The Accidental Theory of Us

Short synopsis • Naria Khan

A needle barely moves when Sorrel stands for her academy examination, although she can feel the roots beneath the floor. One evening the witches pass around a mirror that can show them who's on their mind. Sorrel has the thread in her hand when Alban, the prince's brother, comes to return a lamp. He falls into her arms as their mirror breaks. By morning she carries his storm, and he feels the roots she misses. They have until the full moon to reverse the exchange.

Their private lessons need an explanation, so Sorrel says they're courting. By the time she kisses him, she means it. When a greenhouse freezes, the witches trace the missing warmth and Sorrel discovers someone was drawing power through the garden before Alban fell. Mara, a copyist, died in a trial that night. Her withdrawal reached the project office that morning, but the public notice says she died at home.

At the full moon the scholar Halric Dey lures Sorrel to his chamber. He arranged the lamp errand to steal Alban's storm and now means to take it from her. Sorrel cuts the copper return. When Alban finds her, he helps expose the instrument so she can break it. Halric dies holding on as the force rebounds. With moonlight coming through the damaged roof, the two make their own circle and willingly give each other's magic back.

Mara's letter survives, and Sorrel seeks her unpaid wages. All six witches secure paid work for a season. Sorrel and Alban arrange their next meeting in person.