

DIRT - AN AUDIO DRAMA
Chapter 6 Transcript
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****Warning****

This is a complete written transcript of the entire Chapter 6 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 6.

(Sound of being inside car while driving)

(Begin background music)

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

I call Kim next as I crest Manastash Ridge on Interstate 82 and descend into the wide Kittitas Valley.

Desert sagebrush starts to give way to fertile farms and ranches. Dozens of white windmills dot the brown hillsides in the distance, and beyond them, the jagged Stuart Range wears the first snow of the season.

With Kim on the line, I don't know where to start, so I just blurt everything out.

KIM:

(On phone) Holy crap Joseph!

JOSEPH:

I know. Crazy right? Like the plot *seriously* thickens!

KIM:

You're stealing my line now. And embellishing.

JOSEPH:

Well, I've got jewelry box fever now.

KIM:

Haha. You're a changed man, I can hear it in your voice.

JOSEPH:

The thing is, I almost wasn't. For a minute there I wanted to smash the detector into bits. Now though? I think this is all real, Kim. I saw with my own eyes that the box had been in the ground for a long time. Oh, I asked them if I could keep the metal detector, just to have it. (Laughs) It's in my trunk right now.

KIM:

That's so cool!

JOSEPH:

You know, right before I called you, I was thinking about Aimo and Vivian driving over this pass back in the day, probably with the detector in *their* trunk...

Or driving down the canyon, along the Yakima River. Now there's a beautiful drive...

Dang it, why didn't I go that way?

KIM:

Okay, but Joseph...

JOSEPH:

Yeah?

KIM:

There's a lot to figure out still.

JOSEPH:

Mmm, mmm hmm—

KIM:

I mean, the license coincidence, someone stealing Antonia's purse. Lots of details to connect. Oh! My friend at the lab says she has time tomorrow. She's gonna analyze the videos I sent her, to see what their software comes up with.

JOSEPH:

Sweet. (Chuckle) Maybe it'll help us figure out what to do next. The note in the box said there are six things to find before the last thing.

(Begin background music)

I don't know even where the first of the six things are. I'm gonna dig in deeper tonight.

Ahh! Why couldn't Aimo have just drawn a map with a bunch of Xs on it?

KIM:

Nice try little brother. I don't think that was his way.

(Background music interlude)

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

For the rest of the drive, I listen to a playlist that Julie and I made together. Up and over Snoqualmie Pass, down the Cascade foothills, through the Seattle suburbs, across the 520 bridge to my house in Laurelhurst. But I don't think about Julie at all when I hear the songs.

I send Antonia a text—hands free, don't worry—that says, "It was good to see you again. You *and* your family. I forgot how much I like it there. Sorry about all the excitement."

I see three dots indicating she's writing back, but then the dots go away. Without a reply.

(Background music continues, then fades out)

* *

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

When I get home, I go right to my safe. I write "Wapato" on the plastic bag that contains the key and the note, and lock it up. I put the jewelry box on a shelf in my garage, and also label it "Wapato." I order Thai food from a delivery service app, and hop in the shower. I'm clean and dressed by the time it gets here.

(Smartphone chime indicating personal assistant is engaged)

(Background music begins)

(Sounds of preparing food in kitchen in background)

This house sleeps six, but I live here alone. I didn't buy it to start a family or rent out rooms, I bought it because it's waterfront property on Lake Washington.

I can look straight across the water to Husky Stadium and the Montlake Bridge... and the Olympic Mountains beyond. The house came with a new dock. I might get a boat. It also came

with a security gate on the driveway, and high hedges on both sides of the backyard running down to a small private beach. It's very secluded, which I like. I see enough people during the day. When I'm here, I usually like to be alone.

It's 5:30 and already getting dark. And it's cold. I eat green curry inside the house instead of out on the deck, with the furnace on for the first time all year.

I check my phone every five minutes, but still, no reply from Antonia.

(Sound of smartphone personal assistant being engaged)

JOSEPH:

Kill the music.

(Sound of music stopping)

(Sound of eating food)

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

I grab my copy of *A Hitchhiker's Guide to Grays Harbor*, and leaf through it at the table. I flip to one of my favorite pieces in Aimo's collection, a short story called "Wesport Ho." The writing is uncomplicated, and the imagery is simple and pure. It takes place in 1925, and includes his brother Niilo, whose name is spelled N-i-i-l-o. The story goes like this.

(Clears throat) Niilo and I had planned the trip very carefully.

(Sounds of seagulls and small lapping waves at boat dock)

It was morning, our lunch was packed, and everything was perfect. The tide would be at its highest at 8:37, and we untied the rowboat at 8:05. The sun and the moon were aligned to cause one of the highest tides of the summer. (Sounds of ship horn in distance, rowing noises) We rowed the boat down the Chehalis River, past the Saginaw Shingle Mill, and we kept to the south side of the river to miss any boat traffic that might be coming or going.

(Sound of stronger waves)

It wasn't too long before the tide turned and began to flow out toward the ocean. We kept rowing steadily, and soon we were out in the bay opposite Indian Arrowhead Field, at the mouth of Squaw Creek. Everything was going as planned; the tide was flowing more strongly, the bay became a wide estuary, and our pace quickened.

After a few hours, off in the distance we could see our destination: the dock at Westport. After another hour and a half, we arrived. We tied the boat to the doc and stepped out. It felt good to be on dry land again as we were tired of sitting and rowing. There was an hour and a half

before the tide would turn, so there was still time to fool around. (Sounds of festive atmosphere on dock) In those days there was only the single dock there, not like it is now with all the buildings and the marina.

When it was time to begin our return trip, we cast off. (Sounds of rowing noises) We knew that in the summer with nice weather like this that there would always be a northwest wind coming up, blowing right up the river back to Aberdeen. (Sound of sail being raised) We hoisted a makeshift sail, and with the help of the incoming tide we would make it home before the tide turned again. And sure enough, we made it.

(Begin background music, continue rowing noises)

We traveled a total of 40 miles rowing and sailing with the help of the current. It was the end of a perfect day.

(Rowing noises fade out, music continues)

I feel it's important to point out that in 1925, Aimo was 12 years old. And Niilo, his next older brother, one of *seven* brothers in all, was 13. They sailed and rowed 50 miles all on their own, without cell phones or life jackets or GPS or any of the conveniences and safety expectations of today.

I leaf through other stories in which a young Aimo and his brothers and friends spend their days roaming the marshy shores and tributaries of Grays Harbor—usually with meager rations—to catch fish, trap minx, or search for Indian artifacts.

In another story from his early years, Aimo watches with delight as his father shaves his beard while singing a Finnish folksong. In another, a young girl his age appears on a horse on his street, and offers him a ride all over town. She drops him off at home an hour later, never to be seen again. In another, he finds a human skull on a beach that may have belonged to one of Billy Gohl's many victims. And in yet another, he paddles through his neighborhood in a boat during a violent storm and tidal surge of the Chehalis River.

(Begin new background music)

And then there's the hitchhiking story. On a Saturday in June of 1930, when he was 16, Aimo had to get from South Aberdeen to Seattle for a violin lesson. That's about a hundred and ten miles, but back then without a car it may as well have been a thousand miles. He tells of waking up at 5am and going downstairs to find that his mother has a pot of coffee going. She cooks him breakfast and hands him a paper sack lunch and a dollar bill and implores him to be careful.

He leaves the house and walks quickly down Perry Street and then Mill Street, waving to a friend along the way, and then walks across the railroad bridge that spans the Chehalis River—

and then over another bridge that spans the Wishkah River. Once there, he stands next to the highway. And puts his thumb in the air.

The first driver takes him as far as Elma, about 20 miles. The second, to Tacoma. In Tacoma, beneath the looming presence of Mt. Rainier, or *Tahoma*, he sits by the highway and eats the first of two homemade meat loaf sandwiches. Then a young driver in an expensive convertible picks him up and gets him to Seattle in record time—so quickly, that Aimo is early for his lesson.

To pass the time, he steps into a restaurant called The Samovar and orders a cup of coffee to have with his other sandwich, saving the apple for his trip home. When the time arrives, he walks into the Cornish School of Music for his lesson with Peter Bradov, a renowned teacher and violinist from Russia who had fled the revolution and wound up in Seattle.

His lesson with Bradov includes rehearsing the Mendelsohn Concerto in E Minor as well as some of the Kreutzer etudes. When the lesson's over, Bradov asks him where in town he lives. Upon hearing Aimo's answer, Bradov goes to his cupboard and stuffs two meat pies into a paper bag.

"Here you go," he tells him, with concern and admiration in his voice. "You're going to need these for your trip back home."

(Sounds of eating dinner)

JOSEPH:

Dude, hitchhiking. (Laughs) Not today.

(Sound of turning pages in story collection)

(Sounds of eating dinner fade out)

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

Near the back of the collection is a story titled, "Tuolla kaukana on pieni vene." It's a story about a husband and wife from Finland who are fishing off the coast of Alaska, on their way back to Aberdeen. In the open water they spy an ancient-looking dugout canoe drifting on the waves. They steer toward it and manage to attach a line, and then they tow it back to their home port. They later give the canoe to Aimo, the same vessel he paddles around in, in his flooded neighborhood.

"Tuolla kaukana on pieni vene." There far off is a small boat. A boat which, in my strange dreams, I can't reach...or see inside of.

(Sounds of strange dreamy wind)

(Sound of walking alongside swiftly flowing stream)

AIMO:

Oh, will you look at that, an osprey.

WALTER:

I'll be, I think you're right. Look at it fly up there.

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

We're walking along a creek, somewhere south of Toppenish. The early morning light paints the forested buttes above us in burnt orange. Aimo and Aimo's father-in-law, Walter, are beside me. We're here to fish—which is weird because I'm not a fisherman, but it seems perfectly natural that I would be.

We stop at a small gravel bar where the current flows swiftly. (Sound of footsteps ends) Walter and Aimo decide to put their lines in here, but I walk farther on my own, downstream. (Sound of footsteps resumes) I get to a spot where the clear, cold water slows as it enters a deep pool, with basalt walls on either side. (Stream sound turns to sound of lapping waves) I see an animal trail that leads to the top of the wall, where the rocks give way to soft, navigable ground. But instead of going that way, I decide to scramble sideways across the basalt (sound of Joseph moving along rocks, breathing heavily), clutching my gear in one hand while holding onto the rock with the other.

Soon I'm high above the water—exposed, but making good progress. When I get about halfway across, I place my hand in a notch to steady myself. (Sound of something hissing, slithering) My fingers grab a handful of something cold and scaly, something that moves.

(Sound of Joseph crying out, falling)

In a panic, I jump off the ledge and fly through the air. I try to wake up, as I always do in dreams when I'm falling—but I don't. The snake and I fly through the air for what seems like minutes.

(Sound of loud splashing in water)

I kick and flail in the water, and quickly make for the shore, somehow with the fishing gear still in hand. The snake is nowhere to be seen.

I climb out of the water dripping wet, and notice a small pine grove set back from the creek bank. (Faint sounds of fire or something cooking over fire) At the center of the grove is a teepee. I move toward the grove and notice two people, a man and a woman, who are sitting in front of the teepee. They're *old*-looking, almost as old as the trees around them. They're

cooking something in a pot that hangs from a tripod over a fire. I nod, and they acknowledge my greeting.

Suddenly, Aimo and Walter are standing there beside me. Walter says that they're among many who come to camp along the Satus. That they long for the old days. To live, if only briefly, like they used to.

(Faint sound of electronic pulsing that becomes wake-up alarm)

(Sound of Joseph waking up, stirring in bed)

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

In my morning haze, I see that I have a text from Antonia that came in overnight. It reads: "I went to the police."

JOSEPH:

What?

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

Maybe I misunderstood and wasn't supposed to take the jewelry box or the metal detector. "About what?" I write back. She replies right away. "About the license. I took your suggestion."

JOSEPH:

Oh, whew.

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

"I told the police that it was found in Seattle." Then another message: "I didn't tell them how I got it, only that it was anonymously returned to me."

I text back, "OK. What did they think?" Again, the three dots, and then: "I'm busy all morning. But we should talk later today."

I don't tell her this, but I'm highly ok with that.

(Joseph getting out of bed then background noises fade out)

* *

(Begin background music)

(Sounds of doing things in kitchen)

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

I check my personal email while making coffee and see a new message from Kim. The subject line adorably reads, "Cookie recipe" but the message body says, "Trying to be a little careful in case anyone is reading over your shoulder, LOL. This is fun."

JOSEPH:

At least *somebody's* having fun.

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

She tells me that her friend thinks she knows what Aimo is saying in the movies. Or at least, the AI software thinks it does. She explains that the AI analyzes mouth movements and comes up with potential individual words being spoken. But it also knows a person isn't likely to string together random nonsense words. The words have to fit together, to convey some kind of meaning.

She lists the top three phrases it came up with:

The mazes of men. It will bind them.

JOSEPH:

Oh.

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

The places I've been. It will find them.

JOSEPH:

Yeah!

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

The graces of Ben. Get well Hiram.

JOSEPH:

Hmm.

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

On my phone, I re-watch the short videos Kim sent me of the Super 8 footage and yeah, I can see any of those phrases being the one that Aimo is saying to the camera. *Or*, maybe none of them.

JOSEPH:

Yeah.

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

Kim also relays her friend's caveats: that the tech still a work in progress, that the source footage is dated and grainy, that the AI isn't familiar with the speaker's voice and enunciation,

etc. *And* she includes one more thing: She says we should at least acknowledge that in addition to reading lips, AI can handwrite letters.

JOSEPH:

Mmm, Mmm hmm.

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

Just Google it, she says, you'll see. She ends with, just something to think about. Skepticism has long been a sweet spot for Kim and me. I take a moment to remind myself to be methodical. To treat this whole thing as I would any other problem to solve. Build a hypothesis. Test it. Rapidly iterate. Test it again.

* *

(Sound of running on treadmill)

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

On my treadmill a short time later, I suddenly realize something.

(Sound of treadmill quickly stopping, Joseph stepping off of it and breathing hard)

I take a video of myself saying, "The Places I've Been" three different times. I compare my lip movements, with the volume off, to Aimo's lip movements.

JOSEPH:

Woah.

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

It's a near match.

(Begin background music)

(Sounds of Joseph running upstairs and into kitchen area)

(Sound of Joseph setting something down and flipping quickly through pages)

JOSEPH:

In silent words determine more the *places* where I heard the sounds...

Yes! That's gotta be it!

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

Right there on page 82 of *The Hitchhiker's Guide to Grays Harbor* is a story I'd forgotten all about, called "The Places I've Been."

JOSEPH:

That's gotta be it!

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

A quaint tribute that Aimo wrote...

JOSEPH

(in background) Ah! Is that it? That's gotta be it!

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

...to some of his favorite spots.

Six spots to be exact.

(Brief musical interlude)

I have no idea if this is the right trail to follow. And suddenly, Mel is blowing up my work phone with messages. But I pack some clothes in bag and send Kim a quick text before hopping in the shower, that reads:

I think I have something.

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 Genie Leslie as Kim, and Ken Kaiyala as Aimo. I play the part of Joseph.

A very special thank you goes out to My Tozzi for the original song "Skin Touching Sinew." To hear more of Mya's wonderful singing and guitar playing, visit her bandcamp page at girldisaster.bandcamp.com.

For more information about Dirt - An Audio Drama, as well as media or sponsorship inquiries, please visit dirtaudiodrama.com.

You've reached the end of Act One, but we'll be back with more chapters soon.

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