Here's a bidding problem ...

(answer on the next page)
Margarita correctly passed 2♥. She has four trumps and nice ruffing values, but *no points in my suits*. Yes, responder should strain to raise in this situation, but this would be pushing it. I like to have ten points with 4-card support, or eight points with 5-card support, for a raise. As Eddie Kantar puts it, a raise of opener's second suit promises 4-card support, in *blood*, so there are no hands good enough to raise with 3-card support. The void is a mixed blessing. Opposite at least nine cards in the majors, one of those kings is likely wasted. A raise would have merit if one of those kings were in hearts.

But we can make a game?! Well, yes, but that's just luck: the opponents' hearts are blocked. If hearts are 2-2, a trump lead will sink 4♥. And if one player has ♥AKx, a trump lead sets 3♥.

Mark this auction: when opener bids two suits and plays in the second, consider leading a trump from almost any holding.

Similarly, my hand was not worth a jump shift to 3♥, which would be forcing to game. Just bid 2♥ and hope for another noise from partner. For example, over a 2♠ preference, this would be an easy 3♥ bid at the third chance.

That distinguishes the hand I held from ♠AJT63 ♥QJ94 ♦A4 ♣3, on which I would also rebid 2♥. With that hand, if the opponents start with three rounds of trump, 2♥ would likely fail.

Precision North players, whose opening 1♠ opening bid is limited, might choose a 3♥ rebid, as the hand could not have much more playing strength. South should probably pass that bid for all the same reasons.

- Pete Matthews