

301. Transferred Menace

Playing in a team game, I hold:

♠ Q 3 ♥ J 6 4 ♦ A Q J 8 3 ♣ A 10 3

At unfavorable vulnerability, partner passes as dealer, and East, on my right, also passes. We are playing a weak notrump so I begin with **one notrump**. West passes, and partner bids **two clubs**—Stayman. I respond **two diamonds**, and partner returns to **two notrump**. I am near maximum with a five-card suit and I have no problem going on to **three notrump**. The full auction:

West	North	East	South
—	Pass	Pass	1NT
Pass	2♣	Pass	2♦
Pass	2NT	Pass	3NT
All Pass			

West leads the three of hearts and dummy is a disappointment:

♠ A 10 6 2
♥ 10 8 5
♦ 10 5
♣ K Q J 7

3♥ led

♠ Q 3
♥ J 6 4
♦ A Q J 8 3
♣ A 10 3

East wins the king and ace of hearts, and plays a third round to West's ♥Q. When West cashes the ♥7, I throw a spade from dummy and a diamond from hand. West exits with a club, which I win on the board. It appears that my only chance is to find East with king-third of diamonds. I lead the ♦10. East covers and I happily take my ace.

I extract the ♦Q from my hand but hastily return it. East has produced the ♥AK and ♦K. Since he would have opened the bidding with the ♠K, that card is marked with West. If West has length in diamonds (which is suggested by East's quick cover of the ♦K), he may be subject to a squeeze. The flaw in this analysis is that both threat cards are in front of West's winners. I can correct this safely by leading the ♠Q. West predictably covers with his

♠K, and I take dummy's ace. The ♠10 now serves as a threat along with the ♦8.

I play two top clubs ending in dummy and reach what I hope is this position:

	♠ 10 6
	♥ —
	♦ 5
	♣ J
♠ J	♠ x x
♥ —	♥ —
♦ 9 x x	♦ x
♣ —	♣ x
	♠ 3
	♥ —
	♦ Q J 8
	♣ —

When I play the ♣J, East throws a low diamond and West the ♠5. Not what I was expecting! I have no choice but to play diamonds. On the queen and jack, *East* follows with the seven and nine. My eight is good for the ninth trick.

The full deal:

	♠ A 10 6 2
	♥ 10 8 5
	♦ 10 5
	♣ K Q J 7
♠ K 9 5 4	♠ J 8 7
♥ Q 9 7 3	♥ A K 2
♦ 6 2	♦ K 9 7 4
♣ 9 6 4	♣ 8 5 2
	♠ Q 3
	♥ J 6 4
	♦ A Q J 8 3
	♣ A 10 3

Unexpectedly, the squeeze operated as planned, not against West but against East. East threw me off by covering the ♦10 with his king. This cover exposed him to a later finesse of the ♦8 (but as a practical matter no one ever takes that finesse).

The key maneuver was ♠Q, a no-risk play which had the effect of transferring the spade menace from West to East. It proved that sometimes good things fall your way even when you have no idea what you're doing.