

# Metatheran Promise

By Morrie Mullins

Thurm Loogg addresses the people of Cularin, intruding on their daily lives to assure them that the Cartel has no intention of intruding on their daily lives, that all is well, and that as long as the Cartel is present, nothing can go wrong in Cularin! Hear it straight from the, er, horse's mouth in our latest supplement to the **Living Force** campaign.

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Hello, joyous people of Cularin! It is I, the very personification of kindness and gentility that you know and love as Thurm Loogg, and I am once again on your video screens when you may not have expected to see me. Is it not a pleasant surprise? I am here for you, when you did not even ask me to be here! It is as if it were meant to be, do you not think so?

After my last broadcast, there was much discussion of whether the generous and gracious Metatheran Cartel should interrupt your viewing schedules once more with our messages of peace and goodwill. It seems that many of you were angered by the abrupt termination of whatever broadcast you were watching the last time, and that a great many downloads of pictures of myself were interrupted, much to the dismay of all who provide such images. I must warn you, however, that not all of the pictures of the frolicsome Thurm Loogg that you find on your holonet are authentic. For instance, the one in which Thurm Loogg appears to be in the process of courting a rancor -- this is not a real picture! Strange as it may seem, I have never actually had dinner with a rancor. I am told their table manners are such that any occasion that requires formal attire is probably inappropriate for them, and as I would never dream of eating dinner in anything less than formal attire, I do not generally dine with rancors.

Not that there is anything wrong with rancors, of course.

I must also regretfully inform you that the very popular image of the effulgent Thurm Loogg dressed as a Twi'lek dancing girl is not authentic. While the ceremonial lekku attached to my head are, in fact, ceremonial lekku attached to my head, it is the case that my head was removed from my body and attached to the body of a lithe young Twi'lek.

Only in the picture, of course! It would be very uncomfortable, not to mention medically impossible, to actually remove my head and place it on another body. But what a laugh I had when I saw the picture for the first time! I must have laughed for minutes and minutes at the wonderful ingenuity of the people of Cularin. If only you spent as much time planning how to defend yourselves from invaders as you do playing with images of your friends from the Cartel, you might not get invaded so much.

That is a joke! We at the Cartel are very much aware of how much time you spend defending yourselves from invaders. We are certain that Cularin, under the leadership of a woman who lives on Coruscant and with the military guidance of a traitor and a Gungan, must certainly be prepared for every exigency, and that you cannot possibly worry about the outcome of the Clone Wars, much less more immediate threats to your health and well-being!

At that point, my advisors tell me, the probability of any given individual in Cularin turning off their viewscreens or datapads was approximately 82 percent. This is why we bought time on every network in Cularin at once! We of the Cartel do not wish to interfere illegally in your lives. Goodness, no! Illegality is bad! We do not want to be illegal! If we are going to interfere in your lives, we will do it the way the galaxy demands.

We will buy our way in, just like everyone else.

You may be asking yourself, "Why did my viewscreen turn itself back on after I shut it down? Too much of a good thing can be dangerous! Why, as much as I love Thurm Loogg -- because I know how much the Cartel loves me, and all of Cularin -- I do not know how much I can watch of him. It is so much like taking a lick of sugar, then another, and finally pouring the entire bag of sugar in my mouth because it tastes so good, I just cannot stop. This is what Thurm Loogg is like to me! I know this, and so I turned my viewscreen off, and yet, it is on again! Why, oh why?"

To this, I say -- surprise, Cularin! What you did not know about much of your technology is that over the last few years, we have been providing complimentary upgrades to your software! All of your software now functions much more smoothly and efficiently than ever before, all free of charge, courtesy of the omnibenevolent Metatheran Cartel! And one of the things our upgrades allows us to do is to turn your viewscreens and datapads back on when you turn them off by accident! Aren't you excited? Cartel programmers are working hard to make all of your software run smoothly -- especially the software we did not create!

We recommend that you not attempt to modify our modifications to your software, however. Some of you are very proprietary about such things, but the Cartel understands what is best for you. You must trust us! Besides, if you attempt to modify our software and fail, the hardware being controlled will explode immediately, doing much damage to your face and neck.

This is also a joke! We do not want to explode anything in your face that you would not explode in ours.

Isn't it wonderful, being in such a symbiotic relationship?

Now, why is Thurm Loogg, the only non-Jedi ever offered a seat on the illustrious Jedi Council, the only individual actively courted by both the Loyalist and Separatist camps, the true brains behind the Clone Army that will save all of the Republic from certain destruction, speaking to Cularin today? Because it is important that he do so, of course! And because there have been rumblings of discontent throughout Cularin, which we hope to quell, with regard to the Metatheran Cartel.

Sad to say, there are those who still do not trust the Cartel. I do not understand! It has been three years since my foolish-and-well-dead predecessor ordered the cutting of the ch'hala grove on Cularin -- three years! The good-hearted Cartel blasted our own base out of existence to prove our sorrow at my predecessor's actions, we graciously donated a ship to Cularin's defenses, we created secret bases on Tilnes and -- er, that is -- was -- our only base, and it was created to establish a defensive perimeter to assist in keeping Cularin safe, and what response do we get?

You love us! Even from here, in my secret transmission station, I can hear you shouting it at the top of your lungs. "We love you, Thurm Loogg! We love you!"

Admittedly, not all of you love us. But most of you see how much the Cartel loves you, and accept us as the friends we know ourselves to be. Everywhere we go, we are greeted with smiles and gratitude! It is wonderful to be of the Cartel. Wonderful, wonderful, wonderful.

What my most fortuitous and compassionate self would most like to say to you, Cularin, is that while the Cartel is in Cularin, you need not fear any threats from outside your system. We will make things better! Just by being here, the Cartel offers you safety and security. How can you not feel safe and secure, knowing the Cartel is close by?

I know, it is hard to imagine not feeling safe in your homes. Which is why we haven't left! We are not going to leave you, Cularin. The Cartel loves you! We do. And so we will stay, and stay, and stay, risking our lives as your fighters and those of the bad nasty Thaereians -- with whom the Cartel does not, of course, do business, because they are bad and nasty and not at all the kind of individuals the Cartel prefers to deal with -- blast one another into space dust.

Oh, and such explosions! I was watching footage of a battle recently, and I found it interesting that your fighters explode green, and the Thaereian fighters explode red. Isn't that strange? It's like watching celebratory explosions at a coronation!

One moment. I do not think I meant to say that. My teleprompter is behaving curiously. Hello? Who is on the teleprompter? Is it Max again? Hello, is it Max? Max, have I not told you that we do not liken the wholesale slaughter of species to coronations? How many times must I make this clear? You know what this means, don't you, Max? That's right. Max no longer gets a monthly bonus check, at least until next month. Bad Max! I hope you will remember next time!

Where was I? Ah, yes. I was speaking of the glorious defense of Cularin, and the role the Metatheran Cartel will play in this defense.

We have thought long and hard about how to assist in defending Cularin. How can we show Cularin how much the Cartel loves it? How?

Then it came to me, one evening after a meal that was likely much too spicy and upset my stomachs to no end. The best way to help Cularin is to stay out of the way!

That is right, Cularin. The Cartel loves you so much that we are not going to provide you with assistance in defending yourselves. We know that you take much pride in being able to defend yourselves, having spent many years with Thaere looking over your collective shoulders and gathering information about how to suppress any pitiful resistance you might mount. We know! And we respect your desire to not ask for help, since if you had asked for help against the Thaereians long before the great war started, you would have received it, and would not now have the problems you do. So, you must not want help! It is so clear to us!

So the Cartel will respect your wishes. You may go on and fight your little war, and the Cartel will stay out of the way. We will not insult your pride and dignity by fighting your war for you, since we would win it too easily! Where would be the fun in that? The people of Cularin love to fight, and now, you are fighting someone else, and the Cartel is very happy.

For you.

We are very happy *for you!* That is what I meant to say, except that my prompter stopped. Max just lost dessert privileges for the week as well, didn't he?

So, that is our promise to you, Cularin. We will not interfere to help you win this war that you clearly want to win. We will not, because the Cartel loves you! Remember that always!