

THE MADNESS OF CHARTRULEAN
A Gardeka Story

S1:E08
"THE BURDEN OF DOUBT"

Written by

H.M. Radcliff

TMOC EPISODE 8: THE BURDEN OF DOUBT

KSB LEAVES ASTREUS

KING STARBRINGER

(drunk)

Ahhhhhhh, what an evening! We must do this again sometime. Perhaps next time we see each another will be on the deck of my daughter's ship, eh?

CHARTRULEAN

Eh, I--.

YOBA

Go on ahead. I'll catch up.

KING STARBRINGER

Right.

(sighing)

Time to stop procrastinating.

YOBA TRIES TO BE MAD AT CHARTRULEAN

[Footsteps receding, Yoba exhales]

CHARTRULEAN

You're sick?

YOBA

You forget a bath?

[Sniffing self]

CHARTRULEAN

Well that's humiliating.

YOBA

Neither of us are presenting well today, are we? What's your excuse?

CHARTRULEAN

Restless night, like every other.

[Beat]

YOBA

You know, you've really changed. Used to be fearless. Didn't care what people think.

(MORE)

YOBA (CONT'D)

(beat)

Least of all, I would never have expected you to buckle under the pressure of a little girl and her man-child of a father.

CHARTRULEAN

What should I have done differently?

YOBA

You *can* and *should* say no to them! I can't even keep Buehl on track for five minutes, now he'll be gallivanting off for some pet project.

CHARTRULEAN

Why didn't you say something?

YOBA

I did! Yesterday! I even tried to give you an out.

CHARTRULEAN

(reeling)

I *took* the out! And somehow the conversation was still on the table. And after everything that happened yesterday...

YOBA

You can get away with more than you think.

CHARTRULEAN

Give me an example of that being true!

(beat)

People follow me around, cleaning up messes and making *excuses* for me. Sure, *I* can walk away unscathed. But can everybody else?

YOBA

I--

CHARTRULEAN

(lowers voice)

I have to be careful, and think about how my words and actions affect others.

YOBA

That sounds a lot like the admiral speaking. You shouldn't let these old men drill mantras into your head.

CHARTRULEAN

(sarcastic)

It's what I know.

YOBA

And we *really* need to work on that.

CHARTRULEAN

(defensive)

Lapadine is *not* Maldoro. Maldoro's fault is in his conviction. Lapadine's is his faith.

YOBA

His faith...in you?

[Beat]

CHARTRULEAN

(defeated)

He is trying with me, but I can see him losing patience. I find new ways to disappoint him daily.

YOBA

Maybe just try thinking for yourself, and not doing what other people tell you.

CHARTRULEAN

I tried that, and now I'm getting my hands slapped for it.

YOBA

Advice is advice, it's not gospel.

[Beat]

CHARTRULEAN

I can't afford to let him down any more than I already have.

(beat)

If we lose Astreus, what would happen to *them*?

YOBA

You're talking about the paladins?

CHARTRULEAN

I know what it's like to be
disparaged, and they don't deserve
to go through any of that.

YOBA

What The Order did to you really
left a scar, didn't it?

CHARTRULEAN

I don't think that's all that's
bothering me.

[beat]

CHARTRULEAN (CONT'D)

(exhaling)

My "superman" is disappearing,
Yoba.

YOBA

I'm sure you're just tired.

CHARTRULEAN

No. I wish it was that simple. I--

(beat)

Forget it. I shouldn't burden you
with my doubts.

YOBA

I came here to be angry with you,
but it's hard to stay mad when
you're so pitiable.

CHARTRULEAN

Pitiable. Tsch. So I disappoint you
too, then.

YOBA

No. I'm *proud* to call you friend,
but you need help. Is there
anything I can do?

[Sighing]

CHARTRULEAN

Everyone has to keep going so far
out of their way to help me.

[Beat]

YOBA

For some reason I'll never understand, our world leans on *one man* for so much. It's stupid, and I can't begin to imagine how you feel. But I think the picture you're trying to shape is too big.

(beat)

You can't move mountains on your own. But you can move people. Find those people, and focus only on them. Build those relationships. Then *together*, chip away at that mountain.

(beat)

To that end, I certainly don't mind stepping in wherever you need me. However you need me.

[Silence. Yoba clears throat]

YOBA (CONT'D)

(tone changes)

Anyways, I see you've upped security. That's good. Keep your secrets under tight lock and key.

CHARTRULEAN

Those words have been said a lot lately. You think I'm not?

YOBA

I, for one, just walked right into Astreus without anyone to question me.

CHARTRULEAN

There were guards.

YOBA

Guards who will let in people you trust. I need you to be your own gatekeeper. Trust *no one*.

CHARTRULEAN

Even you?

YOBA

I'm not giving you my opinion. We are all capable of mistakes.

[Beat]

YOBA (CONT'D)
 Now if you'll excuse me, I have to
 go make sure no one starts another
 war.

[Transitional music]

SOPHROSYNE PLAYS WITH CHILDREN FROM BOETHEMA

NARRATOR

The afternoon sun cast hard shadows in the gardens on the
 capitol's eastern lawn. Aside from the discordant chirring of
 insects, the scene seemed frozen in time. There was
 absolutely no wind. Not one bud, leaf, or branch moved.

Suddenly, two children rounded a hedge row at a dead sprint,
 where they found Sophrosyne crouched beneath a bush filled
 with large white flowers.

[Sounds of children playing]

LITTLE GIRL
 Found you!

SOPHROSYNE
 You rascals! Where's your other
 friend?

LITTLE GIRL
 She's over there. I think she's
 sad.

SOPHROSYNE
 Let me see if I can cheer her up.

[Walking through grass]

SOPHROSYNE (CONT'D)
 There you are! What's wrong? Don't
 you want to play with the others?

DUA 642
 Mmmm, mmm.

SOPHROSYNE
 Why not?

DUA 642
 Am I going to live here now?

SOPHROSYNE

What? Oh, no. I'm sorry. Between you and me, you wouldn't really like it here.

DUA 642

But I don't want to go back there.

SOPHROSYNE

Oh--why? Everyone seems so nice.

DUA 642

Not the lady with the scary eyes.

[Music cue]

SOPHROSYNE

What did you just say?

[Giggling intensifies, sounds of tackling]

SOPHROSYNE (CONT'D)

(laughing)

Excuse me, we're having a serious conversation over here!

BOETHEMA NURSE

Alright children, release the princess, it's time to go!

ALL CHILDREN

Awww....

SOPHROSYNE

Thank you, Sister! I was a goner.

BOETHEMA NURSE

It's such a joy watching them play like this. Lady Starbringer, our breeding program is second to none with the highest rate of exceptional children produced. We'd love to have the chance to show you what we could do with your family's continued support.

SOPHROSYNE

Of course I'll come!

(to children)

I'd like to see you all again.

BOETHEMA NURSE

Why not consider our program for yourself?

SOPHROSYNE

Oh! Uhm...

BOETHEMA NURSE

At least let us help you narrow down candidates for marriage. We have a comprehensive database, and could help you design the perfect heir.

SOPHROSYNE

Oh, no. Thank you, I'm not quite ready. But I do promise to come see the children.

BOETHEMA NURSE

You know where to find us. What do we say to Lady Starbringer for letting us play?

ALL CHILDREN

Thank you, Lady Starbringer!

BOETHEMA NURSE

Now come along!

[Walking sounds recede]

SOPHROSYNE AND CYTHAELIA IN THE GARDEN

SOPHROSYNE

(sighing)

I really don't like children.

[No answer]

SOPHROSYNE (CONT'D)

Cythaelia?

(beat)

Cythaelia!

CYTHAELIA

Ah! Sorry! Yes, children are wonderful.

SOPHROSYNE

That's not what I said. Where's your head?

CYTHAELIA

I'm not allowed to daydream?

SOPHROSYNE
It's probably this heat. Come on,
let's go in.

CYTHAELIA
Ok.

SOPHROSYNE
(interrupting)
Wait, something's going on...

CYTHAELIA
Who's at the gate?

[Distant arguing]

SOPHROSYNE
Oh, no. This won't be good. Come
on, I need to know what *he's* doing
here.

[Transitional music]

Yوبا SEES JOSQUIN APPROACHING THE CAPITOL

NARRATOR

An acrid smell hung in the afternoon air. The temperature had risen since morning. Whatever was at the source of the stench was even less fond of the sudden spike in temperature than Yوبا, who stood overlooking the courtyard from a balcony. He had stepped out for fresh air, but found the opposite. He was left with the choice of vomiting in front of the entire council, or vomiting outside. His dark blue tunic now hung heavy, and his shoulders were beginning to ache under its weight. A bead of sweat rolled down his forehead, which he caught with a kerchief before it could reach his collar. Then he saw something he didn't like. Josquin was climbing the steps below.

Yوبا ARRESTS JOSQUIN

[Sound fades to voices in echoey space]

JOSQUIN
You don't have the authority to
bar my entry.

GUARD

We aren't going to let anyone
inside this building without the
authorization of the chamberlain,
or the king.

JOSQUIN

I am a member of the royal council!

[Footsteps approaching]

YOBA

Ah, Lord Josquin! Welcome back to
Simitu. You look well.

JOSQUIN

You can drop the act, Yoba. I know
you're not happy to see me.

YOBA

It's my job to welcome *all*
visitors. Should we move somewhere
more comfortable? Some wine, maybe?

JOSQUIN

I'm not a visitor, I'm here to do
my civic duty as an alderman of
Cailou.

YOBA

That reminds me! I got your
message. Sorry I haven't had a
chance to craft a response, things
have been very busy.

JOSQUIN

So I've heard! King Starbringer has
returned to Simitu. But that's not
all, is it? Tell me, as a member
of the royal council, why have I
not been included in negotiations
with the Rau? Are you trying to
humiliate me?

YOBA

Mmmmmmm. The council thinks it
might be better if you sit this one
out.

JOSQUIN

The Rau are a *planetary* concern.
You need representation from
Cailou!

YOBA

We've got someone. Someone who was invited.

JOSQUIN

(sarcastic)

But the party? You didn't invite me to the party! You know I love parties...

YOBA

Half the attendees weren't invited, so you only really stopped yourself from coming.

CYTHAELIA

(whispering)

Phrosy, we should stay out of sight.

SOPHROSYNE

(whispering)

I have to see.

YOBA

Why are you here, Josquin?

JOSQUIN

To get what I'm entitled to. My seat at the council.

YOBA

I can't do that.

JOSQUIN

Why?

YOBA

You know why.

JOSQUIN

(shouting)

I demand an audience with the council to settle this.

YOBA

They're busy with more important things.

JOSQUIN

I won't leave until I get my audience.

YOBA

Surely you have better things to do with your time. Like launch a propaganda campaign behind our backs?

JOSQUIN

That accusation is unfounded.

YOBA

Is it?

JOSQUIN

What proof do you have?

YOBA

What more proof do I need? If I were you, I'd leave the capital right now. Return to Cailou, and never set foot here again.

JOSQUIN

Or else what?

YOBA

Or else I'll have you detained.

JOSQUIN

How dare you try to censure me! I have more allies than you realize. Don't think I won't go down without a fight.

YOBA

Is that a confession?

JOSQUIN

A confession to what exactly? I want to hear you say it.

YOBA

Treason. Tell me, how far did you expect this "New Regime" of yours to go?

JOSQUIN

You tell your King I want an audience with the council, or else arresting me will be the single most regrettable decision he'll ever make.

YOBA

Mmm, I disagree.

[Sounds of weapons as guards engage Josquin. Commotion from balcony]

IMSEP
Josquin!

YOBA
Imsep, stay where you are.

IMSEP
(pleading)
Where are you taking him?

YOBA
Somewhere comfortable, I assure you.

JOSQUIN
What exactly do you seek to gain from arresting me?

YOBA
We could be lenient, or we could make an example of you. Either way, your little revolution ends here.

JOSQUIN
It's a shame. We would have worked so well together had things been different.

YOBA
I tend to side with the winning party.

JOSQUIN
Not this time. This time, you and House Starbringer lose.

[Footsteps of Josquin and several guards]

IMSEP
(crying)
Josquin!

YOBA
Guards, please escort the young prince back to his apartments.

IMSEP
Don't put your dirty hands on me.

[A beat. Dizzying music]

YOBA

(to self)

Josquin, you idiot. If you had half a brain you'd have seen this coming from a mile away. And the timing couldn't have been worse. Ugh, and why won't everything stop spinning? I...I...Oh no...

[Sound of Yoba collapsing, commotion]

YOBA SEES DR. TOMLIN

SOPHROSYNE

(faded intelligibility)

Yoba? Oh I think he's opening his eyes a little bit! Yoba? I think he's awake.

(to Yoba)

You're still burning with fever.

YOBA

Sophrosyne, what are you doing here?

SOPHROSYNE

I saw everything with Josquin. You were brilliant.

[Sounds of ice clinking]

TOMLIN

Here, take this.

YOBA

What is it?

TOMLIN

Just some seltzer water. Drink every last drop, please.

YOBA

How boring.

TOMLIN

You may say that now, but you'll thank me later. You're lucky to be alive.

YOBA

What do you mean?

TOMLIN

You should lay off the wine for a while. At least until your stress levels return to normal.

YOBA

I haven't had *that* much to drink.

SOPHROSYNE

With everything going on, maybe you've just lost track?

YOBA

That's unlikely, I have great self-control.

TOMLIN

When's the last time you drank?

YOBA

Last night.

TOMLIN

Are you entirely sure?

YOBA

Yes. But whatever I drank was particularly strong. I didn't feel great immediately after.

SOPHROSYNE

(condescending tone)

Was it from the Rau?

YOBA

Yes. In hindsight, that wasn't a very good idea, was it?

TOMLIN

You show all the telltale symptoms of acute alcohol poisoning. Frankly I'm surprised that you remember your name at this point. I'd like to keep you here a while.

YOBA

There's work to be done.

TOMLIN

I'm sorry, you seem to be under the impression that I'm making a request.

SOPHROSYNE

Our dear Chamberlain is a lush.
What'll my father say?

YOBA

Your father can drink me under the
table tenfold.

SOPHROSYNE

I should go tell him what just
happened.

YOBA

Leave this part out, please. It's
embarrassing.

SOPHROSYNE

All right, just promise you won't
give Doctor Tomlin a hard time.

YOBA

No guarantees there, I'm afraid.

[Sophrosyne's footsteps receding]

TOMLIN

Well! Now that we have some
privacy, I think a delightful
palette cleanser to that seltzer
water would be a detailed
explanation of this "alcohol" you
imbibed.

YOBA

Let's trade. You've been close to
the sickly ambassador, Cydar.

TOMLIN

Yes. Apparently there are limits to
their immortality. Eternal youth
rather than eternal life, if you
ask me.

YOBA

Did you...mention The Order to
them?

TOMLIN

Briefly. On my last visit, they
seemed very curious about the
temple. The rites of passage in
particular.

YOBA

I really didn't want a Rau death on our hands. I don't understand why they brought such a frail man to an alien planet for something this important.

TOMLIN

Well, trust me. If he's going to pass away it's not going to be on our hands at all. Honestly I don't see what use he could be in his condition.

YOBA

It's certainly an interesting question. What use could he be?

[Transitional music]

IMSEP VISITS JOSQUIN IN JAIL

[Footsteps on concrete, echoing]

IMSEP

Open this door right now, or I'll have Loam open it with your head!

[Door flying open, brisk footsteps]

JOSQUIN

Imsep!

IMSEP

I couldn't just abandon you down here. How *dare* they treat you with so little dignity.

JOSQUIN

What have you heard?

IMSEP

Nothing. Father's drunk and Yoba's ill.

JOSQUIN

Well at least we can be afforded this moment. Look at you...you've come a long way from the lost boy I found all those years ago. Does your father treat you any better?

IMSEP

No, it's gotten worse. I'm barely even an afterthought most days.

JOSQUIN

What about your sister?

IMSEP

She's father's favorite and spoiled to the core. You wouldn't believe what she gets away with.

JOSQUIN

I hear she's gotten quite beautiful. Her re-entry into society has been a topic.

IMSEP

Exactly. All the while I get to stand on the sidelines and play "broken prince."

(beat)

This place isn't for me, Josquin. I hate watching everyone be so ridiculous. Little do they know, I actually have opinions.

JOSQUIN

Opinions that unlike them, I value.

IMSEP

Nobody understands me like you do.

JOSQUIN

Nobody.

IMSEP

I wish we could be somewhere else right now. Somewhere where these things can't bother us.

JOSQUIN

I, too, wish that. But if you still want these things to change, we have work to do. Understand?

IMSEP

What can I do?

JOSQUIN

Well....seeing as my options are currently limited, all you *can* do is look after yourself. Go out and enjoy a little drink on my behalf.

(MORE)

JOSQUIN (CONT'D)
 With any luck, you'll find yourself
 in good company.

IMSEP
 (piqued interest)
 Where?

JOSQUIN
 Somewhere that serves your favorite
 cocktail. A good boy deserves only
 the best.

[Transitional music]

NIGHTTIME - IMSEP SNEAKS OUT WITH LOAM

[Heavy door opening, snapping of vines. Nighttime sounds]

IMSEP
 Is the coast clear?

LOAM
 Hmmmm.

IMSEP
 Glad you're finally good for
 something. Who knows how long it's
 been since this door's been opened.
 The gate is hidden in that alcove.
 We must make it there unseen.

DRECHEN AND GROBIEN HEAR IMSEP SKEAING OUT

[Footsteps in grass. Metal gate sounds in distance. Cydar coughing]

DRECHEN
 Did you hear something?

GROBIEN
 More than heard.

DRECHEN
 What did you see?

GROBIEN
 Two figures in black, one large,
 one small.

DRECHEN
 Where did they go?

GROBIEN

I don't care where they went, only where they came from. Below us is a door.

DRECHEN

A door?

GROBIEN

A door. I wonder who comes in and out of that door?

DRECHEN

We will watch this door, and then we will see.

[Transitional music]

THE PALADINS SNEAK INTO ASTREUS

[Night sounds, exterior gate opening and closing. Boyish giggling]

CORBIN

Now that was fun.

QUAY

Backalley is still the best.

[Hushed tones]

HAVELION

Shhhhh. Quiet, you idiots.

CORBIN

You shhh!

ABRUC

Come on, stay quiet. Which entrance should we use?

HAVELION

He's probably still up working. If we go in through the gym, he'll probably never know the difference.

QUAY

Good idea.

[Door opening and closing]

ABRUC

Just leave your overcoats, they probably smell like everything.

CORBIN

Hopefully not everything.

QUAY

Ugggggh...

HAVELION

Shhhh. Go on without me, I should check on him.

ABRUC

Suit yourself.

[Transitional music]

HAVELION CHECKS ON CHARTRULEAN

[Footsteps approach]

HAVELION

(astonishment)

You're still up I see.

CHARTRULEAN

Is that a surprise?

HAVELION

Not really. What are you eating?

CHARTRULEAN

Do we always keep these on hand?

HAVELION

Uhhhh, yeah.

CHARTRULEAN

These are actually acceptable.

HAVELION

And now you've suddenly discovered food. What's next?

CHARTRULEAN

I don't know. Hand me another.

HAVELION

You're getting crumbs all over.

CHARTRULEAN

Borsha has been trying to force food down my throat every chance she gets. Apparently leaving it around my work area is part of some new tactic.

HAVELION

Well, looks like it's working.

CHARTRULEAN

At this point, anything to get her off my back.

HAVELION

(insulting tone)

Pahrum.

CHARTRULEAN

Do not call me that.

HAVELION

Whatever. What are you working on? Is this for Sophrosyne?

CHARTRULEAN

No. This is *The Sophrosyne*.

HAVELION

Just one afternoon with a girl, and you're building her a ship.

CHARTRULEAN

This is not *for* her. She just gets to put her name on it.

HAVELION

The Sophrosyne. It is a good name. Although I still don't understand why we're doing this.

CHARTRULEAN

(inspired)

Today was a first for me, listening to someone else's dream for a ship. It reminded me that there is no solitary vision for a perfect future. I would like to build something more substantial than *The Nine*. Something benevolent and beautiful in appearance, but with the might of *azurea*.

HAVELION

What about The Nine, are we abandoning them? I can't imagine Lapadine being happy about that.

CHARTRULEAN

Lapadine understands our situation.

HAVELION

Which is...

CHARTRULEAN

Despite our victory against the Rau, The Nine are ultimately a failure. The berserker feeds on azurea, and is a threat to everything we do. Until we learn how to eradicate it, we cannot in good conscience build more like them. A new project gives us a chance to start over. Hopefully along the way, we can fix them.

HAVELION

Aaaaaand what about us?

CHARTRULEAN

(analytical)

Shan said something very interesting the other night that has me thinking. She referred to the azurea itself as a presence. An old friend. The ships may not have *learned* sentience. It may have been there all along. We just didn't know to listen.

HAVELION

You're saying the azurea is making The Nine act on their own? *Not* the berserker?

CHARTRULEAN

Azurea *is* the collective consciousness. Energy harvested from knowledge. We only assume it's omniscient, faceless. And we can easily be wrong.

HAVELION

That makes some sense. But it feels like a hostile takeover. Almost like it can't tell us apart from the machine.

CHARTRULEAN

Well whatever is influencing them,
it has shut me out. So I have no
further insight.

HAVELION

Isn't that taking it a bit
personally?

CHARTRULEAN

I should feel that way, I made
them.

(beat)

Now please leave me, I need the
silence to be able to think.

[Beat]

HAVELION

Well, just don't stay up too late.
Maybe you should "discover"
sleeping in your bed next.

[Footsteps. Sniffing]

CHARTRULEAN

Wait. What's that smell?

HAVELION

Uh. What smell?

CHARTRULEAN

You smell like aged meat and
fermented grass. Where have you
been?

HAVELION

I haven't been anywhere.

CHARTRULEAN

It's no use lying to me.
You've been to Backalley.

HAVELION (CONT'D)

Here we go.

CHARTRULEAN (CONT'D)

Apparently what I said about
leaving the compound fell on deaf
ears.

HAVELION

Well maybe we deserved a break.
It's better than watching you kiss
ass while the rest of us are just
standing around waiting for
something to happen.

CHARTRULEAN

Do you think I want any of this? Of
these people?

[Eerie whispers]

HAVELION

I don't really know anymore. You
sure seem to be enjoying yourself.

CHARTRULEAN

Don't come closer.

HAVELION (CONT'D)

Or what?

CHARTRULEAN (CONT'D)

I will not warn you again.

HAVELION

Tell me again why you're making
this ship, but this time, give me
the real answer.

CHARTRULEAN

Keep your distance.

HAVELION

You'll have to make me.

[Sounds of struggle and crashing cart]

CHARTRULEAN

(firm, panting)

I don't need you toying with me
right now. I need you to be *with*
me, and I need you to be able to
see how this behavior will not
change anything.

[Eerie whispers]

HAVELION

I think I'm really starting to hate
you.

CHARTRULEAN

Hate me if it helps, but don't
become a liability.

HAVELION

If I'm a liability, what does that make you?

CHARTRULEAN

These episodes are becoming irreconcilable. What do you want me to do?

HAVELION

You can start by *helping* us instead of just worrying about your damn self.

[Footsteps leaving. Long silence. Sounds of Chartrulean returning to work]

CHARTRULEAN RUMINATES OVER HIS PROBLEMS

CHARTRULEAN

(thinking, frustrated)
But is he wrong?

[Sound of something being slammed on work surface]

CHARTRULEAN (CONT'D)

(frustrated, layered)
This is futile! My thoughts can't stay in one place for more than a second. And now this headache...between this math and my sense of panic, I think I've actually exceeded my mental capacity.

[Whispers sweep through room]

CHARTRULEAN (CONT'D)

Who's there?

[Spooky music, slow footsteps]

CHARTRULEAN (CONT'D)

(thinking)
That presence has returned. Dark feelings, and whispers you sense, but can't quite hear. Is it the azurea that haunts them? Or is it the berserker? In any case, tomorrow I will have the ships moved out.

(out loud)
Lights off.

[Click. Transitional music]

NARRATOR

The work lights dimmed as Chartrulean strode off down the corridor that led to his apartment. But not before taking a brief detour. He came to a pair of tall doors made of heavy metal and concrete. On the other side was a chamber.

Walls covered in a strange black material that absorbed all light and sound, the chamber simulated the vacuum of space. Chartrulean visited often to satisfy some morbid curiosity. As he crossed the threshold, his ears began to ring from the subtle change in air pressure. Even while inactive, it was thrilling.

[Heartbeat sounds]

CHARTRULEAN (CONT'D)

*The effect in here is fascinating.
In a way, it resembles the void.
But there is a real danger here.
Not just one of suffocating, but of
losing my mind. The silence is
beyond anything I have ever
experienced. Even now fear prevents
me from closing the door behind me.
What would my mind do if I let it
wander right now?*

[Heartbeat and blood flowing sounds. Voices layered]

KING STARBRINGER (V.O)

You're more of a paradox than I
expected.

YOBA (VO)

You shouldn't let these old men
drill mantras into your head.

KING STARBRINGER (V.O.)

Humble. Yet fierce. I like you.

HAVELION (V.O.)

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

YOBA (V.O.)

The picture you're trying to shape
is too big.

CHARTRULEAN

(thinking)

There they are, those little stray thoughts. Like embers rising from a fire that rages out of control. Just as the berserker has taken root inside of me, I am taking root on Arcas. Whereas before I was free, now I am just more tinder for that fire, same as everyone else.

[More whispers from war hawks, Yoba, etc.]

CHARTRULEAN (CONT'D)

Everything I thought I knew about this world is wrong. About the people, their motives, the intricacies of their politics, and my place in all of it. I like Yoba's idealized version of the world better, the one in which everyone is worth saving. He actually had even me believing it for a time. But once again I'm not so sure.

HAVELION (V.O.)

What are you all afraid of?

[Layered War Hawks voices]

CHARTRULEAN

Havelion is right. There are people who make the world worse.

[Layered War Hawks voices]

HAVELION (V.O.)

You can blame us all you want, but at some point you have to turn a mirror on yourself.

CHARTRULEAN

I wish I had his talent for calling them out into the open.

HAVELION (V.O.)

I think I'm really starting to hate you.

CHARTRULEAN (V.O.)

Hate me if it helps! But don't become a liability!

[Thoughts and music crescendo to a breaking point of sweeping score]

CHARTRULEAN

(desperate)

*When was the last time I stared
into the face of acatalepsy and was
excited? Why do I suddenly care at
all about these banal interactions?*

[Music reduces back to silence. Heartbeat rate increases]

SOPHROSYNE (V.O.)

I just want to do more to
help you. Just please let me
try.

SOPHROSYNE (V.O.)

Well you obviously think I'm
stupid or something.

CHARTRULEAN

Especially with her.

SOPHROSYNE (V.O.)

They look like you. Irascible and -
slightly feral.

CHARTRULEAN

(layered)

*She is disingenuous. A far worse
performer off the stage than on.*

SOPHROSYNE (V.O.)

Maybe we're a little bit the same
in that way.

CHARTRULEAN

*She wants so badly for me to be
someone she can access.*

SOPHROSYNE (V.O .)

I'm so stupid.

CHARTRULEAN

My hand still feels strange where
hers touched mine.

SOPHROSYNE

Shake hands! Isn't that how you
make things feel more official?

[Heartbeat and more blood flowing sounds, gross]

CHARTRULEAN

*I really need to get out of here.
If my own smell doesn't get to me
first, the sounds eventually will.*

[Heavy door closing]

CHARTRULEAN RETURNS TO HIS ROOM

NARRATOR

Chartrulean found his dormitory clean. Bed made. Work carts removed. Trash and laundry piles swept up. Clothes laundered and returned to his bureau. Someone had even pulled back the panels along the far wall, revealing a window and seldom-used door.

CHARTRULEAN

*The gardens...I almost forgot they
were so close.*

NARRATOR

The moonlight flooding the room was so bright that he didn't bother turning on the overheads. He lay back in his bed, reached his non-trembling hand towards the ceiling, and examined the way his knuckles made tiny mountains across the back of his hand. In the absence of light, it was like looking like a detailed sketch of a hand, not necessarily his own. He willed the hand to be tightened into a fist, and looked surprised when it complied.

CHARTRULEAN (CONT'D)

*A sudden awareness of the beast
machine can be startling. Sometimes
I forget who controls who.*

(panic)

*The brooch! Where did I have it
last?*

[Rummaging sounds]

YOBA (V.O.)

Pitiable!

CHARTRULEAN (CONT'D)

Shut up!

CHARTRULEAN (CONT'D)

(relief)

*Here it is. Someone took care with
it. Evidently more than I am
capable of. There must be more to
know. Where it came from, who its
maker is.*

(MORE)

CHARTRULEAN (CONT'D)

(manic)

*But to whose benefit? Mine? Hers?
And what's the cost of involving
myself in someone else's mystery?
This could become very expensive.
But so is the curiosity. No matter
what happens I lose. Well played,
princess.*

(determined)

*What would the void reveal about
it? I should at least try. Maybe
this little energy boost will help.*

[Deep rumbling and ear ringing sounds]

CHARTRULEAN (CONT'D)

(energetic)

Yes! Now what can I see?

(thinking)

*Two differing wavelengths of
infrared show me two different
types of silver. The main design of
it is pure, but the backing with
the fastener is some kind of alloy.
Most likely added later for
fashion. What if it was removed?*

[Sound of metal hitting ground softly, echoes]

CHARTRULEAN (CONT'D)

*That came away easier than
expected. Engravings. Finally,
something I can work with! But what
is this language? Not immediately
recognizable. It could be one of
the lost languages, or maybe
incomplete. This might be easier
than I thought. But is it really
worth going deeper?*

[Void sounds intensify]

NARRATOR

He let himself sink further and further until several stone doorways materialized, gliding towards him through the void mists one by one. Chartrulean picked a door, and stepped into one of his mind's many chambers.

Suddenly, his small room stretched into a long stone corridor. The glow from the brooch the only thing illuminating the walls as he moved without moving, pulled along as if by an invisible conveyor.

Corridor after corridor, room after room, Chartrulean cycled through spooky black-and-white memories of places. Frayed edges whispering every which way, calling him in. Doors opened and closed, he ascended and descended stairways, and looked out through countless windows at distorted landscapes. Details were blurred. Objects, and even entire rooms, flickered in and out of existence, some being replaced with the wrong things. Faces where they weren't supposed to be. Like a nightmare.

He found himself in a great library, scanning every book he had ever read. But just as Chartrulean's memories of places were distorted, so too were the pages. Blank. Then whole books began to fade away, followed by entire sections. The void began to quake. Entire stacks fell to the floor and crumbled into black ash.

[Rumbling and crashing sounds]

CHARTRULEAN (CONT'D)

No! I can't lose this. I have to go somewhere else.

NARRATOR

He allowed his mind to sink to a new dimensional plane, and found himself somewhere different. Now he was standing in front of the mural in the vaults of the seminary.

CHARTRULEAN (CONT'D)

The answer is surely in there, but if I can hang onto anything at all, it has to be this.

[Rumbling sounds intensify]

NARRATOR

Suddenly he was back at the Jhardeho Temple, but the void chased after. He likened the sensation to being pursued by the wolf he had seen in the desert. But the stray thought of it was enough to let the wolf itself manifest as a black misty vision of itself with four glowing red eyes. It chased him, snarling. Hungry. The ground beneath his feet broke apart, and they fell away into nothing. But he urged himself to move faster in spite of it.

Swirls of black began to overcome his vision to the point that only a small round window was still visible. It would only be a matter of time before this part of his memory would be blocked completely, and the demon wolf that nipped at his heels would overtake him.

CHARTRULEAN (CONT'D)

I cannot outrun it!

[Rumbling and ringing sounds stop; sounds of Chartrulean collapsing]

CHARTRULEAN (CONT'D)

(panting)

Cold. Too cold. I can't do this on my own.