

Discussions With Lanius

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Lanius Qel-Bertuk entered the Jedi Academy on Coruscant two weeks prior to his third birthday. He was brought to Coruscant by Master Jonas Fel'Kona, already a graying Jedi who insisted on traveling the galaxy searching for new students to be brought into the Order. Master Lanius remembers very little of Master Jonas, aside from a certain kindness and respect for all living beings.

While Lanius excelled at the political maneuverings necessary on Coruscant, by his own admission he did not enjoy them and felt that they were not the best use of his abilities. Perhaps the best thing that could have happened to him was the assignment of his Master, Nerra Ziveri, to the new academy on Almas. He journeyed with Master Ziveri to the Cularin system, assisted in the construction of the new academy, and was the first student to take his trials in its newly crafted chambers.



The disappearance of Master Ziveri forced Master Lanius to take over headmaster duties at the Almas Academy. With the blessing of the Jedi Council, Master Lanius continued recruiting students as Master Jonas had recruited him, and continued building the academy. Two decades later, the Almas Academy is a source of satisfaction for the Council, a second seat of Jedi training in the galaxy under the command of one of the most competent Jedi in generations not to sit on the Council.

Master Lanius is a quiet man, very calm, very friendly, and very focused. His age is difficult to determine, though his beard and moustache are just beginning to show a hint of grey. At times, his eyes track off into the distance, and you get the feeling that he is momentarily somewhere else - and yet he is always there, always in the moment, and we were never able to catch him off-guard.

We were fortunate enough to be able to sit down with Master Lanius and ask him a few questions about recent events in the Cularin system, and what he sees in the future - his own, the Academy's, and Cularin's.



Hello, Master Lanius. I hope you're doing well.
I am, thank you.

It's a great honor to get to speak with you and ask some questions. I know you're a busy man, so I'll just go ahead and jump right in, if that's all right with you. [He nods.] There's been a lot going on in the system over the last year. Would you be interested in talking about any of it?
[Laughing] Certainly, I would. Would you be interested in clarifying what you would like me to discuss?

Of course, I'm sorry. I suppose we could start with the Cartel. What are your thoughts on them?
The Cartel is a tricky business - in multiple ways. As you know, the Jedi do not involve ourselves in local political situations.

As evidenced by the abstention of many Padawans at the celebration last year, when Governor Chistor polled the attendees?

We teach the Padawans to follow their consciences. Each must make his or her own decision. Had they decided to offer an opinion, no one would have faulted them. After all, we are not creating

automatons. We are helping mold the guardians of the galaxy, and if they believe that the best way to guard the galaxy is to remain wholly impartial, then that is their decision. If they believe that they can offer an opinion, and still uphold peace and serve justice, then that is also their decision.

So would you have offered an opinion, if you were present?

You've heard that the future is difficult to foresee? Well, the past that never was is more difficult still.

That's not much of an answer.

It's plenty of answer, actually. Reflect on it at your leisure.

[At this point, I begin to understand what it may be like to be a student at the Academy.]

Do you agree with what the Cartel has done?

That's a loaded question. Let's look at what they've done, shall we? They've increased attention to the Cularin system, increased trade, and brought more prosperity to a system that for a long time lacked any kind of prosperity. Speaking objectively, it's hard to argue with those results. However, they have come within a hair's breadth of violating their trade charter, they have certainly violated the good faith of the Tarasin by cutting the ch'hala trees, and their recent deceptions have not displayed the best of judgment. Do I agree with what they have accomplished? Trade charters are granted by the Republic to enhance trade and to develop systems that have not been fully developed. Cularin has been enhanced by the presence of the Metatheran Cartel. However, the way they have done it does not always sit well with me, on a personal level. The fact that some of their results have been desirable does not excuse the means they have used to obtain them.

So does the Academy -

The Almas Academy does not take any official position on domestic matters, nor does the Jedi Council. I'm more than happy to offer opinions, but they remain that - opinions.

Of course. Do you have an opinion on the [recent upheavals](#) in the system's underworld? Specifically, the reported infighting in Nirama's organization, and the emergence of Rufus Trammel as a fairly public rival to Nirama?

I do have an opinion. There are right and wrong times to fight, and right and wrong things for which to fight. A war within the smuggling community now does nothing but unsettle the system. It would disrupt legitimate trade, and innocent people would die. I am very pleased that large-scale battles were averted. Besides, Nirama is a known quantity. He has stabilized and organized the lawlessness that existed under Hutt rule.

So the head of the Jedi Academy supports a criminal?

No, the head of the Jedi Academy speaks in support of order, rather than chaos, and in favor of peace, rather than war. I have never offered support to Nirama or any others who operate outside the parameters of the Jedi.

What of reports that there were Padawans involved in some of the disturbances in the Asteroid Belt?

Of course there were Padawans involved. One of the things we expect of our students is that they go on quests. Sometimes these quests will lead them out of the system, but there are often plenty of difficulties to be dealt with in-system. Several Padawans who had the opportunity to investigate the disturbances in the Asteroid Belt contacted their Masters. Each was told that he or she must follow the dictates of his or her conscience. To be able to identify and resolve conflicts is one of the skills our students must develop, whatever path they take in their training. Many of them found the interactions with Nirama and his personnel distasteful. They will be fortunate Jedi indeed, if Nirama is the worst they ever have to deal with.

What of Rufus Trammel?

I know very little of the man. His acts of aggression - and the fact that he has made his home on Dorumaa - do not speak of the strongest of character. If he intends to bring war to the system, then rest assured - the Jedi will not sit idly by.

Should Trammel consider this a warning?

He has come to a system with a large number of Jedi in residence. If he needs more warning than our presence that overt aggression will not be tolerated, then he may not last long against Nirama.

I suppose a wise criminal would stay away from Cularin altogether.

The people of Cularin have never demonstrated a willingness to stand and watch while violence is done to their homeworlds. It would be an exceedingly bad idea for someone to come to Cularin with the idea of causing trouble, even if the Jedi Academy were not present.

You look thoughtful. Is there something else? Something you've . . . sensed? In a Jedi way?

I sense a great deal. [He laughs softly.] It is a complicated universe in which we live. There are always dangers. There are always threats to our well being, to our sovereignty, to our prosperity. That is why the Jedi exist, after all. To watch, and when needed, to intercede.

Master Lanius, does this have something to do with the reason the Academy was founded? That Sith fortress on the far side of Almas?

All things are connected, in the Force. There is nothing within the dark fortress that has not been there for generations. There are no new threats there. But now, I have a meeting with the faculty that I must attend. I thank you for your time. May the Force be with you.

[And with that, our interview ends.]

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