

Charles Hertan

Forcing Chess Moves

The Key to Better Calculation

New In Chess 2008

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Foreword



by three-time US Champion Joel Benjamin

The study of tactics holds a necessary place in the regimen of players of all levels. One can find explanation of fundamental tactical elements - pins, skewers, forks, etc. - in a host of books, but the process of finding the killer moves is still rather mysterious.

Hertan's work calls to mind the underdog success story of Van Perlo's Endgame Tactics. The little-known Dutch correspondence grandmaster compiled positions for thirty years until he produced a masterpiece which took the English Chess Federation's Book of the Year honors in 2006.

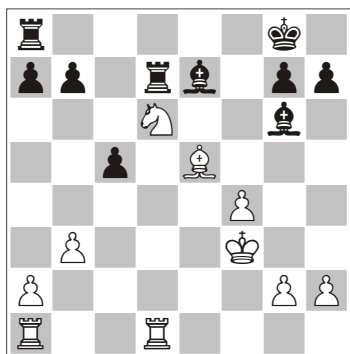
Hertan, a FIDE Master living near Boston, has spent a comparatively small but still impressive fourteen years researching, organizing, and codifying 650 tactical positions of all varieties. Like Van Perlo, Hertan has unearthed a multitude of positions appearing in print for the first time. I have a feeling that Hertan's opus, like Van Perlo's, will be warmly received.

In my lectures I have occasionally explored the demands of solving complex problems at the chessboard. Hertan has done so here on a grander scale with the aid of the useful concept of '**computer eyes**'. From my experience working at IBM on the Deep Blue team, I know that computers can find strong moves that humans overlook because they appear too outrageous to consider. It is a sign of the growth of computers that the term 'computer move', which once was assigned to an ugly and pitiful move, is now used to connote a strong but surprising move computers are better equipped to identify.

But my own human travails suffice to bring Hertan's idea close to heart. In many of my games I have discovered astonishing moves and combinations that seemed (to me, if not the spectators) to fall out of the sky.

Yet there is a thought process behind every great chess move, and by organizing and explaining the nature of these magic moves, Hertan has brought us all closer to being able to find them.

Forcing Chess Moves



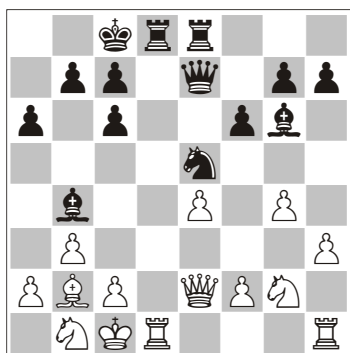
Benjamin-Silman

Lone Pine 1979



My opponent, one of the great American chess teachers and writers, no doubt looked forward to enjoying the bishop pair against his fifteen-year-old opponent. The tactical idea, utilizing a discovered attack and a zwischenzug, is fairly routine compared to the execution. I wanted to play 24. ♘f5, but the bishop would simply capture my knight and defend the rook on d7. The idea only works with the stunning **24. ♘c8!!** After **24... ♖xd1 25. ♘xe7+ ♕f7 26. ♖xd1 ♕xe7 27. g4!** White went on to win an instructive (but beyond the scope of this book) ending. Silman had not registered that the knight could dare to enter a square so apparently off limits.

The surprise square figured in another shocking move for me in the 1992 U.S. Championship. I have all my pieces converging on the e4-pawn, but with my knight in the way White seems safe to continue his maneuvers:



Alexander Ivanov-Benjamin

Durango 1992



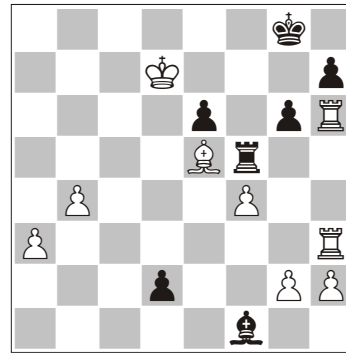
The startling **17... ♘f3!!** provided a big advantage. The main line runs 18. ♖xf3 ♕xe4 19. ♖g3 ♕d6 20. ♖xd6 ♖xd6 21. f4 (21. ♖xd6 cxd6 22. ♖g1 ♕xg2 23. ♖xg2 ♖e1+ 24. ♕d2 ♖xb1) and now I intended 21... ♕xg2 22. ♖xg2 ♖xf4+ 23. ♘d2 ♖e3 with a

big initiative for Black, but the computer suggestion 21...♙xc2!? 22.♖xc2 ♜e2+ 23.♖c1 ♜d5 is also strong. 18.♜xd8+ ♜xd8 19.♜xf3 ♙xe4 20.♜g3 ♙d6 21.f4 ♙xg2 22.♜xg2 ♙xf4+ is even worse, so Ivanov tried **18.a3 ♙d6 19.♖c3 ♙xe4 20.♖xe4 ♜xe4 21.♜xe4 ♜xe4 22.♜d3 ♖g5** and Black won on move 33.

The defender can hardly be expected to catch a move like 17...♖f3 in time. The attacker, with a vested interest in discovering such magic, may look deeper. Any 'safe' move by the knight allows the consolidating move 18.f3. I only noticed the move because I had been calculating sacrifices on f3 if White played f2-f3 at some point. Notice that with the pawn on f3, the knight sacrifice appears more plausible because it captures something, reducing the 'quietness' of the move.

Benjamin-Friedman

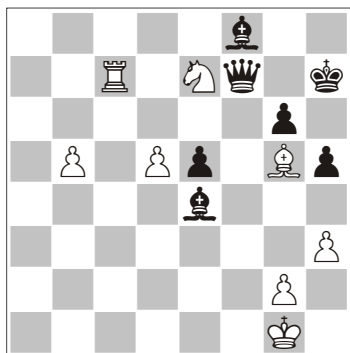
St. Martin 1993



It seems that White can hardly win with the black d-pawn poised to queen. **48.♜xh7!** is a good start because 48...d1♜? 49.♖e7! forces mate. After **48...♜h5??** (48...♜f7+ was necessary for the draw) **49.♜3xh5 gxh5 50.♜h6!!** is a killer quiet move. Black can queen with check, normally a real combination spoiler, but here that only encourages 51.♖e7, tightening the net on Black's king. The game concluded **50...♖f7 51.♜f6+ ♖g8 52.♖e7 ♖h7 53.♜f7+ ♖g6 54.f5+ exf5 55.♜f6+ ♖g5 56.♜d6 1-0.**

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The final position I would like to share comes from the last round of the 1984 New York Open, a game I needed to win to obtain a good prize.



Abramovic-Benjamin

New York 1984

Though White doesn't have enough material for the queen, the awkward position of the black queen and the dangerous passed pawns complicate the winning process considerably. With very accurate play Black may consolidate, but I could not work it out over the board and felt frustrated. After a 45-minute think I had an inspiration.

1...♙xg2!! 2.♖xg2 e4 3.d6 ♜f3+ 4.♔h2 ♙g7 5.♘c6 ♜e2+ 6.♔h1 e3 7.♗e7 (7...d7 ♜e1+ 8.♔h2 e2 9.♙e3 h4!) 7...♜d1+ 8.♔g2 ♜d5+ 9.♔f1 ♜xb5+ 10.♔e1 ♜xc6 11.d7 ♜c1+ 0-1.

We do not often have the luxury of using a 'brute force' approach favored by computers, but here I had been reduced to considering almost every possible move. Once I allowed my brain to contemplate 1...♙xg2, the calculation was quite easy. With the bishop gone from e4, the follow-up 2...e4! is a deadly 'quiet connector'. After that, the black queen completely dominates.

I hope I have whetted appetites for the smorgasbord of positions to follow. The beauty of Herten's achievement lies in the quality of both the positions selected, and the analysis. While the examples of each 'computer eyes' theme will interest even the strongest master, they are explained and analyzed at a level which unlocks their mysteries for even the average club player. Beyond this, the text is liberally spiced with Herten's pithy, and often humorous, commentary. Entertainment, and very likely enlightenment, awaits the reader.

Introduction

The vast majority of tactics and combination books have three glaring limitations:

1. They give great coverage of key themes like forks, pins, and typical sacrifices, but fail to address the crucial question, ‘HOW CAN I FIND THESE THEMES MORE CONSISTENTLY IN MY OWN GAMES?’
2. They tend to REHASH the same ‘classic’ tactical examples over and over, for the obvious reason that it is far easier to draw from existing works, than to comb raw game scores for fresh illustrations.
3. Most combination books devote almost all of their attention to mating attacks, neglecting the simple 2-4 move MATERIAL-WINNING FORCING MOVES which occur far more frequently in practical play.

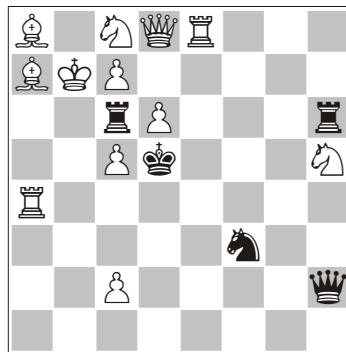
This book takes a radically different approach, starting with the assumption that the reader is already familiar with basic tactical stratagems like pins and skewers (or can study them elsewhere) and focusing instead on the question ‘**What prevents me from finding the winning forcing moves more often?**’

While hard work and talent certainly play important roles, my 28 years of teaching have shown me the central role of HUMAN BIAS in the failure to adequately consider key options. If we could shed our natural human thought tendencies and see the position through ‘COMPUTER EYES’, these biases might fall away, enabling us to consider other options which may hold the truth to a given position.

A terrific illustration of my thesis is the ‘Mate in Two’ composition, a genre which is specifically designed to confound human biases, as you’ll discover if you become addicted to solving them as I have:

Chernykh & Kopaev

2001

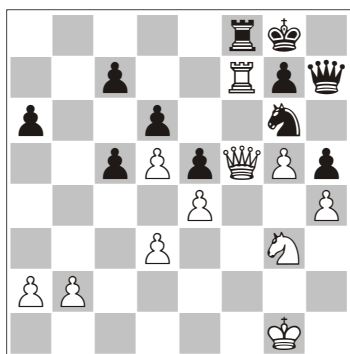


Mate in two moves

After the key move **1.♖d7!** threatening **2.♚xc6#** (not **1.♚f6?** threatening **2.c4#**, which is ‘cooked’ by **2...♗e5!**), Black has nine defenses, each of which is met by a

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different mating move! While strong computers would solve this problem with ease, let's face it, it's quite a struggle for us humans to visualize lines such as **1...♖hxd6 2.♘f6#** when the rook is pinned; **1...♔xd6 2.♘f4#** and now the queen is pinned; **1...♘d4 2.c4#** when the knight now seals the king's d4 egress; **1...♘e5 2.♘e7#** when e5 is 'self-blocked'; or the 5 different mates resulting from each legal move of the c6 rook; **1...♖b6+ 2.♙xb6#**; **1...♖a6 2.♙xa6#**; **1...♖xc7+ 2.♙xc7#**; **1...♖xc5 2.♘b6#**; and finally, **1...♖cxd6 2.♙b8#** (the rook is now pinned and can't block the bishop check).



Erenburg-Banusz

Budapest 2004



Moving to the realm of practice, how many readers can honestly say that they would even consider the following mind-blowing 'quiet' forcing move

1.♔e6!! ♖xf7 2.♘f5! ♙h8

The main line is **2...♘f4 3.♔e8+ ♖f8 4.♘e7+** mating, and **2...♔h8 3.♔xg6** threatening **4.♘h6+** is also utterly hopeless)

3.♔xf7 ♘f4 4.♘e7 1-0. A mating queen check follows.

Defining 'Forcing Moves'

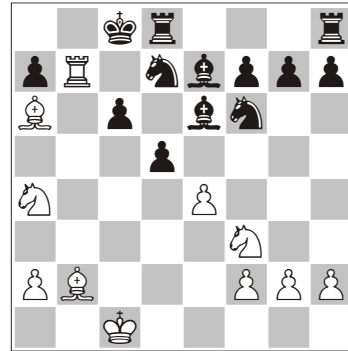
Before we go further, it is very important that you understand precisely what I mean by the term 'forcing move'. Loosely defined terms lead to misconceptions and errors in thinking! So here it is:

A FORCING MOVE is a move which limits the opponent's options. Nothing more or less. Many players think only of checks, captures, or flashy sacrifices when they hear this term. While checks and captures do TEND to be forcing, frequently they are far from the MOST FORCING choices.

Take, for instance, this position taken from a classic game between Mieses and Chigorin.

Mieses-Chigorin (variation)

Hanover 1902



There are many checks and captures, but no move more FORCING than **1. ♖e5!** threatening double discovered mate via **2. ♖b8#** or **2. ♖c7+ ♜b8** **3. ♖c8#**. Absolutely forced is **1... ♜xe5** when **2. ♖xa7+ ♜b8** **3. ♖b7+ ♜c8** **4. ♜b6#** follows.

The first step toward developing better calculation skills is to train yourself to **always analyze the most forcing moves first**. This is not because they are always best! The most forcing move may lose outright, and usually does! There are three compelling reasons why analyzing forcing moves first is necessary:

1. Forcing moves have the potential to transform the game, by leading to gain of material, checkmate, or other CONCRETE GAINS. When they do work, they tend to work better and quicker than non-forcing options.
2. Analyzing the most forcing moves first saves precious time. If they work, there is no need to look any further! Countless winning positions have been squandered by players who wasted huge amounts of time examining obscure ideas, when a clearly decisive forcing move was available.
3. Forcing moves limit the opponent's options, and thereby reduce the risk of calculation error. Fewer replies to calculate means less chance of slipping up, so all things being equal, the most forcing option is simplest and best.

A deep study of forcing moves is probably the single most important task toward achieving chess mastery, since doing so will do four wonderful things to improve your calculation skills:

1. Studying tactical positions PROMOTES ANALYTICAL PRECISION. 'Close enough' won't do. This is exactly what you must strive for, to find more winning forcing moves in your own practice. Precise analysis wins games.

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2. Tactical study helps you DEVELOP BOARD SIGHT, the ability to envision more clearly where all the pieces are, and what they are doing, at each step of every variation. This is not an issue for computers, who have the huge practical advantage of perfect board sight, no matter how far ahead they are ‘thinking’.

3. Studying composed problems and master tactics helps you overcome human bias and ‘staleness’ in your thinking. In problem solving, stereotyped, ‘automatic’ moves will get you nowhere fast!

4. Learning to relax and enjoy the slow process of discovering the answer (rather than beating yourself up in frustration!) will help you develop the important capacity to enjoy the challenge of calculating difficult variations. Yes, this is a capacity you can develop! As a young player with a ‘positional bent’, I had to learn to do so myself, and it is a must if you are to develop your tactical potential.

The first goal of any player aspiring to find more winning forcing moves in his/her games, should be to CALCULATE TWO MOVES AHEAD WITH ABSOLUTE PRECISION. Two obstacles are false pride and shame! Somehow, players seem to believe that ‘everyone else’ can see two moves ahead with ease, and they’re embarrassed to admit how difficult it may be for them! Most club players have a similar fallacy about opening preparation: they imagine that studying openings is the key to improvement, and that ‘everyone else’ knows their openings cold; while in reality 95% of club games are decided by who does a better job of calculating variations and avoiding blunders.

Seeing two moves ahead, consistently, with accuracy and perfect board sight, is a very difficult task for a human, and probably a sufficient achievement to allow you to perform at the candidate master level tactically. My peak FIDE rating was over 2400, yet I am not ashamed to admit that some particularly devilish mate-in-two problems have stumped me for as long as an hour!

Defining ‘Computer Eyes’

When I use the term **computer eyes** in this book, I have two skills in mind, which computers excel at, and which we must learn from in order to maximize our chance of finding the correct FORCING MOVES.

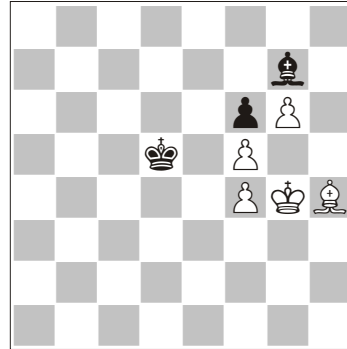
The first skill is BRUTE FORCE CALCULATION, the ability to accurately analyze a series of forcing moves. The first two chapters are focused on helping you develop this skill, and it continues to be an important theme throughout the book.

The second skill is OBJECTIVITY, the ability to find critical forcing moves which we tend to overlook due to HUMAN BIAS. Developing this skill will be the primary focus of the remaining chapters. Bias varies from person to person; unlike computers, each of us has different blind spots, or types of moves that tend to elude us.

The following encounter helped me bring this idea more into focus.

Hertan-Kelleher

Cambridge 1994

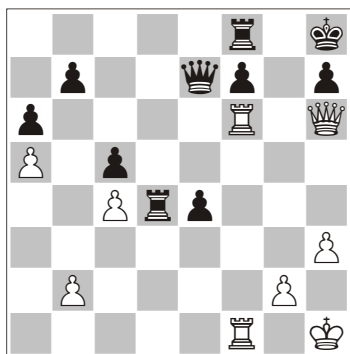


Black, one of New England's most feared attacking masters, lost quickly after **1...♙e4?? 2.♜g5!** and the pawns crash through on **2...fxg5 3.♙xg5** or **2...♙d5 3.♙h5** and **4.♜h6**. More refined is the WAITING MOVE **1...♙d4?!**, but it transpires that White can still win by one tempo: **2.♙h5 ♙e4 3.♜g5 ♙xf5 4.♜h6 ♜h8 5.♜f8! ♙xf4 6.♙h6 f5 7.♜g7 ♜xg7+ 8.♙xg7 ♙e3 9.♙h7 f4 10.g7 f3 11.g8♖ f2 12.♖c4**. So is Black lost? Well, no. It turns out that there is a miracle draw with **1...♙d6!! 2.♙h5 ♙e7 3.♜g5 fxg5 4.fxg5 ♙f8! 5.f6 ♙g8!!** The shocking point: on **6.fxg7, 6...♙xg7** wins the ♜g6 with a book draw. **6.♙g4 ♜f8 7.♙f5 ♜b4** and White can't break the blockade, since **8.g7 ♙f7 9.g6+ ♙g8 10.♙e6 ♜a3** leads nowhere.

What struck me about this game was not Black's failure to find these variations, which were after all so deep that few GM's would foresee them, but rather, Kelleher's candid admission afterwards: 'I would never consider the move **1...♙d6**; it's too passive.' While a computer would have used brute force calculation to find the draw, a strong master had failed to even consider the strongest FORCING MOVE due to human bias! If this was true for Kelleher, how much more true must it be for the average club player!

In the pages of this book, you will find hundreds of opportunities to understand, and move beyond, typical human bias. Once you have digested these positions carefully, your newfound COMPUTER EYES will help you discover many winning FORCING MOVES which might have escaped your consideration in the past.

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FCM 1.5
Karasev-Klaman
 Leningrad 1967



White exploits Black's back rank woes creatively to set up a mating attack:

1. ♖e6! ♔d8

Again, the queen must guard against 2. ♚xf8#.

2. ♗g6!

Did you overlook this forcing move because it looks impossible? Chapter 4, SURPRISE FORCING MOVES, will help you overcome this bias!

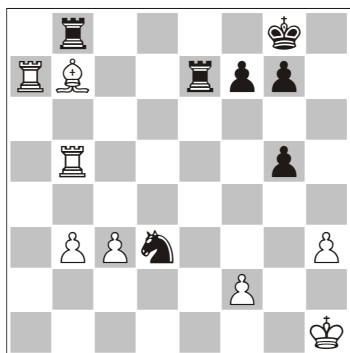
2... ♖g8 3. ♖xf7

The attack shifts from g7 to the sitting duck on h7.

3... ♖d1+ 4. ♔h2 ♚b8+ 5. g3 1-0. The white king walks toward the rook.



A bishop (or other piece) blocking the king's escape hatch at h7 can have the same effect of creating a back rank liability for the defender:



FCM 1.6
Topalov-Morozevich
 Cannes 2002

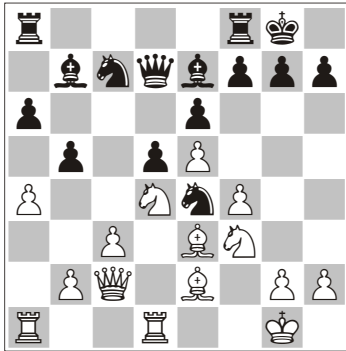


1. ♕e4!! A fantastic feat of COMPUTER EYES! Yes, attacking all three black pieces is very forcing, but since you are not a computer or world champion, you probably need to work on your SELECTION skills to even consider such a SURPRISE FORCING MOVE!

1... ♖xb5 There is no escape, e.g. 1... ♗xf2+ 2. ♔g2 ♖e8 3. ♖xb8 ♗xb8 4. ♕xf2. **2. ♖a8+! 1-0.**

Forcing Chess Moves

A crucial function of COMPUTER EYES is knowing when to switch from a positional struggle to the complications of a tactical fray. Lesser players often back off in critical positions, rather than developing the confidence and work ethic to accurately assess MESSY TACTICS which may lead to victory:



FCM 3.8
Mokry-Stocek
 Czechia 1994



White sees through the illusion of the ‘rock solid’ ♖e4 and accurately navigates Black’s scary desperation tries. COMPUTER EYES DON’T FEAR GHOSTS, but insist on exposing them to the light of analysis!

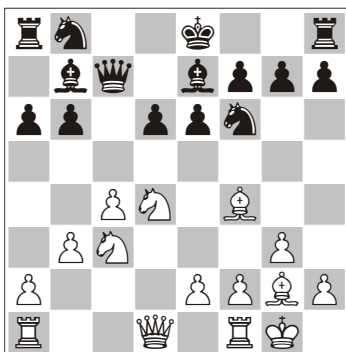
1.axb5 axb5 2.♖xa8 ♖xa8 3.♘xb5! ♘xb5 4.♙xe4! ♖a2

Very scary, but winning for White was 4...dxe4 5.♖xd7 exf3 6.♙xb5 6...♖a1+ 7.♙f2 fxg2 8.♙e2!

5.♙c2 (not 5.♙b1? ♘xc3) with a good extra pawn **1-0**.



Always examine the FORCING OPTION first, even in the opening!



FCM 3.9
Mohr-Atlas
 Ptuj 1995



1.♙xd6! ♙xd6 2.♘db5 axb5 3.♘xb5 ♙xg2 4.♘xc7+ ♙xc7 5.♙xg2 1-0.

Chapter 4 - Surprise Forcing Moves

Study Material

In the first three chapters we focused on recognition of stock forcing moves and the use of brute force calculation. In the remaining chapters, we examine the other key aspect of developing strong computer eyes, **OVERCOMING HUMAN BIAS**. We begin with **SURPRISE FORCING MOVES**.

The most basic human chess bias is our tendency to rely on ‘normal’ moves, and to rule out ‘impossible’ or strange ideas. On the one hand, this shows a deficit of creativity; but from a **COMPUTER EYES** perspective, it also demonstrates a lack of objectivity, since unusual forcing moves are often the best! Computers lack human sensibilities which label a move abnormal, so they calculate surprise moves and normal moves equally, without bias. Since humans do have a need to categorize positions and weed some options out (we don’t have the computer luxury of analyzing every move!), we must make a special effort to develop the capacity to find strong surprise forcing moves in our games. Many great attackers make a practice of **CONSIDERING ‘IMPOSSIBLE’ MOVES FIRST**, to ensure that they don’t overlook the shocker which might be the key to the position. Since opponents also neglect these surprise options in their calculations, mastering this key aspect of **COMPUTER EYES** will translate into better results, as well as a heightened appreciation for the possibilities hidden in ‘everyday’ positions.

Last chapter, we discussed the three essential skills involved in calculating forcing chess moves: selection, board sight, and raw calculation of variations. Surprise forcing moves are of primary importance in the area of **improving your selection skills**.

The two **CARDINAL SINS OF SELECTION** bear repeating:

1. Failure to consider crucial forcing options during your calculations. If this is your problem, the remaining chapters are the remedy. You must start by ‘reprogramming’ to be extra alert for the **SURPRISE FORCING MOVES** that you tend to discard.
2. Spending too much time on ‘dead ends’. This becomes a serious problem if you are chronically addicted to the disease of time pressure. The remedy for this one is more difficult, since you don’t want to ‘throw out the baby with the bath water’ and stunt your creativity. Much of this ‘**HONING**’ skill will come from experience and the study of master tactics, but a good start at this point would be to heighten your practice of **ALWAYS EXAMINING THE MOST FORCING MOVES FIRST**. The surprise moves in this chapter all share in common the trait of being extremely forcing; as such, they are precisely not the types of options you want to ‘filter out’ of your calculations. We will distinguish two types of surprise forcing moves.

A) 'Impossible' Moves

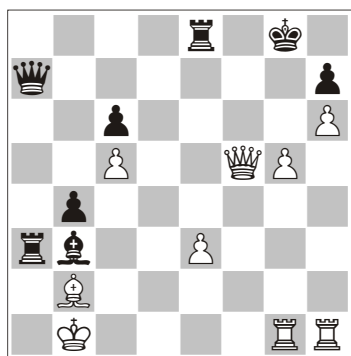
B) Unusual Squares and 'Antipositional' Surprise Forcing Moves

'UNUSUAL SQUARES' refers to surprise invasions which occur on a square not usually associated with a particular piece. Rote thinking often wrongly ignores these strange forcing options.

'ANTIPOSITIONAL' forcing moves are the kind of 'ugly' forcing shots computers thrive on. They may look like 'the worst moves on the board' to human eyes, until brute force analysis shows that they win by force! Typical 'antipositional' shots include moves which destroy one's own pawn structure, or trap one's own piece(s), until one grasps the tactical justification which overrides these positional considerations.

A) 'Impossible' Surprise Forcing Moves

These are the elemental 'bolts from the blue' catching the opponent completely off guard, with devastating impact. They typically involve major material sacrifices. The quintessential surprise forcing move is the 'JAW DROPPER', a move which looks so unlikely that it is often completely overlooked by the opponent.



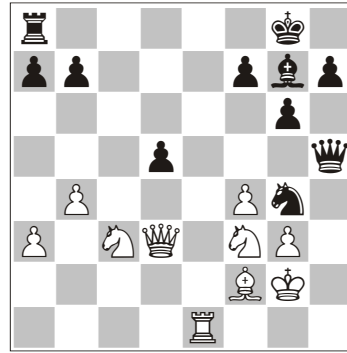
FCM 4.1
Bischoff-Nogueiras
 Havana 1998



I'm guessing that Black was pretty happy with his chances here, since 1.g6? is met by the winning countershot 1...♖a1+! 2.♙xa1 ♚a2+. But White struck first with an unbelievable BARN BURNER:

1.♚xh7+!!! ♚xh7+ (or 1...♙xh7 2.g6+ ♙g8 3.h7+) **2.g6 ♙a2+ 3.♙c1 1-0**. After the shock of a lifetime, it's hard to blame Black for resigning a little prematurely; he could still resist with 3...♖a7! 4.gxh7+ ♙xh7 5.♗g7+ ♖xg7 6.hxg7+ ♙g6 with slim holding chances.

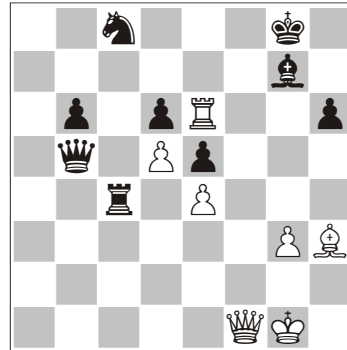
FCM 4.2
Zilber-Tal (variation)
 Riga 1958



The main justification of another brilliantly speculative Tal piece sacrifice was the shocker **1...♚h3+**, envisioning an unusual version of the stock fork trick **2.♜g1 ♚h1+ 3.♞xh1 ♘xf2+ 4.♞g2 ♘xd3**, regaining the piece with a winning edge. **0-1.**



FCM 4.3
Kasparov-Smirin
 Moscow 1988



It's hard to believe that White could be winning here down a piece and pawn, with an exposed king and Black threatening ...♚c5+ and ...♝c1, but Kasparov's SURPRISE BOMBSHELL reveals that he has the whole position in hand:

1.♝xh6 ♞xh6 (otherwise **2.♞e6+** is mate) **2.♞e6+ ♜h8** (**2...♞g7 3.♞f7+**) **3.♞f6+**

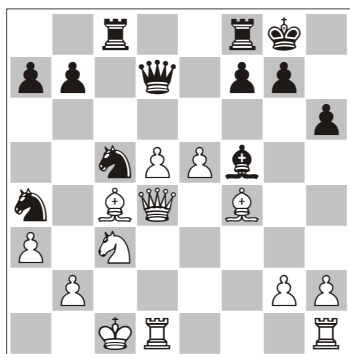
As we noted earlier, such positions with many checking possibilities require careful brute force calculation. **3...♞g7** now loses to **4.♞h4+**.

3...♞h7 4.♞f7+ ♞g7

Or **4...♞h8 5.♞g8#**. Finally all becomes clear.

5.♞f5+ ♜h8 6.♞h5+ ♞g8 7.♞e6+ ♜f8 8.♞f7#. A stunning display of Kasparovian prowess.

Forcing Chess Moves



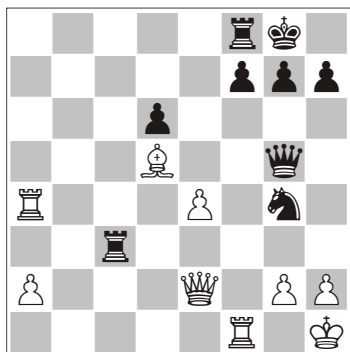
FCM 4.4 Vetemaa-Shabalov

Haapsalu 1986



Black's initiative is even stronger than White's imposing center, but White hopes to fight on after 1...♟xc3 2.bxc3 ♖a4 3.♙b2!. The OTHER magician from Latvia has something much more devilish in mind:

1...♜b5 A monstrous SURPRISE FORCING SHOT. **2.♞d2** The queen is taboo due to 3.♟b3#; while 2.b4 loses prosaically to 2...♟b3+ 3.♙xb3 ♜xc3+. **2...♟xc3** **3.♜xc3** (3.bxc3 ♜b1# or 3.♙xb5 ♟b3#) **3...♟b3+ 0-1**. The c-file pin proves decisive.



FCM 4.5 Fischer-Sherwin

New York 1957



Losing is 1.♞xf7 ♜c1+ 2.♞f1+?? ♟h8, but with Fischer's unique ability to penetrate positions with searing objectivity, he wasn't quite ready to give up on this critical forcing line:

1.♞xf7 ♜c1+ **2.♞f1** A marvelous feat of creative SELECTION! The doomed queen enables mate after 2...♞fc8 3.♞f8#, while 2...♞xf1+ 3.♞xf1+ ♜xd5 4.♞xf8+ wins. **2...h5** **3.♜xc1 ♜h4** 3...♜xc1+ loses a rook to 4.♞f1+. **4.♞xf8+ 1-0**. Before computers, only Fischer-like genius could conceive a move like 2.♞f1!

Afterthought

Fifteen years ago, I noticed that all of my students, from beginners up to 2100 rated players, had a critical flaw in their calculation process. Most of them had already mastered the information taught in standard tactics books about pins, forks, skewers and other tactical devices, yet they continued to miss critical forcing moves in nearly every one of their games!

Over a series of lessons, I tried to program into their brains a new approach to analyzing positions, beginning with the question: 'OK, what are the most forcing options in this position?' Pretty quickly, I began to see encouraging results; a 1400 player would suddenly find a crisp 2-3 move forcing sequence and defeat a much stronger player.

I decided then on the concept of writing a different kind of tactics book, which focused on the MENTAL PROCESS involved in correct analysis. A few others had written important books on this subject, such as Kotov's classic *Think Like a Grandmaster*; but that book was in many respects too advanced for my students. I wanted my book to break down the calculations to a level accessible to everyone (with a little hard work), and to focus sharp attention on the task of analyzing forcing moves. I had a lot of fun collecting beautiful master combinations over the years, and amassed a fairly large library for my research.

Over time, I began to think about the different types of forcing moves which were hardest to find, and why some were harder than others. I noticed how often my students would describe a certain move with a negative label ('it's too passive', 'it ruins my pawn structure') before they had even analyzed it! I enjoyed correcting their prejudices: 'It may ruin your pawn structure, but it also wins by force!'. I realized that a computer never refuses to calculate a forcing move 'because it ruins my pawn structure!'; it calculates first, then draws conclusions. As I thought more about this idea, I hatched the concept of 'computer eyes' as a tool for overcoming human bias.

As I prepare to let this 'baby' enter the world, I find that I have developed a habit that is difficult to break after 15 years: the habit of collecting beautiful forcing moves from master games! Sometime during this process, I realized that I was writing not only for students and lovers of the beauty of chess; I was also completing my own education!

I had read many books during my own development as a player, but it turns out that there was a wealth of stock forcing moves that I had never fully absorbed. The legendary Soviet School of Chess, which completely dominated the chess world for decades and continues to be the strongest influence, considered stock master combi-

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nations as part of the ‘ABC’s’ of chess. Students would be shown hundreds, thousands of forcing moves from master games, and critical endings, before they ever picked up an opening book. These lessons would be gathered into tactics manuals, but most of them were rather dry; just hundreds of diagrams, and perhaps only the first “key” move given as the answer. Such Soviet School books were ideal for working with a trainer, who could give the student a few exercises as “homework” and help him fill in all the details during the next lesson. Since every promising student was given a trainer, there was no need for tactics books that spelled out every analytical detail more clearly, or gave more wordy or interesting explanations: the teacher would take care of all that.

So, in the first two chapters of this book, I offered the reader a chance to begin your ‘Soviet School’ training. We have covered a wide variety of crucial stock forcing moves, and I have tried to take the place of your ‘trainer’ by explaining each position in depth and helping you work out all the variations.

In the subsequent chapters, we took an indepth look at human bias, and helped you understand the types of forcing moves which humans tend to miss, and how to remedy this problem in your own games with the use of COMPUTER EYES. Finally, in the chapter on Intuition and Creativity, we took a step beyond concrete analysis of forcing moves, and looked at some of the practical, psychological, and analytical tools which help masters create enduring works of chess artistry.

In the end, I think I wrote the book which I needed to read at the beginning of my career; a thorough coverage of the concept of forcing moves, which grounds the reader in stock master combinations and gives you the tools to start finding more FORCING CHESS MOVES in your own games. I hope that I have enhanced your appreciation for the incredible beauty and variety of forcing moves, and started you on a lifelong ‘education’ of your own, taking a special interest in looking for, and thoroughly understanding, as many master combinations as you can find. You can do it just for pleasure, but I have no doubt that it will also make you a much stronger player.

Charles Hertan
January 2008