

Worlds Beyond Number

The Wizard, the Witch, and the Wild One: Episode 08

Final Version

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

Aabria Iyengar

This is the sound of Worlds Beyond Number.

[The other instruments fade into a lone flute and violin pluck]

[Pounding Imperial Timpani]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

In a rose quartz corridor, lined by red polished wooden doors, outside the small, yet stately, office of the Bursar of this sanctum of the Scepter's Chorus—Wizards of the Khemsarazan Empire—we see one Guild Mage Pane, a tall, sorrowful-faced man, leaning forward with a slashed arm, having just simulated an attack on himself. With his right hand now filled with crackling lightning, his eyes luminescent white, as he lunges towards Eursulon, unaware that there is a fox in his office, or a wizard and a witch at the end of the hall that know what is happening. I am going to need everybody here to roll initiative.

[Everyone groans]

Aabria Iyengar

Oh god!

Lou Wilson

Hey-uh!

Erika Ishii

You son of a gun!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Suvi, you are 100 feet away, but you are first to act, knowing that something is wrong. You hear a clattering of steel and your Citadel training [snaps fingers] kicks in. You are first to act.

Aabria Iyengar

I don't know what's happening yet. Can I move down the hallway but hold an action?

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Yes, you can. You just start sprinting, and it takes your entire turn to sprint around the corner, and you see, another 50 feet off—

[Sounds of a struggle]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

—the scene unfolding before you. Eursulon, I'm going to need a dexterity saving throw.

Lou Wilson

17?

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Lightning crackles—

[Lightning crackling]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

—but you pull back at the last possible second, so that only some raking edges of the crackling static in this wizard's hand touches you. You will take half damage.

Aabria Iyengar

[Gasp]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Nine damage, halved to four.

Lou Wilson

Mm.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

The spell that this wizard is wielding is not mighty. There is a reason this wizard has been shunted into the administrative corner of a far flung chantry at the edge of the Empire's reach. However, this is the first time that Wizard's Magic has touched Eursulon in this way. There is something crisp—otherworldly, and yet not of YOUR other world. There is something beautiful, symmetrical, yet static and sterile about this magic that unfolds. What's going through Eursulon's mind as you feel even this diminished result of this spell.

Lou Wilson

I mean, I think—Eursulon already wasn't in the best place walking into this situation, there really was no plan that wasn't going according—and he was just improvising. I think Eursulon feels the magic. He's just immediately wanting help, or to flee. I think there's just a desire to not be in this interaction. It already didn't go according—and it doesn't feel like there's anything to salvage here.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And with that confusion and horror, it is your turn.

Lou Wilson

I will use a bonus action hidden step to turn invisible.

[Reverberation of magic]

Lou Wilson

As I go invisible, my eyes dart to the end of the hallway, where I see Suvi?

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Mhm.

Lou Wilson

I think I'm going to start taking steps toward—moving towards Suvi.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You are able to join Suvi's side.

Lou Wilson

Okay, great. You feel Eursulon's presence, but I don't speak.

Aabria Iyengar

There's just a little bit of that like, the mom hand that slides over as she feels you pass by her, and she's like, "alright, done." And, just rounds, and you saw it as she was walking, Suvi is furious at this fucking hedge mage that touched her friend.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

There is a look of panic in the Guild Mage's eyes as you suddenly vanish, And he realizes that you are more than you seem.

Erika Ishii

I am still with the other acolytes, yes?

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Yes, that's correct.

Erika Ishii

I weigh the situation and I say

Ame (Erika)

We must move quickly. Get somebody in authority. Get Morrow. There has been an attack on our party.

[Shocked murmurs]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Go ahead and give me a persuasion check.

Erika Ishii

19.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Two of the acolytes, hearing the sternness in your voice, bow almost reflexively, and sprint down the hallway.

Erika Ishii

I use my movement to get to where my friends are.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Suvi, it is your turn.

Suvi (Aabria)

[Hatefully] Mage.

Aabria Iyengar

And I'm going to send—

Lou Wilson

[Laughing] Jesus!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

[Laughs]

Aabria Iyengar

—I'm going to close to 30 and cast Witch Bolt.

Erika Ishii

Oooh hoo hoo hoo!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Roll an attack roll for me, if you would be so kind.

Aabria Iyengar
10!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You throw a witchbolt at this Guild Mage.

[Arcane ringing]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You see that Pane throws an arcane shield.

[A magical shield coalesces and the bolt of magic pings off of it.]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
The witchbolt—interacting with swirling, intersecting overlapping circles of runic language, and you can see something vile, which is a sneer of contemptuous joy, as the Guild Mage Pane successfully resists the spellcraft of a Citadel mage.

Aabria Iyengar
[Grimly] You will explain yourself now.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Pane sees you, leaps into his office, slams the door shut, and uses his action to lock it.

[Door bolting closed]

Aabria Iyengar
What.

[Aabria and Erika laugh]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
It is now Eursulon's turn.

Lou Wilson
The invisibility ends, and I think Suvi and Ame regard a very sheepish Eursulon.

Eursulon (Lou)
Is, um. Things did not go according to plan. It was my mistake. Do we need to—

Suvi (Aabria)
Are you okay?

Lou Wilson
I'm—Yeah, I'm fine. I just—I messed up.

Ame (Erika)
No, that's okay.

Suvi (Aabria)
No.

Eursulon (Lou)
I did mess up.

Suvi (Aabria)
He messed up.

Eursulon (Lou)
No, I messed up. I said Will Gallows.

Ame (Erika)
Oh, well, yes, but—

Suvi (Aabria)
No. He messed up. He deigned to hurt a companion of a Mage of the Citadel.

Ame (Erika)
[Gasp]

Suvi (Aabria)
You're fine.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You hear in your mind, Ame, the fox speaking to you and saying

The Fox (Brennan)
[Telepathic echo] Uh, the guy is doing something in here.

Ame (Erika)
What is he doing?

Aabria Iyengar
[Laughing]

The Fox (Brennan)
Agh. He uh—

Ame (Erika)
Describe his actions. Describe his actions, you don't have to extrapolate what he's doing.

The Fox (Brennan)
Ok, his one hand's going up and his other hand is going down?

Suvi (Aabria)
[Cackling]

The Fox (Brennan)
Now they're together again, thumbs up, and—Aah! Aah hah hah hot! Hot hot hot!

Ame (Erika)
[Gasps, panicked] Fox is there, Fox is in there, Fox is feeling hot!

Lou Wilson
I'd like to run back down the hallway.

[Soft tense strings join the timpani]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You're run back down the hallway, you get to the door. Ame, it is your turn.

Ame (Erika)

Fox, are you okay? What's happening?

The Fox (Brennan)

It's hot in here. It's hot!

Ame (Erika)

It is hot in there, or are you hot specifically?

The Fox (Brennan)

I don't—I feel—how do you tell?

Ame (Erika)

Okay uh—[stammering, confused]

The Fox (Brennan)

It's not hot anymore.

Ame (Erika)

Oh, he was definitely burning some incriminating documents. Okay, you should attack him.

The Fox (Brennan)

Okay!

Aabria Iyengar

[Laughs]

Ame (Erika)

Go for the throat!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

The fox is going to attack! Go ahead and give me an attack roll for the fox.

Aabria Iyengar

Ooh!

Erika Ishii

That's a natural 20.

Lou Wilson

Mmm.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

[Laughing joyously]

Aabria Iyengar

Yeeeah!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Eursulon, you're right outside the door, you hear a sort of [woosh of fire] conflagration—you can smell almost like smoke and flame from the other side of the door. And you suddenly hear a—

The Fox (Brennan)

[Growling, muffled]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

—and a—

Guild Mage Pane (Brennan)

[Muffled] Gah!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

—as the Guild Mage takes two points of damage. Suvi.

Aabria Iyengar

Now I'm going to hold my action, as I catch up to Eursulon. Oh, there's a bloody dagger on the ground, right?

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Yes.

Aabria Iyengar

I'm going to go ahead and pick that up and pocket it. And then I turn to you and say

Suvi (Aabria)

Mind gettin' the door?

Eursulon (Lou)

Yeah. Happily.

Aabria Iyengar

And I'm going to hold my action to attack when I have line of sight on him again.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Great. He's going to go now. And trapped on the other side of the door as he is with the fox, I'm afraid to say he's going to attack the fox.

[Music cuts out]

Lou Wilson

Brennan, we're only seven episodes in—

Aabria Iyengar

[Laughs]

Lou Wilson

—and you're already attacking familiars?

Brennan Lee Mulligan

People love to pop off and then they—and then they end up finding out about what bad people do when you pop off around them.

Lou Wilson

Oh, he's so bad he'd attack a fox?

Aabria Iyengar

A fox that—

Brennan Lee Mulligan

A fox just bit the hell out of him!

Erika Ishii
So I said go for the throat.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Yeah.

Erika Ishii
Is he still attached to him?

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Yes, he is still attached.

Erika Ishii
Okay, good to know.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
A fox's hit points are 2!

Aabria Iyengar
Aah!

Erika Ishii
Ohhhh!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Or actually, let me double check that because—

Aabria Iyengar
[Laughing] Oh my god is this fox gonna die??

Lou Wilson
What! The fox is—

Aabria Iyengar
Can we walk this back?

Lou Wilson
Hold on, yeah, can we wait?

Aabria Iyengar
Brennan Brennan Brennan Brennan Brennan.

Erika Ishii
Can you please—

Lou Wilson
We need to go back.

Erika Ishii
Yeah!

Aabria Iyengar
Yeah, Brennan can we go back.

Lou Wilson
Two HP??

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Everybody's made a lot of choices in quick succession.

Erika Ishii
Is it?

Lou Wilson
Two HP.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Let me double check here. I'm going to roll this in front of the board.

Aabria Iyengar
Aah!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
On a nine or higher—

Erika Ishii
Oh, you gotta be shitting me

Brennan Lee Mulligan
—he hits the fox.

Aabria Iyengar
[Groan]

Lou Wilson
HAAW!

Aabria Iyengar
Ha ha HA!!

Lou Wilson
HOH!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
That is a two.

[Everyone screams triumphantly]

Lou Wilson
Yes!

Aabria Iyengar
[Off mic, screaming] Oh my god!

Lou Wilson
Wow, we fully tried to kill our—wow!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Hey—

Aabria Iyengar
Erika's gone!

Erika Ishii
[Wailing off in the distance]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You guys—everyone's got to protect your little fuzzy guys, because if you send them into the room with the Bad Man, then the Bad Man's in the room with your little—

Aabria Iyengar
[Laughing] Oh my god, is Eursulon my fuzzy guy?

Brennan Lee Mulligan
That's the thing, everyone always wants to put it on me. "You're attacking foxes out here!" If you are in your home D&D group, I'm going to say something very clearly right now. I'm going to say something very clearly right now. If you go in the kitchen, you might get burnt. And if—

Aabria Iyengar
[Laughs]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
—if you're sending your familiars, and your companions, and your various little animals, and constructs, and buddies, if you're sending them to get up in the mix, they're gonna get got.

Lou Wilson
Hey, they went in the kitchen—

Erika Ishii
Look, I know that, but Ame doesn't know that!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
There you go!

Lou Wilson
I went in the kitchen to get cookies, alright?

[Aabria and Brennan laugh]

Lou Wilson
I didn't go anywhere near the stove, alright?

Brennan Lee Mulligan
If you walk—

Lou Wilson
You know me, just because I—

Brennan Lee Mulligan
—in the part of the kitchen just has the pantry, you're gonna get burned!

Aabria Iyengar
[Laughing]

Lou Wilson

When I sent that fox in there earlier, that was never my intention.

[Tense music kicks back up]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

So, you hear from inside, and Ame, you can still feel telepathically, the fox has latched onto his leg. The Guild Mate has tried to rake down with lightning in his hand again, and missed.

[Fox growling]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

The fox has like, wriggled on the other side of his leg, still sinking his fangs into this wizard. Poor showing from our wizard friend here. That is now going to go to be Eursulon's turn.

Lou Wilson

The Strongman of Silbry will take the door!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Here we go. Go ahead. Give me an athletics check.

Lou Wilson

Hmm! [Chuckles]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

It's a DC 15.

Aabria Iyengar

You got this buddy!

Lou Wilson

Oh god. Damn.

Aabria Iyengar

[Laughing] Level one is hard!

Lou Wilson

I really don't like it down here.

[Everyone laughs]

Lou Wilson

That's an 8. That's just a straight up 8.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Copy that. Eursulon you lean back, get your shoulder in front of you, and slam into the door, and hear it shudder against the door frame, remaining closed and locked.

Eursulon (Lou)

[Grunt as he slams into the door]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Eursulon, any bonus action?

Lou Wilson
Can I try again?

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Go ahead and—I'll say on a bonus action, give me one with disadvantage.

Lou Wilson
Okay. Two 11s, plus 4. 15!

[Everyone cheers]

Lou Wilson
Oh my god.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
There we go! So you go and back up all the way against the edge of the hallway and run. And finally this time—

Eursulon (Lou)
[Grunts as he slams into the door and it yields]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
—slam the door wide open into the room.

Aabria Iyengar
Wait, can I use my held action—

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Oh, yes, absolutely

Aabria Iyengar
—now that it's open? Suvi's going to wrap her hand around her staff, the staff of the Citadel—of a True Wizard and her father's ring, her ring, glows green, as I summon one of the level spell slots that I keep inside it, to cast magic missile as my darts bend around Eursulon, and light. Him. Up.

[Magical darts lance through the air]

Erika Ishii
[Gasps]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Go ahead and roll damage for magic missile.

Aabria Iyengar
12 plus 3 is 15.

Erika Ishii
WOOO!

Lou Wilson
That would kill me!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
The darts springing forth from Suvi, race through the air, and impact with shuddering, explosive force on the body of Guild Mage Pane.

[Arcane explosions]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

The pure destructive energy radiates first through his ribs, his shoulder, in through his lower back and along the sort of side of his abdomen. He falls to the ground, bleeding from three enormous injuries on his body, and you can tell, is holding on to—he's immediately unconscious, dropped to the ground, holding on to the last tethers of life.

[Horn swells one last time and then the music disappears]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And we are out of combat.

Lou Wilson

Eursulon doesn't like how this happened, doesn't like how much blood is gushing out of this man, and is going to lean down, and without making eye contact with Suvi, cast lay on hands and give him 1 hit point.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You lean down, you give him one hit point which will raise him from unconsciousness, he will not be making death saves. He comes to on the ground looking at the three of you. I am going to need some kind of charisma based rolls, to not have him spring into survival mode, essentially.

Aabria Iyengar

It's not gonna be from me, Suvi is just—she's about to—like, I think Suvi has reached into the pocket, and has pulled out the bloody dagger, and is attempting to finish a kill in the same way that she finished Captain Emliss on the ship.

Erika Ishii

That's 19, from Ame.

Lou Wilson

14 from Eursulon.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Ame, you can perceive that he is probably going to continue—he cannot accept the situation, there is no surrender in his eyes as he comes back to one hit point.

Ame (Erika)

It's over. There is no escape from this. If you talk with us and tell us what is going on, you may yet have a chance to escape the clutches of Gallow.

Guild Mage Pane (Brennan)

[Out of breath] I don't know what any of you are talking about. There is no proof of anything. There is no—and what even thing would there be?

Ame (Erika)

Do you think that Will Gallows will wait for proof?

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You hear a noise of approaching footsteps rapidly and you see Morrow and several of the attendant mages come in. Eursulon is injured, he doesn't see a knife on the floor, but he does see a lot of blood on the floor, and he sees all of you standing over—he sees all of you standing over Pane on the ground in his office, with also just like a bunch of ash around in there. Morrow goes

Guild Mage Morrow (Brennan)

Good heavens! What is the meaning of this? What is happening?!

Ame (Erika)

I'm not quite sure, perhaps this was some big misunderstanding?

Erika Ishii

And I look at Pane.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Pane looks— [Laughs]

Aabria Iyengar

[Laughing] What??

[Everyone laughs]

Aabria Iyengar

The craziest flex I've ever heard in my life.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

He looks at Ame and looks up at Morrow and says

Guild Mage Pane (Brennan)

[Unconvincingly] A little bit of horseplay gone out of hand, Guild Mage Morrow, I'm afraid, [Panting] you see, Bear and I—

Aabria Iyengar

[Off mic, laughing] Bleeding to death!

Guild Mage Pane (Brennan)

He is covered in blood, blood is running out of his mouth.

[Everyone is choking laughing]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Blood is running out of his mouth. He's covered in ash. There is a fox with its fangs sunk into his leg still going [Fox growling] and he's like

Guild Mage Pane (Brennan)

We realized that we had summered, he and I, in the same beach village outside of Silbry, and were engaging in, a rustic bout of indoor croquet, which they play there.

Eursulon (Lou)

Something we often did.

Guild Mage Pane (Brennan)

Something we often did, but outdoors, because of the beach, but we were doing it indoors.

Ame (Erika)

That's silly. That's so silly!

Eursulon (Lou)

We were so silly. Yes, we were silly.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

So realizing we were silly, I—

Aabria Iyengar
[Laughing]

Guild Mage Pane (Brennan)
—burnt all of the mallets and croquet balls with magic, and then, ah, we were putting the rest of the gear away and Eursulon, B-Bear was admiring my knife, and in admiring it he turned around, and I, accidentally, walked into it, and then—

Aabria Iyengar
Suvi is disgusted, and walked away.

Guild Mage Pane (Brennan)
And then I cast magic missile on myself.

[Everyone bursts out laughing]

Guild Mage Pane (Brennan)
Because I was frightened. And that spell never misses. So that was the type of horseplay.

Ame (Erika)
Fox, you can probably stop playing with him.

The Fox (Brennan)
[Growling]

Eursulon (Lou)
Yes, Fox. We have finished. We have finished.

Ame (Erika)
Ya did so good, buddy.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Fox lets go, licks the blood off his fangs, and you see looks around, he loves a good lie, but he looks over, and you see he pads over to Pane's head, who is still lying on his back, and you see, he just whispers in his ear

The Fox (Brennan)
[Whispering] I'm gonna eat you one day.

Erika Ishii
[Burst of laughter]

Ame (Erika)
Here, Fox, I have a vote for you!

Erika Ishii
And I take out a little treat from a pack.

The Fox (Brennan)
[Excited gasp] My vote!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Leaps up, and eats it, gobbles it up. So Morrow goes

Guild Mage Morrow (Brennan)

I'm going to be very honest. All of this behavior is the most outrageous tomfoolery I've ever heard of! To think! That you were playing croquet! Inside this chantry! And rough housing with knives, and casting powerful, offensive magic on yourselves, is completely uncalled for! And with your earlier rudeness to our honored guest, the Archmage Apprentice Suvi, I must say Gilmesh Pane, I am going to be writing a report!

[Dramatic harpsichord sting]

Guild Mage Morrow (Brennan)

And I will be submitting it. Encouraging my superiors to relocate you to a diminished office, somewhere of less significance than Port Talon!

Erika Ishii

Aw, well that's such a shame, no.

Lou Wilson

Please don't. Please don't. Our silliness—it should not reflect back on him. But if you must, I understand.

Guild Mage Morrow (Brennan)

Ah no, I must.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And you see, he says

Guild Mage Morrow (Brennan)

I must see to the Apprentice Archmage.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And you see, Morrow leaves this open crime scene, and just sprints after Suvi down the hallway. Guild Mage Pane looks up and goes

Guild Mage Pane (Brennan)

[Panting] What do you know about Will Gallows?

[Will Gallows' sleazy jazz motif kicks up]

Ame (Erika)

We know that he has something that we want. And in return, he wanted you. So how do we give him you, and still let you live? The choice is yours, because we are not leaving here without what we came for.

Guild Mage Pane (Brennan)

You promised me to Will Gallows in exchange for something, of his that you desire.

Ame (Erika)

Yes.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

It's possible that I might be able to keep my life, but find a way to make sure that you get what you want as well. There is some very critical research up in the library, that may have some indication of the sorts of things that Will Gallows is interested in me for. It's possible that, given just a minute or two, I might be able to root around, and find something of value to him.

Lou Wilson

Can I make an insight check?

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Yeah.

Erika Ishii
Yeah, we're all... 14.

Lou Wilson
13.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
I rolled a natural 1.

[Aabria and Erika laugh]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
This guy is flop sweating, his eyes are flicking back and forth. He is trying to be helpful to you, and I think sweet little village witch Ame, and deeply dreams in his faerie heart of being a knight Eursulon, are watching a guy that you have approached only with honesty and forthrightness, who is a nasty, gambling debt, wizard motherfucker, who is, only in this moment, trying to lie to you, to get far enough away to flee forever.

Guild Mage Pane (Brennan)
So here's what we must do. We will split up into—

Ame (Erika)
[Angry] Don't lie to us. Do you think just because you're a wizard with training from the Citadel, you can fool us? We have been nothing but open, and honest, and kind. And if you give us no other choice, we're going to give you over to Gallows.

Guild Mage Pane (Brennan)
I understand. What ideas do you have about how my life might be saved?

Ame (Erika)
Here's what I will tell you. We were instructed to cut your ties with the Empire, and that Gallows would take it from there. So that is what we're going to do. And now, you knowing this means that you have a head start, and that is as much as we are willing to give you.

Guild Mage Pane (Brennan)
You will let me flee?

Ame (Erika)
Yes. Because we will still be fulfilling our end of the bargain. But it's up to you not to get caught by Gallows.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Give me a persuasion check with advantage.

Erika Ishii
That's a 17.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
He stands up. Looks at you.

Guild Mage Pane (Brennan)
You have destroyed my life. Please stall for as long as you can.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
And he sprints down the hallway.

[Swish of a robe, clacking footsteps echoing away down the hall.]

Eursulon (Lou)
We have to stop doing this. The amount of times we've interacted with a mage and then watched them run away—

Brennan Lee Mulligan
[Laughs]

Eursulon (Lou)
—fearing for their life.

Ame (Erika)
Is not a great pattern. [Sighs]

[Jazz piano fades away]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Suvi!

Aabria Iyengar
Yeah.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
As you've marched away, you hear Morrow rounding the corner.

Guild Mage Morrow (Brennan)
Apprentice Archmage! Um, uh.

Aabria Iyengar
Suvi turns around, and as she rounds on him, it's that—I mean, he would understand it, too, everyone that came through the Citadel, children were trained to be soldiers first. And the more tests you passed, the longer you got to stay, the more you had a dream of not simply being a frontline fighter, but all of that training was still there. And Suvi is trying to calm down the adrenaline of a child raised for battle, and is trying to put it away and that's what he sees when she turns around.

Guild Mage Morrow (Brennan)
Apprentice Archmage. I am so very sorry. I understand how upsetting it can be, when servants act—

Suvi (Aabria)
No.

Guild Mage Morrow (Brennan)
—outrageously.

Suvi (Aabria)
You—

Guild Mage Morrow (Brennan)
Your man-at-arms should NOT have been playing—

Suvi (Aabria)
Stop. I told you I had no intention of speaking to you about what some of my work entailed. But, part of it involved...

Aabria Iyengar

And I think there's this pause where Suvi has fully committed—she has committed herself to the death of this man, and is going to give the game away.

Suvi (Aabria)

We... I had intel that there was some embezzlement from this Chantry at the hands of Guild Mage Pane. And when I sent my man to go speak to him of it, Pane attacked, confirming my suspicions. You know as well as I do. Embezzlement? That is treason to the Empire, with a death sentence.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Have you any proof of this crime? Attacking your servant is by itself enough for us to—so the croquet, that didn't happen? Or—

Erika Ishii

[Laughing]

Lou Wilson

Or.

Guild Mage Morrow (Brennan)

I'm just trying—

Suvi (Aabria)

No.

Guild Mage Morrow (Brennan)

—he—okay so—

Suvi (Aabria)

No, the croquet did not happen.

Guild Mage Morrow (Brennan)

So he just burned those mallets and balls for no reason?

Suvi (Aabria)

He burned the evidence of his malfeasance.

Aabria Iyengar

And I'm going to pull the knife out and kind of throw it at Marrow's feet.

[Clatter of metal on stone]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

That's Guild Mage Pane's knife.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You see he picks it up.

Guild Mage Morrow (Brennan)

[Sigh] Very well. Effective immediately, the Guild Mage Pane is stripped of all rank and title within this Chantry.

Guild Mage Morrow (Brennan)

He looks at his attendants and says

Guild Mage Morrow (Brennan)

Please go see to the Guild Mage's prompt arrest.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And the Mages sort of flank out and begin moving through the space.

Guild Mage Morrow (Brennan)

I am grievously sorry that—first of all, why was I not told directly, that one of my subordinates was a Thief, and stealing from the Empire?

Suvi (Aabria)

My hope was to collect evidence to present you with. Out of respect for you and the work you do here, I wanted to come to you with an easy solution, and an understandable set of circumstances.

Guild Mage Morrow (Brennan)

Thank you. Thank you, both for—but why did he cast magic missile on himself?

Lou Wilson

[Laughing]

Suvi (Aabria)

That was me, I did that. I cast the magic missile when he attacked Bear.

Guild Mage Morrow (Brennan)

Oh, my god, it all checks out!

Suvi (Aabria)

No, it's fine.

Guild Mage Morrow (Brennan)

I have an answer for everything! Okay.

Suvi (Aabria)

Thank you. I—Indoor croquet?

Guild Mage Morrow (Brennan)

I was wonder—the thing that got me was the wickets!

Suvi (Aabria)

Yeah! Right?

Brennan Lee Mulligan

How do you get the wickets in the stone floor?

Aabria Iyengar

[Conspiratorially] Look, I understand we're kind of here on the fringes of the Empire, and they get fucking weird, but like, no, no indoor croquet, that's nothing.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

I won't lie to you. I know—I know, in my role as administrator, I have been failing. It is because I have given everything to my role as lead researcher. When you see the derrick tonight, you will understand why I [sighs] have been... Lacking, in my diligence and observation of the minutiae of the Chantry.

Aabria Iyengar

And I think in this moment, Suvi realizes an opportunity to consolidate a bond? And she just reaches out very simply, and touches Morrow's elbow, and just gives a little nod.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

He looks up at you and you see these sort of big, watery blue eyes well up with tears.

Guild Mage Morrow (Brennan)

I was not given much, but I was given enough, and I knew that if I could stay focused, I would be able to contribute something.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And you see his lip quivers here.

Guild Mage Morrow (Brennan)

I would be able to contribute something that mattered, something that other mages, greater than myself, would see some merit in. I... I wish that my work might be... A simple stepping stone, to achieve things greater, and more glorious, in the direction of what I have started. I will see—my attendants are, I'm sure, arresting Guild Mage Pane right now. Let me, for once, turn my attention to the mundane, the material, and the imperial, and see to the effecting of this arrest. This will be handled. The ship will be ready tonight. You have your leave of this place here, of the city itself, the research library, or, if you wish as well, if your man-at-arms, who I saw was injured. We have an armory. If there's anything that—

Suvi (Aabria)

Thank you.

Guild Mage Morrow (Brennan)

Yes.

Suvi (Aabria)

I will avail myself to that.

Guild Mage Morrow (Brennan)

Yes, of course. And, the ships will be ready tonight, at half past 10.

Suvi (Aabria)

I very much look forward to seeing it.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Ame and Eursulon, you look through ash. Ash and books and ledgers. It looks like he was pretty—Ya know, someone said the magic word that told him his life was about to be in shambles, and he did the first thing he could think to do as an Archmage Apprentice of the Citadel rounded the corner, which was jump into my office and burn all this shit.

Lou Wilson

Yeah.

Erika Ishii

[Laughs]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You see, the fox looks up and goes

The Fox (Brennan)

That guy tried to kill me.

Ame (Erika)

Yeah, he did. And I'm sorry that I put you in harm's way.

The Fox (Brennan)

I'm sorry I put you in harm's way.

Ame (Erika)

What?

The Fox (Brennan)

Ya know. You were around. Something could have happened.

Ame (Erika)

Well yeah, but, I mean like, I told you to attack him. And if he was going to—

The Fox (Brennan)

I was in harm's way before I attacked him. You don't have to worry about harm's way. I'm from the forest. You're in harm's way all the time. Fall down a hill, break your leg, get caught in a trap, drown, storm, freeze to death, starve, not get enough food. Easy. Harm's all around.

Ame (Erika)

Yeah, well, not in the forest, when you care about someone, you try to mitigate that harm. And so this is my promise to you to always try and make it so that there's less harm around you.

The Fox (Brennan)

If I see any harm coming for you, I'll mitigate it.

Aabria Iyengar

[Laughs]

Ame (Erika)

You'll what?

The Fox (Brennan)

I'll get it. What did you say?

Ame (Erika)

I said mitigate.

The Fox (Brennan)

That means make it go away?

Ame (Erika)

Make it less, yes.

The Fox (Brennan)

Yeah.

Ame (Erika)

Okay.

The Fox (Brennan)

If harm comes for you, I'll mitigate it.

Ame (Erika)
Yeah. Thanks.

The Fox (Brennan)
You know what we really should mitigate is, ah, all this ash and blood everywhere. This place is bad now, huh?

Aabria Iyengar
[Laughs]

Ame (Erika)
Yeah.

Eursulon (Lou)
Yes, this place is bad now.

The Fox (Brennan)
[Chuckles] Let's go find some of that fish slurry and mitigate that.

[Aabria and Erika laugh]

The Fox (Brennan)
Am I using it right?

Ame (Erika)
You know what? I'm proud of you. You're using a new word in a sentence.

The Fox (Brennan)
There you go. That's how you mitigate it.

Ame (Erika)
That one was less—but that's ok.

Eursulon (Lou)
That doesn't work.

The Fox (Brennan)
That doesn't work? Okay, all right.

Ame (Erika)
Well you keep—ya gotta keep trying until you get it right.

The Fox (Brennan)
If you do that, you will... Mitigate [sighs] mistakes.

Ame (Erika)
Yay. And we're back!

The Fox (Brennan)
And we're back! Okay, I got that one. I get it, I get what it means.

Erika Ishii
We go to find Suvi.

Lou Wilson

Yeah. I'm going to pull up alongside Ame while we're walking. Yeah, I think it—just quietly following the fox, standing next to you.

Eursulon (Lou)

It was—I had no idea what I was doing.

Ame (Erika)

You're not used to planning, that's okay. To be honest with you, Spirits and wherever witches lie kind of aren't big on plans, and following them.

Eursulon (Lou)

No, but feel like if we keep doing this, it's going to keep happening the same way.

Ame (Erika)

Yeah, that's true.

Eursulon (Lou)

Suvi is going to step in. And HANDLE it, and it's impressive, and—I just—I don't like being carried, I don't like you carrying me. I should be able to—I should be able to handle myself.

Ame (Erika)

That's not really how it works, with us. Just like I told the fox, you mitigate harm around you, as much as you can. You're not a burden on anybody, okay? And, look, I'm still getting used to this, too. I don't—there's just things here in the city that don't make sense to me. And if I am being honest with myself, I don't want Suvi to see that.

Eursulon (Lou)

Yes, this is—this is different.

Ame (Erika)

She went off, and she became this big, fancy, city wizard and, ya know, this is really different than that summer on the farm, where I got to show her the ropes, and look like I knew what I was doing, but I'm really out of my element here, and I think you're feeling a little of that, too, but—okay. Here's the deal. We're going to do our best, to learn, and observe, and NOT make more wizards run away, fearing for their lives, um. And—and maybe it's okay if we ask Suvi for some pointers sometimes.

Eursulon (Lou)

Yeah.

Ame (Erika)

We gotta make it clear, because it's not we're dumb—not that not that we're dumb.

Eursulon (Lou)

We're not dumb.

Ame (Erika)

We're not dumb.

Eursulon (Lou)

We're capable.

Ame (Erika)

Yes, we are very capable.

Eursulon (Lou)
We're just capable in other ways.

Ame (Erika)
Yeah! Everybody's got their strengths.

Eursulon (Lou)
Yes. I mean, I'm the Strongman of Silbry!

Ame (Erika)
Yes! [Laughs]

Eursulon (Lou)
I have to stop saying it, it's truly like—

Ame (Erika)
You took down that door like it was nothing!

Eursulon (Lou)
The second time! [Laughs]

Ame (Erika)
We got there.

Eursulon (Lou)
We got there.

Ame (Erika)
[Sighs]

Eursulon (Lou)
Alright. We'll do better.

Ame (Erika)
We'll do better.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You round the corner. Suvi, I think Morrow has already gone off to see towards Pane. Probably you're actually back in your quarters at this point?

Aabria Iyengar
Yeah.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You all reconvene, and you see that, sort of running into the room, already—you see that, no matter how kind of frightening and traumatic things are, that the Fox is already completely back to neutral. He's great.

Erika Ishii
[Laughs]

Aabria Iyengar
[Laughing] Yeah!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
He's—

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Resilient!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
He walks up, he looks up at you Suvi, and he goes

The Fox (Brennan)
[Laughing] I don't know how the hell you bit that guy standing so far away, but I'll tell you this. I set 'em up, you knock 'em down.

Aabria Iyengar
I just want to offer him a little bitty fist bump.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You—paws.

Aabria Iyengar
Oh, no I don't like that.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Little loving paw on your fist.

Aabria Iyengar
I kiss it? I don't know.

The Fox (Brennan)
Thank you.

Suvi (Aabria)
Weird. Are you okay?

Eursulon (Lou)
I'm fine.

Ame (Erika)
Yeah. How about you?

Suvi (Aabria)
I'm fine. You brought him back.

Eursulon (Lou)
I couldn't—it just felt like it didn't have to go that way. And it was my folly that it did.

Suvi (Aabria)
What do you mean?

Eursulon (Lou)
Well, it felt good, that I thought that I could be the person who would help, you know—that I could sneak in. And so I said I'd do it, And then the opportunity availed itself to, and I did. And then, things didn't go well, and everything went sideways, and he ended up bleeding out, and so I—I took that upon myself. It did not have to go sideways in that way.

Suvi (Aabria)

Eursulon, he's going to die. If not in his office, Will Gallows WILL kill him. We consigned him to death the moment we told him why we were here. What do you think you did?

Eursulon (Lou)

Well, I'm sorry, Suvi—

Suvi (Aabria)

No—

Eursulon (Lou)

—I'm not as good at this as you are.

Aabria Iyengar

No, I'm sorry. Things are different, in the Citadel. It's hard here. But the law is clear. Treason is met with death. At our hands, or an outlaw's, doesn't really matter. But I appreciate your penchant for mercy.

Lou Wilson

I—agh, I don't know. I was performing at a circus two, three weeks ago. Now I'm deciding if—if wizards should live, or die here, or die there. It's—it's just—it's a lot.

Erika Ishii

I haven't really ever traveled much, outside of the village. And this is all bad. It feels bad. I—it's like, the rules that I spent my whole life learning, are just not applicable here, and—and so I'm I'm sorry if I seem like I'm trying to question you, or anything, I just don't know—please help, Suvi!

Eursulon (Lou)

I guess that's really what we're asking for.

Ame (Erika)

[Crying] Yeah!

Suvi (Aabria)

No, no! I—Oh god.

Aabria Iyengar

And Suvi just, goes over and makes sure the door is closed and locked, and kind of brings everyone as far away from where anyone could overhear.

Suvi (Aabria)

You're fine. I'm sorry. This is—this is the thing they train us for. It's not good, but it's—

Ame (Erika)

But how do you know? Like, how do you know that that man, should have died, or or what to do? Like you always know what to do!

Aabria Iyengar

I mean that's—you spent the last 15 years training with Grandmother Wren. I went to the desert, and survived it. I—All I know is how to make hard choices. But it's the first time in my life I actually have to make them, and it's not easy. For whatever that's worth. I'm sorry.

Eursulon (Lou)

No, don't. No one should be apologizing.

Erika Ishii

Yeah, and when those kinds of decisions become easy, I think, is when we have a real problem, so...

Suvi (Aabria)

Yeah, maybe.

Ame (Erika)

Okay, well, we fulfilled our end of the bargain.

Eursulon (Lou)

Yes. We can—we can go get Wavebreaker now? I mean it's—

Ame (Erika)

We can.

Suvi (Aabria)

I kind of want to see whatever Morrow is working on.

Ame (Erika)

There's something deeply wrong with that derrick out there.

Suvi (Aabria)

I mean, you guys saw the—the wands?

Eursulon (Lou)

The large tanks.

Suvi (Aabria)

Yeah. It feels like they're preparing for war.

Eursulon (Lou)

The Azure Battalion, you mean?

Suvi (Aabria)

Yeah.

Eursulon (Lou)

They're going to fight.

Aabria Iyengar

I mean, you saw those big barrels. And, I saw wizards, earlier in the research library, bandaged. All of this feels, wrong, it doesn't feel peaceful, or calm at all, and maybe if we spend just a couple more hours, we can have a better insight on whatever's happening.

Ame (Erika)

I agree.

Erika Ishii

And I taste the salt water in my mouth, and a knot in my stomach. It isn't magical, or anything like the tangled roots that were there before, but it is deeply connected to this place, and whatever is happening.

Eursulon (Lou)

So we'll see the derrick, and then—then treat with Gallows.

Suvi (Aabria)

Yes. Also, do you want some armor? Look—

Eursulon (Lou)

What?

Suvi (Aabria)

Look, I kind of run this joint now. We can go, and go get some stuff.

Ame (Erika)

[Gasps]

Suvi (Aabria)

You want some stuff?

Lou Wilson

I mean, you did say there's a war and all, coming, and, I would like to be better prepared. I mean I think I—I have this cheap sword that I got from Finley, that I didn't even have, it was in my bedroom. So, yeah, I would take something—something better.

[Imperial parade march begins to play]

Suvi (Aabria)

Let's go outfit our little guardian!

Ame (Erika)

[Squealing]

Suvi (Aabria)

"Little" just staring up at you like, "Ha ha ha ha! Little guy!"

Lou Wilson

Alright.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Hell yeah. So, you have a couple of hours to kill, you head over to the armory?

Aabria Iyengar

Yeah.

Lou Wilson

Yeah.

Erika Ishii

Yeah!

Aabria Iyengar

Shoppin'!

Lou Wilson

Shopping-uh!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Incredible! So what I'll add—what I'll say is this. Anyone who wants to can give me an investigation—

Lou Wilson
Mm.

Aabria Iyengar
Yes!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
—or an arcana check.

Aabria Iyengar
[Gasp] Those are things I like and I'm good at!

Lou Wilson
Can I have help from the fox?

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Yes, the fox will help.

Aabria Iyengar
Shit!

Erika Ishii
And I will do guidance?

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Cool.

Erika Ishii
For anybody who needs it.

Aabria Iyengar
Can I have it?

Lou Wilson
I'll take it.

Erika Ishii
Yeah! Take that guidance!

Lou Wilson
Do you mind if I take your familiar and—[Laughs]

Erika Ishii
Yeah! Yeah, I can help you out.

Lou Wilson
All right. Thanks, Fox.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
So I—so I'll be honest with you. We got some really good rolls in here. We got a dirty 20 from Eursulon.

Aabria Iyengar
Yeah!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
We got a 17 over here.

Erika Ishii
[Goblinessque] Yeah-huh!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
What do we got over here? We have—

Aabria Iyengar
23!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
23. So the three of you, having had this quite harrowing afternoon, violence in the halls of the Kalabel Chantry of the Scepter's Chorus, with Guild Mage Pane, who is apparently sprinted out of here, unclear whether he's been captured by the attendant Mages and Guild Mage Morrow, the head of the Sanctum. You had—came to blows! Eursulon was injured by Wizard's Magic for the first time!

Lou Wilson
Augh!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Not grievously so, but nonetheless, injured. And you find yourselves walking down one of the quartz hallways, on the ground floor, as sort of a warehouse and more, kind of, technological industrial holding areas of the Sanctum, give out and flare out from the tower's base. So you're sort of no longer in the Sanctum proper anymore, you've walked down a kind of interior passage. You see that there's windows on either side, that face out to these, like, white gravel courtyards, and walk into an armory, as it is so called.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
The armory is sort of a—immediately, I think, for Ame and Eursulon. Your idea of what will be awaiting you is INSTANTLY dispelled, as a very quiet, meditative, wooden room unveils itself—something like being in a well appointed study. There are small blue fabric chairs. The things here are a little bit less ostentatious than in the Sanctum—no one's trying to be impressed—but even so, it gives way more of the feeling of like, a drawing room in a private manner, than it does of when you think of an armory.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Large wardrobes are filled with azure coats, sort of military coats. You see that the only things that are visible at the moment are the coats in the open wardrobes, and there is an entire wall, lined with these Imperial war-staves. There are, sort of—there's one little section open, that you see is—first looks like a bench, but you realize that the front of it can be sort of lifted up, and at this moment it IS slightly a jar and there are just a lot of boots underneath there.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Your investigation checks were quite high, so for our purposes, this is almost a combination investigation check and luck check. What you would realize, Suvi, in this moment as well, is there's a lot of stuff in here. There's no one in here taking care of it right now—you're in the Sanctum, all the people that would stop you from get—the point of this place is that it's available to the soldiers who need it—

Aabria Iyengar
[Laughs] Yeah.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
—so there's not someone here, sort of guarding it. But, normally you know, there would be a process of checking this stuff out. You probably don't need to do that, but it's rude not to do it, because someone will get in a lot of

trouble if something just goes missing. I think that you know that your station here affords you the license to do whatever the hell you want, with consequences.

Aabria Iyengar
Yeah.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Right? But, I think the important thing is, the big set piece is sort of these staves. There's an entire wall that should be full of them. But, of course, many of the Azure Battalion have their's, so there's space for about 60, and there's probably 14 left up on the wall. So, much like being in a pool hall where all the queues have been taken off because they're being used, there's just a couple of them left.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
That being said, there are drawers set into the wall, cabinets that are all closed, and looking at them, you're sort of going, where would big polearms, and swords and axes be? But, of course, this is a wizards armory, so it's a lot more genteel and sedate than that.

Lou Wilson
And Eursulon is immediately crest fallen.

Aabria Iyengar
Oh no!

[Aabria and Brennan laugh]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Immediately on your investigation, I will tell you that more than half the room you're able to quickly rule out. The boots, they're magical, they will not fit Eursulon. The jackets, they're magical, they will not fit Eursulon.

Aabria Iyengar
[Laughs]

Lou Wilson
Okay.

[Aabria and Brennan laugh]

Lou Wilson
Come on. Eursulon is like, looking at a rack at the GAP and being like "If I go more to the right, do we get larger? Do we get larger? No. A medium?"

Erika Ishii
Ame's behind him trying to sort of—

Eursulon (Lou)
Yes, could you stitch it? Is that possible?

Erika Ishii
Trying to mend it, to stitch it.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
And of course, you're looking—

Erika Ishii
It's lumpy.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And of course, you're looking at Eursulon's, ya know, glamoured self holding a jacket that absolutely—

Eursulon (Lou)

I'm five feet—I'm five inches taller than I—like, even my seven foot one is not my full size.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Yes, exactly.

Aabria Iyengar

So funny.

Lou Wilson

I definitely rip two or three robes, to start.

Aabria Iyengar

Ah!

[Ripping cloth]

Eursulon (Lou)

Ah, ooh I'm—I'm sorry. It—I thought—

Suvi (Aabria)

Nope, you're good.

Eursulon (Lou)

Maybe it would—I thought it would stretch magically or something.

Suvi (Aabria)

It's nothing. Thank you, just pass that over here.

Aabria Iyengar

Suvi is sitting with the ledger, kind of keeping track of what we're grabbing, and she'll just start passively mending everything.

Erika Ishii

Go ahead, take your time.

Erika Ishii

Mending. I'm pulling things off the rack, as if a fashion montage is happening.

Aabria Iyengar

Yeah!

Ame (Erika)

Oh, try this one.

Aabria Iyengar

[Singing "Suddenly I See" by KT Tunstall] "Suddenly I see!"

Eursulon (Lou)

Of course! Agh, nope. Suvi.

Suvi (Aabria)
Here we go. Mending mending mending.

Ame (Erika)
Maybe just a hat here.

Eursulon (Lou)
Okay. [Grunts with effort]

Ame (Erika)
Maybe you're not a hat guy!

Eursulon (Lou)
No, no, no, Suvi, please.

Suvi (Aabria)
Got it, got it, got it.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You get a hat that can perch.

Aabria Iyengar
[Laughs]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You get a hat that can, like, perch on your head, but it's one of those—

Erika Ishii
Like a fascinator.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
—sort of cavalry officers hat, that has a chin strap, and it won't—not even close.

Lou Wilson
Just fully blocking my eyes.

Eursulon (Lou)
Do we think—do we think this—could I just—

Ame (Erika)
It's fine!

Eursulon (Lou)
No, sorry, sorry, sorry.

Ame (Erika)
[Uncertainly] It's a look.

Aabria Iyengar
Can you just remember what this looks like, and use your magic to replicate it?

Eursulon (Lou)
Yeah, but that's—come on, Suvi.

Suvi (Aabria)
Okay, I'm sorry.

Eursulon (Lou)
Come on, Suvi.

Suvi (Aabria)
I'm sorry. Has to be that hat.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
I think also, Suvi, you'd be aware that some of this stuff—the jackets and hats and boots, for example, bear the crests of the Azure Battalion. So it's not wrong for you to—it does magical stuff, I wouldn't fault you for taking it, but it will lead to interesting social interactions, as opposed to some of the stuff in the armory that's a little bit less—like, so the number one thing that I actually won't even make you roll for, I'm handing a little index card across the table.

Aabria Iyengar
Aaah!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
The first thing you see are the Imperial war-staves. But I'll let Suvi describe—you can see what they do and what they're called. I'll let Suvi take it away and explain whether Eursulon wants that or not

Aabria Iyengar
Suvi watches. After you've grabbed a couple, I was like, can you just, hey, go grab a matchstick.

Eursulon (Lou)
Alright?

Lou Wilson
I guess I'll take one of the staves down.

Aabria Iyengar
Yeah.

Aabria Iyengar
Yeah so they're—look, Azure Battalion and any sort of war mage, all of this is, yeah, you can hit it with the pointy end, but it helps you cast magic more effectively.

Eursulon (Lou)
Mhm.

Aabria Iyengar
Cantrips mostly, because these are all, heh, shit wizards, but they're good at hitting stuff. We love cannon fodder.

Lou Wilson
So it's like a strict—like, like Suvi's staff?

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Oh, Suvi's staff is meant to wield status and respect, these staves are all bound on either end with brass studs, into a leather, sort of, harness or sash that allows you to shoulder these staves. So you can carry them over one shoulder when you're marching, they come off—they're wielded in two hands, but you see that, the way they're wielded, they're not like quarterstaves you've seen. Like, yes, you can hit people with them, but fundamentally, you see that there is an end—and because these have seen some use, you see where the slang term "matchstick" comes from, which is that one of the banded ends is covered in a little bit of soot.

Lou Wilson
Mhm.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
And that these are basically for firing firebolts, cantrips, things of that nature.

Suvi (Aabria)
They need help to cast cantrips.

Eursulon (Lou)
Mm.

Suvi (Aabria)
Gross.

Ame (Erika)
Is this like—like the things that I make?

Suvi (Aabria)
Oh.

Ame (Erika)
You know. How I put magic into little things, and then I'll give them to people? Is it you like that?

Aabria Iyengar
Kind of. But yours are—

Aabria Iyengar
And I think you see Suvi kind of just, like, shakes her wrist a little bit and she's still wearing the like, sort of, no longer charged charm bracelet.

Suvi (Aabria)
No, because the magic on these is sort of permanent. I think yours are sort of one and done, right?

Ame (Erika)
Yeah. It's permanent!?

Suvi (Aabria)
Oh, yeah.

Erika Ishii
I pick one up, and I inspect it.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Go ahead and give me an arcana check.

Erika Ishii
9.

Suvi (Aabria)
[Laughing] Oh no!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You really don't understand some elements of this. It has a permanent magical effect on it, and it's up on the wall like candy in a candy shop. The full weight of the Imperium. The Citadel. What it means to have something like this. These staves were made by people who didn't know the names or faces of who would end up using them.

Ame (Erika)

But then what if they're used for bad things?

Aabria Iyengar

What do you mean?

Ame (Erika)

I mean—

Suvi (Aabria)

These are all used by soldiers of the imperium.

Erika Ishii

I mean, I don't mean to sound naive here, but people are people, and this is a lot of power for just a person to have in their pocket.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Ame is probably—is reacting to the mass production of magical objects. But you're also aware of how not powerful these magical items are. One of the things about these staves is, they don't have any spells in them. They literally don't—a normal person picking this up would not be able to do anything with it. It relies on the wielder already being able to cast a cantrip. All they serve to do is take a spell you can already cast at will and make it a little bit more accurate.

Aabria Iyengar

Yeah. And thinking back to like, the actual systems inside of the Citadel, like the Pooling of Magic, where we have whole systems where low level wizards dump their spell slots into pools for better wizards to use and like Suvi's mind kind of—I think Ame would see Suvi go away a little bit, in her own head, as she imagines the more impressive versions of all of the magical items she's seen, and all of the incredible industry around magic. And instead of speaking to any of that, Suvi just kind of nods and tries to—like

Suvi (Aabria)

Oh, look at what Eursulon's got!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

[Laughs]

Lou Wilson

Yes. Eursulon is definitely like having a real kid with a present he didn't want energy at this point.

[Everyone roars with laughter]

Lou Wilson

Which is like, he's holding the matchstick and being like

Eursulon (Lou)

[Muttering] This is—yeah, mhm.

[Everyone laughs]

Eursulon (Lou)

I bet—

Eursulon (Lou)

but, like, kind of leaning over to the drawers, and kind of looking for Suvi's permission to start opening more stuff to find anything else.

Aabria Iyengar

Yeah.

Erika Ishii

I'm just really fascinated by this because I just—I don't understand quite—it all is very technical, I guess? But I would really love to have a chance at some point to study these and to see if there's a way to do something like this again.

Suvi (Aabria)

What do you mean?

Ame (Erika)

I mean just make things.

Suvi (Aabria)

Oh, yeah, you can have one.

Ame (Erika)

Yeah?

Suvi (Aabria)

Yeah, take one.

Ame (Erika)

Okay!

Aabria Iyengar

I just pull out the ledger and put "2 matchsticks" and then cross it out and write [Laughing] "Imperial war-staves."

Lou Wilson

All right, Eursulon is done. Eursulon is opening other stuff.

Yeah ok! Go go go go!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

So, I'll go ahead—we'll resolve this initial investigation check. I'll say on a 17—on a 17—

Aabria Iyengar

[Laughs]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

—Ame opens a cabinet next to—or actually, at the edge of the line of jackets, you see that on a little stool, wrapped up in wax paper, is a stack of fabric, that you realize—

Erika Ishii

[Gasp]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

—it's like a thick stack of fabric, that are all in squares, and you realize they're little kind of diaphanous bandanas. There's a wavy, cream and green pattern to them—

Aabria Iyengar

Ooh!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

—and they are—but they're there in a stack like, sort of like freshly laundered napkins, and there's a ton of 'em.

Ame (Erika)

I keep saying that I don't need more fabrics and things, but then I just get—I always think of just a little project that I can use it for in the future.

Suvi (Aabria)

Like when we were leaving the cottage.

Ame (Erika)

Yeah.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You recognize these, because these appear to be more, like, of a texture that doesn't seem—it seems that this has been, like, requisitioned from a local, more than it has come from the Empire. You find a stack of these!

Aabria Iyengar

Magical Etsy!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You find a stack of these.

Erika Ishii

[Gasps] Wooow.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And you recognize why this local chapter of the Azure Battalion has needed them. This is a little stack of Witchfire veils. They're just for wrapping around your nose and mouth while you're out dealing with dangerous magical smoke, essentially.

Aabria Iyengar

Oh!

Erika Ishii

Ohhhh.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

So Ame finds that. Off in a corner, you find the good stuff that actually, probably, Eursulon could wear without clocking too much social heat—

Aabria Iyengar

Yeah.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

—because they're pretty—they don't have any crests or symbols on them—which are just golden bracers, that go on the forearm. They are of like, sort of a hardened leather, essentially. Very light, good for spellwork, not very heavy, but they're—you know, they're like, handy. They have a minor abjuration on them.

Aabria Iyengar

Suvi's got big mom energy, wherever you are, like, try these on, sweetie.

[Aabria and Erika laugh]

Eursulon (Lou)

Alright. Yes. Oh, these fit!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And the last thing, Eursulon, you open—you're looking at a bunch of empty drawers, and you open a big, wide drawer, the drawer is almost like four and a half feet wide, but very shallow, it's only like a few inches tall. And as you open it, you see these lovely, like, black velvet surfaces, with all these little slits in them. And then you see that while it is mostly empty, there are rows and rows of rings.

Lou Wilson

Mm.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Like a jeweler's shop.

Aabria Iyengar

Ooh!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You see that there are bronze rings, copper rings, and coral rings.

Erika Ishii

[Gasp]

Lou Wilson

Mm!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Suvi, you would know off the top that it's only safe to wear two magical rings at once. Also, these are not marked with the Azure Battalion, these are way wider use within the Empire in general. These are sort of Citadel-made, mass produced magical rings. Go ahead, and you can give me a—give me an arcana check. What'dya get, what'dya get!

Aabria Iyengar

28.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

28!

Erika Ishii

Eyyy!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

I was gonna say, 15 gets you one, and—

Aabria Iyengar

Yeah!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

—20 gets you two. You're able to instantly identify all three of these types of rings. Because the Azure Battalion are all kids that—are all usually, people that were at least assigned to be wizards going forward, and they fight magically, there are a lot of rings that are made to basically bolster their innate abilities for non-combat purposes. So these rings are all basically like, non combat—for non combat jobs.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You know that the bronze rings are called Steward's Rings, which is basically to give to wizards that have to do cargo, longshoremen, porter, kind of carrying and unloading stuff. The copper rings are Scout's Rings, which are for watchmen, scouts, people that are on guard duty. And then there are these coral rings, which, you actually haven't seen these before, but you just look at the little—you can see an arcane mark in the velvet that you can just speak the sort of Irulian, you know—and you recognize these have been called Sailor's Rings. So Steward's Rings, Scout's Rings, and Sailor's Rings. And I'll give them to you and let you interpret the game abilities into—

Aabria Iyengar

Yes!

Erika Ishii

[Screaming]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

—what Suvi would be able to say.

Aabria Iyengar

[Laughs in delight]

Lou Wilson

I think Eursulon just kind of grabs a handful of them.

[Aabria and Erika both cry out]

Eursulon (Lou)

I found these.

Suvi (Aabria)

Oh, okay.

Eursulon (Lou)

What do they do? And would they fit on my fingers?

Aabria Iyengar

[Laughs]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

These magical rings, you know, are a little bit less shoddy than the Azure Battalion stuff, they're citadel made, they will resize.

Erika Ishii

Mmm!

Ame (Erika)

Where's the coral from? What kind of coral is it?

Suvi (Aabria)

I don't know.

Aabria Iyengar
And I just hand you a ring so you can stare at it—

Ame (Erika)
Ooh

Aabria Iyengar
—while Suvi just sort of contemplates all three.

Suvi (Aabria)
Okay, we're going to put the bronze rings away, because that's for, uh, you know, someone that would be carrying bags, and I don't want that on you. BUT. The copper.

Eursulon (Lou)
Okay.

Suvi (Aabria)
Copper is good. This is a Scout's Ring.

Eursulon (Lou)
Okay.

Suvi (Aabria)
It will help with perception, and I think since you are not only the strongest man in Silbry—

[Ame and Eursulon laugh]

Suvi (Aabria)
—but our protector, it'll help you get the drop on whatever we come up against.

Eursulon (Lou)
That sounds right. Yes.

Aabria Iyengar
Yeah. I immediately put the bronze rings back. I don't like 'em.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
[Laughs]

Aabria Iyengar
I think there's something—there's enough like—Suvi has enough internal biases that like, oh, when you see that, you're like "eugh, gosh."

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Give me an insight check, Ame.

Erika Ishii
21.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
I think that you can see, as Suvi sort of discards the bronze ring, there's an element of judgment in Suvi, about what the bronze ring signifies, that you would clock, I think, a little bit along the same vibe with this whole chantry in general, of the kind of things wizards look down on.

Ame (Erika)

I mean, if it's about carrying things, I carry a lot of things. Can I look at that one?

Suvi (Aabria)

Yeah, I guess it helps with your strength.

Aabria Iyengar

I think I handed you the card back.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Oh, yeah yeah yeah.

Aabria Iyengar

Yeah.

Suvi (Aabria)

Uh, it makes you—If you want to be a little pack mule, go ahead. Maybe put a glove on over it, though.

Ame (Erika)

Put—what? Why? [Laughing] That's rad as heck.

Suvi (Aabria)

Mm.

Ame (Erika)

I mean you get to—

Suvi (Aabria)

Mm.

Erika Ishii

Yeah!

Erika Ishii

Yeah, I guess.

Ame (Erika)

You don't want to be strong?

Suvi (Aabria)

I am strong.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

[Laughing]

Ame (Erika)

[Lascivious] Yes, ma'am!

Suvi (Aabria)

And I like that!

Ame (Erika)

Oh, wow.

Suvi (Aabria)

These Sailor Rings, though. This allows you to breathe underwater.

Ame (Erika)

[Gasps]

Eursulon (Lou)

What? [Stammering]

Suvi (Aabria)

Yeah!

Lou Wilson

Let me go back to like, get my own.

Ame (Erika)

[Gasps]

Suvi (Aabria)

Remember, you can only wear two. Pick your two.

Eursulon (Lou)

Is it a style thing?

Suvi (Aabria)

Oh, it's a magical load thing.

Eursulon (Lou)

Oh, okay, got it. It wouldn't be—it's not just like, you would look weird having a bunch of rings?

Suvi (Aabria)

Oh no, no not at all!

Eursulon (Lou)

Okay.

Lou Wilson

I will be taking Suvi's suggestion, so on his left middle finger, he'll wear the Sailor's Ring, and on his right index finger, he'll wear the copper ring.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Gotcha gotcha gotcha.

Lou Wilson

The Scout's Ring.

Aabria Iyengar

Yeah.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

The Scout's Ring. Incredible.

Ame (Erika)

This is fascinating, the amount of power that is in these, permanently??

Suvi (Aabria)
Mhm!

Ame (Erika)
Incredible. I would love to take one of the bronze rings, so I can carry a lot of different things. I could wrestle so many goats—

Suvi (Aabria)
What.

Ame (Erika)
—with this ring. I would also like to get a Scout's Ring—

Suvi (Aabria)
Nicholas.

Ame (Erika)
—because I could do with a little more vigilance.

Lou Wilson
Do these rings feel any sort of way, putting them on?

Brennan Lee Mulligan
What I would actually love for you to do is to give me a constitution saving throw.

Lou Wilson
Okay, why did I ask. That's a 7.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You put the copper ring on, and the sensation is not actually a terrible one, as you put it on. I think that constitution save means you're just very—you feel the stimulation of the magical effects taking over you very palpably.

[Rumbling]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You're not guarded to the change in your physiology. However, you put on the Scout's Ring and immediately, the way you feel is just a little bit... Buzzed in a kind of caffeinated way.

Lou Wilson
Mm.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You find yourself with an abundance of focus—

Lou Wilson
Mm.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
—that doesn't feel unpleasant, but you find yourself noting more things. You're not getting distracted, very easily as you wear this ring. So, whereas before, putting all your focus into a ring, you notice the ring, but you also notice the two soldiers walking by at the end of the courtyard, you notice a sort of creak in a hallway outside.

[Footsteps pass and a floorboard creaks]

Lou Wilson
Ugh.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
It's—it is a little—but I think.

Lou Wilson
I think Eursulon takes the ring off—

[Rumbling stops]

Lou Wilson
—for a second, just like—and you see him, like—

Suvi (Aabria)
Are you ok?

Lou Wilson
—shaking his hand.

Eursulon (Lou)
It is palpable, the difference.

Suvi (Aabria)
Oh!

Eursulon (Lou)
Eugh!

Lou Wilson
And then I'm gonna try—

Suvi (Aabria)
Try to yawn. If you can pop your ears, it kind of helps.

Eursulon (Lou)
Oh, okay. Yes. [Trying to yawn] Aurmh. Ah. Ah. Aaah.

[Everyone laughing]

Lou Wilson
I—

Aabria Iyengar
Let's assume it does make your ears pop.

Lou Wilson
A specific physiology as a spirit, maybe—

Eursulon (Lou)
[More mouth noises] What is—I'm not getting the popping you were talking about.

Suvi (Aabria)
I'm sorry. I gotta have some gum here. Hold on. Ame, do you have any gum? Do you like a chewy food?

Ame (Erika)
[Searching noises] Spearmint?

Suvi (Aabria)
Yeah. Yeah.

Ame (Erika)
Oh, I also have fruit.

Lou Wilson
I think Eursulon just starts snapping—

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Huge Witch Energy. "Oh, I also have fruit!"

[Everyone laughing]

Lou Wilson
It doesn't make him pop his ears, but it is just nice to focus on something else.

Erika Ishii
I would like—I also—so I take a bronze ring and a copper ring. I take an extra bronze ring, and I check it. Is it—would it be okay for non humans to wear it?

Brennan Lee Mulligan
I don't know if you know. I don't know if you know Offhand. You can give me an arcana check if you want.

Erika Ishii
Oh boy. That's a 1.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Do you slide a bronze ring onto your finger. Before sort of questioning what it would do to something else?

Erika Ishii
Yes, yes. I poke a digit into it, tentatively.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
It feels like touching a source of electricity. And it's in that way that it numbs, it's not pain, but boy, is it an unpleasant sensation.

Ame (Erika)
[Mumbling unpleasantly]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
And you start to sweat profusely, and feel sick to your stomach.

Ame (Erika)
[Pained grunts] Okay. [Deep breaths]

Eursulon (Lou)
Chew on some spearmint and fruit, it helps.

Ame (Erika)
Okay. [Moaning]

Suvi (Aabria)
Why are you all—

Ame (Erika)
[Lip smacking]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Go ahead, give me a history check. Oh, Suvi, go ahead and give me history.

Aabria Iyengar
Oh me! Okay, sorry. 20. Dirty 20.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You recognize that one of the pieces of advice they give to soldiers in the Azure Battalion is not to take these rings off, lightly. And you also remember that, on the first day they get them, they're not assigned anything. You think that the first day of wearing these, you are pretty—

Aabria Iyengar
Ohh.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
—it's a pretty intense process of like, accepting, and assimilating, and dealing with the effect of the ring.

Ame (Erika)
[Groaning]

Suvi (Aabria)
There's a bit of a—

Ame (Erika)
[Not okay] That's okay.

Suvi (Aabria)
You good? There's kind of a curve.

Ame (Erika)
Yeah. I've got a—

Erika Ishii
I rummage through my pouches and pull out my herbalism kit, and I pop some ginger into my mouth, and start chewing it up.

Ame (Erika)
[Mumbling chewing noises] It'll be fine. Hey, uh, Fox.

The Fox (Brennan)
Yeah?

Suvi (Aabria)
What?

[Pleasant marimba music]

Ame (Erika)
How would you like to mitigate some harm with a little experiment that might make you a little uncomfortable?

The Fox (Brennan)

No.

Aabria Iyengar

[Laughs]

Ame (Erika)

That's... Fair. I respect your bodily autonomy.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Great. Because I can smell you sweating, and I don't want to do whatever it is you just did.

Ame (Erika)

[Laughing] Okay.

Suvi (Aabria)

[Subtly] Ame.

Ame (Erika)

Yes. Yeah.

Suvi (Aabria)

Were you going to put one of the rings on the fox?

Ame (Erika)

Only if he wanted it! How cool would it be if we had a strong ass fox?

Suvi (Aabria)

That's a good point. Hey, Fox.

The Fox (Brennan)

Yeah?

Suvi (Aabria)

Please let me put one of these rings on you.

The Fox (Brennan)

What do I get in return?

Suvi (Aabria)

You want some more of that fish slurry, from earlier?

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Give me a persuasion check.

[Aabria and Erika laugh]

Erika Ishii

We're both looking at him.

Aabria Iyengar

Perfect! 7.

The Fox (Brennan)

[Sighs] Let me be clear. I don't—I'm never puttin'—I should have made this clear the moment we met. I'm never puttin' clothes on. And that's clothes.

Suvi (Aabria)

Yeah. Alright.

Ame (Erika)

Awwww. Look, I'm just going to say, I'm so glad you're here with me, but if I had known that, going into this, things might have turned out a little different.

Suvi (Aabria)

Ooh!

The Fox (Brennan)

Tough break. Tough break Boss.

Ame (Erika)

You can't choose your family.

Suvi (Aabria)

Yeah.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You put on the coral ring as well, Eursulon?

Lou Wilson

Yes.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You put on the coral ring, and do not have any such reaction to it. It feels—you don't feel any change on your body as you put the coral ring on.

Aabria Iyengar

I want to say very specifically, Suvi didn't take anything, because of the like, ledger optics of, if it looked like she took something, too, and that the—and that somehow a wizard of the Citadel was ill equipped.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Yes.

Aabria Iyengar

[Sighs] Which is obnoxious.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

[Sighs] Copy that. I hear you. Suvi and Eursulon both see Ame stealing something from the room. Erika just passed me a little note, but the roll was not high enough.

Erika Ishii

[Mischievous chuckling]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

What do you steal with an emblem on it? Do you steal one of the boots, or do you steal a jacket or something...?

Erika Ishii

Just a jacket, I think.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Steal a little jacket.

Erika Ishii
Shove it into my bag.

Aabria Iyengar
Suvi marks something down into the ledger, but does not say anything.

Lou Wilson
Eursulon looks to see—Suvi, sees that she doesn't mind it and thinks—

Aabria Iyengar
Oh, Suvi minds, like you can see it in her face, she's pissed off at this, but she's not going to say anything.

[Imperial parade march begins again]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
So! All of you leave this area. You have a little while before—you have a little while before the boats leave. What do you do in the intervening. Ame? You feel sick as hell.

Erika Ishii
I'm going to take a little nappy nap.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Cool. Ame goes to take a nap, and just double checking again one time. Two copper rings, one coral ring, one bronze ring and a jacket, and a pair of bracers.

Aabria Iyengar
Did we not take any of the Witchfire veils? Did you explain the witchfire—

Erika Ishii
I took four of the Witchfire veils, and then you said one matchstick?

Brennan Lee Mulligan
And a matchstick, if you want it!

Erika Ishii
Okay. Yeah.

Aabria Iyengar
Take the matchstick!

Erika Ishii
I take the matchstick.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Cool. Well, our first big getting—

Erika Ishii
YAY!

Aabria Iyengar
YAY!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
—of cool magical gear.

Lou Wilson
There it is.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
There it is.

Lou Wilson
Get me some water, bro, now I need water!

[Everyone laughs]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You spend some time, and actually, you all do take an hour to attune to your magical gear, which is sort of what this process is. Your attunement, Eursulon, is just getting used to the new sort of amount of sensory information.

Lou Wilson
Oh, and I was just going to say that Eursulon spends that time drinking wine, trying to meet in some kind of middle of like, I don't want to be able to hear everything.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
But you can also feel the coral ring, you do sort of feel a—there's something sort of, like, interesting in this. I think, you feel the quality—inside of your glamour—you feel the quality of your fur change a little bit? There's something to your plumage and your fur, where it becomes—not in an unpleasant way—it shines a little more, as you realize that there's kind of a healthy, natural oil on it. There's something that makes it a little bit more—almost like a polar bear, or an otter's fur or something like that, that if you were to suddenly submerge, you would not soak—

Erika Ishii
[Squeals in delight]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
—instead it would sleeken, it would become like, a little—it would be very easy to become aquatic.

Aabria Iyengar
Eursulotter!

Erika Ishii
AAAAAH!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Eursulotter.

Lou Wilson
Eursulotter.

Erika Ishii
[Li'l stinker voice] Like water off an Eursulon's back.

Aabria Iyengar
[Laughs] I want to say during that time, I absolutely attempted to fully pack the—whatever—that like, flower pressed book that Morrow gave me. I'm trying to keep it so, I'm like, packing it into myself. It's mine now.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Got you. So you did not open it? You're just packing it away?

Aabria Iyengar

Yeah, that hour wasn't enough time, I think she's got other stuff on her mind, and she didn't want to get lost in this, before going and doing something else.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Incredible. Go ahead and give me either stealth or sleight of hand as you attempt to conceal it in your belongings.

Aabria Iyengar

13?

Brennan Lee Mulligan

13, okay, copy that. You go ahead and conceal this sort of pressed tome inside. Ame, Fox—the fox is right on your bed, looking at you with this really concerned thing. You are sweating. You feel nauseous. Because you also, I believe, put on a copper ring as well. Right, okay. So you're having full sensory stuff, as you get advantage on perception and initiative, and you have this bronze ring on. So, I don't know how to tell you this, Erika, after an hour's nap, you do get up and—actually give me a constitution saving throw.

Erika Ishii

That's a 13.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Okay. On a 13, you MIRACULOUSLY do not have to get up and go to the privy to expel, what you ate or drank, but it's close. There's a couple of times where you're like, holding your stomach and you're like, do I get up and make a run for it?

Erika Ishii

Just dry heaving a little.

Ame (Erika)

[Gagging]

Aabria Iyengar

Rally! Puke and rally!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And, Ame, you—after about an hour, this—and you realize, like, 45 minutes into it, you have a full fever.

Erika Ishii

Oh, god, I'm going to sip some wizard gatorade.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Yeah. You have your little ginger whipped drink.

Erika Ishii

Ginger—ginger shots and little wizard gatorade.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Yeah. By the way, I'll say this, when they give these rings out, they tell you not to put both on in the same day, for sure. So you get up, once again, like more things in focus, more things aligned. You're way more perceptive. And you look in a mirror after an hour, as you get up and are like changing out of your truly soiled, like, sweat soaked clothing. You have lats.

Erika Ishii
[Gasp]

Aabria Iyengar
Ah!!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You just fully have lats. You turn your arm and have like, a shredded fucking tricep. As you bend down to get more clothes, there's like, definition in your quads.

Erika Ishii
[Squeals with laughter]

Aabria Iyengar
Ooh!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
There is nothing—Ame now has a strength score of 19.

Erika Ishii
[Screams]

Aabria Iyengar
Let's go!

Erika Ishii
WuhBAM!

Aabria Iyengar
Let's go!

Lou Wilson
That's higher than Eursulon.

[Everyone laughs]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Yeah. You have a—you have a stewards ring on, and it's fucked up.

Erika Ishii
[Screams]

Aabria Iyengar
[Laughs]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You are jacked as hell.

Aabria Iyengar
[Whispering] Let's go!

Erika Ishii
I spend a little bit of time flexing—

Aabria Iyengar
Yeah!

Erika Ishii
—in the mirror. This feels real good!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Incredible.

Erika Ishii
I grew up my whole life on a farm, wrangling animals, and chopping wood, but like, now it's aesthetic.

Aabria Iyengar
[Laughing] Mirror muscles!

Erika Ishii
Yeah!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Yeah, you've—your biggest impediment has always been your actual physical stature—

Aabria Iyengar
[Laughs]

Erika Ishii
Yeah! I'm small!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
—and, doesn't seem to be a problem anymore.

Aabria Iyengar
Let's go!

Erika Ishii
Now I am a five foot shit brick house.

Aabria Iyengar
Oh my god.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
[Laughing] Shit brick house!

[Everyone laughs]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Incredible. Night falls, and all of you have dinner brought to your rooms. And as you, sort of, you know, ready yourselves, a carriage pulls up outside. Do you all enter and head to the harbor?

Suvi (Aabria)
Are we feeling good—you look like shit.

Ame (Erika)
Does THIS look shitty to you??

Erika Ishii
And I pull back a sleeve, and flex.

Eursulon (Lou)
Yikes.

Aabria Iyengar
I go to grab your muscle—

Ame (Erika)
[Grunts with exertion]

Aabria Iyengar
—but you're still fever sweating, and I'm like

Suvi (Aabria)
Kind of a mixed bag.

[Aabria and Erika laugh]

Eursulon (Lou)
Agreed. Is that the ring?

Ame (Erika)
[Still grunting] Mhm.

Suvi (Aabria)
I guess.

Erika Ishii
[Grunting, presumably while switching between different flex poses]

Suvi (Aabria)
Fox, that could be you.

Eursulon (Lou)
Honestly, I think in this moment I'm VERY glad we did not give the fox a ring!

[Aabria and Erika laugh]

The Fox (Brennan)
But I want one.

Eursulon (Lou)
No, no you don't.

The Fox (Brennan)
Give me one.

Ame (Erika)
He said he want—he wants the ring!

Eursulon (Lou)
Do you all want to see a fox with abdominal muscles? Is that what you want?

Suvi (Aabria)
[Laughing] I do NOT.

Ame (Erika)
Why is that even a question?

Suvi (Aabria)
Absolutely don't.

Eursulon (Lou)
Abso—it was bad enough when we gave him a vote.

Suvi (Aabria)
He ate his vote, he doesn't have it anymore.

The Fox (Brennan)
You can eat your vote and have it too.

Erika Ishii
[Cackles]

Suvi (Aabria)
I don't like the fox telling me I'm wrong.

Eursulon (Lou)
I think we should get on the carriage.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
[Laughs] All of you get on the carriage, and proceed through Port Talon at night. A cool mist sort of rises up, from the water of the harbor. You are going towards the interior harbor, the one on sort of the inside of the curve of the talon of Port Talon.

[Imperial parade march]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
And, you move through cobblestone streets, and beautiful more like civic Imperial buildings, that have been built more recently. And you see a ship awaiting you out of the end of a long pier, that goes all the way out towards like, a tall ship that can take you all the way out towards the derrick. The ship waiting for you is not some massive war galley, it is a tall ship, but it is a sort of frigate. It's one made for speed, and for a smaller crew. As you travel past in the carriage, I would ask for Suvi to give me a perception check.

Aabria Iyengar
Okay. Dirty 20.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You look at the Governor's manor, and it is night, but you see that there are still some rooms that are alight with Citadel magic within the Governor's manor. You see a Citadel carriage, outside of the Governor's manor. And on a dirty 20, I think you can see that the coachman of that Citadel carriage is leaning in, and speaking to someone inside of the carriage.

Aabria Iyengar
I gotta say it. I have the observant feat. If I can see someone's mouth moving, can I read these lips?

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Read their lips from far away? You absolutely can!

Aabria Iyengar
YEAH!!

Brennan Lee Mulligan
That's the first time I've ever seen that come up.

Aabria Iyengar
YAY!! I've never been more excited to remember how my feat works.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You see that the coachman is saying

The Coachman (Brennan)
As you wish, Abjurer Galani. I believe that they should be outside, sooner rather than later. I heard word from someone at the Scepter's Chorus Chantry that there was some—

Brennan Lee Mulligan
And at that point, you're pulling around the corner.

Aabria Iyengar
[Whispering] Oh god, what was it—[Louder] Hey, y'all?

Eursulon (Lou)
Yes?

Aabria Iyengar
Do you remember the three wizards that were mentioned in the Ace of Wands?

Ame (Erika)
Yeah.

Eursulon (Lou)
Not really, but—

Ame (Erika)
Oh. Morrow and Pane and Galani.

Suvi (Aabria)
[In unison] Galani.

Aabria Iyengar
And I point back towards the Governor's manor.

Suvi (Aabria)
Is there—I don't know if that's important, but that's—that's a Citadel wizard. Could just be nothing.

Eursulon (Lou)
You're a citadel wizard.

Suvi (Aabria)
And it's very weird that I'm here.

Eursulon (Lou)
Mm.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Galani is someone you've met before.

Aabria Iyengar
Ooh!

Suvi (Aabria)
And I know them, they're—

Eursulon (Lou)
Is it bad that—I mean, we already flubbed our cover story one time. Is it bad if we—

Suvi (Aabria)
No, they—I think Galani knows I'm here. I saw something. The—the coachman mentioned our Chantry, and something that went down, so I think word of "the unpleasantness" is already at the Governor's mansion.

Ame (Erika)
"The unpleasantness." That's us duty. Should we be on guard with this person?

Suvi (Aabria)
With everyone.

Ame (Erika)
Oh!

Suvi (Aabria)
Always.

Eursulon (Lou)
Okay. Yeah, of course.

Suvi (Aabria)
Wizards are defined by their secrets.

Brennan Lee Mulligan
You continue along, waiting, avoiding the eyes of the Citadel. You arrive at the harbor, walk along the pier, and see out in the distance now, much more dramatic in the nighttime sea, purple and green. Lights pulsing out in the distance. Up on the deck of the ship Guild Mage Morrow clasps his hands.

Guild Mage Morrow (Brennan)
Ah! Welcome, welcome! A lovely sea tide excursion. Obviously I know you've had your dinner already, but we do have some amenities, and some crudités waiting for us on the—

Ame (Erika)
That's so kind of you, no thank you.

Guild Mage Morrow (Brennan)
Oh!

Ame (Erika)
I'm quite alright.

Guild Mage Morrow (Brennan)
Very well.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You see that he invites you onto the deck of the ship, and you hear ropes unwinding with some careful mage hand spells, from the sailors around.

[Clanging and thumping from the ship]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And as you take off, the ship begins sailing, Morrow stands near the prow, looking excitedly. Walks over to you Suvi.

Guild Mage Morrow (Brennan)

I wished to let you know, that we were unable to apprehend the Guild Mage Pane. He... Was alerted to his status somehow.

Suvi (Aabria)

Mm.

Guild Mage Morrow (Brennan)

And elected to flee.

Erika Ishii

Eursulon and Ame look at each other.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

However, we've taken the liberty—

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And you see he holds up a small parchment that has a magically conjured, sort of etching of Pane's face and it says "Wanted for crimes against the Imperium, for the bounty of 750 Imperial Marks."

Guild Mage Morrow (Brennan)

We've taken the liberty of putting these up across town.

Suvi (Aabria)

Wonderful.

Guild Mage Morrow (Brennan)

Without a traveling door, he won't be able to get far.

Suvi (Aabria)

I consider this handled.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

He smiles and says

Guild Mage Morrow (Brennan)

Wonderful. Now, ha ha, to the main event! Ahh, I am so excited. Truth be told, I have longed to be in the company of a true wizard, and, though I know, of course, that you are still in your apprenticeship, I think the writing is on the wall that you will be a great wizard of this age, and I am so excited to see, what is to come.

Aabria Iyengar

Suvi nods graciously.

[Aabria and Brennan laugh]

Aabria Iyengar
Just a little asshole.

[Industrial sounding groans and wailing beeps that build in volume and intensity]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

The ship arrives at the derrick, and as you come closer, you see a structure that has four inclined, massive steel beams that all come to a central point. It is effectively the shape of a pyramid, but in an incredibly acute isosceles formation, so a tall and narrow pyramid of steel, except hollow, so only the corners are these like four steel beams that come down, and set between them, you see that they are platforms ascending up, covered in lights.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

The platforms appear to be both structural like, helping hold and secure this magical derrick, and you also notice that there's not anything ostentatious going on here. Like the platforms are secured structurally to the outer beams. There are some railings for safety on the edge of the platform, but within them, you see that there are the basics of rune work within platforms going up, and each of the platforms holds—as you arrive up on the outside, there's a staircase going up like zigzagging up across from platform to platform, going way, way up high. In the center of each steel platform is a circular disk of glass, or if it's crystal—

Erika Ishii
Ooohh.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

—it's perfectly transparent crystal. But it basically creates the circumstance of—that, whatever floor you're on, you can walk out into that disc of glass and look straight up and see all the way up to the central lights at the top, that you see are these massive stacked purple and green—that you can now see are perfect octagonal prisms. So like an octagon cylinder, into octagonal points that flow, so it's like a little prism, right?

Brennan Lee Mulligan

They hover up at the top of this derrick shape, and the light from them cascades down through all of those lenses. And you see the sort of strange effect, all through all these lenses, is that the actual water—as the beams go into the sea itself—that there is this INCREDIBLY bright, green and purple light, illuminating the gentle waves rolling underneath the derrick. Really like, illuminating the sea, which also has the effect of making all the sea around it incredibly dark, that you kind of—that light is so powerful that it's blinding what you'd normally be able to see.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

As you arrive and the ship is anchored, Morrow says

Guild Mage Morrow (Brennan)

Welcome! Welcome to the Kalabel Nautomantic Apparatus. [Long pause] It is a pleasure, and honor, and a privilege, which I know I have said altogether too many times, but—

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And you can see here he trembles with emotion. He says

Guild Mage Morrow (Brennan)

Right this way.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Takes you to the staircase, and you can see, uses for the first time his own magic, he casts a spell that kind of creates a floating platform of force underneath you, so that you don't have to ascend this long staircase yourselves. As you begin to float up the staircase, on this platform of force, he just begins to point things out to you. And as you get up, the wind kind of kicks up, going higher and higher, the sea wind really starts to get more intense, so sort of speaking over the wind, he starts to go like

Guild Mage Morrow (Brennan)

[Yelling, muffled by wind] The construction of the actual apparatus, took approximately three and a half years. The enchanting could begin within the last year, but we needed to wait until it was fully stable and operational before the real enchantments, the prisms you see up above, could actually be called into effect. It's an incredible testament to the work of the engineers, and the various magewrights that were able to come in, and build this here. I really can't wait to show you.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You arrive at the uppermost platform.

[Mechanical groaning and a shuddering thump, footsteps on steel gantry]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Which, at this point, is about still 80 or so feet underneath the top. You're probably like 160 feet up above the ocean. You're high high high up. And, as you are up on this—this last platform is probably like 30 feet by 30 feet. Like, it is narrow up here, right? So it's pretty—pretty cozy. And you see this big disk of crystal—pure, like, flawless, completely translucent—in the center of the steel platform. The platforms, of course, are what's the word I'm looking for? Not corrugated. The platforms have lots of slots in them, like almost like a chain link fence. What was the room looking for? Like a grate.

Aabria Iyengar

Yeah yeah yeah.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Yeah. The steel platforms are grated to A.) Make them easier to lift, they're lighter, but B.) Also for water and things like that. So you're on this grated steel platform, that goes out to this disc in the middle, and you see Morrow looks at you and says

Guild Mage Morrow (Brennan)

And of course, we built the derrick, enchanted it, and then it was just a matter of time, before we could... Set into motion, what we knew was possible, given studies of the opportunity given to us by Port Talon, and what the locals had often spoken about, they only knew a fraction of. There is something truly worthwhile, but explaining it to you would rob you of the wonder of what we first found when we came out here. So without further ado, if you would step onto the disc we will go ahead, and let the show begin!

Aabria Iyengar

I don't hesitate.

Lou Wilson

I'm in lockstep.

Erika Ishii

I pause for a moment. This is all so fascinating and impressive, but there's just something in my stomach, that feels bad, and it's not the result of the rings.

[Discordant strings and whisperings]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You feel that weirdness. You see Morrow looks at you and says

Guild Mage Morrow (Brennan)

If you're not feeling well, you don't need to participate.

Ame (Erika)

Oh, no, that's all right. Sorry, it's a little nausea.

Guild Mage Morrow (Brennan)
Understood. Well!

[Two claps]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
He claps, and you see that a number of other attendant mages, down below, begin to swirl their hands and chant.

Attendant Mages (Brennan)
[Mystical mumbling chant]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Whispers begin to echo out from the derrick. The sea kicks up a little bit as you see a group of wizards working in unison. Morrow looks up, touches his lower lip, speaks silently to himself.

Guild Mage Morrow (Brennan)
[Mystical whispering]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
And you see the prisms begin to rotate overhead, causing the purple and green light to rotate on the sea floor underneath. You look and see the lenses shifting, as the mages below begin to chant in unison.

[Reverberating mystical energy builds]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
And the light intensifies. [Bwoom noise] Purple and green light, mixing, swirling, becoming one winding image. The waves kick up, the wind kicks up. You see white foam coming off the sea caps of the waves. Beneath you, the light is obscuring it, but you see that the foam is building and building and building. Suddenly you realize, the light itself is swirling, and creating a whirlpool underneath the derrick.

[Reverberation reaches a climax and rings out]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
But it's not a whirlpool of space, but one of light itself. The sea is flattened and illuminated as something neither water nor air is created. It is simply solid light itself taking the place of any other element, and [Whoosh] zooms down.

[A tone rings out and then a deep boom]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
Deep to the bottom of the ocean underneath, illuminating something deeper, deeper, deeper. You see the light.

[The same tone and boom]

Brennan Lee Mulligan
And now even the brightness of the gold light clears, to actually pure crystal clarity. You can see exactly what you are meant to see, standing here on the glass. Endless water parting, and down another 80 or 100 feet beneath the surface you see... Something. Enormous. At first, you wonder what it could be. A ship, wrecked and scuttled on the bottom of the sea out beyond the bay? No, it's bigger than a ship. It's some kind of whale? Some leviathan of the ancient sea? And then you see it moves in something like a breath or a palpitation.

[Shuddering reverberation and something alike to a foghorn]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

There is a coloring to it. You're looking at... Red, and cream stripes, like waves and hundreds of tendrils. You look to find a face, but you can't see one. There is some, massive monster, at the bottom of the sea, surrounded by tall, dark ocean rocks in the depths. You see its tendrils. It is something like—

[The foghorn sound again]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

—a lionfish, baseless and oblong as a sea cucumber, larger than an ocean galley. At the front of its body there is a series of glowing bioluminescent lights, each larger than the wheel of a carriage, but on its massive frame, somehow small in comparison, that stretch back. You see its long body curls, almost like a nautilus, a tail that narrows, tucked in underneath itself, even though all of it is soft, and writhing, and palpitating, in its massiveness.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

The lights light crystal blue, and then deep green, and then bright red, scintillating along its body. A massive ocean creature, unlike any you have ever seen before. You see, from underneath its massive frame... Coral, growing up from where its body touches, underneath. And the source of the coral, is some glimmering, blue-white liquid, that appears to shimmer iridescently, like oil on the surface of water, that soaks out from where its body touches the stone.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And as it leaves, coral grows, spiking out in all directions, spiring up, as though to reach out, and rise up and, encover or encase or enclose. And you see down there, the base of the steel structure of the derrick, and clearly the coral is being carved off. You see structures and tools and implements at the base of the tower, for carving the coral away. And you see the light.

[Ringing tone and boom]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

As the light touches the creature, you see reverberating, like sonic waves, the creature pushed down.

[Foghorn]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

This tower, reverberating with energy, its four posts on either side of the creature. At the bottom of the sea, you see Morrow smiles, weeping.

Suvi (Aabria)

What have you done?

Brennan Lee Mulligan

[Manic laughter] We caught it! We caught it!

[Sinister horn music swells]

[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]