

# Tad

*Surprisingly competent orc-at-arms, 26 years old.*

*Is tall, wide and muscular; wears very large shirts. He has filed his small tusks into some semblance of human teeth.*

*Tad has...*

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

*Tad is...*

- An expert **soldier** (d8)
- A skilled **tactician** (d10)
- Good at **acting stupid** to put people at ease (d10)
- Proficient in various **goblin dialects** (d10)
- Familiar with **local geography** (d12)
- Knowledgeable about **local mercenary outfits** (d12)
- A competent **hunter** and tracker (d12)
- Aware of the basics of **field medicine** (d20)
- An awful **cook** (d30)
- Completely **tone-deaf** (d30)

*Tad is carrying...*

- A shortsword
- Decent armour (d12)
- A short spear, for hunting

You were born in a small orc village, far away from here. When you were a young boy, you observed during your tribe's numerous skirmishes with human settlements that human soldiers were a lot better equipped and more skilled at fighting than your relatives. In the interests of self-preservation, you thought it wise to change sides at the nearest opportunity.

It's not unheard-of for mercenary companies out in the sticks to hire goblins, orcs and half-goblins to make up numbers, and you soon found one that didn't care what you were as long as you wouldn't steal from them or run away in the middle of battle. Thus began your military education.

You were a quick learner, rapidly outpacing your enlisted comrades—and shortly afterwards, the officers who taught you. The next time you were in a town, you found a more competent company, and persuaded them to hire you after showing off your skill. Thereafter, you spent a few years moving from company to company—rising in the ranks, learning what you could of their battle tactics and fighting styles, and leaving.

You soon learned something unfortunate: humans don't like orcs who are too smart. Smart orcs have aspirations above their station. Smart orcs are suspected of being up to no good. Smart orcs frequently get sent into danger, in the hopes that they will not return alive.

Big dumb orcs, on the other hand, are cheerfully tolerated—especially if they display their incompetence in humorous ways which make humans feel better about themselves.

After being sent on a large number of surprise suicide missions, being at the receiving end of dirty camp politics, and being attacked in back alleys by random thugs, you decided that it would be prudent not to be so ostentatiously good at your job. The next time you changed companies, you performed barely well enough to get in—and you stayed at the lowest rung for a long, long time.

Your company was visiting Blackwater six years ago when you got word that Lord Payne was looking to hire a few men-at-arms for his country estate. Some of the lads were eager to try out, and you went with them—partially because it amused you to see what would happen, and partially because you knew it amused the rest of them even more.

The old sergeant who did the hiring for Lord Payne was quite perceptive, and although you took great care not to outperform your companions, he must have recognised some of your talent, because you were one of the handful of men he selected.

You are quite pleased with your new job. It is far less stressful to pretend to be a lousy fighter when you don't have to do much actual fighting. Lord Payne isn't very wealthy—you suspect that's why he had to resort to hiring people as dubious as you—but away from the temptations of the city, you have less opportunity to waste your money.

When Lord Payne was deciding whom to send off to the war with his son, you made sure that you would not be picked, by displaying a complete failure to understand complex instructions. And so here you are, guarding an area with no strategic value whatsoever. You enjoy the relaxing view from the top of the battlements.

You have occasionally been sent on patrols to the nearby villages. Sometimes the peasants are terrified of you, and sometimes they're hostile and rude. Sporadic raids by deserters, many of whom are goblins, have done nothing to improve the local reputation of your kind. You generally let others do the talking, and try not to be too conspicuous.

You are a little concerned how the people of Red Creek will react when you arrive there with a dwarf and a half-elf. At least you have Verna, your token human—and Adalard is good at entertaining crowds.

You fear that Altus is already dead, or will be by the time you reach him. It's a pity—he was one of the few humans you've met who treated you decently. If there are bandits responsible for whatever has happened to him, you will make them pay—with blood.

Keeping up your constant charade of stupidity is frustrating. You often have to bite your tongue when you know that you have something insightful to say, or endure mockery for a deliberate error when you know well that you could have performed flawlessly. You are glad to be away from the estate for a while, in a place where you don't have dozens of people watching you all the time.

You suspect that Verna and Sigthorn are not entirely convinced by your act, and Adalard is so wrapped up in his own affairs that you doubt he pays much attention to you. Perhaps you won't have to ham it up so much, when it's just the four of you in the forest.

## Your companions

**Sigthorn:** the dwarven caretaker. He obviously really cares about the state of the gardens, and is always hard at work

pruning and planting. He's very pious, and regularly visits the estate's small shrine to the Mother and Father.

**Adalard:** the half-elven wizard. You don't think you've ever seen him leave the castle. You've been fortunate enough to be on guard duty indoors during one of his performances, and you were rather impressed—he knows how to captivate an audience.

**Verna:** Roderick's paramour. She's a tricky one. She claims to be some kind of disinherited foreign noblewoman; Lord Payne is very skeptical. You've certainly heard her use some very unladylike language to men who have made inappropriate remarks within her hearing. If she's played young Roderick for a fool, she's probably not the first; he's really not very bright.