

An Uneasy Peace

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The story

“Eye of the Sun” presented the story of the Metatheran Cartel, and of the emergent heroes of Cularin. Faced with a threat to their way of life, the citizens responded with gusto, taking risks they had never dreamed of before. This galaxy far, far away suddenly seemed very different to its inhabitants. If the Cartel – who had seemed somewhat slimy, if relatively harmless, before – could offer such a meaningful threat, then what might the rest of the world be hiding?

Our story opens two days after the events of “Revelation and Refutation.” The celebration of Cularin’s 200th anniversary was disrupted by Velin Wir’s announcement that the Cartel would be making its presence more known in Cularin. Now, the celebration resumes, and all the heroes who assisted in the ousting of the Cartel from Cularin proper are in attendance.

Because of their role in the affairs of state, the heroes’ opinions are especially valued. They represent the “best and brightest” of Cularin, and the powers that be have decided that several difficult decisions must be made. Politically, the best way to make these decisions is to poll the heroes themselves.

Thus, at the celebration, the politicians of Gadrin and Hedrett are conducting a straw poll. In particular, Barnab Chistor, governor of Gadrin, is interested in gathering information about the feelings of the populace. While many individuals have shown strong disdain for the Cartel (and given their activities, that’s no surprise), others like the presence of a strong trade organization, and the financial stability it offers the planet.

If it were as simple as a straw vote, however, there would be no need to continue further. The heroes being sampled have seen first-hand the destructive influence of the Cartel, and most have viewed their handiwork at the base of operations for the resistance. It therefore takes a little more to make this an interesting exercise, particularly from the point of view of the “concerned parties” vying for the continued presence of the Cartel in the system.

A few individuals are circulating through the crowd, in the hopes of persuading the heroes to allow a proxy to vote in their stead. In exchange for the right to serve as the proxy to a hero, these individuals are offering 5000 credit chips. All they ask is for an unmarked voucher, which they guarantee will be turned in to the appropriate individuals by the time the votes are counted.

The decision that faces the heroes, then, is how to proceed. 5000 credits is a lot of money. It’s a speeder, it’s a blaster, it’s a nice flight suit, all rolled into one. But to get the credits, they must give away their voice in the future of Cularin, at least for a short time.

In the meantime, the celebration continues. Individuals can interact with representatives of the Jedi Academy, patrons at a local cantina, the employees of Joh’s (a droid shop), and others.

They have been given the opportunity to make a decision, and have been given the chance to contribute to the well-being of the system, yet again.

Here's hoping they don't blow it.

The Details

The Cartel, and allied trading concerns (to be named later), would prefer to not see Cularin occupied solely by the small private trading houses. These are notoriously inefficient, and tend to divide profits in odd ways. The Cartel's representatives do not believe that the organization has a whole has done anything to warrant expulsion from the planet. Their official position: A single rogue envoy, Velin Wir, systematically set about to create alliances and grease palms for his own gain. He had always been a political climber, and even, records indicate, went so far as to ally himself with the Hutts for further backing. He made some questionable deals that the Cartel was not aware of, and they are in the process of investigating how much damage has actually been done. They have petitioned Governor Chistor of Gadrin, and Senior Counselor Westa Impeveri of Hedrett, to be allowed back on the planet. They withdrew of their own volition, after the destruction of Wir's base of operations in the jungle, and the new envoy to Cularin, Thurm Loogg, is intent on making sure that the return of the Cartel (which he believes will be a valuable asset to Cularin, just as Cularin is an asset to the Cartel) is not something that upsets the people.

This does not keep him from ordering, however indirectly, that the election be influenced. He knows people well enough to understand that if their loyalty can be bought once, it can be bought again, and sometimes even that is unnecessary. Many species (particularly Humans) have an annoying habit of self-justification. They make a poor decision, and then justify it to themselves in their own minds, eventually convincing themselves that it was the right thing to do. It makes them easier to understand, and to influence.

He has some very real issues to deal with, however. The heroes investigating the disappearance of many of the residents of Cularin discovered evidence that the Cartel cut the Ch'hala trees, which are sacred to the native Tarasin. They elected to convey this information to Dariana, Mother of the Hiironi, and have not been particularly quiet about their displeasure with the Cartel's actions. Dariana, in turn, has communicated to her irstat that some of the ch'hala trees were cut, but that the perpetrators have been brought to justice and the balance restored.

This does not keep the Tarasin from raising a fuss, however. Certain members of the Tarasin community, and their associates, have taken it upon themselves to make sure everyone knows what was done, and that when the time comes to vote, they remember the egregious crime. Not only was it a violation of the Cartel's charter to do this, but it was a violation of a most sacred place, with no motive but profit.

In the following pages, the primary settings and NPCs will be described. Much of the action in the interactive will occur in the square at Gadrin, but there will be other opportunities to learn the nature of the situation as well.

The Setting

Scene 1: The Square

The square at the center of Gadrin is where most grand celebrations on Cularin begin. Food and drink are served from carts that surround the base of Reidi Artom's statue, music blares from buildings all around, and the mood is festive. It feels good to have the Cartel gone, with everything they did.

NPCs present: Barnab Chistor, Sa'Arli, Fot, ???

Scene 2: The Cantina

Vanster Enan's Sop House is bustling again, with the Tarasin band wailing up a storm. Enan has opened up the back room today, to accommodate the overflow of people, and drinks of all varieties are imbibed in great quantity. A modicum of gambling is available, as are drinks and music. While it doesn't provide much as a spectator sport (no matter what Stallone may have thought when he made "Over the Top"), there is a line forming to take on the reigning arm wrestling champion, a burly, dark-furred Wookiee.

NPCs present: Vanster Enan, big wookiee, Na'Lora (manager for the Tarasin band), ???

Scene 3: The Jedi Enclave

A representative from the Jedi Academy is here, in part to keep an eye on the many Padawans attending the celebration, and in part to congratulate them on their accomplishments. Mol Beldun is a pleasant Jedi Knight who is tasked with assisting Padawans in finding an appropriate mentor for their further training. He has a great many questions for the Padawans as they approach, and is unlikely to come down hard on the issue of the Cartel.

NPCs present: Mol Beldun (Adam), some assistant

[Note: We need a quick way to process people. Or multiple interviewers. We're going to have a line at this booth, and will need roaming Jedi, perhaps, nervous folk wandering around the enclave keeping an eye on the party. They will be able to talk more than Beldun.]

Scene 4: Joh's

The droid shop exists to fulfill the needs of individuals interested in purchasing a droid. Only a limited selection are currently available, and the prices are reasonable. The service plan seems decent as well.

Scene 5: Other metacampaign stuff I'm not thinking of.

Scene 6: The Transmission Room

An hour into the interactive, it is announced that for those interested in hearing the Cartel's proposal, a short, interactive holo-conference is about to take place. Seating is first come, first served, and those who attend get to hear Thurm Loogg's logic in asking to be allowed back on-planet.

The Opening

Players arrive at the interactive and are given an index card which is only marked with a sticker, or some other piece of identifying information. They are told not to lose this card, its importance will be explained shortly.

Fifteen minutes past the scheduled start time for the interactive, it is time for Governor Chistor's address.

Citizens of Cularin, I bid you welcome!

Today... is a wonderful day. Today... is a happy day. Today... is the first day in which we may truly recognize ourselves for what we are. Many people, united as one. I am proud to stand before you, as governor of Gadrin. Proud, and heartened by your valor.

Through the efforts of many of you, our home has been rid of a terrible presence. Velin Wir caused us no end of trouble, and he did the same to his employers. It is good that we are rid of him. As you well know, he was responsible for some atrocious violations of the Cartel's policies. Many of you may view the actions he commissioned as unforgivable.

I myself cannot disagree with much of what has been said. Many orders given by the late Councilor Wir went far beyond what could ever be acceptable.

The Cartel has asked that we consider a petition to allow them to return to operations on Cularin. A formal reprimand from the Galactic Senate is pending, but their franchise is not in jeopardy. They will, in my estimation, retain shipping rights within our system.

Now, please. Hold a moment.

That they will retain shipping rights does not mean that they will be allowed to operate on our soil, here on Cularin. That is a question that I must address, along with the other leaders across the planet. Along with Senior Counselor Impevari of Hedrett, the heads of the platform cities, and representatives from many of the Tarasin irstat, I will decide shortly as to whether we will allow the Cartel back on Cularin.

I would like your input.

Each of you has been given a single-use datapad. These can receive once, and transmit once, on a frequency known only to myself. My programmers are finalizing the process as we speak. As soon as the programs are finalized, your datapad will beep three times. You will then be prompted to enter one of two codes. The first code will indicate a willingness to allow the Cartel onto Cularin once more. The second will indicate that you do not wish them on our soil.

This is a simple poll, but the results will be listened to. I need an honest appraisal of public opinion. As soon as your datapad beeps three times, you may enter your preference, and submit it to me.

Until then, enjoy the celebration, and may the Force be with you!

Thurm Loogg's Address

[NOTE: Loogg is transmitting from an orbiting shuttle. He possesses the same broad smile that Wir did, but it seems less ingratiating. He doesn't pander in the same way Wir did, he is very direct. Note that everything he says here is the literal truth.]

People of Cularin, I extend to you my most abject apologies.

I am not one to mince words. The Cartel failed to police our own, and many paid the price. We seek the opportunity to make restitution.

In our estimation, the best way for us to do so, is to return to Cularin, and reestablish operations. For several years, we have contributed to your economic prosperity, bringing in many goods from the Core Worlds and the Outer Rim, and exporting your fine local products. We would like to renew this relationship.

You must understand that former Councilor Wir was not at all typical of our kind. He was deceitful, cruel, and thought only of himself. He bargained with those the Cartel avoids, brokering goods and information with Hutts, and threatening the well-being of your entire system with his reckless foolishness. I cannot apologize enough for his actions.

I ask that you not judge all of our race by the actions of one foolish individual in a position of power. You dealt with him, and for that, I thank you. He truly was a blemish, and the Cartel is much better off with him gone.

As a gesture of good faith, we offer this to Cularin.

[An image appears in place of Loogg in the holoprojector. It's a battle-class ship with three fire-linked turbolasers mounted on its underside. As the camera pulls back, we can see that it is orbiting above Cularin. Its engines fire, and it heads toward the planet. Outside, people hear a roar as the ship comes in above Gadrin, hovers, then sets down on a landing pad.]

We discovered part of Wir's plan, but too late. We removed his capacity to implement turbolasers on his facility, and instead mounted them on this ship. We then used the ship to destroy that abomination of a facility, as soon as all personnel were clear. Now, we offer it to the people of Cularin, as another means of defending yourselves in the future.

I have time for a few questions...

[NOTE: no more than 10 minutes of questions to Loogg. If it gets too hard, the connection gets fuzzy, and the signal is lost.]

THINGS LOOGG KNOWS

- Anyone can go in and check out the ship. It is not trapped, and is a legitimate offering of peace. [Yeah, it reeks of "trojan horse." A little paranoia goes a long way.]

- I will abide by whatever decision Governor Chistor and the others reach. We do not want to be on a planet where we are not welcome. It is bad for business.
- Any individual caught in such egregious violations as those enacted by Wir will be dealt with most harshly.
- The connection to the Hutts is tenuous. We know about his banking connections, and we know that he may have obtained contraband from them. Various... personal weaponry. [Yeah, he just doesn't want to say "lightsaber" to a room half-full of Jedi.]
- All of the individuals who might have had knowledge of Wir's activities have been shipped back to Caarimon. They will be dealt with appropriately. Punishment will fit their infractions.
- I cannot make promises that such things will never happen again. I cannot know the future. There will be no repeat while I oversee our operations in Cularin.
- If we cannot reestablish a base on Cularin, we will manage. It will simply mean refueling elsewhere in the system. We will pick up goods from another vendor there. Where, we are not certain, yet.

Anything else within reason, improvise. Just don't dig me too deep a plot hole. ;-)

The NPCs

Barnab Chistor

Barnab Chistor: Male human Diplomat 12; IM 0; Def 4; Spd 10 m; WP 14; Atk +6/+1 ranged (3d6, blaster pistol); SV Fort +4, Ref +4, Will +9; SZ M; Rep 9; Str 10, Dex 11, Con 11, Int 14, Wis 13, Cha 15.

Skills: Appraise +7, Bluff +12, Computer Use +6, Diplomacy +14, Gather Information +15, Knowledge (alien species—Tarasin) +11, Knowledge (bureaucracy) +10, Knowledge (Cularin system) +12, Knowledge (governmental theories) +8, Listen +7, Profession (Politician) +12, Read/write Basic, Sense Motive +9, Speak Basic, Speak Tarasinese, Spot +6.

Feats: Fame, Persuasive, Sharp-eyed, Skill Emphasis (Gather Information), Toughness, Weapon Group Proficiencies (blaster pistols, simple weapons).

Len Markus

Len Markus: Male human Fringer 3/Soldier 8; IM 3 (+3 Dex); Def 25 (+3 Dex); Spd 10 m; VP/WP 79/14; +13/+8 ranged (3d6, blaster pistol); SQ +5 bonus to Diplomacy checks to buy or sell goods; immune to See Force ; SV Fort +6, Ref +8, Will +5; SZ M; FP 12; Rep 6; Str 13, Dex 17, Con 14, Int 15, Wis 15, Cha 11.

Equipment: blaster pistol.

Skills: Appraise +4, Computer Use +6, Disguise +3, Hide +5, Intimidate +4, Jump +4, Knowledge (streetwise—Coruscant) +4, Listen +5, Pilot +5, Read/write Basic, Search +3, Speak Basic, Speak Sullustan, Spot +7, Tumble +7.

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

Sa'Arli : Tarasin noble, concerned with the cutting of the ch'hala trees. Will subtly encourage people to get rid of the Cartel, keep them off the planet.

Fot (Jason): Scoundrel, forger, concerned citizen. Interested in keeping the Cartel gone.

Vanster Enan (??):

Garwooken:

Na'Lora:

Thurm Loogg: Trying to get the Cartel back on-planet. (See his speech)

Thurm Loogg: Male Caarite Diplomat 7; IM 1 (+1 Dex); Def 14 (+1 Dex, +1 size); Spd 6 m; WP 8; Atk +5 ranged (3d6, blaster pistol); SV Fort +0, Ref +3, Will +6; SZ S; FP 1; Rep 2; Str 11, Dex 12, Con 8, Int 15, Wis 13, Cha 16.

Equipment: protocol droid BR-3PO.

Skills: Bluff +16, Diplomacy +14, Gather Information +11, Knowledge (Cularin system) +10, Knowledge (business) +11, Read/write Caarimala and Basic, Read/write Huttese,

Read/write Rodian, Sense Motive +11, Speak Basic, Speak Caarimala, Speak Tarasinese, Speak Rodian, Speak Twi-lek, Speak Huttese.

Feats: Persuasive, Skill Emphasis (Bluff), Trustworthy, Weapon Group Proficiency (simple weapons).

Cartel lackies: These individuals have been contracted, through so many intermediaries it isn't even funny, to help buy votes for the Cartel. They have no proof of who they're working for. They're just getting paid. Anyway, buying votes involves getting people to hand over those one-use datapads before time for the vote, so that when the vote comes, all those pads can be set to indicate a preference to allow the Cartel back on-planet. They have a seemingly inexhaustible supply of 5000 credit chips, but will not offer more than one chip for any single datapad. Think ingratiating and manipulative. We need several of these wandering around, going after the pads.

Mol Beldun: Jedi Knight doing the "match-making." Doesn't want to talk politics, is all business.