

Worlds Beyond Number

The Wizard, the Witch, and the Wild One: Episode 01

Version 1

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

Erika Ishii:

This is the sound of Worlds Beyond Number.

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

[The sound of wind through leaves come in, and an owl hoots]

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

Beautiful stars hang in the nighttime sky, celebrating the near full moon that shines light over a vast and endless rippling sea of treetops, whose leaves are cast in indigo by the pale moonlight. [Mysterious orchestral backdrop starts in] Wind moves over them, feeling of brisk chill air; the coming of winter. And in all of this silver and violet, there is one cradled point of warm and orange light emanating from the crosshatched and little dust covered windows of a humble country tavern. Gotta start at a tavern.

Aabria Iyengar:

Ahhh, ah that's good.

Lou Wilson:

I mean, are we playing D&D?

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

Are we playing D&D?

Aabria Iyengar:

That's how you know.

Lou Wilson:

[Absolute nonsense noises]

Aabria Iyengar:

[Whispered] That's how you know.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

You got to understand the form so you can subvert them.

Aabria Iyengar:

There you go.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

Exactly. You get it. The tavern rests on the bend of a dirt road with comfortable wheel ruts alongside it. The road hugs the edge of a not too steep ridge that goes down into the series of orchards and vineyards. Small farmhouses now sleepy and quiet as the nighttime has come, with beautiful little lined and stonewalled fields of vines and peppers and grapes and tomatoes, all hanging there with harvest right

around the corner. The noise from the tavern is one of merry conversation, as the travelers who just reached this remote village need to stop here for the night because the next tavern would be too far off on their journeys. Along with plenty of the villagers and farmers here who have come to share a drink and a meal among friends in this public house.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

Off in this far-flung pastoral place, there is no need to differentiate oneself from competition of other taverns. So the tavern bears no name or sign. It's the only tavern in town. But for those that need specify, it is often called the Tavern by the Well. A beautiful stone well rests off sort of partially in the road near the stable and is covered by the boughs of a very bold magnolia tree that is now in full blossom and it's white and pink petals sway in the wind over the well. And looking in through the window we see merry villagers, some travelers, a bar with a warm lacquered wooden railing, and a figure behind the bar pretty effortlessly hoisting barrels up onto the back wall. Lou, could you describe your-

Lou Wilson:

[Yelling, VERY suddenly] YEES, uh yeah I'm happy to.

Aabria Iyengar:

Oh my God.

Lou Wilson:

Do you want name or do you just want description?

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

Give me the name as well. Although it's quite possible that you're the only person in the tavern who knows it.

Lou Wilson:

Oh, look at that. Well, the person I'm describing is my character, Eursulon Toma.

Aabria Iyengar:

Oh.

Lou Wilson:

I am a large, probably about six foot five, large dark-skinned man. Muscular, but not in a "I work out" kind of way, just like in a very attractive sort of way. Black stubble, kind of a bit unkempt, but in that kind of rugged, kind of attractive way. But then bright red hair braided back behind his head very cleanly. And then rich hazel eyes.

Aabria Iyengar:

[Quietly] Oh.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

Eursulon, most of the people here at the Tavern by the Well refer to you simply as Toma, and probably a few have heard of that village even though you're many miles from it now. But those that don't, it's common enough as a given name that it certainly brooks less attention than Eursulon. As you are lifting barrels up, you look out at the chamber here, and this is sort of the work that you have been hired to do here at the tavern. There's plenty of physical labor here to be done that you are more than equipped to be able to do.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

You look out into the common room with the sort of rich pungent smell of pipe smoke that hangs and diffuses the light in this space, the candles that are lit and hanging from chandeliers and there's a big roaring fire in the fireplace. So it's a very smoke-filled room, although it's a sweet wood smoke mixed with tobacco. And you see that there is an old man wearing brown travelers' clothes.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

He's got some sort of loose breeches, his boots sort of tied up with lace and cloth around his shins and he has a vest with many trinkets and ornaments hanging from it. Probably a traveling peddler of some kind, selling sort of wares and charms and things like that. He's got a couple of days stubble, a little bit of sallow skin, and he's being fed by some of the villagers here. You can see because he's a storyteller and—

Lou Wilson:

[Sweetly] Aww.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

—in this part of the world that's close enough to some kind of priest or holy man that the folk of the village are sort of plying him with some belongings. A heel of bread and a little bit of soup is put in front of him by the innkeeper's daughter, who you know, her name is Rosalyn. And she puts it in front of him and he says,

Peddler [Brennan]:

[West Country English "Pirate" Accent, laughing] "Oh, thank you kindly love, I appreciate it. [Laughs] Well now children, you got to—" [Quiet slurp]

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

And sops up soup with the bread and eats it. You see this guy is HUNGRY

Aabria Iyengar:

[Laughing]

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

and he looks at them and he says,

Peddler [Brennan]:

[With cheery wistfulness] "Oh, have I seen the sea? Well, oh, I've seen the wide oceans and I've seen the far off seas of gauth, maye and roof. I've seen the inner seas beyond the ily, the islands around the great city of Carro, if you can believe that."

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

The kids look, a person coming from even four villages away—

Erika Ishii:

[A sound of child-like awe]

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

[Laughs] —Is a huge, huge deal. And he looks out and one of the little children pipes up and says,

Child [Brennan]:

You've seen the whole world?

Brennan Lee Mulligan:
And he goes,

Peddler [Brennan]:
The whole world. Well, I've seen all of THIS world, certainly.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:
And the kids all kind of grow hushed.

[Erika and Aabria act out the awed sounds of the children]

Peddler [Brennan]:
"You certainly didn't think that this was the only world there was, did you? No, no. This is not the only world. [Laughing] It's not even the first. There was a world before this one, children."

Brennan Lee Mulligan:
And he leans in.

Lou Wilson:
I think at this point also, Eursulon starts putting the barrels away just slower and quieter—

Aabria Iyengar:
Ah!

Lou Wilson:
—as he kind of turns part of his attention to whatever this man is about to say.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:
You see one little precocious kid says,

Precocious Child [Brennan]:
Not the FIRST world? What do you MEAN??

Brennan Lee Mulligan:
in a sort of accusatory disbelieving tone, and he says,

Peddler [Brennan]:
[Hushed] Well, you'll believe it or not. But them's that's learning know that the first world there was, was the world of spirits. Great and powerful, some were. The Sun and Moon themselves, and their king and queen. The great storms, beings high above and deep below in that first world. It was them that lived there that made our world, you know?

Brennan Lee Mulligan:
The children sort of shudder and look at the storyteller as he then says,

Peddler [Brennan]:
[Softly] But you need not worry children, for sure there's them spirits [Voice rising grandly] GREAT AND MIGHTY as the dawn, [back to soft] but there are spirits small and humble as a blade of grass—

[Erika playing awed children again]

Peddler [Brennan]:

—with stations no greater than a humble acorn or a seed of the field. The world of spirits is great. All around us, above, beneath, beyond, below.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

You see that the old man smiles at this point. Eursulon, give me a perception check.

Lou Wilson:

You got it.

Aabria Iyengar:

[chanting] First roll, first roll, first roll...

Lou Wilson:

13.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

[Quietly] Yeah!

Aabria Iyengar:

Ooh.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

You see that, later than usual, three guys come into the tavern, and you see they have a couple horses outside and begin to speak to Rosalyn, who nods and goes out to sort of, you know, stable their horses. But they come in and go sit off at a table by the side.

Lou Wilson:

Mmm.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

Looking at the three men, I think you notice that they're wearing villagers clothes but you don't recognize them.

Lou Wilson:

So they're from the farming communities or just regulars, dressed like them but not of them?

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

Yeah. You've been working here since midsummer — or not even midsummer, you've been working here since the first leaf changed, so probably a couple of weeks now. And you kind of clocked every recurring face in the crowd at the end of the first week. And these guys, they aren't dressed like travelers, but they're not from here.

Lou Wilson:

Boots muddy? Do they seem of the field?

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

Boots not muddy.

Lou Wilson:
Oh.

Aabria Iyengar:
Ooh.

Lou Wilson:
Well, their business is their own.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:
Turning back to see the peddler finish his story. You see he says,

Peddler [Brennan]:
[Conspiratorially] Aye, these first ones, spirits, you might know them by many names. Our "honored friends" they are called, and especially, children.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:
And you see he wags his finger,

Peddler [Brennan]:
To their face they are called this. But there is another title they wear, one that reminds us that their world was first and ours was made by theirs, the [suddenly loud] WILD ONES!

[sound of startled, excited children, Erika starts cackling]

Brennan Lee Mulligan:
The kids jump up, you see the kids sort of laugh and he laughs as well and sort of pops a little bit of a confetti thing, some little trick up his, like - magician's trick up his sleeve. You see this small, very precocious little girl speaks up and says,

Precocious Little Girl [Brennan]:
Is there... is there anything like spirits here? Or like, us could be spirits?

Brennan Lee Mulligan:
He's like,

Peddler [Brennan]:
[Softly] Well, I don't know if it's likely that you could BE a spirit little one, but! It's not like we don't have tricks of our own.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:
And you see the kids pay a little bit more attention. He says,

Peddler [Brennan]:
For long turnings of the seasons, there were many things we learned from the spirits. There were some that learned the ways of magic, because some spirit was indeed their father or mother and flowed through them. And there were others that bargained and bargained dearly for the secret that the spirits held. But it's true now that there are some out there in the wide wide world that learned a different path.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

And you see that in this moment he sort of takes out a little deck of playing cards and flips some cards through his fingers and says,

Peddler [Brennan]:

In the hidden places of the world, there have always been those who spoke with kindness and respect for those of the world unseen and hidden. Has anyone here ever had the fortune or misfortune of meeting... a witch?

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

And you see the kids all sort of [Frightened Gasp]! And you see he says,

Peddler [Brennan]:

[Comforting] Oh, don't be alarmed. Don't be alarmed. You need only be respectful little ones. Witches do an important job of speaking to that hidden world on our behalf. And sometimes when we've lost our way, speaking to us on its behalf. And then of course I'm sure you've all heard of a wizard.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

And here he gets a little bit bigger and broader, and he says,

Peddler [Brennan]:

For indeed it was not too long ago that the first wizard found... the secret.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

And you see the little kid says,

Precocious Little Girl [Brennan]:

What secret?

Peddler [Brennan]:

The secret of where those spirits found THEIR secrets from.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

And the kids get FULLY lost on this one

[Laughter]

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

You see them go look up and the peddler goes like

Peddler [Brennan]:

Eh, you'll understand when you're older

[Whole cast laughs, Erika acts as a confused child]

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

Eursulon, you hear from the door,

Rosalyn [Brennan]:

Toma...

Eursulon Toma [Lou]:
[Somewhat surprised] Uh... Yes.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:
Roselyn looks at you and says,

Rosalyn [Brennan]:
Uh, the horses are, um [slight laugh] they're a little bit bigger than most ponies around here. If you could um...

Eursulon Toma [Lou]:
I will tend to them.

Rosalyn [Brennan]:
Thank you.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:
And you see that she walks out with you to the stables.

Lou Wilson:
[Quietly] Mhm.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:
You walk around and approach and you see these are — Like, the guys horses that they came in on, like, three kind of big challenger looking type horses. You see that Rosalyn has clearly had a hard time tying them up in this — Like, the guys maybe asked for a full like, "Can you check their shoes and can you feed them and water them?" And they seem like, not willing to go into the stalls of the stable, essentially.

Lou Wilson:
[chuckles to himself] I think Eursulon is going to walk up and grab the reins of the three horses and look to Rosalyn and say,

Eursulon Toma [Lou]:
I will take care of them.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:
She looks at you and says,

Rosalyn [Brennan]:
[Haltingly] Oh, a-all right.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:
And you see she sort of walks back towards the tavern for a moment. What does Eursulon do?

Lou Wilson:
I think once he feels like her eyes aren't on him anymore, is there one that is larger of the three?

Brennan Lee Mulligan:
Yes there is, yes.

Lou Wilson:

I'm going to push my face closer to him, speak softly saying

Eursulon Toma [Lou]:

My friend, I will make sure you have feed. Please follow.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

This enormous muscular charger, beautiful glossy black mare with a white diamond in the middle of her forehead and white socks, sort of the longer hair around her hooves. Hears you and walks, completely calm, back and the two other horses—

Lou Wilson:

I think I let go of the — I hold the reigns only as long as Rosalyn is there and then let go.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

Give me a perception check.

Lou Wilson:

18.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

You did not feel Rosalyn's eyes on you, but you now sense that she stopped halfway to the door.

Lou Wilson:

Eursulon is going to want to continue, for things to seem normal, and just walk with the horses.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

After 30 seconds, a minute of doing that, Rosalyn walks back in with just a bucket of oats to sort of place by the door. And you see she turns up and says,

Rosalyn [Brennan]:

[Haltingly] You have such a way with, um, with the horses. It's ah, um—

Eursulon Toma [Lou]:

I am... comfortable with them. I spent much time with... beasts... growing up.

Rosalyn [Brennan]:

[Nervously] Oh! Um... That's - well uh, I've always wanted to ask actually if um. So you grew up on a farm or..?

Eursulon Toma [Lou]:

[Somewhat beleaguered] Yes.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

Oh, I don't... I don't mean to pry.

[Erika and Aabria laughing in the background]

Rosalyn [Brennan]:

[losing composure] I'm sorry. I - I uh, the... It's just [stumbling over the word] the - uh your name, you know, Toma. I- I um. [Stops to gather composure] Some travel- some travelers came in, come in, and they came through Toma, you know, be- earlier before the summer before you were working here, um, and I just wondered if you- if you grew up there or not or..?

Eursulon Toma [Lou]:

[Evasively] I spent some time there. And my family is of there.

Rosalyn [Brennan]:

Oh!

Eursulon Toma [Lou]:

But it has been some time since I've returned.

Rosalyn [Brennan]:

Well, that's wonderful. So your mother and father are there?

Eursulon Toma [Lou]:

[Slowly] Mmm... Yyyes.

Rosalyn [Brennan]:

[EXTREMELY Nervously] I don't- Again, I don't uh, I don't mean to pry, you're very — I- I- I have to confess something. I stumbled upon some of your things in the stable, and I, I um...

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

And you see that she looks— And you can see where you keep your stuff kind of hidden. It's like, MORE hidden than the last time you left it there. There's more like hay and straw on top of it. She clearly tried to hide it again. She's like,

Rosalyn [Brennan]:

I just, I'm really sorry, I know that you like your privacy, my father was very clear about the nature of the deal you struck with him for working here, but I just [More confidently, trying to explain] we have beds in the inn! And you sleep in the stables and I just- I thought I'd bring out a bedroll or some blankets or something like that and I saw the sort of little indentation of where you sleep and I just saw something glint under the hay, [hushed] and you have a, there's a sword under there.

Eursulon Toma [Lou]:

[Calmly] Yes. It was given to me by old friends. Rosalyn, you show me great kindness, but the reasons... I use my money for other things. There are more times of the year I travel often and there are times of the year where I cannot work. And as I said, I grew up around beasts and I'm comfortable here. [Somewhat sternly] Thank you for your kindness, but it is NOT necessary and I would MUCH prefer if you were to not go through my things.

Rosalyn [Brennan]:

[Disheartened] I am truly sorry it was... it was terribly rude, and um...

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

Give me an insight check

Lou Wilson:

15.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

I think you see it. This innkeeper's daughter is hopelessly in love with you.

[Aabria and Erika groan and cry out in dismay]

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

And you can tell that she just feels like there was a version of this in her head—

Aabria Iyengar:

[Sympathetic Oh!]

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

—when she discovered this, like, your belongings that she was like, "This is how we finally connect."

Aabria Iyengar:

[Another sympathetic oh!]

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

And it's like NOT going to plan for her and so you just see her go.

Rosalyn [Brennan]:

I've been terribly rude and the sword is so... Your sword, and there's a small shield in there, some sort of strange round- It's just like a small round shield as well. Um, if you ever need me to care for them or to...

Lou Wilson:

Rosalyn, this is very kind and I do appreciate it but it is not necessary.

Rosalyn [Brennan]:

[Still nervous but more subdued] I understand. I'm very glad to hear that you had family and friends somewhere, because you're all unfailingly kind and courteous. But I know that you've been here for over a month and there are none in the village that can truly call you a friend and, I just... I just wanted to make sure you knew that you could feel at home here.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

And before you can speak, Eursulon, you hear another voice from the doorway say,

Peddler [Brennan]:

Well of course, he's not at home here.

Erika Ishii:

[gasps]

Aabria Iyengar:

AUGH!!!

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

And you see the old peddler step into the doorway. He's framed by the falling magnolia petals as he smiles and flips a card through his fingers.

Peddler [Brennan]:

Not at home, I would imagine most places here.

Lou Wilson:

Do I get any... Do any of my hackles go up about impending violence or does this just feel...?

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

Give me perception.

Lou Wilson:

You got-

Aabria Iyengar:

[whispering excitedly] Let's goooo...

Lou Wilson:

Another 15.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

Because of the slope of the ridge, the back of the stables. It's second story where you keep the hay, the sort of like, attic window is actually at ground level for the slope of the ridge behind it, 'cause the slope sort of goes up. You smell flower petals and hay through that window. That window is open and there are figures that you have not noticed, until you thought to become aware, waiting up above in the rafters directly above you.

Lou Wilson:

[Long worried hmmm] Ooooh hoooh, ok! I think I'm going to roll a dice for myself. We're going to see what it is. Okay, Eursulon is going to— How far is my sword from me and how far is Rosalyn from me?

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

Rosalyn was gesturing to it. It's five feet away from you.

Lou Wilson:

How far is Rosalyn from me?

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

What is the exact amount of feet for someone that is really attracted to you but also feels bashful? I'll say five feet.

Aabria Iyengar:

Yeah.

Lou Wilson:

Five feet?

Aabria Iyengar:

Yeah, that's right. Enough to touch if ANY sort of thing happens.

Lou Wilson:

If a hand goes out, it could be met.

Aabria Iyengar:
[Hyped] Yeah!

Brennan Lee Mulligan:
It could be met, but we're not in the bubble.

Aabria Iyengar:
Yeah.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:
Yeah, exactly. Yeah.

Lou Wilson:
I'm going to quickly dart back, grab my things and move so that where those guys would jump would be in front of me, not behind me.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:
Cool. Yep.

Lou Wilson:
But keep my eyes on just the man coming up the hill as if I have not known that they are there.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:
Cool. Let's roll initiative.

Lou Wilson:
Great.

[Erika yells in the distance]

Aabria Iyengar:
Oh my god

Lou Wilson:
19.

Erika Ishii:
Woo!

Aabria Iyengar:
[Whispered] Let's go

Brennan Lee Mulligan:
Let's go. You are going to act first.

Lou Wilson:
Okay.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

Something deep, primal, wild within you goes, "Okay. I know where the things that want to hurt me are." And you leap to the hay and a sword wrapped in blue silk and a gleaming golden pauldron, a broad shoulder pauldron, like a plate of armor made to wrap around the shoulder and protect the neck and shoulder, come up out of the hay.

Lou Wilson:

Quick question, is there also a music box with those things?

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

There is also a music box with those things.

Lou Wilson:

Eursulon is hopeful and is going to look at the man.

Eursulon Toma [Lou]:

[Angrily] You do not understand that which you speak of. You... [takes a shaky breath] I beg of you. I beg of you. Leave me be.

Peddler [Brennan]:

Leave you be? Oh, there's many a clever man in this world who would pay a mighty fine price for a great and wondrous find like you. I know what you are. I know that you do not belong here and there are questions that need answering for why I have found you in this place.

Lou Wilson:

Great. I'm going to drop glamour. Here's who Eursulon actually is.

Aabria Iyengar:

YES-UH!

[Erika squeals, they both laugh]

Lou Wilson:

Seven foot, six feet tall, truly grow another foot, large furry kind of bearlike body. Kind of built more animalistically, kind of have large massive hind feet almost like a rabbit. The hands that go out into-massive hands that go out into like, clawed hands with thumbs. His head has the same plumage as a horned owl but his face is more feline. It has the philtrum, learned that's what it's called. Has the philtrum, the kind of split lip going down into a mouth from which two tusks kind of jut up from the jaw. Angular face, but the same rich hazel eyes. I am statted out like a firbolg, so I have Hidden Step, and with a moment of sadness looking at Rosalyn, I am going to use my bonus action to use hidden step to become invisible. And I am going to run.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

As the menacing travelers, the sort of brute force men drop from the ceiling, you have already vanished in a twinkling of starlight.

Lou Wilson:

I would like to use my Speech of Beast and Leaf, which allows me Charisma on influence—

[Aabria and Erika hold back excited yells]

Lou Wilson:

Offers me Advantage on Charisma Checks to influence animals.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

Yeah.

Lou Wilson:

I would like to turn to the mare who I led into the stable and say,

Eursulon Toma [Lou]:

Run.

Lou Wilson:

And I will chase after them and I would like them to— My hope is that they will charge through their masters and I will follow.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

That is a Nat 20 on the horse's initiative.

Lou Wilson:

Wooo!!

Aabria Iyengar:

Let's! Go!

Lou Wilson:

Let's go horses.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

Let's give me persuasion with advantage. I think we'll call this just a DC, I think DC 10, you can get them to freak out, DC 15, they will do exactly as you say.

Lou Wilson:

That is only going to be a 12.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

The horses scattered into the stable. As they do so, give me one last stealth check as you try to rush past the peddler in the doorway without alerting him to your presence.

Lou Wilson:

That's going to be a 13.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

All right, this guy's got a plus five, gets an 18. You make it past him out the doorway and he whips around. You hear the men drop from the rafters. You see they're carrying clubs, blackjacks, and the man, the peddler turns around to you and you see he flips a card around in his hand that does not have the face of a playing card. Instead, inscribed on it in small writing is something in Imperial.

[Aabria gasps]

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

And you see he blows on the royal blue ink written on the blank playing card and motes of scintillating gem-like blue sparks fly out as he feels you brush past him and you are hit with a Faerie Fire spell. Blowing on the surface of the card the peddler who now you see does have a kind of [in a menacing tone] hungry, sallow look, that is the first time you will recognize in your life that a thing that you were born to, the magic that flows through you, for indeed you are a spirit of the hidden world

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

That gift many mortal men hunger for and the hunger hollows them out from within. The dust of a long shattered sapphire spread on a quick wind from his mouth and scatter, illuminating an edge of the magnolia tree, the surface of the well, the dust of the road and outline your body, invisible though it is, in sparkling light as his spell clings to you, a tracking spell from this hedge mage. He bellows out to the men inside,

Peddler [Brennan]:

After the Wild One! He's makin' for the woods!

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

I'm going to make an Athletics Roll for these men versus the horses that have scattered within the stable. That is a three for the men.

Aabria Iyengar:

Yeah. Come on horses.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

And that is a 15 for the horses.

[The cast erupts in cheers]

Aabria Iyengar:

[Yelling] Let's Go Horses!

Lou Wilson:

Let's go horses.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

Struggling to get past their own steeds, the men within push and pull and you can hear them sort of fighting and jostling with the steeds out there. You see the peddler standing out there, Rosalyn just runs out of the door and throws a bucket of water over the peddler's head.

Aabria Iyengar:

Let's go Rosalyn.

Erika Ishii:

Why just be crazy.

Aabria Iyengar:

Love her.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

And he [coughing as the Peddler] spits up, swats, and you see that Rosalyn looks at you and begins to flee down the road to where you know one of the town elders is, one of the village elders who's just running to go basically get help, that these strange men have started to cause trouble in the village. That is your turn.

Lou Wilson:

I think my, the sword is getting tucked into the belt. The music box is getting thrown into a pocket and I think that's all Eursulon has in the world that he carries with him, and he will take it with him into the night. Full Dash, Full Movement.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

You take off as fast as you can, dropping essentially to all fours as you charge forward into the woods. Given Partial Cover by the trees, the peddler reaches for a spell, one that he knows will work even given the cover of the tree line. Reaches, pulls up another card and flicks it with an old, dirty, partially broken fingernail. Pah! And as he hits it, you see some symbols on the card float off the card. A couple of sickly green crosshatched runes that float out. And as he again flicks his hand towards you, the runes fire off, swirling and corkscrewing, with trails of green fire behind them and two of them slam into you for 11 points of damage.

Lou Wilson:

Mmm! I have two hit points remaining! Guys, it's so nice of you guys to meet my character

[Cast starts laughing]

Lou Wilson:

I'm going to go work on my secondary character. Yes, down to two.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

On your next turn, you leave the range of his spell. Blood gushes from you hitting the ground. At the end of this fall, moss and flowers will grow from where that blood touched the earth, but you will not be here to see them. Out through the night you hear the bellow.

Peddler [Brennan]:

After him you fools, after him! [Yelling] I know you're out there, honored friend! What are you doing in our world?

[Long Pause]

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

The wind continues to rustle the tops of the trees, and as quickly as it pierced the nighttime sky, the howl of the angry hedge mage fades, as we fade from this place, and also fade from this time. Five years later.

Aabria Iyengar:

[shocked] Oh! What!?

Erika Ishii:

[Menacingly] You little sneak.

Aabria Iyengar:

You can do anything on the radio!

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

An endless desert of white sand, that seems at first to invite confusion by the presence of strange pools and lakes that one quickly realizes are not water at all, but simply glass, sometimes uncovered by the ceaseless wind that moves the dunes in their endless dance. The sun above beats down with such ferocity that the sky around it seems to fade from pale and powder blue to something almost approaching white, for there is not a cloud anywhere to be seen. This stark and alien landscape is as beautiful as it is deeply hostile.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

However, in this land that seems to show no indication of life, that would seem to preclude any possibility of habitation, let alone thriving, perhaps for this very reason or perhaps the causer of this state of affairs is the impossible made manifest. The gleaming spire of the citadel. We see a tower of glass, and as we approach that tower, we see that "tower" is something of an understatement. Rising more than a mile into the sky is a magical beacon of the impossible, wrought by will and understanding into existence. The citadel stands here, at the center of this desert. Jagged crystalline structures at its base move out in diagonal slants to the ground like the base of a massive naturally forming crystal.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

And within these massive prisms and geometric spires are the glimmering shapes of, themselves, platforms that float. And within these platforms there are buildings, the buildings made of white marble, or of bricks, some with gardens, and we see flowers and irrigation, fountains in the middle of this desert and flowing water irrigated. The various floating campuses within these crystal structures and at the center, at the very opposite of a diagonal, the most proud and vertical gleaming spire referred to here as the Erien, which is the central tower of the citadel.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

This erupts past the structures of the base, and within that are gleaming prisms, light reflected, this glass enclosure, this mighty tower that from certain angles casts the sunlight in searing sheets of blinding radiance throughout the desert. At the base of the Erien, a gate of glass opens as an entire, let's say, quarter mile wide platform with a campus of buildings and beautiful red brick pathways and green grass lowers down. [Magical Reverberating Woosh] And the band strikes up to welcome home the returning heroes.

[Awed gasps from the cast]

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

Flowers erupt and you see chariots pulled by massive beasts conjured by magic itself. You see that there are proud triple horned rams that pull chariots, their white fur marked by silver brands that empower them with spells—pull wide war wagons. Marching between the wagons and beyond them, we see white uniforms with blue brocade and instruments of brass, [thundering brass horns blow, followed by the bold thump of a drum] huge drums, [drum roll, BAM] and the band strikes up as the assembled junior students of the citadel erupt with cheers, some of them so moved by patriotic zeal that they weep, throwing petals into the air.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

A group of wizards returns home from war. More than half are here, but not all. And those that have returned bear their uniforms clean and bright, but faces and hands marred by what they have seen. Some faces hold endless pride and celebration, having risen with glee to what they met on the far edges of the

empire. Other faces turn inwards accepting this celebration, in a way, quiet and doing yet again what they must. As they march and the band plays, these returning wizards move towards a dais, where their instructors, leaders, advisors, and a strange mixture of their academic and military superiors await them with medals, brocades designations, promotions, encouragements, titles, all manner of scrolls and emblems await them on a vast table.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

And above and to the side, a great box, banisters, rose petals blooming all throughout the citadel. The existence of plant life is central. Ivy and roses and grass and trees can be seen everywhere. And though the glass of the Erien itself takes the deadly light of the desert outside and makes it instead just REALLY god damn bright—

[Lou laughs]

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

—Cuts that by about 25%. The plant life here with its conjured water and filtered sunlight thrives, and the smell here is rich with honey and roses and flowers and jasmine. The thrones assembled within the viewing dais surrounded as they are by roses, look down to give homage and praise to the returning heroes, to show that the mission of the citadel not only lives but prospers. Dressed in deep blue with white brocade, a deep navy undershirt, and then a bright royal blue robe with a white V tabard over it, partially military linings, is an ancient Arch-Mage with deep curly white, long beard, bald head, little round nose, who is fast asleep. [Brennan snores] The Archmage Silence is flanked by his apprentice. Aabria, could you describe your character for us?

[Erika gasps excitedly]

Aabria Iyengar:

Yes. You see Suvirin Kedberiket. She's six foot tall, lithe, and almost painfully rigid in her posture like a dancer or a fencer. She's got medium brown skin with like, golden undertones that are contrasted by the like, deep navy blues and greens of her like, incredibly well-tailored wool coat and silk trousers tucked into boots with like, silvery white detail. She's got high cheekbones that are almost lost in soft features, just sort of leaving childhood and adolescence coming into adulthood. Her hair is actually bright teal and braided and bound upward and ornately decorated with little silvery white clips and chains, one of which terminates kind of off of her bun with a little censer with a single drop of amber resin that's burning this kind of woody spicy scent that you don't find anywhere else here in the citadel.

She has large brown eyes with just almost strange teal cast over the pupils and she's scanning the room with the bearing of a person that sees profoundly, and is perpetually perceived. And she'll just gently reach out with a hand like delicate long fingers and on her right thumb, a big silver ring with an emerald in it and just gently tap the arch mage and try to wake them up.

Suvi [Aabria]:

[Whispering] Sir.

Archmage Silence [Brennan]:

[Fitful snoring]

Suvi [Aabria]:

[Whispering more forcefully] Sir.

Archmage Silence [Brennan]:
[Grumbling Awake]

Suvi [Aabria]:
Mhm!

Archmage Silence [Brennan]:
[Quizzically] It's over?

Suvi [Aabria]:
[Slightly Exasperated] No, we're still goin'.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:
[Resigned] Oh, very well.

Aabria Iyengar:
Yeah.

Archmage Silence [Brennan]:
[Extremely Tired Extremely Old Man Accent] Good, good.. Heroes of the war. They have come... um... I'm not speaking at this one, am I?

Suvi [Aabria]:
Not today, sir.

Archmage Silence [Brennan]:
Not today. Good. Good good.

Aabria Iyengar:
I just kind of pick a little falling rose petal off of his shirt and flick it.

Archmage Silence [Brennan]:
[Befuddled] Good... Well um, do you think they want me to wave?

Suvi [Aabria]:
[Still Exasperated] Oh yeah, we should, we should wave.

Archmage Silence [Brennan]:
[Quietly] All right. Hello.

Suvi [Aabria]:
Yay!

Archmage Silence [Brennan]:
Hello. Good job, heroes.

[Barely stifled laughter in the background]

Suvi [Aabria]:
Sir. Can you just say...

Archmage Silence [Brennan]:
What's that?

Suvi [Aabria]:
Nothing. You're-

Archmage Silence [Brennan]:
They did a good job!

Suvi [Aabria]:
[Defeatedly] They did.

Archmage Silence [Brennan]:
[Gossipy] Ooh yes, I heard about that one.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:
You look down and see— again, you see a very beautiful man, shaved head, deep brown skin, sort of noble features, of sort of like, proud bearing. A scar that you can tell has been altered to look glorious by being partially healed from how mangled and bad it would've been. A lot of wizards that come back from the front line will have their scars partially reduced rather than fully healed.

Aabria Iyengar:
Yeah.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:
And he's gotten, you can tell he's gotten like the beauty scar treatment and has come-

Aabria Iyengar:
So I was going to say Suvi shifts in her chair as she clocks him.

Suvi [Aabria]:
[With a small cough] Yeah...

Brennan Lee Mulligan:
You recognize this guy. You were in the upper school with this guy. He speaks with this big booming voice as he gets up onto the stage. Deep forest green robes. He has the bracers of an evoker.

Aabria Iyengar:
Mm.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:
He's called Silver (the S naming convention). He's called Silver and he proudly stands as you hear, sort of bellowing out with a minor cantrip, making their voice boom out from their throat.

Wizard Announcer [Brennan]:
[Stately Imperious Voice] For services rendered in defense of the Imperium. The honorable wizard, Silver is granted station and title, dwelling in the villa in Hall of Heroes.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

And, big boom goes up, applause, flowers, rain. And you see Silver smiles, salutes the box, and you see makes direct eye contact with you, having been some while since you were students together.

Aabria Iyengar:

Suvi's going to try to—One, she shifts to try to cover the VERY obvious blush on her cheeks, but then is going to give him just a little nod and a smirk. She's trying to play it cool.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

He smiles down there and moves off into sort of the people that have already been decorated. You know Silver was part of a group of wizards that, it was always either going to be, he came back to be fast-tracked to the upper great warriors of the great war wizards of the citadel, or he was not going to come back. And it was a coin flip and he got the right side of that coin. You view the rest of this ceremony. How is Suvi feeling in this moment as you watch this ceremony of the returning heroes?

Aabria Iyengar:

At some point she's grabbed just a little paper banner that's got like the list of ceremonies and awards and the back half, she's just been subtly tearing it apart, trying to look impassive and formal. But all of this is so deeply frustrating because he's out there, he went and saw war and returned a hero and I've spent the last two years keeping an old man awake when he needs to be awake.

Archmage Silence [Brennan]:

[Snoring Again]

Suvi [Aabria]:

[To herself] Damn it! I let him sleep.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

After the ceremony, you are once again surrounded by other archmages, and Silence is sort of speaking with some of the other wizards who are here, and a few, probably out of the, like 60 wizards that came home, probably only five of them are highly decorated enough now to be here in this private luncheon. The room you are in is actually in a dome of water. So you see that there is a hovering lapis lazuli disc, probably about 90ft in the air. That is a small conjured portal that is connected to some kind of ocean or some source of water and is summoning water into the Citadel that comes down in a large dome, almost like a glass cover for a cake.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

And so it is cool and misty in here, and the sunlight's just coming in through the glass of the exterior and then through this like, water dome. You're in this garden and you see that there are a number of servants moving throughout the space that are handing out food and refreshments and looking at the archmages. There's again, probably like five or so of these returning heroes, one of whom is Silver.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

But you also see a surprising figure here which, walking in as the water sort of parts, is Steel. We see an older woman. She wears brilliant golden armor, filigreed, embossed, covered with many arcane runes within the lingua arcana that you recognize. Normally, this kind of armor historically would have been completely useless. But of course, this armor is, for all of its decoration, incredibly practical. She has a high collar on a white cloak, a jewel hilted sword at her side, and a iron and silver bound black spell book attached and holstered at her hip.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

Her skin is a ruddy pink that's still a little bit—some crows feet and some age here. Her bright red hair has started to gray a little bit, but it's kind of hard to see because of course she has a strange kind of marking, of long streaks of white through her red hair and four wavy tapering white streaks across her face, one of which covers an eye. And that eye is white in the iris, which gives her a little bit of a striking and kind of unsettling vibe, which is not a bad vibe for someone who is ultimately the Sword of the Citadel.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

She walks in in this moment. What do you think Suvi is up to in this luncheon celebrating these returning heroes?

Aabria Iyengar

Suvi's foregoing food and trying to cut a fine and deeply unapproachable figure in the corner, hoping that Silver would come by and they could speak. But then the moment Steel walks through, she hustles over with the same speed an excited child would be to go see someone and immediately rushes over and stops short of embracing her.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

Steel turns to look at you and says,

Steel [Brennan]

Suvi, I hope that you were not too burdened this morning with your exhausting responsibilities.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

And she darts her eyes over to the Archmage Silence.

Suvi [Aabria]

[Quietly] Heh, rude. [At normal volume] I have done my duty to keep an old man awake while watching heroes return. So I'm having a great day. How are you doing?

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

I'm doing fine. I relish my ability that my station is high enough that I don't have to go to those.

Suvi [Aabria]

Rude.

Steel [Brennan]

Well, hey, I love when the heroes return and I'm glad that they return. And I'll go tell them that I'm glad that they returned. But ultimately they're going to be going back out again very shortly.

Suvi [Aabria]

Yeah, at least they get a little bit of time here to remember what we're fighting for and what's waiting.

Steel [Brennan]

Well, I don't want to take you away from your duties unless you—

Suvi [Aabria]

There are no duties. You know there's no duties. I know there's no duties. I'm going to go back and do his paperwork while he takes a nap, or eats a very soft cookie.

Steel [Brennan]

Suvi. Suvi, you know how enormous of an opportunity it was that you're the first wizard in the history of the Citadel that was moved into a leadership track upon entering the Citadel?

Suvi [Aabria]

Right. So why does it feel like they're locking me in a little room and forgetting about me?

Steel [Brennan]

You're not forgot—look at the other apprentices of the archmages, and you do look out and see there are other apprentices here. All of those apprentices either came from the war-wizard track or from the researcher track. And the next youngest one is, like, 40.

Suvi [Aabria]

They treat me like a child.

Steel [Brennan] You're very young.

Suvi [Aabria]

Okay. They treat me like a child. And yet I know that if I had one chance, they would know how incredible of a talent I am. But I am wasted sitting in a room reading books. Please do something. I'm dying.

Steel [Brennan] [laughs]

Suvi [Aabria]

[Sarcastically] Ha ha ha, we make jokes.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

She smiles and looks at you and goes,

Steel [Brennan]

You have endless potential. And I know that tending to the ministrations of a tired old man does not utilize your gifts to the best of their ability.

Suvi [Aabria]

I'm one of the best wizards that have ever come through Citadel, and I'm a nurse. I'm a nurse, but go on.

Steel [Brennan]

Your mother and father were each recognized in time for their talents. Your father became a Provost of the 8th, one of the most gifted tactical geniuses the Citadel's ever produced. Your mother was the Sage of the Fundament, and when they were your age, they were still grinding away as a junior junior apprentice buried in a library. What they would have done to be the apprentice of an archmage at your age, I can't even imagine

Suvi [Aabria]

They got a chance to prove themselves,

Steel [Brennan]

A chance that you were so recognized for your gifts that you were able to bypass. We recognized your talents immediately.

Suvi [Aabria]

It's all very honorable, and I am very proud.

Steel [Brennan] Let's take a walk.

Suvi [Aabria] Thank you.

[Upbeat imperial marching drums kick in]

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

The sun begins to set, and, boy, does the energy in the Citadel change. As the sun begins to set, the stars will come out, and all of a sudden, you know, without that, the ceaseless beating of the sun, a night that will suddenly feel like you'll be floating, you know, a half a mile up within the eerie and surrounded by beautiful buildings and flowers. And it has the buzzing feel of an academy brought to life, of people talking about important things and all these brilliant minds brought to this one place.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

As the sun sets and golden light filters in through the glass, you pass room after room of either a small cafe where students on break sit and sip small coffee from little brilliant blue and white cups that some foamy caffeinated drink passes their lips. And they talk excitedly about some fiddly magical problems, some minor bit of the lingua arcana. A new symbol, a new word discovered.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

You walk past a massive hangar building. These, like, big silvery ribs of a white arcane canvas. And within it you can see artificers working alongside wizards. These, like, powerful wrapped white gloves with chain mail on the inside as they built some massive structural automaton, some strange silvery chrome centipede with some insectoid mechanical structure.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

Who knows what it will do? And you begin to walk through the big doors of the building that has these brilliant ever-burning torches that are completely cool to the touch. No risk of fire breaking out within the Citadel. You walk past and hear a lecture going on as evening classes begin. And you see a group of younger, like, 16 year old wizards that have not yet taken their test to formally enter the Citadel. As an old droning lecturer wizard points and says,

Lecturing Mage [Brennan]

We understand within the formal taxonomy of the world of spirits the delineation between certain classifications of spiritual entity vis-a-vis the axis of celestial to themes. But wherein within that delineation do we find form for those spirits of nature best known to-[Speaking fades out]

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

The lecture drones on. You see half the class wide awake and riveted by this. And the kids that you cannot help but somewhat relate to in this moment that are either falling asleep because they don't have what it takes or falling asleep because they already know this.

Aabria Iyengar

I just want to make eye contact with any of the ones whose eyes are wandering and just give a little like, I know, man, I know.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

As you move through, Steel speaks to you and says,

Steel [Brennan]
I can try to talk to-

Suvi [Aabria]
Yes, thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you.

Steel [Brennan]
What do you want me to say? I mean, you can't ask to be moved out of the apprentice position.

Suvi [Aabria]
No, what an honor, what a gift, what a joy.

Steel [Brennan]
Suvi, it is an honor to-

Suvi [Aabria] Yeah, I know.

Steel [Brennan]
You're a step away from being in the leadership of the Citadel.

Suvi [Aabria]
Yeah, okay. Okay, that, that! So this is the most beautiful, incredible place in the world, and I don't know anything but this. How are you supposed to lead when your entire world was libraries and lecture halls and papers for ten years? Ten years. All I've done is study. I'm so tired of just knowing-what if, is there like a, can you go just do, like a walkabout? Can I just go do anything? My heart rate jumped up today for the first time in a month. Please let me go outside.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:
Please give me a perception check.

Aabria Iyengar A natural one.

Brennan Lee Mulligan: Perfect.

Lou Wilson
Hot damn. There it is. The first one. You hate to see it

Aabria Iyengar Oh, no.

Lou Wilson
At least it's on a perception check.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:
You're so tunnel vision, you don't even notice that you are now on a balcony on a sort of third story of this building. There are beautiful, like, hyacinth, like flowers around. You see, there's a couple like you're sort of like, there's an arch and a balcony, so you're sort of held in this little cradle. There's some bird baths around here, and you see a couple of birds come into the bird baths. It doesn't bother you that these birds are partially fixed illusions, there, the ecosystem here is hard to manage, and people didn't so these birds are fabricated, but that's okay. They're very pretty. Steel looks at you and says,

Steel [Brennan]

Well, you're about to get your wish.

Suvi [Aabria]

[Quietly] What? Huh? What? [Clearing throat]

Aabria Iyengar

She immediately tries to regain some sort of posture and bearing.

Steel [Brennan]

It's, there's uh. Oh, Suvi. I'm very sorry. There's been too many times in my life that I've had to give you bad news, and I'm doing it yet again. Grandmother Ren is very ill.

Suvi [Aabria]

[Softly] Oh. No.

Steel [Brennan]

Grandmother Ren is very ill. I'm not sure how much, but I've spoken to the archmages, and given everything that you have given for the Citadel, given what your parents gave for the Citadel, an allowance is going to be made. We have license to open a traveling door to allow you to return. We can place you at Silbry, and then it's a short ride to Toma.

Suvi [Aabria]

Okay. I never got to—oh, God. Silbry. Thank you. I don't know what you had to trade or—thank you. How long do I get?

Steel [Brennan]

There's not there's not a hard and fast on it, I mean, I would assume, I would love for you to be there. I would love for you to be there for as long as it takes, if you understand. I think the important thing is just to stay in touch with us. We can send a speaking mirror through with you, and you can stay in touch with us.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

And actually, speaking of, you see the stuff that you rolled a nat one perception on. She hands you a speaking mirror, which is just a way to sort of stay in touch, it's a communication device. She hands you a book and a scroll case. She says:

Steel [Brennan]

These are for grandmother Ren. If you would be kind enough to give them to her.

Suvi [Aabria]

Of course.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

You see, the book has a title on it that says, "Stars of the Southern Skies," and then a sealed scroll case. She then looks and says

Steel [Brennan]

And...

Brennan Lee Mulligan:
And reaches into the ivy and pulls a tall wrought glass staff.

Suvi [Aabria]
[Yelps excitedly] Sorry. Very normal about this.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:
In the light of day, the glass of the body of the staff will seem sort of clear and radiant, reflecting sunlight from many angles. At night, a small helix of starlight, as though a small patch of the nighttime sky was encased within it, circles up to the top of the staff, which spreads into a pair of crystal wings containing a rounded sigil of the Citadel.

Suvi [Aabria]
That's for me? That's for me. Gimme. Give it. Give it. [More forcefully] Give it!

Steel [Brennan]
You're not really supposed to say "Give it" when presented with a staff of the-

Suvi [Aabria]
Look, there's no one here. It's just you and me. Give it.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:
You little gremlin.

Suvi [Aabria]
Yes. Look at me. Look at me, I look dope. This is cool and I'm, thank you.

Aabria Iyengar
And she looks around one more time and then just absolutely like tackles Steel with a hug.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:
Steel laughs and embraces you and immediately starts crying. She just goes

Suvi [Aabria]
Don't cry! I'll cry, what are you doing?

Steel [Brennan]
I'll cry because you're- [deep sigh] it's very meaningful to me. Soft and Stone should be here. Growing up with your mother, I made so many promises to her that I would take care of her. And getting to look after you makes up for the fact that I didn't get to keep those promises.

Suvi [Aabria]
[Voice quivering] You told me years ago that what you put your magic in, a little bit of you, stays there. And she put her magic in the world and you've been protecting it. So you've been keeping your promise. And I don't know if I've ever said it, and I know I wasn't maybe the easiest kid, but thank you. You didn't have to take care of me, but you did.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:
She wipes tears from her eyes and goes,

Steel [Brennan]

When you believe in a cause like your mother and father did, I don't know that there's much of a difference between the things you have to do and the things you choose to do. Maybe that's what peace is, is when your heart unites the things that you choose to do and the things that you have to do so that duty becomes a choice, and one that you are glad for.

Suvi [Aabria]

It's really deep, for a person that hits stuff with a sword for a living.

Steel [Brennan]

You are going to see what I do one day and you're going to be so sorry for all the times you made fun of me. Everyone-

Suvi [Aabria] [Laughing] No I will not!

[Triumphant horn music lilts upward]

Steel [Brennan]

Here's what I don't understand. I also have a book, I have a book and a sword. You just have a book? Someone-

Suvi [Aabria]

Excuse me, I have a book and this dope ass staff

Steel [Brennan]

Don't take the things I gave you as points against me.

Suvi [Aabria]

It's mine now.

Steel [Brennan]

I gave you that staff. I put your father's ring on your finger and I-

Suvi [Aabria]

It looks good on me. I look great right now.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

She scowls and says

Steel [Brennan]

You are a piece of work. Honestly, I don't know why it took us so long to get you the hell out of here.

Suvi [Aabria]

That's your fault. Speaking of which, when do I get to go?

[Upbeat imperial marching drums kick in over jubilant horns]

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

You make your way to one of the many halls of teleportation. You see a runic circle in the ground and

nearby there is a teleportation specialist, deep blue robes. You see that their eyes are already sort of rolling back in their head as they begin to sort of calculate the different symbols. Up above you see there are moving constellations painted against the roof that, as the teleportation specialist below begins to chart the trajectory of where you're going, the projected sky in the dome moves to reflect the sky of where you will be going.

Aabria Iyengar

[Whispering] Oh wow, that's really cool.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

You arrive, your teal hair in a slightly different configuration than the last time I saw you. Steel stands there and says

Steel [Brennan]

When you arrive there, I would prob-

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

And she hands you a purse of 40 gold pieces. 40, like, Imperial gold coins. Says,

Steel [Brennan]

You're going into a land that is- I know you remember from when you were young, but as an adult, you should know that while this is technically under the sphere of the Empire, this is very far from Kehmsaraza's shores. And so normally, if we were in the heart of the Empire, you would be able to go up and just ask for a horse and get one.

Steel [Brennan]

It will probably be better if you ask to buy one rather than simply get one. Yes. And there's a good reason for that. I can't promise you that there will not be agents of the Dominion or the Protectorate there. This is at the far edges of the Empire. And so I would say

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

and here she moves a hand over your glass staff, and the small cantrip goes into effect, a little minor spell, and it looks like a sort of brass, banded, wooden walking stick. She says,

Steel [Brennan]

So when you need it, use it. And if you don't need it, a little bit of a glamour just to be aware of the situations where it is important to let people know who you are and be aware of the ones where, maybe it's important that they not know who you are. This is what you asked for.

Suvi [Aabria]

Yeah. No, I won. This is great. I am a proud daughter of the Citadel, and I will make you and everyone proud. I could do this. I could do this. It's going to be fine.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

The traveling door begins to open. [Sounds of something powering up] Give me an insight check.

Aabria Iyengar

Please. Please. Dice. [Gasps] Natural 20.

Lou Wilson

There it is.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:
Ooh, wow. Big spread.

Aabria Iyengar
What is the story we're trying to tell? Who could say?

Brennan Lee Mulligan:
You see Steel looking, you clock it really like, right as the traveling door is getting open for you to step through, Steel sort of has a moment of lost focus where she's lost in memory, and you can see her face goes into that neutral, where you're not even putting a facial expression, you're so replaying a memory that there's not even a sort of emotion on your face, and she's just staring at your forehead.

[Slow piano plays against the background sounds of powerful arcane spellwork]

Aabria Iyengar
And I just want to squeeze her hand the same way I do to bring Archmage Silence kind of back to the world and say,

Suvi [Aabria]
It's going to be okay.

Steel [Brennan]
[Sighs] I just—young wizards love to talk and here in the center of the desert we made, who could question the might of wizards?

Brennan Lee Mulligan:
And she squeezes your hand this time and gets really close, and you realize that your mother's greatest friend, and a woman who raised you after the unthinkable happened, is a very intense woman. And she gets close and says,

Steel [Brennan]
Don't let the fraternizing of patriotic students blind you to how much there is in the world that is not us.

Aabria Iyengar
And I think Suvi's face goes completely— she's been straddling that line of, like, adulthood and childhood and she's just lost momentarily in that childlike, open, a little afraid, a little pensive expression before she reschools herself and gives a little god.

Steel [Brennan]
One of the smartest things your father ever said that snapped me out of a trance when I first met him and admittedly, when I first met—I grew to love your father very, very much. But I knew his and your mother's reputations and I was very protective of my friend, as I had every right to be. And one of the first things your father said that charmed me due to its insight, which your father had in great quantity the entire world of wizard craft from the first elders that reached into the shadow and wrought the first secrets of the lingua arcana from the depths of ignorance into the sudden light of insight and realization. The most common of their downfalls has been seeing the humility and serenity of witches, and underestimating it.

Suvi [Aabria]
Fair. I'm no stranger to witches.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

Suvi, standing in the center of the stone circle. The wizard to your right finally finds the constellation of stars to arrest with points of light at the end of each of their fingers, and materializing from motes of light that begin as nothing more than specks of dust, a rose and purple doorway of light that begins only as the faintest halo and begins to spool across a doorway; iridescent film of magical energy. The path navigated by the stars moves forward.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

This road moves upon you. The door of light surrounds, envelopes and closes upon you. And as it constricts, you are already gone, such that the collapsing nexus of light vanishes in a burst. And nothing of the door nor the wizard that it carries is left except for a tiny spiral of vapor. Steel regards it. And then it is gone.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

And we move with but also past Suvi, not to where she is headed in the moment of this magic, but further still past the stone port town of Silbry, up the winding roads through familiar trees that we have seen their type before in the pastoral, rolling hills, farmlands and cottages, deep thick forests with moss covered stone walls, patches of sunflower and corn, little hamlets gathered around a blacksmith shop or a little maypole in a dancing hall. This is a place where the people have been living in this way of life for uncounted years. And we find a village, a village named Toma.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

Many in this village know that they are fortunate to live so near the cottage of a witch. Though, they know not the story of how this witch came to live here, nor how this witch came to find her apprentice. The nighttime fades, the sun rises as it does every day, and up the road, perhaps only about an hour's walk from the village of Toma, winding hard packed earth through the deep roots, and moss, and ferns of the forest we see a cottage. The cottage is old and broad and welcoming, the deep rich brown of its high thatched roof that slopes down to hang over white plaster walls, and welcoming wooden beams.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

Garden, rich flowers, the buzzing of bees, and the corner of a shrine up on top of the hill past the cottage. We see an old goat pen, and a garden shed, and a little foot path down to the stream that flows down past the hill, and a small footbridge over the stream that leads off into the deeper woods where many adventures were once had by the children who called this place home. And, as always, when the sun rises, we hear, as we have heard every morning...

Taro the Rooster [Brennan]:

[Loud, Proud Rooster Crow]

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

As a proud veteran, ancient rooster crows the morning.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

Within the cottage; its familiar kitchen and fireplace, the workshop that faces the road, built up and around an old enclosure at the edge of the house. Large spinning wheel, and bottles of tinctures, and ointments, and hanging from the slightly sloped roof are bundled and dried flowers and herbs, and glass ornaments. Diamond patterned windows, just some of them slightly colored, a little amber or a little blue as the light comes in.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

Seated in the workshop, a young and newly married couple from the village of Toma. The young woman with her hair tied up in a small bandana with a worker's apron tied on and the man with a small and short-brimmed little cap who sits next to his new wife holding her hands in his hands. This couple has come from Toma, Arin and Melia to seek the counsel of a witch.

Arin [Brennan]

My wife and I have been trying for some time. And our parents said that sometimes it takes longer, but I think we are just very eager and we wish to seek the counsel of Grandmother Ren.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

And you see, Melia speaks up and says,

Melia [Brennan]

Arin grew up all the way in Port Talon and I only met him at a summer fair. He couldn't believe—

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

You see, Arin says,

Arin [Brennan]

Well, the legends of Grandmother Ren reached from one side of Akham to the other.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

You see that Melia smiles and says,

Melia [Brennan]

I never knew that we grew up next to—I mean, its Grandmother Ren. She's just, she's been at the Spring Fair every year. She's our, she's all our grandmother. I didn't think—

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

you see, Arin kind of shakes his head in disbelief and says,

Arin [Brennan]

Well, not everyone is lucky enough, my darling, to live under the protection of a witch, let alone one that seems to have given as much love and joy as Grandmother Ren.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

And you see, Melia shrugs and says,

Melia [Brennan]

Although I guess that's the way with blessings, is we always have a hard time counting them.

Ame [Erika]

That's true. I feel like it's easy to take for granted the abilities and the care of witches. Grandma Wren has spent her entire life looking over this little town, and now it's my turn. And unfortunately, Grandma Wren is indisposed at the moment. But is there anything that I can help you with?

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

They both look at each other. You see Melia squeezes Arin's hand because Melia has grown up her entire life seeing Grandma Wren and has also grown up her entire life knowing her young apprentice. Melia,

you've like, you were kids together. She grew up in the village near you. Not that you necessarily got to be that close to any of the kids that grew up in Toma, but you see, she squeezes Arin's hand almost to counsel him through a little disappointment, as though he missed Grandmother Ren's ability to minister to the town by only a year or two.

Ame [Erika]

I'm sure that she'll be up and about and helping to administer to all of the town's needs before we know it. But in the meantime, Melia can attest to my abilities in terms of helping with all manners, both in regards to healing or... [lower] marital.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

You see that Melia smiles and Arin kind of blushes.

Lou Wilson

Damn

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

Yeah. Give me an insight check.

Lou Wilson

Absolutely roasting Arin right now.

Erika Ishii

Oh, wow. That will be 25.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

Arin is uncomfortable with how attractive you are.

Lou Wilson

Oh, damn.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

It was one thing for him to come talk to a sweet old grandma about him and his wife trying to have a baby, and now he's here talking to, like, "Hello, like, I will be the young witch helping you with whatever it seems to be going on." And he's just so, it's like, "Man, I wanted to meet a legendary witch, and also now I'm talking to the apprentice." But you see, Melia squeezes and says,

Melia [Brennan]

My darling husband, Ame is a wonderful witch. Ame has been tending to those pieces of business that Grandmother Ren needed help with for years and years and years. There's nothing that I wouldn't trust Ame to be able to help us with, unless perhaps we were going to ask for a love charm, in which case I would say maybe let's hold off.

Ame [Erika]

Okay. [Flustered] You do one Spring Festival of love charms, and you never hear the end of it.

Melia [Brennan]

No, it did work. It worked.

Ame [Erika]

Some would say

[Ame and Melia together] too well.

Melia [Brennan]
Yes, too well.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:
Melia sort of speaks up and says,

Melia [Brennan]
We know that sometimes it takes longer for some people than others. And both of, you know, our parents, both Arin's and mine, said that it was too early to come and see you and that we should wait and give it more of a chance.

Ame [Erika]
But, I mean, how much of a chance have you been giving it? If you take me meaning...

Brennan Lee Mulligan:
Arin looks over at Melia, and she speaks and says,

Melia [Brennan]
Well, we wed about five months ago and have been trying since then.

Ame [Erika]
Uhm, Wow.

Erika Ishii
Ame nods, impressed.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:
Let me ask, what kind of divinatory tool do you think Ame would use?

Erika Ishii
Oh, no. A decision.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:
A decision.

Erika Ishii
I did not expect to be making those in this game!

Aabria Iyengar
Oh, no. A decision. So real,

Erika Ishii
I would say, you know,

Ame [Erika]
Why don't you step outside with me for a moment?

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

Both of them look at each other, and both of them go and step outside with you. Late morning. It's going to probably be noon in another hour or so. And you can see that there's, like, beautiful kind of like pollen on the air, a little bit that's sort of like in the morning light. Enough humidity to kind of cast some rays over the stream and the grass. Arin and Melia step out, Arin still holding Melia's hands, and she smiles and looks at you.

Erika Ishii

I close my eyes. I can hear the bees in the apiary not too far from the cottage, buzzing. I can hear birds, flocks of them, passing overhead or nesting in the trees. And I listen to the birds and the bees. And I ask them in perhaps not a verbal language, and certainly one that the young couple wouldn't recognize. I ask,

Ame [Erika]

[In a voice that reverberates out] So what's the diagnosis here?

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

Give me a survival check. Or, actually, insight is fine too. Those would both be a 23.

Lou Wilson

Double 23s.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

A morning jay takes off over the tree line, swooping and disappearing back into the foliage. You hear the buzzing of the bees, some of them finding a fresh bank of flowers hanging over the edge of the stream, their little bumbling bodies landing, and dipping the flower down with their weight 'til it almost touches the babbling water of the stream. You hear the shifting of a branch far off in the woods as something steps gingerly through the leaves, through the leaf cover. Two crows alight far off over the hill. You look up, and your eyes go into a softer focus.

Divinatory force [Brennan]

This couple will bear a child. The child will be the dearest heart and center of the world for Melia. It will be a child that will care for her when she is old and will make sure that the last years of her life are lived in comfort and joy and a feeling of happiness.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

Sense the chirping of songbirds nearby, and the chirping goes silent as a bird moves into the hollow of a tree to go into a nest with three eggs.

Divinatory force [Brennan]

Arin will not stay faithful to Melia and will break her heart.

Ame [Erika]

[Reverberating] Okay, thank you. Friends.

Erika Ishii

I return to the moment, and I look at them, this young, happy, vibrant couple, and one of whom has been a lifelong, if not friend, community member. I pull out a ring from one of my many pouches, and I hand it over to Arin, and I say,

Ame [Erika]

You must wear this, and you will have a child. A child that will be your joy, your treasure.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

They smile, and you watch both of them begin to weep. Give me an insight check.

Erika Ishii

13, 13.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

Having come back to this present moment, you see that Arin weeps as well as Melia. And knowing what you have seen, I think you cannot tell whether he knows or not what you have seen.

Ame [Erika]

[Trembling slightly] So wear that, and soon you will have your desire.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

Melia wraps her arms around you in a hug and cries. Arin leaves a hand on her shoulder, smiling. He puts the ring on his finger.

Ame [Erika]

Oh, no, that's not where you put the ring.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

No. He looks and says,

Arin [Brennan]

I'm sorry.

Ame [Erika]

That is not where you're to place the ring, should this charm work.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

You see Melia and Arin both look at each other. Arin goes,

Arin [Brennan]

That can't be.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

And Melia goes,

Melia [Brennan]

You heard the witch.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

And Arin says,

Arin [Brennan]

Well, that.. that makes me... a little uh, I don't know if—

Brennan Lee Mulligan:
And Melia says

Melia [Brennan]
She said we will have a child who will be the joy of our lives, so we're gonna, just...

Brennan Lee Mulligan:
She says,

Melia [Brennan]
One moment, Ame.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:
And she gets up in his grill. She's a little bit shorter than him, and she gets up in his grill and says,

Melia [Brennan]
[Forcefully] So let me understand this. I am to carry this child, and I'm going to then, with the threat of maybe dying one day, and I'm going to carry that and go through all the pain of labor, and you're not willing to put a ring where the witch told you to to put the ring? You're gonna put the ring where she said.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:
And he goes,

Arin [Brennan]
Okay. All right. Okay.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:
You see, he sort of holds it and stands there sort of looking dumbly for a moment and then says, he just starts sweating.

Arin [Brennan]
Not during..?

Ame [Erika]
Did I stutter?

Arin [Brennan]
[stammering]

Brennan Lee Mulligan:
And Melia says:

Melia [Brennan]
Thank you. Thank you.

Ame [Erika]
All the best, Melia, and good luck. If you need any help with the pregnancy, you know I have the right potions, and...

Brennan Lee Mulligan:
she says,

Melia [Brennan]

Of course. Yes, of course. I'll come myself for as long as I can, and then I'll send Arin or someone else. But thank you for everything.

Melia [Brennan]

Arin looks fucking pale as a ghost. He sort of turns to walk away. He puts his hands on Melia's back. She has like, taken the ring and is now holding onto it, and just looks beyond happy. And as they walk away, they head up towards the road, back towards Toma, and you see a moment of Arin looking back over his shoulder at you, and.

Erika Ishii

I put my two fingers up. I point to my eyes and I point to him, and I smile.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

I'm going to make an insight check for him. Give me a charisma check just to see if he can pick up what you're communicating.

Erika Ishii

17.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

As you look at him and point towards him, what is it you are communicating in your witch's glare to him?

Erika Ishii

Oh, it is. "I am watching you."

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

Arin is able to clock that. And whatever—I think you see in that look a moment of him just being as terrified as he is being somewhat enchanted in his first interaction with a witch. And when he meets that enchanting visage of the incredible magic woman he met and sees what you have described coming back at him, he whips his head around and hustles his darling wife down the road as fast as he can.

Aabria Iyengar

He still liked it a little bit, though. He likes that

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

You can be terrified and still develop a—yeah, for sure. Of course. Incredible. Ame. You watch them depart and once again see to people for whom the story of life continues, having come to a witch to get what they need. And now, with them gone, you are once again in the cottage waiting for the next people who need your help.

Erika Ishii

As I turn around and pass back over the threshold, I mutter to myself:

Ame [Erika]

That prophecy better not come true or he's going to have a hard time getting that thing off.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

[Laughing] Incredible. You walk back in. The morning chores are as easy and comforting as a threadworn piece of clothing. You've been in this house and done these chores so many times. And as lunchtime comes around, the meals get smaller and smaller with each day because she has a harder time eating. But with time passing, you walk upstairs and describe to me what you are bringing to Grandmother Ren in her bed

Erika Ishii

There's a little tray, and on the tray is a little blue bowl of juk rice porridge, just the way that she used to make it for me. And on the juk there is, optimistically perhaps, an egg, runny the way she likes it, bright and yellow and some chives, a little bit of shiso leaves from the garden.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

Grandmother Ren's bedroom, which she has been in for the past eight days. This is the longest she's gone without coming downstairs. Her bedroom is like the inside of a beautiful old velvet jewelry box. It is very, somehow both dim and bright. There are two windows that face the outside, but they are quite small, with thick, rich gold and forest green curtains, like gilded and forest green velvet curtains. And a diaphanous kind of white lace that the sunlight comes a little bit through. But they're very small. It's a bedroom, it's best to keep it a little bit dim so that one can be restful in here.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

The walls and ceiling are painted a deep splotchy green, a mixture of the bright green of spring leaves and the deep green of a late summer all around. But of course, the walls and ceiling can hardly be seen for all of the riches here. In many things of tinkling, metal, chimes and little diamond emblems, as well as dried herbs, there are by the window fresh flowers that of course, Ame you mostly bring in. And you see the room—Grandmother Ren took rest very seriously. So within here, you see there is no trace of work to be found.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

There is a broad and mighty closet filled with all manner of robes and shawls and scarves and warm blankets, filled with many pillows and cushions and things of that nature. And the room is very much dominated by the most comfortable bed you've ever seen. And there have been some nights that you've been able to sort of snuggle up in it from time to time. The bed has a broad, great wooden frame, deep red and gold comforters and quilts that have some little gold tassels on it.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

And at the head of the bed, maybe like ten pillows, huge amount of pillows. The headboard is like some incredible thing from like a ship of myth and legend. It's like a carved woodland with a giant face of a green man. There's the face of like a spirit of a wild one. Of this leafy, bearded, twig haired, smiling spirit, some forest spirit in the headboard and boars' heads and stag heads kind of from a wave of leaves carved rampant. Almost like a crest work, like a family crest along the headboard of the bed.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

And under the comforters you know, the mattress just sinks deep down in and just held in warm blankets, her long gray and white hair kind of in a mane around her with just the little lace cuffs of her sleeves as she sort of clutches the edge of the bed, is a sleepy, rosy-cheeked Grandmother Ren, who looks up buried in her pillows and goes,

Grandma Wren [Brennan]

[Weakly] Is it lunchtime already?

Erika Ishii

Before I had stepped into the room, I had taken a deep breath studying the tray. This time going into the room, I have to steel myself these days to go in. And it's not because of the spooky man, as I called him on the headboard that always terrified me when I was a child, but because I don't know how many times more I'll get to go in and hear her greeting. So I take my breath, and I bust in.

Ame [Erika]

[Attempting excitement] Lunchtime!

Grandma Wren [Brennan]

Oh, hooray!

Ame [Erika]

It's juk! And I think Henrietta laid a very special egg for you. It's extra yolkey and golden.

Grandma Wren [Brennan]

[With labored breathing] Lovely. I'm glad.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

You see that. As you put it in front of her, she looks at the sort of golden egg and smiles and looks up at you with a look of just asking for a little bit of help to, the last day or two, she's not really been like getting the fork herself.

Erika Ishii

I pick up the utensil from the tray and I poke the yolk so that it spills out in glorious yellow rivulets over the porridge. I stir it up a little and I get a spoonful for her, and I go,

Ame [Erika]

Open up!

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

She opens her mouth.

Grandma Wren [Brennan]

Thank you. Very glad to have you heree, Ame.

Ame [Erika]

Oh, I mean, where else would I be, Grandma Wren?

Erika Ishii

I continue to spoon the porridge into her mouth.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

She gets two more bites, and then the fourth one comes up and she shakes her head, no.

Ame [Erika]

One more. One more. Come on, you can do it.

Grandma Wren [Brennan]

All right.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

And takes another bite, and you can see it kind of stays in her mouth a little bit longer. And then she breathes out and leans back after that bite and smiles at you.

Grandma Wren [Brennan]

When you first came here, you were a little bit too old to be spoon fed. But I did do my share of wiping off the corners of your mouth. Good grief. You were like a little animal when you first got here. More of lunch would end up on the sides of your cheeks than actually in your stomach.

Ame [Erika]

You know, Grandma Wren, sometimes I was saving those pieces for later.

Grandma Wren [Brennan]

[Laughing] Well, if that was the case, I wish you would have let me know. I would have put it under a little jar, kept it somewhere cold in the water for you.

Ame [Erika]

I like easy access to my snacks.

Grandma Wren [Brennan]

I suppose so. Did I hear some guests downstairs?

Erika Ishii

Yes, Melia and Arin came by. They wanted help conceiving a child.

Grandma Wren [Brennan]

Good. They were having trouble, or they just wanted some assurance?

Ame [Erika]

Um, you know they've been, they're pretty eager to get things started and seems like by now they should have gotten things started, so I just gave them a little assistance on their way.

Grandma Wren [Brennan]

It makes sense. Both Arin is a miller and Melia grew up the daughter of farmers, and you need children around if you're going to have comfort in your old age, so I certainly would never blame anyone for their eagerness. That's for certain.

Ame [Erika]

Yeah. [Quietly] I can blame someone for their eagerness sometimes.

Grandma Wren [Brennan]

That's a very annoying thing to say.

Ame [Erika]

Yes. Cryptic, I know.

Grandma Wren [Brennan]

No, don't explain anything cryptic to me. I know that there's nothing, no more important skill for a witch than muttering little cryptic things.

[The cast laughs]

Ame [Erika]

It's true, I feel like you spent most of my childhood doing that, and I still feel like I don't always have all the answers.

Grandma Wren [Brennan]

I understand. It's important that you know, [breathing heavily] it's important that you know as much as you can. I don't know what will happen when I'm gone. Sort of the last one.

Ame [Erika]

What do you mean, the last one?

Grandma Wren [Brennan]

Well, you know what I mean.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

Give me an insight check.

Erika Ishii

Ooh, 23

Lou Wilson

Hot dice tray over there. There's a hot dice tray over there.

Erika Ishii

Right now, in the beginning, while it matters,

Lou Wilson

When we need it, when we need it. That hot, hot exposition is needed.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

I think you're a little bit confused by that statement. Grandmother Ren looks up at you in this moment of sort of like, you're wondering if she's confused or if you're confused. She looks up at you and goes,

Grandma Wren [Brennan]

Is Suvi still in the library?

Erika Ishii

[Taken slightly aback] No, she's—she's done studying for today.

Grandma Wren [Brennan]

Should make sure that she gets to eat too, she'll study right through lunch if you let her.

Ame [Erika]

I know. She's so scatterbrained.

Erika Ishii

And I pick up the tray and turn around to put it onto the table behind me so that Grandma Wren can't see my face.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:
She looks up and says,

Grandma Wren [Brennan]

And do you, do make sure she gets lunch too. And set aside some extra for our honored friend.

Ame [Erika]

Of course. He uh, helped me with porridge. He still reaches things that I'm too short to reach.

Grandma Wren [Brennan]

He's a tall lad, that's for certain. I have never doubted my own competence for a moment until someone tall moved in. And then I said, this is better. This is better than it was before.

Ame [Erika]

Being independent definitely does have its perks. But the top shelf, where the cookie jar is kept, is just always there taunting you.

Grandma Wren [Brennan]

It's true.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

I'm going to ask a question now, because in this long story together, I feel more freedom to put some choices in the hands of my wonderful players.

[Erika is starting to sniffle]

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

Aabria.

Aabria Iyengar

[Quietly] Yes.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

Do you think Suvi makes it to Grandmother Ren's cottage

[The rest of the cast gasps]

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

In time?

Erika Ishii

[Yelling] Noo!

Lou Wilson

Are you sure you don't need the WiFi password? Could you just take the WiFi password?

Aabria Iyengar

There is, there is nothing... Suvi has such a small world, that the prospect of getting back to Grandmother Ren, sends her flying towards—past Toma, which she didn't care about. [Trembling] God, I want her to be there in time.

Aabria Iyengar:

Yes, she gets there in time.

Lou Wilson:

[Relieved] Ah!

Aabria Iyengar:

She landed in Silbry and had weird thoughts about tarrying, and looking around and trying to remember the last time in this place and forge some new understanding and context over it. But she remembers why she's sort of been let out of the citadel. And every... She just keeps vacillating between wanting to take everything in and know it and understand it and unpack the trauma of Silbry, and then try to get to Toma and explore the place where she was never allowed to be seen. But everything pulls her towards the cottage.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

You barely see the familiar trees of a landscape that you knew so well. Silbry was jarring. The Silbry that you arrived in, teleporting into the middle of a plaza, mist rising from the ground, some surprised noises of people seeing a wizard of the citadel suddenly appear in the middle of the town square. When you arrived there, you realized it was the exact same spot. And Silbry was illuminated by a clear nighttime sky with a beautiful crescent moon and stars.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

The crescent moon made that little glittering streak across the bay, which you couldn't even see the first time you were there, because of the total cloud cover. And to see that town, illuminated by moon and star, rather than covered in the dead of night by clouds and only illuminated in moments by fire, it's very different. And the striking image of a restored mural with a beautiful family drinking tea.

Aabria Iyengar:

[Shaky breath] I turn away from it immediately.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

You turn away from the mural of the Enlos and Daughter's tea company, the beautiful handlebar mustachio, the wide brimmed hat covered in flowers of the mother and their two adorable children. Out of sight, out of mind. You didn't get to see it the first time and so you're not going to see it the second.

Aabria Iyengar:

No. That she has no idea how much time there is, or she gets, before something new happens. I don't think her thoughts are of Grandmother Wren's failing health, but just something new will call her home, so she wants to get to a place that even for a short time she thought of as home. And if you were watching her over time on the road, you would see a very nice horse frothing slightly going from a trot to a gallop as she rides waves of panic of how much time she'll get.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

You ride, and suddenly there it is. The first thing you see is the little white painted stones of the chimney and its little gray stone top, some smoke pouring out of it. And the thatched roof kind of appears and you

get closer and you see the white walls and everything like that. And there it is again. It shrunk while you were away!

Aabria Iyengar:

[Laughing, with emotion] Yeah!

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

[Laughing] Things that were tall are now short! And it looks like it settled in even more. It was already magical the last time you were here, but now vines are even viner and moss got mossier and there's even more. It's, it looks like the house, if anything is tired. When you first came, the house was sitting and now the house is lying down.

Aabria Iyengar:

[Wistful, crying a little bit] Oh... It's so small. This was my whole world while I waited... And I immediately jump off the horse. And that first moment where you realize everything has been taken care of for you for the majority of your life. And Suvi stands and spins, not knowing what to do with the horse for too long, until a wave of panic hits that she has to make a choice and do something. She kind of just ties it to some little bit of the fence that Nicholas used to inhabit and then she runs inside.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

How close do you get to the house when you dismount your horse?

Aabria Iyengar:

Oh, respectful. She's probably 50 or 60 feet away.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

Okay. Do you get off while you're still on the road and approach or do you ride it into the little opening, the area in front of the house?

Aabria Iyengar:

She would have enough common sense and grace to dismount just kind of exiting the road so she's not rushing in what is someone's kind of front yard. So she'll walk the horse in.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

Great. Give me a... Let's roll a luck check, just roll D20 for me.

Lou Wilson:

[Chuckling] Brennan's taking back what he said earlier.

Aabria Iyengar:

Four.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

Cool. You want a respectful distance so you get off the horse and your foot touches the ground right on the road before you walk in. But it's been many, many years.

Aabria Iyengar:

[With a tone of realization] Ahh.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

You-

Aabria Iyengar:
Ah, crap.

Aabria and Brennan stop to laugh]

Brennan Lee Mulligan:
[Maniacally] Fairy tales! [Composing himself] You step on the road, take down— take the horse down to the fence, tie up the horse. You see the old stone bench where Steel sat you down many, many years ago and told you that you had seen your parents for the last time. And you tie up the horse and as you walk inside, I'll tell you what you don't see.

[Varied laughter from the cast]

Aabria Iyengar:
Nice.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:
Nice. You don't see the sun cast a shadow from the trees along the road, and you close the door and the old sign pointing to Silbry falls off a tree. And it takes two iron nails out with it.

Erika Ishii:
[Gasps]

Brennan Lee Mulligan:
Ame, as you're upstairs, the moment just occurred like, 20 seconds ago, that little moment of confusion of her saying, "I've told you everything." Oh. And you hear a noise downstairs in the kitchen. Someone's moving in the cottage.

Ame [Erika]:
Oh. Hold on a moment.

Erika Ishii:
Flustered from this moment, I reached and pick up the tray with the remnants of lunch and I head to the landing to head down the stairs.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:
You get to the landing of the stairs and walking through the kitchen you see a woman that you could never in a million years possibly mistake each other, though you have both become adults, you instantly recognize the person standing in front of you.

Erika Ishii:
I drop the tray. A bowl of porridge shatters, and splats onto the floor. There's little rivulets of egg everywhere splashed up onto my boots.

Ame [Erika]:
[Shocked] Suvi, you came back?

Suvi [Aabria]:
[Tearing Up] Ame, you dropped your tray.

Erika Ishii:
And I run to her and I throw my arms around her.

Suvi [Aabria]:
Why are you the same height?

[Erika laughs, on the verge of tears]

Suvi [Aabria]:
You are so tiny.

Erika Ishii:
I reach up to— my arms reach up to maybe just her armpits.

Suvi [Aabria]:
Oh my God, I didn't know you would be here, you're... Hi.

Ame [Erika]:
Suvi, you're here! I am so glad.

Suvi [Aabria]:
...Hi.

Erika Ishii:
I pull back.

Ame [Erika]:
She's been waiting for you. She— I think she still thinks that you and Eursulon live here. She's—

Suvi [Aabria]:
Eursulon?

Ame [Erika]:
She's really not been doing very well.

Suvi [Aabria]:
Oh, god.

Erika Ishii:
And I take you by the hand and I pull you up the stairs, but I stop before we get to the door.

Aabria Iyengar:
Oh, I'm going to stop you the moment we pass the tray. There is just an anal retentive sense of, "That's a mess. Hold on." And I reach out and just with cantrips that are careless at this point, little streaks of teal magic shoot out to mend anything that's broken and to clean the mess of egg and porridge with prestidigitation. And it's all sort of just resettled on the tray.

Ame [Erika]:
Oh!

Suvi [Aabria]:
Are you okay?

Ame [Erika]:
Yeah. Thank you.

Erika Ishii:
And I pull you up towards the stairs and rapidly try to explain,

Ame [Erika]:
[Quietly] I mean, you know she's a very powerful witch, but we're still humans. And, you know, our lives are a little longer—

Suvi [Aabria]:
[Shakily] And she was so old even when we were little.

Ame [Erika]:
I know!

Suvi [Aabria]:
She was like a million.

Ame [Erika]:
[Laughing shakily] Yeah. Well, steel yourself I guess for her to be a million and 13? A million and 14?

Suvi [Aabria]:
Is there anything... I mean, I can go into town if there's anything I can buy or get to ease... And I'm sorry, I don't mean to be... You're a witch now, a full one?

Ame [Erika]:
Yeah, I'm... I'm a witch! [small laugh]

Suvi [Aabria]:
That's so cool.

Ame [Erika]:
You know magic?

Suvi [Aabria]:
Oh, yeah. Yeah. I do now.

Erika Ishii:
A flicker of... No. No, you know what? You can insight check me if you want to.

Aabria Iyengar:
[Excitedly] Yeah, I wanna insight check her!

Brennan Lee Mulligan:
Go! Go, go, go!

Aabria Iyengar:
[Slyly] I have a passive insight of 13 Brennan.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:
Woah! Okay.

Erika Ishii:
Alright.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:
Okay.

Aabria Iyengar:
Ooh, your girl's gotten good. 21.

Erika Ishii:
[With feigned confidence] 11.

Aabria Iyengar:
Oh! How the turns have tabled!

Erika Ishii:
Oooh! And you can see a flicker of fear and uncertainty and something perhaps approaching wistfulness flicker across on Ame's face for just a moment and then it's gone.

Ame [Erika]:
I really do have to prepare you though. It's going to be hard and I know with everything that you've lost before that this might be tough, but just know that she's going to be SO happy to see you. Okay?

Suvi [Aabria]:
[Unsteadily] Okay.

Aabria Iyengar:
And there's a moment where Suvi sags a little bit and there's something about being in a place where you've been young and vulnerable that makes you want to sort of retreat into that. But you watch her fight it and regain that almost painful posture.

Suvi [Aabria]:
I'm ready. I'm ready.

Ame [Erika]:
Okay. Would you like to go in alone first? Or would you like-?

Suvi [Aabria]:
Together.

Ame [Erika]:

Okay.

Aabria Iyengar:
And I grab your hand.

Erika Ishii:
We hold hands and I open the door, to let Suvi in.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:
You see the sight before you, and sadly the first look that greets you is one of confusion.

Ame [Erika]:
Grandma Wren, it's... It's Suvi.

Grandmother Wren [Brennan]:
[Quiet Gasp] Suvi.

Suvi [Aabria]:
[Quietly] Grandmother Wren

Brennan Lee Mulligan:
She looks and says,

Grandmother Wren [Brennan]:
Oh, I- I- I-

Brennan Lee Mulligan:
And a big tear forms the corner of her eye. She says,

Grandmother Wren [Brennan]:
I- I- thought- I thought- I thought I was looking at stone... huh? Oh please come here. Come here.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:
And she just holds up her... She just makes no attempt to sit up.

Aabria Iyengar:
[Laughing through tears] Yeah.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:
But just holds her arms out and waits for you to bend over the bed.

Aabria Iyengar:
Yeah. Suvi will do the awkward bend and then kind of gives up on it pretty quickly and just hikes up that very well-tailored outfit and just kind of crawls a little bit on the bed to give her a good hug.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:
You see that she buries her— It's like. As always it's the smell. It's like the familiar smell of Grandma Wren and you can see that she buries her face in your neck and just holds you and you feel this really long relaxed exhalation. She goes,

Grandmother Wren [Brennan]:
Oh good, you're both here... Is Eursulon coming?

Ame [Erika]:
[Gingerly] You know how our honored friends are, you know, he comes and goes as he pleases, but he sends his love, of course.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:
Oh, I am so very... [Trails off shakily] It's a good reminder. The presence of a Wild One is a gift no matter how short or long.

Aabria Iyengar:
Suvi's going to do the kind of, turning her head because Grandmother Wren is so small now that she can kind of just look out over her white hair and just give Ame a look of just, "Do you still see him?"

[Ame quietly gives an "unh-uh" to say no]

Aabria Iyengar:
Okay. And Suvi will turn back and just take another big sniff of that scent. And Ame, you can see like, Suvi's hands working again, tapping, committing this to memory.

Erika Ishii:
[Sniffling] I bustle around the bed clothes, tucking it in and smoothing the bed covers and—

Aabria Iyengar:
What are you doing? Be here also.

Erika Ishii:
Okay.

Aabria Iyengar:
Be here.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:
You see Grandmother Wren looks up and says,

Grandmother Wren [Brennan]:
Oh my house was never so full as that summer.

Suvi [Aabria]:
[Sadly, Quietly] Oh..

Grandmother Wren [Brennan]:
But, Ame.

Ame [Erika]:
Yes.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:
See she looks up at Suvi and says,

Grandmother Wren [Brennan]:
I'm so glad you are here, my granddaughter.

[Aabria lets out a sad tearful gasp and Erkia laughs a little bit]

Brennan Lee Mulligan:
And she touches your face and says,

Grandmother Wren [Brennan]:
Suvi, it is good you are here. Ame, I have prepared you with the things I think you should tell Suvi, but you must know that you should ask Suvi's permission because there are some secrets that are going to be hard, I think, for her to hear.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:
Ame. You don't know what Grandmother Wren is talking about.

Ame [Erika]:
[Audibly crying] What? Grandma Wren, you said that you would do a little investigating to see if some of the things that you thought were true are still true, and the people that I might still trust and the things— but you never gave those names to me or, or, or that information.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:
Her eyes go wide.

Grandmother Wren [Brennan]:
Yes I did, Ame.

Ame [Erika]:
[Voice quivering] No, no

Grandmother Wren [Brennan]:
I did. I did. I told you and I ha- I have been telling you for...

Brennan Lee Mulligan:
Both of you make perception checks.

Lou Wilson:
For what? For what?

Aabria Iyengar:
[Voice thick from crying] 14. Brennan, my passive perception is 18.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:
[Laughs] Okay.

Erika Ishii:
My passive perception is 21, but I rolled a 23.

Aabria Iyengar:

Let's go!

Lou Wilson:
That's so many.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:
As Grandmother Wren's eyes go wide. A little, just a faintest, faintest bit. But you see a little bit of a light gray smoke come out of the corner of her mouth.

Aabria Iyengar:
No... [Flatly] I didn't see it. Edit that out.

[Laughter from Aabria and Erika]

Brennan Lee Mulligan:
She says,

Grandmother Wren [Brennan]:
I did tell you,

Ame [Erika]:
[Urgently] Grandmother! Oh, it's like the curse! It's like the curse! Do you remember that summer when she came back with the arm and—

Suvi [Aabria]:
Yeah.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:
You see what you understand to be a portion of a curse. And the thought—you know that curses affect the mind and memory. And in a moment, suddenly, Grandmother Wren's confusion, you wonder how much of this confusion has been the confusion of someone who is preparing to say goodbye. And you realize that [Voice going low] some of this confusion is not of this world. She looks at you and says,

Grandmother Wren [Brennan]:
Ame, you're seeing something. I need you to tell me what it is you're seeing.

Erika Ishii:
A little bit of smoke out of the corner of your mouth, I believe it to be a curse.

Grandmother Wren [Brennan]:
Alright. Alright. We need to think and act [Gulping Breath] carefully.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:
And you see her body shudders a little bit. She says,

Grandmother Wren [Brennan]:
Now someone's managed to put a curse on me. I have memory of telling you many times of who it was you could trust. And I think something has moved here in this place, and on this time.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

Suvi give me a perception roll with disadvantage.

Aabria Iyengar:
It's 13.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:
Where are you looking in this moment?

Aabria Iyengar:
Immediately looking out to the hall to see... I want to get back to the attic to grab another censer.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:
Okay.

Aabria Iyengar:
I've turned and looked away.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:
The sun is lower in the sky than it should be. It has become later in the day than when you arrived here.

Suvi [Aabria]:
[Sharply] What?

Ame [Erika]:
What is it?

Suvi [Aabria]:
What's happening here?

Brennan Lee Mulligan:
She looks and says,

Grandmother Wren [Brennan]:
I need you. It's all right.

Erika Ishii:
I grip her hand.

Grandmother Wren [Brennan]:
Girls come close. All right. I'm going... Um... [with echoing undertones] I am...

Brennan Lee Mulligan:
[Woosh Noise] And smoke comes out of her mouth and says,

Grandmother Wren [Brennan]:
Not that, all right. [Echoing effect] I am...

Brennan Lee Mulligan:
Smoke comes out. She says,

Grandmother Wren [Brennan]:
[Grumbling] Hrrm. Clever, clever, clever.

Aabria Iyengar:
Oh my God.

Grandmother Wren [Brennan]:
All right. There were more like [with great effort] Me.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:
And you see she got strong for a moment.

Grandmother Wren [Brennan]:
[Through Gritted Teeth] And I... Am the last.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:
She grips your hand, Ame and says,

Grandmother Wren [Brennan]:
Suvi, witness this. You are my granddaughter, Ame. This house is [Powerfully, echoing out] your house!

Erika Ishii:
No, no, no, no.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:
It is yours. What is mine, I will to you.

Erika Ishii:
[Crying] You can't!

Brennan Lee Mulligan:
[Whispering] I guarded the heart of this world and there will be a witch of the world's heart after me.

Aabria Iyengar:
The moment this happens, I cast identify on the house.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:
The house is holding something incredibly important. Grandma Wren has been sitting on a source of power that rivals anything you have ever seen in the Citadel.

Aabria Iyengar:
[Gasp]

Brennan Lee Mulligan:
Which if any of the talismans you carry are involved in the casting of that spell?

Aabria Iyengar:
Suvi, mentally reaches towards her mother's pendant, which she keeps by her heart stones amulet and the little censer that hangs from the back of her hair that's been burning a version of the resin that was a gift from Ame, but she realizes now after smelling Grandmother Wren, that she had changed over time to

include the smell of Grandmother Wren in it. So she's been carrying that with her for 10 years and just realized now.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

You also carried a lot of stuff into the home. And I'm wondering what if any of that got left downstairs or any of it that's with you? Just in terms of where the instruments of your power are within the house at this moment.

Aabria Iyengar:

Yeah. I think she would've put the staff down stupidly, because she couldn't carry it all. But she still has the arm full of the cases and scrolls.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

Okay.

Aabria Iyengar:

And the book.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

So you go to your mother's pendant as you cast identify, there is something deep and profound and powerful within this house.

Grandmother Wren [Brennan]:

[Grimly] "Ame, we've been robbed. And that's all right. We have them exactly where we want them, because they have trifled with us. Now listen to me, this house is your house. You are my granddaughter. I do not know how many more witches of our kind are left in the world. But I know that if you are all that is left, the strength of your heart is enough to carry the world. And know this..."

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

And she looks to Suvi and her eyes well up with tears.

Grandmother Wren [Brennan]:

[Softly] Even when I am gone. You are not alone. I... am leaving. Find Taro. Find Taro.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

Each of you can see out the window the sun has fully set, and there is a little bit of purple. Something-

Aabria Iyengar:

What is happening?

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

Give me an arcana check.

Aabria Iyengar:

19.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

You understand enough about temporal fields, about the nature of time. You know that magic associated with the spirits and anything to do with the world of spirits—You remember what happened to Eursulon. You know that when the spirit world draws near that time can flow differently. You don't think this is

anything Imperial. If the wizards of the Citadel had this kind of control over the passage of time reliably... But you know that time moves more slowly in the house than it does outside because that is why the sun is setting faster. So great magic is unfolding in front of you. As it does so, both of you look out and see Taro on top of the garden shed turn and begin to go from being mottled green and yellow and red, to becoming pearly white, and translucent.

Erika Ishii:
I throw open the window,

Ame [Erika]:
[Frantically] Taro! Get your ass feathers in here!

Taro the Rooster [Brennan]:
BUKAAWK!!

Brennan Lee Mulligan:
And a pearly ghostly rooster flies inside. Grandmother Wren's familiar, her rooster familiar rushes to her side. And you see Taro stands at the corner of a bed post, the one facing towards the setting sun, and looks down at Grandmother Wren whose breath has become ragged.

Aabria Iyengar:
Oh no.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:
You see, Grandmother Wren can no longer speak as she concentrates on this magic, but she smiles and looks at Taro. Smoke billows from her mouth, she has not fought off this curse, but she looks and smiles, a clever smile. Taro speaks.

Taro the Rooster [Brennan]:
[Nobly] Granddaughters of Wren, the curse is powerful, the secrets that Wren shared still live. You have been cursed too.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:
In that perception check that you've rolled a 13 on before, you see a little bit of smoke from Ame's mouth.

Taro the Rooster [Brennan]:
For all her sight, Grandmother Wren cannot see where the secrets are being kept. But there is a key, a key to find where they are being kept, and a key to cut them free when found. There is a source with the power to disenchant and scry. She has kept it many long years and thankfully it is, it is... a mere stone's throw away up in the attic, in the bathtub up above. She knows that you both played with it as children.

Suvi [Aabria]:
[Quietly] Oh no...

Taro the Rooster [Brennan]:
There is a suit of armor. Ask the suit to hand you Wavebreaker, the sword up above. It had a cross hilt styled in waves—

Ame [Erika]:
And a pommel with a fist with too many fingers?

Suvi [Aabria]:
[Simultaneously] ...with too many fingers?

Taro the Rooster [Brennan]:
Exactly. Run upstairs and fetch it now. You may still have time to find it!

Ame [Erika]:
Suvi gave it to Eursulon.

Taro the Rooster [Brennan]:
[Flatly Incredible] What?

Ame [Erika]:
To Eursulon, the wild one.

Suvi [Aabria]:
[Quietly] I'm sorry. I'm sorry.

Taro the Rooster [Brennan]:
[At a loss for words] No, you wha..?

Suvi [Aabria]:
Oh no.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:
And you see grandmother Wren looks and winces her eyes in a moment of... she should have known. And you see for all of the tensivity of this moment— for all of the tension of this moment and for all these wide things, [audibly smiling] this wise old witch probably had too many powerful artifacts of great importance in her ancient cottage to keep track of. And for all of the wonder of the world, you see her look and go,

Grandmother Wren [Brennan]:
Ha, just like this to happen. No, these things do unfold this way, don't they?

Brennan Lee Mulligan:
Taro goes,

Taro the Rooster [Brennan]:
Eursulon... Eursulon has the sword. Find him, find the Wild One, wherever in the world he may be and retrieve the sword from him. It will help you find whatever is keeping these secrets, and perhaps whoever took them.

Ame [Erika]:
We will.

Suvi [Aabria]:
Oh, we'll fix it. I'm sorry.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:
Taro looks and says,

Taro the Rooster [Brennan]:

There's nothing to be sorry for. In all the wide comings and goings of the world, perhaps there is some cause for a spirit to have been given the sword that could cut these things free. It is not always for us to know why the workings of the spirit world have come upon us in this way.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

And you see here that Grandmother Wren, goes [Cough] and coughs and a pure lump of like black bile comes up.

[Aabria and Erika groan.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

Taro diminishes a little bit and looks out. Grandmother Wren holds her hands out to the both of you.

Erika Ishii:

I take her hand.

Grandmother Wren [Brennan]:

This is your house when I am gone. But I ask, Ame, will you honor the invitations I extended once the house is yours?

Ame [Erika]:

Always.

Grandmother Wren [Brennan]:

I love you both.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

And she winks at you and squeezes your hand.

Erika Ishii:

I love you so much, Grandma Wren.

Suvi [Aabria]:

[Barely whispering] Please don't leave.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

She, holding both of your hands, moves those hands together so that you are holding each other's hand.

Grandmother Wren [Brennan]:

The ones who leave, Suvi, they can always come back. In our hearts, they can always come back. I'm so glad you did.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

And her eyes close for a final time. Taro looks down, tears roll down his little beak, fade into starlight and twinkle away before they touch the bed clothes. As he begins to fade, the starlight outside is almost carrying little pieces of him away into the nighttime sky, and he looks as though those streams of light are beckoning him. Piece by piece, constellations of him are borne away into the nighttime sky.

Taro the Rooster [Brennan]:

You will find Eursulon, and the sword. I know it.

Suvi [Aabria]:

[Breathlessly] Yes.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

And Taro fades away. Suvi, you think of Eursulon; of the wild boy you found in the forest so long ago. And you look out of the window wondering where in all the wild woods of the world your dear beloved Eursulon might be. You don't see Eursulon. [Menacingly] You see a figure walking up the road.