

DIRT - AN AUDIO DRAMA
Chapter 19 Transcript
© STUDIO5705 LLC

****Warning****

This is a complete written transcript of the entire Chapter 19 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>

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

While I was on the phone with Mel, I received a new voicemail from Dale Stanswick at the King County Sheriff's office. In it, he says thanks in part to the information I provided, officers were able to detain and question two young suspects from the area who confessed to both puncturing my car's tires on Friday and several other vandalism-related incidents in recent weeks, all while skipping school.

He says they're working with the kids' parents and handling the case with care, but if I have any questions or wish to press charges, or if I need information for my insurance claim, I can call him back.

He also says he hopes that the next time I'm in Cumberland, my visit will be trouble-free.

(Fade in sound of being inside car while driving)

JOSEPH:

Well, I guess that's one more thing Mel didn't do. Dang...

(Sound of smartphone assistant engaging)

JOSEPH:

Call Detective Peterson.

(Sound of smartphone disengaging)

(Sound of phone dialing on car speakers)

DETECTIVE HAWKINS:

Mr. Elo.

JOSEPH:
Detective Hawkins...

DETECTIVE HAWKINS:
That's right. Detective Peterson is out on assignment at the moment. She asked me to take her calls this afternoon.

JOSEPH:
Oh. Wow, you guys just...answer each other's phones...

DETECTIVE HAWKINS:
We work very closely together, yes. You got the text about Melanie Van der Linden?

JOSEPH:
(Laughs)

DETECTIVE HAWKINS:
Is something funny?

JOSEPH:
It's just weird to hear her full name. But, yeah. The text mentioned that there was something unrelated to Mel.

DETECTIVE HAWKINS:
That's right. We had a second reason for stopping by your office today. Or I guess I should say, your former office.

JOSEPH:
Oh. What was the second reason?

DETECTIVE HAWKINS:
We had some questions for Marlon Mason.

JOSEPH:
Marlon...

DETECTIVE HAWKINS:
You know that name of course.

JOSEPH:
Yeah. He's one of six major investors in the company. Why did you have questions for Marlon?

DETECTIVE HAWKINS:
We assume you do too.

JOSEPH:

Why would I have questions for Marlon Mason?

DETECTIVE HAWKINS:

Well, it's not every day you see a multi-millionaire operating one of his own products in downtown Seattle.

JOSEPH:

I'm not following.

DETECTIVE HAWKINS:

Didn't you tell Detective Peterson you watched the traffic cam footage?

JOSEPH:

I did tell her that. But I only watched up to the part where I walk away from the intersection.

DETECTIVE HAWKINS:

Ah. Well, you might want to watch the rest. About a minute after you leave, a drone lands near the intersection while traffic is still stopped.

JOSEPH:

Okay...

DETECTIVE HAWKINS:

Mr. Mason is then seen picking up the drone, and walking with it up the same street you walked up.

JOSEPH:

(Exhales) You know for sure it was him...

DETECTIVE HAWKINS:

We suspected it at first. It looked like him, and not many people are that tall. But when we found out you were the costumed jaywalker, we looked into people who are connected to you who *also* know a thing or two about drones. He confirmed it today, when we asked if it was him. *And* if he had a flying permit.

JOSEPH:

Huh.

DETECTIVE HAWKINS:

Mr. Elo...

JOSEPH:

Yeah?

DETECTIVE HAWKINS:

Our job here is just to determine the driver of the vehicle. But it still feels to us like there's more going on. Are you sure there isn't more you want to say?

JOSEPH:

There isn't.

DETECTIVE HAWKINS:

There isn't more going on? Or there isn't—

JOSEPH:

I don't have... Sorry. I don't have anything more to say.

DETECTIVE HAWKINS:

Okay. Well, since Mr. Mason had a valid flying permit, and his drone is registered with the FAA, there's nothing more for us to pursue on that topic.

JOSEPH:

You need a permit to fly a drone?

DETECTIVE HAWKINS:

In or over certain areas such as city-owned property, yes.

JOSEPH:

Huh.

DETECTIVE HAWKINS:

You know how to reach us if anything else comes to mind.

JOSEPH:

I do. Thank you.

DETECTIVE HAWKINS:

Have a good rest of your day.

JOSEPH:

You too.

(Sound of three beeps of phone call ending)

JOSEPH:

(Exhales) Marlon. Dangit. What are you up to... Man...

(Sound of smartphone assistant engaging)

JOSEPH:
Call Kim.

(Sound of smartphone assistant disengaging)

(Sound of Joseph's phone dialing)

KIM:
So, you're calling to tell me you've apologized to the Flores family and all is well again.

JOSEPH:
Not yet. Antonia isn't returning my texts.

KIM:
What about calling Salvador?

JOSEPH:
Yeah. I just need to talk to Antonia first.

KIM:
I can't tell if you're trying hard or not.

JOSEPH:
(Chuckles) I am.

KIM:
Well, don't take too long. I expect a full report soon.

JOSEPH:
Hmph.

KIM/JOSEPH (SAME TIME):
So... / So I'm...

JOSEPH:
(Chuckles) I'm headed back west now.

KIM:
You're not going to Wilson Creek?

JOSEPH:
I was just there.

KIM:

Woah. That was fast. It's only late afternoon. Did you find anything?

JOSEPH:

I did. A couple of things, actually.

KIM:

A box?

JOSEPH:

Yep.

KIM:

Does it look genuine?

JOSEPH:

I think so. It looks more like the first few that I found. Plus, I dug through what I think is a thin layer of ash, to get to it.

KIM:

Ash... Oh! That would mean it was buried before... (Exhales) What year did Mt. St. Helens blow up?

JOSEPH:

1980.

KIM:

Woah. I wonder how long ago Aimo did all this?

JOSEPH:

Good question. Assuming it was him, of course.

KIM:

Right. Well, time for my usual question. What was in the box?

JOSEPH:

There was a note in it, just like the others. This one had a capital letter R.

KIM:

What were the other letters?

JOSEPH:

R, H, and A.

KIM:

So another R. That's weird.

JOSEPH:

And a coin. This time it was a half dollar, from 1964.

KIM:

I forgot all about those.

JOSEPH:

Yeah. Kind of like a two dollar bill.

KIM:

Hmph. Okay but wait, you said you found two things.

JOSEPH:

Yeah. You're not going to believe this. (Laughs) I have Ernesto's accordion with me. From, like, way back in the day.

KIM:

(Inhales)

JOSEPH:

It was in a little restaurant in Wilson Creek on a shelf, with tons of other antiques. And get this—there was a photo on the wall with Aimo and Ernesto in it, along with two other musicians. It's the same photo that they have in the office at Flores Farms. Apparently the four of them formed a group and called themselves the Bedfellows. I need to look in The Hitchhiker's Guide to Grays Harbor to see if Aimo mentions it anywhere.

KIM:

Hmph. And you just stumbled on all this, randomly?

JOSEPH:

(Chuckles) No. I bumped into a strange older guy up by the dam, when I first got there. It's pretty far off the highway and kind a random place to be. Especially on a Monday.

KIM:

Huh. Why did you go there?

JOSEPH:

Uh...just curiosity. I wanted to get a look at the dam and the lake, and it seemed like a good place to do that.

KIM:

Well what was so strange about him?

JOSEPH:

I mean he looked normal enough. Actually, he looked kind of familiar...but I can't place him at all. And he was driving a huge RV, just by himself. I'm not sure why you drive a big RV up to a boat launch, if you're not hauling a boat.

KIM:

But, you were up there randomly too, right?

JOSEPH:

Sure. But that wasn't the only thing. He also told me about the restaurant in Wilson Creek, and that they had something there called a Bedfellows Scramble.

KIM:

Mmmm.

JOSEPH:

(Laughs) Is that 'mmm' sounds delicious? Or 'mmm' interesting?

KIM:

Maybe both. I had to skip lunch today.

JOSEPH:

(Chuckles) Well anyway, of course I went straight to the restaurant after hearing that.

KIM:

Yeah.

JOSEPH:

But then a little later, I saw the RV in town, too. This time it was parked a few blocks away from where I was getting ready to dig, while I was on the phone with Mel.

KIM:

Wait, you talked to Mel?

JOSEPH:

Yeah, She's gonna run the RV's license plate for me.

KIM:

But...I thought you didn't trust Mel.

JOSEPH:

Yeah, I'm pretty sure now I was wrong about that.

KIM:

But you were so sure about it earlier.

JOSEPH:

I know.

KIM:

What changed?

JOSEPH:

Well for one, the detectives say she has an alibi. But it was also just her general tone. She was pretty hurt when I confronted her. And to me, believable.

KIM:

Hmph. And Mel runs plates now.

JOSEPH:

(Laughs) I don't ask too many questions.

KIM:

(Exhales) Okay. So you think the guy in the RV was tipping you off to the restaurant and whatever you needed to find there...

JOSEPH:

Sure seems like it.

KIM:

Hmm. I guess you knew you might still get followed places.

JOSEPH:

Mmm hmm. Oh! And, I learned something else from the detectives. And this one I really don't get. Apparently, the person flying the drone over me in Seattle (Laughs) was one of our Inner Six members.

KIM:

Wait, you had a drone flying over *you* in Seattle?

JOSEPH:

I didn't mention that to you?

KIM:
Uh uh.

JOSEPH:
Ugh. I'm starting to lose track of what I've told you and what I haven't told you.

KIM:
Do you know who it was?

JOSEPH:
I do. Marlon Mason.

KIM:
Oh.

JOSEPH:
Let me guess, you know him, too.

KIM:
Well, yeah. Marlon's company is a major supplier of tech to the ag industry.

JOSEPH:
I thought Hartson Rotors just built drones for people to play with. Or shoot movies with.

KIM:
Well, they do that too. But agriculture is where they got their start.

JOSEPH:
Hmm.

KIM:
Marlon was flying a drone over you... I guess I can see now why you're so paranoid.

JOSEPH:
(Scoffs) Paranoid?

KIM:
Oops, sorry. That's not the right word. I don't—I don't mean like in a clinical sense... It's... It's more like... I don't know. You get super suspicious of everything now. Like everything has a hidden or double meaning.

JOSEPH:
(Exhales) Kim, have you read Aimo's letter recently? This whole dumb thing is about hidden meanings!

KIM:
I know! Sorry...

JOSEPH:
(Reacting)

KIM:
So, are you going back home now? Or continuing on to Oyhut?

JOSEPH:
I'm not sure.

KIM:
It'll be dark soon. Where are you now?

JOSEPH:
Almost to Soap Lake.

KIM:
Where is that again?

JOSEPH:
It's about a half hour northwest of Moses Lake.

KIM:
Oh. So you have quite a way to go still.

JOSEPH:
Yeah. Yeah, maybe I'll sleep in my own bed tonight. I didn't get much sleep last night. Then I can head out to the coast in the morning.

KIM:
That seems like a very sensible thing to do.

JOSEPH:
Hmph. Sorry for snapping at you a second ago.

KIM:
Hey speaking of sleep... What strange places or things are you dreaming about this week?

JOSEPH:
Pretty sure the place I'm headed to tomorrow.

KIM:
Huh.

JOSEPH:
Yeah. Read "Mystery at Oyhut" tonight, from Aimo's story collection, if you get a chance.

KIM:
I will. You know, I was thinking about that line in Aimo's letter that goes, "A plot awaits, for you to pen."

JOSEPH:
Mmm. What about it?

KIM:
Just how it relates, I guess. I mean, you told me about that gravestone with your name on it. And now you're basically unemployed...and I assume considering new options. It's like, you're literally penning your own plot now. Like, there was the old you, and now the new you.

JOSEPH:
(Scoffs) Wow. So symbolic.

KIM:
I know.

JOSEPH:
(Chuckles)

KIM:
Well anyway, don't keep me waiting on an update about Wapato. You need to fix that.

JOSEPH:
I will. I'm going to.

KIM:
Byeeee.

JOSEPH:
Bye.

(Sound of three beeps of phone call ending)

(Sound of looking at phone)

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

I check my phone and still no texts from Antonia. But I do have a text from Megan Kimura, asking if I've made a decision about returning to the company yet.

JOSEPH:

(Exhales)

(Sound of smartphone assistant engaging)

JOSEPH:

Text Antonia.

(Sound of smartphone disengaging)

JOSEPH:

Wait. Cancel that.

(Sound of smartphone canceling)

(Sound of smartphone assistant engaging)

JOSEPH:

Text Salvador.

(Sound of smartphone assistant disengaging)

JOSEPH:

Mr. Flores, I'm very sorry about what I did. I'd like to apologize again, in person, if that's okay. I can be there in a couple of hours to talk. Also, I have something with me that I think you'd like to see.

(Sound of whoosh of phone sending text)

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

Right away I see three dots indicating he's writing back. And then...

JOSEPH:

(Reading text) No. Not now. You and I will talk at some point. But now is not the time.

(Sound of setting down phone)

JOSEPH:

(Exhales) Okay. (Groans)

(Sound of smartphone assistant engaging)

JOSEPH:

Change the mood.

(Sound of smartphone assistant disengaging)

(Sound of turn signal and slowing down car, then speeding up again)

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

At the small town of Soap Lake, I turn north onto Highway 17 and begin one of my favorite drives in all of Washington.

For the next twenty or so twisting miles, the two-lane road ascends a long canyon, with 500-foot-tall basalt walls on both sides, that was carved out thousands of years ago by the same ice age floods that scoured the area near Pinto Dam—and that scoured many other places in central and eastern Washington. Several narrow lakes line the highway, each one smaller than the previous as the road climbs, and each is colored in shades of orange by the fading sunlight reflecting off of their wavy surfaces.

Right as I reach the upper end of the coulee and drive past the viewpoint that overlooks the massive rocks of Dry Falls, the sun drops below the western hills, turning the otherworldly landscape below from orange to gray. Yet far to the east, beyond the rocky chasm, I can still see the vast patchwork of irrigated fields and farmland glowing in the halo of the day's remaining light, beneath a pale blue sky.

From here, I turn up the heat in the car and head west on Highway 2 towards Stevens Pass, yet one more driving route through the Cascade Mountains. And although I feel the heavy weight of unresolved questions and loose ends, and of the trust that I've broken and need to repair, I also feel the freedom of being just one car on a lonely stretch of highway. With the full moon starting to rise behind me, and the stunning beauty of Washington in full display all around me, in every direction.

When I get home, I label and place the contents of the Wilson Creek box in my safe, in my garage. And then place the Wilson Creek treasure box on the shelf next to the safe. I place the accordion on the shelf as well, next to the broken drone.

I know I could, and probably should, break the box apart to look for any clues or signs of fraud that might be inside. But for the moment at least, I decide that one box from this odd mystery should remain intact.

(Fade in sounds of being at home)

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

I plow through some tacos that I picked up at a food truck in the University District, on the way home, and then I flip through my copy of The Hitchhiker's Guide to Grays Harbor, quickly scanning each page for any reference to The Bedfellows.

(Sound of flipping pages)

JOSEPH:

(Exhales)

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

I feel myself wishing I could call my parents, who undoubtedly would know about the Bedfellows. My parents grew up listening to their parents and grandparents and their many aunts and uncles, telling such stories out loud around campfires at large family camping trips at places along the Little Naches, the Tieton, and other rivers that flow east or west out of Washington's Cascade mountains.

JOSEPH:

I should have someone transcribe these stories into a Word doc.

(Sound of text alert on phone)

JOSEPH:

It'd be a lot easier to search for stuff.

(Sound of text alert on phone)

(Sound of Joseph checking his phone)

JOSEPH:

Mel. (Reading text) Call me. In all caps. (Scoffs)

(Sound of phone dialing)

MEL:

Well, I didn't think you'd actually call me in five seconds. Hang on, I'm feeding my cat.

(Sound of turning off TV and setting down remote)

JOSEPH:

What's your cat's name?

MEL:

Zuzu.

JOSEPH:
(Chuckles) Zuzu. I like it.

MEL:
(To cat) Did somebody say we were feeding cats?

JOSEPH:
Aw. Who's a good kitty.

MEL:
(To cat) Okay, go. Go eat now.

JOSEPH:
So, what's so all caps urgent?

MEL:
The RV is registered to Hartson Rotors.

JOSEPH:
You're kidding. And not to a specific person?

MEL:
Well my guess is someone registered it to their business for tax reasons.

JOSEPH:
Crap. (Exhales) So, speaking of Hartson Rotors... We should probably talk about the traffic cam footage.

MEL:
I already know.

JOSEPH:
Know what?

MEL:
Marlon Mason walks into the video frame, picks up his drone, and then walks in the same direction you did.

JOSEPH:
Hm.

MEL:
My team analyzed all of it. Remember?

JOSEPH:

Yeah. I'm just wondering why you didn't mention it to me earlier, if you knew.

MEL:

(Scoffs) Well let's see. First, I was analyzing and summarizing a complicated background check that you asked me do. Then I was digging up an old address in the King Country archives. And then I had to arrange a float plane to pick you up. After which, you promptly quit your job!

JOSEPH:

Okay. That's all very fair. But there's more on that video.

MEL:

What.

JOSEPH:

You have a lookalike. Part of why I got suspicious of you is because there is someone on the edge of the video frame at the crosswalk who, at least to me, looks just like you.

MEL:

Hmm, I didn't notice that.

JOSEPH:

And, the person who looks just like you handed something to someone. And it was that person who ran over to help me. And if you look closely, the person who ran over to help me? Dropped Antonia's license in the crosswalk, for me to find. That's what started this whole thing. I'm honestly surprised you didn't catch all that, knowing how detailed you are. Mel?

MEL:

I really don't like that there's someone out there who looks like me.

JOSEPH:

(Exhales) Well don't worry. You're still unique in my book.

MEL:

Hmph.

JOSEPH:

Do you really not know what I've been doing while I've been out of town these last two weeks?

MEL:

I really don't. I respect boundaries.

JOSEPH:

Okay. So, did anyone besides you have access to the bag I asked you to watch for me on Friday? Like, did you leave your desk at all? Even to like, go use the bathroom?

MEL:

Well, if you must know, I did have to pee once, yes.

JOSEPH:

Do you recall if Marlon was at the office on Friday? I don't remember seeing him in the Molecular meeting.

MEL:

You think he tampered with your stuff while I was in the bathroom.

JOSEPH:

I think...it's a theory. Something was removed from something that was in the bag. You know, it makes sense that Marlon might have done it. If he didn't want the thing that I had in the bag to get traced back to him.

MEL:

What thing?

JOSEPH:

Something that Antonia shot out of the sky in Maryhill.

MEL:

She did what?

JOSEPH:

She shot a drone out of the sky above a cemetery that we were at.

MEL:

Okay first, creepy. But second, dannnng girl.

JOSEPH:

(Exhales) It's kind of all making sense now.

MEL:

I'm dying of suspense over here.

JOSEPH:

I think the drone that Antonia shot out of the sky, and that was in my bag, belongs to Marlon!

(Fade in sounds of being outside the Motorpool office)

MEL:
You ready?

JOSEPH:
Yeah. Thanks again for coming right down here. I know it's late.

MEL:
Wait.

JOSEPH:
What?

MEL:
Let's use my keycard to get in. You're technically not working right now, remember?

JOSEPH:
Right.

(Sound of beep and door unlocking and opening)

JOSEPH:
Good thinking.

(Sound of walking through office lobby)

JOSEPH:
I'm not sure my card still works anyway.

(Sound of getting in elevator)

MEL:
It does. All your access does.

JOSEPH:
(Scoffs) Of course. I'm coming back.

(Sound of elevator ding and walking into and through office)

JOSEPH:
Ah, I always liked how it feels in here at night. With half the lights off, and all the buildings outside... Mmm.

MEL:

I think Talisha's team is working late tonight. Do you want to be seen, or not seen?

JOSEPH:

Probably not seen. But if I am, I'm just here with your help to get a few things from my desk, right?

MEL:

Right.

(Sound of stopping walking)

MEL:

Okay, so...finding this sticker that you say was removed could be like finding a needle in a barn. It could be on his desk, in a drawer...

JOSEPH:

Haystack. It's needle in a haystack.

MEL:

Whatever.

JOSEPH:

(Chuckles)

MEL:

Or maybe he took it home with him. Oh. The garbages were all emptied Friday night, so if he put it in there, it's probably long gone.

JOSEPH:

It's okay. I know it's here. Somewhere.

MEL:

How are you so sure?

JOSEPH:

I just know it is. Although, kind of dumb of me to not ask it *where*, here...

MEL:

Whom did you ask?

JOSEPH:

It's not a *who*. At least I don't think it is...

MEL:
K.

JOSEPH:
(Laughs)

MEL:
Well, I think I'll just go check at my desk. See if he crinkled it up and dropped it near there.

JOSEPH:
Good idea. I'll be over here.

(Sound of walking a short distance then stopping)

JOSEPH:
Snooping around someone at else's desk again...

(Sound of sitting in a desk chair)

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):
Marlon's desk has the look of not being used very much. Which it isn't, since Motorpool is just one of his enterprises. There's a large computer monitor on the desk, with cables and connectors spread around. There's also a small cup containing some pens, a couple of family photos in stand-up frames, and a shiny trophy.

JOSEPH:
Most valuable player agency softball league 2017. (Chuckles) Go Marlon.

(Sound of setting trophy back down)

(Sound of footsteps approaching)

ILA:
Joseph?

JOSEPH:
(Reacting, surprised)

JOSEPH:
Wha—Ila! Woah! How are you?

ILA:
I'm good. Wow, it's great to see you!

JOSEPH:

(Laughs) Yeah, you too. Wow, you're here kinda late.

ILA:

Well, what are you doing here? I mean, of course you can be here and do whatever. Uh, I didn't mean—

JOSEPH:

I'm just picking up a few things. Uh, Marlon here has something I need, so I was just trying to grab it real quick.

ILA:

I hope he's okay.

JOSEPH:

You hope he's okay?

ILA:

I saw him getting interviewed by the detectives this morning.

JOSEPH:

Oh! Yeah. I think they were just following up on some stuff.

MEL:

Oh, hi Ila!

ILA:

Hi Mel!

MEL:

Uh so Joseph, I found that thing you're looking for. Marlon must have forgotten that it wasn't at his desk.

JOSEPH:

Ah, that's great. Hoo! Thank you, Mel. Welp, all done here then, I guess. I hope you don't have to work too late, Ila...

ILA:

No, I'm just about to head out.

JOSEPH:

Oh that's good. It's really good to see you.

ILA:

You too Joseph. See you in a few days!

JOSEPH:

Ha, see ya.

(Sound of Ila walking away)

JOSEPH:

Hoo. You know, I really like her. She's so great for this place. Oh, and...thanks for covering for me.

MEL:

You're welcome. But I really did find it.

JOSEPH:

(Scoffs) You did?

MEL:

It was in my garbage bin. The cleaning crew really needs to step it up around here.

(Sound of handing sticker over)

MEL:

Here you go. It's folded up though.

JOSEPH:

Huh. The words and the bar code are scratched out. Great. But...I guess this proves it was removed here in the office. I just wish we'd found it at his desk. That would have really cemented the connection.

(Sound of handling a sticky note)

JOSEPH:

Oh. Hang on...

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

I see a bright blue sticky note on Marlon's desk, partially hidden beneath some cables. It's the same blue color as the sticky note I saw on Salvador's desk, in Wapato.

JOSEPH:

What is this...

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

Written on the sticky note in Sharpie pen is a 509 area-code phone number, which is the area code for all of eastern Washington. Including Wapato.

(Sound of Joseph taking his phone out of his pocket)

MEL:

What now...

(Sound of Joseph tapping on phone screen)

JOSEPH:

One sec.

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

I look up Salvador's cell number in my contacts, but it isn't his number that's on the sticky note.

(Sound of tapping on phone screen)

JOSEPH:

Hmm...

MEL:

You okay?

JOSEPH:

Well, that's interesting.

MEL:

Once again, the suspense is killing me.

JOSEPH:

Oh, sorry. It's nothing.

(Fade out all background sounds)

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

It's Antonia's cell number.

(End chapter)