

*Blindsided*  
*A missing scene from Starsky vs Hutch*  
By Brit

He wanted to *talk*.

We'd just about had a hand grenade blow us all into the Pacific, and he wanted to *talk*. All I wanted to do was finish giving directions to the "bag and tag" team, whip out the absolute minimum number of reports I could get by with until morning, pick up a six-pack, and go home.

And *he* wanted to talk.

I was too tired to care and too tired to argue with him. Too tired to say "no." Still, there was something else in his eyes, something different than before. He made me curious. Still mad as hell, but curious. We finished up at the scene, each doing our own thing, but still working together all the same. I knew what to expect of him, and he did his job, same as always. Funny how we both avoided *her*. Didn't speak to her, didn't much look at her. She was too busy anyway, crooning to the whippo on the stretcher as they hauled him away to Cabrillo. *Whatever*. She must of run out of cops to take home, so now she had to start in on crackpots.

Okay. That's not the way it was, but I honestly just didn't give a crap.

The drive to the station seemed to take forever, and it was quiet. I didn't even turn on the radio. Still, I was glad we drove separately, me and Hutch. It would have been an uncomfortable half-hour, because I hadn't decompressed from the explosion at the dancehall and didn't want to talk to him. Not yet.

I beat him to the office by a good ten minutes, and wondered if he stayed around to talk to her. *Get over it, Starsky. Besides, who cares?*

I did.

The coffee was still warm, but about the consistency of 10W-40. I wasn't *that* desperate and passed it up. I wasn't very far into my report when I heard the squadroom door open. It was him. I didn't even have to look up, I knew it was him. Always do. Always did. He didn't say anything, just set a still-warm cup of coffee from the corner grocery down next to my typewriter, and went and sat on his side of the desk with his own cup.

"Thanks." It's the least I could say. It's all I could say.

He didn't respond, but out of the corner of my eye, I could see him nod. We both finished up our reports in about forty minutes, threw them to each other to read, then signed off. He gathered them up and put them on top of the stack of Dobey's "IN" basket.

We hadn't said a single thing since I'd thanked him for the coffee. But we both grabbed our jackets and headed out the door, down the hallway to the stairs, then out to our cars. As late as it was, we both were

able to park right out front. Just as I unlocked the Torino, he surprised me and started in. I'd figured we would've at least gone over to one of our places or The Pits to hash this out.

"You don't know how sorry I am."

*You're right, I don't. Why don't you tell me about it?* My guts were on fire, and the crap in my throat felt like I swallowed battery acid. I didn't say anything, just glared at him. I just couldn't understand.

He looked ashamed. Earlier, I'd thought I'd seen something different in his eyes. Maybe that was it—shame. I saw it again, and this time it was even more evident. "Starsk, I...I don't know what to say...don't know how to explain this."

"Why?" The bitterness in my voice surprised even me. I was too angry to care, though. "Just tell me why."

His voice was really soft. "I don't know."

I could hear the pain there—the regret—but I couldn't stand to hear it right then. I stuck the key back in the lock and yanked the door open. I barely felt his hand on my arm, but it was enough to stop me, douse the fire that'd been burning me up inside like nothing else could. If he'd grabbed me, I would've decked him. But he didn't. Just a touch.

"Please?"

It was like I was fighting with myself. Half of me wanted to give in, hear him out. I could see how much this was killing him, and I wanted...shoot, *I* wanted to comfort *him*. How warped is that? The other part of me wanted to drive away and never look back.

And I do mean *never*.

I finally took a step back away from the car and shut the door. I'll be damned if I didn't have tears stinging my eyes when I managed to look him square in the face. "*Why?*"

He closed his eyes and looked away. I couldn't stand to see him like that. I'd seen him in this kind of agony once before—on a rooftop a lifetime ago, because he knew I was slipping away from him and there wasn't anything he could do to stop me. Only this time...this time *he* was the poison.

I don't know how long we'd been standing there, but it was quiet for a long time. When he finally spoke, his voice was rough. "I swear, Starsk, I don't know why I did what I did. But I'd give anything—*anything*—to take it back, make it all go away. I could think of a million different excuses, but there's absolutely *nothing* that could justify it. It's...it's like there's this one moment in time that's frozen, and you have to make a life or death decision, and you do. And you know in that one instant—that one heartbeat—that you blew it. And your entire world just collapses around your ears. And you'd give anything to be able to go back and make the right decision." His eyes were wet when he turned to face me. "You've got to believe me, buddy. I am so, so sorry. I don't expect...I can't expect you to forgive me."

“Hutch, I...” How could I say this? “Over the past year, it seems like you just don’t care enough to make any sacrifices.” I could see that hurt him. Each word hit him like a body blow. “And I’ve made too many sacrifices to care.”

I got in the Torino and drove away.



I pounded on his door hard enough to get splinters. I didn’t want to just let myself in; it somehow didn’t seem right. So, I pounded some more until he opened it, still in the clothes he’d had on at the lounge. “You look like crap.”

Normally, he would’ve given me some smart remark right back, but he didn’t. Just stepped aside to let me in. His place was a mess, which surprised me. There were even dirty dishes left on the table, with congealed blobs of something hardening on them.

I sat down, but he didn’t. Just stood there looking very, very tired. Bone-tired. I got right to it. “You said you didn’t know how I’d ever be able to forgive you.” He looked down at me. “Or something like that. I didn’t think I’d be able to.”

Man, he looked awful. If he felt half as bad as he looked.... “Hutch, sit down before you fall down.”

He did. I could tell he was exhausted. I was, too. Not just tired from pulling twenty-four hours, but *soul-tired*.

“I thought about what you said outside the station. I still...I still wish you could explain to me why you did what you did, but I want you to know...I forgive you.”

I didn’t think I could have surprised him more. I know the revelation had hit me the same way a few hours ago, walking along Venice Beach. I thought about a lot of things, Kira only being a very small part of it. I thought of every single thing we’d been through together. The times I almost lost him, and how that nearly killed me. And now, I might be losing him by my own choice. It didn’t change the hurt that was churning around in my gut, but the thought of facing the streets without him—facing the next day without him—left me feeling cold. Empty. I must have walked for miles, not knowing if I was colder on the inside or outside. The wind had picked up, throwing sand into my eyes, all but blinding me. *Blinding me....*

“Starsk, I don’t know how you can just—”

“Emily.”

He stared at me, not understanding.

“I can forgive you because of Emily. What you said earlier, about that one instant in time when we make a choice, and someone is hurt because of what we’ve done. It made me think of shooting Emily.”

“Starsky....” His voice picked up that tone he gets, telling me that I’m too hard on myself, telling me I’m all right. “You did everything you could.”

Now wasn't the time to rehash all of that or we'd miss the point. "You got me thinking about those instances. Whether they were accidents or...or poor judgement. I remember. God, Hutch, I still remember what the pain felt like for hurting someone so badly."

"This is different. I betrayed your trust."

"You said you were sorry."

Silence.

Hutch drew a breath. "I don't know what to say."

I shook my head. I thought we'd said enough, and my brain was on overload. What I needed was to go home and crash for a few hours before logging back in. We both stood at the same time. Some things never change. "I'll pick you up at nine?"

Hutch looked a little flustered, like it was all too much for his analytical brain to process. "Pick me up?"

If I'd felt more alive, I might've enjoy this moment—it's not every day I can throw him for a loop. "Dobey's expecting us in by ten."

I headed for the door. He caught up to me, reached out to stop me, but pulled his hand away at the last instant. "What...what about Kira?"

Her name still made my guts churn, but I managed to give the poor guy a grin. "I don't know...*you* figure something out. You're always telling me how *you're* the brains of this partnership."

*Partnership.* It still had a sweet ring to it, even after all the garbage. I tapped him on the stomach as I turned to head out the door, getting a glimpse of his eyes again as I went. I saw something else there. *Good.* They didn't look so haunted.

I headed back out into the night.

~ Brit  
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