

Worlds Beyond Number

The Wizard, the Witch, and the Wild One: Episode 14 “There is an Ocean Vaster than This One”

Final Version

[World's Beyond Number intro music rises urgently with orchestral strings and flute.]

Erika Ishii

This is the sound of Worlds Beyond Number.

[The other instruments fade into a lone flute and violin pluck.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Chaos reigns in Port Talon.

[Tense music, drums. Thunder roils.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Rolling thunder from distant storm clouds, paints the sky a deep, bleak gray, as Port Talon wails and screams in the coming of chaos.

[Harsh metallic noise.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

The glow of the witchfires is gone, and vines stretch over the ramparts as the Azure Battalion opens fire, on the screeching Undre, stranglers of the Spirit World, plant creatures intent on the destruction of Port Talon. The reaching arms of Orima, beyond the veil of the Spirit World, reaching for her husband.

[Chaotic chittering, ominous sibilant whispers, and people screaming.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

In the harbor, ships begin to sink, their masts at strange, upsetting diagonals, as they begin to disappear under the waves, and we see a massive whirlpool, suddenly SLAM shut, walls of water tearing the bodies apart, of wizards suddenly caught in the closing mouth of the sea. Eursulon, you lunge with Morrow—

Guild Mage Morrow (Brennan)

[Terrified] No, no, n— [Cut off as he hits the water.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

—into the water.

[Plunging splash, the enveloping sound of being underwater, a lone drum pounds with increasing tempo.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

We pick up right where we left off last episode. In initiative, Suvi, that is your turn.

[Waves and the sound of battle.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You see an equation laid out in front of you. Orima is not in this world, and it's a good thing. Who knows what fate would befall Port Talon if she were here in person. But she is blindly reaching from across worlds, with the arm of magic that she can, sending the vast and roiling green here, to destroy whatever is in its path, until it finds her husband.

[Strangler screeches.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Some part of the magic here believes you to be that. The spell of protection cast up, standing in this way, in this moment here. There is a momentary ability for you to push this energy in one way or another, and the equation you see in front of you is, this force is profound, and as it meets resistance, it will break it. The Empire does not have the ability, with the resources available in this moment, to resist this. So. You see, for lack of a better metaphor, the Empire's arm is going up to resist this blow, and the bone of the Empire's arm will break. Where does it break, to do the least harm? And you see the walls, the Azure Battalion, the Undre streaming in and, far away from you, the harbor, and all of the chaos reigning there. In this moment, what do you do?

[Horns join the drum.]

Aabria Iyengar

I'm going to start by yelling a halt order to the battalion, and to the Undre that's got its arm-tendrils wrapped around my neck, I want to speak through it to Orima, to give her something to follow. She will strike blindly, but if I can give her a better cut, I just want to lean and say

Suvi (Aabria)

Follow me and only me.

Aabria Iyengar

And then make my way back to the harbor if I can, to put her in the path of the wizards that did this.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You give your command to the Azure Battalion, and you give your statement to Orima, to follow you. Let's settle this, piece by piece. Number one. You're telling the Azure Battalion to stand down, you're shouting that command out. They have followed you here, you're going to roll this with advantage, but I'm going to say that, in the midst of pitched chaos and combat while they're actively fighting, this is going to be a higher DC. So we're going to say this is a DC 20, but you're rolling with advantage.

Aabria Iyengar

Okay. Now, Brennan, have you met my dice? [Sigh] Yeah. 12.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Okay.

Aabria Iyengar

One of them was a Natural 1!

Erika Ishii

Oof.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You call out asking for them to lay down their weapons, and over the noise and screaming, your voice just doesn't carry, you're not on the command dais anymore, you're just here on the wall. In your speech to Orima, saying, basically, follow me. Give me another persuasion check, but also give me an insight check.

Aabria Iyengar

Persuasion is 18, and insight? 11.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

On an 18 persuasion, the Undre relaxes its grip on you. On an 11 insight, you know that you want Orima to follow you, and I don't think you can tell exactly HOW that's going to happen, but the grip is released in this moment. What do you do as the grip releases?

Aabria Iyengar

I think I'm going to reach out for it, because to me—especially because she wasn't listening to me, when we were all together in her shrine, I need to keep a speaker close, so I'll reach back out to it, by whatever appendage looks the most like a hand, and pull it behind me onto the horse. I will sacrifice a finger, to spare the rest of the arm.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

As you pull this Undre, it screams out.

[Guttural shriek.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And you see other Undre along the wall turn, and begin to converge, rushing towards you.

[Distant shrieks, the rustling of leaves.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

As they do so, you hear the whining of the stone grow more pronounced right near you.

[Rustling leaves, shuddering stone.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

The Undre go next. I'm going to roll a saving throw for the wall.

Aabria Iyengar

Yeah.

Lou Wilson

That's where we're at!

Aabria Iyengar

[Laugh]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

With a six on the die, you get to your horse and begin to flee.

[Pounding hoofbeats.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And you hear—

[Sharp creak as pressure builds.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

—and the wall behind you, splits and cracks.

[Shattering rock.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

A fissure, no wider than like, your smallest finger on your hand, cracks open in the wall and that's all the kudzu needs.

[Whipping vines, rustling leaves.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And the roots, and leaves, and vines come through, and through that one crack in the wall, enter the city, and you can see, in the cracks of the cobblestones behind you, The Green racing, shattering the geometric angles of the cobblestones, and rendering them fractured, broken earth, as it chases on your horse, with the Undre you're dragging behind you.

[Music swells, sibilant noises as the plants course through the city.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Last roll I'm going to ask for on your turn, because you can see that The Green has—is like growing Undre behind you, as it chases you. What path do you attempt to take through the city to the harbor?

Aabria Iyengar

If there is a main thoroughfare—I would assume the biggest widest road in this city wouldn't be residential, it would be like, a big thoroughfare for people moving through the city, that have to make their way to take things to the harbor. So we are sparing civilians, and ripping up the center thoroughfare.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Give me—I'll say go ahead, and give me one last investigation check.

Aabria Iyengar

Okay! 24.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

24!

Erika Ishii

[Excited grunt]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Hell yes!

Aabria Iyengar

[Anxious laugh.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

With a 24, you steer your horse, going in the direction where you know most people have already evacuated. You see the map of the city in your mind, and go to the places that you know people would not be, in an emergency like this. And as you do—

[Rustling leaves grow louder.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

—The Green grows behind you, reaching frantically. You're somewhat wearing the shape of its husband.

[Music swells and then fades out as we slam back into the water with a boom.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

In the water, having lost concentration, Morrow, the breath leaving his body, looks at you, Eursulon, wearing your true form and not the form of Bear, the strongest man in Silbry.

Aabria Iyengar

[Laughs]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
But you see a look of recognition on his face.

[Discordant music over drums]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
He sees that he had a Spirit, right under his nose this entire time.

[Mystical ringing.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
He reaches a hand, grappled though he is, and is going to cast Disintegrate.

[Bubbles, a harsh metallic groan.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
It is countered with a 9th level spell slot by Naram.

[Everyone cheers.]

[Loud bestial bellow, ethereal spiritual music.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Yeah, you watch—there's no—you know. There was a path, that Ame could have chosen, where Naram paid the ultimate price to save you, and you were facing Morrow by yourself. That's not the path that was chosen.

Lou Wilson
Mm-mm!

Erika Ishii
Mm-mm.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
The path that was chosen is, Naram breaks the tower, breaks the wizards, and saves you, and he sees a spell that can only—is just a pure act of magical destruction and unmaking, where your name would be rent from your memory, and you would be sent back through time, through the realms, until there was nothing left of you. And there is a—

[Triumphant, slow horns.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
—you can feel, it's a type of casting—Naram, basically... There is a movement, as of currents in the sea, where Naram revokes permission for a spell to even be cast here.

[Aabria and Erika both grunt.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
And the spell is gone. [Snaps] That's morrow's turn. Yeah, tough break, buddy.

Aabria Iyengar
Dunked.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Dunked.

Aabria Iyengar
L's on L's on L's for the wizards!

Lou Wilson
Hey, he's in our house now, alright?

[Aabria and Brennan laugh.]

Lou Wilson
We're beneath the waves. And I'm the damn sea bear.

Aabria Iyengar
[Screaming] Let's go sea bear!!

[Cries out.]

Aabria Iyengar
Out here being a whole ass tardigrade. Ah!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
I love it.

[A rush of air, the cry of a strangler.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
As you are racing through the streets Suvi, Galani flies overhead, and looks up after you, and you see, as she's flying is like, looking at the walls kind of being overtaken. Calls down to you, and says

Abjuror Galani (Brennan)
Suvi, what's the plan, where are you headed?

Suvi (Aabria)
Get out of the way!

Abjuror Galani (Brennan)
I'm here to help! God!

Suvi (Aabria)
Okay! Okay! Well, I'm taking a bad thing to her baby daddy, you gotta just move!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Go ahead and give me persuasion.

Aabria Iyengar
[Laughing] Natural 20!

Erika Ishii
Wooo!

Lou Wilson
She's taking a bad thing to her baby daddy!

Erika Ishii
Come on my guy!

Lou Wilson
Get out the damn way my guy!

Aabria Iyengar
I use normal bad. I'm not cool!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You see that Galani hears you say that. She rises up overhead, looks at the wall, looks at the chaos at the wall.
Lowers her staff, fires a blast of blue rippling light—

[Magical noise.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
—that hits the crack in the wall, and further widens it.

[Crumbling rock.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
And as it does, a bigger mass of plants breaks through and you watch the chaos along other parts of the parapet lessen. In other words, it's like as you choose your breakpoint, she goes "Great," and the plants race through, coming just after you. Ane, that is your turn again. You are building your shrine here on the docks. People are terrified and nervous. You smell the incense burning, but you also can feel the jostle of people trying to get to you to understand what is happening.

Erika Ishii
I climb up to the highest point that I can see in that town square. And, facing towards the harbor, I place my hand to my brow, and I shout

Ane (Erika)
Naram.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You call Naram's name. I'll ask for one last survival check as you attempt to, basically, invoke his name early for this offering. So give me one last survival check. The fox is going to give you the help action on this roll.

Erika Ishii
That one's advantage? Need a 14 or higher on the die. And that's a 19 on the die!

[Aabria and Brennan cheer.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You call out to Naram. The voices of the people here fade away.

[An echoing reverberation.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Do—you hear their fear, their emotions, their concern, their frustration. It's okay. They can be afraid right now.

[Hopeful marimba music.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You find something in yourself that needs the people around you to not be afraid, and suddenly accept that you're afraid of them being afraid, and that's the one thing you do have control over. It's okay for people to be afraid. Their life has been disrupted, and they don't understand what's happening. You need to be strong for them.

Ame (Erika)
[Steadying sigh.]

[Tense strings swell.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
As you say his name, under the sea, Eursulon, you hear Ame's voice, as clear as day, but moving through the water like whale song.

Ame (Erika)
[Echoing.] Naram.

Naram, the Wavelord (Brennan)
[Echoing through water.] Witch... Witch of the world's heart? You sound so very young.

Ame (Erika)
[Echoing through water.] I am. Grandma Wren has... I am the witch of Toma now. Thank you for saving my friend. Your wife is seeking you.

Naram, the Wavelord (Brennan)
It's time to go.

[The sound of something huge moving through water, bubbles.]

Naram, the Wavelord (Brennan)
Thank you for your guidance in a moment of fear.

Ame (Erika)
And thank you for your gentleness.

Naram, the Wavelord (Brennan)
Yes. It will never be enough, but I hope that those I was able to spare live long and well.

[Music swells, low droning horns. Heavy distant rumbling.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
And you see the currents shift. You just watch in the harbor, as Naram hears you and prepares. As he does so, Eursulon, that's going to be your turn.

Lou Wilson
We're going 30ft to the bottom of the ocean. My goal—my hope is to pin this motherfucker, but I'm going to go 30ft down. And I'll swipe at him with Wavebreaker.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Hell yes. Go ahead and give me an attack roll.

Lou Wilson
21.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Ooh, baby! And with this attack, are you seeking to—

Lou Wilson
I think I just want to pin him to the bottom.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Hell yeah. So you swim down to the bottom. You raise Wavebreaker overhead. You see, he throws his hands up to—throws his hands up. He casts a shield spell that protects his vital organs, his throat. Runes glitter over him, and Wavebreaker strikes true, driving straight through the belts of his robe, through his cloak, through all of that fabric. And as you avoid his body entirely, you slam Wavebreaker into the stone.

[Thud, bubbles.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And as you draw it out, a plume of coral follows behind it.

[Cracking, tearing cloth.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Growing through the tears of his clothing, through his robes, around his belt, and is left in a shape like a bear's claw of coral, holding him down to the bottom of the sea.

Eursulon (Lou)

Now you know how it will feel.

[Muffled, panicked, unintelligible speaking.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

He goes through, and you can see like—you see his mind being wracked with what he can possibly cast in this moment. No harm has been done to him. He is simply trapped at the bottom of the sea, exactly as Naram was.

[Distant singing.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You watch his face as he looks for the spell somewhere. What spell could he have prepared, thinking that he would be trapped by coral at the bottom of his own bay, in the rubble and boulders, surrounded by the limp bodies of the wizards he had tasked with keeping Naram captured here. There is no spell he has to break free from this moment. Fly though he might, he is restrained, and you can see the fear as the water starts.

[Bubbling, panicked drowning.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Naram, his tendrils—

[Moving water.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

—touch you on the back. He looks at Morrow... And you feel Naram decide, knowing that there is some part of him, even looking at someone that wanted to enslave and torture him for his eternal life to the whims of Empire. There is still some part of him that does not wish to see a man drown. Does he, in this moment—What does he feel, empathically, sharing this telepathy with Eursulon in this moment?

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You can feel his rage. You can feel his sense of poetic justice, to leave this man. He's not killing him, he's just leaving him exactly where he was. But you also feel, already from Naram, this sense of sorrow at having hurt people. This sense of sorrow at like, the decision to save you, and the decision to, you know, destroy this apparatus that shouldn't exist and was going to kill you. What is he feeling emotionally from Eursulon in this moment?

[Somber low cello music.]

Lou Wilson

Eursulon knows, and thinks back to the moments that brought him here, and he knows that this sword is not what it means to be a knight, to be honorable, to fight for a quest. The violent action of killing Morrow is not what he desires. I think the anger and rage is the desire for Morrow to know what it feels like to be trapped and to understand that. And I think there's a part of Eursulon that wants Morrow to die, feeling like the world would be—the world being rid of a man with the intentions of Morrow would likely be a good thing.

[Horns harmonize with the cello.]

Lou Wilson

But I think even in this moment, Naram would sense conflicted feelings, of how does one—would sense conflicted feelings in Eursulon of how does one rid the world of evil, and deal with evil, without becoming it themselves. Feeling like I've done what I wanted, but now, Eursulon even now is watching this guy die, and standing over him being like, do I just watch? Do I just stare? Do I just stand here until he's dead?

[Swirling water, a pan flute joins.]

Lou Wilson

I think it is that conflict of how we can't talk our way through everything. At some point, things will require action.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You feel Naram's ageless and eternal heart feel the same conflict as you. And you hear his voice.

Naram, the Wavelord (Brennan)

I cannot promise you, brother, that it ever becomes easier.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You look at Naram, who hovers over Morrow, exactly... placed by you in the exact position he first showed you Naram. You feel Naram's conflict comes from the 100 dead soldiers in the plain of Witchfire, and all of the Scepter's Chorus mages falling to their death, nameless and anonymous, and far more innocent than this man, who, after all, commanded them here. There's a part of Naram that says "If I made those mages pay with their lives, what justice could it be to let you still live?"

Brennan Lee Mulligan

But then there's another part of Naram that knows that those mages didn't pay with their life for some abstract point of justice. They paid with their life because he had to get the fucking derrick off of you. And that urgency is gone in this moment. And what does THAT mean, to take Morrow's life when there is no urgency left?

Naram, the Wavelord (Brennan)

Not exactly justice. Not exactly the same. Not yet a true mirror.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And a tendril extends down.

[Rushing through water.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And Morrow sees this massive spear—and you recognize the spear, and for a second the glamour glimmers over it, and it is Seacalmer. And then it once again is a tendril of this mighty ocean god—scratches along Morrow's forehead. The blood intermingling with light.

[Mystical swirling water.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And you see—

[Gasping breath.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
—a set of gills opens on Morrow's neck.

Naram, the Wavelord (Brennan)
There you are, Morrow. A gift from me to you. A better mirror, and more kindness than you showed me. I do not know how long you will stay here at the bottom of this bay. Ships and treasures litter the seafloor here. Many never found again. But your cleverness brought you here. One gift is enough. Let your cleverness do the rest.

[Somber horns swell, and take on a more sinister tone.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
And Naram gives him the ability to breathe underwater, and leaves him pinned to the seafloor where he was, and seems to say that, for this moment, that is justice to him. He swims to you and you feel his heart beat.

[Horns crescendo and fade out.]

Naram, the Wavelord (Brennan)
Your friend is calling us back to shore.

Lou Wilson
And I with Na—I'm going to start to swim to shore.

[Imperial war music kicks up, timpanis and trumpets. Cannon-fire, the sound of Stranglers, whipping vines, yelling from terrified people, a horse screams.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Suvi. That is you once again. As the plants are coming after you, do you concentrate more on keeping your speed up, in order to outpace the greenery behind you so it doesn't catch you? Or are you focusing more on choosing the best possible course to get through?

Aabria Iyengar
Definitely best possible course.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Okay.

Aabria Iyengar
I don't really care if it catches me. That's not the point. Right now, I understand that it's following me, and if I can keep it out of civilians' way, then we're doing our job.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You lead it the best possible routes. As you approach some places that have people in them, what do you do if you see civilians or people as you begin to ride down the thoroughfare.

Aabria Iyengar
I definitely think it is, glass staff out, and I'm sending out Irulian bolts in front of me.

[Hoofbeats on stone. Explosions and the pew-pew of magical lasers.]

Aabria Iyengar
It's bursts of light and sound and damage to keep the way clear.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Bolts of blinding white desert magic flash in front of you, and you see up above you, Galani raises her staff again, sort of flying overhead, and mutters a couple quick words to herself, and begins to fracture parts of the sky—

[Mystical reverberations.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

—to be partially reflective, almost in that colorless way, that like, seeing a reflection in a clear glass mirror is.

[Ringing energy.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Just to show you reflections of other streets and places where civilians are, so that you can best guide your course away from anybody, saving as many people as possible. Prioritizing that over your own safety, I will need a dexterity saving throw. DC 13.

Aabria Iyengar

[Whispering] Yeah, that's a natural one.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

The Undre behind you, looking at you firing those bolts off, the one that you have, like, dragged with you finally breaks out of your grip—

[Shriek.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

—long enough to drag a hand onto the cobblestone, and throw up Entangling around you. And you are pulled off your horse, into the greenery with the Undre on top of you, as your speed is suddenly stopped here in this moment, and you see the kudzu—

[Creaking of wood.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

—beginning to expand outwards. You've sort of created this node and you can see it's about to break in multiple directions. What do you do in this moment as your horse gallops away without you and this strangler is standing here holding you, and kind of believing, in a way, that you are Naram. And so it's like, you can feel the plants are like, we have him, but we don't have him. Like, you're a distraction. Your disguise is working, but it's also confusing them because you're not coming home.

Aabria Iyengar

The first thought is up to Galani.

Suvi (Aabria)

[Echoing, telepathically] Keep pointing them forward.

Aabria Iyengar

and then to these vines, to the closest I can get to Orima.

Suvi (Aabria)

[Echoing, telepathically] We're so close.

[Clattering of branches, clicking of the Undre.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Give me a perception check and a persuasion check.

Aabria Iyengar

Terrible. Perception is an eight, which makes sense. Persuasion is an eight. We're doing bad.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You say we're so close. Galani leads them forward, and you see multiple Undre begin to crawl from grass and stand around you. You hear, finally, Orima's voice.

Orima of the Reaching Green (Brennan)

[Hissing echo.] Why are they telling me you are there, when I cannot hear your voice? Speak to me. Why can I not hear you?

Suvi (Aabria)

He's close. We kept our promise.

Orima of the Reaching Green (Brennan)

Why can I not hear you? Why can I not hear you? Grab him.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And you feel the Undres begin to grab you around, everywhere.

[Hissing noises, tightening. Sinister ambient music, light, tense strings.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Suvi, what do you do in this moment. It's the shrine again, and you realize it's not her. She didn't mute you. She can't hear you.

Aabria Iyengar

I have to figure out why. What's going on? What is different. I think in that sort of—fallen from the horse, choked and bloodied. I just look down at myself like, why am I not enough? What am I not seeing? What don't I understand in this moment?

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Give me whatever skill check would be associated with that to you. Whether it's investigation, arcana, insight.

Aabria Iyengar

It's got to be investigation. Okay. 17.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You look down, a discoloration on the front of your blue robes. It's like a darker patch.

Suvi (Aabria)

What?

[Rustling cloth]

Aabria Iyengar

I dig under them.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You see your sapphire pendant, drinking in light.

[Magical ringing.]

Suvi (Aabria)

What? She never told me. Fuck it.

Aabria Iyengar

And I am just going to pull it off and snap it.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You pull it off

Orima of the Reaching Green (Brennan)

[Gasp, screaming.] Liar!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And you hear Orima's voice scream, "Liar." She's going to...

[Sinister mystical whispering.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Yeah, she—she effortlessly dispels your illusion. And you are right in front of her and the Undre all step back.

[Sinister string music.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Ame. That is you. You hear Orima's screams.

Orima of the Reaching Green (Brennan)

[Distantly] Liar!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

In your mind's eye you can see the crest of a wave building, as it heads to shore. You can tell that Naram is coming, he has heard your words. And now it's Orima, and you hear Orima's rage.

[Whispering, flapping bird wings.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You can feel it, it smells like the thickness—the kind of green where the forest is almost choking you with its oppressiveness. And you can tell that she is about to kill Suvi.

Erika Ishii

From high atop my perch, I raise a hand and I say

[Timpani drumroll.]

Ame (Erika)

[Booming with magical radiance.] Stop.

Erika Ishii

There is magic behind my command. Not the kind of magic that worldly spellcasters would be using. It is a word that has behind it a promise. My promise to do right by the Spirits, the promise that was renewed when I mended the temple. It's less of a command and more of an entreaty.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

As the magic flows from you, imploring this Spirit to stop, she is going to use one of her legendary resistances to avoid the spell. You call "stop," and feel all of Orima's wrath turn to you.

[Discordant shrieking music, rustling.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Suvi, in the calm before destruction, the Undre snap their attention away from you—

[Undre screams.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

—and sprint past you towards the harbor. Faster than at any point you've seen it growing. To the point where you cannot, even with your eye, sort of follow the speed of growth of vines and plants that race through the cobblestones.

[Cannon-fire splashing in the harbor, footfalls on cobblestones, wailing, a piercing banshee scream.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You hear, now not even in your mind, just out loud, the distant shriek of a Spirit whose voice covers the entire landscape. Some wail, as though of a ghost. This voice shrieks at the top of its lungs. The vines move. I would like a constitution saving throw from Ame.

Lou Wilson

Mm-mm.

Erika Ishii

That's a 19.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Hell yeah.

[Building discordant violin plucking, screaming.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You see The Green racing towards you as fast as possible. You see the intent of this thing is to destroy you. And with a burst of water—

[Splash.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

—a shape is standing in front of you.

[Soft, peaceful panpipe music.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And you see a thorn of poison holly, a sprig of some plant meant to touch you, and in a moment, stop the beating of your heart with deadly venom—

[Whip sound.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

—strikes Naram in the chest.

[Thud, piercing flesh. Horn joins the flute.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You see him standing there, the height of a man, long green hair, blue long pointed ears, standing with his spear and robe. Eursulon, you erupt out of the water with him as he helps you aloft to land on the harbor.

[Poison coursing through veins.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You watch the poison spread towards his chest.

Ame (Erika)
No, no!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
He turns to you and smiles.

Naram, the Wavelord (Brennan)
[Echoing] My wife has poisoned me many times, my darling.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
And you see he plucks it from his chest. And you see that the wave comes and crashes into the offering, just as the green vines reach it, wrap around—

[Crashing wave, creaking of vines, a mystical bubble envelopes the space. Twinkling.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
—and you are frozen in this moment. You watch the droplets of the wave are moving slowly through the air, as Naram smiles and you see the vines growing up, and touching his face so softly. The vines reach and touch the wound and you see begin to drink the poison back up out of it.

Naram, the Wavelord (Brennan)
My wife can become very cross.

Ame (Erika)
[Crying] No judgment.

[Somber morns and piano.]

Naram, the Wavelord (Brennan)
She is the most beautiful of all Spirits. And I know that she would never harm me in a way that she would not take back. Almost always right away.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
And you see he smiles at The Green. He looks to Eursulon and Ame here in this moment. He holds his hand out and puts it on your shoulder, Eursulon.

Naram, the Wavelord (Brennan)
You are a brave and noble Spirit. You will forever be welcome in any hall I call my home. I hope we meet again one day.

Eursulon (Lou)
I'm sure we will, brother.

Naram, the Wavelord (Brennan)
There is an ocean vaster than this one, upon whose waves the sun is ever shining. It calls you home. And I know, one day, a great feast will be laid for you in that place, to call him, Eursulon, back to the Realm of the Spirit.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
And he touches your head with his and turns to you, Ame.

Naram, the Wavelord (Brennan)

This task was too great, to call kind to set before a witch as young as you.

Ame (Erika)

We all have to learn sometime.

Naram, the Wavelord (Brennan)

It's true. Learn you have, and far more than learn. These people are safe, and I am free. I know the World's Heart is in good hands.

Ame (Erika)

I still don't know what that means.

Naram, the Wavelord (Brennan)

You don't know?

Ame (Erika)

We got Wavebreaker to break the curse on me, so that I could remember, so that I could inherit my duties. I am woefully under prepared.

Naram, the Wavelord (Brennan)

There is a curse placed on you? Wavebreaker can break it, but there is a—

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And you see that as he says that, you see that The Green touches him. And Galani, overhead, you see the wizard sort of appears, lowering her staff. Naram looks up to see her in this moment of slowed time, The Green grows all around him and is almost now totally encompassing him.

[Light rainfall, creaking vines.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

He sees the wizard overhead. He makes a decision about how much time is left here in this moment. He turns to Eursulon and says,

Naram, the Wavelord (Brennan)

The sword. The sword can break the curse. You have precious little time, brother.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

He looks to you and says,

Naram, the Wavelord (Brennan)

Wren knew much. She would not have kept secrets from you. You must trust in what—

[Rustling leaves, Naram's voice fades away.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

The Green mask covers his face, as a bolt of abjuration is just about to strike. He vanishes.

[Reverberating boom, the sounds of the world return to full speed. Waves crashing, the sounds of a city panicking.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

A wave crashes, scatters the offering, puts out the incense. Naram is gone. Returned. And you see all of the Undre collapse.

[An Undre screams.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Bundles of rotting moss and wood on the ground, and a long path of kudzu, leading back up to the broken wall, swaying lightly in the breeze. Suvi, you turn around the corner, to see Ame and Eursulon standing there. You see the scattered offerings, you see the plants, the very edge of the kudzu hanging through the planks of the dock, lightly touching the crests of waves lapping against the shore.

[Aetherial choral music, gentle waves.]

Suvi (Aabria)

Hey. Are you okay?

Eursulon (Lou)

I am fine. Are you okay?

Lou Wilson

And I'm going to come, seeing the injuries around your neck, and cast lay on hands, and give you 5HP back. Put my hand on your shoulder, and I think where I touch you, you feel the warmth of a great hearth kind of, course through your body, that comfort and ease, and the creak of wooden floorboards and walls, as the warmth from a fire kind of causes that, kind of, temperature change that makes a house make all of those rich and comforting sounds that we know from the dead of winter.

[Crackling fire.]

Lou Wilson

I think you kind of hear those lightly on the wind, as the injuries around your neck heal a bit.

Aabria Iyengar

Suvi, instinctively, especially feeling all of that, throws her arms around you, and just sort of sags into you.

Suvi (Aabria)

My Honored Friend. I am so sorry.

Eursulon (Lou)

It has been a day.

[Sounds of a crowd.]

Lou Wilson

And I think looking around at the crowd that is here?

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Yeah.

Lou Wilson

Is going to go

Eursulon (Lou)

I think we should go somewhere more private.

Ame (Erika)

[Uncertain grunt.]

Erika Ishii

Ame leaps over, takes a running leap and tosses herself around their middle.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You toss yourself—you see, by the way, without you even having to have done it, as you emerged from the water, you see that one of the last things Naram did was, he wrapped you in your own glamour.

Lou Wilson

Oh! Okay, great.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

So, as you came out of the water, you, I think, even find yourself surprised, and didn't know that Great Spirits could do that? Of sort of like, putting on your kid's shoes before leaving the house. You're like, oh, he did a like, "I got you, bud." So Ame comes and flings her arms around you. The people look, and see the storm clouds sort of on the horizon, that were sort of menacing begin to sort of disperse, and the derrick is gone. You see that as people look, you know, that, the racing green and the monster out in the waves.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

They see all of this sort of fade, and look around and all of them saw this meeting of the vine and this—and look to Ame as kind of the one leading this shrine-building or offering, and look to you for any possible answers or they just look like—

[Crowd grows louder.]

Erika Ishii

I extract myself from the hug.

Ame (Erika)

The ocean Spirit Naram taught all of you, your ancestors, to fish.

[Gentle harp music underscored by violins.]

Ame (Erika)

Orima has protected these walls for generations. And we have forgotten the ways. We have not tended to their shrines and given them the praise and respect that they deserve. It is a dangerous thing to think that we can control the Spirits. We can only ever try and work with them.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Give me a persuasion check as you speak to the crowd here.

Aabria Iyengar

Can I give her advantage by kind of moving to her side in full Citadel regalia, just to give, like, the arm of the Empire, a little more weight to it?

Erika Ishii

That's an 18 on the die, which makes for a 24.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You see Galani landing—

[Rustling robes, thud as feet touch the ground.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

—and you see, she looks as though she's about to interrupt Ame. And sees you, Suvi, kind of standing there and keeps silent for a moment. And you see, Ame, the people of Port Talon, gathered here at the harbor, remove their

hats, and hold them to their chests, and bow their heads in respect. As they do so, you see a very old woman steps out from the crowd. She's got a wide dress that has very small little sort of, shells woven into the fabric of this white dress. And she's got a warm shawl, warm wool shawl over her shoulders. Steps out of the crowd, puts a last little like offering on the scattered offerings that were knocked over by the wave. Touches your hand, and begins to sing. And as she does, you see a few of the older folks in the crowd look and start to sing as well.

Erika Ishii

I don't know the song or the lyrics, but I can pick out a harmony to join in on the chorus.

Villagers

[A lone voice, gradually joined in harmony by a crowd of voices.] Where the wave has grazed the reach of green/and the wood by gentle sea/We count the coming of the tide/By a love as old as time/Lay down your blanket on the forest floor/In the peace of waves that crash no more/Then embrace me love, soon to be/On the road the rain rides to the sea

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You look and see Galani looking at this song, that people sing as they look, and you see that it's gotten late enough in the day, that even with the storm clouds, the sun gets low enough that it comes in under the storm clouds.

[Singing in the background.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And there's a deep golden light filling the harbor. People sing this song, you see Galani stroking her chin. It's a very beautiful song. The danger is gone. She can appreciate that it's a beautiful song, but you just see a look, I think, that Suvi, you understand the most. Because it's just the look of "Well this song is totally out of our control."

[Blaring horn, drumroll as the song comes back to the front.]

Villagers

I am the blanket on the forest floor/I am the peace of waves that crash no more/Then embrace me love, tho love it leaves/by the road the rain rides to the sea.

[Song fades away.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Galani walks over to you as the song ends, and you see people—you know, Galani goes over to like, the Azure Battalion shows up, other people, Morrow is—you see she's talking.

Abjuror Galani (Brennan)

I have no idea where the Guildmage Morrow is. He disobeyed a direct order from the Citadel to venture out and try to kill a Honored Friend, tried to kill a Wild One—

Suvi (Aabria)

What? Ugh.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And just starts going back. She turns over to you and says,

Abjuror Galani (Brennan)

Suvi, are you all right?

Suvi (Aabria)

Yes, I'm okay. Are you?

[The melody of the song plays.]

Abjuror Galani (Brennan)

As all right as can be. I thought that a great Spirit was going to kill me in the middle of the harbor?

Suvi (Aabria)

Honestly? Same.

Abjuror Galani (Brennan)

Yes, absolutely. And instead, that didn't happen. But many are dead, and that Wild One could be anywhere.

Suvi (Aabria)

My best understanding is that he is gone, that Orima of the Reaching Green reclaimed him, and took him hence, which is good for us.

Abjuror Galani (Brennan)

[Sigh.] Alright.

Suvi (Aabria)

Where's Morrow?

Abjuror Galani (Brennan)

Morrow is presumed dead.

Suvi (Aabria)

[Flatly] Oh. Okay.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

He opened that whirlpool, and the whirlpool shut, which is what would have happened if he had been immediately killed by the Great One that he was flying after.

Suvi (Aabria)

Yeah. Weird. Okay, okay.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Galani turns to both of you and she looks at you, Ame, and says,

Abjuror Galani (Brennan)

Thank you very much for attending to the citizenry of Port Talon. I understand that you were able to calm them with some ritual as they were panicking.

Ame (Erika)

Yes and no. It's a little more—[Clears throat.] You're welcome. I'm glad I could do what I could.

Abjuror Galani (Brennan)

It is something that we too often forget about, in moments of crisis. And it's wonderful to have a witch to attend to those interpersonal needs during a catastrophic event such as this. That Spirit was—I have rarely seen a destructive force like that. That was horrifying to behold.

Aabria Iyengar

I'm going to just shoot Ame a little look, that is just, you got to let it go.

Erika Ishii

I open up my mouth.

Aabria Iyengar

No. Just a little headshake. Mm-mm.

Ame (Erika)

Well, it just goes to show that forces like that should be respected.

Abjuror Galani (Brennan)

[Sigh.] I think you're exactly right. We need to have more respect for these sorts of forces that we're dealing with. And there needs to be more oversight on idiots, like Morrow, who tangle with things they don't understand. Uh, RIP.

Aabria Iyengar

Thoughts and prayers.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And you see, she says,

Abjuror Galani (Brennan)

Let's get your things moved to the Governor's mansion. I don't think that the Kalabel Chantry is going to be a wise place for you to remain.

Suvi (Aabria)

Yeah.

Abjuror Galani (Brennan)

When Steele arrives, do you want to take point explaining—

Suvi (Aabria)

Yes.

Abjuror Galani (Brennan)

Wonderful. Wonderful. Thank you.

Aabria Iyengar

[Laughing.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You see Galani gets your—[Trails off laughing.]

Aabria Iyengar

Suvi tried to be as cool about that, like "Yeah, I get it. She's so fucking scary."

Brennan Lee Mulligan

"So, should you talk to your mom or should I—"

Aabria Iyengar

Yeah, I'll talk to her. Yeah, look, she made you cry last time, so I got it. I didn't say that! That's so mean!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Your things are moved over to the Governor's mansion.

[Cheerful plucked violin.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Again, much more ostentatious. Lots of, like, lapis lazuli and gilded plant—everything is framed in big gilded leaves, wrapping around murals of Imperial victories. And you see that there's already folks gettin' to work, like pulling up kudzu out of the city.

Erika Ishii

As we go make our way there, I speak with especially the elders in the city, and you can overhear snatches of Ame saying

[A clarinet joins.]

Ame (Erika)

Oh, well, I mean, anything, really. Just animal feed and, oh, there's a grape tea you can use, and the flowers can have this nature to them, almost grape-like. And I had a lot of—we had a hanging back at the cottage that I think was made from the fibers. Incredibly useful stuff.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Yeah. The Elders of Port Talon—and it's hard because you can see that a lot of the—Port Talon's gotten really big. It's a big city, so there's sort of this thing, I think, you're spending your first time in a city like this and seeing that the communities here are partially estranged from one another, there's just so many people. And because the systems of government within the city are themselves so imperial, and bureaucratic, and kind of opaque to a lot of the people that live here, it's not like Toma, where you go and find the elders and it's like, oh, yeah, it's these group of families that know each other.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And of course we're going to respect our elders because that's literally like my grandma, and your grandma. It's like, oh, there are communities here, but the communities feel that they've had, like, walls built up around them. But the people that you do talk to are very grateful for your insight and very grateful for your help.

Erika Ishii

The more that it sort of happens and the more that I encounter that, I just end up going over to some of the sailors and saying,

Ame (Erika)

You can make rope with it. You can make rope with it. Cheap. Free rope.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You see them go, "Ah! Free rope! Alright, free rope!"

Aabria Iyengar

"Yay! Free rope!"

Erika Ishii

Free rope.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

As the sun finishes setting, Eursulon, you are protected by your glamour, but feel yourself connected to the Spirit.

[Trilling melody joins in.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You are here in the mortal world. That is your curse. But, for the first time, that joy that was in your fingers, that feeling of being alive. You feel alive. And you feel a source of like, you would never have called it this in the Spirit World, but here it is magic. It's a magic that is... it's not right to say it's yours, it's you. The magic that is YOU is here

with you. How are you feeling in this moment? What are you doing—as Ame is, like, tending to the citizenry and you're like, having your stuff moved over to this new place?

Lou Wilson

I think Eursulon is quiet. I think Eursulon is sitting with this feeling he knew for so long, that he then lost and has reconnected with. I think Eursulon, especially as Ame and Suvi kind of busy themselves, finds somewhere to just sit, and I think listen to, and really just sit with this feeling. I think there's almost a part of him that is looking down at his now human hands in human form and trying to remind himself that this is not. That this is just for protection, that this is the thing he wears. That the thing he is, is the quiet thing inside himself.

Erika Ishii

[Emotional] Ugh! Uugh.

Aabria Iyengar

[Quietly] That was really good.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

As Ame is sort of running around the city, I think back at the, you know, doing your thing. Where is the fox? Is the fox with you as you're going and traveling around?

Erika Ishii

Yeah, there's SO many fish, just flopping around in the streets.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Yeah. Fox is like,

The Fox (Brennan)

Heh. I know that everyone was really scared. This was a great day. This was a great day. Look at all these fish.

Ame (Erika)

Yes.

The Fox (Brennan)

You know how hard it is to catch these? Because they are in the water and they go faster. But up here...

Ame (Erika)

Mhmm. This is your house now, huh?

The Fox (Brennan)

Well, this is a city.

Ame (Erika)

Mm, yes. It's a—

Aabria Iyengar

[Squeaks laughing]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Uh, I don't have a house.

Ame (Erika)

Home. Your home. This is where you're most comfortable. With fish flopping around right in front of you.

The Fox (Brennan)

Yeah, yeah yeah yeah, no, I hear you. It'd be great if there was more grass? Because these rocks hurt my feet. But it's okay.

Ame (Erika)

Don't eat—okay. I know. I'm going to introduce you to a word that's going to be very useful for you in this situation. Moderation. Moderation. It means not too much of something.

The Fox (Brennan)

Okay, and when does that happen?

Erika Ishii

That happens when—Huh. Wh-when you choose for it to... happen. I can see I've lost you there.

The Fox (Brennan)

Yeah. I'm gonna eat as much fish as I can.

[Wet sloppy eating noises.]

Ame (Erika)

Yeah, yeah. Okay.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Suvi. You arrive back at the Governor's mansion as well, and see that your belongings have been brought over here to this new place. And you see the book that you were reading before is sitting on your bedside table now.

Aabria Iyengar

I—Yeah.

[Soft piano music.]

Aabria Iyengar

Make my way over and sit down. Before I open it, I'm going to pull the necklace from my mother out, cast a quick Mending on it to repair the chain.

[Magical ringing.]

Aabria Iyengar

And I think she realizes that after casting Mending a hundred times to fix that bed, that she finally figured out the exact version of Mending that her mother used on her glasses the last time she saw her. Just a little... it's not quite a shortcut. There's a contraction in the words that makes it a little faster. And she does that and smiles, and then opens the book.

[Book opening noise.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Give me an investigation check and give me an arcana check.

Aabria Iyengar

Investigation check is a 12. Natural 1 for the arcana because I can't roll well.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Oh, no.

Aabria Iyengar
Womp womp!

Lou Wilson
Womp womp!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You spend your evening reading this book and seeing just words that you know were scribed by the hands of your mother and father. What's the difference in your mother and your father's handwriting?

Aabria Iyengar
My mother's handwriting, I think because she, I think she has a slightly higher status. So she writes in a way that is more legible. It feels like my dad is writing notes to himself, and my mother is writing towards posterity.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
I love that. You take a long time going over the notes. You've been looking at the book for a while and there's something in your—the notes are incomplete, right? This is sort of like scavenged writings of your... it's sort of like how artists work ends up scattering all over the world after their passing. Your mother and father, their work is sort of, whoever got their hands on any of it, held onto it because it's so significant and important. So you're looking at it and you're thinking about the mending cantrip and how you finally feel like something locked into place, about how your mom used to cast it. And as you're sort of thinking about that, Eursulon, you arrive with this sort of brand new feeling of yours. But you are led up as the Archmage Apprentice's Protector.

[Knocking, door opens creakily.]

Eursulon (Lou)
Suvi.

Suvi (Aabria)
Oh! [Clears throat] Hi.

Eursulon (Lou)
Hi.

Suvi (Aabria)
You're looking in good sorts?

Eursulon (Lou)
Good so—Yes, it has been a good day.

Suvi (Aabria)
Is it too soon for me to ask what happened?

Eursulon (Lou)
No, I um. I... there was a moment when I returned to my room, that I wanted to destroy the ring of coral, made from Naram's blood. And when I struck it, it turned back into a more viscous form, and I destroyed the bed, which I saw somebody put back together. And the blood entered me in some way, and I was—reminded me of a time when I was very young that Naram actually saved me. And I was taken over by a feeling that I could not wait for Steel. And that something had to be done.

Suvi (Aabria)
I understand.

Aabria Iyengar

And there's definitely a moment where Suvi wants to explain herself or the way she feels or the way she thinks the world works. And then that new paradigm locks into place again. That a Wild One will do what they will. So you watch her put it away and just kind of nod and smile.

Suvi (Aabria)

Okay. But you did it.

Eursulon (Lou)

I did do it.

Suvi (Aabria)

How? That was a very well built—it was bad. The derrick was bad. We can all agree. Like, not defending it.

Eursulon (Lou)

Yes. Derrick not great.

Suvi (Aabria)

Right. But how did you get—

Eursulon (Lou)

Well, I actually it's funny. I thought of you, because they had some sort of sensor of some kind, and I was trying to figure out what to do with it, and I was like, well, what would Suvi do? And at that point, I decided that if it couldn't see me, then I could get through. So I turned invisible and—

Suvi (Aabria)

Ah, brilliant!

Eursulon (Lou)

—got in, and then they had him held by a spear, and I took Wavebreaker to it.

Suvi (Aabria)

You s—that's incredibly cool.

Eursulon (Lou)

It was... quite cool.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Ame. You enter at this time.

Erika Ishii

I am all muddy.

Suvi (Aabria)

Did you just hear—WHY?

Aabria Iyengar

Prestidigitation.

Suvi (Aabria)

What are you... Why... How long have you—[Stops self]

Ame (Erika)

I was helping with the town. There's a lot still to do with the cleanup, but I think that the town's folk are really up to the challenge.

The Fox (Brennan)
[Groaning in pain] Oooh, my stomach.

Ame (Erika)
Aww.

Suvi (Aabria)
What's wrong with the fox?

Ame (Erika)
What was that word I taught you again?

The Fox (Brennan)
Fish.

Ame (Erika)
No. No, no. Started with an M.

The Fox (Brennan)
Mitigate.

Ame (Erika)
No, that was—well—

Suvi (Aabria)
Masticate.

The Fox (Brennan)
You did. You taught me mitigate.

Ame (Erika)
I did, I did.

The Fox (Brennan)
Why didn't you mitigate me eating too much fish?

Suvi (Aabria)
Ohhhh

Ame (Erika)
I did. I tried to teach you "Moderation."

The Fox (Brennan)
Those words are too close.

Suvi (Aabria)
Oh, buddy.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You see, the fox's stomach is so full, and he sort of flops over on his side and just is,

The Fox (Brennan)
I need to focus on breathing.

Suvi (Aabria)
Ohh, lil boost?

Aabria Iyengar
I'll go over and pick up the fox.

The Fox (Brennan)
Ooooooh

Suvi (Aabria)
Got you, buddy.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You see, he's completely slack in your hands.

Aabria Iyengar
Yeah.

The Fox (Brennan)
I'm dying.

Suvi (Aabria)
Yeah.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
I am dead.

Erika Ishii
You're not dying.

The Fox (Brennan)
I have died

Suvi (Aabria)
No, he's dead.

Eursulon (Lou)
You are dead.

Suvi (Aabria)
Yeah.

The Fox (Brennan)
[Whining] It's not funny.

Eursulon (Lou)
It is quite funny, fox.

Ame (Erika)
[Mischeivous giggle]

The Fox (Brennan)
Okay, breathe.

Ame (Erika)
[Sniffing.] Eursulon!

Eursulon (Lou)
Hmm?

Ame (Erika)
You... smell different.

The Fox (Brennan)
What?

Suvi (Aabria)
Do you smell different?

Lou Wilson
Do I smell different?

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You can still smell the rosemary, but there's also just a faintest scent of honey.

Suvi (Aabria)
Okay. It's weird because I do feel like, I can't tell if I'm making it up. Like, I smell—it kind of smells sweet, right?
That's not—I'm not making—

Eursulon (Lou)
I do believe while with Naram... I do believe while with Naram, I was able to reconnect with my breath. I am still wayshadowed, but...

Suvi (Aabria)
Oh. Oh! Oh my God!

Ame (Erika)
Eursulon!

Suvi (Aabria)
Congratulations!

[Ame and Suvi squeal in excitement]

Eursulon (Lou)
It does feel good, yes. Anyway, what are we going to do about the curse?

Suvi (Aabria)
I mean, we have to break it.

Ame (Erika)
Did Naram teach you how to break it, perhaps?

Suvi (Aabria)
Oh, yeah. You were talking to him under the water, and he's explained it?

Eursulon (Lou)
No, that he did not do. He said the sword could break the curse.

[Draws blade.]

Eursulon (Lou)
But let's see.

[Whimsical cello music.]

Lou Wilson
I'm going to wave the sword around Ame, just kind of catching a sense if it does something

Erika Ishii
I close my eyes and I outstretch my hand.

Aabria Iyengar
And I will be kind of keeping the tip from cutting Ame's face open as it's waggled.

Eursulon (Lou)
Alright. Suvi, I know—I know how to use the sword.

Suvi (Aabria)
Alright. Okay, okay.

Ame (Erika)
[Meditative drawn out "Mmmmmm"]

[Marimba joins the cello.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Okay. As you do it. I love it. And I'll say this, too, In this moment, Ame's conversation with Steel had to do with Steel basically mentioning the possibility of studying the curse before it was broken.

Erika Ishii
Mhm!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
That was not a conversation that I believe occurred between anyone else.

Aabria Iyengar
NOPE!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
But certainly it seems like Ame is not bringing that up in this moment.

Erika Ishii
Mm-mm!

Aabria Iyengar
Rude!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Incredible.

Erika Ishii
Arms outstretched in sort of a T pose.

Ame (Erika)
Mmmmmm

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Amazing. So, Eursulon, as you are waving it, is there any kind of intention that you are bringing to that?

Lou Wilson
I don't think there's much intention. I think I am—if anything, it would be more perception, trying to sense if the sword... glows! Or if it—

Erika Ishii
I mean, if it lights up, or something!

Lou Wilson
If it vibrates! Or like, you know, I think there's, I'm much more sensory than, like, me going, "I want to break the curse." I think it's me, this is testing the water.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Give me a—well, in that case, if you're rolling perception, just give me a perception check.

Lou Wilson
19.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You are waving the sword. The sword feels very, you know, as you're waving it, you know. Feels good in your hand, you feel a connection to the sword. I think that there is some connection to that feeling you had in your fingers, and you called, and you felt the note of song and honey in your strike. So I think the hard thing for you here is a little bit, you're trying to perceive, like, "is the sword lighting up? Is the sword doing anything?" And I think there's a little bit of awareness on a 19 that your expectant attitude is very different from the state of mind you were in when you cast Divine Smite.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
So the sword doesn't glow. It's not like [lightsaber sounds] where, like, hotter or warmer. You're just like, "oh, nothing's happening. And I'm not aware that the sword's doing anything wrong." But on a 19, it's a high enough roll that you're like, oh, my state of mind is totally different than the one I was in when I did magic with the sword earlier.

Ame (Erika)
Anything?

Eursulon (Lou)
No. I believe maybe I need to... touch that same Spiritness, in order to activate it, but I also don't want to—

Suvi (Aabria)
Should I turn around?

Eursulon (Lou)
No. No. No. It's not.

Suvi (Aabria)
I don't wanna know. I don't wanna know.

Eursulon (Lou)
No, It's not a performance thing. I can do this. I can do this. I just don't want to swing the sword at Ame.

Ame (Erika)

It's ok, don't feel bad. I'm sure a lot of Spirits have issues with using the sword.

Suvi (Aabria)

He needs to touch his spiritness.

Eursulon (Lou)

Stop. Stop, stop stop. Stop. I know what you're doing. I know what you're doing.

Suvi (Aabria)

Do you?

Eursulon (Lou)

Yes. I know what you—you're comparing this, you're talking about the sword like it's my penis.

Ame (Erika)

Oh, what?

Suvi (Aabria)

Hold on. Now we have to talk about it. Wait, you used your penis since you've been out—[Gasps]

Eursulon (Lou)

I am a—Of course I've used...

Suvi (Aabria)

Ah!!

Eursulon (Lou)

[Stumbling] I shouldn't be talking about this with you, but if I'm go—

Suvi (Aabria)

Wait, why not with me?

Eursulon (Lou)

I—well. I don't know. [Fully incomprehensible stuttering]

Ame (Erika)

Yeah, why not with you?

Eursulon (Lou)

Alright. I don't like that face.

Suvi (Aabria)

Oooh! Spirits do just be walking around and banging it out.

Eursulon (Lou)

Stop. Stop.

Suvi (Aabria)

What!

Eursulon (Lou)

We don't just be "walking around and banging it out." Alright?

Suvi (Aabria)
I've heard stories about your dad. I think maybe it's—

Eursulon (Lou)
Well, he was special

Suvi (Aabria)
You got it honest?

Eursulon (Lou)
What?

Suvi (Aabria)
What?

Eursulon (Lou)
What did you say?

Suvi (Aabria)
That you got it honest. Like it's a thing you got from your dad.

Eursulon (Lou)
Okay.

[Ame and Suvi laugh.]

Eursulon (Lou)
You don't need to turn around.

Suvi (Aabria)
Watching is part of it.

Ame (Erika)
[Snickers loudly]

Eursulon (Lou)
[Whispering loudly] Stop. Stop!

Lou Wilson
Eursulon is going to do his best, and not well, to put the thoughts and the fact that he's—it's just that weird moment of talking to your friends about how and who you have sex with.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Yeah. You're coming into this first act of sword magic with thoughts about you, your penis, your dad, your dad's penis.

Erika Ishii
[Loud cackle.]

Lou Wilson
It's bad.

Aabria Iyengar
Hold on. I would like to make a case that that is extremely cogent, because vagina just means sheath.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Wow!

Aabria Iyengar
So it's always penis stuff.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Wow.

Aabria Iyengar
I'm helping.

Lou Wilson
Wow.

Erika Ishii
That was the nerdiest thing.

Aabria Iyengar
I'm a wizard.

Erika Ishii
Wow.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Yeah, for sure. When I think of—

Aabria Iyengar
I can make anything unsexy!

Erika Ishii
That's exactly how I want to talk about it, the etymology!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Yeah. Go ahead and give me a—you're going to add just your charisma modifier to this, but you are going to roll with disadvantage.

Lou Wilson
Got it. Because of all the penis stuff?

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Because of all the penis stuff.

Aabria Iyengar
Oh no!

Lou Wilson
Really?

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Yeah.

Aabria Iyengar
Aw, consequences. [Laugh.]

Lou Wilson

[Laughing.] God! 15. Even with the penis stuff.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Even with the penis stuff, we get a 15.

Aabria Iyengar

I think it helped

Lou Wilson

I also really like that we're saying penis and not like—it's, we're using—

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Very medical. Very medical. Yeah, for sure. Absolutely. Go ahead, on a 15. What do you think Eursulon starts to connect with in the sword? It feels like it's working. It feels like there's something going on here that is working.

Lou Wilson

Putting the conversations aside, I think Eursulon looks at Ame and knows that there is—and it is connected back to the thing that brought his friends together in the first place. And that moment in the tent several weeks ago when Ame told him that he had a quest. And Eursulon reconnects with those feelings and that sense of honor as he brings the sword toward Ame—slowly—but seeks to right that.

[Metal scraping against metal, then ringing clearly.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

There's a moment of connection here. There was a deep moment of joy when you were with Naram, freeing him in the sea.

[Ringing metal transitions into gentle somber string music.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

There was constant joy amongst the steps of your father when you were a cub in the World of Spirits. And in that summer you shared with Suvi and Ame, even in the wake of your life's greatest sorrow that you had ever known, there was so much joy. And the weight of honor and the weight of a quest, and the ever present specter of shame, and of failure, these curses that have haunted you since your first day in the realm of mortals. You realize that one of the greatest powers of shame and failure, is that they insist that they are constant companions of honor.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

But the first time you met honor there was no shame. The first time you met honor it was as joyful as any other moment of playing amongst the steps of your father. When you first met Sir Curran, and the knights on the road, all there was was joy, and kindness, and love, in that moment. There is no contradiction here. And when you suddenly start to put the silly conversation, the laughter of Ame and Suvi, for all of its glibness—and maybe there's something, that it's not weighty enough, it's not solemn enough. And I think there's a moment where you connect, because you are a Wild One, and there is something that can only ever be joy and being fully alive in you.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Maybe your honor doesn't have to be solemn, and the laughter ringing off the walls of your friends—

[Ame and Suvi's laughter echoes mystically.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

—lights on the sword and you feel a connection to joy and life, AND honor and a quest. There become two sort of instincts within you. There's a shorter breath here. There's something that's almost like, a relieved exhale. There's a deeper magic within the sword as well, that is more like a prolonged exhalation, like over the teeth almost, of a controlled, longer, deeper breath out, as you bring the sword to trace a path across Ame. One of them feels like a

lighter form of magic. One of them feels like a deeper, more profound form of magic. What instinct do you think you would follow in that moment?

Lou Wilson
We go deeper, Brennan.

Aabria Iyengar
Yeah-ha-haaa!

Lou Wilson
We go deeper.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
I am going to need a constitution and a wisdom saving throw from Ame.

Aabria Iyengar
Ah!!

Erika Ishii
That is a 20 on the die.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Nat 20! Is that for wisdom or constitution?

Erika Ishii
Constitution.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Okay. And I'll let—I actually, roll both of these for me, and I'll let you assign them where you want them.

Erika Ishii
9.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Gotcha. The sword passes over you. You feel it, Eursulon, Wavebreaker—like, you realize the name Wavebreaker comes from waves being like spells. And this idea of a sword that could cut a path through a wave, break it, and leave something open and calm for, like, a young Naram to pass through in the early days of the World of Spirits. You have that long exhale and cut something. Give me perception, Eursulon, and give me Arcana, Suvi.

Aabria Iyengar
[Whispering] I gotta not roll dice.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
So sorry, Suvi.

Aabria Iyengar
It's a Natural 1.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Okay.

Erika Ishii
What!!

Lou Wilson
Yikes, dude!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
What the Fuuuuuck.

Lou Wilson
Yikes. Yikes!

Erika Ishii
What did I tell you?

Lou Wilson
We're out here breaking curses before your mom could get here, and you're rolling Nat 1? Come on, if we—

Aabria Iyengar
It's a total of seven, I add six to Arcana.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Here we go. What'd we get for perception over here.

Lou Wilson
Dirty 20.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Dirty 20. You immediately can tell the spell has worked. You have successfully removed this curse. Ame is no longer cursed. However, what happens next, you will also be able to perceive. There is something here— this is—like you've said, spirit and body are one for you, you are a creature of both combined, so your, for lack of a better word, like, your knowledge of these things is so deeply internal. When you know magical things, you know it like it's been in your body your whole life. Ame, as the curse comes undone.

[Deep gong, some sort of horrible groaning noise. Metal clicking. Discordant high pitched noises in the background.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
[Echoing, slightly distorted.] You feel something sliding and clicking. Something like a liquid poison, filled with a puzzle, turning from the inside, made of shadow. Something that twists and rotates and expands and pierces.
[Echoing stops] I'm going to let you assign those saves where you want them. And based on hitting a Nat 20, I'll even tell you what's at stake. Failing the wisdom saving throw means that the curse is being cut out, but it's going to take something with it on its way out. If you put your 20 into wisdom, it means you keep everything and lose nothing. However, you'll fail the constitution save, which means that something will happen to your body. Essentially, it's "Do you want to pay this toll with your mind or with your body?"

Lou Wilson
Can I ask? Whatever choice Ame makes, we are seeing the results of it.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Yeah. There's no intercession. So Ame is responding to a magical effect. And essentially what's happening here is, you have perfectly guided through and removed that first effect. Whatever entity placed this curse on Grandmother Wren and on Ame put a spell so nasty that it was standing in front of successive contingent effects. That there's, like, a nested series of spells within Ame, and you're excising all of them. But the big one that Ame was aware of was hiding some others.

Erika Ishii

I grew up on a farm, slinging bales of hay, wrestling with goats. I'm fairly strong, but all of that is nothing compared to how I have been honing my mind and the way that I connect with people, the way that I understand the world of Spirits and of humans. That knowledge is what makes me a witch. So it only makes sense that that would remain untouched, that is strong, strong through the generations of witches that came before me. But my body, though newly muscled with my steward's ring, is not as protected.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You watch—Ame, and the way this feels in your mind is—

[Tense music.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

—you feel the curse leaving. And it's almost like Eursulon has come and taken an unwanted guest within the house of your Spirit and has told it that the time has come for it to leave. And you can feel the curse leaving, but as it does, you see it holding something. And the curse is very—it's a feeling of some malevolent thing that nevertheless is sort of saying, "I'll see myself out." But as it's doing so, it's taking something of yours, and you realize you have the power to just grab it and wrest it out of that curse's hands as it sees itself on the way out the door.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You reach, take hold of that knowledge that it is attempting to steal from you, and as you tear it from its grasp, the tearing between the curse and what it had grabbed shudders your body with physical pain. This is what you become aware of. Ame collapses to the ground and begins like expectorating black bile.

Ame (Erika)

[Wretching noises.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You see the fox screams out loud.

The Fox (Brennan)

[Fox scream.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And leaps to Ame's side as its paws shudder, and it slips on the ground, writhing in seizure on the floor.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Each of you, Suvi and Eursulon, as Ame is convulsing, may take an action in this moment. Ame, you feel yourself, it's one of these things where it's like you have to choose. Are you guarding your face or your stomach? You chose face, and now you're paying the price. Your stomach is, you just feel yourself totally having lost control of your physical body, while putting all of your witches training into protecting your mind.

Ame (Erika)

[Screams desperately]

Lou Wilson

I'd like to run over, and if you'll allow it, cast a Paladin spell, that of Protection from Evil and Good.

Suvi (Aabria)

[Laugh.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Hell yes. Incredible. You went over to cast that. Suvi, what are you doing?

Aabria Iyengar

You know, it's funny because I think Suvi's instincts were the same, but if she sees you act first because you're a little quicker on the draw, then she'll turn her attention from protecting Ame to understanding what it is. And I'm going to cast identify on the bile and figure out what's happening.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You begin to cast identify. The casting time on that is 1 minute.

Aabria Iyengar

1 minute.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

All right. You begin to cast identify on the bile. You cast protection from evil and good. What does it look like as Eursulon cast that spell?

Lou Wilson

I think similarly to divine smite, it is not a visual—there's not like an intense visual golden aura. I think there is a moment of putting his hands on Ame.

Eursulon (Lou)

Ame, Ame!

Lou Wilson

And the kind of the deep and ferocious "Grr" of the Great Bear that he would—

[Low bear growling.]

Lou Wilson

—when those other Wild Ones were kind of moving toward his host, the sounds that he would emit to let them know that they were not welcome and should take no step further to interrupt his Great Parade. Those kind of sounds are carried, kind of very crystalline and clear for me—

[Louder bear growling.]

Lou Wilson

—perhaps more effervescent for others.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

The spell protects you. Ame, give me another constitution saving throw. The difficulty is 20, but you are rolling with advantage.

Erika Ishii

That's a 19. 17 on the die.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Ame, convulsing. You feel the power of the spell protecting you. You shudder and fall deep into unconsciousness. You see that the Fox next to you similarly goes slack. Fox's eyes stare straight ahead, black bile emerging from the Fox's mouth as well.

[Tense horror string music.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Ame goes slack. In your mind you begin to dream, of Grandmother Wren and of the first time she spoke to you of the World's Heart.

[Music fades out, long pause.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Eursulon and Suvi. You look down at this place and see that Ame has fallen into some kind of rictus. She is alive, but she is in the depths of unconsciousness. As you see that she's—her breathing steadies, but she is sweating a deep cold sweat.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Her familiar has also passed into unconsciousness. You see that her fingers and limbs twitch. There is some sort of spasm in her foot as her toes overextend. And sort of like you hear the tendons of her feet hurting. She has lost control over her own body. However, the breathing remains strong. It does not feel ragged. Her heartbeat feels like it actually moves towards resting. Like someone powering through a fever. A minute passes very quickly. Eursulon, you stay sort of embracing her and holding her. After a minute you cast Identify on the bile here. What sort of information are you looking for? This spell effect is unfortunately not an enchanted object, but it is a spell effect. What would you be looking for in this moment most of all?

Aabria Iyengar

I suppose her instinct is just towards the last time I saw a curse being lifted. It always has some manner of it being expected—there's expectorant to it. So it was breath before. If it's bile now, I think she is just running through everything in the Lingua Arcana to codify and categorize whatever this is. Something's coming out, and it needs to be explained. If this isn't the curse itself, then it is a symptom of it. You can understand a disease by what it brings up in people. So she's just trying to get closer to the truth of it without pressing into whatever Ame is going through right now.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

What you see is the bile—in the past you've seen that sort of like wisp of smoke coming out of the mouth. You think this bile is actually not the curse. If anything, actually, you may have even—on that identify. You may have seen a little puff of that mist or smoke go, as Eursulon removed the curse. The curse went. This is whatever was behind the curse. It's something that was hidden there, that was effectively—essentially, this was "if the curse goes, I kill you."

Aabria Iyengar

Got it.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And Ame has surpassed it, but not without tremendous effort. So Ame's unconsciousness is her witch's body doing what it's supposed to do. Like, she's basically shut down to—in other words, if she had retained consciousness, this black bile would likely have killed her.

Aabria Iyengar

Copy.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And instead it was just like, the things bodies often do in tremendous sickness of just like, shut it all down, put all resources into not dying.

Aabria Iyengar

Gotcha. Then if I can ask for a specific kind of information, it's who did this come from?

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Give me an arcana check.

Aabria Iyengar

Here we go. There we go, 22!

Erika Ishii
Woo!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You touch a finger down to the bile. Minor cantrip protects your hand as you touch it.

[A single clang of a bell.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
It's already evaporating. This blood will be gone in a moment. Smells like deep iron.

Aabria Iyengar
The man in black?

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You go to an old fear.

[Echoing sounds of Suvi's past, screaming, running. Suspenseful music.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You remember being a little girl village on fire, and a man who wore the form of a Beast.

Aabria Iyengar
Oh. Blood but worse.

[Heavy breathing, fire, splintering wood.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Fire. Blood. Iron. A man with sharp fangs that looked at you without kindness.

Eoighorain (Brennan)
[Growl.] She'll be dead. Slow us down.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You remember him. Eoighorain. His smell is on this bile.

Suvi (Aabria)
No.

[Sounds and music fades out.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
The eastern edge of the sky, just starting to turn a lighter shade of indigo.

[Wind, a low foghorn.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
A massive red dirigible with gold brocade, flying more swiftly than a falcon—

[Low imperious horn music, a snare drumline.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
—descends from the clouds and docks above the Governor's mansion. A rope spiral staircase descends.

Aabria Iyengar

That's wild to think about. Continue.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

A little cylinder of ropes, with rope steps in a spiral down, descends. In the pre dawn light, the Sword of the Citadel, Steel, enters Suvi's chambers. And I assume at this point that she sees Ame in Suvi's bed, the fox tucked under the blanket by her side, still unconscious and still dreaming. In the intervening hours, as you've awaited through the night for Steel to arrive, how have Eursulon and Suvi been tending to Ame?

Aabria Iyengar

[Laughs]

Lou Wilson

I think there was definitely a cool two minutes where we just kind of stood over the body and we're like,

Eursulon (Lou)

Do we touch it?

Suvi (Aabria)

I don't know. Can you make her relax? The grippies on her feet right now are kind of wild, just—

Lou Wilson

Just like holding onto the toes, being like

Eursulon (Lou)

Come on. Stop it. Stop it. Please stop it.

Aabria Iyengar

Yeah [Laughing]

Eursulon (Lou)

She is all right. Her heart is resting.

Suvi (Aabria)

I saw a wit—you got the curse. You did it.

Eursulon (Lou)

Yes, I did it.

Suvi (Aabria)

Yeah. I think... it was supposed to kill her. Removing this was supposed to kill her. So I don't know if there's anything we can do but wait, and hope that she's strong enough to wake up.

Eursulon (Lou)

Yes. Well, it's a bit drafty in here. Why don't we get a fire going.

Suvi (Aabria)

Yeah, I can do a fire. I can do a fire.

Aabria Iyengar

I walk over to the hilariously giant mantle.

Suvi (Aabria)

There's no wood in—where the fuck is wood?

Aabria Iyengar

I leave the room and go find wood in another ornamental room.

Lou Wilson

And I'm going to take Ame's body and the Fox as well. And I think take them over to Suvi's bed.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Tuck them into bed.

Aabria Iyengar

I think we've got, like, a basin with hot water and cold water to keep her warm, filling up bags to keep her warm in the bed and to mop her brow if she sort of feverish.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

The breathing is a little bit shallow, but the heart rate is down. Fox is tucked up under her arm as well. Also unconscious. And pre dawn light, Steel enters the chamber.

Suvi (Aabria)

How caught up are you?

Steel (Brennan)

Pretty caught up.

Suvi (Aabria)

Okay. Do you want more, or should we start with what you've got?

Steel (Brennan)

Let me see if I understand.

Suvi (Aabria)

Okay.

Steel (Brennan)

After we spoke, you went to the Chantry. I was told that our Honored Friend escaped, that more Spirits attacked the city and that you rode to the walls and tried to draw the other Spirit of the Forest down to meet our Honored Friend in the harbor. And that upon meeting, they vanished.

Suvi (Aabria)

Yes.

Aabria Iyengar

Oh, do I throw Eursulon under the bus? Yeah.

Lou Wilson

Eursulon's standing over by the fire, I think just being quiet.

Steel (Brennan)

Our Honored—the, uh creature. Yes, there was an assist, but he was—he escaped and then

Steel (Brennan)

Sorry, you said there was a what?

Suvi (Aabria)

A bit of an assist.

Steel (Brennan)
There was a bit of an assist?

Suvi (Aabria)
Yeah. We don't tell our Honored Friends what to do, because they don't necessarily always super... listen. And you're the one that told me not to underestimate witches. I cannot control their actions. So.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Steel glances at Ame unconscious in the bed, glances over to you by the fire.

Steel (Brennan)
Am I to understand that your friend Eursulon released Naram?

Suvi (Aabria)
Sorry. Yeah.

Eursulon (Lou)
I did.

Steel (Brennan)
Even though I told you I was coming to do exactly that?

Eursulon (Lou)
Yes.

Steel (Brennan)
Was there any reason that you saw fit to do this on your own?

Eursulon (Lou)
It did not feel right.

Steel (Brennan)
Over 150 soldiers of the Empire are dead.

Suvi (Aabria)
I did everything I could to save as many as I could.

Steel (Brennan)
In the future, Eursulon, if you feel a sudden urge to act, you are not under my command and I cannot stop you. If you have the urge to act without alerting me that my soldiers may be in grave danger, I will consider that the act of an enemy. That Honored Friend should have been free. And if we had worked together, many might still live that are now dead.

Lou Wilson
I hold her gaze.

Steel (Brennan)
This is very disappointing. Where is Morrow?

Suvi (Aabria)
I do not know.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
She turns to Eursulon.

Eursulon (Lou)
Taken by the sea.

Steel (Brennan)
Well, I suppose we have saved the cost of a trial for treason.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
She walks over to the bed with Ame.

Steel (Brennan)
What happened here?

Suvi (Aabria)
You don't want, like, a little break before we get into the new bad stuff?

Steel (Brennan)
I don't know why I would expect anything other than bad stuff at this point, but please tell me.

Eursulon (Lou)
We removed the curse.

Steel (Brennan)
And I see that that went extremely well with no complications.

Suvi (Aabria)
It worked.

Steel (Brennan)
I'm just so glad that the endless resources of the Citadel are so constantly being utilized by those who would benefit from its aid.

Suvi (Aabria)
Yeah.

Steel (Brennan)
But it makes sense that this help would be cast aside, because of all of the harm the Citadel has constantly done to you.

Suvi (Aabria)
Why—

Steel (Brennan)
No, I'm glad that our knowledge and resources are of no consequence or interest. Absolutely.

Suvi (Aabria)
Can we do my, my stuff now?

Steel (Brennan)
Yes.

Suvi (Aabria)
Where the fuck is Eoighorain.

[Low piano music, gentle but tense.]

Steel (Brennan)

Eoighorain? Why? What makes you bring that up?

Suvi (Aabria)

When Eursulon removed the curse from Ame, she spit up bile that smelled exactly like Eoighorain. I will never forget that smell. I am not wrong. What is he?

Steel (Brennan)

Dangerous. We have a long overdue conversation, you and I.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

She looks at Ame. You see, she casts a divination spell.

[Magical sound.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

A set of glowing eyes appear over her own for a moment.

Steel (Brennan)

This is extremely dangerous magic. We should get Ame to help as fast as possible. The longer she remains in a state like this, the more those who created this spell will be able to track her.

Suvi (Aabria)

Wait, what? God. We hav—I get it. I get it. We have to wait for you. Shit.

Steel (Brennan)

The stranger that showed up at the cottage, this curse, this is not accidental. None of this is an accident. Okay.

[Imperial marching drums.]

Steel (Brennan)

We have the resources to heal Ame and undo the tangle of this spellcraft at the Citadel. You can keep an eye on her there. Which is what, that is the task that you are going to be appointed when we return will be tending to Ame.

Suvi (Aabria)

Understood.

Steel (Brennan)

Alright. Eursulon, you are an Honored Friend. You are granted welcome to the Citadel if you would wish it, but I'm not going to command you to do anything you do not wish.

Eursulon (Lou)

If I came with you, would I be under your command?

Steel (Brennan)

No. You'd be a guest of the Citadel. You would be beholden to our rules, but you would not be under our command.

Eursulon (Lou)

Alright.

Steel (Brennan)

We'll make ready to leave. I have some business to attend to in Port Talon, but, it looks like a tremendous amount of people were saved.

Suvi (Aabria)

Is there anything I can help with?

Steel (Brennan)

I don't know. I would tell you some tasks for you to carry out, but it seems almost more likely that you'll do them if I don't ask for them. Take care of your friend. She's fighting a battle harder than I think any of us can realize. Tend to her, and you'll be doing what is of the most significance to the Citadel.

Suvi (Aabria)

[Quietly] Understood

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Steel turns around, looks at you, Suvi, with a look of just exhaustion. Just, she's really tired. She just looks really tired. And she looks over at you. You see her gaze moves over to Ame in the bed, and she sort of shakes her head a little bit. I think, it's just sort of a rueful—you can make an insight check if you want to see what she's thinking in that moment.

Aabria Iyengar

I dooo!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Yeah, go for it.

Aabria Iyengar

16?

[Gentle ambient choral music.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You just see her looking at Ame, and it's sort of like, just the look of more stuff being out of her grasp. And I think she looks—and you can almost see a look on her face of when she came to get you from Grandmother Wren's a long time ago. And I think you can see her thinking about Grandmother Wren. She turns back to you. Eursulon,

Steel (Brennan)

I cannot blame you for seeking to free our Honored Friend. What happened to him was a travesty, an atrocity in the truest sense of the word. I just hope for the sake of those that are lost, that the weight of these actions, that the burden of great magic is not lost on you. Every one of the wizards who died had a name, a story, a life. Perhaps their service to the Empire renders that immaterial. Perhaps the story of what happened yesterday is simply that the Guildmage Morrow was mad with power and ambition, and he meddled with the forces of the Spirit World. And those that died were the price that he forced them to pay.

Steel (Brennan)

Or maybe it is the fault of Orima, or Naram, or Port Talon, or myself, I don't know. I just—

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And you see her voice for the first time that you've heard in years, Suvi, just goes soft.

Steel (Brennan)

I just hope everybody's thinking carefully.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And she massages the bridge of her nose where it meets her brow, and a tear comes at the corner of her eye and falls down her cheek.

Steel (Brennan)
[Soft sigh.]

Suvi (Aabria)
For whatever it's worth, Galani was exemplary throughout the crisis. More lives would be lost without her. My life would be lost without her.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Steel looks at you, and you just watch her reappraise you with her eyes. Speaking with praise about someone within the Citadel? Yeah, give me one more insight check, actually, as you say that.

Aabria Iyengar
It's a—a 17.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You watch her look at you, and she nods. And there's a type of pride here in this moment. It's not like a smiling warm, like, "Wow, good job!" but you see that you're telling her that part of this thing that she's devoted her life to building is working. You're giving her the knowledge that there's someone she can trust. You're doing it in a way there's nothing that you gain from it. And I think you think back to the first conversation when you were about to leave the Citadel, of saying, "I need to get out of here! I'm trapped da-da-da-da-da!"

Brennan Lee Mulligan
And you realize that telling her about Galani's exemplary service is not only a kindness to someone that did save your life, but actually it's how any of this has to work. To know when something is working, to know that there's someone she can trust. And on your part, because this is so selfless and it's you just making sure that someone gets their credit, you realize that the look Steel is giving you is one of acknowledging that you saying this is leadership.

Aabria Iyengar
Suvi doesn't react outwardly, but has learned another thing about herself and what she's capable of in this moment.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Later that day, you board Steel's dirigible, headed East.

[Ringing ships bells, the distant sounds of the city fading away.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You get a stateroom for Ame and the Fox. Eursulon you board this flying ship, this massive wooden gondola of almost like a tall ship, with a giant dirigible—again, it's like a bright red oblong balloon, with gold brocade and big diamond shapes all over it. Little fins coming off the side, and a massive spell engine on the back, the sort of purple hue of like the foreshield protecting the uppermost deck. And you begin to fly East from this place. In this room, you fly so quickly, the sea whipping away underneath you as you leave Port Talon.

[Gentle repetitive engine noises.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
There's always one of you by Ame's side as she rests, to receive the care and attention that she needs at the Citadel. And as you are traveling, give me one last arcana check with advantage.

Aabria Iyengar
Let's go. Come on. 22.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Hell yeah.

Erika Ishii
[Quietly] Atta girl.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

After about like, three days of travel over the wide sea, one morning you awaken, Eursulon. Ame is still breathing, has started to deteriorate a little bit. She can't really eat in this form and is just sort of struggling with this unconsciousness, which is why she's getting moved to the Citadel as quickly as possible. You see, the fox's breathing is a little ragged underneath. You're sleeping off in a corner somewhere, can't sleep in a bed. And you look up and see Suvi.

[Gentle, whimsical harpsichord music.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And this first morning light, you look out and don't see ocean. You see endless white sand.

[A melody of harmonizing horns.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Suvi, it's the morning that you know you will reach the Citadel again, your home. And you are able to witness your long lost brother, Eursulon, behold it from the window. A tower of glass, in an endless desert. Blue sky and white sand, and a monument to the force of magic and the ability to create impossible and wondrous things.

[One final sustained note that fades out.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You're reading the notes, Suvi, of Soft and Stone. And you come across a little interesting margin thing. It's a small sort of like, spell. It's like a little bit of just like, housekeeping in an early spellbook journal. And it's a note in your mother's handwriting. Sorry, you said your mother had always for posterity and your dad's were a little bit more informal. So this is actually in Soft's handwriting. It's chicken scratch. In the somatic component of a spell, the body of which you can't find, so you're not sure which spell it was. But, you know, it's a very low level spell. It's not a powerful dweomer. There's just a corner or something, because this is just scraps.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And you notice a strange bit of note keeping in your father's handwriting. In the spell, in the transcription of the somatic components, of basically the hand gestures, individual units of somatic spell components. The hand gestures you make to cast a spell are referred to in the Citadel as notes. So a note is a single, discrete hand movement in the casting of a spell. And there's a note that appears in almost, you say almost, and then you're like, no, it appears in, like, every single spell. You can't cast a spell without it. It's the reflexive indicative, which is the name of this note that is cast in almost every single spell.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And you see that in your father's handwriting on this spell.

[The piano music returns.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And this is, like, very it looks like early like, the parchment this is on is, like, the kind of spell—you recognize that this is like a black and white, like, journal notebook you'd have in school. It's like a composition notebook. Your father has put a null clef, which is—this is, like, the most jargony wizard stuff ever, but this is how technical it is for Suvi, too. A null clef is a symbol that you basically put on a piece of spell casting when you're working out something from scratch and you put a null clef on it to say, "oh, this is done," or "this is not necessary."

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You basically put it on, like, a dead end where the null clef cancels it out and makes it so you don't accidentally make a scroll of a bad spell. So when you can't delete something because it's written in magical ink, you just put a null clef

over it, and it goes like "This is not part of the spell I'm working on. I've canceled out this chunk of the shit I was writing in this magical spell book." And he's put a null clef over the reflexive indicative.

Suvi (Aabria)
What? Okay.

Aabria Iyengar
And I think it's absolutely that moment of, when you read something that's so sort of outrageous that you respond out loud to it, and it feels like she's trying to have a conversation with her dad, and it's like,

Suvi (Aabria)
That doesn't make any sense. No, you need that. You have to—

Aabria Iyengar
What dumb little cantrip do I have ready that requires the reflexive indicative that I can just, I mean—

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You realize you already cast it, you just cast it. Mending. The contraction your mother put in the mending cantrip.

Suvi (Aabria)
Oh! Oh. You're right! That makes—[Laughs]

Eursulon (Lou)
Suvi, who are you talking to?

Suvi (Aabria)
My dad.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
The glass tower approaches as you look and wonder how it could be, or come to pass, that this all suddenly comes to make a sort of perfect sense to you. And as it does, there is a gentle knock at the door, and you hear Steel's voice.

Suvi (Aabria)
Suvi? You awake?

Suvi (Aabria)
Yeah. Yes. I'm sorry.

Aabria Iyengar
And instead of putting the book down, she just pushes it into her chest so it's open and flat on her body as she goes to open the door.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You open the door. Steel greets you.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
We arrive at the Citadel within the hour. Um, we should talk.

Suvi (Aabria)
Oh. Oh. Yeah.

[Low, deep piano ambience.]

Steel (Brennan)

It's it has been a long time coming, and there has never been what felt like the right moment. But the time has come to speak of Soft and Stone, of the last night that you saw them. And I need to tell you about Eoighorain.

[A slow piano melody over the deeper tones.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And that's where we're gonna end—

Aabria Iyengar

[Screaming] Don't, don't don't! No! No!!!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

[Laughing] That's where we're gonna conclude Arc 1 of the Wizard, the Witch, and the Wild One,

Lou Wilson

Wow.

Erika Ishii

You nasty little man!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Nasty little man!

Aabria Iyengar

[Off mic.] You're a Bad Man.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And we'll pick back up in the Citadel.

[A waltz of strings, bowed and plucked, underscore the credits]

Taylor Moore

That was Lou Wilson as Eursulon, Erika Ishii as Ame, Aabria Iyengar as Suvi, and Brennan Lee Mulligan as Everyone and Everything Else. Worlds Beyond Number is edited, designed, and scored, by Taylor Moore at Fortunate Horse, with additional sound design by Michael Ghelfi Studios. For even more like this, join us on our Patreon. We'll see you there.

[Waltz fades out]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Just your charisma modifier to this, but you are going to roll with disadvantage.

Lou Wilson

Got it. Because of all the penis stuff?

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Because of all the penis stuff.

Aabria Iyengar

Oh no!