

- FOCUS ON FREEPORT 15 -

SALON DU MASQUE

DESIGN: CHRIS PRAMAS EDITING: EVAN SASS

ART: MARCIO FIORITO GRAPHIC DESIGN: HAL MANGOLD

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The following text is designated as Open Gaming Content: Countess d'Amberville's stat block.

For the last two years, the Salon du Masque has been all the rage in the Merchant District. Founded by a mysterious countess from a distant land, the Salon has quickly become a fixture on the social scene of Freeport's elite.

The Salon is open in the evening on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. It is an elegant place, with a garden, numerous balconies, and over a dozen exquisitely furnished rooms that offer varying degrees of privacy. The staff stands ready to cater to every whim or fade into the background as required. There are only two rules of the house: You must pay 100 gp to enter and you must wear a mask at all times. Everything else is permissible.



COUNTESS D'AMBERVILLE

The Countess d'Amberville presides over the Salon du Masque. She is renowned for her quick wit, her seductive eyes, and her impeccable sense of style. She floats from room to room, charming the patrons and making sure her guests are as satisfied with the conversation as they are with the fine liquors.

There are many stories about the countess. Some say that she is in exile from her homeland, others that she fled to escape the madness of her family. It has even been whispered that once she was a Sacred Virgin, but a masked man seduced her and she was cast from the order. According to this tale, she requires her guests to wear masks to honor the memory of her masked paramour, who was slain by vengeful warriors of the church. The countess neither confirms nor denies the veracity of these stories and her mysterious past only adds to the allure of the Salon du Masque.

EXTRAORDINARY SERVICES

Behind closed doors, hidden by masks, and lubricated by alcohol, Freeport's elite feel comfortable enough to gossip. Countess d'Amberville hears many rumors, and more than one drunken guildier has told her things he shouldn't. A select few know that the Countess is not just a good listener—she's also a talented problem-solver. With her many contacts, the Countess can make things happen. She can arrange for the right people to be bribed, she can find out when that shipment of ivory is due to dock, and she can even arrange for "inconvenient" people to disappear. The latter service is most costly and the Countess requires utmost discretion. No questions as to the timing and method are allowed. Most of her clients assume that the Countess hires some dockside trash to take care of their problems. They would be shocked to discover that the Countess d'Amberville adds a very personal touch to her "extraordinary services." Unknown to the wealthy patrons that she charms each weekend, Countess d'Amberville is Freeport's most skilled assassin.

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It is true that a streak of madness runs through her family and perhaps this explains the Countess's fascination with murder. She could simply run the Salon, make money, trade secrets, and enjoy the confidence of the privileged. All that, however, is not enough for her. Yes, she enjoys the games of the Salon, enjoys the manipulation of her clients, but she also loves the thrill of the hit, the feel of the knife as it slides between the ribs of her latest victim. Furthermore, she has taken on apprentices, young women who work in the Salon by night but learn the deadly arts by day. They assist their mistress with reconnaissance and misdirection, but it is always d'Amberville who makes the kill.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

It is said that no one in Freeport has ever seen Countess d'Amberville's face. She is only seen at the Salon and only in one of her many masks. One night at the Salon, the son of a wealthy merchant pulls off the Countess's mask on a dare and by the next morning he is dead. Is this the work of the Countess, angry that her face was exposed, or is the rake's death just a coincidence?

COUNTESS D'AMBERVILLE

Female Human Asa14: CR 14; Medium-size Humanoid; HD 14d6+14; hp 65; Init +3; Spd 30 ft.; AC 19 (+3 Dex, +6 *bracers of armor* +6); Atk +15/+15/+10 melee (1d4+3, +3 *wounding punching dagger of speed*), +14/+9 ranged (1d8+1d6+1, +1 *shock light crossbow*); SA Killing blow (4/day), sneak attack +2d6; AL CN; SV Fort +5, Ref +12, Will +5; Str 10, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 14, Wis 13, Cha 20.

Possessions: +1 *shock light crossbow*, +3 *wounding punching dagger of speed*, *ring of jumping**, *bracers of armor* +6, *masterwork disguise kit*.

Skills and Feats: Bluff +15, Climb +5, Concentration +6, Disguise +15, Gather Information +15, Hide +11, Intimidate +0, Jump +32*, Knowledge (local) +7, Listen +9, Move Silently +11, Sense Motive +10, Spot +8, Tumble +6; Deflect Arrows, Dodge, Glib Tongue, Improved Unarmed Strike, Mobility, Quick Draw, Quick Change, Spring Attack, Stunning Fist, Weapon Panache (*punching dagger*).

Languages Spoken: Common, Elven, Dwarven, Sign Language (*assassin*).

Spells Prepared (Asa 3/2/1): 1st—*change self*, *spider climb*, *shadow hands*; 2nd—*alter self*, *pass without trace*; 3rd—*smoke form*.

One of the Countess's apprentices gets fed up that she never gets to assassinate anyone. She finds a job freelance and proceeds to botch it badly and get caught by the Sea Lord's Guard. The Countess approaches the PCs, charm in full force, and says she would be ever so grateful if they would spring her apprentice from the Fortress of Justice before she goes on trial. The girl is impetuous, the Countess explains, and may say things that cause a great deal of embarrassment to some important people. Those people, she asserts, are willing to pay handsomely for this job (a lie, of course, but the Countess does not want the PCs to realize it is her own secrets she is protecting).

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