

# DRINKING AT THE GOLDEN SKULL

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*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?

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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 locale. 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 GOLDEN SKULL

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The Golden Skull is location 7 on the Dulwich map.

The Golden Skull appears just like any other dingy, forgettable watering hole. Yet, at the rear, a concealed worn stair winds down to a secret basement carved out of the ancient ruins below Dulwich. Here, the town's largest and most ruthless thieves' gang, the Shadow Spiders, led by Voitto Markku, runs a gambling den and fighting pit. The pit's existence is a bit of an open secret in Dulwich society. Both the rich and the poor come to spectate, cheering on the bloody combatants.

- **Food & Drink:** Meal (parsnip and acorn stew or turnip pie; 1 sp) ale (4 cp), wine (pitcher; 1 sp).
- **Accommodation:** A standard room costs 2 sp a night. The room is draughty and has an easily defeated door lock. Visitors can sleep in the common room for 5 cp a night. In both places, a slumbering newcomer is likely to be robbed blind.
- **Lifestyle:** Characters staying at the Golden Skull can enjoy a poor (2 sp/day) or modest (1gp/day) lifestyle.

### THE GOLDEN SKULL BY DAY

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For most of the day, the Golden Skull is quiet—many of its real clientele conduct their business at night. During the day, the taproom sees only sporadic, quiet business. The dingy taproom begins to get busy in the late afternoon.

### THE GOLDEN SKULL BY NIGHT

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At night, the Golden Skull comes alive. The taproom quickly fills with ne'er-do-wells preparing for or planning their nighttime nefarious doings. The Golden Skull's gambling den and fighting pit are often busy. In particular, gambling games are held here nightly—there is never any shortage of folk keen to win big. Fight nights are always busy.

### NOTABLE FOLK

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Some folk are often encountered at the Golden Skull.

- **Voitto Markku** (LE male human **spy**) craves money and power and will do anything to get both. Violence, murder and extortion are more than acceptable to Voitto, and his lack of morals, coupled with a total lack of empathy, makes him supremely dangerous. Stick-thin and pale of skin, Voitto has the appearance of one who does not often see the sun.
- **Ottilia Jurva** (LE female human **bandit captain**) works at the Golden Skull behind the bar. She is tall and thin but blindingly fast. She wins her fights with guile and cunning, not with brute strength. She is murder incarnate with a dagger and much in demand for knife work.

## THE SHADOW SPIDERS

Voitto's money has bought the notoriously fickle and self-serving members of the Shadow Spiders to his side. In addition to gambling, the Shadow Spiders fence illegal goods and sell assassinations. Most of the smaller gangs offer the Shadow Spiders a cut of their profits—it's much safer that way.

### FOLK OUT & ABOUT

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While the characters are at the Golden Skull, they may encounter one or more folk of interest.

1. **Silja Ilakka** (NE female human **assassin**) enthusiastically works with Voitto but harbours dark dreams of leading the Shadow Spiders one day (soon). She lingers in the taproom most evenings before slipping into the night to ply her trade. A surprising percentage of all murders in the town can be attributed to her work.
2. **Hilppa Aikio** (CE male human **bandit captain**) works as a thug and tough for anyone who will pay him. Huge, muscled and bald Hilppa is used to his mere appearance ending most arguments or resistance. He loves a good fight, though, and often beats his victims if they refuse to fight him. Hilppa has no real friends. He works the door on fight night and knows many spectators (and all the regular fighters) by sight.
3. **Kuura Lempo** (NE male human **priest** [Braal]) visits the Golden Skull because she has heard "good things" about the folk who drink there. Of course, her definition of "good things" is probably wildly different to the characters. She keeps her religious beliefs to herself but is here looking for hirelings; she plans to abduct a follower of Darlen and sacrifice them to her dark patron and needs some extra muscle.
4. **Lenokal Keenear** (NE male halfling **spy**) loves it when tall folk underestimate him. **Preternaturally** stealthy, he specialises in breaking into people's homes and businesses while they sleep. Once he has burgled the place, he always leaves a telltale sign of his presence. Lenokal is barely three-foot tall, wears his dark brown hair closely cropped and doesn't bother with armour.
5. **Filpus** (N male human **commoner**) drinks deeply. A beggar, he was given a gold coin today! He is drunk, obnoxious and on the way to getting a beating.
6. **Ovdris Boferg** (LG female dwarf **veteran**) drinks at the Golden Skull while she looks for a friend, Delkas Urzak, who disappeared during a night out a week ago. She leans on the bar alone, quietly drinking. The regulars have not yet decided if she is an easy mark or not; thus, they have left her alone—for now. If the characters are obviously out of place, Ovdris approaches them and asks if they have seen her friend. She is stocky, black-haired and clad in a supple chain shirt. She carries two well-used handaxes at her belt.

## WHAT'S GOING ON?

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

1. **Quiet:** The taproom is quiet, and the characters—likely new to the inn—stand out like sore thumbs. As word gets around that potential marks are at the tavern, a steady trickle of thieves, pickpockets and muggers arrive to take the newcomers' measure. The characters are likely followed—by more than one group—when they leave.
2. **Sinister Types:** Several small groups of obviously nefarious individuals linger in the common room but at widely dispersed tables. Each group mutter to themselves—perhaps planning their next crimes.
3. **Busy Taproom:** The taproom is thick with rogues, pickpockets and street toughs. The characters cannot find a table. They are likely jostled as they move through the taproom—if they are drunk or distracted, a thief may even try to lift a few coins from their pouch.
4. **Gambling Games:** Several low stake gambling games are going on in the common room. Surprisingly, most of the participants are not cheating—there is some honour among thieves, after all. If the characters join a game, however, everyone tries to cheat them.
5. **Delivery:** The Golden Skull is taking in a delivery of wines and ale. The delivery wasn't actually meant for the tavern; the wagon was taken on the road just outside town. Voitto Markku (see "Notable Folk") is in a rare good mood, and his attitude is infectious; the regulars are a merry bunch this evening.
6. **Murder:** A short brawl has just finished. The brawl was cover for the settling of a score. One of the brawlers lies under a table with three knives in his back.

## OPPORTUNITIES & COMPLICATIONS

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

1. **New Spiders:** Voitto (see "Notable Folk") is always open to new recruits either for the Shadow Spiders or the fighting pit. He is also on the look out for brave (and gullible) adventurers to subdue dangerous wild beasts for his fighting pit.
2. **Want to Win Some Goal?:** A regular thinks one of the characters is particularly gullible and invites them to a game in the inn's cellar; it's a secret game, though, so they mustn't tell anyone else.
3. **Gullible Pawns:** Voitto (see "Notable Folk") is always looking for gullible pawns she can use to stymie her rivals' plans. At the moment, she seeks to hurt or injure Almina Mastonen at the East Gate Inn (location 6).
4. **Busy and Dangerous Taproom:** The taproom is thick with rogues, pickpockets and street toughs. The characters cannot find a table and are likely jostled as they move through the taproom and given some hard

looks by many of the regulars. If the characters seem drunk, weak, distracted or gullible when they leave, they are likely followed by more than one group of rogues set on relieving them of their burdensome wealth.

5. **Black Cat Agent:** A member of the Black Cats gang, Kauko Otava (NE male human **spy**), has come here to spy on the Shadow Spiders. The Black Cats are based in the East Gate Inn (location 6). If the characters seem wildly out of place, Kauko approaches them and, after a short bout of pleasantries, suggests they might prefer that inn. If this fails, he warns them that the Golden Skull is the base of the notoriously evil and depraved Shadow Spiders. He hopes that after this pronouncement, the characters' adventurous spirits will assert themselves.
6. **Ill-Advised Merchant:** Kaisu Neuvo (N male human **noble**) has a problem with a rival and has come here to hire someone to do something about it. Now that she is here, she has realised she has made a terrible mistake and that she'll be lucky to leave with this life. At sight of the characters, she latches onto the group.

## WHISPERS & RUMOURS

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

1. **Gambling Den:** The Golden Skull hides a gambling den in a secret cellar far below the inn. The cellar hosts nightly games; much silver and gold have been won and lost at the Golden Skull's tables. Not everyone survives the games.
2. **Fighting Pit:** One of Dulwich's open secrets is the existence of a fighting pit below the Golden Skull in a cellar carved from the ancient ruins lying beneath the town. The weekly fight nights are well attended by all types of folk. Sometimes, Voitto secures dangerous wild beasts for the fights!
3. **Thieves at War:** Dulwich's various criminal gangs are at war—struggling for supremacy over the underworld. Thus far, the gangs have concentrated on each other; when one emerges victorious, a new wave of crime will sweep over the town.
4. **Tax the Rich:** Things are good in Dulwich, and its folk grow wealthy—particularly the merchants. Wido Gall is planning a new tax on the merchants, and they are not happy about it.
5. **The Shambling Dead:** Something is stirring in the cemetery (location 10). Visitors sometimes report being attacked by the animate dead! Almost no one voluntarily goes there after dark anymore. Pickings have been slim in the cemetery of late.
6. **Olden Ruins:** Dulwich is not the first settlement to stand at the site. The ancient ruin of an elder settlement lies beneath the town. Sometimes, adventurers brave these ruins; not all of them emerge.

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