

Worlds Beyond Number

The Wizard, the Witch, and the Wild One: Episode 06

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]

[Rain gently pattering against cobblestones]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

The rain falls, as steadily as the beating of distant drums, on a plaza, showing a whole and mended pair of statues. Spirit of the Sea, and Spirit of the Green, forever dancing, in the center of this square. The rain hits the stones, hits the slate of the roofs, and falls also on Suvi, Ame, and Eursulon.

[Tense, discordant, warbling music begins to play]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

With a splash [sound of splashing water] the fox leaps from the head of the statue into the fountain going

The Fox [Brennan]

Boss!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

and starts to swim towards the edge.

Ame [Erika]

[Coughing up water] I'm okay! I'm okay, are you okay? Fox?

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Fox—you realize how truly skinny this creature is, as he comes out wet. His little fuzz that's so good for scratching under his chin—

Aabria Iyengar

[Laughing]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

—now hangs in two little sad, wet mutton chops of white fur under his head, ears sort of flapped down with water, comes over, absolutely shivering.

The Fox [Brennan]

[Shivering]

Erika Ishii

I gather him up into my arms

Ame [Erika]

[Coughing and gagging] Sorry.

Suvi [Aabria]

Ame!

Erika Ishii

And I tuck him under my cloak, and pull out some old kibble from my bag.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

He's like

The Fox [Brennan]

[Munching and crunching noises]

Suvi [Aabria]

Ame, are you okay?

Erika Ishii

Yeah. I had a vision. I tasted salt water, and there was fires, and the ocean, and vines and leaves, and something painful, lancing down through the waves. I don't know what it means. [Coughs] But I feel like, with all the smoke, maybe it has something to do with the fires. There was also stone. Stone—unnatural stone.

Eursulon [Lou]

Mm. Well, we can talk about it more inside, we need to get you out of the cold.

Suvi [Aabria]

Yes.

Lou Wilson

Does that—I'd like to make a perception check on that building that we saw, does it feel like just a public space?

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Give me a perception check, and anyone else that wants to do any last investigation here in the square, before heading inside.

Erika Ishii

What do I know about those Great Spirits? And, with an 18 perception check, what do I see?

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Without a formal study—I think this probably would, honestly, be the religion skill, to have this thing of Great Spirits—but going around and looking, you come across, on that 18 perception check, looking at the Spirits and trying to get—first of all, the face you have seen—now that the face of the ocean Spirit is returned, you see that they sort of complement each other. What's interesting is the woman's eyes are open and the man's eyes are closed.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

His face seems to be soft in reverie, grateful, shy, tender. And you notice that he has a fishing spear in his hand. It's not a war spear. And you think in terms of being an Ocean Spirit, there is something here, that the ancient communities in this place—the statues are also very old here, right? This is pre-Empire. So you see that fishing spear. You see the waves in his hair. You see that he is sort of wearing open robes that show, like—open robes that show chest, and stomach down to like, soft breeches that are wrapped around.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

The woman's face is beaming and radiant. Her eyes are open. At the bottom of their robes, I think you see the man has bare feet, and the woman has clawed talons at the bottom of her feet. There's just a hint of them underneath the gown. One of her—it's a statue, so it's like one of the feet isn't carved because it's just in the solid stone of where her gown wraps around, but in the part of the gown that has been carved to show her movement in the dance, there is that one taloned, clawed foot, that is sort of peeking out.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

So when you look at that, I think that you don't clock her as a dryad—you don't clock her as just a Plant Spirit—I think seeing the combination of greenery, and that sort of talon, you clock her as maybe like a greater kind of Nature Spirit, maybe something a little bit more formidable, even though she's depicted as being somewhat—they're of very similar heights, but she's just ever so slightly shorter.

Lou Wilson

Can I throw a quick glance at the two Spirits? Anyone I recognize from my childhood?

Aabria Iyengar

Oh shit!

Erika Ishii

Oooooooh!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Give me history with advantage.

Lou Wilson

Uh!

Erika Ishii

[Laughs]

Lou Wilson

One's, a Nat One. So thank you. 14.

Aabria Iyengar

Hoo!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

On that history check, you remember your childhood growing up in the World of Spirits. One of the things that, as a child, as a Fae creature, a babe, running rumpus in far off lands of Faery woods that Great Spirits often did have business in the mortal world, which seemed, even in the strange relationship of Fae childhood to Fae adulthood, impossibly grown, and adult.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

For a Spirit to have such a broad and vast domain, that their magic saw its roots take hold in the mortal world. Adult Spirits often had responsibilities and tasks, things they watched after in the mortal world. However, like many Spirits, their passage to the mortal world had its own customs, traditions, things of that nature.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And I think looking at these two, you don't recognize them, and I think you don't recognize them because you look at the statues and, as someone who's been living in a carnival for a year or two, you know a Glamour when you see one. You think these forms of these Spirits were what they wore to show their kindest face to mortal beings.

Lou Wilson

Eursulon has interest in the statue, but I think he's more concerned with his friend—and now the fox, the friend—it just seems like a bad thing to just keep standing in the rain.

Erika Ishii

Yeah.

Aabria Iyengar

I wanna do like—I got a 15 on an investigation check, I'm very specifically, kind of looking at this weird pentagon we find ourselves in, looking for what other windows are facing our one that's lit up, to see if there's like a relay of information, or if it's just here. And the Ace of Wands is essentially what—is this, the money... House? That's dumb.

Lou Wilson

No, it's the question we're wondering.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You see, on the golden plaque, written up here, a name that is familiar to you, because you had heard of it by reputation while you were in Port Talon, though never came here, to this square before. Even though this place looks like a private—

[Droning ambient music]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

—truly something like a manor of a townhouse, right? It fully is built into the block. There is no separation from the other buildings around it, they are all built of a piece, and yet it is quite grand and stately in its own right.

Aabria Iyengar

Mm.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Has that sort of old, Edwardian almost, feel to it. You recognize it as a public space, primarily because of the brass plaque on the front of it, in which it's written in curling script, the Ace of Wands.

Aabria Iyengar

Oooh.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

By reputation, you had always heard of it as a house of fortune, but sort of a private—one of those public spaces that's not actually that public when you really get down to it.

Aabria Iyengar

Mm.

Suvi [Aabria]

Maybe we let the Gallows problem wait, for a little bit.

Ame [Erika]

[Coughing] Yeah, let's get inside.

Eursulon [Lou]

Let's get inside.

[Moody cabaret style jazz piano and the murmur of a crowd of people, muffled by the walls]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You approach the door, the door is closed in front of you. Do either of you open it or—as you approach, what do you do?

Aabria Iyengar

I'll just knock, normally.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You knock. There's several moments of being left out in the rain, but the door opens, and you immediately see that sort of—in the warm red and mahogany interior of a private social club.

[Door creaks open, the noises which were muffled become clear]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You see a wooden banister of a staircase, a building that was clearly meant for spacious private residence, that is now quite cozy, public recreation. Red carpet going up a staircase, bookshelves lining the foyer, and a small hosts podium. You see a young, beautiful woman, sort of rich brown hair tied in a bun with two little curling trails to frame her face, and a green and black gown, that stretches up the sleeves to actually form a partial glove that just the tips of her fingers comes through.

Aabria Iyengar

Phew. That's really cool.

[Aabria, Brennan, and Erika laugh]

Erika Ishii

Ough.

Aabria Iyengar

Dang it, I like that a lot.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Opens the door, you can see that she has sort of come from her hosts station—small ledger behind it—and, opening the door, says

Hostess [Brennan]

Hello! Welcome, please step inside.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And opens the door wide. As you enter, you hear laughter, music. The music that plays here is something, approximating chamber music, but a little bit faster, a little bit bawdier, a little bit stripped down.

Lou Wilson

Ooh

Aabria Iyengar

[Throaty chuckle]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

A place for the well to do to come, and enjoy themselves.

[Moody jazz piano kicks up, joined by a low french horn and clarinet. The audience cheers]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You look in one corner, and see rich, forest green, felt tabletops, and what look like some of Port Talon's merchants, or financiers, seated with Imperial Marks on the table in front of them, and what look to be croupiers wearing the same shade of green as the hostess in front of you. The room to your left seems to have sort of clack—

[Balls clacking]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

—of ceramic balls striking each other, some sort of table, billiard something, a game of cue sticks, and you can smell a lot of pungent cigar smoke coming from that area. Up the stairs, you hear, not too much noise of revelry, but sort of some faint music coming from up there as well.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

As you step inside, you see sort of a rack of cloaks, and a place for you to sort of hang—there's a small coat room that has another attendant waiting in there as well, and the hostess turns and says

Hostess [Brennan]

Well, greetings and hello. I am so sorry, you must have been caught out in the rain terribly. Are you... Guests of any of the games being hosted here?

Lou Wilson

Eursulon immediately turns to Suvi.

Aabria Iyengar

[Laughing] Suvi immediately turned to Eursulon!

Lou Wilson

I think we both then turn to Ame.

Erika Ishii

Ame is still cradling the fox under her cloak, and is a little bedraggled, but she—a simple country girl—she just straightens up.

Erika Ishii

Hello, miss. My name is Ame, and these are my companions, Suvi, Wizard of the Citadel, and Eursulon, our traveling companion. We—

Lou Wilson

Eursulon's a little taken aback. [Laughs] "I need to get a title, dammit!"

[Everyone laughs]

Erika Ishii

We have happened upon your establishment, but, we have heard of its reputation, even as far away from where we came, and we would love to join a game.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Go ahead and give me—

Aabria Iyengar

[Giggling]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

—a persuasion check.

Aabria Iyengar

As Ame mentioned Suvi's title, she's going to tap her staff and cast prestidigitation just to dry herself off.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Mhm.

Aabria Iyengar
And then again for the homies.

Lou Wilson
Oh, thank god.

Erika Ishii
Thank you! [Sighs]

Lou Wilson
I think Eursulon has a moment of just going "Travelling companion. Soaking wet, travelling companion."

[Aabria, Brennan, and Erika laugh]

Aabria Iyengar
Oh no!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You dry off the fox, and the fox says

The Fox [Brennan]
Hoo hoo hoo!

Erika Ishii
[Giggling]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Yeah, the hostess seems confused by where the "hoo hoo hoo" came from.

Aabria Iyengar
Stop.

[Everyone laughs]

Erika Ishii
[Laughing] And Ame goes

Ame [Erika]
[Unconvincingly] Ahoo hoo hoo hoo.

Hostess [Brennan]
Oh! Ha. Yes! Hilarious.

Erika Ishii
16 on my—16 on my persuasion.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
She looks and says

Hostess [Brennan]
Ah! Well. There are no openings at present, most of the games are already underway. However, there is a drawing room upstairs, where you'd be more than welcome to rest, and have a drink, and enjoy yourselves, until a new game should open up. Can I put your names down for the next croupier that becomes available?

Ame [Erika]
Yes, please.

Hostess [Brennan]
Of course!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
She takes your—you see, she doesn't have to even ask them again. She just heard them the first time—

Aabria Iyengar
Hoo! Okay.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
—takes them down, and she says

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Thank you so much for gracing the Ace of Wands with your presence. We are, as always, ever grateful anytime any representative of The Citadel should choose to [Coyly] make herself known here.

Aabria Iyengar
And I just give a gracious little nod, and not lean in super far—just a degree or two.

Suvi [Aabria]
Please tell me there's a good cup of coffee here. Please.

Hostess [Brennan]
A good cup of coffee? I don't believe we have any coffee here. There's a potential that some might be procured for you, if you should wish. Many of our guests, spend their time here looking to, heh, I would say, unwind.

Suvi [Aabria]
Understood.

Ame [Erika]
Oh, that might be good for you!

[Everyone stifles laughs]

Eursulon [Lou]
Ah hoo hoo!

[Aabria and Brennan laugh]

Eursulon [Lou]
Hoo hoo!

Aabria Iyengar
[Cackles]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
She goes

Hostess [Brennan]
Ah hoo hoo. Yes.

Aabria Iyengar
And with your spirit.

Lou Wilson
And with your spirit.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
And also with you. And ah hoo hoo with you. And she—

Erika Ishii
[Giggling]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
—she begins to guide you up the stairs.

Lou Wilson
Can I lean over to Ame as we head up the stairs?

Eursulon [Lou]
[Whispering] Ame.

Ame [Erika]
Yes, Eursulon?

Eursulon [Lou]
I'm not much of an artist.

Ame [Erika]
Uh. I don't see what that might have to do with the situation?

Eursulon [Lou]
It's a drawing room, yes?

Ame [Erika]
Oh, yes. Hmmmm. You know, it's—Suvi, why is it called a drawing room?

Suvi [Aabria]
I... Don't know.

Eursulon [Lou]
I just—I need you both to know I'm not good at it.

Suvi [Aabria]
They won't make you draw, you'll just drink.

Eursulon [Lou]
Mm. Well, that I can do.

[Low chuckles]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You are taken upstairs, into a VERY lovely chamber. She rounds the banister, walks down a little carpeted hallway, all the walls up here are different stripes, of a sort of rich forest green, into an incredibly dark, like nearly black, green. All little wall sconces casting this sort of soft yellow light.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Up here the bookshelves have been exchanged for portraits. There are a couple busts along the walls, and as you see the different busts on the walls here, you recognize the writing is all in imperial. But the people that are being venerated here, unlike you're familiar with at the Citadel, seem to be a collection of like, merchants, and various financiers, and people associated with the Crown, which obviously—

Aabria Iyengar
Yeah!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

—representatives of the Crown are in the Citadel all the time, but the Citadel is sort of. The Citadel!

Aabria Iyengar
Yeah.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Yeah. You walk throughout and, as you do so, you approach a door that opens, expecting sort of a cozy room, you are actually sort of suddenly a little bit taken aback to find lots of gray sunlight in here. Some sort of refitted solarium. There's like metal ribs of the—there are like metal ribs coming down, with giant glass panes, so you're watching the rain fall down—

Erika Ishii
[Sigh of wonder]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

—it's almost like being in an aquarium, you're in sort of a rooftop greenhouse, almost, but with clear glass so you can see all the forms of the water coming down. And in the walls to either side you see there's large vertical, sort of, steeple windows. So suddenly you're in a gray light that's a little bit dim when you're outside, but when you're inside actually doesn't feel as sort of dark as the candle-lit studies on the interior of this house of fortune.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

There are several sofas here, and towards the back you see that there is a large, bright blue witch fire burning [Quiet woosh of flame] some sort of witches—you know, quite a pretty penny to sort of have this in a private, sort of a social club.

Aabria Iyengar
Mm!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You also notice that it is warm, it's heating the room, which you know is a separate effect—this fire doesn't produce heat—

Aabria Iyengar
[Laughs]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

—so the fire is just for visual effect, and then some other kind of spell has been paid for, and put on here, to also make it warm. There are several sofas around, and you see that there is a piano player in the corner, playing a soft tune. And along the back wall near the door is a long bar, with all sorts of beautiful multifaceted glass decanters, of different liqueurs, and spirits, and aperitifs.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And the bartender has a perfect middle part in his hair, that gets curled into two long curls on the other side.

[Aabria and Erika laugh]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Big handlebar mustache, dark green vest, white shirt. And you see there's a number of wealthy looking people here. The wealthy people you see here, I should underline, do not have the bearing or manner of aristocrats. They are dressed in expensive clothes, and talk crassly to each other, and laugh. You see that there is one man sitting in a tallback chair, near enough to the fire, but also sort of partially out of the way, near a bookcase with a couple of marble busts on it.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

This man, you see, has his coat slung over the back of the chair, vest, gold fob for some sort of pocket watch, thick hairy forearms. He has a newspaper open, that partially obscures his face, but you see his sort of salty white hair is cut close to his head, and he has dark, suntanned skin like a sailor. That kind of like, red—that sort of almost red, weather beaten—lots of wrinkles on his neck.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You see that next to him, leaning against the inside of the arm of his chair, is a thick, heavy piece of wood, with its end banded in iron. The hostess brings you over to a sofa, sort of facing out the rainswept city, and says

Hostess [Brennan]

Please, have a seat, be warm, and if there's anything you'd like at all, you can see our bartender, and I'll let you know as soon as a game becomes available.

Ame [Erika]

Thank you so much, Miss...?

Hostess [Brennan]

Lila.

Ame [Erika]

Lila. Are there any of the other... Guests here, who we should become acquainted with? We're new to town, you see.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

She smiles and says

Lila [Brennan]

To those of the Citadel, I am certain I can offer no insight. Your friendship, I'm sure, is welcome in all corridors, and thank you again for gracing us with your presence.

Aabria Iyengar

Suvi will clear her throat just enough, and give a little like, dismissal nod to Lila.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Lila nods and sees herself out of this drawing room.

Eursulon [Lou]

Would anyone like a drink to warm them up?

Eursulon [Lou]

And Eursulon is going to stand, like he's going to the bar.

Aabria Iyengar

Yeah, I'm gonna pass you three more like, Imperial Marks and, yeah.

Eursulon [Lou]
What would you like?

Suvi [Aabria]
[Whispered] I don't know. Something—I don't—I don't know.

Eursulon [Lou]
I mean, I'm happy to order for—

Suvi [Aabria]
Wine? Just make a choice, I don't know, I don't know.

Eursulon [Lou]
Alright.

Suvi [Aabria]
We're fine, and we're good. That would be great.

Ame [Erika]
I would love hot wine if you have any.

Eursulon [Lou]
Hot wine.

Ame [Erika]
If there is any.

Eursulon [Lou]
Alright.

Lou Wilson
And I'm going to head for the bartender.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You walk over, this guy's mustache is out of control.

Aabria Iyengar
Yeah-hahaheah!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Just absolutely—

Lou Wilson
How far are we going off the face?

Aabria Iyengar
Ha HA!!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You have to wait for him to turn his head quickly, to really get it in motion, but you think it—you think it's beating his ears—

Lou Wilson
[Raucous laugh]

Aabria Iyengar
Incredible!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
—in terms of—in terms of off to the side. And it certainly is giving him that kind of Sam Elliott thing where, when his mouth is closed, the bottom of the mustache is covering the lower lip—

Erika Ishii
[Burst of laughter]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
—even though it's waxed, so it looks like this guy, got a choice between a mouth and a mustache, and chose mustache.

[Aabria and Lou laugh]

Eursulon [Lou]
Hello, sir.

The Bartender [Brennan]
Hello there, friend!

Eursulon [Lou]
I just wanted to order a few drinks for me and my friends. Two hot wines.

The Bartender [Brennan]
Two hot wines?

Eursulon [Lou]
Yes.

The Bartender [Brennan]
Alright!

Eursulon [Lou]
And three warm whiskeys.

The Bartender [Brennan]
Two hot wines, three warm whiskeys, alright.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You see, he looks up and says

The Bartender [Brennan]
So, the whiskey's room temperature, neat's alright?

Eursulon [Lou]
Neat's just fine.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
And you see, he gets three VERY well made, heavy bottomed glasses, [sound of pouring liquor] and gives you a nice sort of three finger pour on each glass, puts it in front of you, and then gets these sort of beautiful, ornate copper mugs, and pours—you see, he has a small little cauldron behind the bar, that sits on a clay tile with an imperial runecraft underneath it, that keeps it warm.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And you see, he ladles out—you can see a bunch of spices and cloves, tied together with twine, and something looks like floating pieces of orange in there. And sort of a mulled wine comes out into both glasses.

Eursulon [Lou]

And I must say... It's quite a mustache.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You see, the corners of his eyes crease so much with a smile. He gives you a nod, winks, and you swear to god, his eye sparkles.

Aabria Iyengar

[Giddy laugh]

The Bartender [Brennan]

Thanks, friend. Glad ya noticed.

[Mystical twinkle]

Erika Ishii

[Gasping laugh]

Eursulon [Lou]

Will this do?

Lou Wilson

And I put out all three marks.

Aabria Iyengar

Goddamn it.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

He takes it and makes change for you. So he slides two of the marks back across the table, and puts a silver and four copper across the bar to you.

Lou Wilson

I leave the silver and four copper.

Lou Wilson

Thank you. Put it into the old—the old—moustache—

The Bartender [Brennan]

I'll put it in the wax fund, sir, you're very kind.

Eursulon [Lou]

Yes, that's what it's called.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You see, he takes the coins. Probably have to make a trip or two, to get all the drinks back over.

Lou Wilson

Yes, I come back, deliver two hot—one hot wine.

Eursulon [Lou]

One hot wine for you, one hot wine for you. And here is the change.

Suvi [Aabria]
Oh! Thank you.

Lou Wilson
And then I go back over and I come back with three whiskeys.

Ame [Erika]
Oh, are those all for you?

Lou Wilson
And I immediately shoot one—

Ame [Erika]
Oh!

Lou Wilson
—then I immediately shoot the other.

Eursulon [Lou]
Yes, they are. Well, cheers, to being together again.

Suvi [Aabria]
Warm and dry.

Eursulon [Lou]
To being warm and dry.

Suvi [Aabria]
And together.

Eursulon [Lou]
And together as well.

Erika Ishii
I hold up—

Ame [Erika]
Cheers to all of that.

Erika Ishii
I hold the mug with both hands, warming them.

Erika Ishii
[Whispering] Hey, Fox?

The Fox [Brennan]
Yeah?

Ame [Erika]
Have you ever had wine before?

The Fox [Brennan]
Yeah.

Ame [Erika]
Wuh—really?

The Fox [Brennan]
What is it?

Aabria Iyengar
[Laughing]

Ame [Erika]
Oh, it's—it's an alcoholic beverage.

The Fox [Brennan]
Okay.

Ame [Erika]
You want to try?

The Fox [Brennan]
Yeah yeah, let me try it.

Ame [Erika]
Okay. Just, get it under there.

The Fox [Brennan]
[Lapping up wine]

Ame [Erika]
Alright that's—good, okay?

The Fox [Brennan]
Mmm!

Ame [Erika]
Mm!

The Fox [Brennan]
Okay.

Erika Ishii
Yeah.

The Fox [Brennan]
Wow. What is that?

Ame [Erika]
Oh, that's wine.

The Fox [Brennan]
Let me have more.

Aabria Iyengar
[Shriek of laughter]

Ame [Erika]

Just one more. Just a little taste.

The Fox [Brennan]

Alright. [Laps up more wine]

Ame [Erika]

Okay.

The Fox [Brennan]

Let me have more.

[Aabria and Erika laugh]

Eursulon [Lou]

I mean, he's not wrong.

Aabria Iyengar

By the way, while Eursulon was at the bar, Suvi was making an absolute meal of like, slowly unbuttoning her wool cloak, and folding it gently over the edge of the sofa, to reveal an optic white blouse, that's cut specifically and only ever for her, with a pillowy bishop sleeve. And she's just having this moment of like, "I'm going to make everyone in this room look at me, because I'm from The Citadel, and that gets to mean something, finally. Ame pay attention to me."

Erika Ishii

[Giggling that turns into a cackle]

Aabria Iyengar

And then after taking care of all of that, kind of reaches back to the little hanging censer at the back of her hair—

[Sizzle of flame]

Aabria Iyengar

—and relights it so the resin begins to kick up like a small little bit of incense around them.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You all sit here having your drinks, looking around the room. So you've made it into this place, and, you know this is where—there's some window in here that you could see that area, where Ghost buried the bone in that flower pot there. But for the moment, it's just nice to be on a comfortable sofa—

Aabria Iyengar

Yes.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

—having a drink and being out of the rain.

Erika Ishii

Mhm.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Do you all take this time to rest? Or are any of you active, looking around, seeing what's going on?

Aabria Iyengar

Can I make an investigation check to try to overhear conversations? From my time being the apprentice to Archmage Silence, I just want to see if I can hear a name that I may have run into at some point at the Citadel. Like,

who's the most important person, that's being mentioned in these bawdy conversations, that I may have any amount of connection to?

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Give me an investigation check, I know you have your passive, but give me a check, too.

Aabria Iyengar

21!

Erika Ishii

[Laughs]

Aabria Iyengar

Woo!

Lou Wilson

Passive meets active!

Aabria Iyengar

[Laughs]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You hear a couple of them, you can hear—especially as you take your cloak off, and hang it there to become a spectacle in the room. You hear the people that are farthest from you talking quietly about

The Room [Brennan]

[Mumbling] Mm. Wizard standing over—who do you think her companions are?

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And you hear a couple of them—you can't hear the conversations well enough to hear every one of them word for word, but you do clock specifically names. You get three names. One of them you get the most.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

The two that you hear are—the one you hear the most is Pain. And then the other name that you hear a little bit is Morrow. The third name, that you don't hear very much, but you hear the name Galani, and you know a Wizard Galani, it's an abjuror—it's someone high up in the Researchers Corps back at the Citadel—

Aabria Iyengar

Mm.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

—specifically involved in abjuration. And so all the people up in this little echelon of Port Talon, those are the names of wizards you hear being spoken. Morrow and Pain you don't know. Maybe they're somewhere buried deep in the Citadel, where you wouldn't have heard about it, but there are also a lot of wizards that are not in the Citadel anymore.

Aabria Iyengar

Yeah. Okay. Thank you!

Lou Wilson

I do think Eursulon is taking this moment to rest. I think this is definitely a moment in which Eursulon has—is not, like, super aloof, but has—this is crazy. Like, I don't think Eursulon has experienced luxury like this before. I don't think he's ever had his drinks—drinks of this quality, paid for him before. So I think there is a—and just the respect that has been shown to him and his companions in this space, is something truly new and surreal.

Lou Wilson

And I think in—especially, like, now inbibing alcohol, I think he is really relaxing, and just like, taking things in, enjoying the taste of the most expensive whiskey he's ever had, and kind of, I think, checked out.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Incredible!

Aabria Iyengar
Oh okay! Goodbye!

Erika Ishii

I look around the room and, for all intents and purposes, seem to be enjoying myself, and savoring the wine, and the warmth. And I would like to surreptitiously look around, and see if anybody is giving us, perhaps, too much attention or too little.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Give me an insight check.

Erika Ishii
16.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
There is someone giving you too little attention. The man in the chair, the one man in here who is not socializing.

Erika Ishii
Mhm.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
There's a man in the chair reading a newspaper, who has that—

Aabria Iyengar
[Quietly] The cudgel, sorry. [Louder] Oh! Sorry!

Erika Ishii
Wow! For those who cannot see us in this room, Aabria clearly called this shot—

Aabria Iyengar
[Wailing with laughter in the background]

Erika Ishii
—that made Brennan stop in his tracks, and what appears to be a flicker of fear crossed his face.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
No fear, no fear.

Lou Wilson
He described the weapon.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
I described it, yeah.

Erika Ishii
Well.

Aabria Iyengar

He described it, and everybody was like, "Oh, it's a cudgel. Wait a second! A word!"

Erika Ishii

[Disbelieving] Mhm.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Wait, was that you getting yourself in that moment? [Uproarious laughter]

Aabria Iyengar

Because my brain went "The man holding the cudgel. Oh, no! The Cudgel!"

[Everyone breaks down laughing. Someone slaps their knee.]

Erika Ishii

I love you. So. Much.

Aabria Iyengar

Sometimes you can just be cut—high and low wisdom!

Erika Ishii

[Laughing]

Lou Wilson

Aabria was fully on that like, "Alright, this blouse, when I take this fuckin' coat off—"

Aabria Iyengar

Shut up!

Lou Wilson

"Shit, what are they called? They're called bishop sleeves, is that it?"

Aabria Iyengar

YUP.

Lou Wilson

"Yeah, yeah, bishop sleeves."

Aabria Iyengar

I don't like being seen like this. That's exactly right.

Erika Ishii

I was leaving a trail of breadcrumbs for our dear listeners-uh! [Cackling] I love—

Aabria Iyengar

[Cackling] I love you!

Erika Ishii

—it was so incredible!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Incredible! I fuckin' love it. Yeah. I think you clock that man, and again, see in here—it's a big, strange world that Ame is getting to know.

Ame [Erika]
[Sighs]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And I think you are—you just saw Finley, this patchwork, stubbly, fence of magical bricabrac, and he spoke of Will Gallows, with this sort of air of being terrified. There would be no point to crime, if it didn't pay, and so the people that he's speaking about—you're in this place of luxury with merchants and other people around. And you do notice this one guy, who doesn't seem to need to socialize, who is the only guy that you can see in this room that doesn't look a little bit soft, and a little bit like an indoor kid.

Erika Ishii

Hmm. I approach him. And I act as if I'm, mm, trying to not look at his newspaper, hoping to catch his eye.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You catch his eye, for sure. He looks up from his newspaper—the moment you st—I actually think it would catch you a little bit off guard, that as you stand from the couch, the first step you take, he looks at you.

Erika Ishii
[Gasp]

Aabria Iyengar
Oooh.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

He was clocking your feet enough, that the first step you take, he looks up.

Ame [Erika]

Oh, I'm so sorry, sir. I didn't mean to interrupt your reading.

Erika Ishii

And I rock back and forth on my heels a little bit.

Ame [Erika]

I was just hoping for some local news, I'm new in town?

Lou Wilson

Eursulon looks up.

Eursulon [Lou]

Wait, where did um—where did Ame go?

Suvi [Aabria]

The worst possible place to be in this room.

Aabria Iyengar

And I just kind of gesture—like eyeline gesture.

[Newspaper flaps]

Ame [Erika]

My name's Ame.

The Cudgel [Brennan]

[Low cockney accent] You can talk to the house downstairs, to get you a newspaper.

Erika Ishii

Look, you seem like you would know more than what just a newspaper would tell me, but very well. Of course.

The Cudgel [Brennan]

If I knew more than the newspaper, why would I be reading one? Do I strike you as a man who wastes his own time?

Ame [Erika]

No. No, you don't.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Give me a deception check.

Aabria Iyengar

[Whispered, scared] Oh my god.

Erika Ishii

16.

Lou Wilson

Thank god.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

He breaks his eyes from contact with you, and goes back to reading his newspaper.

Aabria Iyengar

Damn!

Erika Ishii

Now that I'm up close to him, can I roll an insight check? I want to get any clues that I can, about what he's reading, his clothes, anything that I might be able to see better up close. And that's a 20 on the die. [Chuckles]

Aabria Iyengar

Let's go-uh!.

Erika Ishii

Total 26.

Aabria Iyengar

Yeah.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You're looking at his clothes, you're looking at his belongings. His clothes are really nice. He does have really nice clothes. And he looks like a guy that—he looks like a guy that didn't grow up in these clothes, but having gotten to them at some point in adulthood, has already figured out how to take them for granted.

Erika Ishii

[Snorting stifled laugh.]

Aabria Iyengar

Damn! Damn, he's cool.

Erika Ishii

Is he magic? Is there anything of magic in—?

Brennan Lee Mulligan

I mean, if you look—on a Nat 20, you're looking for any sign of magic. You don't think this guy has any connection to any spiritual understanding of it.

[Aabria, Brennan, and Erika laugh]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

There's no—you don't—you think this guy's about as disconnected from his fuckin' third eye as it is possible to be. But I will say, you look at all the clothes, you're looking for all these clues, and then you kind of remember some kind of breath, catching your breath.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You hear Grandmother Wren's voice going "Soft eyes." And you just look at his body, and posture? He is waiting. He's waiting, like someone whose beloved has business indoors, and they are on a bench outside. Will Gallows is in this building.

Ame [Erika]

[Shuddering gasp]

Erika Ishii

I quietly walk away, and I return to Eursulon and Suvi.

Suvi [Aabria]

What was that?

Eursulon [Lou]

Who—yeah.

Erika Ishii

That was the Cudgel.

Aabria Iyengar

Yeah, I could tell from the stick.

Eursulon [Lou]

Oh!

[Aabria and Erika shriek with cackling laughter]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

The fox looks at you and goes

The Fox [Brennan]

It's the stick.

Lou Wilson

Now that's what—he keeps the weapon, and they name him after that.

The Fox [Brennan]

Is that something that should happen? Should you name me after something I have?

Ame [Erika]

Yeah.

The Fox [Brennan]
I don't have anything.

Ame [Erika]
You have a tail. You have uh—you have eyes. You have paws. You can be Mittens!

Suvi [Aabria]
Hey, what if we talk to the fox less, in the room?

Eursulon [Lou]
That is fair. We can only get away with so much "ah hoo hoo."

[Everyone laughs]

Lou Wilson
Ame, did you—did you speak to the Cudgel?

Erika Ishii
I did. He was extremely dismissive, but Will Gallows—

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Go ahead—I am going to need, actually, a group stealth check here.

Erika Ishii
Yeah.

Lou Wilson
Oh, ok.

Aabria Iyengar
[Laughs] God dammit! Fair enough.

Erika Ishii
19

Aabria Iyengar
11.

Erika Ishii
[Screaming] Oh no!

Lou Wilson
Eursulon literally pokes his head over Ames shoulder and looks directly at the Cudgel—

Erika Ishii
[Giggling]

Aabria Iyengar
God dammit!

Lou Wilson
—with a Nat One.

[Everyone laughs]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
The cudgel looks up at you and goes

The Cudgel [Brennan]
[Flaps newspaper.] Mm.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Stands up, and walks out of the room.

Aabria Iyengar
Ah!

Lou Wilson
[Laughs] Yeah, I make full eye contact with him, look back at you.

Eursulon [Lou]
Oh. So did—he's leaving.

Erika Ishii
Yes, he is.

Suvi [Aabria]
[Whispered growl] Discretion.

Erika Ishii
Alright. Will Gallows is in the building, I say that we discreetly follow—

Suvi [Aabria]
Why.

Ame [Erika]
What do you mean, why?

Suvi [Aabria]
Why are you pulling more attention to us?

Ame [Erika]
Oh. Well, we are here for the sword, and I propose that we get the sword.

Suvi [Aabria]
Okay. Do you remember the part where we all noticed that the Cudgel looked at you, after a single step in his direction? Do you think he's not paying a ton of attention, to the three of us right now, even as he walks away?

Ame [Erika]
I don't propose that we go and try to sneakily follow him. We're just here for a business transaction, after all.

Eursulon [Lou]
Well, maybe if we wait here, he'll come to us.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
The door reopens, and the Cudgel reenters. You see that the eponymous weapon now hangs from his belt, by a leather cord. And he walks into the room with a woman, who has a black long coat, black breeches, tall black boots. She—the coat has sort of a hint of something maritime or navel to it, but not enough to actually mark her as being a sea captain, seems like she just is from this port town, and the manner, and style, and cut of the clothes here kind of bear some resemblance to that.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

She has a wavelike column—her hair is styled up, almost like the flames of a fire, and you see it's like a rich, deep auburn, with some traces of gold through it. And she has a sharp, smiling face, that seems to straddle the border between very demure, and kind of inviting, and a little bit predatory, like something that you can't quite tell, is that like a sweet little mouse, or is that like a weasel?

Aabria Iyengar
[Giggles]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

She walks across the room with the Cudgel behind her, and approaches your group.

Eursulon [Lou]

They're coming this way. They are coming this way.

Ame [Erika]

Yes I know, we can see them—

Eursulon [Lou]

Are we gonna—what do we—

Suvi [Aabria]

Okay.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

She approaches and says

Weasely Woman [Brennan]

Good afternoon. It's a pleasure to see you here, we are some of the benefactors of the Ace of Wands. My name is Arleigh, Arleigh Price.

Ame [Erika]

[Diplomatically] Hello, Arleigh. I'm Ame, and these are my friends Suvi, a Wizard of the Citadel, and Eursulon, our protector.

Arleigh Price [Brennan]

Hm! Well, I am delighted to meet you all. It's rare that we see new faces here at the Ace, especially new faces that have come, seemingly, without already having a seat waiting for them at a game. I'm so sorry that you have to wait for an opportunity to join some of the recreation occurring downstairs.

Ame [Erika]

Waiting in your drawing room is an absolute delight.

Arleigh Price [Brennan]

[Friendly chuckle] I'm glad you think so, we're very proud of it ourselves. Well, by what reputation did you come to the Ace of Wands? Who recommended it to you?

Suvi [Aabria]

Several of my associates from the Citadel spoke highly—

Arleigh Price [Brennan]

[Surprised] Really!

Suvi [Aabria]
—on their visitations here.

Arleigh Price [Brennan]
Well, those Citadel wizards must keep their... Cloaks quite close around, because they've done a very good job of hiding their presence here. I'm sure they want to keep their business to themselves.

Suvi [Aabria]
Sometimes we get stuck in the rain.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
She looks and says

Arleigh Price [Brennan]
Well, I'd love to get you into a game sooner, rather than later. There are some private tables, if you don't mind playing with some of our more regular guests?

Suvi [Aabria]
That would be lovely.

Ame [Erika]
If you wouldn't mind.

Eursulon [Lou]
We would much enjoy that.

Ame [Erika]
I—

Arleigh Price [Brennan]
Splendid!

Ame [Erika]
I would also like to apologize to your companion for my ruse of trying to read his newspaper. He looked so well connected and, well, I suppose it got this introduction with you, so...

Arleigh Price [Brennan]
[Chuckles] That's so kind. Irami here loves to make connections.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
As she says "Loves to make connections," everyone give me an insight check.

Aabria Iyengar
Natural 20!

Erika Ishii
Yooooo!

Lou Wilson
Thank god.

Erika Ishii
12, but—

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You see the cudgel smiles. As she says "as he loves to make connections," her eyes dart to the tip of his cudgel.

[Piano stinger]

Lou Wilson

Eursulon steps forward.

Eursulon [Lou]

Well, well met!

Erika Ishii

[Laughs]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

The Cudgel shakes your hand. Just puts it right there. [Laughs] She says

Arleigh Price [Brennan]

Well, let's put a table together for you, we have some guests that weren't planning on playing today, but we want to make a good first impression, so we'd be happy to introduce you.

Ame [Erika]

Thank you so much.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And she turns to step away, and the Cudgel sort of moves to the side like a butler, and shows you the way after Arleigh. Yeah.

Erika Ishii

Okay.

Aabria Iyengar

As I walk by, I'm definitely going to try to do, like, an arm, like—forearm touch. We're going to flirt—we're gonna flirt our way through it!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You do a little forearm touch to the Cudgel?

Aabria Iyengar

Yeah!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Go ahead and give me persuasion.

Aabria Iyengar

[Wail]

Lou Wilson

Let's go. Sensuality!

Aabria Iyengar

[Strained] That's about right!

Erika Ishii
Uh oh!

Aabria Iyengar
Eight!

[Aabria and Erika cackle]

Aabria Iyengar
Wizard flirt-uh!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You touch his forearm, and—this is like a dangerous, scary guy. You touch his forearm, and he shifts his posture in, like, kind of a boxer weave, that he looks so confused, that he tries to translate the boxer weave, into thinking that you're falling, because why would you touch him?

Aabria Iyengar
[Riotous laughter, off mic]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
[Wheezing laugh] Goes to like, catch you. And then you see kind of—huh— sneezes a bit, and then just sort of—

[Everyone collapses into laughter]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
—moves you on. You've never seen someone's body truly, like, scramble like that before. At an unexpected touch.

Aabria Iyengar
[Laughing so much it's hard to speak] Suvi's just gonna—I just walk. Oh! Oh god.

Erika Ishii
You doing okay, buddy?

Aabria Iyengar
Hey, shut up? Shut the fuck up.

Erika Ishii
Mm.

Arleigh takes you—

[Aabria, Brennan, and Erika have a giggle fit]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Arleigh takes you down the hallway, to the staircase again, where you go the opposite direction—you go left further along the building. These would have been small bedrooms back when this was like a private residence. And now you see that these have similar little brass plaques on them, that don't refer to rooms, but to tables. So it's table one, table two, table three, table four. She takes you all the way to table four.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
As you walk in, you see beautiful, leather-wrapped, red felt octagonal table in the center, drawer, there are just clean glasses and several decanters for you to serve yourself. And, Eursulon, you look up and see a many candled chandelier.

Lou Wilson

Yes. Do I get a sense—as we walk do I get a sense, in the way that we're moving through the building, we're moving closer to the window, and then in this room, I guess, does this—

Brennan Lee Mulligan

If you want to take a look out the window—

Lou Wilson

I'll give a quick peek, as I move toward the decanter.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You take a quick peek. You see, far away, that flower pot, off on that different street corner, where you guys were standing.

Aabria Iyengar

Ahh!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

This is the room.

Aabria Iyengar

Nice.

Eursulon [Lou]

Ah hoo hoo!

Aabria Iyengar

[Sudden burst of laughter]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Ame, the Fox sort of scrambles in your clothes, and goes

The Fox [Brennan]

Ah hoo hoo!

Ame [Erika]

Ah hoo hoo hoo!

Lou Wilson

And I think Eursulon looks out the window, looks at his friends.

Eursulon [Lou]

Ah hoo hoo!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Arleigh looks at all of you and says

Arleigh Price [Brennan]

You're all saying "ah hoo hoo."

Arleigh Price [Brennan]

It's a little idiosyncrasy—it's a little idiosyncrasy where we're from.

Arleigh Price [Brennan]

We call those customs.

Eursulon [Lou]
Yes. It's a custom.

Arleigh Price [Brennan]
Ah, a custom, alright, well. Ah hoo hoo.

Suvi [Aabria]
[Exhausted] Thank you for treasuring our culture.

Arleigh Price [Brennan]
And the three of you—

Erika Ishii
[Laughing too hard to speak] Ame pokes Suvi—

[Everyone laughs]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Arleigh looks and says

Arleigh Price [Brennan]
And the three of you are all from. The same place.

Eursulon [Lou]
Yes.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Alright, well. We'll go collect our guests and be right back.

Ame [Erika]
[Laughing] Ah hoo hoo!

Erika Ishii
[Collecting herself] Ame gives a satisfied nod.

Aabria Iyengar
Yeah! [Giggles]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Arleigh steps out of the room, and you have a moment of being able to just inspect through that window and see that—

Lou Wilson
The Cudgel is gone as well?

Brennan Lee Mulligan
The Cudgel is gone as well.

Lou Wilson
I think Eursulon, while fully opening the decanter and pouring himself a glass is like—

[Bottle uncorking, liquor being poured]

Eursulon [Lou]

Wow, we've—I think this is it, I think we've found the room, do you think they—

Suvi [Aabria]

[Conspicuously] Brother, pour me a glass.

Lou Wilson

[Realizing, haltingly] Oh uh. Yes! I think we have found the room! With... The drink! Here. Is a glass for you, sister.

Suvi [Aabria]

Thank you.

Ame [Erika]

None for me! Thank you.

Eursulon [Lou]

Of course! [Whispering] It's—yeah, we found it. What do we do now?

Suvi [Aabria]

[Whispering] Apparently, wait and don't flirt, he's so bad to flirt with. It was like to make a connection, and then I was like, oh, I'm gonna make a connect—it was just violence. [Grunt as she knocks back the drink, coughing] Again.

Eursulon [Lou]

Yes. One more, one more.

Erika Ishii

I look around the room.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You take a look around the room. It's lovely in here, and I think, you take a quick scan. Small room. Not too much going on here. There's a small dresser that seems to have, like, games, dice and cards, and things like that in it. Very quickly, the door opens again, and you hear outside, a little like a small cheer from downstairs.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

The music picks up and gets a little bit louder.

[Muffled cheering]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And you hear a kind of rumbling and rolling, and a scatter of pins.

[Muffled bowling noises]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Like, it seems like a new game has started up of throwing balls down a lane and hitting pins, in some parlor downstairs. So it's gotten a little bit noisier. The door opens. Arleigh opens it, the Cudgel walks in, takes a seat at the table kind of next to the three of you. Four other people walk in, in green, that do not introduce themselves to you, are not smiling, and just stand in the room along the back wall.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And a tall man, in a black coat with lank, black hair over his forehead. It is a simple, dull expression on his face.

[Sleazy dark jazz piano begins to play]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And his skin is, almost like, translucent white, you can see like, blue veins in his neck. He is as broad shouldered as you can imagine, his neck's as thick as his head, his hands are large, they look—even for a large man, his hands look a little bit larger than they should. And he walks in, pulls a chair out, sits across from you and stares.

Ame [Erika]

Mr. Gallows, I presume?

Will Gallows [Brennan]

[Quiet low cockney voice] Presume right. Will Gallows.

Aabria Iyengar

[Quietly] Oh.

Ame [Erika]

I am certain that your associates have told you our names. And I am certain that you have seen us down in the courtyard, so you know that we were hoping to do dealings with you. You have, as we understand it, a certain sentimental artifact of ours, that we hope to purchase from you at whatever cost you may name.

Will Gallows [Brennan]

Let's be clear.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And he reaches out to one of the decanders on the thing behind him, takes it, pours himself a stiff drink, takes a sip.

Will Gallows [Brennan]

[Gravely] You've already lied once. I don't have anything of yours because everything I have is mine.

Erika Ishii

[Congenial chuckle] Yes. I'm sorry. It was not a lie, it was an unintentional, misspoken phrase.

Will Gallows [Brennan]

So you want to buy something of mine?

Ame [Erika]

I would love to purchase an item of yours.

Will Gallows [Brennan]

Mhm.

Ame [Erika]

That hopefully you will be gracious enough to part with.

Will Gallows [Brennan]

Look me in my eye.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

He says to Suvi.

Will Gallows [Brennan]

Who knows you're here?

Suvi [Aabria]

Why do you want to know, sir?

Will Gallows [Brennan]

Because I'd guess, that no one does. And I'd guess there's a reason for that.

Suvi [Aabria]

Then you know there's no universe in which I would confirm that for you, either way.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

He takes another sip.

Will Gallows [Brennan]

Not looking for confirmation. Just have a hunch. That if you never walked out of here, no one would know to look for you.

Aabria Iyengar

[Coolly] We've given no offense. We're here to make an honest deal.

Will Gallows [Brennan]

So. What are you looking to buy?

Eursulon [Lou]

A sword.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Arleigh raises an eyebrow and looks at her boss. And you see Mr. Gallows looks back at you and says

Will Gallows [Brennan]

A sword.

Eursulon [Lou]

One you requested from Hedgemage Finley.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Give me an insight check anyone who wants to.

Erika Ishii

Oh god.

Aabria Iyengar

Woo!

Lou Wilson

It's a natural 20.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You say "the Hedgemage Finley," and in this moment, as you look at Will Gallows, you know that you have condemned that man to death.

Lou Wilson

[Shocked quiet laughter]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

It's a good thing Ghost is thinking about joining the Empire because, she's not going to have that job for long.

Lou Wilson

[Shocked loud laughter]

Aabria Iyengar

That's the raw—hey, Brennan, look at me, that's the rawest shit.

Lou Wilson

That's the rawest shit.

Aabria Iyengar

That's the rawest shit.

Erika Ishii

Raw!

Lou Wilson

Let me tell you, I've been playing D&D since—

Aabria Iyengar

Yo!

Lou Wilson

—for over five years now. And I don't think there's ever been a Nat 20 I wanted less.

[Aabria and Brennan laugh]

Lou Wilson

I don't think there's ever been a Nat 20 in my whole life—in my whole life—that I would be like, give me a 13. Give me a fucking 6.

Aabria Iyengar

[Laughing]

Lou Wilson

If it just meant you were like, "He probably doesn't like him anymore." And I would have been like, "Whoo! Well, neither do I." Worst Nat 20 of my life.

[Aabria and Brennan laughing]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Gallows looks at you and says.

Will Gallows [Brennan]

Huh. Finley mostly pedals in trash but, he's had... A catch every so often. This sword... Rusty old thing, yeah? Tried to sell it to me with a scrap of blue silk on it, said it was enchanted or some dribble. Am I wrong?

Suvi [Aabria]

Not yet.

Will Gallows [Brennan]

[Clears his throat] Alright. I know the sword. Might still know where it's kept.

Ame [Erika]

Would you be willing to part with it?

Will Gallows [Brennan]

Everything has its price, Lovey.

Ame [Erika]

And what is the price of the sword?

[Long pause]

Will Gallows [Brennan]

How... Crass... Do we intend to be? Because I see myself beholding a Wizard of the Citadel, and I wonder if the only thing that we might barter in is gold.

Suvi [Aabria]

Heh.

Will Gallows [Brennan]

But. If it helps you to wrap your head around where we are, and you see no need to be creative in our "business negotiations," I'd say we can start somewhere around 5000 Imperial Marks.

Aabria Iyengar

And I just give Ame a slow look.

Ame [Erika]

[Falteringly] I'm afraid that we don't have that kind of gold on hand, sir.

Will Gallows [Brennan]

Busy?

Suvi [Aabria]

You don't look like you're in need of gold. So let's have the crass conversation. Please.

Will Gallows [Brennan]

Hmm. There's a wizard named Pain. Guild mage, working with the Azure Battalion. Mr. Pain is very fortunate, in his magical gifts. Less so at the dice table. Now. I happen to know, that he has taken from the Imperium's coffers to cover some of his minor debts. But, of course, I'm not in a position to make any honest reports to the authorities, am I?

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Nor am I in a position to... Apply the same justice to him, that I would to anyone else who had wronged me. Given those who have his back. Now, if the guild mage Pain were to... Lose the good graces of his institution, I might be able to act unimpeded. But as yet, I have had no... Inroads that he does not monitor, to see that he might be, eh, pushed out of the nest, down to the forest floor with the likes of me.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

I have a feeling that you're a bit of a stranger here. And I have a feeling, that that staff you bear can open doors for you. And if I had to test my intuition to its utmost... I'd say that there's probably heads you can jump over. Because alas, as young as you, with that much ice water in her veins, can only come from WAY up high.

Suvi [Aabria]

Oh.

Aabria Iyengar

As Suvi begins to do the mental gymnastics to see what she's willing to do, can I make an insight check to see if he's lying to me?

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Yeah, go for it.

Aabria Iyengar

22.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You don't think this dude is lying to you. You think that he—I think on that insight check, you can also tell something as well, which is that he got Wavebreaker and didn't—he's just been sitting on it for years. Like, it doesn't—he didn't find a way to make it like, catch fire and shoot a bunch of lasers, that would make it the fucking best magic sword ever.

Aabria Iyengar

Yeah.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And he probably encountered the same issue Eursulon encountered, which is, walking around town with a big ass sword will draw attention to you that he earnestly doesn't want in his line of work. So I think what you see is that, he's in a position of power, so he gets to ask for anything.

Aabria Iyengar

Yeah.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

But the reason he's entertaining this, is that you think on a 22, the sword is not that important to him.

Aabria Iyengar

Yeah.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

So you see this move—in other words, you see this move not as like, "Why would he part with something so dear? For what—" he's not parting with anything so dear.

Aabria Iyengar

Yeah.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

He has no idea who you guys are, and he's just had an itch on his back for years that he can't scratch that, maybe you can because you're new and could shake up the math of this town, and its power structures, that he's been hitting for a while.

Aabria Iyengar

Mhm.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

So you think it's genuine, but you also think there are ways in which it doesn't matter to him, it's just a problem that his opportunistic brain saw he might be able to solve with a little bit of new math in the equation.

Aabria Iyengar

Copy.

[Tense droning music starts up]

Suvi [Aabria]

You'd ask me to cut my brother loose, for a blade?

Will Gallows [Brennan]

I would.

Suvi [Aabria]

Well you know that I'm new in town, so I'd only ask that, at the end of our transaction, I could count you amongst my friends, in this town.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

He looks over at Arleigh, Arleigh looks back to him. She speaks to you and says

Arleigh Price [Brennan]

True friends are a RARE treasure. But. I think Mr. Gallows can always offer an open door.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And you see that Gallows looks over at you and says

Will Gallows [Brennan]

I don't promise what I can't deliver. I don't have easy friends. But I keep my word. And if you deliver what you say you can, then you'll always know where to find me.

Suvi [Aabria]

Understood.

Erika Ishii

Is his heart beating?

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Give me a perception check.

Aabria Iyengar

[Short cackle]

Erika Ishii

That's a 12. Active.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You just hear the rumble of pins and balls downstairs.

[Muffled bowling noises]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And I think on that perception, you can't hear his heart because you recognize that, more and more things that happen around you aren't accidents. And that game got started in case they needed to kill you up in this room and cover the noise.

Erika Ishii

But he's blinking?

Brennan Lee Mulligan

He blinks. Not as often as you might like, but he blinks.

[Aabria and Lou chuckle]

Erika Ishii

Mm.

Suvi [Aabria]

I think we have an understanding.

Will Gallows [Brennan]

I'll get my messages from the hosts here. I'll see you around, Suvi.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Mr. Gallows stands up and leaves the room.

[Door opening, footsteps leaving.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

The others follow out behind him, leaving the Cudgel and Arleigh. Arleigh smiles and says

Arleigh Price [Brennan]

Pleasure doing business!

Aabria Iyengar

And walks out.

[Door shuts]

Aabria Iyengar

The moment the door shuts, I turn and wretch on the ground.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

[Laughing]

Erika Ishii

Oh!

Eursulon [Lou]

Hoh! Oh!

Eursulon [Lou]

Can we do all the things you said we were going to do?

Suvi [Aabria]

Shut up shut up we have to get out shut up shut up.

Ame [Erika]

It's okay.

Aabria Iyengar

Don't touch me don't touch me. You just told them. You just walked up. You just walked up and told them who we were. You just didn't—you didn't think about it. You didn't think about what was safe. You just—you think everyone you meet is a friend you haven't made yet.

Erika Ishii

That's not true. I just know that if they wanted to know who we were, they'd find out.

Aabria Iyengar

[Darkly] God forbid you leave something to the imagination.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You see, the Fox looks up at you, Suvi and goes

The Fox [Brennan]
Didn't that lady write your names down in that book downstairs?

Suvi [Aabria]
I wasn't the one that said my name to her.

Ame [Erika]
Well, in future I'll let you do the introductions.

The Fox [Brennan]
[Furtively] Seems like you have an easier time if none of you had names.

Suvi [Aabria]
[Exasperated] Oh my god the fox is—

Eursulon [Lou]
Hey, hey buddy? M-mm.

[Aabria and Erika laugh]

Eursulon [Lou]
Hey. Come here. Come here.

Lou Wilson
I bring him over the—and I open the decanter, I pour a glass for him and one for me.

Eursulon [Lou]
Just to—enjoy that for a second. That's all you.

The Fox [Brennan]
[Lapping noises, hiccup]

Aabria Iyengar
Uhp.

Eursulon [Lou]
It's fine. Suvi, are you all alright?

Suvi [Aabria]
No, of course I'm not.

Eursulon [Lou]
We need to go. We need to leave.

Suvi [Aabria]
We need to go. Oh, god. Ohh...

Eursulon [Lou]
Well, then let's begin.

Lou Wilson
And I'm going to go open the door, and step out, and gesture to my friends to walk down the hallway.

Aabria Iyengar

Suvi takes, just some extra minutes, kind of pulling herself together by putting on her coat.

Suvi [Aabria]

[Sighs]

Aabria Iyengar

Working her hands, and will follow.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You all get downstairs. Lila smiles at all of you as you walk past. She says

Lila [Brennan]

Thank you so much for coming to the Ace of Wands.

Lila [Brennan]

And hands each of you a playing card, an ace of wands, that goes into your hands. And you see that written in the center, sort of that little diamond wand shape in the center of the card, that red diamond is a hand drawn, very beautifully calligraphied number four.

Ame [Erika]

Thank you. What does this signify?

Brennan Lee Mulligan

She points up to the room up above you, table four.

Lila [Brennan]

Mr. Gallows' table. If you ever have—

Suvi [Aabria]

Understood.

Lou Wilson

I think Eursulon steps outside, but not far outside the door.

[Door shuts, the music and cheering disappears instantly]

Eursulon [Lou]

Do we seek rooms for the night? Or somewhere for you two to rest?

Suvi [Aabria]

[Uneasy sigh] Yes.

Ame [Erika]

Yes, thank you.

Lou Wilson

Would I know of an inn or one that—

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Yeah. Well, I think you'd know places that you couldn't afford, when you were here and destitute, but that would probably not break the bank, given the amount of golden marks that have been sliding across bar—

Lou Wilson

I definitely aim like, lower than maybe what I—what I would have dreamed, because I just—I don't—because at some point I'm already in the hole for seven marks—or six marks.

[Everyone laughs]

Lou Wilson

I'm not gonna—

Erika Ishii

[Sighs]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

The fox is BLASTED.

[Aabria and Erika cackle]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You've never heard him snore before, he is truly—[Snore]—just like, gone in your arms.

Lou Wilson

There's part of Eursulon that is toying with [Laughs] the idea of telling Finley to get the fuck out of town. So I think I'm thinking of Grayhill, I think I also seeing Suvi be sick, and Ame soaked. Traveling is not the move.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Great you're—yeah. You're going to find a small spot here. I think there's not an "inn," you know a place that is truly like, a fleahouse. Like, there's not a common room, there's not music, it's just a place with beds.

Lou Wilson

How bad were the beds? I mean, I never would have asked.

Aabria Iyengar

[Laughing] How would you know?

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You never would have asked. You probably would have been like, in a closet or downstairs in a cellar somewhere or something like that. But, warm. There's warm.

Ame [Erika]

That sounds fine.

Lou Wilson

I think I'm taking them there.

Erika Ishii

Passive perception-wise, I'm going to just make sure that we're not being followed.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You don't see anyone following you.

[The sleazy clarinet and piano from the Ace of Wands play softly in the background]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You move through the rain, as the sky moves to a darker shade of gray, and night begins to fall. As night falls, you find, basically, an old tenement bought up, and turned into places for travelers, and people like, freshly in the city.

This is actually near the—this is right under the shadow of the massive wall, which wasn't here the last time you were here, this place used to be full.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You look and see the gate here—there's a massive gate in the wall. The gate is shut, SHUT shut, and sealed with massive steel beams, and, as you get to the front, you see there is an older woman, sort of manning a small sort of—almost like a little window, with bars in it, and a small desk, and a strong box behind her. And she looks up, almost surprised to see people, and goes

Boarding House Clerk [Brennan]

Huh! Are you looking for—?

Eursulon [Lou]

Yes. Two rooms.

Boarding House Clerk [Brennan]

Yes—

Suvi [Aabria]

One room.

Boarding House Clerk [Brennan]

Just one?

Eursulon [Lou]

Just one.

Boarding House Clerk [Brennan]

Ah, very well. Three copper.

Lou Wilson

I would like to try—if, from my theater wages, I have three copper, I'll pay.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Great.

Aabria Iyengar

Aww.

Erika Ishii

Aww!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You cover the room with three copper. You guys go up a very narrow little spiral staircase, find this absolute closet of a room, small port window, like on a ship, that looks out over the rest of the city. Up here the rain starts to subside a little bit and almost the moment it subsides, you can hear shouts from up in the wall, and you can hear the noise of fire crackling once again, you can hear the noise of the flame on the other side, and that smoke begins to fill the air. Eursulon. You feel like—this close to the source of fire, you feel sick.

Lou Wilson

Mhm.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Looking out through the porthole, you once again also see, that now the rain stops, starts to clear a little bit, clouds begin to pass, and as the sky clears, you see the lights farther down, hanging lanterns, sputtering witchfires, out by

the Imperial centers, way off towards the point of the Talon. And I think you also see far off, a little mote of purple and green.

[The suspenseful horn music slowly fades away. After it has gone silent, it's replaced by good-natured plucked strings, and the sounds of a busy town in the early morning.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

The following morning, you wake under gray skies, and realize that, though the cloud cover has faded, the equally powerful columns of smoke coming from the fire do keep a kind of gray miasma over the city. Looking out, you see Port Talon, once again, engaged in the business of trade and empire. Great wagons moving to and fro.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

I think, looking out, you see that the gate is still shut, here at this time of day, and you also, during the daylight hours, can see from the window of your Hostel, essentially, that there are a number of places around here, that are shuttered. Taverns that have been boarded up, as though this neighborhood has had some affliction maybe, or that there has been some reason for there to be a sudden evacuation. And again, being here in this area by the wall, there's—

Aabria Iyengar

Yeah.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

—just this large shadow cast over this neighborhood. Looking down at the harbor, you see a number of Imperium ships. You clocked them—you saw them when you entered first, but maybe they've been joined by like, one or two more, it looks like there's just a presence in the city today. The Azure Battalion. You see flags flying from the governor's hall, from the Wizard's Spire, the Guild Wizard's Spire, and once again, the sort of, light gray in the air casts a sort of pallor over the town.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

It's been—the harrowing journey—given the joy in finding Eursulon back in Joras, the strange happenings of the ship, the Captain Emliss, this agent of the Dominion of Rhuv potentially, and coming here, and everything with Finley and Mr. Gallows. It's been a disquieting time, your adventure together has thrust you deep into some of the horrors that Eursulon seemed to speak of, or at least hint at, during all his years alone and away from Suvi and Ame.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

That morning, what is it that you do?

Erika Ishii

In the morning I had awoken early and used my alchemy kit, and I bring two cups of blue liquid to Eursulon and Suvi. In it, I have put a little bit of salt, and sugar, and various herbs, that will help restore vitamins and minerals to them.

Eursulon [Lou]

Oh, thank you.

Ame [Erika]

I think it might help a little with your head and your stomach.

Suvi [Aabria]

Thank you.

Ame [Erika]

Suvi, I'm so sorry. This has all been so much for me. I've never set foot outside of the town in my entire life, and clearly there is so much that I have to learn about the world, and its terrible social structures—

Suvi [Aabria]

Stop stop stop. I'm sorry, too. I'm also overwhelmed, this is a lot. Things, for their size, are simple. Hierarchy is simple where I'm from, so, I'm sorry too.

Ame [Erika]

Well, I would definitely like you to hold me accountable for any missteps that I make, and I would be happy to learn from you, about... The city and its ways. I love you.

Suvi [Aabria]

I love you. And I think Eursulon is our best understanding of the city.

Eursulon [Lou]

Um. Sure! I'm—I mean, yes, um. I'm—

Lou Wilson

Eursulon is definitely confused, I think.

Eursulon [Lou]

Suvi, I cannot lie, I assumed that you would be sort of leading. Are we are we not going to go and, shake down the wizard Pain? Or is that not—I mean, I'm happy to share with—

Suvi [Aabria]

Oh. [Clears throat] I—It is a difficult thing to consider. Forfeiting my—it's weird.

Ame [Erika]

Oh, I have no intention of actually forcing you to choose between this sword and the quest, and your loyalty to your companions. I was simply hoping to assess how much it was worth to Mr. Gallows, and get a temperature reading on this entire town.

Eursulon [Lou]

Oh! Was that—was that always the plan?

Suvi [Aabria]

Feels like it.

Ame [Erika]

It was less the plan and more of uh—information gathering. Expedition.

Suvi [Aabria]

We gotta talk about the information we are trading liberally. Look, Ame, I will—I trust you with my life, but I need you to be a little more careful with my name.

Ame [Erika]

Is Suvi your—?

Suvi [Aabria]

Suvi is my name.

Ame [Erika]

Oh.

Suvi [Aabria]

And even that, I don't want to give as easily as we do, so please—

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Let me stop and ask for an insight check here, and because, Suvi is A name, it's a name you use, but I want to see if—do you think Suvi would consider that a lie, or would be—or would change that in the context of what it means magically?

Aabria Iyengar

Lie of omission. Absolutely.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Okay. Give me deception and insight.

Aabria Iyengar

[Laughs] 11

Erika Ishii

12!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Suvi says that a little quickly. "Suvi is my name." And I think you just hear a little—maybe a little—yeah what does Ame hear?

Aabria Iyengar

Yeah, it's that sort of like rushing over, and then just a little bit of the eye-dart away, as she tries to curate the next thing, to give you information so we can move past this thought.

Ame [Erika]

I see. What would you like me to refer to you as, in public?

Suvi [Aabria]

If I look like me, Sky. Sky will work.

Ame [Erika]

Sky.

Suvi [Aabria]

But also, and this is maybe more of a, like a—you don't have to say the Wizard of the Citadel.

Aabria Iyengar

And I point at my staff.

Suvi [Aabria]

That says it. So you don't have to say the second—just, Sky, and then kinda let the rest roll—

Ame [Erika]

Yes, Your Excellency.

Suvi [Aabria]

Okay! [Laughs bashfully]

Ame [Erika]

Eursulon, is there a name you would like to go by?

Eursulon [Lou]

Mm! I mean, I've often been called Toma.

Ame [Erika]
[Excited gasp] Really?

Suvi [Aabria]
Aw!

Eursulon [Lou]
Yes. For a time, I attempted to call myself Eursulon of Toma, as I was not given a surname, when I lived with my siblings and father. But then, people were often confused because they thought Toma was my father, and then I had to correct them. And for a while, I was actually saying that my father was the Great Bear, which was, ho ho, that was a whole mess! So then—then it became just I just stopped saying the "of," and then people had difficulty saying Eursulon, and so they just called me Toma. Oscar also called me Bear, which—

Ame [Erika]
Again, it really takes such little effort to say somebody's name right.

Eursulon [Lou]
You would think so, but—I never minded the names Bear or Toma!

Ame [Erika]
Okay.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
A little lump under one of the bed clothes says

The Fox [Brennan]
[Pained] Everybody has to stop yelling.

Aabria Iyengar
I am going to go over to the lump and go

Aabria Iyengar
[Loudly] Good morning!

Lou Wilson
I'd like to WHIP the bed sheet off—

[Aabria and Erika laugh]

Lou Wilson
Oh excuse me, I make sure the curtains are as open as they are, and just whip the bed sheet off.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
A fox—for a fox to sleep on its back, with its paws in the air—

[Aabria and Erika cackling]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Just bloodshot eyes, on a forest animal.

The Fox [Brennan]
[Wheezing, barely a whisper] Hhhh. So bright. I'm dead.

Aabria Iyengar
[Laughing]

Ame [Erika]
[Cheerily] Oh, stop being dramatic!

The Fox [Brennan]
I died.

Erika Ishii
And I take a little eyedropper and I put—I put some of the blue liquid into him.

[Sounds of fox struggle]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Sort of, rolls his little canine head around.

Aabria Iyengar
[Laughing]

Ame [Erika]
It'll be fine. And now we learn a little lesson about wine!

The Fox [Brennan]
Wine is poison.

Suvi [Aabria]
Accurate.

Eursulon [Lou]
The best kind of poison.

Suvi [Aabria]
Interesting.

Eursulon [Lou]
What? [Chuckles]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
So, that day facing you, you have the—in a strange sense, you did find Wavebreaker. Will Gallows has the sword, all these many years later, and has given you the price, for which he's willing to part with it. It is a steep price. What occurs to you to do that morning, faced as you are with some tough decisions?

Eursulon [Lou]
I must say that I feel out of my depths. I'm not—I have not had much experience in the way of negotiations. But I will defer to either of you.

Suvi [Aabria]
Here's the thing. If Pain is as... Indebted. As Gallows suggested, we don't have to decide anything yet. But I would meet him. Until we have a better plan, he's our one path.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Go ahead and give me actually like, a history check, if you'd be so kind, Suvi.

Aabria Iyengar
22.

Lou Wilson
Yeah!

Erika Ishii
Ooh hoo hoo hoo hoo!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
My God. So I think, remembering the conversation with Mr. Gallows, I think that on that history, you do go back over your sort of eidetic memory of non-magical lore having to do with the Empire, and specifically with Wizards and their interactions with the Empire.

Aabria Iyengar
Yeah.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Now, who knows how much of what Gallows was saying was true or not. You felt like you got a good read on him, and you felt like he, weirdly, seemed like the kind of guy—you can make blanket statements like "all criminals are liars," but this did not seem like a kind of Finley-esque scambler.

Aabria Iyengar
Yeah.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
It seemed like someone who sort of just dealt in power. And he spoke pretty confidently about Pain stealing from the Empire. And I think you go over in your head—

Aabria Iyengar
Yeah.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Listen, Suvi—her relationship to the Empire is what it is, and everyone relates to the Empire in a different way. What the Empire wants you to do, with people who are stealing, is to tell somebody.

Aabria Iyengar
Yeah, Suvi is definitely fighting the like—well! If he's as bad as they say, then this actually isn't that big of a struggle for her. But, she's loathe to arrive there yet, even though she's circling that truth, so she's trying to put off the decision until she knows, absolutely.

Ame [Erika]
We should go find Wizard Pain.

Suvi [Aabria]
Also what the FUCK is this smoke?

Eursulon [Lou]
Yes!

Suvi [Aabria]
Because, before it just smelled like smoke, and now even I'm—like my lungs kinda hurt and I feel like I've been coughing.

Eursulon [Lou]

I did not sleep much last night because of it. Perhaps we can ask the...

Ame [Erika]

Innkeeper?

Eursulon [Lou]

Yes, on our way out.

Suvi [Aabria]

Yeah. Also, can we stay—can we stay in nicer places? Is that—

Eursulon [Lou]

Well this is what I—there are nicer places—

Suvi [Aabria]

Okay.

Eursulon [Lou]

—but, I mean, I'm in the hole for six Marks, so.

Suvi [Aabria]

To who?

[Upbeat plucked string music begins to play]

Suvi [Aabria]

Sorry. You don't just look like my brother. You are my brother.

Eursulon [Lou]

Oh.

Suvi [Aabria]

What's mine is yours.

Eursulon [Lou]

Alright, but it is, as Ame said, the honorable thing, to repay a debt, so—

Suvi [Aabria]

It's honorable to not let your sister sleep in a—I have little bites on me!

Eursulon [Lou]

Oh! Well, what can I say? I'm pretty used to those.

Suvi [Aabria]

Yeah, I don't—

Eursulon [Lou]

I sleep mostly in stables.

Suvi [Aabria]

Fair. Fair.

Eursulon [Lou]

Sleeping on the floor of here is—I could have used a potato sack or two, anyway—

Brennan Lee Mulligan
[Laughing]

Suvi [Aabria]
[Congenially] Let's go! [Laughing]

Eursulon [Lou]
Let's chat with the innkeeper on our way out.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You head downstairs, and you see that there's a new face downstairs, there's sort of an older, reedy, bespectacled man. Whoever was working here last night has gone home, and the new clerk has appeared in the morning.

Reedy Clerk [Brennan]
Hello, thank you for staying. Thank you for staying very much. And, will you be extending your stay at all?

Eursulon [Lou]
We will not, but thank you so much for your hospitality.

[Music drops into discordant sad tones and fades away.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Immediately crest fallen.

Aabria Iyengar
Oh!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Passive perception and investigation above a 15, immediately clocks a wall of room numbers, hooks, and keys. All the keys are up there.

Aabria Iyengar
[Under her breath] Oh, noooo. Guilty. Guilty guilty guilty.

Ame [Erika]
I apologize that we're unable to stay any longer. Why are there not more guests at your inn?

Reedy Clerk [Brennan]
[Sighs] Oh. How did you—yes—

Aabria Iyengar
A lucky guess.

Reedy Clerk [Brennan]
—I suppose, a lucky guess. Yes, well, I do not mean to make you feel—your business takes you elsewhere, and of course—and thank you so much for staying the night that you did. The closure of the gate, has essentially meant that, we are no longer the first port of call for those that arrive to Port Talon by land. The road is overgrown and unsafe, the farmers long since evacuated, either here into the city or further inland.

Ame [Erika]
Why?

Reedy Clerk [Brennan]

I'm happy to be the first to tell you. I'm sure you've smelt the smoke, or seen it at least. There is a, flood I suppose is the word you would use, of kudzu coming in from the forest.

Reedy Clerk [Brennan]

Oh!

Reedy Clerk [Brennan]

Yes, ferocious, viney plants.

Ame [Erika]

Well, they can be quite delicious if cooked right, yes.

Reedy Clerk [Brennan]

Well, there's always been a problem up in this area with them. They're just very—we noticed the kudzu acting up, the summer previous to this last—last summer. But a few months ago, it just. Erupted. It—it started seemingly overnight. And at first, it was just something that we approached—there was some hedge mages in the city, and things like that, a couple went out.

Reedy Clerk [Brennan]

There was one hedge mage who—who went out there, and I don't think anyone's heard hide nor hair from them since then, but a couple efforts were made, and then it just—I think someone tried to stop it, somehow, and it devoured a house, and some people saw it. It just crawled over and—

Ame [Erika]

Actively moving, fast enough to watch?

Reedy Clerk [Brennan]

Yes. Fast enough to watch. Not fast enough to catch—not an animal, not to catch a person. But over the course of a night, it just grew up around a house, and the roots went in and the house collapsed before morning. It's been growing, we don't—some townships inland may have prevented it there. It hasn't been growing further west or south at all, it's been growing out here towards the city. I know that the Azure Battalion has been working side by side with the Scepter's Chorus—

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You would—no roll necessary—Scepter's Chorus is a branch of the Wizards of the Crown. So these are the people that work for the actual family of the Imperium. Their reputation is kind of like bagmen for the Crown, to do with magical engineering.

Aabria Iyengar

Uh huh.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Big practical jobs, that are not of immediate military focus, but are part of the Crown's interest, essentially.

Aabria Iyengar

Okay!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And you see he says

Reedy Clerk [Brennan]

The Scepter's Chorus and the Azure Battalion have both been working for some time, and the witchfires have been their answer—just, the Kudzu keeps growing and growing and growing, and they just have to burn the earth in front of the vine—

Ame [Erika]

Ough!

Reedy Clerk [Brennan]

—to keep them from touching the city.

Ame [Erika]

Is that why they put the wall up, because of the Kudzu?

Reedy Clerk [Brennan]

Well, yes, and frankly—to put a wall up to try to stop the kudzu, and also to keep people from going out into it, because it's not safe.

Ame [Erika]

Well, how do they tend the shrine for the forest?

Reedy Clerk [Brennan]

Well, I think the village around the shrine got evacuated some time ago.

Ame [Erika]

Oh.

Reedy Clerk [Brennan]

I haven't heard much about the shrine out there, but you know, there's—none of the people that lived around it, evacuated into the city, I think they all headed west was what I heard.

Ame [Erika]

And it's just growing towards the ocean then?

Aabria Iyengar

[Wry chuckle]

Reedy Clerk [Brennan]

Yes. Or well, the ocean—it's growing towards the city, yes.

Ame [Erika]

What's the uh, wizard lights out in the ocean?

Reedy Clerk [Brennan]

Hm?

Ame [Erika]

What are the pretty wizard lights out in the ocean?

Reedy Clerk [Brennan]

Oh, there's a—

Aabria Iyengar

Suvi makes just a, little face.

Reedy Clerk [Brennan]

Oh, the wizards derrick. Yes, there's a structure out there.

Aabria Iyengar
[Giggles] I can call them wizard lights!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Yeah.

Ame [Erika]
Oh, yes. The wizard derrick.

Erika Ishii
Ame says as she looks at Suvi.

Eursulon [Lou]
Um.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Yes, well, I'm—I'm a humble innkeeper, I couldn't tell you, but the lights are very beautiful.

Aabria Iyengar
Remembering from the previous night, how many floors in this inn?

[Plucked string music returns]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
About three. Three floors in the inn.

Aabria Iyengar
Where we stayed last night, how many rooms were in like—on our floor?

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Ten.

Aabria Iyengar
Ok. Suvi's gonna pull out one gold Mark and put it on the counter.

Suvi [Aabria]
Can we have our floor, for two weeks, for this?

Reedy Clerk [Brennan]
Of course, yes! Thank you, thank you.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
And you just see a wave of relief come over this innkeeper. The wall has destroyed his life. And you see that he takes the gold mark, and says

Reedy Clerk [Brennan]
Right away, when should we expect the other guests?

Suvi [Aabria]
Oh. You should not—very specifically, there should not be other guests. If anyone is with us, they will come here with us.

Reedy Clerk [Brennan]
Ah!

Aabria Iyengar

And if anyone arrives here looking for us, please let me know.

Reedy Clerk [Brennan]

Ah.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You see, he looks at the three of you and thinks about the questions you've been asking, and he just sort of—sort of makes a little gesture of waving the little gold piece as though he's making a point that he doesn't seem to even be able to articulate to himself.

[Aabria and Erika laugh]

Reedy Clerk [Brennan]

Very well, until further notice, or at least for the next two weeks, the upper floor is closed for renovations.

Suvi [Aabria]

Thank you.

Ame [Erika]

Thank you, sir.

Eursulon [Lou]

And what did you say your name was?

Reedy Clerk [Brennan]

Arthur.

Eursulon [Lou]

Arthur. My name is Eursulon.

Arthur [Brennan]

Eursulon!

Eursulon [Lou]

I'm the protector. This is Ame, a witch, Witch of the South. And this is—

Suvi [Aabria]

Sky.

Eursulon [Lou]

There it is. Ey.

Suvi [Aabria]

Sky.

Aabria Iyengar

And I'm going to tap my staff, and I'm going to use disguise self. And the staff goes to its, like, normal kind of brown, banded in copper form, and she just looks like a normal human, with dark hair, dark skin, and a normal kind of brown—

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You see, the innkeeper goes

Arthur [Brennan]
Ha ha ha! Hoo!

Suvi [Aabria]
Oh!

[Everyone shares a moment of delight]

Arthur [Brennan]
Oh! Very well, Wizard Sky, a pleasure to have you! And a Witch, and a Wizard, and their Protector. Well! [Laughs]
Thank you very much. If the witchfires, and the lights in the port are of interest to you, should I hear anything from any member of my family, or my friends, I'll—I'll be sure to pass on whatever news I get.

Ame [Erika]
Please do. And also, if you happen to know of any place that we can find out any of the local myths, and stories, of the surrounding areas, I'd love to know that as well.

Suvi [Aabria]
And a bath. A bath?

Arthur [Brennan]
Yes, yes!

Suvi [Aabria]
Can we do that? Can that be a—

Arthur [Brennan]
Yes!

Ame [Erika]
[Gasp]

Suvi [Aabria]
[Sigh of relief]

Arthur [Brennan]
The baths are shared between—well, but you have the whole top floor—

Suvi [Aabria]
There you go.

Arthur [Brennan]
—so there you—I'll draw a bath!

Ame [Erika]
[Gremlin chortling]

Suvi [Aabria]
We're gonna be okay.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Great. And you head out into—oh, and you said mythology—

Aabria Iyengar
Yes.

Erika Ishii
Myths, and legends, anything about the local Spirits.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Let's roll—I'll roll a little luck check in front of the board.

Erika Ishii
Ooh.

Arthur [Brennan]
High is good, low is less good.

Erika Ishii
It's a high of 18!

Aabria Iyengar
Yay!

Erika Ishii
Am I having to make you just like raw dog some mythology right now?

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You are, and I love it. This is what the podcast is.

[Aabria and Erika sputter with cackling laughter]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
This is just it. So on an 18, Arthur looks over

Arthur [Brennan]
Oh! Rich, rich folklore, of course. Many people—the shrine's only a day and a half walk—or was a day and a half walk, now much more than that, cutting through all the Kudzu. But there's a lot—I mean, Port Talon, long before it was a port, certainly, the lords here were said to host Great Spirits, and the first castle that was seen here was given as a gift, to the grandson of, what was said to be the couple, in ancient days, of Naram, the Wave Lord and Orima, of the Reaching green.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
There's a beautiful—and I highly recommend it, because there's not too many neighborhoods in Grey Hill that still have the old stones, but there's a wonderful fountain—

Ame [Erika]
Fountain, with a statue of the two of them dancing.

Aabria Iyengar
Yes! Yes. And it was said, of course, that Orima, of the Reaching Green, was a conquering Spirit Queen, of great forests, whose father was a great Battle Lord of the Sky, and that she called the forest to her aid, and the slashing of her claws, and the reaching of her branches, was greater than any fierce beast of the forest, all of whom bowed to her.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
And it was said that only the gentle touch of the waves could calm her fury, and that Naram taught the people of the coast here, how to fish, and how to swim. A lord of Gentle Seas. And—

Suvi [Aabria]
I love her fury.

Ame [Erika]
Oh, I was going to say I love his gentleness, but—

Suvi [Aabria]
Hm.

Ame [Erika]
Hmm!

[Both laugh]

Erika Ishii
[Laughing] Turn back to look at Arthur.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Arthur's like "Not gonna get into that."

[Everyone laughs]

Aabria Iyengar
Smart man!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
And you see, he says

Arthur [Brennan]
If the—most of the old fishing families live along the Outer Talon, the part that faces the actual sea, the inner harbor is sort of monopoli—it's a better harbor for tall ships, but the fishers still live on the outer edge. Goldencrest is the neighborhood out there, which is—not always the most welcoming to out-of-towners, but it's fine, it's a lovely neighborhood and there's many fisherfolk that still live out there.

Arthur [Brennan]
And if you want to earn some credit with the locals, a little touch to the brow and the name Naram, still is a blessing that the fisherfolk will give to each other before heading out to the sea. Call on the Lord of the Waves who has always been a friend to us here.

Ame [Erika]
Ah, that's wonderful. Is there any reason—has there been any disturbances in the sea as of late?

Arthur [Brennan]
No, not that I can say. The sea—[Laughing] with the kudzu coming in, I think our focus is much—muchly turned inland, which has also been the case here, Port Talon, for as long as I can remember. The farming villages are peaceful as well inside, but we're close enough to the mountains that, sometimes there's bears, and panthers, and things like that. No, the sea has always been quite calm here. Good fishing. It rains quite a bit, but honestly, rarely does a squall come through, get some storms every once in a while. But the—the sea is not not too dangerous around here.

Suvi [Aabria]
Arthur, how long has the derrick been there?

Ame [Erika]
[Sigh]

Arthur [Brennan]

Uh, I would say—Oh, they started building it a long time ago, I think they started building it over—the wizards first started planning for it three years ago, something like that. Four years ago?

Suvi [Aabria]

How long has it been operational?

Arthur [Brennan]

And, operational would mean, would—

Suvi [Aabria]

The lights on?

Arthur [Brennan]

The lights on? A while, I don't know, a while.

Suvi [Aabria]

Okay, okay. Just—mm. Mm.

Ame [Erika]

Thank you so much. I do so love local fairy tales.

Erika Ishii

Ame touches her stomach, feeling the remains, of plants that had grown, and withered.

Ame [Erika]

Nn.

Arthur [Brennan]

Well, I'll make sure that bath is drawn and ready when you get back, and thank you again for your kindness and your generosity.

Suvi [Aabria]

No, thank you.

Lou Wilson

As we leave, can I make a history check on the name Orima?

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Yeah, give me a history check. Do it with advantage.

Lou Wilson

10?

Brennan Lee Mulligan

The name Orima does ring a bell.

[Aabria and Erika gasp]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

One of the only times you ever saw your father change directions, was when he heard that Orima was in the forest ahead of him, where he was going.

Aabria Iyengar
[Laughs]

Erika Ishii
Ooh hoo!

Lou Wilson
Away from that area, or toward that area.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
He went away from that area. He was looking for honey. He was looking for sweet grubs, and tender fruit to eat. And heard word that Orima was ahead of him in that patch of forest, and he turned. Not in terror, just went

The Great Bear [Brennan]
Hmm.

[Aabria and Erika giggle]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
and turned left, and went in a different direction.

Aabria Iyengar
God, she's cool. [Laughs]

Erika Ishii
[Laughs]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You head out from the inn. And to where do you—is your first port of interest that you head to?

Aabria Iyengar
Yeah, I think we should head towards the Guild.

Lou Wilson
Yes. If Eursulon could lead the way, I want to swing by Finley's Bricabrac.

Aabria Iyengar
Okay!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Now, it's the next day, so you know your boy's making a luck check.

Aabria Iyengar
Aaah!!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You want to call it odds or evens?

Aabria Iyengar
Aw shit!

Lou Wilson
Oh.

Erika Ishii
Oh, that's even WORSE!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Alright, no we'll do—

Aabria Iyengar
NO NO NO! That's great!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You want to—

Lou Wilson
I'm callin' it evens-uh!

Aabria Iyengar
Yes!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You're calling it evens?

Erika Ishii
For those of you who cannot see us, Lou Wilson has stood up, on the end of the table—

Lou Wilson
I have to, it's just too scary, Taylor, you tell me if something's going horribly wrong.

Erika Ishii
—And picked up the microphone stand, and is holding it to his face.

Lou Wilson
Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ.

Aabria Iyengar
It's gonna be a one.

Erika Ishii
Fist on the table—

Lou Wilson
I don't like this.

Erika Ishii
—crunching his character sheet—

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Evens or odds?

Erika Ishii
—to watch Brennan... [Gasps]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
That's a 16 on the die, folks!

[Aabria and Erika yell a triumphant cheer]

Lou Wilson
I said evens, right? I said evens.

Erika Ishii
[Shrieking] You said evens!!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You said evens.

Erika Ishii
[Yelling] You said evens!

Aabria Iyengar
[Laughing] Cool, so—

Erika Ishii
AAAAHH!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You swing by the black door. You swing by the—

Lou Wilson
I don't tell. I'm like—I'm like it's this way, and just, we swing by the black door. As we get close, can I make a perception check? Any disturbance or any sort of thing?

[Tense ambient music kicks in]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Yeah, give me a perception.

Lou Wilson
11.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You don't see or hear anything.

Lou Wilson
As we get close I think, Eursulon is going to start jogging.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You look around, you don't see anything. You approach and see the black door in front of you?

Lou Wilson
I'm going to push it, or—

Suvi [Aabria]
Wait, why are we—

Lou Wilson
I'm going to pull it.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Alright.

Eursulon [Lou]
Alright, Just 1 second. 1 second.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Alright, you pull it.

[Heavy door creaking open]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
What do you do as you walk in?

Eursulon [Lou]
Finley? It's Eursulon.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You see, he turns around and goes

Finley [Brennan]
Ack!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
And his throat opens up in blood and he falls to the ground.

Eursulon [Lou]
Stop, Finley. Finley! I know—you—we've seen this before.

Finley [Brennan]
[Panicked mystical words]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You see, he goes

Brennan Lee Mulligan
[Grumbling] Oh. Alright.

Ame [Erika]
What!

Finley [Brennan]
Well, what is it? What? What is it you want?

Eursulon [Lou]
You have to go.

Ame [Erika]
Gallows is looking for—

Erika Ishii
[Angrily] No, YOU have to go!

Erika Ishii
[Frantically] Gallows is looking for you, you have to go now!

Finley [Brennan]
I gotta go!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
And you see.

[Everyone laughs, someone is applauding. Lou is full on losing it.]

Aabria Iyengar
That was great!

Lou Wilson
[Continues absolutely losing it]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
[Everyone laughing throughout] Runs through, just grabbin' indiscriminate shit. A bunch of feathers. Spoons. Throwing them in a bag. Helmet. Helmet too heavy. Takes up too much space. Throws helmet. Smaller glove. Oh, gold. Put gold in the bag. Gold, gold. You just see him running around going fuckin' nuts.

Aabria Iyengar
Can I try to sprint to the back?

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Yes, you can sprint to the back.

Aabria Iyengar
To his good stuff?

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Oh, yes, absolutely. Cool. You sprint to the back. You open the door. Give me an arcana check.

Aabria Iyengar
Yeah! Natural 1!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Natural 1. You open the door. Too late, a spell goes into effect. You open the door. The spell that goes off—as you're rustling it, the door is locked, and a spell occurs, and you hear Ghost's voice saying

Ghost's Voice [Brennan]
Sorry, Master Finley, just a minute. It'll only be one more moment.

Suvi [Aabria]
A—what? It's not Fin—ow, what?

Ghost's Voice [Brennan]
I hear ya, I am a dolt!

Ame [Erika]
Nooo!

Aabria Iyengar
[Outraged] What! No! You're gr—agh! Open the door. Ghost!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Sorry, Master Finley, we'll only be one more minute.

Aabria Iyengar
[Dawning realization] Ohhh.

[Frenzied cackling giggle]

Aabria Iyengar
Incredible. I turn and run away. [Laughing]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Incredible. You turn to run away. Finley looks around and says

Finley [Brennan]
Gallows knows. Alright, listen. If anyone dies, tell him—tell him we're all dead.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
And he runs out.

Eursulon [Lou]
Hey, before you go, your neck!

Finley [Brennan]
What's that?

Eursulon [Lou]
It's bleeding.

Finley [Brennan]
Bah! Too late!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
And he runs out the door, just a dead man sprinting down the street.

Lou Wilson
Gushing—

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Blood gushing, dropping spoons and feathers.

Erika Ishii
[In the grips of a giggle fit] For those of you who cannot see this room, at this moment, Brennan Lee Mulligan—

[Aabria and Erika laugh uproariously]

Aabria Iyengar
It's a very elbow forward, Tom Cruise run.

Erika Ishii
Please imagine a Terminator 2 run, but with balled fists instead of knife arms.

Lou Wilson
This—I'm proudly—proud—I feel proud to say that I feel like this is our second hedge mage that we've sent just
RUNNING.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
[Wheezing with laughter]

Aabria Iyengar
Yeah, that feels good!

Lou Wilson
We're two for two right now, baby. We meet a hedge mage, they are BOOKIN' it!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Bookin' it the fuck outta town!

Aabria Iyengar
Yeah. Yeah.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
And as you leave this place, seeing Finley just sprint off into the streets and it's all he needed, um—

Erika Ishii
Hey, uh Fox. Do you want to stop at the trash heap?

The Fox [Brennan]
[Crying] I'm so sorry. I'm sorry I didn't believe in you.

Ame [Erika]
What?

The Fox [Brennan]
Hey, I don't know if I said it, I should probably say it more. I love you.

Ame [Erika]
I love you, too!

The Fox [Brennan]
[Awed] You remembered the trash...

Brennan Lee Mulligan
And the fox dips around and you hear a noise as he goes around the corner, and he says

The Fox [Brennan]
Nooooo!!!

Erika Ishii
[Wheezing laugh]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You look where the trash is, it's just rubble. And you see through this, that the workshop where Ghost was when you first saw her—

Aabria Iyengar
Yeah.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
—that's—

Erika Ishii
[Gasp]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
—you can first of all, see the workshop, all the stuff in it is gone, and there is a, about twelve foot smashed hole through the wall of just rubble, that's covered all the trash.

Aabria Iyengar
Flicker!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
And you see, emanating from the ransacked workshop, you just hear

Ghost's Voice [Brennan]
Sorry, Master Finley, it'll only be another minute.

[Aabria and Erika laugh]

Ghost's Voice [Brennan]
From an illusory Ghost sound that just pops out of an enchantment.

Aabria Iyengar
Sweet.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You make your way towards the Guild Spire.

[Carts rattle on the stone roads, a bell rings off in the distance. An Imperial parade song slowly begins to build.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Way down in the Imperial Center, wide broad roads paved with fresh cobblestones. You see banners, waving, of the Empire overhead. You see the sort of gray misty clouds beyond and all around you, you see soldiers, members of the Azure Battalion, you see wagons laden with goods. You see a number of merchant marines, interacting with actual representatives of the crown, the Azure Battalion marking them through.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You see big crates of goods, coming off and being loaded, here in this place, ships making ready. You see a couple of warships as well, that—you see a couple of warships in the harbor as well, that look as though they're preparing to maybe head off west, for some business that might take them towards Gaothmai, or other lands beyond.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
The Spire itself is a structure that seeks to honor two masters, in a sense. The Citadel of its training, and the crown of its service. A broad white tower, with blue banners stretching from it, and the emblem of the Saraz Imperium, a geometric runic crown, emblazoned within five, and seven, and nine point shapes, that surround it on all sides. And the S delineated, in bright gold on blue, here within this space.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You see the white tower stretch up, and at its very pinnacle, spinning and hovering above it, a spindle of glass radiating with that bright sunlight, carried from the desert.

[A mystical reverberation builds]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
The spindle moving, and at its very peak, a corona of pure iridescence, almost like a flickering fire, of pure prismatic, multicolored light that marks this place as a safe haven for all those who practice the craft of wizardry. There is a

stone wall, gated, with several gates throughout, but one large one, that has two members of the Azure Battalion standing guard at the front. Do you approach them?

Aabria Iyengar

I do, and I think I get there and don't see enough of a change, and I don't realize that I'm still disguised.

Eursulon [Lou]

Oh. Suvi you're—

Suvi [Aabria]

Huh? What?

Eursulon [Lou]

You're uh—

Ame [Erika]

You do not appear as Your Excellency.

Suvi [Aabria]

Oh! Oh, god, oh god! Eugh.

Aabria Iyengar

I just shake a bit, and shake off the disguise, kind of falls away.

[Ringing mystical tone]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Incredible. You shake off the disguise, and you approach the Guild Tower. Above the gate you see the crest, a scepter emblazoned on a shield, surrounded by many identical figures, that stand in sort of bas-relief behind the scepter—as small figures—as the scepter looms large on the crest. Approaching the members of the Azure Battalion, they look to you, and see you approaching—and is your staff revealed as well?

Aabria Iyengar

Absolutely.

[Magical ringing]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Each of them turns, and salutes!

Suvi [Aabria]

That's right.

Aabria Iyengar

I literally walk by and say "That's right," and I don't regard them beyond that.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

As you approach, you see that they both salute, as you approach and you see they say

Azure Battalion Soldier [Brennan]

Greetings, Wizard. May we offer you escort?

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You see, they say

Azure Battalion Soldier [Brennan]

We have not been alerted as to your coming this morning, but do you require escort in, to see the guild mages?

Suvi [Aabria]

I would love that, thank you.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

One of them turns, opens the gate, and just walks right in with you. As you walk up, you see there are two smiling mages at the front. And you see, they say.

Guild Secretary [Brennan]

Ah! Good morning, who might we let the guild mages of the Spire know, has come calling from the Citadel.

Aabria Iyengar

So quickly. I had a cool little code name for 12 seconds. Suvi will turn and

Suvi [Aabria]

Suvi. Apprentice to Silence.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

They look and they say,

Guild Secretary [Brennan]

Very well, of course, and a moment to ensure the security of you and your friends.

Suvi [Aabria]

Of course.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

They cast detect magic, and you see that one of them casts an arcane eye, a couple of divinatory things looking over all of you.

Aabria Iyengar

Oh.

Erika Ishii

[Laughs]

Eursulon [Lou]

I'm sorry. Can I—is there—?

Ame [Erika]

Oh!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Give me an arcana check, Suvi.

Aabria Iyengar

Aw shit! Not great. 15.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Everything you're seeing is them trying to detect magic. You're not holding concentration on a spell, Ame. Eursulon. You're not holding concentration on a spell.

Aabria Iyengar
Does his glamour not count as—

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Oh, his glamour does count as a spell.

Erika Ishii
Shit!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
So! Thank you for keeping it all honest. So you see, they look and say,

Guild Secretary [Brennan]
Sir. Might you remove your glamour?

Eursulon [Lou]
I apologize, I am... Horribly scarred.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Give me a deception check.

Aabria Iyengar
Nn.

Lou Wilson
First one of these.

Aabria Iyengar
It's gonna be great!

Lou Wilson
[Uncertainly] Ten?

[Aabria and Erika cackle]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
As you say you are horribly scarred, for the first time—because you've often heard tell of their trickery, but you've never seen it in action, the Fox is going to give you a help action on that deception roll.

Erika Ishii
[Gasp]

Aabria Iyengar
Ah!!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
As the fox yells out suddenly, surprising the wizards around here, saying

The Fox [Brennan]
[Agonized wailing] Don't let him take it off! His scars are hideous!!

[Aabria collapses laughing off mic, and Erika giggles]

Lou Wilson
That's a second 4.

[Brennan and Aabria laugh]

Lou Wilson
For another 10.

Aabria Iyengar
[Shrieking laugh]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
[Laughing] Incredible! I have to roll insight against this.

Aabria Iyengar
PLEASE!

Erika Ishii
God!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
They add a +3 to their roll.

Aabria Iyengar
UGH!

Eursulon [Lou]
God.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
So an eight or higher and they beat it.

Lou Wilson
HOHH! OHHH!!

[Everyone roars with cheering laughter]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
[Drowned out by celebration] That's a seven on the die, folk listening at home!

Lou Wilson
Oh my god!!

Erika Ishii
These guys are DUMB!

Aabria Iyengar
YES!!!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
So, they set the DC AT 10, meets it beats it, a 10 deception overcomes it, and there you have it.

Suvi [Aabria]
Please understand that my Brother is within—part of my retinue and, well vetted.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

The family resemblance does actually aid this deception in this moment. And you see that the Fox goes

Brennan Lee Mulligan

[Nauseated snarl] Hideous.

Aabria Iyengar

[Raucous laughter]

Ame [Erika]

Alright. Okay, fox.

The Fox [Brennan]

No no, it's awful.

Ame [Erika]

[Mumbling] No, you're good, thank you.

The Fox [Brennan]

[Shaking head in disgust noises]

Eursulon [Lou]

[Burst of laughter]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You see, they look at you. They sweep you in, to the foyer, you see grand staircases going up, and they bring you into a beautiful rock garden, accompanied by the white sand of the Arulean Desert, large white boulders, and a single, beautiful, blossoming tree, that has thick, almost succulent-like leaves, a desert tree, with bright red to orange blossoms on it, and direct you to a bench, and immediately an acolyte comes out smiling, with a tray of teas, for you.

Aabria Iyengar

Ah!

Erika Ishii

Ah!

Suvi [Aabria]

Yes, thank you.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And you see, another one comes out, for those that don't wish for tea, with small foamy caffeinated drinks.

Aabria Iyengar

Get the hell out of here tea, where's the coffee?

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Macchiato goes up.

Aabria Iyengar

Double fist! Ugh! Energy.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You sit here for a moment, and in the silence of this meditative space, hearing the spinning of the prism up above, having thankfully covered your friend, you also know that none of their divinations—there aren't beings like Eursulon, spirits don't walk the world like this anymore, so thankfully you think none of their magic was geared for

“What type of being are you?” It was “What magic do you have?” And so Eursulon's true nature has gone unnoticed, covered by this deception.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

As you sit here on this bench, quiet, echoing marble, you hear in the distance, the trickling of water, on some distant fountain. You see illuminated, warm, quartz crystal with light issuing from within it, and water flowing over it. The water parts, and a door opens from within the rock wall itself—a seam of stone, transmuted—and several of the guild mages of the Scepter's Chorus walk out.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

These wizards look at a true Wizard of the Citadel, with all the mixture of emotions that you've come to know and anticipate. Respect, admiration, and a wondering of "What if that had been me?"

Erika Ishii

Ame turns to the Fox.

Ame [Erika]

[Through the side of her mouth] That was a big entrance. Who are they trying to impress?

Brennan Lee Mulligan

As they step—

Lou Wilson

Eursulon, wide eyed—

[Aabria and Erika laugh]

Lou Wilson

—like grabbing his thighs, like trying to be cool.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

The guild mage in the lead steps out, pure white robes, with silver geometrical designs all along the high collar, and along the hems, all the way down, steps out, long wide sleeves. You can see that he has several rings on his hands, as well. He has one of the green emerald rings, that allows him to tap into that Imperial pool of magical reserves.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And you can see that he has a scroll at his side, and you recognize it as a scroll that, actually can contain multiple spell books within it, that the pages hide themselves within themselves. His face, his head is very round, flushed, he has sort of ruddy complexion. His eyes are VERY, piercingly, light blue, and he has just a couple of little wisps of blonde hair that have been like combed over his head.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

He looks sort of very—almost monastic, quiet, little shiny, his face. He walks over to you and says

Chorus Mage [Brennan]

An honor, a pleasure, and a joy, to entertain... Am I correct in saying... The apprentice of the Archmage Silence herself?

Suvi [Aabria]

The honor is all mine, sir.

Chorus Mage [Brennan]

[Awestruck] All yours? All yours? Heh. For the daughter of Soft and Stone? No, this is an occasion—to have any mage of the Citadel come and see our work here in Port Talon, is a gift, and to have an Archmage Apprentice? I didn't think it would ever happen, but I won't be caught unprepared. Hit it!

[Booming cannonade]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And you see BOOM! Confetti, sparks everywhere. And you see—so Ame and Eursulon, you see in Imperial writing, in fluttering confetti that turns itself into origami birds that fly, and murmurate, into writing that says [Echoing] "Welcome Suvi, Apprentice of the Archmage!"

Eursulon [Lou]

[Clapping] Ha ha! Incredible! Yes!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

[Laughs] And here this guy just starts weeping. He says—he says

Guild Mage Morrow [Brennan]

[Deeply moved by emotion] My name is Guild Mage Morrow, and I am so excited to show you everything!

Ame [Erika]

[Uncertainly] Yes... Incredible...

[Fireworks boom and fizzle]

[A waltz of strings, bowed and plucked, underscore the credits]

Taylor Moore

That was Lou Wilson as Eursulon, Erika Ishii as Ame, Aabria Iyengar as Suvi, and Brennan Lee Mulligan as Everyone and Everything Else. Worlds Beyond Number is edited, designed, and scored, by Taylor Moore at Fortunate Horse, with additional sound design by Michael Ghelfi Studios. For even more like this, join us on our Patreon. We'll see you there.

[Waltz fades out]