

This was supposed to be a simple heist

A group of well-dressed criminals arrive at a warehouse to rendezvous after pulling off an extraordinary crime.

They know each other only by their pseudonyms – Mister Black, Mister Red, Mister Green, Mister Purple, Mister Beige, Mister Silver, Mister Grey.

The plan is simply to sit tight until midnight when someone will arrive to ferry them – and the loot – across the bay to make a final delivery to the boss.

Sounds easy, right?

But things take a turn for the weird; strange things happen in and around the warehouse. Things which make the criminals doubt the allegiances of the compatriots, their own sanity, and ultimately the very nature of reality.

It is going to be a long wait for the ferryman.

Dockside Dogs is a one-shot scenario for *Call of Cthulhu*. Four to six players take on the roles of the well-dressed criminals, hoping against all odds that they will make it through the night.

All proceeds from the sale of this scenario will go towards Cancer Research courtesy of the Relay for Life UK charity

dockside dogs

**A Modern-day Scenario
for Call of Cthulhu**

by Paul Fricker

"A cop sleeps inside each one of us. We must kill him."

– Graffiti, France 1968

Thank you for buying this scenario.

All money generated by sales of this PDF are going to the Relay for Life charity, raising money for Cancer Research.

If you come by this scenario by other means then please consider making a charitable donation.

I'd like to dedicate this scenario to my father, Henry Alec Fricker, who passed away at his home this morning, 19th May 2012.

Paul Fricker

CLEAR CREDIT

This scenario was written by Paul Fricker.

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Image of suited, headless men derived from a freely-available desktop wallpaper, downloaded from dark.pozadia.org, Photo of VW Crafter Panel van by user Lukas 3z on Wikimedia. Unless otherwise noted, all these images are shared under a Creative Commons Attribution License which has no prohibition against commercial usage or derivative works. The Yellow Sign was originally drawn by Kevin A. Ross.

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Call of Cthulhu is Chaosium's classic roleplaying game of Lovecraftian horror in which ordinary people are confronted by the terrifying and alien forces of the Cthulhu Mythos. A free copy of the *Call of Cthulhu* Quickstart rules can be downloaded from the Chaosium website: www.chaosium.com

Introduction

This is a one-off scenario for three to six players. This scenario is clearly influenced by a certain film, in which the characters argue about their pseudonyms and the boss tells them that he has people on another job. That is the starting premise for this scenario: another bunch of well-dressed criminals arrive at a warehouse having just committed a robbery.

All is not as it seems, however:

- The warehouse seems to be haunted.
- The stolen loot is of a curious (perhaps occult) nature.
- Unbeknownst to the players, all the player characters have the same real name.
- An NPC disappears and some members of the group fail to remember he ever existed.

There are multiple levels of reality in this game. In the game's real world setting, a writer by the name of Robert Meldrum is reading a film script. The script is having a strange effect on Robert, who is externalising the characters within the play, lending them a level of reality. It is this reality that the players inhabit. Ultimately Robert Meldrum will be invited to the alien world of Carcosa, an other-dimensional realm associated with artists and decadence.

Robert Meldrum

Robert Meldrum is an actor and filmmaker. He lives with his cat in a third-floor apartment. His agent recently passed him a copy of a play or film script titled 'Dockside Dogs', which he is now reading. The manuscript tells the story of this scenario as played by your players, with the opening scene being that of the player characters arriving at the warehouse. The words your players' characters speak will form the dialogue of the play; their actions become stage directions.

An overview of the scenario and advice on running it

Our story starts at the warehouse and the heist is not played out. Inform the players that the player characters have been instructed to stay in the warehouse from arrival on Friday afternoon until midnight when a man is due to collect them and take them in a boat across the bay to meet the boss. Of course whether they stay or not is up to them.

Carcosa and the King in Yellow

The King in Yellow and Carcosa are fictional creations of Robert W. Chambers. Whilst they have become associated with the Cthulhu Mythos, H.P. Lovecraft made only oblique references to them in his works. No knowledge of the King in Yellow stories is required to run this scenario beyond that which is given below. You are free to reinterpret and elaborate on the material as you wish.

The original King in Yellow was a nineteenth-century French play that was rarely, if ever, performed, and was reputedly associated with insanity and death. In this scenario, the manuscript entitled 'Dockside Dogs' is analogous to the play 'The King in Yellow'; a modern-day version, if you like.

Carcosa is a strange and dreamlike city, not of this Earth; a haven for decadent artists of all kinds. Carcosa may be the ultimate destination for some characters in this scenario. It will not be explored and need only be loosely described in the final scene.

The character of the King in Yellow is an enigmatic figure, sometimes of dread, other times held in reverence, and is intimately bound up with the legends of Carcosa. He does not feature in person in the play, but will be alluded to as residing in Carcosa.

Some of the scenes must come in order; others can come out of sequence or not at all. Begin with the *Opening Scene*, in which the player characters arrive at the warehouse. Take time to paint a picture of the place, tell them someone's already injured, then play out *Flashback Number One* to see who it was that arrived already wounded at the warehouse.

After the first flashback the direction of play falls into the players' hands. If your players are proactive, you may allow them to take the lead and interject when you wish to alter the pace of play. If your players are passive you are advised to use any of the following scenes to create drama and friction between the player characters. Whilst the player characters are all part of a group, the group is not the usual cohesive party, but a criminal gang sitting on a pile of loot. Tensions are likely to be high and you should stoke the flames of paranoia and suspicion among the players to create excitement and drama. It is quite likely in this game that one player character will kill another.

The scenes listed below do not have to come in strict order, but are likely to follow this sequence:

- Random Events (for use in various scenes)
- Apparitions (for use in various scenes)
- The treasure in the van
- The vanishing Mr Grey
- Cop in the boot
- Flashback Number Two: Planning the heist
- Graffiti
- Meldrum
- Endgame
- Epilogues

If the players decide to leave the warehouse before the end of the game you'll have to be creative. There's no reason to railroad the players in to staying at the warehouse, but the game is set up with the expectation of them staying there.

The game features two flashbacks. Whatever happens, events in the flashbacks will not prevent the characters arriving (in one piece) with the loot at the warehouse. The flashbacks are intended to break up the story and provide colour.

Ultimately a boatman will arrive and offer them passage across the water, but it will be a lake, not a sea. The light on the distant shore is not a lighthouse. This is a journey from which there is no return. An audience with the King who sits in his golden hall awaits those who choose to sail.

Note that where the text refers to Robert, it is referring to the Robert Meldrum in his apartment reading the script. When referring to player characters, their colour name will be used.

Beginning the game: Opening scene

When you give out the character sheets tell the players to read them thoroughly and to keep the information on their background sheets hidden as some of it is personal to them. Stress the need to play up their motivations and personalities as this is an important element of this game. Also state that what took place at the heist is largely up to the players; what they say took place is what happened, and you should step in only if they go way off the mark.

Picture an empty warehouse standing anonymously amongst a row of similar buildings. Sea winds ruffle seagulls' feathers as they cry and stalk along the dockside. The sea laps against barnacled concrete and crumbling wooden piers. A blue sky meets the sea. A stretch of land can be seen on the other side of the bay. The rusting carcasses of several boats are moored along the quay. The sound of a vehicle approaching can be heard. A van arrives together with one car (the second car will follow shortly).

Mr Beige arrives in his own car, with cop secreted in the trunk. Some more player characters turn up along with Mr Grey (an NPC) in the van. Let the characters settle in. Lay out the map of the warehouse and ask them where they park their vehicles. Record the location of the vehicles on the map.

Van: Mr Purple, Mr Silver and Mr Grey

Car 1: Mr Beige (cop secreted in trunk)

The warehouse is mostly empty. There is a large roller door at the front through which they enter. There are other rooms in the warehouse, offices, toilets, a gantry, but essentially it's a big room. Feel free to insert whatever abandoned junk you wish, perhaps the shell of an old car beneath a sheet, empty crate, piles of old pallets, etc. There is a small door beside the roller door. There is also a fire exit at the rear.

The warehouse is situated at the docks and from the gantry one can look through a grimy window and see the sea, and in the distance, the other side of the bay. At night a flashing light can be seen in the distance; perhaps a lighthouse on the far shore, or a ship.

Inside the warehouse, supplies have been laid down. Cans of beer and soft drinks, food, a radio, deck of cards and whatever else the keeper wants to throw in.

Explain the prior agreement to stay at the warehouse until midnight, by which time a man will come and ferry them across the bay to meet the boss. Once there, they are to deliver the loot and get paid. At least that was the plan.

Now Mr Green, Mr Red and Mr. Black turn up — announce that one of them is wounded and bleeding over the back seat (we'll find out who in *Flashback Number One*).

Car 2: Mr Green, Mr Red and Mr Black (one of whom is wounded)

