

Worlds Beyond Number

Fireside Chat: All Interludes

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

Aabria Iyengar

Hello and Happy Halloween to our wonderful fireside. I am going to be your host for this a Interludes Fireside Q&A Spectacular. And I am Aabria Iyengar and with me are my two delightful co-conspirators in the realm of improvised storytelling. To my right, I have the indomitable Brennan Lee Mulligan.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Try to dom me, you can't. Hello, folks. Ahoohoo. *[Aabria laughs]* That's what indomitable means. There's no two ways around it, you can't dom me.

Aabria Iyengar

Challenge accepted.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Ahoohoo. *[laughs]* Ahoohoo, crackle, crackle. Welcome to this interlude extravaganza, this extralude intervaganza, this Halloween spectacularanza! Folks, I'm excited.

Aabria Iyengar

And on my left, we have the one, the only—

Boo Wilson (Lou Wilson)

Boo Wilson. *[Aabria and Brennan laugh]* It's Lou Wilson, but because it's Halloween, you can call me Boo. How about that? How about that? Happy Halloween, you stupid fuck. *[laughing]* How about that? Is that an insane?

Brennan Lee Mulligan

That's the fastest we've gone from intro to actively antagonistic I've ever seen.

Boo Wilson (Lou Wilson)

I feel crazy in that I do think, you know, I just feel so comfortable here at the fireside that I can get immediately antagonistic. *[laughing]*

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Well, it's really funny—

Boo Wilson (Lou Wilson)

You know, someone is on a train somewhere and I am, I'm just calling you stupid fuck. I dunno, I just feel like I can be myself.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

It's a phenomenon— It's a phenomenon whenever you get a little bit cute to reassert that you're dangerous. You're like, you can call me Boo Wilson if you want to fucking die, back off me.

Boo Wilson (Lou Wilson)

Yeah, let's be clear, let's be clear.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

It's like, oops, I got a little cute and now I need to get dangerous. Let's get dangerous.

Boo Wilson (Lou Wilson)

Hey, I've yet to achieve indomitability. So I still have to assert, all right? I still have to show up and remind you.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

I have nothing to prove because people try to dom me and I say I am in that-able.

Aabria Iyengar

Boo, I gotta be honest, it feels significantly harder to dom you now than it was at the beginning, so I think this is working.

[Everyone laughs]

Boo Wilson (Lou Wilson)

Yeah. Yeah, that's right, you stupid fuck. Anyway, Happy Halloween. What are you guys gonna be tonight? What are you guys gonna be for Halloween? What's everyone gonna be for Halloween? Say it out loud.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

I'm being the hot, silent baker's husband from Kiki's Delivery Service.

Aabria Iyengar

Oh wait, for real, that's great. I love him.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

That's a real answer. I have red pants and red suspenders, and I have a little apron that says Gütikipänjä, and, and I'm being him.

Aabria Iyengar

Wait, that's good.

Boo Wilson (Lou Wilson)

Aabria?

Aabria Iyengar

I'm probably unfortunately going back into the older costumes and I'm going to be giving out candy in like a big otter kigu because I'm posted up at home.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Love that.

Boo Wilson (Lou Wilson)

Aww.

Aabria Iyengar

I wish I had a better answer. What about you, Boo?

Boo Wilson (Lou Wilson)

Oh, I'm going to be Jerry Buss, [Aabria cough laughs] owner of the Lakers.

Aabria Iyengar

Hold on, now I want to change my answer to be Jeanie Buss.

Boo Wilson (Lou Wilson)

[laughing] Yeah, you're more than welcome. Yeah, I'm gonna be Jerry Buss, owner of the Lakers, you know?

Aabria Iyengar

But you're a Clippers fan, why?

Boo Wilson (Lou Wilson)

Yeah, exactly, it's funny, it's funny. I'm Boo Wilson, it's funny. No, I don't know, man. I'm not a big, I'm sadly not a big Halloween guy, so I have a pair of cute tiger ears and I'll probably put those on.

Aabria Iyengar

Nice. Nice. Yeah, I haven't done-. We should talk about the things we're actually going to do.

Boo Wilson (Lou Wilson)

No, no, no.

Aabria Iyengar

I just feel like I haven't done like a big blowout Halloween party in a while, and I'm sad about it because this used to be absolutely my favorite holiday.

Boo Wilson (Lou Wilson)

Hey, well, I believe that in the near future, you will have a big blowout Halloween party. Not the near future, you have to wait a year. But I think in a year, you can have a big blowout Halloween party.

Aabria Iyengar

Thank you. That was both sweet and a little sad. I'll take it.

Boo Wilson (Lou Wilson)

You stupid fuck. [laughs]

Aabria Iyengar

There we go. There it is, there it is.

Boo Wilson (Lou Wilson)

This cannot be my recurring event this episode.

Aabria Iyengar

I guess it fucking it is.

Boo Wilson (Lou Wilson)

I guess it is. Let's get into it. Let's talk about the interludes.

Aabria Iyengar

Let's talk about what we're here to talk about. So we're here to answer your questions and to chat a bit about the various interludes that we have recorded over the last couple years in Umora. So I think we should start with Fortune Found and then get into it. Because I have so many questions. Mostly, why, Brennan? Why?

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Why have I done this? It's funny because I, the, every interlude has had a little job. Every interlude has had a little job that I wanted it to do. The job, and of the interludes we've done, there's a fourth secret interlude, unreleased, unreleased interlude.

Aabria Iyengar

[whispered] It's gonna be so exciting.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

We got that in the chamber for y'all. Get hyped for— there should be more little Umoran interludes coming your way. But Fortune Found, The Clearing, and Twelve Brooks, the OG, the original, all had very different jobs to do. We all know what Twelve Brooks' job was.

Aabria Iyengar

Though we didn't at the time.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Though we didn't at the time, but that made its job all the sweeter. It made the job all the sweeter.

Aabria Iyengar

[whispered] Sweeter for who?!

Boo Wilson (Lou Wilson)

To Salmón just taking a Fireball to the face.

Aabria Iyengar

Wait, yeah, that's my question. Do you think Salmón is dead?

Boo Wilson (Lou Wilson)

Salmón is definitely dead. Salmón went down swinging, let me tell you.

Aabria Iyengar

Impressive that you think he could swing!

Boo Wilson (Lou Wilson)

Hey, he attempted to swing!

[Boo and Aabria laugh]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

I will, I'll say the fact that Buckles was in the, in the prison was— The fact, the fact that Buckles was in the dungeons of the, of Castle Twelve Brooks doesn't feel like things are looking great for Salmón. I mean we can leave him, we can leave Salmón and Lia and Jay all in Schrodinger's space. Right?

Aabria Iyengar

No, Lia's for sure dead.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Right? But until it gets said on mic in a recording, it's conjecture, even for the authors, right? Like, in other words, I never want to do the fucking, the thing of like, by the way, I didn't write it in the book, but this is what happened. Like, if it's not in the book, it didn't happen. But if you're asking me to give a prognosis, I give you two ha-boys and a long, I don't know. I don't know.

Aabria Iyengar

Brennan, the sweetest gift you can give me in Book Two is if we see the inner sanctum of the Archmage Saber, and there's just a rack of spirit horns on the back wall, and I'll know that that's Lia. *[laughs]*

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Oh, no. Oh, no.

Boo Wilson (Lou Wilson)

Nasty.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Nasty, nasty. The, I love it. So the job for Twelve Brooks was obviously make a beautiful place, to make a beautiful place because I'm tired of, because, you know, you go to the war-torn, you go to the war-torn places and places don't start war-torn, man. *[laughs]* They get built, they're beautiful. But you look at them and you're like, this poor war-torn land. But I really wanted it to be like they had a Bullfrog festival here. There was an academy. There were, people came here to sing songs and to really have it, to have, to do the, to pay homage to, I think, one of the biggest themes in Miyazaki's work, which is a huge central DNA for Umora, which is just that war fucking sucks, which is not a new observation, but an increasingly germane one. You know, stays relevant sadly. Would love for that to be a less relevant observation. Not only that it sucks, but also like how it comes about, who causes it, what the costs of it are. And you know, the thing Eioghorain says, and when we get to Twelve Brooks in the main campaign, where he's like, "Nobody likes this, but they all prefer it to backing down."

Aabria Iyengar

Ooo! I have a question about that. Mostly for Boo and Brennan, because you two were the ones that had the first big face-off in the main campaign, where you were able to observe Twelve Brooks knowing what you knew about like the interlude, was there anything kind of going through your mind? Sorry, we said we were gonna start with Fortune Found. I lied. We're starting with The Clearing.

Boo Wilson (Lou Wilson)

No, get it. Get it. Get it.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

I veered, I veered. With any case, The Clearing was about doing a real piece of horror that would swerve on people and be lore and world building. And then Fortune Found was about, I think, going to The Freeroads and doing an interlude that was our first sort of interlude of like, foreshadowing a little bit of a place or a vibe that we wouldn't see for a long time. So that's more, I think Fortune Found was more of a teaser for a landscape and kind of some of the things that are going on.

Aabria Iyengar

I don't trust you. I feel like you're gonna whoop our ass with this later, so cool.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

What part, what part of the interlude thing I'm gonna whoop your ass with?

Aabria Iyengar

Any of it, all of it, all of it, all the time.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Yeah, there's definitely some stuff in there that is important for sure. Not plot wise to the Wizard, the Witch and the Wild One, but in terms of things that are thematic and going on in The Freeroads that will come up in Book Two. Yeah, for sure.

Boo Wilson (Lou Wilson)

But it's like, I do like, I really like them because I, you know, we're telling this story. I mean, it's the... not trouble, but it's the reality of the form of storytelling we love, that it is like we're trapped in the PC's station wagon as we like travel through the world. So it's like, it takes a long time to get to The Freeroads. So how do we, but we, I think inherently get the sense as we tell the story that Umora is a full and lively world. And that it's like, you've built things that aren't on, aren't in the purview of where the party is right now. And it's been delightful to kind of get to see other times in Umora, to get to see other parts of Umora, 'cause it feels like it validates the truth we all know and can feel as we tell the story, which is that this is a great wide world, and we're just in a small sliver of it.

Aabria Iyengar

Yeah, and that idea that it's always creating epic stories. And this is like our, our story is one of them. Like does feel, ugh, it's very, very nice. I don't know how to say it other than it feels like being part of a like bedtime story that you're, you're both telling and being told. It's very cool.

Boo Wilson (Lou Wilson)

Yeah.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

If, if they, they really help me because they flesh out the world in this really exciting way where it's nice to know that there are little light, that there are little lighthouses in far distant seas. Normally all the places that you put texture to are, where are we immediately about to go? But there's a degree of like comfort and breathing easy when you're like, oh, I've got a little place developed a jillion miles away. And like, in the worst case, there's a little added degree of security. It would be like moving into a house and you're like, this thing's got, it's got a noise maker in the basement that keeps velociraptors away. And you're like, I'm almost sure that's not gonna come up, but thank you. That's great to know. That's fucking... What a great insurance policy against something that I don't think is ever gonna be a problem, but were it to be one, boy, howdy,

it'd be one. And the other thing the Interludes do that our audience might be interested in, this is why you join us by the fireside. And hey, thank you for joining us by the fireside.

Aabria Iyengar

There he is.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

For everyone here who's come to support the show, we deeply, deeply appreciate it and cannot thank you enough for your support of everything that we're doing here at Worlds Beyond Number. A lot of stuff in the works right now that we can't wait to show you. I will also say the other big, so getting behind the paywall to see this, we tend to do interludes right off the bat first thing at a recording session, at like a batch recording session. So they are an exemplary way to take something that is, like a free fall for all of us and get us back into the swing of playing together so that we can like get fully acclimated to the tub before we have to dive back into the main campaign.

Aabria Iyengar

It's that functional stretching where you're like, oh, I'm warming up and getting ready to like drop back into Suvi, but before, let's...

Boo Wilson (Lou Wilson)

And it gets you back in like the audio visual storytelling mindset, right? Of being like, or not audio visual, but the audio format of being like, talk, describe what you're doing. Like it gives you a chance to be like, that's right. I don't just like, you know, you have to like, how do you pick up the cup of coffee? Why do you pick up the cup? Like all of those beats and those rhythms, we get to settle back into those together.

Aabria Iyengar

Yeah. It's fun.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

I love that.

Aabria Iyengar

Okay. Let's go ahead and start off with a question. And I'm going to start off from the tippy top from a question from Paulina. Thank you so much, Paulina. Speaking of Fortune Found, "Hey, Brennan, What, where are The Freeroads? Are they connected to the origins desert?"

Brennan Lee Mulligan

The Freeroads are not connected to the origins desert. They are a naturally occurring desert. The Freeroads is the name for a series of, for a landmass, essentially, that both has a connection to the concept of free travel on the many roads of that land, but is also like a number of nations or peoples or non-nation, like other configurations of how people make community together and all in a vast desert continent that surrounds the South Pole of Umora. That's right, in the craziest piece of world building in Umora, only the North Pole's cold, South Pole's hot. Make that make sense.

Aabria Iyengar

[claps] I like it.

Boo Wilson (Lou Wilson)

What will you think of next, Mulligan? I swear.

Aabria Iyengar

This is a magical world.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You heard it. South Pole hot. There's a big land mass around the South Pole that is a rocky desert. The Freeroads was so named in recent, The Freeroads is a more catch-all term for a number– There's like, I would say that there are actually quite a lot of different places and countries and peoples all within The Freeroads. The Freeroads is a catch-all term for them because around the turning of the last sort of teleportive shift, that kind of like shift that we talked about, that we heard Steel, I think, talk about where like teleportation and abjuration kind of have these places where they trade off. I always think about it in terms of baseball, where there are eras where pitching gets better than batting, and where batting gets better than pitching, and it changes the way the game is played.

Aabria Iyengar

Meta shift!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

The last time– What's that?

Aabria Iyengar

That's a meta shift.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Meta shift, yeah. The last time the meta shift happened, all of these colonies that were in the southern continent that were held by Rhuv, Gaothmai, and Khemsaraza, became impossible to hold on to as the war raged between them and to the credit of cleverness and organization of the peoples of The Freeroads, they saw all of the great empires of the world reeling as suddenly their home bases weren't safe anymore and quickly rebelled and overthrew the various empires. And so have a less, have a very recently won freedom that is very tentative and is very fragile because it relied on all these other global powers being on the back foot and having to focus their attention on actually protecting their kind of like, essentially like imperial cores. So that's The Freeroads.

Aabria Iyengar

That's so cool. Wait, wait, wait. Okay, hold on. But the end of Fortune Found does involve some conscription from one very specific empire. So what the hell is that about?

Brennan Lee Mulligan

In the similar manner to what you would see what you would see like if anyone has watched Deadwood and the weird relationship between like the United States that is not there but is clearly like no one else is allowed to fuck with this, like if anyone's gonna– It's basically that what you see as the extension of the Empire's power in The Freeroads is a– Oh, sorry, hold on a second. Let me know if we can redline this. I think the, this is the conscription notice we get for–

Aabria Iyengar

For Oaky.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

For Oaky in this. Oh, sorry, this is set in the past. I've completely lost my mind.

Aabria Iyengar

Oh, you're good.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

This is set in a pre-revolutionary past, I believe, in-

Aabria Iyengar

Oh, that's fun.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Yes, I believe that that is, let me check my notes.

Aabria Iyengar

I'm so sorry, I didn't mean to like throw you off with that one.

Boo Wilson (Lou Wilson)

Wow.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

No, you're all good.

Aabria Iyengar

Oh, some people ask this too in the selects. That was just my, that was Aabria's question.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

No, no, I dig it. Hold on one second.

Aabria Iyengar

My favorite part of the warmups is always the moment where I get that like Citadel or Empire mention and like run cold. I'm like, all right, we're back. I'm ready to be Suvi.

Boo Wilson (Lou Wilson)

Love it. I'll ask, take this moment while you check your notes to answer a quick question from Penguin. Thanks, Penguin. She asks, "How much do players know before recording an interlude starts?" And to that, I'd say very little. *[Aabria laughs and agrees]* I think it's... Sometimes Brennan gives us a tone or we'll say this tone is not like the last tone. But aside from that, I think like you very much hear everything in the recording of an interlude. Brennan gives a description. We then inform the environment. And then Brennan asks us who populates that environment. And that is all done live and on mic. So I would say the most we're ever told before is perhaps something about tone. But even that is quite vague and sometimes threatening.

Aabria Iyengar

Yeah, and the only time I remember that specifically coming up was for The Clearing. For reasons that I feel are self-evident by the time you get to the end of The Clearing. *[Brennan laughs]* God, I loved that so much. That was so fun. *[laughs]*

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Yes, as I review my notes, the Imperial conscription that came in was because this is a prequel. This is set prior to the events of The Freeroads becoming free.

Aabria Iyengar

Amazing. They were just The Roads.

Boo Wilson (Lou Wilson)

I love that.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

They were just The Roads.

Aabria Iyengar

Okay, so important lore that I hope everyone is writing down, trains have been around for a long time.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

There you go, yes.

Aabria Iyengar

This is so good. I do feel like this was just fan service for us because Brennan saw how delighted we were at the idea that Umora had trains in it when we met Tefmet and Eursulon got that ticket and we were like, there's trains!

Boo Wilson (Lou Wilson)

Yeah.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You gotta go get some trains. Gotta go get some trains.

Aabria Iyengar

So thank you.

Boo Wilson (Lou Wilson)

We appreciate you letting us touch the sun, man. That's really kind to you. Especially for what you did to us with Twelve Brooks, this felt like a gift. This felt like a gift.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

I love it. I love it. It was a joy, a privilege and an honor. And the, yeah, there have been a lot of like different sources of inspiration for the different interludes. But yeah, I throw them right at the PCs. I mean, how much extra warning did you get for The Clearing? Not much, right? The Clearing was just me being like, this one's gonna be nasty, right? Or did I even say that?

Boo Wilson (Lou Wilson)

Yeah, I think you just said this is not Twelve Brooks. It's different than Twelve Brooks. And then I think in describing the environment, it was abundantly clear this was gonna be different than Twelve Brooks. And then I do think things like my character being nasty and rude to dogs, like that, that just came from inside of

me. [Aabria laughs] Like, we did get like, we got surprisingly dark in that, that I don't think, you know, I think that we, that was, I don't think that was like, we weren't primed for that. We found that together.

Aabria Iyengar

Felt good.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Yeah, that was really, that was really lovely though. 'Cause I think for me, the big thing I was thinking going into The Clearing that, it wasn't like I was holding fast onto this, but as I was looking at it, 'cause like there are a million different ways to interpret the prompt of what it's a creature that doesn't belong here, right? You guys could have just been other spiritual entities from the forest that were in a different, like a Seelie fairies going to the Unseelie court or something. But I did really have the idea of if anyone was playing a mortal, the, I don't know if you guys got fucked up by Jack London as much as I did, reading it when I was a kid.

Aabria Iyengar

Oh my God, the Call of the Wild, God damn.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

The Call of the Wild, or the one, what's the short story to find a match? Let me think what it is. There's Jack London, match. Oh, To Build a Fire.

Aabria Iyengar

No.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

There's a story he wrote, this short story called To Build a Fire, that is one of the most haunting pieces of horror I've ever read. It's just about a guy who's going on a walk through the Yukon and a couple things go wrong and he dies and it's a– Spoiler, spoilers for a hundred year old story, but like the process by which he it's like it's like okay I'm wandering, ah, I'm a little bit lost. You just see he makes certain choices where he's like, Do I really need? He's like, It's only a short walk. Do I really need my thing? No, I should be okay. And he gets out and he's like, Ah, okay, I didn't bring my thing. Now I'm getting tired. Probably should turn back around and go get that 'cause I'm more tired than I thought I'd be. It's like, Oh, but there's the tree right there. I'm already almost there. And it's just all these little choices that all them feel so small and they compound. And it just gets so nasty. That's so cool. I loved it.

Boo Wilson (Lou Wilson)

And that's–

Brennan Lee Mulligan

What's that?

Boo Wilson (Lou Wilson)

That's where we got to. I think you were, I mean, very, I think I remember sitting at the table and we're thinking about who am I gonna be? And I think I was like thinking about being like a lost man, like with his family. Like, we're like, oh God, we're lost. But then I think the other two characters were too sweet. And I was like, I'm gonna be a guy who's fucking, I'm gonna be Blade, this world's Blade.

Aabria Iyengar

[laughing] And you were!

Boo Wilson (Lou Wilson)

And then you made me just having such a bad time that I think it made me go like, oh, I'm not just like a charismatic guy, I'm like a mean, angry man, having the worst day of his life.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And then Aabria let me live out my catchphrase,

Aabria Iyengar

Hell yeah. [laughs]

Brennan Lee Mulligan

I'm gonna kill that dog, and I did. And I killed, and I killed that little smoke monster too. And I killed, I killed Lou!

Aabria Iyengar

[laughs] And you killed Lou.

Boo Wilson (Lou Wilson)

It is fun. It's like we, you end these, I will say that's like, we have like rhythms to the storytelling that I'm like familiar with from having done it for years and I do think these interludes are the most we ever disrupt that feeling and that rhythm. I remember you being very like, I remember us having like a talk after Twelve Brooks because like, you know, you were like, we've, we did it. Like, we don't need to, we don't need conclusion here. We just introduce like, I mean, you quietly in your mind are going, ha ha, they've fallen in love with Twelve Brooks. [Aabria chuckles] Mission accomplished. But like, there's also the mission that is just like, we've seen that there are other people on adventures in this rich and full world of Umora. And then in The Clearing, like, and so we do not need to like solve Buckle's problem. We just understand that Buckles is in a community that works to solve his problem. And then in The Clearing, you're killing people left and right, just after what feels like halfway through, like the length of the storm.

Aabria Iyengar

That was nice. I got paid for the whole day, so I liked it.

[Brennan laughs]

Boo Wilson (Lou Wilson)

There it is. And then in Fortune's Found, you know, only Aabria gets to meet Tippoathy. [laughs with Aabria] The rest of us have to watch a garish fucking medical procedure.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

[chuckles] Awesome.

Boo Wilson (Lou Wilson)

And just kind of, you know, nod along while it happens, you know? So, anything's possible in an interlude?

Brennan Lee Mulligan

It's true. It's really true.

Aabria Iyengar

God, it's so good.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

I'm really excited for this upcoming interlude. I don't wanna tease it too much, but oh boy, I'm really excited. And I think that the, but there was a thing too with Aiden in The Clearing that felt really fun to me, of like, this is the time to see a really nasty PC that we're not rooting for, you know what I mean? That you're like, it's also really fun too, I actually will say another big inspiration for The Clearing was a show that Lou, our friend Boo Wilson put me on to, which is Alone, which, what a show Alone is. *[Boo and Aabria murmur in agreement]* Where I feel like Alone is the show where at once per season you see a fucking jacked Navy SEAL come in, you know, or some huge... Usually like, I'm a fucking what is it? I'm a Blackwater private mercenary.

Aabria Iyengar

[laughing] Yep.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

I'm the scariest man on the planet. I have come here. When you get your mind right, you get your grind right. Nature is beneath me and I will conquer her. And it's like 10 minutes later, and that guy's like, I can't stand the silence! You have to send me home! It is just like the fragility of machismo, and without fail, the person, who is there, like, who you tell could live on a rock in space for 400 days, no problem. That person's vibe is always like, I made another spoon, time to take a nap. Like that.

Boo Wilson (Lou Wilson)

Yeah.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Like, that's the seasoned survivor energy.

Boo Wilson (Lou Wilson)

There's a season where the winner is like, hey, I gotta conserve calories. I'm gonna lay down all day. And then anytime he talks, it's like, been laying down for a couple, for six to eight hours. It's nice here. And like, that's his whole vibe. That's his whole energy.

Aabria Iyengar

I respect that energy so much.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

I knew a dude was going home when he used a four syllable word. Not because—

Boo Wilson (Lou Wilson)

Yeah, exactly.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Not because you don't need to be smart to survive in that area, but because his use of a four syllable word let me know that his brain was hamster wheel brain, which will shatter against the rocks of the best thing you can do is stay still all day. *[laughs]*

Boo Wilson (Lou Wilson)

Like, yeah, yeah, exactly.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Like you are going, anyone who's got a lot to say, you are going home. You understand? You are going home.

Aabria Iyengar

My only struggle with Alone is it doesn't feel like a good show to win because it feels like you're telling on yourself. You're like, no, I don't need people to know that I'm actually this much of a like, no, I'd be fine. No, I'd be fine. You're like, no, I need the illusion of needing civilization.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

There was one winner who said something to the camera like, I hope they don't come get me. I'm not good with people. Like, that... *[laughs with Boo]*

Aabria Iyengar

It's perfect. It's perfect.

Boo Wilson (Lou Wilson)

Perfect.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Hello, hello?

Aabria Iyengar

Yeah, you froze for a second.

Boo Wilson (Lou Wilson)

You went out for a second. You went, I hope they don't come get me. And then you just kind of blanked out *[laughs]* and they kind of came back. So I don't know if you said anything else, but it read right.

Aabria Iyengar

It did.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Yeah.

Aabria Iyengar

Was there a follow up to that?

Boo Wilson (Lou Wilson)

Can I ask about the rifle?

Aabria Iyengar

Oh!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Yes, the Rhuvian rifle.

Aabria Iyengar

Gosh.

Boo Wilson (Lou Wilson)

The Rhuvian rifle that shoots a fire elemental?

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Uh-huh.

Boo Wilson (Lou Wilson)

How's that work? Just don't get–

Aabria Iyengar

Where do I get one?

Boo Wilson (Lou Wilson)

Hey, I know you love to get into the magical, you know, design of a thing. Walk me through the Rhuvian rifle.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

The Rhuvian rifle is essentially a, is essentially a, like, more like a railed, like crossbow. It like fires a disc. The disc is charged with an explosive rune when it shatters. It's literally a little piece of, so Rhuvian magic casting is all warlock based, right? So their whole thing is we know how bad it is when you break a magic circle. What if we weaponize that? *[Aabria laughs]* There's these little guys that you put them in a magic circle, and every time it breaks, they go buck wild and explode and get super nasty. What if we just did that? If that's so reliable, what if we counted on that? And that's a Rhuvian rifle.

Aabria Iyengar

[whispered, amused] That's so funny.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

It's these little sort of summoning circles that get broken, and the thing escapes and creates an explosive charge.

Aabria Iyengar

You weaponized Pokeballs, and that's crazy to me. That's so good.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Yes. Yes.

Boo Wilson (Lou Wilson)

Yes. Yes.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Yes. You have to. You have to. You must.

Aabria Iyengar

Oh man. I like that. Okay, wait, does that mean that those are, are they like pre-negotiated fire elementals or are they like being created like in and of the disc? Like I'm, is it like a Mr. Meeseeks, like sort of like, I'm alive, existence is a burden, kill stuff.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

I think they are actually bound within the desk.

Aabria Iyengar

[*whispered*] Cool.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

But I also don't think that they are, for lack of a better word, they would be a lot more frightening if, like, in the same way that we've talked about the spirit world, that not all spirits are for lack of a better word, like, there are some, like, there is an ocean in spirit that is an ocean. And it doesn't, like, grow googly eyes and talk to you. You know what I mean? Like,

Aabria Iyengar

This is anti-Moana propaganda. I don't like it.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Right. In other words, when you cast Fireball, another way to think about this actually is anytime a wizard casts Fireball, that fire is coming from the spirit world, right? What an evocation is, is going, we're going to go to the lake of fire in the spirit world and scoop a bunch of that fire and evoke it here in the material world of Umora, where it [*mimics explosion*] unleashes, right? We've said that magic is the interplay of the spirit and the real. So that fire is not sentient or sapient, even though it is of the spirit world. I think the fire spirits that are kept within those discs are of a level of like sapience or sentience that they would be much closer to like, not even like an animal, more like an insect or something that it really would be like, this is a, because they're also, let's be clear, to be mass produced are quite minor, right? Like these are small spirits.

Aabria Iyengar

What if it's like germ warfare, where there's like very basic programming, you're like, yeah, I've just made a sort of like fire bug. And it's go-

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Yeah, a little fire bug.

Aabria Iyengar

Ooo, this is very cool. This is fun.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Yeah, a little fire bug in there. Still freaky and sacrilegious, [*Aabria laughs*] but on a level where you're like, look, [*New York accent*] there's a bunch of ants that blow up in the spirit world. We put them in these clay discs and we shoot them with big old slingshots, okay?

Boo Wilson (Lou Wilson)

Alright?

Brennan Lee Mulligan

At the end of the day. Okay?

Boo Wilson (Lou Wilson)

It's a living.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

It's a living.

[Aabria and Boo laugh]

Aabria Iyengar

I need the Flintstones edit for every spirit. That's so fun.

Boo Wilson (Lou Wilson)

I got a question from Big Ted, the main man in Caldera.

Aabria Iyengar

Brah, brah!

Boo Wilson (Lou Wilson)

Ted asks, thanks Ted, Big Ted, excuse me. Big Ted, thank you. Big Ted asks, "What part of the main campaign would you like to explore next in these side adventures?" And by side adventures, I believe he's referring to trademarked Interludes. Is there a part of the world or area you guys would like to, that you would like, I mean, we've done the Matsuri, we've done The Freeroads, we've done the secret thing that we can't tell you about. But is there another part of the world that I think you would be excited to see via the interludes? And maybe we can persuade Brennan in this one.

Aabria Iyengar

Ooh.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

I'm interested where you got, what you guys would want to see in the interludes.

Aabria Iyengar

You know what? Oh, go ahead. You go.

Boo Wilson (Lou Wilson)

I mean, I, go ahead.

Aabria Iyengar

No,

Boo Wilson (Lou Wilson)

No, no, no, no, no.

Aabria Iyengar

I don't want to get cussed out again.

Boo Wilson (Lou Wilson)

No, no, no. No, go ahead and talk, you stupid fuck.

[Everyone laughs]

Aabria Iyengar

I lied. I like it.

Boo Wilson (Lou Wilson)

We gotta stop. I don't like this bit. I don't like this bit anymore.

Aabria Iyengar

Unfortunately, I love the bit. I think my answer would probably be some sort of like political intrigue moment with like the Khanterranacht.

Boo Wilson (Lou Wilson)

Ooo!

Aabria Iyengar

I just want to see a bunch of sorceress houses have to negotiate or just, I just want to see the interplay of nobility. Like that's a thing that I just, I genuinely enjoy. It was my favorite part of Game of Thrones and I like that kind of storytelling. So I don't know.

Boo Wilson (Lou Wilson)

There is, I do think there's something very fun to that of just like, yes, I mean, I think, I mean, it's so weird because Brennan, what these places look like, or at least like the inspiration. So in this moment, even though I'm your partner in storytelling, I do feel like a fan in that I'm like, I think that the houses of Gaothmai are like Egypt, and they all have big pyramids. *[laughs with Aabria]* Like, and their pyramids are next to each other. And so I do think there's something like, and then little rivers and like inlets that run in between, you know. But anyway, oh, there is like, that's, that is a very fun idea. I feel like I would get pretty hype to be playing some princes just running around.

Aabria Iyengar

There is something really fun too about like the implications of like how much nobility is insulated from like we've dealt with so much of, especially in the, like the back end of chapter four, the brutality and like reality of war, especially the battle with Gaothmai and like seeing the kid that got Enlarged and then sort of lived and died in a brief flash of a moment. Like seeing people who are so insulated for that, from that, for whom all of this like war is the thing to talk about feels like, I don't know, it's just interesting. Also, I want them to all be in little pyramids now with rivers. Like that was beautiful. Like little beneathing canals between our pyramids.

Boo Wilson (Lou Wilson)

C'mon dude! Imagine it! Imagine it, dude! Damn, bro.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

I do think the thing that Boo has hit on that is absolutely correct is that so much of the grandeur of Khemsaraza is in the newness, like in that Howl's Moving Castle way of like, the epaulets are crisp, the sky ships are new, this new thing. And I think that Gaothmai flexes in a very different way, where like, you know, we hear about the beginning of the teleportation gates of like, you know, the ancient, the ancient Gaothmai houses. I think it's very possible that there are Gaothmai cities where they haven't built a new building in like 400 years. You know what I mean? Where it's like—

Aabria Iyengar

Wild!

Boo Wilson (Lou Wilson)

Yeah, cause it's a marble slate that they cut there, like cut into the rock. Like it feels like, you want to talk about like a Neolithic city, like that's like in a carved out portion of like a wall face.

Aabria Iyengar

Petra!

Boo Wilson (Lou Wilson)

Yeah, exactly. That feels like some shit that's going on in, and I genuinely, it's so funny. I'm having a moment where I'm like, all of these, because we have officially kind of finished Umora, all of the proper nouns are slipping out of my head. And I was like, it's Gaothmai, right? Gaothmai, it's Gaothmai?

Brennan Lee Mulligan

I feel like I had the same thing on this call as I was like, oh no, I put Umora into deep storage. I have to—

Boo Wilson (Lou Wilson)

Yes, exactly, yes. I was like, it's Gaothmai, I think it's Gaothmai. My pitch is that we do Gangs of Carrow. Yeah. And it's just like a, in my days for some, again, I'm now, this is full fan mode. Brennan knows all the answers, he just hasn't told me, but I just feel like there's a moment where Carrow becomes more civilized and it's around the Will Gallows, like the hanging of Will Gallows, and I feel like there's just maybe a moment of lawlessness, like peak lawlessness. where Carrow is just ruled by a number of gangs. And, you know, we just play members of the same gang or different gangs or whatever.

Aabria Iyengar

Hot. I do want that.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

There's specifically a, if you think about the timeline of the Accordati and the Antivoli and the Cataclysm of Carrow, there was a moment of incredible magical violence that made the city, the city has always had this character to it, but it got even worse after the cataclysm. And then the Antivoli was defeated, and the Accordati all got together, had a huge check cut to them by the Saraz Imperium, and moved to the woods, strike through, the desert, right? And the... Which meant that suddenly this place was fucked up by weird magic and then all the wizards left. And so the rise of the criminal underbelly of Carrow, of this Gormenghast style thing where like all this weird magic residue gets found by a bunch of like cutthroats, pickpockets, and gangsters is like extremely, I don't know, yeah, Carrow. I mean, it's Umora's New York, it's the place I think, think of Carrow every day. I would say let's not do an interlude in Carrow, let's do a fucking

mini series in Carrow. Let's do Carrow Wizard War, let's do Rise of the Gangs of Carrow, let's do the whole nine yards.

Aabria Iyengar

Let's go.

Boo Wilson (Lou Wilson)

Please.

Aabria Iyengar

Wait, I want that back.

Boo Wilson (Lou Wilson)

Please.

Aabria Iyengar

Oh, I change my answer.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

I love it.

Aabria Iyengar

Ooo!

Boo Wilson (Lou Wilson)

I feel like I want to get an answer around The Clearing. I feel like I want to discuss the ending of The Clearing before we go today.

Aabria Iyengar

Okay.

Boo Wilson (Lou Wilson)

I'm desperately trying to find a question, a question from a fan that can kick it off.

Aabria Iyengar

How do you feel about Christy's, number 29?

Boo Wilson (Lou Wilson)

Number 29. Oh, my 29 is different than your 29.

Aabria Iyengar

Oh no, I'm sorry.

Boo Wilson (Lou Wilson)

Oh, are you on best selects? Why the fuck am I on anything but best selects?

Aabria Iyengar

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

Boo Wilson (Lou Wilson)

Yes, that's it.

Aabria Iyengar

You want to ask it?

Boo Wilson (Lou Wilson)

Sure. We have another question that I think, I feel like would be fun to answer from Christy. Thanks, Christy. "I'm hoping Brennan can clarify the creation of the desert in The Clearing. It seemed like the Crowned Leopard," uh, the Crowned Pantherrrr...

Aabria Iyengar

[at the same time as Boo] Crowned Panther.

Boo Wilson (Lou Wilson)

I said it enough times. "The Crowned Panther knew it was coming, but I feel like I missed something every time Suvi explains that the wizards made the desert, and how, if at all, it's connected to the destruction of the Crowned Panther spirit. Love you all and your creative genius!"

Aabria Iyengar

Thanks, Christy!

Boo Wilson (Lou Wilson)

Thank you, Christy.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

That's a great question, Christy. Thank you. There's nothing I love more as a DM than weaving a rich tapestry where choices splinter and rebound and refract and come back and run parallel and perpendicular and weave into a tapestry of story where all these things come back. You know, it took us years to say goodbye to Ghost and find her again. You know, there are these threads that you make that really, really weave. What the interludes do is allow me to do some things that I think are hard to do in storytelling. There's a conflict in storytelling, 'cause storytelling is trying to do two things at the same time. Number one, storytelling is a way for a culture to... compress cultural information and crystallize it in a way that is hyper, that it is hyper memorable and persuasive and says something about the points of view of the human beings in history at the time the story was told and about how they saw themselves in the world. That's the one thing storytelling does.

The other thing storytelling does is grip an audience and something that keeps me up at night is that these two priorities sometimes conflict. In other words, sometimes your story about the nature of good and evil has a conflict between a true observation about the thing you observe in real life and what might best entertain an audience. And coming into conflict with those can be really, really challenging. This is a long lead up to say what the interludes have allowed me to do sometimes is to say things that I think are true about the world that are hard to pull off in a traditional narrative structure.

Which all of which is to say, the Crowned Panther is not anything to do with the reason those wizards blew up the desert. The Crowned Panther is a beautiful, unique spirit whose attachment to the spiritual world allowed it to sense through magic that great doom was coming. Elsewhere in that primeval forest were no less than a dozen other beautiful, unique, magical entities, all of whom had rich, intricate, and deeply

significant stories, who were all wiped off the face of Umora with no record of how they lived and died, or of the cultures that touched and understood them, because that's what happens when you blow up a region, but you just lose stuff forever.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

And so it's a, I understand from an audience point of view that it would be so cool if the Crowned Panther like tied back in later. *[Aabria chuckles]* Like what is the Crowned Panther tell us about the wizards? The Accordati didn't know about the Crowned Panther, so they couldn't care about it. When you move fast and break things, unique wonders get irrevocably destroyed forever. And so that is a big thing that I wanted the Crowned Panther to mean. The story of the witch that sent Bevin and Aiden and sent these people here, the story of the witch who did that, what she was trying to do, Aiden's desire for the Crowned Panther, what the Crowned Panther was there to protect, its connection to all of it, was irrelevant on the scale of machinations of the Khemsarazan Empire and the founding of the Irian. They didn't know that it was there and it's now gone. And I think that's the kind of thing that is, like, unsatisfying from a narrative level in a way that says something true about our world. And that's my answer to that question.

Aabria Iyengar

Yeah. I love it.

Boo Wilson (Lou Wilson)

[chuckles] Happy Halloween, folks. *[Aabria laughs]* I don't know if you've got a deep, unsettled feeling inside you, but I sure do.

Aabria Iyengar

Just the first wizard skywalking, and you're like, this place has good bones. I mean that literally.

[Boo and Brennan laugh]

Boo Wilson (Lou Wilson)

Exactly. Great bones.

Aabria Iyengar

Oh, great bones.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

There you go.

Boo Wilson (Lou Wilson)

Can we end on one more question?

Aabria Iyengar

Ooo, yeah!

Brennan Lee Mulligan

That mine was to sad to be the end? *[laughs]*

Boo Wilson (Lou Wilson)

No, man. It wasn't.

Aabria Iyengar

Yes, Brennan. Up, up.

Boo Wilson (Lou Wilson)

It was, hey, I loved, I loved it. Let's, Happy Halloween. *[everyone laughs]* Okay, this one is from Firozah. Firozah, thank you, Firozah. Firozah, they left the pronunciation here and so I'm just really hoping I'm getting it right. Thank you, Firozah. "A choo-choo, a jackal-jackal."

Aabria Iyengar

Ha, nice!

Boo Wilson (Lou Wilson)

That's pretty good, thanks, Firozah. "This is a question about Fortune Found. I absolutely love the 'Western Gothic' feel of this one. What was the inspiration for Tippiothy? Was he always going to be a sweetie, or did Millie just catch him at the right time?"

Brennan Lee Mulligan

I was deep in my Irish fairy folklore bag, which is that the Fair Folk are nice when they want to be and not when they don't. Tippiothy did not function I think on that wavelength. I think Millie found him and approached him in such a way to arrive at that conclusion. But the tappers are very much based on like European folklore of like knockers.

Aabria Iyengar

Yeah.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

But I knew that if I just said knockers that Erika would probably laugh and giggle too much for us to—

Aabria Iyengar

I would do it too. I'm sorry.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Aabria would do it too.

Aabria Iyengar

I would want to be better, but Erika's laughing would make me laugh, I'm sorry.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Oh, the legend of the knockers. There they are down in the dark.

Aabria Iyengar

Yeah, yeah, yeah. We're not making it through that, I'm sorry.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Yeah, for sure. But there's a lot of, I'm very interested. I love how many fairies, there's a whole sort of category of fairy spirit that is, far from being a Wild One, are like... For lack of a better word, like the fairies of industry? Of like knockers and brownies and like leprechauns who like, you know, the whole thing with

leprechauns is they're the industrious ones. They're like making a single shoe under a dock leaf and they turn into a different kind of fairy when they get drunk, which is a clurichaun.

Aabria Iyengar

What?

Brennan Lee Mulligan

They get rowdy, they get rowdy. You don't, don't be hitting, don't be hitting the sauce, stay busy, stay making that shoe.

[Aabria laughs]

Boo Wilson (Lou Wilson)

On the shoe, dude. On the shoe.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Stay on the shoe.

Aabria Iyengar

Gotta stay on that shoe.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

You gotta stay on that shoe. You don't get a pot of gold that you know the location of unless you stay on that make one shoe grind. This is gonna be, I'm gonna make a leprechaun podcast where it's all about grind set and how to avoid– *[Irish accent]* I don't drink lest I become a fearsome clurichaun. And I also– *[laughs]*

Aabria Iyengar

This is the Alone that I want to watch.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Yeah, yeah, yeah, exactly, exactly. So that's where– Tippiothy is a classic variety of mining fairy, much like kobolds, like knockers, the original sort of mythological kobolds, folklore kobolds, and like dwarves, like the sort of Norse dwarves.

Aabria Iyengar

Nice. I love that.

Boo Wilson (Lou Wilson)

Well, I did feel like I had such a moment. It was like, I was listening to the podcast or listening to this story and like listening to Aabria, you talk about Millie's grandparents pouring out the first like sip of it for whoever passed by. And I was like, God, we used to believe in this country. We used to, *[laughs]* we used to be afraid of invisible things. And now there's, now that's just not the case anymore. But yeah, man. Above table, I have to leave.

Aabria Iyengar

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Hey, let's do it.

Aabria Iyengar

All right. Well, this has been amazing. And I do think we can talk about these interludes forever because they leave so much narrative space to dream in. But that's the point. So thank you for listening to our beautiful little talk back. And from here on out, whatever questions you may still have, dream and hope that when we finally get back to Umora, some questions will be answered and that beautiful dream narrative space will be left for you to play and discover in. That was a weird ending. So I'm just going to- *[laughs]*

Boo Wilson (Lou Wilson)

I loved it. I loved it, dude.

Aabria Iyengar

Thank you.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

I loved it.

Boo Wilson (Lou Wilson)

Let's fucking dream about it.

Aabria Iyengar

Thank you so much for joining me in this talk back. Boo Wilson.

Boo Wilson (Lou Wilson)

Hey, Happy Halloween, you stupid fucks.

Aabria Iyengar

There it was! I love to see it. I can't wait to see everyone's Boo Wilson Halloween costumes. Please tag me in all of them.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Abooboo,

Aabria Iyengar

Jackal jackal!

Boo Wilson (Lou Wilson)

Abooboo.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Abooboo jackal jackal. We'll see you next time.

Aabria Iyengar

Thank you so much, Brennan.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Aw, thanks, gang. I love doing these interludes with you.

Aabria Iyengar

I love it. Let's tell story forever. Bye! Bye! Go away.

Brennan Lee Mulligan

Bye.

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