# Former soldier and firefighter recalls grisly discovery of neighbour's gruesome crime in Brisbane



In a chilling account revealed in his memoir, former soldier, firefighter, and daredevil pilot Kevin Hughes has recounted the harrowing day he discovered his new neighbour, chef Marcus Volke, cooking the dismembered body of his wife Mayang Prasetyo at their Brisbane apartment. The shocking incident occurred in 2014 in the upscale riverside area of Teneriffe.

Hughes, now 67, described the moment he noticed a foul and pungent smell emanating from the apartment of Volke and Prasetyo, a 'softly spoken young couple' who had recently moved into the building. Accompanied by his wife Debrena, who managed the apartment complex, Hughes recalled sensing something deeply amiss. "I glanced to my right towards the stove and then a very cold shiver passed through my body. It was like we had entered the middle of an Alfred Hitchcock movie set," he said in his memoir, Courage and Resilience, One Man's Story.

The couple had initially suspected the odour might be linked to a drug lab or something far grimmer. Volke returned home at one point with his arm bandaged and carrying two drums of acid, claiming he had cut himself at work. He told Hughes and Debrena he was preparing pig’s head broth on the stove to explain the terrible smell but was visibly agitated as the situation unfolded.

When they entered the apartment with an electrician summoned by Volke due to a power outage, the severity of the crime became apparent. Hughes noticed water-damaged carpets in spots consistent with where a body had potentially bled out, alongside human skull fragments and skin on the walls. Unbeknownst to him at the time, two feet were boiling in a pot on the stove while other body parts were hidden in a dishwasher and black garbage bags in the washing machine.

"It was one of the most terrifying experiences of my life," said Hughes. He described an intense moment when Debrena confronted Volke angrily about the damage inside, only to be pulled away as the threat of violence seemed imminent given Volke’s background in karate and knife ownership. Shortly afterwards, Volke fled the apartment by jumping from a balcony, running through an alleyway before police and Hughes gave chase.

Volke was later found dead in an industrial bin with self-inflicted wounds, marking a grisly end to the murder-suicide that made headlines globally.

A coronial inquest in 2017 revealed the extent of Volke’s calculated actions. The day before the murder, Volke had purchased household items including a large pot, rubber gloves, a scrubbing brush, and laundry soaker, all used in attempts to dissolve Mayang’s body parts after the fatal stabbing. Medical evidence showed that Mayang was dismembered post-mortem and subjected to boiling and caustic soda. Volke had sought medical care for a hand wound, claiming it was a kitchen accident.

Mayang Prasetyo, Indonesian-born and transgender, had met Volke in Melbourne when he was working as a male escort. After marrying in Denmark in 2013, the couple worked as sex workers across Asia and Europe before settling in Brisbane in August 2014, where Volke took part-time work as a chef. Volke's history included long-term mental health struggles spanning nine years, and he had kept his lifestyle secret from family.

Hughes, who had no knowledge of Mayang’s transgender status and described her as 'extremely pretty', recounted how the case profoundly affected him despite his extensive experience with trauma as a firefighter and former military operative. Known for his bravery in saving a parachutist trapped beneath his plane mid-flight and his service flying top secret missions, Hughes admitted the sickening discovery remains etched in his memory.

His memoir, Courage and Resilience, One Man’s Story, published by Bilby Books, provides detailed insight into both the gruesome episode and Hughes’s remarkable life. It is available in soft cover, hard cover, and audio formats.

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