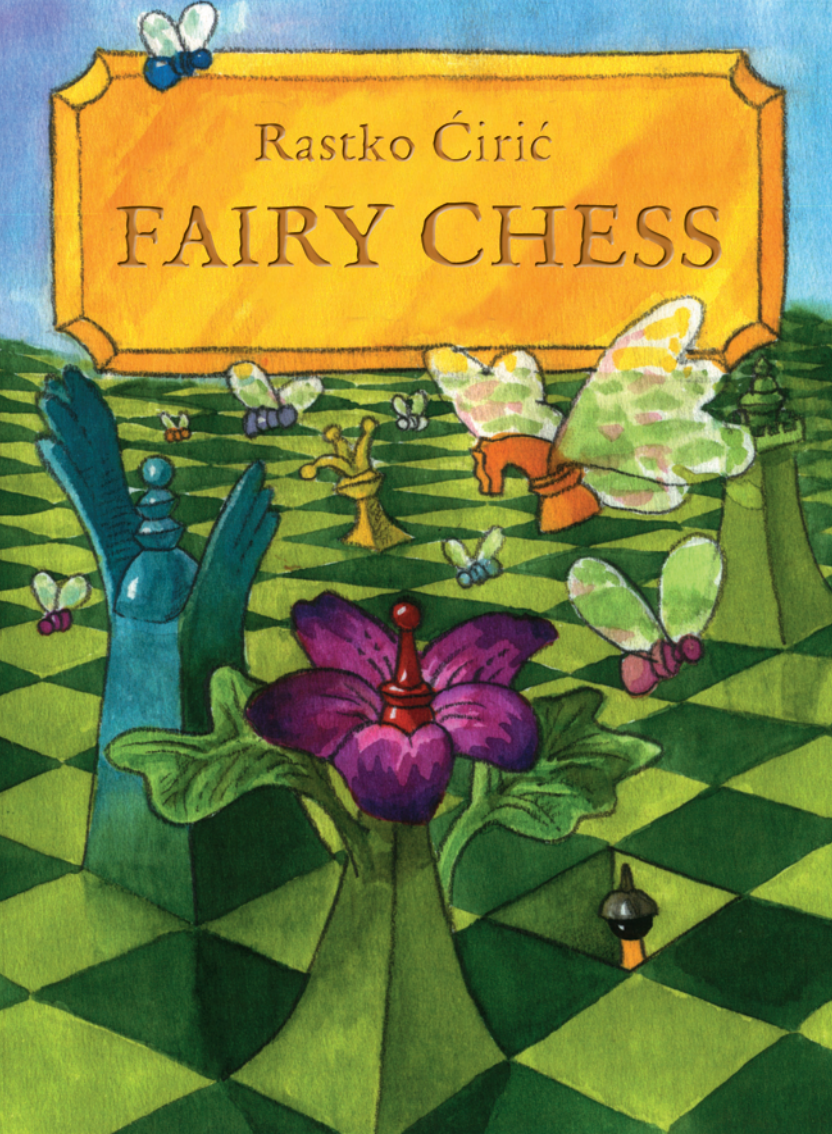
Rastko Ćirić
FAIRY CHESS

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FAIRY CHESS MANUAL

ECCENTRIC CHESS
(Fairy chess in brief)

Chess has its own bogies and beasties - mythological creatures that can appear at any moment on the black & white board, and not be seen by the majority of ordinary chess players. With this manual, you can take a peek at the other side of the chess looking-glass, so that in future encounters with the "syren", "grasshopper" or "night rider", you will recognize them as tame aliens and play with them.

These elves did not appear out of nowhere, they are inhabitants of a paralel world - fairy (heterodox) chess. It is a real gallaxy with an infinite number of chess planets on which some things in the basic rules are changed in a heretical way: the aim of the game, the number of players, the way the chess-pieces move, the shape or size of the chess-board and many more, with one exception: no matter how unusual they may be, the rules of each planet are equally strict and obligatory.

Although the borders of normal chess are themselves too wide, and the life of its devotees too short for learning all the secrets between the eight lines and the eight rows, chess fantasy has been explored for a long time. In the oldest Arabic manuscripts on chess, from about 1300 years ago, imaginary endings of some non-existing games were depicted. Just as the art of painting started with the cave paintings from Altamira, the art of chess problems appeared out of these first tasks to be solved, called "mansubas", involving everything irrational and out of the official chess routine.

Like other arts, the art of chess composition was often well ahead of its time. When chess arrived in Europe from the Far East, via Africa, chess problems became, as an irrestistible form of gambling, even more popular than the game itself, which was too slow for the Western world. In the 13th century the chess problem community announced a reform of the rules of chess, offering

series of amazing possibilities. Among them, the most radical was the "self-mate", a typically fairy task in which the aim of the white player was not to give check-mate, but to be chech-mated himself. It goes without saying that it is much harder to perform a "self-mate" than a check-mate. Thus this new version of the game proved to be unsuitable to traditional chess players, but it has remained popular in chess problems right up to the present day, when the stronger side must acrobatically control both his own and his opponent's pieces.

However, the guests from the other chess planets have succeeded many times in changing not only the art of chess, but also the rules of Earthly chess. The last such a case dates from the end of the 15th century, when fairy chess pieces, which we now considered contemporary, made today's chess faster and stronger than before. Namely, the bishop came into the game only 500 years ago, and the "anvil" piece that jumped two squares diagonally, disappeared. At the same time, instead of the weak "ferz", that moved one square diagonally, as well as the king, came a "raging" queen. Than the pawns, instead of modest promotion to a "ferz", were strengthened by being given a sceptre when they reached the final row.

This "big bang", was followed by peaceful centuries during which this new chess blossomed, and in chess composition the realistic art streams alternated. The spirit of surrealism did not raise its head until the second half of the 19th century. Once again this started from problem chess, and the process was speeded up by the genial American Samuel Lloyd (1841-1911). As one of the pioneers of the chess computer, an universal puzzle-maker and inventor of intelectual games, by the time he reached 18 he had succeded in almost exhausting the most paradoxal chess ideas, and so he then started to search for them in the world of fantasy. Thanks to him, a lot of his followers, as well as "self-mate", came by two new sorts of fairy problems: "help-mate" (in which black black helps white in achieving of mate) and "retrograde analysis" (working out

the moves that lead up to the present position). It is interesting that all three mentioned sorts of fairy problems are not only useless, but even dangerous to the logic of competitive chess!

Lloyd was no more than the early herald of stormy changes in the 20th century. The first half of the 20th century saw the culmination of chess theory, and the second half – the popularity of the chess. With the departure of the second American genius and 11th world champion Bobbie Fisher, more money was invested in chess, but less magic. Finally, the 90s were the time when the computer quickly cleared away history and squeezed human beings out of the game – the real, joyful game. Instead of further development people were talking more and more about the end of contemporary chess.

At the same time, problem chess followed the other arts and abandoned the reality of the game even more. In the first half of the 20th century fairy ideas were already beginning to bloom. The biggest propagator and inventor of new heterodox varieties, the Englishman Thomas Dawson (1889-1951), started a special magazine "The Fairy Chess Review" and fairy chess got its own books and societies. Meanwhile, in the Soviet Union, after the revolutionary freedom of the 20-ies, fairy chess ideas suddenly found themselves on the black list of the "bourgeois fantasy", something that certain problemists would pay for with their lives!

In the second half of the 20th century, the most serious researcher of the fairy chesswas Yugoslav Nenad Petrović, whose magazine "Problem" (1951-1981) emphasized chess-mathematical tasks, and after inventions like the "cylinder chess" or "three-dimensional chess", he introduced chess on an infinite surface. Germany had several specialized fairy chess magazines among which the most distinguished was "Feenschach", and regular meetings of fairy chess lovers had already been taking place in Andernach for two decades. Similar meetings took place in the French city Mesigny, organized by the "Phoenix" magazine. Fairy chess problems were included in the world championships of chess composers and international problem titles were on the increase.

Such a big swing in problem fantasy was influenced by overall social conditions, among which was the ideological conflict between Western and Soviet composers. On the other hand, although it is correct that the possibilities of normal problems are decreasing, they are far from extinct, and the inclination towards rejecting classical inheritance easily and without a fight is getting stronger. Some authors open completely new horizons only to secure a place and originality for their own ideas. Thus a new sort of game has developed, which, because of its material limitations is more difficult to play within other arts: instead of adjusting to existing forms, new ones have been thought up, even if they are for one use only.

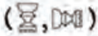
For this reason it is very difficult to get used to so much as a single form of fairy chess that is made up of fairy chess pieces. When at the Congress of the Problem Committee of FIDA, in 1998 in the Finish city Turku, it is again proposed that fairy chess problems should feature in the world championships, one of the conter-arguments was that no chess set has fairy pieces! On diagrams they had up to then been presented by the simple rotating of the existing pieces, with an additional explanation.

In the small gallery in front of you, Rastko Ćirić made his own choice of fairy chess pieces that he has been inspired to depict, in both three- and two-dimensional versions. Some of these are fossils of the extinct chess civilizations "chaturanga" and "shatrange", while others are still used today, for example in Chinese chess. The other exist in chess problems, and will perhaps find their place in Noah's Ark after the "Great Flood" of contemporary chess.

With his specific humour and ease, the author of "Ogres and Bogies" has given to these imaginary chess warriors not only an artistic, but also a human shape, with the wish that the unconventional logic of fairy chess will also provoke unexpected and imaginative twists also in other strict fields of human activities.

MARJAN KOVAČEVIĆ
Chess editor of the Politika newspaper
and world champion in chess problem solving

1. VAZIR (W)

(Vezir, der Wesir) 

Moves one square in a straight line, like the king in orthodox chess which is not allowed to move across. Example of a move: a1-a2 or a1-b1. One of the medieval Eastern chess pieces.

2. DABBABA (D)

(Dababa, der Dabbaba) (♖, ⊳⊲)

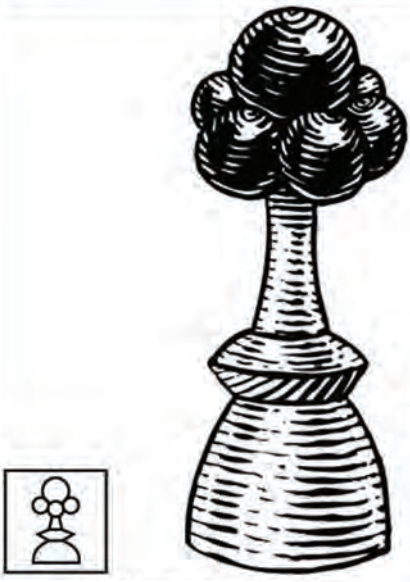
Moves two squares straight ahead and jumps over a piece. Example of a move: a1-a3.

A medieval Eastern chess piece.

3. FERS (F)

(Ferz, der Fers) (,)

Moves one square across. Example of a move: a1-b2. The king in orhodox chess is a combination of vazir and fers. Fers means "minister". At the end of the 15th century, by extending the diagonal move and adding the orthogonal one, the Queen was created. At first it was called the "raging" queen.



4. ALFIL (A)

(Alfil, der Alfil) ( , )

Moves two squares across and jumps over a piece. Example of a move: a1-c3. At the end of the 15th century the move of the alfil was extented to an arbitrary number of diagonal squares and so the bishop was created. At first this new piece was called by a name that meant "adviser to the king".

5. CAMEL (C)

(Kamila, das Kamel) ()

The knight extended – it is moving like the knight, but the longer side of a move contains four squares. Example of a move: a1-b4. Also a medieval Eastern chess piece.

6. GIRAFFE (GF)

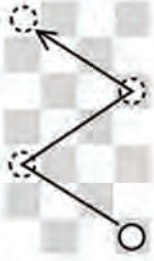
(Žirafa, die Giraffe) ()

The move of a camel is extended for one more square. Example of a move: a1-b5. A piece belonging to a newer age.

7. ZEBRA

(Zebra, das Zebra) ( )

The "Big jumper" – a move of the knight is extended in both directions. Example of a move: a1-c4.



8. THREEZEBRA

(Trizebra, das Dreizebra)

It is moved by making three consecutive moves of the zebra, but the third move has to be parallel with the first one, making an imaginary letter "N".

9. NIGHTRIDER (N) (♘)

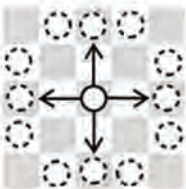
(Noćni jahač, der Nachtreiter)

A multimoving jumper. A move of the nightrider consists of several consecutive moves of the knight in a line, until a piece, or a board edge, stops it. Example of a move: Na1-b3-c5-d7. One of the most common fairy chess pieces.

10. GRASSHOPPER (G) 

(Skakavac, der Grashüpfer)

The "Queen's Jumper". Together with the nightrider, the most popular fairy chess piece. It moves like the queen, but has to jump over a piece of any colour on its way, and stays in the square behind. Without a support to jump over, it is immobile. It was invented by T. R. Dawson in 1912., inspired by the Chinese "rook". There are thousands of chess problems involving the grasshopper.



11. EMPRESS

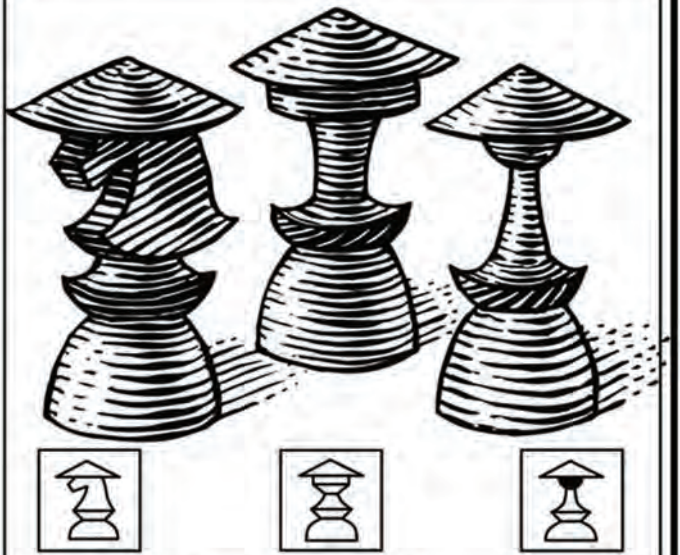
(Carica, die Kaiserin)

A composite piece. The Empress can move as both the rook and the knight. It was created at the end of the 19th century, like most of other fairy chess pieces. The Queen in orthodox chess, for example, is also a composite piece – the rook and the bishop combined.

12. MINOTAURUS

(Minotaur)

It can only move on the two diagonal corner squares. Example of a move: a2-b1.



13. MAO, PAO, VAO

Pieces from Chinese orthodox chess, which have recently been used in fairy chess.
MAO moves like the knight, but cannot jump over a piece from the next orthogonal square.
PAO is a rook that eats a piece only after jumping over it.
VAO is a bishop behaving like a pao.

14. DRAGON

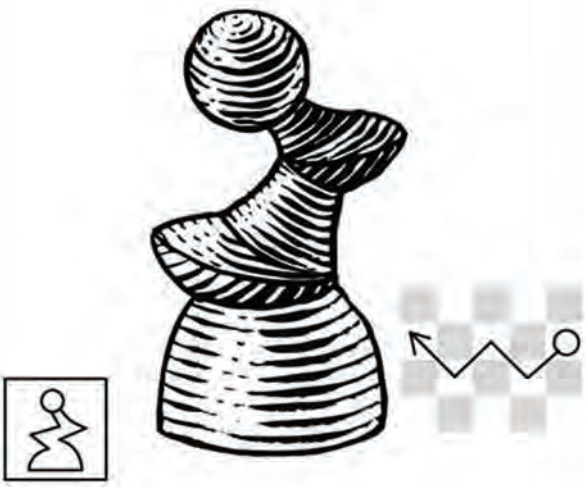
(Zmaj, der Drache)

A combination of knight and bishop (with no promotion allowed).

15. GENERAL

(General, der General)

Also known under the names of "terror" or "amazon", this piece is a combination of a queen and knight (or a rook, bishop and knight). In use from before the 14th century.



16. BOY SCOUT

(Skaut, der Pfadfinder)
It moves in a zig-zag diagonal. The Boy Scout can jump from square g6 to f5, e6, d5, c6 etc, or h7, g8.

17. CHAMELEON

(Kameleon, der Chamäleon)

With each move changes its behaviour in the following order: knight, bishop, rook, queen, knight, etc... The transformation is always made in the same order, unless some other arrangements are made. It was invented in 1925, and recently it has been gaining new popularity, thanks to the Bulgarian master of composition Petko Petkov.

18. HYDRA

(Hidra, die Hydra)

A pawn that earns promotion arriving at the eight square before any other piece of its colour has been taken, becomes a hydra. It moves like a two-move knight. In hydra there is no limit in direction as, for instance, in the case of the nightrider.

19. TANK

(Tenk, der Tank)

It moves one square straight or across, like a king. If an opponent's piece is standing in the next square, the tank can take it. If a piece is of the same colour (except for the king), the tank can push it for one square. Thus it can move a whole line of pieces of the same colour that stand in a line. It can turn pawns back to the starting position, from where they once again have the right to make a double move.

20. X-RAY PIECE

(Rentgentske figure, die Röndgenfigur)

During the game these pieces can pass through other pieces of any colour.

21. MERMAID

(Sirena, der Nixe)

It moves like a grasshopper, like a queen that has to jump over an opponent's piece and stands in the next square, but it takes the jumped-over piece.

22. KAMIKAZE PIECE

(Kamikaze, die Kamikaze-Figur)
"Suicidal" pieces named after the Japanese suicidal pilots from World War Two. While taking the opponent's piece, the kamikaze piece leaves the board together with the taken piece.

23. INVISIBLE PIECE

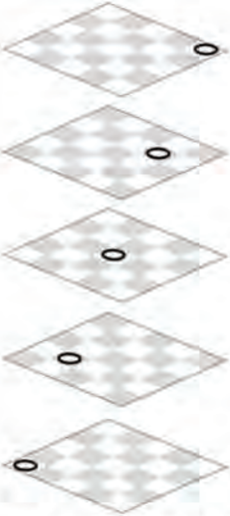
(Nevidljiva figura, der unsichtbare Stein)

A player can "activate" an invisible piece (such as a queen, rook, knight, bishop or any present fairy piece) in any free square from which the opponent's king has not been attacked. Only after this, can the "released" piece move and attack the king. If the player has no other piece to play, he is forced to activate the invisible piece. The pawn promoted into the invisible piece becomes invisible immediately. This square remains "occupied".

24. MAGIC PIECE

(Čarobne figure, die magische Figur)

"Magic pieces" are able to change the colour of the opponent's piece attacked. They have no influence on king and pawns. The invention of Brasilian problemists, in 1964.



25. UNICORN

(Jednorog, das Einhorn)

A three-dimensional bishop in Space Chess. Space Chess consists of five chess boards 5X5 positioned one over another. The normal bishop moves on each board separately, but the unicorn can walk from one board to another covering the space diagonally, standing in both black and white squares.

26. PYRAMID

(Piramida, die Pyramide)
The Pyramid stands still on its square blocking the pieces of any colour, and cannot be eaten.

27. ATOMIC BOMB

(Atomska bomba, die Atombombe)
A pawn can be promoted into an atomic bomb and be transported to any square, destroying as many squares around it as the players agree. It can only be used once. If the opponent's king is thus destroyed, the next highest piece takes the king's role. This piece was invented in 1949.

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