

A Nightmare

by [Larry Cohen](#)

Here is a bidding problem from the world championship. It is a nightmare. Sitting North, you hold:

	♠ 5		
	♥ A K J 8 7		
	♦ A Q 4		
	♣ A K Q 3		
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
4 ♦	?		

If you bid only 4♥, that's quite an underbid with your 23 HCP. If you double, you know that your dumb 'ol partner is going to bid spades. Then what?

When my partner held this hand he contented himself with 4♥ and much to his surprise, the auction continued: Pass, Pass, 5♣ on his right!

Yes, the 4♦ preemptor now was showing that he had clubs as well. My partner doubled (a fairly safe gamble!) and then doubled again when the opponents retreated to five diamonds. This was the full deal:

Board 8					
West Deals					
None Vul					
		♠ 5			
		♥ A K J 8 7			
		♦ A Q 4			
		♣ A K Q 3			
♠ 3		N	E	♠ A 10 6 2	
♥ —		W	S	♥ 10 9 6 5 3	
♦ K J 10 9 8 7 3				♦ 5 2	
♣ J 10 9 6 5				♣ 8 2	
		♠ K Q J 9 8 7 4			
		♥ Q 4 2			
		♦ 6			
		♣ 7 4			
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>		
4 ♦	4 ♥	Pass	Pass		
5 ♣	Dbl	5 ♦	Pass		
Pass	Dbl	All pass			

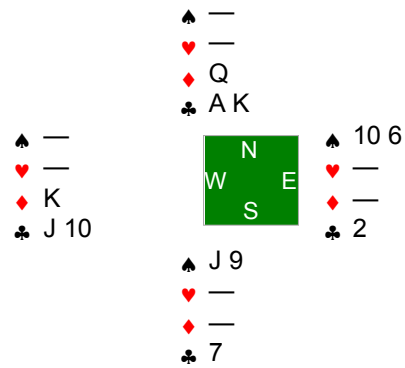
In 5♦ doubled, declarer ruffed the opening heart lead and played a low club. My partner won and continued hearts at every opportunity. Eventually declarer was defeated three tricks, plus 500 for North-South.

We were lucky to stay out of 6♥, because the bad trump break would doom that contract (we have to lose a heart and a spade). However, picture the play in six spades by South!

A diamond is led and declarer wins in dummy and leads a spade. If declarer could see all the cards he'd finesse the nine. However, he goes up with the king and continues with the queen. West shows out and it looks as if there are two spade losers, but a trump coup will come to the rescue. East wins the spade ace and exits with a heart. Declarer wins in dummy and ruffs a diamond and then cashes two more rounds of hearts and ruffs the fourth round of hearts in hand. Next he plays a club to the dummy and ruffs another heart. This has reduced the ending to:

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Another club is led to dummy and a minor suit is played at trick 11. East's trumps are captured and declarer scores up 980 for his spade slam. So, if you doubled the 4♦ opening you might have ended up in spades. Would you have reached six? Would your partner have found the trump coup? My partner will never know.