

SHOPPING AT THE CROOKED HOUSE

The growing trade town of Dulwich looms over the Great Salt Mire in the Duchy of Ashlar. A veritable torrent of lumber from the nearby forest enriches its citizens' coffers and emboldens the growing merchant class. Dulwich's lord, Wido Gall, resists the merchants' efforts to topple his rule while coveting the nearby village of Longbridge. Both sides seek support from the followers of Conn, hoping to sway the newly appointed and young high priestess. Meanwhile, adventurers flock to the town's inns and taverns, preparing their own expeditions into the ruins hidden in the nearby Forest of Grey Spires.

Designed specifically for you, the busy GM, this supplement enables you to effortlessly bring your characters' next urban adventure to life. Designed for use with the town of Dulwich, this mini-eventure can easily be used with almost any town or city.

CREDITS

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USING THIS MINI-EVENTURE?

A mini-eventure is akin to a normal adventure, but does not (normally) feature violence or physical challenges. Instead, a mini-eventure focuses on the use of social skills and role-play to resolve the challenges, or events, therein. Most mini-eventures take place in an urban The Crooked House. Mini-eventures are an excellent change of pace and can be used as filler between adventures or as situations in which characters who have invested in social skills can shine. They are also perfect for players who enjoy role-playing.

Use the lists herein to add depth and flavour to the characters' exploration of Dunstone. Use the entries as nothing more than local colour or as springboards to encounters, side quests or even full adventures. You can use this mini-eventure repeatedly, as long as you keep track of which entries you have previously used. Of course, some of the listed NPCs and locales could become staples of your campaign. Be sure to note the location of locales on your GM's city map and develop any your characters seem particularly interested in visiting again.

You can either plan events ahead of time or just "wing" the whole mini-eventure using the tables herein to facilitate play.



THE CROOKED HOUSE

The Crooked House is location 14 on the Dulwich map.

Thanks to its sloping, quasi-sunken appearance, the Crooked House—general shop and family home—is something of a Dulwichian landmark.

The Ilmarinen family owns the place and sells a vast array of wares from the house's cramped and dingy ground floor shop fronting Foundation Way. A jumble of storage cellars—themselves part of the house's subsidence problem—plunge deep below the three-storey building.

The Crooked House's foundations are subsiding at the rear because the building straddles a subterranean stream. Every time it rains, the house seems to sink slightly deeper, giving it a pronounced lop-sided look. Home to generations of the Ilmarinen family the building is the subject of considerable gossip among the older generations. Some still remember the shockingly brutal murder in the cellar three decades ago and the resultant whisperings of the family's deviant religious practices.

THE OFFERING

The Crooked House offers mundane items for sale at normal prices. The Crooked House does not stock weapons or armour, except a small selection of such weapons suitable for peasants and hunters. This is by design; the owners do not want adventurers poking about their shop.

THE CULT

The small Braalite cult centred on the Crooked House comprises the Ilmarinen family and several of their servants (NE female or male human fighter 1). They meet on the first day of every month to venerate their vile patron in the house's deepest, mould-ridden cellar. Sometimes, they kidnap a homeless person, vagrant or lone visitor. Such unfortunates invariably die horrible, soul-wrenching deaths. Their remains are buried in one of the shop's deeper cellars and their possessions sold in the shop.

THE CROOKED HOUSE BY DAY

During the day, the Crooked House sees a trickle of customers. Decent folk stay away from the Crooked House and only Dulwich's poor or newcomers to town usually visit the shop. Even during the day, the shop floor is gloomy and shadow-filled.

THE CROOKED HOUSE BY NIGHT

At night, the Crooked House is ostensibly closed; all is dark and shut up. Nevertheless, some folk occasionally report hearing odd sounds in the shop's environs. Perceptive characters may notice few beggars and the like hang around on Foundation Way after dark.

NOTABLE FOLK

Some folk are often encountered at the Crooked House.

- **Kerttuli Ilmarinen** (NE female human cleric [Baal] 3/thief 1) leads a small Braalite cult. Kerttuli dreams of establishing a proper shrine to Braal and has begun searching for other like-minded cults in Languard and Dunstone. Business trips—ostensibly to secure more stock—obscure the real reasons for her trips.
- **Pauli Ilmarinen** (NE male human cleric [Baal] 3/thief 1) loves gold almost as much as he loves his dark patron. Intoxicated by the feeling of power he gets as he watches a sacrifice expire (preferably screaming) Pauli's soul is irredeemable.

FOLK OUT & ABOUT

While the characters are at the Crooked House they may encounter one or more folk of interest.

1. **Vilina Toiva** (N middle-aged female human) wanders the street calling for her lost son, Urpo. Vilina is new to Dulwich—she is a weaver by trade—and does not know of the Crooked House's reputation. Evidently well off, but worried, she stops several people to ask if they have seen her son. She is grateful for any help the characters can provide and offers them a small reward.
2. **Tommo Niera** (N male human) lingers outside the Crooked House waiting for other customers to go in. He needs a new cooking pot but doesn't feel safe going into the shop until other customers are present. Once inside, he asks loudly for a new pot and makes a point of making eye contact with at least one of the characters. This thin, sallow-skinned man seems consumed by nervous energy.
3. **Salme Kainu** (NE female human fighter 1) masquerades as a normal customer but is a cultist watching for potential troublemakers. She is ugly, has terrible breath and leers and titters at any such folk. If adventurers seem to be overly lingering in the shop she offers to read their fortune, spouts nonsense and generally makes their shopping experience miserable.
4. **Sven Ihamuoto** (LG male human paladin [Darlen] 1) lingers in the shop, driven here by some nameless compulsion to investigate. He is "in disguise"—not wearing his Darlenite regalia—but is clearly (and spectacularly) out of place. He is suspicious of everyone, but not particularly quick-witted. The Ilmarinens have their eyes on him. He might not survive his visit.
5. **Eljas Ampuja** (CN young male human thief 1) wanders the aisles as part of a dare. Some of his street friends bet him he wouldn't dare steal from the Crooked House. Full of youth's boundless overconfidence and sense of immortality he makes a catastrophic mistake. One of the staff catches him and starts to drag him off to a back room. Seeing the characters he calls for help. If they do

not aid him, he is doomed to a painful death in the shop's cellars.

6. **Rauna Ahti** (CG female human fighter 2) makes a living as a travelling seamstress after a brief stint as a mercenary. She is here to offer her services as she has done to every other business and home on Foundation Way. Rauna is perceptive and has realised something is not right at the shop. When the characters spot her she is in the (strange) process of talking herself out of a job. She latches onto the characters and uses them as an excuse to leave the shop.

WHAT'S GOING ON?

While the characters are at the Crooked House, one or more things from the list below may occur.

1. **Conspiratorial Whisperings:** Three peasants whisper between themselves while pretending to browse a distant shelf. The three are cult members waiting for the shop's normal customers to leave.
2. **Personal Help:** Pauli (see "Notable Folk") wants the characters out of her shop as quickly as possible. Thus she hovers nearby and offers them attentive, persistent and unhelpful "assistance". Perceptive characters may get the impression she is trying to get rid of them.
3. **Empty Shop:** The shop is utterly devoid of other customers. When the characters arrive, Kerttuli quickly pronounces the shop is shutting and that the characters must leave. Ten minutes after they leave he reopens.
4. **Odd Lights:** When the characters pass the shop late one night they notice faint lights burning within. If they noisily investigate, the lights are immediately doused.
5. **Thumping:** A faint thumping comes from the Crooked House's cellar while the characters are browsing. If the characters ask what is going on, Pauli casually explains her husband is "doing some work in the cellar".
6. **Heavy Rain:** It is raining heavily. As the characters browse the noisome stench of mould wafts upward from the cellars.

OPPORTUNITIES & COMPLICATIONS

Lucky adventurers find opportunities almost anywhere. Unlucky adventurers find complications almost anywhere.

1. **Missing Child:** A child has gone missing near the Crooked House, and vague whisperings lay the blame at the Ilmarinens' door. The child's parents are distraught. When the characters next pass the Crooked House they notice the two-tears streaking their faces—standing in the street looking at the shop. Inquisitive characters speaking with the pair learn of the missing child and the parents' suspicions regarding the Ilmarinens.
2. **Help Wanted:** The characters hear, via a circuitous route, that Kerttuli and Pauli seek adventurous help. If they present themselves at the shop, they discover the

shopkeepers have already hired someone. Weeks later, they hear the folk hired have disappeared. The Ilmarinens refuse all subsequent offers of help.

3. **Crooked Directions:** When the characters are shopping for a certain item, they are directed to the Crooked House. In truth, the person directing them knows the shop does not have what they want. Rather, they hope the characters' may become intrigued by the shop and the rumours surrounding it and decide to investigate.
4. **Hidden Trapdoor:** A perceptive character browsing the shop spots the faint suggestion of a hidden trapdoor under a scuffed-up rug. If they return to investigate, they discover the rug has been replaced and a heavy table piled high with merchandise set over it.
5. **Something is Terribly Wrong:** If a paladin or priest of Darlen visits the Crooked House they suddenly experience a deep sense of foreboding and a feeling something is terribly wrong here.
6. **Rumours of Horror:** As the characters approach the Crooked House, Tommo Niera (#2 "Folk Out & About") approaches them. He warns of the shop's reputation by relating rumours #3 and 4 from the list below.

WHISPERS & RUMOURS

The characters may overhear or learn some of the rumours (which may or may not be true) below.

1. **Missing Tax Collector:** A tax collector disappeared while visiting the shop. Some say the Ilmarinens killed him and buried him in the cellar.
2. **Deep Cellars:** Foundation Way is aptly named. An older settlement once stood here and the shops and homes are built over the top of it. Many of the buildings feature deep, multi-level cellars. Some folk speak of even older, deeper tunnels.
3. **Strange Religious Practises:** The Ilmarinen of the Crooked House worship an elder nature god. Their religious practices are abhorrent. Some people say they make horrible sacrifices to it.
4. **Brutal Murder:** A horrible murder took place in the Crooked House's cellar three decades ago. Old folk remember the lurid details: Kerttuli's father—now long dead—said he caught a thief burgling the shop. The thief resisted arrest and was killed. Why he had to be stabbed over 30 times has never been adequately explained.
5. **Reviled Local Landmark:** The Crooked House is a local landmark. The house is slowly sinking—no one knows why. Some people can't wait for the ground to completely swallow the building.
6. **Dogfighting:** Sometimes late at night you can hear strange sounds—yelpings and yowlings—coming from underground near the Crooked House. Some people think the Ilmarinens run a secret dog-fighting ring.

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