

KRZYSZTOF
MARTENS

OWL,
FOX
&
SPIDER

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Vilnius 2009

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ISBN

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Part 1:

OWL

UNIVERSITY OF DEFENSE

*You are the wise owl already,
If you are alert as a fly
Strong as a tiger
Sly as a spider
Cunning as a fox
You'll have to go and see your vet
'Cause you might have turned calf at this point.*

In the fifth year of the bridge university, lectures and classes focused on the most difficult element of the art of bridge: defense.

The Professor began the seminar with two interesting deals.

“The same auction occurred at four tables. The North players held a distributional hand close to an opening bid; nevertheless, they passed because of the vulnerability.”

Part 1: the Owl

NS Vulnerable

Pairs

W	N	E	S
	Pass	1♣	Pass
1♥	Dbl	2♥	Pass
4♥	All Pass		

♠ K 9 8 2
 ♥ J 3
 ♦ A Q 10 9 6 2
 ♣ 9

N	♠ Q
W	♥ K Q 4 2
E	♦ K J 5
S	♣ K 7 6 4 3

Lead ♣9. The play began the same way at all four tables. South played the ♣2, (Suit Preference) discouraging the spade shift. Declarer won the club in hand and advanced a low diamond. North put up the ace, partner signaling an odd number of diamonds. Declarer could now make a guess at reconstructing North's hand as 4=2=6=1, and North's initial pass made the location of the remaining honors equally apparent.

Here is the full deal:

	♠ K 9 8 2										
	♥ J 3										
	♦ A Q 10 9 6 2										
	♣ 9										
♠ A J 10 4 ♥ 9 8 6 5 ♦ 4 ♣ A Q J 8	<table style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100px; height: 100px; margin: 0 auto;"> <tr> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">N</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">W</td> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">E</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">S</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ Q ♥ K Q 4 2 ♦ K J 5 ♣ K 7 6 4 3
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠ 7 6 5 3										
	♥ A 10 7										
	♦ 8 7 3										
	♣ 10 5 2										

Upon winning the ♦A, the four North defenders embarked on four different routes. Considering the features of their characters, we shall call our heroes the calf, the fox, the tiger and the owl.

The calf gave the matter little thought and played the ♥J. To his delight, the jack held the trick. But his joy did not last long – only until declarer claimed ten tricks.

The fox saw the danger of declarer’s ducking the jack, so he selected the ♥3 instead. “This is the way to suggest the club ruff,” he reasoned. It was indeed: but when dummy played low, South took the ace and returned a club.

The tiger did well to foresee this eventuality. Having won the ace of diamonds, he switched to the ♠2, attempting to force declarer to play trumps himself. Giving declarer an additional spade trick wouldn’t cost anything, he calculated. True; but when West started trumps by playing low from dummy, South hopped up with the ace and gave partner a club ruff.

Part 1: the Owl

To warn partner against this play, the owl continued with the ♦Q; not suit preference but an alarm clock. South was puzzled, but when declarer led away from dummy's ♥KQ, he nodded with understanding and put up the ten. He led a club for partner to ruff, and later scored the ♥A as the setting trick.

“I recommend that you attempt to follow in the footsteps of the wise owl,” concluded the Professor.

“We meet the four animals in yet another uncommon defensive problem,” resumed the Professor.

The bidding was again standard.

W	N	E	S
2♠	Pass	4♠	1♥ All Pass

		♠ 10 9 7 5									
		♥ 10									
		♦ J 9 6 4									
		♣ Q 8 7 6									
♠ A Q J 6 4 3	<table border="1" style="width: 60px; height: 60px; border-collapse: collapse; text-align: center; line-height: 1.2;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ K 2 ♥ A Q 4 2 ♦ K Q 2 ♣ J 4 3 2
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ J 9 3											
♦ 10 7 5											
♣ 10											
		♠ 8									
		♥ K 8 7 6 5									
		♦ A 8 3									
		♣ A K 9 5									

The opening lead was the ♥10 at all tables – hardly surprising.

Each of the four declarers rose with the ace, drew trumps (discarding two clubs from dummy) and led the ♥J.

University of Defense

The calf took the king of hearts and played off the club tops. This defense did not interfere too much with declarer's plans.

The fox discarded one card from each suit when declarer pulled trumps. He took the heart king, cashed the ♣A and... at that point he realized what was going on, but could do nothing without that carelessly disposed-of diamond spot.

The tiger threw a heart and two clubs on the spades. He won the heart king, cashed the ♣K (closely watching partner's count signal), and switched to a small diamond.

This was the end position:

	♠ —	
	♥ —	
	♦ J 9 4	
	♣ Q 4	
♠ 6 4	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; align-items: center;"> N </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; align-items: center; margin-top: 10px;"> W E </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: center; align-items: center; margin-top: 10px;"> S </div>	♠ —
♥ 9		♥ Q 4
♦ 10 7		♦ K 2
♣ —		♣ J
	♠ —	
	♥ 8 7	
	♦ A 8	
	♣ A	

The lead was in dummy. Declarer returned to hand via a club ruff and cashed the last trump, discarding a small diamond from dummy. South found himself in a stepping-stone squeeze. He had to keep two hearts and so come down to the singleton ace of diamonds. Declarer cashed the ♥9 and threw the tiger in with a diamond.

Part 1: the Owl

The owl, just like the tiger, parted with two clubs and a heart. She took the heart jack with the king and, without cashing a club, switched to a diamond.

Here was the ending:

	♠ —		
	♥ —		
	♦ J 9 4		
	♣ Q 4 3		
♠ 6 4	N	♠ —	
♥ 9	W	♥ Q 4	
♦ 10 7	E	♦ K 2	
♣ 10	S	♣ J 8	
	♠ —		
	♥ 8 7		
	♦ A 8		
	♣ A K		

After taking the trick with dummy's queen, declarer had no choice but to play clubs. The owl took the ace and exited with a heart. By destroying declarer's communications, she left declarer with no chance to make the contract.

THE WISE OWL

Owls are mysterious birds, and symbols of wisdom and knowledge. They are the heroes of many sayings, legends and superstitions.

The bridge player known as the owl is self-aware. She appreciates the beauty of difficult problems and derives pleasure from solving them. The wise owl is the main protagonist of the stories that follow.

Professor – Let's start with an instructive hand in two versions.

A)

W	N	E	S
1♠	Pass	2NT*	Pass
4♥**	Pass	5♦	Pass
6♠	All Pass		

* – game forcing with support

** – shortness

<table style="width: 100%; height: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>	N			W		E		S		♠ K J 8 2 ♥ Q 9 4 2 ♦ A K 7 ♣ 7 6
N										
W		E								
	S									
♠ 4 ♥ A K 7 5 ♦ Q 10 3 ♣ Q J 10 9 5										

Lead: ♥3 (fourth best). We win the ace (West follows with the ten) and switch to the ♣Q.

Part 1: the Owl

Here is the full deal:

♠ A Q 10 9 6 5 3	♠ 7	♠ K J 8 2			
♥ 10	♥ J 8 6 3	♥ Q 9 4 2			
♦ J 6 4	♦ 9 8 5 2	♦ A K 7			
♣ A K	♣ 8 4 3 2	♣ 7 6			
	<table border="1" style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td style="padding: 5px; text-align: center;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 5px; text-align: center;">W E</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 5px; text-align: center;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S	
N					
W E					
S					
	♠ 4				
	♥ A K 7 5				
	♦ Q 10 3				
	♣ Q J 10 9 5				

Jacek – By winning the opening lead with the ace of hearts, we have implied that our partner holds the king. As a result, declarer will probably try a simple red-suit squeeze against North.

Professor – What will happen if we take the first trick with the king, as the calf would do?

Robert – The distribution of honors becomes clear for declarer. He will reduce to the following ending:

The wise owl

♠ 10 9	N W E S	♠ —
♥ —		♥ Q 9
♦ J 6 4		♦ A K 7
♣ —		♣ —
	♠ —	
	♥ K 7	
	♦ Q 10 3	
	♣ —	

Cashing the penultimate spade and discarding a diamond from dummy leads to a double trump squeeze, regardless of the actual layout of diamonds.

Part 1: the Owl

B)

Professor – Let's imagine the auction was different.

W	N	E	S
4♠	Pass	5♦**	Pass
6♠	Pass		

2♣*

* – Precision (5 clubs +4major or +6♣ – 11-15 HCP)

** – cue bid

N		♠ K J 8 2
W	E	♥ Q 9 4 2
S		♦ A K 7
		♣ 7 6

♠ 4
♥ A K 7 5
♦ Q 10 3
♣ Q J 10 9 5

Lead: ♥3 (fourth best)

Agata – The situation has changed. Now the bidding in combination with the opening lead have made our hand obvious. It's no use taking the trick with the ace. This time we have to find partner with the jack of diamonds. So we win and switch to the ♦10.

Professor – Why?

The wise owl

Here is the full deal:

	♠ 7										
	♥ J 8 6 3										
	♦ J 8 5 2										
	♣ 8 4 3 2										
♠ A Q 10 9 6 5 3 ♥ 10 ♦ 9 6 4 ♣ A K	<table border="1" style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ K J 8 2 ♥ Q 9 4 2 ♦ A K 7 ♣ 7 6
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠ 4										
	♥ A K 7 5										
	♦ Q 10 3										
	♣ Q J 10 9 5										

Ania – Playing diamonds destroys the double squeeze. In the four-card ending:

	♠ —										
	♥ J 8										
	♦ J 8										
	♣ —										
♠ 10 9 ♥ — ♦ 9 6 ♣ —	<table border="1" style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ — ♥ Q 9 ♦ A 7 ♣ —
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠ —										
	♥ K 7										
	♦ Q 3										
	♣ —										

Declarer will not be able to execute the double criss-cross squeeze because of insufficient entries.

MINIMIZATION

Professor – In theory, planning in defense should aim at minimizing the values or specific cards necessary for partner to hold in order to set the contract.

The auction was brief.

W	N	E	S
3♠	Pass	4♠	All Pass

The owl, sitting North, chose not to enter the auction despite holding 14 HCP. She was too short in hearts for a takeout double, her diamond suit did not qualify for a four-level overcall, and she was not bold enough to bid 3NT.

♠ K 3										
♥ 4 2										
♦ Q 9 6 4 2										
♣ A K Q 9										
<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; text-align: center; width: 100px; height: 100px;"> <tbody> <tr> <td></td> <td>N</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>W</td> <td></td> <td>E</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>S</td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ A ♥ A Q 10 6 5 ♦ A K 8 ♣ J 10 7 5
	N									
W		E								
	S									

The ♣A opening lead was obvious. When partner signaled an odd number of clubs, the owl started analyzing possible hands for West.

Ania – If declarer’s shape is 7=2=2=2, the contract depends on who holds the ♥K; the same is true if he is 7=3=1=2.

Distribution 7=1=3=2 is the only hand worth considering.

Minimization

Professor – Why?

Robert – A minor-suit squeeze may be looming against us.

Jacek – After cashing the second club we can try playing diamonds twice, hoping to find partner with the jack. That would break up any squeeze.

Agata – Even if West holds the jack, declarer might not believe we have taken such a big risk – especially if we shift to the diamond nine, so he may rely on the heart finesse instead.

Ania – Not likely: we’ve already shown ♣AKQ, and the ♠K will be revealed in a moment. With the ♥K in addition we would probably have risked 3NT.

Agata – Why do you think we’ve shown the queen of clubs?

Ania – Otherwise our play in clubs would help declarer establish a club winner. After we cash the ace and king, partner would be left with the singleton queen, as his count signal indicated. The conclusion is evident for declarer: North holds the ♣Q.

Robert – I’ve got a better idea. Let’s play all three top clubs, and then, after getting in with the ♠K, force partner to ruff the fourth club.

Professor – Robert’s defense is surely the best shot. For it to be successful, we only need to find partner with the ♦10 (as opposed to the ♦J) and the ♥KJ.

Part 1: the Owl

The full deal:

	♠ K 3	
	♥ 4 2	
	♦ Q 9 6 4 2	
	♣ A K Q 9	
♠ Q J 10 9 8 7 6	N W E S	♠ A
♥ 7		♥ A Q 10 6 5
♦ J 5 3		♦ A K 8
♣ 4 2		♣ J 10 7 5
	♠ 5 4 2	
	♥ K J 9 8 3	
	♦ 10 7	
	♣ 8 6 3	

OBVIOUS?

Professor – Subtle problems call for mature analysis and sophisticated defense.

Vulnerable against not, you were fighting the opponents single-handed.

W	N	E	S
			1♠
2♦	Pass	3♦	3♥
4♣	Pass	4♦	4♥
5♦	All Pass		

N	♠ 10 9 3
W E	♥ 8 6 4 2
S	♦ Q 7 4 2
	♣ K 5

♠ A Q 8 7 5 2
♥ A K J 9 5
♦ —
♣ J 7

Lead: ♠J.

Jacek – The first conclusion is easy. All of the missing key cards – the ♣A and ♦AK – are in declarer’s possession. With the ♦K, partner would have doubled 5♦.

As far as what we can work out about declarer’s distribution, he is highly unlikely to be 3=1=5=4, since with such a hand, i.e.:

Part 1: the Owl

♠ Kxx
♥ x
♦ AKxxx
♣ Axxx

he would prefer to double 4♥ (an action double suggesting good cards for offense and defense) rather than bid 5♦.

Robert – 3=0=6=4 is also impossible, as in that case our partner would have:

♠ J
♥ 10xxx
♦ xxx
♣ xxxxx

and he would have bid 4♥ over 4♣ or 5♥ over 5♦, no matter what he held in the minors.

Jacek – In light of the bidding, 2=1=6=4 is the most probable shape for declarer.

Professor – I agree with your reasoning. How do you defend? The vast majority of players who were asked said the defense was obvious: indeed, the natural impulse is to take the ace and return a high spade for partner to ruff (we hope). Does any other option have merit? Ducking the jack, for instance?

Tomek – If declarer is 2=1=6=4, the crucial cards are the ♠Q and the ♦J.

Ania – Let's consider West's possible hands.

a)
♠ Kx
♥ x
♦ AKxxxx
♣ AQxx

Obvious?

b)
♠ Kx
♥ x
♦ AKJxxx
♣ Axxx

c)
♠ Kx
♥ x
♦ AKJxxx
♣ AQxx

d)
♠ Kx
♥ x
♦ AKxxxx
♣ Axxx

If declarer has at least one of the critical honors – as he does in variants a), b) and c) – the contract makes regardless of whether or not we hold up the ace at Trick 1.

Robert – Not to mention that if declarer has the ♣10 in addition to the ♣Q, ducking gives away an overtrick: declarer will pitch two spades from dummy on the clubs.

Agata – It's hard to see any advantages to holding up.

Ania – There's still one hand for declarer we haven't analyzed. In variant d), partner has both the ♣Q and ♦J. This is the interesting case.

Part 1: the Owl

Professor – Indeed. This is the entire layout:

		♠ J 6											
		♥ 10 7 3											
		♦ J 9 3											
		♣ Q 10 8 4 3											
♠ K 4		<table style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S			♠ 10 9 3
	N												
W		E											
	S												
♥ Q				♥ 8 6 4 2									
♦ A K 10 8 6 5				♦ Q 7 4 2									
♣ A 9 6 2				♣ K 5									
		♠ A Q 8 7 5 2											
		♥ A K J 9 5											
		♦ —											
		♣ J 7											

Robert – A typical... chess theme. If we take the ♠A and return another spade, declarer will win and try the ace of diamonds. Having discovered the bad split, he will ruff a club and pitch a heart on the third spade. This way he protects himself against a trump promotion.

Jacek – Ducking the spade jack at Trick 1 makes the promotion inevitable.

Professor – An exceptionally difficult problem.

OWL'S CONFUSION

Professor – This next hand posed a problem surmountable only by excellent cooperation and communication between the defenders.

Pairs

W	N	E	S
2♣	Pass	2♠	Pass
2NT*	Pass	6NT	All Pass

* – 23-24 HCP

♠ A Q 10 4
 ♥ 8 7 2
 ♦ J 9 7 5
 ♣ 10 6

	N		♠ K 9 8 6 5
W		E	♥ K 6
			♦ K 8 3
	S		♣ 8 7 4

The owl, sitting North, made the passive lead of the ♥7. Declarer won the king in dummy and followed with the jack from hand, South signaling an odd number of hearts. Declarer next cashed four clubs, North discarding hearts on the third and fourth rounds. While following to the clubs, South showed an even number of diamonds. How do we know South is showing count signal in diamonds and not in spades? Good question – depend on agreement.

How was he able to do that? Since the club layout was about to be revealed through declarer's play of the suit, a count signal in clubs from South would have been redundant. Therefore South

Part 1: the Owl

had the opportunity to show count in another suit: an extremely helpful, although rarely seen, “supplemental count signal”.

South’s signal revealed declarer’s shape as 2=3=4=4. Why was this so important?

In order to know which suit to protect, the owl had to know West’s distribution: if West were 3=3=3=4, North would need to keep the ♠AQ10 and wait for two spade tricks.

Here is the full deal:

	♠ A Q 10 4										
	♥ 8 7 2										
	♦ J 9 7 5										
	♣ 10 6										
♠ J 2	<table style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100%; height: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;"></td> <td style="text-align: center;">N</td> <td style="width: 50%;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">W</td> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">E</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;"></td> <td style="text-align: center;">S</td> <td style="width: 50%;"></td> </tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ K 9 8 6 5
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ A Q J		♥ K 6									
♦ A Q 4 2		♦ K 8 3									
♣ A K Q J		♣ 8 7 4									
	♠ 7 3										
	♥ 10 9 5 4 3										
	♦ 10 6										
	♣ 9 5 3 2										

Owl's confusion

After Trick 5 these cards remained:

	♠ A Q 10 4	
	♥ —	
	♦ J 9 7 5	
	♣ —	
♠ J 2	N W E S	♠ K 9 8 6
♥ A Q		♥ 6
♦ A Q 4 2		♦ K 8 3
♣ —		♣ —
	♠ 7 3	
	♥ 10 9 4 3	
	♦ 10 6	
	♣ —	

Declarer next cashed two hearts, and the owl discarded the ♠Q and ♠A.

Professor – Please explain the owl's spade discards. Declarer claimed 13 tricks for an absolute top score.

Ania – She was trying to set the contract, and therefore assumed that partner had the missing ♠J. Discarding any other spades would have been giving up, since declarer would have been able to set up spade winners in dummy even if partner had the jack. Throwing away a diamond, of course, would also have been surrendering.

Part 1: the Owl

Robert – The location of the jack of spades is vital. Let's imagine the layout the owl was hoping for when she discarded the ♠A:

	♠ A 10 4										
	♥ —										
	♦ J 9 7 5										
	♣ —										
♠ 3 2	<table style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ K 9 8 6
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ Q		♥ —									
♦ A Q 4 2		♦ K 8 3									
♣ —		♣ —									
	♠ J 7										
	♥ 9 4 3										
	♦ 10 6										
	♣ —										

Getting rid of the ♠A on the queen of hearts defeats the contract. West will get only one spade trick. Partner has spades stopped with the jack, whilst holding heart winners.

Tomek – Nonetheless, the owl fully deserved the zero she got from the hand. She should have relied on her partner to clarify the spade position. The ♠Q discard was tremendous and should have alerted South to her dilemma: where is the ♠J? If South followed with the ♥10 on the second round of hearts that should indicate possession of the spade jack, while the lowest heart should deny any spade values. This way the defenders can set the slam when it is possible, without conceding an overtrick when the contract is cold.

FALSE PICTURE

Professor – Let me tell you about the defense I had the pleasure to execute with Tomek Przybora (North) in the finals of the Bridge Olympiad in Seattle in 1984.

W	N	E	S
2♠	Pass	4♠	All Pass

N W E S	♠ A Q ♥ A 3 2 ♦ 9 7 4 3 ♣ A 10 8 6
	♠ K 6 3 ♥ K 9 6 5 4 ♦ K J 8 ♣ 7 5

Lead: ♦2 (fourth best). West won my king with the ace and led a spade to the queen.

I took the king and switched to the ♦J, collecting the ♦10 from West and the ♦6 from North.

I examined this trick carefully. Partner's six was clearly a suit preference signal for hearts (he could have played the five). What are your thoughts on the defense?

Jacek – Partner is in danger of being exposed to a minor-suit squeeze.

Robert – That may be, but we can't afford to delay starting hearts. We will have to try to break up the squeeze later.

Part 1: the Owl

Professor – It's true that hearts must be led on this round, and that partner is in danger of being squeezed. I switched to my lowest heart, even though fourth best was our conventional method.

Here is the full deal:

	♠ 9 5		
	♥ Q 10 8		
	♦ Q 6 5 2		
	♣ Q J 4 2		
♠ J 10 8 7 4 2	N	E	♠ A Q
♥ J 7	W	S	♥ A 3 2
♦ A 10			♦ 9 7 4 3
♣ K 9 3			♣ A 10 8 6
	♠ K 6 3		
	♥ K 9 6 5 4		
	♦ K J 8		
	♣ 7 5		

Declarer put up the jack, covered by North's queen and ducked in dummy. He then took the heart continuation with the ace, cashed the ♠A and returned to hand with a diamond ruff, reaching the following end position:

False picture

	♠ —	
	♥ 8	
	♦ Q	
	♣ Q J 4	
♠ 10 8 ♥ — ♦ — ♣ K 9 3	<div style="position: absolute; top: 5px; left: 50%; transform: translate(-50%, -50%);">N</div> <div style="position: absolute; bottom: 5px; left: 50%; transform: translate(-50%, -50%);">S</div> <div style="position: absolute; left: 5px; top: 50%; transform: translateY(-50%);">W</div> <div style="position: absolute; right: 5px; top: 50%; transform: translateY(-50%);">E</div>	♠ — ♥ 3 ♦ 9 ♣ A 10 8
	♠ —	
	♥ K 9 6	
	♦ —	
	♣ 7 5	

The ♠10 was led. North discarded a heart, the ♣10 disappeared from dummy (unblocking), and I threw the ♥6. The last trump forced North to part with a club, dummy released the now useless diamond, and I bid farewell to the heart king. When declarer played a small club from hand, North inserted the queen. Declarer won the ace and finessed the nine. Why?

Jacek – The owl’s prescience paid off handsomely. The key was exiting with the fifth, instead of the fourth best heart. From declarer’s perspective the five-card ending was slightly different:

Part 1: the Owl

	♠ —										
	♥ 9										
	♦ Q										
	♣ Q 4										
♠ 8	<table style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td></td><td style="padding: 2px 10px;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px 10px;">W</td><td></td><td style="padding: 2px 10px;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="padding: 2px 10px;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ —
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ —		♥ 3									
♦ —		♦ 9									
♣ K 9 3		♣ A 8									
	♠ —										
	♥ K										
	♦ —										
	♣ J 7 5										

Agata – When declarer led the final spade, he believed that North was squeezed in three suits (he needed the nine of hearts to prevent a classic double squeeze) and opted to unguard his club honor.

Andrzej – Avoiding a simple squeeze by suggesting a triple squeeze to declarer is a unique occurrence indeed.

Ania – Especially if you have to have it figured out by Trick 4! The position works even if you do not cash ♦J.

Professor – We're not always able to foresee a complicated squeeze. The owl spins her web, just in case. Painting a false picture of one's hand is crucial insurance in such complex, multi-layered hands.

WITH A HEART FULL OF PAIN

Professor – Painful as it is, you sometimes have to surrender the fruit of your labor.

An easier problem for a change.

W	N	E	S
2♣*	Pass	2♦	Pass
2NT	Pass	3NT	All Pass

* – game forcing

N	♠ Q 10 4
W E	♥ J 9 8 3
S	♦ 8 5 3 2
♠ 7 6 5 3	♣ 7 4
♥ K 6 4	
♦ K J 4	
♣ K J 5	

Lead: ♠8. Partner decided to lead from three small. West wins the opening lead with the king and exits with the ♦Q. North wins the ♦A and continues spades, declarer again taking the trick in hand. Next comes the ♦10: you win the jack and finally set up the spade winner. Having won the trick in dummy with the queen of spades, declarer finesses in hearts, North signaling an even number of cards in the suit. On the ♦9, partner discards a heart.

Part 1: the Owl

This is the ending:

<table style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100%;"> <tr><td style="width: 50%;"></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td style="width: 50%;"></td></tr> <tr><td style="width: 25%;">W</td><td></td><td style="width: 25%;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		<p>♠ —</p> <p>♥ J 9 8</p> <p>♦ 8</p> <p>♣ 7 4</p>
	N									
W		E								
	S									
	<p>♠ 7</p> <p>♥ K 6</p> <p>♦ —</p> <p>♣ K J 5</p>									

Agata – We know West holds a diamond spot lower than the eight, the singleton ace of hearts, and four clubs.

Jacek – So I cash the spade winner and exit with a heart.

Ania – ... and before long you get squeezed in hearts and clubs when declarer crosses to dummy with a diamond.

Professor – Here is the full deal:

		♠ 9 8 2									
		♥ 10 7 5 2									
		♦ A 6									
		♣ 9 8 6 2									
♠ A K J	<table style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100%;"> <tr><td style="width: 50%;"></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td style="width: 50%;"></td></tr> <tr><td style="width: 25%;">W</td><td></td><td style="width: 25%;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		<p>♠ Q 10 4</p> <p>♥ J 9 8 3</p> <p>♦ 8 5 3 2</p> <p>♣ 7 4</p>
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ A Q		<p>♠ 7 6 5 3</p> <p>♥ K 6 4</p> <p>♦ K J 4</p> <p>♣ K J 5</p>									
♦ Q 10 9 7											
♣ A Q 10 3											

With a heart full of pain

Robert – We have to anticipate the actual end position:

♠ —	♠ —	♠ —			
♥ A	♥ 10 7	♥ J 9 8			
♦ 7	♦ —	♦ 8			
♣ A Q 10 3	♣ 9 8 6 2	♣ 7 4			
	<table style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td style="padding: 2px 10px;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px 10px;">W E</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px 10px;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S	
N					
W E					
S					
	♠ 7				
	♥ K 6				
	♦ —				
	♣ K J 5				

If partner holds the ♣10, any defense will be successful, so we must assume that declarer has it. Cashing the spade will lead to a club-heart squeeze, so our only choice is to play a heart now.

When declarer leads the last diamond, painful though it is, we have to part with the laboriously established spade winner. In exchange we will collect a club trick to go along with the ♥K.

AN INNOCENT PARTSCORE

Professor – Inconspicuous contracts may sometimes require you to exercise just as heroic efforts to defeat them as a Grand Slam.

After a lively auction, 3♥ was reached:

W	N	E	S
			1♦
1♥	2♣	2♥	Pass
Pass	3♣	Pass	Pass
3♥	All Pass		

	N		♠ A 10 5 3
W		E	♥ J 10 5
			♦ 10 5 3
	S		♣ Q 4 3

♠ 9 7 4 2
 ♥ A 9
 ♦ A J 9 6 4
 ♣ A 5

Lead: ♥3. You win the ace and make the straightforward play of the ♣A and another club. Partner takes the king and returns the two of clubs. You ruff, but declarer overruffs and draws two more rounds of trumps.

Tomek – West's distribution is 3=5=3=2.

Agata – West must have the diamond king and two spade honors, if the contract is to have any play.

An innocent partscore

Professor – Here is the ending:

N		♠ A 10 5 3
W	E	♥ —
S		♦ 10 5 3
		♣ —
♠ 9 7 4 2		
♥ —		
♦ A J 9		
♣ —		

Declarer pitches a diamond from dummy on the last heart. And you?

Jacek – I can't do without four spades, so it must be a diamond.

Robert – A diamond, however, gets you nowhere near to setting the contract. Declarer will play the ♠Q, win North's king with the ace and play a diamond towards his hand. Note that playing this way he will get an additional diamond trick.

Ania – I think I have found the solution: we need to unblock the ace of diamonds!

Although this gives an immediate trick to the ♦K, North will control the suit with his queen and be waiting with a club winner. Three spades, four trumps and one diamond is all declarer can hope for.

Part 1: the Owl

Professor – Well done! Here is the full layout:

	♠ K 8										
	♥ 8 4 3										
	♦ Q 8										
	♣ K J 9 7 6 2										
♠ Q J 6	<table style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">N</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">W</td> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">E</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">S</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ A 10 5 3
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ K Q 7 6 2		♥ J 10 5									
♦ K 7 2		♦ 10 5 3									
♣ 10 8		♣ Q 4 3									
	♠ 9 7 4 2										
	♥ A 9										
	♦ A J 9 6 4										
	♣ A 5										

WISE AS AN OWL 1

Professor – Another seemingly uninteresting deal – with hidden depths.

The bidding was laborious.

W	N	E	S
1♥	Pass	1♠	Pass
2♥	Pass	3♥	Pass
4♥	All Pass		

♠ K 8 7
♥ 2
♦ 9 7 6 5 3
♣ A K 9 8

N	♠ Q 10 5 4
W	♥ 9 6 4
E	♦ A K
S	♣ 6 5 4 3

You start with the ♣A and ♠K. Partner signals an odd number of clubs. What next?

Agata – I continue clubs. There is no rush to play spades, even if partner holds the ace.

Robert – Declarer is either 2=6=3=2 or 3=6=2=2.

Ania – One has to anticipate the play. What if West has the ace of spades and underleads it? In the first case we need to rise with the king; in the second, we should duck smoothly.

Robert – We should switch to diamonds at Trick 3.

Part 1: the Owl

Jacek – Right, partner's count signal will disclose declarer's distribution.

Tomek – This play should be quick and look natural. A long hesitation would betray our intentions and help declarer find the ♠K.

Professor – Here is the full deal:

	♠ K 8 7	
	♥ 2	
	♦ 9 7 6 5 3	
	♣ A K 9 8	
♠ A 3 2	N	♠ Q 10 5 4
♥ A Q J 10 5 3	W E	♥ 9 6 4
♦ Q 4	S	♦ A K
♣ Q 10		♣ 6 5 4 3
	♠ J 9 6	
	♥ K 8 7	
	♦ J 10 8 2	
	♣ J 7 2	

Continuing clubs at Trick 3 is the play of a calf. West would ruff, play a low spade and... we would have to guess the layout. If it is the following:

Wise as an owl 1

♠ A 3	N	♠ Q 10 5 4
♥ A K J 10 5 3	W E	♥ 9 6 4
♦ 10 4 2	S	♦ A K
♣ Q 10		♣ 6 5 4 3
		♠ J 9 6 2
		♥ Q 8 7
		♦ Q J 8
		♣ J 7 2

We must hop up with the king in a hurry, otherwise declarer will not even have to guess hearts to make his contract.

If instead declarer holds three spades to the ace, we must play low in tempo to give him a guess in the suit.

We cannot know right away whether to duck or to rise. We must seek the answer at Trick 3.

WISE AS AN OWL 2

Professor – The struggle between defenders and declarer can be fascinating.

W	N	E	S
			2♠*
3♥	4♣**	4♥	Pass
Pass	Dbl	All Pass	

* – 5♠ + 5 of a minor

** – pass or correct

N		E	♠ A Q 5
W		S	♥ 9 6 4
			♦ 7 5 4 3
			♣ J 4 3

♠ J 9 6 4 2
♥ 7
♦ 9 8
♣ A K Q 7 2

Partner leads the ♦A, ♦K and ♦2, which you ruff. West follows with the ♦6, ♦10, ♦J. What next?

Agata – My first reaction is to try to cash the ♣A, but after the Professor's remark on the last hand, I put down my cards and think for ten minutes.

Ania – Declarer is likely to have six hearts for his overcall.

Robert – Bearing in mind that partner failed to support spades, we can reconstruct declarer's distribution as 3=6=4=0.

Robert – It is necessary to switch to a spade at Trick 4.

Wise as an owl 2

Jacek – That’s right. The calf would automatically cash the ♣A and...

Tomek – ...soon find himself in a criss-cross squeeze.

Professor – Here are all four hands:

	♠ K 8										
	♥ J 8 2										
	♦ A K 2										
	♣ 10 9 8 6 5										
♠ 10 7 3	<table style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td></td><td style="padding: 0 10px;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 0 5px;">W</td><td style="padding: 0 10px;"></td><td style="padding: 0 5px;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="padding: 0 10px;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ A Q 5
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ A K Q 10 5 3		♥ 9 6 4									
♦ Q J 10 6		♦ 7 5 4 3									
♣ —		♣ J 4 3									
	♠ J 9 6 4 2										
	♥ 7										
	♦ 9 8										
	♣ A K Q 7 2										

Part 1: the Owl

Agata – I see it. Declarer would ruff the ♣A and reach the following ending:

	♠ K 8										
	♥ —										
	♦ —										
	♣ 10 9 8										
♠ 10 7 3	<table style="border-collapse: collapse; margin: auto;"> <tr> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">N</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">W</td> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">E</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">S</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ A Q 5
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ 10 5		♥ —									
♦ —		♦ —									
♣ —		♣ J 4									
	♠ J 9 6										
	♥ —										
	♦ —										
	♣ K Q										

On the penultimate trump dummy can throw a spade, but South is helpless.

Artur – The spade switch kills the entry necessary for the squeeze to operate.

Andrzej – The defenders should surely do the best they can, but West lost the contract at the very first trick by following with the ♦6. If he remembers to unblock, even a spade switch will not defeat the contract. The end position will then have a small but crucial difference:

Wise as an owl 2

	♠ K ♥ — ♦ — ♣ 10 9 8				
♠ 10 7 ♥ 10 5 ♦ 6 ♣ —	<table border="1" style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">W E</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S	♠ A 5 ♥ — ♦ 7 ♣ J 4
N					
W E					
S					
	♠ J 9 6 ♥ — ♦ — ♣ K Q				

On the penultimate trump, declarer discards a spade from dummy. South has a spade to spare, too, but he is helpless when declarer plays the diamond six to dummy's seven.

CAREFUL DISCARDING

Professor – Sometimes we have to plan for as many as five discards.

Partner was active in the bidding.

W	N	E	S
1♥	1♠	2♣	Pass
2♥	2♠	Dbl*	Pass
2NT	Pass	3NT	All Pass

* – Take-out

<table style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100px; height: 100px;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50px;"></td> <td style="text-align: center;">N</td> <td style="width: 50px;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">W</td> <td style="width: 50px;"></td> <td style="text-align: center;">E</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="width: 50px;"></td> <td style="text-align: center;">S</td> <td style="width: 50px;"></td> </tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ 5 3 ♥ K 5 ♦ Q 9 8 ♣ A Q J 9 4 3
	N									
W		E								
	S									
♠ Q J ♥ A J 9 6 4 ♦ 10 7 6 5 4 ♣ 10										

Lead: ♠6. West takes our jack with the king and cashes six clubs.

Robert – If partner holds the ♠10, we'll survive. If declarer has it, that little ten will be enough to block the suit.

Jacek – If declarer has the ♠10, we will have to find partner with the ♦A in order to win more than one spade trick.

Tomek – The ace isn't necessarily enough. After cashing his club winners, declarer may guess well, and try to set up his trick in diamonds next, forcing the entry from the dangerous opponent

Careful discarding

first. The spade suit will still be blocked; so that requires partner to have the ace and the jack of diamonds.

Agata – If partner has the \spadesuit AJ, that means West opened the bidding on just 11 HCP.

Jacek – It happens!

Tomek – This is the ending in which declarer is doomed:

	\spadesuit A 8 7										
	\heartsuit —										
	\diamondsuit A J 3										
	\clubsuit —										
\spadesuit 10 9	<table style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		\spadesuit 5
	N										
W		E									
	S										
\heartsuit Q 10		\heartsuit K 5									
\diamondsuit K 2		\diamondsuit Q 9 8									
\clubsuit —		\clubsuit —									
	\spadesuit Q										
	\heartsuit A										
	\diamondsuit 10 6 5 4										
	\clubsuit —										

Having won West's king of diamonds with the ace, partner will continue with the \diamondsuit J, establishing two diamond winners for us. The key suit is diamonds, not spades.

Ania – The conclusion: we can afford to part with only one diamond, but we can freely dispose of as many as four hearts.

Part 1: the Owl

Full hand:

	♠ A 8 7 6 4 2	
	♥ 8	
	♦ A J 3	
	♣ 6 5 2	
♠ K 10 9	N W E S	♠ 5 3
♥ Q 10 7 3 2		♥ K 5
♦ K 2		♦ Q 9 8
♣ K 8 7		♣ A Q J 9 4 3
	♠ Q J	
	♥ A J 9 6 4	
	♦ 10 7 6 5 4	
	♣ 10	

Part 1: the Owl

Tomek – I immediately rise with the king to get in and return a spade. The whole deal is probably something like:

	♠ Q 10 8 7 6										
	♥ J 2										
	♦ 9 6										
	♣ A 9 5 4										
♠ A 9 3	<table style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ K 5 4
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ A 7 5 3		♥ K 9 6 4									
♦ K Q 2		♦ A 7 4 3									
♣ Q 10 3		♣ J 8									
	♠ J 2										
	♥ Q 10 8										
	♦ J 10 8 5										
	♣ K 7 6 2										

Ania – That’s a nice play – but it is just too obvious!

No solution?

Professor – All of the players who were given the deal as a problem put up the king, but the reality was brutal.

Here is the actual layout:

	♠ Q 10 8 7 6	
	♥ J 2	
	♦ Q 6	
	♣ Q 9 5 4	
♠ A 9 3	N	♠ K 5 4
♥ A 7 5 3	W E	♥ K 9 6 4
♦ K 9 2	S	♦ A 7 4 3
♣ A 10 3		♣ J 8
	♠ J 2	
	♥ Q 10 8	
	♦ J 10 8 5	
	♣ K 7 6 2	

Robert – Why did declarer decide to rely on clubs rather than diamonds for the extra trick he needed?

Professor – He faced a curious problem. Indeed, why should one consider playing clubs when, in theory, the suit combination offers only a 25% chance for two winners as opposed to the 36% chance of a 3–3 diamond split?

Well, practical considerations may lead you to a different conclusion than purely mathematical calculations. Keep in mind that South is not defending double dummy: he does not know declarer's club holding.

Part 1: the Owl

Andrzej – Instead of blindly making the “percentage play”, we should consider what South would actually do at the table when declarer leads a low club from dummy:

- a) With the ♣KQ, he would no doubt put up one of his honors.
- b) With the ♣K9x(x) or ♣Q9x(x), he would probably follow low. If so, declarer could simply duck the eight.
- c) With ♣Kxx(x), South would sometimes rise with the king.

Agata – So with the actual hand, what’s South’s correct play? To put up the king or to follow small?

Professor – Some problems have more than one sensible solution. You have to guess which of them is the winning one.

Jacek – Is it a pure guess, though?

Professor – There are almost always some hints available. In my opinion, if declarer has the ♣Q10x he will play to Trick 2 rather quickly. In contrast, with the ♣A10x he has to find an uncommon line of play and is likely to take longer to lead the club.

There is one more scenario to take into account when considering declarer’s choice to lead a club at Trick 2 as opposed to a diamond. In this hand, as is often the case, declarer can combine his chances. He starts by playing the ♣8 from dummy. If South inserts the king, he is home. If South follows low, he goes up with the ace and switches to diamonds.

DUMMY SQUEEZED?

Professor – I don't recommend the actual bidding on our next deal to anyone. It is not directly your concern, however, since you are defending.

W	N	E	S
1♠	Pass	2♠	Pass
2NT	All Pass		

♠ A J 9
 ♥ A 9 7 4
 ♦ J 10 8 7 2
 ♣ 2

	N		♠ 10 5 3
W		E	♥ K 10 3 2
			♦ 9 6
	S		♣ J 9 7 5

Lead: ♦J. South takes the ace (the queen falls from West) and returns the ♦3 to declarer's king.

Agata – The problem is not about diamonds, is it?

Professor – Well, you never know.

Jacek – What happens next?

Professor – Declarer leads the ♥Q, which you decide to duck. Partner signals an odd number of hearts. West proceeds to cash the ace and king of clubs. Clearly disappointed by your heart discard, he now plays the ♥J. Of course you win the ace and...

Part 1: the Owl

This is the full deal:

	♠ A J 9 ♥ A 9 7 4 ♦ J 10 8 7 2 ♣ 2											
♠ K 7 6 4 2 ♥ Q J ♦ K Q ♣ A K 4 3	<table border="1" style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;"> </td><td style="padding: 5px;">N</td><td style="padding: 5px;"> </td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">W</td><td style="padding: 5px;"> </td><td style="padding: 5px;">E</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;"> </td><td style="padding: 5px;">S</td><td style="padding: 5px;"> </td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ 10 5 3 ♥ K 10 3 2 ♦ 9 6 ♣ J 9 7 5	
	N											
W		E										
	S											
	♠ Q 8 ♥ 8 6 5 ♦ A 5 4 3 ♣ Q 10 8 6											

Robert – In the 7-card ending:

	♠ A J 9 ♥ 9 ♦ 10 8 7 ♣ —											
♠ K 7 6 4 2 ♥ — ♦ — ♣ 4 3	<table border="1" style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;"> </td><td style="padding: 5px;">N</td><td style="padding: 5px;"> </td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">W</td><td style="padding: 5px;"> </td><td style="padding: 5px;">E</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;"> </td><td style="padding: 5px;">S</td><td style="padding: 5px;"> </td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ 10 5 3 ♥ K 10 ♦ — ♣ J 9	
	N											
W		E										
	S											
	♠ Q 8 ♥ 6 ♦ 5 4 ♣ Q 10											

declarer is bound to get two more tricks, no matter what we do.
 Down two.

Dummy squeezed?

Professor – As you can see, the problem was about diamonds, after all.

Agata – Right, we should have kept the $\spadesuit 2$. Then we would be able to lead a diamond to partner. He would take his club winner and lead a spade back to us for down three.

Tomek – It's even better than that. If we cash a high diamond before leading the $\spadesuit 2$, dummy will find itself squeezed:

	\spadesuit A J 9 \heartsuit 9 \diamondsuit 10 8 2 \clubsuit —							
\spadesuit K 7 6 4 2 \heartsuit — \diamondsuit — \clubsuit 4 3	<table style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100px; height: 100px; margin: auto;"> <tr> <td style="text-align: center; width: 50px;">N</td> <td style="width: 50px;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">W</td> <td style="text-align: center;">E</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">S</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	N		W	E	S		\spadesuit 10 5 3 \heartsuit K 10 \diamondsuit — \clubsuit J 9
N								
W	E							
S								
	\spadesuit Q 8 \heartsuit 6 \diamondsuit 5 4 \clubsuit Q 10							

Ania – Declarer can afford to throw a heart from dummy on the $\diamondsuit 10$, but will have no good discard on the $\spadesuit 2$. He will have to throw a spade. South will win the trick, cash the $\clubsuit Q$ (we dispose of our last heart) and switch to the $\spadesuit Q$ for a nice finish.

Andrzej – Keeping the $\spadesuit 2$, the sort of play typical for the owl, makes a two-trick difference.

BE ACTIVE

Professor – It doesn't always pay to sit back and hope for a miracle.

The auction was lively but short. South chose not to reopen.

W	N	E	S
3♠	All Pass		1♥

♠ 7 6 5 4
 ♥ 9
 ♦ 9 7 5
 ♣ A Q 7 6 3

N	♠ 2
W	♥ 8 7 5 4 2
E	♦ K Q 10 8 3
S	♣ K 5

Lead: ♥9. South wins the ace and continues with the king, thereby suggesting a diamond value. West follows twice.

Jacek – I discard a diamond and, if the next heart is ruffed high, another diamond.

Andrzej – Such defense leads nowhere. Partner cannot possibly hold both the ♠A and the ♦A – he would have reopened.

Robert – Only a 7=2=1=3 distribution of the West hand gives us the opportunity for a spectacular defense.

Be active

Ania – We should ruff the second heart and switch to a low club. This way we will kill dummy's sole entry before the diamond winner is set up. Furthermore, we will retain control of the club suit, preventing declarer from ruffing the club loser in dummy.

The full deal:

	♠ 7 6 5 4	
	♥ 9	
	♦ 9 7 5	
	♣ A Q 7 6 3	
♠ A K J 10 9 8 3	N W E S	♠ 2
♥ Q 3		♥ 8 7 5 4 2
♦ 6		♦ K Q 10 8 3
♣ J 4 2		♣ K 5
	♠ Q	
	♥ A K J 10 6	
	♦ A J 4 2	
	♣ 10 9 8	

Professor – Well done! This time the defender should be active, rather than waiting for manna from heaven.

DECENT TECHNIQUE

Professor – By their nature, untypical hands don't come up that often. Most of the time, good results come from decent bridge craftsmanship and playing the percentages.

Here the bidding wasn't overly exciting.

W	N	E	S
		1♣	Pass
1♠	Pass	1NT	Pass
2♠	All Pass		

	N		♠ A 5 3
W		E	♥ 9 7 5
			♦ Q J 10
	S		♣ A K 7 5

♠ K 8 6
 ♥ 6 4
 ♦ A 9 8
 ♣ Q J 9 6 2

Lead: ♥K. West wins the ace and plays the ♠J. You win with the king.

Agata – I switch to hearts. Partner should play clubs through.

Andrzej – What for?

Agata – To get the club trick before declarer establishes a diamond winner for a club discard.

Andrzej – Just count to thirteen. It's unlikely that partner holds a singleton club. And even if he did, we have only one entry.

Decent technique

Ania – We need to ruff a diamond. However, the high diamond spot we will have to discard on the third round of hearts may persuade partner not to lead diamonds.

Robert – I cash the \spadesuit A now and then play a heart. I will discard a second diamond on the third heart and will ruff a diamond played by partner.

All the deals have been switched to standard signals as you will have noted.

Here is the complete layout:

	\spadesuit 4 2		
	\heartsuit K Q J 8 3		
	\diamondsuit K 7 6 5		
	\clubsuit 10 8		
\spadesuit Q J 10 9 7	N	\spadesuit A 5 3	
\heartsuit A 10 2	W E	\heartsuit 9 7 5	
\diamondsuit 4 3 2	S	\diamondsuit Q J 10	
\clubsuit 4 3		\clubsuit A K 7 5	
	\spadesuit K 8 6		
	\heartsuit 6 4		
	\diamondsuit A 9 8		
	\clubsuit Q J 9 6 2		

Good technique includes making things easier for partner.

FOUR ACES AND THREE KINGS

Professor – Unspectacular little plays are sometimes the most beautiful.

W	N	E	S
1NT	Pass	2♣	Pass
2♦	Pass	3NT	All Pass

♠	Q 6											
♥	Q 10 9 3											
♦	Q J 8 5											
♣	K 8 6											
<table border="1" style="display: inline-table; border-collapse: collapse; vertical-align: middle;"> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;"></td> <td style="padding: 5px; text-align: center;">N</td> <td style="padding: 5px;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px; text-align: center;">W</td> <td style="padding: 5px;"></td> <td style="padding: 5px; text-align: center;">E</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;"></td> <td style="padding: 5px; text-align: center;">S</td> <td style="padding: 5px;"></td> </tr> </table>					N		W		E		S	
	N											
W		E										
	S											
		♠	A K 5 3									
		♥	5 4									
		♦	K 6 3 2									
		♣	7 5 4									

Lead: ♥10. Partner follows with the two (signaling an even number) and declarer ducks. When you continue with the ♥9, West takes the king and leads the ♦7 to dummy's king, South contributing the ♦10. Declarer's next move is a low spade to the nine and your queen. Partner signals an odd number of spades with the ♠8.

Jacek – I carefully switch to the queen of hearts to unblock the suit and avoid being thrown in. Partner will get in and play a club through.

Robert – Sounds reasonable, but let's perform a thorough analysis first.

Ania – Partner's count signals reveal West's distribution as 2=3=4=4. The play so far marks him with the ♠J, ♥AK, and ♦A.

Four aces and three kings

He must have something in clubs for his 1NT opening: either the ♣A, ♣AJ or ♣QJ.

Andrzej – The ♣QJ is unlikely. He would have tried to play clubs twice towards his hand.

Professor – Good. What is declarer’s plan for the play?

Robert – West has assumed a 3-2 diamond break. He hopes to score three diamonds, three spades, two hearts and a club. Note that he carefully retained another diamond entry to dummy by playing the ♦7 to the king.

Ania – If we play the third heart, declarer will cash the ♦A and, learning about the bad break, cash out his winners for down two.

Andrzej – Instead, we should continue spades. There is no way that declarer will give up on making the contract. He will win the jack in his hand and proudly table the ace of diamonds.

Ania – Thus four aces and three kings will produce only six tricks.

The full deal:

	♠ Q 6										
	♥ Q 10 9 3										
	♦ Q J 8 5										
	♣ K 8 6										
♠ J 9	<table style="border-collapse: collapse; margin: 0 auto;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ A K 5 3
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ A K 6		♥ 5 4									
♦ A 9 7 4		♦ K 6 3 2									
♣ A J 3 2		♣ 7 5 4									
	♠ 10 8 7 4 2										
	♥ J 8 7 2										
	♦ 10										
	♣ Q 10 9										

FATAL RUT

Professor – I am a sworn enemy of rote thinking, giving in to routine and automatic play. Why? Because I fall victim to it myself from time to time.

W	N	E	S
1NT	Pass	2♥	Pass
2♠	Pass	3NT	All Pass

♠ A 9
 ♥ 10 6 4 3
 ♦ A Q 8
 ♣ J 7 6 4

	N		♠ Q J 6 4 2
W		E	♥ K 7
			♦ 7 5 4 3
	S		♣ K 10

Lead: ♥3. Partner wins the ace and returns the ♥2, declarer producing the ♥J. Declarer now leads a spade from dummy to his king and South follows with the ♠3, showing an even number in the suit.

Agata – Normally, I would take the ace and prudently play the ♥10 to create an entry to partner's hand. The Professor's introduction, however, makes me think there is more to the hand.

Jacek – West's distribution is either 2=3=4=4, 2=3=5=3, or 2=3=3=5.

Robert – To stand any chance, West must hold the ♠10. We can see 20 HCP between our hand and the dummy, and partner has

Fatal rut

already shown the ♥A. Declarer must have the ♠K10, ♥QJ, ♦K, and ♣AQ. But who has the jack of diamonds?

Ania – It doesn't matter. If we persist with hearts, declarer will win, cash the ♠10, reach dummy with the ♣K and claim nine tricks.

Andrzej – And we'll have to be careful not to give him an overtrick.

The four hands:

	♠ A 9										
	♥ 10 6 4 3										
	♦ A Q 8										
	♣ J 7 6 4										
♠ K 10	<table style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td></td><td style="padding: 2px 10px;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px 10px;">W</td><td></td><td style="padding: 2px 10px;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="padding: 2px 10px;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ Q J 6 4 2
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ Q J 9		♥ K 7									
♦ K J 10 6		♦ 7 5 4 3									
♣ A Q 3 2		♣ K 10									
	♠ 8 7 5 3										
	♥ A 8 5 2										
	♦ 9 2										
	♣ 9 8 5										

Professor – The owl, upon winning the ♠A, made a classic entry-killing play: she led a club. Declarer's hesitation was her reward. Finally, dummy's ♣10 held the trick. It was followed by a small spade to the ten and a club back to dummy's king. Declarer discarded two diamonds on spades and switched to a diamond, but as the cards lay he was helpless. The ♦8 proved the key card.

Part 1: the Owl

Agata – Perhaps he should have finessed in diamonds after cashing just one spade winner or even immediately after winning the ♣10?

Andrzej – No good. We would have time to establish a heart winner in all of those scenarios.

DON'T LOSE YOUR HEAD

Professor – The owl does not always find the correct answer, but she never loses her head.

Tactical bidding led to West declaring the heart game. This time you couldn't be maneuvered into sacrificing in spades.

W	N	E	S
2♥	2♠	4♥	1♠ All Pass

	N		♠ 6 4 2
W		E	♥ 8 7 2
			♦ A 7 6 5 3
	S		♣ A 10

♠ A K 8 7 3
♥ A 9
♦ Q 2
♣ J 9 8 5

Lead: ♠Q. West ruffs the third round, crosses to the ♦A (♦4, ♦8, ♦A, ♦2) and plays the ♥2.

Ania – Normally I would rise with the ace and continue spades in order to promote partner's queen of trumps.

Jacek – Declarer may have:

- ♠ xx
- ♥ KJ109xx
- ♦ Kx
- ♣ Kxx

Part 1: the Owl

Professor – The owl followed Ania’s line of defense. She put up the ace and played spades, a suit in which everyone but South was void.

Here are the four hands:

	♠ Q J 9		
	♥ 4 3		
	♦ Q J 8		
	♣ K 7 6 4 2		
♠ 10 5	N	E	♠ 6 4 2
♥ K Q J 10 6 5	W	S	♥ 8 7 2
♦ K 9 4			♦ A 7 6 5 3
♣ Q 3			♣ A 10
	♠ A K 8 7 3		
	♥ A 9		
	♦ 10 2		
	♣ J 9 8 5		

Jacek – Clever. Declarer stimulated our imagination to suggest a non-existent promotion.

Agata – Now West will execute a banal minor-suit squeeze against North.

Don't lose your head

Professor – Declarer discarded a diamond from hand, ruffed in dummy and reached the following ending:

	♠ —										
	♥ —										
	♦ Q J										
	♣ K 7										
♠ —	<table style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td></td><td style="padding: 2px 10px;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px 10px;">W</td><td style="padding: 2px 10px;"></td><td style="padding: 2px 10px;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="padding: 2px 10px;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ —
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ J		♥ —									
♦ K		♦ 7 6									
♣ Q 3		♣ A 10									
	♠ —										
	♥ —										
	♦ 10										
	♣ J 9 8										

North had to part with a club when the last trump was led. Declarer threw the ♣10 from dummy, and the owl thoughtfully parted with the ♦10. Why was this discard so important?

Ania – West was ambitious. A simple squeeze against North was not exotic enough.

He wanted the crisscross squeeze to operate against either defender.

Robert – The snag with this sort of squeeze is that you have to guess whether it's there at all and if so, which defender is squeezed.

Jacek – A club discard by South would have left declarer no choice but to cash the ♣A, since with three diamonds outstanding there would have been no hope in that suit. Throwing away a diamond created the illusion of a forced discard and presented declarer with an alternative line of play.

Part 1: the Owl

Robert – But the hand South would have to have to find herself in a crisscross squeeze, namely:

♠ A K 8 7 3

♥ A 9

♦ J 10 2

♣ K 8 5

is rather unlikely, for at least two reasons. First, with that hand she might have opened 1NT rather than 1♠. Second, she might have doubled 4♥.

Professor – All true, but kudos to the owl for a great recovery. She didn't lose her head after an unsuccessful play and the rest of her defense was optimal.

A TRAP

Professor – I love this game.

The bidding was unusual.

EW vulnerable

W	N	E	S
5♠	3♥	Pass	5♥
	All Pass		

♠ 9
♥ Q J 10 8 6 4 3
♦ A Q
♣ 9 8 5

N	♠ 4 2
W E	♥ 9 7 5
S	♦ K 4 3
	♣ A Q 10 7 4

Lead: ♥Q. West wins the ace and draws three rounds of trumps. (Partner follows, signaling club values.) Next declarer plays a club to the ten. After winning with the jack, partner switches to the ♦5. You take the ace and...

Jacek – I continue with the ♦Q.

Robert – Then the contract is made on a minor-suit squeeze. The location of the club king is no longer a mystery. North cannot have all those red-suit honors and the club king too.

Agata – A club switch would prevent the squeeze.

Andrzej – True, but West would set up dummy's clubs with a ruff.

Part 1: the Owl

Professor – Here is the full deal:

♠ A K Q J 10 6 5	N W E S	♠ 4 2
♥ A		♥ 9 7 5
♦ 10 8 6		♦ K 4 3
♣ 3 2		♣ A Q 10 7 4
	♠ 8 7 3	
	♥ K 2	
	♦ J 9 7 5 2	
	♣ K J 6	

Everybody is silent for a while. Finally Ania bursts out laughing. Not for the first time, the Professor had set a trap. Once the ♦A was played it was already too late: the problem needed to be identified earlier.

The owl might work out to play the queen, not the ace, on the first round of diamonds. Declarer concedes a diamond but a club switch now would deprive him of a valuable entry needed for the squeeze. Funnily enough, even if declarer starts diamonds himself, rising with the ace loses while playing the queen sets the contract.

PLANNING YOUR DISCARDS

Professor – The setting is a pairs tournament. When you get in, try to foresee the near future before leading to the next trick.

W	N	E	S
		1♣	Dbf
1NT	Pass	3♥*	Pass
3NT	All Pass		

* – shortness

N	♠ A J 2
W	♥ 5
E	♦ A J 4
S	♣ A Q J 9 8 4

♠ K 7 3
♥ A 6 4 2
♦ K 10 9
♣ K 7 6

Lead: ♥J. (Partner would lead the ten from KJ10.) You follow with the ♥2 while West takes the queen and finesses in clubs. You win the king, cash the ♥A (maybe partner had a six-card suit?) and continue with a low heart. Declarer wins and runs clubs.

You can afford a spade and a diamond, but what about the last discard? You reluctantly bid farewell to your last heart, to no avail. The ruthless declarer puts you in with a spade and makes you underlead the king of diamonds. The result: 10 tricks.

Part 1: the Owl

The four hands:

	♠ 10 6 5 4										
	♥ J 10 9 7 3										
	♦ 7 5 3										
	♣ 5										
♠ Q 9 8 ♥ K Q 8 ♦ Q 8 6 2 ♣ 10 3 2	<table border="1" style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;"> </td><td style="padding: 5px;">N</td><td style="padding: 5px;"> </td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">W</td><td style="padding: 5px;"> </td><td style="padding: 5px;">E</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;"> </td><td style="padding: 5px;">S</td><td style="padding: 5px;"> </td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ A J 2 ♥ 5 ♦ A J 4 ♣ A Q J 9 8 4
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠ K 7 3										
	♥ A 6 4 2										
	♦ K 10 9										
	♣ K 7 6										

The owl, having won the ♣K, forced herself to perform a chess-like analysis. As a consequence she gave up on setting the game and decided to save overtricks. Accordingly she switched to... a small heart!

	♠ 10 6										
	♥ 10 9 7										
	♦ 7										
	♣ —										
♠ Q 9 8 ♥ 8 ♦ Q 8 ♣ —	<table border="1" style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;"> </td><td style="padding: 5px;">N</td><td style="padding: 5px;"> </td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">W</td><td style="padding: 5px;"> </td><td style="padding: 5px;">E</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;"> </td><td style="padding: 5px;">S</td><td style="padding: 5px;"> </td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ A J ♥ — ♦ A J 4 ♣ 8
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠ K 7										
	♥ A 6										
	♦ K 10										
	♣ —										

Accordingly, she had an easy discard on the sixth round of clubs: the ♥A. The result: 9 tricks.

PROBLEMS OF ABUNDANCE

Professor – You listened to the aggressive bidding of your opponents with hope. Indeed, you could barely keep yourself from doubling.

W	N	E	S
		1♦	2♣
2♠	Pass	3♠	Pass
4NT	Pass	5♣	Pass
6♠	All Pass		

♠ 10 6 5 4 3
♥ 10 9 8
♦ 10 5 2
♣ 8 5

	N
W	E
	S

♠ A J
♥ 7 6 4 2
♦ A 9 7 4 3
♣ K 7

Lead: ♣8. Declarer wins the ace, crosses to the ace of diamonds and ruffs a diamond. He crosses back to dummy via spades (the ♣Q appears from South) and ruffs another diamond. Next come a club to the king and a heart back to the king.

Initially you watched declarer's strange maneuvers calmly, but apprehension gradually begins to creep over you. You have noticed that West already has fewer trumps than you do.

Part 1: the Owl

This is the end position:

♠ K Q 9	♠ 10 6 5 4	♠ J									
♥ A 5	♥ 10 9	♥ 7 6 4									
♦ —	♦ —	♦ 9 7									
♣ 6	♣ —	♣ —									
	<table style="border-collapse: collapse; margin: auto;"> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;"> </td><td style="padding: 5px;">N</td><td style="padding: 5px;"> </td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">W</td><td style="padding: 5px;"> </td><td style="padding: 5px;">E</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;"> </td><td style="padding: 5px;">S</td><td style="padding: 5px;"> </td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠ —										
	♥ Q J										
	♦ J										
	♣ J 10 9										

A small club hits the table.

Andrzej – The problem is as old as the world of bridge. We must not discard a heart lest we might be endplayed. We have to underruff.

Professor – West ruffs another diamond with an honor.

Ania – Time for another underruff!

Professor – A rare example of voluntarily ridding oneself of trumps in order to avoid an endplay.

Problems of abundance

The full deal:

	♠ 10 6 5 4 3										
	♥ 10 9 8										
	♦ 10 5 2										
	♣ 8 5										
♠ K Q 9 8 7 2	<table style="margin: 0 auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ A J
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ A K 5		♥ 7 6 4 2									
♦ 8		♦ A 9 7 4 3									
♣ A 6 2		♣ K 7									
	♠ —										
	♥ Q J 3										
	♦ K Q J 6										
	♣ Q J 10 9 4 3										

THE CHESS PLAYER 1

Professor – Never play routinely. Long term success depends on always making a thorough analysis, even when it doesn't seem necessary.

You wouldn't expect anything extraordinary after this sort of auction.

NS vulnerable

W	N	E	S
			Pass
1♦* ¹	Pass	1♠	Pass
1NT	Pass	2♣* ²	Pass
2NT* ³	Pass	3NT	All Pass

*1 – 4+ diamonds

*2 – check back

*3 – 13-14PC - no 3♠

♠ K Q J 8

♥ K 6 5 4

♦ 7 5

♣ Q 5 3

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ A 10 7 3 2

♥ A 2

♦ A 6 4

♣ J 9 4

Lead: ♠K. You hold the trick, continue with the ♠Q. Declarer takes the ace this time. Leads a ♣4 from dummy to his ♣10 and South follows with the ♣7. You win the trick, and...

The chess player 1

Jacek – From my experience, it's best to make the passive return of a club.

Professor – Here is the full deal:

	♠ K Q J 8					
	♥ K 6 5 4					
	♦ 7 5					
	♣ Q 5 3					
♠ 9 4 ♥ J 9 8 ♦ K Q 3 2 ♣ A K 10 8	<table border="1" style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W E</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S	♠ A 10 7 3 2 ♥ A 2 ♦ A 6 4 ♣ J 9 4	
N						
W E						
S						
	♠ 6 5					
	♥ Q 10 7 3					
	♦ J 10 9 8					
	♣ 7 6 2					

Ania – Let's try to imagine what might develop if we exit with the club. West will draw clubs and proceed to play off the ♦KQ, reaching this position:

	♠ Q 8					
	♥ K 6 5					
	♦ —					
	♣ —					
♠ — ♥ J 9 8 ♦ 3 2 ♣ —	<table border="1" style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W E</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S	♠ 10 7 ♥ A 2 ♦ A ♣ —	
N						
W E						
S						
	♠ —					
	♥ Q 10 7					
	♦ J 10					
	♣ —					

Part 1: the Owl

Declarer will now cross to the $\diamond A$. We will have to part with a heart – it's no use throwing away a spade. Now when declarer cashes the $\heartsuit A$, we will unblock the king, hoping for $\heartsuit QJ$ in partner's hand. No luck. There is no winning defense, it seems.

Professor – The owl got off to the same opening lead, and the first 3 tricks were identical. However, she didn't let routine dictate her actions. The distribution of suits and honors was clear by that point, so the owl could predict (just as Ania did) what would happen after a club continuation. Unless South had the heart queen there was no defense to the game.

Unblocking the king under the $\heartsuit A$ wins if partner holds the $\heartsuit QJ$, but playing a heart when on lead with the $\clubsuit Q$ succeeds whenever partner holds the heart queen, with or without the jack. So, after taking the $\clubsuit Q$, the owl exited with a heart, thereby leaving declarer with no chance to make the contract.

THE CHESS PLAYER 2

Professor – Outstanding players often seem to have a sixth sense for interesting hands, on which they can come up with unusual solutions.

W	N	E	S
1♠	Dbl	2♠*	Pass
2NT	Pass	3♣**	Pass
4♠	All Pass		

* – 4–7 HCP

** – values

♠ 8
 ♥ A K Q 5
 ♦ K J 10 5 2
 ♣ 5 4 2

	N		♠ K 9 7 4
			♥ 9 7 2
W		E	♦ 8 7 6
	S		♣ K 9 8

Lead: ♥A. West follows with the ♥10 and partner signals an even number. The owl goes into a long tank. What concerns her?

Ania – We know nothing about declarer's hand.

Robert – The problem is posed too early.

Professor – At the table, nobody will let you undo an erroneous play. In some situations I feel a certain apprehension which makes me undertake an analysis I would not normally pursue.

Part 1: the Owl

Robert – West went to game after a weak raise from his partner, so he has a strong hand. That means our partner is almost broke. We are alone in our struggle against declarer.

Andrzej – West has to be balanced if we are to stand a chance of beating him: $5=2=3=3$. In this case we have two potential winners in each of the red suits.

Professor – These are the four hands:

	♠ 8	
	♥ A K Q 5	
	♦ K J 10 5 2	
	♣ 5 4 2	
♠ A Q 6 3 2	N W E S	♠ K 9 7 4
♥ 10 8		♥ 9 7 2
♦ A Q 3		♦ 8 7 6
♣ A Q 3		♣ K 9 8
	♠ J 10 5	
	♥ J 6 4 3	
	♦ 9 4	
	♣ J 10 7 6	

Tomek – There is the threat of an endplay.

Agata – Not really. Partner holds the key ♦9 which would protect us from getting thrown in.

Jacek – The owl was afraid of a simple squeeze.

The chess player 2

Andrzej – Let's reconstruct the play after the routine defensive sequence of three rounds of hearts. Declarer ruffs, draws three rounds of trumps and cashes the ace and queen of clubs, reaching this ending:

	♠ —										
	♥ 5										
	♦ K J 10 5										
	♣ —										
♠ 6	<table style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">N</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">W</td> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">E</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">S</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ 9
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ —		♥ —									
♦ A Q 3		♦ 8 7 6									
♣ 3		♣ K									
	♠ —										
	♥ J										
	♦ 9 4										
	♣ J 10										

West crosses to the ♣K. What do we do?

Agata – We have to discard a heart.

Robert – West plays the last spade. What now?

Jacek – The ♦5 is bad, and the ♦10 is even worse.

Professor – The owl did not make the routine play of the ♥K at Trick 2. Instead she switched to clubs. Declarer won in hand, crossed to dummy via spades and exited with a heart. South did well to hop up with the jack and play a diamond through. And that was the end of declarer!

THE CHESS PLAYER 3

Professor – Refraining from the “obvious” play is a sign of a high level of competence.

Your hand sometimes improves after the opponent’s pre-empt, doesn’t it?

W	N	E	S
			3♣
Dbl	Pass	4♣	Pass
4♥	Pass	4NT	Pass
5♠	Pass	6♥	All Pass

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ K 3
 ♥ K 9 7 2
 ♦ A 8 7 6
 ♣ A K 8

♠ J
 ♥ 6 4 3
 ♦ K 9
 ♣ Q J 10 7 6 4 2

Lead: ♣5. West took the ace, cashed the ♠K and, threatened by the sight of the ♠J falling, drew trumps in three rounds, ending in dummy. (North discarded a diamond on the third heart.) Time for spades. Declarer’s misgivings about the spade break were confirmed when he cashed the ♠A. He crossed to the ♣K (collecting a small spade from North) and called for a low diamond. After some hesitation the owl went up with the king.

The chess player 3

The following ending had been reached:

N		♠ —
W	E	♥ 9
S		♦ A 8 7
		♣ 8

♠ —
♥ —
♦ 9
♣ Q J 10 7

The owl reached for a card, but after a while she put it back.
What scared her?

Ania – Declarer's situation is not good.

Robert – It seems the owl's play is immaterial.

Jacek – The biggest mistakes are caused by a lack of concentration.

Part 1: the Owl

Professor – The four hands:

	♠ Q 9 7 5 4					
	♥ J 5					
	♦ J 10 5 4 2					
	♣ 5					
♠ A 10 8 6 2 ♥ A Q 10 8 ♦ Q 3 ♣ 9 3	<table border="1" style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">W E</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S	♠ K 3 ♥ K 9 7 2 ♦ A 8 7 6 ♣ A K 8	
N						
W E						
S						
	♠ J					
	♥ 6 4 3					
	♦ K 9					
	♣ Q J 10 7 6 4 2					

...and the five-card ending:

	♠ Q 9					
	♥ —					
	♦ J 10 5					
	♣ —					
♠ 10 8 6 ♥ 10 ♦ Q ♣ —	<table border="1" style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">W E</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S	♠ — ♥ 9 ♦ A 8 7 ♣ 8	
N						
W E						
S						
	♠ —					
	♥ —					
	♦ 9					
	♣ Q J 10 7					

Ania – If the owl plays a club, declarer will ruff and North won't have a safe discard.

Professor – Sure enough, the owl exited with a diamond and this suicidal crisscross squeeze never materialized.

THE CHESS PLAYER 4

Professor – You can only hope that your defense is on a par with partner’s excellent opening lead.

W	N	E	S
		2♣* ¹	Pass
2♦* ²	Pass	3♣	Pass
3♠	Pass	4♦* ³	Pass
6♠	All Pass		

*¹ – Precision (11-15HCP, 5+ clubs)

*² – relay

*³ – cue bid

N		♠ 4 3 2
W	E	♥ K 10
S		♦ A J
		♣ A 10 8 5 3 2
		♠ 7
		♥ A J 8 5 2
		♦ Q 10 9 4
		♣ Q 9 4

Lead: ♦2 (fourth best). After some thought declarer plays the jack and your queen wins the trick.

Agata – I won’t cash the ♥A – I’m not a calf. The bidding suggests that West is void in hearts. I exit safely with a trump.

Jacek – Declarer’s probable distribution is 7=0=3=3. If he holds eight spades (8=0=3=2), it is only a matter of who has the king of clubs.

Part 1: the Owl

Robert – West's hand is something like:

♠ AKQxxxx
 ♥ —
 ♦ xxx
 ♣ Kxx

Ania – We may be squeezed in hearts and clubs in the following end position:

	♠ —										
	♥ Q 9										
	♦ K										
	♣ J										
♠ 5	<table style="margin: auto;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ —
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ —		♥ K									
♦ —		♦ —									
♣ K 7 6		♣ A 10 8									
	♠ —										
	♥ A										
	♦ —										
	♣ Q 9 4										

When declarer cashes the remaining spade it triggers the squeeze against us.

Andrzej – We have to switch to clubs immediately, counting on partner to hold the singleton jack.

Robert – Right, this breaks up the potential squeeze.

Jacek – Playing this way, we'll stay in tune with partner's excellent opening lead.

The chess player 4

Here is the full deal:

	♠ 9 6	
	♥ Q 9 7 6 4 3	
	♦ K 7 3 2	
	♣ J	
♠ A K Q J 10 8 5	N	♠ 4 3 2
♥ —	W E	♥ K 10
♦ 8 6 5	S	♦ A J
♣ K 7 6		♣ A 10 8 5 3 2
	♠ 7	
	♥ A J 8 5 2	
	♦ Q 10 9 4	
	♣ Q 9 4	

THE CHESS PLAYER 5

Professor – “What is the point of this whole deliberation?” is a common reaction when I dig into the more complex problems.

W	N	E	S
1♥	2♠	4♥	All Pass

N		
W		E
S		

♠ 4 3 2
 ♥ A 10 9
 ♦ J 8 7 2
 ♣ A K 10

♠ 8 5
 ♥ 8 5
 ♦ K Q 10 9
 ♣ Q 9 5 3 2

Lead: ♠A, ♠K, ♠J. West ruffs the jack (you dispose of a club), draws two rounds of trumps and exits with a low diamond from dummy. Your ♦9 holds the trick.

Agata – Mysterious.

Robert – What did partner play to the diamond trick?

Professor – Wise question. He showed an odd number of diamonds.

Jacek – We should assume West is 2=6=2=3, since this is the only challenging distribution for the defense. If West’s hand is instead 2=5=2=4, he will simply go one down.

The chess player 5

Ania – Incidentally, we can rule out a 2=5=2=4 distribution on the basis of our partner's defense, although it's not immediately obvious. Partner's hand would be:

♠ AKJxxx
 ♥ xxx
 ♦ xxx
 ♣ x

and having cashed two spades, he would presumably switch to his singleton club.

Agata – Why are we having this discussion? I don't see a problem for the defense even if West is 2=6=2=3. We have a trick in each minor to go along with our two spades.

Ania – Not necessarily. There is a threat of a criss-cross trump squeeze in the minor suits.

Professor – Here is the full deal:

	♠ A K J 9 7 6					
	♥ 7 6					
	♦ 6 4 3					
	♣ J 4					
♠ Q 10 ♥ K Q J 4 3 2 ♦ A 5 ♣ 8 7 6	<table border="1" style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">W E</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S	♠ 4 3 2 ♥ A 10 9 ♦ J 8 7 2 ♣ A K 10	
N						
W E						
S						
	♠ 8 5					
	♥ 8 5					
	♦ K Q 10 9					
	♣ Q 9 5 3 2					

Part 1: the Owl

Ania – Declarer plans to reach the following ending:

	♠ 9 7										
	♥ —										
	♦ 6										
	♣ J 4										
♠ —	<table style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td></td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">N</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">W</td> <td></td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">E</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">S</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ —
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ K Q		♥ —									
♦ —		♦ J 8									
♣ 8 7 6		♣ A K 10									
	♠ —										
	♥ —										
	♦ Q 10										
	♣ Q 9 5										

The penultimate trump triggers the squeeze (the ♣10 is pitched from dummy).

Jacek – After getting in with the ♦9, we must exit with a club to disable this complex squeeze.

Professor – Another hand with the jack of clubs as the main protagonist.

THE CHESS PLAYER 6

Professor – The following play would surely be written up in the daily tournament bulletin.

The bidding revealed quite a lot of information about declarer's hand.

W	N	E	S
1♠	Pass	2♣*	Pass
2♦	Pass	2♥	Pass
3♠	Pass	4♠	Pass
4NT	Pass	5♥	Pass
6♠	All Pass		

* – Relay – game forcing

	N		♠ K 10
W		E	♥ A K J 5
			♦ J 7 6 4
	S		♣ J 9 7

♠ A
 ♥ Q 10 9 7 6 4
 ♦ Q 10 9
 ♣ 6 4 3

Lead: ♣K. West wins the ace and plays a spade to the ten and your ace.

Agata – I switch to clubs.

Andrzej – Why?

Agata – So what would you have me do? Lead away from one of my queens, looking at that dummy?

Part 1: the Owl

Ania – Analysis first. The auction suggests that West has six spades and four diamonds.

Robert – At least ten cards in his two suits. Does a hand like:

♠ QJxxxx
 ♥ xx
 ♦ AKxx
 ♣ A

justify bidding Blackwood after a relatively discouraging reaction from partner?

Jacek – I suspect a 7-4 distribution:

♠ QJxxxxx
 ♥ x
 ♦ AKxx
 ♣ A

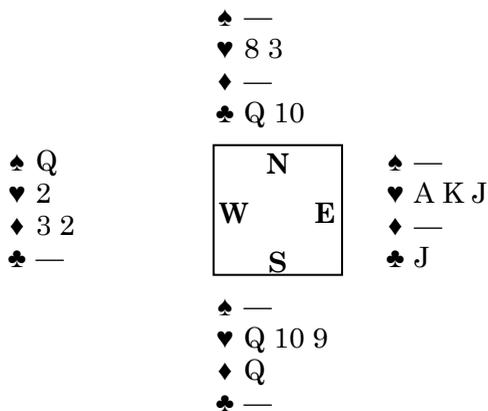
Professor – The full deal:

		♠ 5 4 2	
		♥ 8 3	
		♦ 8 5	
		♣ K Q 10 8 5 2	
♠ Q J 9 8 7 6 3	N	♠ K 10	
♥ 2	W	♥ A K J 5	
♦ A K 3 2	E	♦ J 7 6 4	
♣ A	S	♣ J 9 7	
		♠ A	
		♥ Q 10 9 7 6 4	
		♦ Q 10 9	
		♣ 6 4 3	

Ania – Now West's bidding seems more reasonable. Here a mundane simple squeeze in the red suits will suffice to make the contract.

The chess player 6

Declarer will reach this end position:



In theory a double squeeze may materialize, but in reality it will operate only against South.

Andrzej – It's clear at this point that a heart switch at Trick 3, which we initially dismissed as absurd, is the only defense against a heart-diamond squeeze.

Robert – Not only that, but declarer will not even be able to enjoy the extra heart trick. He will have no entry to the hearts after trumps are drawn. If he tries to cash the third heart while in dummy with the ♠K, partner will ruff with the last outstanding trump.

Agata – The danger of presenting this kind of problem is that young players sitting behind dummy will start underleading honors towards dummy's tenaces in order to break up imaginary squeezes.

Professor – That's true, but all ambitious young bridge players go through a phase where the main objective of their plays is to make the headlines.

THE CHESS PLAYER 7

Professor – An assault on declarer’s communications can be effective more often than one might suppose. The unusual auction has given you a clear picture of declarer’s hand; can you take advantage of this?

W	N	E	S
1♠	Pass	2♣* ¹	Pass
2♠	Pass	2NT* ²	Pass
3♥* ³	Pass	3♠	Pass
3NT* ⁴	Pass	4♣	Pass
4♥	Pass	4NT	Pass
5♠* ⁵	Pass	6♠	All Pass

*1 – waiting

*2 – forcing

*3 – 6+♠

*4 – no shortness

*5 – 2 out of 5 keycards and the ♠Q

♠ A 8 3
 ♥ Q 7 5 4 2
 ♦ 10 8 6 3
 ♣ J

	N		♠ K 6 5
W		E	♥ J 10 9
			♦ A K 5
	S		♣ K Q 8 2

A passive lead is hard to find. Finally you reach for the ♣J.

The chess player 7

West wins the ace (partner signaling an even number) and leads the ♠J... a funny little trick, since the auction already revealed the location of the queen. You duck and declarer continues trumps. How will you defend?

Agata – There is no reason to be active. I take the ace and return a trump.

Robert – We need to do some basic analysis, at least. Let's count declarer's tricks. Five spades, one heart, two diamonds, and three clubs makes eleven. To have any chance of beating the contract, partner must have both the ♥K and the ♦Q, otherwise declarer has twelve top tricks.

Ania – Partner also needs the ten of clubs. West's distribution is 6=2=3=2 or 6=3=2=2.

Jacek – 6=2=3=2 is the dangerous hand, with the jack-third of diamonds, to be precise.

Part 1: the Owl

Professor – These are the four hands:

	♠ A 8 3		
	♥ Q 7 5 4 2		
	♦ 10 8 6 3		
	♣ J		
♠ Q J 10 9 4 2	N W E S	♠ K 6 5	
♥ A 8		♥ J 10 9	
♦ J 7 4		♦ A K 5	
♣ A 7		♣ K Q 8 2	
	♠ 7		
	♥ K 6 3		
	♦ Q 9 2		
	♣ 10 9 6 5 4 3		

Andrzej – Right, the squeeze in clubs and diamonds will be very easy to play.

Ania – Communication is the key...

Robert – ... and our task is to break it.

Agata – Got it. I duck the second spade, too, take the third and switch to a heart. This way declarer won't have time to cash the top diamonds, which is a necessary condition for the successful squeeze.

THE CHESS PLAYER 8

Professor – On defense our analysis must be thorough and multi-dimensional.

The bidding was exciting.

W	N	E	S
			3♣
3♠	Pass	3NT	Pass
4♦	Pass	6♦	All Pass

N			♠ 10
W		E	♥ A K J 8 5
S			♦ K 10 6
			♣ A J 9 7
			♠ Q 5
			♥ Q 7
			♦ 9 2
			♣ K Q 10 8 5 4 2

Lead: ♣6. Declarer follows suit and takes the ace, crosses to the ♠A, and ruffs the ♠2 with the ♦6. He proceeds to cash the top two hearts. The queen falls while West pitches a spade. The ♥J appears on the table.

The owl, sitting South, went into a long tank – a rather rare occurrence. What was she thinking about?

Agata – I haven't got a clue. If the choice is between ruffing and discarding a club, then I go for the ruff.

Andrzej – Me too. I ruff with the ♦9, in case something gets promoted in partner's hand.

Part 1: the Owl

Ania – Analysis first. From the bidding and the play so far, it seems that West has six spades and five diamonds.

Robert – If declarer's hand is really good, like this one, even thirteen tricks are possible:

♠ AKxxxx
♥ x
♦ AQ8xx
♣ x

Jacek – We have to assume that the contract can be set. Let's give declarer a minimum hand.

Agata – That means no king of spades. Something along the lines of:

♠ AJxxxx
♥ x
♦ AQJxx
♣ x

Andrzej – But even with that hand declarer can make the contract on a crossruff. We must find partner with ♦J8x. If so, it is necessary to ruff with the ♦9.

Robert – What about this hand:

♠ AJxxxx
♥ x
♦ AJ8xx
♣ x

The chess player 8

Ania – We should anticipate the ending. Let's assume the four hands are:

	♠ K 9 8 4					
	♥ 10 9 6 4 3					
	♦ Q 4 3					
	♣ 6					
♠ A J 7 6 3 2 ♥ 2 ♦ A J 8 7 5 ♣ 3	<table border="1" style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">W E</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S	♠ 10 ♥ A K J 8 5 ♦ K 10 6 ♣ A J 9 7	
N						
W E						
S						
	♠ Q 5					
	♥ Q 7					
	♦ 9 2					
	♣ K Q 10 8 5 4 2					

Declarer should have no problem in cross-ruffing to reach the following three-card ending:

	♠ —					
	♥ —					
	♦ Q 4 3					
	♣ —					
♠ J ♥ — ♦ A 8 ♣ —	<table border="1" style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">W E</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S	♠ — ♥ — ♦ — ♣ J 9 7	
N						
W E						
S						
	♠ —					
	♥ —					
	♦ 2					
	♣ K Q					

Agata – He will play a club from dummy, pitching the spade. He can't lose. So it is superior to ruff with the ♦9, after all.

Part 1: the Owl

Andrzej – Hold on a second, did you follow the play correctly? In this ending the lead will be in hand, not in dummy. Declarer will exit with the ♠J. Partner will cheerfully ruff with the ♦3, but we won't be able to do any better than to shamefully underruff with the two.

Robert – So we have to guess partner's trump holding. Does he have the ♦J8x, in which case we need to ruff with the ♦9, or the ♦Qxx, in which case we need to ruff with the ♦2?

Jacek – What did the owl ruff the heart jack with?

Professor – The ♦2.

Ania – Did she guess correctly?

Professor – It had nothing to do with guessing. You missed something in your analysis.

There was a moment of silence.

Robert – Shame on us. We should have considered the negative inferences from the opening lead. Partner had a significant spade stack: ♠K9xx. From ♦J8x, a trump lead would have been obvious. The lack of one is evidence that partner holds the ♦Qxx.

Part 2:

FOX

The fox is a traditional symbol of slyness in European and Native American cultures. The fox appears frequently in animal fables, where he uses his cleverness and shrewdness for his own gain.

The Fox and Crow

*The Crow with laden beak the tree retires,
The Fox to gett her prey her forme admires,
While she to show her gratitude not small,
Offering to give her thanks, her prize lets fall.*

Thomas Philipot

In a traditional fable about the crow and the fox, the fox demonstrates that he is not only clever but also an effective flatterer. The fox encounters a crow sitting on a branch with a large piece of cheese in her beak. Knowing that the crow is a vain creature, he starts to compliment her appearance. Having praised her beauty, the fox asks the crow to favor him with a sample of her voice, presumably equally beautiful. Naturally, the beguiled bird opens her beak, releasing the cheese. The fox catches the prize and runs away, leaving the crow empty-handed.

INSIDIOUS 1

To control people's imagination is every politician's dream. To influence declarer's imagination is the fox's task.

The auction had revealed 5 spades and 4 hearts in the West hand.

EW Vulnerable

W	N	E	S
1♠	Pass	2♣*	Pass
2♥	Pass	2♠	Pass
4♠	All Pass		

* – waiting, game forcing

♠ 8 5
 ♥ K 6 3
 ♦ J 10 7 6 3
 ♣ J 10 9

	N		♠ A K J
W		E	♥ 7 5 2
			♦ K Q 4
	S		♣ Q 5 4 2

Lead: ♣J. You hold the trick and continue clubs. Declarer ruffs the third round and draws trumps in three rounds (you discard a diamond). Now West takes the heart finesse twice and claims the contract. The flattest of deals, you think to yourself.

Insidious 1

All four hands:

	♠ 8 5											
	♥ K 6 3											
	♦ J 10 7 6 3											
	♣ J 10 9											
♠ Q 10 9 7 6 ♥ A J 10 8 ♦ A 8 ♣ 6 3	<table style="width: 100%; height: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>	N			W		E		S		♠ A K J ♥ 7 5 2 ♦ K Q 4 ♣ Q 5 4 2	
N												
W		E										
	S											
	♠ 4 3 2											
	♥ Q 9 4											
	♦ 9 5 2											
	♣ A K 8 7											

The fox dropped an encouraging heart on the third round of trumps. Innocent enough, but declarer's imagination awoke.

The whole deal might have been:

	♠ 8 5											
	♥ K Q 6 3											
	♦ J 10 7 6											
	♣ J 10 9											
♠ Q 10 9 7 6 ♥ A J 10 8 ♦ A 8 ♣ 6 3	<table style="width: 100%; height: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>	N			W		E		S		♠ A K J ♥ 7 5 2 ♦ K Q 4 ♣ Q 5 4 2	
N												
W		E										
	S											
	♠ 4 3 2											
	♥ 9 4											
	♦ 9 5 3 2											
	♣ A K 8 7											

Part 2: the Fox

In this case discarding a heart is nearly automatic, though, as will be seen shortly, extremely dangerous for the defenders.

Declarer ruffed the fourth club (the fox pitching a diamond), cashed three rounds of diamonds and played a heart to the ten with a triumphant face. Well, the real ending differed a bit from what he hoped for:

♠ —	♠ —			
♥ K 6	♥ K 6			
♦ 7	♦ 7			
♣ —	♣ —			
♠ —	♠ —			
♥ A J 10	♥ 7 5 2			
♦ —	♦ —			
♣ —	♣ —			
	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; text-align: center; width: 100px; height: 100px;"> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">W E</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S
N				
W E				
S				
	♠ —			
	♥ Q 9 4			
	♦ —			
	♣ —			

Admittedly, discarding a heart while holding five useless diamonds is very difficult and requires breaking free from routine thinking on defense. Bridge of the 21st century will demand from defenders imagining what declarer can imagine.

INSIDIOUS 2

Said the fox to the cat,

*...”You think yourself a knowing one:
How many cunning tricks have you?
For I have a hundred, old and new,
All ready in my haversack.”
The cat replied, “I do not lack,
Though with but one provided;
And, truth to honor, for that matter,
I hold it than a thousand better.”...*

Jean de La Fontaine, *The Cat and the Fox*
(translation by E. Wright, Jr.)

The bidding was uninformative, but the first few tricks yielded much valuable data.

W	N	E	S
3NT	All Pass	2♠*	Pass

* – weak two

N W E S	♠ J 10 9 8 7 4 ♥ A Q 2 ♦ 3 2 ♣ 8 4
♠ A K Q 6 3 ♥ 10 7 4 ♦ 8 ♣ 10 7 6 5	

Part 2: the Fox

Lead: ♦J. Declarer wins with an honor and plays a second top diamond. You discard a spade. Declarer now plays a small heart to dummy's queen and a club back to the jack. Partner wins the queen and switches to a spade. You win (declarer parts with a diamond) and play a club to declarer's ace. You can afford to throw a small spade on another diamond honor, but the contract makes nevertheless: declarer's ninth trick comes from the 3-3 heart split.

This is the whole deal – there appear to be nine top tricks:

	♠ 5 2										
	♥ J 6 3										
	♦ J 10 9 7 6										
	♣ Q 9 2										
♠ —	<table style="border-collapse: collapse; margin: auto;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ J 10 9 8 7 4
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ K 9 8 5		♥ A Q 2									
♦ A K Q 5 4		♦ 3 2									
♣ A K J 3		♣ 8 4									
	♠ A K Q 6 3										
	♥ 10 7 4										
	♦ 8										
	♣ 10 7 6 5										

The fox discarded a small spade on the second diamond trick, as you did. Similarly, he won his partner's spade switch and exited with a club. But when declarer played the third round of diamonds, he discarded a spade honor, even though he still had a small spot left. Why?

Insidious 2

West's distribution was known at this stage to be 0=4=5=4, and his values were equally clear. His hand could be reconstructed as:

♠ —
 ♥ Kxxx
 ♦ AKQxx
 ♣ AKJx

Nine tricks are there, given that the hearts break 3-3.

The fox's objective was, therefore, to convince his prey that the hearts in fact divided 4-2. This was achieved by dropping the spade honor. Seeing the spade honor from South, declarer imagined his hand as:

♠ AKQx
 ♥ J10xx
 ♦ x
 ♣ 10xxx

Playing off three high diamonds, reasoned declarer, would squeeze South in three suits. This is the ending he envisaged:

	♠ 6 2										
	♥ 6										
	♦ 9 7										
	♣ —										
♠ — ♥ K 9 8 ♦ 5 ♣ 3	<table style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ J 10 9 ♥ A 2 ♦ — ♣ —
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠ A										
	♥ J 10 7										
	♦ —										
	♣ 10										

Part 2: the Fox

Now declarer, with a self-satisfied look in his eyes, would endplay South with a club.

- a) If South exits with a small heart, declarer inserts the ♥8. If it wins, declarer plays a heart to dummy to throw South in again, this time with a spade, forcing him to concede the last heart trick.
- b) If South exits with a small heart and the ♥8 is covered by the jack or ten, declarer wins in dummy and finesses against the remaining heart honor.
- c) Similarly, should South switch to the ♥J or ♥10, declarer takes the trick with dummy's ♥A and a heart finesse concludes the play.

Against the actual layout, declarer, deceived as to the heart distribution, won the fox's ♥10 with the ace and finessed the nine. Two down was a brutal wake-up call from the realm of dreams.

At the highest level, such a defense requires co-operation between defenders. Since a skillful declarer would watch the defenders' signals, North should false-card when switching to spades in order to conceal the number of cards he holds in the suit.

Insidious 2

Interestingly, the prey could easily escape the fox's trap if North's concentration slips. Watch what happens if North thoughtlessly discards the ♠2 instead of a diamond when declarer plays a club:

	♠ 2	
	♥ J 6	
	♦ 9 7	
	♣ —	
♠ —	N W E S	♠ J 10 9
♥ K 9 8		♥ A 2
♦ 5		♦ —
♣ 3		♣ —
	♠ A 6	
	♥ 10 7	
	♦ —	
	♣ 10	

The fox wins the club and exits with the ♥10, won in dummy. At this point it would do declarer no harm to play a spade. If North shows out, everything will be revealed and the intricate defensive plan destroyed.

The most beautiful of defenses are predicated upon the cooperation of defenders.

INSIDIOUS 3

... *“Expedients may be too many,
Consuming time to choose and try.
On one, but that as good as any,
It's best in danger to rely”...*

Jean de La Fontaine, *The Cat and the Fox*

This time the auction was quite rich in information.

W	N	E	S
1NT	Pass	2♣	Pass
2NT*	Pass	3♦**	Pass
3♥	Pass	4♥	All Pass

* – both majors

** – transfer

	N		♠ 10 6 5
W		E	♥ Q J 9 8
			♦ A K J
	S		♣ J 5 3

♠ 9 4
♥ 7 5 4 2
♦ 9 6 5
♣ Q 10 9 2

Lead: ♠A, ♠K, ♠Q, ♠2. Declarer ruffs the fourth spade with dummy's queen. You discard a club and a diamond. Next come four rounds of trumps and a diamond finesse.

Insidious 3

As uninspiring a deal as you can imagine:

	♠ A K Q 2										
	♥ 3										
	♦ Q 7 4 3										
	♣ 8 7 6 4										
♠ J 8 7 3	<table style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td></td><td style="padding: 2px 10px;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px 10px;">W</td><td></td><td style="padding: 2px 10px;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="padding: 2px 10px;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ 10 6 5
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ A K 10 6		♥ Q J 9 8									
♦ 10 8 2		♦ A K J									
♣ A K		♣ J 5 3									
	♠ 9 4										
	♥ 7 5 4 2										
	♦ 9 6 5										
	♣ Q 10 9 2										

Uninspiring for most players, perhaps, but not for the fox. He also threw a club on the third spade, but when declarer ruffed the next spade with the trump queen, he began shaping declarer's perception of the hand. He underruffed! While drawing trumps, declarer discovered the 4-1 split and began to wonder about the reason for the underruff. Most likely, South was trying to protect himself from an early squeeze.

Part 2: the Fox

The following ending was reached:

♠ —	♠ —
♥ A	♥ —
♦ 10 8 2	♦ A K J
♣ A K	♣ J 5 3

♠ —	♠ —
♥ —	♥ —
♦ ? 7 4	♦ A K J
♣ 8 7 6	♣ J 5 3

♠ —	♠ —
♥ —	♥ —
♦ ? 6 5	♦ A K J
♣ Q 10 9	♣ J 5 3

♠ —	♠ —
♥ A	♥ —
♦ 10 8 2	♦ A K J
♣ A K	♣ J 5 3

Declarer cashed the last heart, discarding the ♦J from dummy. Had the fox been in possession of both minor suit queens, he would have indeed found himself in a criss-cross squeeze. As it was, declarer was one down in a lay-down game.

INSIDIOUS 4

Quite prudently, the fox always seeks to paint a false picture of the hand.

W	N	E	S
	1♥	Pass	Pass
1NT*	2♥	2NT	All Pass

* - 11 - 15 HCP

♠ A K 5
 ♥ K 9 8 7 4 3 2
 ♦ Q 7
 ♣ 9

N	♠ 9 7 4
W E	♥ Q 10 5
S	♦ A 9 4 3
	♣ A Q 3

Lead: ♥7. Declarer wins the jack, partner following with the ♥6, and plays a club to the queen. Partner takes the king and switches to the ♠6. You win declarer's ten with the king and clear hearts. When declarer cashes the ace and jack of clubs, you part with a heart and a spade. Now West plays diamonds from the top and claims the contract.

Part 2: the Fox

Here is the full deal:

	♠ A K 5													
	♥ K 9 8 7 4 3 2													
	♦ Q 7													
	♣ 9													
♠ Q J 10	<table style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100%; height: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 25%;"></td> <td style="width: 25%; text-align: center;">N</td> <td style="width: 25%;"></td> <td style="width: 25%;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">W</td> <td style="width: 25%;"></td> <td style="text-align: center;">E</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">S</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </table>		N			W		E			S			♠ 9 7 4
	N													
W		E												
	S													
♥ A J			♥ Q 10 5											
♦ K J 6 5			♦ A 9 4 3											
♣ J 6 4 2			♣ A Q 3											
	♠ 8 6 3 2													
	♥ 6													
	♦ 10 8 2													
	♣ K 10 8 7 5													

Quite prudently, the fox painted a false picture of the hand. He discarded two good hearts on the club tricks, holding on to the totally useless spade spot. Three heart tricks were enough to set the contract, and if partner held the ♦J, this defense would only cost the second undertrick.

Declarer read the fox's hand as 2=7=3=1. North's heart discards made the following hand most likely:

♠ AK
♥ Kxxxxxx
♦ Qxx
♣ x

The bidding had guaranteed that North held the diamond queen. Small wonder, then, that declarer played the ♦K followed by the ♦J, hoping for ♦10x in South's hand. One down was a due reward for the fox's thoughtful defense.

INSIDIOUS 5

The simplicity of the tiger will not always suffice to win the battle. One has to be both a tiger and a fox at the same time.

There was nothing noteworthy about the bidding.

W	N	E	S
1NT	Pass	3NT	All Pass

N	♠ K J 9 7
W	♥ J 5 4
E	♦ 9 7 3
S	♣ A Q 7
♠ Q 5	
♥ 9 8 6 2	
♦ K Q 10	
♣ K 6 5 2	

Lead: ♠4. Your queen holds the trick and you switch to the ♦K. When this holds too you continue diamonds. Declarer wins, concedes the ace of spades, sees that the diamonds break, and claims ten tricks.

Part 2: the Fox

This is the full deal:

	♠ A 8 6 4 3	
	♥ 7 3	
	♦ 8 6 5	
	♣ 8 4 3	
♠ 10 2	N W E S	♠ K J 9 7
♥ A K Q 10		♥ J 5 4
♦ A J 4 2		♦ 9 7 3
♣ J 10 9		♣ A Q 7
	♠ Q 5	
	♥ 9 8 6 2	
	♦ K Q 10	
	♣ K 6 5 2	

“I would do better to return a spade to partner’s ace,” you reflect. “He would play a club through and limit declarer to nine tricks.”

The fox counted up to forty before leading to Trick 2. Partner cannot possibly hold any honor other than the ace of spades. The remaining points are all in West’s hand. The cunning predator decided to suggest a different layout to declarer. He returned the ♦10. West’s imagination started to work.

Insidious 5

The layout might well be:

♠ 10 2	♠ A 8 6 4 3	♠ K J 9 7									
♥ A K Q 10	♥ 7 3 2	♥ J 5 4									
♦ A J 4 2	♦ Q 5	♦ 9 7 3									
♣ J 10 9	♣ 8 4 3	♣ A Q 7									
	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100px; height: 100px; margin: auto;"> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;"></td> <td style="padding: 5px; text-align: center;">N</td> <td style="padding: 5px;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px; text-align: center;">W</td> <td style="padding: 5px;"></td> <td style="padding: 5px; text-align: center;">E</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;"></td> <td style="padding: 5px; text-align: center;">S</td> <td style="padding: 5px;"></td> </tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠ Q 5										
	♥ 9 8 6										
	♦ K 10 8 6										
	♣ K 6 5 2										

In this case if declarer covers the ♦10 the defenders set up their diamond tricks and declarer has to guess whether to play for the club finesse. The winning line here is to rise with the ace and take the club finesse. If South ducks, declarer simply switches to spades.

Declarer played accordingly. The result: one down.

INSIDIOUS 6

You looked at your partner reproachfully. Well, did *you* do your best?

The bidding bounced all over the place.

W	N	E	S
1♦	Pass	1♥	Pass
3♣	Pass	3♦	Pass
6♦	All Pass		

	N		♠ J 10 9 7
W		E	♥ K 8 7 4
			♦ K 7
	S		♣ 4 3 2

♠ 6 5 3
 ♥ Q 10 6 3
 ♦ Q J 4
 ♣ 9 7 6

Lead: ♥A. Declarer ruffs and cashes the ♦A and three high spades. He reaches dummy with the king of trumps and discards two losing clubs on the ♥K and the last spade.

Insidious 6

This is the full deal:

	♠ 8 4 2	
	♥ A J 9 5 2	
	♦ 6 3	
	♣ Q 10 8	
♠ A K Q	N	♠ J 10 9 7
♥ —	W E	♥ K 8 7 4
♦ A 10 9 8 5 2	S	♦ K 7
♣ A K J 5		♣ 4 3 2
	♠ 6 5 3	
	♥ Q 10 6 3	
	♦ Q J 4	
	♣ 9 7 6	

The fox dropped his queen under the ace of trumps! Why? Declarer's line of play depends on what happened on the first round of diamonds.

1. If both defenders follow with a low trump, declarer will play three rounds of spades. If the suit breaks 3-3 he is almost home; if not, the odds are better that the three-card trump holding will be in the hand with the doubleton spade.
2. If a diamond honor falls under the ace, then from declarer's perspective the distribution of the suit is either:

a) N ♦ 6 4 3
S ♦ Q J

or

b) N ♦ J 6 4 3
S ♦ Q

Part 2: the Fox

In either case, going after spades makes no sense: in a) it doesn't matter as the contract makes anyway, and in b) the odds decisively favor the club finesse as opposed to finding North with four spades to go with his four diamonds. Therefore, rather than playing on spades, declarer will play a diamond to the king, pitch a club on the king of hearts, and finesse against the queen of clubs.

INSIDIOUS 7

Bear, Hare and Fox are playing cards. Suddenly Hare discovers that somebody is cheating. Furious, he rises and cries: "Somebody is cheating. I'm not going to point my finger at anybody, but just wait until I crack his red-haired head!"

W	N	E	S
1 ♠	Pass	2 ♥	Pass
2 ♠	Pass	4 ♠	Pass
5 ♣	Pass	5 ♥	Pass
6 ♠	All Pass		

♠ J 9
 ♥ Q 6
 ♦ J 6 3
 ♣ A 10 8 6 4 3

N	♠ A 3 2
W	♥ A K 10 8 7 4
E	♦ Q 7
S	♣ J 2

Lead: ♣A, ♣3. Declarer ruffs, draws trumps in three rounds and tests hearts. Soon he is claiming the contract.

Part 2: the Fox

The full deal:

	♠ J 9											
	♥ Q 6											
	♦ J 6 3											
	♣ A 10 8 6 4 3											
♠ K Q 10 8 5 ♥ J 9 ♦ A K 9 5 2 ♣ 5	<table style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100%; height: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;"></td> <td style="text-align: center;">N</td> <td style="width: 50%;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">W</td> <td style="width: 10%;"></td> <td style="text-align: center;">E</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;"></td> <td style="text-align: center;">S</td> <td style="width: 50%;"></td> </tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ A 3 2 ♥ A K 10 8 7 4 ♦ Q 7 ♣ J 2	
	N											
W		E										
	S											
	♠ 7 6 4											
	♥ 5 3 2											
	♦ 10 8 5											
	♣ K Q 9 7											

The fox dropped the jack under the king on the first round of spades. Now declarer found himself at the crossroads. Since trumps were 4-1 from his perspective, he couldn't really afford to ruff a heart. Instead he concentrated on diamonds. He ruffed the third round of the suit with dummy's ♠A and finessed the ♠9.

Frankly, you can't blame declarer. Did the fox foresee such a scenario? It's unlikely. Playing the jack couldn't cost, so he did it routinely. It's in the fox's nature to lay a false trail, just in case...

INSIDIOUS 8

No one is safe from the tricks of the sly fox.

The bidding took its time and was not without its intellectual touches (3NT).

W	N	E	S
1♠	Pass	2♣	Pass
2♠	Pass	3♠	Pass
3NT*	Pass	4NT	Pass
5NT**	Pass	6♠	All Pass

* – hand without shortness (but not sub-minimum)

** – 2 aces + 1 king + ♠Q

<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">W E</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S	♠ A 9 4 ♥ A 7 ♦ K Q J 2 ♣ K J 4 3
N				
W E				
S				
♠ K 7 ♥ 10 8 6 5 2 ♦ 9 7 ♣ Q 10 5 2				

Lead: ♥Q. You signal an odd count in hearts. Declarer takes the king, followed by the ♠A and another spade. You win the king and...

Part 2: the Fox

Here is the layout:

	♠ J 10 5										
	♥ Q J 9										
	♦ 6 5 4 3										
	♣ 9 8 7										
♠ Q 8 6 3 2		♠ A 9 4									
♥ K 4 3		♥ A 7									
♦ A 10 8		♦ K Q J 2									
♣ A 6		♣ K J 4 3									
	<table border="1"><tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr><tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr></table>		N		W		E		S		
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠ K 7										
	♥ 10 8 6 5 2										
	♦ 9 7										
	♣ Q 10 5 2										

It's too late. You should have counted declarer's tricks sooner: four spades, four diamonds, two hearts and two clubs makes twelve.

The fox followed to the ♠A with the ♠K. If West's suit is headed by the ♠QJ (or if he has six spades to the queen), he is merely conceding the overtrick.

Insidious 8

However, when the spade king appeared, declarer started looking for a layout where he could make the contract in spite of North's presumed holding of ♠J10xx. From his perspective the whole deal might have looked like this:

	♠ J 10 7 5										
	♥ Q J 9										
	♦ 6 5 4										
	♣ 9 8 7										
♠ Q 8 6 3 2 ♥ K 4 3 ♦ A 10 8 ♣ A 6	<table style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">N</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">W</td> <td style="text-align: center;"> </td> <td style="text-align: center;">E</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">S</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ A 9 4 ♥ A 7 ♦ K Q J 2 ♣ K J 4 3
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠ K										
	♥ 10 8 6 5 2										
	♦ 9 7 3										
	♣ Q 10 5 2										

The correct line of play here is to strip North of all his side-suit cards and endplay him in the three-card ending.

But with his actual holding:

♠ K 7
♥ 10 8 6 5 2
♦ 9 7
♣ Q 10 5 2

the fox will ruff the third diamond and his cleverness will be rewarded.

THE WRONG TRACK 1

When cornered, the fox tries to lead the hunter astray.

The opponents have reached a heart game after an unremarkable auction.

W	N	E	S
1♥	Pass	2♥	Pass
4♥	All Pass		

♠ J 9 8 3
 ♥ 9 7
 ♦ K J 9 3
 ♣ K 8 7

	N		♠ A 6 4 2
W		E	♥ Q 6 5
			♦ 10 7
	S		♣ J 10 5 3

Lead: ♦3. Partner wins the ace and continues with the ♦5. You capture declarer's queen and switch to trumps. West takes the trick in hand and leads the ♣2. You duck, although not exactly smoothly. Partner wins the queen and returns a club. Declarer produces the ace, draws one more round of trumps, and proceeds to cash the king and queen of spades, leading to:

The wrong track 2

	♠ J 9										
	♥ —										
	♦ J 9										
	♣ K										
♠ 10 ♥ A 10 8 ♦ — ♣ 4	<table style="width: 100%; height: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;"></td> <td style="width: 50%; text-align: center;">N</td> <td style="width: 50%;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">W</td> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">E</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">S</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ A 6 ♥ Q ♦ — ♣ J 5
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠ —										
	♥ 4										
	♦ 8 6 2										
	♣ 9										

Playing off the remaining hearts executes a squeeze in the black suits against you.

Part 2: the Fox

Here is the full deal:

	♠ J 9 8 3										
	♥ 9 7										
	♦ K J 9 3										
	♣ K 8 7										
♠ K Q 10 ♥ A K J 10 8 ♦ Q 4 ♣ A 4 2	<table border="1" style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;"></td> <td style="padding: 5px; text-align: center;">N</td> <td style="padding: 5px;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px; text-align: center;">W</td> <td style="padding: 5px;"></td> <td style="padding: 5px; text-align: center;">E</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;"></td> <td style="padding: 5px; text-align: center;">S</td> <td style="padding: 5px;"></td> </tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ A 6 4 2 ♥ Q 6 5 ♦ 10 7 ♣ J 10 5 3
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠ 7 5										
	♥ 4 3 2										
	♦ A 8 6 5 2										
	♣ Q 9 6										

At Trick 4, when declarer played the ♣2, the fox realized that a squeeze with “Hobson’s Choice” involved loomed on the horizon. If he hops up with the king, declarer will finesse against partner’s queen; if he holds up, it won’t be long before he finds himself squeezed.

Time to surrender? No, time to put declarer on the wrong track. The fox ducked the club, although he was not able to do it smoothly. South took the queen and returned the suit to declarer’s ace. West cashed two rounds of spades. The cunning predator dropped the jack under the second spade honor.

From declarer’s point of view, North held the ♣K (as betrayed by his hesitation) and South four spades. As a consequence, the squeeze was no longer an option. His only chance was that North’s two spades were accompanied by only two trumps. So West drew the second round of trumps (leaving the queen in dummy as an entry) and played the ♠10. To his astonishment, it was South who ruffed. And so the animal eluded the beaters.

Part 2: the Fox

The whole deal:

	♠ 10 8		
	♥ Q J 10 9 8 3 2		
	♦ J 9		
	♣ 10 6		
♠ A K 7 2	N	♠ Q 6 5	
♥ A K	W E	♥ 7 6	
♦ A 10 7 6 5 2	S	♦ Q 8 3	
♣ Q		♣ A 8 7 4 2	
	♠ J 9 4 3		
	♥ 5 4		
	♦ K 4		
	♣ K J 9 5 3		

Just another boring hand, isn't it? As West, would you continue trumps if your ♦A collected the jack from North? No? Why not?

From declarer's perspective, North held one of two possible hands:

- a)
- | | |
|---|----------|
| ♠ | xxx |
| ♥ | QJ10xxxx |
| ♦ | J |
| ♣ | xx |

No problem here, spades are 3-3.

- b)
- | | |
|---|----------|
| ♠ | xx |
| ♥ | QJ10xxxx |
| ♦ | J |
| ♣ | xxx |

In this variation the winning line involves ruffing a spade. Declarer cannot afford to continue diamonds for fear of a trump return by South after winning the king, using up

The wrong track 2

dummy's last trump. Consequently, he would try to ruff a spade immediately and, in the real layout, he would lose.

Declarer's analysis was flawed, however. These are all four hands in the b) variation:

♠ A K 7 2	♠ 10 8	♠ Q 6 5			
♥ A K	♥ Q J 10 9 8 3 2	♥ 7 6			
♦ A 10 7 6 5 2	♦ J	♦ Q 8 3			
♣ Q	♣ 10 6 3	♣ A 8 7 4 2			
	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 60px; height: 60px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W E</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S	
N					
W E					
S					
	♠ J 9 4 3				
	♥ 5 4				
	♦ K 9 4				
	♣ K J 9 5				

After the heart lead West cashes the ♦A. North follows with the jack. Now declarer should lead a club to the ace and ruff a club. When the ♦10 is played, South cannot duck, for declarer would now ruff a spade at no cost. So he takes the king and switches to a spade, carefully won in hand by West. All declarer has to do now is to cross do dummy with the ♦Q and ruff another club. The position is finally ripe for spade-club squeeze against South.

Admittedly, ruffing a spade would win if North held yet a third, different hand:

♠ x
♥ QJ10xxxx
♦ J
♣ xxxxx

This, however, is rather unlikely, given the lack of a spade lead.

THE WRONG TRACK 3

Led astray, declarer may never find his way home.

It didn't take opponents long to reach the classic contract.

IMP tournament.

W	N	E	S
1♦*	1♥	2♥**	Pass
2NT	Pass	3NT	All Pass

* – better minor

** – limit raise or better in diamonds

N		
W		E
	S	

♠	10 4 3
♥	4 2
♦	A 10 8 4 2
♣	A K Q

♠	K 9 7 5
♥	6 5 3
♦	J 9
♣	10 9 6 2

Lead: ♥K, ♥Q, ♥J. By playing his hearts in this order partner signals a spade feature. You show an odd count in hearts. West takes the ace on the third round and plays the ♦Q. North covers with the king and dummy's ace takes the trick. Declarer now concedes a diamond trick. You switch to spades, but declarer claims. Could the fox have done better?

The wrong track 3

The full deal:

	♠ Q 8 2 ♥ K Q J 8 7 ♦ K 6 ♣ 7 5 3											
♠ A J 6 ♥ A 10 9 ♦ Q 7 5 3 ♣ J 8 4	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100px; height: 100px; margin: auto;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50px; height: 50px;"></td> <td style="width: 50px; text-align: center;">N</td> <td style="width: 50px; height: 50px;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">W</td> <td style="width: 50px; height: 50px;"></td> <td style="text-align: center;">E</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="width: 50px; height: 50px;"></td> <td style="text-align: center;">S</td> <td style="width: 50px; height: 50px;"></td> </tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ 10 4 3 ♥ 4 2 ♦ A 10 8 4 2 ♣ A K Q	
	N											
W		E										
	S											
	♠ K 9 7 5 ♥ 6 5 3 ♦ J 9 ♣ 10 9 6 2											

To an already rich diamond trick the fox played the missing honor. The fourth trick indeed looked spectacular: ♦Q, ♦K, ♦A, ♦J. What was the point of this spectacular sacrifice?

Declarer must hold the spade ace for his opening bid, while partner's suit preference play in hearts strongly suggested the spade queen. The fox counted declarer's tricks: one spade, one heart, four diamonds and three clubs equals nine. So following with the ♦9 would end the play.

Part 2: the Fox

True, playing the jack means losing a trick if West has five diamonds, but if he has only four it will prove to be the killing defense. Declarer cannot cash the $\spadesuit 10$. He is assuming the whole deal looks like the following:

	\spadesuit Q 8 \heartsuit K Q J 8 7 \diamondsuit K 9 6 \clubsuit 7 5 3										
\spadesuit A J 6 \heartsuit A 10 9 \diamondsuit Q 7 5 3 \clubsuit J 8 4	<table style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100%; height: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;"></td> <td style="text-align: center;">N</td> <td style="width: 50%;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">W</td> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">E</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;"></td> <td style="text-align: center;">S</td> <td style="width: 50%;"></td> </tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		\spadesuit 10 4 3 \heartsuit 4 2 \diamondsuit A 10 8 4 2 \clubsuit A K Q
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	\spadesuit K 9 7 5 2 \heartsuit 6 5 3 \diamondsuit J \clubsuit 10 9 6 2										

The only winning line in this case is to return to hand with the ace of spades and finesse against North's $\diamondsuit 9$. In reality, this will lead to four down.

The way declarer handled diamonds is, admittedly, questionable. In light of the auction, the correct play is, to my mind, low to dummy's eight. This wins whenever North has one of the following holding:

- \diamondsuit K or \diamondsuit J
- \diamondsuit Kx or \diamondsuit Jx
- \diamondsuit J96 or \diamondsuit K96 (by finessing again on the second round)

Note that the contract can never be made if North holds \diamondsuit KJ9 or \diamondsuit KJ6.

THE WRONG TRACK 4

A competent declarer modifies his plans according to current developments. This is an important observation for the defenders.

W	N	E	S
1♥	Pass	2♣	Pass
2♠	Pass	2NT	Pass
3♠* ¹	Pass	4♦* ²	Pass
4♥	Pass	4NT	Pass
5♣* ³	Pass	7♥	All Pass

*1 – 5♠ and 6+♥

*2 – cue-bid, deliberately sets spades as the trump suit

*3 – 3 out of 5 keycards

♠ J 10 8 5

♥ 9

♦ K Q 10 6 3

♣ K 10 6

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ 3 2

♥ K Q 4

♦ A 2

♣ A Q 8 7 5 3

Lead: ♦K. Declarer wins, pitches a diamond loser on the ♣A and ruffs a club. Next he reaches dummy with a heart and ruffs another club, catching North's king. This concludes the play: making seven.

Part 2: the Fox

Here is the full deal:

	♠ J 10 8 5										
	♥ 9										
	♦ K Q 10 6 3										
	♣ K 10 6										
♠ A K 7 6 4 ♥ A 8 7 5 3 2 ♦ 8 7 ♣ —	<table border="1" style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;"></td> <td style="padding: 5px; text-align: center;">N</td> <td style="padding: 5px;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px; text-align: center;">W</td> <td style="padding: 5px;"></td> <td style="padding: 5px; text-align: center;">E</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;"></td> <td style="padding: 5px; text-align: center;">S</td> <td style="padding: 5px;"></td> </tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ 3 2 ♥ K Q 4 ♦ A 2 ♣ A Q 8 7 5 3
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠ Q 9										
	♥ J 10 6										
	♦ J 9 5 4										
	♣ J 9 4 2										

“Well done, opponents.” Sure, but did you do your best?

The fox dropped the king on the second round of clubs, causing declarer to assume a 5-2 club split which might derail his original plan of play. West saw two possible roads to victory:

- a) If spades divide 3-3 (36%), the correct line is to draw the king and queen of hearts and ruff a spade.
- b) If hearts divide 2-2 (40%), declarer can still rely on the clubs: heart to dummy, ruff a club with the ace, back to dummy with another trump honor and another club ruff.

Neither of these lines succeeds against the actual layout.

THE WRONG TRACK 5

A thorough analysis combined with the intelligent cooperation of the defenders can divert declarer onto the wrong track.

The opening bid was your side's only contribution to the auction. Thereafter, the opponents reached the spade game with no delays.

W	N	E	S
Pass	1♣	Dbl	Pass
2♠*	Pass	4♠	All Pass

* – by a passed hand strongly suggests a 5+ card suit

♠ Q 4 2
 ♥ Q J 5 3
 ♦ 7 5
 ♣ A K 9 7

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ K 8 7
 ♥ K 10 8 4
 ♦ A K Q J
 ♣ 5 3

Lead: ♣A. Partner follows with the ♣8, suggesting an odd count. You continue with the king, partner contributing the lowest outstanding club (showing values in diamonds and thereby denying the ace of hearts) and West the ♣10. Any idea what to do next?

Part 2: the Fox

The full deal:

	♠ Q 4 2										
	♥ Q J 5 3										
	♦ 7 5										
	♣ A K 9 7										
♠ J 10 9 6 5	<table style="width: 100%; height: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;"></td> <td style="width: 10%; text-align: center;">N</td> <td style="width: 40%;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="width: 30%; text-align: center;">W</td> <td style="width: 10%;"></td> <td style="width: 60%; text-align: center;">E</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">S</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ K 8 7
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ A 7		♥ K 10 8 4									
♦ 6 3		♦ A K Q J									
♣ Q J 10 4		♣ 5 3									
	♠ A 3										
	♥ 9 6 2										
	♦ 10 9 8 4 2										
	♣ 8 6 2										

Still can't see a sensible solution? Your imagination is not working. The fox will play another club. Now declarer's imagination may spring into action! From his point of view the layout may well be a little bit different:

	♠ A Q 4										
	♥ J 5 3										
	♦ 10 7 5										
	♣ A K 9 7										
♠ J 10 9 6 5	<table style="width: 100%; height: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;"></td> <td style="width: 10%; text-align: center;">N</td> <td style="width: 40%;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="width: 30%; text-align: center;">W</td> <td style="width: 10%;"></td> <td style="width: 60%; text-align: center;">E</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">S</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ K 8 7
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ A 7		♥ K 10 8 4									
♦ 6 3		♦ A K Q J									
♣ Q J 10 4		♣ 5 3									
	♠ 3 2										
	♥ Q 9 6 2										
	♦ 9 8 4 2										
	♣ 8 6 2										

The wrong track 5

In this case the simple play of the spade finesse against the queen loses. North will rise with the ace and the fourth round of clubs will prove fatal for declarer. Perhaps a viable option for declarer is to try and pitch the fourth club on dummy's diamond honor.

Is this layout probable? A master declarer will not overlook South's ♣2 played at the second round of the suit. It definitely discouraged a heart switch, which means the above layout is not entirely realistic in spite of the fox's club continuation.

THE WRONG TRACK 6

Faking the location of honors is a powerful weapon in the fox's hands.

The bidding was quite revealing:

W	N	E	S
2♣*	Pass	2♦	Pass
2♠	Pass	3♠	Pass
4♣	Pass	4♥	Pass
6♠	All Pass		

* – game forcing

	N		♠ J 9 5
W		E	♥ K J 4
			♦ 8 7 4 2
	S		♣ J 8 3

♠ 2
 ♥ 10 6 2
 ♦ Q J 9 5 3
 ♣ A K 9 4

Lead: ♣5. You win with the king as West drops the queen. Both the bidding and the lead (fourth best from ♣107652) suggest shortness in declarer's hand, so you cleverly switch to the ♦5.

The wrong track 6

The full deal:

	♠ 8 3										
	♥ Q 9 5 3										
	♦ 10 6										
	♣ 10 7 6 5 2										
♠ A K Q 10 7 6 4 ♥ A 8 7 ♦ A K ♣ Q	<table border="1" style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse; width: 100px; height: 100px;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;"></td> <td style="width: 50%; text-align: center;">N</td> <td style="width: 50%;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">W</td> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">E</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;"></td> <td style="width: 50%; text-align: center;">S</td> <td style="width: 50%;"></td> </tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ J 9 5 ♥ K J 4 ♦ 8 7 4 2 ♣ J 8 3
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠ 2										
	♥ 10 6 2										
	♦ Q J 9 5 3										
	♣ A K 9 4										

After some twisting and turning, declarer reluctantly relies on the heart finesse. You complain about your bad luck, but, like it or not, the opponents score up the slam.

The fox, as always, began to lay a false trail. Just in case, he won the first trick with the ace and, deciding that declarer did indeed have a singleton club, returned the ♣9. Declarer ruffed, drew trumps in two rounds, cashed the ♦AK and crossed to dummy with the third trump to ruff a diamond. He was glad when North discarded a club. Why? A double squeeze began to materialize in his mind.

Part 2: the Fox

He reached the following end position:

♠ —	♠ —
♥ Q 9 5	♥ K J 4
♦ —	♦ 9
♣ ? 7	♣ J
♠ 7 6	♠ —
♥ A 8 7	♥ K J 4
♦ —	♦ 9
♣ —	♣ J
	♠ —
	♥ 10 6 2
	♦ Q
	♣ ?

Declarer cashed the penultimate spade. North discarded a club while both dummy and South parted with small hearts. The last trump was supposed to trigger the double squeeze: in hearts and clubs against North and in hearts and diamonds against South. The moment the ♣10 appeared from North, declarer knew he was dead in the water. But his plan of play had been impeccable, assuming North held the club king.

SUBTLE 1

Our red-haired hero is capable of even more sophisticated plots.

The bidding had revealed five hearts with West.

W	N	E	S
		1♣	Pass
1♥	Pass	2NT	Pass
3♣*	Pass	3♥	Pass
4♥	All Pass		

* – relay

	N		♠ A Q 9 8
W		E	♥ K Q 4
			♦ K 7 6
	S		♣ A J 10

♠ J 4 3
 ♥ A 10 8
 ♦ A 9 5 3 2
 ♣ 9 7

Lead: ♦Q. You capture dummy's king and return the ♦3 to West's ♦10 and partner's ♦J. North continues with the ♦8. After ruffing the third diamond declarer crosses to the ♣A and leads a low heart to the jack. When it holds, he continues with a heart to the queen. This technically correct play allows declarer to escape a trump promotion.

Part 2: the Fox

Here are all four hands:

	♠ 10 7 5 2														
	♥ 9 6														
	♦ Q J 8														
	♣ 8 6 5 2														
♠ K 6	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; height: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;"></td> <td style="width: 50%; text-align: center;">N</td> <td style="width: 50%;"></td> <td style="width: 50%;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">W</td> <td style="width: 50%;"></td> <td style="text-align: center;">E</td> <td style="width: 50%;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;"></td> <td style="width: 50%;"></td> <td style="text-align: center;">S</td> <td style="width: 50%;"></td> </tr> </table>		N			W		E				S		♠ A Q 9 8	♥ K Q 4
	N														
W		E													
		S													
♥ J 7 5 3 2		♦ K 7 6	♣ A J 10												
♦ 10 4															
♣ K Q 4 3															
	♠ J 4 3														
	♥ A 10 8														
	♦ A 9 5 3 2														
	♣ 9 7														

At the other table the fox made a subtle play, overlooked by the kibitzers. The first trick was exactly the same, but then he returned the ♦9! North covered West's ten with the jack and duly continued with the ♦8. Declarer ruffed and led a heart to the king and South's ace. Another diamond was ruffed by partner's ♥9 and so the ♥10 was promoted into the setting trick.

"Lucky!" commented the kibitzers.

"Well, you have to make your own luck," smiled the fox. "I tried to suggest a different layout of the diamond suit. Declarer presumed North was the one who might hold five diamonds and that, as a result, he must guard against the following layout:

Subtle 1

	♠ 10 7 5				
	♥ A 9 6				
	♦ Q J 8 3 2				
	♣ 8 6				
♠ K 6 ♥ J 7 5 3 2 ♦ 10 4 ♣ K Q 4 3	<table border="1" style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">W E</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S	♠ A Q 9 8 ♥ K Q 4 ♦ K 7 6 ♣ A J 10
N					
W E					
S					
	♠ J 4 3 2				
	♥ 10 8				
	♦ A 9 5				
	♣ 9 7 5 2				

Given this proposed picture of the four hands, declarer handled trumps properly. Leading towards the jack would have been a losing proposition, since it would be South who gets to ruff in on the diamond, to promote a trump.”

SUBTLE 2

Hard luck befalls the calf more often than fox.

The bidding was not overly scientific.

W	N	E	S
6♠	3♥ All Pass	3NT	Pass

♠ J 7 3
♥ A Q J 10 6 4
♦ 9 8
♣ 4 3

<table style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 25%;"></td> <td style="width: 25%; text-align: center;">N</td> <td style="width: 25%;"></td> <td style="width: 25%;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">W</td> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">E</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">S</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </table>		N			W		E			S			♠ 10 ♥ K 9 7 ♦ Q J 3 ♣ A K J 9 7 5
	N												
W		E											
	S												

Lead: ♥A, ♥Q. Declarer takes the king, throwing the king of diamonds from hand, draws trumps in three rounds and claims.

You murmur something about bad luck. Indeed, the odds of the 3-3 spade break are only 36% (plus the additional chance of a doubleton ♠J9).

Subtle 2

The full deal:

♠ A K Q 8 6 4	N W E S	♠ 10
♥ 3		♥ K 9 7
♦ A K 5 2		♦ Q J 3
♣ 6 2		♣ A K J 9 7 5
	♠ 9 5 2	
	♥ 8 5 2	
	♦ 10 7 6 4	
	♣ Q 10 8	

The fox followed with the jack to the second trump trick.

“A risky play,” later commented one of the kibitzers. “Partner could hold the doubleton queen. What a disaster that would be...”

“With ♠Qx partner would have covered the ten,” patiently explained the fox.

But what could this subtle play achieve? Declarer’s imagination started to work. From his perspective the layout might have been:

Part 2: the Fox

	♠ J 3					
	♥ A Q J 10 6 4					
	♦ 9 8 7					
	♣ 4 3					
♠ A K Q 8 6 4 ♥ 3 ♦ A K 5 2 ♣ 6 2	<table style="width: 100%; height: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W E</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S	♠ 10 ♥ K 9 7 ♦ Q J 3 ♣ A K J 9 7 5	
N						
W E						
S						
	♠ 9 7 5 2					
	♥ 8 5 2					
	♦ 10 6 4					
	♣ Q 10 8					

Declarer knew how to deprive South of his trump trick. The solution here is a grand coup: three rounds of clubs, ruffed in hand; a diamond to dummy and a heart ruff. Finally, after crossing to dummy with another diamond honor, these cards would remain:

	♠ —					
	♥ J 10					
	♦ 9					
	♣ —					
♠ Q 8 ♥ — ♦ A ♣ —	<table style="width: 100%; height: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W E</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S	♠ — ♥ — ♦ 3 ♣ J 9	
N						
W E						
S						
	♠ 9 7					
	♥ —					
	♦ 10					
	♣ —					

The lead is in dummy and playing clubs will execute the coup.

In reality, this excellent plan failed. To declarer's dismay, the fox produced the ♠7 out of the blue to overruff the third club.

SUBTLE 3

The power of suggestion is enormous.

You won't often see the opponents reach a slam after a standard one-level opening by your side. Maybe it needs East to produce a disgusting takeout double!

W	N	E	S
	1♥	Dbl	Pass
2♥	Pass	2♠	Pass
3♣	Pass	4♣	Pass
4♥	Pass	4♠*	Pass
6♣	All Pass		

* – Spade cuebid also promising a diamond control

♠ 10 5 2
 ♥ A K Q J 5
 ♦ Q 10
 ♣ 7 5 3

	N		♠ K 8 7 4
			♥ 8 6 4 2
W		E	♦ A K
	S		♣ Q 9 8

Lead: ♥A, ♥K. West ruffs and cashes the top diamonds. He then crosses to hand with a trump and ruffs a diamond as you discard a heart. This is followed by a heart ruff and another diamond ruff. This time you part with a spade spot. Declarer after some hesitation, finesses against your partner's ♠Q.

Part 2: the Fox

Here is the full deal:

	♠ 10 5 2		
	♥ A K Q J 5		
	♦ Q 10		
	♣ 7 5 3		
♠ A J 9	N W E S	♠ K 8 7 4	
♥ 7		♥ 8 6 4 2	
♦ 8 7 6 3		♦ A K	
♣ A K J 10 4		♣ Q 9 8	
	♠ Q 6 3		
	♥ 10 9 3		
	♦ J 9 5 4 2		
	♣ 6 2		

The fox, instead of discarding a spade, underruffed the fourth diamond.

The power of suggestion is immeasurable. Declarer immediately imagined that he was faced with the following end position:

	♠ Q 10		
	♥ Q		
	♦ —		
	♣ —		
♠ J 9	N W E S	♠ K 8	
♥ —		♥ 8	
♦ —		♦ —	
♣ 10		♣ —	
	♠ 6 5		
	♥ —		
	♦ J		
	♣ —		

Subtle 3

With triumphant face, he played the last trump. Alas, the expected squeeze was just an illusion, masterfully created by the fox.

And so the endangered queen of spades took a trick she was not entitled to.

SUBTLE 4

Suggestion is a very effective weapon, but only against opposition who are awake enough to pay attention to your subtleties.

The bidding had revealed at least 5-5 in majors in the West hand.

W	N	E	S
1♠	Pass	2♦	Pass
2♥	Pass	2♠	Pass
3♥	Pass	4NT	Pass
5♦	Pass	7♠	All Pass

♠ 10 9 2
 ♥ J 2
 ♦ Q 3
 ♣ Q 9 8 7 5 3

	N		♠ Q J 6 5
W		E	♥ K
			♦ A J 10 7 2
	S		♣ K 4 2

Lead: ♣7. Declarer takes South's ten with the ace and plays a trump to dummy's queen and a trump back to the ace. He now leads a diamond to the ace, cashes the ♣K (pitching a small diamond from hand), and ruffs a diamond. He crosses to dummy with the jack of trumps and cashes the ♥K, leading to:

Subtle 4

♠ 7	♠ —	♠ 6			
♥ A 9 8 6	♥ J	♥ —			
♦ —	♦ —	♦ J 10 7			
♣ —	♣ Q 9 8 5	♣ 4			
	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100px; height: 100px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W E</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S	
N					
W E					
S					
	♠ —				
	♥ Q 10				
	♦ K 9				
	♣ J				

The only problem that remains is how to tackle diamonds. After giving it some thought, declarer chooses the ruffing finesse against the diamond king. Thirteen tricks.

“What could the fox do better?” you ask.

♠ A K 7 4 3	♠ 10 9 2	♠ Q J 6 5			
♥ A 9 8 6 5	♥ J 2	♥ K			
♦ 5 4	♦ Q 3	♦ A J 10 7 2			
♣ A	♣ Q 9 8 7 5 3	♣ K 4 2			
	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100px; height: 100px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W E</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S	
N					
W E					
S					
	♠ 8				
	♥ Q 10 7 4 3				
	♦ K 9 8 6				
	♣ J 10 6				

Part 2: the Fox

When declarer played a diamond towards the ace, the fox carefully inserted the queen. Can you blame declarer for failing to guess the position of the diamond king in the ending?

Variations on a theme are usually very instructive. Let's imagine a slightly different layout:

	♠ 10 9 2										
	♥ J 2										
	♦ K Q 3										
	♣ Q 9 8 7 3										
♠ A K 7 4 3	<table style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ Q J 6 5
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ A 9 8 6 5		♥ K									
♦ 5 4		♦ A J 10 7 2									
♣ A		♣ K 4 2									
	♠ 8										
	♥ Q 10 7 4 3										
	♦ 9 8 6										
	♣ J 10 6 5										

Here North should refrain from playing the diamond queen on the first round

SUBTLE 5

The subtle fox forces his prey to commit to one option, without allowing him to test the other ones first.

Here the bidding started slowly but then accelerated into the stratosphere.

W	N	E	S
1♥	Pass	2♣	Pass
2NT*	Pass	6NT	Pass

* - 14+ HCP

	N		♠ 7 4 2
W		E	♥ 4 2
			♦ A K Q 10
	S		♣ A K Q J

♠ J 10 8 5
 ♥ Q 10 8
 ♦ 9 5 4
 ♣ 9 8 2

Lead: ♦7. Declarer wins in dummy and leads a heart to his nine. Partner's ♥J takes the trick, but since hearts break 3-3 declarer soon claims.

Part 2: the Fox

The four hands:

♠ A Q 6	♠ K 9 3					
♥ A K 9 7 6	♥ J 5 3					
♦ J 3 2	♦ 8 7 6					
♣ 6 3	♣ 10 7 5 4					
	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100px; height: 100px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W E</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S		
N						
W E						
S						
	♠ J 10 8 5		♠ 7 4 2			
	♥ Q 10 8		♥ 4 2			
	♦ 9 5 4		♦ A K Q 10			
	♣ 9 8 2		♣ A K Q J			

At Trick 2 the fox inserted the ♥Q. When declarer won and entered dummy with a club to lead another heart, our hero repeated the move, putting up the ten. Regardless of whether declarer wins the trick or ducks the ten, he has to guess whether to play for 3-3 hearts or the ♠K onside. He may get it right, but at least the fox had done his best!

STRAIGHTFORWARD 1

Banal traps are none the less dangerous.

The bidding was short.

W	N	E	S
1NT	All Pass		

N	♠ J 7 5
W	♥ Q 3
E	♦ Q 8 2
S	♣ Q J 5 3 2
♠ K Q 10 8	
♥ 7 6 2	
♦ 9 7	
♣ K 9 6 4	

Lead: ♥A and ♥K. You signal with the ♥7, showing an odd number, and then with the ♥6, to suggest spade values. Partner duly switches to the ♠4. Declarer takes your ten with the ace, crosses to the queen of diamonds and finesses in clubs. Seven tricks. Next board, please!

Part 2: the Fox

The four hands:

	♠ 6 4 3					
	♥ A K J 9					
	♦ 10 6 5 4					
	♣ 8 7					
♠ A 9 2 ♥ 10 8 5 4 ♦ A K J 3 ♣ A 10	<table border="1" style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">W E</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S	♠ J 7 5 ♥ Q 3 ♦ Q 8 2 ♣ Q J 5 3 2	
N						
W E						
S						
	♠ K Q 10 8					
	♥ 7 6 2					
	♦ 9 7					
	♣ K 9 6 4					

After a similar start, the fox put up the queen of spades at the third trick, rather than then ten. Can you blame declarer for playing the ace and ten of clubs instead of taking the finesse? He was convinced that the defenders would take at most four hearts, a spade and a club. The result: two down.

One of my outstanding students criticized declarer's line of play. He argued that a detailed analysis proves that it is safe to take the finesse, after all. If North indeed holds the ♠10, the defenders are helpless. Why?

Part 2: the Fox

I like such analyses a lot. They help develop intellect and practical skills, but they are also contingent on a high degree of precision. The modified end position would be:

	♠ 10 3										
	♥ J 9										
	♦ —										
	♣ —										
♠ 9 2	<table style="border-collapse: collapse; margin: auto;"> <tr> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">N</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">W</td> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">E</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">S</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ J 7
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ 10 8		♥ —									
♦ —		♦ —									
♣ —		♣ Q J									
	♠ K 8										
	♥ 2										
	♦ —										
	♣ 9										

West exits with a heart. Unfortunately for declarer, when North cashes his remaining heart dummy is squeezed..

STRAIGHTFORWARD 2

The red-haired one lays a false trail again.

You intervened in the bidding with diamonds, but again, the opponents brushed you aside.

W	N	E	S
1NT	Pass	2♥	3♦
3♠	Pass	4♠	All Pass

N	♠ Q J 10 8 7
W E	♥ Q J 9 3
S	♦ K 2
	♣ 3 2
	♠ K 5
	♥ A 6
	♦ A J 10 9 8 6 5
	♣ 7 6

Lead: ♦Q. Dummy covers, but you win the ace and cash the jack, everyone following. At Trick 3 you switch to clubs. Eventually declarer reaches dummy via hearts and takes the spade finesse.

Part 2: the Fox

The full deal:

	♠ 6 4 3		
	♥ 10 7 2		
	♦ Q 4		
	♣ J 10 9 8 5		
♠ A 9 2	N	♠ Q J 10 8 7	
♥ K 8 5 4	W E	♥ Q J 9 3	
♦ 7 3	S	♦ K 2	
♣ A K Q 4		♣ 3 2	
	♠ K 5		
	♥ A 6		
	♦ A J 10 9 8 6 5		
	♣ 7 6		

The fox, having scored two diamonds, cashed the ♥A at Trick 3 and switched to a low club! Fooled by this clever play, declarer decided to reach dummy through a club ruff...

STRAIGHTFORWARD 3

Some ruses are risky.

Consider the following deal, played in a pairs tournament.

W	N	E	S
3NT	All Pass	1♣	Pass

♠ A 6 4 3
♥ A J 7 4
♦ 7 5
♣ K 9 5

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ K J 10 7
♥ K 6 3
♦ K Q
♣ Q 8 3 2

Which major should you lead? For the sake of the problem, I'm going to legislate a spade lead.

Lead: ♠3. When dummy's ten holds, declarer leads a small club to the ten. You take the king and choose an aggressive heart switch, hoping to find partner with the queen. Your efforts are in vain and it is West who produces the queen. All you can do after he plays spades is to cash your two aces. Ten tricks yielded only 37% for the defense.

Part 2: the Fox

The four hands:

♠ A 6 4 3			
♥ A J 7 4			
♦ 7 5			
♣ K 9 5			
♠ Q 9 2	N	♠ K J 10 7	
♥ Q 9 5	W	♥ K 6 3	
♦ A J 2	E	♦ K Q	
♣ A J 10 4	S	♣ Q 8 3 2	
		♠ 8 5	
		♥ 10 8 2	
		♦ 10 9 8 6 4 3	
		♣ 7 6	

Few Norths were aggressive enough to try the heart lead, the only one that gave the defense four tricks, and the fox was not among them: his opening lead was a small spade.

However, after getting in with the ♣K, he switched to the jack of hearts! South cooperated superbly by encouraging with the ♥2. Declarer took the queen and conceded a spade. North continued with a low heart. Since declarer assumed that North had the ♥10, he ducked this to the nine in hand. South won the trick and the defense ended up with five winners.

One off was worth 97%. A well-deserved top.

STRAIGHTFORWARD 4

Seemingly trivial signaling may make declarer uneasy and confuse him.

The bidding was a bit unsophisticated.

W	N	E	S
		Pass	Pass
1♠	Pass	2♣*	Pass
4NT	Pass	5♣	Pass
6♠	All Pass		

* – Drury (invitational with support)

<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ 10 6 5 ♥ K J ♦ K J 10 7 6 2 ♣ J 7
	N									
W		E								
	S									
	♠ Q 8 ♥ Q 6 4 3 ♦ 5 4 ♣ Q 10 9 6 5									

Lead: ♥A and ♥2. West pitches a club on the heart king, draws trumps in two rounds and claims: seven spades (including a club ruff), one heart, two diamonds and two clubs. Unfortunately, the opening lead had solved declarer's main problem.

Part 2: the Fox

The full deal:

	♠ 9 2		
	♥ A 10 9 7 5 2		
	♦ Q 9 8 3		
	♣ 8		
♠ A K J 7 4 3	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; align-items: center;"> N </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; align-items: center; height: 20px;"> W E </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: center; align-items: center;"> S </div>	♠ 10 6 5	
♥ 5		♥ K J	
♦ A		♦ K J 10 7 6 2	
♣ A K 4 3 2		♣ J 7	
	♠ Q 8		
	♥ Q 6 4 3		
	♦ 5 4		
	♣ Q 10 9 6 5		

The auction and opening lead were exactly the same at the fox's table, but when declarer asked for a low spade from dummy at Trick 3, our hero inserted the queen.

Was it safe? Well, it's hard to imagine West could be missing the trump king and the ace of hearts. After all, everyone knows their Blackwood responses, right?

After a long tank declarer played the ace and king of clubs. Why didn't he draw the second round of trumps? Let's follow the play. Declarer cashes another trump honor, discovering North with ♠982. Let's imagine a typical hand for North:

♠ 982
♥ Axxxx
♦ Qxx
♣ xx

Straightforward 4

Now declarer plays the $\spadesuit A$, $\clubsuit AK$ and ruffs a small club in dummy as North discards a diamond. This will be the end position:

	$\spadesuit 9$										
	$\heartsuit 10 9 7$										
	$\diamond Q$										
	$\clubsuit -$										
$\spadesuit J 7 4 3$	<table style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		$\spadesuit -$
	N										
W		E									
	S										
$\heartsuit -$		$\heartsuit -$									
$\diamond -$		$\diamond K J 10 7 6$									
$\clubsuit 3$		$\clubsuit -$									
	$\spadesuit -$										
	$\heartsuit Q$										
	$\diamond 5$										
	$\clubsuit Q 10 9$										

Declarer will pitch his club loser on the king of diamonds, but North's $\spadesuit 9$ will be promoted into the setting trick on the next diamond. If, on the other hand, West had left two spades in dummy, he would be able to return comfortably to hand via the trump suit.

STRAIGHTFORWARD 5

Do you know this one? Yes, you do. Well, listen anyway.

Pairs tournament.

W	N	E	S
1NT	Pass	4♥*	Pass
4♠	All Pass		

* – transfer

	N		♠ K J 10 7 6 4
W		E	♥ 5 2
			♦ A 8
	S		♣ J 9 3

♠ A Q
 ♥ J 10 9 7
 ♦ 6 5 4
 ♣ A Q 8 2

Lead: ♦Q. West wins the king and plays a low spade to the jack. You take the queen and start analyzing. Simple arithmetic shows that declarer holds all the remaining honors. You cash the ♣A and continue with a club. Declarer chooses to rise with the king and pitches dummy's losing club on the third heart. A banal hand.

Straightforward 5

Here is the entire layout:

♠ 8 3 2	♠ 9 5	♠ K J 10 7 6 4			
♥ A K Q 3	♥ 8 6 4	♥ 5 2			
♦ K 9 3	♦ Q J 10 7 2	♦ A 8			
♣ K 10 7	♣ 6 4 3	♣ J 9 3			
	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100px; height: 80px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W E</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S	
N					
W E					
S					
	♠ A Q				
	♥ J 10 9 7				
	♦ 6 5 4				
	♣ A Q 8 2				

From Trick 1 the fox knew his partner had nothing apart from the diamond sequence and that the standard defense was doomed to failure. So, at Trick 2, the clever animal won the first round of spades with the ace, not the queen. This is a classic defensive coup called the “strip-tease”. Could it cost him a trick? Of course it could: if West held four spades, the fox would turn into a jackass.

The continuation was similar: ♣A and a club. Declarer put up the king and claimed, stating: “I finesse in spades and pitch the club on the hearts.” And justifiably so: it was far from obvious for declarer how to continue after winning the club king. After all, a 5-2 heart break occurs more often than South’s deceptive play.

CAMOUFLAGING 1

The word “camouflage” comes from the French *camouflage*. It means to hide or disguise so as not to be recognized.

W	N	E	S
	1♠*	Pass	Pass
Dbl	2♠	Pass	Pass
3♥	All Pass		

* – 12-17 HCP, 5+♠

♠ A K J 10 9 2

♥ 4

♦ K Q J

♣ 9 6 4

	N		♠ 6 4 3
W		E	♥ 8 5 2
			♦ 9 7 4
	S		♣ K Q 7 5

Lead: ♠A, ♠K and ♦K (all following). Declarer ducks, takes the next diamond with the ace and plays three rounds of clubs, pitching a diamond. He next leads a heart and, after long thought, rises with the ace. “At last he misguessed,” you sigh with relief.

Camouflaging 1

The full deal:

	♠ A K J 10 9 2											
	♥ 4											
	♦ K Q J											
	♣ 9 6 4											
♠ Q 5	<table style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ 6 4 3	
	N											
W		E										
	S											
♥ A J 10 9 7 6		♥ 8 5 2										
♦ A 8 6		♦ 9 7 4										
♣ A J		♣ K Q 7 5										
	♠ 8 7											
	♥ K Q 3											
	♦ 10 5 3 2											
	♣ 10 8 3 2											

The fox, having cashed two spades, switched to the ♦Q, followed by the ♦J. Now declarer cashed the ace of trumps without much deliberation. If South holds the ♦K, he reasoned, North must have at least one heart honor, since South had passed his partner's opening bid.

CAMOUFLAGING 2

Camouflage in defense – a rare bird indeed.

The competitive auction concluded in 4♥. Do you agree, by the way, with East's 2NT bid (invitational with support)? Perhaps it would have been better to jump directly to game.

W	N	E	S
1♥	2♣	2NT*	3♣
4♥	All Pass		

* – invitational with support

♠ 10 8 4 3										
♥ A										
♦ J 9										
♣ K Q J 10 9 5										
<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; text-align: center; width: 60px; height: 60px;"> <tr> <td></td> <td>N</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>W</td> <td></td> <td>E</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>S</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ J 7 ♥ Q 9 4 3 2 ♦ A Q 6 5 ♣ 3 2
	N									
W		E								
	S									

Lead: ♥A and ♣K. Declarer wins his ♣A as partner shows four clubs, then finesses in spades and diamonds. Finally he concedes three tricks: two diamonds and the trump ace. An exceptionally uninteresting hand.

Camouflaging 2

The four hands:

♠ A Q 6 2	♠ 10 8 4 3										
♥ K J 10 8 5	♥ A										
♦ 7 3 2	♦ J 9										
♣ A	♣ K Q J 10 9 5										
	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100px; height: 100px; margin: auto;"> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;"></td> <td style="padding: 5px; text-align: center;">N</td> <td style="padding: 5px;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px; text-align: center;">W</td> <td style="padding: 5px;"></td> <td style="padding: 5px; text-align: center;">E</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;"></td> <td style="padding: 5px; text-align: center;">S</td> <td style="padding: 5px;"></td> </tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ J 7
	N										
W		E									
	S										
		♥ Q 9 4 3 2									
		♦ A Q 6 5									
		♣ 3 2									
	♠ K 9 5										
	♥ 7 6										
	♦ K 10 8 4										
	♣ 8 7 6 4										

After the same opening lead, the fox switched to the queen of clubs. To the astonishment of the spectators, declarer decided to play a low spade from hand towards the jack. As a result, he went one down.

West offered a sensible explanation. “Assuming South has the ♣K, North must hold one of the remaining kings. If it is the spade king, I will pitch two diamonds from dummy on spades. Otherwise the diamond finesse wins and I will lose one spade, one heart and only one diamond.”

A perfectly logical and reasonable plan of play – how unlucky to be playing against the fox.

CAMOUFLAGING 3

The measure of success of a defensive subterfuge is whether declarer believed the lie of cards to be different than it actually was.

W	N	E	S
			1♦*
Dbl	Pass	1♥	Pass
2NT**	Pass	3NT	All Pass

* – Precision; 11-15 may be as short as two diamonds

** – 22-23 HCP

	N		♠ 8 5 2
W		E	♥ J 8 3 2
			♦ 6 4
	S		♣ Q 9 7 5

♠ A J 3
 ♥ Q 9 4
 ♦ A Q 7
 ♣ 10 8 6 2

Lead: ♦3 (4th). You make the correct technical play of the queen, ducked by declarer. You continue with the ace and seven of diamonds. West takes the king, cashes the ace and king of clubs (partner signals an even number of spades by discarding the ♠4) and exits with a diamond. Partner wins the trick, but you have to find a discard. It is obvious that you cannot afford to discard a club, which would give declarer an additional entry to dummy and an easy ride to nine tricks. Your options are to throw either a heart or a spade.

Camouflaging 3

The four hands:

	♠ 10 9 7 4										
	♥ 10 7 6 5										
	♦ J 9 8 3										
	♣ 4										
♠ K Q 6	<table style="border-collapse: collapse; margin: auto;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ 8 5 2
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ A K		♥ J 8 3 2									
♦ K 10 5 2		♦ 6 4									
♣ A K J 3		♣ Q 9 7 5									
	♠ A J 3										
	♥ Q 9 4										
	♦ A Q 7										
	♣ 10 8 6 2										

Declarer needs to guess your shape to choose his line of play. Let's try to step into his shoes and imagine how he would interpret your possible discards.

The location of the ♠A and the ♥Q is known from the bidding. South has one of three possible hands:

a) 2=4=3=4

With this hand South would probably discard a heart. The winning line is to pick up the ace of spades doubleton.

b) 3=3=3=4

Here South would most likely part with a spade. The same play would then succeed.

c) 4=2=3=4

This variation is the least likely. Why? Because North would have to hold five hearts and three spades, in which case he would have discarded a heart rather than a spade on the second club trick. This is an important point to bear in mind

Part 2: the Fox

on defense: defenders should not reflexively get rid of seemingly useless cards.

With this reasoning in mind, you should smoothly discard a heart (long hesitation might give the trick away), attempting to mislead declarer into believing that your shape is 2=4=3=4. You are expecting partner to co-operate by switching to hearts. If he plays the ♥6 (which could be from ♥765), declarer will be reassured that a) is the actual South hand. Accordingly, he will opt to play South for ♠Ax.

Partner's discard of the ♠4 may have been too revealing, but it was necessary to help you work out declarer's hand and prepare the optimum defense.

You would, of course, operate differently if West's hand were:

♠ K Q
♥ A K 6
♦ K 10 5 2
♣ A K J 3

Fortunately, very few declarers pay attention to, appreciate, or trust the defenders' signals.

CAMOUFLAGING 4

“He’s not a fox, he’s a chicken,” commented the kibitzers, when the contract was not doubled.

Both Vulnerable

Pairs

W	N	E	S
1♦	2♣	Dbl	3♣
3♥	Pass	4♥	All Pass

♠ 10 9
 ♥ A K J
 ♦ 8 3
 ♣ A J 10 9 8 4

	N		♠ A J 5 2
W		E	♥ 8 5 3 2
			♦ Q J 6 4
	S		♣ Q 7

Lead: ♣A and a small club. West ruffs, crosses to dummy in spades and leads a heart to the nine. You win the jack, cash two more trumps and switch back to clubs, forcing declarer to use his last trump.

Part 2: the Fox

Here are the four hands:

♠ K Q 6	♠ 10 9	♠ A J 5 2			
♥ Q 9 7 4	♥ A K J	♥ 8 5 3 2			
♦ A K 10 5 2	♦ 8 3	♦ Q J 6			
♣ 3	♣ A J 10 9 8 4	♣ Q 7			
	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100px; height: 80px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W E</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S	
N					
W E					
S					
	♠ 8 7 4 3				
	♥ 10 6				
	♦ 9 7 4				
	♣ K 6 5 2				

Declarer claims nine tricks. One off was worth only 29%. Many North players courageously doubled. Well, if the queen had appeared in dummy you would have been right to pass.

After a similar auction the fox did not double, either. His opening lead was identical, and he also continued clubs at Trick 2. However, when declarer crossed to the ♠A and led a trump to the nine, the fox won with the king and continued clubs.

Can you blame declarer for looking for a way to make the contract? He imagined North holding AK doubleton of trumps. Based on this, he ruffed in dummy and played another heart. The result: four down and 99%.

“Better four down undoubled than one down doubled,” was the friendly beast’s response to the kibitzers’ critique.

CAMOUFLAGING 5

You're so sharp you'll cut yourself!

Apparently helpless, the fox camouflages his trap.

EW Vulnerable

W	N	E	S
			1♠
Dbl	2♠	Dbl*	3♣
4♥	All Pass		

* – responsive double, promising four heart.

	N		♠ J 7 2
W		E	♥ J 9 5 2
			♦ Q J 6
	S		♣ A 10 7

♠ A K Q 10 6
 ♥ A 4
 ♦ 7
 ♣ J 8 6 5 2

Lead: ♠5. You win the trick with the ♠10, cash the ♠A and switch to your singleton diamond. West ducks the trick to dummy's jack and leads a trump. Declarer soon claims ten tricks.

Part 2: the Fox

Here is the full deal:

	♠ 8 5 3										
	♥ 8 7 3										
	♦ 10 9 8 3										
	♣ Q 9 4										
♠ 9 4 ♥ K Q 10 6 ♦ A K 5 4 2 ♣ K 3	<table border="1" style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;"> </td><td style="padding: 5px;">N</td><td style="padding: 5px;"> </td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">W</td><td style="padding: 5px;"> </td><td style="padding: 5px;">E</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;"> </td><td style="padding: 5px;">S</td><td style="padding: 5px;"> </td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ J 7 2 ♥ J 9 5 2 ♦ Q J 6 ♣ A 10 7
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠ A K Q 10 6										
	♥ A 4										
	♦ 7										
	♣ J 8 6 5 2										

The fox won the first trick deceptively with the king and switched to diamonds. Declarer immediately grasped South's plan: he was aiming for a diamond ruff and the ♠Q would be the entry to North's hand. From declarer's perspective the hand might be:

	♠ Q 6 5										
	♥ 8 7 3										
	♦ 10 9 8 3										
	♣ 9 4 2										
♠ 9 4 ♥ K Q 10 6 ♦ A K 5 4 2 ♣ K 3	<table border="1" style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;"> </td><td style="padding: 5px;">N</td><td style="padding: 5px;"> </td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">W</td><td style="padding: 5px;"> </td><td style="padding: 5px;">E</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;"> </td><td style="padding: 5px;">S</td><td style="padding: 5px;"> </td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ J 7 2 ♥ J 9 5 2 ♦ Q J 6 ♣ A 10 7
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠ A K 10 8 3										
	♥ A 4										
	♦ 7										
	♣ Q J 8 6 5										

Camouflaging 5

The winning line here is to play three rounds of clubs, discarding a spade on the ♣10.

Declarer followed this plan. The fox did not neglect to cover the ten with the jack on the third round of clubs. To declarer's surprise, North won his queen and gave his partner a diamond ruff.

KILLER 1

The best gambits get back more than they sacrifice.

Pairs tournament.

W	N	E	S
		1♦	Pass
1♥	1♠	2♥	Pass
4♥	All Pass		

	N		♠ J 7
W		E	♥ A J 9 8
			♦ K 6 3 2
	S		♣ A J 3

♠ 6 5
 ♥ Q 7 2
 ♦ 8 7
 ♣ Q 10 9 8 4 2

Lead: ♠A, ♠K, ♠10. After some thought, declarer ruffs with dummy's ♥8. Relieved, you overruff with the queen and switch to diamonds, just as your partner asked. One down was worth 78%. Very few declarers guessed the ♥Q. Some EW pairs, as usual, stopped short of game – not surprising when you see declarer's hand.

Killer 1

The four hands:

♠ Q 4 2	N	♠ J 7
♥ K 10 4 3	W E	♥ A J 9 8
♦ Q J 10 4	S	♦ K 6 3 2
♣ K 7		♣ A J 3
	♠ 6 5	
	♥ Q 7 2	
	♦ 8 7	
	♣ Q 10 9 8 4 2	

The fox refused to overruff. Instead, he discarded a diamond. This was a cold-blooded execution. Predictably, West decided to play North for the trump queen. The diamond ruff was a just reward. Two down. The result: a well-deserved 98%.

KILLER 2

The cornered fox continually searches for a way out.

The opponents' bidding was exceptionally precise here.

W	N	E	S
		1♣	Pass
1♠	Pass	3♠	Pass
3NT*	Pass	4♦**	Pass
4NT	Pass	5♠	Pass
6♠	All Pass		

* – waiting

** – short diamonds

N		
W		E
	S	

♠ Q J 10 8
 ♥ A Q 9
 ♦ 6
 ♣ A Q J 8 5

♠ K 2
 ♥ 8 7 6
 ♦ J 9 8 7 3
 ♣ K 7 2

Lead: ♣6. Declarer goes up with the ace, takes the spade finesse and concedes a club.

Killer 2

The four hands:

	♠ 9 7 4										
	♥ J 5 4 2										
	♦ K 10 5 4 2										
	♣ 6										
♠ A 6 5 3	<table style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100%; height: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;"></td> <td style="text-align: center;">N</td> <td style="width: 50%;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">W</td> <td style="width: 20%;"></td> <td style="text-align: center;">E</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;"></td> <td style="text-align: center;">S</td> <td style="width: 50%;"></td> </tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ Q J 10 8
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ K 10 3		♥ A Q 9									
♦ A Q		♦ 6									
♣ 10 9 4 3		♣ A Q J 8 5									
	♠ K 2										
	♥ 8 7 6										
	♦ J 9 8 7 3										
	♣ K 7 2										

Not so fast! Under the ♣A, the fox sacrificed his king. Declarer, a famous authority on safety plays, cashed the ♠A and led another spade. The fox won the king and gave his partner a club ruff.

Part 2: the Fox

Is opening lead from three small in dummy's suit likely? Well, improbability appears to become reality when the singleton king falls. Against a different layout the described line of play would be effective:

	♠ K 7 4										
	♥ 5 4 2										
	♦ K 10 4 2										
	♣ 7 6 2										
♠ A 6 5 3 ♥ K 10 3 ♦ A Q ♣ 10 9 4 3	<table style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100%; height: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">N</td> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">E</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">W</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">S</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	N		E	W				S		♠ Q J 10 8 ♥ A Q 9 ♦ 6 ♣ A Q J 8 5
N		E									
W											
	S										
	♠ 9 2										
	♥ J 8 7 6										
	♦ J 9 8 7 5 3										
	♣ K										

West guarded against South holding ♠xx with the singleton ♣K, and of course he thought he was safe if South had the ♠K.

KILLER 3

Underestimating your opponent may cost you dearly.

The bidding was informative, but not overly scientific.

Matchpoints

W	N	E	S
		1♣	Pass
1♠	Pass	2♦	Pass
3♣	Pass	3♠	Pass
4♦	Pass	6♠	All Pass

N W E S	♠ A 3 2 ♥ K ♦ K Q J 10 ♣ A K Q J 5
	♠ Q 10 6 ♥ A 9 8 7 6 ♦ 9 8 6 ♣ 7 2

Lead: ♥Q. You take the ace and continue hearts. Declarer ruffs, draws trumps via a finesse against the queen and claims the contract. How lucky!

Part 2: the Fox

The four hands:

	♠ 7 5 4										
	♥ Q J 5 4										
	♦ 7 5 2										
	♣ 8 6 3										
♠ K J 9 8 ♥ 10 3 2 ♦ A 4 3 ♣ 10 9 4	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100px; height: 100px; margin: auto;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50px; height: 50px;"></td> <td style="text-align: center; vertical-align: middle;">N</td> <td style="width: 50px; height: 50px;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center; vertical-align: middle;">W</td> <td style="width: 50px; height: 50px;"></td> <td style="text-align: center; vertical-align: middle;">E</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="width: 50px; height: 50px;"></td> <td style="text-align: center; vertical-align: middle;">S</td> <td style="width: 50px; height: 50px;"></td> </tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ A 3 2 ♥ K ♦ K Q J 10 ♣ A K Q J 5
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠ Q 10 6										
	♥ A 9 8 7 6										
	♦ 9 8 6										
	♣ 7 2										

The fox never rests. Having taken the first trick, he switched to the ♠10! Declarer happily covered with the jack and, when it held, played the ♠9, ducking in dummy. Ultimate naivety, no doubt about it, but congratulations to the fox nevertheless. If you haven't been fooled this way before, you are very likely to fall for the trick.

THE FOX STARTLES THE GAME

The startled prey tends to lose its head and flutter into the air.

The bidding was short.

W	N	E	S
			1♦
4♠	All Pass		

N		♠ 7 2
W	E	♥ A Q 9 7
S		♦ 7 6 3
		♣ K 9 7 5

- ♠ K 5
- ♥ K 10
- ♦ A Q J 10 4
- ♣ Q J 10 2

Lead: ♦9. You win the ace and continue with the ♦Q. Declarer wins the king and plays the ♥J. You take the king as partner signals an even number of hearts. (Incidentally, with an honor the correct deceptive play is to give false count here.) You now cash your diamond and count declarer's hand: three hearts, three diamonds and seven spades. Satisfied with the work well done, you play another diamond; but declarer makes ten tricks, nonetheless.

Part 2: the Fox

This is the whole deal:

♠ A Q J 10 8 6 4	N W E S	♠ 7 2
♥ J 5 3		♥ A Q 9 7
♦ K 5 2		♦ 7 6 3
♣ —		♣ K 9 7 5
	♠ K 5	
	♥ K 10	
	♦ A Q J 10 4	
	♣ J 10 8 2	

Your defense was correct, but how did the fox do? Without a trace of hesitation, he followed with his ♥10 under the heart jack. Now declarer, fearing the heart ruff, cashed the ♠A and conceded a trump trick. The fox scored his diamond and continued with another one (not a club, for this would give away the position of ♣A).

Will he get his heart trick back? Very likely so. Why didn't declarer play a small heart to the queen instead of leading the jack? He was aiming for a double finesse in the suit.

The fox startles the game

There are some interesting variations on this theme. Let's imagine a slightly different layout:

♠ A Q J 10 8 6 4	N W E S	♠ 7 2
♥ J 5 3		♥ A Q 9 7
♦ K 5 2		♦ 7 6 3
♣ —		♣ K 9 7 5
	♠ K 5	
	♥ 10 8	
	♦ A Q J 10 4	
	♣ A J 10 2	

Now South can play the same trick with his ♥10. Following with the ♥8 will inevitably lead to eleven tricks.

THE FOX'S REFLEXES

While on the hunt, quick reflexes are key.

There was nothing unexpected about the bidding.

W	N	E	S
1♠	Pass	2♣	Pass
2♠	Pass	4♠	All Pass

♠ Q 9
 ♥ A K Q
 ♦ 6 5 4 2
 ♣ 9 4 3 2

	N		♠ 10 7 6 4
			♥ J 5 2
W		E	♦ A Q J 10
	S		♣ K Q

You cash three hearts and switch to clubs. Declarer takes the trick in dummy and calls for the ten of trumps, covered by your partner's jack and West's ace. Now you must display the fox's instincts and smoothly follow with the queen.

Is the nine any less likely to succeed? Perhaps; it all depends on how highly declarer rates your partner. There are three possible trump holdings for South which declarer must take into consideration:

- a) ♠ J95
- b) ♠ QJ5
- c) ♠ J5

The fox's reflexes

In my opinion, with holding a) anyone might automatically cover with the jack. With holding b) it is more embarrassing to insert the jack. Playing the jack with c) may cause a disaster, but only for declarer.

Have a look at the full deal:

	♠ Q 9										
	♥ A K Q										
	♦ 6 5 4 2										
	♣ 9 4 3 2										
♠ A K 8 3 2	<table style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ 10 7 6 4
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ 8 6 3		♥ J 5 2									
♦ K 8 3		♦ A Q J 10									
♣ A 8		♣ K Q									
	♠ J 5										
	♥ 10 9 7 4										
	♦ 9 7										
	♣ J 10 7 6 5										

“Declarer should play spades from the top,” you’ll say. Judging from his lead of the ♠10, he probably thinks he’s very clever. All you have to do is to confirm this belief. From my experience, following smoothly with the queen will maneuver West into an embarrassing defeat.

FOX IN TROUBLE

If declarer's natural line of play is bad for defenders, they must do everything they can do discourage declarer from adopting it.

W	N	E	S
1♦	Pass	1♠	Pass
2♣	Pass	2♥	Pass
4♣	Pass	6♦	All Pass

	N		♠ Q J 10 9 5
W		E	♥ A K 8 3
			♦ A 10
	S		♣ 4 2

♠ A K 8 7
 ♥ Q 10 7 6 4
 ♦ K
 ♣ Q 8 6

Lead: ♠4. You cover dummy's queen with your king, but it can't beat declarer's trump. West plays the ace, king and a small club, ruffing in dummy. He next cashes the ♦A and claims.

Fox in trouble

The four hands:

	♠ 6 4 3 2										
	♥ J 9 2										
	♦ 8 5 3 2										
	♣ 7 3										
♠ —	<table style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100%; height: 100%;"> <tr> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">N</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">W</td> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">E</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">S</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ Q J 10 9 5
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ 5		♥ A K 8 3									
♦ Q J 9 7 6 4		♦ A 10									
♣ A K J 10 9 5		♣ 4 2									
	♠ A K 8 7										
	♥ Q 10 7 6 4										
	♦ K										
	♣ Q 8 6										

The fox, sitting South, began to set the trap from the very first trick. He covered dummy's ♠Q with the ace. When declarer ruffed and proceeded to cash the top clubs, he dropped the queen on the second round without a trace of hesitation! No wonder the poor prey took the trump finesse.

Part 2: the Fox

Why not play diamonds from the top? West would hate to go down against the commonest of layouts:

	♠ 6 4 3 2		
	♥ J 9 2		
	♦ K 2		
	♣ 8 7 3		
♠ —	N	♠ Q J 10 9 5	
♥ 5	W E	♥ A K 8 3	
♦ Q J 9 7 6 4	S	♦ A 10	
♣ A K J 10 9 5		♣ 4 2	
	♠ A K 8 7		
	♥ Q 10 7 6		
	♦ 8 5 3		
	♣ Q 6		

Here, North would get in with the king of trumps and give his partner a club ruff.

The trump finesse lost. Now the fox's routine play of the ace at Trick 1 proved helpful. The fox switched to the ♠8. If West recalled the opening lead, he might perhaps correctly read the layout of the suit, but who would remember details like that on such an exciting deal? Overcome with fear, declarer ruffed and crossed to the ♦A. Any attempt by declarer to return to hand was suicidal, forcing himself and fatally reducing his trump holding.

Part 3:

SPIDER

Everyone is afraid of spiders and scorpions! They are terrifying because they have many legs, move fast and are venomous. We must not forget, however, that they can be beneficial too: they eat the worms and insects that destroy crops. Spiders create sticky threads to make webs, which they use to entrap insects. They then kill their prey with venom and consume them.

One of the most characteristic features of spiders is their ability to produce silk thread. This thread is a fluid protein extruded from spinnerets found on the end of the abdomen, which coagulates in the air. Silk has many uses among different species of spiders, including:

- building traps, e.g. webs used for hunting;
- wrapping and storing prey.

Spider's predatory strategies with the use of web

There is a great variety of hunting webs in the world of spiders. The reason is that particular families, genera and species have specialized in hunting specific kinds of prey. Even within a particular species no two webs are exactly the same, because of the “individual approach” to their construction.

This applies to bridge, too. Each of the outstanding players has his or her own spider's strategy which they utilize according to their temperament, experience and habits.

SLY 1

Some spiders build elements of their natural environment into their webs, making them even more effective places to lie in wait.

In the bidding, as is often the case, spades beat hearts.

W	N	E	S
			1♥
1♠	2♥	2♠	Pass
4♠	All Pass		

N	♠ 9 3 2
W E	♥ 9 8 7
S	♦ Q 9 8 3
	♣ A Q 2

♠ Q
 ♥ K Q J 10 6 3
 ♦ K 4 2
 ♣ J 9 8

Lead: ♥A, ♥5. Declarer ruffs, draws two rounds of trumps, cashes three clubs and endplays South with a heart.

Part 3: the Spider

The full hand:

	♠ J 6 4										
	♥ A 5 4										
	♦ J 10 6										
	♣ 7 6 4 3										
♠ A K 10 8 7 5	<table style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ 9 3 2
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ 2		♥ 9 8 7									
♦ A 7 5		♦ Q 9 8 3									
♣ K 10 5		♣ A Q 2									
	♠ Q										
	♥ K Q J 10 6 3										
	♦ K 4 2										
	♣ J 9 8										

The spider, the famous web-spinner, realized the danger of the throw-in from the first trick. Accordingly, he dropped the king under his partner's ♥A and played the jack on the second round. West ruffed, drew two spades and three clubs and reached the familiar ending:

	♠ J										
	♥ 4										
	♦ J 10 6										
	♣ 7										
♠ 10 8 7	<table style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ 9
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ —		♥ 9									
♦ A 7 5		♦ Q 9 8 3									
♣ —		♣ —									
	♠ —										
	♥ Q 10 6										
	♦ K 4 2										
	♣ —										

When the ♥9 was played, spider ducked absolutely smoothly.

Where was the ♥10? From South's sequence of plays it seemed that North held this card, so declarer modified his plans. He ruffed the heart and set out to endplay North in diamonds. When North covered declarer's next lead of a low diamond with his ten, the next question arose: where was the ♦J?

Not only can a spider spin his own web, he can also disentangle himself from the webs of his opponents.

SLY 2

One of the most characteristic features of spiders is their ability to produce silk thread which they use for spinning webs.

The bidding was highly artificial and requires precise explanations.

W	N	E	S
		1♣	Pass
1♦	Pass	1♥	Pass
1♠	Pass	2NT	Pass
3♣	Pass	3♦	Pass
4♣	Pass	4♠	All Pass

- 1♣ – strong (16+)
- 1♦ – negative (0-7)
- 1♥ – waiting
- 1♠ – 0-4 HCP
- 2NT – 23-24 HCP
- 3♣ – Puppet Stayman
- 3♦ – I have a four-card major
- 4♣ – I have both majors

♠ Q 5 3
♥ A Q 9 7
♦ 10 8
♣ K 10 9 4

N	♠ A K 8 6
W	♥ K 2
E	♦ A K 3
S	♣ A Q 7 6

Lead: ♠3. Admit it: you were hoping for the ♠AK in dummy. After some confusion, it is established that the opening lead was from

Sly 2

the correct side and that it is the weaker hand who will be declarer.

West takes the ace and plays a club to the jack. You win the king and continue your clever attack on trumps. As expected, declarer rises with the king. He then plays three more rounds of clubs (ruffing the last one in hand) and three rounds of diamonds, also ruffing the last one. You overruff, but are compelled to start hearts. A banal hand.

The full deal:

♠ J 10 9 4	♠ Q 5 3	♠ A K 8 6									
♥ J 8 6 3	♥ A Q 9 7	♥ K 2									
♦ 7 4	♦ 10 8	♦ A K 3									
♣ J 8 5	♣ K 10 9 4	♣ A Q 7 6									
	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 60px; height: 60px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>	N			W	E			S		
N											
W	E										
	S										
	♠ 7 2										
	♥ 10 5 4										
	♦ Q J 9 6 5 2										
	♣ 3 2										

The spider chose the ♠3 lead, too, but as soon as dummy appeared he realized that even collecting a trump trick would not necessarily set the contract. If West is 3-2 in the minors, he can make the contract irrespective of which minor he holds three cards in.

At Trick 2 the spider continued to spin his web. When declarer played a club to the jack, the spider ducked without a trace of

Part 3: the Spider

hesitation. Now declarer led a heart towards the king. The spider went up with the ace and switched back to a low spade. Declarer put up the king and played three rounds of diamonds, ruffing the third one. Just to be sure, the spider refused to overruff.

Here was the ending:

	♠ Q	
	♥ Q 9	
	♦ —	
	♣ K 10 9	
♠ J	N	♠ 8 6
♥ J 8 6	W E	♥ K
♦ —	S	♦ —
♣ 8 5		♣ A Q 7
	♠ —	
	♥ 10 5	
	♦ Q 9 6	
	♣ 3	

When West led a club, the spider carefully inserted the ten. Declarer ducked with a sigh of relief. Why? From his perspective, the situation was totally different: the ♠Q and ♣K were with South. No wonder he was very surprised when two queens – the ♠Q and ♥Q – appeared on the table one after the other. He couldn't avoid conceding one more club in the end.

Does declarer deserve criticism? To some extent, yes. The whole thing didn't really hold water – North's assumed distribution was inconsistent with what was happening at the table – but admittedly, it wasn't easy to see the intricate web spun by the spider.

THE WEB 1

There is an immense diversity of spider's webs.

This time, hearts did exceptionally well in the bidding.

W	N	E	S
1♥	Pass	2♥*	3♠
4♥	All Pass		

* – constructive raise

♠ 7
♥ 9 6
♦ Q 10 7 6 4 2
♣ K Q 9 7

N	♠ 10 8 4
W E	♥ Q J 4
S	♦ K 9 3
	♣ A 6 5 4

Lead: ♠7. Partner wins the ace, cashes the ♠K and continues with the ♠J, which declarer ruffs with the ace. You discard two diamonds. Everyone follows to two rounds of trumps.

At this point declarer is able to reconstruct North's distribution as 1=2=6=4. (This brilliant analysis is based on the two freely-made diamond discards.) Now he can squeeze North in the minors. After conceding a club, West cashes the ♣A and draws the remaining trumps. This is the four-card ending:

Part 3: the Spider

	♠ —				
	♥ —				
	♦ Q 10 7				
	♣ K				
♠ —	<table style="width: 100%; height: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W E</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S	♠ —
N					
W E					
S					
♥ 10		♥ —			
♦ A 5		♦ K 9 3			
♣ 10		♣ 6			
	♠ 9 5				
	♥ —				
	♦ J 8				
	♣ —				

The last trump executes the squeeze against North.

The full deal:

	♠ 7				
	♥ 9 6				
	♦ Q 10 7 6 4 2				
	♣ K Q 9 7				
♠ Q 6	<table style="width: 100%; height: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W E</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S	♠ 10 8 4
N					
W E					
S					
♥ A K 10 8 5 3		♥ Q J 4			
♦ A 5		♦ K 9 3			
♣ 10 3 2		♣ A 6 5 4			
	♠ A K J 9 5 3 2				
	♥ 7 2				
	♦ J 8				
	♣ J 8				

The spider spun his web patiently. He discarded a club on the second round of spades and a diamond on the third. Trumps divided 2–2.

The web 1

Small wonder, in these circumstances, that declarer assumed North was 1=2=5=5, making the squeeze a much less a viable option (it requires North to hold \spadesuit QJ10). However, there was an alternative available: a singleton club honor in the South hand.

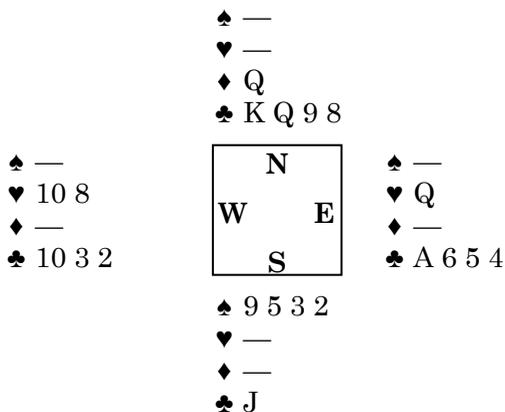
Declarer ruffed a diamond, conceded a club and... went down. Can you blame him for adopting this line of play, though?

The whole deal might look like the following:

		\spadesuit 7							
		\heartsuit 9 6							
		\diamondsuit Q 10 7 6 4							
		\clubsuit K Q 9 8 7							
\spadesuit Q 6		<table style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100%; height: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; text-align: center;">N</td> <td style="width: 50%;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">W</td> <td style="text-align: center;">E</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">S</td> </tr> </table>	N		W	E		S	\spadesuit 10 8 4
N									
W	E								
	S								
\heartsuit A K 10 8 5 3			\heartsuit Q J 4						
\diamondsuit A 5			\diamondsuit K 9 3						
\clubsuit 10 3 2			\clubsuit A 6 5 4						
		\spadesuit A K J 9 5 3 2							
		\heartsuit 7 2							
		\diamondsuit J 8 2							
		\clubsuit J							

Part 3: the Spider

The ending would then be:



The winning line is to concede a club now. Even the “crocodile” (putting up an honor) by North won’t help.

The moral of this story: careless discards give away unnecessary information about your hand.

THE WEB 2

Routine, in the negative sense of the word, never dominates the world of the spider. He spins his web for the sheer pleasure of spinning.

The auction was short.

Pairs

W	N	E	S
		Pass	1♠
3NT	All Pass		

N W E S	♠ 10 8 4 ♥ K Q J 9 4 ♦ J 9 6 4 3 ♣ —
	♠ K Q J 5 3 ♥ 8 ♦ K Q 10 8 ♣ 9 8 3

Lead: ♠9. The nine is covered by dummy's ten and your jack, which holds. West takes the spade continuation with the ace and cashes his six club winners. You have three easy discards available: two diamonds and a heart. Unfortunately, when declarer exits with a heart, partner hops up with the ace prematurely, giving away two overtricks. Declarer finishes with 11 tricks.

Part 3: the Spider

The full deal:

	♠ 9 2		
	♥ A 10 7 6 2		
	♦ 7 2		
	♣ 7 6 5 4		
♠ A 7 6	N	♠ 10 8 4	
♥ 5 3	W E	♥ K Q J 9 4	
♦ A 5	S	♦ J 9 6 4 3	
♣ A K Q J 10 2		♣ —	
	♠ K Q J 5 3		
	♥ 8		
	♦ K Q 10 8		
	♣ 9 8 3		

The spider discarded a heart, a diamond and, on the sixth round of clubs, the ♦K.

Declarer's imagination began to work overtime.

♠ K Q J 9 5
♥ A 8
♦ K Q 8
♣ 9 8 3

With this hand South would find himself squeezed in three suits when the last club was played. The winning line here is to cash the ace of diamonds.

The web 2

♠ 7	N W E S	♠ 10
♥ 5 3		♥ K Q J
♦ A 5		♦ J 9
♣ 2		♣ —
	♠ Q 5 3	
	♥ A	
	♦ K Q	
	♣ —	

That is exactly what declarer did. He was somewhat puzzled when South followed with the diamond ten under the ace rather than the queen; he could do nothing but turn his attention to hearts. North rose with the ace and played a diamond to his partner's queen. The result: one off.

THE WEB 3

A long hesitation by declarer often suggests he has to select between two alternatives. The spider can react fast and take advantage of such an inference.

W	N	E	S
		1♥	1♠
2♦	Pass	2♥	Pass
3NT	All Pass		

	N		♠ 9 7
W		E	♥ K Q 8 6 5 2
			♦ J 3
	S		♣ K Q 2

♠ A J 6 5 3
 ♥ J 10 9
 ♦ A 10
 ♣ 8 7 3

Lead: ♠Q. You duck, but West takes the king and, after a long tank, plays a diamond to the jack. You win the ace and start analyzing.

It's not hard to deduce the distribution of honors: your partner holds the ♥A, while West has the ♣A and the ♦KQ. You must assume that partner has the ♦9xxx, since otherwise declarer has nine top tricks.

The long hesitation suggests that West had a choice of comparably attractive suits to play on. To consider playing on hearts as being as attractive as diamonds, declarer must have a doubleton heart.

The web 3

The full hand:

	♠ Q 4		
	♥ A 7		
	♦ 9 7 6 2		
	♣ 10 9 6 5 4		
♠ K 10 8 2	N	♠ 9 7	
♥ 4 3	W E	♥ K Q 8 6 5 2	
♦ K Q 8 5 4	S	♦ J 3	
♣ A J		♣ K Q 2	
	♠ A J 6 5 3		
	♥ J 10 9		
	♦ A 10		
	♣ 8 7 3		

The delay in your play, in turn, betrays the location of the ♥A. With:

♠ A J 6 5 3
♥ A 10 9
♦ A 10
♣ 8 7 3

your defense would be obvious. Establishing spades would beat the contract unless West has four diamond winners.

The spider took advantage of declarer's deliberations to form his own plans. After winning the ♦A, the spider wasted no time playing the ♠A, ♠J, and another spade, even though he lacked any entry to the established winner. But how was declarer to know that? From his perspective, such a defensive sequence strongly suggested that South held the ♥A; thus his only remaining chance was a 3–3 split in diamonds. When declarer played diamonds from the top, partner's ♦9 became the setting trick, and he had the ace of hearts as an entry.

CAMOUFLAGING 1

The opposite of camouflage is to expose oneself.

The bidding offered a lot to think about. West showed a distributional hand with minor two-suiter: six or more clubs and five diamonds.

W	N	E	S
			Pass
1♣	Pass	1♠	Pass
2♦	Pass	3NT	Pass
4♦	Pass	4♥	Pass
6♣	All Pass		

	N		♠ K 9 8 5
W		E	♥ K Q J
			♦ Q J 10
	S		♣ 8 4 2

♠ A J 6 3 2
 ♥ A 7 6
 ♦ 9 5 2
 ♣ 6 5

Lead: ♥10. You take the ace and mindlessly cash the ♠A. Even if West is void, you reason, he won't benefit from the additional trick of the ♠K. Declarer ruffs. He then draws the ♣A, dropping...

Camouflaging 1

The four hands:

♠ —	N	♠ K 9 8 5
♥ 4	W E	♥ K Q J
♦ A K 6 4 3	S	♦ Q J 10
♣ A Q J 10 9 7 3		♣ 8 4 2

♠ A J 6 3 2
♥ A 7 6
♦ 9 5 2
♣ 6 5

Yes, partner's king puts in a premature appearance. You complain about your bad luck.

Well, luck had nothing to do with it. You failed to perform an elementary analysis. The lack of Blackwood suggests West is void in spades. Cashing the ♠A, which might seem immaterial at first glance, actually exposes partner's king of clubs: two aces and a king are normally sufficient to open the bidding, but you passed in first seat.

Since not switching to spades would also be suspicious, the spider played a low spade after winning the ♥10. Declarer, believing that North held the ♠A, could draw no inferences about the club position and took the losing finesse.

After an odd and illogical heart continuation at Trick 2, declarer may attempt a discovery play and lead the ♠K from dummy. You should duck it to save the day.

CAMOUFLAGING 2

Spiders spin sticky threads to make webs. They use their webs to entrap insects which they then kill with their venom, and consume.

The bidding was complicated.

W	N	E	S
			1♣
1♠	Dbl	Rdbl	2♣
2♦	Pass	2♠	Pass
4♠	All Pass		

	N		♠ K 6 4
W		E	♥ A K 7 6 5 2
			♦ 7 4
	S		♣ 9 4

♠ A Q
♥ 8 3
♦ J 9 5 2
♣ K Q J 10 8

Lead: ♠10. You win the queen, cash the ace and switch to the ♣K. Declarer takes the ace, pitches a club on the second top heart and plays a diamond to the ten.

Camouflaging 2

The full hand:

	♠ 10 7	
	♥ Q J 10 9	
	♦ K 8 3	
	♣ 7 5 3 2	
♠ J 9 8 5 3 2	<div style="position: absolute; top: 5px; left: 50%; transform: translate(-50%, -50%);">N</div> <div style="position: absolute; bottom: 5px; left: 50%; transform: translate(-50%, -50%);">S</div> <div style="position: absolute; left: 5px; top: 50%; transform: translateY(-50%);">W</div> <div style="position: absolute; right: 5px; top: 50%; transform: translateY(-50%);">E</div>	♠ K 6 4
♥ 4		♥ A K 7 6 5 2
♦ A Q 10 6		♦ 7 4
♣ A 6		♣ 9 4
	♠ A Q	
	♥ 8 3	
	♦ J 9 5 2	
	♣ K Q J 10 8	

Instead of leading the club king, the spider exited with the queen of clubs at Trick 3. The effect was dramatic.

The following ending was reached:

	♠ —	
	♥ Q J	
	♦ K 8 3	
	♣ 7 5 3	
♠ J 9 8 5	<div style="position: absolute; top: 5px; left: 50%; transform: translate(-50%, -50%);">N</div> <div style="position: absolute; bottom: 5px; left: 50%; transform: translate(-50%, -50%);">S</div> <div style="position: absolute; left: 5px; top: 50%; transform: translateY(-50%);">W</div> <div style="position: absolute; right: 5px; top: 50%; transform: translateY(-50%);">E</div>	♠ K
♥ —		♥ 7 6 5 2
♦ A Q 10 6		♦ 7 4
♣ —		♣ 9
	♠ —	
	♥ —	
	♦ J 9 5 2	
	♣ K J 10 8	

Part 3: the Spider

As before, declarer pitched the losing club and led a diamond, but this time he finessed the queen.

From his point of view, South's hand was:

♠ A Q
♥ 8 3
♦ K 9 5 2
♣ Q J 10 8 3

The result: one down.

Hats off to the spider. Because of dummy's lack of entries, the contract depended on guessing diamonds. By playing the queen of clubs, he "transferred" the king to his partner's hand, thus changing declarer's perceived location of the diamond honors.

Did the spider foresee this ending when he played the ♣Q? Not necessarily. He was simply spinning his web as a matter of habit.

CAMOUFLAGING 3

“Play transparently” is not the spider’s credo.

Teams

W	N	E	S
1♣	Pass	1♠	Pass
2NT	Pass	3NT	All Pass

N W E S	♠ A K 6 4 ♥ 6 3 ♦ 9 3 2 ♣ K 10 7 3
	♠ Q J 10 9 2 ♥ 10 9 8 4 ♦ K 4 ♣ 4 2

Lead: ♦Q. You overtake with the king and return a diamond. After some hesitation, declarer rises with the ace. When he proceeds to play off the ♠A, ♣Q and ♠J, you discard the ♠Q on the third round. Declarer cashes two spade tops and puts your partner in with a diamond. North cashes his diamond winners but is forced to lead away from the ♥K, presenting West with his ninth trick.

Part 3: the Spider

The four hands:

	♠ 7 5		
	♥ K 7 2		
	♦ Q J 10 6 5		
	♣ 9 8 5		
♠ 8 3	N	♠ A K 6 4	
♥ A Q J 5	W E	♥ 6 3	
♦ A 8 7	S	♦ 9 3 2	
♣ A Q J 6		♣ K 10 7 3	
	♠ Q J 10 9 2		
	♥ 10 9 8 4		
	♦ K 4		
	♣ 4 2		

The spider pitched a heart on the third round of clubs. Why? To avoid revealing partner's distribution. Discarding a spade betrays holding at least five cards in the suit, since it would not be safe to discard a spade from three or four.

Then enabled declarer to reconstruct North's hand and execute the strip and endplay.

It is important to note that partner must have either the ace or the king of hearts to beat the contract. If not, declarer has nine tricks already: two spades, two hearts, one diamond and four clubs.

When South discarded a heart, declarer assumed that North held at least three spades and that his only chance to make the contract would be to find the ♥K onside.

A LITTLE BIT OF ACID WILL DO YOU NO HARM

The eating habits of spiders are quite interesting. Unable to chew, they inject acid into the insect they wish to consume and suck out its vital liquids.

The bidding sounded normal.

Pairs

W	N	E	S
1♣	Pass	1♥	Pass
2♦	Pass	3♦	Pass
3NT	All Pass		

♠ J 7 4 2
♥ K Q 3
♦ K J 6
♣ Q 7 4

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ 9 5
♥ A J 10 9 8
♦ A 9 8 3
♣ 10 2

Lead: ♠2. Declarer takes South's queen with the ace and plays a diamond to the ♦A, followed by a diamond to his queen (partner follows with the ♦4 and ♦10). The location of the heart honors does not give you grounds for optimism. You decide to continue spades, but, unfortunately, declarer holds the ten. Declarer leads a third diamond and you finally manage to establish a spade winner, which you cash after winning the ♣Q. The result: 9 tricks.

Part 3: the Spider

The full hand:

♠ A K 10	♠ J 7 4 2	♠ 9 5			
♥ 5	♥ K Q 3	♥ A J 10 9 8			
♦ Q 7 5 2	♦ K J 6	♦ A 9 8 3			
♣ A K J 9 3	♣ Q 7 4	♣ 10 2			
	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100px; height: 100px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W E</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S	
N					
W E					
S					
	♠ Q 8 6 3				
	♥ 7 6 4 2				
	♦ 10 4				
	♣ 8 6 5				

At the spider's table, the opening lead and the next two tricks were exactly the same. Partner's low-high sequence in diamonds did not encourage the spider to persist with spades. With the spade ten he would have given a Smith Echo in diamonds, saying he had unexpected good news in the suit led to trick one.

West's distribution was now clear: 3=1=4=5. The location of the heart honors was extremely favorable for declarer, but would he in a position to take advantage of it?

The spider, having won the ♦J, exited with a low heart! Declarer couldn't afford to finesse. If South got in and played a spade through, he would go down (because of the entry problems) even with the ♣Q onside. So he went up with the ace and took the club finesse. Result: one down.

The spider spit acid on the opponent and later swallowed the tasty morsel with delight.

A SPIDER WITH IMAGINATION 1

Some spiders use their webs to catch insects; they tie them up before beheading them or crushing their thorax.

The bidding did not give the defenders any cause for concern.

W	N	E	S
		1♥	Pass
1♠	Pass	3♠	Pass
4♠	All Pass		

<table style="width: 100%; height: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">N</td> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">E</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">W</td> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">S</td> </tr> </table>	N		E	W		S	♠ A 8 7 6 ♥ A Q J 10 9 ♦ K Q ♣ 6 2
N		E					
W		S					
	♠ 3 2 ♥ 7 6 4 2 ♦ A 9 7 4 ♣ A 9 4						

Lead: ♣K. You encourage with the four. Partner cashes the queen of clubs and switches to diamonds. Soon declarer claims the contract. One of a hundred deals where you fold up the cards and complain how bored you are.

A SPIDER WITH IMAGINATION 2

Our hero tries to wrap up his prey.

After a series of cue-bids, the opponents stopped in game.

W	N	E	S
1♠	Pass	2NT*	Pass
3NT	Pass	4♣	Pass
4♦	Pass	4♠	All Pass

* – game forcing with support

N	♠ A 8 7 6
W E	♥ J 10 3
S	♦ A Q
♠ J 10 4 2	♣ K Q 7 5
♥ 6 4 2	
♦ J 10 9 4	
♣ J 3	

Lead: ♥A. You signal an odd number. Partner cashes two more hearts and switches to a diamond. Declarer makes no mistake, starting the trumps by cashing the ace and subsequently finessing twice against your ♠J10.

Part 3: the Spider

The whole layout:

	♠ —										
	♥ A K Q 5										
	♦ 8 6 5 3 2										
	♣ 10 6 4 2										
♠ K Q 9 5 3	<table style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ A 8 7 6
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ 9 7 2		♥ J 10 3									
♦ K 7		♦ A Q									
♣ A 9 8		♣ K Q 7 5									
	♠ J 10 4 2										
	♥ 6 4 2										
	♦ J 10 9 4										
	♣ J 3										

The spider began fabricating his web from the very first trick and encouraged with the ♥2. Partner cashed the remaining two heart honors and obediently continued with the thirteenth heart. The spider ruffed with the ♠10 and declarer overruffed. Suddenly, on a seemingly flat deal, a problem had arisen. Where was the jack of trumps?

A SPIDER WITH IMAGINATION 3

Many of the spider's tricks can be found in bridge publications, but it is an entirely different thing to be able to use them at the table.

The auction saw West describe his hand sufficiently to give the defenders some help.

Pairs

W	N	E	S
1 ♠	Pass	2♣* ¹	Pass
2 ♠	Pass	2NT* ²	Pass
3♦* ³	Pass	4♠	All Pass

*1 – waiting

*2 – forcing

*3 – some extra values with 3 clubs (5332)

<table style="width: 100%; height: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>	N			W		E		S		♠ A 10 5 ♥ 5 4 ♦ K Q 2 ♣ A Q 8 4 3
N										
W		E								
	S									
	♠ K J 9 ♥ A 10 3 ♦ 10 9 6 5 4 3 ♣ 5									

Lead: ♦J. Declarer takes the queen and plays the ♠A and a small spade. You jump up with the king and, as the only chance to earn an additional trick, make the risky play of underleading the ♥A. The result: 12 tricks = 7%.

Part 3: the Spider

The four hands:

♠ Q 8 7 4 3	N	♠ A 10 5
♥ K Q	W	♥ 5 4
♦ A 8 7	E	♦ K Q 2
♣ K 9 6	S	♣ A Q 8 4 3

♠ 6 2
♥ J 9 8 7 6 2
♦ J
♣ J 10 7 2

♠ K J 9
♥ A 10 3
♦ 10 9 6 5 4 3
♣ 5

The spider dropped the king under the ace of trumps. Declarer did not continue trumps: he played a heart instead. The spider rose with the ace and gave his partner a diamond ruff. The result: 10 tricks = 85%. Some EW pairs stopped in 3NT, down one.

You may criticize declarer for switching to hearts. Perhaps he should have crossed to the ♣K and played a trump to the ten. Maybe... but that's not the point. The point is that the spider created an opportunity for his opponent to go wrong. West got caught in the spider's web.

SPIDER'S SIMPLE MANEUVER

Sometimes just a few threads suffice to catch the prey.

The bidding was a bit brutal.

W	N	E	S
		Pass	Pass
1♠	Pass	2♣*	Pass
4NT	Pass	5♦	Pass
6♠	All Pass		

* – Drury (10-11 HCP with support)

N	♠ Q 8 3
W	♥ K J 4 2
E	♦ A 9 7 4
S	♣ 6 3

♠ 10 9 7 5
♥ A 10 9
♦ J 5 3
♣ Q J 7

Lead: ♥6 . You cover dummy's jack and return a heart. Declarer discards a club, ruffs a club in dummy, draws trumps and claims.

Part 3: the Spider

	♠ 2					
	♥ Q 8 7 6 5					
	♦ Q 10 6 2					
	♣ 9 5 2					
♠ A K J 6 4 ♥ 3 ♦ K 8 ♣ A K 10 8 4	<table border="1" style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">W E</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S	♠ Q 8 3 ♥ K J 4 2 ♦ A 9 7 4 ♣ 6 3	
N						
W E						
S						
	♠ 10 9 7 5					
	♥ A 10 9					
	♦ J 5 3					
	♣ Q J 7					

Under the ♣A the spider dropped the jack and under the ♣K, the queen. Declarer ruffed the third club with the ♠Q. The result: one down.

The play was poor, you'll say. True: declarer should have drawn two trump honors from hand first. When the 4-1 split is revealed, ruffing a club no longer makes sense. Right, but do you always play against experts?

A SPIDER, NOT A CALF 1

Constantly trying to provoke an error sometimes pays off handsomely.

The bidding was short.

W	N	E	S
1♦	Pass	2♦	Pass
3NT	All Pass		

♠ A 6 4
♥ 7 6 5
♦ J 9 8 2
♣ K Q 10

N	♠ K 8 7
W	♥ 8 4 2
E	♦ A 10 5 3
S	♣ 7 5 2

Lead: ♣K. South encourages with the four. When you continue with the ♣Q, partner signals an odd number of clubs remaining, with the ♣3. Declarer takes the ace, cashes the ♦K and ♦Q (South discarding a spade), and enters dummy via a diamond finesse. He now plays a heart to the jack, returns to dummy in diamonds and leads another heart to the queen. Finally, when the king of hearts falls, declarer claims the contract.

Part 3: the Spider

The full deal:

	♠ A 6 4 ♥ 7 6 5 ♦ J 9 8 2 ♣ K Q 10										
♠ Q J 2 ♥ A Q J 10 ♦ K Q 7 4 ♣ A 8	<table border="1" style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;"></td><td style="padding: 5px; text-align: center;">N</td><td style="padding: 5px;"></td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 5px; text-align: center;">W</td><td style="padding: 5px;"></td><td style="padding: 5px; text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;"></td><td style="padding: 5px; text-align: center;">S</td><td style="padding: 5px;"></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ K 8 7 ♥ 8 4 2 ♦ A 10 5 3 ♣ 7 5 2
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠ 10 9 5 3 ♥ K 9 3 ♦ 6 ♣ J 9 6 4 3										

Another boring hand? Try putting yourself in declarer's shoes. When you cash the king and the queen of diamonds, on the second round the spider follows with the jack. What do you do? Of course you overtake with the ace. Why? You will need three entries to dummy if the layout is different:

	♠ 9 6 4 3 ♥ 7 6 ♦ J 9 ♣ K Q J 9 6										
♠ Q J 2 ♥ A Q J 10 ♦ K Q 7 4 ♣ A 8	<table border="1" style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;"></td><td style="padding: 5px; text-align: center;">N</td><td style="padding: 5px;"></td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 5px; text-align: center;">W</td><td style="padding: 5px;"></td><td style="padding: 5px; text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;"></td><td style="padding: 5px; text-align: center;">S</td><td style="padding: 5px;"></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ K 8 7 ♥ 8 4 2 ♦ A 10 5 3 ♣ 7 5 2
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠ A 10 5 ♥ K 9 5 3 ♦ 8 6 2 ♣ 10 4 3										

A spider, not a calf 1

Note that the $\spadesuit 5$ is the third entry necessary for the final finesse against the king of hearts.

It proved possible, on an apparently banal hand, to reduce nine sure tricks to just eight. You have only to spin an intricate web, in which declarer will get caught like a fly.

A SPIDER, NOT A CALF 2

Everyone is afraid of spiders! We fear them because they are venomous.

Pairs

W	N	E	S
1♥	Pass	1NT	Pass
4♥	All Pass		

	N		♠ 10 9 8 7
W		E	♥ 10 8 4
			♦ Q 7 5
	S		♣ Q J 5
			♠ K 5 3
			♥ J 9
			♦ K J 6 3
			♣ 8 6 4 3

Lead: ♣10 (from K109, 10x or singleton). West takes the ace, draws trumps in two rounds and exits with the ♠J. You watch partner's signals closely (♥2 and ♥7) and suspect he is implying diamond, rather than spade, values. (The location of the ♣K was revealed at the first trick.) So you switch to the ♦3 to cash three diamonds. The result: down one = 61%.

A spider, not a calf 2

The full deal:

	♠ 6 4 2				
	♥ 7 2				
	♦ A 10 2				
	♣ K 10 9 7 2				
♠ A Q J ♥ A K Q 6 5 3 ♦ 9 8 4 ♣ A	<table style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td style="padding: 2px 10px;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px 10px;">W E</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px 10px;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S	♠ 10 9 8 7 ♥ 10 8 4 ♦ Q 7 5 ♣ Q J 5
N					
W E					
S					
	♠ K 5 3				
	♥ J 9				
	♦ K J 6 3				
	♣ 8 6 4 3				

The spider dropped the jack under the ace of trumps. West immediately saw an extra chance and, for communication reasons (he needed two entries to dummy to take two spade finesses), finessed against the ♥9. The spider took the trick and switched to diamonds. After the defense cashed three diamond tricks, the spider exited with a club. The result: down two = 93%.