

Disapproval

By August and Cynthia Hahn

There are many stories to be told in the Cularin system, most of them featuring heroes and the brave decisions made in the growing time of crisis. Unfortunately, there are also tales of darkness and dishonor. The Jedi of Cularin have a mandate from the Force and their mentors to protect all life, but, like all mortal beings, some fall off the path of the righteous at times. When they fall too far, they become a dangerous embarrassment -- one that must be dealt with.



We'd just come down from a Militia patrol, and all any of us wanted was a quiet night at the Crosstown, downing suds and Rodian ale until we passed out. That was a laudable goal, one my flightmates and I planned since our last sweep took us past Almas and back through the asteroids.

According to the local crowd, we'd managed to avoid all the fuss that happened in the bar while we were away. The Nder's house getting demolished and Lx going off the deep end -- that sounded intense. The group of Jedi, many of them Masters, who tried to help and got essentially run out of the bar -- frell. I may not always agree with that robed lot, but I know better than to get in their faces, especially with the war going on and that hunter thing killing them all. I figure they got enough stress, you know?

Speaking of stress, no sooner do we sit down and get our drinks than Dag starts in with politics. "Could we can the serious talk for just one frakking night?" I ask him. He nods, like he's finally gotten a clue, and starts drinking. I should have known it wouldn't last.

"So, like I was saying," he starts up again after a couple of minutes, "I don't think the Separatists have the wrong idea. I mean, yeah, *Holonet News* paints them pretty dark, sure, but there isn't a shred of real proof. They just want to be free, right? Who doesn't want that? The Republic sure isn't free."

There he went, as always. After the usual rounds of talk about the Separatists and their killer droids, the Republic and their Jedi, and the fact that all we wanted was to be left alone, this guy in a flight suit turns to us and says, "Don't talk about the Jedi as if you know us. We have suffered more than anyone in this war." Then Dag comes out with one of those lines that remind us why we like having him as our wing mate.

"Right," he says to the guy's face. "Mister Flight Suit with a blaster on each hip and a belt full of grenades. Lecture us about the plight of the Jedi when you've got the guts to dress like one, mate."

So this guy's hand twitched toward his blaster, and I thought that was going to be the end of us. Thugs with laser swords aren't well known for their stability and respect for people's opinions, if you know what I mean. It probably would have been curtains for all of us -- Dag especially -- but then this robed bloke showed up at the door to the Crosstown. The pilot-Jedi just looked at him, and after a few seconds, he sort of sulked and left the bar.

The one in robes tossed a few credits on the bar to cover the Jedi's tab. A tab, I might add, that included a few seriously brain-hammering drinks. I'm sure not up on Jedi training, but I don't think they're supposed to go around sloshed. In the Militia, we have to hang up our gun belts if we want to get a good shine on, but Jedi frelling are weapons, you know? Just seems unprofessional for them to knock back the hard stuff in public.

Well, that harsh scene done, I turned back to convince Dag to let the politics go for just one night. Only he wasn't there, and neither was my flight team. They were all heading around the back of the bar. I wasn't going to drink alone, so of course I followed them out the back door. "What are we doing?" I asked real quiet like.

Dag answered me with a much louder voice. "I wanna see if that Jedi guy gets called down on account of him threatening us." No tact at all, that man.

"No way, Dag -- that's the kind of thing they only do on their private little planet." I rolled my eyes. "They're too good for us common types to stick around here."

But I was wrong. In the alley beside the cantina, the two Jedi were standing and arguing. They were behind a wall of bins and refuse dumpsters that I could've sworn weren't there when we got to the Crosstown, shielded from sight in every direction except ours. To be honest, only Master Flight Suit was arguing. The other one seemed to be real patient. He didn't raise his voice once, not even with what happened next.

"What do you know, *sir*?" the other Jedi shouted sarcastically. "Word is that all you did was cover up evidence at the manor the other night. Even Nder's widow said so! So get off your high and mighty speeder. I know all about you!"

I gotta hand it to the other Jedi; he played it real cool. If anyone had spat in my gob like that, I'd have given him an all-expense

paid trip to the Outer Rim, courtesy of my combat glove. Instead, the robed Master just said, in that same unnatural calm voice, "I am going to forgive this outburst, Knight. You are obviously inebriated and need some time to relax."

"Knight? " The drunken Jedi shook with rage, an anger so thick we could feel it all the way back where we were hiding. "I am a Master, you . . . you . . ."

The Jedi in robes shook his head. "Not when we get back to Almas. I think you need more training. I have also made the mistake of fraternizing too closely with those we are here to protect. You will understand in --"

He was interrupted when the furious Jedi scooped a lightsaber off the belt on his right leg and raised it to attack. "Not a chance. I know what you are, you bloody Si --"

Then there was a rustle of robes and a streak of purple light. It happened so fast that I don't think any of us, not even Colnor with that cybernetic eye of his, knew what had happened until we saw a flight suit sleeve cuff hit the ground, the Jedi's hand still in it. His lightsaber, which hadn't even been ignited yet, clattered down beside it.

I could swear the bins and dumpsters were shaking now. The robed Master, still in that incredibly calm voice, looked down at the wounded Jedi with no trace of mercy or regret. "Please make your choice, Padawan. You have three. Return with me to Almas, leave the Order and remain here, or lose your other hand by doing what you are thinking about." He then added, stooping to touch the guy's wrist -- I suppose to heal it -- "Please decide quickly. If you pass out from shock, I will assume you have chosen Almas."

My mates and I were stunned. We weren't sure what we were seeing. I mean, the attack surely was provoked and I would've testified to that, but -- frell! Couldn't the man have cut the kid a break and just sliced his lightsaber in half? Did it have to be his hand? As a pilot, that hits awful close to home.

Anyway, next thing we knew, the kid was walking dejectedly out of the alley toward what we assumed to be the Master's speeder. Then the Master Jedi picked up the severed hand and the dropped saber. He got to his feet and started toward the mouth of the alley himself. Then he stopped and turned back to look right at us. I mean like right into our eyes.

I've seen the business end of a bank of turbolasers, and I've never been as scared as I was when that Jedi looked at me. No, not *at* me, but *into* me. It was like he wasn't staring so much as studying our souls. I'm not much for colorful words, but if there was ever a hand of death, I could feel it closing around my heart.

He didn't come for us the way I feared he would. Instead, he just bowed his head and said softly, "Forgive the trouble. I have darkened this place too often. It will not happen again." The voice was quiet, but even with the traffic nearby, none of us had trouble hearing him. Then he was gone, his silver speeder driving past the alley and away into the evening.

After that, we all had a good long drink. And then another. And then we lost count. The next thing I remember, Dag broke the silence. Trust good old Dag, with that ridiculous hat that looked like a womp rat turned inside out, to heal from emotional trauma like a rancor from a thrown rock. "So, like I was saying, if the Separatists are as bad as you all pretend they are, I'll eat my hat and retire to Tatooine."

Just then, the Holonet on the wall beside us started showing pictures of devastation. Beneath the images was a caption that said, "Battlefield: Cerea: Separatist forces destroy military base and surrounding civilian city. Death toll estimated at more than 1,000,000."

Dag just stared at the screen. Cerea is his homeworld. He knew that place, knew that the images weren't fake.

I know I should have been sympathetic, but I was still so emotionally stunned. All I could do was slide my mug over to him and say, "So, Daggath Darklighter, you want something to wash down the fur?"

To this day, I still haven't been invited to visit his moisture farm.

Living Force Game Notes

Effective immediately, Master Lanius and his faculty at the Almas Academy have become deeply concerned with the behavior of certain Jedi in the Cularin system. As such, any Master with five or more unatoned Dark Side Points, and any Knight with three or more unatoned Dark Side Points, loses their current rank and falls back to the next highest rank. A Master becomes a Knight, and a Knight becomes a Padawan.

This has no effect on level or class features. Demoted characters do not lose any levels of Jedi Master, and they retain the bonus feat for obtaining Master. The change in rank is merely a mark of disapproval from the Almas Council. Ranks are restored as soon as a character atones for the Dark Side Points. When a demoted hero's current DSP total equals zero once again, all demotions are cancelled.

Gamemasters should make this check at the beginning of every adventure played after the web publication date of this article. Hero Jedi receive only one chance at this cycle of demotions and redemption. If a Master or Knight is reduced to Padawan, regains the rank of Knight and then is demoted a second time, the character is permanently removed from play. All status changes are noted on a player's log sheet and initialed by the GM for verification and accountability.

*If you want to learn more about the **Living Force** campaign and how to take part in the adventure, this [introduction](#) will get you started.*