

Toby Strite, then a student at the University of Illinois in Urbana, could have taken a page out of Victor Mollo's *Bridge in the Menagerie* when he declared this slam in a 2-team IMP match. He made his doubled contract by taking advantage of a "friendly" opening lead and executing an unusual Passion Coup, which involved picking up all four of East's trumps without ever leading the suit.

The hand was dealt just after midnight on Halloween in an after-hours game at the local duplicate club. East, Nate Ward, thought it was Christmas instead when Toby and partner Hugh Williams bid to the seemingly hopeless 6D. But Nate felt haunted by Mollo's ghost when he realized the 4-0 trump break was actually a favorable one for declarer.

The auction itself could have been perpetrated by the Rueful Rabbit. North, who wasn't ready for the 5S response to Blackwood, had no way to escape to 5NT, so he was forced to bid the slam off two aces and, it appears, a possible second trump loser.

East regretted his "easy" double when he saw partner's opening lead. West, Bharat Rao, assumed the double must be Lightner (calling for a lead of dummy's first-bid suit), so he led the club 10.

From there, the play was right out of Mollo's *Menagerie*. Toby made his slam by leading *six rounds* of clubs, and never leading trumps. He recognized the layout he needed almost immediately, and played the entire hand out in less than three minutes.

The opening lead went to the club Jack, Queen and Ace. Toby led a club to the king and led another high club from dummy. East ruffed low to prevent the spade discard, but Toby over-ruffed and used his three dummy entries (the heart ace and two heart ruffs) to lead clubs three more times. East was over-ruffed twice more and was finally down to the singleton diamond ace when the last club was led. That allowed Toby to pitch his spade and claim, losing only the trump ace.

Can the slam be beaten with a club lead? Only if East refuses to play his club queen at trick one **AND** if declarer errs by letting dummy's club jack win the trick. That would leave him one dummy entry short for the six club leads.

It also does East no good to refuse to ruff the third club. If he instead discards a heart, declarer can pitch his spade, lead to dummy's heart ace and finesse East's diamond jack. A heart ruff in dummy allows him to repeat the trump finesse.

Champaign IL Bridge Studio; Hallowe'en night, 1992

IMP teams -- South dealer, both vulnerable

♠KQJ
♥A
♦982
♣KJ9653

♠97643
♥J7532
♦Void
♣1074

♠A1082
♥1098
♦AJ53
♣Q8

♠5
♥KQ64
♦KQ10764
♣A2

South West North East

(Toby)			
1D	Pass	2C	Pass
2H	Pass	2S	Pass
3D	Pass	4NT	Pass
5S*	Pass	6D**	DBL

ALL PASS

* 2 keycards plus the diamond queen

** **Oops.** Endplayed by Blackwood!

Opening lead: Ten of clubs.