

## EPISODE ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY SEVEN - THE GAMBLER WILL PROTECT US

*Original transcript created and edited by Orion*

[BEGIN Episode 127.]

**INTRO:** Hey guys, welcome back to season 11 of WOE.BEGONE. I hope you enjoyed the break, and I hope that you're excited to get right back into it. I am too, so let's make these plugs quick.

Firstly, there is a new episode of *The Diary of Aliza Schultz*. Episode 17 of *The Diary of Aliza Schultz*, Streetlamp Folly, is available wherever you listen to podcasts. The *Diary of Aliza Schultz* is its own, standalone show, and you do not have to be caught up to WOE.BEGONE to listen to it, which would be an odd reservation to have if you are listening to episode 127 of WOE.BEGONE. The *Diary of Aliza Schultz* follows Aliza Schultz, the perfect reader of airport novelist Rafael Muslani, and is an exploration of fiction, metatext, and what it means to be a fictional character. So check out the *Diary of Aliza Schultz* wherever you listen to podcasts if that sounds up your alley. That is A-L-I-Z-A-S-C-H-U-L-T-Z, Aliza Schultz.

Special news on the Twitch stream front, this Sunday I am going to Start *Nancy Drew and the Legend of the Crystal Skull*. That is [twitch.tv/woebegonepod](https://twitch.tv/woebegonepod), where every Sunday evening I write that week's episode soundtrack and then hang out and play a video game. It's been awhile since the last Nancy Drew game, and I've hammered out all of the technical issues with Crystal Skull, and I am excited to get into it. So check me out at [twitch.tv/woebegonepod](https://twitch.tv/woebegonepod) if that sounds fun to you.

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 early access to ad-free episodes, instrumentals, soundtrack albums, Q&As, director's commentaries, Movies with Michael, postcards, and more. In honor of the one-year anniversary of the postcards, I created an audio version of the August 2022 and September 2022 postcards. These are the personalized messages that members of the postcard tier received that month, and they tell a larger story that's a slice of life story about stuff that happens around the Base. So check that out if you're interested in supporting the show. That's [Patreon.com/woe\\_begone](https://Patreon.com/woe_begone). Special thanks to my ten newest patrons, [REDACTED] for supporting the show. Enjoy.

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

[Opening theme plays.]

**MDAWG:** Alright, I'm ready, let's do this. I hope you guys were able to get settled a little bit while I got everything ready. I got our conversation prepped, I lit some incense, I think we're good to go. Uh, do you guys need anything before we begin? There are some beverages in the break room. Uh, we've got water, uh, tea, I could put on the coffee. Uh, there's a beer or two in the fridge, I think? But that might not be appropriate for this occasion.

**MICHAEL:** And how do we know that the beer won't eat us like the grass ate Eagle, pard?

**MDAWG:** Uh, because that doesn't make any sense, I guess? Do we need to take some deep breaths? Uh, find our center? I want this to go smoothly for all of us.

**MIKEY** [*slamming an object on the table repeatedly*]: Well, MDawg, I feel like I might be able to find my center better if my hand wasn't in the *center* of this iron box. Can we maybe get this off of me? My hand is burning in there.

**MDAWG:** Oh, no, no, no. It's a solid block of lead, molded perfectly around your hand. That's why it's so heavy. And I know it's a bummer, but you know why you have to wear it. The lead isn't what's burning your skin, it's the Flinchite tracking device.

**MIKEY:** Well, [*Thump.*] I'd prefer not to get lead poisoning on top of being captured by O.I. on top of being sent on a Flinchite mission to do who knows what with probably the boulders.

**MW:** You're gonna be fine, Mikey. You don't want Ty to know where we are, do ya? Signal's gotta be masked somehow, and I know it weren't our idea, but I think it's a pretty good'n.

**MDAWG:** It's all about mindset, Mikey. It's like, are you having a bad day? Or did something bad happen to you, and you're letting that one bad thing color the whole rest of your day?

**MIKEY:** Today might not be a very good example, MDawg.

**MDAWG:** You know... we could cut off your hand, if that would make you more comfortable. Heh, no joke. We could send you to medical, have them snip it off, and then put you back together when it's time for you to go. We didn't really budget time in our conversation for that, but we could figure something out. And if it would make you feel more at home, we could make you search for an indie rock song for several days first. Once!

**MIKEY:** Pass.

**MDAWG:** Hey, I'm sorry that it hurts, Mikey. I can feel the negative energy flowing out of it. I'm not here to hurt you, in fact, it's exactly the opposite. We need really good vibes coming out of this room when we're done. I'm talkin' warm, yellow, brown, strength vibes. We need to send you out of here ready to get the job done. You know what I mean?

**MICHAEL:** we're on *your* mission now, is whatcha mean.

**MDAWG:** We're both on O.I.'s mission, Michael. Don't worry, it's nothing complicated. You probably won't have to fight anyone, but you should be ready just in case. Like your pal, MW, here. That is one hell of a revolver, man. Where'd you get it? That is not O.V.E.R. issue.

**MW:** It's a Colt Python. It was a gift from Borris.

**MDAWG:** How generous. Have I met Borris?

**MICHAEL:** Borris is our landlord. Now look, MDawg. I'm gettin' tired of the chitchat, pilgrim. Didn't you say our time's budgeted? Where the hell are we? What the hell is goin' on?

**MDAWG:** Okay, so our time is budgeted for this exact conversation, nothing more and nothing less. I didn't say that we're in a hurry, we just have the time that we have. We're moving at exactly the speed we're supposed to, so take it easy, cowboy. We'll get there when it's time to get there. And as for where we are, I don't know. We're inside Operose International, in the room that is reserved for us to be able to have this conversation for the amount of time that that takes. I don't know where that room is. That isn't the sort of thing that you get to know around here. You just gotta go with the flow. I'd say that maybe about one percent of employees know where O.I. is on any given day. And that one percent is rotated so it isn't always the same group of people. Secrecy is the name of the game around here. What I know is only the tip of the iceberg. They gave me the information that I needed to have this conversation and nothing more.

**MW:** Well, we'll go with the flow with ya, as long as the current ain't too strong, MDawg. Seems like you got somethin' to tell us, which I take it as a good sign. That means you ain't gonna kill us for workin' with Ty, right?

**MDAWG:** Of course, I'm not going to kill you. Operose hasn't given me permission to do that yet. *[Pause.]* C'mon, that was a joke! I was kidding. You have to take it easier. You'll live longer.

**MIKEY:** If I live too long, *[Thump.]* I risk turning into a cowboy.

**MDAWG:** There we go, that's good. Riff with me, Mikey. We're doing good, feeling good. You understand that Operose rescued you from the situation, correct? Surely you don't think that we swooped in and scooped you up from a completely normal, harmless mission handed down from Ty Betteridge. I don't think he offers those sorts of missions.

**MIKEY:** I don't know, *[Thump.]* MDawg. I'm still trying to get a read on you. And I'd feel a lot better about my mortality, if I could see Edgar.

**MICHAEL:** If you don't quit banging your hand on the table, I'm gonna be the one to cut it off.

**MDAWG:** Edgar's fine, Base's totally groovy, I promise. They're with EdMan, so I'm sure they're having a great time. They're having a conversation very similar to this one, but with relevant details changed.

**MIKEY:** And with Marissa interjecting loudly, I'm sure.

**MDAWG:** Oh yeah, they're conversation is probably budgeted for much longer. We need Base in perfect form, too. We need everyone to coordinate when we're done here. Nobody's getting hurt, and that's not just me being a tree-hugger, it's in Operose's best interest as well. They'd never kill off Anne's little pet project, right now of all times. My understanding is that this is something like a senior thesis for her. And if she proves her capabilities, it could mean very good things for her in the future inside of Operose. And what's good for Anne is good for all of us. Because it's good to have friends in high places.

**MICHAEL:** Well, is Anne gonna get us out of this whole Flinchite Compound mess?

**MDAWG:** Sorry, I'm gonna have to hand wave that question away, Michael. I only know what I've been told. And I'm not even a lowly peon. Me and EdMan are contract workers, we're only here when they call us.

**MM:** You make it sound like they've called on you before, MDawg.

**MDAWG:** They have called on us before.

**MW:** Then, you and EdMan were lying to our faces the whole time *[MDawg starts spluttering.]* we were talking to y'all in Vancouver.

**MDAWG:** No, no, no, no, no. We didn't know anything. In fact, Matt knew a lot more than we did. We did have a clue what he was talking about when he confronted us. And that could have turned into a real problem, but fortunately the tank disappeared and you guys had a bigger mystery on your hands, and we just went back to our lives.

**MIKEY:** So, what did you think that you were doing? Did you not know that Operose was who sent you out there?

**MDAWG:** Right, we still don't know that Operose sent us out there. We have no idea what's going on. So, to backtrack, this is not the first time EdMan and I have been activated by Operose. It's happened several times before, including times before you came to visit us. Some of those times involved EdMan and I preparing for your arrival in the storage unit, and we think that's what Matt saw. However, due to our arrangement with Operose, we don't remember any of the work we've done for them after our work is complete. When we're on a job, we can remember all of the previous jobs, but we forget everything the instant that we're done. Recently, this resulted in me getting a bruise that I didn't remember getting. I actually went all the way to a sleep doctor because I thought maybe I was thrashing around in my sleep. But if I got it from thrashing around in my sleep, wouldn't EdMan notice? And of course, now that I'm here, I know that it happened on another job. But as soon as I get home, I'll be wondering where that bruise came from all over again.

**MW:** I'm lost as to how the time travel stuff turns into the brain stuff.

**MICHAEL:** I don't think it's as complicated as it seems, pard. The Flinchite Compound has all that medicine and storage stuff, and Edgar's been playin' around with them continuous corrections. Not to mention, Mikey here, what MDawg's describin' don't sound too far off from that. And it might explain why you don't remember nothin', Gambler.

**MDAWG:** Cute nickname. Uh, which one of you is Gambler?

**MICHAEL:** That'd be Mikey.

**MIKEY:** It really isn't, but I think you're right about that last thing. If MDawg doesn't remember what he was up to, then I never stood a chance at remembering. I suspect that Edgar wouldn't have been able to consolidate us during a time when MDawg was on a job with O.I., even if he wanted to. So my MDawg was effectively wiped.

**MDAWG:** Okay, that's what's different. I thought I felt something changed about you, Mikey. It's that MDawg glint in your eye. You're a little bit more laid-back, chill, goin' with the flow. Maybe even a little bit docile, at least compared to these two. And here I thought I was imagining things. Welcome to the club, Mikey.

**MW:** You didn't know that he consolidated with you, MDawg?

**MDAWG:** Well, you guys don't exactly keep me in the loop. And when I became MDawg, it's not like I had memories of being MDawg before I was MDawg.

**MIKEY:** I don't think that I was MDawg until pretty recently. So, Jamilla brought me from 2020 to 2023 in the Hunter Timeline, and in that timeline that's where I consolidated with MDawg. And then the Great Correction happened, and then the me from 2020... was... wait...

**MW:** Y'all are givin' me a headache.

**MIKEY:** Anyway, Ty says that he thought that you might be a stable timeline *duplicate*, or whatever dumb British way that he put it, so it might not be a coincidence that you were the one that got chosen?

**MDAWG:** There's evidence. EdMan and I are out in Vancouver, minding our own business, kickin' it. Operose recruits us sometimes, but they're the winning team and they mostly leave us alone to do our own thing. So it's like we're hanging out in the Pacific Northwest for when you all need a stable Mikey to come set things right.

**MICHAEL:** Don't get too big for your britches, MDawg.

**MDAWG:** Nothin' like that, just good vibes.

**MW:** And EdMan's definitely the most stable iteration of Edgar, if Mikey's right about what he saw.

**MDAWG:** What he saw from being consolidated with... me?

**MW:** Wait, it should be obvious what we're talkin' about, MDawg.

**MICHAEL:** They didn't tell him, Emdubya.

**MDAWG:** Mikey, do you somehow know something about EdMan that I need to know?

**MIKEY:** If Operose didn't tell you, then I'm scared to propagate it. I don't want to mess it up.

**MDAWG:** I'm... confused, Mikey. Even if you're consolidated with an iteration of me, you wouldn't remember stuff that I don't, and you wouldn't remember anything about Operose. I forget about them as soon as they drop me off at home.

**MICHAEL:** I reckon it's time to come clean, Gambler. You're dancin' around the subject too much. MDawg, we'll let you in on our secret, as long as it never leaves this room. There ain't any surveillance devices in here, are there?

**MDAWG:** Oh, no. This room is what they call "info-proofed". No information makes it out of this room, that's how they limit propagation.

**MIKEY:** Okay, MDawg, I...snuck into Operose a while back. Well, I didn't do it, I created an iteration and I sent him to do it. We were looking for Anne, but she wasn't where we expected her to be, and instead we found some files that she left behind. And they were files about you, EdMan and MDawg.

**MDAWG:** Well, that's not surprising. We are her project inside of Operose.

**MIKEY:** But do you know what's in that file?

**MDAWG:** No, it's off limits. W-What's in the file?

**MIKEY:** The file says... that... EdMan is cured. He isn't going to die in eight years, he's perfectly healthy.

**MICHAEL:** He's gonna live forever.

**MIKEY:** He's going to live a perfectly normal human lifespan.

**MW:** Assumin' that something else don't kill him.

**MIKEY:** What it alleges to confirm is that he doesn't die of a brain hemorrhage in eight years.

**MDAWG:** And he, uh, Operose said that he's gonna be alright?

**MIKEY:** That is what the file that I found said.

**MDAWG:** *[Breaths shakily.]* I... I'm not going to get my hopes up. Not yet. M-Michael, do you know...?

**MW:** Michael don't know, and the long story short is we already got in a shouting match about it before you came and got us. I don't think we should go into it right now. But basically, we don't know. We only know what Mikey told ya.

**MDAWG:** Can you... I'm-I'm gonna forget. Can you come tell me that again, once the mission is over? Fuck, no, you can't cause you won't remember either.

**MIKEY:** So, they're gonna wipe our memories, too?

**MW:** We're goin' on a mission. I figured as much.

**MIKEY:** I wanted to tell you, MDawg. I thought about going to your house, several times. I wanted to see if you already knew. I didn't think that you did, because of that sappy Instagram post you made a long time ago, but I wasn't sure, so maybe I'll show up and tell you?

**MDAWG:** I hope you do, Mikey. That would mean a lot to me. What did you do with the iteration that you sent into O.I.?

**MIKEY:** I uh, *[Coughs.]* I uh, I-I-I killed him.

**MICHAEL:** Did the right thing and shot him down like a true cowboy. Ain't that right, Gambler? Heh. That's how he got that nickname. He rolled the dice on a trip into Operose, and won big. Attaboy.

**MIKEY:** Right, and Michael has been calling me Gambler ever since then, uh, much to my dismay. I-I don't like it. I already gave myself a Wild West name, ya know. Back in the Hunter Timeline. You guys remember Boone Grizzly Babcock?

**MW:** Boone's a fake name. It ain't a nickname.

**MDAWG:** I'm sorry you had to go through that, Mikey, that must've been a real bummer. But you did the right thing, I think. If the Flinchite Compound had gotten ahold of that iteration that had been inside of Operose, it could've spelled trouble for all of us. It had to be done.

**MIKEY:** It's... I'm-I'm okay.

**MICHAEL:** Alright, well, we said our peace MDawg. I think it's your turn to tell us what exactly is goin' on here today.

**MW:** Yeah, Ty wouldn't tell us jackshit. All we know's it got something to do with those dang Boulders. We got intel that O.V.E.R.'s plannin' on movin' the Boulders around the same time that Ty was talkin' about sendin' us out to the field. And then, Operose's got it's own set of Boulders, so we figure it's all related.

**MIKEY:** We learned more from Jam than Ty, they're the one who told us about the Boulders and gave us the key.

**MDAWG:** Well, pretty good theorizing, considering how little you know. You're on the right track. O.V.E.R. is gearing up to transfer the Boulders to a more secure location. The Flinchite Compound has been interested in access to it for a long time now, and the dangers of keeping them there outweigh the convenience of having them there. O.I. knew about this ahead of time because they have an arrangement with O.V.E.R. It's not an arrangement without its fair share of spies and honest collaborators and everything in between, but there's a tenuous peace. They try to scratch each other's backs if they can manage. And this is a big move, so O.V.E.R. told Operose about it.

**MIKEY:** So, a little bit like Compound and Base? We aren't always friends, but we work for them, and then they help us out when we really need it.

**MDAWG:** Yeah, just less asymmetrical than that. And neither O.V.E.R. nor Operose have any sort of working relationship with the Compound at this point. The Flinchites are out there doing their own thing. Which I respect on principle, of course, as a cool chill guy out there doing his own thing. But that means if they want to get their hands on any of this fancy Boulder stuff, they have to steal it, and now is as good a time as any to steal it because O.V.E.R. has to spread itself a little bit thin in order to arrange the transport. Which makes it more vulnerable than usual. Workers have to be given directions about what to do and where to go in order to ensure that the job gets done, and that means there's information that can propagate to the world and that the Flinchites can intercept. Hence, they were able to gather enough information to send you out into the field.

**MIKEY:** When you say "steal the Boulders," you don't mean steal them, right? You mean iterated them?

**MW:** Yeah, it ain't theft, it's copyright infringement. It's like he's torrenting them off the pirate bay.

**MDAWG:** Right, iterated, not stolen. If you're sneaky enough, the target of an iteration will never suspect that it has been iterated. And the Flinchite Compound is advanced enough to be that sneaky. Iterating the Boulders could give them a huge leg-up. They could reverse engineer the technologies involved, and fold them into their own projects. They would better understand



what's happening inside of O.I. and O.V.E.R. There is a bunch of raw data that could be obtained just from the Boulders, and even more information could be inferred based on what they've learned. And that is information that no one wants the Compound to have, which is why the Compound is willing to kill some of you in order to get it done.

**MW:** Whoa there, uh, I think we made a little leap at the end.

**MICHAEL:** Yeah, I ain't no fan of Ty or this cockamamie mission, but uh, I'm sheepdoggin' this here troop. We might be put in danger, but no one's gonna die on Michael Walters' watch.

**MIKEY:** I don't know about the track record on that particular statement, but I do agree with the sentiment.

**MDAWG:** Mikey, you said that someone gave you a key, right? May I see it?

**MIKEY:** Sure, MDawg, it's in my pocket, let me just dig it out *[Thump.]* with my lead *[Thump.]* hand. *[Thump.]*

**MW:** Just pull it out with your other hand, Mikey.

**MIKEY:** Alright, fine. Here it is.

*[Places the Boulder key on the table.]*

**MDAWG:** Right. And this is what I thought it would be. This is a key for the quote-unquote, "second location". As in, the location that isn't the Boulders themselves. Ty was sending you to the second location so you would insert the key there. Base would be inverting a different key at the Boulders themselves simultaneously. It takes simultaneous action at both locations to generate a message. And the three of you being at the second location would ensure that at least one of you would die.

**MW:** Okay, so the second location itself is deadly.

**MDAWG:** Communicating through these channels is serious business. Deadly serious business, actually. And so, a lot of work has been put in to ensure that if someone is attempting to make a communication, or perform an emergency override using the Boulders, that they must be highly invested in doing so. The second location will automatically kill the person that uses the key to initiate the communication. This is in order to severely limit who is willing to use the Boulders and why, for reasons that you might imagine. You have to either be willing to die or be willing to create an iteration to die in your stead.

**MICHAEL:** Or you can pass off the job to someone who don't know no better.

**MW:** So, Michael, you was wrong. They were sendin' us on a suicide mission.

**MDAWG:** I think only the person who puts the key in dies, but I'm not a hundred percent on that. So, he was sending Mikey on a suicide mission. He was sending you two to watch.

**MIKEY:** Does Ty definitely know that this would kill us?

**MDAWG:** Yes, Mikey, he intended for you to die.

**MW:** Well, why would Ty care? He don't see iterations as different people.

**MDAWG:** And opportunities like this are rarer than iterations of Mikey. He was willing to throw some iterations of us into the meat grinder in the name of progress, cause he can always make more later. Which isn't very chill for us.

**MW:** You know, Ty was as real keen on gettin' iterations of me into the Compound. He could replace all three of us at this point, if'n he set his mind to it. And it'd work, as long as the new iterations don't blab about where they came from.

**MICHAEL:** Seeing what Operose is doin' with MDawg, they don't gotta know where they came from. Hell, we could be replacements.

**MIKEY:** Don't fucking say that. Don't entertain that idea. MDawg, I thought that the Flinchites didn't know where the second location was. I thought that was part of why they beat us up back in the day. You know, me and Anne and Chance and Shadow. And you, MDawg, you hadn't been iterated yet.

**MDAWG:** This is a recent turn of events. Just like with the news of the Boulders moving, something probably propagated somewhere in anticipation of the move. To add insult to injury, the Flinchite Compound's tracing capabilities have pulled far past everyone else at this point, which means that any tiny scrap of information that they can get about anything can be extrapolated into this huge amount of useful information for them. O.I. can't even be sure of the ways that they need to protect themselves anymore. They have to guess at what they don't know that they don't know and plan accordingly. Honestly, we're lucky that they're able to detect how quickly their tracing capabilities are progressing. It would be much safer for the Compound if nobody knew about that. Being too capable puts a target on your back.

**MICHAEL:** Gotta nip 'em in the bud before they're too strong to cause trouble.

**MDAWG:** We missed that window, I'm afraid. The Compound is already strong enough to fight. Operose is just hoping that they aren't strong enough to win. But the plan for today isn't even to fight them head on.

**MICHAEL:** Well, if we ain't takin' them out, then what's the plan, boss? I figured that this was O.I. Making their move. Walkin' right into this standoff on your side instead of Ty's, and then we take the Compound down once and for all.

**MDAWG:** And how did you think that we were going to do that, Michael? There are less than a dozen members of Base, and the O.I. is not ready for a boots-on-the-ground war. The Compound has a definite tactical advantage there. Operose is still forming its own army of "boots," as the Compound calls them. We have new boots and we have a brand new guy who's training them, but that fight is a long, long, long way away. Based on the vibes I get, it feels like it has to happen eventually, but that is not where we are today. Maybe we'll have some more insight on that by the next time you come here.

**MICHAEL:** Course there's gonna be a next time. We can't just do y'all a solid and be on our merry little way, can we?

**MIKEY** [*Slams his lead encased hand intermittently while speaking*]: It's cool. We work for Operose now. We work for Operose and O.V.E.R. and Base and the Flintchites. And we're gonna keep coming to the Operose headquarters, which means I'm gonna keep getting this lead block put on my hand.

**MW:** We worked for everyone. Hell, we worked for H durin' a timeline that none of us can remember.

**MDAWG:** Guys, no need to harsh the mellow. It's hardly a big change and it's hardly a big deal. And this is Anne's leadership that we're talking about. Operose is enabling all of this, but this is her project, and she ran Base before, so it'll be like that, except she has better resources. And if we help her, she can help us. And it's hardly work most of the time. You just go places and do stuff. They aren't going to send you into battle.

**MICHAEL:** MDawg, you said, not twenty minutes ago, that you wake up with cuts and bruises that you don't remember gettin'.

**MDAWG:** Yeah, but I remember now, and it was— it was nothing. I went to lower the automatic door on the storage unit as I was heading out, and I wasn't fast enough, and it hit me on top of the head. Of course, it's supposed to stop if it senses something, but it's old and janky, and none of this is O.I.'s fault.

**MW:** And you swear that's what happened? You swear on EdMan?

**MDAWG:** Yeah, sure, I'd swear on EdMan. I'd rank what I do here as slightly more dangerous than walking around O.V.E.R. on your patrol route.

**MICHAEL:** The grass eats folks, MDawg.

**MDAWG:** You won't be working inside of Operose. You'll never see that grass again. *[Michael grunts.]* You're really hung up on the grass, aren't you, Michael?

**MICHAEL:** Oh, so I got a problem with the grass what eats fellas, and that makes *me* the weird one.

**MIKEY:** That is not the thing that made you the weird one.

**MDAWG:** Alright guys, let me put it this way. It's me, it's MDawg. You guys make fun of me because I'm so chill and cool all the time, but I'm still chill and cool all the time. I've been chill and cool this whole conversation. And I'm a Mike, you're a Mike, so you guys have to know that I couldn't be chill if things were bad inside of Operose.

**MIKEY:** I'm still working on making my peace with what's going on, but I'm going to get there. But there is a problem. You scooped us up out of Ty's mission. He's not going to forget that, even if we do. What are you going to do about the fact that Ty's going to notice that his plan got sabotaged?

**MDAWG:** Uh, I thought that was pretty obvious. I thought we were on the same page. Uh, do we understand?

**MW:** I understood, MDawg.

**MICHAEL:** Me too.

**MDAWG:** All right then, class, let's teach Mikey. The Compound won't notice that you're gone because, say it with me...

**MDAWG, MW, AND MICHAEL:** O.I. made iterations of us.

**MDAWG:** Very good, class.

**MIKEY:** What? H-How did you guys know that?

**MW:** I assumed.

**MICHAEL:** Yeah, it's what I would do if I were them.

**MDAWG:** Right, so iterations of the three of you are in fact on that mission, while this iteration of you is here. Hi. An agent from Operose is on the inside of O.V.E.R. Watching you very closely, and when the time is right, they'll give us a signal, meaning that this conversation is over. At that time, we will quietly transport and consolidate you with the iterations that are in the field on Ty's mission. Then you get to sabotage the mission yourself, and all that Ty will know is that somehow O.V.E.R. was one step ahead of him. You'll be safe and undercover. Nobody will ever

know that O.I. was involved in this mission failure. Ty doesn't get his shiny new toys, the good guys win.

**MICHAEL:** So, are we gonna have to make it look like we're messin' up on accident? Like some sort of dang TV infomercial?

**MIKEY:** Don't you hate when you can't hold on to your Boulder key, and it falls into the middle of the ocean? Well, for five payments of \$1995.95 you can get... the... it's... uh, f-for your holding your keys. A keychain.

**MDAWG:** *You* aren't going to mess this up. Ty messed up. Ty got careless and didn't check that key that you brought him. If he had paid close attention, he would have noticed that it's a dummy key. See? Right here.

**MIKEY:** What is this? Where did you get a second key?

**MDAWG:** Just use this key instead of the real key, and you'll be good to go. See, it's got this little groove along the side, that gives it away as a dummy key, but you would only know to feel for that if you knew the real keys don't have it, which none of you knew, obviously.

**MIKEY:** But Jamilla gave us the key. What about them?

**MDAWG:** Well, I'm sure that Jamilla can't tell a real key from a dummy, either. Hell, I've got both in front of me, and I can't tell by looking. Gotta run your finger along the side. Feel the groove. But the dummy key doesn't just not work, it will send a signal out that reports that the dummy key has been used. This could alert O.V.E.R. and they might send someone, but what it will do is alert Ty that the mission has got to shit before O.V.E.R. can get there to confront you about it. Ty will extract you, and he'll have to start all over again with his plan. And O.I. will coordinate the memory wipe to coincide exactly with when he extracts you, so you won't remember any of this conversation by the time it's time to debrief Ty on what went wrong. You won't remember that you switched out the real key for the dummy key.

**MW:** Right, we won't remember nothin' unless you wake us up again. We'll be like you and EdMan, blissfully unaware.

**MDAWG:** Well, activated, not woken up. This isn't *Severance*. But yeah, you'll go back to your normal lives, working for all those other organizations that you're involved with, and that'll come in handy when Operose needs you again, and you get activated. The more you see, the more useful you are. And it is physically impossible for you to blow your cover.

**MICHAEL:** Who said that I wanted to be useful?

**MDAWG:** It doesn't really matter what you want, because you won't remember during the time that you're going to be useful. I keep sayin' you just gotta go with the flow, man. But, uh, we're

coming up on the end of our time here. Skipping to the end of the script, uh, put the dummy key where the real key is supposed to go. Easy-peasy. You guys ready to go?

**MICHAEL:** Let me get that beer out of the break room, for the road.

**MDAWG:** Oh, *[Chuckles.]* you don't want to take it on the road with you, it's in a glass bottle. Glass being a material that famously breaks if you sing the wrong pitch at it, you could end up covered in glass shards and beer when you get there. But uh, *[Claps.]* that's about it. You know what to do. It's been fun. You should all come over for game night some time. Or, at the very least, I'll see you all again when we can remember this. Probably can't have game night then, though. Good luck and *[Snaps finger guns.]* remember to take it easy.

**MIKEY:** Wait, MDawg, the-the day that you got iter—

*[Time travel noise.]*

**MW:** Uh, any idea where this is?

**MICHAEL:** It don't look like O.V.E.R. very much, does it? Architecture's all wrong, but I ain't sure. O.V.E.R.'s a big place.

**MIKEY:** Well, now that I'm consolidated, I can confirm that Ty did not warn us that one of us was going to die. I've got his instructions now. How about you guys?

**MW:** Nope, can't remember no instructions.

**MICHAEL:** Looks like it's just you, Mikey.

**MIKEY:** Which I guess makes sense. I am the one with the key. Well, two keys now, but Ty doesn't know that.

**MICHAEL:** You sure which is which, Gambler? I don't want a repeat of what happened inside of O.I. with Anne.

**MIKEY:** Yeah, dummy's in my left pocket, real one's in my right.

**MW:** Well, I ain't fond of dilly-dallying here. Go ahead and put the dummy key in, Mikey. Let it fail. Ty will extract us, and we can get the hell out of here. I don't like this place. Gives me the creeps.

**MIKEY:** We should think about this, MW. We do have both keys.

**MICHAEL:** Ain't nothing to think about. I said we don't want a repeat of Anne.

**MIKEY:** Just think about it, Michael. O.I. is not offering us our freedom. They want to control us, just like everyone else. They don't even want to free us from the Flinchite Compound, we still have to go work there as though none of this ever happened. But we don't have to do what they say.

**MW:** We do if we wanna help EdMan and MDawg and Anne.

**MIKEY:** Oh, don't tell me that you care about EdMan and MDawg. We have EdMan and MDawg at home, it's me and Edgar. And Anne is so far above us in competency and capability that we don't have to worry about her. Not to mention, she made her own decisions inside of O.I. during the Hunter's Timeline. No judgment, but turnabout is fair play. I'm not doing anything that she wouldn't do.

**MW:** Ugh, I can't fucking believe you, Mikey.

**MICHAEL:** Gambler...

**MIKEY:** Yes, it's a gamble, call me whatever you want, but think of the payoff. If we did this for Ty, Ty would be in our debt. It could flip the whole script.

**MW:** No, it would put a different target on us.

**MIKEY:** I'm so sorry that you disagree with my decision, you wanna-be cowboy. I'll take that into consideration, but I'm the one with both keys, so my decision is final.

**MICHAEL:** Mikey, did you forget that if'n you do that, MDawg says you're gonna die?

**MIKEY:** How convenient for MDawg that I died if I put in the real key, but not if I put in the dummy key. Odd how reality works out for him like that. Even if he's telling the truth, we've figured out me dying before, I'm not concerned. We could replace me with an iteration at the last second, or we could even iterate me right before O.I. picked us up and put the real me somewhere safe. It's a non-issue.

**MICHAEL:** Y-You ain't being yourself, Gambler.

**MIKEY:** Yeah, and you aren't calling me by my real name. I'm tired of being told what to do, Michael. At least if we follow Ty, there's only one organization telling us what to do besides ourself. I'm putting in the real key right—

*[Gunshot. Mikey yelps and groans, then breathes rapidly.]*

**MW:** I fucking told you not to do it, Mikey. Michael, get the dummy key off him.

**MICHAEL:** Right. Got it. We gotta get out of here fast [**MIKEY:** Fuck. Fuck.] It's just his shoulder, but you got him pretty good.

**MIKEY:** Fuck, I can't— I can't move my arm.

**MW:** Yeah, that was the point, pilgrim. And I've seen Ty patch up deeper wounds than that in an afternoon. You'll be fine.

**MIKEY:** Easy for you to say. You fucked everything up, MW.

**MW:** I ain't the one who fucked everything up.

**MICHAEL:** Quit your jabbering, both of ya. Inscertin' the dummy key in three, two, one.

*[Loud processing sound. Time travel noise.]*

**MIKEY:** Extry, extry, read all about it. News from the front lines. O.V.E.R. sent out a memo to all of their guards at the Tier Two border. Marissa took a picture of her copy for me. Check it out.

**MW:** Is Marissa allowed to disseminate this?

**MIKEY:** I don't know, are you a cop? Apparently, they still haven't moved the Boulders. "Our window for anomalous activity at the Tier Two barrier has been extended indefinitely. Consult the Handbook for instructions on specific scenarios, as well as what cases require use of the emergency button. The section has been appended for Tier Two barrier employees as of this memo. Updated versions are available online or in print at patrol dispatch." Well, we could go to patrol dispatch and try to get a copy, but that is the most depressing building on Earth, and I would rather die.

**MW:** You think the fact that they ain't moved them yet got something to do with Jamilla giving us a dummy key?

**MICHAEL:** Yeah, something got in the way of Ty's plan. I don't think he's as many moves ahead as he says he is.

**MIKEY:** Well, I wish that he had been enough moves ahead to anticipate that O.V.E.R. security was going to be there. My shoulder would be in less pieces right now. *[Sighs.]* But I would do it all over again, diving in front of MW to save his life.

**MW:** He weren't even pointing at me, Mikey.

**MIKEY:** You had the key, and I valiantly put my life on the line, knowing that my sacrifice would be worth it.



**MICHAEL:** Ty says that there won't even be a scar there by the end of the week.

**MIKEY:** Until then, it stands as an enduring symbol of what brotherhood costs.

**MW:** Speakin' of getting treated at the Compound, how's the consolidation sickness going?

**MIKEY:** Haven't had an episode since the last time I saw Ty, so I'm hoping that I'm out of the woods.

**MICHAEL:** Glad to hear it, pard. I think we're due for some smooth sailin' for a little bit.

**MIKEY:** *[Sighs.]* I hope so. I know that this Boulder situation has just been kicked down the road a little bit, and Ty is going to interfere again, but that's later. I hope that the next mission he sends us on is a little less bloody. Unless he wants us to go get revenge on the O.V.E.R. security guard who shot me. Then the mission can get bloody. I will have my revenge on him, or my name ain't The Gambler. Okay, well, it isn't, but I will have my revenge.

*[Closing theme plays.]*

**BLOOPER (MDAWG):** I thought there was something different about you, Mikey. You got that dog in you.