

## EPISODE ONE HUNDRED AND EIGHTY - SET FIRE TO THE FACE ON FIRE

*Original transcript edited by Theo and reviewed by Jenah*

*[BEGIN Episode 180.]*

**INTRO (DAVID):** Hey, folks, quick plugs. Dylan is now asleep, because he's been on a writing marathon overnight. Uh, it's... I think he got to bed about maybe six a.m. his time? But even then, I'm not entirely sure, because he's still online on Discord, so something's keeping him going. Maybe it's biscuits and gravy. So, if you have any biscuits and gravy, please send them to: Dylan Griggs, Sleepy Town, Get Yourself The Fuck To Bed for—

**INTRO (DYLAN):** No, I'm awake, I can do it, I'm awake. Uh. Hey, guys. Uh, uh— quick plugs. *[Voice starts fading out.]* Welcome to the season finale— Wait! *[Voice gets pitched down.]* What are you doing?

**INTRO (ATHAN):** Hey, guys, quick plugs. I am Dylan, and I am still streaming every Sunday on Twitch. If you're listening to this episode on the day it was released, then you know that last week was my birthday, and we are now five days away from the anniversary of the show. I will be doing a 35,040-hour stream for the entirety of the current presidential term over at [twitch.tv/woebegonepod](https://twitch.tv/woebegonepod). If you'd like to support the show, you can do that at [patreon.com/woe\\_begone](https://patreon.com/woe_begone), where you get early access to ad-free episodes, instrumentals, soundtrack albums, Q&As, director's commentaries, Movies with Michael, postcards, corkboards, and more. I don't have access to the ten newest patrons, so instead, I'm going to be doing a dramatic reading of a haiku I wrote in the bathroom today. "Warm biscuits crumble / The gravy flows down my chin / I like how it's warm." Thank you for listening; enjoy the episode.

**INTRO (DYLAN):** *[Voice briefly pitched down and distorted, then voice effect stops.]* What? What happened? Where did I— Where did I go just now? Uh. Anyway. Special thanks to my ten newest patrons: [REDACTED] for supporting the show. Enjoy.

***[Warning: This episode contains many types of violence: wet and visceral violence, gun violence, but just a warning for violence in general. Listener discretion is advised.]***

*[We faintly hear the sounds of the Compound.]*

**OUTLAW TY** *[whisper-yelling]:* Psst! Fe. Fe! Over here!

**FELIX:** Not now, Ty. *[Sighs.]* I have an appointment to get to, and it's with another Ty duplicate, so I can't exactly talk to you about it, alright? Just— *[Pause.]* Outlaw Ty. Is that you!?

**OUTLAW TY** *[whisper-yelling]:* No, it's some other dang Ty in a cowboy hat. Yes, Fe, of course it's me, pilgrim! Now get over here before someone sees us!

*[We hear Felix walk towards Outlaw Ty.]*

**FELIX:** What on *earth* are you doing here, Outlaw? It's extremely dangerous! You're on thin ice with the Compound as it is! The only reason they haven't stuffed you in Storage already is that it's more trouble than it's worth these days after Nobody wrecked the place! If the other Tys find out that you're here, they may well try to keep you here. Or worse.

**OUTLAW TY:** I know that, Fe, but I have a problem.

**FELIX:** Oh, the, um. The thing with the, uh—

**OUTLAW TY:** No, no. The cream sorted that one out. It's one that I can't shoot my way out of this time, it's... one hell of a predicament.

**FELIX:** Well, you could take the cowboy hat off, for a start. Anybody who sees that thing will know it's you!

**OUTLAW TY:** I can't take it off. But that ain't why I'm here. I just transported in from Texas. I was the only one left. Tex and MDawg both up and vanished. I went to their house, and ain't nothin' but tumbleweeds. I need to borrow some of the Compound's resources to— to find 'im. He's in trouble, I just know it. I can't stand the thought of him wandering out there, alone.

**FELIX:** Yes, I know that Tex is missing, actually. If only that were the extent of the shenanigans that were going on at this very moment. Everybody's up to something all at once, and I mean everybody. I swear! Nobody could just stay put and do their actual jobs for a single second! It's all subterfuge this, and subterfuge that, all of the time!

**OUTLAW TY:** Wait. Y-You know that Tex went missing? A-Are the other Tys involved? I-Is he here in the Compound?

**FELIX:** Well, *one* other Ty's involved, and he's causing an enormous headache at the moment. The other Tys don't seem to know that it's going on. I first became aware of him because I'd been careful watching the— the fridge? In the break room? There's been some stuff going on with Samantha's lunch, and I— I just thought I'd keep an eye, and, well—... *[Takes a breath.]* It turns out... he was stealing *my* food. I wouldn't have minded if he'd just taken some of my, you know, special biscuits and gravy. But— *[Brief grunt.]* But he insists on taking the entire lot! The nerve of some duplicates!

But that was only the start of things. I didn't know who to suspect at first, so I went to Tracing. They rolled their eyes about litigating a lunchroom dispute, but they owed me a favor, so they ran the trace. And— Well, I'm glad they did, because the results... were unexpected. The food had somehow made its way to MW's apartment in Latvia. And those weren't the only weird signals coming through.

**OUTLAW TY:** Ah, so a duplicate was bringin' Emdubya food? Why would that be? Surely Emdubya is capable of rustlin' up his own grub.

**FELIX:** I didn't know, but it made me suspicious. So, that's when I started watching him. I quickly discovered that wasn't the only visit this duplicate made to the apartment building. As it turned out, he'd been making all sorts of undisclosed trips. Not just to the apartment, but to places all through space and time. He's meddling, and not in the usual Compound-authorized way.

**OUTLAW TY:** You found all of this through spyin' on him? That's the first red flag. If he was doing something legitimate, he would have come to you immediately for organizational support. Your spreadsheets are legend.

**FELIX:** That is exactly what I was thinking. And I could tell, just from his chosen locations, that this project would never get Compound approval. He's been all over the future. Kaz would never allow such a thing without extensive justification. Did you know, for instance, that we are currently in a timeline where all of Oldbrush Valley just gets set on fire in the future?

**OUTLAW TY:** I can't say that I did.

**FELIX:** Well, you should, because that's where Tex is! The rogue has been sending all sorts of Mike duplicates there. Why he's doing this or why Oldbrush Valley is on fire is still beyond me.

**OUTLAW TY:** So, he took your precious biscuits and gravy to savor after he sent Emdubya away? How odd.

**FELIX:** No, even odder! MW is still there, in the apartment. He was last time I checked, anyway. He could be gone by now. But it's the other duplicates who are in trouble.

**OUTLAW TY:** So, this Ty fancies Emdubya for some reason. Why might that be? Maybe he's becomin' a cowboy. Happens to the best of us. ...And you'd look good in a cowboy hat, too, partner.

**FELIX:** Heh. A cowboy hat? *[Brief chuckle.]* I, uh, I thought that was one of those sorts of things that you should only ever try once in your life, like, uh, Morris dancing, or, uh—

**OUTLAW TY:** No, y-you're thinkin' o' things you should never try, Fe. ...Ugh, Morris dancin'.

**FELIX:** Oh. ...Right, yes. *[Pause.]* I have an idea, actually. And I don't think he's becoming a cowboy. Come this way with me.

*[We hear them start walking.]*

**FELIX:** See, I've been sneaking into his office when he's been off on his illicit trips and perusing his personal documents. His shoddy records aren't up to my standards, mind you, but he has

documented enough to get some insight into what he's doing. He thinks he's "completing the handoff." Based on the data, I think that refers to the moment when Base formed the Satellite Base in Latvia with Mike and Michael. My guess is that he keeps visiting MW because he's chosen him as his favorite candidate to become Mike, and he's trying to force him into the position.

**OUTLAW TY:** Emdubya? Did the documents mention why he would wanna do that? Mike ain't no cowboy. I don't think he was before he went to the Satellite Base, either. He'd have to decowboyify Emdubya before sending him back. I don't even know if that's possible.

**FELIX:** There are some clues in the documentation as to why he believes so strongly in MW. But I'm going to have to do some work in the field to put it all together. I've been looking for the right time to slip away and start asking people some questions.

**OUTLAW TY:** Well, here's your sign, pard. You gotta help me find Tex. Bluster hadn't been eatin' since he's been gone. I brought him back to my place, but he just mopes around all day. I have a bad feelin' in my gut about it. Tex ain't gonna make it back unless we go get 'im. We need the cavalry to ride in, and save the day.

**FELIX:** *[Sighs.]* I knew this was where you were heading, Outlaw. I am going to help you, but I want you to know that it's for my own edification. I find you showing up here to speak to me at all to be quite vexing. For a group of duplicates that believe you're all the same person effectively, you sure do fight constantly. You're always at each other's throats! I will rectify this so that Kaz doesn't find out, become furious, and combine you all back into one. How does that sound?

**OUTLAW TY:** Vexin'? How do you think I feel? I'm willin' to shoot this other duplicate, if that's what you're implyin'. I ain't got no allegiances with 'em. Not anymore. I'm Texas born and bred now.

*[We hear they've stopped walking.]*

**FELIX:** We will both do what we have to when the time comes. Now, we've arrived at the office of the duplicate I've been telling you about. He's currently away, probably in furtherance of these plans that I've intercepted. But, I wasn't fully honest with you when I said that I only found files in there. I brought us here because we have something else to pick up before we head out.

*[We hear the door open.]*

**PYTHON:** Felix? What's going on? Ty told me not to open the door for anyone. ...Oh. You're here, too. *[Pause.]* Wait. Ty, why are you wearing a cowboy hat? Did you get it from Old Man?

**OUTLAW TY:** Matt? Felix, what in tarnation is Matt doin' in someone's office at the Compound?

**PYTHON** *[begrudgingly]*: I. Am. *Python*. You know, like the snake? The *[Hisses.]* python. I've never even met this Matt person that everyone keeps talking about.

**FELIX**: Outlaw, this is Python. Python, this is Outlaw Ty. He lives out in Texas with some Mike duplicates; it's sort of like its own Satellite Base. Anyway, now. *[Exhales.]* He's here because the Ty that brought you here is putting Tex and Old Man in danger. We're going to put a stop to what the other Ty is doing, but we're going to need your help. I know that he has promised to help you, but I do not believe that that promise was made in earnest.

**PYTHON**: I don't think so, either. I think he's using me as a way to drag Mike around by the nose. I'm in. If Old Man is in trouble, I'll help any way I can.

**FELIX**: That's good. Because we're going to need to talk to your housemates.

**OUTLAW TY**: Yeehaw!

*[Opening theme plays.]*

*[We hear the roar of the fire and the crunch of leaves as Tex wanders through Oldbrush Valley.]*

**TEX**: Ugh... Well. You done fucked up now, Tex. How am I supposed to climb a damn mountain in a firestorm? *[Huffs.]* I'm way too old for this shit. *[Sighs.]* Maybe I shoulda done more for Troy. That scary motherfucker. I know that dumb shit's all an act. Ugh, whatever. I don't need 'im. I don't need no one. I'm gettin' myself the hell outta here! That's the important part.

**MDAWG** *[distant]*: Hello? Hello, is— is someone out there? Hello? **[TEX: What the hell?]** Hello?

**TEX**: Who was that? ...MDawg, was that you!? Where are ya!?

*[We hear Tex speed up his trip up the mountain, grunting as he exerts himself.]*

**MDAWG** *[less distant as Tex approaches]*: Michael? Michael, uh, how did I get up here? **[TEX: MDawg!]** What— What's going on, where am I?

**TEX**: Is that you?

**MDAWG**: Michael.

**TEX**: MDawg? What the hell are you doin' out here alone? Where are the others? Where's TXDawg and Old Man?

**MDAWG**: Where are they? Uh, I—I— I don't know what you mean? Uh, I mean... n-no one else is out here with me. I—I haven't seen anyone, it's— it's— it's just me.

**TEX:** Are you sayin' you cain't remember nothin'?

**MDAWG:** R-Remember w-what? About the— the fire? Uh— I don't— I don't remember anything.

**TEX:** I cain't say I'm surprised, pard. You got hurt real bad out here. Hit on the head, or somethin'. You were out cold for who knows how long. A few hours, at least. Not unconscious, but completely out of it. I was scared you weren't gonna make it, but I— I didn't say nothin'. No need gettin' everyone worried. You really don't remember nothin'. No even gettin' here with us.

**MDAWG:** No, I don't remember anything like that. The last thing I remember is MW's house. Uh, I think everyone might have been there?

**TEX:** You got that part right, at least. You got transported first, 'fore the rest of us, but ya didn't stay gone. When ya came back, ya had a note with ya. Uh. Gimme a minute, uh. I got it with me somewhere. I took it off Old Man when I was stealin' his VHS tape, which I don't reckon you remember, either.

**MDAWG:** VHS tape? N-No. I— I don't remember any of this. I didn't even sense it in the astral field.

*[We hear Tex pull out the note.]*

**TEX:** Well, while you were here in burnin' Oldbrush Valley, someone handed you this here note, and then you ended up back at Emdubya's house with it. You don't remember who gave ya the note? We're tryin' to figure out who's doin' this to us and how to get home. But... we got split up. I guess you got split up with a second time.

**MDAWG:** I don't have any other ways of saying that I don't know. I know that's bodaceless, but I don't even remember hitting my head.

**TEX:** That's the worst part about hittin' your head, pard. Takes a big chuck outta your memory. We got two notes. One was that one you're holdin', and the other came on the back o' Young Bluster.

*[We hear nearby boulders start to move.]*

**TEX:** I took off on Young Bluster, but he abandoned me, too. So, what, Old Man leave you behind? That cur. I left y'all, but I wouldn't leave a wounded comrade alone in a firestorm.

**TXDAWG:** Uh, Michael, whichever one you are, uh—!

**TEX:** That's low.

*[We hear the boulders start to fall.]*

**MDAWG:** Look out!

*[The sound of rocks crashing down drowns out all other noise for a while.]*

**TEX:** MDawg. MDawg! If you can hear me, say somethin'! I– I'm stuck, my leg is stuck under this rock. *[Groans.]* I can't get it out! *[We hear the rocks stop falling.]* MDawg. ...What are–

*[Time travel noise.]*

**TEX:** ...Fuck. Fuck! He's gone, I gave MDawg the note! It was me. I–I still don't know who wrote it. Fuck. I'm stuck. *[Groans.]* ...I deserve this for Troy. *[Groans.]* That leg is gone... *[Groans.]* Fuck. Goddamnit! *[Calling out.]* Young Bluster? Old Man? Uh– Someone! Help, my leg is crushed! I– I can't get free, I'm– I'm g– I'm gonna die out here, help! Help! *[Coughs.]* TXDawg... *[Groans.]* Bluster... I'm sorry...

*[We hear the world swirl and reverb around him. Some time passes, but we can't be sure how much. Tex mutters to himself, but the result is nonsensical and washed out. Then things snap back into focus.]*

**EAGLE:** Well, well, well. If it isn't my old nemesis. Which one would you happen to be? Michael? Old Man? Tex? Or one I haven't even heard of yet? It's not very cowboy of you to be whimpering like that.

**HELEN:** He's really hurt, Eagle. Look at his leg! He's pinned down under that boulder. He might not be able to hear you. He might be in shock. Hey. Can you hear us, Walters? *[We hear Tex weakly groan.]* Whichever one you are?

**EAGLE:** That's nothin' a little percussive maintenance can't fix.

*[We hear Eagle slap Tex several times.]*

**EAGLE:** What's your name, soldier?

**TEX:** Uh... Tex... *[Groans.]*

**EAGLE:** Ah. Howdy there. And why are you out here, Tex?

**TEX:** Someone sent me. *[Stammers.]* I don't know why I was put out here...

**HELEN:** He's not going to be able to answer your questions, Eagle. **[TEX: Helen...]** We need to push the boulder off of him and take him back to the ranch with us. Time's of the essence! He's going to die if we don't do something.

**EAGLE:** *[Laughs.]* Push the boulder off of him? I appreciate the flattery, Helen, but we are not moving that boulder. It probably weighs, *[Brief chuckle.]* I'd say two or three tons. We are not nearly strong enough. That boulder is staying there, and so is everything underneath it, Tex's leg included.

**HELEN:** We can't leave him here! We have to get it off.

**EAGLE:** He can come with us back to the ranch. The left leg is staying here, though.

**HELEN:** Eagle, you can't be serious!

**EAGLE:** Relax, Helen. I'm a pro with a hunting knife, and ol' Tex here was never going to be able to walk on that mangled thing again, even if we got the boulder off. That leg has gotta go, and I'm just the man for the job. Some regiments call me The Surgeon, you know. Alright, now, Tex: I'm gonna give you my belt to bite down on so you don't bite through your tongue.

*[We hear Eagle remove his belt.]*

**HELEN:** You can't be serious. You're going to cut his leg off? Here.

**EAGLE:** Where else would I do it? Do me a favor and be useful, Helen. Make sure he doesn't hurt himself while I'm doin' this.

**HELEN:** You haven't even asked him yet. Tex, is it okay—

**TEX:** Just cut it off! *[Groans.]* I'm— I'm slippin' in and out... I— I don't know how much time I got...

**EAGLE:** See? We need to act fast. I'm going to get started, Tex. Are you ready?

**TEX:** Just do it, please. *[Groans.]*

**EAGLE:** Alright. In three—

*[We hear Helen gasp as Eagle begins cutting through flesh. Tex starts yelling and crying out in horror and pain.]*

**EAGLE** *[teasing]:* Come on, you whimp. If you were in my army, getting your leg cut off wouldn't even be the worst thing that would happen to you today. We do this thing 365 days a year. It's not even your good leg! When was the last time you used your left leg for anything important? And I'm taking it off right at the joint. Like carvin' up a Thanksgiving turkey. A nice, clean cut. *[Stops cutting.]* Alright. I'm gonna pop your hip out of its socket. That's gonna tickle a little. And, *[We hear the leg detach.]* there we go. Congratulations, Tex! You're free. Helen, help him get up. We need to get him back to the ranch so we can cauterize the wound.



*[Tex falls silent.]*

**HELEN:** Tex, I'm sorry. There could have been some other way!

**EAGLE:** Don't be sorry, Helen. We saved him! There wasn't any other way. We're stuck out here with nothin'. It's not like we could do time travel surgery on him. We don't even have those rudimentary Calculators that they use at Base. Come on. You get that side, and I'll get this side. Let's go. We'll get him back to the ranch.

*[We hear the crunch of leaves as they make their way back down the mountain.]*

*[Scene transition.]*

**MARISSA:** Honey, I'm home! Ugh. You would not believe the absolute clown show work was today, I swear to god. I almost got to go all John Woo/Gun Fu on someone's ass, which would've been dope as fuck, but— I— missed, so that's fuckin' embarrassing. And as if that wasn't bad enough, I had to fill out all the damn paperwork about it!

All I'm saying is, if Roger doesn't wanna Find Out, then maybe he doesn't wanna Fuck Around in the off-limits areas, either. I don't care who his daddy is, I'll kick his ass, too if I have to. Look, if he's still alive to bitch about the whole thing, then he should be the one doing the pencil pushing. Not me! ...On the plus side, he just about shat himself, so at least there was that.

**CHARLIE:** Hey, babe. *[Kisses Marissa.]* Welcome home. I'm glad you had a good day today. Please don't shoot Roger, though. He gets on my nerves, too, I get it, really, but I just smile and ignore him. Easy like that. Can't you do the same?

**MARISSA** *[realizing something is off]:* Uh... Yeah. *[Pause.]* Uh, well, yeah, uh, like I said. Just some nepo baby bullshit, as usual. Honestly, I almost thought about shooting him again properly just to get him to shut the hell up, but then that'd mean even more admin, so, meh, whatever. Anyway. How was your day? Get up to anything fun after Mikey and the others left?

**CHARLIE:** *[Brief laugh.]* Not really. Pretty boring, all things considered. I didn't have gate duty today, so I just cleaned up around the house, lazed around a little bit. I was so tempted to watch some of that show we started yesterday, but I waited just for you; I would never. ...I distracted myself with some chores, some dishes, likewise, you know.

**MARISSA:** Yeah! I've noticed, actually. Something's... different. Around here. ...Actually feels like something's missing? Did you get rid of somethin'?

**CHARLIE:** Huh? *[Brief laugh.]* What? I don't think so... Just regular old spring cleaning. Nothing too fancy.

**MARISSA:** Uh-huh, uh-huh... Well. It's not spring, exactly. Um... There is dust on them shelves, and that's not a criticism of your cleaning, by the way, I know it's on sight with those dust bunnies when you're actually going at it. Mm... *[Clicks tongue.]* Oh. I figured it out. It's the tablecloth. It's the tablecloth, right? Yes... Alright, alright, so that means... you just lied to me. You didn't clean today.

**CHARLIE:** *[Sputters.]* Babe! What? Lied to you!? Are you serious right now? Are you actually accusing me of lying to you? I would never! Is your adrenaline spiked from shooting at people today or something? What's this about, what's going on?

**MARISSA:** Ah-ah, wait, that's not all! You lied about Mikey this morning, too.

**CHARLIE:** *[Scoffs.]* What? I don't know what's gotten into all of you guys, seriously. But I know I don't appreciate being treated this way. I'm not a liar. You know I'm not a liar; you know I'm not a liar. Honesty is always the best policy, even when it makes things more difficult in the short term. You know that!

**MARISSA:** And that's what makes you just the *perfect* liar, babe. No one ever listens to the boy who cried wolf, but it's the card shark who always knows when to play their ace who really makes the big splash. Everyone knows that Charlie never lies, so that means when you really need to, you can go all in with your liar coins and snap up the big prize!

But like... Mikey? Really? Girl, c'mon. If you're gonna play highroller, then at least go for something big, ya know? At this point, Mike iterations are a dime a dozen, and I know that tablecloth was worth more than that.

Which brings us back around full circle. The tablecloth. Now, I know I didn't spill any coffee today, I'm not an animal. And if you spilled something, then I can't see why you'd lie about it. That is, unless there was some wild party going on in here that I wasn't invited to.

**CHARLIE:** This is my house, Marissa, you know. Not yours. You can't come in here and talk to me like this. I can do whatever I want with my kitchen table.

*[We hear Marissa cock her gun.]*

**CHARLIE:** Fuck. Marissa...

**MARISSA:** Sweetie, I don't know what is going on right now, but we are about to figure it the fuck out. *[Thinking.]* It was blood, right? You got blood on the tablecloth. Something you can't wash out. But not yours, though. So. Whose?

**CHARLIE:** U-Uh—...

**MARISSA:** You're right, Charlie. We do know each other. So, I know that you're lying, and you know that I will shoot if I have to. I've shot Mikey. I've shot Anne. And I'll need therapy, but hey, who doesn't? We can always do some time travel shit about it later. So. Start talkin'.

**CHARLIE:** Marissa, I d—... MW and Ty are—

**MARISSA:** I'm sorry, what!? Ty!? Ty Fucking Betteridge!? Are you fucking kidding me right now! Ty Betteridge. Ty Fucking Careful Fucking Betteridge!

**CHARLIE:** Are you going to let me fucking finish, Marissa? You asked me to start talking, and here I am, trying to talk.

**MARISSA:** You're keeping secrets from me with Ty Fucking Betteridge! [*In Cantonese.*] Jau<sup>5</sup> mou<sup>5</sup> gaau<sup>2</sup> lan<sup>2</sup> co<sup>3</sup> [有冇搞攞錯], holy shit, babe. I love you to death, but "to death" is about to be the operative fuckin' phrase here. I killed Anne over less than that!

**CHARLIE:** [*Huffs.*] Marissa, I can explain. ...I don't want you to have to shoot me. Okay? I know that you don't want me to get involved with anything, but it's my choice, okay? Something was happening, and I chose to get involved. And it wasn't Ty that originally came to me, it was MW! Something important was happening to him, but Base couldn't know or it could jeopardize the whole thing, so he had to keep it hidden, so he came to me because I'm not even technically a member of Base—

**MARISSA:** [*Under her breath.*] Ngaak<sup>1</sup> gwai<sup>2</sup> sik<sup>6</sup> dau<sup>6</sup> fu<sup>6</sup>— [呃鬼食豆腐——] [*Out loud.*] You know what? Just save it. Save it. I seriously cannot with you right now. You've obviously put a lot of practice into this, so let's go get you the audience you deserve. You didn't just lie to me, you lied to the rest of Base. You looked Chris right in the eye and said that was Mikey we were talking to. That wasn't Mikey. Was it, babe?

**CHARLIE:** Look, fine, it wasn't Mikey. But, it was MW. I only did it because—!

**MARISSA:** Nah-ah-ah-ah! You don't get to abuse your superpower and lie to us like that. We all trusted you!

**CHARLIE:** It's not a superpower.

**MARISSA:** Hey, Charlie? You wanna know what the worst part was about killing Anne? I'll give you a hint: it wasn't pulling the fucking trigger. It was the fact that I had to finish the goddamn mission myself without a fucking clue what I was doing, because we got fucked by assuming that we could still trust her. We gave her one job, and even her thinking about fucking us over was enough to need damage control.

If you really wanna roll with Base so bad, then you can play by the same goddamn rules as the rest of us! And you don't have to have read the fucking manual to know, at bare minimum, that means *not* fucking around with Ty Fucking Betteridge! I cannot fucking believe you right now.

**CHARLIE:** How am I expected to know what the rules are if you never let me get involved? And I promised MW.

**MARISSA:** Ty being our enemy should not be new fucking information, Charlie! You know what? Fuck it. Honestly. We're heading over to Base right now, and you're gonna tell 'em exactly what the fuck is going on.

**CHARLIE:** Fine, alright, but I promised MW—

**MARISSA:** No offense, but I don't care what you promised MW. The jig is up! We're gonna sort this whole thing out. I'm going to call them and have them transport us.

*[We hear Marissa make a call on her phone.]*

**CHANCE** *[though the phone]:* Hello? Marissa? Is everything okay? Is something going on?

**MARISSA:** Uh, hi, you're not Edgar. What the fuck, Chris? Why are you answering the phone?

**CHANCE** *[though the phone]:* I don't know where Edgar is. I haven't seen him since we left for Charlie's. I wasn't just gonna sit there and let the phone ring in his office.

**MARISSA:** *[Huffs.]* Well, I'm at Charlie's right now, and... we've got a problem. Turns out, we were right about that little dipshit we dragged here this mornin'. That wasn't Mikey! That was MW.

**CHANCE** *[though the phone]:* I fucking knew it. But why would Charlie lie to us about that? She was lying, right? She wasn't just, like, wrong? I honestly don't know which is scarier, her lying to us, or genuinely not being able to tell them apart.

**MARISSA:** She's never been wrong a day in her life, I'm afraid. And as for the lying: well, that's a work in progress. *[Pause.]* I've got a gun pointed at her right now. That's not a euphemism, by the way. So, I could get her to spill the beans right here and now, but I thought it'd be more fun if we all got together to do it. Either way, it seems like MW is the ringleader in all of this, and he's got Ty Fucking Betteridge in his back pocket. So, go shove that nerd in a locker until we get there so he can't make a break for it. We need to transport over ASAP. Beam us up, Scotty.

**CHANCE** *[though the phone]:* With pleasure. I'll have Ryan do that right now. *[Calling to Shadow.]* Hey, Ryan? We have a Code Mollusk. Can you do that for me?

**SHADOW** *[though the phone]:* I'm on it! Where is he?

**CHANCE** *[though the phone]*: Living room.

**SHADOW** *[though the phone]*: Come here, Mikey! I need you for a second.

**CHANCE** *[though the phone]*: That's not Mikey, Ryan! He's—... I'll explain everything in a bit. *[Stops calling out.]* Alrighty, Marissa. MW will be safely locked away in the closet until you get here. I'll send a Calculator your way as soon as we get off the phone.

**MARISSA**: Cool, coolcoolcoolcool. See ya soon, then. Bring your best interrogation weapon.

**CHANCE** *[though the phone]*: Ryan says my best interrogation weapon is my sharp tongue.

**MARISSA**: Well, it sure ain't those skinny-ass legs of yours. I'll bring the machete. See ya in a bit.

**CHANCE** *[though the phone]*: Bye, Marissa.

*[We hear them hang up.]*

**MARISSA**: The machete is only for MW. I swear.

*[Scene transition.]*

*[We hear some commotion as everyone files into the living room at the Crust Punk House.]*

**MAGNOLIA** *[overlapping]*: Oh. There's people in the house. Okay, hi! Python, who are these people? Is that another—? Is there another cowboy? We can't have another cowboy. There's too many cowboys. Oh. Wow. Yeah, there's people! Okay. Um...

**FLASH** *[overlapping]*: Okay, what's going on? Hey. Uh... What's happening? Who are these guys?

**ROBERT** *[overlapping]*: What are these people doing here? What's Python up to? What is all this?

**SKINNER** *[overlapping]*: Good to see you, Felix. *[Laughs.]* Ty, yeah, that's a good look for you. Lovin' the cowboy hat. *[Laughs.]* Old Man rub off on you, too? *[Laughs.]*

*[We hear Felix making a shushing noise, and Skinner snorts.]*

**FELIX**: Are we ready? Is this everyone?

**SKINNER:** Uh... Let's see... uhh...*[unintelligible muttering]* Robbity-Bobbity... Flash... Yeah— I mean, we're missing Old Man, but he hasn't been around lately, so I wouldn't count on him.

**OUTLAW TY:** Yeah, we know that. That's why we're here, actually.

**PYTHON:** Where is Skuzz?

**SAX:** Skuzz is playing a show in Vermont this week. They won't be back for a few days. And that's assuming the rustbucket they drove to the gig can even make it back. We might have to go get them.

**PYTHON:** Okay, so this is everyone except for Old Man and Skuzz. *[Sighs.]* I hope that'll be enough. *[Addressing everyone.]* Hello, everyone! Like Skinner just said, Old Man has been missing for awhile now. We're trying to figure out what happened to him.

**ROBERT:** Old Man goes missing all the time. Why should we care?

**PYTHON:** Well, these people are Ty... uh, Outlaw Ty, I guess? And Felix. They're from the Compound, which is a time travel organization sort of like O.V.E.R., and they think that Old Man could be in a lot of trouble this time, and we might be the only people who can help him out.

**FELIX:** At the Compound, we're able to trace the source of time travel events, and we traced a duplicate of Ty... This is Ty, this one, right here. Picture him without a cowboy hat on, alright? We traced him to this building. Would any of you know what he might have been doing here?

**SAX:** You don't know what you were doing here, Ty?

**OUTLAW TY:** I ain't the one that was here. It was a different duplicate of me. One that ain't a rough and tumble outlaw. Have you seen anyone matchin' that description?

**SKINNER:** Naw, I haven't seen anyone? But, but... we can check the cameras, if you want.

**MAGNOLIA:** What cameras?

**SKINNER:** The ones that I monitor from the security station in my room. *[Pause.]* You didn't think that we'd let any old chucklefuck wander around here unfilmed, did you? Mags. Come on.

**SAX:** I spraypainted over the one in the garage.

**FLASH:** Yeah, same with my room. You didn't sweep your room for bugs, Magnolia? That's, like, OPSEC 101.

**MAGNOLIA:** What!? No! I didn't know I was supposed to. I didn't know I was supposed to do "OPSEC"!

**ROBERT:** We'll help you get the cameras out of your room when the meeting is over. Someone should have done that when you moved in, but it was a busy time.

**SKINNER:** So, speaking of cameras that you all do and do not know about. Uh, Flash: I know it was you who ate my leftover coconut cream pie. Uh, Sax: stop drinking directly from the milk container. Robbity-Bobbity: you keep doing what you're doing. You're perfect. And, uh, Britches: you've been picking the lock to Old Man's room and snooping around in there at night. Care to explain yourself?

**BRITCHES:** Ain't nothin' to explain. I've been breakin' into Old Man's room, what's your point?

**MAGNOLIA:** You've been breaking into people's rooms!?

**BRITCHES:** Don't worry. Just his.

**SKINNER:** Well, maybe since these fine folks are asking about him, you could tell us the tale of what you've learned on your adventures, huh?

**BRITCHES:** Oh, I'll tell ya. But if he's in a pickle, you might wanna leave him to brine once you see what he's been up to. Especially you, Magnolia. It's some shady shit, I'll tell you what.

**MAGNOLIA:** Especially me? What are you talking about? He hasn't done anything to me.

**BRITCHES:** I think maybe I'd better show ya. Y'all wanna take a field trip down to Old Man's room?

**OUTLAW TY:** If you think that can help us find him, then yeah.

**PYTHON:** Show us, Britches. Right this way, everyone. It's right at the end of this hallway, Felix.

**BRITCHES:** I started leavin' it unlocked once I figured he wasn't gonna be back for a little while. Step right in, everybody. [*Opens the door.*] It's gonna be cramped.

**FLASH:** Uh, I don't know about this, gang. Old Man always said he would shoot us if he found us going through his stuff. Rooms like this can remember when negative energy's been put into it. Old Man will be able to tell we were in here.

**FELIX:** Old Man may very well be dead unless we find him. So, I think the risk of him shooting you is relatively low.

**OUTLAW TY:** We might find somethin' that makes us able to save him.

**BRITCHES:** Drum roll, please.

*[We hear a short drum roll, then Britches opens a drawer and takes out a binder full of papers.]*

**BRITCHES:** Here ya go. *[Drops papers down.]* It's a record of what Old Man has been up to, and it ain't pretty.

**ROBERT:** A spreadsheet? *[Grabs papers.]* Why is he filling out a spreadsheet by hand? If he was going to keep such a large one, he should have come to me! I could have helped him digitize it! Something this large needs to be searchable.

**SAX:** What are these, Britches? Does that say "Magnolia 214"? "Magnolia 215"? And it keeps going on.

**BRITCHES:** You bet your cockney ass it does, Sax.

**SAX:** I'm not cockney, actually, I'm—

**SKINNER:** Woahwoahwoahwoah, wait just a second here, Britches. *[Scoffs.]* Magnolia 214. Just how many are there, exactly? Like, there wouldn't happen to be, I don't know, uh, a thousand of them, would there? Just— Just— I don't know, just shootin' in the dark here. Like, near, or maybe exactly 1,000 Magnolias?

**BRITCHES:** So. I guess Skinner already knew what he was up to. Yes, Skinner. In fact, there are thousands of entries in this here spreadsheet.

**MAGNOLIA:** Wait, waitwaitwait. You all are acting like you're looking at this and understanding what it means. I don't know what it means! And I'm Magnolia! A thousand of what!? What does this have to do with me? What does Magnolia 214 mean?

**PYTHON** *[reading]:* "Strangulation after prolonged battle..." "Magnolia 215: surprise execution, shot in back of head..."

**FLASH:** Gross. Why the hell would he write that?

**PYTHON:** Does this mean what I think it means?

**BRITCHES:** Looks like Old Man's been killin' Magnolia. A thousand times over. Well, that's time travel for ya.

**SKINNER:** Alright, come on, Britches, keep up. It's not "killing Magnolia a thousand times." I'm pretty sure, anyway, that Old Man has killed a thousand Magnolias. As in, different Magnolias than the one living in this house with us. Hell, some of them are probably cowboys.



**SAX:** A thousand Magnolias? Why would there be a thousand Magnolias? Where would they all go?

**SKINNER:** Oh, those are great questions that I don't have the answers to. But, our pretty little Magnolia here either has no idea, or they're playing ignorant. What do you know, Magnolia? Anything you wanna get off your chest while we're airing the dirty laundry?

**MAGNOLIA:** I don't know anything! I swear! I'm just as surprised as you are!

**FLASH:** You know who doesn't seem all that surprised? Skinner. Why do you know so much?

**SKINNER:** Okay. Uh, it's not important why I know what I know. But, yeah, no. The Thousand Magnolia Problem? It's not news to me. Guess it's... not a problem anymore, though. Seems like Old Man's been a busy bee and brought the population down to one, lone individual.

**BRITCHES:** First, he put a bomb in Skuzz, then there's this. Fuck. I reckon he's been tinkerin' with us in ways we ain't even figured out yet. None of us are safe. There could be a book of Skinners he killed laying around here somewhere.

**SKINNER:** *[Laughs.]* A thousand of me? Heh. In Robby-Bobby's dreams. Heh. If there were a thousand of me, I would know about that. *[Accusingly.]* Magnolia...

**MAGNOLIA:** I don't know anything! I'm a video essayist! I came here to find a horse! You think I know that there's a thousand of me? That makes no sense! I'm just as surprised as you are!

**PYTHON:** Actually. Ty—the Ty that we are looking for, not Outlaw Ty—brought me here before everyone moved in to try and figure out where I came from. Mike and I snuck up to the window, and I looked inside. Old Man's cowboy hat was here already. He was here before any of us.

**BRITCHES:** Wherever Old Man's gone, let him go. He's done enough damage here, just my two cents.

**FLASH:** You know, I thought I felt him intruding on my brainwaves. I didn't say anything, 'cause he was, like, super easy to psychically counter, but...

**FELIX:** Thank you for showing this to us, Britches. It is extremely helpful.

**SAX:** I'm not so sure that I want to find Old Man anymore, either.

**FELIX:** Robert, you said that you could digitize the spreadsheet. Um. How long would that take?

**ROBERT:** I don't know. Maybe an afternoon?

**FELIX:** I'd really appreciate it if you could do that for us. It might help us investigate each separate incident. It could come in handy later.

**ROBERT:** Yeah, no problem. I can have it to you by the end of the week. Flash has a new contract that I need to look over as well, but I can get started as soon as I'm done with that.

**FLASH:** I'm talking to some TV people about a ghost hunting show.

**SAX:** Looks like there might be a lot of Magnolia ghosts running around out there. That could be your first episode!

**PYTHON:** This spreadsheet doesn't tell us where Old Man went, though. Felix, is this enough of a clue?

**FELIX:** I think so. I wasn't expecting much out of this visit. We still have another stop to make. You have all been extremely helpful. So, thank you all so much for your cooperation. We will be in touch after we find Old Man to get the spreadsheet, and to investigate the, um... what d— what did you call it, Skinner? The, um... the 1,000 Magnolia Problem.

**SKINNER:** "Problem" is relative, obviously, but yeah.

**BRITCHES:** Maybe don't send 'im here once you've found him.

**OUTLAW TY:** I'm sure we'll hear Old Man's explanation when we find him. We can discuss the particulars then.

**PYTHON:** *[Sighs.]* I'm not gonna write him off yet. Old Man has a reason for all the stuff he does, even if it doesn't make sense to us. Felix, you said we had another stop to get to?

**FELIX:** Yes. That's right. If we are ready to go, I can transport us out of here right away and into the next location.

**PYTHON:** I'm ready.

**OUTLAW TY:** I'm ready, too. It was nice meeting all o' y'all.

**SKINNER** *[sarcastically]:* Mm, it's always a brighter day when I get to see Ty Betteridge.

**FELIX:** Alright. Transporting out of here in three, two, one...

*[Time travel noise.]*

*[Beat.]*

**FLASH:** Okay, I'm gonna say what we're all thinking: what the hell was that?

**MAGNOLIA:** 1,000 Magnolias...?

**BRITCHES:** We need to figure out a way to keep them from poppin' in here like that.

**SKINNER:** Heh. Whaddaya say, Sax. You wanna build us a transportation-proof array?

**SAX:** I'll see what I have laying around in the garage, shall I?

*[Scene transition.]*

**MW** *[through door]:* You can let me outta here, you know. I don't got no Calculator or nothin'. There's nothin' I can do to hurt y'all. I'm powerless.

**MARISSA:** No shot, jackass. I've seen what the Mikes do when they get desperate. You're staying locked in that closet until we're ready to move ya.

**CHANCE:** I'm familiar with a desperate Mike. One time, we were playing *Sorry!*, and Mikey "accidentally" dropped all of my pieces down the garbage disposal when he thought that I might win.

**SHADOW:** You weren't even going to win. *[Brief laugh.]* I was way closer.

**CHANCE:** Yeah, but I was the one that kept sending all his pieces back to the start. You snuck by because you kept quiet about being in the lead.

**MW** *[through door]:* You know, most folks don't play board games as much as y'all grown-ass adults do. Also, *Sorry!*'s a brand name; the game's called Ludo.

**CHARLIE:** Marissa's a sore loser at board games, too. Don't let her tell you otherwise. There was this one time we were competing in an international *Candy Land* tournament, and we'd made it to the final four. It was the second to last game of the year. Right when we were about to lose, Marissa freaked out, pulled out her gun, and shot our opponents in the head. When security tried to stop her, they had to call backup because she was on a complete rampage; it's a miracle anybody left that situation alive. Long story short, we are now banned from international *Candy Land* tournaments. We did have to correct that one, too.

**MARISSA:** Aw, *babe*, you didn't have to tell them all that!

**CHANCE:** What you do need to tell us is what the hell you're up to, Charlie. This is an interrogation, not game night.

**MARISSA:** Well, you're not actually that far off. Turns out, Charlie was in the mood for a little murder mystery dinner party. Weren't ya, babe? Oh. You know. She killed someone in the kitchen.

**CHANCE:** Wait, you killed someone!? Who!?

**CHARLIE:** ...Yeah, okay. *[Sighs.]* Uh, I think we lost the game, MW. I think we need to tell them what's actually going on. We can't keep up the lie any longer. Jig is up.

**MW** *[through door]:* I'm secondin' Chance. This ain't game night, Charlie, you're about to get me killed.

**MARISSA:** Well, hey! Don't threaten me with a good time! Come on. You tell us what's going on, we'll kill MW, everything will go back to normal.

**CHARLIE:** Alright, so... story time, then? Buckle up, kids, because this is a long and sorta confusing one. Okay. So. This all started a little while after the Operose incident. You know, the one where "Skuzz was a bomb"? Whatever that means? MW visited me and explained that he was beginning to receive odd messages. He said that he's been receiving VHS tapes from an iteration of Michael, and that this iteration of Michael was telling him that he, MW, was going to be the iteration that became Mike when it was time for someone from our "present" to go back and form the Satellite Base. This iteration said that Base would try to stop him, but if they successfully stopped him, that things would go extremely badly for Base. Like, horribly. End of Base's lineage kind of thing. The idea was that Base was being tricked, and the Michael on the VHS tapes was the only one that had the correct info to prevent Base from being destroyed. ...I think that's everything, I swear. Do I have that right, MW?

**MW** *[through door]:* VHS Michael says they're all gonna die unless I'm Mike, so. R.I.P., y'all, I guess.

**MARISSA:** Blah, blah, blah, yeah, yeah, yeah. Skip to the part where Ty Betteridge gets involved.

**CHANCE:** God fuckin— Ty is in this?

**MW** *[through door]:* Ty was helpin' me with the handoff.

**SHADOW:** And you didn't see anything wrong with Ty helping you?

**MW** *[through door]:* I can explain, but it'd be a lot easier if you'd let me out of this dang closet! *[Pause, then huffs.]* Fine! Ty knew about the tapes. He said he'd also received some tapes, and that they said the same thing: Emdubya must become Mike, or Base is gonna get wiped out. He told me that his interests were the same as that Michael's, and that their interests were the same as mine. I was told that I was supposed to turn into Mike. Ty said that he had experience

with timelines in which Base had been wiped out, and that that's a very real possibility, and that he would help us prevent that. *[We hear MW try to move around.]* Sorry if you cain't hear me good, there is a knit sweater right in my face.

**SHADOW:** If all of this is about who becomes Mike, where is Mike?

**MARISSA:** Yeah, Charlie. Where is Mike?

**MW** *[through door]*: Charlie killed him.

**CHANCE:** D-Did that not just defeat the purpose?

**CHARLIE:** Oh, come on, you guys. I didn't kill him forever, don't you think that's a little alarmist? This situation is only temporary. It's a not-so-small wave in a massive ocean, alright? Mike was trying to stop this plan from happening, so Ty and MW, for Mike's benefit, were planning to kill him. I knew about this plan, Mike stopped in to talk to me, and I took the opportunity when it presented itself. Mike seemed pretty understanding, alright? *[Silence.]* Ugh—! What!? So, you guys can all kill people all day every day whenever you feel like it, no big deal, and when I do it, somehow I'm the villain? I'm the one who gets the third degree. Are you kidding me!? How is this fair? Marissa, you literally shot at Roger today! And that wasn't even a life-or-death situation.

**MARISSA:** Roger isn't a member of Base, Charlie.

**CHARLIE:** Oh, come on! You're trying to tell me that you guys have never killed a member of Base before? I think we all know that's not true.

**MARISSA:** Context, Charlie! Context!

**CHANCE:** Plus... you know, you're... Charlie.

**CHARLIE:** Ugh, well, Mike seemed understanding, at least. He had time to understand what was going on and make peace with that. I think he knows that I meant well and that he will be coming back soon.

**CHANCE:** Well, Charlie, that explains where Mike went. But what about everyone else? Where's Stinky? Where's Mikey? They should be around here somewhere, but I can't remember the last time that I saw them.

**CHARLIE:** Mikey is with Ty, I think. At least, he was.

**MW** *[through door]*: The others are in something called "the fire future."

**MARISSA:** Whawhawhawait, so— the... fire whatsit now?

**MW** *[through door]*: You could hear me better if ya open the dang door.

**MARISSA**: Shut the fuck up. What fire?

**MW** *[through door]*: Marissa, am I supposed to shut the fuck up, or am I supposed to—? *[Huffs.]* Wh— *[Huffs again.]* The other iterations got transported into a future where O.V.E.R.'s on fire until we figure out this handoff. The only way to save Oldbrush Valley is to send me back as Mike. It's so none of 'em can steal my place from me. The fire future's designed as a punishment for what happens if we don't do this handoff right. At least, that's what it said on my tape. So, you gotta let me go, or everyone's gonna die.

**SHADOW**: Okay, so that's where the other Mikes are. But that doesn't explain where Edgar is.

**MW** *[through door]*: I don't know where Edgar is. He ain't a part of this.

**MARISSA**: Alright, dipshit, start talkin'. How are we supposed to get the Mikes back from the fire place? Or, do we have to put the fire out first? 'Cause we are sure as hell not going to let you fulfill your destiny, or whatever it is you think is happening.

**MW** *[through door]*: I don't know, Marissa. I don't know when in time the fire future is or even how to get there. Ty was involved in all that. I was just bait. The only way I know how to prevent it is to do the handoff.

**MARISSA**: Alright, no bright ideas from this one.

**CHANCE**: As much as I hate to say it, I guess we have to find Ty, then. Any idea where he is?

**CHARLIE**: Well. Um. He was at MW's apartment. At least, he was when I called to tell him that I killed Mike? I don't think he's there anymore, though. At least, I doubt it. Ty was really only at the apartment because MW was there. But, now that Ty knows MW isn't there, he took Mikey and fucked off to who knows where.

**CHANCE**: You two had better figure out a way to find him. You got us into this mess, and you'll be the ones to get us out of it.

**CHARLIE**: Alright, if you say so.

**MW** *[through door]*: It's y'all's funeral.

*[Scene transition.]*

*[We hear the time travel noise. Stinky is in a small room with no doors or windows. It's empty and pretty reverby.]*

**STINKY:** *[Startles, then clears throat.]* Hello? Uh. ...What– What the hell is this? T-This one of those– those Compound thingies, the– with the rooms where they come in and interrogate you? Uh... I'm– You're not putting me back in Storage, right? Uh. Uh, can I even go back to Storage? Uh, Nobody did all the Storage stuff, and– w-where did we leave off on that? ...Anyway, uh, w-whatever! I'll tell you whatever you wanna know! I don't care! The other Mikes are mean to me. I– I'll sell you out to them for free! Uh– I mean, okay. Mikey's okay to me. And– And Troy, if we're talking about those people, but you can do whatever you want to the rest of them. I don't care.

*[We hear the time travel noise again. Ryan arrives.]*

**STINKY:** Okay, what is going on?

**RYAN:** Oh, this old trick? Very funny, Toph. This is exactly what Ty Betteridge would do, you know. Do you wanna be compared to him? Doesn't that get your gag reflex goin'?

**STINKY:** Toph...?

**RYAN:** Oh. Hey, Mikey. Toph didn't say you would be joining us. ...Good to see you again. How's the Scruff profile doing?

**STINKY:** No, I'm not Mikey, uh, sor– You shouldn't– No– I– I mean, I am Mikey, and I would honestly prefer to be called Mikey, but Base has all these rules about who gets to be called Mikey, and so technically I'm Stinky, which I hate, but what I'm trying to say is, I'm not the Mikey you think that I am, because I don't know who you are. Uh, so, hi. I'm Stinky.

**RYAN:** Stinky? What the hell are they doing at Base? That's not a nickname for an adult man.

**STINKY:** I– I don't know. All of Oldbrush Valley's on fire, and they keep getting sent there. And I was trying to investigate when I got sent here. There were two guys in the woods, and they had Calculators, and then they pointed them at me, and then I was here.

**RYAN:** And I take it you didn't recognize them.

**STINKY:** I don't recognize anyone ever. So, this Toph guy is in for a letdown if he thinks I'm gonna be able to tell him something about someone.

**RYAN:** Oh, I'm sure Toph thinks that he has a plan. He always does, but there's a reason I'm the brains and he's the brawn. His solo album isn't going to sell out now that the band is broken up.

**STINKY:** Okay, s-so help me, 'cause I'm completely lost. You– You know him? Who is this Toph guy?

**RYAN:** Let's call him a... "former accomplice."

**STINKY:** [*Huffs.*] I don't know, can we call him something more descriptive?

[*We hear the time travel noise again.*]

**STINKY:** Goddamnit.

**RYAN:** Speak of the devil. Hey, Toph! Long time no see. You're not going to tie us up? We get to wander around freely inside your little box?

**CANNONBALL:** I don't have to tie you up. If you even think of attacking me, you'll stop existing. I've undergone something of a... technological upgrade.

**RYAN:** Toph! I would *never* attack you. You have such delicate sensibilities.

**CANNONBALL:** I'm in charge here, Ryan. You don't get to boss me around anymore.

**RYAN:** I wouldn't dream of it. But I would love to know why me and Stinky were brought here on this... assumedly b-beautiful day. Granted, there are no windows—

**STINKY:** Uh, Ryan, right? He's one of the guys! The ones that I saw right before I got put in this box.

**RYAN:** I thought so. Who's the other guy, Toph? Hunter? Stinky, did he have the most ridiculous *Fargo* accent you had ever heard?

**STINKY:** Uh, he— he didn't say anything.

**RYAN:** I'm sure all will be made clear in due time. Toph, would you like to begin the proceedings or whatever this is?

**CANNONBALL:** I would if you would ever shut up. You're worse than Mike about quipping, you know.

**STINKY:** Hey.

**CANNONBALL:** [*Sighs.*] I've been doing a lot of important work since the last time I saw you, Ryan. You shouldn't underestimate me.

**RYAN:** Ooh, hard work, huh? Suckin' up to FLINCH, are we?

**CANNONBALL:** That's one way to put it. FLINCH has been in contact, yes.



**RYAN:** Stinky here says that you were roughing it out in the woods in Oldbrush Valley.

**CANNONBALL:** I had a monitoring station set up. Ty got us those jobs at O.V.E.R., but then Base came back from the Dome and took their jobs back. I simply never left. I'd been working as security patrol, so I knew that no one ever checked that deep in the woods. So, I got set up in there and got to work.

**RYAN:** And now we get to be subjected to whatever hairbrained scheme you've come up with in the meantime. Get ready to cut your arm off, Stinky. Didn't you do this already, though? Last time you got into WOE.BEGONE, Base had to set up a Satellite Base in Latvia to stop you, if I remember correctly.

**STINKY:** Why would I cut off my—? What would I have to do where I need to cut off my arm?

**RYAN:** Who is this guy, Toph? Stinky, you've never played WOE.BEGONE before?

**STINKY:** Uh, if WOE.BEGONE's a game where you cut off your arm, then— no. Look! I have arm, look!

**RYAN:** Do the other Mikes not talk about WOE.BEGONE anymore? It was a pretty big deal.

**STINKY:** Okay, so, you made the Mikes cu— I've see— They have arms, though! You made them cut off their arms?

**RYAN:** And their hands. The good old days. That feels like so long ago at this point, almost four years to the day, actually.

**CANNONBALL:** The challenges are different this time. And you are on the other side of the game, Ryan.

**STINKY:** Wait, are you the guy from Scruff? The—

**RYAN:** Great. A new game. Can't wait. Let me at it. Am I going to have to carve my eyes out? Ooh! Do I get to carve his eyes out? Tell me it has somethin' to do with eyes this time.

**CANNONBALL:** No. You freak. Nobody's carving anybody's body parts. Ew. There— There are no pigs this time. No one is going through any lyric sheet for clues. We're going to accomplish actual goals. You're going to do exactly what FLINCH and I tell you to do. And, as a prize, we will spare your lives. For the time being.

**RYAN:** What a deal! I'd be losing money not to take this wonderful offer! What do you say, Stinky? Are you ready to play WOE.BEGONE?

**STINKY:** W-What are you saying? What is he s-saying? I'm gonna have to mutilate myself? Are you saying he's gonna make me mutilate myself?

**CANNONBALL:** We've progressed beyond such childish things. But you will do exactly what I tell you to do. You don't have a choice.

**RYAN:** "You don't have a choice." Pfft! You're doin' great, Toph. Now all that's left to do is send us on a wacky mission where we get chopped to bits or whatever. That's WOE.BEGONE, baby!

**CANNONBALL:** There is a mission. A simple one, to begin with. I will send you out into the field. You will do as you have been ordered to do. And then you will return here, and await more orders. Is that clear?

**RYAN:** You don't have to be a fuddy-duddy about it.

**CANNONBALL:** Is that *clear*?

**RYAN:** ...Yes.

**CANNONBALL:** Yes, *what*?

**RYAN:** Oh, you're not going to make us call you sir, are you?

**STINKY:** You *are* the guy from Scruff.

**CANNONBALL:** Just get ready for the goddamn mission, Ryan.

**RYAN:** Yessir.

**STINKY:** Wait. Did you meet him on Scruff, too?

**CANNONBALL:** That's no one's business but our own, thank you very much.

*[Fingertrapped plays.]*

*Provenance  
Of dirt and skin and bone  
I picked you out because i was bored  
I made a joke at your expense  
You weren't listening  
A compliment  
Distinguished, iron age  
I've never seen a better-tended grave  
You knew there was no escape that's*

Free of consequence  
As long as you sit patiently  
They'll pay you for your time  
Celebrate  
Synapses on a relay  
I was on the verge  
Of tearing you apart  
I held my tongue  
Because I could not bear  
To get my point across  
Tolerate  
The faction sees the verdict  
I was made for going off the deep end  
I used to think that's how it was  
But now I'm scared to take the plunge  
Left a note that read:  
Here lies the dead  
Please be more careful than i am  
We can get the right person  
Experienced in graveside manner  
Finger- trapped  
Caught you in a sieve  
Look, I'm not asking you to give  
But they say every penny counts  
And i dont fuck with small amounts  
Locked into a lease you don't  
Intend to carry out  
Celebrate  
A carbon dated birthday  
I was on the verge  
Of setting you aside  
I held your tongue  
Because i needed to  
That's how i sleep at night  
Tolerate  
Disaster seized the verdict  
I was made for digging out the deep end  
I used to think that's who I was  
But now I'm scared to take the plunge

*[Scene transition.]*

*[Time travel noise.]*

**OUTLAW TY:** Felix. You didn't say we were breakin' into O.V.E.R. ...A-Are you sure this is safe?

**FELIX:** / don't see why not. If Ty came this way, then we should be able to, as well. That being said, watch your step. Don't leave the path, don't go anywhere you aren't supposed to, and follow my lead. Tier Three is *no* joke.

**PYTHON:** Tier Three. Isn't that the highest tier?

**OUTLAW TY:** It's the highest tier that they talk about.

**FELIX:** Our answers should be on the other side of this door. Are we ready?

**OUTLAW TY:** Just open it already.

**FELIX:** Alright. Here we go.

*[We hear the door open.]*

**VHS MICHAEL:** Ah, hello, uh, Felix, Outlaw Ty, Python. We were expecting you.

**TY:** My, yes. I do feel like I should be stroking a cat at this point! Hello, everyone, you've followed the breadcrumbs here quite expertly. Uh, do shut the door behind you on the way in.

**VHS MICHAEL:** We can get you a cat if you want one.

**PYTHON:** You didn't say that Ty would be here.

**FELIX:** I-I d— I d— I didn't know!

**PYTHON:** Is he gonna kill us? It feels like he's gonna kill us.

**VHS MICHAEL:** Oh, Ty just has murderous resting face.

**TY:** Oh, Python, Python! I could have killed you at any time up to this point. Why would I wait until I was in Michael's office to do so? Blood is such a persistent stain.

**VHS MICHAEL:** Yes, and the leather office furniture was super expensive, so please be careful around it. Uh, we do need you out of the way, but that's not a euphemism for killing you, this time. We've needed to move a lot of assets to pull this whole thing off, but once we get the actual project done, we can focus on moving everything back to where it came from. You know, like *[Singing.]* "Clean up, clean up / Everybody, everywhere," *[Stops singing.]* but emphasis on "everybody."

**OUTLAW TY:** Yeah, I noticed that you're "movin' assets around." That's why we came here in the first place. I need to know what you did with Tex and how I can get him back.

**TY:** Tex. Ugh. Tex is a loose cannon. And you know this, Outlaw. We've been over this several times before. He needed to be stuck somewhere that he wouldn't be able to make it out of of his own volition. We can't "give him back to you," as it were. He would ruin the whole project.

**FELIX:** Why not just kill him, then, if you're going to sequester him away?

**VHS MICHAEL:** We're trying to minimize corrections, and unnecessary deaths yield necessary corrections. Tex is excellent bait for the other assets. He's suggestible enough that I can coax him into going wherever I please, but he's also volatile enough that he prevents anyone from making too much progress. He's like a hand grenade. He's an excellent weapon, and I am using him wisely.

**FELIX:** And this is all so that MW can be involved in "the handoff," isn't it? What's the point? Why is that important? Why does MW absolutely need to be Mike?

**TY:** *[Sighs.]* Now, this is what I love about you, Felix, you've obviously been doing the reading, haven't you?

**VHS MICHAEL:** Felix, you can't understand where we're coming from without doing extensive futurescouting, which is something that I am not going to allow you to do. I have made arrangements with many other organizations, and we have collectively decided that MW becoming Mike in the handoff is mutually beneficial to all parties involved. It is important to appease all of these groups in the present, *my* present, because it prevents the sort of interorganizational squabbles that make it so that no one can get anything done. For instance, in your time period, where everyone is always killing each other.

**TY:** Well, quite. In fact, your wondering about why we aren't going around killing everyone when they present the smallest obstacle for us is further proof that at least some civility has come from these alliances. Everyone killing each other is so 2024. And 2023, and 2022, and... well, in fact, most of... the history of the human race. But, in this instance, it's very Nobody, if you catch my drift.

**PYTHON:** Wait. What year is it now?

**VHS MICHAEL:** You really don't need to know that for the sake of this conversation.

**PYTHON:** Was this all a part of some plan? Why involve me at all? Why take me to the Crust Punk House before I was supposed to move in?

**TY:** Ah! Yes. Well, you were collateral damage, I'm afraid. I needed something to hold Mike's attention, but not even that was enough. You weren't supposed to see the cowboy hat. Old Man

is more of a liability than I predicted. The cowboys are always sticking their fingers in the pie. Luckily, you happily came along, back to the Compound with me when it became clear that you might be getting too close to something... disruptive. I locked you out of sight and out of mind.

**FELIX:** So, what is all of this, then? You wanted to lead us here? Into Michael's office in Tier Three in the future? Why here? To what end, what for!?

**VHS MICHAEL:** Okay, so it's not as specific as we intended to lead you here? It's that we knew that there was a likelihood that Outlaw would want to find Tex, and we needed something to fall back on in the event that he managed to put those wheels in motion, which he clearly did. Uh, all roads lead to Rome or whatever. And if Outlaw didn't try to find Tex, he was free to go about his normal life... "normal" life, unperturbed.

**PYTHON:** And if we use the Calculator-thingy to time travel out of here?

**VHS MICHAEL:** Felix, did you not prep them at all for what this is?

**TY:** You, uh, can't time travel in this room, Python, this is Tier Three—well, it's... a little bit above Tier Three; I like to refer to it as Tier Pi, being 3.14 and a transcendental number—of O.V.E.R. And the membranes here are extremely selective around here, hypothetically speaking.

**VHS MICHAEL:** Don't listen to him, there's no such thing as Tier Pi. Uh. You were expressly permitted in; you will not be permitted out. I've already pushed the button under my desk.

**PYTHON:** So, we can just make a run for it, out the door we came through.

**VHS MICHAEL:** I leave my door unlocked, but I would suggest not doing that? Security measures outside are extensive. They're surreal and borderline hallucinatory. You might think that you've made it out and end up in a replica of reality for years until you die. You could end up in a construction of a memory. The technology in here goes way beyond what you're able to comprehend as a human being. Your mind just won't be able to keep up.

**OUTLAW TY:** So what are we supposed to do now, Ty? Are you gonna send us to the place where Tex is? Are you gonna round us up together?

**TY:** Oh, no. Nonononono. We aren't going to do that, the project is currently at capacity.

**OUTLAW TY:** What are we supposed to do, then?

**VHS MICHAEL:** What you are "supposed to do," Outlaw, is remain right here in this office and follow our orders. We will decide when and if you leave.

**TY** *[slyly]*: You are going to learn that it is possible to wait for a very, very long time.

**PYTHON:** Fuck that! I'm leaving.

*[We hear the door open again, followed by a very strange sound. There is a distorted voice, and a whirring noise that winds down until the door closes.]*

**TY:** *[Chuckles.]* I don't think you will be.

**VHS MICHAEL:** It's pretty cold out there in the past, isn't it, Matt?

*[Scene transition.]*

*[We hear the ambience of the fire and leaves.]*

**MDAWG** *[overlapping TXDawg]:* EdMan, where are you? EdMan, you're out here somewhere, I know, EdMan. Come here! EdMan! Can you sense me, can you sense my aura? I— My aura is tingling! My aura is *tingling!* EdMan!

**TXDAWG** *[overlapping MDawg]:* EdMan. EdMan, where are you, hello? EdMan. EdMan! *EdMan!* EdMan, I've been trying to reach you on the astral plane, EdMan.

**OLD MAN:** Could y'all *please* stop with that? It didn't work before, and it ain't gonna work now, damnit!

**MDAWG:** Okay, but we should still be making noise. Even if we don't find EdMan, we could find Anne, we could find ourselves.

**OLD MAN:** Or ya could be drawin' Eagle right towards us.

**TROY:** I don't wanna find Eagle. Mr. Oklahoma, you told me that we weren't gonna find Eagle. My ankle hurts. I need to take a break. We should go home. Have you considered maybe that we should go home? How about maybe we go home. It's a fire here, let's just go home.

**MDAWG:** We don't have a way to get home, Troy.

**TROY:** My ankle really hurts, though, and *[Huffs.]* it shouldn't be legal for there to be fire where my ankle hurts, and we— we need to stop somewhere. Also, I— I kinda need to pee, and I don't wanna pee in the fire, because then it'll burn.

**TXDAWG:** You're starting to limp a little bit, too, Old Man? Or, your soul is. Maybe we should stop somewhere. We could all use some rest.

**MDAWG:** I'm drawing energy from my mind crystal, but even that won't last forever. A short rest should recharge it.

**TXDAWG:** I believe I see a barn up ahead, with my first and second eyes, that hasn't burned down yet. Maybe we could stop inside there and get out of the fire?

**TROY:** *Please*, Mr. Oklahoma. Can we just sit down somewhere for a minute?

**OLD MAN:** Alright, fine. If it means y'all shut your traps. But we can only stay a minute. Every second we're here's another second in danger.

**TXDAWG:** I think that me and MDawg understand that, but we will be in less danger if we have more energy.

**TROY:** *[Sighs.]* I usually have lots of energy. Sometimes, Charlie tells me I have too much energy and I need to stop asking her questions because she has a "migraine," but she's always so nice about it. Unlike Eagle, who's really mean to me sometimes. One time, **[OLD MAN:** Uh, Troy...**]** I ran out of toilet paper, and I needed some more, and I yelled through the door, I was, like, *[We hear a barn door creak open.]* "Eagle, can you get me some?" And he just ignored me, he didn't even answer. And I know he was there, because I needed him to be, but he just— he just ignored me.

*[We hear the barn door creak.]*

**TXDAWG:** This is a pretty nice barn and a— a really big ranch. Uh. Old Man? Have you ever heard of this place? Have you ever been out here?

**OLD MAN:** No, sir. Ain't got no reason to come this direction outta town. Ain't nothin' out here. Except this place, I guess. I reckon you thought I'd heard of it since it looks like they got horses.

**TROY:** Do you think they have big horses or just regular horses?

**TXDAWG:** Well, there's only one horse as big as Bluster, so I guess regular horses, Troy.

**MDAWG:** And they have no horses right now, obviously. I guess they all evacuated when the fire started.

**TXDAWG:** Uh— Wait— Uh. Old Man, uh— Here— Come take a look at this.

**OLD MAN:** Huh? What is it, TXDawg?

**TXDAWG:** There is a plaque on this stall door, and it says "Bluster." Do you think it's our Bluster?

**MDAWG:** Wait. Do we know where Bluster came from? I—Is that why he's— he's young and small here? He's— Is he from t-this ranch in this time period? ...But then how did he get back to Texas in the past?



**OLD MAN:** Beats the hell outta me, MDawg. And the only fella who might know ran off on Young Bluster already.

*[We hear the barn door creak open again.]*

**EAGLE:** He won't be running off anymore. He's with us now. Heh. Hello, everyone. Welcome to Bluster's ranch. I'm glad you finally made it.

**TROY:** Guys, that's Eagle. That's the Eagle I've been telling you about. The one that was super mean to me. One time—

**OLD MAN:** Troy! Not! Now!

**TXDAWG:** H-Helen? Uh. What the hell are you doing here?

**HELEN:** I ended up here after Operose collapsed. ...Eagle found me. I didn't know what else to do. He saved me from the fire, and I've been stuck with him ever since.

**TXDAWG:** Eagle, you said that Tex is here? Uh, where is he?

**EAGLE:** Tex! Limp your sorry ass out here!

*[We hear Tex grunt as he enters.]*

**TROY:** Oh, my god, Mr. Texas! Did you cut off your leg instead? I told you to cut mine off! Y— That's yours. You— That's the wrong one. That's— That's not even— That's not my leg, that's your leg. Mr. Texas, come on, dude.

**TEX:** I didn't cut off nothin'. I got pinned down by a boulder. Eagle cut me free.

**EAGLE:** And I'll be doing a lot more cutting unless you get us out of here. First her, then him. I assume that you care about Helen more than you do Tex. Just a suspicion.

**MDAWG:** I mean...

**OLD MAN:** We don't got a way out, Eagle. We're stuck here, too. You're wastin' your time with this.

**EAGLE:** What do you think, Helen? Is he bluffing?

**HELEN:** Please. Don't hurt me.

**OLD MAN:** Are you gonna twirl your dang mustache next, Eagle? You gonna tie Helen down on the train tracks? Do we need to invite Rocky and Bullwinkle?

**HELEN:** Please don't give him any ideas.

**TXDAWG** *[quietly]*: Old Man, Britches has a Calculator.

**OLD MAN** *[quietly]*: We ain't tellin' him that. We need him trapped here. Follow my lead.

**TXDAWG** *[quietly]*: Old Man, what are you doing?

**OLD MAN:** *[Quietly.]* Savin' your hide, pal. *[Aloud.]* Alright, Eagle. Ya got us. We don't got a Calculator or nothin', but we got somethin' better. We got hippies. These two have figured out how to do alchemy without a transmutation circle. They can pop in and outta here usin' only their minds. Prolly somethin' to do with intentionality. That's how we were plannin' on gettin' outta here. So, all we gotta do is hold hands, and they can send ya back to the present. If'n we do that, will ya leave Helen and Tex alone?

**EAGLE:** I'm going to need some proof that this fancy technology of yours is real, you know. Send one of them back right now. If he can transport without a Calculator, you can send me next.

**TXDAWG** *[quietly]*: Old Man, what are we gonna do?

**MDAWG** *[quietly]*: I can try to focus, uh. Maybe if I align my chakras?

**TXDAWG** *[quietly]*: MDawg, someone transported us here. We didn't actually transport without a Calculator. It's not gonna work.

**MDAWG** *[quietly]*: I'm going to try anyway.

**EAGLE:** Well? Let's see it, Old Man.

**MDAWG** *[quietly]*: I think i—

*[Time travel blip.]*

**TXDAWG** *[quietly]*: Old Man, w-what the hell was that? What's going o—? What do you know?

**OLD MAN** *[quietly]*: Someone somewhere set their intentions. That means it's workin'. Keep followin' my lead.

**TROY:** Where did he go? MDawg? Was MDawg able to leave this whole time!? Why didn't we leave *before*? I told him my ankle hurt, and he didn't even care! You— You know what? Fine! I'm taking him off as an emergency contact. I don't— I don't want him at the hospital if I get hurt.

**OLD MAN:** Alright, Eagle. I proved it to ya. I need ya to hold hands with me and TXDawg here. He'll be able to channel the energy through his third eye and into your palms, and use that to generate a transportation event. Alright, so just take my hand *[We hear Eagle take Old Man's hand.]* and TXDawg's hand here.

**EAGLE:** This had better work, Old Man.

**OLD MAN:** It'll only work if ya trust us. TXDawg, you can start whenever you're ready.

**TXDAWG:** Alright, I'm finding my center... I'm envisioning our location...

*[Everyone stands in silence. We hear the fire raging on.]*

**EAGLE:** Is this going to work or not?

**TXDAWG:** I'm— I'm trying. Uh. *[Quietly.]* Old Man, what are you doing?

*[Old Man grunts as he headbutts Eagle. There's a scuffle.]*

**EAGLE:** I knew it wasn't real!

**OLD MAN:** And you still let me get close to ya, idiot! Stay back, TXDawg! Helen, run! Get away from him!

**HELEN:** Right! Tex, come with me.

**TEX:** I cain't. I only got the one leg. I'd slow ya down.

**HELEN:** No, no, you don't. Now's our chance! We have to get out of here.

*[We hear Bluster whinny.]*

**TEX** *[overlapping Troy]:* Bluster!

**TROY:** Bluster! I— I knew you'd come back. You only mean to leave Mr. Texas in the cave, right? You— You came back for me. *[Pause.]* Wait. Who— **[TXDAWG:** Britches. What are—?] Who are you?

*[We hear two gunshots. Eagle and Old Man lay dead in the grass.]*

**BRITCHES:** *Shoo-wee!* Almost got 'em in one shot!

**TXDAWG:** O-Old Man! Uh! B-Britches! What are you doing!?

**BRITCHES:** I solved all your little problems for ya! You're welcome. No more Eagle, no more Old Man. Now the rest of y'all better take this fuckin' Calculator and scram.

*[We hear Britches toss the Calculator down.]*

**MDAWG:** *[Stammers.]* You're giving us the Calculator? After all that?

**BRITCHES:** I want you to get yourself and Helen home safe. Tex, too, I guess. I want y'all to scram, to stay the hell away from the Crust Punks. You don't wanna mess with us. We're more than capable o' protectin' ourselves. So, Old Man stays dead. Got it? If we catch another whiff of him alive, I'll be back. And I'll be bringin' hell with me. Do ya understand?

**TXDAWG** *[murmuring]:* Old Man...

**MDAWG:** We understand, Britches. Thank you for the Calculator.

**BRITCHES:** Then y'all have a good rest o' your night. Let's ride, Bluster. Hyah!

*[We hear Bluster whinny again and then ride away.]*

**HELEN:** Who the hell was that? They knew my name?

**TEX:** That there is Britches from the Crust Punk House.

**HELEN:** That doesn't explain anything to me. Were they telling the truth? That you could use this to send me home? ...For good, this time?

**TEX:** I don't see why not. I reckon we should get o' the fire first. Regroup at Base, get a witness statement from you, and send ya on your way. How's that sound?

**HELEN:** Anything to get us out of here.

**TEX:** 10-4, pilgrim. Transportin' us home to Base in three... two... one...

*[Time travel noise.]*

*[Scene transition.]*

**CHANCE:** So you're sure that this'll work, Charlie? We just put in these coordinates, and he'll be there?

**CHARLIE:** Yeah, um, I think so. It's important that we take him by surprise, though. You understand, right? The less time he has to propagate information, the better for all of us.

**MW** *[through door]:* Can you let me out of the closet now?

**MARISSA:** Quiet in the cheap seats!

**SHADOW:** How will we know we have the correct Ty?

**CHARLIE:** Oh! Don't even worry. I know which Ty we're dealing with, so it'll be easy.

**CHANCE:** And are we just to assume that you'll be telling the truth this time?

**CHARLIE:** Chris, come on! I only lie when I have to. I only lied this time because I thought it was the right thing to do. You would have done the exact same thing, I promise. In fact, I know. *[A little sinister.]* You've lied before. Don't pretend like you haven't. I know the truth. And you thought you got away with it, but you didn't. Yeah? I didn't say anything at the time because it wasn't quite the right moment yet. There was no need to expose you, but... I think we both know that doesn't mean that no one noticed. You underestimate me because I'm nice. That doesn't mean I don't see what happens right under my nose.

**SHADOW:** What is that supposed to mean?

**CHANCE:** Charlie, are you threatening me?

*[Time travel noise.]*

**MAGNOLIA:** Jesus Christ.

*[Scores and scores of Magnolias start chattering, and the members of Base talk over each other.]*

**CHANCE** *[overlapping]:* Are we under attack? Where the hell did these iterations come from? Who sent them here? What the heck is going on here? Where did all these iterations come from? Do you have anything to do with this? Charlie, if you have anything to do with this, I swear to god.

**SHADOW** *[overlapping]:* Oh, my god, there's so many of them! Why are there so many of them!? Oh, this is so [?] a nightmare.

**MARISSA** *[overlapping]:* Holy fuck! Where the fuck did these guys come from!? Ah! Shit! Oh! Too many! Stop. Stop! Hey! Hey! [?] Someone open a goddamn window! Shoo! Get! Get! Oh, fuck.

*[We hear Magnolias continue to chatter in the background.]*

**MAGNOLIA:** Hey, guys! Uh, so sorry for the intrusion. We didn't really choose to pop back into existence here. This is just sort of... where we landed.

**CHANCE:** Magnolia, what the hell is going on!? Why are there so many iterations of you?

**SHADOW:** Base has a 12-person maximum! Some of you need to get out. You're breaking the fire code.

**MAGNOLIA:** Hear you loud and clear! But, while I'm here, I did wanna thank you for your intentionality. You don't know that you're going to do this yet—at least, I don't think so—but if we're here, that means that you intend on keeping Old Man from coming back to life. That's the only way we're able to be here... being a fire hazard. Sorry about that.

**MARISSA:** Hey, hold up, hold up. Old Man is dead?

**MAGNOLIA:** Yeah, he's dead. I'm sure the details of that scenario will be made clear to you soon enough. We'll get out of your hair, though. Like I said, we didn't intend to show up here. I mean, there are just so many of us, so we had to show up somewhere, you know? And there's already way too many people and another Magnolia in the Crust Punk House, so we just kinda had to go somewhere. Anyway, our organization sort of owes you, and we know that you're in this protracted inter-organizational spat, and the other organizations are saddling you with future punishments that you don't know how to rectify yet. So, as a thanks for making sure Old Man stays dead (thanks again), we'll take care of that for ya.

**SHADOW:** Take care... of what, exactly?

**MW** *[through door]:* Are you sayin' you're gonna stop the fire timeline, Magnolia?

**MAGNOLIA:** MW? Are you locked in the closet?

**MARISSA:** Yeah. Well. That, and naughty iterations get put in the pear wiggler to atone for their crimes.

**MAGNOLIA:** Ah, the closet of mistrust. Understood. But, he does ask a good question, and the answer is yes. We're going to put that fire out, uh. Literally and metaphorically. You won't need to worry about that. Unless Old Man comes back, of course. Then all bets are off, because, you know... the rest of us'll be dead.

**CHANCE:** Thanks, I guess... Magnolia, I guess?

**MAGNOLIA:** Don't mention it. By the way, you should be more careful about who you take instructions from regarding the future. Not everyone that is shaped like a friend is actually a friend. Iterations from the future might seem more legitimate, but they might also just be burnt out O.V.E.R. employees who are trying to get their way because their future didn't turn out the way they hoped. You gotta be careful with present-day iterations, too! Like this Charlie, for instance! That's not your Charlie. That's a different iteration with different ideas and goals. I hope that made sense? We should get out of your hair. Ryan's right. It's cramped in here. Alright! Bye, everyone!

*[Time travel noise.]*

*[The members of Base are alone again. The silence is noticeable.]*

**CHANCE:** Hey. ...What the fuck was that?

**SHADOW:** Charlie...?

**CHARLIE:** Uh—! Guys. O-Obviously they were lying. I swear! *[Brief laugh.]* Come on.

*[Scene transition.]*

**PYTHON:** *[Exhales.]* You have to let us go eventually, you know.

**TY:** What? You haven't enjoyed the past three months in here? It's been a blast hosting you. No time has passed at all for us, of course, but that's because Michael and I haven't been testing the security system over and over again. You have no one else to blame but yourself for the lost time. And the fact that you'd been listening to Arctic Monkeys in reverse over and over again. Oh, did you hear all the messages they embedded in there?

**OUTLAW TY:** Felix. Felix! Are you okay? Can you— Can you hear me?

**TY:** Yes, Felix is a tad sensitive, I do feel awful putting him through this, but... you knew that already, didn't you, Outlaw?

**FELIX:** I, um... W-Where am I?

**VHS MICHAEL:** Ty's right, though. We told you that you couldn't leave. You should've stayed here like we told you to.

**FELIX:** Samantha, where've you—...? W-Where's she gone?

**PYTHON:** Huh? Who is Samantha?

**TY:** Oh, don't worry about that. Samantha is a coworker. Felix probably had a hallucination while he was out there.

**OUTLAW TY:** You can't just break us like this, Ty. It ain't right!

**VHS MICHAEL:** I don't know what to tell you. We have to hold you until you are no longer a liability to the project. And I am getting tired of repeating myself on tha—

*[Time travel noise.]*

**OUTLAW TY:** Mike? H-How the hell did you get in here?

**PYTHON:** I thought you said the membrane was... semipermeable, or whatever it was you said, Ty.

**VHS MICHAEL:** It *is* semipermeable. He should not have been able to get in. Mikey, what the hell are you doing in my office?

**STINKY:** I'm not Mikey, I'm Stinky! And *[Huffs.]* I have a— Hold on, ah— *[Pulls out a piece of paper.]* I have a prepared statement from Toph that I'm supposed to read.

**VHS MICHAEL:** Uh, Toph. Topher Evans? CANNONBALL?

**STINKY:** Topher Evans, like Christopher Evans? Like— Captain America? No, this is... uh, Toph, uh, from... *[Fiddles with paper.]* WOE.BEGONE, I guess. He told me say— Wait— He told me, uh... Uh, he told me to do this first. Uh, so just... point it at you guys, and...

**TY:** Stinky, what is that—?

**VHS MICHAEL:** Ty, duck—

*[We hear a strange sound as they disappear.]*

**STINKY:** Okay, those two are gone. Uh, I'm not supposed to get rid of the one in the... the cowboy hat. ...Right, okay. Okay, so now he told me to say, uh: "I am behere... I am *here* on behalf of FLINCH." Uh, "Ty and Michael are still alive. They have been preserved inside of this device"—uh, this one—"which I will be bringing back to CANNONBALL—" Oh, okay, so Toph is CANNONBALL. Okay. "Ty and Michael have been stored in an easily editable state, and will be returned to the world in a less disagreeable fashion." Ugh. "CANNONBALL wants to remind you that Ty Betteridge owes him a massive favor, and he will be coming to collect on that soon enough. In the meantime, the VHS that begins the cascade of the handoff is in Michael's desk. If you destroy that, you will prevent the propagation of that information backwards through time. Do with that information what you will." And then I'm supposed to— to disappear. Uh. Does he mean—... Does— You mean to leave? Uh— How do I leave? Do I use the— the thing—?



*[Time travel noise.]*

**PYTHON:** Does that mean we aren't stuck here anymore?

**FELIX:** Yes. I think so. Let's grab the tape and get the hell out of here.

**OUTLAW TY:** You are gonna destroy it. Aren't ya?

**FELIX:** Hmm... We'll see.

*[Scene transition.]*

**MIKE:** Hello, everyone. I am so glad that you could make it today. I got the memo about not having meetings at eight in the morning. Don't worry. This is a crucial meeting, and it is vital that every member of Base be here, even those considered part of our... extended family. Troy, MDawg, Emdubya. I'm lookin' at you.

**TROY:** *Alright*, Mike's lookin' at me!

**SHADOW:** Where is Edgar?

**MIKE:** I'm... getting to that. Uh, the search still continues for Edgar, as well as the original iteration of Charlie that we know and love and that didn't betray us. Uh. Stinky, too, I guess. Uh, we still aren't sure of the nature of their disappearances. It may have been linked to the fire? But the correction of the fire timeline by Magnolias...—plural—did not return them to us, so there is still much work to be done. MDawg will be coordinating with the other survivors of the fire timeline to see if they can develop a lead on their whereabouts.

**CHANCE:** Surely the Compound can find them with tracing, right? They had to have traveled through time at some point. Can Ty not just pick up on that?

**MIKE:** You guys are great at segues. From this point on, we will no longer be working with Ty Betteridge. He nearly destroyed Base through his pursuit of self-interest, not to mention his, you know, long history of exploiting us? That guy we hate? And while I understand that this means that we will no longer have access to Tracing, I believe that we will be able to develop parallel technologies that can rival and surpass even what the Compound can do. Might I even say, a weapon to surpass Metal Gear. *[Pause, then brief laugh.]* Why are you guys being so quiet? That was a joke.

**MARISSA:** What, you're the Big Boss now just 'cause Edgar's gone?

**MIKE:** See, Marissa gets it. I'm in charge now that Edgar's gone. And that means that, like Edgar, I'm going to have to make some difficult decisions. Which is why... I have decided to make a difficult but ultimately crucial executive decision, effective today.

**SHADOW:** I get the feeling I'm not going to like this.

**MIKE:** I have decided that, starting today... Base is going to change locations every day, the exact location of which will remain undisclosed to everyone except for myself.

**SHADOW:** What? Every day?

**CHANCE:** That's not your call to make! You can't do this!

**TROY:** Wait, what about my mansion? I— I left a guy in there. Do I get to say goodbye to my guy, at least?

**MARISSA:** Uh, yeah, what about our jobs? We all still work at O.V.E.R., you know. What, you gonna pull a Ty Betteridge and have us all quit again? I ain't fuckin' quitting my job again. Not in this economy.

**MIKE:** Okay, everyone needs to calm down. It's not as drastic as all that. It won't be any different from Operose. They moved around every day, but they still got out; we saw Lieutenant and Eagle all the time. And we have the technology to make it happen, so you can all report to your jobs at O.V.E.R., and then use an encrypted channel to come back here. The technology's been around for a while, actually. Edgar helped develop it for us during the time before the Great Correction.

**CHANCE:** Does that mean that H created this technology?

**TROY:** Wait, do you mean the tater tot hotdog hotdog dot tot tot guy?

**MIKE:** It was H's leadership, but it was Edgar's ingenuity. And, regardless, they're out of the picture, so it's ours to use. I don't think that you'll actually see a huge difference in your daily life, but Base will enjoy greatly increased security.

**CHANCE:** I don't know, Mike...

**MIKE:** Well, I didn't ask, so.

**MARISSA:** Sheesh. Where did Mike the Dictator come from?

**MIKE:** Mike the Dictator came back from the grave, Marissa. And so now, without further ado...

*[Time travel noise.]*

**MIKE:** Welcome home.

*[Don't Make Me Come In There plays.]*

*Even if the fire's out  
The burning's just begun  
I could burn you  
Or warn you  
Anything you want  
Lead into temptation  
A godsend  
Recklessly getting warm*

*What becomes of all creation  
If the smallest prayer is answered "no"?  
And what becomes of tired masses  
If the firewatcher's eyes are closed?  
I think I know  
Caught the teller by the tale  
Piercing through the din, a distant wail  
Drink up your fill  
I don't care what  
As long as you're emaciated  
Distending your gut  
There was a time  
When it made sense  
For me to care for minor things  
That time has passed  
I'll catch the broad strokes later  
Check your behavior  
Don't make me come in there  
I could nourish  
Your pointless  
Excursions in the dark  
Offer explanation  
I don't care  
Nobody's keeping score  
What becomes of your ambition  
If i drop the leash and let you go?  
Panting like a dog  
Your tongue stuck to the artificial snow  
I think you know  
Take the speaker by the throat*

*Check the back for what i need to know*

*[Scene transition.]*

*[We hear a campfire and a howling wind.]*

**XL:** *[Yawns.]* Good morning, 47. Uh, 38. Have either of you read the report yet?

**47:** Hadn't got a chance. Just got my dang eyes open, XL.

**38:** I told ya, don't be readin' that shit. We don't wanna be involved.

**XL:** Okay, I just wanted you guys to know that Tex is not out of the running. ...Except literal running. It seems he's lost a leg. But, if you wanna go to one of his poker games, he's probably gonna start those up again. And that the Base has pulled an Operose. Mike has taken the helm, and he has decided to put them in a new location every day.

**47:** Mike has? Where the hell's Edgar?

**XL:** That is the million dollar question.

**38:** Well, I don't like the smell of this. Smells like we're gonna wind up involved. You better throw that report away, XL.

**XL:** Okay, but not knowing about it won't make it not happen, you know.

**47:** We'll cross that bridge when we come to it.

**38:** And if y'all see any other iterations out here, it's shoot on sight.

*[We hear a wolf howl in the distance.]*

*[Extended closing theme starts playing.]*

**CREDITS:** This has been WOE.BEGONE.

The voice of Britches was Cody Heath. You can check them out in [The Grotto](#) or [Do You Copy?](#) pod,  
or listen to their band [Elsewhere!](#), with an exclamation point.

The voice of CANNONBALL was Nathan Lunsford. Check out his podcast [The Storage Papers](#).

The voice of Chance was Taylor Michaels. You can check Taylor out in [The Grotto](#) and many other podcasts.

The voice of Charlie was Lyssa Jay. Check her out in [The Grotto](#) or [400 Words A Horror](#).

The voice of Eagle was Steve Anzalone. Check out his podcasts [Maeltopia](#) and [The Sleep Wake Cycle](#).

The voice of Felix was Ben Rowe. Check out his podcasts [The Felix Chronicles](#) and [The Samantha Chronicles](#) right here on this feed.

The voice of Flash was Jesse Syrratt. Check out her podcast [Nowhere. On Air.](#)

The voice of Helen was Tatiana Geffer. Check out her podcast [Soul Operator](#). I'm in that one.

The voice of Magnolia was Pine Gonzalez. Check out their podcast [Tales From the Fringes of Reality](#).

The voice of Marissa Ng was Michelle Kan. Check them out at [fswrites](#) on social media.

The voice of Python was Jamie Petronis. Check out his podcast [The Cellar Letters](#).

The voice of Robert was Alex Telander. Check out his podcasts [Ostium](#) and [Circè](#).

The voice of Ryan was Kevin Berrey. Check out his podcast [Hell Gate City](#).

The voice of Sax was Shaun Pellington. Check out his podcast [Wake of Corrosion](#).

The voice of Shadow was William Wellmen. Check out their podcast [Hello From The Hallowoods](#).

The voice of Skinner was JustJenah. Check them out in [The Grotto](#) and [400 Words A Horror](#).

And the voice of Troy was Athan. Check him out in [The Grotto](#).

*[Rapping.]* The voice of Ty Betteridge was David Ault. Check out his podcast [Shadows At The Door](#), or go to [davidault.co.uk](http://davidault.co.uk) for more. *[Stops rapping.]*

Season 16 starts in two weeks. Thanks for playing.

*[Extended closing theme plays out.]*

*[Brief start-stop of the closing theme.]*

**BLOOPER (CHARLIE):** Hey, babe. Welcome home. *[Makes a kiss noise.]* I have to figure out how to— *[Kiss noises.]* How do I—? *[Kiss noise. Brief laugh. Another kiss noise.]* Is that working? *[Different kiss noise. Laughs.]* That did not—! That last one sounded like a pop. *[Chuckles.]*

*[Brief start-stop of the closing theme.]*

**BLOOPER (LYSSA):** Adding this to the list of things I'm normal about. Um. Marissa having Charlie at gunpoint, and Charlie doing absolutely nothing to fight back or run away, because she knows that if she makes Marissa shoot her, it's gonna royally fuck her up, and she wouldn't do that to her baby.

*[Brief start-stop of the closing theme.]*

**BLOOPER (LYSSA):** *[Normal voice.]* I'm normal about *[Falters.]* them. I'm not normal about them.

*[Brief start-stop of the closing theme.]*

**BLOOPER (LYSSA):** *[Comically fumbles for words.]* Lied to you? *[Continues fumbling.]*

*[Brief start-stop of the closing theme.]*

**BLOOPER (LYSSA):** This is gonna be a *bad day* for Charlissa shippers. *[Laughs.]* Wonderful...

*[Brief start-stop of the closing theme.]*

**BLOOPER (FLASH):** Ah, I don't know about this, gang. Old Man always said he would shoot us if he found us going through our stu— "Going through our stuff?" It's literally not even ours. Literally. Why would it matter if we were going through our own stuff? Okay.

*[Brief start-stop of the closing theme.]*

**BLOOPER (MARISSA):** Nah-ah! No shot. You don't get to abuse your superpower and lie to us like that. I was rooting for you. We were all rooting for you! How dare you!

*[Brief start-stop of the closing theme.]*

**BLOOPER (MICHELLE):** So, one of the phrases that Marissa uses this time is "ngaak<sup>1</sup> gwai<sup>2</sup> sik<sup>6</sup> dau<sup>6</sup> fu<sup>6</sup> [呃鬼食豆腐]." Which is an idiomatic expression for disbelief. Um. You know. Shock. Outrage. Especially if someone's been deceiving you. And it literally means "to trick a ghost into eating tofu." And this is a pun, as is usual for Cantonese and Chinese, because the word "dau<sup>6</sup> fu<sup>6</sup> [豆腐]," as in tofu, sounds a lot like "dou<sup>6</sup> fu<sup>4</sup> [道符]," as in the Taoist paper talismans that are used to exorcise ghosts. So. Ngaak<sup>1</sup> gwai<sup>2</sup> sik<sup>6</sup> dau<sup>6</sup> fu<sup>6</sup> [呃鬼食豆腐]: trick a ghost into eating

tofu. Ngaak<sup>1</sup> gwai<sup>2</sup> sik<sup>6</sup> dou<sup>6</sup> fu<sup>4</sup> [呃鬼食道符]: trick a ghost into eating the thing that will send him back to hell. So. There you go.

*[Brief start-stop of the closing theme.]*

**BLOOPER (MICHELLE):** I have now said the word "rawdogging" more times in this single recording session than I will ever have need to say for the rest of the entirety of my life. Quota fulfilled. My name is Michelle Kan, and this is RAW.BEDOG.

*[Brief start-stop of the closing theme.]*

**BLOOPER (CHANCE):** Hello? Marissa? *[Accidental British-like inflection.]* Is something going on? *[Purposeful British-like inflection.]* Is something going on? I'm now Ty Betteridge. That's n— *[Laughs and drops inflection.]* That's not how Ty talks at all! *[Laughs.]*

*[Brief start-stop of the closing theme.]*

**BLOOPER (CHANCE):** Ryan says my best interrogation weapon is a *sharp* tongue. ...Oh, I whistled on that one.

*[Brief start-stop of the closing theme.]*

**BLOOPER (CHANCE):** Yeah, but I was the one that kept sending all his pieces back to the start. You snuck by because you kept quiet about being in the lead. *[Breaks character.]* Is that...? Is that foreshadowing? Dylan, is that...? What's up with Shadow? I don't like that. This is sus.

*[Brief start-stop of the closing theme.]*

**BLOOPER (TROY):** Guys, that's Eagle. That's the Eagle I've been telling you about. The one that was super mean to me. One time— *[Chuckles.]* No, I can't do it anymore.

*[Brief start-stop of the closing theme.]*

**BLOOPER (ATHAN):** Hot dogs! Get your hot dogs!

*[Brief start-stop of the closing theme.]*

**BLOOPER (TROY):** Hey, Mike, if you're making executive decisions, can you also make a rule that I can pretend to be a cowboy, too? 'Cause *[Cowboy voice.]* I-I wanna be a cowboy. If everyone else is gettin' to be a cowboy, everyone— I-I wanna be a cowboy, as well. I can do an accent, and I can get a hat, as well, somewhere. *[Spits.]* I'll spit out some dip somewhere. If you put— E-Ew, it's icky, but I'll do it if I need to.

*[Brief start-stop of the closing theme.]*

**BLOOPER (TY):** You think you can leave my employ? You think that you'll be safe? *[Laughs.]*  
Poor fools! You're all doomed! Doomed! *[Laughs.]*

*[Brief start-stop of the closing theme.]*

*[END Episode 180.]*