

DIRT - AN AUDIO DRAMA
Chapter 7 Transcript
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****Warning****

This is a complete written transcript of the entire Chapter 7 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 Joseph's phone ringing)

JOSEPH:

Hey! Mel. Haven't looked at your messages yet. What's up?

MEL:

(On car speakers) You were being followed.

JOSEPH:

(Pause) What?

MEL:

I'm going through the camera footage now.

JOSEPH:

Can you tell for how long?

MEL:

At least for a few blocks before the crosswalk. I haven't looked at the footage from farther away yet. I also noticed you went into that noodle shop.

JOSEPH:

Yeah.

MEL:

Didn't I tell you that I ordered lunch for you?

JOSEPH:

I momentarily forgot. I didn't actually eat there...

MEL:

Somebody in dark jeans and a dark jacket, medium height. And red headphones. They were near you in the crowd while you were down on the pavement, too. But that's all I know so far. I can update you more later, after I've looked through everything else.

JOSEPH:

Ok. Crap. Can you tell if they dropped anything on the ground next to me?

MEL:

Um, I just said...

JOSEPH:

Yep. Right.

Any news on the background check?

MEL:

Still waiting to hear back.

JOSEPH:

Okay.

MEL:

You're worried about Friday's meeting with Molecular.

JOSEPH:

It's starting to feel like the wrong week to try to sell a 40-million-dollar company. I don't suppose a freak storm is about to shut down the Berlin airport?

MEL:

The Germans will be here Thursday night.

JOSEPH:

Right. Guess I better be on my best behavior.

MEL:

For sure Angela is.

JOSEPH:

Angela...

MEL:

I better go. I have a project to run, you know.

JOSEPH:

Of course. No way you're on a smoke break right now.

MEL:

(Sound of breathing out cigarette smoke) There you go being funny again.

(Sound of phone hanging up)

(Sound of Joseph thinking, tapping on steering wheel)

JOSEPH:

Followed... Man...

(Sound of car accelerating)

[End scene]

(Sound of opening café door, walking in, café sounds in background)

SERVER (CARLA):

Just you, hon?

JOSEPH:

Yep. Just me.

(Sound of walking to café booth)

CARLA:

Don't tell me you're gonna keep those sunglasses on.

(Sound of Joseph sitting down in booth)

JOSEPH:

(Trying to sound convincing) It's my eyes... They're sensitive to the light.

CARLA:

Well, it looks to me like you're trying to hide. What are you wanted for, hit and run?

(Sound of taking glasses off, setting them on the table)

JOSEPH:

Actually... it's not too bad in here...

CARLA:

You say that now. Just wait 'til you taste the food.

(Sound of text notification on Joseph's phone)

You need a minute with the menu?

JOSEPH:

Nah. Could I get a Denver omelet, light on the cheese? And some coffee?

CARLA:

Kinda late for breakfast, isn't it?

JOSEPH:

What can I say. It sounds good.

CARLA:

Alright. Don't spoil your dinner. Cream too?

JOSEPH:

Yeah. Oh and some h—

CARLA:

Hot sauce. Don't worry, I got a sixth sense about me. (Shouting over her shoulder) Hey Carl! Mile-high omelet! And take it easy on the cheese!

CARL:

(In distance) *Thanks Carla.*

(Sound of Carla walking away)

(Sounds of random text notifications on both of Joseph's phones, during below narration)

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

I wasn't planning to get back on the road so soon, but when it dawned on me this morning that Aimo may have dropped a big clue—six of them, to be exact—in a simple story that he wrote more than 30 years ago about some of his favorite places around Washington. I mean, after what just happened in Wapato, and learning that Salvador and Maria had received a letter from Aimo too... and then finding a box in the ground on the farm... *and* the way I *found* the box, using an old metal detector that I'm pretty sure belonged to Aimo, all those years ago...

(Footsteps approaching table, sound of setting down mug)

CARLA:

Here's that coffee. I can hear that thing *dingalingling* all the way from the kitchen. You've got two phones?

JOSEPH:

Ugh, sorry about that.

(Sound of Joseph handling phones)

There, muted.

CARLA:

If I had two phones, I'd just play Candy Crush against myself all day. It'd be way better than working at this joint.

JOSEPH:

(Laughs)

CARLA:

Are you gonna get that?

JOSEPH:

Huh?

CARLA:

Antonia's calling!

JOSEPH:

(Fumbling for answer)

CARLA:

Look, that's what it says on your phone screen...

JOSEPH:

Right. Sorry, I'll try to keep this quiet.

CARLA:

It won't bother me any. At least somebody in this town has something going on...

(Sound of Carla walking away)

JOSEPH:

Antonia.

ANTONIA:
(On phone in Joseph's ear) Hi.

JOSEPH:
(Clears throat) So, uh, you said you went to the police?

ANTONIA:
It was good to see you too.

JOSEPH:
Sorry?

ANTONIA:
I didn't write you back right away yesterday, so I'm telling you now. Your visit... it made my parents very happy.

JOSEPH:
Oh. Well, that's good to hear. Next time I promise not to show up out of nowhere like that.

(Sounds of kitchen clanking noises)

ANTONIA:
Where are you?

JOSEPH:
I'm at a café in a little town south of Olympia, not too far from the coast.

So—

ANTONIA:
So I went back to the police and told them that my license was mailed to me from someone in Seattle. Like I said, I just told them it was returned anonymously.

JOSEPH:
Yeah, thanks for that.

ANTONIA:
That seemed to make sense to them. They said some other items were stolen from over here at about the same time, and turned up a recycling center in Seattle. They think that whoever did it went on a stealing spree and then drove over there and dumped the stuff they didn't want into a blue bin, when they probably meant a black trash bin.

JOSEPH:

Yeah, the whole bins thing is kind of a mess over here.

ANTONIA:

Yeah.

JOSEPH:

So, do they have any idea who did it?

ANTONIA:

Don't you think it's strange that you out of all people found my license?

JOSEPH:

(Long pause) It's not exactly random, is it.

ANTONIA:

Well the police aren't supposed to reveal identities, but I've known most of them since we were kids. So yeah, they mentioned a likely suspect who's under investigation.

JOSEPH:

Oh. Did you get his name or address or anything like that?

ANTONIA:

Her.

JOSEPH:

What?

ANTONIA:

It's a her.

JOSEPH:

Oh. Right. *Her*.

ANTONIA:

She lives in Yakima. I was thinking about paying her a visit.

JOSEPH:

Wait, what? By yourself?

ANTONIA:

You don't think I should?

JOSEPH:
Well I—

ANTONIA:
I can handle myself, Joseph.

JOSEPH:
Of course. (Pause) Sorry, I didn't mean it like that. I'm just wondering if... I mean, knowing it could all be connected—your purse getting stolen, me finding the license, digging up that box at the farm. They don't know for sure that she did it, right?

ANTONIA:
I know who she is.

JOSEPH:
(Pause) Okay. So, I have somebody over here looking into it too. It might be good to try to connect a few dots before confronting her, I guess is what I'm saying. Would you be okay holding off for a couple days?

ANTONIA:
(Long pause) You know, you still do that thing when you eat.

JOSEPH:
What thing?

ANTONIA:
You smack your lips every third or fourth chew. I noticed it when you were over here.

JOSEPH:
I do?

ANTONIA:
You do.

JOSEPH:
I do not...

(Sound of Carla arriving, setting plates on table)

CARLA:
I think he put too much cheese on here.

JOSEPH:
It looks fine.

CARLA:
Okayyy.

JOSEPH:
Hey, can I ask you a question?

CARLA:
Sure, hun.

JOSEPH:
I'm looking for the old Pe Ell school.

CARLA:
Hmm, you mean like...older than the school that's down the street?

JOSEPH:
Yeah. Not the newer one I drove past on the way in, but an older one. From like back in the thirties or forties?

CARLA:
Oh honey, you're asking the wrong gal. I just moved here a month ago. The chef might know, though. He was actually born here. (Yells over her shoulder again) Hey! Carl! Carl!!

CARL:
(From kitchen) What do you want, Carla?

CARLA:
Yeah where's that old school located? The one from the forties?

(Sound of dishes or pan being set down then footsteps of person walking closer)

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):
A large, middle-aged man in a dirty chef's outfit walks out of the kitchen and toward us, wiping his hands on a rag.

JOSEPH:
Sorry, didn't mean to interrupt you there.

CARL:
(Gruff but friendly voice) It's ok. Is there a problem?

CARLA:
He was asking about that old school in town. You know, wondering where it is.

JOSEPH:

Wait. You're Carla, and you're...Carl?

CARL:

Yep. We got *Carlos* back there helping in the kitchen, too. Just worked out that way.

JOSEPH:

(Chuckles) Alright.

Well, my grandfather taught school here in Pe Ell years ago. I just figured, hey, I'm passing through, might as well take a look. I mean, who knows when I'll be out this way again, you know?

CARL:

(Suspicious) Yeah. Is that your fancy car out the window there? You from Seattle?

JOSEPH:

Yeah...

CARL:

Well, we get people like you come through here once in a while, for stuff like that.

CARLA:

My advice is they keep on going...

CARL:

Oh, just hush.

CARLA:

Just saying it like it is.

CARL:

So, you want to know about the school from around the time of the great wars. Well, that's easy. It's right behind us.

JOSEPH:

Oh. It's that close?

CARL:

Yep. When you walk outta here, just go around the corner and look at that old building with the blue roof. The one that looks like it might fall down—but it won't. That's all that's left of the old school. Used to be the gymnasium, but today it's the VFW hall.

CARLA:

VFW is about the most exciting thing going on around here.

CARL:

That's not true, you just don't know.

CARLA:

Guess I don't.

(Fade out café sounds)

[End scene]

(Fade in sound of Joseph leaving café, walking on gravel)

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

I pay and walk outside and head around the corner toward the back of café, and sure enough, (Sound of stopping walking) there it is: an old, large, wooden building with white windows and a blue roof.

JOSEPH:

Alrighty then.

(Sound of Joseph starting to walk back to car)

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

It would be weird for me to do what I came here to do while it's still light out. (Sound of getting in car) In a couple of hours, it'll start to get dark. So, to kill some time, I decide to drive around and see the surrounding area.

(Sound of starting up car)

What there is of it.

(Sound of driving, from inside car)

Pe Ell, which is two words, spelled "P-e" "E-l-l," is eight, maybe ten blocks long from what I can tell. There's a Texaco, a post office, several churches, a few restaurants and bars, a couple of banks, and a grocery store. A sign on Main Street advertises a farmers' market on Saturdays.

Pe Ell may be tiny, but it's the biggest town for miles, right in the heart of timber country. The same Chehalis River, that 90 or so miles downstream from here flows into Grays Harbor at Aberdeen, and then into the Pacific Ocean, skirts the western edge of town.

(Sound of driving faster)

I head west on Highway 6, the main road between here and the coast. The highway passes through hay and dairy farms, and up and over forested hills that are checkered with patchy clear cuts. Logging has *long* been a way of life here, and has been for generations, going as far back as the arrival of the first European settlers.

I know from Aimo's stories that it was the timber industry and the promise of work for Aimo's father as a longshoreman or logger or fisherman or oyster harvester or cranberry grower that brought the Elos and many other immigrant families to the Washington coast in the first place. I don't know this area well, but I *do* know my family history can be traced throughout the meandering rivers and swampy meadows of these coastal lowlands.

At the town of South Bend, where the Willapa River starts to flow into the marshy estuary of Willapa Bay, I pass a statue of a giant oyster shell that's at least as tall as my car with a sign that reads "World's Largest Oyster." I consider venturing further towards the open ocean, but I keep an eye on the clock—and the quickly darkening sky—and start to make my way back. The same way I came.

(Sound of car parking, turning off engine)

NARRATOR (Joseph):

Just before I get back to Pe Ell, I park near a bridge on Highway 6 that crosses over the Chehalis River. I briefly look around for anything suspicious, as I have numerous times now since Mel called.

(Sound of getting out of car and walking to riverbank)

(Sound of river, sound of hand in water)

The river is low, but a month from now, when late November storms start to batter the Washington coast one after another, the ground I'm standing on will be several feet underwater, and will stay that way until summer.

From here the Chehalis takes on the waters of the Newaukum, Skoocumchuck, Black, Satsop, Wynoochee, and Wishkah rivers, and countless creeks and streams, before running its course.

(Sound of rock splashing in river)

Washington is many things: forests, deserts, mountains, coulees and canyons, islands, and vast prairies.

But more than anything else, it may be rivers.

(Sound of walking back up to car then fade out)

(Fade in sound of car parking and engine turning off)

It's nearly dark as I park near Carl's café again. I stay in the car and answer some work texts and emails until it really *is* dark. And then, when no one seems to be around (sound of getting out of car and opening and closing doors and doing things) I start to get ready. I put on a dark wool hat and jacket. I strap a headlamp around my hat, leaving the light turned off for now. I grab my duffle bag and sling the strap over my shoulder. Then I grab (sound of handling the metal detector) the Coinmaster IV metal detector (sound of walking on gravel then grass) and head towards the old school building.

(Sound of walking on grass, sound of being outside at night, sound of handling metal detector)

Other than a bright light shining from an outdoor sconce next to the old gymnasium's main door, the area around the old school—now the Veterans of Foreign Wars building—is quiet. I use the faint glow of my phone's home screen to scan the foundation as I walk along it. I get about halfway around the building, and then I see it...

JOKSEPH:

Nice.

NARRATOR:

An old faucet coming out of the wall. I turn on my headlamp, and from my duffle bag I grab some wired earbuds, and plug them into the small hole in the Coinmaster using an adapter I purchased.

(Sound of outside noises being muffled due to wearing earbuds)

JOSEPH:

(Muffled) (Exhales)

(Muffled sound of turning on metal detector and hearing low buzzing noise)

(Muffled sound of walking around on grass)

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

The Places I've Been. If that *is* the phrase that Aimo is saying over and over again in his home movies, as Kim's email suggested, and if I'm right that the story of that title in *The Hitchhiker's Guide to Grays Harbor* *is* in fact the key to unlocking whatever it is I'm supposed to find or do next...

JOSEPH:

(Muffled) I could be in for a long road trip...

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

Most of the stories in Aimo's collection go into colorful detail—about locations and people and events from all throughout his life. By contrast, *The Places I've Been* is not much more than a simple round-up of placenames and single-line descriptions, almost to the point of being forgettable. And yet, it may be the story that unlocks everything.

Leave it to Aimo to hide his clues in plain sight.

JOSEPH:

(Muffled) Wherever you are, I hope you're enjoying all this...

MALE VOICE:

(Muffled) Hey!

JOSEPH:

(Muffled) (Gasp)

MALE VOICE:

(Muffled) You there!

(Sound of Joseph dropping Coinmaster and earbuds coming out, outside ambiance returns)

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

A bright flashlight shines directly at me. I look up and see two silhouettes standing about ten feet away.

JOSEPH:

(Breathing nervously) Woah, it's okay! Do you mind lowering your light so I can see you? Here, I'll turn off my headlamp.

(Sound of rifle cocking)

JOSEPH:

(Breathing) Woah. Okay... I'm lowering my hands...

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

Whoever's holding the flashlight moves the beam down to the grass in front of me, shining it on the metal detector. They take a couple of steps forward.

MALE VOICE:

Say, is that an old Coinmaster you got there?

JOSEPH:
Carl?

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):
The light shines back on my face.

CARL:
Omelet guy.

JOSEPH:
(Nervous laugh) Yeah, that's me. Don't tell anyone though, I usually have a kale salad for lunch... (Laughs nervously)

CARL:
Gosh, I haven't seen one of these in person in a long time. It still works?

JOSEPH:
Yeah.

CARL:
Huh. Well, this here's my dad, Bernie.

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):
Carl shines the flashlight on the person next to him, who looks annoyed and puts a hand up to his face to block the light. He's short, especially next to Carl's sizable frame, and appears to be in his eighties or nineties. He's dressed sharply in navy pants and an old, military-style jacket and hat. He's also holding a rifle, one that looks about as old as he is.

CARL:
Staff Sergeant Bernie Franks. We just got done inside the building here, setting up for tomorrow's chamber lunch. You know, I didn't catch your name earlier...

JOSEPH:
Oh, uh... It's Joe.

BERNIE:
Why are you out here?

JOSEPH:
(Exhales) It's kind of a long story.

CARL:
Well dad, I'd say he's metal detecting. Wouldn't you? But why after dark? Would have been a lot easier when you were here earlier...

JOSEPH:

Well, like I said, it's a long—

CARL:

You know, I've located several old coins and keys here myself.

JOSEPH:

You... have a detector?

CARL:

Oh, you bet your doodle tickler I do! Mine's a lot newer than that old beauty you're using, though. I've got an M6. Got it new a couple years ago to replace an MXT All Pro with the 950 coil, which, by the way, I sold for a dang good price. And then with the M6 being a lot cheaper—

BERNIE:

Ugh—

CARL:

But pretty much about as good—

BERNIE:

Carl!

CARL:

I also got me a nice new coil cover, plus an eight-inch probe and a Bullseye TRX Pinpointer, too. Is that...is that what you're using in the bag there?

JOSEPH:

(Chuckles) Uhhh no. Just a small shovel pretty much. I like to go light. Sounds like you have quite a set-up...

CARL:

More like a *dream* set-up. If you know what I mean.

BERNIE:

What are you doing out here? Spying on us? You belong to a gang or something?

JOSEPH:

No. No, no. Nothing like that.

BERNIE:

Seems to me you're up to no good.

CARL:

Look, dad, he told me earlier today that his grandpa—idn't that right? Your granddad?

JOSEPH:

Yeah.

CARL:

So his grandpa used to teach here, way back in the day, when this was part of the old school.

JOSEPH:

Look, I get that it's weird me being out here at night like this. Honestly though? I just didn't want to draw any attention to myself. Although, looks like that plan backfired...

BERNIE:

Heh, I'll say.

CARL:

Well, what ARE you looking for, anyway?

JOSEPH:

I mean, nothing really...

(Sound of rifle cocking)

JOSEPH:

Right. Well... I just have a feeling my grandfather might have left something here, a long time ago.

CARL:

Left something... You mean on purpose?

JOSEPH:

I'm not really sure. Most likely I'm wrong though. There's probably nothing here. I'll just wrap up here in a minute and get going.

CARL:

Well, here's the thing, Joe. I *could* cite you for trespassing.

BERNIE:

(Groans)

JOSEPH:

Cite me...?

BERNIE:

Carl, let's just go.

CARL:

I do have some jurisdiction here seeing as I'm the part-time Fish and Wildlife officer for the southwest region. Maybe if you just tell me more about what you have going on here, we could come to some kind of compromise.

JOSEPH:

Compromise...

CARL:

Well, I can't let you just roam around on someone's private property like this, can I? And, the way I see it, you could really do yourself a favor by using something with a lot more signal power. Hey, I could go get mine!

JOSEPH:

No, no. That's ok, I'm—

CARL:

It's ok, you wouldn't be inconveniencing me. It's not far. I could be back in 10 minutes, after I drop dad here off at home.

JOSEPH:

Carl, that's...not necessary. Thank you though. Really, just five or ten more minutes and I'll be out of here. I'm really sorry to bother you both.

CARL:

Well, do you mind if we stay and watch? I mean, on the grounds of trespassing and all.

BERNIE:

What?

CARL:

Well dad, you heard what he said, it won't take long. Man, I *love* these old things. I can't believe you have one! The boys on the treasure hunt forum, they're gonna love hearing about this.

JOSEPH:

Wait, wait...

CARL:

Are you running double As or 9 volts in there?

JOSEPH:
The batteries?

CARL:
You bet I mean the batteries.

JOSEPH:
Oh. Yeah. Double As.

CARL:
Does it *really* take 14 of them?

JOSEPH:
Yeah. 14.

CARL:
(Whistles)

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):
Carl's clearly not going anywhere, and Bernie still looks like he wants to shoot me—or Carl, I can't tell which now. It looks like if I'm going to see this through, I'll have an audience. And, if I'm not careful, a new detector buddy named Carl.

(Sound of walking and picking up detector)

JOSEPH:
Well, I'll just uhh, pick up where I left off then...

(Sound of turning detector back on)

(Sound of Joseph walking around with detector)

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):
For the next few minutes, I can hear Carl explaining to Bernie about dials and switches and coils. It's awkward being watched—and critiqued. I try my best to look like I know what I'm doing. Then I get an idea.

(Sound of setting down detector)

Maybe if I drive away and come back in a couple hours, I'll truly have the place to myself.

JOSEPH:
Well, just as I thought, it's not here.

CARL:
That's it?

JOSEPH:
Yeah. It was just a hunch anyway. Too bad. I had to give it a try though you know?

BERNIE:
I think he's lying.

JOSEPH:
What?

BERNIE:
Where did you say you're from?

CARL:
(Suspicious) Earlier he said he's from Seattle.

BERNIE:
That's a long drive to come all the way down here and give up so quickly.

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):
I start to calculate the distance from here to the car, and if I have enough time to outrun Carl and drive off before this gets any more personal.

(Sound of detector shaking in background)

Or before I really do get myself in some kind of trouble.

CARL:
Hey, you got a hit!!

JOSEPH:
Again...

(Sound of Joseph walking toward detector)

CARL:
I didn't know the old ones do THAT when they find something.

JOSEPH:
Yeah.

(Sound of Joseph grabbing handle of detector, detector noise turns off when he grabs it)

JOSEPH:
(Laughs to self)

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):
I hover the disc over the ground where the detector was just shaking.

JOSEPH:
Nothing...

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):
Suddenly—

(Sound of several hard steps)

JOSEPH:
Woah...

NARRATOR:
The detector pulls me to the left, like it wants to go somewhere.

(Sound of Joseph walking on grass)

JOSEPH:
(Chuckle)

NARRATOR:
And then...

(Sound of detector buzz getting suddenly loud)

(Sound of Joseph turning off detector)

JOSEPH:
(Exhale)

(Sound of setting down detector, walking over to get shovel out of duffle bag)

CARL:
(From distance) Shhh, dad! I don't know. I'm trying to watch...

(Sound of walking back to detector and starting to dig)

CARL:

(From distance) Oh, you should totally get a Ground Hog Shovel. They're about sixty bucks. Perfect for stuff just like this!

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

I dig up chunks of grass, and hear Bernie behind me saying I better put those back when I'm done. And then...

(Sound of shovel hitting metal)

CARL:

Ohhhh, dad, did you hear that? Gosh, that sound bigger than a coin...

(Sound of Joseph tossing shovel and using hands)

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

I get a few fingers underneath it and pry it free from a few roots, and then...

(Sound of Joseph breathing, holding box)

CARL:

(From close) Woah... Is that a box?

(Sound of Joseph blowing and wiping dirt off the box)

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

I again consider grabbing my things and dashing for the car. But Carl is right next to me now. And Bernie still has his rifle, loaded or not.

CARL:

Will you look at that. Y—your granddad left this here for you? How long ago? And how did you know that?

JOSEPH:

I don't know exactly when. Might have been decades ago.

I can't believe it was actually here...

CARL:

Well? You gonna open it?

JOSEPH:

(Heavy sigh)

(Sounds of Joseph handling box)

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

The cloth interior is in bad shape, like the box in Wapato. A small plastic bag shines brightly in the rays of the headlamp and flashlight. I set the box down and unfold and open the bag.

(Sounds of handling plastic and paper)

Inside there's a folded-up note on familiar stationary, plus something shiny. I quickly stuff the paper in my pocket, but I hold the coin out in my palm so Carl and Bernie can see it.

CARL:

That's... Can you...see what year that is?

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

I squint at the nickel in the bright light.

JOSEPH:

Looks like 1938.

CARL:

Hoo! A 1938 Jefferson. You should find out if that's a proof. They only minted something like 20,000 of them. Makes it worth even more...

JOSEPH:

So you know a lot about coins, too...

BERNIE:

Ugh. He goes to shows, bids on auctions on his computer. He goes through all the change at the café too.

CARL:

Well, dad, all it takes is one good find, and I can retire.

(Sound of Joseph getting ready to go)

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

Carl wants to keep talking, but I'm beyond ready to get out of here.

JOSEPH:

Okay, as I promised, I'll get out of your hair now. Oops... almost forgot about the grass.

(Sound of shovel patting ground)

There we go...

CARL:

Now wait. Just wait. I mean, this is pretty exciting! Finding that old box in the ground there... It's Joe, right? You want to grab a beer or something, Joe?

BERNIE:

Let him go, Carl. He got what he came for. Besides, I'm late for Jeopardy!

JOSEPH:

Sorry Carl, I need to get going. Thanks for not shooting me. Hope you both have a good rest of your night...

CARL:

OK hold on. Now, I mean, it's a pretty small world of people these days who metal detect, and even smaller for those who find *anything* of value anymore. How about let's exchange phone numbers. Here, give me your number and I'll send you a text right now, so you have mine.

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

I consider the ramifications of sharing anything of mine with a stranger, especially with everything going on at work and social media right now, let alone one who just saw me unearth a mysterious object, under the cloak of night, in a small town that I don't live in, and who seems just savvy enough with information to be both clingy *and* dangerous.

But playing along feels like the easiest escape right now, so I give him the number of my new phone. It'll be easy enough to block him if he calls or texts.

CARL:

Got it. Okay. So, ah, Joe, what's your last name?

JOSEPH:

Just Joe.

CARL:

Alright, just Joe...

(Sounds of group walking)

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

I start walking back to the car, and they walk with me. *Right next* to me. Carl tells me about some of the coins in his collection, and that there's a show at the Tacoma Dome he's going to starting tomorrow night.

JOSEPH:

Mmm. Mmmm hmm....

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

We get to the café and Carl and Bernie start to splinter off towards a nearby truck.

(Sound of loading gear in car and getting in car)

JOSEPH:

Dude! Man, that Was Close.

(Sound of starting car)

Nobody knows I was here...

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

I steal one final look at Carl in my rearview mirror, and I can tell what he's doing.

Joseph:

Oh great.

NARRATOR (JOSEPH):

He has his phone out, and he's aiming it at me.

(Sound of car pulling away)

He's taking a picture.

Of my license plate.

(Sound of car driving away then fade out)

[End scene]

[End chapter]

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