

INTERMISSION XXXIV - REMAKE: EPISODE 23: I HAVE BEEN TO THE FUTURE

Original transcript edited by Orion and Theo and reviewed by Jenah

[BEGIN Intermission XXXIV.]

[Time travel noise.]

[Nighttime outdoor ambience.]

MIKE: –Huckleberry. Huh? Fuck! *[Sigh.]* I'm outside again. Uh, no, no, no. Uh– The... hot sauce. *[Huff.]* Fuck, it's on the counter. Uh... Uh, how am I supposed to keep that on me all the time? *[Sigh.]* You– You could have brought the hot sauce with me. You can bring me here, you can bring it. I shouldn't have to remember it, 'cause you're the one that's– *[Huffs.]* Whatever, ugh... Goddamnit, focus. *[Sigh.]*

[Cellphone buzzes loudly.]

MIKE: Now what? Ugh! "Time to keep playing." Yes, I-I know, I'm at Matt's house. This– This isn't fair. I didn't get a warning. I can't do this right now! I'm not wearing pants! I was watching a movie! You know what you're asking me to do; that's a pantsed behavior. You need to be wearing pants for it.

Okay. *[Mike slaps his own face gently.]* Okay, sober up. What's going on. *[Mike walks through bushes towards Matt's house.]* Okay, Matt's house. Fourth challenge again. Go in there and be the flash of light that you saw when you were here the first time. Matt puts the gun down, I pick the gun up, and I complete the fourth challenge. *[Groans.]* And the world needs to stop spinning.

Should I make– I can make pants... out of leaves, no. Oh, shit. What's– That's nothing. Uh... Fuck, and he's awake... Okay... Okay. Here goes.

[Mike knocks on the door, which then opens.]

[Matt cocks his gun.]

MATT: What the fuck are you doing here again, Mike?

[Opening theme plays.]

[Nighttime outdoor ambience.]

MIKE: Hey hey, Matt! Uh, funny seeing you here. I mean, it's not, but... I-I was in the neighborhood. Uh, can I come in?

MATT: You already are inside! What the fuck is going on, Mike!? Is this a magic trick?

MIKE: I don't know, Matt. Do you point guns at every magician you see?

MATT: Only the ones that seem to be trying to kill me.

MIKE: If it isn't Matt's famous trusty shotgun. Did you saw off the barrel yourself? 'Cause that's illegal. I mean, it is in America, I-I don't know about Canada. I made some great memories with that shotgun.

MATT: What does that mean? What— What memories? Why are you being so fucking coy? I don't see you for years, and then you show up at my house and start pulling some weird prank? This isn't funny.

MIKE: It's not "haha" funny. Uh— Mikey-boy is in there, right? 'Cause that's why I'm here. He's a good kid, he's got a good head on his shoulders, and that makes him really bad at explaining what's going on. He wouldn't be able to upsell you on a vacuum cleaner. How is he supposed to convince you to let him kill you. *[Shouting into the house.]* Hey, Mikey, uh, don't worry, I'm here. Uh, we've got this all under control.

MIKEY *[from inside]:* What the hell is going on out there, Matt?

MATT: I don't know! I-I mean, I do know... but this, this is all a trick. Did you drug me, Mike? Am I hallucinating? Am I dreaming?

MIKE: In one sense, if life is but a dream. Uh, can I come in? I'm just gonna... yeah, uh... I'm just gonna slide right past the gun barrel and, uh, yeah, let's just, uh, get in here and get the door closed.

[Door shuts. Outdoor ambience ends.]

MIKE: Howdy there, Mikey. Good to see you. It's been a while. I mean, it hasn't been a while. Actually, it's not good to see you. But hello.

MIKEY: Matt, I don't know what's going on. I don't know who he is or what he's doing here. I mean, I-I know who he is, but I don't—

MIKE: There isn't time for this, Mikey-boy. You do know why I'm here. We've got to get a job done, and I'm only here because you couldn't get it done. And unfortunately you won't remember this. I mean, I didn't. I just knew that someone helped me complete my fourth challenge. I didn't know it was me until Ryan actually told me.

MIKEY: Until Ryan told you? You're working with Ryan? Matt, you can't trust this guy. Because if he's working with Ryan—

MIKE: I'm not working with Ryan. He just let me in on some info. Don't worry, you're not going to remember this, so just sit back and enjoy the ride. Uh, Matt won't forget though... Not until, uh... you know.

MATT: Mike... Mike, tell me what is going on *right now*. I don't wanna have to shoot you, but Mike... the other Mike, he told me that someone is ordering you, him, to kill me. You're scaring me. Whatever's going on, I don't get it.

MIKE: Well, Mikey, if he thought that you were serious, then he would have killed you already, so maybe you did a good job after all. This is how the fourth challenge gets done... somehow. Honestly, [*Slight cowboy voice.*] the specifics roll off o' me like water off the back of an armadillo, pilgrim. [*Drops cowboy voice.*] Uh... s-sorry, it's been a *night*. I was drunk and watching *Tombstone* when I got sent here. You know, Sam Elliott should be in everything. Like main character stuff. It's weird, everyone likes Sam Elliott, right? But every time he's in, like, a big movie, he's a little character, so what's up with that?

MATT: Okay! I've had enough of this. I'm gonna call 911. If you so much as move from where you're standing, I'll shoot. Both of you.

MIKE: Don't worry, Mikey, he almost never does. They use 911 in Canada? I thought it'd be, like, 112. Anyway, he won't shoot us.

MATT: Oh, I won't? Try me.

MIKE: Yeah, I already have. But we need to get down to brass tacks. Matt, it's true. Everything this one's saying, I'm the evidence. There's two of me. There's not an elaborate mask or something. He's Mike Walters. I'm Mike Walters. We're identical. I look 100 years older because I've been put through the meat grinder since then, but we're the same. Hey, Mikey, say something I would say.

MIKEY: Matt, he's right that I'm telling the truth, but I don't know what he's doing here, and I don't trust him.

MIKE: [*Mocking.*] Matt, he's right that I'm telling the truth, but I don't know what he's doing here. [*Normal.*] See, we're identical. And it's not like you can hire a Mike Walters impersonator on Craigslist.

MATT: Even if you are Mike and... he is also Mike... why? Why are you here? Why did you say that you're gonna kill me?

MIKE: Surely Mikey already went over that. You died years ago, I was devastated, brought you back through a violent online game (uh, not really a game), and then the final challenge is to kill you all over again. Uh, we're on life number three, for what it's worth.

MIKEY: *We're on life number three? Someone kills us?*

MIKE: Someone named Anne, yeah.

MATT: Anne as in the Anne that I know? What is going on?

MIKE: She's playing the game that I just brought up.

MATT: I don't believe you.

MIKE: Well, do. It should bring you some solace, right? Anne killed me, and here I am. So we need to kill you to complete the fourth challenge, but that doesn't mean that it's the end of everything, necessarily. It's like a... a-a page break for a new chapter. And we're gonna set the book down for a while. And the book is teetering over a pit of molten lava, but it hasn't fallen in yet, and we're not gonna let it. Probably.

MATT: Why would you play this game? Why would Anne play this game? If you have to kill the person that you brought back to life, then w-what's even the point?

MIKE: The point is to make you realize that that's not the point. It's not about you, Matt, unfortunately. You're the prize for the first challenge, but the rest of the game is set up to make you realize that the first challenge prize is small potatoes. It's the carrot that draws people in so that they can realize what's really at stake. We saved you from the car accident. Uh, get ready for a sappy monologue about that, by the way. But by this point there's a new carrot for me, which is the power that started this whole process to begin with. The game's called WOE.BEGONE, and in WOE.BEGONE, a disgusting spokesweasel stays in constant contact with the players to make sure that they value the idea of power over human life.

MATT: Power? Is that what this is about? You want power? I can help you. I mean, I don't have very much money anymore, but I used to have money. I have connections that I can still use. I can help you do whatever this thing is. Or if what you mean is that you're in with some bad people and Anne is too, I can help with that. You can stay here. If someone's looking for you, they'll never come all the way up here, not during a pandemic.

MIKE: Time travel, Matt. You were saved from death by time travel. The technology does a lot more than that, too. Stuff that I don't have a full grasp of. There are so many implications to the existence of time travel, someone with this technology can do basically anything. And you're going to want to get ready for some shenanigans, Mikey-boy. Life is not going to be pleasant from here on out.

MATT: But if you can time travel, then why listen to whatever this game is telling you to do? Why not... I don't know, man, why not go back to dinosaur times or something? Ride... Ride a raptor or something, you know? One of the cute ones, the one that eat vegetables or some shit.

MIKE: I don't think there were vegetarian raptors, but I can't time travel. I was sent here. And I'm going to keep getting sent here until I kill you. That's why Mikey's here. But he showed up of his own volition. I got dropped off here like a *RollerCoaster Tycoon* park guest. And I want to get off Mr. Ryan's Wide Ride, but I can't. I have to convince you to let Mikey kill you, and then he has to actually do it or we have to do this all over again.

MIKEY: Right, and this is only temporary, right? We're gonna bring him back like Anne did with you?

MIKE: We're going to tell him that, yeah. I can honestly say that I'm going to try, but... look at me. You think that I'm in control of my life right now? I've got a hole through my hand! I'm in my boxers, and I'm a little bit drunk. It's going to take a lot to convince him, Mikey. Uh, getting killed sucks, and I hate dying. There's pain, sure, but there's also, like, what if? Like, what if this is it? Never existing again. But our job tonight is to convince him of semipermanent nonexistence. There are two of us, therefore time travel is real. Matt, your framework for reality is different now. Your framework for death needs to be, too, because we can't leave until this is done.

MATT: You're not convincing, you know. You're not in control at all. How could I possibly believe that you would bring me back from the dead if that is actually possible? You said it yourself. You got dropped off here.

MIKE: Well, what this younger, dumber version of me doesn't know is that, after tonight, I get sent to a top-secret government facility that contains time travel technology. It's something that the WOE.BEGONE gamerunners want to get their hands on, but I'm their hands. So, if I can wrap my fingers around it, we don't need them anymore. We don't need anyone. I can do whatever I want in whatever time I need to. Fuck winning the game, that's the goal now. The first order of business would be to put a halt to all of these fucking challenges, starting with what is going to happen tonight. But, in the meantime, I have to keep doing this because they're going to keep sending me back.

MATT: What do you mean, keep doing it? Have you done this before? To someone else?

MIKE: Not to someone else, Matt, to you. This isn't my first rodeo. They've made me try this before. A-A couple times, actually. The new gamerunners (that's right, Mikey, it's not Ryan) are going to keep resetting this event until the job is done. I've given up trying to prepare. That's why I was drunk in my boxers watching *Tombstone* one minute and here the next. We—me and Mikey—need to get out from under WOE.BEGONE's thumb, but I can't do that if I keep getting sent back here. So, we have to kill you, Matt.

MIKEY: Matt, I know he's being an asshole, but he's telling the truth.

MATT: I... Mike. I don't want—

MIKEY: I-I mean, nobody wants to die, Matt, but it's not like you know—

[A sudden shuffle as Matt aims his shotgun.]

MIKE: Whoa there, big boy. If you don't want to die, then you can't shoot me. 'Cause if I die, I lose the game, and my prizes get revoked. Uh, if you'll remember, you're the prize. So you might as well be pointing the shotgun at yourself. You would have until I released my last breath to think about how you royally fucked yourself, and then *[Snaps.]* you would disappear. The last couple of years, gone. Not that that would really matter. You die in the accident, and the world would go on without you. Or, more likely, the gamerunners fix it and I have to come back here again, so, uh, maybe we could put the gun down.

MATT: You can't be serious. There has to be something—

[There's a brief commotion as Mike strikes Matt and takes the gun.]

MATT: Ah! **[MIKE:** Give that here!] Ow! Fuck!

MIKE: I will be holding on to that, thank you. The expository part of the visit is over now, so pick that chair up and sit your ass down at the kitchen table and don't make any sudden movements. Every time you do this. No matter what I say, you're so eager to shoot me that you always try.

MATT: Fuck! So— So now what? You win, right? You're gonna kill me because you think it's the only way to win this game? It's over. Is that it?

MIKE: No, it's not that simple. I remember how it happened when I was Mikey, so if I'm going to remember it like that again, then it can't be like... this.

MIKEY: This has gone too far. You gave him a black eye.

MIKE: You're gonna shoot him in the face, Mikey. Have some perspective.

MATT: Is that true, Mike?

MIKE: Yes, of course it's true.

MATT: Not you. Is that true, Mike? Are you gonna shoot me? Just because someone running a website and this guy who says he's you from the future tells you to? What if you're evil in the future? What if he's, I don't know, possessed or something?

MIKEY: Mike, maybe there's something we can do. We can get Matt out of here. We'll get him into hiding and, uh—

MIKE: No, no, no, no, no, no. Uh, all options have already been exhausted. I have tried *[Claps for emphasis on "again."]* again and again and again and again and again. My patience has

evaporated, because I have tried everything. I've been here too many times. I would end this all right now if I could. But when I was here, when I was you, I had to do it myself. So you have to, too.

MIKEY: You know what? No. I'm not gonna do it. What now?

MIKE: Why is every other version of me such an idiot? You need to get your shit together. Every second of indecisiveness etches another scar into our back. You spend so much goddamn time *figuring* that everyone who spends their time *acting* gets a shot at you. I've actually been shot during the course of this, just like you were about to be. Whatever compassion you thought you were showing him by drawing all of this out, that sad stupid monologue that you're gonna give when I'm gone, none of that matters! He will be dead; he won't remember it. It's just more time that he can improvise a weapon or you could get caught or the neighbors could get suspicious and call I guess 911. You're wasting time, and there's nothing I can do about it, because I know that I also wasted that time. There's nothing anyone can do, so you better get ready to kill him. He was about to kill all three of us in one go! It's time to swallow all of that sentimentality already. And I know you won't remember this either, so this is also useless.

It's pointless to care about Matt's life anyway. We made a choice, Mike. A stupid choice with a right and wrong answer, and we chose the wrong one. The correct answer, if you were wondering, is to die. To let time eclipse our ugly, violent little life and just go back to a universe where Mike Walters isn't playing WOE.BEGONE. You've known that since the very first instant that the stakes were introduced. You said as much into a microphone. Why didn't we do the right thing? Why are we such a coward that we couldn't look the obviously right option in the eye and accept it?

Matt doesn't matter anymore. We chose WOE.BEGONE. Going through these melodramatic motions of how much you care about him is doing him such a disservice. Bringing him back to life is a pleasant thought, and we truly mean that we will give it our best shot if and when we get the chance to. Sorry, Mikey, but I've seen the chances, and they're slim pickins out there. I stopped getting my hopes up when three men showed up where I was staying and put a knife through my hand. You could see daylight through it. I was foolish to keep any hope inside of me for so long. What you have to look forward to is akin to being sucked into a black hole. Your being will be pulled apart strand by strand like spaghetti. And after I'm gone, you're going to eulogize this piece of work like he matters. You know that he was lying to you about everything. You know because I knew. You knew that his whole life up here had been a total fabrication. Why did you do that, Matt? Why did you lie to us?

MATT: Lie? Lie about what?

MIKE: The day I completed the challenge, I called you, and you told me that you had a good job and a wife and kid in Vancouver? I've taken a tour of the house at this point, and I haven't seen any of that. So, why did you tell me that things were going great? Why did you accuse me of trying to get money from you?

MATT: It all fell apart. I don't even know what happened. It... It felt like it all happened at once. I don't owe you an explanation. You're pointing a goddamn shotgun at my head. My shotgun.

MIKE: Okay, you don't owe me anything, but it kind of is your last chance to say anything to anyone. You're already dead, Matt. No matter what happens tonight, you're going to die. I have to do this again until that outcome is certain. I know because that's me. Right there. Mikey? I was him. And I saw what's going to happen. I remember showing up without a plan, secretly hoping that you'd kill me so that I wouldn't have to do it. I remember telling you that you were the first straight boy I ever fell in love with for some goddamn reason. I don't know why I said that, it's not even true. You probably aren't even straight. I guess I just wanted to say something nice before I blasted you into next week. I know what happens directly after this conversation. If you don't do that, then something else happens and you wind up dead anyway. I just keep popping back into this situation until the deed is done. You are already dead. Where I'm from, you've been dead for a while now, ever since tonight. On a different timeline, where we don't play WOE.BEGONE, it's been years. It is as inevitable as the sun rising. You're dead. We all are, but I have been to the sliver of time where I'm not and you are.

I am so much more done with this than that spry wonderdog at the other end of the table. I spent weeks having my body ripped to shreds, and I got a "fuck you" for my efforts. My cane didn't even teleport with me, so now I have to hobble around like an old man, but I swear to god I would beat you to death with it if it meant that I could get through with this already. I quit my job at O.V.E.R. because my life was completely destroyed by this shit. So all I have left for you, Matt, is contempt. For standing in my way. For kickstarting this whole ordeal and then blocking the threshold right when the challenge gets the hardest. For creating this point in time where I have to stand here, beside myself, because the past version of me was too much of a lowlife to bow out gracefully and not enough of a lowlife to do a decent job of killing you. *[Mike's voice lowers and eventually shifts into a cowboy impression.]* You have hobbled me. The only solace I can hope for is that I can reduce you in the same way that you reduced me.

This is the end of the line, Matt. High noon. Pistols at dawn. *[Normal voice.]* Or a sawed off shotgun in the middle of the night, in our case. You can see the reality of the situation for yourself. There's me; there's other me. That's proof that something is happening beyond your control. It's beyond mine, too. I knew that this day would come again, but I thought it would be under different circumstances. I thought that I would still be like him. I thought that I would care whether or not anyone in this room lived or died. I thought that I would be wearing clothes. I thought that I would have some shred of humanity left inside of me. I thought that the point of this would be to maintain that humanity! I thought that there would be something about myself still remaining that deserved to be protected. Get it together, Mikey. This is your future. You need to be ready for it.

This must be near the end of the conversation. It usually is. I don't have anything left to say to either of you. My only purpose for being here was to make sure that you hand Mike the gun at the end of the night. ...Oh. You ran your hand through your hair. *[Laugh.]* That's pretty funny.

'Cause when I was here the first time, I thought that your hair suddenly parted the other way from timeline shenanigans? I doodled out a diagram to see if I could get a better grip on what was going on. But, no, you were doing it to cover up the black eye so I wouldn't know that I did that. Well, it's not the greatest plan I've ever heard, but it worked, apparently. My mind was racing; I wasn't going to take notes on small stuff like that, especially stuff I can barely see in this dingy kitchen. *[Brief chuckle.]* That's funny. I mean— Well— Not funny.

MATT: *[Huffs.]* I let him in my goddamn house. I got myself killed. Fuck. There's always been something dark about you. I should've known better than to let you keep talking.

MIKE: Well, you did. Look, let an old pro give you some tips on this dying thing: if there's no way around it, and there's not, then there's no reason to panic about it. My colleagues and I are going to do everything that we can to gain access to the technology in a way that we can control for ourselves, and we're closer than we ever have been. If I've been returned from the grave twice, then you can do it, too. Hell, Matt, people like you. Someone might play WOE.BEGONE to bring you back to life before I can get around to it. And when you get back, it will be like nothing ever happened. I feel no pain from Anne killing me to complete the fourth challenge. It's actually the stuff that doesn't kill you that you've really gotta watch out for. The reason I have to walk with a cane isn't because someone killed me, it's because someone didn't. I can't hurt you like the world can. And the world won't wait until it is cornered and has no other options to do so either.

MIKEY: *[Sighs.]* Matt... I-I'm sorry.

MIKE: Mikey, for what it's worth, I'm so jealous of you. You think that you've already lost what makes you human, but even caring about that proves that you haven't yet. You are going to. And I shudder to think what kind of Mike Walters is going to look back on me and say the same thing, that I haven't yet lost what makes *me* human. There is somehow always a deeper depth to plunge to.

[Matt starts crying.]

MIKE: Just because you've gotten used to falling doesn't mean that the descent is over. I haven't even hit the ground, but it has to be terminal velocity. We're going to hit the dirt hard enough to kill us, Mike. **[MATT (quietly):** Please... Please don't do this, please don't do this, please don't do this, Mike... *(Continues to cry.)* And it's too dark out to see when that will be. It could be a time so far from now that it is indistinguishable from eternity. And what a horrible curse that will be.

Welp! *[Dusts off hands.]* You're crying, Mikey's crying, and that's about where it picks up after I leave, so that's a good sign. Keep that energy up and we might make it out of this situation. Mikey, uh, be sure to lock up when you're done. *[Matt pleads amidst his sobbing.]* It makes it look less like someone broken in and killed him if the doors are locked and there's no sign of a break-in. *[We stop hearing Matt cry.]* He lives alone, so it throws the cops off, and they end up

deeming it a suicide even though *[Brief huff.]* that doesn't make any sense? I think it's 'cause he lives like this. Cops don't care about dead poor people in possession of illegal weapons, and they find pot in the bedroom. It's pretty much the easiest murder to get away with.

Don't make me come back here. This is the third time that I've been back here to fix this shit because it didn't shake out like it needs to the other two times. They won't tell me what happened, but I'm guessing that chicken shit here either couldn't bring himself to do it, or you couldn't bring yourself to slide the gun across the table. Either way, cut that shit out. It's going to happen no matter what any of us want. Because, to be clear, I don't want this either. We are all dolls being posed by gods. Let them play with you and get their rocks off, for god's sake. Give up on wanting to be a real boy. You never could be.

And that's my time for this evening. You've been a great audience; tip your bartender. Uh, I won't be here all week. If I have to come back for a repeat performance, I will be even more on edge than I was tonight, so look forward to that. One black eye is actually my record low. Thank you, Cleveland. Good night!

[Mike slams the door.]

[Closing theme plays.]

[END Intermission XXXIV.]