

Gruvrå's Mine

Hidden away in one of the denser mountain regions on the western side of the great southwestern Serkbergen peninsula of Peredur, is a curious valley of lakes, rivers and unusual realms. While apparently devoid of most humanoid habitation now, seemingly this was not always so, as the odd formerly-occupied cave, ruin and tower can be found still in the area. Around the lakes and cascades is a substantial region of very tall, spire-like mountains. One of the lower peaks among these, on the southwestern edge next to a gigantic natural rock arch, contains the cave entrance to this former mine, on its lower northeastern slopes.

The general location is a cold, often dark, one, as it lies well within Nibirum's Antarctic Circle, around 71 degrees South latitude. Conversely, in the short summers, the Sun never sets, so it is always light outside then. Consequently, the mine Entrance is not always accessible, being commonly blocked by snow and ice during the long winter dark. As it faces northeast though, it has a good chance of clearing in any warmer, sunnier weather. The higher mountains nearby are snow-capped year-round, although the summit spires like this peak are mostly too steep to allow much snow and ice to settle for long there.

Initially, the Entrance cave is about 9 feet high (2.7 metres), lowering quickly once within to between 5 and 6 ft (1.5 to 1.8 m), a ceiling level that persists throughout much of both Old and New Mines, except in the two larger Old Mine caverns and the more open one in New Mine (the one into which runs the blocked Hidden Passage off its northwestern side). These three are partly natural caves, whose ceilings in places reach up to 9 or 10 ft (2.7 to 3 m). Most surfaces throughout the caves, and especially their connecting tunnels, show evidence of having been worked by tools in the past. Those familiar will recognise these marks as typical of Dwarf work. Rubble on the floors is partly old mining debris, partly later collapses. The Old Mine section is generally safe from worse falls than the minor ones suggested by the map at least. It may seem odd there are no signs the caves here have ever been used by local wildlife, however.

Towards the southwest end of the longer, inner, Old Mine cavern, the passages linking with New Mine are clearly less secure. The more northeasterly of the pair is partly blocked by a heavy rubble fall at its entrance, and could only be crawled through by any except the smallest humanoids, unless further cleared. Where this passage opens out and turns sharply southwest, the breakthrough into the Cells room is almost totally blocked by rubble, as are those passages further south into the other squared-off rooms and corridors of and extending from the Old Laboratory and Workshop part of this small complex.

All the passageways in New Mine do seem notably younger than those in Old Mine. Some hint that they were once cut into flat faces in a few areas, like the prepared walls to the north and south ends of these caves. Now though, all areas across New Mine are generally unstable and liable to fresh falls and collapses if loud sounds or violent actions, such as from offensive spells, occur here. The Hidden Passage can be neither found nor accessed by anyone other than Gruvrå Igrid (see below on her).

The surviving more regular parts of the Mine, and those now largely lost to the subsequent "remodelling" of the New Mine caves more recently, were created by a group of humanoid experimenters, tinkers and inventors, who found, took over, redeveloped and reused this isolated Mine at some point after the original Dwarf miners had departed. They created a secret research complex where they intended to create a "better" kind of Golem, using magics, alchemy, technology and, far more disturbingly, body parts from captive humanoids kept locked in the Cells room. Among the room debris in the Old Laboratory and Old Workshop especially can be found shattered fragments of what were once elaborate mechanical, magical and alchemical contrivances designed to assist with this whole process. Behind the stone-doored cupboard off the Laboratory are a few pieces of unharmed and unused equipment, such as alchemical glassworks and components, including some in the large chest, and a selection of old clothes of various styles and sizes in the sack, these latter showing signs of having been cut from their wearers. There is also an empty, large, iron-maiden-like, standing metal framework, designed apparently to help hold together various pieces of an oversized humanoid Golem form.

A very large, solid stone workbench is more or less intact still, fully attached to the floor at the southwest end of the Old Workshop. This bench may also have been an altar and/or an operating table simultaneously, as it has linear designs incised into its upper surface, much as the drawing on the map shows. This object has some surface damage, probably where stone fragments shattered during the collapse of the cave entrance in the northern northwest wall here struck it. The wooden connecting door between the Laboratory and Workshop shows signs of such minor scarring too (on both sides), although it remains fully functional as a door.

The small room off the southeast wall of the Workshop, sealed by a stone door, contains the last surviving product of the experiments here, a still-living Golem, if one currently inactive. It is a tall, chunky humanoid, constructed mostly from Human body parts, so far as these can be identified, with the head of a Snow Leopardfolk humanoid (white fur with black markings; this is a known humanoid folk from these parts). To this head have been grafted a pair of sharp, straight unicorn horns. The Golem's flesh is studded with magically-attached precious gems, some of which form the focal points for several intricate, colourful tattoos. When active, aside from being very strong, powerful, and almost indestructible, the Golem also has a muscular tendril attached under its tongue, which it can expand and use as a third hand.

Extending northwest from the Old Workshop are two narrow, rectangular areas, one a little wider than the other, linked by an intact wooden door. Both have more badly-broken furniture scraps among their stone rubble, although neither seems to have an obvious function other than as corridors.

In the Cells room, all of which barred cells are still securely locked shut, are eight humanoid occupants, one per cell. Three have been reduced to skeletons, two lie on the floor as still-fleshed corpses, one is manacled to the back wall of its cell, and the final two are fully mobile physical undead creatures. Depending on the GM's requirements, up to all of these could be undead. Quite how they became so is entirely unclear. Some have missing limbs, various small features grafted onto them, or tattoos like that on the last Golem in the Old Workshop, again much as the GM may prefer. They have been trapped here since the research complex was abandoned, and their primary motivation is the destruction of those who imprisoned them here ages earlier. Their ability to recognise such folk now is, at best, shaky, so anyone looking a bit like an inventor, alchemist, doctor, magician or priest, is likely to be preferentially attacked, should the opportunity present. While genuinely undead, they will be unaffected by the typical religious options for halting or destroying undead creatures, and will be extremely hard to destroy by other means.

The north corner of the Cells room hosts a separate small room with a wooden door, in which is a table and a fallen-over chair. A drawer beneath the tabletop contains a ring of keys that open the eight cells here.

Gruvrå Igrid

Central to the current and future state of this Mine is Gruvrå Igrid. "Gruvrå" means something like "Mine Guardian Spirit". She is a tall, slim, very pale-skinned, beautiful, Human-looking, fae creature, that lives only underground among mountains where there are mines, like most of her type. She is clothed simply in a long, grey dress, boots, and a skullcap. She usually carries a bunch of keys, although these may be sometimes attached to one or more chains hanging from her waistbelt instead, and may carry a lantern. She moves effortlessly and, if she wishes, soundlessly, and despite her height, never has to stoop anywhere in her Mine. The ceiling seems to simply move aside or rise a little for her, without anyone noticing it has done so. Igrid is typically accompanied by three bats (which are most likely simply detached aspects of herself, not actual living bats). A larger drawing of her from that shown on the map, is available separately in the Atlas.

Her appearance may lead to her being mistaken for an undead being, most likely a vampire, or a demon. She is neither, as she is more a living personification of the mountain and the ore deposits to be found there. Igrid seems to be the ruling spirit for all the great spire-like mountains that arc away from the Mine to the northeast and east for roughly 18 miles (nearly 30 kilometres), spanning both sides of the

lakes and river in their midst, all the way to the Myconid Realm at the far end of the spires. Miners familiar with this type of fae elsewhere, will know she is to be feared and respected, since she will sometimes warn respectful miners of an impending collapse, or lead them to fresh new ore lodes, especially those who provide a suitable gift, such as a new dress. She is though also, like others of her guardian spirit kin (rå), temperamental and easily offended even by minor infractions, such as whistling or swearing in the Mine, and liable to cause a collapse, or confuse those in the Mine so they become disoriented and lost. Some parts of the mountains and their bounties she considers exclusively hers, and will not allow access to them. Normally, she is only glimpsed momentarily. Should she appear in a black dress, rather than her usual grey, that is a sign of impending death. Her preference is for the silence and solitude her domain provides, rather than the company of others.

Long ago, she aided the Dwarf miners here. When they left, it was many years before she passed this way again, and was horrified by what she discovered then of the research complex. She destroyed it, driving away or killing those responsible (while there are no obvious bodily remains shown on the map, there may be some buried under the collapsed areas). She could not understand the undead creatures in the Cells room, and being unable to do anything for them, left them alone and locked in. The last Golem in the Old Workshop cupboard confused her too, particularly as the gems studding its flesh are not from her mountains. Again, she has simply left it alone. She or her bats keep a much closer watch over the Mine now, in case someone should return to it. When she appears, that is most likely first in the New Mine near the Hidden Passage, as that connects to the rest of her domain by further concealed ways. She will allow no others to pass that way, however.