



Encounters Series



Lair of the Lava Queen

by Micah Watt

Lair of the Lava Queen

Encounters Series - 001

Author: Micah Watt
Cover Art: Dean Spencer
Interior Art: Dean Spencer, Dante Cifaldi
Original Cartography: Dyson Logos
Altered Cartography: Dante Cifaldi
Supporting Content: Russ Brown

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Dungeon Specifications

Level – 8-10 (party of 4)

Best Terrain – Desert, Barrens, Cliffs

Best Climate – Hot, Arid

Lair Composition – Stone

Room Height – 25 feet (Areas 2-4, 7 & 8), 10 feet (Areas 5 & 6)

Doors – Stone, unlocked (AC 10, Hardness 8, HP 30, Break DC 25)

Illumination – Dim (Areas 2-4), None (5&6), Bright (7&8)

Backstory

The Lava Queen is a medusa that has been infused with the elements of both Fire and Earth. An outcast amongst her own kind, the Lava Queen leads a solitary existence, residing alone with her 'pets' in a high rocky region far from civilization. Still, she has ample company in the form of a constant stream of adventurers – all seeking the legendary artefact that is the cause of her unusual transformation. Rumoured to be deep within her lair is the Eye of Imix, a powerful gem infused with elemental fire.

The Lava Queen herself has spread these rumours, eager to acquire resources for her 'art', a gallery of living stone sculptures, forever captured in burning magma. The best she keeps on display, while those she deems failures are melted down, never to be recovered.

Hook

1. Rumours hit a local town or adventurer's guild that a powerful artefact of elemental fire has been disgorged in a magma vent in the nearby wilderness. It is ripe for the taking if one is simply brave enough to seek it out.
2. An associate of the characters (or one of the characters themselves) is suffering a curse or disease that defies the usual magical treatments. From their investigations/research, they have discovered an unusual cure – a gem infused with elemental fire that can 'cleansed by flame' supernatural illnesses and effects. It is said to be an exceedingly painful process, but may prove to be effective where other options have not.
3. The local climatic conditions have changed in a village the characters are passing through – with the temperatures rising steadily by 5 or so degrees

on average. This is not enough to render the place uninhabitable, but it is certainly uncomfortable, and beginning to affect crop yields. The locals have tried everything – Cattle sacrifice, witch burning, sessions of self-flagellation – to appease the 'Fire God' Imix, but nothing has worked. A hedge wizard (moments before he was burned as a witch) divined that the cause resided in a cave system a few miles out of town, but none of the villagers have the necessary skills (or courage) to explore the caves. The Mayor has sent an appeal for brave adventurers to the nearest town, figuring they can either solve the problem, or serve as the next lot of 'offerings' to Imix.



Lair of the Lava Queen

1) Approach

In the shadows of black stone cliffs you can see four tunnel entrances leading off into darkness. A strange, constant howling sound seems to emerge from the openings. Perhaps it is an effect of the wind across the cave mouths, though the air seems still out here.

The howling effect is produced from area 4, and drowns out speech and standard sounds short of shouting. Within areas 2-4 (inclusive) verbal communication is impossible beyond 10 feet and Perception checks incur a -5 circumstance penalty.

2) Tunnels

Uneven stone stairs lead down into a darkened area ahead, though some sort of glow orange can be seen in the distance, like torchlight. The air is warm here, and gets hotter as you progress

3) Ledge

This tunnel opens up on one side, dropping away to overlook a lower passage. Two misshapen stalactites dominate the ledge, and seem to generate some sort of internal orange glow that can be seen through cracks in the rock. The howling is louder here, and has taken on a decidedly sinister aspect

A closer examination will reveal them to be statues similar to those in 4 (see below for intimate description). The statues here are the rough shapes of a male human carrying a bow and a male dwarf carrying a crossbow.

4) Gallery

The tunnels open into a huge cavern lit by numerous oddly-shaped stalactites that give off an orange glow. The glow emanates within the rock formations, shining out through cracks in the stone, though all seem to have consistently larger openings toward their tops, and occasional cracks elsewhere. It gives the impression of a dozen miniature volcanoes within the chamber. The heat here is oppressive, and breathing the warm air is unpleasant.

The howling has increased, and now seems more like a multitude of sources blending together rather than a single source, and has taken on the sinister aspect of voices screaming in pain.

Anyone in the chamber must make a DC 15 Will save or be shaken) until they leave the complex (or the effect is negated by magic or other effects).

Sure enough a closer examination of the statues reveals them to be roughly shaped humanoids. They appear to be carved from cracked volcanic rock, but rather than being smooth like cooled magma, they have rough surfaces that crumble to sharp chunks and slivers if touched. The rock also leaves behind a fine ash that seems to cling tenaciously to surfaces (and creatures). The 'statues' are all humanoids in various poses and carrying various weapons (see the list below). All of them have expressions of anguish on their faces, and the howling emanates from their open mouths. The largest sources of light are emitted from empty eye sockets, mouths and ears, while the odd crack in their 'bodies' lets out a little illumination. Any statue handled roughly collapses into fragments and ceases howling and shedding light.

The Lava Queen is here, along with an Earth elemental servant. She is perusing her collection and 'cleaning out' those that no longer interest her. At her gesture the earth elemental topples various statues and throws the fragments into area 4D. If the PCs are stealthy she may not be immediately aware of them (Perception +16). If & when they are detected, or combat ensues, she directs her 'pets' to attack (the elemental and the mephits at 4A), flees to area 5 (via 4C or 4D) at the earliest possible opportunity, heals up if injured (via her *Cleanse By Flame* ability) and then seeks to circle around and ambush the PCs from behind using the secret door at 4B. If the battle goes against her she will try to flee and make her final stand at area 7 (See **Last Stand**).

Earth Elemental, Large - HP 68

There are 16 statues marked on the map, two of which are in area 3 and already described. Assuming the PCs eventually have time to examine them, they can make out the following details. The GM can arrange as liked, change or remove any destroyed in the battle.

- A male halfling brandishing a two handed axe over his head.
- A male goblin trying to find something in a large sack.
- A creature that appears to be a nightmarish amalgamation of bear and humanoid (a druid caught mid shapechange).
- A female human in plate armour with no arms

(snapped off and shattered with rough handling – slated for disposal).

- A male dwarf in robes carrying a staff.
- A female elf in chainmail mid motion drawing a sword.
- A male human in leather peering forward, with a stone torch in one hand.
- A female tiefling (identifiable by her horns) with hands upraised as if pleading.
- A female human in a strange mid-climb pose (this one is leaning up against a wall).
- A male elf in plate armour on his back, as if frozen just after falling.
- A male gnome lurching forward with twin daggers, frozen mid thrust.
- A lizardman carrying a greatsword looking over its left shoulder.
- A female human in leather armour carrying a halfling man in her arms.
- A male half in a breastplate elf grasping a holy symbol in one hand (choose prominent campaign deity) and reaching out with the other.

Note that despite their screams, the creatures turned to magma are actually petrified. They can be restored via the usual methods (stone to flesh, break enchantment). If restored they are alive (unless 'broken' in which case those injuries manifest immediately) and grateful, though they have little of value (all their equipment is mundane).

Alternately, the DM could switch out some of the above with recognizable campaign NPCs that have gone missing, and/or rival adventurers the PCs know.

4A) This raised area currently houses two bored magma mephits, who are doodling on the floor and walls and making small magma sculptures. They were sent here by the Lava Queen as a 'time out' for causing mischief in Area 5. They will attack intruders at their mistress's command.

Magma Mephit (2) – HP 19

4B) There is a secret door here, cunningly concealed in the uneven rock surface. If found (Perception DC 20) it can be opened from both sides.

4C) There is a dust mephit 'cleaning' here, essentially

drawing in the ubiquitous ash generated by the volcanic petrification of intruders. It's job is to keep the ash from getting too bad in the lower areas of the complex (areas 5-7). It will attack intruders at its mistress' command.

Dust Mephit – HP 19

4D) The bottom of this area is covered with scattered rock fragments. The magma crawler that resides in area 8 finds the results of the Lava Queen's petrification ability delicious. Statue fragments are a treat for it, and it will consume them in preference to any other rock type. After an 'accident' involving one of her favourite statues, and the 'chastisement' (beating) that followed, the crawler has learned that it may only eat from the stone left in **4D**. It slowly consumes what's left here, eking out its treats to savor them.

There is a hot air current that rises off the magma in area 8, and is funneled up the narrow passage here. Anyone traversing this passage (or remaining in it) suffers 1d6 points of fire (heat) damage each turn. Resistance and immunity to fire applies to this damage.

Note – this passage is more natural than the rest. The 'stairs' marked on the map are natural rock shelves rather than carved like the rest of the complex.

5) Living Room

The Lava Queen still needs all the comforts a girl requires, even if she is a dangerous, loner, shut-in with too many mephit pets and a penchant for petrifying guests.

This room has a highly polished obsidian 'nest' in the centre, where the Lava Queen sleeps. Against the east wall is a huge silver mirror, where she may gaze at her reflection for hours without petrifying (see her statistics below).

In the south west corner a number of shelves have been carved into the rock, and act as rest alcoves for her mephit pets. There are six alcoves in all.

Various shelves line the other walls. Most contain various semiprecious stones or statuary carved from obsidian or basalt (around 300gp value in total for the 200lbs of miscellaneous carvings). There are also some fine artisan's tools for stone and gem cutting. On one

shelf is a display of half a dozen necklaces, pendants, bracelets and other jewelry, made from wrought iron and gems (6 pieces each worth 100gp). There are three display stands empty, and 2 crude figures that look to be mephitis made from wrought iron with gemstone heads (worth 25gp each). These used to be fine jewelry, but the mephitis currently being punished (Area 4A) decided to melt them down and turn them into 'mephitis dolls', much to the Lava Queen's displeasure.

6) Storage room

Not everything that adventurers bring with them is turned to stone. Often they will drop an item, or lose it mid battle (or leave it outside on mounts). The Queen has extracted gems from jewelry (found in area 5), and stockpiled anything else that might be of future use here (mounts and other unwanted items go into the magma pit at Area 8).

The storage room currently has a number of sacks, packs and saddle bags containing coins (326cp, 174sp, 267gp and 29pp), a *mithril longsword* +2, 3 *arrows* +3 and a pouch with 2 potions (*cure critical wounds* and *fly* - at 7th level). There are 2 earthen ware jugs, one containing solidified gold (around 30gp raw value) and the other solidified silver (20gp raw value). There is also a slightly singed 10 foot pole, a 20' length of chain and a bag of sea shells.

The Lava Queen has found no use for these items to date, and cannot drink the potions (they evaporate as she tries to drink them from the extreme temperatures inside her body).

7) Worship Room - Imix

The walls of this room are highly polished obsidian, painstakingly carved with runes and images of fire and flame. Four pillars of the same stone reach to the ceiling, and an idol of dancing flame carved from basalt rests in the centre of the room. The chamber is lit with a hellish red glow cast from the open area to the northeast. The ambient temperature is scorching, your skin drying and slowly burning.

For each turn spent in this room, creatures take 1d6 fire (heat) damage. There are two fire mephitis here polishing the walls and grumbling and throwing insults at each other. If there are intruders and the Lava Queen is not present, they flee into Area 8, trying to lure the intruders to where the magma crawler can reach them (without exiting the lava pool). If the Magma Queen is present

they follow her commands.

If the Lava Queen escapes here to make her last stand, she moves to the edge of area 8 to lure the PCs within range of the Crawler, and orders the mephitis to fly in behind the intruders (exiting via 4D if necessary) to harry stragglers or casters.

Fire Mephitis (2) - HP 19

8) Magma Pool

A roiling, bubbling pool of lava churns here as if alive and agitated. The heat radiating off it is blistering.

A magma crawler makes its home here, something of a pet for the Lava Queen. It will rear up and attack anyone that isn't her, or a mephitis, that comes within 10 feet of the edge of the pool. The magma crawler may attempt to pull grappled victims toward the lava (using the drag maneuver), but risks attacks of opportunity to grapple as it lacks any specialist feats for that purpose.

Just being within the area causes 1d6 points of fire (heat) damage per round, and actually touching or contacting the lava deals 2d6 per contact, 20d6 per round of immersion, for 1d3 rounds after exposure ceases ½ damage applies (1d6 or 10d6)

Magma Crawler - HP 95 (New Monster)

Last Stand

When the Lava Queen finally falls, her body immediately petrifies into the same ashy, volcanic rock as her victims, then cracks, shattering into pieces and scatters across the floor. All her equipment remains, collapsing into the ash pile. Gleaming in the heart of the ash pile is a tiny orange gem that seems to glow with inner fire - **The Eye of Imix**. All the creatures in the caverns that are still alive depart, no longer drawn to the place by the Lava Queen's presence. The statues of her victims also crumble into ash piles.

Finally the ambient temperature immediately drops to warm, but no longer scorching, and the magma pool begins to cool and harden, slowly over the next hour becoming hard and cool enough to touch (losing 2d6 damage per 6 minutes).

The Eye of Imix (minor artifact)

Aura strong transmutation; **CL** 20th

Slot none; **Weight** -

The Eye of Imix is a tiny orange gem that is hot to the touch (no matter what material is placed between flesh and gem).

Cleanse By Flame (1/day) - This ability causes the touched individual (requiring a touch attack if the creature is unwilling) to be wreathed in orange flame for a number of rounds determined by the owner, up to a maximum of 6. For each round engulfed, the recipient is healed 10 hp damage, or cured of one poison, disease, curse or ongoing magical effect (their choice). Each round so engulfed the recipient is *helpless*, and gains the *fatigued* condition from rounds 1-3, becomes *exhausted* if affected for 4 or more rounds and if affected for 6 rounds must make a DC 20 Fortitude save or die. *Fatigue* and *exhaustion* gained in this way can only be removed by rest, not by magic or other means. An unwilling creature can make a Fortitude saving throw each round to try to resist the effect, with the DC starting at 14 on the first round, and increasing by 1 each subsequent round.

Creatures immune to fire gain the beneficial effects, but not the conditions.

The Eye of Imix is at all times monitored by Imix, who can send visions or telepathic communication to the owner (acts as a *sending* spell). If Imix favours the owner, he may offer it the opportunity to serve him, becoming a slave to his will. Any creature agreeing to such a deal must swallow the gem, gains unique abilities as determined by the GM and becomes an NPC under the GM's control.

Destruction

The eye must be swallowed by an elemental creature of Water or Ice. The creature must immediately, and every day thereafter, make a DC 20 Fortitude saving throw or die. If the creature successfully survives for 1 month (in terrible agony) the eye is extinguished permanently.

The Lava Queen

This creature appears as a woman from the waist up and a serpent from the waist down, with serpents for hair. Her entire form radiates heat, and looks like a slowly cooling lava flow. Despite her stony appearance she moves with the easy grace

of a serpent.

Lava Queen, Unique Medusa

CR 10

XP 6,400

LE medium monstrous humanoid (earth, fire)

Init +8; Senses all-around vision, darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +18

Aura blistering aura (20 ft., DC 20)

DEFENSE

AC 19, touch 14, flat-footed 15 (+4 Dex, +5 natural)

Hp 114 (12d10+48)

Fort +7, **Ref** +11, **Will** +8

Immune fire

Weaknesses vulnerability to cold

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee 2 claws +14 (1d6+2+1d6 fire), snake bite +11 (1d4+poison)

Ranged lavaball +16 (2d6+4 fire)

Special Attacks petrifying gaze

STATISTICS

Str 15, **Dex** 18, **Con** 18, **Int** 12, **Wis** 13, **Cha** 15

Base Atk +12; **CMB** +14; **CMD** 28 (can't be tripped)

Feats Improved Initiative, Multiattack, Point-Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Weapon Focus (Bite)

Skills Climb +19, Intimidate +12, Perception +18, Stealth +17, Swim +19; Racial Modifiers +4 Perception, Climb +4, Swim +4

Languages Common, Ignan, Terran

SPECIAL ABILITIES

All-Around Vision (Ex) The Lava Queen's snake hair allows her to see in all directions. She gains a +4 racial bonus to Perception checks and cannot be flanked.

Blistering Aura (Ex) Waves of heat pour off of the Lava Queen. Any creature within 20 feet of the Lava Queen at the beginning of its turn takes 1d6 nonlethal damage and becomes fatigued from exposure to heat. A DC 20 Fortitude save negates the fatigue and reduces the nonlethal damage by half. This does not cause a creature that is already fatigued to become exhausted. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Lava body (Ex) The Lava Queen is made up of elemental lava. This allows her to create small masses that she can hurl at her opponents (see lavaball attack above), as well as for other purposes. In addition, when struck lava like 'blood' is released, causing 1d6 fire damage to attackers unless they have reach weapons, or make a DC 20 Dexterity saving throw to avoid. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Petrifying Gaze (Su) Turn to stone permanently, 30ft,

Fortitude DC 20 negates. The save DC is Constitution-based. Unlike most medusa, the Lava Queen cannot be affected by her own gaze.

Poison (Ex) Bite – injury; save Fort DC 20; frequency 1/round for 6 rounds; effect 1d3 Str; cure 2 consecutive saves. The save DC is Constitution-based.

The Lava Queen is a unique medusa, combining the qualities of both her original form and that of an elemental. This additional power has made her arrogant, and creatures of elemental fire and earth are drawn to her. Unlike most of medusa, she is not subject to her own gaze, and so has become vain and preening.

Magma Crawler

This monstrosity resembles a red-skinned cuttlefish with extended tentacles and waves of heat radiating from its body.

Magma Crawler

CR 8

XP 4,800

CE Large outsider (earth, extraplanar, fire)

Init +6; Senses darkvision 60 ft., tremorsense 60 ft.; Perception +15

Aura blistering aura (20 ft., DC 14)

DEFENSE

AC 21, touch 11, flat-footed 19 (+2 Dex, +10 natural, –1 size)

Hp 95 (10d10+40)

Fort +7, **Ref** +9, **Will** +10

Immune fire; **Resist** acid 10

Weaknesses vulnerability to cold

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., burrow 30 ft., bore

Melee 2 arms +15 (1d6+5), 4 tentacles +13 (1d6+2 plus grab), bite +15 (1d8+5)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft. (20 ft. with arms and tentacles)

Special Attacks fiery rend (2 arms, 1d6+7 plus 2d6 fire), magma jet (2d6 fire, DC 19)

STATISTICS

Str 20, **Dex** 15, **Con** 18, **Int** 11, **Wis** 16, **Cha** 9

Base Atk +10; **CMB** +16 (+20 grapple); **CMD** 28

Feats Cleave, Cleaving Finish^{UC}, Improved Initiative, Multiattack, Power Attack

Skills Escape Artist +15, Knowledge (arcana) +13, Knowledge (planes) +13, Perception +15, Sense Motive +15, Stealth +11

Languages Common, Ignan, Terran

ECOLOGY

Environment any (Plane of Fire)

Organization solitary or pair

Treasure none

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Blistering Aura (Ex) Waves of heat pour off of a magma crawler. Any creature within 20 feet of a magma crawler at the beginning of its turn takes 1d6 nonlethal damage and becomes fatigued from exposure to heat. A DC 14 Fortitude save negates the fatigue and reduces the nonlethal damage by half. This does not cause a creature that is already fatigued to become exhausted. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Bore (Ex) A magma crawler can burrow through lava or other forms of earth, even solid rock, at its full burrow speed. When burrowing through non-molten earth or stone a magma crawler leaves behind a 10 foot diameter circular tunnel. This tunnel has extremely smooth sides where the rock has been melted.

Fiery Rend (Su) When a magma crawler strikes the same target with both arm melee attacks it can tear the target apart with a violent twisting motion. This also releases a fiery blast from the creature's arms, adding 2d6 points of fire damage.

Magma Jet (Su) When it is in contact with a pool or stream of lava, a magma crawler can shoot a stream of lava at its opponents. Any creatures in a 50 foot line take 2d6 points of fire damage from the lava. A DC 19 Reflex save reduces the damage by half. The save DC is Constitution-based.

By Russ Brown



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Is it just me or is it hot in here?

The ambient temperature is rising. According to the locals, some strange creature has taken up residence in a nearby cave, and inhuman howling echoes through the region. Maybe its just the wind?

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