

In the Ogre Chief's Grasp

A Swords & Wizardry Quick-Play Adventure
Rescuing a halfling community from an ogreish overlord.

TROUBLE IN HILLSHIRE

Hillshire is a tiny halfling community located 50 miles southwest of Aran. This isolated community was granted independent status many years ago as a reward to the halfling inhabitants of the time in return for some long forgotten favor. Due to its location hidden deep within the hills, as well as man's notoriously short memory, time has mostly erased the knowledge of Hillshire's existence (excluding the folk of Aran, who sometimes make their way through the hills to visit the community). One month ago an ogre chief, along with 4 of his kin and a band of orcs, descended upon Hillshire from the north. The ogres and orcs quickly took the halfling village. After establishing their rule over the community, the ogres claimed the old abandoned keep known as Hillfort which overlooks the halfling village, while the orcs were left in the village proper to maintain violent order.

HILLFORT, THE OGRE'S KEEP

Hillfort was established at the same time as Hillshire. The keep was built by a minor Aranian noble and friend of the halflings, to protect the small village from the monstrous inhabitants of the hills and mountains to the north. While the aranian nobleman lived, he and his men manned and occupied the keep. With the nobleman's passing after many years of peaceful watch, the keep known as Hillfort quickly became abandoned, the Hillshire folk occasionally using it for certain festivities.

When the ogres and orcs overtook the village, the ogre chief and his kin took the old keep for themselves.

CALL FOR AID

Be it through a halfling acquaintance, or a sympathetic Aranian, word of Hillshire's plight will reach the PCs. The sheriff of Hillshire, Birill Long-Pipe, has let it be known that rich rewards await any brave party willing to take on the ogres residing in Hillfort. With the ogres tied up in Hillfort, Birill will use the opportunity to mount an assault on the orcs within the village, free from any retaliation from the ogres in the keep.

THIMBLE HAIRFOOT: HALFLING-OGRE

What no one in Hillshire suspects is that the ogre chief who suddenly appeared in their midst is in fact one of their own (as demonstrated by the fact that the chief had three halfling favorites; pipe-weed, ale, and pudding, confiscated and brought to the keep for his enjoyment). The Hillshireling in question, one Thimble Hairfoot, a disagreeable, nasty halfling cast out of Hillshire 20 years hence, has now returned under

a new guise.

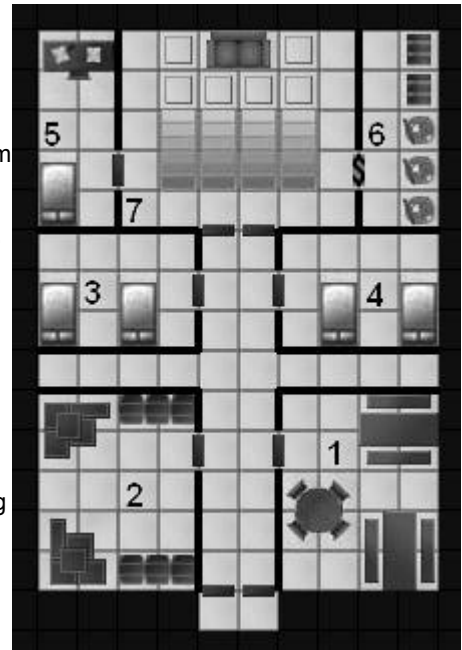
After having been cast out from the village for some offense, the unscrupulous Hairfoot took up with a band of unsavory adventurers. During his travels, Thimble acquired a magic pendant which polymorphed the halfling into an ogre.

With a new, powerful form and 20 years of accumulated hate for the community that cast him out, Thimble assembled a band of ogres and orcs and proceeded to dispense dark retribution upon the halfling community.

THE KEEP

The GM may place the ogre chief's 4 subordinates anywhere in rooms 1 through 4. The GM may have them wander room to room, or may decide to have the PCs encounter the ogres singly or in groups, depending on the party's strength. If the GM uses the ogres in multiple groups or in 4 singular encounters, remember that the sound of a battle being fought might very well alert and attract one group of ogres to another (1-3 on d6).

Room 1 (Mess Hall): This is where Thimble's ogres dine on whatever the patrolling orcs from the village bring. Chicken bones, mutton carcasses, and porcine leftovers, as well as small humanoid remains, are strewn across the room. Any ogre(s) found within this room will most likely be gorging on hapless halfling livestock (if not on hapless halflings). A single wooden door leads to this room from the west. Three tables take up most of the area, occupying half the room's surface which spans 50'X40'.



Room 2 (Storage): This 50'X40' room contains the pilfered pipe-weed, pudding, and ale that was brought from the village.

Rooms 3 & 4 (Sleeping Quarters): Each sleeping quarter spans 30'X40' and contain two bed-frames upon which foul-smelling, molding straw has been heaped to conform to ogreish preference. There will be a 1-2 on d6 chance that any ogres found here will be sleeping (in lazy ogre fashion).

Rooms 5 (Thimble's Sleeping Quarters): Thimble's sleeping quarters span 50'X20'. A bed is pressed against the south-western corner of the room, with a desk and

IN THE OGRE CHIEF'S GRASP

accompanying chair (massively reinforced to accommodate Thimble's polymorphed girth) resting along the northern wall. A search of the ogre-chief's bed will turn up a set of keys which open the chests found in Room 6. Searching the desk will turn up ink and quills, parchment paper, as well as Thimble's journal which will relate the polymorphed halfling's experiences since leaving Hillshire, his acquisition of the magic pendant and its powers, as well as his plans for revenge upon the community of Hillshire.

Room 6 (Treasure Room): A successful search for secret doors (1 on 1d6 or 1-2 on 1d6 for elves) will reveal the keep's hidden treasure room. Contained within are the ogres' hoarded treasures (equal to each ogre's XP value times 2 or 3, at the GM's discretion) all in a pile to the right. To the left of the treasure pile, two locked chests contain gold and valuables pilfered from the halflings of Hillshire (the GM should use his judgment as to the total amount. A minor magic item or two might also be included). The keys to unlock the chests can be found under the mattress in Room 5.

Room 7 (Audience Chamber): This room was used in times past as the Aradan nobleman's audience chamber. Here, the nobleman would receive halflings and aradanians who would come to call.

The room spans 50'X60', with a 20'X40' raised area at the northern end of the room upon which rests a throne-like chair. Wooden double doors lead into the room from the south, with a single wooden door within the audience chamber leading westwards. A secret door hidden within the eastern wall leads to the Treasure Room.

Upon the raised platform, sitting as best he can upon the human-sized chair, rests the ogre chief, long stemmed pipe clasped between huge, sharp teeth. A gargantuan club rests close at hand. Around his neck the mighty ogre wears a slightly shimmering blue pendant.

It should quickly become apparent to the players that this particular ogre is far more intelligent than his allied brethren. In fact, his mastery of the Common tongue, used to taunt the intruding party, is uncanny.

Should the party kill the ogre chief, they will witness his amazing transformation from mighty ogre to mundane halfling (see *Pendant of Polymorphing*, below).

THE AFTERMATH

The halflings, under the command of the Sheriff Birill Long-Pipe, and without the menace of ogreish retribution, will eventually overcome the orcish occupiers, sending those still standing back to the hills.

Great festivities will be held in the PC's honor with eating, drinking, dancing, and merry-making lasting late into the night.

The halflings swear oaths of friendship towards the party, who have thus acquired dependable allies.

ANTAGONISTS

Ogres (4): HD 4+1; hp 17, 22, 28, 30; AC 5[14]; Atk 1 weapon (1d10+1); Move 9; Save 13; CL/XP 4/120.

Thimble Hairfoot: HD 4+1; hp 33; AC 5[14]; Atk 1 weapon (1d10+1); Move 9; Save 13; CL/XP 4/120.

Note: the polymorphed halfling retains his intelligence even in ogre form. As such, Thimble should be played in a more intelligent and devious manner than his true-ogre allies.

SPOILS OF VICTORY

The party may keep the ogres' hoard from Room 6. What they do with the halflings' valuables, found within the chests in Room 6, is up to the players. Any reward bestowed upon the players for their aid with the ogres will come from these chests.

Pendant of Polymorphing: This pendant affects the wearer with a polymorph spell. The form the wearer assumes will be the original form of the last wearer. For example, anyone putting on the pendant after defeating Thimble will be polymorphed into a halfling.

Once put on, the pendant's chain will enlarge or retract enough to fit snugly around the wearer's neck, yet tight enough that it may not be removed. The chain is indestructible and impervious to harm. Only with the death of the wearer may the pendant be removed. The death of the wearer will also see him revert back to his true form. Players may discover the pendant's power by slipping it on (and being stuck with it) or by reading about it in Thimble's journal found in Room 5.