

# Worlds Beyond Number

Fireside Chat: Episode 009 - Episode 9 “The King of Cups”

Final Version

[Crickets chirp, and a campfire crackles. A bright and sweet song is plucked on an acoustic guitar.]

Erika Ishii

Hello everyone, and welcome to the Fireside Chat, for Episode 9, King of Cups. I'm your host, Erika Ishii, and I'm here with Brennan Lee Mulligan!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Ahoy hoy!

Erika Ishii

Ahoy hoy to you! Aabria Iyengar.

Aabria Iyengar

Ah hoo hoo!

Erika Ishii

Ah hoo hoo, to you as well. And [gasp] special guest Taylor Moore!

Taylor Moore

Ah hoo hoo! Oh, it feels so good to say!

Aabria Iyengar

Hi!!

Erika Ishii

Welcome! And finally, another special guest here, in Lou Wilson's stead.

Lou Wilson

Hi, I'm Lev Meinklang.

[Everyone laughs]

Lev Meinklang (Lou)

Should I say ah hoo hoo? Is that—

Erika Ishii

Yes. Yes.

Lev Meinklang (Lou)  
Ah hoo hoo!

Erika Ishii  
It's the traditional greeting for this podcast, ah hoo hoo.

Aabria Iyengar  
[Laughing]

Lev Meinklang (Lou)  
Fun, fun. Ah hoo hoo!

Erika Ishii  
Ah hoo hoo to you, Lev.

Aabria Iyengar  
Mind clang??

Lev Meinklang (Lou)  
Meinklang. It's Austrian.

[Aabria and Taylor laugh]

Aabria Iyengar  
[Laughing] Incredible.

Brennan Lee Mulligan  
It's good. It's good.

Aabria Iyengar  
So good to have you.

Lev Meinklang (Lou)  
Thrilled to be here.

Erika Ishii  
It's so good to have you. And I'm glad you're here for this episode in particular, it was, truly like a barn burner of an episode, where we kind of see the turn, and the stakes, and uh, a party split for this story. And so today, I'm going to mostly be focusing on talking to people about their different segments. There is the Morrow and Suvi conversation. There was the party split, and then Eursulon going off on his own, and Suvi going off on her own, and the interaction with Will Gallows, and the tricky Fox, furthering the plot.

Aabria Iyengar

Someone had to. Bless that Fox.

Erika Ishii

Yeah. Thank god.

Lev Meinklang (Lou)

Bless that Fox.

Erika Ishii

Thank god. And today we have Taylor with us, because I just—truly, the storytelling in this episode specifically, with the music and the sound cues, was—

Lev Meinklang (Lou)

Mm.

Aabria Iyengar

SIR.

Erika Ishii

—everybody was firing all cylinders for this one. Everyone—not to like, you know, pat ourselves on the back too hard, but I was riveted. Ah! Okay, so first—

Brennan Lee Mulligan

It really popped off.

Erika Ishii

It really did, it really did. Taylor! Taylor—you're laughing. Why are you laughing? It DID pop off!

Taylor Moore

I'm laughing because I love this episode, and I love the response to it, and I knew we had achieved what we wanted to, and the show was firing on all cylinders, because I saw people online saying, "I was so uncomfortable, I couldn't listen, and I loved it."

Erika Ishii

[Giggling]

Aabria Iyengar

Yes.

Taylor Moore

Yes. Yes!

Lev Meinklang (Lou)

Mhm.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Boom. There it is. There it is.

Erika Ishii

Man. That's what some of my favorite stories are, where it's just like, "Ooh! I love it, and I feel so bad right now!" Yeah.

Aabria Iyengar

Getting to listen to this while walking Suvi in the morning is my favorite thing, because I have also forgotten things that happened, and I will respond about characters out loud, so Suvi thinks I yell at her, when I listen to these episodes, in like a really—she's just sitting confused next to me, like, what did I do? It's like, "Suvi! Come on. Come on. Just give them this. No? Okay."

Erika Ishii

For those of us who—

Aabria Iyengar

She just lays down like, mid walk like, what have I done?

Erika Ishii

I'm pretty sure everybody on the Fireside knows this, but Suvi is the name of Aabria's dog. It was actually named before this podcast came out.

Aabria Iyengar

Everyone knows it! [Laughs]

Erika Ishii

That's what I figured, but you know, point of clarification. Brennan, you were gonna say something?

Aabria Iyengar

Dear everyone on the patreon—oh, yeah! Go.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

I was going to say, I really wanted—there's so much—this is what we call a classic thick 'sode, right? This is a very—

Taylor Moore

[Laughs]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

—there's a lot going on in this episode. First of all, one of my favorite things as a Dungeon Master, that lets me know I've done my job, is when the PCs do—I think like—and Taylor, you could maybe check me on the timeline here—like a 20 to 30 minute scene, with zero to minimal—any narration from me, right?

Taylor Moore

Or edits.

Aabria Iyengar

Yeah.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Or edits!

Aabria Iyengar

Oh wow.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

That was just the conversation as it unfolded.

Taylor Moore

Mhm.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

I think, to me, I just want to talk about that, like—both with Taylor—like you're saying, that—leaving that unedited—and for myself, I just shut up at the—I remember shutting up at the table. When that interaction first started, I—I'm sure, Taylor, you had the exact mirror of what happened to me at the table, which is just like, "I'm going to step all the way back."

Aabria Iyengar

[Laugh]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

"All the way back and let this unfold," because that performance from Erika, Lou, and Aabria was just... Unbelievable. Do you guys know? Did you guys feel it while you were doing it, that that was that intense, and that cool?

Aabria Iyengar

I mean—okay. I feel like it was this really cool thing that was building up, and the moment that sent it over the top for me, was realizing Eursulon specifically, like, his reaction, and in real time, playing as Suvi, and defending her take on it, while Aabria was sort of analyzing the, like, "Oh, this is like a trauma response, and a pain response, and like—" And feeling both of those things in real time, I remember coming out of that scene specifically and being like, "Holy shit. This is very good. Oh my god."

Brennan Lee Mulligan  
Eursulon's response IS the curveball there.

Aabria Iyengar  
Yeah!

Erika Ishii  
Yeah!

Brennan Lee Mulligan  
Because I think if Ame says her piece, and Eursulon straight up and down agrees, I think Suvi's reaction is 100% different.

Erika Ishii  
Yeah.

Aabria Iyengar  
Yep.

Brennan Lee Mulligan  
I think Suvi is allowed to defend the Empire, because she's not surrounded. You know what I mean? She's not facing—

Aabria Iyengar  
Yeah.

Erika Ishii  
Mhm.

Brennan Lee Mulligan  
—it's like, "Oh, my two childhood friends don't agree, in this moment, so—"

Erika Ishii  
It's very convenient to do the one that, all your training and all of your trauma informs, yeah.

Brennan Lee Mulligan  
Mhm.

Erika Ishii  
Oh my god.

Aabria Iyengar  
Yeah.

Erika Ishii  
Mr. Meinklang.

Lev Meinklang (Lou)  
Yeah.

Aabria Iyengar  
[Laughs]

Taylor Moore  
[Laughing] Jesus.

Erika Ishii  
Did you know? I mean, just—can you tell me a little bit about Eursulon's response? Because Eursulon has just been such a sweet, go-along-with-the-flow lad—

Lev Meinklang (Lou)  
Mhm.

Erika Ishii  
—and this was his first time really taking a stand and addressing his past.

Lev Meinklang (Lou)  
Well, I think that's the—that's Eursulon's silence, along the way from the derrick to that moment, is the realization that is staring down at this other Honored Friend, realizing that they are trapped. He is trapped, and this—all that this city is, is bringing up those feelings again. And I think, as much as people having listened to the Children's Adventure know about Eursulon's hopes and dreams, that's not the life Eursulon has lived up to this point. And I think that it's—the exciting thing about doing one of these grander campaigns that, I think I felt really comfortable being like, Eursulon doesn't need to be a hero yet.

Erika Ishii  
Ahh!

Lev Meinklang (Lou)  
Eursulon could be just a full guy who's had a hard life, who has a great weight put upon him, and shrugs it off, because it's just too heavy. And we have time. I know that in the span of this, we will find a way to get to that place, but that the first call to action can be declined. And so I think that—that whole trip, I think, is just me also just being quiet, thinking about how Eursulon doesn't want to do anything. Eursulon just wants to be away from this, and forget about it.

Erika Ishii  
Oof.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

There's a—I think there—man, Eursulon, you could just—I could really just write a whole book about the complexity in this episode, of Eursulon and the decisions you're making, because I was struck by how the conversation that happens after—the one where you're like, "What would you have us do? That's the Empire's choice," right? Which is, you know. It's deeply human, but it is the absolute other side of the coin from—I'm rambling—I'm trying to put Eursulon together. Because it's—

Erika Ishii

Mhm.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

—that's so primal, and animal, of like, "There's fire here, I'm going to run." And you're like, "Well, there's other animals that the fire is threatening," and it's like, "if every animal runs, the fastest animals will get away, and that's justice, and we're all going to run."

Erika Ishii

Mmmm!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

This is—a bad thing is happening, I'm a Wild Spirit, I'm going to get away. But then the scene that fol—and being like, "there's nothing we can fucking do," right? And also, Eursulon, as—and there's sort of this deb—the type of sheltered that Suvi has been, and the type of sheltered that Ame has been—

Erika Ishii

Mhm.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

—and then Eursulon, who has NOT been sheltered, right?

Aabria Iyengar

YES.

Lev Meinklang (Lou)

Mhm.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Has gotten the fuckin'—both sides of the hand of the world, over and over again for years, right?

Taylor Moore

Mhm. Mhm.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Ya know, like, sleeping in attics and barns, on the run from hedge mages trying to fuckin' hunt him down, like all this crazy shit. And, in the conversation after that one, where Ame go—first of all, incredible from



Suvi, who, in her own way, while trying to stay mad and high status, the first thing she does is tell Ame to go comfort Eursulon, right?

Aabria Iyengar  
[Laughs]

Taylor Moore  
Unbelievable.

Erika Ishii  
Yeah!! [Crying]

Taylor Moore  
Unbelievable! Everyone's brand of stupidity, and laziness, and fear—

[Everyone laughs]  
Taylor Moore  
—and selfishness, is so, like, complex and real. I love it.

Erika Ishii  
GOD!!

Brennan Lee Mulligan  
And then Ame runs over—

Erika Ishii  
Like—

Brennan Lee Mulligan  
—to have that interaction with Eursulon, and is so sweet and tender. And there was a moment, where Eursulon goes, I actually get kind of choked up talking about it. There's a moment where Eursulon talks about, like, "I got joy back, and we have joy again and I'm so scared to let it go."

Aabria Iyengar  
Oh god.

Erika Ishii  
Yeah.

Brennan Lee Mulligan  
And to me, I've had this image in my mind, right, that the struggle for Eursulon is that this world, this modern world of Empire, and war, and great technological magic, doesn't have space for fairies or knights anymore. It doesn't have the spiritual component, AND the highest HUMAN ideals, it doesn't have room for. And occasionally Eursulon will do something, in that moment where he just tells the truth? And I had

this moment of listening to it again, where I was like—that is so inhuman in some ways, Ame comes and you're like, "I don't want to fight for what's right, because I'm scared to lose what little joy I have." And I heard it at the table, and again listening to it, and I went, "Ugh! That's the thing you're not supposed to say!"

Aabria Iyengar  
[Laughs]

Erika Ishii  
Yeah!

Taylor Moore  
Yeah.

Aabria Iyengar  
Yeah.

Brennan Lee Mulligan  
You're not supposed to say, "The reason I'm not heroic is I have a little bit of happiness that I'm scared to lose," right? You're not supposed to say that. And it's the truth for like every—

Aabria Iyengar  
Yeah!

Taylor Moore  
It's the truth!

Brennan Lee Mulligan  
It's the fucking truth! And so I like—not only is that almost Fae in its honesty, and dismissal of human lies, and the lies of society, that we say to preserve, like a veneer.

Erika Ishii  
Mhm.

Brennan Lee Mulligan  
So it's very Fae in its honesty, but it's also, in its honesty, so deeply honorable. There's an honor in being—

Taylor Moore  
And loving!

Brennan Lee Mulligan  
Yes.

Aabria Iyengar  
Yeah!

Taylor Moore  
It's an act of love. Like, to be that honest with someone is a profound act of trust and love.

Aabria Iyengar  
Yeah!

Taylor Moore  
Yeah, and you're right. It is honorable. Yeah, ah, god, I love it.

[Everyone laughs]

Taylor Moore  
He can't lie. He can lie, but he can't—not to her, not in this moment.

Brennan Lee Mulligan  
Yeah.

Erika Ishii  
I love—

Brennan Lee Mulligan  
Lev, you did a great job, man.

Lev Meinklang (Lou)  
Hey, ya know—

Erika Ishii  
Every—

Lev Meinklang (Lou)  
—we just answered the call, to what my scene partners were putting out.

[Everyone laughs]

Lev Meinklang (Lou)  
We're just meeting the moment.

Aabria Iyengar  
Meeting the moment.

Erika Ishii

It's really great to have somebody classically trained like you with us, sitting with us.

Lev Meinklang (Lou)

Hey, ya know. 15 years at Juilliard.

Aabria Iyengar

[Laughs] That's such a long time! Interesting!

Taylor Moore

The school?

Lev Meinklang (Lou)

Yes. I was—

Aabria Iyengar

Oh!

Lev Meinklang (Lou)

—in and out, in and out, in and out, you know.

[Everyone laughs]

Taylor Moore

Kept having to repeat orientation.

Lev Meinklang (Lou)

Exactly. Because they won't let you—it turns out if you don't go to orientation, you're not allowed to go to the classes.

Aabria Iyengar

Interesting. Hm. Seems like a flaw.

Taylor Moore

You'll get 'em! You'll get 'em one day!

Lev Meinklang (Lou)

One of these days.

Taylor Moore

You're in your 15th year.

Aabria Iyengar

[Laughing] The implication here—

Lev Meinklang (Lou)

Yeah, I'm in my 15th year currently.

Aabria Iyengar

[Laughing]

Lev Meinklang (Lou)

Guys, can we—I do have to go to class after this, alright?

Erika Ishii

Okay, yeah, we'll keep this at a brisk pace, yes. For Suvi, I just—I feel like, as you were saying, this is things coming to a head.

Aabria Iyengar

Yeah.

Erika Ishii

All of Suvi's upbringing, all of Suvi's feelings about Empire, and about following orders. Suddenly she's faced with this one HUGE, monumental, conflict of interest. And I feel like she, so expertly, ended up going on the attack, just like she was taught!

Aabria Iyengar

[Laughs] Always. It's been very fun, especially because we ended the last episode with Suvi's sort of like—how'd she say it? "What have you done?"

Erika Ishii

Mhm.

Aabria Iyengar

And then—it's that idea that you turn a little bit faster than your brain can keep up with? And then all of a sudden, all of the programming, and everything she knows she's supposed to do and be, catches up. And it was very fun sort of spending the first half of the episode—with Brennan's help in this very fun way of like—god, I just love GMs that play your character with you, and are there for those internal moments? Of like, "Yeah, okay. We have to get ourselves back on the same page," and get to that point where you're like, "And I got so deep into character, I forgot, overshot, and was back on the wrong side of it again—"

[Laughs]

Aabria Iyengar

Until I saw my friends Ame and Eursulon, and went "Oh, shit. Alright, sorry. I believed my lie a little too hard. That's probably not a thing that's going to come up later."

Brennan Lee Mulligan

First of all, I think that, like, this is an interesting philosophy, because different GMs have different boundaries about where—to what degree are you supposed to, like—like when a PC gives a per—hits a Nat 20 perception check, and you're describing what they see, as the Gorillaz famously said, you don't see with your eyes, you perceive with your mind, right?

[Aabria and Erika laugh]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

The DM is always contributing to the mind of the PCs, even by just how they describe sensory information—

Aabria Iyengar

Yeah.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

—because you can't perceive 100% of the world around you. And for me, I've always felt like you—it's a DM's role to—like, for example, in a weird way, by playing NPCs, I—one of my characters IS the programming of Empire.

Aabria Iyengar

Mhm. Yeah.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

One of my characters is the messaging and philosophy of these—

Aabria Iyengar

Yes.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

—ideologies that exist in the world, so—but for—I know that Suvi is a very complicated character—

Aabria Iyengar

[Laughs]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

—but I want to remind all our listeners at home—

Aabria Iyengar

[Laughs]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

—that maybe are like, [feigned outrage] "Suvi!! No, the Empire!! Naram is captured!! Morrow is bad!!" Just remember, no matter what Suvi yells at her friends, in moments of defending the Citadel, and defending her position, remember what her very first reaction to Morrow was.

Erika Ishii

Agh!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Very first.

Erika Ishii

Ah!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Very first.

Erika Ishii

Ahh!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

"What have you done?"

Erika Ishii

Oh my god!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And, to me, that describes so many heartbreaking situations, where something deep and true does come, like—the number one belief I have, in terms of like, whatever my secular morality is—is that there's a weird attitude in some parts of our culture, that like, impulses are sinful, and morality is like a structure?

Aabria Iyengar

YES!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And that bullshit. Moral impulses are incredibly real. Nobody needs to explain what's wrong with—think of the first age you are, where someone's mean to another kid, or an animal, and something in you goes "Wrong!!" And that's primal.

Aabria Iyengar

Yeah.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And there was something primal in Suvi that said, "What have you done?" And, uh, [New York Accent] So just don't fuckin' forget that, okay? [Laughs]

Aabria Iyengar

[Laughs]

Erika Ishii

Yeah, and—it was incredible watching the conversation between Suvi and Morrow, and—yeah, like sort of that framework getting sort of rebuilt as a shell around her and—until Aabria says, "At some point, Suvi stops pretending to be excited about this, and actually is." That was terrifying.

Aabria Iyengar

[Laughs]

Erika Ishii

Oh, it was so good though, like, ugh!

Aabria Iyengar

I think that's—like, when we talk about sort of, what the sort of North Star for a character is, when we talk about Suvi's dysfunction, it is her ability to justify.

Erika Ishii

Yeah.

Aabria Iyengar

And I think if you give her enough time in her own head—like, she's, again, incredibly smart so like, the seed of whatever arc she needs to go through, has to start from her strongest characteristic, and the way in which it was formed, left, and sent left, for other purposes. So, yeah, she can think herself into—like, she can work herself into believing whatever she needs to believe. And that was another moment where Brennan said very specifically— oh, gosh. I love that I lined it up and then my brain goes, "I don't remember the line." Taylor, I'm so sorry. You're here right now. You're going to have to cut this part out later and then try to bring it back.

Taylor Moore

[Laughs]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

The line about principle, like, what in principle is different, or no?

Aabria Iyengar

Oh no no! It was talking about like, "What's the difference between a demon being bound?"



Brennan Lee Mulligan

Oh yes. Yes yes yes.

Aabria Iyengar

"How is this different in a way that matters?" And that was like the one little cue where I was like, oh, I'm getting there, and that's the thing that gets Suvi back to, "Okay, I can be inside this feeling, and it's fine."

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Uh—

Erika Ishii

Uh and—yeah.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Sorry, go for it.

Erika Ishii

Suvi, and you, are just also very charismatic and persuasive, and can go down the logic beats. And I find myself, because, you know, definitely—I've talked about I think there's like two brains working—

Aabria Iyengar

Yeah.

Erika Ishii

—when I'm playing, and when Ame and Suvi are arguing, and especially in that big argument up top—

Aabria Iyengar

Oh my god.

Erika Ishii

—both Erika and Ame will go in swinging, and being like, "This is what's important for the story, and for our morality!"

[Laughs]

Erika Ishii

And then, like, I will slowly watch Ame get beat down—be like, "Oh yeah, no no no, you're right, you're right, you're right. Ah damn, you're right. I am kind of biased, ah shit!"

Aabria Iyengar

[Laughing] No!!

Erika Ishii

And I'll be like, "No! No, you little dummy! No, no! Just stand your ground!"

[Aabria and Erika laugh]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Do you know what the hardest part of playing the Fox is? Fundamentally? The hardest part—

Erika Ishii

[Laughing] What?

Brennan Lee Mulligan

—of playing the Fox is when Ame—

Taylor Moore

Getting in the costume?

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Getting into costume.

[Aabria and Erika laugh]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And it's so hot in the studio.

Taylor Moore

Yeah.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

I sweat on a cold day, you know what I mean?

[Everyone laughs]

Taylor Moore

It's cooler since we cut holes for the butt cheeks.

Lev Meinklang (Lou)

Yes.

[Everyone laughs]

Taylor Moore

We gotta get some air back there.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

There were so many Fox costumes with the butt cheeks already cut out—

Aabria Iyengar

Yeah!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

—I can't believe we didn't—

Taylor Moore

We shoulda. Well, you know.

Aabria Iyengar

They didn't have the texture we wanted.

Taylor Moore

Fool me once.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Hindsight's 20/20, yeah. The hardest part about playing the Fox is, when Aabria, as Suvi, spins up into debate team mode—

[Aabria and Erika laugh]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

—and turns it on Ame, who is The Boss, and who the Fox loves with all his little Foxy heart—

Lev Meinklang (Lou)

Mm.

Erika Ishii

Ooh!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

—in his little sly way. The fact—all of these engines in Brennan—

[Everyone laughs]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

—start to spin up as well?

Taylor Moore

Yeah?

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And every episode, I have to remind myself that the Fox would not intercept in front of Ame, to be like, "If you do one more, whataboutism—"

[Everyone laughs]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

"—I am going to take my client out of court. You are bringing up completely unrelated topics that have nothing to do with what's at hand, you're using big words, fast and loud to bamboozle the situation."

Aabria Iyengar

[Laughs] Yep.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And I'm like, but the Fox doesn't care, because what the Fox is gonna do is, let you yell at Ame, and then let you leave, and then go, "Let's do whatever we wanted to do!"

[Everyone laughs]

Aabria Iyengar

It does feel crazy to set up so many like, shitty arguments and then be like, "Stop. Don't. I don't wanna get away with—well, I am enjoying getting away with this, but don't! Not forever."

Erika Ishii

But for—

Aabria Iyengar

And now I'm just going to hold up a Post-It note every time I do it, that says—and just point it at Brennan that says you're a Fox, shut up.

[Aabria, Brennan, and Erika laugh]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

But, it's a very real—

Erika Ishii

Uh—

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Oh, sorry, yeah.

Erika Ishii

No no no, go ahead go ahead.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

I was going to say, it's a very real thing that—the sort of debate mindset. First of all, it's an incredible job that Suvi does, because you can see that—the debate mentality is you're doing it to yourself. Like Ame—you don't even let Ame finish sentences, where it's like—

Aabria Iyengar

Yeah.

Erika Ishii

[Giggling]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

—Ame's like "I don't judge, I never—" and you're like, "You do judge! duh duh duh duh duh! Pow pow pow!"

Aabria Iyengar

[Dying laughing]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And like it's—it's brutal! It's very Imperial. It's like this oppressive weight, from a very smart opponent, who is convincing themselves. Like, the reason the arguments have that urgency, is that Suvi is also self indoctrinating, and it's part of that thing that comes back up. And I think the big, sinister part of, of... The idea of principle. Like, what, in principle, is different from a demon being bound in a circle of salt, and what you saw happening to Naram out under the derrick. This is—I don't have time to explain this in this talk back. I have issues with the philosophic concept of principle, point blank.

Aabria Iyengar

Mm!

Erika Ishii

Mm.

Taylor Moore

Yes! Thank you! This is why I love the Fox in this episode.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Yes.

Taylor Moore

The Fox isn't like, [Jimmy Stewart voice] "You gotta do what's right!" Fox does not talk like that. I don't know.

[Everyone laughs]

Taylor Moore

"Hey, kids!"

Aabria Iyengar

[Laughing] I think he does now!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

[Grimy New York Accent] Hey kids! I'm da Fox!

Taylor Moore

Skip scop skibbidy doo!

[Brennan and Taylor laughing]

Aabria Iyengar

See, this is what the Fox sounds like when you don't cut the cheeks out.

[Everyone laughs]

Taylor Moore

The air builds up and he scats!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Yeah.

Taylor Moore

The Fox doesn't say, "Here's a five point—you know if you listen to John Searle or Rawls's—"

[Aabria, Brennan, and Erika laugh]

Taylor Moore

"—basic philosophical concept and this—you know, the utility of helping Naram—" No! The Fox is like, "Does it feel right? Do what you want to do."

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Yeah.

Taylor Moore

"Do what you WANT to do."

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Yeah.

Taylor Moore

You don't need the philosophical concept of principles to act.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Yes. And I think that the idea of principle, from—especially to a wizard, who is all about organization, taxonomy, patterns, and systems—principle is this idea that, maybe is built on sand, right?

Aabria Iyengar

Yeah.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

When we think about "what are your principles," we use it as a synonym for being a good person. "Are you principled?" But the idea of principle being like, maxims, axioms, "What are some rules that I can ALWAYS follow?" And speaking of them, like, if you go back to Aristotle's Golden Mean, maybe living by principles produces bizarre, immoral edge cases.

Aabria Iyengar

Yeah.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

So it's this idea of, like—but it's unexamined by Suvi in that moment, and the reason it's unexamined, is because I think it's one of the main tools of the indoctrination of the Empire. What have you already accepted? Right? I see this in ethical discourse all the time, which is why whataboutism is so powerful, in modern philosophical discourse, is people go like, "Okay. You've made a moral point. You've made a call to action. You've said, 'we need to do something to make the world better.' So what I'm going to do is find some other moral failing of yours, hold it up in front of you and say, 'but you did this bad thing like this,' or 'this other situation occurred that was similar to this, where you did not act. So wouldn't you in fact, be a hypocrite by acting or not acting in a similar way this time?'"

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Which sounds, when you see it in the world, like sound moral reasoning, and it's garbage.

Taylor Moore

[Laughs]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Because it's basically saying, like, "Instead of helping, why don't you be consistent?" And it's like—

[Everyone laughs]

Erika Ishii

Oh my god!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

It's like stupid. What the fuck is the point of consistency? Like principle as a measurement of consistency, and the Fox's whole deal would be like, "Yeah, yesterday I did something bad and today I'm going to do something good because I want to." That's all.

Erika Ishii

Yeah.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And someone would be like, "You're a hypocrite." And he'd be like, "Okay! I'm gonna get some fish slurry."

Taylor Moore

But Brennan.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Yeah.

Taylor Moore

Brennan. Civilization.

[Aabria and Erika laugh]

Taylor Moore

Civilization relies on institutions, right?

Brennan Lee Mulligan

[Laughs, claps]

Taylor Moore

We cannot have civilization without institutions. And institutions, by definition, need the individual members of it, to surrender their personal principles for the institutional principles, that allow us to carry larger goals from generation to generation. How do you square that?

Aabria Iyengar

Yeah.

Erika Ishii

Why wouldn't you find a society, like a civilization, that has closer to your principles? Wouldn't you want to do that?

Taylor Moore

Interesting. You could go to the desert.



Erika Ishii

Yeah!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

[Laughing] Go to the desert for 40 days and 40 nights!

Taylor Moore

I was thinking more of like an art, fun, steampunky, a lot of mushrooms.

[Everyone laughs]

Aabria Iyengar

Hey, I've got little packets!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Erika just—

Aabria Iyengar

Come with me.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Oh, god.

Erika Ishii

Ohh, I just invented a Cult.

Aabria Iyengar

I have a question for you, Erika.

Erika Ishii

Yes.

Aabria Iyengar

How do you feel being at the center of so many disparate moves and motives, because like, Ame's existence has been this sort of, peacekeeper and the balance maker, between these groups, between the Spirit World and the Human World. I think for me, a delightful part of this episode was watching how much she could be pulled, and try to preserve space, and place, at the center and as the heart, like—How ya—How ya doin' Erika, that's my question.

Erika Ishii

How am I doin'! Aw man.

Aabria Iyengar

How are you? [Laughs]

Erika Ishii

You know, it's so funny, because I think—the issue that a lot of tables run into is palavering, right? Is indecision. And I think that is the thing—I think Ame was stuck in indecision, because she does want to hold space for everything, and she understands how complex, and nuanced everybody's take is, that's her sort of superpower, is not just empathy, but to understand everybody else's point of view. It's how she was raised, it's who she is, it's part of being a witch. But I, Erika, am like, well, we gotta do something. We have to make a move. I have to make some strong choice as a character.

Erika Ishii

And it's funny that Suvi's first reaction is, "What have you done?" That humanity, that primal instinct. Ame's primal instinct is Brennan, playing an external factor. And so, having the Fox—

Aabria Iyengar

Oof. Yeah.

Erika Ishii

—run away, because that's probably what would have happened, is Ame would have run away, or—but like, I don't know that she's there yet, so maybe it wouldn't have happened? But having the Fox, who is literally that id, make the move, was not just Brennan doing, you know, sort of above the table moves, but also, like, narrative wise, doing the thing that made sense. I think, in the way that he—that Morrow, Brennan as Morrow, kind of helped push forward the idea that Suvi has to rebuild the structure around herself, in that way, he pushed forward the idea that Ame—Ame knows what she has to do, and she's going to have to do it no matter what. And the Incredible—which also brings me to—oh, I'm fine, by the way. I'm fine. I'm fine. I would like to also address—

Aabria Iyengar

[Laughs]

Erika Ishii

[Laughing] Does that answer your question? I'm fine.

Aabria Iyengar

Yes!

Erika Ishii

Teacup did have a question. "Are you all okay? And how do y'all do aftercare after a session like this?" And I think, you know, we address this every couple of episodes in the Fireside here, and I just always like to reiterate that—

Aabria Iyengar

[Laugh]

Erika Ishii

—we are all emotionally safe, both with each other because of the groundwork we've laid down, because of our friendship over a long period of time. Because, I don't know. That's definitely how I work as a person, where I'm able to separate the creative process from my own feelings, ya know? So, I think we're mostly okay, you know we just continue on being friends after that, I guess? Ya know?

Aabria Iyengar

Yeah. Right?

Erika Ishii

Yeah!

Lev Meinklang (Lou)

[Chuckle]

Erika Ishii

Yeah.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

I—

Lev Meinklang (Lou)

That's what you think.

Aabria Iyengar

[Laugh]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

[Gasps] Mr. Meinklang!

Lev Meinklang (Lou)

Well what can I say!

Erika Ishii

Mr. Minecrang, is there something that you would like to—

Aabria Iyengar

Oh!

Erika Ishii

—discuss?

Lev Meinklang (Lou)

Well, I'm just an Austrian student at Juilliard, alright. We don't have—you and Lou Wilson have a bunch of groundwork.

Aabria Iyengar

Yeah.

Lev Meinklang (Lou)

But the three of us?

Erika Ishii

Oh.

Lev Meinklang (Lou)

I felt attacked.

Aabria Iyengar

[Laugh]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

I wanna—

Taylor Moore

What's your aftercare, Mr. Meinklang?

Lev Meinklang (Lou)

I spend almost \$30,000 a month on therapy.

Aabria Iyengar

Wow.

Lev Meinklang (Lou)

Different kinds—

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Sorry, wait, how much?

Lev Meinklang (Lou)

30,000?

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Euros?

Lev Meinklang (Lou)

Yes.

Taylor Moore

[Laugh]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Wow!

Aabria Iyengar

What's the exchange rate on that right now? Is that a lot? Is that normal?

Lev Meinklang (Lou)

Uh, it's like—

Erika Ishii

Also, is this a bunch of different therapists or, like, one super therapist?

Aabria Iyengar

Ooh!

Taylor Moore

Well he's Austrian.

Lev Meinklang (Lou)

Bunch of different therapists, a bunch of different types of therapy.

Aabria Iyengar

Woah!

Lev Meinklang (Lou)

Just kind of a real span—

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Wow.

Lev Meinklang (Lou)

—a real smattering of therapy, lotta—and a lot of crisscrossing. Some therapists will be like, do this, and then other ones will be like, they told you what? And then I got one that's an ex-baseball player, and we just hit balls together for about 45 minutes, and he tells me he's proud of me. And, now that one's my favorite.

Taylor Moore

Phew!

Aabria Iyengar

[Laugh] Hitting dingers is a good, therapeutic—

Erika Ishii

Well, thank you for walking us—yeah, thank you for walking us through your process.

Lev Meinklang (Lou)

Happily. Happily.

Erika Ishii

Teacup, I hope that answered your question. I want to talk about Eursulon splitting the party, and consequences, which doesn't always mean negative consequences.

Aabria Iyengar

Yeah!

Lev Meinklang (Lou)

Mm.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

I gotta say, this party split, following—I want to say, Eursulon going to the Ace of Wands and also the music. Taylor, that—

Erika Ishii

FUCK!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

—drunken stumbling, out of the fuckin—

Aabria Iyengar

I was confused, coming home!

Taylor Moore

It's really disorienting, isn't it?

Aabria Iyengar

It's really good!

Erika Ishii

How did you do that?

Aabria Iyengar

Yeah!

Taylor Moore

Well—

Erika Ishii

Did you take the theme that you had before and, like, squish it?

Taylor Moore

Yeah, and—you make an automation lane that changes the pitch but not the tempo. And then I discovered that on rendering, it made that really weird, like, volume dropout effect and just kept it, it was great.

Lev Meinklang (Lou)

Mm!

Aabria Iyengar

Ahh, so good.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

How many different themes appeared in this episode—

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Oh gosh! So many!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Well, and that was the thing too, in this amazing moment where Ame finds out about Wavebreaker. It was—

Erika Ishii

Oh my god, oh my god.

Aabria Iyengar

Holy shit I forgot that was this episode!!

Taylor Moore

Fuck!!! This episode ruled!

Erika Ishii

Oh my god!

Taylor Moore

That was one of my favorite bits of producing.

Aabria Iyengar

AH!!

Taylor Moore  
I loved making that vibe—

Aabria Iyengar  
AAH!!

Taylor Moore  
The library segment, one of my favorite bits of audio in the whole show.

Aabria Iyengar  
Yeah.

Brennan Lee Mulligan  
Because I know that theme runs through the series—

Erika Ishii  
Mhm.

Brennan Lee Mulligan  
—I've heard that leitmotif come back over and over again.

Erika Ishii  
Yeah.

Brennan Lee Mulligan  
And the only thing I remember about—I don't know what your qualifications are for using that theme, it does feel that it's very associated with plot, and lore, and mystery, and revealing things. But I also wonder, using in a scene that was very Ame focused, as Suvi and Eursulon have both taken off into the night. Because I remember you saying one time that you associated—or not associated—that as an artistic choice, witches and witch magic were very represented by strings.

Taylor Moore  
Yes.

Brennan Lee Mulligan  
And it's a very string, heavy piece. You talk a little about that?

Taylor Moore  
Yeah, so. Yes, so. The music—there's two bits of music in that scene—also, I loved this scene because it was a researching in a library montage, which we all love as nerds!

[Everyone laughs]



Taylor Moore

We all fucking love that shit! It's like—

Erika Ishii

Yeah.

Taylor Moore

When y'all were playing. I'm sorry if I call anyone by their characters names. [Laughs] My bad!

Aabria Iyengar

It's all good!

Erika Ishii

That's fine.

Aabria Iyengar

That's fine!

Taylor Moore

Erika chooses to go to the library, I'm like, "Oh fuck yes. oh we're getting it!"

Erika Ishii

[Laugh]

Taylor Moore

"Oh, we're getting it! They're describing the books!" I'm hearing it like fast paced music, and we're hearing the investigation. The music, I believe, I think, in my files is called "On the Hunt."

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Mhm.

Aabria Iyengar

Nice!

Taylor Moore

Which was the same—we hear a version of it when the gals are looking for Eursulon.

Erika Ishii

Aww!

Taylor Moore

And that's the first time we hear the instruments come together. We hear the horns—the horns and the piano, and the strings come together for the first time, when they're looking for Eursulon across the island.

Aabria Iyengar

Ah!

Taylor Moore

And then when they find him, that's when the woodwinds come in, the saxophones and the bass clarinets. So that investigation theme sort of involves all three characters. You hear that, as she's looking, and all these book sounds. But then when we switch the realization about Naram's relationship to Wavebreaker and how they're—

Aabria Iyengar

Yeah. God.

Taylor Moore

The like, "We're involved in this! It's kind of about us!"

[Everyone laughs]

Erika Ishii

Ahh, god, it was—

Taylor Moore

Ya know! And it turns out that, you know, Eursulon thought he was checking outta the story, but oh! How he is very much checking into the story!

Erika Ishii

My god!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Yeah yeah yeah.

Erika Ishii

Just—also, the bold move. I—Lev, can you please walk us through? Like, you specifically, went and split the party. And that's usually, according to tabletopping rules, verboten but—

Taylor Moore

[Quietly] Verboten!

Erika Ishii

—I don't know if you know that, because conflict in—is something that you'd be more accustomed to in drama.

Lev Meinklang (Lou)

Mm. Mhm. Yes.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You also—

Lev Meinklang (Lou)

We talk about that a lot.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You split it in RESPONSE to Ame finding important information! Like Erika did the other scene first!

Aabria Iyengar

Yeah!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Erika said, "I found something!" And you went, "I am not here, baby!"

Aabria Iyengar

Yes! What a beautiful instinct!

Lev Meinklang (Lou)

Everyone went off—well, I think everyone was doing cool shit. And I think I was like, well, it'd be pretty fucking lame if my character just got drunk in his room.

[Everyone laughs]

Lev Meinklang (Lou)

So I think like—even just like, personally, I was like, "Well let's do somethin'—let's give it some juice!" And I think the juice we decided on was just being like, "I'm gonna go get the sword." Because Eursulon—it was like, Eursulon wants to leave, so it's like if we—and I think you had said specifically when, right as we were getting into Suvi's interaction with the head of the Agricultural Department of Iowa.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Des Moines? Yeah

Aabria Iyengar

[Laughing] Galani

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Galani, yeah.

Erika Ishii

Right.

Lev Meinklang (Lou)

Yes.

Aabria Iyengar

What a perfect analogy, by the way.

Erika Ishii

It was so good.

Lev Meinklang (Lou)

Right as we were getting into that, I think you had been like, "It's not that late." And I was like, "Great. Then my man's going to go knock this out so we can go the fuck home." And it is funny listening to it now and being like—I took the note, which was like—

[Laughs]

Lev Meinklang (Lou)

—I was like "Oh, okay!" That amount of deliberate, I'm—I think it just felt like what Eursulon would do of just, like—

Taylor Moore

Yeah.

Lev Meinklang (Lou)

—take it, hold on to it, not care about it, not think about it.

Erika Ishii

Yeah.

Aabria Iyengar

Now, did you do this specifically because you knew that Erika and I wanted to fangirl over Will Gallows, and you decided to sort of clam jam the two of us? From havin' a—

Lev Meinklang (Lou)

That's the—that is the joke, and yes, I thoroughly was like, no jamming of clams. I wanted a nice dry scene with Will Gallows.

Aabria Iyengar

[Laughs]

Lev Meinklang (Lou)

No, I—

Erika Ishii

Oh! Sure, sure. A nice dry scene—

Lev Meinklang (Lou)

Just, dry—

Erika Ishii

—where he says the hardest shit—

Lev Meinklang (Lou)

Exactly!

Erika Ishii

—that I've ever heard, and also, Taylor puts in a sound cue—

Aabria Iyengar

Agh!

Erika Ishii

—of a rope tightening? I'm sorry.

Aabria Iyengar

As they—

Erika Ishii

That's—look.

Aabria Iyengar

So fuckin' cool.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

The tightening on the handshake—

Erika Ishii

AGH!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

—like it was being restrained. Like they're being tied together—

Aabria Iyengar

Oof!

Erika Ishii

Aaah!

Aabria Iyengar

So good!!!

Erika Ishii

Aaah!

Lev Meinklang (Lou)

Look at this man go.

Erika Ishii

Aaah!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Did you—for either Taylor listening, or for any of the pieces at the table, like, Eurs—classic D&D. A character goes, to tell a dangerous NPC, that he is owed something. Like, Eursulon is going there to get paid, right? Like, we did the thing, here to get paid. I'm going by myself. Was there any trepidation or dread, as—especially on Eursulon's part, going there? Or was everyone like—because I think one thing I saw, or—in a lot of DND campaigns, something terrible would have happened there. Did anyone have dread that something terrible was going to happen here?

Aabria Iyengar

Yes, 100%!

[Aabria and Brennan laugh]

Taylor Moore

I thought only if Lou—miss him. Only if Lou.

[Aabria and Lev Meinklang laugh]

Lev Meinklang (Lou)

Rude. Incredibly rude.

Taylor Moore

Well, no I just—

Lev Meinklang (Lou)

I'm not enough?

Taylor Moore

He's—

Lev Meinklang (Lou)  
Lev's not enough?

Taylor Moore  
—a very warm acquaintance I'm fond of.

Aabria Iyengar  
Lev's not enough.

Brennan Lee Mulligan  
I can't believe—I can't believe we have to dig into this bit for the next 20 years.

Taylor Moore  
The rest of our lives.

Brennan Lee Mulligan  
The rest of our lives.

Aabria Iyengar  
You're welcome!

Lev Meinklang (Lou)  
My aunt came up to me the other day and was like—I don't think she listens to the podcast, I think she exclusively listens to the patreon, and was very confused.

Erika Ishii  
[Laughs]

Aabria Iyengar  
Wait, what?!

Lev Meinklang (Lou)  
She was like, "You do the thing with all the name—" She was like, "I've been listening, you know, with the thing you do with all the names."

Taylor Moore  
[Laugh]

Lev Meinklang (Lou)  
And I was like, "What? Like, that's not—" I said, "Like Eursulon?" She was like, "No, it's the one where it's a different name every time." And so my aunt is maybe listening to this. Marcy, please go listen to the podcast as well!

Taylor Moore  
[Laughs]

Aabria Iyengar  
Marcy, please get some context!

Lev Meinklang (Lou)  
It'll make this makes so much more sense!

Brennan Lee Mulligan  
Oh my god.

Taylor Moore  
I thought it could go south if Lou decides to make it go south.

Brennan Lee Mulligan  
Mhm. Mhm.

Taylor Moore  
Because I think, like you said in the show, this crime lord got exactly what he wanted very quickly. Good job, everybody.

Brennan Lee Mulligan  
Yeah. [Laughing]

Taylor Moore  
So it's up to Lou, like, how he wants to play it.

Brennan Lee Mulligan  
Yeah.

Lev Meinklang (Lou)  
Yeah. I don't remember feeling any sort of dread, I felt like—I felt like the vibe I got off of Will Gallows from the previous episode, or from when we met him, was the kind of like, honorable thief. It didn't feel like we would do this thing and then he'd be like, "No, fuck you!"

Taylor Moore  
[Laugh]

Lev Meinklang (Lou)  
It felt like it would be like, "Good. Here's your sword. Now get the hell out of my bar," if it was going to be bad. But I also think Eursulon was in a slightly destructive place, and I don't think was even—was so concerned for his own safety, as much as he was just looking to expedite his experiences in Port Talon.



Brennan Lee Mulligan  
Yeah.

Lev Meinklang (Lou)  
We want this to be over.

Erika Ishii  
Mm.

Aabria Iyengar  
Yeah. [Sigh] So good.

Erika Ishii  
Yeah. I feel like, I was sweating so hard, listening, and being like, "Well, I'm doing my own thing, and I have no idea." Because that's the thing too, is I feel like, you all are just so incredible that I can trust, right? It's not—I'm not—when people, ya know, react to something like that, they see danger in a campaign, I think there's the impulse to go in—to do something, right? But I trust that it's not going to lead to an unnecessary death of a character, or to any—

Aabria Iyengar  
Yeah.

Erika Ishii  
Like, I want to see what happens next, right? This all makes sense and—yeah.

Brennan Lee Mulligan  
The biggest piece of like, G—for anyone listening to this who runs games for your friends, biggest piece of advice I can give, is if you smack your players on the hand, every time they do something risky, they will stop taking risks—

Aabria Iyengar  
Yeah.

Erika Ishii  
Yeah.

Brennan Lee Mulligan  
—and then you'll be sitting there, stunned that your story is not moving forward.

Erika Ishii  
I mean I think—

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Why aren't they trusting any of my NPCs? Why aren't they doing any of this stuff? So, it's really critical, to not salivate when an opportunity—I'm like, "Ooh, I can punish a risk of an NPC, and it'll be a big dramatic—" Don't get me wrong. It would have been a big dramatic scene if Will had been like, [Will Gallows voice] "You shouldn't have come by yourself." Like—

Aabria Iyengar

Yeah.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

That would have been really dramatic and scary, and it would have fucked the whole rest of this campaign.

Aabria Iyengar

Yeah.

Erika Ishii

Yeah.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Because it starts to prove the point that this world doesn't make sense. Will Gallows can't fuck everybody who works for him, at every first opportunity, and stay the crime lord of Port Town.

Erika Ishii

Yeah. That's not how you, crime boss, it's true.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Yeah.

Erika Ishii

It's about networks and alliances, and everything.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Yeah.

Erika Ishii

Yeah. I have to say, I feel so safe taking big swings in this campaign, and I—and, furthermore, I feel comfortable and excited to see my fellow players make big swings.

Aabria Iyengar

Yeah.

Erika Ishii

And I don't feel like I have to be like, "Actually, Ame, like, runs after and everything, and is there, and is loaded up with a bunch of gear, and—"

Lev Meinklang (Lou)

"Can I actually make a roll? A perception check to hear Eursulon leaving?"

[Aabria and Erika laugh]

Erika Ishii

Yeah!

Lev Meinklang (Lou)

Or like, do I see—do I see—

Erika Ishii

Do I see him leaving? Do I see him leaving?

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Speaking of—also, I want to say, speaking of consequences, I feel like we got big capital c Consequences with Suvi.

Aabria Iyengar

Yeah! Yeah! Yeah!

Erika Ishii

No.

Aabria Iyengar

Yeah!

Erika Ishii

No.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And again—once again, Taylor, the sound design on that giant mirror, and I forgot to narrate in the moment, but the reason I said the mirror was 15 and a half feet tall, is that the mirror on the deck—for people's imaginations, you know [Sing-song] Story Clean Up Moment!

Aabria Iyengar

[Laugh]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

For people's imaginations. The mirror that was in Steel's chambers or in The Citadel was only four and a half feet long. So the point being, Steel was 15ft tall in that scene.

Taylor Moore  
Oooohhhh! Woah!

Brennan Lee Mulligan  
Yeah, do you want your mom in IMAX, telling you how bad a job you did? No. You tell Galani, "Please stay in the room, so we all have to be professional. You gotta stay. Please don't go."

Brennan Lee Mulligan  
Please don't go!

Taylor Moore  
Yeah, you didn't say that at the table, right? Because there's no way I would have cut that out.

Brennan Lee Mulligan  
I didn't say it at the table. No, you didn't.

Aabria Iyengar  
That's exactly what I imagined though, I was like, "Oh no, mom's too big!"

Brennan Lee Mulligan  
It was just one of those things where I listened to the episode and I was like, oh, I forgot to say—I mentioned the size of the mirror and then never followed up about why that was important to me. That I was like, "Oh, she's like—" She's like—it's this huge—if you were to paint that room—

Taylor Moore  
Yeah.

Brennan Lee Mulligan  
—it would be this palatial bedroom in a governor's manor. And you would see little, like, five foot whatever or six foot whatever Suvi, and then you would see a 15 foot tall mirror—

Aabria Iyengar  
Uhh!

Taylor Moore  
[Laugh]

Brennan Lee Mulligan  
—with the Sword of The Citadel, in full armor.

Taylor Moore  
A classic management—

Aabria Iyengar

White House intern meets Secretary of Defense.

Taylor Moore

Yeah, classic management technique, there's an old story about Bear Bryant, the football coach at University of Alabama. People would come in to meet with him in his office, and he had a couch across from his desk, and he had all the springs removed from the couch—

Erika Ishii

[Gasp]

Aabria Iyengar

Yes!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

—so that when you came in and sat on the couch, you would sink all the way down to the floor—

Erika Ishii

Oh—

Brennan Lee Mulligan

—and he would be towering over you.

Erika Ishii

—beautiful.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Oh my god!

Erika Ishii

Ugh!

Aabria Iyengar

The athlete urged to yell Roll Tide in response to mentioning—

Taylor Moore

Yes, yeah. There you go.

Aabria Iyengar

I was like "swallow it."

Brennan Lee Mulligan

That sce—so the scene with Galani, and then the scene with talking with Steel, there's a—you know, we had a whole conversation with the Fox about consequences and how to find consequences.

[Aabria and Erika laugh]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Were you expect—how much was Aabria caught off guard by the response from The Citadel, versus how much Suvi was caught off guard by the response from The Citadel?

Aabria Iyengar

I mean, for Aabria, it makes perfect sense because I think I always live a little bit in the world of like, "Yeah, this isn't quite how I—" Like if I was in—I love checking in with people, all the time. I'm—

Erika Ishii

Yep.

Aabria Iyengar

—nasty about that. So it was very funny to be like, "Uh oh! Your cell phone got turned off, minute one. But if I sit here and focus on that, that kills, like—we're on our first adventure, our friendship is back, so don't worry about it yet!" So it was very fun to have that, like, in the back of my mind. And then all of a sudden like, "Oh shit, that's right. Oh god, we were just running around, weren't we? Fuck, this feels. Bad!" Yeah. I was delightfully caught off guard, and then Suvi was just absolutely wrecked by it. Fuck!

Aabria Iyengar

It was very nice to have the moment, though, juxtaposed against Eursulon's like, "This is my first time having a little bit of joy, and wanting to protect that." And Suvi admitting only to Steel that she's fucking scared, and that this isn't nearly as fun as she wanted it to be.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Yeah.

Lev Meinklang (Lou)

Mm.

Aabria Iyengar

And having the sort of like—the thing you'll only admit to yourself, or to someone very close to you, about like, where you actually are versus what you're projecting outward—

Lev Meinklang (Lou)

Mm.

Aabria Iyengar

—is very cool.

Erika Ishii

Yeah, Suvi—

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Her reversion—sorry, go ahead.

Aabria Iyengar

Yeah [Laughs] Child immediately?

Erika Ishii

Suvi being like—yeah, yeah! Suvi being like, "It's bad out here!" And she being like, "Oh yeah, it sounds like it, you were attacked," and she's like "And they caught a Great Spirit!" Just like, "They fucking what?!"

Taylor Moore

Record scratch! Yeah, fantastic. I—that—there's so many moments in this episode where [Sigh] I'll say it, lesser players—

[Everyone laughs]

Taylor Moore

—might make—

Aabria Iyengar

Aah!

Lev Meinklang (Lou)

[Scandalized] Taylor!

Taylor Moore

—clichéd—clichéd obvious choices. Well, I'm going to be classically angry here, the paladin, right?

Everybody's had an experience of playing with a paladin at the table, who's going to be an asshole that makes everybody act like they're in Sunday school all the time.

Aabria Iyengar

[Laughs]

Taylor Moore

Boy oh boy, did we not get that! Ya know, and when you expect Suvi to stand up, and like and, you know, act like an antagonist to like the, the parental force coming in. No. Reverts like someone going home for Christmas and sleeping in their old bedroom—

Erika Ishii

Awwww!

Taylor Moore

—and they find themselves acting like a twelve year old again, ya know? But Brennan, also—this moment where we expect Steel—comes in as this strong, this dominating force, suddenly life snaps to a grid, but then is just sincerely touched, by Suvi's reversion. And then we see this break, and it becomes this warm maternal relationship again.

Aabria Iyengar

Yeah.

Taylor Moore

All those choices, I feel like I would never see at a table. I would never see—but they're fascinating to watch in the show.

Erika Ishii

Well, and I would love to speak to that because you said "lesser players" in a very—you didn't see it, like he sort of wagged his finger a little bit.

Aabria Iyengar

Erika's like "Name names."

Brennan Lee Mulligan

[Laugh]

Erika Ishii

No! We all have had this. But I would say, it's not about lesser players. I would say it's about more inexperienced performers.

Taylor Moore

Mm.

Erika Ishii

Because I think that's the thing is every bone in my body as a player, somebody who—I grew up playing Dungeons and Dragons, and every bone in my body was screaming at me to like, "Oh, find an excuse for me to go be with my friend, or do something badass," right? But then the performer in me, and the kind of narrative play that we're trying to—that we're enjoying here, is that we do what's most fun for the story, and for us together, not necessarily what's optimal for a game.

Taylor Moore

Yeah.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

There's something in this moment, that feels like a—that feels significant. It's—there's something I believe, about institutions, and power, and agency, and everything else like that, that is really significant in Steel's interaction with Suvi here. Which is, even as an institution begins to award power and authority, the grid



stays intact. And there is this idea of—I can't name how many roles I've fulfilled—whether it was at a summer camp, or whether it was at an improv theater or wherever—where it's, like, "Cool, and over this domain, you have total executive freedom." And then you make a decision that doesn't work for the larger institution, and suddenly that freedom is gone. And you go, "Wait a minute, but I was doing this other—you said I had—" And they were like, "Well yeah, within reason."

Aabria Iyengar

[Laugh]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And you suddenly realize that "Within reason" is the most powerful god in the pantheon, and that, no matter what you're—like, that it's all subject to, you know, Steel coming back in, and being like, "The real rule you were supposed to follow was this thing that we just assumed, which is, you wouldn't run off and go do someth—even though I said you could take as much time as you wanted, you've been gone for weeks. I thought you were dead. The last time you were in Akham was when—was the summer you spent there as a kid." And all of this stuff in a row is like, effectively that like, this world of Umora, is not a world whose systems work for adventurers.

Aabria Iyengar

Yeah!

Erika Ishii

Mmm.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Nobody likes an adventurer. Nobody WANTS an adventurer. Every system is set up to marginalize, ostracize, and dismiss adventurers. The Empire doesn't need any adventurers within it.

Taylor Moore

[Laugh]

Erika Ishii

Mm.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And so Steel being like, "What the fuck were you thinking?" Is like—

Aabria Iyengar

[Laughs]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

—it's a very heavy hammer to drop, and I think Erika's point about, like, "I wanna do something badass!" And it's like, for sure! That's awesome! Steel doesn't want you to do anything badass.

[Everyone laughs]

Erika Ishii

Yeah.

Aabria Iyengar

Yeah! I think it becomes a really fun link to what the Fox says. The like "if I stop trying to do what I want to do, then they've already caught me."

Erika Ishii

AGH!

Aabria Iyengar

And knowing immediately, like. Suvi's caught. That's all it is, like. That's just what it is. Both of you go off and do things that are, like, important to you, even if it's the Fox sort of being your id, external to yourself. Eursulon goes and wraps up dealings, and Suvi is told to put it on ice, and will do her best to do so, like. Yeah. It was so cool.

Erika Ishii

Yeah, that quote—

Aabria Iyengar

[Whispered] Fuck it's cool.

Erika Ishii

—from the Fox, like, I want that—

Aabria Iyengar

[Screaming] Why is this Fox so GOOD-UH!

Erika Ishii

—engraved on something. I know it's INFURIATING, both in game, and above the table.

Aabria Iyengar

[Laughing] Yeah!

Erika Ishii

But, I did want to ask Taylor a question, about the name of the episode, the King of Cups!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

[Gasp] I'm so glad you asked this.

Taylor Moore

Yes.

Aabria Iyengar

Yeah.

Erika Ishii

I remember some of my tarot, and I remember the King of Cups is like a sad boy?

Taylor Moore

Sort of. He can—

Aabria Iyengar

Isn't he kind of a water boy? He's got like. Water stuff.

Taylor Moore

He is a water boy. He's a big time water boy!

Aabria Iyengar

There's like a fish.

Erika Ishii

Yeah, he got a fish. And a scepter.

Aabria Iyengar

There's a boat.

Taylor Moore

Yeah. The King of Cups. So—And we're talking Rider-Waite here, ya know, like, come on.

Erika Ishii

Yeah. Yeah.

Taylor Moore

Let's keep it American classic tarot.

Aabria Iyengar

We're keeping it clean.

Taylor Moore

Keepin it clean. The fundamental aspect of the King of Cups is that a cup contains a liquid, and so—and the liquid, of course, is the sea, the water, the self, the emotional self, which is represented by liquid that's always moving and sloshing, the tides, all these things.

Erika Ishii

Mhm.

Taylor Moore

The King of Cups contains it in the cup. And so the King of Cups is all about, like, domain over the ever shifting internal life. Sort of a mastery over the Spirit, if you will. But also all the aquatic imagery. In the Rider-Waite deck, the King of Cups wears an amulet of a fish. There's a fish in a sea behind him, and he's depicted as stand—like, he is literally—like, he's on a throne on the ocean. Literally, like an apparatus [Laughs] of, like, a fundament on the ocean.

Aabria Iyengar

Ahhh.

Taylor Moore

But also it's a reference to, you know—being in your cups, is also a phrase that denotes being drunk.

Erika Ishii

Mhm.

Taylor Moore

That is an old way to describe someone who's drunk.

Aabria Iyengar

Wait! But Eursulon was drunk in this episode!

Taylor Moore

Eursulon was drunk—

Lev Meinklang (Lou)

Ah hah!

Taylor Moore

—and he went to a place called the Ace of Wands.

Aabria Iyengar

Ah!

Lev Meinklang (Lou)

Mm!

Taylor Moore

Now, if you want to talk about heavy handed Tarot symbolism, Google Image Search Ace of Wands, and then email Brendan Mulligan at [asslessFox@hotmail.com](mailto:asslessFox@hotmail.com).

Aabria Iyengar

[Laugh]

Erika Ishii  
Assless Fox.

Aabria Iyengar  
Hold on, I got to grab a domain really quick.

Erika Ishii  
[Cackling]

Taylor Moore  
Yeah! So obviously, like—I usually try not to be very ironic with the show titles, but this one was kind of a dunk on the characters, who are very much NOT in control of their emotions.

Erika Ishii  
Mm.

Taylor Moore  
They're all over the place. They are that sloshing sort of Spirit, that yearns for some sort of direction or control. Yeah, but then also you have, like I said, like, Steel comes in, snaps everything to a grid, and you have—she could also be the King of Cups. So ya know, it's one of those things where there's a lot of different ways to look at it. Great tarot card, the King of Cups.

Erika Ishii  
Yeah.

Lev Meinklang (Lou)  
Mm.

Aabria Iyengar  
Nice!

Erika Ishii  
Great Tarot card, and, like, one of my favorite episodes so far, so thank you so much, everyone, for joining me in creating this piece of art, and in chatting with me on the Fireside! I'm Erika Ishii. Thank you. Ah hoo hoo, Brennan.

Brennan Lee Mulligan  
Ah hoo hoo! To you too!

[Aabria and Erika laugh]

Erika Ishii  
Ah hoo hoo, Aabria.

Aabria Iyengar

Ah hoo hoo!

Erika Ishii

Ah hoo hoo, Taylor.

Taylor Moore

Ah hoo hoo to you, and a crackle crackle to all!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

[Laugh]

Aabria Iyengar

Ah!

Erika Ishii

And ah hoo hoo to our guest, Mr. Lev Meinklang.

Lev Meinklang (Lou)

Hey, ah hoo hoo, crackle crackle, and I, sadly, have to go to physical acting right now.

[Everyone laughs]

Lev Meinklang (Lou)

So I'm gonna hop off. But this was a real treat, guys, one of my favorite eps so far.

[Lilting pipe flute flutters above drum beats and choral tones as the song of the Spirit Realm from the Children's Adventure starts]

Erika Ishii

Excellent. Alright, everybody. Thank you so much! Bye!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Thank you.

Aabria Iyengar

Bye

Taylor Moore

Bye!

Lev Meinklang (Lou)

[Fading away under the music] Do we have it? Do we have it now? Do we just yell?