

Ultraflat

First identified and named by The Sleepers, Ultraflat phenomenon afflicts buildings with numbered rooms or properties where a number in a sequence has been skipped. Owners may skip unlucky figures, make an error when numbering the units or may choose to double the size of room four by knocking through the wall of room five. In either case, apartment buildings, hotels, offices and even storage lockers are vulnerable to manifestations.

Ultraflats typically appear to two kinds of people, those who don't know the room should be absent and those who already know it's there. In afflicted corridors, a new door appears in the wall, warping space to fit in a new room between the existing ones. The door is usually ajar and curious passers-by are lured in with a personalized bait. Often this is in the form of the sound of a voice the victim recognises (whether an old friend or hated enemy) or an intriguing item at the far end of the room. Other stimuli reported included what one witness thought was the audio from one of the lost episodes of Doctor Who and the smell of a Vietnamese seafood curry the victim had been unable to find locally.

Calling out to the room occupant produces no response (maybe they didn't hear you?) and at this point victims may choose to enter the room. The bait is more clearly sensible here, but never close to the entryway, usually off in a different room. Inside everything initially seems normal, with the room's appearance being a combination of the two units on adjacent numbers.

At this point, a few hints at the unusual nature of the room may be spotted with a Notice roll:

- Combining the appearance of the adjacent rooms often produces clashes and errors you might expect out of a poorly tuned generative AI image, such as pennants for two sports teams with a bitter rivalry, two television sets on opposite walls or linoleum flooring which changes pattern seamlessly halfway across it
- There's always curtains drawn over any windows, but no light from outdoors penetrates them. Parting the curtains reveals window frames embedded in the wall with only brick or concrete where one would expect the glass.
- Pocket change, bunches of keys and cell phones on the floor where anyone could step on them.
- Large posters of people attached to the wall in unusual poses, which look sun-faded to various degrees. Sometimes there are also tiny little posters of common household insects such as flies or spiders.

If the victim reaches the bait then the source will prove to be either absent or fake. Sounds and smells emanate from the corner of an empty room or whatever enticing looking goodie was in the room turns out to be a plastic or polystyrene decoy. By this point, the trap has been sprung.

Looking back out the doorway, the corridor outside will appear to be stretching out horizontally. Those outside looking in will see the truth, that the apartment is shrinking horizontally, everything and everyone becoming thinner until it becomes a vertical line and then disappears

entirely. Seeing this from either side is a Rank 4 Unnatural check. If the victim does not escape before the room fully flattens, they are trapped as the walls suddenly snap closed around them. On the outside, space seems to return to normal, as if the extra room was never there.

The room slowly starts contracting once a potential victim has been inside for about fifteen seconds, long enough for them to get deep inside and start looking around for the bait. At this point a roll against the victim's base Secrecy ability will give them a feeling that something is going on.

The narrowing effect becomes noticeable through the doorway after another fifteen seconds as it shrinks at an accelerating rate. Once it's reached that point, whoever's inside has another fifteen seconds to get out before they're trapped, though many people end up freaking out when they see something so unnatural happening and fail to run for the door. Getting out in the last three seconds (or running in to yank someone out in the last six) requires a pursuit or dodge roll. After this the Ultraflat remains closed for a day before it opens up again for new visitors.

People trapped within the room when it snaps to two dimensions become flat rectangular images stuck to the wall like static cling decals, retaining their clothing but losing any objects from their pockets, which end up scattered on the floor the next time the Ultraflat opens up. Over the course of about five days their image will fade until it disappears. This is thought to be how the phenomenon "feeds" on victims.

Before they fade entirely, victims can be peeled from the wall and taken out of the room. In this state victims feel like uncomfortably warm sliced lunchmeat and can be rolled up even and stored in a poster tube without ill effect. Some victims have been restored to life by random magick from adept schools related to healing, spatial distortion or visual art, usually at a cost of 3-5 significant charges. People who return feel drained and sickly, having gained 10 wound points for every day they were trapped within the room, though they recover naturally with rest. Some recovered victims have been kept for weeks or even months with no ill effect once restored and witnesses suspect they have not even aged during their time as two dimensional beings.

Getting rid of an Ultraflat isn't particularly hard once it's identified. If the Ultraflat is unable to catch any new victims it will generally disappear after a month and the door can be glued or jammed shut by mundane means. One other method involves drilling a peephole between the two adjacent real rooms but this is often hard to justify to landlords or residents. It is unclear if this starves the phenomenon or if it simply moves on to new hunting grounds.

The Sleepers have been known to exploit Ultraflats as traps for rowdy sorcerers and have also got a couple of persons of interest flattened and stored in safes until they're needed. One cabal was observed using a room as a storage locker by feeding it stray animals and leaving their guns and stolen goods near the doorway.