

View from the Roof

By Lora Nadad (as recorded by Morrie Mullins)

*Students from the Almas Academy talk about the roof of the academy as a place to meditate and to consider the state of the galaxy, their lessons, and whatever else happens to be going on. Learn more in our latest supplement to the **Living Force** campaign.*



It's funny. I never thought I'd be the kind of person who had a lot to say. I mean, I'm no one special. That's what I grew up thinking, at least. A person with problems, drifting way too fast toward the dark side. I wanted to be a Jedi, and then I thought I didn't. Now I am, and the irony is pretty extreme. I finally get to a place where I can start finding some peace in my life, some peace with myself, and the galaxy goes crazy.

The thing we've all been taught, though, is that when things around you get crazy, you have to keep what's in your head and what's in your heart calm. The Force is always around us. It's always at peace. The times we get really upset are when we aren't looking for the Force, or when we aren't looking in the right way. It's like Minos says -- being a Jedi is about keeping peace, but to keep peace outside your mind, you have to keep peace inside your mind first. It took me a long time to figure out what that meant, and even longer to figure out how to do it.

I guess I don't even know who I'm writing this for. There's a part of me that thinks the Jedi need to record everything we can, just in case. There are fewer of us in the galaxy than in generations. What if the worst happens? What if the Republic survives the war, but all the Jedi die in the process?

It's not something I'm afraid of. Dying, that is. My life isn't all that significant, since if I die, I'll just become part of the Force, and there's nothing to fear in that. But what makes me think we ought to record everything we can is that if the Jedi are gone, who's going to teach people about the Force? People like Mother Dariana are beautiful, but if you look at the Tarasin, or other Force-using cultures, they don't usually teach anyone who's not from their culture about the Force. Which is fine, but what about a little girl who's born in the Outer Rim who can feel the Force but doesn't know what to do with it? What happens to her if there are no Jedi to help train her, to help teach her how to use the Force? I know what it's like to try to learn on your own. You get frustrated. You get angry. It's frightening to try to puzzle out this thing that makes you different from almost everyone around you. And all of those emotions are paths to the dark side.

The thing I really want to talk about is how to clear your mind -- how to let go of anger, fear, and frustration. And I've asked some of my friends here at the academy about it, too. There are lots of places in the academy where students go to clear their minds. Some of us like empty classrooms, or the area by the fountain in the main hall. Some of us like to meditate to the hissing of lightsabers in the practice hall, because if you can clear your mind with the grunting and slashing of combat all around you, you can clear your mind anywhere.

I like to go up on the roof of the academy, stare out over the kaluthin, and let everything go. What do I feel when I see the view from the roof? Here's the best I can explain it in words:

The first thing you notice up on the roof is that it's like leaving the academy behind. Everything inside is clean and shiny, all marble and polished steel. It smells like disinfectant and hard work, exactly the kind of environment you think about when you imagine a place where Jedi train Padawans.

The roof is just a roof. It's usually covered with a thin layer of sand that's been carried in on the wind, and there are vents and spinning bowls and it probably hasn't ever smelled like disinfectant. It smells like the world.

There's a low lip at the edge of the roof where the white walls rise up an extra twenty or so centimeters. so that people can't see that the roof of the Jedi Academy looks just like the roof of a bank, or the roof of a smuggler's den, or the roof of one of the Cartel's offices. Sometimes we sit on the lip, legs crossed (since it's bad form to dangle your legs down the walls of the academy), but usually we just sit beside it. Maybe we bring up a mat to sit on, but most of the time we just brush away a little sand and settle in.

What really starts to clear your mind is looking out over the lip and seeing the kaluthin. Whether or not there's any wind, the kaluthin move. They sway like they're dancing to music none of us can hear, all of them perfectly synchronized, all of them bending just so, then straightening, then bending another way. I don't think there could be a wind that moved them quite that perfectly. Sometimes it's like looking out over a glowing sea, watching waves crash silently on an invisible shore.

If there's no wind, then there isn't much else to move the kaluthin. Whether we're right or not, we decided early on that the way the plants moved was the way the Force was moving, flowing through them, bending them this way and that. So I watch the kaluthin. I watch their movements. I let myself bend to the left as they bend to the left. I let myself bend to the right as they bend to the right. I open myself to the Force, feel it the way they feel it, and let everything else go.

You watch the kaluthin. You focus on one little patch, or maybe a single stalk, and everything around that patch or stalk starts to blur. The universe drifts away. All the sounds, all the smells, all the emotion falls into the blur. You're moving with the

kaluthin, and you're moving with the Force.

Time doesn't have much meaning at that point. I've sat for hours, swaying, looking out over the kaluthin, feeling the nothing that surrounds the Force. I push against the nothing, and it moves away. When I stop pushing, it comes back, always stopping just before it gets to me. After a while, even the image of the kaluthin fades, and I see a gentle glow that bends one way, bends the other way, extends itself into the nothing, and then pulls in on itself. It's like a heartbeat, only it's the galaxy's heartbeat. While I'm sitting there, legs crossed, I can feel how much a part of it I am. I can feel how I am connected to everyone, to everything. Even to the nothing.

The hardest part is coming back. I guess that's like any trance. Sometimes I pull myself out. Sometimes I have to be shaken back, and it's like having a bucket of water slammed into my face. Not the water -- the bucket itself. The world comes into this impossibly sharp focus, and I can see every grain of sand on the roof, every crack in the lip atop the wall, every wispy cloud, and every distant arcing rooftop. I hear everything, from the whirring of the fans to the settling of the air to the distant grinding of sand over sand, and beneath it all, the hiss of the kaluthin as their stalks stretch out and touch one another.

It's a pretty amazing view. Everything up there is amazing. It's the best way I've found to leave the academy behind without leaving the academy. Not that I want to go anywhere, but sometimes you have to wonder -- am I becoming better at being a Jedi because of where I am, because of the environment I'm in? Can I still find my center when I don't have Master Lanius nearby?

There are other things we've tried. Arin likes to borrow the ch'hala cutting that Mother Dariana gave the academy for its greenhouse. She brings its pot up onto the roof with us, and we'll put it between us, or up on the lip. The cutting likes the air outside, even if it's not air that should really be able to sustain life, and if you watch, the cutting starts to sway with the kaluthin, changing colors in time to their movements.

I think that kind of sums up what it's like on the roof. And here's why it's important: Almas is not a planet that should have ever supported life. But it does. It's so far away from the suns that it shouldn't ever feel like "day" here. But it does. And the reason it works is that even though there wasn't much life here, there was the Force. What I've learned on the roof is that no matter where you go, the Force is always there. It's just a matter of learning to see it.

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*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.*