The ♦J opening lead was taken by East's Ace, and the ♦Q played to Declarer's King. Trumps were drawn in three rounds, and with a Club and a Diamond still to be lost, Declarer concluded that a successful Spade guess was required to bring this one home. She'd just finished reading Lawrence's "Counting at Bridge", so she put her newfound technique to work. East had shown up with ♦AQ and ♥J, added to which he might also have a Club honor. With all that, and the ♠A, surely East would have opened the bidding instead of passing in first seat. So, with a high degree of confidence, she led a Spade to the King and East's surprising Ace. Down one.

It was unfortunate that Declarer's bedtime reading had not been "End-Plays for the Improving Player". In that case, after drawing trumps, she would have cashed the ♠K and led a Club to the Ten and East's Jack. East could cash the ♦T, but then had no safe exit ... a Spade return would spare Declarer the guess ... and a Club return would allow Declarer to pitch a Spade on the fourth round of Clubs. Making 9 tricks.

It's true that playing on Clubs was not a sure thing. West might have held ♦QJx, in which case he would split his honors and win the third round of the suit. Now West will lead a low Spade and Declarer can revert to her counting activities (without a happy ending, as it happens).

Visit www.acbl.org for more about the fascinating game of bridge or email marketing@acbl.org