

Warrant Officer Zhushessash “Zed” Xashtli

Yuan-ti; 41 years old. Forensic specialist for the Snakesford Constabulary.

You have a slight build and pronounced scales all over your face and body. Your gender is difficult for others to discern, and you usually keep it to yourself. You ask your non-yuan-ti colleagues to call you Zed so that you don't have to listen to them mangle your real name. Your clothing is well-made, but unavoidably ends up covered in chemical stains: you don't bother to replace it until it's about to fall apart.

Traits

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

Skills

- Extensive skill in **forensic analysis** (d8)
- Some **contacts** among the city's yuan-ti (d10)
- A knack for making **improvised devices** (d10)
- An understanding of **Snakesford politics** (d12)
- Well-practised at **controlling the bomb disposal golem** (d8)
- Basic training with a **pistol** (d12)

Bomb disposal golem

Crime scenes are often dangerous places and you don't like to put yourself at risk unnecessarily. A couple of years ago you convinced Commander Rose to procure an experimental bomb disposal golem which you use to retrieve evidence from hazardous locations and sometimes just because it's fun. Once or twice you have even used it to disable explosive devices.

It is your pride and joy. It's a prototype, and its voice recognition is a little flaky, but you can usually figure out how to fix it if it breaks.

The golem is stone, two feet tall and controlled by means of a rune-covered stone tablet. It is:

- About as strong as an average person - **strength** (d12)
- A little clumsy - **agility** (d12)
- Largely impervious to damage - **health** (d6)

You carry an official police-issued licence for this magical device.

Important equipment

- A mobile **forensic analysis station** stocked with various chemicals
- A bomb disposal **golem**
- A Wilbert & Odricsson **pistol**

Like most yuan-ti, you have a keen interest in the sciences—but you weren't ever drawn to manipulation of living things quite as much as your cousins. You have an intuitive understanding of how dead things decay and how chemical substances interact, and you enjoy puzzles. When you discovered

that the Constabulary would pay you to solve chemical puzzles, you knew that you had found your calling.

It's not a particularly fast-paced lifestyle—you generally don't have to run after corpses or bloodstains and persuade them to surrender. You are seldom called out at odd hours, and usually have plenty of time to perform your analyses in a well-stocked laboratory. You have a feeling that this case is going to be different.

You were awoken in the middle of the night by a messenger wearing Sumner livery and bearing an urgent message. This was a rather surprising development. Like many yuan-ti in the city you consider Lord Sumner to be a benefactor and ally of your people, but you never expected to have such a direct interaction with him.

The message informed you that the Constabulary would soon be conducting an investigation into an arson attack, and that Lord Sumner had ensured that you would be assigned to the case. He needed a trustworthy and impartial person to be involved, given the delicacy of the situation: the attack had targeted a tiny illithid temple in Larch Avenue, which was under the patronage of Lord Foxfire, the White Worm himself.

Foxfire's antipathy towards your people is legendary. You don't know all the details—it has something to do with his sordid family history. He has yuan-ti blood himself, but apparently had to flee the kingdom in fear for his life because of his albinism. You agree that some yuan-ti conservatives, especially nobles, harbour irrational prejudices—but this all happened before you were even born! Now he's a Lord on the council, and everyone who wronged him probably died in the coup which deposed the Mad Emperor—and which, if rumours are true, he helped to orchestrate—but he continues to obstruct yuan-ti interests in the city at every opportunity.

He has made many enemies among the nobles, including Lord Sumner, who has done more than any other council member to counteract Foxfire's malevolent influence. Foxfire's power, fortunately, seems to be waning—he is widely rumoured to be the city's spymaster, and in peacetime his services are far less valuable than they were during periods of unrest.

Lord Sumner believes that this attack was provoked by some kind of illicit activity that Foxfire has been conducting, using the temple as cover. Foxfire is already sticking his pale nose into the investigation, trying to influence it to his advantage. Lord Sumner wants you to be there to keep your eyes and ears open, and keep him informed about anything you find that worries you.

You rapidly got dressed and arrived at the station as soon as you could. Commander Rose seems on edge—you know he hates politics; he can't be very happy about this case.

You have refilled all the reagents in your portable analysis station, even the unstable compounds you seldom use. You want to be ready for anything. You have also gone to the stores and checked out your bomb disposal golem—you never know when it will come in handy.

Your fellow investigators

Special Detective Lisstree Serthalen: this drow is occasionally hired by the constabulary as a contractor, usually to handle the kinds of dangerous cases that get regular police officers killed. You've heard that she used to be some kind of assassin in the underdark before retiring here, or possibly being exiled—and you can certainly believe that after examining what was left of a suspect who resisted arrest after she was through with him. You suppose that you're glad she's on

your side. You really, really don't want her to be not on your side.

Sergeant Ambrose Cartwright: everyone at the station knows Ambrose. You can't help liking the guy, and you have a good working relationship. He has a natural, effortless manner with people which comes in really useful when someone needs to question a recalcitrant suspect or persuade someone to help with an investigation. You're relieved that there will be another normal person on this case.

Acolyte Velaro: an illithid. Seriously, an actual illithid. Who was apparently created last night, from a thug at the crime scene who was allegedly very nearly dead. And now this illithid is going to be tagging along with you, keeping tabs on the investigation for Foxfire, although officially it's supposed to make sure that any holy illithid relics you recover are treated with the proper respect, or some such garbage. You don't know what kind of leverage could have made Rose agree to this insanity.

Yuan-ti name pronunciation guide

Zissarthaz *zi-sar-thaz*

Zhushessash Xashtli *zhoo-sheh-sash zash-tee*