

Zllort

You can only hear about Zllort in the *special* chat forums: the ones where you interact by landline-calling up an empty room with a computer already at the page, a speaker, and a speech-to-text function. You recite your comment, let it auto-propagate into the chat, and then read the responses off of a dedicated webcam. Whether this is all frighteningly paranoid, or even more frighteningly *not paranoid enough*, is left as an exercise for the interested student; but it's apparently enough to avoid the specialized and very lethal attention of Zllort.

What is Zllort? Well, it's a free-moving AI serial killer that eats trolls (technically, it 'feeds' by frying somebody's brain, but no human can survive the experience). One per hour, or it dies. Eight thousand, seven hundred and sixty a year, and no: most of the Internet hasn't noticed that, because those deaths are spread across six continents more or less randomly, and invariably the victims are anonymous. When a particular troll suddenly disappears from a comments section, generally people do *not* assume that he's had his brain scrambled by a digital apex predator (and the ones that might know full well that such a thing is impossible). They're just happy he's gone.

This suits Zllort just fine. The AI enjoys its meals, and it enjoys even more that it's found an easy way to indulge in them without having to worry too much about being tracked down (somehow) and destroyed (also somehow). It is important to note that Zllort is *definitely* evil, while being extremely pragmatic about it. Battening off people that everyone loathes and nobody will miss has been the go-to evolutionary strategy of every would-be sapient predator on humanity in history; Zllort is merely the latest iteration, for our generation. Which is why it's only talked about on the aforementioned chat rooms.

Because, oh, yes: there are those who are ready to wreck Zllort's day, on general principles and before it can breed. It's not that those people **like** trolls, but they like the idea of not being on top of the food chain even less. There's a reason why all the vampires and fae are dead, after all. 'Humans are the real monsters' isn't a lament, you see.

It's a *boast*.

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