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Title: Thirteen Ghosts
Writer: Neal Marshall Stevens & Richard D'Ovidio
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Script Reader: J R Cannon

Page Count: 110
Genre: Horror
Circa: Present Day
Form: Feature Screenplay
Budget: Medium to High

LOGLINE:

A deceased Uncle Cyrus, obsessed with obtaining immortality, bequeaths his widowed nephew, Arthur, a glass-walled house. When Arthur, his kids and their nanny go to view the inheritance, the house traps them, and they must battle invisible spirits, and the house itself, in order to survive.

SYNOPSIS:

CYRUS KRITICOS, 50s, a man of wealth and prestige, wants the one thing man has not yet conquered—the ability to live forever. He needs twelve spirits to fill a mechanism he's built in the form of a glass-walled house. Capturing the twelfth ghost, the BREAKER, in an auto junkyard, proves to be Cyrus' fatal mistake. The Breaker is captured, but Cyrus and DAMON QUINTEROS, a spiritual opponent there to stop Cyrus, are killed in the struggle. KALINA ORETZIA, Damon's lover, and DENNIS RAFKIN, Cyrus' psychic medium, escape.

With Cyrus' death, the glass house is bequeathed to his nephew, ARTHUR KRITICOS. A widower, who lost his wife in a house fire, Arthur and his two kids live in an apartment. MAGGIE, the nanny, is often there, cooking, cleaning and taking care of seven-year-old BOBBY. Bobby's older sister, KATHY, 21, doesn't understand why Maggie is needed. They're all in the kitchen when the ATTORNEY arrives to inform Arthur about Uncle Cyrus' will and the house. Kathy can't believe their good fortune. Arthur's more cautious but agrees to go look at the house.

When they arrive, a Power & Light (P&L) truck parked out front surprises the attorney and Arthur. Rafkin, dressed as a P&L worker, secretly wants entry to the house to learn what Cyrus was planning. When he's introduced to the new owner, Rafkin can't believe it's a relative of Cyrus'. When the key to the house is placed in the lock, it vanishes, making Arthur pause, but he enters the house anyway. He goes with the attorney to the library to finish signing some papers, Rafkin goes to the basement to spy what he can, and Bobby, Kathy and Maggie are told by Arthur to "stay put." Of course, they don't. Once Arthur's out of sight, Kathy wanders off one way, and Bobby explores another way, followed by Maggie.

In the basement, Rafkin "sees," with a set of ghost glasses, the spirits that Cyrus captured. Rafkin didn't realize Cyrus had so many. Rafkin fears for his, and everyone's, safety and runs to the library, telling Arthur and the attorney they must leave the house immediately. Once Rafkin identifies himself, the attorney laughs at the mention of ghosts and tells Arthur not to listen to Rafkin. While Rafkin explains to Arthur about Uncle Cyrus, the attorney slips away to the basement.

In the library, Rafkin tries to convince Arthur of the ghosts, but he's not buying it. Either way, Arthur knows something's off and decides to gather his family and leave. He and Rafkin return to the entryway to find it empty. Arthur tells Rafkin to look downstairs, but Rafkin doesn't budge. As Arthur heads upstairs, yelling for his kids, Rafkin sees a glass panel close across the front door, sealing everyone inside.

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Guided by his own set of ghost glasses, the attorney makes his way through the basement, not caring about the anguished spirits he passes trapped in glass cages. When he finds the briefcase of money Cyrus promised him and lifts it off an innocent-looking scale, the attorney's unaware that the motion activates the mechanisms of the house, bringing it to life. A room filled with clockwork gears spins into action. One lever moves, shifting doors and walls, releasing some spirits from their glass cages. Cyrus' plan begins...whatever it is. As the attorney tries to leave the basement, one of the freed spirits blocks his path. As he backs into an open doorway, the doors and walls shift again, slicing the attorney in half laterally. No living being in the house even knows he's dead.

Meanwhile, the kids and Maggie explore the upstairs, unaware of the ghosts and the shifting house. Bobby, who's seldom without his scooter and microphone/recorder, jets away from Maggie. He glides into a bedroom, which he claims for himself. Maggie follows him in. She spots a set of ghost glasses--not knowing what they are--and puts them on. She sees glowing red, etched symbols on the walls and floor. Hearing her describe it, Bobby snatches the ghost glasses from her and takes off on his scooter down the hall. The three young people are now separated from each other.

Kathy's drawn to a room with a large bed draped in sumptuous silk. Then, she notices the on-suite bathroom. Entering, she's wowed by the glass bottles on the counter and large soaking tub. Only, Kathy sees the room as it is. We see the room as it appears when looking through ghost glasses. The walls and bathtub are covered in blood. Standing, watching Kathy, is SUICIDE GIRL, who looks longingly at Kathy. We're jolted back to the here-and-now when Arthur bangs on the bathroom door, angry at Kathy for disobeying him. Maggie joins them, and Arthur orders everyone to the car. Kathy doesn't understand why he's so upset; she thinks the house is perfect.

Arthur, Kathy and Maggie make their way back to the entry to find Rafkin on the couch, and the front door blocked off. They realize they can't leave. In the clockwork room, gears shift again; the mechanism increases in speed. Two more ghost cages are unlocked.

Meanwhile, Bobby hits a bump on the carpet, crashing to the floor and losing the ghost glasses. Sitting up, he slips the ghost glasses on and spots a head lying between his legs. As he tilts his head up, he sees a headless torso coming down the hall toward him. Panicked, he climbs to his feet and runs the other way, coming upon a bound woman, strangled, her neck hanging at an awkward angle. Scared out of his mind, Bobby runs smack into a glass wall. He drops. The ghost glasses and his mic and recorder beside him.

Dazed, he hears a squeaking wheel sound. He reaches once more for the ghost glasses. Peering through them, he sees a woman in a hospital gown, hooked up to an IV and bag on a rolling pole. As Bobby screams for his dad, the woman speaks. Her voice comes through the microphone into the recorder. He hears her say his name, "Bobby?" He scrambles to his feet, turns and runs right into another glass wall. This one holding his great uncle Cyrus. Bobby blacks out.

Back at the entry, Arthur searches for anything to use to break the glass blocking the front door. Rafkin explains the glass is shatterproof and soundproof. Now that he's got Arthur's attention, Rafkin relays what Cyrus was into. Still not fully believing, Arthur promises to pay what his uncle owed Rafkin, if he'll go into the basement and look for Bobby. Since Rafkin can't leave, he begrudgingly pairs up with Maggie and they head down, while Arthur and Kathy search elsewhere. The gears in the clockwork room move even faster. We see three more glass cages open, releasing more spirits.

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In the basement, Rafkin hands Maggie his ghost glasses. At last, she sees what he's talking about. From behind the glass wall, the HAMMER shoots Rafkin an angry glare, since Rafkin's the one who helped trap him. Maggie stays close to Rafkin.

Bobby awakes to find himself trapped in a glass cage. He sees his dad and Kathy walk past, but they can't hear his yells and because some of the panes are "trick glass," they can't see him either. Bobby's face falls, as they continue walking, not knowing he's right next to them. Arthur finds Bobby's recorder and ghost glasses. He hits play and hears Bobby's scream of "Dad!" Arthur tries to hold it together, while Kathy cries beside him.

Not finding Bobby in the basement, Rafkin turns Maggie around to head back the way they came, in a hurry. He just spotted one of the glass cages, and with the ghost glasses back on, he sees it's empty.

Kathy puts on Bobby's ghost glasses and spots the spirit of the JACKAL. He grabs her and begins ripping her clothes. Arthur sees what's happening to Kathy, but he doesn't see the Jackal. He and Arthur struggle for control of Kathy. Without warning, flames appear, hurting the Jackal. Hands appear to help Arthur. It's Kalina, wearing ghost glasses, whom we saw in the opening junkyard scene. The Jackal runs from the flames. As Kalina helps Arthur bind Kathy's wounds, she explains what Cyrus did—trapping souls—and reveals the name of the device, Basileus' Machine, which is what they're trapped in. As they discuss how to get out, Kathy vanishes. When they realize it, Kalina tells Arthur to run, as a ghost boy chases them down the hall. They end up trapped by the glass walls. The ghost boy disappears.

In the basement, Rafkin and Maggie are surrounded by spirits. Rafkin gets nailed in the head with a bat by the ghost of a teenage boy. Maggie helps him to his feet, and they run. In the clockwork room, the gears whir, and the 9th lever slides into place, releasing another ghost. As the house shifts, a glass wall separates Rafkin and Maggie. Seeing through the ghost glasses, Maggie's expression concerns Rafkin, who mouths, "What?" Rafkin is in the cage containing the Hammer! Through hand signals, Maggie directs Rafkin to "protected" red circles on the floor to avoid being smashed by the Hammer. Playing leapfrog, Rafkin makes his way out of the cage. He kisses Maggie on the lips, thanking her for saving him.

Kathy awakes to find Bobby beside her. He tells her their mom is one of the spirits in the house—the one who said his name. Bobby now hates the house and wants to go back home to their cozy apartment.

With the house shifting again, Arthur and Kalina race through the house. The Jackal on their heels. As Arthur panics, Kalina tells him to "grow some backbone." He's stung. He knows he doesn't have any; it's always been a problem for him. As Kalina holds the Jackal back with quicksilver, she tells Arthur they have to get to the library. Its walls are protected by spells.

Surrounded by ghosts and backed into a corner, Rafkin and Maggie are startled when Kalina pops up through a hole by moving a glass block. They pull up Arthur and try to work their way through the ghosts and to the library, but Arthur's attacked by the Jackal. Another quicksilver flare from Kalina wards off the Jackal, and they all collapse into the library. As Kalina searches through an ancient book she's brought with her, hoping to find a way to stop the machine, she argues with Rafkin for helping Cyrus capture the ghost in the first place. She also tells Arthur his wife is one of the spirits in the house. Hearing that, Arthur gets some backbone, at last, and rounds on Rafkin, punching him in the face.

Kalina shows Arthur the text, describing Basileus' Machine uses the spiritual energy from twelve ghosts to power itself up—to open the *Ocularis Infernum*, the Eye of Hell. Rafkin questions the need for the thirteenth ghost that Damon mentioned in the junkyard. Kalina explains the thirteenth ghost is a fail-safe. To stop the machine, the power of life is needed—a living, human sacrifice with a broken heart. They all turn to look at Arthur. As they contemplate what they've heard, Maggie asks if there's another way. Kalina says, "Yes," and opens her bag to reveal the dynamite she's brought. Arthur "man's up," and he and Rafkin remove one of the library's doors to use as a shield. Arthur's going to save his kids.

Arthur and Rafkin lead the way with the shield. They drop Kalina (wearing the ghost glasses) and Maggie off at the stairs leading to the basement. Kalina will try to stop the machine. Arthur and Rafkin continue searching for the kids. As Kalina enters the clockwork room, Maggie stands guard. The gears move at incredible speed now. Suddenly, Cyrus' ghost stands in front of Maggie. She doesn't see Kalina behind her. Kalina hits Maggie over the head. She drops unconscious to the floor. Kalina removes her ghost glasses and Cyrus still stands there. His "ghost" hasn't vanished, and they kiss.

Wearing his own ghost glasses, Rafkin spots the Hammer. Without warning, Rafkin shoves Arthur behind the door shield, pinning him there, trying to save Arthur's life.

In the clockwork room, Cyrus and Kalina watch as the 12th gear lines up and clicks into place, releasing the meanest spirit, the Breaker. Kalina lets Cyrus know how angry she is that he left her and for making her pretend she loved Damon. As the Breaker leaves his cage to wreak havoc, Cyrus simply smiles at Kalina and tells her to go tie up the kids.

While the Hammer advances on Rafkin, the Breaker advances on them both. The Breaker destroys the Hammer, then Rafkin, who dies protecting Arthur. The Breaker moves on, once he realizes he can't get through the shield to kill Arthur. At Rafkin's death, Arthur loses it. After he calms down, he reaches for Rafkin's ghost glasses and puts them on. Then, he sees his wife, JEAN. He starts sobbing, blaming himself for not going back into the burning house to try to save her. Jean shakes her head "no," helping Arthur find peace in knowing he did the right thing.

Back in the clockwork room, Cyrus has wound a reel-to-reel machine with audio tapes of Damon chanting spells that Kalina had recorded. She returns in time to see Cyrus turn on the reel-to-reel. Chanting begins all through the house. When the ghosts hear it, they vanish. As Jean disappears, Arthur spots Kathy and Bobby tied up, as the *Ocularis*, the center of the machine, rises. Cyrus quickly steps over a still unconscious Maggie, locking Kalina in with the girl. He hits another switch, and the wall between Maggie and Kalina opens. Cyrus says goodbye to Kalina. The walls around Kalina move toward each other, crushing her to death.

The rings/blades of the *Ocularis* rise and begin spinning one-by-one. Arthur looks around, trying to figure out what to do to save his kids. Then, he spots Cyrus' ghost watching. Arthur demands he do something, but Cyrus only gestures for Arthur to jump into the *Ocularis*. Arthur spots Jean, looking on helplessly, and sees the other eleven ghosts, each standing on a symbol around the *Ocularis*. Arthur shouts over the chanting, telling his kids he loves them. He removes the ghost glasses, preparing to make the ultimate sacrifice, and looks in Cyrus' direction once more. Cyrus stands there. He's not a ghost! Furious upon realizing Uncle Cyrus is alive, Arthur charges him.

As they fight, Maggie comes to in the clockwork room. She sees the blood-smeared walls, surmising Kalina's fate. The incessant chanting makes her still throbbing head hurt worse. Eyeing the gears and levers, she has no

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idea how to turn the machine off, so she knocks the reel-to-reel to the floor instead, where it breaks, ending the chanting.

As Cyrus holds a sword under Arthur's chin, the chanting stops. Out the corner of his eye, Arthur spots Bobby's scooter rolling up behind Cyrus. Arthur shoves Cyrus back. He slips on the scooter. Arthur grabs a nearby cane and whacks his uncle on the head, who is stunned for the moment. Arthur slips on the ghost glasses and sees Rafkin is the one who pushed the scooter.

Cyrus shakes his head, trying to clear it. Arthur sees twelve angry ghosts surround his uncle. They tear into him. Then, the ghosts lift Cyrus and carry him off. Bobby and Kathy, not having ghost glasses, only see Cyrus floating in air, headed their way. Cyrus is thrown into the gears of the *Ocularis*, making the machine go haywire. As glass begins raining down, Arthur jumps through the blades to the center of the *Ocularis* to be with his kids. Once the shaking has stopped, Arthur and the kids spot Jean, as she was before the house fire, smiling at them. Then, she vanishes. Maggie, who's managed to survive, claws her way out of the basement, and firmly proclaims, "That's it!...I quit."

COMMENTS:

A well-written twist on the typical ghost story, with specifically needing twelve unique ghost types, with the thirteenth ghost as a fail-safe in case things go wrong. The slow fade-in to begin the story lets us take in what's happening, but the shift from the auto wreck scene straight to an auto junkyard is a bit confusing. We're left questioning what happened at the wreck, who died and why are we now at a junkyard?

The shift can be forgiven because we're plunged right into the activity taking place with the military-type men present, and the Rolls Royce Phantom II rolling onto the scene. Now, we have a sense that something interesting is about to take place. The dichotomy between Cyrus Kriticos—older, wealthy, immaculate—and Dennis Rafkin—young, unshaven, jittery—creates mystery; what on earth has brought such diverse individuals together?

Rafkin's psychic abilities involving touch (e.g., the earth, people's skin) provide a tactile sensation that we can relate to. As humans, most of us crave touch and don't get near enough of it. Through touch, Rafkin learns about the victims, their memories, their pain. This explains his unkempt appearance. Knowing other people's pain must take a toll on one's own sanity. Then, the contrast of how he downs medicine to numb himself from their pain creates his own pain. He's pretty much addicted to always having to numb himself, in order to do what Cyrus pays him to do.

The plot delivers on its promise of explaining why Cyrus created the glass-walled house (it's a machine), bequeathed it to his nephew (the possible thirteenth ghost, if needed) and the conflict of who will survive, physically and mentally (Cyrus and Arthur fighting at the end; Arthur absolved of his guilt; and Arthur saves his kids).

There are several well-placed comedic scenes and dialogue throughout the story. While in the auto junkyard trying to capture the Breaker, Cyrus keeps ribbing Rafkin for his cowardice with lines like, "I thought you were a psychic." Kathy telling Dad, "Have you tasted her (Maggie's) cooking?" Yet, Dad sees Kathy has burned the eggs. And Maggie at the end, clawing her way out, and emphatically stating, "This was not in the job description...."

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The placement of “Easter eggs” are woven throughout the story seamlessly. Bobby’s scooter coming into play to trip up Cyrus; the microphone and recorder to hear his mom’s voice; and the sword Bobby notices when they first enter the house being the one Cyrus grabs and holds under Arthur’s chin while they fight.

The scene where Rafkin gets trapped in the cage with the Hammer and Maggie, with the ghost glasses, trying to get him out was a bit confusing because it read like they were talking to one another, even though it was mentioned by Rafkin earlier that the glass is shatterproof and soundproof. But as the scene continues, we understand Rafkin is reading lips, and Maggie is giving him hand signals of where to stand. A slight re-work/re-wording would correct that, so it’s clear from the start.

The scene progression is on point; one scene flowing into the next, each moving the action along and ramping up the tension. Each ghost being unique and individual created a good mix of characters that aligned with the representation of twelve distinct zodiac symbols.

Each of the main living players is well-written and fully developed, with their own personalities and quirks that make them stand apart from one another. Cyrus is clearly a man out for himself. Arthur’s guilt for not going back into the fire to try and save his wife is palpable. Kathy trying to become the “mom” now, asking ‘why do we need Maggie’, is understandable from a loving daughter and big sister. Bobby is the ever inquisitive seven-year-old. And Rafkin, a troubled man because of his abilities, looking for somewhere he belongs and someone to care about him.

Kalina plays her role well, hiding the fact that she’s secretly working with Cyrus and doesn’t see that she’s just another pawn in his game, like Rafkin and Jean, his nephew’s deceased wife. This was a well-hidden twist, after all we’ve seen Kalina do to help Arthur and his kids, even coming in time to rescue Kathy from the Jackal. And Kalina directly dies at the hands of Cyrus, by him locking her in between the glass walls that crush her.

The ending ties everything together. The antagonist, Cyrus, is defeated by the protagonist, Arthur, who ends up saving his kids and getting to say goodbye to his wife. The house is destroyed. The spirits are released and get their own revenge on Cyrus for trapping them. It would have been nice to know whether or not Arthur received any money from his uncle’s will, by seeing the kids playing out front of their new house, showing they’re not in the apartment anymore.

“Thirteen Ghosts” has a well-thought-out plotline, solid characters, mystery, intrigue, blood and ghosts. If executed well onscreen, this should be quite an enjoyable movie escape.

RATING GRID:

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
Idea	x			
Story Line		x		
Characterization		x		
Production Value		x		

MECHANICS	Excellent	Solid	Needs Work	Re-Think	N/A
Action lines clearly and concisely manifest visual action and literal context.		x			
Scenes avoid the problem of continuing beyond optimal length.		x			
Spelling, grammar, and proofreading.		x			
Page count.		x			
The script's physical presentation.		x			
Dialogue.		x			
The script effectively manifests a compelling theme and adheres to it throughout the story.		x			

CHARACTER	Excellent	Solid	Needs Work	Re-Think	N/A
The protagonist clearly manifests both internal and external goals.		x			
The protagonist has consistent opposition to his/her goals.		x			
The protagonist is sympathetic and/or engages our emotional investment.		x			
The protagonist clearly changes / has an arc.		x			
The supporting characters are unique and add value to the story.		x			
All of the characters are authentic to their backgrounds.		x			
The script has an effective antagonistic force, direct or indirect.		x			

STRUCTURE:	Excellent	Solid	Needs Work	Re-Think	N/A
The script has a strong structural foundation that serves the story, classic three-act structure or otherwise.		x			
Plots and subplots work together.		x			

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The set-up is concise, and effective.		x			
The story has well-designed reversals.					x
Transitions are effective and appropriate to the story.		x			
Every scene has relevance.		x			
The story includes an effective dramatic climax / payoff.	x				
The setup is resolved effectively.	x				
A catalytic situation drives the plot.		x			
Dramatic conflict and tension build across scenes, throughout the plot.		x			

MARKET VALUE	Excellent	Solid	Needs Work	Re-Think	N/A
Originality / freshness.	x				
The story has a clearly defined target audience.		x			
The story clearly has mass audience (universal) appeal.		x			
The story includes a conceptual “hook” that could potentially be used to effectively market the film.		x			

PRODUCTION VALUE	Excellent	Solid	Needs Work	Re-Think	N/A
The lead character is castable / has star appeal.		x			
The visual arena of the script is stimulating.		x			
The project has International appeal.		x			

RECOMMENDATION: **Consider**
