

# All's Fair In Love And Canasta

My husband has introduced me to canasta, a card game with as many nuances and cagey subtleties as Hillary Clinton at a press conference.

It has taken me forever to learn the game, but even longer to figure out the nuances, and longer still to craft a few of my own.

This Saturday, I finally figured it out. The planets aligned, lightning flashed within my mental synapses, angels sang, and I played like a pro.

My husband, on a rank of one to 10, ranks as a firm nine-and-a-half canasta player. His grandmother taught him how to play this game when he was five, and they played on her front porch for years. How do I compete with that? I'll tell you how. Long hours of arduous, mind-bending, torturous losses.

However, each loss brought new insights, and I hung in there. Persistence always wins in the end.

"NEVER, NEVER give up!" has always been my rallying cry. I am not sure if this is an inherited trait, a survival technique, or a character defect, but like bulldogs (or sharks), I simply hang on until the victim gives up. When I fail at something, I bolster my attitude with one of my favorite quotes, which is "Success doesn't happen overnight, and it's not



**Kerry Peresta**  
Columnist

just measured by what you do. So many times it's not about how many times you fall down but more about how many times you get back up." Bill Cowher, CBS Sports analyst.

After 1,342 games, my husband began to give me a "look" when I asked to play canasta, as if to say "Why do you want to completely humiliate yourself...again?" and hesitated before answering in the affirmative, hoping that I would somehow regain my sanity and brush aside the request as ridiculous.

My husband likes to wear down his opponents with canasta trash talk: "You'll never pick up that pile." After a hoot of derision, he continues, "You know, the one who picks up the pile, wins. Period. You are going to GIVE me what I need to win. That's right, lay down your discard...THAT'S the card I need!" Then he eyes me with what he hopes comes across as intimidating confi-

dence.

This strategy does not work with me at all. Instead of becoming demoralized, I try harder to win. He has not yet figured this out, because I have developed an excellent canasta face. A canasta face takes more effort than a poker face, due to the built-in futility of the game. The burning desire to mutter death threats and hurl unflattering comments at a canasta opponent is overwhelming.

This past Saturday, as a cunning ploy, I asked him to remind me of the rules of the game, looking as helpless and as feminine as possible. As play progressed, and he droned on and on, my carefully arranged canasta face revealed nothing. Underneath, I was chuckling as I knew all along I

remembered how to play. This was my very own subtle canasta nuance, and I was rather proud of my strategy attempt. Of course he became ultra-complacent, thinking his dopey wife had forgotten how to play.

(Tacky side note: Men are so easy sometimes, aren't they ladies?)

Oh, how sweet to subdue the unsuspecting! I love to quietly kick out the supports propping up the complacent arrogance of one who feels his achievements are unassailable, then tip-toe into a corner and giggle my head off.

At several points in our game, I noticed his face pucker with worry. My husband is very competitive, and does not like to lose at anything. I masterfully blocked his attempts to pick up

the canasta pile again and again. I began to hear faint whisperings of the "Hallelujah Chorus" underscoring each tiny triumph.

Persistence. It always pays off. When I was losing every single canasta game by ridiculous margins, I reached deep into my arsenal of never-give-up homilies and persevered.

On that dreary, rainy March Saturday, our relationship was affected forever. From henceforth, when I ask him to play canasta with me, the "look" will change from head-shaking pity to grudging

respect.

Sometimes the small victories make all the difference.

*Kerry Peresta is a mother of four adult children, a syndicated humor columnist and a career marketing professional. She and her husband live in Ft. Pierre, SD. Visit Kerry at [www.emptynesting.webs.com](http://www.emptynesting.webs.com) for more information.*

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