

Into the Woods

By Morrie Mullins

Meet Brin Hesk'l, adventurer and treasure hunter extraordinaire! He's come to Cularin for a short time to see if he can uncover the dark secrets of the system and perhaps make a little money in the process. A man's gotta eat, after all . . . Learn more in our latest supplement to the **Living Force** campaign.



Ryk Osentay sits behind the newsdesk for Cularin Central Broadcasting. He looks different than he did the last time we saw him. His head, which once sported wavy golden hair, has been shaved to a light brown fuzz, and his eyes and cheeks have an angry post-surgery puffiness. If he's at all aware of the way he looks, it doesn't show. He has the same half-awake smile he always has, and his eyes -- despite their puffiness -- shimmer with their typical lack of higher cognitive functioning.

Ryk: Hello, friends. This is Ryk Osentay, reporting for "Eye on Cularin." I'm happy to inform you that I'm recovering well from my recent bout with a nasty virus, and I'm going to be at full health again very soon.

Ryk continues speaking in voice-over as the scene shifts. His voice indicates that he is blissfully unaware that the camera isn't still on his damaged face.

The new scene shows Ryk on the streets of Tolea Biqua. He's waving his microphone in the face of a radiation-scarred Ugnaught, who seems to be growing increasingly annoyed. The Ugnaught tries to push past Ryk, and when Ryk blocks his way, the Ugnaught kicks him in the shin. When Ryk doubles over in pain, the Ugnaught clocks him in the face and drags him into a nearby alley, where he commences kicking and punching the unconscious Ryk. We see that the word "VYRUS" is stenciled on the back of the Ugnaught's jacket.

Ryk: In honor of my return, the management here at Cularin Central Broadcasting has decided to give me an assignment interviewing an individual after my own heart. Brin Hesk'l is a treasure hunter, a daring man who has explored everything from the sewers of Coruscant to abandoned Hutt strongholds to lost Sith temples.

The shot shifts back to Ryk, still seated behind the news desk. He most definitely doesn't know what the audience just saw.

Ryk: Now, Brin has come to Cularin, to search for -- well, I'm not exactly sure what it is he's come to search for. Goodness knows, there's enough in Cularin that we don't know about that he could be looking for almost anything! But I suppose that's why we paid him an exorbitant amount of credits to be here today. Friends, please welcome Brin Hesk'l.

A swarthy Human with short, straight black hair walks onto the set and takes a seat beside Ryk. He has eyes that look just a little too big, and a chin that looks a lot too big. His nose is crooked, most likely the product of a few too many cantina brawls, and when he smiles -- which he does almost immediately -- we see that every one of his teeth is a glaring, painful white.

Ryk: Hello, Brin. Welcome to Cularin.

Brin (still grinning): It's good to be here.

Ryk: From everything I've been told I've read about you, it seems as though you've led a fascinating life. How many planets would you say you've seen?

Brin: All of them!

Ryk: No. Really? You've seen every planet?

Brin (grinning more broadly; it's almost like watching a tall, dark Caarite): Not even remotely. But you asked how many planets I'd say I'd seen, not how many I've actually seen! And if someone asked me how many planets I'd seen, why, I'd say, "All of them!" Which I did. You see?

Ryk: Oh.

Brin: It's just a little lesson for all the kids out there who want to become famous treasure hunters like me. Just because you think you understand the question you're asking, that doesn't mean you'll truly comprehend the answer you're given. See what I'm saying?

Ryk: Um . . . yeah. So tell me, if you had to pick a planet out of all the ones you've been to as your favorite, which would it be and why?

Brin (grin turning thoughtful): Hmm . . . well, the easy answer is Coruscant, since there's nothing you can't get there. But let's face it, Ryk -- Coruscant's been done to death. Everybody goes there! It's much more interesting to go to planets that nobody visits, little out-of-the-way holes that pretty much get ignored by the rest of the galaxy. That's where the real treasures are. In the places that nobody looks. Of course, there's something to be said for finding treasure in plain sight. Once, while on Coruscant, I was wandering through one of the museums -- they call it the "Children's Museum," and it chronicles the impact young people have had on our galaxy -- and I just happened to spot a crack in the floor that looked a little suspicious. Well, to make a long story short, this crack was not only hand-made, but it contained the trigger mechanism to open a secret room that had been designed by the original builders over two hundred years before, where some fairly important documents were stored. Right there in a museum, where nobody would have ever thought to look for them.

Ryk: Why have you come to Cularin, Brin?

Brin: Oh, a lot of reasons. First, I heard about what happened -- the whole disappear, reappear thing -- and I figured, "There's got to be something more to this place." I started doing some research, and you know, there's a lot of strangeness that goes on here.

Ryk (touching the puffiness around his right eye): That's the truth.

Brin: I did some poking around in a few restricted archives that I'm not supposed to have access to, but hey, who are we kidding, right? Security's only as good as the people who create it, and they're only as good as the slicers who don't try to get in. So I started reading up on this darkstaff thing. A real, live Sith artifact. It's been living here for how long? And I'll tell you something -- items that powerful, they don't get found just in ones.

Ryk: Excuse me? What do you mean?

Brin: Listen to the Jedi some time. They talk about balance in the Force. Well, when you start talking about things like that darkstaff, if it does what people say it does, there has to be something to balance it out. Some sort of powerful light-side artifact that just hasn't shown up yet. So I'm going to look for that.

Ryk: Where?

Brin waggles a finger at Ryk, his grin disappearing.

Brin: That's a trade secret. But I'll tell you where I want to start -- with the folks that seemed to have the most control over Cularin for a long time. So, my first stop will be out in Thaere.

Ryk: Um . . . you know that we're kind of at war with them, right?

Brin: I heard something about that. It's politics. I have ways to work around politics. You talk to the right people, make the right offers -- everything gets smooth.

Ryk: All right, then. I guess I should wish you luck.

Brin: Nah. Luck is for people who need it. The Force is my ally! But thanks, and let your producers know that they were more than generous.

Ryk: Friends -- Brin Hesk'!l. Thank you, Brin.

Two weeks later, Hesk'!l's ship was found adrift in the comet cloud on the outskirts of Cularin. His whereabouts remain unknown.

For the GM

The information below is meant for the Gamemaster's eyes only.

Brin Hesk'!l is a treasure hunter who can easily be inserted as an NPC into a *Star Wars* campaign in any era. He tends to be brash and self-absorbed, but he's actually very good at what he does. He understands the intricacies of treasure hunting, but more than anything else, he has a deep love for history. He does what he does for two reasons. The first is adrenaline, pure and simple. There's no rush like going into a place no person should be able to enter and coming out with an object the galaxy had assumed to be lost.

The other reason, however, is much more personal to Brin. He loves knowledge. He loves learning. He wants to understand why things happened as they did, and what can be done to prevent future missteps. He is secretly working on a book he calls his *Codex*, which contains all the things he has learned about the places he's been, the objects he's gathered, and what he believes the meaning of all of this information could be.

In your campaign, the heroes might happen upon Brin just as he has uncovered a particularly desirable artifact, or after he has finally made a connection between events that someone went to a great deal of trouble to obscure. With someone who has been as many places and seen as many things as Brin has, there's no end to the ways he can help advance existing plots or introduce new ones into your campaign.

Brin may or may not be gone from **Living Force**, but even if he is, there's no reason he can't pop up elsewhere. It is, after all, a big galaxy.

Brin Hesk'l, Male Human Scoundrel 6/Scout 2/Treasure Hunter 3; Init +2 (+2 Dex); Defense 18 (+2 Dex, +6 class); Spd 10 m; VP/WP 82/13; Attack +7/+2 melee (DC 15 stun baton) or +9/+4 ranged (3d6, blaster pistol); SQ illicit barter, lucky (2/day), precise attack +1, trailblazing, archaic lore, find passage +4, sense traps +2, decipher script; SV Fort +9, Ref +14, Will +7; SZ M; FP 3; DSP 1; Rep +2; Str 10, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 16, Wis 14, Cha 10.

Equipment: blast helmet and vest, blaster pistol, spelunking gear, 3 aquata breathers, exploration pack.

Skills: Appraise +12, Balance +14, Bluff +5, Climb +9, Computer Use +8, Disable Device +14, Escape Artist +12, Forgery +11, Gather Information +6, Knowledge (alien species) +10, Knowledge (archaeology) +10, Knowledge (galactic history) +11, Listen +5, Search +20, Spot +18, Survival +18, Tumble +8; Speak/Read/Write Basic, Rodese, Ryk; Speak/Understand Shyriiwook.

Feats: Alertness, Combat Expertise, Dodge, Mobility, Skill Emphasis (search), Steady, Track, Weapon Group Proficiencies (blaster pistols, blaster rifles, simple weapons), Zero-G Training.

*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.*