

A cat's life

By Rikard J. Greenberg, House Cat

Have you ever gone through such a thoroughly humiliating experience that all you want is to be turned into an ostrich and spend the next few years with your head comfortably nudged into the nearest hole in the sand? Well that is exactly how I felt after what happened to me last month. There I was, cheerfully bobbing along, on my way back to the house with Prissy beside me, looking forward to some intensive cuddling and neck scratching, when my beloved asked if I would not mind organizing a bridge foursome, since she felt like playing for an hour or two. Despite having serious misgivings as to the wisdom of such a change of plan since it would curtail my cuddling/scratching marathon, her wish was my command and I jumped next door to look for Humus and Pitta, since I knew that their early curfew would mean a short game. Unfortunately they would not hear of joining us since they had just got to the first over-time of their daily match of mouse-ball, with a tied score of 3-3 and a thrilling finish to come. Oh well, I had just returned to the house to relate the "bad" news when I heard some loud feline sounds coming from around the corner. There I found Prissy with Tractor and Fritz, the latest arrival in our midst, an unpleasant Holsteiner with a ragged black fur, fat and disgusting. It soon transpired that Prissy had invited them to join us and that was all there was to it. Putting up a good face, I led them inside where I played my "affable host" impersonation and plied my guests with drinks and snacks before sitting down for bridge.

It soon became clear that it was not going to be my day. Any two way decision I would take would inevitably go wrong, light openings would lead to disastrous doubled games, conservative bidding would find us languishing in partscores with dream layouts and perfect dummies providing an embarrassing number of overtricks. It was too much and I kept looking at Prissy and my watch to give some signals that it was time to stop this farce when this happened:

Dealer North, None Vul

♠ 86		♠ KJ107
♥ Q432		♥ J75
♦ J1096		♦ K842
♣ J43		♣ 96
	♠ Q52	
	♥ A	
	♦ Q5	
	♣ AQ108752	
	♠ A943	
	♥ K10986	
	♦ A73	
	♣ K	

West	North	East	South
Tractor	Prissy	Fritz	Myself
	1♣	Pass	1♥
Pass	2♣	Pass	2♠
Pass	3♣	Pass	3NT
Pass	Pass	Pass	

Another 3NT where I could try to wipe out that nasty grin from Fritz! Tractor led the ♦J and I put up the ♦Q from dummy as Prissy purred: "Pray tell me you have a stopper in diamond RikRik..".

Fritz covered the ♦Q with the ♦K and to give Prissy a little jolt I played low from my hand. I would then take the second diamond and say "Et Voila!" with a flourish. That was the plan anyway but, as I prepared my ♦A, I saw that Fritz had instead played back a small heart. My face turned pale white as I suddenly realized that I was going to be irreparably cut off from dummy and that the club suit would be stranded unless I found a doubleton ♣J or the ♠K onside. As the latter was the better of the two chances, I cashed the ♣K and played a spade up to the ♠Q, which was unfortunately covered by Fritz's ♠K. Back came a diamond and when my ♦A was played Prissy, totally oblivious to the tragic developments, smiled encouragingly "Nicely ducked RikRik!". Nicely indeed....that duck had just shrank 11 top tricks into 6! At the end of the play I tried to quickly reshuffle and start on a new deal but nooo...dear old Fritz had to open his mouth and comment on my duck, "the kaputt duck" as he

named it, until even Prissy understood what a silly play I had made.

Upset at him and angry with myself I picked up as dealer this uninspiring collection:

♠ K7
♥ A876
♦ 5432
♣ QJ7

After three passes, Fritz opened 1♠ in fourth seat and Tractor replied with a mutter "2♣, grouurryy, grouurryy". I guess I was the only one to decipher his growling as a hint that 2♣ was Drury, a convention designed to check on the full values of a third or four seat opener, since Fritz bellowed out "6 Klubs!" which Tractor quickly corrected to 6♠. Here comes my revenge, I thought, as I have the King of trumps and an ace exactly when these two idiots have bumbled their way to a ridiculous contract! I doubled and led the ♥A. Alas this was the full hand:

♠ 10		♠ AQ9832
♥ 109432		♥ -
♦ A1098		♦ KJ
♣ 1098		♣ AK432
♠ J654		♠ K7
♥ KQJ5		♥ A876
♦ Q76		♦ 5432
♣ 65		♣ QJ7

Fritz proceeded to ruff with glee my ♥A, cashed the ♠A and then, when the ♠K did not drop, played ♣AK and club ruffed in dummy with the ♠6, threw two diamonds on the ♥KQ, and claimed six made. A deafening silence followed only broken by Prissy's disappointed voice asking me why I had not led a diamond, which as everybody knew was her favorite suit. To that eminently logical question I had no reply to make, so I ran out of the house and jumped the fence hoping that Humus and Pitta would welcome a third for mouse-ball practice!