

POLICE DOOG 2

HER MAJESTY'S FINEST



By wwwolf

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Chapter 8: Inbreeding

June 10th 1988

07:15 Hours

The Kennel, London, England

Taking a step back from the door, I readied myself for when the Dog would step in.

He simply stood there.

At long last the door tentatively opened.

“Hello?” There was something to the Dog's voice, but at the same time he was nothing but yet another perfect Police Dog.

He took a step forward. The door swung closed behind him.

I leapt.

I was upon his back, driving him to the ground, my hand already wrapped around his muzzle, preventing him from crying out.

Archer simply stood against the wall, eyes wide.

Much to my surprise the Dog didn't fight back. He went limp beneath me. I had his wrists in one hand and his muzzle in the other.

I hadn't the slightest what to do with the Dog I held helpless beneath me, but I raised my hand to deliver a blow that would knock him cold.

With a sudden effort he squirmed, turning to look up at me.

And I stopped.

His badge read Sixty, but I'd know him anywhere.

“Brother?” he whispered from between his sealed lips.

I couldn't move.

“Just hit him,” Archer hissed. “We’ll leave him in a stall. We’ll be gone before they find him.”

I stood up, letting Sixty free. I couldn’t say a thing.

He looked at me, eyes wide. “Brother?” he whispered again. “They’re... they’re searching for you...” His voice cracked.

The Dog looked much the same as he had last I’d seen him – only with more pips gracing his uniform. He’d been promoted, and earned a service metal.

I backed up until my tail brushed the wall. Not here. Not now.

His eyes grew even wider. Slowly, he stood up. “You did it, didn’t you? You’re on assignment. You’re with MI18.”

Archer looked over to me. I could see the confusion in every line of his face. I flicked an ear.

And I smiled. It wasn’t forced, it wasn’t fake. I smiled.

Stepping forward, I wrapped my arms around my brother. He wasn’t of my litter, but he was my brother in every way that mattered.

“Yes,” I whispered. “I am.”

We held each other close until Archer cleared his throat. “Sorry to break this up, gents, but we’ve got a job to do.”

Sixty’s tail began to wag. “Please. Let me help. I’ll do anything you command, brother. Please, let me help. There’s been nothing to do since I got here.”

I cocked my head. “Why are you here, Sixty?”

He lowered his eyes. “I’ve... I’ve been selected.”

It was Archer who cocked his head now. I instinctively knew what my brother was referring to.

Sixty looked over to him like he was crazy. “I’ve been selected to become a breeder. The youngest in the history of the Kennel.” The Dog bowed his head as his tail wagged uncontrollably. “But with the excitement I’ve been rescheduled to start next week.”

I could just see Archer ready to destroy Sixty’s dreams. I shot him a glare that could kill. Archer would just as likely break the Dog’s brain.

“Congratulations, brother.” I took Sixty into a hug once more. “But you need to go. I am here on a mission. I can not be caught.”

Sixty grabbed hold of my hand and refused to let go. There was something more to the Dog now, something that hadn’t been there when I’d last seen him leaving the Kennel. He was more alive... more *real*. Like spending a year among the humans of the world had changed him. He was still the Dog I knew, but he’d grown.

“Please, brother,” he begged, “Please let me help you. I want to prove to you I’m worth it.”

“Worth what?” I asked.

He looked away. His tail was no longer wagging. Slowly, I watched his ears fall.

“Worth all the praise they’ve given me. I did good, brother. Really, I did. I saved a little girl. But it was...” He looked at me again. “It wasn’t what they think.”

I set a hand on his shoulder. It was odd to feel the fabric of his uniform between us. There had been nothing when we'd been growing up.

"You're a good Dog, Sixty. You're worth whatever they're giving you."

I heard a strangled noise come from Archer. "If the two of you are *quite* done?" he said, voice dripping sarcasm. "We need to find that Dog."

Sixty perked up again.

"Can I help? I was here the night you... arrived. I tried to see you."

Raising an eyebrow, I gave him a brief description of the misshapen Dog we were hunting.

Sixty's eyes narrowed. "Yes."

"See," Archer cut in, "I told you he couldn't help us..."

"Yes. I saw him," Sixty repeated.

Archer shut up.

"I saw him the night you were brought in. I was one of the Dogs sent to try to find you." He looked away. "I didn't search as hard as I was ordered. I saw him here at the Kennel."

"Where?"

Sixty's tail began to wag again. "Follow me, Brother."

Three Dogs left the toilet seconds later, no sight could be less interesting in the Kennel. Three anonymous Police Dogs walking down the hallway. Only if one looked closer would one notice that two of them were the finest Dogs of their generation, and the other was of no generation ever recorded.

We headed almost directly away from the breeding wing. It took us over ten minutes to walk to the far side of the building. We went in silence.

The medical wing was busy. Sixty led us up a set of stairs, then up another. We were among the senior offices.

"Here," he said, voice soft.

"Where?"

He pointed. "He came out of that office."

I spared a quick glance up and down the hallway. It was empty for the moment.

The office door was locked. A faceplate had once graced the door, it was gone now.

I turned the handle. It didn't move.

I turned harder.

One of the only sealed offices in the building, the lock snapped under my hands with just a touch of force. The three of us walked in a moment later. I wasn't sure if Sixty knew what I'd done or not.

The office was, in a word, *huge*. I hadn't the slightest where I was, but we were obviously at the top levels of the Kennel's management. And more tellingly, almost no one had been here in some time. A fine layer of dust and shed fur coated everything.

I took a deep breath. I could smell the misshapen Dog. He'd been here not so long ago.

Archer stepped past me. "Well bugger me," he whispered. Reaching down, he lifted one of the papers off the desk. It was addressed to Dr. Brophy.

I had to suppress a shiver.

"What happened to Dr. Brophy?" I asked no one in particular.

Sixty, surprisingly, was the one to answer.

"He was diagnosed with cancer eight months ago. It was highly aggressive. He was forced to retire from his position four months later."

I looked over to him as I cased the large room. With all the medical equipment in here it looked closer to a surgery than an office.

"How do you know all this?"

He shrugged. "The doctor appeared to take an interest in me almost immediately after my posting. He came to visit me several times."

I went cold.

"Did he give you any injections? Any treatment?"

Sixty looked me straight in the eye. "No. He was planning to begin a treatment shortly before he was forced to retire, but it was never started."

I let out a sigh.

There was so much in here we could search for years and not find any clues hidden among the endless nooks and crevices. I was ready to call off the search when the sounds of footsteps in the hallway made me freeze. Not again.

"Hide!" I hissed.

In seconds we were all out of sight.

The door to the office swung open. The Dog didn't even seem to notice the broken lock.

I had to blink. *This was a Dog?*

The creature that stepped in looked more like a parody of a Police Dog than an actual member of the force. His fur was rough and patchy, and his muscles were bloated and soft like water balloons. Even his very gait was unsteady, as if he didn't know how to walk.

He lurched into the room, the door left open behind him. I got a clear look at his face as he continued past me, making a straight line for a table full of instruments that lay next to the window.

His eyes were a perfect blue, even if that was the only perfect thing about him. There was a pain there, as if every breath cost him dearly. He was doing his duty, that I could see. He was a Dog, he was doing as he was commanded, even if his body was a mass of horrors.

One by one he began loading the instruments from the nearby table carefully into a box he'd

brought with him. I could see him checking off each one on a list.

And now that I looked, I could see countless other places in the room where the same thing had been done. As if Dr. Brophy's office was slowly being cleared away, one piece at a time.

The Dog finished his task in silence. In no more than half an hour he was gone, closing the door behind him.

"That wasn't the Dog I met," I whispered.

Archer let out a low growl. "That *thing* wasn't a Dog at all. It was an abomination."

I couldn't help but agree.

We didn't even have to discuss it. The three of us slipped out of the office and down the hall behind the Dog. He was as well trained as he was physically proper. He didn't even look back once.

If I'd wondered how such a misshapen creature had entered the Kennel without raising suspicion, it was quickly answered. He pulled a key from his uniform pocket and left by an unmarked door to the street. That left the three of us to scramble after him, leaving by more mundane means.

Out on the street, the Dog appeared to be gone, swallowed whole into the omnipresent London fog, but between Sixty and I we were able to pick up the direction of his scent. We were fortunate he kept off the main streets. Staying in the back alleys allowed us to follow him where the main thoroughfares would have destroyed his trail.

The Dog, it seemed, was not concerned with being followed. He made as straight a path as was possible to the west. Around us the buildings slowly grew more and more dilapidated.

"Have you ever been here?" I asked Archer.

The Dog shook his head. "Not really. It's just old factories and warehouses. Nothing we'd ever be interested in."

Sixty and I snorted in perfect time.

I turned to my brother. "You've changed." I smiled ever so softly. "You're not the Dog I knew."

He looked back at me, nodding. The slightest twitch of his ear, I could tell he was smiling too. "Neither are you, Brother. I... I like you better now."

Another hour and we were on the edge of the city. The sun was beginning to set. The outline of one final building lay dark before us. It was made of coal black bricks, and seemed to be hunching into the ground, trying to go unnoticed between the larger structures around it. The two story warehouse could have been anywhere, but it was where the Dog's trail led. We arrived just in time to watch him walk in the front door. We had just a split second to see three more Dogs standing inside, on guard and at the ready.

I looked over to Archer and Sixty. Archer had pulled his lighter out. He was nervously flicking it open and closed.

"We..." his voice was rough. "We should call the rest of the Pack. I'm, God, I'm in over my

head. We need help.”

I narrowed my eyes. “Not yet.”

I looked to Sixty.

“I’ll do as you command, Brother,” he said without pause.

I smiled and set my hand on his shoulder. “Thank you.”

Ducking low to the ground, I sprinted forward. My dark blue uniform blended into the shadows. I could feel Archer and Sixty at my back, whiskers tickling my tail.

Archer moved smoothly. His footsteps were quick and sure. He was well trained, but he was nothing to Sixty.

My brother was, if anything, better than I remembered. It had been a long, long time since I’d had the opportunity to work with anyone, Dog or otherwise, of his calibre.

The thought that he may have grown to become better than I... it no longer scared me.

We were pressed against the wall of the structure in seconds, hidden deep in the shadows. I could hear motion inside. Even the thick brick walls weren’t enough to cover the clicking footsteps of dozens of bodies.

I stopped.

Those were *not* the sounds of human footsteps.

Taking off around the side of the building, the three of us made for a nearby alley. We were rewarded with a ladder to the roof. In perfect coordination we climbed it, not making a sound. It was obvious this building had not been designed with security in mind. On the roof, we were able to look in through a set of windows to the open space below.

Dim incandescent lights barely glowed, but they threw more than enough thick yellowing light to show us what lay no more than a stone’s throw away.

Dogs – or what might have once began as Dogs.

My ears pulled back. Not in fear, but horror. The creatures that staggered back and forth beneath us were figments of nightmare. Misshapen and horrific, it was as if someone had taken all the finest features of the Canis Superior species and perverted them, placed them in a fun house mirror and laughed gleefully as they warped and contorted them ever and ever further.

The Dog we’d seen out on the street was nothing to what shuffled back and forth below. Their bodies were like plasticine that had been manipulated by a young child. Only the vaguest hints of the noble creatures they had once been remained.

The Dog we’d followed was among the most normal of the lot. His bulging, fluid filled muscles and unsteady gait was a welcome relief as compared to the motions of the others. Spastic ticks, whines of endless pain, and open, weeping sores were common place.

But there was something more.

All the Dogs below, no matter what their appearance, they all shared the same glass eyed stare. They licked at their noses with almost every breath. They were in pain, they were in many cases all but dying, but they continued blithely on, forward in an endless haze, not seeming to see anything about

them.

Our guide pushed through the crowd of mangy and bloodstained fur, making a straight line for a small hut that had been setup in the middle of the warehouse floor.

He knocked on the door and waited. After a moment I could hear it. The voice came from my deepest nightmares.

“Enter.”

Only that single word, but it sent a chill down my spine to the tip of my very tail. It was enough to make me want to scramble back to the Kennel, to give myself up just to keep far, far away from whatever *that* was.

I didn't know what had said the word, but it was not of this world.

It was *wrong*.

I looked over to Sixty and Archer. Their ears were pulled back. Both were on the edge of bolting.

Seconds later the Dog stumbled back out from within the hut. When he'd entered he'd been cognizant, aware. Now he stumbled forward, a glazed smile to his lips as he licked furiously at his nose.

I narrowed my eyes. “We need to know what's in there.”

“I'm... I'm not going.” It was Archer.

I looked over to the Dog. He was shaking. It was only then he truly looked his age. He was little more than an overgrown pup.

“This is our job,” I whispered, my voice soft. “We are Police Dogs. This is what we were trained for. We were born not merely to hand out traffic tickets and find lost children. We are to uphold the law. We are to root out corruption. Whatever is happening here is *wrong*. We have our duty.”

He looked at me, eyes wide. “Please don't make me go down there. I'll do anything, Jonathan. I'm not ready for this.”

I closed my eyes and reached out to set a hand on his shoulder. “I understand. This isn't your battle. Stay here, Archer. The full Police Dogs will handle this.”

I glanced to Sixty. I could see the fear in his eyes, the horror, but he would do his duty.

“Thank you, my brother,” I whispered to him.

He nodded. “It is our duty, Brother. And there is no one I'd rather be with than you.”

I smiled.

We dared not enter by the main doors. As slipshod as the Dogs down there may be, it was clear they had at least a proper guard.

Instead we searched for an entrance from the roof. Sixty gave me an odd look when I snapped the locks that held the door, but I offered him no explanation. I felt a glimmer of pride for him when he

accepted it as necessary to break the law.

Descending slowly into the building, we kept to the shadows. The structure was large, and there were approximately two dozen Dogs milling back and forth.

Save for those on guard duty, the Dogs seemed aimless. Many of them walked in circles, whispering gibberish to themselves. One sat motionless on the floor, staring at a blank wall. Yet another stood in the middle of the room, slowly and methodically pulling the fur from his chest, one hair at a time. Over and over again he whispered, "Not clean... not... not clean..."

Again a shiver ran down my spine.

What had happened here? We were Dogs. We were perfect.

Time and time again we were nearly discovered. Against anyone else avoiding detection would have been a trivial affair, but the random patterns taken by these Dogs made them next to impossible to avoid.

It took us over an hour to make our way slowly towards the junk-pile of a hut in the center of the warehouse. It was hastily constructed, little more than sheets of plywood leaned together.

A stench rose from those walls, bellowing out like a silent banshee. It smelled of death... or of decay. It smelled of *corruption* and things not human.

Slipping up behind, we kept to the shadows. I all but had to hold my breath. The stench was like a physical thing, like a living creature we could see, could *feel*. Like a force pushing us back from this unholy place.

I glanced over to Sixty. The skin around his eyes had gone grey.

I didn't dare touch the clapboard of the structure. I feared if I did *whatever* it was that filled the air would soil my fingers.

The two of us stopped dead when we heard the sound of someone coughing. It wasn't the dry, hard rasp of a mundane clearing of the throat, it was wet, slimy, misshapen. It sounded like it was trying to force out all that was still wholesome. Like the horror had won and was rejecting what good that remained.

I couldn't move.

The cough came again. It grew into a gag. A moment later we heard the sound of something wet splattering across the floor.

Edging forward, I lowered my eyes to peer through a slat in the wall. It was dark within. Like whoever was here didn't want to be seen. Or didn't want to see themselves.

The cough came again. I saw something shiver in the darkness.

A shadow twisted and wreathed. It didn't move like a human. It didn't move like a Dog.

I pulled back in revulsion, but couldn't look away.

A small square of light fell upon the form. I could see pale white human skin. It was broken by patches of brown and black fur.

"Medicine! Bring me my medicine!" it called. It was the same voice that had caused us all to quake on our feet before. Now, so much closer, we were paralysed.

I... I knew that voice.

The Dogs that had been wandering about the warehouse leapt to life as if they'd been shocked by an electric prod. Like they'd heard a dinner bell. As one they rushed towards the hut.

Cowering in the meagre shadow, Sixty and I could only hope the Dogs that raced about were too preoccupied to notice us.

Not one of them paid us the least attention, they all raced for the door of the hut. But only the first to make it entered.

Again through the slat I could see the Dog. He stood in the single room, back straight, voice clear. He almost looked like a proper Police Dog.

"What can I do, Master?"

"My medicine!" the voice called, almost breaking. "My medicine! Give it to me!"

The Dog turned in a quick, perfect motion. From atop a table it lifted a bottle of fluid. The contents was a dark, milky green. It sloshed and rolled as he tilted it. He lifted a needle in his other hand. It was clear it had been many times used, dirt and filth coating it.

Dipping the needle into the solution, he filled it carefully.

"Faster, hurry you mongrel!"

Two steps and the Dog stood before the quivering *thing*. "Are you ready, Master?"

It let out an incomprehensible scream.

The Dog jabbed the needle. Not a clean injection, it looked as though he was stabbing down to kill some ungodly beast.

The creature, the Master, howled in pain.

It howled like a Dog.

Turning, I grabbed Sixty by the collar and ran. I didn't care who saw us. I ran.

With my tail between my legs, with my heart pounding, I ran.

We made it back to the roof in seconds. I didn't need to grab Archer, the Dog was already running as if the fear of God had been put into him.

We sprinted from the warehouse, falling to all fours. We ran until our tongues hung out, until our lungs were burning, until the pads of our fingers bled, until we could run no more.

And then we kept going.

I had no clue where we were. All I knew was that we were *away*. Away from that *thing*, away from the horrors that masqueraded with our faces, that looked like Dogs. Away from the stench of corruption.

I fell to the soft grass. It was well past midnight and we were in some small urban park. I couldn't so much as raise my head.

"Brother," Sixty whispered between pants, "Brother, what was that?" Hesitantly, he reached out to touch me, to make sure I was still real.

I did one better. Grabbing him, I pulled Sixty close with one arm, Archer with the other. I needed to feel the warmth of their bodies, smell their scents.

I needed to know they were here. They were *proper*.

I panted and looked up at the night sky. The smog of London was too deep, I couldn't see the stars.

"The building can not be left to stand," I whispered. "Whatever is happening there. It is *wrong*."

Beside me, I felt Sixty nod. "Procedure, Brother," I heard him whisper, "Is to report this to the human forces. They will deal with it." He glanced over to me. "I can do that."

I could still feel Archer's heart beating fast. "No," he cut in. "That's not their job. That's *ours*. We are the Pack. We deal with problems that no others can. This is *ours*."

I glanced over to Archer. He looked like a small, scared pup.

"You think your *Dogs* can handle this?" I asked, fighting to keep my voice level. "These are *Dogs* that have been corrupted. Whatever this is, it is more powerful than us. No. This is something that must be reported to the Canine Police Authority. They will have a plan for this."

Archer sat up. I could see him shaking, but he stared at me. I knew that look. He'd been *trained* for this.

"No." There was a quality to his voice that brooked no argument. "This is Pack business. It must be dealt with. If you don't believe, come back with me. We will contact *her*. You know she will tell you it's true."

I looked over to Sixty. The Dog was cowed by Archer's sudden change in demeanour.

I narrowed my eyes. "Fine. We will speak with *her*. But she will know as I do this is a job for humans."

I expected we'd make all speed back to the Pack's lair, but Archer pulled us aside at the first phone box we ran across. I almost had to laugh. I hadn't even noticed them. A phone box, not a police box.

He closed the door between us and began dialling. I noticed the phone didn't request a coin.

His voice was low, too low for us to make out. He spoke quickly, but the conversation still took a good ten minutes.

It didn't end happily. Slamming the receiver down, he snapped the door open and walked back out to meet us.

He wouldn't look me in the eye.

"Come on," he said. "We need to get moving. I called an emergency meeting. We're going to be mobilizing as soon as we get back."

"You mean as soon as we're given our orders," I corrected him.

He was walking out ahead of us. He didn't look back.

“Sure.”

Sixty hadn't so much as heard of the Pack. He was more than surprised when we descended into the Underground, and he was wagging his tail like a pup when we began walking down the maintenance tunnels.

I tried to brief him on what was going on, as Archer was unusually tight-lipped. But every time I began I got a glare from the young Dog.

In the end I kept my peace. Sixty, being the proper Dog he was, asked no questions.

This was likely the best day of his life.

We descended the final staircase into the complex. I glanced over to Archer. The Dog's ears were twitching – the stress was getting to him. I felt a pang of pity for the Dog, he truly was in over his head. We all were. But he in particular was showing the signs.

I looked to Sixty. My brother saw them too. Perhaps it would be best if Archer was left behind when we returned to the warehouse with the proper support...

We stepped through the last doorway, into the changing room. I noticed Archer pick up something from a bench, and the door slammed closed behind us.

I turned.

There was the sound of rushing gas. I could smell the scent of something sharp on the air. It made me feel ill.

Looking back at Archer, the Dog was wearing a gas mask.

“I'm sorry... it's the only way.” His voice was muffled.

Acting in perfect synchronization, Sixty and I both sprang at him. We were too late. The draw of breath the action required sent us both stumbling to the floor.

“Brother... what's...” Sixty hit the ground beside me.

I refused to go down. On my hands and knees, I crawled forward. Nothing but sheer force of will kept me moving. “You traitorous...” I couldn't get out the words.

Archer back peddled as I inched towards him. I could see the fear in his eyes. “I'm sorry.”

Then in a single smooth motion he struck me hard between the ears.

There was nothing but blackness.

Then a burst of static cut across the world.

Opening my eyes, I tried to sit up.

I couldn't move.

“Sixty?” My tongue was thick in my mouth, my voice slurred.

I heard a groan from beside me. If I gave it the benefit of the doubt it almost sounded like

'Here'.

I let out a sigh. At least we were together.

Gathering what wits I could, I tried to sit up again. This time I was met with at least some small measure of success. My head was spinning, but I put it aside, aided by years of practice waking up after my treatments.

I was in my room. Well, that's what Archer called it. I just thought of it as the place I'd last slept.

There was even less in here than last time I'd seen it. The cot was gone. Now only I and Sixty were to be found.

I did notice the door was closed. And a small red light above the lock suggested we would have some difficulty leaving.

I pulled at my bonds. We were tied, both hand and foot behind our backs. But, if what I could see on Sixty were any indication, only rope.

I didn't even wait for Sixty to come to before leaning over and shredding his bonds with my teeth. My own followed soon after.

Rubbing at my wrists, I slowly made my way to the door. I'd been wrong when I thought there was nothing here. They'd seen fit to leave us a radio.

It appeared the Pack used the wireless to communicate. The radio was plugged into the wall, tuned to them.

"This is Baker and Charley," a voice whispered. "We're in position."

A moment later a familiar voice came over the air. "This... this is Archer. I'm ready."

A long pause. "Engaging."

The Dog's voice was quiet, almost calm, but I could hear the fear. I'd bet what little I had that the Pack was hand picked for actions like this. This was what they existed to do.

But they'd never once in their lives been called into action.

The radio was quiet for a moment. Just long enough for a pack of foolhardy Dogs to get themselves in trouble.

Then there was a scream.

"Watch out! They're faster than they look!"

"Get to the structure, the structure! They're protecting something..."

More screams.

Then a new sound came over the air, like nothing I'd ever heard before. It started out a scream, but ended a moan, a whimpering cry of pleasure that slowly faded away.

"Baker! Baker! What's--"

And again.

"Keep away from the ones with needles!" Archer yelled, his voice frantic. "They've taken down Baker and Fry and..."

There was a long pause.

The sounds of a struggle and Archer let out a scream. It chilled me to the bone.

“No! No, please... I...”

And there was nothing more.