

Newly minted Major Kharoc Garrlan, officially now a member of the Arcona Expeditionary Force, stepped into the small room in the headquarters building for the Estle City Spaceport garrison. Before he could say anything, the young lieutenant serving as the duty officer for the day jumped to his feet. "Area, atten-SHUN!" The words practically echoed through the otherwise silent and deserted headquarters.

Garrlan waved a gloved hand at the young officer. "At ease, Lieutenant, before you sprain something." He started to remove his heavy outer coat, shaking out slightly to remove the melting water droplets left by the freezing rain outside.

The lieutenant, a young man who gloried in the name of Barco Thistlaine, gaped for a moment at the surprising presence of a field-grade officer suddenly showing up in the garrison headquarters, and on this of all days. "Uh, sir, I'm afraid there's nobody here. The winter holiday... the headquarters staff is all off duty for the day and-"

Garrlan nodded. "I'm fully aware of that, Lieutenant. I'm here, however, to talk to you. Walk me through what you have going today." Staff duty officers didn't normally have onerous duties in garrison; for the most part they just manned a comlink and kept an eye on security systems and made sure nothing burned down and that soldiers being returned by the military police to their unit for whatever offense - usually variations on drunk and disorderly - got processed and punished. For the most part, though, it involved a lot of being bored, and normally got pushed off on to junior officers.

After getting a lay off the land, Garrlan nodded in satisfaction. "All right, Lieutenant, I think I have everything I'll need. You're dismissed."

Thistlaine gaped for a second. "Sir?"

Garrlan nodded. "I'm taking over your shift, Lieutenant." He pulled a datacard from a pocket and plugged it into the computer terminal. The computer considered the newly presented data storage before displaying the file it contained, namely an official memorandum for record authorizing Garrlan's action and presence. "Unless you really *wanted* to spend the holiday on staff duty..."

Thistlaine blinked and recovered. "Uh, no sir! Thank you sir!" Within seconds, the young man had vanished, his eagerness to get out of uniform and to enjoy the holiday radiating from him strongly enough for Garrlan to feel even though he couldn't use the Force.

Garrlan smiled quietly. Staff duty wasn't fun, but it needed to be done. The major felt that volunteering to take the holiday duty shift was a small enough thing to do to give some young person, someone who probably had family or at least a significant other that they would prefer to be with. Garrlan had long since known he had been too focused on his job to have much of a social life, a fact that he was... comfortable with, if not exactly content. So taking the holiday

duty wasn't a particularly significant sacrifice. A chuckle escaped Garrlan's lips as he reflected that it was also a very neat way to escape the almost inevitable awkwardness that would have come from attending the holiday party that the Arconan Consul was throwing for the Shadow Clan, with him being one of the newest members of said Clan and one of the few non-Force sensitives present.

Satisfied with the results of the day's machinations, Garrlan logged into the computer network and pulled up a couple of documents. Might as well get some of the ever-present piles of paperwork done while he was at it. He considered the data displayed before setting fingers to keyboard.