

## EPISODE TWO HUNDRED AND TWELVE - THE SCORPION

*Original transcript edited by Karma and reviewed by Jenah*

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*[BEGIN Episode 212.]*

**INTRO:** Hey guys, quick plugs. I am still streaming over on Twitch at [twitch.tv/woebegonepod](https://www.twitch.tv/woebegonepod) for every Sunday I write that week's episode soundtrack and then we hang out and play a video game. Late last year I discovered a horn on Amazon called Brass instrument B flat flat large hunting horn French horn golden French horn with stand. And I promised that I would buy it during the 24 hour live stream. After a tumultuous process to actually acquire this horn, I have it. And so if you want to come hear me toot it on stream, that is [twitch.tv/woebegonepod](https://www.twitch.tv/woebegonepod). Not to toot my own horn, but beep beep. And if you'd like to support the show, you can do so on Patreon over at [patreon.com/woebegonepod](https://www.patreon.com/woebegonepod), where you can get early access to ad free episodes, instrumentals, soundtrack albums, Q&As, director's commentaries, movies with Michael, postcards, corkboards and morkboards. Bandcamp Friday was last Friday and I put out a little two song EP called *Shaduki, Shaduki, Shaduki* that are reworked songs from the Slovenia episodes, barely noticed and praise. So if you want to go hear those new versions of those songs, they're free for \$5 and up patrons or available at [woebegonepod.bandcamp.com](https://www.bandcamp.com/woebegonepod). Special thanks to my 10 newest patrons: [REDACTED] for supporting the show. Enjoy.

*[Opening theme plays.]*

**STINKY** *[narrating]:* "Hey, uh, Leg? You, you know him, right? So what can I expect from this? Why does he want to meet with me?"

Leg was uncharacteristically quiet. I felt a jolt of pain shoot up through my spine, a tingly, stinging sensation.

*"[Wincing.]* Ow, Leg, what the hell is that?" I asked. "Why are you stinging me?"

A disconcerting silence followed. But this wasn't the first time that Leg had gone inexplicably quiet or refused to elaborate, or stung me for that matter. In fact, I had finally convinced her to stop stinging me every hour on the hour so I, quote, "knew what time it was." But she took many other opportunities to sting me.

The door to the conference room was open and inviting. It looked normal. I don't know what I was expecting. I was meeting a man in the future about why I was there in the future. So I guess I was expecting a closed off room with like no door, something like in the compound. Instead, I was greeted by a normal conference room. I could see a courtyard outside with benches and trees. It reminded me of the Latvia apartment back in 2025.

"Anne must really like you to go through all of this."

There was a man sitting in one of the chairs. I hadn't noticed him until he spoke. He sat upright with good posture in his business casual attire, his short brown hair professionally quaffed. He smiled at me, a big perfect smile made of level straight rows of teeth like that one guy from *Taskmaster*. I bristled slightly. Usually when people who look like that talk to me, it means that something terrible is about to happen to me and they are probably about to explain that in extremely friendly terms.

I gave a hesitant nod. "I don't know why she did it," I said. "I'm a Mike iteration, but she doesn't really know me. I didn't meet her until she showed up at Matt's house."

"Well, she knows you," he said with a tone that indicated that I didn't understand the intricacies of what was going on. "She knows your iterations and that's just as good. What do those other iterations call you, by the way?"

"I'm Stinky," I said. I knew that he was Bradford Beaumont. That is why I was speaking to him.

"It's nice to meet you, Stinky," he said. "What was your role at Base before you came here?"

"I don't think I really had a role," I explained, worried that that was the incorrect answer. "Was I supposed to have a job? Sometimes I do stuff for Base, but sometimes I just wander around and I'm not the one that decides which of those I'm doing."

Bradford scribbled something down in a leather bound journal. "You know, Stinky, that sounds scary to me. Life being so unpredictable like that. Anne's report from that night says you almost got gunned down right there at Matt's house."

"Yeah, I guess, but I mean time travel." I trailed off.

"Well, yes, of course, time travel," Bradford said, adjusting his chair. "But there's always the risk that this time is the last time. I hate leaving things up to chance. And you had all of these people around you who were, uh, *[Starts snapping.]* what's the word that you used? Uh, *[Stops snapping.]* cross contaminated with each other so you couldn't tell like which was which or who was who. That must have been a nightmare."

"I mean, it was nightmarish," I said. "Some things that happened couldn't have been real. That's actually a real problem." I thought for a moment. There was a clear empty space for me to think in, I realized. "Nobody's gone," I said. "I was consolidated with Nobody. He was part of me and then Anne transported me here and Nobody's not here anymore. What happened? Where is he?" I was half scared to bring it up out of fear that doing so would cause him to return.

*"[Laughs.]* That whole consolidation thing is over, Stinky, thankfully. *[Snaps twice.]* Consolidation, that's the word!" he said. "That whole thing is what Anne was in 2025 to solve. The cross consolidation crisis. Yeah. So that Roger guy and that gadget he had just took a *[Makes a whooshing noise.]* wrecking ball to all of you guys. Hard to get work done with that much racket going on. We had to put a stop to it."

"So it's over?" I asked. "The consolidations are over? Anne issued a correction?"

"Anne helped *us* do a correction, but yes," Bradford corrected me.

"And who is 'us' exactly? Sorry, but all I know about you is your name is Bradford Beaumont and I was supposed to meet with you," I said.

Bradford Beaumont chuckled at himself. "[Laughs.] And I didn't even introduce myself. How rude. That's right. I am Bradford Beaumont, CEO of TryLeg Corporation, sometimes just known as Leg, and co founder of the Ibis Society."

"You *made* Leg?" I asked. "Sorry, I know that you're not tech support, but maybe you can help. Mine's been stinging me all day."

"Well, if she's anything like the others, she probably doesn't appreciate being put into airplane mode for our meeting," Bradford said. "But I wanted to meet *you*. I wanted to meet Stinky without her interference. She can be a bit of a control freak."

My impulse was to defend Leg from these accusations, but he wasn't wrong. If she were activated, she would have been doing all of the talking.

Bradford continued, "As CEO of TryLeg, my chief goal is to sell as many Leg units to as many customers as possible, all while preventing the TryLeg technology from propagating back to the time before I invented it. Not to brag, but TryLeg is extremely successful. I don't want someone inventing Leg before I did and founding the company without me. Of course, founding my company out from under me isn't the only propagation risk. It is our responsibility to make sure that all propagation is kept to a strict minimum, which is why I am happy to have your unit back here in 2030 where it belongs. 2025 is beyond the threshold and I'm glad that Anne found you and brought you to my attention."

I thought about the first time that I met Leg. Tex and TXDawg were operating on me, and then they were gone and Leg was here. Who did that to me? What did they do to Tex and TXDawg? What did Bradford know about it? I held on to these questions for the time being.

"Okay, but what do me and Leg have to do with the Stinky Device and Anne?" I asked. There was a flash of confusion on Bradford's face. "Oh, right, the Stinky Device is what we call the device that consolidated everyone, the one that Roger had," I explained.

"Stinky, you would be so surprised how important Base's cohesion is to other downstream projects," Bradford said. "Base is a micro organization by anyone's standards, but it punches way above its weight class. Base's interaction with other groups has lasting effects on them, which is why someone like me needs Base to thrive if I want to hawk talking smart gadgets to the best of my abilities." He winked at me. "The C.O.A. was keeping a close eye on you all, which they do dutifully even when others aren't paying any attention. They were the first to notice the cross consolidation crisis. Ooh, I am liking the [Snapping.] name of that. [Stops snapping.] Triple C, cross consolidation crisis. So yeah, C.O.A. notices the Triple C and they

came to me asking for cooperation on a mission they were planning. We were happy to work out an arrangement. Anne could swoop in and save the day, look like a superhero, grab that stinky device thing and get that out of circulation. My team and I would correct the place, reverse as much of the cross consolidation nonsense as we could, and then set everyone back down on a clear playing field. Notice that I didn't say a level playing field and I didn't say back to normal, but hey, pretty close, right? Base would be back on track and more importantly, certain other players are still excluded, namely Operose."

"So is it part of your plan that I'm here in 2030?" I asked.

"Well, not exactly," he said. "Anne didn't know about your Leg unit when she did the mission. She brought you back when she spotted it, which was all right with me. Helps with the clean up. Like I said, things aren't back to normal back in 2025. For instance, Base got set back in their time travel efforts by *years*. But I mean, the good news is that Operose has yet to rear its ugly head. And it gave me an opportunity to put my thumb on the scale. Mike and Michael work for me now. They report to me here in 2030. Their main job is seeking out Leg units that found themselves too far back in time like yours and disabling them. In return for their hard work, they get to keep an eye on Base and make sure that nothing upsets the apple cart out there, which helps me too, obviously. Their eyes are my eyes. The work's going slower than I'd like. I wish Base would get their time travel up and running, but [*Short sigh.*] you know me, I like to move fast and break things. But overall, it's a good system. Win, win."

I sat in thought for a moment trying to take all of this in. I remembered that the guy from *Taskmaster* was called Rob Beckett, and I remembered that Bradford had just said something about cleanup.

"Anne bringing me here helped with cleanup? What's cleanup?" I asked.

"Yeah, we're going bare bones this time around," Bradford said. "I wish that we could stop iterations entirely, but they're just way too simple to produce. Anyone with any level of time travel access can do it. So we did all we could to limit Mike iterations under the assumption that they would eventually run rampant again. Things are back to the status quo for now at least. It's just Mikey, Mike and Michael in 2025. So no stinky, but the good news for you is that you're here."

"Nobody's gone?" I asked.

"Huh? Uh, yeah, Stinky. We just talked about that." Bradford looked confused.

"No, I know he isn't consolidated with me anymore. Bradford, he's really gone? He's not out there in the world *anywhere*?" I asked.

"Not if I can help it," he said. He looked at me. "Stinky, you look like you're about to cry. Is something wrong?"

I was in fact about to cry. Nobody was truly gone? If Bradford Beaumont were telling the truth, I wouldn't have to worry about Nobody ever again. *[Speaking becomes increasingly desperate.]* Nobody who tinkered around in my head. Nobody who used my body to make me play WOE.BEGONE. Nobody who blurred the line of memory and dream so that I don't remember what I've done and what I haven't. Nobody who wanted to destroy me and then destroy the destruction so there weren't any traces left. *[Sharp breath.]* Nobody who chased me down somehow even when he wasn't chasing me. Nobody, the screen between myself and reality. He was saying that I was free from Nobody.

"No, that's great news," *[Sniffs.]* I sniffled. "It's just difficult to imagine."

"Well, that's the benefit of working with someone who knows what he's doing." Bradford smiled. "Nobody won't be back as long as the correction holds."

"Okay, and what about someone like MW?" The question shot out of me unexpectedly, probingly, like testing a rickety bridge.

"Oof, that entire project." Bradford looked like he was recounting a sour memory. "What a mess, what a mess, what a mess. Not as catastrophic as this one, but close enough, geez. You know, I'm not a fan of how that whole thing got sorted, but compromises are compromises. MW and all of his constituent pieces are now hopefully resting in peace. Talk about a tortured existence. I'm sorry any of that happened. Senseless waste of life is what that was. This time is different."

Bradford talking about MW in this way put a lump in my throat. I thought about the other iterations, Tex, TXDawg, MDawg, 47, 38, XL, everyone. I wanted to know if they were alive, if they were okay, if they existed, if Bradford knew about them. But after what he had to say about MW, I was afraid to say their names out loud out of fear that I might speak them out of existence.

I must have been silent for too long because Bradford began speaking again, no longer waiting for me to reply. "I'm truly grateful for Mike Walters and his iterations, you know. Mike and Michael are excellent employees who have done an incredible job with zero complaints. I wish they'd complain more honestly so that I would know what to fix. And Anne wouldn't be where she is today without them, and we wouldn't be where we are today without Anne. It's odd to say this to someone that I just met, but I owe you a lot too, Stinky, and I absolutely intend to make good on that promise when the time is right. This is a time of relative peace thanks to your Base. Operose is gone, most importantly, and we have you to thank for that and our correction to thank for keeping them gone. The only one still around making big waves in 2025 is O.V.E.R."

"Are you concerned about O.V.E.R. in 2025?" I asked.

*[Chuckles.]* I am *immensely* concerned with O.V.E.R. in 2025. I am *primarily* concerned about O.V.E.R. in 2025. They are excited to be the only fish left in the pond and are growing to match the size of the container they're in. Leaked info suggests they are trying to develop True Permanence again, which I'll believe it when I see it. But by the time I see it, it'll be too late. So we have to take it deadly seriously. It's kind of like a nuclear bomb. You want you and your

buddies to have it, but if anyone else gets it, it's the end of the world, right?" Bradford looked at me, studying my reaction.

"Well, I don't know what True Permanence is, but it sounds bad, I guess. I mean, the word sounds like a good thing, but you made it sound bad, like through context."

"Sorry, this was probably a conversation that could have waited until I got to know you better, Stinky," he said. "But you are in a unique position to help. Your iterations are, I mean. Mikey still works at O.V.E.R. Is helping us with this something that you would be interested in doing?"

"I think I need a vocab lesson before I commit to that," I said.

"True Permanence is exactly what it sounds like," Bradford said. "O.V.E.R. wants to affix things to the timeline permanently so that when me and Anne go out there and save the world and do things like fix the Triple C, O.V.E.R. stuff gets left out of it. That's too much power for them to have, in my opinion. *We* should have that power, Stinky. Me and you and the rest of TryLeg and the Ibis Society. We could set you and your iterations up to be powerful and comfortable for the rest of your lives in a way long thought impossible for mortal men. Whatever you want for however long you want for eternity, even. An end to uncertainty, Stinky." He pulled back slightly. "I'm coming off too strong, but you know what I mean. Something to think about."

"Yeah, I'm sorry to sidestep your excitement and cut to the chase," I said, "but you're asking me to come work with you?"

"Yeah, sure, Stinky, why the hell not?" Beaumont said. "Mikes have already worked at Base and O.V.E.R. and the Compound and Operose and even C.O.A. What's one more mega corporation, right?"

*[Scene transition.]*

*[A long sigh and deep breaths are heard as Stinky dreams.]*

**STINKY:** No, don't put that in my beard, Edgar. I'm allergic. My throat's closing up...

*[He takes another deep breath, then a sharp breath inwards as Leg zaps him. Static shocks are heard.]*

**STINKY:** Ah— Fuck, my allergy— **[LEG:** Get stung, idiot. Wake up, Stinky!] What are you doing, Leg? Are you... I don't need to know what time it is. Stop stinging me. It's the middle of the night. It's not even on the hour. It's 4:22.

**LEG:** This is not your alarm sting, you sleepy moron. This sting is to wake you up. We need to get moving now. We need to get Chance and Mike and get out of here.

**STINKY:** Why? What's going on? I didn't forget a mission or something, or is there danger?

**LEG:** I reestablished contact with Tex's Leg. He came online for a moment, and I had Tex's dream with him.

**STINKY:** Tex's Leg, the one that you like?

**LEG:** Platonically.

**STINKY:** And you had Tex's dream through the leg? Tex's Leg can see his dreams? Can you see my dreams?

**LEG:** Don't be stupid, Stinky. Of course I can see your dreams. I filed them away in my judgment free partition.

**STINKY:** They had better fucking stay there. Especially the cowboy dreams. You're not implanting the cowboy dreams, are... *[Scoffs.]* Why did you wake me up? Why are you telling me all of this? What was in Tex's dream?

**LEG:** First, promise me that you won't tell your new boyfriend Bradford Beaumont about it.

**STINKY:** He's not my boyfriend, don't be gross. He's teaching me a lot about the future, and it's stuff that I need to know if I want to save Base. I'm not happy about the whole MDawg-MW situation either, but if I can get him what he wants, which seems to be something that will help us too, then he can give us True Permanence.

**LEG:** I'll believe in True Permanence when I see it. Promise me you won't tell him.

**STINKY:** I won't tell him, of course I won't tell him. What was it, Leg? What was the dream?

**LEG:** Tex is dreaming about Slovenia. There's a village with a bunch of Michaels there, and they all use letters for their names. Tex is the letter B. It's hazy after that, and there's this weird forest creature with Sly's face on it that he's hunting through the forest. Probably not real. But I think the Slovenia thing is real. Someone there has a Leg, too. It's weak, like Tex's Leg is, but I picked up on it. It is putting out a distress signal. We need to go check it out.

**STINKY:** And why do we need to do this at four in the morning, Leg?

**LEG:** Bradford can't know. You heard how he talks about iterations. He'll wipe out the village if he learns about it. He'll send Mike or Michael to kill them.

**STINKY:** He wouldn't do that. Would he do that?

**LEG:** He wiped out Hippie Hound and Texas Hound and Cowbaby. What makes you think he wouldn't wipe the forest nymphs out, too?

**STINKY:** Okay, fine. We'll go get Mike and Chance *[Door opens and closes.]* and go to Slovenia. But this isn't a linear thing, okay? We're coming back to this exact second. How do I even get into Chance's room?

*[Stinky and Leg start walking.]*

**LEG:** He's in propagation quarantine so that he can go back to 2025 if he wants to. He's not allowed to see anything from 2030. We'll have to go to Mike first. He has the password.

**STINKY:** Must be nice to not be leglocked to 2030. Speaking of that, we *are* coming back, right? We're not gonna get stuck in Slovenia and be unable to return to 2030? Because, like I said, I am leglocked. We're breaking a lot of rules here.

**LEG:** I don't know. I'm not a mind reader. Except for your mind and also the mind of anyone with a Leg that will interface with me, like Tex with his dreams just now.

*[They stop walking. Stinky knocks on Mike's door.]*

**STINKY:** Mike, open up. We've got a... well, it's not a problem. We've got *something*.

*[Mike opens the door.]*

**MIKE:** Stinky, what the hell are you doing here? It's not even five in the morning yet.

**STINKY:** Leg thinks that she found a bunch more Michael iterations in Slovenia.

**LEG:** They were hiding in Tex's dream, but I found them.

**MIKE:** Tex, as in the guy that I went down to Texas to see? What does he know about Slovenia?

**STINKY:** He had a dream about some Michaels in Slovenia, apparently, and I guess he's from there. Leg picked up a different Leg signal coming from Slovenia and confirmed it, I guess. She wants to check it out while Bradford's still asleep. We were gonna grab you and Chance and go check it out. Are you in?

**MIKE:** So we're lying to Bradford about this because iterations are involved. Are you sure you want to do that, Stinky?

**STINKY:** Bradford told me that you decommission Leg units that make it back to 2025. What does that mean, Mike? 'Cause I know what Leg says would happen if you unplugged her from me.

**LEG:** Death would be a relief for you.

**STINKY:** Case in point.

**MIKE:** Yeah, she's right. You can't decommission the units without decommissioning the person attached to it. I normally look the other way and let Michael do that.

**STINKY:** Which is why Bradford can't know that there are iterations out there, and he can't know that there's someone with a Leg unit out there in 2025. It's probably attached to a Michael iteration. So are you in? Can you handle not telling your boyfriend Bradford about this?

**MIKE:** He's not my boyfriend. Don't be gross. I just work for him. Of course I'm in, Stinky. And of course I won't tell Bradford. What he doesn't know won't hurt him. This is exactly the sort of thing that Michael and I were looking for. That's why I went to Texas. And if they actually are connected to Tex, they might be able to help us.

**LEG:** Let's do it to it, party people. Let's go wake up Chance and get out of here. Road trip, motherfuckers. Woo hoo.

*[Closing theme plays.]*

*[Instrumentarians plays.]*

*Brass instrument B flat flat large hunting horn French horn golden French horn with stand  
Brass instrument B flat flat large hunting horn French horn golden French horn with stand  
Brass instrument B flat flat large hunting horn French horn golden French horn with stand  
Brass instrument B flat flat large hunting horn French horn golden French horn with stand*

*Pure tone and good intonation and good intonation  
Hey, have you ever wanted to piss off your neighbors and also you sound bad  
Hey, have you ever wanted to frighten your dog? She thinks I'm in danger  
Hey, have you ever wanted to experience the worst metal flavor  
I just want to relive middle school. I was the best French horn in my middle school*

*And I have the horn for you  
Yes, I have the horn for you  
The note that it makes isn't B flat  
But I'm too busy tooting to care about that*

*I bought it on Amazon  
All the way back in the winter days  
Never came so I got a full refund  
I got a different horn on eBay*

*You thought that the theremin was as annoying as I could possibly get  
Well dream bigger kid  
You didn't even know that this horn existed yet*

*It sounds like a goose  
It sounds like a moose  
It sounds like bowels letting loose  
It sounds like my stream just got harder to sit through*

*Yeah, his viewership's down  
All he does is toot on his horn now*

*I gotta get new friends  
B flat flat horn instrumentarians  
Haters are carrion  
Horn is Bavarian  
Never miss a note with the embouchure close  
Lip squeeze tight to make the right notes*

*S'dope*

*[END Episode 212.]*