

EPISODE ONE HUNDRED AND NINETY TWO - OLDBRUSH VALLEY, US

Original transcript edited by Theo and reviewed by Jenah

[BEGIN Episode 192.]

INTRO: Hey, guys. Welcome to the Season 16 finale. I hope you enjoyed this season as much as I did, and I hope that you are excited for the final episode. A lot of us worked very hard for it, and I'm excited to bring it to you.

I'm still streaming on Twitch at twitch.tv/woebegonepod, where every Sunday I write that week's episode soundtrack, and then we hang out and play a video game. Because it is the intermission, I will not be writing a soundtrack this Sunday. We'll just be hanging out, listening to February Album Writing Month music, and playing a chill game like indoor world on *GeoGuessr*. That's been a lot of fun. That's twitch.tv/woebegonepod.

And if you'd like to support the show, you can do so on Patreon over at patreon.com/woe_begone, where you get early access to ad-free episodes, instrumentals, soundtrack albums, Q&As, director's commentaries, Movies with Michael, corkboards, and morkboards, and postcards. It's a great time to be a patron, because there's a lot of bonus stuff that comes with the season finale. I will be posting all of the songs from this episode, including the instrumental to the soundtrack, as well as two corkboards, not one, and two behind-the-scenes videos where I break down how the episode got made. So check that out if you're interested in what goes into making this kind of episode. That's patreon.com/woe_begone.

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

[Warning: This episode contains depictions of violence, false imprisonment, substance use, and brainwashing. Listener discretion is advised.]

BORIS *[from Episode 144]:* You have look in your eyes of someone who has returned from war.

[We hear a whirlwind of recognizable voices panning, distorting, and echoing. Memories come flooding to Mikey during the Edgar retrieval mission described earlier in the season.]

HUNTER *[from Episode 108, overlapping]:* Welcome back, everyone! It is so good to see that all of you have returned safe and sound. There was some dodginess with the extraction on my end, I'm sorry if any of you felt that. I had to call in some assistance from outside of this time period, but it looks like we got it all worked out. Just a smidge of extra maneuvering. Is everyone feeling good?

JAMILLA *[from Episode 119, overlapping]:* Consolidation is not a linear montage...

EAGLE *[from Episode 167, overlapping]:* And... Cut! Excellent work, Lieutenant. Excellent work, indeed. This is even more than I asked for.

SLY *[from Episode 83, overlapping]:* Now, what can I get you gentlemen? Oh! You two! Mikey and Mike. And I suppose you're lookin' for Michael. I had a sneaking suspicion he ran off somewhere.

[Marissa is trying to get Mikey to snap out of it. Chance is in their earpiece.]

MARISSA: *Hello?* Earth to Mikey boy! Hey! *[Snaps fingers.]* What's goin' on in there? What, did you land upside down? You need an Advil? Aw, poor baby. *[Clicks tongue.]* I think you had dropped Mikey on his head, Chris.

[The whirlwind of voices fades out. We hear birds and outdoor ambience.]

CHANCE *[through earpiece]:* I did not "drop Mikey on his head." He should have transported the same as you.

MARISSA: Well, he's broken, and it wasn't me, so it must've been you. You're gonna have to send a repair guy out here, stat. I don't have time for stragglers, and Mikey doesn't have much in that noggin left to lose. Come on, we've got work to do.

MIKEY: Ugh... E-Ed- Edgar, E-Edgar! Edgar, E-Edgar, uh- Where-? Uh- We're...? We're here for Edgar? Uh-! Uh- Where are we?

MARISSA: Good question, Mikey. By the looks of it, we're somewhere in the vicinity of, uh... haven't got a fucking clue. It looks fuckin' bizarre, though, I'll tell ya that. Does it look kinda... I don't know... wavy to you, Mikey?

MIKEY: *[Still disoriented.]* I- You mean- T-Th- The a-air? Y-Yeah. What- What- What-... What-?

CHANCE *[through earpiece]:* We don't know where you are, either. You're just wherever the Stinky Device told us that Edgar would be. Do you see him?

MIKEY: No, I don't see him! Uh- This- This place feels... I-It feels w-weirdly familiar. Like, I don't think I've been here, but, like, I've been somewhere like here before? Uh, could it be a time travel organization?

MARISSA: Yeah, no shit! You are firing on all cylinders today. Good job, Mikey, you're absolutely correct. Except, how do you know what a time travel organization looks like? What, you seen one before?

MIKEY: What— What kind of question is that? We're somewhere deep inside of somewhere from the looks of it. Uh— I-I remember when I ended up in the future with that Michael that showed us around Tier Three? And i-it's trippy here like it was trippy there.

CHANCE *[through earpiece]:* Wait, Mikey, you *remember* that? What is going on?

MIKEY: U-Uh— Chance, what are you talking about? Yes, I remember that, what—? What—? ...Why—? Why, why—? I used to not remember that. Uh— What's happening?

CHANCE *[through earpiece]:* That's what I asked you. Are you getting your memories back?

MARISSA: Alright, Mikey. This is a very important question, so listen up. Do you remember what I said to you on the very first day that you met me?

MIKEY: Yes, of course I do, you said, "Get in, dipshit."

MARISSA: I sure fucking did, dude. Chris! He's got his memories back! I fucking knew my strategy would pay off eventually. Y'all are welcome.

MIKEY: Okay, uh, I... I-I got my memories back. Uh, okay. Was I— Was I wandering arou—? Did I— Was I somewhere— Did I go to— Was I at Sly's house?

CHANCE *[through earpiece]:* That's where we found you.

MIKEY: And his brother was there.

CHANCE *[through earpiece]:* His what?

MARISSA: Alright, Mikey, this has been a great recap and all, but uh... we have to get Edgar and get the hell outta here, because these vibes are foul. So, Chris, you're the man with the plan. Which way is the twink?

CHANCE *[through earpiece]:* I don't know. If I knew where you were or what it looked like, I could come up with a plan, but I don't. You're locked onto Edgar in the Stinky Device. That's all I can tell you.

MARISSA: Okay, great. Let's figure out which way to go. Mikey, you check that way, see if you can see anything that looks like your stupid boyfriend. I'll head over this way and do the same, and we'll circle back around and meet back here in five minutes. This is not us splitting up the party. I'm on your six, and you're on mine. Don't go too far, don't do anything I wouldn't, and don't be a hero. Okay?

MIKEY: Yeah, I-I'm fine. Let's go find Edgar.

MARISSA: I knew ya had it in ya, soldier. See you in five.

[We hear them walk away from each other.]

MARISSA: *[Calling out.]* Hello, Edgar! Come out, come out wherever you are! Woo! Edgar Edgar oxen free! If there are any twinks in the building, it's, uh, time to come out now. *[Stops calling out.]* Heh. "Come out." *[Huffs.]* Man, this place is massive, Chris. He better not be hiding somewhere. ...Well, actually, I guess if he was hiding somewhere, that'd be better than this being a trap! ...Ya know, boys? All this quiet and solitude and lack of Edgars really makes a girl think, ya know? Like, you ever wonder why we're here? What is the meaning of life? What is the airspeed velocity of an unladen swallow? When are we gonna go rescue my girlfriend? She's probably somewhere nice and normal right now. We could probably rescue her without having to worry about trippy time travel security systems. Ya know, just stuff like that.

CHANCE *[through earpiece]:* We can't go get Charlie yet, Marissa. It's... *[Sighs.]* It's complicated.

MARISSA: Yeah, it really isn't, though? She's missing and we have the ability to find her, so I don't think it sounds that hard. No Edgars inside, by the way. Just a buncha buildings.

CHANCE *[through earpiece]:* Look, I've been talking to Mike about it, and—

MIKEY *[through earpiece]:* Eagle! Eagle!

MARISSA: Yeah, Mikey, I think you broke up for a bit there? I just heard you say "eagle."

MIKEY *[through earpiece]:* Eagle is down there. I saw him, Marissa. He was with some— some people. I didn't recognize them, but they're— they're pretty far away, they're all the way down at the bottom there. Uh— I don't think he saw us.

MARISSA: Ah, yeah, I was afraid of that. Okay, so, uh. Good news! We know we are, and it's apparently O.I.

CHANCE *[through earpiece]:* You both need to be extremely careful! Don't touch the grass; don't touch anything. I-In fact, just get back to the drop-off point. I didn't know I was sending you into Operose. We aren't prepared for that! We need to retreat and regroup.

MIKEY *[through earpiece]:* Uh, no, we can't, uh— regroup— E-Edgar is here? You're— You're saying that Edgar is in O.I., and we're gonna leave him?

MARISSA: Okay, but there is a slight issue with this in that I thought Operose got destroyed. By Skuzz, who was a... a bomb? Someone tried to explain it to me once, but Skuzz is headlining in a tour across Vermont right now or whatever? Maybe they meant "the bomb," I don't know. Either way, I'm pretty sure the cliff notes were that Operose is, uh, well, in-Operose.

CHANCE *[through earpiece]*: This isn't the time for puns, Marissa. Just get back here!

CHARLIE: Marissa... Marissa! Hey! Psst! Over here.

MARISSA: Hmm? What the f--? [**CHARLIE**: Come here!] *[Quietly.]* Charlie!? What are you doing here!?

CHANCE *[through earpiece]*: What was that, Marissa?

CHARLIE *[quietly]*: Don't tell them I'm here! Get over here, behind the building, and say nothing, okay?

[We hear Marissa's hurried footsteps as she is lured in by Charlie.]

MARISSA: Uh! ...Oh. Sorry. Nothin'. I just sneezed. Hat¹ ci¹ [乞嚏!] Hat¹ ci¹ [乞嚏!] You know. Um, I'll be right back.

CHANCE *[through earpiece]*: Where are you going? This is dangerous! We'll send you back after we come up with a better plan.

CHARLIE: Nn! Shh. Mute your comms first.

MARISSA: What in the everloving fuck are you doing here, babe?

CHARLIE: *[Laughs.]* Well, it's good to see you, too, Sunshine. God, I missed you... Okay. Um... Focus. This is going to sound ridiculous, but Edgar, Shadow, and I have been working on a plan, and it only works if you stay here with me for a while. You can't go back to Mikey yet. If we close this loop, I think everything ends up working out okay.

MARISSA: Fuck me, this is a trap, isn't it? Was it the fucking wavy air? Is this some Operose bullshit and I'm gonna wake up with Eagle chopping off my fingers or something? Why can't he be normal?

CHARLIE: Shh! What– Eagle? No! It's not like that! We couldn't tell Base what we were doing. At least one member of Base has been edited, and we couldn't risk that information propagating. Don't worry, we have a plan. *And* you know that Edgar's always good on his plans. And my plans are... well, they're becoming very complicated is maybe a good way to put it. I'll explain why once this is all over.

MARISSA: I'm sorry, "edited"? Who's edited? What does that mean for someone to be edited? Is it me? Am I edited?

CHARLIE: Babe! *[Huffs.] Breathe. Deep breath, ready? [Demonstrating.] Inhale... Exhale... It's going to be okay. We need Base to come back and look for you. And we need the chain reaction that sets it all off. You are the missing puzzle piece, silly. It all comes together perfectly, but first you have to be here. With me! That's easy, right? Oh. At least, I hope it is? [Brief chuckle.]*

[Time travel noise.]

CHARLIE: Oop! And... it's officially too late for you to go back now. They're gone, and you are stuck with me. They won't be back until the right time.

MARISSA: No, actually, by the looks of it, you just stranded me here. Thanks! None of this makes sense. If you're *my* Charlie, then what the hell is all of this? What is going on? And why are you wandering around Operose alone?

CHARLIE: *[Laughs.]* I'm not alone, dummy. I'm with you. Wait... did you say Operose? What are you talking about?

MARISSA: *[Sighs.]* Fool me once. Come on, babe, I know exactly where we are. Mikey saw Eagle, which means this is Operose.

CHARLIE: Sunshine, this isn't Operose. You were right about them. They don't exist right now. At least, as far as I know. This is Tier Three.

MARISSA: Tier Three of what, exactly?

CHARLIE: Um. Of Oldbrush Valley Energy and Resources, silly? What's gotten into you? You're at O.V.E.R.

[Opening theme plays.]

[We hear the rowdy bustling of many Michaels at the Outpost Tavern on poker night: loud music, pool, darts, and empty beer bottles smashing. Cowboyified VHS Michael walks in.]

66 *[into a microphone]:* Alright, we got one more song for ya. This song's called "Until The Wheels Falls Off."

[Until The Wheels Fall Off plays.]

66: 15 is gonna play the guitar for this one. My hands ain't been the same since 79 invented that game where we smash our hands with hammers.

*You know the devil strikes a damn hard bargain
I'm gonna ride it 'til the wheels fall off
Stuck in the saddle 'til the early morning*

*I'm gonna ride it 'til the wheels fall off
If every second is a goddamn eon
I'm gonna ride it 'til the wheels fall off
And if it takes another life to get this head straight
I'm gonna ride it 'til the wheels fall off*

*Turned every pleasure into 9 to 5 so
I'm gonna ride it 'til the wheels fall off
And if torture is a holy honor
I'm gonna ride it 'til the wheels fall off
If you are hoping to cover your heart in gold then
You better ride it til the wheels fall off
And if you call on me then I can be your witness
We're gonna ride it til the wheels fall off*

[We hear applause.]

66: Thank y'all kindly. I'm 66, and these are my Six Shooters. Tip your waitress.

VHS MICHAEL: Barkeep! I'll have a whiskey neat. Thank ya kindly.

OUTLAW TY: Whiskey neat, comin' right up, pard. Say, I ain't sure I recognize you. What's your name, pilgrim?

VHS MICHAEL: Huh? Uh. My name's... Michael, o' course.

OUTLAW TY: You know that ain't what I mean. What's your number?

VHS MICHAEL: My— My number is, uh... 79. Why ya askin'?

OUTLAW TY: Just wonderin'. I don't reckon I've seen you around these parts before. What brings ya to Bluster's Grove?

VHS MICHAEL: I'm tryin' to make some cash at the, uh, the poker night. Like the rest of 'em, I reckon.

55: *[Scoffs.]* Good luck makin' a cent, pard. Tex ain't lettin' no one win. Not since he lost that golden leg o' his. I reckon he's gotta save up to pay this fella for his new one. Yeah, you're better off sittin' here at the bar while these other fools get parted from their money.

OUTLAW TY *[defensively]:* Are you accusin' Tex o' cheatin', 55? I'd be careful around these parts.

55: Hey, I never said nothin' 'bout cheatin', Outlaw.

OUTLAW TY: I know what you meant, pilgrim. We don't take kindly to folks makin' baseless accusations 'round here. It's bad decorum.

55: It won't happen again, pard.

OUTLAW TY: You're damn right it won't. ...Hey, 55. You ever met 79 here? Says he ain't ever been to the poker game.

55: What, 79? ...No, u-uh, I thought you had that motorcycle accident a while back.

VHS MICHAEL: Y-Yeah, I-I took a tumble. U-Uh, I'm back on my feet now. Shit happens.

55: Well, that sure as shit ain't how I remember it, but... this ain't my first drink tonight.

VHS MICHAEL: Well, I'm here, ain't I? So I clearly recovered. Maybe we should change the subject. Y'all keepin' up with the news? What's Base up to these days?

OUTLAW TY: We try to leave 'em be if they leave us be. Which they rarely do. Tex has his ups and downs with 'em, so we keep tabs on 'em, but the rest of the folks here tend to avoid 'em like the plague.

VHS MICHAEL: Well, if they're trouble, that's even more reason to keep an eye on 'em. They even got a Michael these days?

55: Why would you wanna know about their Michael? You gonna pinch his little black book now that he's gone?

VHS MICHAEL: "Little black book"? I-I ain't sure I know whatcha mean.

OUTLAW TY: I reckon that book is a myth, 55. Ain't no one ever seen it.

61: We talkin' 'bout the black book?

55: We sure are, 61. Outlaw here thinks it's a myth, but I'm pretty sure it's real.

61: Yeah, but you think Bluster's real, so who cares what you think?

OUTLAW TY: What are you yappin' about, 61? Bluster is real! He'd be in here, 'cept he likes to watch the constellations on clear nights like this'n. His favorite's Pegasus, the flying horse. Did you know Pegasus flies upside down? Think I might give Bluster some wings soon. That way he can fly up into the sky just like Pegasus himself.

61: S-See, he ain't real, h-he's a constellation like— like Pegasus or Kaiba or any of 'em. Uh— Y'all, Bluster ain't real! You heard it here first.

81: Shut up, 61, everyone's tired of hearing about it.

VHS MICHAEL: Hey, uh... 61, was it? Uh, you gotta slow your bones, pard. Y-You're gettin' rowdy. You wanna tell me about Michael's book?

61: Michael's *book* is just as real as *Bluster*, which is *ain't*.

55: Ain't no one seen the book since Michael disappeared. He got himself killed tendin' to Base, which is what he was always gonna do. So, Base probably got it.

61: N-Naw, i-it's— it's gotta be in that apartment. Uh, I— Which— The apartment ain't real, neither. And neither are them crows, by the way.

OUTLAW TY: What is real, then, 61?

61: [*Brief chuckle.*] One word: Hollowed Earth.

VHS MICHAEL: I reckon I'll have to check the hollow Earth for it, then.

61: Hey— 'Ey, you. Which one is ya?

VHS MICHAEL: Me? Uh. I-I'm 79.

61: 79 from the m-motorcycle accident? Naw. Naw, that ain't right.

VHS MICHAEL: Y'all got me confused with someone else's motorcycle accident.

[*We hear the metallic thud of Tex's leg and a tapping noise. Everyone gets quiet, and the music abruptly stops.*]

TEX: Attention, everyone! The poker game starts in 30 minutes, so get your damn ass to the table if you want a spot. I'm settin' my timer here on my fancy, new, digital smart leg, courtesy o' Outlaw here. When it hits zero, we're startin' the dang game. No stragglers. I wanna get outta here at a decent hour tonight. See y'all in 30.

[*We hear Tex walking away.*]

OUTLAW TY: Hey, Tex. Can I get a word right quick? [*To bar patrons.*] I'll be back in a jiffy. If anyone comes lookin' for me, let 'em know I'm back there talkin' to Tex.

55: Can do, pard.

61: Naw, man. Tex don't exist.

55: Man, I can't ever take you nowhere, 61.

[We hear the bar noises fade out as Outlaw meets Tex in the back room. Cards are being shuffled.]

OUTLAW TY: We got a problem, Tex. 79 is here.

TEX: Damn. That means someone corrected the motorcycle accident? That fella was always rotten. Didn't think anyone would care enough to correct 'im.

OUTLAW TY: 55 and 61 said the same thing. 79 died in a motorcycle accident. I knew I remembered that number; that ain't him. He's out there lyin' about who he is and askin' a buncha questions about Base and Michael. He knows about the black book and everything.

TEX: You think we oughta intervene, or is he just makin' normal trouble?

OUTLAW TY: Ain't got a clue, but he's got my hackles up. I got a real bad feelin'. I think we been infiltrated.

TEX: Alright, then. I trust your judgement, Outlaw. I'll go out there and deal with "79," whoever he really is. You take Bluster and ride out. We might need the Calculator and some backup.

OUTLAW TY: You sure, Tex? If there's gonna be a fight, I wanna be down there in the trenches with you.

TEX: Don't be a hero, Outlaw. Just take Bluster and get the hell outta here.

OUTLAW TY: Alright, Tex. I'll go. You stay safe.

TEX: You, too, Outlaw.

OUTLAW TY: Yup. See ya in a bit. *[Calling out.]* Bluster? Where are ya, boy? Let's ride. Yeehaw!

[Bluster whinnies.]

[Tex re-enters the bar, and the bar noises fade back in.]

61 *[sobbing]:* S-So, I- I reckon it's 'cause I don't believe in myself, uh- S- How can I believe in anything else? Y-Y- You know? I- I don't even exist. Do I even deserve to exist?

55: Hey, uh, Tex. Can we get some coffee or somethin' for our friend 61 here? He, uh... W- He needs to clean up a little bit.

TEX: Hold on just a cotton-pickin' minute, 55. I got some cleanin' up to do, too. Hey. 79, was it?

VHS MICHAEL: Uh, y-yeah, that's me.

TEX: You got any proof you're 79, boy? Last time we heard, that fella was dead.

VHS MICHAEL: What are- Michaels come back from the dead all the dang time. W- Sometimes we don't even know why.

TEX: You have backed your sorry ass right into a corner, pard. On one hand, I know you ain't 79. You don't know nothin' about him. You don't act like him. On the other hand, you're lucky you ain't him, 'cause everyone hated that fucker. Hey, you! Back there. What's your number?

81: Um, me? Uh, I'm 81?

TEX: Howdy there, 81. What did 79 do to you?

81: He dropped a dang raccoon on my porch! I don't even know why he did it, we weren't arguin' or nothin'. Uh- But it was him, I seen it. Nasty thing. Gave me an infection and tightened up my vocal cords.

TEX: So, which is it, 79? Are you a liar or a scoundrel?

VHS MICHAEL: Alright, well, this has been fun. Now that all o' you are crowded around me, it's the perfect time to finish up here.

55: Wh- Wait. What is that thing?

VHS MICHAEL: Don't worry. You're about to get real acquainted with what it is. You're gonna wanna get cozy, y'all. It's about to get real cramped up in there.

55: Tex, do something!

[We hear Tex take a step.]

TEX: You give that thing here, ya goddamn varmint-

[We hear an odd sound as all of the poker players are transported inside of the Stinky Device.]

VHS MICHAEL: *[Laughs.]* I think that was everyone. CANNONBALL's gonna get a kick out of this. Should be enough for a loyal army and then some.

[Scene transition.]

[We hear three sets of footsteps in the reverberant hallway of the Compound: CANNONBALL, Ryan, and decowboyified VHS Michael.]

CANNONBALL: You had better not embarrass me in there. There is a lot riding on this negotiation. No sarcasm, no insulting me. None of that, got it? You're programmed to obey me.

RYAN *[sincerely]*: I would never dream of embarrassing you, sir.

CANNONBALL: You're being sarcastic right now.

RYAN: I am not being sarcastic. I only want to help you make Project Cannon all that it can be. If you succeed, I succeed.

VHS MICHAEL: And if you die, we die. So everyone is hoping that you succeed, Toph.

CANNONBALL: Good. So you do understand. And if you do anything to ruin this for me, I will edit you completely out of existence. If you want any fragment of yourself to remain, you will obey.

RYAN: You have everything under control, Toph. You're offering Mr. Betteridge the opportunity of a lifetime! He would be a fool not to take you up on it. And we're here to help you, we're a team!

VHS MICHAEL: Toph, doesn't Ty owe you a favor or something?

CANNONBALL: Ty owes me his life. He owes me this whole Compound, not that he'd ever acknowledge that. ...Alright, we're here. Remember what I taught you, and *don't* embarrass me.

RYAN: Loud and clear, chief.

VHS MICHAEL: Lead the way, boss.

[We hear the door open without knocking. Ty is slightly startled.]

TY: Hmm? I—... I don't have a one-o'clock, do I? F— Fe, did you butcher the schedule again? Come in. Uh— Fe? I don't want to have to send you to Spreadsheet Ty's weekend seminar, but you've left me no choice, just like the last 27 times. Uh—! Oh. Topher Evans. How did you get authorization to be on this floor?

CANNONBALL: *[Mimics British accent.]* 'Ello, Ty.

VHS MICHAEL: That is what he sounds like.

CANNONBALL: That isn't really any of your concern. Me and my associates have come to speak to you about an amazing opportunity.

TY: Your associates? ...Wait. Which Mike is this—? No! Oh. You're not Mike at all, are you?

VHS MICHAEL: I am a Michael, actually.

TY: Michael? Which Michael?

VHS MICHAEL: No, not Witch Michael.

TY: And how did you end up working for CANNONBALL? Ryan I can sort of understand, they used to have a working relationship, but you? Oh, say it ain't so! For the sake of the office betting pool, I'm gonna be out a fortune. ...I mustn't tell Fe about this.

VHS MICHAEL: Ty, of course I'm working with CANNONBALL. He has given me such an amazing opportunity.

CANNONBALL: I have with me today an extremely powerful device. It's similar to the Calculators that Base uses, but with a more expansive feature set. It's more powerful than any other handheld technology I've ever seen. It can do things that I haven't seen other organizations do.

RYAN: It doesn't have a name yet? I call it the Gizmo. Base calls it the Stinky Device.

TY: I see. And what exactly does this "Stinky Device" do differently? We have quite the technological arsenal here in the Compound, you know.

CANNONBALL: Like the Calculators, the Gizmo can transport humans and objects accurately through spacetime. However, it has modifiable storage capabilities. You can store an object or a person inside of it and edit its makeup. I don't need a fancy storage wing to keep people in, either. Maybe Ryan can explain more.

RYAN: Can do! So, Toph's description makes it sound digital, when that isn't the case? People aren't stored as editable "code," even if it looks like that on the backend when you are "editing" someone. The editing is done in code. But that code is applied to a superstructure. It's really a lot more complicated than that and involves some sort of storage, correction, and consolidation system that it does automatically and that I haven't fully decoded yet? But the gist is accurate. Toph can "put" people "on" the device, change them, and "take them out" again. We're calling it Project Cannon.

TY: Interesting if true. And who gave you this device? FLINCH? Are you working with FLINCH again?

CANNONBALL: It doesn't matter where I found it. I have it now.

TY: I see... Can you give me a demonstration? It's the sort of claim that needs to be seen to be believed.

CANNONBALL: I'm glad you asked. Because I have prepared a presentation. You see Michael here. You were rightfully confused. This is Michael, but why isn't he a cowboy? That feels like an affront to nature, right? Well, with just the push of a button...

[We hear some strange time travel noises.]

CANNONBALL: He enters the Stinky Device. I edit him—I've got a preset for this very scenario—and...

[We hear the sound again.]

CANNONBALL: Out he goes. Fully cowboy! Say something, Michael.

VHS MICHAEL *[cowboyified]*: Howdy, Ty. I reckon I'm a cowboy now. It ain't no act, either. I weren't no cowboy before, and I am one now. Toph here put the spirit of the Wild West in me. Worked wonders on them folks down in the Outpost. 'Til it was too late, that is.

CANNONBALL: And that's not all that I put in him. It turns out that I can enter my own data into it. I can store code that represents myself and my mind. So, everyone that enters the Gizmo has a piece of me in them. That's another preset that I put together. Isn't that right, Ryan?

RYAN: It sure is, sir. A piece of CANNONBALL in every bite.

CANNONBALL: See? Ryan's fully on board with it. And you know that he'd be fighting me tooth and nail if I weren't in there pulling the strings in his puny, little brain. It's like he's been consolidated with me, except with none of the risk. I can do this to anyone who stands in my way. And that's the plan. Welcome to Project Cannon.

TY *[skeptical]*: Well. It's an impressive sleight of hand routine, if nothing else. You could all be acting, though I don't know why Michael would go along with that. *If* it's real—if I just watched you turn this Michael into a cowboy in real time—and if you can essentially turn all of your enemies into yourself with the push of a button... why are you here? To show off? What do you need me for? It sounds like you have it all.

CANNONBALL: I need extra resources if the device is gonna reach its full potential. Editing people is a great tool, but something strange happens when I embed myself into them. They

become connected to me through time. Because of that connectivity, if I die, they all die, too. That means that if something happens to me, my army gets neutralized, and they can't do anything to help. I need a workaround that will allow me to mass produce these Project Cannon soldiers within the device, with all the pieces of me but without the connective link.

TY: Well, that would give your fledgling time travel organization quite a leg up, Topher. What would I receive in return for strengthening my competition like this?

CANNONBALL: *[Brief chuckle.]* In return? Ty, you are sitting in your cozy office chair in the Compound because I saved your life. You owe me this, you owe me everything. You will have repaid your debts. That is what you receive in return.

TY: *[Quietly laughs.]* Toph. With all due respect, you are on my home turf. I am only indebted to you inasmuch as you can enforce repayment of the debt. Your dinky, little gadget is cute, but it does not compare to the institutional power of the Compound. We don't need your technology or your collaboration, so if you want me to help you, then you had best offer something more... material.

VHS MICHAEL: I don't think he's understandin' the predicament he's in, Toph. Want me to *[Cracks knuckles.]* rough 'im up for ya, boss?

TY: Oh, my, my! You really do have him trained. Oh, the possibilities. And not just docile, but proactive!

CANNONBALL: Not now, Michael. I think our friend Ty just needs a more persuasive demonstration.

[We hear a strange backfiring noise.]

TY: What was that!? What did you do?

CANNONBALL: That was a defensive correction. The device just prevented you from doing something.

RYAN: He probably tried to steal the Gizmo from you, sir? It's programmed to deflect and correct attacks.

VHS MICHAEL: Come on, boss. Let me at 'im. *[Cracks knuckles.]* I'll put a hurtin' on 'im.

CANNONBALL: That won't be necessary. I'm gonna collect him and customize him so that he's... more inclined to make good on what he owes me. It will take some time for Ryan to edit him into the proper form, so I'll need to leave a replacement.

TY *[laughing]:* I'm not going to sit here—

[We hear the strange noise. A new Ty is in place.]

NEW TY: –Uh! Oh, where am I? Well, this isn't Michael's office. Is this– Is this my office?

VHS MICHAEL: A lot's happened since we got stuck in that thing back in Tier Three, pard.

CANNONBALL: You're in the Compound. You've replaced a Ty that I have recruited for Project Cannon. You have a job to do. Right now, there is connectivity between the Project Cannon members on the device and myself. I need that connectivity removed. Can you do that?

NEW TY: I–... I think so. It'll likely take significant modification to the software, but I can figure it out.

CANNONBALL: Great. Report back to me when you get a fix, and I'll have Ryan update it.

NEW TY: Sounds great.

CANNONBALL: Yes. Yes, it does. We'd better get going, though. We have some more stops to make, big plans. Project Cannon pushes ever onwards.

NEW TY: Oh, good luck! I can't wait to see what you have in store for us.

CANNONBALL: Thanks, Ty. See you soon.

NEW TY: Toodle pipski!

[Scene transition.]

[We hear busy typing on a computer keyboard.]

SHADOW: I don't suppose that you have a status report for us yet, Edgar?

EDGAR: Afraid not. Mike hasn't been responding to me. I'm worried that something's happened to him. It's been over a week since I've heard from him at this point.

[Typing stops.]

SHADOW: We don't know where Base is anymore, do we? One of us could go hunt them down and see if Mike is there.

CHARLIE: Mm... *[Clicks tongue.]* No, I don't think that's a good idea. I was told not to interact with Base *at all* until the time was right. I'm taking it seriously. There's a *major* propagation risk. Like, the entire mission could be jeopardized, and we might never be able to fix it. Anything we

say to Base could ruin *everything*. Even one of them seeing us through the window might have disastrous results. I say that we stay put for now. Wait for Mike to reach out.

EDGAR: I'd feel much more comfortable if you would finally reveal who your super-secret source is, Charlie.

CHARLIE: I can't, silly. It's super-duper secret! Like, super secret.

SHADOW: Do you know who it is?

EDGAR: Yeah, how do you know you can trust them? It was only a few months ago that the Mikes went on a wild goose chase because they trusted the wrong iteration. I don't want that to happen again.

SHADOW: Old Man is still dead because we trusted the wrong iterations. And Magnolia violated the fire code! What a nightmare.

CHARLIE: You are both making equally important points. I know. And I really wish I could tell you guys, but you're gonna have to just trust me on this one. I know who I'm talking to. I promise. I'm just not telling the rest of you. *[Cutely.]* It's Top Secret Tier Three business. *[Chuckles.]*

EDGAR: Marissa's gonna be pissed about you taking a job in Tier Three, you know.

CHARLIE: Marissa is going to be alive, for fuck's sake! That's all I care about. I didn't really want to take the job. *[Huffs.]* If I'm being totally honest, it's already resulted in one tiny, little mess where an iteration of me... killed my beautiful, perfect girlfriend, but that's so 2024. I'm dealing with it; it's been handled. It has its upsides, too, you know. Namely the "anonymous" tip to skip the Base World Tour? *[Sighs.]* What I'm trying to say is that I took the job for us.

SHADOW: I didn't get the memo. And I didn't appreciate getting swept into a back alley in Mongolia and whisked away back here to Troy's stupid mansion. There's more trampoline rooms than bathrooms, and you won't even let me tell Chris where I am. It's uncivilized.

CHARLIE: *[Sighs.]* Yeah. Sorry about that, Ryan. I know you wanna tell Chris, and I really wish I could tell Marissa, but no one is allowed to know where we are. Mike knows that we're gone and that we're dealing with a problem that's a huge propagation risk, but not even he knows what's going on. He's at Base making sure that the rest of us don't look for us too hard.

EDGAR: I went into one of the trampoline rooms with Mikey during one of Troy's parties once. It was fun! Until Mikey accidentally kneed himself in the jaw and we had to stop.

SHADOW: I don't like trampolines. Too raucous.

CHARLIE: Oof! Don't even get me started on the trampolines. I am not a fan of them, either. Troy has come into work with a broken toe *twice* now because he was, and I quote, "getting his morning bounces in." He said it just like that, really. "Getting my morning bounces in!" As if that were a thing that everyone does! Of course. He doesn't even come in in the morning, guys. He works the night shift! Make it make sense, please!

SHADOW: No, I can understand that. Morning is a state of mind. And the state of Troy's mind is *questionable*.

[We start hearing a call notification.]

CHARLIE: Okay, hey now. Be nice.

EDGAR: Hey, guys? I hate to interrupt this very important conversation, but we're getting a call from the Compound.

SHADOW: Don't answer it.

CHARLIE: Answer it.

SHADOW: Why would they be calling us?

EDGAR: I don't know.

CHARLIE: *[Brief huff.]* Okay, well, the way I see it is that, if they're calling us, then they A) already know how to contact us, and B) that they should contact us. That means they probably know where we are and... maybe even what we're up to. Ugh. Neither of which is a good thing, but... I think it's better to know than to not know, right? We might as well hear what they want. If we're lucky, they might even wanna help.

EDGAR: Charlie, is your mysterious Tier Three contact Ty Betteridge by any chance? Is he the one that tipped you off?

CHARLIE: Ugh! Stop trying to guess, and answer the goddamn phone!

EDGAR: Hmph. Fine.

[We hear the call start.]

EDGAR: Felix?

FELIX *[through the phone]:* Hello, everyone. Sorry to bother you or frighten you or— or anything by calling. I-I know some people don't like the phone, um, these days, but you're the only safe group I know of that I can, uh, ask about this problem.

SHADOW: How do you know where we are?

CHARLIE: *[Brief huff.]* What's going on, Felix?

FELIX *[through the phone]:* We have the joy of receiving Ryan and CANNONBALL at base today. I only know about it because Ty pinged me on the intercom before CANNONBALL interrupted him. I stayed on the line and listened to the whole conversation. I don't think that CANNONBALL knows that I could hear them.

CHARLIE: Oh. Okay, um. What did he say?

FELIX *[through the phone]:* CANNONBALL has a powerful, new, mobile time travel device. He called it the Gizmo or— or something. Uh, I don't think they've got a name for it yet. I—It's like a Calculator, but i—it's not a Calculator. I—It can put people into storage wi— without the need for physical storage space, and it can, um... the— the way he put it was that it can "edit" the characteristics of people they put inside of it. So, t—there was a Michael iteration with him that wasn't a cowboy, and— and he made the iteration into a cowboy. So, so not— not a cowboy, and then— and then a cowboy with— with the edit gizmo—... you see— N—No— No cowboy to— to... Yeah?

SHADOW: Isn't the cowboy thing him just doing a voice?

FELIX *[through the phone]:* Ryan was really off, too. He kept calling CANNONBALL "sir" and being kind and respectful. ...To CANNONBALL. No one's ever been kind and respectful to CANNONBALL before. *[Sighs.]* You s— CANNONBALL's editing them to create some sort of artificial council full of obedient participants, and he's calling it Project Cannon. He said that he figured out how to program himself into people on— on the device. So, it wasn't just Ryan, it was CANNONBALL Ryan. And i—it was CANNONBALL Cowboy Michael. They were being influenced by a piece of CANNONBALL inside their own minds.

CHARLIE: Hmm. Well. You know, *[Clicks tongue.]* for the creative mind behind WOE.BEGONE, I'm a little underwhelmed with the naming choice. ...Huh. Okay. Well. Even if all of this is true, Felix... what was he at the Compound for?

FELIX *[through the phone]:* Wel— I—I— *[Brief sigh.]* It seems that all of these CANNONBALL iterations share some kind of connectivity with him. So if he dies, they all die. That means none of them can do a correction and save him if a mission goes poorly. He's looking for a way to create a massive disconnectivity protocol so that they aren't affected.

CHARLIE: Well, that's just poor time travel procedure.

EDGAR: Can the Compound even do a massive disconnectivity protocol?

FELIX *[through the phone]*: If the device is as powerful as CANNONBALL says it is, maybe. That's what he wanted Ty to do for him. And then... W- I'm not sure what happened, but- but I think that Ty tried to grab the device or something? There was a big burst of static interference on the line, and then... I don't know, really. I-It seems like he replaced Ty with a different Ty that he'd stored in the device.

CHARLIE: A Ty that had been edited to include CANNONBALL.

FELIX *[through the phone]*: Well- Exactly, so *that* Ty cannot be trusted anymore. *[We hear Troy start talking on the phone faintly in the background.]* He's working with CANNONBALL. And if we don't hurry, he's going to make CANNONBALL's already-strong device even stronger. It might even spread to the rest of the Tys.

TROY *[overlapping]*: We don't have Butterfingers, but I think Butterfingers are gross, and they make my teeth hurt because it gets stuck in my- in my mouth. *[Pause.]* No, listen, you're supposed to be me, right? Because that means that you know that in fifth grade, Sally gave me all of her Butterfingers for Halloween because she had braces, and I ate them all, and I got a tummy ache *and* a toothache, and I had to go to the dentist, and he said I had a cavity. So, if I had a cavity, that means you had a cavity and a toothache and a tummy ache. So, no! No Butterfingers, period!

CHARLIE: Whew! Okay. Um, so... what do we do about it?

FELIX *[through the phone]*: Well- I-... I think that CANNONBALL is sending that Michael iteration out to do his dirty work. You need to keep an eye out for him. He's probably going to try to manipulate Base in some way.

EDGAR: Does this have to do with our mission, Charlie?

CHARLIE: Uh, well, I don't actually know? Maybe? Probably? The timing doesn't really feel coincidental, so I'm erring on the side of "yeah, it probably does."

TROY *[overlapping]*: What are you talking about? See? No. No Butterfingers in the pantry. What do you mean you can't see!? Oh. W- Because the phone. Okay. I-I'll tell you, okay? You'll hear soon. We got Reese's Pieces, Dunkaroos, Butterfinger babies...

FELIX *[through the phone]*: Sorry... i-is someone else there with you?

TROY: No. No! Those don't- Those don't count! God-! You're-! E- Honestly you're sometimes y- *[Noticing the others.]* Oh, hey, guys. Uh, hey, I gotta- I gotta call you back. Hey, what are you guys doing here? This is my house, right? Sorry, I-I gotta go, I gotta go, I gotta go. Charlie and Edgar and the... other one are here. Bedgar, I don't know.

SHADOW: What do we do about him?

CHARLIE: Hey, Troy! Uh... You weren't supposed to know that we're here. We're trying to help Base, but they can't know about it. It's a big secret, okay?

EDGAR: He just told that other iteration on the phone that we're here.

TROY: Oh, Other Troy? Naw, don't– don't worry about him. He was barely listening to me. He– He barely listens to anyone, to be honest. I–Imma be– Imma be so real with y'all, I think he might be kinda dumb. Um, but, yeah, no, anyway, Michael's back, so everybody's just been talking about that. We're back in town for work, so I just stopped to get some snacks. I mean, Other Troy wanted Butterfingers. Can you believe that? After our tummy ache and the cavity? I mean, y'all know, y'all know. Y'all get it.

CHARLIE: Whoa! Wha– Wait. What do you mean, "Michael is back"? Our Michael?

TROY: Um. Y-Yeah. He walked into Base, said hi to everyone and said, *[Brief Michael impression.]* "Come here, Troy!" and gave me a big, best friend hug. Way bigger than everyone else's, because he is my best friend and the... other one. Uh, the one with the horse? The horse is also my best friend, so I guess you could say I'm a cowboy? Um. *[Pause.]* Yeah, so Michael's back, and everyone's happy about it.

EDGAR: I think we found the Michael you were talking about, Felix.

FELIX *[through the phone]:* Yeah, it looks like you're right. Troy, can you get "Other Troy" back on the phone? I have a plan.

[Scene transition.]

[We hear gentle Oldbrush Valley ambience as VHS Michael rings a doorbell. Troy 2 answers.]

VHS MICHAEL: Howdy, Troy! What a sight for sore eyes.

TROY2: Uh, Tex? I–Is that you? ...Where's– Where's Bluster?

VHS MICHAEL: Naw, I ain't Tex, pard. I'm– I'm Michael. You remember me, right?

TROY2: I mean, of course I remember you, from– from the cows and snow. I mean, why– why wasn't Bluster there with you, by the way? Does he– Does he hate cows? Do horses hate cows? I mean, I know cats hate dogs, but–

VHS MICHAEL: H– That ain't me neither, pard. Uh– Can I just come in?

TROY2: Ah, I get it, this is like a memory thing, right? I mean, Mikey doesn't have his memory either. That– I–It's okay, Michael, you'll– you'll get yours back, we'll help. *[We hear the door*

close.] Mikey, honestly, he's more fun without his memory anyway, except they're keeping him down in the basement? But, he— he did write a song about how much he likes basements, so I guess he's probably happy down there? I mean, I— I know I would be.

CHANCE: Uh... hi. Who are you?

VHS MICHAEL: Chance! Uh— I— Chris, sorry, uh. Howdy, pard. It's damn fine to be back. It's me. It's Michael.

CHANCE: Michael? You're saying you're *our* Michael?

VHS MICHAEL: Yessir, I am. Back from the dead and in the dang flesh, pilgrim. Right back here in Oldbrush Valley. Feels like the good old days, don't it?

CHANCE: Michael's dead. He consolidated with Lieutenant, and we had to kill Lieutenant. Britches fuckin' kill him with a pickaxe. You can't be Michael! How are you alive?

VHS MICHAEL: There'll be plenty o' time for tales of my return once we can get a campfire goin', pard. I just popped in to say howdy since, ya know, we're both in the neighborhood.

MW: Michael? Is it really you?

VHS MICHAEL: It sure is, Emdubya. It's been a long time. How ya holdin' up?

MW: I get by. Been better, been worse.

VHS MICHAEL: Sounds about right. Man, this place is just like I remember it. So, what the heck are y'all doin' back in Oldbrush Valley?

MW: Chance brought us here for a "work day." Though every day's a work day. Me and Chris and Troy still work at O.V.E.R., so we gotta go in and get a few patrol days done real quick. Just so they don't think we're a no call, no show. It's been rough gettin' back into the groove, but me and MDawg have been sharin' shifts. [*Calling out.*] Hey, MDawg! You're gonna wanna get in here. Michael's back! [*Normal volume.*] And, uh, Stinky's around here, too, somewhere. Oh, and there's this new fella—

CHANCE: MW, I'm really not sure that we should be telling everyone that he's here just yet?

VHS MICHAEL: Ain't nothin' to be scared of, Chris.

TROY2: But we need your help, Michael! Marissa's missing, and we were just about to go get her. You're the only one with boots. Can you just swoop in and do some, like, I dunno, cowboy stuff like wrestle somethin' and get her back? Like when we were in that one place and we did

the horse stuff to kill... the— the British guy? W-Was that a dream or real life? Because I-I mean, honestly, I do both.

VHS MICHAEL: I'll help with whatever y'all need, Troy. I'm back. Now, where are Mike and Mikey? A-And— Did Troy say Mikey lost his memory?

MW: Yeah, that's the new guy I was talkin' about.

CHANCE: They are currently in confinement? It's a long story, but Marissa isn't the only missing puzzle piece. We've got a few other people to locate as well.

MDAWG: I tried to contact Edgar's soul, but his soul is no longer where we did the mission. At least, not anymore. Hello, Michael. It is bodacious to see you.

VHS MICHAEL: It's bodacious to see you, too, pard.

TROY2: This is great news. Listen, I-I think we should celebrate. And, by that, I mean that I'm hungry and I want candy. Other Troy's going to my house. Or his house? Our house. Uh— I'm gonna tell him to grab some snacks. Y-You all like Butterfingers, right?

VHS MICHAEL: Don't mind 'em.

MW: Not really, no.

MDAWG: They reduce my skin conductivity.

TROY2: Okay, great, 'cause I wanna share, obviously? Like, I'm a— I'm a gu— I'm a good guy like that, but, like, only a tiny, little bit. I-I'm gonna go just call him real quick. I-I'll be right back.

[We hear Troy 2 leave the room.]

CHANCE: So. "Michael." Will you be sticking around, or are you just popping in to say hello?

VHS MICHAEL: Cain't do more than pop in and say howdy right now, I'm afraid. I ain't been back too long, so I got errands on the list. I gotta stop by the apartment, too. Thinkin' o' gettin' that whole gang back together. Whaddaya think about that, Emdubya? Movin' back to Latvia.

MW: Sounds good to me, pard. It's a little crowded here.

MDAWG: I thought that we were making progress with the Bikram Yoga, MW. But if you want to move out, that is your soul's decision to make.

MW: It's too damn sweaty's what it is.

VHS MICHAEL: Hey, uh. Mike's here, too, right? Uh— What's the deal with him?

CHANCE: I don't think that we should talk about that just yet? You said that you just "got back"? How did that happen? Who brought you back?

VHS MICHAEL: Well, I ain't ready to talk about *that* yet. So, I reckon we're at a crossroads. I still wanna talk to Mike and Mikey. O-Once you know you can trust me, I mean. I understand ya, Chris. You can't trust every cowboy with a million-dollar smile and a song in his heart, can ya?

CHANCE: I'd have to see a cowboy with a million-dollar smile to know for sure.

VHS MICHAEL: Hey, I ain't sayin' it's purdy. I'm sayin' I been kicked in the mouth by a lotta horses. And a giraffe, once. It costs a lotta money to get it fixed. And that's separate from my giraffe taxidermy fund.

TROY2 [*kinda nervous*]: Hey, uh... Michael? Can you— Can I borrow you for a moment? I— I'm on the phone with Other— Other Troy, and he has a question... a-about... Butter— Butterfingers...

VHS MICHAEL: What is the question, pard?

TROY2: Do— Do Butterfinger BBs count? Because he— [**VHS MICHAEL:** What, Troy?] L-Look, just— just come here for a second? He— He— He— H-He wants to talk to you.

VHS MICHAEL: Okay. Uh. I'll be back in a second, y'all.

CHANCE: [*Sighs.*] Take your time. Just keep a close eye on him, will ya, Troy?

[*VHS Michael walks into an adjoining room.*]

VHS MICHAEL: Okay. Ya got my attention, pard. What do ya need?

TROY2: Okay, so Other Troy's at the house, and he's on the phone right now. S-Say hi, Other Troy!

TROY [*though the phone*]: No, you're the other Troy. [*Huffs.*] Is he— Is he standing where he's supposed to be standing?

TROY2: Oh, right. Could you— Could you stand right here for a second? Is that— Is that alright? Just— Yeah, right there.

VHS MICHAEL: W-What is this about Troy? Uh— 'Cause, look, I ain't Tex, and I ain't Old Man. And I know you like that dang horse more than the cowboys what ride 'em, but—

TROY2: Alright, you're good. He's– He's standing there.

TROY *[through the phone]:* Got it. Okay, he's ready! Now, guys!

VHS MICHAEL: Troy, what in tarnatio–

[Time travel noise.]

TROY *[through the phone]:* Did it work?

MICHAEL: Ugh... Oh... Oh. My– My head. Ugh... Uh–! Don't hurt me, I'll–! Uh–! Uh–! Ugh–! No– No– Oh. No. Uh. Ugh. Troy– Troy. Oh, what did you just do to me?

TROY2: I-I don't know, man. I was just told to get you in here and make you stand there, and you'd be my best friend again. D-Did it– Did it work? Can I have a hug now?

MICHAEL: Troy, we weren't ever best friends, what are you talkin' about.

TROY2: Uh, okay, who's your best friend, then?

MICHAEL: *[Brief sigh.]* Troy, I-I don't know, uh. S-Sly.

TROY2: Um. No, dummy, that's your boyfriend, that– that doesn't count.

TROY *[through the phone]:* He's one of us now, right? We– We did it?

TROY2: Uh, hold on, I'll check. Um. Troy's asking if you're... evil still.

MICHAEL: Uh– What? I– I-I w– I weren't– I weren't e-evil. Ugh. What are...? I-I'm– I'm sorry, uh. Everything's a blur.

TROY2: Here, just– just take the phone.

CHARLIE *[through the phone]:* Hey. You're alone, right?

MICHAEL: Bluebird. Is that you?

CHARLIE *[through the phone]:* Yeah, Michael. That's me! Uh. I've gotta be quick, because Base isn't allowed to know what we're doing. We heard from a source that you had been somehow "edited" to work for CANNONBALL. We're still figuring out what that means? But, when Troy said you were here, we set up a consolidation to put the cowboy back in control. Did it work?

MICHAEL: I– I guess it worked. Ugh... I-I ain't workin' with CANNONBALL. I-I mean, I-I am workin' with... CANNONBALL. O-Okay, um... H-How did you know that?

CHARLIE *[through the phone]*: It's a secret! *[Giggles.]* Don't let Base know what's happening yet. Got it?

MICHAEL: 10-4. This Troy witnessed everything, though, uh. You want me to shoot 'im so he don't blab?

TROY2: Um, hey. I can still hear you? Uh, I— I would prefer you didn't do that.

CHARLIE *[through the phone]*: Okay, no murder! *[Brief laugh.]* You can keep a secret. Right, Troy? You won't tell anyone about this, or Michael's gonna shoot you, okay?

TROY2: 10-4! Sir, yes, yes, yes. I'm the best at keeping quiet of everyone ever made in the world ever and will be. One time, I didn't even talk, and it was, like...

[Beat.]

CHARLIE *[through the phone]*: I'm serious, Troy. You can't tell anyone, okay?

MICHAEL: Hey. Did y'all over there know that Marissa's missin'? Apparently they had lost her on a mission.

TROY2: Um, Mikey said he saw *Eagle!* I hate that guy. Hate 'im. Hate 'im. I don't like 'im. I d— Y'all might, I don't.

MICHAEL: Eagle? Uh— They were in Operose, I reckon?

CHARLIE *[through the phone]*: Mm, *[Sighs.]* uh, I... Okay, I think I know what's happening. Troy, can you let me know when Base starts their mission to rescue Marissa? I think that's going to be an important point in spacetime.

TROY2: Yeah. *Zoom*, space time.

CHARLIE *[through the phone]*: And Michael, can you let CANNONBALL know that Base is going to try and rescue Marissa from Tier Three? This could be an opportunity for two birds with one stone.

MICHAEL: Rescue her from— from where? 'Cau— He said that Eagle—

CHARLIE: —Works at *O.V.E.R.*? *[Brief chuckle.]* People seem to forget that sometimes. Okay. You can just relay that message to CANNONBALL for me; I'll take care of the rest. See you soon, Michael. Oh, and... welcome back. Seriously. I missed you.

MICHAEL: Uh, yeah, I missed you, too, Charlie. Uh, what—? *[Pause.]* She hung up.

TROY2: You know, Charlie's pretty smart. I-I guess she figured out that they must have been inside of Tier Three because, you know, Skuzz was a bomb and blew up Operose, and there haven't been any additional reports of activity from them. Plus, Eagle has always worked at O.V.E.R. Remember? He was good friends with Hunter, and they palled around together in there. It makes sense that he would get a job inside of Tier Three. That place is scary, it's basically the same as Operose, it's got this hallucinatory security system that means it looks like it could be anywhere while being anywhere else. They could have even been inside of O.V.E.R. while making it look like Operose. Time travel's cool. I dunno.

CHANCE *[yelling from the other room]:* Hey, has anyone seen the Stinky Device? It's missing from the drawer! I repeat, **[MICHAEL: I didn't take it, but I got the Stinky Device.]** the Stinky Device is missing! Troy? Where's Michael?

MICHAEL: Guess I better take it and get the hell outta here, champ. Not a word to Chris about this, ya hear?

TROY2: I mean, I guess it's really good timing that I sent Other Troy to the mansion at the same time that you showed up. Right, Michael?

MICHAEL: One of these days, I'm gonna understand what your deal is, pard.

TROY2: No, you won't. Bye, Michael.

MICHAEL: Happy trails, pard.

[Time travel noise.]

[Scene transition.]

[We hear Felix walking down the reverberant hallways of the Compound. He stops and unlocks a sturdy door with Michael on the other side.]

OVERNIGHTER MICHAEL: Is it time to go already, pard?

FELIX: Hello, Michael. I'm going to need you to come with me.

OVERNIGHTER MICHAEL: Go with ya where, Felix? You don't gotta be vague about it. I ain't dumb. I know who Yellow is. I know where the road leads. And I ain't scared. ...So you don't gotta coddle me.

FELIX: Michael. You know I'm doing what I can to make things... manageable in here.

OVERNIGHTER MICHAEL: Is that what you been doin'? You been managin' me?

FELIX: I– [*Sighs.*] I need you to be quiet and to come with me.

OVERNIGHTER MICHAEL: Ain't it customary in times like these to offer a last meal?

FELIX: Michael, please. I– We don't have time for dramatics, just– [*Inhales, then huffs.*] What if I told you we're– we're not going to Yellow, not now, not ever.

OVERNIGHTER MICHAEL: Then I'd say that you're a goddamn liar.

[*We hear Felix start walking.*]

FELIX: Follow me, please. You can decide if I'm a liar once we get there.

OVERNIGHTER MICHAEL: You know, in some countries, they tell prisoners they're lettin' 'em go, and then they– they shoot 'em in the back of the head once they think they're free. So, they– they die thinkin' that they made it out.

FELIX: [*Sighs.*] I–I– I don't know how to feel about that. But it definitely isn't what we do here, it's not our policy. I don't know if our policy's any better or worse, to be honest, but it definitely isn't that. Step in here, please.

OVERNIGHTER MICHAEL: Why are we here, Fe? This ain't Yellow's office.

FELIX: Yes, I've been telling you that! It's almost as if I've been telling you the truth, isn't it? Christ! [*Takes a breath.*] Step inside, please.

OVERNIGHTER MICHAEL: What are we doin', Fe?

FELIX: Uh, Michael, over here, please. Uh, stand on the X on the floor, and remain as still as you can. These aren't ideal conditions, so the less you move, the better.

OVERNIGHTER MICHAEL: [*Sighs.*] Felix, I don't got an experiment in me tonight.

FELIX: Stand there, on the X, please. Charlie. Come in, Charlie. [**OVERNIGHTER MICHAEL:** Charlie?] Charlie, do you read me?

CHARLIE [*through the phone*]: Loud and clear, Felix. Do you have Michael with you?

OVERNIGHTER MICHAEL: What is goin' on, Felix?

FELIX: Yes! I do! We are waiting and ready for the procedure. Have you sent me the coordinates?

CHARLIE *[through the phone]*: We sure have! Troy is getting the other Troy to get CANNONBALL Michael into place right now. It should be super simple? I hope, at least. Base is back in Oldbrush Valley, so we can pinpoint him super accurately. Edgar mapped that place down to the very last atom. Honestly.

OVERNIGHTER MICHAEL: You're sendin' me to Base? Uh– What for?

FELIX: Please don't talk. It makes the measurements less accurate.

TROY *[through the phone]*: Got it. Okay, he's ready! Now, guys!

CHARLIE *[through the phone]*: Ready, Felix? Now.

FELIX: Performing the consolidation in three... two... [**OVERNIGHTER MICHAEL**: What–? Who are you consoli–] one...

[Time travel noise.]

FELIX: Did it work? Is he there? In one piece?

[There is a slight pause.]

CHARLIE *[through the phone]*: Yeah! *[Laughs.]* We can hear him talking to Troy on Troy's phone. He sounds like he's Michael again! Or, he's a Michael again. Do I even wanna know what the deal is with that?

FELIX: You... You really don't. We were not kind to him.

CHARLIE *[through the phone]*: Thank you, Felix. I– I really feel like this plan is finally coming together, and it's all thanks to your help.

FELIX: Glad I could help. Take care of Michael for me. He's a special one. Even if he won't listen, or shut up, or trust me.

CHARLIE: *[Laughs.]* He is, isn't he? I promise we will. Thanks again, Felix. Bye.

FELIX: Take care, Charlie. Cheerio.

[Beat.]

FELIX: *[Sighs.]* This place is ludicrous enough without CANNONBALL running around replacing everyone. Now, just to make sure that CANNONBALL Ty isn't burning down the whole Compound...

[Abide plays.]

*It's an accident
I'm sure that's what I said
And you're believing it
Can't you see the lines across my face?
Arrogance, necessity both have their place
I'm a self-styled expert in these things*

*I might wander the streets but
I'm not going anywhere*

*I can abide
The terror of the fire
If it keeps me dry
There's movement.*

*It's a consequence
Of falling at velocity
I hope you land in it
Braced for inevitability
Marred by bruises
Formed by natural conclusions
They're not natural to me
And I'm an expert in these things*

*I may fall out of favor
But I won't fall through the floor*

*I can abide
The terror of the fire
If it keeps me dry
There's movement.*

*The path is unchanging
I Stand in the wake of it
I cast with my burning hands
An ember into the wind*

[Scene transition.]

[We hear the time travel noise as Michael arrives at the ice lair.]

CANNONBALL: Welcome back. Took you long enough.

VHS OVERNIGHTER MICHAEL: Do you want it done fast, or do you want it done right, pard? 'Sides, it's hardly fair for Ryan to be sittin' here clackin' away at that there computer while I go and put my ass on the line.

RYAN: Hey! I'm not merely "clackin' away" or whatever you said. Someone has to edit all of these cowboys you rustled up for us. That's an intensive coding project. Some of them were barely people to begin with! I had to learn how to sober them up using only code. It was not easy.

VHS OVERNIGHTER MICHAEL: Y'all wanted an army. I found y'all an army. It just so happened to be poker night.

CANNONBALL: They might not be the only ones who need some revisions, Ryan. Michael here's bordering on insubordination. You don't want me to take away your cowboy privileges, do you?

VHS OVERNIGHTER MICHAEL: No, sir. Just ornery is all. I got fired up from bein' around Base, I guess.

CANNONBALL: And how was Base? Did you find anything interesting?

VHS OVERNIGHTER MICHAEL: They've been keepin' busy. They went out on a mission to find Edgar and ended up losin' Marissa. They're goin' back into Tier Three to rescue her. Could be a opportunity to intercept 'em.

RYAN: We do have the black book that we took from the apartment. It's dangerous to blindly execute code like that, though. You wanna risk it for the biscuit, Toph?

CANNONBALL: This could be great news for us, actually. We could take down Base and O.V.E.R. in one fell swoop.

RYAN: We still haven't solved the connectivity issue, though. Tier Three is dangerous at the best of times, and if you die, then the rest of us fall over like dominos. And I don't think that Stinky is going to be rushing in to do a correction. I can't code us out of a disaster if I'm dead.

CANNONBALL: Stinky would fall over dead, too. But that doesn't matter. I just heard back from Ty. He has a solution to our connectivity problem. Hand over the Gizmo, Michael.

VHS OVERNIGHTER MICHAEL: But, uh—... Yessir.

CANNONBALL: Ryan, can you get this thing patched with the latest update? It should be straightforward. Ty says it'll eliminate all connectivity from anything tagged "Project Cannon" with the device. Which means both of you. You get all the benefits of being edited to include a part of me with none of the drawbacks.

RYAN: Easy as pie. One disconnectivity update coming right up!

CANNONBALL: I was thinking that I might just replace your mind entirely, Michael. What do you think about that?

RYAN: He can't replace my mind. I have to sit here and click and clack at the computer. CANNONBALL's never even installed Linux. It's nice to have job security.

CANNONBALL: I'll figure out a way to snuff out that sarcasm eventually.

VHS OVERNIGHTER MICHAEL: Toph, uh—... I mean, yessir. Ain't nothin' wrong with that. You lookin' to be a cowboy, Toph?

CANNONBALL: Heh. I like that. *[Cowboy voice.]* Cowboy CANNONBALL with his army o' Michaels. *[Drops cowboy voice.]* Base makes it look so fun.

VHS OVERNIGHTER MICHAEL: It ain't all good life, but it's my life.

RYAN: He's being weird, Toph. Look at him. Something is off. He isn't treating you with the proper amount of respect.

VHS OVERNIGHTER MICHAEL: And what are you implyin', Ryan?

RYAN: I'm not implying anything. I'm saying you're being weird. You're not up to code.

CANNONBALL: Hmm. C'mere. Let me examine you.

MICHAEL: Uh, y—...y-yessir.

CANNONBALL: Hmm. *[Pause.]* Well. You smell like beer and horseshit.

VHS OVERNIGHTER MICHAEL: Well, I ain't changed clothes since the Outpost. They got beer and horses. I-It's Texas. Them other poker players smell like that, too.

CANNONBALL: I see... And you're an enthusiastic participant in Project Cannon. You've been designed to follow my orders with a smile and no complaints. I was thinking... these Poker Game Michaels... Maybe they're a little rusty. They might need some target practice before I send them out into the field. You wanna stand up against that wall and help us out with that, Michael?

VHS OVERNIGHTER MICHAEL: Uh— Toph... You— I— Y—... Y—

CANNONBALL: You're obedient to me because I made you that way. Are you going to stand against that wall as you've been ordered to? Or do we need to do some more tinkering around in that brain of yours?

RYAN: We can build a new Michael if you kill this one. I've already got a profile built for these other cowboys.

VHS OVERNIGHTER MICHAEL: *[Takes a few breaths.]* I, uh... *[Falters.]* Alright. Fine, I'll do it. *[Muttering.]* I'm dead, anyway. *[Aloud.]* W-Where do you want me to stand?

[CANNONBALL laughs.]

CANNONBALL: Ah, that's all I needed to hear. You're free to go until I need you again.

[We hear Michael start walking away.]

RYAN: You do kinda stink, though. He wasn't kidding about that.

VHS OVERNIGHTER MICHAEL: Ugh. Just come get me when we're doin' the mission.

[We hear Michael open then slam a door.]

MICHAEL *[anxious]:* Where is it? Please tell me you didn't move the Calculator stash.

[We hear him stop walking.]

VHS OVERNIGHTER MICHAEL: Oh, thank god. *[Pause.]* Fuck you, Ryan. You're even worse than when you were Ryan. Goddamn. Okay... Fuck this, I'm goin' to the apartment. What were those coordinates...

[We hear Michael press buttons on a Calculator followed by the time travel noise as he travels to the apartment.]

[Scene transition.]

[We hear crows, other birds, and the ambience of cool Latvian weather.]

BORIS: Michael? Мой Мишка! Мишка, а? *[Мой Мишка! Мишка, а?]* Let me get the door for you.

MICHAEL *[flustered]:* Boris, uh! I weren't sure if I'd see you here or not. It's been a while, pard! How ya been?

[We hear a door unlock and open.]

BORIS: Oh, I am well. Uh, apartment is much quieter without cowboys! *[Laughs.]* And it's— it's good to have you back. Will you be staying?

[We hear the door close followed by two door locks.]

VHS OVERNIGHTER MICHAEL: Cain't, unfortunately. Not today, at least. Though if things go right, we might be movin' back in. I just stopped by to look for some things.

BORIS: And, uh, you brought guests with you.

VHS OVERNIGHTER MICHAEL: No, uh, i-it's just me. Uh, why?

BORIS: Guests are already waiting in your apartment. They let themselves in; I thought you gave them key.

VHS OVERNIGHTER MICHAEL: No, sir, I sure didn't. Who was it?

BORIS: First guy was, uh... British.

VHS OVERNIGHTER MICHAEL: Consarnit, Ty Betteridge. What's he doin' here?

BORIS: And the second guest was, uh...

VHS OVERNIGHTER MICHAEL: British but normal about it, that's Felix. I gotcha.

BORIS: You misunderstand. The second guest was a horse. A *huge* horse! I have not seen such a horse in many years! Uh— Listen. You— You can hear him, no?

[We hear a very faint whinny.]

VHS OVERNIGHTER MICHAEL: Bluster is here? Dang. Outlaw ain't gonna like that you can tell he's British. What in Sam Hell are they lookin' for?

BORIS: I do not know why your guests are here, I was *[Brief chuckle.]* about to check on them, I brought shotgun, mm, to check on them. I thought they might be thieves.

VHS OVERNIGHTER MICHAEL: I ain't convinced they ain't thieves just yet, Boris.

BORIS: Would you like me to come to apartment with you? I know you can travel through time, and you do not need such puny firepower, but a friend with shotgun is always good to have.

VHS OVERNIGHTER MICHAEL: You know what? Sure, pard. Come with me. I got a plan. It'll be fun.

BORIS: Are you sure there will be no bloodshed? Can I bring Bruno?

VHS OVERNIGHTER MICHAEL: I'd be insulted if ya didn't, pard.

[We hear them walking down the hallway.]

BORIS: Bruno! Ko mne [Ko мне]. *[Makes kissing sound.]* Come on! *[We hear Bruno run into the hallway.]* Ko mne [Ko мне]! *[VHS OVERNIGHTER MICHAEL briefly chuckles.]* It's time for you to meet giant horse!

[Bruno barks.]

[Slightly later.]

OUTLAW TY: Pipe down, Bluster! They're gonna hear you, and we'll be in all sorts o' trouble!

[Bluster snorts.]

OUTLAW TY: I see them crows outside, too. But we don't got time to go down there and say howdy. I'm sure they wanna be your friends, too. *[We hear the door open.]* Now stop starin' out the window and start lookin' for that dang book!

[Bruno barks. Outlaw Ty startles.]

OUTLAW TY: *[De-cowboys.]* What the absolute—? *[Clears his throat several times. Resumes cowboy voice.]* Howdy, Boris. Look, I— I can explain. *[Pause.]* Ah. Well if it ain't "79" here in the flesh. You oughta step away from him, Boris. He ain't who he says he is.

BORIS: I know who this is. This is Cowboy Michael; I do not make mistakes in this way. If he was fake Michael, I would know right away, I always know! Uh. Why'd you bring horse into my apartment?

OUTLAW TY and VHS OVERNIGHTER MICHAEL *[simultaneously]:* That's Bluster.

[Bluster snorts.]

VHS OVERNIGHTER MICHAEL: He's just one of the bros, really.

[Bruno whimpers, and Bluster snorts.]

VHS OVERNIGHTER MICHAEL: Be nice to him, Bluster. He ain't bright.

OUTLAW TY: I'm here for the same reason he is, I reckon. We're lookin' for Michael's book. I knew you'd be comin' here next after 55 spilled the beans. Boris, I ain't got a clue why you're so adamant this is Michael, but he's wanted for high crimes back in Bluster's Grove. ...When I got back to the Outpost, every Michael was gone. Every goddamn one of them. And I know he's the one what did it.

BORIS: Is this true, Michael? Wh— What he is trying to say you did? You killed them? Yes?

VHS OVERNIGHTER MICHAEL: N-No, I didn't kill no one at the Outpost. Today. This is all one big misunderstandin'. O-Okay. Well, it ain't exactly a misunderstandin', but—

[Bluster takes a step towards Michael. Boris racks his shotgun.]

BORIS: Whoa there, horse! Do not approach Michael.

VHS OVERNIGHTER MICHAEL: It's okay, Boris. You're right, Outlaw. I weren't 79 when you saw me. I was workin' for CANNONBALL. He's got himself this project called Project Cannon. And he's got this fancy, new toy he's been usin' to "edit" folks so that they gotta do his biddin'. He put a piece of himself in there, too. So I weren't myself when I did what I did at the Outpost. CANNONBALL had me round up the whole poker night so he could experiment on 'em. He's makin' an army. But then Base consolidated me with another Michael. So, I ain't workin' for CANNONBALL no more. He thinks I am, but I'm tryin' to stop him. And I know he's got that dang book in my present, which is why I came back here to get it.

BORIS: How does this CANNONBALL have book in the future?

VHS OVERNIGHTER MICHAEL: Because Ryan's gonna show up and take it.

OUTLAW TY: Well, best of luck to him. I tore this whole place apart lookin' for it and ain't found nothin'.

BORIS: Are we talking about book that is in boar's head? You remember boar's hunt, right, Michael?

VHS OVERNIGHTER MICHAEL: O' course I remember, Boris. I'd never forget that, no matter what they did to my brain. And you're dang right it's in there. Ya just gotta get it down from the wall...

[We hear Michael take down the taxidermy boar from the wall.]

VHS OVERNIGHTER MICHAEL: Right. *[Sticks his hand inside the head.]* And reach inside in here real deep, and, uh... Yup, here it is.

OUTLAW TY: I never woulda looked there.

VHS OVERNIGHTER MICHAEL: Well, it's all yours now, pard. Take it and go put it in your defensive array. I've got a book they can have, but *[Flips through the book.]* it ain't good for nothin' 'cept for readin' when you don't got nothin' else on the toilet.

OUTLAW TY: What's CANNONBALL want the book for, anyway? They're not goin' into Tier Three, are they?

VHS OVERNIGHTER MICHAEL: They are now. They're gonna try to get all of Base and get some codes off in there in one fell swoop.

BORIS: So you're giving them fake book with the wrong code? Clever.

VHS OVERNIGHTER MICHAEL: See? Boris gets it. Let's see 'em punch in those codes. See what O.V.E.R. security does.

OUTLAW TY: Fake codes'll activate emergency protocol, I reckon.

VHS OVERNIGHTER MICHAEL: That's the plan, Outlaw man. And that book's yours to keep, pard.

OUTLAW TY: I appreciate it, Michael, I really do, but... can I have Tex and the others back? We don't gotta wait for CANNONBALL's plans to unravel, do we?

VHS OVERNIGHTER MICHAEL: Afraid we do. CANNONBALL made me fork over the device. So, I ain't got it no more. He's got everyone from the Outpost on there, and he's gonna unleash 'em on Base. Ain't nothin' I can do about that but fight.

BORIS: Boris will join this fight! I already have shotgun! Bruno is glorious attack dog.

VHS OVERNIGHTER MICHAEL: Bruno ain't no attack dog. Watch this. C'mere, Bruno! *[We hear Bruno scamper over.]* Come here, come here. Come here. Yeah. Yeah. Ow! *[We hear Bruno whimper.]* Ow! *[Hisses and groans. We hear Bruno whimper again.]* Nah, i-it's okay, Bruno! I-I was pretendin' is all. See, Boris? You can't even sic him on a boar. What do you think he'd do if he saw a buncha folks what look like me? Try to makes friends is what. 'Sides, I got somethin' for you to do right here.

BORIS: Then Boris will lead fight from the apartment. Tell me, what must I do?

VHS OVERNIGHTER MICHAEL: You got the job, cowboy. I gotta warn ya, though. It ain't gonna be pleasant, but... it'll be over quick, and you hopefully won't remember none of it. And if I do my job, then there'll still be Boris tomorrow.

BORIS: ...I am going to die, no? I know this tone of your voice.

VHS OVERNIGHTER MICHAEL: Yessir. But you're gonna lead these suckers right into the trap.

BORIS: Then Boris will die. *[Slightly sheepish.]* You... are going to bring me back with time travel, yes?

VHS OVERNIGHTER MICHAEL: Just the second this is all over, pard.

BORIS: Then Boris is not afraid! *[Laughs.]*

VHS OVERNIGHTER MICHAEL: Attaboy. So, Ryan's gonna sneak up on ya. Ain't nothin' you can do about it. So, when he does that, I want you to act like you're gonna try and shoot him, but I want you to shoot the boar head off the wall, alright? Just knock it plum off.

BORIS: It will be the easiest boar hunt of my life. Do we bring grenades?

VHS OVERNIGHTER MICHAEL: That's up to you, pard, it's your apartment.

[Scene transition.]

[Time travel noise. We hear birds and outdoor ambience.]

CHANCE: Marissa? Where are you? Wow, this place really is weird. Mikey was right, it's... wavy. MDawg would love this.

TROY: *[Shivers.]* Oh, I hate it. Oh, I'm dizzy.

CHANCE: We don't have to stay for long, we just have to find Marissa.

MARISSA: Yeah, **[CHANCE (startled):** Ah—! Geez! Fuck—!] you said it, Chris! Let's find Marissa!

CHANCE: Geez! There you are. Where did you go? We thought that we lost you to Eagle. Wait... Charlie?

CHARLIE: Hey, Chris! I've been taking care of her the whole time. You had nothing to worry about.

TROY: Hey, Charlie! Thanks for fixing Michael or whatever. Do you have the Butterfingers? The babies? The BuhBuhs? The little ones? Other Troy never came back with them, so I thought maybe he gave them to you.

CHARLIE: Unfortunately, I don't have any Butterfingers for ya, Troy. That iteration you're talking about is still at home. I bet he'd share if you went back. Edgar and Shadow are looking after him.

CHANCE: Charlie, what are you doing inside of Operose? W-Where is Eagle? A-Are you okay?

CHARLIE: Oh, um. *[Brief chuckle.]* Well, okay, I'm gonna actually stop you right there? Good news, bad news: um, this isn't actually Operose, Chris. Uh, um... *[Clicks tongue.]* Maybe right now isn't the best time to go into everything, but, uh... trust me when I say this is definitely not Operose. I can fill you guys in later when we're all safe and sound.

MARISSA: Saddle up, boys! We're about to have company.

TROY: I don't need more company, please, there's already, like, at least four people in my house.

[Time travel noise.]

CANNONBALL: Hello, everyone. Glad you could make it. This is the inaugural mission of Project Cannon. I hope you will enjoy your stay.

MARISSA: I'm pretty sure we won't. What the fuck are you on about?

VHS OVERNIGHTER MICHAEL: We've got a little treat for y'all. Me and CANNONBALL are gonna kick our feet up and watch. Go ahead, CANNONBALL. Hit that button.

[We hear CANNONBALL hit the button, followed by a strange noise. The Poker Night Michaels appear and chatter for a moment.]

MARISSA: Yo, CANNONBALL! How about you come down here and fight me yourself, ya big baby!

CANNONBALL: Alright, everyone. I want you to subdue them, but keep them alive. I have plans for them.

[The Poker Night Michaels make noises of war and charge at Base. A fight begins.]

CHANCE *[overlapping]:* *[Fighting noises.]* I've said it before, and I'll say it again. Fucking cowboys! Why is it always fucking Michaels? Come on, come on! No, Troy, Marissa's on *our* side. Charlie, behind you! Troy! *[Fighting noises.]* Don't--! Ah. Fuck! Charlie!

MARISSA *[overlapping]:* Ow! Ow, stop. Ack! [?] You're going the wrong way! To the left! No, Troy, your other left! Ow! Goddamnit, Troy, you're fucking biting me. *[Fighting noises.]* Gimme that! Ow! Fuck! Ow! Let go! Ah! Shit! Ow! Ah. Fuck. Ow!

TROY *[overlapping]:* ...Okay, I'm ready. [?] Give me your best sh-- *[Gets hit.]* Ah... Oh. ...Okay. Give me your second best shot instead. *[Fighting noises.]* What?

CHARLIE *[overlapping]*: Ah! If you have any suggestions [?], you can [?] and fight. Get down, and stay down. That's alright. At least I've got my [?] Where even is security? Why are they not coming to get you? [?] that rocket launcher? Did you [?] over that, Tex? [?]

[Everyone is fed into the Stinky Device, including the army of Poker Night Michaels, until only CANNONBALL, Ryan, and VHS OVERNIGHTER MICHAEL remain.]

VHS OVERNIGHTER MICHAEL: That's all of 'em, boss. They're gettin' edited as we speak. That's your Base now. The CANNONBASE.

CANNONBALL: Huh. That was... so much easier than I thought it would be.

RYAN: They aren't a match for you anymore, Toph. Great job. You're in the big leagues now.

CANNONBALL: Project Cannon is a success. Now, Michael, if I remembered correctly, you have some experience inside of Tier Three. Could you kindly lead us up to the terminal where I can input this security code? Let's see how much else we can get out of this place.

VHS OVERNIGHTER MICHAEL: Let's get 'er done, pard. Right this way, gentlemen. And be careful. You can still trip the Tier Three security if ya ain't payin' attention.

[We hear them walk for a brief spell.]

RYAN: What's in this book exactly? Me and Mikey thought it was a contact list.

VHS OVERNIGHTER MICHAEL: That ol' thing propagated back from when I worked at Tier Three. It ain't great that it made it back to 2025, but it was kept out of unworthy hands long enough to make it to the right place. Alright, Toph, this is it. You just gotta put the code in here, and then we should be able to walk around wherever we want. Open up any doors and that kind of thing.

CANNONBALL: Alright. Let's see here.

[We hear CANNONBALL enter numbers into a keypad.]

CANNONBALL: I don't think it's working. Should we have seen something? Or... heard something?

VHS OVERNIGHTER MICHAEL: I think ya missed a seven back there. Right in the middle. So, um. You're— You're just gonna have to start all over.

CANNONBALL: Alright. Here goes nothing.

[CANNONBALL repeats the process.]

RYAN: Hey, Michael. Are you sure this is the same book—?

CANNONBALL *[voice echoing]:* Nothing. I—... Hello? Where did everyone go?

RYAN: What is he talking about? Chris, we're right here. Hey, what are you—?

[We briefly hear things are swirling around for CANNONBALL like in the opening scene.]

VHS OVERNIGHTER MICHAEL: You thought you were ahead o' everyone. Have fun with the Tier Three security mindfuck, idiot. Ryan, are you gonna help me out here, or are you gonna go down with the ship? You don't wanna die for CANNONBALL, do ya? I could just kill 'im, but I thought I'd offer first dibs.

RYAN: Kill him? He's blitzed out of his mind on Tier Three security protocol. He's completely defenseless and vulnerable! Of course I wanna kill him.

VHS OVERNIGHTER MICHAEL: Took the words right outta my mouth, pard. *[We hear a knife blade open.]* You can use my—

RYAN: Don't worry. I brought the knife from the trip to the apartment. Sorry, CANNONBALL. It hasn't been good, but it also hasn't been fun, either. I'm sure we haven't seen the last of you or whatever.

VHS OVERNIGHTER MICHAEL: Don't play with your food, Ryan.

RYAN: Here goes nothing.

[We hear Ryan stab CANNONBALL with force. CANNONBALL gasps, gurgles briefly, and then dies.]

RYAN: Well, that was fun. I'm not sure he felt it, though. That's a bummer. What do we do now?

VHS OVERNIGHTER MICHAEL: We get the hell outta here afore we start trippin' on Tier Three juice. Then we start tryin' to get the CANNONBALL outta everyone else on this here Stinky Device.

RYAN: Aw. Can we leave a little CANNONBALL in them? I'm gonna miss the little guy.

VHS OVERNIGHTER MICHAEL: Absolutely not.

RYAN: Couldn't hurt to ask.

[Scene transition.]

[We hear the sounds of the Oldbrush Valley 24-Hour Diner: light music, cutlery and plates, subdued conversations.]

CHANCE: So, we're just gonna sit here? And let him eat with us in the diner? After everything he's done? Mikey, isn't he supposed to be your mortal enemy?

RYAN: Yeah, but I'm cool now. I reversed Project Cannon. Kind of. Honestly, I can't tell how much of CANNONBALL is still hanging out? Plus, I killed CANNONBALL with my bare hands, which is a time-honored tradition among Mikes. Right, Mikey?

MIKEY: Hey, I did it 'cause I had to. And they made me do it.

MIKE: It's true. The plan was to use a baseball bat, but, uh, he wasn't ready for that. It was an eventful day. That was the first day that Michael was a cowboy.

MARISSA: Oh, please, that is such a low bar. Alright, you're not "cool" now just 'cause you killed CANNONBALL, alright? Any of us could have done it, and you just got there first, so just sit down, ya fuckin' kill-stealer. Besides, you were in the Stinky Device.

RYAN: Weren't you in the Stinky Device, too, Marissa? Maybe you're part of Project Cannon.

MARISSA: Oh, yeah, you wanna try me, big guy?

TROY: Oh, my god, it's Cannon like CANNONBALL. I just got it. Guys, it's CANNO— it's like CANNONBALL, that's why we call him— ...Oh, my god.

RYAN: Can someone get a high chair for him?

MARISSA: Can someone get me a steel chair for him?

VHS OVERNIGHTER MICHAEL: I don't care what you did for us, Ryan. You don't get to talk to Troy like that at the 24-Hour Diner. This place is sacred.

EDGAR: It's where we went on our first date.

CHARLIE: You know, honestly, I think it might be quicker to figure out who hasn't been inside of the Stinky Device.

SHADOW: Raise your hand if you haven't been inside of the Stinky Device.

EDGAR: I think it's just me and you, Ryan.

RYAN: Nope, I've definitely been in there. Still got the lingering voice in the back of my head and everything. It's like living with Garfield.

MIKEY: Here we fuckin' go with the Ryan mixup.

SHADOW: He means me. Edgar and I were at Troy's mansion during the mission into Tier Three. We never even saw the Stinky Device.

MDAWG: This is why we have nicknames. I can tell you apart by your metaphysical signature, but maybe we should call our Ryan "Sha—"

SHADOW: I am not going to go by "Shadow" just because he is here. I still don't even get it.

MIKEY: I believe they are the dogs from *Homeward Bound*.

MARISSA: Okay, but consider this, Mikey: no. Ryan is not "going to be here." Why is he even having breakfast with us? This is the diner, this is the cool kids space. He isn't our friend. He isn't our ally. He's not one of the cool kids. This isn't a fucking season finale where everyone comes together and shakes hands and makes up, alright? He should not be within 10,000 feet of us. Or, I dunno, what's longer than feet? 10,000 meters if you're from... fucking New Zealand or something, I don't know!

CHARLIE: Calm down, Sunshine. You're getting worked up over nothing. No one here is from New Zealand. I promise.

TROY: Whew. That's a relief. Can you imagine if one of us was secretly from New Zealand?

MARISSA: Ugh. Sorry. I was just thinkin' about that New Zealand iteration dream again. What if I'd been fucking edited to be like her? I'd be goin' around saying shit like *[New Zealand accent.]* "yeah, nah" and "good as." *[Drops accent.]* "Good as"? Good as what? Am I ever gonna finish that fucking sentence?

CHANCE: You have some explaining to do, too, Charlie. Tier *Three*? Seriously? When were you gonna tell us?

CHARLIE: When the world tour was over and everything was back to normal! So... *[Claps hands together.]* Alright, everyone! Gather around, I have an announcement to make! You already know what it is, and if I'm being totally honest, it took the wind out of my sails a little bit, but, hey... whatever! What's life without a little bit of flair for the dramatics?

MARISSA: I don't know about this, babe. Doesn't being in Tier Three mean that you're more susceptible to, you know... O.V.E.R. bullshit?

CHARLIE: Uh, well, if I'm being completely honest, I might have already been subject to that? Even before I applied to Tier Three. Remember the iteration that almost killed you?

SHADOW: Whatever happened to that iteration?

CHARLIE: Uh. Well, uh... I have no idea. But, it's— Pshh, it's probably fine.

RYAN: She has a point. That other Charlie probably was just doing it for fun and got bored. Happens to me all the time.

EDGAR: Running Base has never been easy or painless. Project Cannon is a thorn in our side, but we will find a way to get through it. Base is all about doing experiments and making incremental progress, and we are going to continue to do just that. Ryan'll help us. He is just as incentivized to fix this problem as we are. Ty owes us a favor, as well, since we restored him to his post. We'll take it one step at a time.

MIKEY: Well said, babe.

RYAN: So the twink is in charge again. Did anyone ask the dogs from *Homeward Bound* what they think of this?

CHANCE: It's fine by me. Eh. I had fun running Base, but I wouldn't want to be powerful.

TROY: Oh, oh, I'm H— I'm Sassy. Dibs. I already called dibs, like, two episodes ago.

MARISSA: You sure are, Troy.

TROY: Uh, you guys don't live with me now, do you? Because there aren't enough trampoline rooms for all of us.

CHARLIE: No, goofy. We needed a base of operations while we worked behind the scenes! It's your house, after all.

TROY: Good, I hate sharing. Once, when I was a little kid, I had an iPad, and I, uh, I would play Roblox on it— Oh, actually, no, that was last night, [**CHARLIE:** Oof!] hold on. When I was a little kid, I would play... What was I doing when I was little? I had a connect the dot. ...I had some finger paints. Um... I went to a water park once, it was pretty cool.

EDGAR: That's very nice, Troy. Great job, everyone. We aren't out of the woods yet. Enjoy your biscuits and gravy, and have a good time this morning, because there is important work to be done when we're through.

MIKEY: Uh, Panther, are you going to be okay, uh, with the gluten?

EDGAR: Oh. Right.

CHANCE: Maybe Edgar got put in the Stinky Device, too. That's some sus behavior! Seriously, though. It's important that we know for sure who was and wasn't affected, 'cause we have to figure out how much to trust everyone.

VHS OVERNIGHTER MICHAEL: Are you a part o' Project CANNON, Edgar? You scamp.

MIKE: I do not believe that Edgar is ontologically a scamp.

MIKEY: While we're all here, I just wanna raise a toast: to Edgar, king of the scamps and the most boyfriend I have ever had. Cheers.

[We hear the clinking of glass. VHS OVERNIGHTER MICHAEL: Cheers, pard. MIKE: Cheers]

CHANCE: Seriously, though? It's important that we know for sure who was and wasn't affected, 'cause we have to figure out how much to trust everyone.

SHADOW: Don't worry, Chris. I'll make sure everyone is on the level.

CHANCE: Thanks, babe.

MIKE: Mm, I forgot how good these biscuits and gravy are. Props to Latif. Anyway, before we wrap up the serious talk, I wanted to say one last thing as disgraced dictator of Base. Uh, mostly I wanted to say that I forgive you all for doing a mutiny even though I had to lie and say that I didn't know why Edgar and Charlie weren't there? So that their plans wouldn't propagate and so that they could save us all? Like, you know, you locked me, but i-it's cool? I knew it was going to happen, and, you know, that kind of makes me a hero, and kind of like the main character of Base if you think about it. But, uh, anyway, cheers! Uh, dig in! Uh— Whatever! E-Eat! Go! Enjoy breakfast. Base is paying.

[Dogtooth plays.]

*dogtooth
clear through
sink into the imagine in the mirror of the image in the mirror
A sharp truth
Leads to
Clouds are now precipitating
waiting for a comedown*

*Incendiary
Coal mine canary*

*I hope you know your right from your left
I wouldn't want you to get bit*

Dogtooth

See-through

Hiding from the threat below the surface of the threat below the surface

I watch you

Burn through

All the necessary tips

On how to stay anonymous

Incendiary

Coal mine canary

I hope you know your right from your left

I wouldn't want you to get bit

MIKEY *[narrating]*: Dear Michael,

This will be my last entry for obvious reasons. After 10,000 years, I'm free! It's time to conquer Earth! I don't know how long it actually was, but it was long enough for everything to change. CANNONBALL... doesn't exist anymore? I think Ryan finally gave him what he deserves. Or maybe CANNONBALL still exists, and it's kind of a huge problem, because he exists in all of our hearts? Uh, but you and Edgar are back, and you guys are gonna solve it.

Oh, and I met Edgar! He's okay. It was, uh, *[Cowboy voice.]* damn fine meetin' you. *[Drops cowboy voice, and quietly laughs.]* Uh. I-it's strange to meet someone after reading so much of what they wrote, but... you were about what I expected. Uh, I still don't understand if you're me from the future and if that means that I'll definitely experience meeting you from the other side of this conversation. Uh, I don't think it'd be too bad. At least for right now.

I wanna meet that big horse you said that that other iteration has. Seems like a pretty cool life. Am I— Am I gonna sound like that, though—? Do I have to sound like that?

I'll keep it short. I'm giving you the journal after this, so you've already got a lot of reading to do. I don't think I said anything I wouldn't want you to see. U-Uh, fuck it, what's the worst that could happen? I read your journal, so now you get to read mine.

I gotta go. Base is taking me to meet someone called Ty Betteridge? To talk about what's going to happen to me. 'Cause there's two of me now? There's the one that stayed locked up at Base, and I think he has his memories back. And then there's me, the one that got stolen by CANNONBALL and then got stuck in the Stinky Device. I don't know what the plan is, but I think Ty's supposed to help me. Whatever happens, I'm sure that it's all gonna work out perfectly fine now that the good guys won.

[Cowboy voice.] I'll see ya on that long, lonesome trail, partner.

—Mikey

[Extended closing theme starts playing.]

CREDITS: This has been WOE.BEGONE.

The voice of Boris was Aleksandr Batenko.

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

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

The voice of Edgar was Jeremy Enfinger. Check out his podcast [The Storage Papers](#).

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

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

The voice of Chance was Taylor Michaels. You can check him out in [Forged Bonds](#) and [The Grotto](#).

The voice of Troy was Athan. Check him out in [The Grotto](#) and his new, upcoming podcast [\[REDACTED\]](#).

The voice of Felix was Ben Rowe. Check out his podcast [The Felix Chronicles](#).

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

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

Season 17 starts in two weeks. Thanks for playing.

[Extended closing theme plays out.]

[Brief start-stop of the closing theme.]

BLOOPER (CHARLIE): Oof!

[Brief start-stop of the closing theme.]

BLOOPER (CANNONBALL): I'll figure out a way to snuff out that snarka– Heheheh, snarkasm.

[Brief start-stop of the closing theme.]

BLOOPER (TROY): Uh, okay, who's your best friend, then?

BLOOPER (MICHAEL): *[Sighs.]* I don't know, Troy... Ty. *[Breaks character.]* T– Ty? *[Laughing.]* Ty?

[Brief start-stop of the closing theme.]

BLOOPER (DAVID): Heck– Heck– Ha– Hackles? *[Varies delivery.]* Hackles, hackles, hackles. Hackles.

[Brief start-stop of the closing theme.]

BLOOPER (TROY): Honestly, Charlie's pretty smart. I-I guess she figured out that they must've been inside of Tier Three because Skuzz was a bomb and blew up O-perose– Operose? Operose– *[Breaks character.]* Fuck! How do I say this? Oh, no, this is Smart Troy! How the fuck! *[We hear frantic typing.]* "Alert!" I'm messaging Tay right now. "Urgent! How the fuck do I say–"

[Brief start-stop of the closing theme.]

BLOOPER (DYLAN): *[Singing.]* Toph eats the sun and drinks the sky, and we all go with him when he dies.

[Brief start-stop of the closing theme.]

BLOOPER (OUTLAW TY): Damn fuckin' straight. Which is about the only thing that's straight in this bar.

[Brief start-stop of the closing theme.]

BLOOPER (LYSSA): Ah, god, they're so embarrassing. I love them. *[Chuckles.]* I don't know how to do this without making it sounding like I'm calling a dog or a cat! *[Laughing.]* Oh, no! Oh, no– It's the "Marissa, come here! Psst! *[Makes kissing noise.]* C'mere! *[Makes kissing noise.]* Yeah, c'mere, baby! C'mere, baby! Aw, yeah, Marissa, c'mere! *[Makes kissing noise.]* Yeah, that's my baby girl! Hi! Come here! Psst! Over here. C'mere–" *[Laughing.]* I'm sor– I'm so sorry– I'm so sorry, I need to leave.

[Brief start-stop of the closing theme.]

BLOOPER (LYSSA): What does that *mean*? What does that mean, Dylan? What does that mean? Why is Troy like this? *[Brief laugh.]* But not in the normal way I would say "why is Troy like this" but in the way that Smart Troy scares me. *[Laughs.]* I'm scared. *[Laughs.]*

[Brief start-stop of the closing theme.]

BLOOPER (LYSSA): Lucky. Nathan gets to die. I wanna die.

[Brief start-stop of the closing theme.]

BLOOPER (MARISSA): Oh, come on, CANNONBALL, you're not even gonna come down here and fight me yourself? Bitch? *[Laughs.]*

[Brief start-stop of the closing theme.]

BLOOPER (MARISSA): Goin' around saying shit like *[New Zealand accent.]* "yeah, nah" or "good as" or "tino rangatiratanga." *[Drops accent.]* Like, is it yeah? Or is it nah? Good as, good as what? Am I ever gonna finish that fucking sentence? I'm not actually mad about tino rangatiratanga, though, that sounds fuckin' awesome.

[Brief start-stop of the closing theme.]

BLOOPER (MICHELLE): For some reason, "yeah, nah" and "good as" are two phrases that always really confuse people not from Australia or New Zealand, but honestly it's super straightforward once you get down to it. "Yeah, nah" is just really polite, actually. Like, yeah, I acknowledge the statement that was just said to me. But, nah. It's like saying "thanks, but not thanks," right? And as for "good as" or "sweet as," they think there's meant to be a second part of that sentence. No. That's it. "Good as" is the whole sentence; "sweet as" is the whole sentence. There's nothin' else.

[Brief start-stop of the closing theme.]

BLOOPER (TROY): Good, I-I hate sharing. Once, when I was a little kid, some little kid tried to eat my boogers. They're mine. I eat them. *[Brief chuckle.]* They can't eat my boogies. *[Breaks character, chuckling.]* That's gross, don't put that in.

[Brief start-stop of the closing theme.]

BLOOPER (CHARLIE): Marissa, come here! Psst! *[Makes kissing noise.]* C'mere! *[Makes kissing noise.]* Yeah, c'mere, baby! C'mere, baby! Aw, yeah, Marissa, c'mere! *[Makes kissing noise.]*

BLOOPER (MARISSA): Girl, w—

BLOOPER (CHARLIE): Yeah, that's my baby girl!

BLOOPER (MARISSA): I'm not Delilah!

[Brief start-stop of the closing theme.]

[END Episode 192.]