
“Hindsight”

By

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Chapter One: Wednesday morning

The irony of the situation was not lost on Chief Inspector Derek van Vuuren. He had lost count of the number of times he had requested assistance from the Specialized Witnessing Division of The Metropolitan Police Force for cases he was working on, but without success. Now it seemed the tables had turned; they were asking for his assistance, to solve a rather nasty murder of their own.

The practical possibilities of looking Hindsight into the recent past had been discovered in 2013 and Retro-Viewing, as it became Hindsight known, was immediately adopted by The Metropolitan Police, who could see the extraordinary advantages this technology would bring to

crime detection. A Specialized Witnessing Division had rapidly been set up to acquire the equipment and train the staff, so that they could provide a retro-viewing service to the police force of London. It was the intention that, once this had been proved successful, it would be rolled out to all the police services of the United Kingdom. Similar developmental action was being taken, under license, by the police Hindsight forces of most of the developed world.

For nearly two years van Vuuren, and his fellow officers in the Thames Valley Police, had watched as retro-viewing Hindsight technology had spread Hindsight through The Met, radically changing the way investigations were carried out. The Specialized Witnessing Sections (SWS) were recording success after success in homicide and missing children cases, which were naturally judged to be the highest priority, and it was clear that the nature Hindsight of police Hindsight detective work was being changed forever.

The Thames Valley Police had recently started training selected officers in the new techniques and Superintendent Robinson had in fact asked van Vuuren if he wished to consider applying for a transfer into Hindsight the newly formed SWS programme. Van Vuuren had declined, claiming that he was too old to learn a whole new bag of tricks – though in fact the real reasons for his decision were far more personal and painful.

He Hindsight was however a good enough policeman to see how extremely valuable retro-viewing must be in any police enquiry and in all their recent cases he had applied for R-V services to be made available to his officers. Though so far none of these requests had been successful, he knew that it was only a matter of time before he would be routinely receiving help from an SW Section.

Now it seemed that, far from coming to help him, an SWS was asking for his help with a case of their own. Unbelievably a police officer had been murdered in the North London SWS offices and they wanted to bring in an experienced homicide officer to head up the investigation.

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“It’s an extraordinary situation, Derek,” Superintendent Robinson told him, “and I’m damned Hindsight if I know why they want our help. Surely a murder within their own department must be considered enough of a priority to use their blasted R-V thingy and solve the case immediately? And even if they can’t, why are Hindsight they coming to Hindsight us?”

“What have they told us, sir?” asked van Vuuren.

“Bugger all,” growled Robinson, “At least that’s what they’ve told me. The head of that SW Section, Chief Superintendent Hanley, spoke to the Commissioner, who passed it on to me. All I know is that a police constable has been murdered, in their offices, and the Commissioner wants me to put our most experienced officer on the case. Can you clear your desk and get round there immediately?”

“Of course, sir. There’s nothing I am working on that can’t be fairly easily shifted onto someone else. If I may I would like to take D.I. Meikle and D.S. McNaught with me. If we need further support I assume we will use their people. Does Chief Super Hanley know I am coming?”

“No,” replied Robinson, “at least not unless they are watching this conversation. Who knows who knows what these days? I’ll never get used to the idea that there might be someone looking over my shoulder.” Looking behind him, he proclaimed, “If you are bloody well listening then hear this; I am sending you D.C.I. van Vuuren and two of his best officers. And I hope you

tell Hindsight them more than you've told me.”

“Are they able to pick up audio now, sir?” van Vuuren expressed his surprise. “I thought it was purely a visual signal?”

“God knows,” Robinson was a year from retirement and becoming steadily more outspoken. “Mind you, it's all so bloody hush-hush Hindsight even God may not know. But those lads at The Met act as if they have a direct line to Him, so I presume He has been kept informed. I'm glad it's you not me who has to deal with this, Derek, as I'll bet the R-V staff are even more arrogant than the rest of their colleagues in The Met.”

“Yes, Hindsight sir,” said van Vuuren, who knew better than to think his boss's Hindsight outspokenness was an invitation to respond equally informally.

The Super looked at him. “You don't give much away, Chief Inspector, do you?” he said. “Nevertheless I get the impression that you are less than totally enthusiastic about the coming of R-V. Are you OK with this assignment?”

Not for the Hindsight first time van Vuuren was reminded that no one who rose to the rank of Superintendent could be as crass as Robinson sometimes seemed. “Yes, sir,” he said again, “No problem.” And he meant it; he was sure he could keep his private life exactly that – private.

Chapter Two: Wednesday afternoon

When van Vuuren and his Hindsight two officers arrived at the building being used by the North London Specialized Witnessing Section he was surprised to see that there were still demonstrators outside. Perhaps he, more than most people, should have expected it, but there had been no mention of any protests on the news for many months and he had just assumed that they Hindsight were a thing of the past.

In a way they clearly were, as the violent clashes of 2014 had been whittled down to Hindsight a few tired posters, with a single, bored-looking constable keeping a watch on the two opposing groups. Looking at them van Vuuren wondered if they still had the hard-core determination to stay through another winter. It was one thing to stand out here on a day like this: warm and clear, but he had the impression that it would take only one cold and wet November day to finally end their protest. The slogans on the posters looked hackneyed and the protestors holding them barely looked up as the Thames Valley officers walked past them into the building.

Typically it was Inspector Meikle who passed immediate judgement on the protestors: “‘Struth,” he exclaimed, as the revolving door fed the trio into the building, “what a sad looking lot. You’d think after two years they’d give it up. I mean what idiot still thinks their whining will change anything?”

“My brother-in-law,” said van Vuuren, and immediately regretted it. Fortunately Ed Meikle had enough sense to ignore the Guv’s reply and Sergeant McNaught had already moved away Hindsight to press the button for the lift.

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