

Cause of the Month

By Morrie Mullins

A Rodian painter once postulated that "everyone is famous for fifteen parsecs." When asked what that meant, given that the parsec is a unit of distance, the painter sniffed and turned his back on the questioner, stating that, "If you don't understand my art, it isn't my problem." The fact that some amount of fame can befall even the most unworthy, however, has not gone unnoticed in the galaxy.



Take the case of San Herrera and Nia Reston. These two young Humans have, over the past four years, managed to repeatedly find themselves in the wrong place at the wrong time (in the **Living Force** adventures "The Resistance Within," "Something Uffel," "Tilnes Rising," and "Memories"), have published a reflective essay on the nature of death, were subsequently interviewed live on "Eye on Cularin" by Yara Grugara, and most recently published an essay calling for the immediate freeing of every droid in Cularin -- indeed, in the whole galaxy. Now they've been invited back for a second interview with Yara. In her new "serious" role, Yara again has some surprises for the young duo.

San and Nia don't look as young as they used to. They seem more tired than before, and both of them have dark circles beneath their eyes. Most noticeable, however, is the fact that they have begun to dress like adults. Rather than the vest-shirt-pants-boots attire they've always worn in the past, now both San and Nia are nicely dressed, in suits that look to have been custom tailored -- if not at one of the most expensive shops in the galaxy, then at least at a competently managed one. They sit, hands folded in their laps, in a tall-backed black sofa. Both of them assiduously avoid looking at the holorecorder.

Yara enters from the left of the screen, shakes their hands, and takes a seat in a chair opposite them. She speaks to the recorder first.

Yara: Welcome to a special edition of "Eye on Cularin." This isn't Yara's show any more, and she wasn't planning on coming back -- ever -- but I suppose Yara did agree to conduct this follow-up interview, and the network owns her contract. So, here we are.

Nia: Thank you for having us.

Yara nods.

San: You really were the inspiration for us being back here, you know?

Yara had been rather dour up to this point. Now she brightens, the grimly serious newscaster face replaced with a playful half-grin that seems much more at home on the "Eye on Cularin" set.

Yara: Yara? An inspiration? Surely you jest.

San: Not at all. It was something you said the last time we talked that got us thinking.

Yara (beaming): Well, being honest, Yara didn't actually have time to go back and review the entirety of our last interview. Some sort of little argument with the producers got in the way. Now, what was it that Yara said that was so brilliant?

Nia: I'm not sure "brilliant" is the word --

San: You asked us whether the Force was in droids.

Yara: Ah. Now it comes back to me. Well, I'm glad Yara could be of help to you. Goodness knows, Yara has helped a lot of people lately! So, what do you say we jump into the questions, shall we?

San: All right.

Nia looks slightly concerned. She noticed the abrupt shift in Yara's mood, and doesn't look as though she quite trusts where the interview is going to lead.

Yara: So, what are the two of you up to this time? Plotting to overthrow the government?

San (chuckling): No, Yara. Not at all.

Nia (serious): We want the droids to be freed.

Yara: And which droids would those be?

Nia: All of them.

Yara looks at Nia, then at San, then at someone out of viewing range of the recorder. She runs a long, red fingernail over a datapad set into the arm of her chair and nods to herself.

Yara: That's interesting. So tell us, San -- the last time you were here, the conversation involved the two of you and your relationship. There was a third party. I think her name was Philinda, is that right? The "hot one"? How are things going?

San: She's actually been out of the system for a while. She was on Coruscant visiting her family when things with Thaere started to get ugly, and she hasn't been able to make it back in. As for me and Nia, nothing's really changed there. I don't think.

Yara: So you two are an item, then?

San: No.

Nia: Yes.

They look at each other.

San: Yes.

Nia: No.

Yara: This all feels very familiar.

Nia: Can we talk about the droids? It's what we came back here to talk about. I mean, you said that you'd interview us when we did our paper on droids and the Force, and we did. Kind of.

Yara: Wait. You were serious?

Nia: Completely. Free the synthetic people!

Yara: The what?

Nia: The synthetic people. It's what we call droids in our paper. And they should be freed!

Yara: If that's what you came on here for, why is San sitting over here talking about a certain lady friend who, if Yara remembers, you weren't too wild about him spending so much time with before? Why are the two of you discussing your poignant, on-again, off-again love life in such a public forum?

Nia: Because you asked!

Yara: Oh. I suppose I did. Well, I suppose it is what we're here for. Now, let me see if Yara has the context right on this. What we know about you two that's part of the public record is that you've attempted to bring "aid" to the Tarasin when they weren't actually in need of aid, you got trapped in a bar on Tilnes when the mines partially collapsed -- are you even old enough to be in a bar on Tilnes? -- and while you were visiting Uffel, you managed to let an insane droid convince you to attack a group of innocent civilians who were hunting said insane droid down. Does that cover things?

San: You left out the part where we got kidnapped by the Thareians.

Yara: Oops. Yara's mistake. So, having done all those things, having shown somewhat questionable judgment in attempting to help those who either didn't need or didn't want help, what in the world is possessing you to try to free the droids?

Nia: "Synthetic people." Calling them "droids" is demeaning. It's forcing them to be things, rather than recognizing the fact that they're just people who happen to have metal bodies and no internal organs.

Yara: Doesn't that make them machines?

Nia: But they can think! They can feel.

Yara: I can program my toaster so that it works exactly the way I want it to, and if it starts to over-cook my toast, it can tell and it shuts down. Do I need to free my toaster?

Nia: That's silly. There's a difference between a kitchen appliance and a synthetic person. A synthetic person is an individual who ought to have the same rights all the rest of us do. Yara, think about it -- synthetic people are nothing but slaves!

San: She's got a point. We argued a lot about this after we were on your show the last time. Yes they're alive, no they aren't alive, yes the Force is in them, no it isn't, back and forth. But what it comes down to is this: do synthetic people feel? Do they have aspirations of their own, besides "I must please my master?" If so, we can't justify keeping them in servitude to us. We have to set them free.

Yara: Once, my producers sent Daveed out with a new camera to follow Yara on assignment. The camera simply could not capture Yara's natural skin tone. It always made Yara look kind of orange. At first, we thought it was something atmospheric, but then, after a while, someone pulled out the backup camera. And do you know what? It captured the true essence of Yara. But the first camera just refused.

San: I think you lost me.

Nia: Not me. You're lumping all machines together again. Synthetic people aren't toasters, and they aren't cameras. They're sentient beings who deserve our respect. The camera that made you look orange wasn't sentient. It wasn't refusing to do anything. It was just malfunctioning.

Yara: Some might suggest that a droid who thinks it has aspirations beyond "I must please my master" is also malfunctioning.

Nia: Hmff. I'd expected better of "Eye on Cularin" than that kind of species-ist remark. You know, that's just the way Hutts talk about their slaves.

Yara: That they're malfunctioning?

Nia: No. Like they're things, instead of people. We have to break that cycle, Yara. We have to help others see that synthetic people aren't just things. They're individuals. They deserve to be protected just like the rest of us.

Yara smiles. She rolls her fingers on the arm of her chair and nods to someone we can't see.

Yara: Well, kids, it's been a pleasure. Yara always finds it refreshing to see what the youth of Cularin is about, what the cause of the month is. Droid rights. Fascinating. Nia -- any final words?

Nia: Yes. Free the synthetic people! Give them Uffel! Outlaw memory wipes!

Yara: Ah, good. Now we're ceding territory to them. San -- final thoughts?

San: Nia's right. We need to take a long, hard look at how we treat droids --

Nia elbows him. He winces.

San: Synthetic people, I mean. They work hard for us, and they deserve respect and the opportunity to work hard for themselves.

Yara: Well said. Anything else?

San (blushing): If she's watching -- hi, Philinda!

Nia smacks the back of his head. Fade out.

*If you want to learn more about the **Living Force** campaign and how to take part in the adventure, this [introduction](#) will get you started.*