

TEXT

ADVENTURE

*'DIVORCÉE
CANYON'*

by
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1

Slowly, Piotr raised his eyebrows over the edge of the console. The disembodied face was still there, floating placidly beyond the borders of the main screen.

“Name’s Atlas,” it stated, boisterously. Piro received the impression of a hand extended in friendship. “How are you called?”

“Captain. Né Piotr. Pleased to make your acquaintance.”

“Hm. I think I’ll call you Piro.”

“That’s... not my name.” Eyelids suddenly drawn tight.

“There’s been an update. It is now.”

Piotr’s hand traveled, instinctively, to his holster. Thumbed his login. Authentication error.

“Anyway, where’s the shitter?”

Piotr relaxed his grip on the pistol. The deity had indeed proven friendly. Just wanted to unload. He updated his address book, pushed the backup to remote storage. “Computer. Guide our guest to the head.”

After flashing a loading screen for some seconds, the RAGNAROK complied with the order. In the absence of a confirming bleep, Piotr once again reclined in his seat. He stared at his leaf. Occasionally, he enjoyed a sip of his tea.

Ship’s guests.

2

As the RAGNAROK came to terms with its new course, Divorcée Canyon gradually shifted into view. A self-propelled Möbius strip modeled on the American southwest, the station’s absurdly detailed period furnishings commanded grudging respect even from those who found themselves unable to stomach its symbolic payload.

“Uncanny valley,” remarked the floating head.

“Not even wrong,” replied Piro.

Product placement confirmed docking speed at regular intervals. Government boobs. Deep throat checking. Mold removal. This last advertisement coaxed a chuckle from Atlas. “If only,” he sighed, sadly, and rested his chin on the floor.

On the ground, Piro stumbled briefly. Noticing the difference in gravity, he adjusted his Reeboks and paid closer attention to his footing.

Atlas inspected several divorcées en route to the public facilities. As he removed the panties from the final specimen, he shook his head in appreciation of local craftsmanship. “Superb elastic modulus,” he observed as he continued to work his fingers in and out of the moist folds beneath her clitoris. “Responsive, too.”

Piro hit up the vending machines. “The ship is eating,” he snapped into his commlink. “Roger that,” confirmed Atlas.

Slake Bottom was fifteen years gone and still there was nothing Piro could do to rectify the situation. Unacceptable. Inevitable. He inserted the seventy dollars change.

Returned: two Rice Krispies treats.

3

Piro worked his thumbs into the tense muscle wire that threaded through the divorcée's neck and shoulders.

"You may require maintenance," he said, flatly.

Atlas continued to jot down notes. Throwing down her cigarette, the divorcée wobbled to her feet and vacated the head.

"This place is deserted. All that's left are the women."

Piro nodded, and in response Atlas looked even more upset.

"This vacation sucks."

He kicked the trash can with his outsized chin.

4

Paper advertisements whipped through the grounds, battering store fronts and light poles, propelled by the high winds of the circulation system. Compost. Piro leaned back against a dumpster and gazed up at the stars.

"Back when I first started out, this place was always packed with children." He unzipped his backpack, rummaging through his gear for a candy bar. "Native arcade did good business."

"Never been here, myself. Of course, I've heard of the place."

"My... Slake used to bring me here, between missions."

"The guy with the donkey head?"

Piro froze. Eyes to the giant, floating face.

"How do you know of him?"

"*Everybody* knows of him. Where *I'm* from. Old family name. Some legal troubles, as I interpret the narrative."

Piro unlatched his holster.

"I think you'd better elaborate."

5

Piro killed the deity and boarded the RAGNAROK, ready to resume his mission. Left the corpse to blow in the wind.

Too many memories on the station.

As he punched in the latest rash of launch codes, he was delighted by the ship's audible response. A familiar series of confirming bleeps echoed through the corridors. Something he hadn't registered since childhood. The bridge seemed to glow even more pink than was normal during the day shift.

"Mother..." he said, smoothing his hands over the armrests of his captain's chair. He hadn't really expected an answer. He'd never even heard the sound of her voice.

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