

## Looten Plunder

### Backstory

**Name:** Usually just called 'Mr. Plunder' or 'Plunder'.

**Species:** Human/cat-based chimera hybrid

**Description:** Pale skin, green eyes with vertical pupils, red hair kept in a ponytail, and long, cat-like fingernails. Has a tattoo on his right shoulder

**Sex:** ♂

**Orientation:** Homosexual

**Age:** 27

**Height:** 165cm

**Weight:** 55kg

**Siblings:** At least one was raised by another mother and of whom he was unaware until his 20s

**Zodiac Sign:** Leo, Dragon

**Magic Power:** Earth magic and healing powers

**Relationships:** In a romantic/sexual relationship with Zarm (see Zarm's analysis)

**Pets:** Has a cat named Kitty

### Worldbuilding Notes

The chimeras in Looten Plunder's universe are half-human, half-animal hybrids created by Zarm as his own personal army. However, they became almost extinct as a result of the first war of the Spirits. In the aftermath of this war Gaia did her best to purge all memory of the chimeras, however she did not quite succeed. Rat-people survived, and a few other species of chimeras interbred with humans. These hybrids meant that chimeras as a species survived, albeit in diluted form.

All chimeras have magical powers, although they differ greatly from one individual to another. Zarm originally granted them enhanced strength, agility, endurance, reflexes, and other similar qualities associated with their respective animal. For feline chimeras, this included specialist abilities such as being able to see well in the dark. He also invested some of his chimeras with the ability to use magic to heal others.

During the war of the Spirits, Gaia broke one of her own rules and gave elemental magic to a selection of human clans. This was to give the humans a fighting chance against Zarm's army of chimeras. During this time, a chimera named Rattus noticed the new powers being bestowed upon some humans and decided that he wanted this same power for himself. Zarm had already passed him over so he approached Gaia with an offer: he would help her to imprison Zarm if she granted him elemental powers of his own.

Several generations later, Rattus' descendants gave birth to Skumm.

Hybrid chimeras generally find it very easy to pass for humans. Any animal features tend only to become apparent under exceptional circumstances. For example, Looten's pupils are circular like those of a human's, unless he looks into very bright light, in which case they elongate like a cat's. Long nails and sharp fangs have become so common in human populations that they are no longer recognised as chimera features. Early chimeras, once they had started hybridising with humans and humans had become the overwhelmingly dominant species of Earth, found it difficult to find a human partner if they looked like animals. Therefore, the chimeras who were least animal-like in appearance bred while the

rest did not. This says nothing of their behavioural traits however. Chimeras with traits such as superhuman strength, quick reflexes, kneading (like a cat), or dark-vision but fully-human appearances had little trouble finding partners and passing on their genes, so in the *Mars' Opposition* universe, chimeras are more prone to behavioural quirks than outlandish appearances.

While the chimeras aren't generally known about, a small number of well-connected individuals are aware of them. This includes rich individuals who have sought further wealth in the discovery of artefacts related to ancient myths and legends. Whenever members of the party showed themselves to be under the effects of, say, a curse, this would make the wealthy individual aware that the world of magic, and of myths and monsters, was real.

Chimera children develop the healing aspect of their powers before any other. This can happen as young as their toddlerhood years. This contributes interestingly to chimeras' cultural heritage. Many human toddlers (stereotypically mainly boys) like to destroy things - play with toy guns and army figures, beat up the bad guy in superhero games, and so on. However, as one of the first things a chimera toddler can do is heal, their skill at healing is encouraged by their parents, and the toddler grows up as a person who is less inclined to act out destructive games. Due to this, chimeras tend to grow up more gentle-spirited, and this is more notable in the males of the population due to aggression and other destructive qualities being traditionally associated with men and boys. This can amount to a contradiction when combined with, say, the cat-chimeras' instinct to hunt and kill, but people have a habit of being contradictory and chimeras are no exceptions to that.

A legend exists in this world of the Crypt of Destruction, which holds Zarm, an ancient Spirit. The Crypt was sealed shut and a curse placed upon it, that whoever opened it would turn to stone - unless they were a descendant of the mage who cast it. The myth told that when Zarm, the spirit that occupied the Crypt of Destruction was released he would grant immortality and incredible power on whoever was present. Five descendants of the original mages would be necessary to perform magic to open the Crypt and reveal Zarm to those who were present. Once they had done so they would need to perform five rituals to restore him to his full power.

In order to transfer the powers from Zarm to the present person or people, they would need to sabotage the final ritual and have possession of a particular artefact from the Crypt. As a final act, it would be necessary to kill Zarm to ensure that the immortality and power became theirs and was not reclaimed by Zarm himself.

Looten Plunder is based on a character from the 80s cartoon *Captain Planet and the Planeteers*, and has been tweaked to fit into the Alternate Universe fanfiction / webcomic *Mars' Opposition*. He grew up as somebody who did not fit in for many reasons and lived a high-profile, rich, and villainous life, but finally found his redemption in another dangerous person.

## **Trust & Confidence**

(newborn)

Looten's mother, named Rose, was a descendent of cat-based chimeras and human mages. She possessed Earth magic and healing powers. Rose and her family were poor

to the point of desperation.

Looten's father was a human named Scourge, and a billionaire. Scourge wanted a child with magical powers so tracked down a chimera woman of childbearing age to have his child, and this is how he met Rose. He had heard a myth about the Crypt of Destruction and wanted the power that Zarm might be able to grant him. He considered the legend worth pursuing, so he used his considerable resources to track and locate the current descendants. He already knew of two families descended from mages – the Greedlys and the Blights. Scourge wanted Zarm's gift of immortality and power for himself. To get it, he needed a child with a hybridised chimera so that his bloodline contained chimera blood. However, the information had been fed to him by Rattus' descendants, in such a subtle way that Scourge had no reason to suspect that he had been deliberately led to this end result.

Scourge approached Rose with a deal that he would take financial care of Rose's entire family in exchange for a magical heir. This information was presented as an offer, however Rose felt very much under threat: that Scourge was capable not only of solving her family's financial problems but would also become a danger to her family if she refused. She understood that she was being blackmailed into having a family with him so she accepted.

Rose agreed to bear his child but without having any physical contact with him. Therefore Looten's conception was planned and took place via artificial insemination.

This was not Looten's father's first family. When Scourge was younger, and prior to meeting Looten's mother, he had at least one illegitimate child, although at this time Scourge was not aware of the existence of any of his other children.

This was the emotional and circumstantial environment into which Looten was born.

Despite the tense relationship between Rose and Scourge, Rose welcomed Looten into the world.

Rose's agreement with Scourge that he would not touch her, along with his disinterest in Looten as a baby, meant that Rose felt that Looten was fully hers to raise as her own. She adored him and looked after him well - and Scourge's financial support made this easier. While this was Rose's first baby, she was already well-practised in looking after babies, as this was the culture of her family and the community in which she grew up. Therefore, she took Looten's care in relative stride.

While Rose was still experiencing the bliss of new motherhood, Scourge pretended to soften towards her and their baby so that he could name his son himself. When he did, he named him Looten. Rose, exhausted and focused on her baby, didn't notice the pun until after Looten's name had been officially registered and Scourge had 'lost interest' in the baby. Scourge did this for his own amusement, with his specific choice of 'loot and plunder' being a nod to the level of aggression and self-interest that would be required in the cut-throat world that he expected his son to become a part of.

One day she overheard a conversation between Scourge and one of his contacts. By listening closely she learned that Scourge had a specific plan for Looten and that Rose herself was well underway to becoming redundant. It became clear to Rose that Scourge would have no problem with disposing of her as soon as he believed that Looten could live

without her care. Rose planned in secret to disappear before this happened. This in turn meant that she cherished her time with Looten all the more, knowing that it was destined to be severely limited.

Looten, of course, had no idea about any of this. How would he? He was only an infant. However he sensed his mother's tension and anger whenever Scourge was around. At this time of his life he lacked the cognitive abilities to recognise that her distress was about a whole other person, and became extra-sensitive to her moods in an effort to recognise them and to respond, if there was any way he could do so. Rose did a good job of soothing him but ultimately the experience of infancy left Looten feeling as if there was always something to be wary of.

### **Freedom & Self-Determination**

*(toddlerhood)*

Looten grew into a toddler and Rose took full advantage of his increasing independence. He became interested in the world beyond Rose's arms and lap, and Rose took the opportunity to teach him to be independent. Her main goal was to prepare him as best she could for her departure from his life, which she knew would be earlier than he would need. She did not believe that Scourge would hurt Looten so did not teach him to distrust his father. At least, not intentionally. Children are exquisitely sensitive to their parents' non-verbal cues so despite her best efforts to keep her fear and hatred of Scourge to herself, he did pick up that something wasn't right about his father. However, this remained at a low level rather than an overt refusal to be around Scourge.

As part of her encouragement of Looten's independence, she watched out for his first use of magic. So did Scourge, but for different reasons. He was impatient for his son to start to develop his magical ability, so began to spend time with Rose and Looten so that he could observe for signs.

This happened one day in Rose and Scourge's garden. Looten found a butterfly with a damaged wing. He wished that he could somehow make it better, and unintentionally used his magic to heal its wing. The butterfly flew away completely healed and Rose, who had seen all of this, knew that it was time to teach him how to use his powers. She taught him how to heal minor cuts, bruises, and scratches, and to repair damage to plants such as torn leaves.

Looten himself found this ability absolutely delightful, especially as his mother noticed and celebrated each act of healing that he engaged in. Despite being descended from cat-chimeras he did not have a taste for killing, but loved to catch small animals, look at them, and then let them go.

Scourge made a show of being unimpressed by these acts of kindness, delight in life, and healing, but from that day on, Rose knew that her days with Looten were numbered. She taught Looten as best she could in the time she had left, while also doing everything she could to culture Scourge's belief that Looten still needed her too much for her to be dispensed with. This worked well enough, but made teaching Looten to be independent difficult. Looten himself read the dynamic between the pair of them and understood that it was tense. He developed a habit for scratching fabrics around the house with his cat-like nails, although he overcame this habit within a year or so.

## **Ambition**

*(young childhood)*

Rose finally decided that it was time to leave Looten and Scourge when Looten reached his fourth birthday. She didn't say goodbye to Looten as she didn't want to make him cry, and she certainly didn't want to tip Scourge off that she knew of his plan and had chosen this moment to make a break for freedom. As a result Looten woke up one morning to find that his mother had disappeared.

Scourge discussed this with Looten but only as a way of convincing Looten that he was acknowledging the issue. He came up with a story that Rose had been in a car crash. He even prepared a fake funeral to ensure that Looten 'understood' that Rose was dead and buried so would not try to search for her in his later years. Of course, as a small child Looten had no idea how a bereavement could be handled with more openness and authenticity.

During his grieving process, Looten visited his mother's bedroom. He found a ring on the dresser. This ring had belonged to Rose and had "Be strong" engraved on the inside of the band. He couldn't have known it, but this ring was a family heirloom. He kept it and as an adult, wore it on his pinkie finger as a way to remember her.

Looten's father remained as cold and distant as he always had been. However, now that his mother was gone Looten noticed this coldness more so than ever. Since he was of early school age, Scourge left Looten with tutors and governesses often so that he could go to work and relax without Looten distracting him.

Looten quickly decided that it was better for him not to tell anybody about his magical powers. He remembered that his mother had had powers, and that she had taught him not to show his to others. Now that she was gone he wondered whether her magical abilities had been the reason for her disappearance, and that impressed on him a sense of imperative to keep his talent with magic a secret. However, whenever he was sure he was alone he would sometimes use them to help wounded animals as a way to remember and honour her. He would often take wounded animals to his bedroom to heal their wounds, and then release them. He also had a way with Earth magic, which he practised with house plants to make them grow and bloom.

With so much focus on what he should avoid being or doing, and sensing from his father that he was irrelevant and merely tolerated (at least, that's how he interpreted his father's distance), Looten gave little thought to what he wanted to do or be when he grew up. For him, getting through the day was all he could do.

## **Productivity**

*(older childhood)*

Being the son of a billionaire meant that as an older child Looten was admitted to a very prestigious private school. Even among the other children he stood out as the one with the richest father. This prompted jealousy from some of the other children, and Looten responded by never quite warming to them.

The lessons his mother had taught him about being independent, plus his natural caution

about showing off his powers were part of the reason for that, but Looten was also serious and hard-working, and this prompted him to focus on his lessons instead of his classmates. For this reason his teachers liked him very much. Indeed, they found him a refreshing change from most of the other children, as many lacked an interest in lessons, believing that they were already set up for life.

With that said, Looten was not antagonistic and didn't mind if another pupil asked him for help with schoolwork, so long as they were polite. He disliked teamwork however, as he felt that he couldn't be his spontaneous self around the other children. Rationally he believed that this was in case he let something slip, but on a deeper level he had felt tolerated rather than enjoyed for most of his life. If his own father didn't like him enough to enjoy being around him, how could anybody else? At least, that was how it felt to Looten.

He also hated to compete. Working alone had given Looten a taste for control, and he wanted to do well in everything he did. Living with his father, who valued only his successes, also had an impact: he had intuited for a long time that his father was a potentially dangerous man, and Looten didn't want to take any risks by failing or being a weak competitor. Therefore to him, competition meant that he had to do better than every other person, who were also trying to do better than him. Looten would push himself insanely hard to come out on top, feeling that he couldn't risk not winning. He didn't like collapsing on the finishing line from over-exertion or studying for tests longer than he assumed everyone else had, so he developed a distaste for competition.

Looten developed one friendship with the younger of the Slaughter brothers, Stalker Slaughter, who sat close to him in class. While their friendship did not become very close (Stalker only really wanted help with homework), it was enough for Looten to not feel isolated.

He had finally developed some clarity as to what he was going to do with his life on a professional level. Scourge hinted occasionally that Looten would work with him at the helm of Plunder Industries and one day take over, but Looten got the impression that Scourge wasn't looking forward to having him there. That was a puzzle to Looten and one he had little interest in solving, but he ultimately assumed that that was where he would end up.

Looten had an unpleasant surprise one day while at school. His schoolteachers had a habit of using the full names of their pupils, and one day when one of the teachers used his full name, he heard the pun. Another of his classmates heard and understood it and started laughing, and it was only then that he recognised what his father had done.

He felt humiliated, angry, and betrayed, but powerless to do anything about it. He understood implicitly that it was his father and not his mother who had named him this way.

This whole incident with his name got Looten thinking about protecting himself from being a pawn in other peoples' plans. He searched for ways to improve his confidence and noticed that 'learn a martial art' came high on many lists of suggestions. Looten decided to find a class and start training.

Scourge continued to be distant in Looten's life, and most of the attention he did pay to Looten was about Looten's grades. Scourge had always demonstrated a keenness to give Looten the best education possible and paid without fail for the best. This included any

extra-curricular educational activities that Looten wanted to take part in. As a result, Looten had no problem getting into the best (reasonably local) martial arts dojo money could buy.

While Looten was eager to learn, he wasn't naturally talented, so progressing through the various belt colour was something of a challenge. Regardless, he persisted until he earned his black belt.

Being a cat-chimera worked against him in this endeavour. He had cat-like grace and quick reflexes, but these aptitudes were designed for a quick hunt-and-kill. Martial arts training however required strength and endurance. Looten had to work against his natural tendency to work on a 'sprint' basis to develop more of an 'endurance' attitude – and the body to go with it. His natural grace didn't hurt, though.

Looten attended a wide variety of after-school activities aside from martial training. This included ballroom dance. His cat-like grace made him a naturally gifted dancer, but he found it boring and moved onto other things. He enjoyed his core school activities and lessons. He also spent a while learning to play the guitar, although he only learned this to basic level.

Perhaps due to his chimera heritage Looten had always liked animals, and asked his father if he could have a pet. Scourge refused and established a ground rule that no animals were allowed at their home.

### **Child to Adult Transition** *(adolescence)*

When Looten was around 14 or 15 he began to realise that his sexual preference was towards other males.

Looten had slowly become aware over the years that his father was a criminal, and a truly dangerous one at that. There had never been a lightbulb moment when he had suddenly realised it; he had always known it deep down. However, it was during his adolescence that this knowledge began to feel more relevant and dangerous to Looten himself.

One day, when Scourge was entertaining other businessmen at his and Looten's home, Looten overheard a part of their conversation. The conversation turned to the Stonewall Riots and Scourge made it clear that he thought homosexuals should not be allowed to live. For Looten, this was the first time he had had confirmation – or as close as possible to it – that Scourge would be prepared to kill his own son if he displeased him enough.

This was painful for Looten to hear, and it led him to wonder whether Scourge had been responsible for his mother's death.

Of course, Looten's schoolmates became teenagers at the same time as he did, and as they did they became more socially aware. For many of them that meant hosting parties where they could show off their parents' wealth and enjoy whatever they deemed cool. Looten put his guard up even more so than he already had, and became deeply afraid of letting slip that he was attracted to other guys, in case his classmates disapproved, but especially in case the news got back to his father. His solitude earned him a reputation as a loner, and this further deepened the rift between himself and his classmates. However as before, none of them dared to bully him about it because they feared Scourge and his

reputation.

Looten may have kept his distance from his classmates, but he continued to help Stalker. Stalker continued to see their friendship as a way to improve his grades and began to spend less time with Looten when they weren't actively studying so that he could be with the cool kids, but Looten read Stalker's determination to continue spending some time with him as a sign of interest in him. Looten developed a crush on Stalker, however he never confirmed whether the guy was interested in him too as he didn't want to risk asking him without giving away his own orientation.

He tried encouraging Stalker by showing off his academic and athletic abilities, and even used his martial arts training to protect him from a gang of thugs on one occasion, but ultimately it didn't work. Stalker read all of this as Plunder trying to prove that he was better than him. One day Stalker put his foot down about this, and this forced Looten to accept the fact that he simply wasn't interested.

Looten felt heartbroken about this. He overcame this eventually but it took him a while. This signalled the beginning of the end of their friendship and Stalker drifted away over time.

Training under a martial arts teacher had given Looten a positive role model, and he learned many things from his instructor that he hadn't learned from his father. Above all else he saw that his instructor was calm, wise, and as tough as nails, and Looten dedicated himself to developing these traits for himself.

As studious as Looten was, he made two small but significant concessions to rebellion: he got a tattoo. This tattoo was of a dragon on his shoulder, a reference to his Chinese Zodiac sign. For Looten it represented strength and freedom, two things he craved above all else. He kept it a secret from everyone and made sure to wear long-sleeve tops to make sure it was never seen. His desire to keep it hidden also prompted him to start wearing leather jackets. Some of his more conservative teachers didn't like his choice of clothing, but most realised that he was not the rebel he was trying to be, and Looten proved this by continuing to be a keen student.

Scourge developed an ongoing involvement with Verminous Skumm, a rat-chimera during Looten's teens. However, Looten had no idea of this at the time and only met Skumm himself at age 27.

### **Closeness in Relationships**

*(young adulthood)*

At around the time Looten reached adulthood he began wearing business suits all the time. Furthermore, he picked unusual and eye-catching combinations of colours. This was no longer to do with rebellion: he simply liked the colours and enjoyed the freedom of disregarding others' wishes in a harmless arena such as fashion. Among his favourite suits was a green ensemble with pink tiger-striped lapels.

At age 18 Looten went to university to study Economics. One of the first things he did was to get a cat. It happened by happy accident: while on the street he saw an old lady with a litter of kittens, who was giving them away one by one to good people. One of the cats, a tabby-and-white, licked his hand and she told him, "Kitty likes you, mister, take care of him,



three-coloured cat brings luck.“ So he took the kitten home, called him Kitty, and loved him for his whole life.

At university he met his first real friend: Hoggish Greedly. He instantly recognised something important about Hoggish: that he was a chimera, like Looten, and had an outlandish name. Hoggish revealed that he had been named Hoggish by his mother as a nod to his chimera heritage. Without coming out, Looten quickly established that Hoggish was straight so did not develop a crush on him and instead enjoyed platonic friendship with him. The two had many common interests and this helped a great deal.

Hoggish introduced Looten to a life-long friend of his, Barbara Blight, who also happened to be studying at the university.

Despite the friendship that the three developed together Looten didn't come out to either of them. His distrust ran too deep for that.

At age 20, Looten received some big news: his father had suddenly died. Hoggish and Barbara were sympathetic but Looten didn't feel a need for their condolences. Instead, he finally felt free of Scourge's cold, dark, and threatening shadow and allowed himself to relax in a way he never had before. The experience was refreshing. Soon after this however it became clear that he had inherited the title of CEO of Plunder Industries. A newspaper even went as far as to describe him as “the richest bachelor in the world”, much to his chagrin.

He understood that this would encourage a wave of female suitors but that was not what he wanted. More important to him was the unpleasant reminder that he had not even had his first kiss yet, something that most people had had years ago. He developed further crushes on the people he met during his early 20s, but none of them were interested.

Even Hoggish married and had a child during this time, and Looten privately felt sad about that.

As Looten saw it, even a man who looked like a pig could find someone willing to marry him and bear his children, but Looten himself couldn't find anyone who wanted to so much as kiss him. Looten believed himself to be ugly, but his lack of good fortune in the world of dating had more to do with him being particularly well-practised in keeping others at a safe distance. Many may have described him as plain, however.

Over the years Looten had considered changing his name so that it was no longer a pun. However, by the time he was old enough to legally do so he had realised that changing his name would have two negative consequences: firstly, the world's media would take it as a sign that he hated his father. While this was true, he disliked the idea of the general public being privy to his family's sour interrelationship. Secondly, as famous as the Plunder name was, he understood that a surprising number of people would be confused and not know who he was under his new name. Besides, Plunder enjoyed being the head of an influential organisation, and the one he was the head of bore the family name: Plunder Industries. In the end he settled for calling himself “Mister Plunder” whenever he possibly could.

One day Looten, Greedly, Blight and a contact of theirs named Sly Sludge received a message from an individual named Verminous Skumm. He told them about the Crypt of Destruction and that, if opened, they would find an artefact inside that could grant any

wish. They debated between themselves whether they would make use of this tip and how they might go about it.

When Looten first met Skumm he found that he instantly disliked him. From Looten's perspective, Skumm's ruthlessness and cold business sense reminded him of his father. He also recognised that he himself was a cat-chimera, while Skumm was very clearly a rat-chimera, and that it was very likely that an old species antagonism was at work.

Looten himself was eager to try it. He already knew that magic existed and that the story was ultimately plausible, and what his wish would be: for directions to find the right guy for him. Ultimately they all went.

Verminous Skumm had lied to them. The Crypt didn't contain an artefact but a Spirit named Zarm.

Looten noticed Zarm's piercing in the right ear and took it as a signal that Zarm was a homosexual. As Looten was attracted to men himself, he was pleased to see this and warmed to Zarm more so than he might have otherwise

When Zarm awoke the first thing he told the gathered party was that he would grant a wish for each of them, if they helped him fully recover his strength. He spoke generally to them all but then lingered on Looten. Looten suspected that it may have something to do with his strength as a mage; Zarm was going to need a strong mage for the rituals.

Greedily, Blight, Sly, Skumm, and Looten all agreed to Zarm's deal. The five rituals took time and during this time, Looten and Zarm got to know each other better.

It didn't take long for Looten to establish that Zarm loved culture. When Zarm described having seen a Victorian ballroom dance and expressed disappointment that he couldn't have joined in, Greedly facilitated a dance for him. Looten, with his history of having learned to dance, was Zarm's partner.

Soon Looten recognised something else about Zarm in addition to his attractiveness. For all of Zarm's otherworldliness they had a lot in common: both had acted in a villainous way, each making their mark on the world from behind a cold mask, both had had their reasons for doing so, both had discovered that they couldn't trust even their own parents, their parents were both powerful people – and if Scourge Plunder had a long shadow then Looten had to admit that Zarm's sole parent, Gaia, had an even longer one – and both were looking for something. Looten wasn't sure what Zarm was looking for and he didn't dare to ponder about that too much, but he hoped that Zarm was looking for a lover, or at least some kind of companion.

At times Zarm flirted with him and Looten rather liked that.

Inevitably the fifth ritual came to an end, and when it did everything changed abruptly. Zarm revealed that he had never intended to grant any of them their wishes and that all he wanted to do was kill his mother, Gaia, by destroying the world so that he would never have to go back into the Crypt again.

Looten warned Zarm that if he went through with this then the result – drifting endlessly through space with nobody for company – would be even more unbearable than his serial imprisonment. This stopped Zarm for a moment. He admitted that he had never thought

about it that way before.

Then Skumm attacked Zarm. Looten, with his lifelong involvement with magic, understood instantly what Skumm was trying to do: to take Zarm's Spirit powers for himself. To do that he would have to kill Zarm, but the first step was to remove Zarm's powers from Zarm himself, thereby rendering him human. Skumm managed to get this far in his plan.

Looten fought to protect Zarm and beat Skumm back for long enough to retreat to the place of the sabotaged fifth ritual with Zarm, to give the Spirit the time to emotionally recover from the loss of his powers.

Greedly, Blight, Plunder, and Zarm (who Plunder had to carry) all went to Looten's mansion by helicopter so they could discuss their next move at a safe distance from Skumm.

While the others were deciding what to do next, Looten argued for Greedly and Blight to help him defeat Skumm. They weren't keen for this as they were all angry at Zarm for going back on his promise, but Looten pointed out that if they let Skumm get to Zarm and kill him, then Skumm would become the next Spirit of Destruction and that would be disastrous for them all, perhaps for the entire planet.

After this conversation, Greedly and Blight left, which gave Looten and Zarm time to talk. Zarm rounded on Looten to ask why he had saved him after he had made clear his plan to destroy the world. He demanded, "Why did you not just let me die? I was ready to destroy everything! Why do you not hate me like the others do?"

Looten answered that he couldn't hate somebody he understood.

Zarm seemed to accept this and told Looten, "At least you didn't say something stupid like, "because I love you"".

Looten had an answer for this: "I thought that went without saying". And when he said it, Zarm cried as if he had needed to hear this his whole life.

The two spent a lot of time together after this, and during this time Zarm processed much of his grief for losing his Spirithood, his long-sustained habit of self-isolation and projection of 'needlessness', and general self-blame for everything that had happened in his life.

Looten worried about him during this time. He showed him all the patience and love he believed Zarm needed, and more. Zarm went through a stage of distrusting Looten on the basis that now that he was human, he was no longer strong enough to fight Looten off if he decided to force himself on Zarm. Looten desired Zarm and recognised that Zarm sensed this, but he loved him too much to do any such thing, and together they overcame Zarm's fears.

The situation continued in this vein for around a year. During this time Skumm exploited any opportunities he saw to attack Zarm. He researched the Plunder family for clues and discovered that Looten had a nephew by a half-brother, named Robin. Skumm used this information to create a brand new opportunity to attack Zarm by using Robin to distract Looten.

He did this by showing Robin that he was related to none other than the CEO of Plunder

Industries, drawing attention to the villainous nature of Looten's empire and spinning any aspect of it he could to offend Robin's sensibilities as much as possible, before bringing Looten and Robin together.

Their first meeting was not pleasant. Afterwards, Skumm convinced Robin to blackmail Looten. He pointed out to Robin the evidence that Looten might be homosexual (to an outside observer there was Looten's poor networking in high school except for Stalker Slaughter who had been, and continued to be, notable for his good looks, and Looten's protective attitude towards Zarm, which Robin had observed for himself when he met Looten - hence Skumm's organising of a meeting between the two).

To bolster these efforts and to test the theory that Looten had been attracted to Stalker, Skumm encouraged Stalker to assist with bringing Looten down. By their late 20s both of the Slaughter brothers had become mercenaries, and were adept bounty hunters and assassins. Skumm hired Stalker to seduce Looten, to draw him away from Zarm and at the very least to add credence to the idea that Looten was attracted to men, which would strengthen the basis for Robin's blackmail.

None of this worked as well as Skumm or Robin hoped. Looten used his black belt training to handle the stress of attack via multiple channels. While he was tempted by Stalker, he remained faithful to Zarm.

Robin was not the only member of Looten's family that Skumm located. He also found Rose. He took her hostage and notified Looten, but Looten succeeded in rescuing her.

He was shocked to see that his mother had been alive the whole time, and his first reaction was to feel confused and angry at her for deserting him. But she explained to him what had happened and that she had had no choice. He asked why she hadn't returned after Scourge's death and she told him that by the time she had heard about this and knew where Looten was, he was an adult - and a billionaire at that - and she hadn't believed he had needed her any more.

He answered her, saying: "I needed you, mum. I still do."

From then on, she and Looten became reacquainted.

Skumm continued to try to find ways to get to Zarm. In fact, Zarm was not his only target: he wanted Gaia out of the picture too as, if he became the next Spirit of Destruction, she would stand in his way. One day he manipulated events so that both Zarm and Gaia visit the Crypt so that he could trap both of them within.

Looten, as faithful a guardian to Zarm as ever, went there with Zarm and was able to foil Skumm's plans.

As far as Looten knew, he killed Skumm that day. They never found the body but they never heard from him again, even years later.

During this conflict Looten saw a chance to save Gaia from Skumm. He did, and to his surprise she offered him the reward of granting him one wish. Looten knew immediately what he wanted to wish for. He had noticed Zarm's misery over his estranged relationship with her and how their alienation from one another had been the main turning point in Zarm's life. He believed that if Gaia were to talk things through with Zarm and offer

forgiveness to him by offering to make him the next Spirit of Earth then much of Zarm's pain would disappear.

Gaia took Zarm away so that they could speak. When Zarm returned he was still human, but seemed unburdened in a way Looten had never seen him before. At first Looten felt concerned that Gaia hadn't lived up to her promise to return Zarm to Spirithood, but Zarm explained to him that his powers as a Spirit would be restored, but only upon his death, and that he was prepared to live the rest of his mortal life as a human with Looten.

Then Plunder understood that Zarm loved him, that Zarm was prepared to delay becoming a Spirit for many years - decades perhaps - just to be by Looten's side.

Looten asked him, "So... do I deserve to kiss you?" He asked the question playfully as the unspoken communication between them made the answer clear enough.

Zarm's answer was, "Oh, I think you deserve even more than just to kiss me, Mister Plunder." Zarm invited him closer by pulling on Looten's cravat to pull him into his first kiss.

At an earlier time of his life Looten had been afraid that he would die without experiencing his first kiss. After Zarm returned he no longer had to worry about that! Looten lost his virginity that night, and although this was his first time, he knew the theory well.

He was gentle with Zarm as he knew Zarm wanted and needed, and paid close attention to Zarm's reactions to him moment by moment so that he could be sensitive to Zarm's desires. Looten wanted nothing more than for Zarm to be happy with him. Their night was perfect for both of them.

The love, understanding, and mutual respect between them, exemplified on that night, continued for the rest of their relationship. As a couple they had a knack for harmony.

They didn't have sex every night; often they simply went to sleep together. Looten didn't like being pushy, and it often took Zarm hinting to him that in fact, he rather liked Looten 'being pushy', and often wordlessly encouraged him to do so. Looten, being shy when it came to such matters and wary of expressing himself sexually after years of hiding his orientation from all others, appreciated Zarm's tact, understanding, and encouragement.

Looten used his riches to take Zarm around the world. Zarm adored the various cultures of Earth and between them, they never tired of it. Or rather, Zarm never tired of the cultural enrichment and Looten never tired of Zarm's pleasure.

The two enjoyed their life together greatly. Zarm loved Kitty, and Looten introduced Zarm to many pleasures of the current day including movies and video games.

### **Passing on Responsibilities**

*(older adulthood)*

Looten and Zarm enjoyed the rest of their life together, continuing to travel and enjoying their time together as family. Robin had long-since warmed to the pair of them so they counted him as family.

Rose was surprised that Looten was attracted to people of the same sex but she was

open-minded enough to accept him for it and be happy that he had found true happiness. She came to see Zarm as her son-in-law.

Regarding his professional life, Looten continued running Plunder Industries long into his middle age as he had no children to pass it on to. He kept an eye on the possibility of passing it on to Robin however.

### **End of Life**

*(old age)*

Looten spent the rest of his life seeing Zarm as his miracle, and felt blessed every day of their life together. Whenever he doubted that he had been a positive influence in Zarm's life, Zarm said he thought Looten was *his* miracle, the one who had freed him from his war with Gaia, and after that talk Looten always felt better.

They were both each others' miracle, in their own ways.

### **Credits**

Based on theory by:

Erikson, E., (1951) 'Childhood and Society', W.W. Norton & Company, Inc. chapter 7.

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~Hayley, The Character Consultancy