

DUNGEON CRAWL CLASSICS

DREAD ON DEVIL CROWN HILL

#92.5: A LEVEL 2 ADVENTURE
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A LEVEL 2 ADVENTURE

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read on Demon Crown Hill is a Dungeon Crawl Classics RPG adventure intended for four to six 2nd-level PCs. Over the course of the adventure, the party explores a weird, supernaturally formed cave-ridden outcropping located atop a windswept tor in hopes of plundering an enchanted shield left there long ago. They must contend with both the bizarre creatures that dwell there and the demonic presence that lurks within the shield itself.

BACKGROUND



ong ago, a pair of sibling heroes ventured to a lonely tor overlooking the land. Legend held that a demonic presence birthed of Chaos dwelled atop the hill, lingering over an ancient sacrificial site and delivering pestilence, drought, and strife to the hamlets residing near the hill. The two heroes, a sister and brother, vowed to combine her steel and his sorcery and end the demon's reign. In a pitched battle, the wizard and demon engaged in a formidable spell duel culminating in a phlogiston disturbance. The clash of magical energies erected an eerie protrusion of hexagonal-shaped stone towers that now adorn the hilltop and give the tor its name—Demon Crown Hill. The heroes perished in the cataclysmic eruption of raw magical power and the demon itself was nearly banished back to the Pits of Perdition. Only by hurling its ragged spiritual form into the warrior sister's shield was it able to stave off complete obliteration. It has dwelled there ever since.

STARTING THE ADVENTURE

The party has learned the legend of Karisher's Aegis, a purportedly magical shield lost in the destruction of a demon long ago. It is said that the shield was borne into battle by the Liege-Lady Karisher when she, her wizard brother, Khal, and a cadre of loyal men-at-arms ventured to Demon Crown Hill to confront the infernal creature, Frygorix of the Thousand Lies. They never returned, but the demon ceased to plague the region. Legend holds the siblings perished in slaying the demon, and Karisher's Aegis must still reside somewhere in the strange rocky towers—the Demon Crown, itself—that arose in the wake of the siblings' crusade.

The rocky pillars atop the hill are gigantic hexagonal-shaped protrusions of glossy stone clustered together. Similar to the Giant's Causeway of Northern Ireland, but on a much larger scale, these pillars were formed by the phlogiston disturbance which ended the spell duel between Frygorix and Khal the Wizard. The Demon Crown is avoided by the locals, who are hesitant to stray within eye-shot of the accursed hill. Nevertheless, they willingly provide directions to any foolish adventurer wishing to see visit the Demon Crown. These directions lead the party to a windblown moor several miles from the nearest hamlet.

Read the following:

Demon Crown Hill rises from the surrounding plain carpeted with windblown heath and heather gone brown with the dying year. The hill measures nearly two hundred feet tall and thrice as wide, standing out against the horizon like a titan's tombstone. The hill itself is

covered with sparse, sickly-looking grass and gorse that shivers in the wind as if anticipating the coming winter.

At the apex of the hill stands the weird stone outcropping that give the hill its ominous sobriquet. A collection of hexagonal rocky towers cluster together to form a solid mass with varying heights. The stone is glossy ebony with ruby highlights where touched by the autumn sun. The stones' edges and sides are sharp as if carved by a godly mason and show no sign of erosion or wear. The soaring pillars are of varying height, ranging from 30' to more than 100' tall, and measuring between 30' and 60' in diameter. The closest of the angled stone towers bears a dark cave-like opening in its southern face.

The pillars are unnaturally smooth and make for difficult climbing (DC 22 Strength or climb sheer surfaces check). The caves within the columns are unlit except where noted.

Loud noises outside the Demon Crown will be detected by the bredung guards in area 1-1, who prepare to defend their home if necessary. Very loud noises or prolonged explorations of the Demon Crown's exterior have a 25% chance of attracting a hellpy (see area 1-9) looking for a meal. Climbing the hellpy lair tower has a 90% chance of attracting the attention of all the lair's residents, who emerge to attack the precariously perched intruders.

DEMON CROWN INTERIOR

Area 1-1—Bredung Lair Entrance: *A hexagonal-shaped cave resides beyond the cave mouth, its walls sharply angled as if formed by tools yet still seeming raw and untamed. The black, shiny walls reflect light wildly, transforming their glossy surfaces into an almost pyrotechnic display. Four weird creatures, humanoid in shape and bearing a cyclopean eye in each of their grub-like heads, lope cautiously from the darkness, spears and crude axes in hand.*

A quartet of bredung, a weird survivor race from the planet's hoary past, guard this entrance to their lair (area 1-3). They are intelligent and speak a debase form of Troglodyte. If communication is established with them, they will bring the PCs to area 1-3 to meet Queen Qwellmenga. However, their first duty is to protect the others in the den and they meet aggression with violence.

Bredung Guard (4): Init +1; Atk bite +2 melee (1d5+1) or spear +1 melee or +2 ranged (1d6+1) or axe +1 melee (1d8+1); AC 13; HD 2d8+1; hp 10 each; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP infravision 60'; SV Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +2; AL N.

Bredung are leathery skinned humanoids with hides the color of weak tea. Their heads resemble cyclopean-eyed grubs perched atop slouchy shoulders. Saw-toothed mouths gape beneath their single eye, widening at the top as if their maws are upside down. Gangly arms and legs dangle from their skinny bodies and they move with loping grace.

The cave is largely bare, holding but a pair of hewn logs that act as seats and a woven bag containing a filled waterskin and three strips of smoked snake meat.

Area 1-2—Stairwell Caves: *This cave is wide and rises high into the air. A series of protruding crystalline steps emerges from several of the chamber’s walls to form a winding staircase along the cave’s perimeter, leading upwards (or downwards).*

There are a number of these stairwell caves throughout the Demon Crown. Unless noted elsewhere in the adventure key, these caves are unoccupied and contain nothing of danger or value. The stairwell cave’s interiors average 30’ in height.

Judges wishing to add a little color to each of the stairwell caves can roll 1d5 or choose from the table below.

Table 1-1: Stairwell Cave Curiosities	
1	Patches of pale green moss grows on some of the steps. This moss absorbs ambient light and glows with a soft green illumination (equivalent to a modern glow stick) for an hour.
2	A small family of bats resides in the cave. Intruders startle them and they flutter about chaotically for several moments before departing. They pose no hazard (unless the judge chooses otherwise)
3	The crystalline stairs emit naturally occurring musical chimes when stepped on. With experimentation, songs can be performed by stepping on the correct steps, but doing so is sure to alert creatures nearby.
4	Bones and rusted weapons that crumble to flakes if touched are scattered along the length of the stairs.
5	A single gold coin is spotted on an upper (or lower) stair. When that step is reached, however, the coin has vanished. Was it ever there or just a mirage formed by an avaricious mind?

Area 1-3—Bredung Lair: *A large hexagonal space formed from shiny black stone lies here. The cave is crowded with crude sleeping pallets, a trio of modest cooking fires that fill the air with hazy smoke, and a large rack holding partially-skinned snakes drying over a fire. A stone platform, decorated with carved skulls showing serpents wriggling through their eye sockets, stands against the northeastern wall. A high seat crafted from timbers and bearing niches holding skulls – many of them human – rests atop the platform. A dozen leathery, one-eyed humanoids occupy the room and a grizzled looking creature of the same type sits upon the high seat.*

The bredung were driven from their ancient home on the nearby moors and have recently sought shelter in the Demon Crown. They keep to these lower caves after having lost a few members of their band to the creatures and weird hazards above. They are led by their queen, Qwellmenga VII. There are eight “commoner” bredung, four royal guard bredung, and Queen Qwellmenga herself present here.

Bredung Commoner (8): Init +0; Atk bite +2 melee (1d5+1) or club +1 melee (1d4+1); AC 13; HD 1d8+1; hp 6 each; MV 30’; Act 1d20; SP infravision 60’; SV Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +2; AL N.

Bredung Royal Guard (4): Init +1; Atk bite +2 melee (1d5+1) or spear +1 melee or

+2 ranged (1d6+1); AC 13; HD 2d8+1; hp 10 each; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP infravision 60'; SV Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +2; AL N.

Queen Qwellmenga VII (1): Init +2; Atk bite +2 melee (1d5+1) or spell; AC 14; HD 4d8+2; hp 22; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP infravision 60', spells (+4 to spell check; knows *comprehend languages*, *enlarge*, *flaming hands*, and *magic missile*); SV Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +4; AL N.

Like their comrades in area 1-1, the bredung are not inherently violent, but will defend their lair. A party that attacks wantonly or seems perched on the brink of violence is met with force of arms. All the bredung fight in defense of their lair and their queen.

If the PCs arrive escorted by the guards in 1-1 or they come here displaying peaceful intentions, the bredung usher them before the queen's dais. Queen Qwellmenga VII addresses them in Troglodyte, but the skulls decorating her throne translate her words, speaking to the party in Common.

Queen Qwellmenga VII demands to know the party's intentions in her realm. If they explain they seek Karisher's Aegis (or simply wish to explore the Demon Crown), Queen Qwellmenga explains that the bredung don't know much about the rest of the Crown. Their efforts to travel beyond the two caves they claim as their lair has resulted in mysterious disappearances and they have no desire to lose more of their dwindled number of tribesmen. She also states they seldom leave their lair at night for fear of "the shadows that burn" (the hellpies in area 1-9).

Queen Qwellmenga is open to allowing the party safe passage through her realm—provided they make appropriate gifts to Her Royal Highness. Luckily, the bredung are poor and any gift of silver, gold, or gems—no matter their worth—is accepted as a worthy token of respect. Under no circumstances will the Queen allow her subjects to accompany the party on their explorations. The tribe has already lost enough members.

The bredung have little treasure, and the lair holds mostly woven mats and blankets, smoked snake meat, ceramic water jugs, and worthless personal belongings. Two of the royal guards, however, wear necklaces made from tarnished copper coins strung together on a rawhide cord (10 cp value each). Queen Qwellmenga's diadem is silver with electrum inlay and worth 100 gp.

There are six skulls set into the queen's throne, each of which can translate any spoken language within 20' of them into Common. Unless their magic is renewed by Queen Qwellmenga using ancient bredung sorcery, the skulls lose their power after 1d7 weeks.

Area 1-4—Relics of the Past: *Ghastly faces peer out at you from within the polished black walls of this cave. Dimly visible inside the translucent stone are the corpses of six men-at-arms dressed in archaic armor. Their sightless eyes and deathly pallor lend this cave an unsettling ambiance.*

The soldiers followed Karisher and Khal to confront the demon, but perished in the phlogiston disturbance. Their bodies are inaccessible inside the walls without prolonged labor and mining tools (at least five hours work per body). However, one soldier's hand protrudes slightly from the stone, the flesh mummified. A simple copper ring adorns one finger (5 cp value).

Inscribed upon the ring is the name "Liege-Lady Karisher." A warrior or dwarf will identify the ring as a service token, often bestowed on loyal soldiers by their liege lord. Other classes can make the same deduction with a DC 10 Intelligence check. Speaking this name aloud in area 1-12 can be beneficial to the party.

Area 1-5—Breached Stairwell Cave: *This cave is wide and rises high into the air. A series of protruding crystalline steps emerge from several of the chamber's walls to form a winding staircase along the cave's perimeter, leading upwards. Weak sunlight shines into this cave from a 5' wide hole in the ceiling.*

A natural crack in the 30' high cave roof leads outside. The outcast hellpy in the next cave uses the opening to venture outside when hunting and as a potential escape route if in danger. A DC 20 Strength or *climb sheer surfaces* check is required to reach the hole.

Area 1-6—Outcast Hellpy Cave: *This cave has a lofty ceiling and a series of protruding crystalline steps emerge from several of the chamber's walls to form a winding staircase along the cave's perimeter, leading upwards. There is a rank smell in the air, like the festering flesh of an unwashed beggar.*

Although similar to many of the other connecting caves throughout the Demon Crown, this cave is claimed by a hellpy who has been cast out of the nest in area 1-9. It lurks perched in its nest near the ceiling, obfuscated by its shadowy aura. The hellpy viciously attacks any who trespass.

Hellpy (1): Init +0; Atk claws +3 melee (1d4); AC 14; HD 5d8; hp 25; MV 20', fly 70'; Act 1d20; SP infravision 60', singeing song (DC 13 Fort save or catch fire), shadowy aura (-2 penalty to ranged attacks targeting the hellpy, +10 to sneak checks); SV Fort +2, Ref +3, Will +6; AL C.

The hellpy is closely related to the harpy, but owes its origins to the infernal power of Frygorix. Human victims were sometimes abducted by the demon and then twisted into new forms. A hellpy resembles a malformed human female, with cancerous flesh marked with lesions, and a pair of wings resembling tattered shadows. However, an aura of gloom surrounds each hellpy, making it difficult to discern its true form while the creature lives. A hellpy does not captivate with song. Instead, its singing causes a single target within 100' catch fire if a DC 13 Fortitude save fails. The ignited victim suffers 1d6 damage immediately and 1d6 each round until they extinguish the fire (either with water or by making a DC 10 Reflex save).

The hellpy outcast has fashioned a simple nest 25' up the wall. It can be reached with a DC 12 Strength or *climb sheer surfaces* check. The nest is laced with silver wire, stolen gold coins, and semi-precious stones worth 200 gp if recovered.

Area 1-7—Searing Light: Read the following if the party enters bearing light sources. If not, paraphrase the below omitting any mention of light or rising heat.

The gleaming walls of this cave burst into flaming radiance as they amplify the light you carry. The light is nearly blinding, but you are able to see that the floor is cracked and uneven. Gaping crevasses leading down into blackness hinder your progress through the cave. A stable ledge on the far end of the room and adjacent to two open exits is visible beyond the pits. As you survey the room, you notice the temperature seems to be rising.

A combination of demonic magic and curious flaws in the ebony stone make this a treacherous cavern to cross. The walls amplify any light brought into the chamber, producing both a blinding glare and increasing temperatures. Both conditions impede navigating the broken floor.

The gaping holes average 30' deep and 8' across. Successfully crossing the room without fashioning bridges or other means to traverse the crevasses requires a single DC 10 Strength or Agility check from all PCs as they leap and scramble over the gaps. This check is modified by armor check penalties. Additionally, the blinding light makes it difficult to judge the distances and imparts a -1d penalty to the check. PCs move at one quarter speed when crossing the room due to the threat of falling.

On a failed check, the PC falls into one of the crevasses. A successful DC 10 Reflex save (modified for the blinding light and armor) arrests their fall as they grab the edge of a crevasse. Failure indicates a plunge into the hole and 3d6 damage.

Complicating matters further, the presence of light sources in the cave causes metal here to heat up quickly. Anyone wearing metal armor suffers 1d3 damage each round they remain in the room while light sources are lit, beginning on the third round. Metal weapons, tools, and other items inflict 1 point of damage if handled with unprotected hands.

Extinguishing all light sources negates the threat of heat damage and PCs with infravision can cross the room without penalty from the blinding light (although armor check penalties still apply). However, adventurers without infravision suffer a -2d penalty if they attempt to cross the cave in the dark.

Extremely dim light, like that from a single candle or produced by the glow moss potentially found in the stairwell caves (see Table 1-1 above) do not produce enough light to create the searing glare or the increased heat, greatly improving the party's chances of crossing the cave successfully.

At the bottom of one of the holes are two breeding bodies. They still clutch broken spear shafts in their hands. One has a curious green stone on a cord around its neck. This rock is from an ancient ruin and it restores 1d4 hit points to the wearer each morning. The power has no effect if the wearer is dead, however.

Area 1-8—The Chamber of Horrible Truths: *The ebony walls of this cave seem to siphon the light from your torches and lanterns, making them glow feebly and giving no reflection in return. Instead of reflecting off the glossy stone, your lights appear to create sinuous runes that slither beneath the stone's surface. As you watch, the runes form a single query in the Common speech: Do you seek a Truth?*



Lingering magical energy persists in this cave, albeit of a twisted and malicious nature. The entire area radiates both magic and evil if divination spells are employed. Any creature answering the chamber’s question affirmatively risks learning more than it wishes to know.

If a PC answers that he or she does seek a truth, a dolorous voice rings out as the sinuous runes reform on the wall. The voice pronounces a terrible fate for the PC. Roll 1d6 and consult the table below.

Table 1-2: Horrible Truths to Plague the Party	
1.	You will perish in pain and alone on the fifth day of the sixth month of the coming year. Those who choose to remain your companions shall also perish unless they renounce their allegiances to you.
2.	The one you love deepest will betray you before the end of this season.
3.	Pestilence shall rob you of your vitality and turn you old before your time. This fate shall come to pass before the rise of year’s last moon.
4.	Madness shall overtake you when you next return home. A revelation there shall break your mind and render you a helpless, pathetic creature.
5.	All your treasures will pass away, leaving you destitute, a beggar in the streets. You will be penniless before the first day of winter.
6.	Your skills will fail and your knowledge shall be lost upon the rise of the Midwinter moon. On that night, all you’ve earned shall pass away like frost beneath the summer sun. (The adventurer loses all gained experience, becoming a zero level PC once more.)

The PC must make a DC 20 Willpower save. If the save is successful, the PC is spared the fate and feels as if the pronouncement holds little weight. If failed, the PC is cursed with the pronounced fate and he or she feels the voice speaks with terrible certainty. Each of the truths revealed will automatically come to pass unless the PC takes steps to remove this terrible fate. Treat these horrible truths as if a major curse. These truths can be avoided via a *remove curse* spell with a high enough spell check or through undertaking a special quest to stave off the impending doom. The judge must create a separate challenging quest for each affected character.

Only a single truth will be revealed to any one creature and each PC will be told a different fate (reroll duplicate results on Table 1-2). If there are more than six PCs present, the judge can modify one or more of the entries above or create her own.

Area 1-9—Hellpy Lair: *The fresh breeze blowing through this area’s open cave mouth overlooking the lands below the hill does little to dispel the stench that clouds the air here. It stinks of filth and decay. The floor is littered with bones, some of which still have maggot-ridden meat clinging to them. Waste soils the glossy stone floor, turning it dull and lifeless. A pervading shadow seems to dim your light sources, amplifying the gloom of the cave.*

This high cave is home to a trio of hellpies (see area 1-6). They drag their meals



back here to consume them and have dwelled here since the Demon Crown was created. At any given time, some of the hellpies may be out hunting. The judge rolls 1d3 when the party first enters the cave to determine the number of hellpies present.

There are three nests situated close to the cave's ceiling. They are 20', 25', and 30' above the debris-strewn floor. Any hellpy present will be in its nest, their auras contributing to the gloomy conditions of the cavern. They defend their nests with a mixture of hatred and hunger.

Hellpy (1d3): Init +0; Atk claws +3 melee (1d4); AC 14; HD 5d8; hp 25 each; MV 20', fly 70'; Act 1d20; SP infravision 60', singeing song (DC 13 Fort save or catch fire), shadowy aura (-2 penalty to ranged attacks targeting the hellpy, +10 to sneak checks); SV Fort +2, Ref +3, Will +6; AL C.

Like their harpy cousins, hellpies enjoy lining their nests with stolen precious metals. Each of their nests contains embedded riches (coins, jewelry, precious metal wire, etc.) worth 500 gp. However, the nests are heavy (100 lbs. each) and precariously perched. Any creature attempting to dismantle the nest to gain the riches while it is in its aloft position must make a Luck check. If failed, the nest comes loose, plunging them to the ground below.

A search of the debris uncovers a multitude of bones, rotten cloth and leather, and rusty weapons. One such weapon is in better condition than the rest. This longsword has a cross guard shaped like a three-headed dragon and its hilt is wrapped in dragon hide. This is the Elder Sword, the heirloom weapon of Karisher. It imparts a +1 bonus to attack rolls due to its keen edge, but is not magical.

The cave mouth in the northeastern wall exits in mid-air and overlooks the ground 90' below.

Area 1-10—Clearly Dangerous: *This cavern is bare of occupants, but there are three piles of rusting weapons and pieces of metal armor scattered near the northern wall.*

The room is not as empty as it appears. Six of Karisher and Khal's men-at-arms died in the running battle with Frygorix, their mortal remains left here to decay. Over the long years, Frygorix's lingering demonic power tainted their bones, turning them transparent and animating the once-loyal soldier's skeletons into horrible un-dead creatures.

Due to the un-dead skeleton's transparent bodies, they are nearly impossible to detect in the dim illumination the party likely bears. The skeletons attack with surprise unless one or more PCs succeed in a DC 20 Intelligence check. Elves may add their bonus to detect secret doors to their check. The skeletons are room-temperature and invisible to infravision.

Transparent Un-dead Skeletons (6): Init +0; Atk claw +0 melee (1d3) or short sword +0 melee (1d6); AC 14 (9); HD 1d6; hp 5 each; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP un-dead, half damage from piercing and slashing weapons, transparent (DC 20 Intelligence check to notice); SV Fort +0, Ref +0, Will +0; AL C.



The skeletons originally attack with bare claws, but there is a 50% chance each round some dim intelligence reminds them to pick up a weapon from the refuse piles in the room. If the PCs concoct some scheme to make the translucent bones more visible, the skeletons' AC is reduced to 9.

The pile of weapons and armor contains six rusty short swords, two broken short bows and two quivers containing warped arrows, three sundered shields, and six destroyed suits of plate armor. There are also six rings identical to those found in area 1-4 and a rusty dagger with an emerald (100 gp value) set in the pommel.

Area 1-11—Weak Staircase: This cave is identical to the other staircase caves throughout the Crown, but has one important difference. A 5' wide section of stairs located 20' up the wall is compromised and is likely to crumble beneath the tread of ascending feet. Each PC must make a Luck check when climbing the stairs. The stairs give way beneath the PC with the lowest Luck score who fails the check. The unlucky PC can attempt a DC 10 Reflex save to leap to safety, suffering 2d6 falling damage if they fail.

The 5' gap can be crossed by subsequent climbers with either a DC 8 Strength or climb sheer surfaces check, or with ropes and careful planning.

Area 1-12—A Spirited Ally: *The southwest wall of this angled cave is discolored by something. Peering carefully at the glossy stone, you see an armored figure lying horizontally within the rock, as if thrown prone and then encased. The figure's long dark hair and pale skin hint that it may have been a woman in life.*

The rock-encased form is the corpse of Karisher, her life extinguished and her mortal remains imprisoned during the phlogiston disturbance that created the Demon Crown. A closer inspection of her corpse reveals it is that of a human woman with long, curly dark hair and skin that was dusky in life, but has acquired the ashen color of death. Plate mail, once of fine make but ruined by war and grievous injury, encases her body. The breastplate bears the image of a three-headed dragon rampant.

Karisher is long dead, but her rage against failing to fulfill her vow of destroying Frygorix means her spirit can be drawn back to the physical world. If her name is spoken within this room, perhaps by an adventurer identifying her as the "Liege-Lady" named on the rings from areas 1-4 and 1-10, the corpse appears to shudder within the rock. Moments later, a voice, cold and angry, echoes through the room:

"Who calls me?"

Karisher speaks with imperious fury, but the rage is not directed at those who summoned her, rather it is anger at herself for failing. She knows all the circumstances leading up to the creation of the Demon Crown and that she and her sibling perished in the confrontation against Frygorix. She is unaware that the demon inhabits her shield.

If the party asks if Karisher can assist them in any way, a pregnant pause followed by a soft "Yes, YES!" echoes throughout the cave. If the characters have recovered



the heirloom sword from area 1-9, Karisher announces, "You have found the blade I once bore in battle. Bring forth the Elder Sword of my line!" If the party doesn't possess the sword, the voice cries, "Present a sword! I shall require steel to aid you." In the unlikely event no swords are present, Karisher demands the party locate her sword so that she may imbue it with her spirit and assist them.

Producing either the Elder Sword or another sword causes the corpse embedded in the stone to suddenly putrefy, becoming an armor-clad skeleton in moments. As the body swiftly decays, spirals of frost accumulate along the sword's blade. Whomever holds the blade feels it grow powerful as if imbued with eerie vitality. Moments later, Karisher speaks from the sword, "*Let us hunt a demon!*"

While her spiritual essence is imbued in a weapon, Karisher can communicate vocally, but believes idle banter is a distraction to the party's true goal: Frygorix's destruction. She'll answer questions with brief replies, but is impatient to seek out the demon. She demands the party search the Demon Crown until her infernal enemy is found.

Area 1-13—Cavern of Conflict: *The ceiling of this angled cave soars overhead, nearly lost in the gloom above. The cave contains a number of hexagonal stepped tiers rising above the floor, looking like the Demon Crown in miniature. A thin mist hovers inches above the ground. Two other curiosities exist here: a statue of a human male dressed in billowing robes and a battered red shield rimmed with gleaming gold and adorned with heraldry depicting a three-headed dragon rampant. The statue faces the tiered risers, while the shield floats in the air above the top riser.*

It was on this spot that Karisher and her brother, the wizard Khal, confronted Frygorix of the Thousand Lies, the demon who plagued the region. The sorcerous battle between Khal and Frygorix caused the phlogiston disturbance that raised the Demon Crown, killing Karisher, petrifying Khal, and forcing the demon to embed itself in the slain warrior's shield. It is here that the PCs will confront Frygorix and hopefully succeed where the siblings failed.

The demon-haunted shield senses the arrival of intruders and it waits until all or most of the party has entered the chamber before revealing itself. When the opportune moment arrives, a grisly, hoarse chuckle echoes through the cave. A pair of burning eyes with three irises each appears on the shield's face, observing the party. The chuckle fades and becomes a voice saying,

"Raw, bloody meat on the hoof? How sweet of you to travel here to assuage my hunger! For that, I shall reward you with a prolonged, agonizing death!"

There is a rumble as two of the hexagonal tiers break loose, revealing themselves to be crystalline humanoid figures formed from ebony stone. The two demon-fueled stone guardians move to attack while Frygorix uses its powers from atop the tier.

Demon-fueled Stone Guardian (2): Init -3; Atk slam +2 melee (1d6+1); AC 17; HD 2d8+4; hp 15 each; MV 20'; Act 1d20; SP immune to critical hits; SV Fort +4, Ref +1, Will +0; AL C.

Frygorix of the Thousand Lies (in shield form): Init +0; Atk shield bash +4 (1d6+2) or infernal fire +4 ranged (1d6+1 plus DC 10 Ref save or catch fire; 120' range); AC 16; HD 6d12+2; hp 45; MV fly 40'; Act 1d20; SP demonic traits (infravision, *darkness* [+4 spell check], suffers half damage from fire and non-magical weapons), infernal spell resistance (-4 reduction to successful spell checks), animate demon-fueled guardians (2); SV Fort +6, Ref +4, Will +4; AL C.

While it cannot utilize much of its demonic sorcery while imprisoned in the shield, Frygorix is not without its tricks. The demon exudes a magic-dampening aura that reduces the effectiveness of spells directed against it. All successfully cast spells targeting Frygorix have their spell check reduced by -4. This modifier can never reduce the spell check to "Lost. Failure" or "Failure, but spell is not lost" or worse results. At worst, the successful spell will manifest with its least powerful level of effect. Failed spells are unmodified.

In battle, Frygorix uses its flying ability to remain out of reach of melee attacks, using its *darkness* and infernal fire attack to best effect. However, if the party bears a weapon infused with Karisher's spirit (see area 1-12), the two enemies sense one another's presence. Read the following immediately after the guardians emerge from the stone:

Suddenly, the demonic eyes on the shield's face narrow and glare in the direction of [the sword's bearer]. "YOU!" the hoarse voice screams. In response, the blade seems to glow with a silver light and a snarled, dangerous reply sounds from the sword. "We meet again, demon. Happenstance saved you last time. You shall not be so lucky again."

Frygorix will concentrate its attention on whomever wields the sword containing Karisher's spirit. In its rage at confronting its old enemy, the demon shield throws caution aside and closes with the sword-bearer, bashing and burning the one assisting Karisher.

Any sword empowered with Karisher's spirit gains an additional +2 bonus to hit the demon and successful strikes with the imbued weapon do full damage.

There are a total of three hexagonal tiered columns, ranging from a height of 5' to 20'. Climbing from one level to the next requires an action but succeeds automatically. Characters attempting to speed their ascent can make a DC 8 Strength or Agility check (player's choice) to quickly climb, but a failed check means they make no progress and lose their action for the round. A result of a natural "1" indicates they fall to the next lowest tier and suffer 1d6 damage.

The "statue" is actually Karisher's brother, Khal. The wizard was petrified in the phlogiston disturbance, transformed into the same ebony stone that comprises the Demon Crown. He plays no part in the final encounter, but may lead to further adventures (see below).

ENDING THE ADVENTURE

Slaying Frygorix while it possesses the shield drives its spiritual form from Karisher's Aegis, sending it back to the Pits of Hell. Read the following:

As the last blow strikes the shield, you witness an unearthly event. A translucent shape appears besides the aegis, its features horrific to behold. The beastly spirit bears the horns of a great ram, the leprous flesh of a diseased wretch, the eyes of a serpent, and a writhing centipede for a tongue. A dismal, hate-filled cry rends at your mind. As your senses revolt against the unnatural sights and sounds, you see a flaming rift, like a tear between worlds, open behind the gruesome spirit. With a final, angry scream, the creature is yanked through the rift and it closes behind it. The very air stinks of brimstone, but you sense as if a lingering evil has been dispelled.

If the demon-fueled guardians are still active, they immediately crumble to rubble. The shield falls to the ground, battered but still functional. Karisher's Aegis, free of demonic possession, bears intrinsic magical properties. It is a *shield* +2 and the bearer is immune to critical hits from demons and devils. It also imparts a +2 saving throw bonus at all saves against spells targeting the bearer. Lastly, when within 60' of a demon or devil, the three dragons roar in the mind of the shield's bearer, alerting him of the infernal presence.

A party that defeated Frygorix with the assistance of Karisher hears a loud, satisfied sigh come from the imbued weapon. Karisher addresses the party:

"My valiant allies! A hundred appreciations for your courage and your might! We have overcome a foulness on this day, fulfilling a vow that my brother and I swore long ago. You have my most profound thanks. Please, in recognition of our triumph, take up my shield and sword, and use them with my blessing."

Karisher then likely bids the party farewell, her vow fulfilled (but see below). Her spirit vanishes, off to whatever final reward awaits us poor mortals.

If the party defeated Frygorix without Karisher's assistance, they each gain 2 Luck points. If they helped Karisher fulfill her vow and defeat the demon, they each gain 3 Luck points.

CONTINUING THE ADVENTURE

Frygorix's defeat effectively ends the adventure, but judges can continue the events of *Dread on Demon Crown Hill* if so desired. One possibility is the restoring of Khal to life. If the judge wishes to introduce this adventure seed, Karisher speaks to the party a final time before her spirit departs:

"I feel the ties that hold me to this mortal plane failing and I must away to my fate. But I have a last request, if I may be so bold. Behold the image of my brother, Khal, transformed to stone when he and the demon clashed with spells. I do not know if he is truly dead, for I did not feel his presence in the gloomy beyond where my spirit wandered. Life may still reside within that stony form. Please, for both our sakes, seek a means to restore him to mortal flesh, be it alive or dead. He is a powerful wizard and will likely grant a grand boon to whomever restores him to life. Should no life yet remain in him, bury him in the cemetery by the walls of Castle Breger, our family estate."

The fate of Khal is left to the judge to decide as are the means to reverse his petrification. Even if no life remains in the wizard, it's been many, many years since Karisher and Khal departed their ancestral home. Who knows what state the family castle may be in or who may live there now? Such are the uncertainties of adventure in the world of *Dungeon Crawl Classics*!



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DUNGEON CRAWL CLASSICS

DREARID ON DEMON CROWN HILL

#92.5: A LEVEL 2 ADVENTURE
BY MICHAEL CURTIS

Long ago, Frygorix of the Thousand Lies, a foul demon, ruled with fear from atop a lonely tor, spreading death and plague across the land. Two brave siblings, one bearing an enchanted shield of great power, challenged the demon, vowing to slay it and free the land. In their climactic battle, black towers of six-sided stone arose from the hilltop, an eerie outcropping called the Demon Crown by some. Stories hold that the shield lies untouched within the Demon Crown, but who knows what else might dwell within those weird, dark pillars of unearthly rock?



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