

THE MADNESS OF CHARTRULEAN
A Gardeka Story

S1:E03
"CONDUITS FOR MADNESS"

Written by

H.M. Radcliff

TMOC EPISODE 3: CONDUITS FOR MADNESS

CHARTRULEAN TAKES THE SCENIC ROUTE HOME

NARRATOR

Chartrulean wound his way through the narrow streets of Backalley Market, a small vibrant neighborhood of Simitu. He carried his jacket in the crook of his arm, and loosened the top buttons of his undershirt. The cool night air felt like an embrace after the suffocating atmosphere he had just escaped.

CHARTRULEAN

(thinking)

*It's been a long time since I've
been in this part of the city.*

NARRATOR

Backalley was a place where those who wanted anonymity could find it. It was an area seldom visited by polite society. And frankly, Chartrulean had his fill of polite society for a while.

He liked the market because, unlike the rest of Simitu, it held cultural interest. Filled with exotic colors, patterns, sounds, and smells, it reminded him of Idrica. It lacked the bleakness of modernity. The last time he had walked its congested streets, it felt untouched by the city's political strife. But not anymore. Now, hardly a surface was left untouched by activists.

A shop owner scraped propaganda from his property with a trowel in slow rhythmic motions. The man paused, looked up, and gave the subtlest of knowing nods. Chartrulean could sense the heaviness of his being.

Adding to the tension was an increase of both capital guards and The Order's watchmen. The presence of the guards made sense. The presence of the watchmen, however, did not. Tall faceless half-men in dark robes, they moved on their own but lacked sentience. In place of faces were glowing red diamonds, which peeked out from beneath the hoods of the long dark robes that hid their true abominable multi-armed forms.

The market felt like a more dangerous place with them there. The fact that they could switch from sentinel to executioner at the drop of a hat had been etched in people's memories. Despite assurances of their reprogramming, everyone was cautious in their presence. Including Chartrulean.

He came to an intersection at the top of a hill and paused. To his right, the street opened up to a view of Simitu's Jhardeho Temple, where he'd spent most of his life. It was situated in the middle of an agora, an odd mixture of ancient and modern architecture surrounded by lush gardens full of curiosities.

CHARTRULEAN (CONT'D)

(thinking)

I've walked down that road probably a thousand times. Muscle memory urges me that way. But I can never go back.

CHARTRULEAN HEARS A STUMP SPEECH

[Crescendoing voice]

STUMPER

(distant)

How long will you stand by and let your families go hungry? The Starbringers have done little to put enough food on your table. And yet the wealthy get all the food they want while we ration!

CHARTRULEAN

(thinking)

Strange to be caught up in this crowd. A stark contrast from where I came from. I should just walk away. But I cannot move.

STUMPER (CONT'D)

And what are people doing instead? They're blindly turning to their gods! Can't they see the moral prison they've found themselves in?

STUMPER (CONT'D)

Because of The Order, we live in fear. Fear of ourselves. Fear of the watchmen, who have slaughtered our friends and families in cold blood.

CHARTRULEAN

Even now, standing among these people, I'm not sure what I feel.

STUMPER

We've enabled our oppressors for far too long! It's time we rise up!

GUARD
 (approaching)
 Alright, that's enough noise from you! Everyone move along! You, come with us!

STUMPER
 (panicked)
 The New Regime is fighting for a future free of our oppressors! Down with House Starbringer, and down with Maldoro and The Jhardeho Order!

[Running footsteps]

GUARD
 (distant)
 Don't let him get away!

[Voices fade. Transitional music]

CHARTRULEAN RETURNS TO ASTREUS

NARRATOR

Chartrulean followed the moonlit path through the gates of Astreus. As he crossed the threshold of his lab, his body began to unravel from the tangle his nerves had put it in, one muscle at a time. Finally, quiet.

CHARTRULEAN
 (thinking)
I think I'm done giving into social pressures for a while.

[Footsteps in emptiness, whispers reverberating through rafters]

CHARTRULEAN (CONT'D)
 (thinking)
 Niven, Kievan, Ustra, Ekta, Marduk, Telkos, Lileil, Raptavian, and Caliburn. *Could I ever understand another human as well as I do these ships? Or at least, at one time that was the case. Now, I'm not so sure. The calamity felt like a betrayal. I had no choice but to clip their wings. But until I know what caused the berserker, they'll have to stay this way.*

[Sounds of intense, indistinguishable whispers, whipping through the space. Then something crashing in the distance]

CHARTRULEAN (CONT'D)
Havelion? Or could it be...

[Hastened footsteps fade to medical sounds]

CHARTRULEAN VISITS THE MEDICAL WING

NARRATOR

Astreus's medical wing was at the far end of the lab. Two large windows, one directly across from the other, illuminated a patch of corridor with soft, amber light. Chartrulean stood between the two windows and peered first into one, and then the other. In the first room was Ditrán.

The fifteen-year-old boy was completely catatonic. The same markings that covered Chartrulean's back and chest covered his arms and face. The paladins had called it "the berserker," and the name stuck.

In the adjacent room was Homena. She writhed and convulsed in a lucid state, her exposed arms and legs also streaked with berserker. On the floor beside her bed was a shattered vase. A single violet from the gardens lie amongst the broken glass.

CHARTRULEAN
(thinking)
I don't like this place. My greatest failure waits here in suspended animation. I did this to them. If only I hadn't allowed them to become more than a responsibility...
(trailing off)
These regrets are far heavier than I could have ever imagined.

CHARTRULEAN (CONT'D)
Rest, Homena. I promise the nightmare will end soon.

[Beat]

HAVELION
I don't remember you giving me that promise.

CHARTRULEAN

(startled)

Havelion. What are you doing here?

HAVELION

You weren't gone long. Is the party done?

CHARTRULEAN

I made an appearance. No one said anything about staying.

HAVELION

How come you didn't notice me sitting here?

CHARTRULEAN

I was lost in thought. Where are the others?

HAVELION

Went back to their apartments. Everyone was feeling a bit dragged.

CHARTRULEAN

Then you should get some rest too.

HAVELION

I will, but I just wanted to spend some time with *them*. And also talk to you about tomorrow.

(sighing)

I know King Starbringer wants to honor us, but...the others, and myself, don't feel right accepting anything.

CHARTRULEAN

Because of Ditran and Homena?

HAVELION

No. Well, yes, but it's more than that. We don't like pretending that everything's ok when it's not. It's not enough that we have to live with the fact that we killed so many people, but now the berserker is tearing each of us apart. I don't want what's happening to them to happen to the rest of us. Or anyone else!

CHARTRULEAN

Havelion, listen to me. We're trying to learn why this happened, that's all that we can--

HAVELION

(angry)

Is it? Really? Look at my hand! At these markings. We've learned nothing.

CHARTRULEAN

Which is why tomorrow is important. We need help.

HAVELION

Yeah. We'd *have* more help if you didn't drive everyone away in the first place.

CHARTRULEAN

More help and the right help are two very different things.

[Beat]

HAVELION

I *hate* this power. We are *not* heroes, and you know what? I can't pretend that we are anym0ore. These people don't know how wrong and how dangerous this is. Our ships are not ships, they're conduits for madness!

[Havelion breathing shakily]

HAVELION (CONT'D)

Do you know what I hear when I'm alone? Not just me, all of us. The reason we keep to ourselves? Why we're restless? We're followed by whispers wherever we go. I *know* it's the ships. We find each other wandering in strange places, and can't remember how we got there.

CHARTRULEAN

Why haven't you said anything about this?!

HAVELION

Who can we tell? You? You're the last person half of us want to talk to.

CHARTRULEAN

I have to know what's going on.

[Beat]

HAVELION

(confused)

You don't....you don't hear it, do you?

CHARTRULEAN

No. The voices driving me crazy are my own.

[Beat]

HAVELION

How do we stop this?

CHARTRULEAN

I don't know. But leave that burden to me.

HAVELION

But you don't *have* to do it alone. I helped create this problem, so let me do more to help you. Please, just tell me what to do!

CHARTRULEAN

You'll have plenty to do tomorrow. So hold yourself together.

[Beat]

HAVELION

How? How can we help them?

CHARTRULEAN

You have to trust me.

HAVELION

That's asking a lot lately.

CHARTRULEAN

What's that supposed to mean?

HAVELION

I don't know. You used to be able to just find the answers.

CHARTRULEAN

You *know* why I can't.

HAVELION

Do I? How do I know you weren't just mad from the start?

CHARTRULEAN

My abilities aren't what they were.

HAVELION

That shouldn't make you so damn useless.

CHARTRULEAN

We'll resume this conversation once you've cleared your head. The last thing I need is to have you behaving like a child.

HAVELION

A child? No. You've killed the child. Don't you dare try to put me on that level. It won't work anymore.

CHARTRULEAN

Havelion...

HAVELION

If you can't see me, you can't help me. And I can't help you.

[Footsteps receding, door opening]

SHAN EXAMINES CHARTRULEAN

SHAN

Well I showed up at the right time...

(beat)

Don't take it to heart. He doesn't mean it.

CHARTRULEAN

Shan. You're still awake?

SHAN

I sleep when she does. Tonight has not been a restful night.

CHARTRULEAN

Havelion's being irrational, but he's not wrong. I don't know how to fix the berserker. But I *am* trying.

SHAN

We're all doing everything we can.
(beat)
The boy's hair is very long. Almost like a girl.

CHARTRULEAN

I keep asking him to cut it, which is probably why he lets it grow.

SHAN

Now you get to see what it was like raising *you*.

CHARTRULEAN

I am sorry if I was ever like that.

SHAN

Hah. The best ones always do the opposite of what you tell them.

[Beat]

CHARTRULEAN

Thank you for making the journey from Idrica. You're the only person I trust to look after them.

SHAN

Well, there's only so much a little old woman can do. Eventually, you're going to need more qualified help.

CHARTRULEAN

We need Fillion.

SHAN

How long are you willing to wait? Maybe it's time you expand your circle of trust.

CHARTRULEAN

Lapadine has men actively searching. It will work out.

SHAN

Suit yourself. For the record, I think he's weird. Unconventional.

CHARTRULEAN

Is *anything* we do around here conventional?

SHAN

On that note, I'm glad you're here. I've been meaning to take another look at you.

CHARTRULEAN

That won't be necessary.

SHAN

It's not just for *your* benefit. I need to understand everything I can about the berserker.

CHARTRULEAN

What do you need me to do?

SHAN

Off with that shirt.

[Rustling of clothes and Shan gasping]

CHARTRULEAN

What's wrong?

SHAN

(critical)
You're too skinny.

CHARTRULEAN

Don't make this more awkward than it needs to be.

SHAN

Come on. Sit.

CHARTRULEAN

I'm not a child, you don't have to talk to me like I'm one.

SHAN

You're still a big baby to me.

CHARTRULEAN

I won't argue with you, Matron.

SHAN

Awww, it warms my heart to hear you call me *that* again.

CHARTRULEAN

You're one of the few people I've ever had that effect on.

SHAN

I suspect there's been at least one other.

SHAN (CONT'D)

Try to relax. Deep breaths.

[Sounds of deep breaths. Sounds of electronic medical instruments]

SHAN (CONT'D)

Are you still experiencing some anxiety?

CHARTRULEAN

Yes.

SHAN

I have things for that...

CHARTRULEAN

I need to work through it. Just focus on the berserker.

SHAN

It's progressed slightly. Only a micrometer, but it still concerns me. Have you been using your azurea at all?

CHARTRULEAN

Some. I think my sense of panic brings it on a little stronger. It just feels like a rope snapping inside me, fiber by fiber.

SHAN

(condescending)

That's because you're making it worse.

CHARTRULEAN

(sighing)

I *am* useless.

[Sound of being lightly slapped]

SHAN
Stop that!

CHARTRULEAN
Ow! Stop what?

SHAN
Being pitiful.

CHARTRULEAN
I'm just being honest with myself.

SHAN
No, you're being a defeatist.
That's not what anybody needs right
now.

[Beat]

CHARTRULEAN
Have any of the paladins come to
you?

SHAN
It'll take time.

CHARTRULEAN
Havelion said some things that have
me worried. He said they're hearing
whispers.

SHAN
The azurea. When you've been around
as long as I have, it feels like an
old friend. A constant companion.
But the first time you hear it, it
can be...well, I think we're seeing
it first hand.

CHARTRULEAN
No. This is different.

SHAN
Is it?

CHARTRULEAN
The ships. They've learned
sentience, and not by design.

SHAN
Well that sounds complicated.

CHARTRULEAN

(despairing)

If only I could know first hand
what they're going through...if
they're not telling me things,
there's no way of knowing what I
can do.

SHAN

Sounds like you have your work cut
out.

CHARTRULEAN

How do you mean?

SHAN

The paladins *want* to get close to
you, but don't feel like they *can*.

CHARTRULEAN

Why not?

SHAN

Maybe it has something to do with
that temper of yours.

CHARTRULEAN

This is too close to criticism for
me to handle right now.

[Chartrulean sighing. Sound of clothes rustling]

SHAN

Can I give you something to help
you sleep?

CHARTRULEAN

No. Lately I just spend my nights
reflecting on everything that's
gone wrong.

SHAN

That sounds optional. And anxiety
inducing.

CHARTRULEAN

I have more petulant demons to
grapple with than a few twisted
nerves.

SHAN

Suit yourself.

[Door closes. Homena moans incoherently]

SHAN (CONT'D)
 I guess some children stay children
 forever. Even the dark ones.

[Transitional music]

ASTREUS LABS - THE NEXT MORNING

[Fades to sound of distant crowd in echoey space]

NARRATOR

Morning came, and with it, company. Chartrulean hid among the columns in the foyer, watching the gathering masses. People crowded his workspace, ogling over The Nine and touching everything they shouldn't, despite several signs that had been posted in the area. Admiral Lapadine stood with him in a similar state of anxiety.

HAVELION
 (distant, approaching)
 Tru!

HAVELION CHASTISES CHARTRULEAN

HAVELION
 I thought you told Yoba to keep
 this thing private.

CHARTRULEAN
 I did, but these people have no
 shame.

HAVELION
 Yeah, well...I don't like any of
 them.

CHARTRULEAN
 I fear my presence at last night's
 party might have something to do
 with this.

HAVELION
 Why, what happened at the party?

CHARTRULEAN
 I would have told you last night if
 you were yourself.

HAVELION

If I was *myself*? You're the one who's *lying*. Why are we hiding so much?

CHARTRULEAN

We're not lying, we're just being mindful of what not to say.

HAVELION

You're starting to sound like *them*.

CHARTRULEAN

I am sorry that you think so.

HAVELION

I liked it better when you were weird.

[Sounds of approaching footsteps]

YOBA

(distant)

Chartrulean! There you are.

HAVELION

(whispering)

Not him, he's the worst.

CHARTRULEAN

(whispering)

Shh. Go get the others ready.

YOBA ARRIVES AT ASTREUS

[Footsteps leaving]

YOBA

Did I offend him? He seems a little....

CHARTRULEAN

No. He's just being contrary to spite me.

YOBA

He's possessive of your energy.

[beat]

YOBA (CONT'D)
 How'd you slip through my fingers
 last night? I had spies at all the
 exits.

CHARTRULEAN
 If I remember, you're the one who
 revealed my identity to the Rau.

YOBA
 They asked, "who's the idiot in
 black?"

CHARTRULEAN
 Don't--
 (composing self)
 It put me in a compromising
 position.

YOBA
 I'm not toying with you, that's
 what they asked...though I might be
 paraphrasing. What was I going to
 do, lie to them?

CHARTRULEAN
Absolutely lie.

YOBA
 Not exactly the best way to start
 an interplanetary alliance. Forgive
 me?

CHARTRULEAN
 I don't do forgiveness. That leaves
 the door open for people to make a
 fool of me twice.

YOBA
 Then where do we stand?

CHARTRULEAN
 Right where we've always stood. At
 the crossroads of understanding.

[Beat]

YOBA
 (changing tone)
 The Starbringers will be here soon.
 Always fashionably late, it makes
 me crazy. Are the paladins ready?

CHARTRULEAN

All but two.

YOBA

This is a very big day to miss out on.

CHARTRULEAN

(angry)

You have to understand something, Yoba. When I asked you to keep this private, I had a very good reason.

YOBA

No need for raised voices.

CHARTRULEAN

Isn't there? Come with me.

[Transitional music]

CHARTRULEAN SHOWS YOBA THE BERSERKER

[Environment fades to medical sounds]

CHARTRULEAN

The boy is Ditran, and the girl is Homena.

YOBA

(concerned)

What's causing this?

CHARTRULEAN

The paladins have been calling it the berserker.

YOBA

Explain.

CHARTRULEAN

It manifests itself as sort of cancer, spreads throughout the body, and eventually reaches the brain.

YOBA

And once it reaches the brain...

CHARTRULEAN

Trauma. They've been like this ever since the calamity.

YOBA

Why didn't you bring this up sooner?

CHARTRULEAN

Because I didn't think it was relevant.

(exasperated)

It wasn't until last night that I learned how the others feel about doing this in their absence.

[Beat]

YOBA

How can I help?

CHARTRULEAN

I don't expect you to help. I just needed you to know.

YOBA

Is that Shan? I can't believe she's still alive...

CHARTRULEAN

There's no help for them in Simitu. They're still fugitives outside of the compound.

[Beat]

YOBA

I really screwed this up. Should I ask everyone to leave?

CHARTRULEAN

No. This is my fault too.

YOBA

You *can* trust me. You have every right to doubt me on that. But to be honest, it was excitement that got in the way of my judgement.

CHARTRULEAN

Excitement?

YOBA

I know it's been half a lifetime since we've been close. But I still consider you a friend. Please...let me try to be a friend to you again.

(MORE)

YOBA (CONT'D)

It's all I've wanted for a long time.

[beat]

YOBA (CONT'D)

Is there anything else I should know?

CHARTRULEAN

Havelion. He's been unpredictable.

YOBA

Is it a security concern?

CHARTRULEAN

No, nothing like that. He just doesn't understand why this needs to stay hidden.

YOBA

Of course he doesn't. He's probably after some kind of exoneration. If everyone was able to see what the Jhardekai have sacrificed...

CHARTRULEAN

They'd be martyrs.

YOBA

History is kinder to heroes than martyrs. So let's try to make them heroes.

[Transitional music]

KING STARBRINGER DECLARES ASTREUS A SANCTUARY

NARRATOR

Chartrulean and seven paladins stood in a row, front and center to the crowd - five boys and two girls.

CORBIN

Corbin. Age sixteen, refugee. Paladin, Royal Armed Forces. Jhardekai.

QUAY

Quay. Age fifteen, Idrica native. Paladin in special service to the Royal Armed Forces. Jhardekai.

FAMKE

Famke. Age fourteen, Idrica native. Paladin in special service to the Royal Armed Forces. Jhardekai.

SUNYATA

Sunyata. Age fifteen, Idrica native. Paladin in special service to the Royal Armed Forces. Jhardekai.

NICOLA

Nicola. Age sixteen, purge survivor, and refugee. Jhardekai and Paladin in special service to the Royal Armed Forces.

ABRUC

Abruc. Twenty-one. Purge survivor, and refugee. Second Lieutenant in special service to the Royal Armed Forces. Jhardekai.

HAVELION

Havelion. Age sixteen, purge survivor, refugee, Jhardekai. First Lieutenant, Royal Armed Forces.

KING STARBRINGER

(confused)

I thought there were nine?

CHARTRULEAN

I am representing Ditran and Homena, ages fifteen and sixteen, both refugees. Paladins in special service to the Royal Armed Forces. Both Jhardekai.

KING STARBRINGER

Well then...

(for all to hear)

Today is a monumental day, one in which we take a step in a new direction. For far too long, the Jhardekai have been systematically reduced by society. And as King, I take responsibility for not putting a swifter end to this injustice.

But as you know, another power exerts control over Simitu. One that I have freed myself from, and whose influence will wane in time.

(MORE)

KING STARBRINGER (CONT'D)

I hereby declare Astreus a sanctuary, and offer you all amnesty.

(for paladins to hear)

I can't promise that things will change overnight. But I do promise to fight for you, as you have fought for us. We will build a new future. Together.

NARRATOR

King Starbringer worked his way down the row, issuing medals, shaking hands, and saying a few words for only them to hear. It was a casual ceremony in and of itself, and Chartrulean was relieved to see the King's good nature rubbing off on the paladins. The girls, especially, couldn't help but mirror his infectious smile.

Sophrosyne, Imsep, Yoba, and Admiral Lapadine watched from the sidelines, and a respectful yet anticipatory crowd stood in silence, hoping to catch some of the king's private words.

Once it was over, a dozen of the attendees misted out of the crowd and congregated near the mezzanine. For them, it was time to discuss Astreus' future. Lapadine's Summit was about to begin.

THE SUMMIT - A WELL-CRAFTED PITCH

[Transitions to sounds of idle chatter in a small room]

ADMIRAL LAPADINE

I shouldn't need to remind anyone that what we discuss here today is classified. Time is limited, and we have a lot to get through, so let's get started.

[Cue music]

ADMIRAL LAPADINE (CONT'D)

As everyone in this room knows, our achievements here at Astreus have surpassed expectations in delivering stronger, faster ships. To date, we have built nine alpha prototypes. And as we saw, these nine interceptors alone were able to scatter an entire enemy armada.

(MORE)

ADMIRAL LAPADINE (CONT'D)

But our achievements go beyond that. We've identified the source of The Nine's power, the azurea, as a game-changer for Arcas.

It's proven itself in terms of power, in terms of efficiency, and in terms of implementation. Its uses range from weapons, to propulsion technologies, water purification systems, agriculture, and raw energy production in orders of magnitude greater than what we've harvested from the sun. As a testament to this, both the Astreus compound and spaceport exist on its own separate azurea-powered grid.

So in short, we believe in bolstering our defenses, yes. But more than that, we believe our technology can help usher in an entire new era. Ending the war was only the beginning for Astreus. Which is why we share with you our vision for the future. I invite Lieutenant Havelion to elaborate.

[Footsteps; murmurs from attendees]

HAVELION

On the day that my special unit destroyed a third of the Rau armada, it wasn't skill, tact, or even luck that led us to victory. It was power. And not just any power. Azurea. The *mother* of all power. But what exactly is the source of azurea, and do we have a right to use it? I can't answer the second half of that question for everyone. But I can tell you that this isn't forbidden magic, like Jhardeho has led us to believe. It's science.

[Mixed murmurs]

HAVELION (CONT'D)

We've only shown you a glimmer of it's potential. So you know what a glimmer alone can do, for better or for worse. But in order to use it responsibly, we need a purpose.

(MORE)

HAVELION (CONT'D)

If that purpose is just to destroy,
does that really live up to the
values of our people?

KING STARBRINGER

(excited from audience)

Yesss...

[Murmurs of agreement from people in the room]

HAVELION

That's been the nature of our work
here at Astreus. To ask these hard
questions, and find ways we can do
better.

The paladins and I are *Jhardekai*.
And what's a better use of our
talents than to usher in this new
era? Imagine living on a world with
oceans again. With food, and
plentiful natural resources. With
the right minds driving our
program, azurea can give us that
within our lifetimes. Well...maybe
not oceans, but it could be
possible.

Or better yet -- what if those
worlds aren't even our own? We're
not only finding way to improve
life for people here on Arcas,
we're finding ways to expedite off-
world colonization efforts. With
azurea, we can do better than we
have already. Go farther, faster.

THE ARGUMENT

WAR HAWK 1

Is that really a priority? The need
for warships *at home* is far from
obsolete.

WAR HAWK 2

The Rau are under control, at least
for the moment. But as long as they
remain in our system, we remain
vulnerable.

HAVELION

Sure. But that doesn't change the fact that The Nine are special because of us. And there are more than nine of us out there. There are people here in this city who are ready to rise to the occasion. And Idrica has hundreds of Jhardekai. Thousands maybe, spread out across the Blighted Valley. We can give them all purpose, and everybody on the planet would benefit.

WAR HAWK 3

An army of undesirables? Here in the capital?

HAVELION

Seriously? *That's* all you can extract from this proposal? Your reaction is based on a false narrative, and generations of prejudice that have been stacked against my people. Our potential is being wasted. Chartrulean saw that, and gave us this chance. I don't know about you, but I'm willing to put my faith behind a man who has seen the future.

ATTENDEE 1

Every war in Arcasian history has happened because of the Jhardekai!

HAVELION

Wrong. Those wars happened because of the fear and ignorance of others. We just get blamed for everything.

ATTENDEE 2

I didn't come all the way here to get a history lesson from some kid.

[Angry murmurs through room]

YOBA

(shouting over dissent)

Then hear it from a man who has dedicated his life to the subject. You forget who you're in the room with.

ATTENDEE 3
Let Chartrulean speak.

ATTENDEE 4
We don't want to hear these
delusions from a pariah!

HAVELION
Unlike some people, this pariah has
done his homework.

[Grumbling]

ADMIRAL LAPADINE
Havelion and the others have proven
themselves in battle, despite
resistance from our own generals.
His message is one that I support.
Let him finish.

HAVELION
Thank you, admiral, but I've said
my piece. Any more time spent
arguing would be a waste.

[More grumbling, KSB giggling]

WAR HAWK 2
Assume that you are able to
relocate and train one thousand
Jhardekai. There are still only
nine ships.

CHARTRULEAN
We'll build more.

[Slow deliberate footsteps and uncomfortable silence. Digital
chime, ooh and ahhs]

CHARTRULEAN (CONT'D)
(nervous)
This is a model of the fleet we're
planning. You'll notice several
additions to the interceptors.

[Chartrulean clears throat]

CHARTRULEAN (CONT'D)
I didn't prepare any eloquent
talking points. But I agree with
the Admiral and Lieutenant. We need
to think beyond our current
situation.

(MORE)

CHARTRULEAN (CONT'D)

Azurea gives us a way to move heavier ships across larger distances, faster. That means people, tools, and weapons can be moved to and from Arcas more easily. Remote colonies could be established in a fraction of the time. Raw materials could be harvested more efficiently. There doesn't have to be a war for technology like this to pay for itself.

But more than that, we are working on ways to integrate azurea into our existing infrastructure. We may not be able to change the fact that life on Arcas is unsustainable in the big picture, but we can buy back some time.

[Sound of heavy footsteps]

KING STARBRINGER

When could you start?

CHARTRULEAN

We already have.

WAR HAWK 1

I like your ships, but not your Jhardekai.

[Grumbles throughout room]

CHARTRULEAN

The Jhardekai come with the azurea. Otherwise you're forfeiting its advantages.

WAR HAWK 3

Can't we just strap some azurea whatevers to our existing ships?

HAVELION

We have to do this the right way. It can be dangerous if used recklessly.

WAR HAWK 2

What if the Rau attack again right now? What is Astreus doing to keep us safe in the short term?

HAVELION

The paladins and I are standing by, ready to fight. With the right kind of support, we could do even better than before.

[Dissent, dissent.]

WAR HAWK 2

Right kind of support? What are you implying?

ADMIRAL LAPADINE

Settle! Settle!

WAR HAWK 3

Didn't Admiral Lapadine ensure that with his little firing spree?

ADMIRAL LAPADINE

They disobeyed orders. I need loyalty out there.

ATTENDEE 1

Do you think we enjoy seeing our best generals out of work while the Rau remain a threat?

ATTENDEE 2

I'm not convinced these pariah are an even trade for men who have dedicated their lives to the service.

[Dissent and grumbles throughout room]

YOBA

(whispering)

Should I stop this?

KING STARBRINGER

(whispering)

No. I'm enjoying it.

WAR HAWK 1

I only see seven paladins. Where are the other two?

HAVELION

You want to know where they are? They're right where people like you put them. In the infirmary, paying the price for *your* haste and greed.

(MORE)

HAVELION (CONT'D)

You can blame us all you want, but at some point you have to turn a mirror on yourselves. Want proof? I'll give it to you.

[Sounds of glove being removed. Gasping]

KING STARBRINGER

What's wrong with your hand, son?

HAVELION

(to the other paladins)
Go on guys. Show them.

ABRUC

(softly)
Come on, Havi...

HAVELION

What are you all afraid of?

[Sounds of clothes rustling and murmurs]

ATTENDEE 1

What are those markings?

ATTENDEE 2

Look at her face.

ATTENDEE 3

Horrendous!

HAVELION

We may have won in the end, but we were unprepared, and alone, because our own generals ran from a fight they could have won without us.

ADMIRAL LAPADINE

Lieutenant Havelion!

[Guffaws from crowd]

HAVELION

The resulting losses were greater than they needed to be. The Jhardekai *will* fight again if we have to. But we're going to do it on our terms. We still need time, money, and resources. Who in this room can give us that?

HAVELION (CONT'D)

And you, King Starbringer.

CHARTRULEAN

Havelion!

HAVELION

What are you willing to do to prove that your words earlier are more than empty promises?

[Dissent, dissent, dissent, then silence once Chartrulean speaks]

CHARTRULEAN

(intense)

This fight isn't just with the Rau. Our very existence is at stake. We have reached the crux, and the decisions we make today *will* impact the future. That much I *can* say.

(pause)

We all have a responsibility to the people of Arcas. *Ours* is to build a future that's actually worth fighting for, be it against the Rau, or against ourselves.

(beat)

Intolerance is an enemy of progress. *We* are progress. Do you want to be *my* enemy? *Their* enemy? If I were you, I would rather be on our side than try to compete with us.

WAR HAWK 3

Is that a threat?

CHARTRULEAN

No. It is an opportunity. The paladins and I stand before you beaten down. Crucified. Punished for our very existence. We are not doing this for redemption. But we are giving *you* a chance at redemption. If you balk at that chance today, you *will* be left behind tomorrow. That is not a threat. It is a guarantee.

[END CREDITS]