

opening repertoire

...c6

Playing the Caro-Kann and Slav as Black

Cyrus Lakdawala
and **Keaton Kiewra**

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About the Authors

Cyrus Lakdawala is an International Master, a former National Open and American Open Champion, and a six-time State Champion. He has been teaching chess for over 35 years, and coaches some of the top junior players in the United States.

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Contents

About the Authors	3
Bibliography	5
Introduction: A Caro-Kann/Semi-Slav Repertoire	7
1 Caro-Kann: Classical Variation	15
2 Caro-Kann: Advance Variation	85
3 Caro-Kann: Panov-Botvinnik Attack	128
4 Caro-Kann: The Pseudo-Panov	152
5 Caro-Kann: Unusual Lines	171
6 Slav: Exchange Variations	203
7 Slav: White Plays an Early Qf3 and e3	236
8 Semi-Slav: White Avoids the Meran	280
9 Semi-Slav: The Meran Variation	323
10 Semi-Slav: The Anti-Moscow	360
11 Semi-Slav: The Moscow Gambit	377
12 Torre, Colle, London and Trompowsky	395
13 Réti and Others	420
Index of Variations	440
Index of Complete Games	447

Introduction

A Caro-Kann/Semi-Slav Repertoire

Rote memorization with the absence of understanding is the great killer of intellectual curiosity. When I ask students the terrifying question: “What is the idea behind your move?” it is often met with “errs”, “umms”, and a few throat clearings before they provide an answer. The truth is most club level players move by feel, without an internal dialogue to assist their decisions. This book hopes to address this issue.

It was originally an idea of Professor Joel Sneed, who was to co-author the book with me, in a teacher/student mode. Now the trouble is a few months after Joel and I started the book, he got a promotion to be head of clinical psychology at Queen’s College. The workload proved too daunting and Joel had to bow out of the book. So I was left without a co-author in a teacher/student book!

My thoughts turned to IM Keaton Kiewra, who lives in San Diego. Keaton, who has two GM norms, once asked me what was missing in his play to achieve full GM strength. My answer: his repertoire was one of kill or be killed. He plays ultra-sharp lines like the Kan and Dragon Sicilians versus 1 e4, and the King’s Indian and Grünfeld against queen’s pawn openings. I felt he needed the ability to draw GMs and IMs with the black pieces, with a more stable repertoire. He was interested, and asked to be the ‘student’ in this book (even though he out-rates me at the time of this writing!). I’m not sure if Keaton wants to play this repertoire, but he does want to learn it, maybe as a test run for playing it later.

The Dreev/Khenkin Connection

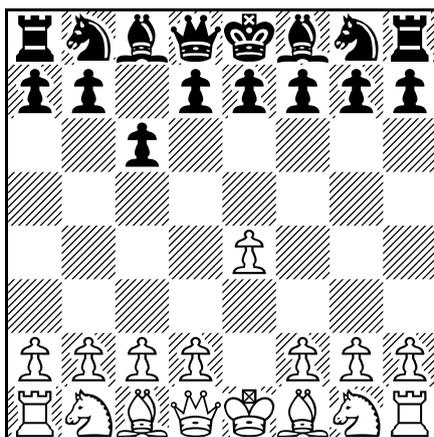
Joel Sneed’s initial idea was to construct a black repertoire where we choose one top GM whose style he liked and based the entire book on his games. The trouble was with a single player, there were theoretical gaps, so we decided to build the book around the openings of two players, GMs Alexey Dreev and Igor Khenkin, who play remarkably similar repertoires

as Black. Even here, we found a few theoretical gaps, so in these cases we simply substituted a game from another player.

Each opening has its own constituency. The book divides into 1 e4, which we meet with the Caro-Kann, and all the queen's pawn openings, which we confront with a Semi-Slav, from a Slav move order.

Winning positions rarely are achieved due to a player banging out a double exclamation move. Instead, they tend to arise as the accreted product of many accurate moves, most of which fall below an exclamation mark's radar. We have a lot of ground to cover (my dream is that someday I will write a book shorter in length than *War and Peace*, but so far it hasn't happened) so let's get started on our key battlegrounds.

In the Caro-Kann section of the book, we strive for positions which are naturally antithetical to an aggressive opponent's arsenal:

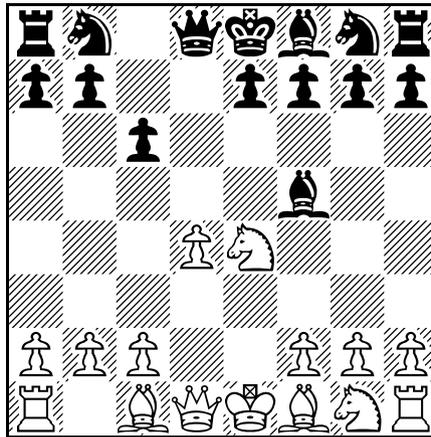


The Caro-Kann – an opening I have always considered the custodian of rationality in a chess world of competing irrational forces – is the battle of the irresistible force clashing against our immovable mass. The solid Caro portion of the book is designed to give little satisfaction to attacking addicted opponents, giving them minimal scope to satisfy their cravings.

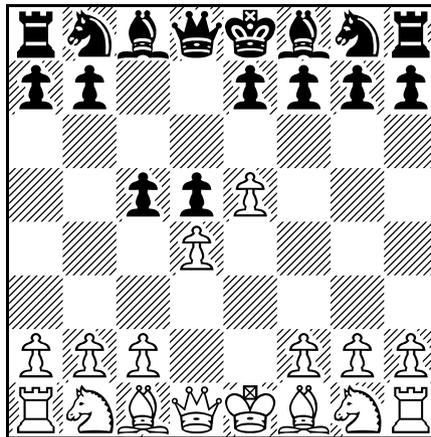
Our opening choices matter. Remember when Kasparov went Captain Ahab on Kramnik in their match? He repeatedly banged his head against Kramnik's Berlin Lopez wall, without scoring a single win, which effectively drained Kasparov of the white pieces in the match.

I don't believe that Kramnik was stronger than Kasparov when the match was played. Kramnik's victory came as a result of his ability to lure Kasparov into tediously technical Kramnik World, rather than the realm of dynamism and fantasy in which Kasparov normally thrived. This, coupled with a deeper understanding of the subtleties of his opening lines, in my opinion, won Kramnik the world championship match, when Kasparov may well have still been the superior player. In this book, we attempt to do the same thing, with

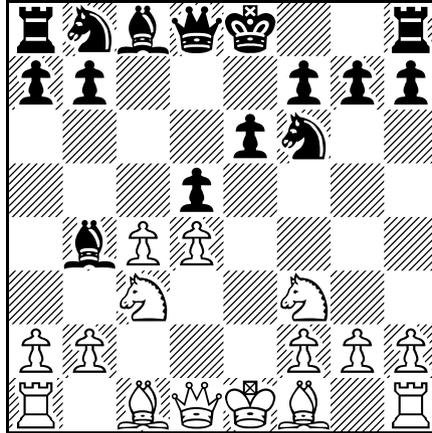
our impregnable Caro-Kann/Semi-Slav wall.



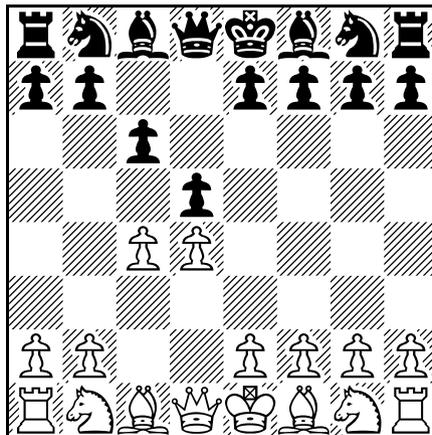
The Classical line of the Caro-Kann is an oyster which no GM to date, playing White, is able to crack open to earn White an edge, if Black responds correctly. We can play for a win in this line based on the theory that the mundane is far more likely to kill a person than the fantastic. Many of us will eventually perish due to excess cholesterol clogging our arteries, than those of us who will die by the bite of a Black Mamba, while on safari in Africa.



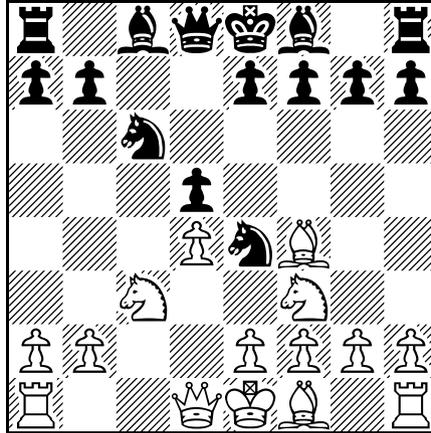
Against the Advance Caro-Kann we go with 3...c5, which is rapidly growing in popularity, where we reach Advance French-like positions. As chess players we often feel that we are a cop on the chess vice squad, who after a while begins to develop a taste for all the vices we are assigned to end. This line is quite risky, since in many versions White plays dxc5 and then grimly hangs on to his booty. In return we get a development lead. From my Dreev/Khenkin study of the line, it feels like Black gets full compensation every time.



When White plays the Panov-Botvinnik Attack on us, he or she invariably takes on an isolated d-pawn, which further play either turns into a cherished only child, or hopefully, a Dickensian orphan, fending for itself in a cruel uncaring world.

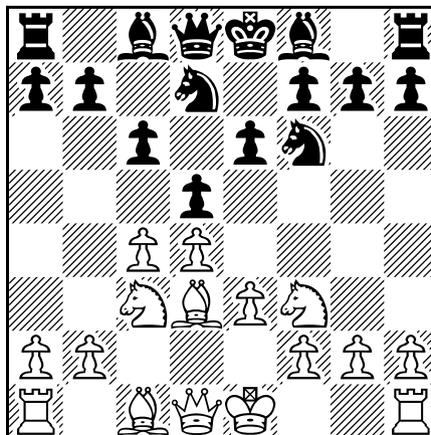


With a Slav move order, we enter the hive of the Semi-Slav. If the Caro section of the book is Dr. Jekyll, then the Semi-Slav portion is our Mr. Hyde. The first portion of the book is an animal bred for domesticity by a warm fireplace, while the Semi-Slav portion is bred for hunting. The lines are considerably more complex and theory dense than the Caro lines. At my age, a solid opening repertoire – like a high fibre muffin in the morning – is a necessity. I normally play the Slav proper, with ...♞f5, outside the pawn chain, but maybe I reached some kind of mid-life crisis (Come to think of it, if this is mid-life, then I will live to the age of 112), where I crave the excitement of the Semi-Slav.

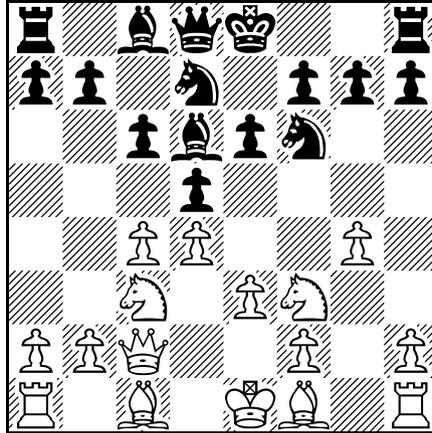


Some players' minds demand constant novelty and entertainment. Not so with players who respond to our Slav move order with the obnoxious (well, I do play it with White myself!) Exchange Slav, and who are more than happy to grind away in barren environments. White usually plays the Exchange Slav on us as a way to force mandatory politeness.

Essentially, the Exchange Slav is the perfect opening for the aspiring Trotskyite, who believes the entire world should be completely equal. We refuse to co-operate, and respond with the unbalancing $6...d4$. Most of us require a strong dose of caffeine to fend off the zzzs, when confronting the Exchange Slav. In our case the position may still be described as dull, but no longer intolerably so.

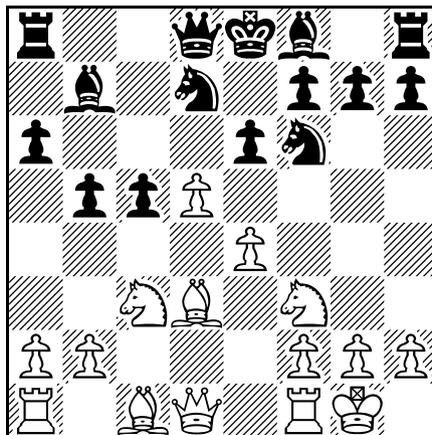


Here is the Meran Semi-Slav, which bears the insignia of a Colle System, yet is so much sharper, since we dare to play the Colle a move down as Black.

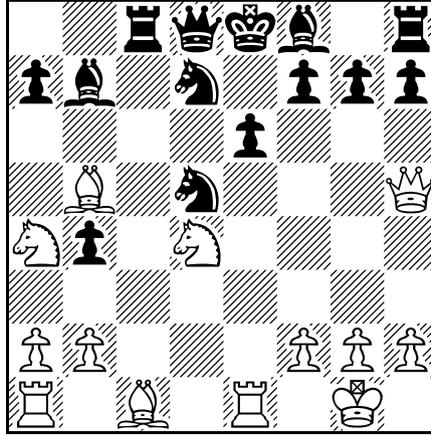


If you are a dealer in illegal activities, it's best not to advertise your shady transactions. When we were children, our parents lectured us about our numerous transgressions. Most of us responded by doing our best to look sufficiently chastened. And then when our parents weren't looking, unrepentantly repeated our mischief. This is how I feel about Shirov's Attack.

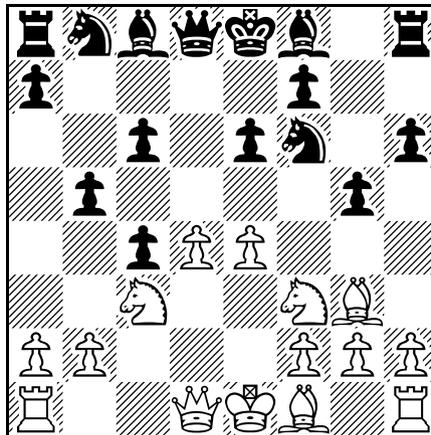
White's last move, 7 g4!?, is an unequivocal signal of our opponent's hostile intent. When we read an advertisement about making "easy money", we all understand it's never much money, and it's never easy. So in the case of Shirov's Attack, we decline White's offer of the sacrificial lamb g-pawn, and instead offer a promising sacrifice of our own, with the plan ...dxc4, ...e5 and ...♘d5, which follows the principle: *counter in the centre when attacked on the wing*. As we all understand, imagination can be a mischievous entity, since it only cares about the creative process itself, without worry about practical matters, like the final result of a chess game. I feel like Shirov's Attack falls into such an opening category, and our chances are at least even if we know our theory.



This position contains the unfathomability of a human attempting to decipher the thoughts of a wild animal. Black often castles long and our king may look the more exposed of the two. Yet our powerful piece activity magically makes our king safer than appearances indicate.



No, Black doesn't have to resign in the above diagram. In fact, if we know our theory, we stand better. Most players tend to go after our opponents subtly, from the inside out, by sowing a small weakness within, hoping it will grow and spread. Well, White isn't doing any of that in this position, and in fact takes his or her chances by handing us a pawn to go after our king with a Neanderthal-like direct frontal assault. The comps say this can't be done if we familiarize ourselves with the defensive ideas.



If you were expecting normal, we are nowhere near it. This line is of a difficulty ratio several levels of magnitude higher than most other chapters in the book. Welcome to the Semi-Slav Moscow Gambit, one of the most complex theoretical tangles in all of chess. The

consequences of miscalculation or misevaluation in the coming middlegame tend to be immediate and fatal.

Attempting to decipher this line in a broad-ranging book like this, may be akin to a lay person attempting to read ancient Babylonian cuneiform. If you play this line, you will need more detailed material. This book provides a starting point, a place to merely orient yourself, rather than dredge up every detail. Once we go over this chapter we may grow simultaneously accustomed, yet oddly still ill at ease, without further supplemental study. Both the real and the illusory cohabit the above diagram, and it is our job to separate the two. White sacrificed a pawn for the following compensation:

1. White's d- and e-pawns control the centre.

2. White leads in development.

3. The fact that Black played both ...b5 and ...g5 means that our king will never feel secure on either wing. Nor is the king safe in the centre, since White has access to d5 prying mechanisms in place. Meaning, Black's structure resembles a car, dented and dinged, from years of careless driving.

For our side:

1. We sequester an extra pawn, as a kind of insurance against our coming strategic issues.

2. White's e-pawn may be undermined with a future ...b4.

3. White's king will almost certainly end up castling kingside. Now this can be a problem for our opponents, since White often tries to open lines with h4 earlier on, meaning their own king may come under attack.

Correct play for both sides tends to mingle and fuse into the incoherent babble of a hundred competing sub-variations. Be careful with this line. We chess players are geese who move in flocks. If one line gets trendy (like the Moscow!), the rest of us want to play it, even when it may not suit our styles. Don't, however, get intimidated either. The tabiya position may be a tangle, but not an impenetrable one, with the help of comps (not to mention this wonderfully instructive book!).

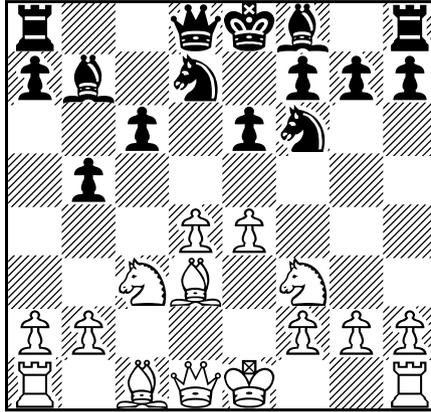
While a titled player requires encyclopaedic knowledge of theory to successfully navigate this line without falling prey to disaster – the club player doesn't. At a club level, if you accrue an essential grasp of the fundamentals, odds are you will likely be more booked up than your potential opponents.

Many thanks to IM Richard Palliser, IM Byron Jacobs and GM John Emms of Everyman Chess, and especially WGM (of proofreading) Nancy. May our opponents gnash their teeth in frustration when they bump into our Caro-Kann/Semi-Slav force field.

Cyrus Lakdawala,
San Diego,
February 2017

Game 50
A.Kuzmin-A.Dreev
St Petersburg 2004

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 ♘c3 ♘f6 4 e3 e6 5 ♘f3 ♘bd7 6 ♙d3 dxc4 7 ♙xc4 b5 8 ♙d3 ♙b7 9 e4



Without preamble, White seizes the centre.

Keaton: It feels like the ...a6 and ...c5 plan will be too slow this game, since White responds with an immediate e5. If this assessment is correct, then how do we gain counterplay against White's centre?

Cyrus: Your assessment is correct. We dispense with ...a6 and go for an immediate ...b4 and ...c5 plan.

9...b4

We commence our undermining sequence. After 9...a6?! 10 e5 ♘d5 11 ♘xd5 cxd5 the position resembles a French Defence gone wrong for Black, who has no visible counterplay. White can leisurely build for a kingside attack, C.Lakdawala-C.Milton, San Diego (rapid) 2006.

10 ♘a4

Normal. After 10 ♘e2?! c5 11 ♘g3 cxd4 12 ♘xd4, as in J.Pina Sierra-L.Dominguez Perez, Aviles 1999, *Komodo* improves upon previous theory with the atonal 12...h5!. The idea is to undermine e4 with ...h4 next: for example, 13 f3 ♖b6 14 ♙e3 ♙c5 15 ♙e2 h4 16 ♘f1 ♗d8 when White is tangled up and in serious trouble.

10...c5

Unleashing our power against both d4 and e4.

Keaton: Isn't Black in violation of principle?

Cyrus: We are in open defiance of the principles: *don't open the game or create confrontation when lagging in development*. However, this position is an exception to the general rule and the comps, along with GM precedence, assure us our move is sound.

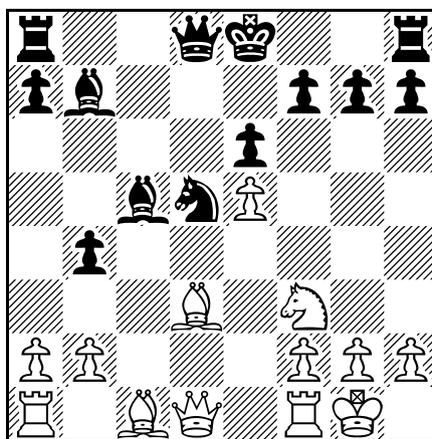
11 e5 ♖d5

Absolute ownership of d5 will be of great comfort to us in our future travails from this position.

12 ♗xc5

12 dxc5 simply transposes to the position we reach after Black's 13th move.

12... ♗xc5 **13** dxc5 ♗xc5 **14** 0-0



Keaton: Why didn't White check on b5 to disrupt castling?

Cyrus: We rarely castle short in this line, so the check on b5 may actually *lose* time for White. For example, 14 ♖b5+ ♕f8 15 0-0 h6 16 ♗e2 ♗b6 17 ♗d2 g6 18 a4 a5 19 h4 ♖g7. The king walked his way to safety on g7 and Black stands no worse, M.Ezat-O.Korneev, Linares 2003.

14...h6

This move is necessary to avoid ♗g5 and ♗h5 ambushes.

15 ♗d2

White's dual-purpose main move. He prepares to transfer the knight to e4, while clearing a path for his queen to the kingside. Dreev has also faced 15 ♗e2 ♗b6 16 ♗d2 ♕f8!? (not a psychologically easy move to make, but the fact is: castling just walks into White's attack; indeed, 16...0-0?! is asking for trouble: 17 ♗e4 f5 18 exf6 ♗xf6 19 ♗g6 ♗xf3 20 ♗xh6 ♗c7 21 gxf3 and White has the better chances) 17 h4 g6 (before White can play h5) 18 ♗h2 ♗d4 19 ♖ab1 ♗d8 20 ♗f3 ♗c5 21 ♖bc1 ♖g7 22 ♖c2 ♗e7! (Black already stands better) 23 h5 ♗f5 24 ♗f4 g5 25 ♗xf5? ♗a6! (a strong zwischenzug) 26 ♗e4 ♗d3 (also strong is 26...♗xf1 27 ♕xf1 exf5 28 ♗xf5 gxf4 29 ♖xc5 ♗d1+ 30 ♕e2 ♖hd8! and Black is winning) 27

♖xd3 ♜xd3 28 ♙xd3 gxf4 when White didn't have enough for the queen, V.Utemov-A.Dreev, Gorky 1989.

15...♞c7

Black continues his policy of stalling/avoiding castling.

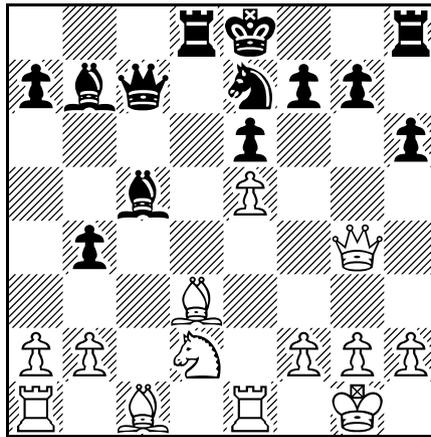
16 ♜e1 ♞e7

16...♞d8 is Black's main move, which we look at next game.

17 ♞g4

After 17 ♞e4 ♞xe5!? (this looks risky; I would be more inclined to try 17...♙xe4 18 ♙xe4 ♞d8 19 ♞a4+ ♞d7 with a balanced position) 18 ♙e3 ♙xe3 19 ♞d6+ ♟f8 20 ♞xb7 ♞d5 21 ♜xe3 21...♞xb7 22 ♙e4 ♞d5 23 ♞d3 White's development lead is at least worth Black's extra pawn, D.Gordh-F.Balabaev, correspondence 2005.

17...♞d8!



It transpires g7 isn't hanging at all.

18 ♙e4 ♞b6

Target: f2.

19 ♞f3

Suddenly, White's initiative doesn't appear so scary anymore.

19...♙d5

There is no reason to take on e4 and give White's knight a free jump into the attack.

20 ♙xd5 ♜xd5

Dreev keeps his knight close to his king.

21 ♞c4 ♞a6 22 b3 0-0

At last. Now Black's king is relatively safe, with the removal of the light-squared bishops, and I already prefer Black's game, due to his domination of d5.

23 ♙e3

If 23 ♞g4 ♙d4! and White must avoid 24 ♙xh6? ♞f5 winning material.

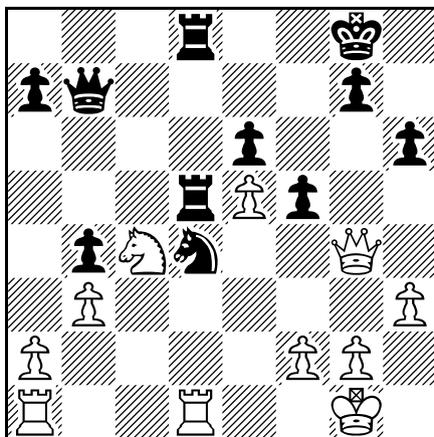
23...♙xe3 24 ♞xe3 ♞f5 25 ♞e2 ♞fd8

White's position has a slightly overextended feel, since his would-be attack is long gone.

26 h3 ♖b7 27 ♜ed1

Kuzmin challenges for the d-file, keeping Black's edge to a minimum.

27...♘d4 28 ♖g4 f5!?



Dreev is unsatisfied with a safe, tiny edge, so he complicates, hoping to clear g5 for his rook. He has an insatiable appetite for an object (White's king), yet is ill-equipped to satisfy his craving. After 28...♘b5! Black retains a small edge.

29 exf6!

Kuzmin correctly decides he must intervene before Black's build-up takes on momentum. So he deliberately falls into Black's trap. Instead, if 29 ♖h5?! ♘h7! when Black threatens ...g6! followed by a knight check, uncovering on d1, and the push of the f-pawn has improved Black's position.

29...♜g5

When your winning combination contains a hole, we fail to see the secret within the secret. This rook intimidates White's haughty queen about as much as a grovelling petitioning peasant before an empress. Now the situation mutates rapidly.

30 ♜xd4

Black's supposed win isn't so self-evident. He wins the exchange, but gets no advantage.

30...♜xd4

Of course ridiculous is 30...♜xg4?? 31 ♜xd8+ ♘h7 32 hxg4 when White obtains way too much for the queen.

31 ♖xe6+ ♘h7 32 g3 ♖f3 33 fxg7

Black's exposed king should White to generate enough play for a draw.

33...♜e4

Playing for the win. 33...♜xg3+ 34 fxg3 ♖xg3+ is a draw by perpetual check.

34 ♖d6?!

Some may argue that the journey is more important than the destination, but it won't be a chess player who just lost a close game. After 34 ♖e5! Black's claim to an advantage is about as legitimate as those supermarket tabloids which claim definitive proof of aliens abducting both Elvis and Michael Jackson. The move forces a draw after 34...♖xg3+ (not 34...♖xg7?! 35 ♖xh6+ ♔xh6 36 ♘f3 and I like White, due to those three passed kingside pawns for the exchange, and certainly not 34...♗e2?? 35 g8♗+ ♖xg8 36 ♗f5+ ♔h8 37 ♘g6+ ♔g7 38 ♖c1 when White has a winning attack) 35 fxg3 ♗xg3+ 36 ♔h1 ♖e1+ 37 ♖xe1 ♗xe1+ 38 ♔g2 ♗e2+, with perpetual check.

34...♖e2

White is badly tied down to the defence of his king, and also a2 is under attack when White moves his rook.

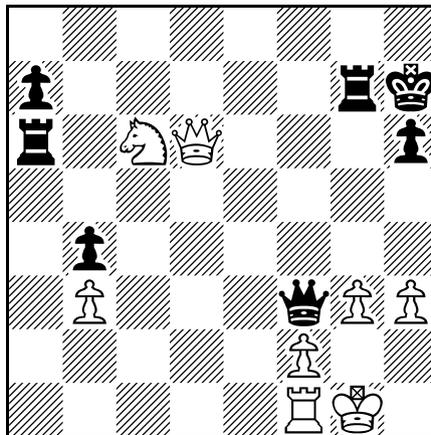
35 ♖f1 ♖xg7 36 ♘a5?!

White should go for 36 ♘d2 ♗f5 37 ♘c4 and ask Black how he intends to make progress.

36...♖xa2 37 ♘c6?

A flicker of inattention is all it takes to separate a potential draw into a definite loss. He should backtrack with 37 ♘c4.

37...♖a6!



The pin proves decisive.

38 ♖c1 ♖a2

Just testing.

39 ♖f1 ♖a6 40 ♖c1 ♖f7!

Dreev constructs his win as methodically as a chef who requires all the necessary ingredients before he actually tackles the complex dish.

41 ♗c5

41 ♖c2?? ♖a1+ 42 ♔h2 ♖h1 is mate.

41...♖c7

Now we see the shape of things to come. The pins continue to pile up and the knight is lost.

42 ♖c2+

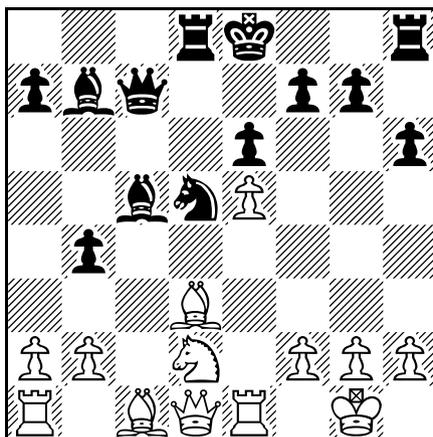
White desperately seeks an out, but the position's geometry refuses to co-operate.

42...♔g7 43 ♖b2+ ♖f6 0-1

Summary: If we survive White's early attack, the position tends to favour us, due to our control over d5.

Game 51
K.Sasikiran-A.Dreev
Linares 1999

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 ♘c3 ♘f6 4 e3 e6 5 ♘f3 ♘bd7 6 ♙d3 dxc4 7 ♙xc4 b5 8 ♙d3 ♙b7 9 e4 b4 10 ♘a4 c5 11 e5 ♘d5 12 dxc5 ♘xc5 13 ♘xc5 ♙xc5 14 0-0 h6 15 ♘d2 ♖c7 16 ♜e1 ♜d8



Unlike last game where Black retreated an already centralized knight, here he brings into play his a8-rook.

17 ♘e4

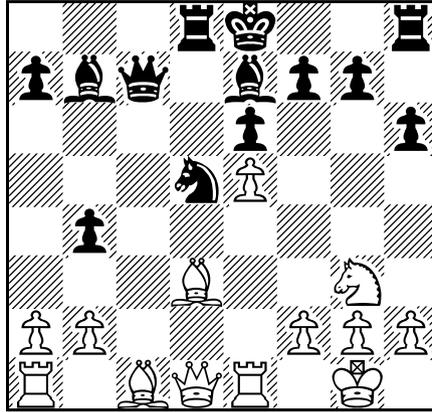
White induces Black's bishop to back off. Alternatives:

a) 17 ♖g4 ♘e7! (uncovering an attack on White's bishop, while tactically protecting g7) 18 ♖g3 (as mentioned before, 18 ♙b5+ only helps Black after 18...♙f8) 18...a5 19 ♘c4, J.De Jong-J.Smeets, Dutch League 2007. I slightly prefer Black after 19...♙f8, intending our familiar ...g6 and ...♙g7 manoeuvre.

b) 17 ♘b3 ♙b6 (Black keeps his bishop on its best diagonal) 18 ♖g4 f5! (this move looks like suicide, which is but an illusion) 19 ♖h5+ (White refrains from the temptation of 19 exf6?, which is met with the nonchalant 19...0-0! 20 fxg7 ♜f6!; now if 21 ♜e2 ♘e7! 22 ♙c2

♖g6!, which plays on White's weak back rank and Black has a winning attack) 19...♙f7 20 ♗b5+ ♕f8 21 ♚h3 ♛e7 22 ♗d2 g5! 23 ♖ac1 h5! 24 ♖c4 ♕f7 25 ♘c1? (Black already stood considerably better before this blunder) 25...♘c3! 26 ♗xc3 g4! 0-1, W.Zielinski-S.Urbaneck, correspondence 2009. White's position collapses after 27 ♗xb4 gxh3 28 ♗xe7 ♕xe7; g2 and ...♗d2 are threatened and White has no way out.

17...♗e7 18 ♘g3



The idea is to threaten a transfer to h5 and induce ...g6.

Keaton: But doesn't our side want to play ...g6?

Cyrus: Exactly right, so White's move doesn't bother us at all. Neither, though, do:

a) 18 ♙a4+ ♗c6 19 ♗b5 ♗d7 20 ♗d2 0-0 21 ♗xd7 ♖xd7 when Black stood no worse, T.Radjabov-F.Vallejo Pons, Linares 2003.

b) 18 ♙g4?! ♙xe5! (this time we can grab e5 with impunity) 19 ♗d2, J.Chabanon-S.Savchenko, Cannes 2000. At this point I would take the second pawn with 19...♙xb2! 20 ♖ab1 h5! when 21 ♙g3 is met with 21...♙d4. I don't see a speck of compensation for White's two missing pawns, since Black's pieces are every bit as active as White's.

18...g6

Keaton: Why is Black making so many pawn moves on the kingside?

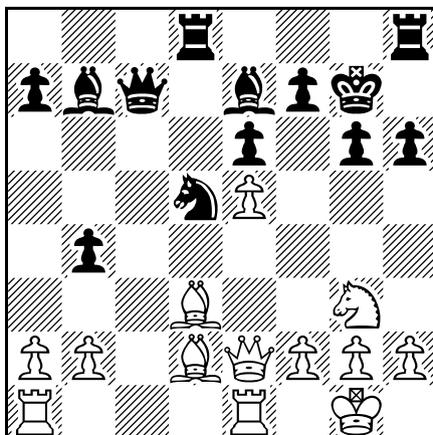
Cyrus: This is the beginning of the usual manual 'castling' with ...♕f8 and ...♗g7. Just remember that an irrational position sometimes precludes a rational solution. In this line it's psychologically difficult to get used to the idea that we can castle, yet we choose not to, and instead walk our king to a kind of facsimile castling!

18...♘c3 doesn't really help or harm Black after 19 ♙c2 ♙d7 20 ♗f1 ♘d5 with an approximately even game, J.Bares-M.Odehnal, Czech League 2000. White can continue 21 ♗h5 ♕f8 22 ♙b3 g6 23 ♘f4 ♕g7 and chances remain balanced.

19 ♖d2 ♔f8

Sometimes it may feel like this walk-the-king-to safety plan qualifies as science fiction, rather than the non-fiction it is in actuality.

20 ♗e2 ♚g7



Keaton: Do you think Black's king is safe here?

Cyrus: Admittedly there are a lot of dark-square holes around Black's king, but each one is amply covered, and there is a plenitude of defenders. So Black has very little to fear of walking into mate in such a position.

21 ♜ac1

Developing with tempo.

21...♗b6 22 ♜ed1

Earlier 22 ♖c4 ♗d4 23 ♖b3 had been seen in V.Epishin-A.Dreev, Tilburg 1994. I slightly prefer Black after 23...♘c3! 24 ♖xc3 bxc3 25 ♜xc3 ♖b4 26 ♜c7 ♜d7! 27 ♜xd7 ♗xd7 28 ♜c1 ♜c8 29 ♜xc8 ♗xc8 30 ♖c2 ♖a5. Black's bishop-pair is worth more than White's extra pawn. Komodo gives Black a clear edge here as well.

22...a5

A useful move, increasing Black's queenside space.

23 h3

Sasikiran makes luft for his king. 23 ♖e4 ♖c5 24 ♗f3 ♖d4 25 ♖xd5 ♜xd5 26 ♗f6+ ♔g8 27 ♖f4 was preferred in the later M.Kulczycki-C.Koch, correspondence 2003. Black can continue with 27...♖xf2+ 28 ♔h1 ♗c6! 29 ♜f1 ♜c5 30 ♘e4 ♗xe4 31 ♜xf2 ♜xc1+ 32 ♖xc1 ♜h7. White has full compensation for the missing pawn, due to Black's hobbled rook.

23...a4

Dreev toys with the idea of a future ...a3, which may offer Black dark-square inroads on the queenside.

24 ♖b5?

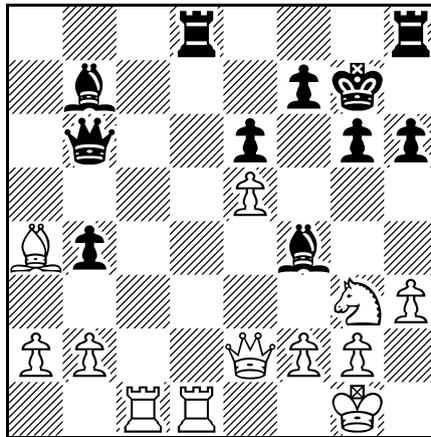
When we only partially understand our position's essence, it's as if trying to recall the face of a stranger who you fleetingly passed by around a street corner. Correct was 24 ♘e4! which *Komodo* played out to a wild draw after 24...♗d4 25 ♘d6 ♙xd6 26 exd6 ♗xd6 27 ♖c4 ♗f6 (b2 is poisoned) 28 ♙xg6! fxg6 29 ♙xb4 ♘f4! 30 ♖xf4 ♗xd1+ 31 ♗xd1 ♗xf4 32 ♙c3+ e5 33 ♗d7+ ♙f6 34 ♗xb7 and Black's best is to just immediately grab the draw with 34...♗c1+ 35 ♙h2 ♗f4+.

24...♙g5!

Even stronger is 24...a3! 25 bxa3 ♘c3! 26 ♙xc3 ♗xd1+ 27 ♗xd1 bxc3 28 ♙d3 ♗d4. Black's bishops, coupled with his passed c-pawn, give him a large advantage.

25 ♙xa4

If 25 ♙xg5 hxg5 and Black threatens the highly unpleasant ...♘f4.

25...♘f4 26 ♙xf4 ♙xf4

Keaton: Do you feel that the bishop-pair provides enough compensation for the sacrificed pawn?

Cyrus: Way more than enough. White's stability is less in evidence than even just a few moves ago. In fact, I think he is already busted, since Black simultaneously threatens ...♙xg3 and ...♙xc1, and I don't see a way for White to cover both.

27 ♗c4

Is redemption the act of being saved from a passed sin, or is it being saved for a sin not yet committed but intended? White's woes run so deeply that Sasikiran feels his position cries out for a radical transformation, guessing that his future misery will be much like his present, only more so. And this prompts him into radical action. However, it isn't a good sign of things to come when we pawn our silverware to pay our mortgage. This clever attempt fails to Dreev's counter-clever coming idea. However, even after 27 ♘e4 ♙xc1 28

♖xc1 ♗xe4 29 ♖xe4 ♖d4 White won't hold the position.

27...♗xg3 28 ♖g4

Could it be that a wave of renewal runs though White's position? As we soon see, the answer is "No!".

28...♖a5!

Threatening White's bishop, as well as ...♗xe5.

29 ♖xd8 ♖xd8 30 ♗b5

This last move seems to confirm a dawning feeling that White may yet have chances to save the game. It appears as if Black's seemingly trapped dark-squared bishop is denied admittance to safety. Dreev's shocking next move dispels this illusion. Instead, if 30 ♗b3 ♗xe5 and Black remains up a full piece.

30...♖xb5!

"Forbidden fruit is that much the sweeter," whispers the love-starved queen into the startled bishop's ears. The magician's secret is to distract the audience into looking everywhere, but at his hands. It's so satisfying when we achieve both utilitarian and artistic benefits in a single idea. This pseudo queen sacrifice, playing upon White's loose back rank, settles it.

31 ♖xb5 ♖d1+ 32 ♖f1 ♗h2+!

This bishop, like Oliver Twist, wants some more.

33 ♖xh2 ♖xf1 34 ♖xb4 ♗d5 0-1

White doesn't have nearly enough pawns for the piece.

Summary: I think 16...♖d8, developing the a8-rook, is slightly more logical than the unforced retreat 16...♗e7, which we saw last game.

Game 52
K.Aseev-A.Dreev
Lvov Zonal 1990

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 ♗f3 ♗f6 4 ♗c3 e6 5 e3 ♗bd7 6 ♗d3 dxc4 7 ♗xc4 b5 8 ♗d3 ♗b7 9 e4 b4 10 ♗a4 c5 11 e5 ♗d5 12 0-0 cxd4 13 ♗xd4!?

A single move turns a position of relative clarity into chaos. Tacticians tend to ask: "What needs to be done?" while strategists worry: "How much will it cost?". Insurgents tend to be free from material encumbrances, since it's tough to plot the regime's overthrow when simultaneously worried about meeting the financial obligation of your mortgage. White's motives are hardly concealed. He offers his e-pawn to increase his development lead and open the e-file.