

Practical Chess Beauty Second Edition

By

Yochanan Afek



Quality Chess
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Preface to the Second Edition

The first edition of my 'deep purple' book, published in 2018, was dedicated to the first fifty years of my creative chess career. In the years that followed, I slowed down my playing and training activities – yet in chess composing and writing, I continue to find worthy alternative channels to express my never-ending chess passion.

Following the growing popularity of the art of the endgame study, also as a highly appreciated training tool, and consequently the success of the first edition, I was encouraged by Quality Chess to add a selection of my more recent efforts, partly in collaboration with gifted fellow composers. Introduced in the additional chapter, they represent a variety of my favourite themes and motifs with a clear affinity to the over-the-board game.

I hope you will manage to combine the instructive with the enjoyable to enhance your own chess passion and strength.

Yochanan Afek
Amsterdam, July 2025

Publisher's Foreword to the Second Edition

From the moment that Yochanan Afek first agreed to publish a compilation of his finest chess studies with relevance for practical players, we knew it would be a gem of a book. We were exceedingly proud to publish *Practical Chess Beauty* in 2018, and the glowing praise it received from reviewers and readers confirmed our assessment. Not long before becoming World Champion, Gukesh named *Practical Chess Beauty* among his three favourite chess books.

At some point, we sold out of the initial print run. It would have been easy to reprint, but we loved the idea of a new edition even more. Happily for us, Yochanan agreed. The maestro has remained active as a composer and he continues to hone his craft.

Practical Chess Beauty Second Edition adds a substantial new chapter, containing thirty-six of Yochanan's favourite studies that he composed since *Practical Chess Beauty* was published. His passion for composing seems boundless: even in the late stages before going to print, Yochanan was emailing me with corrections, refinements and even a few hot-off-the-press studies which he rates among the best he has ever produced. (Don't worry – they ended up in the book!)

We were also keen to enhance the content of the original book as much as possible. Even though the original studies were engine-checked, we rechecked everything at a high search depth and were able to unearth some subtle analytical corrections. In most cases, this meant adjusting a small detail a few moves into a sideline: a worthwhile change, but nothing that would affect the overall accuracy of the study. Only in one case did we end up discarding and replacing an entire study: a "White to play and draw" example where Black was able to sidestep the glorious trickery and win. In a few other cases, the engine check highlighted some form of secondary solution. Any such change has, of course, been noted. From time to time, you'll see a *Note to the second edition*, followed by a few short sentences with my comments on a correction, revision or some other point of interest relating to the study.

Thank you for purchasing this book. If you love chess, you're in for a treat with Yochanan's studies.

Andrew Greet
Glasgow, August 2025

Foreword

by GM Emil Sutovsky

Dear Reader,

You are holding a book written by a Maestro. Maestro stands here not for an official title, though Yochanan Afek is an International Master who still occasionally wins tournaments. Yochanan is a prolific chess composer whose studies have caused headaches and enormous pleasure for generations of top players – and I still can't believe he formally became a composing Grandmaster only three years ago. Yochanan is also an organizer, lecturer, author, journalist, trainer, solver, you name it – he covers all aspects of chess with his enormous passion for the game and his professionalism. A representative of the good old school, Yochanan also managed to adapt, and his works comprise human intellect and inspiration, but at the same time are augmented by the use of modern technologies.

This book is exceptional. Yochanan breaks down numerous important patterns and concepts, and offers examples that would be suitable for players in the Elo range 800-2800. In my view, there can be a lot of differences between a good and a very good player, and between a very good player and a Top-10 player. But what distinguishes any good chess player is immediate pattern recognition. And this book will help a lot to improve in this regard, while at the same time providing fine food for thought, even for a grandmaster.

'You can't cover it all' – I hear you, dear reader. Indeed, it is a difficult task, but Yochanan's versatility makes him a wonderful guide. He supplies every position with a story, explanation or anecdote – making this not just another instructional or puzzle book, but a good read. You can study it and learn from it, trying to dig into every position, or just take it with you on a trip – to simply enjoy leafing through it. Simple forks and beautiful zugzwangs, club players and chess legends, history and stories – you will meet them all on these pages, and it all feels so natural. Probably because it repeats Yochanan's life in chess. As a boy, he visited a chess club in Tel Aviv where he was taught by the famous Moshe Czerniak, and one can still see this youthful spirit and enthusiasm in Afek's work. At least I can testify that his sense for chess beauty has not suffered any damage throughout our 27 years of friendship.

Afek's career as a competitive player was rather successful, but his *life* in chess is simply exceptional. One of the most popular figures in the chess world, Yochanan is always surrounded by colleagues, friends, spectators – always ready to share one of his latest gems or discoveries. And more than once I have witnessed Top-10 players puzzling with each other over Afek's studies. His lectures and masterclasses attract many bright junior talents, but also bring a lot of joy to club players, who are invited to immerse themselves in the wonders of chess.

I had a chance to read and even review some of Yochanan's previous books, and I have to admit – he has got better and better. I never believed in the “old wine” concept – it usually becomes more like vinegar. But not in this case. The book you hold is full of energy; it is fresh and evidently written with a lot of love and passion for the game. Yochanan visibly enjoys sharing his knowledge and readily invites us into his magical world.

I took this journey and enjoyed it a lot, and I am sure you will share this feeling.

Grandmaster Emil Sutovsky

Holon, Israel

July 2018

Chapter 4

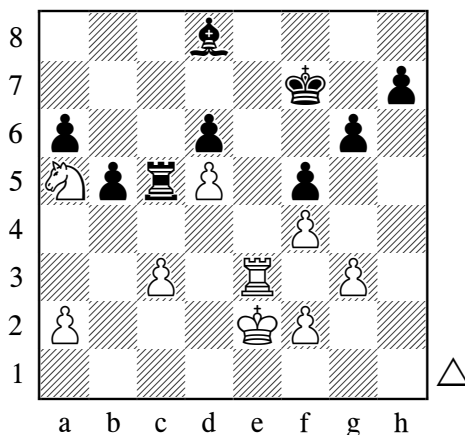
Forks

The fork is perhaps the most common tactical motif, especially in its broader sense of any double (or triple etc.) attack on essential squares in addition to enemy pieces. We have all encountered a multitude of forks at every stage of the game, both on the attacking and the defending side.

Let's start with a couple of simple practical examples.

Yochanan Afek – Christian Troyke

Nuremberg 2013



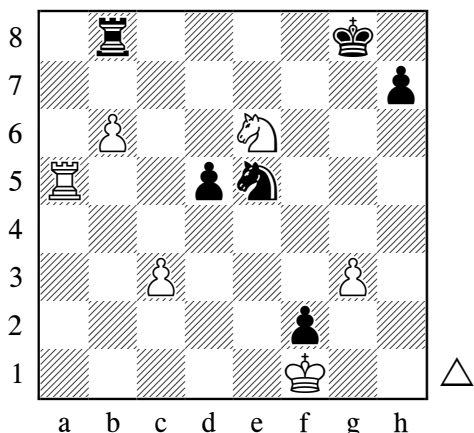
31. ♖b7

White starts with a triple fork. Black resigned, since 31... ♜c8 32. ♘xd6† produces a second successive fork. A *moving fork* is the term for this type of combination.

1–0

Yochanan Afek – Andrew Ledger

Oakham 1993



How should White convert his advantage?

47.b7!

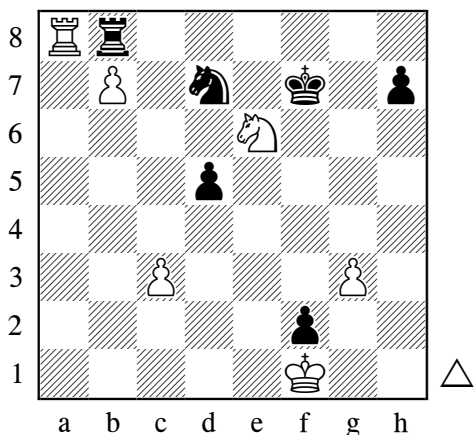
Threatening ♖a8.

47...♔f7

Taking the b-pawn sets up a fork: 47...♞xb7? 48.♞a8† ♔f7 49.♘d8†+–

48.♞a8! ♘d7

This does not offer much hope, but 48...♞xb7 again runs into 49.♘d8†.

**49.♞xb8 ♘xb8 50.♘f4 ♔e7 51.♘d5† ♔d6****52.♘f6 ♔c6 53.♘xh7 ♔xb7 54.♔xf2+–**

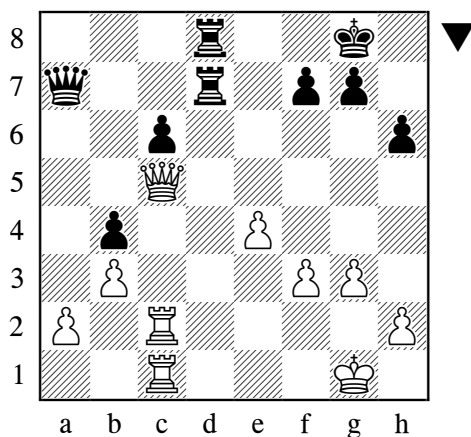
Two pawns down in the knight ending, Black soon resigned.

...1–0

The pieces most commonly identified with forks are the knights, as in the two examples above. However, any piece is capable of an effective double attack, especially the mighty queen.

Sergey Vertkin – Yochanan Afek

Tel Aviv 1993



White is a pawn up, but Black has no trouble equalizing.

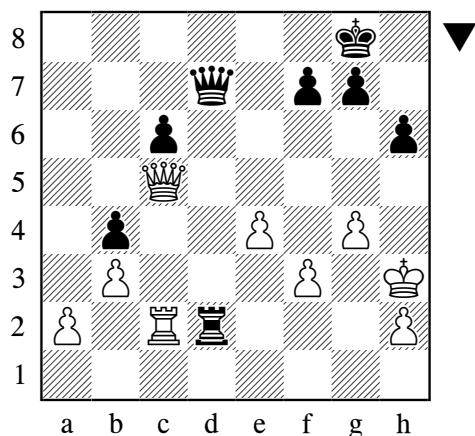
39...♞d1† 40.♞xd1 ♞xd1† 41.♔g2 ♞d2†

The endgame after 41...♞xc5 42.♞xc5 ♞d2† 43.♔h3 ♞xa2 44.♞xc6 ♞b2 45.♞b6 ♞xb3= is safe for a draw, but I opted to change the move order to set one last trap.

42.♔h3??

Any king move to the back rank would have been perfectly safe. Instead though, White makes an instinctive movement to take his king away from the back-rank danger to “safety”, which proves to be an illusion.

42...♞d7†! 43.g4



43...♙d3!

White missed this double attack which will cost him his rook, in view of the deadly threat of ...♙xf3†.

44.♙f5

Setting a final pitfall.

44...♙f1†!

Not falling for 44...♙xc2? 45.♙c8† ♔h7 46.♙f5† with perpetual check.

45.♔g3 ♙f2† 46.♔f4 g5†

0-1

Meet the shortest game I have ever won in an official tournament. A lethal queen fork is the highlight of the dozen-move miniature.

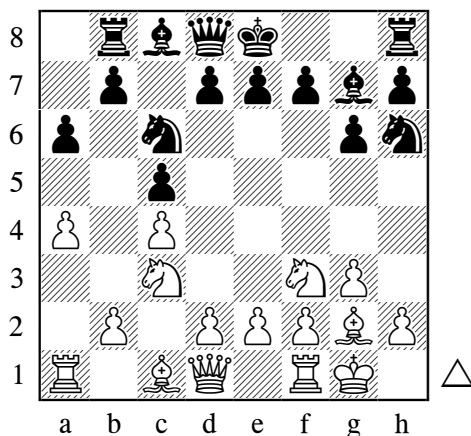
Yochanan Afek – Benjamin Katz

Israel 1977

1.♘f3 g6 2.g3 ♘g7 3.♘g2 c5 4.c4 ♘c6 5.♘c3 ♙b8 6.0-0 a6 7.a4 ♘h6!?

We were all taught to develop our knights towards the centre. Black's choice, however, seems sensible, as he intends to shift the knight to f5 in order to reinforce control over d4 and prevent a central breakthrough. The somewhat paradoxical drawback of this move is that it

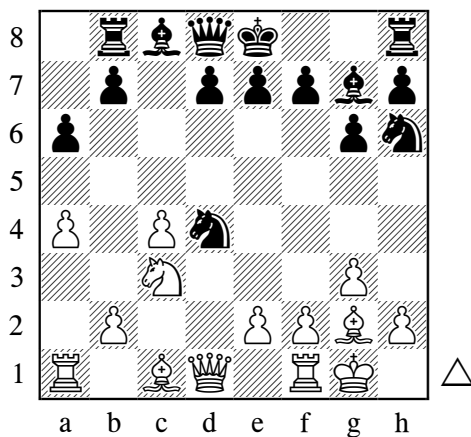
actually allows and even accelerates the very pawn break which it was meant to slow down.



8.d4! cxd4 9.♘xd4

There is actually no significant harm if Black continues with either 9...♘g4, transferring his knight back to the centre, or simply 9...0-0. Instead he errs horribly.

9...♘xd4?



10.♘xh6! ♘xe2??

This greedy move costs Black dearly in no time; however, he is already in big trouble.

10...♘xh6? loses to 11.♙xd4 0-0 12.♙a7! ♙c7 13.♘d5 ♙d6 14.c5 ♙e5 15.f4 and the silly rook can no longer be protected.

10...♙e5! keeps the game going, although 11.f4 ♙f6 12.e4 secures White an overwhelming positional advantage.

11. ♖xe2 ♙xh6 12. ♖e5!

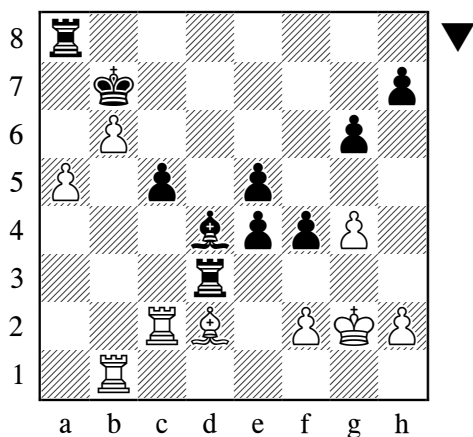
A rare opening vision where the black rooks, on opposite sides of the board, are attacked simultaneously.

1–0

In the following example Black has obtained a winning position. He can keep on improving it gradually, or force matters in order to decide the game more quickly.

Ran Shabtai – Yochanan Afek

Ramat Hasharon 1993



32...♙xf2!

Sacrificial liquidation, assisted by a couple of forks, paves the way for Black's connected passed pawns.

33. ♖xf2 ♖xd2†!

A rook fork...

34. ♖xd2 e3†

Followed by a pawn fork.

35. ♙e2 exd2 36. ♖b5

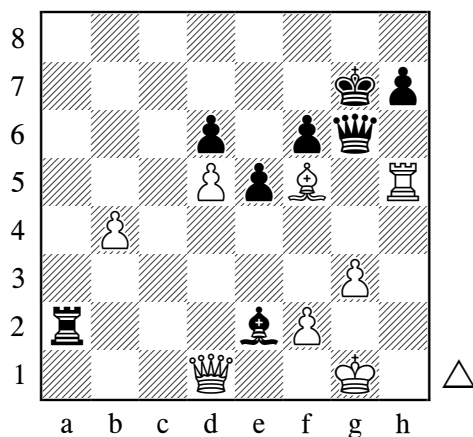
White threw in the towel without waiting for the deadly 36...♖d8.

0–1

The biggest club in the Netherlands, if judged by the number of members, is Caissa Amsterdam, situated in the heart of the Dutch capital and pretty close to my own home. The club holds the traditional weekend Eijgenbrood tournament, in which I took part a couple of times. In its 2013 edition, which I happened to win, I played a decisive game against FM Frank Erwich that reached the following position.

Frank Erwich – Yochanan Afek

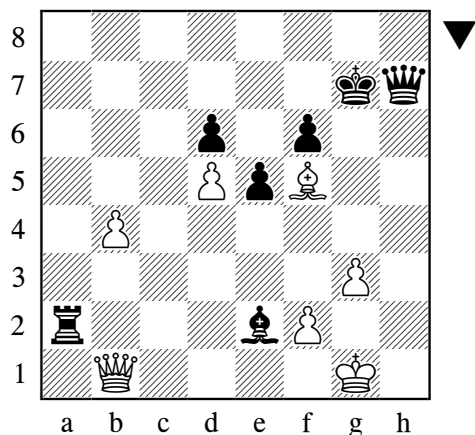
Amsterdam 2013



My bishop fork seemed to force matters and the game indeed continued: 42. ♖xe2? ♖xe2 43. ♙xg6 hxg6 44. ♖h4 ♖d2 45. ♖c4 ♖xd5 46. ♖c7† ♙h6 with an eventual winning rook ending for me. Only much later, my engine came up, against all odds, with a miraculous escape:

42. ♖xh7†!! ♖xh7 43. ♖b1!

This surprising double threat, attacking the rook while protecting the attacking bishop, changes the resulting ending considerably.



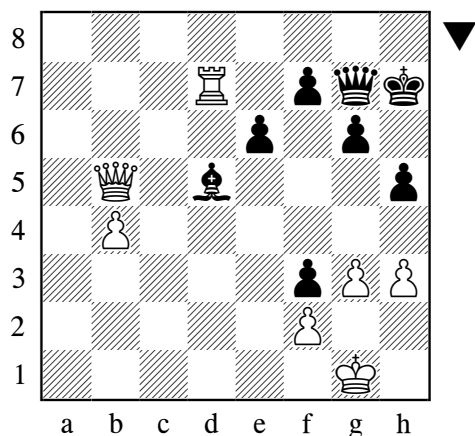
43...♔h5 44.♚xa2 ♚xf5 45.♚xc2 ♚b1†
46.♞g2 ♚xb4

The ending is completely equal.

The next example contains what is probably the most shocking fork I have ever delivered, at least when judged by the expression on my opponent's face.

Vahagn Voskanyan – Yochanan Afek

Paris 1994



White is better thanks to the exchange advantage and the strong passed pawn. Where lies Black's chance?

47...h4!

This is the saving move, threatening to smoke the king out and inviting White to commit suicide.

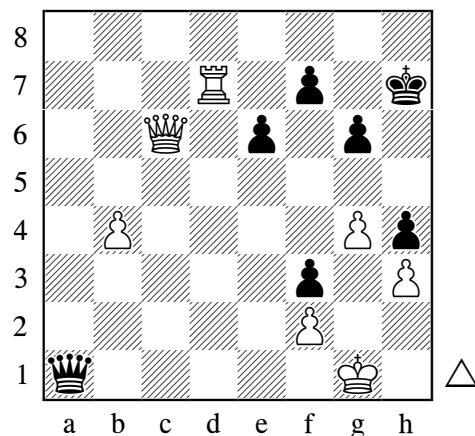
48.g4??

And he indeed falls for it!

48...♞c6!!

On seeing this move, my opponent looked like he had just swallowed... a fork. This powerful sacrifice deflects the white queen to leave his back rank unprotected.

49.♚xc6 ♚a1†



50.♞d1

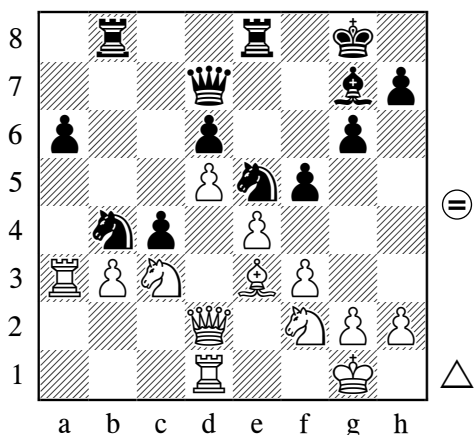
The alternative is mate in four: 50.♞h2 ♚e5† 51.♞g1 ♚e1† 52.♞h2 ♚xf2† 53.♞h1 ♚g2#

50...♚xd1† 51.♞h2 ♚e2! 52.♚c5 ♚f1
0-1

Knights, more than any other piece, are made for forking. We conclude the game selection with two more examples of forking knights at their best.

Richard Meulders – Yochanan Afek

Gent 1999



Black is already somewhat better, with all his pieces actively placed.

26. ♕d4?

This would be a reasonable positional move, if not for the pair of forks that follow.

26.f4 ♖ed3 27.bxc4 ♜xf2 28.♕xf2 fxe4 29.♖b3+ would have offered more resistance.

26... ♜xf3! 27.gxf3 ♕xd4 28.bxc4

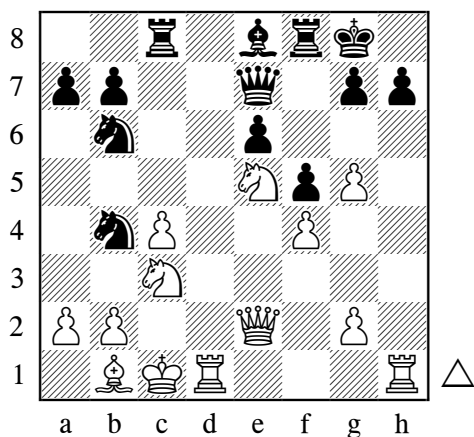
28.♖xd4 is naturally met by the second fork: 28... ♜c2+–

28... ♖bc8

Black eventually converted his advantage. ...0–1

Yochanan Afek – Merijn van Delft

Apeldoorn (rapid) 1999

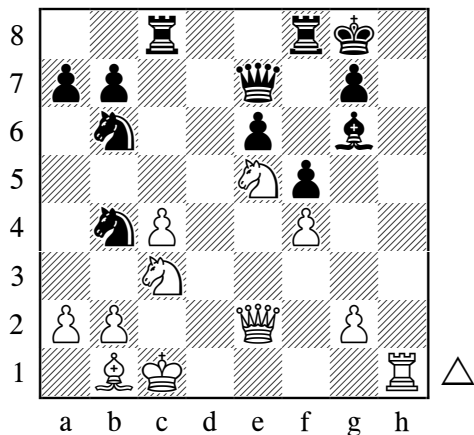


Can White tactically convert his evident positional superiority?

1. ♖xh7!! ♜xh7 2.g6! ♕xg6

2... ♜g8 3.♖h1! leads to the main line. (But not 3.♖h5? ♕xg6! when Black can fight on.)

3. ♖h1† ♜g8



4. ♖h8†!

Followed by two consecutive forks which leave Black no hope. 4... ♜xh8 5.♜xg6† ♜g8 (5... ♜h7 allows mate in two: 6.♖h5† ♜g8 7.♜xe7#) 6.♜xe7† ♜f7 7.♜xc8 etc.

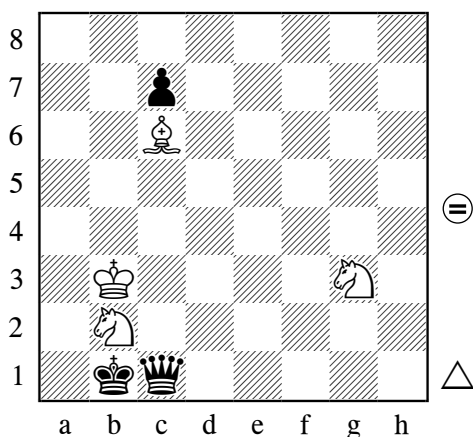
1–0

My Studies

Three pieces usually give an enemy queen a fair fight, provided that they don't lose 'eye contact' and coordination with each other. In our first example, all three pieces are under attack.

Yochanan Afek

HM, Jan Van Reek 50-JT 1995



1. ♖c4

1. ♙e4? ♜a1 2. ♖c4 loses a piece after 2... ♙e1.

1... ♙d1† 2. ♜c3 ♙c1†?

Black sets a small trap: perhaps the king will run in the wrong direction?

3. ♜b3

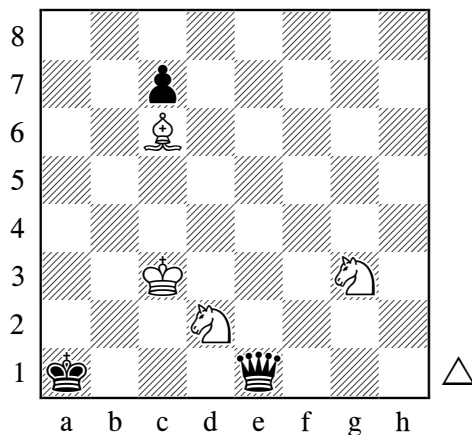
3. ♙d3? ♙c2† 4. ♜d4 ♙f2† wins, so the king steps back and forces Black to come up with a better winning attempt.

3... ♙d1† 4. ♜c3 ♙e1!

This is the more serious winning try, which leads to the key position of the study.

5. ♜d2† ♜a1!

5... ♜a2 allows the white pieces to regroup by means of 6. ♙d5†! ♜a3 7. ♜ge4 when Black cannot make any significant progress.



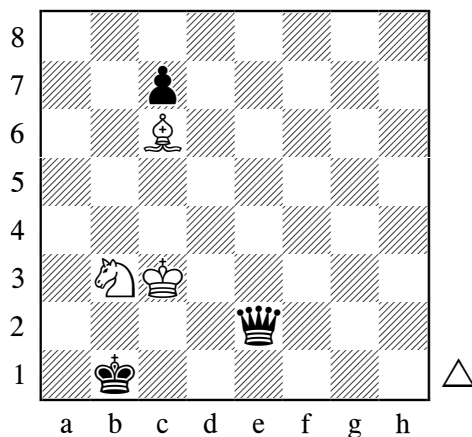
How should White handle the double threat? His knight is attacked directly and his bishop is threatened by way of a skewer.

6. ♜e2!!

An inventive salvation!

The attempt to build up a fortress by 6. ♜ge4? ♙c1† 7. ♜b3 ♙xc6 8. ♜c3 is fairly easily refuted by 8... ♙b7† 9. ♜c2 ♙b2† 10. ♜d3 c5 11. ♜c4 ♙b4 12. ♜d2 ♙d4† 13. ♜c2 c4 14. ♜de4 ♙e3 and Black wins.

6... ♙xe2 7. ♜b3† ♜b1



8. ♙e4†!

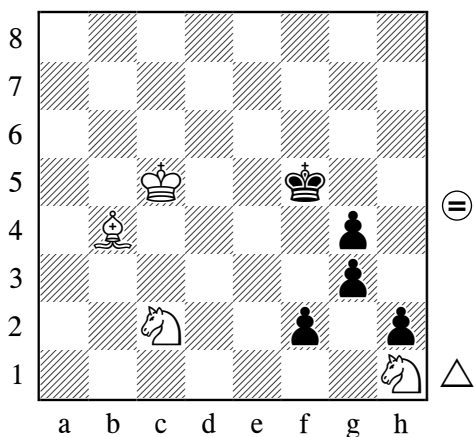
A second sacrifice and subsequent fork secures the draw.

8...♙xc4 9.♘d2†=

In the next position, White's three minor pieces must work in harmony to perform the miracle of restraining the enemy infantry.

Yochanan Afek

5th HM, Pervakov 50-JT 2010



1.♘e3†!

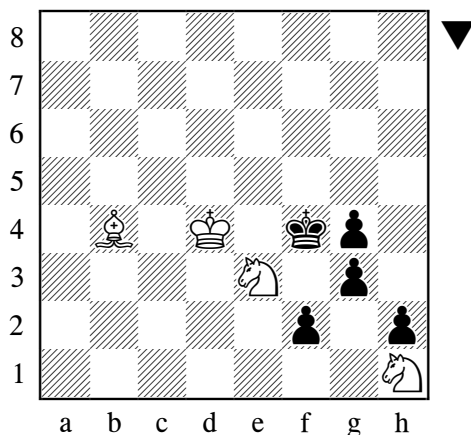
1.♘xg3†? is the first move which comes to mind, but after 1...♙f4 2.♘e2† ♙f3 3.♘cd4† ♙g2 4.♘f4† ♙h1 5.♘de2 f1=♙ 6.♘g3† ♙g1 7.♘f1 ♙xf1 Black wins.

1...♙f4

1...♙e4 allows 2.♘xg4 g2 3.♘hxf2† ♙f3 4.♘h2† ♙xf2 5.♙c3= with an easy draw.

2.♙d4!

2.♘g2†? loses in a few ways; for instance, 2...♙e5 3.♘e3 (3.♘xg3 h1=♙!→) 3...f1=♙ 4.♘f1 g2 and Black wins.



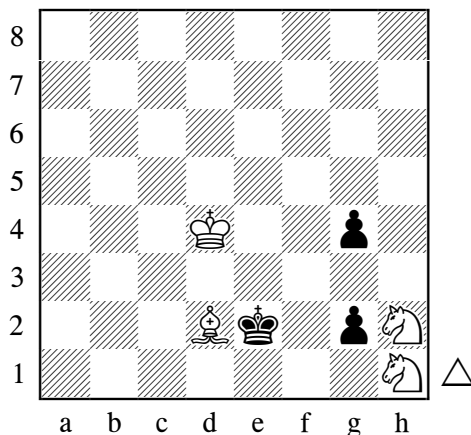
2...f1=♙!

Following 2...♙f3 3.♘xg3 ♙xg3 4.♙d6† ♙h3 5.♙xh2 ♙xh2 6.♘xg4† followed by 7.♘xf2 the kings will be the only survivors.

3.♘xf1 g2 4.♙d2†

4.♙d6†? ♙g5 5.♘fg3 g1=♙† 6.♙d5 ♙h4 is hopeless for White.

4...♙f3 5.♘h2† ♙e2



6.♘f1!!

The ending following 6.♘g3†? ♙xd2 7.♘e4† ♙e1 8.♘xg4 g1=♙† 9.♘e3 ♙e2 10.♘c3† ♙f3 is lost for White according to the tablebase.

6...g1=♖† 7.♔e3! ♖g2

7...♖xf1 and 7...♖xh1 are both met by a knight fork on g3.

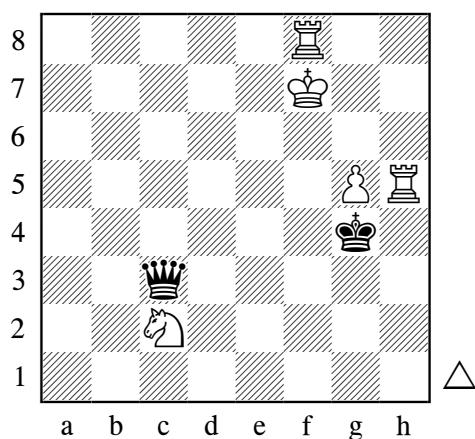
8.♘hg3†=

White has achieved a fortress draw, as the tablebase confirms. (8.♘fg3† appears less natural but is also good enough.)

In the next example White begins with a considerable material superiority, but will have to proceed with great accuracy in order to neutralize the queen's counter-threats.

Yochanan Afek

1st Comm., Israel 50-JT 1998

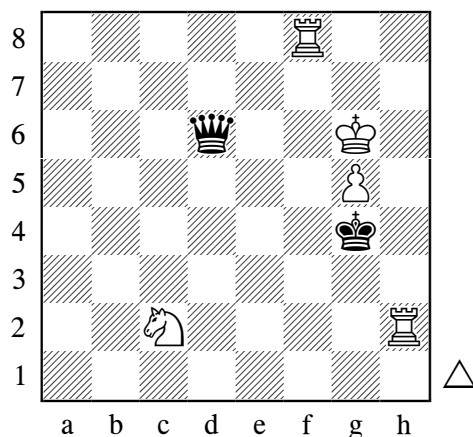


1.♖h2! ♖c4† 2.♔g7!

2...♔g6? is met by 2...♖e6† followed by an inevitable perpetual check.

2...♖c7† 3.♔g6 ♖d6†!

This intermediate check is vital, since the premature 3...♖xh2? loses the queen after 4.♔e3† followed by either a knight fork or a rook skewer.

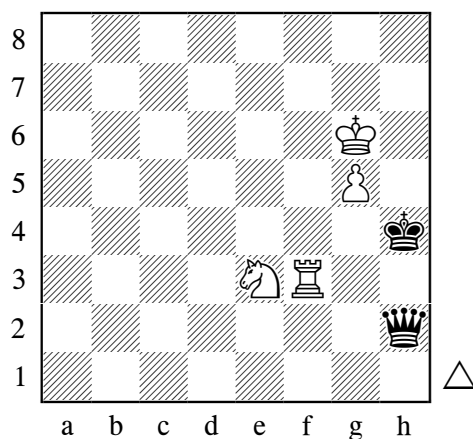


4.♖f6! ♖xh2 5.♔e3† ♔h3

5...♔h4 is met by 6.♖f4†! ♔h3 7.♖f3† reaching the main line below.

6.♖f3† ♔h4

And now what?



7.♖g3!!+-

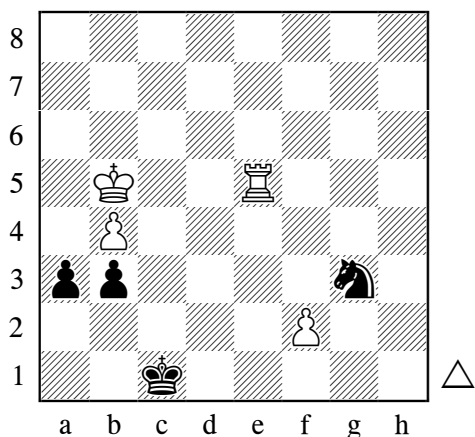
The deadly threat of ♔f5# means that Black can only choose which decisive fork out of 7...♔xg3 8.♔f1† or 7...♖xg3 8.♔f5† he wishes to allow.

Starting in the late eighties, I used to visit Hungary at least once a year, combining chess with tourism and seeing friends. Whenever I arrived in the capital Budapest I used to visit,

among others, my fellow gifted composer, the late Attila Koranyi (1934-1997). The following study was dedicated to his memory:

Yochanan Afek

2nd Prize, Koranyi MT 1999



Taming Black's pair of connected passed pawns seems a piece of cake, yet that is not even going to be the beginning of the end of it. Just perhaps the end of the beginning...

1.♔a4

The pawns must be stopped before it's too late.

1...b2 2.♕xa3!

Now if Black promotes to a queen he will be lethally skewered, but of course there is much more to the solution than that.

2...♖e4!!

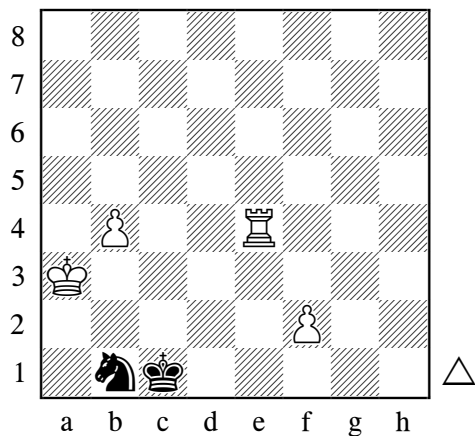
A surprising defensive resource.

2...b1=♖† is the other candidate move, but after 3.♕b3 ♖d2† 4.♕a4 ♖ge4 5.b5 ♖c3† 6.♕b4 White wins comfortably.

3.♞xe4 b1=♖†!

This is the idea behind the previous move: the sacrificed knight is reborn! (In chess

composition this is known as the Phoenix theme.) Wherever the king moves, the newborn knight will deliver a fork to pick up the loose rook.

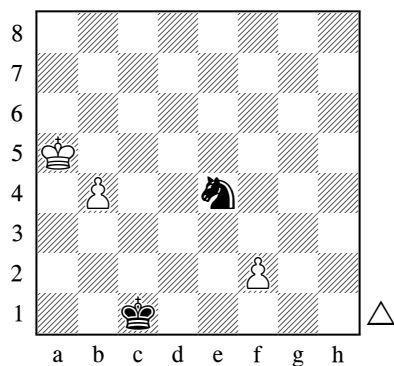


4.♕a2!!

Contrary to normal endgame principles, White's only winning plan is to hide his king in the corner to avoid further knight checks.

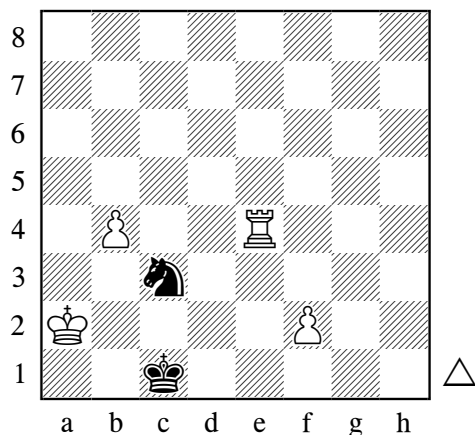
4.♕b3? ♖d2† 5.♕c3 ♖xe4† 6.♕d4 ♖xf2 7.b5 ♖g4 8.b6 ♖f6= is a relatively easy draw.

4.♕a4? ♖c3† 5.♕a5 ♖xe4 is closer, but Black will be just in time:



6.f4 (6.b5 ♖xf2! 7.b6 ♖d3 8.b7 ♖e5!= is easier for Black) 6...♕d2 7.f5 ♕e3 8.b5 ♕f4 9.b6 ♖d6 10.f6 ♕g5 11.f7 ♖xf7 12.b7 ♖d8!= Finally the draw is secured.

4...♖c3†



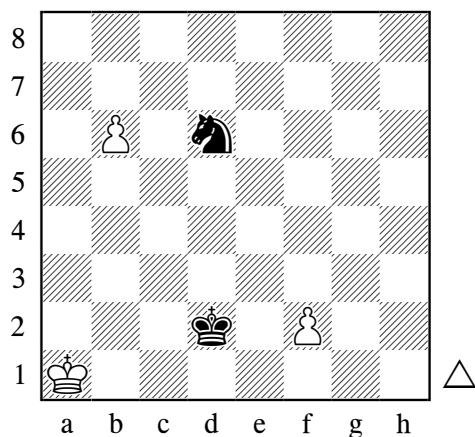
5.♔a1!!

The king finds the one hiding place where it can avoid the forking checks.

5...♖xe4 6.b5!

6.f4? ♖d6 catches both birds in one shot.

6...♖d6 7.b6 ♔d2



8.f4 ♔e3 9.f5 ♔e4 10.f6+–

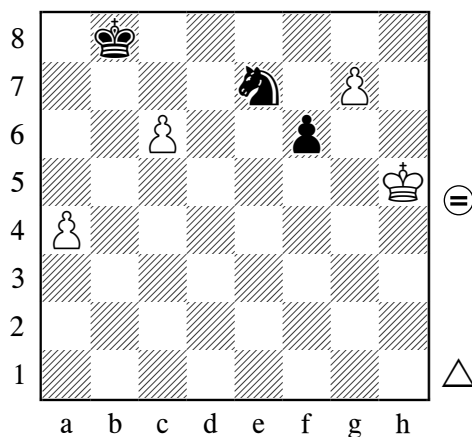
Finally, White secures the promotion of one of his pawns.

Avoiding knight forks

The studies so far have focused on utilizing forking motifs to achieve one's objectives, but avoiding them can be an art form in itself.

Yochanan Afek

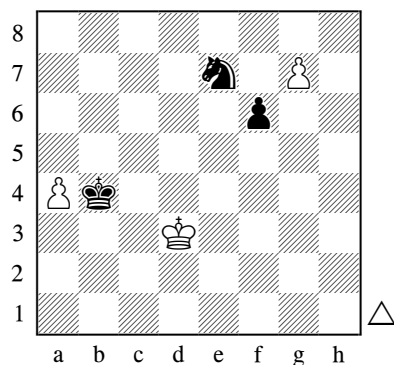
2nd Special Prize, Dvoretzky 60-JT (c) 2007



Facing an impenetrable barrier on the kingside, the white king must walk on his toes all the way to the other side of the board in order to infiltrate the enemy lines. Along the way, he will have to avoid various forking and reciprocal zugzwang pitfalls.

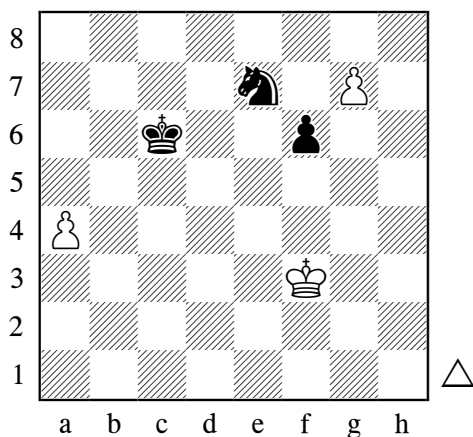
1.♔g4 ♔c7 2.♔f3!

2.♔f4? is an instructive mistake, after which 2...♔xc6 3.♔e4 ♔c5 4.♔d3 ♔b4 reaches a reciprocal zugzwang:



White needs to stop the black king from capturing on a4 and returning to the centre. 5.♔d4 is the only move to meet this requirement, but it allows a deadly fork: 5...♘f5†–+

2...♔xc6



3.♔e2!

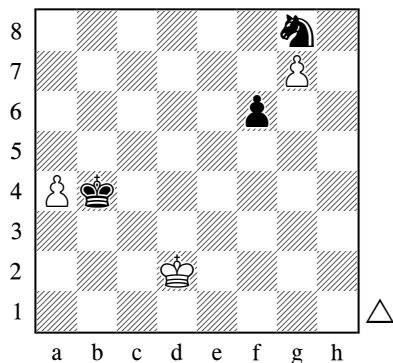
3.♔e4? transposes to the previous note, with 3...♔c5 4.♔d3 ♔b4–+ leading to the same zugzwang position.

3...♔c5 4.♔d2!

Once again, White must be precise and avoid 4.♔d3? ♔b4 with the familiar zugzwang.

4...♔b4

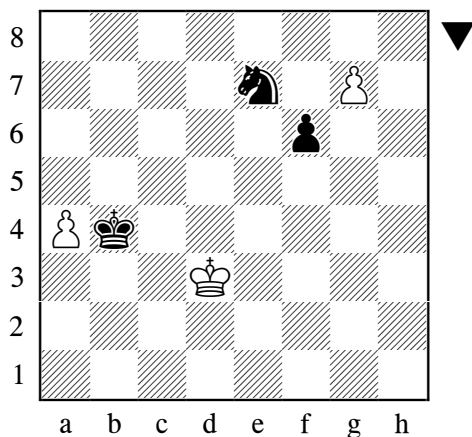
4...♔c4!? is possible but it does not change the result: 5.♔c2 ♘g8 6.♔d2 ♔b4



7.♔e3! (7.♔d3? ♘e7!–+ is what White must avoid) 7...♔xa4 (7...♘e7 8.♔d3 reaches the main line below) 8.♔d4 and White draws.

5.♔d3!

Reaching the key reciprocal zugzwang position, but this time with Black to play!



5...♔xa4

Black has nothing better, but now the white king finally gets through.

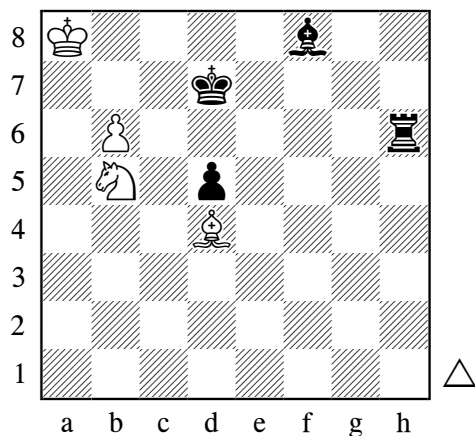
6.♔c4 ♔a5 7.♔c5 ♔a6 8.♔d6=

With a simple draw.

Exercises

1. Yochanan Afek

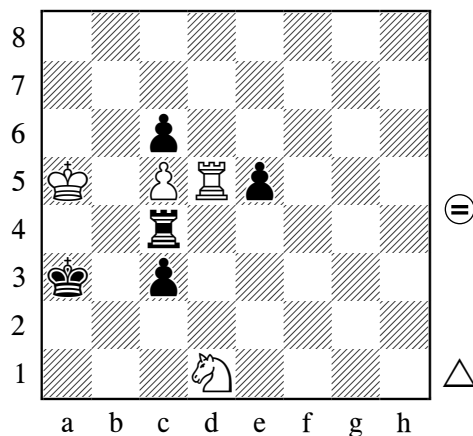
1st Prize, Israel Ring Tourney 1975



This is one of my earlier efforts and a personal favourite. How does White win a titanic battle to secure promotion?

3. Yochanan Afek

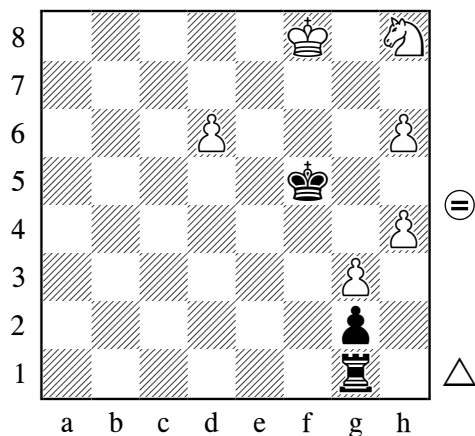
1st Prize, Joseph 100-JT (c) 1995



White's rook is attacked and ...c2 is threatened. How should White handle the double threat?

2. Amatzia Avni & Yochanan Afek

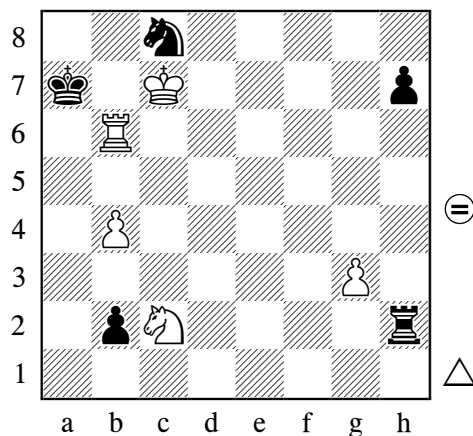
3rd HM, EG 2003



Both sides have promoting aspirations, though Black's prospects seem brighter. How can White deal with this?

4. Yochanan Afek

Tata Steel Chess study (v) 2011



The black passed pawn is too tough to beat. Preparing a warm welcome for the newborn queen might be somewhat easier.

Solutions

1. Yochanan Afek

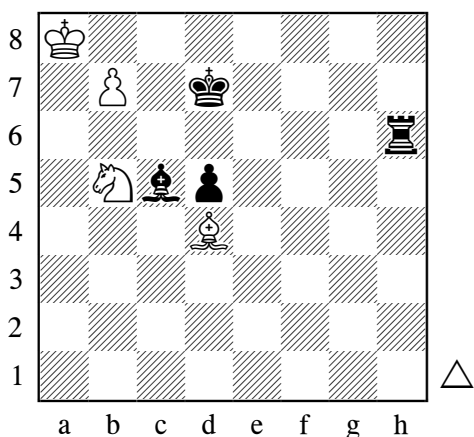
1st Prize, Israel Ring Tourney 1975

1.b7 ♖c5!

A surprising defensive resource to open up the eighth rank, whereas all the rook's direct attempts to get there are instantly refuted.

1...♞e6 loses to 2.♜c7!; while 1...♞c6 2.b8=♜†! catches the rook to obtain a decisive material advantage.

The alternative is not any better: 1...♞a6† 2.♖a7 and the promotion is unavoidable.



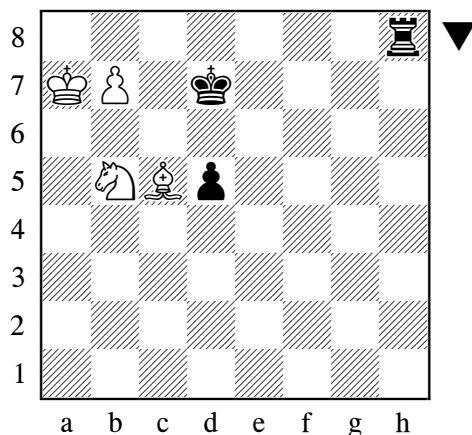
2.♖xc5

2.b8=♞? loses the newborn queen after 2...♞a6† 3.♖b7 ♞b6†.

2.b8=♜? ♖c8 3.♖xc5 is a theoretical draw. The simplest way for Black is 3...d4 in order to give away the d-pawn. White will never be able to weave a mating net, as the black rook will threaten to sacrifice itself for the bishop, in order to leave White with a useless knight pair.

2...♞h8† 3.♖a7

3.b8=♞? is met by 3...♞xb8† 4.♖xb8 ♖c6= with a royal fork.



3...♖c6

This not only forks the bishop and knight, but also threatens a pin along the seventh rank.

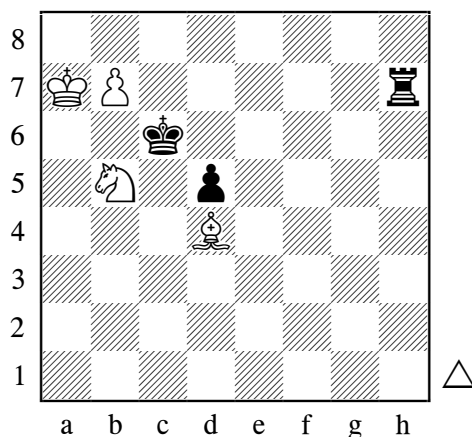
4.♖d4!

A vital switchback. Quite a few solvers fall here for 4.♜d6? ♖xc5 5.♜c8 ♞h7= with an easy draw.

4...♞h7

4...♞f8 or any other move of the rook along the eighth rank allows White a vital tempo for 5.♖a6 followed by 6.♖e5 to win the rook by promoting and then mate with a bishop and knight.

After the text move Black is poised to eliminate the vital pawn. How on earth is White still winning?



5.♙g7!!

A brilliantly unexpected bishop sacrifice masks the pinning line.

5...♖xg7

The rook has been lured just a single square from its previous position, making a vital difference after:

6.♘d4†+-

6...♙d6 7.♘f5† and 6...♙c5 7.♘e6† are deadly forks, while retreating to the seventh rank would unpin the b-pawn, allowing a triumphant promotion.

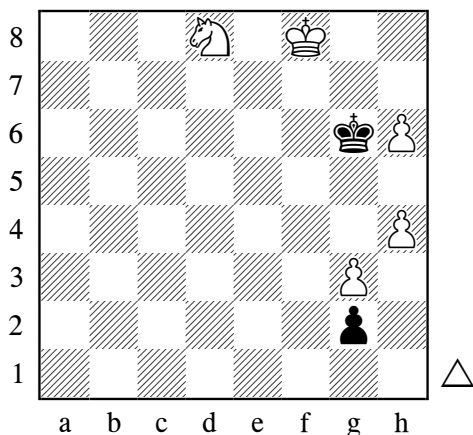
I dedicated that study to a girl at the time. It won the Israeli annual tourney but failed to win her heart. Who knows, if she could only play chess she might have appreciated the beauty of the study and changed my life entirely. In the next life I am going to try poetry...

2. Amatzia Avni & Yochanan Afek

3rd HM, EG 2003

1.♘f7 ♖a1 2.d7 ♖a8† 3.d8=♚ ♖xd8† 4.♘d8 ♙g6!

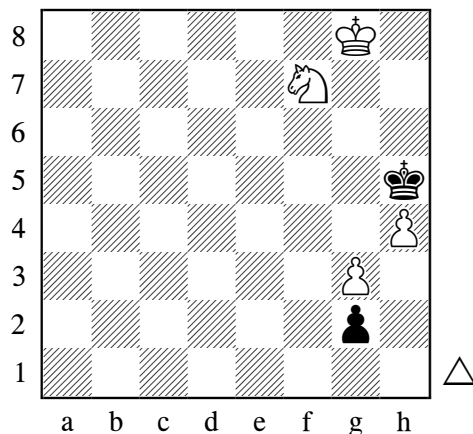
4...g1=♚ doesn't promise much after 5.h7 ♚c5† 6.♙g8 ♚d5† 7.♘f7 and White draws easily.



5.♙g8!

5.h5†? fails to 5...♙h7! and Black wins.

5...♙xh6 6.♘f7† ♙h5

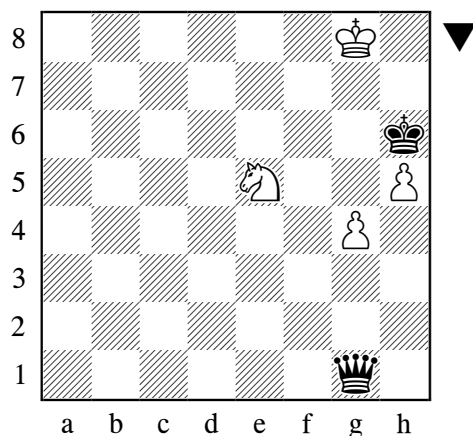


The new queen cannot be stopped, yet a warm welcome may still be prepared for her.

7.♘e5! g1=♚ 8.g4†! ♙h6

8...♙xh4 is met by the fork 9.♘f3†.

9.h5!

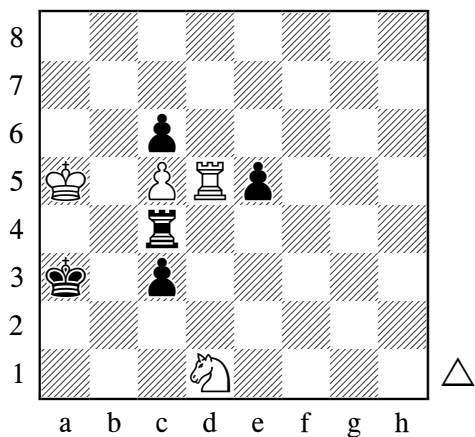


A mating net has been set, and Black has no choice but to abandon his queen. For example:

9...♙g5 10.♘f3†=

3. Yochanan Afek

1st Prize, Joseph 100-JT (c) 1995



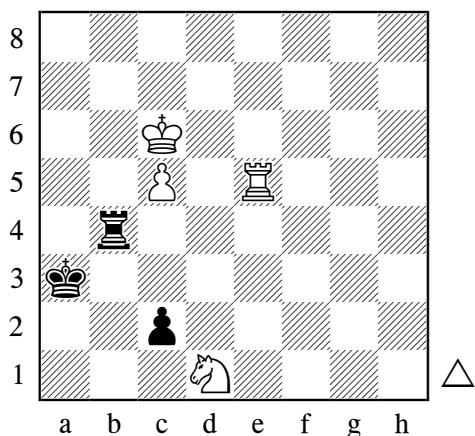
1. ♖xe5!

1...♞d3? is met by 1...♞xc5† 2. ♖b6 ♖b4!
3. ♜e3 c2 4. ♜xc2† ♞xc2→ and Black wins.

1...♞a4†!

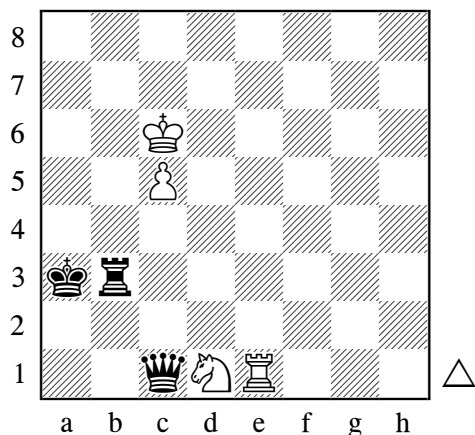
An important in-between move. 1...c2 enables White to draw more easily: 2. ♞e3† ♖a2 3. ♜c3† ♖b2 4. ♜e2 ♞xc5† 5. ♖b6 c1=♞ 6. ♜xc1 ♞xc1 7. ♞e5=

2. ♖b6 ♞b4†! 3. ♖xc6 c2



4. ♞e3†! ♞b3 5. ♞e1!! c1=♞

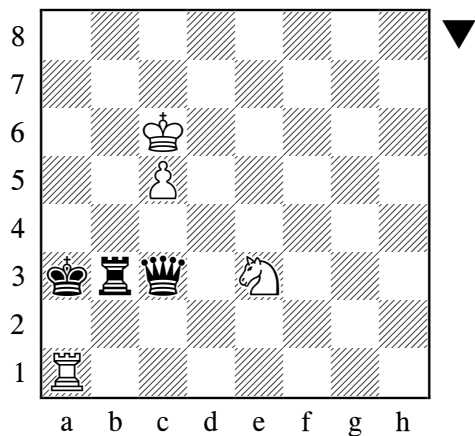
5...♞b1 6. ♜e3!= also holds.



6. ♜e3!! ♞c3

All other queen moves are met by knight forks: 6...♞xe1 7. ♜c2†, 6...♞b2 7. ♜c4†, or 6...♞d2 7. ♜c4†.

7. ♞a1†!!



7...♞xa1

7...♖b2 8. ♜d1† draws in much the same way; and 7...♖b4?? even loses after 8. ♜d5†.

8. ♜c2† ♖b2 9. ♜xa1 ♖xa1=

The draw is certain, as the c-pawn will cost Black his rook; the black king is not even close to getting back in time.

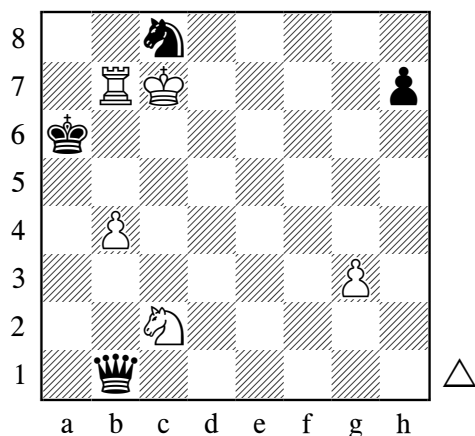
4. Yochanan Afek

Tata Steel Chess study (v) 2011

1. ♖b7† ♕a6 2. ♘a3

White's first two moves were forced, but now Black has a small trick to force the b-pawn through.

2... ♜c2†! 3. ♘xc2! b1=♚



4. ♖b5!!

It just so happens that the best way to defend the attacked knight is to put the rook en prise too!

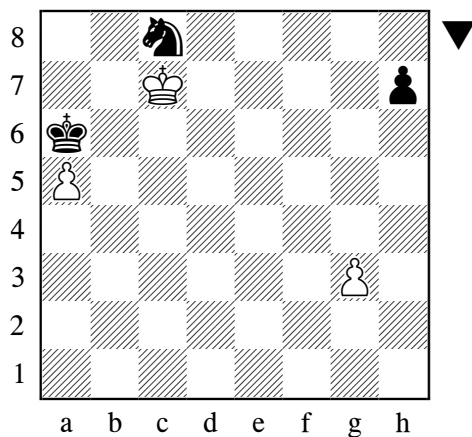
Note to the second edition: The original study started with a black pawn on b5, but Yochanan subsequently realized that the solution remains identical without it. Superfluous pieces are best removed. Besides, the reader will surely appreciate the enhanced elegance of the rook offering itself by moving into thin air, as opposed to capturing an enemy unit.

4... ♜xc2† 5. ♖c5

The royal family is simultaneously in danger.

5... ♜a4 6. ♖a5† ♜xa5† 7. bxa5

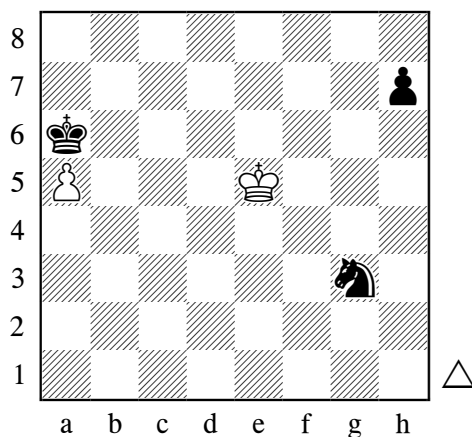
A totally new phase starts. The journey towards the last pawn must still be handled with precision.



7... ♘e7 8. ♔d6!

8.g4? loses to 8... ♘d5†! 9. ♔d6 ♘f6 10.g5 ♘e4†; similarly, 8. ♔d7? ♘f5 9.g4 ♘h6! is hopeless for White.

8... ♘f5† 9. ♔e5! ♘xg3



10. ♔f4! ♘h5† 11. ♔g5 ♘g7 12. ♔h6=

White's aesthetic triangle manoeuvre secures the draw.