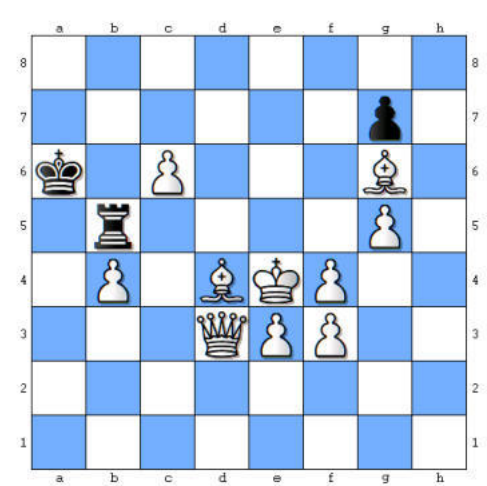




Anatoly Steepochkin

S#12 (C+ - Brute Force tested) – Two solutions

2nd Honorable Mention

This two-solution selfmate presents rich and ambitious play, with a clearly defined thematic nucleus. Both solutions revolve around White forcing Black to deliver mate with ...gxf5#, but the paths diverge into two parallel structures: one based on 1. Be8!, the other on 1. Bf7!. The dual introduction is intentional and structurally

coordinated, and the composer succeeds in giving both lines coherence and narrative flow. The main artistic weight, however, rests unmistakably on the 1. Be8! solution. This line displays two well-designed echo variations (after 4...Ka6 and 4...Kc6), each leading to a distinct yet thematically parallel finale. The manoeuvres around b5, c7, and the subsequent Rook interferences are handled with precision, and the overall geometry has both clarity and elegance. In particular, the White play involving c7–c8=Q, the Rook chases, and the Bishop switchback on d7 demonstrates careful construction: a well-polished thematic core that could easily stand alone.

The second solution, beginning with 1.Bf7!, is thematically related but notably less compelling. While it mirrors several motifs of the main line, its structure is looser, with fewer refined points and a more mechanical sequence. There is connection, but less artistic density; the manoeuvres feel more instrumental than expressive. In a single-solution setting, this would be considered a secondary branch rather than a co-equal thematic line. For this reason, the problem leaves a mixed impression: the composer's idea is strong, the main solution is prize-worthy. However, the presence of a second solution — though intentional — diminishes the aesthetic purity and dilutes the thematic impact of the stronger line. A one-solution version centred on 1.Be8! would likely achieve significantly higher value, and could have contended for a higher distinction.

Solution:

1.Bf5? g6 2. ...?? gxf5#

A) 1.Be8! g6 2. Qa3+ Ra5 3. b5+! Kxb5 4. c7+ Kc4 5. c8=Q+ Rc5 6. Qe6+ Rd5 7. Qc5+ Kb3 8. Bd7! Ka2 9. Qc1 Kb3 10. Qb2+ Kc4 11. Qa6+ Rb5 12. **Bf5 gxf5#**

other variation 4...Ka6 5. Qd6+ Kb7 6. Qc6+ Kc8 7. Qd7+ Kb7 8. c8=R+! Ka6 9. Rc6+ Kb5 10. Rb6+ Kc4 11. Bf7+ Rd5 12. **Qf5 gxf5#**

B) 1.Bf7! G6 2. Qa3+ Ra5 3. bxa5 Kb5 4.a6 Kxc6 5.Be8+ Kc7 6. a7 K~any 7. a8=Q Kc7 8. Q3a5+ Kd6 9. Q8d8+ Ke6 10. Bb5 Kf7 11. Bd3 Ke6 12. **Qf5+ gxf5#**