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Eight Hours as a Golden Boar

Freyr and the Gifts of the Gods



MICHAEL KAHLER

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Author

Michael Kahler

Publisher

Sabnock Works

Kattrepel 7
27404 Zeven
Germany

Lathmar@t-online.de
sabnockworks.com

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Eight Hours as a Golden Boar

One hero becomes a golden boar to lure a collector away from his archive. The bailiff holds the only potion that can restore the hero, and it must be drunk within eight hours.

For this adventure, one player character takes the form of a boar with golden bristles. The group decides who will take that role before the ritual begins. Everyone knows the abilities, the eight-hour deadline, and what happens if the potion arrives too late. The scenario can be used with various fantasy systems; the boar's physical statistics are specifically based on the Dire Boar from the D&D 3.5 d20 rules. The following background is intended for the game master. The connections to Hildisvíni and Mārīca are freely adapted. [1]

The Bailiff's Commission

Bailiff Arved receives the party at his manor on the edge of an ancient forest. In the grove beyond stands a stone archive, guarded by a powerful forest spirit known locally as the Keeper. Arved wants an inscribed bronze tablet recovered from the archive. He explains that it belongs to his family and establishes their right to rule. He offers a substantial reward for its return. The party is to lure the Keeper away with a living golden boar.

Arved knows the Keeper's passion for collecting rare animals. The spirit keeps them in a walled enclosure and has said several times that a boar with golden bristles would complete his collection. Former servants can confirm this. The alchemist Mera knows a ritual that transforms a hero into an animal, allowing them to cross the grove's boundary stones without alerting the Keeper. Disguises and illusions are not enough. While the rest of the party waits outside, the boar must lure the collector beyond the boundary stones.

Before the ritual, Mera also shows the heroes the finished potion that reverses the transformation. Arved intends to keep it as security and hand it over in exchange for the bronze tablet. The party can negotiate this condition before setting out. In the adventure as written, the only dose remains in a padded case in his study; the bailiff carries the key. Mera knows a way into the room through the paneling in its rear wall. Brewing another dose would take several days.

What the Tablet Says

The bronze tablet records an old pact between Arved's ancestors, the Keeper, and the people of three villages. It guarantees the villagers rights to use the forest and a say in the construction of new roads. Arved wants to push through a trade road and control its revenues alone. That is why the tablet must disappear. The Keeper has also made life difficult for the villages: for years, he has refused even concessions that could help them. The pact is written clearly. Anyone who reads it understands these rights without needing a special check.

Even before the ritual, the characters can find an incomplete copy in one of the villages. The archive also contains letters in which Arved demands the destruction of old charters. These clues allow the party to question his commission and choose a different course. They can

deliver the tablet, make the pact public, or open new negotiations. The tablet is evidence, and the party decides how to use it.

The Abilities of the Boar Form

The boar form uses the physical statistics of the Dire Boar from the Revised SRD 3.5: Large size, 52 hit points (7d8+21), initiative +0, and a speed of 40 feet, or eight squares. Its Armor Class is 15, with touch AC 9. The body has Strength 27, Dexterity 10, and Constitution 17; Fortitude +8, Reflex +5, and grapple +17 are its fixed game statistics. Its gore attack has a +12 attack bonus and deals 1d8+12 damage. It also has low-light vision and scent. The unmodified SRD creature has Challenge Rating 4. [1]

The character retains their personality, memories, mental ability scores, and existing Will save. They do not acquire the animal Intelligence score in the monster's stat block. Equipment is set aside before the ritual; abilities requiring hands or particular items are correspondingly limited in boar form. Existing injuries carry over. Under D&D 3.5 rules, Ferocity allows the Dire Boar to keep fighting at 0 to −9 hit points; it dies at −10. This ability does not compel the transformed hero to attack. The rules for retaining the character's mind and carrying over injuries are specific to this adventure. [1]

The name "battle boar" inspires this powerful body. During the mission, however, the boar has no planned combat encounters. Their task is to draw the Keeper away, keep their distance, and evade his attempts to capture them. A rescue can also be resolved through deception, negotiation, and help from the other characters. Only if the party turns against Arved might the tusks come into play in a confrontation with the bailiff or his guards.

The golden bristles light the way and make the animal visible from a considerable distance in open terrain. A thick covering blocks the glow. There is also an ability borrowed from Mārīca's deer: the hero can imitate voices they have heard and speak in those voices. This grants them no knowledge belonging to the original speaker. A well-chosen call can send the Keeper down the wrong trail; a careless answer can expose the deception. [2]

The boar can also speak to their companions in their own voice. The boar holds the Keeper's attention mainly because he wants to possess the rare animal alive. The glow itself compels no one to obey. The bristles cannot be plucked or shorn. Any pieces that fall off or splinter away become ordinary steel shavings with no value as trade goods or magical ingredients.

The Clock Starts with the Ritual

The eight hours begin as soon as the transformation is complete. Before that time runs out, the hero must have drunk the entire dose of the reversal potion. Drinking it takes one action, and their original form returns immediately. Captivity and unconsciousness do not stop the clock. Nor does another transformation ritual reset it. Ordinary dispelling or healing cannot break the bond. The game master keeps the remaining time visible to everyone.

After eight hours, the transformation becomes permanent. The prepared potion no longer helps, even if the party obtains it later or Mera brews another dose. The character remains a boar, retaining their mind and special abilities. An extraordinary solution could become the subject of a later adventure; none is available during this mission. Mera explains these consequences before the ritual.

For planning purposes, allow ninety minutes for the outward journey, thirty minutes for final reconnaissance, forty-five minutes for the distraction and retrieval, and ninety minutes for the return. That totals four hours and fifteen minutes, leaving three hours and forty-five minutes for complications or changes of plan. When the party splits up, its actions happen simultaneously. Half an hour of pursuit and half an hour in the archive, played in parallel, use only half an hour. Before a lengthy detour, the game master gives the players an estimate of how long it will take. The travel times can be adjusted to suit the setting before play begins.

The Grove and Its Keeper

The archive stands within the grove’s inner stone circle. As long as the Keeper remains inside the outer boundary stones, the ward alerts him whenever a person in humanoid form crosses the boundary and whenever anyone enters the archive, including through a window. At the boundary, the ward recognizes physical forms, not thoughts: the transformed boar can cross unnoticed. Entry into the archive would still be detected. Once the Keeper leaves the area, this special awareness ceases. The archive door has an ordinary lock; the rotten wooden frame of a barred side window can be pried loose with tools. Beside the archive are the animal enclosure and the quarters of Sela, its attendant. Two large dogs patrol between the buildings and can be distracted with food. Arved and Mera explain how the ward works before the ritual.

During the chase, the Keeper should be a dangerous pursuer. He carries a strong net and a pole with a noose, intending to bring the boar into his enclosure unharmed. He cannot teleport or see through every obstacle. The game master uses suitable pursuit and capture rules from the chosen system. A prepared route, a fallen trunk, or a convincingly imitated voice can therefore make all the difference.

There are three suitable escape routes: a game trail through dense undergrowth, a stream with widely spaced stepping stones, and an old causeway. The boar can use their strength to force a way through the undergrowth. At the stream, tracks can be concealed, but a misplaced step costs time. The causeway allows a fast escape, though it gives the Keeper a clear line for throwing his net. The party can scout these routes before the ritual, leave useful equipment along them, and agree on a meeting point behind the abandoned mill.

The Hunt Begins

If the boar steps into clear view beside the stone circle, the Keeper recognizes the animal he wants and first tries to entice it closer with food and soothing words. When it retreats, he follows. Under these conditions, no roll is needed to attract his initial attention. From then on, the player decides how much distance to gain, when to come back into view, and which route to lead the pursuer along. The companions wait for an agreed signal that the Keeper has crossed beyond the outer boundary stones.

After a few decisions, the game master switches between the chase and the archive. A failed escape roll costs the boar some of their lead, forces a detour, or gives the Keeper an opportunity to throw his net. This can result in capture without turning the scene into a fight. If the boar loses the pursuer, the Keeper must travel the actual distance back to the archive. Until then, the others have time to complete their task.

Inside the Archive

The other characters must open a way in, get past the dogs, and find the correct tablet. Sela knows where it is and knows the history of the pact. She can be deceived, persuaded, or asked for help. Arved's letters are kept with the records concerning the tablet. The party may make copies and take the documents. This takes longer than simply grabbing the bronze tablet, but it may prove crucial later. Discovering the truth allows them to change the original plan while the mission is still underway.

Carrying the bronze tablet at speed requires both hands. The group must decide who carries it and who secures the escape route. They have an agreed signal at the mill. If the boar is more than fifteen minutes late, the others go looking for their companion. They can first leave the loot in a prepared hiding place.

If the Boar Is Captured

If the Keeper catches the boar, he brings them into the animal enclosure. The hero remains involved in play. They can talk to Sela, imitate a voice they have heard, examine the gate, or call to their companions. The Keeper will then know that he has caught a speaking creature. He still needs to be convinced that this is a person facing a deadline. His desire to keep the boar may continue to stand in the way of their release.

The enclosure has a barred gate. Through a drainage opening, a slender character or a suitable tool can reach the bolt on the inside. Sela also carries the gate key. The heroes can talk to her, sneak in, or rely on the captive's help to secure a release without combat. As a guideline, a prepared rescue attempt takes about an hour. The clock keeps running throughout.

Completing the Commission or Changing Sides

If the party brings Arved the tablet as agreed, he hands over the potion and the reward. He has no reason to punish reliable helpers afterward. The villagers' rights are now at risk, however, unless the characters have secured a copy or other evidence. An apparently successful mission may therefore have political consequences later. Reversing the transformation depends only on drinking the potion in time.

If the party wants to preserve the pact, they can return the tablet, keep it themselves, or make it available to the villages. They can negotiate safe passage and the release of a captive hero with the Keeper. He has no remedy for the transformation. If he helps the group, his established abilities and the usual travel times still apply. The characters must obtain the prepared potion from Arved.

Even after a failed break-in, the heroes can negotiate for the potion. They might offer Arved another price, use his letters to put pressure on him, or tell Mera what has happened. The alchemist believed the commission was legitimate and does not want to leave anyone trapped in an animal's body. If the group persuades her, she can give them access to the existing potion. She cannot make a replacement in the remaining hours.

The Second Theft

If Arved refuses to hand over the reversal potion, his manor becomes the final location. One guard stands outside the study; two more watch the courtyard. An entrance through the kitchen leads to the rear corridor. From there, Mera can help open the wall paneling. The padded case remains in its known location unless someone explicitly warns Arved of an attempt to take it. The group can deal with the lock using the key, tools, or their usual magic. A failed lockpicking check alone does not shatter the bottle.

The boar can help here, too. They might call a servant away in someone else's voice, distract the guards in the courtyard, or speak to Mera directly. Meanwhile, another hero could keep Arved occupied with a staged handover. If the group chooses open resistance, this is where the Dire Boar's combat statistics may come into play. Once someone has the bottle, they can bring it to the boar. Arved's consent is not required to reverse the transformation. As a guideline, a prepared attempt takes one hour in addition to the return journey.

After the Deadline

If the hero drinks in time, their original form returns. Injuries and obligations remain. Arved may now possess the tablet, the villagers may be discussing a new pact, or the Keeper may be searching for his escaped treasure. What follows depends on the group's choices. Failing to retrieve the tablet does not have to mean losing their companion as well.

If the deadline passes, the hero remains a golden boar. They know their companions, remember the mission, and can tell the others what they expect of them. A potion obtained too late no longer helps. Whether they continue traveling in this form is the player's decision.

The search for another way to reverse the transformation can open a new adventure. Perhaps the party works with Mera. Perhaps they abduct the alchemist if she refuses any further help. What Mera might know, and what another route back would cost, is left to the game master.

Sources

[1] Wizards of the Coast. Revised System Reference Document, v.3.5. The Hypertext d20 SRD.

"Dire Boar" · p. 3, 4

"Dire Boar", Ferocity · Condition Summary, "Dead" · p. 4

[2] Vālmīki. Rāmāyaṇa, Araṇyakāṇḍa. Sanskrit text with English translation by Desiraju Hanumanta Rao. Valmiki Ramayana.

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Read the essay · Hildisvíni and the Golden Deer