

TOP SECRET

BRIDGE AT THE

ENIGMA CLUB



PETER WINKLER
FOREWORD BY CHIP MARTEL

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FOREWORD

What you hold in your hand is no ordinary bridge book. True, it tells an entertaining story that features colorful characters and fascinating deals—some from actual play, some the likes of which you have never seen before.

But this book also introduces a host of new ideas for bidding and defense, while giving you a glimpse into a possible computerized future for bridge.

And, importantly, it is the first and only book in the world about cryptologic methods in bridge: learn to (legally) communicate in secret with your bridge partner. You can show your controls while your opponents languish in the dark; and you can signal on defense without telling declarer how to play the hand.

You don't believe it? Neither does 'Tush' Tischman, intrepid hero of *Bridge at the Enigma Club*, until he becomes the victim. Poor Tush, lured by a pretty girl into a bridge club like no other. Luckily it is he, and not you, who must suffer while you laugh (and learn).

Here you will see more new ideas in bridge than you ever dreamed of. Will you agree with all of them? Probably not (I don't). And some of the suggested systems and conventions are not permitted in your local game or tournament, at least for now. But whether you love Winkler's ideas or (like Tush) are totally outraged, you can't fail to enjoy this one-of-a-kind volume.

So, read and enjoy. Chances are, you'll never look at bridge quite the same way again.

Chip Martel, April 2010

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BRIDGE AT THE

ENIGMA CLUB



Corky, wherever you are... please forgive me. I know I messed up, but until then we were good together, don't you think? Let's play again sometime.

Robert

PRELUDE

She stood dripping against the carved facade of a ten-story building, make-up smeared, curls ruined, eyes defiant—in short, irresistible. In her fist, as if he had willed it there himself, was the soggy but unmistakable corpus of an ACBL convention card.

“Get stood up by your partner?”

A compression of the lips was sufficient answer.

“Perhaps I can offer myself as a substitute.”

“You wouldn’t want to play with someone in my frame of mind.”

“I’ll take my chances,” he said offhandedly. “I’m a good player, and I can adapt. I just finished a business meeting, but I don’t fly home until tomorrow. Where’s the game?”

She paused, looked him over, and sighed. “Follow me.”

He tried to look casual, but his heart raced; a minute ago he’d been taking a bored, aimless walk in an unfamiliar city. Now, suddenly, an afternoon of bridge! True, his partner was unknown and unhappy. But he knew he could change that.

X X X

Robert ‘Tush’ Tischman was a Nice Guy and, indeed, a fine bridge player. He was good at many things, in fact, when he concentrated—but at times he had trouble doing that, and allowed his emotions to get the better of him.

He had acquired the nickname ‘Tush’ (rhymes with bush) on account of some childhood pudginess, combined with the lure of alliteration. Now a young man, he was in fact quite presentable, if at times a bit earnest. Unmarried but looking around, he often dreamed that he could find a girl he could love and play bridge with. Alas, young female bridge players seemed to be a rare commodity in the twenty-first century.

Tush understood that his wet and angry companion in the elevator might be a poor bridge player, and, moreover, might be attached or even married (though her ring finger was bare). At least she was *willing* to play—with someone. But wasn’t he getting ahead of himself?

Concentrate! Play a solid, strong game, he told himself, and behave. Be a good partner. Impress this young woman. Then, what happens, happens.

What happened next, in fact, was that the elevator doors opened to reveal a slightly decrepit art-deco hallway from which emanated a maze of smallish rooms. Several “Hi, Corky” greetings were directed toward Tush’s partner, but she seemed in no mood to respond. She led Tush to a room with only one table in it, and saying “I’d better sit North to score,” she indicated the South seat for Tush.

In contrast to its seventy-five-year-old surroundings, the table itself was a high-tech affair. Tush saw that built into the table surface in front of each player was a private touch screen. ‘Corky’ did something on hers and a list of systems appeared before Tush:



“We don’t have time to put in details,” said Corky brusquely. “What’s your poison?”

“Um, I guess Standard American Yellow Card will have to do.”

Board 1: North dealer; neither side vulnerable

TUSH LEARNS THE ROPES



As Tush pushed the yellow card button on his touch screen, a gangly middle-aged fellow and a demure-looking elderly woman—his mother, perhaps?—appeared and sat themselves East and West, respectively.

“Ay, Corky!” said the guy. “Who’s your partner?”

“Beats me. I just found him on the street.”

“Robert,” said Tush, quickly sticking out his hand. “Good to meet you, and you too” (this to the woman).

“I’m George, this is Tricia,” said East, while his partner fumbled in her pocketbook, finally extracting a convention card. This she inserted into a slot in the table; it was regurgitated with a soft acknowledging “beep.” Tush could see that the card itself was a computer printout, and had bar codes as well as human-readable convention information.

“I take it that East-West pairs enter their convention cards before each round?”

“My goodness, no,” said Tricia. “The tables communicate. Are you ready to begin?”

Tush nodded and Corky pushed a button. With a whirring sound, cards began to appear in a slot in front of Tush. He must have looked a bit startled, because West (Tricia) said sweetly, “I take it you’re not used to real-time computer dealing, Robert?”

Tush smiled pleasantly, reluctant to acknowledge that this old lady was more technologically savvy than he. As he picked up his cards he noted that, indeed, they were also bar-coded. Hmm, that meant the cards could be freshly dealt at each table—no chance for misdeals caused by putting the cards back incorrectly. Come to think of it, they could even play the same deals simultaneously at every table—perhaps they were.

Holding:

♠ A 5 4 2 ♥ Q 7 ♦ 6 ♣ A 7 6 5 3 2

and thinking that this was worth an opening bid, Tush looked up to see if he was the dealer. On the table before him words appeared:

```

BOARD 1
DEALER NORTH
NONE VUL

```

It occurred to Tush that since they were at Table 7, yet beginning with Board 1, they probably *were* playing Board 1 everywhere at the same time. Tush looked down again, this time seeing:

```

WEST      NORTH      EAST      SOUTH
          1NT

```

So Corky had opened one notrump, presumably by pushing a button on her own touch screen. After a moment the display changed again:

```

WEST      NORTH      EAST      SOUTH
          1NT      2♣
          (NATURAL)

```

Pretty cool, thought Tush. It tells you what the opponents bids mean; you don't have to ask. Presumably the opponents were told "15-17 HCP" after Corky's opening. Looking down at the display, Tush saw that he had not yet even been offered an option; the computer was doing a mandatory countdown while the words:

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WAIT-OPPONENTS HAVE INTERFERED

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appeared on the screen. After ten seconds a bidding option display appeared before Tush:

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PASS  DOUBLE
2    3    4    5    6    7
♣    ♦    ♥    ♠    NT

```

Tush noted that one-level bids and redouble were not presented to him as options. Presumably, it wouldn't even allow him to bid, say, two clubs. No chance of an insufficient bid. Or a bid out of turn. Not to mention a bid without appropriate hesitation.

What, indeed, *should* he bid? In a moment of panic, he thought, oh my god, is Lebensohl on the Yellow Card? If so, fast or slow? No, surely not. Whew. Double would be business, too, probably, but this hand was an obvious 3NT call.

Looking down at the screen, he pushed "3" then "NT" and was gratified to see the updated bidding display:

| | | | |
|------|-------|------|-------|
| WEST | NORTH | EAST | SOUTH |
| | 1NT | 2♣ | 3NT |

which, a few seconds later, had been augmented to:

| | | | |
|----------|-------|------|-------|
| WEST | NORTH | EAST | SOUTH |
| | 1NT | 2♣ | 3NT |
| ALL PASS | | | |

and then:

| |
|------------------------|
| CONTRACT: 3NT BY NORTH |
|------------------------|

East looked down at his table display, no doubt seeing something like:

| |
|-----------|
| YOUR LEAD |
|-----------|

and put the ♠K on the table.

Tush put down his dummy and, rather impolitely, peeked into his opponents' hands, mentally reconstructing his partner's.

THE DARK SIDE OF BRIDGE

Robert Tischman is just looking for a game of bridge, but when a mysterious stranger persuades him to partner her in a two-session event at the Engima Club, he gets much more than that.

This is a book that can be enjoyed on several levels:

- 1) as a bridge novel with lots of great deals;
- 2) as a glimpse of what the game might be like if technology were applied to it with more imagination;
- 3) as an exposition of the author's ideas on encrypted bidding and encrypted signals—bids and plays where, in full compliance with the Laws of Bridge, partners can exchange information that cannot be deciphered by their opponents.

Consumer warning: these methods, though fascinating and ingenious, are illegal in many bridge jurisdictions.

“Here you will see more new ideas in bridge than you ever dreamed of. Will you agree with all of them? Probably not (I don’t). But read and enjoy. Chances are, you’ll never look at bridge quite the same way again.”

—Chip Martel, multiple World Champion.



PETER WINKLER (Hanover, NH) is a former cryptographer who now teaches mathematics and computer science at Dartmouth College. He originated the idea of encrypted signals some twenty-five years ago, and has been fighting to have them declared legal ever since.



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