

This one-page scenario is something of an experiment in *Call of Cthulhu* scenario design, relying on player input and Keeper improvisation—think of it as a hybrid between *Call of Cthulhu 7th Edition* and *GUMSHOE*. What we provide for you here is the skeleton: you and your players provide the musculature and functional organs during play.

Our scenario takes inspiration from Ogden Nash’s 1955 poem, “A Tale of the Thirteenth Floor,” widely available online. We recommend that you read the poem before play.

A TALE OF THE 13TH FLOOR

Scenario Generation.

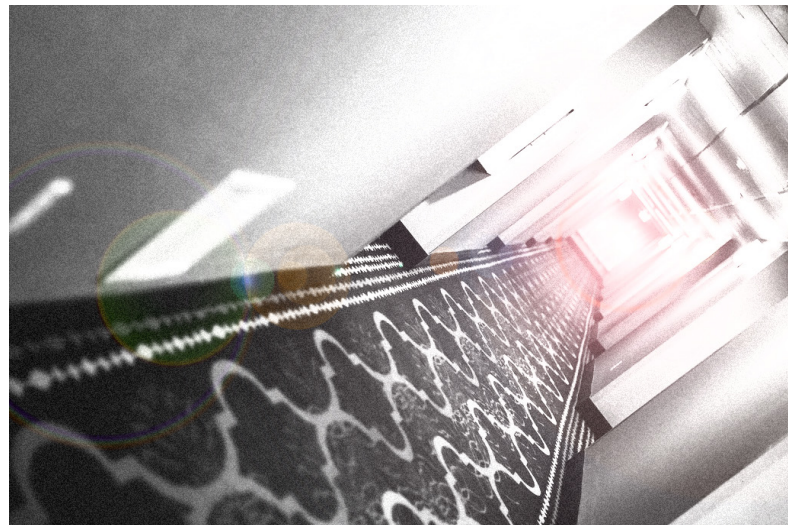
1. At the outset, invite your players to help you determine a period after 1900—this marks the shift to available, completely automatic elevators, with doors that close the elevator off from the elevator shaft.
2. Collectively decide on the nature of the building the investigators find themselves in—the only requirement that it have enough floors to warrant an elevator, in your period.
3. Decide if the investigators know one another. It may be that they all work together, and this is the skyscraper in downtown Manhattan where they trade stocks. Or, they may all be lodgers of a hotel in the early 1920s, who have never met. The combinatorial possibilities are literally endless.
4. Finally, on a 3x5 card, have each investigator privately write down a significant person, location, cherished item, and special memory for their character, and hand it to you.
5. During these generation phases, secretly record the seemingly banal, interesting, and extraordinary suggestions of the players that go unused in the final building design. Especially if any Mythos creatures happen to be named in this phase, (even in jest) write them down (and underline them). You will return to these notes later.

The game starts in an elevator with a lift attendant (“operator”), no matter how temporally out-of-place he may seem. The lift attendant is an old man, in his 70s at least. When the investigators board, he sits on his attendant’s chair, slumped in one corner, snoring gently. They will have to wake him to begin their ascent. The attendant will only speak if spoken to, at least until the elevator jams; if asked he gives his name as “**Randy**.” For his last name, choose a banal but distinctive word that cropped up during scenario generation. Despite the invented last name, this is really Randolph Carter dreaming through one of his first experiences of the Dreamlands, and the investigators have stumbled into his nightmare (see Lovecraft, *The Dreamlands of Unknown Kadath*). The investigators are dreaming in their beds, and the whole scenario takes place in Carter’s dream. Until the finale, Randolph remains unaware or in denial of the nature of the reality they are all in.

The elevator rises slowly. Encourage odd looks between the investigators as they hear the creaking of the cables, feel the swaying of the counterweight as it passes by, and notice the liver spots on Randolph’s hands. With a terrifying jolt the elevator lurches to a halt. Randolph will attempt to calm the investigators, stating that the elevator usually clears itself after a moment. He moves the handle back and forth, causing more terrifying grating as the elevator shifts against its emergency breaks. The investigators are well and truly jammed... Investigation begins as an attempt to escape the elevator. Allow creativity here, calling for appropriate rolls as they attempt to force the doors, reach the ceiling hatch, etc. No matter where they end up, above, below, or prying open the inner doors, the investigators see a placard for the thirteenth floor. Randolph screams. **INT** rolls or appropriate interpersonal skill to calm Randolph will reveal that this building *does not have a thirteenth floor* (**SAN** 1/1D4). **Climbing** rolls to reach other floors reveal that they are all number 13... (**SAN** 1/1D6). This is a high sanity loss. But imagine the Keeper’s delight when a player loses 5 **Sanity** in this situation...

Secret Dreams. As the investigators open the door to the thirteenth floor, they discover an infinitely long hallway, with doors lining either side. Stepping through a door, the investigators enter another place, one inspired by their memories and the notes you took during Step 4 of scenario generation. It may be a room, a park, or any other location. Each time they enter a room, all who step across the threshold lose 5 **POW**, except for Randolph. It is important that the investigators do not forget about Randolph’s presence, that he is not just “tagging along.” Within each room the investigators find both a clue and a threat. The clue is someone’s cherished item, and the threat is something they can’t immediately deal with (Mythos monster, creepy murderer, actualized psychological terror) and can only escape from. Safety lies back in the hallway, and finding the door that leads back depends on what precautions the investigators took to mark it when they entered the room.

Eventually, the investigators enter enough rooms to realize they are traipsing through each other’s memories, which occurs as their **POW** continues to decrease, their minds fading into unison with Randolph’s. As they investigate these memories, they may notice that there is nothing particular to Randolph or his memories, revealed only through conversation, and that he slowly gets younger with each entered room, which a **Hard Spot Hidden** roll reveals after two rooms, and a regular **Spot Hidden** after four or more. As the investigators realize that they are exploring their memories but not Randolph’s, one of the previous room’s threats crashes through a doorway or wall and into the hallway. Movement is suddenly slowed – much like in a dream – and all physical abilities suffer a **Penalty** die. If the investigators have realized they are dreaming, they may piece together that they must wake up Randolph to escape the dream. The threat (a **Moon Beast**, perhaps?) attacks the PCs and is capable of killing them (“If you die in the matrix...”). Whatever method the investigators use to wake Randolph – a loud noise, slapping him, convincing him that he’s asleep – have the player make an opposed **POW** roll against Randolph’s **POW** of 85. Ties go to Randolph; the investigators will have to have a better success than the dreaming elevator attendant. A satisfactory conclusion sees a dire monster mowing down investigators as they desperately try to wake Randolph up.



RECKONING OF THE DEAD CHARACTER SHEET

Name: _____ Gender: _____

Occupation: _____ Age: _____

CHARACTERISTICS

STR DEX INT HP

CON APP POW MP

SIZ EDU Luck Sanity

SKILLS

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BACKGROUND & EQUIPMENT

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Occupation: _____ Age: _____

CHARACTERISTICS

STR DEX INT HP

CON APP POW MP

SIZ EDU Luck Sanity

SKILLS

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BACKGROUND & EQUIPMENT

