



In June 1925, First National Pictures released its lavish motion picture adaptation of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's 1912 novel, "The Lost World". It was a smash hit.

*Starting in July 1925, Conan Doyle published in the Strand magazine by instalments a new Professor Challenger novel: **The Land of Mist**, a story of the spirit world. Burdened with Doyle's intrusive advocacy as to the truth of Spiritualism, the book was a failure and is little known. Doyle's obsession had obscured the fruits of his storyteller's gift: a powerful story of science, belief and loss in a world shaken by war.*

This film brings the story of The Land of Mist to the screen. The script has been written by novelist and screenwriter Gavin G. Smith.

The Land of Mist - Synopsis
(Based on The Land of Mist by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.)

Flashback to 1918: As the Great War rages, Professor Challenger's wife lies in hospital, dying of Spanish Flu. Her condition resists the war-weary doctors' attempts to cure her. Her husband, the renowned, ferocious, scientific polymath, protests at their failure to apply the latest science in her treatment.

With his wife at death's door, Challenger carries her out of the hospital and drives her back to his house where he has set up a laboratory in the dining room. He injects her with an experimental vaccine for the Spanish Flu. She knocks on the table, a secret signal to him from back when they were courting. She tries to tell him something but dies before she can finish. Moments later the anguished Challenger hears the same knock from the door to the dining room.

Seaside town 1925

Seven years later, Malone, Challenger's son-and-law-to-be, a reporter who has had a 'difficult' war, is covering a séance for his newspaper. The séance is run by renowned psychic Mr Linden, and his wife. During the séance the sceptical young man manages to find a hint of respite from the ghosts that haunt him as a result of his experiences in the Great War.

Later Malone attends a dinner party at his fiancé's residence. The dinner party is held in the dining room, which is all but a shrine to Challenger's dead wife. Her portrait has pride of place and below that are framed photographs of all the comrades Challenger has lost on his various adventures. Malone mentions his experiences at the séance. Although his guest, Dr. Morgenstern, a Viennese physician, argues that the mind is still largely uncharted territory, Challenger dismisses Malone's story as a nonsense and suggests that he has been subject to confidence trickery. Malone attempts to defend his experiences but is brow beaten for his troubles, and the evening ends on a somewhat sour note.

After Malone has left, Enid, Challenger's long-suffering but formidable daughter, confides with Lord Roxton, one of Challenger's oldest friends, a former soldier and now a senior member of the office of the Director of Public Prosecutions in London. She tells him that her father has done little in the way of scientific work since her mother died. Instead he has become a somewhat curmudgeonly commentator on such matters in the press and various journals.

Finally Lord Roxton and Challenger are left alone to enjoy a brandy and a cigar. Finding his friend distracted, and

constantly staring at the picture of his dead wife, Roxton tell Challenger that 'it' wasn't his fault and that he tried everything he could.

The following day Challenger comes across Enid in his dead wife's room, normally locked. Enid talks to him of her mother, of whom she remembers little, and wishes she could speak to her. She tells her father that she will be accompanying Malone to the next séance. Surprisingly calm, Challenger says that he will accompany her to the séance. His daughter tells him that he must 'behave' if he does.

At the next séance Enid starts to show signs of 'channelling' the spirits. This triggers Challenger who behaves abominably, sabotaging the whole affair. Linden faints, but a strangely rhythmic knocking is heard, the same knocking heard in the flashback. The knocking sound causes Challenger to lose his temper, accusing Linden of playing tricks. Mr Linden protests his innocence and Challenger storms out. Malone is furious with Challenger and also loses his temper, hinting at just how disturbed the war has left the young man. Only then do they realise that Enid has fallen into unconsciousness. The Professor picks her up and carries her out of the house, threatening the Lindens, and their 'cult', with all manner of things as he does so.

Dr Morgenstern is looking after Enid at Challenger's home. She appears largely recovered from her cataplectic state, but has a slight fever. While Malone is visiting Enid's bedside, Challenger insists that Enid's condition was caused by the Lindens' attempting to take advantage of his 'weak-willed' daughter's suggestive state of mind. This infuriates Enid and angers Malone. Morgenstern sends them out of Enid's bedroom.

Out on the landing Challenger notices that the door to his wife's room is open. He goes in and has a look around but, seeing nothing, he closes it and locks it.

A little while later Challenger thinks that he sees his dead wife in the streets, and chases after her but she is always just out of reach. He bumps into Roxton. Seeing how distraught Challenger is, Roxton insists on taking his friend to his club for a fortifying drink. At the club Challenger dismisses his vision as a simple case of mistaken identity. However, he points out just how insidious a con these séances are. That if even someone as strong-minded as he is can be affected by their talk of spirits, then imagine how easy it is for them to part the more simple minded or vulnerable from their money. Roxton tells Challenger that after his son died at Ypres he went to a medium. The man told him everything he wanted to hear and was well paid, but turned out to be a fraudster.

Challenger and Roxton agree that the likes of the Lindens are parasites and they do not wish to see them dig their claws into Enid and Malone. At Challenger's suggestion, Roxton

agrees to use his position to look into the Lindens, and see if there is any wrongdoing on their part.

Meanwhile Silas, Mr Linden's brother and Mrs Linden's ex-partner, visits his brother and sister-in-law. A fake medium but a real confidence trickster, and all round nasty piece of work, Silas demands to be allowed to use their séances to bilk money from the attendees. Mr Linden throws him out just before Malone arrives.

Malone warns them that, if he knows Challenger, then the Professor means to make their lives difficult. This angers Mrs Linden but Mr Linden is much more phlegmatic and more concerned with Malone's obvious troubles. They offer tea and sympathy as he discusses his woes, all of them unaware that Silas, concealed, is listening.

After Malone has left two women visit the Lindens. They behave strangely, seemingly looking for Mr Linden to say specific things. Finally once they have what they need they reveal themselves as police officers and have Mr Linden arrested. Challenger, triumphant, is waiting outside to watch as Mr Linden is led to the horse-drawn Black Maria. Mrs Linden confronts Challenger, only to be met with scorn.

In an emotionally charged courtroom filled with many of the accused's supporters, including Malone, Lord Roxton acts for the Crown during the remand hearing. Roxton calls Challenger as a scientific expert. Challenger presents very little evidence, instead he just announces that mediumship, spirits etc. are all nonsense. His reputation and oration, however, are such that he easily sways the bench. Mr Linden attempts to justify spiritualism 'scientifically' only to be shouted down by Challenger.

Challenger gets another fright when he thinks he catches a glimpse of his dead wife in the court, but again convinces himself that it is just another case of mistaken identity.

During the proceedings the judge has the court cleared because of outbursts from Mrs Linden and a number of her supporters cause a disturbance in court, demanding to know where the science, and where the research is in Challenger's assertions. However, Linden is committed for trial at the Old Bailey and remanded in custody.

Outside the court Malone confronts Challenger and the pair come to blows. Challenger tells him that under no circumstances will someone as credulous as Malone obviously marry his only daughter. Silas watches from a distance.

Silas finds Malone and tells the distraught young man that he is Mr Linden's brother and also a medium. With Malone at his lowest ebb, Silas takes advantage of him, having the 'spirits' encourage him to help Silas with the legal costs to help free

Mr Linden. Of course Silas has no intention of passing the money on.

Enid discovers that her engagement has been called off and confronts her father. She asserts that Challenger is no longer a scientist, instead he uses science to bully people and that eight years after her mother's death he needs to move on. Receiving only harsh words in return she announces that she is leaving, that she fully intends to marry Malone and that she will be attending a rally, held by Mrs Linden, to help gather support to free her husband. Professor Challenger finds himself alone.

Drunk and maudlin, Malone calls on the Challenger household. Shouting up to Enid in her sick bed, he tells her that her father has called off the engagement. A weakened Enid calls down to him from her bedroom window that she couldn't care less what her father has done. Challenger interrupts their discussion and sees Malone off but not before Malone tells the professor that he has spoken with the dead.

Worried about his sickly daughter, Challenger visits Roxton in his capacity as a prosecutor. Roxton helps the professor swear out an affidavit, testifying that Malone is insane and is a danger to himself and other people.

With Malone at his lowest ebb, Silas takes advantage of him by arranging for a particularly theatrical 'séance'. Using the information he learned from Malone in the pub, he holds a séance for Malone in which the 'spirits' of Malone's dead war comrades encourage him to help Silas with the legal costs to free Linden.

Roxton and the police interrupt the séance. They are there to take Malone into custody and transfer him to a psychiatric hospital 'for his own good'. In the process of doing so, however, the séance is revealed as a fake and Silas as a fraud. With a horrified Malone admitting that money has changed hands, Silas is arrested.

Challenger returns home, where a still ill Enid tells him that having Malone sent to a psychiatric hospital was an act of rank cowardice. Challenger is just trying to keep her a prisoner in this cold dead shrine to her mother, so that he has somebody to look after him. She announces that she is leaving, that she will marry Malone, and that she doesn't care how sick she is, she fully intends to go to the rally being held that very evening, by Mrs Linden, to help gather support for her husband's imminent trial. However, she collapses and is returned to bed. Dr. Morgenstern advises Challenger that her symptoms resemble Spanish 'flu. Challenger insists that it is the doing of the Lindens and sends Morgenstern away.

Roxton visits a miserable, frightened Challenger. He explains what he's discovered about Silas and Mrs Linden. He asks

after Enid's health but Challenger barely acknowledges his old friend. In the end, Roxton, frustrated, leaves. Left on his own again, Challenger broods amongst the photographs of his dead friends, under the painting of his wife. Finally, he storms out of the house.

Challenger bursts into Mrs Linden's rally for her husband. The hall is full of the Lindens' supporters, all of whom are angry at the injustice that has been done.

Challenger proceeds to castigate them all as credulous fools. He accuses them of casting aside all semblance of rationality and the gifts of the enlightenment in favour of dark ages superstition.

Mrs Linden, admitting that she does not have the knowledge that her husband does, defends spiritualism, citing (pseudo) scientific studies into the phenomena, asking Challenger for proof of his assertions. She asks him if he would cast aside empiricism in favour of slander and insults.

With Mrs Linden getting the better of him, Challenger announces her criminal past to the audience. Mrs Linden admits her shameful past but tells them that her husband is a good man who really believes. Mrs Linden all but admits that it doesn't matter if sprits are real, or not, if it helps people.

Challenger goes deathly quiet as he catches a glimpse of the same familiar figure he had seen in the street and at the trial, leaving the rally. He pushes his way through the furious crowd in a bid to follow her out into the street. This time determined to catch her.

Huffing, covered in sweat, and red faced, the professor gives chase to the spectre-given-form. She leads him through the tangled alleys of the town back to his own house, where he has abandoned his sickly, only child.

In the hall of the echoing, otherwise empty house, the professor convinces himself that, standing on the landing above, a thickening, congealing shadow, is his wife.

A desperate Challenger calls out to her, but the 'spectre' merely turns and walks out of sight.

Challenger masters his fear and runs up the stairs to his daughter's room. It is empty but the door to his wife's room is open. One step at a time he forces himself towards the room.

Enid, feverish, covered in sweat, tosses and turns in her mother's bed. For a moment Challenger thinks he catches a glimpse of his dead wife by the wardrobe:

Challenger: **"Why are you doing this to her?"**

On closer inspection, however, he realises that it is just one of his wife's dresses, slightly soiled, dangling out of the wardrobe. Hugging the dress Challenger collapses to the floor, sobbing.

Meanwhile Malone sobers up, pulls himself together, and escapes from the asylum in which he has been incarcerated.

Challenger finds himself staring at a picture of his wife. Managing a degree of self-control he calls Dr Morgenstern, apologises, and begs him to return. Then he takes some blood from the still unconscious Enid.

By the time Dr Morgenstern returns to Challenger's house the professor has managed to become a semblance of the scientist he once was. Examining Enid's blood sample under a microscope, Challenger tells the good doctor that the red blood cells are not clumped together, that despite Enid having all the symptoms of Spanish Flu he can find no trace of the virus in her system. Dr Morgenstern is more than a little worried about Challenger's health, particular when the professor tells raving stories of having seen his spectral wife.

Malone breaks into the Challenger house and joins the professor and Morgenstern in Challenger's wife's room, demanding to take Enid to a hospital. With Challenger at his wits end, Morgenstern suggests that perhaps the Professor was right all along, that this does all stem from the séance and Enid's morbid fascination with her mother. If this is the case then there is still one more expert they have yet to visit - Linden. Challenger angrily points out that they now know the Lindens to be confidence tricksters. At which Malone loses his temper and during the ensuing argument he points out that if Challenger loved his daughter he would try every possible avenue to see her well again.

Challenger: **"Do you imagine your love for her is any more than a father's love for his daughter!"**

Malone: **"Then prove it."**

On the eve of the trial Challenger goes to see Linden in the dank, dismal surroundings of the gaol. Challenger is forced to beg Linden to help his daughter in front of a visiting Mrs Linden. After the remand hearing, and their confrontation during the public meeting, Mrs Linden has no sympathy for Challenger, and he receives the sharp end of her tongue. She is in the process of throwing Challenger out of the visiting room when the professor breaks down and admits that it was his own arrogance that killed his wife. In tears, he tells the Lindens how he administered an un-proven flu vaccine to her. He believes that the angry spirit of his dead wife is haunting him. Mr Linden, begs his wife to relent. He tells Challenger that he doesn't think that it is an angry spirit that is causing this. He believes that someone was trying to communicate through Enid but the interrupted séance has resulted in the spirit being caught between their world and

the Land of Mist. It is this trauma that has sickened Enid and caused the partial manifestations that have troubled the professor. Challenger begs the medium to help him. But the distraught Mr Linden wants to but is stuck in the gaol.

Challenger visits Roxton in his chambers on the morning of Linden's trial. Despite being wanted, Malone insists on accompanying him, hoping that his shared history with Roxton during the war will help them sway the Lord. Challenger asks Roxton to have the charges against Linden dropped. Roxton tells him that he couldn't do that if he wanted to. He goes on to point out that there is significant evidence against the Lindens but that he still requires Challenger's expert testimony. Malone and Challenger object, telling Roxton that Enid's condition is worsening, and that she may not have much time. Roxton tells them that this is exactly what people like the Lindens do. Roxton seems to convince Challenger of this, which enrages Malone, who Roxton has arrested again.

At the trial a smug Silas gives damning and false evidence against his brother. Then Challenger goes into the witness box and testifies that Linden is not a confidence trickster, angering Roxton. Challenger testifies about the unexplained events surrounding his daughter's illness, and about his part in framing Linden. With tears in his eyes he admits his own arrogance and abuse of science.

Moved by Challenger's testimony, the jury return a verdict of not guilty and Linden is released. The Lindens and Challenger leave the courtroom in great haste.

Enid, watched over by a worried Dr Morgenstern, is worsening as Challenger arrives back at the house with the Lindens. Enid is now wearing one of her mother's old dresses. The good doctor has absolutely no explanation for how she came to be wearing the dress.

A hurried séance is arranged in the dining room. Linden attempts to contact the spirit trying to communicate with Enid. Nothing. A tearful Challenger is becoming more and more desperate, demanding to know if the mentally exhausted Linden is real or a fraud. Linden collapses, announcing the séance a failure, horrifying the distraught Challenger.

Then the knocking, so loud it is deafening, is heard again.

All eyes are on Enid. She sits up straight - no trace of her illness - arm outstretched, finger pointed at her father. Behind her, the professor sees the shadows thicken and congeal into a seemingly spectral form.

It is all too much for Challenger, too much for this man of science, and he flees.

Outside in the night Challenger enters the Land of Mist. On the green, the misty forms of his fallen friends and comrades

surround him. Suddenly he is face-to-face with his wife. He drops to his knees. She tells him: it is enough - he didn't kill her. But he must let her go - and he must let Enid go.

1918. Challenger storms over to the dining room door and tears it open. A ten-year-old Enid is standing there. He bursts into tears and sweeps her up into his arms.

1925. His wife has gone and in her place stands Enid.

Enid and Challenger, who is now sporting a black eye, sit on the beach. Malone is a little distance away. Challenger tells Enid that he thinks Malone has finally forgiven him

The Professor goes on to point out that Morgenstern believes that there are a number of sound scientific explanations for what they experienced. Enid merely smiles and proposes that he should investigate all possible explanations. They rise and walk back towards the town, Malone and Enid arm-in-arm. Out at sea a storm is forming.

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