Shattered Keep of Grayon

"Shattered Keep of Grayon" is an adventure scenario for 7th level 5e characters set in the ruins of a subterranean keep once serving as the lair for a bronze dragon sage named Valystanian Grayon. 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 a series following the Key of Worlds campaign arc in the *City of Arches* sourcebook. This series begins with the *Scroll of Akrave* scenario.

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 third of three scenarios leading to the Brazier of Grayon. The two previous scenarios took the characters through Sunken Revvia and the hollowed out Abhuman Effigy until they reached the subterranean chamber holding the Shattered Keep of Grayon surrounding the bronze dragon's Blackfire Brazier. 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* and followed the path through Sunken Revvia seeking the Brazier of Grayon.

This scenario assumes the characters chose the path to find the Brazier of Grayon and made their way through Sunken Revvia and the Abhuman Effigy to reach this point. Now they're ready to enter the Shattered Keep and find the Brazier of Grayon.

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 their rivals lit the remaining Brazier.

If this is the first brazier the characters seek, they're likely 7th level when they begin this scenario. If they've already found and ignited another brazier, they may be 10th level. In the latter case, you may want to beef up encounters with bigger monsters, more monsters, or both. Alternatively, you can leave it as-is and give the characters an easier series of encounters. Decide what's right for you, your players, and the pacing of the game.

Scenario Background

After the fall of the Nameless King, many powerful creatures took control over various regions within, above, beyond, and below the City of Arches. A wise bronze dragon named Valystanian Grayon took the opportunity to claim an old keep of the Nameless King outside the ruined city of Sunken Revvia as his lair – a lair where he could study times past and knowledge of worlds beyond in peace.

Sages and historians able to traverse the dangers of Sunken Revvia visited Grayon, seeking his knowledge and studying his texts. Noting his isolation and considerable power, the Knights of the Black Flame sought Grayon as a guardian for one of the three Blackfire Braziers – bringing the artifact to him. Knowing the power of the Key of Worlds, Grayon accepted and kept the brazier in his personal sanctum.

Years later, a trio of hags came to the dragon, disguised as researchers and philosophers. They poisoned the dragon's body and mind, destroying him over decades until all that remained was his desiccated husk and wrathful spirit.

The Blackfire Brazier's purpose remains a mystery to the hag coven, who tore through Grayon's libraries seeking forbidden magics from other worlds. They remain still within the keep, their minions roaming the halls while the twisted spirit of Grayon writhes in his undead shell.

Scenario Start

Beyond following the arc of the Key of Worlds, the characters may come to the Shattered Keep of Grayon in a few ways:

- Joselyn Halfcloak of the Golden Knights learned that the Knights of the Nameless King seek powerful magic buried in the private libraries and vaults of the fallen bronze dragon Grayon. She seeks adventurers to brave the dangers of Sunken Revvia, stop these evil knights, and recover any dangerous artifacts before they fall into the wrong hands.

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- Danvon of Duskwater, mage of Kartan, seeks treasure hunters to delve into the vaults of Grayon and recover a unique text containing magic connected to the Outside – a realm of anti-life outside the known multiverse. He fears others may recover this dark tome and not understand the power they hold – he alone can keep the tome safe the Tower of Kartan.
- Garland Willowmane learned that the Children of Ibraxus have an archkey bound to an archway in the Shattered Keep of Grayon and plan to use it to draw a powerful host of demons into the chambers beneath the City of Arches. She seeks adventurers willing to hunt down and stop these cultists before they endanger the whole city.

Secrets of Grayon

Deliver the following secrets and clues as the characters delve into the Shattered Keep. Characters might discover these clues from chipped frescoes on the walls, ancient dusty books and scrolls, or from conversations with the hags or their followers. The characters need not discover every secret – think of secrets like treasure uncovered as the characters explore the crypts.

- Centuries after the fall of the Nameless King, the noble bronze dragon Valystanian Grayon took one of the Nameless King's keeps as his own lair.
- For centuries the bronze dragon researched magic and stiudied the multiverse. Sages able to make the journey through Sunken Revvia sought council with the wise dragon.
- About five hundred years ago, the Order of the Black Flame brought one of the three Blackfire Braziers to Grayon who swore to protect it.
- Years later, several researchers calling themselves the Order of the Iron Rose visited Grayon – secretly led by three hags known as the Skullrot Coven. They killed Grayon, using his life energy to fuel their hideous experiments.
- The three hags each hold a piece of a fetish able to open walls of force that block passage to many areas of the Shattered Keep.
- The three hags opened a gateway to the hellish world of Maphotar and drew devils into this world who reluctantly serve the hags.
- The three hags hope to open a portal to the Outside to draw in raw negative energy and form it into beings of pure darkness and power they can wield and control.
- Each of the three hags secretly hates their sisters and hopes to end them, forming a new coven of hags they alone control.
- The hags turned Grayon into an undead husk of his former self but part of his spirit still remains buried deep in his rotted corpse.

Key NPCs

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

- **Sister Blacktongue – Lady of the Void.** Eldest **night hag** sister of the Skullrot Coven. Sister Blacktongue knows her two sisters plot against her but hope to turn them agains one another. She drives their desire to open the gateway to the Outside and touch the power of Ourboran – the world eater. Sister Blacktongue's body appears like a humanoid built from a weave of shining black tendrils.
- **Sister Ember – The Eyes of Fire.** Second-eldest sister of the Skullrot Coven. The **night hag** sister Ember commands the devils summoned from Maphotar. She hopes to weaken her sisters so her fiendish servants can cut them down. Sister Ember's body appears like a charred corpse with burning yellow eyes.
- **Sister Ironcowl – The Spine of Steel.** The **night hag** Sister Ironcowl loves machines and learned how to fuel fiendish energy from Maphotar into creatures such as **gorgons**, **clay golems**, and **animated armor**. She sees herself commanding an animated army of machines to invade the City of Arches. Sister Ironcowl's body has been half-fused with ironwork, gears, and pistons, and spews out noxious gas from vents on her back.

Encounters in the Effigy

The Skullrot Coven isn't particularly organized in their defense of the Shattered Keep. Their summoned and constructed creatures wander the halls while other monsters unaligned with the hags occasionally wander in from side passages. 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 10th level characters, consider adding more monsters, larger monsters, or both.

1. Several **animated armors** and a **gorgon** stalk the hall.
2. Two **bearded devils** or **barbed devils** ignore the screaming orders of Bluebarb the **imp**.
3. Three **basilisks** feed on a poisoned adventurer.
4. A plane-traveling **bandit captain** and her **bandits** (known as the Brimstone Boys) attempt a smash-and-grab of the Shattered Keep.
5. **Specter** sages, murdered by the Skullrot Coven, weep in the corner over books they cannot open.
6. One or more **black puddings** from the Outside seep out of cracks in the walls.
7. A **horned devil** sits in a tiny chair reading a picture book, giggling.
8. One or two **bone devils** hunt down the characters.

The Skullrot Fetish

The three sisters of the Skullrot coven do not trust one another. Each holds a part of a fetish the three sisters can use to access the central chamber of Grayon (area 24) and the Blackfire Brazier (area 25). One must acquire all three parts of the fetish from the three sisters. The fetish is a tall withered humanoid figurine of bone and leather with a serpentine lower body. Sister Ironcowl holds the fetish's serpentine lower body. Sister Ember holds the fetish's torso. Sister Blacktongue carries the fetish's head.

Area 24 and 25 are blocked off with translucent walls of force the three hags put in place to prevent anyone, including one another, from accessing the remains of Grayon or the Blackfire Brazier.

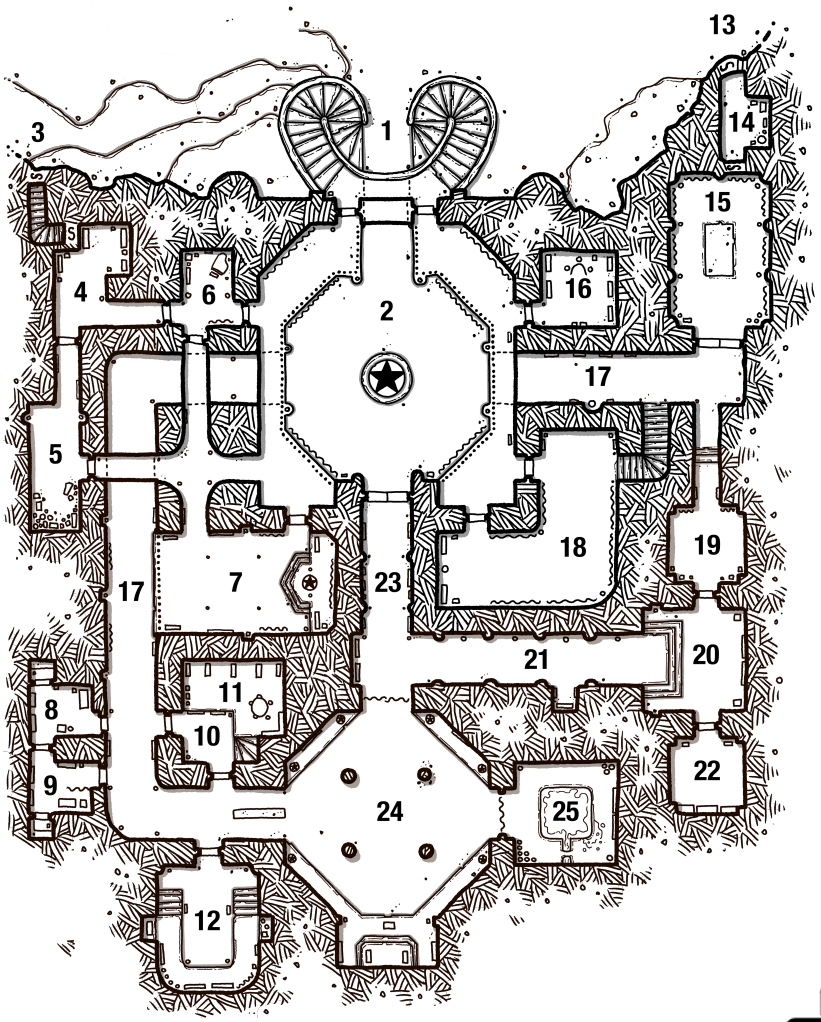
For a faster scenario, you can have any one of the hags carry the whole fetish so any one hag can be killed to give the characters access to area 24 and 25. You can likewise move the three night hags to any chamber you wish – including all three in one chamber – to change the pace of the adventure.

Locations

The Shattered Keep is carved into the eastern wall of a mile-wide subterranean cavern. The upper ceiling of the cavern is a thousand feet high with massive stalactites hanging hundreds of feet down and towering natural columns breaking up the cavern. A violet phosphorescent glow emanates from large purple mushrooms occasionally growing out of the floor, walls, and ceiling. While exploring the cavern surrounding the Shattered Keep, the characters may encounter other denizens. Fill in potential encounters with monuments and inhabitants using tables from the Sunken Revvia chapter and the adventure generator tables in the appendices of the *City of Arches* sourcebook as desired.

Inside, the Shattered Keep is generally unlit. Hallways have ten-foot-high ceilings and chambers have fifteen-foot-high ceilings except where noted.

1. Main entry hallway with shattered doors. Spiral staircases lead to upper stone doors leading to the balconies in area 2.
2. Central hall of the keep. Balconies look down upon a partially shattered statue of a bearded and robed man (Grayon in humanoid form). The doors to area 23 are sealed, requiring one of the three pieces of the fetish carried by the hags.
3. A secret doorway appearing as natural stone leads to area 4. The hags are unaware of this secret entrance.
4. Laboratory of Sister Ironcowl. A half-mechanical **zombie** is chained to the wall. Cabinets and shelves hold strange alchemical supplies.
5. Charnel pit of Sister Ironcowl. It's filled with half-construct skeletons and zombies that don't quite work. Discarded books from the library of Grayon lie in a moldering heap.
6. Sister Ironcowl's parlor. An automatic harpsichord plays disjointed music. An ornate tapestry displays the three sisters and their queen – the deceased Grandmother Bloodmoon.
7. Former shrine to Sulin, God of Light. The statue's head is missing and replaced with a bloody iron basket filled with decaying meat. Crumbing plaster on the walls reveal mosaics from the days where this chamber served dark priests as a shrine to the Nameless King and Ibraxus of Choul.
8. Stores of Sister Blacktongue containing vile concoctions and components used for summoning and divination rituals.
9. Sleeping chamber of Sister Blacktongue. A rotted mattress lies on the floor among decaying corpses. A tapestry depicts Sister Blacktongue exsanguinating a screaming dwarf into a black pool from which tentacles emerge.



10. Grim portraits of the three hags. A secret door leads to area 11.
11. A shared library and meeting room of the three hags containing several forbidden texts.
12. Portal chamber of Sister Blacktongue. An arcane circle is carved into the floor and an archway looms on the southern wall of the upper platform. Black inky liquid flows from cracks in the walls where the boundary to the Outside grow thin.
13. A secret door disguised as natural stone leads to area 14.
14. Sister Ember's storage shelves contain jars of alchemists' fire and acidic compounds.
15. A horizontal slab of charred stone and burnt tapestries decorate this chamber. Here Sister Ember built a fire-infused **flesh guardian**. When reduced to half of its hit points, the fire-infused flesh guardian creates a *fireball* cast on itself. It is immune to fire but still feels the burn.
16. Dining hall of the Skullrot Coven. Half-eaten corpses writhe, having been turned into **zombies** and **ghouls**.
17. Hall of portraits of sages and leaders from the time before Grayon's death, now defaced with sacrilegious glyphs and obscene pictographs. Each of the two halls connects to the lower floor of area 2. A *wall of force* blocks access to area 24 only accessible with the combined fetish of the three Skullrot hags.
18. This hall of murals shows the history of the area surrounding the City of Arches from the time of Primordials until roughly 500 years ago. All the images of the Nameless King have been burnt out.
19. A huge otherworldy stone floats in the center of this chamber – drawn from another world. Strange arcane power flows from it.
20. Archway to Maphotar. Sister Ember and Sister Ironcowl use this chamber to call forth devils of the mechanized hell of Maphotar – either summoning the fiends directly or drawing their energy into Ironcowl's constructs. The portal is mostly inert but one attuned to arcane energy can peer into the hellish world of machines.
21. Several guardian armors stand in this hall. Others lie destroyed. Those that remain have been filled with the mutated remains of the hags victims.
22. Sister Ember often meditates within a burning arcane circle in the center of this chamber. Three idols of three of the Lower Twelve gods sit atop altars on the south side.
23. Here the Skullrot Coven hung trophies of their opponents to amuse themselves or otherwise threaten visitors. An opaque *wall of force,* requires the fully-assembled Skullrot effigy to access area 24
24. Here lie the remains of Grayon, who rises as a zombie dragon with the statistics of an **adult bronze dragon** and the type of Undead. Grayon cannot be turned with *turn undead*. When defeated, the spirit of Grayon thanks the characters for his release.
25. This chamber contains the Blackfire Brazier of Grayon surrounded in burning black waters. One must step through the flaming water to ignite the brazier.

DCs, Damage, Traps, and Hazards

The Skullrot Coven set numerous traps up in the halls of the Sundered Keep keeping would-be trespassers at bay.

DCs for detecting or disarming these hazards are all DC 15. Damaging hazards inflict 27 (5d10) for single-target traps or hazards and 16 (3d10) for multi-target traps or hazards.

1. Psionic skulls of former victims scream.
2. Necrotic glyphs burn souls.
3. Crushing walls with grasping iron hands slice with bladed fingers.
4. Dragon heads expel a blast of fire, cold, lightning, poison, radiance, necrotic, force, or acid.
5. Whispering shadows drain lives.
6. Black candles spew hellfire.

Treasures

The characters might find treasure in several areas throughout the keep. Most of the treasure is likely in area 24 with the remains of Grayon. Split up the treasure below however desired.

Monetary Treasure

- 244 SP, 4,291 GP, 223 PP
- 7 × 100 GP bloodstone gemstones
- 8 × 100 GP lapis lazuli gemstones
- 200 GP dark elven platinum and black sapphire earrings.
- 200 GP elven fine mithril-inlaid lute

Consumable Magic Items

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

- 2 × *Potions of Greater Healing*
- 4 × *Potions of Healing*
- *Oil of Slipperiness*
- *Dust of Sneezing and Choking*
- *Bowl of Commanding Water Elementals*

Permanent Magic Items

Choose one of the following permanent magic items to reward:

- *+2 radiant astral-touched shortsword, longsword, or greatsword* named "Sunburner". A creature attuned to Sunburner can use a bonus action to cause the blade to blaze with radiant light for one minute. While blazing this way, the sword's damage becomes radiant and it inflicts an extra 1d6 radiant damage.
- *Wand of lighting bolts*
- *Amulet of health*

Conclusion and Further Adventures

When the characters defeat the Skullrot Coven and the reanimated Grayon they are free to ignite the Blackfire Brazier of Grayon.

If this is the first Blackfire Brazier they ignite, they can choose one of the two remaining braziers to find next. Once they've chosen their second brazier, their rivals, perhaps the Children of Ibraxus, seek out and ignite the third. Thus, both groups seek out the final brazier.

If this is the second brazier the characters ignite, they may be beset upon by cultists of Ibraxus who also sought to ignite this brazier. This group includes the **archmage** Irthrain of Choul and several **cult fanatics**, **veterans**, and **gladiators** or **champion fighters**. If the characters possess the Blade of Irixthius, Irithain carries the Staff of Servlen – a *staff of fire*. Otherwise, one of the gladiators or champions carries the Blade of Irixthus, a *flametongue longsword*.

Opening the Vault

If this is the second brazier the characters lit, and the Children of Ibraxus lit the other – the character who ignites the third brazier becomes aware of the doorway to the Vault of the Key hidden in a chamber beneath the Library of Vrassa in the City of Arches. The campaign then concludes in the scenario *Key of Worlds.*

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