

Zexxyth, Artifact Hunter

The Great Fall...

Zexxyth began life like any other kobold hatchling of the Yzynth Tribe. The hatchling nest was hidden deep in the caves, concealed safely behind the waterfall, in the northern hills of the Zintalos Deepwoods.

At the time of his birth he was like any other hatchling of the tribe with moderate red scaling and just a hint of light tan underbelly. Over the years the scales would turn to a deeper red or slight brown, and the underbelly would remain a light tan, but sometimes would become a slight brown, following the hardened scales on the back.

In their first year the hatchlings remained in the deeper safer areas of the caves. They would play games of hide and sneak, while food would be brought in by the elders.

In their second year back scales became more resilient, and eyes had a stronger, more reactive inner lid. While this could not entirely provide protection from the extremes of the day, they would not be completely blind if they left the caves. It was in this year they learned to find berries and smaller, less dangerous prey.

In their third year the first adult outer scales begin to come in. Youngling scales are shed, and final colors are revealed. It is here Zexxyth began to show his difference. In the light a silver sheen began to become apparent. While more subtle on his underbelly, the edges of his primary scales were lined enough that it almost looked like a light weave of chain armor.

One terrible day when his egg mates and he were out hunting all were resting, most asleep. Or so Zexxyth thought. To his surprise and horror he was awoken with his cloths being ripped from him. "Tiamat does not love you!" "You are a betrayer!" "Metallic is evil!" The was dragged to the edge of the raging river, where in only a quarter mile away it plummeted a hundred feet to the rapids below. "Banishment and death!" "You are one of us no more." And he was thrown into the river. He kicked and gasped to try and stay afloat, but the tribe did not swim, he had only been in ankle deep water to grab fish. As the river raged and he saw the edge come closer and closer he passed out. His limp naked form tumbling down... down... down...

The Ruins ...

Zexxyth awoke in a strange place. Here the river was calm and slow. Behind him lay a broken sewer grate, but the entry point seems to have been from a steep slope. Judging by the vines on the grate and this portion of the sewer line, it may have been hundreds of years since anyone was in this section of the tunnel.

Zexxyth was badly injured and struggled to crawl forward to investigate his surroundings. It was dark inside, but the single beam of light peering in from this newly revealed entrance was enough. He slowly crawled, tears mixed with the water below. The sewer entrance opened up to a junction of half a dozen directions. All seemed to be entry points for the river to create what seemed a flow control area. A central overflow area slowly drained to unknowable depths below. As Zexxyth lay on the stone walkway the sound of the river seemed peaceful. And so he rested, and eventually fell asleep.

In the three months that followed Zexxyth's bruises mostly healed, yet he found escape through the path his crash had forged to be impossible. The angle was too steep, and the overgrowth too slick.

Venturing inward he found he was correct in that this was a sewer. It branched and wound its way about, almost like a maze. But this was not a sewer of a living city. The city above was ancient, possibly a thousand years vacant. Much was destroyed, and long since crumbled to dust. And so the sewer was a slow moving river of fresh water, providing unlimited drinking water wherever it was, and to Zexxyth's delight an occasional fish.

But fish was not frequent enough, and Zexxyth was forced to find something else; snakes and large spiders the most common among these. But hunger was not his most dangerous foe. There were things... shapes... terrors... monsters to whom the large spiders were a tasty treat. Though there was the giant spider layer, where even those terrors were a treat.

So Zexxyth avoided the monsters, staying mostly in the vacant sewer lines, as they were too big for the scary things. In his travels he found enough remains of people to piece together some cloths. A few daggers were all he needed to feel comfort and hunt the smallest prey when he could find it.

But he found the city was not entirely in ruin. A few of the buildings were intact, some pockets the city in caverns hundreds of feet high. It was here the dangers were not the monsters, but the traps left behind. They say Elven magic lasts forever, and some of it could be avoided. Libraries of books in strange languages remained protected. Though these were too far from the sewer lines to stay for more than half a day. Food and water were too scarce. And young Zexxyth was beginning to become too frail and warn to stay very long from his safe entry point.

At least until the food ran out.

It had been nearly a week since Zexxyth had eaten. He was begging to feel woozy and lose focus much of the time. It seemed near the end. And if it was to be so he wanted to be near the stories. They told of adventure, mystery, and far away places. Places much better than these ruins. Places much better than the kobold tribe who banished him and threw him to his death.

Zexxyth was reading of one such better place. A happy place. And as the last of his strength left his body he rested his head on the book, and closed his eyes for what he thought would be the last time.

Of Ancient Dragons...

"E's a dead kobold." Grock snorted through his tusks. "Not quite, my brutish companion," Medidin replied, kneeling down, carefully setting down his staff, gently scooping Zexxyth's head into the palm of his hand. "Acolyte Sarath." "Yes Archeologist Medidin?" Medidin continued, "Fetch my water and a bit of fruit from my satchel, if you'd be so kind." "Right away," Sarath said, as the young elf dashed off to the book stacks, set his torch to the side, and rummaged through the party supplies.

"Why 'r you wastin' your time? Leave it be." Grock again snorted, then turned and walked away, his leather and plated armor squeaking and echoing in the chamber. He dropped himself onto a stack of blankets near a fire not far from the book stacks.

"What would you say?" Medidin asked of Sarath as he returned, presenting both items. Medidin pointed towards the water. "I... I don't understand the question." Sarath said confused, passing the water. Medidin gently fed the water to the almost completely unconscious form of Zexxyth. The old Dragonborn passed back the water and gestured towards the kobold, raising an eyebrow. "Are we wasting our time?"

Sarath observed for a moment, then gave the room a search. The fire crackled in the distance. The shadow of Grock looked like a looming giant. But the remains of the ancient buried library ruins were otherwise still and silent.

"Well... he's not quite dead. Though there are no signs of wounds." Sarath began, Medidin nodding at the appraisal so far. Sarath continued, "So he must just be starving." "And nearly dead because of it. But what else? What do we not see?" Sarath glanced around again before continuing, "We've seen no others. But he's not a scout, as he lacks food or supplies. He's barely even dressed. He must be alone." "Very good." Medidin praised, while glancing over at Grock, who only responded with another snort before taking out a sharpening stone to work on his blade. "Continue," Medidin said as he turned his gaze back to Zexxyth. "We are lost. He may be too, but if he's lived long enough to be starving, he may know his way around."

Medidin reached for the fruit, which Sarath passed him. Zexxyth slowly became a bit more conscious as the smell reached his nose. "And if he does, we may all leave together, taking the knowledge we've gained with us." He nodded towards Sarath. Zexxyth's eyes fluttered open. "Well hello there little fellow," Medidin said as he moved the fruit closer to Zexxyth.

Artifact Hunter ...

"Adopted father, I am home," Zexxyth called out to the empty study. With a heavy and tired sigh he flopped an overstuffed satchel onto an old wooden table and began sorting the items. "Here is cup," placing a silvered goblet onto the table haphazardly, "And here is... ooh half a cookie," which he devoured. "Here is runed book," placing a red book with silvered runes flat on the table.

A clanging of movement came from down the hall. "Adopted father? Is it you?" Zexxyth called out looking away from the satchel. Calling towards the hallway he continued, "There is another book. A very scary book."

“Oh?” The ancient dragonborn asked, clack clacking a cane as he slowly limped into the study. Zexxyth went to the corner, and with a strained ‘rrraahhh’ moved a cushioned rigid backed wooden chair twice his size near to the table before helping Medidin into the chair. “Thank you, adopted son,” he said, patting Zexxyth on the head before Zexxyth hopped back to the edge of the table to continue rummaging through the satchel. “Yes... there is... a very scary book... It has a face.” “How so?” Medidin said, righting the goblet on the table after a quick inspection.

Zexxyth placed the book on the table with a thump. For it was thick, and quite heavy for its size. A slight poof of dust kicked up, as the entire book was thinly coated. “Look.” Zexxyth said, blowing some of the dust off the cover. Scrrreee! The chair screamed as Medidin jumped back in horror at the sight. The cover was a twisted visage. Two black tears, stitched closed, formed eyeholes. A triangular black mass where a nose would be. And a half open, half stitched mouth below. The cover a medium tanned brown, stretched tightly around the yellowed pages, yet severely wrinkled in parts where the otherwise round face was stretched flat.

“See? It is very scary.” Zexxyth said. “Is that really...” Medidin stammered reaching towards the cover. “Flesh? Yes. Pretty sure it is real. And the book does not want to be opened.” Zexxyth said, using one claw to try and open the lid, the book resisting, flopping back onto the table with each demonstration. “Usually with such books that is for the best.” Medidin withdrew a shaking hand and reached for his cane for stability, but it had been cast to the floor in the start.

Zexxyth retrieved the cane and set it in Medidin’s hand. “Do you know this book? Why is it a face? Why does it not open?” “I have a feeling I do,” Medidin replied, moving towards a research stack. He selected several scrolls, a book, and placed them in a pile. With an incantation the pile floated along behind as he walked down the hall to head downstairs. “Bring the book. We must confirm my suspicion.”

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With the completion of the third ritual Medidin opened his eyes and sighed heavily. “This is terrible news.” And with a speed Zexxyth had not seen before Medidin gathered a cloth, a bit of chain, and a medium sized belt pouch. He quickly wrapped the book in the cloth, then wrapped the chain around it. He placed the book in the center of the ritual circle. After speaking a few words there was a flash of arcane energy, and what sounded like chains being pulled and placed in a hot forge. Zexxyth saw what was a loosely wrapped chain turn into a single fused piece, wrapping itself around the book like a weave.

“This should hide the book and prevent anyone from attempting to open it.” He placed the book into the bag, which should not be possible as the book was twice the height of the bag. He placed the seemingly empty bag in Zexxyth’s lap. Zexxyth gasped and asked, “Where did the book go?” As he tested the bag, finding his whole arm could disappear into it, as well as his head when he peeked inside. “It... is empty?” “Where it went is neither here, nor there. I can retrieve the book, and you can retrieve the book. We know it is there. But others cannot. And it must stay that way.”

Medidin quickly gathered a few maps and other items, giving them to Zexxyth who placed them into the bag gleefully laughing as each completely disappeared. “I have to tell you a great secret. I have not been working with the Cult of the Chained Oblivion because I agreed with their philosophy. Quite the contrary. There are a handful of artifacts which could allow them to see the return of their god. And this is one. This,” He gestured towards the now hidden book, “is the Kandaran Book of the Dead. It can summon and control great demons, among many other unspeakable horrors.” Zexxyth gasped in horror and fear.

Medidin sighed heavily, knelt down, and put his hand on Zexxyth's little shoulder. "You must go my son. After a lifetime trying to discover if this was real, it seems it is up to you." Zexxyth looked confused. "But adopted father, you are not that old. You should come." Medidin smiled. "Bahamat knows I was already long past my years when I found you." "That was only five years ago." "And five past my already ancient years."

Medidin struggled up and went across to a table, "I do not have that many years left," he said, as he packed up the snack that was there. A tear rolled down his cheek. Not turning back towards Zexxyth he continued, "You must go. Further and further with each contract. Do not break contact with the cult completely, for there are still other artifacts to keep from their hands. And breaking from them too quickly may arouse suspicion. But you need come back less often. ... Just in case they discover we have found the book."

Zexxyth crossed the floor, dropping the pack where it was, and climbed onto the table to match Medidin's height. Looking down he placed his forehead against Medidin's cheek, still wet from tears. He said quietly, "I will miss you father."

Zexxyth (Zz'-eck-s-th)

Age: 8

Race: Kobold.

Alignment: Chaotic Neutral.

Appearance; Red with a tan underbelly. A light silver sheen can be seen on the underbelly in the light, as well as silver edging on the primary scales, looking in some cases like a light chainmail armor.

Eyes: Green

Physicality; Curious, child-like, sometimes quirks his head 45 degrees.

Personality; Shy in unfamiliar or unknown situations, curious when feeling comfortable.

Clothing / equipment; This small person is dressed chaotically. He is wearing basic street cloths, but they are made from multiple cloths. Some bits a smattering of different shapes, other bits single pieces, but from different main pieces. His feet are little more than leather wrapped. Across his back are two short swords, and down his lower back, like an odd metal rib-cage, are six daggers, three on each side, angled for quick draw. Along each upper thigh are two more daggers. At his left side a small pouch. Seeming almost out of place is a short cloak with a near pristine hood. This seems the only article of clothing he cares to keep as new.

Favored deities;
Secretly Bahamat.

Connections;
The Cult of the Chained Oblivion; for Zexxyth has seen death, knows it comes for us all, and he is prepared.

Emotional Role; Distraction, humor. When in unknown situations: tactics, a voice of caution.

Combat Role; Ranged damage, Stealth / sniping.