

♠ ♣ ♦ ♥ LAS VEGAS! ♥ ♦ ♣ ♠

By Hot and Trazom

(From the Spring 1994 Equinox Party, Berkeley, CA)

Las Vegas is a uniquely American metropolis, a bizarre amalgamation of natural beauty and urban glitz where both the gritty energy and the dark underside of human nature come to the fore. From the surrounding desert to the mountainous pastel vistas, from the noisy, bustling casinos to the Honeymoon Chapel, tourists may be inspired by nature or feel visually assaulted by the oppressive banks of neon signs.

In preparation for the Sequinox party, the two of us decided it would be appropriate to make a logological pilgrimage to Las Vegas. Our mission: to discover how the city got its name. Hot thought it was named for a star; Trazom thought it was named for a car. The Las Vegas Chamber of Commerce tried to sell us a dubious tale about its being Spanish for “fertile plains or valleys.” But we were convinced that the truth was far more complex and interesting than that.

By making a few discreet inquiries on our arrival, we managed to locate a shady character who seemed to have all the answers. “Meet me tomorrow at the craps table, around twelvish,” he whispered, climbing into a lime-green Maserati, “and I’ll tell you what you want to know.”

The next morning we slept late, and then lazed around the pool for several hours—it just seemed like too much trouble to get going. By the time we reached the casino, it was late in the afternoon and our informant had vanished. All he had left behind was a sheet of notes on which he had begun a numerical analysis of the craps game. We decided to take that as our starting point.

♥ CRAPS ♥

We wandered around the casino for an hour or so, pondering the patent, grotesque unfairness of a world that allowed people like our informant to drive fancy sports cars, live in exciting, vibrant cities, and know all about everything, while we lived out our pedestrian days in ignorance and drudgery. What did he have that we didn't, after all, except for a few lucky breaks? After a while, though, this train of thought started inducing tunnel vision, so we returned to the craps table.

To refresh your memory, the rules of craps are as follows. On the first roll of any given game (the "coming out" roll), a roll of 7 or 11 wins, while a roll of 2, 3 or 12 loses. Any other roll (4, 5, 6, 8, 9, or 10) becomes the player's "point," and the player then rolls repeatedly until he or she wins by rolling the point number a second time, or loses by rolling a 7. After the coming out roll, in other words, only the point or 7 can affect the outcome of the game.

To keep it safe from prying eyes, our informant had encoded his analysis in the form of puzzle equations—for example, 7 = W. of the A. W. (Wonders of the Ancient World). All the answers correspond to rolls of the dice (that is, they range from 2 to 12) drawn consecutively from a series of craps games. What emerged as we began to unravel his notes was that the significant rolls were those that caused a player to win or lose; we deduced this from the fact that the first letters in those equations spelled out a word.

		[Enumerations]
_____	= W. on a B. (I. the T. W.)	[6, 7, 9, 8, 6]
_____	= T. D. (and a P. in a P. T.)	[6, 5, 9, 4, 4]
_____	= C. of the S. (R.O.Y.G.B.I.V.)	[6, 8]
_____	= C. in the O. T. (B. of E.)	[12, 3, 9, 4, 6]
_____	= J. on the U. S. S. C.	[8, 6, 6, 7, 5]
_____	= A. of <u>A</u> . <u>the P.</u> 's <u>M</u> .	[7, 3, 9, 3]
_____	= S. by L. v. B.	[10, 6, 3, 9]
_____	= V. in the A. (and S. Y)	[6, 8, 9]
_____	= A. to the C. in the B. of R.	[10, 12, 4, 6]
_____	= V. (plus a V. and a C.) in a S. Q.	[7, 5, 5, 6, 7]
_____	= E. of W.'s N. I. D. (U.)	[8, 7, 3, 13, 10, 10]
_____	= P. on a T. in the N. B. A.	[7, 4, 8, 10, 11]
_____	= S. to E. Q.	[5, 5, 8]
_____	= P. R. of the D. in a G. of C.	[8, 5, 4, 4, 5]
_____	= R. S. on the U. S. F.	[3, 7, 6, 6, 4]
_____	= N. in J. R. R. T.'s <u>L</u> . <u>of the R</u> .	[6, 1, 1, 1, 7, 4, 5]

♠ SLOT MACHINE ♠

After losing a fortune in the slot machines, we decided to see how they are built. Since there was a slot machine in our bathroom, we thought we would be able to take it apart, carry out our research, and put it back together without anyone noticing. This was a word slot machine, so we were doubly interested. To win on this machine you have to get two overlapping phrases (as in TENNIS ELBOW GREASE, yielding TENNIS ELBOW and ELBOW GREASE). Strangely, the wheels could be aligned so that all ten winning triples were lined up correctly.

Unfortunately, when someone knocked at the door we panicked and threw everything back into the bathroom. It was room service. (Hotel visitors often succumb to the temptation of having an extra meal delivered after dinner, and we're no exception. We also ordered several desserts.) After the waiter left, we put the slot machine back together, but the words in the middle wheel had been erased because we spilled aftershave lotion on them.

The words are given below in the order in which they appear on the wheels, but the wheels have been spun. Help us find the words that belong on the middle wheel by lining up the outer wheels correctly and deducing the missing links. Amazingly, a sequence of initial letters from the middle wheel forms a word!

<u>Left wheel</u>	<u>Middle wheel</u>	<u>Right wheel</u>
Egg	_____	Arrest
Lincoln	_____	Bowl
Vest	_____	Cycle
Isolation	_____	Sale
Social	_____	Puff
Animal	_____	Off
Agent	_____	Money
Still	_____	Top
Scotland	_____	Bridge

SOMEONE THAT I USED TO LOVE

When I wake up each morning trying to find myself
And if I'm ever the least unsure I always remind myself
Though you're someone in this world that I'll always choose to love
From now on you're only someone that I used to love

As for me, it's getting down to the last unspoken part
When you must begin to ease the pain of a broken heart
Tell me why should I even care if I have to lose your love
From now on you're only someone that I used to love

I wish it was enough for you, all the love I had to give
And I did my best to keep you satisfied
I guess you'll never know how much I tried, I really tried

And if ever our paths should cross again
Well, you won't find me being the one to get lost again
Once I had so much to give, but you just refused my love
From now on you're only someone that I used to love

SPORTS BOOK

One of the major activities in Las Vegas involves making book—or, in common parlance, taking bets—on sporting events. Not only did that aspect of city life seem important for our research, but it was clear to us that this was an opportunity to make a sizable pile of money. In fact, we could almost feel the wads of greenbacks bulging out of our wallets as we descended the stairs to the dark cellar room where these shadowy dealings take place; even if we returned no wiser than before, we would be rich men, which was at least as important.

Most of the attention centered on a strange football tournament that had just concluded, although the results had not been posted (see the attached sheet). It was obvious to us that there was something fishy about this “tournament,” and it was equally obvious that in order to reach our goal we would need to learn which of the 16 teams had emerged victorious. But no matter how tenaciously we inquired, no one there would tell us the tournament’s outcome. All we could glean were the following disjointed facts:

1. No two teams whose names begin with the same letter survived into the second round.
2. The final game of the tournament was won by the team with the shorter name.
3. The Dolphins (who never played the Saints) were eliminated exactly one round before the Chiefs were.
4. The Vikings played more games than the Eagles did, but fewer than the Jets did. The Jets did not make it into the final round.

Eagles

Lions

Vikings

Indians

Steelers

Bears

Packers

Chiefs

Jets

Seahawks

Bills

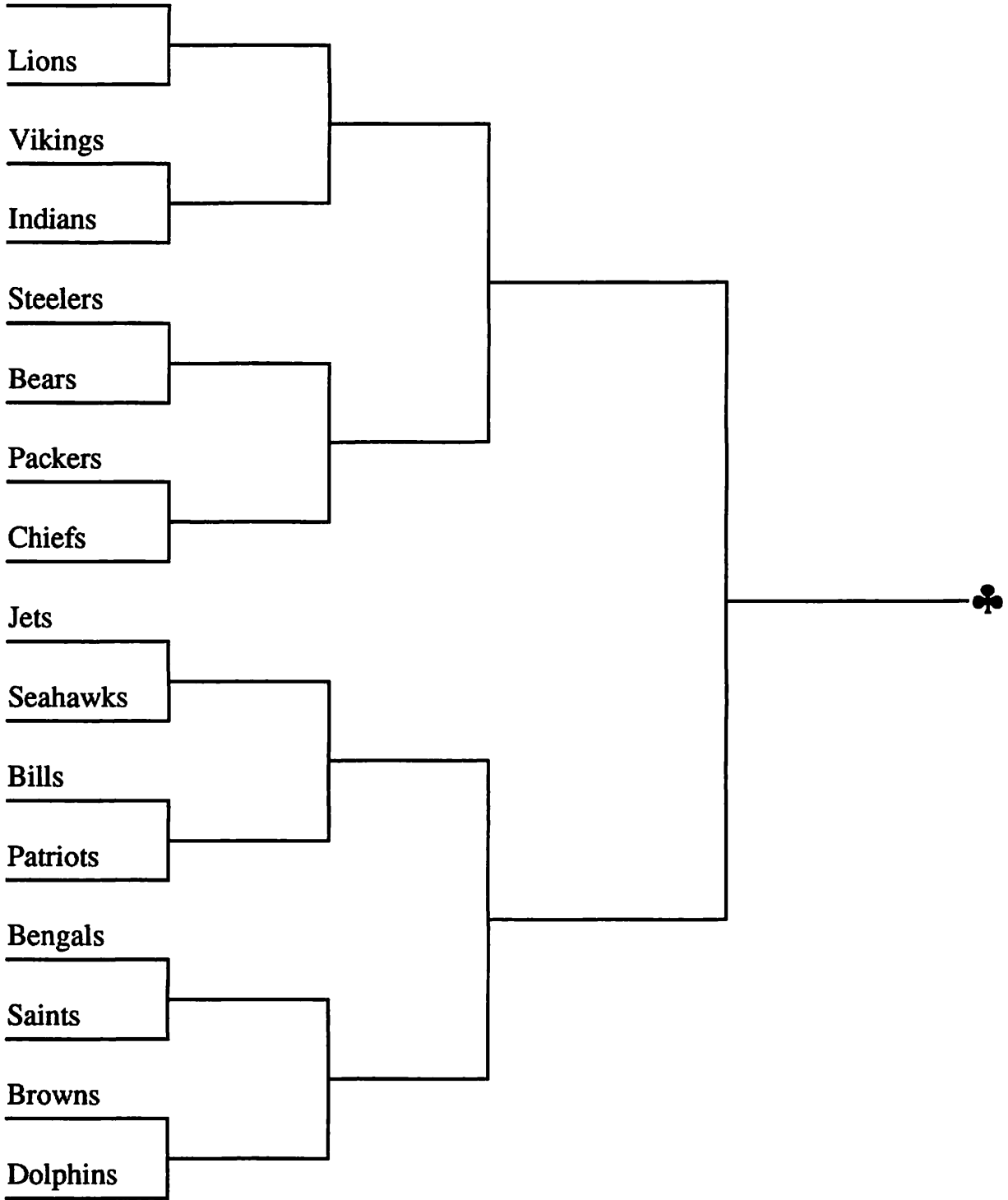
Patriots

Bengals

Saints

Browns

Dolphins



ROULETTE

2 26 11 11 24 0 12 13 20 3 9 10 23 00 26 9 19 0 22 12 7 5 10 8
12 0 17 10 0 17 2 12 0 20 8 11 17 12 12 9 17 2 0 18 12 8 3 00
26 9 9 20 26 7 0 22 10 14 19 0 1 26 8 12 18 0 11 26 14 17 24 00
4 12 16 12 15 12 7 00 21 3 18 2 9 20 00 26 9 19 00 25 26 17 0 6
3 9 1 00 26 14 12 0 9 10 17 0 17 2 12 0 26 9 18 22 12 14 18 0
17 10 0 17 2 3 18 0 11 20 16 16 7 12 00 9 20 17 17 24 00 5 7 20
15 18 00 26 9 19 00 3 21 24 00 2 12 26 14 17 18 00 26 14 12 00

When investigating roulette, we noticed an interesting phenomenon: While a few people won some money, most people seemed to lose. We suspected the outcomes were not random. This really infuriated us. We were seething. We could barely restrain ourselves from throttling the croupier.

The numbers above are our records of the results of many consecutive spins of the wheel. The idea of widespread casino cheating haunts us, but so far we have been unable to prove anything. Is this just a random sequence of numbers, or is there some meaning to it?

HINT:

We examined the numbers for an hour and came up with the following: 26 9 0 2 10 20 14

◆ VIVA LAS VEGAS! ◆

Suddenly, a strangely familiar figure—rotund and sluggish and clad in a glittery white jumpsuit, but indefinably charismatic nonetheless—ducked behind a blackjack table.

“Did you see what I just thought I saw?” said Hot.

“I believe so,” said Trazom. “Unless we’re both seeing things, I’d say that that was—”

“I know,” said Hot. “Maybe this is meaningful.”

Perhaps neither of us would have mentioned it, except for the fact that we had both been experiencing similar parallel visions ever since we arrived. In fact, the more we talked it over, the more it became clear to us that it was essential to our research for us to determine *exactly how many times* we had spotted this well-known, possibly spectral apparition.

EUREKA!

We see it now. We are unbelievably brilliant. We are quite impressed with our own talent. What could be simpler? LAS VEGAS is an acronym! All you have to do is rearrange the letters of the words you found while solving the previous puzzles, add them to the initial letters below, and you will know how Las Vegas got its name!

L _____ ♦

A _____ ♥

S _____ ♠

V _____ ♠

E _____ ♥

G _____ ♣

A _____ ♦

S _____ ♣

(Of course, we might have figured this out from our own behavior; if you look over the record of our visit you'll see what we mean.)