Theory of Vacant Places

North
♠Q 4
♥7 5 4
♦A J 9 6
♣A K 4 2

South
♠A 2
♥A K 3
♦K 10 8 3
♣J 6 5 3

The bidding:

South	West	North	East
1NT	Pass	3NT	All Pass

Opening Lead: ♠5

After the ♠5 is led you call for the ♠Q from dummy and East covers with the ♠K. What is your plan?

In notrump, you count your sure tricks: 1 spade, 2 hearts, 2 diamonds and 2 clubs. You need 2 more tricks before the opponents clear the spade suit and set you. You have the extra tricks in the diamonds if you can locate the ♦Q. She presents a two-way finesse but if you guess wrong it's all over.

There is a theory called "Vacant Spaces". This theory says the missing queen is more likely to be in the hand that has more room in it to hold it: more vacancies. So first play the ♣A and ♣K. Maybe the ♣Q will drop and you won't need the finesse. On the second club, West shows out. On the basis of this you can infer that West has more vacancies for the ♦Q to reside.   Therefore, take the first spade with the ♠A, cash the ♦K and finesse through West for the ♦Q.

The full hand is:

North
♠Q 4
♥7 5 4
♦A J 9 6
♣A K 4 2

	West		East
	♠J 9 7 5 3		♠K 10 8 6
	♥Q J 2		♥10 9 8 6
	♦Q 7 5 2		♦4
	♣8		♣Q 10 9 7

South
♠A 2
♥A K 3
♦K 10 8 3
♣J 6 5 3

Use the information that develops during the play to make inferences.
It's not full proof but it beats the wild guess.