

EPISODE 78: Axe

[Hey guys. Welcome to the season 7 midseason finale. Hope you're enjoying the ride so far. Next week will be an intermission episode. Quick plugs. I've been streaming on twitch on Sunday evenings at twitch.tv/woebegonepod. Come watch me write the episode soundtracks and play the worst Geoguessr of my entire life. If you'd like to support the show, you can do that over on patreon at patreon.com/woe_begone. The first postcards for the \$15 postcard tier are going out this week and I am very excited. I already have next month's drawn up and it looks amazing, if I do say so myself. So if you are interested in that or in early access to ad free episodes, instrumentals, soundtrack albums, Q&As, director's commentaries, and more, head over to patreon.com/woe_begone. Special thanks to my 10 newest patrons: satis.elloquentiae, Valentine Seward, Emily Einolander, Anna S, Jay Petrequin, Ollie, mysticarcanum, The Happy Zoologist, Regan, and Varian for supporting the show. Enjoy.]

[Warning. This episode contains descriptions of violence. Listener discretion is advised. It also contains some loud noises, the timestamps for which are in the description. On another note, this episode makes extensive use of panning, so headphones are recommended to get the best experience. If you get lost, remember: 1 is on the left, 2 is on the right, and 3 is in the center. Enjoy.]

[We hear the familiar time travel noise. Thuds and groans from MIKEY2, MIKE2 and MICHAEL2.]

MIKEY1: [roused from sleep] Ugh.... huh? Huh!? Mike? Michael? What's going on?

[Bruno barks and growls.]

MICHAEL2: SIDET!

MICHAEL1: DON'T FUCKING MOVE.

MIKE1 and MIKE2: Don't point that at me, Michael.

MIKEY2: Put the gun down, Michael.

MICHAEL1: Identify yourselves.

MICHAEL2: I'm Michael Walters, same as you.

MIKE2: Mike, likewise. We're from later tonight. We're issuing a correction.

MIKEY1: What is going on?

MIKE1: Correcting what? We were all asleep.

MICHAEL1: How do I know yain't Flincites?

MIKEY2: Flinchites? What do you even mean? We're Mikes. Someone get the lights, he obviously can't see.

MICHAEL1: Just cause you Mikes don't mean yain't Flinchites.

MIKE1: What is this about all of a sudden? Alaska Mike?

MIKE2: We aren't Flinchites. Why would think that we're Flinchites?

MICHAEL1: Not just Alaska Mike. Any of the Mikeys they been sending after us.

MIKEY1: What are you talking about?

MIKE1: Wait, what happened?

MIKE2: Are you saying you've seen more Mikeys?

MICHAEL2: We ain't Flinchites. Michael. You got some idea what goes on in the compound. You know the first thing they'd do is snatch your hat and break your spirit. You think they got a cowboy like me in the compound? Not a chance.

MICHAEL1: How do I know yain't a Mikey doing an impression of me?

MIKE2: Have you heard my impression of you? It's terrible. [laughs] [badly] Howdy partner. I reckon we're here on correction duty, pilgrim.

MIKEY2: I have been working on the voice, though.

MIKE2: You are not helping.

MIKE1: He's you, Michael. You can tell in the face if you squint. And his ear's all the way healed, look. You're the only one who looks like that.

MIKE2: He's got a different haircut than us if he'd take off the hat, too.

MICHAEL2: Alright, fine. I'll take the hat for a second. How about that? Michael, I come hat in hand. We got a problem. You can put the gun down now.

MICHAEL1: Alright. I trust ya. Can't be too careful.

[Bruno barks, whimpers.]

MIKEY1: Oh, it's okay Bruno. It's just... wait... what is it?

MICHAEL2:: We need the axe out of the closet.

MIKE1: What do you need the axe for?

MICHAEL1: Go get it, pilgrim.

MIKEY2: Mustardseed is about to appear inside the wall.

MIKE1: What do you mean inside the wall?

MIKEY1: Could they even fit? How thick is the wall?

MICHAEL2: He plants a damn bug in the wall. Woke us up bumping around in there setting it up. He was about to wake y'all up, too.

MIKEY1: Wait, so who is Mustardseed?

MIKE2: That's what we're about to find out.

MIKE1: How do you know it was him?

MIKEY2: He sent me a message.

MIKEY1: He sent another message? Tonight?

[More whimpering from Bruno.]

MIKE2: Hey, Mikey... uh... past Mikey... can you do me a big favor? Bruno doesn't need to be in here. There's a big dog bed in my bedroom for Bruno. Can you take him in there and get him settled down? There's a big bag of treats in there for him, too. I think this is too many people for him.

MIKEY1: It's too many people for me, too.

MIKE2: Then be a good little puppy and take him in my bedroom and get him calmed down. He doesn't need to be in here right now.

MIKE1: You mean my bedroom.

MIKE2: You know how this works. We're both Mike. I'll be out of your hair as soon as we catch Mustardseed. We're on adjusted time. No new iterations tonight.

MICHAEL2: I say we put the hole in it before he gets here so we can nab him the second he pops up. It's right here. I remember it, clear as day. Bruno sniffed 'em out.

MIKE1: So you're just going to put a huge hole in the wall?

MIKE2: It's a correction, Mike. You can trust us. I've seen the listening device myself. It really happens.

MICHAEL1: If a man wants to smash a hole in the wall with an axe, you let him.

MICHAEL2: I appreciate the quick turnaround on your trust, partner.

MIKE1: What did the message from Mustardseed say?

MIKEY2: After he planted the bug, he sent me a message saying he would be quieter next time. Mustardseed knew we heard them and they were taunting us. Michael busted open the wall but only the listening device was inside, no Mustardseed.

MIKE2: We got out of the apartment and put together a plan because we thought it still might be bugged. We walked around Riga and decided on this plan to issue a correction and catch Mustardseed.

MIKEY2: I saw more of the city tonight than I have all of the other times I've been here combined.

MICHAEL2: If we're done with pleasantries, I'm gonna smash a big ol' hole in this wall. Are y'all ready?

MIKE1: He's not in there, is he?

MIKEY2: No, no one's in there. Not for another few minutes. We're not trying to hit Mustardseed with the axe. We just want to be ready to catch him when he shows up in there.

MIKE1: Michael, are you okay with this?

MICHAEL2: Of course I am, I'm the one with the axe.

MIKE2: Not you. He means his Michael.

MICHAEL1: I trust ya, partner.

MICHAEL2: The brotherhood of cowboys.

MIKE2: One was plenty.

MIKEY2: Michael is the one who smashed open the hole and found the bug in the first place.

MIKE1: Then I guess you have the go ahead, Michael.

MICHAEL2: Alright, partner. On my count, we smash this sucker open. Everyone got their hats on straight? Here we go. One...

[We hear more time travel noises and even more thuds.]

MIKEY2: Are you fucking serious?

MIKEY1 [From Mike's bedroom]: What's going on in there?

MIKEY3 [spluttering]: Don't break the wall. Don't break the wall.

MIKE2: Michael... is he okay?

MIKE1: Another correction? Really?

MIKEY3: Yeah, sorry. You guys got ahead of yourselves.

MIKE3: What he means is that Mustardseed knew that you guys were going to issue this exact correction.

MIKE1: It does seem like the most obvious solution.

MIKE2: What needs correcting? Mustardseed is going to be inside the wall in a couple of minutes. If we bust open the wall we can grab them right as they appear to plant the listening device.

MIKE3: It did sound like a great plan when we came up with it. I know, because I'm you, Mike. It was our idea. It wasn't even that long ago. I'm telling you that it doesn't matter how good an idea it was. It doesn't work. This is a correction.

MIKE1: Okay, let's assume that the wall smashing idea needed to be corrected. Why did you come here to issue the correction? Couldn't you have stopped them before they started?

MIKEY3: You would think so, wouldn't you?

MIKE3: These guys, geniuses that they are, did an RSC Scrub during the travel to issue the correction. We couldn't track them down until they ended up back here.

MIKE2: Hey, asshole. You just said that you're me, so you did it, too. The RSC Scrub was the only way we could get here without being intercepted.

MIKEY3: You needed to be intercepted, is what our Mike is saying, Mike... I think we might need to establish some rules we're going to keep trying to have a conversation, let's lay it out. Those Mikes from the present are Mikey1, Mike1, and Michael1. Those from the first correction are Mikey2, etc. Those of us from the second correction are Mike3, etc. Does that work for everyone?

MIKEY2: You got it, Mikey3.

MIKEY3: Knew I could count on you, Mikey2.

MIKE2: We thought we were going to be intercepted by Mustardseed, not by another correction. That was the reason for the Scrub.

MICHAEL1: RSC Scrubs are a bad idea anyway. "Random Safe Coordinates" my ass. I know we built the database together, but some of us have had some pretty unsavory experiences traveling to "safe" coordinates.

MICHAEL2: That's what I said.

MIKEY2: We don't even have this database at the current Base. It was all Mike2's idea.

MIKE2: ...Mike3, Did you RSC Scrub to get to *this* correction?

MIKE3: That's none of your business.

MIKEY2: You've got to be kidding me, Mike3. There's not enough room in here for 3 more Mikes if you need to be corrected, too. Who knows what kind of state Michael4 would be in.

MIKE2: What a mess.

MIKEY2: Yeah, I'll say. They buried the lede here: why is Michael covered in blood?

MIKE1: (Has he said anything since he got here?)

MIKEY3: Do you really want the answer to that?

MICHAEL2: Yes.

MIKE3: What he means is that you don't want the answer to that.

MIKE2: Michael, what happened?

MIKE3: [Forcefully.] No. You don't want the answer to that. It does not need to propagate.

MIKE2: Does it have to do with knocking down the wall?

[Everyone is quiet.]

MICHAEL2: I'm putin' the axe down. You got me spooked, partner, if that was your aim. Michael, what—

MIKEY1: Okay, I'm back. Bruno isn't going to lie down and get comfortable with all the noise but— whoa another set of Mikes. Just what we needed. Another correction? Michael... who did you kill? Mustardseed?

[The crowd erupts at this point, all of them shouting about the situation from different viewpoints. MIKEYs 2 and 3 know the messages best, MICHAELs are the most stern and the MIKEs are the most at-odds with their own selves.]

MICHAEL3: [too quiet to actually stop anyone] Stop. [louder] STOP. [louder] STOP...

[Everyone calms down.]

MICHAEL3: You ain't swinging the axe into the wall?

MICHAEL2: No sir.

MICHAEL3: And you don't intend to in perpetuity?

MICHAEL2: No sir.

MICHAEL3: And the present time Michael understands that he is not to attempt the supposed "correction" on his own for any purpose whatsoever?

MICHAEL1: Yes sir.

MICHAEL3: Then the intentionality of the correction is done. It don't matter whose blood because it never happened. I'm tired. I need to go lay down. We can get out of here as soon as crew #2 leaves. So skeedaddle. Sorry for wreckin' y'all's evening.

MIKEY3: What? Hold on, we can't leave yet... [patting pockets.]

MIKEY2: "Too clever. You should be more careful with him. He'd never lose a year from me."

MIKEY3: GIVE IT THE FUCK BACK.

MIKEY2: [dodging] "Does Michael care about this even more than you? Isn't he yours? Why might that be?"

MIKEY3: HOW DID YOU GET MY FUCKING PHONE?

MIKE3: GIVE IT TO HIM, NOW.

MIKEY2: Our pajama pants. My phone's always falling out of the pocket, so I snatched it out of yours. World class operations security right there.

MIKE1: Edgar.

MIKE2: They took Edgar?

MIKE3: You're propagating. This whole situation—

MIKEY2: Could get out of control? Oh no! What would that look like?

MIKEY1: It was Edgar in the wall.

MICHAEL2: What?

MIKEY2: How do you know that, Mikey1?

MIKEY1: Because I've been quietly standing here watching Michael3 while you have all been arguing. He's got Edgar eyes. You all know what I mean by that.

MICHAEL2: It weren't Edgar in the wall.

MIKE2: The correction.

MIKE1: The message.

MICHAEL1: Michael, you was gonna...

MIKE1: Is he in the wall right now? [calling out to him] Edgar?

MIKE3: No. Only if we don't fix the original correction.

MIKEY2: How do you know that?

MIKEY3: Because your correction was a trap. Mustardseed wanted to get away so he programmed a failsafe to keep themselves safe. If we smash through the wall, then...

MIKE2: Oh god. Michael...

MICHAEL2: Get your hand off my shoulder. Don't touch me. Michael...

[MICHAEL3 starts sobbing.]

MIKE3: It's going to be alright, Michael. It was a trick. This is all going away. This was just Mustardseed proving we couldn't get to them tonight. Edgar's fine. We issued the correction.

MIKE1: Why did you bring him here? He's in no state for this.

MIKEY3: We thought that you might need to see for yourself. And we were right.

MICHAEL2: I was gonna...

MICHAEL1: Toughen up, pilgrims. There's Mikes to protect. We can get our feelings out after the job is done.

MIKE2: Michael, cut him some slack, man. He just... YOU just...

MICHAEL1: I didn't. I didn't do it. He did. Michael did... but not me. He...

MIKEY1: Killed Edgar with an axe. Everyone keeps trailing off. I'll say it. It feels worse not to say it. Michael, you thought you were putting a hole in the wall to catch Mustardseed, but Mustardseed caught on, somehow put Edgar in the hole in the wall instead at just the wrong time, and you killed him with the axe. Do I have that right? Michael3, do I have that right? [pause] Could you nod your head for me at least? Thanks. I'm right. He killed Edgar with the axe. [Pause] Don't look at me like I'm the fuckin' bad guy. If we're going to talk, then we need to say what we mean, at least once, right?

MIKEY2: I agree with Mikey1.

MIKE3: Of course you do.

MIKEY1: Plus there's still a faint chance that this is a stress dream that I'm having because I'm asleep on a strange couch and there's a dog laying on top of me. Except in my normal stress dreams there's more Mikes...

MIKE3: Do you think now's an opportune time to be funny?

MIKE2: Don't answer that, Mikey1.

MIKEY2: What did the second part of the message mean? About Michael?

MIKE3: Well, Michael's the one that did it. Maybe it meant that. Maybe Mustardseed was alluding to setting Michael up to do it since it was always going to be Michael to take charge with the axe.

MIKEY1: No, I don't think so. He asked why Michael seemed to care more about Edgar than me or Mikey2 or Mikey3. I don't think they meant just now. I think they meant in general.

MIKEY2: Michael cares more about our Edgar than we do? Respectfully, I disagree.

MIKEY1: That's the implication, though, Mikey2. I don't think that's true, either. I know that Michael loves Edgar, but this time period is our Edgar. Michael has his own Edgar, continuous with ours to one extent or another. Right, Michael?

MICHAEL3: We ain't havin' no conversation. The corrections team is leavin' and then we're leavin'.

MIKE2: I want to know what the message means, too, Michael3.

MIKEY2: I say we don't leave until one of the Michaels spills the beans.

MIKE1: If they're issuing the correction, they can't leave until the first correction team leaves, at least according to protocol. For safety purposes, they need proof that the initial correction has been abandoned. So, you have leverage. It's a little harsh, but if we don't get it out now, there's no telling if we will ever get an answer. So I support you staying.

MIKEY1: That's 2 Mikes and 2 Mikeys. Mike3? Mikey3?

MIKEY3: Now is not the time. We can't wait on this correction. We have to get Edgar back. My Edgar. Mikey1, Mikey2: our Edgar.

MIKE1: This might be important to your Edgar, Mikey3. It might be important to all of ours. Mike3?

MIKE3: He's right that time is of the essence. But I don't know if we'll ever get an opportunity like this again.

MIKE2: So, here's the ultimatum: the first corrections team refuses to leave until Michael explains his portion of the message. The second corrections team, following protocol for double-correction situations refuses to leave until the first team leaves.

MIKEY1: And the present team refuses to leave, as well. We weren't going anywhere, but we also promise not to go anywhere. Right, Mike1?

MIKE1: Right.

MIKEY2: And I assume that makes the vote 6 against 3 and the grumpy old cowboys are all sticking together?

MICHAEL1: You don't know what you're getting into.

MIKE1: Try me.

MIKEY1: I think we all kind of know, which is why we are asking.

MIKE2: Yeah, Michael. Maybe this sort of "sheepdogging" as you call it would have made more sense before we went through the iteration where we got everyone killed, Edgar included. At this point there's nothing that you can say that is going to faze us.

MIKE1: Well, maybe it'll faze us, but it won't destroy our world or anything.

MIKEY2: I think I can speak for all of us when I say that our imaginations are much worse than whatever the truth is. You don't have to protect us from whatever this is.

MIKE3: You didn't go home for vacation after you got shot. We all noticed.

MIKEY3: So, go ahead and tell us before we imagine the worst possible outcome.

MIKEY1: Right. I mean, it's not like your Edgar is dead.

[Long pause.]

MIKEY1: Yep. There it is. That's why I said it.

MIKE1: Jesus Christ, Michael. That was the only place this could have been going, wasn't it? That's what the message meant.

MIKE2: He's been dead a long time hasn't he? This isn't a byproduct of the Hunter truce or anything. That's why you said you weren't talking to him any time that he came up. That's why you haven't been home to your Base. It explains a lot, actually. Wow. Yeah. I should have picked up on this sooner.

MICHAEL2: Are you satisfied?

MIKEY3: So it's true?

MICHAEL2: I want to go home now. The other Michael does, too. Are you satisfied?

MIKE1: I'm sorry, Michael. What an awful thing to squeeze out of you in this way.

MIKE2: The alternative was suspecting the truth and letting our solitary suspicions fester.

MIKEY1: What does that mean for our Edgars?

MICHAEL1: What do you think it means, dipshit?

MICHAEL2: Don't go congratulating yourselves.

MIKEY1: Mustardseed was telling us that Michael is so desperate to help the Edgar in this time period because his own Edgar is dead. Which means that Mustardseed knows that. How did they know that if we didn't?

MIKEY2: It doesn't bode well that they are so many steps ahead of us that we can't even tell how they got there.

MIKE1: Or that we're tearing each other up over every message they send.

[There's a long pause where everyone is quiet. We hear it raining outside.]

MIKE3: It's raining. Was it always raining in this time period?

MIKEY3: Had to have been. We were too busy to notice, I guess.

MIKE1: Might be a bad sign if it wasn't raining last time you experienced this. That would be a major divergence from calculated events.

MIKEY2: No, it definitely rained. The ground was wet when we were walking around town.

MIKEY1: It was that simple. We all should have known that it was going to be that simple. And, ashamed to say, we just did exactly what Mustardseed wanted us to do. Again.

MIKEY2: Yeah, I think so, too. First, they lured Michael into the trap. Then, they caused us to interrogate him about Edgar. They wanted us to have this exact conversation.

MIKE2: Maybe they were trying to get us to bring our troubles out in the open so we would all hold hands and sing Kumbaya together.

MIKE1: They were trying to separate Mikey from Base and now they're trying to separate Michael from us.

MIKE3: [Scoffs.] Well that won't work.

MIKEY3: Let's make sure of that. Let's be careful about that. Do we all agree to that? Everyone? Agreed?

ALL: Agreed.

MIKEY3: Then I think our business is done here.

MIKE2: Well, I'm starting to get pretty tired. How about you, Mikey2?

MIKEY2: [Yawns] Yeah, I'm pooped. It's been a busy day. You about ready to hit the old dusty trail?

MIKE2: Sure am. Michael looks pretty tired as well. What do you say that we get out of here?

MIKEY2: Sounds good to me.

MIKE2: Well, everyone. It's been a pleasure doing business with you. Next time I see you, our experiences will have snapped together into one continuous account, so that'll be... elucidating. Michael, if you would do the honors?

MICHAEL2: I thought you'd never ask.

MIKEY2: Bye everyone. Take care.

[Time travel noise.]

MIKEY1: Three down, three to go.

MIKE3: Well, it wasn't as painless as it should have been, but we did complete the second correction.

MIKEY3: It feels sorta empty in here now with only 6 of us in here. I can almost lift my arms without hitting another Mike.

MIKE3: We should get out of here, too. As soon as we return to our place in line, this should all be a distant memory. Or, at least, an account of something that never happened.

MICHAEL1: Can't wait. Really, I can't wait. So y'all should get a move on.

MIKE3: You're right. Michael, let's go home buddy. Let's get this over with.

MIKEY3: Bye, Mikes. Sorry for ruining your evening.

MIKEY1: It was going to get ruined either way. Bye, Mikes.

[Time travel noises.]

MIKE: [Groans.] I hate that feeling. It's like a headache except nothing actually hurts.

MIKEY: Tell me about it. Michael, are you doing okay over there?

MICHAEL: I've been better.

MIKE: You've been a lot worse, too. Michael3 was about the worst I've ever seen you. I don't blame you. How vividly can you remember what happened?

MICHAEL: Extremely. I won't be sleeping tonight, partner. That's alright. I don't sleep much anymore anyway. It'll callous over with actual memory eventually, but not tonight.

MIKEY: The second corrections team didn't tell us much about what happened in their iteration of events, so Mike and I didn't know about it until now. You acted admirably, Michael. Mike3 and Mikey3 played cool in front of us, but they had some time to cool down before we saw them..

MIKE: It helped that you didn't let them see anything after you understood what happened. Thanks, Michael. That's a memory that we don't have to carry around.

MICHAEL: All part of the job.

MIKEY: I have a question. Mike and I held the two corrections team here to interrogate them about Mustardseed's message. We took a vote and all the Mikes and Mikeys decided to stay, but both of the Michaels were the ones with the Calculator. Why didn't the Michaels just transport their teams out of there? The teams didn't actually have the power to do anything about it.

MIKE: ...did you want us to know, Michael?

MICHAEL: Ya know, I just restocked the liquor cabinet. What do y'all say we have some drinks and play some cards? Maybe not gin rummy this time. Mikey don't got much of a knack for it.

MIKE: I'm down for a couple games. Mikey?

MIKEY: [distractedly] Uh... yeah. Let me go freshen up first. I think I need to splash some cold water on my face.

MIKE: Sure thing. Michael, let's go get the table set up.

[Audio follows Mikey into the bathroom.]

MIKEY: It's... a phone number? Mustardseed wants me to... call him?

[We hear phone connection noises and then hold music]

MIKEY: Did they... did they just put me on hold?

[Sound of sink turning on.]

MIKEY: It's pretty good hold music.

[MIKEY hums along for a moment, waiting.]

[The clip from episode 74 plays, where Michael kills the Mikey from the Flinchite compound. The call disconnects.]

[Message notification sound.]

MIKEY: "Could've been you. Could still be you." Thanks, Mustardseed. Very spooky. I'm spooked. Fuck you.

[We hear Mikey return to the group.]

MIKEY: Alright, I'm back. Who's dealing first?

[scene begins to fade.]

MICHAEL: I'm doing the honors?

MIKEY: You serving drinks while you're dealing?

MICHAEL: Coming right up.

MIKE: Don't even bother dealing Mikey a hand. I've got the winning hand right here.

MIKEY: You haven't even told me what we're playing.

MICHAEL: Texas hold 'em.

MIKEY: Well, I definitely have the better hand.

MIKE: You haven't even been dealt yet.

MIKEY: [Laughs] Yeah, but if you're already bragging about your hand, then you're definitely bluffing.

[END THEME PLAYS]