

SHOPPING AT THE CROOKED HOUSE



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.

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 Baal 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.

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:** Kerttuli (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.

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.

CREDIT

This is a short system-neutral extract from *Shopping at the Crooked House* by Creighton Broadhurst. *Shopping at the Crooked House* is a patron-exclusive mini-adventure available in 5e, OSR and Pathfinder 1 editions. Every member of Raging Swan Press's Patreon campaign got a free copy.

The Crooked House is location 14 on the Dulwich map.