

Worlds Beyond Number

The Wizard, the Witch, and the Wild One: Episode 22 “Bring Them to Me” Final Version

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

Erika Ishii

This is the sound of Worlds Beyond Number.

[The other instruments fade into a lone flute and violin pluck. A lone piano note repeats, and then picks up a melody. Birds chirp in the morning.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Bright morning light cascades through the windows of the Tower of the Glove. The number of skyships has decreased, slightly. Some half dozen have taken off from the Citadel during the hours of your rest, leaving still roughly 40 skyships.

[Resounding rumbling of skyships in the distance]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Some remain within the Irian, docked at various courts. You see others—and this is the first time, Suvi, I think you've seen this since childhood—patrolling the desert out beyond the Irian. As you awaken—I think you awaken quite early, so it's not the sort of burning hot, bright desert day yet. There's still a little bit of that crispness, or newness, of a sun that is low in the sky at the beginning of the day. It is coming up and casting long shadows in that dawn light. You see groups of wizards, even here in Malacanth, marching.

[Men calling out indistinguishable barks from below. Horse hooves on cobbles.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You see that there are noises of shouts from other areas, as people are getting saddled up. It looks like the Citadel is being very activated. Down below, you still see that there are a number of skyships docked in Haverword. You do not see a glow.

[Imperious organ music]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And by the way, at the beginning of the day, you're, like, halfway up the Irian, so Haverword is far, far below, but there is no gleam of orange in the gates. As you awaken, Yulia the Page knocks on the door of your bedroom, Suvi.

Aabria Iyengar

Immediately opens. She's been up.

[Door slides open]

Yulia (Brennan)

Wizard Sky? You are summoned to the Tower of the Sword.

Suvi (Aabria)

Noted. Thank you.

Aabria Iyengar

I'm going to go run, and find the squad.

Lou Wilson

Think Eursulon is in the kitchen, and ready.

Aabria Iyengar

I—It takes me a long time, I keep forgetting I have a kitchen, so.

Lou Wilson

[Chuckle]

Aabria Iyengar

You hear steps downward, then steps upward—

Erika Ishii

[Laugh]

Aabria Iyengar

—and then back downward again.

Lou Wilson

Eursulon's just sipping an espresso, like, his eyes looking up as you're above, down, but knowing you're on the way.

Aabria Iyengar

Yeah. You hear

Suvi (Aabria)

Kitchen!

Aabria Iyengar

right before I'm like

Suvi (Aabria)

Hey!

Eursulon (Lou)

Hi.

Suvi (Aabria)

We've been summoned by Steel.

Eursulon (Lou)

Alright.

Lou Wilson

Eursulon is going to sidle the shield on his back, Wavebreaker at his hilt—or at his hip, and is ready to go.

Suvi (Aabria)

[Calling out] Ame!

Erika Ishii

I bust down the stairs. You hear [Slam noise, rapid footsteps noise.]

Aabria Iyengar

Really quick. Hold on. Are you going like, fully packed—

Erika Ishii

Yes!

Aabria Iyengar

—and ready to leave? Like, you're bringing your luggage?

Erika Ishii

Yes, yes, yes.

Suvi (Aabria)

Hey, do you—real quick. Do you want to telegraph that you're about to leave right now?

Ame (Erika)

Noooo...?

Suvi (Aabria)

We can always come back here.

Ame (Erika)

Can we?

Suvi (Aabria)

To my tower? Yes.

Eursulon (Lou)

I do believe Ame may have a point in terms of the amount of eyes that will be on us coming and going from—I mean, we do have to pass through the Archmage Silence's tower.

Suvi (Aabria)
Fair.

Eursulon (Lou)
Could we—and I know this may seem strange. What if we asked Mr. Callum to hold on to her things?

Suvi (Aabria)
[Gasp] That's a great idea!

Ame (Erika)
Yeah. Yeah yeah.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You guys swing by Candle Street Bakery.

Lou Wilson
I'm also very hungry.

Aabria Iyengar
[Laugh]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You see Mr. Callum looks up and says,

Mr. Callum (Brennan)
'Ello there, welcome back to Candle Street Bakery!

Eursulon (Lou)
Could we have six zucchini sandwiches, and could we leave this here?

Mr. Callum (Brennan)
I'd be more than happy to look after it for you, just—I'll store it here behind the bar!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You see he grabs the bags and stows them off in a corner.

Ame (Erika)
Thank you so much. Please ensure that nothing happens to it. Mr. Callum?

Mr. Callum (Brennan)
Mhm!

Ame (Erika)
Do you know anything about the Taboo of Passage?

Mr. Callum (Brennan)
Not rightly, I don't think, no.

Ame (Erika)
Okay. Do you have any Taboos as a Spirit that you must abide by?

Mr. Callum (Brennan)
Am I a Spirit?

Ame (Erika)
Oh, uh. I think so.

Aabria Iyengar
You can't look at me. I have a strong sense of—in my mental list, I do not qualify this as a Spirit, and more of just like a supercharged spell?

Erika Ishii
Oh.

Aabria Iyengar
But that's on me.

Erika Ishii
Okay. Uh.

Ame (Erika)
What do you consider yourself?

Mr. Callum (Brennan)
A baker.

Suvi (Aabria)
[Laugh]

Ame (Erika)
Oh. Mm. How long do you keep your meringues in the oven for?

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You see that he has become very quiet. Sort of looks at you.

Aabria Iyengar
[Whispered] Damn it, she broke my favorite baker.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Mr. Callum says

Mr. Callum (Brennan)

Well, it depends on the size of the meringue and the type.

Ame (Erika)

Oh, okay.

Mr. Callum (Brennan)

A Gaothmai meringue and a Khemsarazan meringue bake for different amounts of time, different qualities of sugar in them.

Erika Ishii

And you see, he goes and sort of softly sort of starts speaking to himself as he wanders back into the kitchen, to sort of look at the various baked goods back here.

Mr. Callum (Brennan)

Six zucchini sandwiches coming right up!

Suvi (Aabria)

Ame, did you break my baker?

Ame (Erika)

I don't know!

Suvi (Aabria)

Why?

Eursulon (Lou)

I will say, Ame, if you've prevented us from receiving any more marshmallow and chocolate croissants—

Suvi (Aabria)

Ugh.

Eursulon (Lou)

—I will be angry.

Ame (Erika)

I'm sorry!!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Mr. Callum walks back out and says

Mr. Callum (Brennan)

Alright, sandwiches here, ready to go. If you want any croissants or any of the baked goods here, the Tarte au Citron have just come fresh out of the oven.

Suvi (Aabria)

Break me off a piece of that, please, sir.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

He cuts you a little slice of this massive Tarte au Citron.

Suvi (Aabria)

Ah!

Mr. Callum (Brennan)

I don't rightly think I am a Spirit.

Ame (Erika)

Oh!

Mr. Callum (Brennan)

Spirits have always existed, haven't they?

Ame (Erika)

Sure, yes, their world has always been there.

Mr. Callum (Brennan)

Well, then that can't be me, can it?

Ame (Erika)

Well, I don't know, do you want to be a Spirit? What would you like me to call you, if it's a baker, then that's what you can be.

Mr. Callum (Brennan)

Well, my name is Mr. Callum.

Ame (Erika)

Mhm.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

He looks at you and squints his eyes and says,

Mr. Callum (Brennan)

[Echoing] If I know the time of day and the place of my birth, and I know why I was made, then I can't rightly be a Spirit, can I? More a spell than a Spirit.

Ame (Erika)

Oh. I'm sorry if I've upset you.

Mr. Callum (Brennan)

I'm not cross. I can't be cross.

Ame (Erika)

Mm.

Mr. Callum (Brennan)

I don't want to be cross. [Stops echoing] Can I get you anything else?

Erika Ishii

I'm going to do an insight check—

Aabria Iyengar

Aaah!

Erika Ishii

—on him, just to see if there's anything that I can do or say that might—that might sort of ameliorate what seems to have been a misstep on my part. 24.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

I think on a 24 insight check, you remember conversations that Grandmother Wren would have with different members of the community in Toma. And there were some people that would come up and talk to Grandmother Wren about her adventures, and the wide goings on of the world, because they were curious. And with some people, she would share that she knew much, and other people ONLY knew her as the Witch of Toma. And there were people, once or twice, that would enter a conversation that was at a different depth than they were used to seeing Grandmother Wren in.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

A county fair, where someone who was a little bit more traveled, or a little bit more wise, would be speaking to Grandmother Wren about matters of the Empire's presence in Akham, or what was happening at Port Talon or at Joras. And you would watch the discomfort, when someone who knew Grandma Wren from the shallow end of the pool, suddenly discovered that she was actually standing in the deep end the whole time, and was just taller than they thought. And talking to Mr. Callum in this way, Ame, you realize you're a creature of the deep end of the pool, and you are constantly starting deep conversations, in a way that, to lots of people, will be really distressing.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Your glib invitation for this Tamori to have a panic attack existential crisis, is because there's no part of the universe you don't feel interested in looking at, and that, suddenly you realize, is an immense gift, it's a superpower, you're tough, and your heart is strong, and there's lots and lots of people who will never want to join you there. Is that good for a 24?

Aabria Iyengar

Goddamn.

Erika Ishii

Brennan. Lee. Mulligan. That was for my character, that 24.

[Aabria and Brennan laugh]

Erika Ishii

[Crisis] I. Need. To. Sit.

Aabria Iyengar

Yeah.

Erika Ishii

With. This. A minute.

Suvi (Aabria)

Mr. Callum.

Mr. Callum (Brennan)

Mhm.

Suvi (Aabria)

Have you ever—

Aabria Iyengar

And I'm just trying to, like, "Ah ha! A thing has happened and I think the Witch has temporarily gone offline, let me try to save this!"

Ame (Erika)

[Groan]

Suvi (Aabria)

Mr. Callum, have you ever met a—another tamori of a more concentrated aerith than yourself?

Mr. Callum (Brennan)

I have yes, that's true!

Suvi (Aabria)

Okay!

Mr. Callum (Brennan)

Adina! Adinas come by every once in a while. Sometimes when wizards come, an Adina is escorting them. She is of a more concentrated aerith than I.

Suvi (Aabria)

And there's others, too, so maybe, whatever you are and however you see yourself, you are a part of a type of thing that exists, and it exists in a broader way than maybe you were given to know before. And, I think, all things that live hope mostly for community, and worry little about taxonomy. Unless you're a wizard. That's kind of our weird thing.

Mr. Callum (Brennan)
[Echo] Community!

Suvi (Aabria)
Yeah!

Mr. Callum (Brennan)
That's it!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
And has done something simple in his mind—

Aabria Iyengar
Yay!

Ame (Erika)
Yes!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
—that's allowed him to feel good.

Ame (Erika)
Yes! That's it. Community, and—

Suvi (Aabria)
Seems like I got him.

Ame (Erika)
—the feeling of belonging!

Ame (Erika)
I do a little high five.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You see he shrugs and says

Mr. Callum (Brennan)
Spirits and beerits, all hibleddy hobbledy! The important thing is everyone loves a good sandwich!

Eursulon (Lou)
And, Mr. Callum, I must say, these are some of your best yet.

Mr. Callum (Brennan)
Ah, thank you kindly, Bear, the strongest man in Silbry!

Eursulon (Lou)
That's me!

Suvi (Aabria)
Bear, you have to try this tart, it's so good.

Eursulon (Lou)
Oh, just a bite.

Suvi (Aabria)
Yeah. There you go.

Lou Wilson
[Chuckle]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You guys leave from this extremely charged bakery interaction. How's Ame looking?

Aabria Iyengar
[Cackle]

Erika Ishii
You know, this is helpful. I think Ame is thinking, as her processing this as she goes along, and she thinks, "Oh! I just can't start out with deep stuff with people all the time. I have to learn small talk. Aaaaaa! Okay!"

Erika Ishii
I think, Ame—

Erika Ishii
Helpful! Helpful, helpful, helpful.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You suddenly—now that you have recovered your memories, you remember Grandma Wren, who occasionally would come back and be like, "I was flung into an endless pit!" And then the next day would be like, "These goats are more rambunctious than the older goats." Like, you realize, like, "Oh! A huge skill, a huge part of the job I have fucking vastly overlooked!" Because you were always just flanking her, and she would take the charge on small talk, and then would talk to you later about the heavy stuff. Like, "Do you remember Ame, how I went in there and sutured that wound? There was an infection that was spreading more than just the flesh, but in the Spirit as well."

[Aabria and Erika laugh]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
So she was always—it's honestly, for as perfect as Grandma Wren was just maybe, actually a small oversight on her part, that she was very good about giving you the heavy stuff, and then actually was not great at

clocking her own skills like bedside manner, easing people in, being different people FOR different people in an interaction.

Erika Ishii

Yeah, it's—you don't know what you don't know, and it's hard to teach something that you have acquired not through learning, necessarily, but through experience. Oh, boy. Oh boy! Okay okay oka. I'm excited. I'm going to learn to talk about the weather.

Aabria Iyengar

[Laugh]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You see, the Fox looks up at you and goes

The Fox (Brennan)

Am I a Spirit?

Ame (Erika)

[I dunno grunt]

The Fox (Brennan)

Ok.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And you see you guys head off.

[Delightful jingle of store bells, Aabria laughs]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You arrive at the Tower of the Sword. Up on the balcony—where Suvi, you first spoke with Steel upon arriving back at the Citadel this time—you see Steel looking tired, but not haggard. She does okay on like, 3 hours of sleep. You see that she's awake and she's got her golden armor on, has some sort of schematics and stuff out that she closes up in a book as you all arrive. She looks and says

Steel (Brennan)

[Sigh] Suvi, good to see you.

Suvi (Aabria)

How are you holding up?

Steel (Brennan)

Hey. Been better. I don't care for these, you know, goldthreads running all over the Citadel like this, but ultimately, it is what it is. Oh! Slate mentioned that you came by.

Aabria Iyengar

[Menacing whisper] Snitch.

Suvi (Aabria)
Mhm!

Steel (Brennan)
Did you—you wanted to know about Fort Kieran.

Suvi (Aabria)
I did.

Ame (Erika)
She wants to know about Silver.

Suvi (Aabria)
Oh. Great. So we're just going to blow up all of our fucking spots right now. Cool. Cool cool cool.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
She looks at you and says

Steel (Brennan)
We don't have reports back yet. Suvi, I don't know, but losses suffered by the reinforcements have been minimal.

Suvi (Aabria)
I'll take that.

Aabria Iyengar
I just kick Ame's shoe a little bit.

Steel (Brennan)
Um. Eioghorain was there.

[Tense droning music]

Suvi (Aabria)
What?

Ame (Erika)
What!?

Steel (Brennan)
At Fort Kieran.

Suvi (Aabria)
Oh.

Steel (Brennan)

It's being held by sorcerers of the Red Fleet right now, but the beasts that attacked? They weren't beasts.

Suvi (Aabria)

Mm. Okay. Do you have any sense of what their—was this a purely military move to react—why? Why are they doing—why now? Why him?

Steel (Brennan)

I don't know. What I know is that Fort Kieran is where I would attack, if I wanted to get a foothold in a part of the Empire where I could attack a lot of different places next. So, Fort Kieran doesn't—it's not in a part of the Empire that produces a lot of our wealth, or a lot of our resources, but it is a strategically significant place for them to cloak where they are next, so if you think about it like a boxing match, it's not a blow that's going to send us to our knees, but it does mean that they've got a lot of choices about the next punch they throw.

Suvi (Aabria)

Copy. Okay.

Steel (Brennan)

So we're trying to figure out what the ultimate ambition is, but it's a good first move for keeping us in the dark about what their ambition is.

Eursulon (Lou)

I apologize for my ignorance, but you said they were not beasts. Do you mean that they were men, who could turn into beasts?

Steel (Brennan)

Shape-changers.

Eursulon (Lou)

Mm.

Steel (Brennan)

In the information we got back—you know, I don't have definitive proof, but one of the beasts that attacked smelled of iron, and was able to overcome some resistances on some summoned creatures. There were a lot of conjuration specialists at Fort Kieran who summoned some Spirits to the aid of Fort Kieran, and one of the beasts went through them like tissue paper. And, moreover, took a familiar form, based on reports, there was no—there were limited survivors, and the visuals that we got, you know they attacked at night, visibility was low, but I'm certain. Or—or, if it's not Eioghorain, it's someone that had that exact—it was Eioghorain.

Suvi (Aabria)

It was Eioghorain.

Aabria Iyengar

I'm going to look over at Eursulon, and I think the look on Suvi's face has everything to do with like, "Do we tell her what we've talked about over the diagrams?"

Lou Wilson

I think Eursulon will nod to Suvi.

Eursulon (Lou)

I do not know if you already know this but, I have seen beasts like Eioghorain from my time in the Spirit world. He takes the form of something known as a garon.

Steel (Brennan)

You know this creature?

Eursulon (Lou)

I do.

Steel (Brennan)

You have not seen these creatures in the forests or fields of Umora, I take it?

Eursulon (Lou)

No.

Steel (Brennan)

Okay.

Ame (Erika)

Where did you acquire the charts of those creatures?

Steel (Brennan)

Well, we didn't know that they were—the chart was based on Eioghorain. The chart was based on shape-changers from Gaothmai.

Ame (Erika)

And did you make the page artificially smell as he does?

Brennan Lee Mulligan

She looks at you here and narrows her eyes. Your tampering with the page is what allowed you to come into that knowledge. And she goes

Steel (Brennan)

Yes. The smell of the bile, and the iron, and everything else like that, was a part of alerting any possible soldiers to those ends, and, ultimately, I wanted Grandmother Wren to remember, because Grandmother Wren's associations with Eioghorain had been very limited. Eioghorain had never worn that form in front of Grandmother Wren.

Suvi (Aabria)

But they'd met.

Steel (Brennan)

He's a shape changer.

Erika Ishii

Had I known that Grandmother Wren had had meetings with Eioghorain?

Brennan Lee Mulligan

No. She mentioned—I mean, she mentioned—talking about the akatator, and stuff like that. She never said that Eioghorain was in the akatator, but she mentioned—when she talked about the night Suvi came, she would have said that Eioghorain was there, you know. She knew that much. She knew that the night Suvi first came to the cottage, that it had been Eioghorain, Steel, Soft, and Stone altogether. And you see that she looks up and says

Steel (Brennan)

Thank you for telling me this, Eursulon. I appreciate it.

Eursulon (Lou)

Of course.

[Low mysterious piano music]

Ame (Erika)

Steel, I did not know about Grandmother Wren's dealings with Eioghorain, but it seems that that smell is specific to him, and not to other shapeshifters of his kind. Also, his name means "Son of Garon." And his iron—the iron smell about him? Traditionally, iron is used to ward against Spirits, or bind them in some way.

Steel (Brennan)

Well, that holds out. There's—plenty of us have fought other shapeshifters before, but that iron smell, I've only ever smelled on one man. I appreciate your counsel in this regard, Ame.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Suvi, you see she turns to you and says

Steel (Brennan)

So, Fort Kieran is one element of what's going on. The more harrowing element... The Citadel has to be very careful right now. This is the opening of a new gambit. And, where and how we commit ourselves, will define the next five years, ten, futures of the Empire. So, we need to make choices, and we need to make them swiftly. But...

[Tense imperious strings]

Steel (Brennan)

For the moment, we're fighting in the dark.

Suvi (Aabria)

You said that we are at the precipice of either a slow or quick ramp up. In your estimation, what is better for us?

Steel (Brennan)

We're wizards. Given time, we win. Slow is better. Fast is bad.

Ame (Erika)

Is there anything that we can do to stall them out and get more information?

Steel (Brennan)

That's what we're looking into. But it's—right now, what's happening is we're just trying to suck up as much information from every part of the Empire as we can, and what's happening right now, over in the dome, is everyone is attempting, as fast as possible, to separate truth from fact. What is essential. What matters. And within all of that intelligence, knowing that there is shifting ground, what you saw occurring here at the Citadel is, following the attack on Fort Kieran, we were able to isolate three possibilities of how the fort fell so swiftly.

Steel (Brennan)

So even in defeat, there is opportunity, always. The only way—we were able to isolate how the fort could have been taken, followed those avenues, and discovered a thread of espionage and betrayal in one of them. And pulling at it led us not only to the Citadel, but to many other places as well. But to the Citadel, one thread led.

Suvi (Aabria)

Hence the raids in Haverword.

Steel (Brennan)

Correct.

Suvi (Aabria)

Well, let's get to the hard part. Ame has to leave. We have to go with her. What's the best way out?

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Steel sits back.

Steel (Brennan)

As of this morning, you have two days before disaster falls.

[Discordant but melodic string music]

Ame (Erika)

And it's not just to get to Toma. From Toma, I must go to a very far away location.

Steel (Brennan)

Mm. You are moving with a certainty that doom will befall you. Doom will befall you if you do not join a meeting of, you said, this Coven of Witches to which you belong, presumably against your will?

Ame (Erika)

A counsel. And it's a role I have inherited, that I am magically compelled to do.

Steel (Brennan)

That I understand. You were contacted by this coven and threatened with destruction if you were not able to make this meeting.

Ame (Erika)

No, they would never be so crass as to do that. We were contacted and told in no uncertain terms that I was to meet with them. A diviner from the Court of Cabani was the one to tell me that certain destruction would follow if I were not to go in three days.

Steel (Brennan)

Do you have—which diviner of the Court of Cabani?

Ame (Erika)

A trusted friend of Grandmother Wren's.

Steel (Brennan)

A trusted friend of Grandmother Wren's, as I was? Do we—?

Ame (Erika)

Yes.

Steel (Brennan)

Okay. And we're saying "a trusted friend of Grandmother Wren's" rather than what they are called. [Sigh, beleaguered, rubbing her eyes] God I'm just so tired.

Ame (Erika)

I'm so sorry. I will do—

Steel (Brennan)

You know what we consider a great diviner?

Ame (Erika)

Mm.

Steel (Brennan)

Someone whose prophecies are true 51% of the time. That's a diviner that is of incredible use to the Empire. Now, I don't know who this "friend of Grandmother Wren's" is, whose name you don't wish to divulge here, but, I will say I would love to go and speak to the diviners of the Court of Cabani, to see if there is any evidence of this coming to pass. Again, you must know—even as a young Witch—how trivially easy it is to

fool anybody with an illusion. Especially those wizards so fond of peering out unguardedly into the endless expanse of creation.

Suvi (Aabria)

I heard once it was a mistake to see the serenity of Witches, and mistake that for inexperience.

Steel (Brennan)

It sounds like we're not doubting the serenity of Witches. It sounds like we're doubting wizardcraft, which, as the Sword of the Citadel, I maintain the authority to do.

Suvi (Aabria)

Right—yeah—okay—ugh.

Steel (Brennan)

Diviners can be wrong.

Steel (Brennan)

Right.

Steel (Brennan)

And they can especially be wrong if they are being fed information, perhaps by powerful Witches with an agenda, to see certain things that are to their advantage. Let me be clear. I'm talking about taking an hour or two to go get a second opinion.

Erika Ishii

Ame looks to Suvi.

Suvi (Aabria)

Look, you heard it here. More information. The ability to prepare, to know, is how we find victory. You are quick to act, and we are quick to check, and check again. Thank you for trusting, and waiting for this conversation.

Aabria Iyengar

And I'm saying that with a bit of an emotional lean towards Steel, to be like "She wanted to dip yesterday. Take the dub."

Brennan Lee Mulligan

[Laugh]

Suvi (Aabria)

You've given me what I've asked for. Anything more, I leave at your feet.

Ame (Erika)

I can wait 2 hours at most. Let's go discuss this with the wizards of Cabani.

Steel (Brennan)
Perfect.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You see that she gets up—

Eursulon (Lou)
Before we go. Suvi.

Suvi (Aabria)
Yes?

Eursulon (Lou)
[Leading] Suvi?

Suvi (Aabria)
[Confused murmuring]

Eursulon (Lou)
The—

Suvi (Aabria)
[Gasp] OH! Oh, okay, so you left—thank you for the names, you did leave them in a book with other pages in it.

Eursulon (Lou)
What can you tell us of the Wizard Stripe?

Suvi (Aabria)
Okay, I thought—you can't say "Suvi!" And then not wait for me to take too long to explain—what do you know about the Wizard Stripe? You had Badger written in there too.

Steel (Brennan)
[Feigned anger] Snooping in my journal, that I left with a note for you in the middle of it, and a ribbon.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
She smiles and looks at you, Eursulon, and says

Steel (Brennan)
Not my most protected spellbook of all time. More of a to do list. The notes I was looking for, were based on the favor I offered to do for you, or to attempt to do for you, Eursulon.

Eursulon (Lou)
Mhm.

Steel (Brennan)

I, knowing your name—very carefully and guardedly and through back channels such as not to tip off anybody that otherwise would be tipped off— looked for any instances of your name in the record of the Citadel. There was no recording of it, my understanding is that you came to this world as a child and were not—you know. Did not have great writings of your name in the world of Spirits, prior to your adolescence here in Umora. So I didn't find any wizards having previously bound you, I didn't find a diagram with any of your information in it.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You can hear a tone in Steel's voice here, by the way, that Eursulon is a Minor Spirit, you know, he's not—there's not big treatises being written.

Lou Wilson

Brennan! Rude.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

It is what it is, man! You started first level like everybody else!

Aabria Iyengar

[Laugh]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

But you see, she says

Steel (Brennan)

So I found no evidence—I found no primary sources concerning your name. What I did find, were records of other wizards making the same search I was making.

[Soft rattling music, mystical tones]

Steel (Brennan)

The Wizard Stripe spent many years searching for a Spirit called Eursulon.

Eursulon (Lou)

Really?

Steel (Brennan)

Yes. The Wizard Stripe came here and joined as a young person in a far off—you know, the history of the Citadel, when it was very different than it is today, but joined the Citadel when it was much younger, and became a diviner. And was searching for—no one knew it at the time, her business was her own, but she trained in the art of finding Spirits, and became very adept at piercing abjurations, she—a lot of her research was concerned with the fact that sorcerers, or other agents in the—magical agents in the world, could hide Spirits and sequester them away somewhere? She was really good at, for lack of a better word, knowing what eventually—do you know of—how much do you know of the Wizard Stripe?

Eursulon (Lou)
She is my sister.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You watched Steel in an instant, put it all together.

Steel (Brennan)
We shared a father, and grew up together.

[Droning spiritual tones, soft clarinet.]

Steel (Brennan)
Then you know of the Kasov Collection.

Ame (Erika)
And she was released during an oversight?

Steel (Brennan)
Yes. A young friend of mine almost got drummed out of the Citadel for his recklessness—

Brennan Lee Mulligan
And here she winks at Suvi.

Steel (Brennan)
—his recklessness in that moment.

Suvi (Aabria)
Sloppy.

Steel (Brennan)
Incredibly sloppy!

Ame (Erika)
Careless.

Steel (Brennan)
Incredibly sloppy. How he sloppily slopped up, during the hours where the collection was closed and there were no bystanders and et cetera, et cetera, et cetera, in any case, the point being, the Wizard Stripe. I did not—there was no record of her being your sister, that I would have brought to you immediately. There was merely a record of her being a Spirit disguised as a wizard, who spent long years learning how to search for hidden and captured Spirits. One of her appellations was "the Burrower."

Steel (Brennan)
She went to many deep places of the earth believing that something very precious had been hidden away in there, but she was released. You know, aging is a very complicated thing and, over time, her glamor moved farther and farther away from the fact that she was not actually aging at the same rate as everybody else. So

in searching for you, I found out other people who had searched for you, and I now discover that one of them was your sister.

Eursulon (Lou)

Mm.

Steel (Brennan)

She herself was a Badger Spirit, she had searched for other Badger Spirits. She had searched for Bear and Owl, she had searched for Panther, she searched for Fire, and Leaf, a number of different Spirits she had searched for, and—

Suvi (Aabria)

Wait, why would she search for other—

Eursulon (Lou)

Other siblings, I'm assuming.

Suvi (Aabria)

Did others come through?

Eursulon (Lou)

Not that I—I don't believe so, but—

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Steel shrugs as well, and says

Steel (Brennan)

I just started to make a note of everything of interest that she had searched for that felt outside the purview of spellcraft? I mean, obviously, 80% of her research was just learning how to be better at spellcasting but, for our purposes, the one other thing I'll say that she looked for was many, many years before my time, was heraldic histories. Histories of different battles that occurred within Akham. One of them, the Battle of Starling Ford. She made a lot of searches in the armories of the Citadel, specifically looking for a golden pauldron.

Suvi (Aabria)

[Slight laugh] Yeah.

Lou Wilson

[Chuckle] Eursulon feels the pauldron, but makes no move to indicate it.

Steel (Brennan)

So. I am very sorry that you discovered my—it's a wizardly habit to hold on to secrets, and obviously that's very much concerned with your business, Eursulon, but also, it was a favor that you had, for the moment, refused, and so I was sort of just sitting on it anyway, because giving you—not knowing that she was your sister, an ancient wizard who ended up being a Spirit searching feverishly for you, didn't seem like a comforting bit of news to give, nor one that was relevant given that that was more than two decades ago.

Eursulon (Lou)

Of course. I'm assuming there is no indication of where she went when released?

Steel (Brennan)

If there was, the Citadel would have used it to track her down.

Eursulon (Lou)

Well then, good.

Steel (Brennan)

I am going to head to Cabani and talk to the Diviners there. And I will see you at the Tower of the Glove, and will hopefully have an answer for you as soon as possible.

[Chair sliding across the floor, clattering of armor]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

She stands up, claps a shoulder on you, says

Steel (Brennan)

Much appreciated, and we are going to take care of this, I swear.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

She dimension doors out.

[Magical noise]

Suvi (Aabria)

[Whispered] Got to learn that. Someday. [Not whispered] Hey, Ame how ya doing?

Erika Ishii

I'm in the middle of having a conversation telepathically with the Fox.

Aabria Iyengar

Oh.

Erika Ishii

I don't say that out loud.

Aabria Iyengar

Yeah. Yeah yeah yeah.

Erika Ishii

I just am.

Ame (Erika)

[Telepathic echo] This feels like Port Talon. We want to go. We need to go. And we are waiting, and to be honest, it might have been better if we waited while we were at Port Talon. Steel would have helped take care of that. But I just can't shake the feeling that we're wasting time, that we have to get back, to take action.

The Fox (Brennan)

Trust your brain. Trust your gut. If I still have a vote, which is unclear—

Aabria Iyengar

[Exasperated] You—I'm not there!

Erika Ishii

[Laugh]

The Fox (Brennan)

My vote's always going to be to follow your gut. We didn't listen to Steel in Port Talon, and as a result, we freed a really big Great Spirit. Eursulon learned magic. And you brought a song back to all the people there who started singing it, to reconnect to the Spirits. And a lot of people died, but that's okay.

Ame (Erika)

Well, I was going to add that, that's kind of important. Okay. Well. I literally don't see a way that we can physically run away from this one, though. Unless, you know of some way back to Silbry.

The Fox (Brennan)

You telling me you think I can't find a way out of a place?

Ame (Erika)

Yeah, that's what I'm saying! I bet you couldn't do it, even if we wanted to.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

The Fox is gone.

[Tiny claws on tile]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Ducks down beneath the table, skitters away. And you don't know if he ran around the other side of the balcony, or went back inside or whatever, but the Fox.

Erika Ishii

I switch to familiar vision.

[Magical sound]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You see he's in the bottom of the Tower of the Sword, and you see that he starts scratching at the door.

The Fox (Brennan)
[Scrabbling, whining]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You see, Sonder walks up with a sort of little bronze goblet with some kind of thick smoothie in it. And you see, he goes

Sonder (Brennan)
Hey there, little guy! Oh, you need to go outside to peepee?

Erika Ishii
[Cackle]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
And you see, he opens the door, and the Fox takes off onto the street.

Erika Ishii
Alright.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
What do the rest of you do after Steel's departure, here in the Tower of the Sword.

Lou Wilson
So we're just watching Ame warg?

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Yeah, Ame has sort of like warged out and is looking through the Fox's eyes.

Lou Wilson
I'm going to tap Ame on the shoulder.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Ame, you come to out of your fox vision.

[Magical sound]

Eursulon (Lou)
Uh, where did the Fox go?

Ame (Erika)
I don't know. I think he's going out for a peepee.

Eursulon (Lou)
Ah! Well, is it time to go?

Suvi (Aabria)

This is on you. Is it time to go.

Ame (Erika)

Yeah. Yeah, it's time to go.

Suvi (Aabria)

Are we going to wait for Steel's return?

Ame (Erika)

No.

Suvi (Aabria)

Is that what the Fox is doing?

Ame (Erika)

Yyyyes.

Suvi (Aabria)

Okay. I need a minute.

[Droning somber ambient music]

Aabria Iyengar

And I'm just going to leave a note for Steel thanking her for all of the care and time that she allocated, in the midst of a crisis, to look into this for us. But as ever, the comings and goings of Witches cannot be predicted or controlled. And I'll return as soon as I can.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Give me a performance check.

Aabria Iyengar

12.

[Somber piano joins in]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You write the note you place on the desk. You hear the noise of Kadila and Ishra, you hear the running little stomps of Ovi, Steel and Sonders nine year old son.

[Children playing]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You leave the note on Steel's desk, by the journal where you found it, in her study in her residence, not at the sanctum upstairs, which is locked and guarded. As you rejoin your friends, where do you go, and what do you do?

Erika Ishii

I'm going to go back to the tower to get my pack.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Or you go back to the bakery to get your pack.

Erika Ishii

Yes. Yes.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You go back to the bakery, and approach and you see Mr. Callum smiling and talking to two young wizards. You see the two young wizards have their arms around each other, clearly in love, as they order from the bakery together. You see Mr. Callum smile as he sort of raises an eyebrow and gives a little heart shaped tray of bonbons. You look at Mr. Callum's smile and I think, go back to your earlier question, of asking him if he was a Spirit. And I think there's something interesting that you sort of swirl around in that moment of, whether he ever could have been a true Spirit, or what a true Spirit is, what the Tamori are, what people are.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You know, there's these deep sort of questions hanging in the air around you. But ultimately Mr. Callum is friendly, smiled at you. He was a part of your world. And extending that honor to him is just something that I think is very instinctive to Ame. The door jingles, the little bell, you walk in through the candles that are flickering even in the daylight, they sort of stay here and flicker, you can see the flame in the broad daylight. As you walk in, you see Mr. Callum looks up and says,

Mr. Callum (Brennan)

Oh, young Ame, here you are!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Goes and grabs the packs from behind it.

Mr. Callum (Brennan)

Here you go, and wishing you all the best, not sure where you're off to in such a hurry, but hope you don't mind, I've snuck a few scones—

Ame (Erika)

[Gasp]

Mr. Callum (Brennan)

—some marshmallow and chocolate croissants into the bag.

Ame (Erika)

Oh! Thank you so much, sir!

Eursulon (Lou)
Good on you, Mr. Callum.

Mr. Callum (Brennan)
An honor and a pleasure as always.

Aabria Iyengar
Suvi is just staring at the wizard couple.

[Soft piano music]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You see, the wizard couple takes the bonbons and goes to sit at one of the little tables outside. Two little cups of lattes, and little chocolates between them. You see that one of them, out by their chair, has a pack as well, and is getting ready to head out.

[Footsteps. Bell rings.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You leave the Candle Street Bakery. Where do you head to now?

Erika Ishii
I check where the Fox is.

[Fox vision magical sting, mischeivous plucked strings]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
The Fox is slinking around the part of Xiao Court with the traveling doors in it, seeing soldiers everywhere. You see that he's looking out underneath some fabric that you realize is clearly a tablecloth at some sort of restaurant or eatery, where he has eyes to the traveling doors, but sees soldiers everywhere. As you warg into his eyes, you hear his voice.

The Fox (Brennan)
Grounds full of snares over here, boss. I don't know.

Ame (Erika)
And here I thought that you never got caught, that you were always able to avoid the snares, and that you could find a way out of anything. Hmm.

The Fox (Brennan)
Why don't you stay out of my eyes and watch this!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
And he takes off down the street, and says

The Fox (Brennan)

You want to see a great escape? Here's a great escape.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And begins to tear off through Xiao Court. Both of you see, Ame has taken a moment to pause outside of the Candle Street Bakery and look through the Fox's eyes, but time is sort of moving along. As it gets to the end, you see, the Fox just goes.

The Fox (Brennan)

Better head to Xiao Court. I'm gonna be done soon.

Ame (Erika)

Xiao Court.

Suvi (Aabria)

That's where all the gates are.

Erika Ishii

I set off towards there.

Aabria Iyengar

Yeah. I would have taken the time to head towards the like, gallothopter request kiosk.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You head to the gallothopter request kiosk. All of you go to sit in the little gondola of the gallothopter. It is probably now 11 o'clock in the morning, hot daylight here in the Citadel. A little bit oppressive.

[Hawk whistle. pounding drums]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Strange. Could be cooler. Citadel doesn't like to let it get this hot. You go to the kiosk, you put in Xiao Court and you see [bwoom noise] the arcane mark of the Citadel appears over the kiosk. And you see it says

Magical Transportation Authority (Brennan)

Please announce your title and business. [Chime]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

This is not normal.

Aabria Iyengar

Yeah!

[Snare drum]

Aabria Iyengar

Suvi's going to pause and go

Suvi (Aabria)

The Wizard Sky with an appointment. [Uncertainly] At the Kasov Collection?

Ame (Erika)

Mhm mhm.

Eursulon (Lou)

I like it.

Erika Ishii

Ame nods encouragingly.

Aabria Iyengar

Yeah.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

I'm going to need a deception check. I'm going to let you know right now the numbers ahead of time—

Aabria Iyengar

Yeah.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

—so that you do not call me cruel when consequence comes to visit.

Erika Ishii

Alright.

[Aabria and Brennan laugh. Bass drum joins the snare.]

Erika Ishii

Settle down.

Aabria Iyengar

Okay.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

15 avoids dire catastrophe.

Erika Ishii

Jesus.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

20 avoids what we will just call disaster. A 25 deception succeeds.

Aabria Iyengar
That's so interesting!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
What's your bonus to deception?

Aabria Iyengar
I know the number, but I checked again, it's a plus 2.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Plus 2 to deception, okay.

Aabria Iyengar
He said that in a way that made me so sad. It's okay! I'm just gonna crit, and it'll be fine.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Wanna roll a guidance first?

Lou Wilson
Yeah. Roll the guidance.

Aabria Iyengar
A 1.

Lou Wilson
I'm gonna die. Somebody call—

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Somebody wanna give the help action?

Lou Wilson
Will you let me?

Brennan Lee Mulligan
I'll let you give the help action!

Lou Wilson
Okay, great!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Okay!

Lou Wilson
So you got two chances, Suvi! So you're adding three. You need—

Lou Wilson
[Cackle]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You need at least a 12 to avoid DIRE catastrophe. And 17, gets us to avoiding disaster.

Aabria Iyengar
Delightful!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
But you're going to need a Nat 20 to actually fool.

Aabria Iyengar
Yeah, sure. Sure sure sure sure sure. She did not make it, ladies and gentlemen, with a seven as the higher.

Magical Transportation Authority (Brennan)
[Chime]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Gallothopter [thrumming wing noise] takes wing, and begins to head for Xiao Court. Flying through the air, you see the red and white approaching. Halfway to Xiao Court, you hear a sending in your mind, Suvi.

[Horns bleat over the drums]

Steel (Brennan)
Suvi, this is Steel. Finishing up at Cabani now. Should meet you at the Tower of the Glove?

Suvi (Aabria)
Change of plans. Ame needs to leave now. So we're headed to Xiao.

Steel (Brennan)
What? Remain in Xiao Court at the gallothopter station. Do not leave from the station. That is an order.

Suvi (Aabria)
Done.

Aabria Iyengar
And I think you all see that something in Suvi goes dark.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Give me insight checks, Ame and Eursulon.

Ame (Erika)
Fuck! Fuck! 10.

Lou Wilson

16.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Give me a deception check, Suvi.

Erika Ishii

HA!

Aabria Iyengar

Natural 1!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Each of you watches Suvi's countenance fall, and you can tell that she is being spoken to by Steel in her mind.

Ame (Erika)

What did she say?

Suvi (Aabria)

We have to stay at the gallothopter station, until Steel shows up.

Ame (Erika)

What did she find out?

Suvi (Aabria)

We'll find out when she meets us in Xiao.

Ame (Erika)

You were told that you would not be allowed to go. Do you think that was for the Witches, or do you think it was from Steel?

Suvi (Aabria)

I have no way of knowing, because Sly was not more specific. I am very infrequently given a direct order.

Ame (Erika)

Then you have to do what you have to do.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Gallothopter descends and lands at one of eight piers in Xiao Court.

Magical Transportation Authority (Brennan)

[Chime]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

The most that any platform of the Citadel has. You land, and can see that two imperial skyships are headed towards Xiao Court.

[Large ship groaning]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

One up from Haverword, one down from one of the other courts. This is in addition to the two that are already here.

Ame (Erika)

[Heavy breath]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Eursulon, the hair stands up on the back of your neck. You moor the gallothopter, and an attendant helps you step up onto the platform. You see off in the distance, Gossamer Plaza and those butterflies moving around, and off towards the corner you see, maybe like the next pier over has all of the traveling doors on it, all of these big—they're like large hangers that you know will have the major traveling door to Silbry, that is inside this massive rotating circles and dials of stone within the ground. The constellations of the stars overhead, that can send you anywhere in the world that they have built a traveling door. You, Ame, on your passive perception can see soldiers closing in on the area of Xiao that holds the traveling door gateways, an area that you know your fox has run away from. You disembark and stand here at the platform's edge.

Lou Wilson

I'm going to lean over to Ame.

Eursulon (Lou)

Where is the Fox?

Erika Ishii

I close my eyes.

[Magical noise]

Ame (Erika)

Fox, where are you?

Brennan Lee Mulligan

The Fox is somewhere dark, and you see he is straining with all his might

The Fox (Brennan)

[Grunting with effort]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

as a little bit of light, and you hear

The Fox (Brennan)
Yip!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
and then [Clattering barrel noise] of falling barrels. He's like

The Fox (Brennan)
I'm doing my part. Get back to the station near Gossamer Plaza, the cookout area.

Erika Ishii
I start power walking over!

Aabria Iyengar
I grab Ame.

Erika Ishii
I keep going.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
That's an athletics check.

Aabria Iyengar
4.

Erika Ishii
22.

[Low sinister horn]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
As you grab Ame, Suvi, give me a perception check.

Aabria Iyengar
I just don't trust any of my dice.

Lou Wilson
You really shouldn't. Your dice are turning me into the people who yell at me about my dice.

[Everyone laughs]

Lou Wilson
And it's like, unsettling.

Aabria Iyengar
7!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Suvi, you get a hand on Ame. As your skin touches her arm of the palm of your hand, you feel cold, afraid, and naked, as Ame quickly just shoulders past you. But in that touch of your hand on her skin, you become magically aware, that Ame can choose to punish you for that in a hundred years from now.

Erika Ishii

[Gasp]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Ame, as you push past—and again, Suvi loves you. The effort of this is not destructive, but in that effort to control you, the name Suvi flashes over your eyes, and there are a number of the protections you've cast over her, anytime you've healed her or cast guidance on her—basically in the moment that her hand touches your arm, and she attempts to control you, the weight of every kindness you have done for her, settles into your hand like the heft of a sword.

Erika Ishii

I shoulder pass, but as I feel that, I spin around and my eyes flash at her. You see for a second something terrible and much greater and older than Ame. And then it's gone, and I also look scared and frightened, and I start running.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Eursulon, we need an action from you, unless you're not acting.

Lou Wilson

I look at Suvi.

Aabria Iyengar

She looks startled and terrified, and is a little too frozen to react, as Ame begins to sprint.

Lou Wilson

I put a hand on you.

Eursulon (Lou)

We knew it would be this way.

Lou Wilson

And I'm going to take off after Ame.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Okay. I am going to ask just for these purposes, because actions are so tight and narrow to roll initiative.

Aabria Iyengar

Fuckin' 10.

Erika Ishii

Dirty 20.

Lou Wilson
20 as well.

Aabria Iyengar
Agh, god, no!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Ame and Eursulon, you're taking off in the direction of the Fox, yes?

Lou Wilson
Mhm.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
I need to ask you, is your consideration right now speed, or stealth?

Erika Ishii
Stealth. I go as fast as I can, but it's—it is a run, but in that way that it looks like you're just kind of jogging along to get to something. You furrow your brow, and you look like you have business. You're not—this is nothing out of the ordinary, but we're moving quickly.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
I will actually allow for—it's either stealth if you're using structures and obstacles, or it's deception—

Lou Wilson
Okay.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
—if you are trying to move normally, and look like you're supposed to be here. But, you have to tell me, are you relying on shadows, movement, obstacle, secrecy, or are you trying to walk openly, and deceive anyone looking for you, that you are supposed to be here?

Lou Wilson
I would be using deception. We are supposed to be here, and that we are walking with the energy that's currently in the Citadel, toward business that needs to be taken care of.

Erika Ishii
There's no way that I'm going to look normal. I'm a Witch, I have a traveling pack on. I use obstacles and alleyways.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
So you're going to split up. This is between deceiving people by looking like walking in broad daylight, stealthing—like getting to where the Fox is by secret ways—or sprinting. So stealth is not sprinting. Stealth is not tearing ass down the middle of the road. Stealth is getting out of the way and finding some other way to get there to avoid soldiers. Of those, what are you choosing? And you can choose different. I'm actually going to count down from three, and I want each of you to tell me what it is you're going to do, there's no—if

you're bookin' ass from the gallothopter, you might just split up by accident, if you're trying to do two different things. So go ahead. And three, two, one.

Eursulon (Lou)

Deceive.

Ame (Erika)

Stealth.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You guys separate.

[Music gets slightly more frenetic]

Erika Ishii

[Sigh]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Ame, I'm going to need you to pick your lucky number on a d4.

Erika Ishii

3.

Lou Wilson

2.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Great. I'm going to need a stealth check from Ame, and I'm going to need a deception check from Eursulon. We're going to call this a DC 12.

Lou Wilson

Hoh.

Erika Ishii

Oh, god. 13.

Lou Wilson

23.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Hoo-ey! Beating the roll by more than ten, Eursulon, I'm going to allow you to roll a d4 twice. Ame, you're going to roll it once.

Erika Ishii

That's a 2.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Okay.

Lou Wilson
That's a 3. A second 3.

Erika Ishii
Ooh!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You each got each other's lucky numbers. Eursulon, you separate from Ame quickly. Stop sprinting once you are out of sight of the gallohofters place, and just begin to walk like you are supposed to be here. Like this is normal. Ame, you quickly, with your large pack—knowing how easy it will be to find you—stick to the shadows. You hear the Fox's voice in your heart moving through the shadows of Xiao Court. Suvi, we come back to you standing here by the gallohofters.

Erika Ishii
Oohh!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You see your friends run off. They split after they round a corner. So you assume that they're together still, wherever, but leave you here in the magical aftermath of the thundering of that Witches magic. But you are standing here.

[Somber piano]

Aabria Iyengar
I don't understand that that had anything to do with what I did. I don't understand how Ame's magic works. I do understand that I was given a direct order, and they never respect when I am at my wits end, they don't listen. They love being on my tab, they love having fun, they love being protected by me, but they never listen to me, and they don't care. But I am the Wizard Sky. So, as they sprint away, I turn and get the eyes of a soldier of the Citadel, point behind them and say

Suvi (Aabria)
Bring them to me.

[Dramatic sinister organ music]

Aabria Iyengar
And I wait.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Give me persuasion with advantage.

Aabria Iyengar
18 and 19 on the die.

Erika Ishii
[Screaming cackle]

Aabria Iyengar
21.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
I'm going to need Ame and Eursulon to pick an unlucky number on a d4.

Erika Ishii
[Laugh] 4!

Lou Wilson
4 as well.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Give me another stealth check, and another deception check.

Erika Ishii
16.

Lou Wilson
18.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
The DC for that roll had moved up to a 15. You both succeed yet again. Ame, you stay in the shadows, Eursulon, you move with a quiet grace belying that there is nothing out of the ordinary here. I am going to need d4 rolls from you both, neither of you beat the roll by 10 or more, so you're going to roll one time, Eursulon looking for a 2, and Ame looking for a 3.

Lou Wilson
But we also have an unlucky number now?

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Which is 4.

Erika Ishii
3! 3!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
[Laugh]

Lou Wilson
3 as well.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Eursulon, slow pace keeps eyes off of you. Before that, you realize that there are certain ways that you're trying to get to where you're going, but also, only Ame can feel the Fox. So you're trying to get back to where you went before, but you're taking the same route. So you're going to be going by the Kasov Collection to get to where you were before.

Erika Ishii

[Gasp]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You stay walking, it's a farther trip for you. Ame is able to find a shortcut by just following the sense of the Fox directly. Ame, you succeed on your stealth, and you get to your lucky number. You roll up and see that really short range teleportation?

[Sound of shoveling sand]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

It was the thing that opened up the place for you to get to Cabani from Xiao Court, if you remember. There's the sort of shirtless, apron-wearing wizards, they have like, headbands on, long, heavy iron staves that are lit with fires at the end. They're pouring colored sand into these charred, like, half-a-foot down pits, opening up this wet, humid, colorful fire that people walk through to get. It's a dimension door spell. It's exclusively to other parts of the Citadel. What do you do as you approach this place.

Ame (Erika)

Fox. Where are you?

The Fox (Brennan)

Uh, I'm kind of tied up in this right now, boss, so you just gotta get ready to jump, and you tell me, and we'll make it happen.

Ame (Erika)

Suvi and Eursulon aren't with me. They're not here yet—

The Fox (Brennan)

We got one shot, you gotta tell me whether to go or not.

[Long pause]

Ame (Erika)

Go.

The Fox (Brennan)

Yip!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And you hear boom, boom, boom, boom!

[Clattering barrels]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
All of the guys working at this say—

Mass Transit Mage (Brennan)
Oh g—NO! NO!!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
—as barrels begin to fall, stacked up off of a roof, bouncing off of a cloth awning, rolling, scattering. Huge barrels of magical sand. I'll roll a dexterity save.

Erika Ishii
Oh god!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
That's a natural 1.

Aabria Iyengar
Oh no!

Erika Ishii
Noooo!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
One of the guys has his iron staff out, he goes to interpose it so that he is not struck by a barrel rolling towards him. The Fox is like, up on the roof, having kicked the barrels over. You remember him pushing in that attic, to get these barrels to fall down and boom, boom boom boom! The guy puts the staff, and as he puts the staff in front of him to interpose and defend himself, the staff cracks the barrel, and the sand alights.

[Sizzling fuse, explosion]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
BOOOOM!

[More explosions]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Four of these wizards are flung somewhere in Umora.

[Whistling as things are flung past, a terrified scream. The crowd begins screaming in confused horror]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

It alights the other barrels, sand erupts. A bonfire taller than the tallest building in this court sends a signal flare up into the sky as purple, green, silver, iridescent, shimmering flame. ROAR!! You look around—and you can feel it on your face, you look around and see people are sweating, purple, green, and gold, as just beads of the stuff appear on their face. The Fox leaps off, into your arms and says

The Fox (Brennan)

Here we go!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Ame, what do you do?

Erika Ishii

So these are to places in Umora.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You have no idea where those other wizards just went. This is a short range teleportation, that these guys do to ferry people off of Xiao Court, and you can see that your little familiar has done some quick little fuzzy math, and gone "More sand equals more magic equals go farther." A skyscraper, iridescent rainbow bonfire rockets into the sky, almost scorching like, the platform above it in line? And [Laugh] you—you have to make the call of whether you will jump through this fire.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Which you—again, you entrusted your fox. You said, find a way out. The Fox, in all of his wiliness, has found a way out. He has found how a wild animal would escape from a trap. And it is a fire flinging you elsewhere in the world. Perhaps, by some wicked Witchcraft, you would find way to orient yourself and get back to Toma. Perhaps there is some way to wield this wild magic. But it is wild magic. And it would require your focus and concentration to wield it right.

[Building mystical tones]

Erika Ishii

I open that third eye. I look in the chaos around me, and I count down the senses, the smells, I think of Toma, I think of home, I think of my sanctum and my cottage, in which I am not just safe emotionally or physically, but magically. And I step forward with my Fox.

[Thrumming magical energy]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Surrounded. Incredible heat. Potent magic. You feel that you are drowning, that your soul might sweat out through your pores, and you might simply wither and vanish. I am going to need an insight check, and if you'd like to double down and be a little extra dangerous, you can throw a wisdom saving throw on there for me. Your Fox will help you with one of those roles, either insight or the saving throw.

Erika Ishii

Insight, 15. That's a 2 on the die, for a total of 8.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Insight, reaching out, understanding. Are you thinking of the cottage? Are you thinking of Silbry? What is the clearest vision in your mind as you step into the flame?

[Harsh ringing, some sort of shrill glass resonance]

Erika Ishii

I step forward, and in my mind's eye is the perfect picture of the cottage in summer. The hearth is quiet because it's far too hot for a fire. The sound of the cicadas in the evening. The smell of the wildflowers. The cottage in Toma. My home.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Eursulon, I'm going to need one last deception. The difficulty has gone up to 18, and you need to roll a d4. You're looking for a 2 as your lucky number and a 4 as your unlucky number.

Lou Wilson

23 deception.

Erika Ishii

[Gasp]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Unbelievable.

Lou Wilson

It's another 3 on the die.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Okay. You get to Gossamer Plaza. You see the bulwark of the Kasov Collection. You are still several blocks away, as fire roars up and you see it.

[Distant screams, the sound of rapidly expanding fire]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Immediately knowing, this—you hear screams, wizards go running. This is impossible, but you know that this is what it is. Potentially, it will still be going by the time you get there. But you know that Ame has gotten there and had to do something.

Lou Wilson

And then I'll break into a sprint.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Hell yeah. Suvi, the soldiers take off into Xiao Court. As they do, you see—

[Explosion]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

—fire going.

Aabria Iyengar

I think a single tear rolls down her cheek. They have never cared about the cost of their will. They didn't notice the heat in this place, resources being reallocated to war. Something terrible is happening, and they don't care. I've been pushed twice in two days. And of course there is an inferno, because that follows where they lead. And I stand and I wait.

[Tense action music, snare drum and horns]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Eursulon. The fire roars. You break into a sprint. I need you to pick another unlucky number.

Lou Wilson

1.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Go ahead and give me an athletics or acrobatics role. The DC is now 21.

Erika Ishii

Ough.

Eursulon (Lou)

17 on athletics.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Okay.

[Tense music is replaced by disjointed repetitive music]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You run and you feel your body covered by butterflies as you run through Gossamer Plaza. And you can feel them [Chattering noise] clinging to your body as you move. You feel, as you attempt to sprint as fast as possible, but feel somehow that your power is being drained as you run. Spirits running through the streets of Xiao Court is exactly what the magic of this place has been designed to prevent.

[Disjointed music is overwhelmed by low malevolent horns]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You wonder if Kalaya ran just like this through these same streets. You wonder if her escape is why they thought to bring the butterflies here at all. Barreling down. Make me a final luck check. You have two unlucky numbers. 1 and 4. You have a single lucky number that means you will close before soldiers of the Citadel arrive. Go ahead and roll.

Lou Wilson
That's a 2.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Wooo!

Erika Ishii
Oh, my god!

Aabria Iyengar
Let's go-uh!

Erika Ishii
Oh my fucking god!

Lou Wilson
In defiance of this place, I think Eursulon drops his Glamour. And knowing that either this insane plan they concocted works, or, like his sister, he may be trapped here.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Eursulon. You hear voices behind you saying, "Loose Spirit! Loose Spirit in the streets. Escaped!" You hear soldiers barreling down. Wavebreaker. A shield. Blue fruit. Red leaves. A mushroom at its base. You arrive at the fire as it still roars. Ame is vanished. Do you leap into it?

[Whimsical lilting flutes play over a tense minor key string refrain]

Lou Wilson
This torrent of flame, I'm assuming is the result of Ame's and the Fox's plan. Is there any indication that Ame would have jumped? Like—I guess there is something, eursulon, I think sprinting toward this thing, I think as he gets closer, is trying to make sense of what it is he's looking at.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You can give me insight, you can give me perception, you can give me Arcana. Go for it.

[Wordless voices join in a choral melody]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You can give me both. Give me a perception and an arcana.

Lou Wilson
You know what, why not? 9 insight. 6 arcana!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Eursulon, for another time in a line of times in this world, you look at something strange and horrifying, and are faced with one more impossible choice.

Lou Wilson
I sprint right into it.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Leaping in, you hear the sound of cantrips being cast behind you as voices of soldiers say

[Discordant magical tones]

Imperial Soldiers (Brennan)
Stop! Halt!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
I'm going to need, once again, as you dive into the fire, an insight and a wisdom. To one of these, you may add a d10 of inspiration.

Lou Wilson
So I have a 16 and a 19 on the die.

Erika Ishii
Ohhhh ho hoh god!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Oh my god.

Lou Wilson
The wisdom saving throw is going to stay a flat 20.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Okay.

Lou Wilson
The insight check becomes another 31.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
[Laugh]

Aabria Iyengar
Woo!

Erika Ishii
[Shriek] Oh my god! Oh my god!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Eursulon, you—long wayshadowed, trapped in this world—leap into the flame, not knowing if you will survive, or if you will be punished by a punishing and cruel world. But you do know what you have always

known, when you have chosen to face the impossible. You cannot remain where you have been. Danger always lies ahead, when where you are has always been laid as a trap. Surging into the fire.

[The soft whisper of flame, a grotesque magical reverberation]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Doubt, fear, uncertainty, vanishes from you in an instant. [Woosh] Flames roaring around you in all sides, purple, green, silver mist. You are, for a moment, shaken. And then on those incredible rolls, on a 20 wisdom saving throw, and on a 31 insight, as you feel a spiritual energy, you realize that you can't see because flames are blasting into your face. They're moist, and hot, and choking, you're breathing them in.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And suddenly your breath, it's just that it's ragged, it's not fire, it's wind, it's just too much for you. And your shield comes up in front of your face. And suddenly, as you fall through flame, you can breathe. And as you can breathe, what is the danger? You've hurled yourself into magic? You've hurled yourself into what these people wield? Magic is what you are, is what you have always been.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

The thing that you most worried would harm you is home, and more than home, it is you and you are it. Your body is flame, purple, green, iridescent silver. Shield glows brightly.

[Magical bell reverberation]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Wavebreaker gleams and leaps with giddy eagerness to your hand. You feel the power in this moment to dispel a nearby tether of magic. There is a magic near here that is attempting to take beings that are scared and afraid and make them lost forever.

[Music swells to a crescendo]

Lou Wilson

I think, confidently, Eursulon holds Wavebreaker out and cuts the tether.

[Sound of blades clashing]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Leather aprons, sweaty headbands, and the wizards reappear on the platform of Xiao, as you cut loose the magic that was casting them away and send them back safely to their home.

[Triumphant music]

Lou Wilson

I think Eursulon, like only the sound of his heart pumping in his ears, now just turns to find Ame.

[Heartbeat]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

On a 31. This fire had to be kept small for these wizards to wield it. How many beings of this world will they attempt to keep small to make them useful? Let this fire grow as large as the wide forests of your birth. You are home here, and may go wherever you wish. You do not even sense urgency. The pounding of your heart, centered on your breath. You move with utter confidence in this moment. On a 31, the fire flickers into the shape of a forest made of wreathing flame.

[Rushing fire]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You know the way to Ame's cottage. You know the way to Port Talon. You know the way to Chura's chowder. All ways are open to you here within the world of Umora. The fire will die soon, but your clarity of movement, the evenness and steady rhythm of your breath, lets you know that a moment is an hour, and an hour, infinity, in the breadth and span of the world of Spirits. On a 31, you sense behind you, being created by your steps, is a road in the flame. Far behind you on the road is a shadow that can see you now.

The Stranger (Brennan)

Long and plenty of time, to catch a pace, brother Eursulon. I can't believe I haven't had my eye on you.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

In this moment, Eursulon, turning to see the shadow, oh so distant on the road behind you, like a traveler at the far edge of a horizon, but whose steady footsteps never falter.

[Discordant ear-piercing music]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You see something not of Witches or of Wizards, nor the Stranger on the road behind, but something as small, and clever, and funny, as a mushroom painted on a shield. In the fire, near the base of a flaming, whispering trunk of raging inferno, there is a hole, what some might call a burrow. Who can say how long it's been there in the flame, but small and humble, you notice it all the same. Ame ahead, Stranger behind, and off the path, something that you haven't seen in a long, long time, but know you've seen before. It's the honor of a dungeon master to ask this question, and I can't think of a more important time I've ever asked it. Eursulon, what do you want to do?

[Pounding heartbeat rises and then fades to silence.]