

Worlds Beyond Number

The Wizard, the Witch, and the Wild One: Episode 11 “Promises Promises” 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

In the shrine of the Great Spirit Orima, shrouded in darkness, the only light issuing magically, from those artifacts of our traveling companions. The door, shrouded in vines and leaves. Ame, Suvi, and Eursulon, and the fox, behold the massive image of wild-vined hair, the relief in stone, of the Great Spirit Orima. Her feet as sharp talons, and the branches and vines of the forest echoing out from her. At the altar in front of that carving, there is a small block of incense, and a single bowl, filled with a humble meal, as offering. Orima's voice snakes out [sharp inhalation] with venom.

[Sinister drums]

Orima of the Reaching Green (Brennan)

[Binaural audio] 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 poor Talon 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.

[Wailing string music]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Anyone who wants to, can make any kind of check for gathering information if you would so desire.

Aabria Iyengar

What a terrible roll. A 12.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Again, Suvi, you can continue to speak, you don't know what's going on with this—whether you were put on mute or not.

Aabria Iyengar

Look, it's very obvious, I don't have anything good to contribute. And I think she's just muttering under her breath.

Suvi (Aabria)

[Muttering] We know what's going to happen. She will kill countless thousands of people. And maybe it is the fault of the Spirit, that allowed himself to be trapped in the first place.

Lou Wilson

Have Eursulon and Suvi interacted with the plant Spirits in any way? Because I think Eursulon is a bit in his own space, but the threat to Ame's life kind of zooms him into the present a little bit, and is now actively seeking danger.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Give me perception.

Lou Wilson
Oh, and I actually have advantage. That's a natural 20.

Aabria Iyengar
Oh SHIT!

Erika Ishii
[Screaming] Wow!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
More than 30 moving creatures are outside of the shrine.

Lou Wilson
Ough!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You hear them rustling, you hear the weight of their steps. And on a Nat 20, I will tell you that these things are called Undre.

Lou Wilson
Undre?

Aabria Iyengar
Undre!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Undre is a word which, to mortals speaking either Imperial or some other language would sound very like, mystical? You would not have that association with it because it just, in your language it means stranglers.

Aabria Iyengar
Oh shit!

Erika Ishii
Oh!

Aabria Iyengar
Hey, can I cast a little identify on the shrine, and like, that setup, that somehow is keeping her from the world.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
What's the casting time on identify?

Aabria Iyengar
One minute, unless I use it as a ritual, then it's eleven.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Okay, so you can start casting identify now. Ame, were there any rolls from you?

Erika Ishii
I had a 14 on a survival check, to see—where is her Spirit housed right now?

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Beyond. She is a Great Spirit, so she can have her sight, or her voice, or her eyes, or her hearing, go out into the mortal world wherever she wants, it can be in Umora, it can be in the vast Realm of the Spirits, you know. But, her true self seems to be unable to appear here. And you see, the reason she's asked you to take the offering off the shrine, is the offering is a VERY good offering. And Orima is a Spirit that is not just offered prayers, but is also

propitiated. Some Spirits are so nice that you just get to have kind of like a prayerful, thankful relationship with them, and other Spirits you need to keep satisfied.

Lou Wilson
That offering being..?

Brennan Lee Mulligan
There's a small bowl, with a lovely little home cooked meal in it.

Lou Wilson
Mm.

Ame (Erika)
If we beg aid from you, and time, would you entrust us to free your husband?

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Give me an insight check.

Erika Ishii
[Downcast] That's a Nat 1.

Aabria Iyengar
Ope!

Lou Wilson
Can I make an insight check?

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Yeah, give me an insight check.

Lou Wilson
Modified 20.

Erika Ishii
Agh!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
She scoffs.

Orima of the Reaching Green (Brennan)
[Scoffs]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Ame, your training is working here, but you already see—you know, in all the training Grandmother Wren gave you growing up, she was like, when you talk to Great Spirits, it can start to go pretty bad. Like working with smaller Spirits is al—there's—there's—they can be hostile, but you—

Erika Ishii
I—

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Yeah, when you're a Witch of the Heart, it's very easy to be heart-ful, when something can't eat you.

Aabria Iyengar
[Cackle]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And then when something can, it gets very—so, just this thing being like, well, it seems like we're at an impasse, but I'll just kill you. And I think you're just realizing like—it's almost like, went through a textbook and you're like, okay, we're in the bottom five worst options of the flow tree, right?

[Aabria and Erika laugh]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

I'm still in my training, but it's starting to go pretty bad.

Erika Ishii

I have never done this before. I am still not fully accepted into my role. I can barely don the title of Witch of a small little province, much less broker the fate of an entire city.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

But you have asked the question. You have asked. In the face of her saying there's an impasse, you have done your witch-ly duty of negotiating the boundaries between the Spirit and the world of mortals. And you see that in her scoff, you miss it because I think you're just—

Erika Ishii

I am so scared.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You see—actually, you look down and see the fox has wrapped around one of your feet, and has his ears back against his head, and for the first time you see the fox just sort of staring, thousand yard stare out, just dissociating.

Aabria Iyengar

Oh, no!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

He's like, this is bad, this is really bad. Eursulon—

Erika Ishii

I nudge him with my toe.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

On that modified 20. She scoffs at the idea, but you can hear in her voice, we don't let her, out she kills us.

Lou Wilson

We let her out, she kills thousands of people.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

She kills thousands of people. But there's also a part of you that goes like, well, wait a minute. She—the world where she just kills you, for not doing what she wants, is really bad for you, and you can kind of tell there's some part of you, of your—you just find a piece of your spine again, and you go like, "Okay, so we're all dead, and now there's still nobody to help you. We're all dead, and you're trapped in this shrine. Or just trapped on the other side of the shrine in the World of Spirits." So it's a big threat that really could do a good job of rattling you. But ultimately, for all of her venom in her voice, there's something where you're just like, "Well, that doesn't get you—that moves you so far away from what you want."

Aabria Iyengar

Yeah. Eursulon say it the nice way before I threaten this bitch. [Laugh]

Eursulon (Lou)

Great Spirit. What Ame is saying is—what Ame is saying is the best offer that you have. You are more than welcome to end us. We will— [Under breath] Suvi. Suvi.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You say Suvi and you see she goes

Orima of the Reaching Green (Brennan)

What is Suvi?

Suvi (Aabria)

What?

Eursulon (Lou)

Uh.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You look over at Suvi. Suvi's pendant has changed color. Her sapphire raindrop amulet has become a darker shade of blue, and you can see it drinking up light. It just looks like there's a little bit of shadow around it. There's like an almost imperceptible little piece of wind. Aabria's gasping over in the corner.

Aabria Iyengar

No, I'm being very normal and still, Brennan, don't tattle!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

[Laugh, mischievously] The listeners can't see what I can see!

Erika Ishii

Arcana check?

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Yeah, you can give me arcana if you want, but also I'd say—wait, give me actually, insight first.

Erika Ishii

Okay. That's another Nat 1!

Aabria Iyengar

[Laugh]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You got no idea, you're like—you know that Orima like, Suvi's in the shrine, you don't know what's going on. But you can give me Arcana as well, if you'd like.

Erika Ishii

Umm, 15.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

I'm going to say, you become totally distracted from everything in the room, as you're just—you can feel sweat running down your face. Your body is entering kind of like a—

Erika Ishii

Right now, I'm just trying to focus on breathing in, breathing out. I nudge the fox with my toe, as I'm not sure if I'm trying to comfort myself or him.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You look at the bowl on the altar. It hasn't crossed your mind before. As you're looking at the bowl, you finally take a better look at it, because the outside is white, but you look over the edge at the interior rim, and see the little crest of—you see a little top, like, hidden partially by the food inside, of some rice, and eggs, and other things like that, you see a little rooster's crest, and you've washed that bowl hundreds of times.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Eursulon, you look and perceive that pendant doing that, and Orima says

Orima of the Reaching Green (Brennan)

[Hissing] Answer me!

Eursulon (Lou)

It is the, uh—

Ame (Erika)

You knew Grandma Wren?

Orima of the Reaching Green (Brennan)

Grandmother Wren? Yes. I knew her well.

Ame (Erika)

She was my G—my mentor. She's gone now, and I am the Witch of Toma.

Orima of the Reaching Green (Brennan)

Hmm.

Suvi (Aabria)

Why are we negotiating with her? I think I'm on mute, so I can say whatever the fuck I want. Tell her that if she wants her husband alive, ever again, that she's going to let us out, because I can guaran-fuckin'-tee if she thinks—no, there's something happening here, because I heard it—I could hear—I don't know why she can't hear me—

Ame (Erika)

If you respect Grandmother Wren—

Suvi (Aabria)

Oh my god.

Ame (Erika)

—and her legacy—

Suvi (Aabria)

Fine! Fine! Let's be nice!

Ame (Erika)

Please. Please, I beg of you

Suvi (Aabria)

Motherfu—agh!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

[Laugh] As Suvi yells more, Eursulon, you see that the sapphire pendant grows a little bit darker, and drinks in a little bit more of the light in the room.

Lou Wilson
Mm.

Orima of the Reaching Green (Brennan)
There are no other Spirits that can wield it. The Undre do not have the strength to wield Wavebreaker.

Ame (Erika)
We have a Spirit. We have a Spirit, and you've told us how he can claim his breath again.

Orima of the Reaching Green (Brennan)
[Incredulous] The one who surrendered the sword, at once? The one who put it on the altar, the moment it seemed that there might be some trouble in his way?

Suvi (Aabria)
[Yelling angrily] I will turn her husband into scrap!! Tell her to let us out!!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
[Laugh]

Eursulon (Lou)
Yes. Me. I'll do it. I will free Naram.

[Hopeful clarinet music]

Orima of the Reaching Green (Brennan)
Eursulon. Child of the Great Bear. Consider carefully.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
And you hear the venom begin to leave her voice.

Orima of the Reaching Green (Brennan)
Their traps are cunning. Their nets broad. Their fires burn hot and bright. Please. I understand that the witch is your friend. For you, there is uncertainty, if you can do what you say you wish. For me, there is none. If you remove the offering from my altar and leave the sword with me, you can go. I will give you safe passage. You can know a life of ease. You need not trouble yourself with these things.

Eursulon (Lou)
Orima, what you say is true. I am trapped. Chains on either side. And, leaving here would not be a life of ease. You have made clear, that this might be... Not a way out, but... My breath is IN my honor. And this act, this choice to free your husband, it would bring me closer to that. Any it would mean my friends are safe.

Lou Wilson
And I'm going to go, and pick up the sword.

[Sliding metal on stone, a ring of magical energy]

Eursulon (Lou)
Your husband will be freed.

[Low clear horns]

Orima of the Reaching Green (Brennan)
Please. Please, do not fail.

Eursulon (Lou)
We will not.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
The vines at the door of the shrine part—

[Rustling of leaves in the wind]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
—as you see the sunlight hit, and you see the Undre gathering at the door begin to step back into the dark shadows of the forest. You hear a voice, from the carving once more, as the white light fades.

Orima of the Reaching Green (Brennan)
You said "not a way out." You said "not a way out." And this is more true than you know. Your way has been shadowed. The door behind you closed. Lost on the great path through the forest, there is no way out. Only through.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
What do you all do?

Aabria Iyengar
I'm gonna stay and finish my identify because I don't like the way she talked to my friends.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Your identify concludes, and you behold an incredibly powerful piece of Witch's magic, on the bowl, that is just a simple ritual of giving an offering to a Spirit to keep it satiated, but, in this instance, it is preventing Orima from manifesting in the world. Which, again, is not—that sounds very abjurative and restrictive, but, you see, it's not like—like a wizard would have built a wall here. This is more of a promise. It's like Orima's—this is not Orima's—her shrine is here, and she can speak in her shrine—but this is the village of Lamry, in the land of Akham, in the world of Umora, this is the mortal world.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
And so there's just sort of a deal here of like, oh, but the food's still here. You said you wouldn't, you said you wouldn't come through with the offering here. You wouldn't attack the people of this land while there was an offering. So, in a weird way, it's almost like, it's not a firm—it's not like a barricade, you almost think like, a barricade could actually keep—Orima could knock down. This is like something a little bit, just more clever, if that makes sense.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
And you do see that you're looking for sort of the lingua arcana, you're looking for any kind of runes or something that would, like, spell that out for you? And you don't see any—you're sort of reading witch magic, which you haven't read for a long, long time. You just see a little glimmering shape in the smoke—in like, incense smoke. And the incense is not lit here, but there's still almost, like magically, a little bit of incense smoke just in the shape of a rooster.

Aabria Iyengar
I think there's a moment where, like, sees that and wants to feel it. And then just like, all of the training sort of kicks in to keep her focused in the moment, she puts that love and longing and memory of Grandmother Wren away, and does what a wizard does, which is look for a loophole in the deal. What can I do, that fulfills this contract, that keeps this bitch out?

[Imperious, harsh horns]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Give me an arcana check.

Aabria Iyengar

It would be so nice to roll well, ever, in my life. 12.

Lou Wilson

It would be cool. It would be cool.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

12.

Aabria Iyengar

It would be so cool.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

I will say this, on a 12. You start looking for a loophole. So again, the issue is, like, you're like, "Where's a loophole in the contract?" Flip page, flip page, flip page. "Set your oven to 350 degrees."

[Aabria and Erika laugh]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And you're like, "Where is the—" [Laugh] So, it's—the language is SOOO different that you're like, "How do I take it?" But, I will say, looking for a loophole within the contract—and you also do—the identify also sort of works on the carving behind, which you just see the carving is just an ancient piece of Spirit magic. It's the same reason that names are important, images are also important.

Aabria Iyengar

Yeah.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You believe that this Spirit can see out of any of her eyes anywhere, depicted, drawn, carved. Like any idol to her, is an extension of her power.

Aabria Iyengar

Oh, I understand the removing of the face from the fountain so much better now.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

There you go.

Aabria Iyengar

Got it. Okay.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You also see something as well. On a 12, you don't get the loophole you're looking for. You're like—you don't see a way that you can get Orima right here. But there's something with that rooster. And... When Ame turned to leave, that's—

[Mystical choral tones]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

—you know how, like, when you walk by smoke, it'll just like, move in the wake of you?

Aabria Iyengar

Yeah.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

When Ame turned to walk, it rippled almost like it was following her, like SHE could create something. And a 12 is not high enough for you to know why—you don't get the answer, but you do get the question.

Aabria Iyengar

Mm.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And the question you get is, "If Grandma Wren passed, why are her spells still working?"

Aabria Iyengar

And I think just, the churning on that puts her into autopilot, and she'll turn, and walk out.

[Ringing harmonic tones. Bird song in the distance.]

Erika Ishii

As we exit the shrine, I turn and I spread my arms, and I clap twice, and I bow, and I cast a spell of mending, and a gust of wind blows the detritus from around the temple, from around the altar. Stones clatter back into place. Carvings are shined up, and grooves deepened. The plants remain untouched, though there's still a wild beauty about it, the roots, and the foundations, and the twining vines around the columns. But anything that a human would normally touch has been restored, as much as I can.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

The wind whips up around Ame's hair. The stones move back into place. Something in your heart lets you know, that you have done everything right. You care for the shrine. Your tending to it is itself a prayer, and as a young witch, it is the most meaningful sort of prayer, that which is practical, purposeful, to keep a place of importance clean, and cared for.

Erika Ishii

We have much work to do, and I have much to learn, but I can at least renew that promise.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

As you walk from this place, I think, for Suvi and Eursulon, there's this huge offer made by Eursulon, to take the sword and free Naram.

[Cheery plucked string music]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

But I think both of you look at your friend Ame, because, after all, there is—between the three of you, as this group of friends, Eursulon went off and was running around Akham, having these nightmare—you know like, saw some of the bad side of the world, and Suvi went to the Great Citadel, and Ame stayed home.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And I think you both look and see—Suvi you have your staff of the Citadel, and you have your Golden Pauldron, but I think you see Ame walk out of this shrine, and the wind kicks up, and you feel a breath from the forest, of relief and acceptance. And you know that Ame is not an apprentice anymore.

Aabria Iyengar

[Scream of joy]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Without those words, carefully chosen and interjected, it is possible you would never have arrived at the knowledge of the type of offer you could make, to save Port Talon, and potentially, the Spirit trapped within the sea. [With Gravitas] Well done, young witch.

[Aabria and Erika laugh]

Erika Ishii

[Out of breath] The Serotonin, has FLOODED my body!

Aabria Iyengar

Yay!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And you see, the fox comes out and goes

The Fox (Brennan)

We should never do that again.

Aabria Iyengar

I'm going to pick him up by the scruff of the neck.

Suvi (Aabria)

[Grimly, quietly] You did this.

The Fox (Brennan)

[Matter of fact] No, I didn't.

Suvi (Aabria)

Yes, you did.

The Fox (Brennan)

No, I didn't. I didn't do all that scary stuff. Did you see her? She was a lady. She was the stone lady.

Aabria Iyengar

[Defused] I gently put the fox back down.

[Erika and Lou laugh]

Aabria Iyengar

And I walk away.

Lou Wilson

Are we in a village?

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Oh yes, you are in a village, the village of Lamry. Somewhat on the—like the shrine's sort of just outside the village, in a place of honor, but also it's all overgrown with kudzu. So it's like, very—it's wildly overgrown, all the people have evacuated or, sadly, not, but like, most of the people have gotten out of here.

Lou Wilson

I'm going to make a survival check for any sort of shelter in the area.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Give me a survival check.

Lou Wilson

Big 12.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Big 12. Um—

Lou Wilson
Excuse me. Big 13.

Erika Ishii
Oooh!

Aabria Iyengar
Oooh!

Lou Wilson
Change everything.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Change everything.

[Aabria and Erika cackle]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Looking down the hill from the shrine, you see the sort of—they're kind of the most horrifying shapes, which are the places where kudzu has overtaken buildings, because it's plant matter in geometrical forms, right? So, it's the idea of like, "Oh, look at that big mound of green with a perfect angle of a long roof, like a long, slanted roof."

Erika Ishii
Plants don't go that way!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Plants don't go that way, unless they're eating something that went that way. So there are a couple of those that you know you'd probably be able to kick a door open, and find shelter inside of them.

Lou Wilson
Yeah, I'll hit the nearest one.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Cool.

Suvi (Aabria)
What are you doing?

Eursulon (Lou)
I'm so hungover, and so tired, and just made a promise I don't know if I can fucking keep.

Suvi (Aabria)
Yeah, why did you do that!? Why?

Eursulon (Lou)
Ask me after I've had a nap.

Suvi (Aabria)
We have to go back. Ohhh, I lied to Steel again.

Ame (Erika)
Have some electrolytes.

Erika Ishii
[Laughing] And I give them the wizard gatorade.

Suvi (Aabria)
Shut up!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Eursulon. As you're getting ready to head to bed, you do see that the effect on Suvi's sapphire pendant has stopped. It is now just a beautiful sapphire raindrop. Has Suvi ever told her friends about the raindrop?

Aabria Iyengar
Let me be very clear. No one's more surprised than I am, that it was showing. I've been hiding it from EVERYONE—

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Oh, shit.

Aabria Iyengar
—so I like that it came out. Yeah, we've been marching for a day and a half. I wasn't thinking about that.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Okay, we can say that it popped out—

Aabria Iyengar
Yeah!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
—unintentionally, gotcha gotcha.

Aabria Iyengar
So, no, she hasn't mentioned it to ANYONE.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
In that case, Suvi, I think you notice that your—you just sort of like, as you're coming into the village, notice that your pendant is showing.

Suvi (Aabria)
Oh, fuck, hold on.

Aabria Iyengar
And I try to slip it back. Do I catch any of the like—

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Give me either arcana or perception, whichever one you prefer.

Aabria Iyengar
We have to stop making me roll, that's a natural 1.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Oh my god.

Aabria Iyengar
Agh!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

I'm going to say, we actually have to address these rolls all in a row. Give me a wisdom saving row.

Aabria Iyengar

Oh, no.

Erika Ishii

[Fearful exclamation]

Aabria Iyengar

Same die, different die? Okay. 22.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Great. And I want insight from Eursulon and Ame.

Lou Wilson

Dirty 20.

Erika Ishii

Also Dirty 20.

Erika Ishii

Give me a deception.

Aabria Iyengar

Wait.

Erika Ishii

[Cackle]

Aabria Iyengar

Hey, Brennan, you gotta stop making me roll! 10!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Suvi, you don't notice anything on your pendant, but you can put it away as you—

Aabria Iyengar

Yeah, I'm just tuckin' it back.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Your identify spell worked, but you didn't find a loophole. Your pendant came out, some muting thing happened where you knew that this—for some reason—and I guess you're assuming it was the Goddess, it was like—

Aabria Iyengar

I think she was just ignoring me, which is some real shit behavior.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Yeah. And I think on dirty 20s with insight, both of you notice Suvi—and I'll turn this over to you, Aabria, but on those dirty 20—the thing I know as a dungeon master, is that the emotional state that Suvi got into in that shrine—and I will say the mixture of the emotional and ideological state that Suvi got into in that shrine, preempted losing track of her magic. That there was an element of losing—of losing the grip, there. But I want YOU to describe—like, what does that look like to Ame and Eursulon, on 20 insight checks?

Aabria Iyengar

Yeah. I think this is the first really obvious sign that Suvi, for all of her training, is a very young wizard, and can only really focus on one thing, after marching for a day and a half with Eursulon. Like it's very obvious that her rage and indignation, all of that, was the thing that was sort of keeping her aloft, in the moment, so she clung to it, to stay awake and alert in the event of a fight. But that means all of the subtlety and intellect of her, the thing that makes her clever, and good at magic, had to be put away because she can't hold both. So you just see this scatteredness of her.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

We also talked about in this campaign, and these homebrew rules are, like, forthcoming as you guys get a little higher in level?

Aabria Iyengar

Ooh!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

But we talked about for witches and wizards having that secondary ability score?

Aabria Iyengar

Yeah.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Of, like, for witches because their primary is wisdom, their secondary is charisma, of like, yes, you're listening to the world of Spirits, can you do so without losing yourself? Right? For wizards, it's intelligence, but that secondary one is wisdom, which is what that wisdom saving throw was about. And there's an element here, I think of—actually, and you give me, I know you hate me asking for rolls, give me one more insight check here.

Aabria Iyengar

[Resigned scoff]

Erika Ishii

Damn!

Erika Ishii

11.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Cool. So you don't catch this, but there's an element for both of you looking, which is like, yeah, the flaw of a witch—a witch is all wisdom, but you need some charisma so that you remember who you are, while you're listening to, and mediating between, everybody. And for a wizard, it's all about intellect, analysis, putting things together, and solving puzzles. But of course the shortfall is, if you've shut off your ability to gain new information, aka wisdom, then you don't have—it's like trying to do a puzzle without having all the pieces. You see a group of—so, both of you observed Suvi going through that, and you don't see the pendant anymore, Eursulon. What do you do as you approach the village?

Lou Wilson

Eursulon is going to kick in a door. First door he can find. Eursulon is desperate to be horizontal, right now.

[Laugh]

Lou Wilson

So, I'm kicking in the first door I can find, if only so we can have a moment of rest.

[Sound of running feet, a thud and crash of splintering wood]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Kick in the door, find a kind of—rotting vegetation through the broken windows, but otherwise a totally acceptable old—as you walk in here, you see the sort of dust covered tables of an old tavern, that you can see got abandoned so quickly, that there is like, rotting food on plates and like mold on glasses of cheap wine.

Lou Wilson

Mm.

Aabria Iyengar

Phew.

Lou Wilson

I'm going to find a table, and just push all of the food, and everything onto the ground, and then just take my cloak off, make a small pillow, throw it on, and just immediately go supine. I cross my hands over my chest—

[Aabria and Lou laugh]

Lou Wilson

—and just kind of half—kind of glaze over. Just—

Eursulon (Lou)

[Deep breath, half laughing sigh]

Lou Wilson

—and I think Eursulon's not checking out, but just needs to be—needs a break.

Aabria Iyengar

Yeah!

Suvi (Aabria)

[Sigh]

Aabria Iyengar

Suvi walks in, and is kind of, like a dog, sort of pacing—

[Footsteps]

Aabria Iyengar

—torn between also a desperate desire for rest, but the worry that like, you know the like, "I can't take a nap right now if I lay down, I'm going to bed" kind of problem. So I think she's just kind of pacing around, and doesn't know if she should try to recover at all or stay up.

Ame (Erika)

Suvi, I took a little nap in the temple—

Suvi (Aabria)

Yeah.

Ame (Erika)

—so why don't you rest your head for a little bit and I'll take first watch?

Suvi (Aabria)

We have to get back to the city.

Ame (Erika)
Absolutely.

Eursulon (Lou)
But when we go back, we need to know what we're doing.

Ame (Erika)
But first. Rest. And thank you for coming to save me.

Eursulon (Lou)
Just don't make a habit out of it.

Suvi (Aabria)
[Under her breath] Kill your fox.

Ame (Erika)
[Deep sigh]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You rest, that night. Suvi and Eursulon sleep—so you're just sleeping supine on a table, where does Suvi post up?
You've been sleeping in nice comfy beds, in Citadel Chuntries!

Aabria Iyengar
It's bad here!

Erika Ishii
I have a bedroll.

Aabria Iyengar
Why were you out with a bedroll?

Erika Ishii
I had all my gear on me!

Aabria Iyengar
Why?! Ugh!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
What does Ame's bedroll look like?

Erika Ishii
Oh, it's about her sized. [Laughing]

Aabria Iyengar
That's not helpful!! Thank you for a mini skirt of a sleeping bag.

Erika Ishii
[Laughing] 2ft shorter—

Aabria Iyengar
Christ!

Erika Ishii
—than what Suvi needs.

Suvi (Aabria)
Thanks, I'm good.

Aabria Iyengar
And I just go and sit in a corner and kind of push—I want to go to the sort of tactical best spot, which is back against a wall facing out towards the main door, sitting upright, and I will just rest a little bit, gotta get—

Lou Wilson
[Laughing] Just a little bit!

Aabria Iyengar
[Petulantly] Look, you guys don't understand, Steel's coming, she's gon' beat my ass if we're not back!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Incredible. Ame, where do you post up to take your—you're taking the first watch?

Erika Ishii
Yes, I said first watch, but I have no intention of waking them.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Aww. You see—where do you post up to take your watch?

Erika Ishii
I'll sort of be mobile, and sort of wander, from place to place. I have a feeling that, completely surrounded by the kudzu, this place is not going to be very assailable.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
There's no—the only things here that would kill you would only kill you if they got ordered to, and you took care of that earlier today. Part of the nice thing about being in a strange, choked, plant kingdom come to life, overtaking villages is you kind of know where the threat is?

Aabria Iyengar
Both of you got choked out by plants today [Laughing] and you're just so chill about it!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
As you move around, kind of keeping watch, you see, the fox looks up and says

The Fox (Brennan)
Hey if you need to sleep, I can keep watch, too.

Ame (Erika)
Thank you, and I appreciate that. I'm fine. But I don't know that I necessarily trust you to not go wandering off, or do whatever it is that you want to do.

The Fox (Brennan)
If you died, I wouldn't be able to talk anymore, right?

Ame (Erika)
That's correct.

The Fox (Brennan)
And I wouldn't remember any of this stuff that happened?

Ame (Erika)
Yeah, you'd just kind of go back to your life, in the forest.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Make an arcana check for me.

Erika Ishii
That's a 12.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
As you're saying that, you kind of don't know if that's—you think that's true.

Erika Ishii
Yeah.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Like, you're not actually sure if that's true.

Ame (Erika)
[Muttering] I don't know if that's true... But I agree. Yeah. You'll probably return to your life in the forest and forget all about me, and beds, and human food, and my friends.

The Fox (Brennan)
Even if I wasn't magic anymore, I wouldn't forget you.

Ame (Erika)
[Laugh] You always just, say things. You always just say things.

The Fox (Brennan)
That's so true.

Ame (Erika)
[Laugh]

The Fox (Brennan)
Well, look, if you don't trust me, that's fine. But I'll tell you this: I'm better at smelling than you, and I'm probably better at hearing and seeing than you.

Ame (Erika)
That's true.

The Fox (Brennan)
I can make you a promise.

Ame (Erika)
Yeah?

The Fox (Brennan)
I learned about those. You don't actually make them, you don't need hands for them.

Ame (Erika)
No.

The Fox (Brennan)
They're just something you say.

Ame (Erika)
They're something you say, but that mean a lot to you.

The Fox (Brennan)
Yeah. I promise, I'll always tell you what I wanna do.

Ame (Erika)
[Soft laugh]

The Fox (Brennan)
I wanna make sure that you're safe while you're asleep.

Ame (Erika)
Okay.

[Bright, soft marimba]

Ame (Erika)
I'll take it!

The Fox (Brennan)
Okay!

Ame (Erika)
[Laugh]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
And you see the fox just sort of trots off, and he looks around, and says

The Fox (Brennan)
Besides, you can't sleep when we're walking, and I can just curl up in Eursulon's hood and snooze in there.

Ame (Erika)
[Giggle] You're very generous. Fox.

The Fox (Brennan)
Yeah, I am. I'm great!

[Aabria and Erika laugh]

Erika Ishii
I catch him and I give him a little noogie.

The Fox (Brennan)
[Panting]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Morning comes the next day and you depart, presumably for Port Talon. Is there any manner in which you are traveling, or any checks you are making as you travel?

Lou Wilson
I'm feeling pretty comfortable. I feel like Eursulon—I feel like until we get to the edge of the kudzu, I don't think there's—

Eursulon (Lou)

I don't believe there's any reason to be careful.

[Foot steps through the brush, crickets]

Ame (Erika)

Oh, I agree. I agree, I, um—yes. We just—I think we go along, unless Suvi has any objection?

Suvi (Aabria)

No. This is Spirit shit, that's all you.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You journey through the paths, as best you can, walking through the kudzu, trying to avoid the deeper thickets. You journey as quickly as possible, but your rest means that you are embarking at night, so you're like walking through the kudzu woods at night. The noises you hear are strange here, because it's—the greenery is so thick that it's just sort of a chorus of crickets, like, the insects have really thrived in this new world of kudzu. You move through this space, and I'm going to need a group survival check.

Lou Wilson

Mm!

Erika Ishii

Ooh.

Aabria Iyengar

Ohh! I would be excited, but I know how I've been rolling today. Oh! Okay, never mind!

Erika Ishii

22.

Aabria Iyengar

Dirty 20!

Lou Wilson

Big 12.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Okay! The median roll is 20. You quickly and swiftly make your way through the countryside, and actually manage to make pretty good time. Meaning, however, that you are arriving back at Port Talon, with basically like, at MOST? Hours to spare before when Steel said she was going to arrive. Like—

Aabria Iyengar

Aghh!

Erika Ishii

Have you told us this?

Lou Wilson

You have not, right?

Aabria Iyengar

We haven't had time to discuss—just, the days of travel. [Laugh]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Yeah!

Aabria Iyengar
Yeah, I told you.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
I will actually ask too, as you begin to approach Port Talon, is there anything—because like, there are some bits of information that only individuals of you have. Is there anything that, realistically, would come up on the road, that you would find—like in the long quiet, you would find reason to divulge?

Lou Wilson
Wait, do we know about you—about Steel coming to town?

Aabria Iyengar
Yeah, I definitely, at the very least, would have told you about it on the walk over.

Lou Wilson
Got it.

Aabria Iyengar
Yeah, I would have mentioned it on the way back too, like, if you're wondering why, I was like

Suvi (Aabria)
No, we can't stop for a minute to take a break. I have to get back into the city.

Ame (Erika)
Why?

Suvi (Aabria)
Because my guardian is coming!

Ame (Erika)
Ohh!

Suvi (Aabria)
Yeah.

Eursulon (Lou)
Is it—is she—are they—

Suvi (Aabria)
Furious?

Eursulon (Lou)
—mad? Yes.

Suvi (Aabria)
Yes.

Eursulon (Lou)
Oh.

Suvi (Aabria)
Deeply. I was supposed to check in when we got back to Toma, and—

Ame (Erika)

A lot of things were happening.

Suvi (Aabria)

Yeah, she doesn't care. I didn't do what I was supposed to do, and I've just been gone and apparently they were searching for me. It's bad. And then I was supposed to—I was supposed to keep it on ice at three days and then I immediately did not do that.

Ame (Erika)

On ice?

Suvi (Aabria)

Yeah. You know. They love—

Eursulon (Lou)

Keep it cold.

Suvi (Aabria)

Chill out. Don't immediately walk through the kudzu, to treat with a Great Spirit. That.

Eursulon (Lou)

Mm. Well, she'll be glad to see that you're alive.

Ame (Erika)

We'll be back, and she doesn't need to know. I mean, we can clean ourselves up afterwards, right?

Suvi (Aabria)

[Laugh]

Eursulon (Lou)

Yeah, we can go back to the place where you reserved the entire floor. We could take a quick—

Suvi (Aabria)

[Laugh] Oh my god.

Ame (Erika)

A quick bath.

Eursulon (Lou)

You both can bathe there, and then we can head down.

Suvi (Aabria)

You pretty firmly anti-bathing at this point?

Eursulon (Lou)

I mean, "firmly" anti-bathing.

Suvi (Aabria)

Yeah.

Eursulon (Lou)

Don't put me in a corner.

Suvi (Aabria)

No, I get it

Eursulon (Lou)

I just, you know. When I have to.

Suvi (Aabria)

Like, I'm having a very good time talking about my problems. But at what point are we going to discuss the fact that you promised the MEANEST thing I've ever seen that you would free her husband from, you know, the wizards?

Eursulon (Lou)

Well, Ame did not put us in a situation where we had much of a choice.

Suvi (Aabria)

Yeah.

Ame (Erika)

She would have killed all of those wizards, if I'd let her out.

Eursulon (Lou)

I mean, she would have killed everything.

Suvi (Aabria)

I wouldn't have let you, let her out, let me be very clear. Uh, no offense, but this is our world, you get that, right? This is the world for humans.

Ame (Erika)

[Scoffing laughter]

Suvi (Aabria)

You have a world!

Eursulon (Lou)

And it is as much—they are intertwined, Suvi.

Suvi (Aabria)

We don't go there!

Eursulon (Lou)

Well, you CAN'T go there. But we can come here.

Suvi (Aabria)

Okay! And maybe if you come here, you get what you FUCKING get!

Ame (Erika)

I... Don't even know where to start.

Eursulon (Lou)

It's—

Ame (Erika)

Eursulon?!

Eursulon (Lou)

[Confused laughter] Ame! It, um, it is—

Ame (Erika)

[Yelling incredulously] What did they teach you at that wizard school!?

Suvi (Aabria)

To mind your fuckin' business, which is more than Naram can say.

Suvi (Aabria)

The people who trapped the guy at the bottom of the sea were taught to mind their business?

Suvi (Aabria)

Yeah. Stuff in Umora is... Human business.

Ame (Erika)

Except for when the Spirits affect the seasons, and the tides, and the weather, and teach the people to fish, and live off the land and—

Suvi (Aabria)

Okay, but they also choked a village to death in their rage, so, ya know—

Ame (Erika)

Well, I know—

Suvi (Aabria)

—little of both.

Ame (Erika)

That's why you have to have some consideration for them, at least, I mean, i just—

Suvi (Aabria)

No, that shrine was deference! Was BEGGING a Spirit to not ruin lives, and destroy... Civilization. Do you think that's fair? Really!? You think that's fair. To BEG to be allowed to live?

Ame (Erika)

[Laugh] That's what we do of nature. Nature has no ill intent, just as Orima was saying, she has no cruelty in her, but neither does she have care—

Suvi (Aabria)

[Yelling] She IS cruelty!!

Ame (Erika)

She's a Spirit.

Suvi (Aabria)

And we are people.

[Long pause, crickets chirp]

Ame (Erika)

You're people.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

The fox looks up at you, Ame.

The Fox (Brennan)

[Quietly, concerned] Is Umora JUST for humans?

Ame (Erika)

No! No, not at all. That's what humans have called THIS world, but it's no more theirs than it is ours.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Eursulon, give me a—give me like, an insight check.

Lou Wilson

6.

Aabria Iyengar

[Sudden coughing laugh]

Erika Ishii

[Laugh] God dammit.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Suvi—you had that earlier 20 where you noticed how... Emotionally charged Suvi has been in this leg of the journey. And hearing her talk about Steel, and the fact that she was supposed to keep Port Talon on ice, there's maybe some of that that comes into focus—sharper focus for you. As we all tell this story together, Suvi's words were so clearly about Orima and Naram, and this situation, and her lens, being a Wizard of the Citadel, and looking through it that way.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

But her exact words were, "Maybe if you come here, you get what you fucking get." And I cannot help but wonder how those words impact Eursulon. Or if—maybe he doesn't make that connection to himself.

Lou Wilson

I don't think so. I don't think in this moment—those words hit his brain, and he goes—

Brennan Lee Mulligan

To that place.

Lou Wilson

Yes

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Yeah, I totally—that makes perfect sense to me. You—it's so—I think there's like, very clear—if you're not focusing on the words, and you're just following Suvi's emotion, what she's saying is so clearly about this other thing.

Lou Wilson

Yes.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You continue through the long road, towards Port Talon. As you do so, you begin to smell it long before you can see it. The choking salt fire. [Deep breath in] You approach the edge of the kudzu, and now it is—the weather has sort of turned around here at Port Talon. It's a rare sunny day in Port Talon, so the sun is beating down on a plane filled with fire, so it's all of the normal sweat and heat, of like a bright noonday sun, but you're also looking at this pale, like, tan brown, soot covered wasteland, where all the plant material has been destroyed.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And that weird thing of fire—just, you can't see fire in bright daylight, so it's just columns of smoke coming up from something out there in the distance. And then you see the tall, slate gray walls of Port Talon. You get here about midday. You know the LATEST Steel is going to arrive here, is tomorrow morning.

Suvi (Aabria)
Ough. Okay but we made it!

Aabria Iyengar
I'm going to disguise self again as—

[Magical chime]

Aabria Iyengar
—Eursulon's pregnant sister.

Lou Wilson
And I'll throw my glamour up. As the walls come into view, I think Eursulon's glamour fades into appearance.

[Ringing magical tone]

Lou Wilson
He drops that, about foot—

Aabria Iyengar
[Laugh]

Lou Wilson
—and looks like Suvi's brother.

Erika Ishii
I'm just going to sort of tuck myself away, and not show myself.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Great, go ahead and give me a group persuasion roll, as you approach the city.

Aabria Iyengar
[Laugh] I can't stop rolling 8s!

Erika Ishii
Yeah, that's crazy!

Aabria Iyengar
10!

Erika Ishii
I can't stop rolling... Natural 1s!

Aabria Iyengar
Oh nooo!!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
10...

Lou Wilson
I got an 18.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You got an 18. Okay, copy that.

Erika Ishii
[Laugh] God.

Lou Wilson
Any chance it's the same guards from yesterday?

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Well that's what we were rolling for and—

Aabria Iyengar
[Laugh]

Erika Ishii
Aw!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
—the median roll is a 10, so as you guys are just walking under the hot sun, you get closer to one of the big bonfires, and you see some of the Azure Battalion walk over, that are guarding that sort of, you know, that Witchfire out there. Walk up with some of their match sticks over their shoulder and say

Azure Guard (Brennan)
Stop. Halt. Who goes there?

[Tense, imperious snare drums and horns]

Eursulon (Lou)
Sor—

Suvi (Aabria)
[Aggressively] Lamry's GONE! My feet hurt!!

Eursulon (Lou)
Sorry, sorry. We departed the city the other night, this is my sister, and she was hoping that her babe could be born in the village from whence we came, but—

Suvi (Aabria)
Whole thing's gone!

Azure Guard (Brennan)
O-kay.

Eursulon (Lou)
It is gone.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Give me a deception check.

Erika Ishii
[Cackling]

Suvi (Aabria)
The whole thing's gone!

Aabria Iyengar
I will start to cry if I can give him advantage. [Laugh]

Lou Wilson
What did you want?

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Deception.

Lou Wilson
Do I have advantage in that?

Brennan Lee Mulligan
No!

Aabria Iyengar
Why?!

Lou Wilson
Any chance I have double advantage?

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Give me a performance check—

Aabria Iyengar
Yay!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
—you've got to beat a 10 to give advantage.

Lou Wilson
Come on, please.

Aabria Iyengar
I didn't!

Erika Ishii
Ohhh!

Aabria Iyengar
I got 4!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Ok, you have advantage.

Lou Wilson
Thank God.

Aabria Iyengar
No, I didn't do it.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Oh you didn't do it!

Aabria Iyengar
I got a 4!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Ok. So you start to cry super hard—

Suvi (Aabria)
[Exaggerated crying]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
—and I think your pregnant tummy, like, renders through your clothes for a second of like, the video game graphics of your own illusion—

[Aabria and Erika laugh]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
—as you throw your back too hard. It's like, oops, the physics engine broke for a second!

Lou Wilson
6.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
6.

Aabria Iyengar
[Laugh]

Erika Ishii
Oh my god.

Lou Wilson
Had to fight for it. Had to fight for it.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
So, you see, the guard goes,

Azure Guard (Brennan)
Oh, I understand. So you, your pregnant—

Eursulon (Lou)
Sister.

Suvi (Aabria)
Sister!!

Eursulon (Lou)
Not my wife.

Azure Guard (Brennan)
Not your wife, your pregnant sister—

Suvi (Aabria)
Yes?

Azure Guard (Brennan)
And then who's this?

Erika Ishii

You can see my hat sticking out from behind a barrel by the wall.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Yeah. Oh, no, you're not even NEAR the wall!

Erika Ishii

[Laughing] Ok!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You're in the DMZ—you're in the wasteland of Witchfire between the wall and the kudzu.

Eursulon (Lou)

Oh, that's my shy ward. I have a ward, and they're very shy.

Erika Ishii

You come around the corner, and I wave.

Eursulon (Lou)

Down, ward. Down. Down.

Ame (Erika)

[Frightened moan]

Azure Guard (Brennan)

Alright, you're all under arrest.

Eursulon (Lou)

What?

Ame (Erika)

No!

Suvi (Aabria)

Stop.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You're all incredibly under arrest.

Suvi (Aabria)

No!

Eursulon (Lou)

Why?!

Azure Guard (Brennan)

[Flustered stammering] Anything coming out of the kudzu is a Spirit.

Suvi (Aabria)

What!?

Eursulon (Lou)

What?

Ame (Erika)
No! I mean Spirits—

Suvi (Aabria)
Do I look serene and magical?

Ame (Erika)
Spirits don't exist!

Azure Guard (Brennan)
That's exactly what a Spirit would say.

Erika Ishii
[Hooting laughter]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
And you see, they say

Azure Guard (Brennan)
Alright, kindly you are all—no. No one has come out of the kudzu in WEEKS.

Eursulon (Lou)
Well, if you—

Suvi (Aabria)
That doesn't sound right.

Eursulon (Lou)
Well, if you ask a couple of your friends, the two of us went running into the kudzu last night!

Suvi (Aabria)
Yeah!

Ame (Erika)
And I stowed away in the back of a wagon.

Suvi (Aabria)
[Yelling] Why are we confessing!

Eursulon (Lou)
Because my ward is so shy.

Suvi (Aabria)
[Exasperated] Why are we confessing??

Ame (Erika)
Hush!

Azure Guard (Brennan)
So you broke curfew. You ran into the wasteland. You've come back.

Eursulon (Lou)
Yes.

Suvi (Aabria)
What's your name?

Lieutenant Briggs (Brennan)
If you wish to know, my name is Lieutenant Briggs of the Azure Battalion, a soldier of the Imperium, and I am placing all of you under arrest, at the VERY least on breaking curfew, but certainly under SUSPICION of being a Spirit with ill intent towards the mortals of Port Talon.

Suvi (Aabria)
You think if we were Spirits, we would waste our time arguing with you, or like, I don't know, be a wind to death of you?

Azure Guard (Brennan)
Well, if you knew the first thing about Spirits—

Suvi (Aabria)
Yeah, explain to me how Spirits work.

Aabria Iyengar
And I'm gonna tap my staff.

Eursulon (Lou)
Please explain to us, how Spirits work.

Ame (Erika)
Spirit-splain to us!

Suvi (Aabria)
Come on, little matchstick!

Lieutenant Briggs (Brennan)
Spirit-splain? So you're admitting! You're a Spirit!

Ame (Erika)
[Unconvincingly] What? No!

Suvi (Aabria)
No no no, hold on! Let's let Lieutenant Briggs, who bombed out of the Citadel in what, two years, explain to me, what a Spirit is.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Give me a deception check.

Eursulon (Lou)
Sister?

Aabria Iyengar
Not gonna be good! 13!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
He rolled a 2, he says

Lieutenant Briggs (Brennan)
[Defensively] I wanted to be in the Azure Battalion!

Suvi (Aabria)
Mhm?

Lieutenant Briggs (Brennan)
Listen—

Brennan Lee Mulligan
The guy next to him goes

Azure Guard 2 (Brennan)
Alright Briggs, you're gonna have to—you're gonna take a step back.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
And he's like

Lieutenant Briggs (Brennan)
What?

Brennan Lee Mulligan
He's like

Azure Guard 2 (Brennan)
You always do this, you always turn arresting people into a conversation. And we're going to have to talk about it again because it's not how this goes. You're all under arrest. Put your hands behind you, we're going to manacle you right now.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
And then—

Aabria Iyengar
Slam the staff.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
What's that?

Aabria Iyengar
I slam the staff, and drop the form, and go full Citadel Wizard Suvi.

[Magically ringing sound of a vase breaking]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Okay, you're going to have to give me an intimidate check, BECAUSE given the story they're running in their mind—

Aabria Iyengar
[Frustrated] I KNOW-UH!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
—that you are a disguised Spirit

Aabria Iyengar
I can't roll!! Brennan! 9!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
9? Okay, you see he goes

Azure Guard 2 (Brennan)

Okay, so—we've all but confirmed you're a trickster Spirit.

Suvi (Aabria)

God dammit! This is so stupid!!!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Great. They're going to come over, there's four of them here, and they're going to come over and start to manacle you.

Aabria Iyengar

I'm going to kill these guys because I'm in a bad mood!

Suvi (Aabria)

Back up!

Aabria Iyengar

And I want to send an Irulian bolt across the front of them.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Okay, everyone here, roll initiative.

Lou Wilson

Okay!

Erika Ishii

[Yelling off-mic] Woah-uh!

Aabria Iyengar

Hey, did you think my bad mood would suddenly stop? Or get worser.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

So, Suvi. You are going first. You send a bolt as a warning shot onto them. I am going to let you know.

Aabria Iyengar

Mhm.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Killing these soldiers will change your life forever.

Aabria Iyengar

[Bargaining] I'm not gonna kill them. I want them to not arrest me! Brennan!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Okay! That's what the intimidate check was for, and it didn't work because they think you're Spirits. You are first to act. You see that they just see you unleash a harmful spell.

[Laser pew noise]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

They are going for their weapons.

Suvi (Aabria)

Please—okay, okay. We have to—here's the thing. Here's the thing. I can't kill you without having to do a LOT of paperwork! Steel will be here soon—oh, god. I just—please, I am begging you. Please don't make me kill you. Please. I go here. [Crying] I hate Spirits so much, they're so stupid, and I don't want to fight you, but I will!!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Great. Give me a—we're just going to say—

Suvi (Aabria)

I start crying.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

We're going to say persuasion.

Aabria Iyengar

[Chuckle] Perfect, 9!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Great.

Aabria Iyengar

[Sigh]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Cool. That's your turn.

Aabria Iyengar

YEP.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

They do not seem to be swayed by it.

Aabria Iyengar

Ugh!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

The thing that REALLY they seem to be clocking is, the powerful spell that just happened. That seems to be taking most of their focus rather than what you're saying.

Suvi (Aabria)

[Wailing] It was a cantrip, you idiots!!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Great. I think it's Eursulon or Ame next?

Lou Wilson

5.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

5.

Erika Ishii

8.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
8. Ame, you are next.

Erika Ishii
I put my hands out, and I slowly step out from behind the pile of wood that I'm in, and I say

Ame (Erika)
Don't look at me, but also, you can arrest me. We'll go quietly. [Whispered] We'll go quietly.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Okay. Eursulon?

Lou Wilson
No roll on that? No roll on that?

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You're surrendering, so they're going to walk over to you and—

Erika Ishii
Yeah. I said

Ame (Erika)
We'll go quietly.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Yeah.

Ame (Erika)
[Insistent] We'll go quietly!

Suvi (Aabria)
[Crying]

Aabria Iyengar
Suvi's actually crying now.

Ame (Erika)
Aww, don't cry!

Suvi (Aabria)
[Crying] I'm gonna get in trouble because I'm gonna murder them!

Lou Wilson
Insight check on if the—how they're responding to Ame's surrender.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Yeah, give me an insight check.

Lou Wilson
21.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
They appear to be going "Finally, they're seeing reason, this was a really dangerous situation. There is a curfew. There's a bunch of guards. We're at war with this forest, and people walking out of it are maybe Spirits."

Lou Wilson

Great. I'll also drop to my knees.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

I want to be clear that me—as me, Brennan—

Aabria Iyengar

Yeah, yeah.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

—I am an anti-fascist and an anti—

Aabria Iyengar

Yeah!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

—and I don't like cops, but these guys straight up are like, "Hey, come on."

Aabria Iyengar

No, of course. We get what we get.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

"We gotta do our job."

Erika Ishii

That makes sense!

Lou Wilson

I'm going to drop on my knees and say

[Ruffling clothing, thump of knees on dirt]

Lou Wilson

[Laugh] I'm not going to call you my pregnant sister anymore.

Eursulon (Lou)

Suvi. Please. Down.

Ame (Erika)

[Hissed whisper] On your—

Suvi (Aabria)

[Crying] It's so stupid!

Ame (Erika)

—we still have time to get back, and Steel doesn't need to know about this!

Suvi (Aabria)

[Crying] It's so stupid—it doesn't matter! Because now Steel's gonna know either way, it's so dumb! I might as well just kill them!

Eursulon (Lou)

No!

Ame (Erika)
NO!!

Eursulon (Lou)
Don't—don't—don't, please.

Ame (Erika)
What is wrong with you?! Why is that your option?!

Lieutenant Briggs (Brennan)
Your know, we're normally a lot more jumpy than this, but we're going to let that slide.

[Aabria laughs]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You see that the Azure Battalion comes around.

Aabria Iyengar
Yeah.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You are manacled and they get you on a wagon headed back towards Port Talon.

[Horns blare one last time as the music comes to a stop. Hoofsteps on cobblestone.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
The gates open to the city. What is Suvi saying? Give me—you're just manacled.

Aabria Iyengar
Yeah.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You're just here in this thing, you're just moving along. What doe Suvi say, as you're just like weeping, tears streaming down your face. What are you saying as the wagon sort of trundles along.

Suvi (Aabria)
[Crying] I'm gonna get so in trouble, and I'm going to take it out on your ass, Briggs. If she doesn't kill me, I'm going to have your fucking stupid little matchstick.

Eursulon (Lou)
Suvi, please stop threatening the men.

Suvi (Aabria)
You Citadel reject, I hate you. Honestly, you should have shot me out there!

Eursulon (Lou)
[Uncomfortably] I don't—

Brennan Lee Mulligan
What's that, Erika?

Erika Ishii
[Weaselly] That is a 17 on a slight of hand, can I get out of my cuffs?

Brennan Lee Mulligan
A 17 does not get out of the manacle.

Erika Ishii
Dang it.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
The wagon trundles along, the gates of Port Talon open, and you advance through the streets of Port Talon. Now, with the rain gone and the sunlight on it, it has all the sort of appearance—like, sunlight in this city kind of turns it from this oppressive, rainy, cobblestone place, and it kind of feels like a weird museum, or an old abandoned castle, with the bright sunlight on it. But you see busy people moving around, have shifted into their lighter clothing. Port Talon has like a big swing of temperatures, like very freezing when it's raining, and then the sun comes out and it's hot as hell. I'm going to need a... I need a luck check, and I do want Aabria to roll.

Aabria Iyengar
That's so fucked up, Brennan!

Erika Ishii
God!

Aabria Iyengar
You know why! [Screams off mic] NO!!! 2!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
I don't know what's going on over there.

Aabria Iyengar
It's bad here!

Lou Wilson
It's bad over there.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
The dice are bad! I know they can go higher, but i think they forgot.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Um.

Lou Wilson
Wow. We are really—

Aabria Iyengar
[Laugh]

Lou Wilson
This is going as poorly—we just had to walk back home. That was it! That was the goal! The goal was just to walk home.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
I was wondering about it because I was like, they know there's a big ol' wall—

Aabria Iyengar
100%.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
—and a lot of guards?

Erika Ishii
We thought we could go back the way that we came!

Lou Wilson
Hey! It was so silly and fun to get to leave!

Aabria Iyengar
Yeah! We assumed it would be just as whimsical on the way back in, Brennan!

Lou Wilson
Exactly!

Aabria Iyengar
You set our expectations.

Lou Wilson
[Falsetto] Ha ha ha! My pregnant sister needs to go home!

Erika Ishii
It was a good bit!

Lou Wilson
[Falsetto] Ha ha ha!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You gotta know that the dice protect you guys a lot.

Aabria Iyengar
Brennan doesn't respect bits. I want that on the record.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Oh, Brennan respects bits. The dice don't respect bits.

Aabria Iyengar
Don't talk to my dice like that.

Lou Wilson
You need to talk—

Aabria Iyengar
But also your dice. Y'all need to get the FUCK together.

Lou Wilson
You need to talk to your dice in some kind of way, right?

Aabria Iyengar
You're my special little snowflakes, just for this, and you're being bastard people.

Lou Wilson
[Sing-song] Villains!

Aabria Iyengar
Villainous dice.

Lou Wilson
You know it's bad when Brennan has to write a bunch of stuff, because it's THAT bad.

Aabria Iyengar
He's generating lore.

Lou Wilson
It's like, "Oooh, alright, well, they've now—"

Aabria Iyengar
"I have to create a penal system because—"

Lou Wilson
Exactly. "Even my worst PDF is not enough."

Aabria Iyengar
[Laugh]

Lou Wilson
"I assumed they'd at least roll a 6 on the luck!"

Erika Ishii
So tell us about the School-to-Prison pipeline in Umora, Brennan.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Uhhh.

Lou Wilson
Campaign shift.

Aabria Iyengar
[Laugh]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Huge campaign shift.

Lou Wilson
"Two years later, after you—"

Brennan Lee Mulligan
[Singing Tom Waits' "Way Down In The Hole"] "When you walk through the garden!"

[Everyone laughs]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
So.

[Wagon trundling over cobblestones. A small bell rings. Footsteps and the wagon door creaks open.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You arrive at the Azure Battalion, and the first thing they're going to do is start to disarm you. Which means taking Wavebreaker.

Erika Ishii

[Gasp.]

Suvi (Aabria)

Okay. Okay. Okay. We gotta—

Eursulon (Lou)

We can't kill them. We can't.

Suvi (Aabria)

We can! It would just be annoying.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Well now you're in a barracks with like, a couple hundred of them.

Aabria Iyengar

I said what I said!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

[Laugh]

Suvi (Aabria)

No, hold on, hold on.

Aabria Iyengar

And I want to just try to stop before they take a Wavebreaker, and offer up my staff first.

Suvi (Aabria)

Maybe if you touch it, you'll realize that this isn't a shitty little Spirit trick, and I'm a Wizard, and you're on my last fucking nerve.

Azure Guard 3 (Brennan)

Great. Well, we'll go and run some tests on it too.

Suvi (Aabria)

Oh my god, don't take my STAFF! FUCK! AAGH!!

Azure Guard 3 (Brennan)

Well, we absolutely will, so we're going to take that and—

Suvi (Aabria)

Why are you like this?! Someone go get Galani!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Give me a persuasion check, but we're going to do disadvantage because you've had a lot of chances.

Aabria Iyengar

Thanks, bud! Oh, shit! Okay dice! 17!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You see, they look and say

Azure Guard 3 (Brennan)

Galani?

Suvi (Aabria)

Yeah! She's at the governor's mansion! Where I was two days ago!

Azure Guard 3 (Brennan)

Uhhh.

Suvi (Aabria)

Yep.

Azure Guard 3 (Brennan)

Stay—

Suvi (Aabria)

Put it together, I can hear your little brain spinnin'. Come on.

Azure Guard 3 (Brennan)

Hold the prisoners here—hold them—

Suvi (Aabria)

Don't call me a prisoner. Out loud to my face, I don't like that.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You see that, one of the guys turns around, you see this is one of, like, the guards who looks like he's going to be aggressive and violent?

Aabria Iyengar

Yeah!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And you see that the guy goes

Azure Guard 3 (Brennan)

Ah, ah, ah. The prisoner doesn't like it, and that—we're just going to sort ever—[Yelling] We're just gonna sort everything out! Keep the prisoners here.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And the guy goes

Azure Guard 4 (Brennan)

[Cockney accent] In the courtyard??

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And he says

Azure Guard 3 (Brennan)

Yeah, keep 'em in the courtyard, for a second.

Suvi (Aabria)

You guy, what's your name.

Azure Guard 3 (Brennan)

Huh?

Suvi (Aabria)
What's your name?

Azure Guard 3 (Brennan)
Oh, uh. Uh.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You see—

Lou Wilson
There it is.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
It's so hard.

Erika Ishii
[Cackling]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
The PDF froze.

Aabria Iyengar
[Laughing] Sorry sorry sorry!

Lou Wilson
We're fully off the map.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
He says

Sergeant Laplow (Brennan)
I'm Sergeant Laplow.

Suvi (Aabria)
Sergeant?

Sergeant Laplow (Brennan)
Yes.

Suvi (Aabria)
So you're supposed to be smarter than the rest of them.

Sergeant Laplow (Brennan)
Yes.

Suvi (Aabria)
Lean in real close. This is going to go real bad, if y'all don't tighten this up right now. I've had a very bad day. Please. You're kinda cute. We can just, don't—don't make this worse.

Erika Ishii
Ame leans a little closer.

Ame (Erika)
[Gossipy whispering] Oh, my gosh, this is SO interesting.

Eursulon (Lou)
Did you call him cute?

Suvi (Aabria)
Yeah, like, kinda. He's got like a good nose.

Ame (Erika)
But like in a very aggressive way.

Suvi (Aabria)
Yeah.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Sergeant Laplow turns and says

Sergeant Laplow (Brennan)
Respectfully, we're gonna go get this sorted out.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You see he takes the staff.

Suvi (Aabria)
Please don't make me let go of this. Because it's going to be a lot of people's jobs when I get it back. I'm not going to cast any spells, I'm not going to hurt anyone. I didn't before. We could both stand here together holding it.

Erika Ishii
[Laugh]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
See, Sergeant Laplow leans into you, and he goes

Sergeant Laplow (Brennan)
I've been working at the Azure Battalion for about four years. Respectfully, people who threaten that jobs are going to get lost, usually have to ask someone permission to make that happen.

Suvi (Aabria)
Okay, I understand that, and I know you're trying to check me on status here, but even if I ask permission, I bet it fuckin' happens.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Give me persuasion.

Aabria Iyengar
[Laughing] Oh my god stop!

Lou Wilson
What's happening!?

Aabria Iyengar
Don't make me roll anymore, it's bad! There we go, 5!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
He says—

Aabria Iyengar
[Crying laughing] I gotta stop talking! Someone has to stop me!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
He says

Sergeant Laplow (Brennan)
I'm taking the staff now.

Suvi (Aabria)
[Resigned] Alright.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
And pulls the staff away, and walks off.

Ame (Erika)
[Whispering] It's ok, Suvi!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
What's going on with Ame and Eursulon?

Aabria Iyengar
[Cackle]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You're watching Suvi deconstruct. She is SPIRALING.

Aabria Iyengar
[Laugh]

Lou Wilson
Aghhhh.

Erika Ishii
[Stammering] I've never been out of Toma before, I don't know how hierarchy works or pulling rank, I—

Lou Wilson
Yes! I—[Laugh]

Erika Ishii
This is terrifying!

Eursulon (Lou)
Suvi?

Suvi (Aabria)
[Wailing] Yeah?

Ame (Erika)
Hey.

Eursulon (Lou)
What..?

Suvi (Aabria)
[Wailing] Took my staff!!

Eursulon (Lou)
It's alright!

Ame (Erika)
[Soothing] It's ok, you'll get it back! You'll get it back!

Suvi (Aabria)
[Crying] I just got it!

Ame (Erika)
Yeah, yeah, it's okay, though. It's okay. He's going to check it out, and then—

Suvi (Aabria)
[Crying] No, it's dirty!

Ame (Erika)
—they're going to let us go.

Eursulon (Lou)
What? He's—he's not going to get it dirty.

Ame (Erika)
We can clean it, it's okay!

Suvi (Aabria)
[Sobbing] What if he chips it?

Eursulon (Lou)
He's not going to chip it.

Suvi (Aabria)
[Sob]

Ame (Erika)
You're okay, you're doing great, okay?

Suvi (Aabria)
I'm not! This is so bad!

Eursulon (Lou)
It's okay.

Ame (Erika)
Thanks for trying to stand up for us.

Suvi (Aabria)
[Sobbing] I don't know who I am, and I don't know how to have any authority other than what I've been given.

Eursulon (Lou)
Well, the fact that you have had any authority before—your authority, the authority you had, got us on a boat, and it got us—

Suvi (Aabria)

[Crying] And they tried to kill us on the boat!

Eursulon (Lou)

Yes, but then it got us rooms, and it got us food.

Suvi (Aabria)

[Wailing] Then we got in a fight there too! I don't like it outside of the Citadel.

Lou Wilson

[Laugh]

Eursulon (Lou)

It's alright. The world is a big place, with a lot going on.

Suvi (Aabria)

[Wracking sob]

Erika Ishii

I move as close as they—I look at the big sergeant. I'm just like

Ame (Erika)

[Muttering] Okay. It's okay, I'm gonna—

Azure Guard 4 (Brennan)

Yeah, you can cry.

Ame (Erika)

Okay.

[Aabria and Erika laugh]

Azure Guard 4 (Brennan)

You just can't leave, but you can cry if you want.

Ame (Erika)

Ah, thank you, sir.

Erika Ishii

I get close to Suvi and I'm like

Ame (Erika)

Hey. It's okay. We have gone through an awful lot in the last couple of days. You're doing SO great!

Suvi (Aabria)

[Voiceless hoarse whisper] No, we're not! Why are you saying that? We just promised, the scariest thing, I think anyone, in this part of the world, has ever been up against, that we would do the impossible.

Ame (Erika)

It's okay to be scared. And it's okay to be scared of that.

Suvi (Aabria)

[Recovering] Yeah. We can't let that stop us from. Doing what we need to do.

Ame (Erika)

Yeah, you're doing fine. We appreciate you. And, it is good for you to have this little cry, and maybe you should consider doing that now and again.

Suvi (Aabria)

[Whisper] No.

Ame (Erika)

Yes.

Suvi (Aabria)

Okay, thank you.

Aabria Iyengar

I'm just going to hug Ame.

Ame (Erika)

Okay! I love you.

Suvi (Aabria)

It's bad. I love you. love you, Eursulon, I'm sorry.

Eursulon (Lou)

It is fine.

Suvi (Aabria)

God.

Eursulon (Lou)

We'll be fine.

Ame (Erika)

We're going to be okay

Suvi (Aabria)

You're saying that, but I'll be dead very soon.

Eursulon (Lou)

No.

Ame (Erika)

No, no.

Suvi (Aabria)

You don't remember Steel.

Eursulon (Lou)

I won't let them kill you.

Suvi (Aabria)

No, you—Steel is crazy.

Ame (Erika)

She's—agh.

Suvi (Aabria)
No, she is.

[Wagon approaching, pounding drums]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

A big carriage rolls up, of the Governor's mansion—so, that has all the like, The Saraz Imperium, gilding, looks like a giant fabergé egg, music box, kind of carriage. Six white horses with feathered plumes rolls up.

[A horse whinnies]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You see Laplow comes in, holding the staff—now wrapped, it's wrapped up in like white silks. And you see Galani steps out of the carriage. Anyone who wants to, give me an insight check.

Aabria Iyengar
Oh god.

Erika Ishii
Dirty 20.

Eursulon (Lou)
19.

Aabria Iyengar
[Deep sigh] 22.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Eursulon and Suvi. Galani has been crying recently, like red, bloodshot eyes. She goes to the carriage, and pulls out, wrapped in sort of a blue covering cloth—like a velvet covering cloth—a massive shape. And you see some stewards of the Azure Battalion wearing those Steward's Rings, come lift this heavy thing up, move it over, put it in front of you.

[Ominous metallic ringing. Harsh Imperial trumpets join the pounding drums]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

It's a flat thing, about like, ten and a half feet tall. Stand it in front of you. You see that your staff is handed over to Galani. Galani does not make eye contact with you. One of the stewards pulls the drape off of the shape in front of you, and you see the standing mirror from the wall. And you see a mirror reflecting the deck of a ship with no ocean behind it. Instead, clouds racing by, in a bright blue sky.

[Rushing wind]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And there are some people gathered on the ship, but standing there, is a woman in gold armor, a woman you have not seen since she came to deliver heartbreaking news to a young Suvi, at the end of that magical summer, when Suvi had to learn that her parents were not coming to collect her. Steel—now older, with white scars across her face, white streaks in her auburn hair, and one of her irises gone partially white, with that same sort of almost like, weird arcane scarring—suddenly is staring at you. She is standing closer to her mirror than you are. So she is, right now, about 9ft tall.

Suvi (Aabria)
[Whispered] Fuck. [Clears throat]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
And she looks and says.

Steel (Brennan)

[Loudly, sternly, echoing] "On ice," is what I said. I don't THINK I could have been MUCH clearer! And I had the courtesy to do this in private last time.

Suvi (Aabria)

Oh, you could—yeah. Yeah. I'm sorry.

Steel (Brennan)

I understand you gave Sergeant Laplow a hard time about YOUR staff. What EXACTLY is yours? Because I don't have anything that belongs to me. I have the tools of the Citadel, THAT'S what I have. And it's a privilege to wield them.

Aabria Iyengar

Every word is like a physical hit to Suvi.

Suvi (Aabria)

Sorry, I didn't... Think. I just needed to get back in time. We could not, and it was a good—

Ame (Erika)

There were extenuating circumstances.

Suvi (Aabria)

[Yelling with rage] AME, SHUT UP!

Steel (Brennan)

No no. I'd like Ame to talk. In fact, let's do this, right here.

[Imperious music swells to a crescendo and fades away. 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]