

A Breath of Fresh Air in the Sleepy Four Knight's Defence

Marcin Maciaga

<http://d-artagnan.webpark.pl/>; d-artagnan@wp.pl

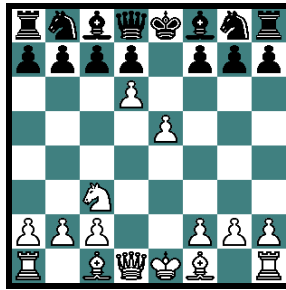
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Halloween is not only a dark night full of vampires, ghosts and witches, a holiday celebrated in Celtic countries October 31st, but it is also a name of an interesting gambit in the sleepy Four Knight's defence starting with moves: 1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nxe5!?

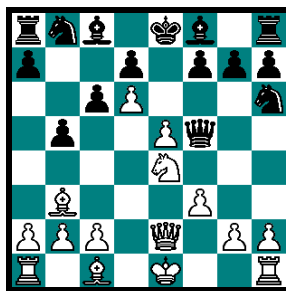
First mention of the Halloween gambit comes from year 1888 [1]. Then Oskar Cordel in his book „Fuerher der Eroeffnungs theorie” published for the first time analyses of this untypical opening known then as the Mueller-Schultz gambit. It's present name this gambit owes to Rainer Schlenker who over a hundred years later, in 1993, published a very interesting article about it. From this moment it is possible to observe a sudden increase of interest in this gambit. For example, in 1996 Stefan Jakob from Austria placed on server a chess program Brause which in a dozen months played in the Halloween gambit 3269 games scoring 72% points a number of times also winning in elegant way [2]. In 2003 Maurits Wind from Netherlands organized and led efficiently thematic tournament in which I had an opportunity to take part, of a giant as for Polish conditions found of rewards worth almost 2 000 Euro. In tournament of an average rating 2229 Elo took part 13 players including GM Vadim Milov from Switzerland, IM Ilmars Starostits from Latvia and IM Alfonso Jerez from Spain. The correspondence was sent via e-mails. In tournament won M. Wind (8.5 pts of 10) before MF Antonio Torrecillas from Spain (8.0 pts) and Franck Steenbekkers from Netherlands (6.5 pts), where first two contestants did not loose any game [3]. And what's interesting, several games in this tournament ended with an impressive victory of White, although it was a correspondence tournament on a quite high level!

In this article, I wish to show on the example of selected games I had recently opportunity to play, how easy it is to win a miniature in the Halloween gambit. In games placed here I confided myself only giving the rating of contestant playing Black and tempo of this game in care of my opponents, to none of them became an object of malicious comments from side of other players, who did not experience yet on their skin the power of the Halloween gambit.

(1) Marcin Maciaga (2248) – Black (2154), Warsaw 2004, 15 min, 1.e4 e5 It is worth to sketch out early a further plan of play after 1...Nf6 2.Nc3 d5 3.ed5 Nxd5 4.Bc4 Nxc3 5.Qf3 e6 6.Qxc3 in case, if don't manage to come to the Four Knight's defence. **2.Nf3 Nc6** It is also worth to think over a variant 2...Nf6 3.Nc3 Bb4?! 4.Nxe5 0-0 5.Be2 Re8 6.Nd3 Bxc3 7.dc3 Nxe4 8.Nf4!, if also this time we didn't manage to come to the Four Knight's defence. **3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nxe5!?** When a weaker chess player makes such moves, it is possible to understand it somehow but when a strong player plays in this way, it is really possible to have confused feeling. **4...Nxe5 5.d4 Nc6 6.d5 Nb8 7.e5 Ng8 8.d6!**

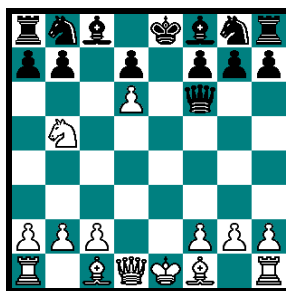


Putting it mildly, the reached position is sufficient compensation for sacrificed Knight because the d6-pawn will paralyse Black's play for a long time. **8...c6?** In this cramped position only 8...cd6 9.ed6 Qa5! with the aim of playing Qa5-b4xd6 or Qa5-e5+xd6 with very sharpen play was the correct continuation for Black. **9.Bc4 Qh4** After 9...b5 10.Bb3 (10.Nxb5? cb5 11.Bxf7+ Kxf7 12.Qd5+ -/+; 10.Bxb5?! cb5 11.Qd5 Bxd6! 12.Nxb5 Be7 13.Qxa8 Qa5+ 14.Nc3 Qxe5+ ∞) 10...b4 11.Qf3 f6 12.Nb5 Na6 13.0-0 a complete zugzwang emerges. Nimzowitch would have been pleased! **10.Qe2 Nh6 11.Ne4 b5 12.Bb3 Qg4 13.f3 Qf5**

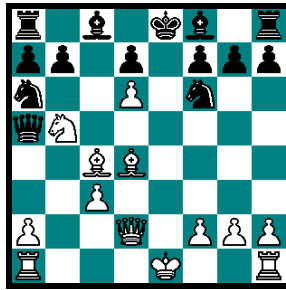


14.Bg5!? White wins in many ways, because Black has problem to save their Queen from capturing after g2-g4 Qf5-g6 h2-h4-h5. **14...a5** After 14...Ng8 15.g4 Qg6 16.f4 (16.h4 h5) 16...h6 17.f5 Qh6 18.Bd2 White governs indivisibly over a chessboard. **15.g4 Nxg4 16.fg4 Qg6 17.0-0 a4 18.Bxf7+ Qxf7 19.Rxf7 Kxf7 20.Rf1+ Kg8 21.Qf3 1-0** It is regrettable that I could not immortalize astonished face of my opponent during the game...

(2) MM – Black (1800), Warsaw 2003, 25 min, 1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nxe5!? Nxe5 It is funny, but the symmetrical moves like 4...Nxe4! 5.Nxc6 Nxc3 6.Nxd8 Nxd1 7.Nxf7 Nxf2 8.Nxh8 Nxh1 would led the game to equal position. **5.d4 Nc6** Declining the gambit at fifth move is a wrong decision since Black at least can only equal position, e.g. a) 5...Bb4?! 6.de5 Nxe4 7.Qg4! Nxc3 (7...d5 8.Qxg7 Rf8 9.Bd3 Nxc3 10.a3 Ba5 11.Bd2 Qe7 12.bc3) 8.Qxg7! Rf8 9.a3 Ba5 10.Bd2 Qh4 11.bc3 Qe4+ 12.Kd1 +/-; b) 5...Bd6?! 6.Nb5! Ng6 (6...Nxe4? 7.de5 Bc5 8.Qg4; 6...Nc6 7.e5 Qe7 8.Be2 Nxe5 9.de5 Bxe5 10.f4!) 7.e5 Bxe5 8.de5 Nxe5 9.Bg5 0-0 10.Bxg5 gf6 11.Be2 =. **6.d5 Nb8 7.e5 Ng8 8.d6 cd6 9.ed6 Qf6?! 10.Nb5**

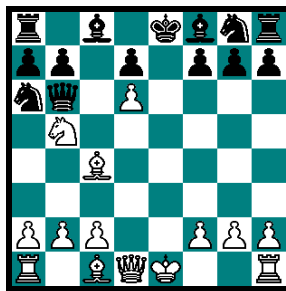


10...Qe5+? Black loose this way an important tempo, although variant, they intend to play, 10...Na6 11.Be3 Qxb2 is not profitable for them. **11.Be3 Na6 12.Qd2 Qxb2 13.Bd4 Qb4 14.c3 Qa5 15.Bc4** Another way to victory was also 15.Qe3+ Kd8 16.Nxa7. **15...Nf6**



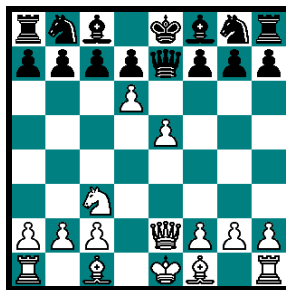
16.0-0 The game was won instantly with 16.Qe3+ Kd8 17.Qg5!, although after the move mentioned above the advantage earned by White is still undiscussable. 16...Be7 17.Rfe1 0-0 18.de7 Re8 19.Nd6 Nc7 20.Bxf7+ Kh8 21.Qh6 1-0

(3) MM – Black (2100), Internet 2003, 5 min, 1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nxe5!? Nxe5 5.d4 Nc6 6.d5 Nb8 7.e5 Ng8 8.d6 cd6 9.ed6 Qb6?! 10.Nb5 Na6 11.Bc4



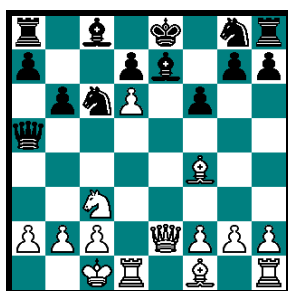
11...f6 A strange move, however considering fact, that Black queenside is completely blocked, it is difficult to propose them anything better. Maybe some kind of solution for Black was 11...Kd8!? (11...Qc6 12.Qe2+ Kd8 13.Bg5! f6 14.Bf7 Ne7 15.Be3 b6 16.0-0-0 +/-) with further plan Na6-c5-e6. 12.Qh5+!? 12.Qd5 Kd8 13.Qf7 Bxd6 14.Qxg7. 12...g6 13.Qd5!? Nh6? One necessary ought to play 13...Kd8 14.Qf7 Bxd6 15.Qg7. 14.Bxh6 Bxh6 15.Qf7+ Kd8 16.Qe7 checkmate.

(4) MM – Black (1800), Internet 2004, 5 min, 1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nxe5!? Nxe5 5.d4 Nc6 6.d5 Nb8 7.e5 Qe7 8.Qe2 Anyway, it is interesting, how dangerous for Black was 8.Bf4!? d6 9.Bb5+ c6 10.0-0. 8...Ng8 9.d6



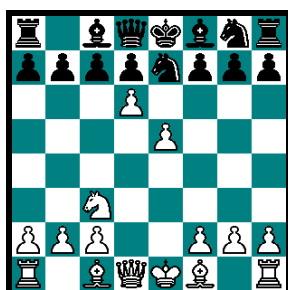
9...cd6 A claustrophobic players would continue the game playing 9...Qd8?, that of course after following 10.Nd5 Na6 11.Nf6+ would lead them to defeat. 10.Nd5 Playing 10.Bf4? it was impossible to straighten this variant any more because 10...de5 11.Nd5 ef4 leads to equal position. Furthermore, Black had up their move 10...Qe6! bringing them quite a large advantage. 10...Qd8?! Definitely better was 10...Qxe5, although after 11.Nc7+ Kd8 12.Nxa8 b6 13.Be3 Bb7 14.Nxb6 ab6!? 15.Bxb6+ Kc8 16.0-0-0!? Qxe2 17.Bxe2 Bxg2!? 18.Rg1 Bb7 19.b4!? White felt better. 11.ed6+ Be7 12.Bg5? White intend to end the game quickly, what after

12...Qa5+ might have ended sadly for them. A correct continuation was 12...Nc7+ Kf8 13.de7+ Nxe7 14.Nxa8 with winning position. **12...f6? 13.Bf4** More precise was 13.Nc7+Kf8 14.de7+ Nxe7 15.Bf4. **13...Qa5+ 14.Nc3 Nc6 15.0-0 b6**

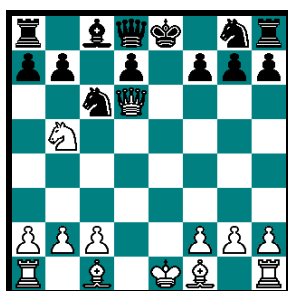


16.de7 Nb4? One ought to beat a pawn playing 16...Ngxe7, although anyway after 17.Rd5!? Qb4 18.Bd6 Qh4 19.Rh5 Qd4 20.Nb5 Black lost at least Rook. **17.Nb5 d5 18.Nc7+ Kd7 19.e8Q checkmate.**

(5) MM – Black (2000), Internet 2003, 5 min, 1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nxe5!? Nxe5 5.d4 Nc6 6.d5 Ne7?! 7.e5 Nfg8 8.d6

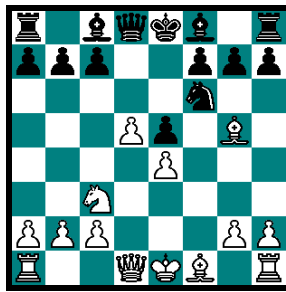


8...Nc6? Slightly better was 8...Ng6, although also then after 9.Nb5 cd6 10.ed6 for already hampered Black figures it would still be difficult to finish develop. **9.Nb5 cd6 10.ed6 Bxd6 11.Qxd6?!** Much more precise was 11.Nxd6+ Kf8 12.Bc4 Ne5 13.Bb3 with winning position.



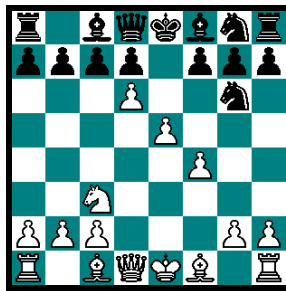
11...Qa5+? A better move was 11...Qe7+, however after further 12.Be3 Kf8 13.Bc4!? White won anyway. **12.Bd2 Qb6 13.Nc7+ Kd8 14.Nxa8 1-0** Black gave up the game because they are helpless against threat of checkmate (Qd6-f8) and taking Queen with Knight (Na8xb6).

(6) MM – Black (1800), Warsaw 2004, 10 min, 1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nxe5!? Nxe5 5.d4 Nc6 6.d5 Ne5 7.f4 d6?! To players, who do not like to defend themselves, expect this move. One can recommend also 7...Bd6?! 8.fe5 Bxe5 9.Qf3 Qe7 10.Bd3 d6 11.0-0 or 7...Neg4?! 8.e5 Bc5 9.ef6 Nxf6 10.Qe2+ Qe7 in both cases with equal play. Symbols „?!” next to this moves means the feeling, that Black should keeping figure yet. **8.fe5 de5 9.Bg5**

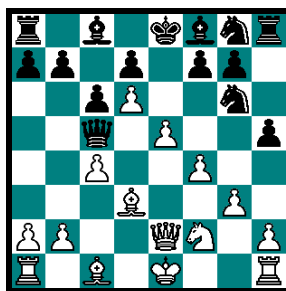


9...Bg4?? 1-0 And Black, not waiting any more for the reply of the opponent, gave up the game noticing, that after further 10.Bxf6 Bxd1 11.Bxd8 they would have to play without figure. Of course, a correct move in position on the diagram is 9...Be7 and now White must answer accurately due to threat of Nf6xd5.

(7) MM – Black (2226), Internet 2004, correspondence game, 1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nxe5!? This game comes from a thematic tournament mentioned in the introduction. As a curious thing I can tell you that competitor, who played Black, comes from Argentina. **4...Nxe5 5.d4 Nc6 6.d5 Ne5 7.f4 Ng6 8.e5 Ng8** In blitz game Maciaga – Grabarczyk lost on time by White, the grandmaster gave back a figure receiving nothing in return, i.e. 8...Bc5 9.Bc4 0-0 10.0-0 d6 9.ef6. **9.d6**



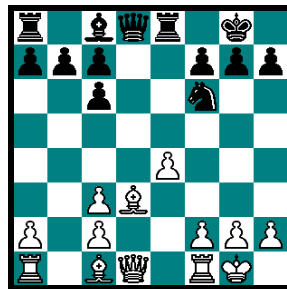
9...c6? Position on the diagram strongly brings on mind the one from game (1). A curious thing is, that also this time Black play in a similar way, like in game mentioned above, exposing Queen to many dangers. Because of this a correct continuation was 9...cd6 10.ed6 Qf6 (10...Qa5 11.Qd4! Qb6 12.Qxb6 ab6 13.Nb5 Ra4 14.Be3! Re4 15.Kd2 Nxf4 16.Na7!! +/-; 10...Qb6 11.Nb5 Kd8 12.f5 Ne5 13.Bf4 f6 14.Qd2 Qc6 15.0-0-0 a6 15.Na3 b5 16.Bxe5 fe5 17.Nc4 bc4 18.Qa5+ Ke8 19.Qxe5+ =) 11.Nb5 Kd8 12.Be3 Nh6 with complex position. **10.Bd3 Qh4+** Penetration of White camp by lonely Queen is at instant doomed to fail. However, also after 10...b5 11.Qe2! b4 12.Ne4 Qa5 13.Bd2 it was still a difficult play for Black. **11.g3 Qh3 12.Ne4 Qg2 13.Nf2 Qd5 14.c4 Qc5 15.Qe2 h5**



Black are mistaken thinking, that they would manage to create an attack on kingside this way. Moving h-pawn forward they only make worse their already hopeless position. **16.0-0 h4** White have just finished their develop mainly thanks to a few tempi they achieved attacking Black Queen and now they can come to a deciding strike. **17.Be3 Qa5 18.Bd2 Qc5** Also winning was 18...Qb6 19.f5 N6e7 (19...hg3 20.fg6 +/-) 20.f6 gf6 (20...Ng6

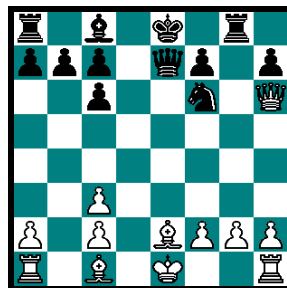
21.Bxg6 +/-) 21.ef6. **19.b4 1-0** In case of 19...Qd4 20.Be3 Qc3 21.a3 Black Queen was lost, which was not able to get out the trap any more.

(8) MM – Black (1800), Warsaw 2004, 10 min, 1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nxe5!? Nxe5 5.d4 Nc6 6.d5 Bb4!? A quick giving back Knight has on purpose taking initiative and is one of the most popular variants for Black against the Halloween gambit. **7.dc6 Bxc3+?** It is not necessary to hurry with exchanging Bishop for Knight. Except main continuation 7...Nxe4, also deserves some interest 7...bc6 8.Bd3 0-0 9.0-0 d5 (Scotch opening) and now White must play 10.ed5 with equal position because variant 10.e5 Ng4 11.f4? (11.h3 Nxe5 12.Bxh7+ =/+) 11...Bc5+ is a losing one. **8.bc3 dc6** After 8...bc6 9.Bd3 0-0 10.0-0 d5 11.e5 Ng4 f4 it is clear, that giving back Black Bishop 7...Bxc3? came too soon. **9.Bd3 0-0 10.0-0 Re8**



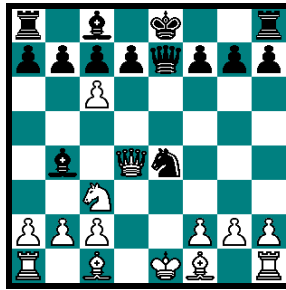
11.f4! The threat of e4-e5 combined with a motif Bd3xh7+ gives White a long term initiative. **11...Nxe4?? 12.Bxe4 1-0** Black gave up the game due to 12...Qxd1 13.Rxd1 Rxe4 14.Rd8+ Re8 15.Rxe8 checkmate.

(9) MM – Black (1800), Warsaw 2004, 10 min, 1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nxe5!? Nxe5 5.d4 Nc6 6.d5 Bb4!? **7.dc6 Nxe4 8.Qd4 Bxc3+ 9.bc3 Qe7 10.Qxg7 Nf6+ 11.Be2 Rg8 12.Qh6 dc6**



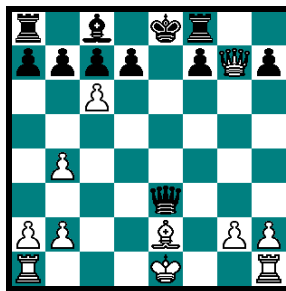
13.0-0 Qxe2 14.Bg5? Unfortunately, due to 14...Qg4 White's last move is feeble. Also 14.Ba3 might have turn out unsatisfactory due to 14...Rxc2+ 15.Kxc2 Qg4+ 16.Kh1 Qf3+ with a draw through repeating of moves. **14...Be6? 14...Qg4! -/+.** **15.Qxf6 1-0** It is now too late to save the game, e.g. 15...Kf8 16.Qe7+ Kg7 17.Rb1! b6 18.Rfe1 Qg4 19.Rb4 with winning position.

(10) MM – Black (1800), Warsaw 2004, 10 min, 1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nxe5!? Nxe5 5.d4 Nc6 6.d5 Bb4!? **7.dc6 Nxe4 8.Qd4 Qe7**



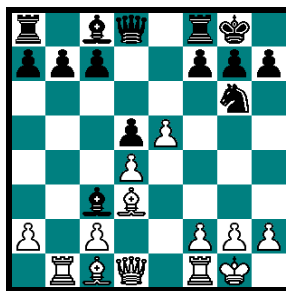
9.Qxg7 Well-known, but slightly offbeat variant for White taking in consideration, that objectively the strongest continuation for both sides is **9.Be3 0-0! 10.Bd3 Nxc3 11.bc3 Bd6!** with roughly equal position.

9...Nxc3+ 10.Be3 Nd5+ 11.c3 Rf8 12.cb4 Nxe3 13.fe3 Qxe3+ Much effort I put in to find something interesting after **13...Qh4+!?** **14.g3 Qxb4 (14...Qe4 15.0-0-0 Qxc6+ 16.Qc3 =) 15.Kf2 dc6 16.Be2 Qe4!** (intending to castle in long side) **17.Rhd1 Bd7 18.Rd4 Qe7 19.Bg4 Bxg4 20.Qxg4 f5**, but an earned advantage would be hard to realize. **14.Be2**



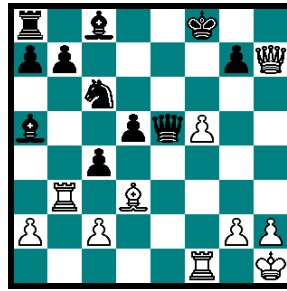
14...bc6? The ending formatted after **14...dc6 15.Qxh7 Bg4 16.Qd3 Qxd3 17.Bxd3 0-0-0** is victorious for Black, e.g. **18.h3 (18.Bf1!? Rfe8+ 19.Kf2 Rd2+ 20.Kg3) 18...Rxd3 19.hg4 Re8+ (19...Rd4 20.a3 Rxa4 21.0-0 Re4 22.Rae1 =) 20.Kf2 Rd2+ 21.Kf3 Ree2 22.Rh8+ (22.Rh2 Rxb2 -/+) 22...Kd7 23.Rd1 Rf2+ 24.Ke3 Rxd1 25.Kxf2 Rd2+ 26.Kf3 Rxb2 -/+.** **15.Kd1!?** A strange move with the aim of playing Rh1-e1 after Bc8-a6. Anyway, perhaps better was **15.Qxh7 Ba6 16.Qc2 0-0-0 17.Kd1** or **17.Rf1.** **15...Qe4??** A losing move. It was necessary to play **15...Bb7 16.Rhe1 0-0-0** with a slight advantage for Black. **16.Re1 Qd5+ 17.Bd3+ Kd8 18.Qf6 checkmate.**

(11) MM – Black (2000), Internet 2003, 5 min, 1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nxe5!? Nxe5 5.d4 Ng6 6.e5 Bb4 7.Bc4? d5 White hoped, that after **7...Ng8 8.Qf3 Qe7** they would manage to come to one of the main variants – game (14). However now, due to thrown in move **d7-d5** appeared a new possibility of playing Knight on e4-square. **8.Bd3 Ne4 9.0-0 Nxc3 10.bc3 Bxc3 11.Rb1 0-0**



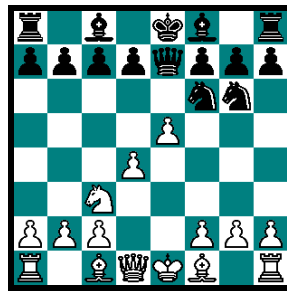
White played the opening incorrectly and now they must fight with one less figure. Their last chance is leading an attack on kingside, what with a slight help from an opponent may yet allow to save the game. **12.Rb3 Ba5 13.f4 f5 14.ef6 Qxf6 15.f5 Ne7?! 16.Bf4 Qxd4+ 17.Kh1 c5?!** This move brings a double advantage, that is, it

prevents from losing Queen after f5-f6, Bd3xh7+ and Qd1xd4, and on the other hand, it threatens of capturing a figure after c5-c4. However, a stronger move was 17...Bxf5! with immediate victory. **18.Bd6 Nc6? 19.Bxf8 Kxf8 20.Qh5 Qe5? 21.Qxh7 c4?**

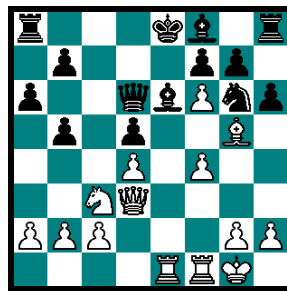


Black completely underestimate the opponent's attack and seem to play still in belief, that they own a figure more. Of course, it has to end sadly for them. **22.f6 gf6 23.Bg6 Be6 24.Re3! Bc3 25.Rxe5 Bxe5 26.Qh8+ Bg8 27.Rxf6+ 1-0**

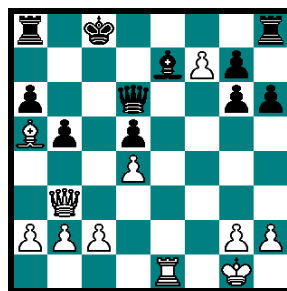
(12) MM – Black (2000), Internet 2004, 5 min, 1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nxe5!? Nxe5 5.d4 Ng6 6.e5 Qe7



7.Bb5 This move become quite popular recently, although in my opinion completely underestimated continuation for White is 7.Qe2 Ng8 8.h4. **7...c6 8.0-0 cb5 9.Bg5 d5 10.Qd3 a6 11.Rae1 Be6 12.f4 h6 13.ef6 Qd6**

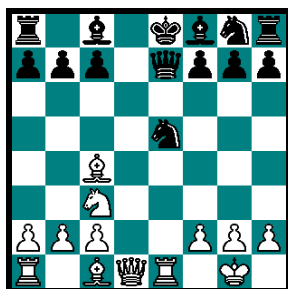


14.Rxe6+! Qxe6 15.f5 Qd6 16.Re1+ Kd7 17.Bd2 b4?! 18.fg6 bc3 19.Qh3+ Kd8 20.Qxc3 fg6 21.f7 Be7 22.Qb3 Kc8 23.Ba5 b5?



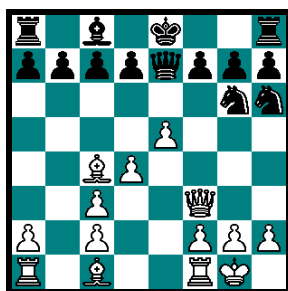
24.Re6! Second in this game sacrifice of Rook on e6-square! Now the game for Black is impossible to be saved. **24...Qd7 25.Rb6 Bd8 26.Qc3 Bc7 27.Rc6 Ra7 28.Qc5 Kb8 29.f8Q+ 1-0**

(13) MM – Black (1400), Warsaw 2004, 10 min, I have a great sentiment to this game because my present girlfriend, whom I met that night in chess club, plays Black. 1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nxe5!? Nxe5 5.d4 Ng6 6.e5 Ng8 7.Bc4 Qe7? Queen would only be disturbing Black in finishing their develop on kingside. 8.0-0 d6? 9.Re1 de5 10.de5 Nxe5?

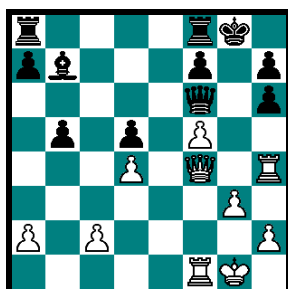


With their last moves Black only helped White to open e-line, what soon will turn against them. 11.Nd5 Qd6 12.Rxe5+ Qxe5 13.Bf4 Qe4 14.Nxc7+ Ke7 15.Qd6 checkmate.

(14) MM – Black (2358), Warsaw 2003, 25 min, 1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nxe5!? Nxe5 5.d4 Ng6 6.e5 Ng8 7.Bc4 Bb4 8.Qf3 Qe7 9.0-0 Bxc3 10.bc3 Nh6

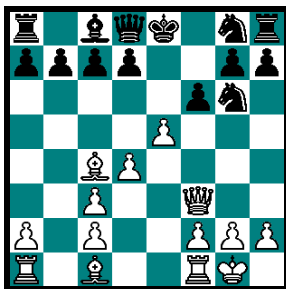


In position shown on the diagram, which quite often occurs, White usually play g2-g3 joined with Qf3-h5, Bc1xh6 and f2-f4. As an alternative, one may play at once Qf3-d3, Bc1xh6 and then at last f2-f4. 11.g3 0-0 12.Qh5 b5 Once, bearer of a title of candidate for master insistently tried to show me that the Halloween gambit is an incorrect opening. One of most funny variants proposed by him was 12...d6 13.Bxh6 gh6 14.f4 Be6? 15.f5 Bxc4?? Unfortunately, this poor thing did not consider 16.f6 with unavoidable checkmate. The second funny situation has taken place recently with my friend in 10 min game. After 12...Kh8?! 13.Bxh6 gh6 14.f4 f5 15.ef6 Qxf6 16.Qxh6 Qg7 17.Qh5 d6 I found a finishing blow, i.e. 18.f5! Ne7 19.f6! Rxf6 20.Qe8+ Qf8 21.Qxf8+ with easily winning ending. 13.Bd5!? It is not clear whether Bishop should stay on the diagram a2-g8 or maybe come to b1-h7 and f pawn's marsh. 13...c6?! Surely better appeared 13...Rb8 with further exchange of White square Bishops after Bc8-b7. 14.Bb3 d5 15.ed6 Qxd6 16.Bxh6 gh6 17.f4 Ne7 18.Rae1 Nd5 19.f5 Qf6 20.Re4 Nxc3 21.Rh4 Bb7?! 22.Qf3 Nd5?! 23.Bxd5 cd5 24.Qf4

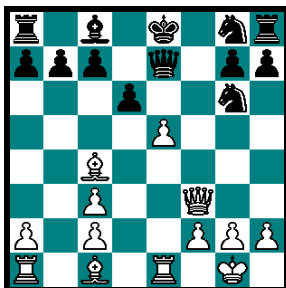


White's plan till that moment was very clear. All that time they tried to construct an attack on kingside awaiting for opponent's mistake. **24...Kg7??** Of course, after **24...Rfe8** Black felt much better. **25.Rxh6 Qxh6 26.f6+ Kh8 27.Qxh6 Rg8 28.Re1 Bc8 29.Re8 Bb7 30.Qg7 checkmate.** A few minutes after the game, as I was warning around the room, I saw an opponent, who was analyzing his game with actual champion of Warsaw. Around his table gathered a large group of supporters, who followed with interest analyses of uncommon sacrifice of Knight at fifth move. How surprised they all were, when I revealed them, that 11.g3 is still a theory!

(15) MM – Black (2000), Internet 2004, 5 min, 1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nxe5!? Nxe5 5.d4 Ng6 6.e5 Ng8 7.Bc4 Bb4 8.Qf3 Bxc3+ 9.bc3 f6 10.0-0

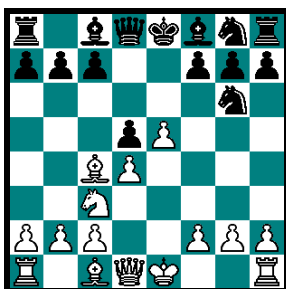


10...Qe7 A main continuation in position shown on the diagram is **10...d5 11.ed6 (11.Bxd5 Nh4! 12.Qh5+ g6 13.Qxh4! =/+)** **11...cd6 12.Re1+ N8e7 13.Ba3 Qc7**, which gives Black a slight advantage, although they must play very accurately. **11.Re1 fe5 12.de5 d6** White won both in case of **12...Nxe5 13.Qh5+ g6 14.Qxe5 Qxe5 15.Rxe5+ Kf8 16.Bxg8 Rxg8 17.Bh6+ Kf7 18.Rae1** and in **12...Nh6 13.e6!? d6 14.Bb5+ c6 15.Bxc6+ Kd8 16.Qh5 Kc7 17.Bg5.**



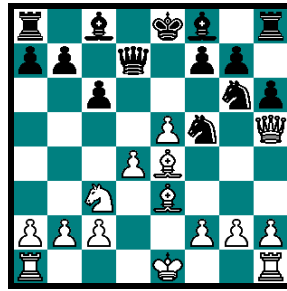
13.Bg5! Qxg5 14.ed6+ Kd8 15.Re8+ Kxe8 Also **15...Kd7** was insufficient, due to **16.Qf7+ Kxd6 17.Rd8+ Qxd8 18.Qd5+ Ke7 19.Re1+ 16.Qf7+ Kd8 17.dc7 checkmate.**

(16) MM – Black (2125), Internet 2004, 5 min, 1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nxe5!? Nxe5 5.d4 Ng6 6.e5 Ng8 7.Bc4 d5

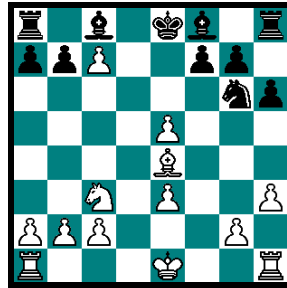


Very solid variant for Black, which turns pawn to break free from their hampered position and create a blockades on White squares in center. Despite this, with two pawns for one figure and strong center, White

keep large chance for a favorable result. **8.Bxd5 N8e7!? 9.Bg5 Qd7** Only a draw was a result of **9...h6 10.Qf3 Be6 11.Bxb7 Rb8 12.Bc6+ Bd7 13.Bd5 Be6 14.Bc6+ . 10.Be4! Nf5 11.Qh5 h6 12.Be3 c6**

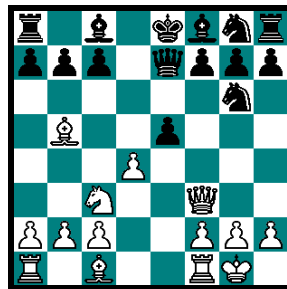


13.d5! Due to a threat e5-e6 Black must cling to wariness. **13...Nxe3 14.fe3 Qg4 15.Qxg4 Bxg4 16.h3 Bc8?** It was better anyway to accept the draw and give a figure playing **16...Nxe5 17.hg4 Bb4. 17.dc6 Rb8 18.c7 Ra8**

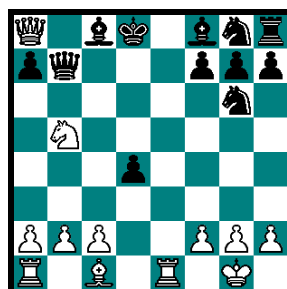


19.e6! Ne5 20.0-0 Be7 21.ef7+ Nxf7 22.Rhf1 0-0 23.Bd5 1-0 (time). Black exceeded the time limit, however their position in this moment was already impossible to be saved, ever despite the fact, that they had one figure more.

(17) MM – Black (2000), Internet 2004, 5 min, 1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nxe5!? Nxe5 5.d4 Ng6 6.e5 Ng8 7.Bc4 d6 8.Qf3 Qe7 9.0-0 de5 10.Bb5+

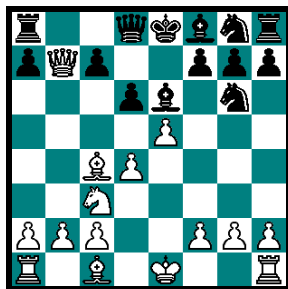


10...c6!? In this position Black usually play **10...Kd8**. In example this game might have gone this way: **11.Rd1 c6!? 12.Bxc6 bc6 13.Qxc6 Rb8 14.de5+ Bd7 15.Nb5. 11.Bxc6+ bc6 12.Qxc6+ Qd7 13.Qxa8 ed4 14.Nb5!** Equally well one could first try check with Rook, that is **14.Re1+ Be7!? 15.Nb5 Nf6 16.Nd6+ Qxd6 17.Qxc8+ Qd8 18.Qc6+ Qd7 19.Qa8+ Qd8 20.Qxa7 0-0 21.Bd2!?** with further plan of march forward with a pawn. **14...Qb7 15.Re1+ Kd8**

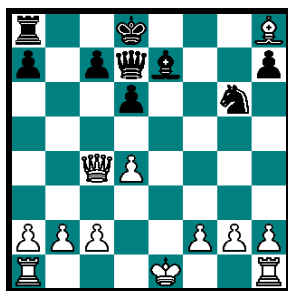


16.Qxa7? It was tempting to take a7-pawn, following the assumption, that d4-pawn is weak and it must be consumed sooner or later. However, the initiative after subsequent 16...Qxb5! 17.Bd2 N8e7 would be insufficient, that's why a correct continuation for White was 16.Qxb7 Bxb7 17.Nxd4 with a slight advantage. **16...Qxa7 17.Nxa7 Bd7 18.Bd2 Bc5??** With their last move White set a smart trap, in which Black fall now trying to get Knight. For this reason absolutely better was 18...Kc7 19.a4 Kb6 20.Nb5 Bxb5 21.ab5 with equal chances. **19.Ba5+ Bb6 20.Bxb6 checkmate.**

(18) MM – Black (2000), Warsaw 2003, 25 min, 1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nxe5!? Nxe5 5.d4 Ng6 6.e5 Ng8 7.Bc4 d6 8.Qf3 Be6?! 9.Qxb7

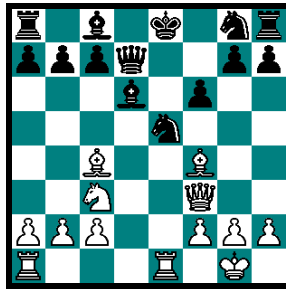


9...Bxc4? Taking Bishop is quite frequently committed mistake, that's why more precise was 9...N8e7! 10.Nb5 Rc8 11.d5 Nxe5 12.de6 Nxc4 13.Nxa7 Rb8 14.Qa6 with equal chance, although Black must be careful due to a large initiative of White. **10.Qc6+ Ke7** In one of my games came 10...Qd7 11.Qxa8+ Ke7 and now I strongly regret, that I did not play 12.Be3. In danger of opening the position 0-0-0 and Rh1-e1 Black would have found themselves in difficult situation. **11.Qxc4** The computer showed later, that the most accurate continuation, leading to victory for White is 11.ed6+! cd6 12.Qxc4 Rc8 13.Qe2+ Kd7 14.Qb5+ Ke7 15.Nd5+ Ke6 16.0-0 f6 17.Re1+ Kf7 18.Qb3. **11...Qd7 12.Bg5+ f6 13.Nd5+ Kd8 14.ef6 gf6 15.Nxf6 Nxf6 16.Bxf6+ Be7 17.Bxh8**

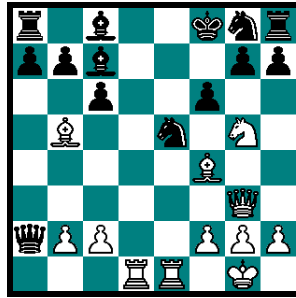


17...Qe8? 17...Nxb8 18.Qg8+? Qe8 19.Qxe8+ unnecessary won the game, but 18.0-0! with further march of f-pawn with certainty put Black in an embarrassing situation, which figures were not coordinated. **18.Be5 Bf6** Obviously in case of 18...de5 following events would be 19.Qd5+ Qd7 20.Qxa8+. **19.0-0 de5 20.de5 Qxe5 21.Rad1+ Kc8 22.Qa6+ Kb8 23.Rfe1 1-0**

(19) MM – Black (2267), Internet 2003, 5 min, 1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nxe5!? Nxe5 5.d4 Ng6 6.e5 Ng8 7.Bc4 d6 8.Qf3 Qd7 9.0-0 de5 10.de5 Nxe5 11.Re1 Bd6 12.Bf4 f6



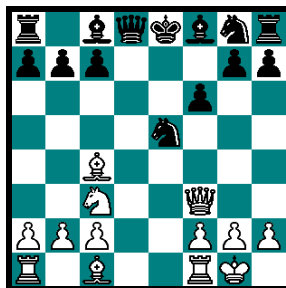
13.Bb5!? A main continuation, which also leads to unusually interesting play is 13.Rad1. **13...c6 14.Rad1 Qe6 15.Qg3 Kf8 16.Ne4 Bc7 17.Ng5 Qxa2?**



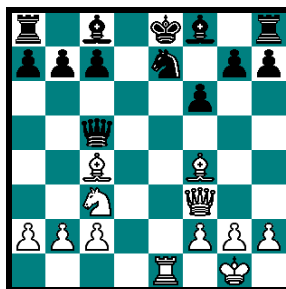
18.Rxe5!! Black are in objectively better situation, however sitting by a chessboard, it is difficult to get out of such a large distress in a strict time limit. The only correct continuation for Black was 18...fg5! 19.Qxg5 cb5! 20.Re3 Bxf4 21.Qd8+ Kf7. **18...fe5? 19.Bxe5 Bxe5 20.Qxe5 Nf6 21.Rd8+ Ne8 22.Qxe8 checkmate.**

(20) MM – Black (2378), Warsaw 2004, 10 min, 1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nxe5!? Nxe5 5.d4 Ng6 6.e5 Ng8 7.Bc4 d6 8.Qf3 f6 In case of 8...f5 the best response of White is 9.g4, since both variant 9.h4 de5 10.h5 e4 11.Nxe4 Nh4 12.Qb3 Qe7! and 9.Bd2!?

c6 10.0-0 d5 11.Nxd5 don't work. **9.0-0 de5 10.de5 Nxe5**



11.Re1 A second option for White was 11.Qe4 Ne7? 12.Rd1 Bd7 13.Be6 Qc8 14.Rxd7 with advantage for him, however after 11...Qe7! the situation reversed and Black felt slightly better. **11...Qd4?** One should notice, that 11...Qd7 12.Bf4 Bd6 with swapping of moves, led to position shown on the diagram in game (19), however Black may play better, that is 11...Qe7! 12.Qg3 g5! **12.Rxe5 Qxe5 13.Bf4 Qc5 14.Re1+ Ne7**



15.Bb3 In this moment game was terminated, and out of clear curiosity with my opponent is started to consider consequence of move 15.Bb5+! Then, it turned out that after further 15...Bd7 16.Qxb7 Rd8 17.Bxc7 Bxb5

18.Bxd8 Kxd8 19.Nxb5 Ke8 20.Qb8+ Kf7 21.Nd6 Kg6 22.Qe8+ Kh6 23.Nf7+ White had a winning position. By the way, the move played in game, that is 15.Bb3 also led to advantage.

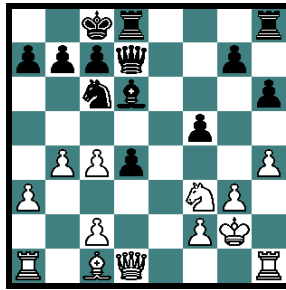
Concluding remarks

The Halloween gambit is an unusual opening with incredibly large richness of unknown till now ideas. As it should be in a gambit, one of sides sacrifices material in exchange for position and develop. However, in contradistinction to a typical gambit a sacrificed material in this case is a figure! Initiative for Knight is really great, that's why very often games end with an instant victory of White. Many competitors, who play Black, prefer to give back a figure, but then it also turns out that they might have problem to equal. Probably the best plan for Black is to keep the figure after withdrawing Knight on 5...Ng6! and then come through a massive attack of White which in any case can not be neglected. In practice, players with rating below 2100 Elo are not able to cope with this attack, and also stronger ones are often helpless and they must admit the superiority of White figure's strategy. As you could find out personally reading this article, the potential of White in leading the attack is enormous, that's why very interesting is also a possibility of playing reversed the Halloween gambit, i.e. 1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.g3 Nxe4!? [4]. After further 5.Nxe4 d5 a position appears, in which one can not go now with Knight to g3, analogically, like in normal the Halloween gambit to g6, that is 5...Ng6! It is only necessary to come back with it to c3. A perfect example is a game placed below, played by two prominent grandmasters, which come from a match deciding of a title team champion of country in Czech league!

GM Ilia Smirin (2670) – GM Bartłomiej Macieja (2653), Czech Team Championship 2004, 1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.g3



4...Nxe4!? Ilia was really surprised by this sacrifice of Knight, not mentioning Bartek's colleagues from team, one of them was GM Zbynek Hracek. **5.Nxe4 d5 6.Nc3** The most emotions in reversed Halloween gambit brings fact, that withdrawal of Knight to g3, analogically like in normal the Halloween gambit to g6, that is 5...Ng6! it is simply impracticable. **6...d4 7.Ne4** After 7.Nb1 e4 8.Ng1 d3 9.cd3 ed3 10.Qf3!? Nd4 appeared a critical to estimate position. **7...f5 8.Neg5 e4 9.Bc4 ef3 10.Nxf3 Qe7+ 11.Kf1 Be6 12.d3 Bxc4 13.dc4 Qd7 14.Kg2 0-0-0 15.a3 h6 16.h4 Bd6 17.b4**



17...Ne5 Now a special attention deserves 17...f4!? 18.c5 (18.Nxd4? Be5 19.c3 fg3 20.fg3 Nxd4 21.cd4 Bxd4 22.Ra2 Qc6 =/+) 18...Be7 19.b5 [19.Bxf4 g5 20.hg5 (20.Bd2 Qd5 =/+) 20...hg5 21.Bxg5 Bxg5 22.b5! (22.Nxg5? Rxh1 -/+; 22.Rxh8? Rxh8 23.Nxg5 Qd5+ -/+) 22...Bf6 23.bc6 Qxc6 =/+] 19...Na5!? 20.Qe1 (20.b6 ab6 21.cb6 cb6!? 22.Bxf4 g5 =) 20...Nc4 21.c6 bc6 22.bc6 Qxc6 23.Qxe7 Rde8 24.Qxg7 Ne5 25.Bxf4 Qxf3+ 26.Kg1 Rhg8 27.Qxh6 (27.Qf6 Ng4 28.Qa6+ Kb8 -/+) 27...Rg6 28.Qh7 Reg8 29.Bxe5 Rxg3+!! with unavoidable draw by repeating of moves. **18.c5 Nxf3 19.Qxf3 Be5 20.Rb1 Qd5 21.Rb3 Bf6 22.Re1 Qxf3+ 23.Rxf3 Rd5 24.Rd3 1/2-1/2**

Tree of variants derived from the Halloween gambit examined in this text: 1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nxe5!? Nxe5 5.d4

	Game(s)
5...Nc6 6.d5 Nb8	1-4
6...Ne7	5
6...Ne5	6-7
6...Bb4	8-10
5...Ng6 6.e5 Bb4	11
6...Qe7	12
6...Ng8 7.Bc4 Qe7	13
7...Bb4	14-15
7...d5	16
7...d6	17-20

Websites related to the Halloween gambit cited in this text:

1. <http://www.xs4all.nl/~timkr/tour/breeze.htm>
2. <http://www.jakob.at/steffen/halloween/index.html>;
<http://home.eplus-online.de/schach/Gambits.htm>
3. <http://d-artagnan.webpark.pl/>
4. <http://www.terra.es/personal2/salclub/enroque.htm>

THE END