

The Complete Guide to Beholders

The Cultist-Monks of the Abbey Inn

An encounter for use with The Complete Guide to Beholders

By Neal Gamache

Encounter Level 10/12/15

Setting: A small hamlet or an isolated crossroad

Summary: An abbey runs a small inn for travelers, but the sect gains converts among them at an astonishing rate.

This encounter is designed to introduce the characters to a beholder cult. It does not pit them directly against a beholder, although it can be adjusted to do so if the GM wishes. Instead, it puts them in conflict with the cultists who serve the Dominion of the Poisoned Eye.

The encounter can take place in a city, but it works best if the abbey is the only accommodation in miles, probably in a hamlet or along an isolated road. The monks of a monastery have set up an inn to feed travelers in the area. They charge 5 sp per night, which includes lodging, dinner, and breakfast.

The inn is separated from the abbey by a thick wooden door. The monks prepare and serve the meals. They are dressed in thick woolen cloaks, but most keep their hoods down inside the inn. They have shaven heads and a variety of racial backgrounds. The food is simple, but hot and filling. Ale and wine are also available, although each mug or glass is 5 cp extra. The sleeping rooms are on the second floor above the common dining room, which is separated from the abbey by a thick wooden door.

Scene 1: Olivia

About twenty guests are present when the PCs arrive. At a table nearby sits a depressed-looking woman named Olivia. Whether they ask or not, she will eventually approach and tell

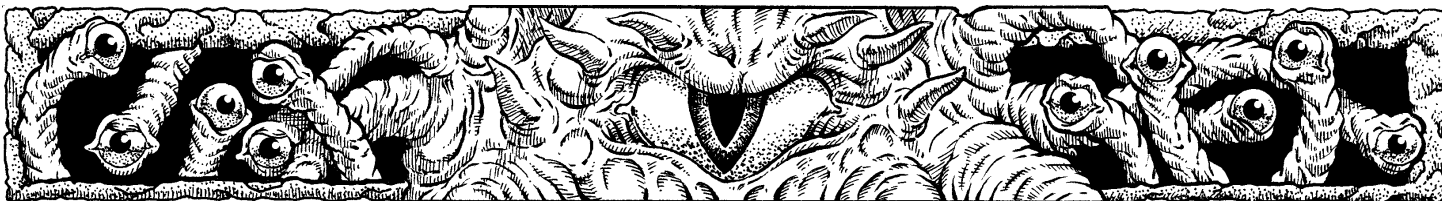
them that last month her husband Fadrik went to visit his sick mother in a town farther along this road. Olivia received a message a few days ago telling her that Fadrik had never arrived. Olivia is now looking for him. Perhaps the party could help her look for a couple of days in exchange for some financial compensation?

The party and Olivia discuss the matter for a short while when a monk emerges through the door to the abbey and identifies himself as one of the leaders. He tells everyone that he will be giving a talk on the merits of the spiritual life in the abbey. Each person who comes will get a free mug of ale, although he is careful to say that attendance is not required. He also says that because the abbey is dedicated to helping travelers, anyone who needs healing or divination should attend the talk to ask him for such aid. A Spot check (DC 20) reveals his complexion is a bit too sallow, as though he is ill. An extremely successful Spot check (DC 30) reveals an extra eye on some part of his body. In truth, he is one of the visionaries of the cult that is masquerading as a monastery. Olivia agrees to hear the talk because she wants to see if the head monk's divination will help her find her husband. About ten other people will go as well. If asked, the other attendees are more interested in the free alcohol than the spiritual path of the monks.

Scene 2: The Lecture

The lecture is in the abbey itself. It is a simple building with few ornaments, although well built with thick walls. Everyone gets a mug of ale, but it is laced with essence of obedience (see page 50 of the Complete Guide to Beholders). Those who drink





this moment. Simply by pledging yourself to these creatures, you can share in their power. Over time, you will come to show visual signs of your faith. At this point, he shows them the tentacles that are growing from his head. Most of the group is *charmed*, and so they are very receptive when he tells them that the best thing for all of them is that they work for these powers, so that they can earn their place at his side. “Once you have been empowered by our lords, all the problems which today seem so trying will fall away like dead leaves. You will destroy those who stand against you when our lords declare the Time of Cleansing at hand.” If he is asked about the nature of these powers, he will simply say they are embodied and near, but that this group has not earned the privilege of meeting them. That, he explains, will come with enough time and study. The new recruits are taken to cells, instructed to don woolen robes, and rest before their studies begin the next day.

The party members who do not attend notice nothing unusual the rest of the night. Breakfast is served around sunrise, and if a party member is not awake at that time the monks will wake them up by knocking on their door.

Scene 3: The New Initiates

The next morning at breakfast, the party discovers that Olivia and any party members who failed their saves are wearing the robes of the monks. When questioned, they say that their experience last night showed them that their lives were full of too much violence and they needed the peace of this place. When asked about her husband, Olivia says the spiritual path of these monks is more important to her than the remote chance that she might find her husband. The other five patrons who failed their saves are still in the abbey – the characters and Olivia came out to let the party know that they are well and wish to stay. Through Sense Motive (DC 25) the party can determine these people are enchanted, although *detect magic* will not detect the alchemical effect. However, a Heal check (DC 20) will reveal that there is some toxin in the system that will remain for another 12 hours. There is no non-magical way to speed its course. *Detect poison*, *delay poison*, *neutralize poison*, and other spells and abilities related to poisons will all work on the alchemical substance. The cultists become hostile if the characters take any actions that would obviously interfere with the effect of the essence.

The new recruits return to the abbey once they have said their goodbyes. If the characters interfere with their departure, five cultists at the level of pupil and one at the level of inoculator (see pages 18-19 of the Complete Guide to Beholders) surround the new initiates and ask the party to leave. If the group does not try to interfere and decides to stay an additional day the monks allow it, but not after anyone has tried to interfere with their new recruits.

must make a Fortitude save (DC 10). While under the influence of this drug, player characters can be influenced by the Diplomacy skill; consider the character’s attitude towards the speaker and use that to determine base difficulty. The monk has a modifier of +6 for Diplomacy checks, and because of the essence of obedience he gets a +10 bonus to his roll, for a total of +16. If anyone is immune to poisons they will be unaffected, although the essence is not magical, so magic resistance does not apply. Victims influenced by the monk’s Diplomacy check who also failed the Fortitude save are now effectively under the influence of a *charm person* spell. As for the characters, unless their attitude is changed to “helpful” there is no effect.

After the ale is passed around, the monk asks if anyone would like to leave. Those who were not affected by the potion go to bed. Assume the monk succeeds in affecting Olivia. Those who remain (five patrons, plus Olivia and any PCs who stay) begin their indoctrination into the true theology of the monks. (If some PCs who made their saves want to stay and listen the monk allows them to, but the characters notice that everyone else seems to find the monk’s speech much more interesting than they do.) The group is told that there are divine forces at work in the world at





At this point there are several ways in which the situation can develop. If no party members have been captured the group may leave Olivia to her fate. The group may leave to plot further tactics. Or they may attack the monks protecting the new recruits. Of course, any new initiates freed by such violence will be upset to be removed from the abbey. Once they are free from the potion's effects they can tell the group what happened to them. Olivia also says that she saw her husband Fadrik in the depths of the abbey. She offers payment for the adventurers if they help her break in and free her husband.

The Abbey

There are several ways into the abbey. The door to the inn is always open, but the door into the abbey is usually locked. There is no other door into the abbey. The group could gain passage by attacking a monk as she passes through the door, which happens fairly regularly. The monks are moving through the inn constantly, however, so any stealth-related checks are opposed by the monks' Listen and Spot checks. They can be treated as a group, with a total +5 modifier to Spot or Listen.

Picking the door lock is difficult (DC 30), as is bursting open the door with brute strength (DC 25). The walls around the abbey have a hardness of 8, 300 hit points, and a break DC of 45. There are also windows high in the abbey – it would take a successful Climb check (DC 25) to scale the thick masonry.

Once inside, the layout of the abbey is simple. The door opens into a long hallway. 15 windowless monk cells are on each side of the hall. There are stairs at the far end of the hall leading to floors above and below. The second floor has cells with windows. These are larger and are reserved for higher-level cultists. It is through these windows that a climbing player might gain entrance, because although they have glass panes they do not lock.

At night, half the rooms are occupied at any given time. During the day the cells are empty – all the monks are in the inn or down below.

No matter what time the party breaks into the abbey, they will find Fadrik in a cell on the first floor, reading a text. His cell is the third from the inn on the right. The party might burst in or attempt

to sneak their way into his chamber through skills or magic. Either way, Fadrik raises an alarm when he sees the group – he is fully committed to the cult because of the essence of obedience. When he sees his wife, he gets another Will save to overcome the effect (DC 15). If the check fails, Fadrik screams for help. If the party captures Fadrik, he will constantly ask Olivia why she is betraying their cause – in his drugged view, her admission into the cult was an opportunity for them to be together.

If he overcomes the essence he realizes what has been done. He tells the group that the cult follows beholders who identify themselves as the Dominion of the Poisoned Eye. They are working to create a large cult that can act as an army. When the cult is large enough, dozens of beholders will rise into the temple and join their human cultists. The resulting army will destroy all the nearby cities. The party may believe that Fadrik is raving, but he believes what he says. Someone who makes a Knowledge (religion) check (DC 35) knows that beholders often use such cults, but they usually ask them to act alone and seldom join them in massive numbers – the cult may be told of the beholder army to make them feel more confident, or this may be a new tactic. The text that Fadrik was reading would support what he says if it was brought along, although the text is more focused on slogans and propaganda than it is on specific plans. “The Time of Cleansing” is mentioned in several places, and seems to be indicating a time when the present order will be destroyed. There is little mention of what new order would take its place – there is a strong sense that the cult is more interested in destruction than in re-building.

The group may now opt to re-enter the temple to eradicate the cult. They may also have missed Fadrik's cell and entered the staircase.

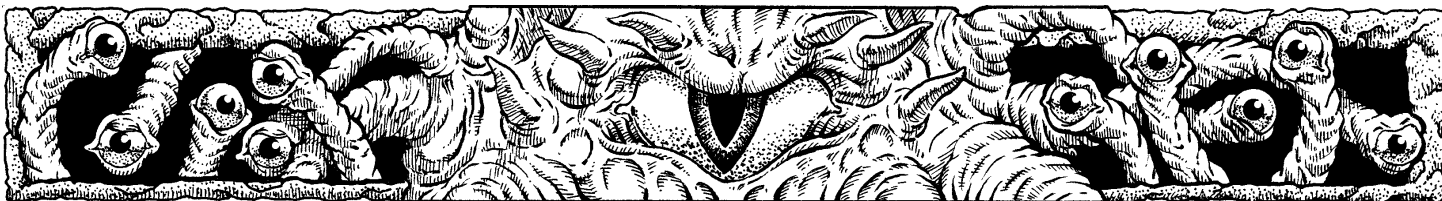
The stairs that lead under the main floor are very long and winding. They end at another wooden door. This one is unlocked, but is engraved with a picture of a beholder. The room inside is a flattened sphere with arcane writing around its edge. Braziers burn throughout the room, and the light is reflected in the gilded eyes that are painted around the walls. There is a pit on the opposite side of the room which leads to a dead end 10 ft. below (although this pit may open up into a passage to a beholder outpost, if you'd like to expand the adventure).

New Beholder Magic Item: Ring of the Pointed Glance

An intertwining band of mithral and black steel, this ring is designed to increase the accuracy of a beholder cultist's eyebeam attacks. When worn over an eyestalk, it provides a +2 enhancement bonus to all attack rolls made with that specific eyestalk. While worn in this way, it does not use up one of the character's two ring body slots. Alternately, it can be worn on the hand; in this case it provides a +1 enhancement bonus to all attack rolls that the character makes with magical ray attacks, including arcane or divine spells that require ray attacks. Any spellcaster can make use of this second power of the ring.

Caster Level: 5th; *Prerequisites:* Forge Ring, Eyekin Blood; *Market Price:* 6,000 gp; *Weight:* –





During the middle of the night, there are only two pupils in this room. One of the pupils yells at the ceiling, at which time two visionaries descend using *potions of levitation*. During the day, there are ten people in the room: one high visionary, two inoculators, and seven pupils. The group is chanting, facing away from the door at a large pit in the side of the room.

The residents attack the characters on sight. While the battle takes place, make a Listen check at +5 against DC of 20 every round. When the check succeeds, someone upstairs has heard the commotion; within 1d6 rounds the entire monastery is alerted. The monastery includes one high visionary, two visionaries, four inoculators, eight initiates, and sixteen pupils. See page 18 of the Complete Guide to Beholders for statistics on these cultists.

The pit in the temple has treasure equal to an encounter level of 8. If this pit leads further below, the treasure is stored in the room above the temple chamber. If the group gets Fadrik out of the monastery, Olivia will pay the characters in family jewelry, giving each character a ring, necklace, or gem worth 100 to 500 gp each. Characters get experience for each cultist killed. They each get an additional 100 XP for freeing Olivia and another 500 XP each for freeing Fadrik.

This encounter is a starting point for a larger campaign dealing with a sudden increase in beholder cults in the area. The party may find scrolls and books with elaborate plans for imminent invasion by the Dominion of the Poisoned Eye. The threat of the Time of Cleansing could force the group to explore the pit in the chamber to find the source of the menace, or perhaps could lead them to root out more cultist temples in the area. The CR of this encounter can be increased from 10 to 12 by adding a beholder overseer resting in the pit, or increased to 15 by adding a beholder sovereign.

Olivia, 2nd-Level Human Aristocrat/8th-Level Wizard: CR 9; Medium Humanoid; HD 2d8+8d4+10; hp 15; Init +5 (+1 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 11 (+1 Dex, +3 deflection); Atk +7 melee (1d4+2 dagger); AL CG; SV Fort +6, Ref +3, Will +8; Str 10, Dex 12, Con 12, Int 16, Wis 9, Cha 11.

Skills: Gather Information +9, Intimidate +7, Knowledge (arcana) +10, Spot +3, Diplomacy +7, Bluff +3, Appraise +7, Alchemy +8, Concentration +9, Spellcraft +11, Search +7, Listen +2. *Feats:* Brew Potion, Empower Spell, Enlarge Spell, Expertise Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative.

Equipment: +2 dagger, ring of protection +3, potion of heroism, ring of feather falling, amulet of health +4

Spells Memorized (4/4/3/3/2): 0-level – daze x2, detect magic, read magic, mage hand; 1st level – mage armor, burning hands, shield, color spray; 2nd level – burning hands (enlarged), blindness/deafness, bull's strength; 3rd level – magic missile (empowered), sleep (empowered), fireball; 4th level – wall of fire, stonewall

Fadrik, 1st-Level Human Cultist/7th-Level Fighter: CR 7; Medium Humanoid; HD 1d4+7d10+8; hp 37; Init +4 (Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 13 (+2 shield, +1 enchantment); Atk +11/+6 melee (1d8+6 longsword); AL NG; SV Fort +8, Ref +4, Will +5; Str 17, Dex 11, Con 12, Int 7, Wis 9, Cha 10.

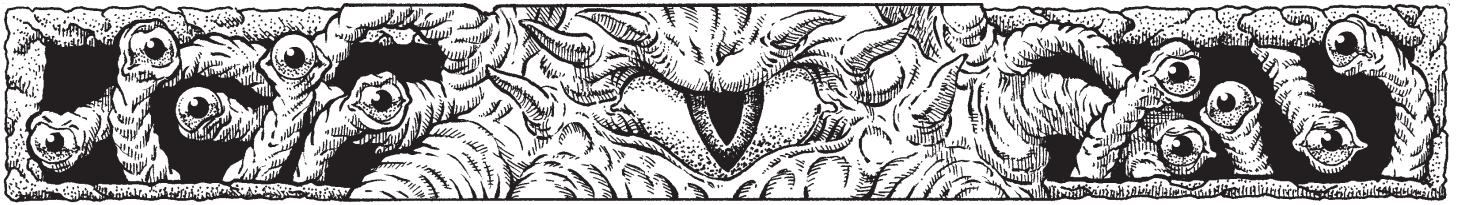
Skills: Jump +4, Climb +4, Spot +1. *Feats:* Cleave, Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (longsword), Weapon Specialization (longsword).

Equipment: +1 longsword, bracers of health +2, spined shield



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