

The Magic and Beauty of Quiet Chess Moves

Mastering the Art of Subtlety

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Mastering the Art of Subtlety

Boguslaw Boder, Jacek Bielczyk

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Key to symbols

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

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Introduction

Beauty in chess means different things to different people. For a player whose taste has not been shaped by years of experience, an important criterion of beauty is probably how much material has been sacrificed, while an experienced player might primarily value the originality and purity of an idea.

Sometimes, the key to a position might lie not in a sacrifice, but in a ‘quiet’ move. This is the kind of idea which has always impressed me the most. Firstly, because of their mystery: why does one of several apparently equivalent moves turn out to be much stronger than the others? Secondly, because they can still be important: a ‘quiet’ move can still radically change the course and even the outcome of the game.

Where did the idea for this book come from? Well, from two places really. Firstly, in all the breadth and variety of chess literature, I have never seen a publication focusing on quiet moves, often relegating them to a (sub-) chapter with a handful of examples. Secondly, I have always felt sorry for those who have not learned to appreciate a kind of beauty, and I believe the examples in this book are beautiful. Imagine someone who looks at a mountain, and sees only a big rock. Or someone who looks at the Eiffel Tower, and sees only a clump of iron. In the same way, there are chess players, who could be shown (or play) a game that was not decided by a devastating attack or sacrifice, and see only pieces of wood or plastic shuffling aimlessly round a larger piece of wood or plastic. However, that is not the case. Such games can bring great satisfaction in their own way too, even (as I learned myself) when you are on the losing end!

This book consists of four chapters. In the first chapter, I focus on the classic quiet moves. In chapter two, I show various forms of quiet moves (for example, prophylactic ones) that are not as magical as the classic ones but still have a lot of charm and an impact on the assessment of the position. Chapters three and four consist of tests for intermediate and advanced players - in total, there are over

800 exercises. Overall, my aim is to sensitize the reader to the beauty inherent in spectacular quiet moves, and to help them find hidden quiet moves in their own games, savoring the magic of the moves as they make them. I have always thought that a chess player's class is determined by the level of quiet moves they can make or find- to find them often requires penetrating insight, and clarity of thought which takes effort to acquire. If something I wrote motivates you in that effort, I will have succeeded in my mission.

A word to the wise...

This book absolutely could be enjoyed on the train, or in the bath. Being a realist, I am not going to try and stop you! But you would be missing much of the point, as only by diligently studying it on your own, with a physical board and pieces, will you reap the full benefits. For the exercise chapters, I propose that you use the woodpecker method (described in chapter three) and take your time over each position. For those prepared to do so, I have a before/after challenge: take note of your chess rating before starting training with this book, and again after completing it. I would be delighted if you share your result (positive or negative) and any feedback about the process and the book. And with that, it is time to sign off and wish you happy training.

With chess greetings,
Bogusław Boder, Jacek Bielczyk

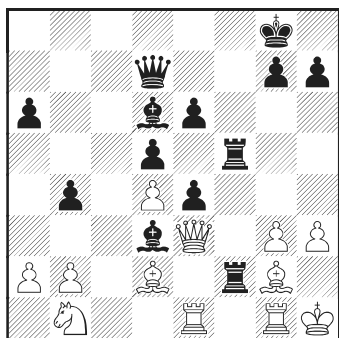
Chapter 1

A classic quiet move

Axiomatically, a perfect quiet move is an unobtrusive move that simultaneously activates the player's pieces and constrains the activity of the opponent's pieces. Such a move may not appear to contribute to the game, but completely changes the game's trajectory, and the commentators tend to delight in them. Sometimes it gets an exclamation mark next to it in annotations, or sometimes even two. For chess amateurs, it is not easy to identify such moves in a grandmaster game, and seeing the magic and beauty of a quiet move like that in their own games is even more challenging.

The most beautiful “quiet” move in chess history

(1) F. Sämisch – A. Nimzowitsch, 1923



White's cramped position allows Black to place him into *zugzwang*, a situation where one has the obligation but not the desire to move. And here is the historic quiet move achieving that end. Whether or not this is indeed the most beautiful quiet move in chess history - well, to each his own.

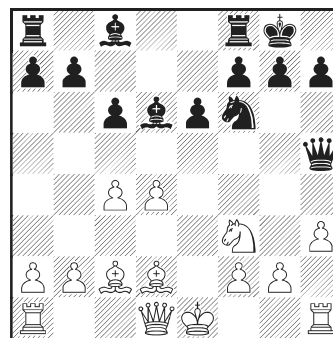
1...h6!

This move removes the only square, g5, from White's queen, thus strengthening the idea of ...♖f5.

2.g4

This also loses to ...♖f5, since taking the rook allows ...♖h2 mate. But there is no salvation anyway: 2.♖d1 ♖e2 wins the queen; 2.♖c1 ♖e2 likewise. Instead, 2.♙c1 'only' drops a piece to 2...♙xb1-+; finally, 2.♙f1 is met by 2...♙xf1-+.

(2) W. Duer – K. Petschar, 1992



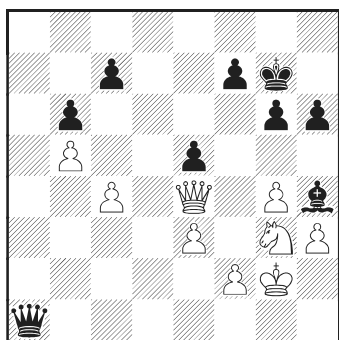
13.♔e2!!

Could this, perhaps, be the most beautiful quiet move in chess history? By uniting the queen and the h1-rook, White creates the monster threat of g4, trapping Black's queen on h5.

(Editor's note: the idea reminds me strongly of the game Kamsky-Karpov, Dortmund 1993, which is worth a look for the interested reader!)

13...e5 14.g4 ♙xg4 15.hxg4 ♖xg4 16.♖h4 ♖e6 17.♗g5 ♖e7 18.♗xh7 exd4+ 19.♔f1 ♖fe8 20.♙g5 ♙e5 21.♗xf6+ ♙xf6 22.♖h8+ ♔xh8 23.♖h5+ ♔g8 24.♖h7+ ♔f8 25.♖h8#



(3) A. Miles – S. Makarichev, 1984

An exchange of minor pieces on g3 would not lead to any advantage for White in the queen endgame, because their king would be quite exposed to checks.

37. ♖h1!!

An important quiet move, saving the knight in a way which takes account of Black's pressure against the f2-pawn. It turns out that White's knight stands perfectly in the corner, in fact better than the h4-bishop. Two other moves also preserved the knight, but after 37. ♖e2 ♜e1! or 37. ♖f1 ♜b2! White would be forced to deactivate their queen to defend the f2-pawn, or else return the knight to its inevitable demise on g3.

37... ♜b2?

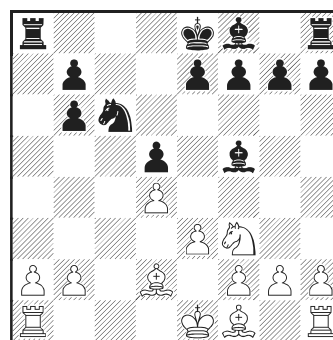
Maybe Black could have brought the bishop to d6 to support the queenside pawns.

38. ♜c6 ♜c2 39. ♜xc7 ♜e4+ 40. ♖h2 h5 41. ♜c6 ♜c2 42. gxh5 ♜f5 43. ♜g2 ♜xh5 44. c5 bxc5 45. b6 ♜d1 46. ♜c6 ♖e7 47. ♖g3 c4 48. b7 ♖d6 49. ♖e4

The knight has reached peak activity. How handy that it didn't get traded on g3, 12 moves ago!

49... ♖b8 50. ♜c8 ♜f3 51. ♜xb8 ♜xe4 52. ♜c7 ♜f3 53. ♖g1 ♜d1+ 54. ♖g2 ♜d5+ 55. ♖g3+-

One of probably the greatest chess players of all time, Jose Raul Capablanca was a noted expert on strategy. Where Tal could sow chaos with inspired sacrifices, Capablanca could find the chess moves that most players would miss.

(4) D. Janowski – J. Capablanca, 1916

Two pawns (of the same color) on the same file are called doubled pawns, and they are worthy of a book in their own right. Typically (though not necessarily) it is a disadvantage to have them in the endgame, especially if there are also no pawns on neighboring files (as here.) In earlier phases of the game, the situation is much more complex, and the doubled pawns can be either a great strength or a weakness. So, logically, quite often the side with the doubled

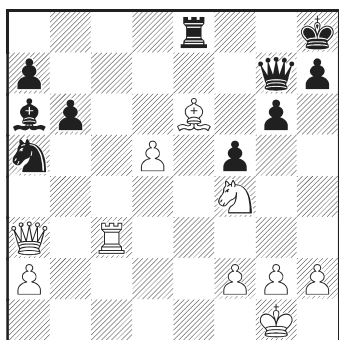
pawns should avoid entering the endgame, and should try to decide the outcome of the game early instead. There, the advantages of doubled pawns can come into play: they can support centrally placed pieces, and (as here with the a-file) they often come with a half-open file that can be used to put pressure on the opponent. Here is a classic example in which Black maximized the use of the doubled b-pawns.

10...♗d7!!

This is not a loss of tempo, but part of a well thought-out strategy. Black intends to activate their queenside pieces with ...b6–b5 (which this bishop move supports) and ...♖c6–a5–c4.

A quiet move is by definition not capture or a check; however, its capacity to change the game's trajectory remains real.

(5) S. Furman – V. Smyslov, 1949



The experienced player would take note of the e6-bishop and f4-knight, 'pointed' at Black's king, and feel some unease despite the absence of any

immediate forcing continuation (and Black's reasonably well-placed pieces.) Enter a quiet move from White, coordinating everything and reaching a winning position.

29.♖b2!

The threat is simply ♖xg6+, removing one of the defenders of Black's king and distracting another so as to allow either a discovered check or ♗h3#.

Also possible, and also 'quiet', was 29.♖c1!? setting up ideas of ♗c7.

29...♘c4

29...h6 allows a queen sacrifice: 30.♕c7 ♖xb2 31.♖xg6#

30.♖xg6+! ♖xg6

30...hxg6 31.♗h3# would be beautiful! After the game move, things are less dramatic, but equally finished.

31.♗xc4+ ♖g7 32.♖xg7+ ♔xg7 33.♗c7+ ♔f6 34.f4

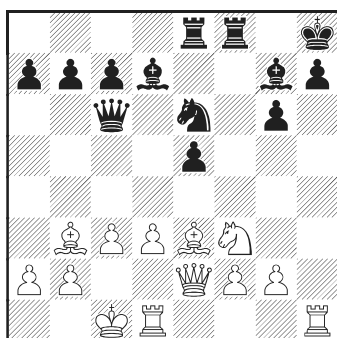
The endgame is hopeless for Black.

"When you play chess with profound strategy, you make it considerably harder for your opponent, especially if your goal is not direct checkmate, but achieving a winning position!" – Mark Dvoretsky

Good chess moves require profound understanding of strategy. When you play against strong players, it helps if your moves (and strategy) also have an element of stealth to them. That was certainly the case in the following

example from the 1892 Havana world championship match between Steinitz and Chigorin.

(6) W. Steinitz – M. Chigorin, 1892



20. ♕f1!

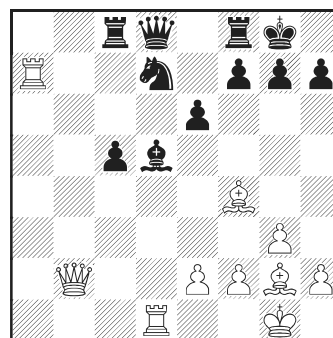
A multi-purpose move. Firstly, the queen should be removed from any possible motifs involving... ♖f4 (and the x-ray attack from the e8-rook.) Secondly, White is setting up ideas involving a rook sacrifice on h7 and subsequent use of the h-file for the queen. Another possibility was 20. ♕d2!? looking for ♖h6 ideas.

20... a5 21. d4 exd4 22. ♖xd4 ♖xd4
22... ♖xd4 23. ♖xh7+ ♔xh7 24. ♕h1+
♖h3 25. ♕xh3+ ♖h6 26. ♕xh6#

23. ♖xd4 ♖xd4 24. ♖xh7+ ♔xh7 25. ♕h1+
♔g7 26. ♖h6+ ♔f6 27. ♕h4+ ♔e5
28. ♕xd4+ ♔f5 29. ♕f4#

A decisive threat can be created without approaching the enemy camp; on the contrary, it can be created while moving away from it.

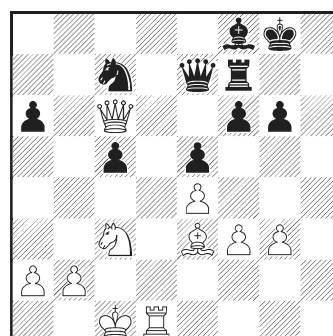
(7) V. Kramnik – P. Leko, 2001



21. e4?!

Vladimir Kramnik did not find the right way to exploit Black's d-file, and the game ended in a draw. Note that 21. ♖xd5 exd5 22. ♖xd5 wins nothing, since Black can unpin (using White's loose queen) with 22... ♕f6 or ... ♕b6. But 21. ♕a1!!, an amazing quiet move that safeguards the queen first, would have won as Black can't vacate the d-file in time: 21... ♕e8 (21... ♖f6 22. e4 ♖xe4 23. ♖xe4+-) 22. e4 ♖c6 23. ♖d6 wins the exchange.

(8) B. Spassky – W. Korchnoi, 1968



White has an undeniable advantage: the black pawns are weak, especially

the c5-pawn. The d5-square, which White's knight eyes intently, will be quite a useful one for the advancing white pieces.

26. ♖b6!

Again putting the queen out of reach of a counterattack! White anticipates the opponent's resource of ...♕e6 offering a queen trade, which would otherwise offer chances of salvation (for instance after 26. ♘d5.)

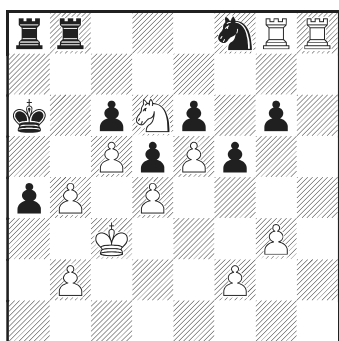
26... ♖g7

26... ♕e6 doesn't work as on b6 White's queen will be protected: 27. ♙xc5! ♖xb6 28. ♙xb6±.

27. ♘d5 ♕e6 28. ♙xc5 ♙xc5 29. ♖xc5 ♘b5 30. ♖e3 ♖c6+ 31. ♔b1 ♘d4 32. ♖c1 ♖b5 33. ♘c7 ♖e2 34. ♘e6+ ♔h7 35. ♖h6+ 1-0

and Black resigned.

(9) A. Alekhine – O. Chajes, 1923



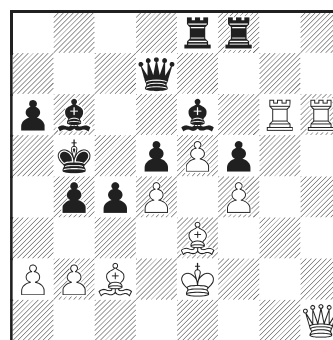
The crippling pin on the eighth rank suggests looking for some tactic based on that. Instead, White gives up on the

pin and reroutes with a couple of 'long' moves, which carry a lethal point.

63. ♖h1! ♘d7 64. ♖a1

and Black resigned. Such a manoeuvre would have been easy to miss, as the rooks are obviously already 'working hard' on the eighth rank. But, of course, Black had a second weakness, namely the a-file!

(10) J. Rejfir – F. Treybal, 1928



At first glance, it seems that White stands a bit better. This is not particularly due to the passed e5- pawn, which Black blockades well, but rather thanks to the active position of their rooks on the kingside. Meanwhile, on the other flank Black looks to control more space. In a surprising turn of events, White makes the decisive move on the queenside, where it turns out that Black has overextended, particularly with their king, allowing a mating attack.

1. ♖d1!

Threatening ♙a4+; there is only one

move to save the exchange, so Black made it.

1...♔a5 2.a3

There is relatively little point playing 2.♙a4 now, though it is of course possible. White goes for mate.

2...b3

White threatened 3.axb4+ ♔xb4 4.♙d2+, among other things.

3.♙xb3! ♚b5 4.♙d2+

Black's discovered counter-check, while ingenious, turns out to be of little avail.

4...c3+ 5.♔e1! ♙xd4 6.bxc3

It will be White who advances their c-pawn next with discovered check, and this one will be terminal.

a roundabout way. The more prosaic 34...♙xd4! is also good.

35.♖d3?

35.♙a7!! was the only try. After 35... ♙xa7?? (35...b6♠!) Black gets mated: 36.♚h6+ ♔e8 37.♚g7 ♖f8 38.♚xf8+ ♔xf8 39.♖h8#.

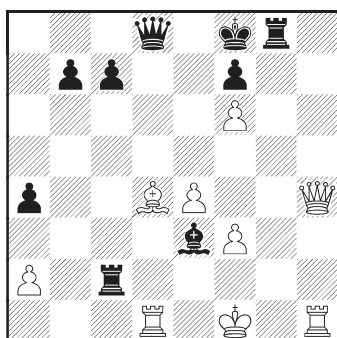
35...♚a6 0-1

White resigned.

What makes quiet moves worth the attention in chess is the fact that they are way down the list of candidate moves, which makes them hard to spot. Even the best players may miss them.

- Mark Dvoretsky

(11) D. Janowski – G. Maroczy, 1900

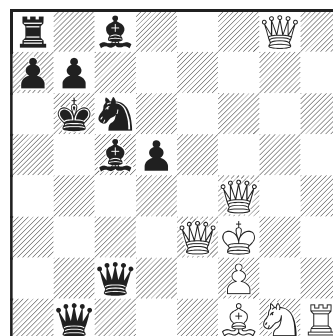


It took a bit of imagination for Black to appreciate the importance of the a8-square here.

34...♚a8!

Black reaches the opponent's king in

(12) A. Alekhine – N. Grigoriev, 1915



The position is a total mess, so I will restrict myself to the lines that make the point. White pins the c6-knight, threatening ♖d8#, and preventing knight jumps to d4 which could be potentially annoying.

24.♖h6!! ♚xf1??

Black blunders mate. Instead 24...♙xe3 runs into 25.♚d8+ ♖c5 26.♚fd6+ (not often you get to write that!), with mate. Instead Black should ditch a bishop to stop all ♚d8 ideas: 24...♙g4+ 25.♚gxg4 ♙xe3 26.♚xe3+ ♖c5 27.♚xc5+ ♖xc5 28.♙g2± when we're down to 1 queen each, and White has a bishop for 2 pawns.

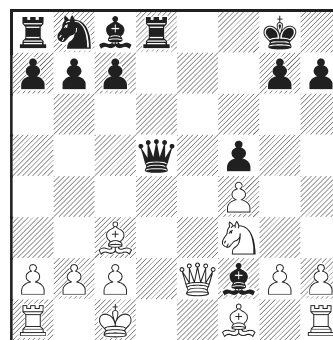
25.♚b4+ ♖b5 26.♚d8+ ♖a6 27.♚ea3+ ♖ca4
27...♚ba4 28.♚axa4+ ♖xa4 29.♚xa4#



28.♚axa4+ ♖xa4 29.♚xa4#

In the next example, Black has control of the open d-file and has doubled major pieces on it. While this doesn't translate into central dominance (with White still having the f4-pawn, f3-knight and c3-bishop exerting significant influence there), it does tie down the rest of White's forces due to the necessity of defending against mate on the d1-square. So Black seems to be strategically winning. However, this is not so, as their king-side is rather vulnerable to counterattack (the more so as they have moved their f7-pawn.) Taking advantage of this, White enacted a short but astonishingly simple and effective plan of action.

(13) S. Alapin – F. Marshall, 1905



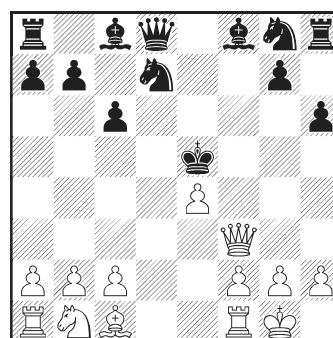
1.b4!!

This move opens a door for the white king to escape, and in so doing creates a threat of ♚xf2 (since ...♚d1 would no longer be mate.) So Black must retreat the bishop, and since c5 is out, only one square will do.

1...♙b6 2.♚e7!

and Black resigned, due to the mate threat on g7. After 2...♚d7 (2...♚d7 3.♚e8#) the bishops deliver mate: 3.♙c4+ ♖h8 4.♙xg7#.

(14) G. Krum – D. Pelitov, 1974



With a quiet move White starts weaving a mating net.

10. ♖f7!!

White removes the retreat square on e6 from Black's king, massively strengthening the threat of ♕f4+.

10... ♘gf6

10... ♖d6 11. ♕f4+ ♖c5 12. ♕e3+ ♖b5 (12... ♖d6 13. ♔d1+ ♖c7 14. ♖f4+) 13. ♖b3+ ♖a5 (13... ♖a6 14. ♖c4+ b5 (14... ♖a5 15. a3 c5 (15... b5 16. b4+ ♖a6 17. ♖xc6+ ♘b6 18. a4 bxa4 19. ♔xa4#) 16. ♘c3 a6 17. ♘d5 b5 18. b4+ cxb4 19. axb4#) 15. ♖xc6+ ♘b6 16. a4 b4 17. a5+-) 14. ♕d2+ ♖a6 15. ♖a4+ ♖b6 16. ♖a5#; 10... ♖f6 11. f4+ ♖xe4 12. ♔e1+ ♖f5 13. ♖h5+ g5 14. g4#

11. ♔d1

Another quiet move, covering the d4-square. While ♕f4 no longer works, the threat is 12. f4 ♖e4 13. ♖g6#. Black's only defence is to pin the f2-pawn, but White also has a knight available to give the next check.

11... ♕c5 12. ♘d2 ♕xf2+

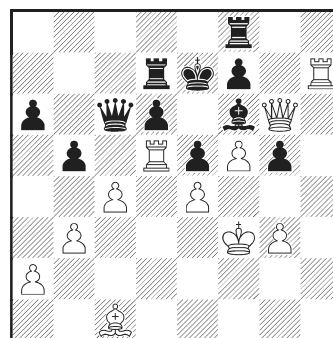
A desperate attempt to complicate the position before White plays ♘f3+.

13. ♖xf2 ♘xe4+

13... ♖b6+ 14. ♖e2 ♖a6+ 15. ♘c4+ ♖xe4 16. ♖g6#

14. ♘xe4! ♔f8 15. ♕f4+ ♖xe4 16. ♔e1+ ♖d4 17. ♕e3+ ♖e5 18. ♕c5#

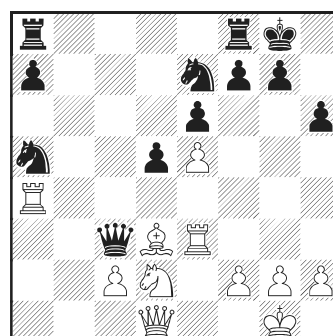
It's worth noting that in the next attack, not only White's major pieces but also their king plays a role! The very first move threatens a decisive queen sacrifice.

(15) Czechower – Pawlenko, 1949**1. ♖g4 bxc4 2. ♖xf6+ ♖e8**

2... ♖xf6?? 3. ♕xg5#

3. ♔xe5+ dxe5 4. ♖xc6 ♔g8 5. ♕xg5 ♔xg5+ 6. ♖xg5 ♖d8 7. ♔h8+ ♖e7 8. f6#

Black is a pawn up in the next one, but there are a number of enemy pieces looking towards their kingside menacingly. Both white rooks can get there very quickly. Right away, there is a threat of ♕h7 and so Black has to move one of the royal couple.

(16) J. Nunn – A. Jusupov, 1988**18... ♖h8!**

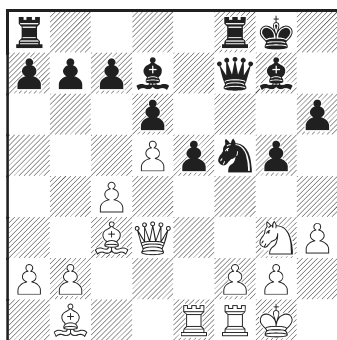
Of course Black's queen isn't very

secure on c3, but it pressurizes the d2-knight, preventing White from swinging their queen to the kingside.

Remember!

Such a method of defense - limiting the activity by an advanced queen.

(17) V. Smyslov – K. Robatsch, 1954



24. ♖e3!

The rook moves to f3, increasing the pressure on the knight on f5.

Black needs to part with the e5-pawn, but that does not solve their problems.

24... ♜e7 25. ♜f3 e4 26. ♞xe4 ♞h4

26... ♜ae8!? might have been a better try.

27. ♞f6+- ♞xf6 28. ♜xf6 ♜xf6 29. ♞xf6

♜xf6 30. ♜h7+ ♞f8 31. ♜xd7 ♜e8

32. ♜xc7 g4

32... ♜e7 33. ♜d8+ ♞g7 34. b4+-

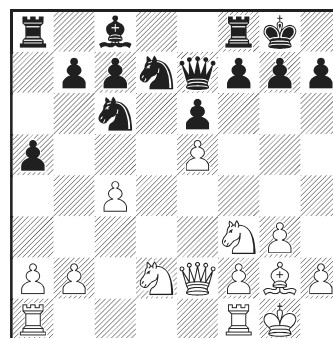
33. hxg4

33. ♜xb7?! gxh3 34. ♜xa7 ♞f3+ 35. ♞h1 hxg2+ 36. ♞xg2 ♞d2

33... ♜f4 34. ♞f5 1:0

34. ♞f5 ♞xf5 35. gxf5+-

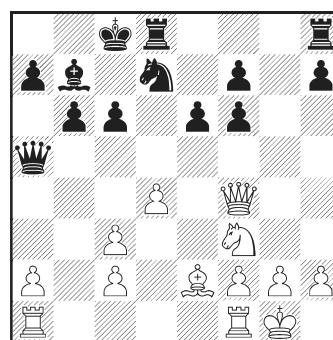
(18) R. Huebner – N. Sprotte, 1999



12...a4!

It turns out that after the inevitable 13... ♜a5, White will (perhaps surprisingly) be losing the pawn on e5.

(19) G. Sigurjonsson – M. Dvoretsky, 1975



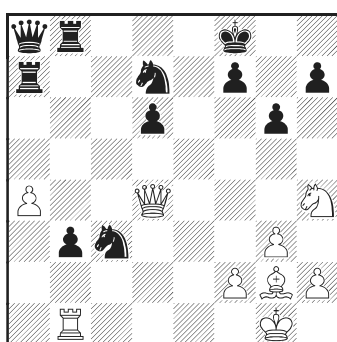
14. ♞d2!

A very dangerous manoeuvre. The knight will be headed to d6 through either c4 or e4.



You do not need to sacrifice pieces and make genius attacks every time to win a game. Sometimes it is enough to make a modest move to destroy the opponent's defense.

(20) M. Carlsen – M. Calzetta, 2003



27. ♖e1!

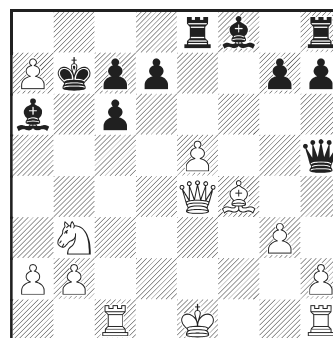
Simply stopping ...♗e2+ and threatening mate on h8. Black's queen is also still attacked- so they can resign.

27. ♗h8+?! yet is less good: 27... ♖e7
28. ♖e1+ ♗e5 29. ♗xh7=

27... ♖g8 28. ♗xa8 b2 29. ♗xa7+-

The following move is an especially 'quiet' one, retreating a piece to the corner unexpectedly. It "kills two birds with one stone", preventing any distracting promotions (keeping the a-file closed), and adds more force to a subsequent ...d5 or ...g5. The difference in activity, already noticeable, becomes more pronounced after this move. While such a quiet move is not always possible- then again, neither are sacrifices!

(21) J. Timman – A. Karpov, 1984



19... ♖a8!!

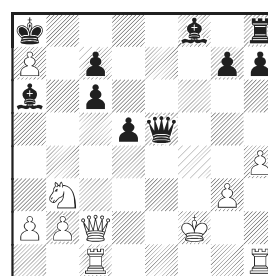
The optimal way of limiting White's attacking chances. At the same time, the a6-bishop's activity increases, as it can either stay on its current diagonal c8-h3, or shuffle to b7 and use the long diagonal.

20. h4

A prophylactic move against ...g7-g5.

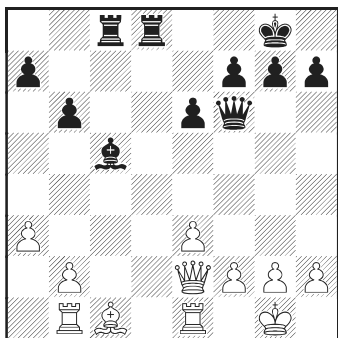
20... d5! 21. ♗e3

21. ♗c2 ♗xe5+ 22. ♗xe5 ♗xe5+ 23. ♖f2



23... ♗d6+-

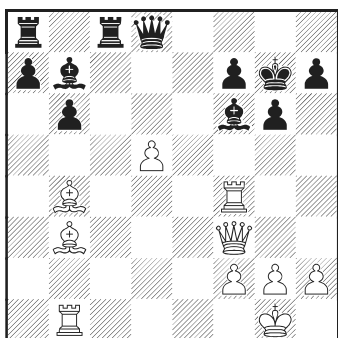
**21... g5 22. ♗xg5 ♗b4+ 23. ♖f2 ♗hf8+
24. ♖g2 ♗xe5 25. ♗xe5 ♗f3+ 26. ♖h2
♗f2+ 27. ♖h3 ♗c8+ 28. g4 ♗f3+ 0-1**

(22) A. Nimzowitsch – J. Capablanca, 1927**20...♔e5!**

An unassuming queen move that improves Black's coordination and limits that of White. Also possible is 20...♔g6!?

21.g3

21.b4 ♕d6 22.g3 ♔e4 threatens ...♖c2; likewise 21.♕d2 ♕d6 22.g3 ♔e4 and White must make a concession. Perhaps the 'lesser evil' is then the investment of a pawn with 23.♕c3 ♕xa3 24.♕xg7 ♕b4♞.

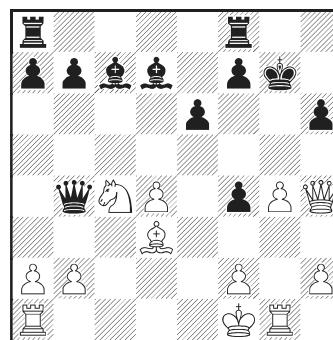
21...♔d5! 22.b4 ♕f8 23.♕b2 ♔a2♞**(23) A. Czernin – S. Dvoirys, 1993****1.♕d2!!**

With the threat of 2.♖xf6 ♔xf6 3.♕h6+.

1...g5

Forced, but after this Black's king position will not remain tenable for much longer.

**2.♖f5 ♖c7 3.♔g3 ♖ac8 4.h4 ♔h8 5.♕xg5
♕xg5 6.hxg5 ♔e7 7.♖e5 ♔b4 8.♕c2
♔c3 9.♕d3 ♔d4 10.d6! ♖c3 11.♖e3 ♖d8
12.♔h3 ♔g7 13.d7+–**

(24) I. Nepomniachtchi – G. Meier, 2018**22.♔h5!!**

Preparing to open the kingside files by force. Trying to rush the same outcome with 22.g5?? (as I can imagine many a weaker player doing) would backfire, as Black can ditch material to keep the files closed: 22...h5 23.g6 f6 24.♔xh5 ♖h8♞

**22...♖h8 23.g5 hxg5 24.♔xg5+ ♔f8
25.♔f6 ♖xh2 26.♖g7 ♕e8 27.♕h7!!
♖h1+ 28.♔g2 ♕c6+ 29.f3 0-1**

And Black resigned.

Chapter 2

The power of quiet moves!

In general, chess is a very tactical game in which, from my point of view, a precise and fast calculation of moves is the most critical skill. However, there are situations in which the game in a straight line does not lead to the goal, in which typical schemes do not work, and the player needs to look for quiet and subtle moves to accomplish their plans or neutralize the opponent's plans. Very often, the king's quiet moves and the knight's withdrawal change the fight's face".

- Pavel Eljanov

In this chapter, I want to show that in addition to classic quiet moves, there are equally beautiful quiet moves (inconspicuous ones) that have something magical about them and that, thanks to them, we can, for example, strengthen - improve our position.

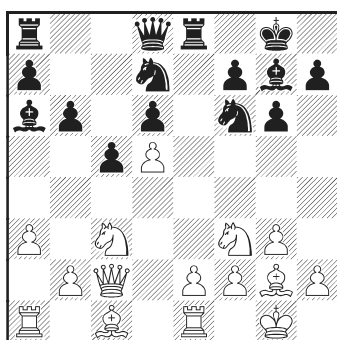
a) Quiet moves in prophylaxis

“The strategy on its own does not decide the result of the game, but the ability to adapt to nuances of the position, just like drivers adapt to changes in road conditions. The art of prediction will let you see which dangers are brought by one or other typical situation, how every opponent’s piece threatens you, and every grouping of these pieces”.

- David Bronstein

In chess, we often neglect or underestimate important moves by the opponent in our calculations, which then completely change the course of the game. I am sure that we can all relate to the phenomenon of an opponent’s move which came as a surprise, one which settled matters in their favor. Why does that happen? There are several reasons why we might not be paying enough attention to the opponent’s ideas. We could be underestimating the opponent’s chances, or their ability, or just relaxing after achieving an “objectively” winning position. This is very common because we are usually preoccupied with our ideas. We want to be creators of ideas, so we are naturally attracted to what we can do. However, one needs to remember that chess is a two-person game. We can implement our ideas only when we understand what our opponent does because our opponent also wants to win, or at least not to lose. I consider it “chess egoism” - being interested only in one’s ideas. In chess, as in life, being egotistical does not pay dividends.

(25) A. Yusupov – J. Timman, 1986



Yusupov plans to push pawns through the center, but realizes that after e2–e4, Black will respond with ...♞f6–g4–e5, after which the black knight will

control the squares d3 and c4. White cannot allow that.

13.h3!

13.♙f4!? also prevents Black’s idea, by diverting their attention for a move to deal with the d6-pawn.

13...♞e5± 14.♞xe5 ♜xe5 15.e4 ♜e8
16.♙e3 ♞d7

Again, Black dreams of placing the knight on e5, and again White prevents it.

17.f4! c4 18.e5!

A very typical pawn sacrifice for this kind of position. Otherwise, Black would achieve a pretty good game after ... c7 and ... e5 .

18... dxe5 19. d6

Is this a dangerous pawn?

19... c8 20. f5 !

It would be wrong to try and cash in: 20. d5 ?! c5 21. e7+ xe7 . But 20. ad1 ? deserved attention.

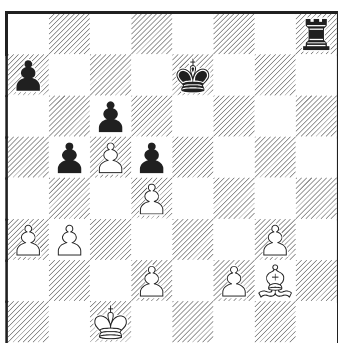
20... c5 21. xc5 !

Of course, one cannot let in the knight into d3.

21... xc5 22. e4

White has skillfully combined attacking chess with prophylaxis and gained a promising position.

(26) V. Chekhover – Anon



It seems that in the face of the irresistible threat of h8-h2 the White's position is lost. But...

1. d1 ! h2 2. e2 xc5 3. f1 h2

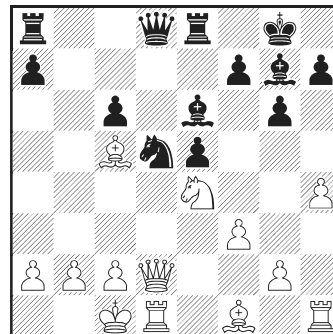
4. g1 h3 5. g2 h6 6. f3 !=

White has created a beautiful fortress. On the h-file, Black's rook cannot get through, because the king just moves between g1 and g2. One try is to switch to the e-file, but in that case White instead shuffles between f1 and f2. Finally, in case of an ...a4 or ...b4 break, it suffices for White to 'push past', keeping the files closed.

When you see a good move, sit on your hands and check whether you can find a better one.

- Siegbert Tarrasch

(27) J. Ehlvest – M. Marin, 1997



It is pretty clear that White intends to continue h4-h5 to open the h-file and attack Black's king.

15... h6 !

After 15...h5 16.g4 hxg4 17.h5 gxh5 18. hx5 White has an attack for the sacrificed pawn, but 15... f4 ?= is possible.

16.g4 c7 17.g5

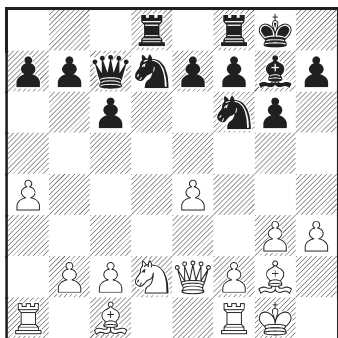
17.h5 g5±

17...h5

White's attack on the kingside has been stopped.

Remember!

It is very important to be able to think prophylactically! - Mark Dvoretsky

(28) R. Fischer – I. Ibrahimoglu, 1970

Such positions are hard to analyze 'move by move' or with engines. Instead a lot depends on whether each player can identify the critical elements of the position, and then synthesise and implement a plan. A strong player, like Fischer, can go through this process relatively easily, intuitively even. However, for less experienced players it's helpful to go through a conscious process, based on both a comparison of both sides' pieces (to see what to exchange) and an identification of important squares (to see what to control.)

13. ♖b3!

Prophylaxis. White neither wants to exchange this knight nor allow ...♞c5.

(Ed: I guess 13. ♞c4!? was rejected because

it's easier for Black to offer a trade, e.g. with ...♞e8-d6.)

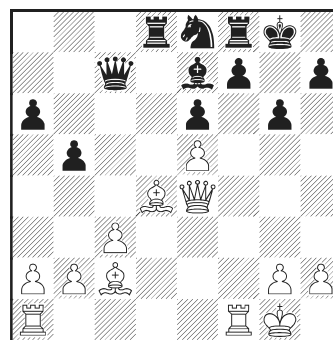
It's important to guard the bishop pair, e.g. 13. f4 e5 14. f5 ♞h6 offers a bishop trade and is OK for Black.

13...b6 14. ♞e3 c5?!

14...a5!?

15. a5 e5

Black places all their pawns on dark squares and, of course, this severely weakens the light squares. Now White's worst piece is the b3-knight. Of course it would love to be on d5, so White backtracks to head there.

16. ♞d2±**(29) N. Short – G. Kasparov, 1996**

White has a clear static advantage. The isolated pawn on e5 is a strength rather than a weakness, because it controls the key squares in Black's camp and does not let in the defending pieces. Additionally, White controls more territory, and has the bishop-pair. Therefore,

the following plan is focused on preventing counterplay while improving the static factors to the maximum.

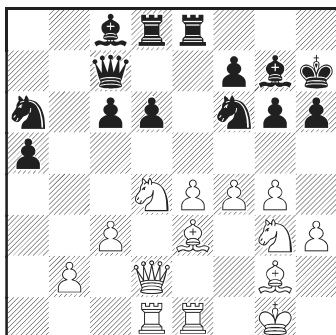
19.b4

White would like to prevent the offer of a bishop trade on c5. It is more efficient for the pawn to take on this duty rather than the queen, which is already quite well placed.

19...♘g7 20.g4 h5±

20...♖d7 21.a4±

(30) A. Karpov – J. Timman, 1979



The next move by Karpov is for sure the best of the game. How did he find it? Of course, he asked himself what the opponent wanted to do. The answer is not complicated: introduce the knight into the game through the square c5. How can it be prevented?

22.♖c2!!

A precise move with two closely related purposes. Firstly, ...♘c5 would now be met by b4 (using, inter alia, the slight weakness of Black's c6-pawn),

and secondly, the e4-pawn is 'overprotected' in order to make sure White doesn't have to take any time out for that reason. Nimzowitsch was the first to comment on this idea of 'overprotection', and also noted another strategic theme that occurs idea- defending against dynamics by reminding the opponent of their weak pawns.

22...♙d7

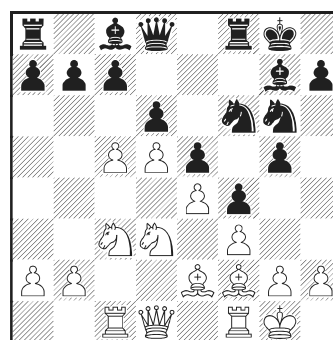
Black protects the c6-pawn and again intends ...♘c5.

22...♘c5? 23.b4 axb4 24.cxb4+–

23.♘f3!

Preparing a future e5 or g5 break, the former of which is also a handy response to ...♘c5.

(31) M. Taimanov – M. Najdorf, 1953



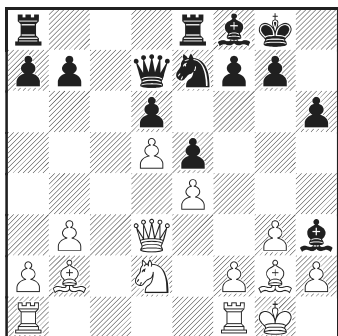
15...♖f7!

A move which aids both Black's defense and their attack. After: 16.cxd6 cxd6 17.♘b5 the rook covers the c7-square; at the same time it can swing to the g-file and help Black's attack, especially if g-pawns are traded.

16. ♖c2 ♘f8! 17. cxd6 cxd6 18. ♙d2 g4
19. ♖fc1 g3!

the kingside with ...h5–h4. Since c5 is not running away, White takes time out to stop that.

(32) A. Rubinstein – O. Duras, 1911



18. a4!

With this move, White secures the c4-square for their knight (it can no longer be hit there by ...b5.)

18... ♙xg2 19. ♖xg2 ♜eb8 20. ♘c4 b5
21. axb5 ♙xb5 22. ♖a3 ♘g6 23. ♖fa1±

1. h3! o–o

1... h4 2. g4!

2. ♘d3

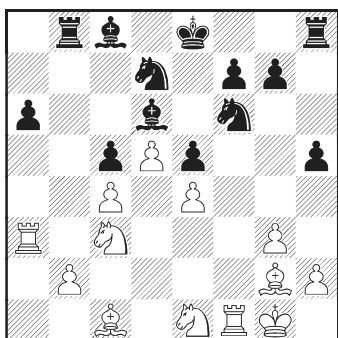
Only now, when the opponent has no opportunity for a counterattack, White focuses on the queenside.

21... ♘b6 22. b3 ♙b7 23. ♙e3 ♖fc8 24. ♖a5
♘bd7 25. ♖fa1 ♙c7 26. ♖5a2 ♙d6 27. ♙f3
♖c7 28. ♖a5 ♙c8 29. ♙d1 g6 30. ♖g2 ♖g7
31. ♖1a3 ♙b7 32. g4 hxg4 1-0

“For some, chess is a sound, for others a map, but for me it is poetry, the poetry of intellect and fight”

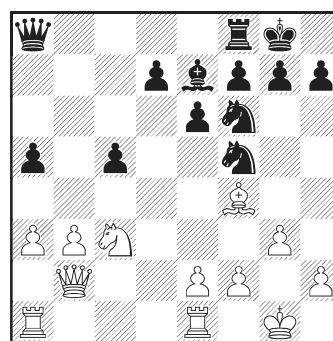
- Pablo Neruda

(33) V. Smyslov – A. Matanovic, 1976



White eventually wants to pressure the pawn on c5 (♘e1–d3, ♙c1–e3, ♖a3–a5), but the opponent hopes to counter on

(34) A. Karpov – L. Christiansen, 1993



19. a4!

Preparing 20. ♘b5, which if played immediately would get undermined swiftly with ...a4.