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4 King-Hunting

Sometimes, having broken through the first line of defence, the opponent's king is forced to take flight on another side of the board. Chasing down the exile is often a very difficult task and certain principles must be taken into account. It is a very infrequent occurrence in modern grandmaster chess to see king-hunts like those in the swash-buckling era of Labourdonnais, Morphy and Anderssen. Defensive knowledge has increased by quantum leaps and players have a much more heightened sense of danger than their 19th century predecessors. Yet king-hunts across the board do arise on occasion and one should understand certain principles regarding king-hunts.

Kings are slippery fellows and I have seen dozens of cases where thoughtless checks and random play lead an attack into a dead-end with nothing to show for a massive material deficit. Every conceivable – even absurd-looking – check and tactic must be taken into account. A fresh sacrifice to bring needed reinforcements or to increase the exposure of the target king must always be evaluated. Always be careful about sudden checks against your own king in the event you play a 'quiet move'. The material count should be kept in mind at all

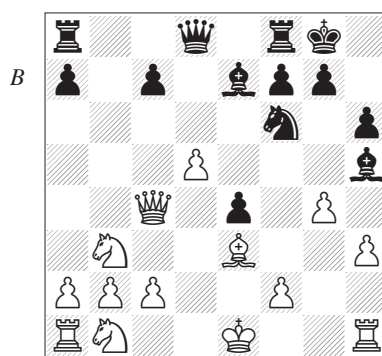
times (often a difficult chore if the hunt involves captures by both sides). As the king moves from its original square, beware of newly opened diagonals and files. A ventilated and abandoned kingside can become a quick and convenient source of counterattack due to the open files.

All of these factors are illustrated in the following examples. The first game features sacrifices that first expose, and then entomb, the enemy king.

Passov – J. Zamora

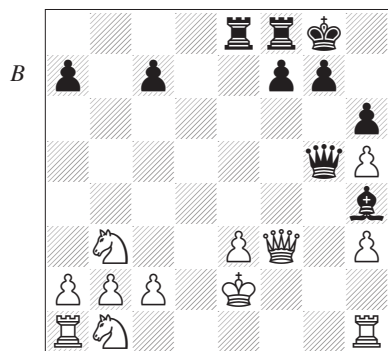
New York 1991

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♙c4 ♘f6 4 ♘g5
d5 5 exd5 ♘a5 6 d3 h6 7 ♘f3 e4 8
♚e2 ♘xc4 9 dxc4 ♙c5 10 ♘fd2 ♙g4
11 ♚f1 0-0 12 h3 ♙h5 13 ♘b3 ♙e7
14 ♙e3 b5 15 g4 bxc4 16 ♚xc4 (D)



White is hoping to spur his lagging development. If Black plays an insipid move like 16...♙g6 then after 17 ♘c3, White can look forward to keeping his pawn and bringing his king to safety. Black instead sacrifices a piece to begin a merry chase of the king.

16...♘xd5! 17 gxh5 ♘xe3 18 fxe3 ♙h4+ 19 ♖e2 ♗g5 20 ♜xe4 ♞ae8 21 ♜f3 (D)



All of these moves have been forced since 16...♘xd5. Black feeds his attack with some further sacrifices.

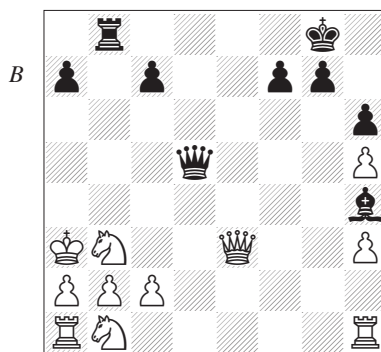
21...♞xe3+!!

The white king will be chased to the queenside where the open b-file will become death row.

22 ♜xe3 ♗g2+ 23 ♖d3 ♞d8+ 24 ♖c4

If 24 ♘d4, Black's most convincing line is 24...♜xh1 (better than 24...♙f2 25 ♜e4 ♞xd4+ 26 ♜xd4 ♜f3+ 27 ♖c4 ♙xd4 28 ♘c3, when White has survival chances) followed by ...c5 to retrieve sacrificed material while keeping a brutal pin along the first rank.

24...♜d5+ 25 ♖b4 ♞b8+ 26 ♖a3 (D)



Black wraps up by first diverting the queen's attention and then composing a mating-net.

26...♙e7+!! 27 ♜xe7 ♞xb3+!! 0-1

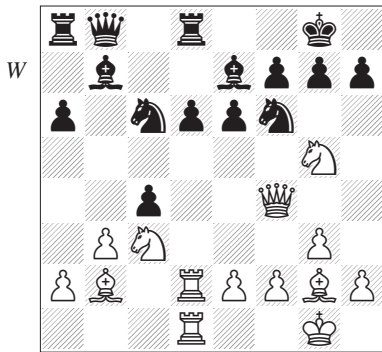
A classic king chase by 11-year old Zamora (now known as Sammour-Hasbun). When launching his sacrificial attack, he had to use imagination (examining every conceivable forcing move) and calculation to land his catch.

Almost as spectacular was a long, successful and instructive king-hunt carried out by Australian IM Alex Wohl:

Wohl – Gipslis

Biel Open 1996

1 ♘f3 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 ♘c3 e6 4 g3 b6 5 ♙g2 ♙b7 6 0-0 ♙e7 7 d4 cxd4 8 ♜xd4 ♘c6 9 ♜f4 0-0 10 ♞d1 ♜b8 11 b3 ♞d8 12 ♙b2 d6 13 ♞d2 a6 14 ♞ad1 b5 15 ♘g5 bxc4 (D)



White is well organized for unfriendly action against Black's king. He begins his attack with a rather blunt attacking move that brings all seven of his pieces into the attack against Black's king.

16 ♖ce4! d5

The only try. Black at least wins a piece for the trouble of watching his king run through a gauntlet of attackers.

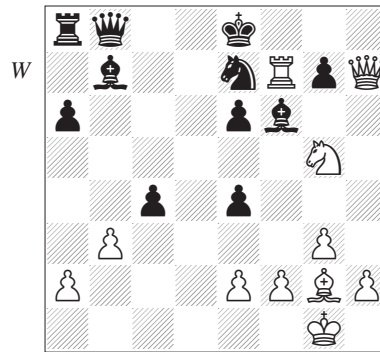
17 ♖h4 dxe4 18 ♙xf6 ♙xf6 19 ♖xh7+ ♔f8 20 ♖d7!

This takes away the flight square e7 and prepares to clear squares on the seventh rank so as to get at the black king. The materialistic 20 ♖xd8+ is less effective as after 20...♙xd8! 21 ♖xd8+ ♖xd8 Black has plenty of fight left in him.

20...♖xd7 21 ♖xd7 ♔e8 22 ♖xf7 ♘e7 (D)

After 22...♙e7, Black is quickly routed by 23 ♖g6 (threatening 23 ♖f8++)! 23...♙d6 24 ♖xe7++ ♔xe7 25 ♖xg7+ ♔d8 26 ♖xb7.

23 ♖xf6!

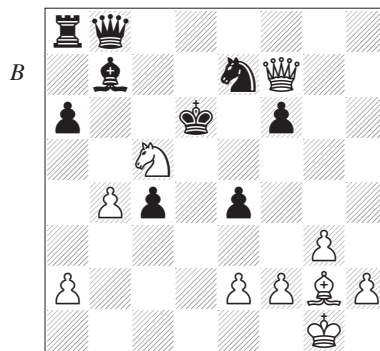


A new sacrifice to fuel the attack.

23...gxf6

Refusal of the offer with 23...♙e5 is met by 24 ♖xg7 ♔d7 25 ♙h3!, and White crashes through on e6.

24 ♖f7+ ♔d8 25 ♘xe6+ ♔d7 26 ♘c5+ ♔d6 27 b4! (D)



Wohl had to foresee this quiet killer at least when he played 23 ♖xf6. Looking ahead to this type of clinching blow is vital for a king-hunt attack to be successful.

27...♙e8 28 ♖xf6+ ♔c7 29 ♙e5+ ♔b6 30 ♘d7+!

A pleasing finish to a model king-hunt game.

30...♔c6 31 ♖c5+!

31 ♜f6 is not bad either.

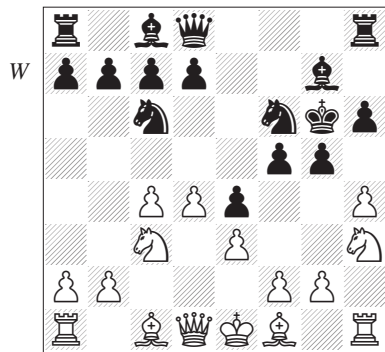
31...♔xd7 32 ♙h3+ 1-0

Wohl made sure he had sufficient resources to continue his mating attack even when the king managed to cross to the queenside.

Rohde – Zsu. Polgar

New York 1992

1 c4 e5 2 ♘c3 ♘c6 3 ♜f3 f5 4 d4 e4 5 ♜g5 h6 6 ♜h3 g5 7 ♜g1 ♙g7 8 e3 ♜f6 9 h4 ♙f7 10 ♜h3 ♙g6 (D)



Black has made the risky decision to bring her king out into the field to support her besieged pawn-front on the kingside. The idea is analogous to certain lines of the French Defence where White brings his king out to support a pawn-front. In this position, the idea fails because White can attack the centre in an effective way (generally the centre is closed in the French

lines where the white king comes out early).

11 f3

The first order of business is to punch holes in the pawn-cover. Now 11...exf3 12 gxf3 opens the g-file with dire consequences, so Black must support the centre.

11...♖e7 12 fxe4 ♜xe4

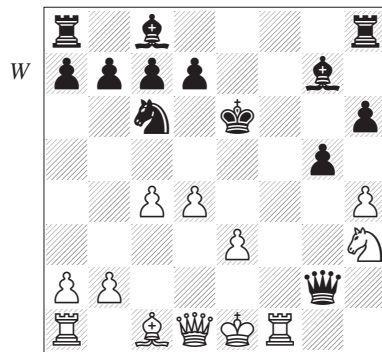
12...fxe4 13 ♜f2 d6 14 ♜fxe4 ♜xe4 15 ♜xe4 ♜xd4 (nothing better) 16 ♙d3 clearly favours White.

13 ♜xe4 ♖xe4 14 ♙d3!

This had to be very carefully considered. White's attacking chances look far from clear, taking into account his own weakened king position.

14...♖xg2 15 ♙xf5+ ♔xf5 16 ♖f1+ ♔e6 (D)

After 16...♙g6 17 ♖d3+ ♔h5 18 ♜f4+! gxf4 19 ♖f5+ ♔xh4 20 ♖xf4+ ♔g3 21 ♖g4+ ♔h2 22 ♖h4+ ♔g1 23 ♙d2 (quickest) Black has no defence to 0-0-0+. This all had to be calculated when playing 14 ♙d3.



17 ♖h5!!