

Kennedy Roundhouse: Moon Detective

Ken (V.O.)

It was that same old dream again. I was out in the dust. Looking at the sun, old Earth just visible over the ridge of the crater. The ground was...anyway you know the dream. It's the same dream, more or less, everyone has from time to time...on the moon. I wake up and forget about it, like everyone does. Let go of old dreams. I'd like to tell ya I got woken up by a knock at the door, get out of bed, and dressed myself, clear eyed and ready to take on a new case. But you'll hear plenty of bullshit soon enough. The reality is I woke up with that same old headache hours before she knocked on my door.

(small, paced door knocks. heavy footsteps and a door opening)

Ken

You here to give or take?

(small, high-heeled footsteps enter her apartment)

Mandy

Both, Ms Roundhouse.

(door closes)

Ken

Two things I don't like in my flat: Dames and playing games.

Mandy

And cleaning, apparently.

Ken (V.O.)

20 years ago a shape in a drape like this walks into my life, I would have taken all kinds of lip to return in kind. But this isn't 20 years ago. Hasn't been for a while.

Ken

What do they call you?

Mandy

They usually call-

Ken

Save your cute answers, I've heard almost all of 'em. And the ones I haven't heard don't impress me. Your name or the door.

Mandy

Mandy. Mandy DeWhitt.

Ken

2 Years ago it was Mandy Licks, lunar lounge singer.

Mandy

Now it's *MRS* DeWhitt. Why ask if you knew? I thought you didn't like games, big eyes.

Ken

I misspoke. I don't other people playing games. What brings you here Mandy?

Mandy

My driver, a question, and 20 bluebacks.

Ken

Someone comes into my home with a driver at their employ better have more than 20 blues or one hell of a question.

Mandy

The 20 is just to listen to my question. If you don't want to answer it, you take the 20 and I walk. You want to answer it, I got 180 more for you.

Ken (V.O.)

I tell her I don't like games and she starts playing checkers with me. But 20 blues'll keep me wet for a month, and she knows it. Only a sucker plays someone else's game, but if you got a sucker's reputation, you gotta play the game.

Ken

Put the 20 in that desk drawer. And it might be a good idea to ask your question walking, 'cause I already know you're screwing with me.

(desk drawer opening then closing)

Mandy

For 170-some years, Lunar colonists have had to live with water rationing, even though every citizen has to produce enough water to sustain themselves and their offspring.

Ken

That's a conspiracy theory for college kids, not a question Mandy. The next thing outta your mouth better be, or you owe me another 20 and a speedy exit.

Mandy

The question is: Why?

Ken

You've changed my mind, Miss Licks.

Mandy

Already?

Ken

Yeah. Now it's dames, games, and being jerked around.

Mandy (seductively)

Mmmm.

(heavy footsteps. door opens)

Ken

Good-bye, Miss Licks.

Mandy

You don't want to answer the question? Even for 180 more?

Ken

I'm a private eye, not a civil servant. I don't know why there are water rations any more than I know why the lights go on. The men in charge set the pace; I just try to keep up.

(quick, high heeled footsteps)

Mandy (dropping the veneer)

I am married to George Dewhitt, Ms Roundhouse. One of the "men in charge". Consider my question. Consider it a statement. Then consider why no one has ever questioned that statement.

Ken (V.O.)

This is all sounded too familiar. She knows I'm not just a private eye. She knows my whole history. What's her game?

Ken

What is it you know?

Mandy

I know enough to know there is something to know worth knowing. I know I won't be allowed to know it. And I know that you're the man who used to be in the business of finding out the things we're not allowed to know.

Ken

I hope playing at slumming it on the dark-side of the city was worth 20 blues to you. That's all it bought you. A play, and a brush with the dust.

(high heeled footsteps)

Ken

Mandy...

(footsteps stop)

Ken

I got a little bit of money just come in, which means it'll be goin right out soon. I can...make a few stops, ask a few questions while I'm out. Since I'm kicking up dust anyway.

Mandy

Make sure you ask better questions than you did last time you investigated my husband. You're on my dime now, big eyes.

(footsteps recede. Door closes)

Ken (V.O.)

That was irritating. Not uncommon though. Plenty of people walk through that door holding mice they swear are tigers. Seeing mazes where only holes in the wall are. Everyone wants their life to be some thrilling tale.

(desk drawer opens)

Ken (V.O.)

At least I can buy a bottle of "it'll-be-all-right".

(MUSIC TRANSITION. TRAVELING TO BAR.)

Ken (V.O.)

I put on my gloves and walk to the bar. I always walk to the bar, it's down the street. I guess I mean I walked it off. She wasn't the first woman to try and hook me on a case. Not even

the first celebrity, if that's what you can call her. But something about it sat wrong.

(BAR DOOR OPENS. KEN BELLY'S UP)

Bartender Nick
Kennedy. The usual, as usual?

Ken
Just pour the drink, Nick.

Nick
What's on your mind?

Ken
The usual, as usual.

Nick
You usually thinking about Mandy DeWhitt?

Ken
How do you know about her?

Nick
Singer-turned-Councilman's-wife? I read the papers, that's how.

Ken
She left my flat not 15 minutes ago Nick. Even for you, that's fast.

Nick
She was in here asking about you. Guess she wanted to know who she went up against before she went up against her.

Ken (V.O.)
Smarter than I thought, and I already thought she was smart. The more I hear the louder it gets, and I'm barely listening.

Nick
She come to you with a case? I hope it wasn't a social call...her limo wasn't parked too long.

Ken (V.O.)
I don't like showing my hand, in fact I don't like leaving the building. But Nicky's got a nose for these things and usually knows better than to ask questions.

Ken
Launch it, Nick.

Nick
Launch what? I'm just asking questions, like any good barkeep does.

Ken
Don't talk to me like I'm other people Nick. I'm dry, I'm tired, and I already had someone try to bluff me today. What's her trajectory?

Nick
Alright, since we go back and since you asked so nice: Mrs DeWhitt, formerly Miss Lick, came in here asking if you came in here, asking if I knew you, asking if you were on the level. She asked about 10 questions she already knew the answers to before she asked the only question she didn't know the answer to.

Ken
Don't make me ask.

Nick
She asked if I thought you were really a fraud turned P.I., or if you were on to something with the corruption story that got you fired.

Ken
Hrrm. I don't like this one Nick. I thought she was just some bored silver-spooner trying to play at rusty hinge, but the things she said to me and her sniffing around here all point to one thing.

Nick
What's that?

Ken
I don't know.

Nick
You oughtta leave this one alone, Kennedey. You'll sleep better at night.

Ken
Speaking of sleeping better, I'll take a bottle of the green stuff.

Nick
A bottle?

Ken
Miss Lick left me a note, a blue one. So none of that debris you
have stowed under the bar. The good stuff. From the back.

Nick
Sure thing, Kenny.

(Nick leaves through a door)

Ken (V.O.)
The water rationing makes for a chokehold on liquor. On Old
Earth they called it prohibition, on the moon we just call it
Tuesday. Nicky knows a guy who knows a girl who still runs
bootleg Earthshine. He'll sell to me, we have an arrangement.
I'll buy from his supplier, and I won't tell anyone because my
hands shake if I don't drink.

(Nick comes back through the door)

Nick
I grabbed you one of the good ones. This is almost as thick as
gravy. Won't even have to cool it.

Ken
Thanks.

Ken (V.O.)
Nick's a good guy and almost a friend. But a bottle of thick
green after a visit from a councilman's wife... Too many things
are falling into place. Too many things are telling me to go
back upstairs and drink to forget. There's only one thing
telling me to get on the train and go uptown. Only one thing
telling me to try and connect the dots. One thing says "go" when
it all says "stop". And since I know it don't matter how thick
the green 'shine is, I won't get to sleep if that thorn is
itching me, I walk to the train and I ride out to the one person
I can trust.

(Train transition sounds)

Ken (V.O.)
I take the Lunar train all the way uptown. Why does it feel like
I'm going down the rabbit hole? I know Wally will set me
straight. I saved his ass by falling on the sword years ago.

When push came to shove I leapt, and he still owes me a few favors...

(typewriter sounds. In the news room)

Wally

Kennedy Roundhouse, you have all of 90 seconds left of grace with me, then I'm putting you out in the dust.

Ken

Wally, listen, I don't want to bother you anymore than you want me here. Someone put something in my pocket and it's jabbing my thigh. I just want to run it past you to see if I'm crazy.

Wally

you have 30 seconds left.

Ken

Wally, you owe-

Wally

"Owe me after I fell on the sword for the DeWitt/Kinglsey scandal". No Kennedy, actually I don't owe you. I DID owe you 6 years ago when you made wild accusations, and when you couldn't back them up and wanted to go public-

Ken

Wally-

Wally

-WANTED TO GO PUBLIC, I was the one who backed you when you fell on your face. You didn't fall on the sword for me Kennedy. I got cut too. And it's nice to see you and all, but unless that bottle-

Ken

WALLY! Will you stop summarizing for a second, and listen?

Ken (V.O.)

Newspaper editors. Always trying to outline. But I know our history. I don't need-

Wally

You have 15 seconds left.

Ken

Mandy DeWhitt paid me a visit today.

Wally
That all she pay you?

Ken
She pointed me to the water supply.

Wally
Ken...

Ken
She hinted that George DeWhitt might be involved.

Wally
George DeWhitt has been a council member for 40 years, of course he's involved with the water supply. Please tell me you're not bugging me with a singer's accusation that her husband's doing his job with nothing else to go on?

Ken
The story I was working on-

Wally
No!

Ken
I'm telling you George DeWhitt is just as dirty today as he was 6 years ago! Ava, Mandy Licks came to me today and hinted that he is up to something. She wants me to dig. ME! Personally! She even asked Nick about me.

Wally
...Your bartender?

Ken
Yes!

Wally
So a 20 something lounge singer marries a 60 something councilman. She comes to you and HINTS that something sinister, MAYBE related to the story you got fired for years ago, is going on. You decide, after 3 years, to come back to me with this story, and your biggest piece of evidence is that she asked your bartender about you?

Ken (V.O.)

I know he just recapitulates as a reflex of being a newspaper editor for 20 years, but it still comes off like him being an asshole.

Ken

I'll leave it alone, I will. As a former conspirator and a friend, I'll leave it alone. But only if you tell me right now, in this room, to my face, that this doesn't feel sideways.

Wally

I'm not going to feed into your mistrust of the powers that be. I refuse to play the role of confidant to a man who believes in wrong-doings, but doesn't know who's doing what wrong. And I certainly won't enable a man who's brought this nonsense AND an illegal bottle of booze into my office at 11 A.M.!

(BEAT. TRAIN TRANSITION NOISES)

Ken (V.O.)

Knew I could trust Wally. If he's shining me off, then I must be coming in for a landing. Or at least in orbit. He tried to talk me out of breaking the DeWhitt/Kingsley story six years ago. 6 years thinking he was right. but now...maybe DeWhitt is still dirty. Not the same kind of dirty every politician is, but...Hell. I sound like a nut job. I crack open the bottle of 'shine. Maybe I just got the scent of my old story. Maybe I'm just hung over. Or maybe the drink finally ruined me. Maybe I should just take the 17 blue's I still have left and go home. Wait for an easier case or buy some groceries. Instead I get off at Perigree Station. If the people watching my back won't help, maybe I need to talk to someone who has every reason to send me home with a black eye.

(leaving the train noises. Heavy footsteps, knock on the door.
Beat. Louder knocking. A click as a voice comes through a speaker)

Kat through Speaker
State your business, please.

Ken
I just want to talk, Kingsley.

Kat through Speaker
Mr Kinglsey is out on business right now, if you would like-

Ken

"MR" Kingsley hasn't been out on business since I dragged his ass through the ink. I know you know who I am and I know he's standing right behind you. I'm not here to shake hands and make amends, so you can hate me the whole time I'm telling my story, but don't hide behind some speaker on the doorstep.

Kat through Speaker

Ms Roundhouse, I would be happy to schedule-

Ken

Mandy DeWhitt came to my apartment this morning.

(BEAT)

(The door buzzez and he enters)

Kat

Ms Roundhouse, if you would follow me please, I'll take you to Councilman Kingsley

Ken

No I'll wait here while you fetch the former councilman. I don't mean any disrepect, but when I get kicked out of a man's house I don't like to do a lot of walking.

(footsteps receding)

Ken (V.O.)

When my story broke all those years ago, I wasn't the only one who lost his job. Then Councilman Jake Kingsley quietly 'retired'. I don't think it proved I was right, kick up enough dust someone's gonna get dirty.

Kingsley

Roundhouse. You have 2 minutes to talk, after that you leave. One second more and you might leave with a split lip.

Ken

The threat of being kicked out of a house carries very little weight when it took me all of 7 seconds to talk my way into it.

Kingsley

You have 1 minute 45 seconds

Ken

Do people just start a running clock as soon as I show up? Or does something about my demeanor suggest my time is running out?

Kingsley

You already know Mandy DeWhitts name got you in the door. You don't need to crack wise until I bring her up.

Ken

She gave me 20 blue backs just to remind me that I once thought you and her husband were up to no good.

Kingsley

I'm not some dumb bootlegger you can dance with. Stop trying to get me to talk and tell me why you're here or leave.

Ken

I'm here 'cause a client paid me good money to answer her questions. I thought maybe you could spare an answer, since you don't have anything else to spare.

Kingsley

I see. So some trophy wife child gave you some of her husbands money to open old wounds, and thought you would come rattle sabres with me. You tell Mrs Dewhitt that I my statement hasn't changed, and if she doesn't like it, remind her I was already fired when she was still in high school.

Ken

Yeah that's what I figured you'd say. I don't know what she wants me to find out. She breezes in asking about the water rations, dangles some money in front of me, and just like that she's gone.

Kingsley

Your time is up. Don't come calling again, Kennedy Roundhouse. By the smell of you, I assume you're spending the councilman's hard earned money on illegal alcohol. I don't think you want anyone outside this room finding out about that.

(footsteps receding. Train noises)

Ken (V.O.)

Kingsley only made good on half his promise, like most politicians. I got shown the door in under 2 minutes, but without the split lip I was due. And the second I brought up the water rations he threatened to turn me in for buying bootleg booze. He's crooked and smart as any of the rest, he knows that was tipping his hand. If I keep digging, he'll make my life harder than he knows it already is. Is he protecting DeWhitt?

He's not protecting himself, he's already disgraced. He's not protecting Mandy. He doesn't give a damn about me. Why the warning? Why not just pull the trigger? I should go home and forget about all of this. That's exactly what Kingsley was trying to tell me. Unlucky for the both of us, there's another stop before my block where I might be able to get more answers.

(cars driving. street sounds)

Ken
Vince, Atende. Long time no see.

Vince
Kennedy Roundhouse.

Atende
Long time no see.

Ken
I just said that Atende.

Vince
And I just said your name.

Ken
Okay, I need you two to focus. I got myself lost in the dust again.

Atende
From what I hear you never left the dust.

Vince
Sounds like you're in the same quicksand you always been in.

Ken
How do you know what I'm standin' in? I've been on this case less than 6 hours and everyone I talk to sounds like they've seen me comin' a mile away. Nicky talks to me cause Mandy talked to Nicky, Kingsley spills the beans cause Mandy spilled the water angle, and everyone knows what Wally knows, cause she talks too much. But how the hell do you two know i'm chest deep in my latest case because I was chin deep in my last story?

Atende
Hopefully you're latest, and not last case-

Vince

Accusing former councilman Kingsley and Current councilman DeWhitt of deep corruption.

Atende

-Came knocking on your door in the shape of Mandy DeWhitt, recent wife of Councilman DeWitt. Sounds like maybe she learned something she didn't like and wanted you to look into it.

Vince

And we're guessing Nicky the Nose knows cause Nicky the Nose knows it all.

Atende

And your editor knows because of course Ava knows your sordid history intimately.

Ken

But how did you know I visited former councilman Kingsley? I just left his flat.

Vince/Atende

We didn't.

Ken (V.O.)

I just told them.

Vince/Atende

You just told us.

Ken

So tell me why I'm talking to you two.

Atende

'Cause your too stupid to leave it alone.

Ken

I already knew that. Tell me what I don't know.

Vince

You ain't gonna like it.

Ken

Then my day at least has thematic consistency. Launch it.

Atende

Mandy DeWhitt knows where or why they dump the water.

Ken

Oh no! Not this crap again.

Vince

Told you you wouldn't like it.

Atende

Every citizen has to spend time producing enough water to sustain themselves plus 50% more. It keeps us busy, keeps the rich rich, the powerful powerful, and makes sure we're all well aware how insecure our hold on the lunar landscape is.

Vince

Plus the numbers from the public records don't hold up. There's more than enough water, why-

Ken

I've heard all this. I've heard more than enough of this. I went through those records during the investigation, they all match. I talked to everyone at the water plant, down to the janitors, it's all on the level.

Atende

Then were does the surplus go?

Ken

Emergency storage. I've seen the tanks. I'm not getting sucked into this. Is this what you have for me? If this is all you've got then I've got a headache that needs medicating.

Vince

There's something going on here Ken. Something big, and everyone knows it. Why do you think everyone on the moon eventually has the same dream?

Ken

Listen kid, I don't go in for your conspiracy theories.

Atende

Said the reporter.

Ken

We're done here.

Vince

Want us to keep an ear to the ground?

Ken
Keep an eye to the ground, for all I care!

(Train noises)

Ken (V.O.)
Normally Vince and Atende have a streets-eye-view for me. Guess they had moon dust in their eyes today. I probably shouldn't burn bridges like that, but why stop now? The young people always want to take aim at the seats of power. I guess I did too. I got mad, but not surprised by what they told me . Why wasn't I surprised? In fact, why the hell did I get so mad? It's just the old case, the fall from grace. Or maybe I'm just pickled, a used up old slosh who stopped seeing straight years ago and finally can't think straight. I close my eyes and pretend to have a headache so I can stop thinking about it.

(train noises stop. heavy footsteps up stairs. His office door opens and closes)

Ken (V.O.)
Ah to hell with this. I don't like self-indulgence, I don't like getting jerked around, and I don't like this case. I may be stupid enough to spend a day chasing my tail, but I'm not gonna waste my time getting burned by the same old fire.

(he uncorks his bottle and takes a swig)

Ken (V.O.)
By the time I get home I'm convinced the only reason the day hasn't been a waste is the half empty bottle in my pocket. I'm about to kick off my shoes and drink till I can't remember why I have the bottle when-

(rapid knocking on the door. Door opens)

Mandy
Roundhouse!

Ken
Look, I already spent the money, so if-

Mandy
Keep the money, I don't care! That's not why I'm here!

Ken

Well I haven't solved the case of 'why your husband's doing his job' yet either.

Mandy

Good! Fine, I mean! I'm here to tell you to drop it. Forget the case, forget I ever came here.

Ken

After all the trouble you went to pester my bartender about me?
After paying me 20 blue just to get my attention?

Mandy

After all that, yes. Here, here's the 180 I dangled at you to answer the question. Consider the question mark a period. Leave it alone. Leave it all alone, Kennedy Roundhouse.

(she leaves in a hurry)

Ken (V.O.)

Either Ava stared looking into things after I left, or Mandy Licks got an answer to her question she didn't like. Either way, I'm taking this 200 as payment on a job unfinished.
A job I'll finish right after I finish this bottle.