

Worlds Beyond Number

The Wizard, the Witch, and the Wild One: Episode 10 “Of the Reaching Green” Final Version

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

Aabria Iyengar

This is the sound of Worlds Beyond Number.

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

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Previously on The Wizard the Witch and the Wild One. Naram, Spirit of the Gentle Sea lies bound at the base of the Kalabel Nautomantic Apparatus, by Guild Mage Morrow of the Scepter's Chorus. Our heroes stand divided. Having reestablished contact with the Citadel, a Castigated Suvi now has direct orders to do nothing, until Steel arrives in Port Talon three days hence.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Eursulon, having returned to the Ace of Wands alone, once again wields Wavebreaker, the sword that, legend says, belonged to Naram himself, with the power to break the spells and curses of his foes.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And Ame, with just such a curse still clouding her mind, and concealing crucial memories of Grandmother Wren and her most important lessons, now rushes forth to find her fox familiar, chasing him beyond the walls of Port Talon, into the wasteland of Witchfire and ash that stand between the city, and the wrath of creeping kudzu beyond.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

We now return to Port Talon in the wee hours as a tall and tipsy traveler ambles contentedly down a cobblestone street, a gleaming sword swinging at his side.

[Marimba and string music over the sounds of a city at night]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Eursulon.

Lou Wilson

Mm.

Sort of winding your way back and you've had a long walk to sober up.

Lou Wilson

Yeah, -ish yeah.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

-ish, -ish. Ya know. We're buzzed still.

Lou Wilson

Yeah!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You approach the Chantry with Wavebreaker in your hand. The attendant guard mages smile and open the door., mages of the Azure Battalion.

[Heavy door swings open]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
What do you do as you enter?

Lou Wilson
I think—what time is it?

Brennan Lee Mulligan
It's like 3 o'clock in the morning.

Lou Wilson
Okay! [Laugh]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
It's 3 o'clock in the morning.

Lou Wilson
I think in that case, Eursulon is excited about showing his friends that he got the sword back. But, isn't thinking about them, is going to wait until morning. It's not like they can head out now anyway. So I think he is kind of just meandering back to his room, in part because he knows there's a little bit of wine left, that he left before he headed off to the Ace of Wands.

[Door shuts]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You see your warped sword, clattered by the door, your former sword. You see the coral ring, still sitting there on the bedside table—or probably a more sturdy surface, like the floor, that you put it on. And then you see your wine!

Eursulon (Lou)
Ah! Right where I left you.

Lou Wilson
And is gonna go, I think, take the sword out of the scabbard at this point, take the wine bottle, and hoist them both aloft, in just a moment of quiet victory.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
[Laugh]

Erika Ishii
[Squealing] Awwwww!

Aabria Iyengar
Ah! Baby!

Eursulon (Lou)
Yes. Yes!

Lou Wilson
And then I think, think back to a certain baker in Toma, and the forms that he once learned.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Yeah, the sword feels—it's good to have it in your hand again after all these long years. Familiar weight and heft.

[Wine uncorks]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

The wine tastes good, and I think you're having a pleasant time finishing the bottle, probably before the siren song of slumber pulls you off to sleep!

Lou Wilson

Yes.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Where are you going to sleep in this room, by the way?

Lou Wilson

I think probably wherever I was sitting. So I think he sits down, and it's that kind of head against the wall, sword in his lap, wine in his hand, as he just kind of drifts off.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Incredible.

Aabria Iyengar

Ooh.

Lou Wilson

It's not sad.

Aabria Iyengar

[Laugh]

Lou Wilson

This is a moment of quiet victory for him! I got the sword back! No oohs, no ahs!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Suvi.

Erika Ishii

Sure, buddy.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You arrive back, shortly thereafter.

Aabria Iyengar

It was absolutely Suvi's intention, to spend the night at the Governor's manor, and just get a little bit of a break? But I think sleep just couldn't find her, after everything that they've been through in the last day and a half, and how badly she feels about how she handled Steel, and the way she sort of casually treated her, while she's been gone these last few weeks. And being surrounded by the trappings of Empire and the manor, like, all of this great glory, but all of it devoid of the like, noble magicness and arcaneness, that comes with the Citadel. It kind of sickened her.

Aabria Iyengar

And yeah, probably she would just leave and slowly stroll back, deeply uncomfortable with the way her glass staff glows at night. That's just this ever present reminder of the Empire and she doesn't really want to deal with it right now. But it's lighting her way home.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You arrive back at the Chantry.

[Heavy door swings open]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Sort of avoiding the ostentatious—something tacky about that Governor's mansion.

Aabria Iyengar

Yeah.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You arrive back at your room to see that A.) The door is no longer locked.

Aabria Iyengar

Mhm! Is it just splinters on the hinge?

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Yeah, oh sorry. It is a—

Erika Ishii

Oh yeah.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

—splintered, shattered, wide open, entry into your suite.

Suvi (Aabria)

The fuck!?

Aabria Iyengar

I just bust—there's not anything to bust in. I guess I just delicately tiptoe over what my door was and look for my stuff being rifled through.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You find a note, and the note reads as follows

Ame (Erika)

[Echoing] Hey, my asshole of a fox is on the other side of the wall finding Orima, gone to get him. Love, Ame.

Erika Ishii

There are rough coordinates of what I would have been able to piece together by looking through his vision, and the note is tucked on top of a book. And on that page, you can see, about the gifts, that Naram received from his father.

Aabria Iyengar

Ah her eyes, like—look, she's been a strong reader for longer than most kids have been able to read—her eyes immediately like, scan down and hit Wavebreaker, and she yelps, and immediately goes to go find Eursulon.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You find—

Lou Wilson

Doors wide open—

Suvi (Aabria)

Up, get up.

Lou Wilson
—fully asleep.

Suvi (Aabria)
Up get up, up NOW, up.

Eursulon (Lou)
[Interrupted snore] Wha?

Suvi (Aabria)
Up. NOW.

Eursulon (Lou)
What? Where?

Aabria Iyengar
And I'm waggling this note in your face.

Eursulon (Lou)
What is it?

Suvi (Aabria)
That sword, belongs to Naram—well, it's yours. [Surprised] You got the sword, hold on?

Erika Ishii
[Cackling]

Eursulon (Lou)
[Smugly] I did it.

[Everyone laughs]

Eursulon (Lou)
I did it.

Lou Wilson
I want to get up to my feet.

Eursulon (Lou)
I did it. I got the sword back.

Suvi (Aabria)
Okay. You don't have to waaaaggle it.

Aabria Iyengar
Suvi's just kind of bobbing and weaving.

Suvi (Aabria)
[Manic grunts]

Eursulon (Lou)
I got it BACK!!

Suvi (Aabria)
Okay. Um—you—and—from—

Eursulon (Lou)
Will Gallows. He likes me.

Suvi (Aabria)
That's—

Eursulon (Lou)
I told him I don't like his city, and he liked me for it.

Suvi (Aabria)
[Confused grunts] Okay, nothing else—Ame is on the other side of the wall.

Eursulon (Lou)
What?

Suvi (Aabria)
She's, apparently, following the fox, but I think that just means she's doing whatever the fuck she wanted to do anyway and that's fine, but now we HAVE to go. So instead of the thing we agreed on, we're going to go do HER thing.

Eursulon (Lou)
[Groan]

Suvi (Aabria)
Oh, am I being too loud for you right now?

Eursulon (Lou)
No, it's not—I just—fine. Fine. Fine. Let's go. Her thing—

Suvi (Aabria)
I know.

Eursulon (Lou)
[Frustrated grunts]

Suvi (Aabria)
Yeah. Thank you, for getting the sword.

Eursulon (Lou)
I thought we'd be leaving. I thought we were done.

Suvi (Aabria)
We need to hold it down here. I—guh. You got the sword, does the sword do—does it feel—like, what's it—

Eursulon (Lou)
It feels like—

Suvi (Aabria)
it's magic, so does it—you—does feel like you're doing magic?

Eursulon (Lou)
It feels the same as always.

Suvi (Aabria)

That is disappointing. Okay! You know what? More conversations for after.

Eursulon (Lou)

Yes, we—we should go.

Aabria Iyengar

And I offer a forearm to help you up with my strength of 10!

Lou Wilson

I take it.

Aabria Iyengar

[Laugh]

Lou Wilson

And pull you immediately down.

Suvi (Aabria)

Gah!

Eursulon (Lou)

Sorry, yes.

Suvi (Aabria)

No, it's ok!

Eursulon (Lou)

[Grunt of exertion] Alright. Do we need anything before we go?

Suvi (Aabria)

We are heading into the heart of an angry Spirit's plants? So no, I think we're good?

Eursulon (Lou)

I think we are good.

[Horns crescendo and then fade away. Crickets chirp.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Ame, what do you do, as you head towards the wall?

[Footsteps on cobblestones]

Erika Ishii

The whole time, while I'm sprinting, in my head, I am calling to the fox, and saying

Ame (Erika)

[Frantically] Please, at least just slow down, and give me coordinates so that I can find you, I'm on my way.

Fox (Brennan)

Oh, you want some coordinates?

Ame (Erika)

Yeah. Yeah.

Fox (Brennan)

Okay. Yeah. Grab the old rabbit trail—not the new one. Take that past like, Mildew at the edge of Crater-That-Used-to-be-a-Pond, you'll be able to smell it a mile away. Obviously, you gotta get your nose really down low, because everything's mostly soot, so dig through the soot a little bit and you'll be able to smell the actual soil.

Ame (Erika)

That is incredibly unhelpful, and I THINK you know it? But you know what, I'm going to call your bluff here!

Erika Ishii

And I'm going to do—as I near the wall, I'm going to do a survival check. 18! Ooh!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Hey!

Erika Ishii

Yeah!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

As you approach the wall, you realize you're approaching a giant barrier, that mostly prevents people from crossing it! On an 18, I don't think you're going to be able to find this incredibly stealthy little animals trail, but you definitely can potentially find some hint, right? Effectively your best bet is just going in the same direction as this creature. What do you try to do, in order to get through the wall? You know, obviously that there's work happening on the other side of it, but you also know that it's kind of being treated like a war zone, in terms of people coming and going. How does Ame intend to cross?

Ame (Erika)

Hey Fox, quick question. How'd you cross the wall?

Fox (Brennan)

I didn't cross the wall.

Ame (Erika)

What do you mean you didn't cross the wall?

Fox (Brennan)

Well, I didn't know how to cross the wall, so I waited for one of those big ol' boxes that goes along the roads, and I jumped in the back!

Ame (Erika)

Ohhh. Gotcha.

Erika Ishii

Alright, I go to where any one of the gates is.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Yeah, you see there's a gate posted up. A little luck check here. And you do see a wagon kind of trundling up, with a sort of load of barrels of Witch's Salt in the back.

Erika Ishii

Okay. I wait for a good opportunity, and then I jump in.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Give me a stealth check.

Erika Ishii
Natural 20.

[Everyone cheers]

Erika Ishii
[Cackle]

Lou Wilson
[Chuckle]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Incredible! You jump in the back of—it's almost too serendipitous, right? Like right as you get to a smaller gate, you see a little carriage, there's a narrow path that turns a corner, that there's some barrels catching rainwater outside. You hide behind them, right as the carriage passes. It like, basically brushes the barrels, so you have an easy place where no one can see you, to just vault yourself into the back, and hide. You hear conversation, from the driver and the soldiers at the gate. Some quick dialogue back and forth, creak of gates opening. And even through the fabric of the covered wagon, you [Sniff] Smell of ash and soot, salt-fire, this acrid burning smell.

Erika Ishii

I pull out one of the Witchfire veils and I tie it around my nose and mouth.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Resting over your face, you have this heavy film on your tongue, as you continue to breathe, but you're not wracked with coughs, it feels like the veil over your face captures the majority of whatever the noxious fumes are doing. And the carriage trundles along. As you are moving, you begin to see a sort of eerie glow, these green fires, and sort of scorched wasteland. There's about a full mile outside the wall, of just ruined earth, dug trenches, blasted ground. There used to be buildings out here, those are all gone now. Usually the buildings were already torn apart by the kudzu, and then beaten back in the fires. So everything that used to be the suburbs and outlying places of Port Talon, are just destroyed now.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Just the eeriness of bright green glows, fading once again into thick night. The smoke turning even regular nighttime's darkness, into something even more obscuring. When do you choose to make your move? Because you know that this wagon will come to a stop, and the salt that it is carrying will be handed off to something, or someone.

Erika Ishii

I wait until we clear the wall and the light of the torches by the gate. Then I jump out.

[Feet hitting the earth]

Erika Ishii

And I switch to familiar vision again to see where the fox is.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You see, the fox no longer can see fire. And you see that the fox is moving through cool earth surrounded by kudzu on all sides.

[Snare drum, paws on the soil]

Ame (Erika)

Hey. Okay, you got me out here. Just stop, and be here with me, okay?

Fox (Brennan)
You be here with me!

Ame (Erika)
I am! Okay, just stop and I will go TO you easier. Do you see what I'm saying?

Fox (Brennan)
Right, But here's the issue is that if you get to me, then you're going to try to convince me that we got to turn around—

Ame (Erika)
No no. No.

Fox (Brennan)
—and go back to be with—

Ame (Erika)
No, I won't. I wanted to be out here, and you knew I wanted to be out here, and so you made the decision for me. We're gonna have words about communication and trust, but at the same time, thank you.

Fox (Brennan)
Okay! Promise me that you're not going to make me turn around.

[Violins join the snare drum]

Ame (Erika)
I promise you that I will NOT make you turn around.

Fox (Brennan)
If you break a promise to me, I'll never take a promise from you again.

Ame (Erika)
I understand.

Fox (Brennan)
Okay! I'll wait.

Ame (Erika)
Okay.

Fox (Brennan)
I'm gonna move around a little bit to try to find some bugs, or like mice.

Ame (Erika)
Oh, nice. Okay, yeah.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
And you take off. As you've jumped out, you see the wagon trundling away. Did you jump out in a place nearer to a fire, or farther away from a fire?

Erika Ishii
Farther away from fire.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
So you are surrounded just by darkness. Give me a perception check.

Erika Ishii
With advantage?

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You have the Scout's Ring.

Erika Ishii
24.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You hear the noise of the wagon trundling away, and though you are outside the reach of their light, the fires still roar in the distance, their sound muffled by the thick blanket of smoke everywhere. The magic cloth on your face prevents you from succumbing to the noxious fumes, but this little village witch is standing in an ash-covered wasteland, with no one around. You are totally alone, and this is the first time, I think in years, that Ame has been in an unfamiliar, unkind place with no one around to care for and no one around to care for HER.

[Plucked violin music]

Erika Ishii
I'm so scared... And unsure... But I know I have my friends at my back, and a part of me, a part of my heart, ahead of me, and I have to find him. The rest will take care of itself.

[Running footsteps]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You journey forward into the darkness.

[Plucked violin fades away]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
We're going to cut back to Suvi and Eursulon. Same question.

[Aabria and Erika laugh]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
What do you do as you approach the wall?

Suvi (Aabria)
Are we just gonna—are we trying to sneak? Or are we—

Eursulon (Lou)
I'm assuming you can just tell them what to do!

Suvi (Aabria)
No, we're done telling. I need to be... Discreet.

Eursulon (Lou)
Oh! I'm sorry, remind me, are we not just allowed to walk through?

Suvi (Aabria)
I—I can't imagine that—no, I can absolutely imagine that they wouldn't want to let us through to whatever this is. I can't throw my weight around right now. I'm supposed to be... Keeping it cool.

Eursulon (Lou)
Oh, alright.

Lou Wilson
Gate situation with this wall. Are there big ones, small ones, a bunch of them?

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Yeah, give me a perception.

Lou Wilson
[Sing-song] 18!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
There are some—there is one enormous gate that basically is the highway gate leading out, but there are a couple—you can see, like, three from right where you are right now—of smaller doorways, into the wall that are basically large enough for a single file procession of people to go through. And you see there's one door, that's just like a single carriage lane through, that's for nearby farmland.

Lou Wilson
I think Eursulon is going to point at that one and say

Eursulon (Lou)
Let's just ask, and I'll do the talking.

Suvi (Aabria)
Perfect.

Aabria Iyengar
Suvi's going to stamp her staff on the ground, and it goes from that big glowing glass, to the wood and banded iron that it was before, and then cast disguise self on myself. And all of the color drains from her outfit and her hair, and goes to like, sooty, dark black just to look like a normal person walking, with none of the blues and whites of the Empire.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You approach, you see that gate has two guards standing at it. What do you do as you approach them?

Lou Wilson
[Laugh] I give a wave.

Eursulon (Lou)
Hello! My sister and I have—are hoping to reach home, by first light, and thus making our way out early. Would it be possible for us to pass?

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Go ahead and give me a persuasion check with disadvantage.

Lou Wilson
Okay? Happily.

Erika Ishii
[Uncomfortable laugh]

Aabria Iyengar
Hold on. Can I help? In my disguised self, I want to look like, five months pregnant.

Erika Ishii
[Gasp]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Cool, so we got it. So now you're just rolling straight.

Lou Wilson
Okay. Alright! Me and this pregnant woman want to leave at 3 a.m. to get home!

Aabria Iyengar
[Laugh]

Lou Wilson
17.

Erika Ishii
Ooh!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You see, the guard looks and looks at your pregnant partner, and says,

Gate Guard (Brennan)
Sire. A strange hour of the night indeed to be making your way—where is your home? Where do you dwell?

Lou Wilson
Eyes are going to flash—

Aabria Iyengar
Wuh! Does Suvi have enough of like—

Lou Wilson
Or would I know a next—like a near—

Aabria Iyengar
Yeah, what's close?

Lou Wilson
What's close? I've been to Port Talon before.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You've been to Port Talon.

Lou Wilson
So what's one—

Brennan Lee Mulligan
One town over?

Lou Wilson
One or two towns over?

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Yeah, you remember drinking at a place in a village that was less than a day's walk from here called Lamry

Lou Wilson

Yeah.

Eursulon (Lou)
We're headed back to Lamry.

Gate Guard (Brennan)
Sire, Lamry is completely overtaken.

Lou Wilson
Fuck you. I knew you were going to do that.

[Aabria and Erika cackle]

Gate Guard (Brennan)
If there's any—

Suvi (Aabria)
[Shaken] What?

Gate Guard (Brennan)
Lamry is far too close, the kudzu—it's been fully evacuated.

Eursulon (Lou)
Well, that's why we want to get there by first light. There's a few things we need to get out of the—

Lou Wilson
Stop making that face Brennan.

Eursulon (Lou)
There's a few things we need to—

Aabria Iyengar
[Laugh]

Lou Wilson
You all can't see it, but Brennan's making a "I don't believe single word of this" face.

Eursulon (Lou)
There's just a few things we need to get out of the home. Things for the babe!

Suvi (Aabria)
[Fake crying] Please. I don't want to do this without my mother's blanket. [Exaggerated sob]

Gate Guard (Brennan)
Sire... I can tell you for certain.

Suvi (Aabria)
[Sob]

Gate Guard (Brennan)
Anything that was left in Lamry is long since gone.

Lou Wilson
I'm going to step up to him.

Eursulon (Lou)
[Whispering] Sir. I know that it's gone, but my poor, poor—

Lou Wilson
I think I said sister earlier, right?

Erika Ishii
You did yeah.

Eursulon (Lou)
My poor, poor sister. I would at least have her believe there is a chance. She is with child! And it has been a hard—she's been trying for a very long time.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You see that they—

Eursulon (Lou)
Let her at least see with her own eyes that this thing is impossible.

Gate Guard (Brennan)
Alright, sire the—the fumes alone—you should not even be in this part of town if you are with child. The smoke of the witchfires is not safe.

Eursulon (Lou)
I told you—

Suvi (Aabria)
[Screaming] I will be fine! Who are you going—no!! This isn't hormones, don't look at me like this is hormones!!! I wanna go NOW!!!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
[Laughing] Give me an intimidate check?

[Aabria and Erika laugh]

Aabria Iyengar
18!

Erika Ishii
[Cackle]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You see—

Suvi (Aabria)
[Hyperventilating]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You see the guard says

Gate Guard (Brennan)
Miss, Miss—

Suvi (Aabria)
Tell me to calm down, I dare you!!

Eursulon (Lou)

Please don't tell her to calm down, I do it every day, and I regret it every time.

Gate Guard (Brennan)

We will open the gate to SHOW YOU how much the way is barred.

Eursulon (Lou)

Of course. Yes.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You see, they open the gate, you see a wasteland dotted by roaring green bonfires, choked with smoke and ash.

Suvi (Aabria)

And?

Lou Wilson

And I walk her forward through the gate.

Eursulon (Lou)

Don't you see, sister? There is no hope.

Suvi (Aabria)

No, I will not bring these... Twins. Into a world with no hope!

Eursulon (Lou)

Sister, do not run for the country!

Suvi (Aabria)

I will, don't tell me what to do!

Eursulon (Lou)

Don't run, don't run!

Aabria Iyengar

And I storm off!

Eursulon (Lou)

Sister!

Lou Wilson

I chase after her.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

The guards go

Gate Guard (Brennan)

Stop! Come back!

Eursulon (Lou)

Sister!

Aabria Iyengar

[Laugh]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Alright, give me some kind of—give me an athletics check to try to, like—

Aabria Iyengar

[Crying laughing]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

—haul ass away.

Aabria Iyengar

17.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

17!

Lou Wilson

12.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

So they sort of peel back as they begin to run.

Gate Guard (Brennan)

Wait, don't go—

Suvi (Aabria)

Don't touch me! Don't! Touch! Me!

Eursulon (Lou)

Just hold the gate for a moment!

Suvi (Aabria)

AGH!

Eursulon (Lou)

I'm going to get her!

Gate Guard (Brennan)

[Calling out, fading away into the distance] Why did you want to do this at 3 in the morning?

Suvi (Aabria)

[Crying] I do what I want-uh!

[Footsteps running into the distance]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Ame, what are the means by which you're using to traverse the ash and, sort of, this area of ash and Witchfire?

Erika Ishii

Well, first of all, how far away am I from the wall, and from the fires?

Brennan Lee Mulligan

I think you probably got, like, a quarter of a mile out before you jumped out.

Erika Ishii

Okay. In that case, I will just use one of the torches that I have with me, and I will use it for tracking, and based on what the fox has told me, and what I can see—what I've seen through his eyes—I will follow him.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Go ahead and give me a survival check, and a stealth check. You may only do one of them with advantage.

Erika Ishii

Well, first of all, I'm going to do a stealth check with no advantage. 12.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Okay.

Erika Ishii

This is survival with advantage. 22.

Aabria Iyengar

Woo! [Clapping]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You find your little fox's footprints, in the soft ash.

Erika Ishii

[Heavy breathing] At this point, I'm feeling desperate. I go as fast as I can, almost jogging along, as I follow the footprints.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You continue through, and eventually arrive, on the other side, of the ash and fire, as cool green kudzu awaits you. You see mounds of kudzu rising up 40, 60 feet tall and realize that they have swallowed entire trees under their mass. A blanket of green over a landscape that was once pastoral and is now wild.

[Ominous whispering]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

How are you guys getting through the ash and wasteland as well? You just rushing through?

Brennan Lee Mulligan

The moment we got, like, a couple feet off of the gate, I pass you one of the Witchfire veils. So.

Lou Wilson

Great.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You giving your advantage to your stealth or you're giving your advantage to your survival.

Aabria Iyengar

Survival.

Lou Wilson

Survival as well.

Aabria Iyengar

Oh god.

Lou Wilson
Yikes.

Aabria Iyengar
5 for stealth, 14 for survival.

Lou Wilson
Pretty drunk. It's going to be 8 for survival, 5 for stealth.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Awesome. You both sort of stumble and pick your way through the ash and wasteland here. A couple of times—in order just to see where you're going, you stay within some firelight, and a couple of times are spotted by people out here working through the night, and have to duck off into the shadows again. So you know that you've been spotted out here. You finally arrive at the kudzu at the edge.

[Wind rustling through leaves]

Lou Wilson
Once we've gotten out of the shadow of the—out of the—like once we can't see the fire anymore, I would like to lay down amongst the kudzu, and take some of it into my hands, and speak to it, and say

Eursulon (Lou)
Sister, my name is Eursulon. I am the son of the Great Bear. I understand you are hurting, and our friend Ame seeks to aid you. She comes for you now, and we follow her. If there's—if you would aid us in finding her, and her in finding you, it would mean a great deal to me. And if you would allow me to make a persuasion check, I do it with advantage.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You absolutely may. And I'm going to say also you can add a d4 to this—

Aabria Iyengar
Ooh!

Lou Wilson
—as SOMETHING casts guidance on you.

Lou Wilson
12 total.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
12 total. You cast speak with plants on the kudzu. You lean down and whisper those words. The kudzu... Rattles, shakes as you hold it.

Orima, of the Reaching Green (Brennan)
[Rush of air, echoing, a cruel voice] Sister, am I? Sister, who? You are child of the Great Bear. You are a little lost cub, a wayshadowed stranger, trapped on the threshold between worlds. If you will not aid my strike, then remove yourself from my line of sight.

Eursulon (Lou)
It's just, I understand, I understand that you are upset. We have seen what these people have done to your beloved.

Orima, of the Reaching Green (Brennan)
What do you mean?

Eursulon (Lou)
Naram. The bay.

Orima, of the Reaching Green (Brennan)
You have seen him.

Eursulon (Lou)
Yes.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
I'm going to need you to make a dexterity saving throw.

[Everyone groans]

Lou Wilson
I am absolutely still shit faced. That's a 6.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
What has Suvi been seeing this entire time? As you speak to the kudzu?

Lou Wilson
I think, you see me kneeling down, holding it, and I think i actually am going to—I think she slowly watches, as the glamour fades.

Suvi (Aabria)
Ah!

Lou Wilson
Would she hear words or... Is the language that is spoken between Spirits something else?

Brennan Lee Mulligan
I think you're whispering. I think it's not—you're not speaking a language that Suvi can understand.

Lou Wilson
So I think you just see some real Spiritual shit—

Aabria Iyengar
Yeah.

Lou Wilson
—begin to happen, as like we get kind of to the fresh kudzu, and I lean down and begin whispering, and the glamour I've been wearing the ENTIRE time we've been in Port Talon, I think for the first time you see the kind of feathered—

Aabria Iyengar
Aww.

Lou Wilson
—my feathering kind of—and then the snout, and the talons, and Eursulon, in his true form, is whispering to this kudzu.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Suvi, you only notice too late as—because Eursulon has made himself sort of holding away to this kudzu. He was standing amongst the plants, right?

Aabria Iyengar
Yeah.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
And the plants come up—like as he crouches down they're like up to his butt, basically, with his legs folded. Eursulon, as you hear the venom in your head and say, "I've seen Naram in the bay," you suddenly realize you can't stand up, and that the vines have circled around your legs.

Lou Wilson
Mm.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
And have rooted you to the spot. And, Suvi, you watch as vines reach up and grasp around Eursulon's throat.

[Tense discordant strings]

Orima, of the Reaching Green (Brennan)
What kinship do we have, you and I? You have seen my husband? What action did you take?

Eursulon (Lou)
[Choking]

Suvi (Aabria)
Eursulon, are you okay?

Eursulon (Lou)
Don't—don't—

Suvi (Aabria)
UGH!

Eursulon (Lou)
Don't strike. I—I—I—there was none I could take. They are very powerful, these—these—

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You feel suddenly around your ribs.

Orima, of the Reaching Green (Brennan)
[Hatefully] How powerful am I, do you think?!

Eursulon (Lou)
[Frantic] You are great and wondrous, but their magic, it is unlike ours. It is—it is something else. It has struck me. I have felt its pain. It is... It is beyond us.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
So, Suvi, what are you doing in this moment?

Aabria Iyengar
Because I see Eursulon, like, holding up a hand to stop me, I am clutching my normal, not-wizard staff, and waiting. But the moment he looks like he is being struck, I will strike.

Orima, of the Reaching Green (Brennan)
Let's make one thing very clear, lost little cub. As far as I am concerned, you became nothing more than food, waiting to be scattered amongst the roots the day you wandered out from under the lumbering shadow of your oaf of a father. You're far from the parade, little one. Very far indeed!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And your elbows are—you are dragged to the ground, as she pushes you down even further. And she says

Orima, of the Reaching Green (Brennan)

You came here to tell me of some piddling witch? You asked me for favors, when you watch my husband in their clutches?! Why don't I simply drink your blood and add it to my leaves?

Eursulon (Lou)

If you must, you may. Just, leave Ame. Leave the witch.

Orima, of the Reaching Green (Brennan)

Ame. The witch's name is Ame. [Sinister] Where are you little Ame?

[Voice echoes, rushing wind.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Ame. As you arrive at the kudzu, which you saw your fox rushing through, what do you do as you arrive there?

Erika Ishii

Oh, man. [Strained] I would have... Definitely... Touched it, and tried to open my vision to it.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Give me an insight check.

Erika Ishii

18.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You touch the kudzu. Nothing happens to it, as you first touch it. You look and see that there are some paths—like, you see that there are some flagstones or boulders that you could like, jump across to kind of avoid some of the kudzu. But also, you could probably just start to walk through it. I mean, this stuff grows lightning fast, but it's not growing, you know, at the speed of, like, a hand reaching out.

Erika Ishii

Sure. Sure. And then I start—I continue to move through the kudzu and—finding my fox.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Give me one last survival check. You can do it with advantage because you're trying to find your familiar.

Erika Ishii

14.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You cannot find your fox. You're looking, you think you've come the right direction. And as you turn, to wonder if you should retrace your steps, the small sort of like, passage you just came through—like a small canyon between maybe what was two collapsed houses or something like that—is filled with plants. It's filled with vines, blocking your retreat.

Erika Ishii

I spin back around to go forward.

[Ghastly chittering]

Ame (Erika)
Fox?

[Chittering]

Erika Ishii
I reach with my mind.

Ame (Erika)
[Telepathic echo] Fox, are you there?

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Nothing comes back to you.

Lou Wilson
Mm!

Ame (Erika)
Fox?

[Chitter]

Ame (Erika)
Fox!

[Bird wings]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Two points of dull green light, and a figure rises from the plants, maybe about 40ft ahead of you. You can feel snapping noises of its own body breaking as it stands up.

[Snapping branches]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
There's another one in the shadows around a corner. You can hear the noise somewhere else.

[Screech]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
A shape, in the darkness. If you held your torch up higher, you could probably see what it is.

[Long pause, sinister ambience]

Erika Ishii
I put out the torch.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
[Blowing out a flame noise] Put out the torch.

Erika Ishii
I try to let my eyes adjust, as I walk towards, bigger.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
As the fire goes out, you hear them start to run.

[Ghastly scream]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

These beings are made of wood and vine, that hold the shapes of people. As you realize, the bodies that fell here in this place—

Aabria Iyengar

Ah!

Erika Ishii

[Gag]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

—were taken over. And the plants that most ate, and drank, of their life's nectar, when called to awaken, bear a form of similar size and shape, to that which nurtured their roots. Fearing nothing more than fire, as your torch extinguishes, the shapes no longer being warded off, rush towards you.

[Rushing footsteps, alien chittering]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Wooden hands, stronger than a steel vise, wrap around your throat in a movement faster than you've ever seen a human move.

[Cracking noises]

Erika Ishii

I struggle. My fingers go to my temple and I say

Ame (Erika)

[Choking] Naram.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

The shapes move their hands, to their brow, mirroring your action. Strong hands grab your wrists and forearms. They wrap around your fingers. Give me a constitution saving throw.

Erika Ishii

[Deep breath] That's an 18 on the die.

Aabria Iyengar

Phew!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

The beings do not know how to hold your body in a way that... Would not cause it harm. There is no malice, nor gentleness, in the movements of these beings as they wrap, around your quick thinking straightens your fingers out so that as they grab them, they do not break the bones in your hand.

Lou Wilson

Mm!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Grabbed by these beings, they turn, no longer menacing you, and drag you by your arms, deeper into the kudzu.

[Dragging noise, clicking sounds as the discordant horror music fades out]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Eursulon, Suvi.

Orima, of the Reaching Green (Brennan)

[Gasp] Ah, little Ame. She is mine. Tell me this, Eursulon. You are long wayshadowed. I can smell the stink of human wine on your breath. Think now, and think very carefully. Is there anything else you can do, to curry favor with me?

Eursulon (Lou)

I can give you something of his.

Orima, of the Reaching Green (Brennan)

What?

Eursulon (Lou)

I have his sword.

Orima, of the Reaching Green (Brennan)

[Shuddering breath] His sword? You have Wavebreaker.

Eursulon (Lou)

Yes, it is on my—it's on the belt around my waist.

Orima, of the Reaching Green (Brennan)

Lost little Spirit. You have come here seeking kinship. You invoke your father's name, you speak of seeing my husband, in torment, and throw up your hands, that there is nothing you can do. And you carry his sword. If you would debase yourself in this way, then see at least that you give the tools of war to those willing to wield them. Bring the sword to me now, and your little witch may yet live.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And the vines recede.

Suvi (Aabria)

[Worried] Eursulon!

Eursulon (Lou)

I'm alright. Just—

Suvi (Aabria)

What?

Eursulon (Lou)

I—I was foolish. I attempted to, ya know, honored friend to honored friend, but it doesn't—doesn't work like that.

Suvi (Aabria)

What do you mean? What's—?

Eursulon (Lou)

We are not all—it was, foolish—Ame's. [Sigh] That's right, you couldn't understand any of that. I—I attempted to invoke my father, and suggest that there was—just, it was stupid. Stupid.

Aabria Iyengar

On your second stupid, Suvi is going to rush up and, like, attempt to reach up and grab your face.

Lou Wilson

You can.

Suvi (Aabria)

You are not—you are NOT stupid.

Eursulon (Lou)

Yes, I—

Suvi (Aabria)

[Grimly] No. And if Orima was stupid enough to try and hurt you, I would personally make sure that every place on this island was burned to ash.

Eursulon (Lou)

Alright, Suvi.

Suvi (Aabria)

No.

Eursulon (Lou)

1.) Thank you, 2.) We're a little too close to the kudzu to be talking like that.

[Brennan and Erika laugh]

Suvi (Aabria)

I think she should respect someone with resolve.

Eursulon (Lou)

Yes, well—I believe you—when you speak to her, I believe she will have met her match in you.

Suvi (Aabria)

[Laugh]

Eursulon (Lou)

Ah. But she does have Ame.

Suvi (Aabria)

Oh.

Eursulon (Lou)

And she is demanding Wavebreaker.

Suvi (Aabria)

[Severely] Well, we'll give it to her one way or another.

Eursulon (Lou)

Suvi.

Suvi (Aabria)

What? It's been a long day and I'm very tired! [Crying]

Eursulon (Lou)

As am I.

Lou Wilson

And I'm going to give you a deep hug.

Aabria Iyengar
Yeah.

Lou Wilson
Do we have any sense of which way we should go?

Brennan Lee Mulligan
West.

Aabria Iyengar
[Laugh]

Eursulon (Lou)
Shall we?

Suvi (Aabria)
Okay.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You, head off. What I will now need is constitution saving throws, without advantage—

Aabria Iyengar
[Gasp]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
—just to avoid exhaustion. You are missing a night's sleep and marching through the night. Ame is being dragged.

Erika Ishii
[Sigh]

Aabria Iyengar
17.

Lou Wilson
Only a 9.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
So Ame, you are dragged through the night.

[Dragging noise]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
The fabric over your knees has shredded. They are now just bloody torn kneecaps, as you are dragged through this place. Your head lolling, as these monsters drag you further inland. Eursulon, you are like, stumbling as the drunkenness fades into immediate hangover, nausea, exhaustion, sickness. Suvi? You feel fine.

Aabria Iyengar
Yeah.

Erika Ishii
[Laugh]

Aabria Iyengar
Yeah.

Erika Ishii
[Laugh]

Aabria Iyengar
Fury feels CORRECT.

Erika Ishii
[Laughing] It's the espresso!

Aabria Iyengar
Yeah!

Lou Wilson
It's the espresso.

Aabria Iyengar
No, she had so much coffee! She's good for, like, two, three days. Let's go.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
It's also, you guys are wizards, but you do have military training.

Aabria Iyengar
Yeah

Brennan Lee Mulligan
So it's like, there's marching.

Aabria Iyengar
Yup.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
So at this point in time, because it's a day and a half travel under the best of circumstances.

Lou Wilson
Oh, god!

Aabria Iyengar
Yeah!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Yeah. So what I'm going to need, actually—

Lou Wilson
This fox fuckin' sucks, alright?

Erika Ishii
[Cackling]

Aabria Iyengar
That's what I was saying!

[Music fades away, and is replaced with serene country fiddle. It's time for an Ad Break.]

Erika Ishii

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Erika Ishii

[Rapid disclaimer] Kerrrn contains less than 15% actual grain not a significant source of nutrition may cause loss of fur feathers and eyesight.

[Soothing country music comes to an end, replaced by pounding drums]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You begin to walk, through thick vines and leaves, through the night, as fast as your legs will carry you. You have Wavebreaker at your side. For Suvi and Eursulon, as you travel, it's a long, long journey to the shrine. What is your—what are you doing in terms of your journey? Are there any actions you're taking, or are you just blindly stumbling for as long as it takes to arrive there?

Lou Wilson

[Laugh] I mean, I'm not talking to no plants no more!

Aabria Iyengar

[Laugh]

Lou Wilson

Yeah, I guess I will use lay on hands on I guess my—I can't use it on myself. I'll use lay on hands on Suvi. But you don't look like you're hurting.

Aabria Iyengar

I'm fine!

Lou Wilson

I think if anything, I ask—

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You can use lay on hands on yourself!

Lou Wilson

Okay, great. I suck from my own lay on hands.

Aabria Iyengar

[Laugh]

Lou Wilson

I nurse at my own hands, to give myself the strength to keep going. And then I think I—also at some point, I'm going to ask to use your staff to walk.

Aabria Iyengar

Yeah. Ooh. Shit. Yeah, Suvi will, reluctantly, hand it to you.

Lou Wilson

I think, just honestly, to support myself.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Yeah.

Aabria Iyengar

But Suvi absolutely reaches into a pack—I think when you see her really lock into a marching pace, and like a fine cadence, she reaches into a pack on her hip, and takes a bite of some kind of little leafy moss that is like a mixture between eucalyptus and wasabi. Like her sinuses clear, and it's something that just, after years and years of training, gives, like, at the very least, a placebo effect of, like, you are in your military bag, and you have to be up and alert. But she just—

Eursulon (Lou)

What is that?

Suvi (Aabria)

Oh—it's—I guess you can try it.

Eursulon (Lou)

Will it help?

Suvi (Aabria)

Maybe?

Eursulon (Lou)

Yes.

Suvi (Aabria)

Okay.

Eursulon (Lou)

[Chomp, pained cries] Hah! Haah!

Suvi (Aabria)

Don't swallow it!

Eursulon (Lou)

Hah! Aah! Haaah!

Suvi (Aabria)

Yeah, just kind of breathe through your nose.

Eursulon (Lou)

Ow!

Suvi (Aabria)

Yeah.

Eursulon (Lou)

Kind of—it doesn't really hurt, but—

Suvi (Aabria)

Yeah.

Eursulon (Lou)
[Spits out]

Suvi (Aabria)
Well, that's all I had. We use it so that we can march... Well. You know. Soldiers.

Eursulon (Lou)
Yes.

Suvi (Aabria)
Are you okay?

Eursulon (Lou)
I'll be fine. It's just my brain. I can feel my brain, you know?

Erika Ishii
[Laugh]

Suvi (Aabria)
Fair. Is there anything I can do?

Eursulon (Lou)
I think we just have to keep going.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Give me a survival check, we can do a group survival check, so we'll take the higher of each of your rolls.

Aabria Iyengar
Oh, it's bad! 8.

Lou Wilson
16.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
16. So, Eursulon does a good job of finding places—so the ROADS are overtaken by kudzu, it just grew up through the roads, BUT. There are mountains of kudzu—because this place was pastoral, so there were woods here, and the woods have trees that are 40 or 50 feet tall, so there are places that if you walked through, you'd be at the bottom of a 50 foot tall kudzu ocean, right? And with no light getting through to you.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
But you're able to basically—knowing that shrines wouldn't be somewhere that you couldn't get to by paths and roads, you're able to, on a 16 survival, mostly get towards pathways, mostly get to, like okay, here's, like—yeah, there's like, 3ft of kudzu here, but it's only 3ft, it doesn't even get to our—it's like just around our waist, and I can feel the loose gravel of broken cobblestones or whatever underneath me as we walk. So you're able to avoid the worst of a wilderness disaster. I'm going to need one last constitution save, that you will make not with advantage, just straight.

Aabria Iyengar
Okay.

Erika Ishii
[Gasp]

Aabria Iyengar
Ooh!

Lou Wilson
Modified 20.

Aabria Iyengar
Yeah!

Erika Ishii
15 on the die.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Ame. Is there anything you want to do? As you are being dragged by these beings? They immediately take you into one of those kudzu dungeons—of just like, going into what used to be forest, and is now just an endless tangle of vines that just parts in front of them as they walk.

Erika Ishii
I toss up a minor illusion.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Any spell you are casting that uses somatic components—

Erika Ishii
Right, yes. It—minor illusion is that.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Your hands are not at your service.

Erika Ishii
With my hands unavailable to me, I can't do anything.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You, at the moment, only have your voice. Your hands are grasped and bound by these creatures that are dragging you, into deeper darkness and tangles of vines, moving forward at an unrelenting pace for creatures that do not need to breathe, and do not have blood flowing in their veins. You move, and as you are going, you hear a voice in your head, go

Fox (Brennan)
[Telepathic echo, pained] Ohh ow.

Ame (Erika)
Fox? Fox are you okay?

Fox (Brennan)
Ahhh, someone stepped on me.

Ame (Erika)
Someone stepped on you?

Fox (Brennan)
Yeah. Thing made a squeaky noise, and stepped on me.

Ame (Erika)
A squeaky noise? Like a [Mimics plant creature] or like—

Fox (Brennan)
Yeah, yeah yeah yeah, yeah yeah yeah.

Ame (Erika)
Did this person happen to be made of plants?

Fox (Brennan)
I didn't get a good look.

Ame (Erika)
Alright. Are you okay? Are you safe?

Fox (Brennan)
I'm okay, my back hurts.

Ame (Erika)
Aww. Where are you?

Fox (Brennan)
I'm waiting for you. Are you almost here?

Ame (Erika)
I um—that's a long story, but the plants came alive, and are dragging me somewhere, I assume to meet Orima.

Fox (Brennan)
They're dragging you?!

Ame (Erika)
Yeah. I don't want to alarm you.

Fox (Brennan)
MotherFUCKERS!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
And you see—

[Aabria and Erika laugh]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
[Rolls tongue to indicate sprinting]

Erika Ishii
Aww!

Aabria Iyengar
Baby!

Erika Ishii
Aww!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
And, anytime you check in with your fox, you just hear him sprinting. Eursulon and Suvi, you—the sun comes up. You are still marching. Do you have any water with you?

Aabria Iyengar

No.

Lou Wilson

Great question. We got wasabi.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

No water or anything, do you have any rations with you?

Aabria Iyengar

No.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Starving, hungry, no water, delirious, you get to a place where you feel like—I think, Suvi, you're okay? You're not feeling it, but Eursulon, you're like in that place of dehydration, exhaustion, and hunger, where you kind of can't make good decisions. Your first level of exhaustion means you have disadvantage on ability checks, right? It's like, that place of tiredness. You get to where you're like, I'm making stupid choices, right? Yeah.

Erika Ishii

Question for you, do you want to roll for my pack integrity?

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Yeah, give me a little roll for your pack integrity.

Aabria Iyengar

Oh wow!

Erika Ishii

Do I want a high or low on this?

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Probably want a low on this.

Erika Ishii

Okay. Well, that's the 7, on the die.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

I think something falls out of your pack!

Erika Ishii

Okay! Let's see what it is. I'm gonna—oh, wait, you know what it would probably be—you know what it might be? Because there's some of it in almost every one of my pouches. Shells.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Some shells!

Erika Ishii

Some shells, that I had collected back when we were in that first port town.

Aabria Iyengar

Aww!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

I love that!

Lou Wilson
Mm.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

The two of you get to a place that suddenly stumps you for a moment, because it's clearly a crossroads. You stand with these four giant hills of kudzu on either side, just—and now the sun is out, it's hot, and there's bugs everywhere. They're biting you, they're flying around. The air is just thick with buzzing. There's these sort of hot daytime crickets.

[Droning buzzing noise]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

The smell of chlorophyll is like, overpowering. It's almost like, heady and intoxicating, and as you look around you, you hear a noise of something rustling in the brush nearby.

Lou Wilson

Can I make a perception check?

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Yeah you can make a perception check.

Aabria Iyengar

Ooh!

Lou Wilson

That's a 6.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You look out and don't see through the plants, until at the last moment, you see a fox comes out of the brush, with a dead rabbit, that you can see immediately has been rotting for a little bit of time. And you can see that vines have partially grown through its neck and eyes, it's not a fresh catch.

Eursulon (Lou)

Suvi. It's a fox.

Suvi (Aabria)

Ours? Wait, yeah!

Eursulon (Lou)

Oh! Could it be?

Brennan Lee Mulligan

[Laugh]

Suvi (Aabria)

Oh, god. Hey, just post up. [Angry yell] Fox!!

Fox (Brennan)

Huh? Sorry it's not fresh. I wish it was fresh.

Suvi (Aabria)

Where is Ame?

Fox (Brennan)

This way. I found shells. She dropped them. Or she didn't drop them, but they fell.

Suvi (Aabria)
I want. To kill you.

Fox (Brennan)
[Unphased] Okay.

Suvi (Aabria)
Fuck! Okay, well.

Eursulon (Lou)
It's our fox?

Suvi (Aabria)
Yeah that's—hey we—

Fox (Brennan)
Have some rabbit, I already ate as much as I could. There's a bunch of dead animals all in the plants everywhere.

Suvi (Aabria)
Hey, don't.

Eursulon (Lou)
Are you sure? I'm so hungry.

Suvi (Aabria)
You're hungry?

Eursulon (Lou)
I just need something to soak up all the alcohol.

Suvi (Aabria)
How about you try—soaking? Better choices. Maybe if we—I'm—fuck—you know what? I'm fine—

Lou Wilson
I'm gonna eat it. I wanna eat it.

Suvi (Aabria)
—but I'm very mad. NO!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You eat it.

Eursulon (Lou)
[Crunch, eating noises] Mm!

Erika Ishii
[Laugh]

Suvi (Aabria)
What!?

Eursulon (Lou)
Oh, that's not bad.

Fox (Brennan)
No, it's not bad!

Eursulon (Lou)
It's definitely missing—it's like—it's a little dry.

Fox (Brennan)
Yeah, yeah yeah yeah, the blood all drained out. There are some streams nearby that are still flowing through here, by the way. You just—you gotta go through the kudzu to find them.

Suvi (Aabria)
We need to find Ame.

Eursulon (Lou)
Yeah.

Suvi (Aabria)
How badly do you need water?

Eursulon (Lou)
I guess—

Lou Wilson
How badly do I need water?

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You could keep pushing if you needed to.

Eursulon (Lou)
The rabbit will hold me for a bit.

Suvi (Aabria)
Okay.

Fox (Brennan)
Alright. She's this way.

Aabria Iyengar
Suvi follows.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Following a little bit of shells, you see the fox takes off into the brush. You will now have to enter one of these kudzu forests. The path becomes so narrow that the vines can actually connect across what used to be a flagstone pathway through the edge of a little village.

[Overbearing oppressive ambient music]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
And now you're just, pushing through vines.

Aabria Iyengar
[Whispered] Fuck.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

As you push through, it's challenging to describe because, of course, you can't see more than 3 feet in front of your face. Everything is pushing through, thicket and briar. The little fox—for the fox, everything's laid out, him moving through the brush, it's second nature. You suddenly realize that you are at a shrine, only when Eursulon, your hand moves through open space, to which there is no kudzu, so there's no approaching it. You're just going up steps of what used to be a pine needle covered hill, and suddenly a hand goes through, what you wouldn't have known 2 seconds before, was a doorway.

[Trill of a flute]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You see the interior of an old stone shrine. An image of a woman with wild hair, and vines and leaves growing throughout it, is emblazoned on a stone, behind an altar. The altar has a small block of incense, and a little bowl of some very stale looking bread. Laid in front of the altar, is Ame's unconscious body. The fox goes—

Fox (Brennan)

[Fox cry]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

—and leaps forward and just circles up in a little fox puddle on Ame's chest, and licks at your face to wake you up, Ame. And your unconsciousness was only due to the exhaustion level, so you've just had a long rest here, essentially.

Erika Ishii

Yes!

Aabria Iyengar

[Laugh]

Lou Wilson

Okay, jealous.

[Everyone laughs]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You enter. You see the emblem of Orima, sort of the sacred carving of the Goddess there. You see that there is an altar with a small offering on it. And you see Ame here, and you don't see anything else. But, of course, the one entrance to this shrine—and the shrine is only, like, 15 feet by 15 feet, it's a small little room—but the entrance is totally obscured by a wall of kudzu, that has only the barest bit of sunlight—you're in, effectively, darker than twilight in here because of all the plant matter obscuring the sunlight far ahead.

Ame (Erika)

[Grunting]

Suvi (Aabria)

Are you okay?

Ame (Erika)

Yeah. Oh! You found me.

Suvi (Aabria)

What—

Ame (Erika)

Thank you!

Suvi (Aabria)
—happened?

Ame (Erika)
Ah. I think, agents of Orima found me? [Grunt of exasperation] Oh, fox, don't run away again!!

Erika Ishii
And I pick him up, and I scoop him up, and I hug him REAL tight.

Fox (Brennan)
[Sigh] I'm glad you're not dead.

Ame (Erika)
[Yells while shaking the fox around in a hug]

Fox (Brennan)
[Yeling, vibrato from the shaking]

Aabria Iyengar
While this beautiful reunion is happening, Suvi's gonna curve away from Ame and the fox, and move over to the incense, and is just a little like, she cannot keep the petulance out of her—any of her energy. I'm going to use prestidigitation to light it, but I want the flame I conjure to be the green of the Witchfire.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Copy that.

Aabria Iyengar
Bitch!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
The incense lights. As the incense lights, I think, Eursulon, you hear a voice.

[Rustling of leaves]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
And, I will allow Eursulon to determine here, because you can hear it and can tell, at the moment, that your friends and allies cannot, but you feel almost a sense of like, if you could draw their attention to it somehow—

Lou Wilson
Mhm.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
—maybe they could hear it.

Lou Wilson
Yeah, I would do that. I think I would—as—as Suvi is being petty—

[Aabria and Erika laugh]

Lou Wilson
—and Ame is shaking the fox, I think I [Sniff] I like, inhale deeply, to get their attention. And

Eursulon (Lou)
Listen. She speaks to us. Listen. Listen.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Both of you begin to hear, the incense swirls, and you see that there is some sort of moss, or lichen, on the emblem of Orima.

Orima, of the Reaching Green (Brennan)

You have come here. You have come to this place. Something tells me... That the one I dragged here, was not the one that was dragged here by me. Something tells me that the one, whose knees are bloody, came here of her own volition. That the one who walked here freely, was compelled against his desires to do so.

Ame (Erika)

Orima. I'm sorry for what has been done to you, and to your husband. I am a Witch, and that means that, while I am still a young acolyte, it is my duty to try and speak with you, and on your behalf, to the world of humans. Will you accept me as your messenger?

Orima, of the Reaching Green (Brennan)

I will.

Aabria Iyengar

Can I insight check her? Is there anything to check in her tone or—

Brennan Lee Mulligan

This is nothing you learned in the Citadel. Ame, in a very formal way, has asked permission, to even be able to talk to this person. And there is a script here, that you would not have known to anticipate, and have a sudden close-up moment, of realizing that Ame has not been twiddling her thumbs in the long years since you last were with her.

Ame (Erika)

I know you seek to be reunited with him. You see the kudzu swarming towards the city. And while I do not excuse, his pain and his suffering, please understand that there are many of my people, that don't understand what is happening, that were not even aware of... The old ways. And so that I ask, your aid in freeing him, and in protecting him, but that in return, please spare the city. I will teach them, and they will learn the old ways, they will learn to keep your shrine clean, and to prepare the offerings. They will learn to revere the one who taught them to fish. He said, that he loves your fury, but you admired his gentleness. He's not in a position to show it now, but I'm certain that he would want that.

Orima, of the Reaching Green (Brennan)

[Menacing] You come here, with my husband's sword, seeking MY help!?

Ame (Erika)

[Whisper] You got it?

Eursulon (Lou)

Yes.

Lou Wilson

And I hold it up.

Orima, of the Reaching Green (Brennan)

While he is pinned, by the craft of wizards to the bottom of the sea, after countless seasons, of seeing YOUR people fed, and you would ask this of me? You wish what? To flee? To run away? This one here, has lost the path of the Spirit. You have lost your breath! I smell them on you. The stink of humans fills your fur, sun-cured hay, and the wine of their glass bottles besots you. You have lost the sharpness of your fangs, and you are now one of theirs.

Orima, of the Reaching Green (Brennan)

But of course, you can never truly be one of theirs, can you? Still you carry the taboo of slumber. You only wear the form of a human, and yet so desperately do you cling to their world, you do not walk the path of the Spirit. You have

forgotten us! Forgotten the world of your birth. Little wayshadowed cub. Where did you put your breath? There is something here, in this world, where you've hidden that which is most precious to you away. [Louder] Show it to me.

Lou Wilson

I think, Eursulon then shrugs his shoulder, brushing away the cloak and revealing the pauldron.

Eursulon (Lou)

It is this, Orima.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

White light at the center of the two eyes of the stone carving.

Orima, of the Reaching Green (Brennan)

What is this? Golden armor, from centuries ago. It has crossed, through the door between the Spirit and the Waking. You, put your breath in this? No, no.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And Ame and Suvi both see, in the reflection of the pauldron, a line of knights, riding down a road, banners high.

[Horses hooves on cobbles]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You see, the approach of a young cub Eursulon, like you remember from that first summer. And you see, one knight, with a proud kite shield, bearing a mighty hawthorn tree, golden armor, a plumed helmet, a falcon on his shoulder, who notices the young cub, stealthy as he is, a creature of the wild places. The knight removes his sword and dagger, his halberd, even his boots, to walk barefoot in the forest, to pay his respects to this Honored Friend. You see Sir Curran of the Hawthorn, kneeling down. In the reflection you cannot hear his words, but you see him speak to a young Eursulon.

Orima, of the Reaching Green (Brennan)

[Whispered] What... Was this? Did you give your breath to this man?

Eursulon (Lou)

Not the man... But what he was. I stumbled into this world, and saw him. Saw what he possessed. He told me, that he was a Knight, that he had... That he had Honor. The thing that brought me to him was, the shine, the way the light played, on him, but... The thing that—the thing I hid my breath away in, was the way that others looked at him. It was the way—it was what I saw in him. This—this thing. Invisible, yet so real.

Orima, of the Reaching Green (Brennan)

Spirit of the Wild, hidden his breath, inside... Of honor? The wish to be a knight? To have come all the way from the world of Spirits, and placed that very essence inside of a concept, so OF the mortal world that even most mortals cannot achieve it. [Laugh] Two great lengths of chain surround you, one tied to the Door of Green Leaves, and the other to a Quest. You move towards one, and the chain behind you grows taught. You move towards the other, and the second tightens as well. I have known some wayshadowed Spirits in my time, but I've never seen one tie themselves in a knot quite this thick. I do not envy you, lost little cub. I do not envy you.

Ame (Erika)

In my mind, there is no tension between his two worlds. Where he comes from, and treating the world of Spirits with respect, and having honor. Because honor isn't something that you just have, that you earn once. It's something that you maintain, with your actions, and with the way that you treat others, throughout your life. So he can still walk the Path of the Spirits, while doing it honorably.

Orima, of the Reaching Green (Brennan)

Little witch, how many do you know that walk ANY path, truly honorably. I do not speak of your kindness to your fellow mortals now, I speak of magic, of choices, of consequences. This cub has woven a great spell. And though it may not strike your kind-heart as just, woven it is all the same. Now, you have come here with a sword. It is my husband's blade. Wavebreaker. Whatever binds him, it can cut. But the blade can only be wielded in this way by a Spirit. Its magic will only be given to one who draws on the power of their breath. Know this. I will see my husband freed. At any cost.

Aabria Iyengar

Suvi bites down on her tongue, can taste blood. She is holding it together because if she speaks, it will be bad.

Lou Wilson

Eursulon produces the sword, and places it on the altar.

Eursulon (Lou)

Then have it done. You are a Spirit. Free your husband, and let us go.

Suvi (Aabria)

No. We worked too hard to get that back. We need to break the curse on Ame, and then we will return the sword to Orima, and she can do—

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Suvi, as you are speaking, you see, Orima starts speaking as well. Make a perception check for me.

Aabria Iyengar

Okay. [Gasp] Oh! 22.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Orima starts speaking, but doesn't have the inflection of someone who's interrupting something. Like, as she starts to speak, she doesn't cut into your words, she just hears the pause of the last thing Eursulon said, and in the middle of your words, you just hear her go

Orima, of the Reaching Green (Brennan)

Thank you, cub, for bringing this to me. Witch. I must be let into the world. There is an offering on the altar. I would ask you to remove it, walk outside the shrine, and scatter it there.

Ame (Erika)

If I bring you into our realm, will you have mercy?

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Give me an insight check. And Suvi, give me another perception check.

Aabria Iyengar

I only rolled an 11, but my passive is 18.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Gotcha. I think that on that perception roll, you're just—the way in which Orima started speaking while you were speaking—and the fact that you spoke up in sort of disrespectful—you were sort of like, "Hey, we can't do this now," and Ame and Eursulon both heard you just fine, but you are literally like—

Erika Ishii

Oh! [Laugh]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

—you're literally like "What's going on?"

Aabria Iyengar
Did this bitch put me on mute?

[Everyone laughs]

Aabria Iyengar
I'm going to burn the kudzu down. Excuse me.

[Everyone laughs]

Erika Ishii
I only got an 8 for insight.

Aabria Iyengar
[Laugh]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You see, she says

Orima, of the Reaching Green (Brennan)
My first, and only mission, will be to save my husband. I bear no cruelty towards those people. Nor do I bear them any care. For generations, has my husband's kindness seen them fed, full, flourishing. And they muddle, through their dull and mundane lives, as he bleeds at the heart of their bay.

Ame (Erika)
They have forgotten the old ways, but we will bring—

Orima, of the Reaching Green (Brennan)
[Screaming] AND WHO'S FAULT IS THAT?! Advocate for them at the risk of your own life, little witch.

Ame (Erika)
Then I must. For even as I advocate for you, and your husband, to them, I have to advocate for them to you. We will help you free your husband. But, you—I beg that you show care to these people.

Orima, of the Reaching Green (Brennan)
I am not so foolhardy, that I would make a promise to a witch, that I did not intend to keep. My goal is not to harm those people, but I am mighty. When I am let upon the world, I will be vast. Many will come to my aid as I approach. But I will tell you this. Whatever harm befalls Port Talon, it will not be my heart's desire. But it will be punishment deserved enough, for what they let befall my husband. If you will not release me, because you fear for the people of Port Talon, then we are at an impasse. For as you cannot seem to find it in your heart to let me free, I am certain then that I cannot find it in my heart to let you walk from this shrine alive.

[Building sinister discordant strings, which drops suddenly and is replaced by a waltz of strings, bowed and plucked, which 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]