

A Cularin Presence

(Episode I of the Eye of the Sun Trilogy)

A One-Round Living Force Adventure

by Morrie Mullins

The Metatheran Cartel has maintained a presence in the Cularin system for years, but recently their presence has become much more... defined. Shipments have gone missing from several non-Cartel trading houses, and rumors point to some sort of conspiracy that threatens the well-being of the system and all her inhabitants. Are the citizens of Cularin ready to become the heroes they must be, to survive? An adventure for beginning Living Force PCs.

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This is a RPGA Network adventure game. A four-hour time block has been allocated for playing the game (or this round of the game), but the actual playing time will be about three hours.

It is a good idea to ask each player to put a name tag in front of him or her. The tag should have the player's name at the bottom, and the character's name, species, and gender at the top. This makes it easier for the players to keep track of who is playing which character.

Scoring the game for RPGA points: The RPGA has three ways to score this game. Consult your convention coordinator to determine which method to use:

1. *No-vote scoring:* The players write their names and numbers on the scoring packet grid, you fill in the top of the grid. That is all. No one is rated. This method is used for people who are just playing for fun.
2. *Partial scoring:* The players rate the game master and the scenario on their player voting sheet, and provide personal information, but don't vote for other players. The game master rates the scenario and completes personal and event information, but does not rate the players as a team or vote for players. This method is used when there is no competition, but the convention coordinator wants information as to how the game masters are performing, or the game master wants feedback on his or her own performance.
3. *Voting:* Players and game masters complete the entire packet, including voting for best player. If this method is used, be sure to allow about 15-20 minutes for the players to briefly describe their characters to the other players, and about 5-10 minutes for voting. This method is used when the players want to know who played the best amongst them, or when the adventure is run in tournament format with winners and prizes. Multi-round adventures usually required advancing a smaller number of players than played the first round, so voting is required for multi-round adventures.

When using Voting, rank the players in order of your voting choice while they are completing their forms, so that you are not influenced by their comments on your abilities.

The players are free to use the game rules to learn about equipment and weapons their characters are carrying.

Some of the text in this scenario is written so that you may present it as written to the players, while other text is for your eyes only. Text for the players will be in ***bold italics***. It is strongly recommended that you paraphrase the player text, instead of reading it aloud, as some of the text is general and must be adapted to the specific situation or to actions of the player characters.

This is an adventure for low-level Living Force characters, and therefore characters levels 1 through 4 are appropriate. If a player brings a higher-level character to your table, explain that he must use a lower-level hero to play in this event. If your players do not have heroes, help them create new ones (see your event coordinator for hero creation instructions).

GM Overview

In the midst of the upheaval surrounding the arrival of the Metatheran Cartel's representatives on Cularin, supplies begin to go missing. The PCs are gathered in a cantina in the aftermath of the Cartel's announcement when a young Human rushes in, chased by several men in official-looking garb. The man shouts that the planet is in danger, that the system is being threatened, then he is taken by the others and placed "under arrest" for treason. He shouts for anyone who values their way of life to go and talk to the local government, to warn them of the threat. Cularin has always been such a peaceful place, but things seem to be changing in a system that has always prided itself on constancy. It is time for the PCs to move beyond their mundane lives, and become the heroes they must be, if the system is to survive.

Encounter 1: A New Threat

The PCs, after having the celebration of the colonization of Cularin interrupted by the holo-message from the Metatheran Cartel representative, find themselves gathered in a cantina where the music is unusually muted. While there, a young man bursts in, clearly fleeing someone. He begins to shout warnings about danger to Cularin when several individuals wearing the uniforms of a private security force for a local trading concern rush in, blasters drawn, and take the man away.

Encounter 2: The Hunt

Several options are available to the party at this point. Reasonable approaches include visiting the trading house (House Hirskaala), visiting the local constabulary, and approaching the local Cartel representative directly. The evidence they are able to collect is enough for them to learn that the man they saw was not taken by the Hirskaalan security force, or that if he was, he is not currently being held in any of their facilities or those of local law enforcement. The local Cartel representative is unavailable to speak with them, as he has been "called away" for the remainder of the day. Further asking around at any place other than those three locales will allow the PCs to hear rumors of missing ships and several stories of ships apparently coming in to land and then veering off to disappear over the Cularin jungles.

Encounter 3: In Broad Daylight

Claxons sound as one of the other trading concerns, Renna's Transport Service, has one of its shipments hijacked from the landing pad with several guards nearby. The shipment contained speeder parts as well as a newly developed Sullustan intoxicant, Meir wine. Renna, a thin female Rodian, is extremely upset with her guards, justifiably embarrassed at their incompetence. Out of frustration, and because the PCs seemed to respond more quickly than her own folk, she consents to answering questions about what has been going on with her business of late, and how this is not the first time she has lost a shipment. First Run Only: She will offer any PC she deems worthy employ with her guards.

Encounter 4: Beggars and Choosers

This encounter may be run as part of encounter two, if the PCs elect to look for a beggar who might have seen something. If not, when they leave Renna's they are accosted by an elderly Human wearing a long brown cloak with a hood. This is Borus Ferthyn, and he is quite mad, but he has become such a fixture in the city that most folk ignore him. This makes him an ideal source of information, since Borus hears a great deal. Unfortunately, only half of what he speaks is accurate, since in his madness he has become incapable of distinguishing truth from falsehood and thus believes everything he hears. The PCs are left to decide which pieces of information he gives them should be treated as fact and which they should assume to be fictions Borus has perpetuated, but enough of what Borus tells them coincides with what they already know to push them to investigate the jungles outside the city.

Encounter 5: Into the Woods

The PCs will need to head into the jungle. Any NPC they have previously consulted will, if asked what should be done next, agree that this seems a logical step, and any trading house will offer payment (if none has yet been negotiated by the PCs) for investigating this possibility. The PCs will be provided with two-person speeders that are maneuverable enough to make it through the jungle foliage. As they leave the city, they will be involved in a short chase, which culminates in their would-be killer crashing into a tree. When they stop to investigate the crash site, some of the local creatures decide to investigate, and attack the PCs.

Encounter 6: The Cartel, Back to Nature

Following the basic directions provided by their informant, the PCs eventually find a duracrete bunker built into the side of a hill. This is the actual base of operations for the Metatheran Cartel. The PCs will be

detected and met with no hostility whatsoever. The Cartel has simply been waiting until the right time to reveal their central location on the planet, and thought that so soon after the announcement might not be the best moment. The representative is very helpful, even to the point of telling the PCs of other ships he's seen over the jungle, some of them matching the markings of missing ships. He also tells them that his men have reported the construction of a landing pad another two clicks into the jungle.

Encounter 7: Piracy?

The landing pad is where the Cartel representative said it should be. Upon sneaking close enough, PCs should discover evidence of very recent traffic, including the ship stolen from Renna just hours before in the process of being stripped and moved into a cave. The PCs may engage in a minor skirmish, at the end of which Cartel troops arrive, or they may return to the city and report in.

Important Note to Judges: This event is relatively dense, information-wise, and is designed to give players a chance to get used to the main world in the Cularin system. There are opportunities for a lot of different things to happen, but I cannot foresee every possibility. One thing I would encourage you, the gamemaster, to do is to allow the players to try out their PCs' various skills and feats whenever possible, to get a feel for how things work in the Star Wars system. On occasion, this may require a little improvisation on your part, but that's why I've provided key ideas for the encounters. As long as you hit those key ideas, things should progress relatively normally and consistently across tables. In other words... let the players PLAY, explore, and learn about what's going on. This is not a slugfest, it's a familiarization event, so as long as they get to the end of the scenario in 4 hours and have some fun, you've done your job.

(Extended) Opening Crawl

Today was to be a great day of celebration in remembrance of Reidi Artom's first successful colonization, exactly 200 years ago. Individuals of all species turned out to share in the glorious role Cularin has begun to play in the galaxy, to celebrate how far the planet's lush natural resources have brought the system in a mere two centuries.

The streets were flooded with revelers, all flocking to the square at the center of town, shouting, dancing, laughing – and then, it appeared. A smiling visage, hanging above the central square of Gadrin, rotating slowly in the late-morning sky. The porcine face of

Velin Wir, Metatheran Cartel representative to Cularin. Without introduction, he spoke.

“Good people, to enhance your celebration I bring grand tidings.” The crowd grew silent. What little Cartel presence you’d had, often seemed too much. Velin Wir’s face was known to all, and trusted by almost none. Something about the too-broad smile, combined with the too-narrow eyes. “The Metatheran Cartel has decided that the Cularin system is worthy of heavier investment. In addition to our small office, we intend to provide you with a full-fledged Cartel trading and distribution center, to truly help make Cularin an integral part of the galaxy at large.” And with another too-broad smile, the holoprojection flickered, and faded.

The celebration continued, but more subdued. Some revelers, already well past inebriation, continued as loudly as before, but many found Velin Wir’s message disturbing. Small groups began to break off from the main body of the party, concerned persons looking for somewhere at least marginally more quiet...

Encounter 1: A New Threat

Key ideas of this encounter: provide the heroes with a first glimpse of trouble; show that private security forces have power; create some level of paranoia regarding the cartel; initial presentation of threat to the system

To set the stage, the heroes were all taking part in the celebration on Cularin for one reason or another. This was to be the day when everyone came together, folks from all walks of life, and paid homage to all the work that has gone into making Cularin into one of the most stable systems in the Mid-Rim. It was to be the party of the decade, until the Cartel representative’s transmission. Now, a lot of folk – potentially including the heroes – are too worried to celebrate.

On most days, Vanster Enan’s Sop House is one of the liveliest, loudest cantinas in Gadrin, if not on all of Cularin. It’s just a block from the river, on the route supply wagons have to take to haul the raw supplies from the river to the docking bays, so you get all kinds in here. Ithorians, rodians, wookiees – always Humans, of course – and then things that most folk never take the time to identify. Enan’s is known for raucous music and huge tumblers of imported beverages, but today the music is strangely subdued, and most of the drinking is being done by individuals who seem to have a lot on their mind.

You wandered into the cantina looking for somewhere away from the crowds and now, standing in the doorway glancing around, it looks like you’ve found it. As have several others.

At this point, give the players a chance to describe their characters and introduce themselves to one another. Once that is done, they are free to interact with the other individuals in the cantina – some of whom will be more receptive to conversation than others.

They see:

- An Ithorian bartender scrubbing glasses.
- A pair of Rodians playing sabacc at a corner table.
- Three Humans – two females and a male – talking at a table in the center of the room.
- A Wookiee and a Trandoshan arm-wrestling while a small man in a gray cloak watches intently.
- What appears to be an entire crew of a Sullustan vessel lining the bar.
- A musical group – if it can be called that – made up of Tarasin, the species native to Cularin.

There is one large empty table off to one side of the room where the heroes could all sit. The rest of the tables and booths are occupied, mainly by the crew from Sullust.

This is the first opportunity many players will have for their PCs to interact with others in the Star Wars universe. They can pick any, or none of these individuals to interact with – though Enan, the barkeep, will eventually make sure they order something if they’re going to take up table space. At most, give them TWO of the other groups to interact with, since if they do everything, the slot may end before you finish encounter 1! Short descriptions are provided below of what kinds of interactions the PCs can have with the different members of the clientele, all of whom speak Basic (except for the Wookiee of course, who understands Basic but lacks the capacity to speak it), but will be pleased if anyone speaks to them in their native tongue instead.

The Barkeep

Vanster Enan is proud of his cantina, if somewhat disappointed that the announcement by the Cartel has dampened people’s spirits. *Folk drink more when they’re happy than when they’re worried. Tip better, too.* He has a broad selection of drinks from across the galaxy, most a little pricey because of the effort it takes to import things to Cularin. He wishes there was a way to safely use hyperdrives within the system, because it

costs an inordinate amount to run sublight engines from the edge of the system all the way to Cularin.

[Note to GMs: This is just how things have always been in Cularin, no one is quite sure why, though science-minded heroes may have heard rumors that there's some instability in the region, probably caused by the two huge suns.]

And the cost for running the sublight engines goes straight to him, and to the consumer. The cheapest imported drink is 3 credits, and they go up as things get more exotic. If asked, he will recommend the house special, a "fine Ithorian brandy" that he can let them have for only 2 credits for a huge snifter. This is a slight misnomer, since the brandy is really only "Ithorian" because he made it himself, from the fermented sap of trees found in the jungles of Cularin. DC 15 *knowledge: Cularin, knowledge: botany*, or *wilderness lore* can determine this. But it's fairly tasty regardless, with a mild pine aftertaste. A cask of the brandy (5 liters) can be purchased for 20 credits.

The Rodians

These guys are playing an intense one-on-one match, and don't want to be disturbed. Any hero familiar with the game will quickly realize that (1) both players are cheating, and (2) both are cheating badly. If they weren't playing each other, they would lose even with cheating. The Rodians will not be overtly hostile to the heroes, but they really don't have anything to say. They don't think much about the Cartel's announcement, since they've seen the same thing in other systems and figured it was only a matter of time here.

The Humans

The two women actually planned on finding men to have fun with at the party, but so far only dug up this one guy, a greasy man with a thin mustache. The women are fairly attractive, dressed in tight flight-suits (Charisma of 14 each). Their names are Amaya and Suki, and while Amaya has already settled for the greaseball (Kip), Suki is looking for a date for the evening. She will immediately gravitate toward any male scoundrel hero who approaches her, or if she approached by someone else who she's seen with an obvious scoundrel, she'll ask for an introduction. She's into "bad boys." They want to find a way to make the celebration back into a party – but later. After some flirting, they'll happily give any interested heroes information on how to get in touch with them later in the evening. (Translation: Playtests indicated that if you let the heroes wander off with the girls now, you'll never get to the scenario!)

The Arm-Wrestlers

The Wookiee (Varoca) and the Trandoshan (Oosk) have been arm-wrestling most of the afternoon, each

winning about 50%. The small Human's name is Nance, and he is taking bets on the outcome of the next match. He won't accept any bets larger than 10 credits, but is giving 3:1 odds against the Trandoshan. If the heroes are interested in gambling a bit, that's fine, they can get in on the betting for a maximum of two rounds. The odds don't change after the first round, no matter who wins. Adjudicate this in front of the heroes using opposed strength checks, giving Varoca a 21 strength and Oosk a 17. Winner is the first one to get two out of three pins. Heroes are welcome to try this, and the odds on any hero against Varoca will be 5:1 in favor of Varoca or 3:1 in favor of Oosk. If a hero beats either of these individuals, Nance will decide this is a bad bet, cut his losses, and leave. Neither Varoca nor Oosk has a stake of their own, though they will continue to wrestle anyone who wants to. They've both been drinking heavily, and had been looking forward to the celebration. Neither of them is a mean drunk, though.

Remember that Wookiees and Trandoshans do not get along.

The Sullustans

The Sullustans are the crew of a supply ship that docked yesterday to offload electronic components. Lots and lots of components. Pretty pricey stuff, too, from what some of them saw on the invoices. They will start spouting off part numbers if anyone asks. YS-4279, YM-3382, YC-1100. Heroes with *Knowledge* skills relevant to computers or *computer use*, can make a roll with DC 13 to recognize the part numbers as very expensive components which typically get used in high-end computer security systems. And there's really not any place on Cularin that has *that* kind of security, but all of the parts were offloaded yesterday onto a pair of unmarked landspeeders. The records of the transaction have already been sent back to the shipping company's base of operations on Sullust, so there isn't a way to figure out who got the parts, although the crew can describe the crates in detail—Large silver crates with bright red lettering, written in Basic and Sullustan. They will quickly get tired of talking about the shipment, and want to find out when the party is really going to start. This was supposed to be a primo assignment because of the celebration, and so far it's seemed pretty tame.

The Band

If the heroes wait a few minutes, the band takes a break and the musicians are willing to talk to them. All of them are various shades of red, due to the excitement and exertion of performing, and are feeling good about their efforts. They are not the most talented musicians most of the heroes have heard, even for bar bands (they collectively have the *Entertain* skill at +12 for their various instruments, and were attempting songs with

DC of 28 or so – feel free to see how close they actually came to doing a good job, since it is possible for them to do well), but they’re probably not the worst, either. A lot of their music sounds much better to native ears (treat the DC to entertain other Tarasin as 18). They are, frankly, just happy to be working, and from their vantage point on the stage, any celebration is a good celebration. They’ve actually been playing all day, so they don’t know about the Cartel’s announcement.

Once the heroes have had a chance to interact with AT MOST two groups in addition to the barkeep, read the following:

You’ve been busy getting a feel for the establishment and for the individuals who you’ve found yourself seated with for a while now, trying to guess just how much the ill-timed announcement is going to affect the celebration. From the sounds of things, though, life is picking up in the streets, as you hear shouting and whistles and laughter.

The sounds get louder as the door slides open and a young man rushes into the room. He has dirty blonde hair and his clothes are a patchwork mess, and he stops just inside the doorway, eyes darting back and forth as he scans the bar.

“Cularin is in danger!” He’s wheezing, but the words still come out clearly. “We have to do something!” And the door, which has just begun to slide shut behind him, slides open again and several individuals dressed in security uniforms rush in and grab the young man by the wrists.

The security uniforms are from one of the local trading houses, House Hirskaala. They are completely legitimate uniforms, because they were stolen from the company that does laundry for Hirskaala this morning (and as such, have not been reported missing yet). The “guards” are actually agents of the pirates in Encounter 7, but know enough details about House Hirskaala to pass. It is also very much the case that in Gadrin, private security forces bear equal weight with local law enforcement, and in fact more weight when matters of industrial security are involved. The heroes are welcome to attempt to convince the guards not to take the young man (his name is Darin) in, but will not succeed. These men are much more afraid of what happens if they fail than they are of anything a bunch of guys in a bar can do to them. They will tell the party that they’re welcome to stop by and talk to the head of security for House Hirskaala, Nim’Ri, to verify their claim, and will produce a document signed by Nim’Ri authorizing the arrest of anyone accused of industrial espionage (this is a form letter Nim’Ri provides all his guards, and is legitimate, albeit stolen). There are enough guards (15) that they will be able to get the

young man out the door and away in a speeder before the party can stop them. If the party insists the remaining guards accompany them to House Hirskaala, the guards will refuse, stating that they have other duties to which they must attend. They will give the heroes the letter from Nim’Ri to take in and verify, but they cannot themselves go with the heroes.

If the heroes simply let the abduction happen, in a few minutes have a representative of House Hirskaala stop in, looking for the young man. Make it clear that whatever the heroes were told, no one from Hirskaala authorized that arrest, and ask them to come back to House Hirskaala to provide a statement on what happened to the young employee.

Encounter 2: The Hunt

Key ideas of this encounter: exploring Gadrin; visiting House Hirskaala, the small cartel headquarters, and the peace and security offices; learning about other missing ships that have veered off and disappeared over the jungle

Try to encourage the heroes to go to the most useful locations first. Again, with lots of options, this **could** run long. The fact that I’ve included lots of contingencies doesn’t mean you should encourage, or even mention them all, to players. But if they want to go to some of the oddball places, you’ve got some basic information on what’s there.

The celebration remains muted as you leave the Sop House and make your way through the streets. There are still a great many people standing outside, most of them waiting expectantly for something – anything – to happen. Most of them hold quiet conversations and sip drinks from tall glasses that would have seemed much more appropriate if the city had not turned so decidedly un-festive...

The heroes now have some choices before them. The obvious choice is House Hirskaala, although the Office of Peace and Security is a reasonable approach, as is a visit to the Metatheran Cartel headquarters here in the city. Basic information is provided for each of these contingencies below.

House Hirskaala

The offices of House Hirskaala are located several blocks from the Sop House, near the center of Gadrin within sight of the monument to Reidi Artom. Hirskaala is one of numerous trading concerns that have established themselves on Cularin in the last year or two, and the numbers seem to be growing exponentially. It was inevitable that the Cartel, who had

always maintained a presence here, would catch on eventually, but you had to hope it would take a little longer than it apparently did.

A thick metal wall surrounds the House Hirskaala compound, and two Human guards stand beside the enormous set of double-blast doors that serve as a gate. They wear insignias identical to those worn by the guards who took the young man from the Sop House.

The guards are gruff, but reasonable. Once the heroes mention an encounter with a roving guard patrol from the house – or better, show the paper the guards were carrying with them – they will be hustled inside and directly to the offices of Nim’Ri.

The door slides open and a yellow-skinned, reptilian individual stands to greet you. His eyes flick back and forth from one of you to the next as you enter the room. With a flick of his wrist, the Trandoshan dismisses his guards.

“Please, sit. I understand we have business to discuss.”

This is Nim’Ri, head of security for House Hirskaala.

Nim’Ri, Male Trandoshan Scoundrel 4/Soldier 2; IM +6; Def 21; Spd 10 m; VP/WP 44/14; Atk +8 melee (2d6+3, vibroblade), +7 ranged (3d6, blaster pistol); SQ Illicit Barter, Better Lucky Than Good, Darkvision; SV Fort +6, Ref +6, Will +1; SZ M; FP 0; Rep 3; Str 16, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 14, Wis 10, Cha 13.

Skills: Profession (Security Specialist) +9, Gather Information +7, Knowledge (Streetwise) +9, Knowledge (Caarite Tactics) +13, Knowledge (Cularin System Politics) +11, Spot +5, Disable Device +6, Bluff +7, Demolitions +6, Pilot +6, Computer Use +8, Survival +4, Jump +7, Languages (Dosh, Basic, Wookiee).

Feats: Weapons (simple, blaster pistol, blaster rifle, heavy weapons, vibroweapons), Armor (light, medium), Skill Emphasis (Caarite Tactics), Point Blank Shot, Improved Initiative, Rapid Shot, Blind-fight.

Nim’Ri has been long enough away from his home world and the influence of his peers that he really doesn’t care much about Wookiees any more, and certainly doesn’t want to antagonize anyone. There are no Wookiee pelts or anything overtly offensive in his office, which is sparse and businesslike – much like Nim’Ri himself.

Nim’Ri can give the heroes the following information.

- One of our employees did express concerns about competition from the Cartel.
- His description matches what you have told me of the young man you saw taken.

- Those were not my men. We had uniforms stolen from our laundry service this morning.
- Darin – the young man you apparently saw – claimed to have information that would “sink” the Cartel.
- He believed the Cartel had more than business in mind. But he never said what, that I know of.
- Other trading houses have had trouble as well. Less than an hour ago, I received word that an entire cargo-hold’s worth of materials was appropriated by individuals wearing stolen uniforms. Yes, from the same laundry service.
- Darin was a good employee, and represented no threat to our organization. I hope you find him.
- You may tour the facilities, if you wish. We have nothing to hide.

All of this information is true. Nim’Ri works hard to protect House Hirskaala, and assists in the running of a very tight organization. Nothing untoward goes on here, and Darin is not on the premises. Other individuals may be interviewed here, and will independently verify anything Nim’Ri says for the heroes.

Peace and Security

The central location for the Office of Peace and Security is well lit and clean, with neatly uniformed individuals of every species represented in the Cularin population – including Tarasin – seated behind desks in a large main room. The heroes will be greeted by a male Rodian wearing the pressed whites of OPS, who can answer basic questions but will direct the heroes to his lieutenant, Henk Lorin, for more complex matters. Lorin is a female Cerean with a very serious demeanor, who knows relatively little about potential problems with the Cartel. She is not happy about their increased presence, but has reviewed their security forces and is satisfied that they are as competent as most of the private security in Gadrin. No complaints were filed about the incident in the Sop House, although she will allow the heroes to file one. She is aware of the laundry thefts, and has people working on the matter. The uniforms used yesterday have already been recovered from a trash pile on the outskirts of town, near the edge of the jungle, and she expects the ones stolen from House Hirskaala will turn up as well.

The Metatheran Cartel Operations Office

Velin Wir is not available, having asked that the transmission to the planet be beamed from one of the Cartel’s ships that are in orbit above Cularin awaiting transport materials. No one knows where he is, and his secretary – a rather gaunt Caarite named Lori – is used to him disappearing and not telling her of his destination. She naturally will deny anything other than

business concerns on behalf of the Cartel, and will spout the party line: ***“We are in this to make credits without hurting anyone. Everything we do is completely legal, and in the best interests of both the Cartel and the communities we serve.”***

This is, in other words, a dead end.

The Laundry Service

The two old Sullustans who run the laundry service are very embarrassed that their shop was broken into twice in as many days, but have no useful information whatsoever. No clues can be gained by searching here, although the proprietors can tell them that another set of uniforms was stolen this morning along with the Hirskaalan uniforms, from Renna’s Transport Service. This is not information that can be gained from Peace and Security, since no one there is likely to want to disclose the full extent of the theft beyond what the heroes already know. The heroes are not members of OPS, after all.

The Docking Bay With the Sullustan Ship

No one saw anything out of the ordinary, although careful questioning will reveal that at least one of the men who picked up the parts from the ship yesterday matched the description of one of the men who collected Darin this morning. No other useful information can be gained here.

The Garbage Pile Outside the City

Going there now will allow the heroes to locate (with successful DC 15 spot checks) the discarded Hirskaalan uniforms. Going there after encounter 3 allows them to also find the discarded Renna’s Transport Service uniforms. They have been sterilized, so no trace of the individuals who wore them remains.

If the Heroes Look for a Beggar Who Might Have Seen Something

If at any point the heroes state that they are looking for a beggar around any of the places they visit in this encounter, proceed to Encounter 4. Then go back to Encounter 3 after that is done.

Encounter 3: In Broad Daylight

Key idea of this encounter: another shipment is stolen, this one right off the landing pad; the heroes may investigate and capture one of the thieves, which gains them audience with the owner of the company, more information, and an offer of employment

If the heroes are dragging their feet doing the investigation in Encounter 2, this encounter and the one that follows are a kick in the pants, so to speak. You may either use these encounters to jump-start a stalled investigation, or may run them once all the useful information in the previous encounter has already been gained. Use your discretion when that point has been reached.

Oh, and because of the centralization of activity in Gadrin, Renna’s Transport House is no more than two blocks from any of the locations noted in Encounter 2, with the exception of the garbage pile, so it may behoove you to run this encounter on the way to the garbage pile, if they’re going to be out of things to do afterward.

You’re just finishing with [whatever they’re finishing with when you decide to run this] when, from a couple of streets over, claxons begin to roar!

Claxons are alarms, of course, and these sound like air horns being blasted (think around 110 decibels, the same basic sound level as power tools being used in closed quarters, or many factory floors). Yes, this may hurt a little (no real damage, though), because the claxons really ARE roaring.

Go on the assumption that an alarm sounding off is going to attract the heroes’ attention. The heroes could, however, run the other direction entirely. If so, they may just miss this encounter. But assuming they move toward the alarm (it’s not in an area they’ve already been to, so it’s certainly nothing THEY did), read the following.

The noise of the claxons is nearly deafening as you hurry toward the source. You come around the corner and see the walls of another trading house. One of the walls appears to have been blasted through, leaving jagged, smoking edges. As you watch, a man in a soiled uniform stumbles through, throws his blaster to the ground, and begins to run toward you while looking back over his shoulder. Several other individuals in similar uniforms burst through the opening in the wall, but seem disoriented by the smoke and noise!

Okay, so all the *real* guards managed to fail their DC 10 Spot check to notice the guy running away. That’s okay, because the heroes don’t have to roll, since this guy is going to barrel into them if they don’t move! If the heroes want to tackle or otherwise subdue him, he is a first level scoundrel (Defense of 14 (+4 from class, no Dex bonus because he’s not looking where he’s going), V/W 6/10). His name is Lars, and he won’t fight back once subdued. This can be run as a minor skirmish, if

the players seem to be itching for a fight. Some people like that dice-rolling thing.

The guards, in the meanwhile, heard something and took off in the opposite direction, so it's up to the heroes to take the Lars back into the compound. Let them catch him, as long as they come up with a reasonable plan of attack.

Leading the still-struggling man back through the smoking hole in the wall, everything seems a madhouse. People are rushing everywhere, and in the center of it all stands a relatively tall Rodian, waving her hands and barking orders. Her eyes pass over you, then her head jerks back and she stares, her lips pursing thoughtfully. A man wearing the uniform of the house guard rushes up to her and she shakes her head, shoving him back as she begins to deliberately walk toward you.

"And who are you?"

This is Renna, owner of Renna's Transport Service.

Renna, Female Rodian Fringer 5/Noble 2; IM +3; Def 22; Spd 10 m; VP/WP 52/14; Atk +7 melee (2d4, vibrodagger), +7 ranged (3d6, blaster pistol); SQ Inspire Confidence +1, Call in Favor; SV Fort +6, Ref +8, Will +4; SZ M; FP 5; Rep 5; Str 10, Dex 16, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 14.

Skills: Search +9, Listen +9, Spot +12, Survival +11, Profession (Mercantile Transport) +9, Repair +8, Pilot +7, Knowledge (Galactic Trade Policies) +10, Diplomacy +10, Sense Motive +8, Languages S/R/W Basic, Rodese, Caarite.

Feats: Weapon Group Proficiencies (blaster pistols, simple weapons, vibroweapons), Track, Alertness, Sharp-eyed, Weapon Finesse (vibrodagger).

The heroes can introduce themselves and hand over Lars to Renna. She immediately recognized him as one of the men who just hijacked a full ship off her landing pad, which is why she approached the heroes. She will introduce herself formally once the heroes have done the same, and will wave some of her guards over to take the man into custody. Yes, she does have first claim on the man, since he was caught stealing from her, and private security concerns do supersede OPS in cases like this. He will eventually be turned over to OPS, but only after Renna's security team (such as they are) have had a chance to make sure he can't provide more definite information. Private security in Gadrin (and Hedrett as well) has the right to non-lethally interrogate any prisoner who is caught committing a crime against them, but must remand the prisoner to OPS for punishment.

Renna looks at the gap in her wall and shakes her head. "I suppose you've done me quite a service. Is there anything I can do for you?"

She's willing to give them information, if they ask, and will invite them inside to speak in a less chaotic setting. This will also (FIRST RUN ONLY, AT WINTER FANTASY 2001) give Renna the opportunity to offer the heroes jobs on her security team, since they seem more competent than her current team.

Things Renna can tell them (and she will insist on going inside if they want information, she doesn't want to talk in front of her employees):

- A shuttle was hijacked from the landing pad. That's why the claxons went off.
- It was carrying Meir wine – a new intoxicant I just started importing from Sullust – and speeder parts.
- No, this is not the only shipment I've had stolen, but it's the most brazen theft.
- The one that really upset me was the shipment with all the datapads and multichannel comlinks.
- I'm not pleased with the guards I had on duty. AFTER FIRST RUN ONLY: I hired some more competent folk recently, but they weren't on duty. Not enough good workers to go around.
- This is the first individual we've captured. We'll see what he knows, then turn him over to OPS.
- The shuttle headed off over the jungle, to the west of Gadrin. It had just refueled, though, so it could have ended up anywhere.

FOR THE FIRST RUN ONLY, WINTER FANTASY 2001

If, in your judgment, the heroes have performed in a professional manner and have impressed Renna, read the following:

Renna looks you over appreciatively. "You've done quite a service for me. As since it seems that you're better equipped to deal with the problems I'm facing than the individuals I currently have working for me, would you be interested in a job? Set your hours as you like, but I believe you'd be a valuable addition to my security team."

The heroes are not obligated to take the job, but anyone who is interested may do so. The pay is 1000 credits/week, and other benefits include +2 reputation as long as they're employed with her and living quarters and food on the premises. It is important that you note which heroes accept this position on the event summary at the end of the round.

For purposes of decision-making, on whether to accept the job, it is well-known that Renna is one of the

most competent import/export traders in the system, but she's had trouble with her staff, and has definitely been looking to upgrade her personnel. There would certainly still be time for adventuring; Renna is not at all difficult to work with, schedule-wise.

Lars is not going to be harmed here. He'll just be asked to convey any information he has, with the promise that the more he shares, the more lenient Renna will ask OPS to be with him. She's a good individual, who sincerely wants the best for her company, and will not harm a prisoner. She will wish the heroes luck, and offer her assistance if they should need anything while they're trying to figure out what's going on – particularly if they are following leads that might get her missing goods back.

Encounter 4: Beggars and Choosers

Key ideas of this encounter: if necessary, give the heroes the final clues that will push them to go investigate the jungles outside the city; introduce Borus; provide rumors which may or may not be revisited in future events

Note that this encounter may not be necessary, if the heroes have picked up enough clues from other places to point them toward the jungle. It can also be inserted at any point in Encounter 2, where the heroes are doing something relevant where they might run across Borus. But if you have to cut time, and they've already figured out where they're going, there's no reason to run this encounter. It's flavor, and introducing a potentially recurring NPC.

Therefore, if the heroes have exhausted all of their other avenues and still don't know where to go next, when they leave Renna's, read the following:

You leave the mess at Renna's behind, although by the time you finish your meeting with Renna the cleanup has already begun. Renna follows you out, calling out orders and getting into the middle of things to assist with the effort.

Whenever you decide to run this encounter, proceed with the following. (And if you're feeling sadistic, have the players put themselves in a marching order, the street is broad enough that five can easily walk abreast. It's not a fight, but hey, they're probably getting paranoid by this point anyway!)

You turn the corner and a ragged cough from an alley to your right draws your attention. A figure in a

tattered brown cloak, hood raised, stumbles out of the alleyway and leans uneasily against a half-full rain barrel. He seems to half-notice you, as he turns the shadowed cowl toward you and grunts something that might be a greeting – or might be a threat.

This is Borus Ferthyn, madman of Gadrin. He detects as Force-Sensitive (if anyone bothers to check), but no good determination of his actual power level can be made. Oh, and he's nuts.

If the heroes attack Borus, he will cower. He's clearly not a threat. When the heroes speak with Borus, he will pull back his hood and reveal a familiar face.

Gnarled and grizzled, with one good eye and one that seems to wander in every direction at once, a familiar face stares at you. Borus Ferthyn, one of the more colorful local figures, a Human of later years with a thick beard that completely obscures his mouth. Bits of food are stuck in the tangle of hairs around his chin. He grunts. Then he does something none of you can remember Borus having done before, for as long as any of you have been in Gadrin. Borus speaks.

Borus has a reputation score of around 13, most of it for being loony. He's been on the streets of Gadrin for 20 or more years, and is quite happy here. He doesn't bother anyone, nor do they bother him. He is not known to have spoken to anyone in over a decade, although he is usually present in crowds whenever anything interesting happens. When he speaks, it may help convey how difficult it is to understand Borus if you put your hand over your mouth to muffle the sound coming out.

"Blasted Cartel," he mutters. He stares at you with his good eye, his wandering eye seeming to watch the street where you came from. "Trouble-makers."

Borus has some interesting ideas about the Cartel, and he's heard quite a bit. He'll be happy to share things he's heard with the heroes, if they talk to him. Now, he can no longer distinguish fact from fiction (and has NO capacity to detect sarcasm), so not everything he has to tell the heroes will be accurate. Things that are definitely true or definitely false are marked as such. Then there are the things which aren't marked, since you, dear judge, may get to play future events, and we'd like you to keep wondering just how nuts Borus actually is.

Borus's tidbits (all things he's overheard, since people don't pay attention to him and say all sorts of things when he's around):

- The Cartel is in league with a Dark Jedi on Cularin.

- The Republic military is taking an interest in the Cularin system.
- There have been a lot of thefts of high-tech shipments lately. (T)
- Most of these have been perpetrated by Dugs. (F, the heroes have seen who's doing it, and there were no Dugs involved)
- There is a hidden base of operations in the jungle to the west of Gadrin. (T, but he doesn't know WHOSE base of operations it is, whether it's the Cartel or someone else)
- The droids on Uffel are involved.
- There are creatures in the jungles of Cularin that negate the Force. (F, any Tarasin or native of the planet will know there are no such creatures here)
- There's been a lot of building going on in the jungle lately. (T)
- The Jedi academy on Almas is working with the Cartel. (F, as any light side Force-user in the system knows, the academy remains neutral on matters of commerce)
- The other trading houses may be hit as well, if something isn't done about what's going on in the jungle. (T, but utterly unverifiable)

Feel free to make up anything else you want. If you come up with a particularly good rumor, make sure to record it on the event summary; you can never tell when Borus may hit on something without the campaign staff knowing about it...

Nothing Borus says will be acted upon by any security force, public or private. Why? Because he's nuts. He never talks to anyone but himself, and claims to the contrary will be dismissed. It's up to the heroes to do something. The natural inclination of people on Cularin is to let someone else take care of the problem; being heroic is something new – and necessary.

Walking into the jungle is not a good idea. Assuming the heroes assisted Renna, she'll lend them speeders if they tell her that they're investigating the theft, or any other reasonable mechanism for obtaining speeders (rentals for jungle excursions are 25 credits for a speeder that will hold the entire party, and can be obtained with a droid pilot if no one possesses piloting skills for an additional 5 credits, plus a 50 credit security deposit). Once they've done everything they can in Gadrin, go ahead to Encounter 5.

Encounter 5: Into the Woods

Key idea of this encounter: first excursion into the Cularin jungle; a chase; and finally, a combat!

The preponderance of evidence the heroes have gathered will push them toward investigating the jungle, and as was noted in the previous encounter, doing so will require speeders. Note that this is not something OPS is willing to do, because of the source of some of the information, and the private security forces have enough trouble just defending their warehouses right now and cannot spare the personnel to search the jungle – although any house who is approached about this will offer the heroes a bounty of 50 credits each if they can locate and/or bring back the individuals responsible. Additionally, either Renna or Nim'Ri will offer to let the heroes borrow a speeder big enough for the entire group, potentially equipped with a droid driver. Rental speeders are covered at the end of Encounter 4, and some sort of jungle speeder will be necessary, since it is EXTREMELY unsafe to walk through the jungles of Cularin.

Which brings us, rather naturally, to what the heroes know about the jungles. First, think rainforest. Huge trees, lots of hanging vines and strange flowers, and air so heavy with water that your hair gets slick just walking through it. The Tarasin live out here, in their Irstat (small villages), as do other things – giant reptiles who guard their territory with a vengeance. So walking = Very Bad Idea™. No Tarasin would willingly walk the jungles without a full hunting party, and make it clear that if the heroes try to walk it, they'll probably die.

Make sure the heroes have done at least some of Encounter 2, and all of Encounter 3, before heading to the jungle, else the slot may run short. Feel free to use your ingenuity to get them to extra encounters before this one if they figure things out too quickly.

Regardless, once they have a speeder and a basic idea of where they're going, read the following:

Your pilot [whether that is the droid or one of the heroes] starts the speeder and you set off into the jungle. Passing beneath the great boughs, the world becomes darker, with shafts of yellow light stretching down through the trees to touch the leaf-covered forest floor. Strange smells (familiar to any Tarasin) assault your nostrils as you pick up speed, getting more comfortable with your surroundings.

Off to your right, something moves in the thick underbrush, and as you watch a small lizard-like creature, perhaps three feet tall at the shoulder, waddles out of the bushes on all fours, spots you, and darts away once more, much more quickly than you would have thought its stubby body could carry it.

It's a nice ride. It's quite hot, but the motion of the air as the speeder moves steadily through the jungle cools your sweat and the condensation from the jungle air pretty well.

Go ahead and give the heroes Listen checks (DC 15), since there is a new sound in the jungle, the sound of a pair of speeders that are coming up behind them very rapidly. Heroes who make the checks, obviously, will not be surprised when the next box-text hits them, nor will anyone who has told you they are watching behind the speeder and make a DC 10 spot check.

Suddenly, two blaster bolts rip through the air on either side of your speeder!

There is a pair of speeder bikes behind the heroes, their riders armed with light blasters. The men on them are in the employ of the pirates in Encounter 7, and have been told to make sure no one comes into this sector. However, they're only prepared for tourist traffic, and will be pretty surprised when someone shoots back at them.

Kerner and Bont, Male Human Scoundrels 3; IM +2; Def 15; Spd 10 m; VP/WP 13/12; Atk +3 melee (1d6+1, baton), +4 ranged (3d6, blaster pistol); SQ Illicit Barter, Better Lucky Than Good; SV Fort +2, Ref +5, Will +2; SZ M; FP 1; Rep 1; Str 12, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 13.

Skills: Bluff +7, Pilot (speeder bike) +6, Demolitions +6, Hide +8, Spot +7, Disable Device +6, Move Silently +8, Listen +7, Repair +2.

Feats: Alertness, Dodge, Mobility, Weapon Group Proficiencies (blaster pistols, simple weapons).

The combat will go like this. First, neither of these guys can hit the broad side of a barn. (Do you really think we're going to put guys with weapons that do 3d6 in an event with only first level heroes and make them at all competent? C'mon... Besides, they lack the requisite feats to be able to accurately take out moving targets from moving speeders.) Kerner is unprepared to have anyone shoot back at him. As soon as anyone does so, or does anything else that would reasonably surprise him, roll a d20 behind your DM screen and describe one of the drivers suddenly veering off and crashing into a tree with a huge explosion.

Bont will stay with them, having somewhat more nerve than his companion, but his accuracy will not improve. Treat him as having a total -8 to hit because of being rattled, firing from a moving speeder, at range, etc. It's okay for him to hit the speeder once (treat the heroes' speeder as having 20 hull points), but it's not likely since he has minimal cover and makes an easy target, and his speeder bike only has 12 hull points and a defense of 12 (it's a cheap model). Given that the speeder provides at least partial cover for the heroes, he shouldn't be able to hit them with a penalty of 8 to his rolls, but you should scare them a little nonetheless.

Eventually, the heroes will blast Bont into nothingness, at which point...

The explosion of the speeder bike seems to have disrupted something in your speeder's controls!

If there is a rented droid driving, his circuits are fried as well, and they're going to crash and take 1d6 damage. A DC 20 computer skill check can get the droid functional, but there's nothing to do with the speeder except hope for the best (getting the droid functional allows a landing that only does 1d2 to the heroes, but which will break the droid in half). If one of the heroes is piloting the speeder, they can make a DC 17 pilot check to force the speeder toward a clearing, where the crash landing will only do 1d2 damage to everyone in the speeder (1d6 if they fail). If this is one of Renna's speeders, then the heroes had better figure out what's going on and succeed in their mission to keep from making her mad. If it's a rental... well, as long as they put down the security deposit, they'll be fine. If not, pick the least expensive speeder out of the rulebook. That's what they're going to end up in debt to replace. If this is a personal speeder – wow, that's bad luck. It looks like about 500 credits worth of damage to repair.

It will be possible for the heroes to find Bont's blaster pistol later. Kerner's, unfortunately, went up in smoke.

You pull yourselves out of the wrecked speeder and look around the clearing where it came to rest. Strange plants and flowers carpet the ground, and a small stream runs by the west edge of the clearing. There's a strange, pungent smell in the air, probably coming from the piles of refuse all around. And the noises of the jungle seem to be getting louder...

Give the heroes one round of actions – healing each other or what have you – then have them roll spot checks (DC 12) to notice that something is coming through the underbrush to the north and south of them. These are the same quadrupedal creatures they spotted while they were on the speeder, coming to find out what's going on in their jungle. They have brown skin streaked with yellow and green, allowing them to blend in with most of the vegetation in the jungle, stand about three feet tall at the shoulder, and have long prehensile noses and long tails that just seem to drag behind them. Normally, mulissiki would not bother with Humans, but they have very much been enjoying feeding off the refuse piles here (this is the Cartel's dumping ground; they don't worry about it because the mulissiki are present and tend to keep the amount of garbage from getting out of hand) and are getting a little uppity and territorial because this is GOOD garbage! So while they

wouldn't usually attack, this garbage is good enough that they're coming after the heroes.

Mulissiki (5): Scavenger 1; IM 4 (Dex); Def 17 (+1 size, +4 Dex, +2 natural); Spd 25 m; VP/WP 6/14; Atk +4 melee (1d4-2, bite); SQ low-light vision, stink gas cloud when frightened (Will save DC 12); SV Fort +3, Ref +6, Will +0; SZ S; Rep 0; Str 7, Dex 19, Con 14, Int 3, Wis 10, Cha 7.

Skills: Hide +6, Spot +4, Survival +2

Feats: Weapon Finesse (bite)

If things seem to be going particularly badly for the mulissiki (when the first of them drops), the others will emit a horrible stink gas cloud. Heroes must make a Will save (DC 12) or flee for 1d4 rounds.

The fight will attract the attention of the Cartel guards, who will show up at the end of the fight, or when the first hero is knocked unconscious (assuming this is after round 2, at least), and escort the heroes back to the Cartel's new base of operations.

Encounter 6: The Cartel, Back to Nature

Key idea of this encounter: discovery of the Cartel's central base of operations, hidden in the jungle; opportunity to question Velin Wir about the Cartel's intentions; learning about the other operation that may be running in the jungle

The Cartel guards show up at the end of the fight with the mulissiki, either to pull the heroes' collective butts out of the fire, or to find out what was going on and escort the heroes back to the Cartel base. They are under very specific orders from no less than Velin Wir himself to not harm anyone who comes near the base, because invariably, that will generate negative publicity. So they will do what they can for the heroes, including using medpacs (there are 2 medpacs carried by each soldier) on injured heroes.

Caarites are about a meter tall, with features that are vaguely porcine. While basically Humanoid, they have slightly elongated snouts, turned delicately upward at their tips, and broad, open faces that only make their too-friendly smiles look all the friendlier. Their flesh is pale pink, so pale that you can see the veins pumping beneath, and they have no hair anywhere on their bodies.

The eight Caarite guards stand around the perimeter of the clearing, watching for more mulissiki – or anything bigger that may come crashing through the jungle. They all wear the uniform of the Cartel, the

dark grey flight suit with four silver stars stitched on the left breast, and while none of them have drawn their weapons, they all have blaster rifles slung over their backs. They sniff the air, their snouts wiggling almost hungrily.

The leader – he must be the leader, by the red bars on his collar – turns to you. “You’re a long way from the city. You should come with us; it’s not safe out here. Councilor Wir will want to speak with you.”

This is Corporal Dregz, one of the guard squad commanders for the Cartel. He's extremely businesslike and formal, and is following his orders to the letter. It truly isn't safe out here, and he's not to allow anyone to wander around. It is much, much safer for the heroes to go with him. He will be more than willing to explain that the mulissiki are some of the lesser creatures of the jungle, and the party was lucky not to meet anything more threatening than that. (And Tarasin heroes will know he's telling the truth!)

He will be reticent to answer questions about what the Cartel is doing out here, saying that, “Such information is really Councilor Wir's place to share, not mine. But he has reasons, I'm sure, that keep the best interests of all concerned at heart.” He knows that the Cartel has been careful not to upset the balance of the forest more than they have to with their presence, but really isn't aware of details. He's a pawn in the organization, really, and only knows what he's told, although he has seen other ships in the area which were not Cartel vessels. Those, again, would be Councilor Wir's place to tell the heroes about, since the Councilor knows everything that goes on in the area.

Corporal Dregz, Male Caarite Soldier 4; IM +2; Def 16 (+2 dex, +1 size, +3 class); Spd 6 m; Sz S; VP/WP 44/14; Atk +6 melee (1d6+2, baton), +7 ranged (3d8, blaster rifle); SQ none; SV Fort +6, Ref +3, Will +2; SZ M; FP 2; Rep 1; Str 14, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 12, Cha 10.

Skills: Climb +4, Demolitions +8, Intimidate +3, Listen +2, Repair +5, Spot +2, Survival +7, Treat Injury +7.

Feats: Armor (light, medium, & heavy), Weapon Proficiency (simple, blaster pistols, blaster rifles, vibroweapons, heavy weapons), Dodge, Point Blank Shot, Mobility, Weapon Focus (blaster rifle).

Equipment: Blaster rifle, uniform, 2 medpacs, baton.

Expendable Troops, Various Caarite Thug 1; IM +1; Def 12; Spd 6 m; Sz S; VP/WP -/15; Atk +2 melee (1d6+1, baton), -2 ranged (3d6, blaster pistol); SQ none; SV Fort +3 Ref +1, Will +0; SZ M; FP 0; Rep 1; Str 12, Dex 12, Con 12, Int 8, Wis 10, Cha 9.

Skills: Jump +4.

Feats: Toughness, Simple Weapons, Light Armor.

Equipment: Blaster pistol, baton, uniform, 2 medpacs.

The heroes really shouldn't think it's a good idea to fight with these guys and you, the judge, shouldn't give them any reason to. No one is under arrest; this is simply an offer of shelter and information. And if you like, have the soldiers start getting antsy because there's something big coming. Make it clear that the heroes are in no danger if they go with the guards, that they can keep all their weapons, and that they are to be guests of Councilor Wir during their visit.

The trek through the jungle is short, leading you within a few hundred kilometers of a small hillock with a bunker built into one side, shielded from any craft that might pass overhead by a rocky outcropping. Another dozen guards lounge near the entrance, and they seem to only barely notice as Dregz and his patrol lead you inside.

The facility itself shines and whirs, everything new and top of the line. Caarites, Humans, and other species scurry busily about, reading datapads or talking about "future ventures." The main corridor you're in winds down into the hill, finally opening out into a grand receiving room where multiple plush sofas line the walls and an iridescent conference table stretches from one end of the room to the other. High-backed wooden chairs covered with exotic fabrics surround the table.

Wooden chairs are odd. Remember how little we see in *Star Wars* of wood products? Yet these are fine woods, and fit the décor perfectly. The woods are easily identifiable as having come from the trees that grow in the rainforests of Cularin.

A door at the far end of the room slides open, and Velin Wir steps through. He smiles, holds his hands wide, and bows deeply before crossing the room to greet each of you.

"Welcome! We had not expected to be offering tours so soon, but it seems I underestimated the curiosity and ingenuity of the citizens of this fine system. Please, have a seat, I'm sure you have questions for me."

Wir is a sleazy politician, the ultimate used-speeder salesman. Smile when you play him. A LOT. Every answer provided here is the TRUTH. He just isn't going to share anything negative...

Some answers to questions you might get:

What are you doing out here? *Gadrin and Hedrett are crowded and overly busy. We needed a base of operations that was more isolated, a lower-traffic area.*

Why lower-traffic? *Because we deal in high volumes of merchandise. If we set up in the city, we would interfere with shipping for the other concerns, which is not our intention. We don't want to take over all trade in this system.*

Then what do you want to do? *Cularin has some resources that are unique. The wood from which these chairs are made, for example, is among the finest ornamental wood in the galaxy.*

So you plan to strip the forests? *All of these chairs were made from trees that had fallen or died naturally. We try not to upset the balance. Besides, if we stripped the forest, that would flood the market with this fine wood, and where would we be then?*

So you were just going to hide out here? *Oh, of course not. But we know how touchy systems can be about us. It's easy to view change as threatening, and our announcement today was sure to make many people unhappy. We were intending to announce our presence in the jungle within ten days. Now, we will go public this evening, with your consent.*

Are you aware of the problems in Gadrin? The thefts? *I've heard of them, yes. It's unfortunate.*

We have evidence that some of the stolen goods were brought in this direction. Was that you? *Goodness no! We have no need for supplies from offworld, we have our own. I am aware of another presence out here, though.*

Do tell? *Some of my guards have reported the construction of a landing platform in the forest, about two clicks west of here. We've seen numerous shuttles and other vessels going that direction, but they were no business of ours. However, you have now made it our business.*

Can you tell us how to get there/take us there? *Of course. I would recommend caution, as there is no telling what may await you, but I could certainly send a patrol with you if you like.*

The heroes are welcome to converse more with Wir. This is all he is really able to tell them now. They are welcome to tour the facility if it will assuage their fears, and they will see nothing out of the ordinary. Don't let this drag on too long, though, since they still have another encounter to go through! Wir will be very polite (and oily) and answer any questions he can to the best of his ability. Use the above as a guide for how he will answer.

If anyone tries to use *See Force* on Wir, he does detect as slightly Force-Sensitive, but will be honestly surprised to hear this if they tell him.

Encounter 7: Piracy?

Key ideas of this encounter: find the pirates that have been taking the shipments from Gadrin; either fight them, or head back to Gadrin to report in

The heroes can either walk with a Cartel escort (the entire escort will be nervous about walking, but nothing bad will happen) or they can borrow a Cartel speeder and go on their own. In either case, the trip through the jungle is uneventful, and they soon arrive at the area where Councilor Wir told them to expect to find activity. And sure enough, they do. It's impossible for the heroes to stumble blindly into the pirate compound, since they are making enough noise with their construction efforts that there is no way the entire party could miss noticing what's going on.

Ahead of you, a large area has been cleared and a makeshift landing platform has been constructed. It rises ten feet off the jungle floor, supported by four huge columns, and atop it sits a small transport shuttle bearing some familiar markings.

This is the shuttle that was just stolen from Renna, of course.

As you watch, the men and women gathered around the shuttle begin disassembling it, piece by piece, hauling first the side panels and then the other parts of the shuttle off the platform and into a nearby cave. Within minutes, they have very efficiently dismantled the entire ship.

The pirates – who are Human – are completely engaged in their task, and really not paying much attention to the jungle at all. Besides, they are used to things creeping around behind the trees. They wear no identifying markings, just plain brown flight suits. Most of them are fairly scruffy and ill-kept, and aren't carrying much in the way of weaponry (mainly knives and other melee weapons, the soldiers do have blasters). The heroes have a few options available to them.

They can fight the pirates. There are 7 of them here, and they don't look (and AREN'T) all that tough.

Generic Human Pirate Scoundrel 1 (4); IM +2; Def 15; Spd 10 m; VP/WP 6/12; Atk +1 melee (1d4+1,

knife); SQ Illicit Barter; SV Fort +1, Ref +4, Will +1; SZ M; FP 1; Rep 1; Str 12, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 13.

Skills: Bluff +5, Profession (Piracy) +5, Hide +6, Spot +5, Listen +5, Search +4, Appraise +4, Jump +3.

Feats: Alertness, Dodge, Weapon Group Proficiencies (blaster pistols, simple weapons).

Generic Human Pirate Soldier 1 (3); IM +2; Def 14; Spd 10 m; VP/WP 9/14; Atk +3 melee (1d6+2, baton), +3 ranged (3d6, blaster pistol); SQ none; SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +0; SZ M; FP 1; Rep 0; Str 15, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10.

Skills: Listen +2, Repair +4, Demolitions +7, Knowledge (Cularin system piracy) +4.

Feats: Skill emphasis (Demolitions), Dodge, Weapon Group Proficiencies (blaster rifles, heavy weapons, vibro weapons, blaster pistols, simple weapons), Armor Proficiency (light).

The heroes can also blow up the landing platform. This will require a *Move Silently* roll opposed by listen rolls from one of the soldiers to notice them, followed by a DC 10 demolitions check to set an explosive device – assuming they have one with them. If they manage to pull this off, give them a grand description of the explosion, which will kill all of the pirates in the area.

They can also head back to Gadrin and call in reinforcements. This is fine as well, reporting in to any of the affected trading houses – particularly Renna's – will get a strike force sent out here immediately, and since they're outside the city, they don't have to worry about consequences if not all of the pirates make it back to OPS in one piece. There is a great deal of loot, lots of good gear in particular, hidden in the cave, and it's clear this is where the missing shipments have ended up. The pirates, if captured, are just doing a job. They get credits transferred to them, along with instructions that are hand-delivered by middle-men who can't be found again (not alive, at least), and they do what they're told. It's a living. There is another pickup of goods scheduled, so heroes can try to set a trap for the bosses. Unfortunately, as soon as any intruders entered the area, one of the pirates tripped a silent alarm alerting their connection to trouble, and no one will show up to spring the trap.

If questioned about Darin's whereabouts, they will tell the heroes that he escaped, and they have no idea where he ended up. Off in the jungle somewhere. It's rained lately, and there have been plenty of creatures through here, so there aren't any traces of him to be found. He was headed in the right direction when he left, so probably made it back to town without any trouble and is in hiding.

Conclusion

Over the next week, the Cartel begins running a shuttle back and forth to their new jungle base, from both Gadrin and Hedrett. Velin Wir's face is everywhere, smiling pudgily from holo-billboards, and the local news is filled with stories about how the Cartel helped the "brave Cularin heroes" root out the pirates who were threatening commerce in the system. There are even stories that the smugglers in the Asteroid Belt have taken notice, and are grateful for removing some unauthorized competition from the scene.

The local trading houses reward you handsomely, and for a few days everyone you see knows who you are, but as is always the case, fame is fleeting, and soon you're able to relax once more.

But something tugs at you. Something doesn't feel quite right, so when people begin disappearing only a week after the pirate base was destroyed, you have to wonder...

That, however, is another story.

Here Ends A Cularin Presence

Experience Point Summary

Experience is calculated as follows for Living Force events.

- 1) Experience awards in the SWRPG are not made for achieving objectives, but instead for successfully completing an adventure of a given length. Thus, if the heroes survived and accomplished the primary goal of the adventure, they receive full Adventure Experience (600 xp for core LF plot scenarios, 350 for non-core LF scenarios).
- 2) Assign discretionary role-playing experience (0-400 points). These should reward accurate character portrayal throughout the adventure, not just how well the PC interacted socially. Do NOT automatically award max roleplaying XP; consider carefully how well the players stayed in character. This is your opportunity to reward appropriately cinematic behavior, so use it!

Adventure Experience Award:

Did the heroes locate and deal with the pirates who have been plundering Cularin? If so, each hero who survived receives 600 xp.

If the heroes do not complete the mission due to time constraints, but were generally "on the right track," award them ½ of the total adventure experience.

If they learned of the pirates who are threatening Cularin, but took no action whatsoever against those pirates, award them ¾ of the total adventure experience.

Note that the amount of roleplaying experience heroes receive is not tied to how far the heroes get in the scenario.

Adventure Experience:	600 xp
Roleplaying Experience:	0-400 xp

Total Possible Experience:	1,000 xp
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Loot Summary

Player characters may keep items from the scenario that are listed on the loot list below or which meet the following conditions:

1. The item must be specifically listed in the text of the adventure (e.g. body armor on foes). If it is not listed in the text, the characters cannot keep it. Items of this nature can be sold for 50% of book value, or recorded on a character sheet.
2. Animals, followers, monsters, henchmen, droids, and so forth (any living being, basically) may not be kept from a scenario for any reason unless the treasure summary lists the being specifically. It is okay for the player characters to form relationships with NPCs, but these will not be certified and cannot bring material benefit to the character. Contacts (sources of extra information) must be specifically certified.
3. Theft is against the law, but may be practiced by some player characters. Items worth more than 1000 credits that are of personal significance to the owner (including family heirlooms) will be discovered in the possession of the character by one means or another. The character must return the item and pay a fine equal to three times the value of the item stolen. In addition, the PC caught receives campaign-decided penalties for being known as a thief. For other stolen items which meet the criteria in #1 above, use your judgment and the circumstances within the game to determine whether a PC thief gets away with the theft or not.

Any item retained according to these rules, which does not have a certificate, will not ever have a certificate issued for it.

The campaign staff reserves the right to take away any item or credits acquired for things it later finds unreasonable but which were allowed at the time.

From Nim'Ri:

- One set of macrobinoculars

From Renna:

- Two datapads
- One bottle of Meir wine
- One multichannel comlink
- **First run only:** Employment (certed): The hero named above is gainfully employed at Renna's Transport Service, as a member of her security detail. The hours are flexible, and do not interfere with "other commitments" the hero may have. Moreover, the pay is good (1000 credits per week), Renna provides free room and board for her security team, and the work is fairly prestigious (translation: any hero employed by Renna gains +2 reputation for the duration of his/her employment). It may be that the training received at Renna's will have other benefits, in the long run.

From Bont:

- One blaster pistol

From the pirates:

- Three knives
- Three blaster pistols

All other loot from the pirate base is marked with the symbols of the houses from which it was stolen, and cannot be kept because of tracking devices those houses possess.

From Other Trading Houses:

- 450 credits per hero (total)

Judge Aid #1: A Cularin Primer

Cularin, the system's namesake planet, is covered in lush, rainforest-like jungles. Mountain ranges poke through the trees and touch the sky, forming plains and deep valleys between them. Thick trees cover the whole of the planet, except in a few places where logging companies were active in years past. The climate is mild and humid, reaching uncomfortably high temperatures only in the height of summer. During the nights the inhabitants enjoy cool temperatures. Rain falls almost every day, though not strongly enough to disrupt activities or threaten lives.

Among the planet's many trees are a number of rare hardwoods, and the mysterious ch'hala trees. Ch'hala trees are tall with thick drooping foliage, and have greenish purple bark that produces swirling color patterns across its surface. No one knows where the ch'hala trees came from; the Tarasin natives claim that they are not native to the world. Some of the softer woods are prized too, and the woods attract great interest from various corporations.

Cularin is a world rich in lifeforms. The top of the food chain is occupied by great lizards called kilassin. Varieties of kilassin exist; most are omnivorous, but some prefer live prey over plants. The kilassin live deep in the jungles, and as settlements continue to appear the large creatures are driven further into the jungles. Some kilassin have been domesticated; corporations like the Metatheran Cartel use them as labor beasts when they cannot take repulsorsleds into the jungles.

Further down the food chain there exists a small creature called a mulissik, a scavenger that can be found around Tarasin villages frequently. The mulissiki keep the villages clean by devouring any waste just about as fast as it is produced, and they scurry away from any approaching creature, so they do not really pose a problem to the Tarasin. In the cities, however, they are a real nuisance. Once they get into the platform cities they cannot escape, and they make nests in whatever dark corners they can find.

The mountain ranges that cut through Cularin's jungles reach beyond the clouds; there are no small mountains here. The lower ridges support Tarasin villages and other life, but the higher reaches are devoid of all but the mulissiki. One range, the Kiallquis, has a sheer face that is particularly suited to mountain speeder racing and to climbing. In the past the Tarasin used it to test the truth claims of a suspected criminal, but in modern times the ridge is more used for sponsored speeder races.

The native intelligent species on Cularin is called the Tarasin. Tarasin are related to the great kilassin remotely; both evolved from the same ancestors, but along different paths. Tarasin have developed a tribal society. Tarasin tribes are called irstats, and usually contain between 30 and 50 members. Larger tribes do exist; the Hiironi irstat contains more than 300 members. The Tarasin prefer the smaller tribes and the simpler life.

Gadrin & Hedrett

Gadrin was originally planned on a grid, but the rapid expansion in the early years of the town caused the leaders to abandon the grid plan and let people build wherever. The buildings are made mostly of wood from the surrounding jungle, but prefab buildings were brought in, and now the city is a mixture of wood, metal, and plastic structures. Hedrett held to the grid system much better. Builders in Hedrett used mostly prefab metal construction, so Gadrin looks more native and older than its sister town.

In size and population, the two towns are very similar. Gadrin boasts a population of 18,000 offworlders and about 2,000 Tarasin, and Hedrett rates its population at 16,700 offworlders and 2,900 Tarasin. But that is where the similarities end. The towns have developed as if each was trying to be different from the other, as if the river somehow made the town on the other side into a rival or enemy.

Critical Event Summary

A Cularin Presence

1. Did any of the heroes recognize the part numbers from the Sullustan ship as security components?

Yes

No

2. Did the heroes capture Lars?

Yes

No

3. Did any of the heroes accept employment with Renna?

Yes

No

If “Yes,” please list their names and rpg #’s below...

4. Did you make up any interesting rumors for Borus to feed the heroes? If so, record them below.

5. Do the heroes owe anyone money to replace a busted speeder? (Note that if they’re successful, Renna will just write the speeder off, and if they paid the security deposit on a rental, they’re in the clear. If it’s a personal speeder, it can be repaired for 500 credits.)

Yes

No

6. Did the heroes *see Force* on anyone important? Yes No If “Yes,” who? _____