

Intermission -2

She really is tired of dealing with auditors.

> Exist

Oh great, you've got another lawsuit from an auditor.

> examine auditor

The auditor looks exactly like every goddamn other auditor that has ever existed: glasses with black frame, short hair, and of disturbing average height, if you were to measure them in comparison to every other auditor in this planet.

You don't mean to be so mean about it. But after around the thirty-sixth one this month you had to cope with SOMETHING, and you chose humor, instead of more dangerous substances, like cocaine, or filling out tax forms.

> examine the audiotor

You examine the audiotor. It is an amalgamate of cassette tapes tied together to look like an auditor. You fashioned some of the black tape into glasses. The walkman doesn't come out until 1979, which isn't that long, but you have to keep yourself entertained where you can.

You are 99.9% certain that this blatant waste of emergent technology, but what's the point of working in Eyedol Games if you don't waste emergent technology?

> waste emergent technology

And that you will! If your name isn't-- isn't--

Wow, how have you managed to run this place for so long without a legal identity? You'd think they'd have like, protocols for this.

Wait, they do. Your job is to dodge them. Well, that's one mystery solved. You toss the original prototype copy of the Magnavox Odyssey out the window, as well as all the telephones in the office, a television set (why is this here?), and also the poor, poor Audiotor.

You give him a tearful goodbye as you watch him fall slow-motion like in that lion movie, but you can't quote that yet. There's a lot of caveats that you have to take in when time travelling, and one of them is when in time you can tell a joke. It's like if all jokes need proper...

Timing.

> go tell the CEO your lion movie joke

You know what? Maybe you should! You know she always enjoys a good time-travelling joke when you ohhh right there's an auditor literally right there behind that door between this room and the rest of the office. You wonder for a second if all the ruckus was enough to distract them, but then you shake your head. You can sense auditors. That's not the Auditor, or the Auditor, but they are... certainly... an auditor.

You suppose if you really wanted to dodge this you could run circles around the breakroom until they get lost, but frankly you don't want another one of them accidentally wandering into the unfortunately named Auditor Trashbin room because of it.

> just wait until the auditor leaves

It doesn't work, Todd. These auditors are powered by INHUMAN senses of time scheduling and accounting. If this guy was a normal auditor, who just wanted to do his job and leave, this wouldn't even be an issue. Not this guy. This guy's got a powerlevel.

> call someone to come talk to the auditor

You'll make sure to allot time to do that after you pick up all the phone bits you threw out.

It suddenly dawns to you the Closer is not going to be happy that you threw out her only method of transportation, but she's never been mad at you or the CEO DIRECTLY so it's fine probably.

> just go talk to the auditor already

Okay okay FINE. Jeez. You cough to clear your throat then open the door, welcoming them in! You tell them to take a seat. You apologize for the mess, it's just. You know. Impromptu renovation. It's fine. The seats are very warm, you tell them; not in a sitting down sort of way, but in a "we just like that kind of temperature here" kind of way.

You know. Hell.

> show the auditor the books

You'd rather kill him. It'd be a mercy.

> ask the auditor if he'd like any refreshment

You ask the auditor if he wants any snacks, after having to wait for so long-- something you profusely apologize for. Fucker coughs, looking at his watch. Doesn't even answer you verbally. He knows he doesn't have to. You as much as him know he only has so much time on his hands, and he's bragging about it. Like a turtle being carried by an eagle. Yeah, it can't eat you now, but get dropped like three hundred fucking feet and suddenly it's not that cool.

> brightly tell the auditor that you have no IDEA why he could be here

You brightly tell the auditor that you have literally no idea why he's here.

He raises an eyebrow. Surely she remembers that she was the one to schedule the meeting, right?

Hahahahahaha yeaaaaah that was her. Man. This sucks. You don't need time travel to have yourself utterly fucked by some past version of yourself.

> recover by telling the Auditor why you called him here, like this is some sort of will reading or something

Well, it's ESSENTIALLY a will reading. You spend the following 15 minutes talking about the various facets of the company, explaining the path of the money as it travels through the business, and going into not-too-deep detail about the departments, hoping this will satisfy him.

The auditor coughs again. Right, he says, less irritated, but significantly more confused after your spiel about R&D's font preservation subdepartment. And the books?

You sigh. You did not wake up ready for this one. Frankly, you forgot about it, with the whole "setting things up for new employees" and all. A part of you is just BEGGING to just toss the damn books in his face and get him dragged off to super hell, but then you remember that being alone in a room doesn't feel very good.

On the other hand you can still just kill him, but god you'd think that this many timelines in you'd all learned a lesson about killing first and asking questions later.

> claim that the books were lost in a mysterious house fire

You start spewing off about how your previous accounting books were literally cooked off the face of the earth in the house fire of 1973, after a tragic incident involving a toaster and a

particularly confused intern that is definitely in the books and is definitely not a bird wearing a human costume. You go into extreme theatrics, discussing the way in which they were all lost in that tragic incident. You bring out newspaper articles to prove it, too. The more you bullshit this the more you realize that you aren't, and that this all literally already happened after the Peyotes got a little frisky with how hot pockets are supposed to be cooked.

The auditor looks slightly flustered at this, but their brow seems so soften at the sight of the newspaper articles. He looks uncomfortable now, scratching the back of his neck. He says that while he understands that you may be in great emotional turmoil, he still has to present ...something, and so far you have created more questions than answers.

You at least have his sympathy (or pity) now, which is something.

> feel satisfaction at having gained his pity

You proceed to have a category five pogchamp moment. The auditor notices this, and is further thrown into the reigns of confusion.

> ask if there are any tax breaks you qualify for in the wake of this tragedy, and if tax breaks, instead of money, could be just giving the company a break for a year from having to file

He gives a sensible chuckle, for once in his miserable life. He thinks you're joking, you presume. It doesn't seem that's possible, at least until you pay lobbyists around 20 years from now when the state laws are destroyed by deregulation.

That last part was you, by the way. The auditor isn't from the future. You hope.

> offer to pay double whatever the taxes the company paid the previous year

You immediately bumble out that you'll DOUBLE!!! whatever the company was paying before, which you definitely know. Unironically, actually. That you do know. The first year of taxes is always the same in every timeline. At this point she's just shortcutting it.

The auditor is somehow more confused by this, but... they seem to agree. He doesn't understand what the hell they're hiding, but the primary service is to collect for the state, so that would do... unless they were somehow... collecting more than that? They don't say it, but you see it dawn upon their face that the tax department pays like shit, and whatever they're being paid is definitely not enough. Whatever light of pure fury was left behind their glasses just peters out. Apparently the idea of a company choosing to pay MORE taxes just short-circuited the guy.

Success! You have successfully destroyed the will of this auditor to look at your books! You can probably just get them to leave now, if you tie this up correctly. You probably should. You hear the unmistakeable sound of static 12 floors below you, where the Auditor's resting place lays.

> offer the auditor a job

The words leave your mouth before you even consider what the fuck you're about to say. They don't even come out in a proper way. You say something along the lines of 'hey kid, wanna job?'

The auditor, previously cleaning up the fog on his lenses, JANKS off his glasses at that in some sort of primal fight-or-flight instinct. His eyes are shot, reacting more in the sheer titanium grade-A Olympic throwing BALLS that it takes to completely evade an audit, pay double the taxes, then offer the damn guy a job literally seconds after. Half of that is, probably, barely legal. You swear you've seen him before, now that you can see his face. You hope, for your own mental sake, that you haven't ALREADY hired this guy before and forgot about it.

You just try to grin it off, hoping that he'll just take it as a weird joke. He doesn't, though. He hands you his card. He hands you... his card. It's a nice card, with all spaced out letters and proper typing, like the feng-shui of business opportunities. You look at it for longer than you should before you're distracted by him holding up his hand at you. You take it and shake it eagerly, hoping very very hard he'll just think he got high on something and this was all a fever dream. Actually, fuck that-- he might try to come back if he does. This is fine. Totally.

You open the door for him as he struts away, nearly getting into a half-sprint as soon as he reaches the corner. You hope he doesn't get lost in the open area section. Or encounter the Peyotes. Or anyone actually.

This job never seems to get any easier.