



Narrator Intro

Welcome back to the path, wanderers.

Fighting on a vacation is never easy. After discovering his partner was texting someone else on his anniversary, our protagonist, Philip went for a hike. The cold, quiet air brought him some peace, even though the reality of the situation wasn't lost on him.

He'd have to discuss this issue when he got back.

Wanting to avoid people, he left the beaten path to follow turkey tracks into the woods, where a strange moan on the wind caught his attention.

Within minutes, he'd discovered a small collection of bramble bushes and a tunnel through their vines. Feeling playful, Philip crawled through, only to hear something come up from behind him and try to force its way through the tunnel to catch up to him.

Escaping capture, Philip found himself in a small clearing, surrounded by tall brush, with no visible way to get out except from the passage he climbed out of... a passage that was quickly buried by falling snow.

Hearing the unknown animal depart, Philip was left with a choice: dig the hole out and retrace his steps home, or try to find another exit.

You voted for him to explore his surroundings for another means of escape.

And so Witchever Path presents A Piece of Somewhere Else – Chapter Two: The Thick of It



Witchever Path presents

A Piece of Somewhere Else
Chapter Two: The Thick of It

Written by Etienne LaFond



I have no idea how long it's going to take to dig out, and whatever tried to chase me through the hole may come back. Let's see if there's another way out. Hang on a minute. To my left there's a space between the brambles. There's another path, still surrounded by the brush. The snow is nearly pristine, save for a few small marks where pine cones or fallen twigs had fallen.

[weird animal sound]

That's coming from somewhere ahead. I feel on my belt for my camp knife. It's secure.
[laughs at self derisively]

Fuck me.

I grip the handle like a little kid holds a bat when they think something is moving behind the closet door. It's embarrassing. A knife is just a tool. Come on, Philip. Breathe in. Good. Take in the trail. The path through the brambles veers toward the left. It's hard to determine if there's any way through. Does the path just stop a few hundred feet or is there another sudden turn? Breathe out. Okay. Let's have some green tea and think a bit.

[takes out thermos]

You laughed at me getting us these thermal bottles until we had hot coffee on the top of Monadnock last winter.

[Velcro pull off of gloves]

"Okay Phil, off comes one glove..."
"now... off with your head, captain."

[unscrewing of thermos, pouring of tea]

The green tea has honey in it. Oh, this is good. Breathe in. Hold it. Feel the lingering warmth from the tea in my throat. Okay, Breathe out. Let's see if we can find another way through this brush.

[breeze]

The snow looks fairly uniform until I notice the vines of a bramble waving in the wind. All right, Philip, relax your eyes just a bit, look beyond the vine... There! The trail cuts sharp to the left. Okay. I got this.



I walk for about five minutes. There's no way space for me to squeeze through the brambles and into the woods. The path I took seems to be running almost parallel to the way I came in. Maybe it'll lead me to an exit. There's a faint smell of woodsmoke on the breeze. Okay, we had our woodstove on. Maybe I'm closer to the house than I thought.

[walking suddenly stops]

"You got to be shitting me."

The path forks ahead of me. The bramble vines are even thicker, older than any I'd seen in the wild. What is happening here? I swear this was just a small cluster of brush when I found it. To the left looks like it just continues to loop around. To the right, the trail seems to go slightly downhill before coming to another sharp right. Hm... more of the same, or something new? Well, insanity is expecting a different result from the same action... Let's see where the path on the right leads.

[walking]

It's been another thirty minutes. The path through the bramble is wider at least. About a mile from the fork, the ground's almost level. The gray sky hasn't changed since I got lost in here. It's two in the afternoon already. The sun will set in a few hours. Still plenty of time to get back, but I've been out here way longer than I expected.

[Click of phone screen]

Still no phone signal. Do you wonder where I am right now? Or are you writing to Amaya, venting about how your stupid man just walked out into the woods by himself? The cut above my eye doesn't sting as much. I've stopped bleeding. Thank goodness for that. The smell of woodsmoke is stronger out here. With no easy to spot exit, that's the only clue I have.

"Oh hello... what's this?"

The turkey tracks are back. Thank God. Following them got me in here. Maybe they'll lead me out. The way the bird walked lets me it wasn't afraid of anything. That's comforting. There are no fox or coyote tracks, nothing to suggest any danger. Just the turkey and me have been this way. I can work with that.

The clawed feet of this bird are enormous. The same the size of my old mastiff, Shep's paws. My big boy, whose ashes you transferred into an amazing urn when we started dating. One that you decorated with rhinestones and a little plaque that read, "the Best Boy." You never even met him, and you did that for me. Anyone who does something like that for me should be able to text whoever they want. Why am I getting so jealous of Amaya I need to get back to you and to see –



“What the fuck?”

Looking ahead, there is definite change in the growth that’s surrounding me. The unruly vines and thorns of the brambles are abutting a wall of tall, manicured hedges. American Holly. Their thick twisted branches are filled with their spiky leaves. I’m at the entrance of someone’s yard, or at least a manicured space. Upkeep means people, which means there’s probably wifi! I’ll be able to reach you.

[animal sound]

Nearly forgot about that for a minute. It’s coming from up ahead. If it’s in this space, the it’s more likely it’s a manmade sound than some roaming beast. Good. I don’t want to be chased again.

Look at this place. If the paths before looked planned, then this corridor, flanked by the hedges, was the final draft. The walls are so symmetrical. Even the snow on the ground looks like it’s been carefully placed. The turkey tracks ahead of me are in a straight line for about seven feet, until they suddenly stop. They don’t double back, nor do they head under a shrub. There’s just a slight change in the gait and then they’re gone.

Shit. It must have flown up. But there are no trees within twenty feet of either side of these hedges that I can see. At least no branches above them that would be a suitable perch.

The smell of the woodsmoke is getting stronger. I walk about twenty feet before I spy a hole in the right hedge wall. It’s the only way forward, so I take it. And then I’m in another, perfectly manicured corridor. Fuck, it’s an actual maze. Luckily, I only have to retrace my steps if I get lost. Okay, going right... here’s a left. Let’s follow our nose.

Ow, my feet are getting sore.

[crackle of the fire]

Oh, I can hear the fire up ahead. Wisps of smoke are billowing upward, above the holly. It’s not far now.

[someone laughing and talking]

People! What a difference a few hours can make. I left you to get *away* from folks and now I’m overjoyed to get in earshot of what sounds like a party.

[sound of music]

Someone has an instrument? I pick up the pace, taking a left, and a left again.



[picking up the pace, music getting louder]

At the end of this last hallway, there's a wooden door, supported by stone posts. A labyrinth door. How DnD! I brush the handle off. The door will swing in toward me, if it doesn't get caught on the snow. I'm ready to run in, but no. I better announce myself first. People up here aren't friendly to strangers in the best of circumstances.

"Hello in there! I hope you can help! I got lost ... and"

[music stops, loud wind and fire being dashed]

"Hello? I'm going to open the door."

[door opens, grinding on snow]

The first thing I see is the plume of white smoke and steam from the snuffed fire. A broken, old property wall stands about eighty feet away, and that's where the campfire had been put out. Tree stumps and rocks about the height of my knee were arranged in a semi-circle around it. There's no one here.

"Hey! It's all right, I just need to get the street."

I walk in a circle, looking around for a sign of anyone nearby. The great hedge maze stands tall behind me. The woods beyond the property wall look more spread out and younger. But there's *nobody* in sight.

"I'm lost and need help. You don't got to hide!"

I walk up to the smoldering logs. The snow is well trampled here. They'd been dancing around, whoever it was. There's a royal blue messenger bag with fancy embroidery sitting on a stump. It's bloated, overstuffed with whatever people wanted to carry out here.

A recently opened case of beer stands in a small snow pile next to one of the stones.

"Hey if you're not supposed to be out here, I don't care."

[walking]

"I just need to pointed to the road, and I'm out."

Scanning the footprints around me, I'm looking for where these people ran off to. A group of tracks seems to lead toward the wall and then over it. That's probably where most of whoever it was who had this fire ran off to. Catching up to them, I might be fine, but if it's a bunch of drunk kids, who knows how this will go?



But that's not the only tracks leading away from the fire. A lone pair of footprints is headed parallel to the wall and up a hill to what looks to be a little shed. It's been painted a bright, canary yellow. A weird thing to see out in this landscape. The hill beyond it looks steep with a sharp cliff face at the top. Probably just over the summit is the house that shed belongs to.

So up the hill, toward a house, or after the people who just ran off. Time to make a choice, Philip.

[sound of the horn]

That's coming from the hedge maze? I thought... Okay, nope. Time to get out of here. Okay... that way.

[sound of walking]

Outro

Which tracks did Philip choose to follow? Did he follow the group over the wall and into the woods? Or did he walk up the hill toward the shed and what lies beyond the cliff?

Make your choice at witcheverpath.com/vote

You have until February 28 to make your decision.

This episode was written by Etienne LaFond and produced by Witchever Path LLC. Voice and principal foley by Etienne, with supplemental sound by Audio Hero. The song Burning Karma by Robert Ruth comes courtesy of epidedemicsound.com!

The Witchever Path Theme Song was written and performed by RYDR.

If you liked this episode, but you wanted to know what happened if you tried to dig your way out instead, then we have a treat for you. Over on the Patreon, right now, is that alternative choice. Here's a taste:

[plays audio]

If you want to listen to that, go to patreon.com/witcheverpath and sign up for the squirrel feed. For just five dollars a month, you'll get access to that, as well as access to an archive of stories and episodes only found there.

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That's it for this week. Take care of one another and sleep with a clear conscience. Choose the Path.