

# Happy Birthday R.J.

It is 1984 and the height of the oil boom. Harrington Oil is the most successful oil company in the state of Texas. The Harringtons are old money, having originally made their money from cattle ranching. Jack Harrington is a well respected pillar of the community.

1980's Texas is all about money and oil. It doesn't just matter who you are, but how much you are worth. The women are all beautiful with big hair, big smiles and big shoulder pads. Everything is larger than life. The older man is in vogue, they're the ones with the money. The women around here may sometimes be loose but they are definitely not free.

Tonight is a lavish birthday party for R.J. Harrington held at his parents' ranch – SouthSpoon. Family and friends are gathered to wish R.J. well on his 30<sup>th</sup> birthday and coming of age. As he turns 30, R.J. comes into the inheritance left to him by his grandfather Eli Harrington.

All those invited to the party are given a character. As they arrive they are welcomed by the housekeeper or butler of the ranch. Each character has goals and objectives that they must complete before the end of the party. Everyone has their own goals – and not all the goals are compatible. If one person achieves their goals, another may fail!

The guests have various items, such as revolvers and money. They also have various abilities to help them achieve their goals.

The guests can form alliances, blackmail each other, steal items and money and maybe even try to kill one another. Along the way they may uncover some of the Harrington family secrets. What is contained in Eli Harrington's will? Why are Sue Helen and Billy Joe barely speaking to each other? Why does Dixie alternate between looking ecstatic and miserable? And what is Lucille up to? Join us to find out more in *Happy Birthday R.J.*

**Join us at SouthSpoon...**

## Welcome to *Happy Birthday R.J.*

Thank you for taking the time to download this document. Most of the information you need to hold *Happy Birthday R.J.* is contained within another set of files, for which you will have to pay. Before you do that, please check that your software is compatible by printing this section out.

### What is included when you buy *Happy Birthday R.J.*?

- Character sheets for each guest, including background, goals and objectives, special abilities, items and money.
- A rule sheet for your guests.
- A step-by-step guide on how to run the game.
- Handouts and other essential items.

### How does *Happy Birthday R.J.* work?

*Happy Birthday R.J.* has been written for 11 to 15 guests – plus the host or co-ordinator. The step-by-step guide explains which characters to omit should you have fewer than 15 guests (you do need at least 11, however). Here's how that works:

Number of guests	Male characters	Female characters	Characters that can be played by either sex
11	5	4	2
12	5	4	3
13	5	5	3
14	6	5	3
15	6	6	3

*Happy Birthday R.J.* runs over the course of three or four hours and is particularly suited to a buffet meal. One person is the Host, and acts as organiser and co-ordinator, responsible for making sure everything runs smoothly and that all the guests have the information they need. They also act as referee should an impartial decision be required.

The guests are all present at a party for R.J. Harrington's 30<sup>th</sup> birthday. They all have their own goals and agendas and how they choose to achieve those goals is entirely up to them. *Happy Birthday R.J.* is an evening of double-dealing, intrigue, secrets and even murder! As the evening draws to a close, family secrets will be out in the open and a mystery will have been solved. Then everyone has a chance to find out exactly what went on.

### Who has taken part in *Happy Birthday R.J.* before?

*Happy Birthday R.J.* has been run on numerous occasions, usually with people with no previous knowledge of murder-mystery parties or events. It contains everything you need to run the game, but please don't think that you can download the game and let it run itself. The co-ordinator will obviously have to put some work in to make it a real success.

# An Introduction to *Happy Birthday R.J.*

Forget who, when and where you are – and join in one of the most glamorous parties in Texas for an evening of double-dealing, intrigue, secrecy and even murder!

In *Happy Birthday R.J.* you and the other guests will take on the roles of some of the richest people in Texas. You might be an oil tycoon, an expert horsewoman or a city lawyer. You will be provided with background details for your character explaining who they are and why they are at the party. You will also be given information on other players and goals for you to achieve.

## **How do I play?**

Playing *Happy Birthday R.J.* is a little like starring in your own movie – although how your movie ends depends on you and the other guests. There is no predetermined script – how you decide to tackle your goals is entirely up to you.

The most important skill in *Happy Birthday R.J.* is the ability to hold a conversation. You will need to talk to the other players to find out who they are and whether they will help or oppose you with your goals. Some of the characters you may know a little about already, but some will be unknown to you.

Information is the key to achieving your objectives in *Happy Birthday R.J.* so you should aim to talk to everyone. Of course, you may need to reveal information known only to you in order to get information from another player, of course.

You will also have a number of abilities that give you an advantage against other characters in certain situations. The other players also have abilities that they may use against you!

## **Rules and the Host**

*Happy Birthday R.J.* has a few simple rules, but the host (playing the housekeeper or butler at the Harrington ranch) usually oversees these. The host is neutral and is there to ensure that *Happy Birthday R.J.* runs smoothly and that everyone has a good time. If you have any questions about *Happy Birthday R.J.* you should first consult the host.

## **And Finally...**

**Have fun!**

## Playing *Happy Birthday R.J.*

If you've not played a Freeform Games murder mystery game before, you might not be familiar with how they are played. Our games are different from other murder mysteries – so you might want to review these guidelines first.

*Happy Birthday R.J.* is completely interactive. You decide who to talk to and when. You also decide what you will tell them, and whether you tell them the truth or not. Of course, that goes for everyone else in the game as well...

In *Happy Birthday R.J.* you will pretend to be someone else (your character) in a fictional setting (Southspoon Ranch, Texas). You will meet and interact with other characters and everyone will be trying to achieve their own goals. We don't provide a script – it's all up to you.

Here are several tips to help you enjoy *Happy Birthday R.J.*:

**Three basic attributes:** Playing *Happy Birthday R.J.* requires just three basic skills - a sense of fun, an ability to strike up a conversation with another person, and the willingness to pretend to be someone else for an evening. If you can do that, you should have no trouble!

**Dress the part:** You will receive information, including costume tips, about your character beforehand. A good costume can help you get into the spirit of the game, and also means that you will be in lots of photographs.

**Read your character sheet:** Your character sheet explains who you are, who you know and what your objectives are. However, your character sheet describes what your character *believes*, but that might not necessarily be true! Keep your character sheet handy as you may need to refer to it during the evening.

**Your Goals:** Your goals describe the objectives that your character is trying to achieve during *Happy Birthday R.J.* You should attempt every goal – although it is unlikely you will achieve them all.

**Read your character sheet again:** This time, think about your goals. You should also take note of other characters - you will probably need to speak to them sooner rather than later.

**Introduce yourself:** Once *Happy Birthday R.J.* starts, you will need to talk to people whilst pretending to be your character. The easiest way is to introduce yourself to someone as your character. If you don't know anything about them you can ask who they are and why they are here. If you do know something already (you may have information on your character sheet, or someone else has already told you something about them) then you can ask them about that.

**Tips for beginners:** We provide tips for people who haven't played our games before. These give you a couple of ideas of things you should do at the start of the game. The tips are optional, but they may help you get started.

**Find your friends and enemies:** In *Happy Birthday R.J.* there are those who will help you, and those who will oppose you. It's important to find both – although to get your friends to help you, you may have to help them in return.

**Ability cards:** You will have special ability cards that you can use to help achieve your goals. The cards are self-explanatory and generally have a limited number of uses. You may need to think carefully about who you want to play them on.

**The Host:** Ideally, you shouldn't need the Host to achieve your goals – most can be achieved by talking and negotiating with the other characters. You should consult the Host if you have a question about the rules, but you certainly shouldn't ask for help in solving your goals as they are up to you!

**Act the part:** Don't start talking about football or movies or anything else that isn't part of *Happy Birthday R.J.* It's more fun if everyone tries to maintain the illusion that you're all at Southspoon Ranch in Texas.

**Read your character sheet yet again:** If you find yourself at a loose end, find a quiet place and re-read your character sheet. You may find that there's someone you haven't spoken to yet, or something you need to do.

**The Murder:** Solving the murder is a matter of talking to people and picking up the clues.

**Finally:** Remember that the most important thing to remember is to have a good time!

# *Happy Birthday R.J.*

You are warmly invited to *Happy Birthday R.J.*, an evening of deceit, treachery, plotting and murder to be held at

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## **Setting**

It is 1984 and the height of the oil boom. Harrington Oil is the most successful oil company in the state of Texas. The Harringtons are old money, having originally made their money from cattle ranching. Jack Harrington is a well respected pillar of the community.

1980's Texas is all about money and oil. It doesn't just matter who you are, but how much you are worth. The women are all beautiful with big hair, big smiles and big shoulder pads. Everything is larger than life. The older man is in vogue, they're the ones with the money. The women around here may sometimes be loose but they are definitely not free.

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## **Your Character**

Your character, the person you will be playing is indicated below along with enough brief details for you to dress for the part. You will receive more background information, your character's detailed goals, simple rules and a heap of cool abilities and items on the day.

**Your Character** .....

## Guest List

**R.J. Harrington** the birthday boy himself, a slick southern boy with a cheeky look in his eye.

**Dixie Green** R.J.'s lovely girlfriend, a pretty little southern belle.

**Jack Harrington** R.J.'s dad, suave and sophisticated oil tycoon and old cattle ranching money.

**Crystal Harrington** Jack's wife and R.J.'s step-mom, glamorous and gorgeous with the best shoulder pads in town.

**Bobby Harrington** R.J.'s half brother, a sweet and caring southern boy. Recently returned from university and started in Harrington Oil.

**Lucille Harrington** R.J.'s half sister, beautiful, buxom but petite little Lucille, butter wouldn't melt!

**Ali Fields** Crystal's sibling, a city lawyer.

**Billy Joe Butler** Jack's best friend and neighbour.

**Sue Helen Butler** Billy Joe's wife and expert horse woman.

**Sam Bond** another good family friend.

**Rick Harper** an old friend from school and one of R.J.'s most handsome friends.

**Deedee Taylor** sweet Deedee is Dixie's best friend.

**Dolly Douglas** a school friend of Lucille's.

**Drew Morrison** Drew used to be a doctor in Houston and has recently moved to town.

**Randy Coltrane** a friend of Bobby's and the Perm Creek Deputy Sheriff.

## Costuming

These are suggestions only – you should wear whatever you find comfortable. However, photographs usually come out better if you are wearing a costume!

Everyone attending the party are from wealthy households, so the men would be wearing suits and the women would be wearing their best dresses. However, you may decide that as a small affair for family and friends then blue jeans and cowboy hats are a better idea.

Where possible, the women would be wearing large shoulder pads and the fashion in the 80's was for BIG hair. Gentlemen can of course wear their hats to the party but would never wear them inside the house.

# Perm Creek Town Newsletter

## July 1984

### Let the good times roll!

R.J. Harrington comes of age this month with the advent of his 30<sup>th</sup> birthday.

R.J. and his brother Bobby are two of the most eligible men around town. I'm sure it won't be long before we hear wedding bells at South Spoon Ranch. Dixie Green has been a long term attachment for R.J. Maybe the two will finally tie the knot??

#### Another Oil Strike

Another big oil strike for Harrington Oil, the second one this year, has just been announced.

The new field will be managed by Bobby Harrington. Bobby recently joined the family business after completing a degree in finance in Houston. Good luck Bobby in your new role.

#### "The Ranch Rustler" strikes again!

Another horse has been stolen, this time from neighbouring Dog-Leg Creek. Be extra vigilant until this criminal is caught.

#### Lucille Wins Another Trophy

Lucille Harrington has added yet another trophy to her collection for her outstanding horsemanship.

She won the barrel race at the Perm Creek Rodeo last month. Congratulations Lucille. Congratulations also go to Sue Ellen Butler for winning the bucking bronco prize at the same rodeo.

#### New Addition for the Butlers

A new mare "Tinsel Toes", a top thoroughbred has just been acquired by the Butlers at Butler Ranch.

A four year old mare out of "Blazing Blue" and "Diamond Dazzle". We can expect great things from Tinsel Toes at next year's Perm Creek Rodeo I'm sure. With such a good lineage she can't fail.

#### New Doctor at Bob Cat Road Surgery

The new doctor has finally arrived at Bob Cat Road Surgery, Dr Drew Morrison.

Dr Morrison is originally from Houston and replaces the recently retired Dr Clark, who was a general practitioner in this town for over thirty years.

#### Crystal Harrington to open Town Fair

Crystal Harrington has again gracefully agreed to open this year's Perm Creek fair next month.

The town would like to thank Mrs Harrington for agreeing to attend this event and for her generous donation which allows this fete to take place each year.

I'd also like to take this opportunity to remind everyone that all entries for the fete produce competitions have to be made by the end of this month to Mrs A Busybody at Box K Ranch.

This year's fair is to be held the first Saturday in August. Hope to see y'all there.

#### Other news

The Beaver Road Gym has just gained a new fitness instructor, Rick Harper. Rick has asked that anyone who feels they need a fitness assessment, to contact him at the gym.

The local children's charity would like to thank Miss Dixie Green for her recent fund raising work. The local kindergarten now has enough money in their "roof fund" to make the building repairs that were required.

**THANK YOU for getting this far. Now please buy the game!**

*Happy Birthday R.J.* is available from anywhere in the world for £20.00 (UK pounds). As soon as we receive notice of your payment, we will notify you of the passwords and location of the main pdf files, which will enable you to download the game.

**To buy online with a credit or debit card:**

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- You buy a licence to run our game - you may run it as many times as you like.
- You are not permitted to re-sell them on (the license only covers use - not resale)
- You are not permitted to use our games for commercial use. (If you wish to, please get in touch with us.)
- The game is copyright Freeform Games LLP.
- Our contract is governed by English law.

**Our Guarantee:** No product is perfect for everyone. We know that and you know that – and that's why we offer a cast-iron, no quibble guarantee. If you're not completely satisfied with *Happy Birthday R.J.* within 30 days, let us know and we will refund you.

**Disclaimer:** The game comes "as is". We are unable to enter into any conversations regarding the best way to make it work. Any disputes arising from the sale of *Happy Birthday R.J.* are subject to the laws of England and Wales, regardless of the location of the customer. This game is for adults and more mature teenagers. Plot lines are not suitable for younger children. Common sense is required to play this game.

We sell **games** - they're meant to be fun. Our games sometimes include rules allowing characters to stab, poison or shoot each other. We provide safe rules covering such acts and do not suggest or condone the use of real implements when the games are played. You are responsible for running the game - if you, or any of your players, choose not to use the rules we provide, you have sole responsibility for the consequences that may follow.