Award of the John Nunn 50th Birthday Study Tourney

I am pleased to announce the results of the John Nunn 50th Birthday Study Tourney. First, a few words about the administration of the event. The closing date for entries was the end of October 2005. Round about this time, the tourney controller Brian Stephenson converted the entries to PGN format and passed the entries to me without the composers' names.

During the following month, I checked the studies for analytical soundness. At the start of December, those unsound studies which seemed capable of repair were returned to the composers for correction, with a further month being allowed for this step. Although a few studies which would have featured in the award could not be corrected, several other studies were successfully repaired. Many of the corrected studies ended up in the award, so this was a worthwhile step. At this stage, there were 59 studies still in the tourney. I then made a preliminary selection of studies for the award and these were sent to Harold van der Heijden for anticipation checking. Only a couple of studies turned out to be seriously anticipated, although some partial anticipations led to changes in the order of the award. I then re-checked the studies in the award for soundness, which unfortunately resulted in one prize-winner being removed from the award.

The standard of the entries was very high. Although I was quite tough with the judging, there are 30 studies in the award. I accept that some of the studies not in the award would certainly have been honoured in many other tourneys; likewise some of the lower-ranked studies in this award would have gained prizes elsewhere. Any composer whose study appears in the award can be proud of his achievement.

Judging study tourneys is not an easy task and personal taste inevitably plays a large part. With my background as an over-the-board player, I tend to favour clear-cut and pointed studies. I solved (or, in some cases, attempted to solve) almost all the studies and included 'solver satisfaction' as one of the elements in the assessment of each study. Complexity is not necessarily an advantage in a study; difficult analysis and obscure side-variations may only serve to hide the main point of the study and frustrate the solver. Quite a few studies featured 6-man database positions or were heavily dependent on them, but in many of these the analysis given indicated that the composer had not used a database. Whether or not the composer has used a database is in my view utterly irrelevant; in any case, if the composer does not choose to reveal his method of composition (and I see no reason why he should), the judge can hardly be expected to read the composer's mind. I judged such studies on the same basis as all the other studies in the award, with the sole difference of giving greater weight to originality. The composer who discovers something remarkable in a database deserves credit; the composer who repeats the discovery does not.

For over-the-board players looking for some game-like positions which they might especially enjoy, I would recommend the following studies in the award: 1st Prize, 3rd Prize, 5th Prize, 6th Prize, 1st HM, 5th HM, 11th HM, 1st Commendation, 2nd Commendation, 11th Commendation, but I hope they will look at the other ones as well! The 8th Prize is a discovery in endgame theory which might well find its way into future textbooks.

The solutions in the award are based on the analysis submitted by the composers, but are entirely my responsibility. The reason for this is partly that the presentation of solutions varied so much from composer to composer – some gave only the main line, while others included pages of

analysis; some used words, others symbols, and so on. Additionally, there were sometimes errors in the composers' analysis which did not affect the soundness of the study and these needed to be corrected. The only way to ensure some consistency in the solutions was to rewrite them myself. I apologise to any composers who feel that my solutions do not do their studies justice. Where I quote other studies in the solutions, if the quoted study is in the 2005 van der Heijden study database I give the study's number in the database.

Thanks are due to all the composers who took part in the tourney, to Brian Stephenson for controlling the event with his usual efficiency, to Harold van der Heijden for anticipation checking, to the magazine EG for supporting the event and publishing the award and finally to ChessBase, for donating some prizes and helping to publicise the event. This definitive award (including a PGN file) is also available for download at http://www.bstephen.freeuk.com/composing/nunn50.html.

John Nunn
January 2006

Oleg Pervakov & Karen Sumbatyan (Russia)
1st Prize, Nunn-50JT, 2005
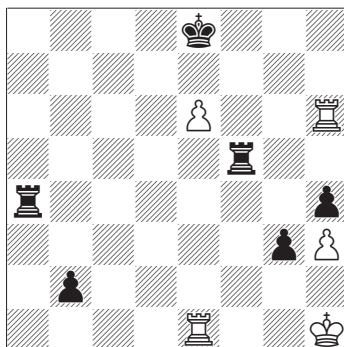
Draw

A real masterpiece. Starting from a game-like position, both sides must play accurately but White has the last laugh as he forces either perpetual check or a pin-stalemate. There is an attractive thematic try in which White makes the mistake of winning the h4-pawn, which destroys the final stalemate. Although there are a lot of four-rook studies around at the moment, no serious anticipation could be identified. Solving appeal is high as the analysis is fairly straightforward and so the theme of the study is not obscured by dense thickets of variations.

1 e7 ♖f1+!

1...♖e5 (1...♖e4 is similar) 2 ♖h8+ ♔d7 3 e8♕+ ♖xe8 4 ♖hxe8 b1♕ 5 ♖xb1 ♔xe8 6 ♖b2 followed by ♔g2 is a draw. Black cannot improve his position and exchanging rooks leads to a drawn pawn ending.

2 ♖xf1 ♖a1 3 ♖hf6!

3 ♖h8+? is the thematic try: 3...♔xe7 4 ♖h7+ (4 ♖hf8? b1♕ wins for Black here because the f8-rook is under attack and so White cannot take on b1, while continuing to check fails because the black queen controls f5: 5 ♖8f7+ ♔e6 6 ♖7f6+ ♔e5 7 ♖6f5+ ♕xf5 and Black wins) 4...♔e6!

(Black's king must stay on the e-file so as to have the white rook under attack if White doubles rooks on the f-file) 5 ♖h6+ ♔e5! 6 ♖h5+ ♔e4! 7 ♖xh4+ (7 ♖hf5 b1♕ 8 ♖5f4+ ♔e5 9 ♖xb1 ♖xb1+ 10 ♔g2 ♖b2+! wins) 7...♔e3 8 ♖hf4 ♖c1! (but not 8...b1♕? 9 ♖4f3+! ♔e2 10 ♖xb1 ♖xb1+ 11 ♔g2 drawing) reaches essentially the same position as in the main line after 8...♔d3. However, White then loses because the stalemate defence of the main line is not available.

3...♖c1!

The most dangerous move. 3...b1♕ (3...♔xe7 4 ♔g2 b1♕ 5 ♖xb1 is also drawn) 4 ♖xb1 ♖xb1+ 5 ♔g2 draws because the rook is not attacked on f6 and if 5...♖b2+, then 6 ♔g1 ♖h2 7 ♖e6 ♖xh3 8 ♖e2 is an immediate draw.

4 ♖f8+ ♔xe7 5 ♖8f7+ ♔e6 6 ♖7f6+ ♔e5

If Black plays his king to the b-file by 6...♔d5 7 ♖6f5+ ♔c4 8 ♖5f4+ ♔b3 then 9 ♖f8 draws.

7 ♖6f5+ ♔e4!

Black's king does not have to stay on the e-file in this line, but the result is the same whether he ends up on c3, d3 or e3, and this move sets a trap.

8 ♖5f4+!

8 ♖b5? ♖xf1+ 9 ♔g2 ♖f2+! (but not 9...b1♕?? 10 ♖xb1 ♖xb1 stalemate) wins for Black and 8 ♔g2? is too early: after 8...b1♕ 9 ♖1f4+ ♔e3 10 ♖f3+ ♔d4 11 ♖3f4+ ♔c3 12 ♖f3+ ♔b4! 13 ♖3f4+ ♖c4 the checks come to an end.

8...♔d3 9 ♔g2!

Now is the right time for this move. Black has nothing better than to promote.

9...b1♕ 10 ♖1f3+!

The same manoeuvre can be played when the black king is on any square on the third rank, except b3 (since in that case ♖1f3+ can be met by ...♖c3!), but then White draws by ♖f8, as in the note to Black's 6th move.

10...♔c2 11 ♖c4+ ♔d2

11...♔d1 12 ♖xc1+ draws.

12 ♖d4+ ♔e2
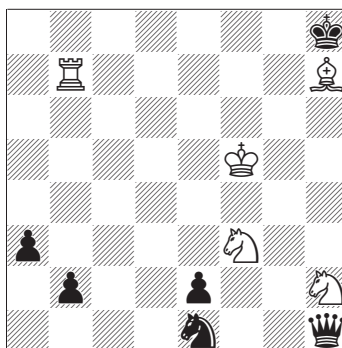
Certainly not 12...♔e1?? 13 ♖e3#.

13 ♖e4+! ♕xe4

Stalemate.

Now we see why White had to avoid winning the h4-pawn.

Marek Kwiatkowski (Poland)
2nd Prize, Nunn-50JT, 2005

Win

Although this study has no particular theme, it is a fascinating battle throughout and is enlivened by plenty of sacrifices, both White and Black. In all Black has four queens, which are downed one by one by White's numerically inferior force. The star move is White's 5th, by which White attempts the self-destruction of his bishop on h7. Black can avoid this, only to fall victim to a different fate. This study contains no difficult sidelines and rated very highly for 'solver satisfaction'.

1 ♔g6 ♛g2+ 2 ♘g4!

2 ♘g5? loses to 2...♛xb7, so White must first sacrifice his h2-knight.

2...♛xg4+ 3 ♘g5 ♛f5+!

3...♛f4 fails to 4 ♖b8+ ♛xb8 5 ♘f7#, therefore Black must sacrifice his queen to gain a bit of time.

4 ♔xf5 a2

4...♘f3 5 ♔f6! ♘xg5 6 ♔g6 forces mate, so Black puts his trust in his advanced pawns.

5 ♘f7+!!

A truly astonishing move. White's attacking force looks rather slight in the face of Black's potential queens, and with this move White is prepared to reduce it even further. 5 ♔f6? loses after 5...b1♛ 6 ♗xb1 a1♛+ 7 ♔g6 ♛a6+.

5...♔g7!

Black declines the offer, because 5...♔xh7 loses to 6 ♘g5+ (switchback by the knight) 6...♔h8 7 ♖h7+! (possible now that h7 is free; not 7 ♔f6? b1♛ and Black wins) 7...♔g8 8 ♔f6 b1♛ 9 ♖g7+ ♔f8 10 ♘e6+ ♔e8 11 ♖e7#.

6 ♘d6+!

This is the only check to win. 6 ♘e5+? ♔h6 7 ♔g4 is a very tempting try, because 7...a1♛? loses to 8 ♗e4 followed by mate. However, Black has the clever defence 7...♔g2! 8 ♗e4 ♘e3+ 9 ♔f4 ♘g2+ 10 ♔f5 ♘e3+ 11 ♔f6 ♘d5+ and White cannot reasonably avoid the perpetual check.

6...♔h8

Here 6...♔h6 loses to 7 ♔g4 b1♛ 8 ♘f5+ ♛xf5+ 9 ♗xf5 and mate next move.

7 ♔f6

Now that White has transferred his knight from g5 to d6 this move wins, because on d6 the knight blocks Black's queen check on a6. 7 ♖xb2? is another tempting false path, aiming for 7...a1♛? 8 ♔g6 and mate, but Black plays instead 7...♘f3! (7...♘d3! also works) 8 ♔g6 ♘e5+ with a draw.

7...b1♛

7...a1♛ 8 ♘f7+ ♔xh7 9 ♘g5+ leads to immediate mate.

8 ♗xb1 a1♛+

Black manages to promote with check, but his third queen is no more help than the previous two.

9 ♔g6 ♛a8

The only way to prevent mate on the back rank.

10 ♖h7+ ♔g8 11 ♖g7+

11 ♘e4 isn't possible at once due to the check on e8.

11...♔f8 12 ♖f7+ ♔g8

Now that White has transferred his rook to f7 there is no check on e8, so White can take time out to reposition his knight.

13 ♘e4!

This blocks the queen's path to g2 and threatens mate by ♘f6+. Black has no choice but to surrender his third queen.

13...♛xe4+ 14 ♗xe4 ♘d3!

Black's last fling, threatening both to promote and to play ...♘e5+.

15 ♖f5!

This sly retreat cuts out the knight check and prepares the final attack with ♗d5+.
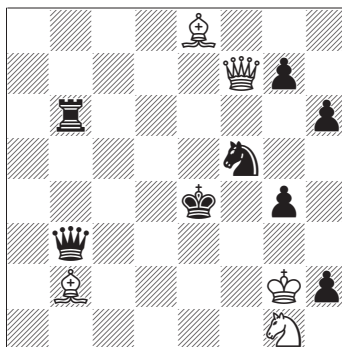
15...♘f4+ 16 ♖xf4 e1♛

The fourth queen, but now the end is near.

17 ♗d5+ ♔h8 18 ♖f8#.

Gady Costeff (Israel)
3rd Prize, Nunn-50JT, 2005

Draw

This is a real solver's study. Some rather forcing introductory play leads to a position in which White seems all set to resign, but then he finds a miraculous defence offering a bishop and a queen. In the resulting position, he manages to hold the draw despite having a lone knight against a queen and four pawns. The final position appears original and it is an important positive feature that virtually all the units involved arrive on their final squares during the course of the play.

1 ♗c6+ ♔f4 2 ♘e2+

The tempting 2 ♗c1+ ♔e5 3 ♕e8+ ♕e6 4 ♗f4+ fails after 4...♔xf4 5 ♕xe6 ♖b2+ 6 ♘e2+ ♖xe2+ 7 ♕xe2 h1♕+ 8 ♔xh1 ♘g3+ and Black ends up with three extra pawns.

2...♔g5 3 ♗c1+

3 ♕xb3 ♖xb3 4 ♗c1+ ♔h4 5 ♔xh2 transposes into the following note.

3...♔h4 4 ♕xf5

4 ♕xb3 ♖xb3 5 ♔xh2 g3+ 6 ♔g2 ♘e3+ 7 ♗xe3 ♖xe3 is a win for Black. In general, the ending rook and two connected passed pawns against bishop and knight is a win. Here Black's king is poorly placed to begin with, but the third pawn is enough to make the win clear; for example 8 ♗f3 (8 ♘d4 ♖a3 9 ♗d5 h5 10 ♘f5+ – or else ...♔g5, followed by ...h4, etc. – 10...♔g4 11 ♘xg7 h4 12 ♗e6+ ♔f4 13 ♘f5 ♖a6! 14 ♘g7 ♖c6 with an easy win) 8...♖e6 9 ♘d4 ♖f6 10 ♘e2 (or 10 ♗b7 ♖f2+ 11 ♔g1 h5) 10...♖d6 11 ♘g1 (11 ♘xg3 ♖g6) 11...♖d2+ 12 ♗e2 ♖a2 and wins comfortably.

4...♕h3+

4...h1♕+ 5 ♔xh1 ♕d1+ 6 ♘g1 ♖xc6 7 ♗e3 gives White enough counterplay against Black's exposed king to secure the draw. The critical line runs 7...♖f6 (or else ♗f2+ is even stronger) 8 ♗f2+ g3 9 ♗xg3+! ♔xg3 10 ♕g5+ ♔f2 (or 10...♕g4 11 ♘e2+ ♔f3 12 ♘g1+) 11 ♕g3+ ♔f1 12 ♕h3+ ♔e1 13 ♕e3+ ♔f1 14 ♕h3+ with a draw.

5 ♔h1 ♖xc6

It looks hopeless as White has only a few more checks, but now comes the real surprise.

6 ♗g5+!

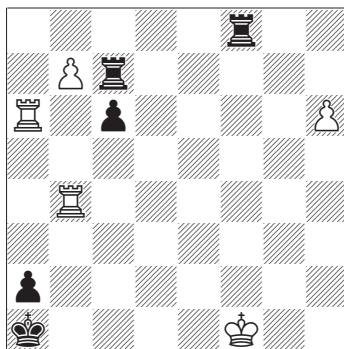6 ♕f2+? g3 7 ♕f4+ ♕g4 8 ♘xg3 ♕xf4 9 ♗xf4 g5 is an easy win.

6...hxg5 7 ♕h7+

After 7 ♕f2+ g3 8 ♘xg3 ♕e6 9 ♘f5+ ♔g4 10 ♘e3+ ♔h5 Black retains a decisive material advantage.

7...♖h6 8 ♕xh6+! gxh6 9 ♘g3!

A remarkable position. Black cannot win despite his huge material advantage. The only try is 9...♕f1+ 10 ♘xf1 ♔h3 but then 11 ♘g3 is the simplest draw.

David Gurgenidze & Iuri Akobia (Georgia)
4th Prize, Nunn-50JT, 2005

Win

This is a complex study which is challenging to understand even if you are just playing over the solution. After a few moves a potential stalemate situation arises, which forces White to take care. Subtle king and rook moves are required in order to deal with an underpromotion defence by Black.

1 ♔g2!

The white king must head for the third rank in order to allow his rook to interpose on h4 in one line. Not 1 ♔g1? (1 ♔e2? ♖e7+ 2 ♔d2 ♖d7+ 3 ♔c2 ♖f2+ 4 ♔c3 ♖f3+ 5 ♔c2 ♖f2+ is an easy draw) 1...♖g8+ 2 ♔h1 (2 ♔h2 ♖h7! 3 ♖xc6 ♖xh6+ 4 ♖xh6 ♖g2+ 5 ♔h3 ♖g3+ 6 ♔h4 ♖h3+ 7 ♔g5 ♖h5+ and White cannot escape the checks) 2...♖b8! 3 ♖ab6 (3 ♖ba4 ♖bxb7 4 ♖xa2+ ♔b1 5 ♖g2 c5 and Black has no trouble drawing) 3...♖h7! (not, however, 3...♖d7? 4 ♖g4 ♖d1+ 5 ♔g1 ♖b1 6 h7 c5 7 ♔h2 c4 8 ♖g8 ♖xb6 9 h8♕+ ♖b2+ 10 ♕xb2+ ♔xb2 11 ♖xb8 a1♕ 12 ♖g8 and White wins; 3...♖e7? is met the same way) 4 ♖xc6 ♖xh6+ 5 ♖xh6 ♖xb7 6 ♖a4 ♖b4 7 ♖aa6 ♖b1+ 8 ♔g2 ♔b2 drawing.

1...♖g8+

The toughest defence. After 1...♖b8 2 ♖ab6 ♖f7 3 ♖b3! (3 ♖b2? ♖g8+ 4 ♔h2 ♖f6 draws) 3...♖d7 (3...♖g8+ 4 ♖g3 wins at once) 4 ♖b2! ♖g8+ 5 ♔f2! ♖f8+ 6 ♔e1 ♖d6 7 h7 ♖h6 8 b8♕ ♖xb8 9 ♖xb8 ♖xh7 10 ♖c2 White wins more easily.

2 ♔h3!

2 ♔h1? and 2 ♔h2? were covered in the note to White's first move, while if White plays to the f-file, then 2...♖f7+ draws easily.

2...♖b8

2...♖h7 fails to 3 ♖a8! ♖xh6+ 4 ♔h4 (this move explains why the king had to head to h3) 4...♖hg6 5 b8♕ ♖xb8 6 ♖xb8 ♖g1 (6...♖g5 7 ♖f4 ♖b5 8 ♖e8 is similar) 7 ♖f4 ♖b1 (7...♖h1+ 8 ♔g4 doesn't help) 8 ♖e8 and White wins by doubling rooks on the second rank.

3 ♖ab6!

3 ♖ba4? ♖h7 4 ♖xa2+ ♔b1 5 ♖a1+ ♔b2! is a draw.

3...♖h7!

3...♖d7 (3...♖e7 is met the same way) 4 ♖xc6 ♖d3+ 5 ♔g4 ♖d1 6 h7 ♖b1 7 ♖cc4 wins for White.

4 ♖xc6 ♖xh6+! 5 ♖xh6 ♖xb7

The introductory play is over, and we are in 6-man database territory.

6 ♖a4! ♖b4!

Black's best chance is to play for stalemate. After 6...♖b3+ 7 ♔g2 ♖b4 (7...♖b2+ 8 ♔f3 ♖b4 9 ♖aa6 is similar) 8 ♖aa6 ♖b3 9 ♖he6 ♖b1 10 ♔f3 ♖b3+ 11 ♔e2 White has a slow but sure win.

7 ♖a5!!

The immediate 7 ♖aa6? only draws after 7...♔b2! because White does not have the move ♔g4 as in the main line. The key continuation is 8 ♔g3 a1♘! 9 ♖h2+ ♘c2 10 ♖c6 and here Black can save the game by 10...♖b3+ 11 ♔f4 ♖c3.

7 ♖a7 and 7 ♖a8 also win, but with loss of time, as in order to win White must play his rook to a5.

7...♖b5!

7...♖b1 8 ♖ha6 ♖b2 9 ♔g3 wins by approaching with the king.

8 ♖aa6!

8 ♖a7 ♖b7! 9 ♖aa6? is a draw since White must only play his rook to a6 when Black's rook is on b5. Black defends by 9...♔b1 10 ♖hd6 ♖h7+ (Black keeps checking until he can transfer his rook to the first rank) 11 ♔g2 ♖g7+ 12 ♔f3 (12 ♔h3 ♖g1 is similar) 12...♖g1 13 ♖db6+ (13 ♔f2 ♖h1! 14 ♔g2 ♖e1! doesn't help White) 13...♔a1 and White must lift the stalemate by playing his rook along the rank, whereupon Black plays ...♔b1 again. White cannot make progress.

8...♔b2

There is nothing better:

1) 8...♔b1 9 ♔g3 ♖g1+ 10 ♔f2 ♖b1 11 ♔e3 and the king approaches.

2) 8...♔b1 9 ♔g4! (the key point is that with the rook on b5, Black is unable to transfer his rook to the first rank by means of a g-file check) 9...♔a1 (9...♖b4+ 10 ♔f3 ♖b2 11 ♖h1+ ♔c2 12 ♔e3 wins easily) 10 ♔f3 ♖b1 11 ♔e3 ♖e1+ 12 ♔d2 ♖g1 13 ♔c3 ♖g3+ 14 ♔d4 ♖g4+ 15 ♔e3 ♖g3+ 16 ♔f4 ♖g2 17 ♖h1+ ♔b2 18 ♖b6+ wins.

9 ♔g4!

This move explains why White first had to deflect the rook to b5 at move 7. Only b5 works, because on b4 the rook prevents ♔g4, while on b7 or b8 Black has a check on the g-file. 9 ♔g3? a1♘! draws as in the note to White's 7th move.

9...a1♘

After 9...♖b4+ (9...♔a1 10 ♔f3 transposes into the note to Black's 8th move) the simplest win is by 10 ♔f5 a1♘ 11 ♖h2+ ♘c2 12 ♖c6, but 10 ♔g5 ♖b5+ 11 ♔g6, followed by playing the king around to c7, also wins although much more slowly. This was the composer's main line but the database revealed the dual win and so I have taken the main line to be 9...a1♘, which avoids the dual.

10 ♖h2+ ♘c2 11 ♖c6

and Black loses the knight after, for example 11...♖b4+ 12 ♔f5 ♖b5+ 13 ♔e6.

Yuri Bazlov (Russia)
5th Prize, Nunn-50JT, 2005
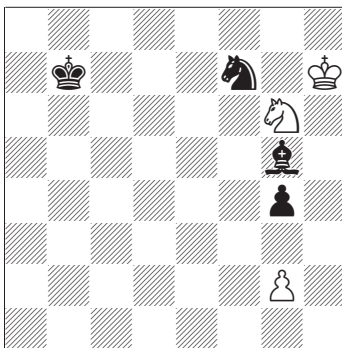
Draw

This position is a truly astounding discovery. White sacrifices a piece to reach a drawn position in which he is two whole minor pieces down and has just one pawn on the second rank. The refusal to capture Black's bishop at move 4 is especially surprising. Other studies with this concluding material balance (such as Avni #20415) have involved stalemate, but this one is based on a positional draw. This study shows that there are still simple and striking positions waiting to be discovered.

1 ♘h8!

Black's bishop occupies a dominating position which makes it hard for White to activate his pieces. White's first move clears g6 in order to play his king to that square. The alternative is 1 ♔g7? ♘d6 2 ♘e5 g3 but Black can secure his pawn on g3 and gradually improve the position of his pieces. Of course, he must avoid the exchange of knights, which leads to a positional draw provided White's king can reach f1. Although the win is not easy, it can be accomplished in the end; for example, 3 ♔g6 ♗d8! (stopping the white king reaching e6, after which it is very hard for Black to displace the centralised white pieces) 4 ♔h5 ♘e4 5 ♔g4 ♗c7 6 ♔f3 ♘d2+ 7 ♔e3 (7 ♔e2 ♘b3 8 ♘g6 ♗c6 9 ♔f3 ♘d4+ 10 ♔g4 ♔d5 11 ♘f4+ ♔e4 wins) 7...♘f1+ 8 ♔e2 ♘h2 (this prevents the white king approaching the g3-pawn and gives Black time to bring his own king up) 9 ♘d3 ♔c6 10 ♔e3 ♔d5 11 ♘b4+ ♔e5 12 ♘c6+ ♔f5 13 ♘d4+ ♔g4 14 ♘c2 ♗b6+ 15 ♔e2 ♔f4, followed by ...♘g4, with a technical win.

1...♘e5

The only winning chance is to prevent White's king moving immediately to g6. After 1...♘xh8 2 ♔xh8 ♔c6 3 ♔g7 ♔d5 4 ♔g6 ♔e3 (Black cannot move his bishop to f4 or h4 without losing his pawn, so he loses another tempo later when White attacks the g3-pawn with his king) 5 ♔f5 g3 6 ♔g4 ♗f2 7 ♔f3 ♔d4 8 ♔e2! the king reaches f1, with a standard positional draw.

2 ♘f7!

Quick action is necessary, or Black just approaches with his king, but this move is simply unbelievable. Already one piece down, White offers a second one! Black must accept as both his minor pieces are under fire.

2...♘xf7 3 ♔g6! ♘e5+!

The best try is to sacrifice the bishop, as 3...♔c6 4 ♔xf7 ♔d5 5 ♔g6 draws as in the note to Black's first move.

4 ♔f5!

Declining the offer. 4 ♔xg5? loses after 4...♔c6! 5 ♔f4 ♔d6! (gaining the opposition) 6 ♔e4 (6 ♔f5 ♔d5 wins) 6...♔e6 7 ♔f4 ♔f6 8 g3 ♔e6 9 ♔g5 ♔d5 10 ♔f5 ♔d4 11 ♔f4 ♔d3! and the g3-pawn falls.
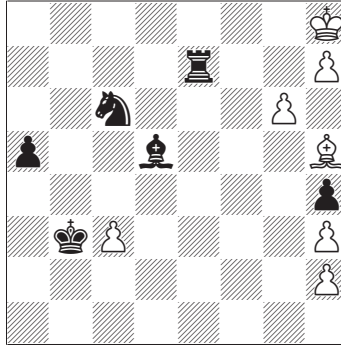
4...♘f7

Amazing but true; Black cannot win despite being two clear minor pieces up. 4...♘f3 5 ♔xg4 and 4...♗f6 5 ♔xf6 ♘f3 6 ♔f5 ♘h2 7 ♔f4 are both immediate draws.

5 ♔g6 ♘e5+ 6 ♔f5!

White repeats the position.

Jan Timman (Netherlands)
6th Prize, Nunn-50JT, 2005

Win

This spectacular study involves sacrifices by both White and Black, with the key idea being the move 3 c4!, opening the long diagonal ready to cover the a1-square several moves later. The whole idea is realised with great economy.

1 g7 ♖e8+!!

The only chance is to sacrifice the rook to clear the e7-square. After 1...♖e5 2 ♗d1+ ♔xc3 3 g8♕ White has too much material.

2 ♗xe8 ♘e7 3 c4!!

A remarkable move which has as its sole purpose the opening of the long diagonal. The immediate 3 g8♕? leads only to a draw: 3...♗xg8 4 ♗f7+! (4 hxg8♕+ ♘xg8 5 ♔xg8 ♔xc3 is a draw because White cannot win the h4-pawn without allowing the black king to reach h8, with a standard rook's pawn(s) + wrong bishop draw) 4...♗xf7 5 ♔g7 ♘g6 6 ♔xf7 ♘h8+ 7 ♔g7 a4 8 ♔xh8 a3 9 ♔g8 (9 ♔g7 a2 10 h8♕ a1♕ 11 ♕xh4 ♕xc3+ draws at once) 9...a2 10 h8♕ a1♕ 11 ♕xh4 ♕a8+ and White cannot avoid the checks without making so many concessions that Black is able to draw; for example, 12 ♔g7 ♕b7+ 13 ♔g6 ♕c6+ 14 ♕f6 ♕g2+ 15 ♕g5 (15 ♔f7 ♕b7+) 15...♕xh2 (15...♕c6+ should also draw) 16 ♕e3 ♕d6+ 17 ♔h5 ♕d5+ 18 ♔h4 ♕d8+ and so on.

3...♗xc4

3...♔xc4 4 g8♕ ♗xg8 5 ♗f7+ ♗xf7 6 ♔g7 ♗d5 7 h8♕ will win in the long run. White picks up the h4-pawn and wins one of Black's minor pieces for the front h-pawn. Black cannot then draw with a minor piece and an advanced a-pawn because White has another h-pawn.

4 g8♕!

A neat tactic forcing the promotion of the h-pawn.

4...♗xg8

4...♘xg8 5 ♔g7 wins at once.

5 ♗f7+!

5 hxg8♕+? ♘xg8 6 ♔xg8 ♔c3 draws as in the note to White's third move.
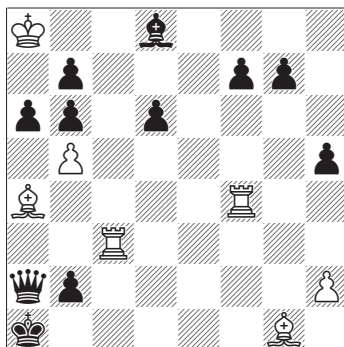
5...♗xf7 6 ♔g7 ♘g6

6...♗c4 7 h8♕ wins as in the note to Black's third move.

7 ♔xf7 ♘h8+ 8 ♔g7 (or 8 ♔g8) 8...a4 9 ♔xh8 a3 10 ♔g8 a2 11 h8♕

and wins, thanks to the open long diagonal.

Gady Costeff (Israel)

7th Prize, Nunn-50JT, 2005

Win

The heavy starting position is not very much to my taste, but one must admire the remarkable play which follows. Black's two queens are held paralysed by a bishop and rook battery, and both sides manoeuvre to try to secure the best possible position after the queens have been captured. White's 5th move, allowing Black to deliver a discovered check from a queen, is especially notable.

1 ♖f1+

Or:

1) 1 ♗c2? axb5+ 2 ♔b8 ♗f6 3 ♖f1+ b1♕ 4 ♗xb1 ♗xc3 5 ♗xa2+ ♔xa2 6 ♖xf7 b4 is a typical line. Ending up a rook ahead is no help if White has to surrender material for Black's dangerous front b-pawn. Indeed, White should force a draw quickly by 7 ♖f2+ if he wants to avoid being worse.

2) 1 ♗b3? ♗f6 2 ♗xa2 ♗xc3 3 ♖a4 (3 bxa6 bxa6 4 ♖a4 b5 5 ♖xa6 b1♕ 6 ♗xb1+ ♔xb1 7 ♖xd6 b4 8 ♖c6 ♔c2 9 ♗b6 ♔d3 10 ♗a5 f5 is also a draw) 3...axb5 4 ♖a7 b1♕ 5 ♗xb1+ ♔xb1 6 ♖xb7 b4 7 ♖xb6 ♔c2 8 ♖c6 ♔d3 is similar. Again White should force a draw as soon as possible.

1...b1♕ 2 ♗d4

2 ♖cc1? ♗f6 3 ♖xb1+ ♕xb1 4 ♖xb1+ ♔xb1 5 ♔xb7 axb5 6 ♗xb5 g5 7 ♔xb6 ♗e5 is not good enough; after 8 ♗e8 h4 9 ♗xf7 g4 10 ♗e6 g3 11 h3 ♔c2 Black draws easily.

2...♗f6 3 ♖xf6!

3 ♗xf6? gxf6 4 ♖cc1 axb5 5 ♖xb1+ ♕xb1 6 ♖xb1+ ♔xb1 7 ♗xb5 ♔c2 is a draw.

3...gxf6 4 h4!

With Black's queens effectively paralysed, White fixes the weak h5-pawn ready to be attacked after the queens have disappeared. Other moves are ineffective: 4 ♖a3+? (4 ♖c1+? is similar) 4...♕bb2 5 ♗xb2+ ♔xb2 6 ♖xa2+ ♔xa2 7 ♔xb7 (7 h4 ♔b2 8 ♗d1 ♔c3 9 ♗xh5 f5 is too slow as Black's king can still stop the h-pawn) 7...axb5 8 ♗xb5 ♔b3 9 ♔xb6 ♔c3 10 ♔c6 ♔d4 11 ♔xd6 ♔e4 12 ♔e7 ♔f5 13 ♔xf7 ♔g5 14 ♗f1 f5 draws, as Black only has to reach h8 with his king in order to save the game.

4...f5!

The best defence, seeking to gain counterplay by pushing the passed f-pawn. Alternatives:

1) 4...♕xa4 5 ♖a3#.

2) 4...♕e4 5 ♖c1#.

3) 4...♔b2 5 ♖d3+ ♔c1 6 ♖d1#.

4) 4...axb5 5 ♖a3+ ♕bb2 6 ♗xb2+ ♔xb2 7 ♖xa2+ ♔xa2 8 ♗d1 f5 (8...♔b2 9 ♗xh5 ♔c3 10 ♗xf7 ♔d4 11 h5 ♔e5 12 h6) 9 ♗xh5 transposing into the main line.

5 ♗d1!

Perhaps the most surprising move in the solution, allowing Black to deliver discovered check. However, White cannot waste a single tempo and must take aim at the h5-pawn without delay.

5...axb5+

Now there is a forced liquidation. 5...♔b2 loses to 6 ♖c4+ ♔a3 7 ♖a4#.

6 ♖a3+ ♛bb2 7 ♗xb2+

By taking the queens this way round, Black's king is drawn one square further away from the h-file.

7...♔xb2 8 ♖xa2+ ♔xa2 9 ♗xh5 b4

Black's king is too far away to stop the h-pawn, so his only chance is to push his own pawns.

10 ♗e2!

Accuracy is necessary. 10 ♗xf7+? only draws after 10...b3 11 h5 f4 12 h6 f3 13 h7 f2 14 ♗c4 b5!.

10...b3 11 h5 b2 12 ♗c4+!

Forcing the king out to a3 ready for a later ♕c3+. 12 ♗d3? f4 is only a draw.

12...♔a3

12...♔a1 13 ♗d3 f4 14 h6 wins as White will pin the b-pawn when he promotes.
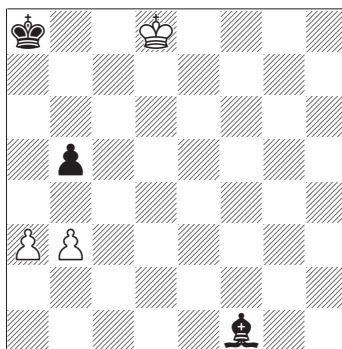
13 ♗d3 f4 14 h6 f3 15 h7 f2 16 h8♕ b1♕

16...f1♕ 17 ♕c3+ ♔a2 (17...♔a4 18 ♕c2+ wins) 18 ♗xf1 b1♕ 19 ♗c4+ forces mate.

17 ♗xb1 f1♕ 18 ♕c3+ ♔a4 19 ♗c2+ ♔b5 20 ♗d3+

White wins.

Jarl H Ulrichsen (Norway)
8th Prize, Nunn-50JT, 2005

Draw

Despite the limited material, a very complex study – in fact, I was unable to solve it. When I saw the solution, I didn't believe that the study could be correct. After considerable manual analysis I concluded that it is sound (thanks to Marc Bourzutschky, this was later confirmed by using a database). It's a remarkable position and a genuine contribution to endgame theory. The study is based on a set of reciprocal zugzwangs (in all cases the pawns are on their current squares):

Z1: ♔c3 v ♔c5, ♗d1. It is obvious that this is a draw with Black to play, as if he moves his bishop White plays b4+ followed by a4. With White to play it is not so clear after 1 b4+, but Black wins by outflanking; for example, 1...♔d5 2 ♔d2 ♗a4 3 ♔d3 ♔e5 4 ♔e3 ♗b3 5 ♔d3 ♔f4 6 ♔d4 ♔f3 7 ♔c3 ♗a4 8 ♔d3 ♔f2 9 ♔d2 ♔f1 and now his king penetrates towards the white pawns.

Z2: ♔c3 v ♚a5, ♗d1. With White to play 1 ♔b2 ♚b6 2 ♔c3 ♚c5 is Z1. Black to play has nothing better than 1...♗h5, but after 2 ♔d2 it's a draw. As soon as Black moves his king away from a5 White plays b4 and then a4. As we can see, occupation of d1 by Black's bishop is an important factor.

Z3: ♔d4 v ♚a5, ♗e2. White to play can only continue 1 ♔c3, but after 1...♗d1 we have Z2. If Black to play continues 1...♗h5, say, then 2 ♔d3 (not 2 ♔c3? ♗d1) 2...♗d1 (or else ♔d2 prevents ...♗d1) 3 ♔c3 is Z2 with Black to play. If 1...♗f1, then 2 ♔c3 and 3 ♔c2 (or d2).

Now it is possible to understand the solution.

1 ♔c7!

Not 1 ♔d7? ♚b7 2 ♔d6 ♚b6 3 ♔d5 ♗e2! (heading for the key d1-square) 4 ♔d4 ♗d1 5 ♔c3 ♚c5 with Z1.

1...♚a7 2 ♔c6 ♚a6 3 ♔d5!

The first surprise. Not 3 ♔c5? ♚a5 and after 4 ♔d5 ♗d3! 5 ♔d4 ♗c2 6 ♔c3 ♗d1 or 4 ♔d4 ♗e2! 5 ♔c3 ♗d1! we arrive at Z2.

3...♚a5!

Other moves are no better: 3...♗d3 4 ♔d4 ♗c2 5 ♔c3 followed by ♔b4 draws at once, while 3...♗e2 4 ♔c5! (threatening 5 ♔b4; not, however, 4 ♔d4? ♗d1 5 ♔c3 ♚a5) 4...♚a5 (forced) 5 ♔d4 is Z3.

4 ♔e4!!

The second surprise. 4 ♔d4? ♗e2 is Z3, while 4 ♔c5? (or 4 ♔e5?) 4...♗d3 5 ♔d4 ♗c2 6 ♔c3 ♗d1 is Z2.

4...♗e2 5 ♔d4

Now we have Z3.

5...♗g4

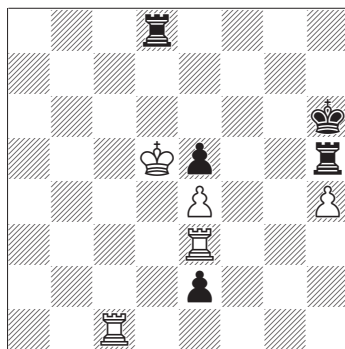5...♚b6 6 ♔c3 ♚c5 7 b4+ ♚c6 8 a4 draws.

6 ♔d3!

The final accurate move, threatening 7 ♔c2 (or 7 ♔d2) controlling d1. 6 ♔c3? loses to 6...♗d1.

6...♗d1 7 ♔c3

With reciprocal zugzwang Z2.

Velimir Kalandadze (Georgia)
1st HM, Nunn-50JT, 2005

Draw

Another judge might well have rated this study lower, but I feel it has several merits. The play soon leads to a position in which one might well resign in an over-the-board game, but White pulls

off a remarkable save based on a mid-board stalemate. The position is natural and there are no complicated sidelines (in fact, no sidelines at all!) to distract from the main point of the study. The only real defects are the perfunctory introductory play and the fact that Black's h5-rook doesn't move during the solution. I would also have preferred to have Black to play in the initial position rather than White's king in check. A somewhat similar idea was shown in #20388 (which turned out to be by the same composer as the current study) but the current setting is considerably superior to the earlier one in that the pieces move into place in a more natural way and White's king performs a switchback.

1 ♔e6 ♖d1

Black has nothing better than to pick up a rook, but this certainly looks as if it should be enough to win.

2 ♖c6!

The right square, setting up a battery so that White's king can return to d5 with gain of tempo.

2...e1♕ 3 ♖xe1 ♖xe1 4 ♔d5+!

The switchback.

4...♔g7 5 ♖c7+

White just keeps checking, and sooner or later Black must play his king to d7 or e7...
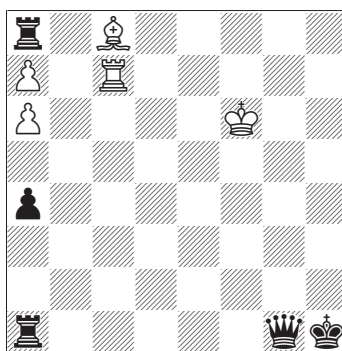
5...♔f8 6 ♖c8+ ♔e7 7 ♖c1!

...whereupon White sets up a perpetual attack on Black's rook!

7...♖e2 8 ♖c2! ♖e3 9 ♖c3! ♖e1 10 ♖c1!

Draw

Emil Melnichenko (New Zealand)
2nd HM, Nunn-50JT, 2005

Draw

This study features an original systematic manoeuvre in which Black's heavy force is unexpectedly kept under control by a long diagonal pin. Step by step, the white king edges closer to the a-pawns until eventually White can draw by simply taking Black's queen. It's an interesting idea, but unfortunately the study simply winds down rather than rising to a climax.

1 ♗b7+ ♕g2

1...♔h2? 2 ♖h7+ ♔g3 3 ♖g7+ ♔f2 4 ♖xg1 even wins for White.

2 ♖c2!

The right way to attack the pinned queen. Not 2 ♖g7? ♖f1+ 3 ♔e6 (3 ♔e5 is met the same way, while 3 ♔e7 fails to 3...♕xb7+ 4 axb7 ♖xa7) 3...♖e1+ 4 ♔d6 ♕e4 5 ♖e7 (5 ♗xe4+ ♖xe4 6 ♔c6 a3

7 Kb7 a2 and 5 Rg4 Rd1+ 6 Kc7 Rc1+ 7 Kd7 Qxb7+ 8 axb7 Rxa7 win for Black) 5...Rd1+ 6 Kc7 (6 Kc5 Rc8+ mates) 6...Rc1+ 7 Kd7 (7 Kb6 Rb1+ wins easily, while 7 Kd6 Rd8+ 8 Kd7 Rd1+ mates in a few moves) 7...Qxb7+ 8 axb7 Rxa7 9 Kd8 Rxb7 10 Rxb7 a3 11 Ra7 Ra1, followed by ...a2, and the white king cannot shelter from a rook check.

2...Rf1+

2...Rxa7 3 Rxg2 Rxa6+ 4 Ke5 Ra5+ 5 Kd4 causes White no problems.

3 Ke6

White must avoid playing his king to the seventh rank due to 3 Ke7? Qxb7+ 4 axb7 Rxa7 5 Rc7 Rxb7 6 Rxb7 a3 7 Ra7 Ra1, winning in a similar way to the note to White's second move. 3 Ke5? is also bad due to 3...Re8+ 4 Kd4 Rd1+ 5 Kc3 Re3+ 6 Kb2 Rb3+ 7 Ka2 Rxb7.

3...Qf3

Giving further checks doesn't help: 3...Re1+ 4 Kd6 Rd1+ (4...Rd8+ is met by 5 Kc7, while 4...Qe4 5 Rc4 transposes to the main line) 5 Kc7 Qd5 6 Bxd5+ Rxd5 7 Kb7 is a positional draw as at the end of the main line.

4 Rc3! Re1+

4...Rxa7 5 Bxf3+ Rxf3 (after 5...Kg1 6 Kb7 Ra1 7 Kd5 a3 8 Kc5 a2 9 Rc2 Black is paralysed) 6 Rxf3 Rxa6+ 7 Kd5 a3 8 Rf1+ Kg2 9 Ra1 draws easily.

5 Kd6

5 Kd7? Qxb7+ 6 axb7 Rxa7 is the usual win.

5...Qe4

5...Qg2 6 Rc2 and 5...Rd1+ 6 Kc7 Qd5 7 Bxd5+ Rxd5 8 Kb7 are similar to lines we have already seen.

6 Rc4!

6 Bxe4+? Rxe4 7 Kc5 Re7 wins easily.

6...Rd1+ 7 Kc7 Qd5

7...Qg2 8 Rc2 Qd5 9 Bxd5+ Rxd5 10 Kb7 is the usual draw.
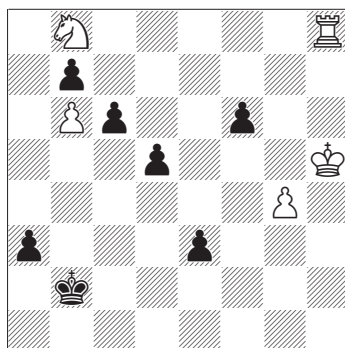
8 Bxd5+

Now the white king is close enough to the a-pawns for this to draw. Not 8 Kb6? Rb1+ 9 Kc7 Rxb7+.

8...Rxd5 9 Kb7 Rdd8 10 Rxa4

With a simple positional draw. White just transfers his rook to the seventh rank and waits, when Black cannot make progress..

Luis M Gonzalez (Spain)
3rd HM, Nunn-50JT, 2005

Draw

Some interesting introductory play leads up to the critical position at move 13, in which White must make a surprising rook move in order to reach a reciprocal zugzwang with Black to play. There is a tempting try at move 6.

1 ♘xc6!

White must bring his knight into the game. Other moves fail:

1) 1 ♔g6? d4 2 ♖h2+ (2 ♘xc6 is too late as 2...d3 3 ♖h1 e2 4 ♘d4 a2 wins for Black) 2...♔c3 3 ♖e2 d3 4 ♖xe3 a2 5 ♖e1 d2 6 ♔f1 ♔b2 7 ♖d1 ♔c2 wins.

2) 1 g5? a2 2 gxf6 (2 g6 a1♕ 3 g7 e2 4 ♖e8 e1♕ 5 ♖xe1 ♕xe1 6 g8♕ ♕h1+ 7 ♔g6 ♕g2+ 8 ♔f7 ♕xg8+ 9 ♔xg8 d4 10 ♘xc6 d3 wins easily) 2...a1♕ 3 ♖e8 ♕h1+ 4 ♔g6 ♕g2+ 5 ♔h6 ♕f3 6 ♔g6 ♕g4+ 7 ♔h6 ♕f5 8 ♔g7 ♕g5+ 9 ♔f7 ♕h5+ 10 ♔f8 e2 and Black wins.

3) 1 ♘d7? a2 2 ♖a8 a1♕ 3 ♖xa1 ♔xa1 4 ♘c5 (4 g5 fxg5) 4...e2 5 ♘d3 c5 and the pawns are too strong.

1...a2 2 ♖a8 e2!

2...a1♕ 3 ♖xa1 ♔xa1 4 ♘d4 ♔b2 5 g5 fxg5 6 ♔xg5 ♔c3 7 ♘f3 d4 8 ♔f4 stops the pawns.

3 ♘b4 a1♕ 4 ♘d3+!

4 ♖xa1? costs a vital tempo and loses after 4...♔xa1 5 ♘d3 ♔b1.

4...♔c3

Now 4...♔b1 5 ♖xa1+ ♔xa1 6 g5 fxg5 7 ♔xg5 is an easy draw.

5 ♖xa1 ♔xd3 6 g5!

6 ♔g6? is tempting, but fails to 6...d4 7 ♔xf6 ♔e3! 8 g5 d3 9 g6 d2 10 g7 e1♕! 11 ♖xe1+ dxe1♕ 12 g8♕ ♕h4+ (Black can force the exchange of queens) 13 ♔f5 ♕f4+ 14 ♔g6 ♕g4+ 15 ♔f7 ♕xg8+ 16 ♔xg8 ♔d4 and Black wins.

6...fxg5 7 ♔g4!

7 ♔xg5? ♔e3! 8 ♖a3+ ♔f2 9 ♖a2 d4 10 ♔f4 d3 11 ♔e4 ♔g3 is decisive.

7...♔d2 8 ♖a2+! ♔e3 9 ♖a3+ ♔e4! 10 ♖a8!

Not 10 ♖a4+? d4 and Black wins.

10...♔e3 11 ♖a3+ ♔f2 12 ♖f3+ ♔e1 13 ♖a3!

A very surprising move. White must not move to d3 at once or else he falls into zugzwang, but he must also avoid b3 because he cannot switch to the 8th rank due to the b-pawns. 13 ♖d3? (13 ♖b3? ♔d2 14 ♖b2+ ♔e3 15 ♖b3+ ♔e4! 16 ♖b1 d4 is an easy win) 13...d4! (reciprocal zugzwang with White to move) 14 ♖xd4 ♔f1 15 ♖e4 e1♕ 16 ♖xe1+ ♔xe1 17 ♔xg5 ♔d2 18 ♔f5 ♔d3 19 ♔e5 ♔c4 20 ♔d6 ♔b5 21 ♔c7 ♔a6 wins.

13...d4

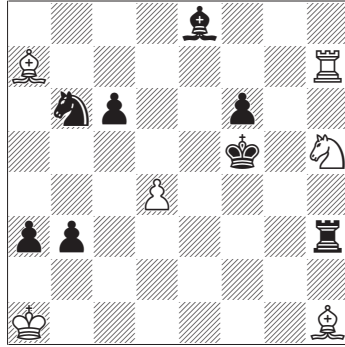There is nothing better.

14 ♖d3!

Reciprocal zugzwang with Black to move.

14...♔f2 15 ♖f3+ ♔g2

with a draw. White just keeps checking and meets ...♔e1 by ♖d3.

Peter Vassilev (Bulgaria)
4th HM, Nunn-50JT, 2005

Draw

This study features some entertaining tactics, enlivened by a tempting try on the first move. From moves 3-7, the black king is amusingly trapped between two 'mined' light-squared diagonals and must move only on dark squares. The study eventually works its way to a familiar conclusion.

1 ♗e4+!

1 ♘g7+? is tempting, but after 1...♔g4! Black wins in all lines:

1) 2 ♘xe8 ♖xh7 3 ♘xf6+ ♔f4 4 ♘xh7 ♘a4 5 ♗b8+ ♔e3 and the pawns cannot be stopped.

2) 2 ♗e4 ♖c3 3 ♘xe8 (3 ♖h1 b2+ 4 ♔b1 ♘c4 5 ♗f5+ ♔g5 6 ♖g1+ ♔h6 7 d5 ♖c1+ 8 ♔a2 ♖xg1 9 ♗xg1 ♔xg7 10 dxc6 ♗xc6 11 ♗c5 ♗e8 12 ♗xa3 ♘xa3 13 ♔xa3 ♗g6! wins) 3...♖c1+ 4 ♗b1 a2 5 ♘xf6+ ♔g5 6 ♘e4+ ♔g6! 7 ♘d2+ axb1♕+ 8 ♘xb1 ♖c2! 9 ♔a3 (9 ♘d2 ♔xh7 10 ♘xb3 ♘a4! wins) 9...♖a2+ 10 ♔b1 ♔xh7 11 ♗xb6 ♖xa3 12 ♔b2 ♖a8 is an easy win for Black.

3) 2 ♖xh3 b2+ 3 ♔a2 ♗f7+ 4 d5 ♔xh3 5 ♘f5 (5 ♗e4 ♗xd5+ 6 ♗xd5 ♘xd5 7 ♗d4 ♔g4 8 ♘e6 f5 wins) 5...♘a4! (not 5...♗xd5+? 6 ♗xd5 ♘xd5 7 ♗d4 c5 8 ♗xf6! ♘xf6 9 ♘d6 ♘d5 10 ♘b5 ♘b4+ 11 ♔b1 a2+ 12 ♔xb2 with a draw by the 6-man databases) 6 ♗d4 cxd5 7 ♘e7 ♘c3+ 8 ♗xc3 d4+ 9 ♗d5 dxc3 10 ♔b1 ♗xd5 11 ♘xd5 f5 12 ♘xc3 f4 wins for Black.

1...♔xe4

1...♔g5 2 ♖g7+ ♔xh5 (2...♔h4?! 3 ♘xf6 is, if anything, better for White) 3 ♖h7+ ♔g4 4 ♖xh3 ♔xh3 5 ♗xb6 draws.

2 ♘xf6+ ♔xd4 3 ♗xb6+ ♔e5!

First Black heads off to eliminate the f6-knight. 3...c5 4 ♗xc5+ ♔xc5 5 ♘e4+ ♔d4 6 ♖xh3 draws easily.

4 ♗c7+

4 ♘g4+? ♔d6 5 ♖xh3 b2+ 6 ♔a2 ♗f7+ 7 ♖b3 ♗xb3+ 8 ♔b1 ♗f7 wins for Black.

4...♔xf6 5 ♗d8+ ♔e5

Black can never play his king to the a2-g8 or b1-h7 diagonals as then White can safely take on h3.

6 ♗c7+ ♔d4 7 ♗b6+ c5!

The last winning try.

8 ♗xc5+! ♔xc5

8...♔e5 9 ♖xh3 b2+ 10 ♔a2 ♗f7+ 11 ♖b3 ♗xb3+ 12 ♔b1 is also drawn.
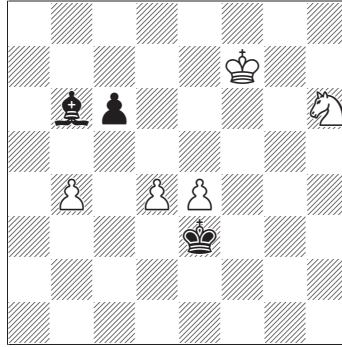
9 ♖xh3

The stage is set for a conclusion that has been seen several times before.

9...b2+ 10 ♔a2 ♗f7+ 11 ♖b3! ♗xb3+ 12 ♔xa3 b1♕ (or 12...b1♖)

Stalemate

Jozsef Csengeri (Serbia and Montenegro)
5th HM, Nunn-50JT, 2005

Win

This study is based on the position of reciprocal zugzwang arising after White's 3rd move, with accompanying thematic try. The fact that this position is reciprocal zugzwang is not at all obvious, and it is perhaps slightly unfortunate that White arrives at it by playing the most direct moves. However, the content, plus the natural initial position, means this study deserves its ranking.

1 e5!

1 d5? ♔xe4 2 d6 c5 is an easy draw.

1...♔xd4

1...♔e4 2 e6 ♗d8 3 ♘f5! ♔xf5 4 e7 ♗xe7 5 ♔xe7 wins.

2 e6

Not 2 ♘g4? ♗c7! 3 e6 ♗d6, winning the b-pawn and drawing.

2...♗d8 3 ♘g4!!

This move gives rise to a reciprocal zugzwang. After 3 ♘f5+? ♔c4 4 ♘e7 c5! 5 b5 ♔xb5 6 ♔e8 ♗b6 7 ♘f5 c4 8 ♘d6+ ♔b4 9 e7 c3 both sides promote at the same time and the position is drawn. 3 ♔e8? is the thematic try: 3...♗f6! 4 ♘g4 (4 ♘g8 ♗g5 and now 5 ♘e7 ♔c4 6 ♘xc6 ♔b5 is a clear positional draw, while 5 ♔f7 ♔e5 6 ♘e7 ♔d6 7 ♘f5+ ♔d5 8 ♘e3+ ♔d4 9 ♘g4 ♗d8 is the key zugzwang with White to move) 4...♗g5 (4...♗h4 is just as good) 5 ♔f7 (5 ♔d7 ♔c4 draws) 5...♗d8 and we have the reciprocal zugzwang with White to play.

3...♔c4

Black has no decent moves. He clearly cannot move his bishop, and king moves allow White to improve the position of his knight:

1) 3...♔d5 4 ♘e3+ ♔d4 5 ♔e8! ♗g5 6 ♔d7 ♔c3 7 ♘c2 wins.

2) 3...♔e4 (here the king is too far away from the b-pawn) 4 ♔e8! ♗g5 5 ♔d7 ♔d5 6 ♘e3+! and wins.

3) 3...♔c3 4 ♘e5 followed by ♘xc6.

4 ♘e5+ ♔d5

4...♔b5 5 ♘d3 wins in the same way.

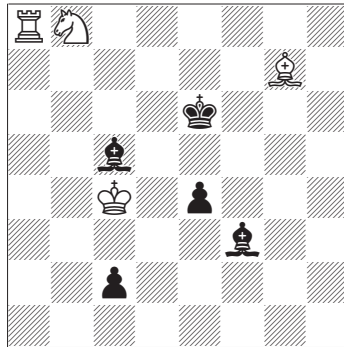**5 ♘d3 ♔c4 6 ♔e8!**

6 e7? ♗xe7 draws.

6...♗h4 7 ♔d7 ♔xd3 8 ♔xc6

The pawns are too strong.

Yuri Bazlov (Russia)

6th HM, Nunn-50JT, 2005

Win

Both sides display tactical ingenuity in this attractive study. In a comical finish, Black finally loses a piece after White retreats all his forces to the first rank.

1 ♖a1

1 ♗b2? e3 2 ♖a6+ (2 ♖a1 ♗d6 3 ♖e1 ♗d5+ draws) 2...♗d6 3 ♔d3 e2 4 ♔d2 ♔d5 and it is time for White to force a draw.

1...♗a3! 2 ♗h6 e3!

2...♗d6 3 ♘c6 wins comfortably, so Black offers a pawn to control the c6-square.

3 ♗xe3 ♗d6! 4 ♘a6 ♗e2+!

Or 4...c1♕+ 5 ♖xc1 ♗e2+ 6 ♔d4 ♗xa6 7 ♖c6 ♗b7 (or 7...♗b5) 8 ♖b6 followed by 9 ♗f4 and White wins a piece.

5 ♔b3 c1♕!

This deflection helps confine White's pieces and is Black's best chance.

6 ♗xc1!

Now 6 ♖xc1? ♗xa6 7 ♖c6 ♗b7 8 ♖b6 only draws as Black has 8...♗d5+.

6...♗d1+ 7 ♔a2! ♗e2! 8 ♗a3!

8 ♔b3? ♗d1+ 9 ♔c4 ♗e2+ forces a draw.

8...♗c4+

8...♗xa3 9 ♖e1 and 8...♗xa6 9 ♖e1+ ♗e5 (9...♔d7 10 ♖d1) 10 ♗b2 win a piece.

9 ♔b1 ♗d3+!

Or 9...♗xa6 10 ♗xd6 ♗d3+ 11 ♔b2! ♔xd6 12 ♖d1 and the pin is decisive.

10 ♔c1! ♗f4+ 11 ♔d1! ♗xa6

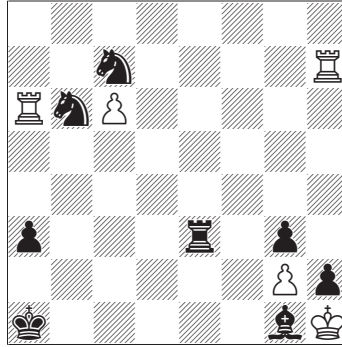Is it finally safe to take the knight?

12 ♗c1!

No! This neat trick picks up a piece.

12...♗xc1 13 ♖xa6+

White ends up a rook ahead.

Richard Becker (USA)

7th HM, Nunn-50JT, 2005

Draw

In this complex study the white king is totally immobilised on the square h1 and the first part of the study revolves around Black's attempts to avoid stalemating White. By the time this situation has been resolved, the position has reduced to a database position of ♖+♗+♙ v ♖. Then everything depends on a series of linked reciprocal zugzwangs. Another judge might have placed this study higher, but in my mind the artificial initial position and lack of 'solver appeal', due to its great length and analytical complexity, weighed against it.

1 ♖e7!

A spectacular initial move. After 1 ♖xa3+? ♖xa3 2 ♖e7 ♘b5 3 c7 ♖f3 (we will see this move several times during the solution) 4 ♖f7 ♘d4 5 gxf3 ♘e6 Black has too much material, while 1 ♖d7? ♘xa6 2 ♖d1+ ♔b2 3 c7 ♖f3 also loses.

1...♘e6

1...♘b5 2 ♖xe3 and 1...♖xe7 2 ♖xa3+ are immediate draws.

2 ♖xa3+

The alternatives 2 ♖xe6? ♖xe6, 2 c7? ♖e1 and 2 ♖ea7? ♘c5 3 ♖xa3+ ♔b2 are all lost for White.

2...♖xa3 3 c7

3 ♖xe6? ♗e3 4 ♖d6 ♔b2 5 ♖d1 ♗c1 6 c7 ♖a1 7 c8♕ ♘xc8 and 3 ♖a7? ♘g5 4 ♖xa3+ ♔b2 win for Black.

3...♖f3!

By putting his rook *en prise* Black defeats White's attempts to force stalemate. 3...♘g5 4 c8♕ ♘xc8 5 ♖e1+ ♔b2 6 ♖b1+ is an immediate draw.

4 c8♕ ♘xc8 5 ♖xe6 ♘b6

Black must hurry with his knight. After 5...♗d4 or 5...♘a7 White simply takes on f3 and then pushes his f-pawn.

6 ♖f6

6 gxf3? ♘d5 (stopping the advance of the f-pawn) 7 ♖g6 (7 f4 g2+) 7...♗f2 8 f4 ♘e3 9 ♖g5 ♘d1 10 f5 ♗e1 11 ♔g2 ♘f2 12 ♖h5 ♘d3 wins for Black.

6...♖f2

Threatening to take on g2.

7 ♖xb6 ♖xg2 8 ♖b3 ♖b2

Necessary to prevent ♖b1+.

9 ♖a3+!

9 ♖xg3? ♖b1 is a database win, but the method is far from simple. One line runs 10 ♖g8 ♖f1 11 ♖g2 ♔b1 12 ♖e2 ♔c1 13 ♖a2 ♖f4 14 ♖e2 ♔d1 15 ♖g2 ♖f5 16 ♖g5 ♖f1 17 ♖g2 ♔e1 18 ♖g8 ♔e2 19 ♖g6 ♖d1 20 ♖g8 ♔f3 21 ♖f8+ ♔e4 22 ♖e8+ ♔f5 23 ♖f8+ ♔e6 24 ♖e8+ ♔f6 25 ♖a8 ♖d3 26 ♖h8 ♖d7 27 ♖f8+ ♔g7 28 ♖f4 ♔g6 29 ♖h4 ♔f5 30 ♖h8 ♖f7 31 ♖h4 ♖f8 32 ♖h5+ ♔e4 33 ♖h4+ ♔e3 34 ♖h7 ♔e2 35 ♖g7 ♗f2 (finally Black can extract his bishop from g1; if White takes the pawn, Black has a winning ♖+♗ v ♖ position) 36 ♖g6 (36 ♔xh2 ♔f3 wins) 36...♖f3 37 ♔xh2 (37 ♖a6 ♗g3 is a standard win as described in various endgame books) 37...♔f1 with a won ♖+♗ v ♖ ending.

9...♖a2

9...♔b1 10 ♖xg3 ♔c1 11 ♖g7 ♖b3 12 ♖g3 transposes to the main line at move 21.

10 ♖xg3 ♔b1 11 ♖g7

White's rook needs plenty of checking distance, because it must be able to check along the rank without being taken by Black's bishop. Thus 11 ♖g8 is also good, but other moves fail; for example:

1) 11 ♖g6? ♔c1 12 ♖c6+ (12 ♖g2 ♖a4 13 ♖g4 ♖a1 14 ♖g2 ♖b1 zugzwang 15 ♖e2 ♖b4 16 ♖g2 ♔d1 wins) 12...♔b2 13 ♖c3 (the problem is that White cannot check on b6 here) 13...♖a4 14 ♖c8 ♔b1 and Black has freed his pieces, leading to a win as in the note to White's 9th move.

2) 11 ♖g2? ♖a1 is a reciprocal zugzwang with White to play; Black wins after 12 ♖e2 ♖a3 13 ♖g2 ♖f3 14 ♖g3 ♖f1 15 ♖g2 ♔c1 and so on.

11...♖a3

Lifting the stalemate. If Black plays his rook along the rank (except for b2) then White just gives perpetual check. The lines 11...♔c1 12 ♖c7+ ♔b2 13 ♖b7+ and 11...♖b2 12 ♖g2 are also drawn.

12 ♖g3 ♖a4 13 ♖g4 ♖a5 14 ♖g5 ♖a6 15 ♖g6 ♖a7 16 ♖g7 ♖a8 17 ♖g8 ♖a1

Sooner or later the rook must move to a1.

18 ♖g2

This is a reciprocal zugzwang.

18...♔c1 19 ♖a2 ♖b1 20 ♖g2

Zugzwang.

20...♖b3 21 ♖g3 ♖b4 22 ♖g4 ♖b5 23 ♖g5 ♖b6 24 ♖g6 ♖b7 25 ♖g7 ♖b8 26 ♖g8 ♖b1 27 ♖g2 ♔d1 28 ♖b2 ♖a1 29 ♖a2

29 ♖g2? ♖c1 is zugzwang.

29...♖c1 30 ♖g2

Zugzwang again.

30...♖c3 31 ♖g3

However Black plays, he cannot free his pieces.

31...♖c4 32 ♖g4 ♖c5 33 ♖g5 ♖c6 34 ♖g6 ♖c7 35 ♖g7 ♖c8 36 ♖g8 ♖c1 37 ♖g2 ♔e1 38 ♖c2 ♖b1 39 ♖b2

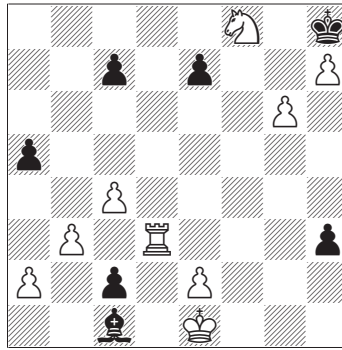39 ♖g2? ♖d1 is another zugzwang.

39...♖a1 40 ♖a2 ♖d1 41 ♖g2

Zugzwang

41...♖d3 42 ♖g3 ♖d4 43 ♖g4 ♖d5 44 ♖g5 ♖d6 45 ♖g6 ♖d7 46 ♖g7 ♖d8 47 ♖g8 ♖d1 48 ♖g2 ♔f1 49 ♖d2 ♖e1 50 ♖d1 (or 50 ♖g2)

Draw

Michael Roxlau & Siegfried Hornecker (Germany)
8th HM, Nunn-50JT, 2005

Black to play – Draw

A monumental study stretching over 26 moves. White must take care how he handles the queenside pawns so as not to fall into zugzwang, but by eliminating the a-pawns he eventually reaches a draw. Despite its impressive technical content, the very complicated analysis means that the study lacks a striking point.

1...♗e3! 2 ♖xe3! c1♕+ 3 ♔f2 ♕xe3+!

3...h2 4 g7+ favours White.

4 ♔xe3 h2 5 ♘d7 h1♕ 6 ♘e5 ♕h6+ 7 ♔d3!!

The only good square for the king. After other moves Black frees himself and wins with his material advantage:

1) 7 ♔e4? ♔g7 8 c5 e6 9 ♔d3 ♕h5 10 ♔d4 ♕h4+ 11 e4 ♕f6 12 a3 ♔h6 13 b4 axb4 14 axb4 ♔g5 wins.

2) 7 ♔f3? ♕h5+ 8 ♔f4 ♕h2+ 9 ♔f5 ♕f2+ 10 ♔e4 (10 ♔g4 ♕xe2+ is similar) 10...♕xe2+ 11 ♔d4 ♕d2+ 12 ♔e4 ♕g2+ 13 ♔f4 ♕h2+ 14 ♔e4 ♕h4+ 15 ♔d5 c6+ 16 ♘xc6 ♕h1+ 17 ♔c5 ♕h5+ 18 ♔b6 ♕xg6 and wins.

7...♔g7 8 e4

Blocking the check on g6 and so threatening ♘f7.

8...♕h3+ 9 ♔d4 c5+

9...♕g3 10 ♘f7 e5+ 11 ♘xe5 is safe as Black has lost a vital pawn.

10 ♔d5 ♕h5 11 ♔e6

Now Black is in zugzwang.

11...♔f8 12 ♘d7+!

12 a3? is the thematic try; after 12...♔g7! 13 a4 (13 b4 axb4 14 axb4 cxb4 wins for Black because White does not promote with check) 13...♔f8 14 ♘d7+ ♔e8 15 ♘e5 ♕h6 16 b4 cxb4 17 c5 we have essentially the same position as in the main line after 16...cxb4, except for the additional a-pawns. This difference turns out to be crucial: 17...b3 18 c6 ♕g7 19 ♔d5 (19 c7 ♕f6+ 20 ♔d5 ♕d6+ 21 ♔c4 ♕xc7+ wins) 19...♔d8 20 h8♕+ ♕xh8 21 ♘f7+ ♔c7 22 ♘xh8 b2 23 ♔e6 b1♕ 24 g7 ♕xe4+ 25 ♔f7 ♕xa4 (making use of the a-pawns) 26 g8♕ ♕c4+ 27 ♔f8 ♕xg8+ 28 ♔xg8 ♔xc6 with an easy win for Black.

12...♔e8 13 ♘e5! ♕h6

13...♕h1 14 a3 ♕h6 15 b4 cxb4 16 axb4 axb4 17 c5 is also drawn; for example, 17...♔g7 (17...♕h3+ 18 ♔d5 b3 19 c6 ♔f8 20 c7 ♔g7 21 ♘f7 ♕d7+ 22 ♔c4 ♕xc7+ 23 ♔xb3 draws) 18 ♔d5 b3 19 c6 ♔d8 20 ♘f7+ ♔c7 21 h8♕ ♕xh8 22 ♘xh8 transposing to the main line.

14 a3! ♕h5

14...♕h1 15 b4 cxb4 16 axb4 axb4 17 c5 b3 18 c6 ♕h3+ 19 ♔d5 ♔d8 20 ♘f7+ is the same as the previous note.

15 b4!

The correct way: White must eliminate the a-pawns if he is to draw.

15...axb4

15...cxb4 16 axb4 a4 17 b5 a3 18 b6 a2 19 b7 ♕xe5+ 20 ♔xe5 a1♕+ 21 ♔f4 also draws.

16 axb4 cxb4 17 c5 b3 18 c6 ♕h4

Or 18...♔f8 19 c7 ♕h3+ 20 ♔d5 ♔g7 21 ♘f7 ♕d7+ 22 ♔c4 ♕xc7+ 23 ♔xb3.

19 ♔d5! ♔d8 20 h8♕+

20 ♘f7+ is a transposition dual but 20 ♘d3? ♔c7 21 e5 ♕h1+ 22 ♔c4 ♔xc6 23 ♔xb3 ♔d5 and 20 ♘c4? ♔c7 win for Black.

20...♕xh8 21 ♘f7+ ♔c7 22 ♘xh8 b2 23 g7

23 ♔e6 is a transposition dual.
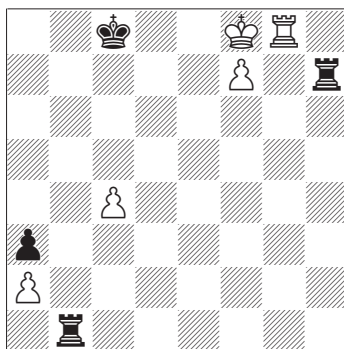
23...b1♕ 24 ♔e6!

Not 24 g8♕? ♕b3+.

24...♕xe4+ 25 ♔f7 ♕h7 26 ♔f8!

The last finesse. 26 ♘g6? is wrong due to 26...e5 27 ♘e7 e4 28 ♘d5+ ♔c8 29 ♘f6 ♕xg7+ 30 ♔xg7 e3 31 ♘e4 e2 and wins.

After 26 ♔f8! the draw is clear.

Iuri Akobia (Georgia)
9th HM, Nunn-50JT, 2005

Draw

The play involves a network of reciprocal zugzwangs, including one which is very surprising (the position after 9 ♖f5!). However, there do not seem to be thematic tries which would really show off the zugzwangs properly. Nevertheless, an attractive study.

1 ♖g7 ♖h8+ 2 ♖g8 ♖h7 3 ♖g7 ♖h2 4 ♔g8

Not 4 ♖g3? ♖xa2 5 ♔g8 ♖f2 6 ♖xa3 ♖g1+ 7 ♔f8 ♖g4 8 ♖a7 (8 c5 ♔c7 9 ♖a7+ ♔c6 10 ♔e8 ♖e4+ 11 ♔e7 ♖a4 12 ♔f8 ♔xc5 also wins) 8...♖xc4 and the 6-man database shows this to be a win, although the method is by no means simple.

4...♖f1! 5 f8♕+ ♖xf8+ 6 ♔xf8 ♖xa2 7 ♖a7!

7 ♖f7? may be refuted by 7...♖a1 with reciprocal zugzwang, but Black can also win by 7...♔b8, which is in fact also reciprocal zugzwang!

7...♖a1 8 ♖f7

This is a reciprocal zugzwang with Black to move.

8...♔b8

Other possibilities are:

1) 8...♖b1 9 ♖a7 forces the rook back to a1.

2) 8...a2 9 ♖f2 is similar to the main line.

3) 8...♔d8 9 c5! (reciprocal zugzwang) 9...♖d1 10 ♖a7 ♖f1+ 11 ♔g8! (11 ♔g7? ♖a1 12 ♔f6 a2 wins) 11...♖g1+ 12 ♔f8! ♖f1+ 13 ♔g8 ♖a1 14 ♖g7! (another reciprocal zugzwang) 14...♔c8 (or 14...a2 15 ♖g2 ♔c7 16 ♔g7 ♔c6 17 ♔g6 ♔xc5 18 ♔g5 ♔d4 19 ♔g4 ♔e3 20 ♔g3 with a draw) 15 c6 (yet another reciprocal zugzwang) 15...♔b8 16 ♖b7+ ♔c8 17 ♖g7 ♔d8 18 ♖d7+ ♔c8 19 ♖g7 ♖f1 20 ♖a7 ♖a1 21 ♖g7 with a positional draw as Black cannot make progress.

9 ♖f5!

The most surprising move in the study, both cutting off the black king and preparing a check on b5. 9 ♖f6? ♔b7 10 ♔f7 ♖b1 and 9 ♖f3? ♔c7 10 ♔f7 ♔b6! (10...♔c6? 11 ♖f5 draws) 11 ♖f5 (11 ♔f6 ♔c5 12 ♔f5 ♔xc4 13 ♖f4+ ♔c5 14 ♖f3 ♔b5 wins) 11...♖b1! 12 ♖f2 ♔c5 win for Black.

9...♔c7

9...a2 10 ♖f2 ♔c7 11 ♔f7 ♔c6 12 ♔f6 ♔c5 13 ♔f5 ♔xc4 14 ♔f4 ♔d3 15 ♔f3 ♔c3 16 ♔f4! draws, as if the black king approaches the a-pawn, White just checks it away.

10 ♔f7 ♔c6

The key point behind White's 9th move is revealed in the line 10...♔b6 (b6 is the best square for Black's king, since it prevents the reply ♖a5 after Black moves his rook away from a1) 11 ♖b5+! ♔c6 12 ♖f5. White needs the check on b5 to displace Black's king from b6 if necessary. The variation 10...♔d6 11 ♖d5+! (not 11 ♔f6? ♖d1 12 ♖a5 ♖f1+ 13 ♔g6 ♖a1 14 ♖d5+ ♔c6 15 ♖g5 ♔b6 16 ♖b5+ ♔a6 17 ♖g5 ♖a2! 18 ♔g7 ♖f2 and Black wins) 11...♔c6 12 ♖f5 is similar.

11 ♔f6

It is interesting to note that if White were to play, ♔f7 would be the only move to draw.

11...♔b6

11...♖b1 12 ♖a5 forces Black back.

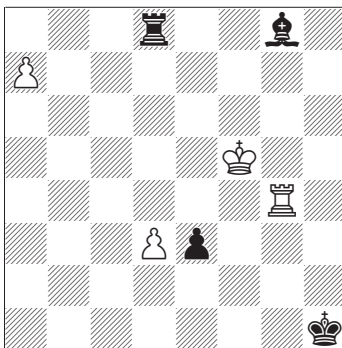**12 ♖b5+ ♔c6 13 ♖f5 a2 14 ♖f2! ♔c5 15 ♔f5 ♔xc4 16 ♔f4 ♔b3**

16...♔d3 17 ♔f3 ♔d4 18 ♔f4 also draws.

17 ♖f3+ ♔b2 18 ♖f2+ ♔b3 19 ♖f3+ ♔b4 20 ♖f2

Draw

Leonard Katsnelson & Vladimir Katsnelson (Russia)
10th HM, Nunn-50JT, 2005

Draw

This is a delicate battle in which White must manoeuvre carefully with his king to preserve a possible perpetual check with his rook along the third rank. However, there is no reciprocal zugzwang involved because White is always threatening to force the issue by playing ♖a3.

1 ♖g3!

1 ♖d4? ♗h7+ 2 ♔f6 ♖f8+ 3 ♔g7 ♖a8 4 ♔xh7 ♖xa7+ 5 ♔g6 ♔g2 wins for Black.

1...♗h7+ 2 ♔g4!

2 ♔f4? e2 3 ♖e3 ♗xd3 and Black wins since White cannot drive Black's king to e1 with checks.

2...e2 3 ♖e3 ♗xd3 4 ♖h3+! ♔g2 5 ♖g3+ ♔f2 6 ♖f3+ ♔g1 7 ♖g3+ ♔f1 8 ♖f3+ ♔e1 9 ♖xd3! ♖g8+

The other main line is 9...♖e8 and now:

1) 10 ♖b3? gives insufficient checking distance and loses after 10...♔d2 11 ♖b2+ ♔d3 12 ♖b1 ♖a8! 13 ♔f3 ♖xa7 14 ♖b3+ ♔c2 15 ♖e3 ♔d1.

2) 10 ♖e3? fails to 10...♖xe3 11 a8♕ ♔f2 12 ♕f8+ ♔g1.

3) 10 ♖a3! ♖g8+ (10...♔d2 11 ♖a2+ ♔d3 12 ♖a3+ draws) 11 ♔f4! ♔f2 12 ♖f3+ ♔g1 (12...♔g2 13 ♖g3+! ♖xg3 14 a8♕+ is a draw) 13 ♖e3! ♔f1 14 ♖f3+ also leads to a draw.

10 ♔f4! ♖e8!

10...♖a8 11 ♖a3 ♔d1 12 ♖a1+ draws as White has enough checking distance, while 10...♔f2 11 ♖f3+ transposes to the previous note.

11 ♔g4!

The white king must remain on the fourth rank so as not to block the rook checks if Black's king heads for the kingside. 11 ♔g3? ♔f1 12 ♖f3+ ♔g1 loses, as does 11 ♖a3? ♔f2 12 ♖f3+ ♔g2 13 ♖g3+ ♔h2 14 a8♕ ♖xa8 15 ♖e3 ♖f8+ 16 ♔g5 ♖f2, followed by ...♔g2-f1.

11...♖g8+ 12 ♔f4 ♖f8+ 13 ♔g3!

Here 13 ♔g4? fails to 13...♔f2 14 ♖f3+ ♖xf3 15 a8♕ ♖g3+ 16 ♔f4 e1♕ and Black wins.

13...♔f1

13...♖g8+ 14 ♔f4 repeats.
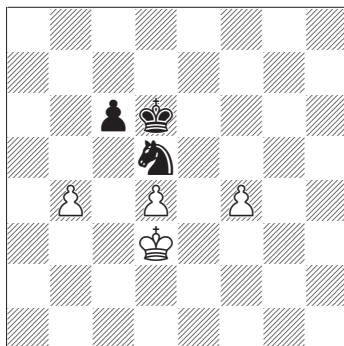
14 ♖f3+ ♔g1

Or 14...♖xf3+ 15 ♔xf3.

15 ♖e3

15 ♖xf8? e1♕+ 16 ♔g4 ♕e4+ picks up the pawn and wins.

After 15 ♖e3 the position is a clear draw.

Daniel Keith (France)
11th HM, Nunn-50JT, 2005

Draw

For a long time I could not see the drawing idea at all, and it still seems amazing that White is able to hold what looks like a dead lost position. The reciprocal zugzwang after White's fifth move is the central point of the study, which is enhanced by a natural position. A very fine piece of work with plenty of play from the limited material.

1 ♔c4 ♘b6+ 2 ♔c3!

This subtle move is the key idea. Other moves:

1) 2 ♔b3? loses simply after 2...♔d5 3 f5 ♔xd4 4 b5 c5 5 f6 ♘d7 6 f7 ♔d5! 7 ♔c3 ♔d6.

2) 2 ♔d3? ♔d5 3 ♔c3 ♘d7! 4 f5 (4 ♔d3 ♘f6 5 ♔c3 ♘e4+ 6 ♔b3 ♔xd4 7 ♔a4 ♘d6 8 ♔a5 ♔d5 9 ♔b6 ♘f5 10 ♔c7 ♘d4 11 ♔b6 ♔c4 wins) 4...♘f6 (this is reciprocal zugzwang with White to play) 5 ♔b3 (5 ♔d3 ♘e4 6 ♔e3 ♘d6 7 f6 ♔e6 and 5 b5 cxb5 6 ♔b4 ♔c6 also win for Black) 5...♔xd4 6 b5 c5 7 b6 ♔d5 8 b7 ♘d7 9 f6 ♔c6 wins for Black.

2...♔d5 3 f5

3 ♔d3? ♘c4! 4 f5 (4 ♔c3 ♘d6 5 ♔d3 ♘b5 6 f5 ♘d6 7 f6 ♔e6 wins) 4...♘d6 5 f6 ♔e6 wins.

3...♘d7

3...♘c8 4 ♔b3 ♘d6 transposes to the main line.

4 ♔d3 ♘f6 5 ♔c3!

This is the reciprocal zugzwang with Black to play.

5...♘e4+

5...♘e8 6 ♔b3 transposes.

6 ♔b3 ♘d6

After 6...♔xd4 7 b5 Black must accept the draw since 7...c5? even loses after 8 b6 ♘d6 9 f6.

7 ♔a4!

7 f6? loses to 7...♔e6.

7...♔xd4 8 f6 ♔d5

8...♔c4 9 ♔a5.

9 ♔a5 ♘f7 10 ♔b6

with an easy draw.

Jürgen Fleck (Germany)
Special HM, Nunn-50JT, 2005
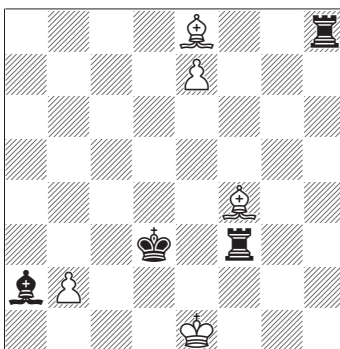
Draw

By shifting the position to the right, this study adds a finesse (the bishop sacrifice at move 7) to a well-known Sarychev study (see #37149 and #37150). The introductory play is quite different to the Sarychev, but not necessarily superior. As this is an adaptation of a classic study, it is not really comparable to the other studies in the tourney, and therefore I have awarded it a Special HM.

1 ♗g6+

White will soon promote his e-pawn, after which the material balance is drawish. Black's hopes rest on a subsequent check by the rook on the e-file which will pick up a bishop.

1...♚c4!

An awkward move with respect to the a2-bishop, but the alternative leads to an immediate draw: 1...♚d4 2 ♗d2! (threatening both 3 e8♕ and 3 ♗c3+) 2...♚c4 3 ♗c3+ ♚e3 4 ♗d2+ ♚d4 5 ♗c3+ repeating.

2 ♗g5 ♗b3!

Black cannot do much to prevent White from promoting his pawn. This strong quiet move plays the bishop to a safe square, forces White's hand (...♗a4 is one of the threats) and prepares some counterplay should White promote his pawn. 2...♖g3 3 e8♕ ♖xe8+ 4 ♗xe8 ♖xg5 5 ♗f7+ draws at once.

3 e8♕ ♖xe8+ 4 ♗xe8 ♖f5

This was Black's idea; it looks as if he will pick up one of the bishops.

5 ♗c1!!

White prepares the stalemate by burying his bishop on c1. Not 5 ♗e3? ♖e5 6 ♗f7+ ♚b4 and wins (note that this line would not win with Black's bishop on a2).

5...♖e5+ 6 ♚d2 ♚d4!!

6...♖xe8 is stalemate, and this is the conclusion of the Sarychev study. Here, however, Black can continue the fight. 6...♚b4 also deserves consideration. Black's plan is to play ...♖c5 (thus tying White's mobile bishop to the diagonal b1-h7), then bring his king to d4 without allowing tactical tricks, and finally deprive the bishop of squares. This plan almost succeeds: 7 ♗g6 ♖c5 (7...♖g5 8 ♗d3 ♖g1 9 ♗e2 is an easy draw) 8 ♗d3 ♚a5 9 ♗e4 ♚b6 10 ♗d3 ♚c7 11 ♗e4 ♚d6 12 ♗d3 ♚e5 13 ♗h7 ♚d4 (13...♚f4 leads nowhere: 14 ♗d3 ♖g3 15 ♗e4 ♚f2 16 ♗d3) 14 ♗d3 ♖c7 15 ♗g6 ♖c8 16 ♗f5 ♖c6 17 ♗d3 ♖c5 (mission accomplished; there are no good squares on the diagonal b1-h7) 18 ♗e2! (18 ♗b1? ♖h5, 18 ♗g6? ♖g5 and 18 ♗h7? ♖h5 all win for Black, but White can save himself by the skin of his teeth) 18...♖c2+ 19 ♚d1 and Black lacks the firepower to deliver the decisive blow.

7 ♗a4!!

A worthy answer in return! Everything else quickly loses a piece: 7 ♗d7? ♖c5 8 ♗e8 ♖c2+ 9 ♚d1 ♖h2+ 10 ♚e1 ♖h1+ 11 ♚d2 ♖d1+ or 7 ♗g6? ♖g5 8 ♗d3 ♖g2+ 9 ♗e2 ♗c4.
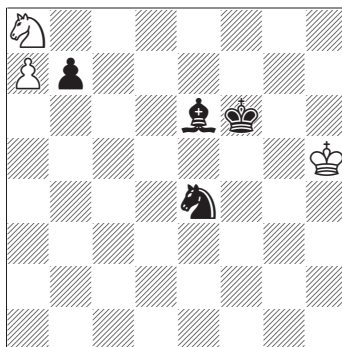
7...♗xa4 8 b3

Threatening both bxa4 and ♗b2+.

8...♗xb3 9 ♗b2+

White is saved by the emergence of the apparently dead bishop.

Yochanan Afek (Netherlands)

1st Commendation, Nunn-50JT, 2005

Black to play – Draw

A slight but entertaining study in which first Black and then White sacrifice minor pieces. The zugzwangs are reciprocal, but lack a thematic try leading to the position with the wrong player to move. Still, a neat study which was a pleasure to solve. Basically the same final position has been seen before in Kalashnikov and Selivanov (#7555) and Kakovin and Motor (#28022), but curiously both these precursor studies are unsound (the first is cooked by 3 ♔d4 and the second is bust by 4...♘f5!).

1...♘g3+

Black's aim is to transfer his knight to d5 in order to paralyse White's queenside forces.

2 ♔h6

2 ♔h4? ♘f5+ 3 ♔h5 ♗f7+ 4 ♔g4 ♘e3+ 5 ♔f3 followed by ...♘d5 is an easy win, as White can only move his king.

2...♘f5+ 3 ♔h7

3 ♔h5? ♗f7+ wins as in the previous note.

3...♗g8+!

A neat move. Black sacrifices his bishop to transfer his knight to d5.

4 ♔xg8

4 ♔h8? ♘e7 5 ♘c7 ♔f7 mates next move.

4...♘e7+ 5 ♔f8! ♘d5

White can only move his king and so he heads for the queenside in an attempt to rescue his knight.

6 ♔e8 ♔e6 7 ♔d8 ♔d6 8 ♔c8 ♔c6

After the move played Black seems to have secured his forces and is ready to push his b-pawn. Not 8...b5? 9 ♔b7, which even wins for White.

9 ♘b6!

The key idea. White sacrifices his knight to create a zugzwang position.

9...♘xb6+ 10 ♔b8!
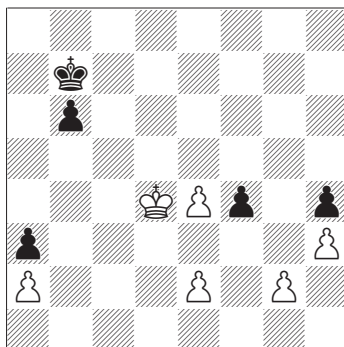
This is a reciprocal zugzwang.

10...♘d7+ 11 ♔c8!

A second one! Not 11 ♔a8? ♘c5 12 ♔b8 ♘a6+ 13 ♔c8 ♘c7 and Black wins.

11...♘b6+ 12 ♔b8

Draw

Marcel Doré & Alain Pallier (France)

2nd Commendation, Nunn-50JT, 2005

Win

White must induce Black to play the move ...b5 (although it is not immediately obvious why this is so detrimental for Black), at the same time navigating around two reciprocal zugzwangs. This can only be accomplished by a surprising switchback. Such switchbacks have been seen before, but this study has more interesting play and, unlike many of the earlier examples, seems to be sound. This was far and away the best pawn ending in the tourney.

1 ♔d5!

It is important to bear in mind that the position ♔b2, ♕a8, ♙h3 v ♔g1, ♙f2, ♙h4 with White to play is drawn since the most White can achieve is a drawn ending of ♕+h♙ v ♕. White can reach this drawn position in several different ways, but in order to win he must do more. The alternatives are:

1) 1 e3? fxe3 2 ♔xe3 ♔c6 3 ♔d4 ♔d6 4 e5+ ♔e6 5 ♔e4 b5 6 ♔d4 b4 7 ♔c4 ♔xe5 8 ♔xb4 ♔f4 9 ♔xa3 ♔g3 10 ♔b2 ♔xg2 11 a4 ♔xh3 12 a5 ♔g2 13 a6 h3 14 a7 h2 15 a8♕+ ♔g1 is drawn.

2) 1 ♔e5? (this allows the black king access to c6) 1...♔c6! 2 ♔f6 (2 ♔e6 b5) 2...♔d7 3 ♔f7 ♔d6 4 ♔f6 ♔d7! 5 e5 ♔e8! 6 ♔e6 b5 7 ♔d5 ♔d7!! (7...♔e7? 8 e6! is reciprocal zugzwang 1 with Black to play) 8 e6+ (8 ♔c5 ♔e6 9 ♔xb5 ♔xe5 10 ♔b4 ♔d4 11 ♔xa3 ♔e3 12 ♔b2 ♔xe2 13 a4 ♔f2 14 a5 ♔xg2 15 a6 f3 16 a7 f2 17 a8♕+ ♔g1 reaches the drawn position mentioned earlier) 8...♔e7 is reciprocal zugzwang 1 with White to play. After 9 ♔c5 ♔xe6 10 ♔xb5 ♔e5 the standard draw will arise.

3) 1 ♔c4? ♔c6 2 e5 (2 ♔b4 ♔d6 3 ♔xa3 ♔e5 4 ♔b4 ♔xe4 will be the standard draw) 2...♔d7! 3 ♔d5 (3 ♔b3 ♔e6 4 ♔xa3 ♔xe5 5 ♔b4 is the usual draw) 3...♔e7 4 e6 b5 5 ♔c5 ♔xe6 6 ♔xb5 ♔e5 and the same draw arises again.

4) 1 e5? ♔c6 2 ♔c4 ♔d7 transposes to 1 ♔c4?.

1...♔c7 2 ♔e6!

Not 2 e5? ♔d7 3 e6+ ♔e7 4 ♔e5 ♔e8! (4...♔d8? 5 ♔d6 ♔e8 6 e7 is reciprocal zugzwang 2 with Black to play; White wins after 6...b5 7 ♔c5 ♔xe7 8 ♔xb5) 5 ♔d6 ♔d8 6 e7+ ♔e8 (now White is to play in reciprocal zugzwang 2) 7 ♔c6 ♔xe7 8 ♔xb6 ♔e6 and the usual draw will arise.

2...b5

2...♔c6 3 e5 b5 4 ♔f7 b4 5 e6 promotes with check.

3 ♔d5!!

This switchback exploits Black's weakening 2...b5. 3 e5? b4 4 ♔f7 b3 5 axb3 a2 6 e6 a1♕ 7 e7 ♕e5 8 e8♕ ♕h5+ leads to a draw.

3...♔d7

3...♔b6 4 e5 ♔c7 5 ♔c5 ♔d7 6 ♔xb5 ♔e6 7 ♔b4 ♔xe5 8 ♔xa3 wins as White has gained a crucial tempo. It takes one move less to capture Black's queenside pawns once Black has played ...b5.

4 e5!

4 ♔c5? ♔e6 leads to the usual draw after 5 ♔xb5 ♔e5 or 5 ♔b4 ♔e5 6 ♔xa3 ♔xe4 7 ♔b4 ♔e3.

4...♔e7

4...b4 5 ♔c4 ♔e6 6 ♔xb4 wins.

5 e6!

This is reciprocal zugzwang 1 with Black to move. Compare this with the position arising in the line with 1 ♔e5? (zugzwang 1 with White to move) and with the other try 1 ♔c4? where Black draws because the b-pawn is still on b6.
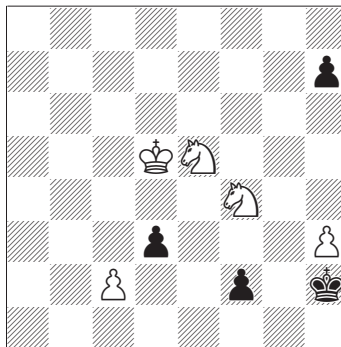
5...b4

5...♔d8 6 ♔c5 ♔e7 7 ♔xb5 wins.

6 ♔c4 ♔xe6 7 ♔xb4

White wins.

Jürgen Kratz (Germany)
3rd Commendation, Nunn-50JT, 2005

Win

Some subtle knight play leads to a neat conclusion. Nothing special here, but quite charming. Although the final phase feels familiar, I couldn't find an absolutely identical position in a sound study.

1 ♘g4+!

1 ♘f3+? ♔g3 2 ♘d2 dxc2 draws.

1...♔g3 2 ♘xf2

2 ♘h5+? is met by 2...♔h4! drawing, but not 2...♔g2? 3 cxd3 f1♕ 4 ♘e3+ or 2...♔f3? 3 cxd3 f1♕ 4 ♘h2+ and White wins in both cases.

2...dxc2 3 ♘2d3!

3 ♘4d3? c1♕ 4 ♘e4+ ♔xh3 5 ♘xc1 h5! is a database draw because the crucial move ♔e4 is unavailable here (see the next note).

3...c1♘!

The best chance. After 3...c1♕ White can of course still play 4 ♘xc1, but he has an alternative win by 4 ♘e2+ ♔xh3 5 ♘dxc1 h5 6 ♔e4! with a long database win. The knight promotion eliminates this possibility, but White still wins by sacrificing a knight.

4 ♘xc1!

4 ♘h5+? ♔xh3! 5 ♘xc1 ♔g4!, followed by pushing the h-pawn, is a draw.

4...♔xf4 5 ♘e2+ ♔f3 6 ♘g1+ ♔g2

There are several studies similar to this with the black pawn on h6, but surprisingly I could only locate one with the pawn on h7 (Rinck, #62539) and that was unsound. The case with the pawn on h7 is actually the most interesting, as we shall see.

7 ♔e5!

Surprisingly, this is the only move to win. 7 ♔e4? ♔xg1 8 h4 ♔f2 9 h5 ♔g3 10 ♔f5 ♔h4 and 7 ♔e6? ♔xg1 8 h4 ♔f2 9 h5 ♔e3 10 h6 ♔d4 are only draws.

7...♔xg1 8 h4!

8 ♔f6? ♔g2 9 h4 ♔f3 10 h5 ♔e4 11 h6 ♔d5 is also drawn.
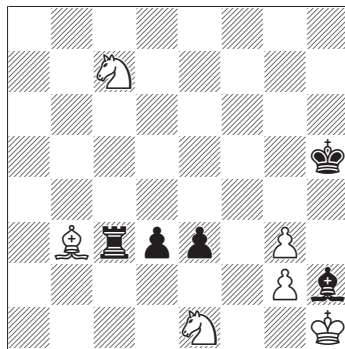
8...♔f2 9 h5 ♔e3 10 h6

Thanks to the position of the white king, Black must now lose a tempo with his own king.

10...♔d3 11 ♔f6

and wins.

Amatzia Avni (Israel)
4th Commendation, Nunn-50JT, 2005

Draw

Some rather forced tactical play ends with a position in which Black has only a choice of stalemates. Unfortunately, the final stalemate idea at move 6 has been seen before (in a study by Telbis, 1970, with a bishop on g1 instead of a knight; this study is White: ♔h1, ♗d4, ♗e8, ♙g2, ♙g3 Black: ♔g4, ♖b3, ♗d1, ♗h2, ♙a4 Solution: 1 ♗xa4 ♖d3 2 ♗xd1 ♖xd1+ 3 ♗g1! and so on). However, the current study has more interesting play and introduces a second stalemate line at Black's 4th move.

1 ♗d1+

1 ♔xh2? ♖xb3, 1 ♘xd3? ♗xg3 and 1 ♘d5? ♖xb3 2 ♘f4+ ♔g4 3 ♘fxd3 ♗xg3 are all hopeless.

1...e2

After 1...♔h6 2 ♔xh2 d2 3 ♘c2! ♖xc2 4 ♘d5 White is safe.

2 ♗xe2+ dxe2 3 ♘d5 ♖c1

3...♖c5 4 ♘f4+ ♔g4 5 ♔xh2 draws.

4 ♘f4+ ♔g4!

After 4...♔g5 White holds the position with 5 ♘fd3! ♖xe1+ 6 ♘xe1 ♗xg3 7 ♘f3+ ♔g4 8 ♘g1! e1♕ (or rook) stalemate.
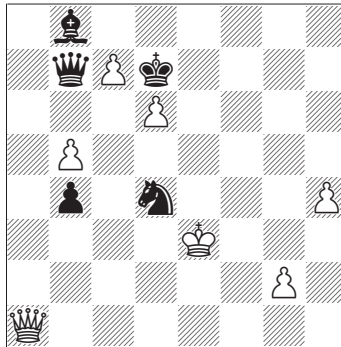
5 ♘xe2!

5 ♘fd3 is insufficient, as 5...♖xe1+ 6 ♘xe1 ♗xg3 7 ♘f3 ♗c7 wins for Black. However, the position of the black king allows a fresh possibility.

5...♖xe1+ 6 ♘g1!

and Black can choose between several different stalemates: 6...♗xg1, 6...♗xg3, 6...♔xg3 or 6...♖xg1+ 7 ♔xh2 ♖d1.

Martin Minski (Germany)
5th Commendation, Nunn-50JT, 2005

Win

The introductory play features a forcing line involving a knight promotion, ultimately leading to a database position of ♘+♙ v ♘. In this position White wins by a surprising retreat of the promoted knight to a1. It's a nice idea, although as with many database-derived studies the introductory play and the database finale are not closely linked.

1 ♕a6!

Or:

1) 1 cxb8♘+? ♕xb8 2 ♕xd4 ♕xb5 is a draw, since the strong b-pawn will make it impossible for White to make progress without losing too many of his pawns.

2) 1 ♔xd4? ♗a7+ 2 ♔c4 ♕e4+ is a safe draw.

3) 1 ♕xd4?? ♗a7 even loses.

1...♘f5+

The knight moves towards White's kingside pawns. After 1...♘c2+ 2 ♔f4 ♕xa6 3 cxb8♘+ ♔xd6 4 bxa6 b3 5 a7 b2 6 a8♕ b1♕ the two extra pawns will be enough to win.

2 ♔f4 ♕xa6 3 cxb8♘+!

Forced; everything else loses.

3...♔xd6 4 bxa6

Not 4 ♘xa6? b3 5 b6 b2 6 b7 b1♕ 7 b8♕+ ♕xb8 8 ♘xb8 ♘xh4 with a draw.

4...♔c7

4...b3 5 a7 b2 6 a8♕ b1♕ 7 ♕c6+ wins easily.

5 a7!

5 ♘d7? ♘xh4! draws.

5...♔b7 6 ♘c6!

The only chance, since 6 ♘a6? ♘xh4! 7 g3 ♘g6+! 8 ♔f5 ♔xa7 9 ♘xb4 ♘f8! is a database draw.

6...b3

6...♘xh4 7 g3! will probably transpose to the main line.

7 ♘a5+ ♔xa7 8 ♘xb3 ♘xh4

Now we are in 5-man database territory.

9 g3!

9 g4? ♔b7 draws.

9...♘g2+

9...♘g6+ 10 ♔f5! ♘e7+ 11 ♔e6! ♘g8 12 g4! wins comfortably.

10 ♔e4!

After 10 ♔f3? ♘e1+! 11 ♔e2 ♘c2! Black escapes.

10...♔b6

10...♘e1 is also met by 11 ♘a1!.

11 ♘a1!!

The knight is heading to c2 to imprison Black's knight, but White must avoid 11 ♘d4? ♘e1! 12 ♔e3 ♔c5! 13 ♘f3 ♘c2+! and the win has gone.

11...♘e1

Otherwise ♘c2 and ♔f3 wins.

12 ♔e3 ♔c5 13 ♔e2 ♔d4 14 ♘b3+! ♔e4 15 ♘d2+!

The last finesse. 15 ♘c5+ ♔d4 16 ♘b3+ (not 16 ♔xe1? ♔e3! 17 ♔f1 ♔f3 18 ♘e4 ♔xe4 19 ♔g2 ♔f5 drawing) 16...♔e4 is a loss of time.

15...♔f5 16 ♔xe1

and wins.

David Gurgenidze (Georgia)
6th Commendation, Nunn-50JT, 2005
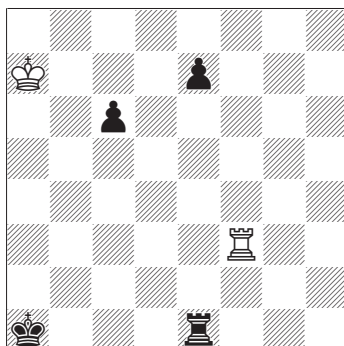
Draw

A database position with a very surprising 4th move. However, similar ideas have been seen before.

1 ♔b6 e5 2 ♔xc6 e4 3 ♖a3+!

It is essential to lure Black's king to the second rank so that the pawn may be pinned later. 3 ♖h3? loses to 3...e3 4 ♔d5 e2.

3...♔b2

3...♔b1 gives White a free tempo which allows him to draw by 4 ♔d5 e3 5 ♔e4.

4 ♖g3!!

The key move. 4 ♖h3? loses to 4...♔c2 (4...e3 5 ♔d5 ♔c3 transposes) 5 ♔d5 e3 6 ♔e4 ♔d2 and we have a reciprocal zugzwang with White to play. After 7 ♖g3 (7 ♔d4 ♖a1 wins) 7...♖h1 Black wins because White cannot take the pawn.

4...e3 5 ♔d5 ♔c2

Or 5...e2 6 ♔e4 ♖d1 (6...♔c2 7 ♖e3 draws) 7 ♖g2 (this pin was prepared by the preliminary check at move 3) 7...♖d2 8 ♖g1 and Black must repeat moves or lose his pawn to ♖e1 followed by ♔e3.

6 ♔e4 ♔d2 7 ♖h3!

Now it is Black to play in the reciprocal zugzwang.

7...♖e2

7...♖g1 may be met by 8 ♖xe3 as Black doesn't have enough checking distance.

8 ♔d4 ♖e1 9 ♔e4 e2 10 ♖d3+ ♔c2 11 ♖e3!

11 ♔e3? ♖d1 wins for Black.

11...♔d2 12 ♖d3+

Draw

Siegfried Hornecker (Germany)
7th Commendation, Nunn-50JT, 2005

Win

Two promotions to knight on the same square in a miniature is a real achievement, even though the study has no great depth.

1 c8♘+!

1 c8♖? ♕e6 2 ♗b8+ ♔a8 and 1 c8♗? ♕e3 2 ♗d6 ♕b3+ are not better for White, while 1 c8♕? ♕xc6+ forces stalemate.

1...♔a8 2 ♘b6+ ♔a7 3 c7 ♕h1

Many other queen moves are also met by promotion to a knight.

4 c8♘+!

4 c8♖? ♕b1+ and 4 c8♕? ♕b1+ 5 ♔c6 ♕e4+ lead to perpetual check or stalemate, while 4 c8♗? ♕b1+ does not offer White any winning chances.

4...♔b7 5 ♘d6+!

The assumption here is that this ending is a technical win, and I believe this to be the case; for example, 5 ♘d6+ ♔c7 6 ♘f7+ ♔b7 7 ♘d8+ ♔a7 8 ♗e5 ♕f1+ 9 ♘c4 ♕b1+ 10 ♗b2 and now White can coordinate his forces, with the eventual advance of the c-pawn in prospect.

Jonathan Speelman (GB)
8th Commendation, Nunn-50JT, 2005
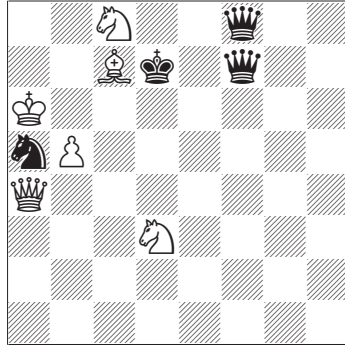
Win

The finale is undoubtedly spectacular, but it is very similar to a study by Kubbel (White: ♔b5, ♕h7, ♖h6, ♘c4, ♙b3 Black: ♔a8, ♕f8, ♖d8, ♗c7, ♙a5, ♙f7 Solution: 1 ♕e4+ ♔b8 2 ♖b6+ ♗xb6 3 ♔a6 ♖d7 4 ♕a8+, etc.). The Kubbel study is much shorter and contains less play, but while the play is more interesting here, it is a significant minus that Black starts off with 2 queens in the diagram. Also, from the solver's perspective, it is unfortunate that the solution depends so heavily on database positions of ♕+♙ v ♕ which to many solvers will not be obvious wins. Solvers can hardly be expected to know such databases by heart, so they are reduced to 'assuming' that the positions are winning, which isn't totally satisfactory.

1 ♘e5+

1 ♘b6+? ♔xc7 and 1 ♘a7? ♔xc7 2 ♕xa5+ ♔b8 give White no advantage.

1...♔xc7

Or 1...♔xc8 2 ♘xf7 ♕xf7 (2...♘b7 3 ♗b6 ♕xf7 4 ♕c2+ and 2...♘c6 3 ♕g4+ ♔xc7 4 b6+ win comfortably) 3 b6! ♕e6 (3...♕c4+ 4 ♕xc4 ♘xc4 5 b7+ ♔xc7 6 ♔a7) and now White can win with the prosaic 4 ♕xa5 or the spectacular 4 ♗d6.

2 ♕xa5+

Other moves are inferior; e.g., 2 ♘xf7? ♕xc8+ 3 ♔xa5 ♕a8+ 4 ♔b4 ♕e4+ 5 ♔b3 ♕e3+ 6 ♔b2 ♕f2+ 7 ♕c2+ ♕xc2+ 8 ♔xc2 ♔b6 9 ♘d6 ♔c5 or 2 b6+? ♔xc8 3 ♘xf7 ♕xf7 4 ♕g4+ ♔b8 5 ♕g3+ ♔a8, with a draw in both cases.

2...♔b8

2...♔xc8 3 ♘xf7 ♕xf7 4 ♕c3+ is a database win.

3 ♕b6+ ♔a8

3...♔xc8 4 ♘xf7 ♕xf7 5 ♕c5+ ♔b8 6 ♕e5+ is a database win similar to the previous one.

4 ♕c6+

Not 4 ♘xf7? ♕xc8+ 5 ♔a5 ♕c3+ with a draw.

4...♔b8 5 ♘d7+!

5 ♘xf7? allows Black to force stalemate by 5...♕a3+ 6 ♔b6 ♕a7+.

5...♕xd7 6 ♕a8+!

This queen sacrifice is the spectacular point of the study. 6 ♕xd7? ♕a3+ 7 ♔b6 ♕e3+ is a draw.
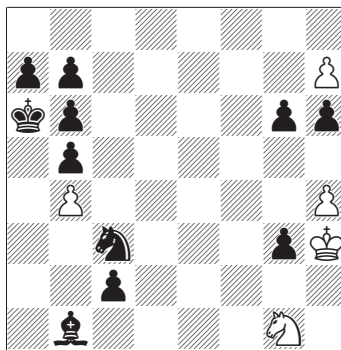
6...♔xa8

Or 6...♔c7 7 b6+ ♔d8 8 ♘a7+ ♔e7 9 ♘c6+ ♔f7 (9...♔d6 10 ♕xf8+ ♔xc6 11 ♕f3+ ♔c5 12 ♕c3+ wins by exchanging queens, while 9...♕xc6 10 ♕xc6 is another database win) 10 ♘e5+ ♔e6

11 ♕xf8 ♕a4+ (11...♔xe5 12 ♕c5+ wins quickly) 12 ♔b7 ♔xe5 13 ♕c5+ ♔f4 14 ♔c7 with a database win (although this one is surely no surprise).

7 ♘b6+ ♔b8 8 ♘xd7+
White wins.

Alain Pallier (France)
9th Commendation, Nunn-50JT, 2005

Win

This is a very complex study, involving an underpromotion by Black and reciprocal zugzwangs. White's queen finally defeats Black's collection of minor pieces thanks to Black's poor king position. However, the interesting play must be balanced against the heavy initial position, in which Black's king has been artificially placed in a box.

1 ♘e2! ♘xe2 2 h8♕
Threatening ♕a1+.

2...c1♘! 3 ♕a1+!
3 ♕b2? ♗f5+ 4 ♔g2 ♗e4+ is perpetual check, while 3 ♕e5?? ♗c2! allows Black to transfer his bishop to the safe square a4, after which White will even lose.

3...♗a2
3...♘a2? 4 ♕xb1 wins. If White picks up a minor piece for nothing then he should win in the end by playing his king to a8 or b8 to attack Black's pawns.

4 ♔g2!
Black's minor pieces are paralysed and he must push a pawn.

4...g5! 5 hxg5!
After 5 h5?? g4 White is on the wrong side of a full-point zugzwang: 6 ♔f1 ♘f4! 7 ♕xc1 ♗c4+ 8 ♔g1 ♘e2+ and Black wins.

5...hxg5 6 ♔f3!
Great accuracy is required:
1) 6 ♔f1?? even loses after 6...♘f4 7 ♕xc1 (7 ♔g1 ♘ce2+) 7...♗c4+ followed by a knight fork.
2) 6 ♔h1?? ♘f4 also wins for Black.
3) 6 ♔h3? is the thematic try: 6...♘f4+ 7 ♔xg3 ♘fd3 8 ♔h2 g4 9 ♔g3 ♘e2+ 10 ♔h4 (10 ♔xg4 ♘xb4) 10...♘ec1 draws as it is White to play in the reciprocal zugzwang (he cannot take on g4 because of the reply ...♘xb4). See also the note to White's 9th move.

6...g4+
Or:

1) 6...♘f4 7 ♕xc1 ♗d5+ 8 ♔e3 ♗b3 9 ♕a3+ ♗a4 10 ♔f3 g2 11 ♔f2 g4 12 ♔g1 g3 13 ♕a1 ♘d3 14 ♕c3 and Black loses his kingside pawns.

2) 6...g2 7 ♔xg2 g4 (7...♘f4+ 8 ♔h2 ♘fd3 9 ♔g3 g4 10 ♔h4 transposes to the main line) 8 ♔h2 g3+ (8...♘c3 9 ♕xc3 g3+ 10 ♕xg3 and 8...♘d4 9 ♕xd4 g3+ 10 ♔g2 also win for White) 9 ♔g2 and Black loses his g-pawn and then a piece.

7 ♔g2!

Black is now in zugzwang and must surrender the g3-pawn.

7...♘f4+!

Transferring the knight to d3 is the best defence. 7...♘c3 8 ♔xg3 loses both g-pawns.

8 ♔xg3 ♘fd3

8...♘fe2+ 9 ♔xg4 wins.

9 ♔h4!

Now it is Black to play in the reciprocal zugzwang. 9 ♔xg4? (9 ♔h2 ♘f4! 10 ♔g3 ♘fd3 still wins but is a loss of time) only draws after 9...♘xb4! 10 ♕xc1 ♗e6+! 11 ♔f3 (say) 11...♘c6 12 ♕a3+ ♘a5. This kind of position cannot be won, since the only weakness in Black's position is the a7-pawn. White can win it but for this needs to have w♔a8 and w♕b8, and with White's pieces so far out of play Black draws comfortably by ...b4 and ...♔b5, etc.

9...g3

The second g-pawn goes and soon after a piece.

10 ♔xg3 ♘xb4

Or else White wins a piece and then marches his king to attack a7 or b7.
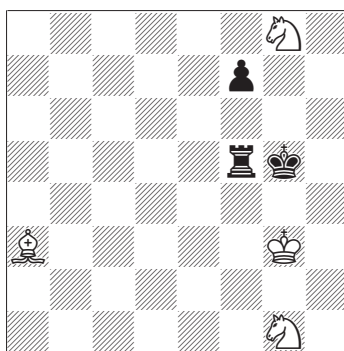
11 ♕xc1

There is no saving check on e6 here.

11...♗b3

Or 11...♘c6 12 ♕a3+.

12 ♕a3+

and wins

Emil Melnichenko (New Zealand)
10th Commendation, Nunn-50JT, 2005

Win

A good straight mid-board mate, although the fact that Black's moves are virtually forced reduces the impact of the finale. Unfortunately, the alternative 4...♔h6 has a dual continuation.

1 ♘h3+

♝+2♞ v ♜ is generally drawn, so White must do something special. 1 ♞f3+? ♚h5 doesn't lead anywhere after 2 ♝e7 ♜a5, 2 ♝b2 ♜b5 or 2 ♝c1 ♜b5.

1...♚h5 2 ♞f4+

2 ♝e7? ♚g6 lets Black escape.

2...♚g5 3 ♝e7+ f6 4 ♞xf6 ♜e5

Or:

1) 4...♜a5 5 ♞e4+ ♚h6 (or 5...♚f5 6 ♞d6+ ♚e5 7 ♞c4+) 6 ♝f8+ ♚h7 7 ♞f6+ ♚h8 8 ♞g6#.

2) 4...♚h6 5 ♝f8+ (the database reveals that White can also win, albeit far more slowly, by 5 ♚g4 ♜g5+ 6 ♚h4) 5...♚g5 6 ♞e4#.

5 ♞e4+ ♚f5

5...♚h6 6 ♝f8+ ♚h7 7 ♞f6+ ♚h8 8 ♞g6#.

6 ♞d6#