

Fallen

by Brit

Part Four

The ambulance screaming through the night provided a horrific episode of déjà vu, and Hutch was instantly transported to the night Starsky had been injected by Vic Bellamy. Starsky was unconscious then, too, but Hutch had no clue as to what had happened to his partner, or what the next twenty-four hours would hold. Now, Starsky lay on his side so as not to choke on his own blood. It continued to trickle from his mouth and nose, and occasionally, he would rouse enough to cough up more before passing out again.

As the ambulance tore through the darkened streets, its red and blue lights piercing the darkness, Hutch watched as the paramedics did what they could for his partner. Until they reached the hospital and tests determined what the cause of the bleeding was, there was little he or the paramedics could do, and Hutch was terrified.

“Please.” Hutch whispered, willing his partner to fight. “Please.”

He clenched and unclenched his hands in fear and frustration until he realized they were sticky. He glanced down at his upturned palm and saw that his hands were covered in Starsky’s drying blood.



Even though Hutch held the bag of saline as the paramedics pushed Starsky’s gurney into the ER, he repeatedly stepped on the heels of the man before him in his haste to get his partner the help he needed. Once inside the treatment room, the saline bag was taken from his unresisting hands by a nurse and hung on the IV stand attached to the exam table Starsky was transferred to.

Hutch stood numbly at the back of the brightly lit room, watching the scene before him play out like a hellish nightmare. Nurses and orderlies swarmed around his too-pale partner, removing his clothes and swabbing the blood away from where it continued to trickle down the side of his face. Starsky’s face looked almost translucent as he lay as still as death. If it weren’t for the shallow rise and fall of his chest—and the ever-present froth of blood—Hutch would have been sure that they’d already lost him.

Dr. Almeda charged into the room and was handed Starsky’s stats, which he quickly pored over while the duty nurse filled him in on what they knew to that point. He quickly looked over the data, then moved to Starsky’s unmoving side. His brow furrowed. “This doesn’t tell me much; when did the bleeding start? What are the probable causes?”

“We don’t know yet, Doctor.” The nurse glanced around the room until her eyes lit on Hutch’s mute figure. “That’s his partner in the corner, Detective Hutchinson.”

“Hutchinson.” The doctor covered the distance between them in four steps. “It says Detective Starsky was involved in an altercation earlier this evening. Did something happen that could have caused internal bleeding?”

Hutch’s jaw worked as he recalled the fight in the alley. “He got knocked around pretty good. I know he took at least one punch to his back. Maybe to his kidneys?”

“That gives us a place to start. All right, let’s get an ultrasound done, stat. I don’t want to open him up unless I have to. As soon as that’s done—and I mean *now*—I want blood and urine samples sent up to the lab for a screen. Then I want his vitals, hemo, and clotting time checked every fifteen minutes until we know what’s going on, got that?”

“Yes, Doctor!” The nurse who responded had already phoned the lab and requested the ultrasound equipment up to the exam room.

“Doctor? What are you doing for him? Why aren’t you trying to stop the bleeding?” Hutch had anxiously moved alongside Almeda, shaken to his core. He was losing his partner, and there was nothing he could do about it.

“Okay, look. I’ll give it to you straight.” Almeda gripped Hutch’s arm and forced himself to slow down his typical rapid-fire speech. “What happens next is critical. We’re going to do a urinalysis and an ultrasound to see if your partner’s kidneys were damaged and that’s causing the bleeding. If that’s not it, then we’re going to run him right into surgery and open him up. We’ve got to figure out where the bleeding is, and stop it.”

Hutch’s face flushed. “He’s bleeding to death! Why aren’t you doing anything to stop the bleeding?”

Almeda raised his hands to placate Hutch. “We need to wait for the ultrasound because if it starts clotting before we get our pictures, it’ll be all that much harder to determine the source. We work fast; don’t worry, Detective. Okay, here’s the tech now. Let’s get moving, Bert.”

The technician had entered the exam room at a run, pushing the ultrasound cart ahead of him. Within moments, he was rolling the scope over Starsky’s side to capture the kidney function. “You might want to see this, Doc.”

Almeda was quickly beside him with Hutch right over his shoulder, staring at the monitor’s screen. “What is it?”

“It’s not the kidneys. There’s some bruising, but nothing that should cause any bleeding. You’re going to want one of the specialists to confer, but I just don’t see enough damage.” Bert pointed to the screen and shook his head.

“Okay, prep him for surgery. Let’s get moving!” The doctor slapped his hands together once, as if to propel the rest of his staff into motion. As they shoved Starsky’s gurney out of the room, Almeda looked back at Hutch with frustration. “Are you sure there’s nothing else? Any other accidents or injuries in the past week that might have led to this? Had he been complaining about an upset stomach or a burning sensation?”

As he watched his partner disappear from sight, all the injuries Starsky had sustained in the past few weeks—from being pushed through the sliding glass doors at the beach house to when the Torino was sideswiped by the garbage truck—ran through Hutch’s mind. “It could be a number of instances, Doctor. It’s not as though we sit behind a desk all day. And these past few months, we—”

The doctor’s brow furrowed when Hutch stopped cold, his face paling. “What is it, Detective?”

“Doctor...” Hutch put out a supplicating hand. “The blood they drew. Would that include any kind of toxicology report?”

“Yes, I ordered it, not knowing what we were up against. Why?”

Hutch shook his head in frustration, angry with himself for not thinking of it sooner. “The details don’t matter, but there’s a possibility that Starsky’s been poisoned or drugged. What can you think of that would cause internal bleeding?”

The doctor looked appalled at the prospect, but instantly considered Hutch’s line of thought. “Coumadin, sure—it’s a blood thinner used to treat coagulation. You know, blood clots. Warfarin is its generic, and it’s basically what they make rat poison out of. But if he ingested it today, it wouldn’t work this fast.”

Hutch’s mind raced, trying to remember if Huggy had mentioned how long Lindsay Worthington had been working for him. “Does it have a cumulative effect?”

“Do you mean someone might have been poisoning him for a while? Naturally. If there have been several other doses, then, yes. Coumadin poisoning—sure, that would explain why his bruising is so severe if he just took those hits tonight. Otherwise, it’d take at least a day for the color to be that dark and intense. That could be it!” The doctor charged out of the room, shouting for the lab results of Starsky’s blood draw.

Hutch all but fell back against the room’s sterile wall and slid to the ground, burying his head into his hands.



“Detective Hutchinson? Are you all right?” The nurse had stepped into the darkened room so silently Hutch hadn’t even heard her. His face remained pillowed against his arms propped up by his knees as he sat on the cold tile floor of the exam room.

“How is he?” Hutch lifted his head to peer at her blearily, his need to know greater than his exhaustion.

“The doctor’s taking care of him right now. Dr. Almeda’s the best; your partner’s in good hands.”

Hutch nodded and shakily pushed himself up off the floor. He lost his balance, and the nurse gripped his arm to steady him. “Detective, are you all right? Are you dizzy? Nauseated?”

“I don’t know.” Hutch scrubbed his face with his hands. “Maybe a little. I don’t know.”

“Dr. Almeda sent me in here to ask if you’d eaten the same food Detective Starsky had and to get a blood draw from you.”

Hutch grimaced. “Yeah, probably. We might not have had the same food, but if he’s been poisoned, the person who did it had the same access to my meals, so it’s a possibility.”

The nurse nodded grimly and steered Hutch over to a chair near her equipment. After donning gloves, she labeled the vial and prepared a syringe, then pulled up Hutch’s sleeve to strap on a rubber strap around his forearm.

“Wait.” Hutch put up his hand to ward off the needle from his exposed vein. “There’s something else they’re going to find.”



“Hutch!” Captain Dobeý hurried down the hall, far swifter than most would give him credit for. His fear was clearly etched on his normally stern face. “I just got the call. What’s going on? How is he?”

“I don’t know yet. I’ve seen...” Hutch swallowed hard before he continued, each word bitten off. “When he went down...Captain, I’ve seen corpses with more color than he had. He was losing so much blood, I...I don’t know.”

The captain straightened his coat and tie. “Where’s the doctor? I want to talk to him personally.” A nurse walking to her station came within Dobeý’s reach, and he reached for her, causing her to stop. “I’m Captain Harold Dobeý from the Ninth Precinct. I want an update on Detective Starsky, and I want it *now*.”

“Yes, sir. I’ll get it for you.” The startled woman hurried away, once she was released from the imposing man’s grasp.

The slight curve at Hutch’s mouth was a grim smile. “Starsky always says you’re pretty scary when you get mad.”

“And don’t you forget it.” Dobey jabbed a finger in Hutch’s direction. “So, what have they done for him? You said he’d been poisoned, and that caused the bleeding?”

Hutch nodded wearily. “Rat poison. Who knows how many opportunities Worthington’s had to get to us? They’ve got Starsky stabilized; he was going into shock when we brought him in.”

The captain placed one of his large hands on Hutch’s shoulder. His voice was surprisingly soft. “But you did get him here in time, Hutch.”

“They got the bleeding stopped with something called Aquamephyton. It’s basically vitamin K. They’ve administered that and plasma, to counteract the Coumadin and clot his blood. I haven’t heard anything beyond—”

“Hutchinson? I figured you’d still be out here,” Dr. Almeda interrupted, then thrust a hand out to Dobey. “You must be their captain. I’m Dr. Almeda. I just wanted to let you know that things are looking better. It’s a good thing you got him to the ER as quickly as you did. Had this gone on much longer, he probably would have gone into DIC, which I’m sorry to say, would have been irreversible.”

“DIC?” Hutch shook his head, not understanding.

“Nothing you’d want to see. Not just bleeding from the mouth and nose, but his eyes, pores. Nasty stuff. I don’t care how many times I’ve seen it, it gives me nightmares for months. Whoever did this to him—to you both—wants you very, very dead, and not in a pretty way.”

When Almeda noticed how Hutch had paled even further and how his captain looked gray, he smiled apologetically. “Well, enough of that. The good news is that he’s coming along. Like I said before, his cell counts are up, which is what we want to see, but they’re not quite where we want them. Not yet, anyway. It’s just going to take some time, but barring any foreseen complications, he’s going to be fine in a day or two.”

“So, what are you doing for him now?” Dobey asked. “Hutch said you’re giving him vitamin K and plasma?”

“Yes, and whole blood, too. We’ll continue to monitor his PT—his Prothrombin Time. That’s the bleeding and clotting factor. We’re also going to watch his hemoglobin and his PTT, make sure his PT and INR get back down to where they’re supposed to be.”

Almeda recognized his audience's anxious and overwhelmed expressions and got to the point.

"He regained consciousness a few minutes ago, asked if you were all right, Detective, then dozed off. Oh, but not before demanding that we dress him in a pair of scrubs. Didn't want to freeze his butt off, he said. He's weak, but resting comfortably." Almeda chuckled and shook his head. "Your partner's something else. He's going to be our guest here for a few days. It's just going to take him a while to get back to normal."

Hutch's smile was weary, but filled with relief. "That's what I needed to hear, Doctor. Can I see him?"

"Sure, right after we admit you."

"Admit me? What for?"

Almeda's jaw clenched. "I don't know what kind of criminals you've ticked off, Detective, but your partner's not the only one who got fed blood thinner."

"What?" Dobey growled, giving Hutch a more thorough once-over. It was then he noticed that Hutch's sleeves were still rolled up past his elbow, and a discolored Band-Aid in the crook of one arm gave evidence that blood had been drawn on him as well.

"The lab results came back positive. I'm no detective..." The doctor gave the two a brief, quirky smile. "But I'd say that somehow your partner ingested more of the poison because there've been more opportunities to get it into his system—either because he eats more than you do, or more frequently."

"Yes on both counts," Dobey harrumphed. "That boy's a human garbage can. Let us know when you're done being a doctor and want to carry a badge."

Hutch chewed the inside of his cheek. "I haven't exactly been eating well since...in the last few weeks. And tonight, Starsky ate his dinner and mine. Could that be what finally did it?"

"It's possible. And, Detective?" Almeda glanced over at Dobey, believing he should not disclose what Hutch had earlier confided to the nurse. "What you mentioned earlier? As far as our tests are concerned, nothing out of the ordinary showed up." The doctor abruptly switched mental gears. "Look, I need to get back to the ER. We just got a dispatch for a multi-car pile up on the 10, and we're expecting quite a few people to be brought in shortly. Dr. Ferguson's been called in, and, after you're admitted, we'll put you in the same room as your partner, then give you the same course of treatment as Detective Starsky. Don't worry—he insisted we let you wear a pair of scrubs instead of a gown, too."

Almeda took Hutch by the arm for a quick look at the damp Band-Aid, evidence that Hutch's blood was not clotting as quickly as it should. "I've authorized a unit of plasma for you as well. After that, we'll continue to monitor your hemoglobin and clotting time." The doctor chuckled darkly. "Between you and your partner, and this latest mess out on the highway, we're going to have to send the vampires out to get more blood before the night's out."

"You need more blood, Doctor?" Dobby raised an eyebrow as he asked. "I can get you more blood."

"Captain," Almeda said as he clapped him on the shoulder. "If you can round up some donors in the next day or so, I'll take out your appendix for free."

Almeda trotted down the hall with a wave and disappeared through the double doors that led to the ER exam rooms.

"Hutch," Dobby asked as he returned his focus on the detective. "What did the doctor mean about something not showing up on the lab results?"

"He didn't know if I'd told you about the hallucinogens that Worthington tried to kill me with. I told Almeda and the head nurse what brought us to this point, knowing that traces of those drugs would show up in any blood work they did on me. They were just trying to protect me."

"Okay, then." Dobby placed his hand on Hutch's back and steered him toward the nurses' station. "You high-tail it over there and get registered. I'm heading back to the office to recruit some volunteers to get down here and give blood."

"You mean you're *ordering* some 'volunteers' to get down here." Hutch smiled in understanding as he let his superior propel him to the desk.

"Same thing," Dobby grunted before leaving Hutch in the capable hands of the nursing staff and charging out the door.



"Hey."

When Starsky's eyes slowly cracked open, he wasn't surprised to find Hutch peering at him from the side of the bed. Somehow, his partner's tired smile reassured him, and it didn't take a detective to decipher the relief that flooded Hutch's face. "Hey, yourself."

Hutch's hand had been resting on Starsky's wrist, which he gripped tightly before releasing it to sit back in the hard plastic chair. "Make me a promise, will ya?"

Starsky swallowed to try and get rid of the odd but familiar metallic taste of blood still in his mouth. “Sure. What?”

“Next time I tell you the food tastes funny, don’t eat it. Okay?”

Starsky managed a grin, then coughed. “Water?”

“Sure, buddy.” Hutch pushed himself up out of the chair, mindful of his own IV, and maneuvered the casted pole beside him as he moved to the nightstand between the two beds to pour the water.

Starsky frowned when he realized Hutch was being treated as well. “What’s wrong? Did she get you, too?”

“Here, drink this first.” Hutch placed one hand under Starsky’s head and tilted it forward, while bringing the cup up to his partner’s mouth to drink. Once Starsky nodded that he was done, his eyes demanded an answer. Hutch continued as he put down the cup.

“Did they tell you what put you in here?”

“Yeah, they told me all about Worthington putting rat poison in the food. Are you okay? Did it make you sick, too?”

Hutch shook his head and sat back down, then placed a reassuring hand on Starsky’s arm. “Not like it hit you. They ran some tests and saw that my blood had been thinned, but I hadn’t ingested as much as you had. They’re giving me fluids and plasma to boost my blood count, same as you, and keeping me overnight for observation, which is good because there’s no way I was leaving you here alone, even with the guard Dobby’s posted outside. Do you remember what happened tonight?”

Starsky stared at the ceiling, his relief in knowing Hutch was going to be okay mingled with the blurred memory of intense pain striking him down as they left the campus rental house. “Not much beyond our questioning Schimmel and not getting anything concrete from him. Then it just hurt like hell. Worse than before.”

Hutch knew instinctively what “before” meant. For his partner to admit that the internal bleeding was even more excruciating than Professor Jennings’ poisoning years ago made his heart constrict with pain of its own. “When you went down—”

“Don’t.” Starsky swallowed his own fear; the intensity of his eyes beckoning Hutch away from the still too-raw horror of the night’s events. “Just leave it. The doctor said I’m gonna be okay. We both are. That whack job ain’t got us yet.”

Hutch gave a small nod, the best he could manage under the circumstances. “Okay.”



True to his word, Captain Dobeý had the hospital lab full of off-duty officers and clerks by 8:00 the next morning. The air was full of light-hearted and nervous chatter as the men and women who risked their lives nearly every day in the line of duty pretended not to be afraid of a little needle and some blood. Some of them actually appeared a little green, but when Dobeý had made the “suggestion” that they volunteer, most of them realized immediately it would be in their best interest to comply. And once they had heard about the attack on the detectives, most were grateful to have something concrete they could do to help.

Captain Dobeý stood beside a bleary-eyed Huggy, looking over his small army of donors with satisfaction. At the center of the activity was Minnie, greeting each newcomer with a quick hug before guiding them to the registration table and helping them get started on filling out the necessary paperwork before they could actually donate.

A bedraggled Dr. Almeda poked his head into the waiting room, and his face broke into a wide smile. “Captain Dobeý, you are a miracle worker!”

Dobeý looked very pleased with himself as he crossed his arms over the wide expanse of his chest. “It’s the least we could do, especially after last night. Our department takes care of its own, Dr. Almeda.”

Huggy noticed a technician at one of the tables beckoning the pair over, and said, “That’s good to hear, Captain, because it’s your turn. With any luck, Hutch’ll be the one to tap into some juice that knows how to groove. You ever see him on the dance floor? That blond brother is downright embarrassing.”

Dobeý cleared his throat nervously as Huggy grabbed his arm and attempted to steer him toward the table. “Now, just a minute there, Huggy. I think there are others who have been waiting longer than we have. Uh, Phillips! Aren’t you before me?”

The uniformed officer looked up from the form he was filling out. “No, Captain. I’m not done with the paperwork yet. You go ahead.”

Captain Dobeý looked urgently around the room again, the telltale strain of desperation beginning to raise his voice. “How about you Collins? Beacham? Rodriguez?”

The three officers all shook their heads and went back to their forms. After one more frantic search of the room, Dobeý allowed himself to be led to the table. Making the best of the situation, he squared his shoulders as he took a seat. “All right then, ladies and gentlemen,” he announced loudly. “Let your captain show you how it’s done.”

With that, he turned toward the technician, who had just donned a pair of rubber gloves and was facing the captain with a needle in one hand attached to an empty bag held in the

other. Without another sound, the captain's eyes rolled up in his head, and he slid off the table to land on the floor in an ungraceful heap.

Huggy shook his head and turned to address the crowd of stunned onlookers. "Ladies and gentleman," he said with a flourish in the direction of the unfortunate captain. "I give you your shining example of 'how it's done'."

Afterward, Dobe was never quite sure why he'd awakened to a room full of thunderous applause.



The day was spent quietly for the partners, the dimly lit hospital room offering them a sense of safety and security they hadn't experienced in months, allowing them to sleep or drowse throughout the majority of the day.

Huggy had wandered in mid-morning to check on them, but only Hutch was awake. In quiet tones, he described Dobe's heroic efforts to bring in donors, only to be overshadowed by his embarrassment over fainting. Once Dobe had regained consciousness, Huggy had driven him back to the station, before returning with sandwiches and sodas from a local deli for the donors. The Pits was officially closed for the day, as Huggy wasn't taking any chances, and he had instructed Angie and the rest of the staff to throw out all of the existing stock that wasn't frozen. It was unlikely that Worthington had tampered with any of the other food, but he believed it was worth losing some of his inventory in order to be sure that he kept his friends and customers safe.

Hutch laughed out loud when he heard about Dobe fainting, but quieted quickly when it nearly woke Starsky. He thanked Huggy for all he was doing to help, as well as for the paperback book he brought along when he'd learned earlier that Dr. Almeda had decided to keep Hutch for a few more days to "monitor" him. It was the physician's way of helping the detectives, recognizing that if Hutch was released, he would most likely end up spending the night in Starsky's room anyway, propped up in a plastic chair, watching over his partner's safety.

After Huggy had left, Hutch started reading the book, but it wasn't long before exhaustion took over and he was sound asleep, the paperback nestled in the crook of his arm.



"You look like you could really use this!" The candy striper extended the large styrofoam container toward the patrolman still in the throes of an enormous yawn.

Officer Biggs smiled gratefully as the aroma of coffee greeted him. It was nearly 1:00 a.m., and the inactivity of being on guard outside the detectives' hospital room was lulling him to sleep. He tucked the photo of Lindsay Worthington into his shirt pocket

and accepted the cup from the grandmotherly volunteer and thanked her. “You’re a godsend,” he glanced at her name tag, “Bernice. I appreciate it.”

The older woman smiled cheerfully. “I’d love to take the credit, but it wasn’t my idea. That pretty little thing over there asked me to give it to you.” Her voice quieted, happy to be a small part of the romantic conspiracy. “She’s a little shy. But if you ask me, I think she thinks you’re cute.”

“Yeah? Really?” Biggs sat up straighter in his chair. “Which one?”

The candy striper looked over her shoulder and nodded in the direction of the nurses’ station, where a trim young nurse with long red hair peered over the top of her glasses at them. When she and the officer made eye contact, she blushed and raised the patient chart she’d held before her higher, blocking her face. She started to turn away and stumbled into the counter. Flustered, she gripped the chart to her chest and fled down the hall. Biggs watched her hustle away appreciatively, finding her shyness thoroughly charming.

“Yep, I’d say she likes you, Officer!” Bernice chuckled.

“What’s her name?” Biggs strained his neck to catch a last glimpse of the nurse as she turned the corner and disappeared from view. He smiled to himself, his ego properly stroked, and took a drink of the coffee.

“Sorry, you got me there. This is only my second time on night shift.”

Biggs cocked an eyebrow and studied the older woman before him with mild suspicion. “I’ve never heard of any candy stripers working at night.”

Bernice shrugged good-naturedly. “I didn’t know they did either, and I’ve been volunteering at this hospital for years. My husband’s a millwright, but when they made him foreman, he had to go to third shift. So, I come to the hospital nights now while he’s working so that we can be on the same schedule.”

Appeased, Biggs nodded and thanked her again for delivering the coffee. Bernice wished him a good night and returned to her cart of books and magazines to be offered to sleepless patients and restless family members in the waiting rooms.

Biggs took another drink from the sweetened coffee as he watched her walk away, the soft padding of her shoes and squeak of the pushcart fading down the hallway as she went.



It was the pain that woke him. At first it was minor, only enough to begin his stirring toward wakefulness. The sting and the warm, wet sensation at the hollow of his throat.

Hutch's hand clumsily quested toward the source, only to be stopped by the increasing pain, causing him to gasp and struggle awake.

His eyes flew open, but he had to blink several times to bring his gaze into focus within the dim lighting. He fought to pull together where he was and what was happening, but his deliberations were dull and it frightened him. *Flashback or drugged? Have I been drugged again? How?* Gradually, Hutch's thoughts began piecing together as his vision cleared. He tried again to lift his hand, but his body refused to cooperate.

A red-headed nurse hovered above him, her face vicious as she peered down at him in abject hatred. Her hands were clasped before him, and Hutch strained to see what she held to his throat.

"Don't move," she hissed in a low voice. "If you so much as twitch, I will shove this blade right through your throat and pin you to this bed until you drown in your own blood. Do you understand me, Hutchinson?"

Hutch's mouth worked silently before he whispered, "Yes." While his body remained still, his mind raced, trying to make sense of what was happening. He stared hard at the face before him, and his eyes widened when recognition finally struck.

"That's right; you two figured it out." Lindsay's mouth twisted in a bitter smile.

Hutch's jaw clenched. "Starsky? If you...hurt him—"

The intensified pressure against his throat caused Hutch to gasp, and he felt blood run down the side of his neck.

"You're in no position to threaten me, Hutchinson," she spat. "The only reason you're alive is because I have something to say to you before you pay for what you did to Jerry. You can't do a damn thing right now, anyway, not with what I pumped into your IV. I'm no fool."

Lindsay leaned forward. "How did you feel these past months? The drugs, how did they make you feel? Like you were losing your mind? Like you'd lost everything? I hope your life was a living hell!"

She straightened marginally while still keeping the pressure of her weapon against his neck. Hutch blinked again to refocus his eyes, trying to keep her clear before him. Whatever she had injected into the saline pump seemed to have caused his muscles to quit obeying him and his vision blur. Glancing down past her hands, it took him a moment to realize that the metal object in her grip was a long, double-edged knife. Lindsay followed his gaze and smiled, enjoying the torment she was inflicting. "You're going to die, you and your partner. The only question is when and how badly it's going to hurt. If you do anything stupid, I'm going to make sure you beg me to kill you to end the pain. Understand?"

“Yes,” Hutch whispered, again. He knew that even as quiet as Lindsay had been, Starsky should have woken from the activity around him if he had been able to. Fear clenched his gut. “Starsky...what have you done...to him?”

Lindsay tossed her head toward the second bed. “Take a look.”

Hutch turned as much as he was able to, even though flesh and muscles pulled painfully against the blade. In the dim light, he could see that Starsky lay pale and unmoving. But what caused Hutch’s heart to constrict was the pool of blood on the floor between them. Starsky’s arm dangled lifelessly off the side of the bed, and while the IV needle remained in his arm, Lindsay had cut the line. Blood fed back out of the needle and ran through the tube to the floor. Starsky was slowly bleeding to death and would eventually slip into shock, if he hadn’t already, and die if help didn’t come soon.

The rage etched in Hutch’s face matched his captor’s as he swore at her, trying in vain to speak cohesively against the drugs. “Don’t be...stupid! You should get out of here...while you can. That...guard’s going to be...checking—”

“Biggs?” Lindsay grinned maliciously. “He’s stoned out of his mind right now. I got some old bat to give him the coffee I doctored up. Mellowed him right out. Other than asking me out and trying to grope me as I came in here to give you your ‘nightly medication,’ he’s in his own happy little world. He’s not going to save you. Neither is your partner. Not again. It’s just you and me, Hutchinson.”

“Save me...again? You know about...the bridge?” Hutch continued to stare up into her eyes, willing her to concentrate on his face so she wouldn’t see him struggling to make his limbs cooperate. He knew their circumstances were desperate, and, unless he could overpower her soon, he and Starsky didn’t have a prayer. The compound she’d injected him with continued to make his voice thick.

“I was there that night. I was going to kill you myself. You must have nine lives, Hutchinson. With the amount of junk you accumulated in your system, I figured you would’ve ended up dead long before that night.” Lindsay swore. “But that night, you climbed up on the railing. It was perfect! I was just waiting for you to jump. Or at least fall. You should have fallen.”

Hutch didn’t show his relief when he cautiously clenched and unclenched a fist, and kept talking to distract her. “That night...on the bridge...how did you know where I was?”

“I’m the one who called you, you idiot. Told you I was your precinct’s Dispatch operator and you were so stoned, you believed me.”

He knew he had to keep her talking. “I don’t...remember the call.”

“Of course not. You came into the health food store earlier that week, and what I laced in your food should have fried your brains completely. That’s why you couldn’t remember. I sent you out to the middle of nowhere to finish you off. I wanted you to beg for your life like Jerry never had the chance to do! I needed to see you suffer like he did, and when I finally got tired of your begging, I was going to blow your head off and roll your sorry carcass off that bridge. They never would have found your body. Never. Then, I would have finished off your partner.”

“Starsky....”

“Yeah, good old Starsky,” Lindsay’s voice shook, her facing hardening. “Got you down before you jumped. He cheated me!”

Hutch gasped when Lindsay shifted her weight and leaned in close, increasing the pressure on the blade at his throat. Another flood of warm blood ran down his neck, and he knew he would have to act soon, even if his efforts to save his partner lay open his neck in the process.

“Jerry didn’t deserve to die. Not like he did,” Lindsay growled. “And it’s your fault, Hutchinson. It’s your fault Jerry’s dead! I hope you burn in h—”

Just as Hutch was about to desperately flail his uncooperative arms at his captor, the blade against his neck miraculously disappeared as Starsky grappled Lindsay from behind, toppling them both to the floor. The knife fell from Lindsay’s nerveless fingers when her elbow connected with the floor tile. It took her a moment to push her way out from underneath Starsky’s nearly unresisting weight. As she got up, her long red wig and nurse’s cap tumbled behind her, revealing her short, bleached hair. Lindsay stood in the pool of Starsky’s blood, looking wildly about for her knife, which had slid across the room during the brief skirmish.

“Guard!” Hutch bellowed, as he awkwardly pulled himself up out of the bed, his adrenaline finally beginning to counteract the effects of the Valium.

As the door was unsteadily shoved open by the doped-up Officer Biggs, Lindsay spied her knife. She charged forward and snatched up the weapon, then continued toward her only means of escape. Seeing the blood-spattered room, Biggs had the wherewithal to reach for his service revolver, but Lindsay was already pushing past him, slashing him across his thigh as he reached for her with his free hand. She made a one-handed attempt to pull his gun, but as Biggs crumpled to the floor, she was knocked heavily into the doorframe. With Hutch unsteadily advancing, she fled the room, her footprints stamping out a trail in Starsky’s blood.

With the immediate threat removed, Hutch spun back to his partner. From the floor, Starsky had propped himself up against the side of the bed, and was pulling the ruined IV out of his arm. His hand clamped around the wound, stemming the flow of blood. “I’m okay. Stop her!”

Torn, but knowing the madness had to end, Hutch nodded and reached down to grip his partner's shoulder. With his other hand, he punched the call button to the nurses' station before crossing to the door. Biggs sat with his back against the wall, panting in pain and gripping his leg to hold back the tide of blood that seeped from between his fingers.

"Help's coming, just hang in there. Be sure to call for back-up!" Hutch cautioned as he drew Biggs' service revolver from its holster. He took a second to look back to where Starsky huddled on the floor, holding his arm.

"Go," Starsky quietly admonished. Hutch nodded again before making his way down the hall, following the faint imprints left by Lindsay's escape. He stumbled once as he passed the nurses summoned to their room, the drugs still wreaking havoc with his equilibrium. One nurse shrieked at the sight of the bloodied detective lurching down the hallway with a drawn gun, but Hutch ignored her.

The trail became fainter and more inconsistent as soon as Hutch turned the first corner. He knew he was lucky when, instead of continuing down the maze of hallways, Lindsay had taken the stairwell, heading up. If she hadn't, he would have lost her trail completely within a few more yards.

Hutch made his way up the stairs as fast as his shaking legs could manage, the service revolver held before him, ready for anything. When he made it to the first landing, he peered through the small window cut into the door leading to the next floor. When he didn't see anything out of the ordinary, he quickly contemplated whether or not to continue upward or to check with the floor nurses for any signs of Lindsay. He decided to continue upward, knowing that, as Starsky and Biggs alerted the staff of their critical situation, the hospital would go into lockdown, and Security and the police would scour the grounds.

Hutch returned to the stairs and was rewarded by the sound of a door slamming closed a few floors above him where the stairwell ended at the roof. He redoubled his efforts, breathing heavily under the waning effects of the drugs and exhaustion, and surged up the stairs.

When he reached the door, he shoved it open with his elbow and swept the gun before him. He was grateful that the expanse of darkness across the roof was broken up by the lights of neighboring buildings on three sides and street lamps below the fourth. Keeping the weapon thrust before him, Hutch closed the stairwell door and moved farther away from the small structure. He slowly crept toward the back of it, expecting to find Lindsay hiding there.

The sound of feet slipping on the roof's loose stones caused him to turn toward the farthest corner of the building. He could just make out the white of Lindsay's nurse's uniform, and the hairs on his neck and arms stood up as adrenaline coursed through him again.



“Freeze!” Hutch bellowed. “It’s over, Lindsay.”

As Hutch crept closer, her features became clearer under the diffused light of the surrounding buildings. She turned back toward him, still wielding the knife, her face that of a cornered animal, wild to get away. Hutch closed the remaining distance, but still left a few yards between them, prepared for whatever she might do next.

He never expected, though, that she would turn and climb up onto the ledge. “Stop! Get down from there, Lindsay. We...” Hutch was surprised by an unexpected thread of compassion for her. “We can get you the help you need. I know you’re hurting. I know you’re angry; I understand. But it doesn’t have to end this way.”

Lindsay peered through the darkness to the nearly empty street seventeen floors below. “Jerry. Oh, baby!”

“Lindsay, listen to me! Jerry wouldn’t want this. He wouldn’t want you to die for nothing. You just need help. We can—”

“Nothing? *Nothing?*” Lindsay spun back at Hutch, shrieking. “*He* died for nothing! He was everything to me, don’t you get it? He didn’t deserve to die!”

“I know; I understand.” Hutch reached out his free hand toward her in supplication, but didn’t lower the weapon. He would help her, but he wasn’t foolish enough to drop his guard. “But he wouldn’t want you to throw your life away. Please, come down. We can get you help.”

“I don’t want to be helped. I want him back and I want you dead!”

Hutch gritted his teeth for self-control. “I know. I know you blame Starsky and me for Jerry’s death. But, Lindsay, if he hadn’t been dealing—”

“Shut up! Just shut up!” Lindsay’s voice reverberated across the flat roof. “You don’t know anything! You don’t know what it’s like to need it so badly you’ll do anything to get it!”

Hutch’s face remained stoic as he took another step toward the ledge, his quiet voice bringing her up short. “Maybe I do.”

“Don’t come any closer!” Lindsay thrust the knife out between them. “Stop it! Stop trying to use your two-bit police psychology on me. It won’t work. It’s your fault—you

and your partner's—that he's gone. Do you know how he suffered, Hutchinson? Do you? I know; I was with him in the hospital. I will never forget...I can't forget..." Lindsay suddenly began to sob, her face a mask of rage and grief.

Hutch watched her warily as he edged forward, wondering how much longer he could remain standing until help arrived.

Lindsay finally seemed to notice that Hutch was nearly within reach, and just barely missed laying open his face with a vicious backhanded swipe of the knife. The force of the failed blow caused her to lose her balance, and her arms began to pinwheel. Her right foot slipped out from behind her and she landed on her stomach on the thick concrete ledge, her legs dangling out into nothingness. As her feet scrambled ineffectively for purchase, Lindsay slipped farther over the edge until only her arms were caught on the side of the building.

Hutch instinctively tossed aside the service revolver and surged forward to pull her back. But as his hands caught the fabric of her nurse's uniform, she screamed madly and struck blindly at him with the knife, even though it caused her to fall farther away from the building. The only thing that prevented her from plummeting to her death was that Hutch had somehow managed to retain a one-handed hold on her weaponless arm.

Lindsay's dead weight pulled Hutch over the side of the building until his stomach rested against the ledge. With both hands now gripping her arm, Hutch gritted his teeth and pulled back as hard as he could, but couldn't find the leverage he needed to draw Lindsay back up over the edge of the building.

"Drop the knife and give me your other hand! C'mon, Lindsay, you don't want to die. Let me help you!" Hutch implored as he searched the deranged eyes looking back up at him.

He was relieved when Lindsay clumsily managed to shove the knife into the pocket of her nurse's smock. It remained within her reach, but he would deal with that after he got her to safety.

Lindsay finally swung her free arm up and locked her hand with Hutch's. Hutch tightened his stomach muscles in an effort to pull them both backwards, but was totally unprepared when Lindsay drew her knees up to her chest and planted her feet against the side of the building. In one swift movement she shoved hard, straightening her legs and back in an attempt to pull Hutch off balance and send both of them plummeting to their deaths.

Hutch felt his feet leaving the roof under the inertia of the thrust, though he managed to remain draped across the ledge. Realizing how close she was to succeeding, Lindsay locked her elbows and arched her back, pulling back even farther. In another instant, she would drag Hutch over the edge into the wind-swept blackness. Hutch struggled to pull his arms free from Lindsay's grip, but had no leverage.

For one bizarre instant, Hutch's vision distorted and he was no longer on the hospital rooftop, but standing on the iron support beams of the bridge with blackened waters swirling below. The calliope of voices again rampaged through his mind, demanding release by throwing himself over the side.

As Lindsay continued to struggle against his hold, Hutch was brought back to the present as he felt the concrete scraping his stomach raw and his feet leaving the rooftop. Just as he was drawn over the precipice, familiar arms clamped around his waist.

"No!" Starsky bellowed, his voice muffled against the back of Hutch's shirt as he drew his partner back with all his strength. One of Starsky's legs was thrown up against the short retaining wall for leverage, and he pulled Hutch's taut form away from the edge.

Hutch's arms felt like they were being pulled out of their sockets by Lindsay's countering weight. "Lindsay, stop fighting us! We can help you. This is no way to die!"

Lindsay's eyes went wide with panic when she realized Hutch was inching back onto the roof with Starsky's added force. Enraged further, she released her death grip on Hutch's wrists and began twisting her arms as hard as she could.

Hutch tightened his weakening grip, desperate to keep her from wrenching herself free. Lindsay managed to pull one arm away, and Hutch quickly joined his now-free hand with the other grasping her wrist.

Dangling by one arm, Lindsay reached into her pocket and withdrew her knife. Teeth bared, she growled as she slashed upward, striking Hutch across the back of one hand. She struck again, this time with more purpose and laid open his forearm before losing her hold on the knife. Hutch's blood cascaded down across his hands and hers, making his already sweaty grip impossible to maintain until finally, Lindsay's hands slipped from between his.

She free-fell soundlessly, staring back at Hutch with a maniacal smile until she became nothing more than a white blur slicing through the darkness below.

When Hutch's weight settled back against him and he knew his partner was standing safely on the roof's surface, Starsky peered into the darkness just in time to see Lindsay's colorless form strike the pavement below. The unnatural echo of her violent death would haunt them both for months to come.

Hutch gripped his arm to staunch the flow of blood as he staggered a few steps back away from the edge of the roof and began to tremble. Starsky turned instinctively toward him and captured him in his arms just as Hutch's legs began to give way, although he barely had enough strength remaining to keep them both from falling to their knees. "I've got you. It's okay. It's gonna be okay. You're safe now. It's over."

Hutch closed his eyes and swallowed hard before nodding. “You okay?”

“We’re both okay.” Starsky’s arms gripped him tighter as Hutch gave way to his exhaustion and rested his forehead on his partner’s shoulder.

After a moment, Hutch pulled away, and Starsky allowed him to go only an arm’s length so he could study him. Hutch met the concerned gaze and nodded again, silently confirming that he would be all right. Starsky smiled gently and, when Hutch dropped his head in exhaustion, moved in without thinking until their foreheads touched.

Starsky closed his eyes against his own wave of weakness and, when he opened them again, was surprised to find himself seated with his back against the short retaining wall. Hutch was kneeling before him, anxiously shaking his shoulder with one hand, and pressing his other against the still-bleeding crook of Starsky’s arm from where he had pulled the IV.

“Take it easy.” Starsky ineffectively tried to wave off Hutch’s grip. “I don’t think my head’s attached that good right now.”

Hutch’s face flooded in relief, and he released Starsky’s shoulder so he could all but collapse next to him. “You just scared the spit out of me.”

“After the past month, I didn’t think either of us had any spit left *to* scare.” Starsky exhaled tremulously.

“You kept me from falling—again.” Hutch’s voice was quiet, both from exhaustion and emotion. He grasped his still-bleeding arm and shook his head as he took in the sight of their blood-spattered clothes. The thought of how close they’d come—again—was more than unsettling. A quick glance to his side confirmed that Starsky remained conscious, although pale and decompressing from the adrenaline rush that had propelled him up the flights of stairs and kept Hutch from falling over the side of the roof.

Starsky sensed his partner’s eyes on him and met the gaze with a small nod. They had lived to fight another day.

The sound of hospital Security and a host of policemen bursting onto the rooftop ended the partners’ conversation, and the two lifted their faces to the uniformed men as they approached. While waiting for wheelchairs to transport them back into the hospital for treatment, Starsky and Hutch reported the end of the madness that had taken Lindsay Worthington.



“Well, I guess that’s it.” Hutch finished reading over the transcript of his deposition and signed off on it, then reached across his desk to hand it to Captain Dobey. Starsky had already signed his and was sitting on the edge of Hutch’s desk, finishing a cup of coffee.

The two had just been cleared for duty that morning, one week since Lindsay Worthington's death. They still looked pale and exhausted in Dobeys eyes, and he planned to give them nothing more strenuous to do than paperwork over the next week. They'd be bored to death and complain every chance they got, but their whining would be a welcome change to their superior.

"The only thing that report doesn't explain is why she waited so long," Starsky stated, as he pushed off the desk and crossed back over to the coffee pot. "I mean, it's been what? Six-and-a-half years since Jerry Jennings died? Why now? Why not come after us then?"

"Or after Professor Jennings tried to take us out," Hutch agreed thoughtfully, tapping his pen on the desk blotter.

"I think I can answer that." Cheryl Jennings had slipped into the squadroom, a sheaf of papers in her hand.

Captain Dobeys stepped back from the desk and pulled out Starskys chair for Cheryl. She smiled and thanked him, then laid the papers before her. She looked up at the three men apologetically. "I don't think I can tell you how sorry I am for all—"

"Hey, none of that." Starsky sat in the chair next to the technician and gripped her hand. "How many times do we have to tell you before you believe us that we don't blame you for any of this?"

Cheryl nodded, but the grief never left her eyes. "I know. I just can't help feeling like there must have been something I could have done." She exhaled, as if to clear her misgivings, and picked up the top sheet of papers to hand to Captain Dobeys. "This might explain things."

"A death certificate?" Dobeys quickly scanned the document until he found the deceased's name. "Jerry *Worthington*? Who's that?"

"My nephew, who I never even knew existed until today." Cheryl looked from one partner to the other. "I don't know if you remember, but when we realized that the person you were looking for was Lindsay, I mentioned how I had tried several times to contact her after Jerry's funeral, but she wouldn't return my calls. Now I can guess why."

Cheryl pulled a birth certificate from the pile. "Six months after my brother went to jail, Lindsay had a baby."

Hutch shook his head in sympathy. "Why do you think she didn't contact you or your father? I'm sure you would have helped."

“Maybe she just couldn’t deal with it, Hutch. I found other documents in her things, including a doctor’s diagnosis. It looks like Lindsay was using drugs when the baby—Jerry—was born.” Cheryl’s voice tightened with emotion. “The baby was underweight and showing signs of drug withdrawal. He was born with Lindsay’s addiction. The hospital called in Protective Services and was going to take the baby away from her. That’s when she disappeared. Until now.”

“How’d your nephew die, Cheryl?” Starsky’s thumb stroked the back of Cheryl’s hand.

“I got a copy of the coroner’s report. It happened a little over six months ago. An accident, if you can call it that.” Cheryl’s voice shook with bitterness and loss. “Lindsay was stoned and ran a stop sign. Her car was broadsided and little Jerry was killed. It was her fault, but she lashed out against you instead.”

The three men exchanged glances of mixed emotions. Starsky finally spoke, “And that’s when everything fell apart.”

“That’s when *she* fell.” Hutch’s eyes locked with his partner’s. “And there was nobody there to catch her.”



“Is this it?”

Starsky nodded slowly, staring ahead. “This is it.”

Seemingly unaffected, Hutch glanced over at his partner, concerned by the tight lines around Starsky’s eyes and mouth. “We don’t have to do this.”

“I have to do this.”

They walked onto the bridge slowly. Starsky’s eyes were locked on the spot where Hutch had stood a few months before, poised to end his life. The January winds remained cold, and a light breeze lifted the hair from their foreheads. The sun shone brightly, contrasting the dark memory of that night. With each step, images of its unfolding events seemed to race before Starsky’s inner eye, like a myriad of slides clicking steadily forward. He hadn’t realized that he’d slowed to a stop until Hutch’s hand gripped his shoulder. That single touch broke through the memories that haunted him, and he was able to place his hand on top of Hutch’s and move forward to the railing of the bridge.

They leaned forward and peered down the hundreds of feet into the rolling and foaming river.

Hutch whistled low and grinned with morbid humor. “Good thing I don’t remember any of this. That would’ve hurt.”

“You don’t remember?”

“No, not really. Just the waves, I think.” Hutch shook his head then looked at his partner. If the tables had been turned, he wasn’t sure how he would be able to deal with images of Starsky prepared to kill himself.

Starsky met his friend’s probing gaze and read the concern there. “It’s getting easier.”

“Yeah?”

“Yeah.” Starsky smiled slightly to try and assure Hutch. “How ’bout you?”

“‘How ’bout me,’ what? I told you, I really don’t remember—”

“No, about all the rest of it. Being drugged again. Nearly dying *again*. Feeling guilty over something you had no control over *again*.” Starsky’s placid expression took the sting out of his words. “You want me to keep going?”

Hutch’s responding smile was self-effacing. “No, you’ve made your point. Am I that transparent?”

“Like a beer mug at Huggy’s when he actually washes them.”

“And then, only once a week.”

“Exactly.”

“Okay, I get it. I’m blaming myself. But, Starsk...” Hutch raised his hands in futility. “I can’t help thinking there was *something* I could’ve done. I should have known something was wrong with me and done something about it.”

Starsky turned toward his partner and leaned his weight against the bridge. “What? What could you have done?”

“I...I...” Hutch’s mind raced, but couldn’t connect with any clues he could have acted on. “I don’t know. There must have been something I could have done, should have done.”

Starsky’s voice was low. “Let it go.”

“Let what go? The guilt? The wondering ‘what if?’” Hutch shook his head. “It’s not that easy, Starsk. A woman’s dead because of—”

Starsky’s hand shot out and gripped his partner’s forearm. “Don’t. Lindsay Worthington did *not* die because of you. She didn’t die because you weren’t strong enough to hold on. She didn’t die because you weren’t smart enough to talk her down from the ledge. She

didn't die because you weren't fast enough, clever enough, good enough, have white enough shirts or fresh enough breath."

Starsky's morbid quip made Hutch smile lightly. "No?"

"No." Starsky loosened his grasp and turned back toward the swirling waters. "Lindsay Worthington died because, well, because she did. The lady had problems, Hutch, serious problems." He chuckled without humor. "You know, if she hadn't fallen off the roof and had gone to trial, some three-piece-suit lawyer would've told her to plead not guilty based on insanity. As if murder or attempted murder is a sane thing to do. Nope, you've just got to let it go, Hutch. If I didn't, I'd be as unhinged as she was."

"What did you need to let go of? You figured out what was going on."

"Yeah, but not until you nearly—" The sentence was cut short when Starsky's throat tightened. "I knew you weren't yourself. I tried to get you to talk to me or to the Department shrink, but maybe if I had tried harder, it would've never gone as far as it did. You wouldn't've been here that night."

"Starsk, you did everything short of tying me up, stuffing me in a closet, and smacking some sense into me. No, wait. That's pretty much what you did do." Hutch grinned and was pleased to get a similar response from his partner. "All right, I get it. If the tables were turned, I'd be second-guessing myself as well."

Starsky reached into his pocket and withdrew a photo and a crumpled piece of paper. He kept the paper for himself and extended the photograph to his partner. "Here."

"What's this?" Hutch asked as he accepted the picture. Turning it over revealed the bright, cheerful faces of Jerry Jennings and Lindsay Worthington. Jerry stood behind Lindsay with his arms wrapped around her shoulders. Their smiles boasted of their love for one another and their hope for the future.

"That's them before dope ruined their lives. That's what should have been." Starsky held up the crumpled paper. "This is the note I found on you that night on the bridge."

Hutch peered at the page in surprise, unsettled by the erratic version of his own handwriting. "What's it say?"

"It's directions to this bridge. It brought you here."

"You kept that?"

"Yeah." Starsky stared hard at the nearly illegible scrawl. Hutch could see that the page seemed to embody his partner's fears and the lingering self-condemnation. He placed his hand on Starsky's shoulder as both men stared at the items in their hands.

“So,” Hutch said quietly. “Just let it go, huh?”

Starsky met his gaze, his mouth lifting in a small smile of encouragement.

The two turned back toward the water and, without speaking, lifted the crumpled note and photograph out over the guardrail of the bridge. A gust of wind coaxed the pages from their hands and gently tumbled them before they landed on the rolling water below.

They watched as the tide embraced the last remnants of that night and carried them away.

As they left the bridge behind them, Starsky casually mentioned that they had one more stop to make before heading over to The Pits for dinner. Hutch looked at him quizzically but, when his partner offered no more explanation than that, agreed to go along with whatever plans Starsky had made.



Still healing from the aftereffects of the past months, Hutch dozed off in the familiar and comforting rhythm of the Torino as they headed back into the city. It wasn't until Starsky had circled his block in Venice, trying to find a place to park on the busy street, that he woke up to look blearily around. Hutch yawned and stretched as they walked toward his apartment, and asked what they were doing there.

Starsky merely grinned mysteriously and stated, “Trust me.”

As they climbed the narrow stairwell, the sounds of chatter and music escalated. When Hutch asked again what was going on, Starsky merely laughed and surged past his friend to throw open the unlocked door to the apartment.

A party was in full swing as they entered, and Hutch was immediately swarmed by friends and co-workers. Surrounded by the boisterous laughter and good-natured chatter, Hutch felt something within him settle into place, like the last piece of a puzzle linking the picture whole again.

Accepting a beer from Minnie as she glided by, setting her sights on making small talk with a new patrolman she was interested in, Hutch took a long drink and looked around his apartment with contentment. He wasn't surprised to find Starsky watching him from across the room as he spoke with one of the stewardesses Hutch sometimes went out with when she had a layover. Only half-listening to the woman's cheerful diatribe, Starsky raised his own beer in a small salute to Hutch and took a drink.

Hutch smiled and, with a nod, returned the gesture and drank. They'd been to Hell and back—again—and he didn't know what might lie before them. What he did know, he knew soul-deep: they'd face it together. And no matter what happened, if he should ever fall again, Starsky would be there to catch him.

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