

Crime and Punishment

By Rikard Greenberg House Cat

I am back! Weren't you all wondering where I had disappeared to all this time? No? Shame on you! Well, that is what happened a couple of months ago...

"Guilty!" The foreman of the jury announced the verdict amidst a thunderous applause followed by a wild meowing which drowned any attempts the judge made to silence the feline crowd.

"Guilty!" The words resonated with deadly finality and their meaning was terribly clear as the judge spelled out the terms of the sentence: "Rikard Greenberg, you have been convicted by a jury of your peers of the heinous crime of stealing cookies from your food provider's cupboard! I sentence you to two months of community work in the Yochanan Fish factory, where you shall be assisting with the handling and preparation of tons of delicious Gefillte fish for the holidays, while being on a strict diet of water and stale bread. May this experience serve as admonishment to mend your wicked ways!"

I guess I deserved it but I still felt that it was not entirely my fault.

It all started just after Hana went on a diet when, upon looking at my healthily plump features, she decided that I would have to join her and shed a few pounds myself!

Now you tell me: who has ever heard of a cat on a diet? We do not need this, cats eat when we feel like it without gorging ourselves on food like some other animals I could mention (no, I was not thinking of dogs but of another species which walks on two legs...got it?!).

Yet there I was living on a meager portion of boiled rice and water like some criminal in a maximum security prison. All my complaining and meowing were to no avail: Hana even put a lock on the fridge when she saw me trying to open it. When I told Prissy about my desperate predicament, she took one look at me and agreed wholeheartedly...with Hana!

So I slimmed...and slimmed...and slimmed some more.

One week went by, a whole week which seemed to last a month, during which my only decent meal was a jar of tuna which I traded for my best set of whisker trimmers.

Then one bright, wonderful day, when I was investigating a kitchen cupboard for some food I found a wrapped up package which looked very promising. After checking that Hana was still busy chatting with her friends in the front room, I quickly ripped open the wrapping and discovered...oh joy!... a big box of Danish cookies with sugar topping! I could not hold myself: I opened it and feasted my eyes on the beautiful selection inside: round cookies, square cookies, cookies with cherries on top, chocolate cookies, all neatly arrayed like little soldiers waiting to march and march they did, one by one, with my belly as the final destination!

Only a few minutes had gone by after finishing off the last of them and I heard a lot of noise from the lounge. Intrigued by this unusual development I strolled in the salon and found that Hana and her friends had started to sing with their off-pitch screeching human voices: "Happy Birthday to you...Happy Birthday to Stella...". A little bird started to advise me that this was a very suspicious and dangerous development and I would do well to absent myself but full as I was of the milk of feline kindness (and of a lot of cookies) I smiled peacefully to signify my unreserved approval for this festive atmosphere. Hana suddenly rushed away back to the kitchen and shortly after I heard a terrible shriek: "Riiiiik Riiiiik!!!!" You guessed it, I was halfway through digesting a box-load of cookies which had been meant as Hana's birthday present for Stella.

The Feline Police was called immediately, they charged me with theft and took me away. The rest you know.

What do you think? Did I really deserve such stern punishment?

Well I should have known better I guess: after all the whole week had been awful,

even my weekly game at the Aristocats had been a disaster.

Look at this board for instance:

MPs, North dealer, None vul

	♠ AK104		
	♥ 9832		
	♦ AJ74		
	♣ 7		
♠ Q65		♠ J72	
♥ Q1074		♥ 5	
♦ Q86		♦ K10532	
♣ AQ9		♣ J832	
	♠ 983		
	♥ AKJ6		
	♦ 9		
	♣ K10654		

I had landed as declarer in South in what seemed like a standard 4♥ contract after my partner had opened 1♦ and replied 2♥ to my 1♥ bid, which I quickly raised to game.

The lead was the ♠5.

Despite having few losers, I also had very few winners. So I decided to play the hand on crossruff lines.

I took the lead in dummy with the ♠K and immediately played a club down, inserting the ♣10 when East failed to produce the ♣A. West took his ♣Q and returned a spade to my ♠A. I cashed the ♦A and started on a crossruff: diamond ruff, club ruff, diamond ruff, club ruff (while West played the ♣A)..

This is the layout we had reached as I played the last diamond from dummy and I ruffed it with the ♥K:

	♠ 104		
	♥ 98		
	♦ 4		
	♣ -		
♠ Q		♠ J	
♥ Q1074		♥ 5	
♦ -		♦ K10	
♣ -		♣ J	
	♠ 9		
	♥ AK		
	♦ -		
	♣ K6		

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PARTNERSHIP BRIDGE

The Wooden Soldier

By Matthew and Sarah Granovetter

Matthew: I think it's important for partners to sympathize with each other when one player takes an intelligent action that does not work. At a USA National tournament a few years ago in San Francisco, sitting West I held this hand with no one vulnerable:

♠ A
♥ 8643
♦ 932
♣ Q10965

West	North	East	South
			Pass
Pass	1♥	1♠	1NT
Pass	Pass	2♠	2NT
Pass	Pass	Pass	

What would you lead, the ♠A or a club?

Sarah: The ♠A. Didn't you say your partner overcalled spades, then rebid them in the face of a notrump bid?

Matthew: Yes, but are we wooden soldiers or thinking bridge players? Granted, partner has shown long spades, but South has shown two stoppers. It's quite obvious that partner has some honors outside of spades, otherwise he would have preempted rather than make a one-level overcall. Therefore, and I think, quite reasonably, I tried to find him with a club honor and led fourth from my longest and strongest.

Unfortunately this was the full deal:

South dealer

None vulnerable

	♠ Q94		
	♥ KQ75		
	♦ K765		
	♣ J2		
♠ A		♠ 1087532	
♥ 8643		♥ A9	
♦ 932		♦ A1084	
♣ Q10965		♣ A	
	♠ KJ6		
	♥ J102		
	♦ QJ		
	♣ K8743		



Opening lead ♣6

Partner won the ♣A and shifted to a spade. However, it was too late for the defense — declarer made 8 tricks. As you can see, a spade lead followed by a club shift would have allowed partner to get in three times, twice to lead spades and the third time to cash spade winners (defeating the contract 2 tricks).

At the end of the hand, partner made the cutting remark, "I guess I should have bid the suit a third time." I object to this unsympathetic view. After all, he could easily have held the ♠Q, instead of the ♥A, with a doubleton club instead of a singleton, in which case a club lead would have been the winner.

The Last Word (Sarah): Perhaps partner should have remained silent. However, if you wish to avoid criticism, lead the suit partner overcalled — not only does it keep partner quiet, but it's usually the best lead.

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West started thinking. By now I was really happy with my line since it looked like West had started with three spades (since East had played the ♠2 and then the ♠7), three clubs and three diamonds (since he had played the ♦Q on the third round and had not led a diamond honor so he was unlikely to have KQ), that meant that he had started with a 3=4=3=3 shape and trumps were splitting 4-1.

However I was safe, since after West pitched his last spade, I would lead my ♣K which he would have to ruff perforce and then exit with a heart to my stiff ♥A. Now I would make my tenth trick en-passant leading another club towards the ♥9 in dummy! Yes, simply beautiful!

Five minutes went by, the round was over and West continued thinking. By now I was getting impatient but I was not altogether displeased since the delay had meant that all the kibitzers were now gathered around my table.

"Come on, be a good chap and give up! I know all the hand by now, there is nothing you can do." I said to him with a friendly smile.

Eventually West played a card: the ♥7! I looked at it in disbelief: I ruffed with the ♥K and this guy underruffs! What is going on? I shrugged my shoulders and played the ♣K as planned and West ruffed with the ♥10, cashed the ♠Q and exited with a low heart to my ♥A, looking at me smugly and showing me the ♥Q which would become the setting trick "Spoke way too soon, friend! Way too soon!". Embarrassed by my early behavior, I left the table mumbling some painful excuses and left to massage my wounded ego in private.

Not a good week and the next two months were not going to be any better!