

The Cursed Caravan

An Adventure for Fate's Edge - Acasia

Adventure Overview

Title: The Cursed Caravan
Region: Acasia - Broken Marches
Theme: Supernatural horror, cursed objects, moral ambiguity
Level: Seasoned (Tier II)
Length: 3-4 Sessions

1 Premise

A merchant caravan has been cursed while crossing the Pale Causeway, causing supplies to rot, animals to die, and strange omens to appear. The players must escort the caravan to safety while dealing with the curse's escalating effects. However, they soon discover that the curse is tied to a larger conspiracy involving a powerful entity that feeds on suffering and despair, and that the caravan's troubles may be just the beginning of something far worse.

2 Hook

The adventure begins when the players encounter one of the following scenarios (Investigation + Notice vs DV 3 to determine truth):

- **Desperate Merchant:** They find the caravan stalled on the road, with Merchant Aldric Thorne desperately seeking help for his dying animals and rotting supplies. He offers them a substantial reward to help get the caravan to the nearest settlement. (Social encounter, Presence + Sway vs DV 3)
- **False Accusation:** A Margravine's bounty poster shows the players' faces with the accusation that they're responsible for the curse, forcing them to investigate to clear their names. (Investigation + Subterfuge vs DV 4)
- **Witch's Warning:** Hedge-Witch Mira Blackwood approaches them in a tavern, warning that something dark is moving along the trade routes and that they may be the only ones who can stop it. (Social encounter, Presence + Insight vs DV 3)

3 Key Factions

3.1 The Merchant's Caravan

The Merchant's Caravan

Leader: Merchant Aldric Thorne

Description: Desperate traders trying to save their livelihood

Key Members: Serah Thorne, Garrick the Guard, Mason the Cook

Strengths: Local trade knowledge, practical survival skills

Weaknesses: Limited supernatural understanding, dwindling resources

Methods: Pragmatic problem-solving, appeals to authority

Position: Desperate (cursed caravan), may improve with player help

DV for Assistance: 2 (desperate need), 3 (normal), 4+ (suspicious)

3.2 The Pale Shepherd

The Pale Shepherd

Description: Mysterious figure associated with transitions and endings

Role: Guide for the lost, guardian of boundaries

Strengths: Supernatural knowledge, ability to appear at crucial moments

Weaknesses: Enigmatic motives, limited direct intervention

Methods: Guidance through omens, appearing at crossroads

Position: Dominant in liminal spaces, Controlled elsewhere

DV for Guidance: 4 (proper approach), 5 (neutral), 6+ (improper)

3.3 The Hungering Dark

The Hungering Dark

Type: Ancient Outsider (Cap 4)

Tags: [FEED], [DARK], [CURSE], [FEAR]

Description: Entity that feeds on suffering, despair, and life force

Strengths: Growing power through feeding, supernatural manipulation

Weaknesses: Vulnerable to proper containment rituals, light-based effects

Methods: Spreading curse, manipulating emotions, possessing weak-willed

Position: Controlled (growing), Desperate (when threatened)

4 Key NPCs

4.1 Merchant Aldric Thorne

Merchant Aldric Thorne

Role: Caravan leader, desperate trader

Age: 45

Skills: Command 3, Survival 3, Sway 2

Knowledge: Trade routes, caravan management, local markets

Motivation: Save livelihood and family reputation

Complication: Skeptical of supernatural but desperate enough to try anything

Position: Desperate (cursed caravan), Controlled with player help

DV for Persuasion: 3 (mutual benefit), 4 (neutral), 5+ (suspicious)

4.2 Hedge-Witch Mira Blackwood

Hedge-Witch Mira Blackwood

Role: Local supernatural practitioner

Age: 68

Skills: Arcana 4, Lore 3, Insight 3

Knowledge: Local folklore, curse origins, protective rituals

Motivation: Protect local community from supernatural threats

Complication: Knows more than she reveals, has personal stake

Position: Dominant (local knowledge), Controlled under direct threat

DV for Information: 4 (proper respect), 5 (neutral), 6+ (hostile)

4.3 Margravine Elara Rothari

Margravine Elara Rothari

Role: Regional ruler of Broken Marches

Age: 52

Skills: Command 4, Insight 3, Sway 3

Knowledge: Regional politics, law enforcement, trade regulation

Motivation: Maintain order and authority

Complication: Balancing justice with practical concerns

Position: Dominant (authority), Controlled under political pressure

DV for Negotiation: 4 (legitimate request), 5 (neutral), 6+ (opposition)

4.4 The Cursed Child

The Cursed Child

Type: Legendary Outsider (Cap 5)

Tags: [OMEN], [BARGAIN], [END], [FEAR]

Description: Folkloric figure appearing at curse climax

Abilities:

- Appear at moments of greatest despair
- Offer terrible bargains
- End conflicts through supernatural means
- Induce overwhelming fear

Weaknesses: Bound by folklore rules, vulnerable to proper ritual

Tactics: Prefer bargains to direct confrontation

Position: Dominant at curse climax

DV for Bargaining: 6 (terrible bargain), 5 (difficult), 4 (possible)

5 Key Locations

5.1 The Pale Causeway

The Pale Causeway

Description: Last high road surviving spring thaws, crucial trade route

Features: Warnings, protective charms, shifting terrain

Curse Effects:

- Navigation becomes difficult (Survival vs DV 4)
- Protective charms failing (Arcana vs DV 5 to maintain)
- Road seems to shift and change (Notice vs DV 3)

Challenges:

- Guiding caravan safely (Leadership challenge, DV 4)
- Dealing with supernatural interference (Combat/Skill, DV 5)
- Maintaining morale (Command vs DV 4)

Position: Controlled (normal), Desperate (strong curse influence)

5.2 Blackwood Hollow

Blackwood Hollow

Description: Charcoal burner's clearing with hedge-witch's dwelling

Features: Protective charms, local folklore knowledge, supernatural sanctuary

Protection: Strong wards resist curse influence

- Challenges:**
- Gaining hedge-witch's trust (Social challenge, DV 4)
 - Learning curse origins (Lore + Arcana vs DV 5)
 - Accessing supernatural knowledge (Extended challenge, DV 6)

Position: Dominant (protected area), may weaken if curse grows

5.3 The Margravine's Court

The Margravine's Court

Description: Fortress-like seat of regional authority

Features: Iron law, harsh justice, bureaucratic complexity

Political Climate: Disrupted by curse, increasing tension

- Challenges:**
- Navigating legal proceedings (Sway + Command vs DV 5)
 - Presenting evidence of supernatural threat (Lore vs DV 4)
 - Dealing with harsh justice system (Social challenge, DV 5)

Security: Heavily guarded, formal protocols required

5.4 The Salt Road Ford

The Salt Road Ford

Description: Crucial river crossing point

Features: Unnaturally cold water, treacherous crossing, bone-filled banks

- Curse Effects:**
- Water becomes dangerous (Athletics vs DV 4)
 - Crossing becomes treacherous (Survival vs DV 5)
 - Supernatural presence increases fear (Spirit vs DV 4)

- Challenges:**
- Safely crossing with caravan (Extended challenge, DV 5)
 - Dealing with supernatural interference (Combat/Skill, DV 4)
 - Maintaining animal control (Command vs DV 3)

Position: Desperate (cursed ford), may improve with proper precautions

5.5 The Cursed Crossroads

The Cursed Crossroads

Description: Meeting point of multiple roads with wrong-time stone

Features: Strong curse influence, place of choice and consequence

Significance: Hungering Dark's strongest influence area

- Challenges:**
- Resisting supernatural influence (Spirit vs DV 6)
 - Making crucial decisions under pressure (Wits + Insight vs DV 5)
 - Confronting entity directly (Varies by approach)

Position: Desperate (entity's domain)

6 Plot Structure

6.1 Session 1: The Cursed Caravan

Opening Scene: Players encounter one of the hook scenarios. Establish the immediate supernatural threat and desperate situation.

Key Objectives:

- Experience immediate effects of the curse firsthand
- Meet key caravan members and understand their motivations
- Begin suspecting supernatural involvement
- Make initial decisions about approach and commitment

Sample Encounters:

- **Dying Animals:** Witness caravan horses succumbing to curse. (Notice + Medicine vs DV 4, Desperate/Limited)
- **Rotting Supplies:** Deal with spoiled cargo threatening caravan's viability. (Survival + Craft vs DV 3, Controlled/Standard)
- **Supernatural Omen:** Experience first clear supernatural manifestation. (Spirit + Notice vs DV 4, Desperate/Standard)

Session End: Players committed to helping caravan. Advance Curse Escalation Clock +2, Caravan Supplies -1.

6.2 Session 2: Into the Blackwood

Opening Scene: Players seek help from Hedge-Witch Mira. Supernatural elements become clearer.

Key Objectives:

- Learn about local folklore and supernatural protections
- Discover curse's connection to sealed chest
- Face growing influence of Hungering Dark
- Make moral choices about dealing with curse

Sample Encounters:

- **Hedge-Witch Consultation:** Gain supernatural knowledge and protection advice. (Presence + Lore vs DV 4, Controlled/Standard)
- **Chest Investigation:** Examine mysterious sealed cargo item. (Investigation + Arcana vs DV 5, Desperate/Standard)
- **Protective Ritual:** Perform local charm to resist curse effects. (Craft + Arcana vs DV 4, Controlled/Great)

Session End: Players understand curse's supernatural nature. Advance Hungering Dark's Strength +1, gain Folk Protection Tokens.

6.3 Session 3: The Margravine's Justice

Opening Scene: Political/legal complications arise as curse affects wider community.

Key Objectives:

- Navigate Margravine's court and harsh justice system
- Deal with curse's effects on local community
- Confront entity behind curse directly
- Make crucial decisions about curse's ultimate fate

Sample Encounters:

- **Court Proceedings:** Present supernatural evidence to skeptical authorities. (Command + Lore vs DV 5, Controlled/Great)
- **Community Crisis:** Deal with curse spreading to local settlement. (Leadership challenge, DV 5)
- **Direct Confrontation:** Face Hungering Dark's influence at cursed crossroads. (Extended combat/ritual, DV 6)

Session End: Major confrontation with entity. Advance all clocks +1, determine path to resolution.

6.4 Session 4: The Pale Child

Opening Scene: Curse reaches climax as Cursed Child appears.

Key Objectives:

- Face ultimate consequences of previous choices
- Deal with Cursed Child's terrible bargain
- Resolve immediate threat to caravan
- Determine long-term effects of actions

Sample Encounters:

- **Terrible Bargain:** Negotiate with Cursed Child for resolution. (Sway + Spirit vs DV 6, Desperate/Great)
- **Final Ritual:** Perform complex containment or destruction ritual. (Extended Arcana/Craft challenge, DV 6)
- **Moral Choice:** Choose between different resolution paths with consequences. (Command + Insight vs DV 5)

Session End: Resolution of curse crisis. Final clock states determine ending.

7 Key Mechanics

7.1 Curse Escalation Clock [8]

Advance +1: Animals die or supplies rot

Advance +1: NPCs become possessed or influenced

Advance +2: Players fail to properly contain the curse

Advance +1: Hungering Dark successfully feeds

Advance +2: Caravan members suffer serious harm

Advance +1: Supernatural manifestations increase in frequency

When Full: Curse reaches maximum power, entity may fully manifest

7.2 Caravan Supplies [6]

Deplete -1: Food and water spoil due to curse

Deplete -1: Equipment breaks or becomes unusable

Deplete -1: Animals die or become unable to work

Deplete -1: Players make poor resource management decisions

When Empty: Caravan cannot continue without external aid

Refill +1: Successful procurement or player intervention (max 6)

7.3 Hungering Dark's Strength [6]

Increase +1: NPCs experience fear, despair, or physical suffering

Increase +1: Curse's effects become more severe

Increase +2: Players use violent solutions creating more suffering

Increase +1: Proper supernatural protections not maintained

Decrease -1: Successful containment rituals performed

Decrease -2: Entity directly confronted and weakened

When Full: Entity reaches peak power, may attempt to escape bounds

7.4 Folk Protection Tokens

Butter-Left Charm: Place butter in niches to keep curse at bay (1 use, +1 Position vs curse effects)

Red Thread Binding: Tie red thread around wrists to maintain connection to living world (+1 die to resist possession, 1 scene)

Salt-Warding: Draw salt circles to contain supernatural entities (lasts until broken, DV 3 to maintain)

Hedge-Witch's Blessing: Gain +1 die to supernatural knowledge rolls (1 scene)

Crossroads Token: Gain +1 Boon when making crucial decisions at crossroads (1 use)

Bone Powder: Sprinkle to reveal supernatural tracks or influences (1 use, Investigation + Notice vs DV 4)

8 Possible Resolutions

8.1 Proper Containment

Proper Containment

Requirements:

- Perform correct rituals to bind curse (Craft + Arcana vs DV 6)
- Return object to resting place with ceremony (Extended challenge, DV 5)
- Gain blessing of local supernatural forces (Presence + Lore vs DV 4)

Procedure: Complex ritual requiring multiple steps and cooperation

Costs: Significant time investment, 1 segment Corruption for each participant

Outcome: Curse contained, grateful merchant, potential supernatural allies

8.2 Sacrificial Bargain

Sacrificial Bargain

Nature: Terrible bargain with Hungering Dark or Cursed Child

Options:

- Offer willing sacrifice to sate entity (Social/Command challenge, DV 5)
- Trade away something of great personal value (Player choice)
- Accept geas with future consequences (Mark ongoing Complication)

Procedure: Negotiation with supernatural entity under pressure

Costs: Moral compromise, ongoing supernatural debt, personal sacrifice

Outcome: Immediate safety but long-term consequences, moral complexity

8.3 Destruction Solution

Destruction Solution

Approach: Destroy cursed object and feeding entity

Requirements:

- Locate proper tools/rituals for destruction (Investigation vs DV 5)
- Accept risks of dangerous undertaking (Extended challenge, DV 6)
- Deal with backlash from destroying powerful force (Combat/Skill, DV 5)

Procedure: Dangerous ritual requiring specific conditions and timing

Costs: Risk of harm to participants, potential for new supernatural threats

Outcome: Complete resolution but possible complications, recognition as powerful agents

8.4 Escape and Abandonment

Escape and Abandonment

Choice: Save selves and abandon caravan to fate

Requirements:

- Flee cursed area successfully (Stealth + Survival vs DV 5)
- Accept moral cost of abandonment (Player decision)
- Face long-term effects of choice (Mark ongoing Complication)

Procedure: Rapid withdrawal from situation

Costs: Guilt and reputation damage, potential future encounters, loss of rewards

Outcome: Personal survival but moral consequences, unresolved supernatural threat

9 Rewards and Consequences

9.1 Immediate Rewards

- Toll-exemption plaque for one bridge: Free passage on named bridge
- Monastery letter for bed-and-bread on a named road: +1 Position for travel on that road
- Wine-right on an abandoned terrace: Access to valuable agricultural resource
- Condotta contract for one battle: Temporary military employment
- Tithe-remission writ for a village: Economic benefit for chosen community
- Border-stone adjustment: Modify regional boundaries for strategic advantage
- Pass-key charm recognized by Pale Causeway watchmen: +1 die to interactions with authorities

9.2 Long-term Consequences

- **Proper Containment:** Reputation as capable supernatural problem-solvers, grateful local contacts, potential for future folk horror adventures
- **Sacrificial Bargain:** Ongoing supernatural connection, moral complexity affecting future decisions, powerful but dangerous allies
- **Destruction Solution:** Recognition as powerful agents, possible new supernatural enemies, access to destroyed entity's former domain
- **Escape and Abandonment:** Damaged reputation in Broken Marches, guilt affecting character development, unresolved threat may return
- **Mixed Outcomes:** Complex relationships with all factions, ongoing plot hooks, moderate standing in region

10 GM Notes

10.1 Atmosphere and Tone

Emphasize the bleak, desperate atmosphere of Acasia:

- Use descriptions of withered crops, gray skies, and desperate people
- Make supernatural elements feel genuinely threatening and alien
- Create sense of isolation and hopelessness that makes supernatural solutions tempting
- Balance horror with folk wisdom and community resilience

10.2 Folk Horror Elements

Use local customs and superstitions authentically:

- Specific folk practices should have mechanical effects
- Local knowledge should be valuable and hard to find elsewhere
- Supernatural threats should be tied to regional folklore
- Community responses should reflect genuine cultural practices

10.3 Moral Ambiguity

Present difficult choices without clear right answers:

- Each resolution path should have significant costs and benefits
- NPCs should have complex motivations rather than simple good/evil
- Supernatural forces should be neither entirely benevolent nor malevolent
- Player choices should have lasting consequences that affect character development

10.4 Escalating Tension

Gradually increase supernatural threat level:

- Session 1: Minor disturbances and growing unease
- Session 2: Clear supernatural manifestations and local knowledge
- Session 3: Direct confrontation with entity and community crisis
- Session 4: Climactic encounter with legendary figure and final choice

10.5 Player Agency

Provide multiple paths to resolution:

- Investigation approach: Master curse mechanics and find proper solution
- Social approach: Negotiate with factions and supernatural entities
- Direct action approach: Confront threats through force or ritual
- Moral approach: Make difficult choices that affect curse's ultimate fate

10.6 Story Beats

Use curse's influence to generate complications:

- 1 SB: Minor supernatural manifestation, small equipment failure
- 2 SB: NPC becomes temporarily possessed, important item goes missing
- 3 SB: Major curse escalation, community member suffers serious harm
- 4+ SB: Entity direct intervention, climactic supernatural event

10.7 Session-Specific Guidance

Session 1 Focus: Establish supernatural threat and desperate situation. Players should feel immediate need to help while sensing something deeper is wrong.

Session 2 Focus: Deepen supernatural elements and introduce local knowledge. Players learn curse has ancient, complex origins requiring specialized solutions.

Session 3 Focus: Escalate to community-wide crisis and direct supernatural confrontation. Players must make difficult choices under pressure.

Session 4 Focus: Climactic resolution with moral complexity. All previous elements converge in final choices with lasting consequences.

10.8 Alternative Endings

If players attempt unconventional solutions:

- **Community Solution:** Rally local population to perform massive protective ritual
- **Entity Alliance:** Negotiate with Hungering Dark to become its agent
- **Folk Hero Path:** Become legendary figures who regularly deal with supernatural threats
- **Cursed Path:** Become cursed themselves but gain supernatural powers

10.9 Scaling for Different Tiers

Tier II (Seasoned): Standard supernatural threats, manageable curse effects, local community scope.

Tier III (Veteran): More powerful entities, curse spreading to multiple communities, regional political implications.

Tier IV (Paragon): Ancient conspiracy involving multiple cursed objects, entity gains patron backing, threat to entire region.