

The Abandoned Mine

By Hogan

Background:

While traveling through a minor mining community, the party is at the local inn approached by a young halfling who offers to sell them the deed on a “highly industrious mine” in the nearby hills. Soon it will come for the day that the mine is actually long abandoned and apparently haunted by a gruesome spectre. Actually the spectre is the work of a minor mage, which uses it to scare away passers-by while his friends works the mine, excavating the gold from a mine which they don't have any rights to.

The mine:

The old mine was abandoned almost 40 years ago when the old solitary gold digger who owned it, died. His distant relatives who came to own the mine, didn't want to continue mining but didn't want to sell either, so the mine fell into disrepair and was almost forgotten. 10 years ago the family fell short of money and sold the mine. The deed passed then through several hands over the years. Most of the owners never even came near the mine before they sold it of. In the end it became the property of a halfling who decided to seek it out to see what it was worth.

The mine is located about two days travel from the mining community of Far Hills. It's a small mine, originally only mined by a few miners at any time, but could give a medium output in raw gold. The entrance to the mine is situated in a cliff face and a single shaft goes about 210 feet into the mountain, before expanding into a larger cave at about 30 x 60 feet where the major excavating took place. A smaller cave is located just next to the large one, this one was intended for storage area for supplies and raw ore, plus as a resting area for workers under the digging.

Just outside the mine, about 30 yards away from the entrance, lies a small cabin originally used by the miners. It contains nothing much, a small oven, a few cupboards with a few rusty common items in it, a table, a few chairs and an old dry lantern hanging from the roof. Two bunker beds allow room for 4 sleepers. On a small table next to the beds lies a couple of old candles and a tinderbox. Old moldy skins adorn the walls and the floors, and the stuffed head of moose sits on the wall opposite the door. A single window in the cabin gives a view at the mining entrance. The whole cabin is not more than 25x15 feet and is of sturdy make, though it's old and dusty.

The “Haunting”:

When the young mage Yildrim Berghost stumbled upon the mine a few years back, he came up with the idea of mining it in secret and scare people away using a magical item, the *Wand of Ghostly Haunting*, which came into his possession after the death of his master. He returned with a couple of friends and took up residence in the mine and started turning out quite a profit, though it was hard labor. They are planning to go on for a couple of years more, and then withdraw with the loot.

While his friends work in the mine, Yildrim waits at the entrance to spot those who get too close to the mine. If he has to rest or tend to a call of nature, another will take the watch while he is unavailable, but his only job is to take on passers-by, and he has scared away many potential miners and curious foresters.

To give the best effect as a scaring ghost, Yildrim will be dressed in flowing white robes and painted with flour in the head. A treatment with a little paint made from luminous fungus, will make him glow slightly in the darkness.

If somebody approaches, he will try to scare them away by first using the minor powers of his Rod, then retorting to the more powerful if it doesn't work. He will try to avoid killing, but if nothing else works, he has no qualms about doing so, though he prefers the power of his wand to do the trick for him. He will resort to his own magic if he cannot use the wand for that particular job.

If visitors take up residence in the cabin, Yildrim has prepared a small hollow beneath the floor planks, in order to spy on the visitors and better affect them with the powers of the wand. The entrance to the hollow lies at the cabin's back.

The Plot:

The halfling who approaches the party is the young and adventurous Hardy Goodback, He will act innocent and sincere, claiming that he won the mine at gambling (actually the truth!), but due to a bad back he cannot mine it himself. If pressed he will admit that he won't go near the mine because it's haunted, and he has seen the gruesome spectre himself. It made him quiver with fear and run away as fast as he could, vowing never to return. Therefore he will offer them the mine for a price of 3000 gold pieces, just to get rid of it.

A few questions around the city should reveal that there really are a mine, though it has been unused for quite some time. A visit to the local land register office can tell that the deed is a genuine one. Various old diggers can, if bribed with for example drinks and the right questions, tell about the old haunted mine in the hills. Some have approached it all has fled in terror when they faced a ghostly moaning spectre! Some has never returned! Due to fear and suspiciousness, nobody will tell the characters exactly where the mine lies, unless they can prove their legal right to it.

Tracking towards the mine in order to inspect it, the party will arrive two days later at nightfall. If they camp in the cabin, waiting to inspect the mine in daylight, Yildrim will hide in the hollow beneath the cabin, using the wand to scare them away. If it doesn't work, he will finally resort to the wand's strongest power, letting skeleton hands appear from the floor to force the party to flee or kill them if necessary. If this doesn't work either, he redraws to the mine. When the party enters the mine, no matter what time of the day, Yildrim will first extinguish any light sources with his wand, then show himself moaning and groaning and using the wand's *Fear* power on the party, making them believe him to be a Ghost (why don't that damn turning work on that spectre!?). If they manage to resist the fear and attack him, he will flee back to the cave and his friends. They will hide in the storage cave and ambush the party when they arrive, showing no mercy.

The Conclusion:

If the party manages to defeat the haunters, they are now the proud owners of a ghost free mine, ready for work. The smaller cave contains the accumulated wealth of the haunters (see "Treasure Trove" below), together with their sleeping mats and a few personal belongings.

What the party wants to do now is up to themselves. They could decide to sell the mine, which could give turn out to give quite a good price now that they can prove that it is no longer haunted and even yields an average output of gold. They could also decide to hire a few trusty men to work the mine while they continue adventuring, or even (though not that realistic) decide to mine it themselves!

The mine could prove to be quite profitable, yielding ore up to perhaps 8000 gp a year. What the party decides to do about salary to workers, protection, food and transport is a matter left to be handled between them and the DM. But a miner's life is never secure. UMBER Hulks can bust through the walls, Orcs attack the workers, bandits ambush the ore-caravan on route to the city, and what happens if the miners hit a tunnel leading down into Underdark? Plenty of ideas to form the base for future adventures.

Notes:

Yildrim Berghost

4th level mage (CN)

15 HP, Thac0 19, AC 9

STR 10, DEX 14, CON 15, INT 14, WIS 12, CHA 11

Spells:

(1st level) *Invisibility**, *Sleep**, *Cantrip*, *Armor*, *Message**, *Wall of Fog*, *Alarm*

(2nd level) *Flaming Sphere*, *Detect Invisibility*, *Forget*, *Stinking Cloud**, *Darkness 15' Radius**

Those spells marked with an * are those he is most likely to have memorized.

Equipment:

Wand of Ghostly Haunting (see below), *Potion of Ventriloquism*

Bronze ring (10gp), Silver necklace (56 gp)

The diggers (5):

5th level Thieves (NE)

24 HP, Thac0 18, AC 7

Equipment:

Picks, Leather armor

Treasure Trove

400 gp, 500 sp, 20 gems ranging from 50-500 gp

8 sacks of gold ore worth about 1200 gp back in town. Double that if melted before sold.

Wand of Ghostly Haunting

The unique Wand of Ghostly Haunting was created to make effects that will make an area seem to be haunted.

Originally used by a secluded wizard who wanted to keep people away from his mountain hideout the wand disappeared at his dead and is largely presumed to be in the possession of his scheming apprentice. What he can be up to now with the wand in his hands to use as he please, is not known.

The wand is able to create the following spell-like effects:

Audible Glamer (1st level)

Dancing Lights (1st level)

Spectral Hand (2nd level)

Whispering Wind (2nd level)

Gust of Wind (3rd level)

Spectral Force (3rd level)*

Fear (4th level)

Evard's Black Tentacles (4th level)**

* Can only be used for creating ghostly transparent characters, but complete with moaning, dangling chains and whatever spooky effect the user can come up with!

** The effect of this spell has been altered to cause glowing bony hands to erupt from the floor instead of the standard tentacles, though the hands are still as dangerous as the tentacles.

One effect can be activated each round, but only one of each can be controlled at any given moment. Hence it is not possible to have two *Audible Glamers* or two *Evard's Black Tentacles* at work at the same time.

All spells are cast at 7th level of ability. The wand is rechargeable, and the effects cost a number of slots equal to their spell levels.