

# FOR THE LITTLE ONES!

A response from the city won't come fast enough. We are alone in this. I beg you to consider: They are our future. If anything, risk your lives for them!

Varina, Respected Matriarch



he plights and tribulations of life can only be endured when the light of hope shines on those who struggle day by day to make ends meet. Most people find this light in their beloved offspring. All challenges are worth the effort when the benefits are to be reaped by one's children. They are beacons of happiness and the reason to give one's best.

## THE HELLISH FLUTIST

AN OBSCURE DEMON named Oogulen came to the Material Plane through a cursed altar in a cavern. Now, despair runs rampant in the secluded settlement of Varlington as all children below 12 years of age are gone; the twenty-four children left their homes in the middle of the night and delved into the wilds. Two brave hunters followed suit and saw a strange entity, shrouded in shadows and playing a pan flute, leading the little ones into a cavern in the woods. They dared not confront the befoul creature. The nefarious demon plans to consume the poor children's souls. Help from the capital's authorities shall not come soon enough. It is in the hands of the peasants, mostly the affected parents, to do something...

## ADVENTURE HOOKS

**For the Children.** The lowly peasants involved in this adventure are parents. Their children were lured by Oogulen. The characters have a strong motivator to risk it all to save their offspring from a terrible fate. None of them are adventurers or particularly brave but the circumstances at hand make them attempt the impossible.

**Deep Loss.** One or more of the characters involved lost a child in the past. The terrible grief transformed them, a trauma that has not yet healed and may never do. These empathetic individuals are determined to help the other grieving parents recover their families to save them from the terrible loss that has assailed them for so long.

**For Glory.** The bailiff and his men are bound to come sooner or later. It may be too late when they get here and many believe that whoever stands out and rescues the children may draw the bailiff's attention. Well-paid work, a knighthood, or an apprenticeship might even be an option for people who demonstrate that they can steel themselves against adversity and fight for a just cause.

## Level 0 Gauntlet

► **Danger.** Risky. Check for a **Random Event** every 2 crawling rounds and after loud noises (3-in-6 chance).

► **Light.** Inside the dungeon, areas 3 and 6 have lit braziers; the rest are dark. All denizens are **dark-adapted**.

► **Smells and Sounds.** A pungent stench of sulfur, blood, and rot pervades the dungeon. The sounds of children laughing, crying, and whispering nonsensical messages appear to come from all places at once, making it difficult to discern their source or location.

## RANDOM EVENTS

d8	Details
1	A <b>swarm of bats</b> gathers and flies toward the cave exit. They ignore the characters but retaliate if attacked.
2	Four <b>peasants</b> from a nearby town carrying torches approach. They have come to help find the children.
3	A <b>dretch demon</b> coalesces in front of the party and attacks while admonishing the party in Diabolic.
4	All the children in area 7 scream in terrible pain as Oogulen siphons a fraction of their life force.
5	Oogulen's voice is heard in the cavern: " <i>Abandon all hope, you are no match to my unlimited power.</i> "
6	A forest hermit ( <b>peasant</b> ) arrives looking for his daughter who was also lured by the hellish flutist.
7	A strong wind current blows through the caverns, snuffing out fires and any uncovered light sources.
8	A <b>giant centipede</b> approaches the party looking for prey. The insect abomination fights until slain.

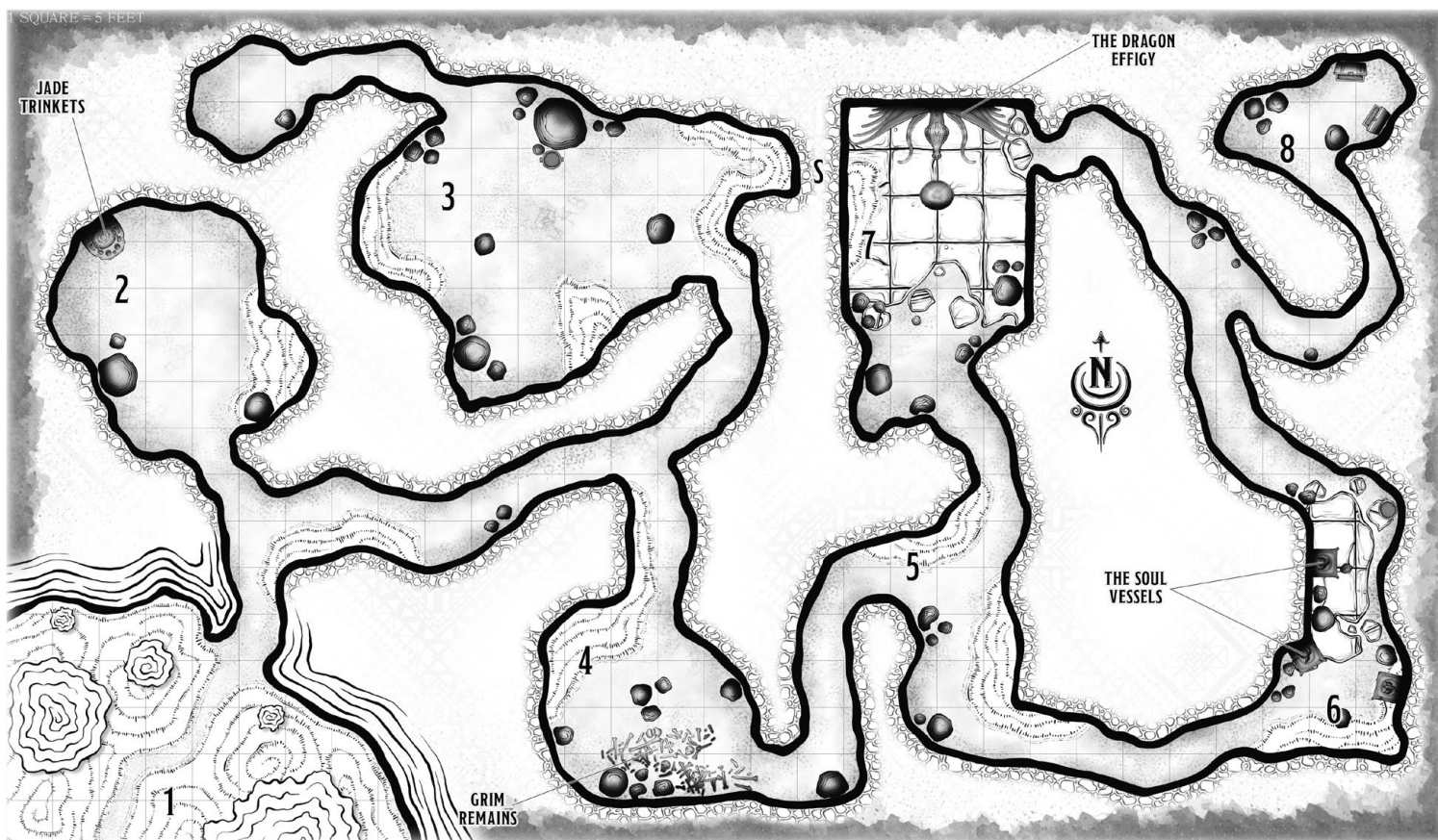
## 1. ENTRANCE HALL

*The well-trodden road from Varlington becomes a faint path through the forest. This road leads to a strange cavern entrance on a squat hill's rocky side.*

It takes the group of peasants a few hours to follow the way to the entrance. Witnesses reported that the kids came this way after leaving their homes that fateful night.

► **The Tracks.** Careful observers notice several tracks of footprints coming into the cavern a day or two ago (DC 12 WIS). An extra set of large-hoofed prints moves around the area, they belong to the demon Oogulen.

► **The Toy.** A wooden horse lies on the grass. It was left as a clue by Martin (area 3) who is unaffected by the luring tune but came along to care for his younger sibling.



## 2. THE JADE TRINKETS

*The dark cavern opens into a roughly circular chamber. A gilded vase surrounded by jade artifacts awaits in the dark. A hum comes from the strange objects.*

A fleeting cult that worshiped Oogulen left these artifacts long ago. Their lair was soon destroyed by a paladin.

► **The Trinkets.** The small jade figurines are carved with the visage of Oogulen. They are magical but the enchantment poured into these stones is just a faint trick to create a constant humming sound. They are worthless.

► **Treasure.** Followers of the defunct cult left some valuables inside the vase. It contains one dagger, rope (30 ft.), a sledgehammer, and nine empty glass vials.

## 3. ENRAPTURED CHILDREN

*Children sit by a brazier and whisper unintelligible babble. They are unaware of their surroundings.*

Sixteen children are in this chamber. Oogulen placed a spell on the brazier that keeps them docile so he can consume them at his leisure. If shaken lightly, the children break out of the mind-affecting spell for a few seconds before they are once again enthralled by it.

► **The Prodigy.** Martin, 9, hugs his sibling Gustaff. He is glad to see adults arrive. The boy is naturally immune to the demon's spells. He tells the peasants about Oogulen's goat-like appearance, its rusty blade, and a knotted whip. Martin could be one of the PC's children (GM's choice).

## 4. THE GRIM REMAINS

*A baleful ossuary lies scattered across the packed soil of this chamber. There are two human skulls.*

► **The Remains.** Careful observers notice that while the spectacle is disheartening, most of the bones belong to small forest creatures and reptiles (DC 12 WIS). The two human skulls are adult-sized and belonged to explorers who died in the caverns years ago to predators.

► **Treasure.** Buried among the remains are a silver ring (10 sp), an oil flask, a crowbar, a backpack, and a club.

## 5. THE AMBUSH

*A child lies face-down in the middle of this chamber. His ripped clothes are stained with grime and blood.*

The poor child, Joseph, lost his life resisting Oogulen after he broke from the luring charm momentarily. The demon placed the child's body here as bait.

**Death from Above.** When a character approaches to examine the body, two **dretch demons** drop from the dark ceiling to attack. The characters can avoid being surprised if they are good observers and notice the abominations hiding above (DC 13 WIS check).

**The Body.** Joseph's body bears a terrible wound under the ribs. A blade cut deep there but it also caused the skin to die off around the wound. It can be inferred that the demon's bladed weapon causes this kind of skin-rotting damage that may be hard to withstand (DC 11 INT).

## 6. THE SOUL VESSELS

Testament to the old demon-worshipping cult, three strange obsidian artifacts remain in this chamber. They are etched with runes in Diabolic that spell obscure prayers to summon Oogulen from the hellish abyss. The souls of three evil priests are contained within. From beyond the veil, they managed to summon Oogulen hoping he would free them from the vessels. However, the demon cares not for their plight, nor is he grateful.

► **The Vessels.** Peasants have no way to understand these artifacts. In the darkness, the vessels whisper maddening sentences. A peasant that studies them may use their obscure revelations to start a wizardry career.

## 7. THE DEMONIC ALTAR

*A cursed effigy sprouts from the north wall. It represents a demonic being. A small crowd of children gathers by a glowing crystal in front of the altar.*

There are eight children around the glowing crystal. Oogulen, the demon, manifests behind it. The demon is angered by the party's intrusion as it was about to finish consuming the children present. Oogulen fights without mercy. During this fight, the demon uses the mind-controlled children as body shields. If the characters are not careful, they may harm the young ones.

► **Secret Entrance.** The characters can surprise Oogulen by approaching through the secret passage from area 3. It is a narrow, debris-filled tunnel (DC 11 WIS).

## 8. THE FORLORN TREASURE

This was once part of a large vault. It collapsed through the eons. Only two stone chests remain accessible.

► **Treasure.** The open coffers contain 24 gp, 360sp, 1,250 cp, a longsword, a *potion of healing*, and a *jewel of barbalt*. This treasure may serve as funding for any survivors to acquire gear, study, and train.

## DEVELOPMENT

THE BATTLE IS won and the survivors return to Varlington with a throng of confused and hungry children. This adventure lights a spark of bravery that cannot be ignored. The bailiff offers the survivors the opportunity to become a knight's squire. They dedicate months to training and learning magic-craft to become level-1 heroes.

### OOGULEN, THE DEMON

AC 12, HP 18, ATK 1 rot blade +4 (1d6 + rot) and 1 knotted whip +2 (1d4), MV near, S +4, D +2, C +2, I +0, W -1, Ch -1, AL C, LV 3

**Rot.** DC 12 CON or the injury cannot be healed by natural means. Only magical healing closes the wound.

