The Abhuman Effigy

"The Abhuman Effigy" is an adventure scenario for 6th level 5e characters set in a series of caves behind the Fetid Falls of Sunken Revvia below the City of Arches. This scenario works with any 5e-based system including D&D 2014, D&D 2024, *Level Up Advanced 5e*, *Tales of the Valiant*, or others. It can also be modified to support other fantasy RPGs.

This scenario is part of the Key of Worlds campaign arc in the *City of Arches* sourcebook beginning with the *Scroll of Akrave* scenario.

This scenario is the second of three scenarios leading to the Brazier of Grayon – one of three braziers locking the extradimensional vault of the Key of Worlds.

You can modify this scenario to run as a stand-alone adventure in any campaign or setting.

This Isn't a Typical Adventure

This scenario isn't laid out like a traditional adventure. Instead, it presents ingredients to use and a scaffold around which to build your own adventure for your own group, campaign, and story. This scenario gives you adventure hooks, histories, secrets and clues, notable NPCs, potential encounters, locations, and potential treasure.

Each section in this scenario suggests how to use these components.

Brazier of Grayon

This scenario is the second of three scenarios leading to the Brazier of Grayon. Two other three-scenario paths lead to the other two Blackfire Braziers – the Brazier of the Betrothed and the Brazier of the Nameless King.

At this point in the campaign, the characters possess one of the two Blackfire artifacts – the *Sword of Irixthius* or the *Staff of Servlyn* – each of which can ignite the Blackfire Braziers. The characters also learned the locations of the three braziers in the *Lake of Monoliths* scenario.

This scenario assumes the characters chose the path to find the Brazier of Grayon and made their way through Sunken Revvia to the Fetid Falls. At this point they've learned that the shattered keep of Grayon lies beyond the caverns of the Fetid Falls.

During the character's adventures, another rival group such as the Children of Ibraxus or the Knights of the Nameless King might seek another brazier. Thus, the characters likely complete *two* of these Blackfire Brazier paths while skipping the third after their rivals lit the remaining Brazier.

If this is the first brazier the characters seek, they're likely 6th level when they begin this scenario. If they've already found and ignited another brazier, they may be 9th level. In the latter case, you may want to increase combat encounter difficulties by including bigger monsters, more monsters, or both. Alternatively, you can leave it as it is and give the characters an easier series of encounters. Decide what's right for you, your players, and the pacing of the game.

The Grimlock Template

This scenario focuses on a clan of grimlocks who worship the White Hand, a deific elf mage who came from another world. There are many different types of grimlocks, including the standard **grimlock,** grimlock **ogres** and grimlock **hill giants**. There are also grimlock **mages**, **cult fanatics**, **veterans**, and **scouts**.

For this scenario you can reskin humanoid or giant stat blocks into a grimlocks that share the traits from the normal grimlock stat block. Reskinning stat blocks gives you flexibility to change the challenge of this scenario should the characters arrive here at 6th level or 9th level.

Whatever their size or skills, grimlocks share the following traits:

- Blindsight 30 ft.
- Gray skin-tones – some darker, some lighter.
- Advantage on stealth checks while in rocky terrain.
- Tattooed and ritually scarred skin.
- Grim trophies taken from other humanoids they've defeated.
- Weapons and armor of bone, wood, and iron or stolen patchwork armor from defeated foes.

Scenario History

Tens of thousands of years ago, abhuman worshippers of the primordial Gthuun hid in the depths from this godly entity who walked the surface above. After the primordial's death, they became a ghost-like people – continuing to hide in their caves worshipping their dark god while the rest of the humanoids evolved in the wake of the fall of primordials. Small clans of these primordial-worshipping grimlocks hide in caves around the region of the City of Arches – one of which lives in caves behind the Fetid Falls of the fallen city of Sunken Revvia. Over thousands of years, the grimlocks carved the rock wall behind the waterfall into the image of the primordial Gthuun – called the Abhuman Effigy by those who behold it.

During the rise of the Nameless King and in the thousand years after his fall, this small grimlock clan was left alone. Attempts to root them out resulted in brutal deaths for those hunting the abhumans and for

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those in power, the risk did not seem worth the reward.

Two centuries ago, a figure stepped through an archway in Sunken Revvia – a young elf dressed in a white shift. In her confused wanderings, she entered the caves of the Fetid Falls. Unlike any other outsider, the grimlocks did not approach her with violence, but instead reverence. They lay prostrate in front of her as she stepped into the Abhuman Effigy. Since that day, the grimlocks worship the elf as a god returned, referring to her as the White Hand.

Scenario Start

The characters may come to the Abhuman Effigy in a few ways:

- The characters learn from contacts in Sunken Revvia that an ancient passage deep in the caves of the Abhuman Effigy leads to the natural chamber housing the Citadel of Grayon. The characters must travel through the Abhuman Effigy to reach the cavern surrounding the Citadel of Grayon.
- Roselyn Zeshe, spymaster of the Queen, believes that the White Hand poses a threat to the city above. She says the White Hand plans to send her brutal followers to the city above, bathing the streets in blood. She seeks adventurers willing to infiltrate the Abhuman Effigy and terminate the threat.
- Garland Willowmane had visions of the White Hand coming to the surface of the City of Arches with an artifact hidden by the grimlocks of the Fetid Falls – an artifact, a small white glass flower, that can call down the will of Gthuun and destroy the city. She seeks heroes to travel to the Abhuman Effigy and recover this artifact before the White Hand can use it to destroy the city.

Secrets of the Effigy

Deliver the following secrets and clues as the characters delve into the Abhuman Effigy. Characters might discover these clues from ancient text scrawled on the walls, stone tablets found throughout the caves, an understanding of the religions surrounding the primordials, and from other explorers of the area. The characters need not discover every secret – think of secrets like treasure uncovered as the characters explore the crypts.

- The grimlocks of the Abhuman Effigy have been there for tens of thousands of years.
- Each clan of grimlocks is often small and separate from the others, hidden in caves all throughout the mountains of Skyreach. Some clans are peaceful with a rich and ancient history. Others are brutal, sacrificing humanoids, and even their own kind, to appease their primordial gods. The clan of the Abhuman Effigy are of the latter.
- Two hundred years ago, an elf stepped through an archway in Sunken Revvia and walked into the caves of the Abhuman Effigy. Instead of slaying her, the grimlocks worshipped her as a walking goddess.
- There are many different types of grimlocks, from smaller humanoid grimlocks to hulking grimlock giants. Some attack without care, others are quite skillful with their weapons.
- The grimlocks used to worship a primordial entity known as Gthuun. The Abhuman Effigy was carved over centuries to pay homage to this godlike being who once walked the earth.
- A crumbling passage in the back chambers of the Abhuman Effigy leads to a large natural cavern containing Shattered Keep of Grayon.
- Several primordials once walked the lands over a hundred thousand years ago. These included Ix the Sky Sunderer, Gthuun of the Outside, Ovelek the Gray Worm, and Tarryx the World Ender.
- Gthuun and Ovelek joined together to defeat Ix. In doing so, they tore open the sky. In doing so, the sky and the region became a thin border between worlds.
- The White Hand is said to hold a piece of the heart of Gthuun and could use it to awaken the primordial from its hundred-thousand-year slumber.
- The White Hand has a knife covered in blood she brought with her from another world. This blade acts as a key to a telepathic force preventing anyone from entering or exiting the upper caves to the chamber of Grayon.

Key NPCs

The following is a list of key NPCs for this adventure.

- **Queen Asharena – The White Hand.** An elven **mage** (or **archmage**) who stepped into Sunken Revvia from another world. Asharena has little memory of her former life other than that she was betrayed and that feeling of betrayal stayed with her ever since. She has full command over the grimlocks of the Abhuman Effigy but cares little for them.
- **Ryvan Stonebrissle – gnome explorer**. An explorer of the great mysteries beneath the city, Ryvan became aware of the grimlocks of the white hand and their walking goddess. He managed to survive his encounter with the grimlocks and now chronicles the words of the White Hand. Ryvan is always one step away from being disemboweled by the grimlocks and having his entrails ceremonially boiled in worship of the White Hand.

- **Sister Gnarlfang.** A **green hag mage** who used to command the grimlocks but lost her command when the White Hand came to the chambers. Gnarlfang now acts as speaker for the White Hand but secretly wishes the queen's demise.

Encounters in the Effigy

The grimlocks, their "domesticated" beasts, and several other lurking monsters dwell in the Abhuman Effigy. Select from or roll randomly on the table below to add inhabitants to locations found throughout the caverns.

If you're running this scenario for 9th level characters, consider adding more monsters, larger monsters, or both.

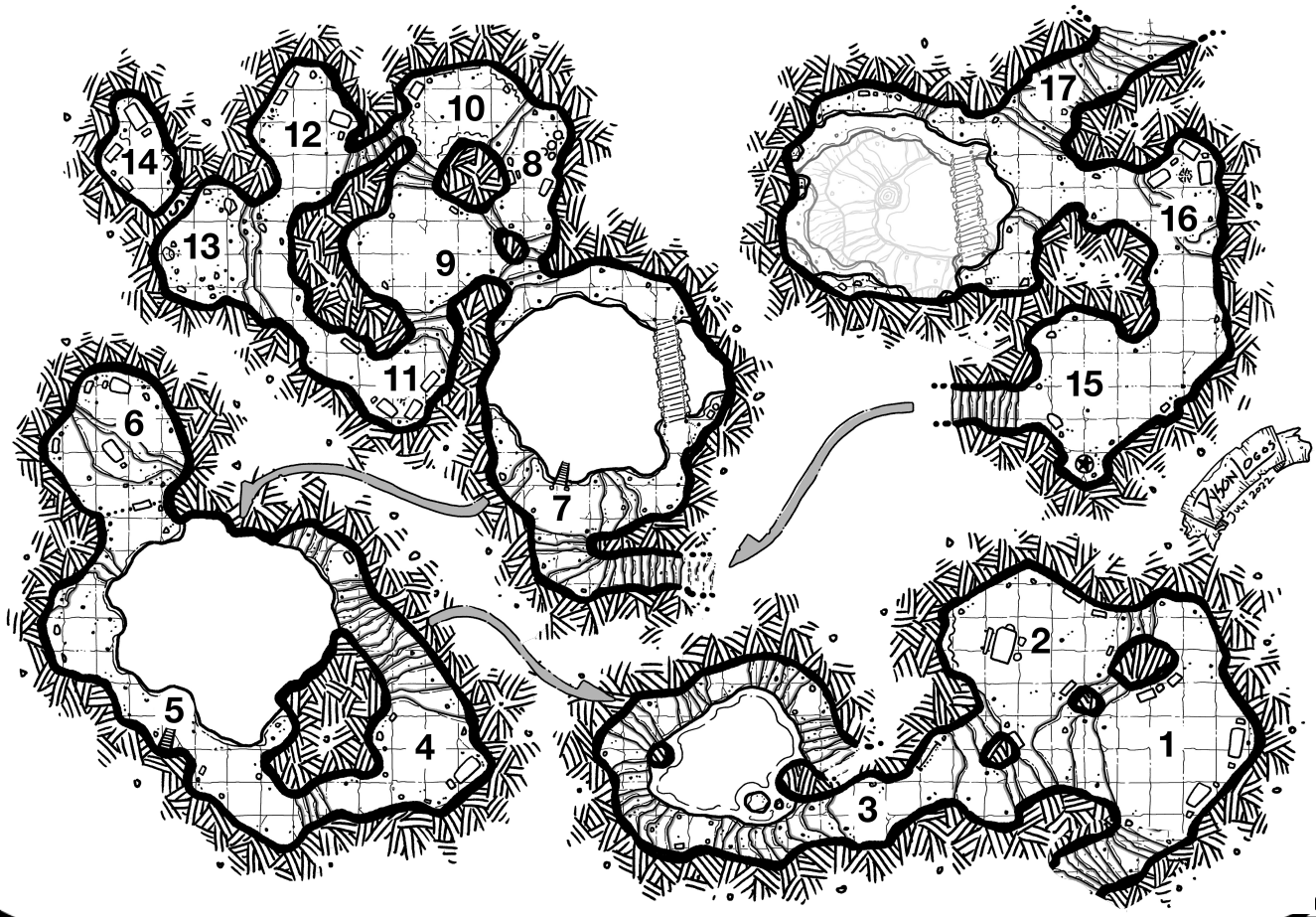
1. A pack of hairless **dire wolves** devouring the corpse of hobgoblin warrior.
2. Several **grimlocks** pray to a small idol of Gthuun covered in blood.
3. A grimlock **ogre** or **giant** attended by several **grimlocks** carries a boiling cauldron of humanoid soup.
4. Bones and shining jewels littering the ground baiting the hunting lair of a large **cloaker**.
5. A bloated body explodes into a nest of **giant centipedes**.
6. One or more **grimlock fomorians** carve a crude idol with a massive stone chisel.
7. **Cult fanatics** and **veterans** of the Children of Ibraxus sneak through the caves seeking passage to the citadel of Grayon.
8. A **green hag** named Sister Gnarlfang and her grimlock **ogre** devotees hunt for intruders, hoping to use them against the White Hand.

Locations

The Abhuman Effigy was carved out of a natural rock wall behind the ever-flowing fetid falls. Black waters seeping through the chambers above Sunken Revvia flow down here – an antithesis of the calming waters found in the City of Arches. Creatures living near the falls often have pustules and boils that never heal and are in a constant state of aggression. Characters may feel these effects but do not succumb to them unless exposed for a long time.

The passages and chambers within the Abhuman Effigy begin at its base in area 1 and wind their way up to the exit to the chamber containing the citadel of Grayon at area 17. An internal waterfall flows down the central chamber to the black pool near area 3. The sound of the waterfall drowns out most noise, making it difficult to hear outside of a single chamber. Inhabitants of the cavern are unlikely to hear or react to noise more than one chamber away.

The map below has 10-foot squares. Chamber ceilings are 20 feet high, and passages are 15 feet high. With their blindsight, grimlocks have no need



for light and thus these chambers are unlit. Note that the arrows point from the highest level to the lowest level though characters likely travel from the lowest to highest.

1. Scouting and guard hall. Stone tables contain weapons and trophies of former kills – the bones of humanoids slain in battle.
2. Feasting hall. Thick smell of rot coming from piles of half-eaten corpses. Blood-covered stone slab with stone stools. Carved shelves of skulls.
3. The black pool. An acid-spitting **hydra** sleeps in the pool, often fed by the grimlocks to keep it docile but it's hostile to anything else.
4. Altar to Gthuun. Large idol of the primordial. Stone bowls of black blood and a bloody obsidian dagger lay on the altar.
5. Ladder leading to area 7. A hanging rope connects to an iron gong. Two pulls alert **grimlock** guards in area 7 to not drop flaming pitch down on those that climb up. The grimlocks can feel when someone is climbing up the ladder without having pulled the gong.
6. Shrine of the White Hand. Here the White Hand addresses her grimlock followers – usually standing silently while Sister Gnarlfang, a **green hag mage** commands in her name.
7. Two **grimlock** guards guard the ladder below. They ignite thick oily pitch with flames and drop them down on enemies who use the ladder without first pulling the gong.
8. The alchemical laboratory of Sister Gnarlfang, **green hag mage** in service to the White Hand.
9. Insect-rotted sleeping chambers of **grimlocks**.
10. Chamber of trophies. Skulls of humanoids and beasts. Frescoes of battles against monsters. Humanoid-skin curtains.
11. False treasury. Copper coins and deadly traps.
12. Chained prisoners, some dead. Ryvan Stonebrissle's writing nook.
13. The White Hand's sleeping chamber. Rough furs and a thin mattress. Paintings on the walls of twisted bodies, iron machines, and fire with the White Queen standing in the middle covered in blood.
14. Hidden treasury and keepsakes of the White Hand. Contains the Knife of the White Hand (see treasure).
15. Altar to the White Hand. Crude statue of the elf queen piled with bloody skulls at her feet.
16. Grimlock armory and barracks guarding the upper passageway to the chamber of Grayon.
17. Exit to the chambers containing the sundered citadel of Grayon.

DCs, Damage, Traps, and Hazards

The grimlocks of the Abhuman Effigy protect their lair with traps.

DCs for detecting or disarming these hazards are all DC 15. Damaging hazards inflict 21 (6d6) for single-target traps and 16 (3d10) for multi-target hazards.

1. Poisoned spikes springing out from the wall.
2. Poisoned darts pressurized by the waterfall's flow.
3. Necrotic glyphs etched into the wall by Sister Gnarlfang.
4. Sinkhole filled with poisoned spikes.
5. Vents expelling flaming pitch.
6. Glyphed skulls that scream psionic terror, sending victims running, often into other traps or hazards.

The White Hand's Knife

You can run this scenario in two ways. In one way, the exit passage at area 17 has no boundary and the characters can leave the area as soon as they find it. This means they might bypass area 9 through 14.

If you want to extend the adventure, area 17 is protected by a powerful telekinetic enchantment. Any creature attempting to enter or leave the area is thrown back against a wall and must attempt a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw taking 28 (8d6) bludgeoning damage on a failed save or half as much on a successful one. The key to bypassing this telekinetic border is a blood-covered knife kept in the White Hand's vault in area 14 (see Knife of the White Queen in the Treasure section). A creature attuned this knife can bypass the border allowing passage in and out of the chamber.

Negotiating with the Grimlocks

The grimlocks and the White Hand despise Ourivax the Sallowsworn residing nearby in Omen's End in Sunken Revvia. Should the party attempt to negotiate with the grimlocks, they might find safe passage through the Abhuman Effigy by destroying Ourivax, an **adult black dragon**, his corrupted **treants,** and his **troll warriors** in the ruined acid-pooled keep of Omen's End. Details for Ourivax and Omen's End can be found in the *City of Arches* sourcebook.

Communication with the grimlocks may prove difficult as they speak only primordial – the language they've shared for tens of thousands of years.

Treasures

The characters might find treasure in several areas of the Abhuman Effigy including area 10, 11, 14, and 16. Split up the treasure parcels however desired.

Monetary Treasure

- 110 SP, 2,238 GP, 117 PP
- 8 × 100 GP lapis lazuli gemstones
- 200 GP dark elven fine mithral-inlaid lute

Consumable Magic Items

You can also include the following consumable magic items somewhere in the caverns.

- 2 × Potions of Greater Healing
- 2 × Potions of Poison
- 7 × +1 bolts
- A frozen white flower that, when crushed, allows the one who crushed it to cast the spell *meteor swarm* once. This is the artifact Garland Willowmane fears.

Permanent Magic Items

Choose one of the following permanent magic items to reward:

- *Bag of Tricks*
- *Periapt of Wound Closure*

Knife of the White Hand

The knife of the White Hand looks more like a cooking knife than a weapon, but its otherworldly nature makes it quite deadly. The blade contains bloodstains that cannot be wiped off and scratches etched into it as though scraped by bone. One who holds it can hear whispering in a strange language from far away.

The *knife of the white hand* is a +2 dagger that requires attunement. One attuned to the dagger can use an action to cast the spell *telekinesis* once, requiring concentration as the spell. Once used, this ability returns on a long rest.

Facing the White Hand

The White Queen can often be found in her bedchamber in area 13 along with two or more **grimlock veterans** who guard her with their lives.

The White Queen has little memory of where she came from but images of her past still haunt her. She seems to mostly ignore the grimlocks who worship her as a goddess and is openly hostile to intruders. Tormented by a past she cannot remember, she wishes only for her life to end but believes that doing so would send her to a hell even worse than this one.

Lately, the White Queen has been overtaken by brutal visions of sending her grimlock followers to the surface of the City of Arches, bathing the streets in blood. Some of these visions are so strong, she telepathically pushes them into the minds of others, which is how Roselyn Zeshe might be aware of her danger.

The White Queen uses the **mage** stat block with twice the hit points if the characters are 6th level or the **archmage** stat block if the characters are 9th level. Each time she hits a character with an attack, she can move them up to 15 feet in a direction of her choosing.

Further Adventures

When the characters defeat the White Hand, the grimlocks fear the characters, fleeing from their presence or cowering from them. They do not, however, follow the characters as they did the White Queen.

Once they're able to exit the Abhuman Effigy, the characters can enter the underground chamber containing the citadel of Grayon and the Blackfire Brazier it protects.