

EPISODE ONE HUNDRED AND SEVENTY FOUR - HIGHWAY STEAM

Original transcript edited by Theo and reviewed by Jenah

[BEGIN Episode 174.]

INTRO: Hey, guys, welcome to the mid-season finale of Season 15 of WOE.BEGONE. This season has been so much fun, and I'm so excited to continue to bring this story. And also, this is the very last thing that I'm recording before intermission, so I sort of have, like, the last day of school vibes. And, as always, I am streaming on Twitch over at twitch.tv/woebegonepod, where every Sunday I write that week's episode soundtrack, and then we hang out and play a video game. Since I won't be writing a soundtrack this Sunday, I plan on beating *Schim*, and then moving on to a different game. Probably a horror game, because October is coming up; maybe a Nancy Drew game, because they're my favorite. That is twitch.tv/woebegonepod.

And 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, Q&As, director's commentaries, Movies with Michael, postcards, corkboards, and more. The postcards keep truckin' along; people are receiving their August postcard and seeing all of the super special stuff that was set up for August. September cards will be going out after I get back from vacation. It's so much fun to share stories in these different ways, and I plan on sharing that with all of you sometime soon, not to spoil upcoming events on the feed. That is patreon.com/woe_begone.

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

And I'm free! I'm not actually free, I have to edit everything together still, but I'm— I don't have to record anymore, I can turn the air conditioning back on.

[Opening theme plays.]

[We hear water occasionally drip.]

[We hear a VHS tape get inserted into a VHS player, and the tape begins to play on a TV.]

VHS MICHAEL *[through TV]*: Okay, so at this point, you're probably wondering why I can't just tell you which iterations are the right ones to send back. Or, alternatively, you're Edgar, and you know that the answer is always propagation. There is an outside chance that Edgar has destroyed this tape before listening to it, because he knows the innate risks of listening to this sort of material, in which case, uh, I'm just talking to myself and wasting everyone's time and money. We're paying Jack over here seven dollars and twenty five cents an hour to record something that's just gonna go in the trash.

I'm kidding, Jack's not real, as far as you know. Point being, these tapes are propagation risks of the highest order. I would go ahead and assume that they've been intercepted, honestly, and so

the information inside of these tapes has been treated with that in mind. So, if I were to tell you which iterations were the correct choice, the other iterations could easily pose as them [**OLD MAN**: Alright. TXDawg, I'm— I'm gettin' bored of this, he's talkin' in circles.], and that would make this more complicated, and that's the last thing that we want.

OLD MAN: I'm gonna shut 'im off, if that's okay.

[Old Man removes the tape from the VHS player.]

TXDAWG: My psychic energy is feeling depleted as well, Old Man. I think that this Michael recorded over this whole tape, plus a whole second tape that I found on the shelf over there. There isn't much else to do, though. You could go over and pout with Tex if you're bored. He looks like he could use some company. I think he strained his hand trying to punch through the sealed door. I offered him something for the pain, but he declined.

OLD MAN: I ain't exactly Tex's friend, if ya ain't noticed, pard. He can lick his wounds by his own dang self.

TXDAWG: Well, there are a limited amount of experiences in this basement that we can do while remaining in this plane of existence. Our options appear to be either go pout with Tex or watch the tape. Unless you want to try breaking the door down again. I have been sitting and trying to concentrate, to see if I can teleport out of here, but it hasn't been working. I think the walls might be too thick.

OLD MAN: I know that you know better than to think that's how it works, pard. You think if we could time travel from just sittin' down and havin' a real good think, it wouldn'ta propagated everywhere at this point? You think it'd be discovered from some hippie, greenhorn Mikey iteration? No, sir. You know, some of us have been in this field for more than a century. If that trick were possible, I'da seen it already.

TXDAWG: You and Tex are free to keep rebuffing my idea, but neither of you have presented an alternative. What do you think is going on? Do you think that our transport has something to do with the Michael on the tape? You think that there's an iteration who caught on and is doing what he suggested? One of us is the chosen one, and now they are out there pretending to be us?

OLD MAN: I'm thinkin' it's the opposite, pard. I think Edgar's behind it. We're the ones that Base needed to get rid of. Or at least make sure we ain't actin' up while they're sendin' the right folks back. So, we're bein' held in quarantine while they can figure out what to do with us. Or work up the nerve to kill us.

[We hear MDawg stir.]

TXDAWG: MDawg is awake.

MDAWG: *[Groans.]* Oh, my neck...

OLD MAN: MDawg! We're comin', pard!

TXDAWG: You're going to be okay, MDawg. Uh, it's me. I'm here. Uh— They're calling me TXDawg now. Do you understand where you're at?

MDAWG: *[Groans.]* Somewhere cold and wet.

OLD MAN: That's about all we know, too, pard.

MDAWG: The last thing I remember is getting hit in the back of the head... My neck hurts...

TXDAWG: We tried to make you as comfortable as we could, but all we had was a shirt for a pillow. This place is full of junk, but we haven't found soft junk yet. We can try to look again if you're that uncomfortable.

MDAWG: It feels like something's poking into me through the shirt.

TXDAWG: Poking into you? Like something hard?

OLD MAN: You let me take care o' that, pard. Don't worry, MDawg. I'll get your pillow nice and fluffed up for ya. It'll be like layin' on a big, plaid, flannel cloud.

[We hear Old Man fluff up the shirt. A VHS tape falls out, and hits the ground.]

TXDAWG: Old Man? Uh, what— what is this, another tape? ...It says, "Old Man only. Don't propagate. Watch in complete isolation." What is this?

OLD MAN: That's mine. You oughta give it back, pard.

TXDAWG: Did you find this here? With the other tapes?

OLD MAN: Don't matter where I found it. Ya need to mind your dang business. I hid it under MDawg 'cause I ain't got no other place to put it. Now, you do all of us a favor and forget you saw it. And sure as hell don't tell Tex. I don't trust him as far as I can throw Bluster.

TXDAWG: Tex wouldn't try to take it, would he? I get that you don't trust him, but you saw the tape with future Michael. If we do the wrong thing here, then the whole valley burns. He was combatative with MW, but I don't think that he'd want that.

OLD MAN: He's been happy to watch it burn, pilgrim. He's like the dang Joker.

TXDAWG: Things don't have to be so contentious here. We are all beings from the same mother soul. I could mediate a conversation. I'm an expert mediator. We shouldn't light any incense or anything in here, but we can light mind incense to calm us, which is almost as good. I don't like how the negativity hangs in the air here. We don't have enough oxygen as it is, and the negative feelings will push it towards the bottom of the room and make it harder to breathe.

OLD MAN: I ain't lookin' for mediation, TXDawg. I'm lookin' to get us the hell outta here 'fore somethin' bad happens. We all got our part to play in what's about to go down, but I don't know what Tex's role is. And I don't know what he's up to, but he don't got our best interest at heart, not even yours. Now quick, help me get this shirt back under MDawg's head, and you keep quiet. *[Pause.]* And you keep quiet, too, MDawg.

MDAWG: N— Oh, okay. Uh, I don't know what's happening...

TXDAWG: When you transported to the fire again, you returned with a note, MDawg. Do you remember that? Did you see who could have done that?

MDAWG: *[Stammers.]* I didn't s-see anyone. I-I saw a fire, and, uh...

TEX: MDawg! *[TXDawg startles.]* You're awake again! It's a miracle! Everything goin' okay over here, Old Man?

TXDAWG: Tex, you startled me.

TEX: Well, I heard ya talkin' to MDawg. 'Course I'm gonna come over and check. You need anything, pilg? You comfortable?

MDAWG: I, uh. My neck— I— Yeah, I'm fine.

TXDAWG: We just got done fluffing up the shirt pillow.

TEX: Alright, then. Are you okay, TXDawg? You look like you been sweatin'.

TXDAWG: Uh, no— Y-Yeah, I'm fine. Uh, i-it's not sweat, uh. Over in front of the TV, there's a drip. So, it must've dripped down on me while I was watching it.

TEX: That's funny, pilg. I was over there, too. I don't think I got dripped on.

TXDAWG: Oh, well, I guess it was dripping where I was—

[We hear banging start on the other side of the door.]

TXDAWG: *[Startles.]* Is someone here?

TEX: The person what put us here, I reckon.

OLD MAN: Naw, Tex. The person what put us here would know how to get in. *[Banging noise stops.]* Even if that door is sealed shut, they transported us in. They could transport themselves.

TXDAWG: Hello, uh— Who is out there? Uh, spirit or human, do you come in peace? Uh, please identify yourself, uh. Are you here to help us, or are you here to take us, uh— or what's inside here?

[We hear more banging.]

TEX: I reckon that means they don't feel much like talkin', TXDawg. *[Calling out.]* You cut that shit out, or I'll shoot through the door!

TXDAWG: Tex, please don't.

OLD MAN: He ain't gonna do it, pard.

[We hear a gunshot.]

TEX: Ow! Fuck! Fuck!

TXDAWG: Tex, a-are you okay?

TEX: Yeah, it just grazed my shoulder.

[We hear more banging.]

OLD MAN: And a lotta good it did us, pilgrim.

TXDAWG: That did not appear to deter them. What do we do now?

OLD MAN: We go back to what we were doin', TXDawg: we wait.

[Scene transition.]

[We hear the sound of MW washing his hands.]

MW *[muttering, panicked]:* Okay, alright. Oh. Oh, my god... Okay, what am I doin'? *[Breathes heavily.]* I-I can't— I can't explain this. Mikey's gonna go to Base, and then Base is gonna come right here, and I'm... fucked. Fuck. Fuck. *[Takes a breath, and shuts off the water.]* Okay. MW, you got this. *[Takes another breath.]*

MIKE: Do you know **[MW: (Startles.) Mike...]** the story of that boar's head on the wall, MW? It came from an 80-kilogram boar that Michael shot one day.

MW: Mike, ya can't just barge in on me like that. *[Breathes heavily.]* W-What were you sayin' about the boar?

MIKE: That day was such a mess. I didn't wake up until, like, one in the afternoon, and we had a mission to go on that day that I completely forgot about. Michael woke me up by blasting this terrible rock music that he was pretending to jam out to while making breakfast, and he was making breakfast at one in the afternoon as an excuse to drag my ass out of bed. So, I came in here into the kitchen, and there was this— this boar's head sitting on the table. Uh— Decapitated, and everything, ju— blood everywhere. And Michael was *[Michael impression.]* "makin' bacon," *[Drops impression.]* which meant that he had to spend much more time on this field-to-table expedition than just going hunting with Boris. You have to cure bacon, and curing takes time. Which means that Michael abused time travel protocol to give me the third degree about being hungover. Which means that he was infringing in the rulebook way worse than I am; being hungover isn't technically in the rulebook. *[Brief laugh.]* And then that mission went so badly and got corrected so thoroughly that neither me nor him even remember what the mission was. *[Laughs.]* How's that for time travel shenanigans? *[Laughs.]* And then we argued, because I wanted to get a puppy! It was such a different time.

MW: That's quite the yarn, Mike. Uh, I don't think I knew most of that. Michael's always tellin' stories about his escapades with Boris and what they get up to, um. ...Was always tellin' me, I mean. Uh. You didn't come to visit the boar, did ya?

MIKE: I did not.

MW: Uh, what's your business, then, stranger?

MIKE: *[Sighs.]* Well, my business is it's been a *long* day, most of which was not spent in this time period, it was spent in the past on a completely different day, and... I just need someone to vent to, you know? And I thought, what about my pink puzzle pal, MW. *[To the tune of "Pink Pony Club."]* Pink Puzzle Pals! *[Laughs.]* You— I thought you might appreciate the company? Uh. Now's a good time, right? You're not doing anything?

MW: Uh, n-no, it's, uh, just me here. Uh, I w— I was cleanin' up. Uh, I don't usually get visitors, uh. Boris sometimes, but... I'd rather he'd leave me alone. He always wants to talk about Michael.

MIKE: Sore subject. I get that. *[Brief pause.]* Hey, uh, you didn't down all the whiskey in the apartment, did you? Uh, *[Laugh.]* I don't know what it is. Something about telling stories around this table makes me think that there should be drinks involved. It's some sort of nostalgic sense-memory.

MW: U-Uh, there— there's still some in the c-cabinet, I reckon.

MIKE: Cool, cool, cool. I'll grab the bottle and two glasses, and then I'll tell you the story of Python and Python *and* Python.

MW: Python and Python? You're saying there's iterations o' Python now? What is goin' on with that house? I-Is this one of them council-whatchamadoojies?

MIKE: Well, if you ask Python and Flash, they'll say that the house is haunted. It feels like those paranormal investigations where they go out and investigate a ghost, and every time it's a barn owl being spooky at night, except instead of owls, we've got time travelers? We've just got started on what's going on at the Crust Punk House. *[Brief laugh.]* And councils? What even is a council anymore. It's not defined by knowledge. Chance's council don't even know each other, they don't know they're in a council. So, maybe there's a council of Pythons? *[We hear Mike start making them drinks.]* Uh, which is cool with me. Matt's my BFF and everything. But we do need to get to the bottom of why it's happening. For Matt's sake, if not ours. Python doesn't remember anything; that sounds super stressful. And Old Man not mentioning him to us was suspicious as hell. Alright, you ready, MW? Nas zdorov'ye! *[Нас здоровье!]*

MW: Yeah. Cheers, Mike.

[We hear their glasses clink.]

MIKE: Yeah, so dude's got amnesia, obviously. He doesn't remember being Matt, but he's— he's a grown man, he had to have been Matt for most of his life. He's only been Python for a— a few months? And Base doesn't have a doctor, so I took him to the Compound to get a checkup. See if Ty had a prescription for what to do next. Turns out, Python is in *[Betterridgely.] excellent* physical health other than total amnesia. So, Ty and I decided to check out the day that he moved into the Crust Punk House and see if we could do a trace.

MW: You have Ty doin' tracin' for ya?

MIKE: *[Sighs.]* Admittedly, I had to swallow my pride. Uh, I don't like Ty, but he's a— a peer at this point. ...Sounds weird. Uh— I'm not scared he's going to take over Base anymore. He's a guy that we can go to when we need stuff. And we need some tracing done at the Crust Punk House.

MW: A-And— And— And did ya f-find anything to trace over there?

MIKE: We found more to trace than you could imagine. Oh— First of all, the house was empty when we got there, and then a Python iteration transported in, went outside using a key that he inexplicably already had, picked up a bloody cowboy hat with a crow's feather in the band, and then promptly got ripped to shreds by some transportation process that I'd never seen before.

MW: Uh— W— So, an iteration o' Python walked into the house and got ripped apart. S-So, that—that weren't the one that turns into our Python.

MIKE: It sure didn't seem like it. That would raise all sorts of questions about the connectivity between the Pythons and how it could get distorted on such a short timeframe. Python was freaked, obviously. Matt's part of the team; we tell him that he's a member of Base, but we keep most of the dirty work away from him. So, even if the body did keep the score, Matt's body doesn't have any points on the board. So, me and Python head over to where Ty was taking tracing measurements, and out pops another Python, right out of the ether! So, counting present Python, that's three Python sightings. And we still don't think that that's the one that's connected to present Python, because present Python doesn't remember the house being empty.

MW: That's a wild tale, Mike. Uh, I don't get why anyone would wanna do any o' that. Seems like a waste o' good Pythons to me.

MIKE: You and me both, MW. After that, the Pythons made the *regrettable* decision to head to the Compound, ugh. So, maybe Ty will figure out what's going on? In the meantime, we took a bunch more measurements inside the empty house, since no one was there, and we started getting the results back today. I didn't realize it would be so fast, but directed propagation, information feedback accumulation, all that stuff.

MW: S-So, uh, what did Tracin' find?

MIKE: The Crust Punk House is absolutely littered with traceable events, before and after Python's move-in date. I guess I shouldn't be surprised that time travel was going on in that house. They all had to get there somehow, and all of them are lying about why they're there. We're going to have to investigate each signal one-by-one to rule out their relevance to this case. We're getting started by putting together lists of culprits. You can get an idea of who was traveling and when because they were all hiding from each other, so they were all doing it in their respective bedrooms. And there was Old Man, of course; we can see when MDawg transported him to the house. And then there was this super curious event with him. Old Man transported out of the house today.

MW: Oh, uh. Well, what's he up to?

MIKE: We don't know, and we can't ask him. Michael iterations have certain issues around the truth? Uh, namely that they don't tell it? So, we're gonna have to run a trace if we want to know what he's doing. But, that's in the middle of the stack. Python's first. That's the project. You haven't seen him, have you?

MW: Uh, no, sir, I have not. Uh, nobody comes around here very often.

MIKE: *[Laughs.]* Um, I hope Nobody's not coming around here. *[Teasing.]* Uh, you back there, Nobody? Uh, better surrender now before the pickaxes get here! You saw what we did to Lieutenant!

MW: N-Naw, *[Brief laugh.]* it ain't like that. It's— It's just the two of us, Mike. Uh— No one else is here. ...S-Sorry, uh— *No one* comes around here very often. Not even the Michael iterations. I keep their old room empty if anyone wants to come stay, but Boris is the only one who ever visits.

MIKE: So, what do you do all day? Just sit around, drink to forget?

MW: Uh, sometimes, yeah.

MIKE: And does that ever work? Do you ever actually forget?

MW: Nope. Not really.

MIKE: Yeah, I didn't think so. I used to be in this exact same funk in this exact same apartment. Which was falling apart a lot worse, by the way. Boris has really spruced it up since then. I was at the end of my rope, and Michael could tell, so he pulled me aside, and he said... *[Clears throat.]* Excuse me. *[Michael impression.]* "I'm in pain, but I also grew the fuck up. You can look into the darkness. You have to, it's healthy to look. But you can't stay there. There is no home there. There is only wilderness. My advice is come inside, 'cause people are waitin' for ya there." *[Drops impression.]* And the— the stupid cowboy wisdom always stuck with me. And it pulled me up, so maybe if I pass it along to you, it will help pull you up, too.

MW: *[Sighs.]* Thanks for carin' about me, Mike. I'll— I'll keep that in mind. I-I ain't been my best these days. ... And, uh, thank ya for the advice. It feels good to hear his words again.

MIKE: *[Cowboy voice.]* Any time, pard. *[Drops cowboy voice, and laughs.]* Seriously, though. You don't have to do anything rash, okay? You hear me? We have all the time that we need, quite literally.

MW: "Anything rash"? Like, whaddaya mean?

MIKE: Yeah, you know. Like, anything drastic that would, like, destroy or betray ties to Base. It's just not— It's just not too late is what I'm saying. Everything can still be avoided. You just have to keep a level head. Vulnerability propagates fast. The second you're down on your luck, someone's gonna swoop in and want to take advantage of you. So, just don't let that happen, alright?

MW: Yeah. I-I mean, no. I won't let that happen. You can count on me, Mike.

MIKE: *[Sighs.]* I know I can, MW. *[Pause.]* Well, I drank you plumb outta house and home, so I'd better get going. Miles to go before I sleep. It was great seeing you.

MW: It was great seeing you too, Mike. Uh, let me know how it goes with Old Man. O-Oh, and Python, too.

MIKE: Yeah, uh, sure thing. And I'll make sure that you get invited to the Base stuff. Communication is a two-way street. Alright, I'm gone. You take care of yourself, MW.

MW: Yeah, you, too, Mike.

MIKE: Happy trails, pilgrim.

[Time travel noise.]

MW: *[Sighs.]* Well, it's pretty dang safe to say he knows you're here, pard.

TY: *[Chuckles.]* He may think he knows something.

[Scene transition.]

[We hear water occasionally drip, as well as intermittent metal banging.]

TXDAWG *[distant]:* I don't understand, Old Man. If it's a person out there, why don't they respond when we call out to them? And if it's a spirit out there, why don't they phase through the door?

OLD MAN *[distant]:* 'Cause this is some kinda dang ol' test, TXDawg. *[Unintelligible.]*

[We hear a VHS tape get inserted into a VHS player, and the tape begins to play on a TV.]

VHS MICHAEL *[through TV]:* Welcome to Side Two of Tape Two. I'm still Michael. A non-primate animal can be considered connected to a past iteration of itself if and only if it can reliably solve a connectivity-learned maze faster than disconnected counterparts. The connectivity of animals might seem irrelevant, but this knowledge affects their behavior, and this behavior, multiplied over an entire ecosystem, for example, can have drastically different outcomes across timelines. This becomes doubly important when you consider people's access to synthesized ecosystems. *[Pause.]* Hey, uh— uh, Tex. Tex. Are— Are you listening?

TEX: Huh—? M-Me—? Michael. Are you— Are you talkin' to me?

VHS MICHAEL *[through TV]:* I'm— *[Brief laugh.]* I'm not actually talking to you, doofus. This is a VHS tape. But if I've timed this just right, the others should be preoccupied with something else, so you're the only one listening. If I was wrong, u-uh... oops? But I'm pretty sure I'm right. I think

that you're the only one listening to me, so listen, Tex. What is going on here is the most important handoff in the history of the lives of all of the iterations. It's like one of the most important things that's ever happened. Nothing you have ever done is as important for your survival as what you're going to do in *[Claps.]* this *[Claps.]* moment. Okay? Understand? You better understand. You and all your Wild West LARPing buddies had better not ruin this for the rest of us. We worked so damn hard for this! I sacrificed so much. I sacrificed everything multiple times over, and if you screw that up through your selfishness, I swear to god, you will know perdition the likes of which you have never seen. You think that Nobody and Eagle and Mustardseed were malicious? You have not met me on the day where Tex endangers my life's work, motherfucker. Do you understand me?

TEX: Michael, I-I swear, I-I weren't gonna do anything, i- I just- I saw-

VHS MICHAEL *[through TV]:* Again, I can't actually hear you, this is a VHS tape. But I'm going to assume some sort of understanding. And, uh- if the others heard this, uh, this was merely an example of how a message can be altered through propagation without direct modification from the sender. Uh, in a narrow propagation field, (shut this off now, Tex) assuming a spherical cow in, like, a physics sense, and the rate of information decay can be defined as the limit as x approaches infinity of-

[Tex removes the tape from the VHS player.]

[We hear tearing metal.]

OLD MAN: Uh, it's- it's happenin', Tex. You're gonna wanna come see this.

TEX: I'm here. What's goin' on?

TXDAWG: The entity on the other side has made a breakthrough. I believe we are about to make our departure from this basement.

OLD MAN: We're gettin' outta here. Still cain't tell if that's a good thing or a bad thing.

TXDAWG: Old Man says that he heard a blowtorch right before the metal started to deform. I did not hear that, but I was trying to hear on the other side of the door with my third ear, so my terrestrial ears were closed.

TEX: Whoever's out there still ain't said a word?

TXDAWG: Not a single word. I thought that maybe they were navigating some sort of contraption, like they were using a bulldozer to try to get in. But their energy is much too close to the door. I can sense a bodily form.

[We hear the metal twist and bang again.]

OLD MAN: Here we go, y'all. I think the next one's gonna be the one. This door's gonna fly off. Everyone, get behind me.

TEX: What are you gonna do, Old Man? You ain't even got a shirt on.

OLD MAN: I'm gonna protect my flock from shrapnel's what I'm gonna do.

TEX: I ain't your flock, pilg. TXDawg ain't, neither. Protectin' us from shrapnel won't do no good if someone barges in here with a gun or a Calcu—

[We hear one final bang, then outdoor ambience.]

TXDAWG: Oh! Uh, Tex, uh. Is that—?

[We hear a high-pitched whinny.]

TEX: Bluster! I-Is it really you?

TXDAWG: Tex, that can't be Bluster. Bluster's so much bigger and older.

[Another whinny.]

TEX: That's him, TXDawg. That's Young Bluster.

OLD MAN: We need to get the hell outta here, y'all. Tex, you take TXDawg and head outside. I'll grab MDawg and my shirt and meet ya there.

TEX: I'm on it. Come on, TXDawg.

[We hear Tex and TXDawg ascend the steps. Outdoor ambience fades out as Old Man goes to MDawg.]

OLD MAN: Alright, MDawg. We're saved. We're gonna get you outta here.

MDAWG: We're saved, how? What's going on?

OLD MAN: We're gettin' out of the basement's what's happenin'. We're goin'— somewhere safe. Uh—! Wha—? ...Wha—? *[Huffs.]* Where is it?

MDAWG: Uh, w-where is what?

OLD MAN: Tex. That no-good, rotten lowlife took my tape. *[Breathes in.]* Don't worry, MDawg. I ju— I just lost somethin' I thought was in my pocket. That's okay. Can't be worryin' about that

now. Need to get you outta here. Young Bluster is waitin' for us. Alright, I'm gonna pick ya up. One, two, three! *[MDawg grunts.]* I gotcha!

MDAWG: Is it... safe to go out there?

OLD MAN: We're about to find out, pard. *[We hear them ascend the stairs, through the door, and into outdoor ambience.]* I reckon anything's safer than stayin' here.

MDAWG: W-What? Is that... really Bluster?

TEX: Just as sure as the sky is blue, MDawg. Well. Light's red right now 'cause the fire. He's a little younger than I remember.

OLD MAN: Howdy there, Bluster. You sure are a sight for sore eyes. Y-You didn't set this here fire, did ya?

TEX: I'll bet ya Stinky it's the same fire that the Dawgs saw. TXDawg, you figure I got that right?

TXDAWG: I think it has to be the same fire. It's difficult to tell from here, but I get the same feeling. It feels like everywhere is burning.

OLD MAN: But we still don't know when we are, right? You ain't ever seen this Bluster before, Tex?

TEX: No, sir, I have not. Awful small for Bluster, but I'd recognize those colors anywhere. Ho, there, buddy. I-It's me, it's Tex. I don't reckon you remember me.

[Young Bluster snorts.]

TEX: Dang. Young Bluster. I never thought I'd see the day. I see you got a saddle and a pack on. Was someone ridin' ya? You mind if I take a look in there?

[We hear Tex unzip the pack, search through its contents, and pull out a piece of paper.]

TEX: There's a note in here, y'all! *[Straightens out note.]* "I'm sorry. I didn't mean for this to happen to MDawg. I didn't hurt him. Someone else did. I still need help. I think you do, too. I can help MDawg. Young Bluster will lead the way. Please believe me. Please believe in Young Bluster. We can help each other."

TXDAWG: This could be from the second person that I saw with MDawg on the other side of the valley. So... Do we trust him?

OLD MAN: I don't think we got many other options, pard.

TEX: Young Bluster, MDawg's hurt bad. He cain't really ride by himself right now. Think you can carry 'im?

[Young Bluster snorts.]

TEX: Attaboy. I'll get MDawg up on Young Bluster, make sure he gets comfortable out there, then we'll follow him wherever he takes us. That sounds good?

OLD MAN: Tex. Can we really trust this horse to go where we need to go?

TEX: Say whatever you want about a mangy old cur like me, but Bluster's a good horse. Young Bluster would never steer us wrong.

OLD MAN: You had better be right about that, you mangy old cur. Let's go, Young Bluster.

TXDAWG: Yes. Lead the way, Young Bluster.

[Young Bluster snorts.]

[Closing theme starts playing.]

CREDITS: *[Rapping.]* Hey, y'all, this has been WOE.BEGONE. The voice of Ty Betteridge was David Ault. Check out his podcast [Shadows At The Door](#), or go to [davidault.co.uk](#) for more. *[Stops rapping.]* About three hours ago, David messaged me and asked if I wanted him to be in the show, and I was like, "Yeah, sure." And so that's why Ty is in this episode. Thanks for playing.

[Closing theme plays out.]

[We hear water occasionally drip.]

BLOOPER (OLD MAN): It'll be like layin' on a big, plaid, flannel clown. *[Breaks character. Laughs.]* Big, plaid, flannel clown. *[Imitates clown nose honk.]*

[Brief start-stop of the closing theme.]

BLOOPER (TY): Oh, yes. But he doesn't know that I know who FLINCH is.

[Brief start-stop of the closing theme.]

[END Episode 174.]