

## How Howie Does Less Tedious Work

Darcy had rarely enjoyed a good night's sleep, but he thought he had one tonight. As a temporary member of the crew of a small Vizsla-aligned frigate, the *Crow's Foot*, he (and a full barrel of fresh *vreska*) had managed to bargain his way into a private cabin for his latest trip to the Arx system. Some things were too good to be true, however, and the doors to his supposedly private cabin opened, allowing the captain to step inside and shake him until he grumpily climbed out of his bunk.

"How is everyone's *favourite* smuggler today?" the captain asked.

"What do you want?" Darcy asked gruffly as he glared at a nearby clock. The teenager wasn't in the mood for whatever the captain wanted at this hour of the morning.

"We're nearing Arx now," the captain stated. "You're lucky you're *so great* at making things happen, that Clan Vizsla thought this was the *perfect* job for you." Darcy detected a hint of sarcasm - no doubt there were some sour grapes over how watered-down the barrel that landed him this 'private' room actually was.

"All right, I'll be ready when we land," Darcy mumbled as he snatched up a datadisk containing medal recommendations. This was his mission: to deliver a datadisk to the Master at Arms. A thrilling task full of excitement, danger and... it was too early to think of other adjectives.

"Great! We'll be dumping you at Arx in an hour."

"Then how do I get back?" Darcy asked, a little offended by the captain's sudden change of tone.

"Try trading another dodgy barrel of booze," he retorted snippily as he left. Darcy rolled his eyes and started packing, adding a couple of extra souvenirs into the mix for good measure.

Darcy paced around the office of the Master at Arms. The trip here from orbit had been largely uneventful; he traded a few souvenirs for a shuttle to Elos Vrai, and the pilot - who's poor child was coincidentally in need of some spare bacta patches, aww - was kind enough to drop Darcy off at the Dark Ascent priority landing pads after a brief rummage through Darcy's pack. He'd have to find something else to trade for his way back home again, but that was easy enough. There was always someone going somewhere in this galaxy, and as long as you had the right goods and the right connections, transport was easy. But no one was going anywhere here.

Darcy sighed in boredom as he checked the time. It was already past midday; how long was this going to take? Still, the teenager liked this office. It was comfortable and well-decorated, though a little on the black and white side for his own liking. He had already spent the first hour admiring some of the ceremonial weapons that were (very securely, unfortunately) on display, and now he was skimming over a large desk in the middle of the room.

There were a surprising number of stamps lying around, but his eyes came to rest on a small bronze statuette of a weathered-looking XS-800. Darcy quietly pocketed it as the doors to an adjoining chamber opened, and in walked the Master at... no pants. Darcy raised an

eyebrow as the half-naked older man mumbled some apology without any pants and came to sit at his desk. With no pants. Had he forgotten them? Had he lost them? Was the Corellian whisky on his breath a factor? The boy was too afraid to ask, and instead pulled out the datadisk he had been entrusted with.

“Thank you for agreeing to meet me, your Excellency,” Darcy greeted the Master at Arms while awkwardly avoiding direct eye contact.

“Where is my senility?” he asked, completely ignoring the boy, who tried not to smirk at the question’s obvious implication.

“Clan Vizsla sent me with the last few month’s recommendations,” Darcy replied, trying to direct Howlader back to topic. “Apparently the online system is not being processed quickly?”

“Have you seen my senility?” Howlader asked directly.

“I - I don’t think anyone has, sir.” Howlader began sifting through papers on his desk as Darcy asked, in his most calming manner, “Do you know what it looks like?”

“An XS-800,” the irritable old man snapped back at him.

“Oh!” Darcy exclaimed. Quickly realizing his mistake, he dropped down out of view and removed the statuette from his pockets. “You mean this little statue here? I believe it must have fallen off.” Howlader breathed a sigh of relief as he snatched the artifact back.

“Now what do you want at this hour of the morning?”

*A late lunch*, Darcy thought to himself. “I was tasked with handing these recommendations to you in person.” He held up the datadisk. “I can always bring it back later, if you wanted to get dressed first.” Howlader accepted the datadisk and slipped it into his computer terminal.

“I am dressed,” the Master at Arms replied. Noting the boy’s puzzled glance, he snapped a little more irritably, “the less pants I wear, the less tedious work I am given. Now get off my lawn, kid!”

A little stunned and confused, Darcy stared at the older man for a moment too long. Howlader picked up a pair of rubber stamps menacingly and the teenager quickly ran from the room, choosing to believe his mission was accomplished. Still, what a brilliant idea - make everyone uncomfortable enough, and they’ll leave you alone. Clearly, Darcy had much to learn about avoiding work.

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