

DIRT - AN AUDIO DRAMA  
Chapter 15 Transcript  
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**\*\*Warning\*\***

**This is a complete written transcript of the entire Chapter 15 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>

(Fade in windy dream background sound)

(Fade in sound of ocean waves on a beach)

(Fade in sound of children and parents running around excited in background)

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

I hear the whole group speaking in the strange language. Some of the children have shovels, and they point excitedly and run to spots in the sand wherever small holes appear. There's a blanket spread out where the sand is dry, pinned down on all four corners by canteens and leather shoes and wicker baskets. I wave and gesture at the family as they pass by. But they go about their business, as if I'm not there.

MALE VOICE:

It's over there.

JOSEPH:

What?

MALE VOICE:

What you're looking for. It's in the forest.

JOSEPH:

(Exhale)

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

Suddenly, I'm in the forest. And the dunes and ocean are barely visible through the dense trees.

(Sound of walking on forest ground cover)

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

I don't see anyone else among the trees with me. But I can feel there's something here. Something old.

JOSEPH:  
(Gasp)

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):  
A massive Hemlock tree, far bigger than any tree around it, is crudely broken off at its trunk and leaning over on its side.

JOSEPH:  
What happened to you?

(Sound of walking closer to tree)

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):  
When I go to place my hand on the trunk...

(Sound of detector buzzing)

JOSEPH:  
Hello?

MALE VOICE:  
(Mechanical) Joseph. Joseph!

JOSEPH:  
Who's there?!?

(Sound of Joseph waking up suddenly)

JOSEPH:  
(Breathing) (Gathering self) Ugh these dreams are getting worse...

(Sound of Joseph getting out of bed)

(Fade out background sounds)

(Fade in sound of Joseph in kitchen)

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):  
Even though it's only 8 o'clock on Sunday morning, my phone is full of new messages. There's a text from Antonia saying she's leaving Wapato soon.

JOSEPH:  
Okay.

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):  
And will be here around midday.

JOSEPH:  
Great.

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):  
I send her my home address, and ask if we can meet here.

JOSEPH:  
Maybe we can get to the bottom of some things.

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):  
There's also a text from Carl. He says he knew the fake mustache would come in handy last night.

JOSEPH:  
(Chuckle)

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):  
He also says he hopes I got the information I wanted, and that he's looking forward to meeting up again soon—and that he'll need Bernie's reading glasses back at some point.

JOSEPH:  
Roger that, walleye.

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):  
There's also a voicemail transcription from someone at the King County Sheriff's Office who wants to talk to me about my car—and the circumstances around how it was discovered by one of their officers in Cumberland. He's hoping for a call back.

JOSEPH:  
Hmmm. You probably want to know about a floatplane, too.

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):  
And there's a text from Kim. She, just like me, is stunned about the value of the coins. *And*, just like me, is now more curious than ever about what waits inside the rest of the boxes—fake or not.

(Sound of sitting at kitchen table)

JOSEPH:  
Oh crap...

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):  
I remember that I still haven't responded to Mel's voicemail from yesterday, about wanting to know what my next move will be.

JOSEPH:  
Hmmm...

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

I decide, for now, to play it cool with Mel. If she's secretly conspiring with whoever is spying on me, or if she herself is spying on me, she doesn't need to know that I know that.

(Sound of smartphone assistant engaging)

JOSEPH:

Text Mel.

(Sound of smartphone assistant disengaging)

JOSEPH:

Hey. I'm fine. And don't be so quick to turn down a promising new position. (Sniff) Motorpool is an excellent place to learn and grow. That doesn't change just because I'm no longer there.

(Sound of text being sent)

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

Right away I see three dots. Her reply reads...

JOSEPH:

I suppose you're right.

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

And then...

JOSEPH:

Even so, I've got my...eyes on you...wherever you go. Really interested in what you do next.

JOSEPH:

(Laughs)

(Sound of setting down phone)

JOSEPH:

Dang, Mel. Are you just playing with me now?

(End scene)

(Fade in sound of stereo repair store interior)

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

While waiting for Antonia to drive over, I head back to the stereo repair shop right when it opens.

MAN AT STEREO SHOP:

Well, here you are, right on time.

JOSEPH:

Yeah. Should I come back later?

(Sound of finding, handling detector)

MAN AT STEREO SHOP:

Nah, got it all ready for you.

(Sound of setting detector on the counter)

JOSEPH:

Ah, great.

MAN AT STEREO SHOP:

Yep.

JOSEPH:

So, any surprises in there?

MAN AT STEREO SHOP:

No, nothing at all. It looks completely vintage to me.

JOSEPH:

Huh.

MAN AT STEREO SHOP:

I even looked up the specs online to double-check what I was seeing.

JOSEPH:

Oh wow, I appreciate that.

MAN AT STEREO SHOP:

You know, it's actually pretty surprising. Whoever had it before you must've taken good care of it. I mean, unless *you're* the original owner...

JOSEPH:

(Chuckles) Nope. So, just to make sure...nothing that looks like a microphone...or a transmitter. Nothing like that?

MAN AT STEREO SHOP:

Nothing at all. Gosh, that would be odd, wouldn't it?

JOSEPH:

Yeah, totally. Anyway... Still twenty bucks?

MAN AT STEREO SHOP:

Yeah, let's call it twenty even.

JOSEPH:  
Okay.

MAN AT STEREO SHOP:  
Card goes right in there.

JOSEPH:  
Oh, got it.

(Sound of putting card in payment device)

MAN AT STEREO SHOP:  
Annd just sign on the screen.

JOSEPH:  
Okay. There you go.

MAN AT STEREO SHOP:  
Are you the guy they keep showing on TV? I thought maybe it was you yesterday, but I wasn't sure. But now that I see your name on my screen here...

JOSEPH:  
Oh, yeah. That's me.

MAN AT STEREO SHOP:  
Huh. Sorry about your job. I try to stay away from all that Facebook stuff.

JOSEPH:  
It's okay.

(Sound of picking up detector)

JOSEPH:  
Guess I have more time for my new hobby now. Thanks again.

MAN AT STEREO SHOP:  
Sure thing.

(Sound of opening shop door)

(Sound of walking through parking lot)

JOSEPH:  
Maybe I should keep wearing the mustache and the glasses.

(Sound of Joseph's phone ringing)

(Sound of getting in car)

(Sound of closing car door)

JOSEPH:

Hi! Detective Peterson.

(Sound of starting car engine and driving)

DETECTIVE PETERSON:

How did you guess.

JOSEPH:

(Chuckles)

DETECTIVE PETERSON:

Sounds like you're driving?

JOSEPH:

I am.

DETECTIVE PETERSON:

Both hands on the wheel?

JOSEPH:

(Chuckles) Yep. So, you guys don't take weekends off?

DETECTIVE PETERSON:

Does crime take a day off, Mr. Elo?

JOSEPH:

Hadn't thought of it that way.

DETECTIVE PETERSON:

Actually, I was at my niece's birthday party most of yesterday, over in Poulsbo.

JOSEPH:

Oh.

DETECTIVE PETERSON:

Anyway, you said you have some additional information?

JOSEPH:

I do. And sorry I didn't call back yesterday. It was getting late when I got your message.

DETECTIVE PETERSON:

And is this information that you didn't want to divulge the first time we talked?

JOSEPH:

No, no. This is new. Something I discovered yesterday.

DETECTIVE PETERSON:

Ah. And what is that?

JOSEPH:

I know someone who might know the kinds of things you and your partner are looking for.

DETECTIVE PETERSON:

I see. And who is this someone?

JOSEPH:

Well, you met her on Friday.

DETECTIVE PETERSON:

Your assistant.

JOSEPH:

My *former* assistant.

DETECTIVE PETERSON:

Ah, that's right. How are you doing with the news coverage?

JOSEPH:

Just...blocking it out.

DETECTIVE PETERSON:

Good idea. So, what makes you think your former assistant has anything to do with all of this?

JOSEPH:

I finally watched the traffic camera footage. I'm pretty sure she was standing near the crosswalk when I almost got hit.

DETECTIVE PETERSON:

But you can't say for sure?

JOSEPH:

No, but...before I watched the footage, it was my understanding she was at the office the whole time.

DETECTIVE PETERSON:

Okay...

JOSEPH:

Look, I just think she knows more than she's letting on.

DETECTIVE PETERSON:

And that's it? That's your new information?



JOSEPH:

Yeah.

DETECTIVE PETERSON:

So, from an investigation standpoint, that's not a lot to go on.

JOSEPH:

Okay, but—

DETECTIVE PETERSON:

But I'll talk to Detective Hawkins tomorrow and we'll decide if it warrants questioning her.

JOSEPH:

Thank you.

DETECTIVE PETERSON:

Well, if that's it...

JOSEPH:

If you *do* question her, do you need to let her know that I'm the one who mentioned this to you?

DETECTIVE PETERSON:

Is that a problem? Are you sure there isn't more you want to share?

JOSEPH:

You wanted to ask Motorpool more questions about the video analysis, right? I mean, she's actually in charge of that project. Maybe that's your way in.

DETECTIVE PETERSON:

Well, thanks for telling me how to do my job.

JOSEPH:

Ugh. Sorry. How about we just consider this an anonymous tip.

DETECTIVE PETERSON:

You know, if you're going to put conditions on the information you share, you should do that *before* you share the information.

JOSEPH:

Right.

DETECTIVE PETERSON:

Alright. We'll consider you an anonymous source.

JOSEPH:

Thank you. Again.

DETECTIVE PETERSON:

Okay?

JOSEPH:

Actually, would you be able to tell me if you find anything out?

DETECTIVE PETERSON:

Goodbye Mr. Elo...

(Sound of three beeps of phone call ending)

JOSEPH:

(Reacting)

(Sound of turn signal and stopping car)

JOSEPH:

Oh.

(Sound of getting out of car, engine idling)

(Sound of another car door opening and closing)

JOSEPH:

Hey. You made it early.

ANTONIA:

Yeah. Didn't take as long as I thought.

JOSEPH:

Ah.

ANTONIA:

Nice place.

JOSEPH:

(Chuckles) Thanks.

ANTONIA:

Is that Husky Stadium over there?

JOSEPH:

Yup.

ANTONIA:

You know everyone hates the Huskies, right?

JOSEPH:

(Scoffs) Maybe where you come from. Hang on.

(Sound of pressing 4 buttons on keypad)

(Sound of gate opening)

JOSEPH:

Why don't you go first and I'll follow you in.

ANTONIA:

Okay then.

(Sound of getting back in car and closing door)

JOSEPH:

Yes.

(Sound of driving down driveway then parking and turning off engine)

(Sound of getting out of car and closing car door)

(Sound of walking to house)

JOSEPH:

How was the drive?

ANTONIA:

Pretty much the usual.

JOSEPH:

Yeah.

(Sound of opening front door and walking into house)

JOSEPH:

You hungry?

(Sound of door closing)

JOSEPH:

Or thirsty?

ANTONIA:

Nah, I'm good for now. Thanks though.

JOSEPH:

Wow.

ANTONIA:  
What?

JOSEPH:  
This might be the first time you're not starving.

ANTONIA:  
(Chuckles) I ate some food along the way.

JOSEPH:  
Mmm.

(Sound of Antonia walking around room a bit)

ANTONIA:  
You have this huge place all to yourself?

JOSEPH:  
Yeah.

ANTONIA:  
Huh. So what's your big plan for today?

JOSEPH:  
Well first...I'm glad you drove your sedan over.

ANTONIA:  
Why?

JOSEPH:  
It'll blend in better.

ANTONIA:  
For what...

JOSEPH:  
I was hoping we could do a little detective work.

(Fade out all background sounds)

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):  
Before Antonia leaves my house again in her sedan, we catch up on a few things. I ask her if there's any news on her end, about her dad trying to buy the land trust next to the farm. She replies not yet, but she's still looking into things. We also examine the drone together, in my garage, and while in there she sees all the broken boxes on my workbench and on the floor that I haven't cleaned up yet.

Of course, she asks why I tore up all the boxes, so I tell her about the Cumberland box and how new it is, and that it came from the same place that Mel bought the costume. Then I tell her about what I saw in the traffic cam footage.

ANTONIA:

(On phone) So this Mel person...how long have you known or worked with her?

JOSEPH:

About a year.

ANTONIA:

And is she the one who did the background check on the farm?

JOSEPH:

Yeah...

ANTONIA:

Let's nab this bitch.

JOSEPH:

(Laughs) Woah! Okay, first, *I'm* the one who asked her to do it. Remember? And *second*, I don't know for sure that she's up to...anything. That's why we're doing this. And third...I don't have her address yet. But it should be here any moment.

(Sound of text arriving on Joseph's phone)

JOSEPH:

Ah. Nice. Here it is. So, our receptionist...I mean *Motorpool's* receptionist...just confirmed to me that I've sent flowers to Mel at her home today as a thank you for everything she's done to assist me at work. And yep. She lives up on Capitol Hill, just like I thought.

ANTONIA:

Which is where I'm heading.

JOSEPH:

Which is where you're heading.

ANTONIA:

You know, you should send flowers to your receptionist, too, since she did that for you on her day off.

JOSEPH:

Oh yeah, that's a good idea. Okay I'm texting Mel's address to you now.

(Sound of whoosh of text being sent)

JOSEPH:

You're probably only a few minutes away. So I'll start driving as soon as you have eyes on her.

ANTONIA:

(Laughs) Eyes on her? That sounds like something you heard in a movie.

JOSEPH:

(Chuckles) Well, what would you say?

ANTONIA:

How about just, as soon as I see that she's home.

JOSEPH:

Why do I get the sense you've done this kind of stuff like this before...

ANTONIA:

What stuff?

JOSEPH:

I don't know...surveillance stuff?

ANTONIA:

Cooper did the surveillance stuff, remember?

JOSEPH:

Just tell me you're not gonna use your gun on anyone.

ANTONIA:

(Exasperated sigh) So you really didn't know where she lived until now?

JOSEPH:

I didn't. Well, not exactly.

ANTONIA:

We know where *all* our workers live. Some even live on our farm.

JOSEPH:

Hmph. Well, I guess this isn't Wapato.

ANTONIA:

No kidding. I forgot about all the traffic over here. Especially in this rain.

JOSEPH:

Yeah. Thanks again for doing this.

(Sound of horn honking in background)

ANTONIA:

Hey, whatever dude! Ugh.

JOSEPH:  
(Chuckles)

ANTONIA:  
Okay I'm pulling into a loading zone. Hopefully I can just keep it here until someone tells me to move.

JOSEPH:  
Great. You have a good view?

ANTONIA:  
Yeah. I think... Woah.

JOSEPH:  
What?

ANTONIA:  
Woah...

ANTONIA:  
I think I actually see her.

JOSEPH:  
You can actually see her?

ANTONIA:  
Yeah, in a corner window. I mean the address says unit 201, and I'm looking up at the second floor...

JOSEPH:  
Huh.

ANTONIA:  
You said her hair is dyed bright red?

JOSEPH:  
Yeah.

ANTONIA:  
How did you know she'd even be here, anyway?

JOSEPH:  
She and I have been texting throughout the day.

ANTONIA:  
Oh. Sneaky.

JOSEPH:  
She said she'd mostly be at home this afternoon, catching up on chores.

ANTONIA:  
It looks like she's using her laptop.

JOSEPH:  
Bingo.

JOSEPH:  
Okay. I'm gonna start driving.

(Sound of Joseph starting his car)

ANTONIA:  
Okay.

(Sound of Joseph driving)

JOSEPH:  
So my hypothesis is that when I get to the freeway, which won't take very long, then we'll see something.

ANTONIA:  
Assuming your hunch is correct.

JOSEPH:  
Yeah.

ANTONIA:  
How do you know she doesn't have people who do this stuff *for* her?

JOSEPH:  
Hmm. She might. But if she was there at the crosswalk, then I'm guessing she goes wherever the action is.

ANTONIA:  
Oh!

JOSEPH:  
What?

ANTONIA:  
She just closed the laptop...and left the window.

JOSEPH:  
Okay.

ANTONIA:  
And the lights just went out in her apartment.



JOSEPH:  
(Scoff) You're kidding.

ANTONIA:  
That was fast.

JOSEPH:  
Here we go.

(Sound of Joseph's car accelerating)

(Sound of someone knocking on Antonia's car window)

ANTONIA:  
Oh shoot!

JOSEPH:  
What?

(Sound of Antonia lowering window)

ANTONIA:  
Hi!

TRUCK DRIVER:  
Yeah, we need you to move your car so we can get our truck in here.

JOSEPH:  
Argh, not now.

ANTONIA:  
Yeah, I'll just be here a minute longer.

TRUCK DRIVER:  
Yeah, it's a loading zone so cars can't be here.

ANTONIA:  
Okay...

TRUCK DRIVER:  
Okay, thank you.

ANTONIA:  
Yep. No worries.

(Sound of Antonia raising car window)

ANTONIA:

Ugh, I need to move.

JOSEPH:

Ugh, that's crappy timing.

ANTONIA:

Yeah. Wait!

JOSEPH:

What now?

ANTONIA:

Woah. She just walked out the building.

JOSEPH:

Woah. Are you able to stay with her?

ANTONIA:

Huh. You didn't tell me.

JOSEPH:

Didn't tell you what?

ANTONIA:

She's cute. Kind of in a *Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* way...but cute.

JOSEPH:

Oh. I guess it never came up.

ANTONIA:

Huh.

JOSEPH:

Okay, let's focus! Now what is she doing?

ANTONIA:

Okay, she's walking down the sidewalk...

(Sound of horn honking)

ANTONIA:

Fine! just go around me!

JOSEPH:

Ugh. Hang in there.

ANTONIA:

Looks like she has her purse and a couple of...I think they're empty bags? She's holding them over her head like an umbrella.

JOSEPH:

(Laughs) Nobody uses umbrellas in this town.

ANTONIA:

Okay, now... Oh, ha! She's getting in one of those toy cars!

JOSEPH:

What do you mean, toy car?

ANTONIA:

You know, those really tiny cars for rent. To me they look like toys.

JOSEPH:

(Chuckles) Well, at least it'll be easy to keep track of her.

ANTONIA:

Oh shoot!

JOSEPH:

What?

ANTONIA:

She just pulled a U-turn, right out of her parking spot. Can you do that here?

JOSEPH:

I'm actually not sure.

ANTONIA:

Hang on...

(Sound of Antonia's car doing U-turn, horn honking)

JOSEPH:

Ah! Don't make yourself too obvious!

ANTONIA:

It's fine! I'm a few cars behind her.

JOSEPH:

(Exhale)

ANTONIA:

Okay, she's turning west on...looks like...Olive Way. Wait, this heads down the hill to the freeway, right?

JOSEPH:

Yeah, right down to I-5. (Scoff) There's a northbound onramp at the bottom of the hill. Unbelievable.

(Sound of Joseph's car accelerating onto freeway)

JOSEPH:

Okay I'm just getting on northbound I-5 now too, up at 45<sup>th</sup>. It's a couple miles north of where you are.

ANTONIA:

So if she *is* following you, what's your plan?

JOSEPH:

I was thinking of driving up to the Mukilteo ferry. It's just far enough that if she does the same thing, there's no way it can be a coincidence.

ANTONIA:

And then what? You'll confront her?

JOSEPH:

I'm guessing she'll try her best not to let me notice her.

ANTONIA:

Yeah. Okay wait—

JOSEPH:

What.

ANTONIA:

We're turning.

JOSEPH:

You mean, onto the freeway...

ANTONIA:

No. We're turning onto Denny Way.

JOSEPH:

Huh.

ANTONIA:

Okay, now we're going *over* the freeway.

JOSEPH:

Over it...

ANTONIA:

Yeah. And now we're continuing west on Denny.

JOSEPH:  
Huh.

ANTONIA:  
Isn't Belltown down here? Where your office is? I mean, *was*, sorry...

JOSEPH:  
Yeah. Hmm. Okay, I'm gonna take the next exit and pull over somewhere. Can you stay behind her?

ANTONIA:  
Yeah. There are only a couple of cars between us now. We're coming up on Westlake Avenue. Isn't this the intersection where—

JOSEPH:  
Yes. Where I almost got run over.

(Sound of Joseph pulling car over to shoulder)

ANTONIA:  
Okay so she's actually turning left on...it looks like...Terry Avenue. The road *before* Westlake. Hold on...

(Sound of Antonia turning suddenly, tires screeching)

JOSEPH:  
Geez. *Please* be careful.

ANTONIA:  
Okay, she's heading into a small parking lot. It's...kind of up the hill, like on the second floor of a building?

(Sound of Joseph turning engine off)

JOSEPH:  
Hmm. Yeah, I know that one.

ANTONIA:  
Ha. Lucky gal, there's a spot here just for cars like hers. Shoot, I'm not sure there's another place to park up here.

JOSEPH:  
Maybe just park against a curb and put your hazard lights on?

ANTONIA:  
Yeah.

JOSEPH:  
I'll take care of it if you get a ticket.

ANTONIA:  
Okay.

(Sound of Antonia turning off car and getting out of car with noise in the background)

(Sound of Antonia walking)

ANTONIA:  
Ugh there are a lot of people in this town.

JOSEPH:  
Are you still with her?

ANTONIA:  
Yeah. She's...oh, shit!

JOSEPH:  
What?

ANTONIA:  
She just turned around.

(Ad break)

JOSEPH:  
What?

ANTONIA:  
She just turned around. Hey! Is there a good place to get coffee around here? I mean, that's probably a dumb question, this is Seattle, right? Of course there is...

BYSTANDER:  
Um yeah if you just go (unintelligible).

JOSEPH:  
Ugh.

BYSTANDER:  
Maybe about uh about three blocks...

ANTONIA:  
Oh great! So just a couple blocks down from here?

BYSTANDER:  
Yeah, you just go uh down here and cross the street and go to the right...

ANTONIA:  
(To someone else) Great! Thank you!

BYSTANDER:  
Sure.

ANTONIA:  
(Exhales) That was close.

(Sound of Antonia walking)

JOSEPH:  
Yeah. Can you still see where she's going?

ANTONIA:  
Yeah. But wait—she doesn't know what I look like, right?

JOSEPH:  
I...don't think so? But that's a good question actually.

ANTONIA:  
Okay, she's heading down some stairs next to an outdoor escalator. Why do you think she'd be heading back to where all the jaywalker stuff happened?

JOSEPH:  
Wait. You said she's going down the stairs...

ANTONIA:  
Yeah. I am now too.

JOSEPH:  
Ah crap. And is she still carrying the empty bags?

ANTONIA:  
Yeah, she still has them.

JOSEPH:  
Ugh. Antonia...she's on to us.

ANTONIA:  
What?

JOSEPH:  
She's on to us. She must have seen or recognized you from the beginning, and made a detour here instead.

ANTONIA:  
How d—

JOSEPH:

She's...smart. And she has connections. She might have information on *everyone* I've been with recently. *Arghffffuh!* Those bags she's carrying? She could have gone anywhere to use them, but she went to *this* intersection to send me a message!

ANTONIA:

Now she's headed through some doors...

JOSEPH:

I am so sorry. Dang it! This was so sloppy of me.

ANTONIA:

I'm gonna follow her.

JOSEPH:

Antonia, I think...

ANTONIA:

Wait...

(Sound of automatic door opening)

JOSEPH:

I think she's taking us grocery shopping.

ANTONIA:

Are we at a—

(Fade out all background sounds)

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

Whole Foods. Antonia stays on the phone with me and gives me a play by play over the next ten minutes of what Mel puts in her shopping cart: lettuce, bananas, cereal, yogurt, almond milk, vitamins, a baguette, several gourmet frozen dinner entrees, and toilet paper.

A half hour later, Antonia texts to confirm that Mel is back in her apartment, back in her second story window, and back on her laptop.

(End scene)

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

On my drive home, I pick up a couple of Vietnamese sandwiches from a restaurant in the University District. Antonia arrives at my house a short time later, and together, we eat a late lunch out on the covered part of my deck with a soggy view of Lake Washington.

Antonia understandably gives me a hard time about the wild goose chase I just sent her on, and I accept it. And just like Kim, Antonia questions my assertions that Mel is spending all of her time following or



tracking me. She says Mel seemed oblivious to her presence, and the whole ordeal leading up to it, while grocery shopping at Whole Foods.

But even though my hunch turned up empty, I can't shake the feeling that Mel is somehow involved in all of the strange things that have been happening to me over the past week.

(Fade in sound of being inside car while driving)

When we're done eating, I pack some clothes in a bag and grab the detector and the duffle bag, and then we each start to drive our cars over the mountains, to Wapato.

(Sound of incoming text message alert)

JOSEPH:

Another text from Megan Kimura. What does the Inner 6 need so badly?

(Sound of Joseph's phone ringing)

JOSEPH:

(Groans) (Answering phone) Hi, this is Joseph.

KING COUNTY SHERIFF:

Ah, Mr. Elo! Looks like I finally caught you.

JOSEPH:

W-what?

KING COUNTY SHERIFF:

Sorry. (Laughs) It's just a police joke.

JOSEPH:

Ha. Pretty funny...

KING COUNTY SHERIFF:

This is Dale Stanswick from the King County Sheriff's Office. How are you doing today?

JOSEPH:

I'm doing fine, thanks.

KING COUNTY SHERIFF:

That's good to hear. Sounds like you're driving. You must be back in possession of your vehicle?

JOSEPH:

I am. My insurance company was able to tow it to a repair shop for me.

KING COUNTY SHERIFF:

Ah. That must have been an expensive tow, to get it from Cumberland to...looks like you live in Seattle?

Joseph:

(Chuckles) Yeah. It's about time all those insurance premiums paid for something.

KING COUNTY SHERIFF:

(Chuckles) Yeah, I guess you have a point there. So first, I'm happy to hear your car is back in working order. And second, I wanted to make sure you're aware of some data we've gathered about what happened to your car.

JOSEPH:

Okay.

KING COUNTY SHERIFF:

We've received an eye-witness report of two individuals who were seen breaking glass near your vehicle. According to the same witness, the same two individuals intentionally *punctured* your tires.

JOSEPH:

Oh.

KING COUNTY SHERIFF:

Yeah, and the observations of the officer who later responded to the scene line up with that—that it appears your tires were punctured for whatever reason.

JOSEPH:

Okay.

KING COUNTY SHERIFF:

So mainly, I just wanted to let you know that we're looking into it. And also, it might be important to your insurance company to know how the damage may have occurred.

JOSEPH:

I see. Thank you.

KING COUNTY SHERIFF:

Sure. Do you mind if I ask...did you yourself witness any vandalism to your vehicle while you were there, just so we can add it to our report?

JOSEPH:

No. I didn't see anything like that. I just assumed that I drove over the glass when I parked, without noticing.

KING COUNTY SHERIFF:

I see. And can I ask when, and for how long, you were away from your vehicle? Just so we can more precisely pinpoint the time of the vandalism?

JOSEPH:

Uhhhh...

KING COUNTY SHERIFF:

It would honestly help us in our efforts to crack down on other crimes like this in the area like this.

JOSEPH:

Sure. So, it was right around 10 in the morning when I parked. And then I'd say I was away from the car for about...an hour? Or maybe a little less?

KING COUNTY SHERIFF:

Okay, 10 AM, for about an hour...thank you. Details like this really do help us in our efforts. And just one more thing for my report. Could I ask where you were at, when the vandalism occurred?

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

On the one hand, this call is going way better than I thought it would. I figured by this time I'd be confessing to boarding a float plane that never, ever should have landed on a nearby lake. On the other hand, telling a sheriff that I was trespassing on private property, following a coyote through the woods, and finding a treasure box in the ground doesn't seem like a good idea.

JOSEPH:

I was just going for a walk. I'd been driving for a while that morning, so I just wanted to stretch my legs.

KING COUNTY SHERIFF:

I see. And...you must have arranged for transportation...after you realized you couldn't drive your car?

JOSEPH:

I did.

KING COUNTY SHERIFF:

Just that or...

JOSEPH:

I called my office, and they sent someone out for me.

KING COUNTY SHERIFF:

Got it. Okay! Well, I'm sorry that your experience in our little corner of the world wasn't the best. I really appreciate your time this afternoon.

JOSEPH:

Sure. Anything else?

KING COUNTY SHERIFF:

That's it for me, for now. Unless...there's anything you want to add?

JOSEPH:

No. Nope. Thanks so much for reaching out.

KING COUNTY SHERIFF:

My pleasure. If or when I have more information to share, I'll be in touch. Hope you enjoy the rest of your Sunday.

JOSEPH:  
Thanks, you too.

(Sound of three beeps of call ending)

JOSEPH:  
(Exhales) Punctured. Intentionally...? What? That seems *way* too coincidental.

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):  
It never occurred to me, not then nor up until a moment ago, that Mel sending a floatplane to rescue me was anything more than another random, dazzling accomplishment on her part. But now that I think about it...

JOSEPH:  
How do you just arrange for a float plane to go pick somebody up at an illegal landing spot, in like...*five minutes*? Who does that? (Exhales) Unless...it was her plan...all along??

(Fade out all sounds)

(End chapter)

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