

Almas



Orbiting far from the suns of the Cularin system, the small planet of Almas would be unremarkable except for its importance in the history of the Jedi. The planet itself is an anomaly in space; a molten terrestrial world orbiting beyond the usual range for such planets. The core is hot, but the surface should be ice covered and unlivable. The planet's original atmosphere contained methane, phosphorus, and other heavy gases, all of them poisonous. That did not deter a Sith Lord named Darth Rivan from choosing the planet as his home. Darth Rivan built a fortress partly underground, and enclosed the whole in a dome.

But Rivan, like most Sith, was not content to leave nature to its own devices. He possessed some expertise in biology, and over a period lasting but a single revolution of Almas about its suns, used the Force and his knowledge to develop a new species of plant he called kaluthin. Kaluthin is a wavy, grasslike plant that is green on the edges and deeply purple in the centers of the leaves. The stalks are generally greenish, but contain also white areas that mark phosphorus deposits. Kaluthin's unique properties include the ability to synthesize methane from the air and create oxygen, and a taproot that reaches miles into the crust of the planet. He spread the kaluthin across the surface of Almas, and they slowly changed the planet. The taproots brought heat from the center of the planet, and the methane processing turned the atmosphere. As the plants processed the phosphorus in the air, the mineral accumulated in the plants' structure, and they began to glow. Before he was slain, his creations had begun to terraform the planet from an unlivable nightmare into the gardenlike world it is today.

Darth Rivan was driven from Almas by the Jedi during the Sith Wars, and his dome-like home blasted into pieces. The central fortress remained, somehow impervious to blaster fire. The Jedi, thinking that the fortress was not worth the continued effort, decided to leave it. Centuries passed, and the kaluthin continued to prosper. They spread across the whole planet, and by the time Reidi Artom came to Cularin the planet supported an oxygen atmosphere a little richer than humans considered normal. Trace elements of methane and phosphorus make the air slightly poisonous as well, but adverse health conditions don't manifest for a few months after one starts breathing the air here. Breath masks are strongly recommended. Though the planet is far from the suns, and therefore receives little light, the surface is always lit as if by the moonlight of Cularin. The kaluthin, glowing with phosphorus, are responsible for the light, and it can be a little unsettling to visitors to see the light coming from the planet rather than the sky. Materially, the planet remains nonviable. The expense of mining does not outweigh the value of the small mineral deposits in the planet's crust, and removing the kaluthin would cause the planet's atmosphere to become unstable. Thus, the planet is more like a living plant than anything else, as the roots of the kaluthin bind the soil together.

Under the kaluthin, the planet is largely spherical, with two mountain ranges each of about 200 km in length. The mountains are far from the settlements, and the kaluthin do not grow all the way to their tops. There is no surface water, but below the surface lie large underground lakes where the icy crust has melted. The kaluthin all nourish themselves from these underground lakes, and the settlers dig deep wells to mine the precious water.

From space, Almas looks like a planet of contrasting, and conflicting, environments. Over much of the surface, the kaluthin grow. Other plants have been introduced into the soil, and those that survive form a symbiotic relationship with the kaluthin. On one side, however, there is a desolate wasteland where even kaluthin cannot grow anymore. The center of this wasteland is the ancient Sith fortress. Slowly, the wasteland grows. Jedi have measured the growth rate at about a meter of increased radius per year. Within this area, the planet is cold and dead. The atmosphere is barely breathable even with breath masks. Scholars among the Jedi study the area and speculate on what is killing the planet.

Almas Moon: Dorumaa

The resort moon of Dorumaa, which orbits Almas, would be utterly uninhabitable were it not for terraforming technology. It has become one of the more popular tourist attractions in the Mid Rim, and it's certainly the most popular one in all of the Cularin system.

Dorumaa was once an inner planet in the system. When a massive impact knocked it out of its orbit, it settled into an orbit over Almas. After its traumatic exit from its orbit, Dorumaa's distance from the suns flash-froze the fresh water seas on the surface of the planet, along with everything that lived below. After it was terraformed, Dorumaa's atmosphere warmed, and the ice melted into expansive crystal-blue oceans stretching over eighty-five percent of the moon's surface. Scientists quickly sculpted the other fifteen percent of the surface into tropical islands, and construction began on the resorts.

The Dorumaa Investment Group assumed anything that might have lived on Dorumaa was long-dead. Unfortunately, it was wrong. Any creature that had been living during explosion died when the seas flash-froze. However, many of the life forms had laid eggs in the sea floor. As the seas thawed and grew warmer, the eggs came back to life. The indigenous creatures of Dorumaa were reborn. While the investors have turned this into a marketing tool, even the senior investors sometimes worry about what may lie beneath the waves.

Meet crimelord [Rufus Trammel](#) of Dorumaa