

Return to Coppernight Hold

by Baz Stevens

With the release of Essentials for D&D 4e, there has never been a better opportunity to look anew at some of the early releases. One of the very first books was Dungeon Delve. Even then, it was obvious that the delves were pretty basic encounters, enough to get a solid gaming session done and dusted with no fuss. They were straightforward, easy to prepare and run, they were fun. However, now that the game has evolved, I think it is worth looking at what the same delves would look like now, with the benefit of Monster Vault, skill challenges and new tiles. The first delve I want to cover is inspired by Coppernight Hold by Shawn Merwin.

Background

A team of dwarven prospectors, led by Corven Coppernight, have staked a claim on an abandoned minehead nearby. That's their story anyway. In fact, Corven is a novice adventurer, and has managed to acquire an old map, one that shows an ancient temple '*dedicated to the elemental eye*', and hints at treasure within. He has convinced some of his clan into accompanying him on this delve, and to keep avaricious competition in the dark, they've concocted the mining cover story. They've been bringing back small finds to town for the past few months, in order to keep up appearances, but two weeks ago, the visits ceased. Unfortunately for the 'miners', a young white dragon has decided to use their excavations for her new lair. She has devoured most of the clan, and the rest are frozen by her icy breath, awaiting their certain doom. Sated for now, the dragon has pushed through to the temple and now rests, dreaming of more easy meals and hoards.

Major Quest: Investigate the missing miners, 500xp

The town elders hire the party to investigate the mine, and to bring back any news. For payment, roll on the following table.

(11-14) 2d6 x 100sp; (15+) 2d6 x 10gp
(18+) 1d2 gems worth 100gp
(20+) one art object worth 250gp
(13+) one magic item of level 1d4+1

The Journey

The minehead is off the beaten track, so feel free to improvise some hiking, some dangers of nature, or even a full on combat encounter or two. Before too long the party will arrive at their destination.

"The trees clear. Ahead you see a sheer escarpment of rock. There are signs of activity around the base of the rock. Tracks, both humanoid and wheeled, criss-cross the area. There are old campfire areas, and detritus that suggests excavations. The minehead is visible behind some empty wooden crates. There are no signs of life."

Skill check: Perception or Nature(DC 8): Some of the tracks are of kobolds. The rest are dwarven boots. (DC 12): approximately half a dozen of each.(DC 19) The dwarf prints are a week older than the kobolds

"The minehead tunnels swiftly narrow. It's pitch black in here, and utterly silent. Soon, the taller among you have to stoop to continue downwards along the winding tunnel. After a few minutes, the passage widens out, and the floor changes from mud and stone to fitted timber boards."

Skill check: Perception (DC 19) There are sounds of movement up ahead. It's too faint to pick out details.

Encounter 1: Defeat the sentries 400xp



"You are on a raised wooden platform. At the end some steps lead down to the stone floor. The crudely hewn chamber is a mess, There are piles of rubble here and there alongside broken barrels and crates. Long timbers shore up the 20' high ceiling in places. The area looks and smells like a wet dog's nest. Something has made its lair here, and it's not dwarf miners."

Skill check: Dungeoneering (DC 12) There aren't enough props to fully support this excavation. The whole place looks unsafe.

Skill check: Nature (DC 8) There's a distinct aroma of kobold here. (DC 12) Kobolds are cunning trapmakers

Kobold Slinger	Level 1 artillery	100xp	MV 180
Kobold Dragonshield	Level 2 soldier	125xp	MV 181
Kobold Quickblade	Level 1 skirmisher	100xp	MV 180
3 Kobold Tunnellers	Level 1 minion skirmisher	75xp	MV 179
Rockslide	Level 1 trap	100xp	DM 216

The dragon has attracted a pack of wily kobolds, who are happy to bunk down in the mine's entrance chambers and keep watch on her behalf. They have posted pickets to ensure that the dragon gets to rest in peace. The kobolds will take up hidden positions as they hear the party approach. (Stealth +7) There is space under the wooden platform and behind the rubble or crates. They will leap from hiding as soon as any character sets foot on the lower section of the room, potentially gaining a surprise round.

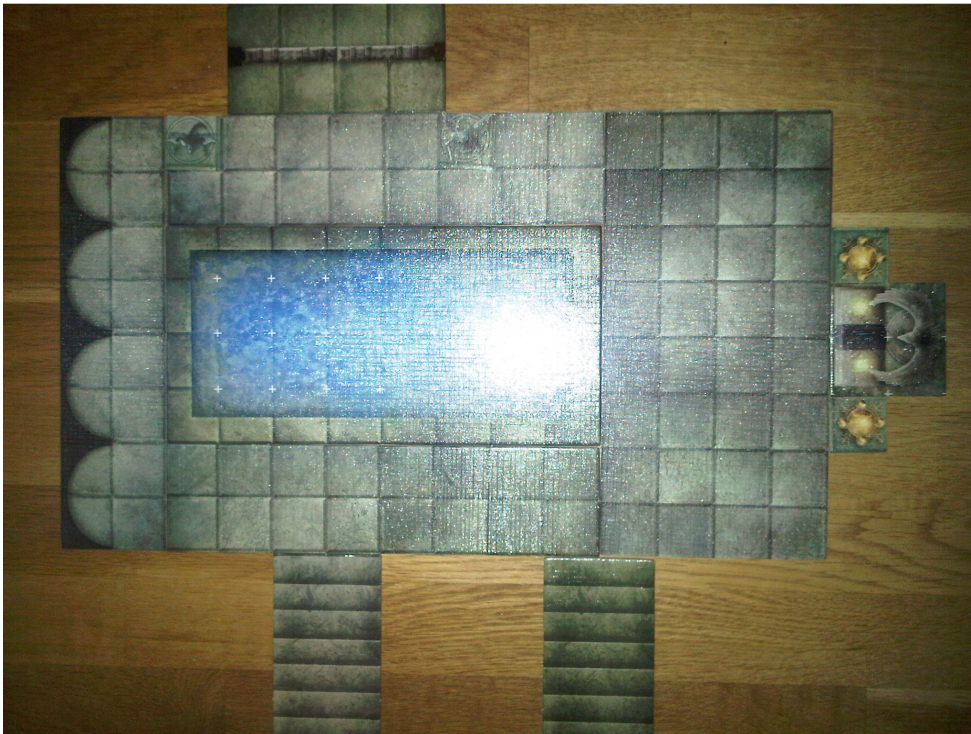
The chamber is a mess. The dwarf's equipment has been looted and vandalised, including the props that hold up the ceiling. They have been turned into firewood and makeshift traps. Unfortunately, this means that any sudden moves or violent disturbances within the area will cause a rockslide.

At the start of each turn, roll a D20, on an 15+, the rockslide occurs on it's initiative score. Add +1 to subsequent rolls for each round that the rockslide does not happen. The origin square for the slide is at the centre of the chamber.

The excavated areas are 10' deep causing 1d10 damage if fallen into.

Treasure: None

Encounter 2: Rescue the miners 525xp



“Beyond the entrance chamber, you notice the passageways take on a different feel. These are not freshly hewn, they are ancient worked stone. The passage opens into a large chamber. The area is dominated by a massive block of ice that contains dark shapes within. At one end of the chamber are a set of alcoves. These contain beautiful stylised mosaics. They show each of the classic four elements, water, air, fire and earth. The other end of the chamber holds an altar, still in pristine condition”

Skill check: Nature or Religion (DC 12) The alcoves are shrines to the four elements. The altar is dedicated to an ancient and primal god, whose name is lost to history.

Skill check: Perception or Heal (DC 8) The ice contains four frozen dwarves, they look like they’re still alive in there, but not for much longer in that cold!

As the party investigate the area, the four elementals are summoned to guard the temple by ancient rituals. They are mindless guardians, and they fight to the death. Each appears in it’s allotted shrine.

Lesser Air Elemental	Level 1 lurker	100xp	MV 108
Lesser Earth Elemental	Level 2 soldier	125xp	MV 108
Lesser Fire Elemental	Level 1 skirmisher	100xp	MV 109
Lesser Water Elemental	Level 1 controller	100xp	MV 109
Skill challenge	Level 1	100xp	DM 226

There are 4 dwarves frozen in ice. They have not died yet (the dragon likes her food fresh), instead they are merely suspended, and in need of defrosting. They are due to be the dragon’s next meal. Each rescued miner will become a staunch ally for the party. The party must perform the rescue while fending off the attentions of the temple’s guardians, elementals.

Skill Challenge: Complexity 1, 4 successes required, DC 12

Suggested skills: Athletics, Dungeoneering, Endurance, Heal

Any creative use of heat or fire (such as pushing the fire elemental into the ice) will make the next check an easier DC of 8. Each failure results in the death of one of the dwarves (Corven himself is last to be rescued). The dwarves will be no use in this particular fight, they will need to take a short rest before becoming capable of much more than coughing and shivering.

One of the rescued dwarves is Corven Coppernight himself. He is appreciative, despite his gruff manner, and can describe the sorry events that led to this moment. He and his clan are ready for vengeance and will insist on joining the party to take on the dragon. Corven and his clan see this as a matter of honour. If the party need more practical motivations, Corven will explain that the dragon took their gold and their clan heirloom, which Corven will relinquish to the party when the dragon is slain. Their basic kit is back in the entrance chamber with the kobolds.

Treasure: None

Encounter 3: End the threat 750xp



"The chamber is cold, cold enough that you can see your breath in the air. Draped across a huge throne at the far end of the chamber between two large statues is the beautiful yet terrible sight of an ice dragon. She sleeps, but even so you are drawn to her majesty. Her wings and tail are tightly curled around her powerful form, yet she still measures 3 yards in length. She rests upon a glittering scatter of coins and other treasures.

Between you and her is a table covered in scraps of parchment. To your right lie the skeletal remains of half devoured dwarves, their bones picked clean."

Young White Dragon	Level 3 solo brute	750xp	MV 67
1-3 Dwarf Warriors	Level 1 minion artillery	(0-75xp)	MV 100
Corven Coppernight, Dwarf Clan Guard	Level 1 soldier	(100xp)	MV 101

The white dragon sleeps soundly on her hoard. Any notion of sneaking the treasure out is soon dispelled by the battle-cry of the Coppernight dwarves who launch the attack. As she doesn't share food either, there's little chance of diplomacy. This battle is to the death!

Treasure: 3 rolls on the following table:

(11-14) 2d6 x 100sp; (15+) 2d6 x 10gp
(18+) 1d2 gems worth 100gp
(20+) one art object worth 250gp
(13+) one magic item of level 1d4+1

Conclusion

Those alive can reclaim the treasure. As for the parchments on the table, I leave that to you to decide what they contain. Should any dwarf survive they will stick to their word and allow the party to claim the riches. The dwarves will head for home, knowing that the adventuring life is no longer for them. There's not much for the party to do but return to the town as heroes. But wait, the pattern of those stones behind the throne, do they perhaps suggest an outline of a door?