

Ken (vo)

Time was I could actually get nostalgic about being roughed up in the interrogation room at the midtown police station. These days they don't even bother to cuff me. Or book me. I'm looking in the two-way mirror and wondering if my reflection is as hollow as whoever sees-

(heavy fists slam down on a table)

Felder

ROUNDHOUSE IF YOU DON'T STOP STARING INTO THE MIDDLE DISTANCE AND GIVING YOURSELF EARTH-EYED LOOKS IN THE MIRROR I AM GOING TO PUNCH THE UGLY RIGHT OFF YOUR FACE.

Ken (vo)

Oh right, I'm wanted for murder. Or trespassing? It's not buying illegal alcoholic sludge, they wouldn't haul me all the-

(PUNCH! Ken rolls off his chair to the floor)

Felder

WHAT DID I JUST SAY, ROUNDHOUSE?

Ken

Can we just get to the part where you do the thing? I don't blame you for not doing 'bad cop/good cop' but haven't we done this long enough to know that 'bad cop who is also punch cop' doesn't impress me?

Felder

I just like having an excuse to bend your nose.

Ken

And trespassing at the water plant is a good enough excuse?

Felder

Trespassing is a good enough excuse, yeah. Murder is a damn valid reason, but between you and me-

Ken

"-you just like seeing me bloody and on the floor", yeah I get it Felder. Look, have you actually got any evidence against me, or are you just as bad at your job as I pretend you are?

Felder

You were the last one to see her alive. We have eyes on her that puts her in a very agitated, almost fearful state, and Councilman DeWhitt tells me you were sniffing around his former Councilman Kinglsey's flat, opening old wounds. That's at least enough cause to get you down here for questioning.

Ken
I was the last one to see her alive?

Felder
That's right, Roundhouse.

Ken
Wouldn't the murder be the last one who saw her alive?

Felder
Don't get cute with me.

Ken
Can't help it. No one saw her yesterday night or all day today?

Felder
Not until her husband found her with half her head blown off in her bedroom.

Ken
Well if I was trespassing at the water plant on the edge of town all afternoon, how exactly did you figure I got uptown to her gated mansion, snuck in, shot her, then went all the way back to my place to get picked up by you?

(pause)

Felder
You wanna tell me how you know the time of death?

Ken
Nicky told me, when I was standing next to you about a half hour ago.

(another punch!)

Felder
The only one who has any connection or any motive to kill Mrs DeWhitt is you, Roundhouse. I don't know exactly how or exactly why yet, but that's what you and I are gonna spend the next few hours figuring out.

Ken(vo)
I'm in trouble here. Felder's an jack of all asses, and not a very good cop, but if the old dog thinks he's got a bone he'll hold on until he sees a piece of meat.

Ken
What makes you think it wasn't suicide?

Felder
Because you shot her in the back of the head.

Ken(vo)

Whoever Mandy was scared of when she told me to drop the case snuck up behind her and made sure she couldn't tell anyone else what she knew. I'm probably next. Getting arrested is the only thing keeping me safe right now.

Ken

Okay Felder, legally you got me for 24 hours, so why don't you get us some coffee and we'll piss each other off for a day.

Felder

Piss each other off, that'll be a nice change of scenery.

(someone knocks on a heavy metal door.)

Felder

You just sit there and decide how easy you want this to be.

(footsteps, the door opens. Felder exchanges inaudible murmurs with someone.)

Felder

BEAUTIFUL LIVING HELL! I AM NOT LETTING HIM OUT OF THIS ROOM UNLESS GOD HIMSELF COMES AND-

(more inaudible murmurs. Footsteps and the door closes hard)

Ken(vo)

That's queer. Thought I was the only one who could pull on Felder's feathers like that. Maybe I'm losing my touch. Or maybe he's just got anger issues.

(the door opens again. Felder stomps in)

Felder (furious whisper)

I don't know what the hell is going on here-

Ken

Aren't you used to that yet?

(Pause)

Felder (furiouiser whisper)

Whatever rocket you're riding just fired its last stage. You better put all your energy into maintaining a very low orbit or I will see to it you crash so far out in the dust no one will ever see you again.

(he stomps off)

Rando Cop
Alright Roundhouse, you better get out of here before Felder remembers he has a gun and forgets he's a cop.

Ken
Leave?

(Transition sounds. Footsteps. Ken is outside the police station)

Ken(vo)
Suppose I should be as used to things not adding up as I am to Old Earth hanging over the horizon. Suppose I should just throw out my moral compass and get used to stumbling around in the dark. Suppose I should get used to being in over my head and just live my life buried. But the only thing I seem willing to learn is that I never learn. Felder-

DeWhitt
Mr Roundhouse, despite your reputation and a near constant vacant look in your eyes, you seem to un-endingly deep in thought.

Ken
DeWhitt. I take it you're the one who launched me outta holding?

DeWhitt
And people say you're not a good detective.

Ken(vo)
Guess it was God himself.

DeWhitt
I had you released because I know full well, just you know full well, that you did not dispatch my dear Mandy. I know when she died you were in my water plant, chasing your tail.

Ken
That's right, then I went back home to chase a beer. I'm a lousy drunk and I didn't find anything at the water processing plant, but I don't believe for a second you came all the way down here to do me a favor, so do me one now and let me in on the gag.

DeWhitt
You've been igniting trouble all over town, all because my Mandy came to you to flirt with danger, now she's dead. I want all of this to settle so I bury my wife and grieve.

Ken(vo)
'Flirt with danger'. Slip of the tongue or insecure metaphor?
This guy plays too close to the vest.

DeWhitt

Leave it be Roundhouse. I don't like attention, I don't like you, and I don't like what I saw in my wife's bedroom today. I won't insult you with a payoff, and I'm certainly not going to threaten you. But it almost goes without saying that if someone is willing to incur my wrath by slaying Mandy over her activities then dispatching you would hardly be an effort.

Ken

Yeah. I guess that 'almost' went without saying.

DeWhitt

Take care Mr Roundhouse. Stick to dissolving alimony payments with pictures of cheating husbands. That's the kind of work one can do in one's cups.

Ken

Right.

DeWhitt

We'll be keeping our eyes on you, Kennedy Roundhouse.

(clipped footsteps as DeWhitt walks off)

Ken(vo)

Didn't seem too broken up over the dead wife he kept waving in my face. Damn it, Mandy, what did you get yourself involved in? What did you get us involved in? Why tell me he's not gonna threaten me, then make a veiled threat, then outright threaten me. Why not just bury me? I'm feeling sick, and not just because I haven't had a drop in hours. I can feel my bones sharp and hard inside me. I feel trapped inside my skull and it's too hot. I been half ass following leads and dragging my heels on a case I haven't really let go in 6 years. Now I got a dead woman's blood on my hands, or at least accusations of gun powder staining my pointer finger. Too many puzzle pieces fell into my lap at all at once, like some big brass band leader waved his baton and suddenly I don't know the tempo. It's time I retrace my steps and leave a boot print on someone's ass.

(transition. Street noises)

Ken

Alright, Vince?

Vince

Kennedy Roundhouse, heard you were cooling afterburners in a midtown cell. You end up being too small fry to hold, or did some big fish swim by and gulp you down?

Ken

How'd you hear about Felder buying me iron bracelets and how do you know DeWhitt pulled me out, and don't jettison garbage at me.

Vince

Sounds like someone finally opened his eyes. You ready to listen to me in earnest, Roundhouse?

Ken

I've never been ready in my entire life, but I'm bull rushing forward now all the same. I'm gonna drop a few facts on you that you already know and you're gonna fill in any gaps you see, then I'm gonna go open more eyes or die trying.

Vince

Sing me a song, Kennedy.

Ken

My case 6 years ago, a corrupt politician and some dirty secret about the water supply. 2 days ago I get hooked on the same case from the new wife of the same politician, I go kicking over moon rocks and she ends up dead. I get picked up by the cops and in less than an hour her husband, the guy who has the most to gain by me being locked up cuts me loose. Too many people are flagging me off and no one has tried to kill me yet. That's my verse and chorus, sing me yours.

Vince

Already gave you our chorus, but here it is again: You know we're right about the water, that's why you keep drilling. But you keep missing the target.

Ken

I'm here to find the source of the water, the conspiracy, the murder.

Vince

Everyone in this dump of a city is connected by the water production. You think that's normal? You think it's always been like that?

Ken

Course it is. That's the way it's always been.

Vince

Even on old earth?

Ken

Who can say.

Vince

Mandy DeWhitt got closer than she knew to figuring it out. And once she got too close she got burned. If you don't want to get buried with her, you best stay away. You ready to come inside?

Ken

Too late now. I'm already in it.

Vince

Soon as we heard Mandy DeWhitt got the open end of a gun in the back of her head, Atende went in to do some fact checking. Soon as she was found, Councilman DeWhitt left his mansion and drove out to the water reserves. He came back to bail you out of jail, for reasons even we don't know, and then directly back to the outside of town. Atende's been following that big black windowed car he only takes out 3 times a year. Whatever is going on with you, Councilman DeWhitt, and Mandy DeWhitt's death is all centered around the water out there.

Ken

Then why aren't I dead?

Vince

Dead yet, you mean. Because it's too high profile. You tried to take him down, everyone knows Mandy came to you after all the questions you asked. Now she's dead, maybe that's just bad luck. Maybe it's just skeletons in the closet. But you turn up dead in the same week, now that's something a dedicated cop might look into.

Ken

Felder.

Vince

Felder doesn't factor. He's a rube, doing what he thinks is best. Atende is out at the water reserve now, seeing what there is to see.

Ken

Hate to say it, Vince, but this isn't exactly news to me. I was hoping for something more solid to go on.

Vince

Aren't we all. The water conspiracy you investigated is what connects all of this, what connects all of us. Find the source, Ken. The answers are at the source.

Ken

The source, huh? You ever heard of Dr Bao Fang?

Vince

I don't know her.

Ken
What about her daughter, Lin Yao Fang?

Vince
Not sure.

Ken
If you'd seen her you'd be sure. Not the kind of woman you forget. Dr Bao Fang also had a theory about a source of connections. But her focus was the crater dream.

Vince
Thought that was just a bunch of stuff and nonsense.

Ken
Maybe maybe not. And right in the middle of this water nonsense this Lin Yao sidles up to me at the bar and tells me her mother was trying to figure out what this dream nonsense was. Dr Fang hasn't said anything in months, now she's only saying my name. Go check her out, have Atende get away from DeWhitt and both of you meet me at Nicks.

Vince
What's the countdown?

Ken
Countdown's ASAP, the body count's at one and we both know I'm two.

Vince
Deep yoghurt.

Ken
And I don't know the drop-dead date. So the word is Now. Stay safe, kid.

(transition noises. Ken enters the bar.)

Nick
Kennedy! I hope they launched you, 'cause if you escaped and came right here I think they're gonna find you.

Ken
Yeah. Gimmie a bottle of something cheap and a glass, put it on my tab. I'm taking my booth and doing some hard thinking. Vince, Atende, or Lin stop in point them to the dark corner. Anyone else, you haven't seen me since Felder pinched me.

Nick
Ken, you know I don't lie to-

Ken
You do today, Nick.

(transition noises. Ken is drinking)

Ken(VO)

I don't know how long I've been waiting, but I finish the bottle. The bottle's not finished with me though. However long it's been is too long. I go to put the lean on the bar and twist a few limes for information. One way or another, someone's spilling their guts tonight. Nick does a couple shots with me. We don't talk, but I've never seen him drink a drop while he was working before today. Not talking helps. I stop watching the door and take in the bar. Deep brown wood with red trim. Black booths with just enough light to see your drinking buddy and enough dark to ignore the bar flys. No mirror behind the bottles lining the wall behind Nick. People don't come in here to see themselves. It stinks and even when Nick cleans it it stays dirty, but it's got the cramped wet comfort of immediate nostalgia. I go back to my booth and start watching the door again.

I don't remember nodding off. But there I was, dreaming the moon dream again. I'm in the crater, too dry and too soft. Old Earth, watching me. No...no I'm watching Earth, someone else is watching me. I'm in the crater and can't get out and it's not dry anymore. Before I can commiserate, I feel it again. Every PI, every good one, knows when they're being watched. Paranoia's just good business. This isn't business. This isn't just someone watching me, something can see me. Something that always has. Always will. Something that sees us all. My gravel turns to sand turns to dust and suddenly I realize I've never been scared before. THIS is scared. This is what fear feels like. Inescapable and deep and black as the sky. Something is trying to talk to me now. I can almost hear-

Atende
KENNEDY ROUNDHOUSE.

Ken (VO)

All eyes on me. Even Nick looks worried. Vince and Atende are wild eyed at the door I was supposed to be watching. If anyone could-

Atende
KENNEDY ROUNDHOUSE. KENNEDY ROUNDHOUSE.

Ken
Back here! Keep it down! You're scaring the straights.

(vince and atende shuffle to the booth and have a seat.)

Ken

Why-

Atende
KENNEDY ROUNDHOUSE.

Ken
Shh!

Vince
What are you into Kennedy? I found him like this out at the water plant, wandering around like he had nowhere to be for the rest of his life.

Ken
Oh no.

Vince
He hasn't said anything other than your name, I'm not even sure he knows anything beyond that.

Atende
Kennedy Roundhouse.

Ken
I suppose every person on the train from uptown to this bar has heard him shouting my name then?

Vince
And further. I took him to see Dr Fang and her daughter.

Ken
You spoke with her? You were just supposed to case the joint.

Vince
I like you Ken, and I want to get at the truth, but I have to know what's wrong with Atende. What's wrong with him Ken? It's the same thing that's got Dr Fang.

Ken
I don't know what it is, but I got an idea. Let's wait for Lin, you and I, and we'll all have a group shoot about it.

Vince
You're meeting Lin Fang here?

Ken
She probably beat you here. Waiting outside trying to figure out if she can still walk away from all this. She can't. It's a family case. No one walks away clean in a family case.

Nick (distant)
He's in the back.

Ken
Lin! Over here! Vince, slide Atende over, make some room. This
won't take long.

Lin
Ms Roundhouse I do not appreciate-

Ken
Hold on, keep your voice down. Have a seat.

Lin
I am acquainted with your friends. What I have to say I have to
say to you alone.

Ken
You're not here to say anything. You're here to listen. Sit.
Down.

(lin sits)

Ken
Whatever the hell is going on, whatever Mandy got me into and
died for, it ends tonight.

Lin
That's all you have to say?

Ken
That's all it is, doll.

Vince
What about Atende?

Atende
Kennedy Roundhouse.

Lin
And my mother?

Ken
Whatever's wrong with them is permanent. They got too close to
figuring out what Mandy knew, and judging on how she faired they
got off lucky.

Ken (vo)
Sorry, kid.

Lin
Lucky?!

Ken
It's catatonic or dead.

Lin
You seem to have escaped both.

Ken
For now. I don't know whatever secret burned away your mom's mind, or Atende's. You don't have to see it this way but they got mercy.

Vince
So that's that?

Ken
No. I'm walking out of here and going to the reserves. Whatever I missed 6 years ago I won't miss tonight. This all gets exposed before the morning edition.

Vince
What makes you sure you won't get a bullet or end up cowing your own name for the rest of your life.

Atende
Kennedy Roundhouse.

(beat. Ken tosses his keys on the table.)

Ken
You and Atende can have my flat for as long as you can afford it or until the land lord chases you out. There's only one bed, but there's 145 bluebacks in the desk. Take care of yourself, and stay away from all of this.

(Ken slides out of the booth and walks off. Lin follows)

Lin
And what about me? What do you expect me to do?

Ken
Go home and keep Dr Fang comfortable. Forget me and the moon dream and the water. If you don't read answer in tomorrow's paper, then forget there was ever a question.

(heavy footsteps as ken walks away)

Lin
What do you expect will happen, Kennedy Roundhouse? If you find any answers, I will never hear them. Do you hope for the death or the mercy of madness?

Ken
I hope for the truth. If I get that, then may God or whoever is
watching spare me mercy. Take care, Lin Yao Fang. Remember me
while you finish that bottle I bought you, and not an ounce
later.

(footsteps, Ken opens the bar door)

Nick
Ken...

Ken
Nick.

(beat)

Nick (weakly)
I'll see you tomorrow, yeah?

Ken (with finality)
Yeah, Nick. The usual, as usual.

(the bar door closes. Transition noises. Train.)

Ken(vo)
I hope to hell I never see them again. Mandy, Dr Fang, poor
Atende. This invisible war has had more than enough casualties.
I've got one more good-bye before I see this through to the end.
This time of night I take the strike out train uptown, shoulder
to slumped shoulder with 8 sobs dressed to the 9's looking to
score a 10. You never did see so many red eyes looking so blue.
Better luck tomorrow, boys. Better than mine at least. I get off
at Apogee Station and cross 5 blocks till I get to the green
door. He won't be happy to see me, but he needs to.

(knock on a ratty door. Harder knocks. It opens.)

Wally
I thought you'd be here hours ago. I was in bed, Ken. If you need
me to talk you back from a ledge go drink it off. I'll shout some
common sense at you tomorrow.

Ken
Not sure about tomorrow Wally. Hell, not sure about tonight.

Wally
Alright, come in and have some coffee. If we're gonna do this,
let's at least do it.

Ken
Can't stay long. And coffee makes me tense.

Wally
You're always tense.

Ken
So you can imagine how I feel about coffee.

Wally
I'm tired Roundhouse. I got the morning edition hitting news waves in 4 hours. I don't want to dance and I don't feel like wagging my finger at you.

Ken
It's tonight Wally.

Wally
Ken-

Ken
3 days ago I would have agreed. Tonight I've got a dead woman's money on an open case. A long open case.

Wally
I heard about Mandy DeWhitt.

Ken
And I got two others whose minds have been burned out. All they can do is say my name and wait to die. Something's calling me Wally. Calling me out to the water reserves. It's over after tonight. I expose this, finally. Or I'm finally exposed.

Wally
Are you asking me for a favor?

Ken
Leave your radio on. If you don't hear from me by morning edition you won't hear from me. If you do you'll have the biggest story in the Moon's short, dirty, history.

Wally
This sounds too familiar to wake me up for.

Ken
Leave your radio on.

Wally
Always do. And even if you had story in your coat pocket right now you know full well it wouldn't make the morning edition. Wouldn't make the evening edition without sources and something solid. You wanna tell me why you're darkening my doorstep, Roundhouse?

(beat)

Ken

Because you knew me when. Because you're true blue, Wally. Because I don't know if anyone really likes or cares about me, but you understand me. After all of it, you understood me.

(beat)

Wally

You want to come in Kennedy? We can talk, figure it out.

Ken

Leave your radio on. If you don't hear from me, do what I couldn't and leave it alone. If Vince or someone called Lin Yao Fang comes knocking, you turn their heels.

Wally

Ken, where're you going tonight?

Ken

I'm going to fall on that same sword again. Fall on it or use to cut someone with it. Either way it's a bloody Moon tonight.

Wally

Yeah...sure. Come by the newsroom tomorrow and let me know how it all dusts out.

Ken

Sure Wally. Take care of yourself.

Wally

Watch your caboose, Ken.

Ken

I intend to.

(Ken walking. Transitional train noises)

Ken (vo)

I wanted to walk. All the way out of the only town on the Moon. But I didn't have the time. None of us did. I took my last act of true rebellion and walked a couple miles to the farthest train station, Zenith station. I pound the pavement, and some nights it pounds back; Pound for pound it packs a shot harder than any I've ever been poured, and I know something about poor. I sit down in the slick transit seat and before I have time to think I'm on the outskirts. Yesterday an hours walk through the dust to the reserve tanks outside the water plant would have been out of the question. Tonight that question was a short statement. The back of my mind pretends to wonder if I should have grabbed my gun

before I set out, but I know there's nothing to shoot out here
but the breeze.

(SFX walking through heavy moon dust. Climbing on metal ladders
and tubes.)

Ken (vo)

Just like it was six years ago. Only now I'm not just gonna look
at the pipe that stretches the miles from the plant to the
reserve tanks. Whatever answer is to all these questions, for all
the questions I've got I know there's only one maddening answer,
is in those tanks. There isn't even so much as a fence to keep me
out. We're all one big happy lunar family, after all. My mouth is
suddenly dry. My eyes want to wander outward, take in the beauty
of the landscape, the hard turn from slate grey to wet black at
the horizon. Old Earth, as blue as anything above. But I had my
sentimental moment back at Nick's. The time is now. The reserve
tanks are huge and buried. I reach out and spin the old metal
wheel-lock on top. I don't know what's inside but I know even if
I give up and head home now it won't matter. I'm in it. All or
nothing, and nothing's all I have.

(heavy metal clanking. The wheel turns. A hatch opens.)

Ken

No. No no no. It can't be just this.

(the hammer of a gun clicks back)

Ken (speaking over her shoulder to the gun)

I guess I didn't have the pieces of the puzzle after all. This
tank is full to the top of good old fashioned water. I assume all
the others are as well. I don't know what I expected, but
emergency water rations wasn't it. I'm gonna stand up and turn
around now, nice and slow. Maybe then you can tell me what the
hell is actually going on...Mr DeWhitt.

Mandy

Sorry Roundhouse. Wrong DeWhitt.

Ken

Mandy.