

# Worlds Beyond Number

## The Fox: Then and Now Preview

[In a forest, you can hear many types of birds chirping along the wind. You hear snuffling, and a few whelps from a fox. There are soft footsteps in the underbrush, and distant sounds of a woodpecker. The fox continues to sniff around the leaves and soil.]

[From 3:00 the "baa" of a few sheep start to get closer. at 3:30 you start to hear voices from afar. Suvi and Ame's voices are finally recognizable. They speak urgently, as though stressed, but their words can barely be made out]

Ame [Erika]

I think it's time for me to have a familiar?

Stream Spirit [Brennan]

Okay. I don't know about any of the other stuff, but I'll tell you, if you need an animal, there's a lot of animals around here and I wouldn't be much of a stream spirit if I couldn't—okay, hold on. Time to get to work. It's been a minute. Let's see if I've still got it. [With a lot of effort] HYPE!

[The peals of horns rise up in the soundscape. A rising tone crescendos into a dramatic boom and recedes, and a song plucked on strings brings us into the next scene where the sounds of water get louder.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Taking off from Joras, the Roan sails merrily over the sea, cresting over the white caps as it heads out to deeper water, dull blue gray of the wide ocean beyond which the shores of the Imperium await. We see on the deck; our witch Ame, our wizard Suvi, and our wild one, Eursulon. All of you have garnered passage on this vessel, and yet, having garnered passage, there's no real tasks that await you. However, you do see that the crew sort of goes about their business. Ame, you look down and see the fox down beneath you, looking up, eyeing people around here and there. It says,

Fox [Brennan]

[Sniffing around] Stuff in those barrels.

Ame [Erika]

Yeah. This is a merchant ship. Are you curious about what's in the boxes?

Fox [Brennan]

Yes, very much so. I can actually tell you which barrels I'm curious about if you want to know.

Ame [Erika]

Actually, yeah, let's go into those barrels.

Fox [Brennan]

Okay. This barrel over here is of pretty intense interest to me.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And you see, he sort of walks over and you see there's a large barrel that very lightly casked on top. It seems to be like a crew food barrel, but you see it has some just like apples in it that look like they're there for the crew to eat and stay healthy on like a long sort of ocean voyage. You see, yeah. There's this big thing of apples and the fox says,

Fox [Brennan]

Smells like something up there, like fruit.

Ame [Erika]

Oh yeah, yeah. It says apples on the side. Can you read? You can't read? Why would you be able to read?

Fox [Brennan]

I can read.

Ame [Erika]

Oh, yeah. Well then what does that barrel say over there?

Fox [Brennan]

It's not saying anything. As quiet as can be. It's a trick question. And I won.

Ame [Erika]

You can't win a question.

Fox [Brennan]

If you don't get caught by a trap, you won. And that was a trap made of words for me and I won.

Ame [Erika]

Oh, touche.

Aabria Iyengar

Suvi giggles because she's overhearing all of this while pretending to busy herself in her spell book.

Fox [Brennan]

Oh, and I suppose you know how to, uhh—

Suvi [Aabria]

Read.

Fox [Brennan]

Read.

Aabria Iyengar

And I just hold up my spell book.

Suvi [Aabria]

Yeah. Also, I was laughing because you won.

Fox [Brennan]  
Oh, yeah. Thank you.

Suvi [Aabria]  
You're welcome.

Fox [Brennan]  
So, "read," that's when you open that.

Ame [Erika]  
No, reading is a way that we communicate with each other with only symbols. And it's kind of useful, actually.

Suvi [Aabria]  
[Under breath] Kind of?

Erika Ishii  
I look at Suvi and nod knowingly.

Aabria Iyengar  
Suvi just sort of slowly nods back while trying not to be offended by "kinda."

Fox [Brennan]  
So you said it's useful. How much food have you gotten with it?

Suvi [Aabria]  
All of mine.

Ame [Erika]  
Yeah, that's the thing.

Fox [Brennan]  
You got all your food with "read?"

Suvi [Aabria]  
[Quietly] No, I lied.

Ame [Erika]  
Well—

Suvi [Aabria]  
But a lot of it.

Ame [Erika]  
Yeah, I mean, it's how you can tell what is food and what isn't food without smelling it or seeing it. You can tell if the food's going to be good or bad. You can tell if the food is, you know, not FOR you, per se. Like these. These apples are for the crew.

Fox [Brennan]  
Elaborate on that.

Suvi [Aabria]  
Don't get us kicked off this boat.

Ame [Erika]  
Eursulon. How shall I say... When food is supposed to be for somebody else that is not you? You know not to take it, right?

Eursulon [Lou]  
If you're told not to, yes.

Ame [Erika]  
Yes. Okay, well, explain that—

Brennan Lee Mulligan  
You turn around and the foxes in the barrel eating apples.

Suvi [Aabria]  
No!

Ame [Erika]  
No, no no no

Erika Ishii  
I pull them out.

Fox [Brennan]  
[Gobble noises] Come on!

Erika Ishii  
I pull them out!

Fox [Brennan]  
If they're for the crew, then why was I able to eat them?

Suvi [Aabria]  
Oh, my God.

Fox [Brennan]  
It doesn't seem like they're for the crew. It seems like you are for the crew, and the apples are for whoever gets them.

Eursulon [Lou]  
Fox, this is a big day for you, but, in addition to reading, you also have to learn about something called manners, which is not an easy lesson to learn, but they are a thing, and they guide how we are meant to act with one another.

Fox [Brennan]

Okay, what's the first "manners."

Eursulon [Lou]

[Sighs] This is not my thing.

Suvi [Aabria]

You're doing great. Keep going.

Eursulon [Lou]

I would argue that manner number one is respect.

Fox [Brennan]

Ooh, okay. I know respect.

Eursulon [Lou]

Do you know respect?

Fox [Brennan]

Yeah. If I see a big animal, I run away.

Eursulon [Lou]

There it is.

Suvi [Aabria]

That's more like fear.

Fox [Brennan]

What's the difference?

Suvi [Aabria]

Shit. Okay.

Aabria Iyengar

Suvi taps out and walks across the boat.

Eursulon [Lou]

I guess I would—

Fox [Brennan]

What's the difference between fear and respect? I'm learning!

Ame [Erika]

Is there ever a time in which you are not afraid of something, but you still want to do what that thing is telling you to do? Like, is there any part of your brain that will stop doing something that you want to do?

Fox [Brennan]

No.

Ame [Erika]

Okay. All right. Well, I don't know where we can start from, here.

Fox [Brennan]

I think I'm right here. Because I think respect is when what you want to do changes because you're afraid of a bigger animal.

Ame [Erika]

Fear isn't the only motivator. One day, hopefully soon, you will find a way that makes you feel, that will make you stop doing something that you want to do. And that isn't fear, but perhaps caring about something or someone that is not you.

Fox [Brennan]

Well, so you're the boss, is that it?

Ame [Erika]

Well, no. No I mean—I mean, yes, yes I am. But also, I want you to do the things that I say not because you're afraid of me, but because you like me.

Fox [Brennan]

I like you.

Ame [Erika]

You do?

Fox [Brennan]

Yeah. Do you like me?

Ame [Erika]

Yeah.

Fox [Brennan]

[Laughs VERY mischeviously]

Ame [Erika]

[Laughs at Fox, which turns into an equally mischevious laugh]

[Ame and Fox both keep laughing "ominously"]

Aabria Iyengar

Suvi's shaking her head and going back into her spell book with old notes from, like, ethics classes and tearing the pages out and throwing them into the sea.

Fox [Brennan]

But here's what I don't understand. I don't respect you. I don't respect anything that can't catch and eat me. But, I want to—I don't do the things that I don't want to do that you want me to do. Because that would be, "I'm afraid." When I find out that there's something you want, I want to do it.

Ame [Erika]

Maybe that's just the way that familiars work. Maybe that's the magic of it. Or maybe it's it's because you care about me.

Fox [Brennan]

Yeeaah, I care about you. That sounds right. But if I don't get respect and don't really understand it, that's fine. But I also think that maybe all of you don't understand wanting. Because I never do something I don't want to do. If I'm doing it, it means I want it.

Eursulon [Lou]

Well, actions have consequences, Fox.

Fox [Brennan]

How can I get some consequences?

Eursulon [Lou]

You don't want some consequences.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

I'll tell you what I want.

Eursulon [Lou]

Oh, you'll tell me what I want?

Fox [Brennan]

Yeah, yeah!

Eursulon [Lou]

I'm gonna pick the Fox up.

Fox [Brennan]

I respect you! I respect you!

Eursulon [Lou]

That's right, you respect me. Come get these consequences, Fox.

Lou Wilson

I'm going to chase him.

Eursulon [Lou]

Come get these consequences. Here they come.

Fox [Brennan]

I don't want them! I don't want them!

Eursulon [Lou]

Here come the consequences!

Erika Ishii

Ame also sprints after them, giggling.

Ame [Erika]

Consequences! Consequences!

[A sweet tune gets plucked out on strings, fading out]