

POLICE DOOG 2

HER MAJESTY'S FINEST



By wwwolf

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Chapter 12: Examination

August 18th 1995
12:15 Hours
The Kennel, London, England

“Forty-Seven.” The lady running front desk for the Final Exam never even looked up. He was nothing more to her than just another Dog. She hadn't heard a whisper of how the Dog had mysteriously been lost, then equally mysteriously reappeared again, years later. She never even took notice of how much older the Dog was than those she normally admitted. Or if she did she didn't say a word.

I watched, standing side by side with Dave, from the Handler's lounge. Dogs were examined twenty four hours a day, seven days a week. A slow and steady trickle. Handlers watched by closed circuit television as the Dogs they had spent years training were put forward for final judgement.

Handler Llyal stood calmly, leaning on the walking cane he'd picked up after our encounter with Brophy, seemingly at ease. I... I projected, as always, a mask of perfect and detached calm, hiding the heart that pounded frantically in my chest.

“Steady on, Johnathan,” Dave whispered, resting a hand on my shoulder, “He's out of our hands now. Everyone has to leave the nest sometime.”

I stood still as stone, the rise and fall of my chest nearly imperceptible. “He's not ready. He hasn't had enough training... If he fails the test they'll...”

Dave took a step closer. His form had become gaunt and frail as both the years and wounds had taken their toll on him, but he was still strong. “He's had the best two teachers in the Kennel.”

The fact he used the term *teacher* was not lost on me.

Forty-Seven made his way confidently down the hall, into the examination room. I remembered that hallway. That was where I'd stood after my own test, waiting at gunpoint for my result.

The last heavy steel door slammed closed behind him as Forty-Seven made his way into the

chamber. Around us dozens of screens leapt to life, giving us the same view the graders did. Wide angle shots, close ups of his face, screens displaying his heart rate, breathing, perspiration. It almost felt like we were inside his head.

I frowned slightly. I was his only living kin and not even I knew what went on inside that Dog's mind.

“Good afternoon, Forty-Seven,” the lead examiner said, his face hidden in shadow. “We will now begin your Final Examination to decide if you are fit to become a Police Dog.”

They say the most compelling story is one you have an investment in. Forty-Seven's most certainly was of importance to me. He moved slowly, cautiously. No matter how well we'd drilled him it was obvious he was not a Police Dog in the same sense that all the others that passed this way were.

Given a command he was forced to pause, to think about it. He did not leap into action as any other Dog would. He had not been raised from his first waking moment to do as he was told, he did not have the training drilled into him from the day he could walk. The hesitation was slight, almost imperceptible, but it was there.

He was ordered to answer a question and he did so, he was commanded to provide samples and he did, he was told to jump, he only did after thinking about it.

I remembered the questions the board asked, the tasks they made him perform. They were, in many ways, almost identical to those I had been put through so long ago. Breed compliance, physical testing, intelligence, police procedure, and Goddard's compliance.

In breed compliance he scored perfectly, just as I had. We were, in that respect if nothing else, the same Dog. *His* results were what had been used to generate my score so long ago. He was who I should have been. He was nearly perfect.

Physical testing was hardly worth noting. He may not have grown up with the same rigorous daily regimen I had, but he had been forced to maintain the same body as I. A perfect score.

Intelligence. I had picked up many human idiosyncrasies over the years. One from Richard made itself now known more than was proper. Forty-Seven was not just smart, he was a *genius*. He knew every aspect of the Service, far better than any other Dog, than any Dog *should*. He not only answered the board's questions, he over answered, going outside police procedure – and in some cases good sense. The Dog that should have scored a perfect one hundred received a failing mark.

And at last came the question of Goddard's Compliance. This was nothing, hardly worth mentioning. Forty-Seven was not me, he would not make the same mistake as I. He was, if anything, more tightly bound by the conventions than any other Dog.

“And what does the final axiom mean to you?” the examiner asked.

Forty-Seven paused for a long moment. He turned his head ever so slightly, looking directly towards the camera. “It means that no matter how heinous a crime, how foul a villain, no living creature has the right to kill another, to take their life away. We are Dogs. We were created, elevated by humans to a higher standard. It is my duty to show to all those around me that we can be more, can achieve more, create the compassionate society that we all strive for. No matter how much you may hate someone, there is always a chance they are not what they seem. The axiom states that I shall not kill. I will follow it not only because I must, but because it is the right thing to do.”

I could feel the sweat pooling between the pads of my toes as the board sat silently, tabulating Forty-Seven's final score.

"Eighty one point four two," the lead examiner said at last. "Congratulations, Forty-Seven, you are now a Police Dog."

There was no cheer, there was no standing ovation. Forty-Seven stood there, bowed his head ever so slightly, just as a proper Dog should, and began walking towards the door that opened in the far end of the chamber.

Beside me I heard Dave let out a breath I hadn't realized he'd been holding. "Well, that's that," he said, turning to leave. "One last Dog graduated to go on my record. And a damn fine one, if I do say so myself." He glanced back. "The third best I ever had."

I remained in the Handler's lounge for some time after that, men and women came and went around me. By this time I had become a common sight at The Kennel, none paid me any attention.

I watched the screens.

A dozen more Dogs entered to take their Final Exam. Only four of them became Police Dogs. The remaining eight were sent to disposal. A two thirds failure rate. And to a Dog they all accepted their fate without a word, not the slightest sign of fear.

But I knew what they felt inside.

"You have done well, Forty-Two."

It took me a long time to place that voice. No silhouette appeared reflected in the screen before me. It was as if I was talking to a ghost.

"I was wondering when you would return," I said, my voice soft. "It's been so long, I almost thought I'd dreamed you up."

The other Dog didn't chuckle. "You've already seen me once more than the average Police Dog," he said, voice soft. "And consider yourself most fortunate. Those who come to know us rarely find the experience as beneficial as you." There was a long pause. "Your friend Vincent Brophy still tries daily to escape us."

Once again I debated asking where it was the man was kept, but I decided I didn't want to know the answer.

"Will you test him as you did me," I asked instead, "So long ago in the wood?"

There was the softest rustle beside me as his long grey fur moved. "All Dogs are tested," he said, "It begins when we are born, and ends when we meet whatever there is to find in the life beyond. As for Forty-Seven... He has much potential, perhaps even more than you. It would be such a shame if he were never to make it to his posting, to disappear on the highways, to once again slip into the spaces between paperwork."

I never glanced up from the screen. Another Dog had begun his Final Exam. It did not look promising.

"He might just like that," I said. "You should ask him."

The softest of chuckles came back. “No, Forty-Two, that's not our way. We do not *ask* Dogs to join our ranks. That's not the way it is done.” He paused, watching with me as the Dog below slipped up, all but ensuring his failure. “And that is where you disappointed us, Forty-Two. You never *took the initiative*. You would have made a good member of the Highway Patrol.”

I wanted to track Forty-Seven down, to congratulate him, but that was not the way. He was a Police Dog now, he had his duty. And with a final grade like that he likely had a long walk ahead of him. I wondered if he'd be given a posting to the north... perhaps somewhere near the Scottish border.

Instead I made my way to the car park located in The Kennel's sub-basement. A moment later I was astride my bike. It roared to life between my legs.

Goosing the throttle, I spun it around and made for the exit. From just the corner of my eye I could make out a Dog exiting from an unmarked maintenance hallway. He was all but invisible, just another Dog in a building with thousands like him.

He smiled at me and waved. Some Dogs just couldn't keep in character.

It took me six hours of hard riding to make it home. I grinned under my helmet. I no longer thought of it as anything else. West Woodburn was my home, and I'd been away far too long.

The moon was up by the time I coasted my bike to a stop next to the church. My box was long gone and had never been replaced. There sat an empty spot beside the road where it had once stood.

They'd offered to send me up a brand new one, top of the line. I'd refused.

Cutting the engine, I pulled off my helmet, taking a deep breath of the country air. There was not a sound around us but the calm night breeze.

Pulling the pack from my back, I walked across Dere street, after first checking both ways, and pushed open the old, rusty gate to the graveyard. There were graves here that dated back to the late seventeenth century. The one that interested me was more recent.

Far in the back, in a secluded corner, sat a prim and neat grave. No headstone graced it. As far as I knew Sixty was the only Dog in history to have received a proper funeral. He lay not a stone's throw from the final resting place of my own namesake.

“Good evening, Brother.” I knelt beside his grave. “I have good news.” Reaching down, I ran the pads of my fingers across the thick emerald grass that sprang from him. “We have a family.”

I walked the rest of the way to the Hyett farm. It wasn't far, and I enjoyed the stroll. The River Read bubbled away merrily beside me. There was a scent on the air that hadn't been here when I'd first been assigned to West Woodburn.

The lights of the farmhouse beckoned me onwards as I took the final steps. From behind the heavy wooden door I could hear not only the sounds of Richard, Marry, and Trevor, but also those of my own children, sons and daughters.

I'd sent them all up here the moment they could be weaned, to learn the ways of the world and to grow up as all good creatures should.

Chapter 13: Closure

June 12th 1988
06:00 Hours
London, England

The early morning London fog swirled thick around us as we stepped out onto the worn cobblestone street. Dozens of Dogs, all of them broken in some way, a human, and one creature that fit none of the categories that had ever been created.

Handler Llyal let out a soft grunt of pain with every step despite the care and attention I gave him, carrying his broken body in my arms.

I didn't even bother to try and act surprised when a form materialized out of the fog, standing in the middle of the street before us. He wore a different uniform than a normal Police Dog, and his thick grey, sheepdog coat made him look like a cloud himself.

"Congratulations, Forty-Two," he said. I stepped up to him, beaten, bleeding, worn, and run to within an inch of my life. He gave me nothing more than a small nod. "I see you have been successful. We are ready to take him into custody."

I had to hold back a growl. "Vincent Brophy will be handed over to the proper authorities. He will face a court of justice for his crimes, answer to what he did to us Dogs."

The Highway Patrol officer cocked his head ever so slightly. I could only see the barest glimmer of his eyes behind the thick coat that obscured his face.

"*We* are the proper authorities. Did you think, Forty-Two, that the Service has survived as long as it has without a single misstep because of what the *humans* have done?" He glanced over to Handler Llyal. The man's face was pale and gaunt, though from the sight of this Dog or his wounds I couldn't say. "If you hand a human to the human authorities he shall receive human justice. A Dog to the Dogs and he shall receive the judgement of the pack. Mr. Brophy is neither. Remand him to us and I can assure you he shall pay for his crimes."

I looked back to where Vincent Brophy stood behind us. His breathing was laboured, his back

hunched, body wrapped in chains. Both Frankenstein and his monster waited for judgement.

I stepped aside.

The Patrol Officer strode forward, whips of fog clinging to him like a cloak. Reaching down, he took Brophy's leash.

"Hello again, old friend," the Dog whispered, a flash of fang showing. "I promised you we'd meet again one day."

Turning, the two disappeared into the consuming fog. In moments there was nothing, not even the rattle of Brophy's chains.

There was some confusion on what to do next. Archer was adamant that something be done with the Dogs we'd rescued. The mere *idea* that they might set paw in the pack house sent him into conniptions.

At long last we came to a compromise. The compromise was that everyone would do as I told them, and no one would complain.

The Dogs were escorted to the pack house by the few remaining members of the Pack. Those who were fit to perform some form of work would be processed. Those who were not would be made comfortable.

Archer and I made our way to the nearest hospital. We had Handler Llyal to attend to.

It was only after all the other Dogs had left that Llyal spoke. "Three," he whispered, voice hoarse, on the edge of breaking. "That Dog... it was Number Three..."

He didn't say anything more.

Getting him into A&E was a simple enough matter. One human and two Dogs, all of us coated in blood and other less savoury fluids. We kicked up quite the fuss walking in the front doors.

It was two days before Handler Llyal woke again, but thankfully that was primarily due to exhaustion.

They Hyatt's, on the other hand, were all down in London that same afternoon. They'd been waiting on my call.

It was rather convenient, all said and done, that there was no longer an order out for my capture. It seemed, as I'd been told, that it was all a misunderstanding. The events of the last few days had never occurred – at least according to the records at The Kennel.

I only saw the papers once, but I did notice the seal that graced them. My benefactor had stepped in to clear my name.

"So that's that, then, is it Johnathan?" Richard asked. The four of us were sitting at a small patio table of a greasy spoon restaurant. "That hardly seems like much of an ending. You're still just a Police Dog, and you haven't even been reassigned back up to West Woodburn again?"

I took a small sip of my tea, fighting not to make a face. Someday I'd learn not to order it. "I

wouldn't say that, Sir..." I paused, a tight smile slipping to my lips, "Richard. My name is cleared, and all is once again right with the world." I laid a finger alongside my nose. I'd only told them *some* parts of the story. "And can you keep a secret?"

He raised an eyebrow, leaning in towards me. "Of course."

I grinned. "So can I. But someday I'll tell you the rest of the tail."

I took another sip of my tea. On the street in front of us a Police Dog passed by, on his rounds. I watched as a young girl tugged at his sleeve.

She was lost, scared, and alone, but she had found the Dog. She was safe now.

Author's Note



And here we are one more time, eh? First, something to set the [mood](#).

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 have some of the worst 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 that 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...

So, now we've reached the end. This story is interesting as it is the shortest 'novel length' work that I've yet posted. At hardly over 60,000 words it's hardly half the length of *The Hunters*! Not that this is a bad thing, but I do feel a touch of remorse that many of the characters to appear (and return) in this story didn't get even a fraction of the development I was hoping to give them. Archer and Sixty in particular were victims of this.

I rather like Archer as a character, a Dog that doesn't have the same history and *culture* to grow from that his fellow Dogs do, he's a beautifully neurotic pup who just happens to find a big new Dog to attach himself to. The fact he just happens to express more than a fully platonic interest in Jonathan is completely coincidental, I assure you...

Sixty. Poor Sixty. In many ways he is even more the perfect Dog than Forty-Two. He did everything right, overcame obstacles that should have been impossible, proving beyond a shadow of a doubt just what Dogs are truly capable of and was rewarded with nothing but death. There's no regeneration in this world, and dead is dead. Writing him out of the story was surprisingly difficult to do.

In any event, I'm not as happy with this book as I was with the original *Police Dog*. Friday can attest to my pessimism when I sent him the first chapter, but his endless optimism and encouragement helped me get to the point where I was able to move on.

Even with his help I'm not nearly as happy with the ending of this book as I was the original. It does wrap things up nicely, but I do wish there was *more*.

In any event, Jonathan's story is over for now, but that doesn't mean it over for good. Someday I see the Dog walking between the roots of Big Ben and the halls of power that find their home there.

Thank you for reading, commenting, and faving. It may sound cliché but your feedback makes a world of difference.

wwwolf

Editor's Note



I have been bugging wwwolf for a long time to get a good editor, as I believed a second set of eyes was all his writing needed to bring it up well past the standard of most published works today. Being a charmer, he responded by asking me to edit *Police Dog 2: Her Majesty's Finest*. Being a sucker for flattery, as well as being eager to help work with someone whose writing I admire, I agreed.

Most of the work of editing PD2: HMF has been rather simple, and in fact, quite fun. wwwolf has made it an enjoyable experience, with quite a bit of back and forth on various bits of my commentary. His ability to make what could have been an extremely tedious task quite amusing and engaging was a wonderful experience for me. Adding onto how much I learned about writing by carefully parsing wwwolf's, I was pleasantly surprised by how much I gained from doing what I thought would be a rather selfless task. I extend many thanks for that!

Moving from wwwolf to the book itself, PD2: HMF is an interesting book. A direct sequel to PD, the motivation for the two works is very different. The first book's final scene was the first part of it conceived, and the raw drama and perfect climax of the scene makes that obvious. For PD2, the ending wasn't even completed for most of the time I was working on it. The genesis of the two books is completely different in such an odd way, for two books in the same series, featuring the same character. The biggest challenge I had in editing PD2 was making sure at all times that what I was reading was staying true to the original while also allowing it room to be its own thing. I was constantly keeping track of continuity, tone, and characters as well, making sure that they stayed true across the series, and catching times they didn't – and in those times, helping wwwolf brainstorm workarounds. These conflicts occurred rarely but were still the largest challenge I had. Well, not quite. The largest challenge I had was letting go of trying to hyphenate everything.

The result of this process was the book you've just read. I hope that you as a reader have enjoyed reading it as much as I've enjoyed working on it. I'm exceptionally honored that I was given the opportunity to help work on something so great. I hope you've enjoyed becoming Jonathan's friend, as well as journeying into a world where man's best friend is Man's Best Friend – I know I have.

-Friday