

EPISODE ONE HUNDRED AND NINETY - RIGA, LV
Original transcript edited by Theo and reviewed by Jenah

[BEGIN Episode 190.]

INTRO: Hey, guys, quick plugs. *the american bison 3*, available on streaming services, search for "WOE.BEGONE," click on "the american bison 3." Ya did it. I've also got a new recap podcast, *The Proof Is In The Podcast: A WOE.BEGONE Recap Show*, where I recap the show with two guests, each episode is going to cover a season, and the episode for Season One is out now, Season Two coming soon, search for "The Proof Is In The Podcast: A WOE.BEGONE Recap Show" wherever you get your podcasts.

I'm still streaming on Twitch over at twitch.tv/woebegonepod, where every Sunday I write that week's episode soundtrack, and then we hang out and do something. It's currently February Album Writing Month, so right now we're chilling and listening to other people's February Album Writing Month submissions. It was a lot of fun, we listened to a lot of new interesting music last Sunday. So check that out, that's twitch.tv/woebegonepod.

And if you'd like to support the show, you can do so on Patreon at patreon.com/woe_begone, where you can get early access to ad-free episodes, instrumentals, soundtrack albums, Q&As, director's commentaries, Movies with Michael, postbards—, bardspords, and splib— I have to stop doing this as the last thing every wee— [Cut.] All of the January cards are out! That's super exciting. Of course, if you sign up in January, I will send you a card, and it's a super cool story. So now's a great time to join at the \$15 level and get a postcard from me. I don't want to spoil too much, but you might get a visit from my friend Lisa Frank. That's patreon.com/woe_begone.

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

[Warning: This episode contains a description of violence as well as gun violence and death. Listener discretion is advised.]

[Opening theme plays.]

MIKEY [narrating]: I am never going to habituate to time travel. Even when I know that I'm about to be "transported," which I suppose is the industry term for it, I am always in for an excruciating time. I think it's my inner ear? I get sick on airplanes, too. And other people don't seem to be as affected by transportation as I do. Ryan appeared alongside me, standing straight and tall; insufferable, wry, inscrutable smile in tow. I could tell that he was preparing to say something confusing and sarcastic.

"Welcome home, Mikey. Looks like you forgot to take out the garbage. We have a chore wheel for a reason! That's okay, though. We're gonna be tearing this place apart anyway."

All things considered, that was a pretty fair criticism of the state of the place. It was a dingy apartment; small, bare, cold. I could feel a draft of winter air from the poorly installed window on the other end of the living room. A bare bulb hanging from the ceiling provided a paltry amount of light. Things were strewn about: clothes, trash, food, anything you could think of. The place smelled musty and abandoned. There were several cowboy hats sitting around and a large taxidermy boar's head looking out over everything from an accent wall.

"What is this place, and why are we here?" I asked.

"Isn't a mystery more fun when it's still a mystery?" Ryan replied. I shook my head. "Okay, smartass. Well, I already told you. Welcome home!"

"I— I don't understand. Is this your house or something?" I asked.

Ryan scoffed. "Yup! The good old abode." He ran his finger along a stack of DVDs on the coffee table, scattering dust into the air as he did so. "I've got all my favorites right here on hand. I brought you here so we could pop in this, uh, *10 Western Film Classics* DVD. You know, so we could watch, uh, let's see, uh, *The Assassination of Jesse James by the Coward Robert Ford* on a 20-inch CRT TV. You know I'm a sucker for 480p video burned onto plastic e-waste."

"I actually really like that movie," I said.

"I bet you do," Ryan replied. "You used to live here, stupid. Before you got bonked on the head and forgot everything."

I looked across the apartment again. It was a wreck. Even if the mess of household items were gone, it was still a dark, dingy apartment. There was a support beam in the center of the living room, obstructing the view of basically everything. Someone was gonna have a bad viewing experience if everyone tried to huddle around the small TV.

"This can't all be my stuff," I said. There was too much of it. It was too foreign. There were cowboy hats everywhere.

"Oh, lots of you lived here," Ryan explained. "I don't really divide you up like that? Mikey is Mike is Michael is MW, et cetera. Uh— You met some of those at Base, right? They used to live here. You got into all sorts of adventures here. Uh, you killed Toph, uh, right over there..." He gestured towards the support beam in the middle of the living room.

"What? I— We didn't kill Toph," I said.

"Mikey, Mikey, Mikey." Ryan shook his head. "I pushed a button on this little magic box, and we whizzed through spacetime to get here. You've done so much whizzing around that I'm sure that you would've lost count even if you had your memories. Of course you killed Toph. Why wouldn't

you? It's fun. We should try it again sometime." He still had an inscrutable smile on his face. I could never scrutate that damn smile.

"I... I don't think that I-I would've done that. I mean, if we have to, y-you can do it, but I- I-I wouldn't," I said. My already turned stomach was turning.

"Newsflash, Mikey. You're really good at this stuff. Impressive, even. Don't let it go to your head, but when I was running WOE.BEGONE, I had to move my roadmap up to keep up with you. I wanted a bloodbath; you gave it to me. Barely any hesitation. It was awesome. And even after that, you still had that killer instinct. You aren't even the most bloodthirsty of your little copies, either. Poor little Christopher Evans was giving you trouble, so you tied him to that beam right there, and then you—yes, you, Mikey Walters—shot him right between the eyes like you were puttin' down Old Yeller. No judgement. I would have done the same."

Ryan's words washed over me as I stood in the middle of the living room. CANNONBALL's name is Chris Evans? Li- Like Captain America? I'm a killer? The- The rest of the iterations lived here? Are there more iterations that aren't part of Base? Uh- Where is Michael? I looked at the support beam in the middle of the living room. There was no blood. There was no evidence of any crime.

"Hey! Ground control to Major Mikey!" Ryan's voice cut through my inner monologue. "I'm glad you got to reminisce on the good times, but we're on the clock, remember? Well, it's not actually a clock because we can always travel back in time, but we need to keep our circadian rhythms synced up to the time that we came from, or Toph's gonna kill us in our sleep when he figures out that that journal entry that you left is a red herring. And he is going to figure out that it's fake. Toph's like a dog. You can pretend to throw the tennis ball and he'll go running, but if you keep doing it, then he's not gonna get faked out anymore."

"Sorry, uh. What are we looking for?" I gazed out the window. A murder of crows had taken over the courtyard.

"We are looking for Michael's little, black book," Ryan said. He brushed the DVDs off the table and started going through the various pieces of paper that remained, discarding each onto the floor as he read through them. "You wanna find Michael so bad? Well, it's your lucky day. Michaels proliferate like rabbits. There's a whole Michael network spread out all over the globe. I bet Base didn't tell you about that."

They hadn't, but I didn't affirm him.

"Toph has been having me create this map of their known locations, but it's been slow going. We know that they're in, like, Canada, Texas, Slovenia, a few other places. There's more, but we don't know how to track them down. We're trying to figure out how they coordinate." Ryan brushed the last of the papers off the coffee table, which was now bare. "Welp, that was a bust.

Guess I should try Michael's room next." I looked into the other rooms. The cowboy's bedroom was not difficult to guess.

I was intrigued by the prospect of finding Michael, of finding a network of Michaels. I thought about the Michael that was in the Stinky Device. Or, not "in" as Ryan was quick to remind me. The one that was linked to the device in a way that I was apparently too small-minded to understand.

"What do you want with a network of cowboys?" I asked. "I thought we were trying to get the Stinky Device back. How does this help with that?"

"As soon as we take the golden idol off the pedestal, the boulder's gonna start rolling towards us, so we've gotta act fast," Ryan said. He raised his voice and kept talking, even as he searched through Michael's bedroom. [*Raises voice, distant.*] "Our golden idol contains one of the Michaels and a pretty damn interesting one at that. Maybe he belongs in a museum, but I think it would be a better idea to go after some... uh, private collectors. A rare Michael like the one on the device is valuable. We can use him to make some alliances. Base won't be on your side after you steal their precious, and Toph won't be on our side after we kill him. We're going to need allies, and the Michaels have the same problems with the same people that we have. We can use them to get our operation up and running. And once we get some momentum, I'll betray you and disappear with the technology and leave you stranded with all the angry cowboys who are gonna eat ya for supper for roping 'em into this whole mess. That sound good?"

I tried to scrute, and failed.

"That joke is only funny if I trust you," I said.

"What joke?" he asked. "I'm going to betray you; you're gonna betray me. Welcome to time travel, Mikey. We can pretend, though. Those best friends Mikey and Ryan are at it again! Can they solve the mystery before the commercial break? What a thrilling adventure!" I heard him rifling through papers and books in the bedroom. "What is it with you people and journals? Do you ever write anything interesting, or is it just a bunch of feelings and stuff? Stop having those!"

I heard something behind me, but didn't have time to process it before a voice rang out through the apartment.

"Oi, moi mishka! Kak dela? [Ои, мои мишка! Как дела?]"

I jumped slightly and spun around. Leaning against the doorway was a sturdy man in a fur shapka, a sweater, and grey sweatpants. He looked casual and unconcerned with our presence, no tension in his body as he leaned on the doorframe. He was absentmindedly loading a double-barreled shotgun as he spoke. "Kto tvoj drug? [Кто твой друг?]"

He was speaking in a friendly and familiar manner. I studied his face. I didn't recognize him, though I wasn't expecting to. ...Did I know Russian? I didn't think so, but, uh, I tried anyway. "Izvinite [Извините], uh, ya govoryu po-russki ochen' plokho [я говорю по-русски очень плохо]. Uh. ...Vy znayete mene? Kto tebe ne pomnyu. [...Вы знаете мене? Kto tebe ne pomnyu.] Is— Is that right?" I didn't know where the words came from; I had no idea if they were right. What a nightmare.

"Howdy, Boris!" Ryan called out from Michael's bedroom. I was surprised. I had expected Ryan to hide. "Hey, uh, tell me, where does the cowboy keep the good stuff? Uh, and I don't mean the liquor cabinet; we already found that."

"Boris has already escorted one visitor today," Boris said. He did not look up from loading his shotgun. "I am not tour guide. No more visitors."

"Ugh, don't tell me we already got beat to the punch!" Ryan said. "That's no fun. They didn't take Michael's book of contacts, did they?"

"I do not know you," Boris said. "Mishka, you need better friends. This one and the British one? They are no good."

"Fuck, Ty Betteridge was here?" Ryan called out.

"Ty Betteridge? Who is Ty Betteridge?" I asked.

Boris racked the shotgun, stood up, and walked further into the room. He laughed. "Heh. I do not understand you, Mishka. I can see that you are my Mishka, but you do not remember. Uh— You remember nothing? Is that right?" I nodded, hoping that Ryan wouldn't see.

"Look, Boris, we're kind of in a hurry. Michael told you about all the scary time travel stuff, right? So you know that you can't stop us. We'll just correct the scenario over and over until we get it right and you aren't in the way anymore. Mikey, do you wanna try again? Yeah, I'll just post you at the door, and you can kill Boris when he turns the corner, does that sound good? How did you even get in here? I— I guess you have a key. Don't you have to give notice or something?"

Boris chuckled. "This is no friend, Mishka. I will remind you of friend. Menya zovut Boris. [Меня зовут Борис.] I am greatest hunter in all of Latvia. I kill wolf, I kill bear, I kill boar like one on wall, one larger than your new friend. I was with Michael when he killed that boar. And I have killed time traveler. Smarter ones than your friend. He does not frighten Boris."

"Yeah, yeah, best shot in the whole apartment building," Ryan said. "We've all killed time travelers, Boris, it's not impressive anymore. We're in the same business. Now, are you gonna do something about us, or are you gonna get out of the way?"

"Do you know where it is, Boris?" I asked. "Michael's contact book? We're trying to bring him back—"

Ryan interrupted me. "Don't share our business with him! We don't want info to leak out! Uh— Time travel is lousy with information."

"Of course I know where book is. Michael tell me his secrets. I protect him, even when he is gone."

"Well, it's time to hang up the spurs, cowboy," Ryan said. "Because that Michael is *long* gone. Dead as a doornail, and staying that way. That idiot got his skull caved in a long time ago. And Base doesn't want him back, from the look of things." I tried to scrute him for a third time. Was that the whole truth?

Boris took a few more steps forward. We were close enough that we were almost touching. I could smell his breath.

"I know about death. I know what you do to death with time travel. I know that I am protected. Michael explained. Mishka, would you like for me to kill this friend for you?" He smiled.

I was sweating. I didn't know this man, but he presented an opportunity. I could let him kill Ryan, take his Calculator, and work with Boris to get the Stinky Device instead. He claimed to be an ally of Michael. He could help me get Michael from the Stinky Device. Boris knew me. He felt like a protector of some kind. It was difficult to scrute, if you will, but I scruted Ryan at least a little, and he was joking about betraying me because there was a hint of truth to that. That is what I scruted. Boris might be the safer bet.

"Seriously, Mikey!? You're considering it? After everything? You'd be polar bear food if I hadn't found you." Ryan had emerged from Michael's bedroom empty-handed. He was in the back of the living room now, running his finger along a dusty lamp that had a cowboy hat for a lampshade.

"Mikey doesn't remember anything, Boris. He's vulnerable and easily exploited right now, and I do not appreciate you attempting to manipulate him with your warm recollections of cowboys," Ryan said. "It is *my* turn to exploit him, thank you very much. Now, if you don't mind..."

"Can you help me find Michael, Boris?" I asked. "I don't know anything about him, uh. All I know is what is written in this journal that I found after I lost my memories." I pulled the journal out of my pocket, and flipped open to an entry that Michael wrote. Boris leaned in to look. "We think that he's in a device at Base. We're trying to get him out."

Boris studied the journal entry. "This is handwriting of Michael," he said. "What is this journal? I have not seen this. And why do you not ask Base for device?"

"Base... It's a long story, but Base doesn't trust me without my memories," I said.

Boris continued to squint at the journal entry. "I do not know all of these words. You say the cowboy is alive in time travel computer."

"It's not that simple," I said, remembering how Ryan had chided me for saying the same thing. I looked around for Ryan's disapproving gaze, but didn't see him. *[Internally.]* Where did he go? *[Aloud.]* "But if we get the Stinky Device, then we can get Michael out of it."

Boris turned the page in the journal. "No, uh. This is misunderstanding with Base. Base would not leave you or Michael behind. They should not distrust you. It is decided. Boris will go to Base, and we will explai- *[Groans.]*"

Boris interrupted himself with a deathly groan. He doubled over in pain, then went down on his knees. I saw blood drip down onto the floor.

Ryan stepped out from behind the support beam, holding a knife. It was slick with fresh blood. There was a deep gash through Boris's sweater on his back.

"You gotta be tough to make it out here in the Wild West," Ryan said. "You should have stayed home with Bruno. We're gonna have to check his apartment, too, Mikey. If he knew where the book was, he could have moved it."

Blood dribbled out of Boris's mouth as he looked up at me. He was trying to focus on my face, but I could see his eyes struggling to stay focused.

I was trembling. "You're gonna have to get used to a lot worse than this, Mikey," Ryan said. "Hell, we're gonna do worse than this to Toph later today." I did not know that Ryan was already planning to kill Toph. "I guess if you need to be, you're allowed to be sad that we orphaned a dog. Poor Bruno. Toph says hi by the way, Boris."

Boris gurgled, and spat blood. He still had a firm grip on the shotgun. He raised it, unsteadily, attempting to aim it at Ryan. Ryan pushed the barrel aside with his hand.

"No more cowboy shit," Ryan said. "End of the line. You're a goner, and no one who can bring you back is around anymore. It's over, Boris."

The gun was no longer pointed at Ryan. It was unclear if Boris understood that. He pulled the trigger anyway.

The report of the shotgun echoed violently against the low ceiling and cramped walls of the apartment. The shot traveled past both Ryan and myself, striking the large taxidermy boar's head that hung on the wall behind us. The boar's head shook, rattled loose from the wall, and

fell to the ground with a deep thud. The back of the mount was open, exposing the foam that gave the mount its shape.

Ryan surveyed the scene. "Oh, so that's what this is about," he finally said after a few seconds. My ears were still ringing painfully. "And here I thought we were just standing around wasting time. Mikey, finish up with Boris. I'm gonna check out the taxidermy, and then we can get out of here."

"U-Uh— Finish up? What do you mean, finish up?" I asked. I looked down at Boris. He was fully prone now, breathing raggedly. He had released his grip on the shotgun, which was lying on the floor at my feet.

"Well, it's simple math, Mikey. He's got a double-barreled shotgun; he fired one of 'em. Uh, I guess you can let him sit there and choke to death in his own blood, or you can, you know, uh... take care of him. But what's really important is that you have fun out there, slugger." He stuck his hand inside the taxidermy boar's head. It was large enough that he could fit most of his arm in, moving aside the foam and distorting the shape of it.

"Bring... my Mishka..." Boris whispered weakly. I could barely understand him.

"*Bingo!*" Ryan called out across the apartment. He pulled his arm out of the boar's head, holding a small book. "Got the little, black book. I knew it was around here somewhere."

"It was just... inside the boar's head?" I asked.

"No, Mikey, I'm trying out a new magic trick, see? It was... behind your ear this whole time? What?"

"O-Okay, but... i-it would actually be magic! If it was in the boar's head, I mean," I said. "Boris was trying to shoot you. He wasn't trying to help us. But the shot knocked the taxidermy off the wall, and the only thing we're looking for happened to be in there? Which means if Boris hadn't heard us, we never would've found it. You're describing a magical coincidence."

"Something, something, sufficiently advanced technology, or whatever," Ryan said. "The book was ours for the taking."

I looked at him, still puzzled. Ryan was rolling with this development as if this were normal for him. He was like the Joker. Crazy Bread was just Normal Bread to him.

"The future, Mikey!" Ryan said, seemingly answering a question that I had not asked.

"Remember? Time travel? We're in the middle of it right now? Someone turned Boris here into a fleshy Rube Goldberg machine. This was all set up so that we would find the book. Let's be honest, it's probably me from the future helping us out, so, uh, you can thank me now. Boris, you don't have to thank me, just hurry up."

"But what if it's... I-I don't- I-... What if it's someone bad?" I asked. I looked down at Boris. He was still breathing, barely. I wished he weren't.

"Oh, you mean like what if this is a trap?" Ryan asked. "Well, it would be a stupid trap. It's- It's too cute, is what it is. Because, why wouldn't they just kill us? Like, why wouldn't Boris just *kill* us if this was a trap? Because if we're still alive, we're causin' damage, baby."

Ryan walked towards me and Boris, still flipping through the book. "Ya did good, Boris," he said. "You know, this is probably exactly what Michael wants, if that makes you feel any better? It does kinda mean that you're disposable to him, so, uh, that sucks. Uh, but, I- I mean, you- you served your purpose. Uh- You can go now." Boris didn't move. He didn't respond. "Mikey, you sadist. Why didn't you shoot him?"

"I'm not going to shoot him!" I said. There was too much going on. Ryan said someone made Boris do that? This was all a part of a pla-? Whose plan? Our plan? Was it really Future Ryan? I-I just now got that that whole golden idol thing he said was an *Indiana Jones* reference. "Why would the plan be for Boris to shoot a shotgun indoors? Someone's gonna call the police."

"Nope." Ryan hit the wall with his closed fist. It made a quiet, dull thud. "They soundproofed this whole thing. Classic Michael. And Boris made sure he didn't have any neighbors. No one heard any gunshots except for us. [*Slight chuckle.*] That was all Boris's doing. So, uh, congratulations, Boris. We coulda been in real trouble if someone heard us. Anywhoozle, this has been fun, but, uh, we really gotta get going. We got people to see, things to do. CANNONBALLS to put in a cannon. Uh, we'll see if that's literal. But, it's go time. [*Claps twice.*] Chop chop, Mikey!"

"We can't just leave him here! He's not dead!" I said.

"Well, who's fault is that, Mikey?" he asked.

I pointed at him.

"You're the one that's been standing over him, watching him the whole time," Ryan said. "I was doing some real work, so I trusted you with some light murder. If you aren't going to put him out of his misery, we need to go. Unless you wanna pop on down to Boris's apartment and raid his humidior before we skedaddle, there's nothing else here for us."

I picked up the gun. I looked at Ryan. Boris was going to die no matter what. I looked at Boris. He was still breathing.

I pointed the shotgun at the back of Boris's head, took a breath, and pulled the trigger. Boris finally went limp and stopped moving.

"[Dusts hands off.] Okie dokie!" Ryan said. "Keep that energy up, Mikey. We might need it at Base. Here, I found this in the bedroom. Consider it a gift from Michael." He placed a cowboy hat on my head. "Alright, here we go!"

Ryan pushed the button on the Calculator, and we were back in Toph's Secret Ice Lair. There was still blood on my shoes.

MIKEY: After the break, we found time for something completely different.

[Back Into It plays.]

*I was hoping
You'd lead me to the ocean
And I could pull you under there
It's always been
Sink or swim
I was hoping
You'd render an emotion
How terrible it must be
To be concerned
All the time
About time
Time*

*Every chance is your last
Put some muscle in it
Put your goddamn*

*Back into it
Feel the freedom of your obligation
Back into it
Held in place by the skin of your teeth
It would take a machine
To put the fear of god back into me*

*I was wretched
A little lie
A sacrifice
I took what's forsaken
Into my hands
You understand
I was letting you know
That the useful thoughts
Are the first to go*

*The rest are waiting
For me to call time
Because it's about time
About that time.*

*Every chance that you get
Bash your skull into it
Put your goddamn*

*Back into it
Feel the freedom of your obligation
Back into it
Held in place by the skin of your teeth
It would take a machine
To put the fear of god back into me*

*How cruel that they coddled you
It would take a machine to break the news
How cruel that they coddled you
It would take a machine, construction fee's on me*

[Scene transition.]

[We hear Skinner whistling and pressing buttons.]

[We hear a knock on the door.]

SKINNER: Ah! *[Drops the Calculator.]* Fucking hell, Mag Doll.

MAGNOLIA: Sorry! I don't know knocking would scare you! It's just me!

SKINNER: You realize that isn't particularly reassuring, right?

MAGNOLIA: Okay, that's just mean.

SKINNER: Not what I meant.

MAGNOLIA: Okay, then wha— Oh. 'Cause of the thousand other mes out there in the world.

SKINNER: Lucky for you, this bad boy's still in one piece.

MAGNOLIA *[teasing]:* Skinner, I knocked on the door. ...I could've attacked you with pool noodles.

SKINNER: *[Snorts.]* I was talking about the Calculator.

MAGNOLIA: Heh. I know.

SKINNER: Oh. *[Chuckles.]* Well, the pool noodle thing is a fairly common occurrence around here. *[Starts starts pressing buttons again.]*

MAGNOLIA: Oh, trust me, I know. Python and Skuzz are dueling in the living room as we speak.

[We hear Skinner continue to press buttons on the Calculator.]

MAGNOLIA: Hang on. *[Skinner stops pressing buttons.]* We gave Base your Calculator, didn't we?

SKINNER: Yep.

MAGNOLIA: But, that looks like the same one.

SKINNER: Heh. Yep.

MAGNOLIA: Skinner?

SKINNER *[innocently]:* Mm?

MAGNOLIA: How did you get your Calculator back?

SKINNER: Stole it.

MAGNOLIA *[giggling]:* No, you didn't! Did you really?

SKINNER: Well, if I told ya, I'd have to kill ya. *[Beat.]* Whoa, whoawhoawhoawhoawhoa. Kidding, totally kidding! Jesus. You just went white a sheet.

MAGNOLIA: Oh. Well. Wonder why. Definitely has nothing to do with the, I don't know... thinly veiled threats, the fact that someone's already killed a thousand of me, like, definitely nothing like that. Definitely no reason for me to go white as a sheet.

SKINNER: Yeah. Sorry about that.

MAGNOLIA: It's fine.

[We briefly hear Skinner pressing buttons on the Calculator.]

MAGNOLIA: Are those Old Man's spiders?

SKINNER: *[Shudders.]* Don't remind me.

MAGNOLIA: I knew you were taking care of them, but I—... I don't know... figured you'd at least leave them in Old Man's room. I guess it would be the spiders' room, then. Since he's... you know. *[Beat.]* Either way, didn't expect 'em in your room.

[We briefly hear Skinner pressing buttons on the Calculator.]

MAGNOLIA: Aren't you, like, terrified of spiders?

SKINNER: *Correct.* ...Wait. How did you know that?

MAGNOLIA: I mean, Python told me ages ago, I think first day in the house. It was, like, one of the first things he told me about you.

SKINNER: Oh. Still. You had a pretty busy first day at the house. I'm... surprised you remember.

MAGNOLIA: Mind like a steel trap!

[We briefly hear Skinner pressing buttons on the Calculator.]

MAGNOLIA: So, what are you doing?

SKINNER: Checkin' the logs. Just to see if Base used it to go anywhere.

MAGNOLIA: Well, did they?

SKINNER: Heh. That is for me to know.

MAGNOLIA: Still don't trust me, huh?

SKINNER: Don't flatter yourself, Mango. I wouldn't tell anyone else, either.

MAGNOLIA: I see you sidestepping the question.

SKINNER: Agility is an important and often underutilized skill.

MAGNOLIA: *[Laughs.]* I bet. Is that how you got the Calculator back? With some *Mission: Impossible* spycraft and agility?

SKINNER: Uh... *[Pause.]* Sure. You could say that.

[Flashback harp music.]

[We hear Skinner grunt as they open a window, heft themselves up through the window, and fall with a thud to the floor.]

SKINNER: ...Fuck.

[We hear Skinner approach a door. Chris is talking on the other side, his voice gradually becoming closer.]

CHRIS *[muffled]*: I appreciate you reaching out and setting up this meeting. Edgar is still at O.V.E.R., but he should be off work soon [**SKINNER:** Perfect...] and is hoping to join us. *[Chris's voice becomes distant as Skinner walks away.]* Before we start, can I get you something to drink?

SKINNER *[softly to herself]*: Alright... Where are you?

[We hear a door open.]

SKINNER: *[Sighs.]* Fucking sweltering in here. ...Ugh. Let's *[We hear the rustling of clothes.]* get this fucking sweatshirt off, Jesus.

[We hear Skinner lift the sweatshirt over their head with effort.]

SKINNER: Ah... *[Quietly huffs.]* ...That's a little better.

[We hear Skinner drop the sweatshirt on the floor.]

SKINNER: Alright. Let's see... what we have here...

[We begin to hear Skinner walk around.]

SKINNER: Alright...

[Skinner hastily searches, opening and closing various drawers and cabinet doors, until we hear the sound of a metal box being shaken and a Calculator inside.]

SKINNER: Hoho! A lock box? Yeah, fuckin' amateurs.

[We hear the sounds of picking a lock and Skinner whistling as they work. The lock clicks open.]

SKINNER: Bingo! *[Laughs.]* There we go. Did ya miss me?

[We hear the front door open.]

SKINNER *[muttering]*: Fuck.

[We hear the routine of someone settling in.]

SKINNER: Fuck me. *[Muttering.]* Of all the goddamn— *[Out loud.]* Hey! Charlie, right? Charlie, hey, haha... Hi. Hi. *[Clears throat.]*

CHARLIE: Skinner, hey! Yeah, um, I was wondering if I'd run into you today.

SKINNER: *[Laughs nervously.]* Yeah, good, good to see you again!

CHARLIE: *[Brief chortle.]* Uh, what are you up to here? Are you and Chris taking a break or something? Anything fun I should get in on?

SKINNER: Hmm? Me and—? Oh! Yeah. Yeah, right, the meeting. The meeting I'm having with Chris, today. Right now. Yes. ...Yes, hi, yes.

CHARLIE: *[Brief laugh.]* Uh-huh. Yeah. That one. I saw that he added it to Base's calendar earlier this morning, so I figured that's why you were here.

SKINNER: Yup. Just, ya know, talkin' shop? Just, uh, just two... mom and pop time travel groups... talkin' about the future. *[Laughs awkwardly.]* And— And the past. And— And probably the present.

CHARLIE: *[Laughs.]* Yeah, well. I know we didn't really have a chance to talk, because we met after all that Lieutenant and Nobody stuff, so. Um. ...I'd love to get to know you. I promise I don't bite. I mean, *[Brief chuckle.]* that is, unless you deserve it, of course.

SKINNER: *[Nervous laughing.]* Yeah. Yeah, g— Good one! *[Stops laughing.]* Good one, yeah, no, yeah, everyone. Everyone's been, uh... super, uh... super... super nice. Everyone's been super nice.

CHARLIE: Oh! *[Brief laugh.]* Awesome! Great, I'm glad! That— It makes me feel better. Um. I know we've got a lot of, uh... let's just say, strong personalities, maybe? At Base? Um, and I know that that can be a little intimidating sometimes, so. I— I swear, though. I— I swear, Marissa was joking about the rocket launcher. *[Pause.]* At least, um. At least I think she was? Uh. I should— I should probably check with her on that. *[Chuckles.]*

SKINNER *[nervous laughing]*: Yeah. Yeah, she's— she's, uh, she's a riot. Um. Yeah. Yeah, so, I— I should probably get back to my meeting with Chris? You know, I— I wouldn't want to be rude and keep him waiting, so, uh. I'll just. I'll just ge— uh, get goin'...

CHARLIE: Wait. Skinner. Uh, Chris's office is that way, silly.

SKINNER: *[Laughs.]* Right. Yeah. Sorry. Got all turned around. Uh– Thank– Thank you? Thanks, Charlie. I'll, uh, see you... *[Pause.]* I'll see ya soon, I guess.

[We hear Skinner's footsteps as they hurry away.]

CHARLIE: *[Sighs.]* Well. They were definitely up to something.

[We hear Charlie's footsteps as she goes down the hall.]

CHRIS *[muffled through a door, growing louder as Charlie approaches]:* –a friendly working relationship. I know Edgar is interested in seeing if we can maybe collaborate on a few–

[We hear the door open.]

CHRIS *[surprised]:* Charlie! Hey! Uh. Do you need me for something?

SKINNER: Aw, hey there, Charlie! ...Did I forget something in the kitchen?

CHARLIE: *[Chuckles to herself.]* Uh-huh. Um. No. Sorry. Sorry to interrupt, um. You guys keep at it, I was just looking for something? It's not important, though. Um. I'll catch you later, Chris. Okay? Um. Have a good meeting, guys! I'll go ahead and get outta your hair.

SKINNER *[smug]:* See ya around, Charlie.

CHARLIE *[amused and not fooled]:* Good to see you again, Skinner.

[We hear the door close and footsteps walking away.]

CHRIS *[muffled through a door growing quieter as Charlie walks away]:* Like I was saying, Base might be willing to collaborate on certain projects that are to our mutual benefit. If we can identify what's... *[Voice fades out.]*

CHARLIE: *[Sighs.]* Well. On the bright side, at least we now know we need to keep an eye on them.

[Flashback harp music.]

MAGNOLIA *[laughing]:* Wait. You actually had a meeting with Chris?

SKINNER: Yup. I sure did.

MAGNOLIA: *[Laughs.]* But you had just broken into Base. Why would you bother to break into Base if you had a legitimate reason to be there?

SKINNER: I didn't have a legitimate reason to be in Base when I broke in. Well. I did, but I didn't have a legitimate reason for two of me to be there.

MAGNOLIA: *[Laughing.]* You created an iteration of yourself to get your Calculator back? That's wild! *[Realizing.]* Wait. ...You would've needed the Calculator to iterate yourself. ...How were you in two places at once?

SKINNER: Intentionality.

MAGNOLIA: Ooh, wait, I know this! Uh, Edgar explained it to us after the whole thing with Lieutenant and Nobody? It's when you set your intention to change something. If you do it right, you'll see the results before you actually take the action. *[Pause.]* I hear that's how, uh... a thousand of me crashed into Base. ...Oops.

SKINNER: Yeah, that's basically it. It's not magic or anything. It's gotta be something that you can actually do, and then you actually need to do it in order to close the loop.

MAGNOLIA: Right, because if you choose not to do whatever you set your intention to, then you've changed your intention.

SKINNER: Yeah, you gotta follow through.

MAGNOLIA: So you... I mean, what? *[Piecing it together.]* Broke into Base with the intention of going back in time once you got your hands on the Calculator? So that you would be there for your meeting with Chris?

SKINNER: You catch on quick.

MAGNOLIA: And, lemme guess. Meeting with Chris was a distraction, so he'd be busy with you while you searched the rest of the house.

SKINNER: *[Snaps fingers.]* You got it in one.

MAGNOLIA: How did you know the Calculator wasn't in Chris's office?

SKINNER: I didn't.

MAGNOLIA: Don't you think that's a bit of a big risk?

SKINNER: Eh. If they caught me, I'd just tell 'em I was there for the meeting I booked with Chris.

MAGNOLIA: Ah. So the meeting was a distraction and a fallback plan.

SKINNER: Mm-hmm.

MAGNOLIA: Crafty.

SKINNER: Why, thank you.

MAGNOLIA: Do you think they know you took it?

SKINNER: Eh. They seem pretty busy. And they've got Calculators of their own. I think it'll be a while before they think to check. But, who knows. Maybe they have better security protocols than I think.

MAGNOLIA: You don't seem particularly worried.

SKINNER: I'd be surprised if Base thought it was worth going to war over a single Calculator. Unnecessarily escalating things between time travel organizations, even small disorganized ones, is *usually* a bad call.

MAGNOLIA: I guess you would know better than I would.

SKINNER: Hah. Sure.

MAGNOLIA: ...What's that supposed to mean?

SKINNER: [*Laughs.*] I'm not the one out there with a thousand iterations of me doing who the hell knows what.

MAGNOLIA: You're really never going to let that go, are you?

SKINNER: The fact that there are a thousand of you? Yeah, I'm gonna be clinging to that for a while, Magpie. Unless you wanna enlighten me about why they exist.

MAGNOLIA: I know exactly as much as you do!

SKINNER: Yeah, I tend to doubt that.

MAGNOLIA: And what's that supposed to mean?

SKINNER: Either you're lying, and you know a lot more about those iterations of you—

MAGNOLIA: Which I don't.

SKINNER: —or you're telling the truth, and all you know is that they exist and that Old Man spent his days crossing them off his spreadsheet. In which case, I'd actually know more than you.

MAGNOLIA: Do you... Do you know why he didn't kill me?

SKINNER: Wha– what?

MAGNOLIA: Old Man. He killed a thousand iterations of me. Probably had to hunt them down. I mean, scour the globe, right? ...A thousand is a lot of iterations. You can't have them all in one place. People would notice. It would be a fire hazard.

SKINNER: Well, sure.

MAGNOLIA: I was right here. My room is just a few doors down from his. ...He could've killed me at any point. Could've smothered me in my sleep, or something! I mean, he did plenty of surprise executions, I've seen the spreadsheet! But he didn't kill me. ...I was right here! So easy to be killed, and he didn't kill me. Why?

SKINNER: I dunno, do I look like a decrepit, paranoid old cowboy?

MAGNOLIA: You knew him better than me. You gotta have some idea.

SKINNER: Mags. I really don't.

MAGNOLIA: ...Well. I guess I have no choice but to believe you.

SKINNER: Yeah, yeah, yeah, you're a better person than I am, I get it. But... I meant it when I said that, in a way, it doesn't matter if you knew about your iterations. Because *they* seem to know about you. And *that*, my friend, is worrying.

[Beat.]

MAGNOLIA *[lightly teasing]:* Hmm. So, what you're saying is... you're worried about me.

SKINNER: *[Groans.]* There's a few layers to that sentence, but yeah. I'm worried about you.

MAGNOLIA *[lightly teasing]:* Aw.

SKINNER: Alright. That's enough feelings for the both of us, I think.

MAGNOLIA: Well... if you ever wanna do feelings again, you know where to find me. But, for now, I'll let you get back to your investigations.

SKINNER: Wait, why did you stop by? Surely it wasn't to take a gander at Old Man's spiders.

MAGNOLIA: *[Laughs.]* No. Definitely not. ...The pizzas are here. I didn't want you to miss out.

SKINNER: Ugh! Fine. God. You really are, like... a nice person. Aren't you?

MAGNOLIA: *[Laughs.]* Yes. Of course, my dastardly plan is just to be a nice person. Lull you into a false sense of security. *[Beat.]* No, Skinner. I'm just being thoughtful. There's a difference.

SKINNER: *[Brief laugh.]* You're insufferable is what.

MAGNOLIA: *[Laughs.]* Well, coming from you, that sounds like a compliment.

SKINNER: Yeah, yeah, let's just go get some fuckin' pizza, alright? *[Quietly laughs.]* The shit I have to put up with.

[Closing theme starts playing.]

CREDITS: This has been WOE.BEGONE.

Skinner's Untitled Crust Punk Show was written and sound edited by JustJenah. The voice of Skinner was JustJenah. The voice of Magnolia was Pine Gonzalez, the voice of Chance was Taylor Michaels, and the voice of Charlie was Lyssa Jay. Listen to [*The Grotto*](#).

[Closing theme plays out.]

BLOOPER (DYLAN): You know, now I sort of wish that instead of Boris having a dog, the— the Mikes had a dog. Because, like, now... now Bruno's an orphan. He's probably gonna be okay, but it's gonna— It's sad, right? Like, what if Mike and Michael had got a dog. Like, that would've been so cool. Why didn't that happen?

[END Episode 190.]