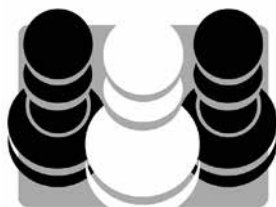


1000 Chess Problems

By

Yakov Vladimirov



Quality Chess
www.qualitychess.co.uk

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Publisher's Foreword

Having recently co-written and released the book *Endgame Labyrinths* together with the reigning World Champion and now also grandmaster in chess study composition, Steffen Nielsen, it is natural to repeat the feat within the area of mating puzzles. But in this case, we do not have to give up thousands of hours to get the book out the door. Instead, we have the chance to translate this epic collection compiled by Yakov Vladimirov, which was first published in Russian in 2019.

A towering figure in problem composition, Vladimirov has been an active composer since the 1950s and a grandmaster for chess composition since 1988. He has won a vast number of composing tournaments along with various other prizes. This book is a compilation of Vladimirov's favourite Mate in two, Mate in three, Mate in four & more, and "fairy chess" problems. Vladimirov modestly selected works from other composers in the majority, but also included a sprinkling of his own finest compositions. Altogether, it makes another little jewel in the crown of Quality Chess.

Endgame studies are useful for developing several aspects of your game, such as the potential for how the pieces can work together and on their own, endgame patterns, calculation of long variations and so on. Mating problems, the main ingredient in this book, are useful for developing different skills, the main one being imagination. As a trainer for top grandmasters, I often find that they struggle with different elements of calculation. It might be failure to calculate lines until the end, or the mirror problem: calculating excessively long lines that are by no means forced. Another issue is that of imagination; usually known as candidate moves, the Kotov expression for "seeing the options," which is how I like to express it. If you are solving Mate-in-two or Mate-in-three problems, you will not be in danger of calculating long lines – the end is nigh! As soon as you have the right idea, you will solve the puzzle. Alas, finding the idea may prove far more difficult than most people would intuitively guess. I have presented 2700+ students with challenging puzzles that had a one-move solution. Once you consider the right first move, you will solve it – but only because what follows on moves two and three is evident. Now add the complexity of a surprise on both these moves, and suddenly you are in a wilderness of low branches everywhere you look. Work on this book, whether you want to improve your chess, or simply love chess. Reward is found within.

Quality Chess would like to thank GM Dr Colin McNab for editing this book and working with us, first on and off, and later full-time, from 2005 to 2022. Colin is a world-class solver who twice won the British Chess Solving Championship and won the team World Championship in 2006. Colin had recently returned from the World Chess Solving Championship when he first started proofreading for us. As fate would have it, Colin's first-ever correction for us was spotting a mate in one! A kind thought is sent to Douglas Adams' paranoid android... Colin's last job before retiring, on December 1st 2022, was editing this book.

Jacob Aagaard
Creative Director, Quality Chess



Chapter 1

A Two-Mover? It's Very Simple!

Read before solving the problems in this chapter

We've watched this so many times: the first thing an inexperienced solver does, after arranging the pieces on the board, is to grab the white queen and place it now on one square, now on another, in an attempt to find the solution – in vain.

In actual fact, you need to start your search for the solution by analysing the features of the initial position. First of all you must identify Black's strongest defences. These are checks to the white king, or moves that capture white pieces or shut them out of play, thus freeing squares for the black king's escape; or moves of the king itself; or moves unpinning black pieces or pinning white ones – and so forth. And you must see whether White has suitable replies. If it turns out that some of these strong black moves can't be parried, you must start searching for a first move by White that prepares a reply to these defences or eliminates them. It's useful to detect what *weakening effects* are entailed by the "strong" defences. For instance they may *block* squares next to the black king, or obstruct (*interfere* with) another black piece; they may *unpin* a white piece or bring it into play, or *pin* or *deflect* a black one – etc.

Fairly often, in analysing the position, you discover that replies to all Black's possible moves are already available at the start. Then for White's first move you need to look for a *waiting move* that preserves all these replies. However, in many cases the point of the problem is that, after White's first move, some or all of the mates against the original defences become new ones, that is, they *change*.

You can speed up the solving process by ascertaining which category the program belongs to – is it based on a *threat* or on *zugzwang*? In the former case, after the key move, you have a mate available against indifferent moves by Black – you have what is called a threat – and you need to seek White's replies *only to the defences that parry your threat*. If you can see that in the initial situation Black has some moves that don't in any way weaken his position, then most likely you do need to find a first move that creates a threat for White.

If the problem is based on *zugzwang*, White's first move doesn't threaten anything – but he has to have replies (in a two-mover, this means mates) to *all* moves by Black. This usually occurs in situations where the number of possible black moves is very limited.

Quite often the first move needs to be selected from a range of outwardly analogous ones. For instance there may be different moves that free a square for your mate threat; or you may have to choose the right piece to shut off an enemy unit or unpin a piece of your own. It may well be that each of the tries entails some quite interesting variations, and you have to investigate carefully whether White has answers to all Black's defences. You aren't in a competition and are not pressed for time, so apart from finding the correct solution, it pays to clarify how the analogous tries are refuted.

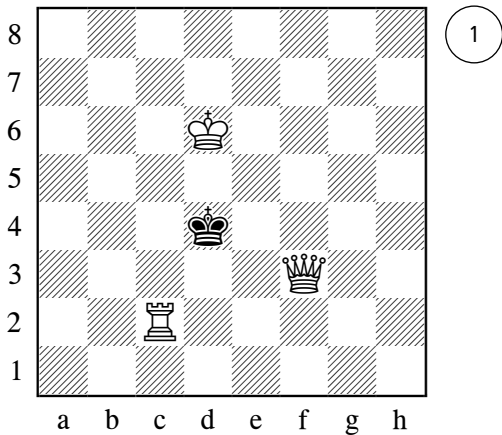
Sometimes in contemporary problems the author's essential idea consists not so much in the variations that form the solution as in the correlation between these variations and the unsuccessful lines. Of course if you merely set yourself the aim of finding the mate from the initial position, and all the rest is of no interest to you, you can go straight on to the next problem. But if you are a keen solver, and more particularly if you attempt to compose problems of your own, then it's always very useful to elucidate for yourself what the author's idea consisted of – how the play in the actual solution is related to the plausible tries and the defences to them, the refutations of the powerful tries. If at present you have trouble figuring this out on your own, then study the solution we give at the end of the chapter.

You should keep in mind that in constructing a chess problem, the composer (who is also called a *problemist* as distinct from a composer of studies) is guided by certain aesthetic criteria in the choice of the key move. Thus it is not recommended to begin the solution with the capture of a black piece, the queening of a white pawn, a check to the black king, or a move that deprives the king of free squares without corresponding compensation. However, these rules are no dogma – and sometimes, if the theme of the problem demands it or the composer wants to “nonplus” the solver, they can be broken. Specifically, in the present collection there are *some* problems that start with a check to the king or the capture of a pawn.

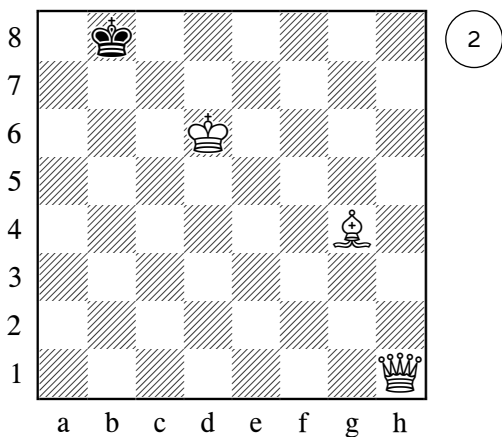
The first move is considered pretty if it sacrifices a piece, presents the black king with free squares or gives Black the chance to check the white king. In a word, in a good problem the key move must be difficult to find, striking, memorable.

Editor's note: For the benefit of readers who are new to chess compositions, please note that on reaching Exercise 39 on page 25 (followed by similar examples throughout the book), when you see “*b*) ♗e4→b5” under the diagram, it means there is a second version of the problem, with mate in the same number of moves but starting with the bishop on b5 instead of e4. There follows “*c*) ♖c6→f1”, meaning a third version with the rook being moved from c6 to f1, and so on. These are variations on the *original* position, meaning that when you attempt version c) with the rook on f1, the bishop should be on e4 as per the original position – not on b5.

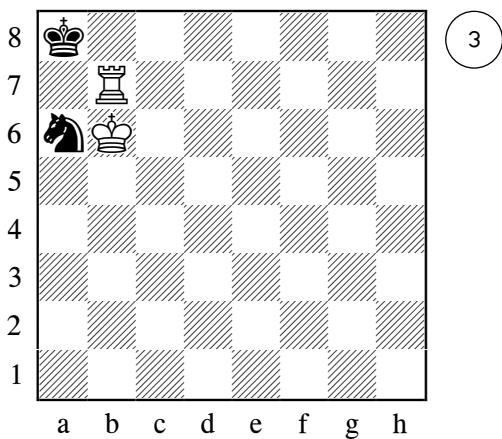
G. Carpenter, Dubuque Chess Journal 1873



J. Schumer, Transvaal Leader 1906

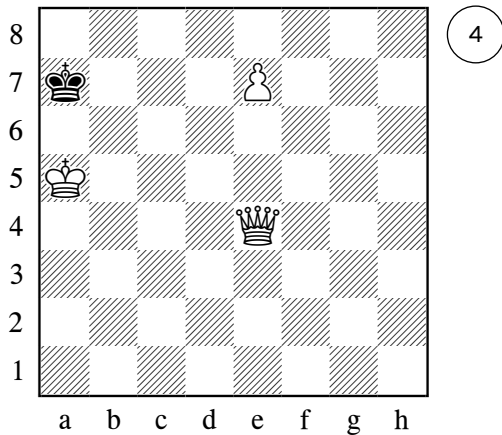


O. Dehler, Neue Welt 1919

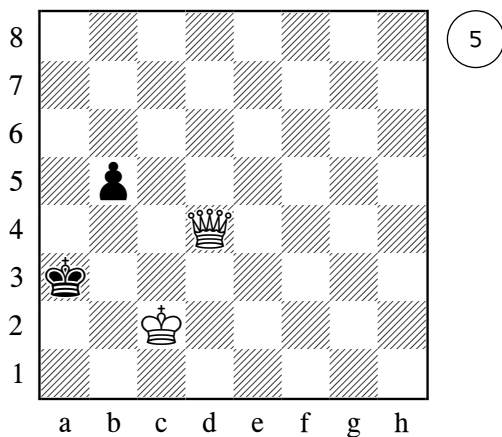


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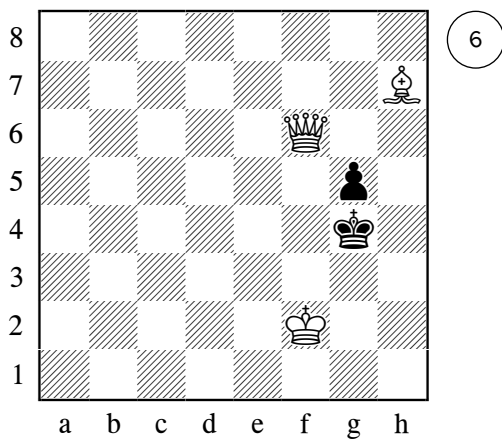
O. Dehler, Tidskrift for Schack 1928



J. L'Hermet, Revista de Sah 1927



J. Campbell, The Chess Player's Chronicle 1861



4

5

3

6

1. 1. ♖h3! ♔e4 2. ♜c4#

2. 1. ♙c8! ♔xc8 2. ♗a8#; 1... ♔a7 2. ♗b7#

3. 1. ♜d7! Zugzwang. 1... ♗~ 2. ♜d8#; 1... ♗b8! 2. ♜a7#; 1... ♔b8 2. ♜d8#
1. ♜e7? does not work due to: 1... ♗c7! 2. ♜e8† ♗xe8!

4. 1. ♗h7! Setting up an ambush! 1... ♔b7 2. e8=♗#

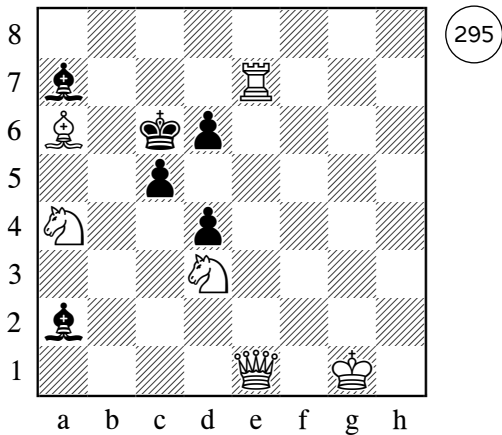
5. Initially, everything is ready, for example 1...b4 2. ♗a7#, but there is no waiting move.
After 1. ♗e4! b4 (or 1... ♔a2) 2. ♗a8# we have a changed mate.

6. 1. ♗h8! Zugzwang. 1... ♔h3 (or 1... ♔h5 or 1... ♔h4) 2. ♙f5#; 1... ♔f4 2. ♗d4#

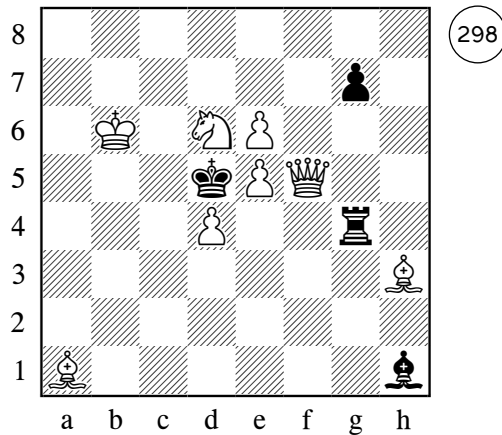
With the key the queen sets up an *ambush*, which operates when the black king plays to the h-file.

In composition, there is a system for classifying problems by the number of pieces in the starting position. If the total number of pieces does not exceed five, then such a problem is called a *baby*.

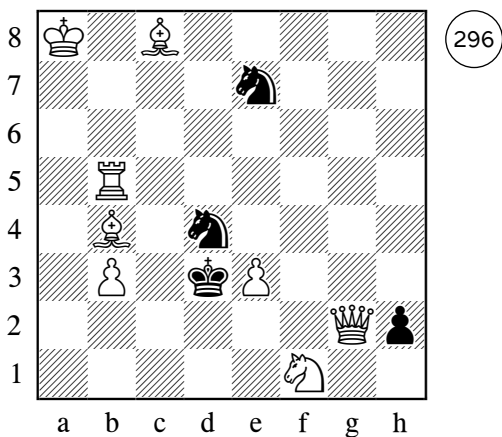
V. Rudenko, 1.p Chervoni Girnik 1977



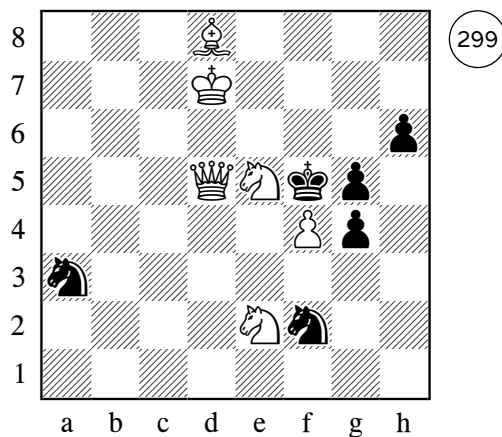
J. van Gool, 1.p Urania Theme Tourney 1980



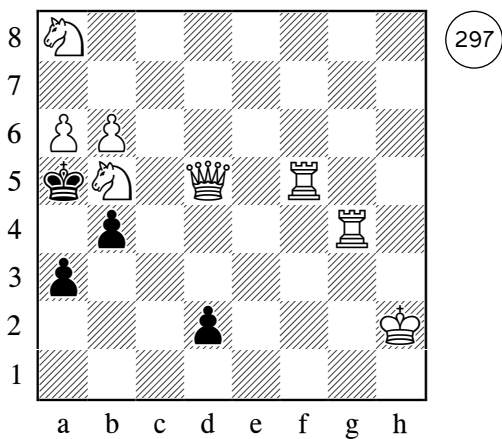
V. Melnichenko & V. Rudenko, 1.p Szachy 1977



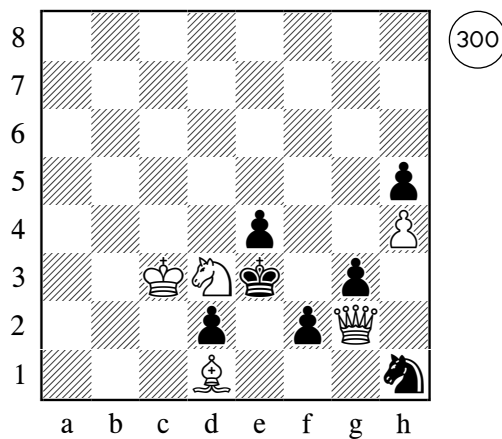
M. Vukceвич, Mat 1981



V. Chepizhni, 1.p 64 Shakhmatnoe obozrenie 1980



D. Banny, 1/2.p Olympic Tourney 1980



295. Set play: 1...♔d5 2.♖e4#; 1...d5 2.♖e6#

1.♖c1? threatens 2.♕b4# (A), and aims for 1...♔d5 (a) 2.♖b7# (B) or 1...d5 2.♖h6#, but fails to 1...♖c4!

1.♖a5! Threatening 2.♖b7# (B). **1...♔d5** (a) 2.♕b4# (A); **1...d5** 2.♖c7#

Let's become acquainted with another modern two-move theme. Between the try and the solution, there is a switch of threats and mates against the same defence. This idea was proposed by two Dutch problemists, the twin brothers Piet and Henk le Grand, and it is named after them.

296. 1.♖c5? (A) threatens 2.♖c3# and aims for 1...♗e2 2.♖a6# (C) or 1...♗f3 2.♖c2#, but fails to 1...♗d5!

1.♖e5? (B) threatens 2.♖d2# and aims for 1...♗e2 2.♖e4# or 1...♗f3 2.♖a6# (C), but fails to 1...h1=♖!

1.♖a6! (C) Threatening 2.♖d5#. **1...♗e2** 2.♖c5# (A); **1...♗f3** 2.♖e5# (B); 1...♗xb5 2.♖xb5#

Another idea developed by modern problemists is the switching of the *first move* and the *mating move* for the same defence. It is called the *Salazar* theme in honour of the Spanish problemist who discovered this algorithm.

297. Set play: 1...♔a4 2.♕c3#; 1...♔xa6 2.♕bc7#

1.♖d7? threatens 2.♕bc7# and aims for 1...♔a4 2.♕d4# or 1...♔xa6 2.♖a7#, but fails to 1...d1=♖!

1.♖d3! Threatening 2.♕c3#. **1...♔a4** 2.♖xa3#; **1...♔xa6** 2.♕d6#

A witty simple change of mates in Zagoruiko style. It is given a modern look by the use of the set-play mates as threats in the other two phases. The composer of this problem, Muscovite Viktor Chepizhni, is a Grandmaster of Chess Composition and Honorary Vice-President of the FIDE Permanent Commission for Composition.

298. 1.♖f7? threatens 2.e7# and aims for 1...♖f4 (or 1...♖g6) 2.♖b7#, but fails to 1...♖xd4!

1.e7? threatens 2.♖f7# and aims for 1...♖f4 (or 1...♖xd4) 2.♖e6#. but fails to 1...♖g6!

1.♖f2? threatens 2.♖a2# and aims for 1...♔xe6 2.♖f7# or 1...♖g2 2.♖f3# or 1...♖xd4 2.♖xd4#, but fails to 1...♖g3!

1.♖f1! Threatening 2.♖c4#. **1...♔xe6** 2.♖f7#; **1...♖xd4** 2.♖b5#

299. Set play: 1...♗e4 2.♖e6#; 1...gxf4 2.♗d4#

1.♕c3? threatens 2.♖f7# and aims for 1...♗e4 2.♖xe4# or 1...gxf4 2.♖e6#, but fails to 1...♔xf4!

1.♖d2! Threatening 2.♗g3#. **1...♗e4** 2.♗d4#; **1...gxf4** 2.♖xf4#; 1...♔e4 2.♗g3#; 1...♗h1 2.♖d3#

A simple three-phase change of mates (à la Zagoruiko) with an excellent introduction to the solution that destroys the prepared battery.

300. Set play: 1...exd3 2.♖f3#; 1...f1=♖ 2.♖xd2#; 1...f1=♗ 2.♖e2#

Tries: 1.♖f1? exd3!; 1.♔c4? f1=♖!; 1.♕c5? f1=♗!

1.♕xf2! Zugzwang. **1...♔f4** 2.♖xe4#; **1...♕xf2** 2.♖xg3#; **1...gxf2** 2.♖g5#

The problem is a block with arbitrary changes (in both defences and mates). A blunt first move leads to the appearance in the solution of black moves which previously did not exist at all.

Chapter 2

The Queen of Chess Problems

Read before solving the problems in this chapter

That is what a three-mover is sometimes called, given that three moves may be considered the ideal length for the solution of a “popular” chess problem. Indeed, for a well-prepared solver, two-movers are fairly simple; a four-mover or “more-mover” (especially a complex one) presents perfectly understandable difficulties; but in a three-move problem the level of difficulty is just right, and moreover in this category it is possible to demonstrate virtually the entire arsenal of themes that has accumulated during the modern chess problem’s 150-year history.

Of course with the increase in the number of moves the difficulty for the solver increases too, but it is not excessive in any of the popular problems in our collection. I repeat that every competent chess player (in the present context this means anyone who knows the notation and is able to write down the moves of his games) is capable of solving any of these problems directly from the diagram, within a reasonable amount of time.

To solve a three-move problem you take the same steps as with a two-mover, but some of these steps may carry less influence. For example a strong defence may be overcome, or a white piece activated, not only by the first move of the solution but by a subsequent one. The analysis of a weakness in Black’s camp resulting from one of his defensive moves is of great significance. In a two-mover the weakness is obvious, but here it might be revealed only with the mating move. Let us recall the typical types of weakness: lack of mobility in consequence of a pawn move; deflection of a black piece from the defence of some point or line; blocking of a square next to the black king or at a short distance from it (in that case you must see if the king can be driven towards that square); the entry of a white piece into the play (see if you can move this piece or drive the king towards squares controlled by it); interference with a long-range black piece; and finally some more complex tactical nuances: unpinning of a white piece, pinning or self-pinning of a black one, and so on.

Here too it’s important to decide whether the problem is based on zugzwang or a threat. If for instance Black has only his king and pawns, it’s most likely to be a zugzwang problem. The same applies if Black has one or more additional pieces but their scope for movement is restricted – or they are tied down, from the outset, to the defence of the approaches to the king. Most often the composer’s idea rests on variations in which the black king moves, and to all of its moves you need to find answers.

If the analysis shows that Black has moves that entail no perceptible weakening of his position, or moves which on the contrary strengthen it significantly, then the problem is most likely to be based on a threat, and you have to search for that threat as you continue the solving process. You must decide whether the threat has to be of a forcing nature – beginning with a check, that is – or whether it could be a “quiet” move.

Another important thing to decide is whether the theme of the problem resides in one central variation or whether it immediately separates into a number of branches equal in status – which may for example start with different moves by a black pawn, or with other defensive moves analogous in character.

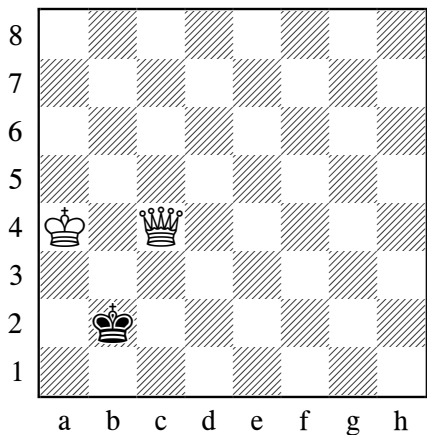
If you recognize which style (which school) the problem is associated with, this in particular can speed up your search for the solution. Sometimes from the very surname of the composer you can guess what to look for in the variations (which is why, in solvers’ contests, the composers of the problems are as a rule not disclosed). In problems by Czech or English composers, it’s essential to look for variations culminating in “model” mates. In the solutions to the two-movers we have constantly pointed these mates out, and if you read those comments you will no doubt be able to spot a pure mate as well as an economical one. If you didn’t give attention to those beautiful finales, then turn to the preface again and acquaint yourself with the definition of a model mate. As a rule, there should be no less than three such mates in a problem of this type. It may be boldly stated that every third problem with model mates has variations leading to “echo” finales – that is, mates with similar (or sometimes wholly identical) configurations but with the black king on different squares of the same colour. The construction of a so-called “chameleon echo” is held to be the most *chic* thing of all. This is when the echo mates occur on *opposite*-coloured squares. In your analysis of the original position and your choice of key move, bear in mind the colour principle, that is the coordinated control of light and dark squares near the black king.

Problems by German composers usually have a conspicuous false try in the initial position – an ingenious line against which Black has a unique refutation. Consequently you need to find a plan that parries Black’s defence.

Very popular features of three-move problems are geometric motifs (creation of a path for the long-range pieces; doubling of long-range pieces on one line), manoeuvres of pieces to form “stars” or “crosses”, pieces marching from one corner of the board to another, duels between a black piece and a white one, the concealed ambush of a white piece, battery mechanisms, pawn promotions. You need to remember this when considering a possible line of play for White.

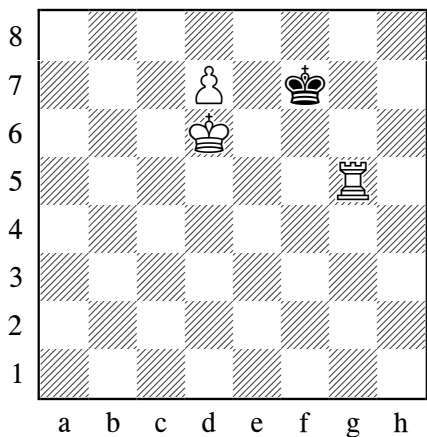
And finally, don’t forget about the most striking element of a chess combination – the sacrifice of a white piece – which invariably accompanies a good problem. You should be constantly checking for this possibility. Composers particularly tend to sacrifice pieces (including the queen!) on squares diagonally adjacent to the black king.

K. Hannemann, Problemnoter 1955



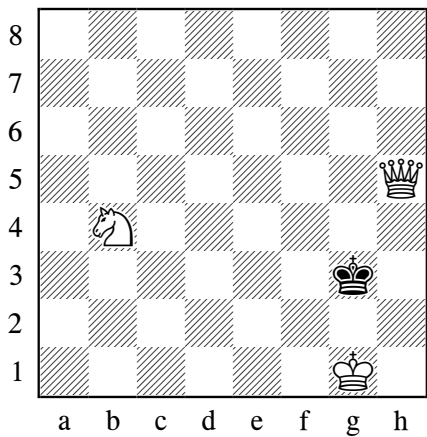
321

P. Loquin, La Palamede 1843



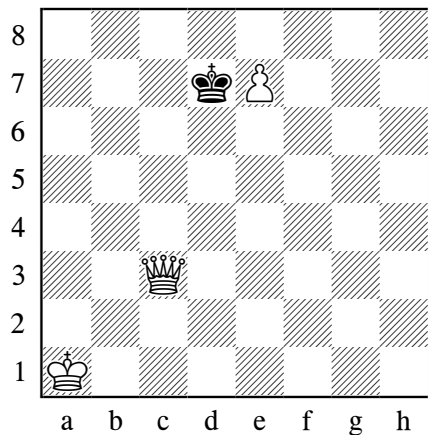
322

W. Bone, La Palamede 1846



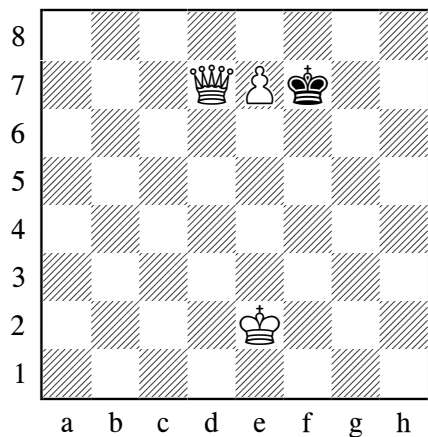
323

F. Healey, unknown 1855



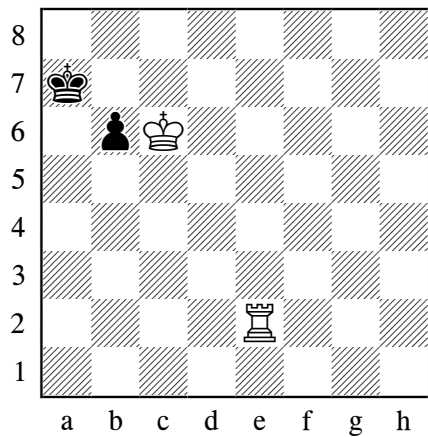
324

S. Loyd, New York Albion 1856



325

S. Lehner, unknown 1864



326

321. Initially, everything is ready: **1...♔a1 2.♔b3 ♔b1 3.♖f1#** With an ideal mate. **1...♔b1 2.♔b3** (or **2.♔a3**)

This play is preserved by the waiting move: **1.♔b4!**

322. Initially, everything is ready: **1...♔f6** (or **1...♔f8**) **2.d8=♖† ♔f7 3.♖e7#** However, the composer believed there was no waiting move, and his intended solution is: **1.d8=♗! ♔e8 2.♖f5 ♔xd8 3.♖f8#; 1...♔f8 2.♔e6 ♔e8 3.♖g8#**

Later it emerged that the set play could be kept with the calm first move: **1.♖g4! ♔f6 2.d8=♖† ♔f7 3.♖e7#; 2...♔f5 3.♖g5#** In composition such a solution, not intended by the composer, is called an *incidental* solution or a *cook*.

323. 1.♗c6! ♔f4 2.♔f2 ♔e4 3.♖f3#

With the first move, it appears visually that the knight is moving away from the black king, although a precise calculation shows that the distance between the knight and the king has slightly decreased as a result of the opening move.

324. 1.♖c5! ♔e8 2.♖e5! Zugzwang. 2...♔d7 (or **2...♔f7**) **3.e8=♖#; 1...♔e6 2.e8=♖† ♔f6 3.♖ce5#**

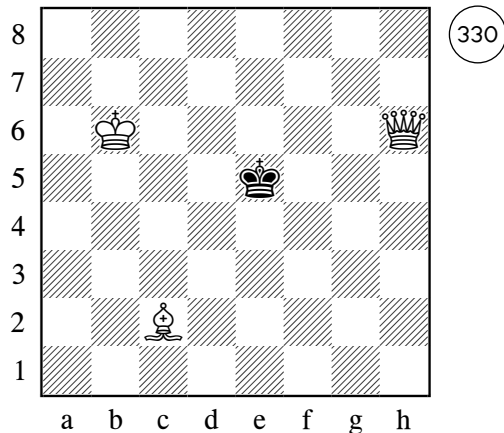
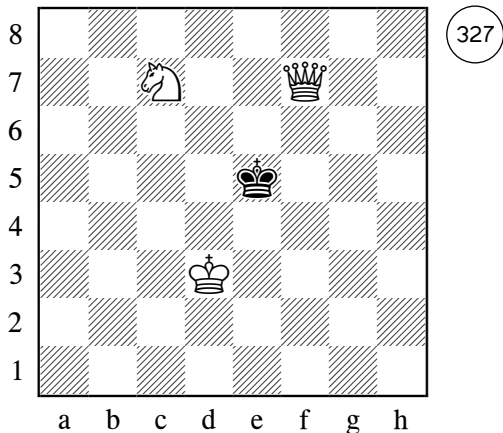
In the next problem, we see how the same idea was presented slightly later by Sam Loyd.

325. 1.♖d6! ♔e8 2.♖e5! Zugzwang. 2...♔d7 (or **2...♔f7**) **3.e8=♖#; 1...♔g8** (or **1...♔g7**) **2.e8=♖† ♔h7 3.♖dg6#**

326. 1.♖c2! Zugzwang. White prepares an ambush on the c-file! **1...♔b8 2.♔xb6 ♔a8 3.♖c8#; 1...b5** (or **1...♔a8**) **2.♔c7! ♔a6 3.♖a2#; 1...♔a6 2.♖a2#**

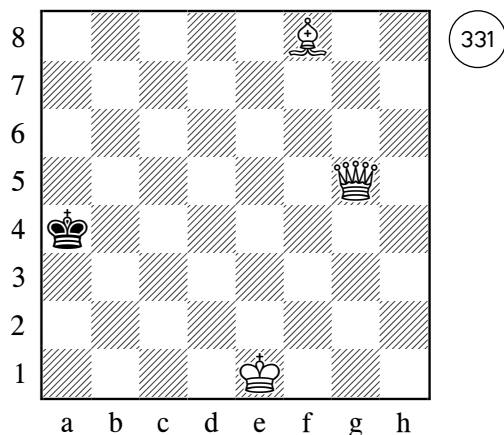
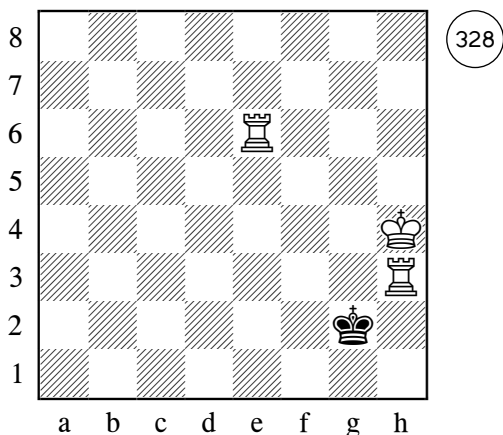
A. Ferrante (ver. by W. Shinkman), La Revista degli Scacchi 1859

M. Burghardt, Brunner Beobachter 1887



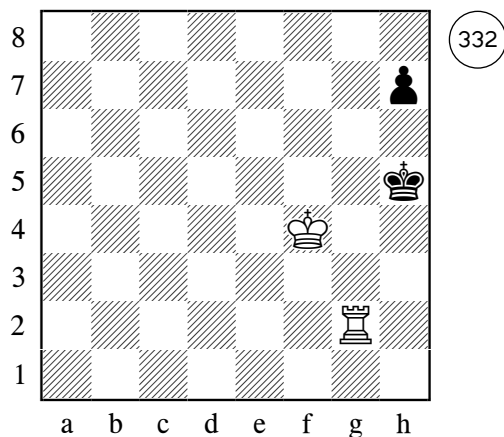
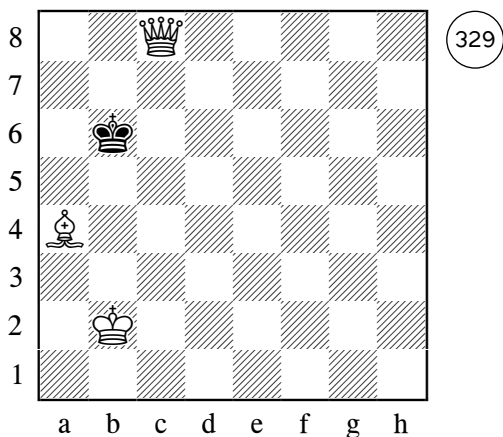
W. Shinkman, American Chess Journal 1877

J. Kohtz & C. Kockelkorn, Illustrierte Sonntagsblatt 1888



W. Shinkman, Cleveland Voice 1878

W. Shinkman, Tiffin Tribune 1898



327. 1. ♖a8!! ♔d6 2. ♔d4 ♕c6 3. ♖d5#!

A paradoxical opening move. However, Problem 323 is in essence the same position.

328. 1. ♖h1! Zugzwang. 1... ♕xh1 2. ♔g3 ♕g1 3. ♖e1#; 1... ♕f2 2. ♔h3 ♕f3 3. ♖f1#; 1... ♕f3 2. ♖h2 ♕f4 3. ♖f2#

Three ideal mates, with the last two forming an exact chameleon echo. Recall that mates which are similar but with the black king on squares of *different* colour are called chameleon mates.

329. 1. ♙b3! ♕b5 2. ♖c7 ♕b4 3. ♖b6#; 2... ♕a6 3. ♙c4#; 1... ♕a5 2. ♖c6 ♕b4 3. ♖b6#; 1... ♕a7 2. ♖c7† ♕a6 3. ♙c4# A model mate. 2... ♕a8 3. ♙d5#

By the way, even in grandmaster practice there have been occasions when the players (during time pressure) failed to notice the mirror model mate shown above on the edge of the board.

330. 1. ♖f8! ♔d5 2. ♖e7 ♔d4 (or 2... ♕c4) 3. ♖c5#; 1... ♕e6 2. ♔c6 ♕e5 3. ♖d6# Echo mates, but only the first one is a model mate. 1... ♕d4 2. ♖c5#

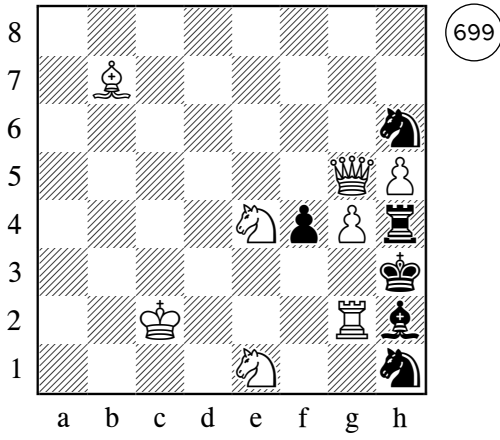
331. 1. ♕e2! ♕b3 2. ♖d2 ♕c4 3. ♖d3#; 2... ♕a4 3. ♖b4#

1. ♕d2? is wrong since the king blocks the d2-square, making 2. ♖d2 impossible.

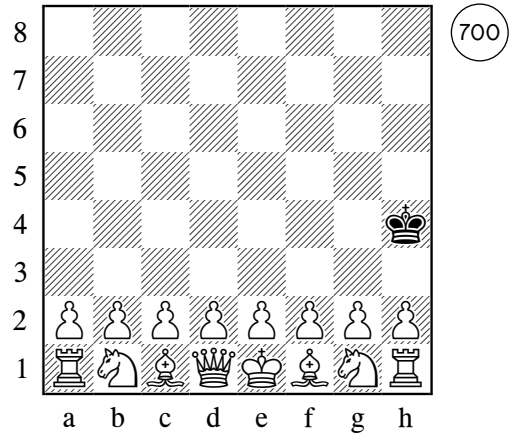
332. 1. ♖g1! Zugzwang. 1... ♕h6 2. ♕f5 ♕h5 3. ♖h1#; 1... h6 2. ♖g2 ♕h4 3. ♖h2#

Identical echo-chameleon model mates.

V. **Chepizhni**, 2.p Shakhmaty v SSSR 1972



S. **Loyd**, Chess Monthly 1858



699. 1.♙a6! Threatening 2.♙f1 followed by 3.♖g3#. 1...♞xg4 2.♞h4†! ♞xh4 3.♜g5#; 2...♜xh4 3.♞xh2#; 1...♙g1 2.♞h2†! ♙xh2 3.♙f1#; 2...♜xh2 3.♞xh4#

A sharp idea – white pieces are sacrificed on squares that the black pieces have just left. This combination is called the *Umnov* theme, after the problemist who first proposed it.

700. 1.d4! ♜g4 2.e4† ♜h4 3.g3#: 1...♜h5 2.♞d3 ♜g4 (or 2...♜h4) 3.♞h3#

Such a problem is called a *grotesque* – all the white pieces against the opponent's lone king!

