

Wampa

Darrio was not handling it well. He was not handling it well in the slightest.

He felt light headed, nauseous, and like all the blood in his body was rushing to the top of his head. Of course, that *might* have something to do with the fact he was currently hanging upside down from the ceiling of the cave.

Or was it from the blow to the back of his head? Right now, he wasn't so sure. What he was sure of, was somehow, someway, this was all Appius' fault. He was prepared to let his *vod* know all about it the next time he saw him.

When Appius suggested that they split up and tackle one problem each, Darrio assumed he'd gotten the sweeter deal. Between an acklay and a wampa, he knew which he'd rather fight. What he was *not* prepared for was an ambush. The damned creatures had caught him by surprise, so here he was, ready to be the next main course for mealtime.

Darrio looked around as best he could, given his current circumstances. The sound of chomping, crunching, slurping, and swallowing could be heard nearby. When he glanced over, he saw the pack of wampas munching on what appeared to be acklay offspring. This must have been an acklay cave before the wampas took it over.

Bloody typical.

Below, Darrio spotted his blaster buried in the snow. He reached out to grab it, but he was several inches too short to reach the handle. He tried again, stretching an extra inch, not that it made any difference.

He let out a heavy groan. "Goddamn it..."

He needed to weigh up his options. He could use his jetpack to break himself free, but he'd end up crashing into the ground and breaking his neck.

That was not his idea of a good time.

He had his explosives, but he'd need to be free before he used them in case he got caught in the blast. Then there were his vambraces...

That was it! He could shoot himself free with that! He attempted to curl himself so he could see where he was shooting, but doing so in mid-air was more difficult than it looked.

"Oh, come on you stupid..."

A loud roar vibrated through the cage, and Darrio turned his head to see that the wampas had noticed his activity. For half a second, there was nothing but a staring contest between him and them until the closest roared at him, projecting saliva across the ground.

Darrio's heart skipped a beat. To hell with being careful. He needed to get out of here NOW!

He fired the blaster on his vambrace, and it hit the ceiling, but not the ice holding him in place. He shot another, and another, but missed. The wampas were closing in now.

Finally, and mercifully, the right shot connected, breaking feet from the ice. He collapsed to the ground in a lump, but wasted no time in scrambling for his blaster. He grabbed it as the wampa towered over him.

The furry beast picked Darrio up by his shoulders, so he placed the barrel of his weapon under the wampas jaw, charged the shot, and released.

The resulting shot echoed throughout the cave, and blew the wampas brains out all over the walls.

The rest of the pack lunged forward, and Darrio shot the closest one in between the eyes. He retrieved a thermal detonator and primed the explosive. He then dropped it into the snow, and beelined for the cave entrance.

His heartbeat thundered in his chest, and despite the cold, his adrenaline kept him warm. He had just reached the entrance when he heard the explosion behind him.

He didn't look back. He couldn't. His survival depended on it. The ground shook beneath his feet, and he leapt out into the outside world as the wall cave collapsed behind him.

Darrio was half buried in snow by the time everything had settled. He dug himself out and admired his handiwork.

He'd done his part, now it was time to give Appius a headache. One thing was for sure, though. This would be a good story for Ellisyn and Sulla.

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