

DESIGNED FOR FOUR
4TH-5TH-LEVEL PCS

THE CLATTERING KEEP



A 5E WARLOCK ADVENTURE SCENARIO
BY JON SAWATSKY

THE CLATTERING KEEP

“The old keep was abandoned when the plague blew in from the wastes. The Yellete family made it to Bourgund with the sick wind at their back – the servants, guards, their children...no, they were left behind. By the time the priests got there, the flies had claimed it. Aye, it sits now in the shadows of the woods at the end of an untended road. If you mean to go there, take the gods with you.”

Background

This scenario is set just north of the capital city of Bourgund. The noble Yellete family abandoned their ancestral keep several decades ago when a pestilence spread through the region. The place has sat empty since the family left. It contains several treasures left behind by the nobles in their hurry to leave. It also contains the remains of the servants and guards who were unable to flee.

Currently, the keep is the lair of two foul undead dragons (**unhatched**) who were drawn to the place by the dark magic of a tome hidden away in the keep’s small library. The dragons spend their days reading from the book, though they have yet to unlock its secrets. The book appears to be a simple description of the slaying of Zhergthoth, the Old One whose corpse still rots outside the capital city; in actuality, it is an enchanted tome capable of granting its reader a deeper understanding of the Void and its magic.

The presence of the undead dragons has caused the bones of the dead servants to rise, assemble, and wander about the place in a grim pantomime of their former duties.

A necromancer learned of the dead-kept keep and has taken up residence in one of its chambers. She plots to take command of the dragons and the keep. She hired a handful of mercenaries to help her in her efforts.

Sharp Hooks and Enticing Stories

- Count Tremvar Yellete of Bourgund is planning to retake his family’s ancestral keep. Unable to muster a force at this time, the count turns to adventurers to scout the keep, ridding it of its shadowy inhabitants if they can. He offers the adventurers 1000 gp to perform this service.
- The high-parfumier of Ailuros in Bourgund has sent an urgent request for the recovery of the Eight Wounds of Zhergthoth, an ancient accounting of the death of the Old One. She offers six ounces of Honeysand Perfume (worth 1000 gp) to any who might recover the book from the fallen keep.

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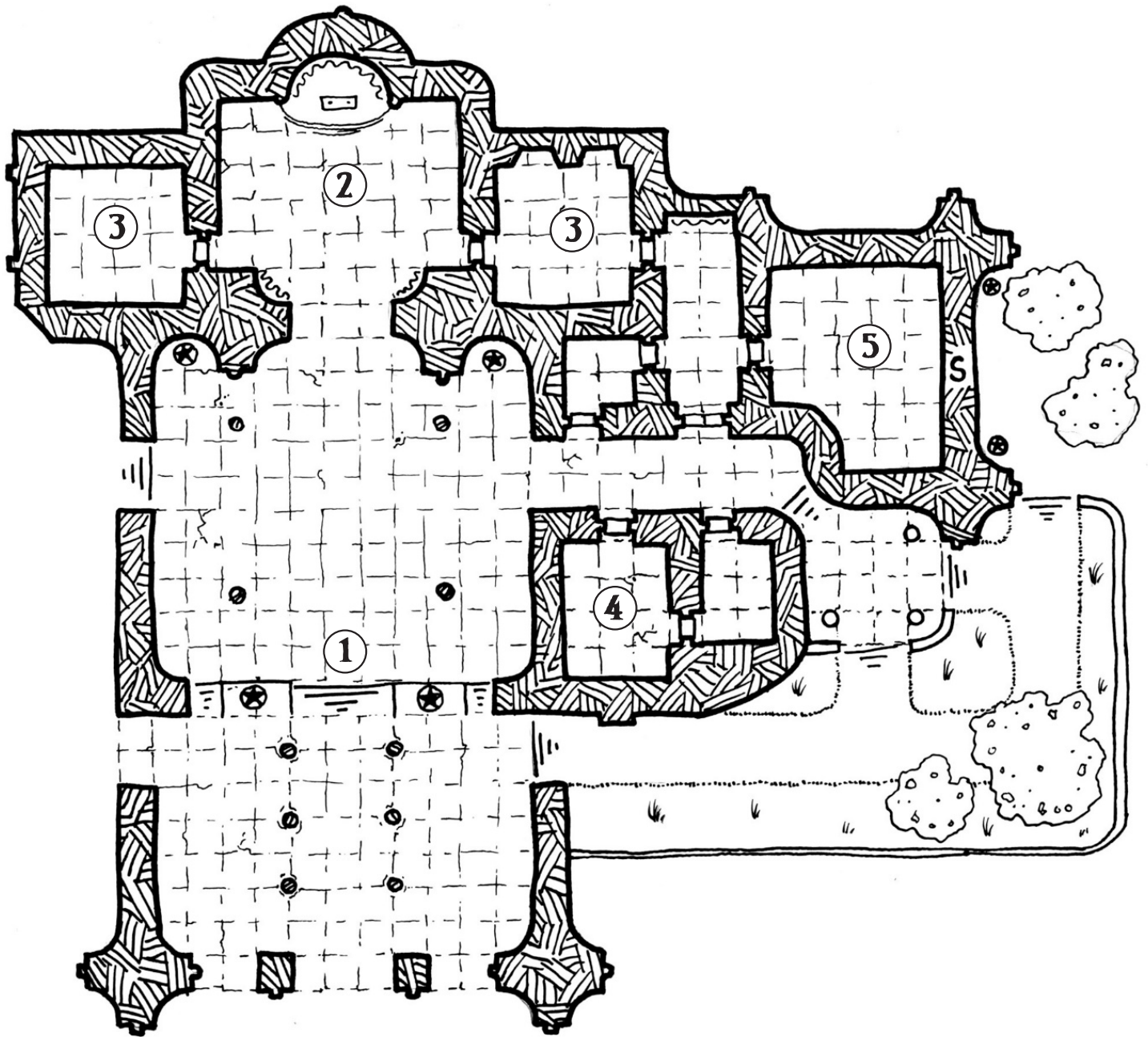
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The Road

An old cartway overgrown with grass veers from the main road into the rocky hills. A patchy wood rises in the distance.

The old road to Keep Yellete has been reclaimed by the flora of the region. It winds for three miles through the scrubby hills and grassland. Choose any number of events from the list below to make the journey to the keep memorable:

Pilgrimage. Four **priests** of Ailuros are using the road to forge a path to the Pillars of Uxloon. Two women and two men walk the wilds, their heavily perfumed brazier filling the air with scented smoke. The priests are open

to conversation with friendly adventurers. If the PCs speak with them, one PC gains advantage on their next Intelligence (History) check made in this region.

Vessels. Two **ogre zombies** shamble through the grass and rock – serving as the eyes for the nearby necromancer. The zombies wear tattered tunics depicting a bony hand pointing skyward. A DC 14 Intelligence (History) check reveals the symbol denotes the Accusers of Sheth, an infamous coven of necromancers and witches. The zombies' eyes glow a strange pink hue. A DC 14 Intelligence (Arcana) check reveals that someone is seeing through the zombies remotely.

The Necromancer

Utratch the necromancer (**cult fanatic**) and her rabble of mercenaries (2 **veterans**, 2 **scouts**) plot to retake the place for themselves. Utratch was drawn to the keep by the two dragons who radiate strong necrotic magic. She is in the process of quietly placing wards around the keep to trap the dragons and sap their power – allowing her to take control of them and acquire a new stronghold in the process. She is only able to place one ward every few days, and she is two wards away from being ready to conduct her ritual. She and her mercenaries wander freely, unharmed by the lesser undead thanks to a magical brand from her coven. When the dragons are home, Utratch and her followers hide in the Servant Quarters.

Dealing with Utratch. Utratch is not interested in the books, nor is she interested in a fight unless pressed. PCs amenable to working with a necromancer will find she is enthusiastic about receiving their aid. If the PCs agree to defeat, but not slay, the dragons and allow her to take command of them, she will give the party her bone wind chime (*chime of opening*) and 200 gp.

The Wards. A human skull with antelope horns driven into its crown sits on top of a short stick. Burnt pinecones and greasy leather pouches decorate the antlers.

They radiate magic and are hidden throughout the rubble (DC 12 Wisdom [Perception] check to spot). A DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check reveals they are part of a larger ritual and are linked to subjugation magic.

The Unhatched

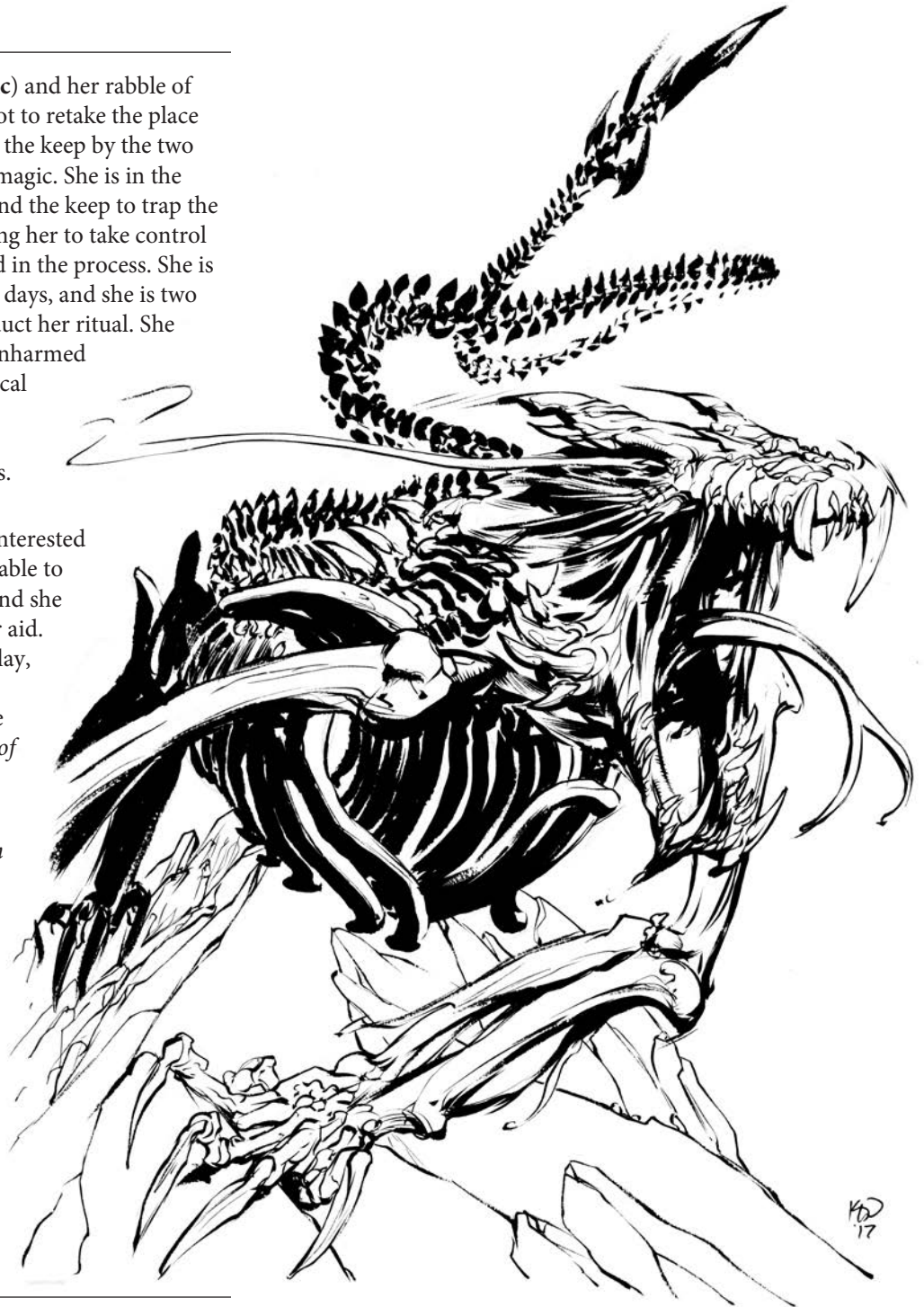
The dragons are evil creatures with little interest in conversing with meddling mortals. Returning to their lair to find it disturbed will enrage them, and they will attack.

These unholy dragon whelps were never given the chance to hatch: their mothers were slain, and the eggs which contained them carried off to dark ends. They appear as small skeletal dragons, their wings laced with brittle leathery skin.

They are commonly found guarding evil wizard's lairs, vampire's resting places, or crypts and tombs of various sorts. Left to their own devices, they actively seek out magical

knowledge, and can be encountered in ruins containing libraries or other vaults of knowledge. They are cunning opponents, using their illusion magic to draw their prey into their lair. The unhatched often band together in groups of three or more.

Stewed in Necromancy. The unhatched dragon egg is stewed in a vile necromantic soup that dissolves the hard shell and melts the creature's flesh from its bones. It arises from the wretched fluid as an evil, skeletal, draconic whelp—its hollow eye sockets glowing pale yellow.



More than Dead. In addition to the usual undead characteristics, the unhatched emerge with some minor necromantic magic. If allowed to mature, their magic grows in power, making liches especially fond of unhatched pets.

UNHATCHED

Small dragon (undead), chaotic evil

Armor Class 14

Hit Points 85 (13d6+39)

Speed 30 ft., fly 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)	18 (+4)	10 (+0)	9 (-1)

Damage Resistances necrotic, piercing

Damage Vulnerabilities bludgeoning

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13

Languages Common, Draconic

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Minor Magic Resistance (3/day). The unhatched has advantage on its next saving throw against spells or other magical effects.

Innate Spellcasting. The unhatched's spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell casting DC 14, +7 to spell attacks). It may cast the following spells innately, requiring only verbal components:

At will: *chill touch*, *minor illusion*

1/day: *bane*

Hatred. Deprived of parental bonds, the unhatched despise those who nurture and heal others. It gains advantage on attacks against creatures who used their last action to heal, restore, strengthen, or otherwise aid another creature.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The unhatched makes one claw and one bite attack.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5ft., one target.
Hit: 12 (3d6+2) slashing damage.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack.* +4 to hit, reach 5ft., one target.
Hit: 11 (2d8+2) piercing damage and 5 (1d8) necrotic damage.

Desiccating Breath (recharge 5-6). The dragon exhales a cloud of choking dust infused with necrotic magic in a 30-foot cone. Each creature in the area must succeed on a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw, taking 28 (5d10) necrotic damage on a failed save or half as much on a successful one. Creatures who fail this save cannot speak until the end of their next turn as they choke on the dust.

Keep Area Descriptions

The dragons are away when the PCs arrive. The PCs may explore the place as they wish. Refer to Area Descriptions to facilitate their exploration. Find a suitable time for the dragons to return. Battle sounds are likely to draw the attention of Utratch and her company, who will scout the castle for the source of the noise.

***Empty Chambers and Halls.** The few unannotated spaces on the map can be used as quiet places for the PCs to rest or may be used to add one or two more undead-based encounters. The terrace offers a unique way into the keep, but likely results in an encounter with Utratch's mercenaries.

1 The Main Hall. This large entry hall is filled with dust and toppled columns. It is cool here, and the air feels close despite the large openings to the outside. A DC 12 Wisdom (Survival) check reveals large draconic tracks coming and going through the hall. Two recently animated guards (**wights**) have resumed their posts near the stairs. They attack intruders, using the toppled pillars as cover and firing their longbows before moving into melee. There is a good chance that two of Utratch's mercenaries (**veterans**) will come investigate any noise in the Main Hall. They will defend themselves if attacked, though suggest speaking with their master if given the opportunity.

2 The Throne Room. This area serves as the lair to the unhatched. Great claw marks have been scraped into the walls and floor. Piled around the three leaning thrones are various books and scrolls. The dragon's pet and servant, Yeg (**grimlock**), hides behind the throne (stealth 14). If discovered, he will grunt for mercy in broken Common. A DC 14 Charisma (Intimidation or Persuasion) check convinces Yeg to retrieve the Eight Wounds of Zhergthoth for the party from the stacks. Yeg will flee if left alive.

3 Private Chambers. These two rooms once served as living quarters for the Yellete family. Most of the furniture has turned to rubble and dust, though a few threadbare tapestries hang on the wall. Hamra (**ghost**), a servant to the family, wanders from one room to the next, attempting to clean the chambers. She is not violent and, if spoken to, explains how difficult her job is. If she is asked about the plague, she becomes increasingly agitated and, if pressed, screams wrathfully – summoning two additional servants (**shadows**) and attacking the PCs. A gold and silver locket (350 gp) sits in a pile of rubble in one of the rooms.

4 The Kitchen. Nothing edible remains in this moldering place. The hearth, which once cooked fancy meals for the Yelletes, is now the home to a **sarcophagus slime** (*Tome of Beasts*), placed there by Utratch and left to grow. The slime recoils into the chimney when the party enters (stealth 20) and rushes down to attack any who get close. A DC

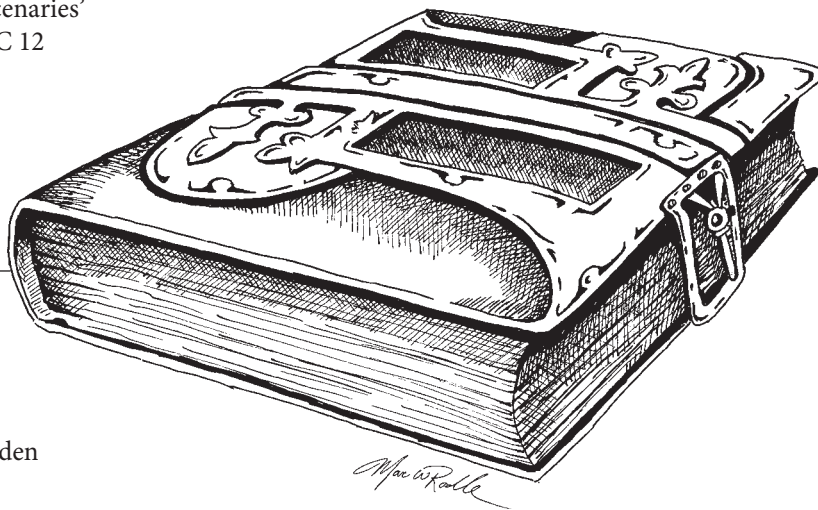
16 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals an enchanted butcher's cleaver (*shortsword*, +2) stuck in a chopping block under a crumbled table.

5 The Servant Quarters. This is the lair of Utratch and her mercenaries. The room is littered with skulls, antlers, candles, and folios describing the necromancer's subjugation ritual in Infernal script. The secret door is damaged and no longer closes entirely, but can be used to enter and exit the castle. The veterans' sleeping mats and personal possessions are also found here. The mercenaries' wages (230 gp, 82 sp) are kept in a locked chest (DC 12 Dexterity check with thieves' tools to pick).

The Eight Wounds of Zhergthoth

Wondrous item (book), rare, requires ability to cast 3rd-level spells to attune

The book is a written (Common) account of the death of Zhergthoth. Readers who spend the time to attune to the book discover that there are hidden



messages about the Void and its loathsomely angled gods. Bearers of this book may add *protection from the void* and *void strike* (*Deep Magic: Void Magic*) to their list of known spells. Additionally, the book is considered a source of void taint, and creatures who attune to it are subjected to Void Exposure (*Void-Touched: Warped Flesh and Twisted Minds*, WARLOCK #1). Failing the DC 15 Charisma save while attuning to the book results in three void taint points.

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