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6 Vision

The last three chapters of the book could be labelled ‘The Fine Art of Seeing a Few Moves Ahead’. Being able to envisage a position at the end of a variation is a vital chess skill that sets top players apart from amateurs. I hear you protesting “But surely when we solved the checkmate and tactics puzzles in Chapter 1, we were seeing a few moves ahead!” True, but if you only need to verify that the enemy king is mated, or that you are a rook ahead in a quiet position, you need no more than a fuzzy image. When the target position demands a more finely-tuned assessment, it can feel as if fog has descended, and our brain almost stops functioning. Somehow, top players keep a clear picture in their mind, as we can see from the quality of their play even in blindfold games.

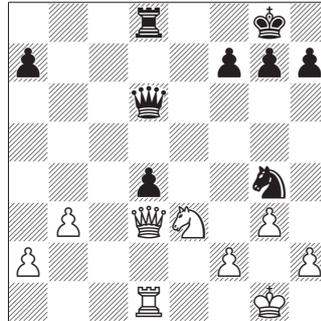
One way to develop this skill is by playing blindfold chess yourself. You’ll probably find that you manage better than you expected, and improve rapidly. Or play through games and variations from a book in your mind’s eye, and see how far you can follow them before you lose track of the position. You should find that with some practice, you are able to ‘refocus’ on a position several moves ahead. At the board, the time to refocus will be well spent if the improved view helps you get a critical decision right.

These final three chapters provide opportunities to develop your chess vision. You will need to analyse numerous possibilities that lead to positions which require further assessment or calculation. In some cases, the solution is a ‘resulting move’ – a concept discussed by Valeri Beim in *How to Calculate Chess Tactics*. These are moves that don’t initially appear to have much purpose, but are ideas sparked by your analysis of the more natural moves. Often a resulting move prevents counterplay, or rules out a defence that is preventing you from implementing your main ideas.

This chapter features puzzles that are mid-range in difficulty and complexity. You get 1 point for finding the correct move or giving the right answer to a question. There is an additional 1 point for seeing the main ideas and analysing the most critical of the supporting variations.

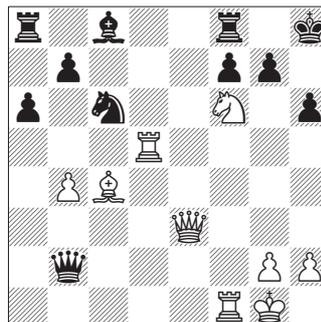
194 Black to play
Burmakin – Shaposhnikov
Voronezh 2010

White is trying to apply pressure to Black's isolated d-pawn, but Black can strike with a devastating tactical blow. What is it?



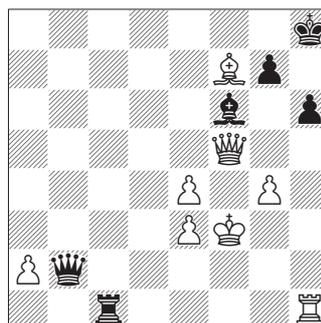
195 White to play
Ter-Sahakian – Kotanjian
Armenian Ch, Erevan 2011

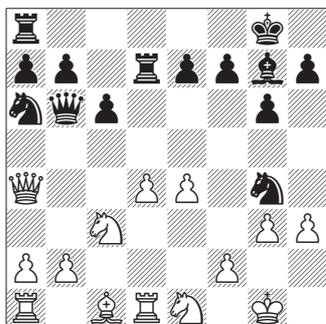
How should White pursue his attack? Think about what is preventing him from crashing through immediately, and how this problem can be remedied.



196 Black to play
Dzhumabaev – Maletin
Moscow 2011

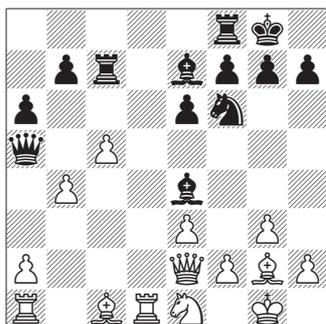
There are threats to both kings, so care is needed. Black has only one good move; everything else loses. What is this killer move?





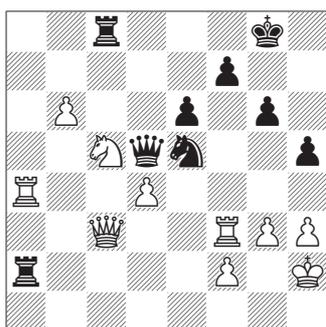
197 Black to play
Gajewski – Janković
Cappelle la Grande 2011

Naturally, Black does not want to retreat his knight, as this leaves White's centre unchallenged. But is there a good way to exploit the weakness of f2 and d4?



198 Black to play
Miroshnichenko – Gagunashvili
Turkish Team Ch, Konya 2011

Black chose 18...♖a4, and ended up defending an unpleasant pawn-down ending. Was there a good reason not to play 18...♖xb4 instead?



199 White to play
Bologan – Jobava
Poikovsky 2010

The number of *en prise* pieces makes the position initially quite confusing, but the variations are not too complex. Your task is to find a clear-cut win for White.

enough to win, but 46...♙e8! 47 ♖xh5+ ♗d7 48 ♖g7+ ♗c6 49 ♖f3+ ♗c5! 50 ♙b6+ ♗b5 is even more convincing, as the king makes a clean escape.

192) Kunte – Shyam

Commonwealth Ch, Delhi 2010

25...♙xb2! is best, mainly because it gives the rook the e5-square in the line 26 ♖xb2?! ♗a5! 27 ♖d5+ ♗h8 28 ♗xa5?! (28 ♗c7 ♗xc4 29 ♖xc4 ♗e5) 28...♙e5, when only Black can be better. 26 ♗c7 should lead to a draw (e.g., 26...bxa3 27 ♗a6 ♖a8 28 ♗c7 ♖b8 or 26...♙f6 27 ♗a6 ♖a8 28 ♗c7 ♖b8, with a repetition in both cases), because 26...♗xd6?! 27 ♖xd6 ♙e5 28 ♗xe5 ♙e6 29 ♗xd7 ♖xd6 30 ♗xb8 bxa3 isn't a good winning try.

In the game, 25...♗c5? allowed White a solid advantage, and he won after 26 ♙xf6 ♖xf6 (26...♗d3 27 ♗c7 gxf6 28 ♙e3) 27 ♗c7 ♙b7 28 ♖xb4 ♙c8 29 ♗a5 ♖xd6 30 ♖xd6 ♖xc7 31 ♗xb7 1-0.

193) Gryson – Van Herck

Gent 2010

Perhaps you saw that ...g5 is a key idea, but the problem is how to implement it. The right way is 22...♙e8!, with the cunning point that 23 ♗xe5 is met by 23...g5!, with unclear play after 24 ♖xg5+ ♗xg5 25 ♖xf5 ♗xe5 or 24 ♖xf5 ♗xg3+ 25 ♗h2 ♗xf5 26 ♖xf5 ♗xe5. After 23 ♙d4 ♙d5 Black has secured his pieces. In the game, the immediate 22...g5? was refuted by 23 ♖xe5 ♗xe5 24 ♗xd8 ♖xd8 25 ♗h2, with an easy win for White thanks to his extra material.

Chapter 6

194) 25...dxe3!!

This temporary queen sacrifice wins cleanly. 25...♗xf2? 26 ♗xf2 dxe3+ 27 ♗e2! (27 ♗xe3?? ♖h6+) 27...♖xd3+ 28 ♖xd3 leaves Black with a difficult ending due to White's queenside majority and active king. 25...♗e5? 26 ♖e4 also lets White escape from his difficulties.

26 ♖xd6 exf2+ 27 ♗f1 (27 ♗g2 ♗e3+ is essentially the same: 28 ♗xf2 ♗xd1+ or 28 ♗f3 ♖xd6) 27...♗e3+ 28 ♗e2 (the basic problem for White is that 28 ♗xf2 ♗xd1+ is check) 0-1. 28...♖xd6 29 ♖xd6 f1♖+. The knight lives long enough to support the pawn's promotion, and the fact that it is check denies White time to deliver a back-rank mate. Always think carefully when there are pawns near promotion and active knights!

195) 28 ♗h1!

This quiet move is best. Now 29 ♖h5 is a real threat, since 29...♖d4 doesn't pin the white queen. Black has no adequate defence.

Other moves don't make progress. 28 ♖h5? allows 28...♖d4, nullifying White's attack, while after 28 ♖f2?! ♖b1+! (28...♖a1+? loses because 29 ♙f1 ♗xb4 30 ♖h5 leads to mate) White can only win by repeating the position and finding the winning move at the second time of asking:

a) 29 ♙f1? ♗xb4 30 ♖h5 ♖g6 leaves it unclear if White has any advantage; e.g., 31 ♖e7 ♙e6 32 ♖xb4 ♖fd8 (not 32...gxf6? 33 ♖h4 ♗g7 34 ♙d3 f5 35 ♖f3 ♖ad8 36 ♙c2!) 33 ♖h4 ♖d1 gives White an extra piece, but Black has three healthy pawns and sound defences.

b) 29 ♖f1 ♖b2 merely repeats, when White must still find 30 ♗h1! in order to make progress. But at least if you failed to see the win, hopefully you saw

that you could bail out with a draw in this way.

28...♟e7 29 ♖h5! (29 ♖xe7 ♟e6 30 ♖h5 is also strong, but less clear-cut) **29...♞g8 30 ♞xg8 ♟xg8 31 ♟xf7+! ♟h7?** (31...♖xf7 is necessary, but 32 ♖e8+ ♟h7 33 ♖xf7 is at the very least unpleasant for Black) **32 ♖g5 ♖c2 33 ♖xh6+! gxh6 34 ♟g8+! 1-0.** It is mate after 34...♟h8 35 ♖xh6+ ♟xg8 36 ♖xf8# or 34...♖xg8 35 ♖f7+ ♟h8 36 ♖xh6+ ♖h7 37 ♖xh7#.

196) 38...♟h4!

No doubt you saw that 38...♖xh1?? is ruled out by 39 ♖c8+ ♟h7 40 ♖g8#. But perhaps it was less obvious that 38...♖c2? (intending ...♖f2+) also fails. The problem is the cunning reply 39 ♖h2! (not the passive 39 ♖f1? ♟h4 40 g5 {only move} 40...♟e1!, when White is fighting to survive) 39...♟h4 (otherwise Black loses immediately; for example, 39...♖xh2? 40 ♖c8+) 40 g5!? ♖f2+ 41 ♖f2 ♖xf2+ 42 ♟g4, when the opposite bishops fail to save Black after 42...♖g3+ 43 ♟h5 ♖xg5+ 44 ♖xg5 ♟xg5 45 ♟g6 or 42...♖xf5+ 43 ♟xf5 hxg5 44 a4.

39 ♖xh4

There's no good answer: 39 ♖xc1 allows 39...♖f2#, while after 39 g5 ♖f2+ 40 ♟g4 ♖g2+ 41 ♟h5 ♖xh1 42 ♟c4!? (42 ♟d5 ♟xg5+ 43 ♟g6 ♖f1) 42...♖d1+! (42...♟xg5+? loses to 43 ♟g6) 43 ♟g6 (or 43 ♟xh4 ♖h1+) 43...♖d6+ Black mops up safely.

39...♖f1+ 40 ♟g3 ♖g1+ 41 ♟f4 g5+! 42 ♖xg5 ♖f1+ 0-1

197) 16...♖xd4! is the right way to sacrifice the knight. It is offered 'passively' – that is, left to be taken. After 17 ♖xd4 ♟xd4! 18 hxg4 ♟xf2+ 19 ♟f1 ♟xe1 (19...♟xg3 is also good) 20 ♟xe1 ♖g1+ 21 ♟e2 ♖d8 22 ♖a5 ♖d6

Black will get at least four pawns for the piece, while retaining strong play against the white king.

Black instead preferred **16...♞xf2?**, which is the obvious sacrifice, but doesn't cause White any real problems. Black gets two or three pawns for the piece in a simplified position, and the only question is how much better White is: **17 ♟xf2 ♖xd4** (17...♟xd4+ 18 ♟g2 ♟g1?! is parried by 19 ♖c2 ♖xd1 20 ♞xd1, while 17...e5 18 ♖b3 ♖xb3 19 axb3 exd4 20 ♞b1 also favours White, partly because d3 is a fine blockading square for a knight – the black bishop has little scope) **18 ♖xd4 e5 19 ♖b3 exd4 20 ♖xb6 axb6 21 ♞a4 b5 22 ♞b6 ♖e8 23 ♞d3 ♖xe4 24 a4** and White had the better prospects.

198) No, 18...♖xb4! is good. There are enough loose pieces in White's position that 19 ♖d4 fails to win material: 19...♖xc5 20 ♟xe4 (20 ♖xe4?? ♞xe4 21 ♟xe4 drops material after 21...♖e5) 20...e5 21 ♞d3 ♖c3 22 ♟b2 ♖c2 23 ♖xc2 ♖xc2 24 ♞xe5 (24 ♖a4?! b5 25 ♖xa6 ♞xe4 26 ♟xe5 ♖d2 with strong counterplay) 24...♞xe4 25 ♖xe4 and now 25...f5! followed by ...♖xb2 leads to a level endgame (but not 25...♖xb2?! 26 ♞d3, after which White has all the chances).

199) 41 b7!

The basic idea is to distract the black rook, whose pin on the c-file is tying White down. If it refuses to budge, then the prospect of White getting a new queen arises. 41 dxe5?! ♖xc5 42 ♖xc5 ♖xc5 43 ♖xa2 ♖xb6 is a 2♖ vs ♖ ending where White can certainly play for a win, but Black can at least put up dogged resistance. 41 ♖xa2?? ♞xf3+ is winning for Black.

41...♖xc5

41...♖b8 allows the simple 42 dxe5. 41...♗xf3+ fails because White can swap his old queen for a new one: 42 ♖xf3 ♖xf3 43 bxc8♗+ ♖h7 and White can finally settle matters with 44 ♖xa2. Three white pieces are *en prise* after 41...♖xb7 42 ♗xb7 (42 dxe5? ♖xc5 43 ♖xa2 ♖xc3 44 ♖xc3 is another 2♖ vs ♖ ending, and this time Black is better placed to defend), but Black has no viable way to gorge himself on them: 42...♗xf3+ (42...♖xc3 43 ♖xc3) 43 ♖xf3 ♖xa4 44 ♗d6 and White will win, though he must be mindful of possible fortress defences.

42 b8♗+ ♖h7 1-0

White has many ways to win, such as 43 dxe5 ♖xc3 44 ♖xf7+ ♖h6 45 ♖h8+ ♖g5 46 h4#, but not 43 ♖xc5?? ♗xf3+ 44 ♖h1 ♖e4 45 ♖xa2 ♗d2+ 46 ♖h2 ♗f3+, which is a draw.

200) 22...♗e2+! (22...♖xc5? threatens ...♗e2+, but 23 ♖xc5 ♗e2+ 24 ♖xe2 ♖f4+ 25 gxf4 ♖xc5+ 26 ♖c4 gives White plenty for the queen) **23 ♖xe2 ♖f4+! 24 gxf4 ♖xe2** (Black has a decisive attack) **25 ♖d2** (giving the king an escape-route; 25 ♗d2 ♖xc5+ 26 ♖xc5 ♖xc5+ 27 ♗c4 ♖a6 is now hopeless for White) **25...♖xc5+ 26 ♖d1 ♖xd2+ 27 ♗xd2 ♖g4+ 28 ♖e1 d3!** (the *quietus* – White cannot avoid mate) **29 ♖f2 ♖xf4+ 0-1**

201) 42 ♖d3+! wins because as soon as the black king steps onto the e5-square, there are ♖g7+ skewer ideas:

a) 42...♖g4 43 ♖e2+ ♖f5 (43...♖xh4 44 ♖e3 and the threat of mate by ♖h6+ forces 44...♖g7 45 ♖e6, when White wins a piece to start with) 44 g4+ ♖e4 (44...♖e5 45 ♖d8 is similar to line ‘b’) 45 ♖e6+ and White picks off a bishop.

b) 42...♖e5 43 ♖d8 ♖c6 44 ♖g7+ ♖f4 (attempting to save the bishop with

a...♖a2 pin, but the king runs into trouble; 44...♖e6 45 ♖xb2 ♖a2? 46 ♖c4+) 45 ♖xb2 ♖a2 46 g3+ ♖g4 47 ♖g8+ ♖h5 48 ♖g5+ ♖h6 49 ♖g6+ and Black loses everything.

However, White played **42 ♖e3?**, when 42...b5! would have left the outcome unclear.

202) Perhaps Black noticed that ...♖b4 was an idea (with ...♖xc1 and ...♖d1+ as the follow-up), but gave up on it when he saw that the immediate 31...♖b4? achieves little because White can insert 32 ♖xd5 ♖xd5, when his back-rook weakness isn’t such a problem.

However, the preliminary 31...a6! decisively improves matters. Wherever the white rook moves, the ...♖b4 idea will cost White heavy material. 32 ♖xb7 (32 ♖b3 is also met by 32...♖b4!; 32 ♖a5 leaves the rook undefended, so 32...♖xf2+ wins) 32...♖b4! 33 ♖xc8 (33 ♖f1 ♖xc1 34 ♖xc1 ♖d1+ shows Black’s main idea) 33...♖xe1 34 ♖cc7 ♖d1 35 ♖xf7+ ♖g8 36 g3 ♖c5 and Black will win.

Black instead played the quiet continuation **31...♖c7?!**. Then White would still have been in the game if he had chosen the resilient 32 ♖a1.

203) 27 ♖e6!

Although Black can now win the white queen, he cannot restore material equality. 27 h4?? ♖f4+ 28 ♖e6 ♖f6+ costs White his queen, while 27 ♖h6? ♖g7! 28 ♖h5 ♖h4! 29 ♖xh4 (29 ♖d1? ♖h3+) 29...♗xh4+ 30 ♖g4 ♖xh1 31 ♖xh4 ♖d4 is pleasant for Black.

27...♖xh1 (after 27...♖d6+ 28 ♖xd6 ♖xd6 29 ♖d1 White is winning) **28 ♗d5 ♖g7 29 ♖d8 ♖h6** (29...♖e4 30 ♖g8+ ♖h6 31 ♗e3! threatens mate next move, and Black turns out not to have any particularly useful discovered