

All Comers

By Morrie Mullins

Adventure Spoiler Warning: If you haven't played the "Decision" adventure series, please don't read any further. The reactions depicted and the events mentioned in this article reflect what may be viewed as a minority opinion about the events of the "Decision" trilogy, and reading this article may compromise your enjoyment of the trilogy if you haven't already played it.



They're not quite heroes, but they try. There can be no doubt that San Herrera and Nia Reston have Cularin's best interests at heart -- or at least, what they *believe* to be Cularin's best interests. But for all their helpful spirit, for all their initiative, it often seems that they're just a bit "off." Earlier this week, San and Nia organized a rally at the base of Reidi Artom's statue on Cularin. What seemed to be an innocent affair quickly turned into an opportunity for speechifying that struck many as unnecessarily divisive. Even San and Nia seemed somewhat unnerved by the course of events. What follows is a transcription of a portion of the event, as recorded and broadcast on Cularin Central Broadcasting.

A crowd of people mill beneath the statue of Reidi Artom that overlooks one of Cularin's two primary cities. A small platform has been erected, a hasty construction that seems to be all loose boards and half-hammered nails. Two young Humans -- a caption reads "San Herrera and Nia Reston" -- seem to be struggling to set up a sound system. They have a pair of wireless microphones, but neither seems to be working. A Rodian from the crowd wanders to the edge of the stage, takes one of the microphones, and slams it against one of the loose boards. The microphone shrieks and whines to life, and the Rodian hands it to San before stepping back into the crowd.

San Herrera: People of Cularin! We come before you today to reaffirm our shared belief that Cularin cannot and will not be subjected to the will of anyone! Cularin is strong! We can and will take on all comers, and we will emerge victorious!

Shots of faces in the crowd. Whatever the citizens of Gadrin thought they were coming here for, this clearly wasn't it. Their faces show surprise, but as they process San's words, there is also pride. A few of them send up a ragged cheer, which gains in strength even as it begins to fade.

Nia Reston: Look at everything we've done -- everything *you* have done! Look at what we've defeated, together! We never had to count on anyone but ourselves, and we're still here! We're still alive! All comers!

Now the cheering is less ragged. Shapes begin to appear in nearby doorways, people making their way out into the streets. Reidi Artom towers above the two young Humans, keeping her opinions (as always) very much to herself.

San: You kept Cularin safe and whole. *You* did! Did the Republic ever send clone armies here? No! Because Cularin didn't need them. We were able to take care of ourselves!

Voice from the Crowd: The Jedi helped!

Other Voice: Weren't there Republic ships for that last battle?

San and Nia don't seem to hear the latter comment. They look to be getting fired up.

San: Sure, the Jedi helped. So did the droids! So did the Tarasin! So did every other sentient being that lives in Cularin. We've survived things no one else has, things no one else could!

Nia: Every day is a different trial, Cularin. And we've survived them all! We don't need to worry about the armies of the Separatists. If they wanted us, they would have come, and you know what we would have done?

Voice from the Crowd (probably not the same): Killed 'em! Death to the Separatists!

Other voices echo the call. Nia looks at San, who shrugs.

Nia: We would have sent them away, just like we sent away everyone else who wanted to hurt Cularin! Who needs Thaere?

Who needs the Cartel?

Voice from the Crowd: Aren't they still here?

Other Voice from the Crowd: Death to the piggies!

Nia: We don't have to kill them -- we can just send them away! Cularin can be completely self-sufficient. So what if the Senate didn't want to help us? We didn't need them, did we? They can keep their scorch-marked clone armies and their slave droids! Leave Cularin to take care of herself. We can handle all comers!

Voices from the Crowd (not quite in unison): All comers!

San: In the spirit of victory, we want you all to contact Senator Wren. Let her know that we aren't happy with the support the Senate has offered. Cularin is sovereign! We don't need a Senate that sits on its hands for years while Thaere tries to subjugate us, and only acts when they are forced to do so! We made it on our own for two hundred years, we've got a standing military, we've got everything we need. Why should we care about having a vote in the Senate now, when we've proven over and over that we don't need anyone but each other?

Nia: Cularin was forced to stand alone, and we stood strong! Let the Separatists try -- their Thaereian monkey-lizards couldn't do anything to us, and neither can anyone else! All comers!

Crowd: All comers!

At this point, members of the crowd -- which has been growing continuously, people streaming in from side streets to hear what the disturbance was about -- begin making their way to the makeshift platform. The first to mount the platform is a nervous-looking Devaronian, a male of middle years with a scar running across his forehead. San hands him a mic.

Devaronian: I just want to say, I been all over the place. The galaxy -- big! And Cularin's the best place I been. None of that sitting around. Problem? People do something about it! I been safer here, with wars and Siths and whatever else we got, than anywhere else. Cularin people are tough! I'm stayin'! Finally got a place I believe in!

Nia: All comers!

Crowd (starting to sound a little frenzied): All comers!

The Devaronian steps down from the platform and is replaced almost immediately by a young female Twi'lek. Her lekku twitch as she takes the mic from the Devaronian.

Twi'lek: I was born in Cularin. I never lived anywhere else and I never wanted to. I don't need the Senate! I didn't need Thaere, nobody needed Thaere, but we got them. Now we got the Senate? I don't think that's right. Let Cularin take care of Cularin!

San: She's right! The Senate is great for running a galaxy, but for our system? We can protect ourselves. Let the Senate run the rest of the galaxy!

As he speaks, the Twi'lek makes her way down and a Wookiee -- enormous and black-furred -- stomps onto the platform. It shakes dangerously beneath his massive feet. He grabs a mic from San and roars. A partial translation runs along the bottom of the screen.

Wookiee: Rawrrr! [BEEP] rorr [BEEP] rowrowrwww [BEEP BEEP BEEP-BEEP]! [BEEP] grrror [BEEP-BEEP BEEP]!

Translation: Cularin! [Deleted] Thaere [deleted] insignificant, mindless [deleted]! [Deleted] the Senate [deleted]!

The crowd shouts its approval, many probably as much for the Wookiee's tone as what he said. The Wookiee raises both arms above his head and roars, inadvertently crushing the microphone in the process and sending a painful feedback shriek out over the speakers. If anything, that works the crowd into even more of a frenzy. As the Wookiee hands back the shattered mic, San exchanges a glance with Nia. They both look at the crowd, then at each other once more, lines creasing their foreheads.

San: Now, I love Cularin as much as anybody, but there's no reason to get carried away. We can take care of ourselves, we've taken out every force that's tried to knock us down, but there's no need to say -- well, anything we'd regret.

Crowd: All comers!

San looks chagrined, and barely notices when a Gungan, a blaster rifle slung across his back and a blaster pistol hanging from

each hip, climbs the steps to the platform and takes the mic from his hand.

Gungan: Maxi-big, Culariners! Maxi-big your hearts! Meesa dinkin', meesa not likin' nobody but Cularin. Meesa dinkin', da fightin' not bein' done yet. Wesa needin' ta close Cularin's borders! Keep out da ones dat wants to hurt us! Mya blaster --

He swings the blaster rifle from his shoulder around and cradles it with the arm that's not currently holding the microphone.

Gungan: -- her name be Reva. Reva sayin', nobody better to be tellin' Cularin what to do, or Reva's bombad blastin' at dere faces! Dat's what Reva sayin', and meesa dinkin' dat sounds pretty good!

He raises the blaster rifle above his head and fires a rapid burst of bolts into the air. His firing is followed quickly by a half-dozen more citizens illegally discharging weapons. The statute involving penalties for unnecessarily discharging firearms within Gadrin corporate limits scrolls across the bottom of the screen, with fines and incarceration times in bold text.

Gungan: Alla comers!

Crowd: Alla comers!

The Gungan tosses the mic back to San, then blasts another volley into the sky. Now at least fifty blasters in the crowd fire with him.

San: Look, we need to be calm about this --

He's cut off as a Tarasin staggers onto the platform and grabs the mic. The Tarasin, a female of some years, stares at the mic for several seconds before spitting on the platform and taking a deep breath. Her skin tone shifts from greenish-yellow to bright yellow to red as she begins to talk.

Tarasin (slightly slurred): I'm nobody important. But my kind have been here longer than anybody else. And nothing good comes of outsiders coming here. Nothing! You all, the ones as was born here -- I love you all! You're my brothers and sisters! But we don't need no Senate, 'cause the Senate don't need us! Little backwater Cularin, not good for nothing, gonna stick 'em with a bunch of lunatics what'll want to take 'em over and try to invade and kill our friends and family. You know what I say to that? Keep your help. Too little, too late. Let Cularin be Cularin. We can take 'em on! Yeah!

Crowd: All comers!

She tries to hand the mic to San, almost drops it before he can wrap his hand around it, and then turns around and steps off the edge of the stage. Her fall is broken by the black-furred Wookiee, who catches her in mid-roar, looks a little surprised, and places her gently on her feet. Then more blasters go off, the sky turning into a fireworks display. San and Nia hurry from the platform and disappear as the throng surges forward, crushing the wood construction. The crowd continues to get rowdier, but the sound on the playback diminishes, replaced by a Cularin Central Broadcasting announcer.

Broadcast Voice-Over: For several tense minutes, it seemed that the mob might become violent. The makeshift stage was crushed, and several harsh words were exchanged. A number of small fights broke out, but thankfully, no one was hurt. Property damage was minimal, limited to a handful of broken windows. Herrera and Reston remain at large. Cularin Central Broadcasting would like to take this opportunity to officially thank the Senate, and in particular Chancellor Palpatine, for coming to Cularin's aid in the recent conflict. We would like to assure the Senate that this disturbance, while regrettable, represents a very small minority opinion, voiced at a time when it appears that at least some of the participants may have been operating with impaired judgment.