

The Griffins Club

If you are looking for a hilarious bridge read, try the *Bridge in the Menagerie* series, written by the late Victor Mollo. The setting is the Griffins bridge club, and the protagonists are named for animals whose characteristics they exhibit. Our favorites are the hopeless (but amazingly lucky) Rueful Rabbit and the insufferably brilliant, claret-swilling Hideous Hog.

The contract is an ambitious seven spades. West leads the ♥10, and a

devious declarer plays the queen from dummy, hoping to tempt East into covering. But East plays low, knowing that West would not underlead an ace against a grand slam. Declarer's ace wins the trick and trumps are drawn. Next, declarer cashes the ♦K, finesses the ♦J, cashes the ♦A and ruffs a diamond. The ♠Q provides an entry to the long diamond and that's thirteen tricks for declarer. Routine stuff, eh?

That may be the normal way to play and defend, but Rueful Rabbit doesn't do normal. To spare himself the chore of thinking (which he finds quite difficult) he lives by certain rules ... third hand high ... cover an honor with an honor ... and many others. So, at trick one, Rueful Rabbit *does* cover the ♥Q, gleefully following two rules at one fell swoop! This "mistake" gives declarer an option. Now, instead of relying on the 50% diamond finesse, he can triumph whenever diamonds are 3-2 (a 68% chance) ... draw trumps, cash the ♦K, cross to the ♦A, pitch a diamond on the Rabbit-created heart winner, and ruff a diamond. But, alas for declarer, this fails when diamonds are 4-1 and he goes down in his cold grand. Rueful Rabbit strikes again!

If the Hog had been sitting East he also would have covered with the ♥K at trick one. But in his case the Hog would (somehow) have divined that it was the winning play and we can still hear him chortling in between celebratory gulps of Chateau Margaux 94 (perhaps some of them even from his own glass).

Board 5

North Deals
N-S Vul

♠ 6
♥ 10 9 8 6
♦ Q 10 9 8
♣ K J 8 6

♠ Q 3 2
♥ Q J 2
♦ A J 6 5 4
♣ 4 3

♠ 5 4	♥ K 7 5 4 3	♦ 7	♣ Q 10 9 7 5				
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♠ A K J 10 9 8 7	♥ A	♦ K 3 2	♣ A 2				