

DIRT - AN AUDIO DRAMA
Chapter 14 Transcript
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****Warning****

This is a complete written transcript of the entire Chapter 14 audio file and is full of spoilers from start to finish. To avoid ruining surprises, read along as you listen—but don't read ahead!

Link to audio files: <https://www.dirtaudiodrama.com/#listen>

AIMO:

Dear Little Joey,

(If I) leave too soon to tell you this
What blossoms in the east is bliss
A plot awaits for you to pen
A wealth of golden fruit to kiss

Begin your search where flowers grow
Familiar, yet the father knows
Not what the gift to grant to you
Until you ask where we first sowed

Search there for knowledge in the ground
Then follow down the trail laid out
In silent words determine more
Of places where I heard the sounds

Three more clues about your quest
The year your grandmother and I wed
The dough boy statue in the park
The quiet place where Rose homestead

Keep practicing your piano. And seek with care.

- Aimo

(Fade in sound of being inside garage)

(Sound of sitting down on cement floor)

(Sound of handling and then setting down metal detector)

(Sound of sitting down on floor)

(Sound of getting phone out of pocket)

JOSEPH:
Five voicemails...

(Sound of playing new voicemail)

ANTONIA:
(On phone speaker) Hi Joseph. It's been a little while now. Call me back, when you get a chance. Hope you found whatever you're looking for.

JOSEPH:
Hmph.

(Sound of playing new voicemail)

KIM:
(On phone speaker) *Heeeeeeeeee*. So this you *not* calling me back when you *say* you're gonna call me back thing isn't really what I had in mind when I said "winging it." Joseph, at least send me a text so I know you're okay. Okay?

(Sound of playing new voicemail)

CARL:
(On phone speaker) Hey! It's your buddy, Carl! (Laughter) It's three o'clock and we're about to head back to the Tacoma Dome for the coin show. All you have to do is show up at will call, tell my buddy Dave that your name's Ralph. He'll know what to do. Oh, and make sure you eat something first. Yesterday they ran out of hot dogs so we had to make do with some jerky that Dave made last summer from some road kill out near Tumwater...

JOSEPH:
(Exhale)

CARL:
(On phone speaker) That stuff is not... let's just say it didn't sit well with us, afterwards.

JOSEPH:
Ugh.

(Sound of playing new voicemail)

MEGAN:

(On phone speaker) (Softball game happening in background) Hey Joseph, it's Megan Kimura. Sorry to call you on a Saturday! But the Inner Six met this morning and there are some urgent things we need to discuss with you regarding your resignation right away.

JOSEPH:

Huh.

MEGAN:

(On phone speaker) Umm, I'm at my daughter's softball tournament, but you can call me back here. Or reach me on our corporate Slack channel, which is still on for you. Thank you, Joseph.

JOSEPH:

(Exhale) Well, this should be good.

(Sound of playing new voicemail)

MEL:

(On phone speaker) So... how you doin'... I know that *technically* I don't work for you anymore, but I've been thinking...

JOSEPH:

Mmm hmm...

MEL:

(On phone speaker) I mean, sure, Motorpool is great and all... But, I'm always open to new opportunities. I guess I'd love to know what your next move is.

JOSEPH:

I bet you would.

MEL:

(On phone speaker) Oh, and I went and got a new phone, too. You can use *this* number to get back to me. Please do.

JOSEPH:

(Exhale)

(Sound of taking business card out of pocket)

(Sound of dialing someone on phone)

DETECTIVE PETERSON:

(On phone speaker) Hi, you've reached Detective Jen Peterson with the Seattle Police Department. If this is an emergency, 911 is your friend. Otherwise, leave me a message and I'll get back to you as soon as I can.

(Sound of voicemail beep)

JOSEPH:

Hi. This is Joseph Elo. We met yesterday. Anyway, I might have some new information about the traffic incident that we talked about. Someone who I just learned might be involved. When you get a chance, could you please give me a call back? Thank you.

(Sound of handling metal detector)

(Sound of Joseph getting up)

(Sound of walking in garage)

(Sound of opening door back in to house)

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

So, in case you're wondering, yes.

(Sound of walking inside house)

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

I did tear open the metal detector.

(Sound of grabbing car keys)

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

Not only that, I tore open the *other* three treasure boxes, too: the one from Wapato, the one from Pe Ell, and the one from Maryhill.

(Sound of opening front door)

(Sound of walking outside and being outside)

(Sound of Uber driving up)

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

All in the same destructive manner that I tore apart the box from Cumberland, looking for any sign of anything that is new or fake.

(Sound of sitting inside Uber)

UBER DRIVER:
To University Tire Shop?

JOSEPH:
Yep. Thank you.

(Sound of being inside Uber as it starts to drive away)

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):
The good news is, I didn't find anything suspicious in the other three boxes, or inside the detector. At least, as far as I know.

The bad news is that all of Aimo's treasure boxes, assuming they actually *are* Aimo's boxes, are now in pieces.

And during my frantic state, I accidentally snapped in half the thin wires that connect the Coinmaster's battery housing to its control box.

(Sound of being inside car and turning engine off, getting out of car)

(Sound of walking on pavement with busy street in background)

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):
From the tire store, I drive a couple of miles north to a laptop and stereo repair store on Aurora Avenue, that has good reviews on Yelp...

(Sound of opening store door)

(Sound of being inside store)

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):
...despite its shabby storefront appearance, to see if they might be able to repair the detector's damaged wires.

(Sound of radio or TV in background)

(Sound of setting Coinmaster down on counter)

STEREO REPAIR SHOP GUY:
Woah. You're definitely the guy who called earlier.

JOSEPH:
(Chuckles) Yeah.

STEREO REPAIR SHOP GUY:
How old is that thing?

JOSEPH:
My guess is it's from the '70s...

STEREO REPAIR SHOP GUY:
And you think it's just the wires that are damaged?

JOSEPH:
Yeah. It worked great before I accidentally snapped them.

STEREO REPAIR SHOP GUY:
Hmm. Mind if I look inside?

JOSEPH:
Be my guest.

(Sound of opening clasps and looking inside detector)

STEREO REPAIR SHOP GUY:
Yep. There they are.

(Sound of closing up detector)

STEREO REPAIR SHOP GUY:
Well, turns out I've got some time the rest of the afternoon before closing. I'll call if anything comes up, but should be ready tomorrow morning. Does that work?

JOSEPH:
Oh. Yeah, that's great. And I guess one more thing. Would you mind glancing over everything else that's in there? Like all the components and stuff? Just to see if maybe there's anything new in there.

STEREO REPAIR SHOP GUY:
You mean like if someone replaced a part or something...

JOSEPH:
Yeah.

STEREO REPAIR SHOP GUY:

Sure, I can do that.

JOSEPH:

Great. Thanks so much.

STEREO REPAIR SHOP GUY:

You got it. You know, they do make newer versions of this.

JOSEPH:

(Chuckles) I know. I guess I'm just attached to this older one.

STEREO REPAIR SHOP GUY:

(Scoffs) That's what my wife says about me. Good to be wanted by someone, I guess.

JOSEPH:

(Chuckles) Yeah.

JOSEPH:

So, see you tomorrow then?

STEREO REPAIR SHOP GUY:

Yep.

JOSEPH:

Okay.

(Sound of walking out of store)

(Sound of walking outside being next to busy street)

(Sound of smartphone assistant engaging)

JOSEPH:

Call Kim.

(Sound of smartphone assistant disengaging)

(Sound of phone dialing)

(Sound of getting in car)

(Sound of closing door)

(Sound of starting car)

(Sound of plugging in phone)

(Sound of driving away while inside of car)

KIM:

Oh! So you DO exist!

JOSEPH:

(Laughter)

KIM:

And, you're in the *car* again.

JOSEPH:

Yep.

KIM:

Already on your way to Wilson Creek?

JOSEPH:

No, not yet. Maybe tomorrow, we'll see.

KIM:

Ah. Well then... where is *Mr. Now That I've Resigned I've Got All the Time In the World* off to now?

JOSEPH:

(Scoffs)

KIM:

Hellooo?

JOSEPH:

I'm heading to a coin show.

KIM:

That's not what I expected you to say.

JOSEPH:

I know.

KIM:

With... your coins from Aimo?

JOSEPH:

(Exhales) Kim... the box from Cumberland, the one I found yesterday...

KIM:

Yeah?

JOSEPH:

It's fake.

KIM:

What?

JOSEPH:

Yeah.

KIM:

How do you know?

JOSEPH:

I tore it apart.

KIM:

Why did you do that?

JOSEPH:

And, I think Mel is behind it. Or at least, connected to it all somehow.

KIM:

Well, of course she's connected. She's been helping you out!

JOSEPH:

Yeah. Maybe a little too much. I'm pretty sure she's the one who had Antonia's license—and then made sure I got it when I was in the crosswalk.

KIM:

But—

JOSEPH:

It's on the traffic cam footage from Monday. I have it all!

KIM:

Do you know *for sure* that it's her?

JOSEPH:
I'm pretty dang sure.

KIM:
But not *totally* sure?

JOSEPH:
Well no, not 100% sure.

KIM:
Okay, s-so why do you—

JOSEPH:
Yesterday, when I finally got to the office for the Molecular meeting, I asked Mel to watch my stuff for me. That included the bag that had the boxes and the drone in it.

KIM:
Right...

JOSEPH:
And then, when I was done with all that, she gave everything back to me. I didn't give any of it a second thought until this morning, when Antonia called to ask me a question about the drone.

KIM:
What kind of question?

JOSEPH:
(Exhale) She wanted to know about the sticker that was on the drone. She says they have similar drones on their farm, so she wanted to compare the info.

KIM:
Right...

JOSEPH:
But when I went into the garage to tell her what was on the sticker, I noticed the sticker was gone.

KIM:
Huh.

JOSEPH:
Yeah!

KIM:
So...that's it?

JOSEPH:
W-what?

KIM:
A blurry video, that you said *might* show Mel... and a sticker that's been removed.

JOSEPH:
Well... okay. There's more! The box from Cumberland that I said is fake? It was purchased at the *same* store that Mel bought the costumes from. And there was a stamp hidden inside the lid that said copyright 2019! There was even an RFID tag!

KIM:
Yeah, that's definitely concerning... But do you know *for sure* that the box was *Mel's* doing?

JOSEPH:
It's also things I remember that she said right after the accident happened. I thought she was in the office, but when she called when I was hiding in the coffee shop, she said, "I saw what happened." So, that, plus seeing someone who looks just like her on the video footage.

KIM:
Yeah. But Mel is *also* the one who told you about the drone in the first place, right? And isn't she the one who told you about the woman in the red headphones following you? Joseph, why would Mel tell you these things if...if she's in on it all? Wouldn't that be kind of like...telling on herself?

JOSEPH:
Maybe she's just trying to throw me off the scent...

KIM:
(Exhale) Maybe. And I'm not saying you're wrong... But it also doesn't add up, you know? She doesn't seem like the *secretly plotting against you* type.

JOSEPH:
I just have a really bad feeling about all of this.

KIM:
Right. Just like the bad feeling you had about Salvador... *whose background check came back clean...*

JOSEPH:
(Scoff)

KIM:

And how you felt about *me*, and my supposed *lurid connections* to R.A. Hastings... *and* Carl the Fish and Wildlife Guy...

JOSEPH:

You said yourself these notes from Aimo could all be handwritten by an AI program...

KIM:

What about the other boxes? Were they new too?

JOSEPH:

No, not that I can tell.

KIM:

Well, okay. *Whoever's* behind all of this... they couldn't have faked everything, right? I mean, we *know* Aimo's stories are real. And we know the home movies from decades ago are real. And then there's the handwritten letter that Salvador and Maria received from Aimo. A I *definitely* wasn't doing that kind of stuff back then.

So, I don't know. Maybe Mel... is just Mel.

You're really going to a coin show? By yourself?

Helloooo againnn...

JOSEPH:

I'm meeting Carl there.

KIM:

(Laughs) What??

JOSEPH:

(Exhales) Don't ask...

(Fade out all sounds)

(End scene)

(Fade in sound of parking car and turning off engine)

(Sound of being inside car with engine off)

(Sound of smartphone assistant engaging)

JOSEPH:

Text Antonia.

(Sound of smartphone assistant disengaging)

JOSEPH:

(Voice dictating text message) Hey, I'm sorry I haven't called back yet. (Clears throat) But I'm wondering... if you don't have plans for tomorrow, would you be willing to help me out with something. It would mean coming over here for the day, and then back to the farm after. I'll be busy for the next hour or two, but I can call later tonight or in the morning, with more details.

Argh! Auto-correct!

(Sound of tapping on phone screen)

(Sound of "whoosh" of phone sending text)

(Sound of opening car door)

(Sound of being outside at the Tacoma Dome parking lot)

(Sound of closing and locking car door)

(Sound of walking through parking lot)

MAN INSIDE WILL CALL BOOTH (DAVE):

(Through a speaker) Welcome to the Pierce County Coin Club Convention!

JOSEPH:

Uhh, thanks. You must be Dave.

DAVE:

Yes.

JOSEPH:

I'm here to pick up a ticket? The name's Ralph.

DAVE:

Ah! *Ralph*! I was told you might be arriving.

DAVE:

Uh, one moment here...

(Sound of fumbling around for something)

JOSEPH:

Sure.

So, isn't the Tacoma Dome a little large for a coin show?

DAVE:

Oh, you've obviously never been to the Pierce County Coin Club Convention before.

JOSEPH:

Can't say I have.

DAVE:

O-okay, here. This is for you. Let's see if I can squeeze it through this window slot here...

(Sound of paper bag emerging through window slot)

JOSEPH:

Woah.

DAVE:

Okay! Your ticket's inside there, along with some other supplies.

JOSEPH:

Supplies?

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

I look inside the bag and see a camouflage-colored baseball hat, a flannel shirt, and an orange vest.

DAVE:

Let's just say a certain someone we both know thought you might need to fit in a little better with the crowd. Annnd I'd say he was right...

JOSEPH:

(Scoffs)

DAVE:

Make sure you uh get the fake mustache, too. Our friend said you might want it.

Oh, I'll need those clothes back when you're done.

JOSEPH:

Oh. Are these yours?

DAVE:

Don't worry, I washed 'em just last week.

Did you find the ticket?

JOSEPH:

Here it is. How much do I owe?

DAVE:

Oh, don't you worry about that, Ralph. It's on the house.

JOSEPH:

Ah. Thanks.

DAVE:

Walleye, this is sturgeon, over.

(Sound of radio chirp)

CARL:

(On radio, coming from inside booth) Walleye here.

DAVE:

The eagle has arrived. Should we fly him in? Over?

(Sound of radio chirp)

CARL:

Roger sturgeon. I'll intercept at the entrance.

JOSEPH:

(Nervous laugh)

DAVE:

Okay Ralph, you're all set. And may the coins be with you.

JOSEPH:

What?

DAVE:

Oh, it's just what we like to say to each other.

JOSEPH:

Ahhh. I see. Alright. Well, thanks again.

(Sound of walking toward entrance)

(Sound of convention noise getting louder from other side of the door)

(Sound of opening door)

(Sound of being inside Tacoma Dome)

(Sound of Carl approaching)

CARL:

Well I'll be a turkey with a bib on. Hoo-boy! I can't believe you actually showed up!

Woah woah now, hang on there...

JOSEPH:

What?

CARL:

You got the vest on inside-out!

JOSEPH:

I do?

CARL:

You do.

Here... Okay...

(Sound of rearranging vest)

Okay, that's better. And here, how about you put these on. They're Bernie's reading glasses. He's got a few extras so that's okay.

JOSEPH:

No no, I... I feel like the hat and vest are good enough.

CARL:

Okay. Well, how about you just put 'em folded up in your front pocket. It'll make you look like a professor or something.

Yeah, like that. There you go.

Okay! So... where do you want to go first?

JOSEPH:

Where do I want to go? You're the one who invited me here. How about I just follow your lead...

CARL:

Roger that, *Ralph*. Walleye to school. We are in the stream, over.

(Sound of radio chirp)

VOICE ON RADIO 1:

Copy.

VOICE ON RADIO 2:

Copy that.

VOICE ON RADIO 3:

Understood.

(Sound of walking through Tacoma Dome)

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

The Tacoma Dome is big enough to host state-championship football games, concerts by major entertainers, and monster-truck races. And as we walk around, I notice that nearly every square inch of the huge floor is taken up by tables or kiosks or booths, where hundreds of coin dealers, some dressed up in costumes since it's Halloween, are milling about, talking amongst each other or proudly displaying their wares.

I didn't know what to expect before I walked in, but I'll admit, it's pretty impressive. The attendees appear to be of all ages and backgrounds, and most have ID cards attached to lanyards hanging from their necks. And most look for all the world like there's no other place they'd rather be on a Saturday night.

CARL:

Oh, howdy Wendy! Yep, just taking my buddy here to see what's going on. It's totally NOT his first coin show or anything like that...

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

Apparently, Carl is well known here, and he waves hi to many people as we walk past dozens of vendors displaying every kind of shiny coin you can imagine. A lot of the venders have chairs in front of their tables, for the curious to sit down and gaze at their prized collections.

JOSEPH:

So, are most of these people hoping to make money here? Or is this just more like, showing off what you've already got?

CARL:

Oh, there's definitely some Fort Knox kind of *cash-ola* going back and forth, you better believe it. Oh, this way...

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

Carl darts to the right and heads towards a woman dressed as Dolly Parton, about 30 feet away. I follow, but keep my distance.

CARL:

It's okay, Jo—I mean... *Ralph!* Mindy here don't bite.

MINDY:

Oh Carl, I'd sure like to take a big bite out of you... (Sweet laughter)

CARL:

(Nervous laugh) Hoo, okay Mindy. So *Ralph*, don't let the costume here fool ya. Mindy here is *also* from Pe Ell, born and raised—and then some, trust me. We went to school together and now she lives just down the road from me and dad. Oh, and she also has a Metal Seeker TR 9000 limited edition with a dual-band multi-flex search coil and carbonite spring that she saved up for, uh... what was it like, three years to buy that thing.

MINDY:

That's right.

CARL:

I'm not gonna lie, me and the boys are *pret-ty* jealous about that thing, but we ain't gotta go into that right now.

MINDY:

I just hope one of these days Carl gives me that private lesson he promised...

JOSEPH:

(Chuckles)

CARL:

Ooo! (Clears throat) Well, we'll see about that...

MINDY:

Are you enjoying the show, Ralph?

JOSEPH:

I mean, y-you know...

CARL:

Oh Ralph here is a *big* detector. (Chuckles) In fact, I'd say he's a natural if I ever saw one. He's found some pretty amazing stuff already.

MINDY:

Oh! We'll have to get you on our mailing list for our Sunday metal detecting meet-ups! We go all over the place! Raymond, Centralia, Adna, even sometimes Castle Rock! Oh! Hi there!

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

Mindy abruptly turns to someone else she knows, and they immediately begin chatting as if Carl and I are no longer there.

JOSEPH:

So. Mindy...

CARL:

Oh, don't you pay her any mind.

JOSEPH:

(Chuckles)

So how many of these do you go to?

CARL:

Oh... not that many. Maybe a couple dozen a year?

JOSEPH:

That's not very many?

CARL:

Well, some of them are pretty small. Just a few of us die-hards in a high-school gymnasium somewhere.

JOSEPH:

Hmph. I had no idea this was such a... thing. Why were you so adamant about inviting me here?

CARL:

You don't want to know?

JOSEPH:

Don't want to know what?

CARL:

How much that '38 Jefferson is worth!

JOSEPH:

The what?

CARL:

The nickel you found the other night! At the VFW!

JOSEPH:

Oh! I mean, sure. Someday, I suppose.

CARL:

(Whistles) Well I guess for someone like you, with lots of money in the bank, that makes sense. But hoo... for folks like me and Bernie and Mindy and Dave... you know, with the jerky... out there in the will call booth. I tell ya, if we could make a find like the one you did? That would be some kind of deal.

ADMIRER IN CROWD:

Hi Carl.

JOSEPH:

(Chuckle) (Sigh)

Why the radios? And if I'm going to have a call sign, it's Archer. Not eagle.

CARL:

Archer? Okay. Look, Joe, when I found you at the lake the other day... You know, the day you said I was *tracking* you? Which I definitely was *not*... I got the sense real quick that you were trying to stay *in-cog-ni-to*. I mean, maybe it's because of all that stuff you've been digging up. Now don't worry, I'm not trying to find out what stuff you're up to. That's your business. But like I told you a few times now, I can help. In fact, you can count on me and my boys looking out for you.

JOSEPH:

Looking out for me? What does that even mean? And why would I need you to do that?

CARL:

Well, *Ralph*, that's what detector buddies do! They have each other's backs! It's an unspoken trust!

VOICE ON RADIO:

Perch to walleye. Come in, over?

(Sound of Carl handling radio)

CARL:

Walleye here.

(Sound of radio chirp)

VOICE ON RADIO:

We've got eyes on a Datsun. In the parking lot.

JOSEPH:

Wait, did he say Datsun?

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

Without a word, Carl quickly moves closer to me, as if to provide cover. And without thinking, I cower next to him, trying to hide—even though we're still out in the open between rows of tables.

I quickly scan the crowd, and he does the same, looking for anything—or anyone—who seems out of place. Which to me, here, on Halloween night, could be anybody.

CARL:

Roger that, perch. Can you ascertain if said vehicle has an occupant, over?

(Sound of radio chirp)

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

I start to feel like everybody is looking at us, which they probably are given our strange entanglement in the middle of the floor.

CARL:

Here...

(Sound of shuffling quickly then sitting in chair)

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

Carl quickly shuffles me over toward Mindy and whoever she's talking to, and sits me down in a chair at a table.

(Sound of close body movement)

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

He then stands guard right *behind* the chair, with his back to me, shielding me from passers-by as he gazes around.

VOICE ON RADIO:

That's a negative, walleye. Vehicle is empty.

CARL:

They must be in here already then...

JOSEPH:

Carl, how do *you* know about the Datsun?

CARL:

Well, you accused me of driving a Datsun at the lake, remember? That's when I *really* knew you were in rough shape.

JOSEPH:

Ask them... what kind of Datsun.

Just ask!

CARL:

Perch, can you ID the model of said vehicle in question, over?

(Sound of radio chirp)

VOICE ON RADIO:

Affirmative, walleye. Looks to be a 720. I'd say early '80s, and white. Gotta say though, for me, I always preferred the blue exterior over the white...

JOSEPH:

So not a 280?

VOICE ON RADIO:

The red was ok too—

CARL:

Perch, confirming that said vehicle under suspicion is, in fact, a 2-door pickup. Over.

(Sound of radio chirp)

VOICE ON RADIO:

Yeah. Isn't that what I said?

CARL:

Yeah, I know.

(Sound of radio chirp)

CARL:

Confirmation confirmed. School, stand down on alert status orange. I repeat, alert status orange.

(Sound of radio chirp)

VOICE ON RADIO 1:

Alert status orange, roger.

VOICE ON RADIO 2:

Copy that.

VOICE ON RADIO 3:

Orange, copy.

CARL:

So, I gather the Datsun parked outside isn't *your* Datsun then?

JOSEPH:

No.

CARL:

School, revise status to green. I repeat, we are at defcon green. Acknowledge.

(Sound of radio chirp)

VOICE ON RADIO 1:

Acknowledged.

VOICE ON RADIO 2:

Roger, walleye.

VOICE ON RADIO 3:

Copy that.

VOICE ON RADIO 2:

I'm ordering cheese sticks from the concession stand up in section 105 if anyone wants any...

(Sound of Mindy approaching)

MINDY:

My goodness, are you two doing okay? It looked like you were trying to hide from somebody.

CARL:

Ooo uh... hi there Mindy! Yep, just fine. Everything's cop...stetic.

MINDY:

Okay! Well, Barb here has a customer. So we're gonna need that chair you're sitting in...

JOSEPH:

Oh! Right.

Here you go.

You know, I think... I think I'm just gonna get rolling.

CARL:

Wait, already? There's so much more to see. I mean, I figured I'd introduce you to the rest of the school at least. And don't worry, they don't know who you *really* are. I told them your name is Ralph dot Lauren. They'll never know.

MINDY:

Who you *really* are?

CARL:

Uh... I just mean that Ralph here is one of the best metal detectors around. Darn near legendary already. We just don't want that getting out, if you know what I mean.

MINDY:

Oh. Well, all the more reason to add you to the Sunday mailing list I mentioned!

JOSEPH:

(Chuckles) Sure. My weekends are pretty full for a while though. It was nice to meet you, Mindy.

CARL:

Now, now hold on. (Nervous laugh) Wait, just a minute. I mean, you came all this way... You *sure* you don't at least want to *see* what that coin is going for these days?

JOSEPH:

No, I'm good for now. Thanks though. Sounds like you better get up to section 105 before all those cheese sticks are gone.

CARL:

Okay! Alright.

JOSEPH:

See you around, Carl.

(Sound of walking on convention floor)

CARL:

(From distance) All right then! I'll call ya! There are three more shows this month! Plenty of chances to meet up again! I... I don't want to force falafels on you, but we got 'em. Okay bye!

(Sound of opening door and exiting the Tacoma Dome)

(Sound of walking outside in parking lot)

DAVE:

(Through a speaker) Woah, that was fast!

JOSEPH:

Yep, just wanted to get a good look around.

(Sound of Joseph removing vest)

JOSEPH:

And, you were right, it *is* impressive in there.

DAVE:

Did Carl offer you any of the jerky I made?

JOSEPH:

(Laughs) No, he didn't...

Here you go. Thanks again for the clothes.

DAVE:

Ralph, it was my honor. I hope we can serve you again!

JOSEPH:
(Chuckles)

(Sound of walking through parking lot)

(Sound of opening car door and getting in)

(Sound of closing car door)

(Sound of movements inside car)

JOSEPH:
Geez... (Exhales) Okay.

(Sound of reaching into pocket)

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):
Fortunately, I still have the ticket in my pocket—and the moustache from the bag that Dave gave me.

JOSEPH:
Bernie's readers too. Perfect.

(Sound of putting things on)

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):
I attach the moustache above my lip, and put on the glasses, keeping them low on my nose so I can see over them. Then I put on the Seattle Mariners baseball hat that I brought with me from home.

(Sound of opening car door and getting out)

(Sound of Tacoma Dome parking lot)

(Sound of closing car door)

(Sound of walking on pavement)

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):
And head *back* to the Tacoma Dome entrance.

(Fade out for ad break)

(Fade in from ad break)

(Sound of walking on pavement)

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

I wait in the dark near a trash bin until a group of other attendees arrives, and then I carefully walk close to them, so I can avoid Dave's watchful gaze.

(Sound of multiple people walking on pavement)

(Sound of opening door)

(Sound of walking inside Tacoma Dome)

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

It doesn't take me long to find my way to a booth that I'd spotted earlier, with a sign that reads Evergreen State Numismatic Society. Inside the booth is a wide table, with several bright lamps and various kinds of magnifying tools.

(Sound of people talking in background)

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

A man and a woman are seated behind the table. He's dressed up as Abraham Lincoln, complete with a tall top hat. She's wearing a shirt that is covered with small green leaves, and on her head is a foam statue of liberty crown.

The man is cheerfully talking to an older couple sitting on the opposite side of the table. I watch as he carefully examines numerous coins that the couple have brought in, separating them into piles that I presume represent relative value. I can see on the monitor on the table that the couple has so far amassed a total of three dollars and eighty-eight cents for the big bundle of coins they've brought in. So much hope and effort, but so little payoff.

JOSEPH:

(Sigh)

(Sound of taking envelope out of pocket)

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

I reach into my pocket and pull out a small envelope that contains the nickel, dime, and quarter from the Pe Ell, Maryhill, and Cumberland boxes. Boxes that I've completely destroyed. Boxes found by a detector that I've damaged. Damage that resulted from finding out that at least part of the strange quest I've been on, and that has briefly taken over my life, isn't genuine at all.

JOSEPH:

Aimo... wherever you are... I hope you don't take this personally.

WOMAN AT TABLE (KATHY):

Can I help you with anything?

JOSEPH:

Hi. Yeah. So... you must be... the U.S. Mint?

KATHY:

Hmph. You're good.

JOSEPH:

The smell gave it away.

KATHY:

But you can call me Kathy. Kathy Chen.

JOSEPH:

Ah. Nice to meet you.

KATHY:

Enjoying the show?

JOSEPH:

Uh... You know... I'm actually on my way out. But I figured I might sell a few coins first.

KATHY:

Well, just know that the ESNS only provides written estimates.

JOSEPH:

The... what?

KATHY:

Evergreen State Numismatic Society? The booth that you're at?

JOSEPH:

(Chuckles) Right.

KATHY:

The idea is you can take whatever value we assign here and then shop your coins around with the vendors, to see who makes you the best offer.

JOSEPH:

Ah.

KATHY:

Is that what you want to do?

JOSEPH:

Yeah.

(Sound of sitting down in chair)

JOSPEH:

Yeah, let's do it.

KATHY:

Alright.

(Sound of Joseph opening envelope and emptying coins on table)

KATHY:

Oh!

JOSEPH:

What?

Everything Okay?

KATHY:

Wow.

JOSEPH:

(Nervous laughter)

KATHY:

Could you hang on a moment?

JOSEPH:

Sure.

(Sound of Kathy doing things)

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

Kathy spins in her chair and grabs a tablet from a backpack behind her. She turns it on and taps on the screen a few times, and then sets the tablet on the table, next to the coins.

KATHY:

This is just... to cross-reference my findings with a few sources... to make sure I'm being completely accurate... You're definitely going to want that.

JOSEPH:

Okay.

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

Abraham Lincoln, who's now done helping the older couple, peers over to see what's going on.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN:

Boy, Kath, you haven't been *this* excited in a while. Whatta you got here?

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

He wheels his chair over and takes a peek. They share a glance before he wheels back to grab his laptop and starts typing on his keyboard. Kathy then puts on a pair of thin white cotton gloves.

KATHY:

I'm so sorry... I didn't ask you *your* name.

JOSEPH:

Oh. Uh... it's Ralph.

FEMALE VOICE BEHIND JOSEPH (LOIS):

Goodness, Kathy, what seems to be all the excitement?

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

I turn my head and see an older woman, wearing what appears to be a homemade slot machine costume, made out of cardboard and other arts and crafts.

KATHY:

Oh hi Lois! Well, we're trying to find that out right now!

LOIS:

Are these *your* coins she's fussing about?

JOSEPH:

Yeah...

LOIS:

She only gets like this when something *big* is going on. These numismatists... they really live for the rare stuff!

(Sound of more commotion in background)

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

I notice a few more people, some costumed and some not, walking towards the booth, each with a look of curiosity on their faces.

LOIS:

Kathy here helped my grandson with his coins. He got a whole seventeen dollars' worth. He used the money buy a video game he just (chuckles) had to have!

JOSEPH:

Yeah.

KATHY:

Okay! Ralph. Let's take these one at a time. Is it okay with you if I touch the coins?

JOSEPH:

Sure.

MAN BEHIND JOSEPH (GARY):

Ho-ho! Kathy's got the white gloves on. Hang on, are you supposed to be... what *are* you dressed up as?

LOIS:

She's the US Mint, Gary.

GARY:

Oh! Right. Wait, does this slot machine lever on your arm actually work?

(Sound of more clamor in near background)

JOSEPH (NARRATOR):

I'm definitely starting to feel uncomfortable with the gathering crowd. I consider asking for my coins back so I can leave and avoid any more attention. But Kathy and Abraham Lincoln are still taking turns closely examining the three coins and consulting their screens *and* each other, and writing down notes. I check to make sure my moustache is still on, and I glance over my shoulder, towards the exit, to make sure I have a clear path to get out of here as soon as this is all over.

KATHY:

Okay!

(Sound of shhhh-ing in background)

KATHY:

Well, you're very fortunate, Ralph, that each of these are in exceptional condition. Which is why... we can provide estimates on the *higher* end of the value spectrum. And by the way... if you choose to keep these instead of selling them? I'd suggest storing them individually, and in something more protective than a paper envelope.

JOSEPH:

Right. Noted.

KATHY:

Okay! So, based on our mutual findings...

(Sound of a drumroll sound effect behind Joseph)

(Sound of 3-4 people laughing)

LOIS:

Shhh! Knock that off, Gary!

KATHY:

(Exhales) Our market estimate for the 1938 nickel is... six hundred dollars.

(Sound of a "ta-da!" sound effect behind Joseph)

(Sound of people laughing)

LOIS:

Ugh. Gary.

KATHY:

That's about a hundred times the value of a similar coin in average condition.

PERSON IN BACKGROUND:

Woah!

KATHY:

Which, again, is why I recommend protecting it, so it stays that way.

JOSEPH:

Okay.

KATHY:

And now...

(Sound of shhh-ing in background)

KATHY:

The 1932 Washington quarter. You've got a fairly rare one here in that it's a D mint mark. The S mints are much more common.

(Sound of chatter in background)

KATHY:

And so, again, noting the excellent condition of the coin... our estimate for the *quarter* is fifteen thousand five hundred and fifty dollars.

(Sound of murmuring in background)

GARY:

Is it Ralph? Ralph, my booth is right over there. I'd be happy to make you a nice offer right now, tonight.

JOSEPH:

I-I... I don't—

LOIS:

Gary! He hasn't even heard what the dime is worth yet!

(Sound of more commotion in background)

(Sound of people taking photos with their smartphones)

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

I glance again toward the exit and notice the walkway is even more crowded. It appears that Aimo's coins are suddenly the talk of the Pierce County Coin Club Convention.

KATHY:

Annnd finally...

(Sound of shhh-ing behind Joseph)

(Sound of radio chirp)

KATHY:

The 1916 dime. So again... the coin is the D mint mark, making the value quite high, given its rarity. They didn't make many of these mercury dimes to begin with. And although this one is in

a little less pristine condition than the others, the demand more than makes up for any minor blemishes.

By the way, this is quite exciting! How did you come across these?

(Sound of people moving closer, listening in)

JOSEPH:
I'd...rather not say?

(Sound of crowd murmuring)

KATHY:
Oh! Of course. I'm sorry, it's none of my business anyway.

JOSEPH:
It's okay. Um, before we're done, could I get your business card?

KATHY:
Sure!

(Sound of sliding business card on table)

KATHY:
I volunteer my time at these shows, but I do have a private practice. Feel free to call anytime.

JOSEPH:
Okay. Thanks.

KATHY:
Okay.

(Sound of shhh-ing in background)

KATHY:
So, for the dime, our estimate is...

(Sound of cash register sound effect behind Joseph)

(Sound of people laughing)

LOIS:
Gary!

(Sound of 2-3 people laughing)

(Sound of shhh-ing in background)

KATHY:

Twenty-three thousand five hundred and seventy-five dollars.

(Sound of cheering and applause)

(Sound of cash register sound effect)

KATHY:

So all told, you're looking at nearly forty thousand dollars, for all three!

(Sound of hooting and clapping in background)

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

Kathy quickly and kindly puts each coin in its own small zip lock bag, and hands them back to me, along with a complementary set of unused cotton gloves. Abraham Lincoln then hands me a printout of the estimates, on certified ESNS letterhead.

JOSEPH:

I really appreciate all this.

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

I thank them both for their time through the commotion, and stand up to try to leave...

JOSEPH:

Oop—

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

But bump into the slot machine.

JOSEPH:

Sorry.

LOIS:

Hello! (Laughter)

VOICE IN CROWD (BRENDA):

Hi! Ralph?

JOSEPH:

Yeah?

BRENDA:

I'm Brenda! If you want, I can pay you in bitcoin...

JOSEPH:

Uhh, thanks. Maybe some other time.

VOICE IN CROWD (DESMOND):

Hi! My name's Desmond and uhh, my booth it's uhh, it's right over here...

JOSEPH:

I appreciate it. I'm actually just on my way out...

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

I check my mustache again and pull my Mariners cap down low as I start to make my way towards what looks like a wall of people, blocking me from the exit, all wanting to grab me, or get my attention.

JOSEPH:

Shoot...

(Sound of getting phone out of pocket)

(Sound of radio chirp)

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

I check my phone to see what time it is, and notice that I have two missed calls.

JOSEPH:

Nice.

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

One from Antonia, and one from Detective Peterson.

JOSEPH:

Now... if I can just get out of here...

CARL:

Walleye to school, alert status orange...

JOSEPH:

Ugh.

CARL:

Over.

(Sound of radio chirp)

JOSEPH:

Crap.

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

I look over my shoulder, and there he is. Standing with Dolly Parton at his side.

VOICE ON RADIO:

Roger walleye.

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

His radio is clipped to his front pocket, and he has a cheese stick in one hand and a tub of marinara sauce in the other. I briefly worry that I've offended him by sneaking back into the show on my own.

VOICE ON RADIO 2:

Initiating operation transport Archer, alpha one. Over.

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

But instead, Carl smiles a big toothy grin.

CARL:

Confirmation confirmed.

(Sound of radio chirp)

NARRATOR:

I look back toward the exit and see several men in orange vests and camouflage pants starting to make a path for me through the crowd.

JOSEPH:

(Chuckle) Hoo-kay.

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

I then nod knowingly to Carl.

CARL:

Yee-aah!

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

The kind of nod, I have a feeling...

JOSEPH:
Coming through.

NATTATOR (JOSEPH):
...that detector buddies make to each other.

(End scene)

(End chapter)

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