

## EPISODE ONE HUNDRED TWENTY FOUR – CHARLIE WILL PROTECT US

*Transcribed by Karen (Count Swagula) edited by Orion*

[BEGIN Episode 124.]

**INTRO:** Hey guys, quick plugs. The first thing that I wanna plug is I have a dog now. She is a one-and-a-half-year-old German Shepherd mix and her name is Riga. And I love her with all of my heart. If you'd like to see her, you can check us out on Twitch at [twitch.tv/woebegonepod](https://twitch.tv/woebegonepod). Where every Sunday I write that week's episode soundtrack and then play a video game. I got pretty distracted with Riga this past Sunday, she's still learning behavior so, we're going to start Hollow Night over again next Sunday. Again, that is [twitch.tv/woebegonepod](https://twitch.tv/woebegonepod).

And if you'd like to support the show, you can do so on Patreon, over at [Patreon.com/woe\\_begone](https://Patreon.com/woe_begone). Where you can get easy access to ad-free episodes, instrumentals, soundtrack albums, Q&As, director's commentaries, Movies with Michael, postcards, and more. And I am still plugging the August postcards, it is not too late to sign up for it. If you sign up before the end of the month, you will receive the postcard and all of the goodies that I have planned for the one-year anniversary postcard. As well as the customary handwritten, unique message from a character that is on every postcard, and that you can share in the Discord, it's a lot of fun. That's [Patreon.com/woe\\_begone](https://Patreon.com/woe_begone). Special thanks to my ten newest Patrons [REDACTED] for supporting the show. Enjoy.

**MIKEY [narrating]:** The week following my return from the Flinchite Compound was... challenging. Challenging is a euphemism, it was bad. The consolidation injury that I had sustained attempting to remove MDawg from myself was severe, but it only tended to flare up in episodes. Mike had shown similar symptoms after his failed consolidation. I was completely fine to be on my own, right up until the point where I wasn't. At which point I very much wasn't. This inability to be alone without incident was disheartening because one thing that I felt that I truly needed was some time alone with myself. In addition to the physical injury, I was also recovering from a severe crisis of self. The type that someone might normally resolve by backpacking through Europe or climbing a mountain or something. Instead of rediscovering myself, I had Edgar checking in on me every couple of hours if I didn't text him. And of course, Ty wanted to see me twice a week for consolidation therapy. On top of that, Base experiments were advancing in a refreshingly non-violent way and I wanted to participate. Between those things there was no time for me to be alone or to find myself. This perceived lack of time to myself might have influenced some... regrettable actions that I took after my second rehabilitation at the Compound.

I left the Compound that day feeling relatively great, better than I had since I had initially sustained the injury. It felt as though a haze had lifted, though once I returned to Base that clarity was replaced with a frenzied panic. Ty had unwittingly planted something awful in my head. Ed-Man and MDawg came from Anne. Anne used the O.I. to create backups of us. MDawg was a residual part of me now. There had to be answers about him at Operose. The only thing stopping me from going there was Ty's order not to, and a tracking device that would tell him if I disobeyed. I did disobey, of course, but I tried to be clever about it. I iterated a version of myself from before Ty inserted the tracking device, told him what was going on and sent him to the O.I. Unfortunately for my clever plan, that Mikey also had the tracking device somehow. It must have traveled through time to be in him as well.

There was no doubt that Ty had been notified that we had disobeyed him. Horrified, I immediately attempted to destroy the evidence. I entered some random coordinates that corresponded to somewhere in the Pacific Ocean and transported the iteration there. I am truly blessed that so much of the Earth's surface is ocean. It means that any given coordinate that you use will probably be in the ocean, and any land animal sent there will

be... neutralized— to borrow a term from Ty Betteridge— in a matter of minutes. Out of sight, out of mind, out of... breath. Is that too... dramatic? To my surprise, Ty didn't contact me. Ironically this could've been the most torturous way that he could've handled the situation. I spent the next several days at a loss of what to do. Originally, I was going to offer Ty a Limited hangout.

*[Sing-songy.]* Oh Ty! There's a rogue iteration he went into O.I., I don't know how he got there or why he did that, be on the lookout for him he's probably still out there. He's probably evil, I saw him twirling his mustache.

I would gladly sell O.I. Mikey down the river now that I was done with him, especially if it would earn me some brownie points with Ty instead of resulting in punishment. Edgar would be proud of this plan. However, I just couldn't come up with a water-tight alibi. How would I know any of this and still be innocent? Instead, I kept quiet and I curdled in my secrecy, not telling anyone, anything.

A couple days passed this way. One morning I emerged from a sort of non-sleep that I had been fitfully lying in all night. My alarm was going off. 9am. I groaned. I was alone in my cabin at O.V.E.R. on one of my days off. Normally I would spend a day like this with Edgar either at his cabin or at Base but I had convinced him to give me a little bit of alone time. I got out of bed, just as tired as I had been when I had gone to sleep, texted Edgar to let him know I was okay, and put on the coffee.

The phone rang. The landline phone in my cabin. I had completely forgotten that I had a landline phone. Even when I made calls for work, I just used my cell phone. Sure, that sort of erodes the work life boundary, but I also live in a cabin on the campus of my work, so that ship has sailed. Also, I do not remember how the O.V.E.R. phone extensions work, and I am not going to re-learn. My cellphone is always in my pocket and it literally has video games and Doordash on it. Granted, no one is willing to deliver out here because I'm inside of a top-secret governmental facility but I can transport to somewhere that does get deliveries if I have the calculator. Or I could just transport to the place that I want to eat at. I answered the phone.

"Mikey, Hi!" a cheery voice on the other side of the line said. "It's me, it's Charlie."

"I know it's you, Charlie," I said. Charlie was the only person who would be this chipper on the phone at 9am. "So what's up?"

"Well, I'm at the front gate," she said. "And Marissa is here, she's still up from her night shift. Say Hi Marissa, I'm on the phone with Mikey!"

I heard Marissa's voice, made thin by her distance from the phone.

"Tell that dipshit what the fuck is going on already, Charlie," she said.

"Tell Marissa I said hi," I said. "What, uh, is she talking about? What's going on?"

"Oh, right," she said. "I'm calling to make sure that you're you, Are you, you?"

"The one and only," I replied. "Well, the one and only, asterisk, some exemptions apply, see your local Mike vendor for more details."

“Okay, good, just checking,” she said. “There’s someone here, and he says that he’s you but, I saw you yesterday and he doesn’t look like you. I never forget a face and everyone looks a little bit different every day, so I knew that this wasn’t my Mikey, and I know that it’s not Michael or MW or Mike either, obviously.”

My blood ran cold. There should not be an unaccounted-for iteration. Ty certainly would not allow that and he would reprimand us if he knew that there was an iteration that we did not disclose to him. Except uh, what if this was the Mikey from the O.I. with the tracking device in his hand. Fuck, my mind was racing. Charlie was still describing to me; I caught the words rash on the back of his hand. It was him. Fuck. Fuck. He was alive? And he came back to O.V.E.R.? To do what, replace me? Fuck. I knew that I should’ve double-checked these coordinates but I didn’t want to give him time to figure out what I was doing. So much of the earth is ocean, how did I mess this up.

“That’s not me, Charlie, he’s dangerous,” I said. “Can you, uh, I don’t know, stop him for me?”

“Oh, don’t worry about that,” Charlie said. Her cheeriness did not waver. “Marissa already has him in handcuffs.”

“Handcuffs? Who had handcuffs?” I asked.

“I do, silly,” Charlie said. “They’re standard O.V.E.R. issue stuff for someone with my job. I have to use them about... once a year, but it’s rarely this dramatic. Marissa did the actual cuffing this time. She got him on the ground and I handed her the cuffs.”

“Well then give my regards to Marissa.” I said.

“So yeah, we’ve got him. We were wondering what you wanted us to do. Should we call Edgar or The Compound or what? Or would you like to do that?”

“Don’t call anyone, Jesus.” I said. “The less people that know about this, the better. Understand? Especially Edgar, and *especially* Ty. Can you guys... kill him for me?”

“Mikey...” That was what wiped the cheeriness from her demeanor. “Mikey, we can’t, no we’re not going to kill him. He might not be you but he’s a human being. Has he even done anything wrong?”

“If he’s here, he came to replace me, and he is going to get us in deep shit with Ty Betteridge.” I said.

“And you think that the punishment for that is death, and that you’re judge, jury, and executioner?” she asked.

“No. I’m asking *you* to be executioner, and you haven’t seen what Ty Betteridge is capable of,” I said.

“I’ve heard stories from Marissa,” she said, “I’m still not going to let you kill him.”

I could’ve sworn that I heard a faint ‘Aw Man!’ from Marissa in the background.

“Then, can you at least bring him to my cabin?” I asked. I could kill him in good old 63A and Charlie would never be any the wiser.

“Yeah, we can do that, but you can kill him either,” she said. “If we don’t have a resolution by the end of our conversation, we’re taking him back with us.”

I huffed.

“Fine. Bring him here, and we’ll try for a ‘resolution’ but once you fully understand what’s going on here—”

She interrupted me.

“Great! I was about to start my lunch break anyway, we’ll be there in a few, see you soon Mikey.” The cheer had fully returned to her voice.

The line went dead. Shit. Charlie was going to goodwill us to death if I didn’t do something about it. She was too nice and smart and proactive to understand. Stuff like this never happened to her. Of course *she* never needed to kill anyone. She didn’t know what it was like. And the longer that this Mikey who had been to Operose remains alive, the more likely he was to start causing problems. I had about 15 minutes to figure out a plan, less if they took Marissa’s patrol car. Googling “How to kill an iteration of yourself without Charlie or Marissa noticing?” yielded 669— nice— thousand search results, but none of them were at all relevant.

This is WOE.BEGONE.

*[Opening theme plays.]*

**MIKEY** *[narrating]*: I was not able to find a relevant Google search before I heard a loud knock on my cabin door. Google search just keeps getting worse. I know that people complain about Google getting worse all the time, but this is the first time that it had bitten *me* in the ass. They’ve gone far too long without a serious competitor and it shows.

I knew that the knock was Marissa because Charlie knocks very quietly and politely. One time I was in the bedroom and didn’t hear her knocking and she ended up having to call me to open the door, which was unlocked by the way. Conversely, Marissa once barged in while I was taking a shower one morning and was toasting a bagel when I got out. Yes, I keep my cabin door unlocked most of the time. If someone is going to kill me with time travel then a lock is not going to stop them. I opened the door.

“Hey Mikey! Are you ready?” Charlie asked.

“We caught this shitbag trying to pass himself off as you, *[Laughs.]* guess he doesn’t know that that shit won’t fly,” Marissa said.

She shoved O.I. Mikey through the threshold of the door and into the cabin. O.I. Mikey didn’t speak. We went into the living room. Charlie, Marissa, and O.I. Mikey sat on the couch and I sat in a chair opposite them. O.I. Mikey was still handcuffed and was clearly uncomfortable sitting with his hands behind his back.

“So, we understand that there is a problem,” Charlie said. “Mikey, why don’t you begin by telling us how we ended up here from your perspective.”

“*He* was supposed to be in the ocean,” I said.

"You dropped me in New Caledonia, genius," O.I. Mikey said, tersely.

"Wait, what? There's so much ocean, I dropped you on an island?" I asked.

"Yeah, really great job with that one," he said. "I can't believe how stupid I am in the future."

"You're only a few days younger than me," I said.

"Well, personally, I'm glad that you survived," Charlie said. She smiled. "Mikey, you created this iteration, right? Why did you do that?"

"He went into O.I. for me," I explained. "Ty put a tracking device in my hand that would activate if I went there, so I sent an iteration of me that didn't have the implant. The implant went off in him anyway, even though it shouldn't even be there, so I got rid of the evidence."

"Not very well, you didn't," Marissa said.

"I think I get it," Charlie said. She was easily settling into her role as mediator. "You thought that you found a loophole to get around Ty's orders."

"Why the fuck would you want to go back there?" Marissa asked. "That place is fuckin' dangerous. Remember Eagle? The grass ate him, Mikey."

"I had him break into Anne's cabin, she had files on EdMan and MDawg," I said.

"Okay, weird, but why do you care about those losers?" Marissa asked.

"It's a, it— uh, I, uh, Edgar..." I stuttered. I didn't want to tell them about the consolidation with MDawg. They didn't need to know. "According to Ty Betteridge, The Council of Annes put them there. She wanted her own backup of us or something."

"Yeah, that sounds like a good reason to leave the whole thing a-fucking-lone," Marissa said.

"I needed to see for myself, and... I was right, or at the very least I saw for myself that she is watching them. Weekly status reports and some other stuff. I'm almost positive that she iterated them." I didn't want to tell them about the other thing that I saw in the file. I shot a glance at O.I. Mikey; his expression told me that he didn't want me to say either. The one thing that we both agreed on.

"Ty Betteridge is your boss, Mikey. Like it or not," Charlie said. "I know that I don't, but this isn't a normal boss/employee situation either. Something terrible might happen if he decides to take you off the job. Marissa and all of the others worked very hard to get you here. In order to honor their sacrifice, you need to do everything you can to make sure that it isn't in vain. Okay?"

"Okay, but if we're doing everything that we can, then we should absolutely kill him," I replied. "See that rash on his hand? That's from the tracking device. We can play dumb to Ty. We can say that we don't know what iteration set off the tracking device. Maybe someone iterated me that we don't know about. There are a bunch of people who could do that and a majority of them are our enemies, but we can't play dumb if he's sitting here in the living room with us."

"This is too large of a thing to lie about, Mikey," Charlie said. "I think that the best thing to do is to be honest with Ty, take accountability, and negotiate a fair punishment. You made a promise to him and then you broke that promise."

"Charlie, I appreciate your... kind nature," I said. "But Ty's job as best as I understand it is to literally torture me. There are iterations of me in The Compound. He hurts them, kills them, consolidates them, and then puts everything back to normal. Over, and over again. He's been doing it for a very long time. If we go to him, he will replace me with another iteration and you won't be any the wiser."

"That's just not true," Charlie said. "I can always tell you guys apart. I won't let him do that. Me and Marissa will raise hell if he tries something like that. You can trust me, Mikey. I'll protect you."

"You don't understand, you—"

I stopped just short of hurling insults at Charlie, of all people. Not like a super mean one mind you, I was going to call her a clod for some reason. Where did I pick up the word clod? Clod. Clod. *[Slowed audio]* Clod. I stood up. I could feel my face getting red-hot.

"I... need some... water," I said. "I'll be back in a second."

I stormed off into the kitchen. I grabbed a glass, filled it with ice from the freezer, and turned on the tap. When the glass was full, I sat it down on the counter. My knife block stared out at me from the counter. I eyed the large chef's knife. It hadn't worked on H but O.I. Mikey was not H. He had his hands bound behind him. I would only have to get one good stab in. Charlie and Marissa wouldn't have time to react. I remembered... I remembered how Eagle had killed me, where the blade went inside of my chest and how he twisted it. I would do it just like that. I remembered him telling me to remember that moment. *[Shaky breath.]* I remembered it. I grabbed the knife from the block. I took three deep breaths to steady myself.

*[Deep breath.]*

Then, in a flash, I turned around and ran back into the living room, towards O.I. Mikey. When I was about three feet away from him, I pulled my hand back ready to stab. My vision narrowed. I could only see O.I. Mikey. The world moved slowly. I saw the rash on his hand. I saw the fear in his eyes. Not yet a fear of death, I don't think he had processed what was going on, more of a fear that I was rushing at him. I was no longer hesitant. I was ready. I was going to kill him.

Before I could reach him, I felt someone tackle me to the floor. Hard. My hand slipped downward as I fell to the ground. It slammed down as I was slammed down with it. I felt the blade go through Mikey's shoe and into his foot. There was a crunch of bone. He let out a howl. I could feel my arms being ripped backwards behind me. I remembered Eagle tying me up before he killed me. I felt the cold metal of handcuffs around my wrists. I could see red hair dangling in my periphery.

"Ah. You have two sets of handcuffs?" I groaned.

"Yup, just in case! I've never actually had to use two sets at the same time, though," Charlie said. I could hear her smiling.

"Did you think that you were being sneaky, dipshit?" Marissa asked.

"I did think that actually, yeah," I said. O.I.

Mikey continued to howl in the background.

"Oh shut up, you'll be fine." Marissa said.

"Mikey, it's great that you think that I'm nice, and good-natured, and pretty, and all of that," Charlie said, "but, you underestimate me. We brought this iteration here because I was prepared for a negotiation, and I know what a negotiation with Mike Walters looks like. Stop telling me that I don't understand. Okay? Now, Marissa, let's get him into the chair."

Marissa and Charlie stood me up and sat me down in the chair opposite the couch. I glared at O.I. Mikey. He mostly had his eyes closed. A pool of blood was forming around his shoe.

"I was hoping to hear at least one legitimate proposal before things went sour," Charlie said. "You didn't wanna call Ty, and I hoped that maybe there was a way that I could facilitate that solution, but this has gone too far. Marissa, could you call The Compound for us?"

"What?!" I cried out. "Don't call Ty. Please. P-Please, he'll kill me. Worse, he'll lock me up in there. I'll never be free again. They'll send a more 'docile' iteration to take my place. C-Charlie please..."

Charlie didn't respond. I could see Marissa fiddling with her phone. I could feel the panic worsening.

*[Gasping breaths.]* "I- k-k-kill me then, C-Charlie, kill me, before Ty does something worse. Kill me Charlie."

"I'm not going to do that, Mikey." Charlie's voice was soft and level. "We're going to figure something out. I promise. Trust me Mikey."

"You're heartless! Your kindness is a lie! You're letting this happen to me."

Sadness crept into the corners of Charlie's expression. I felt no remorse, only frenzy.

"You don't... mean that," Charlie said.

I didn't reply. I didn't know what I meant. I doubled over on myself, sobbing.

"Stop being so dramatic, Dipshit," Marissa said. "Besides, I've got an idea."

I saw Marissa bring up a page in her contacts and hit call. I winced in anticipation. I was truly terrified of what Ty might do, and he would sound so reasonable about it. That's the most crushing thing about him. It would feel like a legitimate business arrangement.

*[Cowboy voice.]* "Uh, howdy, Marissa," a voice on the other line said. The phone was on speakerphone. "Always a pleasure to hear from ya. Sorry if the connection drops, I'm out in the yard with Badger and the horses. So, how's it goin', pard?"

Who could this mysterious voice be? I wondered. Who in the world did Marissa call instead of Ty. Or was this Ty?

"Howdy, Michael!" Marissa said. "Sorry that I always seem to need something when I call but we're in a bit of a pickle. Mikey has been snooping around O.I. and we're hoping to get him out of hot water. He stole some files from Anne's cabin, and uh, there's an iteration of him here with us."

"That son of a bitch," Michael growled.

"You're on speakerphone, Michael!" Charlie chimed in.

"Oh. Howdy, Charlie. Mikey, you son of a bitch. We're workin' our asses off to get you on the straight and narrow and you're snoopin' behind our backs."

"He sure is." Marissa said.

"I was hoping that you might have some advice about what to do? Mikey tried to kill the iteration, so now both of them are handcuffed. Mikey's scared of what Ty might do. I was hoping you might know a way to get this settled without killing anyone and without Ty finding out. Michael, is there any way you could stop by 63A for a minute?" Charlie asked. "I've been trying to mediate but our talks have fallen through."

"Yeah, come get your boy, Michael," Marissa said.

"Fraid, I don't gotta calculator no more," Michael said. "If'n y'all wanna come get me I'll come with but I'm stuck here at the ranch until Edgar sends me back to the apartment. I'll assume y'all don't want Edgar knowing about this."

"No! Please... no," I said.

"Then, y'all said y'all don't wanna kill the iteration, huh?" Michael trailed off. "This is a tricky one. I'd just as soon kill him if I was y'all, but I know that Charlie's gotta merciful head on those shoulders."

"Charlie's holding all the mercy for the both of us," Marissa said.

"We don't have a calculator either, Michael," Charlie said. "We'd have to go to Base to get one and Edgar would want to know why we're checking it out."

"Right. Well, let me make a phone call. I reckon I can get this sorted out no problem," Michael said. I could hear him crack his knuckles.

"Wait... call who?" I asked.

"You let me worry 'bout that, pilgrim. You'll know here in a minute if things turn out alright," he said. "I better let y'all go, take care of the Mikeys for me alright, Charlie?"

"Can do!" Charlie said.



"Thank ya kindly, be seein' you folks, m-bye." The line went dead.

"Is he... going to fix this?" O.I. Mikey asked. There was still severe strain in his voice, but at least he had moved past howling in pain.

"I hope so. Michael knows how to get shit done," Marissa said.

"He'll take care of it," Charlie said. "I trust him."

"That bozo will do something completely boneheaded every now and th— What the fuck?"

Marissa's thought was interrupted by a person suddenly appearing in the room in front of us. He didn't fall to the ground like we usually did. He landed with anticipation, stood up, and took a deep breath to center himself.

"Ty fucking Betteridge," Marissa said.

"Hello everyone," Ty said. "Michael called me with some concerns about your predicament. I'm here to get everything settled. Now, which one of you is the Mikey that activated the O.I. tracking device?"

"That's the one on the couch," Charlie explained.

"Excellent, and where are the files that he pilfered from O.I.?" he asked.

"They're... on the desk," I said.

"Mikey is very worried that you're going to kill him, Ty," Charlie said. "Please don't kill either of them. Mikey knows that he's made a mistake and he's had a very hard time recently and we were hoping that we could negotiate something that works for all of us."

Ty chuckled. "Mikey! Did you tell them that I was going to kill you? I am not that cold-hearted, I assure you. Nobody is going to die. I will need to take this new duplicate of Mikey off of your hands, having been exposed to O.I. *again* means that he will be able to provide some... unique data and testimony. And I will be taking these, of course." He picked the files up off of the desk. "My, you're hurt."

"He stabbed me," O.I. Mikey explained.

"Ugh, how rude." Ty said. "Oh well, we can get you patched up as soon as we get to the Compound."

"What's going to happen to me?" I asked.

"Well, I can't say that I am pleased with your little loophole," Ty said. "But I think that you learned an important lesson about how I intend for you to take orders. We will get you trained into full obedience, just you wait and see. In the meantime, I have been planning a special event of sorts. I am going to attach some more responsibilities onto that for you. And Michael has offered to shoulder some of the punishment as well. We've discussed the terms of his punishment on the phone."

"Michael, you self-sacrificing nitwit. Ty, don't hurt him," I said.

“What I do with Michael is between me and him,” Ty said. “Anyway, I’ve got what I came here for. Better luck next time, Mikey. I find it goes smoother if you don’t keep putting yourself into these situations. Toodle pip!”

And with that, Ty, the files, and O.I. Mikey were gone.

“See, problem solved and no one got hurt,” Charlie said. “I knew that you’d be okay.”

Charlie uncuffed me. We hung out for about an hour and drunk the coffee I’d put on that morning, trying to relieve the stress of the incident. After a while, we all hugged and said our goodbyes. Charlie was going back to work and Marissa was going to bed. I thanked Charlie for mediating, and then, again, I was alone in my cabin.

After Charlie and Marissa left, I began to laugh. A small laugh at first. I laughed harder as it all washed over me. The absurdity of it all. *Charlie* of all people getting involved. Ty taking O.I. Mikey and sparing *me*. And most of all, the files. The fucking! Files! They were mostly weekly status reports about nothing, EdMan and MDawg actually are boring, but there was one little detail that made the whole shitshow worth it.

EdMan was not going to die in eight years! They *cured* him. They cured EdMan. *[Slightly deranged laughter.]*

*[Closing theme plays.]*

**AFTER CREDITS:** Every time the words O.I. Mikey appeared in the script, my brain would first try to read them as Ol’ Mikey, which turns the lines from a Mikey line to a Michael line.

**BLOOPER (MICHAEL):** I would gladly sell Ol’ Mikey down the river, pard, if’n it meant getting’ in good with Ty Betteridge.

*[Brief start of the closing theme.]*

*[Extremely slowed audio.]* CLOD.

*[END Episode 124.]*