

THE MADNESS OF CHARTRULEAN
A Gardeka Story

S1:E09
"THE WORM"

Written by

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TMOC EPISODE 9: THE WORM

THE RAU DROP THE WORM ON LOAM

[Transitional music. Nighttime sounds, Cydar coughing and gasping]

DRECHEN

If we don't remove it now, it will
kill him prematurely. Our plans
could be forfeit.

CYDAR

I'm ready.

GROBIEN

You've done your part in helping us
deliver the worm. But try not to
let the extraction kill you just
yet.

CYDAR

(slow)

A Rau would never die before
fulfilling the extent of his duty.

DRECHEN

Alright, now, I need you to be
perfectly still. This will require
a delicate hand.

NARRATOR

Drechen uncorked the lid of a metal flask, filled with a strange, pungent fluid. He brought it to Cydar's open mouth. As he did, Cydar's body began to convulse, eyes rolling back into his head. Drechen and Grobien stayed close, unmoved by the sight of their writhing comrade. First, a single fleshy gray tendril peeked out from Cydar's nostril. Then another. The tendrils wrapped themselves around Cydar's chin and neck. The worm, not quite solid and not quite liquid, pulled itself free from its host at last, morphing and stretching as it moved.

The worm pulled itself along using its fleshy amoeba-like appendages, and disappeared with a plunk into the metal flask.

DRECHEN (CONT'D)

Into the bottle you go!

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

The second he was free of it, the old blue-haired ambassador looked somehow deflated. His breathing slowed, and the tremors subsided. All that was left was an empty shell, even closer to death than before.

GROBIEN
HMMMM. Nicely done.

DRECHEN
A dignified expiation if I do say
so myself.

GROBIEN
Yes, handled well. Some take better
to the worm than others. He's done
well.

DRECHEN
It won't last long without a host.
We must move quickly.

GROBIEN
So are we just going to stand here
on the balcony until that door
opens?

DRECHEN
I don't see what other options we
have.

GROBIEN
Let's just hope our assumptions are
correct about who uses it.

[Distant gate opening]

DRECHEN
(whispering)
They are. Shhh! Here they come.

GROBIEN
Aim well, brother.

DRECHEN
Be quiet so I can focus.

LOAM GETS HIT

[Loam grunting, stone door opening. Splatting sound]

LOAM
(grunting)
Huh?

IMSEP
What's wrong with you? Come on,
dog.

[Door closing, Rau cackling fades away]

YOBA CONFRONTS IMSEP IN HIS ROOM

[Footsteps and door opening]

YOBA
Surprise.

[Imsep startled]

IMSEP
What are *you* doing in my room?

YOBA
I've come to make peace.

IMSEP
I don't want to talk to you.

YOBA
(sighing)
Too bad. I guess I'll have to tell
your father that you've been
sneaking out.

IMSEP
What do you want?

YOBA
I *don't* want you to do anything
stupid.

IMSEP
Oh really? What exactly do you
think I would do?

YOBA
I have a pretty good imagination.

IMSEP
Is that all you have to say to me?

YOBA

No, there's more. With the Rau here, we're dealing with substantial security concerns. Does that make sense? We can't be sneaking around.

IMSEP

Whatever.

YOBA

And Loam, you know better than to enable bad behavior.

LOAM

Hmmmm.

IMSEP

He's *my* guardian, he listens to *me*.

YOBA

That's a problem, isn't it? Can I beg you for a moment with the prince? It's hard to argue with him when you're breathing down my neck.

IMSEP

You heard him. Out.

LOAM IS INFECTED WITH THE WORM

[Argument fades as we follow Loam's footsteps and heavy breathing. Door closes. Conversation is audible yet muffled]

YOBA

About Josquin.

IMSEP

You had no right to arrest him.

YOBA

Clearly you're torn up about it. So torn up that you spent your entire day canoodling somewhere.

IMSEP

Oh, is that where I was? I'd forgotten.

YOBA

I assume.

IMSEP

I can do what I want. It's not like it matters whose company I enjoy, I am the broken parince after all.

YOBA

An unfortunate title.

[Weird creature sounds, Loam choking]

IMSEP

Even my father acknowledges it. You don't have to pretend to be sympathetic.

YOBA

Oh, I'm not. Your family jewels may be a little lackluster, but you're still the prince. And you need to start acting like one .

IMSEP

Who are *you* to tell me anything?

YOBA

I'm someone who's trying to help your father build a future. For Arcas.

IMSEP

The future you are trying to build is one that people like me can't participate in. So why should I even care?

YOBA

People like you?

IMSEP

The loveless. The discarded. The broken.

YOBA

Is that how you see yourself?

[Loam struggling, falling to knees]

IMSEP

How else would I see myself? I've never been able to compete with my sister, not even for five minutes of father's attention. He secretly wishes I was never born.

YOBA

That doesn't mean you can ignore your responsibilities as a Starbringer.

IMSEP

What, I go to parties. I tag along to all these stupid public events. I'm present. What more do I have to be?

YOBA

You are just like your grandfather. Content with doing the bare minimum. If you want to change the lineage conversation and compete with your sister, you have to change your attitude.

[Loam collapses, stops breathing]

IMSEP

Don't think I don't see what you're doing. You're not working *with* my father, you're trying to *be* him when he's not looking. Otherwise why would you be here now?

YOBA

Because I needed to say what he obviously will not.

IMSEP

VAnd why won't he say it?

YOBA

He doesn't know how.

IMSEP

And *you* do? You are overstepping your bounds, chamberlain. How dare you!

YOBA

How dare *I*? I'm not the one who wilted at the sight of a political adversary, out in the open for all to see!

IMSEP

You of all people should know how I feel!

[Loam gasping for air, being confused]

YOBA

What's that supposed to mean!

IMSEP

I don't think I need to explain it.
Not get out of my room or I'll have
Loam throw you out.

YOBA

This is not resolved.

IMSEP

I don't care.

[Door opening, conversation resumes at normal volume. Loam
struggling]

IMSEP (CONT'D)

Loam! What's wrong? Whoa, his eyes
are funny.

YOBA

I'll send for Doctor Tomlin.

THE NEXT MORNING - MALDORO IS GIVEN A MESSAGE

[Morning sounds, echoes of footsteps on concrete, pok pok of
cane on tile]

NARRATOR

Abbott Maldoro walked briskly through the antechamber of the
Jhardeho temple. His pursed lips formed a straight white line
across the bottom half of his face, and his eyes were molten
amber. The pok pok of his cane striking the floor resonated
throughout the temple, warning of his approach.

He reached an ornately carved door at the end of the corridor
and pushed it open. On the other side was a room with a long,
black stone table in its center. Five well-dressed men and
women were there, joined by a royal messenger. Magogoso,
dressed in a monk's frock and stole bearing the eye of
Jhardeka, stood with the messenger. The look on Magogoso's
face, and the nervousness of the messenger, set the
expectation of bad news.

MALDORO

What's the meaning of this
intrusion? Can't you see we have
more important things to do?

MESSENGER

I bring a message from King
Starbringer.

MALDORO

I won't hear it. You can inform
your king that any Starbringer
loyalist that steps foot in my
temple will face the full extent of
Jhardeho law. Under this roof, he
is not king. *I am*. Have this maggot
removed, and consider this a
warning for yourself for letting
him in, Magogoso.

MAGOGOSO

You might want to hear what this
young man has to say.

MALDORO

You have one minute to make it
interesting. Then out.

MESSENGER

(clearing throat
nervously)

The Rau ambassadors have asked to
come to the temple.

MALDORO

What business could they have here?

MESSENGER

(gulping)

One of them is dying. They want his
final hours to be observed here at
the temple, under our customs. As a
show of...unity.

[Beat]

MALDORO

I'll think it over and send a
message once we've decided. Now get
out.

MESSENGER

Yes, Lord.

MALDORO

Don't "Lord," me.

[Footsteps receding]

MAGOGOSO

Well?

MALDORO

I'll need more time to process this.

MAGOGOSO

It'd be an interesting opportunity. We don't get visited by members of an alien race every day.

MALDORO

The Rau are our mortal enemy. What message would it send to the masses if we agreed to this?

MAGOGOSO

One of peace.

MALDORO

Too presumptuous. I'd rather not involve myself in any capitol business. They've made it clear they don't value our opinion.

MALDORO COMMANDS THE COUNCIL

[Councilman 1 clearing throat]

MALDORO

Do you have something to say?

COUNCILMAN 1

How much longer are we supposed to impose these rations?

COUNCILWOMAN 1V

Our farmers are being negatively impacted.

MALDORO

Keep on it for a few more days. Then, throttle the water supply.

COUNCILWOMAN 1

But sir--

MALDORO

We have to show King Starbringer who's really in control of this city.

(MORE)

MALDORO (CONT'D)

Have you come here to disagree with me, or have you come to help me crush the monarchy?

COUNCILMAN 2

With all due respect, all I see us crushing is the people.

COUNCILMAN 1

Either by design or complete oversight, King Starbringer has yet to retaliate.

MALDORO

There's nothing he *can* do. I'm the one sharing a table with the men and women who have the power to turn Simitu on and off at will.

COUNCILMAN 3

That won't last long. He has Astreus. And Lapadine.

COUNCILMAN 1

If the calamity showed us anything, it's that Lapadine's support isn't airtight. Even *his generals* can be bribed.

MALDORO

Enough speculation. We're shifting our focus to Chartrulean. Without him, House Starbringer is powerless.

MAGOGOSO

Chartrulean has every protection. Are you sure it's worth it?

MALDORO

We *must* find a way to dismantle Astreus and demonstrate how dangerous the azurea truly is.

MAGOGOSO

Even if it's a lie?

MALDORO

It. Is. No. Lie.

(probing)

Where is your allegiance, Magogoso?

MAGOGOSO

With Jhardeho. My Lord.

MALDORO

Then prove it. Find me a way into
Astreus.

MAGOGOSO

I'd never get past Lapadine.

MALDORO

Then get creative.

[Transitional music]

SOPHROSYNE THROWS AWAY CLOTHES

[Sounds of clothes piling up]

SOPHROSYNE

Heads up, here's more. A lot more.

CYTHAELIA

Are you sure you just want to get
rid of *all* these clothes?

SOPHROSYNE

None of this is here because I
wanted it. You're more than welcome
to anything.

CYTHAELIA

There has to be some other way to
burn off this pent up energy of
yours. At least spare your
wardrobe.

SOPHROSYNE

I'm trying to keep my mind off of
Astreus.

CYTHAELIA

That again?

SOPHROSYNE

I did my part, got out of a ship...

CYTHAELIA

Then what's the issue?

SOPHROSYNE

(sighing)
I just....wish I could be of more
help, for the paladins if nothing
else. But the *right* kind of help.

(MORE)

SOPHROSYNE (CONT'D)

Not just "a drain." So the best thing I can think of to do is not think about it at all.

CYTHAELIA

Didn't your father ask you to spend some time there?

SOPHROSYNE

He'd probably rethink that if he knew everything.

CYTHAELIA

About what Chartrulean said to you?

SOPHROSYNE

No, about how I just--just don't know how to do these things.

CYTHAELIA

What *could* you do right now anyway?

SOPHROSYNE

I don't even know. Ugh, it just makes me so mad. When I first met Chartrulean, I thought "here's a person I can actually understand." I thought he'd be different. More like he was in my dream.

CYTHAELIA

See, this is *exactly* why I don't want to encourage you. Dreams are dreams. Nothing more.

SOPHROSYNE

I think I'm gonna go ask for Mom's brooch back.

CYTHAELIA

I think that's a good idea.

SOPHROSYNE

(sighing)

There has to be more to the world than watching these great men play war.

[Sounds of clothes rustling]

CYTHAELIA

Are you really getting rid of *that*?

SOPHROSYNE

Yes.

CYTHAELIA

But it's so pretty!

SOPHROSYNE

I want to look like an old maid.
Bleak and undesirable.

[Door opens]

KING STARBRINGER

Oh! Why are you still here?

SOPHROSYNE

Why are *you* here?

KING STARBRINGER

I live here.

SOPHROSYNE

Me too.

KING STARBRINGER

Shouldn't you be at Astreus
planning your ship?

SOPHROSYNE

Didn't Chartrulean tell you? He
said it was impossible.

KING STARBRINGER

That's not the story I got.

SOPHROSYNE

Wait. What did he tell you?

KING STARBRINGER

That you inspired him to take
Astreus in a new direction. He
showed me some of your ideas, and
there are some good ones. Although
the bugs and trees seemed to be of
particular concern. I don't think
they'll make the cut.

SOPHROSYNE

This is a nightmare. I don't want a
ship.

KING STARBRINGER

And you don't have to worry. This of yourself as a *shareholder* in the most iconic engineering feat in recent history. It's an arrangement he seemed a lot more comfortable with. *And* he's naming it after you.

SOPHROSYNE

I have to go stop this madness. No-- I can't just go back there, he'll be put off. I need a reason.

KING STARBRINGER

I just gave you a reason! Go!

SOPHROSYNE

There's someone I need to talk to first.

[Transitional music]

YOBA VISITS JOSQUIN IN JAIL

[Sounds of wine pouring]

JOSQUIN

It's always empty threats with these people. Even here there's wine. Not very good wine...

[Approaching footsteps, heavy door opening]

YOBA

I see the warden is treating you well, Josquin.

JOSQUIN

If you're here to gloat, spare the energy.

YOBA

In that case I'll be leaving.

JOSQUIN

How long do you plan on keeping me down here?

YOBA

Until we decide what to do with you.

JOSQUIN

Does the council know I'm here? And the king?

YOBA

He's aware. The council will be informed of the situation once their current obligations are fulfilled.

JOSQUIN

How long will that be?

YOBA

However long it takes to settle things with the Rau.

JOSQUIN

I should be up there with them now!

YOBA

You forfeit that privilege on your own.

JOSQUIN

Is that what standing up against social injustice is to you?

YOBA

We can't be screaming about domestic issues with them present. You'd just use the council chamber as a stage.

JOSQUIN

I would never...

YOBA

It's what you do. And I noticed you wore the red cape. The red cape always spells trouble.

JOSQUIN

(angry)

I'm the one who's been knocking on doors. Talking to people, and finding ways to solve their problems. They're exhausted by the theater, they want *stability*.

YOBA

In other words, you've been rallying support behind our backs and exploiting the misfortune of those less fortunate than you?

JOSQUIN

King Starbringer is letting people go *hungry*. Open your eyes.

YOBA

Your heart appears to be in the right place, but why all these extreme tactics? The tabloids, the threats of insurrection. It's just sloppy work, and will get you nowhere.

JOSQUIN

It's called being relatable. It's what makes you and I different.

YOBA

Don't pretend you and I have ever been on the same level when all you've ever done is give me a headache.

JOSQUIN

Oh, right. Unlike you, my career wasn't fast-tracked by the Starbringers. I am *entirely* self made!

YOBA

Oh, so now being smart is cheating at life? With that, I wish you the best of luck.

[Turning on heel]

JOSQUIN

Where are you going?

YOBA

To talk to the captain of the guard! You didn't think I made a special trip down here for you, I hope.

VJOSQUIN

Wait!

[Door slams]

YOBA TALKS TO THE CAPTAIN OF THE GUARD

[Footsteps through corridor. Door opening and closing]

YOBA
 (lowered voice)
 Ah, Captain. Any luck locating
 Abraset?

CAPTAIN
 Josquin hasn't given us any useful
 information. Either he doesn't
 know, or we need to push him a
 little harder.

[Sounds of crinkling paper as Yoba pulls out the slip of
 paper from the messenger]

YOBA
 Let's not make him too ugly just
 yet. But cut off the wine.
 (beat)
 Here are two more names to add to
 the list. Assuming our informant is
 still reliable.

CAPTAIN
 As far as I know.
 (reading)
 Lybender and Pytra. What do you
 want us to do with these two?

YOBA
 For now, let's just watch and learn
 from a distance.
 (beat)
 Actually, better yet. Get eyes and
 ears inside every food purveyor in
 Simitu and find out what's really
 going on.

[Beat]

CAPTAIN
 There's something else you should
 know.

YOBA
 Let me guess. Josquin's had a
 visitor.

CAPTAIN
 He has.

YOBA
Anything useful come of it?

CAPTAIN
Not as far as we can tell.

YOBA
Continue to log their
conversations. I want records of
every interaction.

CAPTAIN
Yes, sir. Is that all?

YOBA
For now.

[Footsteps recede as Yoba leaves the ward, and closes door
behind him]

SOPHROSYNE ASKS YOBA ABOUT CHARTRULEAN

[Sounds of running footsteps]

SOPHROSYNE
Yoba, there you are!

YOBA
Sophrosyne? You shouldn't be down
here.

SOPHROSYNE
Can I talk to you?

YOBA
Make it quick, I'm between
catastrophes.

SOPHROSYNE
This ship thing with my Dad is a
disaster.

YOBA
Well done. What's your point?

SOPHROSYNE
He wants me to oversee it, but I
don't think Chartrulean wants me
around.

YOBA
Hah!

SOPHROSYNE

Thanks for that. So, what am I doing wrong?

YOBA

What's *anybody* doing wrong?

SOPHROSYNE

See, that's the thing! He's in this little echo chamber where people just walk on eggshells around him. He needs help, but just takes everything I say as criticism.

YOBA

And that's problem number one. You're approaching it like a charity case.

SOPHROSYNE

Then how should I approach it?

[Yoba stops walking]v

YOBA

There's something you have to understand about Chartrulean. There's a reason Astreus is spread so thin. He is *very* smart, and *very* good at driving away anyone he perceives as dead weight.

SOPHROSYNE

He thinks I'm dead weight?

YOBA

He probably doesn't know what to make of you. Problem number two is that *surface* Sophrosyne is bossy and likes to talk in circles.

SOPHROSYNE

Hey!

YOBA

Show him who you really are. Once he identifies your strengths and decides they're of some benefit, he might change his tune. *But* if you push *anything* on him, he'll push back ten times harder. Thinking about it now, it's a surprise I was able to get him to come to the banquet.

SOPHROSYNE

He came because he trusts you.

YOBA

He came because he must have seen some logical reason to. That's how he works.

SOPHROSYNE

So then he has a logical reason to trust you.

YOBA

Chartrulean and I keep each other honest. There's nothing logical about it.

SOPHROSYNE

That can't be all.

YOBA

When our friendship began, it helped that in an odd way, we needed each other. There was a clear benefit for both of us.

SOPHROSYNE

He *still* needs you.

YOBA

I don't know about that.
(clears throat)
Anyways, that's not what you're asking.

SOPHROSYNE

So just be myself.

YOBA

That's a very simplified way to put it, but in essence yes . I don't know what you're after, but don't expect him to show you any kindness. I made that mistake long ago. Let mine be a cautionary tale.

[Transitional music]

CHARTRULEAN IS VISITED BY A CONTRACTOR

NARRATOR

In the days since Lapadine's summit, Astreus had returned to its state of semi-orderly chaos. Adding to the chaos, a man with shoulder-length hair and large spectacles walked through the front door carrying a small scale model of a ship. Loris. Loris's presence was a compromise that Chartrulean resented, but one that would speed things along considerably

LORIS

I've been dying to see how Astreus has changed since my stint here. Maybe if you succeed in putting my company out of business, I can come back and work for you.

CHARTRULEAN

Maybe I'll reinstate you now if you show me something that I like.

LORIS

You can't just poach people. Not to mention, I'd have to want to come back.

CHARTRULEAN

Why wouldn't you want to?

LORIS

If I remember correctly, the last thing you said to me was "get out of my sight, you worthless sack of carbon." Then you kicked a hammer at me.

CHARTRULEAN

(cynical)

Well, as I recall, you were inscrutable, and I was idealistic. At least one of those scenarios has improved.

LORIS

Well unfortunately for you, I'm still hard to deal with.

CHARTRULEAN

Is that the model I asked for? Give it.

[Sounds of metal being snatched and handled]

CHARTRULEAN (CONT'D)

I hate your fuselage design will need to be improved upon to meet out standards.

(MORE)

CHARTRULEAN (CONT'D)

These joints look like child's toys. But...your overall concept is a good start.

LORIS

(defensive)

Ok, let me just say something. I know Lapadine is probably pushing for this contract. But if I see any inkling of this relationship not working, I'm inclined to walk away.

CHARTRULEAN

Actually this partnership was my idea. You are familiar with how we do things here. No other contractor has that insight. So you're the least likely to waste my time.

[Sound of model being handed back]

LORIS

(stunned)

Thank you. I think?

[Commotion in background]

SOPHROSYNE

Step aside!

GUARD

I'm under strict orders to only let in visitors with security clearance.

CHARTRULEAN

(distracted)

Great. Here's the change order. Respond within the week if you think it's feasible within the proposed timeline.

[Rushed footsteps]

LORIS

(offended)

This is extensive! Wait! Where are you going?

CHARTRULEAN

I am a busy man.

LORIS
(distant)
What if I have questions?

[Beat]

SOPHROSYNE BARGES INTO ASTREUS

SOPHROSYNE
I command you to step aside!

CHARTRULEAN
What are you doing here?

SOPHROSYNE
I have to talk to you.

CHARTRULEAN
Let the princess and her guardian
enter.

[Footsteps approaching]

SOPHROSYNE
Finally.

CHARTRULEAN
Keep it brief.

SOPHROSYNE
I can't believe you agreed to the
ship!

CHARTRULEAN
You said you don't want it, so why
would you even care?

SOPHROSYNE
Because you said it's a stupid
ship! That you'd probably never
build it! Did you lie to me?

CHARTRULEAN
You think I would do something to
embarrass you.

SOPHROSYNE
I don't really know, do I? Maybe
there's a cruel sense of humor
hiding under all that fur.

CHARTRULEAN

The bugs and trees were your idea,
as I remember.

SOPHROSYNE

You can't be serious.

CHARTRULEAN

You can leave any additional
grievances with Borsha and see
yourself out. I was in the middle
of something.

SOPHROSYNE

No. Wait, just one minute. I--

[Sound of grabbing arm]

CHARTRULEAN

(hissing)
Don't--touch me!

SOPHROSYNE (CONT'D)

Whoa!

[Sophrosyne gasping]

CYTHAELIA

Phrosy, let's just leave him alone--

SOPHROSYNE

I-I didn't mean to grab. I'm sorry.

[Awkward silence]

CYTHAELIA

Maybe we should come back another
time?

SOPHROSYNE

No. I'm going to get what I came to
get.

CHARTRULEAN

One. Minute. That is all you get.

SOPHROSYNE

I--

[Borsha distant] Borsha

Chartrulean! The paladins set part
of the gymnasium on fire!

CHARTRULEAN

(cooly)
Has it been extinguished?

BORSHA

Yes.

CHARTRULEAN

Is anyone injured?

BORSHA

Not this time.

CHARTRULEAN

How extensive is the damage?

BORSHA

Mmmmm, I'll go check.

CHARTRULEAN

Children...v

[Footsteps pattering away]

CYTHAELIA

I should go see if they need help.

SOPHROSYNE

Of course.

CYTHAELIA

If he raises his voice to you again....

SOPHROSYNE JUST GO.

SOPHROSYNE PUTS CHARTRULEAN TO SLEEP

[Footsteps leaving]

CHARTRULEAN

(in pain)

Gah...

SOPHROSYNE

What's wrong?

CHARTRULEAN

This headache. It makes it impossible for me to think.

SOPHROSYNE

I'm really good at headaches. Can I try something on you?

CHARTRULEAN

Absolutely not.

SOPHROSYNE

No, seriously. Is there a place
where you can sit down?

CHARTRULEAN

There is a chair around the corner,
but I doubt it will help.

SOPHROSYNE

Come with me.

[Chartrulean sighs]

SOPHROSYNE (CONT'D)

This one looks comfortable. Sit.

CHARTRULEAN

What are you going to do?

SOPHROSYNE

I'm going to touch you a little.
Will you bite my head off this
time?

CHARTRULEAN

(regretting)

No. Sophrosyne. I--

SOPHROSYNE

Look. I know painful memories when
I see them.

[Beat, then sound of falling into a leather-y chair]

SOPHROSYNE (CONT'D)

I don't think you're telling me the
whole story.

CHARTRULEAN

(snaps)

I am not obligated to tell you
anything.

(beat)

That story will die with me if I
can help it.

SOPHROSYNE

(rolling eyes)

Oooh. That sounds terrible.

CHARTRULEAN

Why do you always laugh at me?

SOPHROSYNE

Try laughing with me sometime. If you're so serious all the time, you're just going to give yourself more headaches.

CHARTRULEAN

(frustrated)

You laugh when nervous, and only smile on command. If you want to coach me on my attitude, either examine your own first, or work on your transparency.

SOPHROSYNE

Well, you got me there. Lie your head back. I just need to find where the headache is being triggered.

[Sounds of easing into chair]

CHARTRULEAN

You need to what? Ouch!

SOPHROSYNE

Stop squirming! If this is going to work at all, you *have* to relax.

CHARTRULEAN

How can I relax with you jamming your thumbs into my skull?

SOPHROSYNE

I'm not even pressing that hard.

CHARTRULEAN

Well, press less.

SOPHROSYNE

Do you even know what it means to relax? Look at these shoulders.

CHARTRULEAN

Ok. Enough. Ow!

SOPHROSYNE (CONT'D)

Not so fast! This will only take a minute.

CHARTRULEAN (CONT'D)

You have already been here one more minute than I allowed in the first place.

SOPHROSYNE
Why are you like this?

CHARTRULEAN
Be more specific.

SOPHROSYNE
Specifically awful.

[Beat]

SOPHROSYNE (CONT'D)
I'll take your sudden silence as a
sign it's working.

CHARTRULEAN
This is fine.

[Silence]

ASOPHROSYNE
There's something kind of
embarrassing I have to bring up.
I'd like you to return my mother's
brooch.

CHARTRULEAN
Why?

SOPHROSYNE
To be honest, when I gave it to
you, I had this expectation that
something big would happen.
Something that would answer a lot
of questions. But now I can see how
stupid I was to think like that.
Now I'm afraid I've just burdened
you with something you didn't ask
for, and it'd be best if I just
took it back.

[Silence]

CHARTRULEAN
I am admittedly a poor steward for
anything of value. For that reason
alone I would return it gladly. But
I am sorry that the reason is that
I disappointed you.

[beat]

SOPHROSYNE
Well, now I feel terrible.

CHARTRULEAN
Why should you? It was never mine.

SOPHROSYNE
After this, I promise to stay out
of your hair for good.

CHARTRULEAN
(drowsy)
I have to tell you though. It has
been driving me crazy.

SOPHROSYNE
What has?

CHARTRULEAN
(losing coherence)
The brooch. I tried to read the
inscription, but the meaning is so
far lost on me.

SOPHROSYNE
It doesn't have an inscription.

CHARTRULEAN
(drowsier)
It does. Hidden.

SOPHROSYNE
Hidden? Where?

[Incoherent mumbling, then silence]

SOPHROSYNE (CONT'D)
Chartrulean!
(surprise)
Did you fall asleep?

[Gentle snoring]

SOPHROSYNE (CONT'D)
Are you pretending?

CHARTRULEAN
(mumbling)
There's a bug in my room...

SOPHROSYNE
Well that's weird and sudden.
(sighing)
I wish you could be this at ease
all the time. You're too much of a
fighter for your own good.
(beat)

(MORE)

SOPHROSYNE (CONT'D)
Wait a minute. These scars on your
neck...

HAVELION FINDS SOPHROSYNE AND CHARTRULEAN

[Running footsteps, Sophrosyne yelping]

HAVELION
Tru!

SOPHROSYNE
Shh!

HAVELION
Great, he's asleep.

SOPHROSYNE
Should I wake him up?

HAVELION
No, just let him go. He doesn't
wake gracefully, if you can wake
him at all.

SOPHROSYNE
Does this happen a lot?

HAVELION
Yeah. He just works himself to the
brink, and it happens where it
happens.

SOPHROSYNE
What happened to the gym?

HAVELION
We've done worse. Actually, I'm
glad I ran into you. Do you have a
minute?

SOPHROSYNE
Sure.

HAVELION
I have a bit of a favor to ask.
Like, a really, really huge one.

SOPHROSYNE
Ok....

HAVELION

Well, in just a few days, Tru and I are going to Idrica to get more Jhardekai interested in coming here. Unfortunately the "coming here" part has been a bit of a challenge, and both Lapadine and Borsha are kind of at their limits with other stuff. And I thought seeing as you're the princess and all, you might be able to use some of that Starbringer connection to make some things happen.

SOPHROSYNE

Like what?

HAVELION

There's kind of a long list. Would you come back tomorrow and go over everything with Lapadine and I?

SOPHROSYNE

Not Chartrulean?

HAVELION

There are only so many particulars he can be bothered with right now.

SOPHROSYNE

I don't think he would be very happy about it. And in fact, I just promised I'd stay out of his hair.

HAVELION

The man is building a ship with your name on it. Do you honestly think he wants you to stay away?

SOPHROSYNE

Well...

HAVELION

And, it's technically half yours. So you have every right to be here. If he gives you a hard time, talk to me.

SOPHROSYNE

(skeptical)

Ok, whatever you say.

(beat)

Hey, can I see your hand?

HAVELION
Sure. But it's not pretty.

SOPHROSYNE
I'm not bothered by it.

[Sound of glove being removed]

HAVELION
Wow. Your hands are really soft.

SOPHROSYNE
What?

HAVELION
(awkward)
Oh--eh--it's just not something
we're really used to around here, I
guess. You know...factory.

SOPHROSYNE
Well, I have the magic touch,
apparently.
(beat)
Does it hurt? The berserker?

HAVELION
Sometimes. The hardest part has
been watching it tear us apart in
other ways. Tru and I have always
been at odds. But now it's like the
things we want are so far apart.

SOPHROSYNE
Are they, though? I think he feels
just as lost as you.

HAVELION
Well, hopefully there's some help
for him in Idrica. For all of us,
that is.

SOPHROSYNE
Is he in danger?

HAVELION
You don't know, do you?