

The Simple Squeeze

“Simple” only in name -- it can become quite complicated:-) Here are the **conditions**:

1. All but one of the tricks remaining to be played
2. Two **threats** (also known as “menaces”; I use the terms interchangeably)
 - 2.1. Cards that aren’t (yet!) tricks... but will be if an opponent discards their¹ *guard* in the suit
 - 2.2. **Entry**: communication to cash the winner established by that crucial discard
3. Knowledge (or hope) that the guards in **both** threat suits are held by the **same** opponent
 - 3.1. ...so they’ll have to commit and unguard one suit or the other at the crucial time

Often you don’t *know* whether all the conditions apply... but, you can play by supposing they *might*!

A caveat

Even so-called “simple” squeezes can be complicated enough that most any general assertion about them can find exceptions. I’ll nevertheless make such assertions (and mention exceptions just in footnotes) for assertions that are valid the vast majority of the time.

A first example

Example 1:

	AQ2	
	KQ5	
	A743	
	KQ5	
T??		???
???		???
???		???
???		???
	KJ6	
	AJ4	
	KQ6	
	A642	

South declares **7 Notrump**, say on a lead of the Spade Ten (doesn’t really matter).

Clear certainty of 3 tricks per suit: A, K, Q; total, $3 \times 4 = 12$ sure tricks

Either of the minors may be worth **4** tricks as long as it splits 3-3: then, 13 total tricks², no squeeze.

¹ To avoid gendered pronouns, I deliberately use “they” as singular, as has been OK since Chaucer and the Bard.

² Actually, 14, if both split, so 7NT+1, but I suspect opponents would object.

But if a minor does **not** split 3-3, the 4th card there (D7, C6, if you follow upward) is a *threat*. The *guard* is held by the single opponent that has more than 3 cards in that minor.

So **if** the same opponent is long in both minors, they hold both guards... and then, all conditions are met -- *as long as* you don't destroy your entries (condition 2.2). Which... weird as that may seem... **could** accidentally occur at the table to a squeeze-unaware declarer!

Premature consumption of entries (3(2)-3(30))

Say, for example that whole deal is distributed as follows:

	AQ2	
	KQ5	
	A743	
	KQ5	
T987		543
98763		T2
J9		T852
73		JT98
	KJ6	
	AJ4	
	KQ6	
	A642	

It may be that South is eager to know as soon as possible how the minors are split (since a 3-3 in either minor would make the play trivially easy), and therefore starts by cashing A, K, Q in each minor (getting the bad news). Say that South now, e.g., cashes two more Spades (in addition to the lead South had originally won). Now the situation, at trick 9, would be:

	--	
	KQ5	
	7	
	--	
IM-		--
MA-		T2
TE-		T
RIAL		J
	--	
	AJ4	
	--	
	6	

Now South cashes 3 hearts and can choose to end in either hand -- but East will know (if they're awake and alert!) which hand South will be in at trick 13.

If play ends with North having to lead (inevitably, they'll lead the Diamond 7) at trick 13, East keeps the Diamond Ten and makes the last trick, beating the grand slam -- it does not matter that for this purpose they have to discard the Club J (the guard in Clubs), because declarer's premature cashing of all the minor-suit winners removed all real threatening power from the Club 6, since there's no more entry to it.

Vice versa, and in perfect symmetry, if play ends with South having to lead (inevitably, they'll lead the Club 6) at trick 13, East keeps the Club J and makes the last trick, again beating the grand slam -- it does not matter that for this purpose they have to discard the Diamond Ten (the guard in Diamonds), because declarer's premature cashing of all the minor-suit winners removed all real threatening power from the Diamond 7, since there's no more entry to it.

Appropriate timing

At least one (ideally, *exactly* one, as we'll see in future examples) of the threats has to be accompanied by an entry (with a card in that suit opposite it, for communication purposes). This is usually known as the "long threat", sometimes also called the "two-card menace".

The winning³ card which actually produces the squeeze (also known as "the squeeze card") is the last⁴ winner you cash in either of the suits which contain no threats (also known as "the last *free* winner"; the no-threat suits being known as the "free suits"). The squeeze card must always⁵ be *opposite* the two-card menace. As for the other threat, it's usually best to cash all the winners in that threat suit (sometimes it makes no difference, but, when feasible, it never hurts and may help), so it is usually known as the "one-card menace".

The one-card menace can be in the same hand as the squeeze card (opposite the two-card menace), or in the same hand as the two-card menace (opposite the squeeze card); when you have a choice, the former arrangement (where the two threats face each other) is preferable, as we'll see later.

Back to our example deal, the Diamond threat is in North, the Club one in South, so the preferred arrangement with the threats facing each other is automatic. There are so many high cards that the flexibility is total: declarer gets to decide from which major (majors being the "free suits"), and from which hand (North or South), the squeeze card will come. The only key thing is to *avoid* cashing all winners in the minor suit whose threat is opposite the squeeze card, in order to keep that threat as a 2-card menace (it's OK to cash all winners in the *other* minor, although in this case it doesn't matter).

³ It's also possible, though rare, to have a *losing squeeze card*, but I don't cover that further here.

⁴ Almost always -- for an exception, see "The trump squeeze" later on.

⁵ With exceptions -- see, for example, "The inverted automatic squeeze" later on.

(deal repeated for convenience)

	AQ2	
	KQ5	
	A743	
	KQ5	
T987		543
98763		T2
J9		T852
73		JT98
	KJ6	
	AJ4	
	KQ6	
	A642	

So, here, for example, is a winning sequence of plays: win the Spade opening lead and cash the other two Spade winners; Diamond K then Q, Club K then Q then A. After all of this, the ending is similar to the one we saw before, but with one little, absolutely-crucial difference: North has a **two**-card threat in Diamonds, holding A7, and South has the Diamond 6 to provide North with an entry. Now, it's **absolutely crucial** that the squeeze card, the last free winner, be *opposite the 2-card menace*, that is, in South's hand. Therefore, in this ending...:

	--	
	KQ5	
	A7	
	--	
IM-		--
MA-		T2
TE-		T8
RIAL		J
	--	
	AJ4	
	6	
	6	

The proper continuation is to cash the three Heart tricks **ending in South**: for example K, then Q, then small to the A. East follows twice, but this is the situation on the squeeze trick, trick 11:

```

--
5
A7
--
IM-      --
MA-      --
TE-      T8
RIAL     J
--
A
6
6

```

When North plays H5 to South's Ace, East must discard one of the minor guards. If East discards the Club, South ends with Club 6, now established, then Diamond to North's Ace; if East discards a Diamond, South ends with Diamond to North's Ace, to which East follows with their last Diamond, and at trick 13 North's Diamond 7, now establishes, wins the trick. Either way, South makes the grand!⁶

Reducing the count

We started off by mentioning, as "condition #1" for the simple squeeze, the need to have "All but one of the tricks remaining to be played". But, what if we don't? For example, consider Example 2:

```

542
KQ5
A743
KQ5
???      ???
T??      ???
???      ???
???      ???
KQJ
AJ4
KQ6
A642

```

⁶ It doesn't matter whether the squeeze card, here the HA, is **led** or **led to**: all that matters is that said card must be the one winning the squeeze trick (in the vast majority of simple squeezes, including this one).

Now, we're playing **six** notrump, on the lead of H Ten. We can count (eventually, possibly after they've taken their Spade Ace) 2 tricks in Spades and 3 in each other suit -- total, 11. But, there are a total of **thirteen** tricks to be played, not just 12. How do we establish condition #1?

The idea of going, from "All but N of the remaining tricks" (for N greater than 1), to the "All but 1" required by condition #1, is known as "*reducing the count*". In this example, the crucial bit is, quite clearly, to have the opponent take their Ace of Spades.

Do your best to tempt them to take that Ace soon! I suggest: take the (say) Heart lead in dummy, and immediately play a small Spade to the King. If West has the Ace, they may well overtake your King, just in case (from their point of view) you were trying to grab a Spade trick with Kxx in hand (rather than the KQJ you actually have). If the Spade K takes the trick, go back to dummy and try another Spade: the Ace becomes even more likely to show up (East may duck the first time but now fear you started with KQ doubleton; or, West may duck the first time, but now fear you started with KQx...)

If your opponents are good (and brave) enough to duck twice in Spades -- you have a problem! A third round of Spades would run into the obvious risk that either opponent started with Axxx in Spades -- now they'd take their Ace and cash the 13th Spade to beat the contract. It's probably best to give up on the squeeze and just hope either minor is 3-3! (Be sure to compliment your opponents' defense for denying you the chance of a squeeze!-)

Squeeze defense: denying count reduction

In this lecture I won't say much about defense *against* squeezes, but, out of all the ways you can successfully find and execute such a defense, refusing to help declarer in reducing the count is a pretty frequent one. (Of course, especially at masterpoints, there might be a risk of misreading the situation, and conceding an unnecessary overtrick by excessive ducking).

Using diagrams of just the ending

Rather than studying whole deals, there may be added value in focusing just on the situation of the cards at the end of the play, at or very near the squeeze trick; so far, I've presented full deals, described the start of the play, then (for the two ways, a wrong one and a right one, to play Example 1) also shown the "ending diagrams". But at the table it's often fruitful to reason the other way around: start by visualizing the ending situation you want to establish, to confirm the squeeze will indeed work in such an ending; then, "reason backward", deducing how best to start the play in order to reduce the starting situation to that ending. We saw this when we talked about timing earlier.

Similarly, when showing various squeeze positions, like here, it's often helpful to focus on the ending, where the difference between the variants is clearest, skipping over the "start of the play" needed to achieve that ending, which might distract from the ending itself (of course, just as in Example 1, the "start of the play" cannot be skipped over in real life: the difference between a successful squeeze,

where the start has managed to produce the desired ending, and an unsuccessful one, is in how well that “start of the play” is executed!).

Simple squeeze with threats opposite each other

So, e.g., here’s the ending diagram for the canonical position we’ve been discussing so far, where the threats lie opposite each other (two-cards threat opposite the squeeze card, one-card threat with the squeeze card):

```

--
2
A2
--
?
?
?
?
--
A
3
2

```

The squeeze card is the Heart Ace, which is either led at trick 11 (if the lead is in South), or, led **to** at trick 11 (if the lead is in North) -- you can see that it makes no difference in this case.

By assumption, a single opponent holds, as their last 3 cards, two Diamonds (the Diamond guard), and one club (the Club guard). The 1-card menace is South’s Club 2; the 2-card menace is North’s Diamond A2 (with South’s Diamond 3 to provide the entry to it), opposite the squeeze card, as must generally be the case.

When South’s Heart Ace takes trick 11, the single opponent holding both guards must either discard the Club guard (so South’s Club threat is established, and gets cashed at trick 12, with North’s DA taking trick 13), or else discard one of their two Diamonds -- this leaves their other Diamond as a singleton, therefore not a guard any more, since it’s fated to be crushed by the Diamond Ace at trick 12 (then, North’s now-established Diamond 2 takes trick 13). It does not matter whether the squeezed opponent is East or West: the forced discard, no matter which defensive side it comes from, is exactly just as helpful to declarer.⁷

Simple squeeze with threats together

By contrast, let’s see the ending diagram when the threats are in the same hand (which, by necessity, will always be the one opposite the squeeze card). That’s often inevitable: there are many deals in

⁷ From now on, I’ll just use “x” to indicate “a small card”; it could be any card, as long as it has low-enough spots.

which you are fated for an ending where the threats are together. So, here's a typical ending diagram for this kind of squeeze:

```

--
--
Ax
x
--      x
--      KQ
KQ      --
J       --
--
Ax
x
--

```

Here, it **must** be South's turn to lead to trick 11 (if the lead was in North, no squeeze, and in fact only one trick since there would be no way to cash South's Heart Ace).

So, South leads H A, and West must choose a discard *before* dummy does -- a crucial aspect of this kind of squeeze, because what you'll discard from North on the Heart Ace depends on what West discards just before then, in the course of the squeeze trick (trick 11).

If West discards a Diamond, North keeps the Diamond threat, discarding the Club x (which, having done its threatening duty, is now disposable). North then takes T12 with Diamond Ace (as West has to follow with their last Diamond) and T13 with Diamond x (now established, since it's the only Diamond left unplayed). Symmetrically, on C J discard.

The crucial role played in this kind of squeeze by the aspect of *who discards after whom* means the squeeze **doesn't** work if the card of East and West are swapped:

```

--
--
Ax
x
x      --
KQ     --
--     KQ
--     J
--
Ax
x
--

```


Here, when south cashes Heart Ace, West just follows, and the crucial decision must now be made of what to discard from North, *before* knowing what discard will later come from East! In fact, East will discard depending on North's discard, "keeping length parity" with dummy (a good general principle to follow in defense, when you have to choose what to discard with no other indication about what other cards are left where).

If North discards Club x, East does not need Club J any more, and just lets it go; vice versa, if North discards Diamond x, East also discards a Diamond, keeping the Club guard. Either way, declarer only comes to 2 tricks, the Aces: no squeeze has been working to develop the third, extra trick, as it did in the previous ending.

Since this squeeze depends so crucially on the **position** of the guards (i.e., whether they are in West or in East), it's universally known as a **positional squeeze** rather than by the descriptive phrase "with threats together". (It's important to know that not all positional simple squeezes have threats together, as we'll soon see). By contrast, the "bidirectional" simple squeeze made possible by threats being split (as in all full-deal examples we've seen previously, starting with Example 1) is known as an **automatic squeeze** (the "automatism" only acts at the very end, as the squeeze card takes the squeeze trick: it refers to the fact that the hand opposite the squeeze card can discard or follow "automatically", without needing to wait to see what an opponent discards, as opposed to the positional squeeze, where such a wait, and conditional discard decision based on what the opponent chose to discard, are crucial to the mechanism).

Why we must reduce the count

Ending-diagrams can help you see why it's so important to reduce the count. Consider an ending such as:

	x	
	x	
	Ax	
	--	
x		Ax
--		x
Jx		x
J		--
	K	
	A	
	x	
	x	

Here, the count is **not** reduced: declarer has 2 tricks (the Aces) out of 4 still to play -- the first condition ("All but one of the tricks remaining to be played") is therefore not met. When declarer cashes HA, West has what's known as "**an idle card**" -- the Spade x, which plays no role as a guard -- so just discards it, as North, then East follow suit to the Heart. All declarer has coming now is dummy's Diamond Ace -- just 2 tricks in total, the Aces; no squeeze.

It is very different if the count **has** been reduced (i.e., East had taken their Spade Ace earlier) ...:

```

--
  X
  Ax
--
--          X
--          X
Jx          X
J           --
--
  A
  X
  X

```

Here, declarer *does* meet condition 1, having 2 tricks out of the 3 remaining to be played. Thus, when declarer cashes the Heart Ace, West has no idle card -- all of West's cards are **busy**, playing indispensable roles as guards. Therefore, since West has to discard one of their busy cards; that is, West *is* squeezed, and must release one of the guards, as N and E follow suit in Hearts.

Now, either the Club x has become a winner (if West has discarded the Club J), or else West is left with just one card in Diamonds, so play can finish with Diamond Ace (leaving the Diamond x as the sole outstanding Diamond and thus certainly a winner), Diamond x to win Trick 13. (As usual, declarer has to watch out only for the Club J, the guard that applied to the one-card menace).

The split two-card menace

Consider a side suit in which, in the ending, the holding is Ax in dummy, Qx with declarer, with an opponent still having Kx in that suit. Clearly, the Q is a threat, and the A is an entry; however, threat and entry are in **separate** hands. In this case, the squeeze card, here the A of hearts, **must** be together with the Qx, while the third card accompanying the Ax **must** be the 1-card threat, giving a diagram such as:

```

--
--
  Ax
  X
--
--
Kx
J
--
  A
  Qx
--

```

The lead **must** be in South. When South cashes HA, West must either discard CJ, unguarding the Cx (then North discards Dx and takes the last 2 tricks with DA, Cx); or, West must discard Dx: then North discard Cx, takes T12 with HA squashing the now-singleton K, and South takes T13 with DQ.

Since North's discard is *not* automatic, but conditional on what West chooses to unguard, this is a *positional* squeeze--it wouldn't work if East and West were interchanged--despite the fact that, arguably, the threats are split: North's Club x, and South's Heart Q! The problem lies with the nature of the diamond menace, Ax in front of Qx, known as a **two-card split menace**: it's not quite as flexible as a normal long threat, because, if you discard the x accompanying the A, you block the suit.

Sometimes it does happen that a two-card split menace is the best you can arrange. Often, though, you can do better, simplifying the ending.

The Vienna Coup

```

      x
      Ax
      Ax
      --
x
Kx
KQ
--
      AK
      Qx
      x
      --

```

You're in dummy. Say you play S to A (W follows) and SK. Now if W discards a D, dummy discard Hx and takes the last 3 tricks with HA, DA, Dx; if W discards a H, dummy discards Dx then takes DA, HA, and South takes T13 with HQ -- the squeeze has worked, so, all is correct, no?

Not necessarily! The "if/then" reasoning in the play's description makes it clear that this is a positional squeeze; it would not work if you interchange E and W. On SK, dummy would have to discard before E, deciding which red Ace to leave singleton; East discards the same way, keeping parity with dummy, and all the tricks declarer can make are four, AK, A, A -- no fifth trick, since no working squeeze.

No need to accept the limitation of this squeeze to a positional nature! In the diagram just shown, *cash dummy's H Ace first* before playing S to hand. This turns the tricky split 2-card menace in H into a simple, more useful 1-card menace in South; the split 2-card menace is not needed (in fact, it's harmful!) because North's Diamond threat is a natural 2-card menace (with South's small Diamond opposite it for communication), and cashing the Heart Ace reduces the whole position to a typical, "automatic", split-threats squeeze.

That is, after HA and a Spade to hand (showing the guards in East for clarity):

```

--
x
Ax
--
      --
      K
      KQ
      --
A
Q
x
--

```

Now, on South's Spade Ace, North has the "automatic" discard of a Heart, and East is squeezed in the reds.

Cashing the Heart Ace (reducing the threat to a 1-card menace in the appropriate hand) is known as a **Vienna Coup**. It may seem overkill to honor such a simple play by the moniker of "Coup", but it was named in the mid-19th century after an English writer saw it executed **at Whist** "by the greatest player in Vienna" (alas, we have no idea who that worthy may have been!). At Whist, there is no dummy, so that Austrian player managed the maneuver *while looking only at their own cards*--impressive enough to justify the name!-))

You can look at the Vienna Coup as a specific kind of "unblock in advance"; or, as one important application of a rule of thumb we mentioned early on, and I quote: ""ideally, *exactly* one...of the threats has to be accompanied by an entry...as for the other threat, it's usually best to cash all the winners in that threat suit... so it is often known as the "one-card menace". ""

If we don't cash Heart Ace early, **both** threats (Dx and HQ) are "accompanied by an entry", the Ace of that suit (well, one might say the HQ is not "accompanied" by the HA, since they're in opposite hands, but in most respects a split two-card menace, Ax opposite Qx, like the one we start with in Hearts in this example, works a bit like a regular two-card menace, AQ opposite xx -- just, most often, less effectively/flexibly!).

Cashing HA turns HQ into, literally, a one-card menace, thus fully meeting the goal shown in the quote.

Cash unneeded free winners

The idea of cashing all the winners in one of the threat suits⁸ (thus leaving that threat as a one-card menace) is not limited to the Vienna Coup (which, specifically, is useful because it turns what otherwise would be a positional squeeze into an automatic one). It can come in handy more often!

Consider the following inevitably-positional ending:

	x	
	--	
	Ax	
	Ax	
x		x
--		KQ
Kx		Q
Jx		x
	A	
	Ax	
	x	
	x	

Both threats (minor x's) are in North, so only West can be threatened. However, there is no reason to keep both minors as 2-card threats. Before coming to South with Spade Ace to cash the Heart Ace as the squeeze card, be sure to cash **one** of dummy's minor Aces, turning that x into a one-card menace. Why?

Because, that way, you will more easily be able to recall that only one high card is out as the guard against your 1-card menace in that particular suit (DK if you cash DA; CJ if you cash CA); on the Heart Ace, you just need to check if West has discarded that specific guard: if not, just let the 1-card menace go and try cashing A, then x, in the 2-card threat. This simplification of your mnemonic task is not, strictly speaking, needed, as long as you count every suit and remember every meaningful card that's out; however, it cannot hurt either, and it may act as a sort of insurance policy against some mental errors. Simplify, always simplify!

You might not know which suit the defender unguarded

If you don't cash all winners accompanying the 1-card menace, at times you may not know, and will have to guess, which of the threats the squeezed defender's discards have established. Consider, for example⁹:

⁸ Extra winners with the "2-card menace", making it "extended", on the other hand, do not present problems.

⁹ Adapted from an example by H.Kelsey

	AKT	
	AKT	
	--	
	x	
Qxx		Jx
Qxx		Jx
--		--
x		xxx
	xx	
	xx	
	--	
	AKx	

Say that now you cash Club A-K, and West discards a Spade. Against many opponents, you'd be safe assuming they kept guards in each major up to the bitter end, so the Spade discard on the squeeze trick means West just unguarded Spades: dummy can discard Heart T and finish by cashing H A-K, S A-K-T.

However, say that you do **not** know exactly how the majors were originally distributed (and thus, how they are distributed now)... and West is good enough to see the squeeze coming -- they know they'll have to give up one guard eventually, and doing so right on the squeeze trick can be a dead give-away. So, cleverly, they discard a Heart earlier in the play (unguarding Hearts, to be sure, but you don't know that, as you don't have a count of the suit), keeping a fourth, "redundant" Spade. So the ending is actually:

	AKT	
	AKT	
	--	
	x	
Qxxx		J
QJ		xxx
--		--
x		xxx
	xx	
	xx	
	--	
	AKx	

If you cash C AK, West lets go of a Spade (which does **not** unguard Spades!); if you follow the rule of thumb we mentioned previously, and assume that West discarding a Spade on the squeeze trick means Spades are now unguarded, you discard Heart Ten from dummy and cannot take all 7 tricks any more.

To avoid having to guess (and possibly being outfoxed by a clever West), follow the “make one of the threats into a 1-card threat” rule of thumb: cash AK of one major before coming to hand in Clubs. Suppose you cash Spades: you’ll see East discard on the second Spade, so you know for sure that the Q is with West. Just watch to see if West discards the S Q on your C A-K; if so, Spade 10 in dummy is good and you can happily discard H Ten; if West keeps the S Q, discard the still-guarded Spade 10 from dummy, and end by cashing A-K-10 in hearts. If you choose to cash Hearts instead of Spades, in this case you’ll see Q-J fall, and thus know that the Heart 10 is good for the last trick.

If the ending is actually the one we saw previously (West having kept 3-3 in the majors as long as possible), you’ll see two x’s from West in whichever major you choose to cash A-K in (while the J falls in East); you will assume the missing major Q (in the suit you’ve cashed A-K in) is with West (mandatory, since the squeeze is positional), and know what to do depending on whether West discards it, or not, on the Club A-K.

The “inverted automatic” squeeze

Some kinds of long menace (longer than just 2 cards, i.e. “extended”, by an extra winner) can lead to situations in which the squeeze card and the long menace are in the same hand. The common case is a long threat where something like Kx faces Axx (an extra winner opposite the menace card proper, an extra small card for communication together with the menace card proper).

The ending diagram might be, for example:

	Kx	
	--	
	x	
	x	
?		QJT
?		--
?		Q
?		--
	Axx	
	--	
	--	
	A	

South leads CA, North follows -- and East is subjected to an automatic squeeze.

If East discards a Spade, South ends with Spade K, then A, then x (established, since Spade QJ fall on AK).

If East discards the Diamond, South goes to dummy with Spade K, cashes the established Diamond x, and takes T13 with the Spade Ace.

North's Spade K acts as the entry for the one-card threat in Diamonds, if East unguards the latter; if East keeps the Diamond guard they must release a Spade, so Spade K then A will establish South's Spade x.

The Criss-Cross squeeze

A peculiar kind of simple squeeze, not frequent but quite interesting, is when the two threats are in different hands, and each is facing a blocking entry to the other hand. For example:

```

--
Qx
A
x
?
?
?
?
--
A
Qx
A

```

Opponents have both red Kings, and you must assume, as usual in any simple squeeze, that a single opponent is holding them both. When you cash the Club Ace (the squeeze card), everybody's left with just 3 cards, so, if either opponent started with Kx in each red suit, one of the Kings must now be singleton, unprotected. You don't technically know which one (unless the bidding has told you, or you have a complete count on one of the red suits), but against many opponents you can use the usual rule of thumb: it's likely that the squeezed opponent has kept Kx, Kx as long as possible, so *the red suit they discard on the squeeze trick is the one they unguarded* (i.e., the one whose King is now singleton). [Remember, don't be *that* predictable when you are the one defending against a squeeze-savvy declarer!]. Cash the A in the red suit whose K is now (presumably) singleton, go to the other A, and cash the red Q which is now good because the corresponding A has crashed that suit's K.

The trump squeeze

Squeezes occur at both trump and notrump contracts; in the former case, trumps' ruffing power can often be useful in the preparatory phase; but, once in the ending, most simple squeezes are, essentially, of a "notrumpy" nature (the trump suit is often the one where the squeeze card is cashed, since, by nature, it tends to be the longest suit around, the one with the most winners to cash; never be afraid to cash the very last trump you hold when it's needed as the squeeze card!).

One ending that's an exception is a curious variant of the criss-cross squeeze know, appropriately, as the "trump squeeze" (AKA the "ruffing squeeze"). Consider this variant of the criss-cross ending:

X
 Qx
 --
 X
 ?
 ?
 ?
 ?
 --
 A
 Qx
 A

Spades are trumps, dummy's Sx is good, the lead is in South. South cashes CA, N follows. If either opponent started with Kx in each red suit, one of those Kings is now singleton -- just like in a criss-cross, you have to **guess** which one, but assume it's whichever suit the opponent discarded.

If it's the Heart K, cash HA to unblock (and crash the HK), go to dummy with a D ruff, and cash the now-established HQ.

If it's the Diamond K, ruff a Diamond (to crash the DK and establish the Q), come back to hand with HA, cash the now-established DQ.

This is, essentially, a "criss-cross squeeze" of sorts, with North's single trump playing the role that the singleton A of diamonds was playing in the previous ending!

What's peculiar is that the squeeze card, Club Ace, is here the *penultimate* free winner -- dummy's last trump is also a free winner, but you must **not** cash it before the squeeze trick, as it plays a crucial role afterwards as either an entry to North or to ruff out the Diamond King if the latter is left as a singleton!

A choice of squeezes (1)

Sometimes, it's not fully clear **which** squeeze to play for. Consider, e.g.:

A2	
KQ5	
A743	
KQ52	
???	???
???	???
???	???
???	???
Q653	
AJ4	
KQ6	
A64	

6NT, lead S Ten. It's likely that the SK is with East, but anyway there's nothing to gain by hopping up with the Ace at Trick 1, so you duck; East takes SK and returns a small Spade to dummy's Ace. Now, with one more trick in Spades, plus 3 in each other suit, you have 10 of the remaining 11 tricks (so East's Spade K reduced the count for you; however, it was really terribly difficult for East to duck SK!).

Here, you might also use a small Spade in hand as a threat (inevitably the 1-card one, since there are no more small spades opposite to provide communication), alternatively to the 4th card in either minor in dummy, so there does arise the complication of picking which squeeze to play for -- minors, blacks, or "pointed suits" (Spades and Diamonds)?

Each minor offers an extra chance with respect to Spades: the 4th card might be a winner thanks to a 3-3 split, while in Spades the 4th card can only help if it's a squeeze threat. On the other hand, the Spade, as a 1-card threat, would be opposite the 2-card threat in either minor, which is good, as long as the squeeze trick (3rd round of Hearts) is taken in South. If the squeeze is between the minors, both threats are in the same hand, so, if East has both guards, no squeeze: East will just keep parity with dummy, as they can do since they discard *after* dummy.

To give yourself all chances, guess a minor, say e.g. Clubs, and cash A-K-Q there. If 3-3, you're done. If East has the guard, there cannot be a minor-suit squeeze; you have to try for a squeeze between Spades and Diamonds (you can't do Spades and Clubs any more, since both black threats are now reduced to 1-card ones: there's no simple squeeze without a long threat!). So, K then Q of Diamonds, Q of S discarding the last (now, alas, useless) Club from dummy, down to:

```

--
KQ5
A7
-
???      ???
???      ???
???      ???
???      ???
6
AJ4
6
--

```

And now, 3 rounds of Hearts ending (mandatory!) in hand. Just look out for the last Spade: if either opponent has discarded it, your S 6 good--cash i; otherwise, D 6 to the Ace-- hope D 7 is trick 13 (maybe jDiamonds were 3-3 all the time... or maybe the squeeze worked... grand slam anyway!-).

If you count and watch every card, you'll **know**; but it often happens in a potential squeeze that you only have to watch for the guard you know is out against one threat (specifically, the one-card threat) -- if that guard's still out at the end, the last, best hope is that the **other** threat, the tlong one, has been unguarded, so, try for that.

If **West** started with 4 C, you find yourself in an interesting situation; you don't know who's guarding what, except you know West is guarding C. So, much like before, K then Q of D, then 3 H ending in hand, down to:

```

--
--
A7
5
???      ???
???      ???
???      ???
J??      ???
Q6
--
6
--

```

Now, Spade Q: West must keep CJ, thus reducing to just 2 cards between S and D; you finally discard dummy's C 5, which has served its role; and E must also reduce to 2 cards between S and D. One of the opps must have kept a high S; if that's East, both opps are down to singletons in Diamonds, and D to A will make the D7 good for the last trick. Only if West has been able to keep both single-card black guards (so W must have started with 4 cards in each of C and S) and East the two-card guard in Diamonds (so E must have started with 4 cards in D) will the contract fail. You've given yourself every chance to make your contract (and were just unlucky in cashing out A-K-Q in C rather than D: if you'd guessed D, and it **was** a pure guess, the black-suits squeeze against West would have worked at the end!).

A choice of squeezes (2)

	Kx	
	Kxxx	
	Axxx	
	AQJ	
x		QJTxxxx
QJTxx	x	
9x		QTxx
xxxxx	x	
	Axx	
	Axx	
	KJx	
	KTxx	

East opens 3 Spades; South tries 3 Notrump, and North raises to 6 Notrump. Lead, Heart Queen. The contract is clearly pushy, since South counts only 10 ready tricks: 2 Spades, 2 Hearts, 2 Diamonds, 4 Clubs. The only real chance for an 11th one is the Diamond finesse (the alternative of hoping West has Diamond Q singleton or doubleton is clearly even less likely to succeed, because, if East has 4+ diamonds, it's more likely that East has the Queen).

After which, besides hoping for Diamonds to split 3-3, what other chance is there for a 12th trick, besides a squeeze?

Which squeeze to play for? Possible threats are in Spades, Hearts, Diamonds. Clearly East guards Spades, and most likely West guards Hearts, so the choice of squeeze depends on who's likely to guard Diamonds -- given that East holds the Diamond Queen, as is necessary for the finesse to succeed. That "given" does mean the Spade-Diamond squeeze against East stands a better chance than a squeeze in the reds against West!

The Simple Squeeze	1
A caveat	1
A first example	1
Premature consumption of entries (3(2)-3(30))	2
Appropriate timing	3
Reducing the count	5
Squeeze defense: denying count reduction	6
Using diagrams of just the ending	6
Simple squeeze with threats opposite each other	7
Simple squeeze with threats together	8
Why we must reduce the count	10
The split two-card menace	11
The Vienna Coup	12
Cash unneeded free winners	14
You might not know which suit the defender unguarded	14
The “inverted automatic” squeeze	16
The Criss-Cross squeeze	17
The trump squeeze	17
A choice of squeezes (1)	18
A choice of squeezes (2)	21