

DIRT - AN AUDIO DRAMA
Chapter 18 Part 1 Transcript
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****Warning****

This is a complete written transcript of the entire Chapter 18 Part 1 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 sound of being inside car while driving)

(Sound of smartphone assistant engaging)

JOSEPH:
Text Antonia.

(Sound of smartphone assistant disengaging)

JOSEPH:
I know I don't deserve it, but please write or call back.

(Sound of whoosh of text being sent)

(Sound of car slowing down and turning onto another road)

(Sound of car accelerating and leveling off)

As I leave Kays Road and turn onto Highway 97, the gravity of what I did, and said, at the farm, really starts to sink in. Even though the detector freely revealed the location of the key to me, and even though being on the other side of the fence made me feel like I could try, and do, anything, I know I made those choices myself. Just as I chose to wear the costume last week that resulted in a scandal that ultimately made me leave Motorpool.

I feel terrible about undermining Antonia, but I feel almost scared that I called out Salvador, in front of everybody, and that he and Antonia may be having a difficult conversation right now because of me, about the property next to theirs. And then there's Maria, and the disappointment in her voice.

JOSEPH:
(Reacting)

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):
The thought that I may have caused trouble in the family makes me feel ashamed and embarrassed.

(Sound of incoming text)

JOSEPH:
(Reading text out loud) Did you get my messages? Alright.

(Sound of smartphone assistant engaging)

JOSEPH:
Text Megan Kimura.

(Sound of smartphone assistant disengaging)

JOSEPH:
Hey Megan. I'm on the road today. But yeah, let's talk as soon as you're free.

(Sound of incoming text)

JOSEPH:
(Reading text out loud) In meetings, but will call as soon as I'm out. Okay.

(Sound of turning onto new road)

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):
It's sunny as I turn onto Highway 24 and begin the drive into the Rattlesnake Hills north of the Yakima Valley, heading east.

(Sound of smartphone assistant engaging)

JOSEPH:
Call Kim.

(Sound of smartphone assistant disengaging)

(Sound of phone dialing)

KIM:
You know I'm at work, right? Is this an emergency?

JOSEPH:

(Laughs) No, just wanted to talk.

KIM:

Well you're lucky, I have a few minutes before my next wildly fascinating Zoom call.

JOSEPH:

(Chuckles)

KIM:

So, where is little brother off to today, hmm? Yoga?

JOSEPH:

(Scoffs) Yoga?

KIM:

Well, it's Monday morning and you're not working. That's what I'd do.

JOSEPH:

I am not off to yoga. Although maybe it would do my mind some good.

KIM:

Wapato?

JOSEPH:

Just left there.

KIM:

Well then, I'd say you're heading up to Pinto.

JOSEPH:

Nailed it. Or, thereabouts. This clue feels even more vague than the others. Plus, I've never been there, so I'm not really sure what to expect.

KIM:

"Wilson Creek, where bellows begat bedfellows."

JOSEPH:

You memorized that? From The Places I've Been?

KIM:

Well, with the plot always thickening, I need to stay current.

JOSEPH:
(Laughs)

KIM:
Which way are you driving?

JOSEPH:
I'm on 24 right now, heading toward Hanford Reach. Then probably 17 through Othello, all the way to 28.

KIM:
That's a pretty drive.

JOSEPH:
Yeah.

KIM:
So you're near the sleeping giants.

JOSEPH:
(Chuckles) How did that start, by the way?

KIM:
I think that's just the name mom and dad came up with when we were little, because of the shapes of the hills all around there. Someone thought the hills looked like rows of sleeping giants all laying down next to each other. I'm sure it made sense at our age.

JOSEPH:
Yeah. Just like the pumpkin sign out at Ritzville. Remember that?

KIM:
The giant orange Union 76 sign you could see from miles away.

JOSEPH:
Mmm hmm. Hmph.

KIM:
Well...any more mysteries solved on the farm?

JOSEPH:
Kind of? But I made a mess of things.

KIM:
What do you mean...

JOSEPH:

I said and did some things that got everyone upset at me. Salvador told me to leave.

KIM:

What?

JOSEPH:

Yeah.

KIM:

Jos—

JOSEPH:

(Interrupting) I deserved it. I can be such an idiot sometimes.

KIM:

What did you do?

JOSEPH:

I-I pressed Salvador about some things that Antonia warned me not to. He got pretty upset, and she did, too. And then I might've broken into their office to get a key to the tractor...

KIM:

What?

JOSEPH:

I broke into their office in the middle of the night to get a key—

KIM:

No, I mean, why would you do all that?

JOSEPH:

They told me the tractor got stuck up there again. But I needed to see for myself that it was true.

KIM:

(Reacting)

JOSEPH:

This isn't making any sense to you.

KIM:

Not really. But they actually told you to leave?

JOSEPH:

Yeah. They're even changing the gate's security code on the driveway.

KIM:

Joseph?

JOSEPH:

Yeah?

KIM:

This is like...becoming a pattern now. You doing something and then having to work your way out of your own mess!

JOSEPH:

I know.

KIM:

I have no idea what possessed you to do these things... But you need to get your shit together!

Do I need to send them a note? Apologize for you? For *us*?

JOSEPH:

Why us? You didn't do anything.

KIM:

Because they're family! (Exhales) You really broke into their office?

JOSEPH:

That's where the detector said the key was.

KIM:

The what?

JOSEPH:

The detector told me that the tractor key was in there.

KIM:

The detector *told* you that...

JOSEPH:

It did. When I asked.

KIM:

Well let's put that aside for now. I'm guessing because the detector said it, you felt you had permission to do it.

JOSEPH:

(Reacting)

KIM:

Well if this freaking detector is so all knowing, why don't you just ask it what the answer is to this huge mystery you're trying to solve! I mean it would save you a lot of steps! And maybe a few relationships! You know you're acting weird, right? Since all of this? I mean it's one thing to get really interested in a solving a puzzle. But you...you're taking it to a whole new level! You need to get some self-control!

JOSEPH:

I know.

KIM:

And now, I have to go present research data about pig feces to a panel of industrial fertilizer experts! I can talk more tonight if you want. But Joseph, please promise me you'll make things right with the Floreses. No dumb treasure hunt, or...weird...psycho metal detector, is worth ruining that.

JOSEPH:

I know. I will. Kim...

KIM:

What.

JOSEPH:

Just...thank you.

KIM:

For what.

JOSEPH:

Just...being here.

KIM:

Well, quit making this so hard. For both of us.

JOSEPH:

Right. Bye.

(Sound of three beeps of phone call ending)

(Sound of smartphone assistant engaging)

JOSEPH:

Text Antonia.

(Sound of smartphone assistant disengaging)

JOSEPH:

It's me, apologizing again. But at least now we know your dad is up to something?

(Sound of whoosh of text being sent)

JOSEPH:

Ugh, that was a dumb thing to say.

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

Almost immediately...

JOSEPH:

Oh...

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

I see three dots indicating she's writing back. But almost as fast, the dots disappear. Without a reply.

JOSEPH:

Well, at least I know you're getting these. (Exhale)

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

I try to refocus as I take in the lonely landscape around me. Treeless hills, covered in yellow grasses, rise gently on both sides of the highway. Even though this road is just one ridge away from the lush Yakima Valley, it's mostly empty here. A few occasional farms or ranches dot the landscape, doing their best to make something of the stark, dry land.

(Sound of car accelerating then decelerating)

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

Thirty miles or so later, the road cuts north to the Vernita Bridge, which crosses over the only free-flowing section of the Columbia River in Washington. To my left and west, I see the tall gorge where the river cuts through the Saddle Mountains, south of the town of Vantage. To my right is a vast desert plain that houses the industrial complexes of the Hanford Nuclear Site.

Once across the Columbia, the highway heads east again above tall sandy-white cliffs that the river carved out eons ago. Eventually the road turns north again, where the brown basalt rock and yellow grasses finally give way to richly fertile farmland. Farmland that also was once barren, but is now irrigated by man-made canals that travel great distances from large reservoirs that were created in the 1940s and '50s by the United States Bureau of Reclamation, as the Columbia Basin Project.

Without it, the entire middle part of Washington state, which is caught in the rain shadow of the jagged Cascade Mountains to the west, would still be inhospitable to all but the most hardy.

(Sound of slowing down car and parking)

(Sound of getting out of car and being outside at a lake)

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

It's just before noon when I arrive at the boat launch for Billy Clapp Lake, the large reservoir behind Pinto Dam.

JOSEPH:

Hmm.

(Sound of Joseph walking around on gravel)

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

There are basalt cliffs and rockfalls on both sides of the lake, and no trees except for those planted in a nearby community of lakeshore homes and dam facilities. The earthen Dam was created as part of the Columbia Basin Project. It *also* happens to be, as Salvador pointed out at dinner last night, where Aimo and Vivian first met Ernesto and Lucila.

I know this because it's the subject of another of Aimo's stories in *The Hitchhiker's Guide to Gray's Harbor* called, *Where We First Met*. The story takes place in the summer of 1948, when Aimo and Ernesto were separately looking for temporary work.

Aimo, because school was out for the summer. Ernesto, because he was newly back in the United States after briefly returning to Mexico. And this time no longer as a Bracero. Ernesto was free to seek out whatever jobs he could find for himself. And for both men, and their wives, the idea of helping build a massive engineering project among the rocky coulees of the Columbia basin sounded like a unique opportunity to learn new skills, and make some quick money.

It was after a couple of weeks of working closely together on the dam's emergency spillway project that Aimo invited Ernesto and Lucila to dine with him and Vivian in the worker's camp, down in Wilson Creek.

(Sound of Joseph's phone ringing)

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

The four of them quickly struck up a friendship that would last a lifetime.

JOSEPH:

(Exhales) (Answering phone) Hey! Megan...

MEGAN:

Hey Joseph! Happy Monday! What a crazy few days, huh?

JOSEPH:

Yeah, you could say that.

(Sound of goose honking in background)

MEGAN:

Was that a...duck?

JOSEPH:

Actually, a goose.

MEGAN:

Where are you?

JOSEPH:

Just out by a lake. Taking in the scenery.

MEGAN:

Ah. Well, I'll just get to it.

JOSEPH:

K...

MEGAN:

So we heard very firmly over the weekend from Molecular that they aren't happy with how things went down.

JOSEPH:

Wait, what? Angela told me the meeting and dinner went great.

MEGAN:

Oh. They did. I'd say better than expected.

JOSEPH:

Sooo...

MEGAN:

What they're not happy about is you leaving the company. They say without you, they're not getting the full value out of Motorpool that they expected.

JOSEPH:

Oh.

MEGAN:

Yeah.

JOSEPH:

Like, how not happy are they about it?

MEGAN:

They haven't gone forward with the buyout yet.

JOSEPH:

Huh. Shoot.

MEGAN:

Apparently, they're very eager to hang on to you. Even more so since the costumed jaywalker thing.

JOSEPH:

(Chuckles) What?

MEGAN:

They still want you to headline *Conjoin*, for example.

JOSEPH:

Conjoin.

MEGAN:

(Exhales) Sorry, I can never say it right. Maybe we should rename that...

JOSEPH:

(Chuckles) Maybe. So now they're okay with goofy stuff?

MEGAN:

Word is that they always liked you. They just didn't want the attention during the buyout evaluation.

JOSEPH:

Hmph. Right. Well, what about Angela? I promoted her. There's no going back on that.

MEGAN:

You don't have to! They love the move. This is about you and your future at Molecular. They have something different in mind for you. Apparently, something much bigger.

JOSEPH:

Much bigger...

MEGAN:

Yeah. A global position. Lots of travel, meeting with clients, speaking engagements, all that stuff. They have several private jets!

JOSEPH:

(Reacting)

MEGAN:

Oh come on! We all thought you'd say yes to that.

JOSEPH:

Hmm. So, does the whole Inner 6 know?

MEGAN:

Yeah, I'm calling on everyone's behalf.

JOSEPH:

Hmph.

MEGAN:

Mmm, you still there?

JOSEPH:

Yeah. Yeah, just thinking.

MEGAN:

Well, don't take long. They're expecting a yes right away.

JOSEPH:

What about the press release that went out on Friday? (Pause) The world thinks we parted ways.

MEGAN:

PR will come up with a new angle. Actually, I think they're already working on it.

JOSEPH:

(Laughs) Sounds about right.

(Sound of a vehicle driving into parking lot and turning off engine)

JOSEPH:

Okay, just for argument's sake, let's say I decline. Then what?

MEGAN:

Well... I don't think I need to tell you how much is riding on this deal to go through. For all of us.

JOSEPH:

(Swallows) Yeah. I know. Argh. Dangit.

MEGAN:

So, what should I report back?

JOSEPH:

I just need a little time to process all this. Let me get back to you later today.

MEGAN:

Okay. Just remember, the longer you take, the bigger the current story gets. Gotta control the narrative!

JOSEPH:

Yep, I get it. Oh, hey Megan, while I have you...can you confirm Marlon Mason's cell number for me?

MEGAN:

Marlon?

JOSEPH:

Yeah. Sure. I'll text it to you right after this.

JOSEPH:

Ah that'd be great. Thank you.

MEGAN:

So... just call or text when you have an update?

JOSEPH:

Yeah, I will. Thanks Megan.

MEGAN:

Okay. Bye Joseph.

(Sound of three beeps as call ends)

JOSEPH:

(Exhales) Geez...

RV DRIVER:

That sounded like an important call.

JOSEPH:

(Gasp) Woah!

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

I turn around and see an older man with a thick, gray beard. He's wearing sunglasses and a thick coat, a scarf, and a wool, newsboy-style hat.

JOSEPH:

Where did you come from?

RV DRIVER:

Oh, I just heard that little bit at the end is all.

JOSEPH:

(Reacting) Can I help you?

RV DRIVER:

Oh no. I'm just looking around. Same as you, I guess?

JOSEPH:

Yeah. Wow, nice RV.

RV DRIVER:

Oh, thanks. I feel a little silly in it. It's a bit much for just me, you know? I got it a few years back when my wife was still alive.

JOSEPH:

Oh. I'm sorry to hear that.

RV DRIVER:

We planned to travel all over together when I retired. Now that I'm on my own, I guess I have all the room and time in the world, to roam around. Just don't tell that to my gall bladder. Or my prostate.

JOSEPH:

(Reacts)

RV DRIVER:

You know, this lake, before they built the dam here and filled it up... This was a big open coulee with tall cliffs. It had five much smaller lakes in it.

JOSEPH:

Huh.

RV DRIVER:

Can you imagine what it was like, standing here, 15,000 years ago, when those flood waters came roaring through here? And not just once, you know. They say maybe dozens of times. We might've been a hundred feet underwater, right here!

JOSEPH:

Yeah, I guess I remember learning some of that back in high school. Didn't some geologist get ridiculed for theorizing all of that?

RV DRIVER:

That's right. J. Harlen Bretz. Now his theory is the gold standard. I've taken a few guided hiking tours around here and elsewhere. It's pretty fascinating when you get out there on foot in the canyons, away from the highways. It's a lot different than the view from your car.

JOSEPH:

I bet.

RV DRIVER:

So, what're you doing here?

JOSEPH:

(Scoffs) I'm just out exploring, like you said.

RV DRIVER:

In that car? On a Monday?

JOSEPH:

I have the day off.

RV DRIVER:
Didn't sound like it.

JOSEPH:
(Scoffs)

RV DRIVER:
There's a nice place to eat down at Wilson Creek, if you're hungry. On the main road. I think it's the only place in town. I had the Bedfellows scramble.

JOSEPH:
What did you say?

RV DRIVER:
Pretty good coffee too. I think they serve breakfast until 2. So you're still in luck.

JOSEPH:
Okay. Thanks.

RV DRIVER:
Sure. Well, I'll let you get back to your "day off." Hope you find whatever you're looking for!

JOSEPH:
Wait, you look...familiar. Do we know each other?

RV DRIVER:
I don't know, do we? Take care now.

(Sound of person walking away)

JOSEPH:
(Reacting) Oh man...

(Sound of Joseph's walking back to car)

JOSEPH:
(Exhale)

(Sound of person starting RV in distance)

(Sound of Joseph getting into car and closing car door)

JOSEPH:
That cannot have been random.

(Sound of tapping on steering wheel)

(Sound of taking phone out of pocket and tapping on screen)

JOSEPH:
Okay.

(Sound of reaching into back seat and turning on the detector)

JOSEPH:
Should I go search at the café?

(Sound of detector starting to pulse and click)

JOSEPH:
Y
E

(Sound of turning of detector)

JOSEPH:
Yes.

(Sound of tapping on steering wheel)

JOSEPH:
(Groan)

(Sound of turning on the detector)

JOSEPH:
Should I take the Molecular job?

(Sound of detector starting to click and pulse)

JOSEPH:
Wait!

(Sound of suddenly turning off detector)

JOSEPH:
No. Nope. Don't do that.

(Fade out all sounds)

(End scene)

(Fade in sounds of being inside empty café)

CAFÉ OWNER:
Alrighty.

(Sound of setting down plate)

CAFÉ OWNER:
With egg whites, just like you asked.

JOSEPH:
Hmph, thanks.

CAFÉ OWNER:
Sure! Don't rush though, you can finish while I clean the place up.

JOSEPH:
Ah, appreciate that. So is this your place?

CAFÉ OWNER:
I mean, technically it's the bank's. But yeah, it's mine.

JOSEPH:
Nice. Mmm, this looks really good. How did it get the name Bedfellow's scramble?

CAFÉ OWNER:
Oh, it goes back a long time.

JOSEPH:
Oh yeah?

CAFÉ OWNER:
You see that photo over there? Behind the register?

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):
I look in the direction he's pointing and can kind of see a photo, but it's tough to make out due to the entire wall, and all of the other walls in the restaurant, being completely covered with knick-knacks and antique-looking collectibles of every kind imaginable.

JOSEPH:
I think so?

CAFÉ OWNER:
You're welcome to go take a look at it when you're done. Before I bought the place, this building was a general store, a church, a bank, and before all *that*, it was the house my grandmother lived in.

JOSEPH:
(Chuckles) Wow.

CAFÉ OWNER:
Yeah. I like to think she knows I have it now, God rest her soul.

CAFÉ OWNER:
Anyway, that photo was taken back in the late forties, when a lot of the dam workers stayed here in town.

JOSEPH:
Yeah, I've read a little bit about that. The dam workers stayed not far from here?

CAFÉ OWNER:
Yeah. Not many people know that. What brings you to town?

JOSEPH:
Oh I'm just passing through, mostly. Taking in some of the sights.

CAFÉ OWNER:
Ah. Have you been to Dry Falls yet?

JOSEPH:
No, not yet. Later today, probably.

CAFÉ OWNER:
Nice. Well, anyway, four of the dam workers formed a group during that final summer of construction, and called themselves The Bedfellows. My grandmother had them over to play at her house often. She'd get a big crowd here, which she loved.

JOSEPH:
(Chuckles)

CAFÉ OWNER:
That's why the town made this place a dance hall after she moved away.

JOSEPH:

Haha. Why did she move away?

CAFÉ OWNER:

Oh, she got married to a farmer. Things didn't work out here, so they picked up and moved to St. Louis.

JOSEPH:

Oh. I guess that was the end of that.

CAFÉ OWNER:

For her it was. Though I know she missed it here.

JOSEPH:

Yeah.

CAFÉ OWNER:

(Chuckles) Sorry, I get to talking about stuff and can't stop. I should let you eat.

JOSEPH:

No, it's okay. I love hearing about this kind of stuff.

CAFÉ OWNER:

Yeah? You see that accordion on the wall?

JOSEPH:

Oh...yeah...

CAFÉ OWNER:

It actually belonged to one of the Bedfellows. He made enough money that summer to buy a new one, so he left the old one here with my grandmother as a gift.

JOSEPH:

Oh wow.

CAFÉ OWNER:

Yeah! Then she gave it to me when I was little. I had it boxed away for decades, but one day I realized it belonged here, with all this other stuff.

JOSEPH:

(Laughs) Yeah. You have quite the collection here.

CAFÉ OWNER:

Yeah. Most of it still works. With that accordion, I figured I'd have to replace some of the keys or the bellows or something. But nope.

JOSEPH:

Wait. Bellows... That's what the crinkly things on the accordion are called, right?

CAFÉ OWNER:

Yeah. Do you play?

(Sound of incoming text)

CAFÉ OWNER:

Or, I guess you don't, or you'd know what they're called.

JOSEPH:

(Chuckles) Yeah.

CAFÉ OWNER:

Well anyway, that's the story.

(Sound of another incoming text)

CAFÉ OWNER

I should go clean up. But like I said, take your time...

JOSEPH:

Alright! Thanks again.

(Sound of footsteps walking away)

(Sound of taking phone out of pocket)

(Sound of tapping on phone screen)

JOSEPH:

(Gasp) What?

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

I see that I have two new texts from Mel, from her new phone.

JOSEPH:

Oh crap.

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

The first one reads, "Really?" Followed by...

JOSEPH:

(Reading text) You had the police question me? Oh no. (Exhale)

(Sound of tapping on phone screen)

JOSEPH:

Just hang on a second.

(Sound of whoosh of text being sent)

(Sound of incoming text)

JOSEPH:

Oh man.

(Sound of getting up and walking to register)

CAFÉ OWNER:

Oh. That was fast.

JOSEPH:

Yeah. Something came up. But thanks again. For the conversation too.

CAFÉ OWNER:

Sure. And if there's anything in here you want to buy, it's all for sale. Here or on eBay.

JOSEPH:

Aha! Hmph.

CAFÉ OWNER:

Oh, did you want to look at that picture?

JOSEPH:

Oh, right. I already forgot. So which one is it a... gain...

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

In the framed black and white photo on the wall...

CAFÉ OWNER:

Uh, you okay?

NARRATOR (JOSEPH)

Just over the restaurant owner's right shoulder, are four men, each holding musical instruments.

JOSEPH:

Could I come around and look at that a little more closely?

CAFÉ OWNER:

Sure.

(Sound of walking up to wall)

JOSEPH:

(Exhales)

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

I recognize it instantly as the same photo that's on the wall in the office, at Flores Farms. With Aimo, holding a violin...

JOSEPH:

You know, I do want to buy something, actually.

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

And Ernesto, holding...

JOSEPH:

How much...for the accordion?

(End chapter)