

THE MADNESS OF CHARTRULEAN
A Gardeka Story

S1:E05

"CHRYSLIS IN THE VOID"

Written by

H.M. Radcliff

TMOC EPISODE 5: THE CHRYSALIS IN THE VOID

HONA (V.O.)

Dear daughter, do not be sad for me. In death, I am free. One day, this world will beckon my soul return, and I can fill a new vessel. And hopefully I will live my new life in a world that has been made a better place because of you.

Watch after your father. He has been lost for some time, and I fear that once I'm gone, he will lose himself further. Be his anchor, and his guide. Show him how to be the man that I know he can be. And your brother; help him find his purpose.

There's one last thing that I need to tell you. The contents of this letter may sound confusing to you right now, but this may be my last opportunity.

Find the chrysalis in the void. Only for you will it open. Truth waits for you on the other side of fear. The brooch is the key. Follow your heart, and you will find her. She will give you the power to change the world.

Love your father, love your brother, and above all, love yourself. You are hope.

SOPHROSYNE WASHES HER FACE

[Sounds of running water]

CYTHAELIA

Phrosy, you don't have to scrub so hard. Your face is turning red.

SOPHROSYNE

That's not from scrubbing, it's because I'm mad.

CYTHAELIA

If I were there, he would have lost
a hand.

SOPHROSYNE

His fingers were like ice. I can
still feel where he touched.

[Scrubbing sounds intensify]

CYTHAELIA

Their idea of immortality is
interesting, I have to admit. Stop
that, you're splashing water on
your dress.

SOPHROSYNE

I don't care.

[Water shuts off]

SOPHROSYNE (CONT'D)

There's a difference between living
and being alive. I'm not sure which
one they are. Would you hand me a
towel?

CYTHAELIA

They do smell like death. Stringent
chemical preservatives with a tinge
of rot.

SOPHROSYNE

(distant)

No, it doesn't smell like that at
all. Death smells like herbal tea
and olibanum.

CYTHAELIA

I'm sorry...I didn't mean to make
you think of your mother.

SOPHROSYNE

Sometimes I get the feeling she's
not really gone.

CYTHAELIA

Of course she's not gone, at least
not from memory.

SOPHROSYNE

There's more to it than that. There was something very strange about her. Something I'm still trying to wrap my head around.

CYTHAELIA

Her letter?

SOPHROSYNE

That's just part of it.

[Transitional music]

FLASHBACK - SOPHROSYNE REMEMBERS HER FIRST DREAM

NARRATOR

Sophrosyne awoke with a start. It was the middle of the night, and the lingering nightmare left her feeling feverish. The ghostly apparition of a woman stood near an open window. It grew larger than life as it stepped out of the window into the night. By the time Sophrosyne freed her legs from the tangle of blankets and rushed to the window, the apparition had faded into a thin purple haze.

The landscape outside was not the capital. Instead, she was surrounded by the silhouettes of mountains, as far as the eye could see.

On the bedside table was her mother's brooch, not yet gifted to Chartrulean. It would be another three years before they would meet. The brooch sat on top of an open letter -- the letter her mother wrote to her while on her deathbed. Sophrosyne cradled the brooch in the palm of her hand, turning it over in the moonlight. As she did, it glowed the faintest blue. Almost imperceptible to those who didn't know to look for it.

SOPHROSYNE

(thinking)

What a strange dream. It's almost like someone was inside my head.

[Swirling voices]

SOPHROSYNE (CONT'D)

The chrysalis in the void...what could she have meant by that? Is that what my dream was showing me?

FLASHBACK - KSB AND SOPHROSYNE MIDNIGHT CHAT

[Glasses clinking, distant]

SOPHROSYNE

Who's out there? Imsep, are you sneaking out agai--

[Sound of door opening]

KING STARBRINGER

Sorry! Was I being too loud?

SOPHROSYNE

Dad! You're back.

KING STARBRINGER

Yeah...I got back just a little while ago. Didn't want to bother you. What's your excuse, why are you up?

SOPHROSYNE

I just had a bad dream.

KING STARBRINGER

Oh yes? You've come to tell your old man all about it, eh?

SOPHROSYNE

Well...
(deflecting)
What are you doing?

KING STARBRINGER

(sighing)
Oh I just thought I would take in the stars for a little while. They have a remarkable way of putting oneself into perspective. Don't they?

SOPHROSYNE

Well, it looks like you are also taking in some wine.

KING STARBRINGER

Always! Come. Join me.

[Sounds of wine pouring]

SOPHROSYNE

I like it here. Very quiet.

KING STARBRINGER

Yeah. It is. I'm glad you like it.
Because we may be staying here a
while.

SOPHROSYNE

What do you mean?

KING STARBRINGER

You haven't heard? Well, at least I
get to be the one to tell you,
then.

(sighing)

We're not going back to the capital
for a while. I did something that
may have been a mistake.

SOPHROSYNE

How so?

[Beat]

KING STARBRINGER

What do you know about Chartrulean?

SOPHROSYNE

Yoba talks about him like some kind
of prodigy.

KING STARBRINGER

He is the Etruvian, yes. Anything
else?

SOPHROSYNE

I know he went into exile, but
don't fully understand why. What's
he have to do with anything?

KING STARBRINGER

Quite a lot, actually. I've ordered
that he be given clemency and
installed with everything he could
possibly want at Astreus.

SOPHROSYNE

(snickering)

What does Maldoro think of that?

KING STARBRINGER

I'm sure quite a lot. But it
doesn't matter because I've broken
from the Jhardeho Order. They no
longer hold a seat on my council,
and nobody's happy.

SOPHROSYNE
(gasping)
What?

KING STARBRINGER
I know. Tell me straight, how badly
have I screwed up?

SOPHROSYNE
You had to have a reason.

KING STARBRINGER
I did. I *do*. Chartrulean is the one
person who can be able to save us
from annihilation. Or at least he's
the best chance we've got.

SOPHROSYNE
Then why would The Order be so
against it?

KING STARBRINGER
The Order believes that his methods
could do more long term harm than
good. On the other hand, I'm
willing to risk it, if it means
ending this senseless war.

SOPHROSYNE
I'm sure you made the right
decision.

KING STARBRINGER
I hope you're right. But until we
get a handle on the situation, the
capital is no longer safe. So I've
hired guardians to shadow you and
your brother.

SOPHROSYNE
"Shadow"?

KING STARBRINGER
They're specially trained, very
discrete. Don't worry. I've hand
picked them myself. You'll like
yours a lot I think, she's very
much like you.

[Tinkering of jewelry]

KING STARBRINGER (CONT'D)
 Don't fidget with that brooch. You
 wouldn't want to break something
 that belonged to your mother.

SOPHROSYNE
 Sorry!

KING STARBRINGER
 She'd have strangled you in life
 and may still do so in death.

SOPHROSYNE
 I guess I'm still a little shaken
 up.

KING STARBRINGER
 From your dream?

SOPHROSYNE
 We don't have to talk about it.

KING STARBRINGER
 Ok...

[A beat]

KING STARBRINGER (CONT'D)
 You know, I think about your mother
 every day.

SOPHROSYNE
 Me too. I wish I was more like her.

KING STARBRINGER
 You are more like her than you
 could possibly know.

SOPHROSYNE
 I don't now. I feel so....so
 behind. It's beautiful out here,
 but we're so far away from
 everything.

KING STARBRINGER
 I can understand that. And I will
 do everything I can to make your re-
 entry into society after all this
 is over a happy one.

SOPHROSYNE
 Yeah but still, I'm just struggling
 with...What *kind* of person makes
 the best king or queen?

(MORE)

SOPHROSYNE (CONT'D)

Today we're surrounded by so many amazing people. Jhardehos, Mystics, messiahs, and the like. I don't know, I feel so ordinary in comparison.

KING STARBRINGER

My dear you are far from it.

SOPHROSYNE

You're just saying that.

KING STARBRINGER

No. No I'm not.

[Beat]

KING STARBRINGER (CONT'D)

You know, the day your mother fell ill was really the day I lost faith in the Order. I think this break has been a long time coming. It almost sounds selfish to say it out loud, but...

(sighing deeply)

...I fear that this decision was really all for me. Chartrulean is more of an excuse.

SOPHROSYNE

What do you mean?

KING STARBRINGER

Why don't we go inside. I think it's time that I told you what happened to your mother.

[Transitional music]

SOPHROSYNE AND CYTHAELIA TALK ABOUT HER DREAMS

[Cythaelia fades on]

CYTHAELIA

Phrosy. Phrosy! Are we going to just stand here all day?

SOPHROSYNE

What if I'm not good enough?

CYTHAELIA

Are we going to have this conversation again? Have you seen how much people love you?

SOPHROSYNE

It feels so superficial.

CYTHAELIA

You're trying too hard.

SOPHROSYNE

There's just this feeling of urgency...like if I let an opportunity pass me by, something terrible is going to happen.

CYTHAELIA

That's ridiculous.

[Beat]

SOPHROSYNE

Do you think my dad is doing the right thing?

CYTHAELIA

(snickering)

It doesn't matter what I think.

SOPHROSYNE

Your opinion matters to me.

CYTHAELIA

I think he's doing as well as he can. Don't you think so?

SOPHROSYNE

I want to. But if these dreams mean anything at all, the war may not be over. And so far, they've gotten one thing right.

CYTHAELIA (CONT'D)

(under breath)
Here we go...

CYTHAELIA

You're afraid, but people have recurring dreams all the time. Plus, you've been under a lot of stress.

SOPHROSYNE

Maybe. But these are so different. Jhardehos believe in prescience and all that, so I know I'm not completely crazy. Especially after what I learned about Mom.

CYTHAELIA

How many family heirlooms are you willing to give away before you're satisfied?

SOPHROSYNE

I think I'm close to an answer. You said you saw what happened last night with your own eyes.

CYTHAELIA

No, I saw what *I* saw, which was like a glimmer. I didn't see the room shrouded in black mist and an intense blue light, or feel like I'd been dipped in cold water, or however you described it.

SOPHROSYNE

That's because I didn't exactly see it with my eyes. I saw it...some other way.

CYTHAELIA

Excuses.

SOPHROSYNE

I'd feel a lot better if you didn't think I was mad. You take everything way too literally...

CYTHAELIA

I just don't want you to be disappointed.

[A beat]

SOPHROSYNE

Is *Chartrulean* the chrysalis in the void?

(snickering)

Or is he an "abomination"?

[Transitional music]

CHARTRULEAN SUFFERS AN ANXIETY ATTACK

NARRATOR

The sun slipped below the horizon, draping Simitu in deep blue and purple hues. Chartrulean slunk back to his apartment, exhausted and craving a bath. Before the door even clicked shut behind him, he was free of his boots, and already wrestling with his shirt.

CHARTRULEAN

(thinking)

These days are just getting more and more exhausting. Each disaster more terrible and strange than the last.

[Clothes rustling and being thrown]

CHARTRULEAN (CONT'D)

Funny. I go to put my soiled shirt on the back of this chair, but it is already there. Is it the same shirt on a different dimensional plane where time has shifted? Stranger things have happened under stress. Or is it another one all together? Could I have just not seen it there? What else is hiding here? I need light.

[Sound of lights turning on, layered voices]

CHARTRULEAN (CONT'D)

(horror/wonder)

What is this alien landscape? One of discarded junk and half-consumed cans of liquid stimulant. Wow. Look, it even has its own ecosystem. How long have I shared my apartment with a bug?

(growing panic)

Is this really how I have been living? How did I not notice until now? Sophrosyne. I cannot let her see how I live?

(pause)

Wait -- how would that even be possible? This is a private space.

[Heartbeat sound]

CHARTRULEAN (CONT'D)

That strange feeling again. Moist palms, shortness of breath, pupil dilation, accelerated heart rate, minor jugular vein distension...

[Sound of glass bottles clinking]

CHARTRULEAN (CONT'D)

Maybe I took some of these bitters this morning and can't remember?

[Sounds of glass bottle opening. Sniffing]

CHARTRULEAN (CONT'D)

Blech. I would remember that. How old are these?

(beat)

This is dire.

[Spooky music cue]

CHARTRULEAN (CONT'D)

This stranger in the mirror. Is he really me? His chest moves in time with my breathing. Where his undershirt appears soaked with perspiration, I feel cold wetness. I think he is me. In this unflattering light, I really am the image of death. Am I really so lost on my own?

[Sounds of rumbling and heartbeat]

NARRATOR

The void mists enveloped him. He looked at his clouded reflection, as if expecting someone to answer, but found only his ghostly visage. Blue light emanated from the brooch, illuminating his face from below and casting threatening shadows of unseen form. The whites of his eyes adopted the azure glow of the brooch, his pupils the black of the shadows.

In infrared, the berserker was all the more clear beneath waxy, translucent skin. From somewhere deep inside, near the base of his skull, there was a glow. The source of the light, an organ about the size of a coin, was wrapped in berserker. Like the roots of a tree overtaking a stone. It was his azure epicenter, and gateway into the void. Before the calamity, its energy radiated throughout his entire body, lighting him up like a beacon. Now it wasn't much more than a backlight for his bones, and pulsed like a dying star.

CHARTRULEAN (CONT'D)

(horrified)

Is this is all that is left? Only a phantom of former myself.

Has there ever been an Etruvian whose powers receded instead of getting stronger? And what about the princess? She followed me into the void. But how? No matter how, I have to account for it. But why did I do it?

[Sounds of heartbeat and ears ringing]

CHARTRULEAN (CONT'D)

What exactly did I see? Her youthful face, empty blue eyes, a tortured smile.

There was something else in her expression. Intrigue, directed right back at me. Unasked questions. But there's more. The arch of her eyebrows, and the darkness of them against the milkiness of her skin. The fullness of her lips. The curvature of her neck. The smallness of her figure.

What is happening to me? This will pass if I force it. Just think of something else.

[Void sounds recede. Transitional music]

FLASHBACK - JHARDEHO TEMPLE KITCHENS

NARRATOR

Repressed memories suddenly exploded into Chartrulean's consciousness. Feelings of guilt and shame following a relentless barrage of past embarrassments. Faces and places long forgotten flashed by. He fought the urge to vomit as he grabbed desperately for something reliable.

CHARTRULEAN

(thinking)

No, not this memory!

NARRATOR

When he found it, he had been exploring the temple agora when through an open window he spotted a young woman working in the kitchen. As the memory played out, he was captivated once again by the repetitiveness of her motion. It wasn't intentionally provocative, but he was hypnotized. Sensations he had never before experienced welled up from somewhere deep inside. A quickness of breath and tightening in the chest and groin.

He was torn from the reverie as a gnarled gray hand grabbed him by the wrist, swinging him around. He was a boy again, gazing up into the stony face of his mentor, Maldoro. The warm feelings he felt only moments ago were replaced by fear and revulsion. The old man's lips quivered as they usually did before the cane came down, and the boy braced himself. But the blow didn't come. Maldoro's knuckle bones cracked as his grip on Chartrulean's wrist tightened, but the old man's eyes oscillated between rage and empathy. Whatever lesson lay on the other side of that decision not to strike would be worse. Much worse.

MALDORO

You must learn to suppress all earthly desires. The more primal the instinct, the deeper down it must be locked away.

CHILD CHARTRULEAN

I wasn't--

MALDORO

To reach your true potential, you must devote yourself wholly to Jhardeka. Do you understand?

CHILD CHARTRULEAN

I understand.

MALDORO

You are destined to be our next messiah. Now look at her and tell me what does the messiah see? LOOK AT HER!

CHILD CHARTRULEAN

(struggling, afraid)
Nothing. I see....nothing!

MALDORO

Nothing, eh? So be it. Until you can tell me, then nothing shall you see.

[Rumble. Sound of door slamming, echoing]

CHILD CHARTRULEAN

(crying)

Don't leave me in here! It's dark!
Shan! Help me!

MALDORO

(distant)

You will not come out of that room
until you rid yourself of these
perversions.

[Void sounds recede]

CHARTRULEAN

I did what Maldoro told me to do. I
recalled every desire I'd ever
experienced, and packed it all into
a box. Not a physical box, but a
box I made, wrapped in chains, and
entombed deep within my mind.

After all these long years, I think
that the box has somehow reopened.
The chains that bound it shut were
Jhardeho, but they have become
brittle and started to break. And
now just like that time when I was
a child, I will lie here in
darkness until I can regain
control.

[Transitional music]

NIGHT - THE RAU DISCUSS THEIR PLANS

[Sounds of papers flipping]

DRECHEN

There. That should do it.

GROBIEN

What an exhausting thing. All these
words. Endless....monotonous....

TRANSLATOR

(nervous)

Would you like me to deliver these
to the King Starbringer this
evening?

DRECHEN

No, we'll deliver it in the morning. We have no more use for you tonight. You're dismissed.

[Footsteps leaving, door closing]

GROBIEN

They won't be pleased with our demands.

DRECHEN

It'll take them a while to sort through it. I don't care if they're happy whilst doing, the more time we can buy the better.

[Cydar coughing]

DRECHEN (CONT'D)

Your condition is worsening.

CYDAR

The worm will kill me if not released. I'm too weak to continue.

DRECHEN

Then we must find a replacement soon.

GROBIEN

Is this not a cause worthy of--

CYDAR

My death must not be wasted.

DRECHEN

What about the prince's bodyguard? He would give us intimate access to Starbringer. He's a mute, and subservient to the prince.

GROBIEN

Perhaps the young prince himself could be useful.

DRECHEN

Far too risky. For now, we watch, and we wait. The Chamberlain didn't break, but he did bend. We know now that things aren't as quaint as they seem. This New Regime detail is also interesting.

GROBIEN

We have lots to do. What else do we have?

CYDAR

The Jhardeho Order. In fact...I have an idea.

[Knocks at door]

DR. TOMLIN

Greetings. Uh.....you sent for a physician?

GROBIEN

Oh, yes. Right.

CYDAR

Five hundred years of existence and this is the mindfulness I get?!

DR. TOMLIN

Ok. How is he?

DRECHEN

Deteriorating.

DR. TOMLIN

Let me take a look at him real quick.

[Close breathing sounds]

DR. TOMLIN (CONT'D)

Gentlemen. I don't know how Rau culture usually handles medical procedures of any kind of delicacy, but giving the physician a little bit of breathing room would be greatly appreciated.

DRECHEN

Yes. Well. Quite.

DR. TOMLIN

Yes. Well. I've ordered some devices that should add some humidity to the room, that should help considerably. I'm hesitant to try any more invasive therapies for obvious reasons, you understand.

DRECHEN

Thank you. Most kind.

GROBIEN

I'm curious. What happens when people die on your planet?

DR. TOMLIN

Well, notable deaths are observed by members The Order, and certain rites of passage are performed shortly after.

DRECHEN

Interesting. Tell us more.

[Transitional music]

MAGOGOSO TALKS TO ABRASET, LYBENDER, AND PYTRA

NARRATOR

Under the cover of night, a man with a cloak pulled low over his face ambled through the congested streets of Backalley Market. The damp night air was laced with the scent of smoked meats, vinegar, and incense, and the people were out in droves. Large insects on skewers were pulled from vats of hot oil, and put into the hands of hungry customers. It was a rare day of bounty following a week of fasting for most people. The perfect time for someone to disappear into a crowd.

The man pushed through a row of merchants into a small tavern. It wasn't the most savory place on the block, nor were its patrons. The inside was dark, lit only by candles. The floor was sticky and the place smelled of spilled draft, sweat, and excrement. But it was a place where secrets were regularly traded, and were protected by some unspoken pact. For that reason, the man was a regular.

At the back of the room was a table. The man pulled up a chair and joined the three people who were already there-- two men, and a woman with silver hair. One of the men slid him a tall glass of thin brown fluid as he pulled back his hood.

MAGOGOSO

Lybender!

LYBENDER

Good of you to finally join us, Prior Magogoso.

MAGOGOSO

Hopefully the draft hasn't lost its bite while you were waiting. Sorry.

(MORE)

MAGOGOSO (CONT'D)

It's getting harder to leave the temple undetected, nowadays.

PYTRA

Maybe it's because you're getting fat.

MAGOGOSO

Fat? Who's fat?

LYBENDER

At least someone's putting your fares to good use, Pytra.

PYTRA

I just find it odd how the temple Jhardeka aren't being deprived of food when everyone else is.

MAGOGOSO

Why are you in this part of town, anyways?

PYTRA

In case you didn't notice, it's a feasting day. I wanted to see our deliveries and make sure the people got what they needed.

MAGOGOSO

Oh? Ok.

PYTRA

You make it sound like we don't have to smuggle food in and out of these districts.

MAGOGOSO

Sounds like you don't need my help with that, so why am I here?

[Sipping beer]

ABRASET

You're here to tell us what Maldoro is up to.

MAGOGOSO

Ah. You must be Abraset, the New Regime wordsmith.

ABRASET

Remember it well.

MAGOGOSO

You say that like you matter.
How are things in Cailou?

ABRASET

I'm not here to make small talk.
I'm here for information I can use.
At least that's what Lybender has
promised me.

MAGOGOSO

(reasoning)
Seriously, Ly...

LYBENDER

Sorry. He insisted on this meeting.
But you should hear the boy out,
his plan is good.

ABRASET

So?

MAGOGOSO

SO? How this works is that I have
to be interested in giving you the
information. If I don't know how
it's going to be used, and up to
this point I don't, I could be
sticking my neck out for nothing.

ABRASET

Isn't their good word good enough
for you?

MAGOGOSO

Is anybody's?

[Beat]

MAGOGOSO (CONT'D)

Lybender, I can understand. But
Pytra? Why involve yourselves with
this rushed mentality?

PYTRA

Because we don't see these problems
going away. Maldoro walked away
from House Starbringer with a good
portion of Arcas's infrastructure
in his back pocket. And he's
abusing it.

LYBENDER

If King Starbringer can see the civilian plight at all, he's most likely powerless to do anything. He underestimates Maldoro, thinks the problem is just going to go away if he can't see it.

PYTRA

Not to mention, he's too busy playing war right now.

MAGOGOSO

Ah.

ABRASET

The king is out of touch and apathetic. What he's allowed to happen in this city, and in Idrica and Cailou, amounts to crimes against humanity.

MAGOGOSO

Ok, ok...I thought we were here to talk about Maldoro.

ABRASET

We are. We want to see both House Starbringer and The Order answer for their crimes. But we don't have that kind of power, at least not yet. If we're going to be a player, we need to pick a side. At least until we grow legs of our own.

MAGOGOSO

You want to work with Maldoro to take down House Starbringer. What makes you think he'll need your help to do that?

ABRASET

I know we don't have members, but we have a voice, *and* a champion.

MAGOGOSO

Don't say Josquin...

ABRASET

He's on his way to Simitu now, actually.

MAGOGOSO

(sighing)

In the middle of negotiations?

LYBENDER

It's the best time to get people riled up. We're going to need a stampede to create a revolution.

MAGOGOSO

What leverage do you even have to sway the conversation? Maldoro doesn't listen to anyone.

ABRASET

That's why you're here. To give us leverage.

MAGOGOSO

(incredulous)

You want to try to blackmail Maldoro?

PYTRA

We know Maldoro is intentionally creating scarcity. We are delivering our foods to distribution centers just like before. But they're not being distributed.

LYBENDER

These kinds of tactics are not new to him. He's using fear to control people.

ABRASET

We just need proof.

MAGOGOSO

I could get you proof. But I don't want to.

ABRASET

Why not?

MAGOGOSO

Because it won't work. He's not afraid of what people do or don't know, his grip on them is too tight.

ABRASET

Look. How can we change your mind?

MAGOGOSO

Simple. Get a better plan. Thanks for the draft.

[Chair moves as he gets up]

ABRASET

I have an insider at the capitol. Someone close to everything that's going on. We know things about Astreus, and what they're planning.

[Chair stops moving]

MAGOGOSO

Don't you touch my boys.

ABRASET

Help us get what we need, and it won't come to that.

MAGOGOSO

You're being sloppy. If you piss everybody off, you're going to run out of allies before you even get started.

LYBENDER

(reassuring)

Look. We don't want Astreus to get caught in the crossfire. But we think that we can use this information to get Maldoro to react. If he pushes against Astreus, we won't have to.

ABRASET

We do want Chartrulean on our side in the end.

MAGOGOSO

You don't know him well, do you? He doesn't pick sides. And he especially won't give an ounce of thought to extremists.

LYBENDER

He'd do what's right for the people, he's the messiah.

MAGOGOSO

You're expecting him to be compassionate. Chartrulean has been provided for his entire life.

(MORE)

MAGOGOSO (CONT'D)

Coddled. He isn't as moved by the human condition as you might think. He gets his ideas from...well, somewhere else.

ABRASET

(worked up)

Astreus has azurea, and a motive for going after Maldoro, which makes Chartrulean the most important man in Simitu. Even Maldoro's loyalists will wake up to the fact that whoever--

(calming self)

Whoever controls energy controls the world.

MAGOGOSO

He's untouchable, guys. Well protected. Even if you were to get in, he wouldn't be easy to manipulate. Now if that's all, I should get back before I'm missed.

ABRASET

This conversation isn't finished.

MAGOGOSO

Yes it is. You can't finish something you didn't start. Come back to me once you have a plan. Something that makes sense, not a wish list. And you two should know better.

[Footsteps away]

LYBENDER

That didn't go well.

ABRASET

You've wasted my time.

PYTRA

Don't worry. He may still be useful. He can get proof. We just need to convince him that it's worth it. Or....

LYBENDER

That sounds like a big idea.

PYTRA
I've just thought of a way into
Astreus. But I'm going to need to
call in a favor.

LYBENDER
A Yoba favor?

PYTRA
The best kind.

THE NEXT MORNING - YOBA THROWS UP

[Morning sounds. Sounds of vomiting behind a closed door.
Door opens, then closes. Yoba's heavy breathing. Footsteps
hastening]

KING STARBRINGER
Yoba! There you are.
(stopping)
Are you sick?

YOBA
I'm fine. Just a bit of malaise.

KING STARBRINGER
The ambassadors have some revisions
to propose. They've been
suspiciously easy on us so far, so
we should be ready for anything.

YOBA
Buehl, wait a moment.

KING STARBRINGER
Whoa. It must be serious if you're
using my first name.

YOBA
(whispering)
We should consider a different
approach. I think we're spinning
our wheels.

KING STARBRINGER
Why? What happened?

YOBA
They tried to bribe me.

KING STARBRINGER
Pfish. Everyone does.

YOBA

Shut up and listen. I may have egged them on a little, but now I see they're not above it. They're after the azurea.

KING STARBRINGER

Is that supposed to be news?

YOBA

No. But I'm evermore convinced we need to end this quickly and get them off our planet. At least before someone more breakable than me drinks their wine.

KING STARBRINGER

(sighing)

We have to imagine ourselves in their situation. Someday we're going to leave our own world behind, and might find others out there like us. We would expect to be given this kind of opportunity.

YOBA

We can't project our values onto them, just because they vaguely look like us. They are too different.

KING STARBRINGER

I understand your trepidation, but what would it say about us if we don't try to do this the right way first?

YOBA

That we're smart.

KING STARBRINGER

You've disagreed with me before.

YOBA

Which I regret, and I've been wrong. But this time, I don't think I am.

KING STARBRINGER

What could they possibly do? We have the upper hand in every way.

YOBA

Do we though? Do you even know what's going outside these walls? What the sentiment of the people is? If you think we're supported in this, you're wrong. The people aren't interested in your leniency with the Rau, they want the political theatre to stop so they can go on living.

KING STARBRINGER

We can only do one thing at a time. Once the Rau are handled, we can take on Maldoro. With Chartrulean behind us, it won't be hard.

YOBA

Maldoro isn't waiting for the Rau to leave, both him and the New Regime are using this opportunity to gather energy.

KING STARBRINGER

I'll keep my eye on it.

YOBA

(incredulous)

Oh, you'll keep your eye on it? Like you keep your eye on your son?

KING STARBRINGER

Are you criticizing my parenting now?

YOBA

You know who his friends are...

KING STARBRINGER

And I'll deal with it.

YOBA

You'll deal with it, or *I'll* deal with it? Do you know how many strings I've had to pull to keep Josquin out of this city?

KING STARBRINGER

You keep pulling your strings, I'll deal with Imsep.

YOBA

That'll be the day.

KING STARBRINGER
I've spoken. Now let's get down to
business.

[Transitional music cue]

SOPHROSYNE DRAWS HER DREAMS

[Morning sounds, Sophrosyne waking up, yawning]

CYTHAELIA
Good morning.

SOPHROSYNE
(groggy)
You're up early.

CYTHAELIA
I'm up early every morning. You
just don't know it.

SOPHROSYNE
Oh.

[Blankets moving]

SOPHROSYNE (CONT'D)
Can you hand me my journal?

CYTHAELIA
Was it that dream again?

SOPHROSYNE
Hard to tell anymore.

[Sounds of scribbling]

CYTHAELIA
What are you drawing?

SOPHROSYNE
I've been trying to draw out parts
of it as they come up. I don't know
why, it just helps me think things
out.

[Pages flipping]

CYTHAELIA
Some of these are a little scary.

SOPHROSYNE
Do you have to?

[Pages being snatched]

CYTHAELIA

I'm just trying to understand
what's got you so worried. Let me
look.

[Beat, more scribbling]

CYTHAELIA (CONT'D)

What's this one, this woman with
black holes for eyes?

SOPHROSYNE

Red tanks and terrible eyes.

CYTHAELIA

And this one looks like
Chartrulean, only he looks a little
buffer than in real life.

SOPHROSYNE

Ok, you're done here.

[Paper being grabbed]

CYTHAELIA

Sorry.

SOPHROSYNE

It's fine. This is just very
personal, and I don't like you
making fun.

CYTHAELIA

I'm not!

[Sophrosyne aggravated sounds]

SOPHROSYNE

There has to be someone else I can
talk to about this stuff.

CYTHAELIA

Can you talk to Chartrulean?

SOPHROSYNE

Can anybody?

(sigh)

What am I going to do about this
stupid ship my dad is pushing for?
It's just frivolous.

(MORE)

SOPHROSYNE (CONT'D)

There are people out there who are struggling to survive, and he's stuck on this stupid thing. How can he be so blind?

CYTHAELIA

I think he means it as a positive. So make sure it is one.

SOPHROSYNE

Can a ship alone end world hunger or replenish the earth? No.

CYTHAELIA

Maybe you should ask Chartrulean if it can.

SOPHROSYNE

I...now that's an idea. Get ready, we're going to Astreus.