

EPISODE ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY EIGHT - FORM SRM176 WILL PROTECT US

Original transcript created and edited by Synthium and Orion

[BEGIN Episode 128.]

INTRO: Hey guys, quick plugs. First of all, [*Single clap.*] I am all about that [*In a Scottish accent.*] Nancy Drew [*Back to normal.*] right now, over on my twitch at twitch.tv/woebegonepod I've been streaming *Nancy Drew and the Legend of the Crystal Skull*. I played it on Thursday, I played it on Sunday, and I'm going to play it next time that I stream. And of course every Sunday evening I write that week's episode soundtrack, and then we hang out and play a game. So go check that out at twitch.tv/woebegonepod if that sounds like something that you're interested in.

And if you'd like to support this show, you can do so on Patreon at patreon.com/woe_begone, where you can get early access to ad-free episodes, instrumentals, soundtracks, QNAs, director's commentaries, *Movies with Michael*, postcards and more. I have the September postcards in my hands as we speak, not literally, but they're on the table downstairs, and I'm going to start sending them out sooner rather than later. So if you'd like to be part of that, that is patreon.com/woe_begone. Sign up at the 15 dollar and up tier to receive a monthly postcard with a handwritten message from the characters of *WOE.BEGONE*. Special thanks to my 10 newest patrons [REDACTED] for supporting the show. Enjoy.

[Warning: This episode contains a depiction of medical distress. Listener discretion is advised.]

[Opening theme plays.]

MDAWG: Alright, alright, alright. Is everyone getting settled in back there? I can't see. They told me that I couldn't burn sage in here, so apologies if the vibes aren't perfect. But thank you all for coming. My name is Mike Walters, but you should call me MDawg, cause if you don't things will get a little confusing. This is my SRM evaluation statement. I've been out in the field for a couple weeks now, as per the time that I was approved for through my initial SRM176 form, and things have been bodacious so far, though I am glad to be back somewhere where I can just be... y'know, MDawg. I can't say bodacious out there.

I think what I've learned from my travels will be quite useful to Operose. I know that I've found it personally edifying, and I hope by the end of this evaluation we can talk about turning that semi-permanent retention of memory into a permanent retention of memory, though I can't say that I'm looking forward to that paperwork, considering how... comprehensive the SRM176 form was. Alright, strap in, everyone. Welcome to my TEDtalk. Hold onto your butts. Okay, it's not that exciting, but you can still hold onto your butts if you want to.

To briefly outline the nature of my SRM176 request, just in case someone hasn't done the reading, here's what you missed on Glee. Two weeks ago, me and my husband, that's Edman, were tasked with sabotaging an attempt by the Flinchite Compound to interfere with the

emergency communications protocols established inside of Oldbrush Valley Energy and Resources. Of course, O.I. uses that communications channel as well, so it was vital that the Compound not be allowed to interfere. The Flinchite's plans hinged on the actions of Base, an organization that contains several iterations of yours truly, as well as at least one of my truly beloved Edman. For this reason, Operose handed the mission off to the lovely Anne, who set up the mission objective that we achieved. Hi Anne, if you're out there.

Our mission went relatively smoothly. Base was held here for instructions and they behaved cooperatively and competently, for the most part— let's put a pin in that. This allowed us to sabotage the mission with Base's full participation, which allowed us to draw attention away from ourselves. There was a brief hiccup in emergency communications, but things are much more normal than if we hadn't intervened. To my knowledge, O.V.E.R. has not been made aware of our involvement in this subversion at all, but when they eventually have the information propagated to them, I want them to know that I accept thank yous in the form of chocolate.

I was compelled to file a SRM176 after the iteration known as Mikey revealed some unbeknownst to me information regarding operations inside of O.I. during our mission. According to him, he was able to steal some files that indicated that Operose had cured the one and only Edman of his future terminal condition. I apologize for the provenance of this information, but it did inspire me to ask myself what I can offer Operose in exchange for being able to retain this information. And that is how we all ended up here.

As you have likely skimmed through by now, absentmindedly wondering how long until lunch— it's only about twenty minutes, just stay with me guys— there was an incident near the end of the mission involving Mikey and our plan to covertly sabotage the Compound. Mikey went off-script and attempted to go through with the Compound's plan instead of our's and was shot by his compatriots for his trouble. Thank you to Michael and MW for helping us out there. Mikey's insubordination was the impetus for me to request to replace him inside of Base, with my memories semi-permanently intact, while Mikey sits here in storage to cool off a little bit. He's earned a time-out. The point of this meeting is to share what I have observed in the past two weeks and to urge you to extend my semi-permanent retention of memory claim. I intend to prove that I am doing useful work for Operose and that I need the memories in order to continue to do this work. So, let's get started.

First off, I'm sure that you were wondering about operation security. There is a risk to replacing someone like this that can only be mitigated so much by having iterations of the person in question. And I am proud to say that I have drawn absolutely no suspicion. Enough time has passed that I don't think that they're just playing it cool to see what I do. They would have to be playing it even cooler than me, and I just don't think that's possible. In all honesty, when me and Edman are alone together, we describe them as a bunch of squares. Not cool. Too hot-headed. Life's too short for that shit, man, let's just go to the beach. Speaking of, it has been months since Operose has been moved to the beach. So this is me formally requesting a beach day.

My point being, I would know pretty quickly if the squares blew my cover and I can execute emergency measures before suspicion can turn into anything ugly. Michael, that's uh, that's the cowboy iteration, claims to be "highly sensitive to changes among his group." Apparently the Compound switched up their iteration of MW, um, that's the uh... the lesser cowboy? With a more complacent iteration from within the Flinchite Compound, and Michael caught on [*Snaps fingers.*] immediately and killed him. Michael prides himself in being able to sniff out any iterations that don't pass the vibe check. However, I'm obviously flying under his radar. Likely because I am the master of vibes. Michael has told me things that he absolutely would never have told me if he suspected that I was working for Operose. Put a pin in that too. Now we have two pins, isn't that fun? I have been able to go about my duties as though I were actually Mikey, which leads me to suspect that maybe the cowboy is all hat, no cattle if you know what I'm saying? [*Chuckles.*] Did, did you guys laugh? I can't tell cause of the two-way mirror. The-The one-way mirror? Is it a two-way mirror or one-way mirror? Or, do both of those mean the same thing? Anyway, I'm charming and handsome and cool and they can't see past the MDawg charm. Few can, in my experience. Write that down.

The first few days were fairly difficult. As you will recall, Mikey sustained a gunshot wound to his shoulder during the mission. And so, in order for me to match Mikey, I required an identical gunshot wound. I would have preferred that you wipe the whole shooting out of existence, but I understand that there is propagation to consider and that we have a guy inside of O.V.E.R. and we can't predict how his information will propagate, so it's just easier if I match Mikey. But it wasn't fun. So, I was shot with a Colt Python revolver with love and care, by our wonderful Anne. Thank you, Anne. She did a great job shooting me. Can we get a round of applause for Anne? [*MDawg applauds.*] Yeah, that's why you pay her the big bucks.

Being severely wounded was actually a really good cover. It allowed me to be quiet and watch everyone else talk and figure out how to blend in without having to take any chances. That's how I first learned that the Compound attempted to replace MW and failed, and once I knew that I could reference that and it would seem like I was Mikey. The initial gunshot wound was also a convenient way for me to justify going to the Flinchite Compound. Base's medical capabilities are... they don't have any. In the previous time they had Anne, who is a wonderful field medic but doesn't have the capabilities of a time-travel base medical department. And now what they have is the cowboy, who will give you some whiskey and then sew you up and then will all pray that you don't get an infection, like it's the 1860s. But because Base has an unwilling alliance with the Compound, they're able to go there for any medical assistance, so that's where I went.

Ty Betteridge has been seeing to my improvement personally, and I have seen a drastic improvement to the wound over the course of just a few days. This is great for me, of course, but it far exceeds what I thought that the Compound was capable of. If Operose was going to engage with the Compound through an army of foot soldiers, which is where it feels like this is headed, they need to be aware that the Compound medical capabilities are quite advanced. They will be able to get injured soldiers back onto the battlefield in a matter of moments. I went from death's door to feeling pretty groovy in only a couple of visits, and I don't think that they did anything special to me. I didn't feel like a particularly high level subject for them. They treated

me well, they allowed me to treat the room with aromatherapy oils to boost my mood and my immune system, but it just felt like a regular hospital visit fast forwarded. I have had several appointments at the Compound at this point, and I have been able to get a read on their capabilities. They're fairly sophisticated. I think that I was under the impression that they'd be one step above Base, but that is far from the truth.

As you can see here, *[Clicks mouse.]* uh. As you can see here, *[Clicks mouse again.]* is-is the— I said I wanted a Powerpoint, did you guys not set it up for me? I sent-I sent it— I gave the- I gave the USB drive to Dave? See, this is why I wanted to burn sage in here, now there's bad vibes and the bad vibes got in the computer and now the presentation's ruined. I took pictures, everyone. They're in a big Google Drive, I'll send out an email after this for the link to all of them. The Compound is big and complicated and I was actually able to sneak away a couple times and I think I found a secret passageway? So, what I found might only be the tip of the iceberg.

They have a really diverse set of departments that I was impressed by. They have a system for information, object, and living storage, much like OI has. They have a medical division that was more advanced than I expected, though it appears to be at the extreme cost of some experimental test subjects. And their tracing capabilities continue to exceed those of anyone else in this space. So if you want my assessment, I will describe them as organized, competent, and dangerous.

As far as a threat assessment for Base, I would call them mostly harmless? At least from an offensive point of view. Unlike the Compound or Operose, they're still primarily focused on time and space travel. Recent advances in their understanding of the technology have allowed them to get a *little bit* clever with it, but they're still just moving stuff around. Plus, they are also being purposefully limited by the Compound. Ty would never let them get big enough to pose a danger to them. Operose could probably scatter Base to the wind if they really wanted to. They're puny, tiny, little smol beans. The way in which they actually pose the most danger is that they have an outsized effect on the timeline due to their position in the middle of so many organizations and interpersonal groups. So I'd keep them around, in my obviously biased opinion. Their lack of status and their connection to the Compound is the perfect combination so that I can just walk right through the Compound doors. And they could fuck up the timeline again, but that's not really a threat to anyone with storage.

Speaking of fucking up the timeline, understanding how Base ended up in their current position in this timeline will make the rest of my statement make more sense so, story time.

The current dynamic between Base and the Compound stems from Mikey in a chain of poor or otherwise desperate decisions that he made surrounding a correction incident that returned the Base to their control. As I noted on the SRM176, there was a timeline where Base was run by this guy named Hunter Jeremiah Hartley, and all iterations of Mike Walters had ceased to exist. Edgar issued what they're calling a continuous correction? And some short-lived version of me, MDawg, was consolidated into a past form of Mikey. From there, they were able to work with the

Compound to fully restore the timeline, though with a version of myself being incorporated into Mikey thereafter.

Mikey does not know how to go with the flow, and so he did not take this consolidation well. In an attempt to free himself from my cool taste in Hawaiian shirts and easy going demeanor, he attempted to dilute my influence through even more consolidations, with Mikeys iterated from a time before that Mikey had been consolidated with me. Eventually, he sustained severe injuries as a result of his medical self experimentation. The botched consolidation resulted in what they call "consolidation sickness," which just amounts to severe organ damage. Mikey had been making appointments inside of the Compound for, quote, "consolidation therapy," before their mission to the second location, so I had even more reason to be inside of the Compound. If Mikey at any point had been able to take a deep breath and chillax, then I wouldn't have been able to do any of this. You can imagine my surprise when I showed up from my consolidation therapy appointment only to learn that it had been made under false pretenses. There was a Mikey that had consolidation sickness, and up until that mission, he had been the Mikey that was at the Base, I think. I have no way to be certain. However, on the lead up to the mission, the Compound had replaced him with an iteration of Mikey from their own supply of iterations, one that had been trained to be more compliant toward their goals. This means that the Mikey that I replaced was already a replacement, and that means that the Mikey being held within O.I. is not the Mikey that we thought that we had, and it's not the one that Base thought that they had. Where the original Mikey is, I can only speculate. I think that he's probably somewhere inside of the Compound. I doubt that they would do away with him just like that.

So now we've come to that first pin that I told you to place. I had a twinge of suspicion about Mikey during the mission. Something just seemed off about him. I guess much like Michael I am good at picking up on the vibes of iterations. Mikey seemed... too passive. Too willing to help Ty Betteridge. In the final moments of the mission, he was willing to die to help Ty Betteridge, which is completely out of character for him. He's much more likely to die in order to sabotage Ty Betteridge. I warned him that he would die if he did that and I was telling him the truth. He would have died if he'd put the real key in the Boulders that day. I mean, on a certain level, I get it. I'm a Mike Walters too, and so, I'm sure that he was thinking, "Well, fuck you dude. How do I know that the dummy key doesn't kill me?" But between those two choices, dying to help Ty Betteridge and dying to sabotage Ty Betteridge, he would pick sabotage every time. That's just who Mike Walters is.

So when Ty referred to me as a replacement and asked how the espionage mission was going, I didn't freak out and think that he was talking about me, MDawg, doing espionage for Operose. I was able to understand that he meant that the Mikey that I replaced was a replacement. Luckily, I had many of the same goals as Ty when it came to infiltrating the Base, so I had plenty of information to perform a limited hangout. I told Ty about his replacement MW being killed and corrected. He knew that something had happened, but he didn't know the particulars until I told him. Michael had told me that he set up a very extensive failsafe that would kick in if they tried to replace him, and that it worked on a very detailed accounting of how he would be different

than any replacement. That is the second pin that I was talking about. It's good to get all the pins off the board before you wrap up.

His plan sounded complicated and I didn't understand everything, but I did take notes on it, which I will be making available to Operose. Thinking that I was Mikey, he instructed that I make one for myself and that he would be willing to help me make it, so I might get some hands-on experience as to what he meant with that.

And finally, I asked him about O.I. curing Edman. I had managed to pick up from context clues that Ty had received the files that Mikey had stolen, and that for some reason Michael was the one being punished for the crime of snooping around Operose without permission. I didn't ask what Michael's punishment was out of fear that I was supposed to already have known that. I asked Ty if he thought that the report and the procedure described within it were legitimate and he said that he thought it was risky and difficult to understand, but that the medical wing was hard at work trying to backwards engineer some of the procedures described in the file. In addition to a plethora of Mike Walters, there are iterations of Edgar in there as well. I took his statement to mean that they were to become test subjects in an attempt to recreate the results that Operose achieved. Unfortunately, the file has been committed to long term storage, which means, much like long term storage inside of Operose, any attempt to retrieve the file will be effectively useless due to its presence in storage throughout more time than we can account for.

And I think that that's everything that I've learned in my two weeks as Mikey Walters. Or Mikey Walters' replacement. The Compound is quite formidable. It has capabilities that I was not expecting them to have based on my preparation from Operose. Their medicine is advancing quickly, maybe even more quickly now that they have some of our materials. They are replacing members of Base with Compound compliant iterations, and there is much more snooping to be done. I have found at least one secret passageway, and I anticipate that there is some useful material that I can get my hands on if I can make it down a few hallways undetected.

From the Base side of things, I learned that Mikey has been replaced, MW was unsuccessfully replaced, and Michael has set up a kill switch designed to keep himself from being replaced. As far as the technological power struggle goes, Base is kind of treading water trying to defend themselves from everyone else. Though, they do have more technological prowess than they did before what they call the "Great Correction," which was the timeline switch that gave the Base back to them. Edgar has announced plans for a big construction experiment in the coming week or so, and so my goal is to be present for that so that I can see what progress is being made.

In addition to the experimental construction at Base and using my appointments at the Compound to discover more material there, I also have a mission that Anne has planned for me inside of O.V.E.R. Overall, this project has had a demonstrably high value for Operose and I am excited to continue to work on it. The renewal of my SRM176 will allow me to continue to retrieve intel in the way that I am uniquely qualified to do, so I would appreciate your support so that I can get back into the field as soon as possible.

Other than that, uh, well, would you look at the time? It's lunch. I heard that there's poutine in the cafeteria today, though of course it's classified whether or not we're in Canada, so the poutine might not be of a high standard. Alright, bye everyone. Go eat. What? *[Clicks mouse. MDawg scoffs]* Oh, of course the Powerpoint's working. Look, fuck the Powerpoint guys, go eat. I'll send the pictures in an email.

[Scene transition.]

MDAWG *[frantic, over a radio]:* Hello? C-Come in, Op-Operose? Th-This is, this is MDawg, I need extraction immediately. It-It uh— Can you, can you locate me? I'm ah— uh, there's this secret passageway in the Flinchite Compound th-there's an elevator. Uh, I got it halfway down and I stopped it uh— I don't think they know I'm down here yet. They don't know that I know that the elevator exists. Uh, I've got until they figure it out, and then they turn the elevator back on. Uh-Uh, please, my cover is blown. They're gonna capture me if you can't get me out of here, and I-I still remember everything. I remember everything about Operose. They'll get it out of me. I saw what they did to Mikey, they know how to make you compliant. *[Panicked breathing.]* I don't want to. I-I'm sorry, it happened so fast, I was sneaking around, looking for intel, for you and I got spotted and, I don't know how to give you coordinates, you're gonna have to find me. I-I don't know how to tell you where I am, please. Anne, please. Find me I-I'm in the- I'm in the elevator find me. Fuck, they're gonna hurt me.

[Time passes with silence.]

MDAWG *[over a radio]:* Hello? Come in. Anne? Whoever— uh, I made it out of the Compound uh, I'm outside, I'm hurt I can't see at all. I'm trying to run toward the forest and I can't see. Uh, I-I can't tell if there's anyone chasing me. I'm bleeding out of my eyes. I-I-I can't see. But I-I'm outside, you can find me. Please, Anne. Uh, I'll get into the treeline and wait and you can pin me down. You have to get me out of here. I-I know what they do to the-the iterations in there. They'll break me down, and they'll send you a replacement, and you won't even know that it's not me.

[Slightly whispered.] You have to save me, Anne, please. *Please.*

[Normal volume.] I can't go back in there. I- I don't have anyone else, uh. I'm betraying the Base, Ed-Edman doesn't remember anything, you're the only one that can help me Anne, please. Please. Please, I think I hear them. No, please, Anne, Help—

[Time travel noise.]

[Scene transition.]

MDAWG *[tired, defeated]:* Hello everyone. I would like to issue a formal apology to Operose, to everyone involved in the department of operations, to Anne, and to my beloved husband Ed... Edgar. *[Deep inhale.]* As you are well aware, I was involved in an espionage mission to collect data on the Flinchite Compound and Base, which took an... unfortunate turn. I take full

responsibility for the outcome of this project. I was able to use Mikey's identity to get important information from the Compound, and in my excitement, I accidentally pushed too far and ended up being caught in an act of espionage.

My capture by the Compound would have been extremely damaging to Operose as a company and this team of individuals in particular and, I am so sorry that I put you and I in that sort of situation. Eventually I was able to free myself from the Compound and get to a location where Anne could safely extract me and begin to issue corrections orders. I am extremely grateful to her and to the entire team for rescuing me. I understand that my actions resulted in undue panic, heartache, and stress that none of you deserved, and I am deeply sorry for that.

During the scuffle, my head was slammed onto the concrete floor, and I sustained a head injury and severe loss of vision in my right eye. I will survive, but those wounds will stand as a testament to my carelessness. I understand if Anne, this team, or Operose, never want to work with me again, though I will be glad to help if it was ever wanted from me. All I ask as a parting favor, is that you allow me to retain the memory of Edman being cured. Let us live our lives in peace, as you have been. We won't bother you. Once again, I am sorry, and I hope that you can forgive me for putting all of us in danger. It will *never* happen again. Thank you.

[Scene transition.]

[The sound of knocking on a door.]

MDAWG *[teasingly, muffled behind the door]:* Oh, back so soon? Did you figure out that you forgot your kiss? It's alright, I'll forgive you this time, Edman. *[Door opens, MDawg's voice is now clear.]* You're... not my husband.

MIKEY: MDawg! Good to see you, you look... absolutely terrible. Uh, can I come in?

MDAWG: Mikey, the last time that I saw you, you parked a tank on my lawn.

MIKEY: Well, look around. I left it at home this time. Actually, I think it's still in the desert somewhere? I'd have to ask Marissa. Uh, can I come in? I have something that you're gonna want to hear.

MDAWG: Mikey, what could you possibly have that I'd want to hear?

MIKEY: Uh, extremely good news, obviously? I didn't come out here for nothing.

MDAWG: Alright, fine. Come in, but I'm texting Edman, and he's going to raise hell if something happens to me.

MIKEY: No offense, MDawg, *[Door closes.]* but it looks like something's already happened to you. You're-You're grouchy, MDawg the hippie is grouchy and that eye looks gnarly. Did you get hit by a bus?

MDAWG: I fell off a cliff while Edman and I were hiking. I was lucky that I didn't die. Edman's gone out to get me my prescription eye drops. I don't go out too much anymore. It's hard for me to get around with just one eye. I'm not used to it.

MIKEY: You know, I knew a guy with just one eye once. He was a really complicated fella. And having one eye did not slow him down from doing whatever he wanted to do. You'll bounce back, buddy. But speaking of guys I know, I also know someone who does some pretty miraculous work with consolidation based medicine? Do you want me to talk to Ty Betteridge about getting you in to see him? He's pretty good at patching me up good as new.

MDAWG: Well, he patches you up because you're part of Base.

MIKEY: Just let me talk to him. Worst he could do is say no, right? He might be receptive. But that's not why I came here. Are you ready for some good news, MDawg? Are you ready to turn that hippie frown upside down?

MDAWG: You can try.

MIKEY: MDawg, your Edgar, Edman, isn't going to die in eight years like the other Edgar iterations. *[Conversation begins to fade out.]* He's been cured. There's this time travel organization like Base or the Compound or O.V.E.R., called Operose International, and we discovered it because Anne works there...

[Closing theme plays.]

AFTER-CREDITS: Riga! Do you have something you want to say to the crowd? *[Sounds of scuffling.] [Muffled.]* Do you have something you want to say to the people? *[Riga sniffs the mic and puts her mouth on it.]* Don't bite it! Don't bite it! No! *[Even more scuffling and a chair creaks.]*

AFTER-CREDITS (MICHAEL): You heard it here first, folks. Riga's biting the microphone, cause she don't want the podcast to proceed. She don't like it. I'm startin' to suspect that she don't like cowboys neither. I think she might be a dang varmint.

[END Episode 128.]