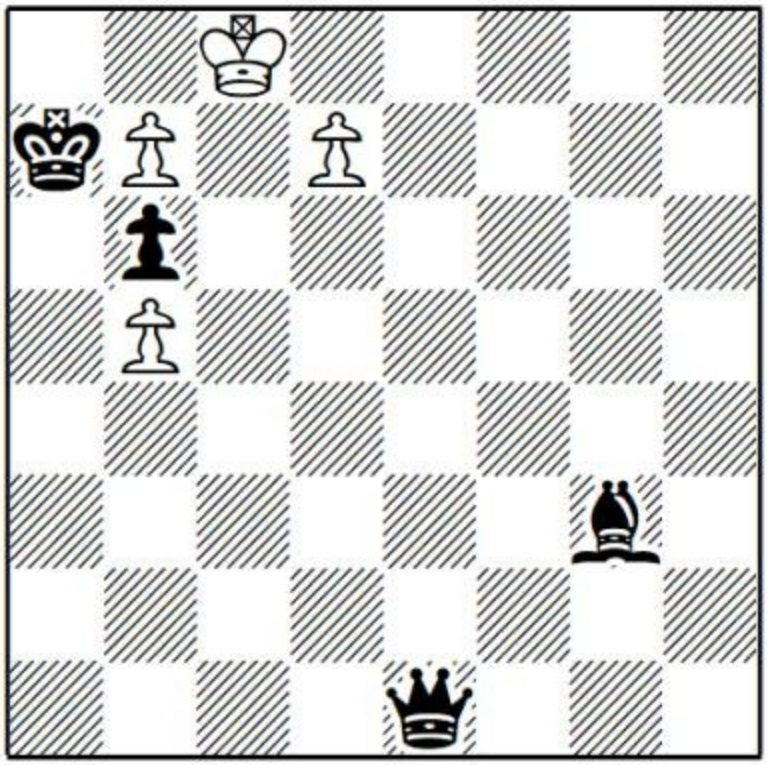
5 ... Bxf8

Also lost is 5 ... Bc1 6 Bh6+ Kf5 7 Bxc1.

6 Bxf8

We win Black's h-pawn and are left with rook pawn and correct-coloured bishop, which is easily winning.

440) Y.Afek
Chéron MT, 1982



White to play

Level 4.5

A quick examination shows that promotion to a new queen loses for White. How does White save the game?

Answer: Only by underpromoting to a knight does White save the game.

1 d8N!!

Threat: Nc6 mate! Now the question arises: Whose king is the real hostage?

Instead, 1 b8Q+? Bxb8 2 d8Q Qc3+ 3 Kd7 Qd3+ 4 Ke7 Qxd8+ simplifies

and wins easily, as does 1 d8Q? Qe6+ 2 Qd7 Qxd7+ 3 Kxd7 Kxb7.

1 ... Qe8

Now White has a stalemating combination, but 1 ... Qc3+?? loses to 2 Nc6+ Qxc6+ 3 bxc6 b5 4 c7.

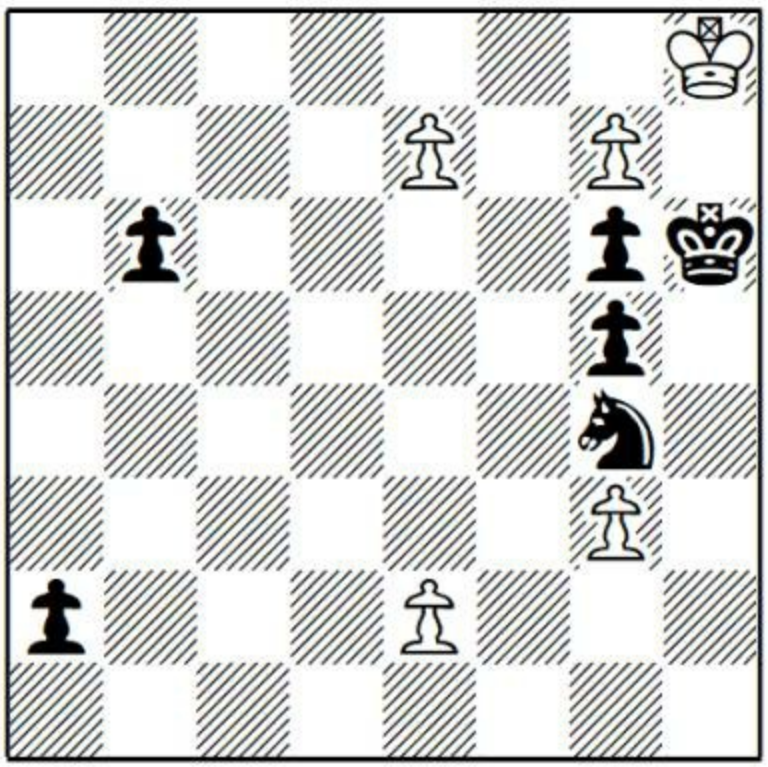
2 b8Q+!

Attraction.

2 ... Bxb8

Stalemate.

441) V.Kalandadze
Friendship-200, 1983



White to play

Level 5

Which pawn to promote? And to what piece?

Answer: It must be g8, with underpromotion to a knight, since it comes

with check.

1 g8N+!

Not 1 g8Q? a1Q+ 2 Qg7+ Qxg7 mate, while after 1 e8Q? a1Q 2 Qe7 Nf2 3 Kg8 b5 4 Kf8 Qa8+ 5 Kf7 Kh7 6 Qf8 Qa2+ 7 Ke7 Qg8 8 Qxf2 Qxg7+ White is down two pawns and losing.

1 ... Kh5 2 e8N!!

Underpromotion number 2. 2 e8Q? a1Q+ 3 Kh7 Qa7+ 4 Kh8 Qa1+ is only perpetual check.

2 ... a1Q+ 3 Ng7+

Black is forced to hand back the newly minted queen.

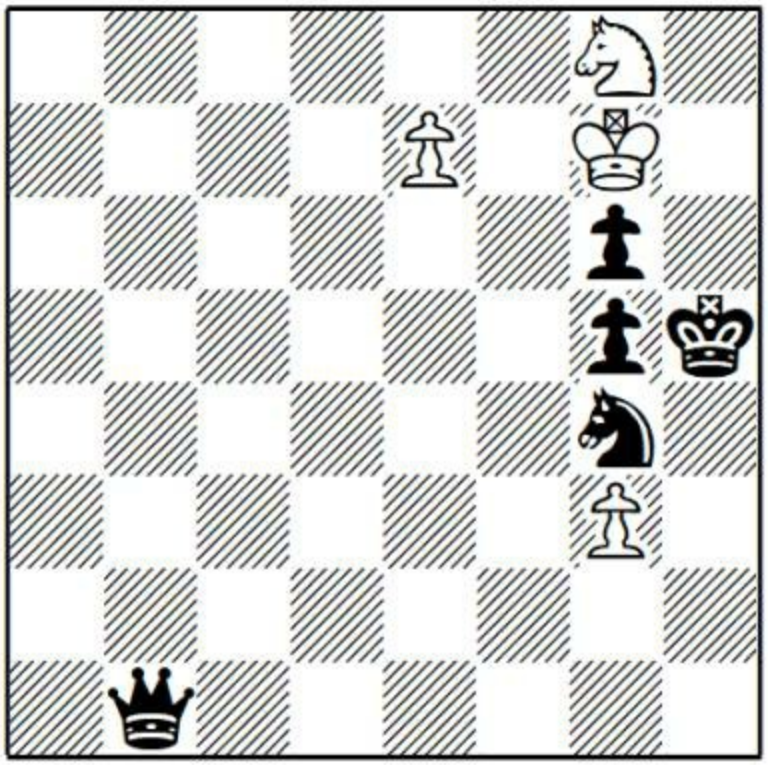
3 ... Qxg7+ 4 Kxg7 b5

A new promotion race begins.

5 e4 b4 6 e5! b3

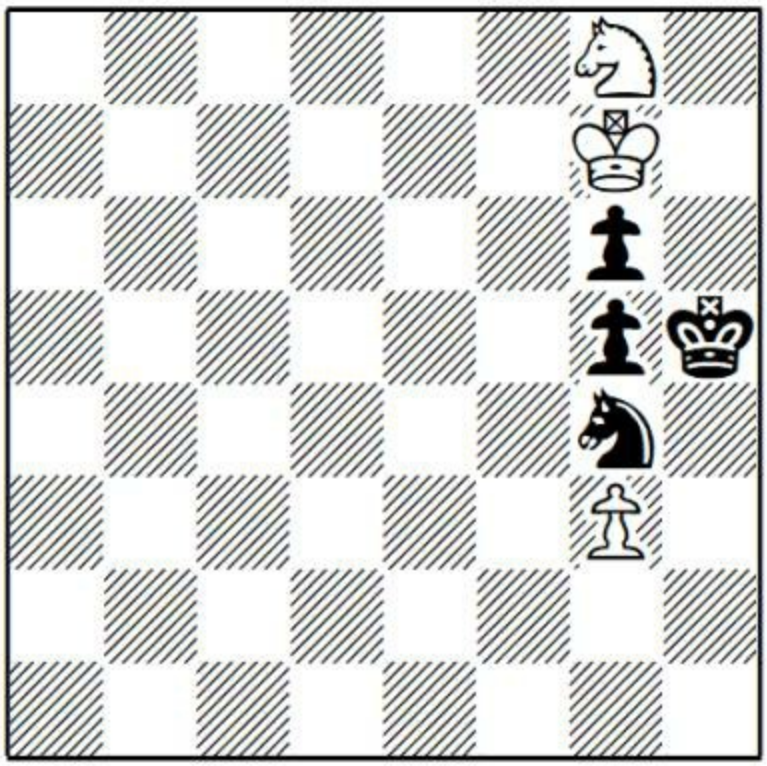
Black's knight is frozen on g4, since 6 ... Nxe5?? is met with 7 Nf6 mate.

7 e6 b2 8 e7 b1Q



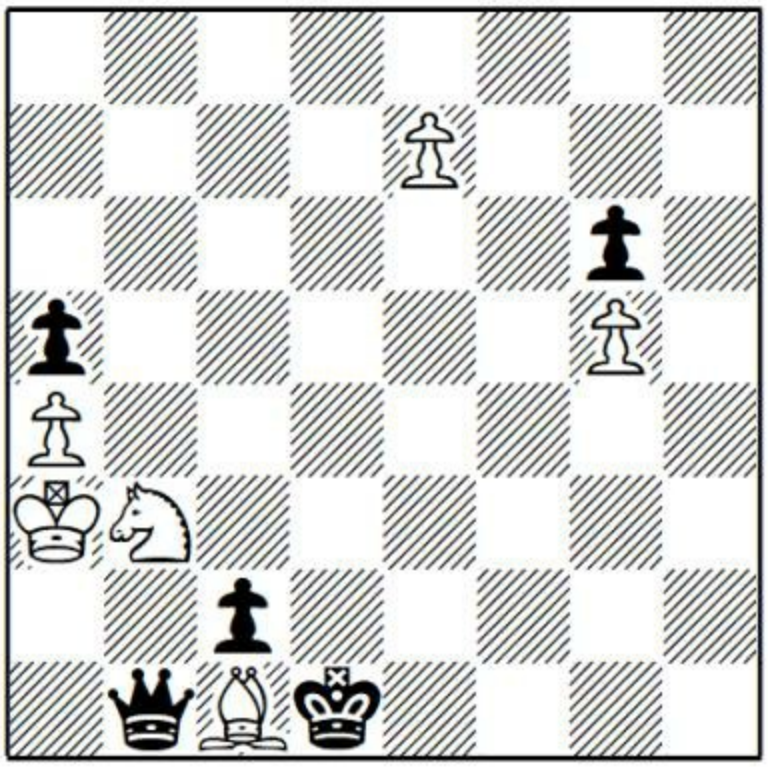
White to play

Level 3
How does White force mate in 5?
Answer: A third promotion to a knight.
9 e8N!
The threat is either knight to f6, forcing mate.
9 ... Qb7+ 10 Kh8!
Clearing g7.
10 ... Qf7 11 Ng7+ Qxg7+ 12 Kxg7



Zugzwang. Black's king, whose humiliation is absolute, senses the Reaper's bony knuckle on his shoulder.
12 ... Ne5 13 Nf6 mate

442) V.Smyslov
64 Shakhmatnoye Obozrenye, 1999



White to play

Level 4

How does White exploit the trapped position of Black's queen?

Answer: Only promotion to a bishop works.

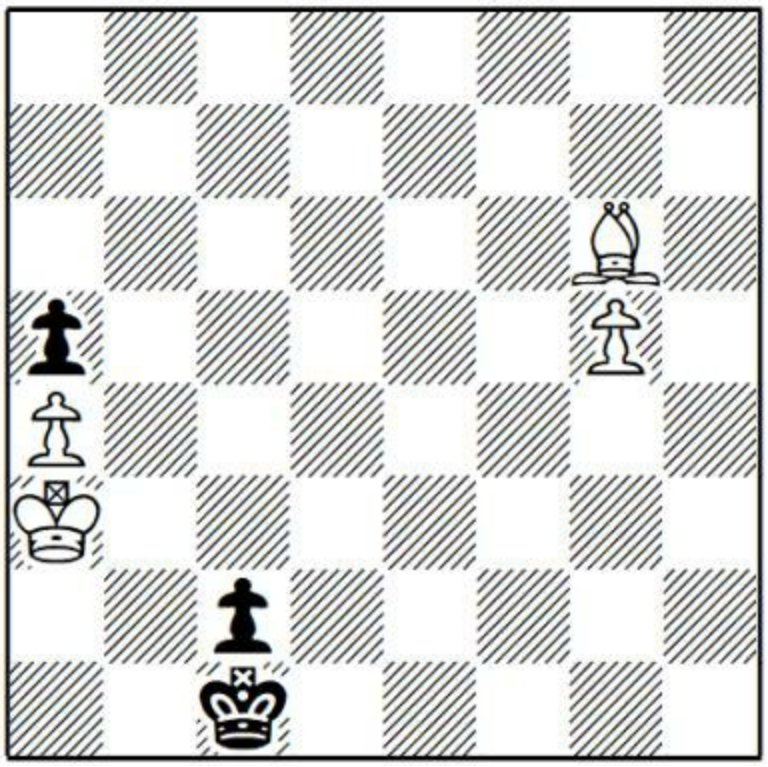
1 e8B!

Not 1 e8Q? Qa2+! 2 Kxa2 or 1 e8R? Qa2+! 2 Kxa2, with stalemate in both cases.

1 ... Qxc1+ 2 Nxc1 Kxc1

Black's c-pawn isn't going anywhere.

3 Bxg6

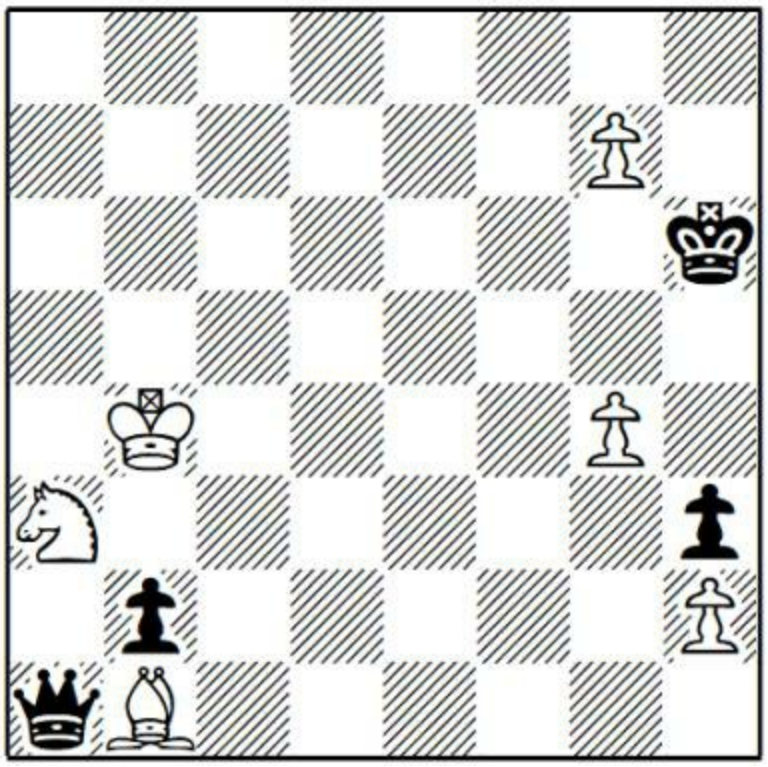


Not every game finishes with a dramatic story of great consequence. Sometimes the finish is mundane, as seen here. Now we see why White promoted to a bishop, rather than a knight, since a knight is too slow to catch Black's passed c-pawn.

3 ... Kd2 4 Bxc2 Kxc2 5 g6

We promote.

443) V.Smyslov
Moi Etyudy, 2000



White to play

Level 5

At first this appears to be an easy win for White. Be careful. The position is loaded with traps.

Answer: We must underpromote to a bishop.

1 g8B!!

Avoiding 1 g8Q?? Qxa3+! 2 Kxa3, which is stalemate, as is 1 g8R?? Qxa3+! 2 Kxa3.

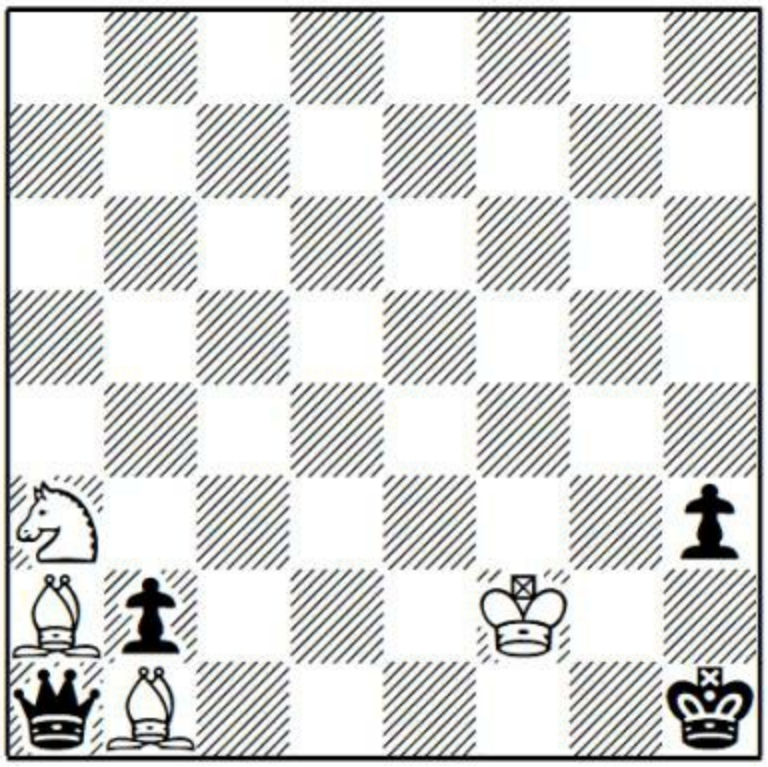
1 ... Kg5 2 Bga2!

Black's disgraced queen is forever banished to a1.

2 ... Kxg4 3 Kc3 Kf3

Black's king will win White's h-pawn. The cost will be imprisonment.

4 Kd2 Kg2 5 Ke2 Kxh2 6 Kf2 Kh1



White to play

Level 4

Do you sense an oppressive lack of creative freedom for Black's side, who can only shuffle the king? White forces mate in 6 moves:

Answer: 7 Nc4!

Instead, 7 Nc2? Qxa2! 8 Bxa2 b1Q! 9 Bxb1 h2 is a draw, but 7 Nb5 (Smyslov gave this slightly inferior version in his original study) 7 ... Kh2 8 Nd4 Qxa2 9 Bxa2 b1B 10 Bxb1 Kh1 11 Be4+ Kh2 12 Nf3+ Kh1 13 Nd2+ Kh2 14 Nf1 is mate.

7 ... Kh2

If 7 ... h2? 8 Be4 mate.

8 Ne3 Kh1

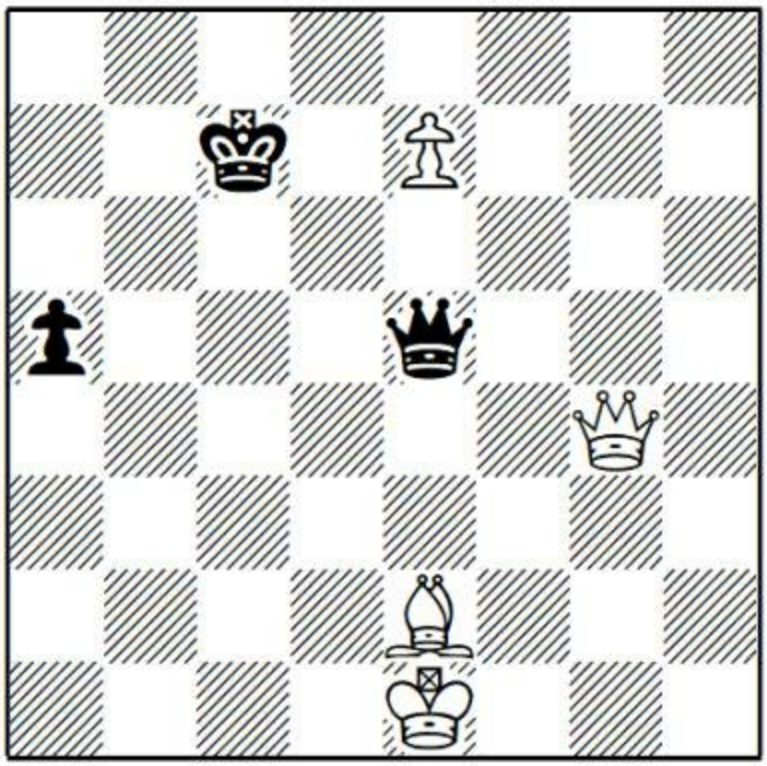
8 ... Qxb1 stalls mate by only a move: 9 Ng4+ Kh1 10 Bd5+ Qe4 11 Bxe4 mate.

9 Be4+ Kh2

Black's king is White's favourite Pinata.

10 Ng4 mate

444) E.Pogosyants
Ja Tvoriu po Vdokhnoveniu, 2001



White to play
Level 4

To solve this one you really only need to find one powerful move. White's position requires urgent action since our passed e-pawn is in grave danger. How does White continue?

Answer: Queen sacrifice/attraction/underpromotion/knight fork.

1 Qg7!!

If you work on studies every day, you begin to find such moves naturally. In fact, it was the very first move I looked at. After 1 Qh4? Kd6 the e-pawn falls and the game is theoretically drawn.

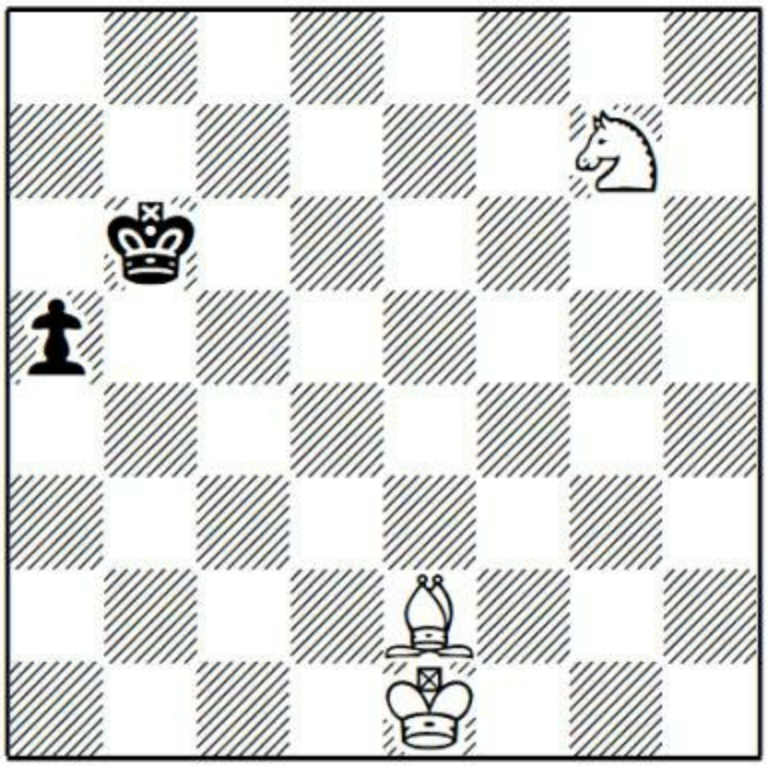
1 ... Qxg7 2 e8N+!

We can chop Black's queen and easily stop the a-pawn.

2 ... Kb6

It's a type of wisdom to see that a battle is already lost, before it begins. Black can resign here.

3 Nxg7

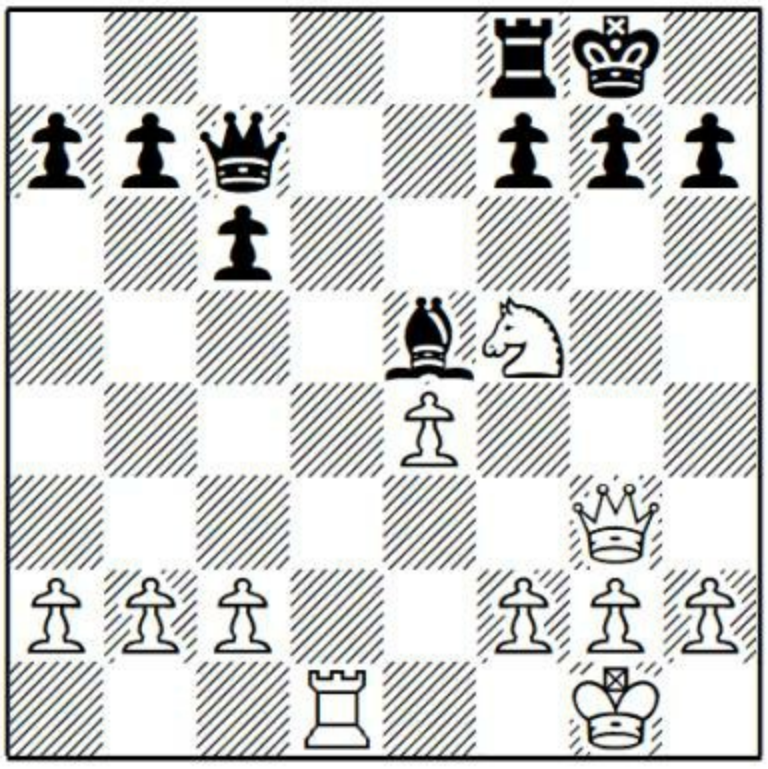


We win Black's a-pawn and then mate with bishop and knight.

28) Weak Back Rank

The seed of every combination from this chapter arises from one side's weak back rank.

445) J.Capablanca-M.Fonaroff
New York 1918



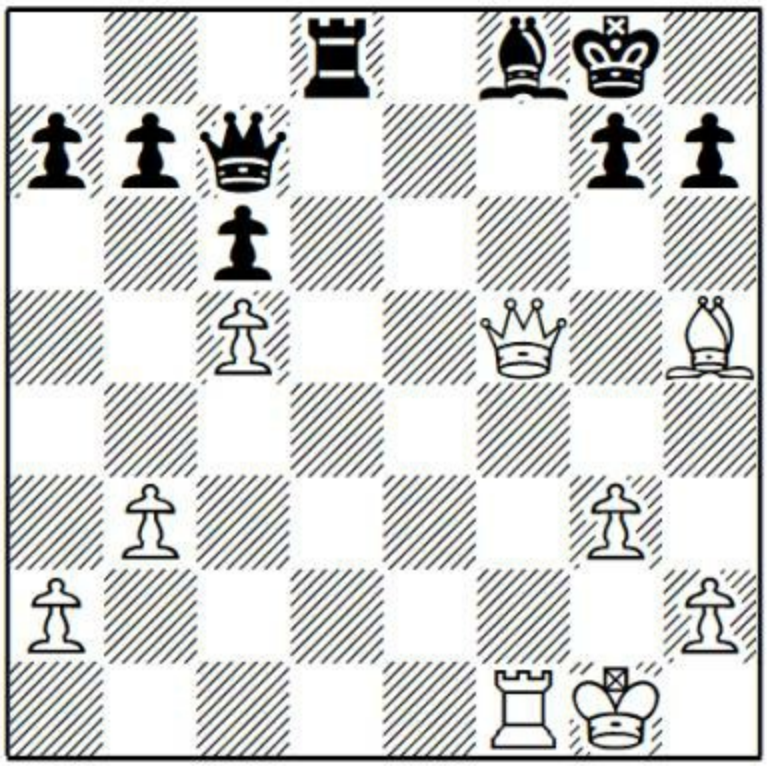
White to play
Level 3
This is the part of the movie where dramatic, anticipatory music begins. Capa found a pretty combination to net decisive material:
Answer: Queen sacrifice/decoy/knight fork/weak back rank.
20 Nh6+! Kh8 21 Qxe5!

Black will now be undone on the back rank.

21 ... Qxe5 22 Nxf7+! 1-0

22 ... Kg8 (or 22 ... Rxf7 23 Rd8+ Qe8 24 Rxe8+ Rf8 25 Rxf8 mate) 23 Nxe5 leaves White up a piece and two pawns.

446) R.Reti-E.Bogoljubov
New York 1924



White to play

Level 3

Bogo's back rank is terminally weak. Prove it.

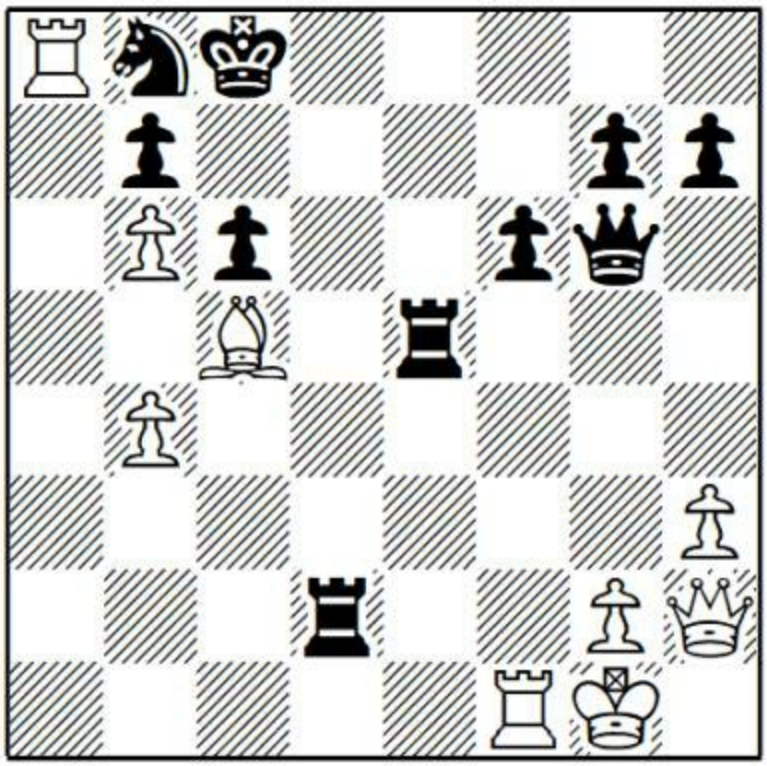
Answer: Give a bishop check on f7, driving Black's king to h8.

24 Bf7+! Kh8 25 Be8! 1-0

Suddenly, Black's position is a rat's nest of debt. Step 2: Interference. Black is mated in nine moves at the most and 25 ... Bxc5+ (if 25 ... Rxe8 26 Qxf8+ Rxf8 27 Rxf8 mate or 25 ... Be7 26 Qf8+ Bxf8 27 Rxf8 mate) 26

Qxc5 Rxe8 is met with a back rank mate: 27 Qf8+ Rxf8 28 Rxf8 mate.

447) A.Alekhine-S.Reshevsky
Kemeri 1937



White to play

Level 3

35 Qxe5?? fails miserably to 35 ... Qxg2 mate, do how should White proceed?

Step 1: Attraction. Black's king is lured to b8. Why? Because then Qxe5 comes with check.

35 Rxb8+! Kxb8

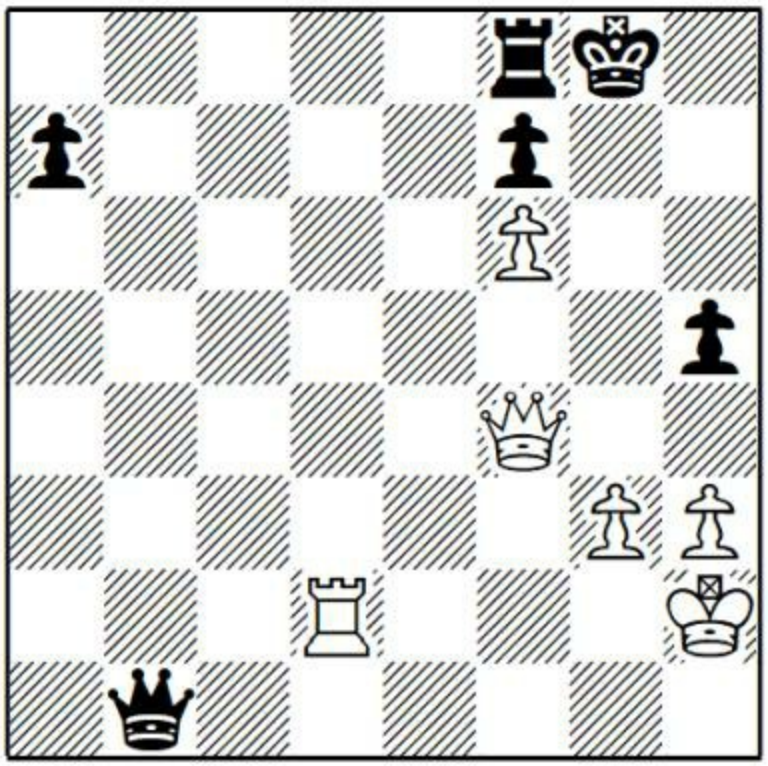
Black's king cries for help in the wilderness. 35 ... Kd7 36 Rxb7+ Kd8 37 Ra1! wins.

36 Qxe5+! 1-0

Step 2: Queen sacrifice/weak back rank. After 36 ... fxe5 37 Rf8+ Black

only has two blocks before getting mated.

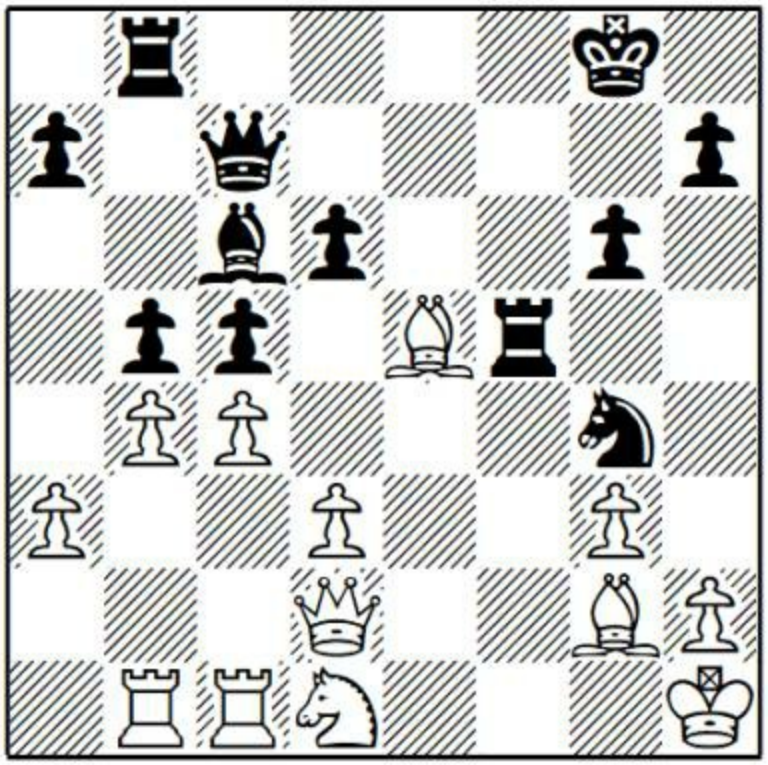
448) J.Bolbochan-R.Sanguinetti
Mar del Plata 1945



White to play
Level 2
Black intends to meet either 41 Qh6 or 41 Qg5+ with 41 ... Qg6. A dark-squared plague is about to visit Black's position. What did Black miss?
Answer: Move to h6, intending to sacrifice on f8.
41 Qh6! 1-0
41 Qg5+? blows it, as Black is just fine after 41 ... Qg6, but 41 Qh6! Qg6 42 Qxf8+! (queen sacrifice/weak back rank) 42 ... Kxf8 (42 ... Kh7 leaves Black down a rook) 43 Rd8 is mate.

449) C.Orbaan-H.Kramer

Amsterdam 1950



Black to play

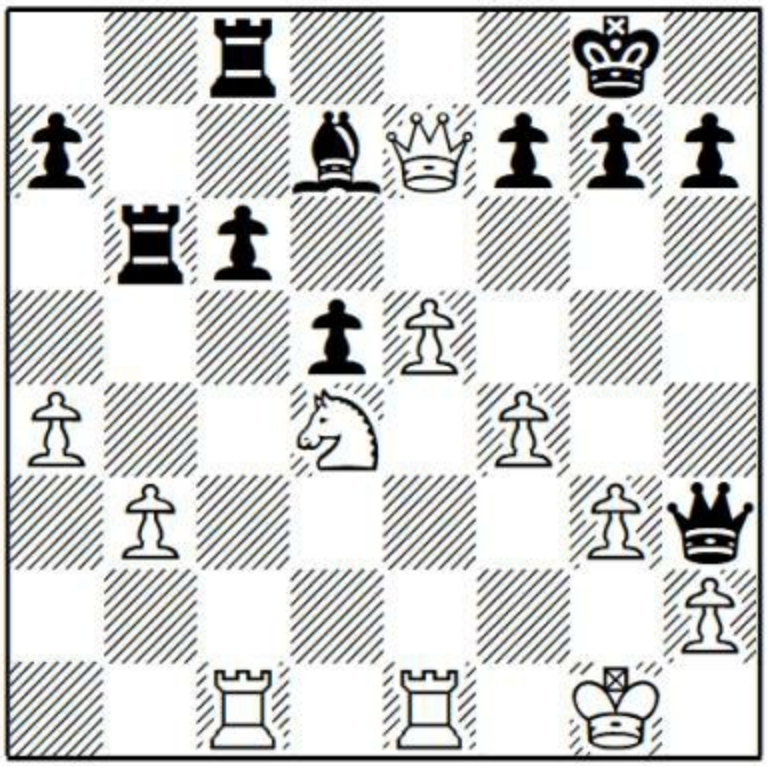
Level 1

On his last move White, who is guilty by omission, fell asleep and played 25 Bxe5??. He obviously expected Black to recapture on e5. What did White overlook?

Answer: Weak back rank/pinned piece.

25 ... Rf1 mate

450) V.Korchnoi-R.Teschner
Stockholm 1962



White to play

Level 4.5

White to play and win material:

Answer: Interference/weak back rank.

33 e6! Bxe6

Instead, 33 ... fxe6 interferes with the black queen's protection of the bishop and loses to the simple 34 Qxd7 and 33 ... Be8 34 Qxa7 Rbb8 35 Nxc6! (overloaded defenders) 35 ... Ra8 36 exf7+ Bxf7 37 Ne7+ (knight fork/discovered attack) 37 ... Kf8 38 Rxc8+ Rxc8 39 Nxc8 wins too.

34 f5!

Step 2: Weak back rank.

34 ... Qg4

Black squirms, avoiding 34 ... Bxf5?? 35 Qe8+ Rxe8 36 Rxe8 mate, but Korchnoi has everything under control.

35 Rcd1

The safe, human move. The engine wants the looney line 35 Nxc6! (weak

back rank) 35 ... Rxb3 36 Rxe6! Rxg3+ 37 hxg3 Qxg3+ 38 Kf1 Qf4+ 39 Ke2 Qg4+ 40 Ke3 Qg3+ 41 Kd4 Qf4+ 42 Kxd5 Qf3+ 43 Re4 Qd3+ (after 43 ... Qxf5+ 44 Qe5 Qd7+ 45 Qd6 Qf5+ 46 Kd4 Qf2+ 47 Kd3 Qf3+ 48 Re3 Qf5+ 49 Kd4 Qg4+ 50 Re4 Black ran out of decent checks and loses) 44 Nd4! (defensive move/weak back rank) and wins. This is not a variation for the soft hearted! Computers, more than humans, are willing to enter such crazy lines.

35 ... c5 36 fxe6!

Korchnoi will not be manipulated so easily.

36 ... fxe6

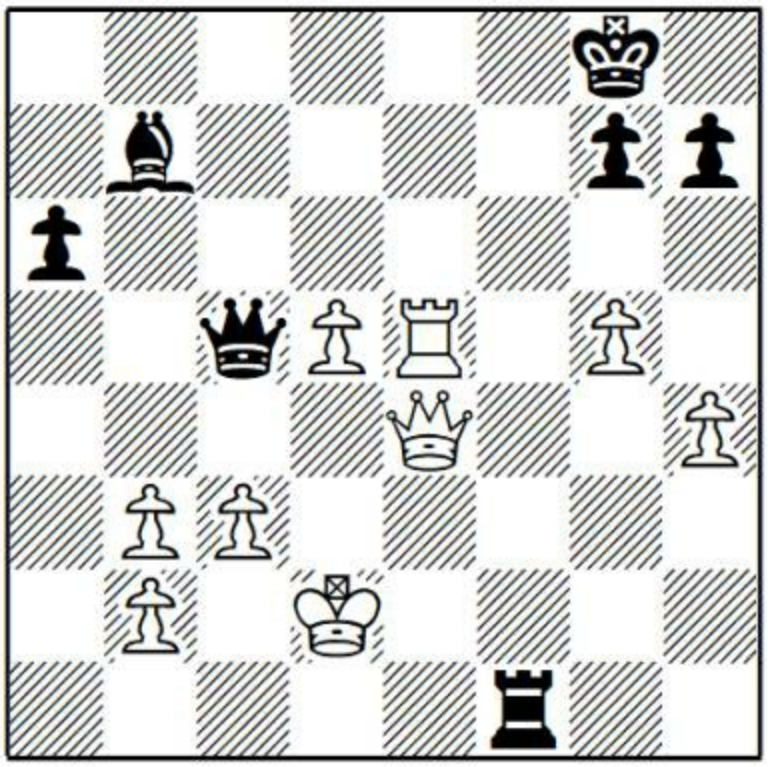
Black must hand over a piece, as if 36 ... cxd4?? 37 exf7+ Kh8 38 f8R+ Rxf8 39 Qxf8 mate.

37 Qxa7 Rcb8 38 a5! R6b7 39 Qxc5

That's it. Korchnoi secured his material advantage and Teschner resigned in a few moves.

451) M.Tal-B.Larsen

10th matchgame, Bled 1965



White to play

Level 2

Why are so many of us irresistibly drawn to Mikhail Tal's chess games? Maybe because of dramatic finishes like this one. Continue for White:

***Answer:* 35 Re8+ Rf8**

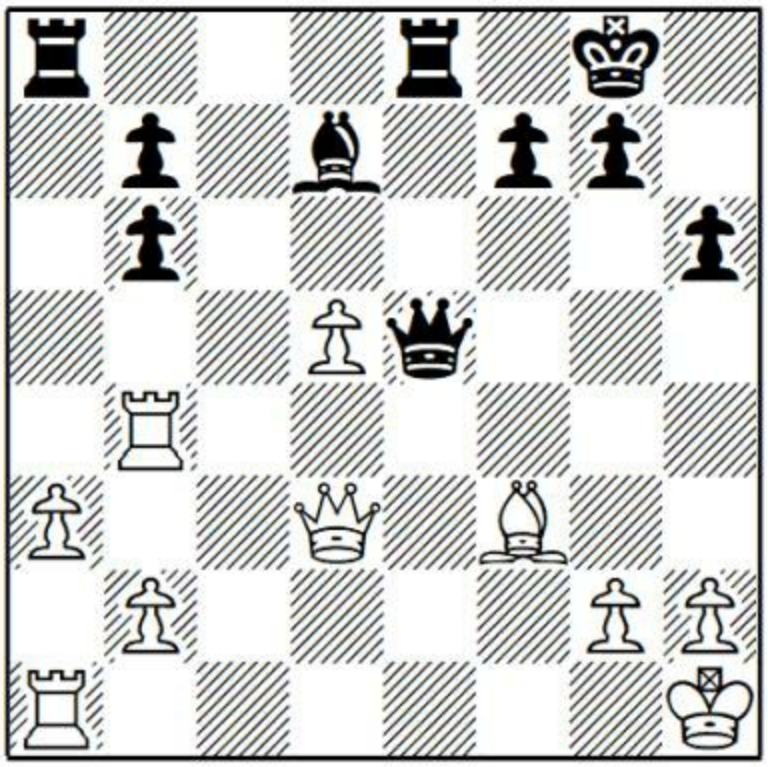
If 35 ... Kf7?? 36 Qe6 mate.

36 Qe6+ Kh8 37 Qf7! 1-0

Weak back rank/pinned piece. After 37 ... Qxd5+ 38 Qxd5 Bxd5 (or 38 ... Rxe8 39 Qxb7) 39 Rxf8+ Bg8 White wins.

452) V.Mikenas-D.Bronstein

USSR Championship, Tallinn 1965



Black to play

Level 4

This is another example of a short range combination, which requires incredible alertness to spot in an over the board game. In this position Bronstein found a thunderbolt:

Answer: Rook sacrifice/overloaded defenders/pinned piece/weak back rank.

24 ... Rxa3!! 0-1

We must pause a moment to absorb what just passed before our startled eyes:

a) 25 Rxa3 Qe1+ 26 Qf1 Qxf1 mate.

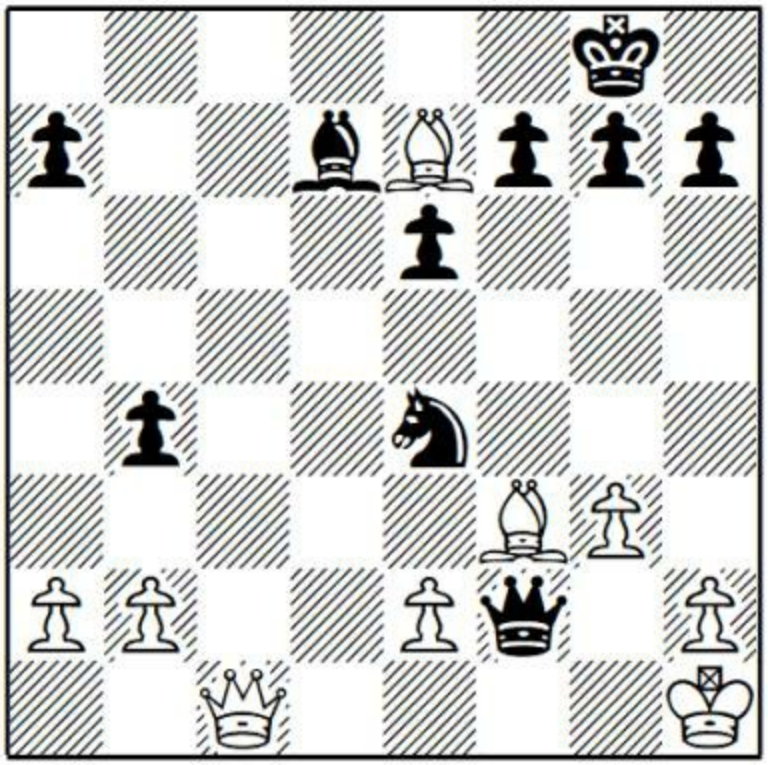
b) 25 Qf1 Rxa1 26 Qxa1 Qe1+ 27 Qxe1 Rxe1 mate.

c) 25 Qxa3 Qe1+ 26 Rxe1 Rxe1 mate.

d) 25 bxa3 Qxa1+ 26 Rb1 Re1+ 27 Rxe1 Qxe1+ 28 Qf1 Qxf1 mate.

453) W.Hug-V.Korchnoi

Switzerland 1978



Black to play

Level 5

Korchnoi found a powerful continuation:

Answer: Transfer the bishop to c6, exploiting White's weak back rank, defending the loose e4-knight.

23 ... Bc6!!

Now White's once solidly dependable position begins to destabilize.

24 Bxb4

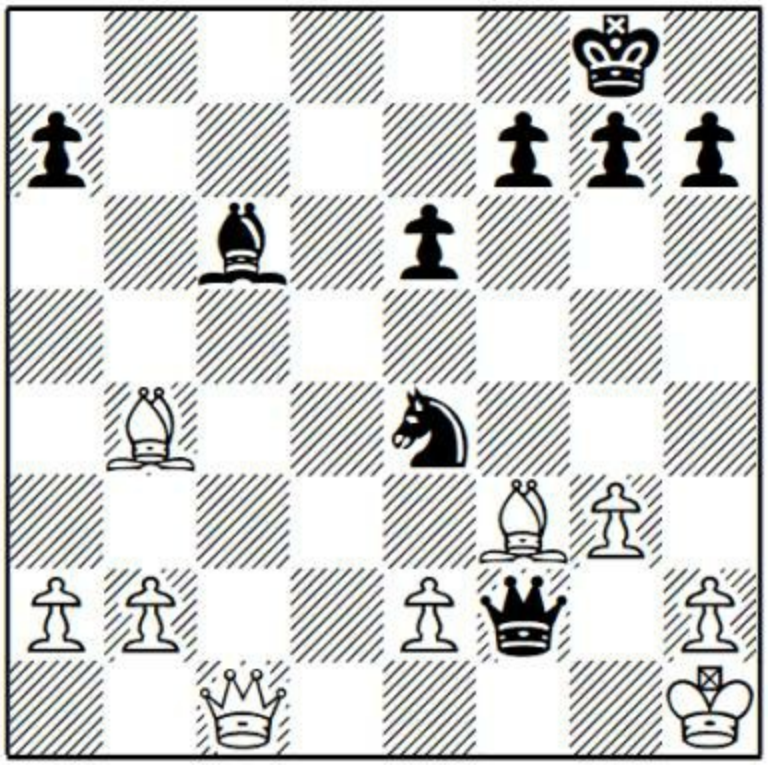
Alternatively:

a) 24 Qd1 Qxf3+! (queen sacrifice/knight fork) 25 exf3 Nf2+ 26 Kg1 Nxd1 and Black won a piece.

b) 24 Qa1 a5 25 Bd8 h6 26 Be7 (after 26 Bxa5 Qc5 27 Bd8 Nd2! 28 Qd1 Nxf3 29 exf3 Qf2 there is no defence to the coming ... Bxf3+) 26 ... f5 27 Bd8 g5! 28 Be7 g4 wins, since if 29 Bg2 Nxg3+! (discovered attack) 30 hxg3

Qxg2 mate.

c) 24 Qxc6?? Qf1 mate.



Black to play

Level 3

How did Korchnoi finish his opponent off?

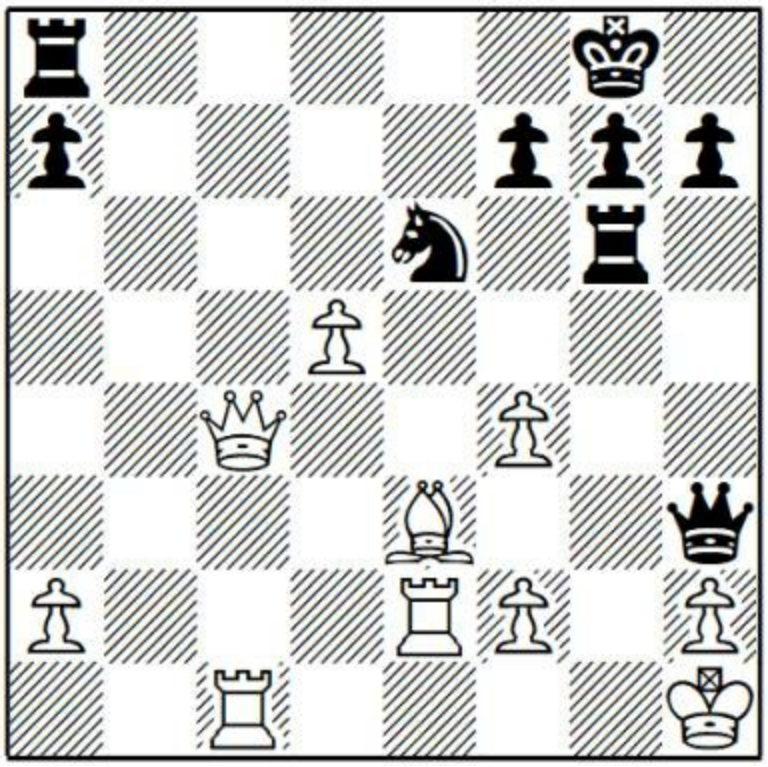
Answer: Queen sacrifice/decoy.

24 ... Qxe2! 0-1

You are overweight and struggling with portion control for your meals. Then your family suggests we all go to the buffet restaurant for dinner. I just described Black's queen. Korchnoi ends his study-like combination with a pretty shot. After 25 Bxe2 (or 25 Qxc6 Qf1 mate) 25 ... Nxg3+ 26 Kg1 Nxe2+ 27 Kf2 Nxc1 Black won a piece and pawns.

454) J.Klinger-I.Glek

Werfen 1990



White to play

Level 4

Black threatens mate on g2. What should White do?

Answer: Queen sacrifice/weak back rank.

24 Qc8+!

Not 24 Qe4?? (where there is doubt, hesitation is born; hesitation allows the opponent time to recover and move against us) 24 ... f5 (overloaded defender) 25 Qxe6+ Rxe6 26 dxe6 Qf3+. Double attack. Black wins.

24 ... Rxc8

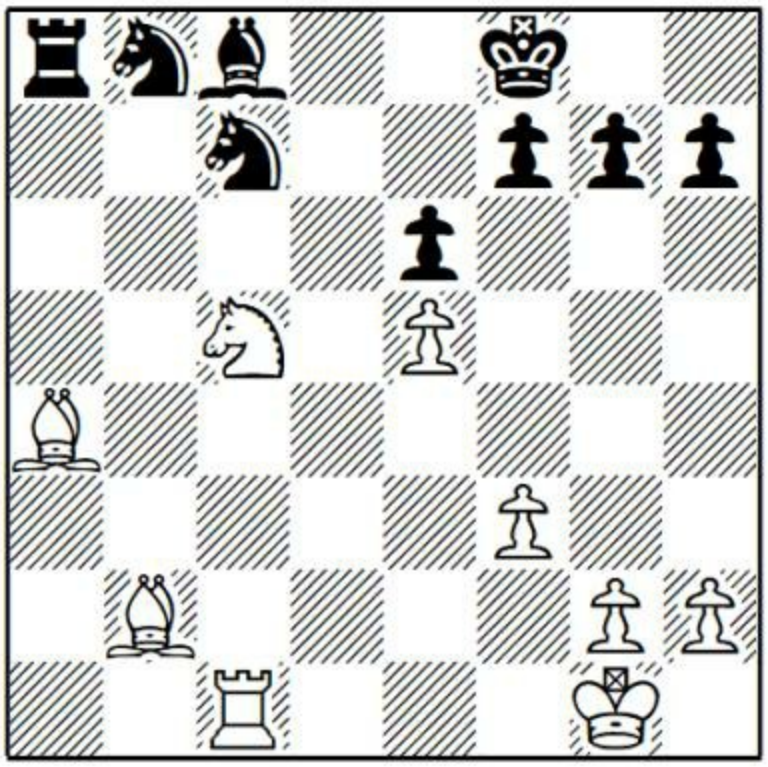
24 ... Nf8 hangs a full queen to 25 Qxh3.

25 Rxc8+ Nf8 26 Rxf8+! 1-0

Attraction/weak back rank: 26 ... Kxf8 27 Bc5+ Kg8 28 Re8 mate.

455) V.Kramnik-A.Karpov

Dos Hermanas 1997



White to play

Level 4.5

Karpov is behind in development (yes, development counts, even in the ending!) and his jumbled pieces feel insecure. How did Kramnik take advantage of this?

Answer: Step 1: Transfer the bishop to a3, threatening horrible discovered checks.

32 Ba3!

Answer no.2: Also winning is 32 Ne4! Ra7 (or 32 ... Rxa4 33 Rxc7 Ba6 34 Ra7 Bb5 35 Rb7; double attack, and White wins) 33 Ba3+ Kg8 34 Bd6 Rxa4 35 Rxc7 Ba6 36 Ra7!. There is no saving the b8-knight, due to Black's weak back rank.

32 ... Kg8

Forced, but now back rank threats begin to emerge.

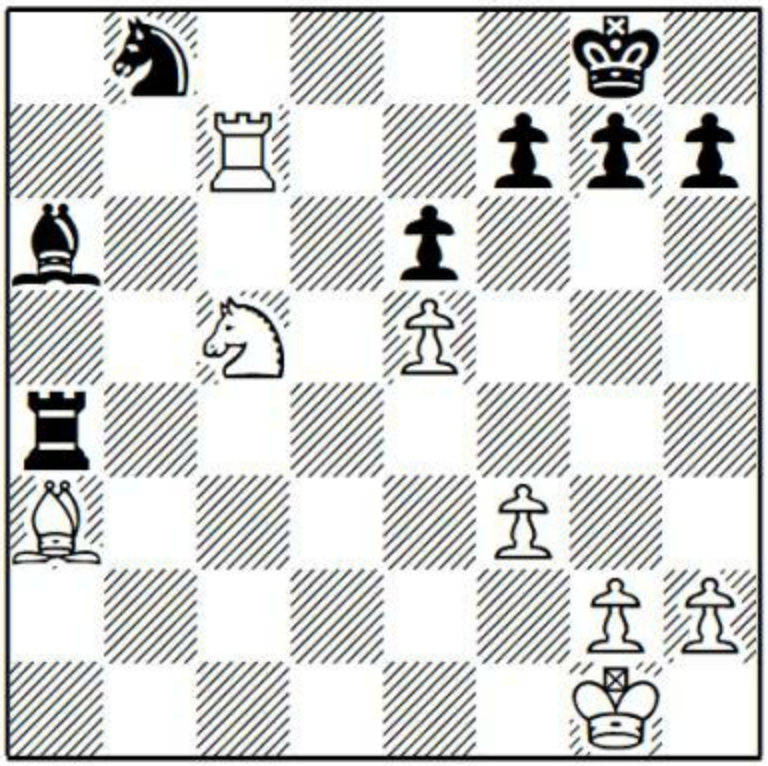
33 Ne4!

Discovered attack/weak back rank.

33 ... Rxa4

Hopeless too is 33 ... Nba6 34 Bc6 Rb8 35 Bd6 h6 36 Ba4 Rb7 37 Nc5 Nxc5 (or 37 ... Ra7 38 Nxa6, overloading as White wins a piece) 38 Rxc5 Ra7 39 Rxc7.

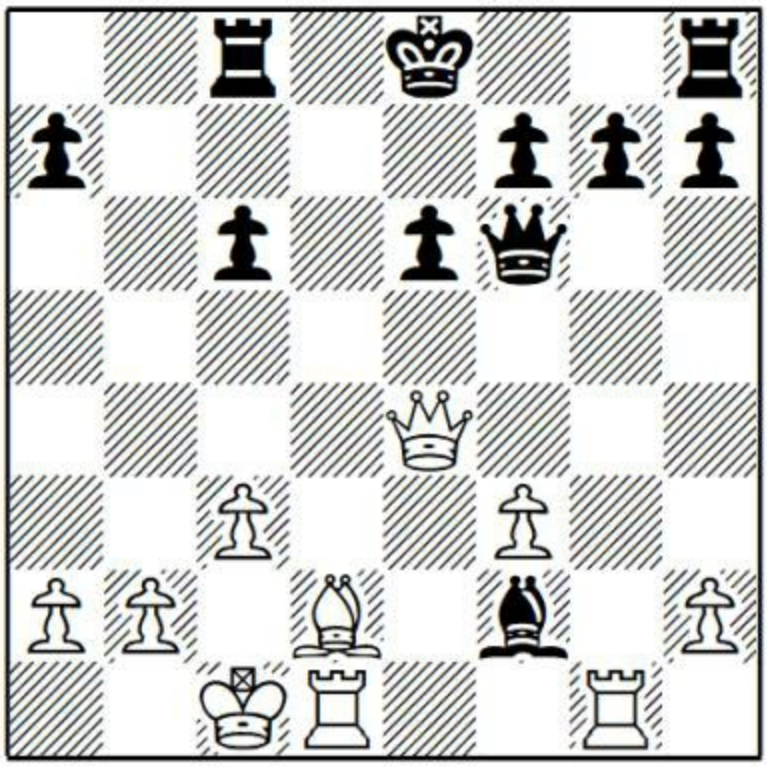
34 Rxc7 Ba6 35 Nc5! 1-0



After 35 ... Rxa3 36 Nxa6 (threat: Rc8 mate(36 ... h5 37 Nxb8 White won a piece.

456) D.Marciano-E.Prie

French Championship, Narbonne 1997



White to play

Level 3

How did White exploit his development lead?

Answer: Moving the bishop to g5 wins Black's queen, due to Black's weak back rank.

19 Bg5! Qg6

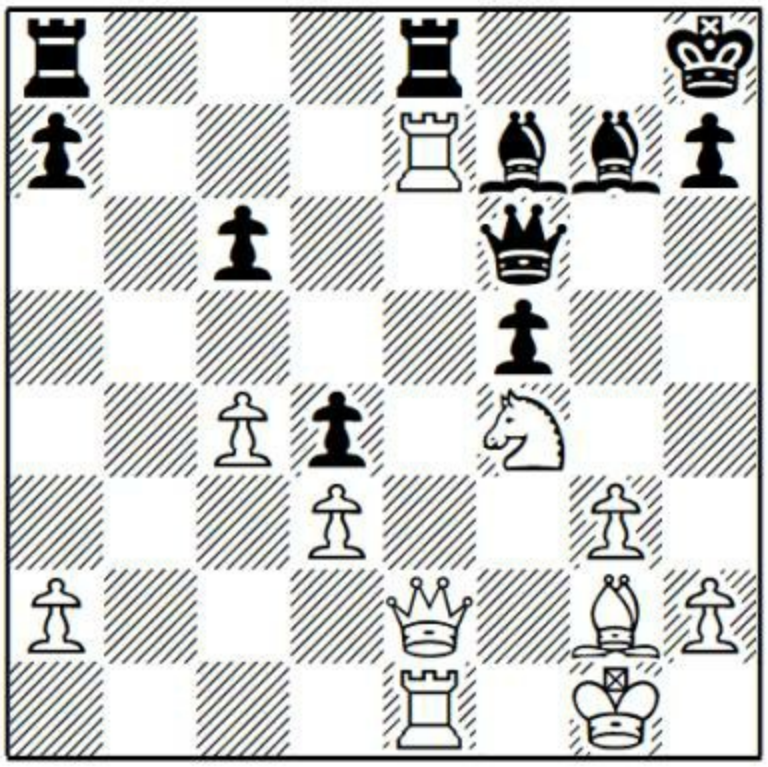
Also hopeless is 19 ... Bxg1 20 Bxf6.

20 Qxc6+! 1-0

Decoy/weak back rank: 20 ... Rxc6 21 Rd8 mate.

457) A.Kosten-G.Lilley

British Championship, Scarborough 1999



White to play

Level 2

Black unwisely challenged White's e-file control. Why was this a mistaken decision?

Answer: Queen sacrifice/ pinned piece/weak back rank.

25 Rxe8+ Bxe8

25 ... Rxe8 26 Qxe8+ is the same.

26 Qxe8+! Rxe8 27 Rxe8+ Bf8 28 Ne6! 1-0

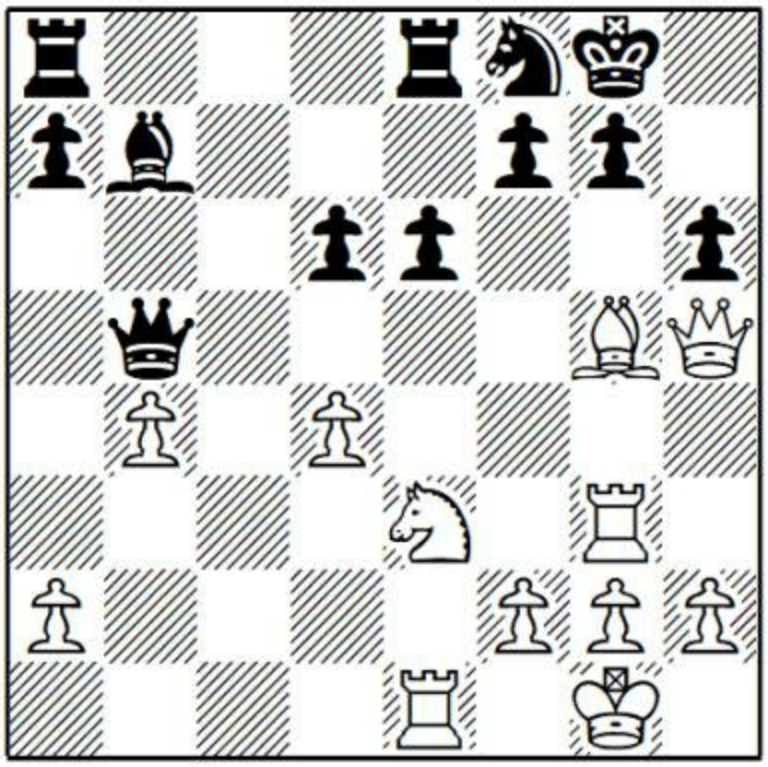
28 ... Kg8 29 Rxf8+ Qxf8 30 Nxf8 Kxf8 31 Bxc6 leaves Black down a piece and a pawn.

29) Windmill

Ingredients required for a Windmill:

1. Your rook and bishop should be hovering near the enemy king.
2. Restricted movement for the defender's king.
3. The victim lacks pieces or pawns which are capable of blocking out the bishop's checks. If there are pieces or pawns which can block, then be sure to eliminate them (often through sacrifice or deflection) when initiating the Windmill.
4. Our attacking rook must either deliver checkmate, or pick up material in the Windmill mechanism.
5. A windmill can also occur with a knight/bishop or knight/queen team, as shown in the next game.

458) C.Torre Repetto-E.Lasker
Moscow 1925



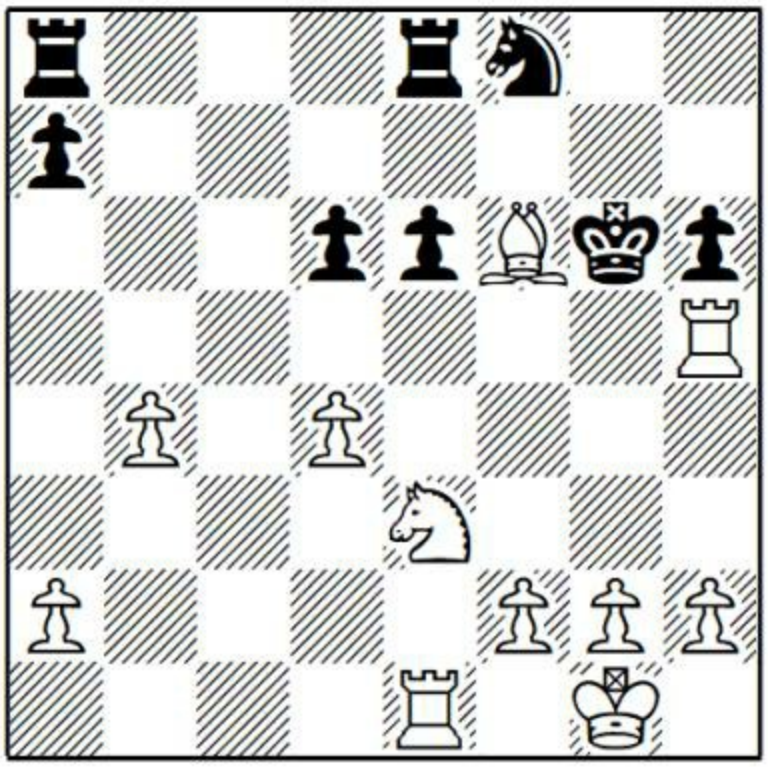
White to play

Level 2.5

Torre's combination is beautiful, yet not so difficult to spot.

Answer: Queen sacrifice/windmill.

25 Bf6!! Qxh5 26 Rxg7+ Kh8 27 Rxf7+ Kg8 28 Rg7+ Kh8 29 Rxb7+ Kg8 30 Rg7+ Kh8 31 Rg5+ Kh7 32 Rxh5! Kg6



Double attack. Lasker was lucky to have this trick at the end of Torre's combination. Yet it wasn't enough to save the game, since Black loses too many pawns.

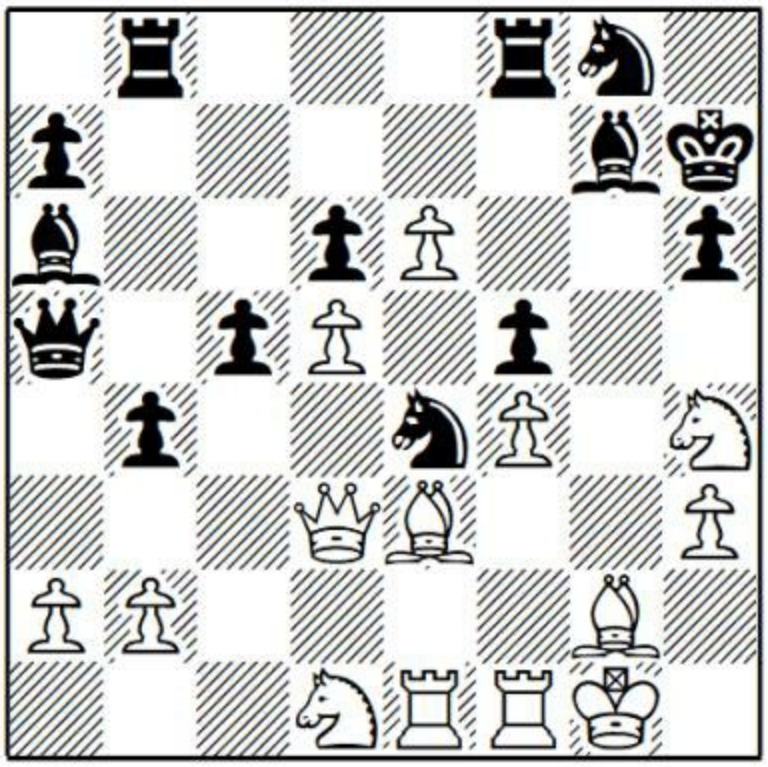
33 Rh3

Shockingly, *Stockfish 12* prefers to retain board control and forego taking the third pawn with 33 Ra5 Kxf6 34 g3, with a completely winning position for White.

33 ... Kxf6 34 Rxh6+ Kg5 35 Rh3

Sombre choir music was required here. Torre was up three pawns and even Lasker's wiles were not enough to save him.

459) A.Alekhine-A.Fletcher
London (simul) 1928



White to play

Level 3

Black thinks he is winning the exchange. Instead, something terrible is coming for his king:

Answer: Queen sacrifice/knight windmill.

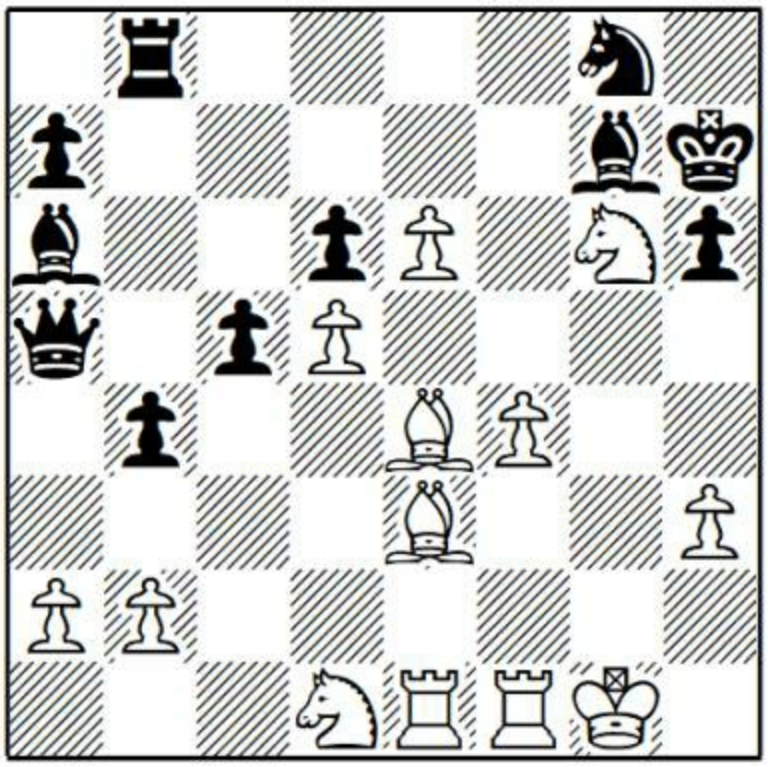
26 Qxe4!! fxe4

After 26 ... Bxf1 27 Rxf1! and White's combination still works and 26 ... Ne7 27 Qb1 Bxf1 28 Rxf1 is also hopeless for Black.

27 Bxe4+ Kh8 28 Ng6+

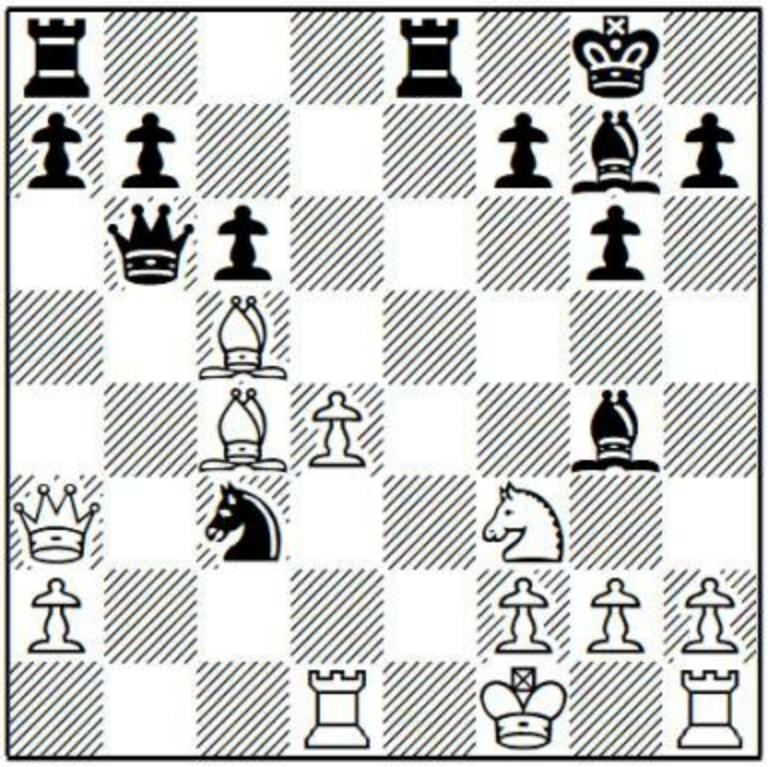
This is an example of a knight windmill.

28 ... Kh7 29 Nxf8+ Kh8 30 Ng6+ Kh7



White to play
Level 1
Alekhine forced mate in two moves:
Answer: **31 Ne5+! Kh8 32 Nf7 mate**

460) D.Byrne-R.Fischer
New York 1956



Black to play

Level 5

You all have probably seen the combination from the Game of the Century. It is one of the most famous windmill combinations of all time. What did Bobby play?

Answer: Queen sacrifice/windmill, smothered mate.

17 ... Be6!!

Tactical wisdom doesn't always come with grey hair. The 13-year-old Bobby finds one of the greatest combinations in chess history.

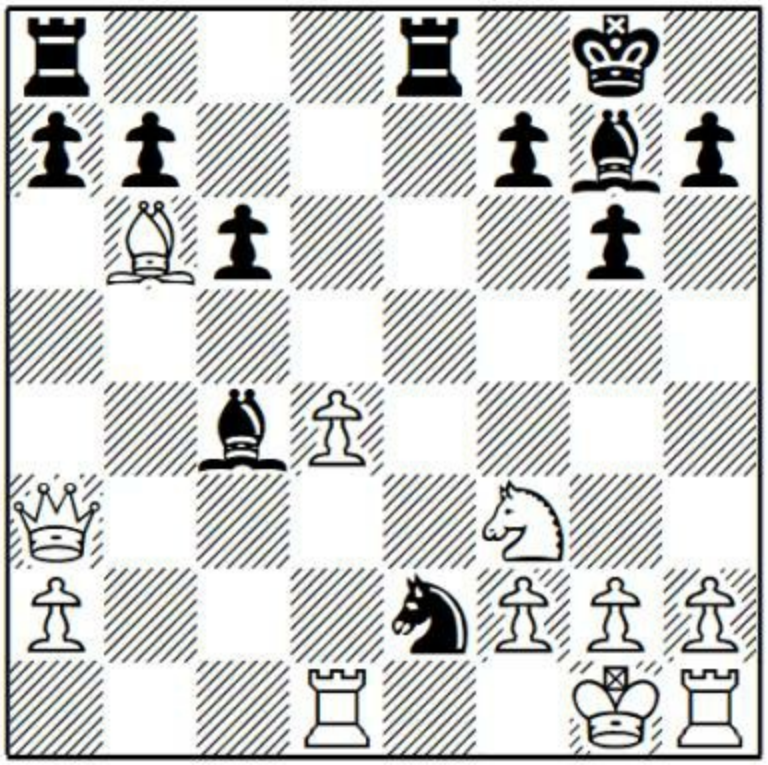
18 Bxb6

White's king-safety woes parade themselves before our eyes. White's king is smothered mated if White declines the queen: 18 Bxe6?? Qb5+ 19 Kg1 Ne2+ 20 Kf1 Ng3+ 21 Kg1 Qf1+ (this pattern is so cliched, that this sacrifice doesn't even deserve a single exclam, since the lowest rated player in your chess club would see it) 22 Rxf1 Ne2 mate.

Instead, 18 Bd3 is slow death for White after 18 ... Nb5! 19 Qb4 Qd8 20

a4 a5 21 Qb2 b6! 22 axb5 bxc5 23 bxc6 a4 24 Qa3 cxd4. White is completely busted.

18 ... Bxc4+ 19 Kg1 Ne2+



The knight windmill begins. White has no choice but to grit his teeth and endure in silent obedience.

20 Kf1 Nxd4+ 21 Kg1 Ne2+ 22 Kf1 Nc3+ 23 Kg1 axb6

Zwischenzug.

24 Qb4

The queen is unable to protect her rook: 24 Qc1?? Ne2+. Knight fork.

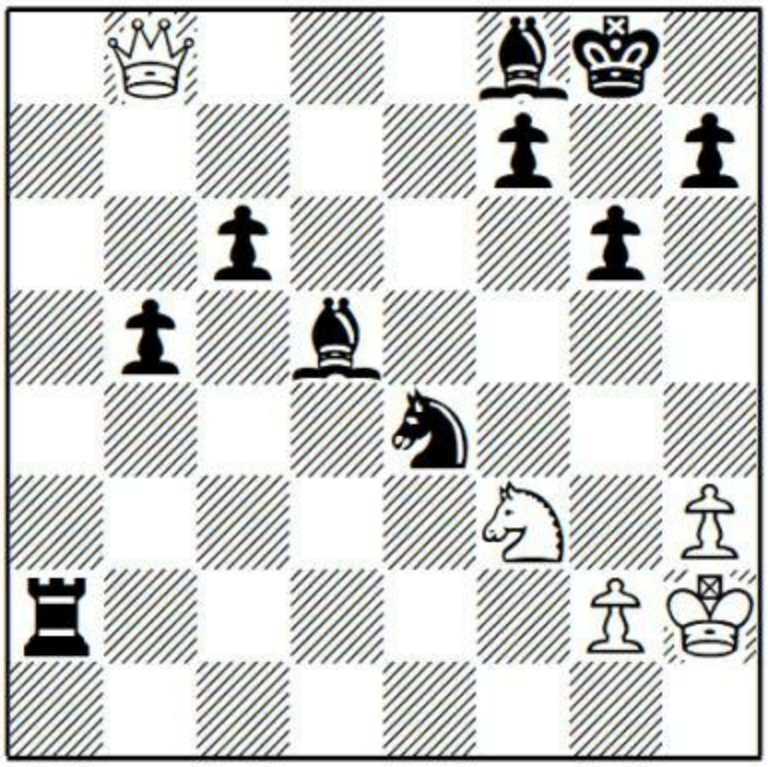
24 ... Ra4!

Zwischenzug. Bobby wants a full rook, not just an exchange.

25 Qxb6 Nxd1

Bobby got rook, two bishops and a pawn for the queen - way too much. Byrne could have resigned here.

26 h3 Rxa2 27 Kh2 Nxf2 28 Re1 Rxe1 29 Qd8+ Bf8 30 Nxe1 Bd5 31 Nf3 Ne4 32 Qb8 b5

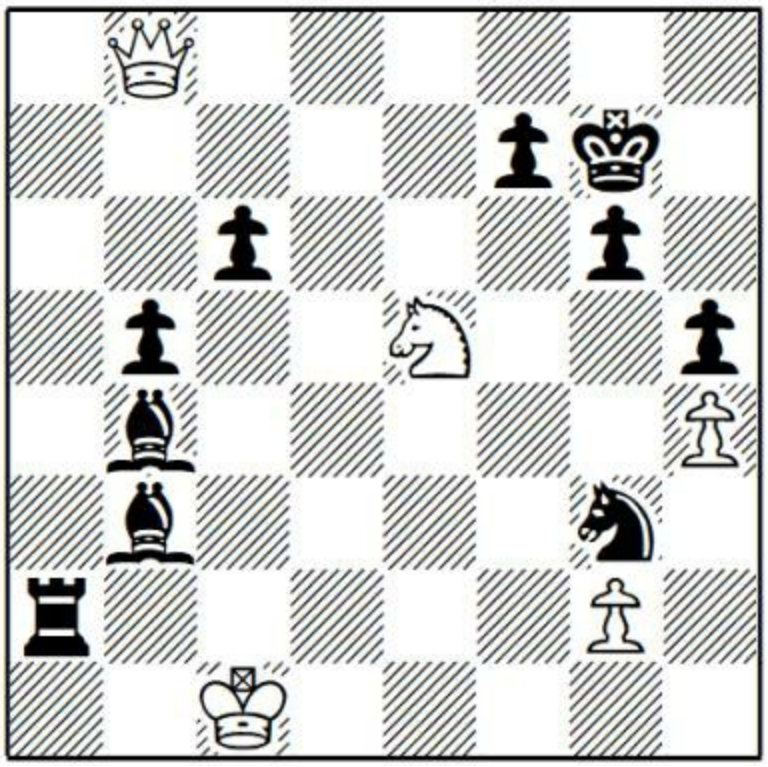


Every piece in Black's camp is covered and White's queen and knight lack even a single target. White, on the other hand, cannot cover g2. Black doesn't even need to bother with promotion of the b-pawn.

33 h4 h5 34 Ne5

Threat: Nd7, which is trivially easy to prevent.

34 ... Kg7 35 Kg1 Bc5+ 36 Kf1 Ng3+ 37 Ke1 Bb4+ 38 Kd1 Bb3+ 39 Kc1



Black to play

Level 1.5

Black forces mate in 3 moves:

Answer: **39 ... Ne2+ 40 Kb1 Nc3+ 41 Kc1**

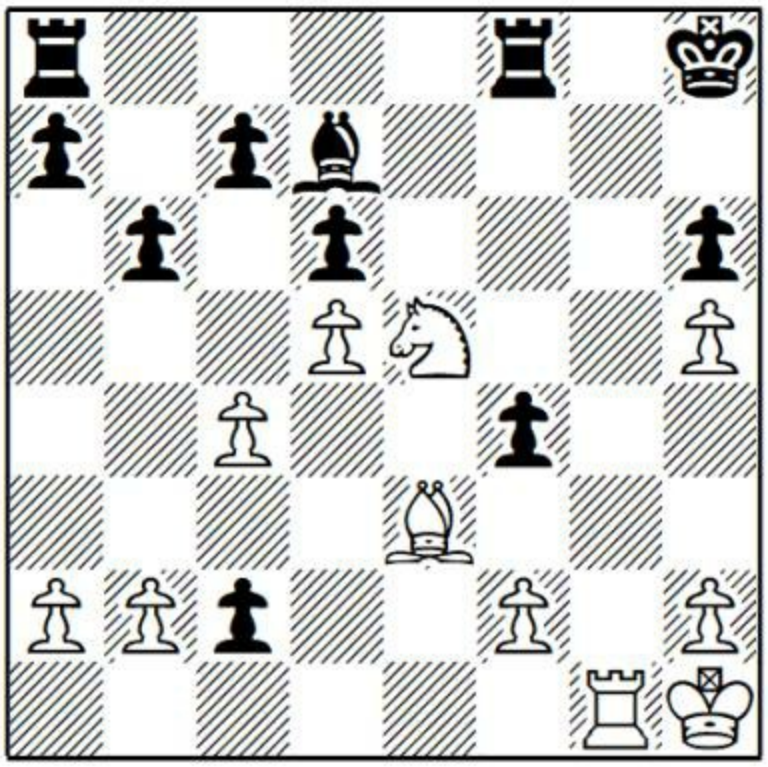
Byrne is wiser than his anger and generously allowed the young Bobby to deliver mate to complete the masterpiece.

41 ... Rc2 mate

It may have been right around this point where IM Byrne may have had the gut feeling that his opponent was somewhat talented.

461) T.Petrosian-B.Spassky

World Championship (Game 12), Moscow 1966



White to play

Level 3

Petrosian is down material. He found a windmill combination to hold the draw:

Answer: Zwischenzug/windmill.

33 Bd4!

The only way. After 33 Ng6+? Kh7 34 Nxf8+ Rxf8 35 Bc1 f3! White is fighting for a draw, while 33 Nxd7?? fxe3 34 Nxf8 exf2! (zwischenzug/pawn promotion) 35 Ng6+ Kg7 36 Rf1 Re8! 37 Kg2 Re1 sees Black promote and win.

33 ... dxe5

33 ... c1Q?? is mistimed: 34 Nxd7+ Kh7 35 Nxf8+ Rxf8 36 Rxc1 leaves White a piece up.

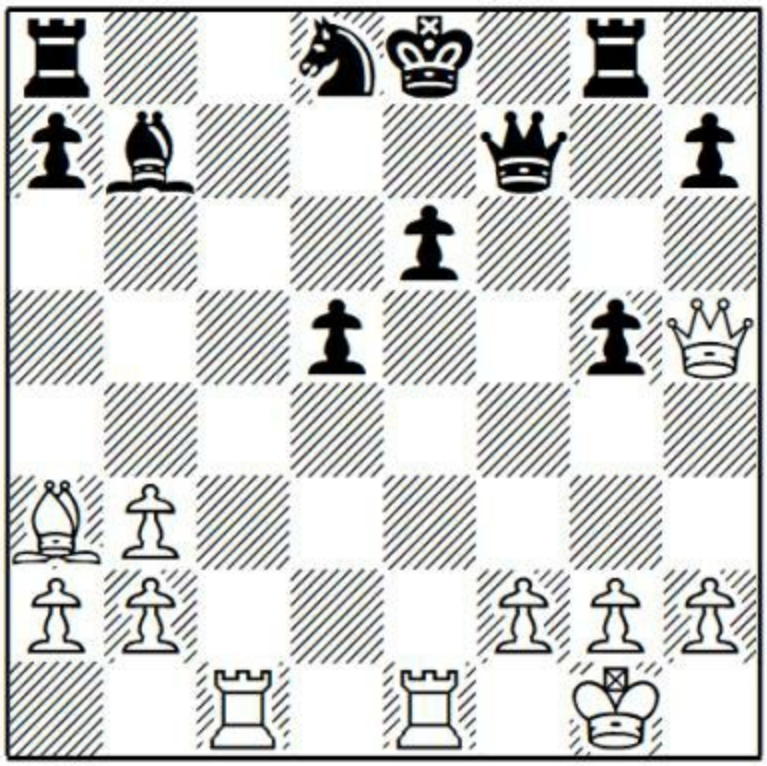
34 Bxe5+ Kh7 35 Rg7+ Kh8 36 Rg6+

Restraint was a quality which was rendered inoperable in Tal's world. Not so in Petrosian's, which always veered to the side of caution. Petrosian

chooses to draw rather than play for the full point (or loss!) with 36 Rxd7+ Kg8 37 Rg7+ Kh8 38 Rxc7+ Kg8 39 Rg7+ Kh8 40 Rxa7+ Kg8 41 Rg7+ Kh8 42 Rg1+ Kh7 43 Rc1!?. The engine calls it dead even here.

36 ... Kh7 37 Rg7+ Kh8 38 Rg6+ Kh7 39 Rg7+ ½-½

462) G.Antunac-R.Hübner
Dresden 1971



White to play

Level 3.5

White is down a piece for a pawn, so it's a sink or swim situation. If White doesn't have a combination, he is losing. Fortunately for him, he does. White to play and reach a winning position:

Answer: Queen sacrifice/windmill.

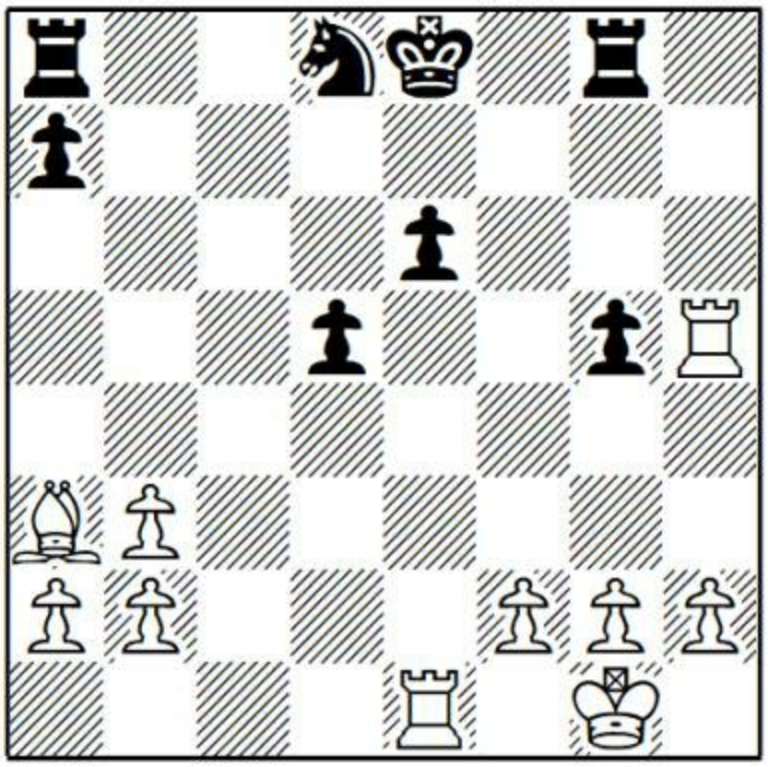
1 Rc7! Qxh5

There isn't any choice.

2 Re7+ Kf8 3 Rxb7+!

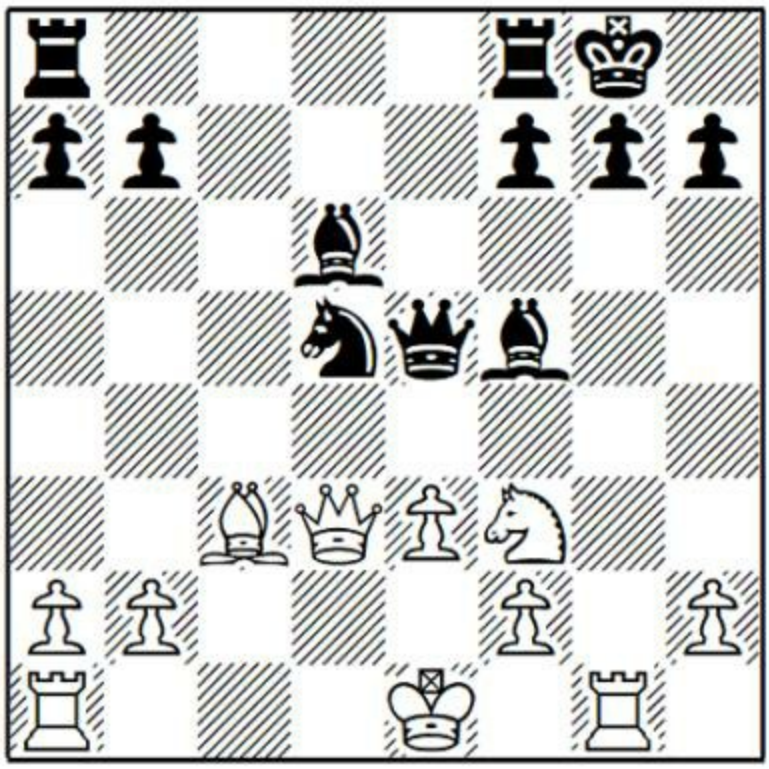
There is no rush to capture Black's queen. White can pick off Black's bishop and also Black's h-pawn *before* capturing Black's queen.

3 ... Ke8 4 Re7+ Kf8 5 Rxh7+ Ke8 6 Rxh5!



Sometimes the strength disparity between opponents is vast, yet the lower-rated player still wins the day, as in this case. White is up two clean pawns and went to score a huge upset over his world-class GM opponent. However, 6 Re7+ Kf8 7 Rxa7+? would have been too greedy. White must now take perpetual check since 7 ... Ke8 8 Re7+ Kf8 9 Rh7+?? loses to 9 ... Rxa3! 10 Rxh5 Rxa2 when White suddenly finds himself down a piece without compensation in the ending.

463) S.Mamedyarov-K.Shanava
Tbilisi 2012



White to play

Level 4

19 Qd2 wins material, yet Mamedyarov found something even stronger. What is White's optimal continuation?

Answer: Queen sacrifice/removal of the guard/windmill.

19 Qxd5!!

After 19 Qd2 Nxc3 20 Nxe5 Bxe5 21 bxc3 Black can fight on with two bishops and a good position against a queen.

19 ... Qxd5

'Duty' is a synonym for 'unpleasant task which we are forced to perform'. Black has no choice but to recapture. Now comes the windmill and Black's worst fears come true.

20 Rxg7+ Kh8 21 Rxf7+ Be5

21 ... Kg8 22 Rg7+ Kh8 23 Rg5+ wins.

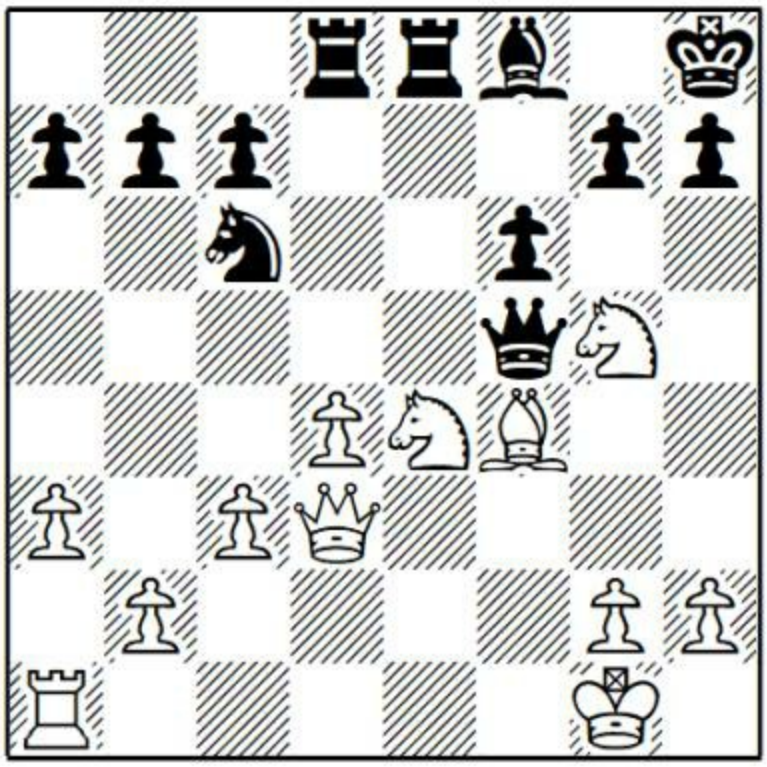
22 Bxe5+ Kg8

22 ... Qxe5 23 Nxe5 leaves White up two clean pawns.

23 Rg7+ Kh8 24 Rg5+ 1-0

24 ... Qxe5 25 Nxe5 Rac8 26 Rd1 leaves White up two passed pawns with an easy win.

464) D.Konnert-S.Caputi
Indiana 2020



White to play

Level 4

My Facebook friend Bob Smith sent me this position from a game at the Boehm club, in Indianapolis, Indiana. White is a 1399 player and his opponent is rated 1633. White played 1 Nf7+ and scored an upset draw. Do you see how White could have won the game?

Answer: Queen sacrifice/smothered mate.

1 Nxf6!!

1 Nf7+? was played in the game. The position is equal and they soon agreed to a draw.

1 ... g6

The only move, as of 1 ... Qxd3?? 2 Nf7 mate or 1 ... Qxf6?? 2 Qxh7 mate.

2 Qc4!!

Threat: Qg8 mate. Sometimes dividing our army is the best course, since sometimes it is necessary to be in all places at all times, as in this case. Also winning and much easier to calculate is 2 Qxf5 gxf5 3 Nxe8 Rxe8 4 d5, and if 4 ... Na5 5 Bxc7 Nc4 6 d6! And wins.

2 ... Qxf6

2 ... Qxf4?? is met with 3 Qg8 mate.

3 Nf7+ Kg7

Or 3 ... Kg8? 4 Nh6+! Kg7 5 Qg8 mate.

4 Bh6+ Kg8

Now comes White's knight windmill.

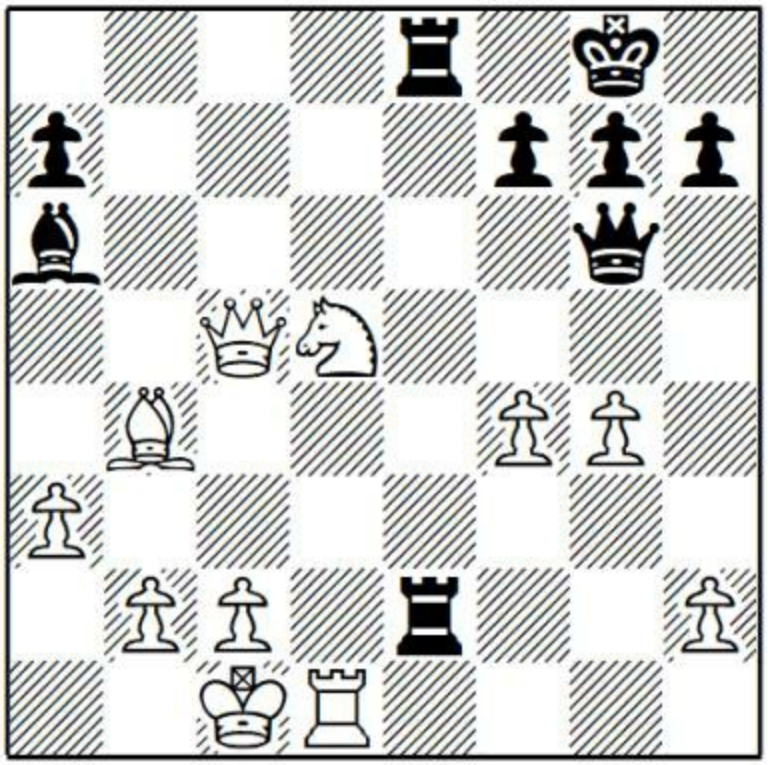
5 Nxd8+ Kh8 6 Nf7+ Kg8 7 Nd6+ Kh8 8 Nxe8

White wins.

30) X-ray

Sometimes the term X-ray is a synonym for a skewer, yet the more correct definition is when it refers to a combination where a piece indirectly attacks an enemy piece ‘through’ another. An X-ray can also be used in a defensive context, where a defensive piece helps a comrade square or piece ‘through’ an attacking piece.

465) M.Chigorin-E.Znosko Borovsky
Kiev 1903



White to play
Level 4
How did Chigorin win decisive material?

Answer: Knight fork/weak back rank/X-ray attack. The coming X-ray is the most difficult part of the combination to see in advance.

29 Ne7+! R8xe7

Instead, 29 ... R2xe7 30 Qxe7 Qe6 31 Qxe6 fxe6 32 Rd7, threatening both Rxa7 and Bc3, is a lost ending for Black.

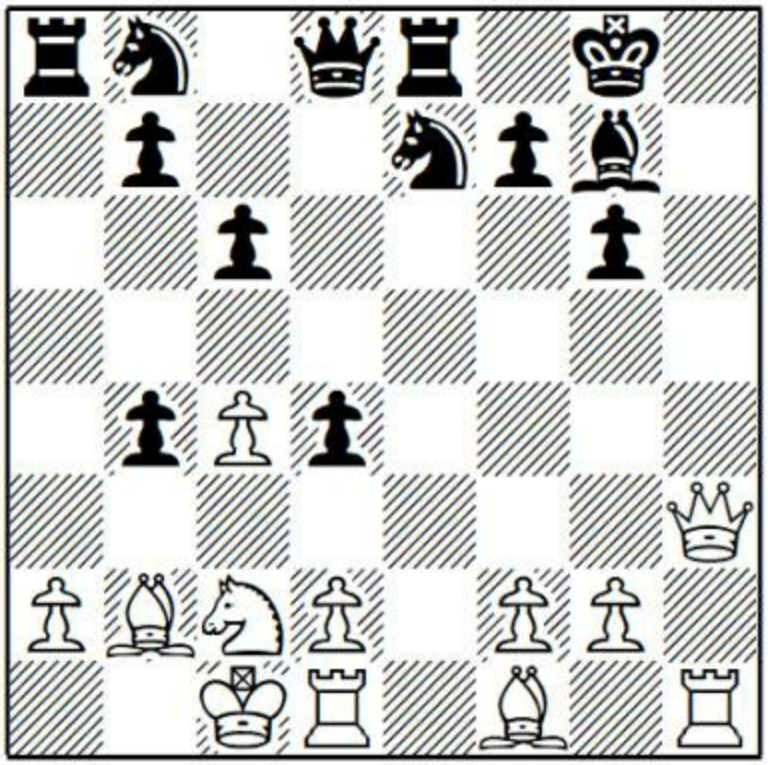
30 Rd8+! Re8

Did White miscalculate? No. Znosko Borovsky's joy vanishes as swiftly as it appeared, after Chigorin's next shot.

31 Qf8+! 1-0

Queen sacrifice/X-ray mate. Note how White's rook on d8 works 'through' Black's not-so-effective defending rook on e8: 31 ... Rxf8 32 Rxf8 mate.

466) M.Euwe-R.Loman
Rotterdam 1923



White to play

Level 3

How did Euwe whip up a winning attack?

Answer: Chop on d4 with the knight, relying on an X-ray mating threat to keep the knight safe.

16 Nxd4! Bxd4??

Pride and practicality often march out of step with the other. This allows an X-ray mate in 2.

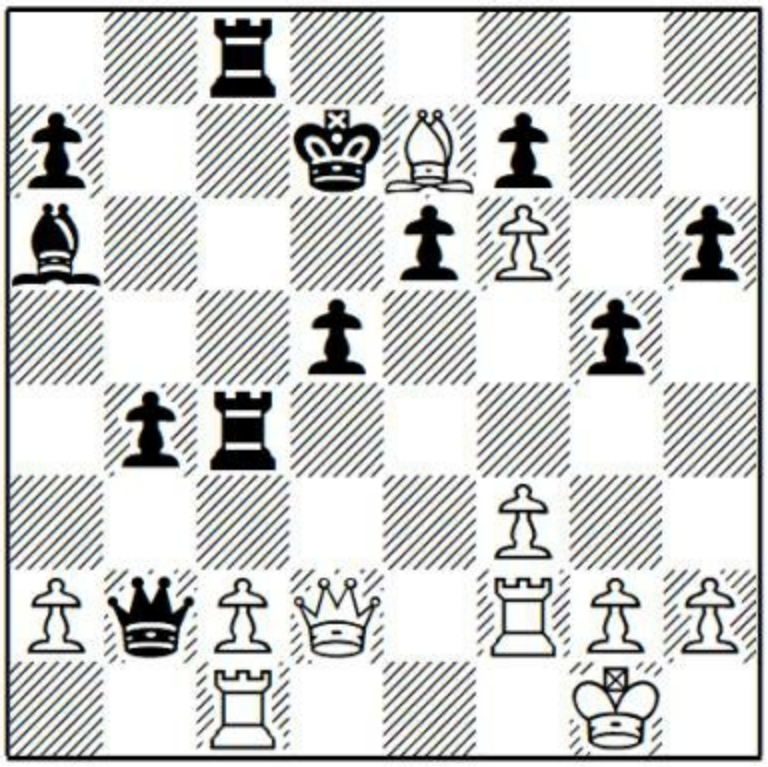
Instead, 16 ... Rxa2?? walks into mate after 17 Qh7+ Kf8 18 Ne6+! (discovered attack) 18 ... fxe6 19 Qxg7 mate, so 16 ... Kf8 was necessary. Then 17 Qh7! (threat: Ne6+ and Qxg7 mate) 17 ... Qxd4 18 Bxd4 Bxd4 is also hopeless for Black, but sadly his best course.

17 Qh8+!

X-ray mate. White's b2-bishop assists in the mate 'through' Black's bishop.

17 ... Bxh8 18 Rxh8 mate

467) Z.Nilsson-E.Geller
Stockholm 1954



Black to play

Level 3

Black can either win heavy material, or force mate via an X-ray combination:

Answer: White's c2-pawn isn't as covered as he thought.

22 ... Rxc2!

The solution is about as subtle as the butcher's meat cleaver.

23 Qxc2

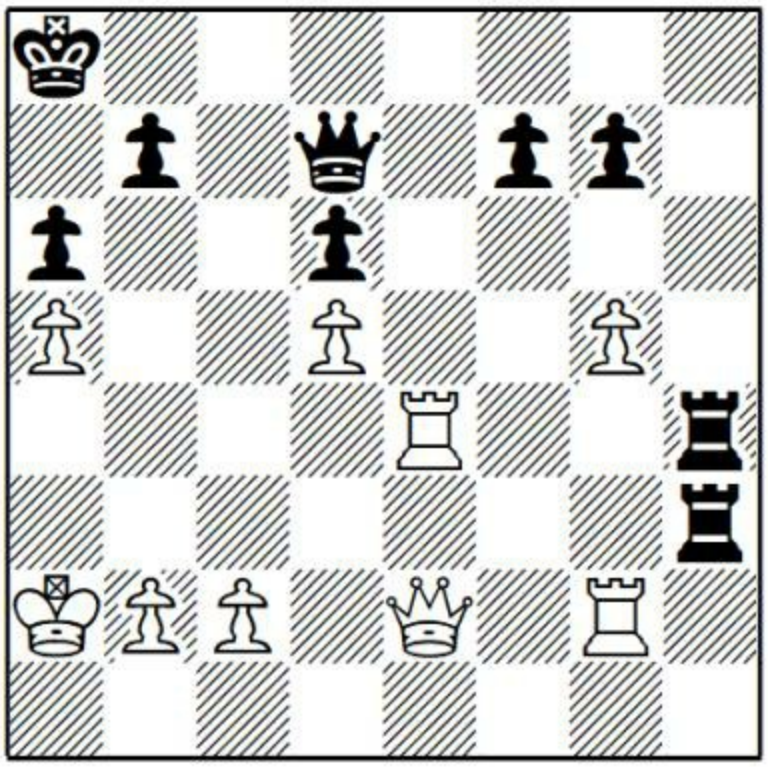
Or 23 Rxc2 Qa1+ 24 Qc1 Qxc1+! (X-ray/weak back rank) 25 Rxc1 Rxc1+ 26 Rf1 Rxf1 mate.

23 ... Qxc1+! 0-1

This X-ray forces mate: 24 Qxc1 Rxc1+ 25 Rf1 Rxf1 mate.

468) J.Tisdall-J.Polgar

Reykjavik 1988



Black to play

Level 1.5

Judit has an immediate game-ender:

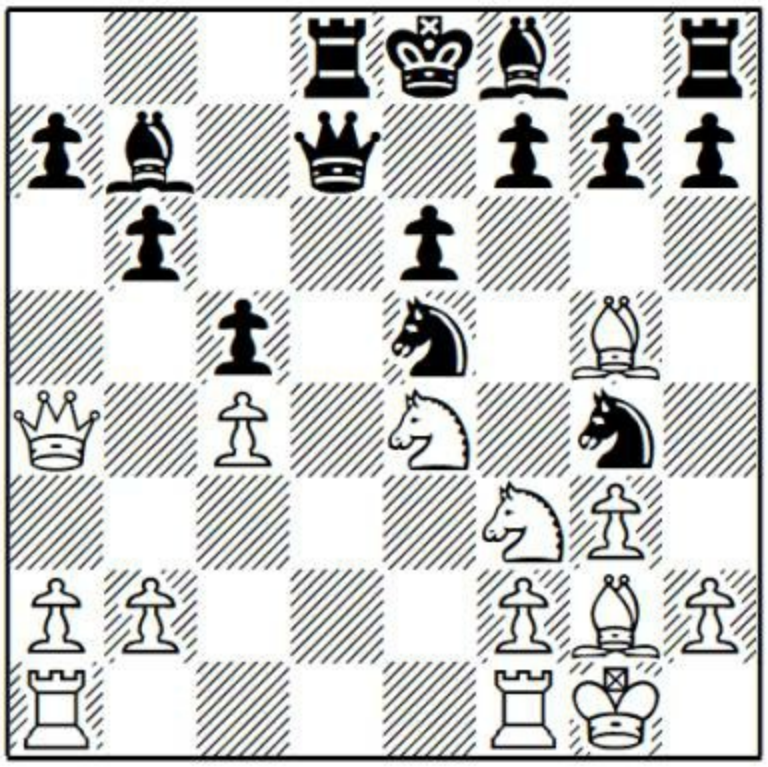
Answer: Queen sacrifice/X-ray attack.

33 ... Qa4+! 0-1

The feeling of banging out such a shot is intoxicating. 34 Rxa4 (34 Kb1 Rh1+ 35 Qe1 Qxe4 wins) 34 ... Rxa4+ 35 Kb1 Rh1+ is mate in 2.

469) A.Shirov-E.Bareev

Novgorod 1994



White to play

Level 3

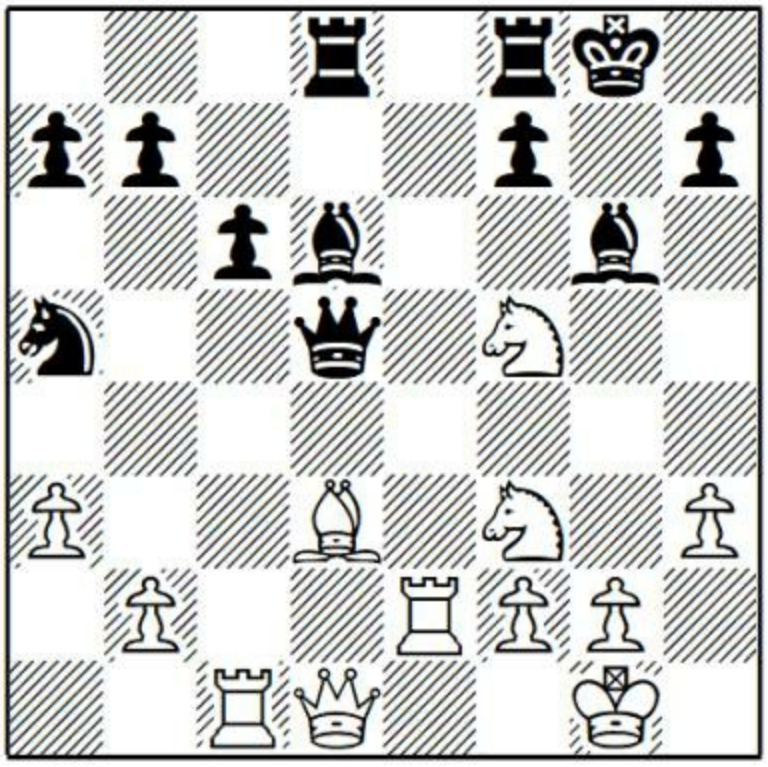
White can't take the exchange since his queen hangs on a4. If Queens are swapped, this leaves Black up a pawn. What should White play?

Answer: Queen sacrifice/X-ray mate.

15 Rad1! 1-0

We are reminded of that time that enraged Jesus overturned the money-changers' tables from the front steps of the temple. After 15 Rad1! Black must give up a piece to avoid mate or loss of his queen: 15 ... Bd5 (not 15 ... Qxa4?? 16 Rxd8 mate) 16 Qxd7+ Rxd7 17 cxd5 exd5 18 Nxe5 Nxe5 19 Nf6+! (attraction/double attack; White's sacrifice is stronger than 19 Nc3) 19 ... gxf6 20 Bxf6 Ng6 21 Bxd5! (threat: Bc6) 21 ... Rxd5 22 Rxd5 Be7 23 Re1 Rg8 24 Bxe7 Nxe7 25 Rde5 leaves White up a full rook.

470) G.Kasparov-J.Timman
Amsterdam 1994



Sometimes a short-range combination is not so easy to see, if the first move is atonal and counter-intuitive. How did Kasparov win material?

Answer: X-ray attack/overloaded defender/knight fork.

24 Re5!! Bxe5

Timman gives up his queen. All other tries are hopeless as well:

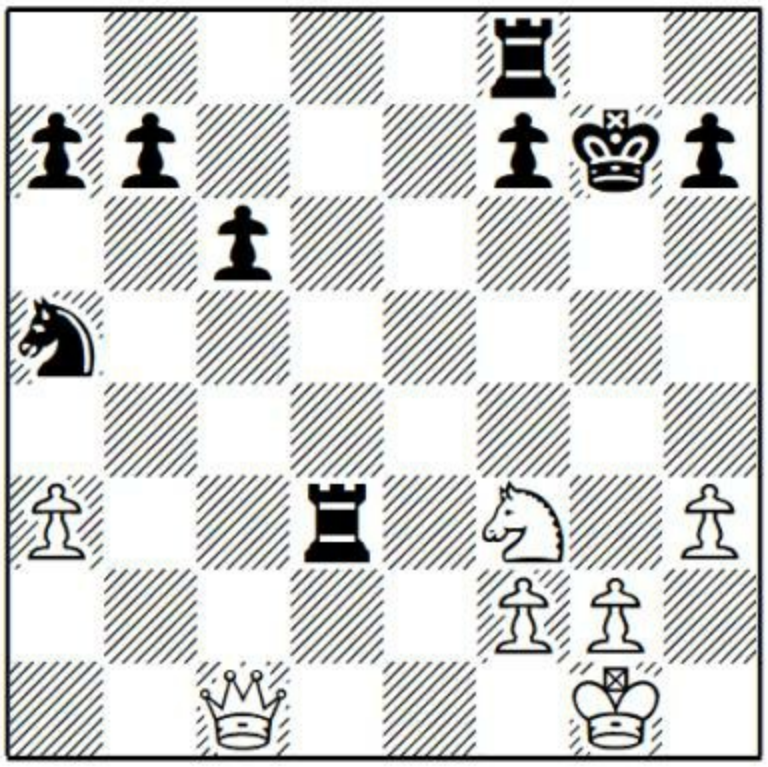
a) 24 ... Qb3 loses the knight via the X-ray 25 Rxa5 Qxb2 26 Rc2 Qf6 27 g4 when White consolidates.

b) 24 ... Qxd3 25 Qxd3 Bxe5 26 Qc2 wins.

25 Ne7+ Kg7 26 Nxd5 Bxb2 27 Nf4 Bxd3

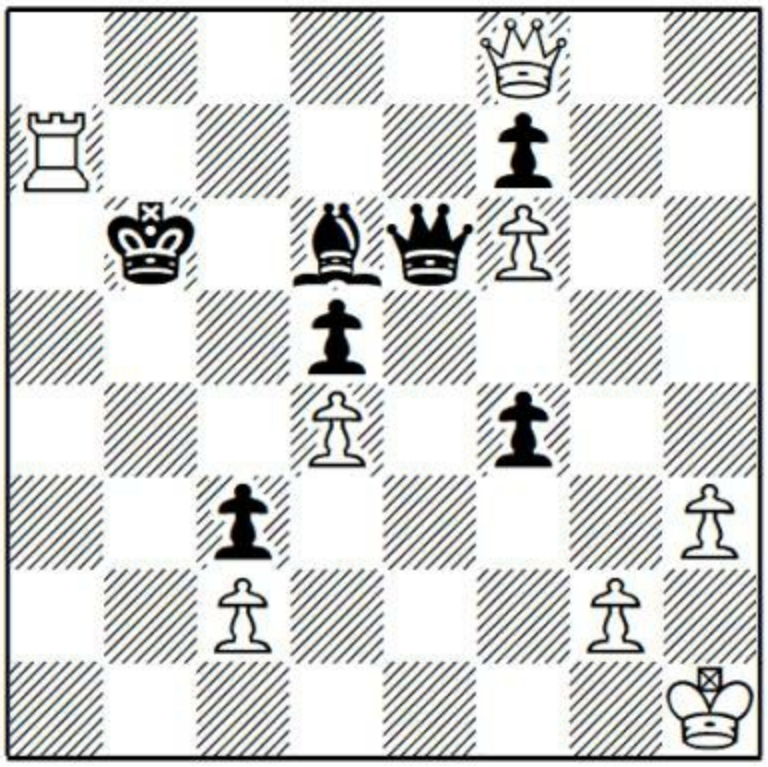
Or 27 ... Bxc1 28 Qxc1 Bxd3 29 Nh5+! Kh8 30 Qh6 Rg8 31 Qf6+ Rg7 (the bodies of the dead pile up and begin to choke the street) 32 Qxg7 mate.

28 Nxd3 Bxc1 29 Qxc1 Rxd3



White to play
Level 1
How does White finish?
Answer: A simple double attack on g5.
30 Qg5+ 1-0
30 ... Kh8 31 Qxa5 wins.

471) V.Anand-V.Ivanchuk
Monte Carlo (rapid) 2005



White to play

Level 5

Black threatens: 1 ... Bxf8, 1 ... Kxa7, and 1 ... Qe1+ and ... Qg3+, with perpetual check. Find one powerful idea and White can overcome all his issues and win:

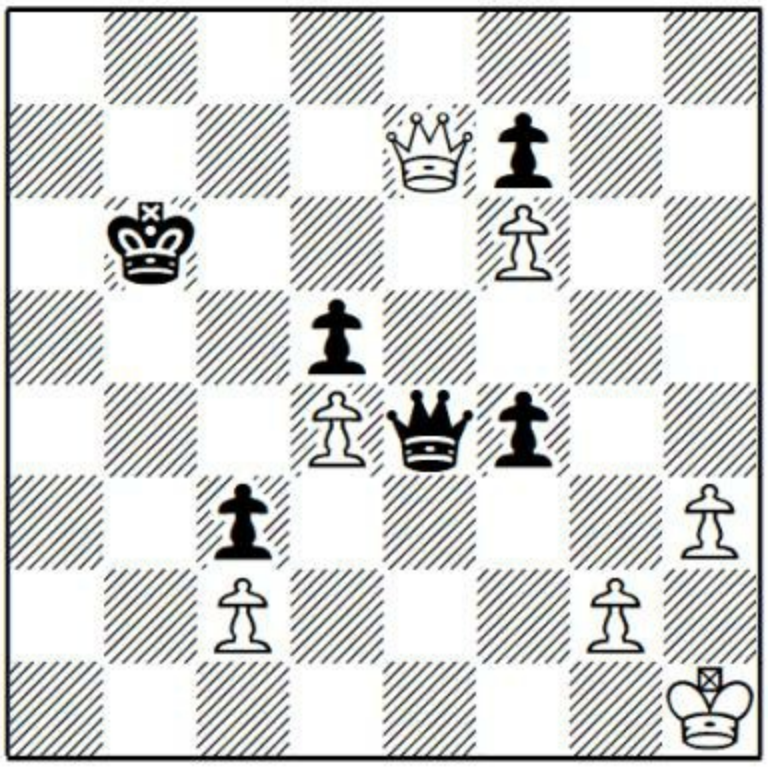
Answer: Defensive X-ray. Move the rook to e7, which covers all three black threats.

45 Re7! Bxe7

There is no declining, in view of 45 ... Qxf6?? 46 Qd8+ Kb5 47 Rb7+. The discovered attack wins Black's queen and mates shortly.

46 Qxe7 Qe4

After 46 ... Qf5 47 Qc5+ Kb7 48 Qb4+ Ka6 49 Qxc3 Qxf6 50 Qc8+ Ka7 51 Qc5+ Ka6 52 Qxd5 White wins the queen ending.



White to play

Level 4.5

An opponent with nothing to lose becomes twice as dangerous. Ivanchuk takes his chances in the promotion race. Should White exchange queens, or keep them on the board? The truth lies buried behind a mountain of calculation.

Answer: The king and pawn ending is a win, yet it takes strong calculation power to see it at this stage.

47 Qxe4!!

Anand correctly calculates that he is winning the king and pawn ending.

47 ... dxe4 48 h4 Kb5

The idea is to walk the king over and pick up the c2-pawn. It's too slow, but if 48 ... e3 49 Kg1 and White wins.

49 h5 Kb4 50 h6 Ka3 51 h7 Kb2 52 h8Q Kxc2 53 Qe8 Kd3 54 Qxf7 c2 55 Qb3+ 1-0

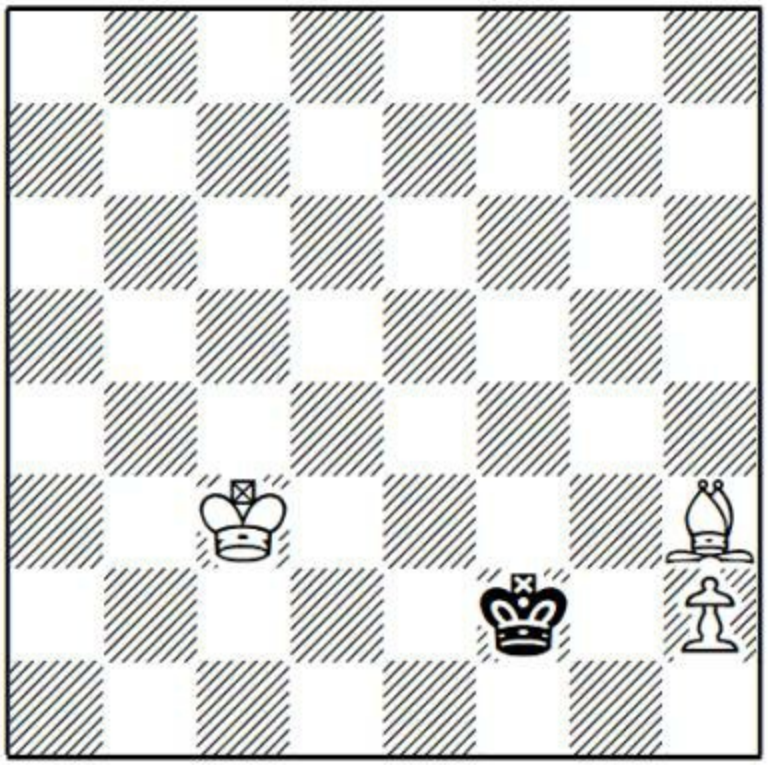
After 55 ... Kd2 56 Qb2 e3 57 d5 e2 58 Qd4+! Kc1 59 Qc3 Kd1 60 Qd3+!

(this is that scene from *2001: A Space Odyssey* where Black's pawns are the apes with the sticks and White's queen is the alien spaceship; only now does it become clear that Black will not save the game) 60 ... Kc1 (or 60 ... Ke1 61 Qxc2) 61 Qxe2 neither black passed pawn promoted.

31) Zugzwang

Zugzwang occurs when one side is obliged to move, yet in doing so, their position is either damaged or destroyed. The essence of a siege is to starve the enemy into submission. This is where zugzwang comes into our tactical arsenal.

472) O.Frink
The Chess Amateur, 1923



White to play
Level 5

I posted this study on my Facebook page and right away, received 10 wrong answers from 10 different people. Number 11 got the solution. If

Black's king reaches h8, the position turns into a drawn bishop and wrong-coloured rook pawn situation. Only one bishop move keeps the king out of the corner. Can you work out which one?

Answer: Only by moving the bishop to d7 can White promote.

1 Bd7!!

Only this way:

a) 1 Be6? Ke3 2 h4 Ke4 3 h5 Ke5 4 h6 Kf6 5 Bf5 Kf7 draws. Black's king made it to the corner.

b) 1 Bg2? Ke3! (Black must ignore the bishop; 1 ... Kxg2?? 2 h4 promotes) 2 Kc4 Kf4 3 Kd5 Kf5 4 Bf3 Kg6 and, once again, Black's king reaches the drawing corner.

c) 1 Bf1? (several people incorrectly posted this as the solution; it isn't) 1 ... Ke3 2 h4 Kf4 3 Be2 Kf5 4 Kd4 Kg6 draws.

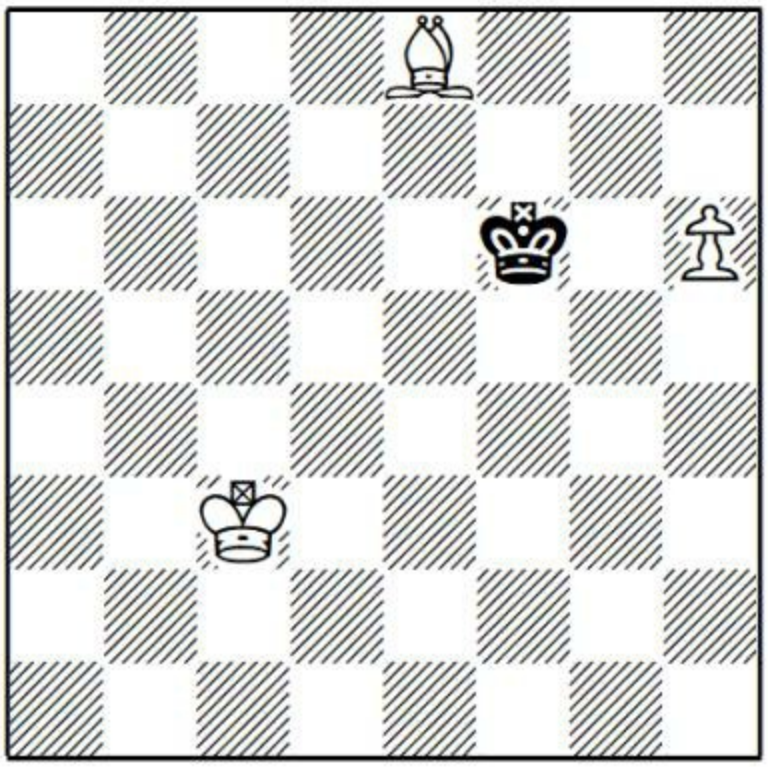
1 ... Ke3

Or 1 ... Kf3 2 Kd4 Kf4 3 h4! (zugzwang) 3 ... Kg3 4 h5 and wins.

2 h4 Ke4

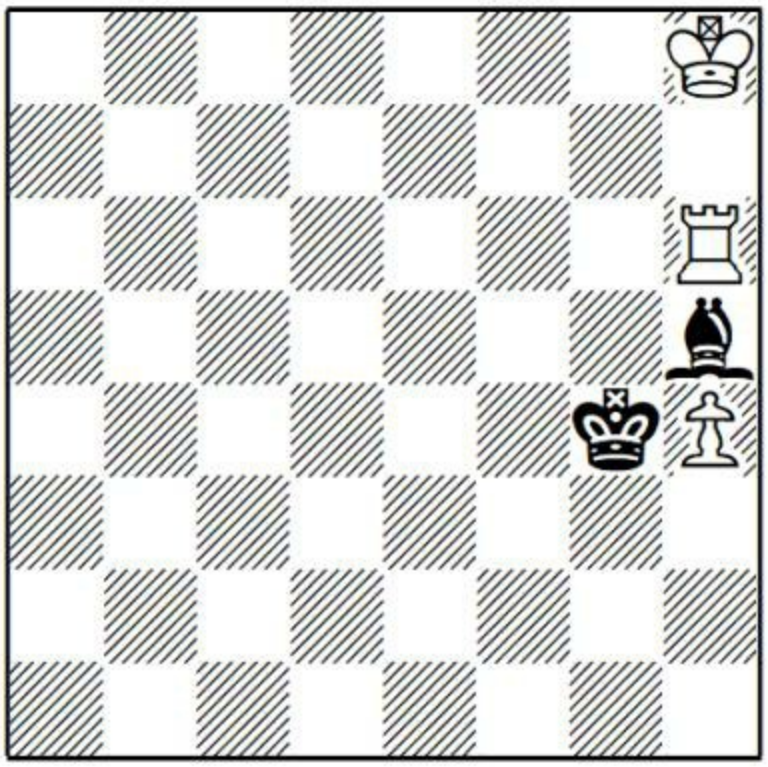
2 ... Kf4 3 Kd4 is another zugzwang. White promotes.

3 h5 Ke5 4 h6 Kf6 5 Be8!



Zugzwang. Every black king move allows White to promote.

473) L.Kubbel
La Patrie Suisse, 1934



White to play

Level 4

This is an example of a solvable study for a player rated below 1800, if they put in the time. Black is about to play ... Kxh4, which would be a theoretically drawn rook and king versus bishop and king ending, unless we can force zugzwang ...

Answer: Step 1: We move our king closer to the battlefield.

1 Kg7 Kxh4

Instead, 1 ... Be8 2 Rh8 Bh5 3 Kf6 is just another version of our main line, where White wins.

2 Kf6 Kg4

If Black has a chance to play ... Be8, the position is drawn.

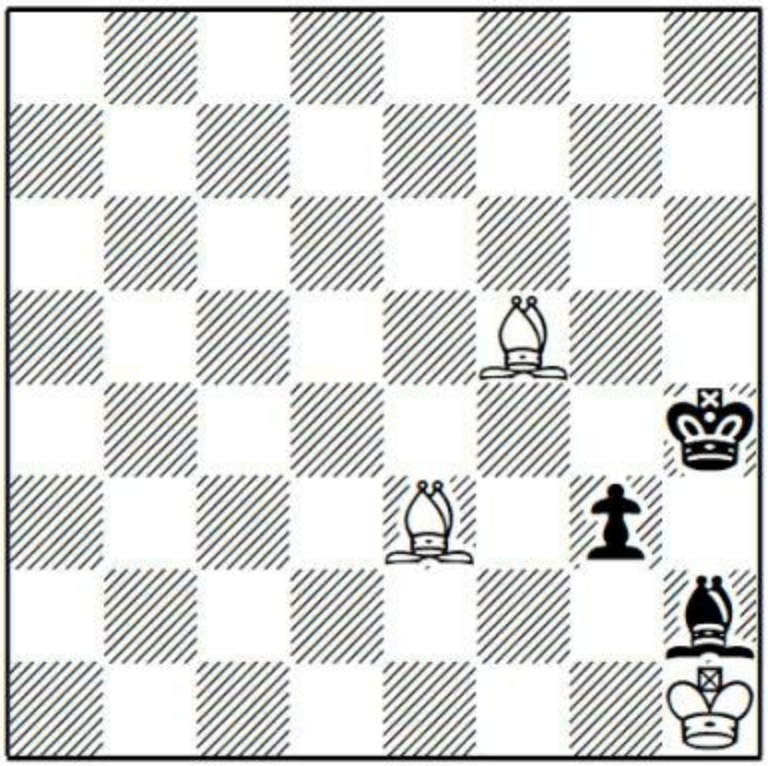
3 Rh8!

Cutting off Black's intended ... Be8. Now Black's pieces are in a dungeon on a bread and water diet.

3 ... Kh4 4 Kf5

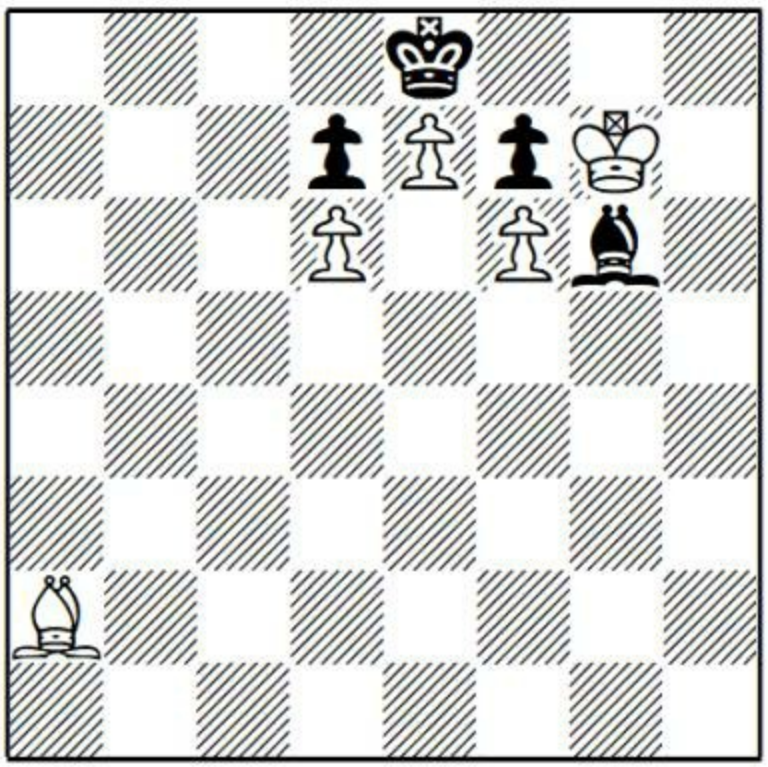
Zugzwang. Black's bishop falls.

474) A.Wotawa
Deutsche Schachzeitung, 1956



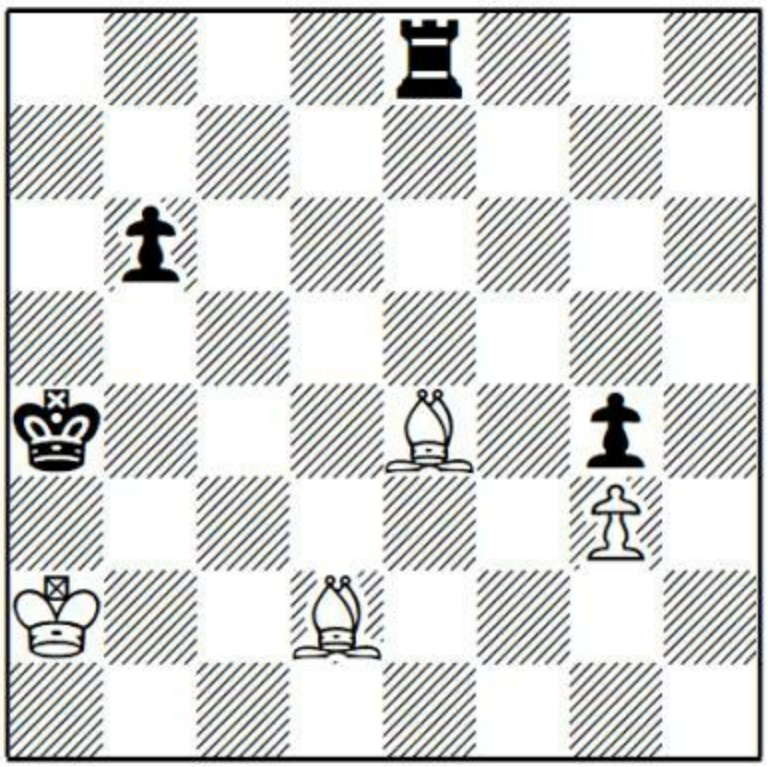
White to play
Level 3
What is White's winning plan?
Answer: Transfer our king to h3, creating zugzwang for Black.
1 Kg2 Kh5 2 Kh3! Bg1
Or 2 ... g2 (principle: If you are going to tell a lie, then make it believable; Black obviously isn't going to have time to promote the g-pawn) 3 Kxh2.
3 Bxg1
And wins.

475) A.Wotawa
Deutsche Schachzeitung, 1956



White to play
Level 4
Find a way to upend Black's attempted fortress draw:
Answer: Move the bishop to e6, creating zugzwang.
1 Be6!! dxe6
If 1 ... fxe6 2 Kxg6 e5 3 f7 mate or 1 ... Bh5 2 Bxd7+! (in this study, it's always the same plot line: promote our e7-pawn) 2 ... Kxd7 3 Kf8 White promotes on e8.
2 d7+!
Decoy.
2 ... Kxd7 3 Kf8
White promotes.

476) E.Pogosyants
USSR, 1960

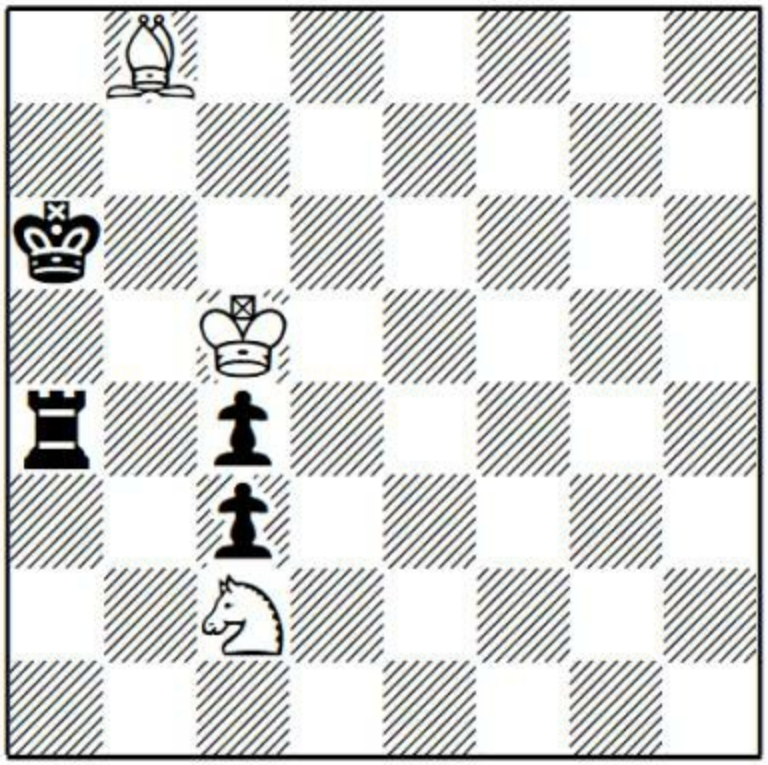


White to play
Level 4.5
How does White force the win?
Answer: Step 1: Start with the obvious double attack check on c6.
1 Bc6+ b5 2 Bd5!
Step 2: *Don't* take Black's 'free' rook, since that would be stalemate, but instead, move the bishop to d5. Threat: Bb3 mate. Black is in zugzwang, since the king needs air. Did you fall for 2 Bxe8?? stalemate? If so, please raise your hand.
2 ... b4
Or 2 ... Re2 3 Bb3 mate.
3 Bc6+
Step 3: We re-double attack.

3 ... Ka5 4 Bxe8 1-0

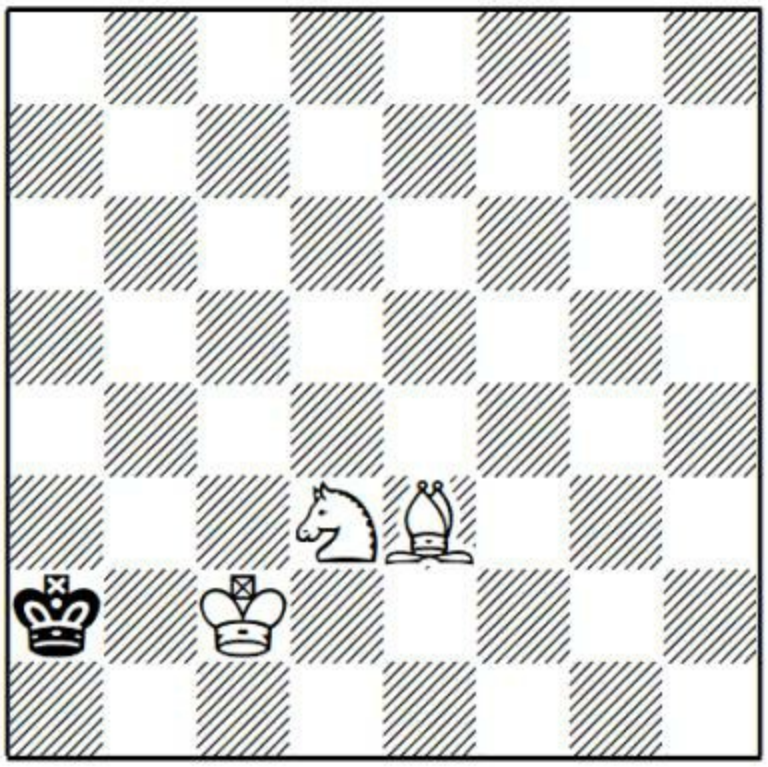
Step 4: This time we can take Black's rook, free and clear, since the stalemate threat is gone and, for Black, a hard rain's a gonna fall.

477) E.Pogosyants
Problemista, 1964



White to play
Level 3.5
How does White exploit Black's king position to force the win?
Answer: 1 Kc6!
Zugzwang.
1 ... Ka5
Alternatively:
a) 2 ... Ra5?? 2 Nb4 mate.
b) 1 ... Ra2 lasts the longest, yet is still an easy win for White: 2 Nb4+

Ka5 3 Nxa2 c2 4 Bc7+ Ka4 5 Kc5 Kb3 6 Nc1+ Kb2 7 Bf4 Kc3 8 Be3 Kb2 9 Kxc4 Ka1 10 Kb3 Kb1 11 Nd3 Ka1 12 Kxc2 (bishop and knight versus king is not so easy with the defending king in the middle of the board; here our task is simplified considerably) 12 ... Ka2.



White to play

Level 2

White forces mate in 3 moves:

Answer: 13 Bc1! (13 Bc5 is one move slower after 13 ... Ka1 14 Bb4 Ka2 15 Nc1+ Ka1 16 Bc3 mate) 13 ... Ka1 14 Bb2+ Ka2 15 Nc1 mate.

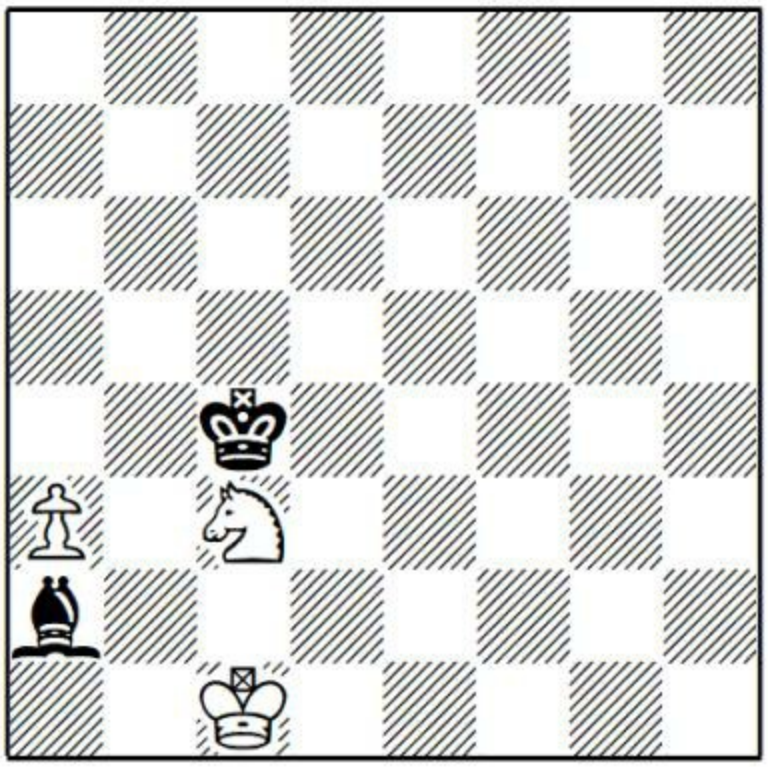
2 Bc7+ Ka6 3 Bb6!

Zugzwang number 2. There is no halting Nb4 mate.

3 ... Ra2 4 Nb4 mate

478) J.Rusinek

The Problemist, 1993



White to play

Level 4

With only one pawn remaining on the board, it's difficult to believe that White is winning with the extra pawn. Yet when we examine closer, we see that Black is losing a piece via an anomaly:

***Answer:* 1 Kc2!!**

Only the c2-square works. White must *lose* a tempo to achieve the win.

a) Wild dreams don't pay the bills. The capture on a2 is foolish, since after 1 Nxa2? Black wins White's final pawn with 1 ... Kb3.

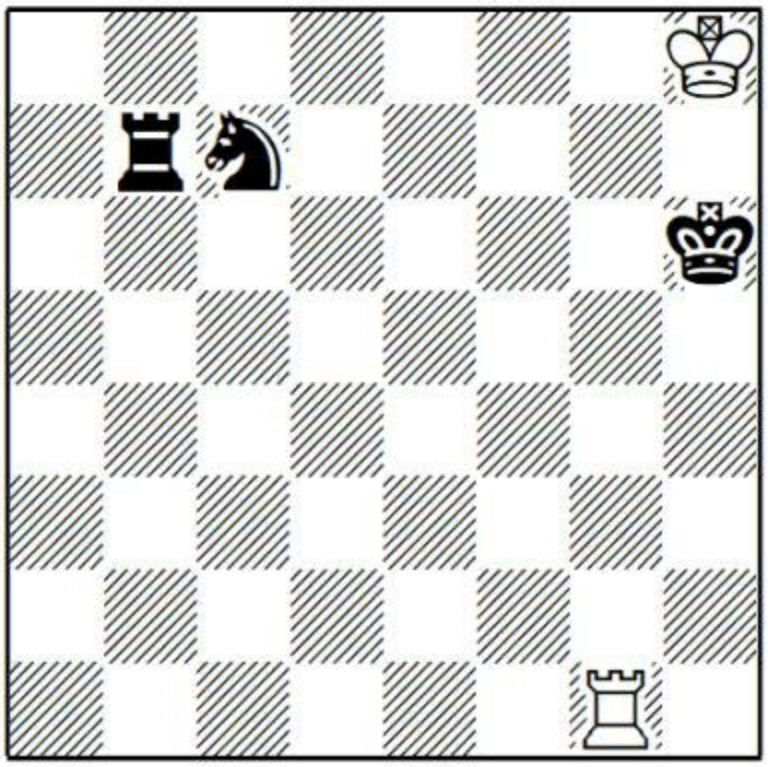
b) 1 Kb2? Bb3 2 Nb1 Ba4 and Black holds the draw.

1 ... Bb3+ 2 Kb2!

Zugzwang. Black's bishop is well on his way to nowhere.

479) J.Polgar-G.Kasparov

Dos Hermanas 1996



Black to play

Level 4

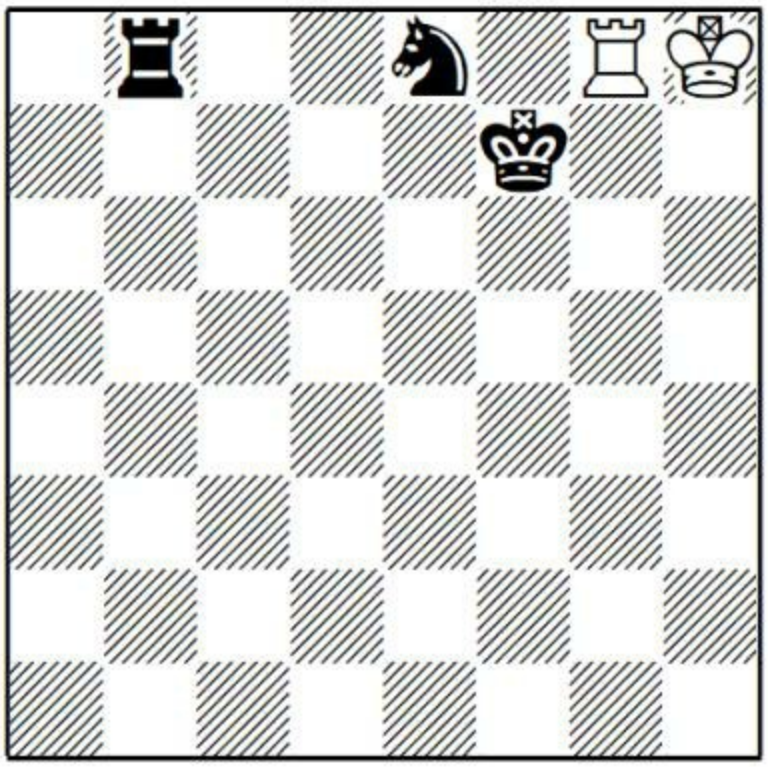
This position is proof that working on endgame studies translates to wins, over the board. Kasparov, who worked on studies since childhood, finds a winning pattern which resembles a study. Rook and knight versus rook is nearly always drawn, unless an anomaly exists. How did Kasparov force the win?

Answer: **89 ... Rb8+**

The rook check looks like no big deal for Black.

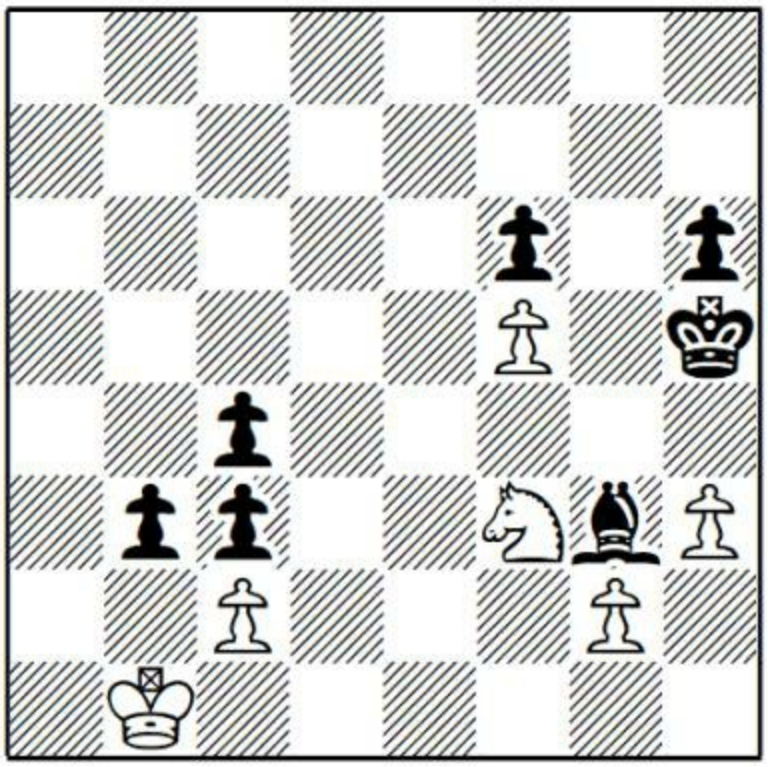
90 Rg8 Ne8! 0-1

Step 2: Zugzwang. White's defensive idea is dying and it was just born. White's rook is unable to move off the first rank, and if 91 Rf8 Kg6 92 Rg8+ Kf7.



Zugzwang number 2: 93 Kh7 (or 93 Rg1 Nf6+ 94 Rg8 Rxg8 mate) 93 ... Nf6+ forks and wins.

480) V.Smyslov
Moi Etyudy, 2005



White to play

Level 5

Our plan is clear, yet implementation is far more difficult. If we zugzwang Black and force the bishop to move, then we play g2-g4 mate. So how do we go about it?

Answer: Step 1: Trade on b3.

1 cxb3!

Instead, 1 Kc1 is a waste of time since Black can repeat the position with 1 ... Bf4+ 2 Kb1 Bg3 and 1 Ka1?? is suicidal, as it is White who is mated after 1 ... bxc2 2 Ka2 c1Q 3 h4 Qb2 mate.

1 ... cxb3 2 Ka1!

Zugzwang. Black must move one of queenside pawns, thereby losing both, via zugzwang. 2 Kc1 merely wastes time after 2 ... Bf4+ 3 Kb1 Bg3.

2 ... c2

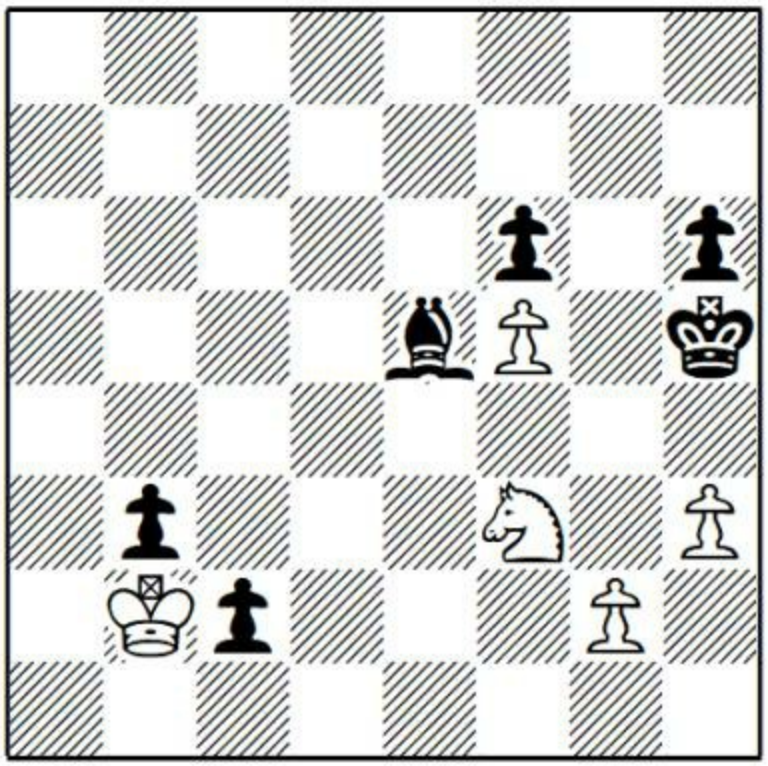
Or 2 ... b2+ 3 Kb1 c2+ 4 Kxc2 b1Q+ 5 Kxb1 (zugzwang) 5 ... Bf4 6 g4 mate.

3 Kb2

Zugzwang number 2.

3 ... Be5+

If 3 ... c1Q+ 4 Kxc1 Bf4+ 5 Kb2 Bg3 6 Kxb3 (zugzwang) 6 ... Bf2 7 g4 mate.



White to play

Level 3

Should we play Nxe5, or should we play Kxb3, or should we move the king to c1?

Answer: We should take the b-pawn.

4 Kxb3!

Correct:

a) 4 Kc1?? is a catastrophic blunder which allows Black to promote with check after 4 ... Bf4+ 5 Kb2 c1Q+ 6 Kxb3 Bg3, winning.

b) 4 Nxe5?? also throws away the win, turning it into a probable loss: 4 ... fxe5 5 h4! (threat: g2-g4+, followed by f5-f6, forcing promotion; the trouble

is Black is faster) 5 ... e4 6 g4+! (decoy) 6 ... Kxg4 7 f6 e3 8 f7 e2 9 f8Q c1Q+! (attraction/tempo gain) 10 Kxc1 e1Q+ 11 Kb2 h5 12 Kxb3 Qxh4 and it is White, down a pawn, who is begging for a draw.

4 ... c1N+

Not 4 ... c1Q? 5 g4 mate.

5 Kc2 Bg3

5 ... Ne2 6 g4 mate.

6 Kxc1 Bf4+ 7 Kd1 Bg3 8 Ke2

Zugzwang number 3. White's position reaches its summit of power and Black is mated next move.

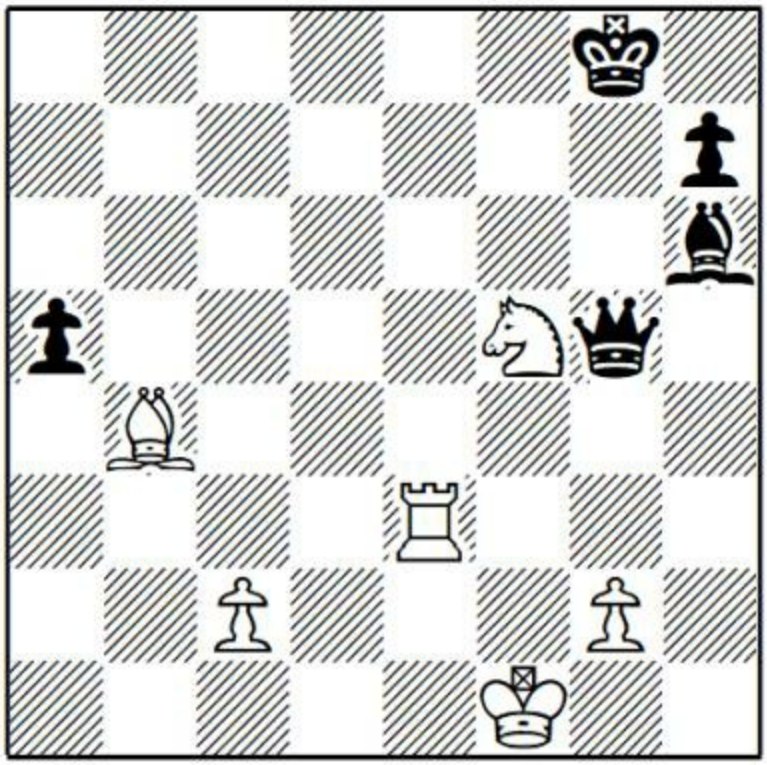
8 ... Bf2 9 g4 mate

I hope and pray that no reader fell for the uber-greedy 9 Kxf2?? and stalemate.

32) Zwischenzug

Zwischenzug means ‘in-between move’. It occurs when instead of the obvious move - almost always a recapture - we play another in-between move, which creates a threat our opponent must respond to. Only *next* move do we play the pre-zwischenzug move our opponent expected.

481) A.Troitzky
Novoye Vremja, 1898



White to play
Level 5
How does White win material?
Answer: Pinned piece, which is not so difficult to spot. The true essence

of the combination is revealed with White's second move.

1 Rg3! Qxg3

1 ... axb4?? 2 Nxh6+ wins the queen.

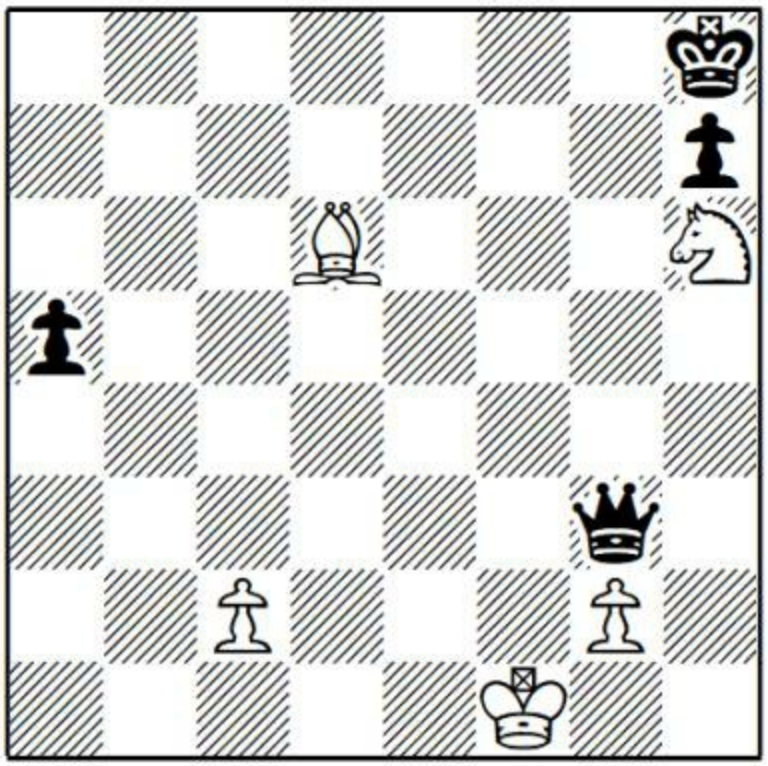
2 Nxh6+!!

This important zwischenzug is the key to White's combination. The routine recapture 2 Nxg3? axb4 is a draw.

2 ... Kh8

2 ... Kg7 gets forked by 3 Nf5+ Kf6 4 Nxg3 axb4, which leaves White up a piece.

3 Bd6!



Zwischenzug number 2, If Black's queen expected a life of indolent ease, she is about to be disillusioned. Black's queen is trapped, no matter where she moves:

a) 3 ... Qe3 4 Be5+! (attraction/knight fork) 4 ... Qxe5 5 Nf7+.

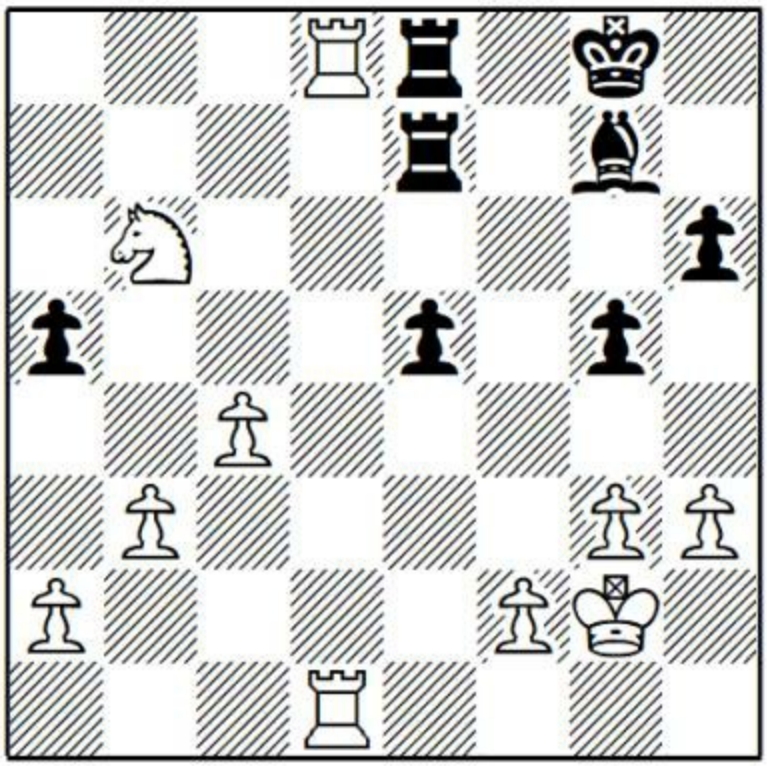
b) 3 ... Qc3 4 Be5+! Qxe5 5 Nf7+.

c) 3 ... Qg6 4 Be5+! Qg7 5 Bxg7+.

d) 3 ... Qg5 4 Nf7+ forks.

e) 3 ... Qxd6 4 Nf7+ forks king and queen.

482) V.Smyslov-G.Primavera
Venice 1950



White to play

Level 2

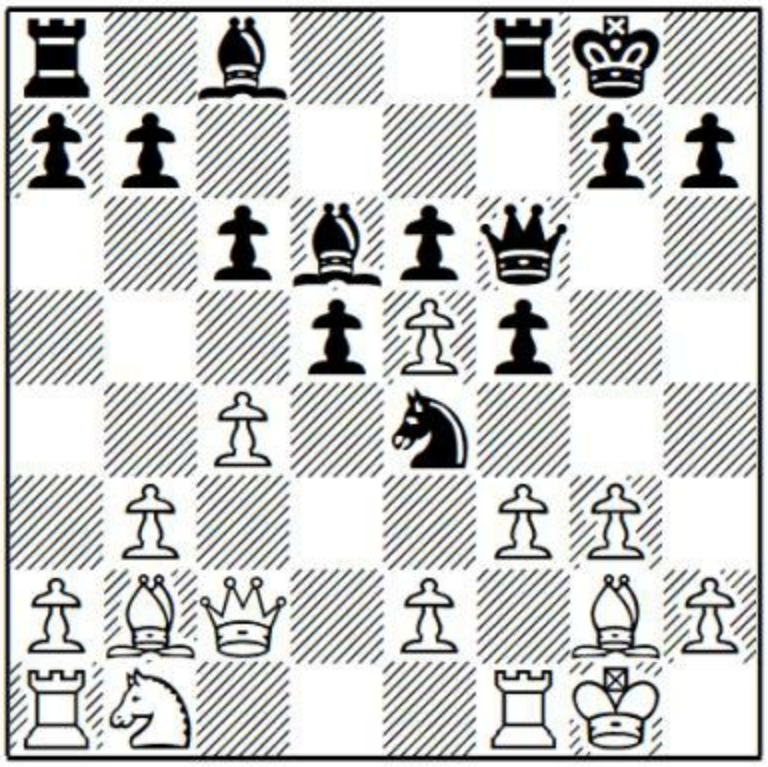
A strong player's powers tend to be futile when pitted against those of a superhuman talent. Smyslov's optimistic opponent refused to resign when two pawns down. How does White force the win of the exchange to alter his opponent's mind?

Answer: Zwischenzug/knight fork.

37 Nd5! 1-0

White's knight approaches with noiseless stealth: 37 ... Rxd8 (or 37 ... Re6 38 Nc7 and the knight fork wins more material: 38 ... Rxd8 39 Rxd8+ Kf7 40 Nxe6) 38 Nxe7+. Zwischenzug, so White wins the exchange.

483) E.Grünfeld-C.Torre Repetto
Baden-Baden 1925



Black to play

Level 2

What is Black's strongest continuation?

Answer: Step 1: Give check on c5, chasing White's king into the corner.

12 ... Bc5+!

Zwischenzug. Not 12 ... Bxe5?? 13 Bxe5 Qxe5 14 fxe4! and White wins a piece, since 14 ... Qxa1 is an unprofitable journey, which is met with 15 Nc3 Qxf1+ 16 Bxf1 fxe4 with a winning material advantage for White.

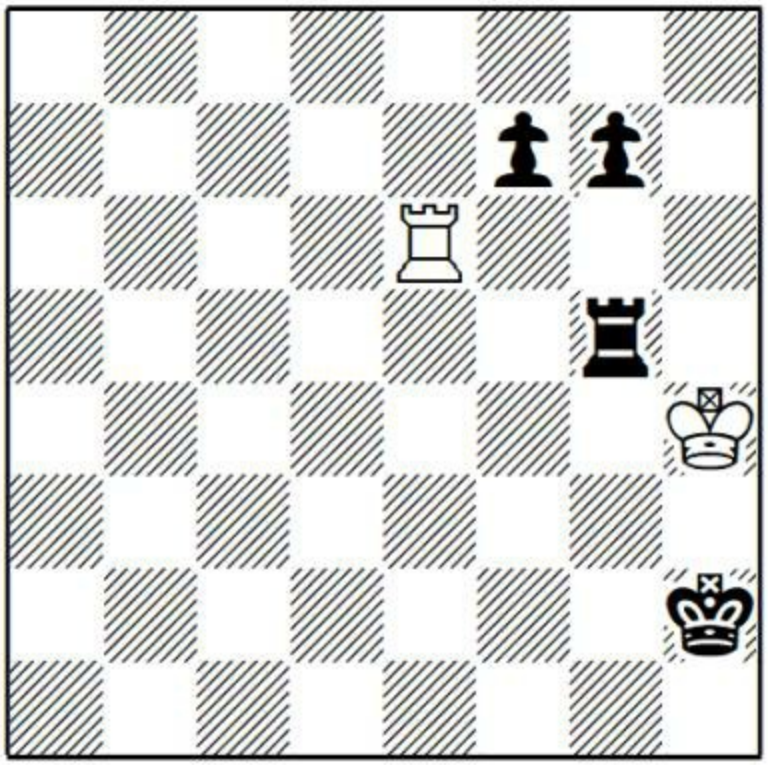
13 Kh1

Or 13 e3 Bxe3+ 14 Rf2 Qh6 15 fxe4 fxe4. Pinned piece. White's rook is lost.

13 ... Nxg3+! 0-1

This move gets White's attention! Zwischenzug number 2 and also clearance. If 14 hxg3 Qh6+ 15 Bh3 Qxh3 mate.

484) A.Wotawa
Deutsche Schachzeitung, 1954



White to play
Level 5
Black just exchanged rooks on g5. If White's king automatically recaptures, Black easily wins the king and pawn ending. Do you see White's hidden draw?
Answer: Zwischenzug. Move our rook to f6.
1 Rf6!!
Suddenly, Black is no longer calling the shots, unlike after:
a) The automatic recapture allows Black to win easily: 1 Kxg5? fxe6 2 Kf4 Kh3 3 Kg5 Kg3 4 Kg6 Kf3 5 Kg5 e5 and wins.

b) 1 Rh6? (this clever stalemate attempt is flawed) 1 ... Rg4+! (Black gives White's king air, unlike 1 ... gxh6?? and stalemate) 2 Kxg4+ gxh6 3 Kh5 f5 wins.

1 ... Rg2

If 1 ... gxf6 stalemate or 1 ... Rh5+ 2 Kxh5 gxf6 3 Kg4 when White wins both remaining black pawns, and 1 ... Rg4+ 2 Kxg4 gxf6 3 Kf5 is also a draw.

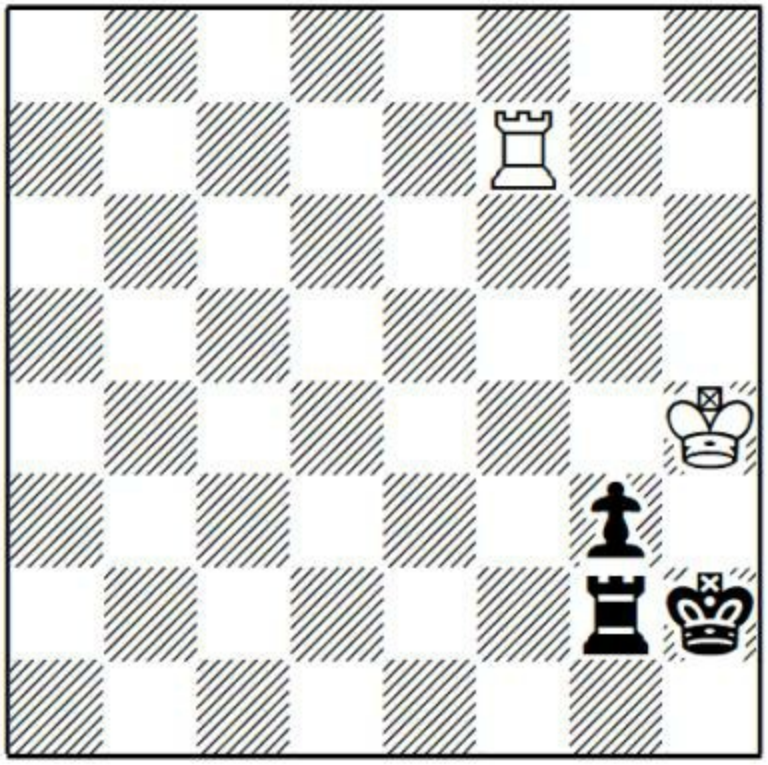
2 Rxf7 g5+

After 2 ... g6 3 Rg7 Black is unable to make progress.

3 Kh5 g4

3 ... Kh3 4 Rf3+ Kh2 5 Rf5 g4 6 Kh4 g3 is similar to the study's continuation.

4 Kh4 g3



White to play

Level 4

Should White place the rook horizontally on g7, or laterally on f3? Be

careful. Only one move works:

Answer: Only by moving the rook laterally does White draw.

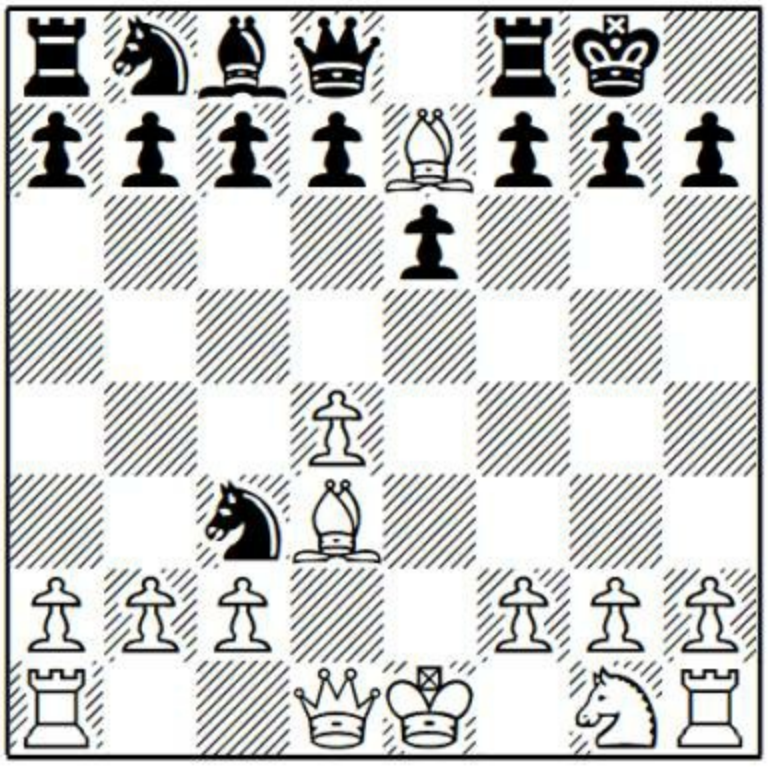
5 Rf3!

Not 5 Rg7?? Rg1 6 Rg6 g2 7 Rg3 (threat: Rh3 mate) 7 ... Rh1!, which gives Black's king air and wins.

5 ... Rg1 6 Ra3!

Have you ever debated with someone and then realized that you don't even believe in your own argument? Black is there now, since the g-pawn can never be pushed, due to a mating threat on h3. If Black's rook moves off the g-file, we simply chop Black's g-pawn: 6 ... Rb1 (and not 6 ... g2?? 7 Rh3 mate) 7 Rxg3 Rb4+ 8 Rg4 draws.

485) A.Durao-S.Horta
Lisbon 1954



White to play

Level 1

Black misfired on a combination. Refute it:

Answer: Zwischenzug, chopping on h7.

7 Bxh7+!

And not the bone-headed 7 Bxd8?? Nxd1 8 Be7 Nxb2 9 Bxf8 Nxd3+ 10 cxd3 Kxf8 when Black has two healthy pawns for the exchange and is strategically winning.

7 ... Kh8

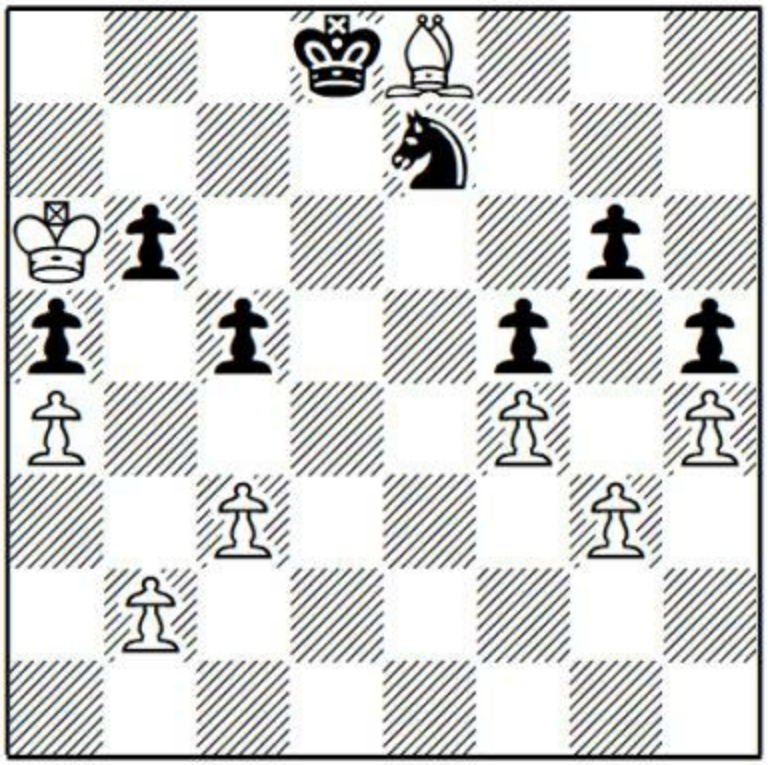
7 ... Kxh7 8 Qh5+ Kg8 9 Bxd8 wins Black's queen.

8 Qh5 1-0

White's attackers are certainly not practicing social distancing. The second zwischenzug mates Black in 2.

486) R.Fischer-M.Taimanov

4th matchgame, Vancouver 1971



White to play

Level 4

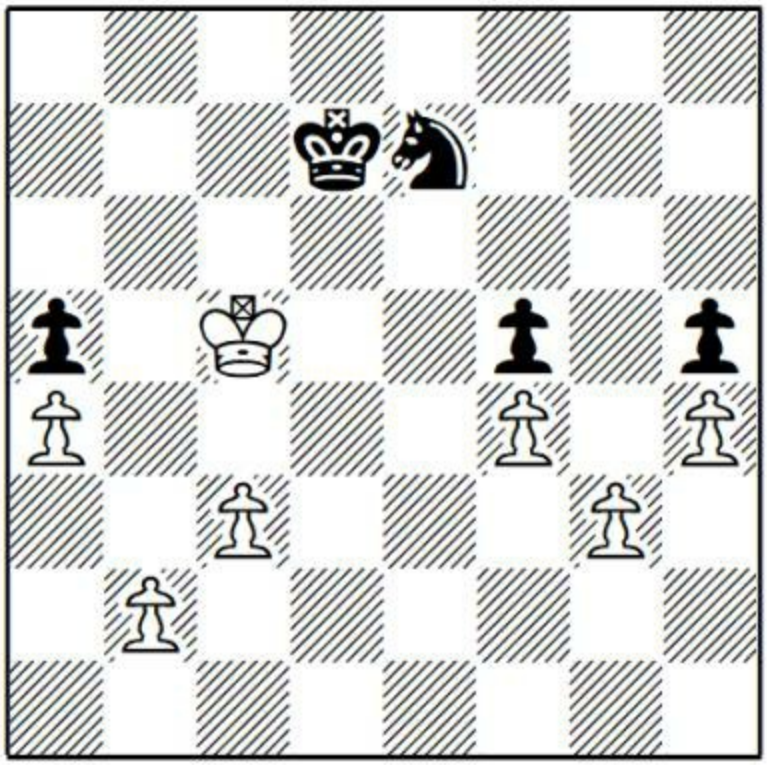
This classic ending left an imprint upon my mind when I first played it over in 1971. If Bobby moves his bishop to f7, Taimanov plays ... Kc7 and White makes no progress. Suggest a plan for White:

Answer: Annihilation of defensive barrier/zwischenzug. Just give up the bishop on g6. White's gets too many pawns for Black's knight and king to deal with.

62 Bxg6!

The bishop goes commando on Black's pawns.

62 ... Nxg6 63 Kxb6 Kd7 64 Kxc5 Ne7



White to play

Level 3.5

Make a judgement call. Should Bobby go with speed, with the immediate 65 b2-b4, or material, with 65 Kb5, intending 66 Kxa5? Which is White's cleanest win?

Answer: In this case speed overrules material.

65 b4!

Principle: *In any promotion race, speed - not material - is our most precious resource.*

Slightly accurate yet still winning is 65 Kb5 Nd5 66 Kxa5 Kc6 67 c4 Ne3 68 Kb4 Nf1 when at least Black can turn it into a (losing!) race.

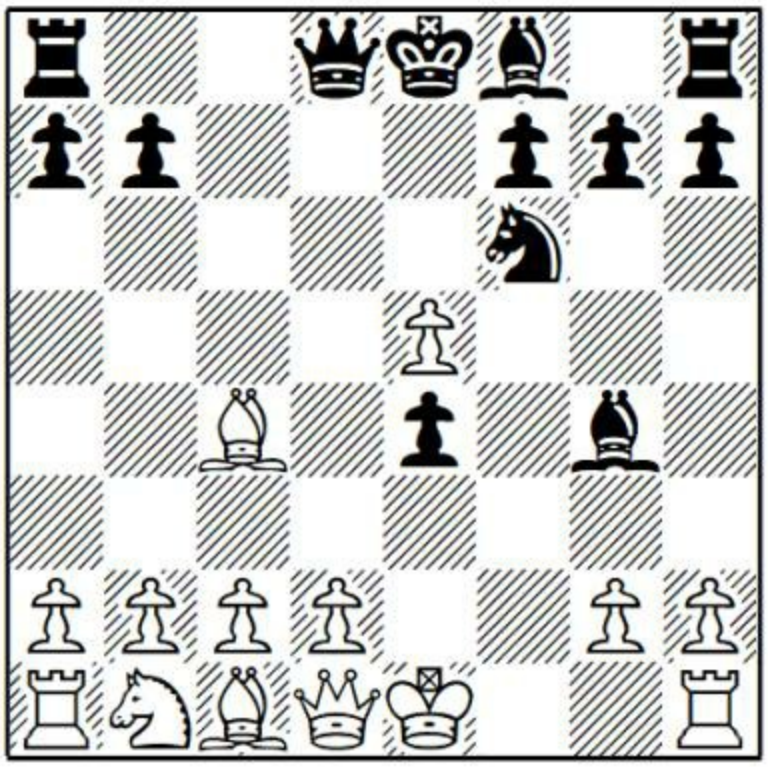
65 ... axb4 66 cxb4 Nc8 67 a5 Nd6 68 b5 Ne4+ 69 Kb6 Kc8

After 69 ... Nf2 70 a6 the a-pawn promotes.

70 Kc6 Kb8 71 b6 1-0

If 71..Nxg3 72 a6 Ne2 73 a7+ Ka8 74 Kc7 and the b-pawn promotes.

487) G.Welling-R.Douven
Eindhoven (rapid) 1982



White to play

Level 2

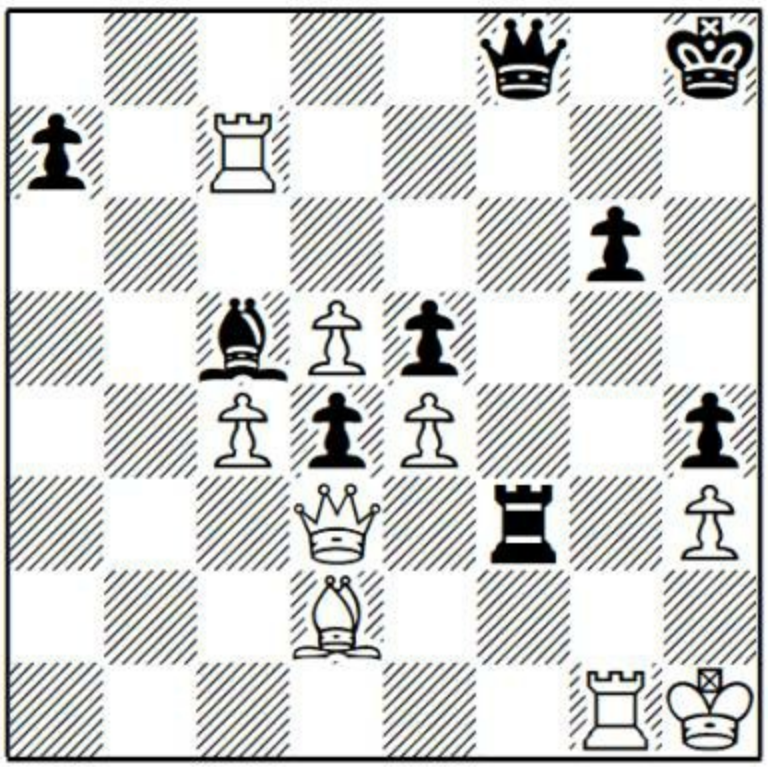
Must White retreat his bishop to e2?

Answer: Step 1: Zwischenzug. Chop on f6, allowing Black to take our queen.

9 exf6! 1-0

White's plan crystalizes: Welling will regain the lost queen with a zwischenzug check on b5 next move (9 Bb5+?! does not win a piece due to 9 ... Bd7): 9 ... Bxd1 10 Bb5+!. Step 2: Zwischenzug. Black must return the queen and end up down a piece after 10 ... Qd7 11 Bxd7+ Kxd7 12 Kxd1.

488) A.Karpov-G.Kasparov
World Championship (Game 23), Seville 1987



White to play

Level 4.5

Black's position thrills with attacking anticipatory joy. Kasparov sacrificed a full rook for the attack. How would you respond for Karpov's

side?

Answer: Zwischenzug/Undermining/defensive move

53 Bh6!!

The bishop was just waiting for a pretext to pick a fight. Only this move wins:

a) After 53 Qxf3? Qxf3+ 54 Rg2 Qxh3+ 55 Kg1 Bd6 56 Rc6 Bb4 57 Bxb4 Qe3+ the game will end in perpetual check.

b) 53 Qe2?? Rxh3+ 54 Kg2 Rg3+ 55 Kh2 d3! (clearance/double attack) 56 Rf1 dxe2 57 Rxf8+ Bxf8 58 Be1 Bh6 59 d6 Bf4 60 Kh1 Rd3 61 d7 Bg3! 62 Rc8+ Kh7 63 d8Q Rxd8 64 Rxd8 Bxe1 65 Rd3 Bf2! when Black promotes and wins.

53 ... Rxd3

53 ... Qf6 loses to 54 Bg7+!.

54 Bxf8 Rxh3+ 55 Kg2 Rg3+ 56 Kh2 Rxg1 57 Bxc5

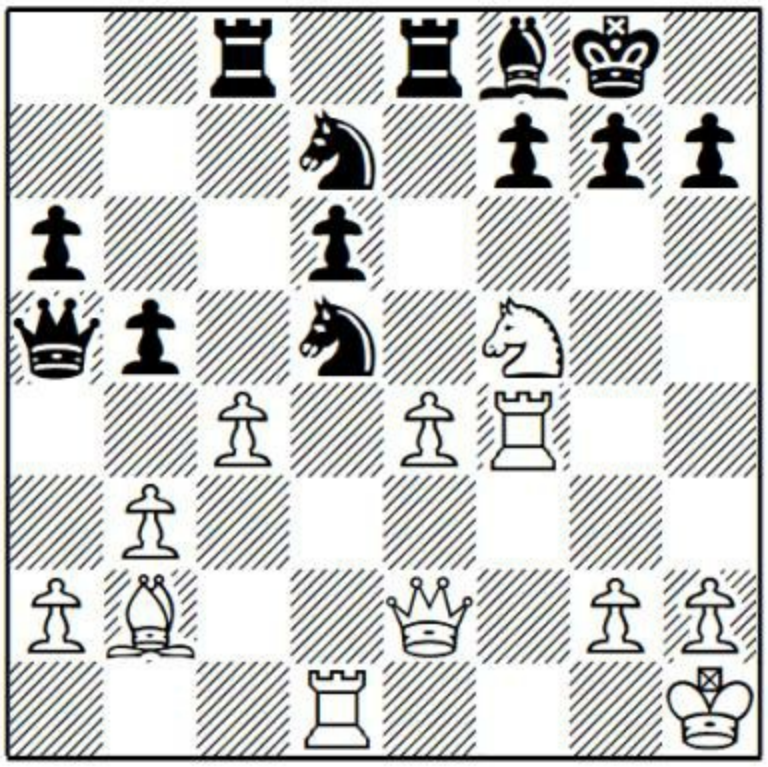
57 Kxg1 also wins.

57 ... d3 1-0

After 58 Bb4 Rc1 59 d6 d2 60 Bxd2 Rc2 61 d7 Rxd2+ 62 Kh3 there is no remedy to the coming Rc8+ and d8Q.

489) M.Chiburdanidze-G.Sachs

Forli 1990



White to play

Level 3

Black just swapped knights on d5. How should White continue?

Answer: Give the zwischenzug knight check on h6.

19 Nh6+!

The knight check is far stronger than the auto-recapture 19 Rxd5? Ne5 when Black looks OK.

19 ... Kh8

The knight can't be touched: 19 ... gxh6?? 20 Qg4+ Bg7 21 Qxg7 mate.

20 Nxf7+ Kg8 21 cxd5 Ne5

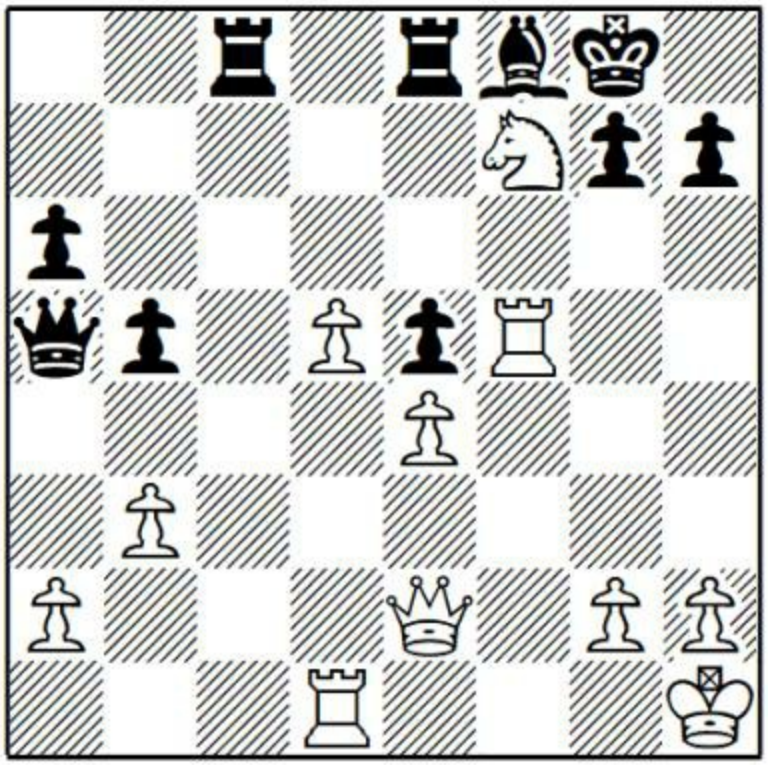
Black is desperate to block the diagonal, as 21 ... Qxa2?? 22 Nh6+ Kh8 23 Bxg7+! (discovered attack) 23 ... Bxg7 24 Nf7+! (zwischenzug, which retains the knight) 24 ... Kg8 25 Qxa2 wins.

22 Bxe5

This move conveniently:

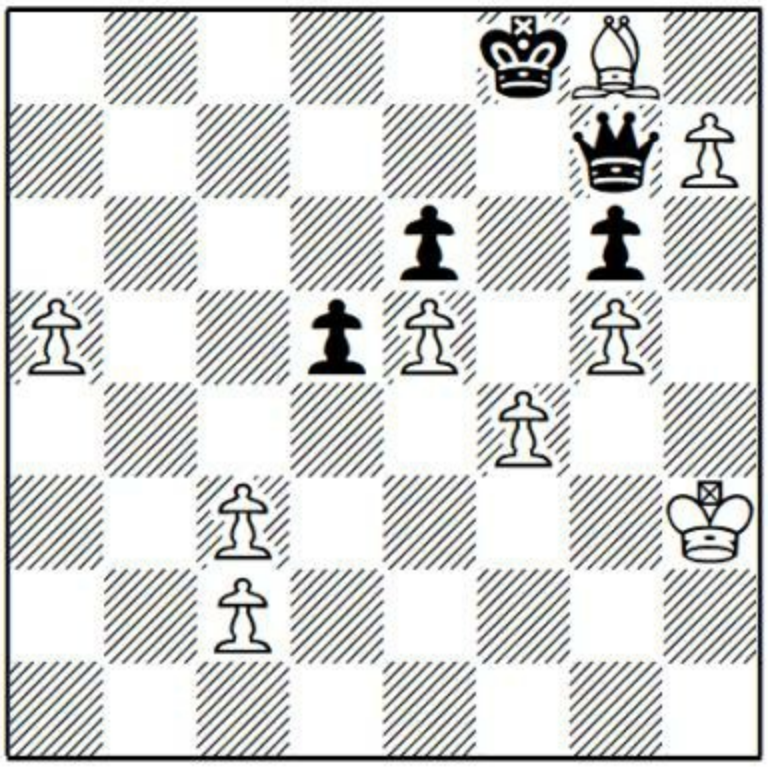
1. Covers White's a2-pawn.

2. Clogs the e5 hole with a black pawn.
3. White is given a protected, passed d-pawn.
22 ... dxe5 23 Rf5 1-0



Chiburdanidze has won a clean pawn and converted easily.

490) V.Smyslov
Moi Etyudy, 2005



White to play

Level 5

Look deeply into the position and avoid the obvious move. What would you play as White?

Answer: Zwischenzug. Move the king to g2, preventing Black's future perpetual check attempt.

1 Kg2!!

We must retain our composure with this eerily calm move. The rote 1 a6? fails to 1 ... Qa7! 2 h8Q Qe3+, which is perpetual check.

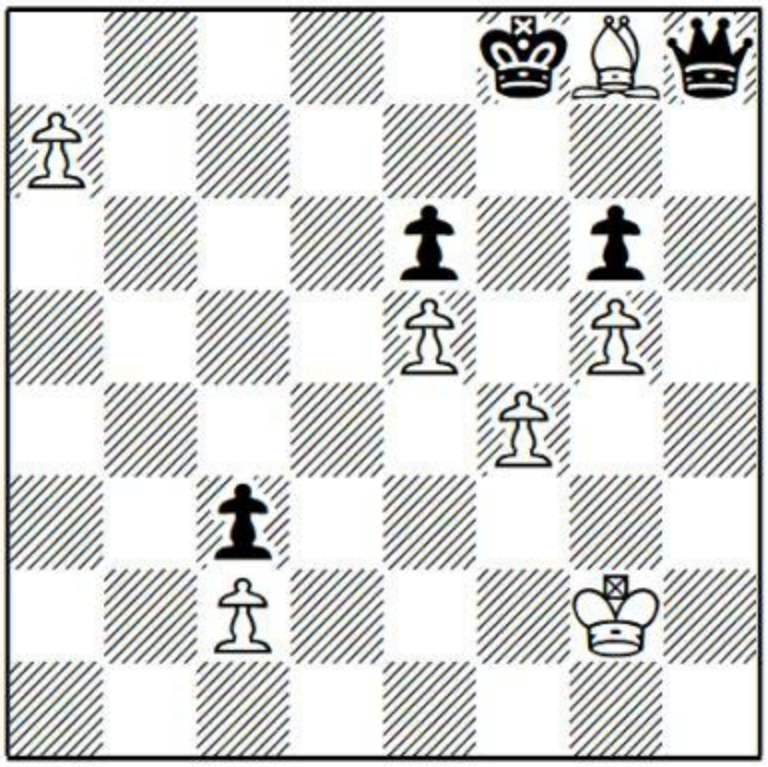
1 ... d4 2 a6!

We don't have time for 2 cxd4?? (Principle: *Do not seek redemption, and then when we get it, throw it away with a careless move*) 2 ... Qb7+ 3 Kg3 Kg7 when Black wins.

2 ... dxc3 3 h8Q!

Removal of the guard/simplification.

3 ... Qxh8 4 a7



After 4 ... Qxg8 5 a8Q+ Kf7 6 Qxg8+ Kxg8 7 Kf3 White's king walks over and picks up Black's c3-pawn, with an easy in the king and pawn ending.

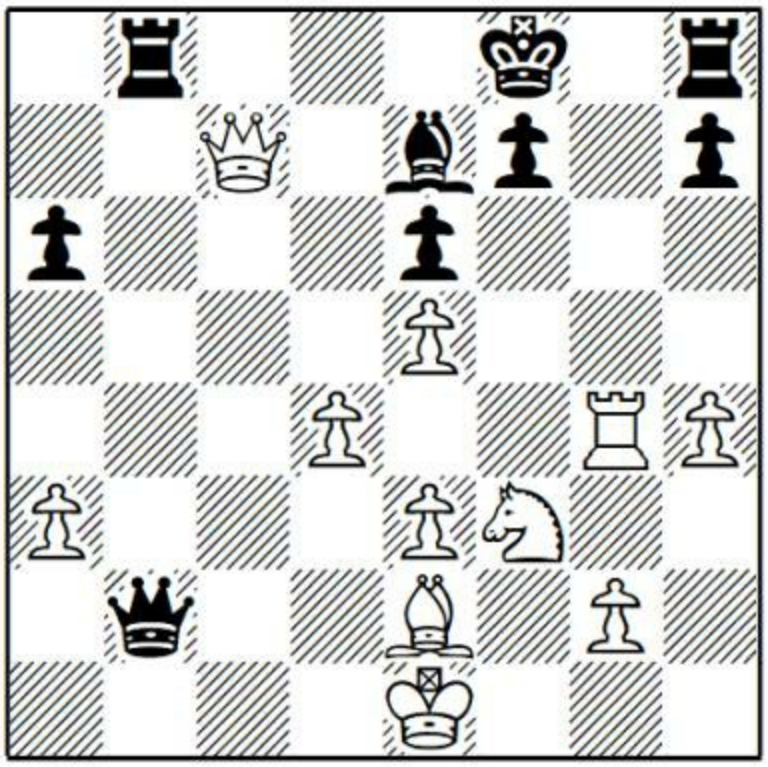
33) Match of the Titans: Carlsen versus Nakamura

It's time for a pop quiz. This time you don't know in advance what the tactical theme is. Who in your opinion were the players who played the most exciting chess match in history? There was the first Spassky-Fischer match in Reykjavik, but it was too one-sided. Karpov-Korchnoi, Baguio 1978 was a nail-biter and there are many more we could choose from.

My pick isn't even a world championship match. It isn't even classical chess. Magnus Carlsen and Hikaru Nakamura reached the finals of Carlsen's signature tour. Magnus won an epic, 38 game battle by drawing/'winning' the final Armageddon tiebreaker game. As such, Magnus won the Magnus tour, which is the same as the President of the United States, awarding himself the presidential Medal of Honour!

With a draw as Black in the Armageddon, Magnus won four sets to three and took home a whopping $140,000, to Hikaru's $80,000 for his second-place finish. It was the most watched online chess event in history. In this chapter we look at the decisive games of the match (and also the final Armageddon tiebreaker), where you will be asked to find the combination, which the players may or may not have seen. So let's start:

491) M.Carlsen-H.Nakamura
1st Set; Game 2



White to play

Level 5

Magnus has a powerful way to secure a decisive strategic advantage. How should White play?

Answer: Clearance/pawn breakthrough. Pushing the d-pawn to the fifth rank gives White a winning position.

26 Kf2?

Now White's advantage withers away and hope for a win becomes a toss-up. We are unable to undo our past mistakes, yet we can still learn from them.

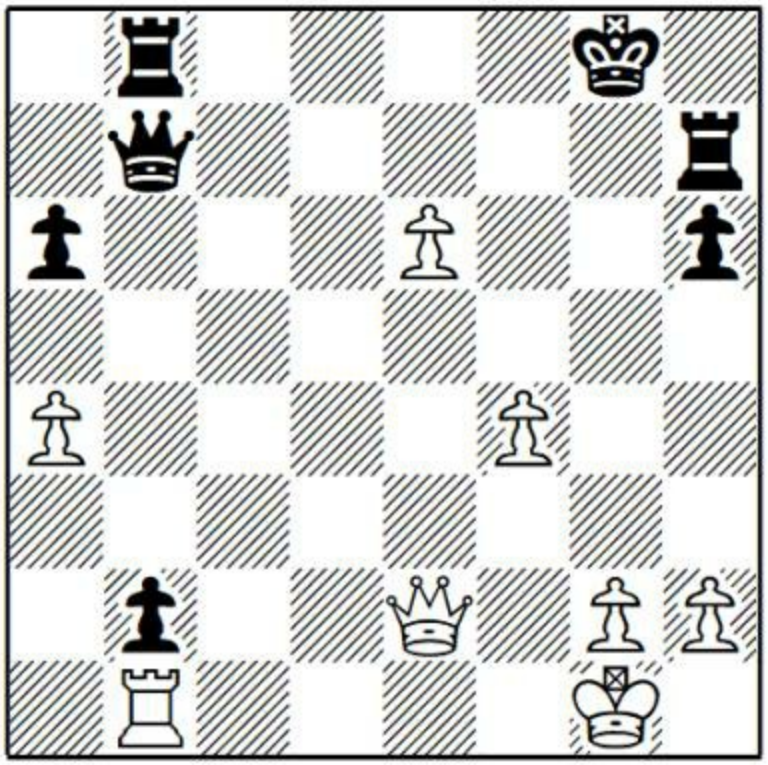
Magnus must have kicked himself after the game for missing the thematic 26 d5!!. This disrupts Black's position to the point where the defensive burden is unrelenting: 26 ... exd5 (pr 26 ... Qb7 27 Qxb7 Rxb7 28 d6 with two pawns for the exchange and a strategically won game) 27 e6! f6 28 Nd4 Qb6 29 Qf4 (threatening to infiltrate on h6) 29 ... h5 30 Rg5 Rb7 31 Kf2 Qd6 32 Qf3 Qh2 33 Rg3 Qxh4 34 Qxd5 Rb8 35 Nf5 Qa4 36 Rg7 Re8 37 Qd3!

Qb5 38 Rf7+ Kg8 39 Nxe7+ Rxe7 40 Qg6 mate.

26 ... Qb7!

Hikaru equalized and ended up winning later on.

492) M.Carlsen-H.Nakamura
2nd Set, Game 1



Black to play

Level 2

White's passed pawns don't even come close to compensating Black's extra rook. Hikaru made one strong move which compelled Magnus to resign:

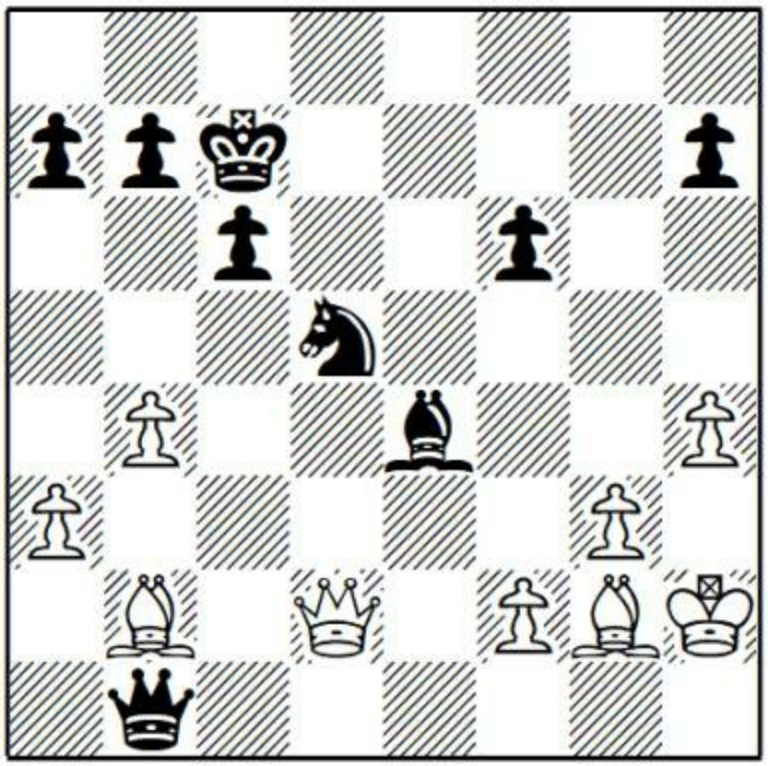
Answer: Simplification. Swing the h7-rook over to the c-file.

45 ... Rc7! 0-1

For Magnus' position, this is End Times. Threat: ... Rc1+. After 46 Qd2 cleanest is 46 ... Rc1+! (simplification) 47 Rxc1 bxc1Q+ 48 Qxc1 Qb1!. The

cruel truth: White reaches a king and pawn ending down a rook.

493) M.Carlsen-H.Nakamura
2nd Set; Game 3



White to play

Level 2

Magnus found a winning shot:

Answer: Double attack. White can chop the f6-pawn and regain the lost piece via a double attack with Qf4+.

38 Bxf6!

The truth reveals itself: White won a clean pawn and his 3-1 kingside pawn majority will win any promotion race.

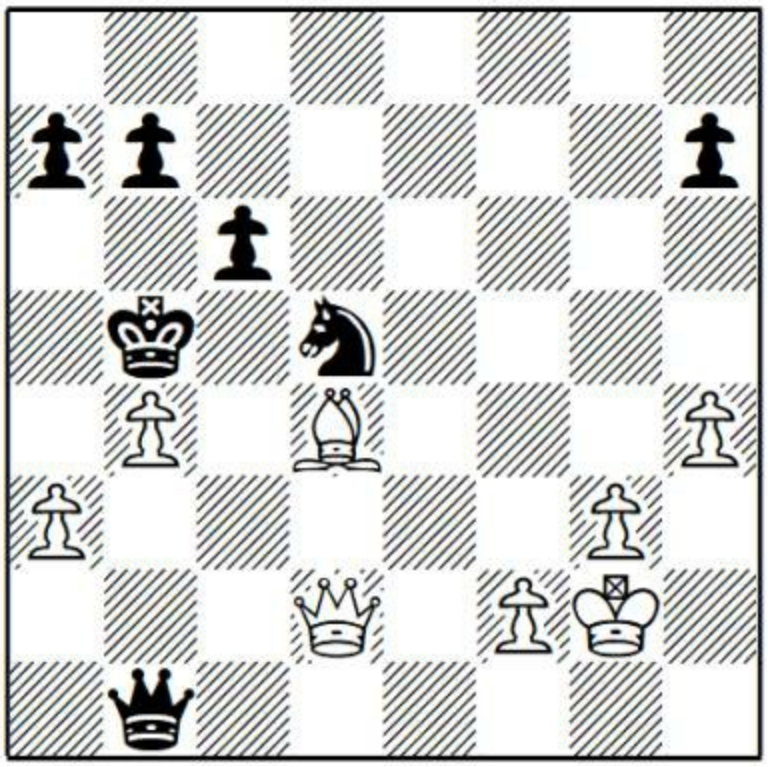
38 ... Bxg2

Or 38 ... Nxf6 39 Qf4+ Kd7 40 Qxf6, which is pawn up with a winning position for White.

39 Kxg2 Kb6

39 ... Nxf6 40 Qf4+ Kb6 41 Qxf6 is pretty much the same. White is winning the queen ending since his kingside pawns will be faster.

40 Bd4+ Kb5!?



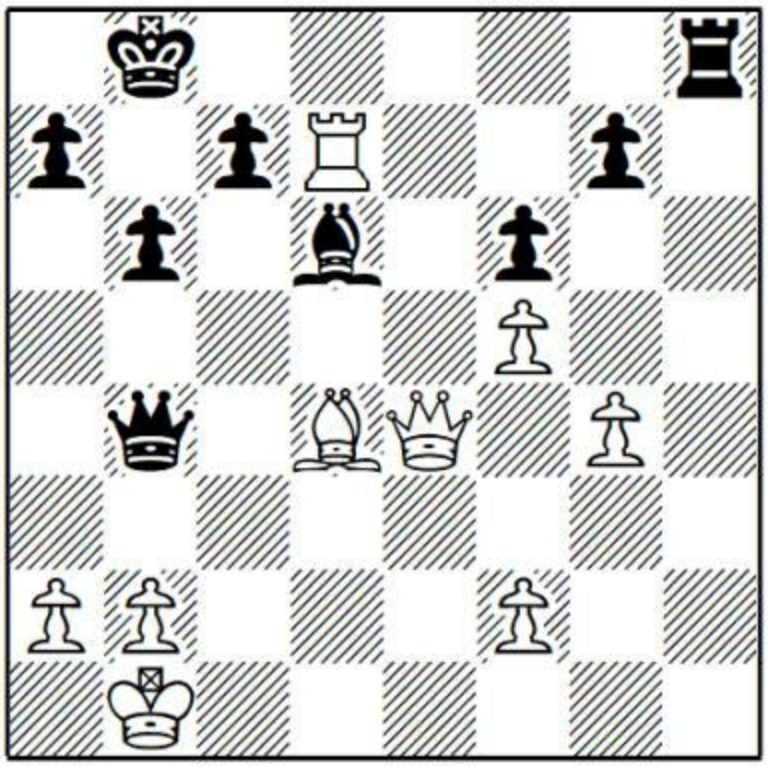
A strong will is untouched by the pain around it. Hikaru tries a desperado and offers a second pawn to activate his king.

41 Bxa7 Ka4 42 Bc5

Magnus went on to convert and win. 42 ... Kxa3 43 b5+ Kb3 44 bxc6 bxc6 45 h5 is lost for Black.

494) H.Nakamura-M.Carlsen

2nd Set; Game 6



White to play

Level 2

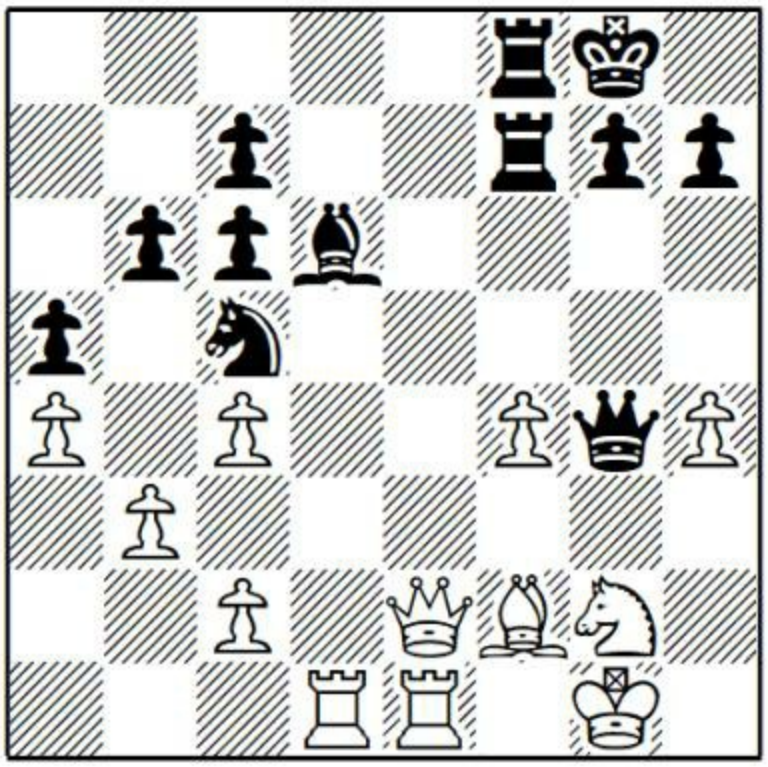
A geometric stain remains indelible in White's position. Find the killing shot:

Answer: Double attack. By moving the queen to a4, Black threatens ... Qd1 mate, as well as ... Qxd7.

29 ... Qa4! 0-1

495) H.Nakamura-M.Carlsen

3rd Set; Game 1



Black to play

Level 1

We are in a level 1, low alert, meaning this one is a no-brainer. How did Magnus win a pawn?

Answer: Pinned piece. Now f4 hangs, since White's knight is pinned. When Black's rook takes on f4, his queen is simultaneously protected.

28 ... Rxf4!

Not-so-brilliant is 28 ... Qxe2? 29 Rxe2 Bxf4 30 Bxc5 bxc5 when White gets full structural compensation for the pawn.

29 Qxg4 Rxg4

Magnus won a pawn for no compensation, and with the initiative.

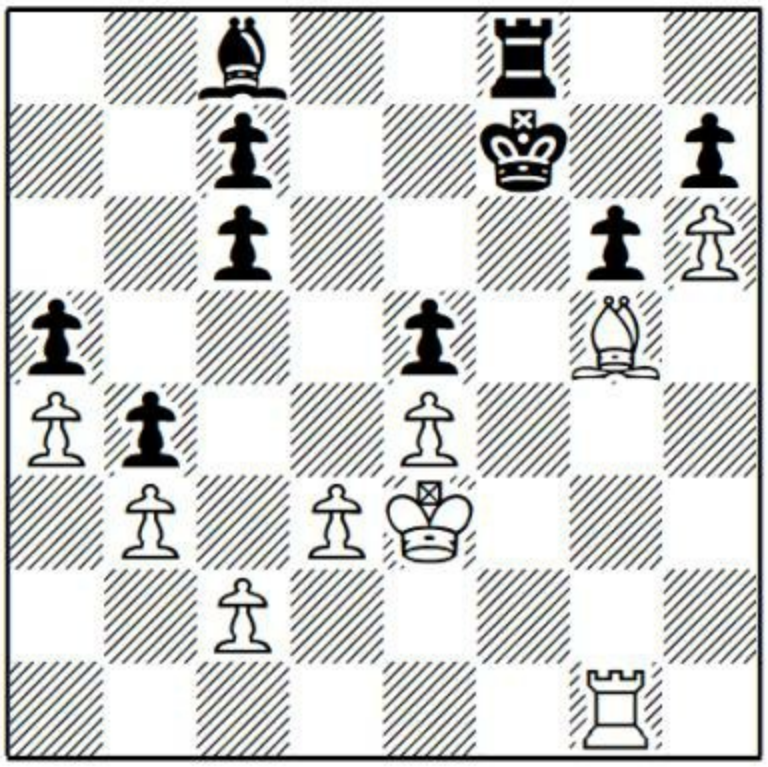
30 Rd4 Rg6 31 h5!?

This 'active' move loses a second pawn. 31 Re2 h5 fixes h4 as a permanent target and White is lost.

31 ... Rh6! 32 Rh4 Rf5 33 Be3 Rhxh5 34 Rxh5 Rxh5

Magnus won easily with his two extra pawns.

496) H.Nakamura-M.Carlsen
3rd Set; Game 3



White to play
Level 2

Is there such a thing as an Alpha dove? Over and over in this match, the normally uber-aggressive Hikaru relied upon a delayed version of the Exchange Lopez with Bxc6, creating such a structure, which to my mind dulls both sides' dynamic possibilities and makes it feel as if they wear a penitential sack cloth garb. Make a decision: should White simplify with a rook check on the f-file, followed by a swap of rooks? Or should White keep rooks on the board?

Answer: Simplification. The rook swap wins easily since Black has way too many pawns fixed and unprotected on the dark squares. The bishops of opposite colours don't help the defence at all, since White wins way too

many pawns.

33 Rf1+!

White may not be able to win if he keeps rooks on the board with 33 Bh4? Ke6 34 Rg5 Re8 35 Bg3 Kf6. which offers Black decent chances to hold the draw.

33 ... Ke8 34 Rxf8+ Kxf8 35 Bd8 c5

Alternatively, 35 ... Kf7 36 Bxc7 Ke6 37 Bxa5 c5 38 Bc7 Bb7 39 a5 Ba6 40 Kf3 Bc8 41 Kg4 Bb7 42 Kg5 Ba6 43 Bb6! Kd6 (or else White's bishop chops all of Black's queenside pawns) 44 Kf6 Bb5 45 Kg7 g5 (such little rebellions are more for our own psychological benefit, rather than to actually inflict harm upon the opponent's position; White catches the upstart g-pawn before it promotes) 46 Kxh7 g4 47 Bd8! g3 48 Bh4 g2 49 Bf2/. Oh, no you don't. White's h-pawn promotes, while Black's g-pawn doesn't.

36 Bxc7 Ke7 37 Bxe5

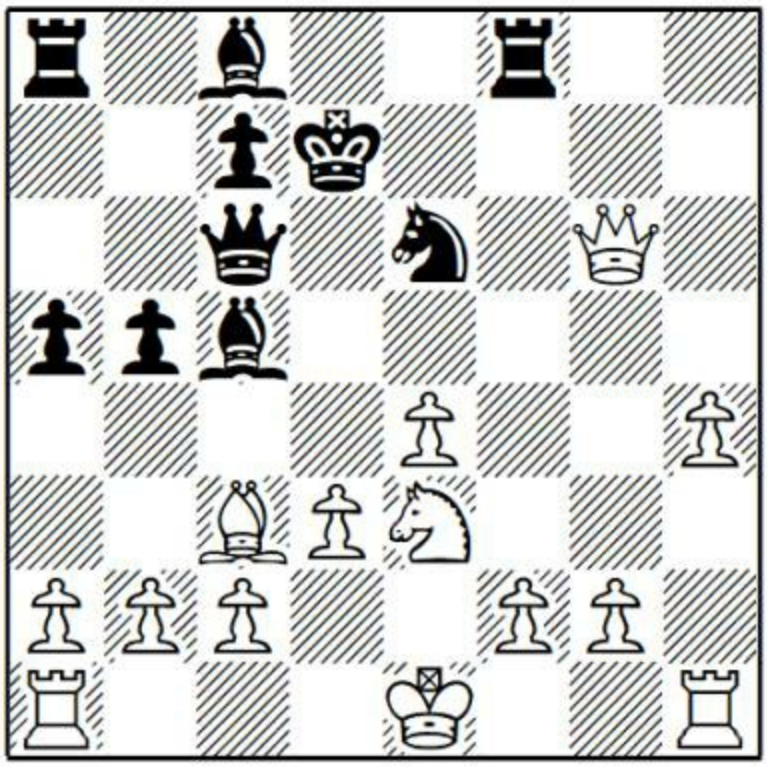
Taking the a5-pawn also wins easily.

37 ... Kd7 38 Bf6 Bb7 39 Kf4 Bc6 1-0

40 Ke5 Bb7 41 Bg5 threatens Kf6, Kg7 and Kxh7, to which there is no defence since if 41 ... Ke8 42 Be3 wipes out Black's queenside pawns.

497) H.Nakamura-M.Carlsen

3rd Set; Game 5



White to play

Level 2

Not only does Hikaru have five pawns for the sacrificed piece, but even worse news is to come for Magnus: White can win his piece back and remain up a million pawns. How?

Answer: Double attack.

21 d4! b4

Magnus tries a desperate counterattack. The three other candidate moves all fail miserably:

a) 21 ... Nxd4 22 Qg7+ Ke8 23 Bxd4 Bxd4 24 Qxd4 leaves White up four pawns.

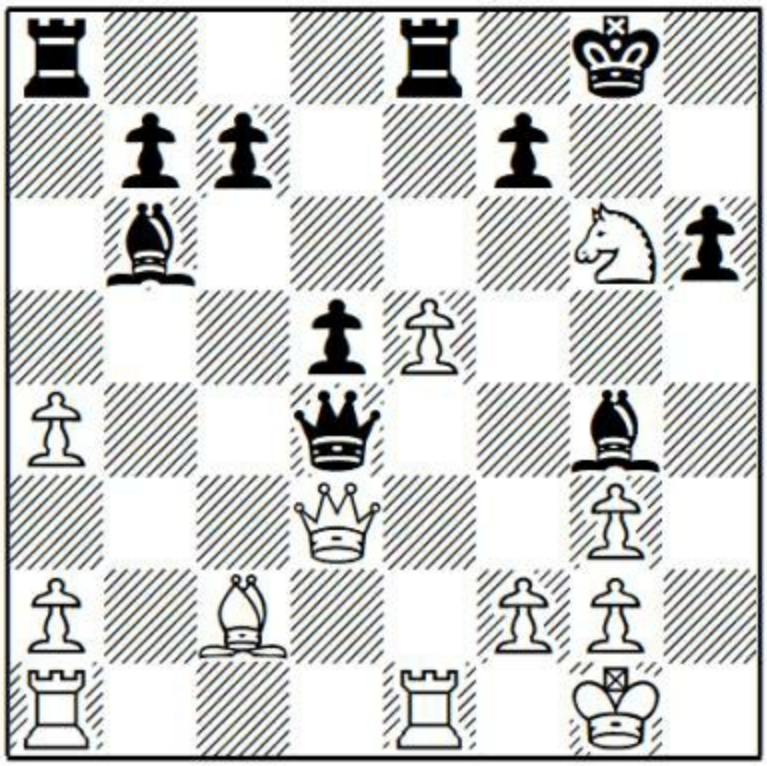
b) 21 ... Bxd4 22 Bxd4 Nxd4 23 Qg7+ (triple attack) 23 ... Ke8 24 Qxd4 is the same problem.

c) 21 ... Be7 22 d5. Double attack. White regains the lost piece with an easy win.

22 dxc5! 1-0

Clearance. This is not a case of donating money to the poor. Black's king has no chance along the now open d-file: 22 ... bxc3 23 0-0-0+ Ke7 24 Nd5+! (forcing Black's king back to the open d-file) 24 ... Kd8 25 Nb4+. Discovered attack. Black loses his queen.

498) M.Carlsen-H.Nakamura
Set 4; Game 3



White to play
Level 3.5

This was one of my favourite games of the match, where Magnus gave a clinic in the art of defence. Here f2 is under attack and if Magnus attempts to keep queens on the board, then Black can take White's loose knight on g6. If Magnus swaps queens, then the simple recapture with ... Bxd4 wins the exchange for Black. Do you see a tactic which offers White excellent winning chances?

Answer: Interference/mating net/double attack.

25 Ne7+!

Not 25 Qxd4?? Bxd4 (double attack) 26 Nf4 Bxa1 27 Rxa1 Rxe5, which leaves White down an exchange and busted.

25 ... Kf8

Unfortunately for Hikaru, White's knight can't be touched. 25 ... Rxe7?? interferes with the black king's run square e7 and he is mated with 26 Qh7+ Kf8 27 Qh8 mate.

26 Nxd5! Qxf2+!?

Desperado! This is a bad pawn to take since it opens the f-file against Black's weakened king. Objectively this is weak, yet it contains the benefit of greatly increasing the complications level. Hikaru (probably correctly) felt that there was no saving the game two pawns down with the conciliatory 26 ... Qxd3. The comp likes this move, yet it may be a case of misapplied logic since White will almost certainly win in the long run after 27 Bxd3 Ba5.

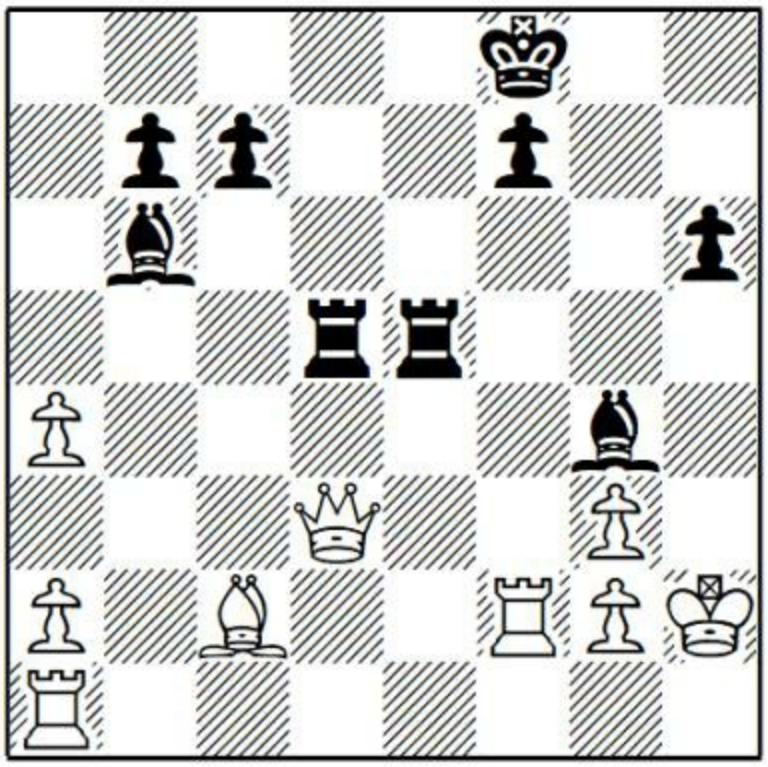
27 Kh2 Rad8 28 Rf1 Rxe5!

As always, the tactically resourceful Nakamura continues to escalate. He finds a dirty desperado trick, even from a lost position. Threat: ... Rh5 mate. It may feel as if Nakamura applies unendurable pressure, yet Magnus had the defence confidently worked out.

Instead, if 28 ... Qd4?? 29 Rxf7+! (annihilation of defensive barrier) 29 ... Kxf7 30 Qg6+ Kf8 31 Rf1+ Qf2 32 Rxf2+ Bxf2 33 Qf6+ Kg8 34 Ne7+ Rxe7 35 Qxe7 Rd2 36 Bb3+ Kh8 37 Qf8+ Kh7 38 Qg8 mate.

29 Rxf2 Rdxd5

Now 29 ... Rh5+?? isn't mate anymore, and 30 Kg1 Bxf2+ 31 Kxf2 c6 32 Qa3+ Kg7 33 Qc3+ either forks or mates. Instead, 29 ... Bxf2 renews the mating threat on h5, but after 30 Qa3+! (unpinning the knight) 30 ... c5 31 Nf4 (covering the mating threat on h5) 31 ... Rd4 (threatening to remove the defender of h5) 32 Bg6! Kg7 33 Qb2 Black's would-be mate is ruined and White consolidates.



White to play

Level 3

How should Magnus proceed?

Answer: Annihilation of defensive barrier.

30 Rxf7+!

Did I mention that Magnus is also pretty resourceful?

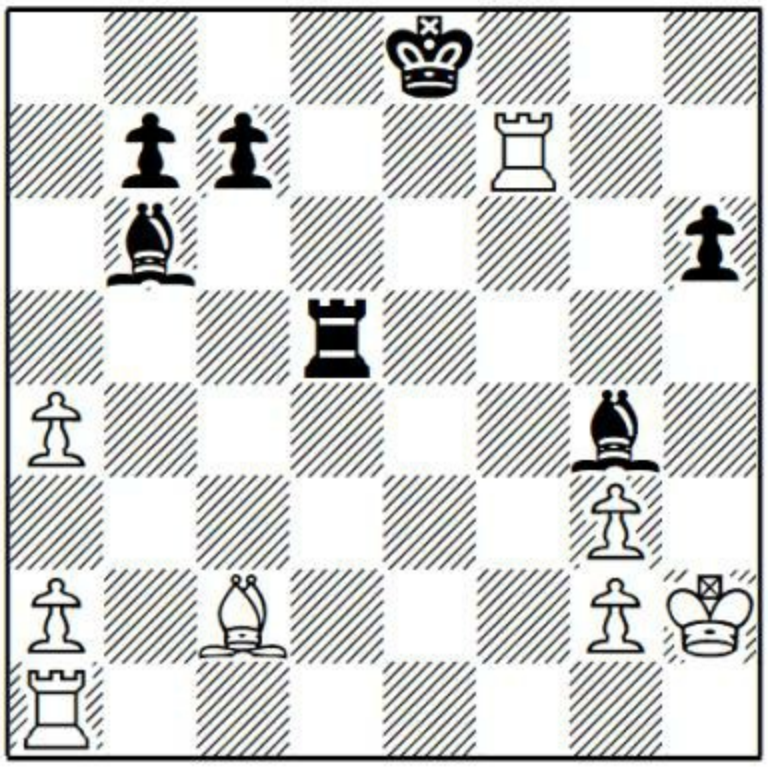
30 ... Ke8

Now Black threatens mate on h5 again. After 30 ... Kxf7 31 Rf1+ Ke7 32 Qh7+ Kd6 33 Qg6+ Be6 34 g4! Blacks mating threat on h5 is eliminated and White wins.

31 Qxd5!?

Simplification! Black's attack is water, evaporating under the desert sun. The ending is an easy win for White. The purist comp likes 31 Rf8+! Kxf8 32 Rf1+ Ke7 33 Qh7+ Kd6 34 Qg6+ Be6 35 g4! winning, as in the above line.

31 ... Rxd5



White to play

Level 2

Now what? Black threatens both ... Rh5 mate and also ... Kxf7.

Answer: Move the bishop to g6.

32 Bg6!

Oh, you sneaky devil. Magnus obviously saw this resource in advance, otherwise Black would win. Black's mating threat on h5 evaporates and White threatens awful discoveries.

32 ... Kd8

Or 32 ... Rg5 33 Re1+ Kd8 34 Rg7 Bf5 35 Re8 mate.

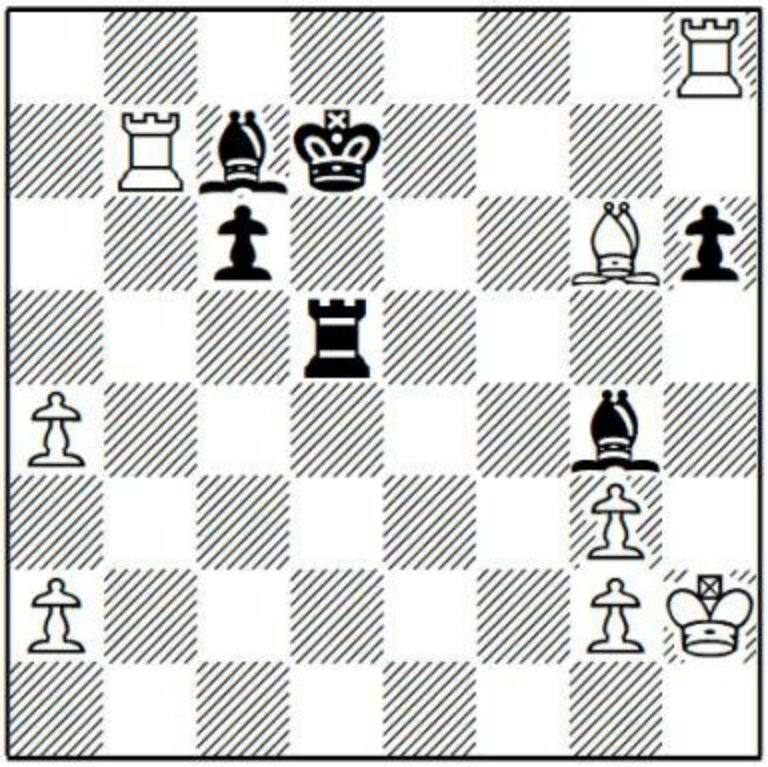
33 Re1!

Now Black must worry about his own weak back rank.

33 ... c6

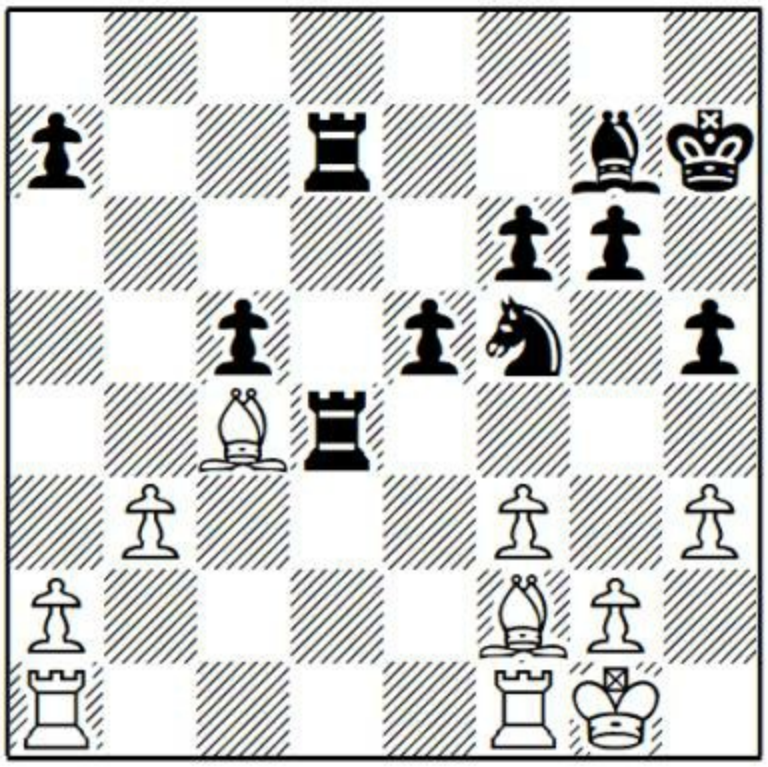
After 33 ... Rd4 34 Rh7 Kc8 35 Re8+ Rd8 36 Rxd8+ Kxd8 37 Rxh6 White wins easily.

34 Rxb7 Bc7 35 Re8+ Kd7 36 Rh8! 1-0



Threat: Rh7+ and either rook taking the c7-bishop. 36 ... Kd6 37 Rxh6 Rg5 38 Be8+ Be6 39 Bf7! Re5 40 Rxe6+ Rxe6 41 Bxe6 leaves Black down a rook.

499) M.Carlsen-H.Nakamura
5th Set; Game 6



Black to play

Level 3

OK, OK, I know this is a book on tactics, but I read the fine print and my contract stipulates that I get to sneak one strategic masterpiece into the book! Black's rook is under attack. If it moves then White regains his lost pawn. What is Black's strongest continuation?

Answer: Strategic exchange sacrifice for the dark squares. White is busted, despite his extra exchange for a pawn.

29 ... Bh6!

As we are taught in the martial arts: speed overcomes size.

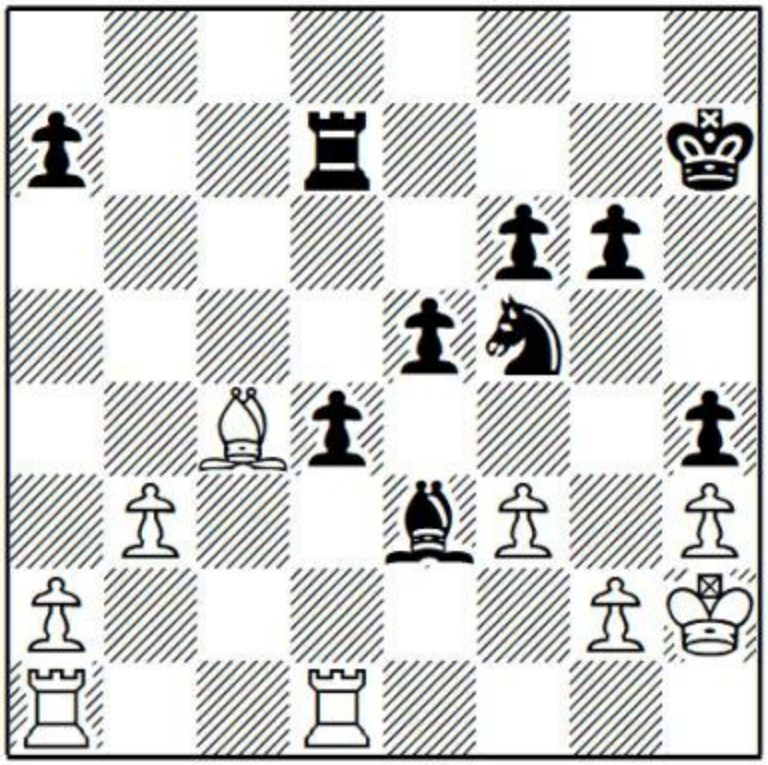
30 Rfe1 Bd2! 31 Bxd4?

Acceptance makes matters even worse for White. World champions are not accustomed to stepping aside, yet he should have done just that with the humbling line 31 Re2 Bc3 32 Rf1.

31 ... cxd4!

Black's d-pawn is way faster than White's queenside majority.

32 Red1 Be3+ 33 Kh2 h4!



This move fixes White's kingside pawns.

34 b4 Bf4+ 35 Kg1 Ne3 36 Rdc1 d3!

Principle: *Passed pawns should be pushed.*

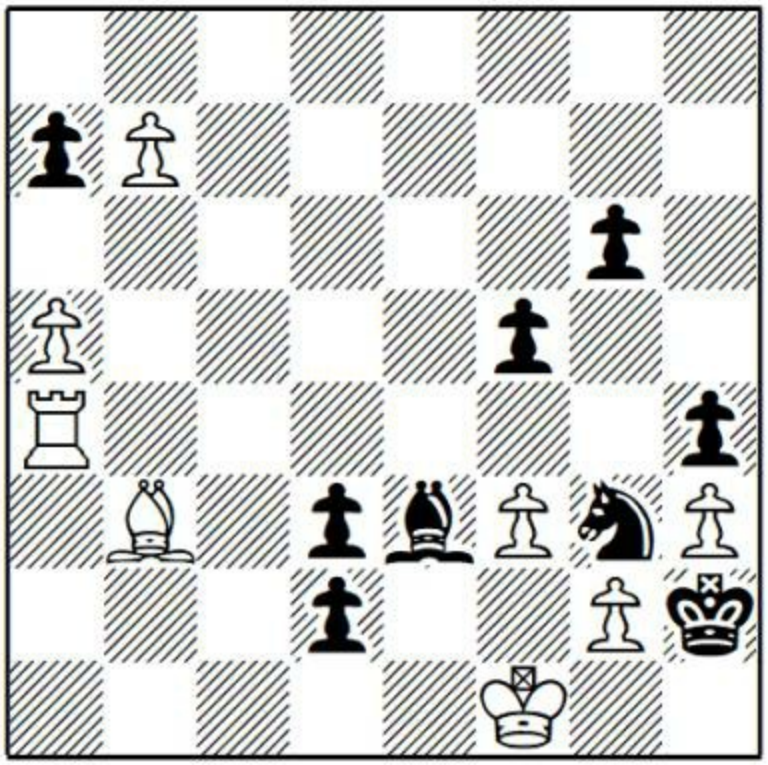
37 Bb5 Rd4 38 Rc7+ Kh6 39 Rd7!

Magnus is desperate to reduce Hikaru's fire power.

39 ... Rxb4?

What? I was stunned when Hikaru gave away his murderously powerful d-pawn. This is the problem with blitz and rapid games: even the chess gods make dumb decisions due to the clock factor. Black should keep his d-pawn with 39 ... d2! 40 Rxd4 exd4 41 Ba4 Nd5! 42 Bb3 Nc3 43 a4 Kg5 44 a5 Be3+ 45 Kf1 (45 Kh2 Bf2 46 Bc2 Kf4 47 Bb3 Ke3 48 Bc2 d3 49 Bb3 Ke2 50 Kh1 d1Q+ 51 Bxd1+ Nxd1 52 b5 Bg3 53 b6 Nf2+ 54 Kg1 a6! 55 b7 d2 wins) 45 ... f5 46 Bc2 Kf4 47 Bb3. Black's pieces refuse to share the road with White's. White can only shuffle pitifully: 47 ... d3 (oh, wait: White can't even shuffle now; zugzwang) 48 b5 Ne2! (threat: Ng3 mate) 49 Ra4+ Kg3 50 b6 Kh2! 51 b7. The fact that a new queen is coming is not much cause for

celebration: 51 ... Ng3 mate.



The final mate in the analysis is a study in itself.

40 Bxd3 Rb2 41 Bf1 Nf5 42 a4 Be3+ 43 Kh2 Bd4 44 Rc1 Ne3 45 a5?!

After 45 Rd6 Kg5 46 Kh1 Rf2 47 Ba6! and if 47 ... Rxg2?! 48 f4+! Kxf4 49 Rxf6+ Kg5 50 Rcc6 Kh5 51 Bc8! White will save the game.

45 ... Rf2! 46 Kg1

This g1 spot is not a healthy place for White's king.

46 ... Ra2! 47 a6 Nxf1+?

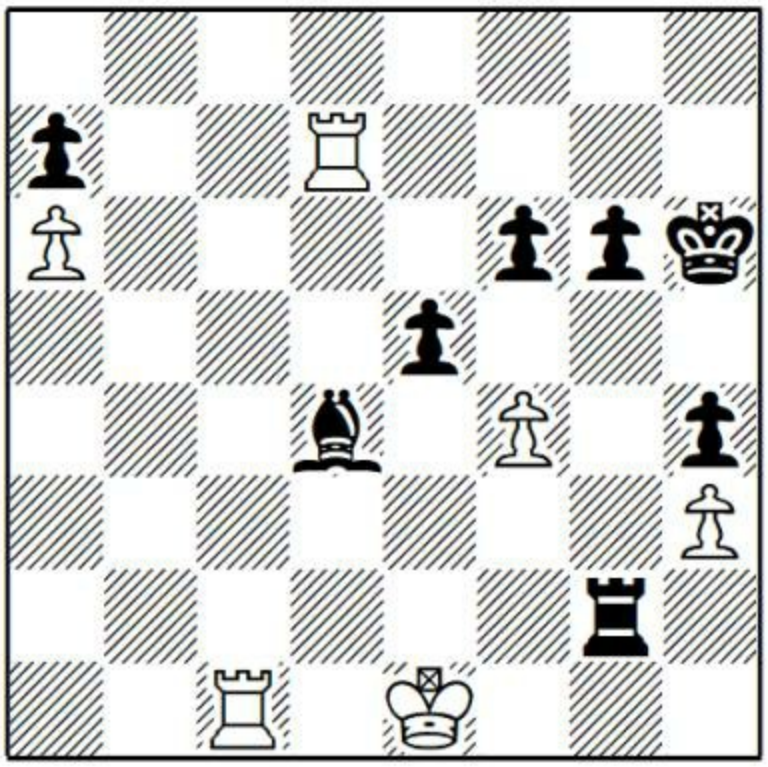
It has been my observation that when a person uses the word 'but' in a sentence, everything which precedes it doesn't really count. Now White should draw. 47 ... Kg5! was correct.

48 Kxf1 Rf2+

After 48 ... Rxa6 49 Rdc7 Kg5 50 Ke2 White has excellent chances to save the game.

49 Ke1 Rxg2 50 f4?

With 50 Rc6! Kg5 51 Rdd6! Kf4 52 Rxf6+ Ke3 53 Rxg6 White will draw.



Black to play

Level 2

Under the strain of the clock and endless defence, Magnus just blundered. How does Black win material?

Answer: Step 1: give check with the rook.

50 ... Rg1+ 51 Kd2 Be3+!

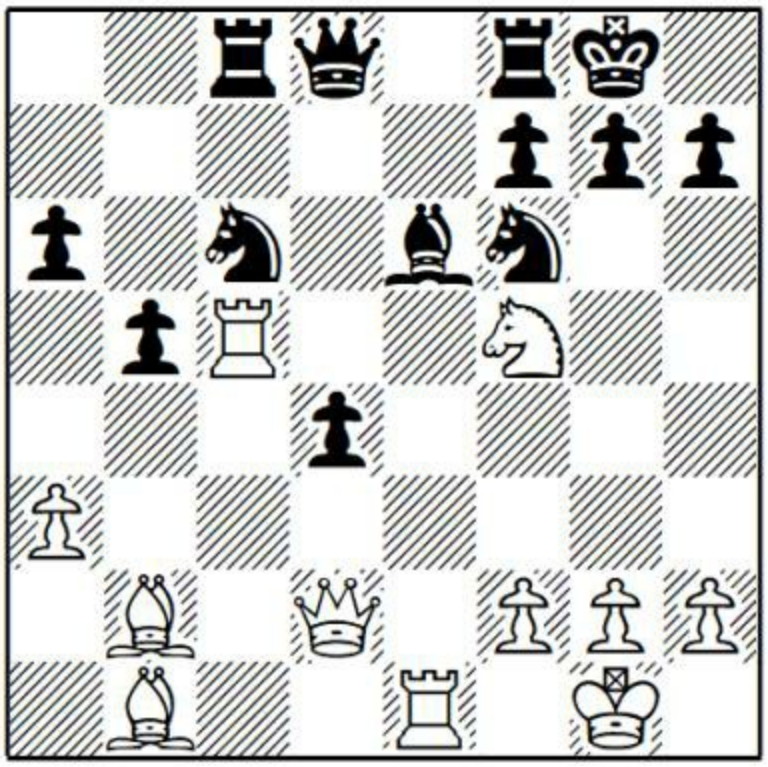
Overloaded defender. White loses the exchange back and is down too many pawns in the rook and pawn ending.

52 Kxe3 Rxc1 53 fxe5 Re1+ 54 Kf3 Rxe5 55 Rxa7 Ra5 0-1

Nakamura converted this technical win.

500) M.Carlsen-H.Nakamura

6th Set; Game 1



White to play

Level 5

Magnus has sacrificed two pawns. Prove that he has full compensation:

Answer: Annihilation of defensive barrier. The piece sacrifice is sound.

23 Nxg7!!

This sacrifice is obvious enough, yet it is not at all easy to see how White proceeds. An oracle is supposed to hand us answers on demand. Yet it isn't one of those sacrifices where we must first check the position of the stars in the sky and then deal out the Tarot cards. From the resulting damage on the dark squares around Black's king, Magnus' intuition whispered: "It will work."

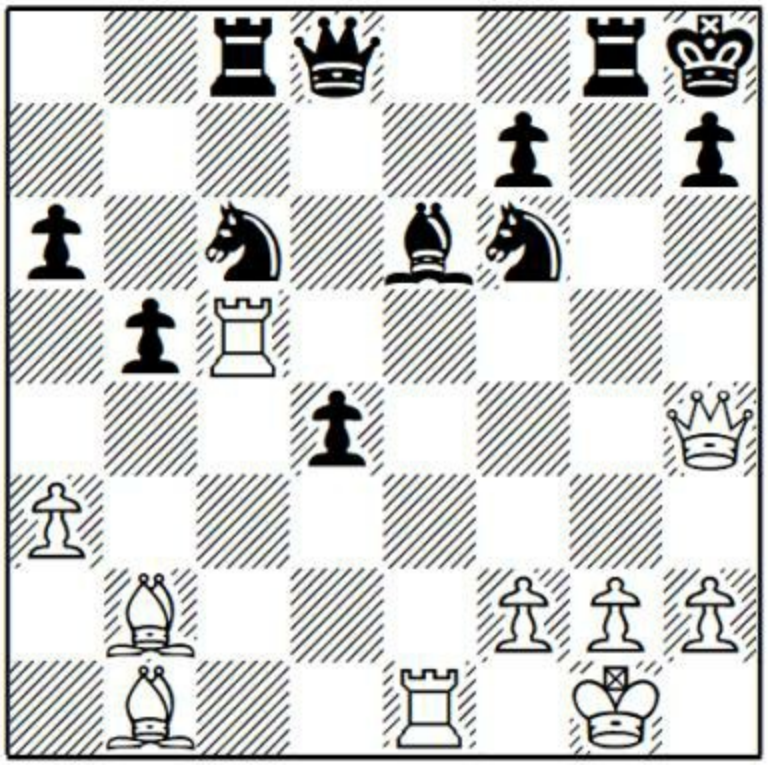
White should avoid the milquetoast 23 Nxd4? Nxd4 24 Qxd4 Qxd4 25 Bxd4 Nd5, which leaves Black up a clean pawn in the ending with all the winning chances, while after 23 Qg5? Bxf5 24 Bxf5 Rc7 25 Rec1 Qd6 Black is a bit tangled yet has excellent chances to consolidate.

23 ... Kxg7 24 Qg5+?!

Inaccurate. 24 Bc1! gives White the advantage: 24 ... Ne7! (after 24 ... Ng8? 25 Rg5+ Kh8 26 Rh5 f5 27 Rxe6 Black can resign) 25 Qh6+ Kg8 26 Rxc8 followed by regaining the knight on f6, as Black shouldn't allow 26 ... Nxc8? 27 Bg5.

24 ... Kh8 25 Qh4 Rg8?

25 ... Re8! was necessary.



White to play

Level 3

Continue White's attack:

Answer: Annihilation of defensive barrier.

26 Rxc6! Rxc6 27 Bxd4

White is down a rook yet his bishops breathe fire. Now mate is threatened on h7.

27 ... Kg7?

Missing 27 ... Bf5! 28 Bxf5 Rg6 29 Bxg6 fxg6 30 h3 Kg8 31 Re3 Rc4 32 Qxf6 Rxd4 33 Qxa6 Rd1+ 34 Kh2 Qd6+ 35 Qxd6 Rxd6 when Black has

chances to hold a draw in the rook and pawn ending.

28 Qxh7+ Kf8 29 Qh6+ Ke8 30 Bxf6 Qa5

Threatening mate on e1.

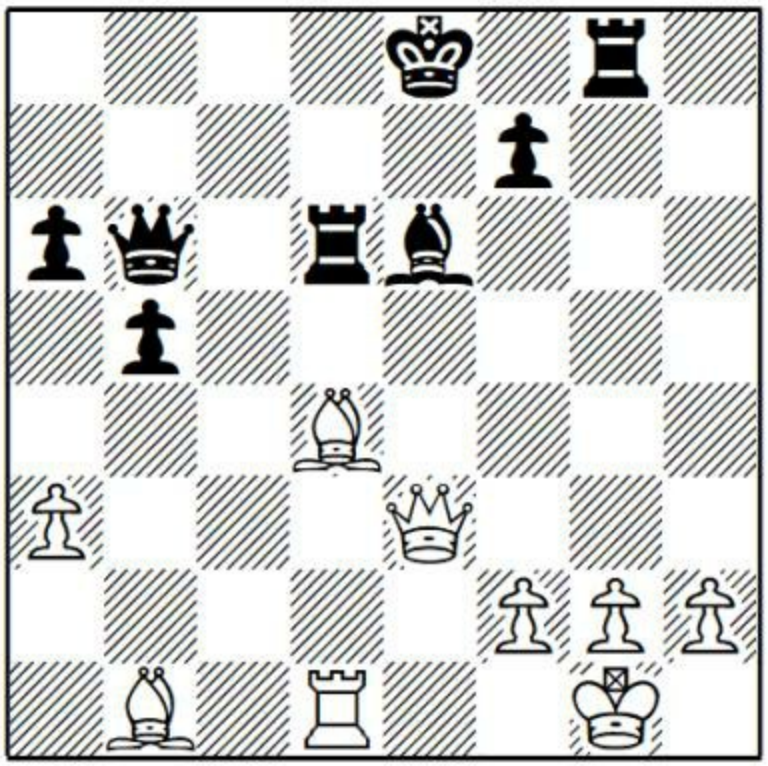
31 Qe3 Qb6 32 Rd1?!

Black is helpless after 32 Be4! Rd6 33 Qf3 Kd7 34 h4!. The idea is to push the h-pawn all the way down the board.

32 ... Rd6

The odds are low that a world-class player is going to fall for the boneheaded 32 ... Qxe3?? 33 Rd8 mate.

33 Bd4!?



Magnus counter-intuitively agrees to a self-pin to keep pieces on the board. I wasn't exaggerating when I told you this was the most exciting match in chess history! Maybe just a touch better is 33 Rxd6 Qxd6 34 h4! Qd1+ 35 Kh2 Qxb1 36 Qd4 Rxg2+! 37 Kxg2 Bd7. Even here Black may still save the game.

33 ... Qc6?

Threat: ... Qxg2 mate, except that it is a waste of time. Black should take

advantage of the pin on the d4-bishop with 33 ... b4! 34 axb4 Qxb4 35 Bc2 Kd7 36 h4 Rc8 and it's anybody's game.

34 Be4 Qc4 35 h3

Magnus creates luft for his king.

35 ... Kd7 36 Rd2

Unpinning his bishop.

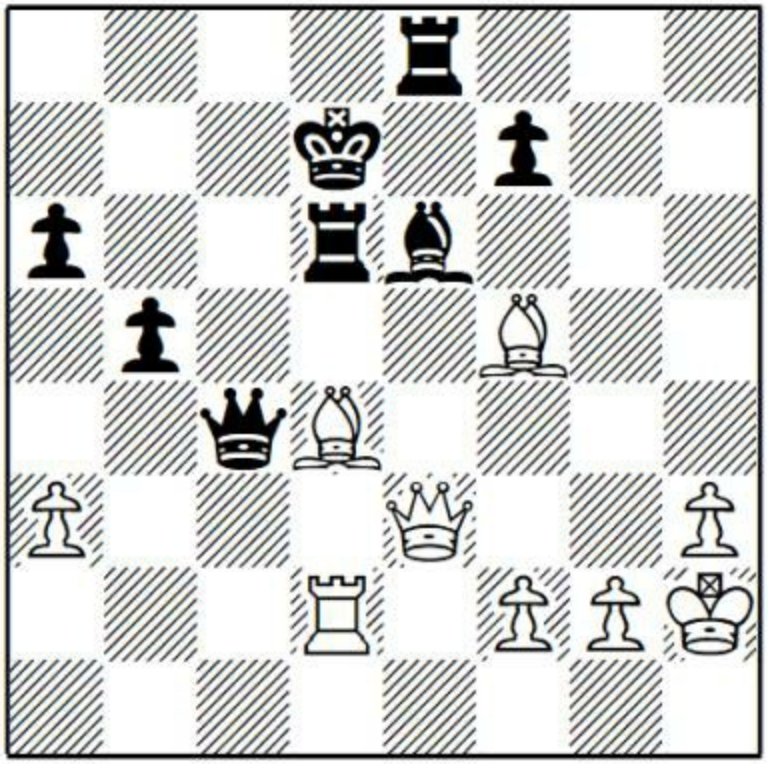
36 ... Re8 37 Kh2

Covering against future ... Bxh3 tricks and also checks on the back rank.

37 ... Bd5

The comp says this is a blunder, yet I don't really see what Black will do after its suggestion 37 ... Rc8 38 h4!, intending to push the h-pawn down the board.

38 Bf5+ Be6



White to play

Level 4.5

Magnus found a winning continuation:

Answer: Retreat the bishop to d3, which completely disorganizes the defence.

39 Bd3!!

Imagine that you could read the minds of others, while they are unable to see into yours. You would live life with a colossal advantage. When watching Magnus live, I am often struck dumb in wonder at his impossibly quick grasp of even the most chaotic situation.

39 ... Qa4

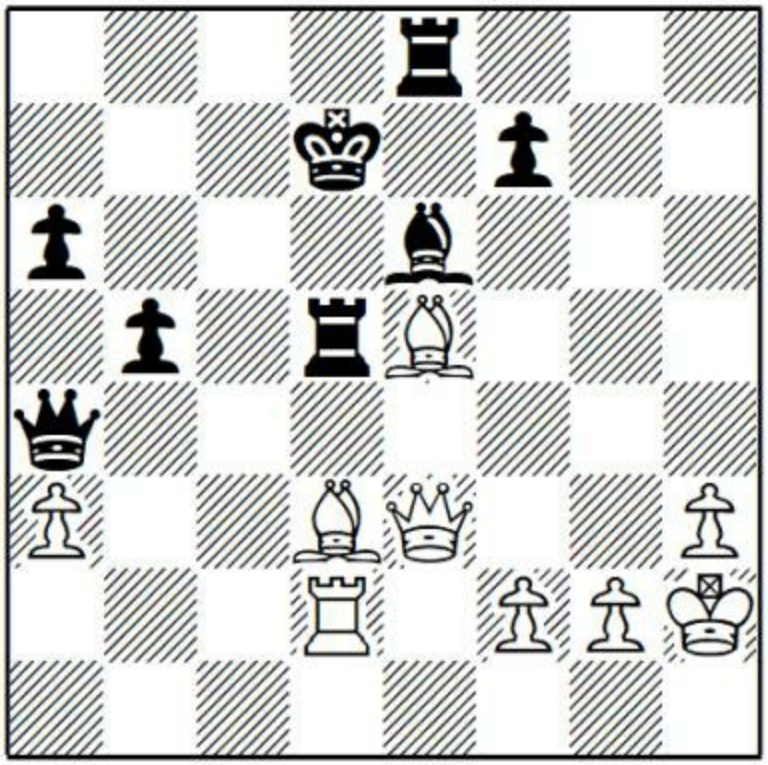
39 ... Qxd4?? loses the queen to the simple discovered attack 40 Bxb5+.

40 Be5!

Step 2: Clearance. White threatens Black's rook and also infiltration with Qa7+.

40 ... Rd5

Not much of an improvement is 40 ... Bd5 41 Qa7+ Ke6 42 Bg3 Red8 43 Re2+ Kf6 44 Be5+ Kg5 45 Qe3+ Kh4 46 g3+ Kh5 47 g4+ Kh4 48 Bg3 mate.



White to play

Level 1

Black's last move allowed Magnus to deliver a death from which there is no resurrection. White mates in 2:

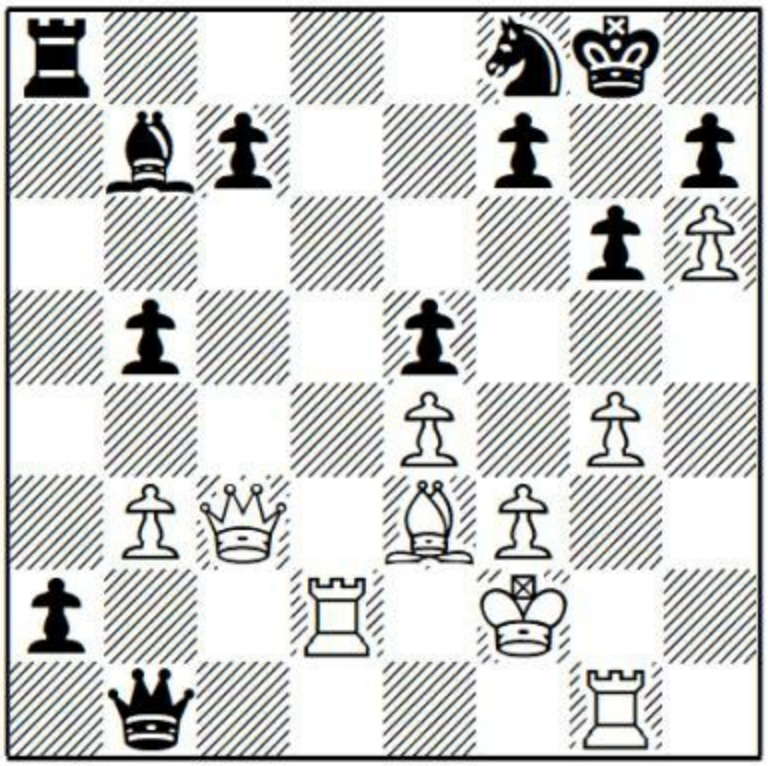
Answer: Give a queen check on a7.

41 Qa7+! 1-0

Mate follows on c7, no matter where Black moves his king.

501) H.Nakamura-M.Carlsen

7th Set; Game 3



White to play

Level 3

Black threatens to promote and 30 Qa1 looks like it should eventually win. Yet we should heed Lasker's advice: If you see a good move, then wait and keep looking: there may be a stronger one:

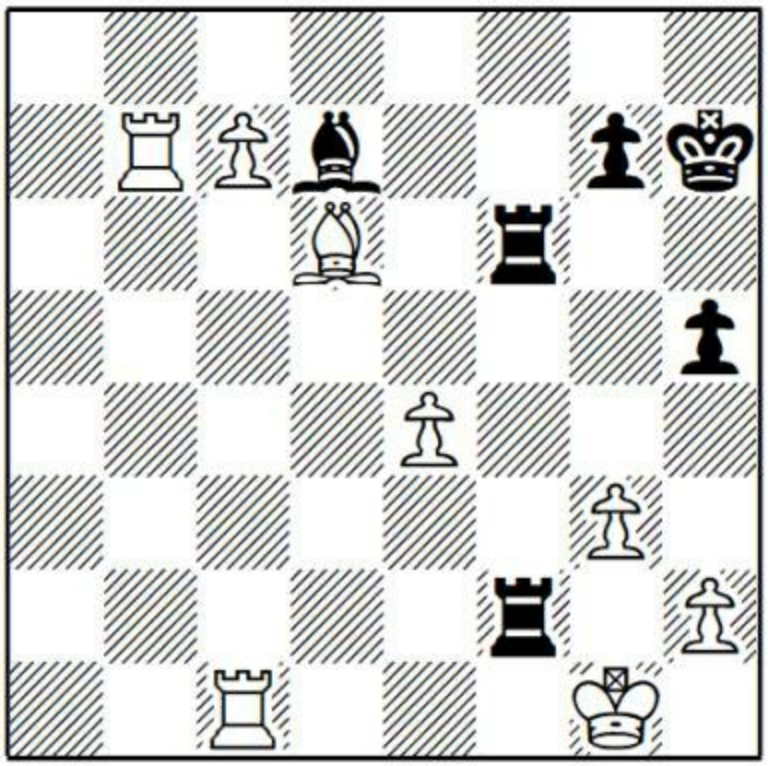
Answer: Simplification. Give up a full rook to launch a dark squared

mating attack against Black's king.

30 Rxb1! axb1Q 31 Qxe5 1-0

There is no way to reverse the dark-square disfunction in Black's position. After 31 ... Qa1 (if 31 ... Ne6 32 Bd4! Kf8 33 Qh8+ Ke7 34 Bf6 mate) 32 Bd4 Black must hand over the newly minted queen in order to evade immediate mate.

502) M.Carlsen-H.Nakamura
7th Set; Game 6



White to play

Level 3

What is White's clearest path to the win?

Answer: Interference/double attack. By placing the bishop on f4, White threatens both Kxf2 and c8Q Black loses a piece.

42 Bf4!

This simple interference move adds an additional tax upon Black's already overburdened position. Magnus was too astute to be caught in Hikaru's strategic trap 42 c8Q? Bxc8 43 Rxc8 Rf1+ 44 Kg2 R1f2+ 45 Kh3 Rxd6 46 Rcc7 Rdd2! 47 Rxg7+ Kh6 48 Rh7+ Kg6 49 Rbg7+ Kf6 50 Rf7+ Kg6 51 Rxf2 Rxf2 52 Re7 Kf6. Black should draw, despite White's two extra pawns, mainly due to the disastrously inefficient position of White's king.

42 ... Bc8

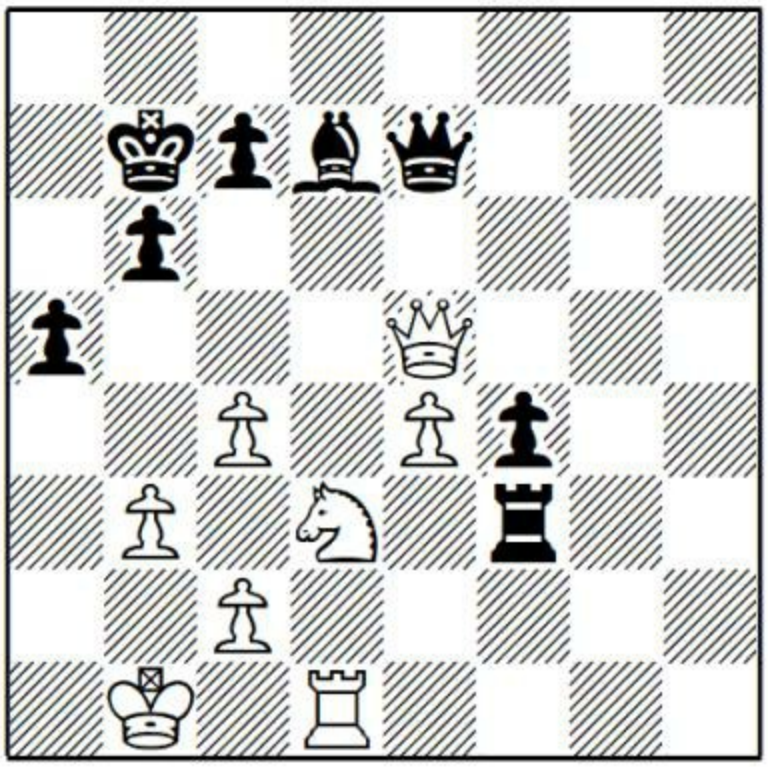
42 ... Re2 43 c8Q Bxc8 44 Rxc8 Rxe4 45 Rc5 is hopeless for Black.

43 Rb8 1-0

The double attack remains.

503) H.Nakamura-M.Carlsen

7th Set; Game 7



Black to play

Level 4

It was Thomas Hobbes who theorized that a prophet is just the best guesser. This was the nail-biting Armageddon game, where Black starts the game with a minute less, yet if he draws he 'wins' the game. The difference between first place $140,000 and $80,000 is a lot! So how did Magnus earn an extra $60,000 by forcing a clear drawing line?

Answer: Queen sacrifice/simplification/fortress. Giving up the queen for rook and bishop is the clearest path for Black to draw the game.

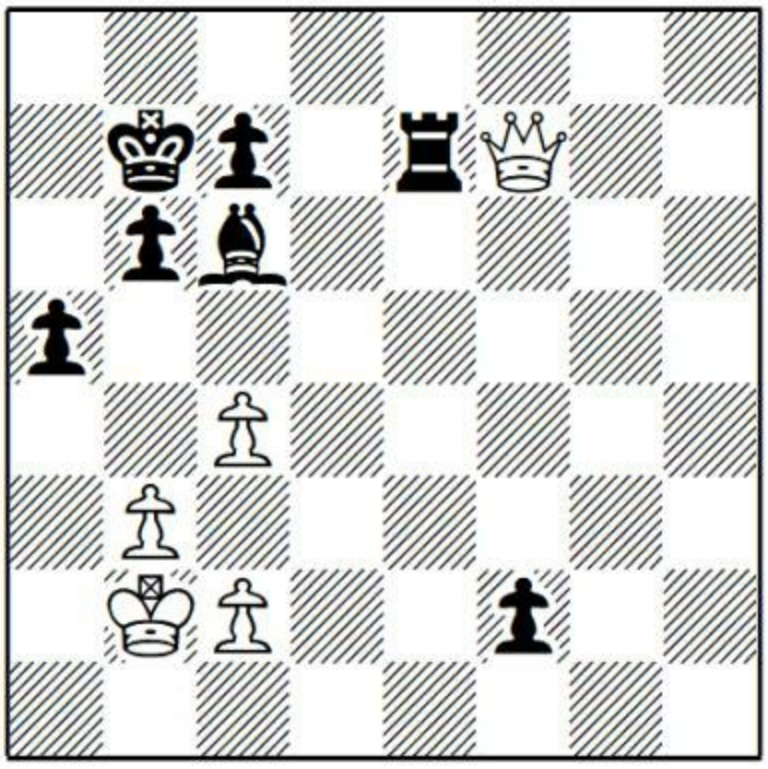
40 ... Rxd3!

One door closes while another opens. 40 ... Qe6 is not worse for Black, but at least Hikaru could have kept on playing in that variation. With the line played in the game, it's a dead draw.

41 Qxe7 Rxd1+ 42 Kb2 Bc6 43 e5 f3

Threat: ... f3-f2.

44 Qf6 Rd2 45 e6 f2 46 e7 Re2 47 Qf7 Rxe7!



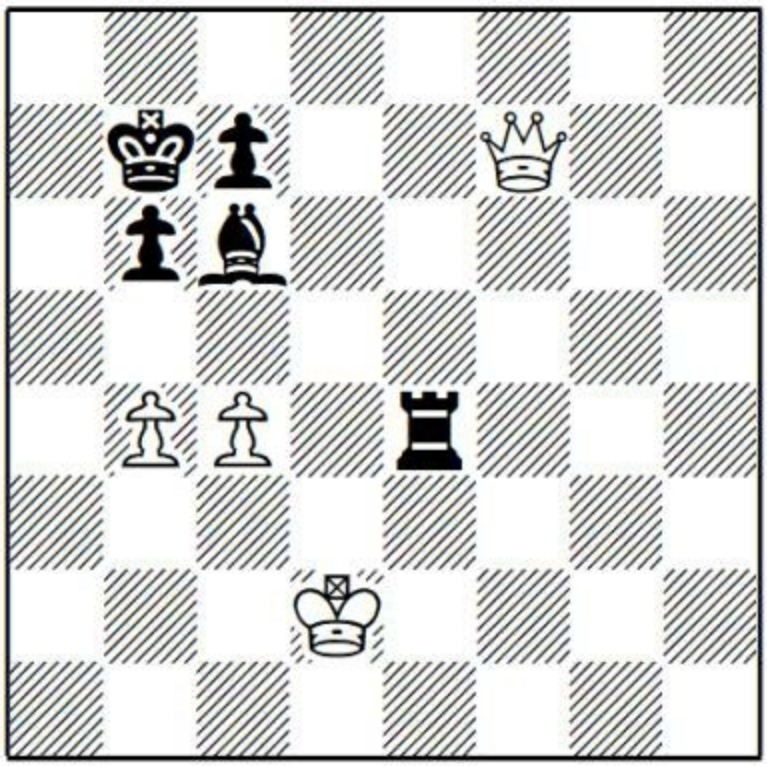
More simplification, where the position coalesces into a clear picture. Now White doesn't have a prayer in hell of winning. Nakamura plays on, but in his heart he must have known that in reality he didn't even have a faint

hope. 47 ... f1Q! 48 Qxf1 Rxe7 is essentially the same.

48 Qxf2 Rg7 49 Qf4 Rg2 50 Qe5 Rg6 51 c3 Rg2+ 52 Kc1 Rg4 53 Qe6 Re4 54 Qf7 Re1+ 55 Kd2 Re4 56 b4

After 56 c5 b5 White is unable to make progress.

56 ... axb4 57 cxb4



White to play

Level 2

Make one powerful defensive move and White's dream of a win is dead:

Answer: Push the b-pawn, creating a light-square fortress.

57 ... b5!

Perfect technique. This move creates an impregnable light-square fortress.

58 cxb5

After 58 c5? Rxb4 only Black can win.

58 ... Bxb5 59 Qd5+

Double attack?

59 ... Bc6

Actually not. Everyone is covered.

60 Qc5 Re6!

White's king will never get past Black's third rank.

61 Kc3

After 61 b5 Rd6+ 62 Kc3 Bd7 White has no way to make progress.

61 ... Rd6 62 b5 Bd7 63 Qe5 Bc8 64 Kc4 Rb6 65 Kc5 Kb8 66 Qe8 Rd6 67 Qf8 Rb6 ½-½

Magnus's ferocious style is almost comically unsuited to passive defence to grovel a draw, yet this time he is fully willing to do so, if it earns him an extra $60,000! He will play ... Rd6 and ... Rb6 for all eternity, or at least until the 50-move draw rule.