

Episode 71: studies.

[Time travel noises.]

[Heavy breathing.]

Mikey: ...Mike? You're back? ...Why? Don't get me wrong, I appreciate it. Michael tied me up tighter than he acted like he did. Maybe he doesn't know his own strength. I don't think I can wriggle out of this one. And my hands are feeling tingly.

Mike: We need to talk.

Mikey: Anything you want, just untie me.

Mike: Talk first.

Mikey: Is that really what you want? You want to interrogate me while I'm tied up? I'll tell you anything that you wanna hear if it means untying me. Good things, not the truth, of course. I assume that you didn't come back here to get buttered up.

Mike: Don't fuck with me, Mikey. Mikey...?

Mikey: Yeah?

Mike: No, sorry, it's just that we already have a Mikey, so I don't know what you're called. There's not a fourth name.

Mikey: Mikey's fine, thanks. Or Mike.

Mike: We've been calling you Alaska Mikey around the apartment.

Mikey: But I just got here like 15 minutes ago. I'm like the least Alaskan Mike there is. Weren't you guys here for awhile? Aren't you Alaska Mike?

Mike: It's been a few weeks from my perspective.

Mikey: I can tell. You've showered since the last time I saw you.

Mike: A lot has happened. Could you tell?

Mikey: Huh? No?

Mike: Nothing? Edgar?

Mikey: What about him?

Mike: He's alive.

Mikey: ...I know he is.

Mike: Interesting.

Mikey: Is Edgar in danger?

Mike: Just the normal amount. He was dead up until recently. You don't have memories of both iterations?

Mikey: No...

Mike: Good. It isn't pleasant. What happened or the sensation of having both sets of memories. Wait. How did you get here then?

Mikey: Ty sent me. You acted like you already knew this when you tied me up.

Mike: But how did you get to the Flinchite compound?

Mikey: I walked there from the forest.

Mike: But how did you get to the forest?

Mikey: I... don't know? I just... got transported there. It's happened to you before, right? You're minding your own business and then you're... somewhere else all of a sudden.

Mike: But Hunter didn't send you there.

Mikey: Hunter's dead. I assumed that you were involved in that. I saw you that night and you told me to go home and the next morning he was gone.

Mike: In the last timeline, Hunter sent you to Latvia. And you still ended up here.

Mikey: I don't know what to tell ya.

Mike: But you have to have gone to Latvia. That's why Mikey is there now.

Mikey: I know. I was in Latvia.

Mike: But I don't understand how you got there. A phantom transport from a different timeline? Are Calculator transports... I don't know... attached to something more fundamental than whatever timeline they occurred in? So someone who doesn't even exist anymore can still cause someone to be transported?

Mikey: Are you asking me?

Mike: Is that what happened when we ended up back at O.V.E.R. after we did the 4th challenge with CANNONBALL.

Mikey: I don't know!

Mike: I'm sorry. I'm just trying to understand.

Mikey: That must be super hard for you. Are you going to untie me?

Mike: No.

Mikey: You really should. I'm not going to tell the truth unless you do.

Mike: Are you going to tell me the truth if I untie you?

Mikey: Probably. No love lost between me and Ty Betteridge, if that's what you mean. I'm not on his side. I'm a prisoner. So if you rescue me from the impending nerve damage, I'll squeal like a pig.

Mike: [sighs.] Alright, I'll get you out. But you have to tell me what is really going on. The stuff from the letter that you didn't want to talk about. And if I feel like I'm not getting the information that I need then [sound of knife opening] this knife won't just be for cutting you lose. It'll be way worse than what Michael did.

Mikey: Michael? What do you mean?

Mike: That's for me to know and for you to find out. Or not. [cutting through rope] Hold still. Just about got it. And...there. You're a free man, Alaska Mikey.

Mikey: I didn't even know that I was in Alaska until you called me that.

Mike: Really? We didn't tell you?

Mikey: I don't think so. Michael tossed all the maps in the fire.

Mike: Well, welcome to Alaska, Mikey. What brings you to Agattu Island? Business or pleasure?

Mikey: A little of both really. I was sent by Ty to retrieve the two of you. I wasn't going to do it, though. I was going to get all three of us the hell out of here.

Mike: Yeah, I'm sure you were. There was another Mikey that broke out of the compound. Did you meet him?

Mikey: No, but that doesn't surprise me. They're doing all sorts of shit in the compound. Ty is running WOE.BEGONE. He's the head of the Arbiters.

Mike: I know. He told us as much. Did he put Edgar through the Lost Year?

Mikey: I don't know what that is.

Mike: Right, because now it didn't happen. In a previous timeline, Edgar got captured for an entire year. That's not what the letters are about?

Mikey: No. I wrote the letters, I remember the letters, and what you are describing is not what I did to Edgar.

Mike: What you did to Edgar?

Mikey: [sigh] You're going to get mad. Your face is already flushing. Mike, I need you to understand. Surely you will understand. I love Edgar more than anyone else on Earth and it's not even close. I love Edgar more than I care about my own life, easily. I know what you're thinking, but you're wrong. The Flinchite compound is more than we can even imagine. There is a huge team of people figuring this shit out faster than we ever could, accounting for every contingency. I cannot die for Edgar. They will not let me die for Edgar. It is not for a lack of trying. There is nothing that I can do that will successfully result in my death. I am under nearly constant supervision. But it doesn't matter. Even if I wasn't, they can always travel back to issue a correction. Do you understand?

Mike: I understand. But you understand that I can't accept that.

Mikey: I do. And I'm not asking for forgiveness. Not from you and not from Edgar.

Mike: That was a lot of preamble. What did you do?

Mikey: They call it Consolidation Studies. I was surprised. They have all of this infrastructure and they don't fully understand consolidation. I was not expecting that. It's one of the messier aspects of this whole time travel thing.

Mike: Why Edgar? Because he was running Base with us?

Mikey: I don't know what Base is. But it's because of us. It's because they had me and I know Edgar inside and out. I can tell what changed in the consolidation. I don't know when I was in time, where they sent us. They sent us through different times for reasons I don't understand. Maybe as some form of security? But they plucked Edgar out from... some time in the future. I don't know. I see your wedding band. Edgar had one, too. I think that's why the Compound called us married the first time that we got captured. The Consolidation Studies happened in a time before we got spirited away from Matt's house. Does Michael's Edgar remember any of this?

Mike: Michael's Edgar is a sore subject right now, so I have no idea.

Mikey: He's alive and safe, though?

Mike: I think so? I actually am not positive.

Mikey: Oh god. It's possible that they made an iteration of Edgar themselves. We wouldn't necessarily have to know that he was even missing. But I'd check on Michael's Edgar.

Mike: I've seen consolidation go wrong. There was a whole thing with Matt, back when I first started out. Long corrected, thank god. No one remembers it except me and Michael. You did this to Edgar?

Mikey: I consulted on it. Sometimes it was fine. There would be strange little changes. Like they create 2 iterations a second apart and when they put them back together his favorite color was orange? There was a whole battery of surveys that he would have to fill out every time and I would look through and say "that isn't right." In a practical application, the iterations would be kept apart longer than a few seconds, so they were trying to make the consolidation as reliable as possible.

Mike: In the letters, you didn't make it sound like you had changed Edgar's favorite color. Spit it out.

Mikey: I've been dancing around it because I'm a coward, Mike. This is the difficult part of the conversation. Instead of me telling you, could you like... take that knife you cut me loose with and just... plunge it deep into my chest? Or cut my throat, your pick. I feel nauseous. We can skip the part where I tell you the Thing.

Mike: Talk, Mikey.

Mikey: They made an iteration of him and killed him. Right there on the spot. Right in front of me. A bullet to the brain. They didn't have to make me watch. I didn't know that was what they were going to do or I would have rioted. Maybe I did and they kept reverting me until I did what they wanted. I have to think that this was what happened. I have to think that. It was the worst thing I've ever seen. Edgar was there in front of me and then a millisecond later he was gone. Totally destroyed in an imperceptible amount of time. I watched him leave. I saw the light leave his eyes. You've seen people dying. And you've felt yourself dying. Neither of those would prepare you for what I saw. Edgar hitting the ground, limp. A twitch seemingly in protest but he was gone. Eyes open, dilated and wide, no one home. Dead. And then they consolidated both of them to see what happened.

Mike: [sighing deeply, head in hands]

Mikey: No one should see what I saw. I don't know what they expected. He was half alive, squirming, paralyzed from the waist down. But it was more than paralysis. You could see it on his face, he was in a state between life and death. And I just sat there behind a two-way mirror. I see him when I close my eyes. Edgar, mutilated, begging for death. And the next moment, a correction, but I could see on his face. He remembered what happened. Tortured. Our species doesn't have the words to describe it yet. It will be a war crime one day. If the Flinchites are exploring this, O.V.E.R. likely is as well. You should have seen Ty trying to justify what he was putting us through. A spiel about how consolidating the dead with the alive could have an enormous medical use if the science got to the point where it created a functional human. I wish I knew what I did to try and escape or to hurt him but whatever I did, it was corrected. I am the iteration that sat there in stunned silence. I am the worst of all possible Mikeys. I was designed to be. ...We were right, we did 357A too, by the way. Not that it matters. Fuck O.V.E.R. But we gave the instructions to Marissa. I don't know what they were for, but they had me read it.

Mike: [covering his face and crying]

Mikey: They made so many copies. Of Edgar but probably me as well. It's impossible to tell how many of us there are. There might be a whole storage shed at the Compound packed full of Mikeys. I wasn't surprised when you said there was another one of me that got free. It's a statistical inevitability that one of us would get free at some point. Good for him. From the sounds of it he wasn't used in the same way I was. I know that other Mikes are used for consolidation experiments there. Ty said as much to my face. Ty didn't understand what I was so upset about. They corrected the consolidation, what's the problem? Unfuckingbelievable.

Mike: [silent.]

Mikey: I did some other stuff while I was there, but it doesn't even matter. You can kill me if you want, you know. It would be easy. From the looks of things, Ty isn't coming to my rescue. He's willing to

expend me out here or he would have called me back already. It's not like he doesn't know where I am. The data is worth more to him than my life. He might have known the whole time that this mission failed. This could just be his way of disposing of me. Maybe he squeezed a little more data out of me. Maybe he knew that you were going to come back. Maybe he wanted you to know. Maybe I was really here to deliver the message. Is that it?

Mike: I'm not going to kill you.

Mikey: Michael, then?

Mike: Michael's right. We lose Edgar for an entire year, the Lost Year. Killing you prevents the Lost Year. It was a hunch but it payed off.

Mikey: Which Edgar?

Mike: Edgar from the Tier 2 incident.

Mikey: So not even the one from the consolidation studies.

Mike: Nope.

Mikey: All because of us.

Mike: We did get him into this. But he helped run the Base. He and Anne were the brains of the whole operation. If you want to take some solace, somehow, Edgar is his own person and he made his own decisions and he made those decisions because he loves us. Edgar is his own person and that's why we love him. How terrible it would be if we were the same person. He would tell you the same thing if he was here.

Mikey: I'm never going to see him again.

Mike: Nope.

Mikey: Tell me a story? About him? One that I don't have?

Mike: No. You had your life with Edgar and it was your life with your Edgar. It is everything that it is. The story would be fantasy to you. Thank you for telling the truth, Mikey. It cost you, but I think keeping it a secret would have cost you even more. It's funny to think about-- hey! [punching sounds] Fucker.

Mikey: Give me the calculator!

Mike: I thought you were... resigned to die?

Mikey: Fuck that. I'm gonna leave you here and say that I'm you.

[scuffling sounds]

Mike: Ow, fuck! My nose.

[stabbing sound.]

Mikey: [cries out in pain.] Ugh! Oh fuck, Mike. That's... deep.

Mike: Yeah, you're lucky I didn't cut you worse. Fuck. You busted my nose, man.

Mikey: Fuck. I'm gonna die.

Mike: Yeah, but not from that stab wound. Didn't hit anything important. Welp, see ya. Asshole.

[Time travel noises.]

Michael: Get it together quick, Mike. I fucked up. Mikey's here.

[spluttering]

Mike: It's okay, Mikey. It's just a broken nose. It's not even that bent out of shape. You should see the other guy. Michael, you said that Mikey wouldn't be here for this.

Michael: I put your time into the Calculator instead of our time.

Mike: Well, that's what we get for keeping secrets from Mikey, I suppose. Sorry, Mikey. I know you're not our kid brother, but I can't help but get protective sometimes. Michael, can you get me some tissues? ... How did Base recruitment go?

Mikey: Suspiciously perfectly. Chance, Shadow, and Charlie are a go, so I guess the whole Base is a go at this point.

Mike: Glad to hear it. I've got some news of my own that's too good to be true. Unrelated to the broken nose, of course. [pause.] We're getting married.

[Magnetic North plays.]

[End theme plays.]