

INTERMISSION XXXI - THE PROOF IS IN THE PODCAST EPISODE 1: SEASON 1

Transcript by Theo

[BEGIN Intermission XXXI.]

INTRO: Hey, guys. Welcome to the Season 16 intermission. Season 16 will continue next week, but this week I have something very special to show you. I am starting a podcast called *The Proof Is In The Podcast: A WOE.BEGONE Recap Show*, where every episode I sit down with two guests, and we talk about an entire season of *WOE.BEGONE*. If you've ever been feeling lost or confused about what happens on *WOE.BEGONE*, that's great, that's what I was going for, but if you would like to alleviate that feeling a little bit, these episodes aim to give you both a recap of what happened in the episodes of the show, as well as commentary on those episodes, and a discussion of them and how they fit into the greater world of *WOE.BEGONE*. For instance, in this episode, we take the challenges in Episode One and try to describe them using the language of time travel that we get in the later seasons. In this pilot episode, I sit down with Jenah, who is the voice of Skinner, and Shaun, who is the voice of Sax, to discuss Season One. We do a plot rundown of all of the episodes, I ask Jenah and Shaun who they think FLINCH is, and we discuss the most important question of all: whether or not we think that Ryan actually said that Mike is hot. This is the only episode of *The Proof Is In The Podcast* that currently exists. We will be covering the rest of the seasons in order on its on RSS feed, so search for "The Proof Is In The Podcast: A WOE.BEGONE Recap Show" wherever you get your podcasts. And without further ado, here is Episode One. Enjoy.

[the proof is in the podcast plays.]

Season Seven

What was that

Was that one of the ones that was sad

Was that the Mustardseed one

Or was that Season Eight

You tell me

I don't know

I wrote it all so long ago

What would I do

Relisten to the podcast

What am I

Some kind of asshole

Yes

I am

You should know that by now

If you've been listening this long

You should be able to tell

Yes

I am

The proof is in the podcast

The music that I broadcast

Please stop me now

DYLAN: Welcome to *The Proof Is In The Podcast: A WOE.BEGONE Recap Show*—unless that's not the name of it by the time it comes out, in which case I'll edit myself saying something else here.

This is a show that I wanted to do because I keep getting these messages saying, "Dylan, I'm so lost, I don't know what's going on in *WOE.BEGONE*. Something's happened, and I don't know when I was supposed to pick up on that. You've become everything you've hated." You know, messages like that. That's not entirely... made-up. *[Chuckling.]* Anyway, um. *[Jenah chortles.]*

So, each episode is going to cover a whole season of the show, and we're going to talk about what you noticed, how it relates to other episodes and other seasons, picking out elements that are going to be important for understanding the show later. So you listen to all of these recaps, and you know what is going on in *WOE.BEGONE*. There will be spoilers; we will probably be discussing things in the first handful of seasons and trying to use our understanding of time travel to explain it with our current knowledge. So it is best to have listened ahead if you're sensitive to exposure to overarching concepts and themes.

Each episode will feature guest voice actors from the show, one who is all the way caught up, and one who hasn't listened to the show at all or who isn't very far into the show and will have relevant questions. Someone who might be confused. Someone who might say, "Dylan, you've become everything you've ever hated. *[Jenah quietly laughs.]* What is going on in the podcast." Um. Please don't actually do that.

So, uh, without further ado, I will introduce my guests. Uh, Jenah, would you like to introduce yourself?

JENAH: Uh, so, I'm Jenah. I've been listening to the show since I think it was December 2022? I've done several I—relistens, uh... I am now a VA. Uh, I play Skinner. Um, who you may or may not know depending on where you are in the podcast, but just know: I will be coming for you. I'm in a few other shows. And, uh, I am, I guess, our... expert? I feel like that's weird saying expert in front of the person who wrote the show, *[Shaun briefly laughs.]* but you know, here we are.

DYLAN: I guess it's also a spoiler that there are voice actors. So. Welcome to Season Seven **[JENAH: Yeah, sorry. SHAUN: Mm.]** if that's news to you.

[Jenah chuckles.]

SHAUN: I'm Shaun. Um, I create the show *Wake of Corrosion*. Um, I'm also in *WOE.BEGONE*. Uh, I play Sax. I I– started listening a few years ago, but... I am terrible at being consistent, so I have very recently, and I'm talking this week, relistened to the first season of *WOE.BEGONE*, and I am caught up on the first season. *[Briefly laughs.]*

DYLAN: We were on the same Rusty Quill Network, uh, slate, right? Like, we joined at the same time?

SHAUN: Yes, I think so. Um–

DYLAN: Is that when you started listening to *WOE.BEGONE*?

SHAUN: No, it was before then. Uh... **[DYLAN: Oh, really?]** Yeah, yeah, w– it– i– I– I recall, I think, I think it was Season Three, actually, was coming out as I started listening.

DYLAN: Mm-hmm. So, I thought for our first little segment, someone tries to describe everything that happens in Season One in 60 seconds.

[Segment transition song plays.]

*This season is already done
I need to know what's going on
Can someone please sum up
What happens on the podcast WOE.BEGONE*

*This season is already done
I need to know what's going on
Can someone please sum up
What happens in 60 seconds*

DYLAN: And, at the end, we will have thought of, like, "oh, but you didn't say this." And I feel like **[JENAH: Okay.]** that– that's– that's a great way to illicit, like, what's actually import– like, w-what is worth keeping in mind going forward? Would one of you like to give the plot of Season One of *WOE.BEGONE* in 60 seconds?

JENAH: I am ready. *[Laughs.]*

DYLAN: Alright. Three... two... one... go.

JENAH: Okay, we meet Mike Walters. Uh, he starts a podcast because there's a mysterious online game that he found on Reddit. Uh, he starts playing it. Uh, the first challenge that he is given, uh, is a, uh, he has to call his ex-boyfriend in the middle of the night. Uh, recount, uh, an incident in which, uh, he was hurt by him, and tell him that he doesn't forgive him. He does that, has a mental breakdown about it. Uh... but then wakes up in the morning and realizes that

never happened. **[DYLAN: 30 seconds.]** Uh, the thing— Oh, my god, are you serious? *[Shaun laughs.]* This just the first **[SHAUN: The first episode.]** episode! *[Shaun laughs.]* No! This is impossible. No. *[Dylan chuckles.]* Uh... Eh— He... n— kills a pig, kills a cop, cuts off his hands, cuts off shoulders— uh, cuts off his arm at the shoulder, uh... runs from Anne. Uh, helps Anne kill a cop, helps Anne... uh... not get killed by CANNONBALL. Turns out CANNONBALL isn't trying to kill Anne, uh... Meets with CANNONBALL, talks about Aliza Schultz, and... uh... meets Ryan. Tries to... uh, uh, get all the information from Ryan and CANNONBALL, realizes CANNONBALL may or may not know anything, I have *thoughts* on that. Uh... *[Stalls. Shaun chuckles.]* Everything is reset, he goes... into the middle of the street, doesn't remember a huge chunk of time. And, uh, eventually, uh, has to go and actually kill Matt, because he didn't get the things from CANNONBALL and Ryan that he wanted. Uh... and... wuh, wuh, th— This is impossible, Dylan, 60 seconds! Come on.

SHAUN: *[Laughs.]* This definitely ended **[DYLAN: Yeah, yeah, i-it's been 90 seconds.]** a while ago. Yeah.

JENAH: Yeah, a— and I'm not even done. *[Laughs.]* And I missed **[SHAUN: I loved how—]** everything. *[Laughs.]*

SHAUN *[laughing]:* —you went from, like, Episode One, and then just, like, Episode Two to Seven in, like, ten seconds.

JENAH: This is impossible. Uh... What else, uh, oh. Gets a job at Oldbrush Valley. Uh, and that's... how... Season... One ends. *[Clears throat.]*

DYLAN: 1 minute and 53 seconds. *[Brief chuckle.]*

JENAH: There is no plot—! There— I missed everythi— Anyway, go ahead. *[Laughs.]*

DYLAN: Yes, you a— You missed that he goes and kills Matt in Vancouver. Uh—

JENAH: Yeah, there— Like, I missed all the important things. *[Laughs.]*

DYLAN: Okay, **[SHAUN: That is one of my favorite episodes, as well.]** so maybe we can't— maybe we can't recap a plot in 60 seconds.

JENAH: Dylan, in your own **[DYLAN: Mm-hmm?]** words, *[Jenah and Shaun laugh.]* can you sum up your show— your epis— your first season in 60 seconds?

DYLAN: Alright, three—

JENAH: Don't cheat. Don't you dare cheat. *[Brief chortle.]*

DYLAN: I'm not cheating, I'm– [**JENAH:** Okay.] I– I'm looking at the stopwatch, and I'm about to hit play, [*Jenah chortles.*] and I'm not gonna immediately tab over to my plot synopses [**JENAH:** Mm-hmm.] that I wrote up this morning.

JENAH: Uh-huh. [*Shaun chuckles.*] Okay.

DYLAN: Y-You're both looking at the plot synopsis. I can– I can see your little icons in the Google Docs.

SHAUN: Oh– [*Laughs.* **DYLAN:** Alright, three–] We've been caught.

[*Dylan and Jenah laugh.*]

DYLAN: Three, two, one... go. So, *WOE.BEGONE* is the story of Mike Walters; he discovers a mysterious online game. It tells him to go and tell his ex-boyfriend that he doesn't forgive him. Uh, he does this about something that had to do with his best friend Matt dying; he awakes to find that Matt is been returned to life somehow. Uh, this is a game about time travel, as he eventually figures out, and for the next challenge, he has to cut his own arm off at the left shoulder or else he'll lose the game. The challenges get more and more extreme; first he has to kill a pig, then he has to kill a police officer, a metaphorical pig. His friend from college c-calls and says, "Hey, I saved your life by playing *WOE.BEGONE*, would you like to help me complete the third challenge?" They do. Uh, he keeps meeting with one of the gamerunners named CANNONBALL; CANNONBALL is giving trailheads about where to find stuff. Uh, he cuts off his hands for bonus points at one point; there's an intermission where there's a song. And Mike gets more and more interested in actually seizing the power for himself, and so he goes and kidnaps CANNONBALL. That turns out to be nothing, because CANNONBALL is basically not– he's a showrunner, not a gamerunner, and he meets Ryan, who's the real gamerunner; says that he's working for a guy named FLINCH. And says that he has to complete the fourth challenge; he goes and completes the fourth challenge by killing Matt; some weird time travel stuff happens. He comes back, CANNONBALL doesn't remember anything, and he is told to go to Oldbrush Valley, which is where Season Two begins. 1 minute and 11 seconds.

SHAUN: Wow.

JENAH: Show-off. [*Chuckles.*]

SHAUN: It's almost like you wrote it.

DYLAN: Yeah.

JENAH: The thing is, though, the show in and of itself... the way it's structured, there is enough... narrative space? That you're kind of able to kind of wriggle back in there and recontextualize pretty much everything. [**DYLAN:** Mm-hmm.] Which is kinda cool.

DYLAN: I left all the clues, Mr. Policemen. That's generally what I tell people, it's like if you're feeling feeling confused, I probably wanted you to? Uh, I feel like a lot of people can't sit with that very well?

JENAH: Mm...

SHAUN: Yeah, yeah.

DYLAN: And they're like "why isn't th— why aren't things being explained?" And it's like, well, have you tried waiting 100 episodes? Because I'll— [*Jenah and Shaun briefly chuckle.*] I'll get around to it. I— I think it's about time we start on going through episode by episode.

[Segment transition song plays.]

*Here is the part where we actually recap the show
I hope I tell you something that you didn't know*

DYLAN: I— I [**JENAH:** Mm-hmm?] have a— a big list that I wrote up this morning. One of you is— is highlighting absentmindedly, as am I. [*Jenah and Shaun chuckle.*] I can see you; Anonymous Walrus is what it calls you.

[Jenah chuckles again.]

SHAUN: I am not the walrus.

DYLAN: Episode One is called "Participant Observation." Mike Walters discovers a mysterious online game. In my pitch, I always say "a mysterious and violent online game, but it's not violent yet." [*Jenah briefly chuckles.*] In order to play, the gamerunners tell him to call up his ex-boyfriend, John, and relay a story about a time that he didn't forgive him. Mike tells a story about the death of his friend Matt; this results in a mysterious shifting of reality in which Matt has never been dead.

JENAH: It's a great first episode, because it introduces us to this, like, really fucked up game. And we don't even realize how fucked up it's gonna be.

SHAUN: Yeah, it's interesting because obviously, you know, you start the show when you don't have a... a-an idea of how intense it's going to get. You jump in, and you're like "oh, god, y— this game's making people do these, like, quite horrible sort of like social experiment-style things," and then so it's like the whole concept of what this is changes when Matt is brought back to life.

DYLAN: The first challenge explains, like, the value proposition. It's like this is awful, like, no one would do this, and then so you have to come up with, uh, something that's valuable enough to make it worth the challenge.

JENAH: I don't wanna get too far ahead, but it does feel like every challenge essentially is a— a means of filtering people out. There's a sense that... we are looking for a very specific type of person. And if you are not willing to take a certain level of risk, i— this is not gonna be worth either of our times. Mike [*Brief laugh.*] undergoes this challenge not even knowing what the benefit or reward will be, but once he gets the reward, that is a *huge* motivating factor that carries him through quite a lot of the game.

DYLAN: The first prize—and we'll talk about this across the episodes—feels like the thing to draw you in... until you can prove that you're worthy of, like, the actual prize?

JENAH: Yeah, you need to show them what this can do in order to get people to actually buy into it. But if you give them the proof and make them [**SHAUN:** Right.] work for it and show them, like, hey, if you're willing to do what we ask... you know, you can get closer to this.

DYLAN: Alright, to summarize Episode One, uh, the vocabulary words in bold o— in your textbook are going to be: Mike Walters, uh, the— the guy who is making the show; WOE.BEGONE, a mysterious game that has brought Matt back to life. Gamerunners are running WOE.BEGONE. There are going to be challenges; we know throughout the season that there are going to be four main challenges. And then, at the end of this episode, he remarks on things that could be happening, and he ends up saying, "Maybe time travel exists." And he just sort of says it offhand as a-an explanation; it ends up becoming the explanation, I think, by next episode.

So, Episode Two: Mike gets the second challenge. The challenge is delivered using clips of his own voice, including clips that he hasn't recorded yet. The clips tell him to cut his left arm off at the shoulder. He, quote, "successfully" does this, and he realizes that there aren't going to be good prizes anymore, that he's basically staying in to maintain Matt, and at the end of this, he's contacted by a mysterious figure named CANNONBALL, who leaves a very strange letter... asking to meet with him. Yeah, [*Shaun chuckles, and Jenah sighs.*] so this is *the* episode.

SHAUN: Yeah.

JENAH: Yeah.

SHAUN: I remember the first time I listened to this quite distinctly.

JENAH: I listened to this episode for the first time with a hundred-and-two fever, so— [*Laughs.*]

SHAUN: Oh, wow.

JENAH: This definitely is a episode that filters people out for sure. We get a pretty intense description of Mike cutting his shoulder off, and his process of figuring out how to do that includes *Dexter* of all things. [*Chuckles.*]

SHAUN [*chuckling*]: Yeah.

DYLAN: I've talked about this in the commentaries. I thought about this show being like a challenge-of-the-week and building up to this, but then I got to writing Episode Two, and it's like, that's what I want to do, so I'm just gonna do it.

JENAH: As much as it is a filter, it is also, I think, an episode that is what grabs a lot of people, because we— [**SHAUN**: Yeah.] we realize, like, oh, there are real fucking stakes.

SHAUN: The reward from tha— the first challenge is now a threat. The— That your prize becomes our biggest hold over you. We've given you this, and we can take it away, as well. So, do this.

DYLAN: That was the point where I chose: we're gonna do challenges for as long as they are u-useful in building the intensity and f— the other machinations of the show going on around it. The first challenge gives him a freedom from consequence, and then Episode Two through One Hundred Seventy Six [*Jenah chuckles.*] are him being pinned down by consequences. Another question that comes up a lot is: what happened to Matt's child and his wife? And the answer is: I didn't have anything interesting for them to do. So they're... [*Jenah chuckles.*] they're not in this show.

SHAUN: I-I— [*Brief chuckle.*] I like this idea that they could've just been erased. Because, like, they just didn't fit the narrative f— from a— [*Jenah chuckles.*] a show creation point of view, [**DYLAN**: Yeah, like, quite literally.] but at the same time— Yeah, like, the— the actual showrunner, but, you know, could the gamerunner have just been like "yeah, it doesn't work, so, um... we'll just get rid of those."

DYLAN: Matt's life seems pretty chaotic, just based on the snapshot we get now and then the snapshot that we get in Episode Eleven. I think that that's probably just because they— they plopped him down somewhere? It has nothing to do with, like, the mechanism of time travel, but more like the mechanism of if you just took a random person and started their life over in the middle of Canada. Things to remember from Episode Two: it's the second challenge; Matt is living a different existence out in Canada; Charles Thibbideau is mentioned, I believe, in CANNONBALL's letter setting up their meeting; and we're pretty sure it's time travel now.

And that brings us to Episode Three, which is called "It's Just A Pig." This begins with Mike discovering Charles Thibbideau, a time travel researcher who was being actively corrected out of existence. Mike is forgetting him. Mike meets CANNONBALL at a coffee shop, where he explains that Mike is playing the game super fast like a psychopath would and that the third challenge is going to be, quote, "a doozy," and he goes home and finds a pig to kill, which he does. That's not that much of a doozy, but this is revealed to be only the first part of the challenge. And the second part is he's gonna have to kill a police officer. And so now we're— we're— we're getting— we're getting out into the world. He— He left his house for the first time, [*Jenah and Shaun laugh.*] I'm pretty sure.

JENAH: Fair enough, it's in the middle of the pandemic. Give him a break. *[Laughs.]*

DYLAN: Oh— Oh, yeah, that's def— that's something that I make a note of later, is that this came out in 2020, *[Jenah briefly chuckles.]* and so he's just gonna talk about COVID.

JENAH: But, yeah, CANNONBALL comes in with an *energy* in this episode, just really is intense and ready to perform. He just, like, completely comes in as like "hey, you've surpassed me, what are you doing, how fast did you do these challenges." It makes the, uh, the reveal *[Brief laugh.]* later on all the better.

DYLAN: Mm-hmm. Yeah, that's a great way to gaslight someone, is just **[JENAH: Uh, yeah.]** tell them they're winning. **[SHAUN: Yeah. JENAH: (Laughs.) Yeah.]** It's a great way to gaslight Mike.

JENAH: The fact that there is a leader board for Mike, **[SHAUN: Mm-hmm.]** um, and that no one has communicated any of this to Anne is **[DYLAN: Mm-hmm.]** something that I really enjoy. Um—

DYLAN: Well, Anne doesn't care about a leader board.

JENAH: No! Of course she doesn't. *[Chuckles.]*

SHAUN: But Mike cares deeply about the leader board, and it's... **[JENAH: Yes!]** you know...

DYLAN: Absolutely. I mean, if someone walked up to me and was like "you got 75 points," I'd be like "hell yeah." *[Shaun and Jenah laugh.]* Like, you wouldn't even have to tell me, like, what— I would already be excited.

SHAUN: Yeah.

DYLAN: Alright, so to sum up Episode Three, the takeaway is— is that Mike is pathologically good at this, and he's going to complete, uh, challenges in record time. Toph is playing the game for his wife, which is difficult to parse out knowing what *[Jenah snorts.]* we know now, but don't worry about it. Uh, Mike is not a codename, I wrote that down again for some reason. *[Jenah chortles.]* U-Uh, the pig is sort of like a running theme, and animals in general... are a running theme throughout the show, so pay attention to animals—how they're characterized, how they interact with Mike, how Mike interacts with them. Uh, Mike already wants control of the game. When I pitch the show, I often say, "What begins as an investigation of an ARG becomes a quest to find the technology that makes the game possible." But we're three episodes in, and he's already like "I want that. I-I— I need that for me, please."

[Shaun chuckles.]

JENAH: Yeah.

DYLAN: Uh, and he's already talking WOE.BEGONE as a mechanism that changes his character. Uh, Anne's going to talk about that later.

JENAH: Mm-hmm.

DYLAN: Moving on to Episode Four, "Selfishness, Plain and Simple." We are doing Part Two of Challenge Three. Mike has been instructed to kill a police officer, which he views as an even further escalation in the game. He tries to grapple with this, but *Dexter* is his only baseline, and he can't convince [*Jenah quietly laughs.*] himself that he's doing a good thing, even though the gamerunners are trying to make this guy look like a real shitbag. He kills the cop, and then he has to, quote, "lay low" for a week, and he almost gets arrested or killed before Ryan corrects the situation at the very last second, claiming that he needed all of that time to issue the correction. And at the very end, Mike gets an email from Anne. This is the episode where I put a big warning at the beginning, just in case someone listened and thought that I killed a police officer.

[Shaun laughs.]

JENAH: Dear FBI Agent Assigned to Me, I did not actually kill a cop, thank you. [*Chuckles.*]

SHAUN: You can stop listening now.

JENAH: You get Mike having to, uh, grapple with the fact that he's about to take a human life. He has all these reasons laid out in front of him for why this guy, you know, is a total scumbag. But then he tells us, like, that might be true, but that's not a reason to kill him. [*Shaun chuckles.*] Like, he's a horrible human being, but that doesn't mean that he deserves to die. If I'm going to do this, like, that isn't gonna be my reason. I can't— It can't be my reason, the reason is that I want to win.

SHAUN: Yeah.

JENAH: 'Cause he's already seeing the power that this game has and recognizes what that could mean— well, to some extent, anyway.

SHAUN: I find it really interesting that, like, he— he sort of tries to justify it in the sense that I'm not killing the cop because of all of the horrible things, um, this cop has done, I'm killing the cop because I wanna get ahead. And yet when he does kill him, he's almost, like, disappointed that the cop's reaction isn't what he expects it to be, like— And i-it's interesting that he doesn't—
[DYLAN: Mm-hmm.] he— he wants that reaction still.

JENAH: It's, uh, it's an interesting thing for him... for him to see, like, *[Brief laugh.]* in this cop's last moments, it's like, he looked confused, not angry, not defensive... He just seemed like a confused guy who didn't know **[DYLAN:** Mm-hmm.] what was happening to him or why.

DYLAN: There's a episode in this season where Mike's like "I always prepare, like, what I'm gonna say, and then I end up in a conversation and immediately, like, *[Snaps fingers.]* the other person completely derails it, and I don't have a script anymore." *[Shaun chuckles.* **JENAH:** *(Brief chuckle.)* Yeah. Yeahyeahyeah.] I-It seems sort of like a confluence of those two things where he's like "this isn't... th- what I thought a murder would be like."

JENAH: Yeah! Yeah. *[Chuckles.]*

SHAUN: Yeah. Like he'd built himself up, and, like, the scenario played out in his head.

DYLAN: So, for Episode Four, the big takeaways is that Mike's going to try to be a WOE.BEGONE winner, and this means that he can't be a good person, he's decided, so he kills the cop, and at the very end, he gets a message from Anne that ends with "if I lose, you die."

So, yeah, let's move on to Episode Five, which is called "Takesies Backsies." An episode title that I remember thinking, "I'll come up with something better later." *[Jenah laughs.]* Um. Ah- But, it- it's still called that. In Episode Five, Anne shows up and reveals that she is playing WOE.BEGONE. Mike died doing the second challenge, and she uncovered the game trying to figure out what happened to him. She played the game and corrected Mike's death, which means that his life is dependent on her gameplay. He helps her kill her police officer for the third challenge, which almost kills her and almost gets them both arrested, very similar to when it happened for Mike. There is another last-second correction. He takes her to the hospital. She says that she likes how WOE.BEGONE is changing her. CANNONBALL emails Mike and says that someone has passed CANNONBALL on the leaderboard, and they plan to meet and talk about it.

JENAH: Anne. Heh, such a nice girl. **[SHAUN:** Heh.] Literally that's what we get at the start of this episode, *[Shaun briefly chuckles.]* and then by the end of the episode, she's killed a cop **[SHAUN:** Yeah.] and feels good about it. *[Laughs.]*

DYLAN: I think that Anne judged her situation and what would happen in it better than Mike did. I think that Anne was expecting what happened. The intro monologue talks about how power is violence, which is a theme in the whole show, and how being powerful means that you can act at a distance in a way that prevents you from being vulnerable. Going up the power ladder in WOE.BEGONE, they're running the game, and, therefore, they can do all these things at a distance. And then FLINCH is even at a further distance to the point where we don't even know who he is. Of course, he hasn't been talked about yet.

JENAH: Yeah, the further out from the circle of power that you are, the more direct violence you are experiencing and- and acting. I love that this gives us another level of motivation for Mike.

Like, essentially, like, okay. He's got the power of the game incentivizing him. He's got Matt's life incentivizing him. Now he literally has *his own life* hanging in the balance. This has become crucial for him to succeed [**SHAUN**: Yeah.] at this point. This is where "just don't die" [**DYLAN**: Mm-hmm. Yes.] comes in, basically.

DYLAN: So, w-we covered all of my topics of interest. Uh, though I will reiterate that Mike is Anne's prize, and this is gonna lead to an enormous standoff that lasts, like, ten episodes.

SHAUN: Mm.

[Jenah chuckles.]

DYLAN: So, yeah, I guess we'll jump right into Episode Six, fan favorite, "ONCE.mp3."

SHAUN *[singing]*: Once.

JENAH: I don't know how anyone listens to this episode and don't get *[Briefly singing.]* "Once" [**SHAUN**: "Once."] stuck in their head for days upon days upon days. *[Brief chuckle.]*

SHAUN: Mm-hmm.

DYLAN: Mike meets CANNONBALL at the coffee shop, and they talk about CANNONBALL being in third place now. It took him years to do the third challenge because he ended up in jail. He mentions Aliza Schultz and that he completed the unknown fourth challenge... and that he wants to kill the new second place, who we know is Anne. And CANNONBALL has a real "doctor was the mother" moment and doesn't even consider that it could be a woman. *[Jenah and Shaun quietly chuckle.]* Uh— Mike returns home to find the song snippet sent by the gamerunners. Eventually, this is a clue i— within the band name that he needs to cut off his hands, which he does for bonus points. And the episode ends with him trying to figure out this Aliza Schultz thing.

JENAH: I feel like we really get to know Mike in this episode, like, really well. This really just shows off who he is at his core. *[Brief chuckle.]* Not only does he spend... some days, uh, try— just listening over and over again to a, like, second-and-a-half clip of a song, and driving himself mad trying to find that. He then cuts off his hands... for bonus points. *[Laughs.]*

SHAUN: Yeah. [**DYLAN**: For bonus points.] For bonus points. Yes. [**JENAH**: For bonus points.] Oh, no.

JENAH: As far as we know, him not completing this challenge would have no negative repercussions. [**SHAUN**: Yeah. **DYLAN**: No—] It's not that he would lose— He wouldn't lose Matt, he wouldn't be out of the game. As far as we know, [**SHAUN**: He just does it.] he would just— everything would remain the same.

SHAUN: Mm-hmm.

DYLAN: And no one else does this challenge. Anne doesn't do it. There are later seasons where people have played WOE.BEGONE, and they do not remark upon having done this challenge. *[Shaun and Jenah chuckle.]* It's not called the fourth challenge.

SHAUN: It's just got Mike written all over it.

JENAH *[overlapping Shaun]:* It's very explicitly not called the fourth challenge, **[SHAUN: Yep.]** like, it's— it's wild.

DYLAN: Yeah, the opening monologue is about whether it's worth it to solve a puzzle of this nature, and I think that he answers in the affirmative pretty strongly. I would say that, as far as, uh— plot furtherance, it's just Mike's... gaining points, they never tell him how many points he has, but he's being assured he's in the lead. Ryan is showing, uh, obvious favoritism in a way that, like, makes it clear that a person is in charge of everything... **[JENAH: Yeah.]** is one of the elements. **[SHAUN: Yeah.]** And that we are s— we're— we're setting up a standoff between Anne and CANNONBALL and Mike.

JENAH: 'Cause this is when he says that he wants to kill Anne. I mean, he doesn't know it's Anne, but... **[DYLAN: Mm-hmm.]** h— CANNONBALL explicitly is like "so we should kill them." **[SHAUN: Yeah.]** Right?

DYLAN: To be fair to CANNONBALL, in a couple episodes, Anne's gonna show up and be like "I think we should kill CANNONBALL." It's not like CANNONBALL is, like, the only one escalating.

SHAUN: Yeah. *[Jenah chuckles.]* For once, it's not Mike. He was just too busy *[Jenah laughs.]* cutting— cutting off his own hands.

JENAH: Yeah. For once, Mike is like "whoawhoawhoawhoawhoawhoawhoa, slow your roll."

SHAUN *[overlapping Jenah]:* Yeah, like, "What? Really?" *[Chuckles. Jenah laughs.]* You know something's messed up when he's the rational one. *[Brief chuckle.]*

DYLAN: My last note of topics of interest is Aliza Schultz mentioned, and then I had put in parentheses "mention the podcast," like I— *[Jenah laughs.]* ha— like I wasn't gonna plug... *[Shaun laughs.]* a-as soon as possible. Um, so, yeah, listen to *The Diary Of Aliza Schultz*. None of this matters in *The Diary Of Aliza Schultz*. Then we get a quick intermission, "Hallowed." "Hallowed" is featured partway through Episode Six as a break; I had completely forgotten that. The song is about being a bad, little gremlin. Uh, the intermissions, I would say, are not required for Season One... and that that is not always true for every season.

JENAH: Mm-hmm.

DYLAN: Moving on to Episode Seven. Uh, anyone wanna tr– remember the name of Episode Seven without clicking on it?

SHAUN: Well, I've already failed at that.

JENAH: Oh–... *[Shaun laughs.]* Oh, did y–? *[Laughs.]*

SHAUN: I literally just clicked. *[Chuckles.]*

JENAH: Um... Hold on.

DYLAN: It's very, very long.

SHAUN: Yeah.

JENAH: Oh! "The Mechanici– Mani– Mechanification of Theory: Blahblahblahblahblahblah"?

[Shaun chortles.]

DYLAN: Yes. *[Jenah laughs.]* **SHAUN:** It was going so well.] Instead of "Blahblahblahblahblahblah," it's "A Plausible Methodology for Retrocausal Informatics."

JENAH: Listen, I didn't get the subtitle, but I got the title. *[Jenah and Shaun laugh.]*

DYLAN: And to summarize said episode, Mike reads Aliza Schultz's proposed methodology for time travel that has a very long title. *[Jenah quietly snorts.]* Uh, he meets with CANNONBALL again, who seems excited to have dropped a trailhead on Mikey. He describes how Aliza, codename "BOBCAT," lost the game and ended up how she is. Mike is very suspicious about this story. He receives his fourth challenge, which is to kill Matt, which really accelerates the standoff between him and CANNONBALL and Anne. I– I wanted a more poetic element to *WOE.BEGONE*, uh, as *WOE.BEGONE* became my, like, my main and only project. **JENAH:** Mm-hmm.] So it became more important to do exactly what I wanted to do, and so I wrote this character that has, like, this f-flair... for the poetic, and also there's a lot of foreshadowing in– in these stories.

JENAH: I think what's interesting is that, you know, CANNONBALL tells us that Aliza Schultz was essentially dropped from the game. And Mike, when visiting her blog—quote-unquote, "her blog"—is basically struck by the fact that, like, she does not seem well. *[Laughs.]* Right? Like, she doesn't seem good. There's a point **[DYLAN:** Mm-hmm.] at which things start seeing incoherent simply because they're so academic that they're beyond his understanding, and switches, at some point, to being so incoherent that Mike is like "something happened to her." **[DYLAN:** Mm-hmm.] And what's interesting to me is he does not seem to take that as... the

warning that I th— I think it is meant to be? It feels like we're getting both a carrot and a stick here with Aliza Schultz. We're getting Aliza Schultz, the carrot: here's all the explanation of the technology and what it could be used for and how powerful it is. But we're also getting the stick here, like, if you don't... stay in the game, there will be consequences; here's what one of those consequences looks like. **[SHAUN: Yeah.]** And I'm not... sure... that he f— takes the consequences as seriously as, uh, maybe he should in this episode.

DYLAN: Very important episode. The big plot point is that he receives the fourth challenge, **[JENAH: Ohoho. SHAUN: Yes.]** which is to kill Matt.

JENAH: And at that point he realizes that means that Anne has to kill him. *[Chuckles.]*

SHAUN: And I— I find it really interesting that, you know, that when he realizes if— if she loses, he dies, uh— basically that he dies in both situations. Um, that he then says the same thing to Matt, um, later on in the story. Like, that he's in a bad situation, **[JENAH: Yeah.]** because if— either way, he's d— he dies.

DYLAN: Yeah. I-I think that that is a good... summarization of Episode Seven, so we will go on to Episode Eight, "Limited Hangout." And a limited hangout is what you were describing, Shaun, where... you want to give as much of the truth as you can... **[SHAUN: Yes.]** and— and— and then put the lie in th— a-a believable, little pocket. So, Mike reveals to Anne that he did the bonus challenge. Both of them pretend to not know what the fourth challenge is. *[Jenah chuckles.]* Uh, and Mike figures out that Anne knows partway through the conversation. Anne wants to kill CANNONBALL, but Mike distracts her with talking about Aliza Schultz. Mike discovers that Aliza isn't real and speculates about what her role might actually be. He hints about going to Vancouver to kill Matt, hoping that CANNONBALL will listen and act on that information, because *WOE.BEGONE* is a podcast that the characters in the podcast are listening to. This is a real character episode where Mike's talking to Anne, and they— they know that they're both doing the fourth challenge, and, really, this is a lot to set up him pretending to go to Vancouver.

JENAH: It is a really fun reveal to realize, like: oh, okay. Mike has been putting this out there, quote-unquote, "week-to-week." **[SHAUN: Mm.]** He's essentially using his entire podcast as his own trailhead.

SHAUN: Yeah. *[Jenah chuckles.]*

DYLAN: A constant question going into later seasons is "is Mike still doing a podcast?" *[Shaun and Jenah laugh.]* Um. And my favorite theory that I sort of workshopped and built up with the Discord is that the podcast— his podcast was never what we've been hearing; he's been putting out a much worse product. *[Jenah and Shaun chuckle.]* He hasn't really told anyone about it, and it's just him being like *[Leans into microphone and mumbles.]* "hey, guys, I'm Mike Walters, I— I cut my arm off, *[Shaun chuckles, and Jenah laughs.]* and then, like, I time travel, anyway, bye." And so, like, nobody's listening to it. Uh, but i-it's still out there, it's just not good or useful or interesting. He makes it look like he's gonna kill Matt, but that's a fakeout, but *that's* a fakeout.

[Shaun and Jenah chuckle.]

DYLAN: Well, i-it's— it's not a— it's not a fakeout the second time, but he— he does end up doing it, but he sort of h-has to, but I guess we'll get to that.

JENAH: Yeah. He really tries not to. [Chuckles.]

SHAUN: Mm.

DYLAN: Mm-hmm. Working at the behest of everybody is a theme that only compounds going forward.

JENAH: Heheh.

DYLAN: It's like he— [JENAH: Yeah.] he's— he's being told what to do by Anne and CANNONBALL and this, and then later he'll be told what to do by the Compound and Operose and O.V.E.R. and the Council of Annes and— [JENAH: And Base. (Jenah and Shaun chuckle.)] and Base.

JENAH: And this is... the episode where he realizes Aliza is fake. Right?

DYLAN: It is heavily implied that CANNONBALL created Aliza Schultz, like entirely. So all of those writings are him writing flavor text. *The Diary of Aliza Schultz* is a podcast that is based very loosely on just, like, the more poetic ideas from the Season One episodes. Uh, they don't really inform who she is in this podcast, and you don't have to listen or be caught up on *WOE.BEGONE* to listen to *The Diary of Aliza Schultz*, available wherever you get your podcasts.

[Shaun chuckles.]

DYLAN: But, yeah, uh, a little bit light on... things that you absolutely have to know, I think, in this episode. Episode Eight is just a big... buildup to Episode Nine, "Trailhead." This episode was recorded in CANNONBALL's apartment after Mike hits him with an iron rod. [Jenah briefly chuckles.] Uh, this is when he discovers CANNONBALL's tall name, Christopher Evans, like Captain America, [SHAUN: Yeah. (Brief chuckle.)] except he goes by Topher. [Jenah laughs.] Uh, he discovers hopefully relevant documents on Toph's computer and uses Toph's identity to lure out Ryan, who appears to be the one doing the real work on the game. Uh, this was a fun one...

SHAUN: Yeah, there are a lot [DYLAN: ...uh, as far as...] of things I really enjoyed about this episode. E-Especially the intro music having, like, Topher, CANNONBALL, [Jenah briefly laughs.] like, in the background, [DYLAN: Yeah. JENAH: Oh, my god, yeah.] like, muffled. It's

just great, it's ju— I don't know why, it's just [**JENAH:** Yes...] the idea that Mike would, like, leave that in the podcast.

DYLAN: Yeah, [**JENAH:** It's so good.] uh, I don't know if either of you have ever shoved a sock in your mouth and screamed like you had been kidnapped. It's more unpleasant than you think it is. Like, your mouth being full of fabric sets off, like, [**JENAH:** Ugh...] a panic response, [**SHAUN:** Oh... **JENAH:** Mm-hmm.] so those were really uncomfortable scenes to record. [*Jenah chuckles.*] I used an ankle sock, too, not like a big sock. [*Shaun and Jenah laugh.*] And, like, my brain is like "this is ba—... [**SHAUN:** Yeah. (*Brief chuckle.*) **JENAH:** Yeah.] take it out, that's— you're— y-you're gonna die!"

[*Jenah chuckles.*]

SHAUN: At least in panic mode.

DYLAN: This is the episode where Mike says that his name isn't Mike Walters.

SHAUN: Yeah.

JENAH: [*Laughs.*] Maybe that's not his first name. Maybe he has multiple middle names. I know many people with multiple middle names. I-it's possible.

[*Shaun chuckles.*]

DYLAN: I mean, there could be a lot of things. [**JENAH:** Yeah. (*Chuckles.*)] Uh, it could be that people called him Mikey, and he didn't like it? Uh, 'cause that is a thing that happens later. But it's also a very Mike Walters thing to do to say that he has a code— as, like, a-a double bluff, it's like he says that his codename is Mike Walters because then people won't think that it's his real name because it is?

JENAH [*laughing*]: Yeah.

SHAUN: [*Chuckles.*] These moments are, like, Mike at my favorite, how much Mike rinses CANNONBALL about his, like, security? It's great. Like, [**DYLAN:** Mm-hmm. **JENAH:** (*Laughs.*) He really is ruthless.] like "why don't you log out of your Gmail?" [*Chuckles.*]

JENAH: Yeah. [*Brief laugh.*]

DYLAN: Uh, this is the first episode where we talk about... um... well, I wrote "wha— where/what is WOE.BEGONE itself," but that's might be a question for next episode once we talk to Ryan.

JENAH: Mm... [**SHAUN:** Yeah.] Yeah.

DYLAN: Uh, is there anything else we need to say about Episode Nine... other than... he– he fooled CANNONBALL, and he got some relevant documents, and he's found that Ryan, uh– is the name of the guy in charge, apparently.

SHAUN: Yeah.

JENAH: And he messages this Ryan to basically meet him at CANNONBALL's place [**SHAUN:** Yeah, yeah.] so that he can, uh, confront him.

DYLAN: Yes, and I feel like that tie– that transitions perfectly into Episode Ten, "Tell-All."

[**JENAH:** Hmm.] Uh, Ryan shows up to CANNONBALL's house and discovers Mike there. They had met online before on a gay dating app named Scruff, which is real. [*Shaun laughs.*] People ask me sometimes; it's real. [*Jenah quietly laughs.*] Uh, Ryan explains that he didn't create the technology that WOE.BEGONE is founded on. Instead, he created, like, this malware bug where I had to google a whole bunch of words and put them in that order. [*Jenah chuckles.*] Uh, WOE.BEGONE was created by someone named FLINCH, who spells their name annoyingly.

[**SHAUN:** Yes. (*Jenah chuckles.*)] CANNONBALL has not been allowed to know very much. Ryan calls him the showrunner. Ryan acts as though he is going to whisper the truth of what is happening to Mike, but then Mike's memory cuts out at just that moment, and he comes to standing in the middle of the road. Anne finds him and leads him inside to his house and cares for him, but Anne is supposed to be in St. Louis and not in whatever city Mike is supposed to be in, [**SHAUN:** Mm-hmm.] so that's super suspicious, and she's still looking to complete her fourth challenge.

SHAUN: Yep. And it leads us on a very, like, "oh" moment. The conversation with Ryan... I think is really interesting. Like, Ryan is just so arrogantly, like– he's not even that arrogant, is he? Uh– He sort of is but doesn't play it that way? Uh– It's just this idea that, like...

DYLAN: He's unchallenged [**SHAUN:** Yes. Yeah, yeah. For sure.] by Mike. I would say, like, this– this isn't new or surprising or scary [**SHAUN:** Mm.] in any way.

SHAUN: Yeah, it reminded me of, like, meeting, like, [*Brief laugh.*] like, meeting this... c-completely... um... om– omnipotent being and just being like "you are of no consequence."

DYLAN: Yeah, this is the first we get to see of the– the Ryan-Topher dynamic, which [**JENAH:** Mm-hmm.] I think is pretty accurate to how it ends up being once we get actors. Topher starts out– Once we understand, like, s-sort of who he is, it's like "oh, he's sort of, like, in the dark." And then Ryan comes in, and he just, like... is a wet dog. Or, I guess, uh, an orange cat. Uh–

JENAH: The fact that Ryan doesn't even immediately demand that, like, Topher is released. Like, [**SHAUN:** Yeah.] he stays tied up throughout their entire conversation. [**SHAUN:** (*Laughs.*) He just does not care. (*Laughs.*)] With a sock in his mouth! [*Chuckles.*]

DYLAN: Oh, and, uh, he's prepared to die. *[Jenah chortles.]* Or i– he– it seems like he's prepared to die, and Ryan's like "don't die, y– you don't know anything, like, **JENAH:** Right. *(Laughs.)* **SHAUN:** Yeah.] don't be prepared to die." If CANNONBALL is FLINCH, this is a very different scene.

JENAH: Mm-hmm. Yeah. *[Laughs.]*

SHAUN: Oh, god, *[Chuckling.]* yeah!

DYLAN: There is one question I would like to open up to the floor that i– arises here and gets asked occasionally. Uh, because of the unreliable narrator effect, I need to know from the two of you: canonically, is Mike hot?

[Brief silence, then Jenah laughs. Shaun mutters something.]

DYLAN: Ryan says that he is.

SHAUN: I think, at this point... like, Mike, Mike is so... intrigued by his conversation with Ryan that... he's not fabricating things. He's hot. *[Jenah laughs.]* He says it 'cause he is it. *[Chuckles.]*

JENAH: Um, I think there's a real chance that Ryan said that... if for no other reason than to fluster Mike, **[SHAUN:** Oh.] to be quite– Like, Ryan *loves* to get people on their back foot and toy with them. Like, Mike might be hot, but Ryan said that... maybe because it's true, but also to get Mike flustered. *[Laughs.]*

SHAUN: Like a power play. **[DYLAN:** Mm-hmm.] Mm-hmm. *[Brief laugh.]*

DYLAN: Oh, and the summary is "Mike has a discreet but fiery masc4masc **[SHAUN:** Yes, I just read that.] hookup," *[Jenah laughs.]* uh, that's something that is often remarked upon. *[Shaun briefly chuckles.]*

So, Episode Eleven is called "This Is Only Temporary," uh, and it's a big format break, because we aren't listening to Mike talk into a microphone, we are listening to him actually going to Vancouver to kill Matt. **[SHAUN:** Mm-hmm.] Uh, something has woken Matt up in the middle of the night, and Matt... intends to shoot Mike with a sawed-off shotgun, but a time travel event occurs in the kitchen where they're standing, and when it's over, Matt understands what's going on. It uses a sound effect that is not the stock time... uh, travel sound effect, because that didn't exist yet. Mike does– Mike doesn't remember what happened, but he can tell, from context clues... basically what happened. And what happened is the plot of Episode Twenty Three. The obvious thing is completing the fourth challenge, and a time travel event happens that we don't understand how it got finished, but it got finished. And Matt doesn't speak, because Jamie Petronis didn't even exist yet. *[Shaun and Jenah laugh.]* Uh, I– I had to invent him.

SHAUN *[laughing]:* "Didn't exist yet"...

JENAH: I mean, we— we find out that there have been many attempts, uh, at this much later on. But, uh, in what we see here. So, there's a correction that happens. [**SHAUN:** Yeah.] Um. [**DYLAN:** Yes.] Suddenly, Mike is on the other— Mike and Matt have essentially switched spots. [**SHAUN:** Mm-hmm.] Uh, [**DYLAN:** Mm-hmm.] some things look different. [**SHAUN:** Yeah.] But then there's another moment that feels like a correction, because— because the— the—

DYLAN: It's sort of like a flashbang that goes off.

SHAUN: Mm.

JENAH: Yes. 'Cause it feels like there's two things, because at first there's a correction; Mike still remembers having come and told... uh, Matt that, uh, you know, all about WOE.BEGONE and explaining the— the mechanics of it and what he's been through. But then there's a moment of, like: [*Claps hands together.*] okay. Actually... now Mike no longer remembers even telling that... that an— any of that. And Matt is handing over the shotgun. Um...

DYLAN: I-It feels like two corrections.

JENAH: Yes, exactly, it feels like two corrections. Like the first one didn't take; it wasn't good enough.

SHAUN: Mm.

DYLAN: Whatever w-we get to hear happens in two stages.

JENAH: Right, exactly. It feels like *Matt* remembers both of them.

[*Shaun chuckles.*]

DYLAN: Matt has to remember both of them, or the whole process doesn't make any sense as far as having a point.

JENAH: Exactly, which is fun in that, like, up until this point, you know, we're following Mike, and everything seems like, you know, he's remembering what's happening, right?

DYLAN: And just a quick rundown for Shaun and anyone who hasn't listened to, like, Season Five. Uh, people are connected to each other through time in the sense that, like... if I bite my fingernail off now, like in real life, [**JENAH:** Mm-hmm.] and travel through time at one second per second like I usually do... like, ten minutes from now, I still will have bitten my fingernail off. And so I'm connected to my past self through time in that way? You can't always be connected to yourself through time in that way, or you wouldn't be able to prove that time travel exists. Because everything would be the way that it's— it has always been... uh, and so, at some point, people have to become disconnected through themselves and iterations of themselves through

time, just as a way that it... has to be for time travel to exist. And because this arrangement exists, you can create iterations of people through time who are not connected to each other. As in, I, uh, cut my fingernail off, and there's a future version of me who this has not happened for. Does that make sense, Shaun? As much [**SHAUN:** As much as--] as it can right now?

SHAUN: I was gonna say-- Yes, yeah, as much as it's possible for it to make sense, yes.

DYLAN: The idea that Matt would remember all of this and Mikey wouldn't isn't, uh, unexplainable.

SHAUN: Mm...

JENAH: [*Quietly chuckles.*] Ah...

DYLAN: But, uh... yeah, that was our first format break episode. Um... Get used to it.

[*Jenah laughs.*]

DYLAN: Um... From here on out, every episode is... viewed under the lense of "can I break the format [**SHAUN:** Mm-hmm?] somehow?"

[*Jenah chuckles.*]

DYLAN: But I would say that that's the climax of Season One and that [**JENAH:** Yeah.] Episode Twelve is the falling action.

SHAUN: Yeah.

DYLAN: And, so, that-- that-- that-- that's the culmination of the challenges, is the fourth challenge happens, he kills Matt, he has completed his fourth challenge. [**SHAUN:** Mm-hmm.] And that sets us up, if we're ready to talk about the season finale of Season One of *WOE.BEGONE*.

SHAUN: Yeah...

JENAH: Yeah. Yeah.

DYLAN: Episode Twelve: [*Briefly imitates French accent.*] "Clearance." [*Jenah and Shaun chuckle.*] Uh... from the French for "clearance."

JENAH: All this time, I've been pronouncing it wrong. [*Laughs.*]

SHAUN: Yeah. Wow. [*Dylan briefly chuckles.*] That is a real thing we learned this evening.

DYLAN: Yeah, what if I just, like, "Yeah, so we're gonna talk about Mi-ke—"

SHAUN: *[Laughs.]* Mi-ke...

JENAH: *[Laughing.]* Oh, my god... That's why he says his name [**SHAUN:** —isn't Mike.] isn't Mike. *[Laughs.]*

SHAUN: Yeah, because it's Mi-ke.

DYLAN: So, synopsis: Mike tries to figure out what happened in Vancouver, namely the time travel incident. And he can only conclude that he helped himself from some time in the future, because his reasoning was basically like "who else would help me." And he uses this to say that he's going to get some control... over the technology or is going to be able to travel in time in the future. In the future, he'll call this being the King of WOE.BEGONE... *[Jenah briefly chortles.]* but that is in Season Two, I think.

JENAH: Yeah.

DYLAN: CANNONBALL emails Mike, and CANNONBALL doesn't remember anything: not the Matt stuff, and not even the kidnapping. [**SHAUN:** Yeah.] The gamerunners ask Mike to apply at Oldbrush Valley Energy and Resources. He gets a job as a patrol officer and is excited to get away from the city and all of this mess, and he hopes that this will protect him from Anne, because Anne is still doing her fourth challenge. And so we leave Season One with Mike about to ship off to *[Briefly muffles speech. Shaun and Jenah chuckle.]* in United States. Uh... is it a desert valley, is it a mountain valley, is it a forest, is it— is it wet, is it dry, is it in Colorado? *[Jenah quietly chuckles.]* Who knows. I wonder what it is about that place.

SHAUN: I think it's really interesting that, like, like, earlier on in this season, he mentions about how, you know, he's, like, lost his job. So, it'd be nice *[Jenah laughs.]* to get paid, so that'll be good. *[Briefly laughs.]*

JENAH: Yeah. He's like, "Oh, yeah. Yea— You have noticed how I've [**SHAUN:** "I've just— Yeah, yeah, I've just stopped." *(Chuckles.)*] been busy, um, doing things not my job? Yeah, [**SHAUN:** Yeah.] that had consequences." *[Laughs.]*

SHAUN: It really leads nicely into the second season of this changing from Mike trying to play this game to moving and is getting involved in something completely new. But it's still part of the game? But it's not, 'cause it's a job now? And it— it just opens up so many questions like "who is employing him," "are the people from WOE.BEGONE employing him," "is Oldbrush Valley even connected," "is it just another big ploy, like a— a thing for them to hold over him," like, I think it's a nice lead-up. And after this sort of intensity of the last episode, it works well.

DYLAN: I don't know if he talks about it in this episode, but he convinces himself, I think, that FLINCH is [SHAUN: Yeah.] in there and that he's going to be directed to get FLINCH [SHAUN: Yeah.] out of there.

JENAH: I th– believe that he... at the very least says that Ryan wants direct access to the technology and that he believes that he's being sent to Oldbrush Valley to get that for Ryan. [SHAUN: Mm.] This is the episode where he's now getting communications from a completely new number, right? Whoever he was getting messages from before and whoever i– he is getting messages from now, the number has changed, and the tone has changed.

DYLAN: Yes. We're still on, like, "gamerunners? (question mark) how many [SHAUN: Yeah.] are there" sort of talk. Like, it might not just be Ryan.

JENAH: Right. Yeah.

DYLAN: But, yeah, that is a whole season of *WOE.BEGONE*. Do we have any... thoughts on the season as a whole?

JENAH: Honestly, it's a great intro [SHAUN: Yeah. Mm.] to the entire show.

SHAUN: That is essentially what I was gonna say, like, it just– it sets the scene so nicely, and it– it's been good, actually, because the more we've talked about this, the more I remembered parts, uh, I've listened to of Season Two. Um, and just– and, like, it– it really, like, is resonating me just how well it's set up to start that whole sort of, uh– different journey, but also it's an introduction to a really complicated thing without feeling like you've had to, like, chew through a load of jargon. Because I feel like in a different [DYLAN: Mm-hmm.] version, a different version of this show's idea, that could've been the case, but it's almost through, like, Mike's presentation of it that you don't get that, and I quite like that, I think that the na– the first-person narrative really fits well with this, of you picking it apart as he does. But also... questioning "is he holding certain things back," which I always– I'm always like "what's– what's Mike not telling us here."

DYLAN: I feel like this– this season... does the whole show in miniature. [SHAUN: Mm.] And then in the next season, it's like "well, what if there was a big campus full of people for him to bounce off of in a similar way," and then Season Three happens, and it's like "well, what if we go inside the super secret area there," and then Season Four is like "well, what if we bust the whole thing open," and then Season Five is like "what if it's all busted open and we hand it to the– the characters from [Shaun chuckles.] Season Two and have them play with it."

[Jenah chuckles.]

SHAUN: Now you've got your 60 seconds for the other seasons.

JENAH: It was really cool getting to revisit this season and, like, realize how much of the rest of this show is really baked into this first season and how much you keep coming back and sort of drawing on themes from this first season, these first 12 episodes.

DYLAN: Yeah, I agree. And in that sense, it's not confusing [*Shaun chuckles.*] at all.

JENAH: Totally. Very straightforward, actually. [*Chuckles.*]

DYLAN: So, yeah, I think that that wraps up our episode-by-episode recap. I hope listening along to that will help people better understand Season One. I think that this is probably the easiest this is going to go. [*Shaun and Jenah chuckle.*] The other segment I have is just called "What Didn't Shaun Understand." [*Jenah and Shaun laugh.*] Um. So, yes, uh, here comes our new segment; I'm sure a jingle will play that [*Brief snicker.*] just says [*Shaun chuckles.*] "what didn't Shaun understand."

[Segment transition song plays.]

*I think that everybody is confused
Let's ask our guest if they feel any closer to the truth
I think that everybody is confused
But I've got answers, you've got questions
Let me see what I can do for you*

[Jenah briefly laughs.]

DYLAN: Shaun is not as immersed in the show as Jenah and I, so this is a segment where he is encouraged to ask questions about things that confuse him. So what were your, uh— what are your initial questions?

SHAUN: Okay. So, my question is... CANNONBALL. Okay. I want to know how much he knows. Right? Like, is he an actor? Is he a paid actor? Or did he play it, but then... did Ryan, like, mess him up?

DYLAN: Jenah, would you say that those questions have been answered? I feel like it has been hinted that there is an answer to the questions.

SHAUN [*quietly*]: I think that's it.

JENAH: I don't think that we have a straightforward, clear, defined answer? I think in Ten and even in Eleven, I think Mike talks about how he believes that CANNONBALL probably just thinks that this is just... all fiction, that this is all just an ARG and that Mike isn't really out there killing cops and pigs and all of that stuff. But, uh, I do think that we get answers later on that make it very clear that CANNONBALL is much more, uh, enmeshed in this than it originally

seems. That doesn't mean that he isn't playing a role and he's not acting. He definitely has a flair for the dramatic. But I would say he's a pretty active gamerunner and not just a showrunner.

DYLAN: He steps up and explains some of what he's doing in Season Four, and [**JENAH:** Mm-hmm.] he's been hinting at something beyond that.

JENAH: I do like, uh, that we have to ask ourselves whether CANNONBALL actually killed his wife or not? Um.

SHAUN: Wait, so she's rea— Oh. [*Brief laugh.*]

JENAH: So, there is a question here: did he himself test out WOE.BEGONE the game for himself? [*Chuckles.*]

SHAUN: I'm still in shock that Kate's real. Like, because obviously only listening to Season One, I'm like [**JENAH:** Yeah.] "i— she's a fabrication, right?"

JENAH: There is at least some truth being shared in Season One from CANNONBALL's life. I don't know how much. [*Chuckles.*]

SHAUN: Hmm. Yeah. Okay. Yeah, I've got ano— uh, what I don't understand. I was listening to it, and I had a thought... what if Mike is just fully insane? [*Jenah and Dylan chuckle.*] What if he's just mad, and he's going around thinking he's doing all this stuff, and th— that is not happening at all? [*Brief chuckle.*]

DYLAN: Well, that's— I don't— I don't like stories that do that? Uh, which is [*Shaun chuckles.*] how you can— how you can know that [**SHAUN:** That is not— yeah.] that is not what's happening. Mike is unreliable, but he's not just telling a story. There are episodes later where Mike describes a scene, and then, in the next episode, a different character describes the scene. Uh, and they are not the same. Like, I— I'm the crazy one who's making up a story, like, there doesn't have to be [*Jenah briefly laughs.*] another lay— layer where a character's [**SHAUN:** Yeah.] also doing that.

SHAUN: I've got one more question. When Matt comes back... we don't know what— Has Matt, like, has he lived all these experiences, has he not? But then we're fully aware of all the experiences Mike has lived through, because he's explained them all, but then you're like "but wait... in another world, he's been dead since Challenge Two," and it's just... yeah.

DYLAN: Different dimensions don't exist in WOE.BEGONE. Like, simultaneously? [**SHAUN:** Okay. **JENAH:** Mm-hmm.] Uh. So, that stuff about retrocausal pockets where you're dropping into another dimension that's existing simultaneously with our own isn't real. When you change things in time, they affect everything going forward. And there's a lot of clever ways... to interact with this, but there isn't a universe where Mike died, like, anymore. And not only didn't happen, it never happened in any where in any universe. There are a certain set of paradoxes that explain

why time travel could never exist in our universe. The chief one we're talking about here is: Anne played the game to save Mike's life; therefore Mike is alive, therefore Anne doesn't have to save Mike's life, therefore she doesn't, therefore he dies, therefore she has to go back and save Mike's life, therefore sh— he's alive, therefore she never has to, and so on in an infinite loop. And because time travel does exist in *WOE.BEGONE*, these paradoxes are solved. And we don't really get the solutions to them, but we do know that they are solved, and that's why time travel exists.

JENAH: The tech essentially breaks that loop.

SHAUN: Yeah. Wow. *[Shaun and Jenah laugh.]* That's what I have to say. Wow, heh.

DYLAN: So, yeah, I guess my last question is "who do you think FLINCH is?" And this'll be a funnier question every episode as we get further through the seasons *[Jenah chuckles.]* for guests. Who do you think FLINCH is?

SHAUN: I feel like it's someone who we've met or— I say met, someone we have heard about. I'm gonna go, it's, um... Mike from the future.

DYLAN: Very popular guess.

JENAH: Mm.

SHAUN: Oh, is it. **[DYLAN:** Um.] Okay, I'm not unique. *[Shaun and Jenah laugh.]*

DYLAN: Who FLINCH is has not been answered as of **[SHAUN:** Okay.] Episode One Hundred Seventy Six.

SHAUN: Do you know who FLINCH is?

DYLAN: I do. *[Shaun briefly chuckles.]* I answered this on Tumblr this week. **[SHAUN:** Oh, okay.] Someone's like "do you really know who FLINCH is?" Yes, I do. **[SHAUN:** Yeah. *(Jenah chuckles.)*] I'm— A lot of things are by the seat of my pants; that's not one of them. Jenah, who do you think FLINCH is?

JENAH: Right now, during this current relisten... uh, I was thinking CANNONBALL. *[Laughs.]* Partly **[SHAUN:** CANNONBALL.] because he's just so unsuspecting. It seems like it would be a real wallop, and yet, at the same time, this is the guy who wrote, like, millions of words of blogposts, uh, for Aliza Schultz and has crafted this entire narrative and just seems to get a real kick out of all of the stuff that's going on. Uh, other than getting socks shoved in his mouth and, um, *[Shaun briefly chuckles.]* held hostage in his own apartment, I think that part he didn't enjoy so much, but **[SHAUN:** Maybe he did.] what can I say. *[Laughs.]*

DYLAN: It would be so funny if CANNONBALL was Ryan's boss this whole time, [**SHAUN:** Yeah! **JENAH:** Yeah. (*Chuckles.*)] and Ryan— Ryan treats him like that.

SHAUN: I imagine CANNONBALL is like, he's this, like, DM. The lore for him is what it's all about, and if the players [*Jenah chuckles.*] don't interact with the lore, he's mad about it.

DYLAN: An AI would've just written that whole blog [**JENAH:** Heh!] in 2024.

JENAH: God, that just makes me sad. [*Laughs.*]

SHAUN: Yeah.

JENAH: My other answer would be Anne. She's brilliant, and she knows a lot, [**DYLAN:** Mm-hmm.] and, uh... I think that we're not getting a full picture of Anne.

DYLAN: She's very secretive, she bas— [**JENAH:** Yes.] she doesn't want specifically Mike to know what she is doing. So, yeah. Um... Shaun, if you need to go, we can say goodbye to you and move on to the— the segment that's about, like, later seasons and how— the implications.

SHAUN: Uh, yes, I do unfortunately, I am really sorry, um, [**JENAH:** Mm.] um, I have to go. ...And—

DYLAN: That is quite alright. [*Jenah briefly laughs.*] Uh, would you like to plug your stuff again real quick?

SHAUN: Uh, I can do, yeah? Um, I create [*Shaun and Jenah briefly laugh.*] this show, *Wake of Corrosion*. Uh, I'm— I'm in it. Me and my brother are the main characters. We play brothers in the st— in— in the actual show itself, so it's a nice, little dynamic. Um, it's fun, it's apocalyptic. Um, yeah, go and— go and check it out. Uh, and... also check out *The*, uh, *Diary of Aliza Schultz*.

DYLAN: The— If— If— If you're taking [**SHAUN:** It's "check out"...] anything away from this, it's "you need to listen [**SHAUN:** Mm-hmm. Yes.] to *The Diary of Aliza Schultz*." Don't listen to *WOE.BEGONE*. [*Jenah laughs.*] I'm— I'm— I'm taking it off of the RSS feed.

SHAUN [*laughing*]: It's only *Aliza Schultz*.

DYLAN: When *Aliza Schultz* hits a million listens, I'll put *WOE.BEGONE* back.

SHAUN: [*Laughs.*] Thank you so much. Thank you for, uh, asking me to be a part of this. [**DYLAN:** Yeah. Thanks for coming on.] Uh, I appreciate it a lot. It's renewed my, like, love for, uh, *WOE.BEGONE* now, which is great, 'cause it means I can actually go back and— and catch up and then be thoroughly weirded out when I hear my own voice. And i—

DYLAN: Oh, I have one question for you. Uh, you can answer it as briefly as you want. Did listening to this season affect how you think about your character in your season?

SHAUN: Ooh... [**DYLAN:** It's fine if the answer is no.] Do you know what? I— No, it didn't, *but...* it did make me question what happens from now to get to the point where this crust punk [*Jenah briefly chuckles.*] gang are in it and causing shit to go wild. That's how it makes me feel. [*Jenah laughs.*] Which, yeah— I-I realize, I— I need to— ah— Listen, I was reading a— a story to one of my classes. I'm a teacher—uh, an English teacher, by the way, just to— [*Jenah chortles.*] And the voice I did for a character, I didn't realize until partway through that I was doing the voice I do for Sax. [**JENAH:** That's so good.] I, like, mid-way through a sentence, I laughed, and the kids were like "are you okay, sir?" And I was like "oh. Yeah. Sorry. It's fine." I was like—

JENAH: It's just this time travel murder game, [**SHAUN:** Yeah, yeah, it's— it's all good.] don't worry about it, kids.

SHAUN: Don't worry about it. But, yeah. [**JENAH:** Talk to you later, Shaun. **DYLAN:** Bye, Shaun, enjoy your evening.] Thank you so much. Take care, guys. See you, bye-bye.

DYLAN: The next segment is called "Knowing What I Know Now," which is a reference to Season Ten, Episode Ten.

[Segment transition song plays.]

*Knowing what I know now
The past is not that hard to figure out
In the present
With the language that we learned
We can return*

DYLAN: This will be the spoileriest part, 'cause we're just gonna [**JENAH:** M'kay.] talk about what happened in Season One, uh, knowing what we know now. [**JENAH:** M'kay.] And namely I wanted to focus on, like, the— the challenges. So, like, the prize for the first challenge and the correction. Like, does that— does that make sense with your view of how other people are using the tech later in the show?

JENAH: So, we don't really see a lot of people remembering corrections, specifically, uh, corrections other people have done, right? Like, mostly, if you remember a correction, you are part of making that correction happen. But eventually we see, uh, the technology seeming to progress in different ways, or it might just be them discovering new facets of the existing technology? But, either way, eventually we do start hearing about people, uh, remembering corrections done on them. I, um, specifically think of, like, the Great Correction. Everybody remembers the events of the H Timeline, if you will. It's something that we don't really see a lot of until Season Ten, I think. But it does make sense to me knowing— Heh. Knowing what I know now. [*Chuckles.*]

DYLAN: Season Ten gave us the idea of a continuous correction, which is the Base's term for altering things to create a temporary, quote-unquote, "pocket dimension"—it's not actually a— a pocket dimension, but it's like you're moving people from a different context and placing them back into a timeline and correcting the timeline that they came from so that it doesn't exist and it's— we're still in ours.

JENAH: We are briefly changing circumstances, and so that it is reality briefly.

DYLAN: T-The correction is corrected from the, like, the Planck second that it existed. But there's all of this, like, connectivity-based shenanigans with, like, Storage and [**JENAH:** Mm-hmm.] preserving people from different experiences, and so i-it feels like Matt's existence could be from a continuous correction.

JENAH: Yeah, there is definitely a feel of, like, he— him having been plucked out of existence and placed into a new reality. Or, for him, it is [**DYLAN:** Mm-hmm.] a new reality, I should say.

DYLAN: Right. [**JENAH:** I think...] And then the second challenge is just a correction.

JENAH: Yes. I think the only thing that comes to mind is Mike continuing to have all of his text messages after he dies. [**DYLAN:** Oh, that's true.] Uh—

DYLAN: There's an environmental consideration, 'cause there's a lot of talk about how animals sometimes slip through the cracks. So it seems like whatever technolog— like, whatever the mechanism is requires input about what the environment is? [**JENAH:** Mm-hmm.] And if that— if that information is incomplete, then the correction is incomplete. Uh. probably in a way that doesn't matter, because who cares if a cow remembers [*Jenah laughs.*] the timeline.

JENAH: —a previous iteration, yeah.

DYLAN: Mm-hmm. Uh, the third challenge... I guess my question for the third challenge is, uh. Ryan makes it seem like it takes a long time and that he's getting this all done just in the nick of time. Do you think that that's true?

JENAH: I mean, it depends. Is he doing this in real time? Is he just waiting with Mike as he's doing these challenges, or is he doing them at some point in the future? Because if he's doing them at some point in the future, there is absolutely no reason for Mike to have gone through, you know, almost getting arrested and then having 12 guns shoved in his face. And knowing Ryan, the way Ryan is... this could just be his idea of a fun time.

DYLAN: And I feel like that jives well with, like, the other organizations don't take him very seriously. I mean, we still don't know everything. There's a relationship with Ty Betteridge [**JENAH:** Mm-hmm.] through CANNONBALL. Uh, 'cause we were hinting before to s-save Shaun's innocent ears. [*Jenah laughs.*] Uh, CANNONBALL keeps saying that Ty owes him a big

favor. Season Four paints a really weird picture of him. That makes it clear that, like, we don't know anything that we think that we know about CANNONBALL. We also know that Ty... just completely dismisses, uh— I don't— Ty's never acknowledged that CANNONBALL has said these things to his face, like, [*Jenah briefly laughs.*] two or three times. And we talked about the fourth challenge, how that seems like it's two different corrections... butting up against each other.

JENAH: Yes.

DYLAN: Well, if that's all we have for this segment, we can move on to, uh, basically what is our last real segment, "Advice to Greenhorns." What would you say to someone who... is new to the show or got into the show and has got confused and are coming back to listen to the recap episodes?

JENAH: In Season One, we get some ideas about, uh, how time travel works, and we see it in practice. But what we don't actually get is a firm answer yet, and so I would kinda take it in stride and realize that, like, we're discovering this with Mike.

DYLAN: I tell people that I want them to feel lost and confused. [**JENAH:** Yeah.] Uh, t— that ties into that. 'Cause people are like "I feel dumb 'cause I'm confused." It's like, don't feel dumb, you're doing exactly what I wanted you to do, which is to feel lost and confused. [**JENAH:** Yeah, I mean th—] And maybe a little bit antagonized, [*Jenah starts chuckling.*] 'cause I love when people tell me that I'm like a— like a stupid, little worm. Go— Go wiggle in the dirt... and, like, just glance up at the eldritch god existing above you. So maybe I do what you to think that you're dumb, but I want you to feel good about it.

JENAH: Aw. Thanks, Dylan. [*Laughs.*] Yeah.

DYLAN: We are all dumb on this blessed day.

JENAH: I think the reality is, this is a show where the main character is constantly trying to understand things. He has put forward—this is not just true of Season One, but many, many seasons—he's put forward theories on *many* things, and a lot of them, we later learn, are untrue. Uh, and that's just a— a natural progression of his own understanding of what's happening.

DYLAN: Well, there's— there's no amount of human capacity that could understand the very core of this.

JENAH: It is [**DYLAN:** I-I-It's something—] brain-breaking. Yeah.

DYLAN: It is— The amount of information is larger than one human brain. I guess if I were to answer this same prompt—like, to— to speak to people who are trying to get a better grasp on the show—is, I would think of WOE.BEGONE as an organization. [**JENAH:** Mm.] That's not something that happens in Season One. But starting in Season Two, you're gonna get O.V.E.R.;

you're gonna get the Compound; you're gonna get Base; you're gonna get the Council of Annes; you're gonna get, uh, anonymous councils of all sorts; you're gonna get Base, uh, before the Great Correction and after the Great Correction. And I think that it's helpful to look at WOE.BEGONE as a time travel organization. And watch through that lens what their goals are, what their structure is... with a big question mark, 'cause FLINCH is at the top of it. [JENAH: Mm-hmm.] And just, like, how that situates them and their interactions, 'cause they're gonna interact with the Compound in a really big way. And how Mike interacts with them, both during the season when WOE.BEGONE is the only thing and then in later seasons where WOE.BEGONE is a small fish in a big pond, basically.

JENAH: Everybody who's in the time travel business, for all that they don't take WOE.BEGONE seriously, they all seem aware of WOE.BEGONE. Like, if anyone is connected to some time travel organization, they do seem to at least have some awareness that WOE.BEGONE is a thing and is a means of accessing the technology.

DYLAN: Uh, I asked Shaun if his relisten, um, affected how he thought about Sax. Does— Did it help you think about Skinner at all?

JENAH: A little bit in that... So, [Chuckles.] when I was recording lines for Skinner, uh, I ad-libbed a line... uh, that—

DYLAN: About retrocausal pockets? [JENAH: Yeah.] Is that what you were gonna talk about?

JENAH: The retrocausal pockets. Um—

DYLAN: That definitely has a very extreme implication [Jenah laughs.] that Aliza Schultz exists as we discussed her.

JENAH: Yeah. It's one of those things that I... ad-libbed, and I was like "oh, Dylan included that. Interesting." So, I definitely thought about that specifically when I got to that episode, and I was like "so, this means... this means that Skinner has, at— at minimum, read this blog." Does that mean that Skinner played WOE.BEGONE? I have no idea. Or is it just that they know about WOE.BEGONE? [Chuckles.]

DYLAN: True. ...Yeah, I guess this concludes our first episode of *The Proof Is In The Podcast: A WOE.BEGONE Recap Show*. Unless that's not the name of it, in which case, uh, something m— I'll— I'll come in— Editing Dylan will be talking right now. Next time— I was gonna say next week. Not next week. We will talk about Season Two. Season Two is the first season to have a subtitle, and the subtitle is "Oldbrush Valley." And that's when things really start to get their first hairs. Not h— I wouldn't say hairy, yet. But... [Jenah chuckles for a moment.] uh, the— the— the hairs are growing. Before we get off of here, is there anything that you would like to plug?

JENAH: Yes, actually. I should definitely plug *400 Words A Horror*. Uh, that is a podcast that I participate in as a writer and voice actor and other logistics associate and sometimes audio

editor, actually. Um. And the other big thing that I want to promote is *No Normal Life*, which is the Critshow's first audio drama. I am co-lead in that. Monster hunter and lots of gay pining... is going to ensue. So, yeah.

[The Proof Is In The Podcast closing theme starts playing.]

CREDITS: Alright, that was our first episode of *The Proof Is In The Podcast*. I hope you enjoyed it. This episode starred Jenah, the voice of Skinner, and Shaun Pellington, the voice of Sax, and was edited by Michelle Kan, the voice of Marissa, and I did the other stuff. See you next episode where I will be back with two more guests to discuss Season Two. Alright, bye, guys.

[The Proof Is In The Podcast closing theme plays out.]

[END Intermission XXXI.]