

Brother, My Brother

Taldryan Tower

Port Kasiya

41 ABY

Darrio was a man on a mission. He was going to Appius' office, and there was not a man nor woman alive that was going to stop him. He maintained a brisk pace, fists clenched at his sides.

Not even the Pantoran secretary following him down the hallways, waving her arms like a madwoman to try and get his attention, was going to stop him.

She moved in front of him. "You can't go in there! That is the Supreme Chancellor's office! You need an appointment first!"

"I don't care who he is!" Darrio barged past her without a care. "He can be the *Mand'alor* for all I give a kark right now. He's my brother, and he will damn well see me when I want him to!"

Durasteel blast doors prevented his entrance to Appius' office. He slammed a fist against them and kicked it repeatedly with his foot.

"Appius! I know you're in there!" Darrio grabbed a thermal detonator from his pouch. Open it up, or I swear I'll blow this door down!"

The secretary screamed, though Darrio paid her no mind. To his surprise, his bluff worked, and the doors slid open. They lead into a large, circular office with lush red carpets, a skyline view of all of Port Kasiya, and in the middle with several terminals showing hell knew what, was a wooden desk.

Sitting at him, sans helmet, was none other than Appius Taldrya Wight, the Supreme Chancellor.

Appius rose from his seat, the holographic monitors vanishing from sight. "Hello, Darrio. How can I he-"

Darrio roared and lunged at him. He leapt over the desk and tackled Appius to the ground. Both brothers rolled on the floor before coming to a stop.

The secretary observed the whole thing, and clasped a hand to her mouth. "Oh my God!"

A struggle ensued, with Darrio pinning Appius to the ground. He held the thermal detonator in one hand. He was suddenly flung into the air before he could activate it. He hit the ceiling spine-first, and relinquished his hold on his explosive. As he came crashing down, Appius rolled out of the way, giving no cushion for his brother's fall.

Darrio landed chest-first. "Ow..."

The secretary ran to Appius' side and helped him onto his feet. "Supreme Chancellor, sir! I can go get help!"

"Nah, don't bother," Appius dusted himself down.

The Pantoran went wide-eyed. "Don't bother!? Sir, he drew an explosive on you!"

Appius smiled at her. "Would you believe me if I said that's far from the worst thing he's ever done to me?"

The secretary opened her mouth to speak, but promptly closed it again.

Appius placed a hand on her shoulder. "It's fine. This is how we work things out. Go take the rest of the day off, Maven. You've earned it."

Darrio rose back to his feet, snarling like a man possessed. "Don't you dare ignore me!"

The secretary took that as her moment to beeline it out of the room. Now it was just Darrio and Appius.

Good.

That was how Darrio wanted it.

He launched himself with reckless abandon. He readied his fist back and went for a punch to the side of Appius' head.

It never made contact. Instead Darrio found himself floating in mid-air.

Appius stared at him from below, his eyes maintaining a stern gaze. "Now, I have a feeling I know what this is about, and if you give me a chance to explain..."

Darrio activated the blaster in his vambrace, hitting Appius square in the chest.

"Frack off!" Darrio was not, in fact, in the mood for his excuses. "Ellisyn did nothing, *NOTHING*, to warrant being attacked!"

Appius relinquished his hold on Darrio, the latter landing on his feet. "Darrio, if you just give me a chance too-"

"I DON'T WANT YOUR EXCUSES!"

Darrio grabbed a cylindrical object, and Appius recognised what it was. Darrio smirked. That was it, the look of fear.

Appius held out a hand.

"Use your space wizard kark, and I'll blow us both to high hell," Darrio flicked the ignition with his thumb.

Appius put his arm back down at his side. "You aren't serious..."

Darrio looked him dead in the eyes. "Try me."

Appius bit the side of his lip. "Darrio... think about what you are doing..."

Darrio laughed maniacally. "Think!? I don't need to think! What the hell made you think it was right to attack Ellisyn?"

"I-"

"Shut up! I'm not done!" Darrio took a deep breath through clenched teeth. "Why is it everytime I try to piece my life together, you always show up to make things worse?"

Appius went wide-eyed. "The hell, Darrio!?"

"I found something, someone else that makes my life tolerable. Someone that cares for Sulla and I more than anyone else ever has, including you, and you go and try to take her away from me!"

"Have you forgotten everything I have done for you!?" Appius began to approach him. "I gave you somewhere to live, a place to call your own. I gave you a job. I bent every rule to let you take custody of Sulla when everyone told me not to, and what did you do to thank me? You threw it back in my face! You got into trouble over and

over again, and nearly started an inter-clan war because you can't control yourself!"

Appius now stood in front of Darrio.

Darrio held the explosive up. "I will..."

Appius got in his face. "Then do it. I dare you."

It was damn tempting, but Darrio didn't want to do it. Not really. He hated Appius' guts mostly because in a way, he knew he was right. Darrio had baggage so deep he'd lose an arm in it.

That didn't make what Appius did to Ellisyn acceptable, but she wouldn't want him blowing himself up over this. How would Sulla grow up knowing that her adopted father blew himself up over this? What kind of message did that send?

Darrio put the explosive away. He barged past Appius and made for the exit. "I don't want you coming anywhere near me, Ellisyn, or Sulla. Do you understand?"

Appius didn't answer. Darrio took that as his moment to leave.

"I don't trust them."

Darrio stopped.

Appius rubbed under his chin with his hand and took a deep breath. "I don't trust them, the Crusaders. They appear from out of nowhere and decide to come and help us. Why? What do they want?"

"Is that what this is about!?" Darrio turned on the spot. "Appius, they are a bunch of renegades looking to do good where they can. They aren't trying to help Taldryan, they are trying to help *people*. They couldn't give less of a damn about you, Taldryan, or anyone in its ranks."

Appius folded his arms across his chest. "You're letting your feelings cloud your judgement."

Darrio scoffed. "So are you. Are you seriously telling me that attacking Ellisyn was a good idea?"

Appius opened his mouth to speak, but promptly closed it.

"See? Exactly! This is my point! What are you so scared of that made you think attacking her was a good idea?"

Appius averted his gaze. "I'm scared of losing everything again..."

Darrio felt like a speeder had hit him. He felt numb. He knew what Appius meant, and it was a pain and burden they both shared.

They were the last of Clan Klars of Mandalore.

They had to rebuild their lives after everything and everyone was taken from them.

They were both scared of losing everything again.

They were so different, and yet so similar at the same time.

It was infuriating to see it in each other, and not in themselves.

That's why the anger Darrio felt faded. How could he be angry at that?

"Appius... I get it. I really do. This was just... frack, I don't know."

Darrio took a seat across from Appius' desk. He dropped his head in his hands. "What the hell are we doing?"

"I don't know," Appius took the seat on either side of the desk. "It feels like no matter what we do, we end up hurting someone we care about."

Darrio gave a small nod. "Mhm..."

Neither said a word to the other for a few minutes.

Darrio hated the silence. "So, what do we do?"

Appius shrugged.

Darrio rolled his eyes. "Stop being difficult."

Appius chuckled to himself. "You're one to talk."

They both burst into laughter. It was contagious, infectious, and they found themselves laughing harder and harder until their ribs hurt.

Appius was the first to stop laughing. "I miss this. Laughing like this with you. I can't remember the last time we did."

"Mandalore. Before you left, I think."

"Mhm..."

Darrio stood from his seat and dusted himself down. "I better get going."

Appius nodded. "Yeah, sure."

Darrio hesitated for a moment, but then made his way to leave. The durasteel blast doors opened.

"Darrio."

He looked back at Appius.

"I'm sorry."

Darrio gave him a soft smile with heavy eyes. "I am too."

He left, and didn't look back as the durasteel blast doors closed behind him.

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