

Worlds Beyond Number

The Wizard, the Witch, and the Wild One

Children's Adventure: Episode 05 (Version 0)

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

The words that Suvi uttered and remembered thinking about Starling Ford and the movements of her fingers perform the first somatic components of the first spell. Because her mother taught her those movements knowing that this cloak would be with her, and though it was her mother's intention that this spell should come to protect Suvi in a time of need, Suvi has seen fit to gift it to another for the time being.

Suvi and Ame share a moment as kindred spirits and friends whose story we have yet to tell. But it can be said that in this moment of their friendship it was worthy of remark that they became a witch and wizard on the same night.

Ame, you can go ahead and take detect magic, and Suvi, you can take protection from evil and good.

Aabria Iyengar:

Oh, okay.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

Protection from evil and good offers protection from fiends and celestials and undead and for our purposes, quite importantly, fae.

Eursulon.

For the first time you dream, you dream in sleep, you look at a broad river, shallow stones in its midst and see fallen knights in the mist, a scene of horror. But once again, the sun shines brightly in this dream. You can hear the birds in the forest. You can hear the flowing of the water against the rocks, and for the first time in your life it occurs to you that it might be strange that the birds would sing and the sun would shine in a place with such grief and loss. There would've been a time when grief and loss was beyond your ability to comprehend, and perhaps you would've played in the sunlight or sang as the birds do too.

You are standing by the banks of the river, at the ford where all these knights have died. You feel a hand on your shoulder. He's standing there, translucent but not ghostly. No, he flickers like the hot sun over open sand made of golden light. His presence here is as warm as the hearth fire. Or perhaps that warmth is simply reflected here as your sleeping body curls up in front of it. But there's something here in dream, as Sir Curran, made of light, looks down at you. He holds your back and smiles, weeping.

Lou Wilson:

I'm so sorry little one. I was stupid to think it would be easy and come at no cost.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

No. No. There is nothing stupid about what you have done. These lessons are hard one, and it is a gift that you grew in a world without them. I would not see you harm yourself or hurt your heart because the harshest lessons of the world had not yet been given to you. They come in their time to us all. Were it in my power, I would spare you and spare all from such lessons, but it was no failing of yours that it came to you in its own time.

Lou Wilson:

But it is, Sir Curran. I'm not meant to learn the lessons of this world. It's not mine. These lessons aren't meant for me, and I'm not ready to learn them.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

I think we never are. Those curses ring true, and they are less curses than they are lessons. Or perhaps that's what every curse is. I don't know. You cannot know honor without the risk of shame. To act nobly and to have that be a choice means that there must in the world await the choosing of another path. And to know a quest is, of course, to know failure.

What great deeds could there be to be done if there could not be a failing in the doing of them? I am sorry, but I do know one thing. It is right that you were not named that name that I will not repeat here, that the spirit in the forest attempted to give to you and in so doing gave only to itself. Do you remember what it was that reflected back on that spirit? The curse, it's third that it attempted to lay on you.

Lou Wilson:

[inaudible 00:06:58] ... your armor.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

No, no. It was your turning to save your friend. He kneels, takes his sword. You are right, you are- And there you awake.

Amazing. Okay.

Lou Wilson:

Is it Brennan? Is it amazing? I mean, you're upbeat, which I guess I'm happy about.

Erika Ishii:

I'm glad someone's having fun.

Aabria Iyengar:

I'm happy you're happy.

Erika Ishii:

No, I'm kidding. That was incredible.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

I want all our fans to know that I didn't make these fucking characters, okay. The players made these characters. They told me what they wanted to happen. I'm here on time, a God-damn delivery man showing up with what you ordered.

Lou Wilson:

Now take it home. Take it back. I don't want it.

Erika Ishii:

We decided we have buyers remorse.

Aabria Iyengar:
Return to sender.

Erika Ishii:
Caveat emptor!

Aabria Iyengar:
Return to sender.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

Suvi and Ame, as Eursulon sleeps in front of the hearth, you two young girls have this moment, and I think sometime after that... Let me know what you do in the immediate aftermath of Eursulon falling asleep and making the fire, and Ame, you are aware of this change that has come over you.

Ultimately, I think it's just your proficiency bonus goes up. You know that you have this spell. I don't know if you can cast it again, but you know that you saw the forest for what it truly was. You know that you saw deeper truths in the world, and it didn't feel...

There was no flash to it. This wasn't a weird magical lens through which you can see the thing. It really just felt like I have a pair of eyes that I can open to see the world, and then I have another pair of eyes that you can't see in this world that I can also open, and it's just that simple and natural.

And Suvi, you look and see your mother's cloak and see the soft rise and fall of Eursulon falling into deeper sleep and are unaware of any spell at this moment. What do you both do in the immediate aftermath?

Aabria Iyengar:

I think because Ame kind of took the charge in soothing and setting the breathing cadence for Suvi, I just turn and look at you, and I think maybe in this moment it's just a little more apparent. She ran down without her giant glasses on, and I think she just looks like a kid that is a whole year younger than you.

Erika Ishii:
I indicate that we should go upstairs.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:
What if you... When he wakes up, will he be alone and he anyone?

Erika Ishii:
Oh, well then I take her more to the corner then, so far enough away so that our whispering won't wake him up.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:
You both can walk over to... The way the cottage is laid out is that the kitchen and the little table there and everything is around a little corner, but you can see most of the hearth from there. So you can both

be honestly a little bit farther away, tucked around the corner, but still poke your head out and see Eursulon.

Erika Ishii:

I explained to her what happened in the woods as best I can, as to me, still, some parts of it are more about the light or the sound or the feeling or the smell. I don't remember all the words perfectly, but you understand, and I convey 250 years.

Aabria Iyengar:

There aren't knights anymore.

Erika Ishii:

Yeah. What are we going to tell Grandma Wren?

Aabria Iyengar:

And I think just her name feels like a slap. Like, oh my God, an adult. Oh no, she's going to be mad.

Erika Ishii:

You didn't do anything wrong.

Aabria Iyengar:

No.

Erika Ishii:

And you know that even if you did...

Aabria Iyengar:

We lied. I lied. I said I knew, and the mushroom said that it's because he went inside. And I told him to come inside with me. And then he got washed, and that's because I said he was dirty. I did that. I made him different, so he can't go home.

Erika Ishii:

Look. What happened, happened, and you didn't know. You didn't know.

Aabria Iyengar:

That's not an excuse.

Erika Ishii:

It is an excuse.

Aabria Iyengar:

It's not.

Erika Ishii:

You can't know everything.

Aabria Iyengar:

That's not an excuse to not be better.

Erika Ishii:

What did you mean that if you weren't good, that they wouldn't come back? You think that you have some control over this. You don't. You can be as good as you want. You can learn all the things you want, but things are just going to happen. It's how you feel about them, how you accept them.

Aabria Iyengar:

No, no, you can change. That's what magic is.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

The door opens, and out of the night, and you could swear that as she steps up the two short stone steps that she was 12 feet tall, but at once and all of a sudden she's in the kitchen, and she is her real size, is Grandmother Wren.

She immediately looks... Her cloak is somewhat tattered at the edges and a wide brim hat that you have never seen before brushes across the top of the doorframe as she enters. As quickly as she can, it is off and hanging on its normal hook to the side. The broom in her hand, alights and sails through the air, swiftly, silently, and as a moment, gone, you see a deep and powerful magic fade from her.

You could be wrong, but you don't think Grandma Wren walked here through the garden from the road. She looks at you both, looking a little older than she was this morning, eyes sunken a little deeper, a little less color to her face. You don't know where she's come from, but you know that she was gone for a long time and that normally, under the best of circumstances, she would've let you know.

Both of you can give me an insight check in this moment.

Erika Ishii:

Ooh, 18.

Aabria Iyengar:

Oh my God. 17.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

Both of you look at her face and see a deep sorrow and regret as she puts together, in a moment, what has happened here in her absence.

On a 17 and an 18, you see that deep sorrow and regret. I leave it up to you if you are old enough as children to know when a grownup feels that they have let somebody down. Maybe it's not something that looks familiar to you, so maybe you wouldn't recognize it. And you might not recognize, as well, the fact that she also underneath that expression knows that what she has just come from had to happen no matter what, and there would've been no way to avoid this.

Erika Ishii:

I don't understand and I could never articulate it, but I can feel this is different. She's not her normal self, and it's so terrifying because I've seen adults unsure of things or in fear. Plenty of people come to the cottage in need of help, but I've never had to see Grandma Wren like this. And so, without speaking, I run up to her, and I throw my arms around her midsection.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

She immediately puts a hand on your shoulder, Ame, and goes, "Oh, oh my sweet girls. I'm so sorry."

Aabria Iyengar:

Suvi just takes a little half step back. I don't think she understands, but she's putting it together. She sees the similarities between the looks on both of your faces, and the moment you make physical connection, I think she understands that there is a similarity of intention and mood, and she would rather stand away and understand than move closer and be comforted.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

Grandma Wren makes eye contact with you, Suvi, and in a moment, simply upon you stepping back you see her move with the knowledge of what that means, but immediately on to knowing that there is no path forward to address that in this moment.

She goes, "Oh my sweet girls, I'm so sorry. I didn't-There was no time. There was no time. All right, Ame, go upstairs to the bathroom. Get the bucket of water down off the wood stove. Suvi, I'd like you to go up to the study in the corner. There are several small jars. They'll look like small sugar jars. Take the two small blue jars with ceramic lids on top. There's a small spoon next to them. Bring those both down here, all right?"

Aabria Iyengar:

There's a water.

Erika Ishii:

There's what?

Aabria Iyengar:

From the [inaudible 00:19:45] There's a lot of water. Sorry.

Erika Ishii:

There's the kettle, so I look to look at the kettle, and it's still in there.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

You see she says, "Very well, the kettle. Yes, that's all right. That that'll have to do."

Aabria Iyengar:

Sorry.

Erika Ishii:

I take the Kettle. I take the pot holder and grab it with both hands.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

You see Grandma Wren say, "That'll be enough for now." She whips her head over her shoulder, opens just the top half of the farm door, and goes "Nicholas! Water!" And you hear, "Meh," and you hear a gate unlatch in the dark.

Erika Ishii:

Oh, God.

Aabria Iyengar:

No!

Erika Ishii:

He can unlatch the gate?

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

"No, no, no, no. He can't unlatch the gate. I just unlatched the gate," and you see she walks off.

Erika Ishii:

That's actually a relief.

Aabria Iyengar:

That means he can listen.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

Grandma Wren goes down to Eursulon's sleeping form and gets this water. You run up and get these two small things. You see that she takes some herbs out of it. You see that she leans down as she begins to pad above Eursulon's brow with a wet cloth, trying to cool him down.

As she does so, you see she gets a mortar and pestle and begins to take the things from the jars and grind them up. She gets a little bit of the water, makes it into a paste, begins to apply that to Eursulon's brow.

You notice her furrowing her brow looking at this and going, "He's lost his scent already," and she's going to roll a medicine check.

Erika Ishii:

Can I assist at all?

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

Yes, you absolutely can assist here.

Erika Ishii:

I arrange the charges, and I hand her things as she asks for them.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

You do your best to assist here. "See," she says, "All right, when he came inside, was it daytime or nighttime?"

Erika Ishii:

It was daytime.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

Okay, so we have a little bit less time than I thought. It was day time when he came in.

Aabria Iyengar:

The first time. The second time was nighttime.

Erika Ishii:

The second time was night.

Aabria Iyengar:

This is the second time.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

I understand. He tried to go home, yes?

Aabria Iyengar:

Yes.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

I understand.

She looks a little bit closer and says, "And he was washed, yes?"

Aabria Iyengar:

Mm-hmm.

Erika Ishii:

We gave him honey.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

And you gave him honey. All right, I understand. So it's a good thing you didn't use any of those extra soaps. The ones that you used are used with trees and herbs from around here, so he doesn't have to go without a scent. He's going to just smell like the forest, you see.

She looks and says, "Oh my, we do have a chance. Oh!"

And you see a little tear collects in the corner of her eye that she quickly wipes away, kisses it, and a little dart of sparks of magic go towards Eursulon, go inside and you see runes on the outside of your mother's cloak that you have never seen before, they were in the thread, disguised somewhere, alight and ripple with silver starlight.

Aabria Iyengar:

I think that's the moment I sprint forward, and now I'm like clinging to the side of Grandmother Wren's skirts and watching.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

She looks and says, "You have a very good memory. Those words your mother taught you are not easy for even the wisest to remember."

Aabria Iyengar:

Break down at that praise, oh God. She's done, and now snot crying into the skirts.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

As you cry, she looks and says, "It'll be all right. It'll be all right, Suvi. You cry. It's all right to cry. It's all right to cry. And a strange request, but we're trying to save our young friend. Make sure all those tears land on the cloak and not on the floor, all right?"

Aabria Iyengar:

Suvi, just mid snotty cry, just...

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

Grandmother Wren immediately realizes that she's given you a wrong way to cry and a right way to cry, which for a kid like Suvi...

Aabria Iyengar:

That's bad intel. That's one point of data, and I will map too much onto that.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

As Ame runs and gets [inaudible 00:25:01] you see the Grandma Wren takes her cloak off, tosses it with one toss across the room, where it lands perfectly on a hook by the door, rolls up her sleeves. You see these long hands. She's got these long witchy hands with rings on them, a little bit of age and liver spots, but begin to go to work. You see they are strong.

As you see, she cracks a little nut in one hand, begins to take some of the things you gather from her alchemical base. Go ahead and give me an alchemist tools check on your own, and she will give you the help action here.

Aabria Iyengar:

Yes. Oh, no.

Erika Ishii:

Oh. No!

Aabria Iyengar:

Don't trust both of them. Six.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

Six. You guys work as fast as you can in the night. It's late and dark though. And Grandma Wren has enough proficiency with medicine to be able to do the bare basics, but this is still going to come down to a couple of saving throws from Eursulon.

Aabria Iyengar:

Oh. Oh, no. No, no, no.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

There are a couple of effects here,

Lou Wilson:

Okay? Okay.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

And I want to let you roll them.

Lou Wilson:

Okay?

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

One of them has to do with... And I'm going to let you know what these are about in the fairytale logic of it all.

Lou Wilson:

Oh, that's so kind of you.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

One of-Oh, sorry. Yes, Suvi.

Aabria Iyengar:

No, you're good. You're good. You're good.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

Yeah. One of them has to do with beds. Another has to do with doors, and a third to do with sunlight.

Lou Wilson:

Okay.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

And you may roll. These are all going to be constitution saving throws.

Lou Wilson:

Of which I had nothing to, for I am a child.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

You may roll these, and in this instance, because you have a powerful witch working to help you, and you have... Oh, I'm so sorry. You also roll these with advantage because of the protection from evil and good from Suvi.

Lou Wilson:

Okay, great.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

So you are going to roll these with advantage.

Lou Wilson:

Oh, thank God.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

And I will let you roll them, and you may assign them afterwards. So go ahead and make your rolls.

Lou Wilson:

Okay. Oh, I gotta pick the best boys, the best boys, only the best boys. Okay, here's the first one coming at you. Okay, that's a two and a 14.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

Okay.

Lou Wilson:

So, wait, 14. After I know all three, will you let me?

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

Yes.

Lou Wilson:

Okay. That's very kind to you.

Feels like I'm rolling for my future. That's a Nat 20.

Aabria Iyengar:

Yay!

Erika Ishii:

Yeah!

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

Hell yeah.

Lou Wilson:

Okay. Still got a good roll in it. Picking my dice over here. Okay, let me do the last one. That's an 11.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

Okay.

Lou Wilson:

Okay, so I got a 14, a 20, an 11.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

Let me know to which of these... There are several fae effects unfolding here.

Lou Wilson:

Mm-hmm.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

Let me know based on those. You know that the magic has to do with these things.

Lou Wilson:

Mm-hmm.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

Yeah, let me know which of where you want to put these.

Lou Wilson:

Okay, I'm going to put the nat 20 in doors.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

Cool.

Lou Wilson:

I'm going to put the 14 in sunlight. I'm going to put the 11 in beds.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

Okay. I'm going to let you know right now that was the right call.

Aabria Iyengar:

Oh!

Erika Ishii:

Yeah!

Lou Wilson:

Thank God.

Erika Ishii:

We don't even know what... Oh, God.

Lou Wilson:

Just to be clear, these are not parts of my backstory I asked for. I was not like, "Brennan..."

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

Yeah, this is the new stuff.

Lou Wilson:

I'd like to roll. I'd like to roll.

Erika Ishii:

Roll for beds?

Lou Wilson:

Well, I'd like to roll for beds, doors, and sunlight. I'm going to throw up.

Aabria Iyengar:

It's all that honey.

Lou Wilson:

It's all that damn honey. It's all that-

Aabria Iyengar:

That quiet-ass honey.

Lou Wilson:

-brutal honey, that silent honey.

Aabria Iyengar:

The quiet honey.

Erika Ishii:

[inaudible 00:29:26] honey. So quiet.

Lou Wilson:

It's giving me shitty dreams, all this. That fucking mushroom, this fucking...

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

So, you wake the following morning. Grandma Wren is smiling. Ame and Suvi, how much of troopers are you to help Grandma Wren with medicine before your little kid bodies just succumb to exhaustion?

Erika Ishii:

I end up definitely falling asleep in front of the hearth, instead of just dropping.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

And then Suvi, how about you?

Aabria Iyengar:

Oh, I'm happy to roll for it. I think Suvi, in her strange trauma brain, is having a night similar to the night when she showed up. And if she sleeps, it's very brief, and mostly she is trying to push through.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

Yeah, give me a constitution saving through.

Erika Ishii:

Yeah, let's do it.

Aabria Iyengar:

No. Eight.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

I think there was a moment very clearly where you had outstayed your usefulness because you were so exhausted, and Grandma Wren allowed you to research other medicines, and so you are upright in a seat, fully asleep with a book open on your lap.

Aabria Iyengar:

Yep.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

And Ame, you have just collapsed on the edge of where Eursulon is sleeping in front of the hearth. Early, early morning light. You hear outside [rooster crow 00:31:05]

And as you awaken, you have beaten two of the three DC-12 effects.

Lou Wilson:

Okay, and I am thankful.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

Grandma Wren smiles and looks down and says, "Good morning. Welcome to my home. I'm Grandma Wren. The girls have told me about you. I know you mightn't be feeling well, but you've been very strong and pulled through, and you're going to be all right.

"The mortal world can be unkind to wild ones, but I think you will be all right. There are certain taboos that our honored friends must contend with if they move through the world of mortals. There are certain ways to avoid them. The mushroom spirit, which has long been a nuisance, lives close to my cottage, and it's extremely spiteful, discovered, I think a very fitting end to its cruelty, quite unusual for mushroom spirits, may I be the first to say.

"And may I also say, oh by the way, some porridge for you, and there's some eggs and some bacon," and you do smell really tasty food in front of you.

Lou Wilson:

I think Eursulon is going to quietly eat it, and while not making eye contact, focusing on the food, go, "That was my fault. He was my snack, and I forgot him."

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

Well, we're all somebody's snack eventually. It's no need to take it personal.

Lou Wilson:

I think even Eursulon looks up from that.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

"You see," she says, "What I mean to say is this is the world and life, and small child takes you across the threshold into another world. You're only going to make your own.

"Here's the real trick with magic. The person who pays the highest price for spite is always you. There's plenty of witches I'd like to explain that lesson to."

You see, she looks at you and says, "There are certain taboos that spirits have to face if they will live wholly and fully in the world of mortals, not like the mushroom spirit that exists in sort of a halfway space. When we find those glades or pools or places of powerful fae magic, those are places where the spirits have an attunement, so to speak. For one like you, that for all intents and purposes is mortal, now, you may walk wherever you wish in this world of man, but there are certain taboos that come by. We have done our best to see to them that they will not affect you.

"The passage of thresholds is troublesome for some honored friends. You, I think because of the kind invitation of Suvi and Ame into our home, will not have to trouble yourself with that. And for sunlight in the mortal world after your first night of sleeping indoors, I think there will be something here to help you."

And you see that she takes a little paste and once again places it very gently on each side of your temples on your head, and those few little motes of starlight that she blew out of her own tear glow for a moment on your head. She says, "I might be wrong, but I believe you have some trickiness to you. Have you ever been able to hide your nature?"

Lou Wilson:

I can do that.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

Very well. If for any reason you are unsafe or feel that there are those who would use the fact that you are a spirit to move against you in any way, you will be able to wear a guise of your choosing. It must be a guise you choose before you step into the sunlight today, on your first day in the mortal world. The presence of the sun will reveal all deceptions. However, if you can hide from its direct light, you will be able to potentially keep yourself safe.

She here sort of grimaces a little bit and says, "I believe the warmth of the hearth was what you were seeking last night, and it was unsafe to move you. Beds. It is possible that you will not find rest in beds."

Lou Wilson:

Have I slept in a bed before?

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

You've never even seen a bed before.

Aabria Iyengar:

That's amazing.

Lou Wilson:

I think that will be okay. I don't know what that is.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

A bed is, well, it's just a very soft... device? I don't know what you call it. It's furniture, but it's a place where humans sleep.

Lou Wilson:

Well, I liked where I slept last night.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

All right. In game terms, sleeping in a bed will give you a level of exhaustion.

Lou Wilson:

Okay.

Erika Ishii:

Aw.

Lou Wilson:

No sleeping in beds, then.

Aabria Iyengar:

Not terrible for baby Eursulon. Older, maybe trying to fuck Eursulon...

Lou Wilson:

Oh, I start with, "Hey, that was a great night. I'm going to hop out of this bed."

Aabria Iyengar:

It's a very Count of Monte Cristo thing, and honestly I think that works for you.

Erika Ishii:

Yes.

Lou Wilson:

Like, hey, what's up? I cannot stay. I simply cannot stay.

Erika Ishii:

Hey, maybe that's not all bad for him, then.

Lou Wilson:

There it is.

Aabria Iyengar:

Uh-oh. The players are leaking through.

Lou Wilson:

There it is.

Erika Ishii:

Oh no.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

Amazing. So Eursulon, you awaken. Whatever the medicine did, you've had these taboos explained to you, basically, that seems like you dodged a couple bullets. Sunlight could have been really bad, or something with doors could have been really bad, but feels like it's all groovy now. Beds thing feels like whatever.

Lou Wilson:

Yeah. I don't think I have a hit. The concept of bed is still out there for me, so being told I can never have one is kind of like, oh. It's like somebody being told when they're young, "Oh, you can never eat this incredibly specific thing you've never heard of."

And you're like, "Okay, I think I'll get by."

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

I'll get by on that. Amazing. So Eursulon, you have your food. Grandma Wren takes you to the kitchen, and she kind of just fills the kitchen with a little bit of chatter of just her being like, "You've done remarkably well, and here you have this here. Oh, make sure have some of this, and have a little bit of juice. This is all right. This comes from the oranges that we have on the tree out at the end of the..." And it's that kind of fluffy, meaningless chatter that's just meant to be a pillow in the room.

You see probably after a half hour of that, strutting in through the bottom open half is Taro, the rooster. Taro whips up and looks at you.

Lou Wilson:

Good morning.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

"Good morning," and begins to walk over.

Erika Ishii:
Shut up!

Brennan Lee Mulligan:
And-

Aabria Iyengar:
It's the most important thing that's ever happened.

Lou Wilson:
He seems nice.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:
Oh, yes. He's a lovely, lovely rooster. He's been my familiar for as long as I can remember.

Lou Wilson:
I like him.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:
He walks over and goes up to a sleeping Ame and goes...

Aabria Iyengar:
And just slams her face into the book and Suvi's awake, too.

Erika Ishii:
My hair does the thing that Ghibli characters do, like the... Yeah.

Aabria Iyengar:
Just the ripple here.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:
You see Taro struts back out, his job accomplished, and you were both asleep for the moment preceding. You see Grandma Wren looks out and says, "There's a long day ahead of us, and we must to work. There are chores to be done, and I know that it's been a busy night, but Eursulon, as you can see, is doing fine, and we are going to make sure that he is welcome here.

"Now Eursulon, you did not ask to come to the cottage. You were here on a, well, I suppose something of a quest to find some information. So it is not incumbent upon you to do any chores if you do not wish. However, as part of my keeping of this place as a sanctum, I allow any guest one night of staying in my cottage. A longer stay, I do ask for guests to do some chores, but I know that chores would be a very foreign concept to you.

"So if you wish, if chores sound far beyond what you would like to do, which you have seen Ame and Suvi do their chores, we can find somewhere around the garden or somewhere else for you to stay if you would prefer to lead a chore-less life while you are my guest."

Lou Wilson:
I will try chores.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:
You see she smiles here, and her eyebrows go up, and she says, "Very well, chores you will try." She looks at Ame and Suvi and says, "Try to think of chores for Eursulon."

Erika Ishii:
Goat! He can take care of Nicholas.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:
"Nicholas the goat went and fetched water, and then immediately did not put himself back in his pen and has escaped. Would you please find..."
You see, she looks and says, "If you could find Nicholas the billy goat and get him back in his pen." And for some reason you have this momentary vision of you will be a child going into the woods to find a goat, and you have a vision of knights and questing beasts, of bright white stags far off in misty glades. This is a start.

Lou Wilson:
I think Eursulon pushes back from the table and stands, chest out. "I spoke to Sir Curran, and he reminded me that I am a protector of the forest, and I am going to retrieve... Nicholas?"

Brennan Lee Mulligan:
Nicholas, yes. He's a billy goat. He's very grumpy, and he will try to butt you. And if I'm being honest, he will succeed in butting you.

Lou Wilson:
And I will butt him right back.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:
All right. A brave young boy. Very well. Very well.

Erika Ishii:
They do a little high five. Yeah. A little high five.
He's gonna get gotted.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:
Incredible. You take off to go... So now you do not have to deal with Nicholas, Suvi and Ame. As Suvi and Ame high five under the table, how does that first day of chores go?

Aabria Iyengar:
Oh, man. I think... If I could just interject one quick thing...

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

Yes.

Aabria Iyengar:

... before Suvi does take off to go do chores, and she's a little emboldened by not having the mortal peril of Nicholas on the docket.

She goes and heads over to where Eursulon was sleeping by the hearth and goes and collects the cloak.

And I think she holds it up and gives it a sniff and notices the new smell, the pine and rosemary.

But then as she refold it and clutches it to her chest, she looks from it to Grandmother Wren. And I think that look is full of all the questions that a more independent child that wasn't so obedient and focused on being good instead of being present and heard, would ask about the man with the cloak that was there earlier and all the things that are left unsaid.

And then she just runs upstairs and goes to catch up with... I mean, Ame, I'm running out to go watch Eursulon v Goat. I'm ignoring all other chores until that's resolved.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

Go ahead Eursulon, and give me either a survival or investigation check.

Lou Wilson:

Oh, I'll give you survival. That's going to be a 13.

Erika Ishii:

Yeah!

Aabria Iyengar:

Okay.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

You head out across the stream over a little glade. It's not that deep into the forest. You can still see the edge of a fence by the garden through the trees and branches. You see Nicholas hanging out in a little glade and turns around, "Meh."

Lou Wilson:

You are Nicholas. You need to come home.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

Give me persuasion with advantage.

Aabria Iyengar:

Let's go.

Lou Wilson:

That's going to be a 14.

Erika Ishii:

No!

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

And Nicholas just walks off right past Eursulon. You see, as he gets, he sort of nuzzles your chest and walks off towards the goat paddock.

Lou Wilson:

As he gets close, I bash my head against his.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

Bam! You butt his head. He stumbles backwards, and you feel the feeling you are the new billy goat and he, you've just like, literally, he perfectly understands your speech and understands your intention and does not want to mess with you and walks off towards the paddock.

Erika Ishii:

Oh, there's a little hedgerow, and you can see the tiniest bit of the bowl haircut and eyes, and...

Aabria Iyengar:

Little eyebrows.

Erika Ishii:

... with the flowers, and we're like, "Oh."

Aabria Iyengar:

Suvi's just screaming, "How did he do that?"

Lou Wilson:

Grandma Wren, I believe I need more chores.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

As Eursulon says this, we cut from this moment, as you say-
Oh my God, Erika almost just died.

Aabria Iyengar:

Are you okay?

Erika Ishii:

Only ate shit.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

No!

Erika Ishii:

Oh my God.

Aabria Iyengar:

You landed so gracefully, though, for completely going off of that chair.

Erika Ishii:

Yeah. Wild.

Aabria Iyengar:

Are you okay? Did you die?

Erika Ishii:

Yeah, I'm good. I'm good.

Lou Wilson:

Okay, thank God.

Aabria Iyengar:

Are you dead?

Erika Ishii:

Oh, wow.

Lou Wilson:

We're doing it.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

We're doing it. As you announce, "I think I need more chores," in this stunning completion of this first chore, there is great sorrow in Eursulon's heart, but also you remember Sir Curran's words.

You went into the forest with a quest to find a goat and get it back to its paddock. You protected Ame when she was in mortal peril. You chose danger for yourself when it could have been another's, and you feel a little something as you complete your first chore, perhaps the tiniest itty bittiest little spark of honor.

Lou Wilson:

I think Eursulon kind of savors this feeling in this moment. If he wasn't already wearing it. He kind of puts back on his pauldron and I think quietly thinks to himself that he does not like this world, but he likes it here.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

Aw.

Erika Ishii:

Ow.

Aabria Iyengar:
Ow, my heart.

Brennan Lee Mulligan:

We pull up. Suvi and Ame, you see Eursulon walking up with the golden pauldron, and you see that Grandma Wren leans out of the door and says, "Already done? All right. Much to be done. Always plenty of work around the garden. With the goats and all around, there's much to be done, and very excited to see where it all will lead."

And we pull away from the garden, the three young children walking up to the cottage of Grandma Wren, a wizard, a witch, and a wild one. And this is where our children's story ends.

Aabria Iyengar:

Is it? That's the story. We did it all? [inaudible 00:51:13] cute story.

Erika Ishii:

Oh my God. It was perfect.

Aabria Iyengar:

Wait, but where did Grandma Wren go? What was she doing? Who was the guy?

Erika Ishii:

Howl's moving castle?