

KURSK

A DUNGEON WORLD ADVENTURE

JOE BANNER



A quaint farmstead of wood and old iron, surrounded by rotting wheat. You might come here investigating strange tales of witches up to no good, or the cursed wheat getting up at night and terrorising the neighbourhood.

Where is it?

The hinterland region of Mirkasa, a few leagues north of the Umberto border. From Nosjad city, you'd travel for about a week through a dozen or more backwoods and villages, until the cold forests give way to rolling farmland. From the Malachite mines, you'd have to cross the breadth of the Iron wastes and likely contend with one or more Templars once you crossed the border.

What's actually happened?

A witch hiding in the region has cursed the old Kursk farmstead so that every 7th seed – whether planted in the ground or a woman's belly – will grow fast, foul, and cruel. There's a few possible suspects as to who the witch (or witches) are. The Kursks are your typical backwater farming family; they've got a few dubious secrets, but it seems they're just in the wrong place at the wrong time.



Meet the Family

Waldegund Kursk is the oldest member of the family and something of a matron. She's built like a brick house and a keen shot with a crossbow; she served with the Mirkasan arbalists in her youth. She mostly keeps to herself, relying on her son to take care of the day-to-day work. She ignores her daughter where possible, or treats her with scorn when she can't. She hasn't seen the wise woman of the fields since Lhamia's birth, but blames her for the current crisis (and any other failings of her family to boot.)

She misses her late husband dearly, and his death is a grim reminder of her own mortality. She wants to keep her family together and safe, even after she's gone.

Solitary, Intelligent, 12 hp 2 armour, 1d10 damage near; Moves: protect a family member, nail a target from fifty paces, stare death in the face

If Waldegund is a witch, then she actually wants to live forever with her dead husband and gains the moves raise the dead, imperfectly. The curse is the 'imperfect' aspect of her initial attempts. Unless stopped, the curse will spread rampantly while Waldegund and her whole family will live on, in a manner of speaking, right in the middle of it.

Benedict "Benny" Kursk was found dead in the fields six months ago, apparently of natural causes. His loss has been felt keenly by the family, some of whom are coping better than others. His body is buried in a fresh plot by the family shrine. He doesn't really want anything, because he's dead, but if someone pulls his soul back from the dead all he'll want is to return to the grave.

Henri Kursk is Benny and Waldegund's twenty-one year old son, and the only one still on the farm. With his father's death, "he's the man of the house" – but he's struggling to keep the farm running. Truth be told, he'd sooner sell it, but deep down he wants to make his parents proud, and keeping the farm going is the only way he can see himself doing that.

Solitary, Intelligent, 10 hp 1 armour, 1d8 damage close; Moves: see to the duties in the farm, hide behind his mother's skirts, display an unexpected act of bravery

KURSK

Lhamia Marie-Rose (nee Kursk) left the farm about a decade ago with a travelling bard from Chalcedon. The marriage lasted all of ten months, but while abroad she found a new calling in the priesthood of Mareth. Recently, her visions showed the doom of her family line, prompting her return home. But there's no love lost between her and her mother and ultimately she only wants to witness death first hand.

Solitary, Intelligent, 10 hp, 1d8 damage close; Moves: cure light wounds, ease someone's passing, learn something from the dead, conduct last rites

As part of the duties of her faith, she is tasked with gathering the secrets of the dead. Where this requires magic, she'll prefer to do this in secret. Any secrets she does learn, she'll write on a scrap of paper and send back to the church by raven.

If she is a witch, she actually wants to claim the secrets of life eternal instead. In this case, she'll keep all the scraps of paper with her, stuffed in her robes and pinned to her sleeves. The curse is only the start of her research – if allowed to continue, or conduct it on more people, it will be very bad news.

Mizra'im is an old druid and wise woman from Umberto; bone white hair, skin like old leather. She's lived in the hills for longer than anyone can remember and helped bring Henri and Lhamia into the world. She's rarely seen without Anais, her lizard familiar. She's trusted locally, but any templar would regard her 'wise ways' with a lot of suspicion. Although kindly, she knows her way with a skinning knife and more than a few poisons too. Ultimately though, she wants to live out her days in peace.

Solitary, Intelligent, 8 hp, 2d6 damage close; Moves: cast a complex healing ritual, invigorate or poison with a drug, offer cryptic advice, see things through her familiar's eyes

If Mizra'im is the witch, she actually wants revenge against the Mirkasan people for massacring her family when she was a child. Anyone she helped bring into the world (certainly Henri and Lhamia, and a 5-in-6 chance of anyone else thirty or younger raised in the area too) is cursed, and will spread the curse to their children too...

Who's the witch?

Choose, or pick at random who the witch is before the game begins (between Waldegund, Lhamia or Mizra'im.)

Stakes

- Who'll survive the curse?
- If she escapes, what mayhem will the witch cause next?
- Will the curse spread beyond the farm?

Other Questions

- Who's the witch?
- What other secrets are the Kursks hiding?
- What can they give you as a reward?

Rewards

- Honour and more from the templars, in return for a known witches' head
- The spirits of the Kursk family, who know more than they're letting on
- The matron's old battleaxe, only used for wood for years, but destined for greater
- The druid's fetishes, which could be used for powerful magic
- The priest's wards, powerful tools in the hands of the devoted

Areas

The “Matron’s Guardhouse”

A small, pretty cottage on the edge of the farmstead near the road. Waldegund built it herself shortly after her marriage, for when she needed some space away from the family. While her husband was alive she didn’t use it much; now, she’s hardly anywhere else. There’s a simple pantry, a glass-walled study filled with flowers and a warm study. Mounted on the study wall is Waldegund’s old crossbow, still loaded with a single silver bolt. Spread throughout are several awards and accolades from her time in the army, as well as reminders (pretty stones, a painting or two and other mementoes) of her husband.

If Waldegund’s a witch, hidden under the papers will be a necromantic spell or two detailing how to raise the dead.

The Homestead

A well-built family ranch. Henri is the only occupant, living in his childhood room. The master bedroom is vacant, as Waldegund tends to doze in her ‘guardhouse’ instead. Lhamia’s room has been turned out and has nothing of her former life, so she continues to live in her caravan.

A smaller pasture holds two cows – Svenja and Moo – and a clutch of chickens. Henri takes care of them and himself with what little fresh food he has left.

If Lhamia’s a witch, then Moo – her childhood favourite – will be dead. (Lhamia will pretend to be sad about this, and might even accuse her mother of killing her favourite cow out of spite.)



KURSK

The Rotting Fields

Two acres of waist-high wheat, green and rotting but somehow still standing. The whole area smells terrible, sweet and sickly like day-old vomit. The ground is slimy and treacherous, though the family insists there's not been a good rain for a week. You swear you hear rustling all around you, even when you're standing still. If the crops are cut down, by the next day more rotten wheat will have grown in its place.

If you explore the fields at night, the crops will twine together into shambling humanoid things that want to turn you into fertiliser.

Crop-things: Horde, Organised, Construct, 3 hp, 1d6 damage close; Moves: pull themselves together, emit a cloud of poison (reach, ignores armour), spread the virulence further

The Family Shrine

A simple cenotaph of stone and iron, dedicated to the last few generations of Kursks. Inspection of the statue will confirm only Benny is actually buried here; the others all died in one or another of the countless Umberto/Mirkasan border conflicts.

*Some Kursk ancestors are Adelai, Travis, Mischa, Benoit, Angelica and Carsten. Carsten Kursk was a famed templar, and war hero of Mirkasa. **If you petition the Kursk ancestors for aid**, roll+WIS. On a 10+ a spirit answers, and offers what advice or blessing it can. On a 7-9 the spirit offers no aid now, but its blessing when the Kursk estate is safe. On a miss, mark experience and you learn the ancestors spirits have started to become corrupted...*



The Priest's Caravan

Set up as far from the guardhouse as possible. Lhamia has (or had, see below) a sturdy horse called Brutus. The caravan smells of lavender, and is stocked with texts dedicated to Mareth and plentiful travelling supplies. An untuned guitar that once belonged to Lhamia's ex hangs on one wall, worth a pretty penny to someone.

If Mizra'im's the witch, Brutus will be missing (drawn away in the night to stop Lhamia escaping the families fate.) What's left of Brutus will be found in the fields some time later, likely intertwined with an attacking crop-thing.

The Druid's Shack

A few miles south of the farm, nestled in a verdant swamp. (Think Shrek's house from the first movie.) The house used to be a two-storey affair, but the lower half apparently sunk into the muck a long time ago. The remaining bedrooms have long since been converted; a balcony window serves as a front door.

If Mizra'im isn't the witch, the rot will have already begun to take hold on the edges of the swamp. If the crop-things aren't kept in check, progressively higher numbers of them will assault her home every night.

When the crop-things attack the shack at night, start a countdown (draw six boxes, filling in the first.) Roll Mizra'im's damage; if she scores less than 6, she fails to drive them off significantly – fill in another box. When all the boxes are filled in, her home is fully corrupted.



Making a Character

You have a **NAME**: perhaps *Aventail*, *Bascinet*, *Morion* or *Schynbald*.

You have **SIX ATTRIBUTES**: **STR**ength, **DEX**terity, **CON**stitution, **INT**elligence, **WIS**dom and **CHA**risma. Each has a score and a modifier. Assign these scores/modifiers in whichever order you like:

16 (+2) 15 (+1) 13 (+1) 12 (+0) 9 (+0) 8 (-1)

You start with **HIT POINTS** equal to your constitution, plus 6.

You start with either a *sword and shield* or a *bow with 3 ammo*. (You might lose 1 “ammo” for rolling poorly when attempting to shoot. A shield gives you 1 armour.) You deal 1d6 damage. You also start with 5 rations, 5 adventuring gear and coin equal to your charisma plus 6.

You have an **ALIGNMENT**, which is a statement that sums up what your character wants most in life. If you do what your alignment describes at least once per session, you mark experience at the end. Pick one of the following:

- “I defeated a worthy opponent today.”
- “I defended someone who couldn’t defend themselves.”
- “I inspired my allies to try something very brave - or very stupid.”

Finally, you have a **HOMELAND**. Your homeland gives you a special move. Choose where you come from from the options overleaf, or work with the GM to create your own home.

How to play

When you attempt something risky, roll 2d6 and add a modifier. (The GM will describe the risks before you roll, and which attribute you use.)

A 10+ means it goes as well as expected. A 7-9 means it happens, but not quite as you would have hoped. On a 6-, mark experience and the GM describes what happens next. (You’re probably not going to like it.)

When you suffer damage, you lose **HIT POINTS** equal to the damage taken minus your armour. At 0 hp, you’re unconscious, incapacitated or worse.

APPENDIX

The world is an ever-changing place. Today's tyrants are tomorrow's trophies. Nations rise and fall. No king rules forever. Always remember: the actions of but a single adventurer may yet shape the fates of everything.

Mirkasa

The mountain gnomes and the templars of Saint Mirka. Two cultures sharing a land of ice and snow. They said they'd never work together. They were wrong! The "elektrickery" of the gnomes lights their streets; the faith of Mirka warms their hearts. But the brighter the light, the longer the shadow...

Special move: when you are struck by lightning or a magical attack, hold 1. Spend hold when you attack to deal +hold damage.

Umberto

What mysteries lie below the sands of Umberto? The young Caliph and his half-god queen rule their ancient city; devils and magi bargain with men's souls. They say it all began in the Iron Deserts. Perhaps it will end there, too.

Special move: you count as a "place of power" for the purposes of the move Ritual. Be warned: taking full advantage of this may risk your physical, mental or spiritual well-being.

The Green Scar

The Green Scar burns. It's gods have fled or died. Those that remain fight a losing battle against an unfamiliar foe, cruel men with the power of science and greed in their hearts. The once-limitless power of the jungle gods is nearly spent. But what miracles and terrors may come, before the end?

Special move: you start with FAITH equal to your wisdom. You may spend 1 faith at any time to turn a 6- result into a 7. Faith cannot be recovered; when it reaches 0, what remains of your gods is lost with it.

Chalcedon

Everything is broken. There's not enough to go around. And everyone has a price. These are the only laws that matter in Chalcedon. Remember them, and you may yet survive another day on the smog-choked streets.

Special move: when you discern realities, add these to your list of available questions:

- What will it cost to get rid of this person for a while/for good?
- What's the best way in/way out/way through?

My Thanks

To my munificent patrons, who helped make this possible:

Aaron Merhoff, Acritarche, Alex Norris, Alexander Grafe, Amy Stringer, Andrea Parducci, Bay, Ben Rosenberg, Benjamin George, Bruce Curd, Charles Wotton, Chris Patterson, Chris Sakkas, Christopher Giles, Christopher Weeks, Dane Ralston-Bryce, Donna Almendrala, Eduardo Caetano, Eric Loren, Felix, Gozuja, Hani Musallam, J.Walton, Jeremy Riley, Jeremy Strandberg, Joe Barnsley, Johannes Stock, Jonathan Spengler, Justus Goldstein-Shirley, Kenji Ikiryo, Kevin, MapForge, Marco, Marcus Flores, Martin Deppe, Matt Greenfelder, Matt Kay, Matteo Casali, Matthew Caulder, Matthew Klein, Michael Prescott, Michael Raichelson, Oleg Krapilsky, Olle Wilhelmsson, Rafael Rocha, Robert Rees, Roland, Ryven Cedrylle, Schubacca, Shane Knysh, Spenser, Stefan Dziewanowski, Stephanie Bryant (Mortaine), Tim Dennett, Tim Jensen, Tim Reed, Tom Miller, Tom Sambles, Zane Dempsey, Zane Gunton

If you enjoy reading this adventure, you can help me make more!

Join in at patreon.com/jbinc to get first access to new adventures and maps. You can find previously-released adventures on my website, joebanner.co.uk.

Writing, editing, publishing & layout by Joe Banner.

Public Domain Art: [flickr.com/photos/britishlibrary/](https://www.flickr.com/photos/britishlibrary/).

Dungeon World by Sage LaTorra & Adam Koebel, CC-BY 3.0.

The text of this document is released under a Creative Commons Attribution ShareAlike 4.0 international license: creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/

The layout of this document is copyright © 2015 by Joe Banner.

For more info, freelance writing, editing & design, visit joebanner.co.uk.