

# Ame's Playlist - Liner Notes

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## 1. Come Along- Cosmo Sheldrake

This felt like the perfect opening prelude to Ame, witches, and the campaign itself, especially our Children's Adventure; whimsical, but with a mysterious dissonance (and interesting woodwinds). We're lured with promises of carefree days spent dancing and feasting in idyllic woods "*free from greed, anger, and boredom*". Of course no such place truly exists, but the promise feels very of the spirit realm. I've imagined it before as a siren's song calling to adventure and Carrolesque fantasy. An urging to live in the moment and explore a world of whimsy and wonder. But in this case, I started to think of it as an invitation from Ame and the witches, who welcome all to "*Run away from the hum-drum.*" And an invitation to all of us to enter Umora.

## 2. Demon Kitty Rag- Katzenjammer

A catchy little ragtime-style ditty whose melody and instrumentation is very playful, but with an edge of threat to it. I love its rustic banjo and fiddle instrumentals (coincidentally, Taylor's choices for Ame and the cottage's leitmotif!) contrasted with vengeful riot grrrr lyrics.

*I'll be your nightmare mirror  
Do what you do to me  
I'll be your nightmare mirror  
Colder than a steel blade*

Witch's magic is meant to heal, connect, and nurture. But if folktales have taught us anything, you should never disrespect a witch. Brennan, M. Vesalak, and everyone who helped design the witch class crafted beautiful mechanics to reflect the stories where witches mete out harsh punishments for injustices done to them. "Do not underestimate the humility and serenity of witches."

## 3. Everything at Once- Lenka

Grandma Wren asks little Ame what she wants her magic to do and Ame says "EVERYTHING!" Grandma Wren responds dryly, "So what you've said is already incredibly dangerous." Ame has a deep love for the world and a profound curiosity for its wonders and denizens. If it exists, she wants to revel in it, befriend it, and connect with every living creature.

*As sly as a fox, as strong as an ox  
As fast as a hare, as brave as a bear...*

But the inclusion of this song has a twofold purpose. Ame also has the *obligation* to be all things to all people. Being a witch is about finding compromise and always being of service to your community. The best witches can also remain true to themselves. They are probably not in their early 20s, cursed, in unfamiliar lands.

#### **4. Fuck it, I'm a Flower- Crying Day Care Choir**

*Fuck it, I'm a flower  
Growing taller every day  
Getting greener by the hour  
And I don't care what people say*

This is a song about aggressively flourishing. At her core, this is the kind of nurturing Ame excels at, the kind of cheeky helpfulness where you offer a cock ring as a fertility charm or threaten your plants like Crowley in *Good Omens*. Please imagine a preteen Ame tenderly packing manure around each stalk in a field of beans as she screams at each one to “eat shit and thrive”.

#### **5. Wildflowers- Miley Cyrus**

I love the original Tom Petty version, but I believe it's actually about having a midlife crisis (!?) Petty had just left his longtime record label, fired the drummer he'd worked with most of his career, his marriage was falling apart, and some speculate this song was him urging his wife to move on. Like most truly great poetry, it's a beautiful cry for help. But when sung by a young femme, it feels hopeful and aspirational. Take the time to run through a field of flowers! Find a lover! Sail away on a boat out at sea! Ame's life revolves around the responsibilities to her community, innumerable obligations and tethers that should keep her in one place. But perhaps an adventure will give her the time and space to explore and let herself feel free.

#### **6. Opening Titles Including Underground- Trevor Jones and David Bowie**

*But down in the underground  
You'll find someone true  
Down in the underground  
A land serene*

I was a latecomer to Labyrinth, but when I saw it I was absolutely charmed. Jim Henson fae isekai? Yes. So this one's for Eursulon, the little changeling from the spirit realm. While Eursulon lost his way due to the hardships he faced, I still see him as true blue as Sir Diddymus and as kind as Sarah.

Also I'm calling it canon now, there is a hot Bowie-esque goblin king in the spirit realm.

#### **7. Kids Again- Artist vs. Poet**

*But still we laugh, we cry  
We fall, we get high  
Just like we were kids, just like we were kids  
And when I am feeling small, you get me through it all  
Just like we were kids, just like we were kids again*

The bond that unites the three adventurers has strong roots in that halcyon childhood summer. I know Ame has been chasing that feeling ever since, imagining what a reunion with her true friends might be like (messy and harrowing, as it turns out). Even with their disagreements and trials in the mere weeks (!!!) they've been back together, I see them revert to habits of their past and build upon the foundations of a deep and abiding love: Ame's first spell helping ease Suvi into a peaceful slumber on that first night, Suvi becoming a wizard as she casts protection over Eursulon, Eursulon showing his true power as he faced danger to protect Ame. We see many of their childhood interactions repeated in their actions in the present. See if you can find the ones that were intentional and those for which we were so deep in the character flow state, we didn't clock them until after listening to the finished episodes months later.

### **8. Voice in My Throat- Pearl and the Beard**

This one's from Brennan. Two years ago, we made playlists of songs that we wanted to weave into the fabric of the campaign and he included this gem on it. I immediately hyperfixated and it became my most listened to song of 2021. This one is about the piece of her heart that gives voice to the thoughts and desires she cannot: The Fox.

*I walk down the road and I'm alone again but (All these years I've traveled down a lonely pathway)*

*You will be the voice in my throat (You have been the voice in my throat)*

The harmonies and melodies blend so gorgeously, the lyrics call and reply, the lines finish one another's' thoughts. The little butthole of a familiar is in some ways Ame's truest self, which is unbelievable since he's played by someone else. Aaaaaaaand I just found out **BRENNAN INCLUDED THIS SONG IN HIS FOX PLAYLIST**. This is too spooky, Brennan stopit.

### **9. Home to Me- Devil and the Deep Blue Sea**

*How dare you love me like you've never known fear*

*You've got more troubles than minutes in the year*

*And a voice like your father's tells you nothing good's for free*

*Well, that may be*

*But you're walking home to me*

This is one of the sweetest songs about loving and belonging and being surprised that someone can love so patiently, that you know they'll always return home to you. Ame is one big open and honest heart. Will there be enough beings in the world, human or spirit, who will do the work to give her their heart back?

### **10. Bird Song- Juniper Vale**

*Listen to the sound of my heart beat slow*

*Yeah, my heart's like yours, my heart's like yours*

*Listen to the sound, oh it feels like home*

A song from an artist whom I was first a fan of and am now fortunate to also consider a friend. She once told me (to paraphrase) that because time is subjective, playing music together is one of the only ways you can tell you're experiencing time in the same way as another person. I frequently remember that, both in my life and when I was thinking of how Ame opens herself up to the spirit realm and connects with others.

### **11. Curses- The Crane Wives**

The narrator describes losing control and asks someone to stay with them to help in the fight against their demons. When Grandma Wren and Taro are gone, when Ame is left alone in the cottage with the echoes of the past and a blank slate of a future, it's Suvi who sees the wisp of smoke curling from her mouth, understands she is fighting a curse, and springs into action to help.

*There's still cobwebs in the corners  
And the backyard's full of bones  
Won't you stay with me, my darling  
When this house don't feel like home?*

### **12. Lollipop- Mika**

*I went walkin' with my mama one day  
When she warned me what people say  
Live your life until love is found  
'Cause love's gonna get you down*

Another song with severely juxtaposed lyrics and melody. Apparently Mika wrote the song to caution his younger sister that having sex too soon would "mean something very different to guys than it would to her". Now we don't have time to unpack all that, but sadly I think it does reflect Ame's dating history and the sort of cautions young witches may receive. How do witches even date? Recall how little control you have over your body and emotions as a young adult. Now imagine compounding that with unnerving emotional intelligence, a post where you are asked to always be of service to others, and erratic magic-fueled moods. Plus I can only imagine the dating pool in the village of Toma is... likely pretty sparse.

### **13. Time in a Bottle- Jim Croce**

*If I could save time in a bottle  
The first thing that I'd like to do  
Is to save every day 'til eternity passes away  
Just to spend them with you*

I wanted Ame's crafting magic to incorporate more nontraditional effects. *The Night Circus*, a book from one of my absolute favorite writers, Erin Morgenstern, includes the most evocative descriptions of tastes, scents, crafted moments, and magic that I've ever read. There's a tent where each stoppered perfume bottle's scent evokes a vivid scene or moment in time. I was

swept away by the labyrinthine tent of different environments including a pillowy cloud-covered climbing apparatus and crystalline snowscape. I wanted more than just the standard array of effects we associate with spells like fire, psychic, force, healing etc. I want them to distill the impossible into the tangible.

#### **14. Howl's Moving Castle: Merry-Go-Round of Life- Joe Hisaishi (Vitamin String Quartet cover)**

As we've said before, Umora and especially Ame draw much inspiration from Studio Ghibli films, both aesthetically, thematically, and very importantly in the way we wanted to *feel*. The way food in a Ghibli film makes your mouth water or creatures' fur makes you want to bury your face into their soft squishy bellies or the flying machines make you feel that rush of exhilaration as the Joe Hisaishi score swells? I aspire to create that kind of visceral experience with my stories! I wanted the witch class to incorporate the witches of fairy tales from all over the world, but Ame was inspired by stories of witches from my childhood: European witches, Japanese Yamauba, and anime magical girls. And I remember discussing with Brennan how Ghibli witches baked bread, wove ribbons, used their brooms for sweeping as often as for flying. I was enamored with the idea of a character whose primary strength in a violent world is "be kind" and for that to be effective. The ultimate power fantasy!

#### **15. Once Upon a December (from Anastasia)- Liz Callaway**

*Far away,  
Long ago,  
Glowing dim as an ember,  
Things my heart  
Used to know  
Things it yearns to remember*

I've always loved the storytelling in this song, and I wanted Ame to be able to tap into that ephemeral quality to conjure up a half-remembered melody or a sweet scent you can't quite place. I also specifically requested the cantrip "fuck with milk".

#### **16. Memory- Seatbelts**

I love a wistful little music box melody with emotional plot significance so much that I included two on here. Before we started, I made a list of many different trinkets Ame could craft and imbue with purpose. One was to evoke memory. The Japanese have a phrase "natsukashii" that roughly translates to what we might think of as "nostalgia", but really is more like "a feeling of deep and wistful longing when you remember the past" or "a memory that makes you sigh". I wanted Ame's baking, cooking, sewing, trinkets, and crafts to evoke that. Like that moment in *Ratatouille* where the critic takes his first bite.