

THE MADNESS OF CHARTRULEAN
A Gardeka Story

S1:E11
"A KINDNESS"

Written by

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TMOC EPISODE 11: A KINDNESS

EXCAVATION IN THE LOST CITY OF ZARASTRA

[Intense blizzard sounds, excavation equipment clanging in the distance. Digital sounds.]

DR. FILLION
Finally, a break in the weather.

WORKER 1
Doctor Fillion, we've finally broken through to the antechamber.

DR. FILLION
On my way.

[Footsteps crunching through snow]

WORKER 1
As far as I can tell, there aren't any major obstructions. The interior of the structure is well preserved.

DR. FILLION
Good. Hopefully the extraction will be simple.

WORKER 1
Can I ask exactly what it is we're extracting?

DR. FILLION
Knowledge.

WORKER 1
What kind of knowledge?

DR. FILLION
This place has spent the last one thousand years buried under rock and ice. We're the first to break through, so whatever we find here will be unedited.
(beat)
Today, we may very well unlock secrets that have so far been lost to us.

WORKER 1
Watch your head.

INSIDE THE EXCAVATION SITE

[hollow wind sounds, footsteps on concrete. Voices echo]

DR. FILLION
Remarkable.

WORKER 1
How strange. It's like people were
just here yesterday.

DR. FILLION
I recommend not touching anything
unless I tell you to.

WORKER 1
What is this place?

DR. FILLION
A library.

WORKER 1
Without any books?

DR. FILLION
A library of another kind. Look at
the walls.

WORKER 1
What are all these little
inscriptions?

DR. FILLION
Names. Inside each one of these
little stone compartments is a
soul. And each soul has a story to
tell.

[Stone sliding sound]

WORKER 1
It opened!

DR. FILLION
I said not to touch anything.

WORKER 1
Sorry. It was an accident.

DR. FILLION
Anyways, what I'm really interested
is *that*.

WORKER 1

What is *it*?

DR. FILLION

A machine. One of the last of its kind, and hopefully salvageable.

WORKER 1

What's it do?

DR. FILLION

It's a translator between the past and the present. With it, we'll be able to fill a gaping hole in history. Finally know the truth about what led to Zaratra's demise.

[Digital chime]

WORKER 1

What's that?

DR. FILLION

Apparently a message.

[Several digital chimes]

DR. FILLION (CONT'D)

Huh. Appears I've been missed.

WORKER 1

Special lady?

DR. FILLION

No. Etruvian. Secure the site, I must return to Idrica with haste.

WORKER 1

But--

DR. FILLION

This has been waiting here for over a thousand years. It can wait a little longer if it has to. Secure the site.

[Transitional music]

CHARTRULEAN FINDS NICOLA SLEEPWALKING

NARRATOR

Chartrulean re-entered the Astreus compound through the garden gate. What he'd learned with Magogoso replayed in his mind.

CHARTRULEAN

(thinking)

Sophrosyne, a Jhardoestra. The simplest of the Jhardeho, but most potent. In a word, infectious. But they are our very nature, amplified. Without exhibiting any outward power, their effect on others is undeniable, however mysterious.

(analytical tone)

An example. She puts her fingers to my temples. The dopamine release is almost instant. The headache dissipates. Sleep overcomes.

And then there was the banquet. There's no question we shared a connection that transcends the physical which allowed her to follow me into the void. My heart races in her presence, and I quietly obsess over even the smallest details of her...it must be related.

She might be the closest thing to magic that still exists in this world. Or the echo of a curse.

[Sound of something small tumbling on ground]

CHARTRULEAN (CONT'D)

Nicola?

[Pattering of bare feet, gate opening and closing, eerie whispers]

CHARTRULEAN (CONT'D)

(thinking)

Is she...asleep? There's nothing on her feet, and the ground is cold.

(calling)

Nico--

(beat)

No. I should follow.

[Footsteps]

NARRATOR

Chartrulean followed Nicola back out through the garden gate. She wasn't wearing much more than her underclothes, and her bare feet patted across the tarmac. He watched her heels turn black with dirt and oil. Her eyes were open, unblinking, and trained on something invisible in front of her.

She was making a b-line for the hangar where The Nine were stored. She pushed her way through the side door and approached Ekta, the ship she named after her grandmother. Standing nose to cold metal nose, Nicola reached up and caressed the ship fondly, cocking her head from side to side as if greeting a loved one after a long time apart. Chartrulean stayed in the shadows of the hangar and observed.

CHARTRULEAN (CONT'D)

(thinking)

There's something to this. She would not have come here by mistake. Something was urging her. Something I can't see.

[Spooky whispers]

CHARTRULEAN (CONT'D)

Or can I?

[Void sounds, whispers]

CHARTRULEAN (CONT'D)

There's another presence here. I can't see it. But I can sense it.

[Rumbling void sounds, shrill awful sound]

CHARTRULEANA

Ahh! That sound! Nicola -- her eyes -- she sees me!

[Sound of ship powering up and mechanisms; cannons powering up]

CHARTRULEAN

The ship is engaging me! It's--it's trying to attack!

NICOLA

(screaming)

Stop!

[Void sounds recede; ship powering down; dull silence]

NICOLA SNAPS OUT OF IT

NICOLA
 (confused, breathing
 heavily)
 What? Wh...where am I?

CHARTRULEAN
 (panting)
 Nicola. Tell me what just happened.

NICOLA
 (panting)
 I saw a strange light in my room
 and I followed it. I don't remember
 anything else.

[Beat]

CHARTRULEAN
 Come on. I'll carry you back.

NICOLA
 Carry?

CHARTRULEAN
 Your feet. Here. Put this on.

[Rustling fabric]

NICOLA
 Oh. Thank you.

CHARTRULEAN
 We're going directly to Shan.

[Footsteps]

CHARTRULEAN (CONT'D)
 You really don't remember anything?

NICOLA
 (groggy)
 Well, not exactly. It felt like I
 was dreaming about my grandmother.
 I've been dreaming about her a lot
 lately, but she's always speaking a
 language I can't understand.
 Sometimes I dream of someone else.
 A stranger. I never see their face,
 only their shadow, and red eyes.
 When it shows up, I feel like I'm
 in danger.

(MORE)

NICOLA (CONT'D)

It switches from one to the other so fast sometimes, but the shadow, sometimes it doesn't really go away, even after I'm awake.

CHARTRULEAN

You have this dream often?

NICOLA

Yes. Maybe it sounds strange, but I think my grandmother is trying to warn me. If only I could understand what she was saying. Sometimes I feel like if I just listen close enough, I'll figure it out, and these nightmares will stop.

CHARTRULEAN

I've also had dreams. Dreams I can't understand, of things that feel dangerous.

NICOLA

Really? I don't know why, but that makes me feel a lot better.

CHARTRULEAN

Why?

NICOLA

I don't know. Maybe it's just knowing that you're not untouchable. That you're going through this along with us.

CHARTRULEAN

(sad)
Nicola...

NICOLA

We're in this together. Aren't we?

CHARTRULEAN

Of course.

NICOLA

How did you find me, anyways? And why are you dressed all normal?

CHARTRULEAN

I was out looking for answers.

NICOLA

Did you find any?

CHARTRULEAN
No. Only more questions.

[Transitional music]

IMSEP STORMS THE JHARDEO TEMPLE

[Morning sounds]

NARRATOR

Night transitioned into day, and Prince Imsep strode defiantly through the corridors of the Jhardeho temple at the heels of an acolyte. Loam lumbered behind, followed by two watchmen. They came to the ornately carved doors of his study and stopped.

UNFORTUNATE ACOLYTE
(nervous)
Just wait here.

IMSEP
No. Step aside.

[Sound of door opening]

UNFORTUNATE ACOLYTE
Sir, he--

MALDORO
What's this Starbringer offspring doing in here? Have it removed immediately.

UNFORTUNATE ACOLYTE
He says he has something important to tell you.

MALDORO
Why should I listen?

IMSEP
Because I believe an injustice has been done. One that The Order and the people don't deserve.

MALDORO
And what power do you have to fix it? A sniveling broken prince?

IMSEP
None. But you do. All I have is information.

MALDORO
Information that you think I can
use...how?

IMSEP
To punish my father.

MALDORO
(unconvinced)
Close the door.

UNFORTUNATE ACOLYTE
Yes, sir.

MALDORO
Leave while you're at it.

UNFORTUNATE ACOLYTE
Eh--

[Door closes]

MALDORO
Well?

IMSEP
I have...found...the New Regime
ringleader. Father and Yoba are
keeping him unfairly restrained at
the capital without any input from
the council.

MALDORO
Pity. I was enjoying reading his
trite garbage.

IMSEP
It's not garbage. It's poetry.

MALDORO
Idealistic drivel, written by
privileged little children too busy
enjoying the fruits of high society
to see the damage they are doing.
(calming)
Why should I be interested in this
"information"?

IMSEP
Because I believe the New Regime
and The Order could be powerful
allies.

MALDORO

If you expect me to aid you in replacing the monarchy with *that*, you can take your leave.

IMSEP

Then what about Chartrulean? I have information on Astreus, too.

[Beat]

MALDORO

Don't you *dare* come in here and speak that name to me.

IMSEP

Seems I've struck a nerve. I'll tell you what I know if you help me. You still have allies within my father's council, do you not?

MALDORO

What exactly do you hope to achieve?

[Beat]

IMSEP

What do you know about the berserker?

MALDORO

Nothing. Sounds made up.

IMSEP

What if I told you that Chartrulean was making people sick?

MALDORO

Sick? How so?

IMSEP

A cancer of the mind. There are currently two felled pariah.

MALDORO

Heresay.

IMSEP

No, I saw it myself. Up close and personal. I also know what Astreus is planning next, and that they are grooming an army of Jhardekai here in Simitu.

[Beat]

MALDORO

This goes too far. Get him out of my sight.

[Door opens, mechanical sounds, struggling]

IMSEP

Unhand me! Think about it! What more could you want than an informant with my kind of access to your enemies?

MALDORO

Please don't tarnish what little dignity the Starbringers have left in my eyes with your pleas.

IMSEP

You're making a big mistake! I'm handing you an opportunity on a silver platter.

MALDORO

Your mistake was coming here thinking I would help you. Give Josquin my regards, *if* you ever see him again.

IMSEP

How'd you--

MALDORO

How stupid do you think I am? I know everything that goes on in this city.

IMSEP

Guardian, where are you?! Stop this abuse!

[Door closes. Sounds of footsteps and sitting down in chair]

MALDORO

If only that was true.

(beat)

What are you still doing here, guardian? Be a good dog and follow your master.

[Slow footsteps]

MALDORO (CONT'D)
Do you mean to frighten me? Well,
say something!

[Heavy breathing from Loam, staggered breathing from Maldoro.
Long pause. Sound of paper being placed on desktop, and then
sliding slowly across its surface]

MALDORO (CONT'D)
What's this? A letter? Who from?

[Heavy footsteps away, door opening and closing, silence
filled by Maldoro's staggered breathing slowly returning to
normal, letter opening]

MALDORO (CONT'D)
How strange. Stranger still is this
manner of writing.
(beat)
Jhardeho save me.

[Transitional music]

CHARTRULEAN WAKES UP HOLDING NICOLA'S HAND

FLASHBACK

[Rumbling void sounds, shrill awful sound]

NICOLA
(screaming)
Stop!

BACK TO PRESENT

[Door opening, feet shuffling, medical sounds]

SHAN TELLS CHARTRULEAN FILLION'S BEEN FOUND

SHAN
(whispering)
Psst. Time to wake up.

CHARTRULEAN
(waking)
What time is it?

SHAN
Poor thing. She held your onto your
hand all night.

CHARTRULEAN

Not the most comfortable night but
there have been worse...

[Stretching and cracking of bones. Nicola groaning]

SHAN

Shhh. It's still early. She could
use a little more sleep. Let's
leave her to it.

[Door opening, footsteps]

SHAN (CONT'D)

I've never seen you do that with
them.

CHARTRULEAN

Do what?

SHAN

Spend the night in the infirmary.

CHARTRULEAN

I think part of me was afraid she
wouldn't wake up again. To lose
another...

SHAN

Well then, I have good news. That
Borsha girl was here with a
message. Fillion's been found, *and*
he's agreed to see the paladins.

CHARTRULEAN

Is he on his way?

SHAN

Mmmmmmm. There is a catch.

CHARTRULEAN

No time for catches, he needs to
come straight here.

SHAN

No ships can reach him, the storm
has calmed but not subsided. We're
stuck with whatever time he needs
to be able to move along the
surface. *And...*he wishes to remain
in Idrica.

CHARTRULEAN

What? Why?

SHAN

Everything he needs to work is there. Not to mention...so is Artedemis.

CHARTRULEAN

Not that again.....

SHAN

Chartrulean, you *have* to take them to Artedemis.

CHARTRULEAN

They will not go back willingly. You have no idea what Idrica is to these kids.

SHAN

At least take Ditran and Homena.

CHARTRULEAN

They cannot be seen in their condition.

ASHAN

(firm)

There are two sides to this. Hopefully Fillion can fix their bodies, but their minds are *still* lost. They need the Etruvian to guide them home, and if that can't be you...

CHARTRULEAN

(defeat)

I really am useless.

SHAN

Yulia is already preparing to receive all of you.

CHARTRULEAN

It sounds like a plan has been forged without me. Unbelievable.

SHAN

That's the extent of how much I am willing to push. The rest is up to you. Make the right choice.

CHARTRULEAN

Fantastic.

SHAN

How was your "fresh air" outing, by the way? Enlightening, I hope.

CHARTRULEAN

It was and wasn't.

SHAN

You went to the temple.

CHARTRULEAN

I needed to call in a favor.

SHAN

Aha. How is Magogoso?

CHARTRULEAN

Fatter.

V[Footsteps]

HAVELION

Tru! There you are. Did you hear? Borsha found Fillion.

CHARTRULEAN

I did.

SHAN

I'll leave you boys to talk.

[Shuffling away]

CHARTRULEAN TELLS HAVELION FILLION'S BEEN FOUND

HAVELION

What's going on?

CHARTRULEAN

Fillion will not leave Idrica. We must go to him.

HAVELION

What? That's ridiculous! I don't understand why he can't just come here.

CHARTRULEAN

He may not hold the modern world in very high esteem. But this seems...excessive.

HAVELION

Can he be convinced to come here?

CHARTRULEAN

(tangent)

He can. But he is not the only involved party. This is no doubt Yulia and Shan conspiring behind my back. They will say anything short of admitting that I am a failure. And now this?

(backpedaling)

But what if they're right? If last night proved anything, it's that the situation will only worsen.

HAVELION

Why, what happened last night?

CHARTRULEAN

They need another kind of help. Help that at this rate I may not be able to provide. But maybe Artedemis can.

HAVELION

Sooooooooo.

CHARTRULEAN

Whatever they intend with this intervention I am resolved to let it happen. We take Ditran and Homena with us.

HAVELION

How are we going to do that safely? We're already spread thin for this trip and Homena's a handful by herself.

CHARTRULEAN

You're right. How about this as a compromise. Ditran is stable. We can move him discretely on his own. Everyone will have their chance to weight in, and we can reason with Fillion directly without any interloping women.

HAVELION

That could work.

CHARTRULEAN

You know what I find even more
unbelievable is the sheer hypocrisy
of it!

HAVELION

Yeah well...

CHARTRULEAN

The mystics practically embrace
inaction as gospel. So why
interfere now?

(calming)

Forget it. I am wasting my energy.
What is done is done, and it's
settled.

HAVELION

For now. Oh yeah, I also came to
tell you there's a bit of bad news
out front.

HAVELION READS CHARTRULEAN THE TABLOID

[Sound fades to outdoor space with angry shouts of a small
mob]

HAVELION

The zealots are back.

CHARTRULEAN

When did they get here?

HAVELION

Who knows, they were there when I
got up. But that's not the best
part.

[Paper sounds]

CHARTRULEAN

What is this?

HAVELION

The latest tabloid. You know the
kind.

CHARTRULEAN

Do I want to know how you got this?

HAVELION

I didn't go out, if that's what you're implying. One of the technicians brought it in.

CHARTRULEAN

(reading)

I don't have the energy for this.

[Paper being grabbed]

HAVELION

Let me do the honors.

(clearing throat)

Headline: Is the Etruvian Messiah the King Simitu Really Needs?

CHARTRULEAN

No. Wait...

HAVELION

(reading, mocking)

As Chartrulean ushers in the Age of Azurea, he enters a political arena fraught with existential woes. Astreus looks to the stars for hope with the construction of a new frigate, bearing the same name of none other than the Starbringer Princess, Sophrosyne. An unlikely duo in uncertain times, it's said that the princess spends her days at Astreus, making plans for a future free of the burdens of her unfortunate family legacy. Some say it's only a matter of time before she draws more than the Etruvian's eye. We may very well be looking at the future of Arcasian politics. The princess, an emblem of beauty and grace in the image of her mother, and the first Etruvian Prince Consort and future king--

[Sounds of paper being snatched, torn up]

HAVELION (CONT'D)

Hey!

CHARTRULEAN

I have heard enough.

HAVELION

Oh I actually memorized it. I can paraphrase the rest if you'd like.

CHARTRULEAN

How many people have seen this?

HAVELION

(counting silently)
Looks like twenty five at least.

CHARTRULEAN

No, I mean has Sophrosyne seen this?

HAVELION

You can ask her yourself, she's here.

CHARTRULEAN

Nononononononono.....
(breathing)
I just need to get somewhere where I can *think*.

[Feet on stairs, door opening and closing]

SOPHROSYNE TELLS CHARTRULEAN SHE'S GOING TO IDRICA

[Voices starting far and getting closer]

ADMIRAL LAPADINE

I think it's a great idea!

SOPHROSYNE

(chipper)
There you are! Can you talk for a second?

CHARTRULEAN

(seething)
Do you *have* to be here right now?

SOPHROSYNE

Excuse me?

CHARTRULEAN

Have you looked outside?

SOPHROSYNE

(nonchalant)
Yeah.

CHARTRULEAN
Do you know why they're here?

SOPHROSYNE
No. Why?

[Sigh of relief]

CHARTRULEAN
Jhardeho save me...

HAVELION
Oh yeah, I forgot to tell you.
Sophrosyne is going to Idrica with
us!

ADMIRAL LAPADINE
Now if you'll excuse me, I have to
go out and clear the front gates,
in case you haven't noticed.

SOPHROSYNE
Please let them go. It's their
right.

ADMIRAL LAPADINE
Not while you're here.
(beat)
By the way. Who in your sphere is
aware of our plans for the ship?

SOPHROSYNE
Mostly just my family, and whoever
my Dad's told. Why?

ADMIRAL LAPADINE
I'll be back.

[Footsteps receding]

CHARTRULEAN
You. Come with me.

SOPHROSYNE
Me? Why?

CHARTRULEAN
Just come.

CHARTRULEAN TAKES SOPHROSYNE HALFWAY UP

[Transitions to outdoor sounds]

SOPHROSYNE
We're going up in the elevator?

CHARTRULEAN
After you.

[Footsteps on metal, mechanical sounds, then elevator rising sounds]

SOPHROSYNE
I've always wanted to see the
spaceport. Is that where we're
headed?

[Chartrulean sighs. Elevator mechanisms kick on. Awkward
silence]

SOPHROSYNE (CONT'D)
Somehow I forgot how beautiful the
Blighted Valley can be. Look at
everything.

CHARTRULEAN
Astreus, stop.

[Mechanical powering down sounds, Sophrosyne stumbling and
being caught]

SOPHROSYNE
Whoa.

CHARTRULEAN
Stay alert.

SOPHROSYNE
We're not going all the way up?

CHARTRULEAN
Another time.

SOPHROSYNE
Then why'd you bring me here?

CHARTRULEAN
I needed quiet.

SOPHROSYNE
Then I don't understand why you
would bring me, of all people.

CHARTRULEAN
You seem to believe that I have a
low opinion of you.

SOPHROSYNE
And suddenly you don't?

[Jewelry sounds]

CHARTRULEAN
Here. You asked for this back, and
so I am returning it.

SOPHROSYNE
You broke it!

CHARTRULEAN
No, I enhanced it. Does that
inscription mean anything to you?

SOPHROSYNE
Oh. I don't think I've ever seen it
before, no.

CHARTRULEAN
Is there anything else you can
think of that might give us a clue
about its origin?

SOPHROSYNE
Give us a clue? Maybe I'll let you
keep it after all.

CHARTRULEAN
No. If you offer it again, I will
refuse.

[Beat]

CHARTRULEAN (CONT'D)
Why did you give it to me?

SOPHROSYNE
(sighing)
Before I tell you anything, I
wanted to ask you about dreams.

CHARTRULEAN
(incredulous)
Dreams?

SOPHROSYNE
Have you ever had a really strange
one? One that you feel is trying to
tell you something important?
See, for years, I've been having
the same one. Over and over again.

CHARTRULEAN

Dreams are the refraction of our own experiences through a distorted lens. Those That carry even a grain of prophecy are a tangle of fears and desires. Most are unreliable garbage.

SOPHROSYNE

I just need to know if it's possible for one to come true.

CHARTRULEAN

Have parts of *your* dream come true?

SOPHROSYNE

(sighing)

The night that we met, you were wearing this. I gave it to you to prove that I was being ridiculous. But that's not what happened.

[Sounds of paper]

SOPHROSYNE (CONT'D)

This is the letter my mom left me before she died. I keep it with me at all times, and I think you should read it.

[Paper unfolding]

CHARTRULEAN

(reading fast, mumbling)

Find the chrysalis in the void...truth waits for you on the other side of fear...she will give you the power to change the world...

[Silence]

SOPHROSYNE

Those words have been with me for more than half my life. There are things there that still don't make any sense. But I think I've found the "chrysalis in the void." His face first appeared to me in a strange dream. He was wrapped in blue light, staring at me from a cold, dark place with black eyes. And then, I saw him again in the void, the night of the banquet.

(MORE)

SOPHROSYNE (CONT'D)
 Wrapped in blue light.
 (anxious)
 Please would you say something,
 don't just stand there with your
 back to me.

[Silence]

CHARTRULEAN
 Tell me about your mother.

SOPHROSYNE
 She died when I was really young,
 so there are mostly just small
 things left. Smells, sounds,
 feelings. I always knew she was
 special. But then a few years ago,
 on the same night I first had the
 dream, I learned something.
 Something...that she was.

CHARTRULEAN
 Something that she was...and that
 you suspect yourself to be?

SOPHROSYNE
 (defensive)
 What can I tell you that won't
 sound idiotic? When we met I said
 that we might be alike and you just
 shirked it off.

CHARTRULEAN
 Because you are Jhardoestra?

[Sophrosyne gasps]

SOPHROSYNE
 Sorry. I mean I guess. It's--

CHARTRULEAN
 We're not the same. Even if it's
 true, that doesn't change.

SOPHROSYNE
 What do you mean? Wouldn't that
 mean that I have some special power
 too?

CHARTRULEAN
 Jhardoestra didn't gift humanity
 with anything that was not already
 there.

SOPHROSYNE

That's not true, she gave us love.

CHARTRULEAN

Wrong.

SOPHROSYNE

The Jhardeka evolution was of the spirit. The Jhardekai, of mind and body. The Jhardoestra, the heart! Everyone knows that!

CHARTRULEAN

She was a placebo.

SOPHROSYNE

I don't believe that.

CHARTRULEAN

Jhardoestra came here to make a point about our innate nature.

SOPHROSYNE

It's in my blood! That can't count for nothing!

CHARTRULEAN

I never said it did! Will you let me get to my point?

SOPHROSYNE

(angry)
Please!

CHARTRULEAN

(taken back)
What exactly are you after?

SOPHROSYNE

I don't know, an epiphany! Answers!

CHARTRULEAN

Answers to what?

SOPHROSYNE

To why I feel so alone, and if it's-
-I don't know, because I'm special.

CHARTRULEAN

Why would you ever wish that upon yourself?

SOPHROSYNE

So I can have more to offer the world than just my name! To be more like you and live above the world.

CHARTRULEAN

Above? I am a *slave* to this world. You have no concept.

SOPHROSYNE

Why are you being so awful about this?

CHARTRULEAN

I am being honest with you. It may not be what you wanted to hear, but believe me I am doing you a kindness.

SOPHROSYNE

This isn't about something being easy, or problems magically solving themselves--

CHARTRULEAN

(interrupting)

What problems could *you* possibly have that being a demigod would solve?

SOPHROSYNE

That's easy for you to say, you get to change the world. All I will be able to accomplish is kicking the Starbringer name down the line.

CHARTRULEAN

Do you honestly believe that?

SOPHROSYNE

I am alone.

CHARTRULEAN

To be a Jhardeho is the very *definition* of being alone.

[Sounds of pacing. Sophrosyne sniffing]

SOPHROSYNE

But you have all these people holding you up. I'm just surrounded by people who don't listen, or even try to understand me.

CHARTRULEAN

Just because I have people close by
does not mean we understand one
another.

SOPHROSYNE

Havelion understands you a great
deal.

CHARTRULEAN

He knows my habits, not my heart.

[More sniffing]

SOPHROSYNE

Don't turn around.

CHARTRULEAN

What?

SOPHROSYNE

I'm trying really hard not to cry.

CHARTRULEAN

(panicking)

Nononono. Sophrosyne. Please don't--

SOPHROSYNE

Ugggh, why is it so much worse when
you actually say my name?

CHARTRULEAN

Can I do or say anything right with
you?

SOPHROSYNE

Why'd she have to leave me with all
these riddles? Why couldn't she
have said any of this so that I
didn't have to hear it from
some...*monster*?

CHARTRULEAN

(taken aback)

Monster? So that is what you think
of me after all this time, and yet
you expect me to what? *Indulge* you?

SOPHROSYNE

Wait, I didn't mean it like that.

CHARTRULEAN

Oh no, I think you did. Let me spare you the trouble of having to name all the ways in which I *am* a monster. I am *fully* aware. But don't make a monster out of me just because I can't give you an easy answer. You want know why? Because easy answers hide hard truths.

[Chartrulean reeling]

SOPHROSYNE

Whoa. Are you all right?

CHARTRULEAN

Fine. The air is just...close in here. I didn't think this through.

SOPHROSYNE

Oh. Ok.

CHARTRULEAN

There is more you need to know. But don't push me on it right now.

SOPHROSYNE

Is it bad?

CHARTRULEAN

No. Just...uncomfortable.

SOPHROSYNE

Uncomfortable!
(sarcastic)
Great.

CHARTRULEAN

(aggravated)
Don't misunderstand me.

SOPHROSYNE

You think I'm dead weight.

CHARTRULEAN

(softening)
No. I think you are confused.

[beat]

SOPHROSYNE

Can you at least tell me what you think of the letter?

CHARTRULEAN

You want to know if I am your
"Chrysalis in the void."

(sighing)

I understand that you are desperate
for answers, but it would be better
for both of us to separate these
things in your mind. Anything I say
could be very...damaging.

SOPHROSYNE

(raises eyebrow)

Do you want me to tell you the rest
of my dream?

CHARTRULEAN

Absolutely not.

SOPHROSYNE

Why?

CHARTRULEAN

Because this letter is not a dream.
It is right here. In my hand. If
you cannot see the difference, then
I can be no more use to you than
the words on this page. I am sorry.
But you'll have to answer this on
your own.

SOPHROSYNE

(frustrated)

You already said I'm
powerless, alone, and my
dreams are garbage. So why
should I even try?

CHARTRULEAN (CONT'D)

(through teeth)

That's exactly the kind of
damage I'm talking about.

CHARTRULEAN (CONT'D)

Because you are supposed to be
following your heart. Not hinging
on the words of a monster.

(beat)

Sophrosyne, there are more
monstrous things out there than I.
And they can take on a cunning
form. I will help you once you
learn to see them for what they
are, and form a question that I can
answer.

[Paper sounds as letter is returned]

SOPHROSYNE

I don't really think you're a monster.

CHARTRULEAN

Why? It wouldn't be the worst thing anyone has called me. And not entirely inaccurate.

[Awkward silence]

SOPHROSYNE

Well, I guess we're just here for the view at this point.

CHARTRULEAN

Will this world accept my vision of the future? Or is all this a mistake?

SOPHROSYNE

(surprised)
What?

CHARTRULEAN

We've reached the crux — and it doesn't feel earned.

SOPHROSYNE

How do you think it should it feel?

CHARTRULEAN

Cathartic. But all this doubt has deflated any sense of accomplishment.

SOPHROSYNE

Oh...you want me to tell you that you're doing a good job.

CHARTRULEAN

I think I do.

SOPHROSYNE

It's not for me to say. But a lot of people look up to you like a hero. Isn't that enough?

CHARTRULEAN

I used to come here when I need to feel some distance. Looking down from this "god's eye view" deluded me into believing that I was--as you said--above the world.

(MORE)

CHARTRULEAN (CONT'D)

But now, even here, not even the most powerful man on Arcas is safe from these dark thoughts. I envy your over-simplified worldview. But it is easy to get lost in things that seem simple. Things like titles. Shipbuilder. Messiah. Monster. Every title I am given leads me further away from what I was never allowed to be. Now all I have left is this hollow man. And I don't like him very much.

(beat)

All this to say, I cannot stop you from searching for answers, but do not get lost in them as I have.

[Jewelry sounds]

SOPHROSYNE

Look. You said this brooch is a harbinger of chaos. It sounds a little stupid to say now, but *Mom* told me that it's a love story about two moons competing for Arcas' heart. Their gravities pulling her in different directions. But the strain of it slowly tears her apart at the fabric. First go the plants, then the animals, then the oceans. Then eventually us. We're nearing the end of that story. And despite what you say, *I* think my dream is trying to tell me that you are the beginning of a new one.

CHARTRULEAN

Or maybe I *am* the end.

SOPHROSYNE

You are hopeless.