

Home sweet home

Say what you like but even an intensive and exciting couple of months spent managing the newly established "Fishfather's Bridge Club" cannot beat the wonderful feeling of a homecoming.

As soon as I strolled through the door, I was welcomed with a big hug by Hana, who showered me with kisses and tickles. She had gathered together all of my friends for a "welcome home" party: my beautiful Prissy, Tractor, Humus, Pitta and many others were all there to show me how much they cared for me. The next few hours were a blur: it felt so great to be the center of so much love and friendship.

Over the next few days, I got back into my usual routine but unfortunately it was soon clear that something was not quite right with Hana.

As any cat knows, food providers are rather clumsy beings with extremely poor night vision. They are also extremely fragile and require a lot of care and attention. Hana, however, apart from the time when she came back from a skiing holiday with one of her legs encased in a big white cylinder, seemed to be rather sturdy for a human and I had hoped she would keep well for some time.

Lately I noticed that she was hardly eating and was losing that healthy well fed look she once had. I have always been a good hunter, and there are plenty of attractive little thingsies flying around the home with which I supplement my daily fare, so I decided that it would be nice to repay Hana in kind for the wonderful "Welcome Home" party she arranged for my return and catch some food for her. Now, we all know that the fresher the food the better it is, so I carefully tried to bring the thingsies to her while they were still alive. Well, for some strange reason, instead of being thankful and dive right in for a tasty snack, Hana would turn white, scream and run away.

Very odd behavior, I thought to myself, could the trauma of my absence have made Hana lose her appetite?. After thinking about it for some time, I realized that it had to have something to do with

the food providers' inability, some would say repulsion, to hunt like superior beings (cats, to be exact). This obviously meant that they were unable to kill a prey even when it is given to them on a silver platter, so to speak.

No problem. That is what I am here for: I will simply have to kill them myself, just so that she would not starve. Now this is where it got really weird. When presented with a neatly laid out set of freshly killed thingsies on her bedside cabinet, Hana would make a strange face, take the bodies to the magic water bowl (I guess to wash them before eating), but then would always end up dropping them. She obviously hadn't yet figured out that the magic water bowl makes things disappear (with a frightening whoosh sound), so she kept losing them before she could have a single bite.

My poor food-provider must have been starving by now so, in desperation, I tried to shove little chunks of food into her mouth while she was asleep. Well, that did not work either: she kept waking up, spitting and spluttering, rudely throwing me from the bed and rushing to the bathroom.

I guess I will have to find another way to thank her and let her go back to having those strange "Atkins" cans she keeps in the big white cold wardrobe.

At least I noticed that her illness does not affect her bridge... which is as bad as usual.

Yesterday afternoon she was entertaining her friends for one of their "tea and bridge" sessions and this hand came up:

	♠ 65		
	♥ A98		
	♦ AKQJ7		
	♣ KJ6		
♠ KQ843		♠ AJ72	
♥ 2		♥ K43	
♦ 9432		♦ 5	
♣ 543		♣ Q10982	
	♠ 109		
	♥ QJ10765		
	♦ 1086		
	♣ A7		



Hana opened a weak 2 in hearts and was immediately raised to 4♥ by Liora.

Ruth led the ♠K and, after a little thought, Aviva took the ♠K with her ♠A and played back a diamond to dummy's ♦A.

Looking a little perplexed, Hana came back to hand with her ♣A and run the ♥Q to Aviva's ♥K. Back came the ♠7 to the ♠Q and a diamond ruff was the fourth defensive trick.

Aviva was understandably happy about the result and received many felicitations for her brilliant play.

Do you see how Hana could have made the contract despite Aviva's sharp defense?

When something odd occurs at the bridge table, the least we should do is to ask ourselves: why?

Here there could be no other reason for Aviva's extraordinary overtake of her partner's winning ♠K, only to return a diamond to dummy in a suit headed by AKQJ, apart from her holding the guarded ♥K and a singleton diamond. What Hana should have tried, before attempting the heart finesse, is to take advantage of an additional chance to sever the defensive communications in spades by cashing her top club honors and then run the ♣J from dummy. If Aviva holds the ♣Q and covers, she could simply discard her losing spade on it, making sure that there is no way for West to get the hand and give East the diamond ruff. Then we can safely finesse in hearts. If there is no cover, we will ruff and play ♥A and a heart hoping to find Aviva with a doubleton ♥K, so that she does not have a third trump with which to ruff.

Simple, isn't it...hmmm...wait was that a yummy butterfly that just flew by? I wonder if Hana might like a taste of that? Be right back, folks!"