

- ARDEN WINDBROOK -

BARBER, ASSASSIN, SERIAL KILLER

Human male Exp5/Asn3: CR 7; Medium-size humanoid; HD 8d6; hp 31; Init +3; Speed 30 ft.; AC 13 (touch 13, flat-footed 13); Atk +8 melee (1d4+3, +2 *straight razor*); SA death attack (DC 14), sneak attack +2d6; SQ poison use, uncanny dodge (Dex bonus to AC); AL CN; SV Fort +3, Ref +6, Will +4; Str 13, Dex 16, Con 10, Int 15, Wis 8, Cha 14.

Skills and Feats: Bluff +12, Climb +6, Diplomacy +12, Disguise +12, Gather Information +11, Hide +10, Listen +6, Move Silently +12, Perform +11 (buffoonery, juggling, storytelling), Profession (barber) +10, Sense Motive +7, Spot +2; Exotic Weapon Proficiency (straight razor), Run, Skill Focus (Profession [barber]), Weapon Focus (straight razor.)

Languages: Common, Halfling.

Spells Prepared: (0/2; saves are DC 11 + spell level): 0 – *change self, obscuring mist*.

Spellbook: 1 – *change self, detect poison, ghost sound, obscuring mist*.

Possessions: *potion of haste*, caltrops, +2 *straight razor* (equivalent to a Kukri in all ways except it only weighs 1 lb.).

BACKGROUND

Born to a street barber, Arden grew up with a razor in his hand. He was a friendly and personable kid, who easily charmed people. His father taught him performing skills to attract clients, and entertain them while he groomed them. However, Arden had a dark side that he concealed from everyone, even his father. Sometimes at night, the youngster would skulk about in the shadows and spy on people, while he imagined committing dark deeds. Occasionally he would even catch and slay small stray animals.

When he came of age, Arden set off on his own and soon established a thriving street-barbering business. One day he was approached by a stranger who offered him a large bag of gold to slit the throat of one of his regular clients. The dark thrill that idea roused in him, and the temptation of all that gold proved too great to resist, and he did it. He then immediately fled the city and traveled far from home, eventually setting up again in a new town, under a new name. He let word of his special talents leak to the right people, and was well paid for performing several more assassinations. Eventually, a shadowy organization approached him and offered him membership and training; all he had to do was prove himself by slaying an innocent. Arden killed yet again, this time without gold as his reason, and joined that city's guild of assassins.

After murdering a dozen people he had to move again, this time to Freeport. To ensure a safe haven he maintains two separate dwellings: one along the docks, another in the Eastern District. Arden works in the Merchant District each day, entertaining the wealthy and building a web of trust. He hopes to make a big score soon and leave Freeport far behind. He uses his disguise skills to appear somewhat different in each new city he moves to. When Arden kills for money he typically attempts to decapitate his victims with his +2 *straight razor*, while in the midst of shaving them. [He receives a +4 circumstance bonus to his death attack under these conditions.]

If he succeeds, he flees with the victim's head, making it difficult to bring them back to life.

Now that he's tasted blood, Arden needs to kill. He slinks through the shadows late at night, imagining what it will feel like the next time his razor does its work. If it has been more than two months since his last kill, he will begin slaughtering stray animals. After four months he will need to kill a random person to satisfy his urge.

PERSONALITY

Arden enjoys being both a barber and a killer. He basks in the attention he receives from wealthy patrons, who find his lighthearted style amusing. At the same time, he relishes the power and terror that a swift pull of the blade inflicts. He hopes to one day settle down and teach his skills to a son, but he needs a few more big jobs to enable him to retire in the style he covets. Until that day, a show of jovial good humor, an engaging personality, and mild buffoonery will continue to mask the evil that lurks within him.

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Arden is a tall, athletic man in his late twenties, with dark hair and eyes. Generally his hair is short and neatly trimmed, but his facial hair changes frequently depending on his whim or current disguise. His frequent smiles reveal a small chip on a bottom front tooth. When working, he dresses to impress his clientele. Every action is orchestrated with finesse and style.



- ARDEN WINDBROOK -

HOOKS

- The PCs encounter Arden (grooming clients, juggling razors and otherwise entertaining the crowd) on several trips to the Merchant District during daytime hours. Soon after the PCs have become accustomed to the cheerful barber (or even befriend him) he assassinates someone. A large bounty is placed on his head and, as the Sea Lord's Guard believes he has fled the city, the PCs are asked to hunt him down. When they catch him, will his protestations of innocence convince them that he is not a cold-blooded killer? ("It was a doppelganger, and I panicked and ran...")
- Arden is a good source of rumors, gossip, and even secret information, as he is told a lot by clients who let down their guard. Even he is sometimes surprised at what they'll tell him!
- Arden loses it completely, and starts stalking the streets of Freeport, ala Jack the Ripper. With the tally of headless victims rising nightly, the Guard (stretched beyond its manpower limits) deputizes the party and sends them out to patrol Scurvytown by night, in search of the 'Freeport Headsman.'
- Arden accepts a highly profitable job. He sets his chair up in the Plaza of Gold (see *F:CoA*, page 63) as usual, and once the man sits for his daily shave, Windbrook

slashes his razor completely through his victim's neck. Holding onto the head by its hair, he turns to run, but the body fountains gray-green blood into the air and convulses into that of a doppelganger. Arden stops in amazement at the crowd's cheers. They surge forward, haul him up onto their shoulders, and carry him about as a hero. The Sea Lord's Guard is very suspicious of how Arden knew that the nobleman was a shapeshifter ("He just felt wrong.") but can do nothing. Now the mobs are up in arms over a shapeshifter scare, and have forced Arden to lead a vigilante hunt for more of the creatures. From here, several scenarios can be explored:

- The PCs, accused of being shapeshifters, are attacked by a mob. The mob demands that the characters, as renowned heroes, join the hunt under Arden's command. The barber, knowing the truth will likely come out, and soon, is desperate to escape the city. The PCs spot him as he makes his break for it.
- Alternatively, the party is asked by the Guard (as trusted insiders) to investigate Arden for them. Remember that the mob is one step away from rioting, and will hear no ill spoken of their 'savior'.
- The PCs end up fighting for their lives after accidentally exposing the Rakshasas that control the League of Freemen (see *F:CoA*, pp. 59–61.)

- ARILEE STORMCREST - HIGH SOCIETY CAT BURGLAR

Human female Ari2/Rog4: CR 5; Medium-size humanoid; HD 2d8+4d6+6; hp 33; Init +7; Speed 30 ft.; AC 18 (touch 14, flat-footed 18); Atk +5 melee (1d4+1, +1 dagger); SA sneak attack +2d6; SQ evasion, uncanny dodge (Dex bonus to AC); AL CN; SV Fort +2, Ref +7, Will +4; Str 10, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 13, Wis 10, Cha 14.

Skills and Feats: Climb +4, Diplomacy +9, Disguise +7, Gather Information +7, Handle Animal +7, Hide +12, Move Silently +12, Open Lock +12, Ride (horses) +10, Search +7, Sense Motive +4, Spot +4; Dodge, Expertise, Improved Initiative, Run.

Languages: Common, Elven.

Possessions: +1 dagger, +1 studded leather armor, masterwork thieves' tools, ring of protection +1, potions of gaseous form (3).

BACKGROUND

Silk robes, glittering jewels, luscious feasts and banquets, the best entertainment — all the comforts of the rich, and the dreams of the lowly peasant. Many would give anything for such a life; however, to Arilee Stormcrest they are the epitome of boredom. By the age of twenty, the young noblewoman had all she could take of a perfumed and pampered lifestyle. In search of excitement, Arilee turned to burglary. Not for the

money, her father is among the richest men of the city. It's the thrill of stealing treasured items and thumbing her nose at the law that appeals to her.

Arilee is an accomplished thief and has pulled off some daring heists. She is a member of the secretive Daughters of the Guild (see *F:CoA*, pp. 69–70), and is highly amused by their tales and antics. Few of the disillusioned young women ever do anything truly illegal, but Arilee keeps her eyes open. She desires a protégé and ally and figures that this is the best place to find one. Nifur Roberts does not like Arilee, because of the way she scoffs at some of Nifur's more outlandish ideas. The other women of the society enjoy Arilee's company, but no one suspects she is really a burglar. She will reveal that fact only to one that she believes she can teach, and work with. At the moment, she is watching Vikki Tarjay (see page 93) with interest.

Arilee is happier than she has ever been. She smiles often and actually enjoys the many balls and festivals that she attends — ever watchful for new acquisitions. The model of proper etiquette and politeness, she is a must on everyone's guest list. Merchant princes compete to court her, but she has favored none. She is in no hurry to marry and relinquish her freedom.

PERSONALITY

Arilee is a prim and proper noble lady. She is blasé and bored with everything around her, even treating potential suitors with

- ARILEE STORMCREST -

disinterest. It is the same with the gods. Arilee pays lip service to them but has no true faith. Jaded by wealth and luxury, she despises the daily activities of Freeport's idle rich. However, all of this changes when she slips out to steal. A transformation takes place in her mind; she becomes alert, patient and utterly professional. Glimmers of passion dance in her eyes and she can't help but smile when confronted with a particularly tricky lock. So far she has been lucky, she has not had to fight for her prizes. Just the thought of wounding anyone horrifies her.

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Arilee is a slender, lily-skinned beauty whose stunning emerald eyes turn heads. She is petite, but not to the point of being skinny. Her flesh is unblemished by the caress of the sun; no toil has calloused her hands or feet. Her brown hair is worn curled and stylishly arranged, held in place with jewels worth more than most men will ever earn. Her gowns are of the finest silks and most brilliant colors. Perfume and make-up hide any imperfections (if she truly has any). If only she would smile, and erase the boredom from her countenance!

When Arilee slips into the role of burglar, she ties her hair up and covers her face with soot. She even rubs a bit of the nasty stuff in her mouth to help disguise her perfect teeth. Her clothing, rags stolen from the city's poor, is always dark black or brown.

HOOKS

- Arilee was caught in the act by a noblewoman, and clubbed with a fireplace poker. She defended herself and in the ensuing struggle the noblewoman died when she fell and split her head open on the fireplace. Arilee fled in shock and horror at what she had done. To her surprise, the Sea Lord's Guard began banging on her door the next afternoon. After being resurrected, the noblewoman had reported recognizing Arilee through the soot, and amazingly was able to identify the young woman as her murderer. With the law coming in the front door, Arilee grabbed her jewelry and her loot and bolted through an open window, fleeing into the city. She is now in hiding and seeks to leave town. She is disguised as an older woman needing passage to a far off city, claiming that she must quickly leave, to go be with a dying sister. She approaches the PCs to ask for an escort, offering to pay handsomely. The Guard has put a large bounty on her head, and many bounty hunters are after her, so the party will have its hands full protecting their charge. Alternatively the noblewoman hires the PCs to capture and return Arilee. The lady is not willing to let her assailant get away merely because she sailed out of Freeport's waters. When they catch her, Arilee will offer most of her stolen jewels for her freedom. The very tempting offer totals much more than the bounty on her head, and their promised reward, put together.
- Arilee has heard a rumor of a rare and valuable figurine that a local wizard uncovered on a recent adventure. Intrigued, she investigated, and discovered that the wizard was displaying it, along with several other exotic works of art, in a public exhibit. Making her move, she stole the small statue, but then fell victim to an ancient curse it carries. When the wizard took the figure from the previously deceased owner, he did not trigger the curse, but when Arilee stole it the curse affected her immediately. Arilee has switched to a Lawful Evil alignment and is disassociating herself from her family and friends. Worse, she is attempting to build up a cult dedicated to a long forgotten evil deity (the idol is a religious icon that depicts it) and has found several depraved followers. Concerned for Arilee, her friends hire the PCs to track Arilee down, and investigate why she has changed so radically, and become so cruel and aloof. The statue must be returned to the wizard, or destroyed, for the curse to be lifted. If it is stolen back from Arilee, the thief will be cursed too (and switch alignments if necessary.) Arilee is obviously obsessed with the idol and carries it everywhere, sometimes even talking to it. Freeport doesn't need any more cults, and besides, her beauty and charisma are attracting others to her, so it is only a matter of time before she will be causing real trouble.
- Arilee finally picks a protégé from among the Daughters, and begins teaching the younger girl the tricks of the trade. The young woman's parents discover evidence of their daughter's new career and hire the PCs to follow her, discover who is corrupting her, and teach them a lesson.
- By coincidence, Arilee pulls a job on the same target, and at the same time, as one or more of the PCs are sneaking into it as well. She and they bump into each other in the middle of the simultaneous break-ins, possibly with comedic consequences. She could even romantically fall for a handsome PC in the course of this; attracted by the guy's refreshingly similar tastes in 'evening entertainment.'

