

Chess Keys:
The Promotional Queen
by Rachel A Schechter

"Hey, Miss Rachel!"

I look up and smile. Taylor Kang. Advanced middle school chess class. Super smart kid: how many quarks can fit on C6? Rated around 1250.

"Hey Taylor, how's it going?"

Taylor shakes off his jacket and boots. "It's a monsoon outside. Freezing rain—in April. Where's Spring?" He sets up the computer, the smart board. "Where's the demo?"

"In the closet. The music class needed this space so—"

"I'll get it." In and out of the closet. "Hey, there are 2 demos."

I nod, counting pawns.

"Yes, I'm thinking... one for position, one for analysis..."

"Cool, I'll configure them..."

Taylor configures the demo boards, bounds over to me, extends his hand.

"Congratulations," he says.

I look up from a board, smile and shake hands.

"Thanks. For what?"

"We heard you'll be writing monthly chess articles."

I blush, clumsy, scatter half a dozen pieces across the floor.

"Oh, maybe..."

"About what?" Taylor says, "Tournaments? Game Analysis? Software reviews? Will you be traveling?"

I scramble for the scattered pieces, eyeballing the rain, wondering if my car can travel three miles across town to my next chess class. "There are writers better suited for that. I would write about building chess boards or raising money for a community chess center. Maybe chess history or book reviews. I really like chess reality fiction too..."

"Chess reality fiction? You mean like *The Adventures of Sherlock Chess*?"

I laugh. Last semester three students chanced upon original episodes of Basil Rathbone's *Sherlock Holmes*, loved them, and so created Sherlock Chess and his brilliant sidekick Vishy-Anand Soise—chess cops who scour the globe solving chess mysteries

while searching for game winning recipes.

"My chess stories," I continue, "would contain elements of chessic reality but still be *fictive*."

Taylor Kang considers this.

"Real situations but different names, dates, and stuff?"

"Yes. Circumstances that chess players, coaches, parents, etc. can relate to—share, compare..."

"Then why not just use *real names and events*?"

I flip through a sheaf of positions:

"Oh, for broader appeal. For safety. For legality. For the same reasons books and films have 'disclaimers'. Sometimes it's preferable—for all concerned—that real names be withheld."

Taylor quiets, knits his brows, distracted.

I count the boards, the pieces and sigh. We are missing 2 more promo queens. That would make 7 queens lost in the past month. What was this about?

"What's going on with the promotional queens?" I say, "They're disappearing. Should we consult with Sherlock Chess?"

Taylor breathes sharply, knuckles the back of a chair, eyes wide, white. I lay down the pieces, touch his shoulder:

"Taylor, what's wrong?" I say softly.

"Oh, nothing—"

"Taylor—please, tell me."

He slams the chair on the floor:

"Eddie Lopez took the promotional queens. He pocketed them. He's stealing gym equipment, art supplies, and books. What's *wrong* with him? He's even stealing *lunch money*—and he's not *poor*. Last week he punched out Brian Patel, his best friend. What *happened* to him?"

I sigh, look through the window into the storm; the field is under water; and I am flooded with sadness for Eddie Lopez. Eddie Lopez... Smart, funny, popular. Just six months earlier, he was driving back with his family from Chicago O'Hare Airport, from an extended Thanksgiving weekend—they hit a patch of black ice. Mom killed, sister crippled, dad hospitalized with a nervous breakdown. Eddie emerged unscathed, so said the reports. Tears edge my eyes, my heart. Eddie Lopez. Stealing. Sudden-

ly so poor. Unscathed? Happy Thanksgiving.

I study the rain. Eddie had dropped in on our chess class a few times since returning to school but played little, said less, then disappeared.

"Maybe Eddie feels as if *he's* been robbed," I say quietly.

"Who would *steal* from him?" says Taylor. "*Everybody* likes him. *Everybody*—oh—you mean the accident...his...his...family... I, I'm sorry, I forgot about that, I...I'm so sorry..."

I pat his shoulder.

"We're all sorry. And you didn't forget, Taylor. You're remembering. Such a tragedy is very painful. Life 'steals' from all of us at times."

Eddie winces.

"His mom was so nice.... When we were young, she brought in the best chocolate chip cupcakes for his birthday—"

Tears down his cheeks.

When we were young... I clear my throat, step into the breach:

"You'll be okay, Taylor—"

"I know *I'll* be okay," he cries, "But what about *Eddie*? His life will *never* be the same. His sister's getting better. But he'll *never* be okay. It's your *mom*—how can you *recover*?"

I shift gears, slide a board between us.

"You're right," I say calmly, "It'll never be the same. But somehow, people recover." I start moving pieces. "White opens e4. Black's feeling a little frisky and decides to play the Scandinavian, d5. E4xd5, black foregoes Ng6 favoring the more traditional Qxd5. He's playing the line well—but—white aligns bishop, queen and g-knight and 6 moves later...traps the black queen on h5..."

Taylor sniffs back his tears, visibly relieved, studies the board, assumes white's position. I play black, narrate:

"Now we both know Black can resign at this point—losing his queen during the opening—and who would blame him? But that's *not* how we play this royal game, is it? "

"No," says Taylor decisively, "We don't give up. We regroup, reconsider, counterattack—"

We're both moving pieces.

"White's over-confident," I say, "and has dropped his guard, eager to mate. He underestimates his opponent..."

"Oops, I missed that—" says Taylor.

"Black is patient, cool, keeps his wits about him and now plays a variation of the Sicilian. ***This combination keys his success.***"

We trade kings' knights, queens' rooks.

"White tries to recoup but can't stave off the pawn storm—and 10, no, 12 moves later black promotes to queen on b1 and goes on to mate." I clear my throat. "It's a new game, a family re-structured, lives rebuilt..."

Taylor looks deep into the pieces then into my eyes.

"You mean Eddie's dad will remarry?"

"It's possible," I say, adjusting the promotional queen. "86% of widowers between the ages of 25-45 remarry within 2 years."

Hope lights his clear young eyes.

"What about Eddie?" he asks, "What about *now*?"

"Well, Eddie's here at school so he's clearly not ready to resign," I say, "but he's angry, he's grieving, he needs help restructuring his game. Maybe he can't *ask* for help—so he acts out, starts stealing, fighting—"

"So, is this kind of stealing acceptable?"

I shake my head:

"No. Stealing is never acceptable. Understandable but not acceptable. The tragedy *explains* his behavior but *doesn't excuse* it. Fortunately, our educational community can intervene before matters get worse."

Taylor nods, studies the tips of his sneakers, shifts his weight, twists a bishop, still distraught.

"What's worrying you, son?"

"It's just that—well, are you going to tell Principal Matthews?"

I nod.

"Yes, I am. Today. I think Eddie needs immediate counseling. It will *help* him. And I think Principal Matthews will agree. *Teamwork is the key to resolving this.* It's the responsible move. Is that a problem?"

"No, no, it's the right thing to do, it's just, just—"

"Just what?"

Taylor spins around, pained:

"JUST DON'T USE MY NAME—THAT'S ALL!"

"Taylor, take it easy—"

"I mean—tell Principal Matthews the truth, but please don't say it was me. I'll be the one who 'told on Eddie Lopez', the other kids will think I'm a wimp, a troublemaker, can't be trusted, no one will sit with me at lunch, I'll be the one who—"

"—who spoke up and saved his life? Years from now you'll—"

"—it'll be on Facebook, Twitter, my parents will want to 'discuss it'. I have a major chemistry exam tomorrow—I can't worry about years from now!"

Years from now. Only yesterday. I look through the window—the rain has yielded to a new sun, to a new spring—then look back to this sensitive young man. Why should any 12-year-old have to worry about 'years from now'? Or a patch of black ice that shatters his life? Eddie Lopez's face rises before me. Our community will support him. I smile at Taylor Kang, drape an arm about his shoulders. Quarks on C3.

"Don't worry, Taylor. You did the right thing talking with me. I'll take it from here."

"What will you tell Principal Matthews?"

"That since his family tragedy, Eddie Lopez is having issues we need to address. That I saw him stealing chess pieces on numerous occasions, that other faculty are likely noticing similar behavior, that we need to work together to bring Eddie 'back on board'.

Taylor gulps:

"You saw him?"

"Yes. Are we clear on this point Mr. Kang?"

Taylor sighs, grins, relieved:

"Yes, we are, Miss Rachel. Thank you, I—"

"Now will you please reset the board? Class convenes in 3 minutes."

Taylor resets the board, then:

"Hey, Miss Rachel, I just realized... This could be a piece of your reality chess fiction—and I helped you write it."

I smile, toss him a promotional queen.

"Thanks, Quarkman."

"Quarkman? I like that. Uh, and since it is fiction, could you make me taller, with cooler hair? Megan Phillips' steady boyfriend? Youngest person ever to win the Nobel Prize for Physics...?"

I laugh, toss him another promotional queen.

"It's reality fiction, Quarkman. Fiction not fantasy..."

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Rachel A Schechter

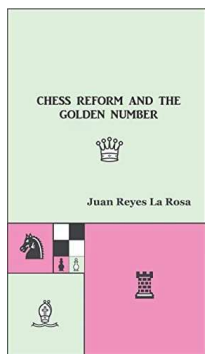
Names changed to protect our youth, our future.



CHESS REFORM AND THE GOLDEN NUMBER

by Juan Reyes La Rosa
Reviewed by Mark Capron

This book was sent to me by the author and is available from Amazon. Published on April 17, 2022 in English. It is 32 pages of a discussion on how the mobility of the pieces can be related back to the Golden Number. The reform in chess happened during the 13th century where the moves of the pieces transitioned to what we essentially use today. Many theories as to why the moves were updated exist. The subject of this book attempts to convince the audience that a mathematical reason was behind it all.



The golden number is a number of great fascination dating way back to 300 BC and perhaps further. It is 1.61803399 and is represented by the Greek letter *Phi*. It is the solution to a quadratic equation. It comes up in many real life applications from the pyramids to music, to facial features. Many

may have heard of this from the book or movie "The Da Vinci Code."

The author represents the moves of the pieces with a number and if lined up in order of piece strength the resulting sequence simplifies to the Fibonacci sequence, 0,1,1,3,5,8,13,21, ... The next number is simply the sum of the two previous numbers.

"Taking as premises that the total mobility value of the rook is the sum of the mobility values of its preceding pieces in importance, the bishop and the knight; and, that the mobility of the queen is the sum of the mobility values of its preceding pieces, the rook and the bishop; I propose the hypothesis that the mobility value of the pieces in chess corresponds to a pattern of the Fibonacci series, since the values of this series are obtained by the sum of its two preceding ones.

I believe the book is very interesting. You will have to decide if you agree with the author's perspective.