

Wasted Youth

Trail of Cthulhu Conversion notes

“Wasted Youth” is a *Call of Cthulhu* scenario written by Christopher Smith Adair and published in *New Tales of Miskatonic Valley* by Miskatonic River Press in 2008. *New Tales of Miskatonic Valley*, which marks the return of Keith Herber to writing and editing for *Call of Cthulhu*, is a new collection of scenarios taking place in the Lovecraft Country of the Miskatonic River Valley in the 1920’s.

This scenario uses locations and characters appearing in Chaosium’s Arkham sourcebook (published as *Arkham Unveiled*, *The Compact Arkham Unveiled*, and *H.P. Lovecraft’s Arkham*). The sourcebook is not required to run this scenario. Keepers can adapt the scenario to another setting, but must place it in a city or town with an adjacent forested area of considerable size. The scenario can easily be set in the 1930’s.

The first part of the scenario’s investigation involves a lot of interviews. Investigators with strong Interpersonal abilities will have an easier time questioning those involved, and the group will benefit by having more than one Investigator with such abilities among their number. Reassurance in particular is needed to easily come by two core clues.

One of the affected children, Sarah Reid, can be used as a sort of deadly little Floating Clue by the Keeper. She can be used to start the scenario off, and she can also be used if the Investigators get stuck at some point or are dragging their feet. Her diary is one of the main ways to bring Elijah to the Investigators’ attention. Sarah may target the Investigators specifically, or her condition can suddenly worsen, causing her to go on a rampage (probably the worst one so far).

To succeed, the Investigators need to find out about Elijah, either through reading Sarah’s diary (a core clue) or by speaking with the Principal Derby and asking the right questions and making the appropriate spends. It is also possible for the Investigators to find out about Elijah by asking any of his schoolmates about any new and/or peculiar

children at school, if they are unable to get the information otherwise.

Once they start investigating Elijah, they should discover that he is not in town. To find out the location of the Boy Scout campsite, they can either impress upon his parents the potential danger using Reassurance or look elsewhere for the information.

The climax involves a protracted chase through the wilderness, an atypical situation in either game. The chase is set up so that Investigators who persevere will arrive at the conclusion, though failed tests and depleted pools may mean that they arrive later than would be ideal.

Investigations in Arkham

The Arkham Advertiser

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- **Assess Honesty 1-point spend:** Roberta likely knows more, but she won’t reveal what it is.

The Arkham Police Department

(Page 32)

- Without much evidence, it’s a **Cop Talk 2-point spend** to get the addresses of the children. With some solid evidence, a **Cop Talk 1-point** or **Flattery 2-point spend** can get the information.

The Morgue

(Page 32)

- Robert Dent is immune to the use of Interpersonal abilities. He is interested only in cash.
- Dr. Sprague will only let the Investigators see the reports if they are good friends or contacts of his or with a **Flattery 1-point spend**. He will, however, discuss the black goo that he discovered in the boys’ stomachs.

Arkham Sanitarium

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- Unless the Investigators are in some official capacity, it requires a **Credit Rating 3-point spend** to get an interview with Dr. Harcourt.

- Talking to the orderlies is easier, and a **Bargain** (with offer of a meal or a drink), **Flattery**, or **Reassurance 1-point spend** will get them to open up, as long as it is while they are off duty.

Billy's Admittance

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- **Medicine** or **Pharmacy 1-point spend**: Vomiting is not an uncommon response to sedatives. Kindly Keepers may allow another **Medicine** or **Pharmacy 1-point spend** now or after speaking with Billy to hypothesize that he was somehow cured by the potassium bromide (see the Potassium Bromide entry below). This is particularly appropriate if the players are already speculating about the possibility.

The Patient

(Page 33)

- **Assess Honesty** shows that Billy is being genuine.

Eben S. Draper Elementary School

(Page 34)

- Principal Derby will meet with Investigators if they're on official business, if they have a plausible story accompanied by a **Reassurance 1-point spend**, or if an Investigator makes a **Credit Rating 3-point spend**.
- About Joey Dooley: A **Reassurance 1-point spend** gets Derby to tell them about Elijah.
- Sarah Reid: Derby is hesitant to talk about her unless the Investigators are on official business or have her parents' permission, but a **Reassurance 1-point spend** gets him to do so without that.

Talking to Other Students

(Page 35)

- Finding a child that knows where Elijah lives requires a **Flattery 2-point spend**. The Keeper can determine how long this strategy takes to fit the pace of the scenario.

Potassium Bromide

(Page 35)

- As mentioned above in the entry on Billy's Admittance, Keepers who want to draw attention to or support the potassium bromide theory can allow a **Medicine** or **Pharmacy 1-point spend**.

- Investigators manufacturing their own potassium bromide can do so with a **Chemistry** or **Pharmacy 2-point spend**.
- To administer the potassium bromide, the child must be held down. This requires an **Athletics** contest. Note that the children have higher effective Athletics ratings when struggling to get away. The normal and higher Athletics appear in their stats, separated by a slash. Two Investigators can cooperate in the contest.
- After the black matter is vomited up, the Investigator with the highest **Sense Trouble** rank believes the matter twitched.

Meeting the Families

(Page 35)

- The Keeper can roll a die and add 1 to determine how many other families share a particular surname.

Joey Dooley's Family

(Page 36)

- **Reassurance 1-point spend** to get the wary Patrick Dooley to open up.

Attack of the J.D.s

(Page 36)

The Woodbine twins throw rocks up to near range, rolling **Athletics** to hit.

Gary Woodbine

Abilities (normal/contests to escape restraint): Athletics 4/16, Fleeing 7, Health 6, Scuffling 4, Weapons 4

Hit Threshold: 3

Stealth Modifier: +2

Weapon: +0 (baseball bat), -1 (thrown rock)

Mary Woodbine

Abilities (normal/contests to escape restraint): Athletics 4/16, Fleeing 7, Health 6, Scuffling 3, Weapons 3

Hit Threshold: 3

Stealth Modifier: +2

Weapon: -1 (kitchen knife), -1 (thrown rock)

Sarah Reid's Family

(Page 36)

- **Assess Honesty 1-point spend** reveals there is something deeply wrong with Sarah.

Sarah's Diary

(Page 37)

- **Core Clue:** A **simple search** finds Sarah's diary. **Reassurance** gets her parents to let them read it.

Sarah Reid

Abilities (normal/contests to escape restraint): Athletics 4/16, Fleeing 7, Health 6, Scuffling 4, Weapons 4

Hit Threshold: 3

Stealth Modifier: +2

Weapon: +0 (baseball bat), -1 (thrown rock)

Elijah Corey's Family

(Page 37-38)

- **Assess Honesty 2-point spend** allows the Investigator to sense a profound feeling of loss in the Coreys, as well as their anxiety about the future.

Frank Corey

Athletics 3, Health 7, Outdoorsman 1, Scuffling 5, Sense Trouble 1

Hit Threshold: 3

Belinda Corey

Athletics 1, First Aid 3, Health 7, Outdoorsman 1

Hit Threshold: 3

Elijah's Not Here

(Page 38)

- **Assess Honesty 1-point spend** reveals that he was disturbed by Elijah's reaction to his hiding.
- **Simple search** to find Elijah's drawings.
- **Cthulhu Mythos** recognizes Tsathoggua and a **1-point spend** reveals that the black blobs might be his formless spawn.

The Boy Scouts Go Camping

(Page 38)

- **Core Clue:** An Investigator can use **Reassurance** to convince the Coreys of the importance of reaching Elijah. The Coreys will tell them where the Boy Scouts are camping. Frank will insist on accompanying them if he is present.

The Winthrop Farm

(Page 38)

- Winthrop has a sharp mind and a significant **Assess Honesty rating**. If an Investigator lies about the group's intentions, the Keeper should ask what Interpersonal ability is being used, if it

isn't already clear. The Keeper should then tell the player that 4 points need to be spent in that ability to pull off the lie. If the Investigator doesn't have that many points (or chooses not spend them), the farmer detects the deception. If the group sincerely apologizes, he'll relent.

George Winthrop

Assess Honesty 4, Athletics 4, Firearms 3, Health 7, Outdoorsman 2, Scuffling 4, Weapons 2

Hit Threshold: 3

Stealth Modifier: +1

Weapon: +1 (shotgun), -1 (hunting knife)

Chief

Athletics 12, Health 6, Scuffling 8

Hit Threshold: 4

Alertness Modifier: +3

Weapon: -1 (bite)

Following the Boys

(Page 39)

The Investigators have to track the Boy Scouts through a variety of terrain, while finding various clues and making various tests to continue. If Chief is with them, he will do the tracking. The Keeper or one of the players should roll for Chief's tracking, adding his Alertness Modifier to the result of the roll. If the Keeper normally reveals Difficulty Numbers for tests, he or she either not do so in this case or roll Chief's tests. This will keep players from immediately knowing whether they are on the right or wrong path. Without Chief's aid, the Investigators and any NPCs accompanying them will have to rely on their own abilities.

The players should feel like Chief is a very useful special benefit that they have gained through their interactions with Winthrop. Likewise, they may have Frank Corey with them as well. Both Winthrop and Corey have some useful abilities, including Outdoorsman. Whenever possible, the Keeper should turn to the players and their characters' abilities first. The NPCs should be there to provide assistance and roleplaying opportunities; they're not there to steal the spotlight.

If the Investigators persevere, they will eventually catch up to the Boy Scouts at the climax. But there are many obstacles on the path that may delay them and they may waste precious time following the wrong path. This lost time will be reflected in how the climax plays out.

The Keeper should assume that the scouts have a thirty minute lead. Every time the Investigators suffer a delay, the Keeper should add fifteen minutes to the scouts' lead. It will take Elijah thirty minutes to properly perform each sacrifice, so the more time the Investigators waste time while lost, the more Boy Scouts will die.

The Keeper should assess a fifteen minute penalty if the Investigators go back to their vehicle before beginning the pursuit. The Keeper should also do so if they spend a long time arguing with Winthrop.

Trekking the Wilderness

(Page 40)

As the trek drags on, the Keeper can increase the Difficulty Number of certain tests by 1 or 2 to take into account the debilitating effects of the Investigators' journey.

Investigators exposed to poisonous plants must make a Difficulty 4 Health test. The allergic reaction that ensues with a failed roll takes about a day to appear, and the Investigator is treated as **hurt** while suffering the effects.

Black widow bites also require a Difficulty 4 Health test. Failure causes 2 points of damage. Less venomous spiders cause 1 point of damage.

Keepers can also call for Difficulty 4 Health tests to resist illness. Keepers can periodically increase the Difficulty Number of tests like Stealth or anything requiring concentration or fine motor control by 1 for those suffering an illness.

The Path from the Campsite

(Page 40)

- **Core Clue: Outdoorsman** or **simple search** finds the footprints. **Evidence Collection 1-point spend** or **Outdoorsman** determines that the adult male was running. They can easily follow the trail from here, especially with Chief's help.

Dead Dudley

(Page 40)

- It is a 3-point Stability test to see the murdered Scoutmaster. Anyone who suffers from Shell Shock must make the customary Stability test (Difficulty 4). Freezing up will cause a 15-minute penalty. Anyone whose mind is **blasted**

may also delay the group long enough to cause a time penalty.

- Anyone making a **Forensics** or **Weapons 1-point spend** concludes that the cuts were made with a small blade, like a pocket knife.
- **Core Clue:** The body is still warm.
- **Core Clue:** The path continues on the other side of the clearing.

The Trail of Terror

(Page 41)

As stated before, ability checks and other resources are required to stay on the right path. The group will always recover from a momentary failure, but will lose time.

The Trail of Terror is divided into a number of waypoints that pose a variety of problems for the Investigators. At the conclusion of each of these waypoint scenes, the Investigators may be called on to use abilities to pick up the trail. The results of a failed check or inability to spend points are described in the following waypoint scene.

No ability is required to find and follow the well-worn path leading away from the scene of the Scoutmaster's murder, deeper into the woods.

1. A Highway

(Page 41)

The two-mile hike along the hilly wooded path takes more than a half-hour.

- If Investigators wait for a car during the day and early evening, the Keeper should roll 1d6+4 to see how many minutes it takes for one to pass by.
- Shortly after leaving this waypoint, Chief should make a **Track check against difficulty 5** (his check is 1d6+3). If Chief is *not* present, an **Outdoorsman 1-point spend** or **Evidence Collection 2-point spend** will keep them on the proper trail.

2. Some Train Tracks

(Page 41-42)

2a.

- If Chief fails his Track check, or if he is not present and the Investigators or accompanying NPCs are unable to spend the necessary points, they wander north, away from the actual trail, until they come upon a swamp. If they turn back

right away, they only lose fifteen minutes. If they insist on skirting the swamp, they will waste even more time, and will have lost thirty minutes before they get back to the proper path.

2b.

- Following the correct path, the party traverses another two miles of woods, crossing three small streams in the process. Crossing the third stream by hopping from stone to stone requires an **Athletics test against difficulty 5**. Failure means slipping into the water and soaking shoes and socks.
- A half-mile later, they cross a corn field and after another half-mile they come upon a set of train tracks. The rains begin. On the other side of the tracks, they plunge back into the woods. Chief must make a **Track check (1d6+3) against difficulty 6**. If Chief is *not* present, an **Outdoorsman 1-point spend** will be needed to find the path again.

3. A Deadly Snare

(Page 42)

3a.

- If Chief fails his Track check, or if he is not present and the Investigators or accompanying NPCs are unable to spend the necessary point, they wander the forest in circles until they finally stumble on some footprints that put them on the right path. The Keeper should assess a fifteen-minute time loss.

3b.

- Thirty minutes, and nearly a mile and a half later, Chief is trapped by a snare. George and the Investigators can reach Chief in one round, but the dog needs to make a **Health test against difficulty 4** or suffer 1d6-2 damage. Anyone making an **Athletics test against difficulty 5** can dismantle the snare, but during the procedure Chief has to make a **Health test against difficulty 5** or suffer 1d6-2 damage. If the Investigator fails his Athletics test he or she may try again the following round, with Chief needing to make a **Health test against difficulty 6** or suffer 1d6-2 damage, and so on. The frantic Chief will not spend points on these tests until the difficulty increases over 6. Then Chief will spend the minimum amount of points needed to succeed on a roll of 6.

- Chief will die if reduced to 0 Health. If freed, anyone with First Aid can heal Chief 2 Health point. The Investigator does not need to spend any points to do so (and can not). No Track test or any other ability use is needed to get to the next waypoint.

4. Another Road

(Page 42)

Three quarters of an hour later, and roughly two and a half miles, the Investigators emerge from the woods, finding themselves standing before another dirt road.

- Two people lie on the pavement, near the parked car. If it is dark, all that can be seen are a couple of dark objects.
- It is a 1-point Stability test to see the accident scene. Both corpses are still warm.
- It is a **simple search** to spot evidence that a group of people have recently climbed the steep, muddy embankment on the far side of the road.

5. Climbing the Embankment

(Page 42)

- Reaching the top requires an **Athletics tests against difficulty 4**, or the Investigator slips and slides back to the shoulder of the road.
- If the tripwire is pulled, the log falls. Persons on the embankment have a 50% chance of being in the bouncing log's path. Their players should roll a die; they are in the path on a result of 1-3. Those in the path can choose either an **Athletics** or **Fleeing test against difficulty 4** to avoid it, with those failing suffering 1d6-2 damage. The person who triggered the trap automatically suffers 1d6-1 damage.
- If the Investigators specifically state they are searching for a trap, anyone carefully reaching over the embankment can make a **Sense Trouble test against difficulty 4** to find and safely trigger the trap or avoid it entirely by moving down the road a few yards and climbing the embankment there.
- After fifteen minutes of hiking, Chief must make a **Track check against difficulty 6**. If Chief is *not* present, an **Outdoorsman 1-point** is needed.

6. Death on the Trail

(Page 43)

6a.

- If Investigators lose the path, they wander south, eventually finding themselves in a low-lying rocky area. The trail seems to end in front of a steep hill with rocks, many of them having tumbled to the bottom of the slope to form a loose pile at the foot. The rocks are in a large pile rising up the side of the hill over ten feet. Investigators may surmise a cave hidden behind the jumbled rocks, and the Keeper can let them know that it is certainly possible for such a large pile to hide a cave entrance.
- If the Investigators proceed with that theory, every time someone moves a rock off the pile, there is a 1 in 6 chance that they disturb a timber rattler. The Investigator who disturbs it may make a **Sense Trouble test against difficulty 6** to jump back (since the timber rattler was resting deep in the rocks, its warning rattle doesn't sound). If the test fails, it gets to strike first and the target is treated as having Hit Threshold 3 for this strike, even if it would normally be higher.

Timber Rattler

Athletics 7, Health 4, Scuffling 15

Hit Threshold: 3

Weapon: -2 (bite); venom (see the venom entry under serpent-folk on page 146 in *Trail of Cthulhu*)

6b.

- Once back on the right path, the Investigators travel through nearly three miles of thick woods before Chief, if he is still with them, suddenly halts and begins to moan.
- It is a 3-point Stability test to see the head. anyone who suffers from Shell Shock should make the customary Stability test (Difficulty 4). Freezing up will cause a 15-minute penalty. Anyone whose mind is **blasted** may also delay the group long enough to cause a time penalty.
- It is a **simple search** to find the way to the next waypoint.

7. Foxfield Road

(Page 44)

The Investigators cross the road without incident and plunge back into the woods.

8. Death from Above

(Page 44)

- A mile further in, Chief once again comes to a halt, this time growling menacingly. If Chief is not with the group, a **Sense Trouble test against difficulty 7** detects a subtle rustling in the branches above, just a few yards up the path.
- If the Investigators are not forewarned, the creature automatically hits. If the Investigators are wary, the creature must roll to hit, and Investigators will have time to get a shot off before it reaches them, provided they have their guns in hand. Otherwise, it will act first.

Hyperborean Nightmare

Envelop: When the thing wraps itself around a victim's head, it is nearly impossible to pry it loose; it must be killed. Enveloping causes no damage. Firearms and bludgeoning weapons (as well as punches, kicks, etc) cause damage not only to the creature, but do -3 damage to the victim as well. Trying to cut the creature is the best choice in this situation. Bites and claw attacks (such as Chief will make) will also damage only the creature, not its victim.

Rasping Tongue: On the second round after enveloping a victim's head, it forces its rasping tongue down the victim's throat automatically. This causes both damage and the draining of 1 *rating point* of Stability each round.

Abilities (land/air): Athletics 4/12, Envelop 35, Health 7

Hit Threshold: 3/5

Stealth Modifier: +1/3

Weapon: -2 (rasping tongue; see above)

Armor: -2 vs any (tough hide)

Stability Loss: +1

- It is a **simple search** to find the final stretch of the trail.

The Hilltop Ritual

(Page 45)

The first sign of the scouts the Investigators get is when, a mile later, between an opening in the trees, they spot the boys atop a domed hill about a quarter-mile away. If the Investigators have managed to reach this spot without suffering any time penalties, they arrive just in time to see the last few seconds of the first sacrifice. The actual number of scouts depends on how close the Investigators stayed on the trail. Each sacrificial

victim requires thirty minutes of time. Seeing a sacrifice is a 3-point Stability test.

Five Vicious Scouts

Abilities (normal/contests to escape restraint): Athletics 5/20, Fleeing 7, Health 6; 5; 5; 5; 6, Scuffling 4, Weapons 3

Hit Threshold: 3

Stealth Modifier: +1

Weapon: -1 (pocket knife), +0 (spear)

Elijah Corey

Abilities (normal/contests to escape restraint): Athletics 5/20, Fleeing 7, Health 5, Scuffling 4, Weapons 4

Hit Threshold: 3

Stealth Modifier: +1

Weapon: -1 (pocket knife), +0 (spear)

Disrupting the Ceremony

(Page 45)

- If the Investigators try to approach the foot of the domed hill without detection, it is a **Stealth test against difficulty 4**, leaving them about 50 yards away (long range). The hill is curiously barren and they can't get any closer without being spotted.
- If given the chance, Elijah will unleash the ooze within one of the boys. This is a much weaker version of the Formless Spawn of Tsathoggua (see page 133 of *Trail of Cthulhu*).

The Hybrid Spawn

Athletics 12, Health 8, Scuffling 20

Hit Threshold: 4

Stealth Modifier: +1 (+3 in shadows or darkness)

Weapon: -1 (tendrils), +0 (limb), +1 (bite); can extend tendrils attack at near range; can attack one to three targets with a limb simultaneously, adding 1 to the Hit Threshold for each additional target

Armor: -2 vs any (plastic form)

Stability Loss: +1

Zalothos Reborn

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Athletics 7, Health 12, Scuffling 30

Hit Threshold: 4

Stealth Modifier: +1 (+3 in shadows or darkness)

Weapon: -1 (clawing arms), +0 (limb), +1 (bite); can attack twice with clawing arms against a single target; can attack one to three targets with a limb simultaneously, adding 1 to the Hit Threshold for each additional target

Armor: -3 vs any (plastic form), regenerates 1 Health per round.

Stability Loss: +2

The Spells of Zalothos

(Page 46)

Zalothos has a number of spells listed. Three of them, Cause Blindness, Clutch of Nyogtha, and Stop Heart, appear in the *Call of Cthulhu* rulebook. Shrivelling appears in the *Trail of Cthulhu* rulebook. Swell Mind appears in this scenario. Conversions for each of these spells, except Shrivelling, appear below. Clutch of Nyogtha and Swell Mind use the same mechanics, though they affect different organs, so they appear together.

Cause Blindness

Stability Test Difficulty: 5

Opposition: Once the spell is cast, and after paying the casting cost, the caster must succeed in one test of the caster's Stability against the target's Stability. If the caster does, the spell takes effect. If using the reverse of this spell on a willing recipient, no test is needed.

Cost: 7 Stability to cast; the reversal costs 4 Stability to cast.

Time: This ritual requires a day to perform.

Clutch of Nyogtha/Swell Mind

This hideous attack spell can be used on any visible target at point-blank or close range.

After the test to cast the spell, the caster makes a second Stability test against the target's current Stability. If the target wins the roll, the spell fails. If the target loses, the spell does damage with a -1 modifier each round while the spell is in effect. The victim must make an additional 5-point Stability test, temporarily paralyzed and unable to take any actions. If the victim dies, the affected organ bursts.

Each round the spell is maintained, the caster must spend 4 Stability points. The caster must concentrate on the spell each round it is in effect, and also must make a Stability test against the target's current Stability each round. If the caster is distracted or the target wins the test, the spell ends, but any damage already done remains.

Stability Test Difficulty: 4

Cost: 5 Stability to cast; it costs 4 Stability points each round the spell is maintained.

Time: One round to cast.

Stop Heart

The caster prepares the spell itself in advance for a particular target, spending a day making this involved preparation and spending the spell's cost at the culmination. Once the spell is ready, the target must be in long range or closer and visible to the caster. Discharging the spell takes one round.

Stability Test Difficulty: 4

Opposition: Once the spell is discharged, the caster must succeed in one test of the caster's Stability against the target's Health *rating*. If the test succeeds, the spell does damage with a +4 modifier.

Cost: 10 Stability to prepare the spell.

Time: See above.

The Potassium Bromide

(Page 46)

- If Elijah is given potassium, he forcibly vomits up a nearly brain-sized mass of the black matter, directed at the nearest character's face. That character can make a **Sense Trouble test against difficulty 4** to get out of the way. The thing from inside Elijah's head causes a +1 Stability loss to encounter.
- If it lands on someone's face, it begins to suffocate the character. The character may make an Athletics test each round to resist. The difficulty of this test begins at 3 and increases by 1 with every passing round. As soon as the character fails the test, he or she begins to suffocate and loses 1d6+1 points of Health each round, but these points can be restored if the victim is rescued and resuscitated before dying. If however, the character is **blasted** or frozen from Shell Shock, he or she does not get to make the Athletics test.
- The victim and up to one other person can try to wrench the black matter off the victim's face. This is an **Athletics test against difficulty 5**. They must both make their tests separately.
- If the black ooze lands on the ground instead of a victim, it launches itself at a target the following round. It has a pool of 15 points to fling itself at targets.
- After 5 rounds, or after killing a target, the spawn dies.