

The big sleep

By Rikard Greenberg House cat

The thundering applause woke me up from my sleep and I found myself been glanced at with intense disapproval by Prissy and her friends of the Feline Theatre Club. I muttered a few unconvincing words about my being deep in thought and hoped I got away with it.

I should have known better.

"How could you Rik Rik? How could you embarrass me in front of all of my friends? I shall never be able to live this down" She uttered wiping tears from her beautiful whiskers shortly after we left the theatre. I felt really bad and my abject apologies must have sounded sincere enough for Prissy to put me on probation for only a fortnight. "Probation" was her way to inflict a mild punishment on a soul gone astray but deemed worthy of redemption: it meant no afternoon stroll through the park, a maximum of 30 minutes daily petting and an embargo on her food provider's delicious treats. Painful but bearable.

I walked home rather dejected and yet thinking to myself how unfair the whole thing was, after all who could expect a fellow cat to remain fully awake through three hours of that drivel? Don't get me wrong I have nothing against William Catspeare and his works as long as they are carefully administered in small doses. There are even some parts that I actually do like: that speech at the start for instance was quite nice, wait how did it go?

"To sleep or not to sleep...that is the question!

Whether 'tis nobler to venture out and chance

The cuffs and buffs of inclement weather

Or to doze upon a comfy sofa,

Nodding off to melt the solid hours

That clog the clock's bright gears with sullen time

And stall the dinner bell."

Highly inspirational stuff which affected

me deeply, so much so that not long after I decided that the "to sleep" option sounded eminently reasonable, I obliged and nodded off. Why should I be blamed for that? Maybe the snoring did it. Who knows? Oh well, females! Life used to be so much simpler without them: even my bridge is not immune to the delightful manipulations of Prissy's "lateral" thinking.

Look at this hand we played during the Friday evening bridge jamboree at the exclusive "Aristocats Club" against Dotty and Potty, two lovely Siamese who just moved to the neighborhood.

Halfway through the tournament I picked up the following cards in East:

♠ QJ976
♥ K109
♦ 3
♣ Q853

Dotty opened 1♥ in North and, green vs red, I could not help putting in a light 1♠ overcall. Potty bid 3NT and that was that. Prissy swiftly tabled the ♠3 and this is what I could see:

	♠ 842	
	♥ AJ7643	
	♦ 2	
	♣ AK2	
		♠ QJ976
		♥ K109
		♦ 3
		♣ Q853

The defense prospects seemed promising if the ♠3 was from King or Ace to three, as long as Prissy would be careful enough not to block the suit since she might also have the ♠10. The lead ran around to my Jack and declarer's King. Potty now started thinking and then she run the ♥Q to my King. I almost had a spade in my hand when I realized that something was not quite right about the distribution at the table. If, as I initially assumed, the ♠3 had come from ace to three, why would Potty bid 3NT so quickly only with King doubleton in the suit? Surely she could not have three hearts and she was marked with diamond length so she should have been able to bid 2♦, hear partner's rebid and then decide what to do.

It all smelled fishy to me and yet I would look like a total idiot if I sent back a diamond to find declarer with the ace and thus able to claim nine easy tricks while

we had four cashing spades.

Still I felt I had to give it a try, if the layout I feared was the actual one at the table, most of the pairs would be in 4♥ taking ten tricks meaning that 3NT just made would be a very good score for us, whatever happens.

So I closed my eyes and played back the ♦3.

Potty was not happy. She looked up, she looked right, she looked left and then played the ♦Q which Prissy quickly took with her Ace.

Now the unthinkable happened: the ♦6 came back and....held the trick!!!

With a wide mischievous grin, my Prissy slowly..oh ever so slowly, proceeded to cash diamonds, diamonds and more diamonds: a seemingly never ending procession of them triumphantly marched across the table to take trick, after trick, after trick. The ashen faced declarer could do nothing but to jettison her high cards and eventually only managed to collect four tricks for 3NT-5.

This was the complete hand:

		♠ 842	
		♥ AJ7643	
		♦ 2	
		♣ AK2	
♠ 3			♠ QJ976
♥ 52			♥ K109
♦ AKJ109876			♦ 3
♣ 104			♣ Q853
		♠ AK105	
		♥ Q8	
		♦ Q54	
		♣ J976	

Take heed o ye of little faith in your partners' overcall: had Prissy wavered in her staunch resolve to lead my suit and cashed her two top diamonds, that would have been the end of the defense. Declarer would have comfortably made ten tricks for a huge score since 4♥ is also held to ten tricks after the ♦A lead and a diamond continuation, unless declarer finds the double dummy play of ruffing with the ♥J and then leading a heart down to the ♥Q.

Here comes the crunch: would I have done it? Of course not. Did it work? By golly it did!

Oh Prissy, Prissy, what would I do without you?