

EPISODE 131 - BLUSTER THE GIGANTIC HORSE WILL PROTECT US

Original transcript edited by Synthium and Jenah

[BEGIN Episode 131.]

INTRO: Hey guys, quick plugs. The season four *WOE.BEGONE* soundtrack album is finally available at woebegonepod.bandcamp.com. I worked really hard on it and I think that it turned out great. It's about an hour and a half long, 26 tracks, just the best songs from the season four soundtrack, polished and reworked and made the best versions of themselves. So check that out at woebegonepod.bandcamp.com.

And as always, I am still streaming every Sunday on twitch at twitch.tv/woebegonepod, where I write that week's episode soundtrack and then we hang out and play a video game. As of this recording, I'm about two thirds of the way through Limbo, and we're going to keep playing spooky games all throughout October. That's twitch.tv/woebegonepod.

If you'd like to support the show, you can do so on Patreon at patreon.com/woe_begone, where you can get early access to ad-free episodes, instrumentals, soundtrack albums, QnAs, director's commentaries, Movies With Michael, postcards and more. As I have just mentioned, it is the spooky season and there will be a spooky postcard this month. It's going to be a fun silly time and you don't want to miss it. So check that out at patreon.com/woe_begone.

Special thanks to my ten newest patrons, **[REDACTED]** for supporting the show. Enjoy.

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

[Time travel noises]

MICHAEL: Well, we're here. Home sweet home. make yourself comfy Mike. Here let me just get some... *[Rustling noises]* some junk off the couch. Alright. Make yourself comfy. You're gonna be here a long time.

MIKEY: Michael, this is the... safehouse? *[Horse huffing noises]* what the fuck was that?

MICHAEL: That was Bluster.

MIKEY: It was *what*?

MICHAEL: Bluster the gigantic horse. You'll meet him, don't worry

MIKEY: Michael, this is the safe house that you were telling me about?

MICHAEL: Yessir

MIKEY: I was expecting something a little different, like I know that Edgar was drafting up these ideas for what a safe house would look like and all these protocols, and this uh... isn't... that? Uh this is not to specification. Also, clearly someone already lives here, there's a bunch of stuff everywhere.

MICHAEL: Well I'm sorry that it ain't to your likin'. I didn't realize that you was royalty. It might be a little rough around the edges but it's gonna keep you safe, that's the important part. Hell, I even furnished it for ya.

MIKEY: You did not furnish this for *me*. This is clearly your shit, Michael. You didn't put a big saddle in the middle of the living room in preparation for me to arrive. That is yours.

MICHAEL: You're getting older Mikey. I figured you was turning into a cowboy. It's about damn time.

MIKEY: You know for a fact that I am not a cowboy.

MICHAEL: And that there saddle's an antique and a damn precious one at that. I've been working on and off getting it fixed up. Not for riding of course, it's retired. I ain't ever gonna use it on Bluster or nothin' like that. I'm just trying to get it looking good as new. And I think I've done a fine job.

MIKEY: Wait, you actually have a horse? I thought that was a joke.

MICHAEL: Yeah pard course I do. Name's Bluster *[MIKEY, overlapping: Yeah you said that.]* Big fella, and I mean *big*. Lives out in the yard, you'll meet him.

MIKEY: Lives out in the yard, as in you own him?

MICHAEL: Nah, can't no man own Bluster the horse.

MIKEY: I'm sorry that I asked- Michael, where the fuck are we? This is not the normal Base safehouse, I know that. This is not built according to our new protocol. And it's somewhere that you've clearly been before.

MICHAEL: There weren't time to rustle up a safehouse from scratch for ya. We was in a hurry so I took us somewhere that I knew that we would be safe. It's all that matters about a safehouse. Keeping us safe. And we are as safe as it gets out here, out in the middle of nowhere. No neighbors, enough weaponry to supply an army and Bluster the gigantic horse. And best of all, ain't a soul knows we're out here.

MIKEY: Does Base know that we're out here?

MICHAEL: They sure don't pard. It's safer that way. Ty's got his eyes on Base, remember?

MIKEY: Okay I get that but something just doesn't sit right with me. The vibes are off.

MICHAEL: You gotta trust me pard. I busted you out of the Compound. You were gonna rot away in there, remember? You said you ended up 15 years out and Base was kaput. We've clearly got a situation here so maybe let big dog Michael Walters steer us out of this'n.

MIKEY: No, none of this is adding up. I'm calling a vibe check. Something feels off and Michael it's always you telling me and MW to trust those feelings. Have you always had that scar on your face?

MICHAEL: Course I have. You ain't never looked me in the eye before Mikey.

MIKEY: I don't know, I just feel like I'd notice that and that you would tell me a story about how you got it. Michael, are we in Texas?

MICHAEL: What makes you say that?

MIKEY: Oh uh just avoiding eye contact with you looking out the window. I've been playing a lot of GeoGuessr recently, and there are all of these tips on how to tell different parts of the world apart and one of those things is called Texas pavement. Like the road right out there. It's lighter colored with specks of dark in it, and it's only found in Texas. I guess because everything in Texas has to be done this special Texas way, so they have their own way of mixing pavement. So, Michael. Why the hell are we in Texas?

MICHAEL: You can't believe everything you read on the internet, pard.

MIKEY: No Michael I've seen photos of this, this is a real thing.

MICHAEL: I brought ya out here wherever we are cuz I needed to get you away from the Compound. *Far* away. Somewhere that they won't think to look for ya.

MIKEY: You want to talk about breaking me out of the compound? Then let's talk about it. For instance, where did you get that calculator? You and MW haven't had one since the Great Correction; Base wouldn't issue you one, they'd go with you. And don't think that I didn't notice that it looks just a little bit different than ours, so it's not even from Base. So, what gives?

MICHAEL: There's a saying around these parts. Don't look a gift horse in the mouth. Now, Bluster weren't a gift per say but-

MIKEY *[Interrupting]*: Shut up about the fucking horse. Around these parts? So we are in Texas?

MICHAEL: I'd shut my trap and be grateful if I were you, Mikey. You was minced meat before I cracked open the Flinchite storage and saved your hide. Don't take it for granted.

MIKEY: I would feel a helluva lot safer if you could just answer basic questions.

MICHAEL: It ain't about you *feeling* safe. It's about you *being* safe.

MIKEY: Can you at least tell me how long we're going to be out here?

MICHAEL: As long as it takes.

MIKEY: Which is how long?

MICHAEL: As long as I say.

MIKEY: Right. But there's got to be some sort of plan to return things to normal after which I can return to Base so, what is that plan? I thought that it would involve getting rid of replacement Mikey but on the way out of the Compound you said that we couldn't just kill him and that "it's complicated." What does that mean?

MICHAEL: Things ain't started happening yet. We ain't instigating a plan. We're waiting on some other folks to make the first move before the cavalry comes riding in. The Compound and Operose are at war. We're gonna let 'em duke it out and then strike at the right time to get us our freedom back.

MIKEY: Okay, what has to happen for us to strike?

MICHAEL: I'll know it when I see it.

MIKEY [*Sighing*]: Of course you will.

MICHAEL: You gotta learn how to hold your horses pard. We're staying here for as long as it takes and that's final. Now, if you'll excuse me, I gotta go out for a little bit. I'll be back in 4 hours with supplies.

MIKEY: You're leaving? You could just leave? I thought that we were in hiding. What if you go out and someone sees you? Like these organizations that presumably want to capture us?

MICHAEL: Don't worry about me. This ain't my first rodeo. I'm the king of being inconspicuous.

MIKEY: You are the most conspicuous person who has ever existed. You are wearing a cowboy hat.

MICHAEL: It's Texas, Mikey. It would be more conspicuous if I *weren't* wearing a cowboy hat.

MIKEY *[Sighing]*: So we *are* in Texas.

MICHAEL: You got me pard.

MIKEY: I think that plenty of people in Texas walk around all day not wearing a cowboy hat but I do see your point.

MICHAEL: Can you feed Bluster for me here in a couple hours? It'll be his dinnertime. Just scoop him up some feed and fill his trough up to the line should do it.

MIKEY: Michael, I've never fed a horse before.

MICHAEL: Well it ain't rocket science, Mikey. Like I said, just go out to the shed and find the scoop and fill the trough up to the line. Oh and uh, tell him he's a good horse. It's really that easy. And don't get intimidated by him. Bluster's a big fella and he'll get antsy when he realizes that soup's on. But he's the sweetest horse there ever was.

MIKEY: Okay but if he bites me or kicks me or whatever horses do, there is going to be hell to pay.

MICHAEL: If he kicks you then you deserved it pilgrim. Alright I really gotta go. Stay here, do not leave the property and do not talk to anyone for any reason. Understand?

MIKEY: Uh, yeah, I guess? Where would I even go?

MICHAEL: You ain't got your phone, do ya?

MIKEY: No, I guess that they took it from me when they put me in storage?

MICHAEL: Perfect. I'll be back in 4 hours. No more, no less. If someone shows up before those 4 hours is up, that ain't me. And if someone who ain't me tries to get in, then I need you to shoot 'em.

MIKEY: Shoot them with what Michael I'm not armed.

MICHAEL: Look around, pard. I got this place well stocked. Just find yourself a gun that tickles your fancy and keep it on you. Okay?

MIKEY: I don't think that my fancy is going to get tickled.

MICHAEL: I'm serious. Arm yourself. And don't go out the front door if and you don't want to get shot in the face.

MIKEY: What? What's that supposed to mean?

MICHAEL: I'm rigging it up so that that there shotgun will go off if someone opens the front door without disabling the booby trap. Don't disable it and don't go out the front door. Understand? It's for your protection.

MIKEY: I don't know that feels like overkill, Michael. And probably illegal? Like even in Texas illegal.

MICHAEL: Hell Mikey, the folks that we got tailing us that's practically underkill. But it'll work in a pinch. Alright, I gotta go. I'll see you in 4 hours.

MIKEY: Alright. See you, Michael.

MICHAEL: Stay vigilante pilgrim.

[Doorknob turns]

MIKEY *[Sighing]:* What has this dumbass gotten me into? Guess I should pick me out a weapon. Hm, this revolver actually kind of does look pretty badass. *[Revolver spins]* End of the line, pard. Draw. *[Mikey laughs]* this town ain't big enough for the both of us. So stupid. YEEEHAW!

[Opening intro plays]

[Night ambiance]

MIKEY: Bluster? Here, boy. Where are you? I've got your food. I heard you before so I know you're real. *[Sigh]* I swear if this horse is some sort of prank that Michael is playing on me, then- *[Horse huff]* Oh- fuck me. You are fucking big. How did you sneak up on me like that? I thought that I knew how big a big horse was, but you are... a lot bigger. And very quiet when you run. Where did you come from? Did Michael make you this big with the calculator? That's not possible... right? Maybe I was wrong about how big horses are? Or *[horse huffs again]* maybe they just seem bigger when you're all alone with one.

So uh, hi Bluster? I'm Mikey? Uh, g-g-good horsey. Uh I've got your dinner right here. Uh, I'll just put it in the uh- the thingy? The trough, the trough. *[Sounds of the horse feed being dropped into the trough, sounds of Bluster eating]* Alright that is two the line on the trough. I hope that that's enough food. *[Bluster continues crunching on horse feed]* You're a good horse, Bluster. Uh, M-Michael told me to say that. I don't know, that feels more appropriate to say to a dog but I don't know what I'm supposed to do. Horses are just big dogs, right?

There... isn't a fence back here, which explains why I didn't see you in the yard when I went to the shed. Does he just let you... roam around out here? I guess that's fine, there aren't

neighbors here or anything but you can still run off and get lost. So when does Michael come out to take care of you exactly? Because you are clearly well taken care of. It takes a lot of food to feed an animal your size and your coat is nice and shiny and black. But... When is Michael here? It's not like I keep tabs on him but he's always at the ranch or the satellite base, so when does he find the time to come here? Time travel? Because he obviously lives here. He's got a horse, the fridge is full of beer, and there's bread that hasn't gotten stale or moldy in the pantry which means it can't be that old so he lives here. You wanna piece together that puzzle for me Bluster?

God you're big. I understand why Michael kept bringing it up now, you're fucking enormous. And I bet that you know exactly what is going on with him. Horses are smart, right? That's the thing about horses? You know what he's up to. I wish you could talk. Actually, no I don't. Michael is already too much cowboy to handle and that's without a talking animal companion who is also a cowboy. Because you would be a cowboy, Bluster, cause you're a goddamn horse. You'd be a cowboy.

And you're already done eating ugh. Do I give you more? I mean, I don't want to overfeed you- *[gunshot]* uh *[Bluster neighs in alarm]* Fuck, fuck! FUCK! *[Bluster continues neighing in alarm]* Was that the shotgun? Fuck, someones here uh... uh... Bluster? Uh... stay here, uh. Stay. Uh, good horse. I'm going to go see what's going on and if I don't come back uh... go get help? Uh, is that something that you could do? I don't know, I don't know I'm scared. Just... stay here. Okay? *[Bluster huffs]*

[Gun clicks and the doorknob turns]

MIKEY: Whoever you are, I have a gun. Put your hands where I can see them.

INTERLOPER MICHAEL It's, it's me Mikey. It's Michael. I'm hit.

MIKEY: Bullshit. I watched Michael set up this booby trap 2 hours ago. He would not forget about it.

INTERLOPER MICHAEL I tried to turn it off and it didn't work. *[grunt of pain]*

MIKEY: Uh huh. And that scar on your face that I asked you about earlier is gone?

INTERLOPER MICHAEL You can only see it in the light.

MIKEY: You are good at coming up with lies for someone with a hole in their chest, but I'm officially calling bullshit on this one. You're the one that always says that we can tell iterations apart based solely on vibes and this is a failed vibe check. So time to fess up. Who the hell are you and what are you doing here.

INTERLOPER MICHAEL C'mon Mikey. There's cautious and then there's paranoid. You're just being paranoid *[more grunts of pain]* I swung by to get those papers off the desk. *[Pained intake of breath]* If you wanna grab 'em for me.

MIKEY: Yeah, you're just going to grab some files and walk on out of here? I don't think so, you're really hurt and Michael wouldn't do that. You're trying to make a getaway. So, do you want to start telling the truth or maybe I can finish the job?

INTERLOPER MICHAEL You wouldn't shoot me. But you sure ain't gonna believe me huh?

MIKEY: No, of course I'm not going to "believe you." I bet you don't even know who Bluster is.

INTERLOPER MICHAEL I'm assumin' some sort of critter.

MIKEY: He is a gigantic horse that you riled up when you set off the shotgun. So uh, you wanna start talking now, interloper?

INTERLOPER MICHAEL I might be dyin', but I could still draw on you and put you down before you worked up the courage to pull the trigger, pilgrim.

MIKEY: Oh do you wanna try me? Because it's been a really dicey 15 years.

INTERLOPER MICHAEL You weren't supposed to be here. Texas Michael didn't clear none of this with Base or- anyone else for that matter. Ol and the Compound both think you're still in storage, and Satellite Base knows you've been replaced but Base don't. They're still hanging out with replacement Mikey and handing all their secrets over to the Flinchites.

MIKEY: Okay so what is a Texas Michael? He's not my Michael from Satellite Base?

INTERLOPER MICHAEL And here you was playing smart with me when you don't even know that ain't your Michael.

MIKEY: I had my suspicions.

INTERLOPER MICHAEL Texas Michael's a compound escapee. He and Outlaw Ty made it out of the compound and settled out here in Texas hopin' no one would find 'em. Course, situation's changed since then, but the other Ty's owe him a favor for helping 'em out so they've been keeping their existence under wraps.

MIKEY: Uh huh, and Outlaw Ty is a... cowboy iteration of Ty Betteridge? I sort of want to see that.

INTERLOPER MICHAEL Cowboyification comes for us all eventually pilgrim. Outlaw Ty couldn't hack life in the compound no more.

MIKEY: Hard disagree on cowboyification. How do you know any of this? Who are you? Where did you come from? You're not my Michael, and you're not the Michael that I came here with so... what's the deal?

INTERLOPER MICHAEL I'm just a man with some business to take care of.

MIKEY: Okay let's hear about that business, then. Or I shoot.

INTERLOPER MICHAEL *[Laughs]* You can't threaten me with death or torture or none of that no more. I've seen it all and then some, pard. You're gonna have to be a lot smarter- *[Gunshot]* than that if you wanna put fear of God into me. You missed by the way.

MIKEY: That was a warning shot. You didn't even flinch?

INTERLOPER MICHAEL Nope. Can't rattle me. If and you want I can help you hold your arm steady so you can point it at me. Go on. Shoot me, pilgrim.

MIKEY: I'll do it.

INTERLOPER MICHAEL Then put on your big boy britches and do it. I'm dyin' anyway. That shotgun peppered me something fierce. I'm not walkin' out of here. Eagle don't want damaged goods back, anyway.

MIKEY *[Overlapping]:* Um, *Eagle?* Talk. If you're gonna die anyway, then what does it matter?

INTERLOPER MICHAEL Fine. I'll talk, but it'll help pass the time until the reaper comes to get me. I think I let that slip on purpose. But I'm warnin' ya, the cat's gonna be out of the bag. Ain't no way to get it back in.

MIKEY: That's fine with me. Cats shouldn't be in bags. It's inhumane.

INTERLOPER MICHAEL Alright, but remember that you asked for it. *[A few intakes of air]* I've been workin' for Eagle.

MIKEY: Alright, great. Uh, with all due respect, whichever Michael you are, I am glad that you're dying.

INTERLOPER MICHAEL Can't say that I blame ya but as you know the grass ate him up inside of Operose.

MIKEY: Yes I do know, which is why I thought that he was dead.

INTERLOPER MICHAEL Well, he ain't dead. Operose wouldn't let him go to waste, they patched him up. He was able to give them a firsthand account of things leading up to the Great Correction and while they were talking to him about that, they discovered that he was something of a torture expert. So, they put him in charge of trainin' foot soldiers. Boots. There's a war goin' on between the OI and the Compound and they are lookin' to win it through well-trained manpower. That means a whole fleet of special force operatives, trained in torture and death by none other than Eagle. He's makin' 'em as stone cold as he is.

MIKEY: And you're one of those special operatives?

INTERLOPER MICHAEL We're a whole division of them, Mikey. A whole fleet of Michaels with different jobs and different specialties. But it was supposed to be you.

MIKEY: Why would it be me? How would I even get in there? Operose wouldn't want me in there. Why do they want you in there?

INTERLOPER MICHAEL I got information about the Compound. And uh I know what it looks like on the inside for when we go to storm it. This weren't Operose's idea. Ty wanted someone on the inside to see what they was plannin' in there. His original plan was to send you as punishment after ya got caught snoopin' around inside of Operose. But I stepped in and took fall for you and... a thousand iterations later... here we are.

MIKEY: Ty was going to send me to work for Eagle?

INTERLOPER MICHAEL Yep, and Eagle gets a real kick out of killing me day in and day out for training. Ty knew how to get ahold of Anne through snoopin' on Base. Turns out Edgar's got her number. Ty used a Compound iteration of Edgar to ring her up and ask her for a favor. She said yes and I went to work for Operose. As far as she knows, it's Base volunteerin' one of their own and we got good reason to work for them. If Operose wins this thing, no Compound. Base is free. Anne don't know that I'm a double agent.

MIKEY: Alright, so you're working for the Compound. You're working for Eagle. You are working for Operose. Which one sent you to a little ranch in the middle of nowhere Texas?

INTERLOPER MICHAEL All of 'em did. It all goes back to an incident that Outlaw Ty was involved in called The Elephant And The Dog.

MIKEY: Elephant And The Dog like the poster that Ty has in his office? Of like the golden retriever and the elephant that are best friends?

INTERLOPER MICHAEL The very same. The Elephant And The Dog incident had something to do with Ryan and CANNONBALL getting free. And, of course, Ryan and CANNONBALL getting free kickstarted that whole chain of events that ended up with Marissa shootin' Anne inside of

Operose. Both sides believe that Texas Michael and Outlaw Ty have some very important documentation and memories about what happened.

MIKEY: So both sides sent you on a mission to retrieve it.

INTERLOPER MICHAEL Operose sent me on a mission to capture Texas Michael and Outlaw Ty and seize this property and whatever documents might be lyin' around. The Compound on the other hand, sent me to kill Texas Michael and Outlaw Ty and burn this here place to the ground. They had their fun, but they were a liability for the other Tys. They was getting scared that Kasimieras was gonna find out. I was gonna have to choose which mission to complete.

MIKEY: And I bet that Texas Michael will be thrilled to learn that you came here to kill him when he gets home.

INTERLOPER MICHAEL I'm a goner Mikey, you're the one that's gotta choose. The powder keg is gonna go off any day now. You can help Operose or you can help the Compound. But you gotta make a choice. Sittin' around and doin' nothin' is gonna get you and Base killed.

MIKEY: Do you think that its a coincidence that you ended up here the same day that Texas Michael brought me here?

INTERLOPER MICHAEL I sure don't partner. I think that someone wanted this to happen. Someone wanted us to have this conversation.

MIKEY: I'm supposed to do something, I think. I've been 15 years in the future. I was in storage at the Compound and they pulled me out 15 years later and Base was gone. And the Ty's aren't the united front that they act like they are. Do you think one of them contacted Outlaw Ty to bust me out of the Compound? And then that Ty could make it seem like he didn't know what was happening. Texas Michael even put an iteration in my place. And so I'm supposed to prevent the Base from disappearing in 15 years. And you're telling me that I have a decision to make. So Ty threw you into the meat grinder so that you could tell me all of this with your last dying breath, which, gross.

INTERLOPER MICHAEL Or it could be one big coincidence.

MIKEY: Coincidence or not it happened, so. Now I have a choice to make.

INTERLOPER MICHAEL Well, I'm glad all my organs falling out could help you with your personal journey.

MIKEY: You're being sarcastic, but you really did help. Thanks.

INTERLOPER MICHAEL Any time, pard.

TEXAS MICHAEL *[Muffled, outside]:* Whoa boy! Whoa Bluster!

OI MICHAEL *[Overlapping]:* Texas Michael's back.

TEXAS MICHAEL *[Overlapping, muffled]:* Whoa, whoa whoa whoa

MIKEY: I- Bluster really went to get him? I- uh I underestimated that horse. You ready to explain to him why you broke in here this evening?

INTERLOPER MICHAEL Nope. I'm gonna go.

MIKEY: Go where? You can't even stand up.

INTERLOPER MICHAEL Can't even feel my legs, pard. Nope. I'm done answerin' questions. I think I answered you plenty. You can tell Texas Michael whatever you want. Spill the beans or pretend that I died before you could get in here to interrogate me. Your choice. Either way, I'm... I'm goin'.

MIKEY: You're... You're just going to die now?

INTERLOPER MICHAEL Yup. Good seein' ya, Mikey. Take care of Edgar for me. Sorry to leave you with this whole mess. Best of luck to ya.

MIKEY: I'm not just going to let you shoot yourself or whatever. You need to talk to Texas Michael.

INTERLOPER MICHAEL Aint gotta shoot myself. Just gotta will myself to go. Done it a thousand times before. Eagle trained me good.

MIKEY: Michael, don't.

INTERLOPER MICHAEL Sorry, Mikey. Goodbye. *[Exhales. Soft Grunt.]*

MIKEY: Michael! Ugh. Michael? Hello? Hello in there? Oh fuck. Uh... His pulse is already gone. How did he do that?

TEXAS MICHAEL: *[The back door opens]* What the heck is goin' on in here Mikey? *[Sound of the back door closing]* Bluster ran all the way to town. Said that you was in trouble and that someone was in the house. Who's this fella? Looks like the booby trap did a number on him.

MIKEY: The horse... *talked*... to you?

TEXAS MICHAEL: Well, I knew what he was trying to say.

MIKEY: Well it's a Michael obviously. I mean, look at him, he looks just like you.

TEXAS MICHAEL: Well, other than he got a big hole in him. Hey, you alive, pilgrim?

MIKEY: Don't poke him with the shotgun, Michael.

TEXAS MICHAEL: I was lookin' to see if he twitched.

MIKEY: He is very dead.

TEXAS MICHAEL: Did he say anything to ya?

MIKEY: ...No. I was outside feeding Bluster when the shotgun went off. By the time I got inside, he was unresponsive.

TEXAS MICHAEL: Well, looks like Bluster and I saved your hide again, pard. I reckon we'll never know where this'n came from.

MIKEY: Dead men tell no tales. You think we're still safe here?

TEXAS MICHAEL: Safe as we'd be anywhere else. The booby trap worked, didn't it?

MIKEY: It worked alright.

TEXAS MICHAEL: How about I clean all this up and then you and me eat supper? I got us steaks to throw on the grill. Thought I would kick off our little hideout with a good time, but that ship sorta sailed.

MIKEY: If I let a corpse of an iteration of myself ruin my day, I would never have a good day in my life.

TEXAS MICHAEL: You can say that again, pard. Say, uh, Bluster still got his saddle on. You wanna head out there and ride him around while I get this cleaned up? He's a smart horse. He can tell you ain't used to ridin' so he'll go nice and easy and slow for ya.

MIKEY: Honestly, I've been dying to check him out again ever since I fed him. He is so big.

TEXAS MICHAEL: That's why they call him Bluster the gigantic horse.

MIKEY: Who calls him that?

TEXAS MICHAEL: The other horses.

MIKEY: You can't talk to horses, I don't care how much of a cowboy you are. But uh, you're fine with cleaning all this up?

TEXAS MICHAEL: Yep. I'm here to protect ya so let me do the dirty work.

MIKEY: You don't have to tell me twice. *[Door opens]* See ya at dinner.

TEXAS MICHAEL: Yup. Tell Bluster I said hi.

[MIKEY leaves, closing the door behind him]

[A few beats pass]

TEXAS MICHAEL: Alright now, let's get a look at ya. Hm. You're still warm. You ain't been dead over a minute. Mikey lied. So, what did you tell him?

[Nothing About Me plays]

*It was doing what about me now
It was doing what about me now
I can't just pack up and switch towns
I advise you do nothing about me*

*What about me now
It was doing what about me now
I can't just pack up and switch towns
I advise you do nothing about me*

*What about me now
It was doing what about me now
I can't just pack up and switch towns
I advise you do nothing about me*

*What about me now
It was doing what about me now
I can't just pack up and switch towns
I advise you do nothing about me
What about me now
It was doing what about me now
I can't just pack up and switch towns
I advise you do nothing about me*

*I advise you do nothing about me
Okay?*

We clear?

FELIX: It's been quite a week. I knew that I would have to speak to Ty about all of this eventually, but I honestly was not expecting to find him sitting outside of my mom's house, or my dad's house or, whoever's house it was when I arrived there early that morning. Yes I was trying to cover up a huge mistake, yes I had lied to the whole team about going to Euro Disney, but I thought it would buy me some time.

TY: Oh, Fe, Fe, Fe Fe. Oh, uh, can I check? Can you hear me? *[FELIX, overlapping: [Sighs] Hello Ty.]* Hello? Am I coming through loud and clear? *[FELIX: Ty, I can hear you.]* Ah! Excellent, sorry I'm a little late, how far have we got? Are we onto EuroDisney already? Was it fun? *[FELIX, overlapping: Ty, please.]* Everything you could possibly want? *[FELIX, overlapping: Please.]* All the magic in the universe—*[FELIX, overlapping: Ty.]* or least the Euroverse.

FELIX: Really?

TY: Very well, very well, I'll wait a moment before my grand reveal. I can hold on.

FELIX: Thank you. *[pause.]* I wasn't expecting to see Ty at what I guess I have to call my dad's house?

TY: *[interrupting.]* Oh, I really can't wait, this is delicious! Felix is terrible at spreadsheets, truly terrible. Excel, sheets, numbers. I even got him a copy of Lotus 123 from 1984 and he still absolutely butchered it, even in VGA. Abysmal. Poor chap, he tries his best, but he has no idea what he's doing at all and it caused a massive anomaly and I had to fix it and then give him a little treat. And now he's acting as if he's all traumatized for having to—

FELIX: *[interrupting.]* Alright, Ty—I'm cutting your feed now. I'll let you back in later if you can behave. He means well. And, he's right of course. I did make a quite unforgivable series of errors. I think it's perfectly clear by now that I have not always found it easy to be my mother's son.

It was different with my dad. We were easy in each other's company. I could never remember a time when he wasn't my best friend, my idol, the center of my universe. Long car trips would seem to last minutes as he'd just chat to me the whole time, explaining some new thing he'd read recently, some idea, some concept. We dominated the house. We rolled our eyes whenever my mother sought to join in with our little world. We were truly awful to her. But she seemed happy enough back then. She had her two boys to love and protect, she almost encouraged it. She loved my father, and I think she loved the idea that I was growing and developing and turning into him.

Of course she wasn't always so needy. She took his death terribly badly. And I was the last thing she had to cling onto. Suddenly every time I wanted to leave the house she needed to know exactly where I was going, who with, why I was going, how I was getting there, what time I'd be

back. Not the usual protectiveness of a parent of a teenager. Something stronger. A desperate fear and a need to control, a need to know everything.

Our relationship had never been strong. That was my fault. I was obsessed with my dad. Every parent says they don't have a favorite child. I have no idea whether or not that's true but I can assure you that every single child has a favorite parent. My mother knew that my dad was the chosen one, of course she did.

By the time I was sixteen or seventeen and only a couple years away from leaving for university, she was all that I had left. But we'd never started developing anything other than the most perfunctory mother-son relationship. She tried her best. And I pulled away. Very, very, far away. To university the other side of the country. And then to a job the other side of the continent. I threw myself into our work. The only distractions were the daily phone calls with my mother. And I grew resentful of her and pitied her.

It sounds awful to say it out loud. But at one point at work I began to see our visitors, real people, as something akin to cattle. I could watch people die dozens of times a day in the name of our research and I became quite immune to their suffering. But something was scratching away at my core. Every morning I would speak to my mother and hear the desperation in her voice. Hear the hope that today we would really connect about something, the hope that she would, a couple of days later, start to get as close to me as my father once had.

But in time I began to appreciate that, apart from my psychopathic boss, she was the only real human connection I had left. And so I found myself becoming particularly attached to one of our guests. I saw experiments of separation and consolidation. I saw three different versions of him at different stages of his life. I wanted to understand what it felt like for him to have different versions of himself running around. To understand how it might feel to have such different experiences and then amalgamate them back into one mind.

My plan was this: I needed three new Felixes. Three Felixes that could experience the life that I never had the chance to lead. First, a Felix who had both of his parents Second, a Felix whose father survived and mother died. And third, a control, a carbon copy of me, whose father died and who I could test out alongside the others and assess for any unexpected changes. A canary.

TY: And what a remarkable trio they made. Ah, oh don't worry Fe, everything's under control. Have you explained what a kind and loving man I am, yet? Fe? Oh, ah, yes, I've muted you. Well nevermind. So! As far as I can piece together from the device logs and my own conversations with the, uh, relevant parties, Fe's plans started off swimmingly. I was completely unaware at the time he made his little copies and sent them off into the ether, and intended to check on them from time to time to see how they were getting on. But then a few things started happening at once. Firstly, he became incredibly jealous of the Felix who grew up with both parents. Secondly, he couldn't bear to witness once again the grief of the Felix who lost his

father. Thirdly he couldn't bring himself to even look at the Felix who was happily growing up with his father. And lastly, he was worried about me, weren't you Fe? Fe? Ah, yes.

FELIX: Oh you found your way back in, well done. Yes, Ty, our jobs are not simple. On an average day we have to keep a dozen contradictory ideas in our minds all at once. All of which are provably incorrect when compared against the others. And yet, all of which are completely undeniably true. I can't begin to explain the power that our technology can have over a person. It makes you feel like a god.

TY: Ah, yes it does create a certain frisson doesn't it? Although I can't say it has ever caused me to seek to clone and then murder myself on multiple occasions.

FELIX: The tech allows you to lose sight of the fact that at your core you're still a terrified teenager grieving for his daddy. I knew Ty would discover what I had been up to eventually, so I decided to cut my losses. The exercise had to end. The clones had to go. Creating so many little pocket timelines was dangerous. There was too much to keep track of. I thought I'd planned it perfectly. Yellow's section are always very accommodating. If someone appears in their waiting room unannounced, they know it's time to get out the bolt gun or the—

TY: *[interrupting]* The *metaphorical* bolt gun I think you mean. I like to think we're a little more sophisticated than that.

FELIX: They know it's time to get out the metaphorical bolt gun and send them off to the metaphorical woodchipper.

TY: I have actually seen yellow use a non-metaphorical woodchipper on occasion. He gets terribly bored of the furnace. *[Felix chuckles.]* And the lye. And the acid *[Felix chuckles a bit louder.]*

FELIX: *[laughing.]* I didn't want to be cruel to the Felixes. They deserved as full a life as possible. I hated Felix who grew up with both parents. He was so remarkably well adjusted, so happy. The prick. But I couldn't prematurely terminate the enjoyment of the only happy version of me in existence anywhere. So, I let him live to old age. The carbon copy whose dad died young was far easier. I remembered too well the pain that he had to go through. So he could be removed straight away as a teenager. The motherless Felix was trickier. He was happy with his father but still not complete. But I thought I'd let him have until his father died of natural causes some years later. So he'd get to live til middle age. And so I arranged to transport each of those Felixes from the appropriate point in their lives straight to Yellow, a couple of weeks apart. I thought I'd planned it really well. Yellow would become suspicious if three different Felixes turned up all at once in the same instant. So I was careful.

TY: *[interrupting.]* Were you? Were you really? Go on, Felix, tell them. *[Felix exhales heavily in the background.]* Tell them how brilliant you are with spreadsheets and how marvelously you planned.

FELIX: When we have to perform a particularly complex set of maneuvers with the technology, our standard practice is to put it all into a spreadsheet and then save it as a CSV file

TY: [*interrupting.*] A CSV file.

FELIX: [*spluttering.*] Okay, a CSV file and then input that into the program. And then just press go and it performs everything all at once. It means we can spend an awful lot of time planning each step of the process, inputting extraction points, dates, times, one by one. Account for movement, acceleration, everything. And then work out where everything is going and not worry about the execution. Just the planning. I came very, very close to getting it all right. But, in a way it really was Ty's fault that I got it wrong.

TY: That is an outrageous slander, Fe. How exactly was it my fault?

FELIX: Well. Remember that special "All Tys on Deck" weekend away on the yacht on the coast of the Seychelles?

TY: Well— yes.

FELIX: You may remember you asked me to arrange transport. It wasn't strictly approved and you asked me to do it off book. A whole spreadsheet of transporting lots of Tys all to the same time and place for your little jolly. It played havoc with my Felix spreadsheet. To cut a long story short, when I eventually finalized the Felix operation I may have reused the Ty Boat Party spreadsheet, forgot to replace the destination location, and then maybe reversed some columns. So instead of -454 for the Seychelles, it became 54-4, a point in the middle of the Irish seas, slap bang in the middle of the sea current to Holyhead.

TY: Now [*clears throat.*], as Felix is perfectly aware, we have several delightful women called Samantha, who carry out all sorts of media monitoring for us. Given the nature of our work, strange occurrences, coincidences, accidents, can be an early warning sign that someone unauthorized has got a hold of the tech. Can't be too careful especially these days. The "Holyhead Triplets" were all over the news in the UK, of course we noticed it. Within minutes of the second corpse I knew exactly what had happened, how it had happened, and who was responsible. But I didn't know why exactly, Felix had decided to go on some sort of auto-rampage. I thought it might have been fun to see how it played out. I very much enjoyed your visit to Disneyland Paris. I'm not entirely convinced you needed to go on "It's a Small World" *eleven* times though.

FELIX: [*stammering.*] It—it—it's a magical world where everyone is friendly, Ty.

TY: I'm afraid I can't see the attraction but not to worry.

FELIX: [*stammering.*] Anyway it wasn't *our* Disneyland Paris was it? Because when you transported me to France you sent me to another timeline where my mother was dead.

TY: I thought you might be happier. You've always seemed so frustrated at your mother.

FELIX: We both know that wasn't the reason. You wanted to teach me a lesson, never to mess around with the tech again. Never to use it for my own purposes. Only ever to follow the plan. [*deep sigh.*] And you were right. And I'm sorry. But Ty—

TY: But?

FELIX: But Ty you didn't have to make me choose. You didn't have to do that to me. You turned up to my father's home, unannounced. It was the first time I'd seen him in decades. I knew you'd done something but god knows what, and you sat there and you made me choose in front of him. You told my father everything you knew. You told my father everything I had done, every mistake I had made. Do you have any idea of the shame that made me feel? That I was sitting there while you explained my inability over decades to deal with his death? That it had led me to murder three people. That it had led to the eradication of my mother? He said it, Ty, but I could see it in his eyes. Do you have any idea how disappointed he was in me? Can you imagine how that felt, to finally see him? The man I have missed and to look at him and only feel shame. I think it may be the most awful thing you've ever done.

TY: There was no other way, Fe. I'm sorry but it's true. What would've happened if you'd got your mother? How would you have redeemed this situation? What would you have done? "Oh don't buy a paper mum." "Why not?" "Umm, I don't know."

FELIX: I would've been fine. It's true I had choices to make, but they would've been my choices. Instead you gave me your choices.

TY: And what lovely choices they were? 1) Amalgamate with your father's Felix, live a life with both sets of happy happy memories. 2. Have me undo everything back to the point where you set off for France, never remember that you met your father. 3. Just come back to work, leave your father to his Felix and carry on dealing with your mother. And I must remind you that you still have not made your choice. It's been the best part of two weeks now and your poor father must be quite worried wondering if and how he might suddenly pop out of existence.

FELIX: The problem with your oh so special choices, Ty, is that none of them actually deal with the bodies in Wales. Nothing you've done sorts any of that out. The whole country's still in hysteria about this insane mystery.

TY: Are they? [*scoffs.*] Do you really think I would let that happen? That I would risk our little project coming under any scrutiny? Oh, Fe, surely it must've been obvious to you by now that the bodies were the very first thing I resolved.

FELIX: [*stammering.*] Wha—what?

TY: I let you stew on it for a little while but as I sent you to France, I simultaneously moved all of the bodies in your original transfer. I didn't want to interfere too much. As we speak there are three corpses decomposing on my yacht in the Indian Ocean. And I shall hold you responsible for cleaning it in due course. But check the papers. The "Holyhead Triplets" never existed.

FELIX: So—so—what—what was this all some sort of—

TY: Honestly, a bit of a prank. Fe, you know I care for you very very dearly but you really shouldn't have messed around with things the way you did. You are the last person on earth that I would wish to punish and I can't do without you around here. So I had to find some way of regaining your concentration without destroying you completely. But I do need you now to make a choice. Which Felix do you want to be?

FELIX: I want to be me. I want to be Felix.

TY: We both know that's meaningless Felix.

FELIX: I know we disagree on this philosophically, but you know what I believe. I am *this* Felix because of the experiences I have had as *this* Felix. Another very similar Felix will not and cannot be me, only I can be me. It's true that the last two months have been absolutely hell but they've been my hell so I'm stuck with them. I can't choose to be anyone else, that would be impossible. Another Felix might have a very different taste in music or—or perhaps not discovered recipe for English biscuits and gravy.

TY: That was perhaps even more moronic than our adventure in space and time. Bourbons and bisto, I ask you—

Felix: [*interrupting*] You have no idea. They were delicious. But I might not have made the decisions about our cowboy friend. I'm me because I'm me, as trite as that sounds. And I cocked up, and I tried to fix it, and I failed, and I met my dad, and I suffered his disappointment and, I tried to fix it, and I failed, and I couldn't. And then you fixed it and then in your entirely warped way I think—I think you tried to help? And you may be one of the most terrible men on earth. And you caused me untold unnecessary suffering in recent days for your own amusement.

TY: I know. It's been a pleasure.

FELIX: But the sum of all that is me. Felix. Fe. Your friend. So, um, should we just crack on?

[*Closing theme plays.*]

CREDITS: This has been WOE.BEGONE. And this has been the series finale of the Felix Chronicles. The Felix Chronicles are written and recorded by and starred Ben Rowe. The voice of Ty Betteridge is David Ault. [*spoken rap*] Check out his podcast [Shadows At The Door](https://shadowsatthedoor.com), or go to davidault.co.uk for more. I can feel my soul leave my body when I do that.

AFTER-CREDITS TEXAS MICHAEL: Alright, Bluster. Hold still and I'll make you ten percent bigger. [*Horse huffing noises. Time travel noise*] Biggest horse in the dang world. [*Horse whinnies*]

[END Episode 131.]