

Acting Can Be Murder... at the Library!

The victim: Jessica Heart Pruitt, actress
Found: In the nonfiction stacks of the
Hays Public Library
Approx. time of death: 5:30 pm, Oct. 18 2004
Potential witnesses: Kelley, Erin, Ashley, Paula, Stephanie, Intissar

Your job tonight is to discover who killed Jessica Heart Pruitt, a famous actress who came to Hays in order to shoot her newest thriller movie, *In the Stacks*. You may interview staff members who were witnesses to this horrible deed, and also review the official statements taken by the Ellis County Police who responded to the scene. The Coroner, who inspects deaths, decided that there was foul play involved because of the blow Jessica suffered to her head. There were many members of the library staff involved in the shooting of the movie and some of them were very invested in the project. Were any of them involved enough to kill? You have a chance to investigate before the FBI arrives at 8:30 pm to clear the crime scene! Remember, ask all the

witnesses if they have “more” to tell you... they’re suspects in a crime investigation and may not want to share their information directly!

Official Statements

STATEMENT BY THE CORONER.

The body of one Jessica Heart Pruitt was discovered by Erin, an employee of the library, at 5:45 pm on Oct. 18 2004. The body exhibited signs of foul play—blunt trauma to the head was determined to be the cause of death, although the victim’s hands and forearms were discovered to have small cuts and contusions as well. The victim bled freely from the head wound before expiring at approximately 5:30 pm, Oct. 18 2004.

STATEMENT BY KELLEY.

“It’s strange that Jessica Heart Pruitt died in a library while she was shooting a horror movie *about* a library! Since the Hollywood folks came to town, we’ve been really busy. They sure know how to make a stir! Lots of us at the library hoped to be extras—that’s how a lot of people get regular acting jobs, did you know? Well, I was on my way downstairs after my dinner break to shelve books when I heard the scream. Erin ran out of the stacks, her face all white, and pointed. I looked down into the nonfiction, and there she was. All that famous blonde hair covered in blood, just laying so still. When I ran upstairs to tell someone, there was Paula—which was odd, she usually works in the basement in the evenings. She asked me if I’d seen Erin, that she needed to call in a favor. That’s not unusual, Erin’s always owing Paula something. But when I tried to tell her what had happened, Paula just yelled at me! She’s so angry all the time lately, muttering stuff like ‘this is my last chance,’ and ‘I’m not going to let it happen again.’”

STATEMENT BY ERIN.

“I’ll never forget it. We were all so excited to have Jessica Heart Pruitt, the famous actress in town. You know, Hays hasn’t been in the Hollywood spotlight for years... ever since they shot that movie *Paper Moon*. I thought this was our chance to shine—but now it’s all ruined! I helped her when she wandered upstairs, looking for some help. She wanted to know where the horror books were, so she could really get into her role as the heroine Annie the Supernatural Expert. When I sent her down to the basement, I had no idea I was sending her to her death! (crying) I went down to check on her. It was too late, just too late...”

STATEMENT BY PAULA.

“I couldn’t believe it! The great horror writer Sherbet Queen was in town shooting his latest movie *In the Stacks*, and I was going to see if he would finally read my screenplay. Maybe all my mail never got to him. But I could never get near enough to try: that stupid actress Heart Somebody-or-Other was always in his face, waving her cute little hands around, like she was saying “look at me, look at me!” I guess it’s just too late now. They’re all packing up after Erin found Miss Cutie-Heart facedown in a pool of her own blood. Man, I’m still hungry. I didn’t get a chance to eat dinner what with all the racket the coroner and police made. What? Oh, no, it didn’t turn my stomach. I’ve written lots of gory murders and this was just great material for my latest and greatest screenplay. I mean, I’m sorry she’s dead and all, but what can we do now? I hear the Hollywood people aren’t leaving until the morning, and Burger King is Mr. Queen’s favorite restaurant. Maybe I’ll head there in a few.”

STATEMENT BY INTISSAR.

“Well, Erin may have gotten to help Jessica Heart Pruitt but I was stuck upstairs with Stephanie. She’s been going on and on lately about how she just *knows* she’s going to get that little speaking part she auditioned for. If I know one thing, it’s that this movie makes more work for us. I’m always shelving books while she practices her one line over and over! Supposedly Ashley got hired to consult Sherbet Queen

himself on library work, and he told her that Stephanie was a shoo-in as a double for Jessica Heart Pruitt—and was just as talented! Well, Stephanie just went overboard when she heard that if you ask me. You're the police and you can't even get her to talk to you—she's been standing in front of the tabloid photographers all evening, getting her face in the papers. Well, I saw her coming up the back stairs right before Kelley came up to tell us Jessica was dead... and if you ask me, she'd better start rehearsing her innocent look. Go see for yourself—her hands looked pretty red to me!"

Team Members: _____

HOW TO SOLVE THIS CRIME.

Go from floor to floor, and interview the witnesses. Ask them more about the events they describe in their statements to the police, about what they saw versus what the coroner described in her statement, and inspect the crime scene closely. Ask the witnesses if they have any further clues—you might get a secret hint from them! Keep track of clues on this sheet so you don't forget what you discover. **YOU ONLY HAVE AN HOUR, SO GO!**

Witness: Kelley

What they said:

Witness: Erin

What they said:

Witness: Paula

What they said:

Witness: Ashley

What they said:

Witness: Intissar

What they said:

Witness: Stephanie

What they said:

READY TO SOLVE THE CRIME?

Who killed Jessica Heart Pruitt? Tell us what you think happened:

Remember to ONLY give out your call# clue to those teams that ask you if you have “more” to tell them!

Don't volunteer any more information than you have to—remember that you're a suspect!!!

KELLEY:

Mention that Paula was breathing heavily when you came upstairs to tell someone that you found Jessica Heart Pruitt. She usually works downstairs but for some reason she was upstairs that night. She had been going upstairs to talk with Stephanie a lot lately, anyway, so maybe there was just nothing to it. Send the sleuths to **VHS 0407** (*The Unbreakable Alibi* from Agatha Christie's Partners in Crime series), and tell them that it was something Erin had put on hold...

ERIN:

You have been very suspicious lately, especially about Stephanie. She has really been angling to be a star in the movie *In the Stacks*, and it's getting in the way of her work. All she used to talk about was Jessica Heart Pruitt! But lately, she's been interested in animals. Melanie rescued a falcon from a nearby field and Stephanie volunteered to feed it and care for it... it trusts her a lot... but you think you're on to something. You've been listening to the people at the library and you think you've uncovered a—look around, is anyone listening? Send them to the vertical file on **PAPER MOON** and tell them that it's very revealing...

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PAULA:

Tell them that you and Erin are such good friends... she'd do ANYTHING for you. Despite people talking about you and Stephanie hanging out all the time, you actually talk to

Erin more than anybody. Deny that you and Stephanie have been talking. You are intent on talking to Sherbet Queen, the writer, no matter what it takes, and that's your main focus. That Jessica Heart Pruitt is a nosy buttinski, and if you could just get one minute of his time... send determined sleuths to **808.3 WRITING** (Writing Mystery and Crime Fiction) and tell them that you've got one goal in life: to write the perfect murder.

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ASHLEY:

Talk about how Sherbet Queen is the coolest writer/director ever! But Paula has been really mad and jealous that he picked YOU to help him do his research. She seemed to cool off when you explained to her that you never really get to talk to him alone, you mainly just drop off books to his trailer when he's working on the set. You hardly pay attention to what's going on at the library lately with all Queen's work, but you did happen to notice Stephanie slipping down the back elevator with Melanie's falcon earlier this evening! ... send determined sleuths to **MYSTERY MCGOWN** looking for a book with a movie in the title, and tell them that Sherbet Queen was really eager to read it.

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INTISSAR:

Stephanie is just a starstruck attention hog since the Jessica Heart Pruitt crew came to town. You're tired of doing her work and listening to her insane muttering. She's been obsessing over how horror movies, and even asked you once whether you thought it was believable when someone was distracted right before they were killed. You think she's stupid! Also, she's been whispering with Paula lately. Seems strange and out of the ordinary. Send determined sleuths to **J 598.9 MILLER** (Birds of Prey) and tell them it's for Stephanie, AGAIN.

STEPHANIE:

Act a little nervous, but keep asking them if they want to take your picture. After all, you're going to be a star—you mean, you have a little part in Sherbet Queen's newest movie. Generally act like a ham being interviewed by Barbara Walters. Strike dramatic poses while you talk. You showed Jennifer Heart Pruitt (she lets you call her JHP, isn't that COOL?) Melanie's falcon because she is SUCH an animal lover. It has very sharp claws and you have to be careful when you let it perch on your arm. But you never went downstairs, Paula can vouch for you. You showed JHP the falcon *before* she went downstairs to look for a book. You don't have a clue for them... if they ask you more questions, just play dumb and nervous.

You've Found a
Clue!

Good job. Please don't move this item, but be sure you examine it and write the information in your notes. This may be the hint you use to crack the case!

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