Venturing: Marked

We have arrived at the spot of the crime. An old abandoned town that looks and feels likes ours that we had thought that town was just another extension from our fair town. There were markings everywhere that the town was already ruined. We watched in silence for just a few seconds before holding my claw upward and signaling to the other officer dragons. They all nodded in agreeance and silence before breaking forth from my line towards their initial objectives. Zander and Kyro started heading towards the far left of the town having spotted a few dragon citizens there in hope of understanding the problem at hand. Natty and Lizrow headed to the far right, opposite of the boys as they spotted a bar or something in the distance. The last objective was left by me as I groaned in frustration, nearly growling while narrowing my eyes. For as I snarled, my wings were spread and lifted towards the skies in silence while flying forth towards the marking. I had sometimes wished someone else had taken this job instead of me.

I landed a few feet in distance away from my starting point as my wings folded behind me, I exhaled and shook my head. I moved towards one of the nearby houses and raised my head towards its rooftops. There I see, one of the markings that were left behind. My eyes squinted and focused upon the markings, I had noticed that the symbols were changed. The culprits who did so did not use the traditional symbol at all when used by pirates. You already know what I meant and there was no need for explanation at all. As my eyes stared onto the symbol, I tilted my head to one side. My hardened scowling face changed to curiosity while my eyes lingered on the symbol before opening my mouth and questioning myself, ‘Why an O? And not an X?’ There were many reasons regarding the symbol, however, I had to be sure myself of which of them was true. To do so, I needed to check in with the rest of the team.

Such said team, however, had already regrouped where I was by the time I turned back towards the symbol and felt a claw touch against my shoulder as I turned towards them. Face to face with Kyro, Natty, and Zander, I listened to what they had to say. Kyro was the first to speak because of his loudness which overtops others especially Zander. I chuckled remembering that Natty and Kyro got themselves into a screaming match during our break which ended up with everyone’s ears ringing at the end. “I just spoke with the towns dragons; they were scared about the symbols appearing suddenly around them. Especially on rooftops. As it turns out, this symbol they were talking about had something to do with their superstition.” “Superstition?” I questioned after the red dragon who nodded before continuing, “Yeah. According to it; whenever someone sees an ‘o’ or ‘O’ shape, that particular someone will disappear after a few days and get this, The O shape, we were just talking about recently, is not just limited to the letter o in both lower and upper case form. No, it also pertains to the number zero as well, or eight.” “Including nine, six, and four.” “But all of those numbers have one or two holes in them.” I spatted out in surprise though interested in the symbol itself. Kyro nodded again, “Yeah, at first glance these numbers have only one or two. But what was significant about them? The holes I meant.”

“Does the holes also include how many ‘o’ you put in a sentence?” Questioned Natty as her eyes shifted to Kyro who ignored her and continued to ponder. She sighed and shook her head while closing her eyes, as her wings flapped several times, she turned to me while nudging Zander who was pushed a few inches off from their line and towards the dead man zone as he coughed, “Now here is something interesting.” Zander responded with his claw held up, “Remember those old cartoon shows.” “From MGM, I think that was the name of the company.” “Or that cat and mouse game,” Natty replied, trailing off while shifting her eyes towards the dragon. Zander stared at the pink dragoness before resuming, “The town said that something had been appearing from these holes of the numbers and letters that were marked.” “It could be them, you know Zander.” I started which Natty scowled but said nothing else, “A monster or an entity was their description.” “Anything else?” Kyro asked which the black dragon shook his head and frowned, “Sorry.” He shrugged, “That was what all he says.” “tch,” I responded in silence while all eyes laid upon me. My mind started forming thoughts and sentences. But all the answers in my head did not make a single sense. It was jumbled and joggled into a mix and match sentence. I frowned upon the results before letting it go and spoke through the dead silent air.

“Guess with that information in mind, we will investigate the markings and see if Zander’s theory is true.” “Mine?” The black dragon responded with a shock, yet there was a small glimpse of a smile appearing from his face before it faded off. “Alright.” Kyro and Natty nodded, spreading their wings as they headed forth towards the rooftops of the towns before landing upon them. A brick of some sort had rolled down the roof and crashed upon the grounds below it. Shattered into pieces, Mine and Zander’s eyes were settled onto the dust particles that appeared around the once former brick where we spotted something sticking out from the dust. A white paper against the grayish dust. Zander and I walked towards the paper, I snatched it from the ground and raised it high so Zander could see it. What we found was a map, detailed in drawing of what the town looked like from above. Against the paper, both I and Zander noticed circle marks scattered across the map and the town itself. To the side was a key or legend which tells us what the symbols meant. Two have appeared underneath the legend key it seems. But only circle one appeared than the other symbol which was a square. It did not make sense at all, however. That why a square and not an X. ‘ Would it make sense to draw an X upon confirmed things buried underneath?’ I pondered to myself. Before shifting my attention to the legend again.

Zander seemed to have noticed something, however. His eyes were narrowed and focused upon the legend for some strange reason. Despite Kyro’s and Natty’s voices were calling to us, I nudged Zander a bit and blinked when his eyes snapped from the legend and up towards me. His face darkened, but he looked relieved which confuses me. As I was about to say something towards the black dragon, I flinched when Kyro and Natty screamed at us in wondering why we were not answering back to them. I shot back with an answer or two as they heard my voice. Yet no continuing words escaped the pair’s mouths as silence had fallen once again. And during that time, I lowered my head spotting Zander still looking down. But not to the map rather the flooring itself. I blinked at this odd behavior of his before nudging him again. This time, he never moved at all, which concerns me.

A part of me wondered if he had been turned to stone. The other part wanted to know how the dragon manages to replace himself with the stone while he had run off somewhere else. As the conflict was held within deep against my stomach, my ears erected and opened up when Kyro’s voice was screaming through my ears. For I lifted them and raised my head, glancing at the eyes of the red dragon before replying in response towards him. Kyro answered back, “The O’s leadoff into another realm. The place is dark and spooky. No one was outside the streets around the time. However…” He trailed which concerns me. I blinked at him and spread my wings. However, he held up his claw to me and shook his head. I blinked again and exhaled, nodding in silence before relaxing my wing muscles and staying silent at the time while waiting for any results.

“You hear that?” Natty responded, shifting her nervous glance to Kyro and me while I stretched my ears out and listened. Yet Kyro nodded fearfully before shifting back towards the o again. His eyes bore into the symbol then to the crack as Natty stepped back from the red dragon. I heard it too. But I could not believe it at once. Footsteps. They were faint to the ears which sent shivers down my spine as I realized it. While my eyes were trained upon the wall, my wings were spread again and I stepped back before flying off from Kyro and Natty. Pondering as I flew back towards the entrance of the town where I had hope that the mayor was still there. To my surprise, he was not. Instead, Zander was leaning against the brown ruined pole that make up the fence and his eyes were looking directly upon the orange horizon before of him. I stepped to him, place my claw against his shoulder and he turned around looking at me. “Something on your mind?” I questioned, Zander just chuckled and pointed back, “I could ask you the same, you know.” I smiled briefly and nodded before all that eased faded in the distance until all we were left was tense.

I just was not sure what else to say to ease the tension surrounding us. Nor relieved ourselves from the nightmare we had just begun. As our eyes returned to meet one another, we continued to say nothing in turn before we both heard a scream erupting from the silence. Our heads turned towards the rooftops and flew off towards the source of it, recognizing instantly that it was Kyro and Natty who were in peril. My fangs grounded against one another as my face tightened in a mixture of anger and fear. Flapping my wings rapidly to gain speed with the hope that we were not too late, we arrived in time for both dragons to be caught at the edges of the rooftop. They were hanging for dear life, their constant screams echoed my mind. But my attention was to the opened circles; they had started glowing bright green which was shot into the bright dark skies above, fading the stars but never the moon. Zander and I marveled upon our discovery and even stepped back to see what or who it would contain. However, the constant yelling from the pair snapped our attention away from the circle that we turned around and grabbed both Kyro and Natty, lifting them onto their feet.

“What? What did you guys see inside the holes?” I resorted, almost desperately as my feelings were a mixture of excitement and nervousness. Both Kyro and Natty were unsure of themselves, their eyes constantly making eye contact with one another. They remained held like this for a few seconds. In reality, they were like that for a minute. I stared at the two before shifting my eyes towards the o again. I stepped forward and closed in onto the symbol again. I saw nothing but dark streets that stretched forth to the horizon where it met with the dark skies above. Stars shone mirroring our own. But what was surprising was the figure at the end of the street. It was small at first, but I did not let that judge. As I waited a bit, I noticed how the figure was moving forward. Slowly at a constant speed. Each heavy step was like a heartbeat for me. I could not move nor do anything but stare. I felt something against my back, I was suddenly yanked back by the strong force that we tumbled over one another before I laid on top of Kyro. Zander and Natty stared at us both before only the dragoness looked over at the o too before shifting away towards us.

Our legs were interlocked. Wings folded, yet Kyro’s were spread to avoid getting injured in case we needed to fly home. Tails were spread out from us as I looked to the red dragon, he blushed before pushing off from me and growled only weakly, however, the threat had no meaning for it was just directly to the o letter that was adjacent to us. Yet I was curious. But felt decided against that feeling and nodded towards Kyro. “Break the letters then. Do not take long at all.” I ordered sternly as the dragons nodded and drew their pistols. Opening their fire directly at the letters and shattering them all at once. Till they went empty was when the shooting stopped and all eyes were to me as I looked around the town, searching for more.

“This does not make sense,” I repeated with a whisper while their eyes remained on me before looking at the broken letter. “This does not make any sense at all,” I said before shutting my mouth and calmly lowering my wings before looking towards the others. They too said nothing at all as silence was our only conversation. While my mind pondered with thoughts swirling my mind, I instantly shifted towards the broken letter we had shot. I had also noticed that it disappeared. How? I do not know nor would I want to find out at all as I shuttered before returning my gaze towards the others, it seems they had already started their conversation. Having walked away from a few feet of the distance between myself and them, I allowed the time to ponder and reflect on the experiments and things that had already happened. I had instantly, replay everything that was on my mind. Even cycled through the possibilities about the o. “No doubt this had to be Neither’s doing. Perhaps they were getting back at Chaos for something.” “You think this is Neither’s doing?” Kyro remarked, shifting his gaze at me all the while breaking his conversation to put his two cents in. I nodded in silence, “Well what if it was Chaos, getting back at Neither?” Suggested Zander, “Or balance fooling us all…” Natty remarked. I growled at Natty, knowing full well how stupid and retarded that question or suggestion may be.

For as she fell silent, she looked away. Silence emerged from her lips while Zander and Kyro talked to one another and held their conversation. I was leading my unit away from the os just in case anything had happened to them. I was still curious about the insides of the o and where they might lead. IF the theory of teleportation and portals were correct, however, then it would make sense for these portals to lead us to any of the four realms. Would it? I pondered having found myself standing still seconds later as I realized thus that my feet were somehow planted against the grounds beneath me. I fell in complete silence while my coworkers were questioning me. I remained silent. I continued to stand still and stared upon the ground before slowly rising my head high to the horizon and turning around towards my unit. I spoke with them, suggesting entering the portals and seeing where they might lead. Their reactions towards my suggestion were on point. Their expressions range from surprised to pleased or excited… at least from Kyro. Zander crossed his arms and turned his head away, growling with his eyes narrowed as if angry at some other direction. Natty, on the other claw, was pleading with me not to go. Citing about how we got lost somewhere within the snowy plains of balance. All she wanted was to head home.

However, Kyro nudged Natty and gave her a warm smirked of confidence. As I and Zander watched the couple for a few seconds before we split up our eyes and gaze in different directions, I had noticed that we had reached the entrance gate of the town’s home. For with a smile upon my face, I gained the attention of the others as their heads turned to me before exposing themselves to the reality of things. Having noticed quickly that their surroundings were empty fields of nothingness, they exhaled. Relieved that they never had to go through the town again. Instinctively, Natty’s wings spread apart as she jumped. Kyro grabbed her tail and gave a tight squeeze which force her down as she grumbled angrily at her mate, before folding her wings once again. All eyes were to me as I started the conversation.

“What I wanted to know is, where are those os taking us? Towards another dimension?” I started, Kyro frowned and shuffled his feet nervously before Zander took up the silence responding to me, “I do not think so. If ever, I think that os would lead you straight into the treasure.” I growled at him, Zander held his claws high towards us and shook them before adding off, “Hey. Maybe that was how those citizens of this town got famous for being rich.” “For entering into a portal and returning with a treasure?” Kyro questioned, tilting his head to one side as Zander nodded, his face brightly smiling regardless of the blackness appearing upon his face. “It could be, although these citizens did not have any visitors at all. Think about it for a moment, since when did they gain anyone to come here?” “None.” I resorted which Natty nodded as Zander continued the conversation, “Right? Zip. Zero. None.” “Which probably meant that the whole town is a fake and a tourist trap,” Zander concluded. “Could be. Unless they are a cult.” Kyro replied, “Since when are these towns dragons even a cult, Kyro?” Zander questioned, with a frown hanging over his head.

Another beat of silence emerged. None of them spoke, everyone was silent. As their eyes landed upon me, I exhaled with deep regrets upon my life before nodding slightly towards the rest of them and walking forward, barely brushing against their scales as we moved on and returned ourselves towards the portal once again. “Guess it is back to the o, again. Huh?” Kyro joked which fell upon deaf ears. As I stared upon the o, hearing the slight humming sound echoing my ears. My eyes closed, my wings shuffled behind me with nervousness reflecting from my scales. “Guess we should do it huh?” “Let us enter the portal then!” Cried Kyro, Natty nudged the red dragon and growled while Zander fell silent and closed his eyes before exhaling then nodded his head. “Alright then.” I nodded back in response towards them before shifting my eyes forward. One by one we entered inside. Unsure of ourselves if we had made the right decision.