

## When Hana is away, the cats will play... bridge!



By Rikard Greenberg, House-Cat

Summer. Has there ever been a word with a sweeter sound? It evokes images of golden streams of warmth hugging me in a loving embrace, slow hazy days spent stretched on the porch being lulled to sleep by the serenade of a nearby grasshopper. The memory of the bleak rainy winter seems so far away that one might easily dismiss it as a bad dream.

Summer is also freedom. When I see those telltale signs of Hana starting to pile up the bed with clothes and then slowly packing them into her little wardrobe with wheels, I already know what to expect. First: she inevitably will feel guilty about leaving me and will treat me to some lavish gourmet meals. Second: I will be hugged and kissed and petted a lot more than usual (I don't mind that one little bit). Third: I will have the run of the place!!! Ok, ok Hadass, her niece, is supposed to come and look after me but a couple of timely scratches soon show her who is looking after whom in my house! Holidays, here I come!

After a week spent basking in the sun while pondering matters of vital importance for catdom at large (Does tuna in a glass jar really taste better than tinned one?), an unbearably hot day spurred me to open the entertainment season by inviting a few select companions to "chez Rikard" for an

afternoon of fun and frolics.

I had it all figured out: a little bridge to warm things up, a nice selection of grilled meat and fish to provide well needed restoration and then over to the lounge for tea and biscuits.

I jumped up on the roof and with a loud meooooowww I called over my neighbours Humus and Pitta (how can any self-respecting cat agree to be named like that?). We are now three and ..wait...here comes Tractor (I always knew he would : he has an amazing knack for smelling out food). Why the name Tractor? Because of the remarkable noise he makes: a grrrrr several decibels louder than an electric chainsaw.

I checked what Hadass had laid out for us and I put away in the kitchen the choicest treats for my evening snack leaving on the dining table some fish and chips and a bowl of dried food.

As soon as everybody sat down in their place, we started playing bridge.

The first hands were normal administration, except for Tractor's many attempts to elope with one excuse or another towards the dining table.

Then this hand came along:

West	North	East	South
Tractor	Humus	Pitta	Myself
Pass	1♠	4♦	4♥
Dbl	Pass	Pass	Pass

	♠ AQ9852		
	♥ A10		
	♦ 84		
	♣ K43		
♠ K1063		♠ 4	
♥ Q92		♥ 43	
♦ Q2		♦ AKJ109763	
♣ A1076		♣ Q5	
	♠ J7		
	♥ KJ8765		
	♦ 5		
	♣ J982		

Tractor obediently led his partner's suit with the ♦Q, Pitta took over with his ♦A and continued with the ♦K, which I ruffed in hand. "Time to get your brain cells spinning" I said to myself and I started to

look at what was the best chance to make the contract. "The heart finesse should be on and probably so is the spade finesse since with such a good suit and a K outside even Pitta might have bid 2♦ and not 4♦. Still I cannot finesse the hearts immediately because otherwise I have no good way to come back to hand, because if I play ♠A and a spade to the ♠J, West will take and play back a club and now even after pitching a club on the ♠Q I still must lose two more clubs." So I resolved to play first the ♠J, covered by the ♠K and dummy's ♠A. Then I played ♥A and a heart to the ♥K, with both following suit but sadly no doubleton ♥Q. Now for the "piece de resistance" : I played the ♠7, finessing the ♠T but overtaking in dummy with the ♠8. I pitched a club on the ♠Q and ruffed a spade in hand. Looking at both of my poor opponents with a condescending grin, I completed my masterpiece playing with a flourish a small club from hand. I could not lose now more than one club since the ♣A was marked outside from the bidding and my remaining club would go on dummy's spades.

I closed my eyes waiting for the accolade to come: I wanted to fully enjoy the looks of awe and the congratulations of my fellow felines confronted by such a masterful showpiece of declarer play.

But there was silence, I opened my eyes slowly and ..nothing. Nobody around. A frightening thought came into my mind: "They couldn't have. Could they?". Oh yes they could and they did. Taking advantage of my diverted attention, the rascals had run to the kitchen where they were obscenely feasting on the delicacies I had kept for later.

Hana, where are you? I miss you!!! Meooooowwwwww.

