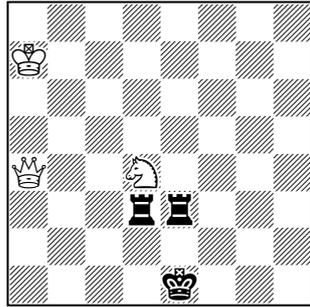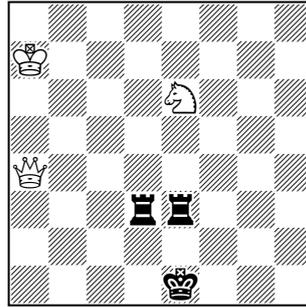# A little more about queen and knight against two rooks

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For several years, it has been thought that two rooks could draw against queen and knight if they could place themselves on the third rank with the White king above them and their own king below them and away from the corners. However, Marc Bourzutschky has pointed out that even this does not guarantee the draw; in **1** below, Black to play loses even though he appears to have achieved an ideal situation. Moreover, the depth to mate against best defence is 74 moves, and since queen against rook can force mate or win of the rook in at most 31 moves and king and queen against bare king can force mate in at most 10 moves, it follows that at least 33 moves against best defence must elapse from **1** before a rook is lost. There can be no question of a brief tactical flourish leading to mate or capture of a rook.

1 - Black loses even with the move   **2** - White to play

There are further third-rank losing configurations for the rooks with the other pieces placed as in **1** (b3/c3, b3/e3, b3/f3, d3/f3, e3/f3), but in each case one or both rooks is under attack. However, attacking a rook is not necessarily White's best option. In **2**, White's only winning move is Nd4; the more aggressive Nf4 fails.

It therefore seems that drawing with 2R against Q+N is not just a matter of setting up a third-rank defence, nor is winning with Q+N solely a matter of preventing the defenders from setting up such a defence. The defenders must also avoid positions like **1**, where the safety is illusory.