

24th TZUICA TOURNEY AWARD – 2026

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TZUICA TOURNEY 2026 ANNOUNCEMENT

Theme: Helpself compositions (**hs#n/hs=n**) with **at least 2 solutions showing the theme Change the Pinner.**

Please take in consideration the following **definitions**:

1. In a **help-selfmate** problem in 'n' moves (denoted **hs#n**), White starts and Black collaborates with White in order to reach a position of **s#1** (selfmate in one move) at move 'n' (the last move). Helpselfstalemates are also accepted.

2. Change the Pinner:

Form: In the initial position black piece **a** pins white piece **A** and a different black piece **b** pins a different white piece **B**. Before Black's last move, **a** pins **B** and **b** pins **A**.

Antiform: In the initial position white piece **A** pins black piece **a** and a different white piece **B** pins a different black piece **b**. Before White's last move, **A** pins **b** and **B** pins **a**.

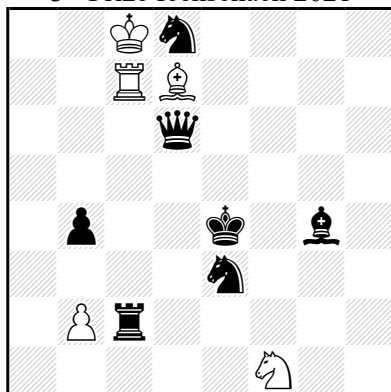
- Neutral pieces are allowed as thematic pieces.
- A cyclic presentation of the theme is also allowed.

All fairy pieces and conditions are accepted, provided that the problem is checked by a known solving program.

Example 1 - Form

Vlaicu Crişan

Dedicated to my son Eric for his 13th birthday
3rd Prize feenschach 2021



hs#4 2.1.1... (5+7)

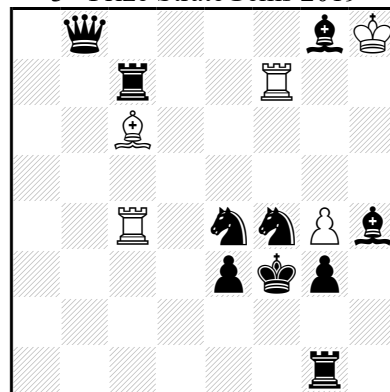
1.Be6 Sc4 2.Rg7 Bh3 3.Rg4+ Kd3 4.Bxc4+ Rxc4#
1.Rc5 Sf5 2.Ba4 Rc1 3.Bc2+ Kf4 4.Rxf5+ Bxf5#

A=♖c7, B=♕d7, a=♜c2, b=♙g4

Example 2 - Antiform

Christopher J.A. Jones

3rd Prize StrateGems 2019



hs#3.5 b) ♜g3→e2 (5+10)

a) 1...Rg2 2.Ba4 Sf6 3.Bd1+ Se2 4.Rxf6+ Bxf6#
b) 1...Bf2 2.Rh7 Sd5 3.Rh3+ Sg3 4.Bxd5+ Bxd5#

A=♖f7, B=♕c6, a=♜f4, b=♜e4

Participants:

Daniel Dumitrescu 1; Dieter Werner 3*,6*; Dimitris Liakos 13,14,16; Emanuel Navon 7*; Franz Pachl 12; Jorge Lois 15; Mario Parrinello 8,9,10; Mark Erenburg 18,19; Menachem Witztum 7*, 11; Nikola Petkovic 4,5; Ralf Krätschmer 2,3*,6*; Themis Argirakopoulos 17.

INTRODUCTION

This year's requested theme Change the Pinner has proven difficult for the composers and we received the comparatively small amount of 19 problems by 12 composers from 8 countries.

The choice of this year's theme was inspired by Vlaicu's son. Some years ago he jokingly asked: "What if Dad was Mom and Mom was Dad?" After a while, Vlaicu thought how to translate this question into a chess composition - and that's how the first given example was created in 2021. Five years later, Vlaicu's son has reached the adult age and we thought the theme Change the Pinner would be particularly suitable for marking this milestone, as a memento that although from a legal point of view we are changing, our bonds still remain the same.

Our main challenge was to identify some suitable criteria for classifying the compositions. Despite the low number of received entries, it was quite difficult to properly formulate what should constitute the genuine content which makes the theme more attractive and/or valuable. We eventually decided to retain two main criteria, but did not use them in a dogmatic way.

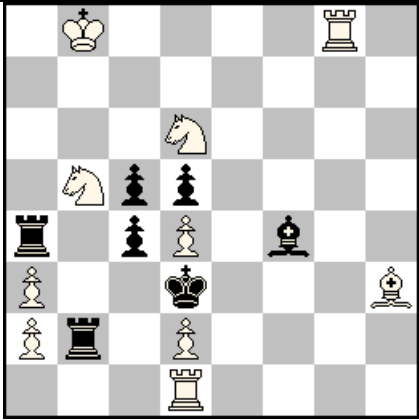
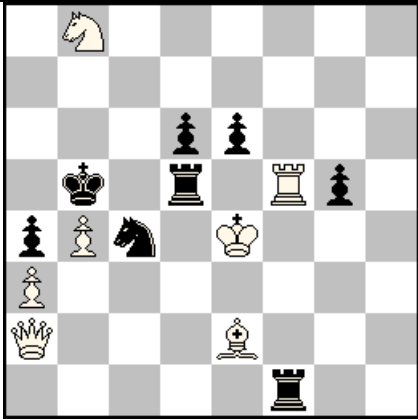
The first criteria was the density of the thematic moves played by the five thematic pieces in the play until the critical moment: the last Black move in the normal form, respectively the last White move in the antiform. The higher the density, the better. The King was considered as a thematic piece, thanks to his ability to unpin/pin the pieces. We soon discovered we needed to apply a second criteria: the ratio of the actively playing officers in the solution to the number of officers present on the diagram.

From an aesthetical point of view, we gave preference to the entries in which the pinned pieces move on different squares in the two phases. Finding different squares requires more subtle motivations for changing the pinner. The composers managed again to delight us - and we won't be surprised to see many of these entries from this award getting widely reproduced.



ORTHODOX SECTION

Three fourths of the received entries were orthodox (14 entries out of 19). The overall quality is good, with the prizes being particularly impressive.

Mario PARRINELLO 1st Prize Orthodox Section Tzuica 2026	Menachem WITZTUM & Emanuel NAVON 2nd Prize Orthodox Section Tzuica 2026
	
hs#4 2.1.1... (10 + 7)	hs#3.5 b) ♠d6→b6 (7 + 8)
1.Bc8 Bxd2 2.Sb7 Ke4 3.Rg3 Bf4+ 4.S5d6+ Bxd6# 1.Rc8 Rxd2 2.Sc7 Kc3 3.Bf5 Rb2+ 4.Sdb5+ Rxb5#	a) 1...Rf3 2.Rf7 Rdd3 3.Rb7+ Sb6 4.Qd5+ exd5# b) 1...Rf2 2.Bh5 Se5 3.Be8+ Rd7 4.Qe2+ Rxe2#

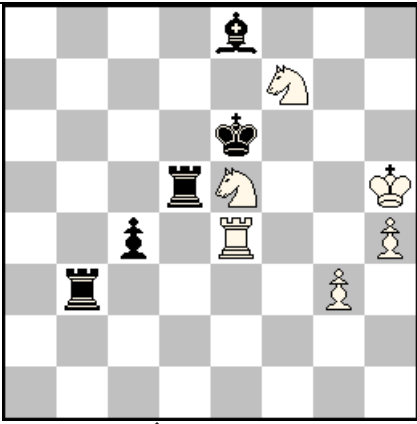
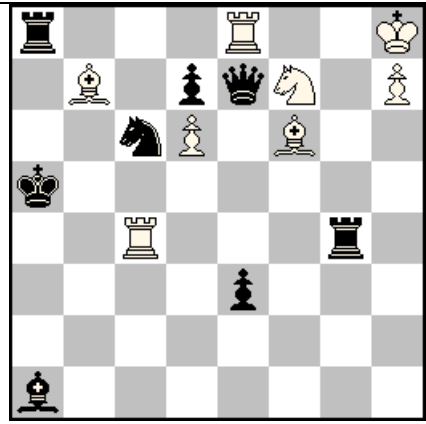
1st Prize: Mario PARRINELLO (Italy)

Mario wins the first prize with a very ambitious setting, in which this year's theme is mixed with many motives encountered in past Tzuica tournaments, such as pin mate (2015), reciprocal exchange of functions (2011), cross-checks (2017) and switchbacks (2013) restoring the pin on the same line after opening wRd1 line. The high density (4/7) and ratio of active pieces (6/10) only convinced us more this is the absolute highlight of the orthodox section. Although the matrix has been shown before in a more economic setting (see annex A), the rich strategy is different enough to ensure its originality. An outstanding conception.

2nd Prize: Menachem WITZTUM & Emanuel NAVON (Israel)

The only composition from the tournament using the thematic pair bR-bS. Here, the authors decided to restore the initial pins on different lines in each solution - like in the second example. Naturally, this mechanism ensures a high thematic density (4/6). The economic setting facilitated also a high ratio of active officers (5/9).

We highly praised the usage of the double pin to ensure the final mate, as well as the line opening performed by bSc4 - a neat unifying touch. The twinning shifts a black pawn to a position where it blocks a bK flight while opening bRd5 line. Only a second prize for the authors, but we think the received bottle will provide a neat compensation.

Dimitris LIAKOS 3rd Prize Orthodox Section Tzuica 2026	Nikola PETKOVIĆ 1st Honorable Mention Orthodox Section Tzuica 2026
 hs=4 b) ♖e6→g2 (6 + 5) a) 1.Rd4 Rd7 2.Sg6 Rxg3 3.Sh6 Rh7 4.Rd6+ Kxd6 = b) 1.Re1 Ba4 2.Sg5 Rb6 3.Sg4 Bd1 4.Rg1+ Kxg1 =	 hs#3.5 2.1.1... (8 + 8) 1...Qd8 2.Se5 Qb6 3.Bd8 Sxe5 4.Rxe5+ Bxe5# 1...Qe5 2.Sd8 Qb5 3.Re5 Sxd8 4.Bxd8+ Rxd8#

3rd Prize: Dimitris LIAKOS (Greece)

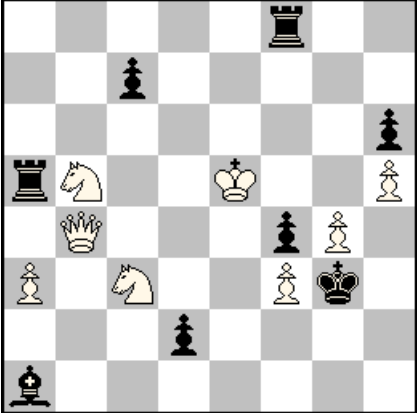
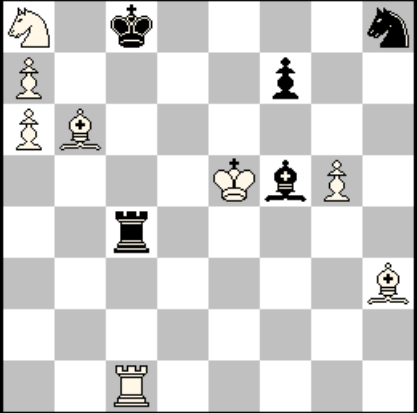
This Meredith is clearly the best among the few received helpselfstalemates. Although the matrix is similar with the 1st Prize, the play is entirely different with the initially pinned wS getting subsequently pinned on a different line. Both the density and ratio of active pieces pass beyond the 50% threshold reserved for prizes. The strong twinning shifts the position of the bK. The order of moves is cleverly forced and we particularly liked the ambush effect present in B1.

1st Honorable Mention: Nikola PETKOVIĆ (Serbia)

By some standards this composition would win a prize in any informal tournament. In each solution one of the pinned white units is pinned by the bQ and pinned again by the original pinner. The second thematic white unit is unpinned by the wS and unpins the first white unit which captures the bS and pins itself. Both pinner and pinned pieces exchange their roles in a superb diagonal orthogonal correspondence (Tzuica 2008), with a neat Follow-My-Leader effect. The schema reminded us of annex B but it is not an anticipation.

Seeing Nikola's elder daughter proudly holding dad's bottle during the congress is a priceless memory.



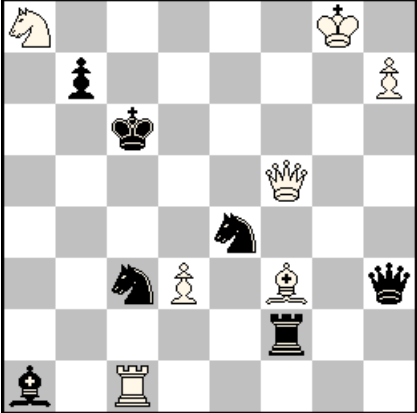
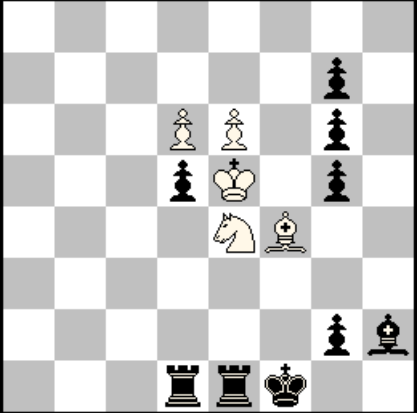
Jorge LOIS 2nd Honorable Mention Orthodox Section Tzuica 2026	Mark ERENBURG 3rd Honorable Mention Orthodox Section Tzuica 2026
 hs#4 2.1.1... (8 + 8) 1.Qc5 Kh4 2.Sd4 Kg5 3.Sd5 Re8+ 4.Qe7+ Rxe7# 1.Qb2 Kf2 2.Sd5 Ke1 3.Sd4 d1=Q 4.Qe2+ Qxe2#	 hs#3.5 b) ♠f7→g6 (8 + 5) a) 1...Rc7 2.Bc5 Rd7 3.Be7+ Bc2 4.Bf6 Sg6# b) 1...Be6 2.Sc7 Rg4 3.Se8+ Bc4 4.Sf6 Sf7#

2nd Honorable Mention: Jorge LOIS (Argentina)

The only composition from the whole tournament where both thematic pieces are pinned in the final position! The author managed to achieve this task by using wQ to unpin one wS and playing both unpinned pieces next to the wK to block flights. As White essentially does all the job, some purists may complain about the reduced interplay and the rather poor black strategy. However, even the harshest critics will admire the author's creativity and technical skills to avoid cooks with no apparent efforts.

3rd Honorable Mention: Mark ERENBURG (Israel)

We instantly felt in love with this economic setting: both solutions display unified strategic effects, ending with zugzwang model mates delivered by the cornered bS. This masterfully conceived piece of art failed to reach the prize level by a whisker: the active ratio play is "just" below 50%. We are giving this problem good chances to eventually make its way into the FIDE Album. Until then, Mark will probably enjoy the 32% alcohol purity from his well deserved bottle.

Nikola PETKOVIĆ 4th Honorable Mention Orthodox Section Tzuica 2026	Menachem WITZTUM Commendation Orthodox Section Tzuica 2026
 hs#3 b) ♖f2→b5 (7 + 7) a) 1.Bd1 Sc5 2.Ba4+ Sb5 3.Qe6+ Qxe6# b) 1.Rg1 Sd5 2.Rg6+ Sd6 3.Qc8+ Qxc8#	 hs#3 b) ♜f1→g1 (5 + 9) a) 1.d7 Bg1 2.Be3 Bh2+ 3.Sxg3+ Bxg3# b) 1.e7 Rf1 2.Sg3 Re1+ 3.Be3+ Rxe3#

4th Honorable Mention: Nikola PETKOVIĆ (Serbia)

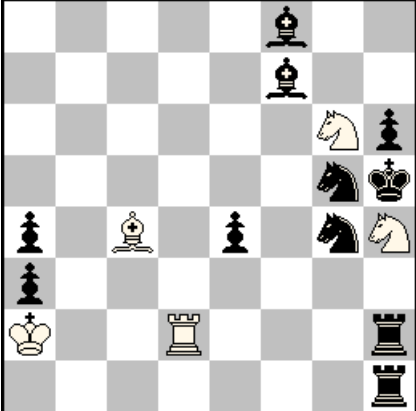
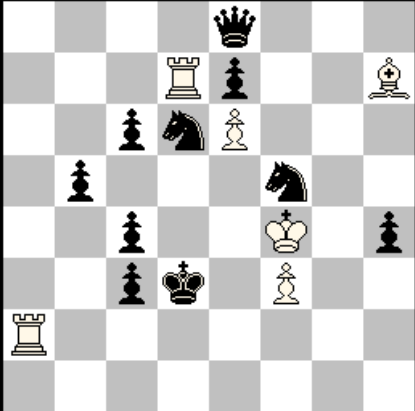
The best "shortie" from the orthodox section. The main reason for changing the pinner is to open bBa1 diagonal. A careful study will reveal certain strategic effect dissimilarities between the solutions. Nevertheless the presentation surely deserves recognition in spite of some inherent flaws.



Commendations without order

Commendation: Menachem WITZTUM (Israel)

The second shortie from the orthodox section surprisingly starts with a tempo move. This is the only composition featuring the pinned pair wB-wS. Moreover, these pieces are initially blocking flights and are getting far from the wK. The switchback and cross-checks are very nice, but the exchange of W2-W3 feels a little bit schematic.

Mark ERENBURG Commendation Orthodox Section Tzuica 2026	Ralf KRÄTSCHMER Commendation Orthodox Section Tzuica 2026
 hs#2.5 2.1.1... (5 + 11) 1...Sf2 2.Rd5 Sh3+ (Sf2~?) 3.Be2+ Rxe2# 1...Se6 2.Be2 Sd8+ (Se6~?) 3.Rd5+ Bxd5#	 hs#3.5 b)+♙h3 (6 + 10) a) 1...Qh5 2.Bg8 Sd4 3.Bh7+ S6f5 4.Bxf5+ Qxf5# b) 1...Qd8 2.Rxe7 Se4 3.Rd7+ Sfd6 4.Rxd6+ Qxd6#

Commendation: Mark ERENBURG (Israel)

Showing the theme in only 2.5 moves is definitely a record! The economy of time comes with a nice choice of unpinning bS hideaway options at B2. We noticed the visually pleasant effect of black sibling pieces staying next to each other.

Commendation: Ralf KRÄTSCHMER (Germany)

This would have been placed higher would the motivations of B1 and W2 have a higher unity. Our quick attempts to achieve that showed that hiding the bQ behind the pinner is possible in both twins (see annex C).



FAIRY SECTION

There were only 5 problems in the fairy section, but we retained them all in the award.

Mario PARRINELLO Prize Fairy Section Tzuica 2026	Mario PARRINELLO 1st Honorable Mention Fairy Section Tzuica 2026
hs#3.5 b) + ♖ h4 (5 + 8) ♙=Nao; ♚=Siren; ♖=Triton a) 1...Qa8 2.TRxb7-a7 NAc2 3.TRd7+ NAd2 4.Kh4+ Qf3# b) 1...Qa7 2.Slxb6-a6 NAd2 3.Slg6+ NAc2 4.Kg4+ Qe3#	hs#3 b) ♘g4→c4 (10 + 6) ♙=Bishop-Locust ; ♚=Locust ♘=Nao ; ♖=Rook-Locust a) 1.Sf2+ Kb5 2.NAg7 LRxf2-f3+ 3.NAf7+ Lxf7-e8# b) 1.Sb2+ Kc5 2.NAf7 LBxb2-c3+ 3.NAg7+ Lxg7-g8#

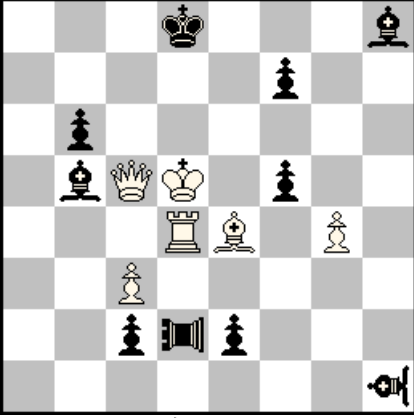
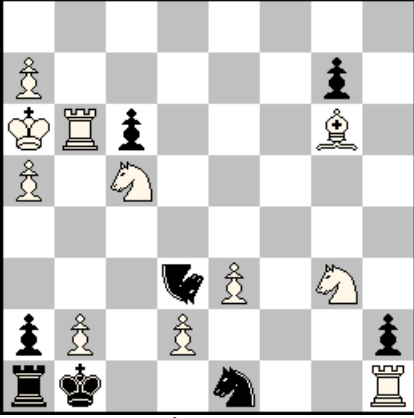
Prize: Mario PARRINELLO (Italy)

The Giegoldesque keys, hiding the bQ behind two black pieces, are more than enough to give this composition a very high reward. Much too often composers fail to think of producing pleasure to solvers. Not the case here: all play is delightful, with intense interplay and culminates with antibattery mate delivered after battery check. The strategic wealth is so rich that we might barely fail to recognize the theme is done in only 4 half-moves (W2-B3). The composition is based on a very simple observation: the Marine pieces (and Locusts as well) can pin pieces either in front of the King or behind the King.



1st Honorable Mention: Mario PARRINELLO (Italy)

The same idea as in the previous problem, this time shown using Locusts as pinners for the pinned wNAs. Although this ticks all boxes mentioned in our criteria to get a prize, it is just completely outshadowed - hence the lower ranking. While the prize reminds us Giorgione's Sleeping Venus for its serenity, the honorable mention reminds us Titian's Venus of Urbino for its realism. Both are masterpieces, and we admit our preference is based on purely subjective considerations.

Ralf KRÄTSCHMER & Dieter WERNER 2nd Honorable Mention Fairy Section Tzuica 2026	Ralf KRÄTSCHMER & Dieter WERNER Commendation Fairy Section Tzuica 2026
 hs=3.5 b) ♖h1→f3 (6 + 10) Faro ♜d2, Loco ♜h1 a) 1...FAG2 2.Bxf5 FAG5+ 3.Re4 Bxc3 4.Qc7+ Kxc7 = b) 1...LOxg4 2.Bd3 LOd1 3.Rc4 LOb3 4.Qe7+ Kxe7 =	 hs#3 b) ♗a5→c5 (4 + 7) Circe ♞ = Nightrider a) 1.Sf1 Sc2 2.Sg3+ Ne1 3.Se2 Nxc5[+wSg1]# b) 1.Sf5 Nc1 2.d3 Sxd3[+wPd2] 3.Sd4 Sxc5[+wPc2] #

2nd Honorable Mention: Ralf KRÄTSCHMER & Dieter WERNER (Germany & Switzerland)

The best helpselfstalemate from the fairies section. The pinned white officers must change the pinners before the wQ can sacrifice itself for achieving the aim. To ensure soundness, the authors decided to use two Argentin pieces as pinners. While it is good the pin restoration occurs on a different line in each phase, we found slightly disturbing the lack of homogeneity of effects in the black play (B1, B3).

Commendation: Ralf KRÄTSCHMER & Dieter WERNER (Germany & Switzerland)

The authors mixed the present theme with two themes previously featured in Romanian Tzuica tournaments: zugzwang (2007) and Pelle moves (2021). We were thrilled by the self unpin zugzwang mate thanks to Circe rebirth, but could not ignore that white strategy mainly consists in waiting and the Circe specificity is reduced. The given reward (a mini-bottle) perfectly suits this little gem!

Themis ARGIRAKOPOULOS
Commendation
Fairy Section Tzuica 2026

hs#2.5 b) ♔d5→b8 (6 + 7)
Einstein
ConditionsUntilPly=4
♖=Pao

a) 1...Rc3(=B) 2.b8=PA Bxb8(=R) 3.Rd8+ Rxd8#
b) 1...Ra1(=B) 2.PAh2 Bxh2(=R) 3.Be5+ Bxe5#

Commendation: Themis ARGIRAKOPOULOS (Greece)

To conclude the award we simply had to retain this composition, regardless how it was composed. Yes, Themis, we are occasionally reading your Facebook posts and totally agree everything is relative. Is this the work of a mathematician or of a long-distance runner? Whatever the answer, composing a thematic entry in only 33 hours is already a highly impressive achievement. The scheme, however, cries for a cyclic interpretation, with wRh7 being sacrificed in a third phase. So we throw you another gauntlet: would you achieve this task until the next Romanian Tzuica tournament will be announced, you will get a bottle hors concours!



We hope that these selected compositions have entertained you as much as they entertained us. Our thanks go to all participants for submitting their excellent entries to our tournament. It was our delight to see how their creativity allowed displaying one of the oldest chess composition themes in so many original renderings. After all, that's what the Romanian Tzuica tournament is all about.

Vlaicu Crişan & Eric Huber
August 18th 2026, Cluj-Napoca & Bucharest



FAIRY DEFINITIONS

Bishop-Locust: (1,1) Locust. Moves along Bishop lines only by capturing an enemy unit, arriving on the square immediately beyond that unit, which must be vacant.

Circe: When a capture is made, the captured unit (except a King) is replaced on its rebirth square (its square in the initial game array) if it is empty : otherwise, the captured unit vanishes.

Conditionsuntilply: *Conditionsuntilply*=*n* means that the conditions are taken into account only until the *n*th ply (the *n*th white move for a direct, a self or a help-self problem).

Einstein Chess: Units ‘grow’ when they capture ($P \rightarrow S \rightarrow B \rightarrow R \rightarrow Q \rightarrow Q$) and ‘shrink’ when they move without capturing ($Q \rightarrow R \rightarrow B \rightarrow S \rightarrow P \rightarrow P$). Castling is permitted with reborn Rook but the Rook changes to a Bishop. If a white (black) Pawn on 7th (2nd) rank make a non-capturing move, it does not change its status, i.e. remains a Pawn and loses its mobility. If the Pawn captures, it changes into Knight. The white Pawn on 1st rank can make five(!) moves: two captures and three forward moves. For example a white Pawn on c1 can capture on b2 and d2 and can move to c2, c3 and c4. The same rule applies to the black Pawn on the 8th rank. Two en passant moves are possible after the white Pawn plays, for example, from c1 to c3 or from c1 to c4. The same goes for black Pawn moves. After en passant moves the capturing Pawn disappears and the captor becomes a Knight. Rules for neutral and half-neutral Pawns: on the 1st rank the Pawn can be moved only by White, while on the 8th rank only by Black. Einstein Chess is not defined for play with other fairy pieces.

Faro: (0,1)-Argentinian rider or ‘Argentinian Rook’; moves and captures on rook lines, but when not capturing moves any distance to reach a hurdle and then any further distance beyond it.

Loco: (1,1)-Argentinian rider or ‘Argentinian Bishop’; moves and captures on bishop lines, but when not capturing moves any distance to reach a hurdle and then any further distance beyond it.

Locust: (0,1)+(1,1) Locust. Moves along Queen lines only by capturing an enemy unit, arriving on the square immediately beyond that unit, which must be vacant.

Nao: (1,2) Chinese. Chinese piece operating along the lines of Nightrider.

Nightrider: (1,2) Rider. Operates along straight lines with squares lying a Knight’s move away from each other.

Pao: (0,1) Chinese. Chinese piece operating along Rook lines: moves as Rook, but captures only by hopping over a hurdle to any square beyond.

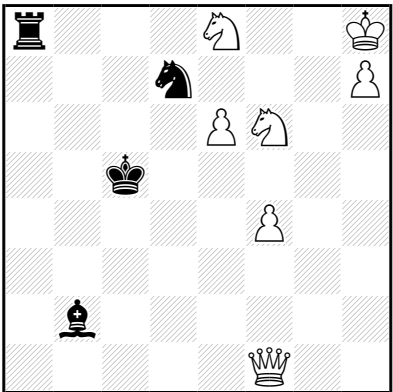
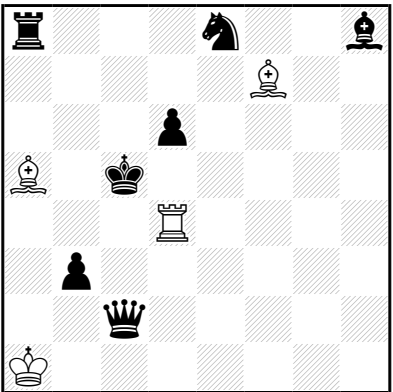
Rook-Locust: (0,1) Locust. Moves along Rook lines only by capturing an enemy unit, arriving on the square immediately beyond that unit, which must be vacant.

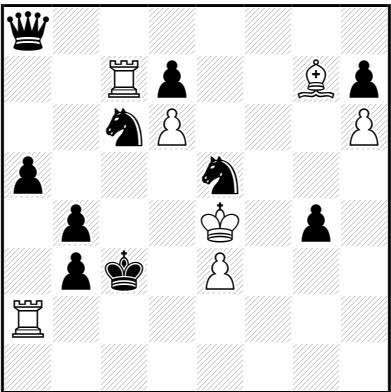
Siren: (0,1)+(1,1) Marine. Marine piece operating along Queen lines: without capture moves as Queen, with capture – as Locust.

Triton: (0,1) Marine. Marine piece operating along Rook lines: without capture moves as Rook, with capture – as Rook-Locust.



ANNEXES

A. Petko PETKOV 2nd Prize The Macedonian Problemist 2002	B. Georgy A. Evseev, Valery V. Gurov & Dmitry E. Turevsky Problem Paradise 2025
 hs#4 2.1.1... (7 + 4) 1.Qa6 Se5 2.Sg8 Kd5 3.Qb6 Sc4+ 4.Sef6+ Bxf6# 1.Qg2 Sb8 2.Sg7 Kd6 3.Qg5 Sc6+ 4.Sfe8+ Rxe8#	 hs#4 b) ♖e8→b8 (4 + 7) a) 1.Bd5 Sf6 2.Ra4 Sd7+ 3.Bc3 Sb6 4.Ra5+ Rxa5# b) 1.Be8 Sa6 2.Bc3 Sc7+ 3.Ra4 Sd5 4.Bd4+ Bxd4#

C. Version of Ralf KRÄTSCHMER Commendation
 hs#3.5 b) + ♕h3 (7 + 10) a) 1...Qh8 2.Bf8 Sc4 3.Bg7+ S6e5 4.Bxe5+ Qxe5# b) 1...Qc8 2.Rxd7 Sd4 3.Rc7+ Sec6 4.Rxc6+ Qxc6#