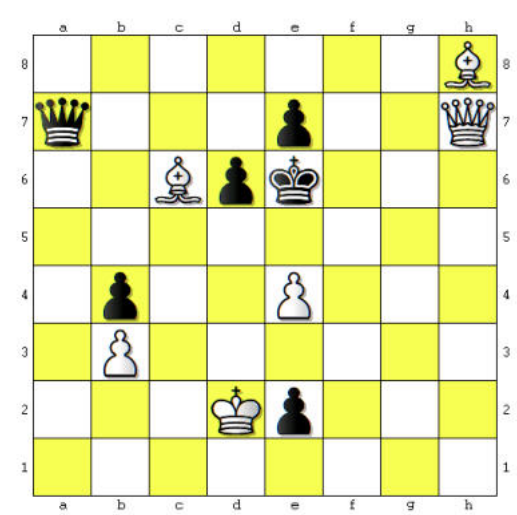




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 Black to move – White wins
3rd Honorable Mention

A charming study about one of my favourite themes. The central idea belongs to a well-known family of studies, yet it is presented here in a particularly attractive and convincing form. I cannot deny that this study has a deep effect when the solution gradually develops, and I'm not talking just about foresight effect.

I am talking about the immediate reaction of the hippocampus in your brain when you see the second and the last move and you connect them, as a flash of insight. Something that you understand and remember almost instantly and refuses to be forgotten, even if it appeared so mysterious in the beginning.

Of course, I have to point out also the drawbacks. The implementation of a known idea in a new position and some little defects as Black to move, overgrown variations and the overall limited active role of the white light-squared Bishop, which moves only once in a sideline (although its move is crucial to preserve the win), prevent this work to reach a higher ranking. But the "mystery" has been revealed with competence and elegance.

Solution as presented by the Author, with relative comments and just some refinements:

{White is significantly superior and threatens three checkmates so Black must check the white King and hoping for perpetual checks. Black has objectively only three active moves: 1...Qa2 (the first main line), 1... Qe3+ (the second main line) and additional attempt 1...e1Q+.}

1 ... Qa2+ (1. .. Qe3+ 2. Kc2 {!! One more spectacular move on the very beginning play in another main line.} (2. Kxe3 ? 2. .. e1=Q+ {As it was shown in the thematic try of the first main line 1...Qa2+! white could not escape from the perpetual check on both king and queen sides.} 3. Kd3 (3. Kf3 Qf1+ 4. Kg4 Qg2+) 3. .. Qd1+ ! 4. Kc4 Qc2+) (2. Ke1 ? Qc1+ {!!} (2. .. Qg1+ ? 3. Kxe2 !)) 2. .. Qc5+ (2. .. e1=N+ 3. Kd1 ! (3. Kb1 ? Qxb3+ 4. Bb2 Qd3+ 5. Ka2 Qc4+ 6. Ka1 Qa6+ 7. Kb1 Qd3+) 3. .. Qd3+ 4. Kxe1 Qe3+ 5. Kd1 ! Qd3+ 6. Kc1 Qe3+ 7. Kc2 Qe2+ 8. Kb1 {Position A.} Qf1+ 9. Ka2 Qa6+ 10. Ba4 Qe2+ 11. Bb2 {Both white bishops actively protect the King on the Queen's side.}) (2. .. Qc1+ 3. Kxc1 e1=Q+ 4. Kc2 Qe2+ 5. Kb1 {etc, Position A.}) 3. Kb2 (3. Kd3 Qe3+ {Waste of time}) 3. .. Qg5 !?

4. Qh3+ ! Kf7 5. Qf3+ ! (5. Bd5+ ? Kg6 {!}) 5. .. Kg8 6. Qxe2
 {White Queen plays actively.}) (1. .. e1=Q+ {A less favorable option.} 2. Kxe1 Qe3+ 3.
 Kd1! (3. Kf1? Qc1+ {!}) 3. .. Qd3+ 4. Kc1 Qe3+ 5. Kc2
 Qe2+ 6. Kb1 {etc. Position A.})

2. Bb2 {!! *The mysterious sacrifice, whose effect will only be visible ten moves later, is a typical example of the annihilation theme. This move is the highlight of the study!*}

{Thematic try:} (2. Ke1 ? Qb1+ 3. Kxe2 Qc2+ 4. Kf3 (4. Ke3 Qc1+ ! 5. Kd3 Qd1+ !
 6. Kc4 Qc2+ 7. Kxb4 Qc5+ 8. Ka4 Qa7+ 9. Kb5 Qc5+ {Perpetual check on
 Queen's side.}) 4. .. Qd1+ 5. Kf4 Qd2+ 6. Kg4 Qg2+ 7. Kh5 Qh3+ 8. Kg6 Qg4+
 9. Kh6 Qf4+! (9. .. Qh4+? 10. Kg7 Qf6+ 11. Kg8) 10. Kg7 Qf7+
 11. Kh6 Qf4+ {Perpetual check on King's side. To summarize, in the thematic
 try the white king is not safe and cannot escape from the perpetual check
 on both (Queen's or the King's) sides.})

**2. .. Qxb2+ 3. Ke1 Qc1+ 4. Kxe2 Qc2+ 5. Kf3 Qd1+ 6. Kf4 Qd2+ 7. Kg4 Qg2+ 8. Kh5
 Qh3+ 9. Kg6 Qg4+ 10. Kh6 Qf4+ 11. Kg7 Qf7+ 12. Kh8** {!!! *It is the only place on the
 board where the white king can hide from perpetual check!*} **1-0**