

Mini Mine Module

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Background

Geography

- **Blackwater**: human city to the south
- **Brethilien**: elven city to the south-east
- **Drakesbridge**: human city to the north
- **Faragroth**: dwarven city inside the mountain
- **New Salt**: town on the pass which goes over the mountain
- **Saltmine**: abandoned town on the old road which runs east of the mountain

Saltmine

Saltmine is a town built around a **salt mine**. The mine was **closed** when the seam of salt ran out, and a more salt-rich area was discovered on the other side of the mountain. The town of **New Salt** was founded there, and once the new mountain pass was constructed there was no reason for anyone to go to Saltmine at all. The town gradually **died**. Most of the houses are **abandoned** and overgrown with weeds, and only a few die-hard (or apathetic) residents remain.

The Gauntlet

A **thousand years ago**, during a long-forgotten **war** between the **elves** and the **dwarves**, a magical elven **gauntlet** fell into dwarven hands. The gauntlet was a complex semi-intelligent artefact. It granted great **magical power** to its wearer, but it worked only as long as that power was regularly **replenished** by elven mages in a magical **ritual**. Its makers intended for it to **die** if its power ever ran out—but the gauntlet was **intelligent** enough to know fear, and too afraid of death to die quietly.

Although the **dwarves** could not feed it more magic, having **none of their own** to give, it discovered that if it **tricked** them into performing a **perversion** of its original powering ritual it could **steal their very life-force** instead. Of course, this was a thin and weak power substitute, and it needed to kill many for even a modest magical effect, but it had many dwarves at hand and they were powerless to resist its magical influence.

It worked its way through a **series of wearer-avatars**, keeping them alive and unnaturally strong so that they would protect it, and leaving **entire mines dead** in its wake. The dwarves lacked the magical knowledge to defuse this danger, and they obviously didn't want to consult the elves. They did the only thing they could think of, which was to **pitch** it and its avatar deep into a **disused mine** and **drop an avalanche** on them both to seal it forever. They hoped that in time it would starve to death.

It lay in the mine for **centuries**—still worn by the crushed and decomposing corpse of its last dwarven avatar—in a state of deep **hibernation**, occasionally luring in and devouring an unfortunate bat or centipede. It has become **completely insane**.

Recently it sensed the approach of a more substantial meal—a **treasure hunter** who had been searching for a legendary **artefact of power** for decades, and her three useless sons. They broke into the old dwarven mine from the abandoned salt mine, and found the gauntlet on the avatar's skeleton—but it is **stuck in a narrow crevice**, and they

need a **small child** to crawl in and get it out. The three sons have already **suffered the effects** of the gauntlet's hunger—but it is grooming Klara to be its **new avatar**.

Plot

Inn

It is **early evening**. The inn is **small and dingy**. In the main area there are **three tables**—an **old man** is passed out on one, **four barflies** are playing cards at the second, and **Amethyst and Caladrin** have the third.

There is an **upper floor** where the rooms are—the **owner, Ned**, spends a lot of time upstairs cleaning the place. There is a door to a **kitchen** behind the bar—if the players go in there later, they will find a pot of **unappetizing brown goo** on the fire, burning slightly since it has been left unattended, as well as grubby wooden bowls and utensils. The kitchen is generally not very hygienic. Another door leads from the kitchen to the **back courtyard of the inn**.

Once the player characters have sat down at a table, a **young girl** will come and ask if they would like some stew. She is **Mairi**, the inn's only waitress, and **Ned's niece**. If the players are the slightest bit nice to her, she will offer to throw in a **dried sausage** if they don't tell her uncle.

The stew **never materialises**. If the players ask Ned about it, he will be first surprised, then annoyed, believing that Mairi has **nodded off somewhere** and neglected her duties. He will become **increasingly alarmed** as he **searches the inn** and is unable to find her, and become **distracted** when he looks out back and sees **signs of a struggle** and some **blood**.

Kidnapping

Out the back of the inn is a **tiny stable** (which contains **Flopsy**), a small **shed**, a **chopping block**, etc. all arranged around a small yard. The snow in the middle of the yard has been **disturbed**, and there are a few drops of **blood** on the ground. A careful search of the ground will produce a **human fingernail** which appears to have been torn off, and some tufts of **reddish hair**. The fingernail looks too big to be Mairi's, and her hair is blonde.

There are dried sausages and onions hanging in the shed.

Ned is **very upset** about Mairi's apparent abduction—although he hasn't been treating her very kindly, he **promised her mother** on her deathbed that he would look after her, and thinks that he has broken his promise. He will **offer the players anything**, including Flopsy, if they can find her and bring her back safely.

Flopsy seems more **spooked** than usual. If someone thinks of questioning the horse, one of the barflies will mention **Ithli**, the **village healer**, who is a druidess. There are rumours that she has elven blood.

One of the barflies is a redhead. Someone might also point out that **Klara**, a woman of the village, **disappeared** a few days ago together with her **three sons**. One of the sons was also a redhead. They were very reclusive, and nobody is sure exactly when they were last seen.

Ithli's house

Ithli is an **eccentric old druidess** who looks after elderly and diseased woodland creatures, and is what passes for the local wise woman and healer. She tends to give out **potions** that will give you a perky tail and a shiny coat.

She fell in love with a miner and married him decades ago, when the village was founded. She is **extremely old**—her hair is white and her skin is translucent, and she is not so much wrinkled as dessicated.

Her house **smells terrible** and is full of moulting, three-legged and geriatric **wild animals**. There are stacks of weird random odds and ends which reach the ceiling. The players may think she's a hoarder, but she actually has an encyclopaedic memory of what she has and it's all useful for *something*.

She may give the players **healing potions**, and answer questions about her **neighbours** across the road, who recently disappeared. She knows that they were **going to the mine**, ostensibly to harvest small amounts of salt for their **pickles**. She will hint that she believes them to be **conspirators** rather than victims, and suggest that their **house** should be **investigated**.

If Ithli **examines Flopsy**, she will tell the players that Mairi was snatched by a man who **smelled like dead things**.

Klara's house

Klara is a disreputable **treasure hunter** who has been in the village for decades trying to find a **legendary artefact** which would give her great power and possibly immortality. She settled down with a red-headed miner named "Red" Jervis (who has since died) and had **three sons**—Reg, Lor and Tev, who are now her useless henchmen.

In the cellar there is a **wall of pickles**. If the players look **behind the pickles**, they will find a **hidden room** which contains Klara's **research into the gauntlet**. There are **elven historical records** which list magical **artefacts lost in the war** a thousand years ago, some **maps of dwarven mines** and some maps of the local mine—observant players may **notice overlaps** in the natural features marked on the maps which suggest that the dwarven mines are somewhere near Saltmine.

The house can be **looted** for a variety of **common objects**. If the players haven't gone to see **Ithli**, they may now see her standing in the doorway of her house.

Dryad

As the players **camp** between the town and the mine (it is too difficult to continue the journey into the foothills of the mountain after dark), they will have **acorns thrown at them** by the **dryad** of a small, gnarled oak tree.

The dryad is as **gnarled** as the tree, and she is so old and so **withdrawn** from her humanoid life that she has almost **turned to wood** entirely. She is **upset** that her peace has been disturbed again—right after the **creature which used to be a man** rushed through there with its **tiny prisoner**.

She remembers "Red" Jervis and can make cryptic remarks about his relationship to the man-creature. She also **recognises the effects** of the curse as some twisted form of **elven magic**, probably left over from **the war** (which she personally remembers). She will **reproachfully instruct Caladrin** to do something about it.

Mine

The players need to find where the **entrance** to the old mine is. The **maps** will help, as will various **body parts** involuntarily dropped by Lor and **buttons** deliberately dropped by Mairi.

The mine consists of **three shafts**—the trail seems to lead into the **newest shaft**. As the players walk through the mine, they will see many **carvings** in the salt—statues of saints, lists of names and occasional vulgar graffiti. They can

piece together Klara's family connections from this if they haven't already.

A **rough hole** connects the end of the newest shaft to a **much older mine** beyond it, which is easily recognisable to Amethyst as an **ancient Dwarven structure**. The faint sound of **talking** will lead the players to a **large open chamber** which is half-filled by a **massive rockfall**. There is a large, prominent **gap** between two large rocks—deep inside it is the **crushed skeleton** of the last **dwarven avatar** (not visible from the outside). In front of the crack is **Klara, with her sons**.

Klara and her sons have already **willingly performed** the ritual which has put them under the gauntlet's control. The gauntlet has slowly been **draining life-force** from the three sons, mostly Lor (Mairi's kidnapper, who has bits falling off him), but has left Klara **untouched** because it is grooming her to be its **new avatar**. It has **lied** to Klara about her sons' affliction, convincing her that her sons are being made ill by **wards** left around it by the dwarves, and that it will **fix them** as soon as it is free.

As the players arrive, Klara is trying to **persuade Mairi** to climb into the crack and **fetch her the gauntlet**. Mairi has been **slapped around** a bit and all her buttons are missing, but she is otherwise unharmed. If a fight breaks out, which is very likely, Mairi will probably **duck into the crack**, where she knows nobody can reach her, and hide.

The gauntlet can **affect** anyone that it has persuaded into performing the **powering ritual**, as long as they remain **within its range** (about 50 metres). The gauntlet can choose whether to **empower** them or **harm** them. Its current chosen avatar is **Klara**, and it will **boost** her health and strength at the cost of harming and even killing anyone else under its control. Its primary motivation, however, is to have someone put it on and **get out of the mine**, so if it looks like Klara can no longer do that it will **pick an avatar who can**: probably either Mairi or Odric, who are the only people present small enough to get into the crack.

While the gauntlet isn't being worn by anyone, it manifests as a **quiet voice** in the minds of the people it's trying to affect. If someone puts it on, it will completely **take over** their body and speak through them. It will probably also transform them into **something inhuman**, with razor-sharp claws and teeth that it can use in self-defence.

The gauntlet is **completely mad**, but it can be **tricked** into getting into a weak position. It fantasizes about getting back to its **creators**, the elves, and getting some **proper magic to eat** again. Of course once it's there it plans to wreak a **terrible revenge** to repay them for what it perceives as their cruelty—but it will lie and say that it wants nothing more than to be their loyal tool as it once was.

Amethyst's **drill bit** can potentially be used to **damage or destroy** the gauntlet, but it may be damaged or destroyed itself in the process. If Caladrin **refuels** the gauntlet with magic, it may temporarily be sated enough to stop feeding on people. Then again, it may use this power to transform its avatar into something even worse.

Caladrin's **terrible dulcimer playing** can confuse the gauntlet long enough for people to get away from it.

What the players do is up to them—they can attempt to **destroy** the gauntlet, kill the villains and **seal the mine back up**, or try to **deliver** the gauntlet to the elves. Anything which involves spending a lot of time around the gauntlet is potentially very hazardous.

Gauntlet stats

- **Magical persuasion** (d8): if the gauntlet succeeds at a **contested check** against a victim's **innate magical ability** (as a dwarf, Amethyst is particularly vulnerable) it persuades the victim to **start chanting** the ritual words which will put them in its power. It takes some time to complete the ritual, so other characters should have the opportunity to disrupt it.
- Anyone who **physically touches** the gauntlet with bare skin **automatically** falls under its sway without being given the opportunity to resist. This means that if it gets itself onto a mobile avatar it can wreak havoc by running around and grabbing people.
- **Mind control** (d10): the gauntlet can attempt to **give a simple command** to anyone **under its control** (e.g. *put me on or kill that elf*).
- **Power transfer** (d10): the gauntlet can attempt to **drain one die level of health** from anyone **under its control** and either **devour** it or **transfer** it to another person under its control (thereby **boosting their health**, giving them **sharp claws**, etc.).
- Since nobody other than the gauntlet knows how to break the powering ritual, the only way to get someone out of the gauntlet's power is to get them **far enough away from it** (about 50 metres).

Supporting villain stats

- Klara has a **crossbow** (d8) with **four bolts**, a **short sword** (d10) and a **dagger** (d10). Her current **health** is average (d12).
- Lor (the red-headed kidnapper) has a **pickaxe** (d12). His current **health** is terrible (d30). Bits are visibly falling off him.
- Reg has a **shortsword** (d12). His current **health** is below average (d20).
- Tev has a **club** (d20). His current **health** is average (d12).

Coda

The old mine is potentially an **interesting historical attraction** which may revitalise the town—assuming the threat of the gauntlet is removed.

If the players succeed in returning Mairi safely to Ned, Caladrin will **receive Flopsy** and be able to deliver his message.

If the gauntlet is destroyed, Tasha and Odric will gain **brief fame and respectability**, even outside Saltmine, and will be able to choose between many job offers while it lasts. If the drill bit is destroyed in the process, the elves will of course **reimburse Amethyst** with much gratitude.

If the players opt for a **strategic withdrawal**, and Amethyst and Caladrin either report the situation to their superiors openly or reveal that they know something about it through incautious historical research, they will draw the attention of their respective nations' intelligence services. Some serious dwarves with neatly trimmed beards and some serious elves who are really good at combat magic have been tracking threats like this for centuries. Amethyst and Caladrin will find themselves forcibly retired from their old jobs, and drafted into new ones.