

Surviving the Force by Roger Lord

Dealer: South

Vul: Both

	North		
	♠A104		
	♥102		
	♦952		
	♣KJ1075		
West		East	
♠762		♠KQ95	
♥Q854		♥63	
♦QJ106		♦A8743	
♣62		♣83	
	South		
	♠J83		
	♥AKJ97		
	♦K		
	♣AQ94		

South	West	North	East
1 Heart	Pass	1 Notrump	Pass
2 Clubs	Pass	3 Clubs	Pass
3 Hearts	Pass	4 Hearts	All Pass

Opening Lead: Diamond Queen

South's opening and two subsequent rebids confirmed a hand of intermediate, or invitational, values. North readily accepted the invitation.

Best defense requires not only watching and counting the played cards, but also imagining and counting unseen cards by inference. The opening diamond queen was won by East's ace, dropping South's singleton king. Dummy's club suit loomed, especially after South's rebid suggested club honor strength. Before declarer could utilize the clubs, an attacking lead was called for—but which attack? Should East advance the spade king in the hope that West could augment that suit with the jack? Or should he press on with diamonds?

East inferred that South had disclaimed a six-card heart suit, else he might have jumped to three hearts over partner's one notrump response. If South had only five trumps, West must have had four. So, East continued a diamond to force South to ruff and bring him down to West's size.

South attempted to draw trumps by laying down the ace, king and jack. West won the queen, and the suit broke 4-2, as East showed out on the third round. Now, the onslaught of diamonds proved fatal to declarer by forcing his last trump while West retained a trump.

Have you spotted the way to combat best defense? Declarer might have taken his own inference, based upon RHO's forcing defense, that trumps were not splitting 3-3. What could he do about it? Observe the position when, at trick three, South leads a low trump out of his hand. West wins the queen and reverts to diamonds, but declarer concedes this trick, pitching a spade. Now, dummy is out of diamonds, so a further diamond lead can be ruffed by dummy's ten, preventing declarer's trumps from being shortened. Regardless of the defense, declarer can arrange to draw trumps and claim dummy's long clubs.