

Betting on Death



Why was a mysterious street person known as Harold killed by a speeding sportscar?

Written and developed by

Jack Pachuta
Management Strategies, Inc.
(MSI Internet Sales)
PO Box 191
Cedarburg, WI 53012

262/377-7230
jack@pachuta.com
www.mysteries-on-the-net.com

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How to Organize “Betting on Death”

Thanks for purchasing this unique murder mystery. You and your guests will enjoy the challenge of solving a crime that will test everyone’s powers of deduction. Here is what you should do to coordinate your murder mystery event:

STEP 1: Review the materials in this mystery packet. But ... please do it in a very specific way. Remember - you have ALL of the information, *including the solution to the mystery*. If you decide to participate in the mystery as a role player or as an investigator, you’ll want to keep yourself in the dark about WHO DONE IT.

All page numbers in this packet are in the upper left-hand corner of the pages as you look at them vertically. That way you can run off the material without having the page numbers interfere with the format. The entire packet includes:

- **Instructions on how to organize the event.** They’re on pages 2 through 5. (You’re reading them right now.)
- **Instructions for the person who will facilitate the event.** Information for the person who will take charge of the murder investigation is on page 6. *If only six people are invited to the event, you may want to assign this duty to Preston Ellis.*
- **Role Player Information.** These pages serve as a “cover letter” for the information you’ll send to the *six individuals* who will be in character as the suspects. Run off six copies of pages 7 and 8 back to back. You may want to use better quality stationery for this letter.
- **Role Player Information.** Pages 9 through 20 contain the information you’ll send with the cover letters. Each role is designed as a two-sided three-panel document. Again, run off this information back to back. *Each role player gets only the information that applies to the role that he or she is playing. Your role players should know ONLY what’s in their packet.*
- **The Invitation to the Mystery Event.** The invitation on page 21 will be sent to each guest. It is designed to be run off as a two-fold. Or, if you decide to use heavier stock, the left side of the page can be run off back-to-back with the right side of the page.
- **Police Chief’s Letter.** The letter on page 22 will be given to each guest by the facilitator upon arrival. Run off enough copies so that each person receives one.
- **Clues about the Crime.** You’ll find 24 clues about the mystery on pages 23 through 25. Cut them out. *Since each guest receives a clue, you can invite up to 24 investigators. Should you want to invite more guests, simply double and triple the clues.*
- **Today’s Edition of *The Sin City Sizzle*.** Everyone will receive a copy of *The Sin City Sizzle* on pages 26 and 27. Run the pages off back to back.
- **Investigative Reports #1 and #2.** Run off one copy of the reports on pages 28 and 29 for each investigative team.
- **The Answer Sheet.** Run off one answer sheet on page 30 for each investigative team.
- **The Denouement. *This is the solution to the crime.*** Run off pages 31 through 34. The facilitator will read these pages at the end of the evening.

STEP 2: Plan your event. Pick a date on which to conduct the murder mystery event. *Betting on Death* is designed to be an evening’s entertainment. Remember: our mysteries are for serious sleuths. It will take two to two-and-a-half hours to solve the case using the recommended format. Because of this, a buffet meal is suggested for the mystery evening. If you have a sit-down meal, add the amount of time the meal will take to your planning time.

STEP 3: Select your role players. Review the scenario and the brief descriptions of the suspects on page 7. Select guests who would fit into these roles. Send the role players their information **and** a copy of *The Sin City Sizzle* (pages 26 and 27) approximately 10 to 12 days before the mystery event. The role players should bring the information with them and use it as a reference when they are questioned by the investigators.

If you have only six guests, the role players will also be the investigators. This means you will send the invitations with the roles so that all of the information arrives at the same time.

STEP 4: Invite your guests. Approximately three to four weeks in advance of the event, send invitations to the guests who will not be role players .

STEP 5: Select a person to facilitate the investigation. The facilitator should read the *Instructions* on page 6, and review the information in the packet to keep the event moving so that the investigation is conducted effectively.

Here's what to do on the night of the mystery event.

STEP 6: The facilitator greets the guests. He or she gives each guest who is investigating the crime a *Police Chief Letter with a Clue attached and The Sin City Sizzle*. (You may want to put them in envelopes marked "Official Information from the Chief of Police.")

If you have only six people at the event, and the role players are also investigating the crime, everyone receives a letter. If your event separates the role players from the investigators, then role players DO NOT receive letters. Tell the investigators they can share clues with each other at any time.

STEP 7: The role players speak. The facilitator asks everyone to sit down as the role players give their recollections of what happened and their recollections of Harold. Ensure that it is staged in this way:

- The facilitator reminds everyone that Harold died last night after being hit by a speeding sportscar in front of the Labachio Hotel and Casino. The six people who are gathered here are the prime suspects. They've been asked to give their recollections about what happened last night along with their recollections of Harold.
- The facilitator asks the six role players to speak in the order indicated on page 6 of each role player's information. They stand and read the sections headlined, "Here's what you'll say when you're asked to speak."

STEP 8: The investigation starts. The facilitator (*with only six people*, this will be Preston) briefly reviews what happened, including such facts as:

- Harold was a well-known street person in Las Vegas.
- *The suspects will answer all questions in character, which means they might stretch the truth or even lie. You'll need to carefully analyze what you hear to find out the real story of what happened.*
- MOTIVE, MEANS and OPPORTUNITY must be considered to solve the case.

STEP 9: Form investigative teams. Have the guests who are investigating the murder form three-to-five-person investigative teams. Team members will work together to solve the case.

If only six people are at the event, you may (at your discretion) form two-person teams who will work together to solve the case.

STEP 10: Break for dinner or refreshments. The teams may trade clues to obtain as much information as possible while they are eating, but they cannot question the suspects yet.

If only six people are involved, distribute the remainder of the 24 clues at regular intervals during the meal until all clues have been used.

STEP 11: Continue the investigation. At the end of the meal, tell the teams that it is time to start the investigation again. Each team should find an area to use as an interrogation room.

If only six people are present, everyone stays together and one role player at a time is questioned.

STEP 12: Coordinate the questioning. Have one role player rotate to each interrogation room at six-minute intervals. (This is called a “round.” Each team will question each suspect **once**, therefore you’ll have six “rounds” of questioning.) If you have fewer than six teams, work out a rotation that gives role players breaks between interrogations. The investigators may ask the suspects ANYTHING.

The suspects should use the information provided in the *Role Player Information* to answer the questions. Suspects should *not* withhold any bits of information, and they should not offer information unless the investigators specifically ask for it. Good investigators must ask the right questions to get the correct information.

STEP 13: Distribute copies of Investigative Report #1. After the 2nd suspect is questioned, the facilitator should loudly announce that police have prepared a preliminary report about the identity of the deceased. Distribute a copy of the Investigative Report to each team.

STEP 14: Distribute copies of Investigative Report #2. After the 4th suspect is questioned, the facilitator should loudly announce that police have prepared a report with important facts about the case. Distribute a copy of the Investigative Report to each team.

STEP 15: Conduct open questioning. After all of the suspects have been questions once by each team, place the suspects in different parts of the facility. For a six-minute period, investigators from any team may go to the suspects and ask final questions. *WARNING: Some investigators will try to pull the suspects back to their teams. Don’t permit this.* Several different teams *may* question a suspect at the same time.

With only six people, anyone can ask any other role player anything.

STEP 16: Distribute answer sheets. Give teams 10 to 12 minutes to write out their solutions by answering the questions on the *Answer Sheet*.

STEP 17: Teams give their solutions. The facilitator asks the questions on the Answer Sheet to each team, one at a time. The teams read the answers exactly as they were written on the answer sheet. *NOTE: Often, a team will want to change its mind after hearing the answers from another team. Don't let this happen.*

If you have only six people, each role player (or two-person team of role players) gives an individual solution to the case.

STEP 16: Read “The Denouement.” The facilitator opens the envelope in which the solution was placed. The facilitator reads it aloud to the guests. This will take 6 to 8 minutes.

STEP 17: Award prizes. You may want to award prizes to the investigative team that did the best job of solving the crime. Let your creativity run wild in selecting the prizes.

Special role player information ...

(The facilitator may want to review these with the suspects prior to the start of the mystery.)

- Because this mystery is crafted with intertwining facts, the role players are provided with an abundance of information that may or may not be used during the investigation. Since the suspects will undergo interrogation by the investigative teams, the extensive number of personal facts will enable them to answer most questions that are asked.
- Role players **MUST** read recollections exactly as they are written. **THIS IS IMPORTANT.** It enables the investigation to begin with the correct preliminary data.
- If role players are asked questions not specifically addressed in this information, the role players should answer in character based upon the other facts available to them.
- The only relationships that the suspects know about are those written into the roles. If asked by investigators about relationships that are not mentioned in the roles, the suspects should say, “No, we’re not related.”
- All of the suspects are telling the truth with the exception of the murderer whose recollections and responses will contain lies – this is intentional and part of the murder investigation.
- Since a good investigator must ask good questions, suspects must only offer information that is asked for by the investigators. They should **NOT** offer information that has not been directly requested.

The murderer **DOES NOT** know he or she committed the crime. This means the suspects don’t

Instructions for the person who will facilitate the event

If you are a role player, then you already have a formal part in the investigation. Your role as facilitator means you will have to stay in character while ensuring that the investigation is conducted effectively.

If you are not one of the six role players, you may want to create your own character and come in costume. You could be, for example, Lawrence Law, the police chief who signed the letter on page 22. To facilitate the mystery event, do the following:

1. Review all of the information in this packet so that you are familiar with the mystery. **REMEMBER: If you are attempting to solve the crime, do NOT read “The Denouement” in advance. It contains the solution to the case.**
2. As the guests arrive, hand them a copy of the Police Chief letter, along with a clue and a copy of *The Sin City Sizzle*. Tell them to talk with as many people as they can to acquire information.
3. The suspects have been told to arrive 15 minutes early. When they do, take them aside and review the *Special role player information* on page 5. Answer any questions they may have.
4. Keep the event moving by following the instructions on pages 2 through 5. Make sure all information is given at the right time.
5. **If you are not one of the role players,** after you read “The Denouement,” lead the guilty party away to jail. If you want to, you can use toy handcuffs to make the arrest. If you want to stage the arrest in this way, let the suspects know you will do this.
6. Take a bow for a job well done!

You didn't walk by the Labachio last night. Instead, you walked directly to your apartment in your Elvis costume. A few people walked up and asked you to sing something, so you sang a few bars of some of "The King's" hits.

You didn't wake up until *I am this morning*. You made yourself a peanut butter and banana sandwich, turned on the news and heard that Harold had been hit by a car in front of the Labachio early this morning.

1

Here's what you'll say when you're asked to speak.

I always say don't be cruel to any living thing, even if it's nothin' but a hound dog. I know you all here have suspicious minds, but that's all right, pretty momma, 'cause someone here is a devil in disguise.

You never know who you'll see in the streets here in Vegas. Some people even pretend to be someone else - not that I'd know about that.

Harold was a customer at Fanny's Show Lounge where I perform nightly. He didn't look like much with that long hair and scraggly beard, but he stayed for the entire show.

Mitsy's dance number is right before I end things with "Green, Green Grass of Home."

If you ask around - and I know you will - you'll find out that a lot of people knew about Harold. He'd appear at night and disappear before dawn. Nobody knew what he did the rest of the time.

As for me, I'll always let you know when I'm around. My fans have been following me for years - ever since I was a star at the Labachio. It wasn't all that long ago. Do your job, and somebody here will soon make be making the jailhouse rock. So, via Las Vegas.

Thank you. Thank you very much. And, Preston has left the stage.

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MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES, Inc.

PO Box 191 • Cedarburg, WI 53012-0191

262/377-7230 • jack@pachuta.com

www.mysteries-on-the-net.com

Betting on Death Your Role: Preston Ellis

You, **Preston Ellis**, are an Elvis impersonator. You've been mimicking "The King" since you were 25 years old. Now, you are nearing 50, and still going strong - at least in your opinion. You love to make women swoon and scream and reach for the scarves that you toss at them. You realize that your audiences are "maturing" and aren't able to scream and shout as loudly as they once did.

You were born in Memphis. (No, not that Memphis - the one in Indiana.) Your parents, Elmer and Elsie, were dairy farmers. In high school, you were a poor student, but starred in the class musicals. After graduation, you made your way to Las Vegas where you tried your hand at becoming famous. You didn't have enough talent to make it as Preston, so you became Elvis.

You've been married twice and have no kids. Both of the marriages lasted less than a month. When your brides realized that you weren't really Elvis, they obtained quickie divorces and fleeced your few assets. You still think that every woman wants to be romantically involved with you.

At the peak of your popularity, **15 years ago**, you were a headliner at the Labachio Hotel and Casino.

The featured dancer in the elaborate revue was **Mitsy Monroe**. Her image graced many billboards and signs on the tops of taxis before age overcame her ability to high kick. Both of you lost your starring roles when the Labachio was purchased by a **secret billionaire investor**.

Now, you ply your trade at some of the lesser-known venues in Vegas, primarily at **Fanny's Show Lounge**, owned by Fanny French, a place whose clientele is mostly lowlifes and losers. It located about a mile from the Strip. **Fanny has owned her lounge for 20 years**. She used to be a croopier at The Sphynx Hotel and Casino. For some reason, she was fired, but had enough money saved to purchase the lounge.

You began performing at Fanny's **10 years ago**, but the pay cut you took meant that you had to lineup additional part-time "gigs" to make ends meet. That's why you spend a lot of your time at Reverend Wayne's Wedding Chapel, performing "I Can't Help Falling in Love with You" as the Rev ties the knot for couples.

You still do your signature split at the end of the song, but sometimes you get stuck on the floor until someone helps you get up.

That's why you are a frequent visitor to Pawn Palace, the pawn shop around the corner from Fanny's owned by **Jess Pawnit**. Jess always seems to have an abundance of Elvis gear that other impersonators have sold to him as their careers waned. Luckily, his Elvis paraphernalia comes in all sizes, including extra large.

You've been buying merchandise at Jess's shop since you started working for Fanny, and **have heard rumors that Fanny and Jess used to be "an item," but neither one of them talks about it.**

Pawn Palace is the largest pawn shop in Las Vegas with all sorts on merchandise for sale. Jess even buys and pawns cars and trucks. You are amazed at some of the vehicles that people willingly bring in just to get money for gambling.

Jess frequently lends cars to Fanny, especially expensive sportscars. Fanny parks them in back of the lounge. **You're surprised at how many times she forgetfully leaves the keys in the cars.**

Due to the state of your finances, you don't own a car yourself. You prefer to walk anyway. Often, you wear your Elvis gear when you walk to and from Fanny's. The women love it - or so you say. **You still haven't gotten over being fired by the Labachio and regularly take a detour to walk by the hotel and casino on the way home.**

About a year ago, to your surprise, Mitsy came into the lounge and persuaded Fanny to give her a job choreographing a few dance numbers for the

lounge's troupe of four dancers. Mitsy always features herself in one of the numbers, receiving a smattering of applause from fans who remember her from her glory days at the Labachio.

Lately, you and Mitsy have had a few drinks together after the shows end, reminiscing and soothing each other's egos. She told you she had left Las Vegas and lived in Atlantic City before coming back to the city.

About the same time that Mitsy was hired, a disheveled street person with long hair and a scraggly beard who called himself **Harold** began patronizing Fanny's. He didn't appear to have much money, but he was always able to buy enough drinks to keep Fanny from throwing him back out into the street.

You'd seen Harold before. He had long hair, a scraggly beard, and a reputation for wandering the streets and talking gibberish to people. **Nobody knew where he lived.** He'd be in the streets at night and disappear before dawn. Mitsy had a strange reaction to Harold. **She looked at him as if she knew who he was.** When you asked her about this, she said you were mistaken.

Preston Ellis

Two weeks ago, a poker legend, **"Wild Bill" Billions** came into Fanny's. You were backstage peeking through the curtain when he walked in. **You'd never met him, but you knew who he was from the picture on the cover of his best-selling book on poker, "Bet Billions."**

He's a loud, flamboyant person who wears a big cowboy hat and alligator-skin boots. Wild Bill is a Texas Hold 'Em champion. He flashed a wad of bills and tipped generously when his drink arrived. Recently, a streak of bad luck has affected his poker-playing performance. After signing autographs, he sat down to watch the show.

A few minutes later, Harold walked in. Sitting at a table in the back of the lounge, he ordered a beer and sipped it while watching the show. Mitsy also watched what was happening.

Mitsy's featured dance number immediately precedes your stage entrance to the strains of "Hound Dog." Your performance lasts about 45 minutes (that's about as long as you can last these days).

By the time you closed the show that night with a maudlin version of "Green, Green Grass of Home," Harold was gone — and so was Wild Bill. You noticed you'd, once again, ripped your jumpsuit.

Darn, you'd have to make a trip to Jess's. **You feel he over-charges you, but he's the best supplier of second-hand Elvis apparel in Vegas.** That was the only time you ever saw Wild Bill at Fanny's.

Two days ago, as you were negotiating with Jess for a new jumpsuit, you noticed that he has several autographed copies of "Bet Billions" in his showcase. The price had been slashed and they were selling for \$5 apiece — down from \$500. When you asked him about this, he grunted, "Supply and demand. You wouldn't believe what else I got from him."

You purchased a new white jumpsuit that you barely fit into. On the way out of Pawn Palace, you noticed a limo parked across the street with a **"Lisa's Limos"** sign on it. The windows were tinted a dark color, so you couldn't tell if anyone was inside.

You used to ride in limos when you were a star, but you haven't ridden in one for many years. You know that Lisa's Limos, owned by **Lisa Ride**, is one of the city's premier limousine companies. She frequently drives the limos herself, delivering celebrities to special occasions.

Last night, Harold was in the audience at Fanny's again, sitting in the back of the lounge and sipping a beer. It was the first time he'd been at Fanny's since the night that Wild Bill had also been there.

When you finished your show *about one o'clock in the morning*, Harold was gone. You thought about asking Mitsy to have a nightcap with you, but she'd left the building.

You left via the back door and noticed that the **expensive silver sportscar (you think it was a Lamborghini) that had been parked behind Fanny's for the past few days, was gone.**

Preston Ellis

**You'll have a good time.
I'll lay odds on it!**

Place:

Date:

Time:

RSVP:



Be sure to meet and talk with:

- Preston Ellis**, Elvis impersonator
- Mitsy Monroe**, show girl
- "Wild Bill" Billions**, poker champion
- Debra Down**, blackjack dealer
- Jess Pawnit**, pawn shop owner
- Lisa Ride**, limo company owner

**Help us investigate
the death of**

Harold

... a street person who was
run down by a sportscar in front of
the Labachio Hotel and Casino.



**Las Vegas
Murder
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Party**

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The Sin City Sizzle



Reporting everything under the sun and moon

Speeding sportscar ends life of mysterious street person

High-speed hit and run shakes the night air in front of the Labachio

A Las Vegas street person who simply called himself “Harold,” was struck and killed by a sportscar around 1:30 this morning. A shocked crowd in front of the Labachio Hotel and Casino watched in horror.

“The car came out of nowhere,” said Etta Towner, a visitor from North Dakota, “Everything was a blur. I think it was gray or silver and the driver had on a large cowboy hat, but I’m not sure.”

Another witness, Hugo Gamble of Homer Nebraska, reported that “It almost looked like the car was aiming at the man. I’d swear that it sped up the closer it got to him.”

Harold was thrown about 100 feet, landing at the Labachio’s entrance. The doorman on duty, Opie N. Klose, called 911 to report what happened. “I only got a glimpse of the car,” recalled Klose, “but I know I’ve seen it before.”

The city has an abundance of street people. Some are visitors who run into a streak of “bad luck” while others have become familiar faces to Las Vegans. Harold appeared on the scene about two years ago. He had long hair, a scraggly beard and a rough, disheveled appearance.

An employee of the Labachio whose nametag read, “DEBRA, blackjack dealer,” watched as Harold’s body was loaded into an ambulance. “I’ve seen him on the street around here a lot,” she said.

“He could be irritating, but he was



A street person known as Harold was killed in front of the Labachio last night.

harmless,” stated Jess Pawnit, owner of Pawn Palace. “He’d come in and look at what we’d taken in that day. He spent most of his time at the jewelry cases. When I’d tell him he had to buy something or leave, he’d turn around, pull some bills out of his

pocket and make a purchase.”

Harold reportedly also made regular visits to Fanny’s Show Lounge, located about a mile from the Labachio in a rough part of town.

“Yes, he used to come in to watch

Continued on back page.

Casino plans major expansion

One of Las Vegas’s largest hotels and casinos yesterday announced plans for a huge expansion. The Labachio, a fixture on the Strip, will double its size in the next two years.

“We’re in the process of acquiring all of the real estate that we need to get the job done,” reported General Manager I. Justin Takorders. “Plans for the new Labachio have been on the drawing boards for several years, but my boss likes to keep things quiet. That’s why we didn’t make the announcement until now.”

Although Takorders didn’t specify

which property is being targeted for acquisition, the area in the Labachio’s immediate vicinity includes several low-priced motels, pawn shops, second-rate night spots, and souvenir shops selling gambling equipment and western gear.

“Most of the land should be a snap to buy,” continued Takorders. “Of course, there will always be a few people who hold out.

“Unless something happens to the boss, you’ll see a new Labachio in the future. The boss always gets what he wants.”