

FOR FOUR PCS OF AT LEAST 9TH-LEVEL

# FIREFALLS OF GHOSS



A 5E WARLOCK MIDGARD ADVENTURE  
BY JON SAWATSKY

# FIREFALLS OF GHOSS

## Designer's Note

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You can adapt this lair to challenge PCs of 9th level and up. Use the location as you see fit, but keep in mind that the players should be at least 15th level before facing Phosus. While portions of the dragon's horde may be accessible by defeating his guardians, the PCs must defeat Phosus to obtain all five great treasures described in *Warlock, no. 4 "The Dragon Empire"*.

## Background

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As he fled angry wyverns some years ago, an ambitious sorcerer, named Ghoss, discovered a great secret in the Dragoncoil mountains. A naturally formed tunnel led from the upper world into the belly of the mountains. Hinting at what lay below, hot sulfuric air rose through the tunnel. Slowly the sorcerer descended until he came to a massive cavern where the stone path ended and looked out over a spectacular set of magma falls. He climbed onto a ledge near the falls and peered down; the flows of liquid stone fell away into unseen depths.

It was on that ledge that the sorcerer discovered the most intriguing thing of all—a thinning in the veil between Midgard and the Eleven Hells. Peering through the magical gateway into the blasted landscape beyond, Ghoss was overwhelmed at the opportunity fate had presented.

He sold all he owned and hired builders to construct a fortress for him in the stone walls beside the firefalls. Within that fortress, he began a project of his own: a magical focus, capable of harnessing the powerful energies cast by the falls and the gateway on the ledge. As the builders finished their work, so too did Ghoss. Alas, the sorcerer's fortunes soon turned. On the eve of the fortress' completion, during the celebration marking the event, a slumbering malevolence awoke. A fire dragon, Phosus the Black Flame, heard the revelers singing and drinking above him. Rising from the magma and shadow, the dragon found Ghoss' fortress, but most importantly, sensed the power of the sorcerer's crystalline focus. Roaring, Phosus incinerated the celebrants in a single breath—sending those who were not reduced to ash into a mad frenzy. The dragon had claimed its lair.

Thanks to his magic, Ghoss survived and, creeping from the shadows, confronted the dragon. Ghoss made a bargain with Phosus: in exchange for five great treasures, Ghoss

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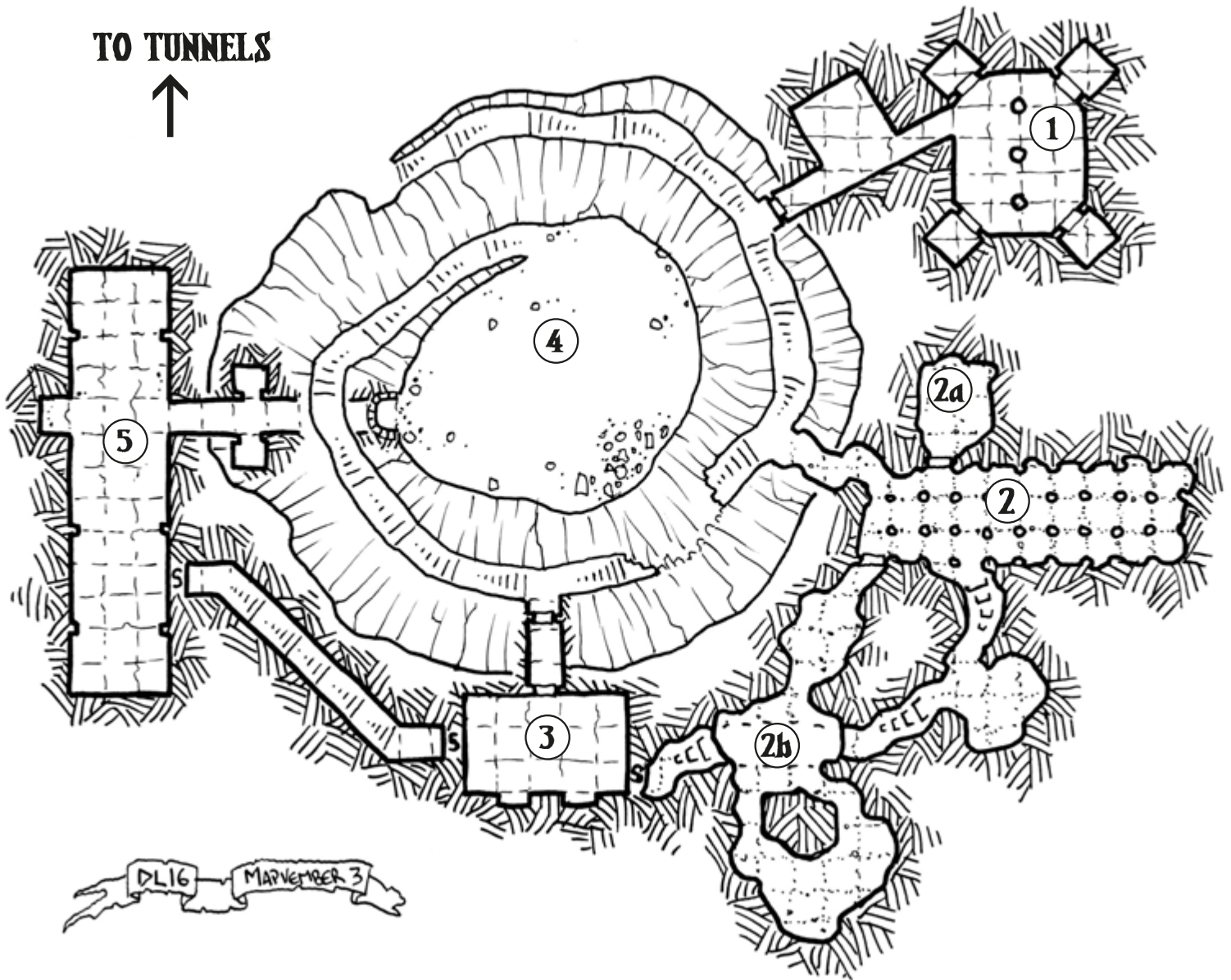
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**Open Game Content:** The Open content in this book includes all monster stats for the Incinis.

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would have access to the focus. The dragon, a glowing grin on its visage, agreed. So Ghoss spent several years acquiring the rarest treasures, stolen from the temples and elder priests of the gods. When he presented the final such treasure, the dragon reduced him to ash. Rich from his treachery, Phosus

drew guardians to his lair from the depths of the mountains and through the gateway to the Eleven Hells.

The tunnel leading to the fortress, its focus, and its master was lost, but tales persist of Ghoss' misfortune and the treasures held by the dragon.

**GM Note:** This lair is intended to be paired with the monster, "Phosus, Dread Wyrms of the Falls", published in *Warlock 4: The Dragon Empire*. Phosus' stat block and treasures are described therein; however, you can use a standard flame dragon (*Tome of Beasts*, p.128) and your preferred treasures instead. When a creature's name appears in **bold**, that's a cue that its stat block appears in the *Monster Manual*. If the stat block appears in the *Tome of Beasts*, it is noted as such.

**MAP:** [CLICK HERE TO DOWNLOAD THIS MAP FOR YOUR VIRTUAL TABLE TOP.](#)



## Sharp Hooks and Enticing Stories

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- A call goes out for adventurers to visit the Temple of Loving Mercy in Nuria Natal. The high priestess has recently discovered who stole the Charms of Lada so many years ago (Ghoss) and has learned of his fortress in the mountains. She offers the party 10,000 gp to recover the artifact, and she provides a vague map describing several possible places they might find the entrance to the fortress. She knows nothing about Phosus or the fate of Ghoss.
- While travelling through or near the Dragoncoil mountains, the party is enveloped in a thick cloud of sulfuric smoke. When it clears, they can spot its origin: a plain looking cave midway up a mountain.

## Travelling to the Entrance

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The entrance to Phosus' lair is located deep inside **wyvern** territory. Most creatures, including true dragons stay away from the area, and so the wyvern population has grown unchecked. The inhabitants and guardians of the fortress occasionally find their way to the surface. **Fire elementals**, **ash drakes** (*Tome of Beasts*, p.149), and assorted demons or devils can be found roaming the area around the tunnel entrance. The regional effects of a flame dragon lair (*Tome of Beasts*, p.131) apply to the area, adding to the overall challenge of finding the entrance.

## Apes of Hell

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The entrance, its cave, and immediate surrounding area are controlled by a fierceness of **apau perape** (*Tome of Beasts*, p.75) demons who devour anything that draws near. The demons were drawn to the infernal energy cast by the focus and the gateway of the firefalls, but they were not strong enough to challenge Phosus or his guardians. They occasionally sneak into the fortress below and suckle what magic they can before fleeing back to their surface home. The demons are led by a cunning and especially strong specimen, named Keem' Nak (17 AC, maximum hp), whose spellcasting is more powerful than his underlings (Keem' Nak casts spells at base level +1, spell save DC 15). The apes travel in troops of two to six, and they cannot be reasoned with.

## The Tunnel

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The tunnel is actually a series of tunnels that are connected to natural caverns of various sizes and shapes. While the party might get lost for a time in the tunnels, they have an advantage in navigation: the right way always descends deeper. The darakhul have found a way into the tunnels from their many passages below the world of Midgard. They occupy several of the caverns, and though they plan to assault the fortress and the dragon eventually, they remain hidden for now. The darakhul force consists of fifteen **darakhul ghouls** (*Tome of Beasts*, p.216), six **imperial ghouls** (*Tome of Beasts*, p.220), and three **iron ghouls** (*Tome of Beasts*, p.221) who lead the expedition.

## Area Descriptions

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Once the party successfully navigates the tunnels, they reach the fortress constructed by Ghoss. The following descriptions present the setting, possible encounters, and items located in each area within the fortress.

### 1. RUINED BARRACKS

These connected chambers were intended to host Ghoss' mercenary guards. The area is filled with incinerated humanoid remains striking poses of terror and pain. Touching one of the grim remains destroys it, and it falls into a pile of ash on the stone floor. The ruined barracks are occupied by a **malakbel demon** (*Tome of Beasts*, p.78), who teleports in and out of the fortress at will to hunt the hellish apes at the entrance. The demon has adorned the walls throughout the fortress with infernal symbol tableaux made from the remains of its prey. The barracks are heavily decorated in this way.

**Treasure.** The malakbel gives anything of value to Phosus in exchange for allowing it to lair in the fortress. It has kept a suit of **dwarven plate** armor with a highly reflective surface. The demon enjoys watching its own fiery reflection in the armor's breastplate. Higher-level parties find the demon is joined by fire elementals in combat.

### 2. THRONE HALL

The audacious sorcerer had a throne hall built for himself. The ashes of Ghoss sit in a pile on the seat of throne, undisturbed since his incineration all those years ago. Ghoss had created spectral guardians (*Tome of Beasts*, p.358) to defend his throne room, which they continue to do. They stand beside the columns leading to the throne, attacking any who would examine it. No fewer than two such guardians watch over the hall.

## 2A. BANNER ROOM

Ghoss, convinced his future was filled with power and conquest, had a symbol created and stitched on countless banners. The banners were to be hung throughout the fortress, but instead, they are still in heaps in this chamber. A DC 17 Intelligence (History) check recalls a portion of the story told in the background (GM's discretion).

## 2B. CAVERNS OF SMOKE

The walls of these caverns were barely worked, and their natural shape remains intact. Ghoss' intention was to keep trained hounds in this area, but today it is occupied by Incinis (see Appendix), a strange elemental who rose from the nearby firefalls a short time after Phosus. The elemental protects the secret passage to the Hoard Room (area 3). Incinis is in awe of the dragon, but he covets Phosus' greater treasures which Incinis would devour to grow in power. The elemental might be convinced to let the party pass unharmed through his domain in exchange for one of the great treasures kept in the Chamber of Wonders (area 5). Higher-level parties find Incinis joined by several ash drakes (*Tome of Beasts*, p.149) in combat.

## 3. HOARD ROOM

This chamber is filled with much of the coin and valuables of Phosus' hoard.

**Treasure.** 13,000 gp, 17,000 sp, a chest of cut gems of various types (40 x 50-gp value stones) gleam in piles on the floor here.

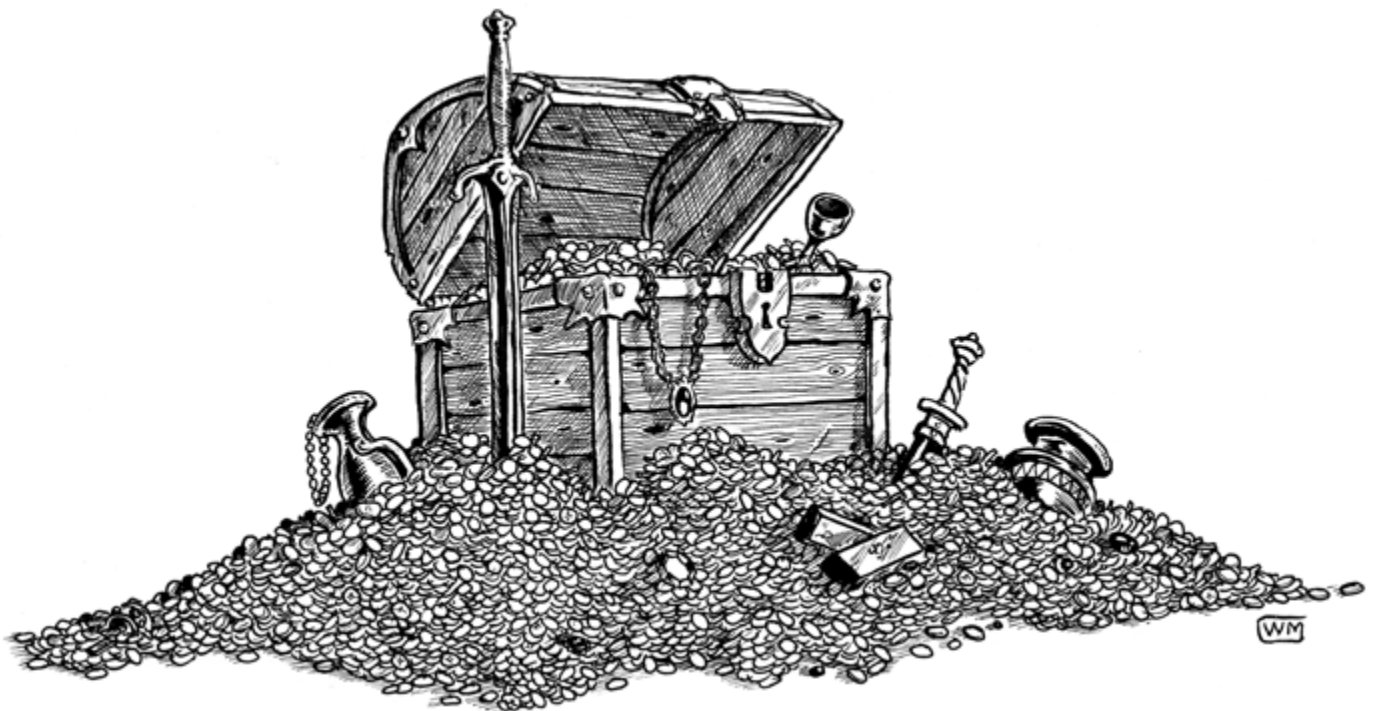
## 4. THE FOCUS

The large, natural cavern at the heart of Ghoss' fortress contains both the sorcerer's focus and the dread wyrm itself. Phosus rarely leaves the focus unguarded, preferring to sleep beside the glowing crystalline structure. Adventurers who would defeat the dragon must face it here in the center of the fortress. The roar from the nearby firefalls overwhelms them as they enter the chamber. The ceiling here is nearly 200 ft. from the floor of this cavern, allowing Phosus to take to the air above the focus and rain fire down upon its opponents.

**The Focus.** The focus is actually quite delicate and easy to break with physical attacks (AC 14, damage threshold 10, 60 hp), but it is entirely immune to magic. A PC who uses an action to study the focus (even from afar) in combination with a DC 17 Intelligence (Arcana) check unlocks following use of the focus: once during the combat, any spellcaster in the party within 20 ft. of the focus may attempt to draw on its power. A spellcaster who does so regains 1d2 spell slots of any level they wish.

## 5. CHAMBER OF WONDERS

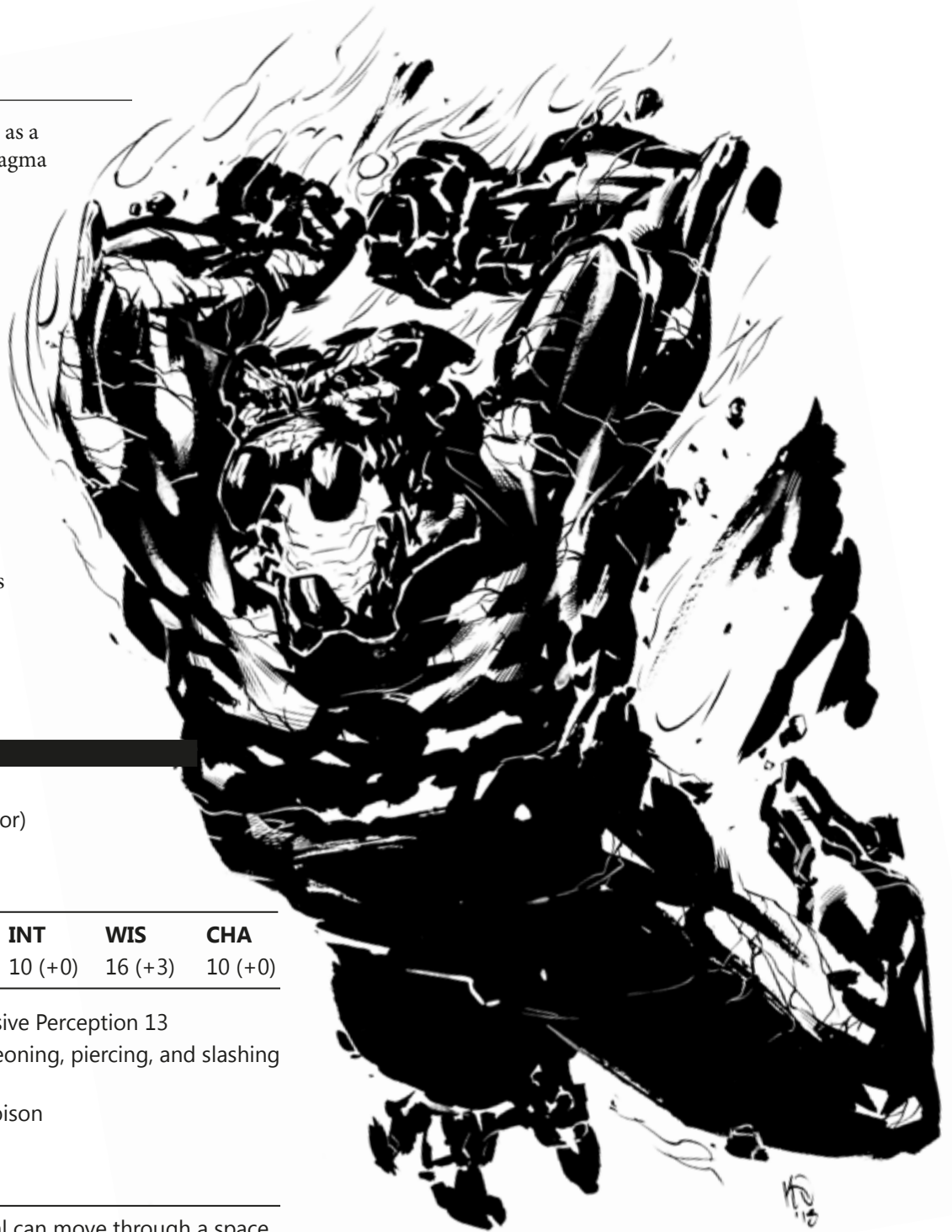
Ghoss had plans to store his own wondrous hoard in this deepest hall. Phosus uses it to do the same. The five great treasures offered to the dragon by the fated sorcerer (Warlock # 4, "The Dragon Empire") are found here. Be sure to reward the party with any other magical treasures they deserve for successfully slaying Phosus.



# Incinis

This unique elemental appears as a large humanoid made from magma and fire. Its skin is pitch black, with glowing cracks forming and closing as it moves. Its face is without features, except for a great flaming maw that sputters and smokes as it speaks.

**Curious.** Incinis is a naturally curious creature, and though it savors the taste of the living, it is likely to greet newcomers before attacking. Incinis is not naive or easily fooled, and it resorts to violence the instant it senses treachery or lies.



## INCINIS

*Large elemental, neutral evil*

**Armor Class** 17 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 171 (18d10+72)

**Speed** 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	20 (+5)	18 (+4)	10 (+0)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., Passive Perception 13

**Damage Resistances** bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons

**Damage Immunities** fire, poison

**Languages** Common, Ignan

**Challenge** 10 (5,900 XP)

**Magma Form.** The elemental can move through a space as narrow as 1-inch wide without squeezing. A creature that touches the elemental or hits it with a melee attack while within 5 feet of it takes 5 (1d10) fire damage and must succeed on a DC 16 Strength check or have the weapon torn from its hand. Creatures using weapons that cannot be torn free take instead an additional 5 (1d10) fire damage on a failed save. A creature can attempt to retrieve their weapon by using an action to repeat the ability check.

## ACTIONS

**Multiattack:** Incinis makes two magma fist attacks.

**Magma Fist:** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 10 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 12 (2d8 +4) bludgeoning damage and 12 (2d8 +4) fire damage.

**Wave of Magma** (recharge 5-6) As an action, Incinis transforms into a wave of magma, moving its speed in a straight line ahead of it. Creatures struck by Incinis as he moves this way must make a DC 15 Dexterity save or take 21 (6d6) fire damage and be knocked prone and carried with Incinis, arriving next to him when he stops. A successful save negates all effects.



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