

A daring escape

By Rikard Greenberg, House-Cat

A cat's diet is not a subject to be trifled with. After all, as the great Maximilian de la Chatfoucauld used to say: we are what we eat and I am sure no self-respecting feline would like to be known as a fish finger. Yet one of the most common and mistaken ideas that people have about us is that we love eating those tasteless meals which some dog-loving marketing whiz-kid designated as "cat-food".

Not that the alternatives people think of are any better: how would YOU like to live day after day on the same boring gruel of canned tuna and boiled rice? A look at that and I can already hear playing the tune of "Bridge on the River Kwai".

This brings me to what happened last weekend: Hana was invited for dinner by Liora, one of her best friends, and thought nothing of leaving me behind with a bowl of cold sliced turkey to keep me company, while she would no doubt enjoy some juicy gastronomic treat thanks to Liora's cordon-bleu skills. Does it sound fair to you?

Luckily, myself and the window locks had become best of friends lately and with a bit of sleight of claw I soon saw myself out and prancing about in the garden, jumping over the fence and quickly making my way towards Liora's house, located at the end of the road, 300-400 yards ..just enough to build an appetite.

If I expected an accolade of "oohhs" and "aaahs" to greet my arrival, I was to be proven very wrong. All I got was a "Told you he would come" from a smiling Hana,

while the others were busy arranging their cards: yet again bridge conspiring to defraud me of what recognition my act of bravery truly deserved.

With the kitchen door firmly shut, there was nothing for me to do but to nest in Hana's lap and meditate on the fickleness of fame. After a few minutes I was jostled awake (well, you know meditation can be very deep at times), by Hana's trembling legs. What was going on? I stretched myself and peeked over the table.

I could see that a very exciting auction had just taken place with the final contract being 5♠ :

West	North	East	South
Ruti	Liora	Aviva	Hana
			1♠
4♦	4♠	5♥	5♠
Pass	Pass	Pass	

The lead was the ♦J and that is what Hana could see:

♠ 98642
♥ A107
♦ AQ
♣ 987

♠ N
♥ W E
♦ S

♠ AKJ103
♥ 852
♦ 63
♣ AK6

When dummy came down Hana was not pleased: the mirror distribution was a very unwelcome sight and made her regret that rash 5♠ bid.

It seemed impossible to avoid losing two hearts and a club: she resigned herself to her fate and finessed the ♦Q. Then she continued with a spade to the ♠A, shaking her head in disbelief when Aviva did not follow. She played the ♠K a diamond to the ♦A (East showing out) and came back to hand to cash her two top clubs, with both opponents following. Next came a heart to the ♥A while Ruti pitched a diamond.

The strange distribution was by now clear and this hand had suddenly revealed a lot of its hidden potential. Could this hopeless contract be make-able after all?

We know that Ruti has started with 3-0-8-2 and by inference that Aviva has 0-7-1-5,

so the position we have reached is the following with North to play:

♠ 986		♠ -
♥ 107		♥ KQJ
♦ -		♦ -
♣ 8		♣ J54
♠ Q	♠ N	♠ -
♥ -	♥ W E	♥ KQJ
♦ K10975	♦ S	♦ -
♣ -		♣ J54
	♠ J103	
	♥ 85	
	♦ -	
	♣ 6	

Hana continued with a spade to Ruti's ♠Q who was forced to return a diamond in ruff and discard. Hana looked at it with a rueful smile and remarked: "Not even that helps me". She was right because she would still have to lose two more tricks in addition to the ♠Q conceded earlier. So she proceeded to pitch a heart from dummy and to ruff in her hand but she forgot her vigilant "guardian cat"... As she was about to play a spade from her hand, with a sudden movement I jerked free her ♣6 which fell on the table.

She went to pick that up but then gave up on it, thinking that it would not matter anyway.

But it did matter, can you see why?

Ruti had no choice but to play another diamond letting Hana pitch the last heart from dummy and ruff in hand. All she needed to do now was to crossruff the last four tricks using her remaining trumps: 5♠ made!!

Here is the complete hand:

♠ 98642		♠ -
♥ A107		♥ KQJ9643
♦ AQ		♦ 8
♣ 987		♣ J5432
♠ Q75	♠ N	♠ -
♥ -	♥ W E	♥ KQJ9643
♦ KJ1097542	♦ S	♦ 8
♣ Q10		♣ J5432
	♠ AKJ103	
	♥ 852	
	♦ 63	
	♣ AK6	

Gosh, I am so brilliant at times that I want to hug myself!

P.S.: Liora's Ossobuco was well worth the wait!