

DIRT - AN AUDIO DRAMA
Chapter 5 Transcript
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****Warning****

This is a complete written transcript of the entire Chapter 5 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:

DIRT - An Audio Drama is a production of STUDIO5705. Chapter 5.

(Begin background music)

(Sound of walking on grass and farm noises in the background)

NARRATOR (Joseph):

The four of us walk for minutes without talking. But it's a comfortable silence. Salvador and Maria are holding hands. Antonia walks slightly behind them. I walk a little behind her and to the side, in a bit of a daze, clutching the metal detector like a Christmas present.

Its rubber handle is cold and grimy. In fact, the whole thing is grimy, probably from years of resting in who knows how many garages or barns or basements or sheds. I don't have any proof that this is *Aimo's* beeper, but right now I don't want to entertain any other possibility.

In my head I recite the letter's second stanza: "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."

We get to the edge of the peach orchard, and Salvador stops. He points to a low stump in the ground.

(Background music fade out)

SALVADOR:

This is the spot. This is what's left of the very first peach tree that Aimo and Ernesto planted. There were nine rows here. *This* was the very first one. Ernesto kept its roots in the ground as a way of remembering the beginning. My family knows this place very well, Joseph. It's as close to sacred as it gets in the farm.

JOSEPH:

Mr. Flores, you said that my grandfather told you I was coming here. (Exhales) How is that even possible?

SALVADOR:

He did tell me. He told me 31 years ago, before he died. He wrote a letter to me and Maria on that stationery that he and your grandmother always used. He told me that one day when you were all grown up, that you'd come by here and ask for something. Something that would only have meaning to you.

You know, we've been wondering when that day would come. And then yesterday you just show up out of nowhere. Joseph, how did you know to come back?

JOSEPH:

(Sighs) Well, I haven't told you guys this yet, but I received a letter from Aimo too. Or at least a letter that's *supposed* to look like it was from Aimo. Mine arrived in the mail two weeks ago.

MARIA:

(Gasps) *Dios mio...*

JOSEPH:

And I haven't told anyone except my sister. And now the three of you know too. And you know how Aimo was, assuming he did write it and someone isn't messing with us. He isn't making any of this easy.

SALVADOR:

(Laughs)

JOSEPH:

His letter is a poem with...vague clues...that are supposed to help me *find* something. It's all I've been able to think about since I got it. (Exhales) I'm even *dreaming* about it! And now I'm *here*, holding something from his past that I never expected to find or need, but I'm pretty sure I need it in order to get the thing I'm supposed to find. (Nervous laugh) I don't even know if it works anymore!

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

I have no idea how to use a metal detector, but thankfully, it's simple-looking. It's basically three parts. A blue metal box with some dials and meters and a small metal speaker. Extending

from the box is a narrow metal tube about three feet long. And at the end of the tube, a flat disc.

I'm not really clear about what to do first, but there *is* a pretty obvious on/off switch. So I switch it on.

(Sound of flicking switch, but nothing happens)

MARIA:
Oh.

JOSEPH:
Oh wait, here's a battery check switch. Okay let me try...

(Sound of flicking more switches)

Nope. Looks like it's out of juice.

MARIA:
Makes sense if it's been sitting here all this time.

JOSEPH:
Yeah.

SALVADOR:
Try those two latches on the box. I bet that's where the batteries are.

(Sound of undoing latches)

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):
I carefully undo the clasps and sure enough, there are two housings, each holding numerous double A batteries that look...very old.

JOSEPH:
Woah, looks like we need a lot of them. One, two, three... (quietly counting higher)

Yeah, 14. Wow.

ANTONIA:
It's okay, we have a lot of them in the main shop.

SALVADOR:
(Whistles loudly) *Martín! Martín! Ven!*

Martín'll get us some. He's got his four-wheeler. (Laughs)

(Sound of Salvador walking closer to Joseph)

SALVADOR:

What do you mean *assuming* Aimo wrote the letter? Do you have your doubts?

JOSEPH:

I do. I mean...maybe? I don't know. I guess I'm just the kind of person who needs proof.

(Sound of four-wheeler getting closer and arriving, Salvador talking to Martín over engine noise, the four-wheeler leaving)

SALVADOR:

(Laughs) Yeah, my mom always said, don't trust anybody.

JOSEPH:

I mean, the stationery, the handwriting, the way it's worded...it all *looks* authentic. Here, see for yourself.

(Sound of envelope being handled)

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

I take the letter out of my jacket pocket and hand it to Salvador. Maria and Antonia crowd near him as they take a moment to read it quietly.

JOSEPH:

Okay, so... I just have to ask. Your letter was sent *here*, where you've always lived. But mine was sent to an address he couldn't have known to send it to. So, assuming he *did* write it, that would mean he made arrangements with someone back then, to send it today. Right? And if so, who is that?

SALVADOR:

Huh. That's a very good question.

JOSEPH:

And then, a couple of weeks *after* getting the letter in the mail, I just happen to find Antonia's license in the street, which helps me connect parts of the letter to *this* place.

SALVADOR:

It wasn't us, if that is what you're thinking. We never knew about any plans he had to send anything to you.

JOSEPH:

But you *all* knew about the letter from 31 years ago? All this time?

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

I look at Antonia when I say this. She and I spent every day together during those summers, when we were teenagers. She never once mentioned any kind of letter or quest or magic destiny having to do with me coming back here to find something someday.

ANTONIA:

I didn't know until this morning. My father told me just before you and my mom joined us at the barn.

JOSEPH:

(Long inhale/exhale) Well, if the new batteries make this thing work, I have reason to believe...or let's say, this letter suggests...that there's something here in the ground that...I don't know...that's supposed to give me knowledge...about a trail to follow...

(Exhales, groans) I'm sorry, this whole thing is making me *crazy*. And I should be at work right now...

Mr. Flores, if this thing works, will it be ok if I dig here? I know this is a very special place.

SALVADOR:

You really believe this is the spot?

JOSEPH:

I have a strong *hunch* that it is.

(Sound of four-wheeler approaching)

SALVADOR:

Then by all means, Joseph. Do what must be done. Do you mind if we stay here with you?

JOSEPH:

I'd very much like it if you did.

(Sound of four-wheeler arriving and engine stopping)

(Sound of delivering some gear and Salvador talking to Martín in background)

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

It takes a little work to pry the old batteries from the housings without breaking anything. Fortunately, Salvador asked Martín to bring tools and a small shovel and a rag too, so I quickly

scrape some corrosion off the connectors with a flat head screwdriver and wipe them as clean as I can.

(Sound of snapping batteries into housing)

The new batteries snap in perfectly, and as soon as the last one is in...

(Sound of metal detector buzzing noise)

JOSEPH:

Woah. I guess it still works.

But I feel like it shouldn't keep making this noise. Isn't this the noise it makes when it finds something?

SALVADOR:

Maybe back off on the tuner? Yeah, that one.

(Sound of turning knob)

(Sound of metal detector buzzing noise getting quieter)

I think that's what you use to zero out the readings. Here—

(Sound of small metal objects hitting ground near Joseph)

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

Salvador tosses his keys on the ground in front of me. I take a couple steps forward and hover the disc over the ground and wave it back and forth (sound of metal detector buzzing noise getting louder and quieter) on top of them.

(Sound of Joseph switching metal detector off and buzzing sound stops)

JOSEPH:

Nice.

SALVADOR:

Okay! I guess we're in business!

MARIA:

Oh this is exciting! And nerve-wracking.

(Sound of Joseph walking a few steps forward)

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

The peach tree trunk isn't very wide (sound of metal detector being switched back on), maybe a foot at most. I take a deep breath and position the disc over the ground to the left of the trunk, and slowly move it back and forth. There's no change in the buzzing sound or the intensity meter, so I move a few steps forward (sound of Joseph moving few steps forward) and do the same thing, and immediately—

(Sound of metal detector buzzing noise getting louder)

JOSEPH:

Woah!

(Sound of Joseph setting down detector and moving forward and digging in the ground with a small shovel)

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

I try to be careful and not disrupt the ground too much. I dig for about 15 seconds before I unearth...

JOSEPH:

(Groan)

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

...a metal screw.

SALVADOR:

(Laughs) Yeah, I'm not surprised. Who knows what's buried everywhere. Nails, staples, pruners...maybe even tractor parts!

MARIA:

Oh!

SALVADOR:

Hey let's save those if you find any...

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

I refill the hole (sound of Joseph walking around) and continue moving the disc over the ground near the trunk. (Sound of detector being switched back on) I try to be methodical, and not miss any ground, moving away from the trunk in sections, in all directions. After about five minutes, I put the Coinmaster down and look over at my audience.

JOSEPH:

(Frustrated sigh) It doesn't look like anything's here. I mean I guess I could keep going farther out, expand the circle. But I would think that whatever it is would be right *here*, near the base. At least, that's where *I'd* put it.

ANTONIA:

Joseph, how did the clue in your letter read? It said where we first sowed, right?

JOSEPH:

Yeah, sowed.

ANTONIA:

Well...sowed usually means putting seeds in the ground. But fruit trees are often planted as young trees, not seeds.

Or, they get started as scions grafted onto existing root stock.

I mean, they *may* have planted these first peach trees as seeds, I don't actually know. Do you papa?

SALVADOR:

You know, I don't know. I mean, it *was* different back then, not always like today.

ANTONIA:

Well, if they *didn't* use seeds for the trees, then maybe "where we first sowed" is a reference to a garden?

SALVADOR:

Ah!

ANTONIA:

I mean, assuming Aimo meant it literally. It's a poem, so I guess you never know.

JOSEPH:

Oh. There was a garden?

MARIA:

Oh yes. A big one.

JOSEPH:

A big one? Like, how big?

ANTONIA:

Well it was pretty small at first. Just things like carrots, beets, lettuce, and beans, I think. We have old pictures of it in the house.

MARIA:
Mmm hmmm.

ANTONIA:
Hey! We could walk back and look through them. They're probably in the office. I mean, it would take a while but—

MARIA:
Oh! I could make lunch. Joseph, can you stay for lunch while we look?

JOSEPH:
I—

(Begin background music)

SALVADOR:
Do you think the pictures are in the office? Or would they be with Aunt Celia? She's got most of them from back in those days. I can drive over to Grandview and get them...

ANTONIA:
We could call ahead of time and see.

JOSEPH:
But wait, I—

ANTONIA:
We could also check with the valley historical society.

MARIA:
Mmm hmm.

ANTONIA:
They may have pictures in their archive.

JOSEPH:
No, no, we need to—

ANTONIA:
Although, they might not be open today...

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):
I want to throw something. Scream out. Pound my fist into a wall. Maybe smash this detector. A second ago we were about to discover something—maybe even something fantastic. And now?

Now we're talking about a garden that no longer exists. A garden that might take hours of research to locate its original spot. And hours or days of metal detecting and digging up more screws and nails and tractor parts. Hours and days that I don't have.

It's already mid-morning and I know the texts and emails are piling up. I should have been on the road by now. I look around at this beautiful place that means so much to me, and I try to feel gratitude for the reconnection to it all and the people who live here.

But I'm also ashamed and embarrassed. Suddenly embarrassed for getting caught up in it all. For going against my better judgement and thinking that something strange (sound of metal clanking noises in background) or magical or sublime might happen here. For letting myself believe that this was all real (sound of metal detector buzzing noise), that Aimo wanted me to be here. And that there was actually something here in the ground for me to—

(Sounds of metal clanking noise and metal detector buzzing noise getting louder)

MARIA:

W-what is it doing?

ANTONIA:

Is it going off? All by itself?

MARIA:

It's...it's shaking!

(Begin background music)

(Sound of Joseph walking over to metal detector)

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

I slowly walk over to the detector. I'm almost afraid to touch it, like it's possessed.

(Sound of Joseph grabbing handle of metal detector and suddenly shaking stops)

I grab the handle and move the disc from its current spot.

(Metal detector buzzing sound gets quieter)

I move it back (sound of metal clanking noise and metal detector buzzing noise get loud again), and it goes *nuts*.

JOSEPH:

Woah!

(Sound of Joseph switching off and setting down metal detector)

(Sound of Joseph walking forward and starting to dig with small shovel)

SALVADOR:

I mean, it *is* old. Maybe it shorted out earlier?

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

It doesn't take much until the shovel hits something hard, about four inches down. It could just be a rock, but a rock wouldn't set off the detector like this.

(Sounds of Joseph dropping shovel and digging with hands, breathing hard)

With some effort I pull the object out of the ground, and brush and blow off as much dirt and small, clinging tree roots as I can.

(Sound of Joseph blowing off dirt)

I can feel Maria, Salvador, and Antonia behind me, gazing in astonishment. I hold it up for them, to see what I see.

MARIA:

(Gasps) It looks like a jewelry box!

ANTONIA:

Joseph, are you ok?

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

I wipe my eyes with my sleeve. I don't know why I'm crying. I grab the rag and wipe the dirt off the box. There's a tiny pin holding the latch closed that I'm able to slip out of place. (Sounds of moving the latch and walking) I walk over to the others and then I open the lid.

The cloth that lines the inside of the box is tattered and weathered, probably from being in the ground without a perfect seal. In the center of the box rests a small, sealed plastic bag, folded in half and then folded in half again. I ask Maria if she'll hold the box while I open the bag.

(Sound of handling bag and its contents)

Inside of the bag is a folded piece of familiar stationery, plus something small and metal. A tiny key.

I place the key in my pocket for safekeeping, and I read the note out loud.

(Background music fades out)

JOSEPH:

Hello Little Joey, though probably not so little now. (Nervous laugh) Please tell my friends there hello.

This is the start of finding things. From here, there are six, before the last. - Aimo

MARIA:

Oh my. That's all? What do you think it means?

JOSEPH:

(Sniffing, emotional) Sorry.

(Loud exhale, then chuckle) Um, I think it ties in with the letter somehow and maybe some old movies too. The letter says, "Search there for knowledge in the ground/Then follow down the trail laid out." So...so I guess this is the start of the trail.

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

A trail I have no idea how to follow.

(Begin background music)

Even so, I *do* know what I need to do next.

JOSEPH:

Mr. Flores, this box was buried on your property, so it belongs to you. But I think this must be the gift that the letter refers to.

May I have it?

SALVADOR:

It's yours.

JOSEPH:

Thank you. May I ask for one more thing?

MARIA:

Of course, Joseph, you don't have to ask for that. The detector is yours now too.

(Sound of walking on grass)

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

I look around at the farm, now bathed in mid-morning golden light.

I think I'm starting to believe.

(Background and walking sounds fade out)

* * *

(Sound of being inside car while driving)

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

I manage to get on the road by noon. But not before Maria feeds me again. As we eat, Salvador shows me their letter from Aimo. He asks what I'll do next. I tell him the truth: that I'm not sure. But I let them know that Kim is helping me figure things out, and I'd like their help too. He also gives me the security code for the gate, for the next time I visit: 1943. The four of us exchange mobile numbers (sound of Joseph dialing someone on smart phone in background), and we agree to keep everything to ourselves for now, until we can make more sense of it all.

MEL:

(On phone, answering) You come up as Sterling Archer on my phone now, when you call from this line.

JOSEPH:

From that cartoon?

MEL:

It's actually an *adult animated series*...? But yeah. I mean, a second phone line, disguises, fleeing to remote locations... It fits.

JOSEPH:

Huh. I kinda like it.

MEL:

You're on your way back now.

JOSEPH:

Yeah.

MEL:

And you'll go straight home since you didn't bring a change of clothes with you.

JOSEPH:

Future Mel strikes again.

MEL:

Well, things seem to be under control here. You must have gotten back to some people last night.

JOSEPH:

I did. I *also* looked at a ton of Costumed Jaywalker footage last night.

You know, I had a thought—

MEL:

You want me to see if there's any traffic-cam footage of the intersection from before you almost got killed.

JOSEPH:

Have you always been like this?

MEL:

And you probably figure that our way in with the city or the police or whatever, is to frame it up as an agency request, so we can release some fun facts about how and why Costumed Jaywalker went viral so quickly. I mean, that's totally in our wheelhouse, so it makes sense. News outlets *eat* that stuff up.

JOSEPH:

Wow. Okay. I have nothing to add. Have you made any in-roads?

MEL:

I reached out to some contacts at a few places. I did hear back from someone at Lingcod. They have a contract to archive and run analytics on all city-owned surveillance camera footage. She's into the idea of partnering because if we do something fun with it, it's good publicity for them too.

JOSEPH:

Lingcod. What a name.

MEL:

By the way, there are a *lot* of cameras in Belltown. I'm going to have to be more careful where I smoke. My mom thinks I quit.

JOSEPH:

I thought you quit, too?

MEL:

Depends on the day.

JOSEPH:

Right. Okay, well, for this to work, it has to be run as a real project with real deliverables. Otherwise, we'll just add strange on top of strange. You've been wanting to project-manage for a while, right? How about we make this your first project—

MEL:

I already put it in the queue.

JOSEPH:

(Laughs) Okay...

MEL:

Vihaan from analytics is interested. I think I have Dayna from strategy too.

JOSEPH:

Dayna... I'm not sure she's right for this. How about Anna. She's better with social.

MEL:

(Put off) Sure.

JOSEPH:

(Uncomfortable rustling sounds) So, if our own people are going to be closely analyzing the footage, it probably goes without saying that I can't be—

MEL:

I know. I'll steer people away from any chance of recognizing you.

JOSEPH:

Okay. (Exhales) Here I was hoping Costumed Jaywalker would fade into obscurity. Now we're going to look closer at it instead. Nice.

(Sound of tapping on steering wheel)

You know, if we get what we need from the footage before the project gets going, we can always find a reason to kill it...

MEL:

Maybe...

JOSEPH:

Right. Sorry. It's your project. This will be good for you, something different.

Oh, Mel, I meant to say this right off the bat. I'm gonna be remote the rest of the week. I can still check in with you and others a few times a day. I just... need to take care of a few more things.

MEL:

I can let the Inner Six know. Anyone else you want me to notify?

JOSEPH:

If you could just work with Angela look at my meetings and assign people to lead them. Right now's a good time for people to step up anyway.

Also, I'm guessing you have ways of looking into people's backgrounds? I need to have a check done on somebody name Salvador Flores, in Yakima County. I just...need to know if anything is there.

Actually, never mind, I shouldn't involve you in my personal matters—

MEL:

I'll make it happen.

(Begin background music)

Are you doing okay?

JOSEPH:

Me? Oh, sure.

Just peachy.

END CREDITS:

Dirt - An Audio Drama is presented by STUDIO5705 and is written, directed, and produced by me, Kris Kaiyala. This chapter features the voice talents of Jhonattan Fuentes as Salvador, Ana Noval as Maria, Megan Morales as Antonia, and Jessi Brown as Mel. I play the part of Joseph.

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