

ROUNDABOUTSYMPHONY

A tale of fear and the unorthodox, written by Tim “Paddy” Lennon.

Episode Four: See Now That There Is Nothing To See

Portia and Artur: In the fishing shack at 2:42 PM

*You are still aiming your gun, as is the deputy.
There is a crowd of humanoid dogs all around you.*

Perception: None of them appear to be armed.

*Knowledge: I... I can't help you... I'm genuinely at a
loss here, as are you...*

*You glance over at the deputy. His expression is
parallel to yours; bewilderment.*

Graham: Are you... okay?

*One of the “dogs” slowly gets up, hands raised. You
strengthen your grip on the handle of your gun, and
steady your arms.*

Dog: We want no trouble, okay? Just let us be...

Graham: We're not here to hurt you...

*He glances at you, and then holsters his gun
slowly.*

*As bad of an idea as it may be, if the deputy is
doing it, it has to be smart, so you slowly open
your coat and slide your gun into the inner lining.*

Graham [cont.]: Now... what happened to... you?

The dog tilts his head in confusion.

Dog: I don't follow...?

You: You... you're not human?

Perception: He and the rest of the inhabitants of this shack are breathing heavily, all sharing a locked expression of fear.

Dog: No... we aren't...

Graham: How did this happen?

Dog: No one knows... we just kinda popped up one day, born into the bodies of fuzzy mongrels. Some say it's the Surgefall, some say it's a mutation, some say it's a costume... but I don't know.

Knowledge: He's certainly not lying. He's in too much shock to lie, plus that conclusion is reasonable.

You: Whatever it is...

You hesitate on a response. You don't want to make the wrong impression, as you did with the deputy.

You: Never mind that. We're here on grounds of an investigation... a DNA sample collected from a crime scene was linked back here.

Dog: What...?

All of them exhibit what appears to be genuine confusion.

You: If any of you committed it, come forward.

The deputy grabs you and pulls you to the side.

Graham: Tigons... I don't mean to be the bearer of bad news, but the DNA links back to a **human**, not a **dog**. I highly doubt their... "you know", would be that of a human's.

You: Right... so now what?

Graham: I don't know...

Knowledge: Whoever committed the crime was here at one point. Perhaps they still are.

You turn back to the crowd.

You: Alright, if everyone could stay here, that would be fine.

Dog: Why...? What's going on?

You: Just a search, to make sure whoever we're looking for isn't here.

Dog: Go ahead, officers... I don't want to cause any trouble for you two...

Perception: His voice has an over-abundance of sincerity to it. He's definitely not lying to you.

You step further inside the shack.

Perception: To the right, a small hallway, with 3 doors on it. Two on the sides, one leading out to the dock. One of the side doors has been removed.

You: Watch them.

The deputy nods and hangs behind to reassert the crowd. You proceed towards the hallway, with various scared, no, **mortified** dogs watching you in fear.

Walking down the hall, you peer into the room with no door.

Perception: It's a washroom. The mirror is slightly cracked, and a razor lays on the carpeted floor.

The shower curtains have been torn down.

You step into the washroom and flick the lightswitch. Nothing. Power's most likely been cut.

Portia: In the fishing shack's washroom at 2:51 PM

You look around the washroom. It's rather small,
unsurprisingly.

There's not much of note in here. Nobody's hiding
in here, definitely.

Glancing over at the half-broken mirror, you see
something.

Perception: A long haired man with an even longer
beard reflects off of the glass. His mouth is
locked in a frown, with only the very edges of the
corners pointing upward. His eyes are an unorthodox
color: purple irises with white pupils, a sign of
the Surgefall's effect on humanity. He has a
chipped away navy blue coat on, with a Russian and
an Irish flag peeking from the middle. This isn't
just any man; this is **you**.

Morality: What a sad sight...

Volition: Yet, this is **us**. Our vessel, our life,
our being. We cannot change this, but that's fine.

Knowledge: Actually, we **can** change this, at least
on a physical scale.

Morality: How so?

Decisions: The razor on the floor is an automated
battery-powered one. There is also a pair of
battery-powered hair clippers on the sink's edge.
Perhaps with these, we can at least make our vessel
look somewhat appealing to the outside world, but
this comes with its own downsides.

Physicality: So you're suggesting we... **cut** our hair with two pieces of equipment that could've been on **anyone's** head?

Decisions: Yes.

Super-ego: **Please** tell me you haven't made up your mind.

Rationality: If you have to ask that question, it means he **has**.

Decisions: You can live without the hair. Besides, it grows back. Once you're done and gone from Morgan, you'll be back to your typical self.

You step closer to the mirror, reaching down for the razor. Popping the battery door open, it's been filled. Flicking the power switch, it whirs to life.

You: Here goes nothing...

You slowly run the razor across your upper lip, and the sides of your face.

Your face gets increasingly lighter as your facial hair falls to the floor.

You grab a pair of scissors and trim the longer parts of your beard, before taking the razor to your chin, and the lower half of your face.

Perception: You look better already!

Decisions: I never fail.

Knowledge: Incorrect.

Turning the razor off, you grab the scissors and clippers.

Flicking the clippers to life, you take them – and the scissors – to your head, trimming down your hair.

Physicality: So **THAT’S** where all of that weight was coming from! Your head gets increasingly lighter as you trim your hair down.

Finishing up, you turn the clippers off, and look at yourself in the mirror closely.

Perception: An actually **good** looking man stares back. Short, well kept hair and a mere stubble of facial hair, paired with those eyes? You’re a womanizer, you rascal, you!

Morality: I don’t know...

Decisions: What?

Id: I think I’m with her on this one... I don’t think this was one of your smart decisions.

Volition: Life has many mistakes, but we must overcome them.

Ego: This isn’t time for existentiality, this is time for insulting this dumb-ass decision.

Encyclopaedia: I am in no position to comment, but I concur. This was not a conscious decision.

Questioning: Why did we do this?

Knowledge: Because **he** made us. Regardless, we cannot revert this choice.

Composure: I don’t know, guys... I kinda like it! It makes us look charming!

Ennui: Of course, you would think that.

Knowledge: Oh, look who decided to wake up.

Hyperactivity: I'm here too!

*Id: Damn it, look what you did! You awakened the
boring side of the mind!*

*Decisions: Like I said, I never fail. Perhaps this
was a good decision, for our vessel alone.*

BANG!

*You turn around. The sound came from outside.
You walk towards the door, and leave the room.*

Portia: In the fishing shack at 3:02 PM

*You turn the corner and walk towards the door to
the dock.*

*Grabbing the handle, you turn it slowly and push
inwards, but as you do...*

BANG!!!

**A multitude of holes bursts through the door. That
was a gunshot. A really big one.**

You open your coat and draw your gun.

*Perception: The sound of screams behind you echoes
through the hall. Footsteps are rushing towards you
from behind. It's the deputy, no doubt.*

You crack the door slightly, peeking through.

*Perception [cont.]: You can't see anyone... or much
of anything.*

BANG!!!

Another gunshot.

Half of the door bursts off from the top.

You step back and kick the door in.

Portia and Artur: In a firefight in the fishing shack's docks at 3:04 PM

Running for a crate in front of you, you drop down behind it. The deputy takes cover behind an adjacent pillar.

You: POLICE! DROP THE GUN!

A rough, grunge voice echoes out from afar.

?: FUCK OFF!!!

*A shotgun pops out from behind a crate, but doesn't fire, instead letting off a mere *click*. It slides back over the crate.*

Perception: You can hear reloading. Whoever is operating it is either being wasteful with their ammo, or is flat out.

Graham: Drop the gun and put your hands up!

?: Fuck no! I'm not gonna listen to a bunch of ñois!

Encyclopaedia: That was definitely the Bajen language; but you, and subsequently I, cannot speak it. Therefore, I cannot tell you what that meant, but it was most definitely an insult.

You: Just drop it!

BANG!!!

He is not complying.

You look over at the deputy.

Perception: He's peeking out from around the pillar. He leans out from around it, aiming his gun.

*Morality: Cover my ears! Wait, no! Cover **your** ears!*

BANG!!!

A gunshot rings out, from the deputy's rather inferior handgun. The man behind the crate begins to scream incessantly.

The deputy jumps out from behind the pillar, running towards the crate, so you do too.

Rushing over to the shooter, he moans and emits gurgling sounds.

Turning around the crate, you point your gun at a young man, laying on the ground, clutching his neck. Blood gushes out from under his hands, onto his body and the ground beneath him.

Graham: **Drop the gun.**

The man gurgles and moans some more. He's not reaching for that gun anytime soon.

You kick the gun away.

The deputy pulls out a medical kit from his waistband and begins attempting to tend to the man's injuries.

Graham: **Breathe, sir.**

He's failing at that.

You don't know what to do, so you just stand and watch.

*This is the side of police work you **didn't** want to have to do, next to seeing a teenager's corpse up close.*

The man has stopped making any noises.

He's motionless.

The deputy puts his hands on the man's heart area, before climbing to his feet.

Graham: He's dead...

You: I can see that.

Graham: He's...

The deputy locks up, taking a few deep breaths.

You: Graham?

He's hyperventilating.

You [cont.]: Graham, what's wrong?

Graham: I... I've never killed any...

He clutches his chest.

*Knowledge: He's having a panic attack. You only know how to remedy your **own** panic attacks, not someone else's.*

You put your hand on his shoulder.

*You: Breathe, **Artur**. Just breathe.*

His breathing is stabilizing, but he's still shaken up.

Id: Communism, baby! It could save his life!

*Morality: **Not now**.*

Volition: We can kick start communism another day.

He's calmed down, but he's breaking down into tears.

Rationality: Damn it, not now.

Looking around, you wrap your arm around his upper body and turn around, leading him with you to the door.

You push the broken bit of the door out of the way with your foot and re-enter the shack.

Portia and a broken soul: In the fishing shack at 3:20 PM

You lead the broken deputy through the shack as the dogs, which you had forgotten about, look on in confusion and terror.

Dog: What's happened?! What the hell was that?!

You: **Move.**

You part the dog out of the way as you make your way to the door, sobbing partner in hand.

Portia and a broken soul: At the fishing shack at 3:22 PM

You carry the deputy out of the shack up the road to his car, uncaring for the corpse you just left behind.

The cold wind contrasts negatively against your shaven head and face.

Knowledge: You know a fair bit of Solsticie, at least more than you do Ephenisium.

You: Shh... *ÿäëurä...*
The deputy's incessant sobbing lightens up.
Graham: I... *Ëyeune... aïønua...*
You: *Üea örum jä ënyeünya.*
He's calming down.

You continue to lead him upwards, to his car.

***Portia and a broken soul: Outside the fishing shack
at 3:26 PM***

You pop open the passenger door and sit the deputy
down in the seat. He's improving mentally.
You buckle the lap-belt around his waist, and close
the door.

You walk around the car to the driver's side door,
and open it, sitting yourself in.

The deputy left the keys in the ignition. What a
fool. You turn the key.

Whrwhr-*rumble* vrmmm, VRMMM, VRRRRMMMMMMM!

The car springs to life, faster than it did
earlier. You reach down and buckle the lap-belt
around your waist.

Disengaging the parking brake, you shift into drive
and plant your foot on the reverse pedal, turning
the wheel to straighten the car out, before
planting your foot on the accelerator pedal,
driving towards the main road.

**Portia and Artur: In the streets of Morgan, Nevada
at 5:09 PM**

You pull into Morgan from a side road. Piles of
Timeflakes habit the ground.

*Perception: The corpses have been removed from the
streets. Someone's been on cleaning duty.*

Turning onto the straight road, you glance over at
various buildings, marked in English and
Ephenisium, and not a single one interesting.
You come up to the police station, and pull into
the parking lot.

**Portia and Artur: In the parking lot of the Morgan,
Nevada Police Department at 5:16 PM**

The car comes to a stop between two lines, in a
reserved parking spot.

You pull the parking brake, which still has a loud
oscillating click to it.

Turning the engine off, you unbuckle your lap-belt
and open the door, stepping out of the car.

The deputy climbs out of the car, rubbing his eyes.

*Volition: The deputy cannot take any more for
today. Do not put him through anything else until
tomorrow.*

You walk around the car to face the deputy.

You: Go home, Graham.

He looks at you.

Graham: What?

You: You heard me. You've gone through enough today. Go home.

He snaps his eyes downwards, silently accepting. He steps around the car to the driver side door, but not before flagging you down for the obvious.

Graham: I see you... did something to yourself.

You run your hand against your stubble.

Perception: It feels rough against your hand.

You: Yeah.

Graham: I like it.

He smiles, a rare sight.

Graham [cont.]: It suits you. Good night, **Portia**.

You: Good night, **Artur**.

He opens the driver side door and gets in.

The car reverses out of the parking spot, and drives out of the parking lot. You're alone now. Across the street is a bar. The sign reads: "Úya Éunay Ólumsekk"

Encyclopaedia: That means "The Pearl Clamshell" in Ephenisium.

You haven't drank in a while, so this should be a good time to do it again.

You walk down the sidewalk towards the bar.

Portia: Outside Úya Éunay Ólumsekk at 5:24 PM

You make your way up the stairset leading into the bar.

Standing face to face with the dual-door, you plant your hands on both of the handles and pull them, pushing the doors inward, walking into the bar.

Portia: Inside Úya Éunay Ólumsekk

It's certainly "happening" here. People are playing various types of games, drinking alcohol and mannar, and chatting about the strange happenings in their lives.

A band is playing a song in Ephenisium. From what you can make out, it's about love and it's eventual betrayal.

No one seems to mind your presence, with the barkeep calling out to you happily.

Barkeep: Hey, officer! Welcome to Úya Éunay Ólumsekk!

You gesture a "hello" at the man, as you walk towards the countertop.

Walking over to the counter, you take a seat on a vacant stool.

Barkeep: So, what'll you have?

*Decisions: Looking up at the menu, it houses a large variety of Ephensian alcohol and mannar. Since you're only familiar with English alcohol, and not familiar with mannar at all, let's ask for whatever **he** likes.*

*Super-ego: Mannar is the **good** shit!*

Knowledge: We've never even had it.

Encyclopaedia: Mannar is a liquid drug sold in most bars and hostels across the New Division. It is highly sought after, more so than alcohol, so it is typically more expensive than alcohol.

You: Whatever you like, sir.

You put five New Division sage on the counter.

Barkeep: Alright-y, then!

The man turns around and begins preparing a drink. Various people sitting on the stools next to you are discussing some sort of ball-game, and the results of the last one played.

Perception: It smells like an unpleasant mixture of alcohol, mannar, coffee and meat in here.

The barkeep presents a cup of what appears to be whiskey on the rocks.

Barkeep: Right, then! A classic whiskey on the rocks, with a tiny hint of mannar thrown in! He slides it over to you. Grabbing the cup, you take a sip.

Moegidsuvophkndecoquenhyaenpe: Holy fuck!

Morality: What the...?

Encyclopaedia: Deary me! I was unaware of the effect mannar truly had!

Perception: Your vision tints a nasty blue and your ears pop. Your nostrils immediately clear up.

Knowledge: If this is a "hint" of mannar, a full bottle of it must absolutely ruin someone.

Physicality: Can we never drink this again? Who votes yes?

You sputter and shake your head.

You: **Jesus**, what is that?

Barkeep: Never had mannar, huh?

You: No!

Barkeep: Weird... most Symphonists drink mannar from
a young age.

You: Sure...

*A grunge voice directs "something" at you from your
left.*

?: What are you doing here?

Looking over, a biker man looks at you.

You: You talking to me?

?: Yes, I'm talking to you. We don't like **your kind**
around here.

You: What do you mean "**my kind**"?

?: Cops don't usually stroll their asses into a bar
and drop sage on the counter without giving a
little bit of it to those who **need** it...

He gets off of his stool.

Id: THIS IS IT! COMMUNISM!

Ego: Will you stop?

You: It's cute that you think I'm obligated to give
you something.

?: You think I'm **joking**, pig?

***Knowledge: "Pig" is a term used to negatively refer
to members of the police force. He's trying to
assert dominance over you. Don't let him.***

You: No. I can see clearly that you mean nothing
but the truth.

The band is still going off.

?: Yeah, that's what I thought! You clearly ain't deaf, so **pay up.**

Volition: Don't.

*Morality: Settle this like civilized men, please?
Talk him down, calm him.*

Knowledge: It won't work.

Physicality: You know what's gonna happen, and so do I, baby!

Morality: Ugh, you men are so out of it.

You: Okay.

You step towards the man. He looks expectant.

Barkeep: Now, now... no trouble in here, okay?

?: Zip it, bitch!

Stepping up to the man, he looks full of himself.

Physicality: Let's do this! You wind your arm back and swing your fist towards the man's face.

Your fist immediately goes numb as it strikes the man dead in the right cheek. Instead of bouncing off, it takes the man with it downwards, as he falls to the floor.

Id: COMMUNISM!!!

You: **How's that for FUCKING payment, huh?! HUH?!**

The man is clutching his jaw in pain.

*From a table, some people hurl insults in Ephesus; but they're not hurling them at you, rather at the man you **just** pummeled. He appears to be a local troublemaker, judging by what you can make out.*

Barkeep: **You should have backed down, Barry!**

You: Now, are you gonna be civil about this, or am
I gonna have to take you in?

*The man looks at you, obviously disoriented. Blood
is running out of his mouth.*

?: Fuck... off.

*He plants his face against the floor, with a groan.
You lean down next to the man's ear.*

You: And just so you know... **I'm a Roundabout, you
son of a bitch.**

He looks at you in confusion.

*You clutch your fist and walk towards the door,
pulling it open, and walking out.*

Portia: Outside Úya Éunay Ólumsekk at 6:15 PM

*Stepping out onto the streets, you're utterly worn
out. Today was a **wreck**. Falling into an underground
city, getting your ass burnt off by a Surge storm,
and getting into a firefight? You sure didn't
expect this.*

You sigh and look around the streets.

*Perception: The dim streets are just barely
visible. Streetlights are slowly kicking on.*

Nothing of note. Barely a person, barely a sight.

You step down onto the main street below.

*As you do, though, a loud **BANG!** comes from your
left.*

*Perception: That was from the Whitner trailer, no
doubt about it.*

You begin walking down the street to the Whitner trailer.

Portia: Roaming in the streets of Morgan, Nevada at 6:18 PM

The streetlights are the only things enabling you to see the trailers on the road, of which are in better shape than they were earlier today, much thanks to the Timeflakes.

The homeless folk have long since retreated to wherever it is they sleep at night.

Whatever florality and fauna populated this place have begun to regrow, quite happily.

After some walking, you make it to the Whitner trailer, but a peculiar sight greets you: the lights in the trailer are on, and there are silhouettes in the windows.

Portia: Outside the Whitner trailer at 6:32 PM

You reach into your coat and draw your gun.
Whoever's in there is about to answer to **you**.

You step up onto the way, walking up towards the trailer.

Perception: Whoever was inside the trailer saw you, because the silhouettes just rushed out of view, with a loud **CRASH!** coming from behind the trailer.

You speed up, and begin running towards the trailer.

The dirt on the ground flies out from beneath your feet with every step, flying up into the air like a dirty blossom rain.

You rush up to the front porch of the trailer.

***Portia: On the front porch of the Whitner trailer
at 6:35 PM***

Perception: The front door is wide open. Someone's been in here.

You slowly step into the trailer through the bursted open door, gripping your gun tightly.

Portia: Inside the Whitner trailer at 6:36 PM

*You take a few slow steps into the trailer, and around the corner. Looking towards the living room,
good Lord...?*

Perception: The victim's corpse has been flipped onto its stomach, with the rear end propped up by the knees, and the head snapped upwards.

Knowledge: Someone – either the original culprit, or someone else – has broken in, and “used” the victim's body for their own pleasure.

You groan and walk over to the corpse. The window is open, with cold air flowing in through it.

**Portia: At the crime scene in the Whitner trailer
at 6:38 PM**

Standing over the body, you let out a sigh. Whoever
did this was **just** here, and they got away because
you made yourself obvious.

On the body's back, there's a sticky note affixed
to it.

You reach over and pull the note off. It reads:

"GreeTIngs, Officers!

**As it wWOuld seem, OurRu friend Hamish was KiLLeDd
at his liTtle shack outside Morgan...**

HoW could you?

**As reTaltaiTion, we have deCided to USeE little
Jenny AgaiAn, to SenD you a MESdssage!**

Sorry not sorry!

Signed: K from the Foundry"

That's a different signage. Whoever did it, did it
solely to taunt you and Graham, but this must mean
they had planned to do it at this **exact** time,
coincidentally **right** as you left the bar.

Looking out the window, whoever did it is long
gone. No point chasing after them.

Volition: They're still here.

Knowledge: What? No they're not.

Volition: I can **sense them...**

**Perception: I sense them too... somebody is still
here, Portia.**

Morality: Outside or inside?

Volition: Inside, all around...

Ego: Is this mannar having an effect on us?

*Encyclopaedia: Most likely. Mannar leads to the
user experie-*

*Perception: **TURN AROUND! NOW!!!***

*You turn around in a cold sweat instinctively to
find a trio of masked individuals staring you down,
aiming their firearms at you.*

*There's no sound coming from them at all. No
breathing, no laughing, no chattering... just
silence. The only thing you can hear is your own
heartbeat and breathing.*

*You seem to have turned around fast enough, as they
lower their firearms.*

*Perception: They're wearing some sort of
high-caliber armor. They're over-prepared for the
type of gun you have.*

*You: **Who are you?***

*An extremely raspy, deep voice comes out of the
centered member of the trio.*

*Center: **Who we are is of no concern to you.***

*You: **Okay... what do you want?***

*Center: **We want to help you, Portia Tigons.**
They know your name...?*

*You: **How do you know my name?***

*The individuals do not move at all, not even a
slight stomach movement from breathing, if they
even **are** breathing.*

**Center: We know all, Portia. And we especially know
of the monsters that are the Foundry, and what
they've done to this young woman.**

*The individuals all simultaneously gesture to the
victim's body.*

*A clearer, lighter voice comes from the right
individual.*

**Right: We seek the same objective as you: find the
Foundry. Though... we know where they are.**

You: Where?!

**Center: That is for you to find out, by finding us
out.**

*An extremely deep voice comes from the left
individual. You can just barely make out what
they're saying.*

**Left: You may find us atop the highest tower in
Morgan, the decommissioned radio tower. There, we
will speak further about the Foundry.**

You: Okay, but-

*The right individual takes their chestplate and
waistplate off, and throws them to you.*

Right: No "buts".

*A new set of armor synthesizes itself onto their
body.*

**Right [cont.]: These will aid you well in the
coming days.**

You: Okay... but, what about-

**Center: Your partner? We have already visited him.
He is well-equipped as well.**

Use this armor wisely; don't use it for regular everyday investigations. Only when the time is right, should you use it. You will know when to use it.

We do not expect you to find us as soon as possible. Take your time. You have a case to solve.

Good luck, and farewell.

The environment around the three individuals begins to distort and stretch as they... disappear?

They have vanished from reality.

Looking down at the armor, you pick it up.

Physicality: It's really hefty, even more so than your gun.

Perception: The armor pieces appear to be made of a mixture of enamel and ceramic, reinforced by vitreous masking and a metal inlay. They'll definitely stop a bullet or two.

You sling the armor underneath your arm and walk towards – and out – the front door.

**Portia: On the front porch of the Whitner trailer
at 7:02 PM**

You step out of the trailer and onto the way down to the street. It's gotten considerably colder outside, which isn't going against your head well.

**Portia: Roaming in the streets of Morgan, Nevada at
7:05 PM**

You step onto the main street and begin walking over to the police station's parking lot, to your car.

The bar is still open, but you're not thirsty anymore.

**Portia: In the parking lot of the Morgan, Nevada
Police Department at 7:14 PM**

You step over to your car and pull out your keys. Unlocking your car, you pop the trunk and put the armor, and your coat, in. Pulling out your beloved axolotl onesie, you walk over to the backside of the police department building to change.

After a few moments, you circle back around, walking back to your car.

Stepping over to the trunk, you throw your Surgefall tattered clothes into the trunk and close it, locking it.

You open the rear left door and crawl into the backseat, locking the door as you do. Crawling onto your "bed", you tuck yourself in and turn the interior light off.

Tomorrow will be even rougher, for sure.

To be continued.