

ROUNDABOUTSYMPHONY

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

Episode One: Civvie, Officer, What’s The Difference?

The year is 19779.

The major factions of the world have long since fallen into disrepair, having been abandoned by their people and governments some time ago.

What remains of the world’s population has holed up in the husked and dilapidated remains of a society once prosperous.

Many nomads, referred to as “Roundabouts”, roam the land that was once called the United States of America. Since ‘342, it’s been known as the New Division of America.

While most of the old states have been long abandoned, some refuge has been taken in their ruins in an attempt to revitalize the world.

So much for “freedom”...

*In a near-empty desert, nothing much of value is
strewn about. Cacti, coyotes and tumbleweeds are
the only residents.*

*Through the rather serene chatter of this
ecosystem, a faint rumbling grows louder and
clearer. It's an engine.*

*From up the road, a rather old hatchback car turns
the corner, getting closer.
Two coyotes on the road take notice and get out of
dodge, for they have better things to do than
become roadkill.
The hatchback speeds past as a pack of coyotes
watches from afar, in uncertainty.*

On the Nevada Highway at 4:56 PM

*This is you.
This is your car.
This is your home.
This is your happy place.
Nobody has a say in how you live. You're better
than them.
Wait, who are you?
...
You could have sworn you had your passport hanging
from the rear view mirror.
You look around your rather messy interior, with
one hand on the wheel.*

It's not in the passenger seat, not that you could make anything out of it, as it's been repurposed into a storage seat.

It's not on the dashboard, because you would have seen it then.

It's... not on the floor.

Well, shit. You kind of need that passport to gain access to any settlement across the Division.

Don't panic, you'll find it, surely. Besides, it's not like there's much of anything out here, why would you need it right now?

*Well, maybe **that's** why!*

From around the corner, a quaint little town slowly appears in your cone of vision. You'll be damned!

One part of you praises whatever Lord there may be for finally finding a settlement, and another curses whatever Lord there may be for losing your passport right as you do find a settlement.

Whatever, you don't need a passport to pass through, so that's your plan. Just pass on through, no trouble, no getting out, no nothing. Just keep driving.

*A sign reading "**Welcome to Morgan, Nevada, Unincorporated Community, Off. Pop. 127, Unoff. Pop 216**" appears on the right side of the road.*

*Not that big of a place, so probably not that big
of a deal.*

At the town limit of Morgan, Nevada at 5:02 PM

*As you approach, two of the rather tired looking
field guards begin to flag you down, waving their
hands in the air. They want you to stop. This is
not the way you wanted things to go.*

*Reluctantly, and with a sigh, you release your foot
from the accelerator pedal and slowly push your
foot on the brake pedal, with your car slowly
coming to a roll.*

*As your car rolls to a near halt, the guard to your
left signals you to roll down your window. Really
wish you didn't lose your passport now, huh?*

*You reach under the door and roll the window down
with the lever as he walks up to your window.*

Mr. Guard has some things to say.

*Guard #1: Good to have you here, sir! We were
starting to wonder if you'd ever answer that call...*

*Guard #2: Are you... sure that this is our guy? He
doesn't really... look like a police chief.*

*Guard #1: Well, if it isn't, then nobody is at this
point! We'll take anyone!*

You shift your eyes from left to right momentarily before locking eyes with the guard.

You: You might have me confused with someone else, I'm just a Roundabout.

The stark contrast between your heavily-Russian accented voice and the guards' poser-American accented voices is so intense, even the guards feel it.

Guard #2: I told you, man! He's just another passerby.

Guard #1: No, no way. I'm not taking that for an answer. We can't just leave poor Mrs. Whitner in the dark. You **have** to be the police chief!

Your collection of dashboard bobbleheads rock their heads back and forth.

*Decisions: He seems distressed. You could simply stay and wait for the police chief, or act as them instead. It won't be a smart thing to do, but it'll get this utter **bozo** off of your back.*

Yeah, I'm gonna act as the police chief. But do it sincerely.

You: Look, I don't know what happened that you need a police chief this badly, but if it helps at all, I can fill their shoes.

Guard #1: **Great!**

The guard to your left is overjoyed, but the guard to your right looks dismayed and tired.

Guard #2: I hope you know what you just signed up for, buddy...

Perception: Based on the tone of his voice and his facial expression, you most likely signed up for something atrocious. This is further solidified by the other guard's exasperation for a police chief.

Guard #1: Pull on in, over to the police station over there.

He gestures to a building, appropriately labeled:

"Morgan, Nevada's Loyal Police Department"

Loyal? You would hope so.

You comply with the guard's request, putting your right foot on the accelerator pedal.

Your car slowly rises to a cruising speed, en route to the police station.

?: Outside in the main streets of Morgan, Nevada at 5:08 PM

Looking out the window, several distressed looking civilians dot the streets. It probably has something to do with the apparent need for a police chief.

*Looking ahead, one group is doing some sort of
needle drug. Fantastic.*

**? : Outside the Morgan, Nevada Police Department at
5:15 PM**

*Pulling up to the police station, you turn into the
parking lot and drive between two white lines.*

Another guard flags you down.

Guard #3: Hey, hey, bud! You're the police chief,
right?

You've sealed your fate thus far.

You: I guess.

Guard #3: Shit, we was wondering if you'd ever show
up! You don't wanna use the public parking spot, go
ahead and park in the reserved spot.

You: Okay, then... Thanks?

Guard #3: Don't need to thank me, man. Thank the
lowlies for giving us tax dollars!

*You disregard that statement, and reverse between
two blue lines, with a lovely sign labeled:*

**"RESERVED PARKING: GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS ONLY;
VIOLATORS WILL BE TOWED AT OWNER'S DISCRETION"**

*You shift into neutral, take the key out of the
ignition, and pull the parking brake. It has a nice
oscillating click to it.*

You unbuckle your seatbelt, open your door, and step out.

*Your legs **immediately** flare up in pain. You've been on the road for nearly 7 hours, and haven't once got out to stretch your legs.*

The guard has a witty remark for you.

Guard #3: Hey, you must've been in a rush to answer the call, huh?

You look over at the man in confusion.

You: What?

He gestures to your body.

Guard #3: You ain't in uniform. You're in civvies.

Happens to the best of us, though.

As you look down, you're not dressed at all for police work. You've got on a pair of brown boots, a pair of dark green baggy cargo pants, and a cloud-patterned long-sleeved shirt.

You: Sure did...

You shut your car door and lock it, before making your way up the sidewalk to the entrance of the police station.

Perception: During your walk, a fight breaks out across the street. A group of passersby get involved, leading to a rather large scuffle in the street.

Rationality: Since you're already at the police station, reporting this would be a piece of cake, since it's in plain view.

You come face-to-face with the front door. Planting your left hand on the door handle, it shocks you due to neurons and stuff. You instinctively pull your hand away, despite it not hurting in the slightest. You don't remember being such a little crybaby...

You plant your hand on the door handle again. It's rather cold for the outside world being scorching hot.

You turn the handle, and push forwards with the door.

It opens, unsurprisingly.

?: Inside the Morgan, Nevada Police Department

Inside, it's rather cold, at least compared to the outside world.

The lobby has various persons dotted about, both those in uniform and those out of uniform.

Dead ahead, a ginger-haired individual who looks important is discussing...something or other, with an extremely upset looking lady.

The ginger-haired individual notices your entrance and shifts their focus to you.

They dismiss their chat partner, and begin walking over to you. You haven't even walked past the doormat yet.

You glare over at various persons, who look to be waiting for their own individual things, in their own individual times.

They finally make it over to you, in no rush at all.

?: So... you're the police chief?

Their voice is rather tinny for their appearance.

You: I... guess?

They look at you with a questionable glare.

You: **LEGALLY...** No. **TECHNICALLY...** Yes.

?: *scoff* Great. Just what we needed, another lost cause.

Id: Hey! Don't let him hit you like that, man!

Super-ego: Hey! Don't assume their gender, man!

Ego: Who cares? At the end of the day, they're a person.

You: I find that rather offensive.

?: Don't. I'm just pulling your strings.

They extend their hand to you.

?: Artur Graham, police deputy.

Perception: They don't sound American. They sound more like a Vietnamese person. Their appearance reflects this.

You: You're Vietnamese?

*They shift their eyes downward and all around,
thinking of a response.*

Graham: Yes... I'm half American, half Vietnamese,
though I'm not *really* sure why **that** was your
takeaway.

You: Are you a boy, a girl, or the secret third
option?

*Morality: It would be a good idea for you to **stop**
talking.*

Graham: I don't see why I should have to answer
this question, but... I am, in fact, a man. Born as
such, raised as such.

You take his hand and shake it.

*Morality: You should make a good impression for
yourself!*

You: Nice to meet you, Deputy Graham.

Graham: As it is to you... Who are you?

You: I'm...

*Knowledge: You don't know. Perhaps if you didn't
lose your damn passport, you would.*

*You reach behind yourself into your pockets,
rummaging for something that could have your
identity, when... **a-ha!** Your passport! It was in your
back pocket the entire time!*

You look at your passport.

Your name is Portia Tigons.

You: Portia Tigons.

Graham: Well, then. Nice to meet you, Chief Tigons.

Now, we need to get over to the site.

You: What, now?

Graham: Yes. Oh, right...

He reaches into his bag and pulls out a police coat, wrapped in a polythene bag.

Graham: Put this on. Actually, you should put your name on it first.

He hands you a blank ID name card. It's labeled:
"Morgan, Nevada Police Chief/Lead Investigator"

You: Okay, then...

You pull apart the bag and pull the coat out. Un-balling it, you pull a permanent marker out of your pant pocket, and write "P. Tigons" on the card, before affixing it to the right breast pocket of the coat.

You throw the coat up and put your left arm through the left sleeve, before doing the same for your other arm.

It's a bit... bigger than it looked in the bag.

Graham: Now, typically we carry firearms, but I'm certain this case won't require the use of any.

You: If you say so.

Graham: Anyhow, we should get going. We're off to the trailer of the Whitner family.

You: Alright, then. Lead the way.

Graham: Actually, since you're the lead investigator, **you'll** be leading the way. It's just down the road, and it's marked, so it's not *that* hard to find.

You: Okay, then. Let's go.

*You turn around and grab the door handle, pulling
the door towards you.*

*Your colleague walks out the door, and you follow,
but your coat gets caught on the door handle.*

*Questioning: Who designed these **stupid** coats?!*

*You struggle for a bit, before slowly and
egregiously grabbing the part of the coat that got
caught and sliding it off, with the door slamming
shut as a result.*

*Your colleague, unfortunately, is not sympathetic
for your cathartic injury.*

*Graham: Are you going to make it? Or do I need to
call for a medic?*

You: Shush.

*He provides a quick smile before going back to his
neutral, emotionless face.*

***Portia and Artur: Outside the Morgan, Nevada Police
Department at 5:21 PM***

*You and your colleague walk down the stairs into
the street below.*

*The fight across the way has since broken up,
thankfully. None of the belligerents are here
anymore.*

*The streets are rather empty compared to when you
entered the police department, yet barely any time
has passed!*

***Portia and Artur: Roaming in the streets of Morgan,
Nevada at 5:22 PM***

*You and your colleague walk down the sidewalk,
passing various marked and unmarked trailers,
citizens sitting outside smoking and drinking, and
a large number of homeless folk.*

*The homed folk seem unsettled by the two of you,
but the homeless folk seem starstruck by the two of
you. Perhaps they admire the police force?*

*Whatever the case, you've got a case of your own to
worry about, that you were forced to worry about.*

*Oh well, at least it's an excuse for you to
actually **do** something except drive for 100 miles
and get harassed in some remote town.*

*After some walking, the two of you finally approach
a trailer marked: "**The Lovely Abode of the Whitner
Family! K + H + J ♥**"*

***Portia and Artur: Outside the Whitner trailer at
5:31 PM***

Graham: This is the place.

You: Wouldn't have fooled me.

Graham: Let's keep on.

You walk up the way to the trailer, with various markings and tapes left by the police department boldly prohibiting public entry.

You glance at your colleague briefly, and back at the various warnings as you continue your walk.

You: Guess they really want the average person to stay out of here...

Graham: Yes, it's quite the tragedy... The average person would be irreversibly scarred by it, and plus, it's a crime scene. It only makes logical sense for it to be cordoned off.

You: Right...

*The two of you come up to the front porch of the trailer. The front door is decorated with pink paint, various flowers and an excerpt from one of the many Bibles: "**Ephesians 4:29: Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.**"*

Portia and Artur: On the front porch of the Whitner trailer at 5:33 PM

Graham: After you, **detective.**

Decisions: Whatever lies behind this door has been covered in secrecy up to this point, with the assumption you know.

This town seems relieved by your presence as the apparent police chief, but they don't make it clear why they're relieved. All you've heard up to now is talk of a "tragedy".

You can't turn back when you open that door. The moment you open that door, you're not a nomad running the road looking for a new convoy of friends to smoke weed with, you're a police detective, immediately thrust into the highest rank in the field.

*Yet, this town depends on you. You've been pursuing doing the right thing for **so long**, and this is your chance to finally do that.*

I have made my decision. Have you?

You place your hand on the door handle, and slowly turn it, pushing the door inwards as you do.

*Perception: A foul smell immediately hits you. You let out an instinctual "**Oh my... God.**" It seems to have hit your colleague too, as he groans under his breath.*

You take a few steps into the trailer, unaware of what lies within.

Portia and Artur: Inside the Whitner trailer at 5:35 PM

The smell of... whatever the Hell that is, hasn't gone away.

It smells like shit. But, like... ten times worse.

You: It smells like shit in here.
Your colleague doesn't respond.

Taking a few steps further, the smell only gets
worse.

Sputtering, you turn the corner into the living
room to find... **a corpse.**

**It's not just a corpse, sadly. It's the corpse of a
young lady, probably mid-to-late teens. She's been
stripped of her clothes, and she appears to have
been... "overpowered" by more than one person.**

**Portia and Artur: At the crime scene in the Whitner
trailer at 5:37 PM**

You can hear your colleague wincing under his
breath and sighing heavily behind you.
Instinctively grimacing, you slowly advance towards
the body.
The floor creaks with every step taken by you and
your colleague.

Now standing directly next to the corpse with your
colleague, the sight is even more upsetting.
She has strangulation marks on her neck, and her
face is purple.
Her body has blunt force marks all over,
intensifying towards the upper chest.

She's posed in a provocative manner, likely done postmortem.

Perception: A rather upsetting and tragedious sight indeed.

*Mortality: Who would do such a thing...?
Your stomach churns.*

Graham: It's the worst thing this town has seen since it was founded... Jenny was like a ray of sunshine here.

You: It's horrible...

Graham: Truly.

Knowledge: You now know that the victim was named Jenny. Going by her family's surname, she was most definitely Jennifer Whitner.

Perception: Around the stomach and pelvic areas of the body, dried up fluids have stuck to her body. She has too many marks for one person to inflict soundless.

Based on the bodily decay, mixed with the other fluids on and near her body, she has most likely been dead for 51 hours.

Using what you've gained so far, from seeing it up close and from the locals calling it a tragedy, you can deduce what most likely happened:

The victim's house was probably breached at some point two days ago, most likely by multiple people.

She was then found and overpowered by the intruders, who then proceeded to violate her possibly multiple times based on the amount of injuries around the lower body.

Once they were said and done, they strangled her to death, judging by the rather deep strangulation wound to her neck.

So, you know roughly **what** happened to the victim, but **how** did it happen?

There has to be something around the victim's house that points to a forced entry.

You look away from the corpse and look around the living room, pointing your focus to the windows.

Stepping around the body and over to the main window, you examine it closely.

Perception: The window is not shattered or cracked in any way, and it doesn't appear to be unlocked.

Knowledge: This isn't helpful, as the perpetrators could have simply locked the window on their way back out.

Perception: Incorrect. **There is no way to unlock the window from the outside.** The window only has an indoor lock.

Encyclopaedia: No trailer home windows can be unlocked from the outside world.

You turn to face your colleague.

You: Graham, go check if any of the other windows
have been broken.

Graham: On it.

He turns and walks down the hall.

*You take this opportunity to examine the area
around the victim. Aside from the body, the blood
and the dried up male release, nothing else seems
to indicate anyone was ever here. No footprints to
the naked eye, no knocked over furniture, nothing's
broken, it's like nobody was ever here.*

*Although, there is a birthday card on the
side-table.*

*It's probably unrelated, but it could help gauge
other relatives or a general understanding of who
the victim really was.*

Grabbing the card, you flip it open. It reads:

"GreEtins, Kolin and Head Whitner

We kome bearing a gift!

The gift of life! The gift of death!

Oh, joy! Oh, joy! For it is here!

***Are you not pleased? Well, luckily your daughter
was!***

***Unfortuntuealy, She seeMs to have suffered a minor
injuri... Oopsie!***

SHe'll be fine! In Heaven!

Signed by: A. from the Foundry"

*Looks like the attackers left a note for the
parents, which they disregarded.*

You: Graham! Get in here, I've found something.
Your colleague turns the corner.

Graham: Yes?

You hand the card out to him.

You: Looks like the perpetrators left a message for
the unfortunate parents.

He takes the card and reads it.

Graham: It seems so. 'Guess they didn't get the
memo, since they weren't home.

They weren't home?

You: They weren't home?

Graham: Correct. They were out drinking and didn't
return until maybe 30, 40 hours after the incident.
They have yet to see their daughter in her current
state... and I pray they don't have to.

*You look down at the body, and then back at your
colleague.*

You: Right...

Graham: We should get back to the station to
present this card to Mr. and Mrs. Whitner, and to
get a possible match on the handwriting, or
whatever the "Foundry" is.

You: Good thinking. Let's go.

*You step around the body, and towards the door,
with your colleague following behind.*

Portia and Artur: On the front porch of the Whitner trailer at 5:57 PM

As the two of you step out, you're met with a frenzied looking woman and a distraught looking man.

Woman: **MOVE IT!!! Let me in!!!**

Man: Head, please... don't disrupt the investigato-

Woman: **OUR DAUGHTER IS DEAD, KOLIN!!! And you want to sit here and tell me I CAN'T go and see her?!**

What kind of cops are you?!

Graham: The honest, working kind, ma'am. Me and my partner will both attest to the fact that, in her current state, you don't want to see your daughter. It would only do more damage to your already hurt hearts.

Mrs. Whitner: **Oh, so I'm just supposed to SIT BY IDLY while some MIDDLE AGED PRICKS GO IN AND PROBE MY BABY GIRL?! I DON'T FUCKING THINK SO!!!**

The woman tries to force herself between you and your colleague.

You grab the woman's left shoulder, pushing her back.

You: Ma'am, my colleague is right. You don't want to see your daughter right now...

Mr. Whitner: I'm sorry, detectives... It's just been... a hard few days for me and my wife.

Mrs. Whitner: It's been more than just **hard, Kolin!**

They *killed* our little Jenny... Our baby girl... Why...

The woman falls to her knees, beginning to cry.

Graham: Mrs. Whitner, I assure you we are doing everything in our power to figure out what happened to your daughter and who did it. I can also assure you the perpetrator **will** be administered justice, in the way you hoped.

Mr. Whitner: Thank you, Deputy... Please... Introduce those **bastards** to the long arm of the law...

Graham: We will, Mr. Whitner. I'll make sure of it.

Your colleague looks at you.

Graham: Let's go, Tignons.

You nod, and look back at the hysteric couple.

You: I'm sorry, I really am.

You walk down the stairs and down the way to the street.

***Portia and Artur: Outside the Whitner trailer at
6:07 PM***

Graham: You did surprisingly well, rookie.

You perk up at this referral.

You: So you know?

Graham: That you're no police officer? Yes.

You: Yeah... Their police chief fucked right off, so I made the bold decision to fill in for him. What a mistake that was.

Graham: Despite your blatant lying, you performed rather well for someone who appears to have lived his whole life on the road.

You: I don't know whether to view that as a compliment or an insult.

Graham: View it as a compliment, because it's probably the only one you're gonna get around here. And I hope you like the red sand of Nevada, because for as long as this case persists, you're not leaving Morgan.

You: I guessed so...

Graham: Your... situation will be sorted at some point down the road, but not now. Now, we need to head back to the station and prepare for an advancement in the case now that we have a clue.

You: Actually...

You're quite tired from your journey.

You: I'm beat.

Graham: I understand. You've been traveling from afar, I assume, and you've just been thrown into the shoes of someone you don't know anything about.

Go get some rest, Tigons. I'll advance the case, and we'll go from there tomorrow.

You: Alright. Good night, Graham.

He nods at you.

Graham: Good night, Tigons.

You turn around and walk down the way, towards your car, which is still in the parking lot of the police station.

**Portia: Outside the Morgan, Nevada Police
Department at 6:12 PM**

You pull your car keys out of your pocket and
unlock your car.

Opening your driver side door, you take your coat
off and toss it onto the seat, and close the door.
Opening the trunk, you grab comfortable clothes and
close the trunk.

You turn around and walk to the rear of the police
department building, out of public view.

You come back around the corner, in comfortable
clothes.

You walk back to your car, and open the trunk
again, throwing your day clothes in, and closing
it.

You open the rear left door and crawl in, closing
the door behind you.

Pulling the passenger seat back, you fold out a
bedroll and roll into it, covering yourself up. You
lock all of the doors and turn the interior light
off.

Tomorrow will be interesting, since you won't be
hitting the road like you usually do. You'll be
head-first in a murder-rape case.

Good night, good luck.

To be continued.