

The Hotel Podcast

Season 6 Companion

THE HOTEL HERSELF

I'm ready for my close up! I even got
Veronica straightened out-

VERONICA

...It's my birthday...

THE HOTEL HERSELF

-so to speak.

Introduction

The first episode of S5 released to the public on the 1st of August, 2022. An insane five weeks after the final episode of S4. This breakneck pace, which had been ongoing for years, was finally reaching its breaking point. And I could feel it. I could feel the creeping, creaking groans of the scripts as they became, if not worse, harder to write to the quality I demanded of myself. Maintaining growing projects and hiring artists every month was overwhelming me while the rest of my life was falling apart even faster. Chronic health and economic issues amplified the pressure of what should have been a sanctuary of relief and a rewarding artistic outlet. I went to bed at two or three in the morning, mind constantly pouring over the Hotel and her needs. I would wake up too soon, unable to rest until I had written the next, or edited the next, or emailed the next, and on and on and on. All my relationships were suffering, as was my work. I was having regular panic attacks.

I was working on the pinup calendars and The Guestbook: Volume I with Jay and Ibis, Trespasses, our true crime mini-series, The New Crew, the bonus episodes, and Hotel en español. When each new project released there should have been celebration and joy. But there was always a muted misery I had

to wrangle. Despite our artistic achievements being absorbed by a fantastic and engaged community, I found myself every time alone in my office clicking 'upload' in silence. I knew something had to change. This much joy uncelebrated could not a life make.

In the background to all this, for years, were growing questions about my gender. Questions that had been there my whole life, in one form or another. Putting the [Hotel](#) aside, an undefined hiatus, allowed me the bandwidth to finally reckon with these questions, and the answer changed my whole life almost overnight. An ill-fitting dress, some slapdash makeup, and Lauren's unflappable acceptance and love gave me a kind of simple joy and quiet calm I honestly thought was not possible for me. The dreary misery that I had spent my life fighting with alcohol and isolation and podcasts evaporated. Everything felt possible. Magic felt possible. No words can describe it. Might as well ask heaven what it sees. The world had changed yet stayed the same. I was a newborn woman, weeping at the beauty of the night.

But my new life, and my new lease on it, did not mean the end of The [Hotel](#) Podcast. Work still had to be done, but now I was the kind of woman who could handle it. Revel in it. Stepping out of the darkness, I felt like me again. The best of me. The lights were on. All the disparate shattered parts of me were no longer at torturous war and I was here again. Still here.

She has, I could not deny, always been here.

I may not have discovered this truth about myself without the many, many, queer and specifically trans fans The [Hotel](#) attracted over the years. Our huge trans fanbase had always been a welcome headscratcher to the production. Why did trans people so resonate with this podcast? I had my answer. I had myself. I had my life back. And I was free to fall in love again with The [Hotel](#).

So I did.

X,

[Veronica](#) California

1. Wearisome's Rest

The New Crew check in Noreen, but some unexpected guests perpetuate the cycle perpetuate the cycle perpetuate the cycle perpetuate the cycle perpetuate the cycle perpetuate the cycle...

The chaos in my personal life prevented this from being ready for the end of S5. In my heart this is the second half of the originally planned two parter S5 finale. Unlike S4's We Found The Hotel! and S5's The Raven which each got reorganized into the show differently, 6.1 Wearisome's Rest will always be our S6 premier.

This episode also serves the dual purpose of being a series finale for The Hotel: The New Crew. Between the end of S5 and eight episodes of their own show, they had finally checked in every guest from S1. Except Noreen. I pulled an old trick out of my hat and told the story from her point of view. I pulled the song title from the true crime miniseries Ben Counter wrote, The Hotel Presents: Trespasses, wrote some sad lyrics and asked Kelly to give us the best aging southern songbird she could. Bringing together the New Crew and the Staff, using a guest POV, and wrapping it all up in a fight centered around that guest's second check in set the stage for a season that is all about the cyclical, damaging, and futile nature of everything in The Hotel.

Noreen's awareness and panic ebbing and flowing is in line with many guests' attitudes, especially in S1 but most notably with Robert Watson in S4. She immediately starts flirting with the canonically handsome Concierge and all her doubts are flashed away with his winning smile. One look at the Bellhop however and her reality starts to crumble.

When the Manager asks if the Lobby Boy can once again summon the Vermin to aid them (remember when we just checked in guests?) the Concierge responds with **"Your wretched throng of filth didn't kill us last time...It won't kill us this time."** (pg. 5) which mirrors what the Owner said when he similarly returned in 5.12 The Reaper's Envy because that is how the character alliances are once again shifting (They are also both paraphrasing Doctor Manhattan from Watchmen (1986) again.)

I quietly reframed Judy as a pet that got 'put outside' to honor the 'Staff only' set up way back at the end of 4.6 ...And Never Brought To Mind.

When the **Hotel** says she can't wait to hear the song you can hear a chord reverberating back through time for a moment.

The Owner immediately snitches to mommy and the Lobby Boy backs him up in a heartbeat. You'd barely remember that these two tried to kill each other recently.

This is the first time the New Crew has had such direct one-on-one interactions with the **Hotel** and the Concierge is not sure how exactly to address her or if she remembers all that stuff he said in The **Hotel**: The New Crew, 1.5 **egnaR ynneJ - 222 moOR.**

Show me a fiction with an insane power balance and I'll show you a throwaway line justifying why a big fight has to happen. The way I get around this common issue is by giving the **Hotel** a lax workplace attitude towards violence and a deep misunderstanding of interpersonal dynamics.

Beat. The Guest music fades out. A record spins.

THE **HOTEL**

Well hey...

She drops the needle.

'Wearisome's Rest' begins to play

THE **HOTEL**

...it's your party.

(pg. 8)

Matt roi Berger wrote the music (adjusting lyrics where needed) into the absolutely wonderful and mournful ballad that Noreen sings as the Staff fights. I am not a gifted lyricist, and Kelly is not overly comfortable singing. I would describe both our talents in this area as 'servicable'. However, pushing ourselves to our limits, in conjunction with what Noreen's capabilities are supposed to be ('servicable' being generous) make for a heartbreaking and beautiful song with Mattie's

incredible musical talent guiding us. I love this song and Kelly's performance of it. The lyrics are of course about Noreen's tragic past, but also very much about how I felt about making The Theater of Tomorrow and The Hotel and my own life as I was staring down a sudden and very uncertain future.

The Staff's inner monologues all end up harmonizing. Each ending and beginning with the same smooth motions. Even Hop's thrashing goblin thoughts bridge the Owner and the Manager's thoughts cleanly. Not just a fun narrative device, but also showing alignment against the Hotel as the Staff unites in their common hatred of the hopeless violent mundane work day.

"...even the Hotel herself has bled and died here." (pg. 10) Important set up here, in the middle of the big song and dance number, after the running monologues have all quietly unified the Staff, the Manager reminds us that the Hotel has weaknesses too. That she too can die. For all the good death here does, for all the futility here, she at least is also, if nothing else, here.

The Lobby Boy then rattles off a series of philosophical and practical questions with deep implications. Class consciousness has to start somewhere.

"She is as resigned to her fate as we are." (pg. 10) The Concierge's line about Noreen is about me too. I am she, she is me. We both cry as we put on our show one last time.

Having hastily established that the Auditor can not only be stained by the guest's blood but she can then use that sanguine layer to interact with the world outside herself, I turn up the Looney Toons knob on the Hotel control panel and explode Noreen like a balloon.

All things considered **"You and I...will have eternity together...to figure out how to die."** (pg. 13) is a pretty romantic line.

The sound of the Auditor's many knives hanging from her jacket lining is actually a chandelier.

Had the show continued, had S6 been the precursor to a S7, and S8, and on, this season would have been focused on the

Manager becoming unhinged and feral against the backdrop of the Staff and New Crew checking in new guests together. Ultimately the Manager would have used the Auditor's knife to put a splinter in God's eye. Who knows where it would have gone from there? A season of a very sick *Hotel*? Does the Manager replace the *Hotel*? But could we possibly part ways with Christa? Does the New Crew have another spin off series? As with the previous seasons I would have figured it out as I went, steering us all vaguely in a single direction.

But since S6 was the precursor to oblivion, the Manager stabs the *Hotel* in the eye here instead, and we pivot that into the final story.

Foreshadowing also the Staff working together, using their different strengths and, ah, 'powers' that build on established rules and lore to come back at the end. See, if the Owner can go anywhere in the *Hotel* (including to hold audience with her and in between the moments the *Hotel* finds its shape) and the Auditor can control time, then they can use the knife which we established can permanently harm the Staff (which is an extension of the *Hotel* herself) then by the end maybe just maybe, technically-TECHNICALLY-this math might all just barely work out.

The quick intercutting lines between the Auditor and the *Hotel* are the best way to keep the momentum of the moment going. It's an atmospheric horror show driven by deep but subtle character dynamics. She's not built for speed or excitement or even necessarily a lot of plot. She can get there, have her moments, when it's earned. But she needs help.

The Owner silently falling apart, like rotting, (which notably absent from this season as we return to something like S1.) and quietly resigning himself to defeat comes right after he states he's never been this close to the *Hotel* before. Her true form, or whatever equivalent they can actually get too. It quietly underlines his point, and the ultimate point of the season: There is no way out. There is only her. There is only this. And he is of course right.

The unifying reaction to any of the Staff who actually get a good close up look at the *Hotel* herself is a hushed whisper:

"She's terrifying." (pg. 17)

During this last ditch effort to kill the [Hotel](#), the blood is 'scratched off' of the Auditor. The reason she is covered in blood for the rest of the season is because during all the rewriting I forgot that happened.

The [Hotel](#)'s final line **"Great party, isn't it? Now get back to work!"** (pg. 18) is a nod to The Shining (1980), and a line I regret. So much time passed between writing this episode and the rest of the season (I quickly jumped into writing The Theatre of Terror V: The [Hotel](#) of Tomorrow II: The [House](#) of Shelley) so I hadn't quite figured out yet that the [Hotel](#) needed to be on her way to dying in this moment and not plucky.

Notably the credits are, for the first time in The Theatre of Tomorrow and The [Hotel](#) history, not read by Mark. By this time, Mark had fully and officially moved on from the show beyond acting and I felt, since it was the final season, it was important to make that distinction somewhere. It also meant something to me personally, as a trans woman and full time podcaster, to put my voice on the record as that stamp. As a producer I don't love the drop in aural quality from a professional voice actor reading credits to a professional writer reading the credits, but a win is a win.

This season sees former special projects managers and former super fans graduate to Producers. With Pacific and Mark firmly in the 'Associate Producer' cornfields, I needed partners, soundboards, extra hands, and accountabilibuddies. They got me through a difficult production at the tail of a tumultuous time in my personal life, and without them I very much doubt the existence of a final season at all.

Lily "Moss" Bensinger also graduated to full Staff Writer. Though he didn't write anything for S6, he wrote the Dracula episode of TTOTV:THOTII:THOS and a dozen bonus episodes and had more than earned his wings.

There was plenty of mountain still to climb, but S6 had officially begun.

"...except a stool with an ashtray and a lit cigarette waiting for me." (pg. 1) This is something John Cougar Mellencamp used to do in concert. He'd run over between songs or verses and grab a puff.

"...New Year's Eve at the end of the universe!" (pg. 2) Reference to The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy sequel The Restaurant at the End of the Universe (1980), no doubt.

"Sorry mom. Sorry Dad." (pg. 7) Is a repeated phrase throughout Chuck Pahlaniuk's novel Invisible Monsters (1999).

"I miss Oklahoma." (pg.7) Fans of Trespases (you listened to Trespases, right?) recall that she is from Broken Bow, Oklahoma. Ben Counter had originally written her from Broken Arrow, Oklahoma. I changed this to Broken Bow as a wink to the first episode of Star Trek: Enterprise (2001-2005).

"That's her...that's the one that got me." (pg. 12) is also what the Lobby Boy says about 5.12 Reaper's Envy, and they both got it from Ghostbusters (1984).

THE MANAGER

"I...gt...yh...nf..."

THE AUDITOR

(amused)

"Heh...What?"

THE MANAGER

(rallying but with effort.)

"I got your knife."

(pg. 13)

Taken almost entirely from Star Trek (2009)

"I SAID 'EVERYBODY DANCE NOW'!" (pg. 14) is also what GOB Bluth demands of his employees in Arrested Development (2003-2019).

"It's proprietary!" (pg. 15) is of course Liv from Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse (2018)

"I said LEAVE ME ALONE!" (pg. 16) is a callback to her shouting similar at the Owner about the Lobby Boy in S4 X - X, and both are pulling from Dr Manhattan in The Watchmen (1986) You can also hear, beneath her bellowing, the Powers That Be noises from S1.

"For some reason, I think of Hop." (pg. 17) This is a nod to Fight Club (1999), and is paraphrased again in 4.18 She's Always Been Here..... I like to fan that little Yuri flame whenever I can.

"...the fluid space dissolving the body's she gave us." (pg. 17) the line as written is **"...fluidic space..."**, but as that word is largely just a reference to Star Trek: Voyager (1995-2001) a pickup was not deemed necessary.

"...as yellow as the sun, burns so sharp the edge of the world bleeds a red just as fierce." (pg. 17) This very specific word choice is also how the rose is described in Stephen King's Dark Tower series.

"I fling the Manager into the center of the universe with my red right hand." Originally a shoutout to the song of the same name in the first three Scream (1996,1997,2000) movies, it has become a common refrain of the Auditor.

2. Lila, Ozzie, and Ren - Room 6

It's Halloween at the **Hotel**,
but who is getting a treat,
and who is getting a trick?

Having finally finished something between a belated S5 finale and a not quite ready for prime time S6 premiere, I had to break the rest of the story for the season and write the final Halloween special. The House of Shelley poured from my fingertips, a joy and delight to write and produce. The rest of S6...did not flow forth with the same springtime ease. In fact it took me months of writing, chipping away and forcing every page, pushing my self imposed deadlines again and again just to finish it.

But finish it I did!

After double checking the final episode for the last time, Lauren asked me how I felt about the last ever season of The **Hotel**. And honestly, it was...fine. Perfectly fine. Good even. But I wasn't excited. There were a few moments, a few cool ideas, but overall it was just fine. As much as I wanted to move on, as much as I wanted to get started on the difficult work of producing it, I knew I owed it to the show, the fans, and myself to start over. I rewrote the whole season, and did rewrite after rewrite on each episode. I moved this episode over there and put that one over here and cut this episode entirely. I changed the Manager episode to a Lobby Boy episode to a Concierge episode. And even after I had finally gotten the rest of the season locked down, the finale was giving me no end of trouble. As if I was trying to smooth down a bubble in the wallpaper, and no matter how flat I got the rest of it, the bubble found its way deeper and deeper into the season, eventually warping the last episode. (But more on that later.)

Maybe it was because Halloween was upon us and I was tackling those episodes, but something finally clicked. I could use the only guests never voiced by Mark and Kelly (except for Trespases, you listened to Trespases, right?) and bring them back! Lila, Ozzie, and Ren, along with the events of 4.0 We Found The **Hotel**! became canon, and like that episode, this episode would serve as a gentle Halloween special to launch us into October and the rest of the season beyond. I picture the

Concierge in a 1930s Halloween card, reading to us from an old book by the fire, a jack-o-lantern at his feet. Using his old fashioned attitude with the Halloween Special nature of the episode allowed him (and by proxy, me) the opportunity to speak directly to the listener under the guise of him discussing the Halloween party plans of the citizens of the town below. The narrative structure and rules and threads are all beginning to fray and break and overlap now. The **Hotel** is rotting and the gasses she releases will choke the narrative along with me and the listeners too if she can.

Here we see the Concierge on his own. The New Crew has been separated, just as the Staff was in S2. This being the New Crew's own pseudo-S2 it was a natural fit. If memory serves, this episode was meant to start, as we often do, with the Manager. And I think the dust covering everything was actually burnt carbon soot from...something. The episode got re-worked in the shuffle and during the rewriting process I tried to save as much work as I had done already wherever possible. This, along with burnout and real world fatigues, lead to a season I am very proud of but not without her narrative bumps along the way. So the **Hotel** has fire damage left over from a previous draft. Call it meta-textual thematic blue-curtaining.

"There are fields of them." (pg. 1) A line Morpheus says in The Matrix (1999), but just a cute reference. This episode sets up a lot of the framework for the Badlands and is almost the only place any explanation of how the guests, the double check-ins, and Judy Blashy work practically. It's all in the relationship between pumpkin and jack-o-lantern and Halloween decoration and guest. There are no answers, only the canon in my head and poetry on the page. The S2 callback line about the light being on, how the Staff is used as a metaphor both for consciousness and capitalism, also illuminates the guests. This hopefully draws attention to the fact that most of the guests have this whole time been voiced by Mark and Kelly.

The **"...rare gas station."** (pg. 2) is referenced also in 4.0 We Found The **Hotel**, as is **"It might just be houses up here, or private property. If any of you see signs, let me know."** and **"...if you can find the **Hotel**."**(pg. 4) in effort to tether these two pivotal episodes together. Along with other lines from S2 and S3 that position the black mountain and the black forest all into this central location, this town choked by a pumpkin patch

surrounded by a city. This is our soft introduction to the Badlands.

The **Hotel** is described as a "...**vein of sinister fluorite...**" (pg. 3) because fluorite is purple.

The Concierge expresses anxiety at not only being alone, being without his staff, but also as needing reassurance that everything is functioning as it should. That he is in his right place, as is his staff, and surely once the three guests (whatever three people show up first) are in their place, then he can relax and fully ignore the dead and rotting **Hotel** all around him. For surely that is all just another Halloween decoration too.

I bring back the Manager's common early season refrain "**I think.**" Ever uncertain of anything other than that she and the rest are unreliable narrators, she's grown enough since S1 to call out all the inconsistencies, be they the **Hotel's** design or my own.

The Manager goes in hard on the 4.0 We Found The **Hotel!** language. The lucky crowbar, the swimming metaphors, the Scooby-Doo Mystery Machine dig, all point to her putting the listener in the shoes of not just the idea of a **Hotel** guest, but these specific guests who come specifically from outside the **Hotel**, as something separate. At least that's what she knows she'll think. She positions herself and you and the guests all as something separate from each other, yet somehow the same. The circular line of nonsense logic comes, pardon the expression, full circle by the finale.

When the Manager says "...**when she thinks something, it is.**" (pg. 5) she is referring to me. In whatever way these fictional events occur, they are occurring when I think them and you hear them. Writing it down is a step in the delivery process. I am one of Her workers. They are extensions of me, living in my mind, just as much as they are of the **Hotel**.

The Lobby Boy now has a much more natural and rebellious attitude. Again, had the show continued his new characterization would be that of an impudent teenager, testing boundaries, slacking off, and perhaps bonding with the Bellhop. The Owner has regained some of his early season dignity and panache.

The Manager and the Concierge share the same view of the same square moon with rounded edges. They are in the same place, but not together. And certainly not in control.

Between the Concierge and the Manager talking about the jack-o-lantern's, I'm not sure how much more clear the relationship between guest and [Hotel](#) could be. (Though I myself only think I know.)

The photo that drops in place of the reservation card is of course the same photo that the kids took in 4.0 [We Found The Hotel!](#), and the Manager calls out their reduction to a 'Creepy story', name checking the podcast we partnered with for that episode: [Creepy](#).

The New Crew's desk bell is silver, the Staff's is gold. Not just a distinction, but a clear ranking of the [Hotel](#)'s favor.

The Staff finally working together without compromising their monstrous nature had been a goal I was working toward since S4. This season is the closest we get to see of that dynamic, and it feels not just natural, but almost healing. The Manager describes the outside of the [Hotel](#) with similar imagery Robert Watson did, and Lila, Ozzi, and Ren did, and even she herself did in S3.

Leaving the [Hotel](#) is not just a Big Deal for the Manager, who for two seasons has been grawping about it being far beyond her reach, but for the entire staff. [Hotel](#) policy is unflinchingly rigid, and if just kicking open the door and sauntering out had been an option this whole time surely they would have availed themselves. The strange absence of guests, the absence of the Bellhop, the implied declining health of the [Hotel](#) herself, all indicate that something has changed. Something is changing. What or why or where it'll all end up is the question being asked the entire season. The answer of course is known all along, but it has to be heard before we understand. If even then.

B A D L A N D S

Our first time in the Badlands! Of course we don't know that yet, and we don't yet realize that it's not at all our first time here, and to be perfectly honest I didn't have a full

idea of what was going on in the Badlands until I wrote it. But nonetheless, here we are.

Back before I had decided this was the final season I was working on ideas for what the show would look like after the S5 break. I had a vision for another New Crew spinoff for Patreon. Badlands was that show, though initially it was called The New Crew: WASTELAND. All I had was an image, a scene, and vibes. I saw the Concierge driving an RV through an endless desert, Hop and Aud in the back playing a game where the Bellhop would guess where the Auditor was touching her despite never knowing if she had guessed right or indeed if the Auditor was actually there at all. I saw the Concierge sitting at a picnic table at a long abandoned rest stop while Hop used the facilities. A family road trip.

Once I decided S6 was the end, I threw the Badlands on as a post credit stinger, hoping it would provide something dynamic and interesting for the New Crew to do while the Staff was searching. Parallel journeys with no clear end goal. It felt right.

Of course, an RV wouldn't really work now, I needed something a little less safe and cozy. At first I thought a bus, but I didn't like the idea of reducing the ever classy Concierge (and a Black man) to a bus driver, for of course he would never allow Hop to drive. So what else could transport the Crew across the desert making regular stops? A train! Of course! A train traveling through the wasteland desert filled with horrors and decaying buildings and such. Maybe the train was somehow the [Hotel](#) herself!

Now, lets talk light spoilers for Stephen King's Dark Tower (1982-2004) book series. Later, this guide is going to spoil several important plot points for several of the books in that series. If you think you might ever, at all, even just a chance, read those books, then do not read the rest of this page. The big spoilers are at the very end of this guide, there'll be another warning down the track.

Okay you've been warned.

In The Dark Tower III: The Wastelands (1991) there is a pseudo sentient murder train that travels through the desert filled with horrors and decaying buildings in a vast area

called, wait for it, the Wastelands. I changed the name to the Badlands, working in yet another Star Trek reference (the Star Trek Badlands are where the whirlwind columns of fire and dust on the borders come in) and started writing, hoping the destination would make itself clear by and by.

The dusky pink and yellow rose coloring from The Dark Tower gets checked again in the Concierges opening line. His next line about being covered in dust being kicked up mirrors 2.1 Room 004 - Janet Hurd, again subtly priming the listener to engage with the show from all the way back to the beginning.

The glitzy purple and blue train colors come from the Hotel's standard color purple, and the blue dress she wore as Judy Blashy. The sparkling boat paint is because part of the train is based on a Disney World monorail (as we'll see again in Hops episode.)

"A phantom that runs on ectoplasm and riddles." (pg. 10) A hat tip to Blaine the Mono from The Dark Tower III: The Wastelands who uses riddles to force his passengers to fight for their lives.

The Concierge has no idea where he is or how they got here. He makes no comment about he and Hop being separated or alone at the top of the episode. Hop is clearly nervous about their situation, but doesn't seem to have any more information that the Concierge does. This entire season is question being answered with question, and my hope is that once the terrible answers are given the listener will think back on this dark confusion as the good ol' days.

"And dignity. Always dignity." (pg. 1) Gene Kelly says this right to camera in Singing in the Rain (1952), which I slipped in for Lauren, who loves that movie.

"For every town has a Main Street." (pg. 1) is a play on 'Every Town has an Elm Street' from Freddy's Dead: the Final Nightmare (1991)

The Concierge says **"...and candied corn..."** (pg. 2) in a Mr Burns-egsue tense because he is very old fashioned.

"I've been dead before." (pg. 4) Once again Spock in Star Trek: The Undiscovered Country (1990)

"It has happened. I watched it happen! I saw it happen, don't tell me it didn't happen!" (pg. 6) Is what Nero says in Star Trek (2009).

3. Robert Watson - Room 5

**The Bellhop is alone on New Year's Eve
and the Staff treads familiar ground...**

We open immediately with familiar language and imagery that devotees will recognize from 4.5 Robert Watson - The Bee & Pollen Room (those less familiar with scripture can cross reference the title.) It's also very notable that the Bellhop is not seeing pure meat and blood. She can also see brick, door frames, and polished wood, just as the Concierge will surely no longer have stargazer vision.

"I'm not even gonna tell you what the ballrooms are made of." (pg. 1) is hands down my favorite joke this season, maybe even the entire show.

Hop wonders disdainfully about the origins of the Staff, positioning them as an outside and unwanted agent that she implies are the cause of the **Hotel's** obvious illness before woefully asking the empty lobby where the guest is. The windows rattle and leak a clear liquid. Could this be the **Hotel** weeping? Does she weep for herself, or for her dear Bellhop, alone and confused and scared? Or is she simply, finally, rotting?

Hop speculates with irony that perhaps Robert has fallen into a snowbank and died 'out there'. This is of course exactly what happens to him in 4.5, though it can be debated that also, no that did not quite happen in 4.5.

We then have a run of lines drawing parallels and establishing some new order: Hop explored every part of the **Hotel** as she waited, just like the Manager does in 4.6 ...And Never Brought To Mind. The flickering shadows caused by the fire light **"...make the **Hotel** feel alive again."** (pg. 2) once again underlining that the **Hotel** is not only sick, but dying (it's also ambiguous about who 'feels' she is alive again, the Bellhop, or the **Hotel** herself.) and it only lasts for a moment, just a moment, which is not only a common **Hotel** Podcast refrain, but softly repositions the Bellhop as a primary member of 'The Staff'.

"The forest, the freeze, the night. That's all." (pg. 3) is a nod to 3.1 Forest Fire Night Beast. That was the night the

Hotel was born. This time, there is no beast, and we are watching the Hotel die.

The Bellhop gives up after who knows how long she's waited impatiently and curls up on the front desk like a pet waiting for their human to come home.

The Lobby Boy walks the same path as Robert Watson, using much of the same language (indeed, it's the exact audio reused from 4.5 Robert Watson - The Bee & Pollen Ballroom.) and even sees the Owner high above, waiting for Robert all those years ago.

It's a small moment, but having the Owner steady the Lobby Boy in the lobby is a sign that these characters are now fully on the same side, any animosity reduced to that low simmer reserved for a co-worker who also hates the boss more than they hate you now.

The bony chandelier (here also caked with mealy meat) is implied to be a whale of some kind. The Hotel's Ballroom in this 'pure' version of herself is called The Whalesong Room. There is a possible reading here that the carcass hanging from the ceiling is some form of the Hotel herself. Perhaps (a representation of) her corpse from the last cycle?

There is something personal and nearly erotic about the way the Manager tears the wallpaper skin off the Hotel's walls. Half undressing, half attacking, all in an intimate act. A reciprocity for all the times the Hotel tore the Manager's body apart with rot (and whatever the hell was going on between them in The Tattoo.) Originally written from the Manager's perspective, the Lobby Boy describing it gives it now a voyeuristic quality.

After the Manager smiles, the Lobby Boy whispers that **"She's...terrifying."** (pg. 6) just as the Staff does when they see the true face of the Hotel.

The Manager going feral and tearing the Hotel apart with her rarely used super strength is a quiet remnant from my initial S6 idea that would focus the story on her sloughing off her tightly wound dedication to the Hotel and becoming a feral thing, a monster that attacks from within with abandon. The Lobby Boy pulls the Owner from harm once again reinforcing their newfound trust and cooperation. This is punctuated by the

monologue handoff, the two boys using the same exact words to describe this moment. The Staff is one. The New Crew is scattered. The **Hotel** is dying. Yet nothing feels like a victory, and all the answers just feel like more questions.

"...as her fury looks for something flesh to destroy." (pg. 6) is a direct quote from 5.1 Merp and Burble, the first time we see the Manager go full feral to the point of hurting herself just to hurt something. I believe Graham here though says 'fresh to destroy', which is close enough.

The Owner in this episode is fulfilling his role without his early season hatred of the Staff, and without his latter season jealousy. Like any good boss, he lets his employees handle their business, stepping in with a light touch to aid them when he sees they need it from his perspective and vantage point removed from them. His hands being out and up mirror his position in 4.9 Mr PLatt - 05, this time he is doing so not to mock the Manager, but to demonstrate his effort to help her. Her arms and hands are bent at him, in the classic Slar pose (see the episode art for 5.1 Merp and Burble.) The line about her being 'ready to ride more violence' a nod to possibly my favorite Manager bonus episode The Ranch.

In the original script the Manager uses a guest's cigarette to burn the guest book and lobby, which is the most likely cause of the fire damage left over in the final scripts. As I rewrote the season to have no guests, she had to kill the old fashioned way.

Note here that while the Owner has demonstrated the most destructive tendencies and the Lobby Boy has direct control over the physical building itself (?), they both wait until the Manager attacks and destroys the **Hotel** before they are free to engage. The Owner crushes the desk bell and the Lobby Boy mentions he can hear it whine. We don't hear it whine, so it is possible that only he can hear this. It's possible that all three of them can hear it. It's possible he's not hearing anything at all.

"In that moment we saw each other clearly. We saw everything clearly. And it was the end of everything." (pg. 8) This is almost word for word what Robert Watson says and the end of 4.6 ...And Never Brought To Mind. We end with the Lobby Boy calling back again to 3.1 Forest Fire Night Beast with **"The bell, the building, the book, and the Staff all fall silent."**

(pg. 8). The birth tied narratively to the death. The implied cycle hinting at what's to come. And whatever is next, whether we've been here before or not, is very different from what has come before.

It is intentional and notable that these two episodes (a halfhearted argument can be made that they are the first two proper episodes of S6) are centered around the only guests not voiced by Mark and Kelly and that those guests do not arrive. Pieces set on the board, questions raised, dots connected, but nothing yet has taken shape enough to indicate what it all means.

B A D L A N D S

Hop describes the landscape as being populated with dim horrors, creatures and strange shadows in the desert. Could this be where the ghouls and goblins that find their way into the *Hotel* come from? Is this indeed the 'outside' of the *Hotel* that Hop was just bemoaning? Is this some place 'inbetween'? A purgatory?

Anyone who's ever driven any length outside any city in the United States will recognize the broken hollow buildings populating the landscape. Abandoned in small towns, old official stations of long gone mysterious purpose, gas stations that starved when new highways twisted away from them.

The repeated **"Dead husks."** (pg. 10) is two separate takes from Rissa, but sometimes I like the eerie way repeated lines flow and use them.

"Whatever was inside them that made them special is long gone." (pg 10) When taken in conjunction with what the Concierge says about jack-o-lanterns in the previous episode, we can continue to build some idea of what the staff and even the guests are to the *Hotel*.

Many years ago I tried once to get into H.P. Lovecraft, but I found his writing to be impenetrable and gave up. There was one reference though to a dream of him flying over 'a dead city' in some story or another that was striking enough to stick with me. Travelling from desert through occasional abandoned buildings on the way to a vast and crumbling city builds momentum and assures the listener that I am indeed taking them (and the New Crew) somewhere narratively. Beyond the city we

will find ourselves somewhere more familiar, but not yet on solid ground.

"...encouraging the wind into a full tilt boogie." (pg. 1) while this is simply an old colorful phrase, Full Tilt Boogie is also the title of the making of documentary on the From Dusk Till Dawn (1996) special edition DVD.

"You're sick, aren't you?" (pg.3) Eliot asks E.T. this in E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial (1982)

"The wind begins to switch. The Hotel starts to pitch. And suddenly the scabby hinges start to unhitch." (pg. 5) are based on the lyrics from The Wizard of Oz (1939) song Munchkin Land: "The wind began to switch/the house to pitch/and suddenly the hinges started to unhitch."

The Lobby Boy's **"...barbaric YAWP" (pg. 5)** comes from the Walt Whitman poem Song of Myself, 52. It's a very Lobby Boy poem.

The dry lightning that flashes overhead comes from Planet of the Apes (1968) for surely the Forbidden Zone is a big influence on the Badlands.

The big white blur Hop sees when it's too bright is likely similar to the big white blur Han Solo saw on Tatooine in Return of the Jedi (1983).

"The next one is nice and cold with benches on either end. I push my face into the window, but a familiar voice warns me to please stand clear of the doors in two languages." (pg. 10) The train has many kinds of cars from many kinds of locomotives. This one is a monorail car from Disney World. (*Por favor, manténgase alejado de las puertas.*)

4. I Am Not Insignificant

**The Auditor finally gets an Audience with the Hotel,
but does the old girl have any fight left in her?**

The Auditor has always been a very tricky character to write. Like the Owner, she is almost functionless. Even more so than he is, which is why she is physically separate. Not always sure what to do with her or how she can do it is a big writing challenge, and the best way to wrangle that is to make it a part of her character.

Being in love with the Hotel while resenting her is also something highly relatable to me during the production process. Here, like the Manager's feral fits, I have to find a way to quickly steer her character into a radical new direction to fit the season's story and limited episode count.

Taking her from a position of totally detached disillusionment that is fueled by pain and anger is also highly relatable to me during the production process. This again I work into her character and the story. I always try to turn a hurdle into something climbable, helping the character reach ever higher rather than try to awkwardly jump over them.

These opening lines about the Auditor's wound still bleeding out could be a character trait, something that indicates her growing humanity, her separation from the Hotel, the pain of her growth following her. I think they might also be slotted in during the rewrite phase once I realized the blood was sheared off of her in 6.1.

"It's hammered into our bones." (pg. 3) Overt reference to 3.2 Hammering Bones. Our romantic and nearly narrative S3 dances in time with S6.

Though it is an audio medium I still try to write striking visuals and the multi-hued blood dripping off of and pooling onto nothing is very striking imagery. The blood itself looks, I think, and keep up with me now, a lot like the river of slime in Ghostbusters II (1989).

**"I'M BLEEDING YOUR BLOOD FOR YOU! I'M BLEEDING EVERYONE'S
BLOOD FOR YOU! BUT YOU CAN'T KILL ME. YOU CAN ONLY KEEP ME! MAKE**

ME STRONGER! IN HERE I AM THE ONLY THING THAT IS! THE ONLY THING THAT ISN'T NOTHING! I AM NOT INSIGNIFICANT!" (pg. 4)

Presented here in full for their importance. Again, I am using the strange, isolated, important/unimportant character position the Auditor holds as a vassal of truth. It is, as we learn later, all the same blood. In a manner of speaking. The Auditor and the blood are the only things actually physically present here. In a way. The use of the Owner's Big Catchphrase of course further parallels the two characters, but also punctuates without irony the truth everyone on the show must reckon with at some point:

Yes, you are. You are not significant. You may not even technically exist, as you understand it. And if you are wrong about that, you could well be very wrong about everything you just said.

This episode, strictly speaking, from a narrative standpoint, does not need the [Hotel](#) to weigh in at all. In fact, if I were approaching this season with a more clinical eye, I would not have the [Hotel](#) show up at all until after the ad break in the finale. She would POP so much more if we didn't hear from her until that critical moment. She should be dying, on the verge of collapse. And I don't have anything particular in mind for her to say right now anyway.

But this is the last season. The last hurrah. Christa has been with me since the first episode of The Theatre of Tomorrow: The Lost Logs of the Saratoga!. She's no special effect to be used as spectacle. No, Christa gets a regular episode too. I don't know what she's gonna say, and she only gets the one, but she gets it goddam it!

She quotes a little Wearisome's Rest, me tapping the sign at you about everyone being the [Hotel](#). 'The lights are on' comes back from S2.

The nice thing about writing the [Hotel](#) is she can go off on tangents, poetic or bizarre, she can hint at how much or little she knows, she can speak lines or paragraphs from earlier in the show and it all means something. For she is all and all is she.

"But the mountain cannot be weathered by light. Only by friction. Only by time." (pg. 4) This perspective is very telling. The mountain has been mentioned many times, perhaps it's that same black mountain in the Badlands. Perhaps she is the mountain. The little lights she sees the staff as are then

not the spark of life, but something that harmlessly illuminates her.

Being pierced by the thorns of the the light is not a mixed metaphor, nor is it trying to give painful descriptor to the shape of light, but is actually a callback to The Garden, which is arguably this season from an even more zoomed out perspective.

She also describes blowing gently through the dark forest and growing her seed there. Events very similar to those of early S3. The paradox of her creating herself is in line with her being present at those events in S3 as the Jibbering Creature, and mirror her being present again after her death in the finale.

"Bad lands for farming out here, but you should see the smiling faces come harvest time." (pg. 5) I cannot make it any clearer than this.

"until my mind was overgrown with it's creeping vines. Smiling faces not yet cut into their ripe melons." (pg. 5) Do I have to draw you a picture?!

The Auditor goes through an emotional breakdown, finally screaming and thumbing her nose, and it's all just background noise to the **Hotel**. Yes she finally hears her, yes she finally acknowledges her, but even that comes with a little story about the Owner first.

When she finally 'grabs' the Auditor, holds her while she grunts and squirms, you can hear briefly the whooshing comet sound that first pops up somewhere in S2 as well as S1 **Powers That Be** noises.

The **Hotel** textually states that S3 is her birthday as that is when she bashed the Manager's head in. Of course she did that as the Gibbering Creature, which textually has not been stated to be the **Hotel** herself, so there's wiggle room for her to just be bleeding out and crazy. (The audio of that death plays in the background, but again the **Hotel** is an unreliable narrator.)

Getting her bearings finally she notes that everyone is gone. Their life changing arcs and world defying journeys boiled down to an offhand **"...wandering around." (pg. 7)**, for she can

see them all, past present and future, and they all are her and also inside her and still just a dream she's dreaming.

She further downplays the drama of their existence by sarcastically asking **"What, are they investigating the hollows of the worlds that live in me or something?"** (pg. 7), taking a very serious line she spoke in S2 and reducing it to a thumb jerking gag.

"H-have to do...everything my damn self...around here....ha ha...that's...kind of a joke..." (pg. 7) This joke is about two things. One is an acknowledgement that she is every character, even perhaps the guests themselves now it seems.

Two is that, with respect to everyone who worked on the show for it does indeed take a village, I still had to do almost everything my damn self. Making a podcast is not necessarily cheaper than therapy, but here we are.

"...and so the moss and the birds move on..." (pg. 7) Case in point, this line is about Staff Writer Lily "Moss" Bensinger and producers Jay and Ibis (bird names, you get it) moving on from the show once it wrapped. While the friendships we developed along the way will remain, and they'll always have a place in my heart, the fact of the matter is we would not be spending nearly so much time together soon. Our dynamics would change and whatever comes next will come next. The wheel turns. A bittersweet wink to them on my way out of town.

The tragedy of the Auditor finally getting an audience with the **Hotel** and being almost completely ignored while the **Hotel** sorts out her own thoughts is a heartbreak fueled into a character turning point. The Auditor also sorts out her thoughts, ignoring the **Hotel** right back.

The Auditor realizes the real **Hotel** is the New Crew she made along the way and the **Hotel** finally reveals that though 'bug' may be a cute nickname shared now by the Lobby Boy and the Auditor, she also clearly means it derisively.

B A D L A N D S

I thought it would be kind of funny if as soon as we got to this dead city we were with the Auditor and so couldn't actually

see it. In the original script, as I was working out how much Aud was bleeding, she saw how fast the train was travelling by how much the blood that was filling the car sloshed to and fro. While I loved this imagery and it was a difficult cut, I think the creatures attacking the train and smearing off works much better.

I also think the image of possibly thousands of figures standing still and staring at the train, floating in the void, was not only a great parallel for the way she sees the guests, but genuinely eerie imagery. It takes on another dimension entirely when you realize the figures can't see her. They're just standing there. Maybe they're watching the train. Maybe they always stand there. A whole city standing still by their windows watching the train go by as monsters chase it through dusty streets.

In the Badlands music I asked Lauren to build a distant, echoey bit. Crunchy notes that are meant to represent the crumbling of the city CRACKING and reverberating off the sides of the buildings. In fact much of the vibe and aesthetic of the Badlands is taken from the opening level in Space Quest IV (1991), particularly the music.

"...a whole herd of something small and meaty scuttles under moonlight I am sure is bright and strange. (pg. 11)

The herd is likely the same somethings that took Harold Pike in 1.14, and the entire line is me doing my best Welcome to Night Vale (2012) impression.

The Auditor doesn't give us any new information about where the train is going or what it could mean. We don't even get, as we did in the previous episodes, a look at what's next. Just the grim possibility that perhaps this too will not end.

"Nothing in abundance." (pg. 1) is paraphrased from The Rocky Horror Picture Show (1975)

"My--MY FACE! THEY did this to me!" (pg. 4) This is from a Dana Gould bit where is imitating, I believe, Vincent Price as Dr Phibes.

"Some little seed doing exactly what it's supposed to..." (pg. 5) A paraphrasing from Bryan Fuller's Hannibal (2012-2014) describing a cancer cell.

"There's only one man who can help me now." (pg. 9) Is what Marty Mcfly says at the end of Back to the Future Part II (1989) The Auditor is of course referring to the Owner, as confirmed by his trademark WINGS FLAP sound.

"Whole fields of them." (pg. 10) How Morpheus describes the human farms in The Matrix (1999).

"They are...watching us." (pg. 10) Paraphrasing the title for 5.4 We Are...Watching You... which was originally a reference to the same line Tim Curry has in Congo (1996)

5. Michael Booker - Room 4

The Purple Door Trilogy begins

when the Bellhop and the Manager check in the same guest...

The Purple Door Trilogy signifies this season's turn. The final countdown, as the room numbers continue indicate. The mission statement for this season was to include as many touchstones and important references to what's come before as organically as possible. This chunk of episodes honors the Behind The Curtain arc, which also introduced important new concepts and had matching artwork. The purple door itself was not originally present in these episodes (nor was the desk bell scarab) but were retroactively included once Moss had turned in his bonus episode script for The Exorcism of Judy Blashy.

Answers slowly reveal themselves now. The Bellhop has been left alone, without guests to kill. She let herself get buried in frozen snow, giving up. This imagery (and the Bellhop herself) calls back to the Manager in S3, as the Bellhop's new attitude subtly calls back to the Manager in S1. The New Crew's job in the purple door trilogy is to check in guests. Business as usual. Just as it always has been. Sure, the **Hotel** is rotting and dying and the guests don't seem to be coming, but the automatons still have their programming.

"That was before I was b-" (pg. 1) She's interrupted by Michael, but is obviously about to say 'born'. The interruption is intentional, as that is not the kind of verbiage that the Staff normally uses. It's similar to the Manager being cut off before she can call the **Hotel** home in previous episodes.

The guests in these episodes are perhaps how the Staff would have appeared as humans (she's even wearing a blazer and loses an eye!) Idealized versions of themselves, or templates on which the **Hotel** designed them. Maybe an image of mockery, or some kind of waste product that is only realized in the throes of cosmic death. Whatever they are, however you conceive of them, they function here as mirrors of normality. The final boss we all have to face on our journeys of growth and life: Ourselves.

They have names that they themselves would have picked. 'Michael' starts with an M and is very masculine, and though uncommon is still used for women on occasion. 'Booker' comes from the guest book. She checks the guests in, 'books' them their rooms. The Manager is many things, but creative is not one of them.

Because of the high volume of Star Trek references populated throughout the show I feel the need to point out that though Star Trek: Discovery (2017-2024) does have a woman named Michael in the lead and who ends up romantically paired with a man named Booker, this name is not a Star Trek reference. The similarity is delightfully coincidental.

I love how excited Hop is to check-in her guest. She doesn't bother with the formality of the concept. Like a child eager to show off her toys to a new playmate, she grabs her and takes her straight away to death.

When Michael is confronted with the door she must walk through she freezes. Instinctively understanding that this door is death. She cannot go through without losing everything. Again, this is how we all react to the doors we must enter many times over on our journeys, understanding somehow that we must leave behind much more than we ever imagined to embrace the unknown.

It's also another clue to the ultimate fate of the Staff coming in the finale. She's walked through this door many times. That doesn't make it any easier. In fact it makes it much, much harder.

I tried to write these episodes more like S1 episodes, the deaths in particular. That grungy, gritty, gross, crunchy, cookie, candy S1 vibe is so tricky to recapture. Painting the room with radioactive green and rotting the guest seemed appropriately nasty while also helpfully tethers the Staff's traditional rot.

Some of the descriptors of the **Hotel** across this season seem to contradict or sit uneasily side by side. Is she rotting or not? Is she brick and mortar or flesh? Is she burnt up or decaying? Is this a result of the many rewrites this season underwent? After a certain point the inconsistencies become part of the framework, like a leg that healed crooked but still functions.

"She's trapped in here and it's getting so hot." (pg. 3) is a nod to the first episode of The New Crew where we get our one and only description of what it's like for the Staff to die and come back.

It's important to note that the New Crew do not get human doppelgangers, nor are they questioning their place or the **Hotel's** supremacy. They are textually designed to do this. They enjoy it, much more than the Staff ever did. While it's no less cruel (as the Concierge and Auditor have both noted several times) they are, at least for now, content in their work.

"And I don't think the water in here will wash it off." (pg. 5) There's something mythical here not only about the fact that the water the **Hotel** provides won't wash away her sins, but also the Manager finally learning the real tricks of her trade.

She then plucks the desk scarab out of the air, realizing she can't see it she grabs where she can't. This is the game as the **Hotel** likes to play it.

"No watermark though. She never was very good at branding." (pg. 6) She's actually talking about me and how mismanaged the branding and advertising side of the show was.

The Manager rejecting the 'perfect' reservation card signifies perhaps the end of her journey here. Her growth beyond what she once craved so ravenously. It's an important moment, and one that the listener will instinctively understand. Which is why the very next line is suddenly about the Lobby Boy being able to take things with him from **Hotel** to **Hotel**. It's important for later.

As she monologues she suddenly begins speaking out loud. She knows the **Hotel** can hear her thoughts so she speaks them pointedly, defiantly, as she describes how little she thinks of what before she sought vociferously.

"I flick it once and shake it, unimpressed at its mundacity." (pg. 6) 'Mundacity' is a word I made up. 'Mendacity' is a word but it means dishonesty. 'Mundacity' is the quality of being mundane.

"The duck decoys who one day quacked a question..." (pg. 7) I believe Ibis first referred to the Staff as duck decoys who become self aware on the We Like The **Hotel**! podcast. It's an

excellent way to approach understanding what they were and what they became.

She calls Michael's smile 'pretty' the same way she called Judy Blashy 'pretty'. This is of course lingering vanity as the **Hotel** is, fundamentally, all these people.

After the Manager consumes Michael and they become, more or less, one entity, she comments that she doesn't know what happened in the woods. She also several times repeats the phrase 'what happened in between?'. These are S3 and S2 references, collapsing the series long perspectives into one single Shin Manager. Indeed being 'whisked back to the black field' is where the Staff was all being mysteriously pulled in S2 when they were separated. Here, now, the 'in between' can be read as 'in between the End of the current cycle and the Start of the new'. Just as surely as they must die and live again to check-in guests, they must come back after the **Hotel** dies to begin from S1 again, just as Michael knew what waited for her beyond the Purple door.

B A D L A N D S

Hop states that there were no people in the dead city, but we know there were because the Auditor saw them in the previous episode. The figures were in the buildings, watching hidden from view. She then describes a neighborhood, choked with vines. This is the same neighborhood the Concierge described in 6.2 Lila, Ozzie, and Renn - Room 6. One can assume, or at least imagine, that the various **Hotel**'s the guests visit could all be located in that dead city, (and the motel's out on the fringes of the desert) and all the rentals are more or less located within this neighborhood. That math of course doesn't work out, but when does it ever at the **Hotel**? The cul-de-sac Hop mentions is almost surely where the houses in the bonus episode The Neighborhood are lined. That episode in fact was originally titled The Cul-De-Sac, but was changed because that's awful.

In addition to the building being choked and crumbled, she specifically says "...I still catch glimpses of broken homes and snarls of violent gardens." (pg. 10) That's not just colorful language, she comes from a broken home, and part of her recognizes that. The 'violent garden' is likely similar to the

bonus episode The Garden. The [Hotel](#) sees herself as a garden and everything that she grows a plant or flower. Those harvested, missing patches could be the pumpkins that the Concierge spoke of. Faces carved and sent off to their doom.

All of these missing pumpkins are under the watchful eye of a scarecrow, dressed as the Bellhop (or is that the Lobby Boy?) This is a very important component to the Badlands and understanding how the Staff and guests interact with it and by extension the events of the show. For more information and a deeper understanding of the Badlands (and perhaps other important perspectives on the show itself) watch the season 2 episode of Star Trek: Voyager (1995-2001) Deathwish.

It should be further noted that while the scarecrow is dressed like the Lobby Boy/Bellhop, in the final bonus episode, The Wizard of [HOZtel](#), it is the Owner who takes on the role of a scarecrow (ScarecrOwner.)

The black wood to which the scarecrow is mounted certainly comes from the black wood of S3. They enter a tunnel at the base of the jagged mountain and when they come out the other side they see that very forest bathed in light. The Concierge's Halloween town, the dead city, the S3 forest, Robert Watson's New Year's Eve [Hotel](#), are all a part of the Badlands.

"Brown, rusty metal walls. Flat, filthy concrete instead rows of seats." (pg. 11) Is obviously missing an 'of' after 'instead'. I am notorious for my typos and sloppy spelling. Why didn't I grab Rissa saying 'of' somewhere else in the episode and slip it in? I'll tell you...I don't know.

This brown, rusty, razor wire torture train car is my take on something from Silent Hill (2006). The three guests on the train are none other than Lila, Ozzie, and Ren, dying in ways very reminiscent of their deaths in 4.0 We Found The [Hotel](#)!.

Just as the Manager has gained some awareness of how to wrangle the [Hotel](#) and kill a guest herself using her decidedly inhuman capabilities, Hop and Cierge have turned a corner on their journey and have seemingly gained an awareness of their destination. The momentum of the story picks up and a sense of meaning and structure form for the listener to hold onto; Everything is clearly building to something, but no one is at all certain what it could be.

"The Hotel kept rotting and stinking and leaking..." (pg. 1) Comes from an episode Clerks the Animated Series (2000) in reference to some old burritos.

"'See? Nothing to be afraid of in here.' Well, now there is." (pg. 2) is a reference to one of my favorite jokes ever in Monsters Inc. (2001)

"Yeesh." (pg. 3) This word is a running gag in Sin City (2004)

"How do I make it stop?" (pg. 3) While not a direct quote, it is inspired by Evil Dead 2 (1987) It's also the final self aware question of a woman who knows the cycle is going to repeat and she'll only end up here again.

"We should do this again sometime." (pg. 4) Is a line from Fight Club (1999) that further connects the relationship between Michael and the Manager.

"...I straighten my tie with my red right hand." (pg. 5) Another reference to the song used in the Scream franchise.

"I like the can the Hotel..." (pg. 4) is an old Hotel fandom catchphrase left over from a typo in an episode description. I am very proud I found a natural way to work it into this final season.

"Everything is slick or wet, like a wet cat that..." (pg. 4) This awful sentence that uses 'wet' twice and has a cat simile is a nod to a similarly structured line in 1.1 Ted Barrow - Room 215.

"Subtle off-white coloring. Tasteful thickness. No watermark though." (pg. 6) is of course paraphrased from the business card scene in American Psycho (2000).

"I see. Very well. If I must. If I must...follow this through to the bitter end." (pg. 7) Doctor Manhattan says this in Watchmen (1986) as he goes to his 'death'.

"We don't even have names. We're just her rotten puppets."
(pg. 7) Paraphrased from the bonus episode The Library.

6. Buddy Boyle - Room 3

**The Purple Door Trilogy continues
when the Concierge and the Lobby Boy check in the same guest.**

The Concierge finds himself out of place. Or he finds the place out of sorts. The [Hotel](#) around him appears as it does to everyone else. He interprets this as her absence, an intentional rebuke. But the [Hotel](#) has crafted much more loyal and loving angels after the first three lights got a little too independent. He waited in the same lobby the Bellhop did, the same lobby Robert Watson checked into, until eventually the snow and ice and black forest from S3 overcame him.

"I watched the sky then, an immobile frozen figure among the waiting trees." (pg. 1) This figure he freezes into ties in also with the S2 episode of the same name. The stars going out one by one could imply time passed for eons, as the Owner has claimed many times in his void. Or perhaps he was simply whisked away. He dreams there of the Badlands, which has already happened, is happening now, but still is waiting for him in the future. All of this reinforces that time and space in the [Hotel](#) work differently. The past and the future are not so separate and fluid a thing. But they are also locked, unable to be changed by anyone, no matter how powerful, except for Her. Slowly winding up to a single blow at the finale.

Mark's performance as Buddy Boyle is heartbreakingly pleasant. The very idea of a healed and whole, human Lobby Boy aches with a safe banality. He is instinctively aware of what waits for him behind one of notably only three doors. His name, again coming from the idea that these would be the names they'd choose for themselves, is most likely something someone would have impatiently sniped at him while he wasted their time.

'Yeah, your name, what's your name, buddy boy?'

The Concierge is only too happy to continue the bloody work of The [Hotel](#). This is a return to the gleeful fantastic horror of S1, just as all of their spin off, [The Hotel: The New Crew](#) was. He uses language mirroring earlier

seasons "...until the decay" (pg. 2), the viper/mouse imagery on pg. 3, "Proof he was here." pg. 4, and the wood of the Hotel soaked in the guests blood, are all again and again intended to bring back old memories and feelings from throughout the show, however subconsciously.

Once the guest is dispatched he is left alone again, and we don't have to wonder very hard what his final wish is at the bell break as he cleans his glasses in quiet tension.

"The Hotel is...s-small tonight." (pg.4) The Lobby Boy's first line harkens back to many a classic Hotel episode opening with a similar if not this exact line. Again, reaching back to where we began. A few lines later he says "The guests are always already here." (pg. 4) which refers to he and the Manager's fate, reaching forward to 6.8 Hotel Policy. Balance.

Here we see a version of the Lobby Boy I've been steering us toward since S4. I knew that after his fearful cowering and head bursting fight with the Owner, once the Staff got back together again and had to go back to work, the dynamic would change and he would essentially have grown to the point of a spiteful teenager who's figured out he doesn't actually have to DO anything since he can't avoid the consequences no matter what.

"Die in here, die out there, die in the rooms, die checking in, die, die, die, die, DEAD!" (pg. 4)

Over the course of the several outlines and rewrites for this season, one of the darlings I had to kill was opening with the Lobby Boy, angry and emo, decorating his supply closet. I wanted to set up his little plant and drain pipe in the first episode and pay that off in the finale. Balance. The end is the beginning is the end. Unfortunately, as is often the case, a combination of production timeline and structure forced me to move that setup to almost the end of the season.

The idea that the supply closet doesn't change like the rest of the [Hotel](#) has been soft canon for a while, and the bonus episodes are the bulk of that evidence. The bag with pink letters he describes is the same one from the first bonus episode, The Mall, and serves to make that idea fully canonical as well as distract the listener from the plant, which we won't need until later.

"...drops little plats down onto the tiny leaves."
(pg. 5) The Lobby Boy saw water 'platting' down onto the leaves of this same plant in 1.1 Ted Barrow - Room 215.

The Vermin finally gets a full and proper character here. We saw it as a swarm of actual vermin taking out the New Crew in S5, but here Izzy's OC gets sentience, sapience, and even lines of dialogue all provided by an uncredited Veronica California. I envisioned that each creature in his makeup would have a distinct voice and personality that all works together in tandem as one overall voice and character (not unlike the [Hotel](#) herself!)

The Party Rat he keeps as a pet also showed up in a bonus episode The Cinema, and was originally an OC designed by a fan that I put in at their request.

"It's his birthday." (pg. 5) And though the original OC design does have the rat wearing a party hat, this line also sets up my birthday line in the finale, which itself is also calling back to the [Hotel](#) saying "It's almost my birthday" in 3.9 Under Old Management.

"But no one else wants to come in here. So that makes it mine." (pg. 5)

This has always been the root of his power, and the source of his pain and isolation. The [Hotel](#) almost never bothers changing his supply closet between guests because the guests never see it. So he can bring things with him, befriend the Vermin, and even start his own little garden.

At 11:28, right when he flicks the tip of the pipe and it shudders, there is a distant howling sound cue. It's that same 'comet' sound often used for the [Hotel](#) in what is surely closer to her 'true' form.

The Desk Scarab, the golden beetle, travels throughout

S6, 'beginning' its journey here by crawling out of the Lobby Boy's pipe. The pipe droops the same way the **Hotel** does when he is manipulating it or '**Hotel** bending'. Perhaps this is a naturally occurring creature in the **Hotel** that taught the Lobby Boy how to change reality. Perhaps it's the last drop of blood pumped from her heart as she died. Perhaps it's the **Hotel** herself, reduced in death and searching for her way back to life.

He stares up, a frozen figure once again, at a black void just like the Concierge described, just like the Owner always does. Just like they all do. The same night, day after day, forever.

The Lobby Boy's sickened reaction to Buddy is very much like the Owner's reaction to him in S1. **"He looks callow. And simple."** (pg. 6) is also how the Owner describes the Lobby Boy in 1.16 The Owner IV.

"I will show him 'how I'm doing'." (pg. 7) at 16:41 the audio on this line is lowered in pitch, which happened only a few times across S4 and S5, revisited here one last time.

BUDDY
(barely able to
speak, but warmly as
possible.)
"I...under...stand"

(pg.7)

As much of a human moment as he is ever allowed, and in the most private moment he has ever had. The **Hotel** is dying around them, not tuned in. The Staff are all separated. Even the guest is just him, not chasing himself but finally embracing himself, forgiving himself, understanding himself.

B A D L A N D S

"She's devised a game to play to pass the time. The Auditor touches her, and she must guess where. I'm not sure how she keeps score. There's no way for her to know if she's guessed right. Or if the Auditor is even here with us." (pg. 9)

As mentioned earlier, this is the beginning of the Badlands. Way back when it was a loose idea for a new New Crew spin off, one of the only ideas I had written down was the Concierge in the father figure role while the Bellhop played this game with Aud in the back.

Here though, on the train, the Concierge passes through S3 and we get a rare look at those mysterious men who cut down the black wood to build the **Hotel's** bones. The Concierge's head tingles like the Manager's does when he sees them, not because he had his head bashed in here, but because she did, and they are all of them one and the same.

"I feel suddenly as if I'm intruding. Witnessing some private moment..." (pg. 10)

He recognizes the intimate moment he is witnessing in the **Hotel's** history, even if he doesn't fully consciously recognize it as her birth. He does recognize himself standing in the snow staring at the sky just as he described earlier in this very episode. He, they all, we, are catching up to the 'present' as they roll through the Badlands where the **Hotel's** death blasted them back to when she died.

Originally he was going to become a tree himself, and maybe the whole forest that gets cut down to make her bones, a la Ted Barrow. But ultimately I didn't like the idea of a Black man being turned into wood and chopped into bits to literally be the physical foundation of the building. So he remained himself, a Frozen Figure like the Lobby Boy in 2.1 Cracker Man. When he settles into what he's seen and calls himself **"Her own little bug encased in amber."** (pg. 9), a line lifted from The New Crew 1.5 Egnar Ynnej - 222 Moor, which Damon wrote. Also from that episode comes the Concierge's drink of choice: Brugerole.

Robert Watson brings him his drink. **"It really does take the edge off."** (pg. 10) This was Robert's line in 4.6 ...And Never Brought To Mind, but his read here is a different take from E.K. Dagenfield's original 2021 audio. It's a much more disconnected and distant take, implying he is in the thrall of the **Hotel**. This is not only an overt nod to **The Shining** (1980) but along with the previous episode this completes the cameos of the guests not voiced by Mark and Kelly, drawing attention to that fact without explaining yet why.

The Concierge's certainty that they are nearing the end of the line playing out against the **Hotel's** birth hints also at the fatalistic finale.

"...the melody he hums changes to a possibly recognizable tune." (pg. 2) Though the tune is almost certainly The Hotel Podcast theme, the line is borrowed from Tom Lehrer introducing his song The Elements (1959).

"I can hear them roaming around the lobby." (pg. 4) In an issue of a The Real Ghostbusters comic book from the 90s someone described being able to hear some floating ghosts 'roaming around out there', and the idea of some ambient ghostly roaming sound stuck with me.

"Red water drips out of the pipe..." (pg. 5) This is a double stuffed reference, one is a wink to the blood spilling out of the elevator in The Shining (1980) which Kubrick told censors was rusty water, and two is to Salad Fingers, who also liked when the red water flowed.

"Go now..go..." (10:33) Just as the Vermin is saying 'Look it's his birthday' one of its voices whispers this line from the opening of the theme song for My So called Life (1994-1995)

7. Owen J.F. Smith VI - Room 2

The Purple Door Trilogy concludes.

"Stepping out of the darkness, there is always a moment, just a moment, where I have to wait for the **Hotel** to find its shape. To find her shape." (pg. 1)

Beginning the end where we started, the Owner uses what is perhaps his signature line and updates the **Hotel**'s pronouns from S1.

His name, or his guests name, is a very no-nonsense take on his given name. 'Owen' is close enough to 'Owner', and 'Smith' is less conspicuous than 'Doe'. The VI is because we've already done The Owner I-V. The J.F. stands for 'Joe Frank', who was an early influence on the show and the Owner in particular. I sent Graham a Joe Frank clip when we were building the character. Joe Frank himself came to me from an episode of The Dana Gould Hour.

He mentions gas lamps on the wall, likely meaning he has arrived in the same lobby as his first appearance, in 1.7 The Owner - I.

He also mentions a "...**dark beast, breathing slow with heavy bones.**" (pg. 1), a half hearted but well meaning attempt to connect S2 and S3 to S6. He remembers standing above the **Hotel** during 4.5 and 4.6, his memory like the others just a slurry of horror stew, one night lived again and again into meaningless repetition. He does seem to be unique (as he claims he is) among the Staff in that he does not believe this 'other' him, Owen, is a guest. It's possible he recognizes him as himself who chased him in insanity while fighting the Lobby Boy in S4, or drove him down during The Road Trip. He, Owen, repeats back the Owners first line, just as Buddy and Michael did. He breaks with this motif and carries on an actual conversation with the Owner, with himself using a voice that sounds much closer to his S1 persona.

The Owner

"Who are you?"

OWEN

"Who are you?"

THE OWNER

"The owner of this-..."

Beat.

THE OWNER
"I'm The Owner."

OWEN
(scoff laugh)
"You're neither."

(pg. 2)

In that brief exchange we hear the Owner in real time accept his identity as a noble monster, a creature of her fashioning, and abandon the human lie that he is a lowly capitalist. They then step into the shadows and begin dueling, feinting as **Hotel** employee and guest, tilting into personal attacks and deconstruction.

"You wouldn't know what happy felt like if you were laughing in the sunshine with a friend." (pg. 3) This line is not only a heartbreaking look into the core of the Owner's character and source of his pain, it's also meant to tee up the finale wherein he originally WAS laughing in the sunshine with a friend (or at least two coworker/survivors.) However that ending changed during the rewrite process and he didn't make it out.

Owen's final barb asking the Owner if he's jealous he'll never be checked into the **Hotel**, never truly belong in any sense, triggers the **Hotel** shrinking and what amounts to a final fight between his two selves. He once again refuses to look up into the void of his own death, just as he did in S3.

It is no coincidence that the Auditor arrives to break things up.

THE OWNER
"I know you well!"

NOT SURE WHICH
"Your pain runs deep!"

Flies buzz.
The Auditor laughs.

THE AUDITOR
"Share it with me!"

(pg. 4)

The Auditor's wild powerset of being able to both stop time and permanently harm the Staff with her knives came to good use

in S5 when she and the Manager stabbed the **Hotel** in the eye, which retroactively caused her 'death'. This sets up the full potential of those powers when combined with the power the Owner has to go anywhere in the **Hotel** he pleases.

Be it the workplace or your community, teaming up against the oppressor with direct action or violence is not only the best but often the only way to affect change for good and for all.

As discussed before, writing the Auditor is particularly challenging and I take refuge in character driven metaphor and purple prose. It's an opportunity to relieve the pressure of plot, especially as we drive toward the finale, to remind the listener of the personal stakes of these characters. They are in pain, designed to inflict and receive it. They are taken advantage of and abandoned time and time again. Set against each other and ignored until their use is called upon again. She uses words here like 'fire' and 'clay', natural elements that signify the deep primal place these feelings come from.

The episode ends with her laughing over the credits and a hollow wind, a nod to similar credit gags done throughout the show and a final warning that it's all come crumbling down.

Owen's scoffing **"You're neither."** (pg. 2) is what Principal Snyder says to Xander in a dream sequence in an episode of Buffy the Vampire Slayer (1997-2003).

"Your pain runs deep." "Share it with me!" (pg. 4) is what Vulcan cult leader and Spock's half brother Sybok says frequently in Star Trek: The Final Frontier(1989).

"...can assume a more pleasing shape." (pg. 4) Once again this quote is from Star Trek VI: The Undiscovered Country (1990) and itself paraphrasing the Bible re: Satan.

8. [Hotel](#) Policy

The End...?*

*yes

A note on the history before we begin:

This season's episode count was originally divined for one episode a month for the remainder of the year it was meant to release. Once that deadline wooshed past me I was left with an outline for that number of episodes, and as I wrote and rewrote the season that number of episodes, nine originally, remained the template. Episode eight was fine, good not great, but it had a cool enough concept that it half worked as an Owner/Auditor episode. I could not crack the final episode. I wrote several versions, and multiple drafts of each of them. They were never more than fine. If that. It wasn't until I figured out that I needed to combine episodes eight and nine, that that 'cool enough concept' was actually the heart of this season, of the entire show, and the only ending that made sense of the chaos.

The episode description echoes and answers the S1 finale description, which at the time served as a potential open door to future seasons. For all I knew when I wrote it, S1 was the end. An experiment. When it ended I could have just as easily moved on to the next project, as I often do. [The Hotel](#) struck a chord (and we were actually marketing it this time), so I wrote more. Produced more. Grew more. By the end of S6, though I could have easily written and produced more and more and more, I had grown enough that what I needed lay outside [The Hotel](#). Of course [Hotel](#) policy being what it is, actually getting out was the tricky part. Almost everything in me wanted to stop. Start my new life as Veronica California, leave all my toxic trends and safe indulgences behind me. But I couldn't just walk away, leave the ending at S5 and New Years Eve with Noreen. I felt I owed the show, the loyal and passionate fans, and myself, a proper ending. I knew however good it might feel to stop right then and there and move on, I would spend the rest of my life regretting it.

In 2021 I thought of the perfect ending for the show. I wrote it down in case I died. It wasn't a full season, it wasn't even a full episode. It was just a final moment to build toward. Something to have in my back pocket in case one day everyone decided to quit the show suddenly. Just a little bit of runway

to land the plane on one more time. I had an image of the Manager, the Lobby Boy, and the Owner leaving the lobby and staring out at the horizon, finally free, whatever that could possibly mean. The Lobby Boy would be the only one who looked back as the doors swung shut to catch a glimpse for a moment, just a moment, of three rotting figures standing by the front desk watching them go. He wouldn't tell the others what he saw, wouldn't dare even speculate what it meant, but that's where we would leave them, with the whole world ahead of them.

Each time I rewrote the season or the finale, this is where it led. Even with the additions of the New Crew and the Badlands, this is where it ended. Maybe when he looked back he saw six rotten figures, or maybe the three figures were maybe/maybe not the New Crew. But every time I rewrote something, like trying to smooth down the wallpaper, the trouble just bubbled out further to the edge.

On one of the many walks I took trying to smooth out these bubbles I suddenly realized something, something that to me is very real though I imagine that to everyone else it must sound at best very silly and pretentious: The [Hotel](#), the [Hotel](#) herself, does not want to die. She knows I'm trying to kill her the only way she can really die, by ending her story. She's fighting me for control still. I've said before on an episode of We Made The [Hotel](#)! that even I work for Her. I am The Writer, The Producer. The others are The Actors, Izzy is The Arist. We all have our roles to serve her and bring her to life. And she does not want to die.

I was so close, and had rewritten so much, and I was so, so tired. I was shedding one life and trying to figure out how to start a new one. She knew that and kept convincing me that just one more draft would fix it. Just one more script. One more week. I finally figured out, after solving problem after problem with the episode that the thing that was no longer working, the bubble that needed smoothing down was The Owner. I was trying too hard to figure out what comes of him and the Auditor after the credits. In one version he just vanishes on the train with a sigh. In another more problematic version he takes on a new form as The Auditor. Nothing worked.

She was holding him hostage.

I had to kill the Owner, kill my darling, if I wanted to escape at all.

Everything clicked into place after that. The Owner got his redemption, the Auditor finally rejects and rebukes the [Hotel](#) in full, the Manager and the Lobby Boy get out, and the New Crew

gets to take over the family business. But of course, **Hotel** policy is unflinchingly rigid and I had to leave a part of myself behind, in the **Hotel**. The Manager, Lobby Boy and Owner are still in there too, with the New Crew circling the back half of their lives forever and ever. The track doesn't change and you can't get off the train. Not really.

But let's begin anyway.

The title functions first to lull the listener into believing **Hotel** policy has been broken and the Staff could succeed in leaving the **Hotel**, but by the end of this it will serve as harsh reinforcement of that rigidity.

The Concierge puts it most succinctly: **"What happened in between seems like little more than the peaks and valleys of a single line."** (pg. 3) 'What happened in between' is what the Staff often wondered in S2 about the moments between guests, between episodes of the show. Here the Concierge all but confesses to knowing what he really is--a sound wave, a single line of peaks and valleys that is the sum of all he knows and experiences.

The Lobby Boy and the Manager repeat lines from the S2 finale, a moment on the show that is a lynchpin, an intersection where many points pass through, perhaps even this one. The Staff all speak over each other, occupying the same space separately, expressing the same thoughts differently, building until we finally get to hear from Her.

We hear the first lines she speaks in each season (plus Trespases, you listened to Trespases, right? Right.) Finishing with the **Powers That Be** noises from S1. She retches up...something. A planet maybe. Or just some gunk. Whatever it is, it's that familiar sound that's been with her since S2.

The **Hotel's** beratement of the Staff comes from her beratement in 4.18 She's Always Been Here and here it also expresses my own wounded perspective venting about the process of making a podcast.

"I think I missed Halloween and my birthday..." (pg. 5) Meaning here that so much time passed between S5 and S6 that we did not do a NYE special or a Halloween special that year.

"I'm not quite sure how I'd know how to say goodbye to the Trash Chute." (pg. 7) This is a quiet reference to one of my favorite OC's created by a fan and The Bakery postcard artist Van. Trash Chute is a huge grinning beast with a small Lobby Boy hat who eats the luggage left behind by the guests.

The **Hotel** speaks mostly in half remembered snippets of her earlier speeches, especially from S2. Her version of the T-1000

assuming all the shapes he has before in his molten death throes. Mostly it signifies her death, and again reminds the listener that what we explore at the end is everything we've gone through to get here.

This repurposed line from 2.7 Return however: **"Something is taking those lights and carving their gourdly cavities. (pg. 7)** swaps the word 'godly' for 'gourdly', a wink at the pumpkins the Concierge spoke of in 6.2 Lilah, Ozzie, and Wren - Room 6, the pumpkins from the Badlands, those gourds who are plucked and carved and in the monstrous becoming are transformed into jack-o-lanterns. Perhaps this is something like where the guests come from.

She immediately retches up the Desk Scarab, the Bell Beetle, the Front Desk Bug, tying the cyclical idea of guest and **Hotel** and Staff all together before it flies away into the Job Swap bonus episodes.

"Six lights of my own making couldn't be put out." (pg. 9) Another callback to 2.7 Return, updated from three to six including the New Crew.

"THE HOTEL

(weaker...)

**What I find gives me for the last
time, an exciting pang of surprise.**

The Cosmic Heart beats for a final time.

THE HOTEL

(she's going...)

**Pay no attention...to the woman...
behind the curtain...
(...there she goes.)
Oh my."**

(pg. 10)

The **Hotel's** 'final' words here are also all quotes pulling double duty. The exciting pang of surprise, here for the last time rather than the first time as it was once again in 2.7 Return. The 'woman behind the curtain' is pulled from 5.4 We Are...Watching You..., which was a reference not only to the Behind the Curtain arc that season but also The Wizard of Oz (1939) and here sets up the final bonus episode The Wizard of HOztel.

The Auditor's **"HA!"** at 21:19 is taken from Bailey between takes.

Once the Owner and the Auditor have collected the Staff who hang high above nothing in the void, the others are suddenly able to hear her and they carry on a conversation about where to go next. This is possibly because of the power of friendship and self respect, but really is because I didn't notice that happened until well into post production.

At 23:51 as the Concierge is describing flying past 5.1 Merp and Burble, the audio from the inspiration for that episode plays. Music-By-Lauren-Pokorney cries 'Wehh!' and I respond 'No! No! No! No!' from our short film series Slar (2020-2021).

"Hey, that's us! Our first day at the Hotel." (pg. 14) the timeline suggests this is S5, the Double Stuff October that introduced their characters. However the train whistle that plays at 24:03 suggests this is the end of this episode when the New Crew drops off Lobby Boy!Ted Barrow.

"...though it felt like we spent much much longer than usual here." (pg. 15) The Manager's comment is a wink to the 40-60 minute episodes of S4.

The Hotel's pleas to the Staff about doing more or less or whatever are her pleas to me to keep the show going. My pleas to the production crew and audience to stay interested. A desperate cry from both of us to keep going over just one more dune and surely finding there a life giving oasis.

"WE COULD KEEP THIS GOING FOR YEARS IF WE PLAY OUR POSTCARDS RIGHT." (pg. 16) Inching us ever closer to finally breaking out all her powers and fully acknowledging she is a character in a show.

"...they, I presume, must have archives of their own." (pg. 16)

This line canonizes (whatever that could possibly mean here) the fanfiction, which as those who know know comes primarily from ArchiveOfOurOwn.org. The fans being such a huge part of the show, it only felt right to give them a proper blessing. The line that follows is from the opening of the fanfic Birdcage by Hotel Staff writer Moss Bensinger.

"HEY! I'M TALKING TO YOU! Well hi there!" (pg. 17) The Hotel stops flirting with it and finally breaks the fourth wall. She speaks directly to the listener, though I suppose she always has been. We all always have been. You have your role in the Hotel too. Yours is The Listener. I opened each episode's announcements this season with 'Well hi there!', not just a quiet reference to Rose the Hat in Doctor Sleep (2018), but a way to anchor the phrase in your mind. When you hear that, you know you, yes YOU, are being spoken to directly. Hopefully when

the **Hotel** uses the phrase it triggers your attention a bit more directly. This effect is lost of course for those who listen to the ad free versions.

She demands you clap your hands to keep her alive, like Tinkerbell in Peter Pan. Like a fading starlet, ready for a close up that will never come. Ready for the animated show Izzy and I never managed to get off the ground. Ready for the TV pilot I wrote that never saw the light of day.

"THE HOTEL HERSELF
I even got Veronica straightened out-

VERONICA
"...It's my birthday..."

THE HOTEL HERSELF
-so to speak."

(pg. 18)

One of the riskiest moves in the franchise. Following in Stephen King's footsteps I inserted myself into my own show. But if you've been paying attention this whole time, I've always been here. And I always will.

In 3.9 Under Old Management the **Hotel** claims 'It's almost my birthday.' Here I simply finish that thought, as I finish everything else. The finale's release date is also the show's official birthday: 13 April.

The Owners words, being 'released from the company', the 'transition that can begin right away', all harken back to the S1 finale. A prophecy finally fulfilled. He finally quits, the Auditor's earned the show's only f-bomb, and Noreen and I wish the listener "Bye!" together. For I am she, she is me. They're all me. It's Veronica all the way down, I'm afraid.

When the **Hotel**--the known universe--explodes, we hear snippets of The Mall, The Ranch, Hotel en español, and a line from the final bonus episode The Wizard of HOztel, **"There's no place like me, your home for the night."** (pg 21), which had not yet been written.

"Know anywhere we can get a room?" (pg. 22) This final line was to be spoken by the Owner as the three of them laughed in the sunshine together, no longer co-workers or prisoners, but something like friends. After his death his lines were given to the Lobby Boy.

If you like your endings happy and cannot bear the thought of risking what you've got, if you listened only to this point in the show and, seeing there were ten full minutes left, stopped listening out of instinctual fear that the storm clouds would blot out the warm sunshine, then read no further. Thank you for listening. Thank you for reading.

Take your happy ending and go then, for there are other worlds than these.

A note now about spoilers for another story. As you must surely understand by now, Stephen King has been a big influence on me and his decades long odyssey The Dark Tower series specifically. (And yes of course, The Shining.) If you ever plan on reading The Dark Tower series, which is a meaty seven book undertaking in the neighborhood of 4,000 pages, skip reading this final Badlands section until you have.

I'm serious, major spoilers ahead for those books. And they're good books! Proceed at your own well informed risk to the true and final ending of The [Hotel](#).

B A D L A N D S

It should also be noted here that though it is not a direct reference or cause for me doing it, Stephen King also put himself into The Dark Tower series.

The Manager starts her Badlands monologue the same way the Concierge did in 6.1. This is the beginning of the end, and it actually started eight episodes ago. It's been inevitable this whole time. There's no stopping what's coming. Whatever that may be.

There is an ending written where the Owner is with them as well. His lines were here given to the Manager. In that original ending he sits in a seat on the train behind the Manager and Lobby Boy, "...sitting at the edge of the seat to leave room for my..." he doesn't say 'wings' but we understand his meaning. He puts his face in his hands and sighs a tired sigh as he vanishes, no longer crying out a desire to stay, whisked off to

whatever cornfield he must wait in until he's him again. I gave this moment to the Manager, who, the poor thing, has almost never actually gotten to sit down in her entire existence.

The Auditors appearance here is tricky. Perhaps it is the Auditor who has been on the train with the New Crew this entire time. Perhaps it is that same Auditor who exploded with the Owner and the [Hotel](#), blasted to the Badlands herself. Perhaps they are one and the same. She stands apart, as she says, and there are more questions in the coda than answers.

And now we come to the final turn on the tracks. What we've actually been building to this entire season. Perhaps this entire series. I had no clear idea of what exactly was going to happen in the Badlands when I started writing it. I didn't know exactly where the train was going. I knew it would pick up the Manager and Lobby Boy (and the Owner, at the time) after the credits, but that's all I knew.

There are so few satisfying and proper endings for long form media. Movies, TV, books, whatever. How many proper satisfying and exciting endings can you think of right now? Not just serviceable but actually GOOD? I can't think of many, don't need more than one hand to count them, and I felt the weight of that fully when crafting my own.

Then I started thinking about one of my favorite endings of all time. This is where the heavy spoilers for The Dark Tower enter. Last chance to exit.

The Dark Tower's seventh book ends with the gunslinger ascending the titular tower and the villains being dispatched. There is a door there, there are many doors in the Tower, and our hero walks through it after perhaps centuries of searching. And then a message from Stephen King, warning the reader not to read on if they like happy endings. On the other side of that warning we learn where that door leads: Right back to the beginning of the first book in the series. The gunslinger must relive his quest all over again, this time hopefully getting it right. He has perhaps done this many times already before. I wanted something like that for my ending. Something that changed your perspective and the texture of the show forever when you listen again.

That's when it fell into place, that they, the Manager and Lobby Boy, would turn into the guests and the cycle would begin again. The plant seed was added to the Lobby Boy's closet to be turned into Ted Barrow's plant. Mark and Kelly did the voices of the guests anyway, except Robert Watson, and Lilah, Ozzie, and Ren. We addressed that this season and trapped the outside interlopers on the train. (I'm sure if the show had continued, we'd have picked up on a thread from Trespases and seen Cecilia Burnham again.)

It was perfect. I could see the moments playing out in my head, I could feel that it was the right move. The only ending that was possible. Looking back on the show it felt like it was always leading here. Had always been this way. And once you've listened to this ending, you can't listen to the show the same way ever again. It all changes.

The moments swelled up and I let them fall one after the other like rain drops plating on the leaves.

"That woman in the jacket is the only other passenger, sir." (pg. 27) The Manager is already Janet Hurd.

"You don't want her to get damaged on your trip." (pg. 27) The Bellhop refers to the plant as 'her', implying it is perhaps the Hotel herself, growing again from the dirty ashes of her old life.

The Concierge

"Oh yes, your employer has called ahead and arranged everything."

Ted Barrow

"Oh. A business trip."

(pg. 27)

The exact same exchange Ted Barrow and the Manager have in 1.1 Ted Barrow - Room 215. His employer, his business, finally revealed.

"See you behind the curtain!" (pg. 28) The Bellhop knows she'll be back once they get to S5 again.

And before you can catch your breath it's over. A few flashback lines lay out the powers at play and how the pieces are set, and a familiar voice from 4.18 returns, something unexplained at the time, urging the Lobby Boy to wait, to do something, to finally 'push', as we hear the voice and the Manager say together.

Perhaps the plant, if it is indeed the seed of the [Hotel](#) regrowing into herself again, returning to the universe after the decay, then she can be killed again before it starts. Truly freeing the Staff this time. Maybe if he pushes the plant, say out a window to drown on the sidewalk below, they can all escape for real this time.

But we already know he pushes the plant. He did it the first time you listened. He'll do it next time you listen. They'll all be trapped still because that's what the show is. That's what she is. They're all figments of her imagination, and she's just a figment of mine. All I could do is put her tail in her mouth and let them run in a loop so that I could finally escape.

Don't get me wrong, I love this show. It means more to me than I'll ever be able to express, means more to me personally than I'll describe in a behind the scenes episode companion certainly. What I went through over the course of the decade I spent podcasting changed me forever, and this show and the fans like you will be with me forever.

Just like the Staff will be with her forever.

And so the show is over. A consistently dreadful ending with just the right amount of thematically meta textual self awareness.

I hope you liked it.

But I wouldn't send you on your way without a song in your heart. (The song that was originally going to end the S5 finale, which is why Noreen has a verse)

So though the likelihood of producing any more [Hotel](#) is null, you can listen and relisten as much as you like. And in that way, we will meet again. And again and again. The show is over, but we'll always have room for you in it.

We have plenty of rooms left...at The **Hotel**.

"Oh no. Not again." (pg. 4) The Lobby Boy here is quoting a character from The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy (1979) who has been killed over and over and over again by someone who they've just spotted killing them once again.

"To me, Lobby Boy" (pg. 6) This is what Cyclops says to summon the X-Men to him.

"It's afraid." (pg. 8) Neil Patrick Harris says this also of the Brain Bug in Starship Troopers (1997)

THE VERMIN: "Stay."

THE LOBBY BOY: (Sadly, wry grin.) "Come."

(pg. 8)

This is the exact exchange Elliot and E.T. have in E.T. The Extra-terrestrial (1983)

"I'll be right here." (pg. 9) In addition to E.T. also famously saying this, at 17:02 in the episode you can also hear Vermin quote C-3P0 from Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back (1980) **"I have decided that we shall remain here."**

"Oh my." (pg. 10) Captain Kirk's final words in Star Trek: Generations (1994)

"NOTHING. In ABUNDANCE." (pg. 10) is also what Dr Frankenfurter promised Magenta (I think?) in The Rocky Horror Picture Show (1975)

"A few false starts as they struggle to turn ana, but then-" (pg. 12)

"A few false starts as they struggle to turn kata, but then-" (pg. 13) 'Ana' and 'kata' are direction beyond the full range allowed within the third dimension as defined by the book The Boy Who Reversed Himself (1986)

"Blue starlight wearing her angry face boils toward us, screaming, snarling." (pg. 15) Hopefully in the mind of the listener this resembles something like the face of Imhotep in a wall of sand chasing a biplane in The Mummy (2000)

"AFTER CAREFULLY CONSIDERING MY AUDIT...I AGREE!" (pg. 19)
John Hammond carefully considers and agrees with Dr Alan Grant's
recommendation in Jurassic Park(1993)

"DON'T LOOK HOP! CLOSE YOUR EYES!" (pg. 20) Ellen Ripley
says the same to Newt in Aliens (1986)

Outside the Hotel, (pg. 21) the Manager looks to the storm
clouds on the horizon just like Sarah Connor at the end of
Terminator (1984) and contemplates her open future just like
Buffy Summers at the end of Buffy the Vampire Slayer (1997-2003)

"I could live in this moment for a thousand lifetimes."
(pg. 26) Hannibal says this to Will Graham on Bryan Fuller's
Hannibal.

THE HOTEL
(laughing)
Oh I've never done anything like this
before!
(reconsidering)
...well...

(pg. 28) The final lines from Meri Wilson's song Peter the
Meter Reader (1981)

THE OWNER
(rejoicing, contained
'fuck you')
"...I QUIT!"

THE AUDITOR
"Fuck it!"

NOREEN/VERONICA
"Bye!"

Front desk bell dings.

Created by
Veronica California
&
Mark Whitten

Written by
Veronica California

The Manager.....**Kelly Nienaltowski**
The Lobby Boy.....**Mark Whitten**
The Owner.....**Graham Rowat**
The Bellhop.....**Rissa Montañez**
The Concierge.....**Damon Alums**
The Auditor.....**Bailey Wolfe**

And
Christa Lewis

Special Guest Star
Robert Watson.....**E.K. Dagenfield**

Music by
Lauren Pokorney
and
West Rodri

Special Guest Composers
Zach Tatom-Drake
and
Matt roi Berger

Produced by
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Jay & Ibis

Art Director
Izzy 'filthyguts' Chavez

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