

Chapter 24: Let's Get Technical: Scaffolding Form, Content, and Assessment of Audio Projects

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1. "The Sound Is My Medicine" by Anonymous

In "The Sound Is My Medicine," a sound engineer at a popular radio station is asked by his general manager to visit his residence after work to fix some custom technology. The engineer finds thousands of dollars of equipment, stolen, and repurposed for a higher calling.

Transcript

Radio Host Jack Dudley [*lower calm and cool tone, measured*]: You're listening to the greatest radio station.

[*door knock, background radio noise, keyboard typing sounds*]

Charles Westervelt [*deep, low toned voice, a bit monotone, robotic staccato*]: Jack, before you leave, make sure those promos are done for next week.

Jack: I'm almost done, boss. Just getting used to the new sound equipment, that's all.

[*background radio noise, phone ringing, eerie music begins*]

Charles: I don't want to overburden you right now, but I'm afraid I need some help. After work, would you mind stopping by to fix some equipment?

[*background radio noise, keyboard sounds, phone ringing*]

Jack: I don't know what could be at your house that I could fix? But if you're looking to give your sound engineer some overtime...

Charles: Let's not go over budget. The new soundboard alone cost us a fortune. But let me just say as your general manager, I believe that you can handle it.

[*Windshield wipers, rain falling on the car windshield while the wipers clear the rain. Jack shuts off the engine and exits the vehicle. The door closes shut. He's walking in the rain.*]

Jack: Mr. Westervelt, what's that in the back yard behind your house?

[*rain continues to fall, thunder*]

Charles: That's my own broadcast tower. Isn't it great?

[*thunder crashes overhead*]

Jack: You're not going to put our station out of business, are you? That thing is brand new judging by all the moved dirt.

[*rain continues pouring, ominous thunder increases*]

Charles: They certainly tore up the backyard putting it in.

Jack: So what did you do? Rip the one off of the top of the station and bring it home?

[*thunder claps, eerie music continues*]

Charles: Believe it or not, I've actually been working hard in this city my whole life. I was just very fortunate to finally get something in return.

Jack: Surely, you don't expect me to climb up there during a storm?

Charles: Of course not. Come inside and don't worry. I'll explain its purpose.

[a metal door creaks open and closed, then footsteps are heard]

Jack: So what equipment do you have down here?

Jack: I can't believe this. So last week, you disabled the cameras and strolled out the back door with thousands of dollars of our station's equipment? *[sounding irritated]* You stole it, and that's why I'm wasting my time learning how to work new equipment?

[sting, heartbeat, radio static]

Charles: We had to do it.

Heartbeat audio, Radio static

Jack: Are you implicating me in this, or your wife?

Charles: She's out of town, hasn't seen it yet.

[heartbeat audio and radio static increase in volume]

Jack: But why? Why did you need to do this?

[thunder]

Charles: I'm broadcasting using my tower to help listeners who are just like me.

Jack: But who does this? I mean what do you even want me to do?

Thunder, Violins, Heartbeat audio, Radio static

Charles: I need you, Jack, to understand its importance. You see, listening to these neural sounds emitted by my broadcast is therapeutic to my recent condition. When I'm not distracted by the radio noise, I hear voices of people, including some callers to our morning shows, that have gone missing.

[violins begin to join sounds of thunder, heartbeats, and radio static]

All day and night, those unbearable voices built up inside of me until . . .

I guess you wouldn't understand, but at least there are others out there that have truly suffered with the sickness of guilt. Jack, this is our only alternative.

[heartbeat pace speeds up]

Jack: I really think I need a minute.

[footsteps running up the stairs, the heavy door to the outside opens and closes; heartbeat, radio static, and thunder continue]

Charles: Please hurry back! *[laughs maniacally]*

[rain, heartbeat continues; sound of shutting car door, car starting, windshield wipers, and then phone dialing]

Female 911 operator: 9-1-1. What's your emergency?

[violins begin to connote ominous tone]

Jack: I should have also asked for the fire department.

[police sirens wailing through the background]

When the police arrived that night after obtaining a search warrant, Charles Westervelt set his house ablaze.

[fire and flames crackling; police sirens continuing, as does heavy rain and thunder]

The fire was so strong that even the downpour from the storm couldn't stop it. The heat also melted his prized broadcast tower. I saw its twisted metal through the smoke the next day when I drove by the scene. Everything was burnt to the ground. Speaking of ground, the heavy rain unearthed remains under the mounds of dirt that washed away in the backyard.

[sounds of metal crashing and twisting, electricity sparks, shovels digging]

I really hate to think about what would have happened had I stayed. It's still hard for me to contemplate everything when I've been talking to detectives all week.

[violins return and their volume and intensity increase]

His whereabouts are currently unknown and this leaves me terrified that one day he might come back, or worse, I'll have to find my own sanity within the sounds of a radio.

[radio static, a quick snowy hiss]