

A Damn Drink

A fiction written by Appius Taldrya Wight.

Port Kasiya
City Centre
40 ABY

All he wanted was a goddamn drink. The night had started out like any other. As soon as darkness descended over Port Kasiya, Darrio dragged himself to whatever hovel would dare serve him. One would think being the Consul's brother would grant him some esteem in the local taverns, maybe even a discount, but no. His reputation as a drunkard that caused far too much trouble was enough for most places to shun him and kick him out the moment they saw him. Thankfully, there was always one place that appreciated his brazen attitude and enjoyed his custom: *The Playground*.

It had to be Port Kasiya's biggest hell hole, and that was why he loved it. If it wasn't the booze, it was the barely dressed Pantoran women moving from table to table taking orders. It could be the gambling den, where those prosperous enough could spend the night wasting away their hard-earned credits in games that may or may not have been rigged. Then there was the upstairs area, where those searching for more *exotic* forms of entertainment could spend the night. Alas, Darrio wasn't here for any of that. All he wanted was a good, stiff drink to clean his arteries. That was as good an excuse as any, and Darrio was nothing if not full of excuses.

Then, a strong tremor shook the foundations of the building. *The Playground* was, as usual, filled to the brim with patrons that were all shaken by the short earthquake, including Darrio, whose drink had spilt onto the bar counter where he was sitting.

"For kriff's sake..." he held up the now empty glass above his head. "Barkeep, another stiff one!"

An explosion suddenly destroyed part of a nearby wall, drawing the attention of all the patrons. In stepped a monstrosity that made Darrio rise from his seat, sans helmet. It seemed like a normal Human-being if you looked underneath the crystalline exoskeleton that covered their body. Crystals struck out of their eyes, elbows, knees, and hell knew where else. Darrio did *not* want to think about that. What stood out most was that he remembered those *things* from Pendroh-I.

"Open fire!"

Being *The Playground*, and being that it was owned by the Chyron Chancellor Elect of all people, the staff were armed to the teeth and then some. They unleashed volley after volley of blaster fire at the crystalline monster, but the bolts only seemed to ping off the crystals like beskar. Excellent entertainers they may have been, but expert marksmen, they were not.

The Crystalline Monster responded with an angry roar. Lightning erupted from red-tipped fingers as electricity collided with the closest citizen. It then sputtered off, striking several others as their lives were swiftly ended.

The Playground became a horror house of screams. People scrambled for whatever exit they could find. Some leapt out of windows, some tried to run past the abomination slaughtering them only to meet a gruesome end themselves, and some ran to the top floor, only to be cornered like wild animals. Even the staff had retreated. No payday was worth dying for.

Darrio reached into his holsters, grabbing his twin Westar Pistols, he unleashed hellfire upon the Crystalline beast before him. Darrio was a crack shot with a blaster at the worst of times, and now was no exception as most of the shots crashed into the side of his target's head. However, it did no damage, and the Crystalline Monster turned to face him.

"This is my bar!" Darrio pounded his chest. "What the frakk are you supposed to be anyways!?"

It didn't answer with words, but with a blood-curdling scream, and faster than Darrio could blink, it was on him.

"Oh, Sh-"

It slammed itself shoulder first into Darrio, and sent him through the wooden bar counter. It broke with a thunderous crack, but the Crystalline Monster didn't stop until it smashed Darrio spine-first into the drinks cabinet several feet away. He dropped to the ground as bottle after bottle crashed around him.

"Oww..." he groaned, then saddened by the loss of perfectly good booze.

The Crystalline Monster grabbed Darrio by his ankle and pinned him down. It extended one sharp crystal arm and drove it downwards. Darrio managed to inch his head away in time as the crystals tore through the durasteel floor next to his head with a crack. He looked on in abject shock at the power this *thing* possessed, and silently wished he still had his helmet on him. He didn't have long to think, for

it was ready for a second attempt at piercing through his skull. Darrio shifted his weight, and managed to free his arms. The Crystalline Monster screeched as a jet of flames blasted it in the face. It recoiled, and covered itself with its arms. It fell back over the broken bar counter and onto the main dance floor.

Darrio staggered to his feet. "Jorm frakkin' owes me for this one."

As the abomination returned to its feet, Darrio noticed the burns adorning what remained of its organic flesh began to mend and heal. If he wanted to win, he'd have to hit it hard, and hit it hard in one go. Thankfully, he had just the tools he needed to do that.

Firstly, he bent his right knee, and a series of miniature rockets propelled out of the launchers hidden within the armor. They exploded upon impact, and staggered the big monster on its feet. He activated his jetpack, and used it to gain quick momentum. Using that very same knee, he struck where the nose **should** have been, knocking the creature off its feet again. Darrio landed in front of it, and spun, grabbing hold of one of his favourite explosives. He placed himself atop the Crystalline Monster, pried open its jaw, and placed the rectangular device in its mouth.

"One... two..." Darrio began counting, and it struggled, trying to spit the device out of its mouth. It was definitely stronger, but Darrio had more leverage as he pushed the explosive as far down its throat as he could.

"Three... four..."

It pushed against him, slowly lifting Darrio off.

"Five... six..."

Darrio held on for dear life. After a few seconds, he was released, and he planted his boots on the device to keep it firmly in place.

"Seven!"

Darrio activated his jetpack, and freed himself from the Crystalline Monster's grasp. He launched himself back as far away from it as he could. He knew what was coming next. Two explosions followed, the first summoned a vacuum that pulled objects in the nearby vicinity towards the device in the Crystalline Monster's mouth. The second was like a Starship's cannons had struck *The Playground*. A mighty *boom* tore apart the duracrete floor, leaving behind a small crater where the abomination had been.

The shockwave from the blast sent Darrio careening to the other side of the building. He crashed against the wall with a hard thud and slid to the ground. His back hurt, his body ached, but he rose to his feet, grit his teeth, and went to inspect the damage he had done.

It wasn't a pretty sight. Half of the Crystalline Monster's body had been decimated, destroyed, or scattered across the bar in a display of gore and violence that Jorm would no doubt appreciate. Maybe he'd even give it a seven out of ten, and hopefully free drinks for life? Darrio somehow doubted the latter.

The clattering of armor caught Darrio's attention. Disciplined boots stormed the bar, and he recognised them as part of Jorm's handpicked Company. The cracked open some caches, revealing a smorgasbord of weaponry that Darrio would have *loved* to have had during the fight. Nevertheless, he now had the opportunity to get out of the area and find Appius, if only to get out of paying for repairs.

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