

The Hotel Podcast

Season 4 Companion

THE MANAGER
(calmer. deadly.)
"I run the Hotel."

THE HOTEL
(just as deadly.)
I am the Hotel.

Introduction

In 2021, during and after the release of S3, everything changed. The show went from being an independent (read: Mark and I fucking around best we could figure out how) to something resembling an professional production. Pacific asked us to join his network, Midnight Disease, which hosted the entirety of S4. Because of his nature (something I often described as a garden, helping art and people grow and flourish) he also spent much of his time teaching me the nuts and bolts of podcasting. Announcements, ad breaks, Patreon, postcards, a half a dozen others, all learned at his knee.

We would be an on-going show with bi-weekly episodes. We had started We Made The Hotel!, our behind the scenes podcast for Patreon. We did bonus episodes with bespoke postcard art. The show was, in many ways, at its peak. But Lauren and I had just moved to North Carolina, Mark and Kelly were back in L.A., and the success came with the bitter aftertaste of post 2020 loneliness. I threw myself into the work, trying desperately to grow the burning ember we'd been chasing for six years into a full fire. The show grew to artistic and critical heights we had barely even dare dream of before, but all the fire did was burn me out.

I wouldn't notice for another two years though.

How could I? The show was going great! The stories poured out of me in writing sessions that lasted for hours, frequently all day. And weren't alone. For the first time since starting The Theatre of Tomorrow in 2015, we had a fandom. Not the most net savvy, it took Pacific to find them. A small but extraordinarily enthusiastic group of passionate people who had, while we weren't looking, connected intensely with our little monsters.

It cannot be overstated how important the fans were and are to all of us at The Hotel. It reshaped everything. The Hotel was designed initially as an experiment to see if we could produce a show that could find an audience. In a very real way, we made this show for you. So when we found you in S4, we simply could not stop performing for you. We hired one of the fan artists to be our Art Director. We then kept hiring fan artists to do our bonus episode podcasts. We tried our best to stay engaged with our fans, but at a comfortable enough distance that they could all conduct themselves without worry that we were watching them (which we 100% were.)

If you're reading these words, you are likely one of the die hard fans, the real lunatics who truly understand that prime directive of Hotel policy and will, like me, never check out. This guide is for you too.

Part historical document, part producer's commentary, and nakedly inspired by House of Leaves.

I could, and have, and will often continue to, talk about The Hotel all day. Where it comes from, what it's done for me, what blood in the fiction was bled by me, and how I too rotted away in service to Her until I was Transformed. But two pages of introduction preceding seventy pages of near stream of consciousness barely edited pseudo academic informal analysis feels like Pushing It already.

Let's leave it at thank you. Thank you for your support. Thank you for your attention. Thank you for reading all this. And, as ever, thanks for listening.

X,

Veronica California

18 July, 2025

Chapter¹

¹*Spoilers*

- *References*

0. We Found The [Hotel](#)!

A group of friends on an urban exploring trip discover a seemingly abandoned [Hotel](#). They soon find it is anything but...

Originally released between episodes three and four in October 2021 for a crossover promotion with [Creepy](#). Mark and I had worked with Jon Grilz once during the [Theatre of Tomorrow](#) days (In July of 2017 Mark built [suicidemouse.avi](#), narrated by Joe Stofko who would, six years later, play Detective Walsh in the first episode of [The \[Hotel\]\(#\) Presents: Trespasses](#)) so it was wonderful to get to cross over properly with this new production.

This episode is the first one I built the sound designed without any subsequent editing from Mark. Mark did the sound design on all of [Theatre of Tomorrow](#) as well as much of [The \[Hotel\]\(#\)](#) up till this point. I took over these duties fully as the production grew. Mark was able to focus more fully on his acting career and producing podcasts had become my full time job.

I was, back then, very very reticent to let someone else come anywhere near writing [The \[Hotel\]\(#\)](#), so probably the only person I would have done this with at the time was producer, friend, and podcast magnate Pacific S. Obadiah. Before he wrote anything we had to resolve the fundamentally disparate concepts of the shows. [Creepy](#) was firsthand accounts of urban legends and tales of horror, but no one checks out of the [Hotel](#). The compromise was reached that one of the kids in his half would just barely make it out at the last second to live to tell the tale.

Also, the script could not imply that the [Hotel](#) originated from wherever these kids were. It couldn't be some famous old [Hotel](#) or local legend. So they stumble across it on top of a mountain¹.

¹Which comes back again in S6. In fact this whole episode got upgraded from 'soft canon' to 'regular canon' in S6 and has subsequently become a load bearing episode.

The final point I needed to make clear to Pacific was whatever children he handed me in his script were going to die really horrible deaths on mic for twenty-five minutes. It's Halloween and we serve horror here sir, I'll kill the cast of Stranger Things if you drop 'em off at my pool. So Pacific aged the kids up to college and left the surviving character as the only proper child.

Shuffling this episode to the beginning of the season, post S3 changed a great deal of the tone and lore in subtle but important ways², and a holiday special is the perfect amount of transitional canon for such delicate work.

The introduction of the concept that the Staff rots away each night works better on a Halloween episode. So too does the Owner finding his feet as almost a Saturday Morning Cartoon Villain, changing size and twirling his mustache with glee. Starting with strangers and building up to the Hotel, seeing the Staff as monstrous, introducing the Hotel as a character, all works much better when you get each bit as a piece of candy after knocking on a series of doors.

An important historical note is the concept of the Staff rotting but the guests not clocking it came from Kramer, The Carnival postcard artist. It fit so perfectly I couldn't believe I hadn't been doing that all along. Working with the fans and integrating their ideas (and indeed eventually the fans themselves) into production would become an important staple of the show.

The Staff is having a lot of fun this episode. Almost joyfully participating in the night, like a Halloween office party, even though they don't really seem to know what Halloween is. (Why would they? It's not a very Hotel-centric holiday.) It's a special day to us (and the Hotel herself) not them.

²To say nothing of how the context changed post S6. Within the fiction, incidental things like the mountain and the small town become very significant in season 6 as part of the setting of the mysterious Badlands just as season 3's black forest. Which retroactively also edges the snowy clearing around Robert Watson's New Year's Eve party. Lila, Ozzy, and Ren become significant, or their absence does, once again like Robert Watson.

Graham put everything into this monstrous performance. Actors are never quite so happy as when they get an excuse to really play and go nuts. I kept asking for more and more, sending him clips of Hexus from Ferngully, and he crafted the Owner into a full living monster. The final files labeled 'We Found The Hotel_Owner_Chord Shredding Retakes.'

We end on a very rare laugh from the Manager as she wishes us happy Halloween with the Hotel, another signifier of deep change.

This unassuming little Halloween special slipped in at the beginning of S4, though sometimes overlooked and even skipped over, is a tremendously important episode both in production as well as within the fiction itself. Though not officially a part of Bloody Disgusting's BDFM network of horror podcasts, this team up with Jon Grilz's Creepy and heavy involvement from Pacific S. Obadiah set the stage for success. Pacific had been producing since S3 but S4 saw much more direct influence. Episode length, announcements, mid show ad breaks, the Patreon, and even more in S5³.

I'm very proud of this episode. It was an exciting challenge to write just the back half of a full story. Trying to find a moment of victory, or at least a cathartic enough arc, for Ren was the tricky part. I think his refusal to believe his brother died, and his last waterlogged words barely coming through "**Just. Keep. Swimming.**" (pg. 39) is not only effective but far more emotionally devastating a target than I was even shooting for. I really like the sound design of the rooms and the TV's going off. The moment where Ren goes from the void to the room, his voice now coming through the speakers, and then we pass through the tv to join him in the room is one I'm particularly proud of. I hope it's something I managed to convey reasonably well enough.

And Lauren and I still to this day quote "NOT LIKELY!" An excellent line read from Brandon Nguyen as Ozzy.

³What would become Double Stuff October and Trespases both came from him. As did 'event episode arcs' like Behind the Curtain and the Purple Door Trilogy, and introducing new characters. His initial suggestion: The Bellhop.

- **"Sure you heard about that though."** (pg. 25), while not a direct reference, is perhaps the loudest and clearest you can hear the women of Kill Bill's influence on how I write the Manager.
- You can just barely hear, in the plant room, mixed in amongst the undulating oscillating grumbling, a distinct 'meez-rack'. you will probably not recognize this from the 1953 novelty song There's A New Sound by Tony Burrello. A track I grew up with thanks to Dr Demento.

1. Perry Sherwin

How do we measure ourselves if we have nothing to measure against?

The lobby being black marble with white accents, Perry wearing black with red shoes and being swallowed into the bed, Perry being a man who is nothing without an entourage surrounding him, all of it is designed around the themes of this first episode's 're-pilot'. I needed to reset things, fix my hair, stand up straight, and explain to the listeners (we had a fast growing and active fandom at this point) what the hell was going on, who everyone was, and how episodes were going to go from now on.

The Manager's door, the Lobby Boy's closet, the reservation cards, the fact that there are two characters per episode separated by the desk bell, all of it needed a simple explanation because next up is the Owner and the [Hotel](#) and things are gonna get weird fast. Even the episode being in real time (the midpoint desk bell summons the Lobby Boy. The first few episodes function like this, the guest checks in in the first half and dies in the second.)

The themes work more deeply though, as the Manager and the Lobby Boy are both very lonely in very different ways. Their new dynamic reflects this, needing each other, but always something uncomfortable about that. Gone is the S1 contempt and glee that sometimes peeked out. Gone is the S2 and S3 yearning and separation. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern ride again, together forever, for better or worse. Somewhere between soldiers in the muddy noisy trenches and the Flintstone's dishwasher spiking the camera with a shrug and a 'it's a living.'

- Perry's red shoes are a wink to Dorothy's ruby slippers because Izzy had a nine hour [Hotel](#) playlist I was listening to while writing (this was months before we hired him) and on it he had the track 'Optimistic Voices' from [The Wizard of Oz](#).

2. Susan Brodner

Who do we run from when we can't be followed?

How do we escape when we are the wardens?

The Owner's first S4 appearance and I am still figuring out what he does. Since all he normally does is give reports I gave him paperwork. The reservation cards gave him a job on the floor as well as a connection to the Manager. I also wanted to eventually offer them as merch. Guest cards as well as personalized cards. That idea only made it as far as Patreon.

The difference between his office and the Manager's is nebulous at best, forgotten at worst, and high inconsequential the rest of the time. For now he has a nice 1980s office. Images that feel tactile but also boring and strange. A wood paneled walls that can be cozy or suffocating. Thick green folders with red string. Old paper. Hard carpets. You feel these things. It's important in an audio only medium to try and engage the listeners' other senses as much as possible.

Touch makes the audio real in your mind.

The Owner has always been written from the POV of the most powerful. The Wealthy. The Man. The Owner. He has no actual power, he is a tool of the **System**. Even his privileges are fringe and fleeting, existing largely in his own mind. So the actual power he wields he wields with swift anger.

His respect for the Manager rooted in her detachment **"I admire her focus and rigidity."** (pg. 2) and lamenting of the Lobby Boy **"I only wish there were some way he could never get out of that closet."** (pg. 3). This is why when the Owner rots, he rots dry. Bones only. The meat and blood and LIFE of the body is nothing to him. Only the eternal proof of his being, the rigid framework, only the **System**, remains.

All this he of course knows fundamentally. **"I look around me and I feel, for just a chilling moment, caught."** (pg. 3) And the moment he acknowledges this to himself, he turns his anger and focus to the death of the guest, caught also by the same trap as he.

The **Hotel**'s first S4 appearance and her first proper appearance as HERSELF. When Pacific brought the show to (at the time) Midnight Disease and we were going to begin full time production with regular biweekly episode releases I wanted Christa and Graham to play too. So I made it an ensemble cast.

Which meant figuring out what the hell the **Hotel** did during an episode.

She's just playing with her toys in the bathtub, pulling wings of flies in her backyard. She's daydreaming instead of paying attention to the road. How do you make that interesting or fun without being exhausting and vague? You make it a one woman show, of course! She's Carrie Fischer. She's Liza with an **H**. She's a drag queen. She's Elvira. She's doing a monologue during a schlocky movie. She's doing crowd work with a corpse. Too overpowered? Knows EVERYTHING? Even what you're thinking?? Fine, it's all a gag. It's voyeuristic. She's sexy and funny and inappropriate and cringe. She can't read the room and wouldn't care much if she could. Everyone looking at her? Good enough!

Christa has a big personality, she's very direct and so warm and caring and I can't picture her without a smile on her face. All I had to do was sprinkle in some madness and murder and give her a flirty wink when she coughs up blood. It's a chance to work behind the scenes and give new context to old characters and dynamics.

The Owner spends 15 minutes talking about how important his work is, but the **Hotel** says he's just staring at the wall. Pouting. She threatens him. Then squeezes her, ahem, walls at him instead.

In S4 I tried to write the guest, their death, and the Staff as connected as possible. The Owner and Susan are both caught, stuck in their own traumatic experiences. Unable to get out, unable to heal, both ruminating in their own heads about it until the **Hotel** kills them for fun. It's an episode about how escaping trauma feels, and sometimes is, impossible to escape. It can oppress you, even locked away all alone. For even their private thoughts are not safe from the **Hotel** herself.

This episode also taught me a valuable lesson in content warnings. I tried to only hint at the domestic abuse angle, not wanting to trivialize that experience or write anything actually upsetting. But I underestimated how INSTANTLY and deeply the people who that would impact would be able to pick up on it. I woke up to several messages from concerned fans advising me to include a CW for domestic abuse.

Each episode now carries a "CW: Themes of horror and death" warning so that if something more intense comes along, you'll know right where to look.

She shifts her halls for the guest but the guest doesn't notice. The [Hotel](#) is even caught off guard by this, possibly.

"...which I find strange. I think I do anyway." (pg 5)

The Staff are often never 100% sure of anything that's going on. They 'think' things are happening. 'Maybe' the guest is doing this. Foggy headed, the lot. This both keeps the overwhelming power balance a little more manageable as well just plain adds to the scary vibes. I continue this trend with the [Hotel](#) herself for the same reasons⁴.

The anticipation shudders through her Staff (she loves a good double entendre), this action is what, in my mind, happens when the Manager can suddenly 'see' the guest dying, or when the Lobby Boy 'knows he's needed'. That's the [Hotel](#) sending signals to her little organs.

- **"She isn't seeing the room though. She's looking past the room,..." (pg. 6)** Susan doesn't see the wall, looking past the wall, just like Michael Myers is described doing in 1978's [Halloween](#). **"...staring at a wall, not seeing the wall, looking past the wall."**

⁴Though post S6, this could read very differently as they could all just be remembering one of the potential multiple previous cycles.

3. The Habers

A honeymooning couple leaves the Manager wondering about the nature of love, and the [Hotel](#) considers how the Lobby Boy loves, or if he even can.

An episode about love and what it means. The Staff are so different from humans that the Manager provides a wonderfully stark look at the experience that provides no answers other than the ones she makes up. She even gets close to getting it right (or I'm still getting it very wrong.)

I love that the Manager hates tacky gaudy crap. Couldn't be me, I live for it. This [Hotel](#) is based very, very loosely on the Madonna Inn in San Luis Obispo, though that is a classy joint with less cheesy room designs. The Manager would probably hate it there too though.

I wrestled with the Haber's for a while. I wanted to include a gay couple, but felt weird about a (at the time) straight male writer tasking a (still) straight male actor to play a newlywed gay guy before we bury our gays. But I figured gay guys would want to see themselves in horror media getting killed just like everyone else. It's fun! So I left it ambiguous in the script and Mark tried a character that splits the difference between gay and snippy.

Writing how and what the [Hotel](#) actually perceives was a daunting but necessary task. A riddle I would have to solve every time I wrote her. I found the key was to have her see everything, but not really understand it. I always write her like the richest, most privileged woman in the universe. She crafts reality. To her, thought and substance are not really different things. She is not used to being wrong, which is why she can't see how very often she is. She makes a lot of cynical guesses about what love is, assigning meaning and intention to chemical reactions, admitting she isn't sure while insisting the Lobby Boy is wrong. I take a Mothman Prophecies approach to her perspective, who, in that movie, is likened to a window washer who could see farther down the road than you could, but not meaning he knows more.

Note that she says the Habers **"...see themselves stuck motionless in cosmic jelly,..."** (pg. 5) Of course, they don't. That's how *she* sees them. She is incapable of considering the perspective of anyone but herself despite the constant

practice of having constructed an entire Staff with disparate perspectives. **"There are no secrets from me, unless I decide to make some."** (pg. 5)

Perhaps she is so bored she is playing chess against herself. Perhaps she's just plain wrong. Perhaps, just as the Staff is always vaguely aware of her and how she controls them, she is aware of me and her role as an invention of mine.

The Lobby Boy's 'love' of the Manager is something I wanted to unpack early. I am not a ManagerBoy shipper (but you have fun) mostly because love and romance are not things I explore in my work. Directly at least. She describes his love about as accurately as the Manager did, about as accurately as she says the Lobby Boy understands it as well. This is because none of them know anything almost at all. **"He sees their love, or he sees them together and makes some good guesses."** (pg. 7)

The Staff are not the only thing the [Hotel](#) projects, casting her own assumptions and chaos onto literally everything and everyone. When she says **"But there is something inside me, something like the love the other two have."** (pg. 5), this can mean either how the Haber's feel about each other (through her cynical, selfish lens) or perhaps how she thinks the Manager and the Owner feel about her.

Either way, she doesn't think much of it. Everyone is so dim compared to her, so small and simple and brief, that she can never be quite sure what she's looking at. Or she simply does not care. Or whatever she feels and experiences is so alien to us that we are forced to view and judge her through our own selfish, unreliable lenses.

- I know taxidermists largely use black orbs or realistic fakes for animal eyes, but in 1968's [Planet of the Apes](#) Landon (spoilers) shows up at the museum stuffed and mounted with white eyes.

4. Geoff Cooper

The Lobby Boy imagines his ideal Hotel from his Supply Closet while the Owner gets first hand experience with the guest.

The Lobby Boy sits in the awful wet comfort of his closet, his only autonomy and space, the walnut shell in which he can imagine a universe more palatable to him.

Of course all he can picture is the Hotel. His universe. A lobby free of harsh light and full of pleasant colors and soft textures. Not just chairs for sitting, but a variety of chairs. A comfortable environment constructed just for the guests (for he is an extension of the Hotel, and we never really override our parental programming.) designed to keep them from their rooms, from their deaths. He only knows how to serve, and he is desperate to spare himself more violence, even just watching the violence upsets him. (Because management does not care about the well being of its lowest workers, they only need to work or be gone.)

It is the optical illusion of compassion, one that people pleasers know well. He isn't interested in saving the guests, he's protecting himself from trauma. He can't stop himself though from ruminating on the worst case scenario: families and pets. (Other than 2.1, kids and animals are lines I don't cross directly because frankly it is a bummer.)

The Lobby Boy fantasy of a soft easy passive death in a comforting room imagined in the dark of his own is contrasted by the Owner paying off his S2 threat. **"I'll have to take a more hands on approach to the guests." (2.7, pg. 3**

The Owner is fully present and actively participates in Geoff Cooper's death. Blood on his own hands, right down to the bone. Even his 'natural' rotting process is corrupted by the killer bugs. The vague idea that he is collecting data to report back is not unlike Bruce Willis in 12 Monkeys eating a spider for future scientists to analyze. It almost makes sense, and there are processes beyond our understanding, but ultimately, like everything in the Hotel, it's all for show and the System will carry on with or without you.

The fuzzy line of the unreliable narrator and the omniscient eye the [Hotel](#) grants to her Staff is blurred further in this episode as the Lobby Boy's fantasy room is where Geoff Cooper dies. Is this how he builds the rooms? Did it change from something else as he was thinking? Could it somehow even be a coincidence? The nuance of the answer would probably not matter to Mr Cooper.

Mr Cooper is based on either John Fiedler in 12 Angry Men or Jason Alexander ('round' does not always mean fat or chubby, it can mean also soft and edgeless) 'Chatty' is always a fun dimension to give to a guest as all three members of the Staff Hate It. And while slow story arcs guide the season, the show was designed to be picked up at any time by new listeners so the character's dynamics end up driving each episode.

Come to hear the guest get eaten by bugs, but stay because the Owner thinks the [Hotel](#) is fucking with the elevators just to tease him (and there's every chance he's right.)

- Geoff is eaten by bugs because I was reading Gregory A. Douglas' The Nest at the time and I fell in love with it. Shoutout to Paperbacks From Hell.

5. Robert Watson

The Staff prepares for the *Hotel*'s first ever New Years Eve party, but this guest isn't going into the new year quietly...

This is another real milestone episode. A New Year's Eve part. Our first ever. It was my intention to do one every year. Something to look forward to each year, an excuse to do something fun and different, and maybe even give some people who dread the holidays a break for an hour or so.

It also opened opportunities to include new important elements, both in the fiction and in production. Our first guest POV episode (recall, WFTH was soft canon and the POV template didn't extend into The *Hotel* half of the special.)

The unusual construction of the *Hotel* here is meant to imply a 'true' or 'neutral' form. Not 'old' or 'original' as much as 'built from every dish at the buffet'. A template not meant for the general public⁵. This is winked at when Robert immediately notices there is no phone, something Ted Barrow failed to realize in 1.1.

A man gone swiftly mad is not so unusual in the *Hotel*, but the Staff remark on it throughout. This is hopefully a sufficiently mild enough mystery that ending the episode with a callback to that first episode (**"He laid out his wet clothes on the bed, leaving behind a moist imprint of his silhouette...leaving behind only a faint smell--as eventually we all do. 1.1, pg. 1.)** makes for a satisfying ending. That callback also sets the stage for the delightful resolution to the mystery of Robert's madness in the next episode.

We see how Robert is dealt with by each of the Staff: The Manager with icy kindness, the Lobby Boy doing as he's told in circles, and the Owner by inventing a problem then blaming everyone else when he can't solve it. The futility of their actions are mirrored by Robert's meaningless meandering and emphasized by his inability to escape as they watch placidly.

Robert and the Lobby Boy have the closest connection as the two with the least power yet most importance. (The Lobby Boy is the only one who arguably does any actual work, and without the guest they have no purpose.)

⁵Of which Robert Watson is somehow not a part, along with Lilah, Ozzy, and Ren. Something reintroduced in S6 reinforced in the Badlands. These are the only guests not voiced by Mark and Kelly.

Robert and the Lobby Boy have the closest connection as the two with the least power yet most importance.

Important in that the Lobby Boy is the only one who arguably does any actual work, though he doesn't seem to have built anything tonight, and without the guest they have no purpose, though as ever none of them are really needed to check them in nor kill them.

The Ballrooms each represent the Staff.⁶

- **The Whale Song Room** is the **Hotel**, for her ancient familiar strangeness and beauty. (It's also why there is a whale bone chandelier in the lobby.)
- **The Banker's Envy Room** is the Owner, for his jealous, covetous heart and ruthless consuming conformity.
- **The Watch and Clock Room** is the Manager, for her predictable precision, endless reliability, and exhausted delicacy.
- **The Bee & Pollen Room** is the Lobby Boy, for he is an important drone, but disposable and utilitarian. Also, like the **Hotel's**, beautiful and natural.

I named them as if they were very old pubs from the U.K. This helps couch the fantastic elements of the show in the quiet old fashioned trappings of the familiar. As if it was all here all along.

I'd hoped the same for Staff's eveningwear, but in retrospect the Owner's golden shirt implies the **Hotel** dresses him nightly as she does the other two, he dressed himself in a special little party outfit on purpose to match, or he just always has a golden shirt on.

⁶An idea continued with the New Crew in 5.12 [It's New Year's Eve, Judy Blashy!](#)

His chunky puffed up suit, his crowing, and him clawing at the ground are all bird imagery I put in once we realized the fandom sees him that way. We honestly never connected those dots until we saw the fanart in 2021. Special episodes like this one are a great opportunity to play a little and lean more into the fun side of horror and balance out the heavy stuff.

For example **"I begin to understand these guests."** (pg. 15) is so dramatic. It's so 'We're not so different, you and I'. He doesn't understand a damn thing, none of them do.

"Breaking the human mind, their will, their sanity, is not something to be done and finished. Again and again they break,..." (pg. 14) The idea that breaking the guests is something that not only needs to be done, but done again and again is in fact about the show itself. That's what we do, and you are the Staff watching it happen.

Of course the highlight for me this episode is the guest countdown. Always looking for opportunities to engage with the fans and make our show fun to party with, I put out a cattle call for fans to be the voice of the dead guests counting down to midnight⁶.

Graham was an active presence in the then still fanrun discord server (I had not yet quite figured out discord and wanted to keep my distance in an effort to not interfere with a natural ecosystem I little understood.) and offered to handle that end of things. Through his efforts and with the cooperation of the hard working discord mods we opened submissions, hoping to get five to ten, and the actors were on standby to provide extra recordings if we got less.

We got more than twenty.

Two more than twenty, so twenty-two. But to a small group of podcasters who had been performing to radio silence for six years, it felt like twenty-two thousand.

⁶The very same countdown returns at the end of 6.8

We asked fans to record themselves counting down both bright to creepy and creepy to bright, one for 4.5 and another for 4.6.

At the time it was the biggest episode build I had done.

Working with and getting to include the fans into the production was one of my favorite parts of making this show and we were very lucky to have a handful of dedicated fans running a discord server at the time to liaise with. The bulk of working with fans came through hiring fan artists for the bonus episode postcards that also began this season, but the guest countdown was a wonderful opportunity to get to work with any fan who wanted to be a part of the show. I wish we had come up with more ideas like that and the guest countdown has a place of honor in the halls of The [Hotel](#).

- The Manager's **"Carefully. Carefully now."** (pg. 10) is Ricardo Montalban in [Star Trek II: The Wrath of Kahn](#).
- **"Whatever it is smells so strongly it forces its way into his skull before he takes the first sip. (pg. 13) and "It really does take the edge off." (pg. 14)** are both nods to the [Star Trek: Deep Space Nine](#) episode [In The Pale Moonlight](#). Another scene of two men sharing lies over a drink.
- This version of the physical [Hotel](#) with its ballrooms celebrating New Year's Eve along with Robert Watson's hoarse lurching destruction are nods to 1980's [The Shining](#) as is the snowside mountain setting⁷. The script uses the word 'shining' twice (**"...my buttons shining." [pg. 7]"...that wasn't pain or madness, came shining back." [pg.16]**) which is me tapping the sign at you.

⁷In S6 it eventually gets folded into the Badlands and S3's black forest.

6. ...And Never Brought To Mind

Robert Watson joins the *Hotel* for a New Year's Eve party, but he may not be the first guest to arrive...

The image of the Owner standing high over the *Hotel* in a snowstorm is absolutely one of my favorites from the show.

There is literally none more suited to the role than E.K. Dagenfield. E.K. was a regular in our first podcast The Theatre of Tomorrow and on top of having the perfect voice, background, and temperament to play a *Hotel* guest, he is simply a tremendous actor. I write *Hotel* guests from an old fashioned place. A Norman Rockwell painting or friend of Willy Loman. The entire cast of 12 Angry Men. The anachronism helps sell the unusual horror as well as the purple prose and melodrama that makes up the fun vibes of the show. E.K. plays it perfectly.

That is also of course why we get an Imperium Arms mention. It's for fun and flavor, but it also (re)introduces the idea of familiar guests, drawing your attention ever so slightly again to S1.

"'Hope to be early, and pray you're never late', as the poet said." (pg. 2) I just think it's funny to attribute some offhand expression to a vague poet who may be or definitely is not Shakespeare.

It was a lot of fun writing these two episodes, painting Robert as a quiet, stuffy man who goes mad for seemingly no reason other than it's a scary show and the Staff is used to people being crazy only to reveal that this whole time the *Hotel* has been poking and prodding and goading him into madness by winking at him with the deaths of those who came before him. He knows this deep down, the same way he knows he's at a New Year's Eve party but doesn't seem know much beyond that.

Falling into a snowbank serves as a reminder that all things here die, and to never forget that there is no hope of escape no matter what follows. Robert even name checks Dante's Inferno and its lowest level, reserved for those who are guilty of betrayal and treachery and trapped in the ice of a frozen lake.

Finding a call and response for Robert from the original guest lines was tricky and the results are mixed. I try to paper over any rough edges with a little razzle dazzle. Hopefully seeing the other side of Robert's madness and hearing from the old guests is fun enough to buy a little credit.

Modesty prevents me from gushing too much but I really love writing for Robert. His verbose pretension makes for some of the best lines of the series. Especially when voiced by E.K. Though "**Even the famous--the infamous--Noreen!**" (pg. 11) was E.K. flubbing the line. But I loved what it implied so much I had to keep it⁸.

Robert is different from other guests. Not just that he is also not voiced by Mark or Kelly, not just that we are hearing his POV, not just that he has no name card waiting for him, but he even gets an audience with the [Hotel](#) herself⁹.

Whatever process by which the Owner is elevated to speak with the [Hotel](#) is apparently very uncomfortable and painful for humans. Robert moans and cries so much the [Hotel](#) shushes him before dismissing him back to his body to die.

The 'Staff only' line about next year's party is one of my standard writer's trick techniques: **Throw something in the air so you can catch it later**. Buuuut by the time I got to next years NYE party Judy Blashy was hanging around so...I just kind of had to...shuffle her out the door. It's fine.

- "...cloth napkins folded into strange poses..." (pg. 11) is, if you can believe it, a reference to the song [When Doves Cry](#) by Prince.
- The [Hotel](#)'s final sentiment about loving each other and being more gentle is a line from a New Year's Eve episode of [The Judy Garland Show](#).

⁸And it was that implication that planted a seed that we would later harvest for [Trespases](#).

⁹At the time this was all meant only as a special occasion. S6 modifies this.

7. Dorothy Rennup

What happens when the shadows that follow us, the shadows that we hide in confront us, and what does the Owner do in those shadows?

I was really trying to play with how much latitude there is in a [Hotel](#) episode. A Bed and Breakfast not only feeds the ManagerBoy fans, but supplies a new dynamic to see our familiar characters navigate. We know the guest is going to die, but can the Lobby Boy sit and drink tea by the fire like a normal person?

I picture this taking place in somewhere like Camber, England. A tiny village out of the way of most things where it gets quieter than you thought it could and the dark doesn't feel so scary .(Except in this case where it will literally kill you.)

That's largely because the Salty Shepard is a very real 'glamping' site on a farm in Camber, England that I stayed in with a friend who took longer paces than you'd expect from someone her height.

I also spent my entire time in England comparing everything to Disney World.

Memory in the [Hotel](#) is hard to grapple with. Memory is not needed beyond remembering to do your job, fulfill your function in the [System](#). This is something very present throughout S2. S4 will continue to reprise that note when the Manager's head tingles from being bashed in in S3 and she can't quite seem to recall why. Incidentally, this also covers me for anything I fucked up or forgot myself.

Highlighting the Owner's otherness here by confining him so the Manager and the Lobby Boy can pose as a couple. The implication being the softer and more human the situation, the less the Owner is desired or useful. This is standard patriarchy stuff (as well as capitalism, all of it serves the [System](#).). It's always driven his character, this season we get into deeper particulars. It should also be noted that the Manager and the Lobby Boy do not enjoy this state particularly more than any other. If anything it comes with additional aggravations. Their coupling and comfort is a lie, but the

Owner of course cannot see this and feels left out resulting in a tantrum.

Lashing out with disruption (a tool he will reach for time and time again when he doesn't get his way. A common tool of the powerful is to interrupt **Systems**, self destructing and taking everyone with them unless those also affected pick up the slack and fall back in line.) but the **System** does not function if the Manager doesn't have final word in her lobby in front of the guest Even his monstrous rage must give way to her firm voice.

The **Hotel** does nothing in response to his fit. To her it's just the dogs snipping at each other, it's fine. He is scratching at the door trying to get in and howling.

Only, there is no door to the Private Office here. No slot through which he can slide the reservation card. It's already in the lobby, which he is notably not.

The Manager is not sure what the cards are for either. Both she and the Owner invent their own purpose to justify the arbitrary 'power' the **Hotel** assigns them. The Lobby Boy knows damn well what his purpose is: Obey.

Even her idea of 'keeping' the card is temporary.

"Wherever they end up I think of them as mine." (pg. 2)

Immediately following this thought she discovers she's at the front door. While I was slowly positioning the Owner and Lobby Boy's conflict to come to a head, the Manager was wrestling with her conflict: Freedom. The luxury of the same movement as the boys; even to step foot outside the lobby. She stands by the door and breathes out into the cold night, the only way any part of her can leave. She really just wants to be alone.

"Darkly past the fireplace...by the doomed staircase, is a shadow." (pg. 4) is flirting with nonsensical. But sometimes you gotta just throw some seasoning in there. It don't always have to make 1:1 sense, art is about vibes, do NOT forget the vibes.

"Bed and Breakfast's still need..." (pg. 4) is a nightmare line that I absolutely would not give to an actor now. Just try saying 'breakfast's still' and make it sound not only natural but commandingly atmospheric.

We are always still learning.

I think I had Edie McClurg in my head when I wrote Dorothy. She has more moxy than I do and I like that about her. She would be friends with Audrey Burns.

The **Hotel** of course denies them even the facsimile of names, the dignity of that for the night. This is a common dehumanizing tactic for compliance or torture. The production reason is so no one would start calling them by these names or assume it had something to do with anything other than being just another lie. In fact the script never even had names in it, only X's. I left the names entirely up to Kelly as I was planning on obscuring them ultimately anyway.

I originally wanted to put the Salad Fingers child screechy noise over the Manager saying her nom de guerre, but thought that would be too harsh and loud, so I just remixed the names. (Fukuhara and Ajax, both the names, I believe, of actor friends of hers.)

Also playing here again with the guest actually being controlled and changed. It's so easy to just throw the guest in a bucket and pour something awful on top that I sometimes forget the **Hotel** can manipulate them as well (Looking at you, Eric Broon.) Simple horror is not enough, The **Hotel** is about the strangeness permeating the illusion of the sameness that surrounds us. Where a little black and white T.V. can also be a silver fire burning quietly.

The Lobby Boy is a simple creature, and he processes things simply, but that doesn't mean he can't conceive of the complexity in everything. He's just gonna do it a little simpler. But he discovers very important basic truths this way, though he doesn't even seem to know that. Excitement and fear become the action of 'grabbing'. **"Excitement...reach out and pull you into a hug. Scared pulls too...it doesn't let go."** (pg. 8) An embrace that ends with love or death. Death is his only lens, and like every low level employee he may do the job, but that don't mean he has to like it.

He also has sympathy for the guest and the things she will miss out on. Her disappointments. He feels those too in a way the Manager and the Owner do not. He is not designed to be a 'company man' the way the others are. His heart and mind are not required for compliance. This leaves room for a more tender view of humanity.

The Lobby Boy's half of the episode starts closer to the end of the story as he is reflecting on some nice shared moment he believes has passed between them, the only nice moment, from the night. He works backward, moment to moment, dismissing each as unpleasant for obvious reasons. As he nears the moment, and the top of the episode, the door frames what is important to him: His Manager, his whole world, while she looks out to what is most important to her, the whole world.

That's his nice moment. Noticing her own private nice moment. Tied together by both of them exhaling. A death rattle, a birthday wish, giving up the ghost to the cool night air.

It's sweet for the ManagerBoy shippers, but it is also a moment of peace found in the calm of his tormentor being happy, or at least distracted. If she's happy, she will treat him nicer.

THAT is why her moods are so important to him.

- Sharing no more than a name with the real Salty Shepard, this [Hotel](#) is based on the [Hounds of Baskerville](#) episode of the BBC [Sherlock](#).
- The Manager's outfit is Cameron Diaz's from [The Holiday](#).
- The shadow the Lobby Boy sees which ultimately kills Dororthy is based on a few different images from [Spirited Away](#): The shadows walking off the ferry and No Face when he becomes large and frightening with wandering tendrils.
- Also the scary hell ghosts from [Ghost](#).
- Her name is Dorothy because of further [Wizard of Oz](#) influence from Izzy's [Hotel](#) playlist.

8. Aj Taylor and Wayne

Why do we struggle, and why do we turn away from those who could ease that struggle? How much pain can we choose to carry within us and how much is forced on us from without?

This is, if not one of the best episodes, one of my favorite episodes. S4 really takes solid shape here. The Staff and the guests' themes and story work in tandem and all four of our characters are featured memorably.

Of course the struggle of the Staff is also the struggle of the Author. Production of S4 was a very lonely time and I was wrestling with a lot of internal and external chaos. The *Hotel* became my toxic therapist/helpful enabler. This episode very much speaks to the powerlessness I felt, the shame I felt at not taking control of what was within my power, and trying to navigate friendships and relationships when I was feeling so disconnected from myself, locked inside traumatic misery.

This episode explores the idea of blind trust in relationships, and understanding that what I bring and what you bring will mix together into something new that neither of us will fully experience or even see correctly, but it is real and affects us deeply.

I also try to impart some life lessons to the young audience in the fandom we've all suddenly discovered. Pepper in ideas of how to navigate group dynamics when maybe you're not sure of yourself.

Also of course narratively setting up the Owner's loneliness and resentment of the Lobby Boy's power. I knew I wanted to bring this feud to a head over the course of this season so I could position them all to settle it and work TOGETHER for a change.

The Owner's resentment (which is shame at his own powerlessness) comes out as a confusing fusion of a paternal lesson and vicious bullying. This cycle and destructive habit (!) can be applied to many *Systems*; be it work, family, relationships, pets, whatever. This mesh of hurting and helping can only be sorted out internally. The Owner is not at odds with the Staff, he's at odds with himself.

He wants to shatter the window just as he wanted to shatter the bookcase wall in 4.7 (shatter the *Hotel*, the workplace, the *System*) and violently rain it down on the Lobby

Boy so he can see he is FINE in the face of horror (he's a Gen X parent) but he can't even do that. It all lands with a dull thud. That's all the power he actually has. Just enough to grouse.

Subtle enough to be missed entirely, but the Lobby Boy keeping one hand on his cart anxiously parallels the Owner keeping a hand in his pocket (also anxiously, though he'd never admit it.) which both parallel the guest, Taylor, keeping his hand in his shoulder bag anxiously.

Lobby Boy's cart being **"A perfect form, without function."** (pg. 6) is also how the Owner sees himself. He is also literally seeing himself in the window's reflection. He is a reflection of guests' loneliness as an outsider (all while ignoring the **Hotel's** affection.)

The Owner not seeing that Taylor is making his own hell just as he, the Owner is, also reflects further on each of us building our own hells. (don't even get me started on the Lobby Boy.)

"If he knew, perhaps, that he was going to die, maybe he wouldn't be so wrapped up in his burden." (pg. 7) Yet we all know we are going to die and still too often we choose to struggle alone up the stairs. The Owner cannot die, so he is not free even of that burden. He is trapped forever struggling up his own stairs, too focused on hating his circumstance to notice how he fits into it.

"...unaware that I'm once again hunched (pg. 8) He is UNAWARE of his own posture that he is telling us about. Narrators don't get less reliable than that. Half narrative device, half deep **Hotel** connection, 100% the reason the Owner is insane.

"I can still see them, inside myself, from my perch..." (pg. 8) He means as in being able to literally see the guests but he is completely missing the metaphor even as he describes it because he's too busy making goddam bird puns about himself.

In fact he is SURPRISED that the others are willing to not only carry Taylor, but the baggage he brings with him. Empathy is simply not compatible with his patriarchal and capitalistic ethos.

The **Hotel** never truly ends. He ascends, flying free in the void with naught but the climb up to Her--a star he can never really reach--and he finds peace. But it's a peace of madness, and it will shatter wholly sooner than he thinks.

"The fire escape rattles at me gently and my skull smiles back." (pg. 10) He can't even own up to a smile. He is separate from that which smiles back. The smile is not an action taken to reassure another or soothe the self. It's not even a natural reaction to the peace he believes he has found. His flesh flaked off and revealed a horror shaped like a smile, and THAT is where he finds his brutish satisfaction.

The **Hotel** stretching (I swear that's what she's doing) sounds very much like the track Incubus on the album Black Mass by Lucifer. While this is entirely incidental, it did inform the sound design I built into it.

"He used to be so patient." (pg. 12). I threw this line in as a wink to the Owner's patience as it seems to change from moment to moment, perspective to perspective.

The **Hotel's** relationship with the Staff and her perspective starts to take real shape here. To her they are something like family, but family the way people treat their family like pets. Needing enrichment (not that they get it) and attention (something also lacking). She talks about the Staff like they talk about the guests.

Remember: your job doesn't care about you and thinks of you as farm equipment the same way they think of the customers as a resource.

"Even now, he's down at my lobby window, flicking it with his heavy bones,..." (pg. 12) I threw that line in to help incorporate S2, a thread I would pick up again later in S5.

"...and just between us girls,..." (pg. 12) I swear the **Hotel** is guessing most of the time. 'Boy' and 'girl' is 'green' and 'yellow' to her. It's possible she's talking to herself, but it really seems like she's slipping her arm through the listeners elbow and gabbing away about her work drama.

"I think she looks GORGEOUS, but the guests really don't like that sort of thing. It can really ruin a party, trust me." (pg. 14) This line hints at several things all at once:

1. She's referring to Robert Watson.
2. It foreshadows Madam **Hotel** disturbing the guests.
3. She thinks rot, decay, and gore are pretty.
4. The **Hotel** is gay.

"He's trapped in his own head, and it's so hot." (pg. 16) is something I would often say about myself¹⁰ pre transition.(I got better.)

"I think that's why he spends so much time on the third story, working on his reports." (pg. 18) Trying still to separate the Private Office from 'the Owner's space'. I don't feel I was ever fully successful at this, but the malleable and strange nature of the **Hotel** allows for some grace. I also for a time referred to S3 as 'The Third Story'. It never caught on.

I leaned way into the **Hotel** being a pushy, almost obtuse, bubbly lover to the Owner here. Their dynamic would continue to be shaped by her pursing while he grits his teeth. A married couple who hate each other. A divorced couple who still fool around when no one's looking. Maybe your boss is hitting on you, maybe she's just a flirt, maybe she's just got a big personality, maybe she's testing you.

Probably it's somehow all of the above.

¹⁰Hop also says this in the first episode of the New Crew.

- The design for the form the **Hotel** takes is based on a piece of Ralph Bakshi art from Cool World of a dark, living building twisting upward out of frame.
- AJ, Taylor, and Wayne themselves are based on Zoolander's roommates, right down to their red, blue, and green athleisure wear.
- **"Each according to our gifts."** (pg. 5) Is a paraphrase of a line from Spock in Star Trek: The Wrath of Kahn.
- **"I grab deep chunks of brick as I pull and leap around its sides, working my way up."** (pg. 7) Him leaping and jumping and climbing the **Hotel** with his bare hands is imagery from the intro to the 90s cartoon Gargoyles. Slowly turning up the monster in him so he can soon let it out.
- The Kate Bush inspired parody lines **"...the three of them are back running up that building. If I only could...If our places were swapped, would I understand then?"** (pg. 8) are a nod to her song Running Up That Hill (A Deal With God) inspired by a Tumblr post by mintlemonade.



mintlemonade

evil kate bush her name is hate bush and she's going to kate push you down that hill

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- **"Taylor is at the window again. He has that look you very rarely find in a guest. The haunting, hunted kind."** (pg. 9) Is a Jesus Christ Superstar line and just a bit of fun for me and Graham.

- **"Filling in the fiddly-bits with scrabbly brick..."** (pg. 11) 'Fiddly bits' is a phrase taken from The Hitchhiker's Guide the Galaxy, one of my favorite books. It's what Mark and I used to call the sound design on Theatre of Tomorrow. But not just regular sound design, not the meat and potatoes. The extra parts, the cool bits, the attention grabbing sounds that really sell it.
- **"He and the Owner, staring at each other, not seeing each other, looking thru each other, to themselves,..."** (pg. 13) is again a nod to 1978's Halloween.
- **"I tie myself into knots, interlinked, that nothing here can perceive, and bend in impossible directions, colors and texture rippling over and over me like pale fire."** (pg. 15) 'Interlinked' is a base word in a grounding technique in Bladerunner 2049, which also features the book Pale Fire, which itself is a twisting metanarrative with dubious verisimilitude.
- **"...leader of the pack, vroom vroom."** (pg. 15) seems to indicate the Hotel herself is perhaps, in addition to being an eternal cosmic concept, also familiar with American chart topping hits of the 1960s.
- **"Isn't it wonderful to have darkness, and coolness?"** (pg. 17) A line from The Twilight Zone episode The Midnight Sun about the Earth falling out of orbit and moving closer and closer to the sun.
- **"Strength of course has little meaning where silence has lease."** (pg. 18) Where Silence Has Lease is an episode of Star Trek: The Next Generation about powerful being interested in studying death at the expense of the crew of the Enterprise.

9. Mr Platt

The Manager maintains boundaries, but the Owner wonders if being bound is a matter of maintenance or compulsion...

This is perhaps the only description of the Owner 'appearing' (never 'teleporting') from an external perspective. It's influence, I admit (while shaking my head the whole time so the reader knows I disapprove) is a combination of the Harry Potter films depiction of apparating, with a spoonful of The Matrix Reloaded/Revolutions agent-taking-over-a-human sugar to help it go down.

It's very tricky to stage visual moments in a podcast without it sounding flat or jarring, and bits of physical comedy even more so. The character's distaste for one another usually goes a long way to lubricating the dry explanations. I had to trust this moment between the Owner and the Manager to be funny enough for the listener to go along for the ride. I could have just had Graham do the line questioning the Manager's actions but I tried to limit that sort of thing to Guests Only.

I love dropping the music for moments of tension. Mingling the diegetic with non-diegetic sound is a time honored way of informing artistic intention, but here it also reinforces the power the Manager wields.

The Owner is shirking his responsibilities here, defiantly rejecting his role, hoping to pick a fight with...anyone. The Manager responds with the frustration we've all felt at seeing our boss demonstrate how useless they actually are while enjoying privileges we do not. Their roles in the **System** are largely performative and needed mostly to maintain illusion and control.

"He's just sitting on that couch and he doesn't need the Hotel to mask anything...When I check him in, when my Lobby Boy takes him to the room he built, the Owner will just sit on that couch, apparently watching." (pg. 3) A man staring down a woman at work (her boss even!) is sadly imagery and experience many know all too well. **"I don't know what use the Hotel has for this...man." (pg. 3)**

This 'man'. The Owner = patriarchy, tapping the sign.

The only thing funnier than the Staff all turning in unison, caught red handed having a very tense silent fight by Mr Platt is Mr Platt not noticing what he walked in on and immediately being obnoxious to each of them individually. Again, presenting this moment aurally is delicate work, but I think this episode succeeded in delivering.

The Owner stops playing her game and walks back to the coffee pot (a symbol in the corporate world of 'hardly working', and surely something he does not need or even want to do) before flexing his power on her by flapping like ten yards away. But ten yards the Manager cannot make.

She spits her tooth out of the lobby the same way she did her breath in 4.7. This time something of her body more substantive makes it 'outside'.

Of course she will not or can not cry. The **System** demands her emotions be flattened and numbed, secondary to its needs. Tears of her own rotten essence, perhaps more personal than water and salt, express her pain.

"Inside, outside. Alive, dead. I drink my coffee, and feel its warmth." (pg. 9) The Owner is very close to realizing his enlightenment, but like most of us he is missing the point by being ironical.

The Manager and Lobby Boy both end up standing in doorways, the Owner in between, mirroring the earlier light hearted tension with the Lobby Boy between the Owner and the Manager. Here now though the stakes are higher in some undefinable way. A danger that sprouts from, more than anything, uncertainty.

The Owner continues to teach lessons with bullying and terror (that's how he was raised) and even expresses hope that the Lobby Boy will follow in his defiant footsteps and go have a cup of coffee. Punctuated by the coffee being explicitly described as 'theatrical'. Decorum falls away, as it was all a lie in the first place.

The desert setting reveals its true purpose: cowboy standoff at the bungalow. The wind blowing the coffee cup between the two duelists like a tumbleweed, or scraps of paper between Neo and Agent Smith in The Matrix. **"Cup or construct?" (pg. 10)**

"...my jacket whirling up clouds of dust from the **Hotel's gravel floor!" (pg. 12)** The Owner referring to the outside

gravel as 'floor' is another defiant refusal of engaging in the lie of the construct.

"And as a member of management she is due a certain level of...respect." (pg. 11) Assumed respect for station is paramount to protecting the **System**.

There is something both erotic and religious in the image of a man being splayed and pulled apart in front of another man kneeling between two beds as they both die together. At least for those of us who study our Bryan Fuller Hannibal regularly.

- Mr Platt named of course for the great Oliver Platt.
- **"...the Owner sips his coffee. No, not sips. Drinks."** (pg. 5) is reference The Cell Block Tango from Chicago where a woman kills a man for doing far less than the Owner has.
- It's not a direct reference, but I picture the Manager and Owner pacing each other in the lobby (**"The Owner sets his cup down and starts across the lobby to follow them. I step out from behind my desk, matching him. He stops, so I stop."** (pg. 6) like Adam Sandler and the cop in Airheads.
- **"I can go anywhere I please, as long as it's in the Hotel."** (pg. 8) Here paraphrasing another famous capitalist Henry Ford, who legend has it said the Model T was available in "any color as long as it's black."

10. Audrey Burns

**Audrey is a "do it yourself" kind of woman, like the can the
Hotel teach the Lobby Boy to be more like her?**

The typo in the episode description '...like the can the Hotel...', became a motto, or catchphrase, or signifier, among some of the fans for a time. For this reason I have never corrected the error¹¹.

I was a huge fan of Izzy's art immediately. I loved his style and he really saw something in The Hotel that I thought was invisible. Something in what he drew and how. The songs he put on his playlist. The kind of funny animations he did. It was like he was peeking behind the curtain. I kept saying to myself "But how'd he know? I've literally never even spoken to him before." He was keyed into a wavelength I was riding and I knew I wanted to have him on my team. Pacific suggested postcard art, something he utilized often with The SCP Archives. The resulting piece Izzy did for our first ever bonus episode, The Mall, was so spectacular that we hired him to do the next episode in production and he's been the art director ever since.

I often refer to him as the Tim Jacobus to my R.L. Stein. The covers Jacobus did for the Goosebumps series are just as (if not far MORE) significant influences on me and my creative horror aesthetic and goals than the books themselves. I knew that hiring him meant that when people think of The Hotel the feeling that comes to them is often first of Izzy's art. He would shape tone and even canon with every new piece. In a very different way than the actors, without whom there is no character, no life, no show, the art director determines what stays with the listener beyond. The artwork is legacy, advertising, and bloody dimension. I tasked him not with designing simple, readable, podcast episode icons, but to follow his heart and paint his passion for the ages. (Eventually we added 'Goosebumps frames' to hold the logo and episode titles, but that was much later.)

Anyway, Izzy's great.

¹¹I slipped the line to the Bellhop in 6.5.

This **Hotel** is based on the Universal Studios Hollywood Hilton, where I used to, on occasion, sell theme park tickets. The Lobby Boy is describing the actual lobby of that **Hotel** and is dressed in the same uniform they wore at the time, so no little hat.

The Manager is standing at the same desk I did in an out of the way corner under a big flat T.V.. By the bathrooms. The other Staff mentioned working in the **Hotel** ("**It's showing other staff members working here too, but they all just look like me, and her.**" [pg. 1]) are efforts to make the S1 reference to the different employees go down a little smoother. We also have similar workers building the **Hotel** in S3.

The Lobby Boy has a very very narrow view of reality and doesn't know much more than he needs to to function, like a good low level employee. He is a real boy though and capable of learning and growing. But with no real world social or cultural or even human frame of reference, he has to guess and stumble his way awkwardly forward.

The little conversation between the Manager and the Lobby Boy about smiling is partially another example of 'throwing something in the air to catch it later', but also a little gift for the ManagerBoy shippers.

The transcript and the episode dialogue is (or was, at some point) different. It's not unusual to move things around if the actor's rhythm plays better in a different order, or as a last minute script edit. Sometime's actors change lines and it's better (or easier) to leave it that way. And every once in a while, it just 'sounds better that way'.

The guests are really the only time on this show that Mark and Kelly get to flex their character chops. On Theatre of Tomorrow every episode was a new chance to have them play a variety of wonderful characters, but in the **Hotel** they are an orchestra forced to play one song again and again. Kelly is so fun as Audrey.

"But the door's open when I get to 414..." (pg. 4) was written to mean 'unlocked' but given what happens next could also be read 'opened automatically'.

The Lobby Boy rots dry, stiff, and gross. Very much like a zombie or Edgar from MiB. He retains his utility, but at the

cost of his comfort and his body. Like a good low level employee.

I like to think Audrey is so sharp and so self aware and so downright commanding that she just figures out as much as she can about where she is, just like the Lobby Boy describes. Anger is such a common and valuable response to death I wanted to give that response to a strong, likeable character.

"Her scream drowns out what I know are surprisingly quiet pops. The little bones break easy, the little bones break quiet." (pg. 7) The Lobby Boy is, of course, one of the little bones.

Like the Lobby Boy, I also do not like being yelled at, even reasonably for things I did or am actively doing.

"And he gets so mad too now." (pg. 6) The Owner getting mad 'now' is a distinction that pulls us away from S1, a subtle indication that change is possible here, but not what that could mean. Reminding the listener that there is something larger at play here, the tension is felt by the Lobby Boy too, and even the guest is angry.

"...neither of us get any closer to getting out." (pg. 7)

The **Hotel** sees his missing knowledge the same as the Managers or the Owners. His skills are valuable. HE is valuable. The others know this but do not treat him as such. To her though, they are all simple bickering children who need to be taught a lesson.

After learning to smile privately, while the guest dies, he winks, just a little, and physically affects the **Hotel**. He can manipulate and move her just as she can herself. This is the first time we see him **Hotel**bending (which she did first in front of him to show him how, like a mama T-Rex wounding prey to teach her baby how to hunt.) and he will need this skill very soon to fight the Owner.

I'm using The **Hotel** as therapy here for myself. Working stuff out. The Lobby Boy is the inner child, the scared little boy who isn't sure what to do with himself. The **Hotel** is your highest self, your objective, loving self. Knowing what to do and doing it are two extraordinarily different things, as we see in this episode.

Not just personal therapy, but also hoping to offer some insight or guidance to the young audience that make up the bulk of the listenership. Sometimes you need to fortify yourself, stiffen that upper lip, roll up your sleeves and GET TO WORK even if failure is a CERTAINTY! GET UP AND LIVE!

But sometimes you just can't. Life is gonna beat you down sometimes. Sometimes you're gonna let it. Sometimes you're just gonna sit there and cry. Sometimes you need too. What you need to keep an eye on is WHY you are acting (or not acting)? is it just fear? Fear of effort? Of failure? Of change? Of comfort? Of certainty? Well that's life, BABE. Try to live it.

"...can he build himself up a little? I really don't know. I'm rooting for him though. I think he can do it." (pg. 8)

But even the **Hotel** herself is not sure what her creations will do. What, in essence, she will do. It speaks to her power and complexity, microwaving a burrito so hot even she could not eat it (and then eating it anyway). And anyone who's got kids (or pets for that matter) knows that just because you know what they are gonna do doesn't always mean you know what they are gonna do. It's sometimes the same with writing.

Seeing what the Lobby Boy does when he is encouraged (both directly by the Manager and subtly by the **Hotel** herself) he relaxes, learns to smile, and even plays a little game of chase down the hall with Audrey. In the face of all this stress and trauma, he can be himself if allowed to grow in the garden.

"More like a garden to grow in. Support!" (pg. 9)

"A flower needs the right garden to grow in." (pg. 10)¹²

And not every plant or flower requires delicate handling to thrive. Indeed Audrey's bile and shouting, while upsetting, is treating him like an adult human with agency. Responsibility. Life is not about COMFORT, life is about LIVING. Audrey knows this too well and she is FURIOUS about him taking it from her.

That's why it's so important to learn how to make yourself smile.

¹²Gesturing emphatically to S6.

- I believe this is the first time we hear the nickname 'Bug' for the Lobby Boy. This was a childhood nickname of Music by Lauren Pokorney and seemed appropriate for him as they have overlapping anxieties.
- Adurey Burns is based on Kathy Bates as Jo Bennet on The Office.
- **"It reminds me of when the Owner yells sometimes. At me. I don't think he ever yells at the Manager, or even the guests. It's hard to tell though because he talks so loud all the time."** (pg. 6) is a reference to men in general.
- **"She wobbles uncertainly as she waves her growing hands in front of her face, painfully trying to flex her fingers."** (pg. 5) Jim Kirk does the same in Star Trek (2009)
- **"She tries to dial like she's used to, but she can only mash the keys with fingers as thick as thigh bones."** (pg. 5) is almost definitely The Simpsons episode King-Size Homer.
- **"I like her pluck."** (pg. 9) would have been a Mary Tyler Moore reference except on Mary Tyler Moore Ed Asner says 'spunk' and that word has since grown a new meaning.
- **Possibly from the novel The Body Snatchers.** Someone was taken over and their body used for days as a courier wearing shoes that were several sizes too small and when the character got free, later in the hospital asked after their feet, to which the answer was 'Don't ask.'
- **"...her bones and organs are getting pushed around to make room for her new...mass."** (pg. 10) Is an indirect reference to how the Animporphs animorph in Animorphs.

- "...threshold of his fear was the beginning of his power, not the end." (pg. 10) A paraphrasing of Spock from the fantastic Star Trek VI: The Undiscovered Country. "Logic is the beginning of wisdom, not the end."
- "Do you see?" (pg. 11) Is the often used refrain taken from Red Dragon(2002) because never forget the Hotel is a wild animal and no matter how friendly she looks she WILL BITE YOU.
- "She knows if she does, that's all folks." (pg. 12) The Hotel herself confirmed Looney Toons fan.

11. Owner V

The Owner tries to report on his audit and pull at an errant thread, unraveling it and peeking behind the frayed curtains.

"Hello James! He doesn't like Jim and he CERTAINLY doesn't like Jimmy. Not since he left for college, not since he grew all the way up. He's got his little job now and he makes his little money and nobody tells JAMES what to do."
(pg. 1)

It's no accident that this guest is in an Owner episode. While there are many reasons why people prefer different forms of their name over others, in James' case it's laid out clearly: He does not want to be infantilised because he has a big boy job.

But this is about the Owner. The **Hotel** hand waves the guest deaths away. This is not about the guests. Note that she seems uncertain about what was meant to happen. Note also that the guest would literally rather tear himself apart than succumb to control, even if death is the outcome either way.

"I think he was supposed to dehydrate or something, but James, oh James, he tore himself quite apart." (pg. 2)

The **Hotel** 'laying down' to become the next motel is so sweet to me. She's just a girl playing make-believe in the fields and forest where she grew up.

'Victoria' sure does sound like a trans woman, with her new name and her life falling apart. At the time she was written this way to imply fleeing and concealing identity but in retrospect that reading is there.

The **Hotel** describes herself as limited by description, and ended by death.

"I am limitless, but description limits. I am endless but, is death not an ending?" (pg. 3)

She has not, to any current knowledge, died. The guests die. The Staff dies. To what death is she referring?

This **Hotel** is very late 80s/early 90s corporate in design. This is again reinforcing that this episode is very much about the Owner.

The small desk and white tiled elevators with the coffee shop by the parking garage is a reference to the Loew's in the Highland Center on Hollywood BLVD, where I also sometimes sold theme park tickets.

We glimpse how the **Hotel** herself views reality. Each room and guest running concurrently, all she need do is turn her attention to it. This is not dissimilar to how the show exists to both author and listener.

There's a Meet Joe Black quality¹³ to how the **Hotel** reckons with being both a singular, linear entity for the listener as well as a cosmic god-like being

"Just trying to use their words contains me within them. And I admit, I fall right in line." (pg. 3)

These lines are among the most important in the series for understanding how and why the **Hotel** and the Staff¹⁴ operate the way they do. These lines are also among the most important for understanding how and why you operate the way you do too.

"Even now I catch myself wondering if it's not just a matter of time." (pg. 4)

Serves the ominous dual meaning 'the issue is a subject of the limitations of linear time' or the vague threat of something impending and unstoppable. She herself is of course both, and more. She occupies multiple perspectives while managing not to learn or understand almost anything at all.

This is a quality she shares with the Owner.

¹³We'll see something similar with Judy Blashy this season. S6 broadly implies some kind of similar relationship with the guests, but more on that later.

¹⁴And again, the guests.

"I see all these places, I am all these places, all at once, twisting and spiraling in from all directions." (pg. 3)

The Owner tries to describe the **Hotel**'s form. A vast zoeotrope of all the rooms, houses, and Staff twirling together. A single night perhaps, played out simultaneously over and over.

"I don't know why he likes all that clutter, I think it's distracting." (pg. 5)

Yet HE determines what his reality is, as we all do. Even the **Hotel** is guessing at what her creations truly are and what they will do.

This episode is doing some delicate and quiet work to try and massage the idea of the 'other' Managers and Lobby Boys. Rather than different beings it's now implied that they are all the same just at different times. This additionally implies there are many versions of events that even the **Hotel** cannot quite wrangle. E.g., The Owner who shifts to give the quarterly reports is the Owner in 1.16 and the twisted monster who just killed a guest is from 4.12. However when they are together, they both change.

"I elevate you to singular significance, even if it is just to chat." (pg. 8) 'You do indeed have singular proximity to my power, but your highest high is merely to engage with my lowest low.'

When she quotes his questions mockingly the lower pitch **Hotel** voice joins in. Remember: there are three **Hotel** voice tracks: Christa's natural voice, her voice pitched up, and her voice pitched down. The down pitch gently represents the Owner while the high pitch is the Lobby Boy. (These pitches also stand in for 'aggression' or 'anxiety' as needed, as well as good old fashion punctuation of thought or speaking rhythm. In this instance though, it is the voice of the Owner as it starts in her own mind.)

We finally hear what it sounds like for the **Hotel** to listen to the Owner's reports. Her own words echoing back to herself from just a moment in the future. We don't hear him at

all. She is, on the same fundamental level as the Author, just talking to herself.

From his perspective things are falling apart, coming to a head. From hers, things are finally falling into place. Tension breaking into smooth alignment (which is precisely what happens for the Staff next.)

"I remember our onboarding, all of us...a scream in a dark forest...I came later, after the staff. Hired by the Hotel for 'big picture' planning." (pg. 9)

This is S3 being almost directly referenced and placed as 'the beginning' or 'birth' of the Hotel. However, it's also a broader reference to the show being written before Graham joined, and the wrestling driving of the larger plot by the Owner's actions.

"And it's only I who gets to glimpse behind the fraying curtain." (pg. 10)

Foreshadows S5 opening Behind The Curtain arc and reminds the listener that while he may intend to attack the Lobby Boy, he has an older beef with her. Before she coos at him while he dies over and over in S3, the first Staff member she killed was him in the S1 finale.

To help connect the Hotel to her S1 form her lines are mixed in with the Powers That Be grumbling. Owner repeats and paraphrases lines from 1.16 muddying the lines again between linear time¹⁵, but he also goes on again about the Lobby Boy eschewing his own potential. Not being true to himself to a hypocritical degree in order to protect himself. This is not only a reflection of the Owner himself again of course, but also each of us as we hesitate and flinch at our own power, hiding maybe more than occasionally behind hypocrisy and fear.

¹⁵And reinforcing the cycle.

- **"...he tore himself quite apart. (with a shrug) HM!" (pg.2)** In The Tipod trilogy of books where a dark red laser blast 'blew someone quite apart' and that phrasing has always stuck with me.
- **"...and I assume new and pleasing shapes." (pg. 6)** some may recognize this phrase from the Bible describing the Devil. The cool kids will recognize its proper place as a line from Iman in Star Trek: The Undiscovered Country
- **"Is it even gonna be fun even??" (pg. 7)** is from Illana Glazer's stand up routine where she talks about being married to a straight man after living with a gay man. Music by Lauren Pokorney and I say it all the time when things that should be fun are not.
- **"I SAID LEAVE HIM ALONE!" (pg. 8)**
"For moments so fleeting I scarcely trust that I've seen anything at all." (pg. 8) are both Doctor Manhattan in The Watchmen.
- **"Maybe it's Hotel rooms all the way down." (pg 10)** Just like in the apocryphal story attributed to many about the turtle of enormous girth who on his shell he holds the Earth. When asked what THAT turtle is standing on the punchline is 'it's turtles all the way down.'
- The phrase **"...noise and waste..." (pg.11)** I pulled from the song National Lampoon song Deteriorata, itself a parody of the poem Desiderate by Max Ehrmann.
- **"As ever, once more at least." (pg. 11)** That's Will Turner in Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl.
- **"HIS PAIN RUNS DEEP! I WILL SHARE IT WITH HIM!" (pg. 15)**
Star Trek V: The Final Frontier

4.12 X - X

**The Owner snaps and the Lobby Boy bends, but is this a fight
that can be won by either of them?**

Originally titled "? - ?" but changed to something more pronounceable. This opening has a lot of really fun language and lines to quietly set up the idea that something is coming, something worse than the storm. This episode is such an EVENT episode, and I knew at the time of writing it would be exciting and one of the all timers, and that joy and anticipation is reflected in the prose.

The Manager lays out almost exactly what happens to Judy. The rugs are laid out in expectation. Whatever happens tonight is a foregone conclusion. It mirrors 1.1.

She also gives us our clearest idea of the physical and professional shape of the **system** at play. The lights are on, and it's back to her office. This season introduces the concept of the Owner's space up on the 3rd story, above the guest floor (taking on a 1,2,3 story shape, one for each Staff member¹⁶. But the Owner used the Private Office in S1, this episode marries the two ideas.

She opens the door here and the Owner's music comes out along with 'void wind'. Occasionally, and always unacknowledged in the fiction, the music will play to signify the presence of the other characters.

The Manager's missing memory crops up again here. Her tingling face implies it is S3 she doesn't remember. Trying to fit it into the timeline logically doesn't work for the kind of season (and show) this is, so it was explained away with the constant unsettling knowledge of its after effects¹⁷.

"I open the door sharply enough to startle him, which isn't really that sharply at all, and catch a glimpse of several crawling, skittering, somethings¹⁸ rushing away from the light into the walls and crevices of the **Hotel." (pg. 3)**
An unpleasant reminder of their true dynamic. Though the language leaves room for the possibility that he was going to be startled no matter how she opened it.

¹⁶We see this physically realized with the New Crew introductory art.

¹⁷Post 6.8 however it plays very differently.

¹⁸THE VERMIN??

The Manager barely smiling at him for fixing the leak feels so much like the **Hotel** teaching him to embrace his power in 4.10. Indeed the language used

"One corner of my mouth curls, just barely..." (pg. 5) is evocative of 4.10.

As the show is, in theory, designed for new listeners to jump in right away, it was necessary to showcase the Lobby Boy's ability to control the physical elements of the **Hotel** for the upcoming fight. Again, what I call **Hotelbending**.

The Manager describes the room and guest death in detail up top as we will not be dealing with any of that this episode. I like to make sure the audience has its pudding, and there are certain expectations when tuning in.

The Manager says the 'guest' (Madam **Hotel**) is pretty for three reasons:

- 1) The Manager and Madam **Hotel** are different expressions of the same entity (the **Hotel** herself) and her self esteem is through the roof. (she's also the roof.)
- 2) Judy Blashy's appearance is based on Christa's, and Christa is pretty.
- 3) The Manager is gay.

She wears a blue dress because despite the heavy usage of the color purple in the show, the color I most heavily associate with the **Hotel** herself is in fact blue.

X

Well hi there.

SFX WET WHACK AND A BODY THUDDING TO THE GROUND.

THE MANAGER

With a swift, fluid motion, he slams her head down on the guest book-hard! Her name becomes a wet splatter of blood and she's dead before she hits the floor.

THE OWNER

IT'S TIME, LOBBY BOY!

The pattern and rhythm of events is just as important as the pattern and rhythm of each word in a sentence. Things have to flow in a pleasing, easy to listen to way. The listener is driving their car, cooking their food, taking a walk, drawing, doing any number of things. If extra bandwidth is required on their part to absorb the podcast, it just won't get in. It is fundamentally a passive form of entertainment that does not engage enough senses to arrest full attention. So it must be natural and expected and simple and one thought at a time.

This is normally a nominal issue as the pacing of each episode is slow and atmospheric. However, when actions like Madam **Hotel** being battered against the deskbook and the Owner taking the Lobby Boy away, it can get bumpy.

The cinematic version of this moment would be as soon as she giggles and takes the pen the Owner should APPEAR AND BAM KILL HER INSTANTLY BEFORE SWEEPING AWAY WITH A 'IT'S TIME LOBBY BOY!'

But to hear the event and then have it explained would be flat and lame and confusing. So it must be described, and then presented. In the moment it can feel slow and even a bit clunky, but the mind will take these moments and construct them into one fluid moment in retrospect.

"I saw...m-me. Burning." (pg. 8)

Just like we saw the Owner at different times across the show in 4.11, here the Lobby Boy sees himself in S3.

"OOF! I step out of the darkness and there's a moment, just a moment, where I have to wait for the **Hotel to find its shape. The hazy forms of gas lamps and tall doors is all I can make out before he appears." (pg. 9)**

This is the Owner's first line ever in 1.7. It's also the same **Hotel** from that episode. Drawing the connection between the Lobby Boy and the Owner is very much at the heart of this fight.

Everything the Owner says to the Lobby Boy he actually believes about himself. He hates his own limitations and thinks if he can provoke the Lobby Boy into some kind of action then it means he could also take action.

He takes him back to 2.1, an episode where the Lobby Boy is particularly aggressive and takes a direct active angry role in killing the guests.

"We hurl ourselves at each other thoughtlessly!" (pg. 11) Is in fact how he describes himself crashing through the window in 2.1.

Having a character describe intricate and strange visuals during a thrilling monster fight is a challenge each writer must face someday. Balancing clarity with momentum and tone is careful work without any visuals at all. I think overall it's pulled off very well here, though looking back years later I have Thoughts About Pacing.

The fight goes all over the **Hotel** (which the Lobby Boy can control, resulting in violent stalemate) so the Owner takes him to his void, where he's 'in charge'. We already saw the Manager can just open the Private Office door and enter the void, and that's exactly what she does.

The Owner is forgotten about until he shows up and 'kills the guest', then the Manager is forgotten about until she shows up to stop the fight, after which the forgotten guest shows up and ruins everything.

- **"Tall figures, thin with knobby joints and protruding stomachs...wide, unblinking blue eyes set above their puckering, whistling mouths. They wobble awkwardly..." (pg. 5)**

The creatures described here are the family of aliens from Mac and Me, which I find extremely upsetting and needlessly frightening for what that movie asks of the viewer.

- **"The guest came in late at night, as most of our guests do." (pg. 6)** Paraphrasing her line from 1.1.
- **"She wafts through the lobby in a blue dress, somehow almost, but not quite, entirely dry." (pg. 6)** is not a direct reference but is a sentence heavily seasoned with Douglas Adams rhythms.

- **"This is fear."** (pg. 8) is from [Theatre of Tomorrow's Kennedy Roundhouse: Moon Detective](#).
- **"Under and behind and inside everything this man took for granted something horrible had been growing."** (pg. 11) is from [Fight Club](#).
- **"There we can let our rage destroy each other forever."** (pg. 11) The image of two identical men locked in futile violence for eternity trying to destroy each other comes here from the [Star Trek](#) episode [The Alternative Factor](#).
- **"Blood flows in strange patterns..."** (pg. 11) I had a Star Trek book on CD in the 90s that I never successfully finished read by George Takei. I remember hearing him say this line many many times, but I don't remember which book it was. [Envoy](#), I think.
- **"...dropping down with his arms out, fingers crook'd like razors."** (pg. 12) This is what Guinan does when threatening Q in the [Star Trek: The Next Generation](#) episode [Q Who](#).
- **"YOU CANNOT KILL ME IN A WAY THAT MATTERS, LOBBY BOY!"** (pg. 13)



personsonable

me holding a gun to a mushroom: tell me the name of god you fungal piece of shit

mushroom: can you feel your heart burning? can you feel the struggle within? the fear within me is beyond anything your soul can make. you cannot kill me in a way that matters

me cocking the gun, tears streaming down my face: I'M NOT FUCKING SCARED OF YOU

- Though there are many references and influences from Stephen King and the Dark Tower, the wooden floor eating the Owner (pg. 13) is not one of them even though that exact thing is depicted on the cover of The Dark Tower III: The Wastelands.
- **"IN HERE, I MAKE THE RULES!" "IN HERE...I'M IN CHARGE!"** (pg. 14) The Trainman says this in The Matrix: Reloaded.
- **"Good evening, ma'am. This is Unexpected."** (pg. 15) Is also what the Manager says the first time the Owner appears.
- Lobby Boy repeats lines from 2.7, such as **"She's always been here. "** (pg. 15) and the Insanely Cool Hotel Theme plays to connect that moment and this one as the same.

13. Judy Blashy

She's always been here, but can the Staff work together to check in the guests while Madam Hotel is overseeing things...personally?

A massive shift in the dynamic of the show, not only in how the characters relate to each other, not only in introducing strange new concepts of who the guests are and how that works, but a turning point that sets off a series of events that decide the course of the rest of the show. After twelve episodes of setup and knockdown we have to adapt now to Madam Hotel, whoever and whatever that means. Kelly gets to do a little good old fashioned fear as Judy, and she plays fear so marvelously. Something rarely showcased with the Manager.

Christa's breakneck, near stream of consciousness delivery for Madam Hotel really sells the alien strangeness both she and we experience as she tries to navigate the limitations of biological existence. Her atypical rhythms, pauses, and throwaway deliveries recall actors like John Cusack, William Shatner, and Christopher Walken. It commands our attention entirely and forces us along her wild ride.

Since Madam Hotel is speaking out loud for all her episodes it was necessary to devise a simple, organic, non distracting way to indicate to whom she was speaking. Their 'given' names always sound a little awkward when used as such, so cute pet names were decided.

"Dear" is what the Hotel calls The Manager, because they are good friends, she's sure.

"Bug" is what she calls the Lobby Boy, because he is her special little guy and also a gross bug man.

"Mr Man" is what she calls the Owner because he is also her special little guy, but he's the oldest of her two boys and he thinks he's in charge of the playroom. It's also how millions of citizens of earth, including the Author, address their cats.

With Madam Hotel speaking directly and plainly to the Staff, giving orders and critiques, the true shape of their dynamic is revealed. Part motivational speaker who genuinely believes in helping her Staff reach their true potential, part bullshitting boss trying to get the employees to stop asking about raises and work harder, part critical parent determined

to keep her children down and nearby, and almost entirely a child at play pulling wings off of flies behind the shed in the garden.

"...let's just do one and see how it goes. We're already set up here so..." (pg. 4)

This language is common across productions of many kinds. It's a soft acknowledgment that this is a show and she's running lines. It's all a game to her, a rehearsal for an opening night that will never come. She directs the Staff to their 'places' waiting for Judy as though she were a guest star. It's all show biz chatter. She is so powerful she very nearly knows she's on a show, the same way the Staff almost know what her intentions are.

The Owner immediately falls in line and suddenly understands the Lobby Boy's work flow and how to help the Manager run things smoothly. If everything in the **Hotel's** personality didn't scream the self destructive truth, one could almost think she did it on purpose.

I love the Owner stopping Judy from fighting the Staff. Maybe he just wanted to do his job in front of Madam **Hotel**. Maybe he wanted to save Judy from a fate worse than what's in store for her. Maybe that pang of surprise knocked something else loose.

"...flips her head lightly, ghoulishly trying to toss the stream of blood from her face like lengths of hair." (pg. 10)

Iconic.

And finally the Owner leaves the reservation card behind when he flaps away. A moment of solidarity. A signal that they are on the same side, for now at least.

- **"It must be very frustrating for you." (pg. 2)** It barely counts but it counts. This is a line in The Office episode Trivia that is so funny and so condescending I had to give it to the Hotel.
- **"I may be tough on you, but that's only because I know what you're capable of." (pg. 4)** A paraphrasing of a sentiment T'pol explains to Hoshi in the Star Trek: Enterprise episode Vox Sola.
- **She claps for herself. No one else claps. (pg. 6)** She claps for herself in the same pattern that Catherine O'Hara does in Beetlejuice for her husband's lame presentation. (Claps provided by Veronica)

14. Alan Landers

**The Staff tries to check in a sentimental guest,
but Madam Hotel won't behave herself...**

This is a Twin Peaks inspired episode, right down to the roaring waterfalls. But there's something in the muted glass keeping them at booming bay that comes from Jurassic Park's Thunder Falls at Universal Studios Orlando Islands of Adventure.

Alan Landers is an Alan Alda/Leland Palmer type. The distant, quiet, natural wood womb of this Hotel, **"Distant and lonely, even by our Standards."** (pg. 1), reflects the can't-go-home-again nostalgia Alan brings with him.

"Her words a deluge of historical fact, aesthetic opinion, and rhetorical questions." (pg. 2) is so concisely the essence of Madam Hotel.

Hearing Madam Hotel's words echo inside her head was initially a way to keep production efficient (as ever, no need to round actors up for just one line if it can be helped). It also has a very intentionally Majel Barette as Lwaxna Troi from Star Trek: The Next Generation dynamic as Lwaxana is a Hotel character inspiration, along with Bill from Gravity Falls and of course, Christa. It also narratively links the Manager and the Hotel more deeply.

The sunlight dips from yellow to orange just as the Hotel becomes angry. Perhaps it's just the timing of the setting sun, but of course the setting is all her too.

This is reinforced (as is the Manager/Hotel connection) when the light changes from an angry orange to a warm, complimentary orange and brown when the Manager soothes herself with her reservation card.

Madam Hotel appearing quietly alongside the Owner in the shadows ties them together as 'upper management' while still demonstrating the total lack of power he has. Just as the Manager did when the Madam Hotel appeared alongside her. And of course the Lobby Boy remains out of sight, as the lowest class.

The Manager sort of meditates herself into a stillness beyond her rot and day job. The language comes extremely close to referring to **Hotel** herself language.

"...only a shadow that crosses me tenderly now? Does it cover in comfort, like the blanket of night? Or is it the destructive rot of bright oblivion like the guests fear? I change, undeniably. I feel it in the stillness I've made for myself in the lobby. Inside me. But I know I'll find myself in a new lobby soon. I'll find myself new soon" (pg. 4)

Yet just one page she finds herself again. This is the essence of the Manager:

"If change will come--and certainly it will--then I will change with it. And if change finds me immovable, then I will take comfort in consistency." (pg. 5)

"...It's the just the pipes, they howl this close to the falls." Whenever I can, whenever an opportunity presented itself, I liked to tie a little phrase, or character moment, or anything to S1. While I love the way the show and narrative grew and changed and all the friends we made along the way, S1 had such immaculate, raw, fiddly vibes, vibes strong enough to permeate and support the rest of the madcap sprawling seasons. Much the same way the original Star Trek is fundamentally strong enough that all subsequent Trek series are built upon its rock.

The red beating walls drive Alan to the window, filling the lobby with bright light. The **Hotel's** bloodlust and excitement is mounting, bathing him with a warning he doesn't understand.

"In the darkness there, I see a hint, just a hint, of the Owner's eyes again." (pg. 6)

A trademark of the Owner is the phrasing "A BLANK, just a BLANK" and I use it to underline his presence or affect.

The Manager often comments positively on the **Hotel's** design here again. This is because the **Hotel** designed her to think that.

The Lobby Boy speaks to fear unifying humanity in his eyes. Old and young falling away as adrenaline burns self consciousness and habit away. He talks about the guests the same way someone very old speaks about everyone as if they were children, pure and hopeful. The same sad, deadly way humans may view nostalgia.

Where the Manager seems to immediately recognize the Owner as captive of the Madam [Hotel](#) just as she is, the Lobby Boy is (out of the loop) still waiting for him to potentially attack again.

But of course, the attack will come not from within, but without. Madam [Hotel](#)'s face playing over the rocks as an optical illusion until she becomes more and more real culminating with her stepping out from the mountain¹⁹ as a giant rock woman is not something the Lobby Boy is capable of anticipating, and hopefully neither was the listener.

It illustrates the growing intrusion of Madam [Hotel](#)'s presence. The guest has a room ready with a death prepared, yet he never makes it out of the lobby, and only because Madam [Hotel](#) wanted more attention, or a different kind of attention than she already got. A true narcissist, dissatisfied with everything and everyone around her and convinced of her own superiority. Blind to the facts of the disruptive destruction to her own goals she is causing.

"Please stop looking at Madam [Hotel](#). Please. I don't know what she'll do." (pg. 9)

¹⁹It would be also extremely powerful imagery narratively if the Badlands mountain, the [We Found The Hotel](#) mountain, and the mountain she mentions being weathered were all the same mountain. But on occasion in long form writing, shit just sort of happens.

- **"We are...watching you"** (pg. 3) is from Congo.
- **"There's a room upstairs with a claw footed bath tub in it...The drain growls and gurgles."** (pg. 4) The bathtub drain growling and gurgling used to frighten me at the end of childhood baths. The concern being that a Terror dog from Ghostbusters was at the other end.
- **"The Lobby! The lobby is covered in blood!"** (pg. 7) s Fiver's vision in Watership Down.
- **"I'm supposed to...I don't want to go out there. Out into the red thing."** (PG. 7) My brother and I when we were little kids would refer to the main part of The Towne East mall as 'the blue thing'. It looked blue from inside the anchor stores due to the color temperature difference in fluorescent light bouncing off of the JC Penny's and skylight light bouncing off the tile and glass. The Lobby Boy also calls it that in The Mall, so here he refers to the lobby as 'the red thing.'
- The Lobby Boy shrugging his shoulders off and the Manager shaking her head off (pg. 12) are most likely soft references to the Maitlands falling apart during the exorcism in Beetlejuice.
- **"The lobby is almost immediately full, floor to ceiling, with rust-red water."** (pg. 11) is a wink to Kubrick getting around the MPAA by saying the blood coming out of the elevator in The Shining was rusty water.

15. Carl Larpe

It's "girls" night in the city when Madam **Hotel** decides to check in a guest with the Manager, but the guest and Staff find themselves stuck under more than just her thumb...

Scripts are never finished, only refined to the point of a deadline. Things get left behind, half explored, or missed entirely. That's showbiz, baby. But one of my few true regrets in this season is that Madam **Hotel** does not rot throughout. Fucking oops.

The first thing Madam **Hotel** does is ask her underlings how cool and pretty she is while in the same breath making the distinction between the building and the Shape She Has Assumed. Madam **Hotel** is distinct from the **Hotel** itself, the **Hotel** herself. She has to stuff her existence and perception into a meat avatar and it limits her into a 'low rez' version of herself.

That snarky little **"Metropolitan without being crummy about it."** (pg. 1) is the conservative snobbery of the ruling class.

And **"I just love the hustle and bustle of city life. So loud and fizzy..."** (pg. 1) is a brief glimpse into the strange ways she perceives the universe. The duality of her 'human' mechanics vs her cosmic mechanics are part of what makes her so unstable in this form.

Writing Madam **Hotel** is challenging because she is the only character speaking out loud to the other characters in a more traditional dramatic style. But the other characters are not going to respond more than once or twice at most because of the format of the show. So the script must find a way to justify constant one-sided prattle while also moving the story forward and showing us how the other characters all feel too.

And then Christa has to find a way to actually PLAY it. This is a VERY tricky performance that needs to balance many different things on a moment by moment basis with many easy pitfalls that a less experienced actor would fumble into. Instead, halfway through the fourth season of the show she made herself a fan favorite IMMEDIATELY.

Another challenge particular to podcasts is that she needs to address individuals in a room who cannot speak. The

listener needs to understand what she is saying and to whom within the fiction without thinking or the spell is broken and it all turns back into a podcast.

Christa skipped a line in her read here. This is how the script lines are formatted, it's an easy enough (and common enough) mistake to make.

"...the buildings. I guess you can't see those though. 'Cause I made the windows so small. And high. But look..." (pg. 1)

As always, when a line comes back wrong, either from actor or writer error, the protocol is "Can I fix this without getting a retake? If not, can I just cut it?" In this case the meaning is still conveyed and the line is fairly unimportant to the plot (no one on the street will see the following horror because there are no windows)

At the time the idea behind soundproofing the lobby (a gift for the Manager) was that the background traffic noise could be distracting for so many pages, especially competing with the music. In retrospect, if there had been an ambient city scape that was muted by the suffocating wood, perhaps the fear and discomfort could be more effective.

I love awkward, stiff, clumsy women. I love when a cold, hard, monster of a woman doesn't also know how to be normal and warm. I love that the Manager rubs her hand roughly and quickly on the desk because she doesn't understand.

Something that Christa does that sets the **Hotel** apart so well from the other characters, especially as Madam **Hotel**, is drive the words with her own rhythm. She'll tumble through whole sentences at a breakneck, then draw you in with Space. She doesn't just command your attention, she demands it, taking precedence over the words themselves, easily filling the space of every page she's responsible for.

Christa reading his name WAS in fact a retake as the 'e' on the end of Carl's name caused the actors to pronounce his name differently.

"Just us 'girls', huh?" (pg. 3) The quotes around the word 'girls' is not just another look into the **Hotel's** perspective, but also a reminder that none of them are human, and their genders are a trick of the light.

The **Hotel** spaces out when she 'feels' the Lobby Boy, feeling a hint of her old full self (who is of course still out there, still in there.)

She occasionally gets lost in thought and speaks as though she's barely listening. She is too massive to be contained to the meat. She can't even think the way she's used to. Still should have rotted.

Not until page five, nearly nine minutes into the show, is it revealed that the entire time Madam **Hotel** has been talking she has still been bleeding freely from a dented and broken head. When it is gently pointed out that this scares humans she immediately puts the Manager on the defensive. Classic narcissist.

"...rots off just because it might upset some weak stomached man??" (pg. 4) Further, calling out weakness for not having the stomach for death is very Owner coded. We see how he comes from her and her philosophies. They are Richard Burton and Elizabeth Taylor.

The narrative and thematic use of 'dark' and 'light' in art and the potential racial implications have been well discussed and thoroughly covered, but throughout the show efforts are made to also showcase the comforting, soothing, attractive nature of the dark, and harsh, unyielding, burning nature of the light. The Manager lists several versions of the dark, both attractive and repellant, because while in the **Hotel** all things are possible, most things are bad.

The idea of all the ambient oxygen suddenly turning to wood and entombing people is an old fear of mine. Though the feeling of wood scraping against your eyeballs is easily one of the worst parts of being enwooded, feeling it between the spaces in your fingernails is a special kind of horrific. The desert thing is also a real nightmare I had.

It is unclear if the Staff feels the same kind of physical and emotional pain and trauma that the guests²⁰ do or if they have that Addam's Family, Looney Toons, Flintstone's 'It's a living' philosophy to torture and death.

²⁰Post 6.8, their 3rd person descriptions can be read as vague memories from the past cycles, or a shared understanding between guest and Staff selves.

It is also unclear how quickly the Staff rots or if it is consistent, but there is every chance they were stuck in that wood rotting in real time for days.

The pool party thing is a common childhood experience, placed in between the wood thing and the desert thing and coffin thing to ground these extremes as a real possibility in the mind of the listener.

The back half of this episode was written as a nightmare dreamscape, something closer to S3 dressed up in a season 4 suit. Intended as a showcase for Kelly, who always excels when given strange material. To me, Kelly in this episode is Jean Smart in the Watchmen episode She Was Killed By Space Junk.

- **Eight million people and hundreds of thousands of cars and trucks."** (pg. 1) She is in New York City
- **"Button, button, who gets the button?"** (pg. 2) Dee Dee says this in an episode of Dexter's Lab and Spike from Buffy The Vampire Slayer as well. It's an old British nursery rhyme.
- **"It's almost a shame, he looks like such a nice young man in his clean white suit."** (pg. 3) is from the song They're Coming To Take Me Away, Ha-Haaa by Napoleon XIV.
- **"Should I spray paint your skin back on when it rots off..."** (pg. 4) This happens in Death Becomes Her.
- **"I'm going to have to oversee this personally."** (pg.5) Paying off that line from the 2..
- **"We are the lucky ones here."**(pg. 11) is a line included because I love Biff Naked's cover of the song by the same name.

16. Alex Potenski

Mushrooms cover the lobby, growing impossibly out of every surface, including the Staff, but where is the guest...?

Madam **Hotel**'s presence makes for increasingly destructive guest check-ins, as the Owner laments here. He uses similar language to describe her shortcomings as he did with the Manager in her S1 audit, citing an overreliance and interest in the fantastic presentation.

"...we both continue to regard the lobby in uniform disgust." (pg.3) has a zippy double meaning. A wink at their shared distaste for being dressed garishly, the shrug, the funny moment of touching her bandana, the immediate handing over of the reservation card also subtly point to their being united against a new common threat.

But the Owner and the Manager also get so stupid when they're paired up. They turn into sitcom roommates trying or bonded siblings with a chaotic immature parent. If they were friends they would spend a day at the mall, not speaking a word and judging everyone they saw and it would be the best day ever.

"In moments it's a red opaque stripe through the [creek] dappled with dead fauna." (pg. 4)

Apparently Madam **Hotel**'s blood is toxic to animals. Or she just decided that it would cool if that happened just this once.

The **Hotel**'s perspective on the Lobby Boy is that his anxiety stops him from embracing his power, and that he mistakes that anxiety for real fear. This clashes with the Owner's more emotional perspective that the Lobby Boy is scared because he sucks.

The Owner has lines in the **Hotel**'s half of the episode narratively because he, as the highest ranking Staff member, is the one who would step up to *gently* correct her.

The production reason is, once again, that Graham is in the first half of the episode and it's simpler to have him record a couple extra lines rather than have Mark or Kelly send in just a couple lines.

"Euew, they don't quite take to your clothes as well, the spores, do they?" (pg. 9)

The spores don't take quite so well to the Owner's clothes as the other two because, as always, he stands apart. Rejected in a dozen small ways to keep him fighting for approval, to keep him fiercely protective of and reinforcing his domain: The **System**.

"...his quaint little consciousness. It's mixing so delightfully with the mushrooms." (pg. 9)

Alex 'mixing' with the mushrooms also hints at the changes Madam **Hotel** is going through, the changes the Staff go through over the course of the show²¹.

The many and one speech is also a broad explainer of the relationships of everyone on the show.

"Together, and separate. Many, and one. Reborn, only to die again. Is any of this getting through? To ANYONE? It's like I'm talking to myself down here." (pg. 10)

That last line is the punchline, and underline. Because she is talking to herself. She's technically the only one there. (Mushroom Alex no longer counts, I'm afraid, as a person.)

²¹And, ultimately, what the guests end up being.

- The mushroom motif was inspired by the second episode in the first season of Bryan Fuller's Hannibal. The lines about Alex reaching for the Staff with strands because he knows they are there is lifted almost directly from that episode.
- Purples and blues? Dapples of light treading down the walls? A hazy mist languishing amongst humid trees? This sounds like E.T.'s Adventure at Universal Studios Orlando.
- **"No turtles anywhere, of course." (pg. 1)** is a longways wink at Maturin, that turtle of enormous girth, who would likely not want anything to do with an entity like the Hotel.
- The Owner uses the name **"crawdaddy"** (pg. 1) instead of 'crayfish' or 'crawfish' because I am from Kansas.
- The Owner calls shorts **"short-pants"** (pg. 3) because my best friend Mario has done this since high school. It is charmingly old fashioned in a Suburban Dad Drinkin' Coffee way.
- Mushrooms **"...stretching down from the ceiling..."** (pg. 3) is a Super Mario Bros. (1993) movie ref.
- The term **"mycelial network"** (pg 6) is one I lifted from Star Trek: Discovery.
- **I am discouraged by this situation. Yes I am. I am bewildered by your explanation. Yes I am.**
"Hm, well I'm torn and riddled with suspicion, yes I am..." (pg. 10) are lines paraphrased from the Margo Guryan song Yes I Am.

17. Debbie Houston

The Staff already knows the guest isn't going to see the inside of that room, but is the Lobby Boy okay in his closet while the Manager and Madam Hotel's power struggle comes to a head?

This, the final ruined check in, had to be the most disruptive. The Lobby Boy never made it out of the closet and the guest is...getting Madam Hotel's full attention.

In an episode where the Lobby Boy doesn't leave his closet and the rest of the Staff hang in the void, we set our themes tidily with wardrobe woes.

His relationship with fear here is surprisingly healthy, though surely accidentally. Unable to control or dismiss his fear, he allows it to be as it is and instead focuses his energy elsewhere. If he had anything to do with his life but sit in a closet and kill people he may actually have had a breakthrough.

The Lobby Boy uses the direct article 'you' several times here, almost but not quite poking through the podcast veil to the listener.

I also play with words as the Lobby Boy describes the darkness indicated not only the unreliable narrator he is, uncertain of everything around him, but also the shifting relationship they all have with the Hotel. The darkness 'takes his hand', lovingly perhaps, but then it 'takes the rest of him', sinister. Is it a comforting nothing to wander through, or a horrific urban maze? Whatever it is, he knows he is a part of it, and that she watches him suffer as he watches the guests suffer.

"I maybe have screamed those screams myself²²." (pg. 2)

"I don't know what your regularly scheduled programs are." (pg. 3) This helps showcase how little the Lobby Boy actually knows about humanity. He, all of them, only know what they must know to function at work.

²²Which takes on chilling new dimension post 6.8

"Flesh is soft enough than a deep breath..." (pg. 4) is a typo. Should have been 'that' but, well...

"...unused, unappreciated, and meaningless." (pg. 6) is unusual language for the Lobby Boy to describe one of his rooms not being used. It hints at the artistic pride he feels shame for taking in his work. This is what the Owner senses in him, his hypocrisy and power.

The Owner becomes deeply philosophical, plucking at the very threads of who he is, if he is anything at all. He sees the truth so clearly²³ that he is defeated and angry. So he just rolls up his sleeves and goes to work.

"She's expected several hundred miles from here..." (pg. 8) He is surely speaking colloquially, assuming her assumptions. There is no clear indication of how far away from Earth any of this is taking place. Could be trillions of miles, or another dimension, or right here on terra firma somewhere in Brazil, or nowhere at all really. Just inside my head.

The Lobby Boy's half ending with the Owner's arrival and then resetting the episode so the Owner's end is the same moment but now with new context is the final misdirect here.

This episode shows the Staff fully working with each other (best exemplified by the Owner giving a shit about the Manager enough to check on the Lobby Boy, who he still hates.) We also see more of the boys being connected, each hearing her voice in their head this episode.

Though again, we only actually hear her voice at the end, because, like the man said, it's her against them.

We end with a rare Manager line in a Lobby Boy/Owner episode AND the **Hotel** has one at the end. We must be gearing up for the finale!

The Manager and the **Hotel** having a glare down stare off for days is an incredible display of fuck youmanship. The Owner could never.

²²a perk of upper management he shares with the Auditor

- Originally named 'Britanny' but as soon as I said it out loud I saw a potential distracting rhyme to the name.
- The idea of constant distant screaming probably comes from a Blair Witch place, or perhaps something in Monty Python and the Holy Grail.
- This death is also, I believe, based on Tetsuo: The Iron Man.
- **"...and moaning low."** (pg. 5) A phrase borrowed from the Tom Waits song What's He Building In There.
- **"...and miles to go before they get to die."** (pg. 5) is a play on a line from Robert Frost's Stopping By Woods On A Snowy Evening, which I know from the movie Death Proof.

18. She's Always Been Here...

Madam Hotel audits the Staff in the season 4 finale!

Boy oh boy did I NOT have an idea for how to land this season. I knew where I wanted to position everyone on the board (hence the checkerboard lobby floor) Staff united against the Hotel, but that was about it. I knew where it was going (S5, a return to ~~Scare~~ B&B rental framework from S2 in an ongoing effort to help smooth out connections between seasons.) but again, that was it. So I reached back to S1 for answers, as I often do, and I found an audit. Punishment/teambuilding it is. If S4 was a S1 send up, S5 will tackle S2.

"This isn't deja vu. I've been here before²³." (pg. 1)

"'Just wait' it says. 'Don't do anything' it says. 'It'll be over soon.' it says." (pg. 2) Though left ambiguous, this was imagined of course as the voice of the Hotel herself, telling her to sit still for this exit interview. Though Christa is in the episode, these lines are voiced by Kelly (and later Mark²⁴.) to accent the strange and intrusive nature of The Hotel.

The poems each Staff member recites (noted in the episode by an accompanying wind) were written into the episode for reasons escaping even me. It's serviceable enough, but poetry is largely beyond me. The rhyme scheme in the Manager's implies she is, or believes she is, the only one who can help.

The Owner's poem is a short haiku. This subtly reinforces how set apart he is from the others still.

The gibbering creature intrudes on the Manager's thoughts, either because she is remembering S3. Though the timeline of The Hotel is fluid and never directly laid out, the fact that WE hear S4 AFTER S3 means in some capacity one followed the other. The residual tingle in the Manager's head is something like cosmic phantom pains.

²³This cyclical nature changes drastically post 6.8

²⁴These lines come back in 6.8, however it is somehow more ambiguous what they mean (To you. I know what they mean.)

The Lobby Boy wanting to put the Manager's hand where she needs it to go to end her pain is a very simplistic way of viewing her situation, but it also has very clear, almost sexual undertones. Though I don't ship ManagerBoy, sometimes the audience can have little a ManagerBoy, as a treat.

She notices something is different with the lobby, he doesn't because he's too busy looking at the Manager, and we pick up the thread with the Owner. Management is looking at the bigger picture while labor is concerned with keeping his boss happy. The thing that's missing is of course the front door, perhaps a wink to Arnold Jackson in 1.5 also not noticing the door to his room being gone. Guest parallels.

The Owner, in a season finale payoff, seemingly does not care if he's in danger or believes he is in none. He is concerned (?) for his Staff's well being.

The **Hotel** knowing the Owner would arrive in the guest room before he appeared demonstrates how absolutely powerless the Staff is.

The Lobby Boy, despite struggling to answer questions like 'describe what you see in front of you right now' still immediately knows why the Owner is taking his very a-typical action of guest torture because the Staff is connected.

The Owner reprises his final line from 1.16 as he is swept away. This is to illustrate the severity and seriousness of the situation, bringing the Madam **Hotel** arc to a head. The final word of this line gets cut off as he vanishes but in the script you can still read

"NOOOOO! PLEASE! I WANT TO STAY TOGETHER!" (pg. 11)

Lobby Boy reprises his self soothing **"It's okay..."** and **"I wish we were alone."** (pg. 12) from the end of 2.7, which softly takes place across S4.

Now that the end has come, now that the boys are gone and it's just them, finally the facade of two girlie pops united to 'do the work' drops away and the **Hotel** admits she is punishing the Staff for not working together, to her satisfaction, and getting a little too big for their britches.

The Staff's proper noun names make for clunky direct communication, but there's no way around it. Sometimes the Manager needs to cry out 'LOBBY BOY!' as she's vanished to the corn fields. Them calling out to each other and the Manager swearing are little marshmallow treats stuck in to give the episode (and the audience) a little sweet pop for the finale.

Perhaps insecurity at worrying the episode doesn't pop enough on its own, it isn't uncommon for the Author to employ tricks like this.

A rare credits tweak, no music, only the bleak wind of the void, followed by a doorbell to tease S5.

- **"Going nowhere, doing nothing."** (pg. 3) On Star Trek (1966), background pipes and conduits were painted with the designation 'GNDN', meaning 'goes nowhere, does nothing'.
- **"I've been dead before."** (pg. 3) Spock says this in Star Trek: The Undiscovered Country because he in fact has been dead before.
- **"It hasn't happened yet."** (pg. 3) A reference to the song of the same name by William Shatner off of the genuinely incredible album Has Been.
- **"However scared they are, it's not nearly enough."** (pg. 7) is paraphrasing Aaragorn in The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring.
- **"For some reason I think back to my first fight with the Lobby Boy"** (pg. 8) is from Fight Club. It's funny if you've seen Fight Club.

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