

Bridge By Phillip Alder

THE ABNORMAL PLAY THAT WORKS PERFECTLY

Dealer: South
Vulnerable: Both

North 02-21-19
♠ 4 3
♥ 7 2
♦ 10 8 6 5 2
♣ 9 6 4 3

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

South
♠ A Q J 10 8 6 5
♥ K 6 5
♦ A
♣ A K

South	West	North	East
2 ♣	Pass	2 ♦	Pass
2 ♠	Pass	3 ♣	Pass
4 ♠	Pass	Pass	Pass

Opening lead: ♣ Q

Andre Malraux, a French novelist, art theorist and first minister of cultural affairs, said, "Genius is not perfected, it is deepened. It does not so much interpret the world as fertilize itself with it."

I am not sure that that has any relevance to this deal, but thought it particularly interesting.

South is in four spades. West

leads the club queen to declarer's ace. How should South continue?

North's three-club rebid was a double negative, showing 0-3 points.

Declarer starts with nine winners: six spades, one diamond and two clubs. Maybe the spade ace will drop a singleton king, but that is unlikely, only a 12.4 percent chance. Better is to try to ruff a heart on the board. But which heart should South lead from his hand?

Suppose he starts with the heart five. East wins with the nine and shifts to his trump. Whatever South does, his ruff is deep-sixed. If he finesses the spade queen, West wins and returns the suit. Or, if South wins with his spade ace, West takes the next heart and cashes the spade king.

Now let's go back to trick two and make the genius lead of the heart king.

If East can take the trick and play a trump, nothing has been lost. Here, though, West wins with his ace ... and does what?

If he shifts to a low trump, South wins and leads a second heart. Here, if East takes this trick, he does not have a trump left. Or, if West wins, he cannot play another trump without sacrificing his trick.

This line is the best fertilizer for the contract.