

THE MADNESS OF CHARTRULEAN
A Gardeka Story

S1:E10SC
"STORY COMPENDIUM 4:
THE PURGE"

Written by

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STORY COMPENDIUM: THE PURGE

MAGOGOSO

Jhardeho is the source of humanity's greatest triumphs, and its most profound failures. It's not just our religion, it's the cornerstone of our entire planetary culture.

The evolution of Jhardeho over time is as fraught with conflict as any institution. Somewhere along the lines, it split into two competing factions: The Mystics, and The Jhardeho Order.

The Mystic Jhardehos are the most powerful, but the most apathetic. They believe that despite all their gifts, they have no real power to influence the future, that everything follows the ultimate design of the starmakers. They serve as record keepers and educators, but mostly separate themselves from modern society.

The Jhardeho Order are the opposite. Under them, Jhardeho has been bastardized into a poor man's religion. Starmakers eventually became gods, and Jhardehos their servants. Monks, forced to follow a strict moral code, and live their lives in utter devotion to the "gods".

The Order revels in its systems of control. By sowing fear, they are also sowing the need for salvation. Who do people turn to when all seems lost? The gods. It's a system that gives The Order influence, and power. To give the people a roof under which they feel protected, and use fear to drive them like cattle, and control them. The Jhardekai. The Rau. War. The watchmen. Poverty. Dwindling access to food and water. The banning of books.

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MAGOGOSO (CONT'D)

The suppression of information. The list of things to fear goes on and on. And Maldoro uses all of it.

It's biggest overreach has been in it's initiatives with Boethema Labs. Boethema is among our oldest institutions, having operated for a nearly a millennium. It's successes have helped ensure our longevity as a species by preserving genetic diversity. They've essentially eradicated disease, helping us prolong our lives in many cases.

Children designed by Boethema are considered to be genetically sound, while traditionally-bred children face a slew of congenital disorders. And their mothers are unlikely to survive their births. For that reason, Boethema babies are called "desirables." But that begs the question: what *is* desirable?

In just a short time, Maldoro has ravaged Boethema's legacy. First, he put laws in place that regulated child birth. All requests for children were directed through Boethema. But his hidden motive behind this was the continued subjugation of the Jhardekai.

His plan works like this: if a Jhardekai goes to Boethema and asks to have a baby, it will likely be denied. They won't be given a reason, just some canned excuse. Those who try to skirt around the system are persecuted.

Illegal children, if found, are slaughtered. Their executioners are the watchmen. Despite their name, they aren't men at all. They were built to serve as public defenders. Lacking sentience or morality, they wreak havoc in the shadows. Countless families have been torn apart his way.

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MAGOGOSO (CONT'D)

Buehl Starbringer's father was a complacent idiot, and let it happen while pandering to the war hawks. It was a bloodbath. But there were people who resisted in secret. Children--if possible, entire families--were smuggled out of the city. With very few ways in and out, it was a dangerous task. Despite the efforts of these vigilante smugglers, many children still died, or their families died trying to save them. *That* is the Starbringer family legacy.

Where does the Etruvian fit in this picture? In the vaults of Boethema is a hidden cornucopia of Jhardeho research, where scientists work to unlock the secrets of our evolution. Designing a human baby is easy. But designing an Etruvian, a supreme being, is no easy feat. It was something Maldoro was desperate to achieve. He knew that if The Order could gain control of an Etruvian, he would be *more* influential than the king himself. It took decades for their first success: Chartrulean. And I watched their efforts backfire spectacularly. The grudge Maldoro holds against Chartrulean is palpable. I hear the vault is up and running again as he scrambles to make a replacement. But the Etruvian isn't a formula to be cracked. An Etruvian grown in a lab is still an Etruvian, and therefore still part of the Starmakers' design.

The grudge Maldoro holds over Chartrulean is palpable. My theory is that Maldoro's greatest fear is for someone to do to him as he has done to the Jhardekai. Since Chartrulean's exile and The Order's fallout with the Starbringers, that fate is all but guaranteed. There *will* be a breaking point, and Maldoro will face a reckoning. The question is, who will be the one to deliver it?