

## Morton's Fork

As South (dealer, all vulnerable), you pick up a good hand:

♠AJ4  
♥QJ  
♦AQJ109  
♣AQ3

You open with a 20-22 point 2NT, and the bidding proceeds:

S	W	E	N
2NT	P	6NT	P
P	P		

West leads ♠9 and the dummy goes down to reveal the following:

♠KQ10  
♥A104  
♦K  
♣J87652

♠9 led

♠AJ4  
♥QJ  
♦AQJ109  
♣AQ3

Partner has judged well, 7♣ is a poor contract while 6NT looks excellent. All you have to do now is match the good bidding with good play and make the contract (it can always be made from this point). You win in dummy with K and lead 2♣ for a finesse. You expect either to make an overtrick, or claim your 12 tricks if the finesse loses. However East discards H2 on this trick (they are playing low encouraging discards). Take it from there.

### SOLUTION:

You can't afford to let East's K swallow up your Q so the finesse is now out of the question. Nor can you let him make a cheap ♣ trick. So you must go up with A♣. Now lead your 3♣ back towards dummy. If East takes his K it is all over – you have 5♣ tricks, 5♦ 1♥ and 3♠ – contract made with 2 tricks to spare. If he ducks, you change tack – come back to hand with a ♠ then take the ♥ finesse. You don't care if it loses – West has no ♣ to cash his partner's K and you have 12 tricks – 2♣, 5♦, 2♥ and 3♠.

The full hand:

♠KQ10  
♥A104  
♦K  
♣J87652

♠987  
♥987  
♦853  
♣K1094

♠6532  
♥K6532  
♦7642

♠AJ4  
♥QJ  
♦AQJ109  
♣AQ3

East has been caught in the so-called Morton's fork – when you lead 3♣, whatever he does is doomed to failure. This coup is named after Cardinal Morton, who was Henry VII's Chancellor. He argued that men who lived opulent lifestyles, and dressed well, could clearly afford to pay the top rates of tax that the King was demanding. Those who lived frugally and dressed shabbily must be hoarding large sums of money and they could therefore also afford to pay high taxes.

East has been unlucky, he has identical holdings in ♠ & ♥ and if he had chosen to lead ♥ instead of ♠ you would have gone down. Of course, you are much too well-mannered to point that out to him at the table!