

# The Hand

**Episode II of the EndTimes Trilogy  
A One-Round LIVING FORCE Tournament**

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From somewhere deep in the asteroid belt comes a distress call – a very specific call to the heroes of Cularin, from an old ally. Unfortunately, certain non-heroic elements seem to have intercepted it as well... An adventure for LIVING FORCE heroes levels 4-12. This scenario should be played after “*The Heart*” and prior to “*The Eye*” (Episodes I and III of the EndTimes trilogy.), and after all other trilogies have been completed.

*The Hand* is a standard RPGA Network tournament. A four-hour time block has been set aside for this event but the actual playing time should be about three and a half hours.

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

**Reporting the game for RPGA:** The RPGA tracks adventures for the Player Rewards program. The Senior GM or Event Coordinator should provide a form to the GM for this purpose. Both the GM and the players need to list their name and RPGA number on the form.

GMs of RPGA tournaments are expected to be familiar with the RPGA Rules and Penalty documents. These are available as downloads from the RPGA web site at [www.rpga.com](http://www.rpga.com).

**A note about the text:** Some of the text in the module is written so that you may present it as written to the players, while other text is for your eyes only. Text intended for the players is 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.

## House Rules

There are a large number of players throughout the world playing *LIVING FORCE*, and it's impossible to supervise them the way one might in a home campaign. As a result, we have a few house rules. These are outlined here for you.

## Atoning for Dark Side Points

Heroes may, at the discretion of the GM, atone for Dark Side Points acquired during play by spending one Force Point to atone for one Dark Side Point. Heroes may only atone for one DSP per scenario played, and only if, in the judgment of the GM, the hero shows proper remorse and understanding of the dangers of the dark side. Players are required to keep a running total on their log sheets of all Dark Side Points ever acquired, even if the hero has atoned for them.

## Dissipate Energy

Dissipate energy only works against energy damage to Wounds. It has no effect against vitality damage or stun weapon attacks. Also, the DC for the Fortitude saving throw should be "10 + damage dealt," not just "damage dealt".

## Illusion

Use of the Illusion skill allows a save when the hero views or otherwise interacts with the illusion. If the player succeeds at the save, the illusion is seen as an outline only, and anything that might have otherwise been hidden inside or behind the illusion is visible. Illusion cannot be utilized to create "an illusion of nothing"; it cannot make something invisible.

## Stun

If a hero hit by a stun attack makes his or her Fortitude save, the hero is unaffected by the stun attack and takes no damage. A hero who fails the Fortitude saving throw is unconscious for 1d4+1 rounds. This ruling includes heroes in the area of effect of a stun grenade. This house rule supersedes the rules in the *SWRPG-RCR*.

## Hero Earnings

At the beginning of the round, if the heroes are employed, they receive their pay. No matter how much time has passed since the previous round, they receive pay for one week. Heroes may not have more than one employer. Heroes who are not employed but who have Entertain, Gamble, or Profession skills may roll against those skills to see how much they have earned in the last week. Rather than using the method in the core rules for Entertain or Gamble, however, use the method described for the Profession skill on page 96; that is, roll the check, and then multiply the result by 100 credits to determine the amount you made that week. Note that heroes may use only one of the above methods each round and must choose which before rolling (Employment, Entertain, Gamble, or Profession). Per the rules, you may take 10 on Entertain or Profession checks, but not on Gamble. There is no pay for unskilled labor in the *LIVING FORCE* campaign.

## Issuing Force and Dark Side Points

**Issuing Force Points:** When heroes perform cinematically heroic actions, you may issue a Force Point. Because this is a heroic campaign, we expect heroism and encourage judges to reward it. In the course of a standard *LIVING FORCE* event, there are many opportunities for heroism. If a *LIVING FORCE* hero performs in a way

that is heroic, dramatic, and cinematic, then a Force Point is definitely in order. Our favorite story involved the hero at the premiere, who leapt from a moving speeder, grabbed a vine, and swung on that vine to attack someone in another moving speeder. THAT is dramatic, cinematic heroism!

Not everything is that extreme, and you don't have to jump from a moving speeder to earn a Force Point, but if a hero does something that makes you, the judge, say, 'Wow,' then they should probably get a FP.

The core rules (pg 178) define "Dramatic Heroism" as follows:

To qualify as an act of dramatic heroism, an action must fulfill three criteria:

- ∞ It must accomplish a significant task in the defense of good or the defeat of evil;
- ∞ It must occur at a dramatically appropriate time (usually the climax of the adventure); and
- ∞ It should require significant risk on the part of the hero.

**Issuing Dark Side Points:** Unfortunately, it is impossible to produce an exhaustive list of all the possible ways people can get Dark Side Points. There are just too many ways that the beginnings of "evil" can manifest themselves.

To quote the *Star Wars Roleplaying Game Dark Side Sourcebook*... "Evil is not always easy to recognize. An innocent act may ultimately result in great suffering. An act of revenge may save the lives of millions of people. The pure at heart can lash out in anger. Evil may lurk beneath a mask of virtue. Whether an act is evil or not often boils down to a question of motivation, and motivation can be hard to identify.

"When a Gamemaster is in doubt about whether to award a Dark Side Point to a character, he or she should consider the character's motives: Did the character act out of anger? Hatred? Cruelty? Vengeance? Pride? Did the character choose an option simply because it would allow her to spill an enemy's blood? Was greed or envy involved? Jealousy?" (Great section, beginning on page 41, which illustrates the problem fairly precisely.) The GM must assess the motivations of the character, and if those motivations derive from the base emotions that are the path to the dark side, then a DSP is appropriate.

**Wookiees, Rage and Dark Side Points:** Per the sidebar on page 182 of the *Star Wars Roleplaying Game Revised Core Rule Book*,

Wookiee Force users do not gain Dark Side Points for following their natural tendencies and using the Wookiee rage species ability. They do receive a Dark Side Point, however, if they incorporate Wookiee rage with any of their Force skills.

In addition, while in a Wookiee rage, a Wookiee Force user can't call upon the Force (except for calling upon the Dark Side when using a Force point). All other uses of the Force require more calm and peace than the Wookiee can manage while in the natural frenzy.

### General Notes to the GM

When running this adventure, or any *Star Wars* adventure, keep in mind the *Star Wars* adventures should seem like the *Star Wars* movies. The action should flow quickly and the players should not get caught up in too many mechanical details of what they are doing. Describe things in sweeping statements, and recall scenes from the movies when necessary to help players visualize what is going on. More than anything else, have fun.

LIVING FORCE adventures are not designed purely to kill characters. If you believe a combat is genuinely too tough for a group you are running, scale it down. If you believe it will be far too simple, scale it up—within reason. Do your best to keep fights cinematic and interesting, and if someone dies because they made a glorious sacrifice, that's fine. What we want to avoid are the "dumb" deaths that result from a string of bad dice rolls. That's not cinematic, and it's not what *Star Wars*, or LIVING FORCE, are about. That being said, this is the finale trilogy for the campaign. If there's a time for characters to go out in the proverbial "blaze of glory," this is probably it.

This is an adventure for to mid- to high-level LIVING FORCE heroes, and therefore characters levels 4 through 12 are appropriate. If your players do not have heroes, help them create new ones (see your event coordinator for hero creation instructions).

## GM Overview

Some time ago, events transpired that left the population of Cularin believing that one of their allies, the crimelord Nirama, had been killed. Nirama wasn't dead, a fact known to some heroes – but the return of certain other elements did force him to flee.

For better or worse, he isn't the type to stay retired. Cularin became his home; he fought for it in

the Thaereian conflict, and he believes very strongly in the battle the heroes of Cularin continue to wage. Perhaps most important to Nirama, though, is the service those heroes performed for him in returning his people – the Oblee – to the galaxy. More than a few heroes died to bring back the Oblee, and Nirama could not in good conscience leave Cularin to its fate. Not when he learned that Len Markus was returning to the system, and certainly not when he learned that Len had another target in mind this time.

So Nirama returned, traveling as stealthily as he could, and took up residence deep within the Asteroid Belt once more. Hidden inside one of his various bases, in an area called Red Sector that the heroes may be familiar with (it's been a while, but heroes who played the Year One module *TopWorld* were assigned as a security detail in Red Sector, part of an effort on behalf of Nirama to sniff out the Cell, a fringe group within his smuggling organization), Nirama waits. He can't come onto any of the planets; with most of the Oblee relocated to their new homeworld any Oblee is a rare sight and he's fairly recognizable. He is thus forced to send out a distress call, very similar to messages he's used before in contacting the heroes, in the hopes that those who have worked with him in the past will come to him once more. He's fairly certain he knows how to destroy the weapon Markus retrieved from the Asteroid Belt some time ago (the darkstaff), but again, lacks the capacity to do anything about it himself right now. His personnel are scattered, and what resources he had remaining went to smuggling himself back into Cularin. He isn't sure he's going to make it out alive, but knows that he owes his adopted home his life, if necessary.

Unfortunately, someone else has been monitoring the frequencies Nirama was likely to use. Len Markus intercepted the transmission and, with a team of mercenaries, headed straight for Red Sector.

### **Encounter 1: Distress**

Heroes who have received the gratitude of Nirama, for any of a variety of reasons, are contacted via courier. They, and any associates who are willing, are asked to meet up with several other invitees and come to the Asteroid Belt. Unfortunately, the transmission was intercepted, and someone attempts to stop the heroes' progress before it even starts.

### **Encounter 2: Transitions**

The heroes travel to Red Sector, an area in the Asteroid Belt where some of them may have spent a little time several years back. Landing on an asteroid, they find another encrypted message waiting for them, also from Nirama. It contains passcodes to get them through the various security systems that are in-place; unfortunately, someone has already been here, and may have changed the passcodes.

### **Encounter 3: Intruders**

The heroes must make use of their skills as they are forced to manually bypass Red Sector's security systems. Tech-focused heroes have a real chance to shine, as do heroes who prefer a more cerebral approach to problem solving.

### **Encounter 4: Dinky**

Several years ago, the heroes may have encountered a juvenile rancor named Bender, one of Nirama's pets. Bender's father is "Dinky," a rancor with an appropriately ironic name who has been left in Red Sector alone for some time and is more than a little hungry. The heroes must make their way past Dinky – one way or another.

### **Encounter 5: Broadcast**

Nirama, in the control room where he's been waiting for the heroes, finally sees the full extent of the danger of his situation when his location comes under attack. Realizing that the heroes have been diverted and that teams are on the way to intercept them, he broadcasts on all channels, telling them that he is under attack, they are about to be, and that the way to destroy the darkstaff is to – The transmission ends with an explosion, which leads directly into a running fight through the corridors of Red Sector.

### **Encounter 6: Disposable Assets**

The heroes move from one running fight into another, as the security droids that had been installed in Red Sector are activated. Of course, it's Len Markus's doing; he doesn't care about these droids, it's just another way for him to buy time to have Nirama tortured for information prior to killing him. The heroes can figure out how to shut down the droids using the security grid, or they can simply blast their way through.

### **Encounter 7: Endings**

The heroes arrive at the security control room to find the door blown off, and Nirama's face, frozen

on one of the monitors. Then Markus appears on another monitor. He gives a classic “villain” speech, telling the heroes they should leave Cularin while they can. Then he raises a remote control and presses a button. The screen with Nirama’s face on it unfreezes. The camera pulls back, and the gunman standing beside the erstwhile crimelord pulls his trigger. The heroes have one more chance to capture Markus’s mercenaries – or they can retrieve Nirama’s body, to see if he has any hints as to how they can deal with the darkstaff on his person.

**Important Note to Judges:** We’re not sure if anyone is really “neutral” about Nirama. He’s pretty much love-him or hate-him. You need to leverage this. Remember, he’s a crimelord, but he did a lot for Cularin, committing resources and troops to fight alongside the Militia and turning the tide of several battles. Of course, he also had someone killed in front of the heroes – in exactly the same way he himself is probably killed, in the last encounter. This may be a draining module, in a number of respects; there are a lot of potential combats, but this is also the end for yet another of Cularin’s prominent personages.

**Clarification regarding tiering notation:** when you see something like “DC 15/20/25”, use the lowest DC for the lowest tier, the middle for mid-tier and the highest for high tier. In this scenario, tiers are for character levels: 4-6, 7-9, and 10+.

## Opening Crawl

***It is a time of strife in Cularin. Dark forces are on the move.***

***The Believers, once a major threat, have been all but eradicated. Rumor has their leader in the system, though – Len Markus, an individual with whom the heroes are all too familiar. What exactly he has planned remains to be seen...***

## Encounter 1: Distress

*Key ideas of this encounter: getting the heroes together and then coming under attack almost immediately*

If there’s one thing we’ve learned over the years, it’s that if you provide our creative band of LF

players with the opportunity to avoid the module entirely, some of them will take full advantage. As such, the “hook” for this module isn’t really open for discussion; the heroes have already received a message via courier, and arrived at the appointed hangar at the appointed time. Trust us when we say that there is a lot that needs to happen in the next few hours, and we hope that your players can forgive you (well, us) for not giving them the choice as to whether or not they should answer the summons. Ultimately, they were going to have to answer it, one way or another; if you don’t go into the theater, after all, you can’t see the movie.

The text of the summons they received is included as **Player Handout #1**. Read the box text below, to establish the scene, then turn over the handout to them.

***The Hedrett Groundport is abustle with activity. Sleds of cargo shoved from one hangar to another, customs checking the goods, and OPS patrols mingling with the normal, harried travelers. The Groundport smells of grease, with a halting undertone of something burned. Nothing new there.***

***You make your way through the throng to hangar 318, curious as to what awaits you. Every face in the crowd looks familiar, but at the same time very strange. The message the courier brought this morning shouldn’t have existed. And yet, it did.***

***The blast doors labeled “318” are ahead of you; standing by the doors are a number of individuals, already waiting.***

These, of course, are the other heroes. We’d say that this is a fine time for the players to introduce their heroes and describe what they look like, but they’re probably more interested in why they’re here.

The text of the courier’s message – written longhand, of all things – is as follows. All the heroes received the exact same message from the exact same courier, a young Human male with sandy blond hair and a two-day growth of facial hair that went by the name Acan. Acan wasn’t equipped to answer questions; his job was to deliver the messages and deny any knowledge of their contents.

*Greetings. Recent events were necessarily exaggerated, for purposes of survival. I apologize for any undue concern my disappearance may have caused, but in matters of self-preservation I can only plead necessity. Events were beginning to*

*unfold in Cularin that required I remove myself from them, to research them more thoroughly. I knew Markus was returning with his 'darkstaff,' and knew that I must do my part to stop him from doing the will of that thing. It must be destroyed.*

*I believe I have learned how to accomplish this goal, but the information cannot be safely transmitted, nor can I act on it without my organization's infrastructure in place. The Hutt did not take my life, only my ability to function as effectively as I once did. I need your assistance for this, our most critical mission. If Markus is not stopped, I believe he may kill every living creature in Cularin. I cannot allow this. I am asking you, and others whom I trust or whose reputations precede them, to help me destroy the darkstaff and stop Len Markus. Please come to me in the Belt. A ship awaits you in Hedrett, hangar 318. Take it, or don't, but I have left the coordinates where you may find me on the ship.*

*Come to me soon. Cularin depends on you.*  
~N

If the heroes ask (and I'm sure they will), none of their contacts know anything about Nirama being alive, but anyone with the Forgery skill may have you make a check for them; the document is almost definitely in Nirama's hand.

Now, if they haven't already, would be a good time for the heroes to introduce themselves and describe their appearances – if not for the explosion from inside the hangar.

The blast doors are locked, but the lock can be sliced quickly (Computer Use or Disable Device, DC 15/20/25). There's also a side door, if the heroes would rather go there; it's just around the corner from the main blast doors, and standing wide open. The scene is as follows:

***A YT-1300 stands in the middle of the hangar, the roof of which is already open to the sky. Between you and the ship lies the body of a young man. Two rough looking Trandoshans stand over him, laughing.***

Somebody (Len Markus) found out about Acan and sent some lackeys to take out the courier and destroy any information he had about where the ship was headed. Fortunately for the heroes, Nirama isn't the only individual whose resources have been sapped recently; Grug and Gurg, the Trandoshans, aren't exactly particle physicists. They're thugs who like to hurt people and blow things up, usually (but not necessarily) in that order. Grug and Gurg are nothing more than third-level

thug-class baddies who happen to have been given a small stockpile of frag grenades to do their work with. They're mainly a distraction and a way to slow the heroes down. Markus has figured out where Nirama is, and wants to have a head start on getting to his former employer. He holds a pretty mean grudge.

Grug and Gurg's stat blocks, such as they are, are included as **GM Aid 1** – along with all the other stat blocks you may need for the event. These guys are a speed bump, so don't drag this fight out. And Acan? He's dead. Someone tossed him a frag grenade, and he reflexively caught it.

Oops.

The Trandoshans weren't ever going to find the coordinates to Nirama's location. They just weren't perceptive enough. That wasn't their job, though; they just wanted to blow it up. Once the fight is over, the heroes are likely to want to (a) find out who hired the thugs and (b) find the coordinates.

The answer to (a) is "The pale man." That's all Grug and Gurg knew Markus as, though they recognize Markus's description and can confirm that yes, it was him. If asked, they also remember that he did carry a black stick matching the darkstaff's description.

For (b), the heroes are welcome to search the ship – but it's not necessary. Have the heroes make rolls against one or more of the following skills: Knowledge (Cularin politics), Knowledge (spacer lore), any other knowledge skill relevant to ships, Pilot, or if you get really desperate, Astrogate. What you're looking for is any skill that allows the hero to recognize that the identification numbers on the side of the ship are of the wrong format. The DC is one less than whatever the highest relevant skill roll happens to be. Tell the player who makes that roll the following:

***Glancing at the ship, you notice something – the registration numbers on the ship's side aren't in the right format. Two sets of digits, one below the other... then you remember the note.***

***"I have left the coordinates where you may find me on the ship."***

The heroes are now free to use either the ship that was left for them, or take their own. It matters not.

Oh – and now would be a good time for them to introduce themselves and describe their characters.

## Encounter 2: Transitions

*Key ideas of this encounter: the heroes arrive at the designated coordinates within the Belt, an asteroid that was once part of Nirama's operational complex; an encoded message awaits them, which they must decrypt, then determine what to do with the information they obtain*

A long time ago – way back in the first year of the campaign – the heroes were asked by Nirama to help identify a splinter faction within his smuggling organization. This group, calling themselves “The Cell,” were eventually located and dealt with, in a manner befitting a crimelord and those who sought to undermine his control. This initial foray into the Asteroid Belt, the “Between the Worlds” trilogy, introduced the heroes to a number of locations. One of these locations was Red Sector, where they were asked to take on the role of security personnel while assisting Nirama in locating the Cell.

Red Sector is where Nirama has chosen to hole up and wait for the heroes; this is where the coordinates lead them, though due to the nature of the Asteroid Belt (things don't actually stay in one place very long), there wasn't much way to know where they would end up. Anyone who played the module “TopWorld,” however, recognizes Red Sector when they arrive. The upkeep hasn't been all that great for the past few months (it's not the kind of place Nirama's “replacements” cared much about), but the landing bay is very distinctive, as are the markings on the outer blast doors.

The last time the heroes were here, everything was business, and the corridors were packed with outlaws. Now, the inside of the asteroid is as silent as its outside. It's a little eerie, and more than a touch disconcerting.

When the heroes land in the main bay, read the following:

***The coordinates you were given brought you to this asteroid, just as desolate and gray on the outside as every other rock floating through space. Inside, the walls of the docking bay are marred with carbon scoring from blaster fire, and shattered glass (transglass, vors-glass, or something else, you can't tell immediately) and sheared metal are strewn across the floor.***

The shattered glass is actually transglass, which is often used to make faceplates for survival suits

and some makes of armored helmets. Whatever went down here in the end, it wasn't pretty.

There are a few things that observant heroes may note here. We're going to break them out by the relevant skill.

### Spot

Anyone without any of the other “relevant” skills should still be given a chance to notice (Spot, DC 10/14/18) that while three corridors (each blocked with its own blast door) lead out of the docking bay, beside one is a panel with two lights blinking, alternating red and green.

A datapad has been left against each of the three doors. Anyone approaching any of the doors notices the datapad without a roll. The pads are not trapped, though paranoia may be appropriate.

### Survival

Anyone with the Survival skill and the Track feat (which doesn't come up all that often) can make a roll. The Survival DC is 20/25/30. Success indicates that there are no tracks here. At all. It's actually disturbing, because this place has obviously been deserted for some time, but there's not even any dust in the main area. Everything is a little bit too perfect. The only thing that looks at all odd is that some of the bits of transglass look to have been stepped on recently. In fact, one piece (which, based on its curvature, was part of a faceplate) has a partial footprint on it. So, no tracks on the ground, but part of one on a faceplate, with some kind of liquid that hasn't quite evaporated yet still glistening on the glassy surface. In other words, someone has been in this docking bay in the past hour or two at the most.

It wasn't just the landing of the ship that removed the dust, either. There isn't dust settling to the ground; there is no dust here, which makes little sense given the disarray of the docking bay and the fact that the air circulation system is clearly not working. Everything in here is very stale; there isn't a whole lot of breathable air in the docking bay.

### Computer Use

The datapads are encrypted. It's pretty hefty encryption, but Nirama was willing to trust that the heroes would be up to the task. (Note that if they aren't, you should adjust the DCs down appropriately. As with so many things “Force,” make it challenging and interesting, but ultimately do-able.) Slicing the encryption requires a Computer Use check, DC 25/30/35. This allows

the heroes to retrieve the message left by Nirama, which is present on all three datapads.

***You finish slicing the encryption and Nirama's voice – sounding a little tinny – emerges from the small speaker on the side of the pad.***

***"Thank you for coming. I have powered down the internal communication system, to make it more difficult for scanners to detect our presence. The security systems are, unfortunately, active. They have been active since my people vacated, and to shut them off would be to invite attention. I have included a file with the passcodes on each of the four pads left in the bay. With these, you should be able to bypass the security measures as you reach them. I am on the lower level, in the security center. Come to me, and we will discuss Markus."***

#### Search

They can search all they want; there are only three datapads in the docking bay, despite what Nirama said.

#### Disable Device

The flashing red and green lights beside one of the doors are part of the security system. The security is, as Nirama noted, active (so we'd suggest resolving the rolls relating to finding and hearing his message prior to resolving any attempts to disable Red Sector's security system).

On the down-side, the passcodes Nirama left? They don't work. Anyone with Disable Device can make a roll while examining the security system (DC 22/27/32) to determine that not only is the security system active, but it's been tampered with in the last hour.

It is possible to undo the tampering. However, it's not easy, and it can't be done from here in any reasonable amount of time, because the parts of the system that are accessible from the main hangar have all been re-wired. It would take (DC 20 Disable Device to figure this out) around two hours to fix what was done to the wiring; the heroes have to get a little further in before they can reset the security system so that their passcodes work.

This means that any of the tech-focused members of the crew have their work cut out for them, early. They need to keep the security system from activating when they open any of the three sets of doors. Suppressing the security on the doors requires a DC 23/26/29 check. It makes a difference which set of doors the heroes go through; the doors on either the left or right lead to

Encounter 3, the door in the center leads to Encounter 4 (it's a turbolift that carries them down to a familiar cantina area).

If they go to Encounter 3 first, after completing it they then proceed on to Encounter 4; if they go to 4 first, their conflict with the rancor triggers the events of Encounter 3 as soon as they leave Mokada's place.

## Encounter 3: Intruders

*Key ideas of this encounter: the heroes must bypass Red Sector's various security systems, using a combination of technical skills and, failing that, dumb luck*

In terms of background (which was mentioned earlier, but not fully explained), Len Markus and his crew did arrive here ahead of the heroes. They did obtain one of the datapads with the passcodes, and did subsequently reprogram all the passcodes to something else entirely. They were also responsible for removing the dust to eliminate their tracks (Nirama, sneak that he is, came in through a private entrance, and only approached the docking bay from the far side of the doors), they left the footprint on the faceplate, and they actually did send a team further in. Markus himself is not in Red Sector; he's on the ship hidden in a nearby asteroid, powered down and listening. But he has several of his people inside, and knows that they are likely to reach Nirama and exact the debt Markus feels he owes his erstwhile employer before the heroes can reach the Oblee crimelord.

This encounter may go relatively quickly, if you have one or more particularly tech-savvy heroes. If they make all the rolls on the first try, feel free to sigh and look frustrated and say, "You are so lucky" while shaking your head and flipping to the next encounter. If they don't, well, then they get a second chance before they have to deal with the blaster arrays and the knockout gas.

Remember, you are running this encounter prior to Encounter 4 only if the heroes went through the door on either the right or the left first, heading out of the docking bay. You may also substitute this encounter if the heroes do something unexpected, like prying up the plating on the floor and shimmying through the space beneath, or whatnot. The challenges in this encounter are ones that have to be dealt with

regardless. But there are a few other pieces of information to be gained along the way. We'll deal with these in order.

### Tracking

While the floors in the corridors leading away from the docking bay are transteel and thus don't hold tracks very well, they also haven't been recently cleaned. Several sets of boot prints are visible (Survival DC 18/22/26). One of the sets of boot prints is approximately three days old; the others are less than an hour old (Survival DC 23/26/29). It's impossible to tell exactly how many individuals came through here recently; at least three, maybe as many as six. Because the prints overlap so much, there's no way to be sure. It appears that whoever came this way was also heading for the lower levels.

If no one is able to track, feel free to give Spot checks to let the heroes notice that there has been traffic through here recently, in the form of multiple individuals. No more detailed information can be had, in the absence of someone with the Track feat.

Once this has been established, given everyone Spot checks (DC 15) to notice the security panel on the right-hand wall 30 meters down. We're going to lay out some basic DCs and relevant skills for dealing with these challenges, but as ever, feel free to substitute skill checks that better allow the heroes to shine if there's no one able to do what we ask of them. We want heroic action, not a bunch of players sitting on their hands because none of them have technical skills.

In other words, you have our permission to modify the DCs and skills required as appropriate to keep things interesting and exciting.

### Computer Use

Ask for two checks. Check 1 (DC 15/18/21) reveals that the security system is still active here, and that the passcodes have been changed recently. Check 2 (DC 20/24/28) reveals that there are three different security countermeasures that can be triggered in this corridor. One relates to the floor, one to the ceiling, and one to the far end of the corridor. Without proper passcodes (or other creative workaround), the heroes are likely to trigger all three.

The other question the heroes may have is whether it is possible, from this terminal, to take control of the security system in a way they couldn't from the docking bay. The answer is, Yes, but it requires disabling the various security firewalls that are in-place. Computer Use by itself

isn't enough.

### Spot

Once the heroes know what they're looking for – floor, ceiling, and far end of the corridor – they can make Spot (or Search, I guess) checks to notice hints to at least two of the security measures.

The floor, as mentioned, is transteel. It's also in a roughly diamond-shaped pattern. The key is in the seams (DC 22/25/28 to notice) where one piece of metal meets another – wires run through those seams, capable of turning the floor into one big electrical grid. We'll deal with damage for this under the section on "Blind Heroic Charging" below.

The security at the ceiling level is easier to notice (DC 18/21/24); there are two-centimeter diameter holes every meter or so, where the wall and ceiling meet. When an unauthorized individual steps on the floor past the security panel and onto the diamond-patterned floor, knockout gas is released from these holes. The DCs to save against the gas (which are irrelevant if the heroes happen to have breath masks or the like and choose to wear them) are also dealt with under "Blind Heroic Charging."

The third aspect of the security system, the blaster cannon array, is not something the heroes can see from here. You can guess where we'll describe that in more detail, at this point.

Players with particularly good memories may remark that this feels a little familiar; these security measures are, in fact, similar to the ones utilized by members of Cularin's resistance movement in the first LIVING FORCE trilogy, "The Eye of the Sun." It's completely intentional on our parts, since we wanted a sense of circularity in the finale scenarios. If nobody mentions it, there's no reason for you to bring it up; but we thought it would be better for you to know, in case they did.

### Disable Device

This, of course, is where Disabling Devices comes in handy. Do remember that you make the rolls for the heroes, and they don't know the outcome until they try to move forward.

1. Disabling the security firewalls to allow the security passcodes to be reprogrammed from here: DC 24/28/32. Actually reprogramming the security passcodes then requires a DC 25/30/35 Computer Use check. If this is done, the rest of the device disabling is irrelevant, as the heroes can simply enter their passcodes and continue on.
2. Disabling the three security measures (if the heroes don't try to reprogram the whole

security system again) requires three separate Disable Device rolls. For the electrified floor, the DC is 21/24/27. For the knockout gas, the DC is 23/26/29. And for the blaster cannon array at the far end of the corridor, the DC is 25/28/31.

#### Blind Heroic Charging

We figure it's a one in a thousand shot, but since there are at least a thousand people playing Living Force, that means it should happen at least once. One of the heroes will go screaming off down the corridor, much like Han Solo in *Star Wars Episode IV: A New Hope*, only this time with the intent of triggering all the traps and allowing the rest of the group to deal with whatever threats emerge. It's not exactly the "smart" or "sane" solution, but it's certainly cinematic, in a very red-shirted kind of way, at least.

The corridor is 100 meters long. Once the electrified floor is triggered, read the following: ***The floor crackles, and bursts of energy zip through the seams between the plates, then bounce up to the walls and create an array of electricity flashing back and forth from one wall to the next, all the way down the corridor!***

It's not just the floor, in other words. Having rubber-soled boots isn't going to help. Running down this 100m corridor means that every round, the hero takes 2d6 electrical damage and must make a Fortitude save (DC 10/12/14) to halve the damage and not be knocked unconscious. Being knocked unconscious is bad, since at that point the hero pretty much falls down and does an impression of bacon in the microwave. This does give someone the opportunity for a cinematic rescue, at least.

Anyone who accidentally steps past the security checkpoint and triggers the floor can make a Reflex save (also DC 14) to step back and only take half damage for the round they were on it. The knockout gas in the ceiling does not trigger unless there is continuous contact with the grid floor for at least two rounds.

As to the knockout gas, it releases the second round someone is in contact with the grid floor. Anyone who inhales the gas must make a DC 12 Fortitude save each round. The first failed save results in 1d6 DEX damage; a second failed save results in the hero falling unconscious, with consequences as noted above.

Whenever someone passes the 75m mark in the corridor, a panel in the far wall slides aside and the blaster cannon array activates. There are four blaster cannons, each firing twice a round with an attack bonus of +8 (4d8/19-20). After the

second round, there are only three blaster cannons firing each round, as one cannon is having its power pack changed every round from thereon.

Because it's inevitable that someone will ask: Yes, it is possible to take the blaster cannons. All it takes is 10 minutes to disassemble the complex mounting mechanism that's hard to reach inside the walls. If the heroes are fine taking ten minutes to do this, have them roll the appropriate skill checks and go for it. You also have our blessing to bring the goon squad from Encounter 5 up on them somewhat earlier than might have otherwise been the case.

So, there you have it. Two pages for an encounter that probably gets resolved with three skill checks for most parties. But then, they're heroes – they're supposed to be good at what they do, right?

## Encounter 4: Dinky

*Key ideas of this encounter: conflict with a very hungry rancor that has been feeding off vermin and whatever it can scrounge from the remains of the kitchen for the past two months*

If the heroes went to Encounter 3 first, then once they bypassed all the security features, they found themselves at an elevator that could take them deeper into the complex. If, on the other hand, they went to the middle door first in Encounter 2, they got in an elevator and began their descent. In either case, when the elevator door opens, read the following.

***A pale glow of fading glowbulbs shrouds the huge room before you in an unpleasant grey light. Everything is wrecked, but the wreckage looks old. A sickly smell hangs in the air – something foul and rotting, but underneath that, something worse.***

This is Mokada's Place, a restaurant deep inside Red Sector that has been out of service since before the first year of the campaign. Heroes who played "TopWorld" have been to this place before; it's where they took their "trials" to become part of The Cell. Once they enter and start to look around, you can feel free to give them the map included as **Player Handout #2**.

Anyone with ranks in either Handle Animal or Knowledge (Nature/Wilderness Lore/etc.) can make a roll to identify the smell. The DC is

14/17/20 – rather on the low side because it's not difficult to recognize the smell of a large animal's lair.

In terms of what they see... The contents of the restaurant are strewn all over the place. Broken glasses, broken plates, broken chairs and tables – all litter the floor. A few tables remain standing, and all of them are shown on the map. There are three small tables on the upper level, three mid-size tables and a banquet table on the middle level, and four long tables and one single person table on the lower level. Each level is separated by a set of stairs 1.5 meters in height. A railing runs along the edge of the upper level where it overlooks the lower level, but a gap in the railing (indicated by the partial “V” on the map) provides a space where climbing up or jumping down is relatively easy. Three meters above the upper level is a balcony level. The only access to the balcony area from below is a staircase just to the north of the kitchen entrance that has been magnetically sealed. Almost the entire floor for all three levels is littered with refuse of one type or another.

One major difference between this visit to Mokada's and the last is that before, the door to the kitchen had been magnetically sealed. Now, there is no door – it's been ripped out, and part of the wall around it is gone as well. The kitchen is where Dinky has been living for the past two months, since he broke free of his holding pen in the lower levels and began eating anything he could find. He's malnourished, but still vicious – a little more vicious for being malnourished.

As soon as the elevator door slides shut behind the heroes, proceed to the next boxed text. (Just got tired of writing “Read the following,” sue me.)

***You hear a grunt, and something moving around through the far doors. Then an enormous, wrinkled face emerges, snarling through razor-sharp teeth!***

This is Dinky. Dinky is the father of Bender, the juvenile rancor the heroes dealt with last time they were in Mokada's Place. Dinky had to eat his son three weeks ago; he's not particularly sentimental (he's a RANCOR), but at this point, there's not a whole lot left to eat, and the heroes seem both warm and chewy.

Dinky is not necessarily a standard rancor. Depending on the tier of the group, he may be advanced, maddened, or both. However, he's still “just a rancor,” and anyone with sufficient ranks in the Handle Animal skill may be able to bring Dinky

under control. (Recognizing, of course, that this is not a “standard” use of the skill, we include this option because it doesn't come up all that frequently, and Dinky is about as close to “domesticated” as a rancor can get. He's just been neglected for months, and is somewhat cranky as a result.)

Succeeding at a non-combat interaction with Dinky requires both good skill checks and good roleplaying. Dinky doesn't immediately attack; he's sizing up his prey, trying to pick out who constitutes the greatest threat and who would make the easiest meal. Approaching Dinky slowly, speaking in a soothing voice (the roleplaying of this is critical) and succeeding in a DC 20/23/26 Handle Animal check forces the rancor to pause, very confused. Offering him food provides a +5 circumstance bonus to any interactions with him.

If “negotiations” break down, Dinky's inclination is to grab the nearest hero and start gnawing away. That is, he makes a grapple check to grab a hero with both claws and then uses his bite attack to try to eat the hero's face. He's very straightforward, this rancor of ours. He's hungry, and these moving things smell like food.

One way or another, the heroes need to deal with Dinky. They can then proceed into the corridor that leads deeper into Red Sector. If they've already done Encounter 3, that new corridor leads to Encounter 5; otherwise, it leads to Encounter 3, which leads to Encounter 5 in turn.

## Encounter 5: Broadcast

*Key ideas of this encounter: Nirama comes under attack and breaks communication silence to warn the heroes that they are also about to be attacked, and that they need to get to him quickly*

The heroes come to this encounter in one of two ways. They either reach this point after dealing with Dinky, or after making their way past the array of blaster cannons at the end of Encounter 3. In either case, once both encounters are completed, the heroes enter a narrow corridor (narrow enough that they're forced to walk single-file, so you should ask for a marching order to add to the paranoia) and, after a few meters, hear the following.

***Speakers set into the wall near ceiling-level***

*crackle to life, and a familiar gravelly voice speaks.*

*"I break silence to warn you – they have found me! I see on security cameras, they come for you as well –" Crackling. "– do not know how long blast doors will hold –" More crackling. "– to destroy the darkstaff, you must –" Still more crackling, followed by an explosion. "– tresim volat –"*

*The speakers go dead.*

The last phrase – "tresim volat" – is not something we feel the need to completely explain at this time, since it could mean almost anything and we'd like to keep you guessing. It might be a name, it might be a warning, or it might be the sound of Nirama gargling. No way to know.

The thing is, right now? Not the top priority. Because the heroes are about to come under attack. A team has made its way down behind them, and another has finally made its way to the security station where Nirama was holed up.

Give everyone Listen checks (DC 15; the team coming up behind them aren't making much effort at being stealthy), then remind them that they're in a 2-meter-wide corridor and that any combat they engage in is going to be very problematic. There's a room up ahead where they can spread out, but stopping? Not such a great idea. There's also Nirama, who's currently alive and under attack, and if the heroes can't get to him, neither of those conditions is likely to last for long.

Which means, in the grand tradition of *Star Wars*, it's time for a running fight. Here's how this one is likely to go...

The goon squad (use as many as it takes to keep the party moving; they aren't tiered, and they're 8<sup>th</sup>-level Soldiers, so try not to just wipe out lower-level parties with them, and add enough of them to provide a reasonable challenge for higher-level parties) coming up behind them is coming fast, taking a regular move each round and using the rest of their action to fire at the heroes. During any round, the 1d3 heroes furthest back in the marching order are targets, and 1d3 of the goons (their stats, again, are included in **GM Aid #1**) are doing the shooting. Because they are moving and firing, for the purposes of this combat they can only take a single shot each (attack bonus in that case is +13). Roll randomly to determine who is being shot at if nobody specifically moves to be a target. In the fourth and eighth rounds (assuming continuous movement), the heroes have the opportunity to spread out and all fire back down a narrow corridor.

Or, if that sounds like too much work, just let them run, shoot at them, and see what happens. We're willing to bet that more than a few of our heroes will give the classic, "You go ahead, I'll take care of this!" and stand and fight. It's a classic F/SF archetype, and you know what? This is one of those places where if someone really seems intent on going out in a blaze of glory, they can. It would be a shame for them not to see the finale, but here's what it buys them:

If a hero turns around and stands one-on-many to face down the goon squad (in this case, we will define "many" as a number of goons equal to the number of party members), and if that hero gets killed (it's a bunch of 8<sup>th</sup>-level Soldiers, each taking 5 shots a round; it's not a cakewalk) they have succeeded in buying the rest of the party enough time to actually get to where Nirama is being held and prevent his execution. This is not a guarantee – Nirama is likely to die anyway, and it would take some pretty exceptional action and fast decision-making to save him – but someone willing to do this, a character making this kind of sacrifice... it needs to be worth something. **PLEASE NOTE:** Just turning around and making the heroic stand isn't enough, by itself. Just like not every heroic action is worthy of a Force point, not every heroic stand is worthy of saving the life of a major NPC. A 12<sup>th</sup> level Jedi who makes chopped meat out of our poor soldiers and was never in any real danger can still catch up and try to help the rest of the party out. It's the **sacrifice** that saves Nirama, in the end. We're big believers in parity.

This running fight should, above all, be exciting. Describe the blaster bolts ricocheting off the walls, emphasize the urgency of their flight. One group somewhere up ahead, one group behind, and the answer to how to destroy the darkstaff waiting for them – this should be tense and thrilling as the heroes work their way through 400 meters of winding corridors to get to the door that leads into the security droid lockdown, beyond which is the security room itself.

## Encounter 6: Disposable Assets

*Key ideas of this encounter: the heroes, having successfully dealt with or evaded their pursuers, stumble into the security droid lockdown as Markus's men activate the droids*

Depending on how things go, this may be another combat, or it may be another chance for your resident technophile to shine. Even if the heroes took control of the security system from another location, Markus's first strike team – the team that has been ahead of the heroes the entire time – just took control of the central security station, from which they could override the heroes' control.

When the heroes come through the door into the security droid lockdown, read the following:

***As you step into the room, you're greeted by the sight of what must be sixty or seventy battle droids, fully armed. Every head turns toward you, then every droid rises in unison and turns...***

***One near you speaks. "Intruders, relinquish your weapons."***

This doesn't have to be a fight. As with every room in Red Sector, there's a security panel on the wall (DC 15 Spot; have any techie who's now groaning at having to fight through 63 battle droids roll to notice this).

The heroes **can** fight – but there's no requirement that they do so. With proper roleplaying and planning, we're quite confident they can get someone over to the panel and reprogram the droids through the central security network so that they no longer view the heroes as a threat. Or they can shut the droids down altogether. The passcodes to get them back into the security system haven't been changed (Markus's team doesn't have that much time), and the DC to override the current set of commands for the droids is 20/24/28 (Disable Device). Groups that really want to just continue blasting away are also welcome to do so.

In terms of logistics, the Mad Dash approach may also work. The room is only forty meters from the door where the heroes are standing to the far door; running and hoping not to be killed by blaster fire is an option; divide the attacks of the droids evenly among all heroes that attempt this. (It's kind of metagaming to take this approach, since some players are going to look at 63 battle droids and say, "What, they're fourth level thugs? They can't hit us, let's just go through!" Do make sure to punish any such talk by having one of the droids lob a stun grenade at the square of the offending player's hero. In the absence of that kind of out-of-game reasoning, though, the droids aren't predisposed to use grenades, so we haven't even listed them in the stat blocks. Put differently: A mad, heroic dash is fine. A dash that is consciously informed by the fact that it's very hard

for a fourth-level thug to hit a Jedi Master is not.)

Beyond the droid lockdown area is a branching corridor. It angles down and bends slightly left, where it branches. At the branch, the heroes can smell smoke and see scorch marks coming from the left corridor, along with the sounds of booted feet, running.

## Encounter 7: Endings

*Key ideas of this encounter: a villainous monologue, the death of an ally, and the finding of a clue as to how to stop Len Markus once and for all*

By the time the heroes get to the bend (yes, even with Burst of Speed), it's clear there's no one there. The sounds they heard were actually coming through the security monitors; there's been nobody here for at least five minutes. When they reach the bend, read the following:

***The door in front of you has been blown open, shards of metal sent stabbing into the corridor walls. The control room on the far side contains a pair of chairs, both overturned, and a wall of security monitors showing images from all over Red Sector.***

***The image on one of the monitors is lit like none of the others, and immediately catches your eye. Gaunt and white-haired, with eyes as cold and pale as distant stars, the man whose pursuit of the darkstaff took Cularin out of the galaxy for almost ten years stares out at you.***

***"Ahhh... here you are, the 'heroes of Cularin'. I've been expecting you. I'd say 'just in the nick of time, as usual', but it would seem that this time you're a little too late. Come to save LORD Nirama and stop me, have you? Such charming, if misguided, optimism. Nirama is, as you see, already my guest."***

At this, one of the other screens flickers to life and the heroes see Nirama, kneeling in the middle of a dimly-lit room that looks much like every other room in Red Sector. He is wrapped tightly in wire that cuts into his mottled skin, leaving thin, bloody tracks. His left and right arms are completely confined by the wrapping; the fingers of the rear arm can be seen moving sluggishly. His face, unattractive at the best of times, is particularly unpleasant beneath a mask of blood.

Here's how we see this encounter running.

There are two main options. Markus wants to monologue. He wants to gloat over having finally caught Nirama. Nirama, in the meantime, is trying desperately to convey information to the heroes that they can then use to destroy the darkstaff. Simply blurting it out is not an option, since then Len can act to prevent the heroes from stopping him, so he's using a one-handed variant on the Twi'lek *lekku* language that he desperately hopes the heroes will recognize. See the section, "The Message" for what he's trying to tell them.

As to what the heroes can do... they can stand here, listen to Markus's monologue, and watch as Nirama is executed, or they can rush off down the nearest corridor, realizing that Nirama can't have been taken very far in the time since he broadcast. In this instance, Markus continues to monologue as they run, broadcasting over all channels just like Nirama did to get them there. There is a possibility, albeit a remote one, that the heroes will make it in time to keep Nirama from being killed if they go rushing off to try and save him.

***"Greet our guests, Nirama," Markus grates, and a black clad form briefly obscures the camera, bending over to strike the kneeling crimelord. Nirama grunts in pain, shaking his head, and the figure steps back out of sight. The Oblee leans forward, spitting blood and broken teeth, and again you see an odd, twitching movement in the fingers of his rear-facing hand.***

We're going to break up the box-text. If the heroes decide to rush off and try to find Nirama, they're going to find themselves in the labyrinthine tunnels leading to the core of Red Sector. Or at least, it seems labyrinthine. In fact, there are six crucial decision points where the tunnel branches.

There is, conveniently, a security monitor at each of the branch-points, allowing the heroes to see what is being done to Nirama as they make their decision, and to hear Markus taunting them.

In order to get to where Nirama is being tortured and prevent his death (we're not promising anything else, just that he won't die in this event if they succeed), someone must make the right choice at each place where the corridor splits. The right sequence of choices is left, left, left, right, left, left.

***"Where is your empire, your power, Nirama? I'll tell you – gone. Everything is gone. You're reduced to hiding in asteroids, cringing in fear and calling on Cularin's so-called heroes for***

***help. You can't stop me from having you executed before the eyes of your lackeys, as you once executed my Cell members. You can't do anything at all. How does it feel to be helpless, to know that your continued existence relies on my good will? And you may be completely assure that where you are concerned, I have no good will."***

Yeah, Len has pretty much lost it. He's doing this booming monologue over every speaker in Red Sector, but it's not just technology. It's not just that his slicers are good. The darkstaff wants him to be heard. It wants everyone to know exactly how mad he's become, because while Len can't possibly know it, everyone else may reasonably come to the conclusion that Len is under the darkstaff's influence. Which sets up all sorts of interesting possible moral conundrums, when the heroes finally face him down in the last scenario. In other words, the heroes can't shut him up, no matter how good their Computer Use or Disable Device rolls are.

***"As for you pathetic would-be heroes – you can't stop me. I suppose you'll try – your sort always does – but if you're smart, you'll get out of Cularin. Fast. Don't stop for your belongings, or even your loved ones. If you go now, you might be able to escape with your worthless lives."***

If you want to have some fun, and the heroes haven't already disabled the security system, feel free to have some blaster batteries fire at them as they're running toward where Nirama is being held. Give them Reflex saves (DC 10/14/18) to dodge the incoming fire. Failing just gets them hit for 3d6, no possibility of crits. Use those DCs as attack rolls to set the DC for Jedi to deflect the bolts back at the blasters as well.

In other words, make the rush as interesting and cinematic as possible. They're running, they hear the madman, the tunnel splits, WHICH WAY DO THEY GO, they're running, more madman spewing hate, WHICH WAY DO THEY GO, ALL THE TUNNELS LOOK ALIKE, they're running, etc.

***"Tick tock, heroes. Your time is up. Consider yourselves privileged to view the disposal of this pitiful thing that once had the ambition of power. Nirama – crimelord no longer. Just meat." The barrel of a blaster rifle enters the picture and Nirama looks up. Someone just off-camera growls, "Anything you wanna say, LORD Nirama?" The blaster's barrel digs into***

*the flesh of his temple.*

*Nirama's eyes flicker toward the holorecorder. His rear hand twitches where it's bound against his body, fingers moving in a complex pattern. Then he shouts, "Cularin!" and lunges at the unseen individual holding the blaster.*

*The blaster, still pressed against his temple, fires.*

This is where one of two things has happened. The most likely is that Nirama has just been killed in the exact manner he had one of his underlings executed during that initial trilogy, so long ago, in the presence of the heroes. The symmetry should not be lost on anyone who played the event in question, nor is it lost on Len Markus, who laughs wickedly as the killing shot is delivered.

That's Option A. Nirama is killed, and by the time the heroes find his body, the executioner has fled. If you have any Twi'lek heroes in the party who were paying attention to the security monitors showing Nirama, skip to "The Message" immediately. If not, all the monitors are recording, and the heroes can review the recordings after the fact to discover the presence of the message.

Option B occurs when (a) one of the heroes sacrificed him- or herself to allow the others to get to this point, or (b) when one (or more) of the heroes does something so totally off-the-wall and improbable that you have no choice but to run option B. By "off-the-wall and improbable," we mainly mean that they managed to make the right decisions at each split in the tunnel and get to the room where Nirama was being tortured just as the order for his execution was being given – but not in time to stop the shot from being fired. They had to have been running the whole time, so there's no way they could have been making Survival checks to track where he'd been taken; it really is that random.

The torture location is the secret docking bay where Nirama's ship has been kept, which the mercenaries are going to use to escape. Markus is not now, nor has he been for the duration of the event, on Red Sector.)

Option B adds one line of dialogue to the box-text above. It's spoken by the would-be executioner, and it is simply, **"What are YOU doing here?"** This is addressed either to the hero who had the good fortune to make the right choices (1 time in 64, if it's truly random choosing; unfortunately, the human brain doesn't work that way), or to a shimmering shape that can't be seen on the holoprojection. In the latter case, the

statement is followed by a shriek that allows the heroes to follow it right to where the execution is taking place.

Even if Option B gets run, Nirama still gets shot in the head. The mercenary was distracted – not made incompetent. The difference is, the shot doesn't kill Nirama. It puts him into a coma, however, rendering him a non-entity for the remainder of this trilogy. But he's alive.

Note that if you run Option B from the "Heroic Sacrifice" perspective, when the heroes arrive at the docking bay the executioner is firing wildly at the far corner of the room, where – well, we'll just give you a little box-text, even though it's not likely to be needed very often.

***The man backs toward the airlock, his blaster screaming as bolts ricochet off the far corner. There, amidst the scorch-marks and smoke, stands a shimmering, familiar figure.***

That would be the fallen hero, the one who sacrificed him- or herself to let the rest of the party get here in time. The executioner is a soldier of the same stripe as those in Encounter 5, so should be dealt with easily enough if the heroes arrive in time. The fallen hero's after-image remains, watching, as the heroes confront and deal with the executioner. Then, raising a hand, it fades.

### The Message

Whether Nirama is dead or comatose, he was clearly trying to tell the heroes something. The twitching of his fingers was, as the heroes may suspect, a kind of code, and they have it on the security tape.

What Nirama was doing (as mentioned earlier) was actually an approximation of *lekku*, the Twi'lek head-tail language. It doesn't translate very well to what is effectively signing, but any Twi'lek should have recognized what he was saying: "I hold the answer in the palm of my hand." That, or, "I once vacationed on a mynock's patio." Somehow, stubby fingers don't capture the full flavor of the *lekku* language.

Nirama's message is translatable by anyone who knows the language and views the tape. However, the translation is not immediately necessary. It's also possible to discover his secret as they untie him. Anyone with a medical background is going to be examining him anyway, so have them roll Treat Injury (DC 20/23/26, 5 or more ranks in Spot provides a +2 synergy bonus on the check). If they succeed, they notice a slit in the palm of Nirama's rear hand, which seems to have been sealed with some form of industrial

adhesive (which would have been quite uncomfortable, but one way or another Nirama is currently beyond caring). If no one with medical knowledge decides to examine the body, you may give Spot checks (same DC, but Spot is not now, nor will it ever be, synergistic with itself) to notice this. Inside, Nirama hid a datachip. Not even a full card, just a chip.

And he then died (or got blasted into a coma) to make sure that he would be able to deliver it, rather than being bundled onto a ship and taken away for further torture.

## Conclusion

If Nirama is alive, he is comatose. He will not be awake again for the duration of the campaign. Note that this is also true if he's dead.

Markus and the remainder of his mercenaries are gone, having fled the Asteroid Belt once they exacted Markus's revenge on Nirama. His monologue should make it very clear that the heroes haven't seen the last of him; he's looking forward to having anyone try to stop him. He has every intention of snuffing out the life essence of every so-called "hero" who gets in his way. Modify the following box text in whatever way is necessary. The silence is what's important. Stop any music that you had playing for mood. Pause for several long, quiet seconds. Then, read.

***In the aftermath, Red Sector is completely silent. The security recorders in the ceiling have stopped pivoting, and as you stand, taking stock of your surroundings, the ventilation system wheezes and dies. Nirama lies in the middle of the floor, unmoving. And somewhere out in the Asteroid Belt, you are certain Len Markus must be gloating.***

The datachip hidden beneath Nirama's flesh contains only one file, which is both encrypted and password locked. The password is one the heroes may be able to guess, but barring that, a Computer Use check (DC 18/22/26) allows them to determine that it is simply "Cularin." The encryption takes some time to crack, but anyone who has focused on slicing will be able to decrypt the chip. That decryption gives them the piece of information they need to find the means to destroy the darkstaff and stop Len Markus... but it's not something that can be completed here, on Red Sector. The heroes obtain the message tomorrow

– which is when the final scenario in the trilogy begins.

## Here Ends, "The Hand"

## 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
- 2) Assign discretionary role-playing experience (0-750 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 Nirama and retrieve the datachip? If so, each hero who survived receives 1,500 xp.

Adventure Experience:	1,500 xp
Roleplaying Experience:	0-750 xp

<b>Total Possible Experience:</b>	<b>2.250 xp</b>
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*If the heroes did not complete the scenario because of time constraints, but were "on the right track," you may award ½ adventure experience. If the heroes succeeded in locating Nirama but did not find the datachip (don't worry, someone else will provide the information at the start of the final mod for groups that missed the clue), award them ¾ adventure experience.*

## Loot Summary

If it's not on this list, the heroes cannot keep it. This is a house rule that overrides what they may actually encounter in the scenario.

*Encounter 1*

Various pistols, batons, and frag grenades

*Encounter 2*

3 datapads

*Encounter 3*

Blaster cannons (c'mon, get serious...)

*Encounter 5*

Anything looted off the soldiers

*Encounter 7*

**Nirama's Message:** (cert)(one per hero) In what may have been a last, desperate act, Nirama encoded a clue as to how to destroy the darkstaff on a datachip. The hero named above recovered this chip, but has yet to decrypt it, so Nirama's message remains undisclosed.

## Player Handout 1: The Courier's Message

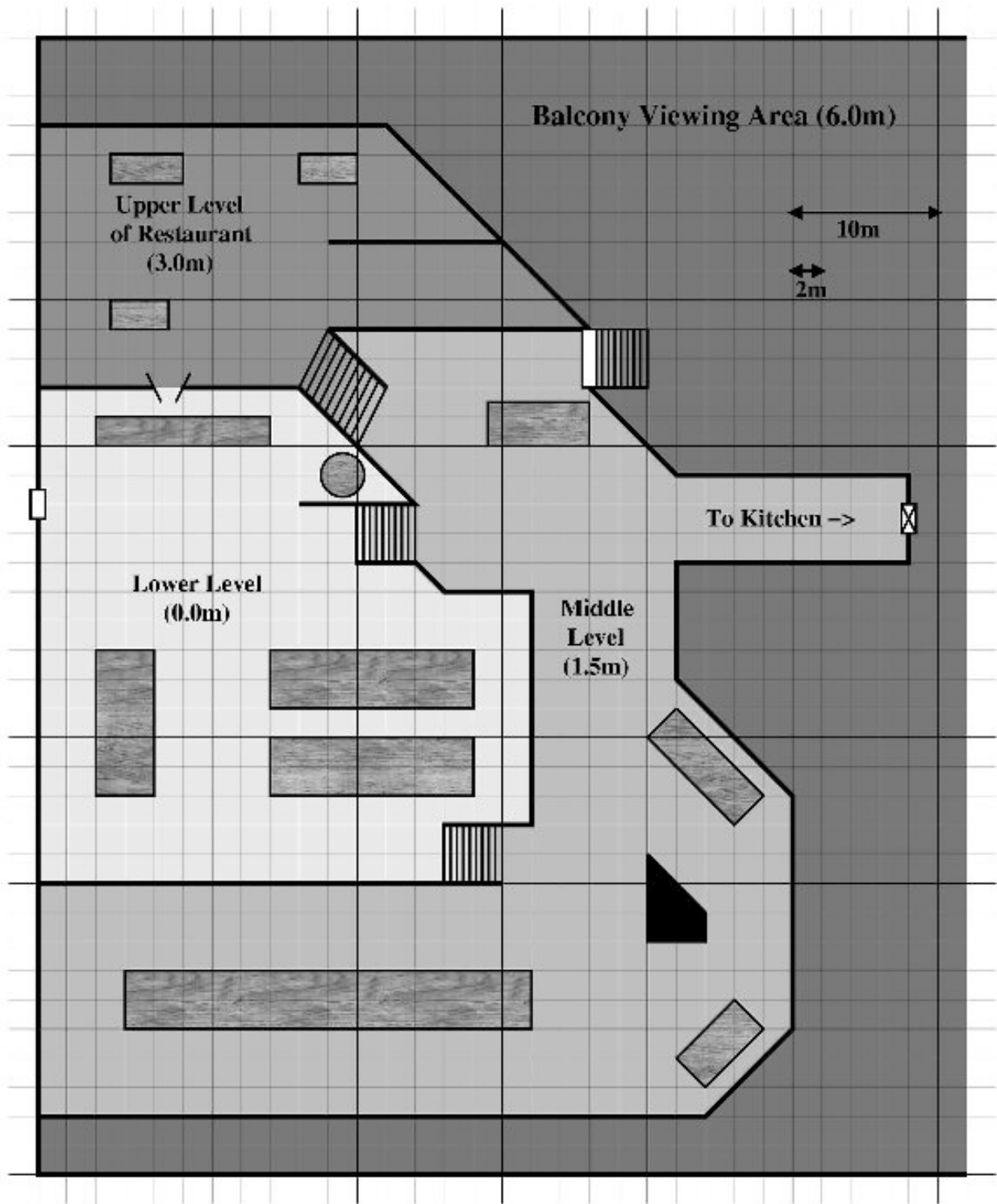
Greetings. Recent events were necessarily exaggerated, for purposes of survival. I apologize for any undue concern my disappearance may have caused, but in matters of self-preservation I plead necessity. Events were beginning to unfold in Cularin that required I remove myself from them, to research them more thoroughly. I knew Markus was returning with his 'darkstaff,' and knew that I must do my part to stop him from doing the will of that thing. It must be destroyed.

I believe I have learned how to accomplish this goal, but the information cannot be safely transmitted, nor can I act on it without my organization's infrastructure in place. The Hutt did not take my life, only my ability to function as effectively as I once did. I need your assistance for this, our most critical mission. If Markus is not stopped, I believe he may kill every living creature in Cularin. I cannot allow this. I am asking you, and others whom I trust or whose reputations precede them, to help me destroy the darkstaff and stop Len Markus. Please come to me in the Belt. A ship awaits you in Hedrett, hangar 318. Take it, or don't, but I have left the coordinates where you may find me on the ship.

Come to me soon. Cularin depends on you.

~N

## Player Handout 2: A Map of Mokada's Place



## GM Aid #1: Combat Statistics

### Encounter 1

#### All Tiers

**Grug and Gurg:** Trandoshan Thug 4; IM +0; Def 12 (+1 class, +1 natural); Spd 10m; VP/WP 0/15; Atk +7 melee (1d6+4, club) or +5 ranged (3d6 or DC 15 stun, blaster pistol) or +4 ranged (4d6+1, frag grenade); SQ darkvision; SV Fort +5, Ref +1, Will +1; FP 0; DSP 1; Rep +1; Str 16, Dex 11, Con 12, Int 8, Wis 10, Cha 9.

Equipment: Blaster pistol, baton, 3 frag grenades each.

Skills: Intimidate +5.

Feats: Armor Proficiency (light), Toughness, Weapon Focus (blaster pistol), Weapon Group Proficiencies (blaster pistols, simple weapons).

### Encounter 4

#### Low Tier

**Dinky, the Rancor:** Predator 5; IM -1 (-1 Dex); Def 20 (-2 size, -1 Dex, +13 Natural); Spd 20m; VP/WP 52/46; Atk +11 melee (2d6+8, 2 claws) or +11 melee (2d8+12, bite) or +2 ranged; SQ low-light vision, fast healing 2, terrifying presence; SV Fort +10, Ref +3, Will -1; Face/Reach 4m by 4m/4m; Str 26, Dex 9, Con 23, Int 4, Wis 7, Cha 4.

Skills: Climb +15, Intimidate +5, Spot +3.

Feats: Power Attack, Track.

#### Middle Tier

**Dinky, the Rancor:** Predator 8; IM +3 (-1 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Def 20 (-2 size, -1 Dex, +13 Natural); Spd 20m; VP/WP 88/46; Atk +15 melee (2d6+9, 2 claws) or +15 melee (2d8+13, bite) or +5 ranged; SQ low-light vision, fast healing 2, terrifying presence; SV Fort +12, Ref +5, Will +0; Face/Reach 4m by 4m/4m; Str 28, Dex 9, Con 23, Int 4, Wis 7, Cha 4.

Skills: Climb +15, Intimidate +5, Spot +9.

Feats: Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Track.

#### Top Tier

**Dinky, the Rancor:** Maddened Predator 8; IM +6 (-1 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative, +3 morale); Def 20 (-2 size, -1 Dex, +13 Natural); Spd 20m; VP/WP 176/46; Atk +19 melee (2d6+9, 2 claws) or +19 melee (2d8+13, bite) or +9 ranged; SQ low-light vision, fast healing 2, terrifying presence; SV Fort +12, Ref +5, Will +4; Face/Reach 4m by 4m/4m; Str 28, Dex 9, Con 23, Int 4, Wis 7, Cha 4.

Skills: Climb +11, Intimidate +1, Spot +5.

Feats: Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Track.

### Encounter 5

#### All Tiers

**Goon squad (number varies):** Soldier 8; IM +7 (+3 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Def 19 (+6 class, +3 Dex); DR 3; Spd 10m; VP/WP 64/15; Atk +9/+4 (2d6+1, vibroblade) or +7/+7/+7/+2/-3 ranged (3d8/19-20, blaster rifle with Multishot and Rapid Shot); SV Fort +8, Ref +5, Will +3; FP 2; DSP 0; Rep +2; Str 13, Dex 16, Con 15, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8.

Equipment: Combat jumpsuit, blaster rifle, multichannel comlink, field kit, macrobinoculars.

Skills: Computer Use +5, Demolitions +6, Intimidate +6, Listen +4, Spot +4, Survival +6, Treat Injury +6.

Feats: Armor (light, medium), Blind-Fight, Improved Initiative, Martial Arts, Mobility, Multishot, Point Blank Shot, Rapid Shot, Weapons (blaster pistols, blaster rifles, heavy weapons, simple weapons, vibro weapons).

## *Encounter 6*

### All Tiers

**High-Level Battle Droid:** Baktoid Combat Automata Battle Droid, Thug 4; IM +1 (-2 remote processor, -1 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Def 10 (+1 class, -1 Dex); DR 3; Spd 10; VP/WP 0/9; Atk +3 melee (1d4+1, hand) or +1 ranged (3d8/19-20, blaster rifle); SV Fort +5, Ref +0, Will +0; FP 0; DSP 0; Rep +1; Str 12, Dex 8, Con 9, Int 6, Wis 8, Cha 6.

Equipment: Armor (light), blaster rifle, integrated comlink, remote receiver (5,000-km range), vocabulator.

Skills: Intimidate +4, Speak Basic.

Feats: Ambidexterity, Armor (light), Improved Initiative, Weapons (blaster pistols, blaster rifles, simple weapons).