

Adalard

Mediocre wizard, reluctant entertainer, and scholar of magical theory. 67 years old.

Looks not a day over 20, and has fine elven features. He tends to wear a mage's robes.

Adalard has...

- Below-average **strength** (d20)
- Above-average **agility** (d10)
- Average **health** (d12)
- Extensive **knowledge of the world** (d8)
- Average powers of **perception** (d12)
- Poor **magical ability** (d20)

Adalard is...

- A skilled **showman** (d8)
- Highly knowledgeable about **magical theory** (d8)
- **Charming** when he wants to be (d10)
- Competent at **sleight-of-hand** (d10)
- Reasonably well-versed in **local politics** (d12)

Adalard has learned...

- Filibert's Fantastic Flames (d8): *colourful **flames**, which can actually burn*
- Leila's Lovely Luminous Lamps (d8): *bright, coloured dancing **lights**, which can be made brighter*
- Theodore's Terrific Transporter (d10): *manipulate small objects at a distance*
- Balthazar's Bountiful Bouquet (d12): *summon real flowers from a nearby source. Works on any kind of flower, including cauliflower—and, for some reason, cabbage.*

You never knew your elven mother, and your father, a village blacksmith, never spoke of her. Your magical talent was discovered early by a wandering wizard, Geoffrey the Red, who took you away with him as his apprentice. By the time it occurred to you to revisit the town of your childhood, and ask your father about your birth, it was too late—in your absence he had grown old and died, as humans are wont to do, and you could ask him nothing more.

By this time, it had become apparent to Geoffrey that your talent was weak, and would never improve. He cursed the years he had wasted training you, and left you to fend for yourself in Blackwater, where he found himself a new apprentice—a boy named Osuald; a nobleman's child who had already surpassed you in power.

You were left with nothing but the clothes on your back and a small collection of books Geoffrey considered a waste of space and was equally happy to ditch.

At first you performed tricks on street corners in order to survive. You realised that to the common man, any magic at all was astonishing and delightful, especially if it was dressed up with enough flair and misdirection. You refined and improved your techniques until you were good enough for inns—later you attracted the attention of wealthy merchants and

nobles, and eventually became the personal court wizard of Lady Winifred, the Countess of Blackwater.

It was a comfortable life. When your services were not required by your patron, you could spend all your time on your studies, and your generous allowance allowed you to purchase many books. You corresponded with distant mages who, like you, were far more interested in unravelling the complex history and theory of magic than in applying it in practice.

You served the lady for decades, and her son, Lord Cedric, after her. Then, five years ago, Osuald returned. Not content with having ruined your life once before, he seemed determined to usurp your new position as well. The two of you continued a bitter rivalry which escalated in viciousness, culminating in a public duel in front of most of the important personages of the city. Osuald humiliated you utterly. You lost your patronage, and were once again left on the street with a sack of books.

You were rescued by Lord Payne, a relatively unimportant nobleman who fondly remembered your performances from his childhood. He offered you a position on his staff at his country estate—his elderly jester had recently died, and he was left with no dinnertime entertainment. It was a pathetically inadequate substitute for the lifestyle to which you had become accustomed, but it was better than nothing. Your name was mud in Blackwater, and any work you could find in the city was likely to be far worse.

Lord Payne seldom needs to be entertained, which suits you well—although you have become very good at performing, you don't enjoy it. You can buy few books with your meagre funds, but you have a lot of time for research. Someday soon, you will make a breakthrough that will be recognised and admired by the entire magical community for years to come—then you will have your revenge on Osuald. You only hope that you can have the satisfaction of returning triumphantly to Blackwater before he dies of old age.

You are irritated to have been pulled away from your studies to investigate the disappearance of some hedge wizard. You are neither a woodsman nor a warrior, you dislike leaving your books and the comforts of civilisation, and you doubt that you'll be of much use on this trip. Lord Payne is concerned that the villagers of Red Creek will be mistrustful of his other emissaries, the dwarf and the orc, and thinks that your presence will reassure them. Personally, you doubt that they'll be any better-disposed towards a half-elf. You think that Verna will do a much better job of providing a friendly human face, now that she's volunteered to go—but of course Lord Payne can't stand her, and doesn't trust her to handle the job on her own, so you're stuck.

Your companions

Sigthorn: the dwarven caretaker. He is a rather strange dwarf; most dwarves you have met are more interested in minerals than in plants. You seldom venture into his domain—the outdoors—and he does not enter the castle often, so you have not had much opportunity to speak. You've heard from the guards that he's very pious, and worships at the little shrine in the garden twice a day. The servants say that he has secret discussions with Lord Payne.

Tad: an orc. He seems to be one of the guards here. You can't imagine why Lord Payne hired him, apart from desperation. He's been here for years, so he probably isn't too much of a troublemaker.

Verna: a young woman from Blackwater, who claims to be some sort of disinherited noblewoman. You are as skeptical about this as Lord Payne, but unlike Lord Payne you don't

particularly hold Verna's pretence against her—you also deceive people for a living. She obviously misses the city as much as you do, and has tried a few times to strike up a conversation with you—but you have no time for smalltalk.