Dummy
♠J4
♥AK3
♦KJ10
♣AK1094

You
♠AK1082
♥65
♦A53
♣852

You	LHO	Partner	RHO
1S	Dbl	P	2D
P	2S	P	2N
P	3N	P	P
P			

You choose to lead the 6 of hearts. Dummy plays the A, partner plays the 4, and declarer the 2. Dummy plays the A, K, and another club, partner following with the 6, J, and winning the Q of clubs, declarer discarding the 2 of diamonds on the last club.

Partner now leads the 7 of spades and declarer plays the 5. Plan your defense.

Send your answers to me: bilpuzzles@bridgesights.com

The Answer

The secret to this hand is to count declarer's tricks and your tricks, and hope you can set up a fifth trick for your side before declarer takes 9 tricks.

You can count 4 club tricks for declarer. You can also count exactly 3 hearts for declarer; declarer did not bid hearts, so he probably does not have 4; partner followed low on the opening lead, so he probably does not have the Q of hearts. Declarer also has a potential diamond trick. That gives declarer 8 tricks.

For your side, you can count 2 spades, 1 club, and 1 diamond, for a total of 4 tricks. So you are in a race to set up a fifth trick for you before declarer can set up 9 tricks.

If you continue spades, you will set up at least one spade trick for declarer. It is unlikely that partner has 3 spades. There are several reasons for this. First partner led back a high spade, and normally that should show count. Second, declarer bid 2N, so there is a good likelihood that he started with Q9xx, because he would be reluctant to bid 2N with Q9x as a spade stopper. So if you return a spade, declarer can come to 9 tricks.

Therefore, your best hope is to play partner for the Q of diamonds. If declarer has it, he has nine tricks no matter what you do. Play the Ace of diamonds and a diamond, hoping that the Q of diamonds will be your fifth trick when you get in with the 2nd spade.

You may be wondering, if declarer has 4 small diamonds and 4 good spades, why the original response to the double was 1D instead of 1N. The reason is that a 1N response to a double should show some values, at least 8 points or so, and declarer has at most 5 (Q of spades and QJ of hearts). In fact, had declarer responded 1N to the double, it is unlikely you would be beating the hand, as declarer probably holds the Q of diamonds.