

THE HARVEST

A 5e Adventure

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ADVENTURE SUMMARY

The village of Denner's Mill is gearing up for the annual Harvest Festival when disaster strikes. Crop circles, mysterious fires, and malevolent ravens—it will take a few brave heroes to uncover the truth and restore peace to the village.

The Harvest is a fall-themed adventure for 1st-level 5e characters geared toward players who are new to tabletop RPGs. Features a good blend of combat, exploration and roleplaying with a gentle learning curve.

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BACKGROUND

Young local warlock, **Sandro Harmell** is in over his head with his demonic patron **Horathua**. At first the mystic knowledge Sandro gained was awesome, and the demon only wanted small offerings. But Sandro, being a young

man, got greedy, and kept asking for more power. A week before the Harvest Festival, Sandro asked Horathua for power far beyond his skill. To make a point, Horathua possessed Sandro's body to show him what the beautiful possibilities of chaos look like. Horathua maintains its control through Sandro's scrying orb and has eyes everywhere in the form of **ravens**.

The possessed Sandro has set up shop in the basement of the **Old Mill**, where he works on a ritual to turn every crop field in Denner's Mill to ash before the Harvest Festival. His first attempt was unsuccessful, causing only uneven burns to the cornfield of two local farmers. Horathua is losing patience, and Sandro is desperate to complete the ritual before the festival begins.

ADVENTURE START

Denner's Mill is a quiet creekside farming town. It's late fall, which means it's the prime time to be harvesting corn. At the end of the harvest, the townsfolk all gather for a community meal to celebrate the bountiful gifts of nature, and an offering is made to the Earth Goddess to ensure continued fortune for the next year.

This adventure starts the afternoon of the Harvest Festival, which is scheduled to begin just after sundown. The adventure begins at an emergency town hall-called by town officials to investigate the incident that occurred this morning at Denner's Mill's biggest farm. **Beatrice Hern** and **Gretta Sahad**, a married couple, awoke to the smell of smoke, only to find their cornfield dotted with small fires. Beatrice found their rooster dead, and a trail of ash leading through the cornfield wherein her scarecrows were smouldering. Gretta also found an ashy trail which she claimed drew out a series of runes that she could not read. When she tried to make her way to the nearby well to put out a small corn fire, she was attacked by a large black bird and left with some nasty claw wounds.

The priestess of the Earth Goddess temple, **Verda Matron**, is convinced the townsfolk have upset the Goddess and wants to investigate each townsfolk to find the "rot". **Mayor Grunner** argues that there's no time; the Harvest Festival begins after sundown, and an ancient tradition can't just be canceled. Some townsfolk are scared that going ahead with the Harvest Festival will prompt whatever evil this is to cause the whole town harm. The exasperated mayor silences everyone and says, "We need a miracle." Beatrice responds by saying, "No, we need to scrape together something for the festivities tonight and we need some volunteers to figure this mystery out by sundown." If the players need more incentive, the mayor offers a reward of 300 GP for pursuing an investigation.

1. THE FARM

*The corn field is a smouldering mess with several **scarecrows** dutifully keeping watch through the lazy smoke. The field is still tall with stalks but almost devoid of colour. You can plainly see the ashy trail mentioned at the meeting. Gretta and Beatrice are not in sight. As you start to follow the ash, the nearest scarecrow lashes out with its pitchfork.*

Encounter: animated scarecrow (one per PC)

Once the scarecrows are no longer a threat, the players can investigate the runes drawn in the ash. These runes (found in the appendix) are in a language that none of the players know. The farmers suggest visiting **Lena Mahler**, the tea-shop owner. She has a small but mighty library.

2. THE TEA-SHOP

On the edge of town near the trade route sits a small but charming house. A hand-painted sign reads “Lena’s Brews”. Inside, it’s clear that it’s really less of a shop and more like Lena converted her sitting room into a gathering place.

When the PCs ask about the library in relation to the runes, Lena is cold towards them but after some persuading, freedom of information trumps her personal beliefs. She insists, “These runes are evil magic. Please don’t speak them out loud, you’ll curse us all!” as she searches for the right book. Inside the book are the **Rune Puzzle Instructions** (appendix). The runes spell out HORATHUA. When the PCs say the word out loud, a fierce shrieking wind suddenly rattles the building, the door blows open, and everyone can smell smoke, although none is visible. Lena accuses them of summoning the demon: “You a bunch of rotten warlocks?” Uninterested in any protest or arguments, she evicts them from her home.

3. THE HARMELL HOUSE

As the PCs leave the tea shop, they are approached by a frightened woman carrying a ball of cloth. She asks them if they’re the ones doing the investigation. Once they say yes, she introduces herself as **Ada Harmell** (Sandro’s mother). PCs must roleplay tactfully to coax information out of Ada. If she feels like they don’t believe her or act aggressively, she’ll try to leave. A DC 16 Persuasion check will calm her down enough to tell them the following:

She says, “This is terribly upsetting but I just found the house cat dead on the porch. See?” It’s inside the cloth. “I admit this isn’t the first time this has happened... It started around 6 months ago with small creatures. Mice, birds. I thought it was the cat bringing gifts. But a week ago my 18 year old son, Sandro, went missing. He’s always been a quiet and obedient boy, but I fear he has become misguided. He might be practicing the... Dark Arts, but I haven’t told a soul. Our family couldn’t bear the shame if it were true. You should see the shed...” On a failed check, PCs can attempt magic or threats. If they continue to be unsuccessful, a circle of ravens forms over the Harmell house, causing Ada to rush home in panic and the PCs can follow her.

The shed beside the Harmell home is starting to smoke. Inside the PCs can find runes carved and drawn into the wood. It smells awful due a handful of decomposing animal corpses. A sinister looking skull sits on the highest shelf. When the players get close or go to touch it, the skull (appendix) animates.

Encounter: Flying Skull

Once the PCs are safe, they see small fires catching along the trail that leads toward the **Old Mill**.

4. THE OLD MILL

Denner's Mill (the mill, not the town) was once a thing of beauty. Now it stands tall on the edge of town abandoned. The wood is faded grey. The waterwheel is still. The river is weak and shallow. The trail of gore that led you here becomes indistinguishable from the muddy path.

A. MAIN FLOOR

The front door of mill is trapped with a hidden pit trap. PCs can make a DC 15 Perception check to notice it or they fall 10ft and take 1d4 bludgeoning damage.

The waterwheel on the outside of the mill is still intact. A small creature can climb it with an ACRO 14 check. A medium creature can climb it with an ACRO 17 check. On a successful check, the creature climbs up the wheel and can enter the mill through an open window. On a failed check, creature falls into the muddy remains of what once was the river but may spot Sandro's **secret door**. A DC 18 Investigation check on the outside of the Mill reveals the door. The grey area on the map (appendix) is considered difficult terrain.

Inside, the main floor is full of barrels and wooden support beams. A **trap door** is hidden under the barrel marked with a star on the map (appendix). A DC16 Investigation check can reveal it. Inside the barrels are 5 **giant rats** (appendix). There is also a **sapphire locket** inscribed with "Mr. and Mrs. Denner" that is in the bottom of a rat infested barrel. Inside the locket is a dark and blonde lock of hair braided together.

A staircase leads up to the second floor.

Encounter: Giant Rats (5)

B. TOP FLOOR

This floor is covered in a thick layer of dust. It's a loft space that has a simple wooden desk and chair, and a window overlooking the river. Oh, and a ghost.

Herein dwells the ghost of Matilda Denner, who used to own the building when she was alive. The town building a new mill and christening it Denner's Mill enraged her spirit, and she angrily haunts the abandoned one. She tried to attack Sandro when he took up residence but was shocked when he was able to damage her incorporeal form with magic. She is frantically planning her revenge but assumes anyone entering this room is Sandro or his minions and tries to fight. She can cast **Chill Touch** at will. If the PCs show her the **sapphire locket** (which was a wedding present), she will stop attacking them and can let them know the location of the trap door.

C. BASEMENT

*The first thing you notice is the smell of sulphur. You've been tracking it the whole day. As you descend the ladder, two **ravens** (appendix) start to caw but you can't see them. There are pentagrams and runes carved everywhere. Sandro is working furiously among the runes, chanting, casting something. He looks awful, as though he hasn't slept in a week, and he clutches an orb of clouded glass. He opens his mouth and an inhuman voice hisses, "Can't you see I'm a little busy here?"*

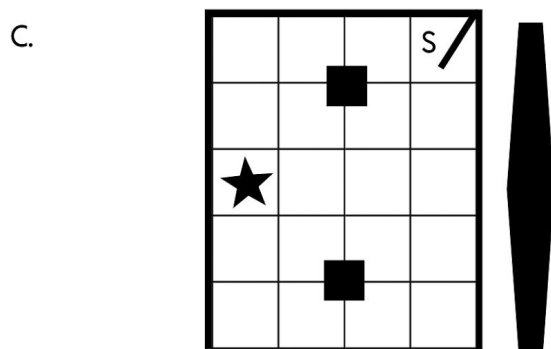
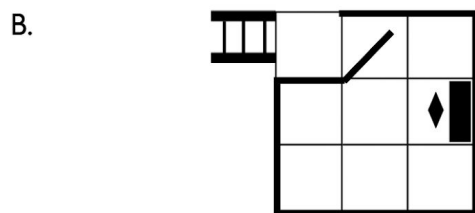
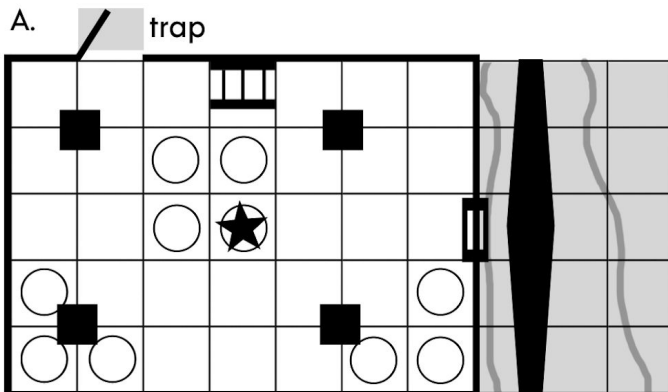
Encounter: Sandro and 2 Imps

Overall, Horathua wants to create chaos, punish humanoids, and protect the orb to maintain its connection to Sandro. If Sandro falls unconscious or the orb is broken, the possession will break. The orb has AC 13 and 10 HP. If Sandro reaches 0 HP, he passes out and will wake up 5 minutes later, coughing up feathers.

There's a secret door behind the waterwheel that Sandro will use to flee if the imps go down first. Sandro targets weaker creatures to gain temporary HP and uses Eldritch Blast to keep people out of melee range. The imps are invisible at the beginning of the fight, and attempt to provide interference against anyone approaching Sandro.

He carries a scrying orb, a raven foot pendant (which gives him beast speech), a dagger, and 30gp.

MILL MAPS



5. THE HARVEST

Tired and dirty, you've succeeded. The mystery is solved. Sandro will face justice later but for now, let's eat!

6. APPENDIX

ANIMATED SCARECROW - Medium construct, Neutral

AC 10 **Condition Immunities:** blinded, charmed, deafened,
HP 7 (1d8+2) exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned
Speed 10ft **Senses:** blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius),
Damage Immunities: passive perception 6
poison, psychic **Challenge:** 1 / 8 (25xp)

STR 13 (+1)	DEX 8 (-1)	CON 14 (+2)	INT 3 (-4)	WIS 6 (-2)	CHA 5 (-3)
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Smoulder: Any creature that touches the scarecrow or hits it with a melee attack while within 5 feet of it takes 2 (1d4) fire damage.

ACTIONS

Pitchfork. Melee Weapon Attack. +3 to hit, reach 5ft., one target. Hit: 3 (1d4 + 1) piercing damage.

Stick arms. Melee Weapon Attack. +1 to hit, reach 5ft, one target. Hit: 1 (1d4-1) bludgeoning damage.

MOTIVATION

The scarecrow has been animated by lingering demonic magics. It is holding a rusty pitchfork that it's not smart enough to use well. If disarmed, it will use its actual arms. When reduced to 0 HP the construct bursts into a flock of tiny black birds that shoot up into the sky and disappear.

FLYING SKULL -Tiny Undead, Chaotic Evil

AC: 14 **Damage Resistances:** fire
HP: 18 (6d4 + 6) **Senses:** darkvision 60ft., passive perception 10
Speed: 0ft., fly 30 ft. **Languages:** Abyssal
 Challenge: 1/2 (100 XP)

STR 7 (-2)	DEX 15 (+2)	CON 12 (+1)	INT 9 (-1)	WIS 10 (+0)	CHA 16 (+3)
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ACTIONS

Swoop. Melee Attack. +4 to hit, reach 5ft, one target. Hit: 3 (1d4+1) fire damage.

Chattering Cackle. The flying skull delivers an eldritch cackle. Each creature within 30 ft. of the flying skull must make a DC 11 Charisma saving throw. On a failed save, a creature must take the Dash action and move away from the flying skull on its next turn. When a creature succeeds the saving throw, it is immune to the flying skull's chattering cackle for 24 hours.

GIANT RATS - Small beast, unaligned

Armor Class: 12 **Senses:** darkvision 60ft., passive perception 10
Hit Points: 7 (2d6) **Challenge:** 1/8 (25 XP)
Speed: 30ft.

STR 7 (-2)	DEX 15 (+2)	CON 11 (+0)	INT 2 (-4)	WIS 10 (+0)	CHA 4 (-3)
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Keen Smell: The rat has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on smell.

Pack Tactics: The rat has advantage on an attack roll against a creature if at least one of the rat's allies is within 5 feet of the creature and the ally isn't incapacitated.

ACTIONS

Bite. Melee Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft. , one target.
Hit: 4 (1d4 + 2) piercing damage.

IMP (Raven) - Tiny fiend (devil), lawful evil

AC: 13 **Damage Immunities:** fire, poison
HP: 10 (3d4) **Condition Immunities:** poisoned
Speed: 20 ft., fly 40 ft. **Damage Resistances:** cold; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical/nonsilver weapons
Senses: **Languages:** Infernal, common
Darkvision 120 ft., passive perception 11 **Challenge:** 1 (200 XP)

STR 6 (-2)	DEX 17 (+3)	CON 13 (+1)	INT 11 (+0)	WIS 12 (+1)	CHA 14 (+2)
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Skills: Deception: +4, Insight: +3, Persuasion: +4, Stealth: +5

Shapechanger: The imp can use its action to polymorph into a beast form that resembles a rat (speed 20 ft.), a raven (20 ft., fly 60 ft.), or a spider (20 ft., climb 20 ft.), or back into its true form. Its statistics are the same in each form, except for the speed changes noted. Any equipment it is wearing or carrying isn't transformed. It reverts to its true form if it dies.

Devil's Sight: Magical darkness doesn't impede the imp's darkvision.

Magic Resistance: The imp has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Variant: Familiar The imp can serve another creature as a familiar, forming a telepathic bond with its willing master. While the two are bonded, the master can sense what the imp senses as long as they are within 1 mile of each other. While the imp is within 10 feet of its master, the master shares its Magic Resistance trait. At any time and for any reason, the imp can end its service as a familiar, ending the telepathic bond.

ACTIONS

Sting (Bite in Beast Form). Melee Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 5 (1d4 + 3) piercing damage, and the target must make a DC 11 Constitution saving throw, taking 10 (3d6) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Invisibility. The imp magically turns invisible until it attacks, or until its concentration ends (as if concentrating on a spell). Any equipment the imp wears or carries is invisible with it.

SANDRO HARMELL (POSSESSED BY HORATHUA)

Medium Human, Chaotic Neutral

AC: 13 (leather armor)

Saving Throws: WIS, CHA

HP: 22 (2d8 + 6)

Senses: darkvision 120 ft., passive perception

Speed: 30ft

12

Damage Resistances: fire

Languages: Abyssal, Common

Challenge: 2 (450 XP)

STR 9 (-1)	DEX 14 (+2)	CON 17 (+3)	INT 10 (+0)	WIS 9 (-1)	CHA 16 (+3)
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Devotion: Sandro has advantage on saving throws against being charmed or frightened.

Beast Speech: Sandro can cast *speak with animals* at will to speak with the crows and ravens who do Horathua's bidding.

Repelling Blast: A creature hit by Sandro's *eldritch blast* cantrip is pushed 10 ft away from him in a straight line.

Dark One's Blessing: When Sandro reduces a hostile creature to 0 hit points, he gains 5 temporary hit points.

Spellcasting: Sandro is a 2nd-level spellcaster. His spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 13, +5 to hit with spell attacks). Sandro knows the following Warlock spells:

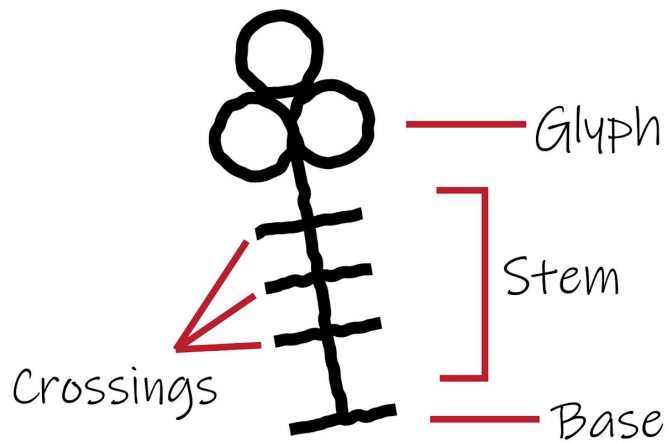
Cantrips (at will): *eldritch blast*, *true strike*

1st level (2 slots): *charm person*, *hellish rebuke*, *unseen servant*

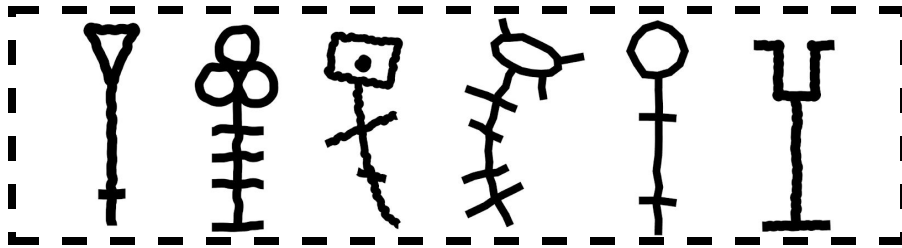
ACTIONS

Dagger. Melee Weapon Attack. +1 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 1 (1d4-1) slashing damage.

How To Read A Rune



The Runes In The Field



The six runes are presented here in order. By following the instructions on the next page, the players will discover that they translate to H-O-R-A-T-H-UA. You can cut the runes out, paint them on rocks, stick them on cards, etc.

RUNE PUZZLE INSTRUCTIONS

1. How many crossings does the rune have?

If two or more, proceed to step 5.

If one or fewer, proceed to step 8.

2. Are the crossings of roughly the same length?

If not, the rune most likely translates to the common letter "R".

If so, the rune must translate to the sound "FR".

If the rune has more than three crossings, proceed to step 10.

3. Does the glyph have corners?

If so, it undeniably must indicate the sound "CH".

If not, it most definitely creates the sound "TH".

4. Are all of the crossings straight?

If not, I can assure you the sound is, in fact, "S".

If so, I am most grievously certain that the sound you have uncovered is "H".

5. Does the stem of the rune curve?

If yes, proceed to step 2.

If no, proceed to step 9.

6. Is the glyph taller than the stem is long? (Look carefully.)

If yes, the translation you seek is "X".

If not, proceed to step 4.

7. Does the rune when viewed in full make the shape of an animal?

If a prey animal (mouse, rabbit, herring), the sound is "L".

If predator (dragon, lioness, owlbear), the sound is "M".

8. Does the stem of the rune end in a widened base?

If there is no base, proceed to step 6.

If the rune ends in a base, proceed to step 11.

9. If the glyph of the rune is tripartite (made of three identical components), the rune undoubtedly translates to "O".

If the glyph of the rune is bipartite (made of two identical components), the rune assuredly corresponds to "E".

If the glyph is neither bipartite or tripartite, proceed to step 3.

10. Is the glyph of the rune symmetrical?

If not, there is no possibility it may be any other sound besides "A".

If so, I would stake my career on the translation being "Y".

11. Does the glyph include any circles?

If so, the sound must without question be "EA".

If not, there can be no hesitation that the sound is "UA".

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