THE PRICE OF PLENTY

Every harvest demands a sacrifice.



LEVEL 1–3 | FARMING VILLAGE, FOREST | FOLK HORROR, MYSTERY, BETRAYAL

ADVENTURE HOOK

The last leaves fall as the characters arrive in Hollowbrook. While neighboring farms have failed, the village groans with abundance. The villagers invite the travelers to a harvest feast of fresh bread, roasted meat, and cider. Elder Bram offers 100 gp to destroy a creature in the forest that has supposedly taken livestock. He gives each character a necklace woven from dried wheat, a token of protection, and directions to an ancient shrine. No villager will accompany them.

As the party leaves, an old woman grips a character's hand. *'Forgive us,'* she whispers. Behind her, the villagers begin clearing the feast tables.

WHAT'S GOING ON?

A century ago, famine drove Hollowbrook to bargain with the Reaper of Roots. In exchange for abundant crops, the village must deliver living offerings before the first frost. Once they sacrificed their own; now they lure strangers with food and promises of gold.

GM truth: The feast is a farewell. Accepting its food and a wheat token marks a traveler as an offering. The Reaper can sense marked creatures in the forest, but cannot claim anyone outside it. Refusing either gift prevents the mark. Removing a token does not erase it. The elder knows the truth; most adults are complicit, though some bitterly regret it.

KEY LOCATIONS

1. Harvest Feast. A child asks why last year's guests never returned. Bram insists the necklaces are protective charms. A concealed wagon behind the granary holds the belongings of previous victims (no check if searched).

2. Elder's House. A ledger records yearly offerings, including names and the words 'paid in full.' Bram carries the key; DC 12 DEX to pick the lock. The ledger reveals the pact can be renounced by the village elder at the shrine.

3. Forest Path. Wheat bundles hang from branches. The birds fall silent. Rusted weapons and bones protrude from roots. A narrow game trail leads back to the village, bypassing the main path.

4. The Hanging Tree. Hundreds of faded wheat tokens hang from a dead oak. A restless spirit points toward the shrine and whispers, 'Make him take back his promise.' A silver sickle lies among the roots.

5. Ancient Shrine. Standing stones surround a throne of roots and antlers. The pact is carved in plain language on the central stone. The Reaper greets marked travelers: *'You ate their bread. You wear their offering. The debt is due.'*

NOTABLE NPCs OR MONSTERS

Elder Bram — LV 0 human. AC 10, HP 4, ATK staff +0 (1d4), MV near, AL N. Believes the village cannot survive without the pact. Evidence of the betrayal or a credible plan for winter can persuade him to renounce it.

Mara Fen — LV 0 human. AC 10, HP 3, no attack, MV near, AL L. The remorseful widow will reveal the truth if approached privately and help the party return to the village.

THE REAPER OF ROOTS — LV 3 spirit. AC 13, HP 18, ATK root lash +4 (1d6+2), MV near, S +3, D +0, C +2, I +1, W +2, Ch +1, AL C. **Entangle:** In place of an attack, one near target makes DC 12 DEX or is restrained; DC 12 STR to escape as an action. **Bound:** Cannot leave the forest. **Fire:** Takes double damage from fire. Morale 6.

TIMERS, TWISTS, & TERRORS

The Harvest Countdown. Begin at step 1 when the party enters the forest. Advance after each major exploration scene, failed attempt to interfere with the pact, or ten minutes of indecision. Do not advance simply for asking questions.

1. All birdsong ceases. **2.** Wheat necklaces tighten; they can be cut off freely. **3.** Faces appear in the bark, mouths moving silently. **4.** The dead whisper the elder's name and warn the party to flee. **5.** Roots block the main path; DC 12 STR to clear them, or use the game trail. **6.** The Reaper rises and hunts marked travelers. Unmarked characters are ignored unless they interfere.

Buying time: Burning a wheat token delays the next advance once for the whole party. The mark remains. The Reaper will hear an offer of negotiation before attacking, unless attacked first.

Fair warning: Give the party clues before the forest and allow them to refuse the job, flee, or confront the elder. Do not force the sacrifice or assume they accept the gifts.

NOTABLE LOOT / ODDITIES

Silver Sickle: Worth 25 gp. Functions as a dagger; against the Reaper it deals 1d6 damage instead of 1d4.

Forgotten Offerings: 34 sp, 12 gp, a usable shield, and a brass merchant's seal worth 10 gp lie beneath the Hanging Tree.

Harvest Ledger: Proof of decades of disappearances. Families or local authorities may reward its return. Bram's promised 100 gp is real, stored in a locked chest in his house.

ENDING THE HARVEST

Slay the Reaper. Destroying the entity ends the pact and releases the spirits trapped in the trees. The village loses its supernatural bounty, but its existing stores remain. Winter will be difficult, not necessarily fatal.

Break the bargain. Bring Bram to the shrine. He must freely renounce the agreement aloud and cut his own ceremonial wheat token on the central stone. The Reaper cannot attack during the declaration unless attacked first. If Bram refuses, the party must find another solution.

Escape and expose the village. Leave the forest by either path. The Reaper cannot follow. The mark fades at sunrise after the first frost. The failed offering ends the village's protection; the entity remains in the forest and may seek a new bargain.

Make a new bargain. The Reaper accepts the village's entire surplus harvest in place of lives if offered before it is defeated. Bram must agree and the grain must be delivered to the shrine before the first frost. The village must survive on ordinary stores and outside aid.

Remix: A missing merchant's family hires the party to investigate Hollowbrook, or a repentant villager secretly asks them to end the pact before the feast begins.