



THE HAVENMINE GAUNTLET

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Situated in a high butte near the bend of a river canyon, Havenmine, named for the predicted security of its lofty location, is anything but safe. A few years ago, when chasing a vein of garnets and other precious gemstones, a house of diligent small folk and a tribe of ambitious kobolds met in a most awkward of situations.

The jewel-hungry gnomes, led by Tramblin Kotterstoke and his four sons, began prospecting and excavating shafts into the south side of the butte over 40 years ago, having no idea that the Bloodstone Clan had a network of tunnels and lairs threaded throughout the north side of the massive cliff structure. The kobolds for that matter went on breeding and growing unawares that their vein of garnets were being harvested only a few hundred feet past their tunnels.

Eight years ago, after each community pulled a wealth of bright red jewels from the earth, the gnomes found that the vein was not depleting, but rather becoming richer and denser. King Rendleklept, leader of the Bloodstone Clan (only newly crowned in a short but bloody coup against his father), urged the tribe into mining faster and deeper to chase the same discovery, as it appeared they were approaching the heart of this wealth.

The report came down the tunnels early one day that it sounded like something else was picking and scratching at the rock beyond the end of the new shaft cutting into the heart of the butte. Kotterstoke sent down a protection team and his best engineer and first son, Preddleton. Rendleklept also received word of strange noises in the Heart Shaft and sent a raiding party fortified by his two best sorcerers.

As the digging halted on both sides, the respective gatherings of cautious small humanoids waited. The gnomes, armed and ready to defend their treasure from the frightening creatures that lurk below ground, waited to hear further sounds from behind the rock. The kobolds, fearful of the large creatures below seeking to feed upon them, stood defiantly in defense of their mine and warrens.

After two days, with sentries posted around the clock, House Kotterstoke was about to pick their tools up and proceed when an impatient King Rendleklept took from his meager armory a treasure that had been handed down from king to king in the Bloodstone clan - the Scepter of Stone, a rod that could control the stone itself.

The king, frothing with an inflated sense of self, led four of his sorcerers and all of his best warriors to the end of the Heart Shaft bearing the treasured rod. When his clan was ready, he opened the shaft, peeling back the stone in a wave of magic. The gnomes, caught unaware, met a scattering of crossbow bolts and magical attacks. Not weak in their own right, the gnomes quickly retaliated with an onslaught of dazzling illusions and volleys of bolts from their own trusty crossbows.

The battle for the Heart Shaft lasted three days. Both groups, though small in stature, fought with bloody determination to clear the butte of each other. The gnomes fell back into their territory. Hours later, after fighting back wave after wave of kobolds, the gnomes were safe enough to make a desperate push to reclaim more of the mine. These events repeated and the long give-and-take battle left both sides depleted and broken. On the third day, after each side lost their leaders, they called a stalemate. Preddleton Kotterstoke replaced his father as head of the House, and Glitkrenklet the cruelest and most powerful sorcerer among the Bloodstone clan claimed Rendleklept's crown with little opposition. Both the gnomes and kobolds began to fortify their halves of the Heart Shaft, carving the stone to fit their guerrilla needs, the series of traps and chokepoints known as the Havenmine Gauntlet.

It is not difficult for heroes to gain access to the Gauntlet from the gnomish side of the complex. House Kotterstoke allows adventurers to enter, free of charge, the neutral ground, the part of the tunnel where the initial breach occurred. They consider heroes a good way to help keep the number of kobolds in check.

Area Details

Outside of the gnomish defenses, the Gauntlet takes on a rough look, being hastily carved from the pale grey rhyolite that forms the butte, a volcanic stone similar in composition to granite. The walls of the Gauntlet shine with flecks of obsidian and garnets. The ceilings reach up barely over six feet in the neutral ground then open up to barely eight feet, unless noted otherwise. The doors in the Gauntlet vary between simple wooden doors to steel reinforced variations. All doors are unlocked unless otherwise noted. Any room in the Gauntlet promises a chance of ambush by warriors of the Bloodstone Clan.

AREA 1: NEUTRAL GROUND

This cramped rough-hewn mineshaft sparkles with flecks of precious stone. In the center of the shaft, the rock looks as if it were soft wax molded into an open portal. Past that, a small steel reinforced door stands alone on a rocky wall where the floor lies scattered with rubble and broken glass. Slanderous racial graffiti covers the walls in hasty scrawls.

Less a neutral ground and more a no man's land, both sides of this conflict realized the draw on resources guarding this room created, thus they chose to put their trust into their traps and defenses. The gnomes have experience with this room and tell the adventurers how to bypass the trap safely. They offer to provide a cloud of smoke or a bright light to hide the group's presence and dazzle the kobolds while two of the members of the party simultaneously reach into hidden holes and free a latch. A third member of the group must stand ready to shove the small door open. Sadly, the gnomes cannot help the party with any further details. As they tell it, the kobolds are obsessive with making new and better traps, that they change the traps and rooms of the Gauntlet on a whim.

AREA 2: THE MASON'S SURPRISE

A fetid burst of stale decay hits the adventurers as the door opens revealing a low wall in the center of this long, narrow passage. Bricks and mortar cover the walls, ceiling and floor breaking the theme of natural stone in these caverns. The barricade, which looks to be organic, stands in a towering lump nearly four feet tall. Closer inspection reveals the composition of the wall to be desiccated gnome corpses. Four pairs of wooden columns run the length of this part of the gauntlet each decorated with at least one husk of a gnome hanging with frayed rope from the narrow pillars. A low wide door waits at the far end of the room.

After the initial battle and the successive raids, bodies started piling up. The kobolds burned their fallen warriors as tradition required, but they kept the gnome bodies in order to strike fear and stoke disgust in their enemies. At one point in the battle, this room came to be a chokepoint. As the corpses accumulated, the kobolds continued to stack them to use as cover. The tiny scaly creatures viciously fired volleys of cross-bow bolts, one after another, from behind these piles of enemy bodies, thus adding to their defenses. Eventually they bisected the room with a growing mound of gnomes in various stages of decay. The carcass barrier contains cubbyholes, carved into the fleshy muck, from which the kobolds fire upon intruders. Glitkrenklet stations this room with guards ready to signal the tribe of an impending attack.

The snipers and the barrier of rotting flesh are the least of the adventurer's worries. If the barrier is disturbed at any point or more than 75 pounds of weight is concentrated in any point adjacent the wall, the floor and ceiling collapses, dropping the adventurers into a five foot deep pit and raining masonry down upon them. In addition to the abuse from dropping into difficult terrain and being pelted with stones, a number of animated gnome zombies fall from a sealed compartment above, within range, and hungrily attack.

AREA 3: TILT AND WHIRL

Piled in random heaps, stone that once made up this portion of the butte lays strewn across the passage floor. The chunks of scattered stone could have fallen from above as the ceiling of this chamber hides in the darkness above. The walls of the chamber are marked with deep grooves arranged in a periodic pattern. Miners might recognize this feature as being pilot holes used to perforate the rock for easier extraction. A low squat steel door stares across from the opposite of the passage.

The rubble imposes slower movement in the room and anyone digging deep enough within the gravel finds a grid of ropes on the true floor of the room. Anyone stepping in the square directly in front of the exit door triggers the first stage of this dangerous trap. Two huge nets cover the floor in this passage and thick ropes, like hand lines in casting nets, run up the grooves in the walls, gathering to a single strand in the darkness 30 feet overhead. Winches in the ceiling draw the catch 60 feet up to a hole cored specifically to

house the rope. Stored tension in the ropes causes the nets to spin as they rise.

While entangled in the nets the victims are bludgeoned by the medium-sized stones, while the smaller rocks and slivers drop through the gaps in the mesh. To add insult to injury, long spears are set into the ceiling, waiting to skewer the captured intruders.

AREA 4: WILL YOU WALK INTO MY PARLOR?

Similar to the last chamber, this 20-foot by 40-foot room is a field of gravel with a low imposing ceiling. The roof of the passage is eight feet near the doors, dipping down to barely six feet in the center. The rough walls on the sides of the chamber clash with the decently finished and polished wall at the far end that frames a shining steel door crudely hammered with an imprint of a ferocious dragon.

The gravel conceals an enormous web covering the entire floor. The central 20 feet of this chamber is a 20-foot deep circular pit housing a large monstrous spider and her newly hatched brood. Characters breaking the membrane of web covering the pit fall 10 feet into a well-strung web, alerting the ravenous mother and her skittering children. Ten feet below the sticky snare, the rocky floor bristles with narrow steel blades. Attempting to break or burn the web drops the captured adventurers onto the prickly floor. The spiders, having feasted from many victims off the floor, anticipate the web snapping and viciously attack their prey to cause them to wriggle around enough to break the web. The mother easily jumps to safety while her brood drops to the ground with the adventurers, unharmed by the jutting blades.

The door at the far end of the chamber stands locked and has two keyholes fitted into the eyes of the rampant dragon. While crude, the rendition would be noticeable to those well versed in dragon lore as a blue dragon. The keyhole on the left disables the shocking trap placed on this steel door while the keyhole on the right unlocks it.





AREA 5: SHOCK UNSEEN

The door to this 20-foot square chamber opens to reveal a clean and polished room. Thin ribbons of copper form a grid on every surface. A small, nearly unnoticeable puddle lies at the foot of the steel door at the other end.

Gritklenklet demanded his sorcerers and engineers collaborate in the making of deviously experimental traps. The tribal king is most interested in how things play out here, as this chamber has rarely seen visitors since its creation.

The room has a permanent invisibility effect on all living creatures that enter the chamber. Stepping over the threshold of the room causes the character to wink out of sight. Unknown to the party, three bound shocker lizards occupy the room. The kobold sorcerers enchanted this room to cut off silent, visual communication and hand signals used by the stealthy gnomish raiders. It also serves to distract larger groups, allowing

the lizards to discharge dangerous bursts of electricity. Creatures entering this chamber, constantly in contact with the copper grid, are subject to their lethal shock ability.

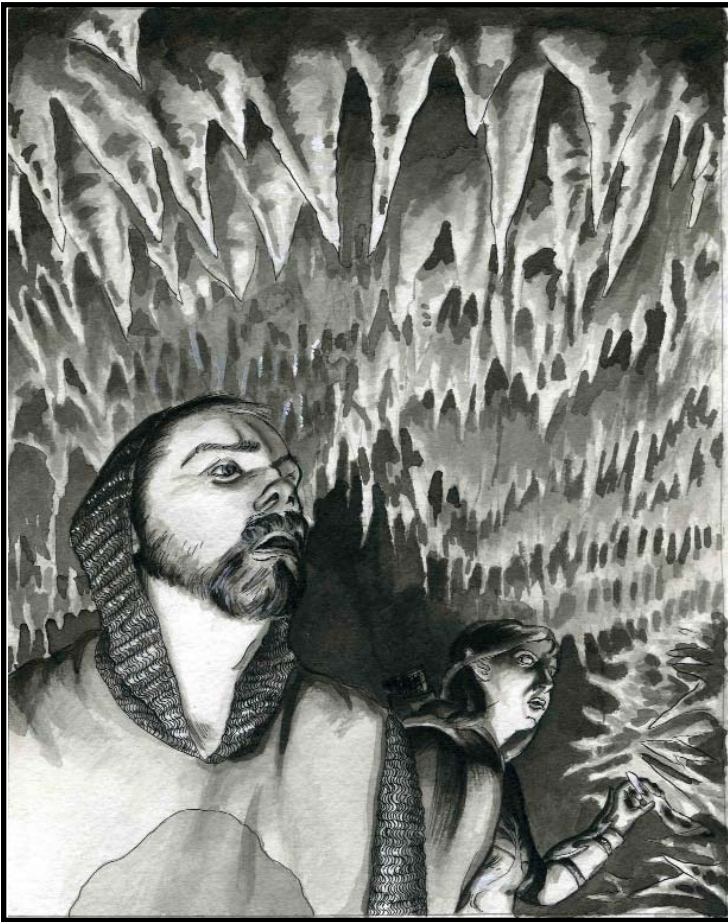
The door on the opposite side of the room sits flush with the wall and does not appear to have a handle, lock or hinges. Cold to the touch and lightly covered in frost, this steel panel, sealed with ice on the others side, will not budge with casual shoves and must be forced open.

AREA 6: COLD BLOWS THE WIND

Cracking the steel panel from the icy sheath of the neighboring room, the rime-coated plate seems hinged on the inside and scrapes loudly against the glacial features of the twisted passage. Jutting icicles reach forth from every wall like gnashing teeth. The floor is smooth and slick with ice and a constant wind chills one to the bone.

Barricades of razor-sharp ice reach from the former mineshaft creating a winding maze toward the exit door. Movement through this passage is perilous and slow to avoid losing one's balance and falling to the frozen ground. The spiky icicle-covered walls snag and slash adventurers moving past them too quickly. The air in this tunnel is frightfully cold and adventurers moving through it are subject to damaging cold and frostbite. Any creature reaching the center of the maze triggers a trap subjecting all within the passage to a violent gust of wind. This wind blasts in short gales every round, pushing characters backwards into and scrambling across the razor-sharp icicles until the tunnel is clear of living creatures.

The steel panel at the end of the tunnel, crusted with ice like the entrance, forgivingly has a ring firmly planted in the center. The frosty metal seal still requires a strong pull to break it free of the clinging ice.



AREA 7: KEYHOLE

Entering this wide chamber alleviates any lingering bouts of claustrophobia. The room opens up into an inverted wedge, widening to 30 feet at the far wall, featuring a large steel-reinforced door in the center depicting a rampant dragon. Eight keyholes hide in the grooves and curves of the image. The floor of the chamber rises up in two concentric tiers barely two feet high at the center. Above the central dais hangs a tangle of chains each holding a ring of mismatched keys. The ceiling is higher in this room than any other place in the Gauntlet, reaching up twenty feet.

Gritklenkret's sorcerers poured most of their thought and energy into this chamber, so much that the aura of magic is almost palpable. The sanctum serves as a last point of resistance and the kobold sorcerers had ample time to enchant the place. It holds great dangers and perhaps more complexity than is needed.

Stepping into the room triggers three puffs of harmless smoke, enough to create a light haze in the room. Moving inside the rapidly clearing fog, three figures are visible: one imposing figure in the center, with two flanking him in the back of the room. These combatants are brutish kobolds standing head and shoulders taller than a typical specimen. They crackle with flashing sparks and hiss menacingly at the intruders, but stand their ground. These impressive kobolds are merely illusions baiting the adventurers into the chamber.

When a character takes a step onto the central dais, the outer ring rises to the ceiling, effectively sealing the room shut. The outer ring stays in its raised position for two minutes before lowering on its own accord. Pulling the appropriate chain lowers the barrier prematurely; however, pulling the incorrect chain rains darts upon the trapped character.

When the dais drops again, the two remaining combatants continue to goad the adventurers into battle. The kobold sorcerers did not think their plan fully through, as a trapped character can easily recognize the brutish kobolds as illusions. Stepping off the dais in the center causes the outer ring to drop to a 20-foot pit. After two minutes, the ring returns to its original position. Again, pulling the appropriate chain resets the chamber. Choosing the incorrect chain riddles the room with darts.

Four different locks bolt shut the door in the back of the chamber, and each is keyed to a number of dangerous magical effects. Bypassing the locks requires choosing the appropriate key dangling from the chains in the center of the room. Using the wrong key or failing a skillful attempt at evading the lock triggers one of the effects. One failed attempt sets off a gout of blistering flame while another summons an acidic cloud. After solving all four locks, the door opens on its own. On the other side the tunnels belonging to the kobolds await.

ADVENTURE IDEAS

The Havenmine Gauntlet can be easily placed at the front door of any dungeon; however, some Game Masters might want to use this adventure location as a quick diversion for an abbreviated gaming session. The following suggestions provide motivation for characters to run the Gauntlet.

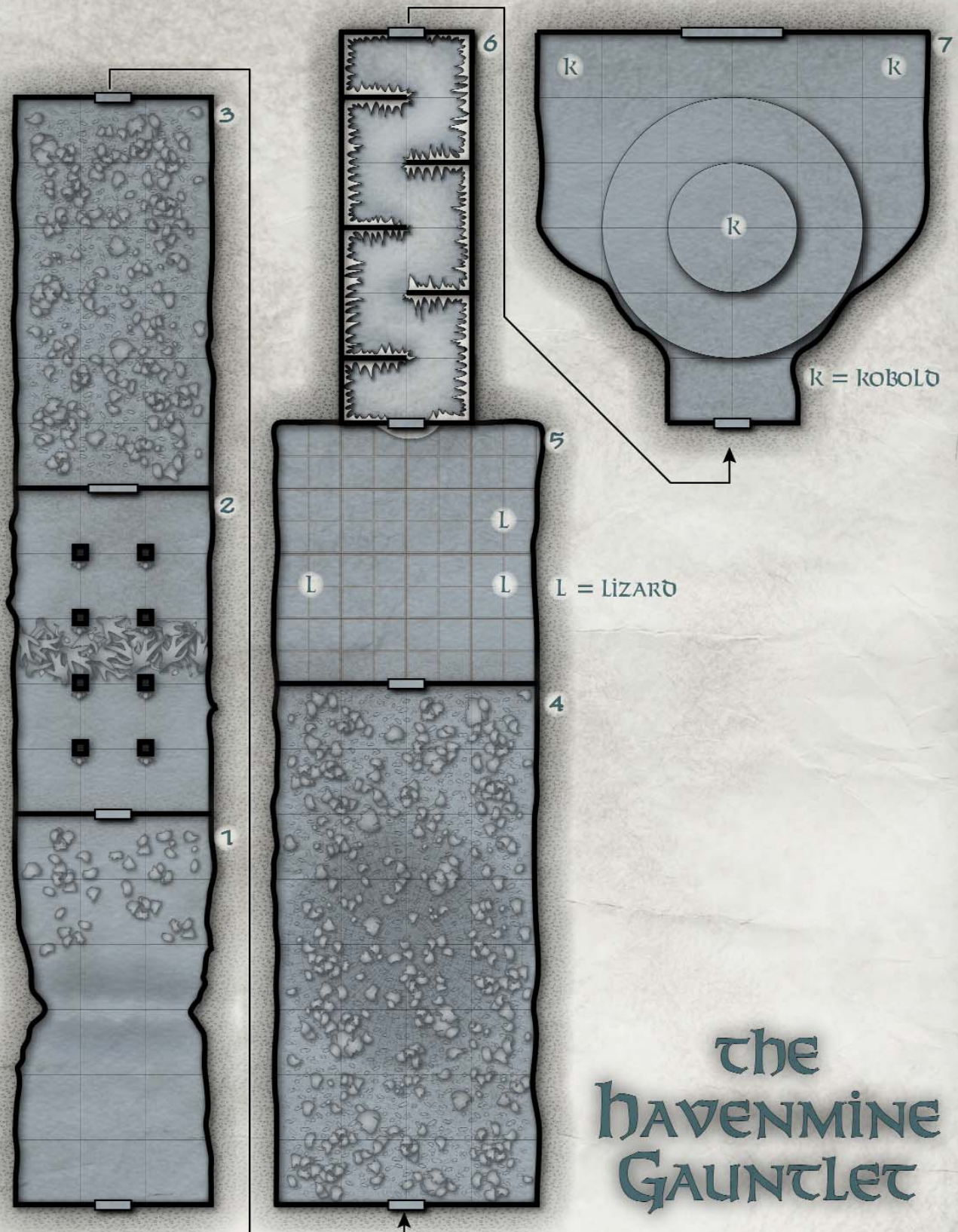
Having sat at an impasse for months, the gnomes seek mercenaries to aid them in taking the Gauntlet. Fueled not only by their desire to harvest the garnets in the Heart Shaft, the gnomes also seek to end their bloody and resource-draining siege. Preddleton Kotterstoke sends emissaries out into the neighboring communities in search of able-bodied adventurers. Preddleton advised his representatives to keep an eye out for dwarves as they know the terrain better and will have an easier time maneuvering the cramped passages.

Months ago when the gnomes had more of an advantage and held territory now claimed by the kobolds, Kembra Hodgemp lost a valuable heirloom while building up defenses. While constructing a protective wall, the laborers suffered a devastating raid. Forced into a hasty retreat, Kembra dropped her enchanted rock hammer into a deep pit and fears the kobolds discovered the tool. Recent infiltrators have remarked on the superior artisanship found behind the neutral zone.

A kobold raiding party, aided by two of Gritklenkret's sorcerers, managed to snatch Finkin Piltwiss, Preddleton's superintendent. Without him construction on newer defenses slowed to a crawl. The laborers continue to work, but the plans for the new protections rest in Finkin's head alone, as the clever gnome destroyed the prints during the raid. Preddleton is most interested in getting his friend back to work in one piece, provided he is still alive.

DOMAINS OF ADVENTURE: HAVENMINE GAUNTLET

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