

Life in the Shadows

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You've been poking around here a lot, haven't you? You strike me as the curious type. Well, I've gotta tell ya - curiosity? It can be a bit of a problem around Cularin. See, there's always someone who's looking over his shoulder, always someone who'd rather you weren't around. Been that way since I was a kid, and it hasn't much changed since.



Yeah, I remember way back when the Jedi Academy wasn't nothing but a foundation in the middle of that big field of funny grass they call "kaluthin." Moons and mynocks, my daddy remembered when there wasn't even an academy in the system, back when all there was here was Tarasin, and pirates, and the Hutt, and everyone was scared of what was coming next.

See, the thing about Cularin is, there's always been folks who would've just as soon gutted you as looked at you. Having the Jedi here, it's changed some of that, but there's always folks who just aren't going to like you. My daddy liked to say that one in every four people you meet is just gonna hate you. I say, it kind of depends on who you are, but there's definitely some folk that you're gonna get along with, and some you aren't. Way it's always been. Way it's always gonna be.

But when you start poking around in dark corners, looking at folks who don't like being looked at, that's when you start asking for trouble.

There's plenty of folks like that still in Cularin. There's Nirama and his folks, to start with. Now, don't get me wrong. I've met Nirama, and I like the - well, whatever he is. I was gonna call him a "man," but I don't know that he'd like that. Whatever he is, he's plenty powerful, and doesn't much care for folks poking around and causing trouble. If you've run into him, you know - he's all about the business. He can be polite as a Jedi at a coronation, but you cross him and you've got someone you'd really rather not be picking a fight with, and he's got the manpower to make you really, really unhappy. He's respected by almost everyone in the smuggling community. They may not all like him, but they respect him, and it's not just fear that does it.

Trammel, I don't know much about. His people talk big, and get into as many scuffles as all the other goons in the galaxy put together, I think sometimes. But for all his wind-bagging, for all his stomping and buying and threatening, he hasn't done all that much to really impress me. Strikes me as the kind who's just out to make a name for himself.



Len Markus, Nadin Paal, and Nirama

The pirates are a pretty varied lot. Some of 'em are respectable sorts, while others - well, someone's gotta supply all the spice-heads in the system, right? Take 'em off their spice and they start shaking and wailing and carrying on, and that's no good for anyone. Not that I condone folks running drugs into the system, but if it's that or a bunch of whacked-out former users running around killing themselves or other people to get something that don't even exist, well . . . you see where I'm going with that.

Then there's the freelancers. The ones who go out and do what they've gotta do, then go home at night and sleep in their own beds and feel like they're doing exactly what they are best equipped to do. These are some of the most interesting folks I ever did meet.

There's one, we'll call him Jake. Jake's been running guns and food and all sorts of stuff ever since he was old enough to pilot a ship. Started small, running blockades to make deliveries to besieged planets, bringing in food that he could unload for 20, maybe 30 times what he paid. Usually he didn't take that much for it, but thing was, he could've. Boy always did have a head for business.

This got him in more than a little trouble, since a lot of those early jobs he wasn't flying for himself. He worked with smugglers from here to the Maw, flying every kind of ship in every kind of circumstance, right up to the point where he made enough money (some of it from being paid, some of it skimming from his bosses) that he could go out and work for himself.

How he landed in Cularin, I won't ever know. It's like he just kind of figured out that there was always going to be something to do here. He's done runs for Nirama, so he's in pretty good there, and he's done runs for other folks, too. Nirama doesn't much care, as long as Jake's around when the time comes for him to make another run for Nirama's crew. Jake's a good guy, although he has this habit of hanging around Xav Verivax, and Xav's trouble on a stick.

See, I know lots of folks meet him, and they talk about how nice he is, and how charming he is. But boy, you catch Xav on the wrong day? He'll whip out a knife and have you half-dead before you know what hit you. Lot of times, I've run into Xav and he doesn't even know who I am. And I say to him, I say, "Xav, don't you remember me? Old Ezil?" And he looks at me like I'm crazy. But I tell you, I am *not* the crazy one in that conversation! Watch Xav some time. His eyes change. Sometimes you don't see it coming - most of the time, even - but you always know when he's not in his own head. Scary sight, I tell you what.

I guess there's one thing you always gotta remember about what goes on in the shadows of Cularin. If you wanna survive, you always, *always* gotta look out for yourself. You start trusting someone else to look out for you and you might as well just pack it in. I don't care if you're Nirama, or Xav, or anyone else. You run around thinking you're better than everyone else, and someone's going to come along and prove you wrong. Listen to Old Ezil. I oughta know, been here all my life. That's just what life is like, out here on the fringes.

*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.*