

# Worlds Beyond Number

Fireside Chat: Episode 013 - Episode 13 "Of the Gentle Sea"

Final Version

[Crickets chirp, and a campfire crackles. A bright and sweet song is plucked on an acoustic guitar.]

Erika Ishii

Hello everybody, and welcome to the Fireside Chat for Episode 13, Of the Gentle Sea. Ironic. My name is Erica Ishii, and I am your humble host. And I'm here with Aabria Iyengar.

Aabria Iyengar

A-hoo-hoo!

Erika Ishii

A-hoo-hoo. Brennan Lee Mulligan.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Crackle crackle!

Erika Ishii

And our new friend.

Finn Lemon

Hi, I'm Finn Lemon. Should I say something? Should I do a thing?

Erika Ishii

Yeah, feel free to make a little bit

Finn Lemon

I liked a-hoo-hoo. That was fun.

Erika Ishii

Oh, yeah.

Aabria Iyengar

Real quick note, guys, I'm so sorry I did not have a chance to onboard Finn before we started.

Finn Lemon

Yeah, what are we—What are we doing?! No, no, I'm a huge fan. I've paid attention to a lot. I'm ready to go.

Erika Ishii

Thank you so much for joining us, I appreciate it. It's an incredibly pivotal episode for Eursulon in this, and we see a lot of the patterns of the children. For those of you who listen to the children's campaign, you may know what I'm talking about. Those patterns of the kids bear out once again in adulthood, Suvi staying behind and reading—

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Beeeeaaaar out. Bear out.

Erika Ishii

Yeah.

[Cast together] Beeeeaaaar out!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

I'll tell you who bears out. It's the fucking Eursulon, am I right?

Erika Ishii

He bears out, but now he's also of the gentle sea.

Aabria Iyengar

Yeah, he's got that otter fur, forever.

[Cast together] Fuuuuuereverrrr

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Forever. That's what bears out, is furever

Finn Lemon

Guys, we can't stop. We can't stop. Are we trapped in this?

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Wait, pause. Wait, paws!

[The cast all yelling together] No, oh fuck no!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

I swear to God, there was a clause in the contract we wouldn't do this.... Claws, oh no!

[Just goofy sounds at this point]

Finn Lemon

We all get shocked every time that happens. Just so everybody knows.

Erika Ishii

Yeah.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Joke's on them, I like how it feels.

Aabria Iyengar

Kind of a squid game recording sitch, but. I like it.

Erika Ishii

We have fun.

[The cast bursts into laughter]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

The enthusiasm of the person who has to keep us on the rails is always my favorite thing. It's me so often, to watch someone be like, "ha ha ha. Revelry. As I was saying..."

Erika Ishii

It's so funny, because I feel like despite the fact that this is just the after show, there is a narrative to all of this. There's like a meta narrative of me having taken over as host and narrator dealing with increasing hijinks and more and more torture devices that are placed upon us as we record this from our penthouse above the Sea. And this is only for those of you who are our Fireside subscribers. So thank you for joining us for our hijinks. [pause] So we see Suvi once again, as she did in childhood, stay inside reading a book while Wild Ones and witches run slipshod all over. Ame is, once again—

Aabria Iyengar

some of us didn't catch quest fever.

Erika Ishii

Yeah.

Finn Lemon

Well, some of us missed out. I absolutely love the moment in which you just like, it's a hard call. Morrow, like, jumps out of the window in front of you and your response is, [Sigh] "Not again." And you just walk upstairs!

Erika Ishii

Here we go again.

Aabria Iyengar

It's very funny to hear Brennan like, "how the fuck do I get Suvi into this?" And I'm like, I can't fly. I'm a level one wizard. This seems above my pay grade. I'm going to go upstairs and open that book you gave me, like, eight episodes ago. Byyye!!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

I love it so much. I love it so much. Well, also because, number one, this is like three of my favorite, funniest people on the planet telling a story that mostly has beautiful, dramatic, emotional beats. But my God, the image of Suvi watching that waxy headed boob jump out of a window and fly and going like, "I'm going to read a book." What expression could have been on her face as this fucking honeydew melon of a man leaps from the window and goes. [Mimicking Morrow's desperate unintelligible noises]

Erika Ishii

Also, you can hear me laughing about this. And I know Aabria's face in that moment, I don't know how to describe it exactly, but I'm like, yeah, that was Suvi's definite face at what just happened. Also, something that got cut was Mr. Finn Lemon, saying, I thought he was going to Game of Thrones season six it, just like, jump out the window.

Finn Lemon

I said that?

Brennan Lee Mulligan

We were at the table—

Aabria Iyengar

Oh that's right!

Finn Lemon

Yes. I thought you were going to fully Joffrey it where you—oh, no, it's Joffrey.

[The other cast together] Tommen

Finn Lemon

I thought you were just going to fucking be like, he's like, "aw, damn dog. Yeah, damn. That's it. Shit. Shit."

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Oh my god

Aabria Iyengar

I mean, what do you do in the face of a human Yankee Candle getting suddenly riled up. I can't match this energy.

Erika Ishii

No, now I'm imagining how he smells, and I hate it,

Aabria Iyengar

You know—look, he's waxy. He kind of looks like he's made a marzipan, but, you know, he smells good as shit and he's well moisturized.

Erika Ishii

But it's like a marshmallow. Like, it smells good in the way that a Yankee Candle.

Aabria Iyengar

He smells like pink sands!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

If you put Guild mage Morrow on the back of a toilet next to a small bowl of shells, there'd be no way to tell. There'd be no way to tell there was a wizard in there.

Finn Lemon

I do feel like I can't unsee what you're describing Aabria, of just like, a shiny man. Like a man who's constantly shiny, but in an unnerving way. You're like you just, like, rubbed petroleum on you.

Aabria Iyengar

Yeah, this is a man used to slugging.

Finn Lemon

Yeah, exactly.

Erika Ishii

Slugging. You're supposed to do slugging at night!

Aabria Iyengar

No, he's got to stay ready.

Finn Lemon

Yeah, exactly. 24/7 Slugging

Aabria Iyengar

You know the Sword's's coming in the morning.

Finn Lemon

Exactly.

Aabria Iyengar

But we are burying the lede! I was the boring one this episode. Let's talk about our fucking paladin.

Finn Lemon

No, let's talk about you walking upstairs and how Brennan made you roll for how much book you could read in the face of unspeakable horror.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

But listen, you cannot tell me that someone's sitting on their bed while fucking Godzilla attacks the city outside and the flying monkey army of human wizards being like, "To arms! To arms!" I restart the same sentence of a paragraph 20 times under the best of circumstances, let alone when fucking civilization is ending outside. Oh, my God.

Erika Ishii

You don't know Suvi's hyper fixation. That woman could read a book. Yeah, truly, during the apocalypse, as the walls were crumbling around her, she would be, like, three paragraphs deep, whereas Ame would probably just not... ever read.

Aabria Iyengar

Ever. Feels—that's a big..

Erika Ishii

Not ever. If you could go outside and do it and learn it, there's really no point in reading about it.

Aabria Iyengar

That's fucking crazy.

Erika Ishii

Yeah.

Aabria Iyengar

And now we're our characters again. I'm going to talk about the level up!

Erika Ishii

Oh, my God. The screams!

Aabria Iyengar

Because I was standing on my bed listening to that part. It was very fun. Like, standing, staring down at my phone, yelling. It was very good.

Finn Lemon

Now I'm interested because there's an edit that I like for flow purposes, but I do think was an interesting experience in the moment. Can we talk about that? Or does it feel like we should just lean into the edit that's been presented?

Aabria Iyengar

No, let's talk about it. That's what the people pay \$5 for.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Thank you to all of our patrons of the Fireside.

[The cast] Thank you.

Finn Lemon

Thank you for sitting with us by the fireside. It's so nice to be here.

[The cast mostly together] Crackle, crackle, crackle, crackle, crackle, crackle. A-hoo-hoo Thank you, thank you.

Finn Lemon

No, but so in the moment now, also, maybe I'm about to get called out for not doing my homework. Did you make me roll damage in this episode or last episode?

Brennan Lee Mulligan

I made you roll damage in this episode, I believe.

Finn Lemon

Yes. But it's not in the episode. So in the moment, what happened was Brennan was like, you have to do this much damage to hit the spear. And then I was like, I roll and it's not enough damage. And then everyone was sad for about 15 seconds. And then Brennan did his thing where he kind of raises his eyebrows like he's about to say something really cool. And then he told me I became a paladin. So it felt in the moment, it felt crazy because I was at a full low. I was at a full like, I just fucked—I'm trapped FOREVER. And then you were like, JK bitch, you can smite! And it was a real roller coaster of emotion that you get to hear, but Taylor has thankfully not made you just slowly watch me go "it's not enough."

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Generally speaking, a lot of the numerical dice rolling stuff gets brought out mostly for pacing and flow considerations for the audio narrative. But that moment I do remember as being—that the damage threshold of the sort of coral spear that was sort of encasing Seacalmer underneath Naram was high enough that you could theoretically get it without smiting. But it was improbable.

Finn Lemon

It was improbable.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

It was improbable.

Finn Lemon

It was improbable.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

It was like a ten. So you needed to roll a seven or an eight, I think, or something like that. But I remember knowing, I was like, but in this moment, breaching your breath, you're going to level up, and that the smite would almost guarantee that the attack would be successful, or at least should you hit that, you would be able to deal enough damage to break through the damage threshold. So, yes, but ah! That

moment of Eursulon, and everything that that moment means, and acting that heroically and the connection to Naram and to the spirit world, but also to the idea of quest and having honor and all this stuff, ugh! [Chef's kiss sounds]

Finn Lemon

It really hit. It was just a really nice, I think like, in listening back to it, you can really hear could my voice is like I'm very much in the... It's the reason I brought it up is because I feel like you can hear me being like, "Wait, we're not going down, we're going up?" And I think it's like the feverishness that is like, "Wait, I get it, and I get to do it and we get to save the day." It was well executed, and I love the way it came out. It feels very momentous and like something we've been working for for 13 episodes.

Erika Ishii

It was so earned. It was so earned and so satisfying. And I love also the idea of we don't do XP, we do milestones, but to actually have a milestone and a level up happen right there in a pivotal moment, which is indeed a milestone, I don't know that I've seen that before. I usually see it after a fight or after some sort of arc, but to have it happen in that moment, in that truly pivotal moment was so satisfying. I definitely stood up and cheered in the room.

Aabria Iyengar

Yup. You can hear us losing our minds, and I think we were right to do so. Also, Finn, your narration of how it started at your fingertips, like, that whole moment

Erika Ishii

On the smell!

Aabria Iyengar

It was just so evocative—the smell! And the song!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

The idea that in some years, when we play these characters at, like, mid to high level, there may well be a group of villains that I get to play that Smell honey and hear song on the wind and go, "Oh, shit." That is [Chef's kiss] you live for moments like that. You live for it.

Erika Ishii

Whoa... What a tease. But also it is—

Finn Lemon

But all very—

Erika Ishii

—you go first. You go first, Mr. Finn.

Finn Lemon

No no no no no.



Erika Ishii

No. Mr. Lemon, you're our guest. Be our guest.

Finn Lemon

No, it's also just I think it's interesting to make calls like that in the moment because—everything was happening so fast, right? You thought you'd lost. You're wrong. You're a level two paladin now, and you smite. What does your smite look like? And you're like "Ah, shit. Okay, um. What is the thing I do almost every attack I get going to look like from now until whenever we finish that." That was, like, the first one of those I feel like I've had. I feel like I thought a lot about my glamour and what that was going to look like and had a lot of data to make that call on. But when you were like, what's your smite look like? I was like, oh, fuck.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Not with—

Finn Lemon

This is a nine year call, right now.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

I mean, that is the wild thing.

Finn Lemon

It's going to be going on for nine years, by the way.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Yes. I mean, hey, at this pace, I made you all take half a year to get to second level.

Aabria Iyengar

We're not all there yet.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

We're not all there yet! But truly, truly truly, I think with a year to plan, you couldn't have made a better choice. Sometimes you're in the moment and the thing that is waiting for you there in the space just beyond the conscious mind, willing itself to leap into being is the exact perfect choice. Because I think that the inclination to do something flashy or thematic or something, but it's like no. Eursulon's whole deal is he is a stranger in a strange land and has to be glamourous and has to hide himself and is a man out of time and all this sort of stuff.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

So the idea that his smite wouldn't be a flashy, visible thing, because the thing about sound and smell is it's hard to pinpoint an origin, right? As much as a visual is, right. So the idea of you can be in the middle of a fight, and if it's a pitched combat, people won't know that you're the one smiting and that that magic just sort of fills the air. And it's a cool thing for someone who has as much of the hidden faerie nature of a

spiritual being, to have a smite that is so subtle, and yet, I'll be honest, it feels more divine. It feels like a more divine thing than like "my sword sheds light and it looks like a big old fucking lightsaber and I smack you with it

Erika Ishii

The divine is unknowable and more ephemeral, and it's so beautiful in that way. Oh, my goodness.

Finn Lemon

It's nicely set up by, I think—

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Wait, what were you saying, Finn Lemon.

Aabria Iyengar

[Chuckling] Good catch

Finn Lemon

Thanks for saying my whole name. I honestly like—I'd like it all together.

Aabria Iyengar

All together?

Finn Lemon

A lot of people try and call me I like Finn Lemon. It's just it feels nice

Aabria Iyengar

Oh that's on me

Erika Ishii

Good mouthfeel!

Finn Lemon

Like I'm a—I'm a two name guy.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

There were a lot of two name guys at summer camp, Finn Lemon. So I get it. You would never say, "oh, is Bo going to be there?" You'd be like, "oh, Bo Strauss is coming." You know what I mean? It's like you're a Finn Lemon. There's Bo Strauss's out there. There's people that are like, yeah, exactly.

Finn Lemon

Exactly. But I also think there was something I feel like I was set up really nicely, I think, by the chantry and our experiences there. I think the amount of time we spent around embellishment, I think when we got to this moment, I think I felt so secure in being like, "it's not that," it's simple, and elegant, and of another world that doesn't translate to this one. I feel like all of the time we'd spent watching magic up

until that point made what this magic look like—it did, I feel like, came quickly. Even though I do remember during this time, I was pausing a shit ton. I know. Like, it's all cut out, but in the—

Aabria Iyengar

Yeah, but you were nailing it.

Finn Lemon

Yeah, but it's fun to think back to just like, I was just sitting there for minutes on end, just like, staring forward and then being like, I think this is it. But it was great.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

I love it.

Erika Ishii

That's beautiful. And there's once again, the parallels of Eursulon now versus Eursulon in childhood. This is the second time that we know of that we've heard him encounter a Great Spirit in our world. The first one being the mushroom, and him having to face down a Great Spirit, know, stand up to a Great Spirit and make a difficult decision, like with the mushroom. It was, he saved Ame. And this time it was, he sacrificed his safety for the safety of Naram.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Speaking of sacrifice and safety, I got to talk about the big—so there were, the big picture—to me, the cover of this episode is Suvi on a white horse, surrounded by soldiers wearing her same uniform, racing to the cresting vines at the top of a shattered wall.

Erika Ishii

The green, my guy!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Literally—

Erika Ishii

The green!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

The green, my guy! The fucking green!

Aabria Iyengar

There's sometimes when you kind of regret, like, oh, I've used my actual speaking cadence for a character that would not necessarily speak like me. And then I was just like, eh, that one. We're going to have to let that go

Erika Ishii

Suvi at 20 years old? Yeah, I don't know.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Incredible. But then also, Eursulon at the bottom of the sea, like, striking down with the sword. And then Ame, talking about sacrifice, Ame on the docks in the liminal space, the bridge between worlds, literally. That picture of the wizard to the walls, the Spirit to the bottom of the sea, and the witch on the line in between, at the coast. And there's an idea of that moment of—what I really love on Ame's insight checks, where we do this thing of, I just throw a bunch of natural phenomena at you and you're like, "Timmy's lost in the well" or you know, whatever. Or like, you have that moment of gleaning stuff from just the natural, feels very witchy.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

But the big thing in this moment when Naram escaped was, for me, the idea of what are witches really about in, Umora, in this setting. And to me, it's the idea of this really subtle, moving at a diagonal, like pushing tiny little dominoes, where the wizards and warlocks and sorcerers of the world cannot see. And that moment where Naram has to make a decision because he's free. Naram is free. He is free to go. But he sees that Eursulon is trapped and has to go, "Well, I'm going to save Eursulon," and has a moment of being like, "Do I rip the derrick out of the water and kill the wizards on it? Which I don't want to do because I'm not violent? Or do I give my life up to break the spell and break the tower, and being caught between them. And Ame, what was that moment like?"

Aabria Iyengar

Yeah, Erika?

Erika Ishii

It was bad, Brennan. It was bad. You were like, "Oh, do you want to kill the Great Spirit and have something perfect and beautiful leave the world forever? Or do you want to kill a bunch of wizards? That's truly a difficult impossible choice, and I, you know, I think Taylor edited out a little bit. I think my question, I was confused on the point of if Eursulon would be saved one way or another and you still hear the fox, and you had responded as the fox saying, Eursulon will be saved either way, but this is a choice between Naram or consequences for wizards. And well, Ame has, up to this point, had a lot of difficulty I think, you know, standing up for things or making strong executive choices. But she's not a pacifist. And I think the term that I use was balance. Was that nature has its own order."

Aabria Iyengar

Interesting. Interesting.

Erika Ishii

Yeah—

Aabria Iyengar

The wizard has some comebacks, but go ahead. We had a Great Spirit was being held a place for a short amount of time. Hundreds of wizards have died. Balance.

Erika Ishii

But I remember saying—I can't remember if it's in this episode or at some point.

Aabria Iyengar

It was beautiful. Beautifully put.

Erika Ishii

Grandma Wren says, you can't make perfect choices. You just have to make right ones. And that's well,

Aabria Iyengar

[Scoffing quietly] The right one.

Erika Ishii

What would have the right one been? What—I mean I guess... ugh you know, I—I Erika,

Aabria Iyengar

I think I know what I would have picked, Erika

Erika Ishii

Okay, okay. Really. Really?

Erika Ishii

After you, After you—Suvi, let me be clear, did not hear the little flashback story where we see Daddy Naram save a perfect little round ball of a baby bear.

Aabria Iyengar

She did not know that. No.

Erika Ishii

And actually to divert for a second

Aabria Iyengar

Ame didn't know either!

Erika Ishii

No, that's true. But I'm the one making the choice, aren't I? But yeah, I mean Ame saying, okay, balance and consequences, and she doesn't want to have to do these things. And she talks about hearing and feeling the deaths of the soldiers and just really mourning it. But making a choice. You just have to make a choice. Because if she had made no choice, I don't think anybody like I think there would have been mass death, AND Naram would be gone.

Erika Ishii

I can tell you what would have happened—Do you know what would have happened

Erika Ishii

Oh, oh god, really? What would have happened?

Aabria Iyengar

Yeah!

Erika Ishii

What would have happened?

Brennan Lee Mulligan

If you had made the choice for Ame to also hesitate in that moment—if you made the choice for Ame to also hesitate in that moment, Guild Mage Morrow and Galani would have used Naram's hesitation to use the derrick to amplify their own magic to kill Naram. So Naram would have been dead anyway, and Eursulon would have stayed trapped and dying under the derrick, and you each would have had to figure out some way to get to the derrick, and I would have had, you know, Eursulon rolling basically like death saves. So it would have been, race to the bottom of the sea to get Eursulon before he's dead.

Aabria Iyengar

Wait, hold on. I could have used the derrick as, like, an amplifier.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

See, this is the issue is there's character bleed happening and Suvi is bleeding into real Aabria. This is the issue.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Literally, Jim Carrey meme "So you're saying there's a chance?"

Aabria Iyengar

That's crazy—Like, I truly—oh, sorry. I've moved on past my bit. I truly can't imagine what the episode would have looked like if Naram had been lost. What would that have meant for Ame and Eursulon, specifically, since that sudden urge to do the right—oh, my gosh, yeah. God, that would have been horrible.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

I would have really vindictively punished hesitation in that moment because I think that in storytelling, there's a lot of, like, um... [Sighs] Real life and the, and the things that have the stakes of epic storytelling, rely on—we examine the choices made by characters and stories from the comfort and repose of lives of consuming media. And there's an element of, I think, the idea of how messy the choices get and also how we are in our own world where so much of the political discourse or the ethical or philosophical discourse of the modern era is around the idea of it's always abstract, and you're always arguing some form of, like, what's the unintended consequence of action? X?

Brennan Lee Mulligan

But of course, the thing is, the world is a chaotic mess and the moral choices you're making are happening while the Godzilla monster is hoisting the wizard derrick. It's all happening. You got to make a call right now or something even—in other words, it's like—okay, I'm rambling.

Aabria Iyengar

No you're good.

Erika Ishii

No no it's so true

Brennan Lee Mulligan

The reason the trolley problem is bullshit is that you're on a different other trolley that is someone else's trolley problem. And they're on a trolley too. And actually, there's no ground. It's just trolleys. It's trolleys, it's Bertrand Russell trolleys all the way down.

Erika Ishii

Oh. My god. All trolleys. It's trolleys all the way down.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

It's oops. All trolleys. Yeah. 100%.

Aabria Iyengar

Oops, all trolleys.

Erika Ishii

Well, we always said the witches, you know, crafting in consequences.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Yeah.

Erika Ishii

Crafting in consequences. But yeah, once again, as echoing the childhood beats, which is I think all of this was unintentional, except maybe Aabria. I feel like Aabria like, had this locked. But yeah, Ame opens up, like with the Mushroom Spirit, Ame is the one who opens up her mind to the Spirit Realm, and talking to a Great Spirit to facilitate communication. Yeah. That's so funny.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

That was a hard part of the episode, too, was both Suvi's and Ame's attempts to speak to Orima because Ame's archetype is a kind of like Nausicaä-esque archetype of the pure hearted, and the person who can speak to and even Suvi, like, using magic disguise as Naram being very like—and there was a chance, those were based on rolls. But the thing about those lower rolls that did make sense to me is this idea of, like, it's overly simplistic to be like, "I'm going to talk and talking will work." It's like, no, man, sometimes shit is popping off and the person that you're trying to speak to is past the limit of reason. And we don't

have to endorse that. But that's like a reality of at least in this setting of like, no, not everyone's open to listening.

Erika Ishii  
Yeah.

Brennan Lee Mulligan  
And what do you do when that's happening?

Aabria Iyengar  
Get choked out by Undre a little bit.

Finn Lemon  
That's just the way it goes.

Aabria Iyengar  
I was like, "I—oh, shit. Okay, well, three hit points left. We're doing great. We're doing great. Follow me." So good. Also, I do think it's one of those things that's both very cinematically cool, but also just dead ass funny that in the middle of, again, a Godzilla fight. Ame is on the dock. Like, let me just whip up a quick "welcome home baby" meal for you Great Spirits. Everyone join me. And the one the guy that's like, some rice got knocked over.

[Crosstalk]

Erika Ishii  
Yeah.

Aabria Iyengar  
Not in a way that brought me out of the moment, but was just like, yeah, that is a little funny. We got to say, it's a little funny.

Brennan Lee Mulligan  
There's a moment—

Aabria Iyengar  
Appreciation in the middle of crisis.

Brennan Lee Mulligan  
But there's also the idea of, the part that's hilarious about that to me is Godzilla is attacking. You've just seen like a derrick flown. Wizards are flying over the bay. They're firing guns at this thing. Also, there's screams up at the top of the cities. There's vines that are crawling over or whatever. And then a woman in a big, wide brimmed hat goes, "give me rice. This is going to help." And I'm going to tell you something. I like to think of myself as a smart, self possessed, cool customer. If that shit was happening around me and someone confidently told me to get rice, I'd get rice. I think I'd get rice ten out of ten times.



Aabria Iyengar

Always trust the bitch saying thoughts and prayers too calmly in the middle of a crisis.

Erika Ishii

[Laughing] Oh, noooo! Thoughts and prayers! It is thoughts and prayers!!

Aabria Iyengar

No I didn't mean it like that!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

There's something so beautiful also about Ame being like, "this is how we stop this from happening again." And everyone's like, "it's not done happening now. It's already happening again! It's still happening!"

Erika Ishii

Well, what did we learn?

Aabria Iyengar

Oh, man, so good.

Erika Ishii

So I did to circle back to Naram and how amazing and wonderful and sweet he is. There was a question from Mambadou. Brennan. "Did you always plan that you would show Naram's kindness through that flashback with Eursulon? Or did you come up with I think the story might have gotten cut off, but basically, did you know that that was the flashback? Did you know that he had an association with Baby Eursulon? Where—would we have seen him in other ways?"

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Is this—now, that's so interesting. Do we want to get really real here? Because there's a really real answer to this that I think is kind of the behind the scenes, how the sausage gets made that our awesome pals by the Fireside hopefully want from these kinds of chats.

Aabria Iyengar

Spill! That! Tea!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

I'm gonna spill that tea! This is not like—

Erika Ishii

The end of the question is "or did you come up with it closer to the time?" Yeah, but yes,

Brennan Lee Mulligan

I came up with this closer to the time. But as we were recording this little batch of episodes, we were recording the last episodes of arc one, which is this one, and then the episode coming the week after you

listen to this Fireside Chat. The amazing thing about—one of the things that happened around Orima's shrine, is I checked in with all of us about, basically doing my due diligence as a dungeon master, being like, with each of my players. How are you feeling? How are you liking how your character is doing? What's going on internally with your character? What's the kind of— you know, doing my little sort of collecting feedback, which you do casually after you debrief from a session where you're all just, like, snacking and eating food and being like, "oh, that was crazy. That was awesome."

Brennan Lee Mulligan

But this was a little bit more pointed because as arc one was going along, I was like, getting—because I've never DM'd something this long-form for actual play, and I've never DM'd for such a small group of PCs ever. So it was a couple of brand new things that I was trying to recalibrate the internal kind of, you know, programming. And there was a moment talking to Lou, who was present at this time. We were recording this episode. No, it wouldn't have been Lou. Would it have been Adonis Guns? Who would it have been? One of our other wonderful guest performers.

Aabria Iyengar

I think it was Adonis.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

It was Adonis. I think it was Adonis. Good grief.

Finn Lemon

You'll be glad when somebody gets this tattooed on their back someday.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Yeah. Hey, if you're listening to this and you're listening to this years from now, as you sort of have the whole back catalog of the finished campaign of the Wizard, the Witch and the Wild One, and you want to make a plan to get all of our guest performers' names tattooed on a massive scroll on your back. I will, um... I will donate \$10 to your tattoo fund.

Finn Lemon

and I... I'll come support—I'll come hold your hand.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Yes.

Finn Lemon

I, Finn Lemon

Aabria Iyengar

Aw, Finn Lemon will come!

Finn Lemon

I mean, maybe I can get Lou to do it, but I, Finn Lemon will definitely be there.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

For sure, for sure. I hope Lou's doing good on his sabbatical, man. It's been going on for a while.

Finn Lemon

You know, he won't respond to any of my texts, so. But you're—

Erika Ishii

That's not very nice of him.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Well, healthy boundaries. He's on a, he said he was on a—

Finn Lemon

I don't know him that well. We're like—

Erika Ishii

Oh, okay, well, then that's kind of on you.

Aabria Iyengar

[Gasps]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Wow.

Finn Lemon

Okay. Alright.

Erika Ishii

He's a busy man, Hollywood writer, and announcer for the Jimmy Kimmel Show.

Finn Lemon

Well, he's on strike right now. He's on strike. And I have a lot of solidarity, but I think he has a lot of time to text me back as well.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

But listen, Lou said that he would come back as soon as he had walked the exact coastline of the Americas, starting and ending in Maine. Where is he, I think he's in Brazil right now? He's walking the coast of Brazil.

Aabria Iyengar

Yeah.

Finn Lemon  
Gotta be.

Brennan Lee Mulligan  
Yeah, he's been hoofing it, man.

Erika Ishii  
He doesn't have reception. Okay.

Brennan Lee Mulligan  
I was going to say, so about the Naram story. Talking to Adonis Guns, I was, like, heading to Orima's shrine, I had noticed, and I was like, these heroes have these complex relationships with what we would consider "classical heroism." We were, like, nine or ten episodes in. And it's like, you're dealing with Eursulon's heartbreak and kind of remove from the disagreements between Suvi and Ame and Eursulon just kind of being low status in relationship to the world, being someone who doesn't see the potential for change or hope. You have Suvi, who is dealing with this intense inner conflict between her devotion to her friends and the obligations and duties and responsibilities she has to the Citadel. And then you have Ame who has this, you know, big fucking shoes to fill and has to be a warrior for, and champion of kindness. And I don't know if you know this about kindness. It's really hard to fight for kindness because the second you start fighting for it, people can be like, well, if you want the world to be nice, why are you telling me that I'm bad?

Brennan Lee Mulligan  
That's not very nice of you. And you go—

Erika Ishii  
Ahhh. The paradox of tolerance.

Brennan Lee Mulligan  
Yeah, exactly right. So I was like, all the characters have these very wonderful first level conflicts with embracing this sort of heroic thing. But as a Dungeon Master, you always want to see your players take agency. And so I'm like, god, should I make this world more sandboxy and have it be more of like, go where thou wilt and do what thou wilt? And I literally posed the question to all of you. I don't know if you remember this, it was like a couple of months ago now. And I was like, you guys are playing really believable first level characters that have these struggles. Do you want—my instinct is to back off and let you find heroism on your own timetable. But because this is so classically mythologically a kind of like, fairy tale world, there are also elements where the world grabs you by the throat and calls you to greater purpose, that feels really of the genre we're in.

Brennan Lee Mulligan  
Do you want that? Do you want this to be—right now we're 50/50 between Sandbox Railroad. Do you want it to kind of tick in one direction or the other? And I remember Lou specifically telling me, like, oh, thrust Eursulon into a predicament where he is forced to make an impossible choice. Like, I want to play somebody that if they could, would run away and hide and stay safe. But if you put him in a situation

where suddenly the choice of being non-heroic is unthinkable, that's how I want it to, like—so that was something Lou asked for in that moment. And the second he asked for that, I went, Naram saved you as a baby.

Finn Lemon  
Quest Fever.

Aabria Iyengar  
Ugh, so good.

Finn Lemon  
Put in that, get out Quest Fever.

Brennan Lee Mulligan  
Yeah.

Finn Lemon  
I loved was I liked that engine. I thought it was like a good—and I thought your placement also was just perfect of just a weird, like, violent moment, that then—

Brennan Lee Mulligan  
You got Great Spirit blood in your body, you're tripping balls, like this magic thing. Fucking repressed memory of being a little round bear cub getting lifted up to your dad by a sweet Wave Lord. And then you'd be like, yeah, that's the guy that you're fuckin'... You're waiting—he can fucking kick it in the fucking poison magic trap for another couple of days. And you're like, and I love the way Eursulon said too, where he's like, I made the promise. I have the sword. I will free him. Where it's like—

Aabria Iyengar  
oh, so good.

Erika Ishii  
God, so good. Morrow is so funny to me. He's so funny.

Aabria Iyengar  
I love him. I love that man. What are you talking about? What a lil guy. When we played in the studio, I was like, what a silly little man. And then there's so many good—fucking sound stuff. The juice in this episode, as in all of them, is incredible. Taylor's sound effect for the throwing of the derrick.

Erika Ishii  
Oh, my God.

Aabria Iyengar  
Did something to the part of me that thinks, yeah, it was like weird in my ears and then landed far away and was sort of bookended by Brennan's narration about how many people were alive or dying on that at

the time. That like, hit for me in a way—not to again lean into a joke of Suvi bleed, but understanding the tremendous cost, both magically and resource and lives that were there, Morrow absolutely losing his shit makes perfect fucking sense. Because as long as like, all the investment that went into it, everything that was lost in that moment and everything that was at risk from there after, like, it's just that horrifying—I don't know. Ugh. Another sports analogy.

Aabria Iyengar

Have you guys ever done something where you know that you're about to win and then something sneaks up on you or you trip, or just one little thing begins to rob you of what your brain has locked into as assured? That was what I felt from Morrow in this way that was like, yes, it's very funny. And the little marzipan man losing his mind is delightful because we need a big silly villain. But it really does make sense. He had it locked in and locked down and all of a sudden two young adults with quest fever upended his world. And that's crazy.

Finn Lemon

That's all it takes

Aabria Iyengar

So good.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

All it takes. I love that one—

Erika Ishii

Agreed, agreed. It's that desperation, the sort of arrogance and just he does treason because of the desperation.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

But also the athletic analogy is a great one too, because it's not just that he worked harder and was better, much like a fucking match or a game as well. He also got lucky. It was that he caught Naram, and that Suvi showed up, and Steel's coming! So it's the combination of "I did everything right, all my moves worked, all my theories were correct. I've worked my ass off. I gamed this perfectly. And the opportunity showed up. Like the luck came through for my favor as well. The fucking Sword of the Citadel's on her way!" I think there was a world where the creature gets away and Morrow doesn't do that if it's like, oh, I caught it and it got away like a month later and no one could find out. And it's like, "Ah, fuck. But it was the idea that I just needed it for another 48 hours, for another 12 hours" or whatever, right?

Aabria Iyengar

It truly is just a bad wind catching a perfectly executed hit or throw. And you're just like, there's nothing I could do about this but be fucking furious and drop all pretense to try to wrest the wind back. It makes so much—ugh! So good. So good. And his whirlpool! And then the—ugh! That's so great. That's so good.

Finn Lemon

Little whirlpool.

Erika Ishii

I remember. It's just ingrained in my memory. You saying they're following this party planner down to hell.

[Brennan breaks into laughter]

Erika Ishii

It just really was so vivid.

Aabria Iyengar

Okay, maybe I'm a little dismissive of guild mages. That's on me. He's not a Citadel wizard. Let me be very clear.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

I love that so much.

Finn Lemon

I did really appreciate those rolls. For them to be like, well, are you really going to follow the most logical person here? And it's like, no, the party planner's screaming pretty loud and everyone's like, "into the whirlpool."

Aabria Iyengar

All femme aligned people felt that in that moment. The like, I'm making a better case and I'm more powerful. Oh, we're going to listen to the screaming man.

Erika Ishii

Yeah, we talked about this. Yeah.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Galani being like, "I am an Abjuror of the Citadel. I outrank everyone here. Also, I clearly have my wits about me. And lest we forget, I am right." And Morrow being like, [In a frantic Morrow voice] "but, look, ahh!" And what is the plan? The plan is, the derrick is gone. There's a god loose in the ocean. And he's like, "I'll make a whirlpool. And we'll all fly down there. And then when we're down there, we'll... get 'em!" Well, what's the—wait, there's a quest—there's a missing step in the plan.

Erika Ishii

True. I have to say, too, I was so scared that Galani was going to die at the hands of Naram.

Aabria Iyengar

Yeah, I was crying at the table. Because I thought she was dying.

Erika Ishii

I would have felt so bad. God.

Aabria Iyengar

[Playfully indignant] Oh, is that what would have gotten you, Ame? Fuck you.

Erika Ishii

Ame said she felt bad! But I will say that in the moment, me, Erika, it felt bad to have to make the call. It's just trolleys all the way down. And I just—

Brennan Lee Mulligan

I'll tell you what—

Erika Ishii

Consequences are bad, Brennan. Why—we're telling a fun little make 'em up!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

I'll tell you what, if I was a PC in this world, those wizards would have been dead lickety fucking split. They would have been fucking toast, baby.

Finn Lemon

I don't feel a thing. I didn't feel a thing. I was like, let's go.

Aabria Iyengar

I didn't experience Naram being a cute little guy with my brother. So I'd have been like, fuck that fish. There's people up here that's going to feed this town for weeks. I don't know how much people eat.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

How much could a banana cost? \$10. I think the trick is, and the whole point of that horrifying choice and of the idea of the conflict, the imperial conflict, the magical conflict of the Spirit World and the world of mortals. And all of this is just the idea of, what's the enemy here. And I think the enemy for me, right, is there are real villains who gird their sinister plans with entire civilizations and societies. And then go, if you want to stop me, you have to oppose people who theoretically, in quotations, haven't done anything wrong, TM.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And I think that the response to that, right, is—and I think I've said something like this in some other games that we've played together, maybe not in Worlds Beyond Number, but it's the idea—maybe this is something fucking like Evan Kelp said, or I forget what it was, but there's something about the idea of, like, I forget exactly what it was, but there's something along the idea of someone's got a boot on your throat and they go, now, listen, I'm going to kill you and everyone you care about. Be careful in how you oppose me that you don't commit an ethical error, lest you be as naughty and bad as me.

Erika Ishii

I know exactly what this is. Brennan for those of you who have not seen the old college humor sketch where Brennan has a turd in a meeting—



Brennan Lee Mulligan

Oh, yeah yeah yeah. [chuckles]

Erika Ishii

It is that.

Aabria Iyengar

I'm googling this right now!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

But it's the thing of like, you know—

Erika Ishii

It is very good and very true. Yeah. Tone policing. It's tone policing, and whataboutism and... yeah.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Well, it's the idea of the Empire creates a system where they're like, where this Guild Mage Morrow goes, "I'm going to capture a Great One." And in the service of that goal, hundreds or thousands of people will be conscripted even without their knowledge, because we have such sorceries as global economies and bureaucracies of state that can conscript. Even the fishermen of this town don't know the ways in which they are helping me bind this god of the ocean to the floor of the bay. But they are. They are complicit in it. They are helping it. And so the devilry of that is anyone that wants to oppose that has to interface with this system that is semi unconscious because it's made of thousands and millions of people. So you got to fucking, ya know. Naram had to kill those wizards.

Aabria Iyengar

Yeah.

Erika Ishii

He did.

Finn Lemon

He had to. He did his best. Let's never forget. He did his best as a hundred foot man throwing tidal waves around.

Erika Ishii

Yeah. Surgical precision, you said. Surgical precision.

Aabria Iyengar

Still killed a hundred people.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

for sure.

Aabria Iyengar

I will say there was a really cool—oh, go ahead.

Erika Ishii

Oh, yeah. No, no, you go ahead.

Aabria Iyengar

I was going to say a moment I really liked in and around that was having a little bit of a check for Suvi with the death of Sergeant Laplow. The person that she was sort of jokingly threatening. Truly, like a day earlier. And then she watches him brutally die and goes like, "Oh, that's actually what that means. Yes, this is what it means when you make a joke like that. And here's the thing that this person who you were tormenting for inconveniencing you was willing to die for." And it was just such a fun—not fun. God, horrifying. The pretend person that died.

Finn Lemon

No, no no. You had fun. It's okay.

Erika Ishii

It was fun for me.

Aabria Iyengar

I had a lot of fun as a character. [Laughs]

Finn Lemon

I enjoyed myself immensely during this episode.

Aabria Iyengar

I'm pouring some out for the homie right now.

Erika Ishii

Consequences! That—yeah. Go ahead.

Aabria Iyengar

It doesn't even quite feel like consequences. It just felt like, to use the sort of like—Eursulon is leveling up in a physical way as he steps into his power. And I think there is an emotional leveling up there for Suvi that goes like, this is what it means to deal with people who are trying to move around the feet of Great Spirits. Like, this is why you be good to other people, because we're fragile.

Erika Ishii

Oh, I meant consequences for Suvi, in having done and—

Aabria Iyengar

Why is this—

Erika Ishii

—said the thing and now she has to feel bad.

Aabria Iyengar

Okay. Okay. Alright. Hey, Ame, I do think you need to learn what balance is? Like, Suvi needs to learn a lesson about humility. And a man has to DIE. That might be a lot? You could just write it down. She'll read it. She'll read the shit out of it.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Well, I think that there's—

Erika Ishii

I think, yeah, talking about know why it feels bad for that to happen is like, this is what had to happen. And now we know the consequences of what would have happened if Ame had instead hesitated. But I think that also, in a weird sort of behind the scenes sort of way, we as performers and improvisers can't hesitate. It's like, UCB don't think, right? You can't. A story will suffer. And you just have to make a decision. Even if it's the wrong one, you just make it a strong one and you make it. And you commit to it.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

To get Aabria's back here for a second.

Aabria Iyengar

Thanks Brennan.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Because I did advocate for the death of your countrymen, and I do understand that.

Aabria Iyengar

Yeah, it's fine. I get it.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And I would, and you must, actually. But there's a moral imperative, too. You have to oppose them. But! But, buuut, but...

Aabria Iyengar

I'm living on this "but"

Brennan Lee Mulligan

The balance thing is interesting because I think Ame went to this place of balance because I think Ame is still very—and this is me as Brennan as an outsider, looking at this and being like, I think Ame is very young, and I think that that is a go to word about harmony. I think, like, if Grandmother Wren had been in that situation, she would have made the same choice, but she would have made it, I think, more

knowingly, about what she was complicit in. She would have said, like—but by the way, do you want to know, because I told you what would happen if you hesitated.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Do you want to know what would have happened if you had picked Naram and spared the wizards? All of the wizards in the Witchfire would have died as Orima decided to burn herself alive. [Erika gasps] Racing across the Witchfire Plain just to kill everybody in Port Talon. [Erika moans in distress] So if you let Naram kill himself, every—the path you chose is the only one that leaves the civilians of Port Talon alive and well.

Aabria Iyengar

That's so cool, Orima's so fucking cool. I love her so much, I want to take her on a date.

Finn Lemon

I think the most ruthless death description in the series of death descriptions was the one of people who the charcoal gets caught up in the water and burns them to death.

Erika Ishii

No burns their throats! It goes down their throats.

Finn Lemon

Yeah, that was raw, that was raw as hell

Brennan Lee Mulligan

To me, it's like a guy tending to a fire that's like 50ft wide, and the water comes and lifts the fire up, and he has burning coals shoveled down his throat and into his eyes as the wave like, lifts the fire up and pushes it on top of him. Yeah, that's bad.

Erika Ishii

Okay, brennan

Finn Lemon

Raw. Raw.

Aabria Iyengar

Look, there is some fun sometimes when you DM you're like, how fucking nasty can I get? Great, this is my time? Here's how fucking raw. And then you're just like, oh, my god. You're just a little nightmare in there. Thank you for giving mostly nice things out!

Erika Ishii

Well, I think if we've learned one thing at tonight's Fireside, it's that Brennan could do a lot, lot worse to us. And we thank him for his mercy every single day. I'm Erika Ishii and I'm here with Aabria iyengar

Aabria Iyengar

Hi, I only have three hit points left. I don't know how much nicer he's going to be.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

[Mischievous voice] Oh, I'll be plenty nice. Don't worry about little old me!

Aabria Iyengar

That was Brennan Lee Mulligan.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

[Up against the mic] Crackle, crackle. That's the noise the coals make as they fucking funnel down your throat, you imperial fucking stooge

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Get 'em. Fucking, that's right

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Maybe if you come to Port Talon, you get what you get, motherfucker!

[The cast yells]

[Surfari's Wipe out kicks in quietly under the dialogue]

Finn Lemon

Got 'em dog. Got 'em. Got 'em dog.

Erika Ishii

And Mr. Finn Lemon, thank you so much for joining us.

Finn Lemon

Of course. Follow me on Back Sky or Blue Sky or whatever

Aabria Iyengar

What the fuck is black sky, or back sky?

Finn Lemon

Follow me on—is it backsky or what is it called?

Brennan Lee Mulligan

[Pained whisper] Follow me on Back Sky!

Aabria Iyengar

It's Blue Sky, the color the sky is!

Finn Lemon

Well, I'm on another app called Backsky

Aabria Iyengar

TM, TM, TM.

Finn Lemon

If you guys want to find it and then DM me that'd be great.

Erika Ishii

Get on that folks.

Finn Lemon

Crackle, crackle.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

A-hoooo-hoooo

Aabria Iyengar

Crackle, crackle.

[Wipe Out continues]