

## RED FOX/BLACK DOG

By DAVID T. CAVELL.

### CH. 1.

Elmer froze his tail horizontal and straight as a bar of iron. Nose stretched, ears flat against his solid skull. Yellow eyes transfixed on something unseen ahead of him. His black, coarse coat was backcombed up along his spine, one front paw raised. I stopped a couple of feet behind him and held my breath, heart pumping and adrenalin racing through my body. Elmer let out a low whining growl, which rumbled up from his chest and rolled over his curled lips, and then he started trembling.

‘What’s up boy?’ I whispered. In response he flicked his ears and remained concentrated on something, but what? I swept the torch beam across the end of the garden picking out a wooden shed, fence, bushes and a compost heap about three feet high, covered in fresh grass cuttings and leaves. Nothing to cause such a reaction; it must be a hedgehog or cat.

‘Come on, find him,’ I commanded Elmer. Not wanting to disobey he slowly backed towards me, not taking his eyes away from the shed and compost heap.

‘Has he found something?’ Terry asked. He had followed us to the end of this garden in Belvedere, South London.

‘Not sure! I’ve never seen him like this before.’ I was puzzled. Three months out of D.T.E. (Dog Training Establishment) and I thought I knew

Elmer.

‘There’s nothing there, me and the others have searched it several times tonight,’ Terry informed me.

‘Okay. Let’s go. Come Elmer!’ Elmer lay down, still facing the shed and whining quietly.

‘Elmer, come!’ No response. ‘We’d better have another look, Terry. He’s not budging till we do.’

‘Okay, I’ll get a fork.’ Terry returned a minute later with a garden fork and together we checked the shed, empty. I started pulling the compost heap apart while Terry stood back to observe without blocking Elmer’s view, just in case, and to give me room to work.

‘Must be a cuppa at least, for all this,’ Terry said.

A glint of metal in the heap caught my eye and I bent down, removing compost from around it.

‘Here Terry, I think I’ve found something!’ I uncovered a knife with a serrated blood-stained blade, then a hand clutching it, the second hand grasping the first.

‘Terry, help me out.’

Between us we uncovered the arms, both wrists slashed and bleeding. Pulling the rotting vegetation away we exposed the old man’s head and shoulders. His neck was hacked open across his Adam’s apple, blood congealing on his throat. He was lying on his back with a strangely serene expression on his face.

‘Bloody hell, I must have walked right over him!’ Terry exclaimed.

I checked his pulse, my fingers on his carotid artery, and to my surprise I felt a faint tremor.

‘He’s still alive! Quick, help me get him out of here.’

Terry and I pulled him out into the garden and passed him over to the ambulance crew who had been called by the worried relatives when they realised we had found the old man.

Over the promised cuppa Terry congratulated Elmer by feeding him biscuits and pulling his ears. Elmer would put up with a lot, providing food was available. Dog like handler they say.

‘I’ve just applied to be a dog handler and what a terrific example to live up to.’

‘Oh I don’t know. Bit of luck really.’

‘Bollocks! That dog of yours is fantastic,’ Terry enthused.

Later, on that morning of the 20<sup>th</sup> August 1974, I pondered on the events at 95 Axminster Crescent, Belvedere. Elmer had taught me a lesson; do not underestimate him. Even if you think you know better, a dog’s instinct is a powerful argument to make one think again.

When we’d arrived Terry had met us in the street filled with police cars and police officers.

‘Thanks for coming, Dave. We’ve been looking for him all over but no sign.’

‘How long has he been missing?’ I asked the obvious question.

‘About eight hours.’

‘Anyone looked in the back garden yet?’

‘All of us.’ Seeing my eyebrows lift Terry went on: ‘I know, not much chance but just put on a show. So they know we’ve tried everything,’ he almost pleaded.

Waste of time, I thought, however we were here now and Elmer needed to stretch his legs.

‘Okay!’ I said opening the van and cage door, allowing Elmer to leap out squealing with excitement. Terry smiled but then stepped back, surprised at the dog’s enthusiastic entrance.

‘Don’t worry, he just enjoys the job,’ I told Terry.

The three of us walked through the house and into a spacious conservatory looking out on to a large garden. All the family were present including the missing man’s son who came over to me and asked:

‘Can you keep your dog away from me runner beans officer? It’s a good crop this year.’

‘Do my best,’ I answered, thinking what a strange time to be worrying about his beans. In the garden I let Elmer go with the instructions to ‘Find him.’ Elmer must have heard the son’s request because the first thing he did was go to the runner beans and cock his leg.

‘You little bastard!’ I half whispered to him. He looked over his shoulder at me and I swear he winked and then went off into the garden. You can see why I didn’t have much faith in him.

## Ch. 9.

Doctors tend to have a fierce reputation and most people are too in awe of them to do much but agree with everything they say. Not Marika.

She needed ultra-violet treatment on her legs to reduce the psoriasis and her consultant at Orpington hospital, Mr Salman, was a stern

man feared by staff and patients alike.

But she faced him with the same fire that had withered others in the past when he arrived at the foot of her bed on morning rounds, accompanied by a clutch of junior housemen.

‘How are you today Mrs. Cavell?’ he enquired while reading her notes.

‘Not sure doctor, my legs seem to have gone very dark brown and I can’t feel them.’ He looked up at her with surprise and asked one of the housemen to touch her leg.

‘Can you feel anything?’ he asked and Marika shook her head. Puzzled he lifted the covers away and said:

‘H’mmm, they do look overdone. We’ll have to reduce the dosage but I am surprised you have no feeling in them, never happened before.’

‘Well it has now,’ Marika replied.

‘Do you always wear your slippers in bed?’ Mr. Salman asked.

‘No, but it’s cold today.’

‘Are you telling me you can feel your feet but not your legs?’ he asked.

‘Yes that’s right.’

‘Can I remove your slippers and examine your feet?’ She nodded and he lifted one of her legs to remove the slipper.

The slipper fell off and her leg detached itself from her body. Mr. Salman stepped back holding the leg, a look of shocked horror on his face. The housemen gasped, stepping back from him and the bed.

Silence, for a minute while the truth dawned and then Marika unfolded her legs from under her and asked for the medical sandbag back from the bemused consultant. She smiled sweetly at him while the other patients struggled to stifle their giggles. The hospital staff were hushed, awaiting the explosion that was sure to come from such a serious man but he stepped forward, chuckled and said:

‘In all my time madam, no-one has done this to me. Thank you for cheering our day up. By the way, did I see you were once a circus acrobat?’

‘Yes sir and I’m happy that you are now happy. You always look so miserable.’

‘Do I? I never realised.’

From that day on Mr. Salman always entered Marika’s ward with a smile.

During this period, 1968 to 1972, work alternated from uniform beat duties, walking or cycling to driving the panda cars or acting as radio operator on the area car, originally a black ‘S’ type Jaguar with spotlights on the leading edge of the roof. Because of the resemblance to mouse ears, they became commonly known as Mickey Mouse lights and had a blue lamp behind them. Later we drove a dark blue Rover 3500, a very nice car apart from the ‘Met’ trying to save money using cheap brake fluid.

One afternoon I was out with Fred Smith driving when we got a call to a robbery in progress. With lights and siren on, Fred gunned her along the Orpington bypass, a dual carriageway. Reaching 110mph we hurtled towards the traffic light-controlled junction with Orpington High

Street. Two cars were waiting at the red light on the nearside and one on the offside as we approached. They did not seem to hear us and Fred applied the brakes.

‘Hang on Dave, we’ve no brakes,’ Fred said calmly.

‘Don’t take the piss,’ I laughed.

‘Look down if you don’t believe me.’ Fred nodded towards the pedals. I looked and saw his foot on the brake pedal was down to the floor and the car was still travelling flat out. My heart jumped and I fought to stay as calm as Fred.

‘Better stick your arm out the window and signal to them,’ Fred smiled.

‘Oh yes and get my bloody arm ripped off!’ I replied. With sirens and flashing lights we bore down on the stationary cars, braced for the impact. Slowly, agonisingly slowly the offside car drifted to the front of the other cars and turned towards the nearside. We hurtled through the gap with no more than a couple of inches to spare. As we went across the junction Fred, as cool as a cucumber, turned to me grinned and said:

‘If he knew we hadn’t any brakes, I bet he’d have moved a bit quicker.’

It took the best part of a mile for Fred to stop the runaway car. Later it was proved the inferior brake fluid boiled at high speed and became useless. Fred emigrated to New Zealand shortly after this incident and as far as I know is still there driving cars - with the proper fluids, I hope.

I spent more and more time in plain clothes on crime patrols and assisting the CID. One day a detective sergeant, whose name I can’t

remember but known to all as 'Dad', because it was his way of greeting everyone, took me out to investigate a burglary.

We arrived at a large manor house in Chelsfield, parked in the drive and he knocked on the imposing oak door. An elderly gentleman opened it and he reminded me of a Victorian squire.

'Allo Dad, 'ad a bit of trouble then?' the DS asked.

'Err; yes we seem to have been burgled,' the gent replied.

'Right, let's see where the toe-rags got in,' the DS said, pushing past the old gent. I followed and we went through into a large drawing room with casement windows opening on to a large garden. The frame of one window had been jemmied by the lock.

'You the butler?' the DS asked.

'No I am Lord Chelsfield '(not his real name)

'Righto Dad, 'ow do yer spell it?' He nodded at me and I wrote the name in my notebook. An elderly lady appeared in the doorway and enquired as to whether we've arrested anyone.

'Leave it out Mum, bit soon innit?' the DS smiled at her.

'Oh this is my wife, Lady Chelsfield,' the Lord informed us but it didn't impress our DS.

'Got the kettle on then Mum?' he asked and before long we had a nice cup of tea and they liked him!

Marika got a temporary job as a filing clerk in the local Unemployment Office, in The Walnuts car park, just off Orpington High Street. She did not stay long. Being open and frank with her opinions did not go down well in the world of office politics and one particular incident convinced her to leave.

A well known gypsy woman, Kitty Dove, came in to demand money. Now Kitty was the Matriarch of the tribe living in caravans at Crittals Corner on the A20 and she ruled them like a modern day Bodiacea. A large, muscular lady with a son built like the proverbial brick shit house to back her up, not many faced up to her.

The nervous man on the counter informed her she was not entitled to any benefits, then shrank away as Kitty stood up, beat the counter with her fists and screamed expletives at the poor man. Several staff, including Marika, heard the commotion and came out to support the now terrified man. Seeing she was outnumbered, Kitty swore and threatened to return with her son.

Marika, surprised at the fear induced by one woman, asked why? The frightened man said,

‘They’re gypsies and I know they do terrible things to anyone who upsets them.’

‘Don’t be silly, she’s only a woman,’ Marika laughed. One of the women joined in:

‘She’s not a normal woman. I’ve seen her beat up a man in here.’

‘Okay, if she comes back I’ll speak to her,’ Marika offered but they refused on the grounds she was not qualified to deal with the public. Marika found this odd but agreed to stay away from the counter.

An hour later Kitty returned, this time armed with a long handled woodman’s axe. She burst in and chopped the counter in two. The terrified staff gave her thirty pounds when she threatened to cut them up as well. Marika was disgusted at this weak display by the staff and left.

In 1971, I believe in May, we were woken on a Saturday morning by a commotion downstairs. Throwing on some clothes, Marika and I rushed down to the living room to be confronted with Hede and Piroška playing with a small grey rabbit.

‘Piroška bought him,’ Hede announced with a grin. Piroška looked a little sheepish and picked up the rabbit. Cuddling him, she told us:

‘It’s alright mummy, I have bought him with my pocket money.’ This we found hard to believe for, at the age of five, we did not give her much apart from enough to buy a few sweets. It transpired Piroška had saved her birthday money from April and instead of buying sweets had paid the pet shop weekly until, finally, she’d paid them off and they allowed her to bring the rabbit home. Why the pet shop owner did not question such a young child as to how her parents allowed this, we do not know. Possibly, knowing Piroška well, they did ask and she told them we knew.

Marika, an animal lover, accepted the new addition into our house and Kiray, by now a large German Shepherd dog, adopted it as his own puppy. We could not separate them and Henrietta began to believe she was a dog, not a rabbit. A hutch was purchased but lasted one day until Henrietta kicked the back out and re-joined her foster mum, Kiray.

A few months later, Henrietta went visiting next door and a couple of weeks later when next-door’s doe gave birth to a litter of grey bunnies, Henrietta transformed into Harold! He had his own collar and lead and food bowl, kept next to Kiray’s of course. Many times we watched as Kiray sat down and allowed Harold to eat his food and nibble on his bones,

I cannot think of any other meat-eating rabbits, so Harold was unique.

After eating, Kiray washed Harold all over and then lay down with Harold snug between his front paws and in this way they slept.

It was in 1972 I first applied to become a dog handler, along with my colleague Barry. Due to our excellent record of crime arrests we made it through to the interview at the Dog Training Establishment, (referred to by all as DTE), in Layhams Road, New Addington, north of Biggin Hill. Barry went on to do his weeks kennel duty and successfully moved on to join the section.

During this same year I received a radio message whilst driving a Morris Minor Panda car to follow a plane! Prior to this I had watched a small aircraft performing acrobatics in the clear blue sky above the St Pauls Cray estate, marvelling at the pilot's skill. Not everyone shared my opinion and a number of people had reported the pilot for dangerous flying over a residential area.

'Get his number 174,' the radio voice crackled.

'Batman to Robin put out the bat wings, kerpooow!' I answered.

'Very funny, now get on with it,' was the response.

I drove around with my head out of the window looking skywards attempting to get the twisting plane's number. Must have looked a real twit. Twenty minutes of this and with a crick in my neck I gave up and went to the petrol station at Crittalls Corner to fill up. The attendant whistled as he filled the tank and I could not resist asking him,

'I bet you don't know what I'm supposed to be doing right now?'

‘Probably not and it don’t interest me guv.’ His laconic response did not deter me.

‘I’m following a plane and trying to get his number.’

‘Really.’ He lifted an eyebrow in bored disbelief. No sooner had he spoken than with a roar the plane appeared at rooftop level coming from the estate towards us. We both thought it would hit the garage canopy and ducked, the attendant dropping the fuel pump and sending a gallon or so of petrol over the forecourt. We watched it disappear towards Ruxley Corner and I turned to the shocked man.

‘That’s him, did you get his number?’ I left him shaking his head at the antics we got up to and hosing away the spilled petrol.

No sooner had I left the garage than the radio crackled into life.

‘Plane crash, Chalkpits Caravan Site. All units attend if possible.’

‘174 on way,’ I responded and drove towards Ruxley and the caravan site, wondering what scenes of carnage awaited me. Obviously it was the same plane involved which probably meant at least one fatality but if it had hit the caravans, who knows?

Heart pumping, I entered the site and to my relief saw the tail of the burning plane sticking up in the middle of a heavily grassed field at the rear of the caravan site. He’d missed all of them and my relief was palpable. Drawing near I noticed an ambulance by the wreckage and an ambulance attendant some thirty feet from the plane in the long grass wielding a fire extinguisher. Leaving my car I strolled over,

‘What you got there mate?’ I asked. Nonchalantly he replied,

‘The pilot or what’s left of him.’ I looked down upon a smouldering broken body, the top of his head missing.

‘Where’s his head?’ I asked.

‘Forgot to duck and left it in the cockpit.’ The attendant grinned and I smiled.

‘He’ll remember that next time, won’t he?’ I said.

This may sound cruel and disrespectful but all members of the emergency services will tell you that, to get on with the job, you must detach yourself and joke about what you are dealing with, or we’d crack up and get nothing done.

We wrapped the body in a plastic sheet and loaded him into the ambulance. The attendant asked me to go with them and the duty sergeant agreed, informing me as first police officer on scene it was my job. It was one job I certainly didn’t need. On the way across the bumpy field the body started to roll off the bench and to stop it the attendant put his boots on it and told me to do the same. Doing so was similar to putting your feet into a blancmange; every bone in his body had compacted. What with him wobbling around and the stench of aviation fuel and burnt human flesh, it was a relief to get to Queen Mary’s Hospital, Sidcup.

The staff nurse on casualty came out to view our delivery. Opening the doors she was met with the aforementioned stench and sight which sent her rushing to the lavatory. Recovered slightly she emerged and asked us to put the body in the mortuary, which we did, then spent the next hour making hot tea for her and calming her down. She told me she had never seen such a mutilated body before and apologised for her conduct. I didn’t like to tell her that neither the ambulance attendant nor I had seen

anything so gruesome before either.

On patrol one afternoon in St Mary Cray High Street, driving a Panda car, I spotted an old car with two young men in it. Seeing me, the driver accelerated away, skidding right into Star Lane. I followed, wondering what they'd been up to, must be something naughty.

I called in the number of the car on my radio and it came back as not stolen. Must have nicked something, I thought. The car was now going about sixty along a narrow lane towards Crockenhill. Over a rise a cattleman walking behind two bullocks came into view. He had his back to us and there was no room for the car to pass. I sounded my horn continuously but the man must have been deaf, for he did not even turn his head.

Slowing down, I could only watch as the young men sped towards him and tensed myself for the impending crash. But the man looked round at the last minute and dived into the hedge. Before I could relax the car smashed in-between the two bullocks, sending them somersaulting into the air. The vehicle, now half its original width, also flew into the air, landed on all four wheels and continued for another 100 yards before expiring in a ditch.

At the station the young men admitted they had stolen a road fund licence and forged the car's number on to it. All that to avoid paying road tax! Incredible! Fortunately the two bullocks were made of stern stuff and survived unscathed, apart from a few scratches,. The cattleman suffered mild shock but did not need any treatment, luckily for the two men.

At Bromley Magistrates Court later, I stood in the witness

box to give the facts to Mrs Bar, Chair of the Bench. She smiled at me when I started and knowing her wicked sense of humour, I took great care in pronouncing my words. Getting to the crux of the prosecution I said in a loud voice:

‘The car approached the cattleman and two bullocks at great speed. The man on seeing the car dived into the hedge but the two—bullocks—kept walking.’ By now Mrs. Bar was leaning forward watching me intently. I went on.

‘The car attempted to pass between the two—bullocks but struck them and the car and both BOLLOCKS flew into the air.’

Realising I’d literally ‘dropped a bollock’, I went very red and, looking up from my notes, saw Mrs. Bar, eyes bulging with tears streaming down her face and shoulders heaving as she tried to control herself. As for the rest of the court, they did not have such restraint and guffaws echoed round the room. The bench retired to consider the punishment and the local reporter handed me a ditty about bullocks and bollocks he’d composed. When the Bench returned I was still chuckling at his dirty ditty.

In 1972 I finally received notification that I was to be accepted into the dog section subject to a home visit by two dog sergeants who would assess the suitability of our house, family and Kiray. If acceptable, a police puppy may be allocated to me.

Sergeant Bert and Station Sergeant Arthur of the Dog training Establishment arrived at our house one morning. Arthur, a red-faced West Country man who could have been a farmer if it wasn’t for the uniform, explained they had come to check out our dog for bad habits. Bert, a very tall man without a hair on

his body and a craggy face that would make a prizefighter proud, nodded in agreement and said:

‘Yeh, that’s right, we can’t have our pups picking up wrong stuff from untrained pets.’

‘Okay, let’s go out the back and I’ll show you Kiray.’ They followed me into the back garden where Kiray was enjoying the morning sunshine. On seeing us he strolled over, tail wagging and sniffed the stranger’s crotches, as you do.

‘Is he trained at all?’ Arthur asked, pushing Kiray’s nose away from his balls.

‘Do you want me to show you?’ I countered.

They both nodded. I picked up a wooden dumbbell used for teaching a dog to retrieve and called Kiray to heel.

‘Gyere ide.’ Kiray immediately came round me and sat by my left side. I threw the toy several feet into the garden. Kiray tensed.

‘Marayd, marayd!’ I commanded and he remained sitting at my side. After a few seconds I gave the command to fetch, hozd! He shot up the garden, picked up the dumbbell and returned, sitting in front of me and offering it up to me. I took it and praised him.

‘Naygon Yol.’ Calling him to heel, he responded immediately, whirling round my legs and sitting by my left side.

‘How’s that?’ I asked the two men. Arthur stroked his chin, a frown on his face. Bert scratched and rubbed his baldhead.

After a moment or two Arthur looked at Kiray and me quizzically and turning to Bert said...

‘Did you understand any of that?’

‘Not a bloody word.’

Bert stared intently at me and in a quiet voice said...

‘Very impressive but how do we know you told him to do all that?’

I decided not to tell them about Harold the rabbit.

My first experience of the DTE (Dog Training Establishment) was slightly less exciting than I had imagined. My home visit had been accepted after Arthur and Bert met Marika and realised she was Hungarian so I set off for a week designed to assess my capability and rapport with large dogs. As I’d lived with dogs for most of my life, this posed no problems for me.

My duties as described by Ted and Jock, the two senior kennel men, were to walk the dogs on the ‘patch’ first thing in the morning, taking some thirty dogs out between the three of us. Not all at once but one at a time, working our way round the pound area. Most of these dogs were working police dogs in the kennels either due to annual leave of their handlers, re-allocations, or because they were injured and recovering. A separate isolation block contained sick dogs and those that could go out, for example non-contagious infections, were exercised after the fit dogs.

Following this came ‘mucking out’, which is precisely as described. Shovels, brooms and hoses, along with Wellington boots and dark blue overalls were the order of the day. Survive the first part of the morning and you became welcome in the kennel man’s office for bacon sandwiches and mugs of steaming tea. Ted and Jock, both serving police officers, swapped stories and anecdotes with us, if they thought you were up to the job. Fortunately I seemed to fit into this category.

After our tea break it was off to assist the various courses

operating in the grounds, and this was where it could get a bit dramatic. I was volunteered to act as a criminal hiding behind a rickety wood and wire fence in a thicket bordering the north side of the lower field. Wearing an old police raincoat over my overalls, I crouched down behind the fence and waited for the dogs, one at a time, to find me. This was an advanced course due to pass out within the next week, so the dogs should be spot on. It should have been straight forward: the handler orders the dog to 'Find him!' and the dog, using air scent, quarters the ground indicated by the handler until he picks up a scent. The dog will latch on to the strongest scent in that area, contrary to the belief of some we do not offer a garment for the dog to sniff first. On locating the suspect the dogs faces them and barks to indicate the location.

Because the dogs are not expected to bite no padding is required. That is all well and fine with most dogs but there are always a few over-enthusiastic frustration. Mickey, a rough coated white German shepherd, who looked as if butter would melt in his mouth approached with his handler, Bruce Winter. On the command, Mickey flew down to the fence and stood, growling, eyeball to eyeball with me.

My arms were folded across my knees in front of me and Mickey stuck his head through the fence in an effort to reach me.

'Speak,' I whispered. 'There's a good boy.' Mickey ignored me and the shouts from Bruce. A moment passed while Mickey weighed up the situation and then with a grunt he forced his body between the wooden palings, his body squeezing in and out like a tube of toothpaste. The palings were no match for him and suddenly he was through and sinking his teeth into my forearm. We looked into each other's eyes, both motionless, and I saw a look of doubt in his.

‘You silly boy. You shouldn’t have done that,’ I told him and with a sigh he released his grip and barked, just once.

Bruce arrived, concern on his face.

‘He didn’t bite you did he?’ he asked. I shook my head.

‘No, only a nibble.’

‘Oh Christ, he’s on his last warning for biting. If they find out he’ll get the chop.’ Bruce was nearly in tears.

‘Don’t worry, if they ask I tell them he just barked, okay?’

‘Thanks mate. I won’t forget this.’ Bruce connected the leash and pulled Mickey back through the fence. Walking back to the office I felt something warm trickling down my arm and looking down I saw blood dripping from the end of my fingers.

Back with Ted and Jock, they asked how I’d got on.

‘No problems but got a nibble on me arm, nothing serious.’

Ted ordered me to roll up my sleeve and on doing so revealed two neat puncture wounds leaking blood on the top of my left forearm.

‘Bloody hell!’ Ted exclaimed. ‘That’s a reportable injury. You’ll have to fill in an accident report.’

‘Do I have to? I hate paperwork and I’ve had far worse,’ I told them. They looked at each other, laughed and Jock said:

‘You’ll do laddie.’ Ted poured some acid type stuff into the wounds, which bubbled up and disinfected them and that was it, I was in!

I returned to St Mary Cray and normal duties, waiting for my call to join the dog section. After all, they told me I had passed the kennel man’s week easily. The months went by and nothing happened, so I started writing reports to the Divisional Commander asking why. Nothing came back

and I was puzzled.

Then one day a friend of mine, I won't say who for reasons that will become obvious, came round to see me.

'I've just been interviewed by the 'Rubber Heelers' about you,' he said. 'Apparently there's an investigation into your activities going on and I'm not to speak to you.'

I was shocked; as far as I was concerned I'd never done anything wrong and could not think what this investigation was about. Well at least I now knew why I hadn't received a call from DTE.

'It's got something to do with a nutty brass you took to Oakwood the other month,' my friend informed me.

Suddenly the mist cleared. I was in the nick one evening, when the station officer ordered me to accompany a mentally disturbed woman to the local mental home in an ambulance. She had an aversion to uniforms so as I was in plain clothes I got lumbered.

When we arrived at the home the ambulance driver went to the wrong entrance which turned out to be the garden doors to the women's ward. I escorted the woman in, where she announced to a mob of nightdress-clad women that I was her new boyfriend. Well I've never been so scared; hands everywhere and I knew rape was in their mind. Suddenly they parted and a six foot nurse grabbed me by the scruff and dragged me out of the ward. In a deep voice she - yes, she - said:

'You stupid man. If I hadn't been passing they would have ripped you to pieces.' I thanked her and hurriedly left.

Now what has this got to do with the investigation? Well, a month later I drove into the gateway of the nick and was stopped by a shifty

looking bloke who got out of a gold coloured Mercedes. He came to my window and pushed a bunch of keys in my hand saying:

‘Here you are mate, the keys I promised you.’ Puzzled, I carried on into the yard and parked up. Walking back outside I was just in time to see the Mercedes pulling away with another man and the nutty brass in the back. Realising it was some sort of fit up, the keys went down a drain. It came to light later, after I insisted on seeing the Commander, that they were her pimps and got upset because I put her away. So they alleged I was involved with large scale corruption and thefts from a timber yard in Penge, South London. I’d never heard of this yard or of them. Eventually I was cleared of any involvement with the brass and her pimps and was re-instated on the list of potential dog handlers.

After what seemed like an eternity of waiting, I got the call I had been waiting for. My dog was ready.

I met Elmer on a cold, clear morning in May 1973. His hair, ruffled by the cold wind, sprouted in different directions like wire wool. As I drew near he pushed his siblings aside and ran towards me, a black loo brush on legs. Although we had never met, he was extremely pleased to see me and, panting with excitement nibbled my ankles!

Crouching down I stroked his tousled hair and he responded by licking my hand. We both knew at once, we were in love. Picking him up I cuddled his muscular body and he responded to my touch by chewing my nose. Elmer, at three months of age, was to become my first police dog!

