

THE AWARD of JULIA'S FAIRIES

RETROS 2023-2024

(January 2023 – December 2024)

Judge: Thierry Le Gleuher (juge International FIDE)

I thank Julia for asking me to provide this judgment, and I apologize to her and the composers for the time it took me to deliver it. I usually try to work much faster, but life's circumstances don't always allow it, especially when you're not yet retired.

Fairy retro problems aren't my favourites, even though I've used several fairy conditions and/or pieces myself. Furthermore, I struggle with anti-Circe proca retractor problems, where the difficulty lies more in finding the checkmate position than in making a retro reasoning. I particularly appreciate them when retro themes are included (triple repetition of position, en passant capture, castling, promotion, structural prohibitions, etc.).

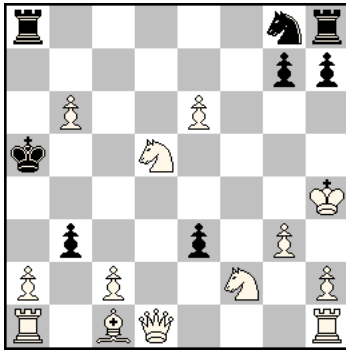
For fairy proof games, I find it important that they can demonstrate an idea impossible to achieve in orthodox, but without adding too many fairy conditions. Indeed, by combining two well-chosen conditions (from the large number already available), it's quite easy to create tasks, but is that enough?

All these remarks partly explain my judgment, the rest being always subjective and depending on the judge's sensitivities.

The selection for the 2023-2024 retro was quite poor, probably due to the small number of problems in competition (only 10 for 2 years): 1736, 1738, 1743, 1747, 1748, 1751, 1757, 1770, 1782, 1796.

Only a few problems stand out.

1st Prize: No.1751, Paul Răican & Dmitrij Baibikov



13+8

phser-dia33

In theory, it would be possible to force Black to play bPb7-b5-b4-b3 if the black Pawn captures twice with b4xc5xb6. However, forcing Black to position two pieces on c5 and b6 lengthens White's game. The same is possible to achieve the configuration of wPe6 and bPe3, but this would still require positioning two black pieces on f5 (or e5) and e6. This is definitely too long, and bP's can reach the third rank without needing to move the King to the third rank with the help of an "en passant" capture. In this case, wPb6 will have captured twice and wPe6 once.

Since e2 will be taken en passant, the natural opening is to move the white King to h4, then play g2-g3 before capturing with the wB on d7. The bPa is very difficult to move and it is natural to take it at home with the wQ, which allows you to imagine the beginning.

1.f4 ... 2.Kf2 ... 3.Kg3 ... 4.Kh4 ... 5.g3 ... 6.Bh3 ... 7.Bxd7+ Kxd7 8.Sh3 ... 9.Qg1 ... 10.Qxa7 ... 11.Qxb8 ... 12.Qxc8+ Kd6

The sequence is very well constructed, optimizing the wQ's moves to force Black into positions designed for "en passant" captures.

A very nice task of four "en passant" captures (2 white and 2 black). A remarkable construction. The wQ's circuit is almost automatic, as it is the most mobile piece in this type of ending.

Solution:

1.f4 2.Kf2 3.Kg3 4.Kh4 5.g3 6.Bh3 7.Bxd7+ Kxd7 8.Sh3 9.Qg1 10.Qxa7 11.Qxb8 12.Qxc8+ Kd6 13.Qxd8+ Ke6 14.f5+ Kf6 15.Qd4+ e5 16.fxe5 ep.+ Kf5 17.Qf6+ Ke4 18.Qg6+ f5 19.Qg4+ f4 20.Sf2+ Kd5 21.e4+ fxe4 ep. 22.Sc3+ Kc6 23.Qc4+ Bc5 24.d4 25.dxc5 26.Qa4+

b5 27.cxb5 ep.+ Kc5 28.Qc6+ Kb4 29.Qd6+ c5 30.Qd4+ c4 31.Sd5+ Ka5 32.b4+ cxb4 ep.
33.Qd1

partially tested by Jacobi (Authors)

C+ Jacobi v0.7.5 until 20.0 moves

Parry-series proofgame:

White always plays the series. Black only moves to parry check, all parries are helpful.

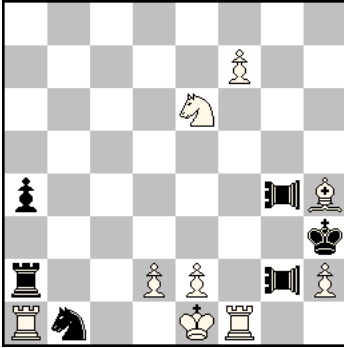
The following notations determine which side makes the final move:

pser-hdia: parry-series proofgame with black moving last.

phser-dia: parry-series proofgame with white moving last.

2nd Prize: No.1757, Klaus Wenda

Ded. to Hanspeter Suwe to his 75. Birthday



9+6

Proca retractor -11& s#1

Anti-Circe Calvet

♖=Pao

Basic attack:

Without bSb1 White would suddenly reach his goal:

1.Ke1xR/S/PAf2(Ke1) & fw. 1.Sg5+ PAg2xg5(PAg1)#

A decoy of this S is requested.

Solution:

1.Kb3xPAa3(Ke1)! a5-a4+ 2.Kc2-b3 b2-b1=S+ 3.Kc1-c2 b3-b2+ 4.c5xd6ep(d2) d7-d5

5.Rd1xPd2(Ra1) d3-d2+ [already now 6.f2xBe3(e2)? Bd4-e3+? 7.0-0-0!, but 6...Rd2-a2+! prevents castling. A draw pendulum forces the rook to unpromote] **6.Kd2-c1!**

Ra1-a2+ 7.Kc1-d2 Ra2-a1+ [a2-a1=R+?] 8.Kd2-c1 Ra1-a2+ 9.Kc1-d2 a2-

a1=R+[forced] 10.f2xBe3(e2) Bd4-e3+! 11.0-0-0! & fw. 1.Sxd4(Sg1)+

PAg4xg1(PAg1)#[both Paos change, compared with the basic attack, the role of mate giving unit/hurdle; ...& fw. 1.Sg5+? PAg2xg5(PAg1)+ 2.Kd2! fails now but the new possibility to capture bBd4 brings compensation]

Tries:

1.Kb3xPa3(Ke1)? a5-a4+ 2.Kc2-b3 b2-b1=S+...9.Kc1-d2 a2-a1=R+?

turns out to be illegal due to the capture-balance: b pawns would have captured 8x but only 7 w units are missing. W would have been forced to break off the pendulum

...2.Kc3-b3 b2-b1=S+ 3.? W cannot arrive on 1st rank with tempo.

...4.e5xd6ep(d2)? d7-d5...10.f2xBe3(e2) Bc5,b6,a7-e3+ 11.0-0-0 & fw. 1.? there is no capture-object on d4 ...6.Kd2-c1 Ra1-a2+ **7.f2xBe3(e2)?** Bd4-e3+ 8.Kc1-d2 Ra2-a1+ 9.0-0-0 & fw. 1.Sxd4(Sg1)+ PAg4xg1(PAg1)# but...8. Kc1-d2 Bh8-d4+! parries, W must continue the pendulum.

Draw pendulum manoeuver, Unpromotion of bS/bR, w ep-capture, w castling in the retro-play Valladao-Thema In the uncapturing moves W1/W5 K&R leave the game array position [= 2x "antizielelement"] and return in W11.

This Proca retractor ticks all the boxes of a good retractor:

- 1. The existence of a clear main plan (or basic attack), specifically refuted by a single obstacle.*
- 2. The execution of a preparatory plan, which specifically removes the obstacle(s), enabling the execution of the [changed] basic attack.*
- 3. The intensive usage of all fairy elements (i.e. fairy conditions + fairy pieces) in the preparatory plan and main plan.*

But this is a retro, and the presence of elements specific to retros is essential. Here we have: Two sub-promotions, one “en passant” capture, the repetition of the white 000, and therefore the Valladoa theme, with the added bonus of using the draw by triple repetition of position.

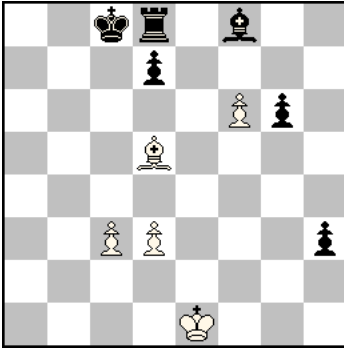
The use of Pao here facilitates s#1 and allows for the change of key and mat.

An excellent problem.

Anti-Circe Calvet: (Captures allowed if rebirth square occupied)

=Pao (Chinese Rook)

3rd Prize: No.1770, Vlaicu Crișan & Paul Răican



5+6

-15 & s#1

Proca retractor

Circe assassin

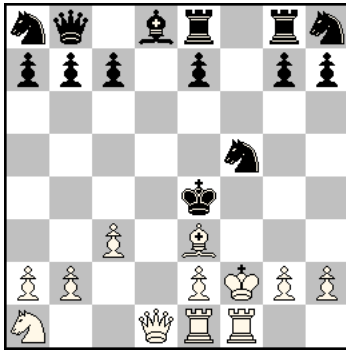
Solution:

- 1.Kf2xBe1(Bf8, -bBf8) Bd2-e1+
- 2.Pf5-f6 Pg7-g6+ (1st occurrence)
- 3.Ke3-d2 Be1-d2+
- 4.Kf2-e3 Bd2-e1+ (2nd occurrence)
- 5.Ke3-d2 Be1-d2+
- 6.Kf2-e3 Pe2-e1=B+ (forced)
- 7.Kf1xBf2(Bf8, -bRf8) Pe3-e2+
- 8.Pe2xPd3(Pd7) Re8-d8+
- 9.Bg2-d5 Ph4-h3+
- 10.Bd5xPg2(Pg7, -wQg7) Pg3-g2+ (1st occurrence)
- 11.Be4-d5 Rd8-e8+
- 12.Bd5-e4 Re8-d8+ (2nd occurrence)
- 13.Be4-d5 Rd8-e8+
- 14.Bd5-e4 0-0-0+ (forced)
- 15.Bh1xRd5(Ra8, -bQa8) & 1.Qg7-d7+ Rd5xd7(Qd1)#

The Circe Assassin allows for complex effects, and the condition itself is difficult to grasp, as it allows pieces of both colours to be put back into play at any time in a completely unnatural way, even for someone familiar with retrogrades.

Here, the authors use the triple repetition of position twice, first to force an underpromotion, and then to recapture Black's kingside castled position. The accumulation of Bishop captures on the same square f8 (according to the Matreshka theme) is a good bonus.

1st Honorable Mention: No.1782, Paul Răican



12+14

PG in 11.0

#C

Chess 960

The starting position in Chess 960 seems quite natural (SQBBRKRS) if one hopes to reach the diagram's position quickly.

Therefore, it becomes clear that it's not possible to promote a bP directly, as this would require capturing the missing black pieces in place, which is clearly too time-consuming. We must therefore resign to using the #C condition to bring out the third black Knight. We see that this can be done naturally with Sh1-g3# with the black King on e4, provided we control the King's escape squares, for example with the white Queen on d6.

White thus have a problem, as the number of moves required seems to be greater than 11. The white Queen will therefore need to be transformed into a black Queen, then back into a white Queen to gain a move for White.

The initial King's position allows us to quickly consider mate positions with Kings on f7/f2 and Queens on f5/f4.

Solution :

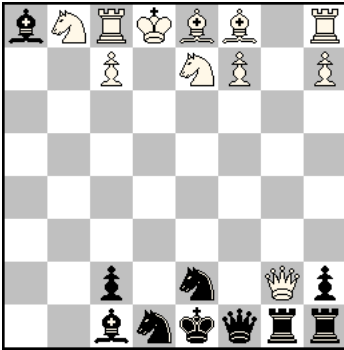
1.c3 d6 2.Bb3 Bf5 3.Bxf7 Kxf7 4.Qxf5#(=bQf5) Ke6 5.f4 Kd5 6.Kf2 Qxf4(=wQf4)# 7.Qxd6+ Ke4 8.Sg3#(=bSg3) Sf5 9.d3#(=bPd3) d2 10.Rgf1 dxc1=B 11.Qd1 Be3#(=wBe3)

Five checkmates, the first two are type Loyd. Impostor Be3.

The author uses condition #C five times in an 11-move game, which seems like a task to me. A very good composition.

2nd Honorable Mention: No.1743, Kevin Begley

Dedicated to Michel Caillaud

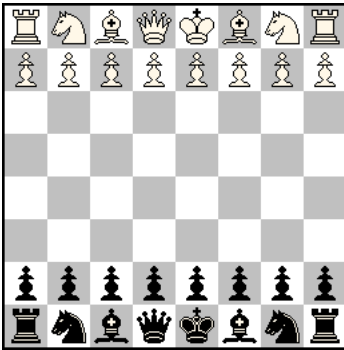


A=>B in 13 10+11

where A= IGA from Upside-Down Chess

B= diagram position

A



Solution:

1.Sa6 Sa3 2.b8=Q Rb1 3.Qxb2 a1=Q 4.Qxa3 Rb8 5.Qxc1 Qxa6 6.axb8=S Qxc8 7.dxc8=R
dxc1=B 8.Qxd1+ exd1=S 9.Kd8 Se2 10.e8=B g1=R 11.Se7 Bg2 12.g8=Q Bxa8 13.Qg2 f1=Q

(C+ Jacobi (v0.7.5), about 36hr (Author))

Unfortunately, it's just an A to B. And what's more, Kevin doesn't use the (admittedly optional) Upsidedown Chess rule that allows promotion only to replace a captured piece (which would have been really interesting). So here, Upsidedown Chess serves no purpose other than simplifying the problem stipulation, thus avoiding showing position A and making it legal.

There are 10 promotions so only 10 themes in fact: 2 Pronkin (wSb8, bBc1), 2 Ceriani-Frolkin (wQ, bQ) and 5 Phoenix (wBe8, wQg8, bSd1, bRg1, bQf1) and 1 Prenix (wRc8).

There is no super AUW here, but 2xAUW (white and black) accompanied by 2x promoted Qweens (Cerinia-Frolkin or Phoenix, your choice).

Admittedly, here the promotions are hidden since it seems possible to reach the position in the diagram without promoting a piece. Nevertheless, it's an interesting problem.

That being said, we are far from the record for promotions in $A \rightarrow B$.

2ème Prix, Millour 70

57 feenschach 211

Januar-Februar 2015

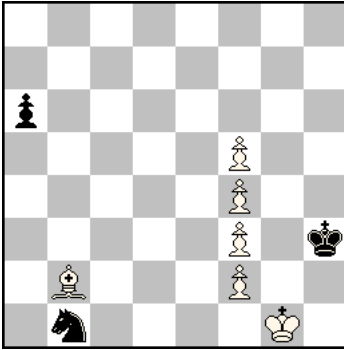
4 AUW

- 3 AUW Phoenix (wQ, wR, wB, wS, bQ, bR, bB, bS, bQ, bR, bB, bS) (including 1 Pronkin bR)

- 1 AUW Ceriani-Frolkin (wQ, wR, wB, wS)

Commendation: No.1796, Shankar Ram

Dedicated to Vlaicu Crişan



6+3

Pacific retractor

-4 & #1

Solution:

-1.Bh8-b2? ~ -2.h7-h8=B and 1.h8=Q# (h8=R#)

but -1...b2-b1=S! and 1.b1=Q# (b1=R#)

-1.Kf1-g1? ~ -2.Bh8-b2 -3.h7-h8=B and 1.h8=Q# (h8=R#)

but -1...Sc3-b1!

-1.Bc3-b2! (Zz)

-1...a7-a6 (b2-b1=S) -2.Kf1-g1! ~ -3.Bh8-c3 ~ -4.h7-h8=B and 1.h8=Q# (h8=R#)

(if -2.Bh8-b2? b2-b1=S! and 1.b2-b1=Q/R#)

if -1...Kh4 (S~) -2.Bh8-c3

(No software currently supports this type)

A belated dedication to Vlaicu, for his 50th birthday on 26-Aug-23. The problem shows the second theme of his 50JT announced on p943 in the [Jan-23 \(issue56\)](#) of Paul Raican's [Quartz magazine](#): Retractors where the Forward Defense is the central idea.

Other ideas shown:

- Unpromotion threat by White is met by Unpromotion defence by Black.
- Logical more-mover style main and 2-stage fore plans

The idea presented here is interesting and new to me. This problem therefore deserves to be included in the award.

Thierry Le Gleuher

28/06/2026