

Name: Morgan

Species: Raccoon

Build: Slim, light mage's build- not much of a physical fighter.

Colors: Normal raccoon colors (Brown primary with black highlights)

Gender: Female

Age: Early 20's. She's no longer an apprentice, but still has a ways to go before calling herself an expert.

Height: 5' 6"

Occupation: White Mage

Abilities: Morgan is a White Mage, and has learned Reverse magic to allow her to use her spells offensively, as well. She has demonstrated a natural aptitude for spellcrafting, but still needs some experience before she can achieve greatness- she is getting close to a rough 'halfway' point, compared to true experts.

Personality: Morgan prefers to make plans before acting, but is willing to modify them on the go as needed. Her studies have not negatively impacted her social skills, nor her ability to maintain friendships.

Notable Interactions: Morgan is friends with several guild members, and gets along particularly well with Tyridia, a fox training to be a Kitsune summoner.

Although she has met the human mage Russo, she is not particularly fond of him, due to some unfortunate circumstances involving a relic, explosions, and a now-destroyed village.

Story:

"Can you sl-"

"No, we can't slow down! Just walk faster, you dress-wearing little tod!"

Morgan sighed angrily and checked over her shoulder. In order to catch up, the raccoon's friend Tyridia had resorted to carrying his kimono's long trail like a bride carrying her dress- a sight which earned a chuckle from the buff lion at her side.

"Hah! This is what I warned the dumb guildmaster about- mages are baggage. They're even worse than thieves! At least THEY have knives!" The lion, Burt, shifted the huge sword over his shoulder and turned back to face front. "The sooner I can punch out that stupid wizard and get this mission over with, the better."

"Tyr, this is why I keep telling you to take some time out from the library and exercise," Morgan politely explained. "You can't order a summon to attack someone unless you're close enough to see them. Or, at least, the summon is. And summons usually don't like being sent all over creation because you didn't have the lung power to walk there yourself."

"I know, I know," Tyridia sighed, "but I think I'm close to getting strong enough for Xis to manifest with four tails!" The fox was clearly excited by the fact. "That crazy vulpine kept telling me I'd never break two tails, and I'm already nearly double that!"

"That's great, Tyr!" Morgan exclaimed, "I know how badly you've been trying to prove yourself to him."

As if trying to make sure the kitsune wasn't around to hear- not that he could have been, without being summoned- Tyridia whispered to his friend, "Actually, I think I might even already have it- I wanna try something a little different on this mission. See if I can't surprise Xis."

"Oh, come on, do you two ever stop talking? This whole mission has been painful from start to finish!"

Tyr frowned at Burt, needing to look up a full foot to catch the lion's eyes. "How can you say that? We haven't even found the target, yet!"

Burt leaned in closer, looming right over the smaller fox's face. "I remember who the target is, though, tod-girl: another mage like you two. This mission is gonna be a cakewalk. If I didn't know the guildmaster would dock me for it, I'd have just left the two of you behind and handled it myself."

"Burt, you're new- very new- so let me explain something to you: we're dealing with a golem master. This is a mage strong enough to bind an artificial intelligence to an inanimate hunk of stone and dirt." Pulling down her hood, she did her best to glare at the warrior. "You're on this mission, not because we desperately need a physical fighter for backup, but because you need experience working on a team."

"I work fine on a team," he grumbled, "as long as it's a team of actual warriors instead of a bunch of dress-wearing wimps."

"It is NOT a dress!" Tyridia insisted, "it's-"

"-a dress. End of story. Shut up, already, come on!"

"... It's a kimono," the smaller fox mumbled, "it's stylish for kitsune summoners..."

Morgan patted her friend on the back, glared at her new acquaintance, and continued on down the road.

"Hold, fair travelers!"

The trio glanced to the side as a short, hood-cloaked figure walked out from behind a tree. "Hello? Can we help you?"

"Ten to one this is our target," Tyridia muttered.

"I can't help but see that you're journeying along this fine, well-kept road..."

"Thirty to one," Morgan groaned.

"... But you all must realize it takes money to keep a road looking so fine, don't you?"

Burt slung his sword off his shoulder and growled. "Fifty to one, and, even if he isn't- his voice is annoying, so this guy's getting knocked into next week either way."

"You'd get into a fight with someone just because you didn't like the sound of their voice?"

"I hate to say it, but I almost agree with Burt- this guy is like nails on a chalkboard!" Tyridia admitted.

"Hmph! See?" Burt grinned at Morgan, then turned to Tyridia. "But, you're still a dress-wearing pansy. HEY, WIZARD... GUY!"

The mage bowed. "Velexus, my good man; call me Velexus."

"How'za'bout I call you 'dead?'" Burt roared.

"This subtlety is killing me," Tyridia groaned.

The comment definitely seemed to have annoyed Velexus, as well. The mage took a step back and raised his hands. "... I like it better when they give me time to monologue, blast it... Very well! Have it your way, you brash muscleheads!"

Blinking, Tyridia wondered to Morgan, "is he calling US muscleheads?"

"I think he means I've got enough muscle for all three of us," Burt proudly insisted.

Morgan just slapped her forehead. "Let's just get this over with, please?"

"Yeeees, let's..." Velexus chuckled as he withdrew a palm-sized disc from his robes. The object was made of some shiny gray metal, inlaid with a series of red gems and a larger blue stone in the center. "And, since you seem so impatient, I'll end it quickly. Painfully, but quickly."

Upon seeing the disc, Tyridia jumped forward and pointed at it. "Look out, he's using it as a-"

Burt shoved him aside, running into the fray. "Don't get between me and a potential shish-kebab, kid! HAAAAAAA!"

The mage flicked the disc forward into the air, where it halted and spun.

Dirt from around the road shot towards it, as did several small rocks and a handful of branches. In mere seconds, the circle had been encrusted with a growing column of debris which was rapidly forming a tall, humanoid shape.

Unphased, Burt performed a running leap and roared proudly. "HRR-RAAAAAARGH-UGHK!"

A tendril of brown and gray erupted from the upper left corner of the mass, slamming Burt in the chest and knocking him for a loop- or, rather, two, given his momentum. As it retracted, the golem was all but completely formed- eight feet of faceless dirt and mud and rock, standing silently between the mage and the heroes.

"Normally, I'd now ask you all if you wanted me to take things easy on you, and just take your wallets and move on... But, after that 'nails on a chalkboard' quip, I think I'm going to pound you flat, instead. Or, rather, my golem will. Isn't that right, my wonderful little toy?"

The golem remained completely silent and motionless.

"Now, golem: kill."

The silent monster shuffled forward, his chest gemstones gleaming in the light.

Burt struggled to his feet, wincing as he hefted his sword. "That's not good."

Tyridia quickly shifted into a summoning stance, gathering energy to use for Xis' manifestation in hopes of getting the kitsune onto the battlefield before this monster got too close.

Morgan, on the other hand, sighed and began casting a basic healing spell on Burt- she had a feeling she was going to need to do so several times before this battle was over.

At first, Burt tried another rush-in on the golem. This was just as ineffective, and it now had two hands to counter him with. "Morgan! Uh, fox-woman-guy!"

"Tyridia!"

"Whatever! Back me up! Help me hit this guy or something!"

"Burt, we're mages. You hit things. We cast spells."

"And you're useless, too!" He grunted, taking a step back from the golem.

Tyridia took a moment away from his focus to point out, "it seems to be counter-oriented. Stop trying to run into its fists and let the fists come to you!"

"What?! That's stupid!"

"I mean, hit it before it hits you, not let the fists hit you!"

Burt growled. "It's still stupid!" Regardless, though, he shifted into a defensive stance and waited for the golem to amble closer.

At first, it looked like it would be a decent wait- the golem wasn't moving too fast. But it gathered speed and momentum as it sloughed, soon moving at a half decent clip.

Leaping forward and to the golem's side, Burt managed an easy slash that cleaved off the golem's right arm in a single swipe.

Carried by its forward motion, the golem continued on several feet before it managed to turn around and face the swordslion again.

"Hah! Gotcha, you overgrown molehill- hey... HEY!" Burt jabbed a finger at the monster accusingly. "You- stop that! What are you- no! Hey!"

As it resumed its journey towards Burt, the golem's severed arm rose from the ground. It gathered a few additional clumps of dirt and some more pebbles to fill any gaps, then stuck itself back in place on the golem's arm.

"THAT IS TOTALLY CHEATING!" Burt roared.

The golem responded with a wide swing that knocked the lion against a tree.

"That disc- it's a golem base. Must have some kind of enchantment, probably something to auto-recover on impacts," Tyridia explained to Morgan, still gathering his strength for the summon. "I was going to warn him, but then he shoved me, and..."

"Don't feel bad, Tyr," Morgan reassured him, "just get Xis out here so he can tell us what we're fighting, hopefully before I need to use revive on our new friend."

"... Is it okay if I delay a little bit-"

"Now, Tyridia."

Burt had established a fairly steady rhythm, by now- wait for the golem, sever a limb, watch as the limb repaired, then wait until Morgan could heal him from his subsequent bludgeoning by said limb. "LADIES! Little help?"

"Okay, okay- Xis! Come on!"

"*Come where?*" A pointed, red and white maw suddenly yawned right in Tyridia's ear. "*I was napping, by the by. Thanks for the wake up call. It feels SO good to be back down to three tails, again.*"

Tyridia leaned to the side, examining the kitsune's rump. Then he straightened up, looked the kitsune dead in the eyes, and reminded him: "Last time you came out, you were waist-height."

Xis arched a brow, then casually examined his four wavering tails. "*Hm. So I was.*" He turned back, and yawned directly into Tyridia's face. "*Well now, you're failing less and less by the day. At this rate it's not entirely inconceivable that you might some day manage to reach six. You ARE two thirds of the way along, after all- if only just barely.*"

Morgan was clearly upset by the kitsune's total lack of manners. "Oh come on, you big ethereal know-it-all, can't you ever cut him a break?"

"Actually, he IS cutting me a break," Tyridia stammered in shock. "Seriously, Xis? You're willing to admit I might get you back up to six tails?"

As if infuriated to have had his 'compliment' pointed out, Xis swished his head and tails. *"Eventually. Perhaps. I don't want you getting ideas of ever managing SEVEN, however, gods forbid- let's remain realistic."*

Tyridia smiled at Morgan. "That might well be the nicest thing this big lug's ever said to me!"

Xis leaned closer. *"I may have grown, but refer to me as a 'big lug' again and I'll introduce you to the business end of my jaws. I assure you, summoned creature or not, they work VERY well."*

Unphased, Tyridia nodded. "Got it, right, Xis. But, first, can you help our frie- er, our teamm- well... Okay, there's this guy, Burt."

"Go on."

"We need some help to help him fight the golem."

"Golem?"

"RAAAAGH!" The armored lion flew directly towards the pair, launched by another successful golem punch.

Xis merely snatched the lion out of midair with his tails, then unceremoniously dropped the feline to the ground. *"Is this pitiful example of the inadequacies of ordinary living beings 'Burt,' or the golem?"*

"Burt. THAT one is the golem."

Xis glanced at the lumbering monster. *"Hm. Droll, in a most disgusting way. A hack job spell-disc tarnished by mounds of dirt and filth."* The kitsune's gaze narrowed. *"... The disc is enchanted with an automatic counterattack spell... Recovery. Each time it suffers injury, it automatically casts healing magic to repair itself. How foolish."*

"Wh-What?" Burt groaned, "it HEALS when I kill it? How am I supposed to beat that?"

Xis entirely ignored the lion. *"What sort of short-sighted imbecile would create such a charm? The most obvious loophole is miles wide. And I've already thought of at least half a dozen other ways to work around it."* He yawned again. *"Morgan, I believe the quickest end to this will be if you were to-"*

"Already on it," Morgan stated. The moment she'd heard Xis' explanation for the golem's seeming invulnerability, she'd already guessed precisely why the guildmaster had assigned her to this mission- "Reverse!"

A wave of counteraction washed over the golem, momentarily altering the light striking his surface into an unreal, shimmering mirror. It soon faded into a faint outline of his body which seemed to be a perfect chromatic inversion of his actual presence.

*"Ah, so you've paid attention in class, then," Xis noted. "It's always a pleasure to work with someone who has SOME clue what they're doing. I'll take things from here."*

Burt started to shove himself up. "But I-"

Xis strode towards the golem, using Burt's face and gut as a paw mat. *"Down, kitten. The only way this battle could possibly be a challenge for me is if I'll need to babysit your childish rump."*

The golem and the kitsune silently advanced towards each other, neither quite looking at their foe- the golem had no eyes to see with, and the kitsune seemed distracted by various rocks and blades of grass.

When he had reached clobbering range, the golem raised his fists and brought them down on the spot where Xis had been seconds ago.

Still looking calm, Xis circled around the golem's back.

The golem shoved out a leg, attempting to kick the fox, but instead met empty air.

Xis sat back in front of the golem, head and ear cocked playfully. *"Do please try harder, oaf. I'll be falling back asleep in minutes, at this rate."*

Burt stared in confusion. "What's he doing?"

"Buying me time," Morgan explained.

"Time to do what?"

The raccoon didn't answer. She merely slipped off to the side of the road and snuck along its edge.

Xis spent several more seconds playing with the golem before he seemed satisfied. *"Ready, Morgan?"*

"All ready!"

Velexus whirled to his side just as Morgan, standing right next to him, yanked his hood down over his head and kicked him directly in the balls. He crumpled on impact.

*"Farewell, golem; you shall not be remembered. And thank the gods for that, you boring lump."* Xis lunged for the golem, and plowed through its chest.



Like a chain reaction, the golem began to disintegrate. Every time a chunk of clay or earth fell from its body, two more would fall in response, and two more for each of those. Before Xis had landed from his attack, the golem was already nothing but a pile of dirt.

"... What... Just... Happened?"

Tyridia patted Burt on the back. "We just showed you how it's done."

"You can thank us later," Morgan added, dragging Velexus' writhing, groaning body behind her by the hood.