

THE MADNESS OF CHARTRULEAN
A Gardeka Story

S1:E03SCA
"STORY COMPENDIUM 2: THE BERSERKER"

Written by

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STORY COMPENDIUM: THE BERSERKER

ADMIRAL LAPADINE

In all my long years of service, it was overseeing the establishment of Astreus Labs that stands out as the most definitive era of my career. This is in no small part thanks to Chartrulean, and there really is no stranger story.

The day I was tasked with locating him was the same day King Starbringer denounced the Jhardeho Order, following a disagreement. Chartrulean had proven the existence of a new source of energy called azurea, which we quickly identified as an opportunity. I followed a tip from an informant that led me to the desert city of Idrica, where Chartrulean was living in exile.

We offered him Astreus and all its resources, and gave him amnesty. Our hope was to build a new type of ship that would be stronger and faster than our current fleet. The Rau could engineer lots of ships very quickly, and could do so in space. Even though our ships were technologically superior, we knew it would only be a matter of time before they would break through our defenses. We were desperate.

Chartrulean's expertise was mostly the result of independent study, which contradicted what we would have required of a normal engineer working at his level. Our first series of setbacks originated from his inexperience. He showed a base understanding of engineering language, but much of it was, for lack of better words, antique. There was no questioning his talents, especially with the metaphysical. But we had a hard time translating his theories to hard science. He was simply on another level.

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ADMIRAL LAPADINE (CONT'D)

Chartrulean also had several unusual methods of working. For one, he always seemed to be in conversation with himself. Often he would get stuck on a problem, disappear, and emerge hours later with the answer.

He learned formidably fast, and the amount of information he could process rivaled any computer. But the more he learned, the more he wanted to control. He was irrevocably driven, and showed blatant disregard for others. He pushed away collaborators, especially those who contradicted him. Slowly people left the project due to his toxic behavior, and for a while we didn't seem to be making any progress. To make matters worse, all initial tests were failures.

We were close to shutting the program down when Chartrulean asked to travel to Idrica. He returned with nine strange youths, all refugees of the pariah race, Jhardekai. It was then that things took a turn.

Like Chartrulean, these youths had extraordinary physical and mental abilities. They were ideal soldiers with unrivaled combat perception and heightened intuition. They also helped us explore new possibilities for psychokinetic weapons and other interfaces.

The most gifted of the Jhardekai, Havelion, became Chartrulean's protege. Havelion was the only person who could challenge him, which ultimately contributed to the development of better, stronger weapons. It was through Chartrulean's camaraderie with Havelion (and I'd like to think somewhat myself) that he learned how to work with others and be forgiving of our faults.

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ADMIRAL LAPADINE (CONT'D)

He learned to trust us, and even recognize his own areas of weakness. Other great minds eventually returned, and the program stabilized.

The azurea project ultimately succeeded, "The Nine" were born, and the rest is history. But the paladins suffered greatly under the rigors of testing. And then, upon returning from their first battle, it was obvious that something was terribly wrong. Even after everything I've seen in all my years of experience, nothing has been more sinister, and more confounding, than the berserker.