

Worlds Beyond Number

The Wizard, the Witch, and the Wild One

Children's Adventure: Episode 08 (Version 2)

Brennan Lee Mulligan

So the long, hot period of late summer moves until the first time that a little bit of cool wind comes out of the east. And it's drawing towards the very end of summer, now. As you all approach the end of summer, what starts to happen amongst the kids as you are sort of like, it's noticeable that evening comes on a little bit earlier. It's still very warm, but I think that it starts to get a little windier at night, starts to get a little bit cooler. What happens as the summer begins to sort of draw to a close?

Aabria Iyengar

Suvi absolutely begins to turn in on herself again, as she's trying not to make it everyone else's problem that she's worried again, that now this is the time and she's sort of holding her breath to see any word from her parents, or if they're just going to show up.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

I think that you also begin to see a sort of increased flow of traffic from the village to Grandmother Wren's cottage. So you have to spend a lot of your time hiding, Suvi. As harvest time starts to come along, people have had the summer to be working on their crops and their farms themselves, and now is sort of the flow of people that are starting to get worried about what they're seeing in their fields and they're coming to Grandmother Wren to talk about if there's anything she can do.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

So there's a lot of meetings and you begin to see kind of the faces of people in Toma and some people even coming from farther away, you see a couple comes in, like, a well appointed carriage one day that has, like, fancy gowns and wear. And they seem to have come all the way from Silbry, which is on the coast. I think you notice at that point, Suvi, sort of like spying on them that they wear clothes that give you a flashback to the charred mural you saw on the wall when you first came to this land far away from the Citadel.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

They leave, time stretches on, as Suvi, as you get quieter... For Ame and Eursulon, having heard the thing about the end of summer, how are you guys reacting in this moment to the approach of this time? I think Eursulon too, this is your first instance, I think, dealing with a time where a permanent change will come.

Lou Wilson

Well, I do think, not to just make the whole— everyone's vibe downer, but I do think Eursulon is starting to, in a way that the fun, and the play, and the new friendship, and the discovery, that's not hitting the same way it was in, like, the long days of summer.

Erika Ishii

Awww.

Aabria Iyengar

Oooh. Yeah.

Lou Wilson

I think chores aren't fun anymore. I think Eursulon is starting to skip chores or just generally be more disengaged from the group as the like. Okay. I think even Suvi— The idea that Suvi is going to maybe go home soon. I think Eursulon is starting to have a really hard time with the fact that he won't. That may— that there— and that there's not— he doesn't know, like, this is— it's now he's actually starting to... Not deal with but I think settle in, or accept, or come— Yes, settle into the idea of like, this is it, or maybe this is it, or is there a chance of going home?

Lou Wilson

He's probably— I've tried to dig. I've gone back and done it and dug, and it didn't work, again, and that was frustrating. It's just. It's not— I love my friends, but it's not hitting. It's not the same play and discovery. It's colder now.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Lohan the Baker stopped coming after Grandmother Wren got back. And I think your world is so rich and full of play and adventure, but it's also very small, and Suvi leaving will be like a huge contraction to your world. How is Ame holding up?

Erika Ishii

[Strained] Not great.

Aabria Iyengar

We all doin' bad.

Lou Wilson

We all doin' bad.

Erika Ishii

Well, I think, you know, for me, I liked my life here alone before, just with me and Grandma Wren. And I'm still really excited about all the things that I'm going to get to do and especially now that I can talk with animals and Nicholas and I are— have an uneasy truce going. But these are my first friends, and this was the first kind of golden summer in my life that I'll always remember. And I don't want them— I'm so conflicted because I don't want them to leave, but I want them to be happy and I realize that they'll be happiest by leaving, so I have to prepare for that.

Erika Ishii

I'm working on little things, little mementos for them, and on helping them try to learn things that will help them on their way. And I'm [sigh] You know... Still a kid, so... Sometimes occasionally hinting at things about how it would be great if they stayed and how, you know, when you get to winter, then we can do snowball fights. But yeah, I do understand the ephemeral nature of things.

Aabria Iyengar

Big words from a baby.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

This baby has a JACKED Wisdom score.

Lou Wilson

This baby was saying "lime place" but three weeks ago, then we bumped that in, baby, here we are.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

I love it, I love it. The last day of summer is not necessarily super definitive. The imperial calendar marks it. So I don't know if Suvi would have been keeping a form of the imperial calendar here, but Grandmother Wren works a little bit differently. Like, her definition of the end of summer would probably be something to do with the actual change in the nature of the forest around the cottage.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Days come, the road stays busy. Probably the way it works is out of every three days, there's a day that more than one visitor comes, a day that a single visitor comes and a day where nobody comes. So that's about how busy the cottage is, right? That like, two out of three days, there's at least somebody there and one of those days, it'll be like, someone coming in the morning and someone else coming shortly thereafter, or like a group of people come and one of them has to wait while the first people are getting seen by Grandmother Wren.

Aabria Iyengar

I think Suvi just posts up in that little library study and until she is told, like, no one's coming today. That's just her M.O. is she will go hole herself up there until someone comes and gets her.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

After your conversation with Grandmother Wren, do you talk to her anymore that summer about witchcraft?

Aabria Iyengar

[Thoughtfully] No. I think in her mind it's, not in an unkind way, but like a fallback that she wouldn't think to bring it up again until she knows the summer is over and her parents aren't coming back.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Ame, there is a day where Suvi— this is one of the no visitors days, you're safe to sort of be wherever you want to be in the cottage. And I'll leave it up to Suvi and Eursulon what you're doing. Ame you've gone to forage specifically out in the deeper forest for some special stuff that doesn't grow in the garden, with Grandmother Wren, and she's asking you to kind of scurry up and grab stuff from her and sort of scurrying up a tree to grab something. You see one of the leaves on one of the trees, it's all green everywhere, there's one leaf that didn't get a lot of sunlight that has started to turn just a little bit yellow.

Erika Ishii

I pull the leaf off and I stuff it into one of my giant galoshes.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

[Laughing] You stuff it into one of your giant galoshes, climbing a tree with rain boots on?

Erika Ishii

Yeah.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You get back down and Grandmother Wren looks and says,

Grandmother Wren [Brennan]

Did you find anything up there? Any small flowers growing in the moss up in the tree?

Ame [Erika]

No. But. Summer is coming to an end, isn't it?

Grandmother Wren [Brennan]

Well, not until the eh... not until the first leaves change.

Erika Ishii

[Shyly] Okay, well. Thaaat's good.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Give me a deception check.

Aabria Iyengar

Let's gooo

Erika Ishii

7.

Grandmother Wren [Brennan]

Ame. You look like you are very sad.

Ame [Erika]

I'm... a little sad, because I know that Suvi's gotta go at the end of the summer or if she doesn't gotta go, then at least she'll be really sad about it. And that, I don't know, I think once it gets colder, Eursulon's not going to want to stay here and be half in / half out of the window. And I found [muttering]

Erika Ishii

And I hold up the little yellowing leaf, and I burst into tears.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Grandmother Wren pulls you in close. She pulls you in so close that your face is sort of hidden in her gown, so you don't see that she takes a deep breath in sighs and ages about ten years in sighing.

Ame [Erika]

[Crying] I mean, I'll miss them, but it's going to be okay, you know. And, you know, I'll- I'll be going sometime soon too, and I'm not sure when, but it'll- it'll- I'll go back with my family and um... you know, It'll be fine. Things change and it's sad when they do sometimes, but [Squeaking, drawing in on herself] nothing can stay the same.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

She very rarely does, but she picks you up and carries you back to the house. Eursulon, this sort of like, late time of summer where do you think Eursulon is on this sort of late summer day?

Lou Wilson

Hmmm. I think he's taken to something he was doing earlier in the summer of, I don't know, like, you know, casting Divine Sense and wandering the forest relatively aimlessly like, not with- but just like going to the forest, casting Divine Sense, wandering around looking for anything that might lead him home. I think that's in the back of his mind, I think at the front of his mind is just not wanting to look sad, not wanting to look- not wanting to talk about feeling sad, not wanting to engage right now.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You're doing this during the day right? Give me an investigation check.

Lou Wilson

12, is plus 1.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

13.

Lou Wilson

Yeah, 13.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Casting your divine sense out in the forest, you get nothing back during the daylight hours here. The forest here is so pastoral, and it's been so fun to adventure with Ame and Suvi. You're not with Ame and Suvi right now. Pastoral is so different from the forests you know, that were wild. And I think on a 13, the emptiness of the divine sense that comes back to you- Again, there's insects and animals and it's a lovely forest, but I think there's a moment of maybe recognition here that this is a lovely forest by human standards.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

This forest is outside of a cottage, and it boundaries a road, and I'll tell you what, if you walked in THAT direction for a day and a half, you'd hit another road, and if you walked in THAT direction for maybe two

days, you hit another road. Deep forest caged by roads. This land has villages and towns. It's not like the forest you come from.

Lou Wilson

Ah. Yeah, I think there's an emptiness in Eursulon as he stands in a clearing. And I think wonders what it will take to find or feel the sort of fullness he knew, or if that's just gone.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Suvi.

Aabria Iyengar

Suvi, uh, by herself. She's in her... in their room and she's slowly, with her little tools that she's acquired, like minor carpentry tools, is ripping her bunk apart. Just vaguely child destructive, not a big display of emotion.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Ame, you get back to your room.

Ame [Erika]

Um... Hey.

Suvi [Aabria]

Mm. Hi. Are you back?

Ame [Erika]

Yeah! [Cautiously] Whatcha doin' to the bunk bed?

Suvi [Aabria]

I can fix it if I need to.

Erika Ishii

You don't have to.

Suvi [Aabria]

Oh.

Suvi [Aabria]

Either I'm going to go home soon and then I won't need it and you can have more room or if I'm going to be here, I'm going to be here for a long time, so I'll make something different.

Ame [Erika]

[Long pause] Oh, well, yeah. That's very proactive of you. And. Um.

Suvi [Aabria]

What's wrong?

Ame [Erika]

Well uh. I think that the end of the summer is here.

Suvi [Aabria]

How do you know? I can't read the calendar that you guys use.

Ame [Erika]

The leaves are turning. And also, it's just a feeling. The air tastes different.

Suvi [Aabria]

Is that what witches do? They can taste the air?

Ame [Erika]

I can never tell if things are a witch thing or a me thing.

Erika Ishii

Oh.

Ame [Erika]

Yeah, you should be preparing uhhh to go. I say that we just prepare you. And- And- I mean- We'll- We'll pivot plans as needed, which is something that I have heard villagers say.

Suvi [Aabria]

If I have to stay, do I have to stay hidden forever?

Ame [Erika]

I don't know. I don't imagine so. I um.

Suvi [Aabria]

You're my best friend.

Ame [Erika]

You're my best friend too, and, you know, just like with the seasons, things change, but there are deeper elements that remain the same. Just like, you know, a tree will lose its leaves or the leaves will turn different colors or have flowers or something, but the tree is still kind of always there and so we'll always be best friends, and we can always maybe do library things where you tell- read to me, or I can go out and show you things in the forest because you can come and visit me. But I made you something that'll be nice for you, I think, even if, either way this end of summer goes.

Suvi [Aabria]

Okay.

Erika Ishii

And I hand you a little vial that looks to be filled with perfume, and it's not the kind that you use, or you spritz, it's just like a smelling bottle. Like it's got little resin in it as opposed to an oil. And hand it to you.

Ame [Erika]

Open it, you smell it.

Aabria Iyengar

Suvi takes it and opens it. Just takes a big ol [Sniff]

Erika Ishii

And it smells like the inside of your mother's cloak, but free of the smell of smoke and fear and steel.

Suvi [Aabria]

[Crying] Oh. Oh... Thank you. The smell is going away.

Ame [Erika]

Yeah. So even if you have to stay here for longer, you got that. Or if you don't, then you can go. And you'll think of me when you smell it!

Suvi [Aabria]

I don't want my parents to be in danger, but I do want to stay with you.

Erika Ishii

[Starting to cry] Same here. I really want you to stay

Suvi [Aabria]

[Sobbing]

Ame [Erika]

[Sobbing] But I don't want you to be sad, though. And you really need to be going with your parents.

Aabria Iyengar

I'm sorry, I'm so sad.

Erika Ishii

It's okay! It's okay! Feelings are fine! Feelings are good.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Eursulon.

Lou Wilson

Mhm.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

I think you get back to the house, and outside of the open windowsill with your bed, your nest, I think you hear as much of that conversation as you want to. And I don't know what it means to Eursulon to hear that, but I think you hear as much of it outside the window as you want to.

Lou Wilson

I think mostly the last part, I think not so much the trinket, but I think the like, the discussion of Suvi leaving, and the wanting to stay, but then- but that kind of like... That kind of push and pull between leaving and staying.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Days pass, and it gets to the point— So it's a couple of days after that, and Suvi, even you notice one or two yellow leaves amongst the trees. How many days, or minutes, or how much time do you think would pass before Suvi mentions something to Grandmother Wren?

Aabria Iyengar

I think the first time she sees a leaf easily from a tree inside, like that she can see from a window in the room she's always in. So she's always in the library. The first time she can immediately go, I can't not see that turned leaf, is when she finally snaps a book shut and then storms off to go find Grandmother.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You catch that, you storm off to go find Grandmother Wren. You just barge into her workshop?

Aabria Iyengar

100%.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You barge in. Grandmother Wren has always had some gray in her hair. It's now mostly white. And you see that she is in a rocking chair covered in several blankets and has one of her hands wrapped in the other. One of her hands is old, an old woman's hand, a little bit papery, and the other one is black and red and withered with some clear blood streaming down it as she holds onto it, sort of rocking in the chair, looking very ill.

Aabria Iyengar

Yeah, she's going to throw the door open, like yelling,

Aabria Iyengar

[Yelling] Grandmother! Wha- [taken aback, quieter] What's wrong?

Grandmother Wren [Brennan]

[Small gasp]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You see that she looks up like she's trying to tell you to get out of the room, but doesn't really have the strength to tell you to get out of the room. Just goes.

Grandmother Wren [Brennan]
[Pained whisper] Suvi don't- [guttural noises]

Suvi [Aabria]
[Calling out, frightened]Ame! Eursolon! Come here!

Lou Wilson
Charge.

Erika Ishii
I come RUNNING.

Lou Wilson
Yeah.

Erika Ishii
RUNNING as fast as my tiny legs can carry me.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You both run in, and you see Grandmother Wren. It looks as though the hand has been burned and keeps cracking, and so the blood keeps flowing freshly from a wound that can't set on the hand.

Aabria Iyengar
What's happening?

Ame [Erika]
Okay, I'm going to try... [Sigh] Alright. Suvi do you know anything from books that is like this?

Erika Ishii
And I'm going to think back and see if there's anything in all of our lessons about what looks to be like a curse of some sort.

Aabria Iyengar
Can I—

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Give me an arcana check. You can give me an arcana check And I think if, Ame, you can either help that or you can get yeah, cool.

Aabria Iyengar
Ooh!

Erika Ishii

Yes.

Aabria Iyengar

22.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

22?!

Erika Ishii

17.

Aabria Iyengar

Oh my god.

Erika Ishii:

Oh my god.

Aabria Iyengar

We're different now.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

I think you little girls have spent the- you spent the entire summer reading books to your friend. You're in Grandmother Wren's workshop. But a lot of the best stuff is in the attic. And I think that you both had a moment in the summer where there were a lot of these hanging little brass censers, with a C, the things that you sort of put smoke from. And some of them, when you took the tarp off of them, had smoke lying- it's very strange to think of still smoke, smoke that is perfectly still and not moving. And so just when you disturb it, it kind of moves like a little soft liquid in the censer. That was the maddest Grandmother Wren ever got at you over the summer, and talked about those censers some of them were empty and some had smoke in them, and she was like, "Don't touch those again, do you have any idea how dangerous curses are?" And if pressed about that, she probably would have said something like, those ones are hard to break. I'm figuring out how to break them.

Suvi [Aabria]

So we can put them in there. Go get one of the empty ones and we'll put this in that!

Ame [Erika]

Oh!! Okay!! [Frantically] Eursulon, please help me pull down the attic.

Eursulon [Lou]

Ok.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

So Ame, you rush up, Eursulon, you open the attic, you rush up, you grab an empty censer, you come back down. I think on this powerful check, I think you two little girls, I think you just start doing some magic, right?

Aabria Iyengar

Yeah!

Erika Ishii

[Whispering] Yeah, we do.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Describe to me what this fumbling attempt at magic looks like.

Erika Ishii

Okay. I would know things for healing, I've studied a lot, and for all of the things that the villagers come in, none of them have this kind of malignant, bad, powerful magic in them for curing. But I know about curing, and a lot of it is about understanding the body and the intuitiveness of knowing what bleeding to stop or what words to say to the spirits. So I think that all of my healing abilities for it have to do with the breathing and the coaxing of the poison out of her.

Aabria Iyengar

I think Suvi's is very, very much the opposite of that. She has so few points of data and the only spell she's ever cast, she didn't know she was casting protection from good and evil. But from the few conversations she's had, and the way she sees witches interact with magic, it's a conversation and balance. So she knows that the magic that her parents do that she's going to inherit does not ask permission. It is willful. So every intention that she's putting out, every bit of energy she's putting forth, is to wall it off and make it do what she wants, which is leave her alone.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Incredible. As you begin to conduct that will into this and Ame, you're just focusing on the breath. I want an insight check with advantage from Eursulon.

Lou Wilson

Got it. Both 9, for a total of 11

Eursulon [Lou]

11.

[Sigh of relieved tension]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You look out, you can't tell— on an 11 you can't tell anything about the magic. But I think what's happening is: Ame, you get closer and closer, as you begin to focus on breath, you need to get so close. Grandmother Wren's breath is very ragged and very weak, sort of like [Quick gasp] She can only take these sort of quick

breaths in. And I think Suvi, you are focusing on that will, and I think you're probably the one holding the censer. Ame, you have to crawl up into Grandmother Wren's lap to even sort of hear her breathing. Eursulon, you don't know about the magic, but you can tell, you've seen traps before in the forest, and you know that there are some traps that keep you trapped because they use the fact that you're in pain against you. And you think that... You know how powerful Grandmother Wren is. You think this curse is not strong, but it's clever. And you think that her pain is what is keeping the curse in place. Like she's trying to deal with the pain and feel the pain, but the more she feels it, the stronger the curse gets.

Lou Wilson

I think noticing that, seeing his friends working terribly hard, I think he just steps forward and puts a hand on the back of Grandmother Wren's neck and leans down and looks her in the eye, says

Eursulon [Lou]

[Calmly] Just a little help.

Lou Wilson

And is just going to let magic flow from him into her and use Lay On Hands for the first time.

[Erika and Aabria scream in excitement]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

The spirit that walks freely and with invitation inside Grandmother Wren's house. You let the magic flow freely forth from you. And I think both of you little magical girls look and see something that is the equivalent of, I think, like someone flying a little flying contraption looking at a bird. Just something so natural and, Eursulon, this magic flows out from you. You're tapped into the life force of the world itself. You're a being of the forest. And in the same way that your body heals itself in rest, that healing is available to you. You watch as the wounds seal on Grandmother Wren's hand and it just looks completely natural. It's just a quickened regeneration of what it would look like if the hand had healed over time. Just gets stronger and more vibrant, you can feel it's just her own blood flowing into the wound and healing it and deep, deep smell of earth and pine in the forest and Ame you're right near Grandmother Wren's mouth as she [Exhales] and a little bit of gray smoke comes out of her mouth.

Ame [Erika]

Get it, get it!

Aabria Iyengar

LUNGE!

[Laughter]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

I think you're holding the censer. It looks like it's about to fly out. Ame, what do you do? You're like right next to it. Is there anything you can do with Suvi there with the censer in that moment?

Aabria Iyengar
Get what!

Erika Ishii

I remember the way that Grandmother Wren has of talking to the animals and talking to the trees and the spirits and how she is firm but— She is firm, and kind, and respectful, but undeniable. And I tell the curse.

Ame [Erika]
[Commanding] Get out.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

[Sound of wind] You see that the curse tries to follow your instructions to get out and begins to ricochet around the room [Ricochet noises] looking for like an exit somewhere in there. Suvi, you're holding on—

Ame [Erika]
Open up the censer! Open it up!

Suvi [Aabria]
[Surprised] What?

Ame [Erika]
Open it up!!

Aabria Iyengar
What? Aah!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You open it and just like two cymbals [CLANG!] Catch this curse inside of these cymbals. Grandmother Wren goes.

Grandmother Wren [Brennan]
[Heavy panting breaths, whispering with effort] Thank you.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
And falls asleep. [Snoring]

Suvi [Aabria]
Oh.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
True, just, in a rocking chair. [Snoring]

Suvi [Aabria]
What did you do Eursulon?

Eursulon [Lou]

She needed help. And I gave it. Was that- Was that..?

Suvi [Aabria]

It was very good.

Ame [Erika]

That was amazing!! Okay.

Suvi [Aabria]

[Awestruck] That was SO COOL! You were just like ahhhh and then her hand was like ahhhhh.

Erika Ishii

Ame is deeply impressed, but also is very much in the moment right now. And uh

Ame [Erika]

Suvi, can you please study what that thing is or look into that?

Erika Ishii

And then I go and I grab the giant bag of salt that we have in the pantry, and I start running it, I punch a hole in it and I start running it around the house.

Aabria Iyengar

[Laughing]

Erika Ishii

Also, I look for Taro or for any signs of where Grandma Wren came from.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You start looking for Taro. You see Taro out on top of the little garden shed. And I think that looking at Grandmother Wren, you— as you're pouring salt, you see a faint sort of mist coming from the little dirt patch that comes to the door of Grandmother's workshop, the sort of door that faces the road. And I think, Suvi, you see that mist as well. And you recognize that mist from when you first came from the Citadel. It was the mist that was around you when you teleported.

Suvi [Aabria]

[Awed whisper] That's magic. That's the magic that moves you. Someone just left, or just came and is hiding.

Erika Ishii

Does it look like- Do I see any footprints? Did Grandma Wren come from there?

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Give me a survival check.

Lou Wilson

Can I help?

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Yeah.

Erika Ishii

Ugh. 11.

Lou Wilson

I'll help.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Go for it.

Erika Ishii

16.

Aabria Iyengar

Okay.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You do not see any other footprints. You barely see like Grandmother Wrens! You know, you see those, just in the soft dust near the door, you see Grandmother Wren's shoes, but you don't see any other footprints there.

Erika Ishii

It's just the mist? There's no other sign of entry and? Okay.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

No.

Ame [Erika]

[Thinking] She's teleported into the shed from somewhere else. Where did she go?

Aabria Iyengar

Does it look like her magic or someone else's? Is there a way to get, like, a signature?

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Give me an arcana check.

Aabria Iyengar

Another 22.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
It doesn't look like her magic.

Aabria Iyengar
I think Suvi still, like, holding the censer and swinging it, comes and finds you outside and goes

Suvi [Aabria]
[Grimly] That's not her.

Erika Ishii
I speak with animals and I say

Ame [Erika]
Taro!

Taro the Rooster [Brennan]
Aawk?

[Aabria lets out a sharp clear laugh and Lou chortles to himself]

Erika Ishii
[Grumbling] He has this whole time refused to speak to me, and I know he can understand me.

Ame [Erika]
[Interrogatory] Did you go with Grandma Wren?

Taro the Rooster [Brennan]
[Quizzically] Buh gawk?

Suvi [Aabria]
You do that, I'm walking.

Erika Ishii
That's nothing. That's nothing! [Pleading] Eursulon! Can you help?

Eursulon [Lou]
Taro?

Taro the Rooster [Brennan]
Yes.

Aabria Iyengar

[Laughing] Ohh, shit!

Erika Ishii

I don't hear this, do I?

Brennan Lee Mulligan

No. [Laughing]

Erika Ishii

Dammit!

Lou Wilson

From where did you come?

Brennan Lee Mulligan

All of you in perfect Imperial, hear Taro say

Taro the Rooster [Brennan]

Grandmother Wrens' business is her own.

Ame [Erika]

[Sharp, frustrated intake of breath]

Taro the Rooster [Brennan]

She is safe.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And you see, looks at you, Suvi, and says

Taro the Rooster [Brennan]

The magic is not hers. Nor was it any wizards, though it was their craft.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And you think about the large stone platforms that existed in the Citadel.

Ame [Erika]

[Darkly] How long have you been able to speak Imperial? I am SO angry!

Suvi [Aabria]

You gotta focus in the moment. You can hold both—

Ame [Erika]

[Frustrated grumbling]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

The next morning, Grandmother Wren awakens. Not early enough to make breakfast. So Ame I think probably

Erika Ishii

[Angrily] Make breakfast

Aabria Iyengar

Rage bacon.

Erika Ishii

[Growls] stirring the pot, like, angrily.

Lou Wilson

Yeah, today's meal is especially tough.

[Everyone laughs]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Grandmother Wren awakens and comes out to have breakfast.

Grandmother Wren [Brennan]

Thank you all, children. You acted extremely bravely and decisively.

Suvi [Aabria]

Do you know what happened to you?

Grandmother Wren [Brennan]

Yes.

Suvi [Aabria]

Will you tell us what happened to you?

Grandmother Wren [Brennan]

I left to try and find out why your parents have not come yet.

Suvi [Aabria]

[Quiet gasp]

Grandmother Wren [Brennan]

And I went to a place that they had told me was safe, and there was someone there waiting to hurt me. They're gone now. Do you understand?

Suvi [Aabria]

I do.

Erika Ishii

I hold Suvi's hand under the table. Squeeze it.

Grandmother Wren [Brennan]

I don't know what's happened my dear, I don't know what's happened.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And she just comes over and hugs both of the little girls and says

Grandmother Wren [Brennan]

I don't know what's happened.

Ame [Erika]

[Shakily] Is there anything we can do?

Brennan Lee Mulligan

She looks at the censer with a little smoky curse in it and a circle of salt around it and just sort of cocks her head and looks at the three of you and it's like

Grandmother Wren [Brennan]

Little children... You're asking me what you can do. I can barely understand what you've already done.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

She smiles and takes it and says

Grandmother Wren [Brennan]

You've done a very good job isolating this curse.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

She goes, blows on the tips of her fingers, reaches in, picks up the chain of the censer, lifts it up, keeping it in the center of the circle of salt and goes

Grandmother Wren [Brennan]

Well, my little friend, you've just jumped to the front of the line.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

She [Whoosh] blows, a fire kicks up in the fireplace and all of the salt in the circle whips up into a little cloud around her. You've never seen her do, like, big magic in the house before.

Lou Wilson

Mm.

Erika Ishii

Despite myself, despite the situation, I'm like

Ame [Erika]

Woah...

Aabria Iyengar

[Excitedly] Yeah I squeeze your hand back, like

Suvi [Aabria]

Woah I know, I know.

Ame [Erika]

[Quietly squealing in excitement]

Aabria Iyengar

Gotta grab Eursulon's hand. be a part of this!

Eursulon [Lou]

Are we excited?

Suvi [Aabria]

Yes!

Ame [Erika]

Yes! Yes!!

Grandmother Wren [Brennan]

Ame, please lift up the rug and open the door to the basement.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You did not know this house had a basement.

Ame [Erika]

We have a—? Oh my god! Ok!!

Suvi [Aabria]

What?!

Erika Ishii

Yeah. I scamper off my chair and I whip the rug off and I pull up, what—

Brennan Lee Mulligan

It is a circular wooden door with a rusted circular latch on it in a ring of stones, that are sort of almost like a well or something like that. As you pull it up, a cast iron spiral staircase goes down into what looks like a subterranean river. You can see water flowing down there.

Suvi [Aabria]

What!! What is that?!

Grandmother Wren [Brennan]

Close the door, when I go down, I'm going to work out to find out who is responsible for this.

Ame [Erika]

Can we come down too?

Brennan Lee Mulligan

No

Suvi [Aabria]

[Begrudgingly] That's fair.

Erika Ishii

[Disappointed] You said we did a good job!

Grandmother Wren [Brennan]

You did an incredible job and you may not come down into the basement.

Eursulon [Lou]

This seems unfair.

Grandmother Wren [Brennan]

[Exasperated, compromising] If you want to SIT on the stone rim and LISTEN to what's going on in the basement, you can do that.

Suvi [Aabria]

Yeah.

Ame [Erika]

Yes.

Eursulon [Lou]

Acceptable.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

[Laughing] She—

Suvi [Aabria]

Guys, I've gotten really good at reading lips, if you dangle me upside down, we can see what she say.

Eursulon [Lou]

That's the plan.

Erika Ishii

You have to imagine, like the Tarantino shot of like, as she goes down and she looks up and all of us, our three heads are poking out.

Aabria Iyengar

Yeah!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

She heads down and you hear. Like, over the rippling water down there. There's got to be some kind of secret cave underneath the house. Something underneath. She goes in the direction of the shrine hill, you notice, so something underground in that direction. And you hear muttering and you hear her voice get pretty loud from time to time, sort of.

Grandmother Wren [Brennan]

[Distant whispering] I call upon... [Yelling] I call upon! [sound of magical light]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And you see some little bursts of light, some intense stuff happening. She comes back. It's been a minute. And she comes back after a while and says

Grandmother Wren [Brennan]

[Slowly, Thoughtfully] Something very troubling... This should have killed me. And it didn't. Because they were expecting something else. I was prepared to believe that this curse was the work of a wizard, and it was not. This was a curse EXPECTING a wizard. And I do not believe its origins are of this realm.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And she says

Grandmother Wren [Brennan]

I don't know. We'll have to try and find out. And I don't know where to begin... But...

Aabria Iyengar

[Quietly] Maybe it was for my parents but my parents weren't there, which means that there somewhere. Sorry, not to make this about me. This is a pretty big deal for all of us equally.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

She she looks and says

Grandmother Wren [Brennan]

Alright.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

She closes the basement again, puts the carpet down, looks at you three children, looks at the carpet and says

Grandmother Wren [Brennan]

[Commanding]Carpet, stay down.

Grandmother Wren [Brennan]

And you see the carpet flattens extra over the basement hole.

Aabria Iyengar

I immediately start to pull an edge.

Erika Ishii

Yeah. I casually scuff my toe along the carpet, sort of dragging my feet as I go over it.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

She goes, to start working on that. The next day or two, she just sort of continues when asked about it, to say, "I don't know, it's strange to me. There's a lot going on. I need to try to find out what it could be." And you can tell, I mean, probably not as kids, but from an adult perspective, you would know that she already thinks you guys are too involved in dangerous stuff and is trying to make it less cool and exciting. Right?

Suvi [Aabria]

Too late.

Lou Wilson

She can try.

Suvi [Aabria]

So cool.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

She can try. About two days after that, it's on a day where Grandma Wren already had a visitor in the morning, And it's one of those two visitor days. Where would people be in the house in, like a late afternoon when visitors had already come?

Aabria Iyengar

Suvi's still up in the library, and she's trying to read up on curses.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Would anyone be outside in the yard or near the road?

Lou Wilson

I'm thinking yard for me. I think I've taken to— Yeah, I think I'm outside. O oh ooh ooh. I think I'm looking for a reason to be with animals and not people. I think everything I'm hearing and everything that people are dealing with is overwhelming in a way that's not fun for Eursulon, it's all a little too much to be thinking about. Grandmother Wren in danger, and Suvi in danger, and Suvi's parents in danger. So I think I'm probably making myself busy with busy work outside.

Erika Ishii

I think I'd like to be with Grandma Wren. I have been sticking a little closer to her, both to make sure she's doing okay, and again doubling down on my tasks of learning witchcraft and also to occasionally pepper her with questions and maybe something will come up and be let slip.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

So you're in the workshop, and I think because of that, Ame and Eursulon are the first to hear the noise of two horses coming up the road.

Lou Wilson

I'm going to grab my broomstick.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Glamour up?

Lou Wilson

Glamour up, broomstick out.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Ame, you look out the window. Grandmother Wren sort of turns to look over, she hears it early too. It's two horses coming up the road. One of them chestnut and the other a sort of cream white, like a sort of dappled white, like an appaloosa. And they have beautiful imperial saddles on them.

Lou Wilson

Mm.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Only one of the horses has a rider. Eursulon, you look up and see a knight, or what- the only thing you can imagine is a knight. There is a woman who wears golden armor, shimmering and shining, sort of banded plates, and a breastplate and heavy pauldrons. She has a white cloak without a hood, but instead, like a high collar. She sort of, tied up in this loose bun, has bright red hair and you see that she rides up to the house. You can give me an Insight Check if you want.

Lou Wilson

Yeah, ya know, I'd love to.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Yeah go for it.

Lou Wilson

You know what, I would love to! That's a cool 9.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

She gets off—So I think that you're standing out there in the yard. Aye, you can see this through the window partially. She has—It takes her some effort to get off the horse. She sort of holds a hand, her gauntlets are off, she holds a hand to her stomach as she gets down. There are weird markings on her face. First of all, a bunch of her hair is in a weird kind of white ombré. And there are these- the lines are kind of wavy in a way that sort of like her complexion is very pink and vibrant, and she has these things that might look like birthmarks almost, that are bone white, that move in a pattern of four and trail to points.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

So they almost look like stripes that come to a point. One of them that crosses over a part of her eye, the line moves over, leaving just a glimmer of the green that used to be there. And the rest of the iris is white, bone white. So it leaves a kind of chilling, one kind of, a little bit ghoulish looking eye. And so the white, it runs through the hair in the sort of four marks across the face that end in points, kind of like under a corner of the lip and then down over the chin onto the neck.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

She gets off the horse, holds her stomach, sits there for a moment, and you see that she has a jewel hilted sword at her side.

Lou Wilson

Mm.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

She doesn't have a shield, you notice, but she does have a book on her hip.

Lou Wilson

Mmm.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

She stands, breathes, sort of looks around, and sees you.

Lou Wilson

I'm going to try and hide.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Give me a stealth check!

Aabria Iyengar
[Laughing]

Lou Wilson
It's a 12.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
She looks at you- As you sprint to like—

Lou Wilson
I think there's something, seeing another knight, and also just a more intense one, I think. It's not fun any- Like, it goes from being like, is this a baker or a fun person? And then it's like, no, it's somebody big. I think there is something Eursulon, you know broom held, but not like, ready to be like, "hey, what's goin'" it's like a, "Ohhh Shit."

[Erika and Aabria laugh]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
As you, like, rush to find a little hiding place, she goes

Knight [Brennan]
[Quizzically] Hello?

Eursulon [Lou]
[Non committally, trying to hide] Oh.

Knight [Brennan]
Wha—

Eursulon [Lou]
Uh.

[Aabria and Erika laugh]

Knight [Brennan]
Hello?

Eursulon [Lou]
[Caught] Hello.

Knight [Brennan]
[Somewhat cheerful but cautious] Hello. Uh are—

Lou Wilson

Are you a knight?

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Oh, am I a knight? Uh... In a manner of speaking, yes. Are you a knight?

Lou Wilson

I drop the broomstick.

Eursulon [Lou]

No.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

[Kindly, Bemused] Little one, you don't have to drop your... That's a mighty blade at your side. You don't have to drop that. Are you protecting the house?

Eursulon [Lou]

Yes.

Knight [Brennan]

Well, then you'd better get your sword.

[Aabria and Erika are moved by this]

Lou Wilson

I reach down and pick it up again.

Knight [Brennan]

[Hearteningly] You look sharp. Well done, soldier.

Eursulon [Lou]

Do you come for Grandmother Wren?

Knight [Brennan]

Sadly, no. I'm not here for Grandmother Wren. I'm Steel. What can I call you?

Lou Wilson

I'm Eursulon.

Steel [Brennan]

Well met, Eursulon. Are you staying with Grandmother Wren?

Eursulon [Lou]

For now.

Steel [Brennan]

[Kindly] She must be very lucky to have you.

Lou Wilson

I think there is, like a sheepishness that comes over, I don't know. This kind of kindness from strangers, I do think is immediately giving Eursulon Sir Curren vibes in a way that he can't— there's a warmth that I think he starts to approach Steel.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

She looks at you and says

Steel [Brennan]

Well, Eursulon, would you be kind enough to let the lady of the house know that I'm here? I'm going to take a moment and tie up the horses.

Lou Wilson

Of course. And I sheath my sword just like Lohan the Baker.

[Aabria and Erika groan from how cute this is]

Lou Wilson

Take it out, put it back. And I go and I

Eursulon [Lou]

Grandmother Wren, Ame. There is a someone here, named Steel.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And I think up in the library you hear that.

Aabria Iyengar

You hear a scream and crashing as I run down, like, literally fall down the stairs, like

Lou Wilson

Broomstick's back out.

Aabria Iyengar

And I'm sprinting out the door. I fully pass.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

So the quickest way is through the workshop. So you go right through the workshop and boom, bust out and Steel whips around. You haven't seen— Steel didn't have those marks when you saw her before. And also, you see her cape is like, a little bit— It's the same sword and the same armor, but she has a different cape than she had before, and you see that— Actually, you don't see anything about her holding her

stomach, she's standing up now and has, like, tied the horses. She turns to look at you, sprinting out and goes

Brennan Lee Mulligan
[Gladly] Suvi!

Suvi [Aabria]
[Sobbing] Steel!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
She just swoops you up in her arms, and holds you, and just pats your head, and nestles her face into your face. You can feel her. She's not sobbing, but you can feel hot tears on your cheek.

Aabria Iyengar
She's scream crying.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
She just holds you and is crying. I think Grandmother Wren looks at both of you and steps out into the little sort of, the dirt path, the little driveway pull-out into the cottage and just stands out on the little stone threshold, looking at Steel and Suvi.

Erika Ishii
I go out to um, help with the horses?

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You go out to the horses. Steel is just holding Suvi for a long time, not saying anything. She puts you down, and looks out and says

Steel [Brennan]
Well, I met your friend Eursulon the Bold here. And—

Brennan Lee Mulligan
you see that she looks and she fully drops to one knee. The villagers are so familiar with Grandmother Wren. You see Steel gets on one knee and bows her head, goes

Steel [Brennan]
[Respectfully] Grandmother Wren.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
And Grandmother says

Grandmother Wren [Brennan]
[Softly] You can stand, Steel. It's all right.

Aabria Iyengar

I want to go run over and grab Eursulon by the hand, and Ame and like, bring them properly over.

Lou Wilson

I think Eursulon definitely fights it for a second because he doesn't want to embarrass himself, but
[Grunts in effort, accepts]

Erika Ishii

But Ame trots up and looks up at Steel expectantly.

Steel [Brennan]

[Kindly] Hello! And what are you called?

Ame [Erika]

I'm Ame.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Hello, Ame. I'm Steel, It's nice to meet you.

Ame [Erika]

Are you going to protect Suvi?

Brennan Lee Mulligan

She smiles and looks at you and says

Steel [Brennan]

I have a feeling that you are asking me if I can do your job for you. And I can tell from the clear strength of your heart that I don't think there's anyone in this world who can do that job as well as you.

Ame [Erika]

[Somewhat sternly, Less a question than a demand] But you'll try, correct?

Brennan Lee Mulligan

She nods solemnly.

Steel [Brennan]

I will try.

Erika Ishii

I may think for a moment, surveys Steel and then the horses and everybodys' bearing and then nods approvingly.

Ame [Erika]

Okay.

Aabria Iyengar

Steel, Ame and Eursolon are my true friends. Like you and Mom.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Steel nods and smiles and says

Steel [Brennan]

Then you have found yourself very wealthy indeed in the short summer you have spent here.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And she looks and says

Steel [Brennan]

There is nothing more important. There's nothing more important than to do right by those that you have let into to your heart in that way. She looks at both of you, and looks at Grandmother Wren and says

Steel [Brennan]

Grandmother, I mustn't tarry long. It is early afternoon now, and it is still some ride back to Silbry. May I impose upon you for some food?

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And you see, Grandmother Wren looks at Steel and nods and looks to Ame and Eursolon and says

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Let's get something together for our guests so that they can have something to eat before Steel has to be on our way.

Ame [Erika]

Okay!

Erika Ishii

And then we go.

Lou Wilson

We go. I think most of what Eursolon does when he helps Ame cook is just grab stuff off of the taller shelves.

[Laughter]

Erika Ishii

Yeah. And I am going to make Suvi's favorite of ours that she's come to love during the summer, which is..?

Aabria Iyengar
[On the spot] Uhhhhh?

Lou Wilson
[Playful, Teasing] "Uhhhh?"

Aabria Iyengar
[Laughing] I've never improvised anything before!

Lou Wilson
"Uhhhh?"

[Laughing]

Lou Wilson
It's definitely like a bunch, just a bunch of sauteed, weird mushrooms.

Erika Ishii
Yeah!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
A bunch of butter and mushrooms.

Erika Ishii
Yeah that's all it is, butter salt and mushrooms.

Lou Wilson
[Crosstalk] Eursulon always is a fan of— I mean, if we want to eat mushrooms. I'm all about it.

Erika Ishii
Yeah. At first I think you didn't like it.

Lou Wilson
No.

Erika Ishii
But now I feel like now...

Aabria Iyengar
It was a spite thing at first and it's just like, "now I like it now."

Lou Wilson
Yeah, at first it was like, yeah, now it feels good.

Aabria Iyengar
That's 100% it!

Lou Wilson
Let's eat a few fucking mushrooms. How 'bout that?

Aabria Iyengar
Let's eat Every Mushroom.

Lou Wilson
How 'bout that?

Brennan Lee Mulligan
There's a little old stone bench. It's not perfectly level, but there's a little old stone bench amongst a little patch of clover. It's like, quite near the road, it's like in between two trees. It used to kind of be a traveler's bench for people on the road, but that over time, it kind of slid down the bank a little bit. And it's now mostly in the yard. And Steel— It's just the closest thing nearby, and Steel says

Steel [Brennan]
Come have a seat with me.

Aabria Iyengar
She's going to walk over slowly, so worried that she now has to get news.

Suvi [Aabria]
[Shaky breath]

Steel [Brennan]
Um...

Suvi [Aabria]
You're here.

Steel [Brennan]
I'm here.

Suvi [Aabria]
Are you okay?

Aabria Iyengar
And I want to touch along that like, the white marks on her face and kind of touch her hair.

Steel [Brennan]
I'm all right. And if I'm not all right, I'll be all right. Um.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
And she just starts crying.

Aabria Iyengar
I grab her around the neck and try to soothe her.

Steel [Brennan]
[Quavering voice] No, not your job, child. Not your job. [Long pause, gathering the words] Your mother and father were the best and bravest people I ever knew, and they're not with us anymore.

Suvi [Aabria]
[Shakily] Okay... [Long pause] What happened? Please tell the truth.

Steel [Brennan]
They... When they went away, they did so doing everything they could to keep this world, and our people and our friends and our families safe. To keep you safe. And, it's complicated, but I really think they did.

Suvi [Aabria]
[Quiet sob] That's good.

Steel [Brennan]
And when it came— They didn't want to have to make a hard choice. They were very clever, and they were trying the best they could to do everything so perfectly that they could fix a very big problem AND keep you safe AND come back to you. And it got really hard, and they knew that they weren't going to be able to do ONE of those things.

Suvi [Aabria]
[Whispering] Okay.

Steel [Brennan]
And the choice they made, and it was a very brave choice, was to help the world and keep us all safe.

Suvi [Aabria]
That's good.

Steel [Brennan]
It is good. Your mother and father were heroes, and they should still be here, and they're not. And that's not fair, and I hate it.

Suvi [Aabria]
[Crying] Yeah.

Steel [Brennan]

And it makes me sad and mad. But many people will grow old and their day will come one day too, and they will have been lovely. But they will not have been heroes. And your mother and father chose to be heroes. And that is something that we will always be able to thank them for. And something I like to think about,

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And you see that she smiles and sort of wipes a tear off your cheek with her thumb.

Steel [Brennan]

...is that, like in magic? Whatever you give a part of yourself to, gets to keep that part of you. So if you give a little of yourself to something you craft, then that thing keeps you. I think your mother and father saved the world. And so that means that that part of them...

Steel [Brennan]

And here she takes a hand and gestures out to the sky in the forest.

Steel [Brennan]

So I think part of them is everywhere.

Aabria Iyengar

Suvi is just shaking with the effort of trying to maintain composure and nodding. I think some of her is, like, pulled away from this part of the conversation. So she's nodding along more to placate Steel than being able to internalize it and hear it and feel it

Suvi [Aabria]

So what now?

Steel [Brennan]

[Sighs] You can... What your parents wanted if the worst were to happen. They asked me to promise them that I'd take care of you. My children are younger than you, but I try to keep a lot of good snacks.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

She just starts crying. She's like

Suvi [Aabria]

I want to go with you.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

She just hugs you so deeply.

Steel [Brennan]

When we get back to the Citadel... When we get back to the Citadel, my friends and my husband and some people that loved your parents have already gone, and we're going to be able to go back to your home, and we're going to make sure that everything that was special and important, it all gets taken care

of. And we'll get to bring all of it with us. And then you can come and live with me. And there will be lots of food and—

Suvi [Aabria]

I wanna learn magic.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

She reaches into a pouch at her side and takes a golden geometrical ring with a green emerald in it

Lou Wilson

Mm. Mm.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

That has a thick chain through it. So the chain's through the ring, and she places it over your head so your father's ring rests around your neck.

Aabria Iyengar

And for the first time, she actually reaches into her, like, just absolutely- It's barely red at this point, dress, and pulls out from under, her mother's pendant too, so they both rest proudly on her chest.

Steel [Brennan]

[Confiding] Suvirin. I promise you, the best wizards I ever met worked many great things upon the world. And I suspect that when the time comes, we will see that their greatest achievement will be the very special young girl sitting on this bench beside me.

Aabria Iyengar

I think at that point, Suvi loses it.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

She holds you close. She holds you very close for as long as it takes. And for as long as it takes, eventually a time comes where you are just dry.

Aabria Iyengar

[Laughing] Yeah!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

There's no more tears to cry.

Suvi [Aabria]

I'm so thirsty, we gotta go inside.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Very hot face and forehead. You come inside and see a very special fried mushroom dish waiting for you.

Suvi [Aabria]

[Softly] Ohh, thank you. My favorite.

Ame [Erika]

I know.

Erika Ishii

[Crying] And I start doling out portions. Eursulon has helped me by setting the table. In this meal that I have cooked is all my hopes for Suvi and this new future for her. And it's got more than just love it's got something in it that will help her— remind her every time she has a fried mushroom, that she has friends here with us. And I think that is, unknowingly, how I cast Guidance for the first time.

[Awws]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Love that. You eat. The sun has gotten a little bit lower in the sky. Steel eats and smiles, compliments

Steel [Brennan]

A very well cooked dish, Ame, thank you so much.

Erika Ishii

[Confidently] I know. Thank you.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And Steel sort of eats quickly and says.

Steel [Brennan]

Um.

Suvi [Aabria]

I'll be out in a second.

Steel [Brennan]

Take your time.

Aabria Iyengar

And I just turn to the two of you

Suvi [Aabria]

Hold on

Aabria Iyengar

And I'm going to go grab my mother's cloak and I just start ripping out the lining.

Ame [Erika]
Nononono don't do that!!

Aabria Iyengar
And the outer part, that like soft bit I will put into your nest.

Ame [Erika]
Ohhh

Suvi [Aabria]
Thank you for protecting me.

Suvi [Aabria]
And that like silky inner lining that smells, thanks to you, a great part like my mother, but also like the pine and rosemary of your magic. I go and I wrap it around the sword that we all got from the bathtub knight. And I drag it— so weak, it takes so long to get the sword down the stairs and drag it over to you. Thank you for protecting me.

Lou Wilson
I take it. And it's the- You're giving me A sword.

Aabria Iyengar
Yeah, it's the sword that we all got together, but it's wrapped in the, uh—

Lou Wilson
I think definitely intimidated by that. But I think it's going to take the broom handle or the broomstick and be

Eursulon [Lou]
For you.

Suvi [Aabria]
I don't know what to- okay.

Aabria Iyengar
Kind of wave it. I hit myself immediately like "what? oh fuck—"

Eursulon [Lou]
Oh, you need— Take it out.

Suvi [Aabria]
Oh.

Eursulon [Lou]

Put it away. Take it out.

Aabria Iyengar

Trying to mimic you as best I can.

Eursulon [Lou]

Don't worry. It will keep you safe.

Aabria Iyengar

Thank you. I have to go.

Ame [Erika]

Come visit us again sometime if you're able to, or I'll come visit you from wherever I am, you know, when I go home.

Aabria Iyengar

I'll be in the citadel. You can't miss it, it's really big.

Ame [Erika]

Okay!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You gather your things, Grandma Wren loads—

Aabria Iyengar

That was the only thing. There was nothing else to get.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Oh, yeah, that's right.

Aabria Iyengar

Yeah.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Grandma Wren loads you up with snacks and things that she believes are now yours. Of- things that you loved from the cottage that she puts around you. Books and things like that. Steel smiles. You guys go outside to get to the horses. It's your first time going to be like riding a horse by yourself too. You see that Steel turns to Grandmother Wren and says,

Steel [Brennan]

Thank you so much for everything.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Grandmother Wren looks and says

Grandmother Wren [Brennan]

She's a very special girl.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And as she says that, you see that Steel looks over at your forehead for a second and seems to see something. And you see that

Aabria Iyengar

Immediately goes to wipe it with that like, hard kid hand.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Yeah. And Grandmother Wren just turns to look at Steel and something changed in Grandmother Wren's voice where she's like,

Grandmother Wren [Brennan]

[Emphatically] Suvi is very special. She's welcome in my home.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Steel kind of nods and says,

Steel [Brennan]

And Grandmother Wren, if ever you need anything from The Citadel, I—

Steel [Brennan]

and Grandmother says,

Grandmother Wren [Brennan]

I am all right here in my cottage. Thank you, Steel.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You see, Steel kind of looks here and [Sigh] sighs a little bit and says

Steel [Brennan]

Of course, well, you know where I will be and where young Suvi will be.

Erika Ishii

[Suspiciously] Can I insight check that moment?

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Yeah.

Erika Ishii

Interrupt the flow, but—

Brennan Lee Mulligan

No, go for it.

Aabria Iyengar

Learn.

Lou Wilson

I also want to say—

Erika Ishii

[Quietly] Dang it!

Eursulon [Lou]

In this moment of departure, Eursulon has put on his pauldron.

[A gasp, Aabria laughs in delight]

Erika Ishii

10.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

10. A 10 insight. I think you know as much as Erika knows in this moment, in terms of looking at this interaction and— grown-ups trap themselves in weird things. And I think you see that here of, like, Steel and Grandma Wren are completely— To your mind, you're like, "you're on the same team, you're both nice grownups!" And you're like, "so what the hell is going on? Where is this weird energy coming from?" And you do see that there's some weird energy. There's something here that is like each of them suddenly that was so kind and respectful to each other is suddenly, like, weirdly on an island from the other one. And it's just like, "well why does that have to be what's happening?" But I think that little Alma just has no insight into why that would be.

Erika Ishii

But if I know what I know, then I can put two together that it has to do with The Citadel and with Grandma Wren, because I overheard that conversation about witches and wizards, and I— it has scared the crap out of me in this moment. So I run over to Suvi, I give her a big hug, and I say in her ear,

Ame [Erika]

[Whispering] We're always going to be true friends.

Suvi [Aabria]

[Whispering] Always.

Ame [Erika]

Ok [sniff]

Aabria Iyengar

I do want to walk over after that weird vibe has passed between the two of them and grab Grandma Wren's, like— Kind of do the apron skirts tug and bring her down to my level and then just kind of give her, like, the big face, little kiddy face smush and just kiss her right on the mouth and say,

Suvi [Aabria]

Thank you for being my family.

Grandmother Wren [Brennan]

You are my family, always

Suvi [Aabria]

Always.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Ame and Eursulon give me perception checks.

Lou Wilson

Better roll initiative.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And if you have any magic—

[Aabria cackling in the background]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Stealth round! 12 damage, you're both dead! Okay.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

If you have any magic here that you want to use or any ability you want to use here too, you can do that as well.

Lou Wilson

Mmm. That's a Nat 1.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

If you want to use Divine Sense to get Advantage.

Lou Wilson

I'll take Divine Sense to get advantage. I definitely think there's a lot going on. Okay, that one is- is perception?

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Perception.

Lou Wilson
That's a Dirty 21.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Hell Yeah.

Aabria Iyengar
Niiice!

Erika Ishii
Let's go!

Erika Ishii
I think that after this summer of learning from Suvi and all of us becoming mindful of the world around us and learning so much, I am very finely attuned to people and to things, but in a different way than Suvi. So I have the Observant Feat, but it's with a bonus to Wisdom instead of intelligence.

[Everyone is delighted]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
That's so beautiful! You each have the Observant Feat!! Come on, people, tell me mechanics don't tell a story, get the fuck out of here.

Lou Wilson
Come on now.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Come on.

Lou Wilson
What are we doing? Come on now.

Aabria Iyengar
So observant! [Crying]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Incredible

Erika Ishii
So it would be a 17.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

When both of you see this, when Suvi says like, "you're my family" and Grandma Wren says "you are always welcome here" you realize what it was that Steel must have seen, which is just somehow rosy and silvery. Like a little bit of rose quartz with starlight trapped inside it, the impression of a kiss on Suvi's forehead. And it's like, you're a little kid, you saw all that cool shit Grandma Wren did two days ago, you're like. The most powerful spell I've ever seen. In the moment the hug ends, that fades away. It's not a visible mark, but for this little moment. And honestly, you don't even think like, if Lohan the Baker was here, he would not have seen anything, right? You guys saw this. For— Grandma Wren again, gives you that big hug goodbye. The only thing she really says in passing is just like, "this is your home. You're always welcome here." You say goodbye to Ame, your true friend. Eursulon, as you do Divine Sense.

Lou Wilson
Mm.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You sense something on the sword wrapped in the cloak. There's something here, there's some kind of magic here. And I think you get it, because you couldn't see it before when you talked to Sir Curran so long ago, but you always knew that it had to be true.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You saw this sword before and it was just some sword, but I think with that Divine Sense, you look down and see it wrapped in the silk, and you had seen that silk before. You'd even seen the sword in the silk when you had Divine Sense active. But now it is coated and filled with honor. And with that 12 Intelligence, with more intelligence than a wild little fairy child would ever have anticipated having, I think you are able to look and go. If the sword didn't have it and the cloak didn't have it, then something about Suvi putting them together and giving it to me made them have it. And realize that Sir Curran was right and that there was something in the deed that gave it honor.

Erika Ishii
[Crying] Oh. Kay.

Aabria Iyengar
[Crying harder] My whole shit is so fucked up.

Lou Wilson

I think Eursulon clutches this sword to his chest and just begins to cry. I think just like, both a mix of happiness and sadness, the departure of a— to have found this thing, and I think having this like— and in this moment finding, like, deeply connecting the idea of honor to his friends Suvi and Ame, that there is honor in the three of us.

Erika Ishii
I put my arms around Eursulon, but I pretty much come up to his waist.

Lou Wilson

I think I'm going to reach down and lift you so that you're hugging my chest and use my other hand to wrap around you.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Is this the first-? I think this is the first time Eursulon has cried.

Lou Wilson

Oh, yeah, definitely.

[Sobbing. Somebody blows their nose.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And I think that there is a big thing— In that moment, in the same way that you ate honey from the mortal world and that did something. This is a mortal feeling. This is something that I think like— In that understanding those tears and understanding what Eursulon is feeling in that moment, I think that there is it's a— even coming closer to shore of understanding mortality in the world you are now in.

Erika Ishii

Which is like me, I know the inherent properties of that kind of tear.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Mhm. Rolling down your cheek. Suvi you get on your horse with Steel and ride away in the sort of golden early fall afternoon, sun coming through the leaves.

Lou Wilson

I will say, I think in the moments of that crying, I think there is something that feels wrong in this. Not so much a cognitive thought, but it's like Suvi leaving doesn't feel right, we're supposed to be together. I think Eursulon is going to put down Ame and chase— Run along the road on all fours for a time before he can't keep up with the horses anymore.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You follow along in the woods and Ame, you even feel the sorrow of like, this extended goodbye. And you're like, grappling with these feelings of like [Indignantly] "you don't have to say goodbye in the realm of spirits."

Lou Wilson

Once Suvi actually starts to move away, it doesn't feel right. This actually isn't supposed to be you're not actually supposed to leave. I'm sorry. Wait, we messed this up why are you actually—

Brennan Lee Mulligan

It was sort of, like you were able to cry about the THOUGHT of it and then it starts to happen, and then you're like, well, what's the animalistic— a dog would not let you go. I'm going to come with you. [Laughing] Eursulon, you trot along, still not walking on the road, and you also still not touch the road either. You would get matted up on your horse and the horse took off as well. And as you go along, a

horrible, horrible thing happens, which is you get you go as far as you can and then suddenly another road intersects and you realize that you're trapped in a triangle. Like, they get to a fork in the road where suddenly it's like there's not more woods alongside. You'd have to go back the wrong direction and the last thing you see is the crossroads.

Aabria Iyengar

I think Suvi was working really hard to pretend that she was unaware that Eursulon was kind of alongside and then can't resist noticing him as they turn and she knows he can't go any farther. And she just yells,

Suvi [Aabria]

You're my best friend.

Lou Wilson

And you're mine.

Suvi [Aabria]

I'll see you soon.

Eursulon [Lou]

You will!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You look back and Steel looks and says,

Steel [Brennan]

[Bemused] Was that farm boy running on all fours?

[Erika and Aabria break out laughing]

Aabria Iyengar

And Suvi, who has freshly learned the importance of secrets this summer, does not acknowledge the question and keeps riding.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Steel shakes her head and says,

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Grandma Wren can pick 'em.

Aabria Iyengar

Then I begin to tell the tale of how weird Grandma Wren's house is, I'm like "and there was a goat and he was a butthole. And this rooster, oh God. Just the Song of Taro will take us all the way back to the Citadel.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

The Song of Taro. For Ame and Eursulon, this is really like the final notes of our Children's Adventure. Eursulon and Ame. When Suvi leaves, it gets so much quieter. Grandma Wren continues to work on the curse. And the question I have, Eursulon, for you, I think is. That moment of crying, those tears it's a huge— You saw Ame and Suvi cry A Lot, and then you cried yourself for the first time. And it's like, I can't be an alien to that anymore. Now I've done it too right? And I think moments like that probably continue throughout your time. So let me just ask broadly. How long does Eursulon stay at Grandmother Wren's cottage?

Lou Wilson

I think maybe only another year. I'm not sure it's... I don't think it's long. I think spring comes, and I think he's... Everything just feels too small and too contained. It's not what Ame wants, but I think there is something to... Ame is a reminder of the lack of Suvi, is the lack of what we... Like, it's just. It's not the same, and the forest is not the same. Nothing feels as good here as I want it to. And I think by the next summer, Eursulon wants to leave.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

I think that there's a moment as well where, as time passes, Ame grew a tremendous amount, like personally, in that golden summer with the two of you there. And every passing day, she's a little more competent. And it's also so clear how much there is for her here, how often Grandmother Wren leads her through what she's working on for someone in the village, how many actual important tasks there are to do, the kinds of things that are to take care of, and also the fact that once Suvi leaves, Grandma Wren, I think, on a very sad day for Ame after that, takes you aside and says,

Grandmother Wren [Brennan]

Well, time has come to start teaching you spells.

Ame [Erika]

[Screaming with joy] Yaaaaay!!!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And really takes you out and starts being like,

Grandmother Wren [Brennan]

What is it that you want your magic to be able to do? It's possible that you will learn to do something that even I cannot.

Ame [Erika]

Everything. I want to do everything.

Grandmother Wren [Brennan]

[Flatly] So what you've said is already incredibly dangerous.

[Laughing]

Grandmother Wren [Brennan]

And I think that there's a night like in that following winter, and I think the winter is really hard, as it gets really dark, and there's a lot of snow, and you were never in parts of the spirit realm that had snow in them. And I think you're also probably growing still pretty—

Lou Wilson

I think I grow unnaturally fast. I think by spring, I'm like 6ft. I think I've put on a full foot, and sleeping inside is annoying. I don't fit my nest anymore. We can't go get more moss because it's too cold, it's too frozen.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Yeah. I think that also, you have to figure something out because the window can't be open all night during the winter. So you kind of have to just.

Lou Wilson

There's definitely three nights where Ame is trying to be very nice and lets me leave it open.

[Laughing]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And I think there's a moment in that winter, like in a really cold patch where Grandma Wren talks to you, because Eursulon has gotten very unhappy and that just makes you not as fuckin' fun when you're just not happy.

Lou Wilson

I'm not as fuckin' fun! I'm sorry!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And Grandma Wren takes you in one of your lessons, Ame, where she can see you dealing with that. And she just points out in one evening she's like

Grandmother Wren [Brennan]

Eursulon is trapped. Trapped here, trapped in his form, trapped in this realm, in this life. And he is trapped halfway between two things that will not hold him, which is he is trapped between being—

Ame [Erika]

A Liminal Space.

Grandmother Wren [Brennan]

A liminal space exactly. A liminal space. And he is trapped between being a beast of the forest, one of our Wild Ones, our Honored Friends, and being a Knight. And that struggle is very potent. But I will say that there are places where Knights and Wild Ones share something in common. And here she looks at you, Ame, and says Knights and Wild Ones don't generally stay in one place for very long.

Ame [Erika]

[Sadly, Understanding] He has to go off on a quest,

Grandmother Wren [Brennan]

I think so.

Ame [Erika]

How can we help him do that?

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Grandma Wren once again sees little Ame talking about how to be the bigger person and help. "How can I help make my own life harder?" And she kisses you very sweetly on the cheek and says

Brennan Lee Mulligan

[Sighs] The best way we can help Eursulon is by understanding him, and... [Long pause] Knowing that he will move through the world in his own way. Our job is not to try to make him more like we think he should be.

Ame [Erika]

it's just like with nature, how I'm supposed to be listening to them and seeing how they want to be and if what we do works together, and not telling them how to be.

Erika Ishii

After that talk with Grandma Wren, I know that Eursulon will leave. So sometime I find you, out.. Maybe as the snows are starting to melt

Ame [Erika]

I made this for you.

Erika Ishii

And I hold out a little dark wooden box. Wooden. And hand it to you.

Lou Wilson

I think my hands have become HUGE at this point.

Erika Ishii

What I hold out with two hands, you palm, easily.

Lou Wilson

I palm with one. But I think I've gotten much better at being gentle. And so I place it in my other palm and open it.

Erika Ishii

And you hear a soft tinkling melody from that box. And it's a sweet tune. But what is really the most exciting about it is that in it you can hear that summer, the bees buzzing and the wind and the pine trees and the crackle of that hearth, like that first night that you were sleeping by it. And so whenever you open it, you'll remember us, and they say

Ame [Erika]

For your quest.

Lou Wilson

I think there's another... Eursulon I think gets down and sits on the ground, which I think means he's about at eye level with you and looks at you.

Eursulon [Lou]

It does feel like I will be going soon.

Ame [Erika]

I know.

Eursulon [Lou]

But it will be good to have our song with me.

Ame [Erika]

Yeah. I know you have to keep moving and find honor, but it's... I'm going to be okay. There's a lot of other people out there that I think need more protecting than Grandma and I do. And I can't wait to learn all my Witch things and then go home and also help in the way that I can. Protecting people.

Eursulon [Lou]

You will be a great Witch, Ame.

Ame [Erika]

Thank you, I know. [Giggle]

Eursulon [Lou]

And I know we will be together again. We are true friends.

Ame [Erika]

Thank you for being my true friend, Eursulon

Lou Wilson

I think I scoop you up.

Eursulon [Lou]

I am hungry.

Ame [Erika]

I can make food. What do you feel like?

Eursulon [Lou]

Mushrooms.

Ame [Erika]

Let's eat mushrooms.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You have a big mushroom dinner and the last question I have for Eursulon is after your big mushroom meal, what time of day is it when you leave and by what route do you leave?

Lou Wilson

I think I leave at night. I can't do what we did with Suvi again. I remember how hard that is. And I don't want to say goodbye to Ame, I just want to leave. So I think I leave in the middle of the night and I think by this point I think part of the reason it's clear, I think Eursulon has been just disappearing for the day and it's just been me wandering to the edges of this little trapped forest looking for another one. And if I've seen one, that's where I'll be headed.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Give me an Investigation Check.

Lou Wilson

That's a 9. I'm not good at this.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

It's the middle of the night. You go to the farthest reach of the old forest. It's a starry night. Big old Gibbous moon, waxing. It'll be a full moon soon. So you finally follow— the forest is bounded by roads. The last place you check is a little culvert that has a metal grate over it where one of the streams goes under the road. I think there's no way for you to leave the forest that you've been in unless you step foot on a road.

Lou Wilson

Then I will step there.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You step foot onto the road and it's the weirdest feeling in the world. Hardpacked earth. Why would you do this to a forest? And suddenly all the joy of running free in the forest and choosing your own path— you see, the road goes One Way and it goes The Other. They made something easier by taking all the fun out of it.

Lou Wilson

I think Eursulon looks left and right and I think is going to go... Left.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You go left, you walk down the road.

Erika Ishii

I wake up the next morning. I see the note by my nest. Be kind. I wash my face, change my clothes. I start the fire to boil the water, start making breakfast. When Grandma Wren comes in, I ask her

Ame [Erika]

He's gone, isn't he?

Grandmother Wren [Brennan]

That's right. He's gone.

Ame [Erika]

My parents aren't coming back for me, are they?

Grandmother Wren [Brennan]

No, Ame.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

She goes to a small chest in a corner of the room and unlocks it and takes out a letter that is addressed to her. She reads it.

Grandmother Wren [Brennan]

This is the letter I received before your parents sent you here. I never showed it to you. Because I hate it. And your parents are wrong. In this letter, they asked me if I knew what to do with children like you. And when I responded that I did and that they should come bring you to me at once, that's what they did. And when they discovered upon arriving here with you that what I intended to do was to teach you and celebrate your incredible gifts, they accused me of not understanding their request.

Ame [Erika]

Yes. {Chokes up, swallows it} I'm sure that they did the best that they could. Think that everybody does the best. I think that everybody does the best that they can with what they have.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Give me an Insight Check.

Erika Ishii

18.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Grandma Wren makes a face like she doesn't believe that.

Lou Wilson

[Oof]

Grandmother Wren [Brennan]

I love you Ame.

Ame [Erika]

I love you, Grandma Wren. And I wanna... I wanna learn everything that I can. So I can maybe also teach it to other people, and nobody has to feel bad.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Grandma Wren just starts crying.

Ame [Erika]

It's okay. It's going to be okay.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

She hugs you and you are, no roll necessary, too young to understand why she is so sad. Because you know that you're saying something really beautiful, so why would it be so upsetting for someone to hear? And she just kisses you on the top of the head and she says

Grandmother Wren [Brennan]

Ame, I've kept it so that you could read it if you ever wanted to. But I'm going to ask you for a favor.

Ame [Erika]

Mhm?

Grandmother Wren [Brennan]

Can I burn this letter?

Ame [Erika]

If it would make you happy to do so, absolutely.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

[Sound of a small whooshing flame] She doesn't touch anything, just in her fingers it bursts into flame. She gives you another kiss and says

Grandmother Wren [Brennan]

I will teach you everything I know. I don't think any witch has ever been so lucky to have such an apprentice.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And she pats your little head. And the last thing I'll ask for our Children's Adventure here before we depart, and meet these characters once again at the beginning of their great adventure, is if you are going to switch any of your ability scores. Before you reach adulthood.

Lou Wilson

I will not.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Will not.

Aabria Iyengar

I will not.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Will not.

[Long Pause]

Lou Wilson

You can do it, Erica, if you want. I know we did like a really declarative

Lou Wilson

[Laughing] yeah that was a whole thing! Like a weird ritual, kind of like "I will not." It felt very Spartacus, so you don't have to be Spartacus if you don't want to be.

Aabria Iyengar

Let me be clear it's just because my stats are fuckin' banger.

Lou Wilson

Yeah, I mean that's also it. We out here slappin, so i ain't got no need to— I'm happy to be Spartacus.

Erika Ishii

[Gravely] I, too, will not

Lou Wilson

Damn! We all Spartacus!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

We're all Spartacus.

Lou Wilson

We're all Spartacus.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Incredible. That's where we conclude our Children's Adventure.

Lou Wilson

Damn.

Aabria Iyengar

How amazing!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

How 'bout it!

[Applause, cheering, screaming with joy]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Let's get some lunch!!

[Everyone cheers]