



# THE PUZZLING SIDE OF CHESS

Jeff Coakley

## PROVING TO BE DIFFICULT

number 252

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What makes a proof game difficult? Obviously length is a factor. But various tactics also complicate these puzzles. The most common are:

*switchback*: a piece returns to a square where it stood previously, often to its original square.

*tempo*: a piece takes an extra move to reach a certain square.

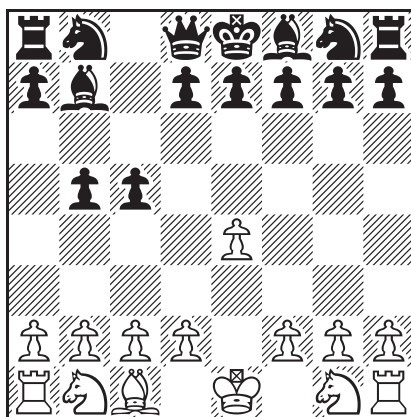
*impostor*: a piece on the back rank is not the one that started there.

*invisible capture*: a square on which a piece was taken is empty.

These and other tricks will be found in the problems presented here.



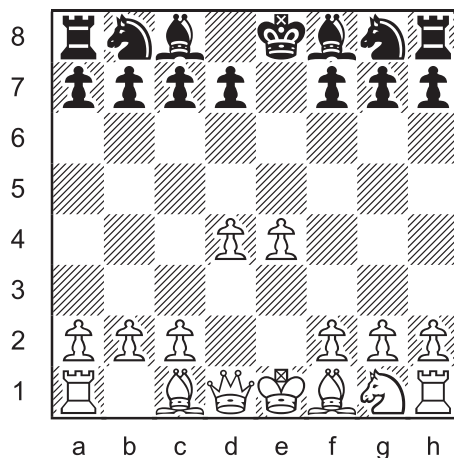
**Proof Game 106** (4.0 moves)



This position was reached after  
Black's fourth turn. What were the moves?

As every chess detective knows, proof game puzzles have a *move stipulation*. The given position must be reached in a precise number of turns, no more and no less. The games may be bizarre, and the strategy subpar, but the moves are legal.

**Longer Proof Game 153** (4.5 moves)

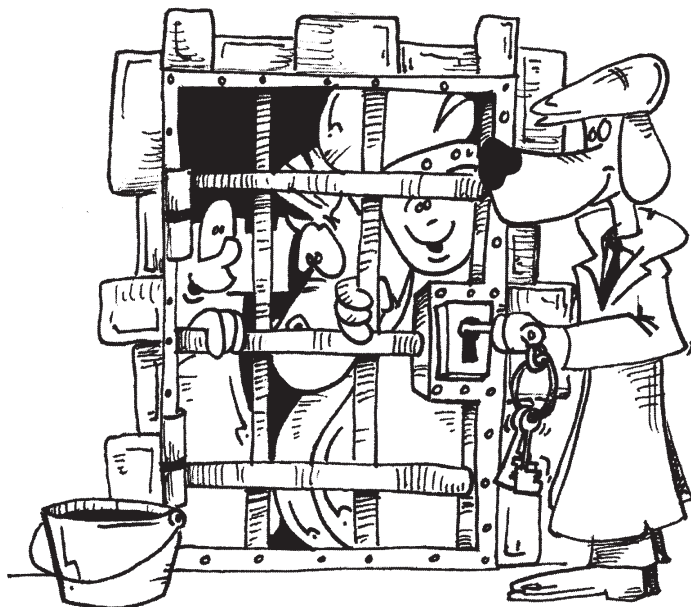


This position was reached after White's fifth turn. What were the moves?

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***The Chess Detective's Handbook***

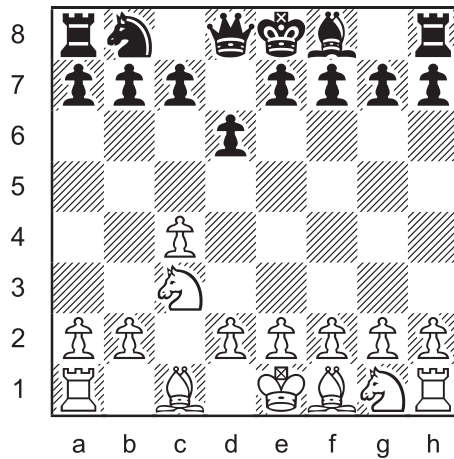
*by Harmonius Hound*



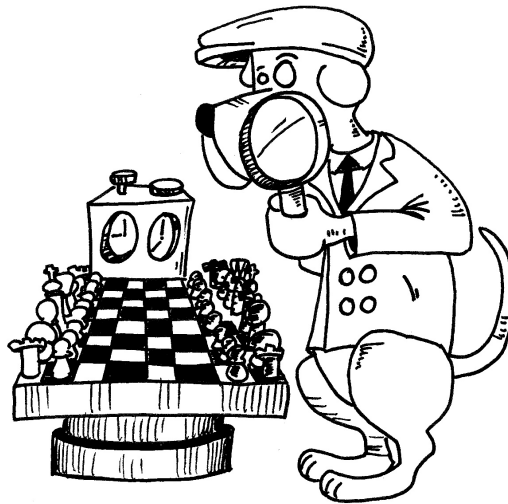
Chapter 10: The Aftermath of Solved Cases  
*Let the truth set you free.*

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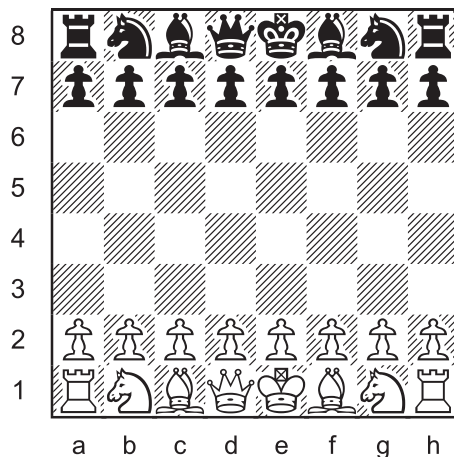
**Longer Proof Game 154** (5.0 moves)



This position was reached after Black's fifth turn. What were the moves?

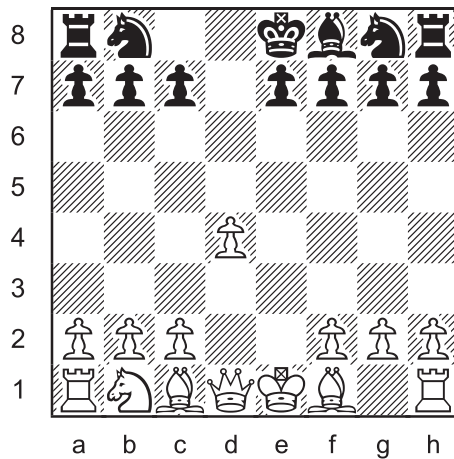


**Synthetic Game 60**

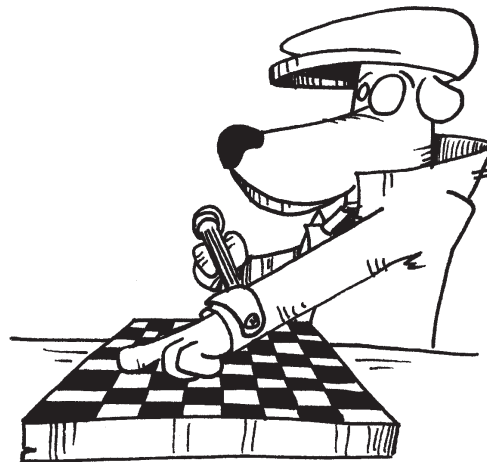


Compose a game that ends with 5.Rc3#.

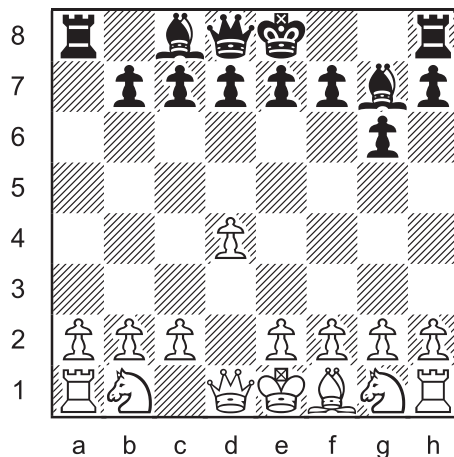
**Longer Proof Game 155** (5.5 moves)



This position was reached after White's sixth turn. What were the moves?

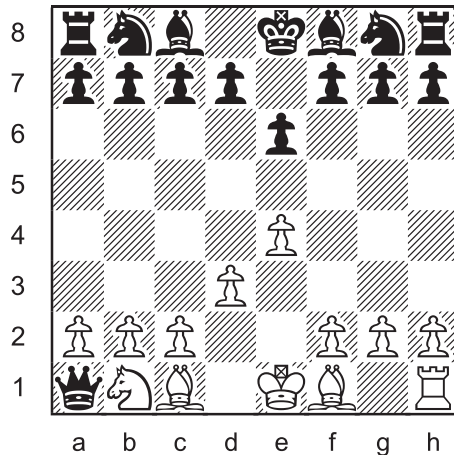


**Longer Proof Game 156** (6.0 moves)



This position was reached after Black's sixth turn. What were the moves?

**Longer Proof Game 157** (7.5 moves)

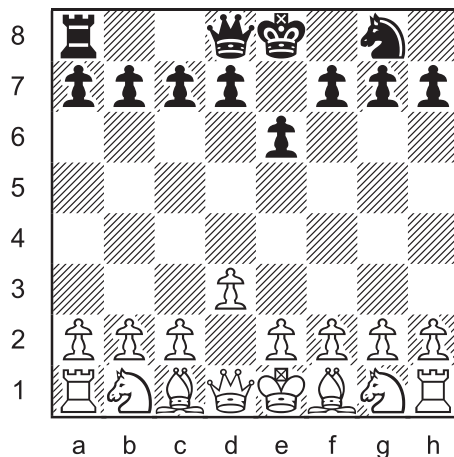


This position was reached after White's eighth turn. What were the moves?

**TRICK OR TREAT!**



**Longer Proof Game 158** (10.0 moves)



This position was reached after Black's tenth turn. What were the moves?

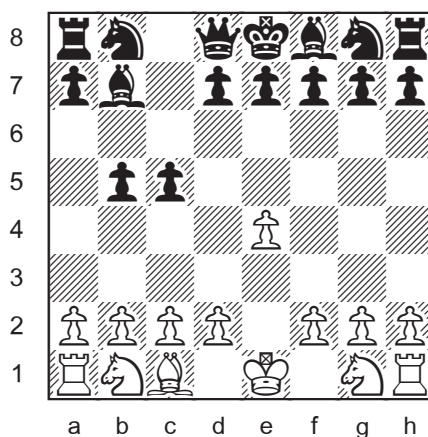
## SOLUTIONS

All problems by J. Coakley, *Puzzling Side of Chess* (2025).  
Proof game #157 was originally published in 2022.

**PDF hyperlinks.** You can advance to the solution of any puzzle by clicking on the underlined title above the diagram. To return to the puzzle, click on the title above the solution diagram.

**Archives.** Past columns are available in the *Puzzling Side* archives.

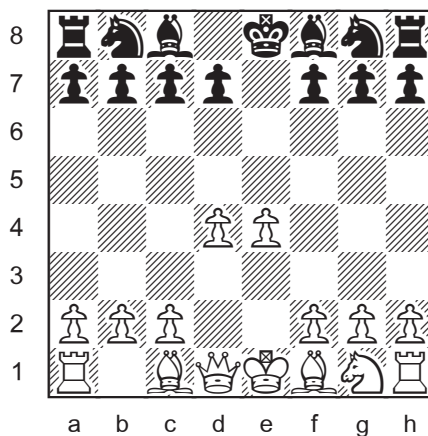
### Proof Game 106 (4.0 moves)



1.e4 c5 2.Ba6 bxa6 3.Qe2 Bb7 4.Qb5 axb5

The black b-pawn provides the trickery.

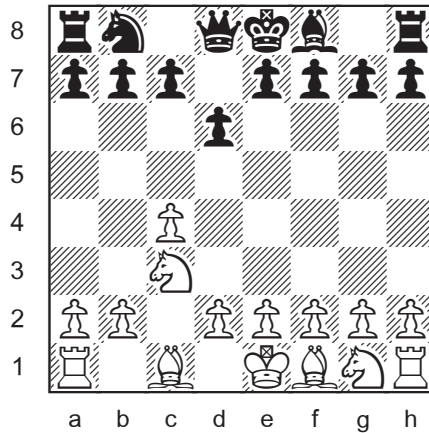
### Longer Proof Game 153 (4.5 moves)



1.d4 e5 2.Nd2 Qf6 3.Ndf3 Qxf3 4.exf3 e4 5.fxe4

An extremely well-hidden course of events.

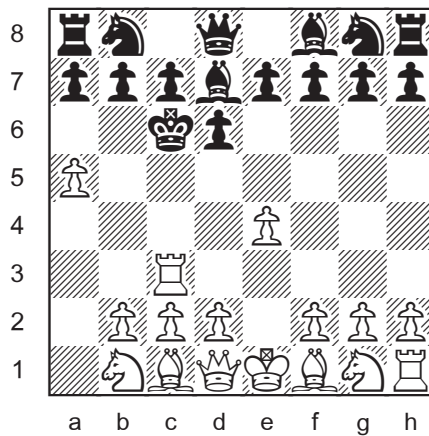
### Longer Proof Game 154 (5.0 moves)



1.c4 Nh6 2.Qc2 Nf5 3.Qxf5 d6 4.Qxc8 Qxc8 5.Nc3 Qd8  
An unusual white queen manoeuvre plus switchback black queen.

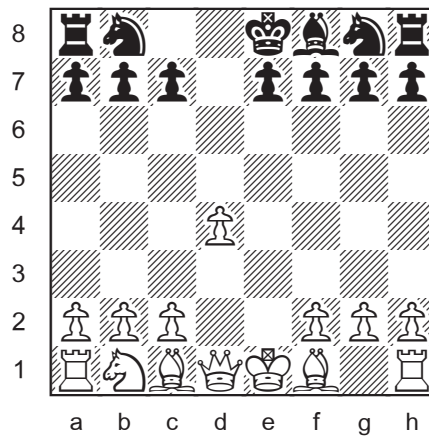


### Synthetic Game 60



1.a4 d6 2.a5 Kd7 3.Ra3 Kc6 4.e4 Bd7 5.Rc3#  
White's moves can be played in different orders.  
Black could also play 4...Qd7.

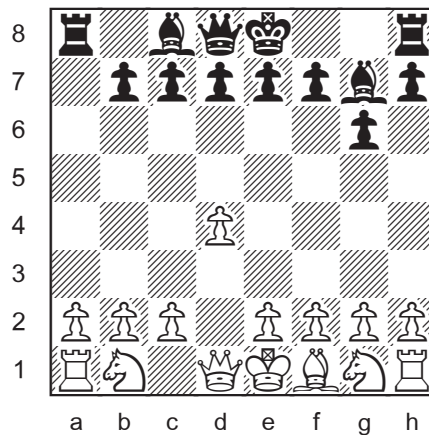
**Longer Proof Game 155** (5.5 moves)



1.e4 d5 2.exd5 Bg4 3.Qxg4 Qxd5 4.Nf3 Qxf3 5.d4 Qd1+ 6.Qxd1  
Switchback white queen with *Orbán effect*.



**Longer Proof Game 156** (6.0 moves)

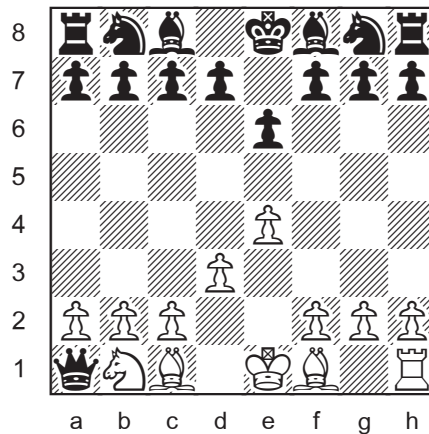


1.d3 Nh6 2.Bxh6 g6 3.Be3 Bh6 4.Bxa7 Bg7 5.Bxb8 Rxb8 6.d4 Ra8  
White pawn and black bishop tempos, black rook switchback.

## Longer Proof Game 157 (7.5 moves)

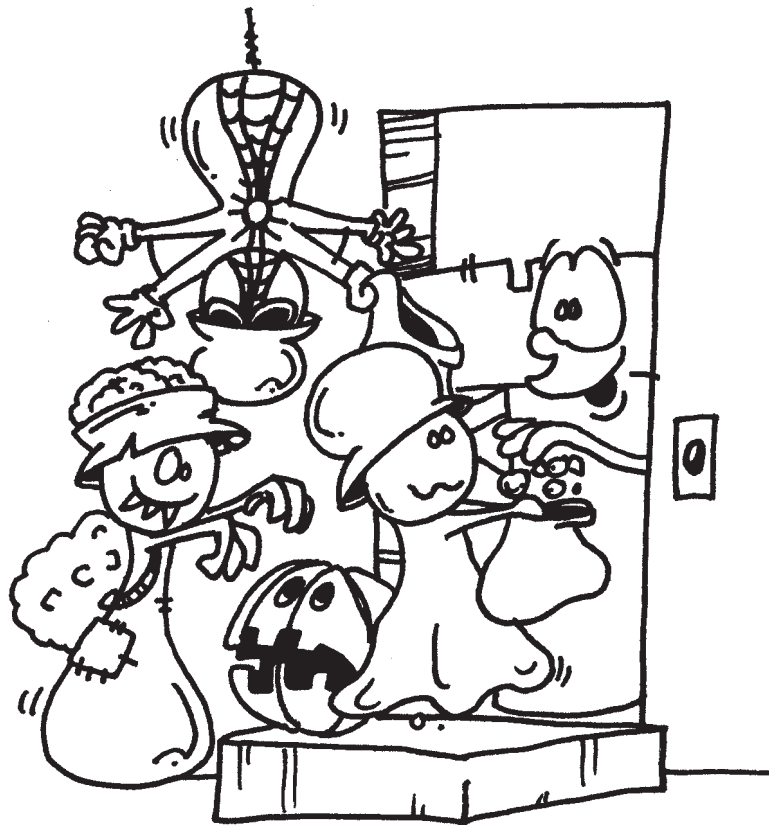
J. Coakley 2022

*Ben-Zvi Memorial Tourney*



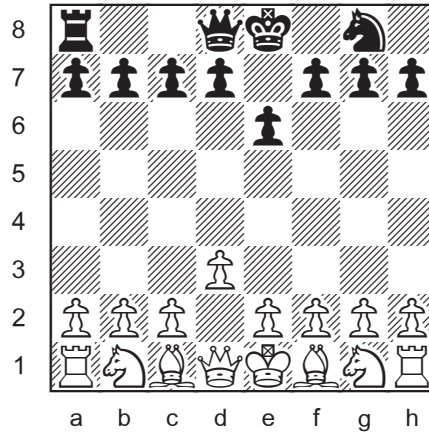
1.d3 e6 2.Bh6 Qg5 3.e4 Qc1 4.Ne2 Qxb1 5.Nc3 Qxa1  
6.Qb1 Qxb1+ 7.Bc1 Qa1 8.Nb1

An impostor white knight and three switchbacks, one by the white bishop on c1 and two by the black queen to b1 and a1.



*The difficult choice between trick or treat.*

## Longer Proof Game 158 (10.0 moves)



1.d3 e6 2.Qd2 Ke7 3.Qb4+ Kf6 4.Qxf8 Qe7 5.Qxc8 Nh6  
6.Qxb8 Rf8 7.Qxf8 Qd8 8.Qb4 Ng8 9.Qd2 Ke7 10.Qd1 Ke8

Switchback by the white queen and black king, queen, knight.



Until next time!

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