

**Two Knights Save the Day:
A World Champion's Favorite Studies**

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The Cavalry in Attack and Defense

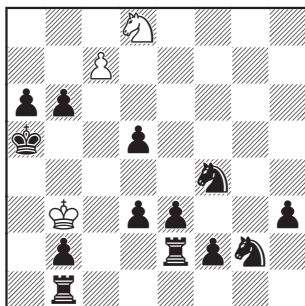
Two knights cannot normally checkmate a lone king. White, the side with the two knights, can only deliver checkmate in case of cooperative play, when the black monarch voluntarily climbs the scaffold.

However, if black has a pawn on a certain square blocked by the knight... a win is possible! The point is, when the time comes, the treacherous pawn will be able to move, depriving its king of stalemate salvation, and while it heads towards the promotion square, the white knights will get just enough time to checkmate the black king. This pattern was first noticed in the early 20th century by one of the fathers of modern endgame studies, Alexey Troitsky. Thus, the theory of 2 knights vs. pawn endgames was born, named after him. In this book, the author presents several brilliant studies that ultimately lead to this endgame, or at least feature the “Troitsky endgame” in one of their lines...

The knight pair can actually be effective even against a much more potent black force!

Harold van der Heijden’s endgame study database has one such example. Unfortunately, its author and source are unknown...

No. I



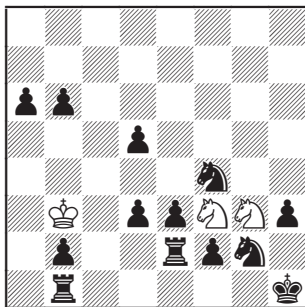
White to play and win

An inexperienced player would have promoted the pawn to the strongest piece without much thought: 1.c8=♔?. And after 1...♖c1 2.♘b7+ ♔b5 3.♘d6+ ♔a5 4.♘b7+, he would be satisfied with a draw.

But a stronger player would have promoted to a humbler piece!

1.c8=♞!! ♔b5! After 1...f1=♔, there's a mate in two: 2.♘b7+ ♔b5 3.♘a7#.

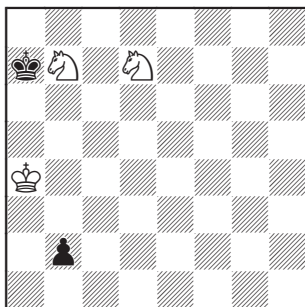
2.♘a7+ ♔c5 3.♘b7+ ♔d4 4.♘c6+ ♔e4 5.♘d6+ ♔f3 6.♘e5+ ♔g3 7.♘f5+ ♔h2 8.♘f3+ ♔h1 9.♘g3#!



The coordinated work of white's cavalry is mesmerizing, isn't it?

But attack is not the only skill the knights have! There are examples of the knight pair holding off much stronger pieces. Here's one of the earlier cases of such a feat.

No. II



White to play and draw

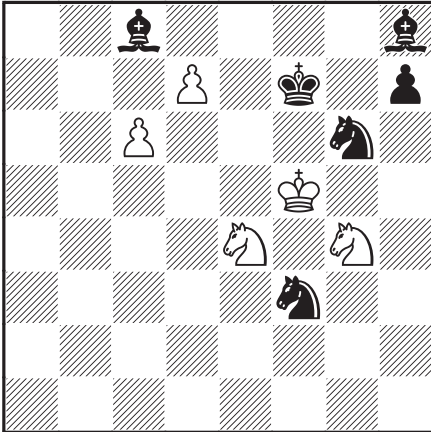
1. ♖bc5! The black king can't go anywhere now!
1...b1=♚ **2.** ♚a5! 2. ♚a3? loses to 2...♚b5
 3. ♚a2 ♚b4 4. ♚a1 ♚c3+ 5. ♚b1 ♚d2 6. ♚a1 ♚c2,
 and the knights are forced to set the black king free.
2...♚b2 **3.** ♚a4 ♚b1 **4.** ♚a5. Positional draw.
 Author G. Walker, 1841 (edited by S. Tkachenko)

This book features 100 instructive endgame studies where only two white knights either win or hold off various sets of black pieces. As per tradition, the number of moves in the solutions is no more than six with rare exceptions. This allows experienced players to test their tactical prowess and calculation technique without a board.

Analyzing these diagrams will be beneficial for novices as well. The diversity of tactical ideas where two knights demonstrate smooth coordination and composure will surely help them in their chess growth.

Good luck in your hunt for the secrets of chess!

No. 25



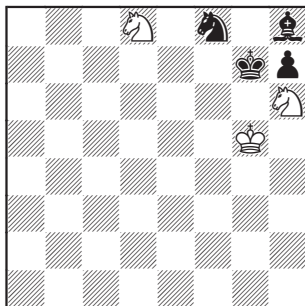
White to play and win

1. ♖g5+! 1. ♖d6+? is not dangerous: 1... ♔g7
 2. dxc8=♚ ♖e7+ 3. ♔e4 ♖g5+ 4. ♔f4 ♖xc8
 5. ♖xc8 ♖e6+ 6. ♔e5 ♔f7+ 7. ♔d5 ♖c7+ 8. ♔d6
 ♖e6, and black holds.

1... ♖xg5. Capturing the knight is necessary. 1...
 ♔g7 2. ♖e6+ ♔f7 3. ♖h6+ ♔e7 4. d8=♚# is bad,
 and after 1... ♔e7 2. dxc8=♚ black has no fork 2...
 ♖e7+.

2. ♖h6+ ♔g7 3. ♔xg5 ♖xd7 4. cxd7 ♖f8!
 Threatening to fork the newborn queen: 5. d8=♚?
 ♖e6+ etc.

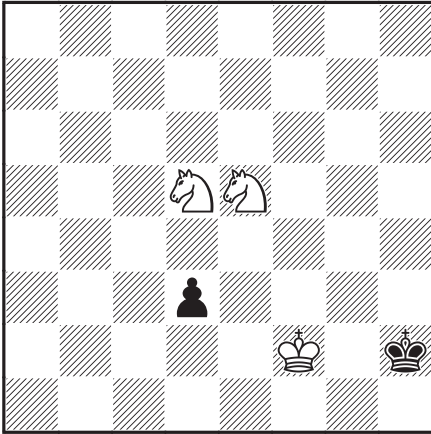
Suddenly: 5. d8=♖!! (5. ♖f5+? ♔f7). Black is in
 zugzwang.



5... ♖d7 6. ♖e6#!

Author M. Liburkin, 1940

No. 26



White to play and win