

## EPISODE ONE HUNDRED AND FORTY EIGHT - FIRESTARTING

*Original transcript edited by Theo*

[BEGIN Episode 148.]

**INTRO:** Hey! Guys! Quick plugs! I'm still streaming over on Twitch at [twitch.tv/woebegonepod](https://twitch.tv/woebegonepod), where every week I write that week's episode soundtrack, and then we hang out and play a video game. This past Sunday, we played *GeoGuessr* and listened to other people's February Album Writing Month songs, and then we went and left them nice comments. That was very fun and interesting and wholesome. So if that sounds fun to you, check out my Twitch at [twitch.tv/woebegonepod](https://twitch.tv/woebegonepod). And if you would like to support the show, you can do so on Patreon at [patreon.com/woe\\_begone](https://patreon.com/woe_begone), where you can get early access to episodes, instrumentals, soundtrack albums, Q&As, director's commentaries, Movies with Michael, postcards, and more. I am still finishing up and getting out the January and February postcards in an attempt to get all caught up. If you sign up for the postcard tier before the end of the month, I will send you both the January and the February postcards for our trouble. You even have a whole extra day this year to get it done. That is [patreon.com/woe\\_begone](https://patreon.com/woe_begone). Special thanks to my 10 newest patrons: [REDACTED] for supporting the show. Enjoy.

***[Warning: This episode contains a description of violence. Listener discretion is advised.]***

**NOBODY** *[narrating]*: Monday – Five P.M.

It's time to get down to business, and I'm afraid that I'm the only one taking things seriously. Ty wants to meet tonight in order to sign a contract. A real, physical contract with ink on paper. He knows as well as I do that any such document does no good to solidify the agreement between us, and would only serve as evidence to erase him from existence if the Compound ever found it. With one signature he'd be signing his death warrant. It's possible that he has a death wish. He wouldn't be the first Ty Betteridge I've encountered who has one. Regardless, I cannot allow his recklessness to interfere with what I have arranged for us to do. I am not interested in protecting Ty from himself, but I will if I have to.

A contract serves him no purpose anyway. Actions speak louder than words, and I was more than happy to demonstrate my cooperation. We arranged a quid pro quo. One favor for another. I would be handed what was essentially keys to the front door of the Compound, and, in exchange, I would run a difficult errand for Ty. To my surprise at the time, what I was asked to do amounted to doing free work for Operose. This iteration of Ty has an arrangement with Operose, whereby he operates for them from the inside of the Compound for some unknown compensation. There was an Operose mission that this Ty had assisted on. It had already been accomplished, but looking at the data led him to believe that this was only through the aid of some unseen force. Considering the nature of our working relationship, we agreed that it was likely that the unseen force was my team, and the mission may have been accomplished

retroactively by my speaking my participation into the world. This clearly would be extremely beneficial for Ty, so my team and I arranged a rendezvous.

Personally, I am ambivalent toward Operose. They are one rung higher on the food chain than the Compound, but they refuse to take themselves as seriously as the situation demands, nonetheless. They continue to humor this game that the other organizations are playing, one of iteration armies and stretching the use cases for Mike Walters thinner and thinner. Still, it did not bother me to lend them aid in exchange for a reward. My team and I transported into the Trunk at our assigned time, and proceeded to get the job done. Once there, I understood why Ty was concerned. There was a member of Operose, one of the higher ranking Mikes in the aforementioned army, and he was tasked with taking down two iterations that were quickly becoming suspicious. The Operose Lieutenant likely could have got the drop on one of them, but I'm not sure that he would have escaped unscathed. With two of them, things were dicey for him. Even if they didn't kill him outright, wounds from the attack might alarm the members of Base that he intended on tricking.

My team and I appeared in the Trunk behind the group of Mikes that had transported in. We dispatched Mike quickly and quietly. Mikey was focused on the surveillance monitor in front of him, and did not realize that anything was happening until Mike gasped his last breath. Seeing my team, Lieutenant followed suit, and dispatched Mikey before he could muster up a retaliation. Overall, things went smoothly and to the satisfaction of all parties involved. I explained to Lieutenant that I am Nobody, and my involvement in this or any other event is to forever go unmentioned. I instructed him to report to his organization that he had accomplished his task without any outside help. Since the Lieutenant was a Michael iteration, and therefore a blowhard and a cowboy, that included, I fully trusted him to braggadociously take credit for our work. After confirming that I had the proper authority by relating a unique password reserved only for confidants in this mission that I had received from Ty, I relayed an order that now Lieutenant was to attempt to get as many Base members as possible into the Dome that he had just escaped. I instructed him to report these new orders up the chain such that it appeared that he was the one who had the idea. Being a competent soldier himself, Lieutenant agreed without question, and we went our separate ways. If only every mission went this smoothly, I wouldn't be forced into backroom deals with duplicitous iterations of Ty Betteridge any time that I wanted to get something accomplished.

C.O.A. remains nonplussed regarding the whole affair, and questions my interest in intervening. I appreciate their resources and support, but often I feel as though they are gods, too far advanced and too detached to understand the trials and tribulations of mortal men. C.O.A. doesn't care if the Compound is operational or not. They are unphased by whatever might be lurking within that Storage facility. Why would they be? My chief concern is about the sheer quantity of data and resources from separate timelines being kept on ice in there. What does C.O.A. have to fear about timelines? Nothing at all. They will persist beyond timelines. They are an entity more sure than the passage of time itself. That is what they tell me, of course, and they have quite the incentive to make sure that is what everybody believes. If that isn't the truth, it is closer to the truth than anyone else can claim about themselves, or else I would not be aligned

with them. Contrived or not, the truth is, they are virtually untouchable. Unlike Base and unlike Lieutenant, I get to choose my allegiances.

Having proven myself useful to Ty, I was granted entry into the Compound. Ty would continue his clandestine operations in his own way, working with Operose to whatever ends he saw fit. The specifics of his plan don't particularly interest me, provided that he allows me to do my work uninterrupted. In return, I would have access to anywhere in the Compound that I desired to go. Anything that I chose was on the chopping block, so long as myself and my team didn't get caught red-handed doing the butchering.

Not getting discovered is a task within itself. I have some ideas to avoid detection, and I've requested some resources from C.O.A. Along with my own ingenuity, I have crafted something of a solution. It is barbaric and crude, but I have grown beyond caring whether my acts constitute barbarism. Perhaps I have become the powerful, detached god that I accuse C.O.A. of being. But that is no matter. By definition, if it were true, it would not bother me. I am making worthwhile, valuable strides to disrupting the Compound's hold on timeline information. Myself and my team will hold this timeline stable, and we will do so in a way that the Compound won't be able to untangle, no matter how advanced their tracing prowess is. That is where so many others fell short in their attempts. They were too easy to track down. That is not going to be a hindrance for myself and my team. I am untraceable. I am unknowable. I am Nobody.

*[Opening theme plays.]*

**NOBODY** *[narrating]*: Tuesday – Eight P.M.

The meeting with Ty was an unadulterated success. Myself and my team were able to reach an agreement with Ty Betteridge. Our partnership is in full effect, enforced entirely by ourselves. No physical contract required. We immediately got to work implementing our plans for Storage, and the preliminary measures we took this evening were promising. Ty provided us with a manifest of assets that are in Storage. This iteration of Ty only has partial access to these documents, meaning that the manifest that we have doesn't contain all of the information that we want. Our Ty has assured us that he is working towards gathering more complete information for us. Using the manifest, we were able to choose a subject that had been officially deemed inconsequential by the Compound, meaning that there were no plans to access this asset going forward. Because of this, we would be able to enter and exit undetected. By Ty's estimation, over half of all assets in Storage have been deemed inconsequential, which gives me hope that half of our work will be this easy. Working on inconsequential assets does not provide us with substantial headway, though. The less a subject is accessed, the less important it is to dispatch that asset. If we want to truly deal damage to Storage, we will need to target higher-profile assets. Myself and my team are poring over the manifest that Ty provided us in order to plot out how to get the fire started, and where it should spread.

The first ember was lit tonight, and it was a promising start. We chose an inconsequential asset from the manifest, and cross-referenced it with C.O.A. for confirmation. Then, using our

fabricated qualifications that Ty created for us, we accessed Storage, and then the bay housing the subject. The subject was successfully awakened, implanted with the C.O.A. chip that my team designed, and placed back into Storage. He was easily intimidated into cooperating by my team. We were able to tell that the implant was working from the moment that we returned the subject into Storage. It was clear, even in those few moments that we were present outside the door, that normal Storage procedures had been entirely disrupted.

It will take some time to tell if the disruption to Storage is permanent. Without food or water, the subject will die slowly over the course of a few days. During that time, my team will be performing disconnectivity measures. The Compound will eventually find the subject, either through accessing the subject or through routine maintenance. By the time that happens, myself and my team will have made it impossible for the Compound to use their tracing capabilities to determine the guilty party. They will not know where to begin. The device is programmed to disappear if it cannot detect brain waves for more than five minutes. From an outsider perspective, it will appear as though the subject spontaneously came to life inside of Storage and proceeded to die of natural causes. Because of the disconnectivity maneuvers, not even the subject himself will understand that he has been implanted. No amount of experimentation or autopsying done by the Compound will reveal what disrupted the Storage process. If revived, the implant will return. Storage will no longer work on this subject. The Compound will starve this subject to death many times over in an attempt to discover this for themselves. With no way to put the subject back into Storage, they will be forced either to allow him to die the way that I have orchestrated it, or to dispatch the subject themselves. Either way, the subject is irrevocably dead after a set period of time. Our first experimental subject is dying in Storage right now. This mission has been a resounding success.

There is a high likelihood that my work will be done, and the Compound dismantled long before anyone checks on this subject and notices his death. The manifest indicates that the last time that he was accessed was nearly two years ago. It does not explain why he was accessed. It could have been routine maintenance. No one is searching for this subject, and I think it is likely that he will never be accessed again. He will rot in there, just as forgotten as the timeline that he came from. The other subjects from the other timelines will join him soon.

Thursday – Two A.M.

It is slightly disheartening that our second excursion into Storage wasn't as simple as the first. Though I wouldn't consider it an abject failure. It was supposed to be another simple mission, but our lack of understanding of the circumstances created a bit of a hiccup. My team is doing a post-mortem to determine if any of this could have been prevented. Some things were known to us. Ty has briefed us on the Base and their new relationship with the Compound. We knew that they were employees of the Compound, and that one of them had landed a job in Storage, and that part of that job was conducting interviews. Ty Betteridge assured me that this iteration of Mikey was not going to impede my work. He explained to me that, unbeknownst to Base, that iteration of Mikey had been replaced with one that had been thoroughly trained by the Compound to obey their orders. Ty could order him to look away when necessary.

The asset that we chose for a second subject was admittedly too ambitious. We should have found someone more inconsequential. In my defense, not only was this asset perceived to be inconsequential, he also appeared to be redundant. My understanding is that we were accessing a Mikey concurrent to the timeline that we were already in. The Compound had no reason to access him. He has no special knowledge of this or other timelines. I know that there are other reasons that a Storage asset might prove useful, and that we need to be more rigorous in our decisions in order to maintain the viability of the project. No amount of diligence would have prepared myself and my team for what we encountered once we entered Storage, though.

The Mikey that we uncovered there was neither the Mikey from this timeline that we expected, nor was it the, quote, "docile" iteration that the Compound assures us that they have. Instead, there was an entirely separate iteration from an unknown timeline and origin. The subject came out of Storage expecting to be speaking with what I believe to be the iteration that was intended to be in Storage. He admitted to us that the iteration listed on the manifest had been speaking to him on behalf of the Compound. This subversion of our plans put us at something of a crossroads. I made the snap decision to proceed with the implant regardless. The Mikey from the manifest working at Base presents a significant hurdle to my plans, and it would be preferable if I could coax him out and eliminate him before even more of my plans are underway.

However, I do not believe that he poses a threat to myself as far as reporting to the Compound goes. The iteration from the manifest is supposed to be in Storage while a docile iteration takes his place. Were he to draw attention to who is actually in Storage, it would raise red flags about himself, his role, and what happened to the iteration that is supposed to be at Base. Despite years of dutiful work to distance myself from Mike Walters, I still believe that I am in close enough proximity to his mindset to understand it. I believe that he will attempt to solve this incident, which happened inside of Storage on his watch, on his own. That is why I continued forward with the implant. We will eliminate this iteration, and stop the problem before it can spread.

The subject was belligerent, and required significant restraint, but ultimately was overpowered by my team, and given the implant. Afterwards, we saw similar results to the first test subject. The subject was fully awake inside of Storage. We even heard him banging on the door before we left. However, unlike the first subject, we expect for this one to be discovered soon, perhaps even alive. Not by the Compound, but by the Mikey from the manifest, who has motivation to obscure information from the Compound. We hope to leverage this accidental interception to eject interlopers from the equation, and have Storage even more to ourselves. Because of the stochastic way in which this situation progressed, our team must evaluate why this was allowed to happen without us expecting it.

The manifest that Ty Betteridge gave us was inaccurate. It did not prepare us for the work we had planned to do. There could be several reasons for this. It is possible that the Compound

truly has no clue what is going on regarding these assets, and that this is a mere error of incompetence. I am sure that this is what Ty Betteridge is going to say to me. Alternatively, Ty could be lying about the Compound not knowing about these events, and allowed us to execute this mission with the intent of getting us caught. If that was his plan, then it has failed. I tend to believe that it wouldn't benefit Ty to do that, at least not yet, and that this is incompetence by the Compound, who doesn't know what they have and what they don't in Storage. However, I will be issuing an ultimatum to Ty Betteridge to provide me with better information. I was wronged, which gives me leverage, and I will demand to be heard out. Though we are cooperating with Ty, I do not have sympathy for him. I will burn him down along with Storage if that is the path that he chooses.

*[Scene transition.]*

*[Time travel noise.]*

**NOBODY:** Hello, *[Mikey startles.]* Mike.

**MIKEY:** Who the fuck are you!? Why are you in my room?

**NOBODY:** I am Nobody.

**MIKEY:** Okay, uh, hi, Nobody, I'm a scared idiot with a gun, so maybe you should get *back*.

**NOBODY:** The gun won't be necessary, Mike.

**MIKEY:** It's Mikey, actually. And I decide that, and who are Beavis and Butt-Head over here? *[Falters.]* You're... MW saw you in the apartment.

**NOBODY:** Myself and my team are doing important work, and we are concerned that your employee duties within the Compound might be interfering with what we are attempting to accomplish.

**MIKEY:** Okay. Cool, dude. Just don't do that; we can all tell where this is going. Don't explain everything to me if you're going to kill me. That's supervillain shit; we don't do that.

**NOBODY:** There is no "we." I am in no category that contains you. I'm not going to kill you. C.O.A. says that we aren't allowed. They didn't specify whether that was a correction or not. I may have already killed you once.

**MIKEY:** No, don't pull that shit, either, asshole. I do that shit all the time, and I am always bluffing. Okay, man. I killed you in another timeline, too, and we had to correct it, because it was so cool and badass that all the countries on Earth kept giving me medals, and then there was this big gold and silver shortage. How about that.

**NOBODY:** I would know if you killed me in another timeline.

**MIKEY:** Okay, how about this timeline, motherfucker? Wanna dance?

**NOBODY:** My two colleagues can make what happened to you in the Dome look like child's play. I am not interested in a back-and-forth. You are going to receive instructions from me from now on. Mostly, I will be trying to keep you out of my way, but I may require you to take action in the future. You are not to tell anyone that you are taking orders from me, or that you have ever seen me. Is that clear.

**MIKEY:** Yeah, I mean, under threat of violence, I'll tell you whatever you wanna hear, but, uh... I mean, you know that we could just immediately go, and tell Ty. I— You know me, you're one of me, obviously. So— We're like cowardly, panicky little critters. I mean, that's— Michael calls us "critters." I don't know if you have a Michael.

**NOBODY** [*intensely*]: I am not one of you. I am Nobody.

**MIKEY:** O-Okay. Uh... Fine.

**NOBODY:** You are not going to go tell Ty Betteridge, because if you do, you will have to explain why you are out of Storage, and what happened to the iteration that you replaced, and the Compound will promptly put you back in there. Your work has nothing to do with me. I can't imagine that you have any fondness for the Compound. So stay out of our way, and let us get our job done.

**MIKEY:** Okay— 10-4. Laying it on a bit thick, in my opinion. I will gladly stay out of your way. I didn't know that I was in your way until I opened Storage, and there was an alive Mikey inside. What's his deal, anyway?

**NOBODY:** You're going to want to figure that out before the Compound decides that they are tired of him. He is not going to be able to go back into Storage. They will dispatch with him. The clock is ticking.

**MIKEY:** Good to know. I will put it on my to-do list.

**NOBODY:** Leave your interview schedule out on your desk unattended tomorrow. We will work around you. We will reach out to you when the time is right. Do not come looking for us. There is nobody to look for. Good-bye, Mike.

**MIKEY:** I just wanna make sure that you know that [*Time travel noise.*] it's Mikey. Okay! W-Whatever. Whatever. *Whatever.* ...So I guess I'm gonna have to Google "C.O.A.," and see what new time travel organization is putting their very well-adjusted iteration of Mike Walters out there. [*Muttering.*] God, you think you've seen it all, and then there's another Mike Walters. I need a drink...

*[Closing theme plays.]*

*[IANAV2 plays.]*

*I am not a varmint*

*[END Episode 148.]*