

A Birthday Surprise

A Live Action
Murder Mystery
Roleplaying Drama
set in October 1987.



Based on Murder One, originally produced by Kenneth Brown and Gordon Olmstead-Dean.

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A Player's Introduction

Introduction to the Host:

A Birthday Surprise is the complete text of a murder mystery which was written by Gordon Dean, and first produced by Kenneth Brown and Gordon Dean in 1986. The final version was produced the following year.

This introduction is intended to be a short technical introduction to the work, which will give you all the information you need to know to successfully entertain a group of your friends (or enemies) for an entire evening.

In general, it will help if you already know something about Live Action

Roleplaying (LARP) or Interactive Drama, which is what a live play without a script of this sort is. But don't despair if you haven't ever heard either of those terms. *Birthday Surprise* is a fairly simple event, and everything you need to know is supplied below.

I. General

In this text you will be referred to as the "host" of this Interactive event, even though you may be putting it on at a location owned by someone else. This term was picked deliberately to avoid the use of the LARP term "gamemaster" which implies something altogether different.

You will probably be assuming the character of Grant Cochran, and his brother Thomas, after Grant's mid-evening demise. You may also choose some other role, and leave the role of Grant to someone you trust. More about this later, under *Casting*. Grant Cochran is too pervasive a figure to render versions in two genders, so Grant is written as a male. Aside from being an ex-lover of Margot Matthews nothing *major* predicates that Grant be played by a male, however you may also want to consider playing Margot Matthews, who is equally important as a host.

What you will need:

Photocopying: You may elect to hand out the character sheets included with the game copy, or you may choose to copy them and keep the originals. Express permission is given by the author to copy any material included, so long as you do not violate the amateur provision in the licensing agreement. You will be making a copy of the Introduction, Rule Book, and Last

Words for every player. That is 8 pages per player, which should cost \$0.66 per player, or a total of just under \$10.00 inclusive. In addition, you may want to run a few copies of the Item and Location Cards. Even if you use high priced "chain" photocopy services, your entire production cost for the game should not exceed \$15.00.

Venues: (pronounced to rhyme, not surprisingly, with "zoos") are, in Interactive Literature parlance, "Where events are run." Your venue will probably be a private house, though you could run the game in a condominium party room, or some other location. The larger and more diverse the space, the more interesting the game will prove.

Properties: these are dealt with more extensively later on. For now, let it suffice that you do not *have* to purchase any properties for the game, though there are a few that can be useful.

Dinner: the murder is structured for a dinner, but in reality, it could be run at an afternoon barbecue, or as a party, with light refreshments, as your budget dictates. We have found that a charge of \$10.00 per guest allowed for ample purchase of food and properties.

II. Setup

Invitation: *Birthday Surprise* is limited to fifteen players, though you may be able to expand it just a bit, if you really need to. For this reason, you should carefully consider who you are going to invite, beforehand. You may wish to send out formal invitations, or you may want to advertise your event in some other way. Formal invitations were not included in this kit, because they may vary so wildly depending on whether or not you are holding a dinner, and whether or not you are charging money. A sample invitation may be suitable to your needs, if you "white out" any irrelevant information. Most greeting card stores sell small boxes of invitations quite inexpensively, and these can be hand written in any manner you desire. Be sure to include the following:

1. Date
2. Time
3. Place
4. Whether or not there will be Dinner
5. Exactly who is invited (IE: Mr. and Mrs.)
6. Whether or not you would allow "guests" as

observers (this is not recommended, but may be necessary under some circumstances.)

7. RSVP Address and Phone for directions
8. Any contribution required
9. Anything your guest is expected to bring
10. Attire expected

How Many Guests: *Birthday Surprise* can accommodate up to fifteen guests, including yourself, but that doesn't mean you will want to actually invite that many. Eleven, including yourself, is a nearly ideal number. The mix below is reflective of the usual break up of sexes attending, and is biased to roughly 2/3 males. In several runs of the game, this has not yet been a problem, but you may substitute Linda Kane for Matthew Allen Carter and Leda Deerden for Avery Carson if you need an even count of guys and gals. In addition, both Jeffrey Saxon and Oliver Stewart could be played as Jehanna Saxon and Olivia Stewart. In addition, they could be put together as a male-female couple. There is some intimation in the existing game that Stewart and Saxon are gay lovers, but it is not written anywhere, and should be suggested only if the players are very comfortable with the idea.

Very Important

Grant/Thomas Cochran

Gary Morant

Margot Matthews

Mike Ballistis

Craig Webber

Emily Breezewood

Margot Matthews

Important

Avery Carson

Toni Randall-Smith

Mort Nicholson

Matthew Allen Carter

Secondary

Leda Deerden

Linda Kane

Dr. Roger Pierce

Tertiary

Jonathan Drake

Sarah Lamont

Jeffrey Saxon

Oliver Stewart

Dinner: it is not in the scope of this guide to provide you with complete details on how to hold a dinner party. Many *excellent* books are available on the subject from many sources including the library. We do *not* recommend taking this occasion to prepare a very complicated meal, unless you will have plenty of help. It is *perfectly* possible for almost any of the characters to help prepare food on the pretext that they were requested to by Ms. Matthews (who is throwing the party for Grant.)

Cost: you may or may not want to charge for the event, or solicit donations. You should decide this in advance, and specify

Casting: is a theatre term which means, in simplest terms, "to cast players into roles." In other words, this refers to which character you give to which person. once you have confirmed your guest's attendance, you may wish to mail them a copy of the rules and their character in advance. You should *not* mail your only copy of the characters, as someone *will* forget it, and leave a gaping hole in the event. If you are putting on the mystery with a regular group of friends, you may wish to get together the week before in order to pass out character sheets.

Casting any Interactive event is very important. I have cast quite a few events, and there are always mistakes. A player that seems "perfectly cast" miscarries, while a character who was a desperation casting performs flawlessly.

There are three rules that you should follow if you want to have a game that is successful for everyone. This is one of the only points in this guide where I will tell you that you *absolutely* should do something, or in this case, refrain from doing something.

Uncle Gordon's absolute advice on casting:

1. Don't cast based on friendship. Tell all of your friends that you will try and cast them in the best role possible. Most of the roles in *Birthday Surprise* are potential "starring roles." Some require more force of personality than others. If you go out of your way to cast your friends "just right" making special provisions, leaking them information, or God forbid, LETTING THEM READ THE CHARACTERS AND PICK!, you will have a game that they will enjoy...

...And everyone else will hate you for it, will feel they are second class, will play accordingly, and your game

will go badly. There are easier, and less expensive ways to make enemies.

2. Don't cast to screw someone over. *Birthday Surprise* is a small game. It should not be too hard to screen applicants you don't feel like playing with. But the time eventually comes when you are left with someone in the game that you had rather not run it for. When this happens, the worst thing to do is to go out and antagonize them. A brilliant casting mistake is to take a character who is in a weak position, and thus requires superior playing (Matthew Allen Carter, Gary Morant) and give them to a weak player you don't like, insuring that they will fail.

They will whine, snivel, waste your time during the game, and afterwards. If you feel a player is no good, cast them as one of the neutrals, which have the option to become involved, but will not damage the game if they don't. If you don't like a player for personal reasons, don't antagonize them. Try and keep clear, and deal with them as little as possible, while giving them little to complain about.

A subclause of this is: "don't typecast." Don't try to cast someone as the character you think they are most like. The idea here is "roleplaying." If you cast someone as a snivelling wimp, and they are a snivelling wimp, you will get a non-performance. If you cast an excellent and indomitable actor, who is not ashamed of showing weakness, as a snivelling wimp, you may get a character who truly impacts the other characters and the game. In the original run of *Birthday Surprise*, the very "weak" character of Gary Morant was excellently portrayed by a very strong actor who was not afraid to break down and show fear and weakness.

3. Don't cast to play matchmaker. Sometimes people get together at events, and end up going out. It isn't the job of a good host to force it. Think of it as a scale limitation. Playing matchmaker is manipulating reality. So is running an Interactive Event. Don't bite off more than you can chew. A soured job of this can really screw a game up *but good*.

How Do I Cast? The characters in this game are uniformly unpleasant people. They suit every requirement for a group of murderers - by and large they are venal, self interested, and amoral. The people this game is about are a real social strata. They arrived too late to benefit from the moral lessons of the 1960's but not to

miss out on the sex and drugs. They moved into college in the mid seventies, with a disdain for everything, and saw the faltering of the Carter presidency in time to be the people who put Ronald Reagan into power. Like many of his followers, these young men and women did not believe in him, but a dichotomy between their practices and their preaching is of little consequence.

We examine them almost ten years later, in 1987, when the sins of the past are buried beneath a facade of morality and decency. They know each other's secrets and are comfortable with the hypocrisy, but not with the exposure. They turn on each other, seeking to eliminate ties to the past that constitute threats.

They are at the core of the YUPPIE movement, without conscience or imagination, and they flock to the one person that knows them all, and is not a part of them. They are a generation that gave us crew cut movie stars whose moral lesson was that winning is right. Whoever they finally reveal as the murderer, as Hercule Poirot discovered aboard the Orient Express....they all did it.

Everyone has different ideas on how to cast an Interactive event. I would suggest that you use common sense and acting ability as a guideline, and rule out most personal observations, with the exception of performances in other dramatic events. Below are some hints about what type of traits each character has. Remember, you are not necessarily trying to match real-life traits to roleplaying traits, but to find a player who can play the traits as written.

Mike Ballistas: a wealthy international consultant with impressive offices downtown. Ballistas has numerous prominent government contacts, and is generally known to be an influential businessman. He donated heavily to the Reagan Campaign. ***Ballistas is a self assured and suave arms smuggler, who may well take a hard fall at the end of the game. This character should go to someone who can handle not "winning" in the end, and who has the guts to start a gunfight if necessary, but not to anyone who might be trigger-happy.***

Emily Breezewood: a college friend of Grant Cochran, and a prep-school friend of Margot Matthews, Emily is the daughter of Senator Breezewood of Connecticut, a very powerful senior U.S. Legislator. Emily was married to Matthew Allen Carter, and divorced him, in a particularly messy case during which Mr. Carter was repre-

sented by Gary Morant. They are reported to be on barely civil speaking terms now. Emily is living with Mike Ballistis. **Emily Breezewood is important to a number of plots, but does not require a great deal of acting ability. The character is somewhat tormented, and the victim of two men, though she also has a great deal of information that she could use against them. She should be played either as very manipulative or very naive.**

Avery Carson: attended George Washington University and has many acquaintances from that period, and immediately afterward. Avery met most of Grant's circle of friends in the seventies while they were working in Washington after graduation. Mr. Carson occupied a position in the staff of the late Darrington Ripley, U.S. Ambassador to Sweden. Currently employed by the State Department, Avery Carson is rumored to actually work for the Company, or No-such-agency. **Avery is a skeezy smuggler, but has a certain suave character. He could be played very clean-cut, or more in the style of "Uncle Duke" in American Samoa.**

Matthew Allen Carter: A well known mystic, Carter is associated with decadence, drugs, and bizarre mysticism. It is unclear where his money comes from, though he is known to be at least moderately wealthy, and eccentric. M.A Carter provides spiritual consultation to some of Washington's most prominent social figures. He has appeared on several area talk shows, notably *Panorama* in July 1979 where he was involved in an altercation, and declined to appear on *Good Morning America* in August of 1982 on the topic "Senators who follow the Horoscopes." He has assisted Federal authorities as a consultant on "Cult Related Cases", and appeared before a Senate Subcommittee Special Hearing in 1983 to discuss "Cult Phenomena and Crime." **If the person who plays Carter is not spooky, this character will come off as a meaningless crackpot.**

Grant Cochran: Grant Cochran is a horror writer whose early work brought him wealth and recognition. His first acclaimed work was a collection of short stories in 1977 entitled *Look Ma, No Hands!* Grant achieved a more limited success with *The Sickness in John Harrol*, 1977; *The Collection*, 1979; but his mainstream horror novels *Dark Symbols*, 1980; and *Trinity*, 1982; were extremely successful. His Lovecraftian fantasy-horror *The Sightless King*, 1984 was universally panned. Grant also wrote the screenplay for the 1981 film *The Blinding*. Numerous short stories including *The Metallic Taste*

of Blood **Omni**, Feb 1982.

Grant's work has tended more towards the occult and fantasy side than Stephen King, and his success has been less marked, but his early novels were commercially successful. Born 1955 to a wealthy Virginia family, Grant graduated from George Washington University in DC in 1975, aged twenty. Writer and playboy, known to have inherited some money from parent's death in 1974. He is widely rumored to have been hospitalized recently for rehabilitation. **Grant should be played by either the host, or someone you trust utterly. Grant has no character information per se, as he is a reflection of the views that others have of him. You should establish what Grant knows by thoroughly reading the other characters. Grant, and later Thomas can be used to drop "hints" during the evening if the participants are stalled. Grant is obnoxious, and torments his friends, but not to the point of lunacy.**

Thomas Cochran: Grant's failure of a brother. Thomas dropped out of school, and was deeply involved in drugs. He narrowly avoided jail on larceny charges. He lost his share of the family wealth, and is currently employed by his brother as a handyman. **Thomas is a second character for whoever plays Grant, and an important source of information for the players, as well as a significant red herring.**

Leda Deerden: A New York author, or visual artist, guest of Grant's Publisher. Ms. Deerden is known for her terra cotta figures, which are widely sold in gift shops in the Village, and her work at the 42nd Street Gallery, but is a newcomer to the writing field. Her first project is projected to be a collaboration with Grant Cochran. **Leda is an "all color" character. Because she is involved in nothing underhanded, it is entirely possible she could solve one or more of the mysteries involved. She should be played by someone who is capable of very good character acting, and not afraid to be flamboyant and annoying. This character can be cut without damaging the plot, but generally, she is too much fun not to cast.**

Jonathan Drake: Publisher of Grant Cochran, Drake is Editor of Horror at Electra publishing, a division of Robert W. Thormond and Sons, Inc., one of the nations largest publishing houses. Despite the failure of Cochran's latest novel, Drake is reported to be success-

ful and on the rise. He handles many other writers including Anthony Blaine, and is also in charge of titles under the smaller, but profitable Medea imprint, for occult paperbacks, which includes the works of Jeffrey Saxon. ***Drake is a highly secondary character, whose presence is peripheral, and can be cut. He is probably the least vital character. Because he knows little or nothing of the others present, he could be held in reserve as a “back up” character for someone who is killed unexpectedly during the game.***

Linda Kane: Parapsychological researcher for the Institute for Parapsychological Studies, 1567 23rd St. NW. Graduate of Columbia Prep, and Mary Washington College. M.A. Barnard. Kane is a literary agent for Matthew Allen Carter and is rumored to be his lover.

Linda Kane is a fairly stodgy character who knows a lot of information, but probably doesn't realize how important it is.

Sarah Lamont: Sarah Lamont is an old Prep-school and College friend of Margot Matthews, Linda Kane, Emily Breezewood and others. Sarah went to work for Gary Morant as a paralegal, and is now his chief secretary.

The least important female character, Sarah SHOULD be held as a second character for someone who is killed off early.

Margot Matthews: Margot was a friend of Grant Cochran, and several other attendees in college, but went on to become a prominent Washington socialite who rose out of the ranks of minor political followers due to her connections with the late U.S. ambassador to Sweden Mr. Darrington Ripley. Margot is giving this party in honor of Grant Cochran's birthday.

Margot is currently employed by the Department of State, where she is rumored to be the mistress of a powerful political appointee. She was mentioned in *People* magazine shortly after the inaugural ball, and her fortunes have definitely been on the rise with the Reagan government. ***Margot is the co-host. She is a prima donna, and openly manipulative, but she must also be able to put on an appearance of being friendly. Dale Carnegie's "How to Win Friends and Influence People" is probably Margot's most important reference work. Margot should have good manners.***

Gary Morant: Washington Attorney. Graduated from

George Washington University in 1974, GW Law in 1978. Formed Morant and Steele with Harlan Steel in 1980. Known for handling some of the messiest and most prominent divorce and lawsuit cases in the Washington social spectrum. Morant is a rising star in the social constellation of Washington, and is Grant Cochran's attorney, and is currently representing him in all of his sordid legal affairs. ***Gary must be played well, because he is the murderer. Gary should be a confederate who has the host's confidence, because the murder will need lots of cooperation and planning to go off as scheduled. In addition, much of the responsibility for a good ending relies on Gary giving himself away, and you cannot impress this too heavily on the player.***

Mort Nicholson: a well known private detective. Nicholson has worked for Gary Morant, and was a research reference for the character of Detective George Panopolous in Grant Cochran's *Trinity*. ***Mort is a colorful, interesting character, who should not be terribly hard to play. Make sure the person you choose has a very rudimentary understanding of the distinction between police and private investigators, and has heard of citizen's arrest.***

Roger Pierce: a Professor/practitioner of Psychology at George Washington University. Young but promising, for several years his 400 level course on Personality Disorders has been considered the “most fun” class in the entire psych department. Many of Dr. Pierce's associates consider him to be “that strung out quack”, Dr. Pierce considers himself a “perceptually enhanced alternative practitioner.” It is obvious that Dr. Pierce either has something on the University, or has tenure. “Psychological disorders can be not only instructive, but entertaining as well...” (*American Psychiatric Yearbook*, 1980). ***Roger is a lot of fun, but should be easy to play for someone who is inexperienced. The better the player, the more colorful he will be.***

Tony Randall-Smith: Olympic Equestrian Medalist, winning two Silver and one Bronze medal at Los Angeles in 1984. Native of McLean Virginia, the child of a former ambassador to England. Personally acquainted with Princess Margaret, has appeared in *Sports Illustrated*, and network television. Currently holds American and European Championships in several categories of jumps. Professional status has been called into question, but intends to compete in 1988. ***Toni is a***

fairly important character, and should be played by someone who is at least slightly athletic, though roleplaying ability is to be valued over looks. She is independent and headstrong.

Jeffrey Saxon: A noted Parapsychology/Occult writer and Astrologer, author of *Health Signs*, *Astrology for You*, and *Psychic Defense*, and several other successful books published in paperback. Jeffrey is rumored to be practically the only person in New York who does not suffer from an incapacitating drug addiction. ***Jeffrey exists solely for the entertainment of the masses, though he might end up solving one of the mysteries. He should be played by someone who likes to play the straight man, and cast in team with Oliver Stewart.***

Oliver Stewart: A comic-book author and illustrator for *Universal Comics*, a major competitor of Marvel and D.C.

Oliver responsible for the satirical *Captain Flapjack* miniseries, but is best known for his work with *Blood Hound*, a revitalized 1960's Superhero, and with *Revenant*, a dark-horror miniseries. Stewart handled a graphic-novel adaptation of Grant Cochran's *Sightless King*, which was somewhat more successful than the actual novel. Oliver is a New Yorker, but has maintained a friendship with horror writer Grant Cochran, and has come down with some of his other New York acquaintances to make his birthday an interesting affair. ***Oliver is the comical side of a pair, with Jeffrey Saxon. Oliver should be energetic and entertaining, and will come out best if played by a really superb roleplayer. He is a colossal gossip, and should be encouraged to ramble on at length about anything he hears that is potentially embarrassing.***

Craig Webber: An acquaintance of Margot Matthews, Mr. Webber is a well-to-do local business consultant, rumored to have connections to smuggling and the underworld. Webber is said to be a business partner of Avery Carson. ***Webber is important, but not a difficult roleplaying challenge. He needs to be able to keep a secret, and should be sensitive to the fact that he is operating on the fringes of the law.***

III. The Murder

How to make it happen: Once you decide on a location for the murder, and the murder weapon, you should pre-write a set of Information cards in two separate colors, one containing the ballistics information (type of gun, rough range of the shot) if a gun was used, and one containing the relevant forensics information (the angle of shot, range, type of wound, rough time of death, etc.)

I found it useful to give players who can look at Information Cards (see the rules) a card of the color that they can look at with the words "you can look at _____ colored cards) printed on it.

Other than that, It will take Ballistas and Toni putting two and two together about money, or someone buying off or badgering Gary's legal assistant.

Gary should break down when confronted with reasonable certainty.

In addition, it is advantageous to set it up so that only Gary could have done it physically, but that is trickier. If Grant is murdered in a closed room, it could be set up so that only Gary had the key to the room, etc. In the first murder, characters were given complex instructions to go to see Grant at a certain time, so that they all missed each other, but that two people saw the body, and hurried away rather than risk being found with it. Despite the fact that from location, footsteps and times it should have been possible to establish who the killer was, no one had the slightest idea. This leads me to believe that most murder mysteries bases on exact timetables are bullshit, but you can try the idea.

In the first run, only eight players were involved and it was possible for each player to be assigned a bedroom. This allowed a complex series of confrontations as three players discovered the corpse before anyone actually raised an alarm. In addition, the power was out for the entire evening, so the entire game was played by flash-light and candle-light.

In the second version, there were not enough rooms to assign one to each player, and the murder took place during a brief period when the lights were out. The corpse had been secreted in a closet and was allowed to fall out onto the floor while the living player stepped into the closet. Again, the places where people were stand-

ing when they heard the body fall should have made it possible to determine who the murderer was, but

In the third murder, Grant was shot in the basement, where he had slipped away to get a drink. The murderer used a silencer, and while it should have made some noise, we skipped the noise in order to make sure that he didn't get caught. Remember, it is *very important* for Morant not to get caught committing the murder, as it ends the event rather early.

Clues: The critical difference between this murder and the standard box game set is that while it has a number of clues, it is virtually (but not entirely) impossible to solve the murder in a logical fashion and demonstrate "proof." The game is a psychodrama, and revolves around the proposition that the player who is Gary Morant will, when confronted by reasonably maintained suspicion, eventually burst and either attempt to shoot his way out, or have a breakdown. This provides a satisfying dramatic conclusion. To this extent it is *vital* to brief the Morant character in advance as to the expected behavior.

In general, there are not a distinct set of clues that lead to the murderer, other than that if Morant uses a gun, Weber can tell that it has been fired recently, and probably identify it as the murder weapon from the exit wound. (Morant's gun is described as small, and should be a 22 or 32.) He can definitely establish it was not either of the arms dealers guns, which should be 9mm. Dr. Pierce can discern the relevant forensics information to tell where the shot entered and where it came from, though he is no forensics specialist.

Birthday Surprise is a roleplaying game, not **Clue**. People should ferret. In real life detectives have to largely ignore motive, and concentrate on opportunity. In mysteries, detectives often concentrate on motive, then manage to construct some chain of reasoning for the opportunity. Morant's nervousness is included to allow the game a logical conclusion once motives have all been sorted out. Only Gary has a really good reason to want to *kill* Grant rather than just hate him. Once the players realize that, they should begin to crank up the pressure, and Gary should crack.

There is some information on how to distribute various clues under *Properties*.

Timetable: In an ideal situation, the murder tends to run pretty close to this schedule. Don't succumb to the temptation to have the murder right away, or right after dinner. It may unsettle the stomachs of your guests.

6:00	arrivals
8:00	dinner
9-10	conversation, by now players are off guard, may even have forgotten they are in a murder mystery.
9:45	murder
10:00	discovery of body
12:00	resolution

The Body: In all of these games, Ken Brown and I made a rather complex papier-mache corpse, with a sophisticated head filled with soft pulpy "brain" and corn-syrup blood. The body could just as well be a traditional "Halloween-style" dummy made of cloth or scrap stuffed into old clothes.

Many professional films, and forensics departments, use Karo and Red food coloring for blood. It has almost the same viscosity as natural blood, and it looks rather realistic. Alas it does not dry brown. Red food coloring will stain a lot of things, though if you use *cold* (never hot) water it will clean off of many things as well. Test for colorfastness overnight if in doubt, not just for a few minutes.

In the first game I achieved a particularly stunning effect by having the corpse have been shot in the back of the head with an exit wound in the front of the head which had dumped the brains into the keyboard of a typewriter (which didn't work very well to begin with.)

The use of a can of Campbell's condensed tomato soup and Welsh's grape jelly for grey-matter and packing material produced an interesting moist-warm sensation in the room, similar to that when a corpse has cooled. In addition, I found that plastering a few bits of hair on the wall along with blood-spackling made for a corpse that brought the concept of *murder* home quite viscerally to our guests.

In the third running, Ken constructed a really superior corpse, and I went all out. I got a roll of white banner paper, and covered a wall with it, then rehanged the pictures over it, so that it was barely noticeable. Then I took an old carpet, which I had vacuumed to the point of being remotely clean, and put it down on the floor. (A

throw rug would do just as well). Carpet is porous, so plastic garbage bags underneath were a real necessity. A head, similar to our first two, was constructed by molding flesh colored clay over a plastic model of a human skull. For eyes, I took shiny white plastic spoons, and cut out life size retinas from a cigarette ad in a color magazine. I used clear fingernail polish to shellac the retinas to the spoons, then placed them over the eye-sockets, and molded clay over them. The result was admirable. A suit of salvation army clothes (similar in color to my own suit, but polyester, not wool) completed the setting. Inside the skull, I packed raw pork brains (wash your hands before preparing food or touching your mouth, to avoid trichinosis) The brains spattered out of the brain cavity when the head hit the floor. I slopped a little on the wall, as well, more for atmosphere than authenticity. Several of the guests were truly disturbed.

On the simplistic side, a dummy with a paper-bag head and some red construction paper cut in the shape of a pool of blood is good enough for most people, and does not require all the special handling to avoid damaging furniture or carpet.

There is no *major* reason that the murdered player could not be represented by the body of the actual player provided they could hold still for some time, but it could be rather boring.

IV. Gamemaster Functions

Adjudicating Combat: At some point during the game, you may be called on to adjudicate combat between the participants. I suggest keeping two principles clearly in mind: fairness, and drama.

The combat system as generally described simply allows for players to point toy pistols at one another, and open fire. This requires a decision from you on who hit first, etc. In most cases, it should be assumed that anyone who took reasonable aim and fired at another person, hit them. You may rule them to be dead, or assess them to be wounded. The wounded should be made to lie down, and if they decide to go strolling around, told that they have fainted. This is not a tabletop Fantasy game, and participants should not expect gunshot wounds to be a minimal inconvenience.

In general, if someone is killed by a fairly well-planned

shot, you should probably rule them dead, especially if you have one of the prepared characters still available for them to pick up.

In cases where you did not see who shot first, you may wish to carry a die, and roll, or have the opponents roll to see who took the first shot. I would not recommend carrying the system beyond that point, as it would tend to interfere with the drama of the game.

Try not to play favorites, but if someone is doing a particularly good job of portraying a character, or was shot by someone for a stupid reason, (particularly if they were shot by a player who was “bored”) consider minimizing the injury. Remember, your word is **Law**. Do not accept argument from players.

Most of all, avoid “re-running” events. There is nothing more frustrating than to corner someone, shoot them, then be called back because they forgot they had a gun and could defend themselves. If players forget some skill or ability, or property, just let it pass. If you make a bad ruling, stick with it, and give the person who you disadvantaged an advantage later to make up for it. But a game where events are constantly being recalled can quickly become a travesty of rules hounding that is antithetical to the atmosphere of *A Birthday Surprise*.

Gamemastering:

From time to time during the evening, you will be called on to act in capacity as a “gamemaster” who must interpret things in the universe for the players. Usually this will pertain to either a character’s past, or the environment.

Example of an environment situation: The back door was originally marked with a location card saying “This is a blank wall.” In the course of the evening it has fallen down and vanished. A player notices, and wonders if this means there might have been a secret door that is now visible. He or she asks you:

“Is there actually a door here?”

You quietly reply:

“No something must have happened to the card.”

This sort of question is called a *metagame* question, because it is a question that pertains to the mechanics

surrounding the game, rather than something within the game.

In another situation, perhaps Dr. Pierce has begun to suspect that Gary Morant has been replaced by someone who is only pretending to be Gary Morant. He asks you:

“Does Gary still look like he did when he was in school. Is it possible he could be a different person?”

You think about it, and recall that Dr. Pierce has met Gary several times since then. You nod negatively:

“You know Gary pretty well. You’ve seen him a few times since school, and he hasn’t changed that much. He doesn’t look the same, but it would take really drastic plastic surgery for anyone else to look this much like him. You are pretty sure that it is the same Gary you have always known.”

This hopefully should give you a fair idea of what you will be doing.

V. Mechanical Systems - Cards

Location Cards: These cards are used to modify the playing space into a useable area. For example, when the murder was run in a private home, there were two persons watching television upstairs who were not playing, and a downstairs office that contained private papers that was off-limits to participants. A location card posted on the stairwell read:

This area is a small upstairs which contains two bedrooms, one belonging to Grant and one belonging to Tommy. A search of each room reveals nothing of any interest.

Downstairs, a card on the office door read:
There is no door here. This is a blank wall.

Use these cards to protect your bedroom, store-room, crematorium, or any other place you do not want the participants wandering at large.

Information Cards: These cards, described in the Rules, are a device for giving your participants knowledge that their character would have, but that they may not be able to discern for themselves.

It is recommended that Knowledge cards be printed in

two colors. One color will represent ballistics information, and one color will represent forensics information. You may want to write up a card that says “You can read Green Cards” etc. for every player who can read a particular color of card.

Each gun should have an item card (more about that in a moment), and a ballistics card stapled snugly behind it. The ballistics card can be read by anyone who examines the gun for a few moments. The card should have the exact caliber of the gun written on it, and does not need to have any other information unless the gun is broken, or otherwise damaged, or unusual. The murder site should have a colored card on which the caliber of the bullet used is printed (if a bullet was used). This will help in narrowing the potential suspects and identifying the murder weapon.

The murder site should also have a forensics card, which describes roughly how the corpse was killed. Dr. Pierce is not a forensics expert, but has some basic knowledge of medicine which will give him a fair idea of the situation. If Grant was killed with a bullet, the direction and range should be indicated (IE: “from the doorway, shot through the right temple”) and if he was killed by stabbing or bludgeoning the rough height and strength of the killer should be established. Obviously, it is a good idea not to cast Gary Morant as a person who is four feet tall when all the other players are 5’11”, and then ask him to stab Grant.

You could invent new types of knowledge if you wanted. For example, you could print yellow cards which represent “Psychic” knowledge and give the ability to look at them to M. A. Carter, Linda Kane, and Jeffrey Saxon. Such a card might be affixed to the murder weapon and say “This weapon was used to take a human life” or to a doorway “a man passed through here with murderous intent.” The possible uses for knowledge cards is nearly limitless. Wine tasting. Drug Quality. etc.

Special Cards: There is no use for these cards. They are included in case you decide to invent some system that is not covered by the other cards, and are intentionally generic. For example, you might wish to give some player an unusual ability. You could write on the card “*the person holding this card is able to make small objects levitate for a period of thirty seconds. Non-transferrable*” This would allow M. A. Carter (presuming the participant does *not* have the actual ability to levitate small objects) to demonstrate his magical prowess.

Craig Webber might have a card reading *“the person holding this card can demonstrate the trick behind simple illusions such as making small objects levitate, and thus debunk those who appear to be able to perform such miracles. Non-transferrable.”*

Use these cards for whatever seems useful.

VI Properties:

Properties can be a major stumbling block to productions, if they are too expensive, or difficult to obtain. Interactive events often overcome this problem by using *Item Cards*. These cards represent an item, but no attempt is made to make them look like the item. In many cases, this is not a problem. These cards are the cheap solution to trying to buy the requisite props for the game. Below, we suggest how you can fabricate the various props required.

Guns should always have an Item Card, even if they are represented by a real gun, unless it is possible to exactly match the caliber of the toy weapon to the caliber of gun the character is supposed to have. The Item card should say “large gun” or “small gun,” and a ballistics card should be stapled to the back giving the exact caliber.

Properties List:

Hidden: 10 kg of “coke” (Table sugar is fine, fructose from a health food store is better.) Given to Grant by Randall, hidden in the house.

Hidden: Blackmail evidence - photocopies, and originals of embassy documents forged by Avery Carter. Given to a Grand Jury, they would at least be enough to bring him to trial. *If Drake is being played as a main character, it is suggested that you put these in a sealed envelope, with “Hold, do not open” written on the outside. This could have been mailed to Drake by Grant for safekeeping.*

Hidden - copy of Grant’s will favoring Tommy

Hidden - Grant’s financial papers

On or near Grant’s desk - Typed note: Be careful. You may die soon!

Avery - from Avery to Randall. \$2,000

Sarah Lamont - copies of Gary’s financial records

Gary - blank copy of Grant’s will

Guns:

Ballistas 9mm silenced automatic

Carson 9mm automatic

Deerden 32 caliber revolver

Morant 22 caliber pistol

Nicholson 38 police positive

Randall Interarms Semi-automatic (non functional)

This starts the game hidden in the bushes outside. Tony should be shown where to find it. In the absence of bushes (or an outside) substitute some similar place, and inform Tony of the change.

Webber 38 Colt revolver

Hiding things:

There are several clues in the game (the blackmail evidence, Grant’s financial records, etc.), which are hidden. In all cases, make sure the hiding place is big enough to reasonably conceal the actual items, not just an item card representing them.

Hidden: 10 kg of “coke”

This should be hidden someplace fairly safe. Grant should fend off inquiries from Tony Randall-Smith until after he is dead. In a “best case” circumstance, he should drop a “hint” as to where they were. At one murder, where we were lucky enough to have a grand piano, the drugs were hidden in the piano, and Grant told Tony that they were hidden “in the best Casablanca fashion.” Grant enjoys tormenting people with what he considers to be his superior intellect. There should not be any sophisticated puzzle telling where the drugs are, however, as Grant would not have had occasion, or reason, to make one up. Grant knows a bit about smuggling, and may have laid the drugs in the bottom of a can of coffee, a method often favored by drug smugglers.

Hidden: Blackmail evidence - photocopies, and originals of embassy documents forged by Avery Carter.

This evidence need not be very large. A simple manila envelope will do quite nicely. The evidence sheet

provided should have an item card affixed to it to indicate that it is a game item, and should have several blank sheets stapled behind it to give some bulk.

Grant has had plenty of time to work on hiding this, and has good reason to leave a clue to Margot about where it is, but not the actual information. In one run of the game, all of the secret documents were in a vault (simulated by a combination locking briefcase) which had the combination “666”. Something more sophisticated may be in order if you intend to slow down the players much. It is recommended that this evidence be hidden separately from anything else, and that Grant have prepared a clue for it. For example, Grant could have shoved it into the bottom of the freezer, and then tell Margot “I’m keeping it on ice for you.”
etc.

Hidden - copy of Grant’s will favoring Tommy
This should be loosely concealed around the room, probably simply in a desk drawer. It is vital that there be an item card stapled to the evidence sheet, since this is the only way players will be able to differentiate it from other documents. It is recommended that this take the form of a concealed envelope, and that the envelope also hold the clue to the location of the financial documents, and a sealed letter to Margot with a hint as to the location of her evidence. Grant is both macabre and a Scorpio, and hiding things, and typing up messages to give to people after his death are just the sort of tasks he would enjoy. Grant might tell Matthew Allen Carter or Linda in the course of the evening that he fears that something will happen to him, and has left some important information for Margot and Tommy.

Hidden - Grant’s financial papers
This should essentially tip the balance in favor of incriminating Gary Morant. The papers are primarily made of check stubs which show large unrecorded payments to Gary Morant from Grant. Obviously, if an investigation were opened, the police could audit Gary’s records, and the whole house of cards would fall down. Tommy, who is no idiot, can point this out if the players fail to realize the obvious. Gary should be primed to break at this discovery.

The best suggestion to how to handle this is to have a hidden vault on the wall behind some picture in the house. The Vault can be “built” in the following manner.

1. Tape a manilla envelope to the wall. Put the information inside it, and seal it.

2. Tape an item card to the envelope which has these words “Wall safe. To open write combination on the envelope, and report this to the host.”

3. When the correct combination has been written, the host should open the envelope, and leave the participants to remove the contents.

The reason for writing the combination tried is to avoid misunderstandings, or conflicting directions, or the confusion of twenty combinations being shouted at once. Only one person can write on the envelope, just as only one person can try to open the safe, at one time.

The combination is up to you. As a default, use the numbers 10-23-54 (which any player can deduce was Grant’s birthday, though they may have to fish a bit for the right year.) 6-6-6, or any other bizarre occult combination that seems reasonable (and guessable by your participants) can be used. In *extremis*, if the event is going down the tubes, the psychics could try and get Grant to transmit the combination by “rapping” on the table.

It would not be past Grant to draw up a puzzle, magic square, or occult riddle that held the combination. Just make sure not to frustrate the participants beyond measure with an obtuse puzzle.

VII. Other Considerations

Adding characters: You may add characters to the game in order to enlarge it. Two characters are “foils” mentioned in the text, but not actually written.

Extras: Sarah Lamont and Jonathan Drake exist as pre-written backup characters.

The characters of Anthony Blaine and Karyn Seidmann are written as short replacement characters.

Anthony Blaine: A New York writer considered a protege of Grant Cochran, Blaine is handled by Jonathan Drake, the same publisher as Cochran. It was rumored that Blaine and Cochran had a very serious argument while appearing together at a promotional convention after the publication of *Sightless King*. Blaine is best

known for his Fantasy-Horror novel *Wunderking*, and his most recent work *The Dinner Guest*. ***If you get a last minute unexpected player, or have a casualty in a game that was already full, Blaine is provided as a back up character. He is expected but has not arrived. His sheet is purposefully very short, so that it can be absorbed in only a few minutes. He could be developed into a full character with some work and cross referencing.***

Karyn Seidmann: A New-York literary agent, Seidmann is not well known in literary circles, though there are some dark rumors about her past, including a lawsuit. Seidmann handles small time occult authors, and until recently her biggest literary success was Jeffrey Saxon, the popular occultist and astrologer. ***Karyn is a con artist, who was posing as a literary agent and actually ended up signing a contract. She is provided as a female back up character, and is also very short, but she could be amusing to expand to a full length character.***

Beyond this, you must either write original characters yourself, or accommodate extra guests in the following manner. Tell them to make up a name, and inform them that they are a friend of some specific person. Then show them the general, but not any specific information, on that person. In this manner they will be able to portray an affiliated “innocent.” Obviously this is not desirable, but is preferential to having them be entirely out of place.

The Occult: The occult is heavily referenced in the game, but nowhere does it actually specifically exist. The “reality” of occult affairs is up to the host, though I recommend against allowing “magic” of any practical sort. Spiritualism is certainly a possibility, and a seance can be a way to get slow or misled players back on track. The host could work with Linda Kane or M. A. Carter as a confederate, and work out a code to “send” them information (one tap for yes, two for no, etc.) manipulate a Ouija Board, or whatever seems apropos. This method should not be the main method of choice to get information into the event, but serves as a fine “control mechanism” to get a stalled event back on track.

Unless you have particularly brilliant plans for laying a rigged seance, I would recommend leaving the question of whether or not to include the occult for the actual run of the game.

Isolation: Obviously, nowadays, people aren’t left to their own devices to solve murders. Some considerable thought was put into creating an “isolation scenario,” that is a situation where the authorities do not immediately take charge. Two things need to be done to complete this scenario.

- 1) Prior to the murder, place “Location” or “Special” cards on the telephones which say “No Dialtone”

- 2) When Thomas returns, he should inform the group that the bridge is out, and that he has just spent several hours walking up from the river. He will suggest that it is futile to attempt to cross on foot again before it is light. Grant’s house backs up to a mountain, and the nearest residence is on the other side, a several hour trek even in good weather.

Changing things around: There is no prohibition whatsoever against changing the text or nature of this work, aside from those guidelines in the license statement. It is recommended that you take some care in the matter of adding material, unless you are familiar with the process of writing Interactive Events. The following two points should be kept strongly in line:

Consistency: Any changes in the game must be consistent with material already written, or else the existing material should be changed.

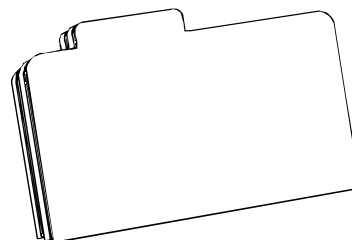
Cross referencing: Any changes must be referenced to everyone who is affected by them. Thus if you write in Tony Randall-Smith’s sheet that “you once had an affair with Matthew Allen Carter,” you must see to it that he is aware of this fact as well.

Use care, and read everything in detail, before making changes.

Be careful! You may die soon!

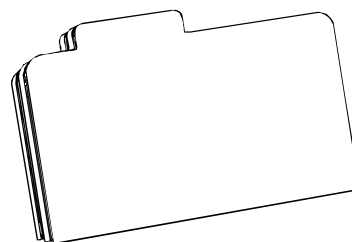
State Department Documents

Photocopies, and originals of embassy documents from the United States Embassy in Sweden, signed by Ambassador Darrington Ripley. Most of the documents seem to be State Department Certification for arms imports/exports between the U.S. and various European states.



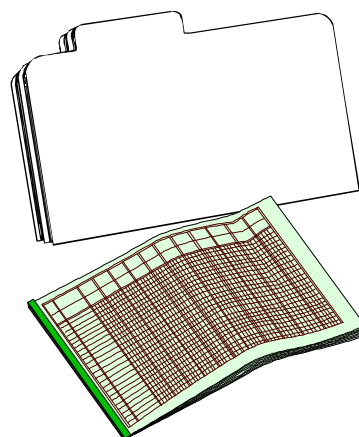
Last Will and Testament of Grant Cochran:

While there are several minor bequests to Margot Matthews, Gary Morant, and others, the text of this will makes it quite plain that all of Grants real property, wealth, and copyrights will be inherited by his brother Thomas Cochran.



Financial Papers

These scanty papers are disorganized and difficult to interpret. They include a set of checkbook stubs for a Money Market Checking Account with a major D.C. area bank. The most recent account balance is less than \$2000.00 dollars, and there seem to be numerous large checks which were written to “Gary - inves.” or “Amer. Mutual Inves.” The amount of the checks, over two years, amount to about \$500,000.



CASTING LIST

Use this section for your master casting list

Player	Character	PRT	Distributed
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Host Character

	Grant Cochran			
<i>ibid</i>	Thomas Cochran			

Primary Characters

	Mike Ballistic		
	<i>Emily Breezewood</i>		
	Avery Carson		
	M. A. Carter		
	<i>Leda Deerden</i>		
	<i>Linda Kane</i>		
	<i>Margot Matthews</i>		
	Gary Morant		
	Mort Nicholson		
	Dr. Roger Pierce		
	<i>Toni Randall-Smith</i>		
	Craig Webber		

Secondary or Walk-on Characters

_____ **Jonathan Drake** _____
 _____ ***Sarah Lamont*** _____
 _____ **Jeffrey Saxon** _____
 _____ **Oliver Stewart** _____

Use this section for your list of players. You may want to check the box for "confirmation" before actually casting players who have promised to show up. More spaces than characters are provided below, in order to handle maybes or any characters you choose to add.

[illegible]

OLD BOYS' GIRLS' NETWORK

	70	71	72	73	74	75	76	77	78	79	Age (87)
Roger Pierce*	W	W	W	W	W	W	W	W	W	W	43
Gary Morant		W	W	W	W	WL	WL	WL	WL		34
Mike Ballistis		W	W	W	W						34
Thomas Cochran			W	W							34
Grant Cochran			W	W	W	W					33
Avery Carson				W	W						33
M. A. Carter					W	W	W	W			30
Margot Matthews	C	C	C	C	W	W					30
Linda Kane	C	C	C	C	MW	MW	M	M			30
Emily Breezewood	C	C	C	C	MW	MW	M	M			30
Sarah Lamont	C	C	C	C	M	M	M	M			30
Tony Randall-Smith		C	C								28

W - George Washington University

WL - George Washington University Law School

C - Columbia Prep

M - Mary Washington

MW - Mary Washington (Summer courses at GWU)

* Professor

You are cordially invited to the home of
Mr. Grant Cochran
for a Birthday Party
on October 23, 1987
at

Dinner will be served at:

Attire is:

The Game Location is:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Evening Phone _____

Age _____ Sex _____ Preference (no guarantees): _____ Nasty _____ Nice

Do you require special food preparation (i.e. vegetarian, kosher, etc.)

You must include a phone for us to accomodate your needs:

The cast is limited to fourteen players. Because all characters are already written, it is not possible to honor requests.

The registration fee is:

A Birthday Surprise



Scenario and Rules:

A few notes before our event begins.

First, if you have not had the opportunity to be in one of these events before: please don't take anything that is said or done personally. Most of your fellow guests are very nice people, but they may not be portraying very nice characters. If people are sharp, short, or sarcastic, remember that they are merely role-playing.

Likewise, feel free to let yourself go as much as you feel comfortable. Remember you are someone else and may have good reason to hate (or even love) some of the people around you. All in all, the characters are not a very savory lot though, so if you run into someone you don't know, please don't hold their attitude against them. **REMEMBER THE PERSON YOU ARE PLAYING IS NOT YOURSELF.**

Your character may be thoroughly vile, wretched, and is likely to be at least villainous and venal. Of such stuff is homicide made. Some of you may find yourselves in romantic plots opposite people you don't know. Usually there is some character reason to act with a degree of reserve. Under any circumstances, play such parts as strongly as you feel comfortable, and be aware if you are making the other person involved uncomfortable. Likewise you may be in a position to do grievous harm to someone you do know. Remember, we are playing here, and no one means any harm. If there were no treachery and confrontation, there would be little excitement. This is not a game where anyone wins, save by causing as much drama as possible.

Finally, **be free with what you know.** Obviously you shouldn't blurt out private information at the drop of a hat, but if you do not make critical confidences and foolishly forget yourself, then information will not circulate, and our little mystery will be a duller thing. Use any opportunity to gossip, especially with those you trust.

The Year 1987

The setting for our event is October 1987, primarily because that was the year it was first written. If you need a quick update, 1987 was both the pinnacle of the Reagan era,

and the beginning of the end. 1987 was the year of the first trillion dollar budget and the first widespread condom ads, and the first year that the Dow Jones closed above 2000.00. 1987 was also the year of the Tower Commission Report, Iran Contra hearings, and the U.S.S. Stark incident. Here on October 24, we are just six days past the resounding 508 point crash of October 19. Yesterday, Congress rejected Robert Bork as Reagan's Supreme Court nominee.

Scenario

You have been invited to attend a birthday party at the country house of Mr. Grant Cochran, and have apparently chosen to attend.

The house lies in rural Virginia, several hours south of the Capital. The exit is off of U.S. 81, near a popular ski resort, but the last dozen miles of the journey are a wrenching trip up and down a badly paved secondary road around the side of Cider Mtn. The only access to the immediate area is an aging WWII temporary bridge that spans a violent river.

Getting in was no real problem. It was still somewhat light. However the river was already swollen and red with mud, and conditions were deteriorating rapidly. It will not be easy to get back out again.

If you have never participated in an Interactive Literature event before, or even if you have, please observe a few notes about this game. The game is quite serious and emotional. For that reason, you are requested to arrive in character, and to remain in character through- out the evening. Try to remember this, and converse in character with the character your other acquaintances are playing, not with the player, whom you know.

Also, try to avoid actually killing anyone

...it would be...awkward.



The Rules

Characters:

You have received a character hint which gives you some information on your character. At game time (or earlier) you will receive a more detailed “character sheet.” This will detail things that you believe to be true, as well as telling you more about your background, and connections.

You are the character in the sheet. Within reason you should feel free to improvise on details not found in your sheet. Use common sense and discretion. If you went to school with someone, it is certainly not unreasonable to say “remember the time we got caught cheating on Dr. Filbert’s exam?” You would not, however want to make up things like “remember the time we were mercenaries in South America and killed a hundred people.” Discretion. Common sense. The point is to join the other characters in creating the common fabric of a work of Interactive Literature: the more elaborately embroidered the better.

If someone makes something up which conflicts with your character sheet, let them back out gracefully. If they for example place you at the World Polo Championship- ship in Eczuma Mexico, and your character sheet specifically says that you did not qualify for the world Polo Championship that year, try not to blurt out “No my character sheet says that’s impossible!” Demurrals such as “I think maybe you have me confused with someone else,” or “No, I think it was the year after that,” are good ways to maintain the ongoing elaboration of background without bringing everything crashing to a halt.

Your Host

Your host will act as “Gamemaster” (GM) if it is required for them to adjudicate the results of combat between participants, or any other acts. Your host will designate someone else to act as a “back up” if they are unavailable.

In general, the GM’s do not do anything other than referee the results of altercations. If you absolutely need to ask them a question, try and be discrete. Try to work with the

knowledge you have, and consult a GM only if you have really serious problems understanding what is going on.

If you have to consult with a GM, try to have specific questions and be brief.

Remember to try to get information from other players before you ask a GM out of character, or better ask a GM in character. For example, if you can’t remember if the upstairs is an off limits area for interaction, rather than pulling aside a GM and asking “Is the upstairs off limits” you might ask the GM’s character. “Say, do I remember seeing a stairway in the front when I came in.” To which you might get the reply “No, the house is single level”, or “Yes but it only goes to the crawl space.”

The Site

Do not break

Do not fold, spindle or mutilate the site. This may require some slight curtailment of complete realism. For example, no matter how frustrated your character is, you should not begin tossing the crockery about in a rage.

Out of game locations

On doors, exits, etc. leading to places that do not exist within the framework of the game, there may be a card telling you what you see instead. IE: “There is no stairway here, just a blank wall”

Mechanics

There is only one non-combat game mechanic in this murder. From time to time you may see pastel-colored cards, taped or secured face down around the house. If you can look at one or more of these cards, you will have information telling you this. If you have not specifically been told that you can look at such cards, then do not read them.

These cards simulate certain special knowledge. If you see someone reading a card, then what you have seen is that person carefully scrutinizing the vicinity of the card. You cannot tell what they learned, but if you notice them reading the card, you are able to notice that they were paying close attention.



Weapons and Fighting

How to fight

To fight with another person, please pantomime attacking them, in slow, or relatively slow motion. Do not strike them, or wrestle with them. If you want to do something like throw them against a wall, say “I’m throwing you against the wall.” Try to pantomime combat safely. The GMs will give you slack if you favor safety over form.

A GM will tell you what has happened to you based on our knowledge of relative character strengths etc. If you are injured and should fall down please do so unless you are physically incapable of doing so.

Weapons

Please do not bring any “weapons” real or otherwise, unless you have been specifically instructed you to. If you need a weapon, it will be provided to you, on loan, by the GM. If you want to use a household item as a weapon, you may pantomime it, but **DO NOT ACTUALLY THREATEN ANYONE WITH A KNIFE OR OTHER DANGEROUS IMPLEMENT**. If someone pantomimes picking up a knife and coming at you, act like they are holding a knife.

If you are assaulted by any weapon, please die promptly, unless you have a weapon ready to fight. If there is an actual fight, your GM will very quickly inform the loser by calling out “Dead”. Please keep your dying comments to a minimum. We will try to be just, but please expire promptly.

If you see a weapon, assume for game purposes that it is real, whether it looks like a toy or not. Likewise, do not panic if you see a gun being pointed at you, as we have a penchant for realistic props, and promise not to use real live firearms.

You may not actually be dead, your GMs will tell you your actual condition, etc. when we get a chance.

Characters that expire gracefully may be allowed to re-enter the game in some capacity. There has never been an actual murder at one of these events, and we would hate to have to start with you. There has been one serious stab wound in a game of this type, and we would hate to start a trend. If you want to attack someone with an object,

pantomime picking it up. The GM’s will try to take it into account.

TO REPEAT: ON NO ACCOUNT MAY YOU BRANDISH REAL KNIVES, CLUBS, BLUDGEONS, ETC. AT OTHER PLAYERS. ONLY WEAPONS PROVIDED TO YOU BY A GM ARE SAFE TO BRANDISH AT OTHER PLAYERS.

Emergency:

If you have an emergency or last minute difficulty, or need directions, please phone

() ____-____



A Birthday Surprise

Mike Ballistas

You are the scion of an old New England union family, and learned politics, labor and crime at your father's knee. Your father was a union leader, not a mafasioso, but you remember many evenings when you were sent away to play while your father sat in the kitchen and drank wine with the Greek mafia. Because he wasn't really a mafasioso, your father relished the stories about this or that guy "getting it" with an icepick that much more. The fact is there wasn't much violence in your waterfront town, and most of the stories were decades old.

Your father had always had visions of being a local politician, and loved people to respect him. He never really got the support from the democratic machine, probably because he was all to anxious to please. He sent you away to the big time, and you entered George Washington University in 1971, with the expectation that you would be a pre-law political science double major. Your father had saved a lot of money to send you to school, and he expected great things.

The problem was that you didn't want to be a union lackey, or even a labor leader for the rest of your life. You wanted a life of excitement. And that's exactly what you got.

For starters, you wanted out of the claustrophobia of New England, where the same "tough guys" had run things for fifty years. Washington is a big town for politics, but its also a big town for adventure. You made connections fast and found that for a young man with absolutely no moral compuncions whatsoever, there was plenty of future. Look at the arms smuggler Khoshoggi, who is a millionaire, and has a wing of a major university named after him.

You drifted into the grey area of arms dealing, starting with drug contacts you made at GW, mostly through Avery Carson. Avery was always a little transparent though, and you weren't. Once

you had found some names, you burrowed in, did your work and waited.

You learned enough about the law to abuse it, and graduated with the poly-sci degree. As soon as you had your diploma you started a small, legitimate consulting business. Foreign Trade Consultants Ltd. Just a name in the Yellow Pages at first, though now you have a nice marble and brass office on K street with enough secretaries and junior consultants to give the place a legitimate feel.

Of course, you became an international arms dealer. Not a smuggler. A dealer. You seldom see the arms that you ship. But you arrange for the pickup, movement and delivery. You push the paperwork that makes the shipments "semi-legitimate." Very few of the arms you ship actually originate, or even pass through the United States. In your role as a trade consultant you fly to places like the Hague, Singapore, Nairobi and Mombassa, to make arrangements, supervise, hire couriers, seal deals. Forty years ago, you would have been a good gangster. Never get your own hands dirty if you can help it.

When your school "chums" began to graduate and get real jobs, you kept an eye open for opportunities. You were always willing to help find a job for a friend, or the friend of a friend. For a long time, you had a very profitable business in Sweden. You had two contacts there: Avery Carson and Margot Matthews, both of whom you knew from school. You knew that it was possible for the Trade Representative at a U.S. embassy to stamp import export papers from that nation to the U.S., or from the U.S. to that nation. Since the U.S. routinely reroutes its own arms shipments to South America, it was possible to use the same machinery that the CIA uses to divert arms shipments for your own practices.

Carson was a medium level employee, and Matthews was the mistress of the ambassador,

Darrington Ripley. You used Matthews to pass orders to Carson. Matthews knew very little about the operation. Carson knew considerably more, but did not know who the orders came from.

Unfortunately your little playhouse collapsed. Ambassador Ripley found out, and you got wind that he was going to come clean about the whole thing, even though it would probably sink his career, since Carson had blackmail evidence on him.

You arranged for a car-bomb in Belgium. You understand that the Basque Revolutionaries took credit. Good for them.

Fairly few people know about your business. You hired Linda Kane to deliver orders for you in the Washington area. You briefly went to school with Linda in the seventies, but you mostly knew her through Margot Matthews. You explained that she was delivering bribes for your trading company. You count on Linda to be too dizzy to ever really roast you on the stand, though she does worry you from time to time. You would like to have her killed, but you can't do it yourself, so you are trying to hire someone that you don't know very well, but can trust. Not an easy job. It might be best if you had something on them.

You have a new acquisition too. Emily Breezewood, the daughter of a Senator. A few years ago one of the people in your operation decided to get weird religion and Matthew Allen Carter happened to recognize your name, and on the strength of having known you in school talked them into going to Tibet, rather than to the feds. You have since had that person dumped in an oil drum off the coast of Jamaica, but if Carter hadn't helped out, it might have gone badly for you.

He had a favor to ask in return. That you seduce his wife. This would have been more unusual if he didn't want a private detective named Mort Nicholson to take pictures. It was no skin off of your nose, though, so you agreed. You didn't know Emily very well in school but she was cute and deserved a wealthy rat like you instead of a screwy rat like Carter.

Of course, she got screwed over in the divorce settlement based on her liaison with you. She never knew for sure that you had set her up, though she was suspicious.

You actually liked Emily fairly well, and she naturally gravitated toward you after the messy divorce with Carter. Maybe somewhere down in your oily soul there is a spark of decency and you felt responsible for her, though you doubt it. At any rate, she hasn't suffered financially since she took up with you, though you got the impression she had some hard times living with the artsy-fartsy crowd up in New York before she got some sense and came back to Washington.

Now back in school, you vaguely knew Carter and Cochran and the other weirdos. Carter is a scary guy, and was even when you knew him back in school. He was always about two bricks shy of a full load, and success as a popular weirdo hasn't made him any safer. You have sort of tried to protect Emily from everything around her, including him, in a gangsterish sort of way, but you aren't anxious to tangle with Matthew Allen Carter.

You are a bit worried though. You recently got invited down to "old home week." Apparently Grant Cochran wanted to get all his old College buddies together. You probably wouldn't have been invited, but Margot invited Emily and so that included you.

Considering the amount of dirt some of these people have on you, you are a little nervous. You have kept your hands *mostly* clean, but you might flounder in a lengthy investigation, especially if several of your people decided to turn state's evidence rather than tough it out. You were up to your ears in the Iran - Contra affair, but that is old news now, and so far your name has not come up in connection with it.

For example, when you have to actually deal with weapons inside the Continental United States one of the people you hire is a girl named Toni Randall-Smith, a washed up athlete who used to run drugs for Avery Carson. She is efficient and discrete.

You are particularly worried at the moment because she is part of a complex situation that you are afraid might be over your head. Always before when you were running weapons in the U.S., you were doing it with the tacit approval of the CIA, usually to Company funded groups in Nicaragua. It is your favorite kind of crime: quasi-legal and government protected. Unfortunately, it now seems that the CIA is as capable of screwing up as

any third rate parcel of gangsters, and since the hearings, your business has fallen off sharply.

Sometimes these shipments were by Air America, the CIA private airlines, but you also learned about the network of drug aircraft that are allowed to land their cargoes in the southern U.S., so that the Company can ship weapons on them on the return trip.

Then you got an offer you couldn't refuse. The Medellin Cartel, a Columbian cocaine concern which has nearly as much capital as IBM, wanted to buy weapons directly from the U.S. Cut out the middleman. You made a deal with them. The fact is that these days it is ludicrously easy to ship weapons anywhere in the world from the U.S. You arranged for thousands of semi-automatic rifles to be shipped from Interarms in Alexandria, to a phony sporting goods chain in Texas.

From there they are to be shipped by air through Panama to Columbia, where they will be modified to full automatic by the local craftsmen, who have a particular skill with such rustic arts.

You have hired Tony Randall-Smith to carry out the exceedingly simple task of driving to Texas, and supervising the transfer of the weapons from a Dallas warehouse to an airfield in the countryside. However, you will need to give her some temporary documents that will cover the shipment. Tony has already made one trip to set up the arrangements, and will be driving back this week to actually supervise the transfer. You had a brief phone call from her in which she said there might be a "difficulty" which she would fill you in on later. If there is a defect with the shipment, you need to know about it right away. The drug cartel is picky about quality, and they will accept delays for a good cause. The weapons are still legitimate, and can still be returned to the manufacturer at this point. But if you ship bad merchandise, the next car bombing you hear of could be your own.

Fortunately you have the perfect opportunity to meet her tonight. Margot Matthews gave you a call to specifically invite you to tonight's party, even though you don't know Grant Cochran very well. You suspect that Margot just wanted to make sure that Emily showed up. You suspected that Toni might be here as well, since she was one of Margot and Emily's old friends, and Margot assured you she would be. You asked Margot to let her know

that you would be here as well. You understand she is living in this region now.

In your last brief conversation, Toni was full of welcome news, and also gave you a warning that there might be someone among your circle of old acquaintances who was helping the Feds with an investigation. She hinted that it might be Grant Cochran, or someone close to him. It could be Margot Matthews or Avery Carter, though as far as you knew, Carter hadn't kept closely in touch with Grant either. It could also be that Linda Kane has found out something, in which case she has definitely outlived her usefulness. You need to try to pressure Carter and Matthews about it, without giving them any ammunition to use against you. At any rate, Toni has earned the \$8,000 in cash you are carrying to pay her, and you expect her to earn the remaining \$8,000 making the actual delivery. The deal itself is making you money well into the triple digits.

You brought your best silenced pistol, because if you can find out who is investigating you, this little party might provide a good cover for an accident.

School: You attended George Washington University from 1971 to 1974. You know Gary Morant, Grant Cochran, Avery Carson, Matthew Allen Carter, Linda Kane, Emily Breezewood, and Margot Matthews from a circle of acquaintances there.

THE OTHERS

What they know about you:

Mike Ballistas: a wealthy international consultant with impressive offices downtown. Ballistas has numerous prominent government contacts, and is generally known to be an influential businessman. He donated heavily to the Reagan Campaign.

People you know well:

Emily Breezewood: *Your current live-in girlfriend*, Emily a college friend of Grant Cochran, and a prep-school friend of Margot Matthews, Emily is the daughter of Senator Breezewood of Connecticut, a very powerful senior U.S. Legislator. Emily was married to Matthew Allen Carter, and divorced him, in a particularly messy case during which Mr. Carter was represented by Gary Morant. They are reported to be on barely civil speaking terms now. Emily is living with Mike Ballistas.

Avery Carson: *is a vital link in your international arms smuggling network. Carson is the only man who could bury you really deep without having to work at it, but you could bury him as well. Carson is not aware that you arranged for the assassination of Ambassador Ripley.*

Carson attended George Washington University and has many acquaintances from that period, and immediately afterward. Avery met most of Grant's circle of friends in the seventies while they were working in Washington after graduation. Mr. Carson occupied a position in the staff of the late Darrington Ripley, U.S. Ambassador to Sweden. Currently employed by the State Department, Avery Carson is rumored to actually work for the Company, or No-such-agency.

Matthew Allen Carter: *When you originally seduced Emily Breezewood, she was married to Carter, and you did it to get him out of a messy divorce settlement. Carter did you a favor some years ago.*

A well known mystic, Carter is associated with decadence, drugs, and bizarre mysticism. It is unclear where his money comes from, though he is known to be at least moderately wealthy, and eccentric.

M.A Carter provides spiritual consultation to some of Washington's most prominent social figures. He has appeared on several area talk shows, notably *Panorama* in July 1979 where he was involved in an altercation, and declined to appear on *Good Morning America* in August of 1982 on the topic "Senators who follow the Horoscopes." He has assisted Federal authorities as a consultant on "Cult Related Cases", and appeared before a Senate Subcommittee Special Hearing in 1983 to discuss "Cult Phenomena and Crime."

Margot Matthews: *Another element of your network, Matthews was largely controlled by Carson, though she is nose-y and you cannot be sure that she knows nothing of you. She could be very dangerous and must be watched, but is fairly useful to you.*

Margot was a friend of Grant Cochran, and several other attendees in college, but went on to become a prominent Washington socialite who rose out of the ranks of minor political followers due to her connections with the late U.S. ambassador to Sweden Mr. Darrington Ripley. Margot is giving this party in honor of Grant Cochran's birthday.

Margot is currently employed by the Department of State, where she is rumored to be the mistress of a powerful political appointee. She was mentioned in *People* magazine shortly after the inaugural ball, and her fortunes have definitely been on the rise with the Reagan government.

Gary Morant: *is your attorney, when you need one. Gary may know a little more than you would like about your businesses, and can probably deduce that you are a smuggler, but you have never told him anything, and he should not have any hard evidence on you.*

Washington Attorney. Graduated from George Washington University in 1974, GW Law in 1978. Formed Morant and Steele with Harlan Steel in 1980. Known for handling some of the messiest and most prominent divorce and lawsuit cases in the Washington social spectrum. Morant is a rising star in the social constellation of Washington, and is Grant Cochran's attorney, and is currently representing him in all of his sordid legal affairs.

Mort Nicholson: *Nicholson was the photographer that Carter and Morant used to set up Emily Breezewood. You only know*

of him distantly, though you have kept him in mind in case you ever need a PI.

Nicholson is a well known private detective who has worked for Gary Morant, and was a research reference for the character of Detective George Panopolous in Grant Cochran's *Trinity*.

Dr. Roger Pierce: You know Dr. Pierce from your University days, and while you cannot say you learned much of use from him, you have always considered him an entertaining person.

Dr. Pierce is a Professor/practitioner of Psychology at George Washington University. Young but promising, for several years his 400 level course on Personality Disorders has been considered the "most fun" class in the entire psych department. Many of Dr. Pierce's associates consider him to be "that strung out quack", Dr. Pierce considers himself a "perceptually enhanced alternative practitioner." It is obvious that Dr. Pierce either has something on the University, or has tenure.

"Psychological disorders can be not only instructive, but entertaining as well..." (*American Psychiatric Yearbook*, 1980).

Toni Randall-Smith: An old friend of Margot Matthews (and also Emily, as it turns out), you have been using Toni as a courier for several years. You originally made contact with her through Carson, for whom she was working as a drug-runner.

Toni is an Olympic Equestrian Medalist, winning two Silver and one Bronze medal at Los Angeles in 1984. Native of McLean Virginia, the child of a former ambassador to England. Personally acquainted with Princess Margaret, has appeared in *Sports Illustrated*, and network television. Currently holds American and European Championships in several categories of jumps. Professional status has been called into question, but intends to compete in 1988.

Other People:

Anthony Blaine: A New York writer considered a protege of Grant Cochran, Blaine is handled by Jonathan Drake, the same publisher as Cochran. It was rumored that Blaine and Cochran had a very serious argument while appearing together at a promotional convention after the publication of *Sightless King*. Blaine is best known for his Fantasy-Horror novel *Wunderking*, and his most recent work *The Dinner Guest*.

Grant Cochran: Grant Cochran is a horror writer whose early work brought him wealth and recognition. His first acclaimed work was a collection of short stories in 1977 entitled *Look Ma, No Hands!* Grant achieved a more limited success with *The Sickness in John Harrol*, 1977; *The Collection*, 1979; but his mainstream horror novels *Dark Symbols*, 1980; and *Trinity*, 1982; were extremely successful. His Lovecraftian fantasy-horror *The Sightless King*, 1984 was universally panned. Grant also wrote the screenplay for the 1981 film *The Blinding*. Numerous short stories including *The Metallic Taste of Blood* **Omni**, Feb 1982.

Grant's work has tended more towards the occult and fantasy side than Stephen King, and his success has been less marked, but his early novels were commercially successful. Born 1955 to a wealthy Virginia family, Grant graduated from George Washington University in DC in 1975, aged twenty. Writer and playboy, known to have inherited some money from parent's death in 1974. He is widely rumored to have been hospitalized recently for rehabilitation.

Leda Deerden: A New York author, or visual artist, guest of Grant's Publisher. Ms. Deerden is known for her terra cotta figures, which are widely sold in gift shops in the Village, and her work at the 42nd Street Gallery, but is a newcomer to the writing field. Her first project is projected to be a collaboration with Grant Cochran.

Jonathan Drake: Publisher of Grant Cochran, Drake is Editor of Horror at Electra publishing, a division of Robert W. Thormond and Sons, Inc., one of the nations largest publishing houses. Despite the failure of Cochran's latest novel, Drake is reported to be successful and on the rise. He handles many other writers including Anthony Blaine, and is also in charge of titles under the

smaller, but profitable Medea imprintaur, for occult paperbacks, which includes the works of Jeffrey Saxon.

Linda Kane: Parapsychological researcher for the Institute for Parapsychological Studies, 1567 23rd St. NW. Graduate of Columbia Prep, and Mary Washington College. M.A. Barnard. Kane is a literary agent for Matthew Allen Carter and is rumored to be his lover.

Sarah Lamont: Sarah Lamont is an old Prep-school and College friend of Margot Matthews, Linda Kane, Emily Breezewood and others. Sarah went to work for Gary Morant as a paralegal, and is now his chief secretary.

Jeffrey Saxon: A noted Parapsychology/Occult writer and Astrologer, author of *Health Signs*, *Astrology for You*, and *Psychic Defense*, and several other successful books published in paperback. Jeffrey is rumored to be practically the only person in New York who does not suffer from an incapacitating drug addiction.

Karyn Seidmann: A New-York literary agent, Seidmann is not well known in literary circles, though there are some dark rumors about her past, including a lawsuit. Seidman handles small time occult authors, and until recently her biggest literary success was Jeffrey Saxon, the popular occultist and astrologer.

Oliver Stewart: A comic-book author and illustrator for *Universal Comics*, a major competitor of Marvel and D.C. Oliver responsible for the satirical *Captain Flapjack* miniseries, but is best known for his work with *Blood Hound*, a revitalized 1960's Superhero, and with *Revenant*, a dark-horror miniseries. Stewart handled a graphic-novel adaptation of Grant Cochran's *Sightless King*, which was somewhat more successful than the actual novel. Oliver is a New Yorker, but has maintained a friendship with horror writer Grant Cochran, and has come down with some of his other New York acquaintances to make his birthday an interesting affair.

Craig Webber: An acquaintance of Margot Matthews, Mr. Webber is a well-to-do local business consultant, rumored to have connections to smuggling and the underworld. Webber is said to be a business partner of Avery Carson.



A Birthday Surprise

Emily Breezewood

You are Emily Breezewood, the daughter of Senator Robert Breezewood, from Basque Woods Connecticut, a place you remember as being dreadfully boring. About the only thing around that was interesting was Linda Kane, and parties.

The two of you were into many of the same things: TM, Ouija boards, men, sex. This was the early seventies which was kind of like the sixties only in the sixties you were too young to do any of this shit. Right...where were you...

You took the first chance to get out of the Woods, and went to Columbia Prep, near DC. That meant you could reach daddy's wallet a little easier. At Columbia, you and Linda met Margot Matthews, and Margot introduced you to fashionable society, and the world. Sure she was probably only attracted to you because you were the daughter of somebody important, but it worked well. You got invitations, and Margot taught you how to behave.

You eventually ended up in college at Mary Washington University, but you worked summers at a PAC where daddy got you a job, and you partied and occasionally attended night classes at George Washington University. It was there that Margot met Grant Cochran, which lead to you meeting Grant's weird friend Matthew Allen Carter. He was a pretty strange fish even by your standards; a bit of a mystic, a bit of a schizophrenic. When he wasn't wired on something, he cut a pretty decent figure in society. Margot started going out with Grant, and you began dating Matthew.

In Columbia, you had learned to stoke up on the friendly white powder that made the Kennedy kids happy, mostly from your girlfriend Margot. You never got in trouble for it, though your friend Toni did, and it took a direct appeal to your father to get her off. Toni dropped out of school (well, was kind of...expelled) but she became a famous Olympic athlete so that's okay.

Margot broke up with Grant, who wasn't rich or famous enough for her anymore, and went to Sweden with an American diplomat. You married Matthew because he had money, drugs, and you were the only person who could put up with him freaking out in the living room at three in the morning. You were and are a person of great kindness and abiding patience, which is why you can stand to have friends like Margot, and how you managed to cope for so long with Matthew. You thought you could *save* him. He seemed so passionate, so artistic...he was cruel to you though. He accused you of being sent by the Greater Demons to disrupt his delivery of the message of the Secret Masters, and put curses on you, which seemed to work, since you felt like death warmed over, and had lousy luck.

Matthew abused you too. He beat you a couple of times to try and drive some evil spirit out of you. You were getting tired of candles and tables and stuff too. He really lived that shit. You had a life of your own. There were important people who trusted you, who thought you were important. You didn't completely blame Matthew, since he was generally only a real bastard when he was stoked up.

He introduced you to a friend of his, named Mike Ballistas, who you remembered distantly as having gone to school with Matthew. Ballistas immediately put the moves on you, and you sought some comfort. Ballistas was everything that Matthew wasn't. He was calm, cool, reserved and worldly. Matthew had you followed, and filed for divorce. Despite the fact that he had broken your arm once, his chickenshit lawyer, Gary Morant talked your father into paying hush money because somehow Matthew found out about your affair with Ballistas. You've always suspected that Matthew and Gary Morant set something up, but you can't be sure.

That has been over for a while now, and you are getting a little more together. When you were married to Matthew, one of your only friends other

than Linda was Karyn Seidmann, who was Matthew's agent. Matthew tried to spend as much time with her as possible, because he wanted to get published on his own. She obviously was interested in Matthew for business reasons, but was personally frightened of him, and the two of you got along very well.

You are secretly sure that Linda always wanted to take Matthew away from you, and she kind of took Matthew's side in the break up. She can have the bastard, but relations with Linda have been a slight bit chilly since then. You went to New York to stay with Karyn while you recovered yourself, and met a fair number of her artist friends. You moved back to D.C. and got an apartment with Margot Matthews when she returned from Sweden this year, but you also started seeing Mike Ballistis again.

You ended up living with Mike Ballistis, though you are seeing someone else on the side. More about that later. You have tried not to do many drugs...you realized they were fucking up your life, and you really do wish that Margot would get into some counselling. Mike is stable, with a real job as a respectable consultant. He takes good care of you, and you would really hate to lose him.

Of course you are a little worried about your current work for Avery Carson. You got involved in Avery's little net when you were living with Margot. You desperately needed money, though Matthew was being decent to you again, and had even given you a little bit of money. Margot told you that Avery might be able to get you a "job." You could have gotten a job from "daddy dearest" but you had a feeling that you would be working "under" some Senator or Congressman in a very real sense if you went to work on the hill, and that appealed to you less than starvation. Since you went to New York, you had been trying to get a career started in fine arts, and you had Leda Deerden teach you how to make small misshapen ceramic figurines of animals, and paint them in bright colors. The market, however, was not booming.

So you went to work for Avery, because he didn't expect you to sleep with him. First he started having you deliver "gifts" for him. He said he was a lobbyist, and you understood that this amounted to bribes, but this didn't cause you any real problems. You grew up in a political family, and graft was a way of life. Most of the "gifts" were to

arab businessmen which also made sense. It was easy for you to slip them a small envelope at a party, and you enjoyed getting to go to parties again. Especially with Margot, who is always a lot of fun.

Lately it has been pretty obvious that you were delivering drugs to Avery's high priced clientele. Mike gives you plenty of money and you could stop, but you are kind of afraid to. You have been thinking of telling Avery you are going to quit, or telling Mike about it, but you don't want to get Avery arrested, you just don't want to work for him anymore.

Then there is the possibility that he really isn't running drugs. There are rumors that he is connected to the Company, or the NSA (known colloquially as "No-Such-Agency"). What if you have been acting as a courier and already know too much. Worse, what if Avery is really working for the other side, and you are a courier for them? Lately there has been talk of the death penalty for spies. You aren't sure you could prove that you didn't know what was going on. You have almost been tempted to talk to Gary Morant. Sure he's a greasy snake in the grass, but he just does what he's paid to, and you may *need* a greasy snake in the grass to get out of this.

It was through Avery Carson that you met Craig Webber, though they claimed not to be very well acquainted which made you feel better about Craig. You have been increasingly worried, because there is definitely something not quite right about him. He makes phone calls when he thinks you aren't awake, or don't see him, and he sometimes misses meeting you. He has said that he can't say who his employer is, which is not unusual around Washington, but you are beginning to think he is just lying. He wouldn't have to hide another affair from you, so you assume he must either be a spook, or a drug runner like Avery. Why do all of your men turn out to be spooks, criminals, or insane?

A few weeks ago, Margot asked you and Mike to come down to a party which she was throwing for Grant Cochran. You had heard that Grant had a breakdown, or was in rehab or something, so this was sort of a "coming back out" party, and he was inviting a lot of old college friends.

You agreed to go, but now you are worried. Margot also invited Craig, your other lover. She

likes to create embarrassing little situations like that. This normally wouldn't bother you except for the fact that you are afraid that Mike knows you have another lover. You over heard him on the phone the other night, when he got an emergency phone call. You heard him say "Yes, Emily and I are coming" and then "Shit...if it's Grant, I'll kill the bastard." He sounded dead serious, and you are worried that he already knows you have a lover, and is just trying to figure out who it is.

Your personal life is a confusing web of arrangements, but since you got your drug habit under control, you actually feel like living. All in all, life is more fun than when your major entertainment was watching Matthew make pronouncements from Nostradamus and vomit.

You aren't out to *do* anything in particular, other than if possible attract attention to yourself as a serious artist, but you want to catch up on all the gossip from your New York friends, and make sure they have a good time.

Special Information

School: You attended Columbia Prep from 1970-73. You know Margot Matthews, Linda Kane, Sarah Lamont, and Toni Randall-Smith from there.

Afterwards you went to Mary Washington with Linda, and Sarah. During the summers of '74 and '75 you and Linda took night classes at GW. From there you know Gary Morant, Grant Cochran, Avery Carson, Mike Ballistis, and Matthew Allen Carter.

THE OTHERS

What they know about you:

Emily Breezewood: a college friend of Grant Cochran, and a prep-school friend of Margot Matthews, Emily is the daughter of Senator Breezewood of Connecticut, a very powerful senior U.S. Legislator. Emily was married to Matthew Allen Carter, and divorced him, in a particularly messy case during which Mr. Carter was represented by Gary Morant. They are reported to be on barely civil speaking terms now. Emily is living with Mike Ballistis.

PEOPLE YOU KNOW WELL:

Mike Ballistas: *the person you are currently livin' with*, a wealthy international consultant with impressive offices downtown. Ballistas has numerous prominent government contacts, and is generally known to be an influential businessman. He donated heavily to the Reagan Campaign.

Anthony Blaine: *a friend of yours from New York*, A New York writer considered a protege of Grant Cochran, Blaine is handled by Jonathan Drake, the same publisher as Cochran. It was rumored that Blaine and Cochran had a very serious argument while appearing together at a promotional convention after the publication of *Sightless King*. Blaine is best known for his Fantasy-Horror novel *Wunderking*, and his most recent work *The Dinner Guest*.

Avery Carson: *the person you are currently "working" for*, attended George Washington University and has many acquaintances from that period, and immediately afterward. Avery met most of Grant's circle of friends in the seventies while they were working in Washington after graduation. Mr. Carson occupied a position in the staff of the late Darrington Ripley, U.S. Ambassador to Sweden. Currently employed by the State Department, Avery Carson is rumored to actually work for the Company, or No-such-agency.

Matthew Allen Carter: *your not very beloved ex-husband. You genuinely cared for Matthew, but he is a terminal psychopath. He scares you. You have seen him a few times in public since your divorce, and have spoken politely.*

A well known mystic, Carter is associated with decadence, drugs, and bizarre mysticism. It is unclear where his money comes from, though he is known to be at least moderately wealthy, and eccentric.

M.A Carter provides spiritual consultation to some of Washington's most prominent social figures. He has appeared on several area talk shows, notably *Panorama* in July 1979 where he was involved in an altercation, and declined to appear on *Good Morning America* in August of 1982 on the topic "Senators who follow the Horoscopes." He has assisted Federal authorities as a consultant on "Cult Related Cases", and appeared before a Senate Subcommittee Special Hearing in 1983 to discuss "Cult Phenomena and Crime."

Grant Cochran: *you have not seen Grant in years, since Margot dropped him and moved to Sweden.* Grant Cochran is a horror writer whose early work brought him wealth and recognition. His first acclaimed work was a collection of short stories in 1977 entitled *Look Ma, No Hands!* Grant achieved a more limited success with *The Sickness in John Harrol*, 1977; *The Collection*, 1979; but his mainstream horror novels *Dark Symbols*, 1980; and *Trinity*, 1982; were extremely successful. His Lovecraftian fantasy-horror *The Sightless King*, 1984 was universally panned. Grant also wrote the screenplay for the 1981 film *The Blinding*. Numerous short stories including *The Metallic Taste of Blood* **Omni**, Feb 1982.

Grant's work has tended more towards the occult and fantasy side than Stephen King, and his success has been less marked, but his early novels were commercially successful. Born 1955 to a wealthy Virginia family, Grant graduated from George Washington University in DC in 1975, aged twenty. Writer and playboy, known to have inherited some money from parent's death in 1974. He is widely rumored to have been hospitalized recently for rehabilitation.

Leda Deerden: *One of your closest friends in New York, Leda has been teaching you useful arts so that you can start a new career. She is a very enlightened and socially aware person.*

A New York author, or visual artist, guest of Grant's Publisher. Ms. Deerden is known for her terra cotta figures, which are widely sold in gift

shops in the Village, and her work at the 42nd Street Gallery, but is a newcomer to the writing field. Her first project is projected to be a collaboration with Grant Cochran.

Jonathan Drake: *you met Drake in New York, and are aware that he is important in social circles there, but you are not terribly familiar with him.* Publisher of Grant Cochran, Drake is Editor of Horror at Electra publishing, a division of Robert W. Thormond and Sons, Inc., one of the nations largest publishing houses. Despite the failure of Cochran's latest novel, Drake is reported to be successful and on the rise. He handles many other writers including Anthony Blaine, and is also in charge of titles under the smaller, but profitable Medea imprintaur, for occult paperbacks, which includes the works of Jeffrey Saxon.

Linda Kane: *One of your dearest friends from High School, you have not been as close to Linda in recent years, but you still care for her deeply.*

Parapsychological researcher for the Institute for Parapsychological Studies, 1567 23rd St. NW. Graduate of Columbia Prep, and Mary Washington College. M.A. Barnard. Kane is a literary agent for Matthew Allen Carter and is rumored to be his lover.

Sarah Lamont: *One of your best friends in school, Sarah went to work for Gary Morant, as a legal secretary. Despite that, you are still friends with her, though you have not seen her in some time.*

Sarah Lamont is an old Prep-school and College friend of Margot Matthews, Linda Kane, Emily Breezewood and others. Sarah went to work for Gary Morant as a paralegal, and is now his chief secretary.

Margot Matthews: *One of your dearest friends in prep-school, you lived with Margot when you returned from New York after your divorce. You have always been close to Margot, though you are aware that she has character flaws.* Margot was a friend of Grant Cochran, and several other attendees in college, but went on to become a prominent Washington socialite who rose out of the ranks of minor political followers due to her connections with the

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Washington Attorney. Graduated from George Washington University in 1974, GW Law in 1978. Formed Morant and Steele with Harlan Steel in 1980. Known for handling some of the messiest and most prominent divorce and lawsuit cases in the Washington social spectrum. Morant is a rising star in the social constellation of Washington, and is Grant Cochran's attorney, and is currently representing him in all of his sordid legal affairs.

Toni Randall-Smith: *When you were in prep school, you used your father's influence to get Toni off on a drug charge. This will be the first time you have seen her in years, though you understand that she has been keeping in touch with Margot and with Avery Carter.* Olympic Equestrian Medalist, winning two Silver and one Bronze medal at Los Angeles in 1984. Native of McLean Virginia, the child of a former ambassador to England. Personally acquainted with Princess Margaret, has appeared in *Sports Illustrated*, and network television. Currently holds American and European Championships in several categories of jumps. Professional status has been called into question, but intends to compete in 1988.

Jeffrey Saxon: *A very good friend of yours from New York, Jeffrey is the life of any party, though he occasionally broods too much. He is a militant tee-totaller.* A noted Parapsychology/Occult writer and Astrologer, author of *Health Signs*, *Astrology for You*, and *Psychic Defense*, and several other successful books published in paperback. Jeffrey is rumored to be practically the only person in New York who does not suffer from an incapacitating drug addiction.

Karyn Seidmann: *You have been good freinds with Karyn since you met her through Matthew. She confided in you that she was formerly a criminal, but is now a legitimate literary agent. You stayed with Karyn in New York during and after your divorce.* A New-York literary agent, Seidmann is not well known in literary circles, though there are some dark rumors about her past, including a lawsuit. Seidman handles small time occult authors, and until recently her biggest literary success was Jeffrey Saxon, the popular occultist and astrologer.

Oliver Stewart: *is a very close friend of Jeffrey Saxon, and a shining light of the New York social scene, as well as an irredeemable drug-addict and alcoholic.*

A comic-book author and illustrator for *Universal Comics*, a major competitor of Marvel and D.C.

Oliver is responsible for the satirical *Captain Flapjack* miniseries, but is best known for his work with *Blood Hound*, a revitalized 1960's Superhero, and with *Revenant*, a dark-horror miniseries. Stewart handled a graphic-novel adaptation of Grant Cochran's *Sightless King*, which was somewhat more successful than the actual novel. Oliver is a New Yorker, but has maintained a friendship with horror writer Grant Cochran, and has come down with some of his other New York acquaintances to make his birthday an interesting affair.

Craig Webber: *your other lover, you do not know much about Craig, though you are very fond of him.*

An acquaintance of Margot Matthews, Mr. Webber is a well-to-do local business consultant, rumored to have connections to smuggling and the underworld. Webber is said to be a business partner of Avery Carson.

OTHER PEOPLE:

Roger Pierce: a Professor/practitioner of Psychology at George Washington University. Young but promising, for several years his 400 level course on Personality Disorders has been considered the "most fun" class in the entire psych department. Many of Dr. Pierce's associates consider him to be "that strung out quack", Dr.

Pierce considers himself a "perceptually enhanced alternative practitioner." It is obvious that Dr. Pierce either has something on the University, or has tenure.

"Psychological disorders can be not only instructive, but entertaining as well..." (*American Psychiatric Yearbook*, 1980).

Mort Nicholson: a well known private detective. Nicholson has worked for Gary Morant, and was a research reference for the character of Detective George Panopolous in Grant Cochran's *Trinity*.



A Birthday Surprise

Avery Carson

You are Avery Carson, a name you generated from a New York City Phone Book. Somewhere in New York State there is a draft notice on file with your birth name on it. But Avery Carson is a real person...now.

You are by profession, a blackmailer. That's about it really. You run drugs on the side. You are a U.S. Citizen and you moved to D.C. in the early seventies because the drug business in New York was getting a little hot, and you heard there was a good supply in D.C. You even went to George Washington University for a while in '73 and '74. You say "went to" because you never actually enrolled in classes. But you wandered around on campus, and generally gave the impression you were a student.

You started out as a local dealer, and pretty quickly got some people working under you. Mostly you got school friends or their dumb relatives to act as couriers for you. You found the perfect social circle. The rich, old money, intellectual crazies. There were a few dullards like Gary Morant around the edge and a few fruit loops like Matthew Allen Carter and Grant Cochran towards the center. This was a perfect group. They wanted drugs, and they could pay for them. You were the much loved campus dealer.

You were still hanging around in the mid-seventies, mostly dealing drugs, in an increasingly pressure-filled environment. One of Margot's friends who she knew from prep school, by the name of Tony Randall-Smith got burned bringing one of your loads up from Florida in '76.

You did some time in South America. You started selling drugs which paid okay, which led to smuggling drugs which paid well, which led to being shot at by Colombian government troops which paid not enough at any price. The foreigners were edging into the Washington drug market and you decided it was time to edge out.

By this time Margot Matthews had dropped her old boyfriend, Grant Cochran, and had a minor job in the office of a Political Appointee at the State Department named Darrington Ripley.

She was sleeping with "Rip" to get up in the world, and you gave her free drugs in return for getting him hooked. Then you turned the tables on him. The U.S. ambassador to Sweden was retiring, and "Rip" seemed a shoe-in for his job. You were his dealer and knew enough to make sure he couldn't get appointed ambassador to Libya. You got a cushy appointment on his staff.

By this time you were blackmailing Ripley and using Margot heavily. Ripley started to get into a really tight spot, and found some really bad trouble on his own. By this time you were smuggling diamonds from the Hague, and using the Ambassador's office to run an arms connection with Brussels, selling heavy weapons through Europe to countries that the U.S. doesn't have legitimate relations with. You had connections with a "classmate" of Margot's who had gone into the arms trade, Mike Ballistas.

Margot worked for you mostly by acting as a courier. At first you paid her, but eventually you got the goods on her, and began forcing her to work to keep out of trouble. Of course she didn't just arrange for deliveries. She was the courier who delivered orders for arms papers. She brought you the information, and you shipped back the completed forged documents, etc. Probably, she never knew exactly what she was carrying, though you have no way of knowing how much she knew about the other end of the operation.

Then Iran-Contra exploded, and it looked like there might be a full scale investigation of the illicit arms trade and you were beginning to sweat. At that point "Rip" had a little "accident" outside of Mons Belgium on a vacation trip. There was a car bombing. How tragic. The Basque Liberation Front called to claim credit. Nice thing about Europe. Blow up an American, and someone will

take credit for it. You didn't do it, so you assume Margot did.

So everyone returned to the U.S., unemployed. You tightened the screws on Margot, who was running scared by this time. Unfortunately she was colder and nastier than Ripley, and she turned the tables on you just as you had on him. You needed some work, and Ballistis has not had much for you in the arms arena. Instead, you called an old friend, Dr. Pierce and went back to drug dealing, though in slightly better social circles.

She went to a writer named Grant Cochran, who you had known distantly, and sold drugs to back in the seventies. He's a hack writer who writes horror stuff. You prefer LeCarre. Matthews gave him some weapons export permits which Ripley had endorsed in Sweden and you had altered for an end user. She is apparently trying to counter-blackmail you. You intend to get the evidence from Cochran, either by intimidation or other means, and then if necessary kill him. After that, you'll worry about putting Margot in her place.

She is actually quite useful, if you can get her to drop the concept that she can act independently of you. You needed to get a network together as soon as you got back to D.C., and all you had to do was follow her around as she began collecting old acquaintances. Like Matthew Allen Carter, the noted fruit loop who is one of your best customers.

For example, she still gets invited to the best embassy parties, and was glad to wrangle an invitation for Tony Randall-Smith, who apparently has the semblance of a career as an athlete these days. She is still riding horses, and you had heard that she still ran "cargo" from time to time. With Margot to attract her attention it wasn't too difficult to convince her to begin working for you again.

She didn't have too many hard feelings about her earlier bust, and you managed to leverage her into agreeing to run narcotics for you. It didn't hurt to point out that if her arrest came out in the tabloids, that her sports career could take a very sudden plunge.

She lives down here in Buffuck Virginia, and she set up a perfect exchange. Your old friend Grant Cochran was throwing a party, and so you suggested to Margot that she should invite you. The deal is, you come down, and exchange the goods in the general confusion of the party. Best

thing is, if something goes wrong, you can probably see to it that Grant takes the blame, since it is his house, and he's known to use all sorts of drugs.

Then there is Emily Breezewood. Beautiful girl, Senator's daughter. Margot ended up rooming with her, and reluctantly mentioned that she needed a job. You found her one as a delivery person of course. Drugs for the Americans, weapons permits for the Arabs. A very nice business. As a socialite, she can so easily move in diplomatic circles where a minor former staffer like yourself would seem out of place.

She happened to lead you to Craig Webber, and you are planning to make your first approach to him this weekend. You have a particular job in mind. The fact is that you are looking to begin to pull out of drugs and arms. Drugs are getting too risky, and arms are headed that way, though right now, despite Iran-Contra there is a virtual "open door" policy for illicit shipments.

You are also using this weekend to vet Craig Webber. He is a small time arms merchant who has drifted into your circle of acquaintances, and a few days ago he said he had a proposal for you. You are trying to figure out how to make the best of it. Whatever it is, you'll need to buy phony documentation from Ballistis, and cut him in for a portion.

School:

You attended George Washington University from 1973 to 1974. You know Gary Morant, Grant Cochran, Avery Carson, Matthew Allen Carter, and Margot Matthews from a circle of acquaintances there.

THE OTHERS

What they know about you:

Avery Carson: attended George Washington University and has many acquaintances from that period, and immediately afterward. Avery met most of Grant's circle of friends in the seventies while they were working in Washington after graduation. Mr. Carson occupied a position in the staff of the late Darrington Ripley, U.S. Ambassador to Sweden. Currently employed by the State Department, Avery Carson is rumored to actually work for the Company, or No-such-agency.

PEOPLE YOU KNOW WELL:

Mike Ballistas: a wealthy international consultant with impressive offices downtown. Ballistas has numerous prominent government contacts, and is generally known to be an influential businessman. He donated heavily to the Reagan Campaign.

Emily Breezewood: *you met her through Margot when she was taking night classes at GW, and have occasionally acted as a supplier for her when you were in the U.S. Emily is currently acting as a courier for you, though she does not know much about what she is carrying.*

A college friend of Grant Cochran, and a prep-school friend of Margot Matthews, Emily is the daughter of Senator Breezewood of Connecticut, a very powerful senior U.S. Legislator. Emily was married to Matthew Allen Carter, and divorced him, in a particularly messy case during which Mr. Carter was represented by Gary Morant. They are reported to be on barely civil speaking terms now. Emily is living with Mike Ballistas.

Margot Matthews: *She could be very dangerous for you. You are certain that she probably blew up Ripley, though you have no evidence. She has the goods on you and she gave them to Grant Cochran.*

Margot was a friend of Grant Cochran, and several other attendees in college, but went on to become a prominent Washington socialite who rose out of the ranks of minor political followers due to her connections with the late U.S. ambassador to Sweden Mr. Darrington Ripley. Margot is giving this party in honor of Grant Cochran's birthday.

Margot is currently employed by the Department of State, where she is rumored to be the mistress of a powerful political appointee. She was mentioned in *People* magazine shortly after the inaugural ball, and her fortunes have definitely been on the rise with the Reagan government.

Tony Randall-Smith: *ran drugs for you back in the seventies. Got busted once, but Margot, who she was in school with, had a connection, and got her off. You think it was probably Emily's father. You'll be paying her \$2000 for a delivery this evening.*

Olympic Equestrian Medalist, winning two Silver and one Bronze medal at Los Angeles in 1984. Native of McLean Virginia, the child of a former ambassador to England. Personally acquainted with Princess Margaret, has appeared in *Sports Illustrated*, and network television. Currently holds American and European Championships in several categories of jumps. Professional status has been called into question, but intends to compete in 1988.

Craig Webber: *A recent "friend" of yours, who you met at a party while you were keeping an eye on Margot. Webber is a small time arms dealer looking to enlarge his operation. He approached you about a possible deal. You have not told him specifically that you deal in arms, but he seems to have the right connections.*

An acquaintance of Margot Matthews, Mr. Webber is a well-to-do local business consultant, rumored to have connections to smuggling and the underworld. Webber is said to be a business partner of Avery Carson.

OTHER PEOPLE:

Anthony Blaine: A New York writer considered a protege of Grant Cochran, Blaine is handled by Jonathan Drake, the same publisher as Cochran. It was rumored that Blaine and Cochran had a very serious argument while appearing together at a promotional convention after the publication of *Sightless King*. Blaine is best known for his Fantasy-Horror novel *Wunderking*, and his most recent work *The Dinner Guest*.

Matthew Allen Carter: A well known mystic, Carter is associated with decadence, drugs, and bizarre mysticism. It is unclear where his money comes from, though he is known to be at least moderately wealthy, and eccentric. M.A Carter provides spiritual consultation to some of Washington's most prominent social figures. He has appeared on several area talk shows, notably *Panorama* in July 1979 where he was involved in an altercation, and declined to appear on *Good Morning America* in August of 1982 on the topic "Senators who follow the Horoscopes." He has assisted Federal authorities as a consultant on "Cult Related Cases", and appeared before a Senate Subcommittee Special Hearing in 1983 to discuss "Cult Phenomena and Crime."

Grant Cochran: Grant Cochran is a horror writer whose early work brought him wealth and recognition. His first acclaimed work was a collection of short stories in 1977 entitled *Look Ma, No Hands!* Grant achieved a more limited success with *The Sickness in John Harrol*, 1977; *The Collection*, 1979; but his mainstream horror novels *Dark Symbols*, 1980; and *Trinity*, 1982; were extremely successful. His Lovecraftian fantasy-horror *The Sightless King*, 1984 was universally panned. Grant also wrote the screenplay for the 1981 film *The Blinding*. Numerous short stories including *The Metallic Taste of Blood* **Omni**, Feb 1982.

Grant's work has tended more towards the occult and fantasy side than Stephen King, and his success has been less marked, but his early novels were commercially successful. Born 1955 to a wealthy Virginia family, Grant graduated from George Washington University in DC in 1975, aged twenty. Writer and playboy, known to have inherited some money from parent's death in 1974. He is widely rumored to have been hospitalized recently for rehabilitation.

Thomas Cochran: *Used to be a minor courier for you, mostly as a favor to Grant and Margot who knew him. He was a failure in every sense of the word. He had already dropped out of school to be a redneck when you first met him.*

Grant's failure of a brother. Thomas dropped out of school, and was deeply involved in drugs. He narrowly avoided jail on larceny charges. He lost his share of the family wealth, and is currently employed by his brother as a handyman.

Leda Deerden: A New York author, or visual artist, guest of Grant's Publisher. Ms. Deerden is known for her terra cotta figures, which are widely sold in gift shops in the Village, and her work at the 42nd Street Gallery, but is a newcomer to the writing field. Her first project is projected to be a collaboration with Grant Cochran.

Jonathan Drake: Publisher of Grant Cochran, Drake is Editor of Horror at Electra publishing, a division of Robert W. Thormond and Sons, Inc., one of the nations largest publishing houses. Despite the failure of Cochran's latest novel, Drake is reported to be successful and on the rise. He handles many other writers including Anthony Blaine, and is also in charge of titles under the smaller, but profitable Medea imprintaur, for occult paperbacks, which includes the works of Jeffrey Saxon.

Linda Kane: Parapsychological researcher for the Institute for Parapsychological Studies, 1567 23rd St. NW. Graduate of Columbia Prep, and Mary Washington College. M.A. Barnard. Kane is a literary agent for Matthew Allen Carter and is rumored to be his lover.

Sarah Lamont: *Personally, you aren't expecting to see Sarah again. She paid you a visit yesterday and had you obtain a passport for her in another name. She made some remarks about "financial problems" and "not wanting to be around Gary when the shit hit the fan."*

Sarah Lamont is an old Prep-school and College friend of Margot Matthews, Linda Kane, Emily Breezewood and others. Sarah went to work for Gary Morant as a paralegal, and is now his chief secretary.

Gary Morant: Washington Attorney. Graduated from George Washington University in 1974, GW Law in 1978. Formed Morant and Steele with Harlan Steel in 1980. Known for handling some of the messiest and most prominent divorce and lawsuit cases in the Washington social spectrum. Morant is a rising star in the social constellation of Washington, and is Grant Cochran's attorney, and is currently representing him in all of his sordid legal affairs.

Mort Nicholson: a well known private detective. Nicholson has worked for Gary Morant, and was a research reference for the character of Detective George Panopolous in Grant Cochran's *Trinity*.

Roger Pierce: *the good professor seems to enjoy reconstructing Freud's original experiments with coke. Back in the seventies you had a warm relationship with Dr. Pierce, but you suspect that his laissez-faire attitude about drugs is becoming unpopular more quickly than he realizes. When you returned to D.C. from Sweden, he helped you get back into the pharmaceutical business.*

Professor/practitioner of Psychology at George Washington University. Young but promising, for several years his 400 level course on Personality Disorders has been considered the "most fun" class in the entire psych department. Many of Dr. Pierce's associates consider him to be "that strung out quack", Dr. Pierce considers himself a "perceptually enhanced alternative practitioner." It is obvious that Dr. Pierce either has something on the University, or has tenure.

"Psychological disorders can be not only instructive, but entertaining as well..." (*American Psychiatric Yearbook*, 1980).

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Karyn Seidmann: A New-York literary agent, Seidmann is not well known in literary circles, though there are some dark rumors about her past, including a lawsuit. Seidmann handles small time occult authors, and until recently her biggest literary success was Jeffrey Saxon, the popular occultist and astrologer.

Oliver Stewart: A comic-book author and illustrator for *Universal Comics*, a major competitor of Marvel and D.C.

Oliver is responsible for the satirical *Captain Flapjack* miniseries, but is best known for his work with *Blood Hound*, a revitalized 1960's Superhero, and with *Revenant*, a dark-horror miniseries. Stewart handled a graphic-novel adaptation of Grant Cochran's *Sightless King*, which was somewhat more successful than the actual novel. Oliver is a New Yorker, but has maintained a friendship with horror writer Grant Cochran, and has come down with some of his other New York acquaintances to make his birthday an interesting affair.



A Birthday Surprise

Matthew Allen Carter

You are Matthew Allen Carter. You always use all three names. You are what most people might consider a looney.

To explain. You aren't actually a lunatic, exactly. It is just that your version of reality doesn't agree with everyone else's. On a rather frequent basis.

You are a bit of a mystic. Well, more than a bit actually. In fact you are one of the leading figures in a very grey realm between shunned cult personality and respected entertainer and parapsychologist. In fact you have speculated that you would be widely respected and accepted, like Uri Geller, etc., if your personality was just a trifle more stable. As it is you have been known to become rather upset when people have displayed a lack of faith in your talents. About like Sean Penn actually.

Well, perhaps not that bad. You realize that the majority out there of the "Great Unenlightened" are going to stay that way, and that will just have to do. You usually ignore them, unless they are obnoxiously insistent.

You have known Grant Cochran for a long time. You finally gave up on University life the year he graduated, but you kept in contact with the community of upwardly mobile drug-using socialites. You never really liked the socialites very much, but you put up with them, especially the group that hung around Grant, because that man was into serious weirdness. Most of them were as shallow as an empty bathtub, and they were drawn towards this depth.

You could handle the sort of bizarre things that he envisioned very well. Well enough that he talked to you a lot about the world over the abyss, which you travel in frequently. He used this as the source of several of his story ideas. Particularly some of the passages in *Trinity*, which was without doubt his best work. Early on he talked to you about paying you for your ideas, but lately he has stopped. He says that all the material he got from

you is why *Sightless King* was such a flop. Most other people realize it was his shitty writing. You talked to an attorney about suing him, but you were told, flatly you didn't have much of a chance...certainly not enough of a chance to take a five grand case to court.

Maybe it was just your chickenshit attorney, Gary Morant. He is also Grant's attorney, but you have never seen conflict of interest matter much to him if he can round on someone like a jackal. He did a fairly piss poor job of handling your divorce too. You were married to the younger daughter of Senator Breezewood of Connecticut. You basically married her for the money, though there were other benefits.

Among the benefits were her connections, including some very powerful people in Washington. Amid all the intellectualism, and obscene grasping for secular power (what a paltry imitation of the real thing), there is an undercurrent of true need for knowledge, and contact with true power. You fill that need, and because you really are an exceptionally generous teacher, you ask only money in return. How much more you might ask. Or take.

She looked like a model, and could put up with you freaking out in the living room at three thirty in the morning. Morant got a fair supply of cash out of her father in order for you not to make a public deal about it. You had the advantage because you had evidence of her committing adultery. Of course that was because you had gotten Mike Ballistas to seduce her. The idea was Gary Morant's but it took you to carry it out.

Ballistas owed you one because he is a leading arms dealer. About a year ago one of his contacts got religion and spilled his beans to you. You convinced the guy to go off and join a monastery in Tibet or something, rather than going to the cops about Ballistas. But you made sure he knew about the favor. You didn't try to get money from him. Even you know that is unwise with a guy who has

more firepower than the *U.S.S. Iowa* unless it is truly necessary. But he was more than willing to sleep with your wife.

Poor Emily, she just wasn't as advanced as you, was a hopeless pupil, and to be frank now that you have enough money to follow your paths night and day, you really don't give much of a fuck what happened to her. She resented the necessity of discipline upon the paths that lead through the abyss. You understand that after living in New York for a while she moved back to D.C. and got an apartment with Margot Matthews, before finally moving in with Mike Ballistas. How happy for her.

There were changes in your exterior life after Emily left. You became somewhat closer to Margot Matthews, who is also friends with Emily, but was in Sweden when the whole thing blew up. Margot is a handy key to make sure the doors of the well-to-do stay unlocked for you. You also began to take your work much more seriously, and prevailed heavily upon Linda Kane. Linda is the Director of the Institute for Parapsychological Research, which is basically a one-room office that publishes a cheesy little newsletter.

But the credentials sound great, and you list her as a reference. You have grown closer to Linda, and taught her somewhat of the paths, as well as used her to assuage those physical needs that you have not risen above. Linda is, of course, far too preoccupied with the physical world, and has not really seen into the darkness beyond. Perhaps you will be able to show her that, though the experience might well destroy her. For now she is useful. You have been holding down the research center for her while makes trips for her other job.

That was a bit of a disappointment to you. She had told you that she was carrying bribes for Mike Ballistas, and you had rather hoped to take advantage of the situation. But when you steamed one of the envelopes that she was delivering to some arab businessman open at her office, it turned out not to contain bribes at all, just a fat folio of manifests in French. You could care less than nothing about Ballistas' business dealings, but you wish you could quietly sidetrack some of his cash. Your work requires vast stretches of uninterrupted time, and working a normal job, or even making regular appointments is simply not possible for you.

The only real loss from your divorce was the devotion of your agent. Your literary agent is Karyn Seidman, though you have been on somewhat lukewarm terms since your divorce. She took Emily's side, and Emily lived with her in New York for a while after she left you. Unfortunately, she is the only agent you have got, and the only one who believes that you could possibly actually coordinate yourself enough to write something. You prevailed on Linda Kane to talk to her at length, and eventually she agreed to continue to have a business relationship with you. She is very interested in having you collaborate with Jeffrey Saxon, a published occult writer.

You have read Saxon's work, and it is not the most miserable dreck you have ever read. Certainly he does not really understand any of the inner mysteries, but he seems well informed for a dilettante, and behind the garbage that is his published work, and his idiotic obsession with bodily health, he actually shows a distant glimmering of enlightenment.

You are actually a pretty smart guy, but you aren't exactly ace on thinking things through. When you heard from Linda Kane that Grant is signing a multi-million dollar movie deal with a major studio for the screenplay of *Trinity*, you did some serious thinking. One thing you have decided is that you do not intend to let Grant Cochran live. You have known him a long time, and he has fucked you over one too many times, and then made you apologize because you needed his name and his connections. Now that you have made some money off of old man Breezewood, you don't have to grovel before Grant Cochran anymore.

In fact, you've decided to kill him. You aren't sure how, but last night you saw him lying dead in a coffin, and you can always make such visions come true. It is time for Grant to see the other side of the Abyss that he is so fond of having you describe. You will stand idly by while Chorazon desiccates his soul...it will be sublime. And of course, who else but you would be competent to organize Grant's notes and produce his last, posthumous, novel.

Linda Kane was with you when you had your vision of Grant's demise. You cautioned her not to tell anyone, lest it disturb the cosmic balance. You kind of wish you hadn't told her, but on the other

hand, you are always so proud when your predictions come true.

You are rather tightly wound...

THE OTHERS

What they know about you:

Matthew Allen Carter: A well known mystic, Carter is associated with decadence, drugs, and bizarre mysticism. It is unclear where his money comes from, though he is known to be at least moderately wealthy, and eccentric.

M.A. Carter provides spiritual consultation to some of Washington's most prominent social figures. He has appeared on several area talk shows, notably *Panorama* in July 1979 where he was involved in an altercation, and declined to appear on *Good Morning America* in August of 1982 on the topic "Senators who follow the Horoscopes." He has assisted Federal authorities as a consultant on "Cult Related Cases", and appeared before a Senate Subcommittee Special Hearing in 1983 to discuss "Cult Phenomena and Crime."

PEOPLE YOU KNOW WELL:

Mike Ballistas: *an international weapons smuggler who you did a favor for you. In return, he took Emily off your hands.*

A wealthy international consultant with impressive offices downtown. Ballistas has numerous prominent government contacts, and is generally known to be an influential businessman. He donated heavily to the Reagan Campaign.

Anthony Blaine: *You have tried very hard to convince Anthony that the secret of Grant's success is his collaboration with you.*

A New York writer considered a protege of Grant Cochran, Blaine is handled by Jonathan Drake, the same publisher as Cochran. It was rumored that Blaine and Cochran had a very serious argument while appearing together at a promotional convention after the publication of *Sightless King*. Blaine is best known for his Fantasy-Horror novel *Wunderking*, and his most recent work *The Dinner Guest*.

Emily Breezewood: *Your ex-wife. How regrettable.*

A college friend of Grant Cochran, and a prep-school friend of Margot Matthews, Emily is the daughter of Senator Breezewood of Connecticut, a very powerful senior U.S. Legislator. Emily was

married to Matthew Allen Carter, and divorced him, in a particularly messy case during which Mr. Carter was represented by Gary Morant. They are reported to be on barely civil speaking terms now. Emily is living with Mike Ballistis.

Avery Carson: *you missed Avery while he was gone, as he was a convenient "one stop shop" for various of the pharmaceutical substances that you require for your work. Since he returned, you have made considerable use of him.*

Attended George Washington University and has many acquaintances from that period, and immediately afterward. Avery met most of Grant's circle of friends in the seventies while they were working in Washington after graduation. Mr. Carson occupied a position in the staff of the late Darrington Ripley, U.S. Ambassador to Sweden. Currently employed by the State Department, Avery Carson is rumored to actually work for the Company, or No-such-agency.

Grant Cochran: *the dead man.* Grant Cochran is a horror writer whose early work brought him wealth and recognition. His first acclaimed work was a collection of short stories in 1977 entitled *Look Ma, No Hands!* Grant achieved a more limited success with *The Sickness in John Harrol*, 1977; *The Collection*, 1979; but his mainstream horror novels *Dark Symbols*, 1980; and *Trinity*, 1982; were extremely successful. His Lovecraftian fantasy-horror *The Sightless King*, 1984 was universally panned. Grant also wrote the screenplay for the 1981 film *The Blinding*. Numerous short stories including *The Metallic Taste of Blood* **Omni**, Feb 1982.

Grant's work has tended more towards the occult and fantasy side than Stephen King, and his success has been less marked, but his early novels were commercially successful. Born 1955 to a wealthy Virginia family, Grant graduated from George Washington University in DC in 1975, aged twenty. Writer and playboy, known to have inherited some money from parent's death in 1974. He is widely rumored to have been hospitalized recently for rehabilitation.

Linda Kane: *A fairly nice girl who you met through your ex-wife. She was responsible for arranging your initial Panorama appearance, and kept you from strangling Jackson Bain on live TV. Since you rid yourself of Emily, you have found increasing*

uses for Linda. She is one of the only people who has ever really believed in you, and you are unflaggingly kind to her for that reason.

Parapsychological researcher for the Institute for Parapsychological Studies, 1567 23rd St. NW. Graduate of Columbia Prep, and Mary Washington College. M.A. Barnard. Kane is a literary agent for Matthew Allen Carter and is rumored to be his lover.

Margot Matthews: Margot was a friend of Grant Cochran, and several other attendees in college, but went on to become a prominent Washington socialite who rose out of the ranks of minor political followers due to her connections with the late U.S. ambassador to Sweden Mr. Darrington Ripley. Margot is giving this party in honor of Grant Cochran's birthday.

Margot is currently employed by the Department of State, where she is rumored to be the mistress of a powerful political appointee. She was mentioned in *People* magazine shortly after the inaugural ball, and her fortunes have definitely been on the rise with the Reagan government.

Gary Morant: Washington Attorney. Graduated from George Washington University in 1974, GW Law in 1978. Formed Morant and Steele with Harlan Steel in 1980. Known for handling some of the messiest and most prominent divorce and lawsuit cases in the Washington social spectrum. Morant is a rising star in the social constellation of Washington, and is Grant Cochran's attorney, and is currently representing him in all of his sordid legal affairs.

Mort Nicholson: *The PI who Gary hired to take the pictures he used to procure your divorce "settlement."*

A well known private detective. Nicholson has worked for Gary Morant, and was a research reference for the character of Detective George Panopolous in Grant Cochran's *Trinity*.

Roger Pierce: *Treated you shortly after your divorce for personality disorders. He is normally a professor at GWU, but was serving as a consulting doctor at the Psychological Extension of GW hospital. He is the one who gave you the line about your version of reality, and he said you were not*

really a juicy fruit. You have told him quite a few secrets.

A Professor/practitioner of Psychology/Psychiatry at George Washington University. Young but promising, for several years his 400 level course on Personality Disorders has been considered the "most fun" class in the entire psych department. Many of Dr. Pierce's associates consider him to be "that strung out quack", Dr. Pierce considers himself a "perceptually enhanced alternative practitioner." It is obvious that Dr. Pierce either has something on the University, or has tenure.

"Psychological disorders can be not only instructive, but entertaining as well..." (*American Psychiatric Yearbook*, 1980).

OTHER PEOPLE:

Thomas Cochran: Grant's failure of a brother. Thomas dropped out of school, and was deeply involved in drugs. He narrowly avoided jail on larceny charges. He lost his share of the family wealth, and is currently employed by his brother as a handyman.

Leda Deerden: A New York author, or visual artist, guest of Grant's Publisher. Ms. Deerden is known for her terra cotta figures, which are widely sold in gift shops in the Village, and her work at the 42nd Street Gallery, but is a newcomer to the writing field. Her first project is projected to be a collaboration with Grant Cochran.

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Sarah Lamont: Sarah Lamont is an old Prep-school and College friend of Margot Matthews, Linda Kane, Emily Breezewood and others. Sarah went to work for Gary Morant as a paralegal, and is now his chief secretary.

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at Los Angeles in 1984. Native of McLean Virginia, the child of a former ambassador to England. Personally acquainted with Princess Margaret, has appeared in *Sports Illustrated*, and network television. Currently holds American and European Championships in several categories of jumps. Professional status has been called into question, but intends to compete in 1988.

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Karyn Seidmann: A New-York literary agent, Seidmann is not well known in literary circles, though there are some dark rumors about her past, including a lawsuit. Seidman handles small time occult authors, and until recently her biggest literary success was Jeffrey Saxon, the popular occultist and astrologer.

Oliver Stewart: A comic-book author and illustrator for *Universal* Comics, a major competitor of Marvel and D.C.

Oliver responsible for the satirical *Captain Flapjack* miniseries, but is best known for his work with *Blood Hound*, a revitalized 1960's Superhero, and with *Revenant*, a dark-horror miniseries. Stewart handled a graphic-novel adaptation of Grant Cochran's *Sightless King*, which was somewhat more successful than the actual novel. Oliver is a New Yorker, but has maintained a friendship with horror writer Grant Cochran, and has come down with some of his other New York acquaintances to make his birthday an interesting affair.

Craig Webber: An acquaintance of Margot Matthews, Mr. Webber is a well-to-do local business consultant, rumored to have connections to smuggling and the underworld. Webber is said to be a business partner of Avery Carson.



A Birthday Surprise

Leda Deerden

You are Leda Deerden, the artist. THE ARTIST. TSITRA EHT. Le Artiste....you are a devoted disciple of almost everyone you happen to read about, and you were quite good at making things like bagels and human torsos out of papier mache or milk cartons and selling the results. Recently, however you have been trying to find a more lucrative career as the market for studio art seems to be bottoming out. You want to make a lot of money.

Which you need. You keep a loft in lower SoHo and sit around at four in the morning at clubs in garages drinking something that smells like fingernail polish remover and discussing the sexual motivations of Archipenko.

You can only build plaster of paris abstractions of the spinal column so many hours a day, so you, like the rest of the bright young things, spend your time in and out of clubs, private parties, and public restrooms where it is fashionable to do lines on the toilet seat. You try your best to impress nearly everyone you meet with how terribly *important* your art is.

Dinner at Odeon (very retro), or some deli where the waiters are all eastern europeans with mental disorders, then out to some club that embodies the bright culture of this wonderful city where everything changes. You meet all sorts of interesting people, and it isn't worth remembering them because by the next time you meet them they have a different hair color, or name, or sex, or personality. If it really is them again. You aren't even sure if it is always *you* again.

What you are sure of is that if New York is heaven, D.C. is hell. It has been stricken with blight. There is not one decent club in the entire city where you can sit for hours waiting for service, while your waiter relives birth trauma on the counter. You are frankly quietly freaking out. This is like all the pose in New York society, and well...nothing ever actually happens. But you do have your poise.

The reason you are here is the promise of steady work. One of your friends is Karyn Seidmann, who is straight during business hours and works as literary agent. She only got out of women's prison a few years ago, and is such a dear. You met her at a soup kitchen, while you were starving one week, which is sort of an on and off thing with your lifestyle. Karyn put you in the way of this very lucrative deal. It involves writing, which you don't know a lot about, but you are an artist after all, and you can certainly adapt. You will consider it a challenge.

You are of the opinion that Karyn has found some dead person's work and attributed it to you or some other such contrivance, since you have not in fact ever written anything longer than a grocery list, but you have recently purchased a typewriter, and you have been producing at least a page a day, and Karyn says you will get *much faster* as soon as you are under deadline.

This publisher named Drake, which rhymes with Fake, wants you to chop up the work of some southern hack writer and make it "speedy and interesting." You have an idea to make it somewhat post modernist, and plan to tell him so, as soon as you figure out which one he is. Drake not the artist. You had dinner with Drake, and you know you talked quietly and intelligently about this job, but you do not remember precisely what it was that you said.

You and Karyn went to someplace called the "Fifteen minutes club" last night, presumably because even the natives can't stand the place for any longer than that, and then you wandered off into the night.

You last remember being in some miserable little discotheque where they were closing (at THREE THIRTY...on a FRIDAY NIGHT!) and calling Drake who dragged you here, and telling him that if he didn't have a plane ticket for you to New York in the hour (of course there aren't even PLANES that fly in Washington at 3:30am) you were going

to strangle him, because you are ever so slightly high strung, and you had done some of the local Bolivian Marching Powder that did not agree with you, more to the point, flatly contradicted you, which is behavior you do not care for in stimulants.

While you were wandering about, you happened to pass Mr. Ballistas as he was checking his heavy duty 9mm pistol. This place is not your idea of fun. You do not think Mr. Ballistas saw you. You are certainly glad that you drove down with Mr. Drake in his limousine, since you did not have to leave behind the 32 caliber revolver you always carry in your purse. It just isn't safe for a young lady in the worst possible districts of New York without a very powerful firearm.

Drake promised you that Jeff Saxon, and Ollie Stewart, and Anthony Blaine and several other seriously disordered literary people would be here. Which might make the occasion more bearable. In the meantime, you are trying to interest Karyn's friend Linda in terra-cotta fruits and vegetables, and try to remember that Karyn doesn't like you to mention that she was in prison.

When you wake up this will be New York.....

"There's no place like home..."

THE OTHERS

What they know about you:

Leda Deerden: A New York author, or visual artist, guest of Grant's Publisher. Ms. Deerden is known for her terra cotta figures, which are widely sold in gift shops in the Village, and her work at the 42nd Street Gallery, but is a newcomer to the writing field. Her first project is projected to be a collaboration with Grant Cochran.

PEOPLE YOU KNOW....WELL:

Anthony Blaine: *Anthony can be a bore sometimes, but he has marginal entertainment value. You like to make a point of the fact that you haven't read his books, as you feel it defines you as part of the cultural elite. You try not to read anything the doesn't have pictures if you can possibly help it.*

A New York writer considered a protege of Grant Cochran, Blaine is handled by Jonathan Drake, the same publisher as Cochran. It was rumored that Blaine and Cochran had a very serious argument while appearing together at a promotional convention after the publication of *Sightless King*. Blaine is best known for his Fantasy-Horror novel *Wunderking*, and his most recent work *The Dinner Guest*.

Emily Breezewood: *a fascinating person, and a friend of Karyn's. She shared an apartment with Karyn while she was in New York, and Karyn did not even rip her off for the rent, and Karyn rips nearly everyone off for the rent. Emily lacks self-esteem, clarity and career motivation. You were teaching her to make small brightly colored animal figurines, but she had to go back to Washington.*

A college friend of Grant Cochran, and a prep-school friend of Margot Matthews, Emily is the daughter of Senator Breezewood of Connecticut, a very powerful senior U.S. Legislator. Emily was married to Matthew Allen Carter, and divorced him, in a particularly messy case during which Mr. Carter was represented by Gary Morant. They are reported to be on barely civil speaking terms now. Emily is living with Mike Ballistas.

Linda Kane: *is someone else who has visited up in New York. She is a really interesting person, though you wish she had more of an interest in art.*

Parapsychological researcher for the Institute for Parapsychological Studies, 1567 23rd St. NW. Graduate of Columbia Prep, and Mary Washington College. M.A. Barnard. Kane is a literary agent for Matthew Allen Carter and is rumored to be his lover.

Jonathan Drake: *Is going to be your new "boss", sort of. He is very lucky to get someone of your talent and caliber, and you have been telling him this at some length.*

Publisher of Grant Cochran, Drake is Editor of Horror at Electra publishing, a division of Robert W. Thormond and Sons, Inc., one of the nations largest publishing houses. Despite the failure of Cochran's latest novel, Drake is reported to be successful and on the rise. He handles many other writers including Anthony Blaine, and is also in charge of titles under the smaller, but profitable Medea imprint, for occult paperbacks, which includes the works of Jeffrey Saxon.

Jeffrey Saxon: *Is really the best writer, and practically the only person you have read who does not publish in comic-books. He is just SO "on it" and he really understands...everything.*

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Karyn Seidmann: *poor Karyn has really risen above her past, when she served time for fraud and perjury in a New York State Women's prison. You only wish she was more interested in social concerns.*

A New-York literary agent, Seidmann is not well known in literary circles, though there are some dark rumors about her past, including a lawsuit. Seidman handles small time occult authors, and until recently her biggest literary success was Jeffrey Saxon, the popular occultist and astrologer.

Oliver Stewart: *Ollie is such a card. Really you wish everyone were as deranged and intense as he is.*

A comic-book author and illustrator for *Universal Comics*, a major competitor of Marvel and D.C. Oliver is responsible for the satirical *Captain Flapjack* miniseries, but is best known for his work with *Blood Hound*, a revitalized 1960's Superhero, and with *Revenant*, a dark-horror miniseries. Stewart handled a graphic-novel adaptation of Grant Cochran's *Sightless King*, which was somewhat more successful than the actual novel. Oliver is a New Yorker, but has maintained a friendship with horror writer Grant Cochran, and has come down with some of his other New York acquaintances to make his birthday an interesting affair.

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Mike Ballistas: a wealthy international consultant with impressive offices downtown. Ballistas has numerous prominent government contacts, and is generally known to be an influential businessman. He donated heavily to the Reagan Campaign.

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A Birthday Surprise

Linda Kane

You are Linda Kane, a parapsychological researcher. You were born in Basque Woods Connecticut, and went to High School with Emily Breezewood the daughter of Congressman Robert Breezewood. It turned out that you and she had a lot of the same interests. It was the early seventies and you turned on to seances, ectoplasm, TM, and men. You had your first Ouija Board together, and you got laid for the first time on the same double date. You were both very wild back then, and you have both calmed down some.

You and Emily ended up at the same school, Mary Washington in Fredericksburg VA. It was a very popular girls school, which is to say it was a hellhole of drinking and partying. During the summer Emily's father got you jobs with a PAC in D.C., and you took night courses at George Washington University.

That's where Emily met Matthew Allen Carter. He was what most people might call a looney, but you became rather fond of him...convinced that behind that deranged and somewhat violent exterior, there was an enlightened and somewhat deranged interior.

Then Emily went off and married him...which wasn't so bad, but of course she misunderstood Matthew a little bit and caused the poor man's mental condition to deteriorate. You remained on good terms with Matthew, and with Grant Cochran, a writer he collaborated with. The fact is that you had kind of been interested in him yourself but...

You got Matthew his first appearance on television, on *Panorama* in 1979. You managed to talk him out of strangling Jackson Bain a local host on Metromedia television. Later in 1982, you arranged an appearance on "Good Morning America," but Matthew declined to get up that early in the morning.

You would like to see Grant and Matthew back on decent terms...they have quarreled lately over some work they collaborated on. You also wouldn't mind seeing Emily and Matthew back

together, if only Emily could understand how sensitive he is. Or perhaps you are more the woman that Matthew needs. You would never have tried to steal him...you are just too nice. But now?

You haven't seen Emily much these past few years. She has sort of "sold out" in your book, though with her family you suppose it was inevitable. You would like to see her revive her interests in idealistic things like the transmigration of souls, and TM.

Also, you would like to see Matthew's reputation proved once and for all. The man has a penchant for self sabotage, like the *Good Morning America* fiasco. If you could just get him to do something really impressive, then keep him calm enough to write it down, you could be rather popular yourself, like the folks who wrote *Seth Speaks*, or that Castenada fellow. You have been working very hard to help him. After his divorce, his agent Karyn Seidmann, who was a good friend of Emily, refused to talk to him. He asked you to intervene and you did. You explained that sometimes Emily gets kind of high strung like the time in school when you all...never mind. At any rate, you assured her that there were two sides to the story.

Seeing Matthew back on good terms with Karyn was great. Now if you could only make the rest of the world get along. You have found out some really wonderful news from Karyn, which you already told Margot and Matthew, though you haven't told anyone else. You *know* they both keep secrets, and you were so pleased. They really *do* like Grant. Karyn told you that Roger Drake, Grant's publisher had told her that Grant was going to be offered a movie deal for his book *Trinity*, worth millions of dollars. You can hardly wait. It is so wonderful when success comes to people you know!

Unfortunately, you are also afraid something terrible might happen. Recently, while you were doing some trance-work with Matthew, he had a

vision of Grant in a coffin, dead. He cautioned you not to tell anyone, lest you disturb the cosmic balance, but you couldn't help yourself. You typed out the message "Be careful, you may die soon!" on a peice of paper, and mailed it to Grant. You immediately felt guilty, but what harm can one little warning do?

Fortunately, there are other things occupying your mind at the moment. You have had to work hard to keep your position at the Institute for Parapsychological Research, which is run out of the top floor of a NW DC Chinese Carry-out. A little attention from Professor Pierce wouldn't hurt. He is always saying he is sympathetic to parapsychology, but that he has not seen any proof. Maybe something will happen to change his mind. Matthew has been helpful in taking calls when you have to be away at your other job. You and he have a relationship...well more an *understanding* really. You understand Matthew very well and know *just* what he needs.

You have a little business on the side that keeps you in enough money to run your institute. You deliver packages for Mike Ballistas. He has told you that the packages contain bribes for certain trade affairs. You realize it is not quite legal, but you also realize that it is not terribly significant. What are mundane affairs for you? And if you didn't get the money, then you could not continue your work.

The funniest thing is that one of the people you deliver packages to is Margot. You can't tell her who they come from of course. You tell her they are from a man you don't know. It makes you giggle sometimes. Politics is so silly.

You do feel terrible about Gary though. You haven't kept up with him very well, since he was really Margot's friend, but yesterday you talked to Sarah who said that he was completely ruined financially by the stock market crash. nearly a million in debt. She was making noises about needing a passport and you told her you really couldn't help. You asked if she was going to skip the country, and she said that she was just going to take a vacation to unwind after the disaster, and get ready for job-hunting, but you wonder if you should tell Gary.

You need to tell Margot, and a few other of Gary's close friends, so that they will be sympathetic, though you don't want to embarass him.

School: You attended Columbia Prep from 1970-73. You know Margot Matthews, Emily Breezewood, Sarah Lamont, and Toni Randall-Smith from there.

Afterwards you went to Mary Washington with Emily, and Sarah. During the summers of `74 and `75 you and Emily took night classes at GW. From there you know Gary Morant, Grant Cochran, Avery Carson, Mike Ballistis, and Matthew Allen Carter.

THE OTHERS

What they know about you:

Linda Kane: Parapsychological researcher for the Institute for Parapsychological Studies, 1567 23rd St. NW. Graduate of Columbia Prep, and Mary Washington College. M.A. Barnard. Kane is a literary agent for Matthew Allen Carter and is rumored to be his lover.

PEOPLE YOU KNOW WELL:

Mike Ballistas: *an old connection from college days. You are so glad he has become successful. You occasionally deliver bribes for him, which is technically illegal ...but...*

A wealthy international consultant with impressive offices downtown. Ballistas has numerous prominent government contacts, and is generally known to be an influential businessman. He donated heavily to the Reagan Campaign.

Emily Breezewood: *you are so sorry that things did not work out between Emily and Matthew. You knew they wouldn't. You love Emily, but she does exaggerate so.*

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Matthew Allen Carter: *Matthew, your current "relationship" you have known for years. He is very strange, but obviously terribly talented.*

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Grant Cochran: *has just landed a movie deal worth millions, though that is a secret you have only told three people.*

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Leda Deerden: *You met Leda through Karyn Seidmann. She is very enlightened for an unenlightened person.*

A New York author, or visual artist, guest of Grant's Publisher. Ms. Deerden is known for her terra cotta figures, which are widely sold in gift shops in the Village, and her work at the 42nd Street Gallery, but is a newcomer to the writing field. Her first project is projected to be a collaboration with Grant Cochran.

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Karyn Seidmann: *Told you about Grant's new deal.* A New-York literary agent, Seidmann is not well known in literary circles, though there are some dark rumors about her past, including a lawsuit. Seidmann handles small time occult authors, and until recently her biggest literary success was Jeffrey Saxon, the popular occultist and astrologer.

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Tony Randall-Smith: Olympic Equestrian Medalist, winning two Silver and one Bronze medal at Los Angeles in 1984. Native of McLean Virginia, the child of a former ambassador to England. Personally acquainted with Princess Margaret, has appeared in *Sports Illustrated*, and network television. Currently holds American and European Championships in several categories of jumps. Professional status has been called into question, but intends to compete in 1988.

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Craig Webber: An acquaintance of Margot Matthews, Mr. Webber is a well-to-do local business consultant, rumored to have connections to smuggling and the underworld. Webber is said to be a business partner of Avery Carson.



A Birthday Surprise

Margot Matthews

You are Margot Matthews, "Maggie" to close friends. You never seriously went to college. You never needed to. Columbia Prep did everything for you. Your girl friends went to Mary Washington, and you went to Washington D.C. You met plenty of new friends of about the same age, mostly from GW or GW Law. While they were working in classes, you were just working, getting in on the ground floor.

At first you were interested in fun. You took up with a young intellectual named Grant Cochran, who was a minor literary prodigy. He wrote all sorts of grim supernatural shit that you never understood his interest in. But he was an excellent short term source of that wonderful Bolivian powder. And you never forget an old friend. Never know when you might need them again.

You took the Elizabeth Rae career trail though, which was still easy in those days. You took up with someone a little more career oriented, like Darrington Ripley, a prodigy at State. He was appointed with the incoming administration in '80, and you came in with him.

Ripley wasn't big into drugs, but the administration didn't say much about them at that time. A friend of Sam's named Avery Carson offered to give you free coke if you could make sure "Rip" developed a habit. You made it abundantly clear to Rip that your womanly needs for fine white things did not stop at lace, and he was delightfully responsive - which is more than you can say of him in bed. Rip was a bit older than yourself. At any rate, he was a very sweet man, though he had a wife on the side.

Carson used his position as Ripley's dealer to extort a position on the Ambassadorial staff when Rip was named Ambassador to Sweden. He used the ambassadorial office to run weapons and diamond smuggling and you helped out as a courier. It was exciting, exotic, and you liked the money. The truth is you have gotten very fond of the color of money.

Avery eventually reduced your salary, and threatened you with blackmail. You went along because you had already cut a few lucrative side deals Avery didn't know about, but you managed to seduce one of his Belgian arms dealer contacts, and got the goods on him in case you ever needed them. You were able to get half a dozen forged Embassy Weapons Export Permits, which had been tampered by Carson.

Carson's contact in the Arms smuggling business is someone who probably knows you, but who you don't know. You have figured out just from how much they know about you and Avery that they probably are at least distantly affiliated with your old social group, but you aren't at all sure who they are. It might be Avery himself, just trying to throw you off. You used to carry packets of orders between Avery and other couriers, and the person at the top of this organization.

You'd like to buy in, on a little higher level than you are now. Since you have gotten back to Washington, you are getting your orders through Linda Kane, who you knew in school. Again, you know this must be someone who you know, because so many of the old circle of friends are involved.

You were about ready to take on Carson yourself, but then he blew up Ripley. Rip had been having some financial problems, and of course you were sad when you heard about the "car bombing by Basque revolutionaries" but you were also kind of relieved. You found that nearly twenty years of coke, cheating and blackmail had left you with very little in the way of emotions. You identified his body, bloated red and shredded black, and were very polite to his wife at his funeral.

Still, you decided an indirect approach to Carson might be best. He is dangerous, and you need your body for your career...can't afford to have it all cooked. So you asked your old friend Grant Cochran to blackmail him for you. Cochran is obnoxious as hell, and belligerent, which should give him an advantage over Carson.

Apparently Grant called Carson, and warned him that he better show up because of some information that he had. You bitched him out about this somewhat loudly earlier this afternoon. Neither you or Grant is a very mild mannered sort. You thought only Thomas was around, but there were actually a few other people who had just come in, so you hope you didn't make too much of a scene.

Grant is a situation unto himself. You dated him years ago, before more interesting offers like a future ambassador came along. He was always somewhat wealthy. A number of months ago, his chronic alcoholism caused an ulcer to do something ugly, and he wound up in the hospital. You had sent him a note letting him know you were in the country, which you did with all of your friends (the Nancy Reagan school of how to win people, and cash them in for valuable prizes.) Tres Dale Carnegie.

Thomas called you when Grant was put into rehab, and you visited him, mostly to be nice (you are nice on very rare occasions, when there is only an outside possibility it will get you something.

In this case it paid off. You heard only a few weeks later through Linda Kane that Grant's Publisher may have a movie deal for his novel *Trinity*, a major motion picture with royalties well into the triple digits. Since your meal-ticket ended up well done in a Belgian intersection, you are not going to turn up your nose at any possibilities. When you first got back, you got an apartment with Emily Breezewood because you figured between her divorce and her father she could pay for it. Unfortunately, she was more broke than you, so you "reluctantly suggested" that she go to work for Avery running drugs or whatever.

You decided on a test, just to see what Grant's current financing was like. You had heard from Gary Morant that he was doing "quite well." So you asked Toni Randall-Smith (can you keep up with people!) if there was some nice little farm in the triple digits near her place where Grant could recuperate. You suggested the place to him, and he bought it without a second thought.

So Grant is nice and isolated where you can keep an eye on him, and you can work at your leisure. If you decide to land him, you should be able to have him in a box within a few years.

At any rate, you spontaneously decided to launch a birthday party, and invite all the old crowd. This provided a chance for Grant to confront Avery. Just to make sure, you arranged for plenty of distractions. Just for a little camouflage, you made sure to invite not only the man Emily Breezewood is living with, but her most recent lover, Craig Webber. Webber is an arms merchant, who you know through Avery, and you are very interested in sounding him out about the possibility of setting Avery up.

School: You attended Columbia Prep from 1970-73. You know Linda Kane, Emily Breezewood, Sara Lamont, and Toni Randall-Smith from there.

You attended George Washington University in '74 and '75 You know Gary Morant, GrantCochran, Avery Carson, Mike Ballistis, and Matthew Allen Carter from a circle of acquaintances there.

Special Instructions

You should be overheard arguing with Grantsomewhat loudly, though it does not need to be apparent what the argument was about.

THE OTHERS

What they know about you:

Margot Matthews: Margot was a friend of Grant Cochran, and several other attendees in college, but went on to become a prominent Washington socialite who rose out of the ranks of minor political followers due to her connections with the late U.S. ambassador to Sweden Mr. Darrington Ripley. Margot is giving this party in honor of Grant Cochran's birthday.

Margot is currently employed by the Department of State, where she is rumored to be the mistress of a powerful political appointee. She was mentioned in *People* magazine shortly after the inaugural ball, and her fortunes have definitely been on the rise with the Reagan government.

PEOPLE YOU KNOW WELL:

Mike Ballistas: a wealthy international consultant with impressive offices downtown. Ballistas has numerous prominent government contacts, and is generally known to be an influential businessman. He donated heavily to the Reagan Campaign.

Anthony Blaine: A New York writer considered a protege of Grant Cochran, Blaine is handled by Jonathan Drake, the same publisher as Cochran. It was rumored that Blaine and Cochran had a very serious argument while appearing together at a promotional convention after the publication of *Sightless King*. Blaine is best known for his Fantasy-Horror novel *Wunderking*, and his most recent work *The Dinner Guest*.

Emily Breezewood: *a fairly close friend in Prep school days. She made the mistake of marrying Matthew Allen Carter. Proved a longstanding point you had about not marrying. Says Matthew is very violent. You could have told her that. Emily was your roommate until she moved out to live with Mike Ballistas.*

A college friend of Grant Cochran, and a prep-school friend of Margot Matthews, Emily is the daughter of Senator Breezewood of Connecticut, a very powerful senior U.S. Legislator. Emily was married to Matthew Allen Carter, and divorced him, in a particularly messy case during which Mr. Carter was represented by Gary Morant. They are

reported to be on barely civil speaking terms now. Emily is living with Mike Ballistas.

Avery Carson: attended George Washington University and has many acquaintances from that period, and immediately afterward. Avery met most of Grant's circle of friends in the seventies while they were working in Washington after graduation. Mr. Carson occupied a position in the staff of the late Darrington Ripley, U.S. Ambassador to Sweden. Currently employed by the State Department, Avery Carson is rumored to actually work for the Company, or No-such-agency.

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M.A Carter provides spiritual consultation to some of Washington's most prominent social figures. He has appeared on several area talk shows, notably *Panorama* in July 1979 where he was involved in an altercation, and declined to appear on *Good Morning America* in August of 1982 on the topic "Senators who follow the Horoscopes." He has assisted Federal authorities as a consultant on "Cult Related Cases", and appeared before a Senate Subcommittee Special Hearing in 1983 to discuss "Cult Phenomena and Crime."

Grant Cochran: Grant Cochran is a horror writer whose early work brought him wealth and recognition. His first acclaimed work was a collection of short stories in 1977 entitled *Look Ma, No Hands!* Grant achieved a more limited success with *The Sickness in John Harrol*, 1977; *The Collection*, 1979; but his mainstream horror novels *Dark Symbols*, 1980; and *Trinity*, 1982; were extremely successful. His Lovecraftian fantasy-horror *The Sightless King*, 1984 was universally panned. Grant also wrote the screenplay for the 1981 film *The Blinding*. Numerous short stories including *The Metallic Taste of Blood* **Omni**, Feb 1982.

Grant's work has tended more towards the occult and fantasy side than Stephen King, and his success has been less marked, but his early novels were commercially successful. Born 1955 to a wealthy Virginia family, Grant graduated from George Washington University in DC in 1975, aged twenty. Writer and playboy, known to have inherited some money from parent's death in

1974. He is widely rumored to have been hospitalized recently for rehabilitation.

Thomas Cochran: Grant's failure of a brother. Thomas dropped out of school, and was deeply involved in drugs. He narrowly avoided jail on larceny charges. He lost his share of the family wealth, and is currently employed by his brother as a handyman.

Leda Deerden: A New York author, or visual artist, guest of Grant's Publisher. Ms. Deerden is known for her terra cotta figures, which are widely sold in gift shops in the Village, and her work at the 42nd Street Gallery, but is a newcomer to the writing field. Her first project is projected to be a collaboration with Grant Cochran.

Jonathan Drake: Publisher of Grant Cochran, Drake is Editor of Horror at Electra publishing, a division of Robert W. Thormond and Sons, Inc., one of the nations largest publishing houses. Despite the failure of Cochran's latest novel, Drake is reported to be successful and on the rise. He handles many other writers including Anthony Blaine, and is also in charge of titles under the smaller, but profitable Medea imprintaur, for occult paperbacks, which includes the works of Jeffrey Saxon.

Linda Kane: Parapsychological researcher for the Institute for Parapsychological Studies, 1567 23rd St. NW. Graduate of Columbia Prep, and Mary Washington College. M.A. Barnard. Kane is a literary agent for Matthew Allen Carter and is rumored to be his lover.

Sarah Lamont: *Introduced you to Grant Cochran and Matthew Allen Carter. Later on you got Grant to get Gary to give her the job she currently holds.*

Sarah Lamont is an old Prep-school and College friend of Margot Matthews, Linda Kane, Emily Breezewood and others. Sarah went to work for Gary Morant as a paralegal, and is now his chief secretary.

Gary Morant: Washington Attorney. Graduated from George Washington University in 1974, GW Law in 1978. Formed Morant and Steele with Harlan Steel in 1980. Known for handling some of the messiest and most prominent divorce and lawsuit cases in the Washington social spectrum. Morant is a rising star in the social constellation of

Washington, and is Grant Cochran's attorney, and is currently representing him in all of his sordid legal affairs.

Mort Nicholson: a well known private detective. Nicholson has worked for Gary Morant, and was a research reference for the character of Detective George Panopalous in Grant Cochran's *Trinity*.

Roger Pierce: a Professor/practitioner of Psychology at George Washington University. Young but promising, for several years his 400 level course on Personality Disorders has been considered the "most fun" class in the entire psych department. Many of Dr. Pierce's associates consider him to be "that strung out quack", Dr. Pierce considers himself a "perceptually enhanced alternative practitioner." It is obvious that Dr. Pierce either has something on the University, or has tenure.

"Psychological disorders can be not only instructive, but entertaining as well..." (*American Psychiatric Yearbook*, 1980).

Tony Randall-Smith: *was at Columbia Prep for a semester. She was busted for drugs, but you used influence with Emily Breezewood's father to get the charges dropped. A week ago, you talked to Tony on the phone, and she was furious at Cochran, and sounded ready to claw his eyes out, but you aren't quite sure why. Something to do with money.*

Olympic Equestrian Medalist, winning two Silver and one Bronze medal at Los Angeles in 1984. Native of McLean Virginia, the child of a former ambassador to England. Personally acquainted with Princess Margaret, has appeared in *Sports Illustrated*, and network television. Currently holds American and European Championships in several categories of jumps. Professional status has been called into question, but intends to compete in 1988.

Jeffrey Saxon: A noted Parapsychology/Occult writer and Astrologer, author of *Health Signs*, *Astrology for You*, and *Psychic Defense*, and several other successful books published in paperback. Jeffrey is rumored to be practically the only person in New York who does not suffer from an incapacitating drug addiction.

Karyn Seidmann: A New-York literary agent, Seidmann is not well known in literary circles,

though there are some dark rumors about her past, including a lawsuit. Seidman handles small time occult authors, and until recently her biggest literary success was Jeffrey Saxon, the popular occultist and astrologer.

Oliver Stewart: A comic-book author and illustrator for *Universal Comics*, a major competitor of Marvel and D.C.

Oliver responsible for the satirical *Captain Flapjack* miniseries, but is best known for his work with *Blood Hound*, a revitalized 1960's Superhero, and with *Revenant*, a dark-horror miniseries. Stewart handled a graphic-novel adaptation of Grant Cochran's *Sightless King*, which was somewhat more successful than the actual novel. Oliver is a New Yorker, but has maintained a friendship with horror writer Grant Cochran, and has come down with some of his other New York acquaintances to make his birthday an interesting affair.

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A Birthday Surprise

Gary Morant

You are Gary Morant, a Washington Lawyer. You graduated from George Washington Law in DC, in 1977. You were in the same classes in college with Grant Cochran, which is how you got to know him.

You have never really practiced law. Your specialty is out-of-court settlement. If it had been you in *The Devil and Daniel Webster* you would have had them settle out of court for fifty years in hell plus three cardinal sins and legal fees. Always legal fees. Very important.

You mostly handle domestic cases, because they pay pretty well, and if you do have to go to court, even you can manage to cross examine a spastic housewife and end up looking like a decisive pro. Your senior partner Harlan Steele did not like your methods. You did not like the fact that he smoked. You read in a novel by one of Grant Cochran's spooky friends that you could use nicotinic acid to poison a smoker without any trace. You contrived an excuse and borrowed some from your old professor, Roger Pierce. Just a dash in Harlan's coffee, and sure enough, he keeled over with a heart attack. Shame you never learned CPR. That made you the senior partner. Roger owed you a favor because you acted as his attorney when his psychiatric license was revoked, and he was disbarred from practicing medicine in D.C. That was shortly after you graduated. You didn't keep him from losing his license, but you managed a fair amount of spin control, and kept the University from firing him.

Not that you are a bad lawyer. Au Contraire. You just don't like to work very much. Which is why you got into a sideline as an investment broker. It seemed like easy money, and lots of lawyers have made a killing in investments. Or so you had heard. Besides it was other people's money.

You took some heavy losses the first year, but what the hell, you weren't a CPA. So you just decided to wait and file taxes the next year and eat the penalty, so you would have the money to reinvest.

The losses would offset the penalty as a deduction. You lost a little in 82 through 84, but it was getting to be less, and you learned a little about the market. Then the market began to soar. You dumped everything in. This was actually going to work, you were making obscene amounts of money. In January the Dow broke 2000.00 for the first time in history. You were one a one-way rocket trip into the financial stratosphere. There was a 51.60 point rise in mid January. The month's end advance was a cumulative 250 points, a record. By August the Dow had reached 2722.42.

October changed that. The market had been dropping steadily and had lost 200 points. You were worried of course, but everyone said it was just a "correction." Then in three weeks it lost more than 300 points. You were already panicked. You had been reinvesting during the "correction." Everyone you had consulted said prices would surely rise. Then on October 19, the market plunged 508 points.

Realistically, you were bankrupt. Your investment company of American Mutual Investments, is bankrupt. And unfortunately, you had been embezzling a fair amount of the up front money for personal use. But the truth is, you have a way out. All you need is to take the funds from one investor, and pay them out to the others as dividends, in order to get them to re-invest at a higher risk under different conditions. Then you can juggle your losses, and tell them they lost money, *too bad*. Everyone is expecting some losses. Your total losses have been about \$780,000.

Fortunately, you have one investor who never really put anything much on paper. You always thought Grant would be useful, and he was in the habit of thrusting money at you, and assuming you would do something useful with it. You have gotten him to sign several very official and very bogus agreements, and beyond that nothing is on paper, at least nothing that Grant has any copies of. He always had you keep his legal papers.

Grant was invested to the tune of half a million dollars, you suspect most of his wealth. He called you when the market crashed. You blithely reassured him that his money was in "ultra safe" Special Commodity Bonds. You just made that up off the top of your head, but it sounded good at the time. You are a bit worried because Grant said the last \$16,000 he gave you was for "a friend." Once Grant is safely out of your misery, you should be personally about \$100,000 down, and you can swallow that and keep your shirt.

Ideally you would like to have use of all Grant's money. His will is a little bit of a problem. It names you as the administrator of his estate, but it makes his brother Thomas the beneficiary and executor. This is because since Grant had some sort of breakdown a year ago, Tommy has been taking care of him. Now you don't mind Tommy getting something, but you would like to see yours truly get some consideration for your long service. Unfortunately Grant has a copy of his will. You need to convince him to update it, and get his copy back. Then you can put his name on any sort of bogus bullshit you care to invent. Under any set of circumstances if Grant dies the only traces in the world of the money he gave you to invest are in your lock-box.

At any rate, it is time that Grant's plummeting career comes to an end. After the reception his last novel got, you will probably be doing him a favor. And this will give you the money and slack you need to get back on your feet. So you have brought a little gun along, and a glove. Goodnight, Grant. You wish you had a silencer, but you understand a pillow is almost as good.

This seems to be the perfect time and place. Grant's spooky friend Carter is around. He is a real loony tune. He was married to a beautiful girl named Emily Breezewood, the daughter of a Senator from Connecticut. You got him off real good. You convinced him to persuade a friend, Mike Ballistas, to seduce Emily. You hired Mort Nicholson, a PI, to take pictures, then told the Senator about them. He agreed to pay off Carter out of court. You took 50% as a blackmail commission. Carter, the ungrateful bastard, wanted more. Men seldom get anything in divorce cases.

You have been trying to let as few people as possible know that you are an investment broker.

Special Knowledge

School: You attended George Washington University from 1971 to 1974. You know Grant Cochran, Avery Carson, Mike Ballistis, Matthew Allen Carter, and Margot Matthews from a circle of acquaintances there. You attended UW Law from '75 - '78

THE OTHERS

What they know about you:

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PEOPLE YOU KNOW WELL:

Mike Ballistas: *One of your legal clients. Ballistis is a shady figure, and you are pretty sure that he is involved in something underground.*

A wealthy international consultant with impressive offices downtown. Ballistas has numerous prominent government contacts, and is generally known to be an influential businessman. He donated heavily to the Reagan Campaign.

Emily Breezewood: *Matthew's ex, she has no good reason to love you. She is as nutty as he is, and probably as dangerous.*

A college friend of Grant Cochran, and a prep-school friend of Margot Matthews, Emily is the daughter of Senator Breezewood of Connecticut, a very powerful senior U.S. Legislator. Emily was married to Matthew Allen Carter, and divorced him, in a particularly messy case during which Mr. Carter was represented by Gary Morant. They are reported to be on barely civil speaking terms now. Emily is living with Mike Ballistis.

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assisted Federal authorities as a consultant on "Cult Related Cases", and appeared before a Senate Subcommittee Special Hearing in 1983 to discuss "Cult Phenomena and Crime."

Grant Cochran: *The man you will kill. You want to find out beforehand whether or not he invested anyone else's money through you, or whether anyone else knows about his investments.*

Grant Cochran is a horror writer whose early work brought him wealth and recognition. His first acclaimed work was a collection of short stories in 1977 entitled *Look Ma, No Hands!* Grant achieved a more limited success with *The Sickness in John Harrol*, 1977; *The Collection*, 1979; but his mainstream horror novels *Dark Symbols*, 1980; and *Trinity*, 1982; were extremely successful. His Lovecraftian fantasy-horror *The Sightless King*, 1984 was universally panned. Grant also wrote the screenplay for the 1981 film *The Blinding*. Numerous short stories including *The Metallic Taste of Blood* **Omni**, Feb 1982.

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Sarah Lamont: *Your secretary. Bright girl, who knows more than you would like about your financial affairs. Could try and blackmail you, so keep cool and keep her happy, because you really can't afford any blackmail just now.*

Sarah Lamont is an old Prep-school and College friend of Margot Matthews, Linda Kane, Emily Breezewood and others. Sarah went to work for Gary Morant as a paralegal, and is now his chief secretary.

Margot Matthews: *Margot is a good social connection, and someone worth sucking up to, though you can't say you think much of her.*

Margot was a friend of Grant Cochran, and several other attendees in college, but went on to become a prominent Washington socialite who rose out of the ranks of minor political followers due to her connections with the late U.S. ambassador to Sweden Mr. Darrington Ripley. Margot is giving this party in honor of Grant Cochran's birthday.

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Mort Nicholson: *an exceptionally good private eye. You hired him to take the critical pictures in Carter's divorce case.*

A well known private detective. Nicholson has worked for Gary Morant, and was a research reference for the character of Detective George Panopolous in Grant Cochran's *Trinity*.

Roger Pierce: *a crackpot professor at your dear old alma mater, you represented Pierce when his Psychiatric license was revoked.*

A Professor/practitioner of Psychology at George Washington University. Young but promising, for several years his 400 level course on Personality Disorders has been considered the "most fun" class in the entire psych department. Many of Dr. Pierce's associates consider him to be "that strung out quack", Dr. Pierce considers himself a "perceptually enhanced alternative practitioner." It is obvious that Dr. Pierce either has something on the University, or has tenure.

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that gave you the idea of how to dispose of Harlan Steele

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Thomas Cochran: *the sole beneficiary of Grant's will.*

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A Birthday Surprise

Mort Nicholson

You are Mort Nicholson, a private detective and a lifelong native of the Washington Area. All your life, you toyed with the idea of being a private detective, but it wasn't exactly a dream come true when it happened.

The fact is that despite a pile of dog-eared and crumbling paperbacks six feet high, you were planning to become an engineer. You grew up in a quiet Virginia suburb of the District, and your father was a civilian engineer for the United States Navy. Your family was almost painfully average. You had two brothers, and your older brother was so dense you even sometimes joked that your folks had 2.7 children.

You had fairly decent grades in High School, though not great. Your father didn't exactly pressure you to become an engineer, but he seemed to think that it was the only way that anyone could make a decent living. Your brother had become a hippie, and ran away from home, which was a terrible disappointment to your father. So in 1970 you found yourself enrolled in George Washington University. Your parents wanted to keep you close to home and you wanted to make them proud.

You really didn't think about it very much when you enrolled in freshman psych. You were just filling out an elective with something you thought might be interesting. What happened was a little different. You found yourself in a class taught by Professor Pierce, who seemed to be a follower of Dr. Timothy Leary. You opened your mind to drugs, sex and other new experiences you had never even thought about before. Some of it you liked (sex particularly.) Some of it you could pass on...LSD never did much for you.

The result was that you lasted slightly less than three semesters, and you never really regretted it. Unfortunately, there was a slight problem with the possibility of the draft. You weren't sure how you felt about the whole war issue, but you were sure that you did not want to get your ass shot off in

Southeast Asia. That was you. Smart, not brave. You "stuck your neck out for nobody."

You needed a job because your father had serious objections to a deadbeat son living in his house. You were smart, but had failed all your classes. You took the U.S. Civil Service Examination, because someone told you it was the best way to get a job without putting much effort into it. You couldn't type, so you took the exam for law enforcement.

Six months later you were working for the United States Treasury Service as a Treasury agent. You quickly found that being a federal agent was not exactly like what Efrem Zimbalist Jr. did on T.V. It was dull, and you were underpaid, and the hours...well the hours stank. You kept telling yourself that it beat out the jungles of Vietnam, but that didn't keep you from staying out until all hours and drinking too much. You straightened up some, but what you found was that you hated schedules, and planning, and getting up to go to work.

The end result is that in 1973, you were fired. It is hard to get fired from the Federal Government, but you worked on it very hard. You looked through the want-ads for "young unemployed pistol-toting alcoholic wanted." The entry you came across seemed almost as good. "Wanted: Private Investigators. 1 yr. experience with law enforcement, minimum."

So you began life as a PI. You worked for a fat slob named Zachatelli, who paid you peanuts, but got your licensing. But you made your own hours, and spent most of your time cruising around in your battered Ford Rambler, following leads and measuring skid marks. You really *did* spend a lot of time measuring skid marks, or at least photographing accident scenes. You had some tailing to do, for divorce cases, always the nastiest business. In five years, Zachatelli never had a murder, or any other interesting crime. A few companies paid to have robberies investigated.

You didn't care that Zachatelli was the biggest slob that ever lived, and he didn't care that you didn't like to start work until 2pm. "Fine you get the night work." Eventually the company became Zachatelli & Nicholson, Private Investigators.

In August of 1978 Zachatelli was taking pictures of an accident scene and dropped dead of a heart attack. You kept his name on the door, and told people that he had been shot to death by the Mafia. You stopped that when the Vienna mafia paid you a visit one day to tell you it wasn't funny. Very polite men. Mostly real-estate mafia, but they could probably still break a kneecap if you pressed their memory.

So business ambled along. You had a few interesting cases, and eventually a murder or two. You got a reputation for quality, and your father even got off your case about being an engineer. You did work for some prestigious law firms, including the Washington firm of Morant and Steele. You got to know Gary Morant fairly well. He introduced you to a friend of his named Grant Cochran, who was a horror writer.

Cochran did most of his own background research, and he paid you a consulting fee to answer his questions and tell him stories about your work. The result, you understand, is that you are a character in his novel *Trinity*, under the name George Panopolous, or some such. You never read it yourself, as someone told you that you are killed in a particularly nasty fashion by a creature from beyond or something, and you like to maintain a low stress level in your life.

Probably one of the nastiest cases you ever worked on without being shot at was the divorce of the occultist Matthew Allen Carter from Emily Breezewood. Emily was the daughter of Senator Breezewood from Connecticut. You didn't feel too bad about the case at first, though you knew the girl was going to get screwed. The way Gary put it to you Carter was a young guy with a few marbles missing who was about to get flensed by a rich and powerful family. "Anyway," Gary asked you, while pushing an envelope full of cash across his desk, "since when are ethics a consideration for you?"

So you helped to set up Emily Breezewood. Gary couldn't resist telling you the whole story, though you had just as soon not known. Apparently Carter had conned a friend of his into seducing his wife. The person doing the seducing was a shady

character named Mike Ballistis, a prosperous and semi-legit businessman. Ballistis tipped you off, and you stood on a balcony and took pictures. The pictures got forwarded to Senator Breezewood, and instead of paying through the nose, Carter actually managed to milk the old man for a settlement.

On the other hand, you found out a little more about Emily from Grant Cochran, who knew Matthew Allen Carter from the same place Gary Morant did, which was Washington University. Cochran and Carter were all there long after you left school, but apparently they were all classmates. Emily had met them when they were in school, and had apparently been going out with Carter for years before they were married. You began to think he'd done her a fairly lousy turn, but on the other hand it isn't any of your business.

However, you are finding yourself inclined to learn as much as possible about Grant's old circle of school friends, because one of them has threatened to kill him, and you've been hired to figure out who. Frankly, you are surprised that nearly everyone doesn't want to kill him. He treats his twin brother like shit, and you have no idea what his old girlfriend Margot Matthews wants out of him, but it sure isn't his stunning personality. Oh sure, he's witty enough. But he's a calculating bastard at heart.

Grant had a long phone conversation with you, yesterday, and made you an impromptu addition to the guest list tonight. You are a bit nervous, because Emily Breezewood is here, though you can't think of any reason she would know that you are the one who took the pictures of her and Ballistas.

Just like old home week. Her psychopathic ex-husband is here too, apparently under conditions of truce. Matthew is a friend of Grant, and Emily is apparently an indispensable friend of Margot Matthews, Grant's social-climbing ex-lover. You need to corner Grant alone, and have him tell you exactly how his life was threatened, and then try and find out who has a motive to do him in.

Or more likely, you can start by eliminating the ones that don't.

THE OTHERS

What they know about you:

Mort Nicholson: a well known private detective. Nicholson has worked for Gary Morant, and was a research reference for the character of Detective George Panopolous in Grant Cochran's *Trinity*.

PEOPLE YOU KNOW WELL:

Mike Ballistas: *is dirty, a major smuggler who has always kept his hands clean. Some day Ballistas will take a fall, but that isn't any of your concern.* A wealthy international consultant with impressive offices downtown. Ballistas has numerous prominent government contacts, and is generally known to be an influential businessman. He donated heavily to the Reagan Campaign.

Emily Breezewood: *After what you've seen...you have never been formally introduced to Ms. Breezewood.* A college friend of Grant Cochran, and a prep-school friend of Margot Matthews, Emily is the daughter of Senator Breezewood of Connecticut, a very powerful senior U.S. Legislator. Emily was married to Matthew Allen Carter, and divorced him, in a particularly messy case during which Mr. Carter was represented by Gary Morant. They are reported to be on barely civil speaking terms now. Emily is living with Mike Ballistas.

Avery Carson: *Another fellow who is as dirty as they come. Carson used to have a huge drug ring, but he closed it down when things warmed up, and headed to Europe. God knows what he was doing there, though you heard that the guy he worked for ended up plastered all over a Belgian intersection.* Attended George Washington University and has many acquaintances from that period, and immediately afterward. Avery met most of Grant's circle of friends in the seventies while they were working in Washington after graduation. Mr. Carson occupied a position in the staff of the late Darrington Ripley, U.S. Ambassador to Sweden. Currently employed by the State Department, Avery Carson is rumored to actually work for the Company, or No-such-agency.

Matthew Allen Carter: *Carter may be weird, but other than assaulting his wife, and*

doing drugs, you don't know of anything really bad about him. In these days, in this town, that's clean. You have a feeling that Carter's lawyer Morant was more responsible for the frame-up on Emily than Carter himself. A well known mystic, Carter is associated with decadence, drugs, and bizarre mysticism. It is unclear where his money comes from, though he is known to be at least moderately wealthy, and eccentric.

M.A Carter provides spiritual consultation to some of Washington's most prominent social figures. He has appeared on several area talk shows, notably *Panorama* in July 1979 where he was involved in an altercation, and declined to appear on *Good Morning America* in August of 1982 on the topic "Senators who follow the Horoscopes." He has assisted Federal authorities as a consultant on "Cult Related Cases", and appeared before a Senate Subcommittee Special Hearing in 1983 to discuss "Cult Phenomena and Crime."

Grant Cochran: *Someone is out to kill Grant. They ought to have a line. Still, as far as you know, he's never actually done anything wrong. Heart of flint though.* Grant Cochran is a horror writer whose early work brought him wealth and recognition. His first acclaimed work was a collection of short stories in 1977 entitled *Look Ma, No Hands!* Grant achieved a more limited success with *The Sickness in John Harrol*, 1977; *The Collection*, 1979; but his mainstream horror novels *Dark Symbols*, 1980; and *Trinity*, 1982; were extremely successful. His Lovecraftian fantasy-horror *The Sightless King*, 1984 was universally panned. Grant also wrote the screenplay for the 1981 film *The Blinding*. Numerous short stories including *The Metallic Taste of Blood* **Omni**, Feb 1982.

Grant's work has tended more towards the occult and fantasy side than Stephen King, and his success has been less marked, but his early novels were commercially successful. Born 1955 to a wealthy Virginia family, Grant graduated from George Washington University in DC in 1975, aged twenty. Writer and playboy, known to have inherited some money from parent's death in 1974. He is widely rumored to have been hospitalized recently for rehabilitation.

Gary Morant: *A dirty rat if there ever was one. You heard that he actually made all his money through investment counseling.*

Kind of surprising to see him still around, after the crash and all.... Washington Attorney. Graduated from George Washington University in 1974, GW Law in 1978. Formed Morant and Steele with Harlan Steel in 1980. Known for handling some of the messiest and most prominent divorce and lawsuit cases in the Washington social spectrum. Morant is a rising star in the social constellation of Washington, and is Grant Cochran's attorney, and is currently representing him in all of his sordid legal affairs.

OTHER PEOPLE:

Anthony Blaine: A New York writer considered a protege of Grant Cochran, Blaine is handled by Jonathan Drake, the same publisher as Cochran. It was rumored that Blaine and Cochran had a very serious argument while appearing together at a promotional convention after the publication of *Sightless King*. Blaine is best known for his Fantasy-Horror novel *Wunderking*, and his most recent work *The Dinner Guest*.

Leda Deerden: A New York author, or visual artist, guest of Grant's Publisher. Ms. Deerden is known for her terra cotta figures, which are widely sold in gift shops in the Village, and her work at the 42nd Street Gallery, but is a newcomer to the writing field. Her first project is projected to be a collaboration with Grant Cochran.

Jonathan Drake: Publisher of Grant Cochran, Drake is Editor of Horror at Electra publishing, a division of Robert W. Thormond and Sons, Inc., one of the nations largest publishing houses. Despite the failure of Cochran's latest novel, Drake is reported to be successful and on the rise. He handles many other writers including Anthony Blaine, and is also in charge of titles under the smaller, but profitable Medea imprintaur, for occult paperbacks, which includes the works of Jeffrey Saxon.

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Sarah Lamont: Sarah Lamont is an old Prep-school and College friend of Margot Matthews, Linda Kane, Emily Breezewood and others. Sarah

went to work for Gary Morant as a paralegal, and is now his chief secretary.

Margot Matthews: Margot was a friend of Grant Cochran, and several other attendees in college, but went on to become a prominent Washington socialite who rose out of the ranks of minor political followers due to her connections with the late U.S. ambassador to Sweden Mr. Darrington Ripley. Margot is giving this party in honor of Grant Cochran's birthday.

Margot is currently employed by the Department of State, where she is rumored to be the mistress of a powerful political appointee. She was mentioned in *People* magazine shortly after the inaugural ball, and her fortunes have definitely been on the rise with the Reagan government.

Roger Pierce: a Professor/practitioner of Psychology at George Washington University. Young but promising, for several years his 400 level course on Personality Disorders has been considered the "most fun" class in the entire psych department. Many of Dr. Pierce's associates consider him to be "that strung out quack", Dr. Pierce considers himself a "perceptually enhanced alternative practitioner." It is obvious that Dr. Pierce either has something on the University, or has tenure.

"Psychological disorders can be not only instructive, but entertaining as well..." (*American Psychiatric Yearbook*, 1980).

Tony Randall-Smith: Olympic Equestrian Medalist, winning two Silver and one Bronze medal at Los Angeles in 1984. Native of McLean Virginia, the child of a former ambassador to England. Personally acquainted with Princess Margaret, has appeared in *Sports Illustrated*, and network television. Currently holds American and European Championships in several categories of jumps. Professional status has been called into question, but intends to compete in 1988.

Jeffrey Saxon: A noted Parapsychology/Occult writer and Astrologer, author of *Health Signs*, *Astrology for You*, and *Psychic Defense*, and several other successful books published in paperback. Jeffrey is rumored to be practically the only person in New York who does not suffer from an incapacitating drug addiction.

Karyn Seidmann: A New-York literary agent, Seidmann is not well known in literary circles, though there are some dark rumors about her past, including a lawsuit. Seidman handles small time occult authors, and until recently her biggest literary success was Jeffrey Saxon, the popular occultist and astrologer.

Oliver Stewart: A comic-book author and illustrator for *Universal Comics*, a major competitor of Marvel and D.C.

Oliver responsible for the satirical *Captain Flapjack* miniseries, but is best known for his work with *Blood Hound*, a revitalized 1960's Superhero, and with *Revenant*, a dark-horror miniseries. Stewart handled a graphic-novel adaptation of Grant Cochran's *Sightless King*, which was somewhat more successful than the actual novel. Oliver is a New Yorker, but has maintained a friendship with horror writer Grant Cochran, and has come down with some of his other New York acquaintances to make his birthday an interesting affair.

Craig Webber: *You thought you knew everyone in the upper end of underground circles in this town. But you've never heard of this guy. He drops the right names though, so he must have some connections.*

An acquaintance of Margot Matthews, Mr. Webber is a well-to-do local business consultant, rumored to have connections to smuggling and the underworld. Webber is said to be a business partner of Avery Carson.



A Birthday Surprise

Roger Pierce

You are Roger Pierce, a Professor/practitioner of Psychology at George Washington University. You are young but promising, and for several years your 400 level course on Personality Disorders has been considered the "most fun" class in the entire psych department. Many of your associates consider you to be "that strung out quack", but you prefer to think of yourself as a "perceptually enhanced alternative practitioner."

You are just a tad unorthodox here and there...you very lost your professional credentials when you offhandedly remarked "Psychological disorders can be not only instructive, but entertaining as well..." (*American Psychiatric Yearbook*, 1980).

At any rate, you are popular with the student body, if not with the University Board. You concluded recently that the subject of your guest lecture that year at Georgetown University upset their "ability to relate to non-culturally programmed phenomena." Your lecture was on psychological dependence on cocaine (drawn from your extensive experience) and its potential social merits. It was well received by the student body, and even picked up by the *Post*, but your book deal fell through. No one wanted to handle *Hooked and Happy in Upper Middle Class America*. It is a perfectly respectable addiction. No worse than alcohol (which you also have a passing fondness for). Freud wrote very positively about it until he did too much.

You had a degree in Psychiatry back in the early seventies, but back in eighty, after your "year of notoreity," the D.C. Board decided to revoke your medical license. Your career should have ended then and there, except for three things. The first is that you retained a young graduate from GWU named Gary Morant as your lawyer. Gary was particularly brilliant, and absolutely without ethical restraint or moral compunction. He told you flat out that you were going to lose your license to practice medicine, and suggested "spin control."

For starters, he bribed people left and right in the University offices to lose all records of your transgression. Gary had plenty of connections in the front office, so that wasn't much of a problem. Then he found out from Avery Carson, the campus dealer, who on the D.C. review Board was addicted to coke. It wasn't hard: virtually everyone in D.C. uses coke, from the mayor to the street people. So Gary let them know in private it would be a good idea if they filed the paperwork to revoke your license and never mentioned it again.

The result is that most people assumed you went to the hearing and were exonerated. You answered all questions by saying "the Board of Regents asked me not to discuss it." The Board never heard about the matter, because the front office never informed them of it. Your colleagues in the department assumed you had been exonerated.

For the most part, you stopped practicing medicine. You are still a PhD, because your degree was not revoked, and you are still a Psychologist. You aren't a Psychiatrist and you aren't licensed to write prescriptions, but of course, you know how. So when you really *need* to write a prescription, you just scribble it out and try to sign it illegibly.

Your favorite addiction has taken some serious blows recently. This basketball player named Len Bias at U. of Maryland was freebasing, and killed himself. Not a pursuit you would recommend, but what can you expect from the University of Maryland. About as similar to what you do as commuting is to the Indianapolis 500. At any rate, the press, the politicians and all are suddenly talking about what a bad thing coke is. Which is great for private practice business, since there are all these important people rushing to try and break their habit.

The problem with you, and private practice, is that confidentiality has always seemed, well...a hindrance...to you. You understand that it is all very important, but you would be much better off

financially if you could just publish everything you hear. You could go into private practice.

You have done some private consulting, "on the side," and all you have requested from your patients who abuse cocaine was a slight "continuing consultation fee." This sort of thing could be considered blackmail if the wrong people found out about it, that is to say, the police. Fortunately that isn't likely. Why, you have had consultations with some very important people in the city, many of them close friends of the mayor. You are in a very good position.

You recently had a chance to return a favor. Avery Carter had just returned from Europe, and he was looking for some contacts to restart his pharmaceutical business. You were able to put him in contact with the just the right people.

You have also treated Matthew Allen Carter. Mr. Carter was sadly not worth blackmailing, since it is obvious to anyone with even a passing acquaintance to him that he does drugs, but he is an interesting case of paranoid schizophrenia.

On the other hand, Gary Morant might be worth blackmailing, but you are a bit afraid to. After all he is a murderer. You had some reservations when, a few years after your license fiasco, he came to you and asked a minor favor. All he wanted was a bit of nicotinic acid. You gave it to him of course. You can't say you were surprised when you read in the paper that the senior partner of his firm, a well known smoker, had died of a heart attack. Nicotinic acid in large doses causes heart palpitations and failure, and is usually not detectable in smokers, unless you are actually looking for it. You decided that it would be a good idea not to discuss the matter with anyone, and didn't.

Recently, you came into some hard luck. You were just heading out for a night on the town, when some men in dark suits threw you into the back of a large limousine. You assumed that they were from the mafia, and wondered who you had offended, or who wanted your services.

In fact, it turned out that they were with United States Naval Counterintelligence, and were carrying out a complex set of investigations on arms merchandising. They had identified you as having connections with certain cocaine smugglers who may also have arms smuggling connections.

They showed you a manilla folder with copies of all the buried paperwork that could end your career were it to, say, be mailed to the *Washington Post*. They made up some headlines like your mother used to do: "Dr. Snow continues to teach children." "Major University keeps drug czar doctor on payroll." You got the point.

Fortunately, these men explained, they did not really care about drugs. They merely wanted your complete, utter and dedicated cooperation in their investigation. You assured them that you would be glad to cooperate, especially if they needed any psychiatric counselling. They told you that was not funny in a voice which suggested that you could end up in a thirty gallon oil drum at the bottom of the Atlantic.

You agreed to cooperate of course, and they told you that you would be contacted. The codeword for thier agent to contact you is "Killjoy." Yeah, that about sums it up.

In the meantime you are trying to keep up normal appearances, and figure out who is actually an arms merchant. Carter certainly seems likely. As doctors go, you are scum, but you are pretty comfortable scum, so you deal with it.

School: You have taught at George Washington University since 1971. You know Gary Morant, Grant Cochran, Avery Carson, Mike Ballistis, Matthew Allen Carter, and Margot Matthews from a circle of acquaintances there.

THE OTHERS

What they know about you:

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Thomas Cochran: Grant's failure of a brother. Thomas dropped out of school, and was deeply involved in drugs. He narrowly avoided jail on larceny charges. He lost his share of the family wealth, and is currently employed by his brother as a handyman.

Leda Deerden: A New York author, or visual artist, guest of Grant's Publisher. Ms. Deerden is known for her terra cotta figures, which are widely sold in gift shops in the Village, and her work at the 42nd Street Gallery, but is a newcomer to the writing field. Her first project is projected to be a collaboration with Grant Cochran.

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A Birthday Surprise

Toni Randall-Smith

You are Toni (Antonia) Randall-Smith. You were an Olympic Equestrian Medalist, receiving two Bronze medals and a silver at the '84 Olympics in Los Angeles. You were hoping your career would take off, but so far your only offer of extra income has been from endorsing a specific feminine hygiene product on national television. You didn't accept. You haven't even gotten an offer from Wheaties. You have concluded that the advertising business is definitely a male-run racket.

You got to make a circuit of the social world when you got back, which was kind of nice, since you got back in contact with some people like Margot Matthews you hadn't seen since you dropped out of an overpriced prep school called Columbia to ride full time on the show circuit at 15.

You did a lot of things back in those days to get money to support yourself and some horses. A lot of people don't immediately associate horses and drugs, but the equation is pretty simple. Anywhere there are horses, there is gambling, legal or not. Anywhere there is gambling there is the mafia. Anywhere there is the mafia there are guns and drugs. The amount of coke that comes north from Florida in horse trailers in this country every year is probably enough to fill the Tidal Basin.

Timber racing and jumping is actually worse than the big para-mutuel tracks. Para-mutuel betting is legal, and while the mob runs it, the payoffs are pretty small. Timber racing usually doesn't have legal betting, so the amounts involved get very big, very quickly, because anything illegal is unregulated, and only the serious boys even bother to get involved.

You ended up working for Avery Carson, a friend of Margot and Cochran. He was a decent guy, and paid well enough. But eventually you got burned. You begged Margot to help you, and she talked Emily into talking to her father, and getting the charges against you dropped. Senator Breezewood is a big man. Of course drug busts weren't as big a deal back then.

At any rate, you ran some drugs, and did some racing and got enough money to buy a breeding farm about ten miles from here. It is no coincidence that Grant Cochran ended up here. You recommended this place to Margot when she told you Grant needed a place to retire to, fast. He had been in alcohol rehab in West Virginia for three months after being hospitalized with an ulcer that nearly killed him.

You got to know Grant as a neighbor, and began to get involved with him. He seemed interesting, witty, temperamental, creative. Nothing very serious: you aren't the type for serious relationships. Free and independent, that's you.

You told him about your financial problems, and he told you he knew a very lucky investor. He wouldn't say who, but he did say that the investor was a close personal friend, and intimated it was someone you knew.

You gave him \$16,000 to invest, which is a lot of money for you. Your entire place is only worth \$48,000, and you figured that if the \$16,000 doubled, like Grant said it would that in two years you could pay off your mortgage, and own your farm free and clear. Anyway, the sky was the limit back then. You read the papers like everyone else, and stocks were climbing like mad back around the first of the year. So back in April, you put your money in.

Only so far there hasn't been any dividend, and this isn't funny anymore. You had counted on getting at least \$4,000, hopefully \$8,000, in six months. Six days ago when the market crashed, you were in Texas, on business, and you called Grant in a panic. He told you he was making some phone calls and would get back to you. You had fought when you last saw him, and now you were so angry you wanted to kill him. You called up Margot and were so mad you screamed at her. She got you calmed down, and told you she would ask Grant about it. She was driving down to make

plans for a birthday dinner that she was giving for him, something you had asked her to do.

When you talked to Grant the next day, he said that everything was fine. He said your money was secure. You told him to get it back, *now*, before the rest of the economy crashed. He said he would have it for you this weekend. Yesterday, you got back, and talked to Grant on the phone, and he reassured you that everything was fine. You want some answers. And some cash.

Then there is your other money making operation. Which is what you had a fight with Grant over. You had tried to go legit, but after the long dry spell, you were approached by Avery about doing some running for him again. You were afraid he would go to your sponsors about your old bust if you said "no", so you were back at work, and right then you needed the money. Your investment with Grant sucked up all your savings, and there were always new expenses.

You decided to play it as safe as possible though. You brought the stuff up from Florida, and gave it to Grant to hide. He bridled, but you offered him a cut of the actual product. You should be getting \$2000 from Avery on delivery. He told you he thought you were taking too many risks. You said nothing, and he dropped the matter.

Then you got the job from Mike Ballistis. Ballistis got in contact with you through Avery, and offered you a cut of some really big money. You were beginning to suspect that your investment with Grant was a wash-out, so you took the offer.

Unfortunately, you are afraid you might be over your head. Always before when you were running weapons, you were doing it with the tacit approval of the CIA, usually to Company funded groups in Nicaragua. It is your favorite kind of crime: quasi-legal and government protected. Of course you tend to be on the low end of the totem pole, and might get burned, but until this Iran-Contra thing blew up, there was plenty of business and very little risk.

During your drug-running days, one thing you learned about was the network of drug aircraft that are allowed to land their cargoes in the southern U.S., so that the Company can ship weapons on them on the return trip. From there they are shipped by air through Panama to Columbia, where they are modified to full automatic by the

local craftsmen, who have a particular skill with such rustic arts.

Mike Ballistis hired you to carry out the fairly simple task of driving to Texas, and supervising the transfer of the weapons from a Dallas warehouse to an airfield in the countryside. You will need him to give you some temporary documents that will cover the shipment, but you have already made one trip to set up the arrangements, and will be driving back this week to actually supervise the transfer. Ballistis let you know that "Uncle Sam" was not involved in this operation, which leaves your guts kind of cold, since that means that it is probably being funded by the Medellin Cartel, a friendly bunch of Colombian Coke Lords. They popularized the "Columbian necktie" which is when you cut out the throat of the person you want to kill, and then pull their tongue through it. Not your idea of high fashion.

Which is why your blood ran cold when you actually inspected the shipment in Texas. Because as far as you can tell, every single fucking weapon there is nearly worthless. The whole shipment is flawed. The bolts are seconds, and some of the weapons don't even have all the parts. You spent two hours going through the cases, and you were appalled to find that every case you opened was scrap. Some of the parts weren't even for the right type of gun. If the Medellin people got this shipment, they would...well you'd rather not think about it.

You called Ballistis, and let him know there might be a "difficulty" which you would fill you in on later. If there is a defect with the shipment, he will need to know about it right away. As far as you can tell, the weapons are still legitimate, and can still be returned to the manufacturer, which is Interarms in Alexandria. Now maybe Ballistis is out to screw the cartel on purpose, but you somehow doubt it.

Fortunately you have the perfect opportunity to meet him tonight. After you got through screaming at Margot about how Grant had bankrupted you, you found out that Margot had invited Emily, and that Mike would be coming with her. Mike had already asked her if you would be here, which was about as discrete as hell, since Margot is incredibly nosy.

That wasn't the only cheery news you had for Mike. Before you talked to him you gave Grant a

quick call from a payphone in town, and told you that you would have to talk to him about picking the stuff up. He said he had moved it to a different hiding place, because he was going to have a Fed in the house. He said that he was cooperating with the government in some sort of top secret investigation of arms dealing. You were more than a little displeased about this too, but he hung up immediately.

You presume he is under some kind of duress, since you have never known Grant to be overcome with a need to help out the Feds. And he was probably warning you because he figured that the investigation was directed at you. But you are still pissed off. Anyway, you passed the warning along to Mike, though if there are any Feds around, they are going to be looking at you, since Grant seemed to be unaware his phone was tapped. You will have to make a point of telling him what that "click" on his phone line actually means.

The fight you had just before you left was about the same thing, basically. You told Grant that you had some "business" to do in Texas, in a tone that implied it was not showing horses, and he really lit into you about taking risks. He was acting like you were his girlfriend, or his property. You savaged him up one side and down the other. Now you are worried that he may have been trying to warn you, though you still don't appreciate the manner of his meddling.

You brought a sample of the non-functional semi-automatic rifles, but considering what Grant had said, you decided to store it outside. You wrapped it in a black plastic bag, and hid it in the bushes.
(See Gordon (Grant) for specific location)

School: You attended Columbia Prep in '71 and '72. You know Margot Matthews, Linda Kane, Emily Breezewood, Sara Lamont, and Toni Randall-Smith from there.

Afterwards you went to Mary Washington with Linda, Emily and Sarah.

THE OTHERS

What they know about you:

Tony Randall-Smith: Olympic Equestrian Medalist, winning two Silver and one Bronze medal at Los Angeles in 1984. Native of McLean Virginia, the child of a former ambassador to England. Personally acquainted with Princess Margaret, has appeared in *Sports Illustrated*, and network television. Currently holds American and European Championships in several categories of jumps. Professional status has been called into question, but intends to compete in 1988.

PEOPLE YOU KNOW WELL:

Mike Ballistas: *one of the foremost gun-runners in Washington, though he managed to keep clear of the Iran-Contra scandal. You are currently doing business for him in Texas, for which you are to be paid \$8,000 now and \$8,000 upon completion.* Mike passes himself off as a wealthy international consultant with impressive offices downtown. Ballistas has numerous prominent government contacts, and is generally known to be an influential businessman. He donated heavily to the Reagan Campaign.

Emily Breezewood: *Emily once got you off the hook on a drug charge back in school, though you got expelled anyway.* A college friend of Grant Cochran, and a prep-school friend of Margot Matthews, Emily is the daughter of Senator Breezewood of Connecticut, a very powerful senior U.S. Legislator. Emily was married to Matthew Allen Carter, and divorced him, in a particularly messy case during which Mr. Carter was represented by Gary Morant. They are reported to be on barely civil speaking terms now. Emily is living with Mike Ballistas.

Avery Carson: *is into drugs, weapons, and anything else illegal. Currently you are making a massive drug delivery to him.* attended George Washington University and has many acquaintances from that period, and immediately afterward. Avery met most of Grant's circle of friends in the seventies while they were working in Washington after graduation. Mr. Carson occupied a position in the staff of the late Darrington Ripley, U.S. Ambassador to Sweden. Currently employed by the State Department,

Avery Carson is rumored to actually work for the Company, or No-such-agency.

Matthew Allen Carter: *you always rather liked Carter, though you have heard he is a bastard. Oh well, you gotta be tough, right. He and Grant recently had a pointless and bitter argument, though you aren't sure about what.* A well known mystic, Carter is associated with decadence, drugs, and bizarre mysticism. It is unclear where his money comes from, though he is known to be at least moderately wealthy, and eccentric.

M.A Carter provides spiritual consultation to some of Washington's most prominent social figures. He has appeared on several area talk shows, notably *Panorama* in July 1979 where he was involved in an altercation, and declined to appear on *Good Morning America* in August of 1982 on the topic "Senators who follow the Horoscopes." He has assisted Federal authorities as a consultant on "Cult Related Cases", and appeared before a Senate Subcommittee Special Hearing in 1983 to discuss "Cult Phenomena and Crime."

Grant Cochran: *You have been "seeing" Grant casually since he moved to this part of the country, and recommended to Margot that she locate him here. You argued bitterly with him before you left for Texas.*

Grant Cochran is a horror writer whose early work brought him wealth and recognition. His first acclaimed work was a collection of short stories in 1977 entitled *Look Ma, No Hands!* Grant achieved a more limited success with *The Sickness in John Harrol*, 1977; *The Collection*, 1979; but his mainstream horror novels *Dark Symbols*, 1980; and *Trinity*, 1982; were extremely successful. His Lovecraftian fantasy-horror *The Sightless King*, 1984 was universally panned. Grant also wrote the screenplay for the 1981 film *The Blinding*. Numerous short stories including *The Metallic Taste of Blood* **Omni**, Feb 1982.

Grant's work has tended more towards the occult and fantasy side than Stephen King, and his success has been less marked, but his early novels were commercially successful. Born 1955 to a wealthy Virginia family, Grant graduated from George Washington University in DC in 1975, aged twenty. Writer and playboy, known to have inherited some money from parent's death in 1974. He is widely rumored to have been hospitalized recently for rehabilitation.

Linda Kane: Parapsychological researcher for the Institute for Parapsychological Studies, 1567 23rd St. NW. Graduate of Columbia Prep, and Mary Washington College. M.A. Barnard. Kane is a literary agent for Matthew Allen Carter and is rumored to be his lover.

Sarah Lamont: Sarah Lamont is an old Prep-school and College friend of Margot Matthews, Linda Kane, Emily Breezewood and others. Sarah went to work for Gary Morant as a paralegal, and is now his chief secretary.

Margot Matthews: Margot was a friend of Grant Cochran, and several other attendees in college, but went on to become a prominent Washington socialite who rose out of the ranks of minor political followers due to her connections with the late U.S. ambassador to Sweden Mr. Darrington Ripley. Margot is giving this party in honor of Grant Cochran's birthday.

Margot is currently employed by the Department of State, where she is rumored to be the mistress of a powerful political appointee. She was mentioned in *People* magazine shortly after the inaugural ball, and her fortunes have definitely been on the rise with the Reagan government.

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Anthony Blaine: A New York writer considered a protege of Grant Cochran, Blaine is handled by Jonathan Drake, the same publisher as Cochran. It was rumored that Blaine and Cochran had a very serious argument while appearing together at a promotional convention after the publication of *Sightless King*. Blaine is best known for his Fantasy-Horror novel *Wunderking*, and his most recent work *The Dinner Guest*.

Leda Deerden: A New York author, or visual artist, guest of Grant's Publisher. Ms. Deerden is known for her terra cotta figures, which are widely sold in gift shops in the Village, and her work at the 42nd Street Gallery, but is a newcomer to the writing field. Her first project is projected to be a collaboration with Grant Cochran.

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is reported to be successful and on the rise. He handles many other writers including Anthony Blaine, and is also in charge of titles under the smaller, but profitable Medea imprint, for occult paperbacks, which includes the works of Jeffrey Saxon.

Gary Morant: Washington Attorney. Graduated from George Washington University in 1974, GW Law in 1978. Formed Morant and Steele with Harlan Steel in 1980. Known for handling some of the messiest and most prominent divorce and lawsuit cases in the Washington social spectrum. Morant is a rising star in the social constellation of Washington, and is Grant Cochran's attorney, and is currently representing him in all of his sordid legal affairs.

Mort Nicholson: a well known private detective. Nicholson has worked for Gary Morant, and was a research reference for the character of Detective George Panopolous in Grant Cochran's *Trinity*.

Roger Pierce: a Professor/practitioner of Psychology at George Washington University. Young but promising, for several years his 400 level course on Personality Disorders has been considered the "most fun" class in the entire psych department. Many of Dr. Pierce's associates consider him to be "that strung out quack", Dr. Pierce considers himself a "perceptually enhanced alternative practitioner." It is obvious that Dr. Pierce either has something on the University, or has tenure.

"Psychological disorders can be not only instructive, but entertaining as well..." (*American Psychiatric Yearbook*, 1980).

Jeffrey Saxon: A noted Parapsychology/Occult writer and Astrologer, author of *Health Signs*, *Astrology for You*, and *Psychic Defense*, and several other successful books published in paperback. Jeffrey is rumored to be practically the only person in New York who does not suffer from an incapacitating drug addiction.

Karyn Seidmann: A New-York literary agent, Seidmann is not well known in literary circles, though there are some dark rumors about her past, including a lawsuit. Seidman handles small time occult authors, and until recently her biggest literary success was Jeffrey Saxon, the popular occultist and astrologer.

Oliver Stewart: A comic-book author and illustrator for *Universal* Comics, a major competitor of Marvel and D.C.

Oliver responsible for the satirical *Captain Flapjack* miniseries, but is best known for his work with *Blood Hound*, a revitalized 1960's Superhero, and with *Revenant*, a dark-horror miniseries. Stewart handled a graphic-novel adaptation of Grant Cochran's *Sightless King*, which was somewhat more successful than the actual novel. Oliver is a New Yorker, but has maintained a friendship with horror writer Grant Cochran, and has come down with some of his other New York acquaintances to make his birthday an interesting affair.

Craig Webber: *you thought you knew everything about the underworld in this area, and you've never heard of this guy. He seems to know some of the right people, but there is definitely something funny about him. Avery has been out of circulation too long over in Europe.*

An acquaintance of Margot Matthews, Mr. Webber is a well-to-do local business consultant, rumored to have connections to smuggling and the underworld. Webber is said to be a business partner of Avery Carson.



A Birthday Surprise

Jeffrey Saxon

You have always been a rather social creature. You were always a little old for your age, and just a trifle manic. In fact, they said you were a "hyperactive child." This struck you as a good thing, but occasionally it made you miserable.

You found out early that weed would calm you down. Your older sister was in college in sixty seven, and brought you some. Pretty soon, you were buying the stuff at high school.

You went through school as a hip, happy go lucky kid, and floated out of college to marry a pretty young girl with whom you were desperately in love in summer of '72. In summer of '75, you had driven up to Woodstock, and were coming back to the city. You were a little bit drunk, and you had done a couple of doobies, but you were basically alright. Then you just sort of lost it.

The girl died. You only wished you were dead.

You realized that you had to get back into things, or you were as good as dead. You needed to talk to your wife, and you found a good medium. There was a tearful night, when you asked her forgiveness. She forgave you, told you there was a better place. Told you to go on living. You have talked with her from time to time since then, and she is your Guardian Spirit.

You joined a procession of groups designed to get you back into good shape: TM, Eckenkar, others. None of them quite fit. You needed money, and you went to work in a health food store. You had given up drugs and alcohol completely, though you realize that it is a personal choice. You try not to be evangelical about it, except of course in your writing.

You picked up some astrology books from your spiritualist, and convinced the guy who ran the health food store to start stocking a rack of "light" occult books. Eventually, you got pretty good at Astrology, and you began casting horoscopes for people who came into the store. There were

problems with this after a while, but in 1979, your father died, and you inherited a decent sum of money. You bought your own storefront, and opened a health-food store. Health food was just coming into its own, but that wasn't what made your fortune. You had been writing a little book that explained the connection between Astrology and health food. The connections were obvious for you: certainly it didn't make sense for a Gemini to eat apricots, and bean curd was no good for a Taurus. But other people did not necessarily understand. They came to you for advice, and so you started putting together a little booklet.

That was *Health Signs*. You didn't know what to do with it, but in 1981 an artist friend, Leda Deerden, who was a regular customer, suggested that you get a literary agent. She had a friend, Karyn Seidmann, who was a young agent, and was willing to work cheap.

You trusted your fortunes to Karyn, and were immediately impressed. She hauled you to a party to introduce you to the publisher Jonathan Drake. Right there, in plain sight, she talked Drake into looking at your manuscript. Karyn definitely has a way of getting people to do what she wants. You ended up paying more than you had expected, but it didn't matter, because *Health Signs* became extremely popular.

After that, you set to work in earnest. You had recognized the need for a good, simple, book on astrology that anyone could understand. You wrote *Astrology for You* in 1983, and were forced to give up your day job in order to handle the speaking engagements. You hired someone to manage the store for you, and you began your career as a professional writer.

Speaking engagements are not what they are cracked up to be of course. When people hear about the "lecture circuit" they think about ex-presidents making the rounds of Yale, Harvard, Columbia. Real writers

do signings at Crown Books, and lectures at the SUNY Jamaica Student Union. Occult book stores in the Village. Unitarian Churches. Two hundred a night. Still it isn't bad money, and it adds up. The party invitations alone can keep you in food.

That was how you really got active socially. You already knew Leda, who seems to know everyone. You made some friends, including horror author Anthony Blaine, and comic book author and illustrator Oliver Stewart. Stewart was a particularly dark personality, the perfect straight man for your sparkingly manic self. The two of you shared an apartment, and other interests. "Ollie" Stewart was already a fairly noted figure, and the two of you together became a little notorious as benign troublemakers.

You got invited to parties and clubs, and accumulated an odd coterie of acquaintances, in which Ollie was the stable central pivot. Despite the fact that you are a health nut, and that Ollie exaggerated his addictions for stylistic value, the fact is that he is one of the more stable members of your little social group.

You are not really very familiar with your host, Grant Cochran, at all. Some time ago, Ollie got the contract to illustrate *Sightless King*, a graphic novel adaptation of one of Cochran's horror novels. He read through the book, and passed it off to you.

You read *Sightless King* that night. It was full of wonderful symbols and imagery, thrown together in an appallingly bad way. You sorted it out, but parts of it really appalled you. The man's sources don't know *anything* about the occult. Ollie met with Cochran, and found him pompous and brusque, which are fairly redeeming characteristics in New York, or at least common characteristics.

During the time he was in New York, Ollie got to know Grant fairly well, and you spent some time with him. Anthony Blaine, who had known Grant for years, had nothing but bad things to say about him, but the fact is for all of your manic energy, you are an affable fellow and like most everyone. You even like Leda Deerden, and you admire and respect her art.

You know some of the other people here better. Some time ago Emily Breezewood divorced her husband and came up to live with Karyn and Leda. You had not met her, but you had heard of her from Linda Kane, a friend of yours who visits

periodically. Linda is the head of the Psychic Research Center in Washington, and has lectured in New York several times. You have helped her make arrangements, and put her up.

Through Ollie (of course), you found out some very interesting gossip about Grant Cochran and his circle of friends. Notably, you heard Emily's ex-husband apparently actually wrote most of the good stuff in Grant's novels. You would be interested in meeting the redoubtable Matthew Allen Carter, and finding out if he is as clueless about the occult as he would seem from Grant's novels.

Karyn asked you and Ollie to come along and ride herd on Leda, though you suspect that actually means creating enough of a diversion that Grant and Drake capitulate to whatever terms she makes just to get some peace. She is really a wonderful touch at getting good terms and deals, and getting people to part with things they had rather not.

Karyn asked you and Ollie to pick Leda up in a rental car and bring her down with you since you actually know how to drive. An odd thing in New York, but you have places to go and people to see. Drake and Karyn were driving down separately, but you have little faith they will actually make it, considering how difficult it was for you to get here, and how little experience either of them have reading maps. Leda is apparently trying to close some sort of literary deal with Grant Cochran, which is fine with you. In the meantime, you are looking for new material, both for your work, and for conversation.

THE OTHERS

What they know about you:

Jeffrey Saxon: A noted Parapsychology/Occult writer and Astrologer, author of *Health Signs*, *Astrology for You*, and *Psychic Defense*, and several other successful books published in paperback. Jeffrey is rumored to be practically the only person in New York who does not suffer from an incapacitating drug addiction.

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Emily Breezewood: *a good kid, a little confused. She roomed with Karyn, who probably wants something from her.*

A college friend of Grant Cochran, and a prep-school friend of Margot Matthews, Emily is the daughter of Senator Breezewood of Connecticut, a very powerful senior U.S. Legislator. Emily was married to Matthew Allen Carter, and divorced him, in a particularly messy case during which Mr. Carter was represented by Gary Morant. They are reported to be on barely civil speaking terms now. Emily is living with Mike Ballistis.

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Leda Deerden: *is a quality person which is what matters. She believes in art, and culture, and stupid causes, which is an important thing in this day and age. You like Leda, despite her dizziness, and she is a very talented artist.*

A New York author, or visual artist, guest of Grant's Publisher. Ms. Deerden is known for her terra cotta figures, which are widely sold in gift shops in the Village, and her work at the 42nd Street Gallery, but is a newcomer to the writing field. Her first project is projected to be a collaboration with Grant Cochran.

Jonathan Drake: *Johnny (he hates to be called that), is down here to close a deal with Leda and Grant. From what you've heard, he wants Leda to rewrite Grant's prose. You aren't sure if she is capable, but after reading Sightless King, you are convinced she couldn't do it any harm.*

Publisher of Grant Cochran, Drake is Editor of Horror at Electra publishing, a division of Robert W. Thormond and Sons, Inc., one of the nations largest publishing houses. Despite the failure of Cochran's latest novel, Drake is reported to be successful and on the rise. He handles many other writers including Anthony Blaine, and is also in charge of titles under the smaller, but profitable Medea imprintaur, for occult paperbacks, which includes the works of Jeffrey Saxon.

Linda Kane: *a very nice girl who has visited in New York several times. You wish her very well, and are profoundly interested in knowing how she became involved with this den of wolves.*

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Karyn Seidmann: *Your agent, and a damn good one. Karyn can get anything out of anyone, and is a little compulsive about it. You try to get her to relax.*

A New-York literary agent, Seidmann is not well known in literary circles, though there are some dark rumors about her past, including a lawsuit. Seidmann handles small time occult authors, and until recently her biggest literary success was Jeffrey Saxon, the popular occultist and astrologer.

Oliver Stewart:

Oliver is...well...Oliver. He can be a damned nuisance, and a profound distraction and a social pestilence of unprecedented proportion. But somehow, ya gotta love the man. Besides, he's a necessity, because you disdain gossip, and if you didn't hand around with Oliver, you would never get to hear any.

A comic-book author and illustrator for *Universal Comics*, a major competitor of Marvel and D.C.

Oliver is responsible for the satirical *Captain Flapjack* miniseries, but is best known for his work with *Blood Hound*, a revitalized 1960's Superhero, and with *Revenant*, a dark-horror miniseries. Stewart handled a graphic-novel adaptation of Grant Cochran's *Sightless King*, which was somewhat more successful than the actual novel. Oliver is a New Yorker, but has maintained a friendship with horror writer Grant Cochran, and has come down with some of his other New York acquaintances to make his birthday an interesting affair.

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Thomas Cochran: Grant's failure of a brother. Thomas dropped out of school, and was deeply involved in drugs. He narrowly avoided jail on larceny charges. He lost his share of the family wealth, and is currently employed by his brother as a handyman.

Sarah Lamont: Sarah Lamont is an old Prep-school and College friend of Margot Matthews, Linda Kane, Emily Breezewood and others. Sarah went to work for Gary Morant as a paralegal, and is now his chief secretary.

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"Psychological disorders can be not only instructive, but entertaining as well..." (*American Psychiatric Yearbook*, 1980).

Tony Randall-Smith: Olympic Equestrian Medalist, winning two Silver and one Bronze medal at Los Angeles in 1984. Native of McLean Virginia, the child of a former ambassador to England. Personally acquainted with Princess Margaret, has appeared in *Sports Illustrated*, and network television. Currently holds American and European Championships in several categories of jumps. Professional status has been called into question, but intends to compete in 1988.

Craig Webber: An acquaintance of Margot Matthews, Mr. Webber is a well-to-do local business consultant, rumored to have connections to smuggling and the underworld. Webber is said to be a business partner of Avery Carson.



A Birthday Surprise

Oliver Stewart

You were born a poor kid in New York City.
Actually you were born a rich kid in New Jersey.
Actually, you were born out in the midwest....

You like to tell stories about your childhood, almost all of which you have made up, and are pointedly contradictory. It allows you to be mysterious, without having to be quiet. The fact is that you have blocked most of your childhood out, and try not to think of it any more than necessary.

You spent much of your childhood wrapped up in comic books. You were born just early enough to be able to find old pre-code horror comics if you looked hard enough, and you did. You could buy them for a nickel a piece used in bins at the comic shop. Most of your money went there.

You lived not only the stories, but the extended stories. The things that went on outside of the comics. You were also an avid reader, and digested everything in your path. When you read, you illustrated the scenes in your mind, and when you read illustrated material, you filled in the dialogue and behind-the-scenes material.

It did not take you particularly long to become a comic artist. There were several years in the late seventies of supporting yourself by odd jobs, as the market for domestic underground work had petered out, and the market for really top-notch work like the material in *Raw* was not yet fully established. But you could draw, and you managed to get yourself a job at Universal, the major competitor of Marvel and D.C. Like most other companies, Universal had a catalogue of wooden 1950's superheroes, and like most other companies, they were in the process of going through them with a chainsaw, and trying to shape something sophisticated enough for an eighties market.

It took several years of working, but eventually you were allowed to produce your own satirical mini-series, "Captain Flapjack." It had been envisioned as sort of a minimal market bit of fluff, but your

biting humor, and hints at adult themes, made it a very successful spoof.

After that, they turned you loose with *Blood Hound*, and a career was born. You handled the adaptation of the insipid 1960's character with a grace and drama that surprised even you. Before long, the trail of bloody footprints superimposed across a bleak oil cover became a common site in shops that handled "mature" comics.

Socially you began to get out a bit more. You made some friends, including horror author Anthony Blaine, and occult writer Jeffrey Saxon. Saxon was a particularly happy camper, a perfect contrast for your manically dark personality. The two of you shared an apartment, and other interests. "Ollie" Stewart became a fairly noted figure, and the two of you together became a little notorious as benign troublemakers.

You got invited to parties and clubs, and accumulated an odd coterie of acquaintances, in which you were the stable central pivot. Despite the fact that Jeffrey was a health nut, and that you exaggerated your addictions for stylistic value, the fact is you were one of the more stable members of your little social group. It was through Jeffrey that you met Karyn Seidmann, Leda Deerden, and Jonathan Drake.

Graphic horror never managed to completely erase your business sense, and you realized that Drake, a major editor at Thormond and Sons, might be useful to know. For one thing, Universal Comics and Thormond Publishing are both owned by Vista Communications, which made Drake practically "in-house." One evening you were sitting around trashing someone's apartment, and the subject of graphic novels came up. Drake mentioned that there was some interest in a graphic novel based on Grant Cochran's *Sightless King*.

You read *Sightless King* that night. It was full of wonderful symbols and imagery, thrown together in an appallingly bad way. You sorted it out, and

began to storyboard it. Drake loved it. Grant's agent loved it. You met with Cochran, and found him pompous and brusque, which are fairly redeeming characteristics in New York, or at least common characteristics. Your work on *Blood Hound* had clenched your career as a writer, but much of the drawing and all of the inking were done by flunkies. Your work on *Sightless King* clenched your reputation as a serious illustrator.

During the time he was in New York, you got to know Grant fairly well, and spent some time with him. Anthony Blaine, who had known Grant for years, had nothing but bad things to say about him, but the fact is for all of your manic energy, you are an affable fellow and like most everyone. You even like Leda Deerden, though her idea of art isn't fit to be used to patch radiator pipes. You have learned, unlike Anthony, to keep such opinions to yourself. Perhaps Jeffrey taught you some restraint.

You do love to gossip of course. Some time ago Emily Breezewood divorced her husband and came up to live with Karyn and Leda. You had not met her, but you had heard of her from Linda Kane, a friend of Karyn and Jeffrey who visits periodically on literary business of some kind. At any rate, you found out some very interesting gossip about Grant Cochran and his circle of friends. Notably, you heard Emily's ex-husband apparently actually wrote most of the good stuff in Grant's novels. You would be interested in meeting the redoubtable Matthew Allen Carter, and finding out if his sense of horror is as acute as you have heard.

Earlier today you touched base with Linda who mentioned that you should avoid discussing business with Mr. Gary Morant this evening, as he had just been wiped out in the stock market crash. You hadn't heard about the stock market crash last week, so you had her fill you in on it. Perhaps you should listen to the news more. You had heard some loud noises from down towards Wall street, so you presume that was the sound of financiers hitting the pavement. Fascinating city, New York. Never boring.

Other than the near compulsive exchange of gossip (it really is the only civilized recreation man has invented), and making sure that Leda behaves herself (Karyn asked you and Jeffrey to pick Leda up in a rental car and bring her down with you since Jeffrey actually knows how to drive. An odd

thing in New York, but he has places to go and people to see. Drake and Karyn were driving down separately, but you have little faith they will actually make it, considering how difficult it was for you to get here, and how little experience either of them have reading maps. Leda is apparently trying to close some sort of literary deal with Grant Cochran, which is fine with you. In the meantime, you are looking for new material, both for your work, and for conversation.

THE OTHERS

What they know about you:

Oliver Stewart: A comic-book author and illustrator for *Universal Comics*, a major competitor of Marvel and D.C.

Oliver responsible for the satirical *Captain Flapjack* miniseries, but is best known for his work with *Blood Hound*, a revitalized 1960's Superhero, and with *Revenant*, a dark-horror miniseries. Stewart handled a graphic-novel adaptation of Grant Cochran's *Sightless King*, which was somewhat more successful than the actual novel. Oliver is a New Yorker, but has maintained a friendship with horror writer Grant Cochran, and has come down with some of his other New York acquaintances to make his birthday an interesting affair.

PEOPLE YOU KNOW WELL:

Anthony Blaine: A New York writer considered a protege of Grant Cochran, Blaine is handled by Jonathan Drake, the same publisher as Cochran. It was rumored that Blaine and Cochran had a very serious argument while appearing together at a promotional convention after the publication of *Sightless King*. Blaine is best known for his Fantasy-Horror novel *Wunderking*, and his most recent work *The Dinner Guest*.

Emily Breezewood: *a good kid, a little confused. She roomed with Karyn, who probably wants something from her.*

A college friend of Grant Cochran, and a prep-school friend of Margot Matthews, Emily is the daughter of Senator Breezewood of Connecticut, a very powerful senior U.S. Legislator. Emily was married to Matthew Allen Carter, and divorced him, in a particularly messy case during which Mr. Carter was represented by Gary Morant. They are reported to be on barely civil speaking terms now. Emily is living with Mike Ballistic.

Grant Cochran: Grant Cochran is a horror writer whose early work brought him wealth and recognition. His first acclaimed work was a collection of short stories in 1977 entitled *Look Ma, No Hands!* Grant achieved a more limited success with *The Sickness in John Harrol*, 1977; *The Collection*, 1979; but his mainstream horror novels *Dark Symbols*, 1980; and *Trinity*, 1982;

were extremely successful. His Lovecraftian fantasy-horror *The Sightless King*, 1984 was universally panned. Grant also wrote the screenplay for the 1981 film *The Blinding*. Numerous short stories including *The Metallic Taste of Blood* **Omni**, Feb 1982.

Grant's work has tended more towards the occult and fantasy side than Stephen King, and his success has been less marked, but his early novels were commercially successful. Born 1955 to a wealthy Virginia family, Grant graduated from George Washington University in DC in 1975, aged twenty. Writer and playboy, known to have inherited some money from parent's death in 1974. He is widely rumored to have been hospitalized recently for rehabilitation.

Leda Deerden: *has never written a word in her life as far as you know, and is about as talented as a Central Park pigeon, but she is a quality person which is what matters. She believes in art, and culture, and stupid causes, which is an important thing in this day and age. You like Leda, despite her dizziness, and will gladly lie preposterously to aid in prevaricating her literary credentials.*

A New York author, or visual artist, guest of Grant's Publisher. Ms. Deerden is known for her terra cotta figures, which are widely sold in gift shops in the Village, and her work at the 42nd Street Gallery, but is a newcomer to the writing field. Her first project is projected to be a collaboration with Grant Cochran.

Jonathan Drake: *Johnny (he hates to be called that), is down here to close a deal with Leda and Grant. From what you've heard, he wants Leda to rewrite Grant's prose. You aren't sure if she is capable, but after reading Sightless King, you are convinced she couldn't do it any harm.*

Publisher of Grant Cochran, Drake is Editor of Horror at Electra publishing, a division of Robert W. Thormond and Sons, Inc., one of the nations largest publishing houses. Despite the failure of Cochran's latest novel, Drake is reported to be successful and on the rise. He handles many other writers including Anthony Blaine, and is also in charge of titles under the smaller, but profitable Medea imprintaur, for occult paperbacks, which includes the works of Jeffrey Saxon.

Linda Kane: *a very nice girl who has visited in New York several times. You wish her very well, and are profoundly interested in knowing how she became involved with this den of wolves.*

Parapsychological researcher for the Institute for Parapsychological Studies, 1567 23rd St. NW. Graduate of Columbia Prep, and Mary Washington College. M.A. Barnard. Kane is a literary agent for Matthew Allen Carter and is rumored to be his lover.

Jeffrey Saxon: *is well...Jeff. How can you express it. He can be a profound nerd, and a brilliant entertainment. The two of you are capable of making profound amounts of trouble at parties. Jeffrey lost his family in a tragedy about ten years ago, a fact which you try not to remind him of.*

A noted Parapsychology/Occult writer and Astrologer, author of *Health Signs*, *Astrology for You*, and *Psychic Defense*, and several other successful books published in paperback. Jeffrey is rumored to be practically the only person in New York who does not suffer from an incapacitating drug addiction.

Karyn Seidmann: *a tragic and interesting figure. Karyn went to women's prison in the 1970's for fraud and embezzlement. She was a professional con-artist. She was released, and went to work as a semi-legit literary agent, and actually landed a good writer. She tries to be straight, but has an almost unbearable compulsion to rip off everyone she is associated with. Jeffrey knows this, and is safe. You try to avoid disclosing information on Karyn's past to anyone, because she is trying to reform. Male reformed small-time gangsters seem to get more respect in New York. Maybe Karyn would do better if she looked like Dustin Hoffman. At any rate, old habits die hard. When you last saw her, she was typing up some work by a forgotten 1950's horror author named Harold Pike to pass off as a sample of Leda's writing.*

A New-York literary agent, Seidmann is not well known in literary circles, though there are some dark rumors about her past, including a lawsuit. Seidmann handles small time occult authors, and

until recently her biggest literary success was Jeffrey Saxon, the popular occultist and astrologer.

OTHER PEOPLE:

Mike Ballistas: a wealthy international consultant with impressive offices downtown. Ballistas has numerous prominent government contacts, and is generally known to be an influential businessman. He donated heavily to the Reagan Campaign.

Avery Carson: attended George Washington University and has many acquaintances from that period, and immediately afterward. Avery met most of Grant's circle of friends in the seventies while they were working in Washington after graduation. Mr. Carson occupied a position in the staff of the late Darrington Ripley, U.S. Ambassador to Sweden. Currently employed by the State Department, Avery Carson is rumored to actually work for the Company, or No-such-agency.

Matthew Allen Carter: A well known mystic, Carter is associated with decadence, drugs, and bizarre mysticism. It is unclear where his money comes from, though he is known to be at least moderately wealthy, and eccentric.

M.A Carter provides spiritual consultation to some of Washington's most prominent social figures. He has appeared on several area talk shows, notably *Panorama* in July 1979 where he was involved in an altercation, and declined to appear on *Good Morning America* in August of 1982 on the topic "Senators who follow the Horoscopes." He has assisted Federal authorities as a consultant on "Cult Related Cases", and appeared before a Senate Subcommittee Special Hearing in 1983 to discuss "Cult Phenomena and Crime."

Thomas Cochran: Grant's failure of a brother. Thomas dropped out of school, and was deeply involved in drugs. He narrowly avoided jail on larceny charges. He lost his share of the family wealth, and is currently employed by his brother as a handyman.

Sarah Lamont: Sarah Lamont is an old Prep-school and College friend of Margot Matthews, Linda Kane, Emily Breezewood and others. Sarah went to work for Gary Morant as a paralegal, and is now his chief secretary.

Margot Matthews: Margot was a friend of Grant Cochran, and several other attendees in college, but went on to become a prominent Washington

socialite who rose out of the ranks of minor political followers due to her connections with the late U.S. ambassador to Sweden Mr. Darrington Ripley. Margot is giving this party in honor of Grant Cochran's birthday.

Margot is currently employed by the Department of State, where she is rumored to be the mistress of a powerful political appointee. She was mentioned in *People* magazine shortly after the inaugural ball, and her fortunes have definitely been on the rise with the Reagan government.

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Craig Webber: An acquaintance of Margot Matthews, Mr. Webber is a well-to-do local business consultant, rumored to have connections to smuggling and the underworld. Webber is said to be a business partner of Avery Carson.



A Birthday Surprise

Lt. Craig Webber

The S stands for "Spook".

You are by profession a spy, in the grand tradition. Actually you think of yourself more as a detective. You planned to spend your life in law enforcement, but found that the peacetime military pays better and you only get shot at about half as much.

You have established an unofficial record as a "damn good operative." You have been trying to infiltrate "Washington Society" such as it is. You have been looking for evidence of arms merchanting.

Your superiors are only passing interested in drugs and sex. There is a rising interest in drugs in the administration, but there is some suspicion it is meant to distract from investigation elsewhere. The people who control your branch of Naval Intelligence probably answer much higher up, or are trying to cut some ice with their favorite Senator. Or maybe they actually care how U.S. enemies keep ending up armed with U.S. weapons, though that is less likely.

DCI had evidence for months that the U.S. Embassy in Sweden was being used as an origin point for phoney Weapons export documents that were allowing U.S. Companies to appear to sell weapons to Belgium and Scandinavia, when they were actually being shipped to countries like Iraq, which the U.S. has no diplomatic ties to. The U.S. ambassador to Sweden, Mr. Darrington Ripley was finally approached in the probe when it became clear he wasn't involved in it. There are other high level government connections. Officially, the domestic end of this case is out of DCI jurisdiction and ought to be a customs investigation, but there are also indications of massive governmental malfeasance, and all sorts of other messy ties. Probably much of what you uncover will get turned over to the Federal Marshall's Service, or Treasury, to prosecute.

You were first assigned to the infiltration project when Ripley was blown up near Mons Belgium

while on vacation. Car bomb. The Basque nationalists claimed responsibility. You have two suspects under surveillance: Margot Matthews, Ripley's long time mistress, and Avery Carson, a minor official on his diplomatic staff.

You've been floating through these circles for a while now, identifying yourself as a minor weapons dealer. This made you contact with Mr. Carson. You could arrest him on drug charges, but you'd much rather have the big case. Discretely following Carson and Matthews from the time they returned to the U.S., you made your first big breakthrough when you made... "social contact" with Emily Breezewood, the daughter of Senator Breezewood of Connecticut. She was looking for a "strong and silent type" after her last relationship with some sort of religious lunatic who beat her up. She lives with a consultant named Mike Ballistas, so you aren't too worried about her finding out about your business. You like her of course, but it would be dangerous for her to know what you did for a living.

You have been honest with her, and when she asked you where you worked you said you could not say. This both strengthened the impression that you are an arms dealer, and left you feeling you had been decent.

Your first big lead may have finally emerged. A few months ago, your people were filtering transport permits from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms. (Legally, you were only supposed to look at permits from out of the country, but they are very understanding about "need to know.") Your Investigative Unit stumbled on a set of forged papers from a phony buyer. A huge shipment of semi-automatic rifles (the sort that can easily be modified to full automatic) from Interarms in Alexandria, bound for a non-existent sporting goods chain in Texas.

The shipment was seized by AT&F, but Interarms quietly agreed to keep the seizure a secret. Instead, a replacement with inoperative firearms

was arranged. Mostly old military surplus, broken, obsolete etc. When the shipment was taken to Texas, your people kept watch. When someone showed up to inspect it, they took pictures.

And this is where your investigation began to pay off. Because you recognized the girl who did the inspection from your travels in Emily Breezewood's social circles. Antonia "Toni" Randall-Smith. A former Olympic athlete. You had a quick check run on her and found that she is in precarious financial shape, which clenches it.

You are getting close to "Mr. Big," the billion dollar businessman who is at the center of a significant portion of domestic and international arms smuggling. You need to find the man (or woman) who controls it all.

You know Carson is a drug dealer, and you are sure he is an arms dealer. You decided to try a feint, and had some papers shipped to your office. They are the certificates for the weapons that were seized from Interarms. You told Avery Carson you had a possible deal for him. With the certificates to lend legitimacy, you will propose paying him 1.4 million to ship the weapons to Nicaragua. When and if he bites, he should lead you to Mr. Big.

THE OTHERS

What they know about you:

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PEOPLE YOU KNOW WELL:

Emily Breezewood: *you are currently having an affair with Emily, and you will try to protect her to the best of your ability.*

A college friend of Grant Cochran, and a prep-school friend of Margot Matthews, Emily is the daughter of Senator Breezewood of Connecticut, a very powerful senior U.S. Legislator. Emily was married to Matthew Allen Carter, and divorced him, in a particularly messy case during which Mr. Carter was represented by Gary Morant. They are reported to be on barely civil speaking terms now. Emily is living with Mike Ballistic.

Avery Carson: *is a drug runner, and may be involved with international weapons smuggling, but with his position and income it is unlikely he is at the center of the operation.*

Attended George Washington University and has many acquaintances from that period, and immediately afterward. Avery met most of Grant's circle of friends in the seventies while they were working in Washington after graduation. Mr. Carson occupied a position in the staff of the late Darrington Ripley, U.S. Ambassador to Sweden. Currently employed by the State Department, Avery Carson is rumored to actually work for the Company, or No-such-agency.

Margot Matthews: *like Carter is a drug runner, and may be involved with international weapons smuggling, but with her position and income it is very unlikely she is at the center of the operation.*

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Sweden Mr. Darrington Ripley. Margot is giving this party in honor of Grant Cochran's birthday.

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Roger Pierce: one of two catches. When you first took up with Emily, you had Intelligence run everyone she knew through all the available channels. Pierce had his license to practice medicine revoked in the late seventies, but somehow it seems never to have gotten into the personnel file at his University, where he is listed as having a PhD in Psychology (he does), but the records of his Psychiatric license seem to be missing. Your people put some pressure on him to encourage his "cooperation" and the good doctor should do whatever you want. He is known to be involved in drug running, another source of pressure. He does not know who you are, but your contact phrase is "Killjoy"

A Professor/practitioner of Psychology at George Washington University. Young but promising, for several years his 400 level course on Personality Disorders has been considered the "most fun" class in the entire psych department. Many of Dr. Pierce's associates consider him to be "that strung out quack", Dr. Pierce considers himself a "perceptually enhanced alternative practitioner." It is obvious that Dr. Pierce either has something on the University, or has tenure.

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Tony Randall-Smith: Your best lead right now. You were able to identify Tony from a photo. She had a drug conviction in the seventies that was "erased" after some direct pressure was applied by Senator Breezewood of Connecticut to the Federal Court.

Olympic Equestrian Medalist, winning two Silver and one Bronze medal at Los Angeles in 1984. Native of McLean Virginia, the child of a former ambassador to England. Personally acquainted

with Princess Margaret, has appeared in *Sports Illustrated*, and network television. Currently holds American and European Championships in several categories of jumps. Professional status has been called into question, but intends to compete in 1988.

Grant Cochran: another unwilling ally. Cochran is heavily in debt, and has borrowed a fortune. He has cheated on his income taxes for the past eight years running. The threat of a phone call to the IRS very quickly brought Mr. Cochran into your camp. He has promised to facilitate your investigation.

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A Birthday Surprise

Jonathan Drake

You are Jonathan Drake, the New York Editor, and well to be perfectly modest, the hottest thing since pre-sliced bread. You are heading up, up, up, and there is no direction down.

Well, there is your total drug dependence, but hell, everyone in New York has that. Where would you be without it. Really you just don't have nay limits.

You are currently in Horror which is becoming a big business. Oh sure, scoff all you want. But there haven't been two months in the last two years that there weren't two horror titles on the New York Times bestseller list. And that isn't even counting fantasy literature.

You have a hunch right now, and if it pays off, you could be in good shape. You were a very junior editor back in 1977, fresh out of school, and you pulled *The Sickness in John Harrol* out of a scrap pile, and got it published. It was a big success. You suffered through *The Collection*, and *Dark Symbols*, which appealed to progressively smaller and more esoteric audiences. You told Grant to get his act together. He did, and produced the fantasy-horror *Trinity* in 1982. It was the worst of his novels, but it sold better than any of the others.

Then Grant produced *The Sightless King*, a boring pile of mumbo-jumbo and boring prose that was so stiff and wooden you almost wondered if someone else wrote it.

You have heard rumors that Grant is dying, mostly from his fans. You have partially come south to see if the rumors are true. You also just got about a hundred pages of the most pathetic schlock Grant has ever produced. This isn't good bad like *Trinity*, it is bad like *Sightless King*. You wouldn't pay attention to the rumors, but Grant called you two days ago and asked what you would do if someone was trying to kill you. You thought it was a literary question and said "hire a private investigator." Grant said that sounded like a good idea, and hung up.

You told your secretary to pack your bags, and prepared to hit the road. It is time for you to have a talk with Grant. An agent named Karyn Seidmann wants Grant to collaborate with a New York writer named Leda Deerden. Basically, you want to take whatever he has and turn it over to someone who is likely to remain coherent long enough to write it into acceptable pulp.

You especially want to secure rights to his new material if he is dying, since his "last book" will be worth more. You had dinner with Leda Deerden last week, and she seemed rather fuzzy, and burbled a lot, but Helen assured you it was because she was a health food nut and never drank alcohol, so the wine had gone straight to her head. She showed you a sample of Leda's writing, which wasn't bad; in fact it resembled the work of the classic 1950's thriller hack Harold Poke.

You dragged Deerden along with you, though apparently she knows more people here than you do. You are actually a little fuzzy on faces sometimes. It's that wonderful Bolivian Marching powder. It keeps you up, but it makes everything just the tiniest bit fuzzy....

THE OTHERS

What they know about you:

Jonathan Drake: Publisher of Grant Cochran, Drake is Editor of Horror at Electra publishing, a division of Robert W. Thormond and Sons, Inc., one of the nations largest publishing houses. Despite the failure of Cochran's latest novel, Drake is reported to be successful and on the rise. He handles many other writers including Anthony Blaine, and is also in charge of titles under the smaller, but profitable Medea imprintaur, for occult paperbacks, which includes the works of Jeffrey Saxon.

PEOPLE YOU KNOW WELL:

Anthony Blaine: *Second rate hack.*

A New York writer considered a protege of Grant Cochran, Blaine is handled by Jonathan Drake, the same publisher as Cochran. It was rumored that Blaine and Cochran had a very serious argument while appearing together at a promotional convention after the publication of *Sightless King*. Blaine is best known for his Fantasy-Horror novel *Wunderking*, and his most recent work *The Dinner Guest*.

Emily Breezewood: *You met Emily when she was living with Karyn Seidmann in New York after her divorce.*

A college friend of Grant Cochran, and a prep-school friend of Margot Matthews, Emily is the daughter of Senator Breezewood of Connecticut, a very powerful senior U.S. Legislator. Emily was married to Matthew Allen Carter, and divorced him, in a particularly messy case during which Mr. Carter was represented by Gary Morant. They are reported to be on barely civil speaking terms now. Emily is living with Mike Ballistis.

Grant Cochran: *Has-been first rate hack.*

Grant Cochran is a horror writer whose early work brought him wealth and recognition. His first acclaimed work was a collection of short stories in 1977 entitled *Look Ma, No Hands!* Grant achieved a more limited success with *The Sickness in John Harrol*, 1977; *The Collection*, 1979; but his mainstream horror novels *Dark Symbols*, 1980; and *Trinity*, 1982; were extremely successful. His

Lovecraftian fantasy-horror *The Sightless King*, 1984 was universally panned. Grant also wrote the screenplay for the 1981 film *The Blinding*. Numerous short stories including *The Metallic Taste of Blood* **Omni**, Feb 1982.

Grant's work has tended more towards the occult and fantasy side than Stephen King, and his success has been less marked, but his early novels were commercially successful. Born 1955 to a wealthy Virginia family, Grant graduated from George Washington University in DC in 1975, aged twenty. Writer and playboy, known to have inherited some money from parent's death in 1974. He is widely rumored to have been hospitalized recently for rehabilitation.

Leda Deerden: *Karyn says Deerden is just what you need to straighten up Grant's prose.*

A New York author, or visual artist, guest of Grant's Publisher. Ms. Deerden is known for her terra cotta figures, which are widely sold in gift shops in the Village, and her work at the 42nd Street Gallery, but is a newcomer to the writing field. Her first project is projected to be a collaboration with Grant Cochran.

Linda Kane: *a friend of Jeffrey Saxon, Karyn and Leda. From this area.*

Parapsychological researcher for the Institute for Parapsychological Studies, 1567 23rd St. NW. Graduate of Columbia Prep, and Mary Washington College. M.A. Barnard. Kane is a literary agent for Matthew Allen Carter and is rumored to be his lover.

Jeffrey Saxon: *makes money for you. Karyn discovered him. You can't stand to read tripe like this, but it sells.*

A noted Parapsychology/Occult writer and Astrologer, author of *Health Signs*, *Astrology for You*, and *Psychic Defense*, and several other successful books published in paperback. Jeffrey is rumored to be practically the only person in New York who does not suffer from an incapacitating drug addiction.

Karyn Seidmann: *seems respectable. Where had she been all your literary life. You hope Leda is worthwhile, because Karyn*

clawed a \$2,000 advance out of you just to get her to come here.

A New-York literary agent, Seidmann is not well known in literary circles, though there are some dark rumors about her past, including a lawsuit. Seidmann handles small time occult authors, and until recently her biggest literary success was Jeffrey Saxon, the popular occultist and astrologer.

Oliver Stewart: *first rate talent, sounder than he makes out.*

A comic-book author and illustrator for *Universal Comics*, a major competitor of Marvel and D.C. Oliver responsible for the satirical *Captain Flapjack* miniseries, but is best known for his work with *Blood Hound*, a revitalized 1960's Superhero, and with *Revenant*, a dark-horror miniseries. Stewart handled a graphic-novel adaptation of Grant Cochran's *Sightless King*, which was somewhat more successful than the actual novel. Oliver is a New Yorker, but has maintained a friendship with horror writer Grant Cochran, and has come down with some of his other New York acquaintances to make his birthday an interesting affair.

OTHER PEOPLE:

Mike Ballistas: a wealthy international consultant with impressive offices downtown. Ballistas has numerous prominent government contacts, and is generally known to be an influential businessman. He donated heavily to the Reagan Campaign.

Avery Carson: attended George Washington University and has many acquaintances from that period, and immediately afterward. Avery met most of Grant's circle of friends in the seventies while they were working in Washington after graduation. Mr. Carson occupied a position in the staff of the late Darrington Ripley, U.S. Ambassador to Sweden. Currently employed by the State Department, Avery Carson is rumored to actually work for the Company, or No-such-agency.

Matthew Allen Carter: A well known mystic, Carter is associated with decadence, drugs, and bizarre mysticism. It is unclear where his money comes from, though he is known to be at least moderately wealthy, and eccentric.

M.A Carter provides spiritual consultation to some of Washington's most prominent social figures. He has appeared on several area talk shows, notably *Panorama* in July 1979 where he was involved in an altercation, and declined to appear on *Good Morning America* in August of 1982 on the topic "Senators who follow the Horoscopes." He has assisted Federal authorities as a consultant on "Cult Related Cases", and appeared before a Senate Subcommittee Special Hearing in 1983 to discuss "Cult Phenomena and Crime."

Thomas Cochran: Grant's failure of a brother. Thomas dropped out of school, and was deeply involved in drugs. He narrowly avoided jail on larceny charges. He lost his share of the family wealth, and is currently employed by his brother as a handyman.

Sarah Lamont: Sarah Lamont is an old Prep-school and College friend of Margot Matthews, Linda Kane, Emily Breezewood and others. Sarah went to work for Gary Morant as a paralegal, and is now his chief secretary.

Margot Matthews: Margot was a friend of Grant Cochran, and several other attendees in college, but went on to become a prominent Washington socialite who rose out of the ranks of minor political followers due to her connections with the late U.S. ambassador to Sweden Mr. Darrington

Ripley. Margot is giving this party in honor of Grant Cochran's birthday.

Margot is currently employed by the Department of State, where she is rumored to be the mistress of a powerful political appointee. She was mentioned in *People* magazine shortly after the inaugural ball, and her fortunes have definitely been on the rise with the Reagan government.

Gary Morant: Washington Attorney. Graduated from George Washington University in 1974, GW Law in 1978. Formed Morant and Steele with Harlan Steel in 1980. Known for handling some of the messiest and most prominent divorce and lawsuit cases in the Washington social spectrum. Morant is a rising star in the social constellation of Washington, and is Grant Cochran's attorney, and is currently representing him in all of his sordid legal affairs.

Mort Nicholson: a well known private detective. Nicholson has worked for Gary Morant, and was a research reference for the character of Detective George Panopolous in Grant Cochran's *Trinity*.

Roger Pierce: a Professor/practitioner of Psychology at George Washington University. Young but promising, for several years his 400 level course on Personality Disorders has been considered the "most fun" class in the entire psychology department. Many of Dr. Pierce's associates consider him to be "that strung out quack", Dr. Pierce considers himself a "perceptually enhanced alternative practitioner." It is obvious that Dr. Pierce either has something on the University, or has tenure.

"Psychological disorders can be not only instructive, but entertaining as well..." (*American Psychiatric Yearbook*, 1980).

Tony Randall-Smith: Olympic Equestrian Medalist, winning two Silver and one Bronze medal at Los Angeles in 1984. Native of McLean Virginia, the child of a former ambassador to England. Personally acquainted with Princess Margaret, has appeared in *Sports Illustrated*, and network television. Currently holds American and European Championships in several categories of jumps. Professional status has been called into question, but intends to compete in 1988.

Craig Webber: An acquaintance of Margot Matthews, Mr. Webber is a well-to-do local

business consultant, rumored to have connections to smuggling and the underworld. Webber is said to be a business partner of Avery Carson.



A Birthday Surprise

Sarah Lamont

You are Secretary to Mr. Gary Morant, the Washington attorney.

When you were in Columbia Prep, here in DC, you met Margot Matthews and Linda Kane. You got along fairly well with both of them, though Linda was always a little strange. You met some strange interesting and slightly dangerous friends of Linda's including the writer Grant Cochran and the Psychic Matthew Allen Carter. In fact, you introduced Grant to Margot, and he became Margot's first meal ticket.

By the time you graduated as a paralegal, she owed you a favor, and got you a job as a legal secretary to Gary Morant, an up and coming Washington Lawyer. He pays well, and is a decent boss.

You have tried to stay well clear of the legal problems within your former social group, though since Gary has become involved in several of them, that's hard. There was a fight between Matthew and Grant which had to do with Matthew feeling that Grant had stolen his ideas. This was a couple of years ago now, but when Gary told Matthew that it would be a losing case to sue over it, Matthew blew a screw. He got violent and stalked around and you thought he was going to take out a wall. Apparently Gary cooked up some kind of plot to hire a Private Detective named Mort Nicholson, and frame Emily. You didn't know it at the time of course.

Of course he was under a lot of pressure just then because he was divorcing Emily, a case which Gary handled. It was messy, and ended up with Emily's family paying Carter off not to splash her name all over the papers. You realize that Gary was just handling the affair to his client's best advantage, but you think Carter is a slimeball. He broke Emily's arms during an argument. The man is violent and ought to be locked up.

Emily is currently involved with two men. One is from Gary's old circle of friends, a guy named

Mike Ballistas. He is a friend of Gary's and has a lot of money wrapped up in Gary's investment business. You are pretty sure that Grant does too. The other is mysterious.

You have more pressing problems though. For a number of years, Gary has been operating a crooked investment business that he doesn't think you know about. Six days ago, Gary was utterly erased from the map. He is penniless, broke, bankrupt, and all of his investors are history. And when they come for Gary, they will cart you away. Sure you could turn state's evidence, and wind up broke, and with minimal time. But you had a better idea. You withdrew all of Morant and Steele's money from the bank Friday, and found out from Linda Kane that Avery Carson could get you a passport in a hurry. In a different name. You told Linda about Gary's failure, but did not give any details.

You were going to leave last night, but this seemed so much better. You will quietly say goodbye to your old friends, then drive away from here. It has been raining steadily for some time. You will maroon your car in the mud, and then hitch a ride out of here, leaving a note saying you are going for help. It will be debated for years whether you were murdered or committed suicide.

And if Gary plays his cards right, he might even manage to blame all his losses on you.

You understand that there are some wonderful places to live in Mexico that are really just like the U.S. Around Acapulco, you think....

School: You attended Columbia Prep from 1970-73. You know Margot Matthews, Linda Kane, Emily Breezewood, and Toni Randall-Smith from there.

Afterwards you went to Mary Washington with Linda and Emily.

THE OTHERS

What they know about you:

Sarah Lamont: Sarah Lamont is an old Prep-school and College friend of Margot Matthews, Linda Kane, Emily Breezewood and others. Sarah went to work for Gary Morant as a paralegal, and is now his chief secretary.

PEOPLE YOU KNOW WELL:

Emily Breezewood: a college friend of Grant Cochran, and a prep-school friend of Margot Matthews, Emily is the daughter of Senator Breezewood of Connecticut, a very powerful senior U.S. Legislator. Emily was married to Matthew Allen Carter, and divorced him, in a particularly messy case during which Mr. Carter was represented by Gary Morant. They are reported to be on barely civil speaking terms now. Emily is living with Mike Ballistas.

Avery Carson: *sold you a phoney passport.* Attended George Washington University and has many acquaintances from that period, and immediately afterward. Avery met most of Grant's circle of friends in the seventies while they were working in Washington after graduation. Mr. Carson occupied a position in the staff of the late Darrington Ripley, U.S. Ambassador to Sweden. Currently employed by the State Department, Avery Carson is rumored to actually work for the Company, or No-such-agency.

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Grant's work has tended more towards the occult and fantasy side than Stephen King, and his success has been less marked, but his early novels were commercially successful. Born 1955 to a wealthy Virginia family, Grant graduated from George Washington University in DC in 1975, aged twenty. Writer and playboy, known to have inherited some money from parent's death in 1974. He is widely rumored to have been hospitalized recently for rehabilitation.

Thomas Cochran: Grant's failure of a brother. Thomas dropped out of school, and was deeply involved in drugs. He narrowly avoided jail on larceny charges. He lost his share of the family wealth, and is currently employed by his brother as a handyman.

Leda Deerden: A New York author, or visual artist, guest of Grant's Publisher. Ms. Deerden is known for her terra cotta figures, which are widely sold in gift shops in the Village, and her work at the 42nd Street Gallery, but is a newcomer to the writing field. Her first project is projected to be a collaboration with Grant Cochran.

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division of Robert W. Thormond and Sons, Inc., one of the nations largest publishing houses. Despite the failure of Cochran's latest novel, Drake is reported to be successful and on the rise. He handles many other writers including Anthony Blaine, and is also in charge of titles under the smaller, but profitable Medea imprint, for occult paperbacks, which includes the works of Jeffrey Saxon.

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Karyn Seidmann: A New-York literary agent, Seidmann is not well known in literary circles, though there are some dark rumors about her past, including a lawsuit. Seidmann handles small time occult authors, and until recently her biggest literary success was Jeffrey Saxon, the popular occultist and astrologer.

Oliver Stewart: A comic-book author and illustrator for *Universal Comics*, a major competitor of Marvel and D.C.

Oliver responsible for the satirical *Captain Flapjack* miniseries, but is best known for his work with *Blood Hound*, a revitalized 1960's Superhero, and with *Revenant*, a dark-horror miniseries. Stewart handled a graphic-novel adaptation of Grant Cochran's *Sightless King*, which was somewhat more successful than the actual novel. Oliver is a New Yorker, but has maintained a friendship with horror writer Grant Cochran, and has come down with some of his other New York

acquaintances to make his birthday an interesting affair.

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A Birthday Surprise

Helen Salle

You are Helen Salle, a country girl who is making it big in the big city. You were born in rural Virginia on a farm...okay well it was a horse farm, and you lived in a house that is now worth better than a quarter of a million. And your father was a Magazine publisher not a Farmer, though he raised horses as a hobby.

But you have made it on your own. Since you graduated from Columbia Prep and Mary Washington College, you have hit New York, and there is nothing to stop you now. Well, there is your near total drug dependence, but hell, everyone in New York has that. Where would you be without it.

You are currently in Science Fiction which is becoming a big business. Oh sure, scoff all you want. But there haven't been two months in the last two years that there weren't two science fiction or fantasy titles on the New York Times bestseller list. And that isn't even counting horror.

You are primarily with Ace, a division of Berkeley, and you are about to take a giant step up. Your boss, Jonathan Drake, has a very good shot at editor and chief of Ace paperbacks...he was having lunch with Nancy Coffey, the editor-in-chief of Berkeley just the other day.

Johnny was a very junior editor back in 1977, fresh out of school, and pulled *The Sickness in John Harrol* out of a scrap pile, and got it published. It was a big success. Then he suffered through *The Collection*, and *Dark Symbols*, which appealed to progressively smaller and more esoteric audiences. Johnny told Grant to get his act together. He did, and produced the fantasy-horror *Trinity* in 1982. It was the worst of his novels, but it sold better than any of the others.

Then Grant produced *The Sightless King*, a boring pile of mumbo-jumbo and boring prose that was so stiff and wooden you almost wondered if someone else wrote it. There were rumors to that extent too, though Johnny seems oblivious to them.

Not to mention the fact that Grant then proceeded to get nominated for a Nebula award for a science-fiction short called *With Flames in our Eyes*, showed up drunk for the reception, and projectile vomited on about half of SFWA. He hasn't been seen much in public since then which may be just as well.

You have heard rumors that Grant is dying, mostly from his fans. You have partially come south to see if the rumors are true. You also just got about a hundred pages of the most pathetic schlock Grant has ever produced. This isn't good bad like *Trinity*, it is bad bad like *Sightless King*.

So Johnny told you to pack his bags, and prepare to hit the road. He is going to have a talk with Sam.

Johnny wants Grant to collaborate with another writer. Basically, the idea is to take whatever he has and turn it over to someone who is likely to remain coherent long enough to write it into acceptable pulp. You especially want to secure rights to his new material if he is dying, since his "last book" will be worth more.

You told Johnny that you had just the person. Your friend Leda Deerden, who is an artist was out of work. You fished around a few agents you knew until you found someone who did a lot of cheap pulp work. Then you got the name of one of their contributors who had died recently. The guy was named Harold Poke, and he wrote trashy science fiction under the name "Gary Starr," and had written two of the "*Hyron the Barbarian*" books. The guy had never published under his real name, and this agent had never disclosed his name until after he died.

So you showed Johnny this stuff, only you said that Leda had written it. You said that this writer was now available. Johnny thought the stuff was really bad and was sold immediately. You all had dinner together, and Leda was drunk and full of coke and babbled incoherently. Fortunately Drake passed

out before she vomited. You told Drake Leda was a health food nut and that she had gotten light headed because she almost never drank wine. You must remember to tell Leda this. You flew Leda down to Washington on next to no notice, and she went out to a club and vanished, and called you at 3:30 wanting to go back to New York. You came and collected her unconscious body, and delivered her to this social engagement.

You are beginning to wonder if it was a good idea to suggest her for this job.



A Birthday Surprise

Anthony Blaine

A New York writer considered a protege of Grant Cochran, you are handled by Jonathan Drake, the same publisher who handles Cochran. A year ago, after the publication of Grant's humiliatingly bad novel *Sightless King*. Grant, ever the belligerent bulldog, threatened to beat you senseless. Nice guy.

You hate Grant, and wish him nothing but ill will. His idiotic attempts to mainstream have made you look foolish, and you hate the fact that your name is connected to his. You would not be here except for your continuing need to suck up to Jonathan Drake.

You are best known for his Fantasy-Horror novel *Wunderking*, and your most recent work *The Dinner Guest*, which was clearly better than anything Grant ever wrote:

You know:

Oliver Stewart
Jeffrey Saxon
Jonathan Drake
Leda Deerden
Karyn Seidmann (distantly)



A Birthday Surprise

Karyn Seidmann

You are not really a literary agent. Or rather you are one by accident. After serving your five years, with two suspended for mail fraud in the New York State Women's Medium Security Prison at Utica, you were returned to the Big Apple. Fraud was all you had ever known, that and con games. You started putting a con on aspiring writers, bilking them for agents fees, and then not actually doing anything.

Leda Deerden
Linda Kane
Emily Breezewood
Anthony Blaine (distantly)

The funniest thing is that you actually got someone published. Because you were pretending to be a Literary Agent, you met some writers who were friends of aspiring writers. This got you invited to some parties. You found yourself talking to Jonathan Drake, in the presence of Jeffrey Saxon, one of your "clients" an astrologer.

You had to pretend to sell Saxon to Drake and you just sort of automatically brought all your "con" skills into play. Drake gave in, and read Saxon's work, and you landed him a fairly successful career as a hack occult writer. Completely by accident.

Your career is actually taking off, it is just that you have a hard time doing anything honest. Recently, Drake mentioned to you that he was looking for someone to collaborate on a book with Grant Cochran, a hack horror writer who had been doing badly. You owed a favor to your ex-roommate, Leda Deerden, so you got her the job. You aren't aware that she has ever written two coherent words in her life, but she *thinks* she can. You showed Drake a writing sample copied from an obscure 1950's horror hack named Harold Poke.

Now you are here to arrange for Leda's first meeting with Grant Cochran. Thrillsville. Well it's semi-honest work.

Who You Know:

Oliver Stewart
Jeffrey Saxon
Jonathan Drake