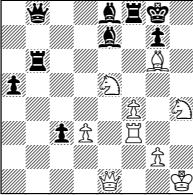
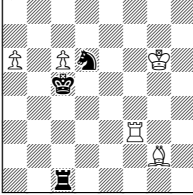
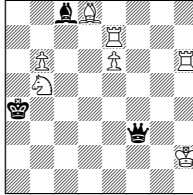
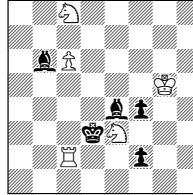


Special thanks to the editors of *StrateGems* for appointing me to judge such an important event. My thanks also go to Franjo Vrabec as well as to all participants.

Mr. Vrabec sent me twenty-one studies (by twenty-two composers from sixteen countries) with diagrams and solutions. The technical aspects and possible anticipations have been verified. An anticipation was found in the study **E0331**.

Here is my decision:

1st-3rd Prize Peter Krug	1st-3rd Prize David Gurgendze & Martin Minski	1st-3rd Prize Pavel Arestov & Anatoly Skripnik	Special Prize L'uboš Kekely & Michal Hlinka
			
Win	(9+9) Win	(5+3) Win	(7+3) Draw

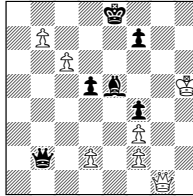
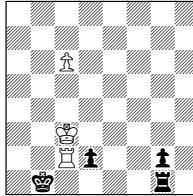
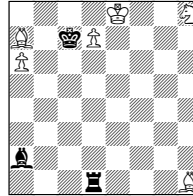
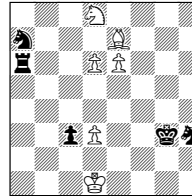
1st-3rd Prize - (Peter Krug - E0338) 1.Rh3! Bd7! [1...Rxf4 2.Bh7+ Kf8 3.Shg6+ Bxg6 4.Sxg6+ Kf7 5.Qxe7+ mate, or 1...Qc8 2.Sf5 Rxf5 (2...Qxf5 3.Bxf5 Rxf5 4.Qe4 Rh5 5.Rxh5 Bxh5 6.Qc4 +) 3.Bh7+ Kf8 4.Bxf5 Qxf5 5.Rh8+ mate] **2.Bh7+!** (2.f5? Bg5! =) **2...Kxh7 3.Qe4+!** (3.Sf5+? Rh6 4.Sxh6 Bxh3 =) **3...Kg8 4.Qd5/c4+ Kh7** (4...Be6 5.Shg6 +) **5.Qe6!** (5.Sxd7? Rb1+! 6.Kh2 Qxf4+ 7.g3 Qh6! 8.Qe4+ Kg8 9.Sxf8 Bxf8 10.Qc4+ Kh7 =) **5...Rb1+ (5...Rxf4 6.Shf3+ Bh4 7.Sg5+ Kh8 8.Sg6+ mate) 6.Kh2 Rh1+ (6...Bxe6 7.Sf5+ Kg8 8.Sxe7+ mate) 7.Kxh1 Qb1+ 8.Kh2 Qg1+ 9.Kxg1 Bc5+ 10.d4!** (10.Kh2? Bxe6 =) **10...Bxe6 11.f5!** (11.Sf5+? Kg8 12.dxc5 Rxf5 13.Rxc3 Rxf4 =) **11...Bxd4+ 12.Kh1 Bxe5** (12...g5 13.Shf3+ Kg8 14.Sxd4 c2 15.Rc3 Bxf5 16.Kh2 +, or 12...g6 13.Shf3+ Kg7 14.Sxd4 Bxf5 15.Rxc3 +) **13.Sg6+ Kg8 14.Rh8+ Kf7 15.Rxf8#**. The key resembles a move from a chess game. There are various lines of attacks on the black king, culminating in a mate or in winning positions. Without a doubt a study for the pleasure of fans as well as a tutorial in the exercise of the combinative game.

1st-3rd Prize - (David Gurgendze & Martin Minski - E0328) 1.c7! (1.a7? Ra1 2.c7 Rxa7 =, or 1.Ra3? Rg1! 2.Ra2 Sb5 3.Kf6 Kb6 =) **1...Re2** [1...Rg1 2.Rf2 Kb6 3.Kh6!! (3.Kh5? Ra1! 4.Rc2 Ra5+! 5.Kg4 Kxa6 6.Rc6+ Kb7! =) 3...Ra1 (3...Kxa6 4.Rf6! Ka7! 5.Rxd6 Rh1+! 6.Kg5 +, or 4...Bxg2 5.c8Q+ +, or 3...Rc1 4.Rf6! Kxc7 5.a7 +, or 3...Sc8 4.Bb7 +, or 3...Kxc7 4.a7 +) 4.Rc2! Kxa6 (4...Rxa6 5.Rc6+ Ka7 6.Rxd6! Rxd6+ 7.Kh5 +, or 4...Sc8 5.Bb7 +) 5.Rc6+ Ka7! 6.Rxd6 Rh1+! 7.Kg5 Rh5+ 8.Kf4 Rf5+ 9.Ke3 Rf3+ (9...Re5+ 10.Be4 +) 10.Kxf3 +] **2.Bh1!!** (2.Bh3? Kb6! 3.Rf6 Kxc7 =, or 2.Bf1? Kb6! 3.Rf6 Kxc7 =, or 2.a7? Rxcg2+ =) **2...Rc1 3.a7 Ra1 4.Rf5+!** (4.a8Q? Rxa8 5.Rc3+ Kd4 =, or 4.Rc3+? Kd4/b4 =, or 4.c8Q+? Sxc8 5.Rf5+ Kd4! =, or 4.Bg2? Rxa7 =) **4...Kb6 5.c8Q+!** (5.a8Q? Rxa8 6.c8Q Rxc8! =) **5...Sxc8 6.a8S+!** (6.a8Q? Se7+! 7.Kf7 Rxa8 8.Rf6+ Sc6! =) **6...Rxa8 (6...Ka7 7.Rf7+ Kb8 8.Rb7+! Kxa8 9.Rb1+ +, or 6...Ka6 7.Sc7+ Kb6 8.Sd5+ +) 7.Rf6+ Ka7 8.Rf7+ Kb8 9.Rb7#**. Despite reduced material, there is a surprising variety of unambiguous sequences. A pleasant study with a timely promotion into a minor piece, culminating in a mate in the main line.

1st-3rd Prize - (Pavel Arestov & Anatoly Skripnik - E0322) 1.Sc3+! (1.Ra7+? Kb4! 2.Rh4+ Kxb5 3.Ra5+ Kc6 4.Rc4+ Kd6 =) **1...Qxc3** (1...Kb3 2.Rf7 +) **2.Ra7+ (2.Rh4+? Kb5 3.Rh5+ Kb4 4.Rh4+ Kb5 5.Rh5+ Kb4 6.b7 Qd2+ =) 2...Ba6!** (2...Kb4 3.Rh4+ Kb5 4.Rh5+ Kb4 5.Be7+ +) **3.Rxa6+ (3.Rh4+? Kb3 4.Rh3 Bd3 5.Rf7 Qd2+ 6.Kg3 Qe1+ 7.Kg2 Kc4 8.Rf4+**

Be4+ 9.Rhf3 Kd5=, or 3.Rf6? Qd2+ 4.Kg3 Qxd8 =) 3...Kb5 4.Ra5+! (4.Ra2? Qe5+ 5.Kg2 Qe4+ 6.Kf2 Qf4+ =, or 4.e7? Qe5+ 5.Kh3 Kxa6 =) **4...Kxa5 (4...Qxa5 5.Rh5+ +) 5.b7+ Ka6!** (5...Ka4 6.Rh4+! Ka3 7.Rh3 +) **6.e7+!** (6.b8Q? Qh3+! 7.Kxh3 stalemate) **6...Kxb7 7.Rb6+!** (7.e8Q? Qd2+! 8.Kg3 Qxh6 =) **7...Kc8!** (7...Ka7 8.e8Q +) **8.e8R!** (8.e8Q? Qg3+! 9.Kxg3 stalemate) **8...Qc2+ 9.Kg3!** (9.Kh3? Qf5+ =) **9...Kd7 10.Rb6! Qb3+ (10...Qc3+ 11.Kg4 Qc4+ 12.Re4! +) 11.Re3!** +-. Elimination of the threat of stalemate with a rook's promotion, tries, sacrifices and precise moves, and the exchange of pieces, completes a study of significant artistic merit.

Special Prize - (L'uboš Kekely & Michal Hlinka - E0323) 1.Rc3+! (1.Rxf2? fxe3 2.Ra2 e2 3.Ra3+ Kd2 4.Ra2+ Bc2 5.Ra1 Bd8+ 6.Kf4 Bc7+ 7.Kg5 Bd1 8.Ra2+ Ke3 9.Rxe2+ Bxe2! →) **1...Kxc3 2.Sd1+ with: a) 2...Kd3 3.Sxf2+ Bxf2 4.c7 Bb7 5.Sd6 Bb6 6.Sxb7 Bxc7 7.Sc5+ (7.Kg4? Ke3 →) 7...Ke3 8.Kf5! f3 9.Se4 Bd8 (9...Ba5 10.Sf6 f2 11.Sg4+ =) 10.Sc3 (10.Ke5? Bb6! 11.Kf5 Bd4 +) 10...f2 11.Sd1+ Ke2 12.Sxf2 =; b) 2...Kd4 3.Sxf2 Bd8+ 4.Kg4!** (4.Kxf4? Bxc6 zz 5.Sg4 Bc7+ 6.Kg5 Bd7 7.Sa7 Kc5 →) **4...Bxc6 (4...Bd5 5.Sa7 Bc4 6.Kxf4 =, or 4...Bg2 5.Sd6 Bxc6 6.Sf5+ Ke5 7.Sd3+ =) 5.Kxf4 Bb7 (5...Bc7+ 6.Kg5 =, or 5...Kd5 6.Se4 =, or 5...Bd7 6.Sd6 Bc7 7.Sfe4 =) 6.Sa7 (6.Sd6? Bc7 →) 6...Bc7+ (6...Kc5 7.Se4+ Kb6 8.Sb5! Kxb5 9.Sd6+ =) 7.Kf5 (7.Kg4/Kg5? Kc5 →) 7...Kc5 8.Se4+ Kb4 (8...Kb6 9.Sc3 Kxa7 10.Sb5+ =) 9.Sc3! Kxc3 10.Sb5+ Kc4 11.Sxc7 =**. With appropriate trials, in two lines of unambiguous sequences, White avoids the domination of bishops over knights.

Special Prize Andrzej Jasik	Honorable Mention Yochanan Afek <i>Ded. to Sabina F. Foisor</i>	Honorable Mention Richard Becker	Honorable Mention Steffen S. Nielsen & Martin Minski
			
Win	(7+6) Draw	(3+4) Win	(6+3) Draw

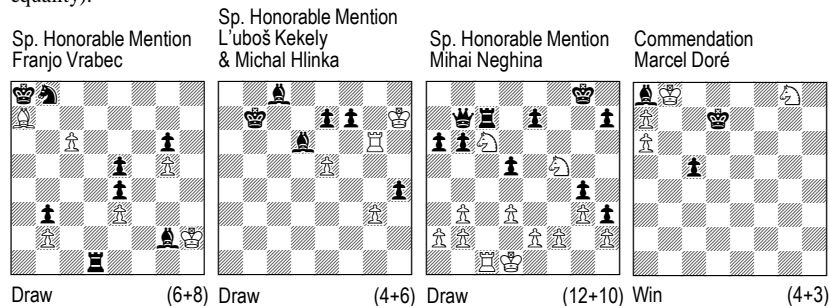
Special Prize - (Andrzej Jasik - E0337) 1.d4! (1.Qg4? Qb1 =) with: **a) 1...Qxd4 2.Qg7!!** (2.b8Q+? Bxb8 3.Qg8+ Ke7 4.Qxb8 Qf6 =) **2...Bxg7 (2...Ke7 3.b8Q Bxb8 4.Qxd4 +, or 2...Qb2 3.c7! Qxb7 4.Qg8+ Kd7 5.Qd8+ Kc6 6.c8Q+ +) 3.b8Q+ Ke7 4.Qc7+ (4.Qb7+? Kf6 =) +; b) 1...Bc7! 2.Qg4! Qb6! 3.Qd7+ Kf8 4.Kh6! zz Bb8 5.Qc8+ Ke7 6.Qxb8 Qxc6+ 7.Kg5! (7.Kh5? Qg6+ +) 7...Qf6+ 8.Kg4 Qg6+ 9.Kxf4 +**. Study with two lines of short sequences, rich content and surprising moves.

Honorable Mention - (Yochanan Afek - E0332) 1.Rb2+! [1.Rxd2? Rc1+ 2.Kb3 Rc3+! 3.Kxc3 g1Q 4.Rb2+ Ka1! (4...Kc1 5.Rb4/Rb5 =) 5.Rb4 Qc1+ →] **1...Ka1 2.Rxd2 Rc1+ 3.Kb3 with two Echo main lines: a) 3...Rc3+! 4.Kxc3 g1Q 5.Rd4! Qc1+ 6.Kb3! Qb2+ 7.Kc4 Qb6 8.Kd5 Qb5+ 9.Kd6** Positional draw; **b) 3...Rb1+!** (3...g1Q is met by 4.Ra2+ Kb1 5.Rb2+ Ka1 6.Ra2+ Perpetual check) **4.Ka3! Rb3+!** (4...g1Q?? 5. Ra2#) **5.Kxb3 g1Q 6.Ra2+ Kb1 7.Rb2+ Kc1 8.Rc2+ Kd1 9.Rc4!** Positional draw. A miniature with notable tries in two unambiguous lines. It's notable, from a technical point of view, how White obtains equality against the queen.

Honorable Mention - (Richard Becker - E0335) 1.Bf2! [Thematic try 1.Be3? Rxd7 2.Bf4+ Kc8 3.Bf3 (3.Be4(g2) Rd8+ 4.Ke7 Rd7+ 5.Kf8 Rd8+ 6.Kg7 Rd7+ 7.Kh6 Bc4 8.Bf5(Bh3) Bxa6 9.Sf7 Be2! 10.Bg3 Bd1 =) 3...Bc4(Bd5) 4.Bg4 Be6! 5.a7 Rd8+ 6.Ke7 Kb7! 7.Kxe6 (7.Kxd8 Bxg4 8.Be3 Bh5! =) 7...Rxb8 8.Be3 Re8+ =] **1...Rxd7 2.Bg3+ (2.a7? Rd8+ 3.Ke7 Rxb8 =) 2...Kc8 3.Bf3! Rd8+ (3...Bc4(Bd5) 4.Bg4 Be6 5.a7 Rd8+ 6.Ke7 Kb7 7.Kxe6! Rxb8 8.Bf2 Rf8 9.Bc5 +) 4.Ke7 Rd7+ 5.Kf8!** [Thematic try 5.Kf6? Bc4 6.Bg4 Bxa6 7.Sf7 Bf1! 8.Kg5 (8.Kg7 Bb5! 9.Kf8 Kb7 =, or 8.Kg6 Bd3+ 9.Kh5 Bc2 =) 8...Bb5! 9.Sd6+ Kd8 10.Sxb5 Rd5+ =]

5...Rd8+ 6.Kg7 Rd7+ (6...Rg8+ 7.Kh7 Rxc3 8.a7 +-) **7.Kh6 Bc4 8.Bg4 Bxa6 9.Sf7 Bf1 10.Kh5 Ba6 11.Kh4 Bf1 12.Bf4 Ba6 13.Kg3 Bf1 14.Kf2 Ba6 15.Bg3 Bd3 16.Bxd7+ Kxd7 17.Se5 +-.** Notable "travel" of the white king, and in particular the thematic tries. If Black avoids the pin of his rook, there is more than one alternative to win. A study difficult to solve in any competition with limited time.

Honorable Mention - (Steffen S. Nielsen & Martin Minski - E0324) 1.Bh4+! (1.d7/Bf6? Ra2! +, or 1.Kc2? Sb5! +) **1...Kxh4 2.e7 Sf2+ [2...Ra1+ 3.Kc2 Ra2+ 4.Kc1! Re2 5.Se6! Sf2 6.Sf4! (6.e8Q? Sxd3+ 7.Kd1 Rd2+ mate) 6...Sxd3+ 7.Sxd3 Sc6 8.Sf4 Re1+ 9.Kc2 Kg5 10.Sd5 Sd4+ 11.Kxc3 Sb5+ 12.Kd2 =] 3.Kc2 Ra2+ 4.Kxc3 Re2 5.Se6! Sb5+ (5...Rxe6 6.d7 =) 6.Kh3! Sxd6 7.e8Q! Sxe8 8.Sd4 Re1/Re5/Rd2 (8...Re3/Re7 9.Sf5+) 9.Sf3 =.** With a nice key and an interesting complementary line, domination is shown (not very common to achieve equality).



Sp. Honorable Mention - (Franjo Vrabec - E0326) 1.c7! Rh1+ 2.Kg3! [2.Kxg2? Rh8 3.cxb8Q+ Rxb8 4.Bxb8 Kxb8 5.Kh2 Kb7 6.Kg2 Kb6 7.Kf2 Kc7 8.Ke2 Kd6 9.Kd2 Ke6 10.Kc3 Kf5 11.Kxb3 Kg4 12.Kc2 (12.Kc3 Kxg5 13.Kc4 Kf5 14.Kd5 g5 15.b4 g4 16.b5 g3 17.b6 g2 18.b7 g1Q 19.b8Q Qd1+ 20.Kc5 Qc1+ 21.Kd6 Qa3+ 22.Kd7 Qxe3 +-) 12...Kxg5 +-] **2...Rhh3+ 3.Kf2! Rf3+ 4.Kg1! Rf1+ 5.Kh2! Rh1+ 6.Kg3! Rh8 7.cxb8Q+ Rxb8 8.Bxb8 Kxb8 9.Kxg2 Kc7 10.Kh1!!** (10.Kf2? Kd7! +) **10...Kc6** (10...Kd7 11.Kh2 Kc6 12.Kg1 =) **11.Kg1 Kd5 12.Kf2 Kc4** (12...Ke6 13.Kg3 Kf5 14.Kh4 =) **13.Ke2 =.** An appropriate and ingenious introduction to arrive at pawns ending, which can be seen in configurations by the Hungarian composer K.Ebersz, which contain precise technical movements of the white king.

Sp. Honorable Mention - (L'uboš Kekely & Michal Hlinka - E0329) 1.Rg5! (1.exd6? fxe6 2.dxe7 Bd7 3.gxh4 Be8 4.Kg7 Kc6 5.Kf8 Kd7 -) **1...f6!** (1...h3 2.exd6 exd6 3.Kg7 Kc6 4.Kxf7 d5 5.Rg8 =) **2.exf6** (2.Rg7/Rg8? fxe5 3.gxh4 e4 +, or 2.Rh5? Bxe5 -) **2...exf6 3.Rg7+ (3.Rb5+? Kc6 -) 3...Kc6 4.gxh4 Bf5+ 5.Kh6!** (5.Kg8? Be6+ 6.Kh7 f5 7.Rg6 Kd5 8.Rg1 f4 -+, or 5.Kh8? Bd3! 6.h5 f5 7.Rg2 Kd5 +) **5...Bf8** (5...Bf4+ 6.Kh5 =) **6.h5!** (Thematic try 6.Kh5? Kd6! (6...Bxg7? stalemate) 7.Rb7 Be7! 8.Kh6 Be4 9.Ra7 Bf8+ 10.Kh5 Ke6! -) **6...Kd5** stalemate. Entertaining study with thematic try and culminating in a stalemate.

Sp. Honorable Mention - (Mihai Neghina - E0321) 1.Sxe7+! (1.b4? Rxc6 2.Rxc6 Qd7 -+; 1.Sfd4? e5 2.Sxe5 Rxc1+ 3.Kxc1 Qc8+ -) **1...Kf8** (1...Rxe7 2.Rc8+ Kf7 3.Sd6+) **2.Sg6+ (2.Rxc7 Qxc7 3.Sg6+ Ke8 -) 2...hxg6 (2...Kg8 3.Sge7+ =; 2...Ke8 3.Sd6+) 3.Rxc7 (3.Sd4? Rxc1+ 4.Kxc1 Qf7 -) 3...Qxc7 4.Sd4 Qe5 5.e3 b5 6.a3 Kf7 7.Kd2 Qb8 8.Kd1 a5 9.Kd2 a4 10.b4 =** Inspired by V.Chekover 1947 study. Fortress of the White, which achieves equality with remarkable sacrifice.

Commendation - (Marcel Doré - E0333) 1.Sf6+! [Thematic try: 1.Se7? c4! 2.Sc8 c3! (2...Bh1? 3.Sb6+ Kd8 4.Sxc4 +-) 3.Sb6+ Kd6!! (3...Kd8? 4.Sxa8! +- see main line) 4.Sxa8 c2 5.Sc7 c1Q 6.Sb5+ Kd7 7.a8Q Qc8+ 8.Ka7 Qc5+ positional draw] **1...Kd8 2.Se8 c4 3.Sc7!** (3.Kxa8? Ke8 4.Sd6+ Kc7 5.Sxc4 Kc8! =) **3...c3!** (3...Bh1? 4.Se6+! and White wins easily, e.g. 4...Ke7 5.Sc5 Kd8 6.Sb7+ +-) **4.Sxa8!** (4.Kxa8? Kc7! 5.Sd5+ Kc8 6.Sxc3 Kc7! =) **4...c2 5.Sc7** (switchback) **5...c1Q 6.Se6+! Kd7 7.a8Q Qc8+ 8.Ka7 +-.** (Perpetual check is not possible for black with the Knight on e6; see thematic try 1.Se7?). An interesting miniature with appropriate tries.



Sp. Commendation - (Daniel Keith & Pavel Arestov - E0327) 1.a5! [1.Bc3+? Ke2! 2.a5 Rd6! 3.Be5 (3.Bb7 Rd8+ 4.Kg7 Rd7+ =) 3...Re6 4.Bc3 (4.Bc7 Re8+ 5.Kg7 Re7+ =, or 4.Bd4? Rh6+ 5.Kg7 Rh4 6.Bb6 Rg4+ =) 4...Rd6! 5.Kg7 Rd3! 6.Be5 (6.Bb4 Rg3+ =) 6...Ra3! 7.Bc7 Rc3 8.Bd6 (8.Bb6 Rg3+ =) 8...Rd3 9.Be5 Ra3 positional draw] **1...Rb5** (1...Rh6+ 2.Kg7 +, or 1...Rb8+ 2.Kh7 Kf2 3.Bc6 +-) **2.Bc3+!** (2.a6? Rh5+! 3.Kg7 Rg5+ =) **2...Kd1!** (2...Ke2 3.a6 Rh5+ 4.Kg7 Rg5+ 5.Kf7 Rxc2 6.a7 +, or 2...Kf2 3.Bc6! Rc5 4.Bd4+ +-) **3.Bc6!** (3.a6? Rh5+! 4.Kg7 Rg5+ 5.Kf7 Rxc2 6.a7 Ra2 =) **3...Rc5 4.Ba4+** (4.Bf3+? Kc2 5.Bb4 Rb5 6.Be1 Re5 =) **4...Kc1 5.Bb4 Rc4 6.Ba3+ Kb1 7.Bd7!** (7.Be8? Rc8 =, or 7.Bb5? Rh4+! 8.Kg7 Rh5 =) **7...Rd4** (7...Rc7 8.Bb5 Ra7 9.a6 +-) **8.Bf5+** (8.Bc6? Rc4 9.Bb5 Rh4+ 10.Kg7 Rh5 =) **8...Ka2 9.Bc5!** (9.Be7? Ra4 10.Bd8 Kb3 11.Bc8 Re4 12.a6 Re8+ =) **9...Ra4** (9...Rd5 10.Be6 +-) **10.Bb6 Kb3 11.Bd3!** (11.Kg7 Kb4 =) **11...Kc3** (11...Kb4 12.a6 Kc3 13.Bf1 +-) **12.Bb5!** (12.Bf1? Rf4 13.Be2 Re4 14.Bb5 Kb4! =) **12...Rb4** (12...Kb4 13.Bxa4 +-) **13.a6!** (13.Bf1? Rf4 14.Be2 Re4 =) **13...Rxb5 14.a7 Rxb6 15.a8Q +- [A].** A valuable find, and/or adaptation of it, from a position containing six pieces. Surely, this is the result of research. The study has many unambiguous lines meriting a distinction.

We thank Mario for this timely award which stays open for three months. Please send comments to Franjo Vrabec.

StrateGems 2017 Helpmates h#n Award

by Emmanuel Manolas

Twenty-nine helpmates h#n (n>3) were published in the year 2017. Twenty-five composers from sixteen countries have created mostly good compositions. The lack of economy in some compositions left them out of the award.

My ranking is as follows:

