

THE MADNESS OF CHARTRULEAN
A Gardeka Story

S1:E07
"WHERE IT BEGINS"

Written by

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TMOC EPISODE 7: PROMISE KEEPERS

YOBA OPENING

YOBA (V.0)

It's the dream of every young politico to be granted access to the library of Idrica, a cornucopia of ancient wisdom and the most complete repository of Arcasian knowledge in existence. When I was young, I was lucky enough to be given the honor, thanks to the good word someone put in on my behalf. And so I spent several years in the seminary, studying the history of our planet.

A heritage site protected by the Mystics and the Saints before them, the seminary is rumored to harbor secrets beyond imagining for those who can solve its many puzzles. I was personally never that motivated, but one day I met someone who was.

[Sounds of crying]

YOUNG YOBA FINDS A GIRL IN DISTRESS

YOUNG YOBA

Are you all right, miss?

CRYING GIRL

I've never met anyone so rude.

YOUNG YOBA

I beg your pardon?

CRYING GIRL

Not you.

YOUNG YOBA

Then who?

CRYING GIRL

The messiah.

YOUNG YOBA

The messiah....is here?

CRYING GIRL

Everyone knows. He's always lurking about in all the darkest places, hiding among us in plain sight.

YOUNG YOBA

That's news to me, and I make it my business to know everything.

CRYING GIRL

Apparently not.

YOUNG YOBA

Are you sure it's him?

CRYING GIRL

If I wasn't before, I am now.

YOUNG YOBA

Tell me what happened.

YOBA MEETS CHARTRULEAN

YOBA (V.O.)

I followed the corridor to the place where the girl said he would be. There he was, dressed in a long Jhardeho tunic with his black eyes and a generally feral look. He was staring at some kind of butterfly contraption, a moving diorama of sorts. I was immediately obsessed.

[Transitional music. Footsteps]

YOUNG YOBA

At last, I think I've found the "superman".

YOUNG CHARTRULEAN

(annoyed)

Have you come to have your fortune told?

YOUNG YOBA

No.

YOUNG CHARTRULEAN

Then why?

YOUNG YOBA

Entertainment.

YOUNG CHARTRULEAN
 What cheap trick would you like the
 "superman" to perform for you?

YOUNG YOBA
 No tricks. Just conversation.

YOUNG CHARTRULEAN
 I don't have any interest in
 politics.

YOUNG YOBA
 How did you know I'm into politics?

YOUNG CHARTRULEAN
 Simple deduction. You're wearing
 the Starbringer crest.

YOUNG YOBA
 Maybe we'll work together one day,
 me a Chamberlain to King
 Starbringer, and you doing whatever
 it is you do. All the more reason
 to get acquainted now.

YOUNG CHARTRULEAN
 I don't work for, or with, anyone.

[Beat]

YOUNG YOBA
 What's your name?

YOUNG CHARTRULEAN
 Chartrulean.

YOUNG YOBA
 Yoba.

(beat)
 What brings you to Idrica,
 Chartrulean?

YOUNG CHARTRULEAN
 (sarcastic)
 Knowledge. Isn't that why any of us
 are here?

YOUNG YOBA
 What's your intrigue?

YOUNG CHARTRULEAN
 Engineering.

YOUNG YOBA
Pft. What? Are you joking?

YOUNG CHARTRULEAN
Why would I be?

YOUNG YOBA
Shouldn't you be studying...I don't know, something more Jharedho-y?

YOUNG CHARTRULEAN
Technology is heavily intertwined with Jhardeho. Only recently has it been less so.

YOUNG YOBA
Will it help with all your messiah stuff?

YOUNG CHARTRULEAN
Leave if you're going to be purposefully ignorant.

YOUNG YOBA
I'm curious. What exactly is a messiah supposed to do in this modern world, anyway?

YOUNG CHARTRULEAN
Same as always. Guide humanity towards an enlightened and prosperous future.

YOUNG YOBA
How?

YOUNG CHARTRULEAN
By choosing what happens next.

YOUNG YOBA
I'm told you can see the future.

YOUNG CHARTRULEAN
Only what the gods allow me to see.

YOUNG YOBA
Then how is that a choice?

YOUNG CHARTRULEAN
That's the problem. And exactly why I'm more interested in our past.

YOUNG YOBA

Let me get this straight...you have a gift that allows you to see into the future, but choose to look into the past?

YOUNG CHARTRULEAN

Few people can look into the past very well.

YOUNG YOBA

Seems straightforward to me, you just open a book.

YOUNG CHARTRULEAN

You clearly lack the capacity to understand.

YOUNG YOBA

Then help me.

[Beat]

YOUNG CHARTRULEAN

Look at this automaton.

[Gentle mechanical sounds]

YOUNG YOBA

This weird butterfly thing?

YOUNG CHARTRULEAN

It doesn't operate by magic. Someone built it. Imagine it as a metaphor for the past. When you look into the past, you can see the whole automaton. Who built it, how it works, the previous failed automatons, et cetera.

YOUNG YOBA

I think I follow.

YOUNG CHARTRULEAN

Now imagine someone from the future is trying to sell you this same automaton, but they're only showing you the finished butterfly.

YOUNG YOBA

Ah.

YOUNG CHARTRULEAN

Our entire story is contained here
in the seminary. In books, and if
you know where to look, hiding
right in plain sight.

[Sound of compartment opening]

YOUNG YOBA

What did you just do?

YOUNG CHARTRULEAN

The seminary is full of little
curiosities. Hidden doors, and
secret compartments. And in them,
wisdom.

YOUNG YOBA

Don't leave me in suspense, what'd
you just find?

YOUNG CHARTRULEAN

A message.

YOUNG YOBA

What's it say?

YOUNG CHARTRULEAN

"A butterfly cannot see the beauty
of its own wings."
(disappointed)
Or something like that.

YOUNG YOBA

That doesn't seem very useful.

YOUNG CHARTRULEAN

Not everything here is. This one's
a little disappointing actually.

[Sound of compartment snapping closed]

YOUNG YOBA

Do all messiahs run around solving
puzzles?

[Distant bell chimes]

YOUNG YOBA (CONT'D)

I have to go. How can I find you
again?

YOUNG CHARTRULEAN

If you're as clever as you think
you are, I'm sure you'll figure
something out.

[Transitional music]

YOBA FINDS CHARTRULEAN BY THE MURAL

YOBA (V.O.)

I ruminated on our meeting for
days, thinking of the automaton and
its hidden message. Then in passing
I heard a conversation between one
of the Mystics and a groundskeeper.
There was some growing anxiety
around Chartrulean's penchant for
exploration. There was something
there they didn't want him to find.

Then one day I found him again in
the lower levels of the seminary.
People were saying he hadn't come
up for days. By the time I reached
him, he was manic. He had
surrounded himself in piles of open
books and stood in front of a giant
fresco depicting a city half-
consumed by flames at the foot of a
mountain. When I approached, he
somehow knew it was me without
looking.

YOUNG CHARTRULEAN

Do you see this mural?

YOUNG YOBA

Hard not to.

YOUNG CHARTRULEAN

It's called "Ebtu Vulf Dobra Kai."
The Path of Abomination. Do you
understand what it means?

YOUNG YOBA

Sure. There's what looks like a
horned dog standing on a rock,
another big scary dog, and a man.

YOUNG CHARTRULEAN

No.

(condescending)

(MORE)

YOUNG CHARTRULEAN (CONT'D)
Is the dog the only animal you
know?

YOUNG YOBA
(embarrassed)
Evidently.

YOUNG CHARTRULEAN
This is *everything*.
(beat)
There's something hiding here that
I need.

YOUNG YOBA
How long have you been staring at
it?

YOUNG CHARTRULEAN
(ignoring)
The first figure, the *horned dog*,
as you called it, is a goat. A wolf
-- again, *not dog* -- is the center
figure.

YOUNG YOBA
And the man?

YOUNG CHARTRULEAN
It's not a man, it's a child.

YOUNG YOBA
Wouldn't the child come first?

YOUNG CHARTRULEAN
Is explaining this as hopeless as
it seems?

YOUNG YOBA
No, I think I get it. The goat must
be us. The mountain, something
liken to knowledge? Now, the wolf,
I'm not so sure. Could be many
things. But the child could be some
sort of rebirth. Is that close?

YOUNG CHARTRULEAN
HMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMM, yes and no.

YOUNG YOBA
I give up. What's the wolf?

YOUNG CHARTRULEAN
It's what concerns me. The wolf is
survival.

(MORE)

YOUNG CHARTRULEAN (CONT'D)

(beat)

These symbols tell the story of our evolution, and the city below, the potential consequences of our actions.

YOUNG YOBA

I don't get it.

YOUNG CHARTRULEAN

(manic)

Don't you see? The wolf is abomination.

YOUNG YOBA

That sounds scary.

(sighing)

I was content with dog.

YOUNG CHARTRULEAN

(ignoring)

The path of abomination threatens everything that's constant. It's destroyed everything once before, a thousand years ago. It was so devastating that they tried to erase it from history.

YOUNG YOBA

Why did it fail?

YOUNG CHARTRULEAN

The mountain represents the challenges we face on the path to true enlightenment. If we, the goat, has not apexed the mountain before the path of abomination is invoked....chaos.

YOUNG YOBA

Is that what all this fire means? This really is on the morbid side, now that I really look at it...

YOUNG CHARTRULEAN

It could be wonderful. And it starts right here, where we're standing right now.

YOUNG YOBA

Is this one of those choices?

YOUNG CHARTRULEAN

Yes. But it's more dangerous than I ever anticipated.

(beat)

I need to be convinced that humanity is worth the risk. The more I learn about our past, the more I'm starting to doubt it.

YOUNG YOBA

That's a glib outlook for the messiah. Aren't you supposed to save us all?

YOUNG CHARTRULEAN

Save? Don't misunderstand. An enlightened and prosperous future could be one without man. The starmakers don't care if we live or die, only that our *potential* endures. To that end, I am their puppet.

YOUNG YOBA

What happens to our potential if everyone dies?

YOUNG CHARTRULEAN

Someone somewhere else starts over. Or the knowledge we leave behind is inherited.

YOUNG YOBA

Sounds like a waste of time.

YOUNG CHARTRULEAN

The starmakers don't experience time as we do.

YOUNG YOBA

Real quick, is there a difference between gods and starmakers, because the nomenclature is getting a little confusing.

YOUNG CHARTRULEAN

(manic)

There. Are. No. Gods. I know that now. You praise gods. Fear gods. The starmakers just are.

YOUNG YOBA

Maybe you should go easy.

YOUNG CHARTRULEAN
 Maybe you should wake up.

[Beat]

YOUNG CHARTRULEAN (CONT'D)
 Our vanity causes us to look only
 at ourselves, but look out *there*.
 The Rau *also* have potential. We
 aren't unique, or irreplaceable.
 We're just confusing potential with
 control.

YOUNG YOBA
 So where do we go from here if both
 success and failure are hardwired
 in?

YOUNG CHARTRULEAN
 I have found a way to give us both
 life *and* potential--*if* I can be
 convinced it's worth the risk.

YOUNG YOBA
 Are you asking for some outside
 perspective?

YOUNG CHARTRULEAN
 I lack compassion, or a sense of
 righteousness. But you do not.
 (pleading)
 Could you show me that humanity is
 worth saving?

YOUNG YOBA
 I could try. But what would be in
 it for me?

YOUNG CHARTRULEAN
 (chuckling)
 Maldoro warned me about people like
 you.

YOUNG YOBA
 Like what exactly?

YOUNG CHARTRULEAN
 People who would try to use me.
 Everybody.
 (challenging)
 Why did you really come down here?

YOUNG YOBA

I'm just trying to be fair. If I help you, I want something in return. It should be no work for you.

YOUNG CHARTRULEAN

What.

[Beat]

YOUNG YOBA

So much is kept from us. Jhardeho is largely ignored by normal people. Written off as folklore, and the stuff of fantasy. But here, I'm learning that it's much more than that. It's a failure of evolution. We were given a boon to our existence that we just could not embrace, for all our flaws. A tragedy of existential proportions, and we continue to make it worse.

YOUNG CHARTRULEAN

Get to your point.

YOUNG YOBA

You're my access. I want you to show me--prove to me--that these "Starmakers" are real.

YOUNG CHARTRULEAN

Why?

YOUNG YOBA

Because as troubled as we are, people can be inherently good. If I'm going to spend my life as a public servant, I need to know that we can beat the darker aspects of our nature. That there's more to us than I can see.

[Beat]

YOUNG CHARTRULEAN

I think you have a deal. Now let's begin.

[Transitional music]

KSB GROWS IMPATIENT WITH NEGOTIATIONS

NARRATOR

King Starbringer, Yoba, and the council sat in uncomfortable silence. Some pursed their lips and stared at the tabletop, others jotted down notes. The rest fixed their gazes on the empty chairs at the other end of the table.

At last, the doors swung open and Drechen, Grobien and their security entourage entered the chamber. Twenty minutes late.

The room remained silent as the ambassadors found their chairs, took their time adjusting their robes, arranging paperwork, and allowing servants to pour them glasses of water. A long few minutes passed before the silence was finally broken.

[Gulping of water, shuffling of paper]

DRECHEN

Our tardiness is on account of poor sleep.

YOBA

Is there a problem with your accommodations?

DRECHEN

Your planet is very bright, and the nights short. We're used to a less demanding schedule.

GROBIEN

The salt is everywhere. Is there no relief from it? My elbows are cracking.

YOBA

I'll have something sent for your elbows.

GROBIEN

Don't bother.

YOBA

Where's Cydar? Is his health not improving?

DRECHEN

He's not long for this world. Your doctor is with him now.

YOBA

Does he need to be returned to your colony?

KING STARBRINGER

If we can just speed things along here, the three of you could return all the sooner.

GROBIEN

These things cannot be rushed. Besides, the stress of the journey would do him in anyways. He wants to be part of these negotiations until his last breath. Grant him that.

DRECHEN

Noble to the very end. Actually, there is something you can do. As a symbol of our alliance moving forward, Cydar has tasked me to request for his passing to be observed by your religious authority.

[Silence]

DRECHEN (CONT'D)

I sense some hesitation. Is there a problem with his request?

KING STARBRINGER

No. No problem.

DRECHEN

Good.

GROBIEN

Maybe we'll even get to meet one of your gods in the process.

[Beat]

KING STARBRINGER

Consider it done. Now onto business.

GROBIEN

We have a few requests. Please give this counter proposal to his highness to look over.

[Sounds of paper shuffling]

KING STARBRINGER

These are....extensive.

DRECHEN

This treaty thing is a quite a complicated ordeal. And all this paper...

KING STARBRINGER

We need to build a strong foundation for this relationship if it's to exist at all. Otherwise you can find somewhere else to park your armada.

GROBIEN

(laughing)

I like a hard bargain.

YOBA

We'll take the afternoon to look this over. Why don't you get caught up on rest and we'll reconvene in a few hours.

DRECHEN

Yes. Do take your time analysing these papers.

[Angry grumbles of other councilmen]

YOBA

Uhm. How exactly do you expect to satisfy their request for Cydar?

KING STARBRINGER

Well, we start by asking nicely. If that doesn't work, and it probably won't, we'll have to come up with something else.

YOBA

Right.

[Frustrated king sounds; paper rustling]

KING STARBRINGER

(sighing)

I need a diversion.

A MESSENGER ARRIVES

[Footsteps approaching]

MESSENGER

Excuse me, sirs. There's a woman
and some children here seeking an
audience with King Starbringer.

KING STARBRINGER

I'm busy.

MESSENGER

They're from Boethema.

KING STARBRINGER

Great. They've probably come to beg
us not to pull our support. That's
very lowbrow of them, using
children like that.

YOBA

Is there no compromise? Your late
wife put in a lot of effort to
foster a relationship with
Boethema.

KING STARBRINGER

And look how they repaid her.

YOBA

(sarcastic)
But the children.

KING STARBRINGER

Boethema is under Maldoro's
jurisdiction. If I don't get to see
what goes on behind closed doors,
it doesn't get my support.

YOBA

Why not send Sophrosyne to see
them? It will give her something to
do.

KING STARBRINGER

Good idea. I'll tell her.

YOBA

I'll go make sure they're
comfortable. Where will you be?

KING STARBRINGER

Astreus. I'm craving some more of
the admiral's wine.

YOBA

Go ahead, I'll catch up.

[Footsteps]

YOBA (CONT'D)
As for you, here's a token for your
trouble.

MESSENGER
Thank you sir.

NARRATOR

Yoba pulled a slip of currency from his breast pocket and handed it to the messenger. As it changed hands, so did something else. Two names.

YOBA
(seething)
Pytra and Lybender. What are you up
to?

[Transitional music]

CHARTRULEAN SHOWS SOPHROSYNE THE BERSERKER

[Medical sounds]

SOPHROSYNE
Are they in pain?

CHARTRULEAN
No. Not physical pain. But who
knows what horrors they face in the
void.

[Sophrosyne breathing heavily]

CHARTRULEAN (CONT'D)
Does seeing them bother you?

SOPHROSYNE
No, of course not. I mean I think I
knew what to expect, but was just
less ready for it than I'd hoped.

CHARTRULEAN
In what way do you mean?

SOPHROSYNE
I didn't think seeing this kind of
thing again would trigger all these
feelings.

CHARTRULEAN

Again? You mean you've seen this before?

SOPHROSYNE

The last time I was in an environment like this was with Mother.

SOPHROSYNE (CONT'D)

"Berserker"...it's such an ugly word. Why do you call it that anyway?

CHARTRULEAN

It changes you. Strips you of who you are, and turns you into the worst version of yourself. We use the term "madness" lightly. But it really is like a slow destruction of one's self. A blurring of the lines between what's perceived and what's imagined until the loss of dignity is total. In a way these two were lucky, their fates were rendered quickly. For others, it's been coming on more slowly.

SOPHROSYNE

I'm so sorry. Who's that woman looking after them?

CHARTRULEAN

My old matron. At least until we can find our doctor.

SOPHROSYNE

What do you mean "find your doctor"? They haven't been seen by an actual doctor?

CHARTRULEAN

We need someone with knowledge beyond what academic medicine provides. And there's only one person like that I can trust. However, he is in the north. We lost communication after a blizzard overtook his encampment. We have no choice but to wait until it subsides.

SOPHROSYNE

How long has it been?

CHARTRULEAN

Weeks. Could be several more.

SOPHROSYNE

But there's no time. Can no one just go in there and get him?

CHARTRULEAN

There are efforts in progress.

SOPHROSYNE

Is there no one else who can help in the meantime? Boethema! They have doctors.

CHARTRULEAN

It's not possible.

SOPHROSYNE

Not possible, or you haven't tried?

CHARTRULEAN

Can you imagine the alarms we would raise? Fugitives walking into Boethema, with an unidentified malignant disease, no less.

SOPHROSYNE

There has to be something you haven't thought of.

CHARTRULEAN

Do you think we haven't tried everything we could think of by now?

SOPHROSYNE

I'm not entirely convinced you have.

CHARTRULEAN

And what would you do differently?

SOPHROSYNE

I'm not sure. But I certainly wouldn't be content just waiting around.

CHARTRULEAN

Content waiting ar--

(collecting)

First you dislike my ships. Then you disapprove of the summit.

(MORE)

CHARTRULEAN (CONT'D)

And now you disapprove of how I handle the very few people in this world that I actually care about. Is there anything I am doing well?

SOPHROSYNE

I don't mean to criticize, I just want to do more to help you. Just please let me try.

CHARTRULEAN

(incensed)

Help? Is this constant criticism the kind of help I have to look forward to from you? Because if it is, it does me no good. You got your hour out of me, now play-time is over. I am contending with real. Serious. Problems.

SOPHROSYNE

I'm sorry, I--

CHARTRULEAN (CONT'D)

And whatever time I give to you is taking it away from time I should be spending helping *them*.

SOPHROSYNE (CONT'D)

Don't you dare talk to me like my time is worth less than yours. You forget who I am.

CHARTRULEAN

And who do you think *you* are talking to exactly? I have told you once before, do *not* belittle me.

SOPHROSYNE

Look. I'm sorry you're hurting, but--

-

CHARTRULEAN

Hurting? Spare me your pity.

(beat)

And never walk through my door again if your sole intention is to be a drain.

SOPHROSYNE

That was *not* my intention.

CHARTRULEAN

(through teeth)

So much arrogance coming from someone who knows nothing.

[Breathing heavily]

SOPHROSYNE
Please look at me.

CHARTRULEAN
I require a moment to myself.

SOPHROSYNE
I had no idea you'd ever take me so seriously. I guess I just thought I could make it sound like you needed m--

CHARTRULEAN
I do not.

SOPHROSYNE
(under breath)
I'm so stupid...

[Footsteps away. Chartrulean exhales, breathes heavily]

SHAN ANTAGONIZES CHARTRULEAN

[Door opens]

SHAN
Your woman is very pretty. Albeit on the younger side.

CHARTRULEAN
She is *not* my woman.

SHAN
And *I* am not an idiot. Now stop that.

CHARTRULEAN
Stop what?

SHAN
You're all up here. Relax the arms, relax the shoulders, breathe...

[Chartrulean exhales]

CHARTRULEAN
Look at this.

SHAN
That looks a lot like your hand.

CHARTRULEAN
It stopped shaking.

SHAN
Oh? Is this hand having a better
day than that hand?

CHARTRULEAN
You are insufferable.

SHAN
Did you need something else?

CHARTRULEAN
No.

SHAN
Bye-bye.

CHARTRULEAN
What?!

[Door slams]

KSB ARRIVES AT ASTREUS

KING STARBRINGER
(yelling)
Hello?
(beat)
That's odd.

BORSHA
(surprised)
King Starbringer!

KING STARBRINGER
Everything all right, girl? Where
is everybody?

BORSHA
Well, Chartrulean is off somewhere
with the princess, and Havelion
took Cythaelia to the gym. Should I
fetch them, or the admiral?

KING STARBRINGER
Ah. The admiral, please. I don't
want to ruin any of the kids' fun.

BORSHA
Ok. Be back in a moment.

[Footsteps away]

KING STARBRINGER

(talking to self)

Daughter with a grown man,
unchaperoned. Me, sober. Huh. This
is all right. Right? Would you have
allowed it? Of course you would
have. You were more trusting. *Too*
trusting. You were fool enough to
marry *me*.

HAVELION GREETES KSB

[Footsteps approaching]

CYTHAELIA

Your majesty!

KING STARBRINGER

Ah! I was wondering where everyone
was hiding.

CYTHAELIA

What are you doing here?

KING STARBRINGER

I needed a distraction. Ah! I know
these two heroes! Havelion, and
Abruc, if I remember?

ABRUC

Yes, your Majesty.

HAVELION

Your Majesty.

KING STARBRINGER

Please. I'm in *your* house.

[Beat]

HAVELION

I'm sorry about yesterday. No
matter what I thought I was saying
at the time, there was no excuse
for it.

KING STARBRINGER

No harm, no foul, boy. To be honest
I enjoyed watching those old war
hawks sweat a little.

HAVELION

I'd be lying if I said it wasn't a
little fun.

ABRUC

We really were excited. I haven't taken my medal off since yesterday.

HAVELION

Me neither. I doubt the others have, too.

ABRUC

No kidding.

[Footsteps]

KING STARBRINGER

Careful, boys. Don't inflate this old man's ego.

LAPADINE INVITES KSB FOR WINE

ADMIRAL LAPADINE

Buehl! Hopefully I didn't keep you waiting. Oh! Sorry, *King Starbringer*, I didn't see the kids there.

[Sounds of man hug]

KING STARBRINGER

Look at us Lapadine--the old guard back together again.

ADMIRAL LAPADINE

I've picked the perfect wine for the occasion.

[Sounds of footsteps approaching]

KING STARBRINGER

Phrosy, there you are!

SOPHROSYNE

Dad!

KING STARBRINGER

Are you all right?

SOPHROSYNE

Why wouldn't I be?

[Footsteps approach. Leery dad sounds]

KING STARBRINGER

So, Chartrulean? Did the two of you make any progress on the ship?

CHARTRULEAN

Sophrosyne had some very interesting ideas.

SOPHROSYNE

(sarcastic)

Oh did I now?

KING STARBRINGER

Does that mean you'll take the commission?

SOPHROSYNE

Wait. Don't you want to hear about it first?

ADMIRAL LAPADINE

If my opinion has any weight, *I'm* going to need Chartrulean's full attention for the next phase. We have a lot of work to do.

CHARTRULEAN

Actually, I have some thoughts.

SOPHROSYNE

(surprised)

Seriously?

KING STARBRINGER

Wonderful!

SOPHROSYNE

(whispering)

What are you doing?

CHARTRULEAN

Eh--

KING STARBRINGER

Let's unwind a bit and you can tell me all about it. I've come to get drunk.

ADMIRAL LAPADINE

Oh boy.

SOPHROSYNE

You really should lay off the wine.

KING STARBRINGER

Well if that's going to be your attitude, why don't you head home and entertain our visitors from Boethema. They've brought some children to parade around the capital.

SOPHROSYNE

Children?!

CYTHAELIA

Children?!

[Sounds transition to]

KSB GETS DRUNK WITH LAPADINE

[King Starbringer and Lapadine laugh]

YOBA

Am I crashing the party?

KING STARBRINGER

No. But I've almost got enough liquid courage going now to look at the Rau's amendments.

YOBA

I glanced through it all after you left. It's going to be a long day.

KING STARBRINGER

What are your takeaways?

YOBA

They want more concessions from us.

KING STARBRINGER

On what grounds?

YOBA

Whatever grounds we're willing to give them.

[Sounds of wine pouring]

ADMIRAL LAPADINE

How about a toast?

YOBA

Thank you, Admiral. but I think I should pass. Give it to Chartrulean.

CHARTRULEAN
I can tolerate it.

KING STARBRINGER
Come on, Lapadine, don't be stingy!

ADMIRAL LAPADINE
There's only so much in the bottle
and you drank half already.

KING STARBRINGER
A toast -- to the old guard, *and*
the new.

[Wine glasses clinking, people drinking. Chartrulean being
grossed out. More laughter]

CHARTRULEAN
I will never acquire a taste for
that.

KING STARBRINGER
You'd live longer.

ADMIRAL LAPADINE
Is that your excuse?

KING STARBRINGER
I'm the king. I don't need an
excuse.

[Footsteps entering]

BORSHA
Some tea for the Chamberlain, and a
little something to settle the
stomach.

[Footsteps leaving]

YOBA
My goodness, have you been hiding
her all this time? She's very
attentive.

CHARTRULEAN
Too attentive.

YOBA
Is there such a thing?

ADMIRAL LAPADINE
The poor woman just wants you to be
well.

CHARTRULEAN

Tsch.

ADMIRAL LAPADINE

How about you, Yoba? Chartruelan is letting a good woman go to waste.

[Sipping]

YOBA

The tea *is* good. I'll give her that.

KING STARBRINGER

(sounds of drinking)

Ah. This is the most fun I've had in a while.

ADMIRAL LAPADINE

Time like this is in rare supply these days.

KING STARBRINGER

Verily. Better enjoy it while we can.

ADMIRAL LAPADINE

How are negotiations going?

[Awkward silence]

YOBA

Why are you looking at me like that?

KING STARBRINGER

Because Yoba wonders why we're even going through the motions.

YOBA

And *he* wants us to give them the benefit of the doubt.

ADMIRAL LAPADINE

Interesting.

KING STARBRINGER

Why? What have you observed?

ADMIRAL LAPADINE

So far no indication they're preparing to retaliate.

(MORE)

ADMIRAL LAPADINE (CONT'D)

The Xisuthros is right where they left it, along with the rest of their armada.

YOBA

Things could get complicated if Cydar dies on our watch.

KING STARBRINGER

They don't seem too worried about that either.

YOBA

(flustered)

Eh-I--

KING STARBRINGER

So! How do you kids plan on spending all our money?

CHARTRULEAN

I--

ADMIRAL LAPADINE

I for one would like to get moving on the Jhardekai recruits.

KING STARBRINGER

Oh yes? What's your plan there?

CHARTRULEAN

Havelion and I travel to Idrica in less than a week's time. I'm not sure exactly what we're doing when we get there.

KING STARBRINGER

Get people good and excited. Hold an assembly or two.

CHARTRULEAN

I'll think about it. Havelion has some good ideas.

ADMIRAL LAPADINE

We'll also need to get Astreus ready to expand our little family. So far, people have been hesitant to involve themselves in our business for political reasons. What we really need is someone of Yoba's talents.

KING STARBRINGER

I need him at the negotiation table.

YOBA

Thank you very much, talk about me like I'm not here.

[Strange animal sounds]

YOBA (CONT'D)

What's that out in the flats? Just south of the ridge.

ADMIRAL LAPADINE

Now *that's* a rare sight.

KING STARBRINGER

Looks like herd of moss boar, far from home. I've seen them out around our country residence.

YOBA

They must be desperate to be all the way out here looking for food. Still hard to imagine this was a sea long ago.

KING STARBRINGER

There are lichen out there that they can eat. But agreed, troubling.

ADMIRAL LAPADINE

That one bringing up the rear is not a boar, but a lone wolf. No doubt he'll soon be making dinner of one of them.

KING STARBRINGER

It's not what you think. Even the animals have learned that food is scarce. Sometimes, a pack will find a herd and protect it from the other predators. Occasionally a member of the herd falls behind, and that's what sustains the pack.

YOBA

Isn't the herd afraid of the wolf?

KING STARBRINGER

Probably. But they seem to have an understanding.

ADMIRAL LAPADINE
An interesting phenomenon.

YOBA
Hm.

[Music cue]

NARRATOR

Chartrulean was transfixed on the wolf. One of the last surviving predators in the wild, the wolves were impressive creatures, and a sighting was incredibly rare.

It was monstrous, much larger than any man, but this one appeared old and ragged. Its head swayed listlessly as it walked, nearly dragging its long shaggy mane across the ground. Its snout hung open, revealing teeth the length and girth of a man's finger. Its eyes were blood red from the stress of the journey, and its large paws were weighed down by caked salt. The last thing Chartrulean noticed disturbed him the most. It was emaciated. The wolf was so dedicated to its mission that it'd rather starve than attack the herd.

Suddenly, almost as if it felt Chartrulean's gaze, the monster stopped in its tracks and looked directly at him. Even from that distance, the sudden awareness of one another sent shudders down his spine.

YOBA (CONT'D)
If they can change their nature,
why can't we?

KING STARBRINGER
Hm. Waxing poetic. And a sentiment
I'd like to finish my wine to.

[Sipping. Beat]

KING STARBRINGER (CONT'D)
(sighing)
I cannot wait until all this stuff
is behind us. We should be focusing
all our energy on finding ways to
solve *bigger* problems. Not renegeing
on peace.

ADMIRAL LAPADINE
I doubt it will come to that.

KING STARBRINGER
Perhaps, but if we ever do leave
Arcas, will we just take these
problems with us, or can they die
here?

[Wind blows, sounds of sifting sand]

KING STARBRINGER (CONT'D)
Look at this god forsaken
wasteland. Arcas was once a utopia.
Now it's a boneyard. I won't stand
still and watch us be swallowed by
the blight. The "Starbringer Kings"
were so named because that was what
we were destined to do: bring the
stars to the people. If I'm going
to be the last, I'll be damned if I
fail at destiny.

[Beat]

KING STARBRINGER (CONT'D)
You've been quiet, Chartrulean.
What are you thinking?

CHARTRULEAN
I am thinking about the ship I
would like to build your daughter.