

POLICE DOOG 2

HER MAJESTY'S FINEST



By wwwolf

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: A Long Drive.....	1
------------------------------	---

[Story by wwwolf](#)

[Cover art by Da Boz](#)

[Editing by Friday](#)

Chapter 1: A Long Drive

June 7'th 1988

08:00 Hours

West Woodburn, Northumberland, North East England

It wasn't the scents that woke me, nor the sounds, nor even the vibrations through the earth of dozens of feet treading the ground not inches from my prone body.

It was the guilt.

I laid there for a long time, my eyes closed, my breathing steady. It was a simple thing to lay here, let the world pass me by. It was the same as I'd done so long ago, so far away at the Kennel.

I finally opened my eyes when I felt someone kneel down next to me.

"I know you're awake," he said softly. A human. No human had ever spoken to me in such a way before.

Moving slowly, I peered up at the man. I'd done wrong, I knew it. I was responsible for the death of Reverend Benson. Somewhere in the distance I could hear the voice of Richard Hyatt. He was giving a report to another officer.

I sat up, feeling the strain of each and every one of my long years on this earth. I looked into the face of the officer who knelt before me. His expression was a blank slate.

"Sir," I said, my voice rough.

"You're Forty-Two?" he asked.

"Of course I..." I realized I no longer wore my uniform, and even my badge was somewhere long lost. "Yes." I paused for a long moment and took a breath. "Yes, I am."

The memories came back to me in flashes and starts. I could smell the blood of Xomph, I could feel the cold flesh of Richard Hyatt, I could taste the bile on my lips as I held the rifle to Benson's skull.

Turning, I vomited.

There was nothing in my gut, but I heaved, I purged, I tried to wash the memories of the last week from me. They wouldn't go.

At long last I felt a hand on my shoulder. To anyone watching it would have seemed a friendly gesture. I was a Dog. This was a handler. I knew the command he was giving me.

Stop.

It did.

"Come with me." His voice was still soft, but the order was there.

I was not a free creature. I was a Police Dog. I was bound by my nature, my training, to follow him. I did without thinking.

The sun was just touching the horizon, precious little light making its way into the ruined church as we walked from the main hall. All around us lay the shattered stained glass that had once held the image of the human's god. Now it was just blood-soaked shards.

Not feet from me lay a white sheet covering what could only be the body of Reverend Benson. Blossoms of immaculate red blood were just now starting to grow on the linen.

And around us streamed two dozen Police Dogs and at least as many human officers.

The sound of so many people must have been all but deafening, but I didn't hear it. I didn't even hear Richard as he called my name. But I did my best to wave at him, to comfort him as I was led off.

Stepping out of the church, I had to fight by ears from falling. A dozen vehicles had parked up and down the road, lights flashing. More than a few had driven up onto the church lawn, leaving deep depressions in what had been faultless turf.

I wondered who it would be that would have to repair it now that West Woodburn was without a pastor.

Parked at the curb, the lights atop it still flashing, was a SERT mobile command vehicle. We climbed the steps to its large rear compartment.

I'd never been inside of these vehicles, never so much as seen one. I had no idea what to expect within.

The door closed behind us with the tell-tale hiss of an air-tight seal.

A moment later a set of fans began to whirr, removing all scents from the air.

The space within was tight, but of all things it looked like an office back at the Kennel. Everything was tightly controlled and artificial. The lights were of the old florescent type they used, the walls were whitewashed, the furniture oak.

It was as if the space had been designed specially to mirror the Kennel, to set a Dog at ease, which of course it had.

The human officer took a seat across the desk from me and motioned for me to join him.

I cast another glance about the room before doing so. The trailer was designed to calm us, to take the edge from whatever it was that had forced us to call upon the SERT team.

It only made my hands shake more.

The officer shuffled some papers and looked up at me. There was a smile to his face that, surprisingly, looked genuine among the carefully pre-designed furnishings of the room.

“You've done well, Forty-Two,” he said. There was no preamble. “We got the story not only from the man Richard Hyatt, but from the proprietor of the inn, and the papers you sent in. It seems you found the murderer not only of the two here, but that Russian... thing. And possibly several other Dogs going back years. You've done well.”

I had to fight back a whimper.

“Thank you, Sir,” was what escaped my lips instead.

“Of course there's the matter of clean up,” he continued, off-handedly. “We'll have the paperwork to do, the follow-up, and the blood tests...”

Those two simple words left me in a cold sweat.

I knew it was to happen. It was standard procedure. The SERT team had been called in. That meant I would be recalled to London for debriefing. That meant the tests, both physical and mental, to ensure I had not been damaged.

And that meant genetic tests.

I should be dead by now. That had been my oath. I'd promised myself that I would place my head under the waves and join my namesake, Jonathan Hyatt, in death. As with so many thing, I'd failed.

I nodded to the officer.

“Of course.”

A moment later there was a soft knock on the door. It was almost swallowed whole by the soundproofing.

The officer raised an eyebrow before rising from his seat to answer. It was obviously no Dog, and no one else should have reason to disturb us.

I knew who was there the instantly, before she so much as spoke a word.

“Is Jonathan in there?”

It was Marry Hyatt.

The officer furrowed his brow as I turned.

“Who?”

I cleared my throat.

“She's referring to me, Sir.”

The man rolled his eyes. It wasn't unknown for Dogs to receive nicknames, even if it was officially frowned upon by the service.

“He's occupied at the moment,” he said.

Another sound came from the dark. I could hear running feet.

“He's there? He's there!” Trevor was pushing his way past his mother not a heartbeat later. He dodged between the officer's legs like he wasn't even there.

I let out a soft 'oof' as he landed on my lap, arms wrapping around my neck. He was small and warm against my pelt.

My own hands came up to hold him.

"I was scared," he whispered. "I had a nightmare about you." There was a tremor to the child's voice.

I forced a smile to my lips, fighting the urge to pull him even closer. "I'm here, Little-One. All is fine."

It was obvious the child didn't understand what was happening scant paces away at the church, but he held me closer.

The officer cleared his throat.

"This is most unusual, Constable Forty-Two." His words were harsh, but there was something to his voice. Not even he could shoo a child like this away.

Slipping a hand between us, I gently wormed Trevor away. He clutched my arm as though I might disappear at any moment.

"Bad things have happened," I whispered to him, voice low enough he had to strain to hear. "I'm... I'm going to have to go to London."

His little fingers dug into my pelt, making fire light up along my arm.

"How long?"

I didn't answer for a long moment. I didn't want to lie.

"I don't know," I said at last. "I'll be back as soon as all is well."

I closed my eyes for a moment.

He still refused to let go of me. A moment later Marry had climbed the steps to the trailer, standing behind him.

"Come, Trevor," she said, her voice soothing. "It's a school day. We agreed you'd go for breakfast and the 'Crown as soon as you knew Jonathan was alright."

His fingers slowly slipped free, but he looked into my eyes.

Something silent passed between us. Any other human, even Richard would have been oblivious.

Trevor saw it. Trevor saw my fear.

Lunging forward, he hugged me again, one last time. He held me so close it felt as though he'd never let go.

"You've been a good big brother." His words were soft and solemn.

It was another two hours before we were ready to leave. The officer had been correct. There was, as always, paperwork to be done. Not only was there a homicide, witnessed by a police Dog, but the self-confessed murderer of two by the dead.

My fingers began to ache after fifty pages. They began to throb after one hundred. After two

hundred pages of forms I was forced to stop. By then the coroners had arrived.

I nodded at the two Special Examiner Dogs. They were accompanied by a human this time.

There was no great ceremony when we left. All the SERT dogs simply piled back into the same vehicles they'd come here in. A single additional Dog arrived just before we left. He was my – temporary – replacement.

To most humans he would be identical.

I liked to think this small town, in the middle of nowhere, a stone's throw from the Scottish border, would be able to tell the difference.

Two hours into the drive, I was sitting alone, shoulder-to-shoulder with the SERT Dogs in the back of a truck. I wasn't seen as a risk, I'd done nothing wrong. I was being treated like any other Dog.

Not a word had been said since we'd been loaded in here. All of us sat bolt upright, staring unseeingly at the Dog across the truck from us. Beneath us the hard wooden benches slowly rocked as we drove.

I let out a soft groan and shifted. My tail had nearly gone numb.

Across the aisle and a couple of Dogs down, I saw one of their ears twitch.

He smiled.

A SERT Dog wears a different uniform than a normal Dog. We wear the traditional dark blue of the service. The SERT are special, their uniforms are darker, almost indistinguishable from black.

The number stencilled upon the Dog's breast named him as Sixty-Five.

"There's something off about you," he said. It was obvious from his voice he was in command.

My blood went cold.

"Pardon?"

He raised an eyebrow.

"A Dog like you. You're not the normal ones we're sent out to rescue from nowhere towns like these. You already had the job done. You hadn't any reason to call us." His eyes narrowed. "Why *did* you call us?"

There was something about his words that took me a moment to put my finger on. He didn't speak like a Dog. His words were too easy, too smooth. They were from a Dog's mouth, no question, but he spoke like a human.

"I'm sure I hdon't know what you're talking about, Sir." I could tell you for a fact he was my superior. All the Dogs here were.

He leaned forward to take a sniff.

"I'm sure you don't," he replied, letting the matter drop.

Another two hours and we came to a stop. It was far too soon for us to be in London.

I could hear voices outside, and the sound of vehicles rushing past on the carriageway.

A moment later the doors to the back of the truck were opened.

“Out you get,” one of the humans ordered.

Like clockwork the SERT Dogs were up and out. I did my best to follow along, but I didn't have the training to know what they wanted of me.

Standing like a lost pup next to the truck, I could only watch as the other Dogs disappeared. We were stopped at a petrol station at the edge of some town. The Dogs had blended into the night, disappearing among the trees.

“Do what you got to do,” the human officer said, nodding towards the trees. “We'll give you your ration of kibble when you get back.”

My stomach let out a soft rumble. I realized just how long it had been since my box had burnt to the ground, taking my supply of kibble with it.

I ambled off into the darkness, not really sure. I understood what he implied, but the thought couldn't be further from my mind. It still took everything I had to keep my hands from shaking. My body was on full alert.

Only then did the thought occur to me.

Slipping silently between the trees, I crept further and further away from the petrol station. I couldn't let them take me back to London. I'd failed to slip away before this all happened, but I could make good on my oath now...

I heard a footfall in the fallen leaves behind me.

“Straying a bit far, aren't you, Forty-Two?”

I turned. Not a pace behind me stood Sixty-Five. He was well within range of restraining me. Another two dogs stood behind him, ready.

I felt my ears pull back.

“I was just looking for some privacy...”

He cocked his head.

“Privacy? For what? You're a Dog.” A smile almost slipped to his lips. “Have you been living alone for so long that you've forgotten what you are?”

His motions were a little too smooth, a touch too professional as he stepped up to set a hand on my shoulder. His touch was light, but his intent was clear.

“Do your business,” he said. “Then we all go back to the truck.”

I was no suspect, but the SERT team was well trained.

It shouldn't have even been a thought. I'd grown up in close proximity to all my brothers and sisters at the Kennel. I should have been able to relieve myself with all of them watching. Yet with them so close again it took long moments for me to find the peace that should have been so close at hand.

Scratching at the dirt to cover my mess, we returned to the truck shortly thereafter. Above us the clouds rolled.

Just steps short of the door I felt the first drop of cold rain fall atop my mussel.

I sneezed. It cleared my nose of the last of the putrid scent of Xomph's burnt fur.

It was another half-hour before the human officers returned. It took me a moment to figure out where they'd gone, right up until I picked up the scent of a greasy spoon's entrée on their splattered shirts.

"Alright, boys," one of them called, "Dinner time."

Opening a cardboard box, they began throwing plastic bags full of kibble at us.

All the Dogs around me were drooling. They'd known what was coming as if a dinner bell had rung.

One of the bags landed in my hands. I looked down at it.

I'd seen hundreds if not thousands of these in the past. Travel rations. Bagged and sealed, they were pre-measured and ready to eat.

I thought back to Forty-One and Sixty, out in New Forest so long ago. Back to when he'd played with his food.

I rolled the bag in my fingers, feeling the kibble within crunch and grind.

All the other Dogs around me were already eating, muzzles pushed deep into their bags.

I took a deep breath and pulled the tab on my bag. It popped up with a puff of air. The scent within was...

Chemical.

It should have been enticing, it should have been calming, it should have smelt of home.

I shouldn't be wishing it was carrots.

I lowered my lips to the bag and ate a lap of kibble on my dry tongue.

I had to force it down.

All around us the storm continued to build, rocking the truck.

Another two hours on the road and we neared London. I could tell. The scent of the air changed.

Glancing out a small window, I caught just the briefest glimpse of a young Dog walking by the side of the road, in the other direction.

Had I ever been that young and thin?

We'd been making good time so far, driving through the night. Now we came to a dead stop, caught in the morning rush.

All the Dogs around me stayed bolt upright. They were all asleep – save for Sixty-Five. He

watched me.

I lost track of time soon after. I could hardly guess what time it was when I felt us dip into the underground parking garage of the Kennel, but it was well into the day.

“End of the line, blokes,” came a call from outside as the doors opened. “You know what to do.”

As one all the SERT dogs leapt to their feet and were off in a flash, leaving me cold, naked, and alone in the back of the truck.

The human officer looked at me.

“You too, Forty-Two,” he said, his voice neutral. “Time for your debriefing.”

I fought down a lump in my throat and stepped out.

My long back claws clicked on the concrete floor of the parking garage. My nails had grown over the months of walking soft country roads.

I could feel the pads of my feet begin to wear on the rough floor. They'd likely begin to crack and bleed soon.

I almost laughed. Normally I'd be petrified about leaving a trail of blood.

Now? Now I just didn't care.

The parking garage was dimmer than I remembered it, but that could simply be due to the months I'd spent out under the bare sun. The weather of West Woodburn was far and removed from that of London.

Across to the nearest elevator, the single human officer and I stepped in. Much to my surprise we were on the forth sub-basement.

Had there even *been* a fourth sub-basement when I'd been here?

The moment the doors closed I felt the pang of claustrophobia. I wanted to see the blue sky, I wanted to roam in a farmer's field.

I wanted *out*.

I closed my eyes and took a deep breath of the foul London air.

The officer didn't seem troubled in the slightest by the close, confining space. He pressed the button to take us to the second level.

At long last the doors opened again. It took every fibre of being I had to hang behind the officer, not race out into the comparatively open hallway.

After no more than a heartbeat my brief respite from the claustrophobia was gone.

Around us streamed dozens of men and Dogs. It was exactly the same as last I'd seen it, save for twice as many bodies pressing and fighting for the already crowded space.

I stopped dead, the breath catching in my throat. I couldn't move.

The officer that led me didn't even realize I wasn't with him until after a few steps. He stopped and looked over his shoulder at me.

With a sigh he rolled his eyes.

"I forgot. You were a rural posting."

Reaching up, he grabbed me roughly by one ear. He could only just reach.

A shot of pain blossomed though me as he pulled. My feet moved of their own accord as he dragged me forward.

Through the crowd we went. Once we were off and moving he let me free. One of my hands crept up to put pressure on my injured ear.

We were halfway down the hallway when I first made out the whispering.

"Philosopher Dog."

Oh dear.

That was the name they'd given me after I'd all but thrown my final test. It seemed I was still recognised.

Sticking close to my lead's heels, we continued down the hall. I could make out the eyes that watched us. It was not only the humans who recognised me, but my fellow Dogs as well. They shouldn't have been able to tell my name with no badge on my chest, but yet they still recognised me.

And then it hit me.

My badge.

A whimper clawed its way up my throat. My badge. It was still somewhere far away, back in West Woodburn. That small, unassuming chunk of metal I'd spent so many years of my life chasing.

Suddenly I would have given anything to have its slight weight in my hand.

Other than the long stares, no one stepped in to stop us as I was led away. A half-dozen twists and turns and I was good and truly lost.

It's a testament to the truly titanic size of the Kennel that I hadn't the slightest where we were. We were still in the respectable offices, and this wasn't a new part of the complex, but yet I'd never been here.

One more turn and the officer stopped in front of a plain wooden door. On it sat a small nameplate, 'Debriefing'. He opened the door, but didn't step in.

Holding my breath, I walked into the small room. I wasn't sure what to expect, but it was... old.

The door closed softly behind me.

Taking a seat before the only desk, it was obvious which chair was mine – the one with a hole for my tail.

The room was small, hardly enough space to hold a table and two chairs. Above us a single florescent light hummed. The other tubes in the fixture were long dead.

There were no windows to the room, no posters, nothing to distract me in the time-worn office. Breathing deeply I could smell the scents of dozens of Dogs that had passed this way before, hundreds.

More than anything the room oozed a feeling of overworked, understaffed, and never-ending bureaucracy.

I was here because I was just another cog in the machine. The SERT team had been called. They had successfully defused a situation, and now I was being debriefed. Things like this must happen a dozen times a day throughout the country.

I was being treated like any other Dog.

Only I wasn't like any other Dog.

For just a moment I wondered where Handler Proust was. He once said that he would protect me, protect the secrets I kept.

I let out a yawn as I leaned back in the chair. If I never saw him again it would be too soon.

There was no clock in the room, and the hallway outside was rarely used. I don't know how long it was until I was joined.

It was obvious the human officer who next opened the door was a Handler. There was something about the way Handlers moved. They weren't like the other officers. They knew how to command Dogs. How to demand respect. It was in every line of their bodies, their every motion.

"Forty-Two?" she asked, taking a seat across from me. She set her papers and a cup of coffee down. I turned my nose from the bitter brew.

"Yes, Ma'am," I replied. My eyes were down and my tail hung limply. I was a picture of submission.

She took a long swig of her coffee. I stole a quick glance at her face. The lines were clear around her eyes. She looked as though the caffeine was the only thing holding her together.

"Alright, Forty-Two," she began, "I've been over your paperwork. This isn't exactly an open and shut case, but we do have your sworn confessions. As far as the courts are concerned the word of a Police Dog is the same as photographic evidence. The reverend was a murderer, and the man..." She flipped through the papers, "Richard Hyatt shot him in self-defence. There was a scuffle in the graveyard, but we don't have much data on that. Everything sound right?"

I nodded my head.

"What happened to Richard..." I cleared my throat. "Mr. Hyatt?"

She raised an eyebrow. "The man? He was flown down. He's already given his testimony and was released hours ago."

I let out a soft sigh.

She was just about to say something, but I never learned what it was. In the distance I could make out the sound of footsteps.

I'd know those heavy, plodding steps anywhere. I'd heard them a million times growing up.

The closed door couldn't hold back the scent of stale cigarette smoke.

A heartbeat later the door banged open. Master Constable Proust stood there. His eyes were red and bloodshot and his uniform was in disarray.

"Out," he ordered.

The woman scowled at him. "We're doing a debriefing here. Who do you think you are to..."

She never had a chance to finish. Reaching forward, Proust grabbed the papers from the desk and tossed them into the hall.

The woman let out a gasp as her paperwork was tossed aside. A moment later she was off chasing after it as it fluttered to the ground. Proust slammed the door behind her.

Taking her seat, the short man looked up at me. He didn't say anything for a long time.

"So you did it."

His voice was flat and emotionless, almost as if coming from a Dog. There was no question to what he was referring.

A smile sprung unbidden to my lips.

"No, Sir. No, I did not." Was it wrong I wanted to laugh? "Richard Hyatt killed him."

He levelled me with a glare. Two years ago it would have left me cowering. A month ago it would have left my tail curled around my leg and a whimper on my lips.

Today... Today I simply stared back at him.

"You're lying. I ordered you to kill him."

I didn't even blink.

"I disregarded your order."

He stopped dead.

"You did *what*?" His voice very nearly broke.

I wasn't sure if a smile was fighting its way to my lips, but my face remained a stoic mask.

"Your order was illegal. I disregarded it."

His pupils contracted to pinpricks. I could hear his heart begin to beat faster.

"You can't disregard a direct order. I am your master."

I shrugged.

It was such a simple action, but it said so much. Dogs do not *shrug*. That is a human action. Our bodies aren't designed for it. We're not *trained* to shrug.

I did it anyway.

"You were one of my handlers," I said. My words were slow and deliberate. "You are my superior officer." I lowered my voice. I was little more than a hoarse whisper now. "I am exactly what you made me. You toiled for years to remove my limitations. Is that not what you yourself told me? You strapped me down and *changed* me. You made me more than I was."

The sound of his chair scraping back was alarmingly loud in the silent room.

"You're still a Police Dog, Forty-Two," he said. His words were coming faster now. "Brophy wasn't that stupid. He wouldn't have removed all your conditioning. He told me he left the final fail-safes in place before he died."

I shrugged again. I didn't have anything else to say.

Once again there was a long pause. I could hear the beat of his heart, the dry, short rasp of his breathing.

“They're going to take you for testing, Forty-Two.” Proust's voice was soft, almost seeming to come from a different man than the one who had ordered me about years ago.

Now that I looked at the man, he seemed far older than the few years difference should have made him. His face was raw and worn, like a man who'd been forced to endure the stress of a whole lifetime in hardly a year.

I could only wonder what he'd been doing since Project Janus had so spectacularly failed.

“I know,” I said. “They will discover what I am. And furthermore, they will track my changes back to you.”

Did I see the barest of smiles on the man's face?

“No they won't.”

Reaching into his coat, Proust withdrew four vials.

One contained a sample of saliva, the second urine, the third blood.

The forth was a hypodermic needle. It reminded me vaguely of my crash kit, now long lost back in West Woodburn. The dark green liquid that sloshed within was far more forbidding than my medication had ever been.

“Take them,” he ordered. “They'll get you past the tests.”

“What is the needle for?”

His ghost of a smile never faltered.

“If something goes wrong. The poison will kill you instantly. And it'll corrupt your body enough they'll never be able to find our tampering.”

I sat across the table from him. There was no tick of the clock to show the passage of time.

“Take them!” he ordered.

Sitting back, I crossed my arms.

“No.”

The single word was so simple I couldn't imagine why I'd never said it to him before.

What little strength and dignity the man possessed seemed to implode.

“What! How—”

He never had a chance to finish. A moment later the door opened.

“Him! He's the man who interrupted my debriefing! He's thrown off the entire night's schedule!”

The woman who'd been speaking to me previously had returned. And she had backup.

“Proust?” the man who'd come with her asked. “What are you doing here?”

The four vials that had been on the table were long gone, as if they'd never existed.

“Hmm? Just doing my job.” The Master Constable could lie better than any man I knew.

The woman glared at him.

“Come on, Forty-Two,” she said. “We're already late. We need to get you down to medical. They'll just run a few quick tests then we can send you back to your posting.”

We were out of the office a moment later, walking down the nearly deserted hall. The woman stood on my left, the new man to my right, and Proust not a step behind me.

He was so close I could feel his fetid breath ruffling the fur on the back of my neck.

Through the endless mazes of the Kennel we walked. At long last we reached an outside wall. I could see out through a set of windows to the alleyway below. There was nothing down there but empty blacktop and dustbins.

Once more Proust tried to press the fake samples into my hands. I refused them.

The female officer turned to glare at him once we reached the elevators.

“I don't know what your game is, Proust, but this is where you bugger off.”

The two of them stared at each other, neither willing to break.

At long last the other man stepped in.

“Piss off. We don't want you here.”

I don't think I've ever seen that expression on the Master Constable's face. He was afraid.

“Fine.”

The only warning I had was the slightest shifting of his weight.

I reacted faster than he ever expected me to. No human could move as fast as I could. Neither could any Dog.

A flash of green and the hypodermic needle plunged towards me. I could see a single drop already squirting from its tip.

And with that the world seemed to slow to a crawl.

I looked at the face of my former master.

He had no dominance over me now.

My muscles sung, moving with the speed and power that could only be achieved with a body that had taken thousands of Briton's best scientists to build. I felt Proust's fingers rough against my fur, but he was too slow, too clumsy. He'd never had a chance.

There was a grunt behind me. Only too late did I realize the deadly needle had instead found the hapless male officer that stood behind me.

Turning, I did the only thing I could.

I ran.

Falling to all fours, I took off down the hallway, my heart racing. Behind me I could hear screaming.

I ran on.

There are many things the Kennel is well prepared for. A rogue Dog is number one on the list.

In every hallway there are buttons that can be hit to put the entire complex in lock down. Never once in my life had I had the misfortune to see them used.

A siren began to wail as the sound of footsteps came heavy from the hallway behind me.

My vision had reduced to a tunnel.

Turning, I saw the windows leading to the alleyway.

Without even thinking I threw myself towards them. The glass would have been more than enough to hold back any mere human.

I crashed through.

Plummeting through the night air I had only a split second to glance behind me.

The human who'd been injected was motionless on the ground. Traces of foam slipped from his blue lips. Dead.

Master Constable Proust was nowhere to be seen.

Author's Note



And here we are again, eh?

First things first, I'd like to thank Friday for stepping forward and offering his services to edit this story. You know as well as I that my work can be a bit rough at times, and hopefully with his attention we'll have some of the worse wrinkles ironed out this time. Any improvements you see to my work are totally and completely due to his efforts to whip me into shape, anything that slipped through the cracks is as a result of my own laziness!

This is Forty-Two's second story, and I'd be lying if I told you I had it planned out from the beginning. *Police Dog* wrapped up pretty tightly – to the point it's one of the only stories I've written that I was completely happy with. Expanding the world with *Police Dog 2: Her Majesty's Finest* wasn't as easy as I was hoping at first, but I think it dovetails in not too poorly, even if I do feel amiss that the Hyatt's didn't get nearly enough screen time.

This book marks a change in the way I'm writing stories. Not only was it my first story to see actual editing by an *editor*, but I also wrote and posted it in a far more ad-hoc manner than I normally do, something that I'm sure would drive the prim and perfect Forty-Two crazy!

Oh, and Zelosh, if you're reading, your suggestion for a character will be showing up eventually...