

POLICE DOOG 2

HER MAJESTY'S FINEST



By wwwolf

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Chapter 7: Brothers and Sisters

June 9th 1988

20:45 Hours

The Kennel, London, England

I wasn't sure where he'd found it, but Handler Llyal offered us some day old Chinese takeout. The little paper boxes even had the traditional metal handles. They were the perfect size for Archer and I to fit our muzzles into as we ate.

Though it did take some convincing before Archer was willing to trust the man even that much. It was clear the Dog did *not* think much of me exposing us to Llyal. I got a sharp kick and a sharper glare when the Handler ask how I'd survived.

I looked the man straight in the eye. "I'm sorry, Sir. That information is classified."

He raised an eyebrow. "Classified? By who? Proust and I are still your handlers, at least on paper."

The slightest of smiles pulled at my lips. "The identity of the person who classified that information is classified... Sir. But I can assure you we work in the Empire's best interests."

He let out a laugh, picking through his own food. "It's been a long, long time since I've ever heard anyone refer to the Commonwealth as an empire, Forty-Two." He paused, watching me. "But you've always been... *you*." He let out a long-suffering sigh. "Can you at least tell me what you're doing?"

"No," Archer cut in. His voice was hard. "I don't trust you. I don't trust anyone in this freakish, Frankenstein laboratory."

It had taken Llyal some time to become accustomed to Archer's most... unprofessional way of speaking. It was still obvious that the Dog's personality grated on him.

"You can only skulk about here so long," Llyal got out between clenched teeth. "*I* discovered you. How long will it be before someone else does? You know as well as I that anyone else would hand you two over without a thought."

Archer gave him a glare over the rim of his carton as he made of point of slurping up a noodle.

Leaning forward, I set my now empty box of takeout between them. "We're looking for a Dog, Sir," I said.

Llyal laughed. "A Dog? Well you've got your pick of them here! We've got thousands."

I shook my head, but my smile grew. It was comforting to see another side of the man I'd come to know so well growing up.

"No, Sir. You misunderstand. Last night while I was... unavailable I was attacked by a very particular Dog. I wish to know more about him." I gave Llyal a quick description of the altercation in the alleyway and the misshapen Dog.

His eyebrows went up. "No. We don't have any Dogs like that here. Not one. Any Dog that deviated that far from breed standard would be obvious. And anyway, by the time you described all Dogs had been recalled. *All of them*. They wouldn't even tell us handlers what was happening, but we had every single Dog back in its cage and locked away."

I felt Archer bristle when Llyal mentioned cages. I decided it pertinent to keep the conversation moving. "So the Dog did not come from the Kennel."

Llyal's expression was hard as stone. "Absolutely not. But I can check the records to see if there were any Dogs in the past who had abnormal claws like the ones you described."

I glanced over to Archer. He seemed indifferent.

"Do it." I said.

Handler Llyal left us safely locked away in his office as he went to check the records. The man had no more than closed the door when Archer was out of his seat.

"I don't trust him," the Dog whispered.

I glared at him. "Handler Llyal was my trainer as a pup. He's the closest thing I have to family here."

Archer sneered. "And that's why I don't trust him. Or you. Any human who would treat Dogs like they do deserves a special place in hell, preferably locked up in a cage of their own."

I grunted and turned away from Archer. I wouldn't hear a word against the man.

We sat waiting in the office for an hour and a half. It had been late when we'd first got in here, and the evening was well settled in now, though the only sign of it we saw was the clock ticking endlessly on the wall.

I didn't say another word to Archer the entire time. The Dog had tried to lure me into conversation, but I was uninterested. A proper Police Dog is comfortable with silence. He didn't appear to have ever learned that particular lesson.

We both turned at the sound of footsteps in the hall. Not a word passed between us, but we were both ready to bolt should it appear Llyal had betrayed us. Thankfully, there was only one set of steps.

He paused in front of the locked office door. I could almost see him glancing up and down the hall, ensuring he was alone.

He stepped in, closing the door quickly behind him. He wasn't smiling.

"I swear the Dogs they have running the records department are incompetent," he muttered. "They didn't even want to keep working when I showed up at the end of their shift. What kind of Dogs are they?"

I waited patiently as he took a seat at his desk. My old training pulled me back to the proper Police Dog procedure of waiting for my Handler. Archer didn't. "Well, did you find anything?"

Llyal scowled at him. I could see the glint of the man's gold dental work. "There aren't any active Dogs that match your description. Not even close."

Archer swore.

Both Llyal and I stopped dead. The Dog had sworn. Archer looked back at us. "What?" he asked, as if it were nothing.

Llyal pressed on, long ago having given up trying to understand the Dog. "But," he paused, looking at me, "I did find something. There *was* a Dog that matched your description. Long claws, a scar on his face. Even the right age. The problem is he's dead."

I cocked my head.

"He was disposed of last year," Llyal continued. "How he'd even survived that long I don't know. If he'd been in my group I would have..." He glanced over to Archer and wisely stopped.

"May I?" I asked. Llyal slid the folder across the desk to me.

Ninety-One. Handler Llyal was right, I couldn't see how this Dog had survived as long as he had. His claws had shown there were obvious genetic defects, and his mental scores were noticeably sub par. The only aspect of his record to prove exemplary was his fighting ability.

I thought back to that night.

"This was him."

I tugged a small photograph from the folder. It was the Dog I knew.

"Not possible," Llyal responded. "The Dog's dead. Disposed. I even double checked. All the paperwork is in order. It was done by Dr. Brophy himself."

I glanced over to Archer.

"Dr. Brophy?"

Handler Llyal was unaware of my history with Proust, Train, and Dr. Brophy.

"Yeah. One of the man's last things before he had to retire due to illness. He's dead now, too."

"The Dog," I said, standing up, "Is not dead."

We stole from the Kennel shortly thereafter, it was simple enough to do. No one gave us so much as a second glance. Handler Llyal, however, had one surprise for me before we left.

"I recovered this for you, Forty-Two. It was picked up by the SERT team up in West

Woodburn.”

Reaching into his coat, he pulled out a badge.

My heart stopped.

It was dull and caked with mud, but it was *my badge*. It no longer dangled from the chain it last had, but rather sat nestled in a thick brown leather wallet.

Reaching forward slowly, I cradled it in my hands. “Thank you.” I looked up into Llyal's eyes. “Thank you.”

He smiled. It was at that moment I wondered what my sire was like. I could only hope he was like this man.

“You're welcome, Forty-Two.” He paused for a long moment. “I read every report that came from the SERT deployment. They debriefed a man named Richard Hyatt. Apparently I should be calling you *Jonathan*.”

I blushed under my fur, looking away.

A moment later he slipped forward a piece of paper. “If you need anything. Anything at all, Jonathan, call me.” My name came clumsily from his lips, but he said it none the less.

Reaching across the desk, he hugged me.

We were two blocks from the Kennel when Archer spoke up. “That was the *sappiest* thing I've ever seen.” His voice positively dripped.

I looked over at him. “Pardon?”

“You don't think he really cares for you, do you? He's a Handler. He's the one who trained you to be a good and happy slave.”

I had to hold back a growl as I clutched my badge tight in my left hand. I didn't dare wear it, but at the same time I wouldn't let go.

“Seriously, what does that man think he's playing at? Why is he helping us? He's a handler. He should be the first to turn you in. He'd likely get a promotion out of it.”

We descended into the Underground, world closing around us. A moment later we were back on the maintenance walkway, out of sight of the public, in the dark. I stopped.

My hand shot out to grab Archer by his collar. A soft yip escaped him as I dragged him forward.

“*Do not*,” I hissed, “*Insult my family*.” My lips were no more than an inch from his ear.

I felt his body go stiff.

“They're not your family,” he said back, voice soft. “We are now. The Pack. Not some humans...”

“You haven't earned the right to call yourselves my family.”

I shoved him away and began walking again. I could feel him trailing two steps behind me.

I was sure he was expecting me to miss the door to the Pack's lair, but he didn't know me well. I stopped perfectly in front of it, even in the pitch blackness, and waited for him to open the lock.

He stopped there, key in hand. I couldn't see him, but I knew he was facing me.

"You're here at her majesty's pleasure, *Forty-Two*. You don't know her as I do. Don't presume too much. The Pack isn't mine, but I am the longest serving member by far. I know the way the real world works. I grew up in it, not in the little fantasy world they teach you at the Kennel."

I refused to dignify him with a response.

He opened the door and we returned to the Pack's den. To him it was home, to me, to me it was just another place to sleep, an oversized police box.

The stairs down felt even longer than they had coming up. It made me wonder who this shelter had originally been designed for.

By the time we stepped back into the shelter proper Archer seemed to have bled away much of the anger he'd held. Now he just looked worn raw, like this had been the longest day of his life.

He pulled the shirt from his back and threw it across the room as if it were nothing more than a rag. His false badge clanked against the floor. I went to go retrieve it without a word. Even if it was false it deserved more respect than that.

He watched me bend over to pick it up. I wasn't fully comfortable with the way his eyes followed my every motion.

"Don't bother," he said. "We can get it later. I do the cleaning around here anyway."

Straightening, I glanced over to him. "You do the cleaning?"

He made a very human-like shrug. It looked odd coming from a Dog. "I seem to be the only one who really knows how. All that growing up in the real world, remember? You purebreds don't seem to get much training on that front."

I cocked my head. This Dog became ever curiouser and curiouser.

I reached out and hung my uniform on the peg where I'd first found it. There were dozens like it. All the same, mass produced just like us Dogs.

"Where did they all come from?" I asked.

For once Archer gave a straight answer. "Dead Dogs. Mostly of old age. When a Dog dies they send his things back to the Kennel. Their uniforms end up in the laundromat. No one much cares for them then. I just slip in and pick up what we need before they're destroyed. Even the badges. Then the powers that be make sure the Dogs aren't removed from the active list." He flicked an ear in a way that made me uncomfortable. "The government forgets that the more strict and blindly followed the procedures, the more easily they're perverted. We know their laws and rules. We have the books. Just say the right things, forge the proper pieces of paper, and the machinery will work for you as well as it'll work for anyone else."

I felt sick as he described perverting the entire Service like it was a trivial action. As if it were nothing more than a plaything in his hands.

"Come on," he said, setting a hand on my shoulder and leading me deeper into the complex.

We passed room after room. A small installation this was not. It must have cost millions of

pounds to excavate in secret.

Another turn and he pushed open a door. Unlike all others in this place, the large room had bare walls, none of the lavish decorations seen elsewhere.

"I asked Baker to clear it while we were out," Archer said.

I looked around. There was nothing here but a cot in the center of the room.

"What is it?"

He smiled. "It's your room."

I blinked.

He pushed me gently forward, hand on the small of my back. "What, you thought we'd make you sleep out in the hall? In a box?" He shuddered. "In a cage?"

I looked about the room. It was large enough to house twenty Dogs.

"All of it?"

Above us a dozen florescent lights hummed.

"Sure. Who else would we give it to?"

A sudden sliver of doubt grew in my chest. The thought of living down here, truly *living* down here with these strange Dogs made me shiver.

Archer seemed to pick up on it. "Are you okay?"

"Of course."

Hand never leaving my back, he led me out and across the hall. Conveniently, that was his room, as if he'd planned it that way.

The room was still garnish, filled to the brim with every nick-knack it seemed the Dog could lay his hands on. In a glance I could see a half dozen computers, most buried under piles of dirty laundry.

"Take a seat, purebred. It's time I told you a story."

I looked around. The only place with even a modicum of free space was on the unmade bed. If I didn't know better I would have said this room belonged to a rebellious teenager. I stopped and looked at Archer. The Dog was rummaging around through something on the floor. His naked bottom pointing directly at me. No. It wasn't *if I knew better*. This room had been carefully designed to emulate that of a teenager. It had been assembled, piece by piece, like an artist.

The clothing tossed everywhere – yet it was Archer who cleaned the complex. Even the ill made bed was more than just randomly thrown together.

A few moments later Archer let out a huff and abandoned his search. I was rapidly becoming convinced he'd never been looking for anything at all.

He took a seat beside me, a touch closer than I was comfortable with.

"Now you know the real reason we're here, purebred. The Dogs are *perfect*." He said the word with more disdain than I thought could ever fit. "We're here by decree to watch the watchmen, or whatever it is they say. We're the ones that *aren't* perfect." He looked me up and down. "Well, except for you. We're the Dogs that can do things that the others can't so much as think of. We deal with the

threats they can't."

I pulled my ears back but didn't say anything.

"What? You don't believe me?" There was a smile to his lips. He was *enjoying* this. There was something to his motions, in his voice. He truly, deeply and truly, thought himself better than I. He wanted to break me.

He edged closer. I could feel the warmth of his body next to mine.

"The Police Service has a long and honourable history," I gritted out. "You will not convince me they are so impotent."

His brow drew down. "That's not what I'm saying, Jonathan." He paused for a long moment. "It's not that the police don't do their job. I *can't* do what they do. Few ever could. But they're large, bureaucratic, structured and mortarbound. *We* can't do what they do. *They* can't do what we do."

I turned my head ever so slightly to look him in the eye. "And what is it *you* do, Archer?"

He stood up with a soft huff.

"Come on, Jonathan. I need to show you something."

We left the Pack complex again, but this time we didn't stop to change into uniform.

"We won't be needing those where we're going," he said.

Back in the Underground, we took a different route. Our lives were in our hands as we were forced to leap across the tracks in the narrow gaps between trains. I was forced to follow him on faith alone. The only light in the tunnels was the lighter that Archer seemed to always carry. The flame was far brighter than I expected it to be.

At long last there was a glimmer of light in the distance.

"Where are we?" My voice had automatically retuned to the clipped and perfect diction of the force, yet it was no more than a soft whisper.

"Buckingham," he said like it was nothing.

We stepped into what could just have well been a space station airlock. The door behind us slammed shut and Archer began entering numbers into a small keypad on the wall. The tiny rusted iron space was lit with a dull red light.

He must have been typing numbers for a good thirty seconds. Then the screen went dark. "We're in," he said, "too bad she's out at Balmoral." The inner door opened and we stepped through into the cavernous stone basement of the castle.

I'd never been here before, I'd had no reason to. Everyone knew the Royal family didn't employ Dogs. They had humans to serve them.

And yet here I was, following Archer through the cellars. It was obvious he knew the way, he walked like he'd taken the journey a thousand times. It was only a matter of moments before he found a staircase leading up. We had to skirt filing cabinets and wardrobes older than most cities.

Up one floor, I had only a moment for a quick glance around before we continued. There was nothing in the sub-basement but more storage. Endless cabinets and cupboards.

Up to the basement proper, we stepped out. This was the first place that began to look like a palace. While the lights were dim and there was no one in sight, the offices and waiting rooms were plushly appointed, if not unusually so. This was a space for workers, not royalty.

Archer took off down a hallway, his steps silent in the half shadows. The Dog's dark coat made him almost invisible once he moved more than a few steps away.

"We shouldn't be here," I whispered, my voice nearly failing. I'd been nervous with breaking into the Kennel, but the Royal apartments left me cowering.

He glanced over his shoulder at me. I expected him to smirk, to scowl, to laugh at my weakness. But rather his expression was soft.

"We're almost there."

We passed through another set of doors and my hands began to shake.

'Access by Royal consent *ONLY*'

The doors weren't locked. It was obvious anyone that had penetrated this deep within the palace must be permitted here. The threat of the sign was more than enough to keep out any who should not tarry.

The space within wasn't as large as I would have expected. There were a couple small offices, a store room, and little else.

"Our *official* address," Archer said with a smirk. "We live out of the Pack house, but any official work gets done here. It makes us easier to get a hold of should she require us."

He took a seat.

"You heard about the Falkland War?" he asked, opening a drawer in his desk to riffle about inside.

I nodded. I didn't like where this was going.

"Rumour was back then that the Russians had loaned Argentina a couple of high end fur jobs. They were supposed to be experimental, real nasty things." He kept digging through the paperwork. "I wasn't even born yet, but my predecessors had everything well in hand."

I snorted and stepped forward, pushing him out of the way. In seconds I'd found the papers he was looking for. I spread the folder out on the desk. There were no news clippings here. Everything was classified. And everything had been handwritten by Dogs. I could see the tell-tale scrawl to their handwriting.

I didn't say a word as I read. I'd never met any of the Dogs who'd been involved. They had names like 'Reginald' and 'Walter'. They'd been on the island.

This simply was not possible. Dogs are not part of the military. It simply isn't. That would break one of the fundamental Goddard laws.

I sighed.

Dogs had been deployed to the island, but only Dogs of the Pack. No one had known they were there, not even the army.

The reports were detailed, but inconclusive. They'd spent days on the island, travelled dozens

of kilometres. And accomplished nothing. They hadn't even found the rumoured Russian Goddard's animals. They'd effectively been nothing more than tourists.

Archer was standing by my side, smiling. As if this were the crowning achievement.

"See? The Pack is Her Majesty's most important tool. We do what no others can."

I looked at him in the half darkness. There was something in his eyes. He wanted me to believe. He *needed* me to believe. The Pack was everything to him, just as the Service had been for me. He needed validation that his life was meaningful, that the group he'd devoted himself to had accomplished something, that there was a history, a legacy.

I nodded and slid the papers back into their folder. "Very impressive, Archer. I've never heard of anything like it."

The Dog's face lit up like I'd just given him a perfect score. "Really? Really, you like it?" His tail began to wag. There was something in his sudden excitement that made me smile, but also turned me off. This was not the proper way of a Dog. Dogs don't show emotion. I was obvious Archer was not simply a Dog.

"This is what they showed me when I was a pup," he continued. "This was what they showed me to help me learn who I was, what I was to become." He spun in his chair, kicking up his feet. "You don't know what it was like growing up in the Pack. There's never been more than a dozen of us. And they were all adults when I was born." He stopped, gaze growing distant for a moment. "I never even met my parents. I was born in the Kennel, but brought here when I was just hours old. *She* showed me these things. She helped me learn what it was I needed to become." His voice grew soft. "I haven't always pleased her. I'm still a pup, at least as far as the rest of the Pack are concerned." He gave me a sidelong glance. "You're the first real job I've been given."

Rolling a chair up next to him, I took a seat. "This is no game, Archer," I said, fighting to keep my voice soft. "Something truly foul is afoot. Someone is meddling with the secure records of the Service. A Dog tried to kill me."

He narrowed his eyes. "I know that. I'm young, but my training is at least as good as yours. You were trained by humans, I was trained by other Dogs. I can do this." He reached out a hand to set on my arm. I could feel the soft pads of his fingers, they were warm, sweating. "You'll help me... right?"

I looked at him again. His blue eyes were wide. Only now did I realize just how young the Dog truly was. I'd thought him short, but he was larger than he should be for his age. He wasn't more than a pup himself.

His question hung in the air for a long moment.

"We're here to do a job, Archer. We'll do it. Together. We're partners."

I was caught completely off guard when a high-pitched cry escaped the Dog. I almost thought he'd been wounded when he threw himself at me, sending us both tumbling to the floor.

"Thank-you-thank-you-thank-you!" The Dog was lying atop me, his tail wagging back and forth as fast as it would go.

I blinked, looking up into his face. I didn't move.

His arms closed around me in a hug before quickly pulling back. "Uh, thanks, Jonathan. You

don't know what that means to me.”

I sat up and looked over at him. He'd backed away a couple of steps and was studiously looking at anything but me.

“No,” I said, dusting myself off. “I don't think I do.”

We left the basement of Buckingham soon after for the Underground. Passing a human staff on the way through the sub-basement, I tried to hide but Archer strode past as if he commanded the building. The human didn't even so much as bat an eye at the two naked Police Dogs who walked past him.

Back at the Pack's complex, I bid Archer a goodnight and retired to my new room.

“Are you, uh, sure, Jonathan?”

I gave him a queer look. “Yes. I need rest. You may recall that my previous night was spent hiding behind a dustbin.”

He glanced away. “Uh, sure.”

I closed the heavy metal door.

Looking about the room, the walls, ceiling, and floor were all unaccompanied concrete. There had been other Dogs here in the past – I could smell them – but they were all long gone. The single piece of furniture was the cot waiting in the middle of the room.

I looked down to my hand. In it I still clutched my badge. I'd never let it go since Handler Llyal had returned it to me.

Playing its chain out, I pulled it from the soft leather wallet to loop over my neck. Its slight weight was reassuring. In some small way, I felt whole again.

Sitting on the edge of the cot, I looked at the badge. It was still coated in the mud and grass of the West Woodburn graveyard.

I sighed. Slowly, I began buffing it against my chest, gradually working it clean. I had no proper cleaning supplies, but I wouldn't stop until it shined once more.

My eyes snapped open the next morning. Nothing had awoken me, but it was time to get up. It was time to do my rounds. But something was wrong. I shouldn't be lying down.

It took long moments for it all to come back. I simply lay there and blinked, staring up at the florescent lights I'd never bothered to turn off.

Rolling over, I carefully stood up. It felt as though each and every one of my muscles ached. In no more than seventy two hours I'd seen the murder of two people, gone through a SERT response, been on the run from the entire Service, and been introduced to a secret society of Dogs.

Possibly one of many.

I carefully stood up and rolled my shoulders. I was stiff, but my body was designed for this. I'd

limber up again soon enough. Looking down, my badge was still hanging around my neck. I smiled.

A few moments later I'd completed some morning exercises and my body was as prepared as it would ever become. I opened the door.

Archer was sitting across the hall, just through the open door to his own room. He perked up instantly the moment I stepped out.

"You're awake!" he said, grinning at me. The Dog was back in his camo shirt and shorts, tail wagging. "I'm... uh, sorry about last night. People tell me I get a bit emotional."

I looked at him, cocking my head ever so slightly.

He looked away. "I didn't mean to come on too strong."

I nodded my head. Despite my best efforts I was slipping back behind my professional mask. "You did nothing wrong, Archer. This is new to me. As I'm sure I am to you. There will be some... adjustment."

He looked up at me, his lips pulled in a tight smile that showed no teeth.

"Come on," he said at last. "Let me get you some breakfast."

I will admit my mind had gone to kibble once I'd woken up this morning. It had been a long time since I'd last eaten properly.

Archer led me down another of the seemingly endless passageways to at last step into a large industrial style kitchen. The hardware here could feed a hundred.

"What do you want?" he asked, opening cupboards. "I could do a proper fryup if you feel like it."

I blinked.

Food was kibble. I wanted kibble.

He looked at me blankly when I asked him. "You want *that*? Seriously? No one eats *that*."

I let out a long-suffering sigh. "We're in a rush. We have a job to do. You can cook me a meal when we're done."

An hour later we were once again dressed in the garb of proper Police Dogs. I had a false badge on my chest, and my real one hanging around my neck, under my uniform.

I'd come up with another possible place in the Kennel that we needed to search. If there was anything going on with unknown Dogs, it would be there. We hadn't checked the breeding wing.

Archer had given me a sour expression. "I don't want to go to rape central."

I stopped dead as we climbed the stairs to the Underground.

"What did you just call it?"

There was no smile to his eyes. "Rape central. The place they send the women to get knocked up by whoever they figure is the best *genetic match*." The way he said those words sent a shiver down my spine.

"I'm sure it's nothing of the kind. The next generation has to come from somewhere."

He gave me a disgusted look. “You don't know, do you? The kibble. The stuff you eat. They treat it to keep your sex drive down. That's why Dogs don't mate when they're out on assignment. They have a different recipe they feed the Dogs they've brought back for breeding. It's pushed the opposite way. I've seen that wing, Jonathan. The so called *miracle of birth* ain't what you think it is. You look at a dam after she's birthed her twentieth litter. You look at a sire after he's been with his seventh lay that day. You think it sounds good? *They don't have a choice.*”

I turned and began walking again. “We still need to search.”

I thought back to my goals when I'd been a pup. How I'd dreamed of becoming a breeder. How *that* had been the goal that underpinned everything I'd ever strived towards.

I forced the thought away. I had a mission.

We passed once again into the Kennel, if anything the security was even tighter than yesterday. It appeared they were still looking for me, and it was becoming harder and harder for them to keep that fact from the media. We'd been stopped twice by reporters looking for a scoop. Both times I'd done the talking, politely refusing them.

Walking the hallways, I made a point of avoiding where Handler Llyal would likely be. I cared for the man deeply, but he was a liability now.

We were just approaching the breeding wing when we were forced to pass through a knot of Dogs. There were officers going in every direction. It was inevitable that we would be bumped into.

“My apologies,” I said, never even looking at who's foot I had stepped on. I could feel the person go stiff.

Oh dear.

I kept walking, Archer by my side, but I *knew* the Dog back there was watching us.

We got another ten paces before I *felt* the Dog following.

Oh dear.

Cautious not to make any obvious signs, I picked up the pace, trying to distance us from him, to duck about. Archer and I turned off into the first available door. The men's room.

It did no good.

I heard the other Dog come to a stop outside the door. It wasn't locked. This toilet was too large for a lock on its hallway door.

I glanced over to Archer. His face was expressionless, but he knew as well as I what would happen if we were discovered.