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## The Devourers In The Mist

This adventure is a tribute to the rugged adventure genre, a pulp staple which earns less love among today's fans than fantasy, science fiction, horror and proto-superhero stories. Don't worry, though; this being *Trail Of Cthulhu*, the players face something far more outré than a simple battle of man versus nature.

*The Devourers In the Mist* can be played at any point in a pulp-oriented series. (For example, it could occur on a trip to or from Shanghai, the site of the next scenario in this book.) It is also designed to serve as a simple introductory adventure highlighting the GUMSHOE rules. With its brief length, it also makes for a good convention game, where you can more freely indulge in the high PC mortality rate encouraged by the survival story sub-genre.

**Important note:** As in any man vs. nature tale, the **Outdoorsman** ability proves crucial to the protagonists' survival. Check character sheets before commencing play. If none of the characters have Outdoorsman (or the player whose character does have it is a sporadic attendee) invite the players to adjust their abilities so that they do.

Some pieces of advice apply only to a one-shot, campaign intro, or mid-campaign scenario. These passages appear next to the following icons:



One-Shot



Introductory scenario



Mid-campaign scenario

### The Hook

The scenario opens with the characters waking up on an uncharted island in the Pacific, the survivors of a shipwreck.

### The Horrible Truth

The shipwreck that strands the characters was no accident. Buried on the island is *The Firenze Tome*, an object which is at the same time a volume of unspeakable Mythos lore, and a Mythos entity called Abholos. Hungry for souls to devour, it exerts a malign influence over the region, causing shipwrecks and plane crashes. Unless the tome is found and destroyed, any potential rescuers will also be drawn in and devoured. To have any chance

of solving this mystery, the characters must work together to gain food and shelter—and evade the invisible beings who come to collect Abholos' nourishment.

### The Spine

To complete the scenario, the characters must:

- Learn that there's a dread tome on the island
- Discover that the tome is also an entity
- Destroy the tome, probably by doing battle with the entity

### Timing For Convention Play

⦿ Convention play requires a Keeper to take a firm hand on the pacing tiller, ensuring that a satisfying story unfolds within the allotted time. This scenario helps you to achieve that by being fairly open ended. Assuming a four-hour session, you ideally want the following events to occur no later than the following points:

- 45 minutes: First indications of devourer threat
- 1 hour: Ruth Copeland's plane discovered
- 2 hour: packet of letters discovered
- 3 hour: Group learns that *The Firenze Tome* is Abholos

To compress the scenario into an even shorter demo experience, play out only a few of the scenes, flashing forward between sequences with quick descriptions of what might have happened in between. Play out the landing on the beach, including Stability tests for the group's memory of the squid attacks during the sinking, and the use of several investigative abilities. If this goes quickly, play out a survival scene or two, as the players decide what to do. Then flash forward to the discovery of the plane, but put the packet of letters, discovered separately in a full run of the scenario, inside the ruined fuselage. Then flash forward again to the final attempt to destroy *The Firenze Tome*.

## The Devourers In The Mist



### Antagonist Reactions

“*Devourers In the Mist*” is both a Mythos tale and a man vs. nature story. In addition to solving the mystery, the characters must in the meantime ensure their day-to-day survival by securing food, drinkable water, and shelter. In other words, nature itself can be seen as an additional antagonist, against which the group must also succeed.

After devouring their souls, Abholos turns the discarded husks of his victims into quasi-substantial hunters, who bring his prey to him. As the PCs fight to survive, progressively more alarming appearances of these unearthly beings ratchet up the tension.

### SCENES

This scenario has a very simple spine, and an extensive set of choices for antagonist reactions and moments of general unease. As such, it allows you plenty of room for improvisation based on the character actions and the mood of the room.

#### The Beach Scene Type: Introduction

The PCs awaken on the sandy shore of a tiny Pacific atoll. All players make **Health** tests against a Difficulty of 4. Those who succeed awaken on their own, at about the same time. Failed characters either must be awakened by another characters (on a Difficulty 2 First Aid test) or come to on their

own. In the latter case, they wake up on their own in fifteen minute intervals, in the order of their Health ratings, from highest to to lowest.

Upon awakening, each character makes an **Athletics** or **Fleeing** roll (player’s choice) against a Difficulty of 4. Failed characters take a die of damage+2. This is retroactive damage, measuring how badly they were hurt during the shipwreck. See which failed character loses the fewest Health points; successful characters lose this number, minus 1.

The characters are played across the beach, some with the cold, briny water hungrily lapping at their legs and torsos. Their clothing is drenched.

# TRAIL OF CTHULHU

## The Beach

They're wearing whatever a person of their Credit Rating would have had on during the early evening on a luxury liner. As soon as a player inquires into the state of repair of his or her garments, all of them make Difficulty 4 **Preparedness** tests. Winners' clothing is relatively intact. The garments of failed characters are tattered and will afford less than perfect protection against the elements until repaired. However, in true pulp fashion, the tattered clothing of physically attractive characters is strategically ripped for maximum sex appeal.

◉ In a one-shot game, only the player

characters are present on the island. When PCs die, they are not replaced. Players up for a convention run of a Cthulhu game know they're signing on for a high body count.

◉ or ◉ In a campaign game, new castaways are found to replace dead PCs. They can be located on other beaches, or have made their way into the jungle interior. Place them as required to ease them smoothly into the narrative. Present flashbacks to characterize these replacement investigators.

The stretch of beach goes on for about half a mile; they are at its center point.

Jungle plants thickly forest the middle of the island. The tree line begins about a quarter of a mile from their position on the beach.

**Geology** reveals that this is an uncharted island, marked on no map.

- There are no obvious sources of shelter, food, or potable water on the stretch of beach the group currently occupies.
- The players will doubtless have questions about the sinking of their ship, the *Empress Of Caledonia*:
- It sank due to a hurricane-force

### ◉ Flashbacks

By using "*The Devourers In the Mist*" as an introductory scenario, you get to use an extreme and vivid example of the technique in which an investigative group forms spontaneously after being thrown together into mutual peril.

Prepare for this by creating a campaign frame in which each player is instructed to prepare an interesting reason for their characters to be headed to the Orient on a luxury liner.

Rather than introduce the characters in static, motiveless scenes aboard the ship, start the action as given in the main text, with the post-wreck awakening on the nameless isle. Let them establish themselves according to what they do.

However, whenever a player asserts something unusual, interesting or telling about his character, use this as a cue for a directed flashback scene, in which the character is introduced to the other players. (See **Fear Itself** for more on directed scenes and flashbacks.) Work with the player to frame the scene to highlight the character's drive, a secret element of his backstory, or as an explanation for a seemingly incongruous ability, as that ability is used.

Possible examples might include:

- A character with the drive In the Blood might gaze into the trackless jungle and feel a shudder of cosmic malignity, which simultaneously attracts and repulses her. This cues a flashback to the first time she felt the pull of weird forces on her.
- When a character who is posing as a scientist but is really a criminal supplies an obscure and useful fact, he flashes back to an incident when he saved an older fellow prison inmate, who in turn tutored him in the basics of science.
- A character's backstory refers to a traumatic year spent as the prisoner of a degenerate Amazonian tribe; a flashback of his capture occurs when he first ventures into the jungle.

Unless a player specifically indicates that he's verbally recounting the flashback to others, its contents must be treated as player knowledge only, unavailable to the players. (That said, if another player takes a flashback of his own in an irresistibly clever direction, he might be able to show why he ought to know another's secrets...)

As no one scene is likely to convey all interesting information about a character, add further flashbacks as trigger points come up in play. Try to balance the flashbacks so that everyone gets an equal share. Some characters are full of hooks for this sort of thing and tempt you to overemphasize them.

It might also be fun to include some flashbacks of the ship's capsizing and the efforts to get to the lifeboats, or to swim to a lifeboat after the sinking.