

Rules of the Assignment

Musings from Starsky vs Hutch

by Brit

The way I see it, there are certain rules in life. A code of conduct. Some of them are written down, like federal laws. Things that you do or don't do because it benefits the greater societal good. Laws that we've sworn to uphold. *Thou shall not murder. Thou shall not steal. Thou not mess with a person's partner.* Those are the rules that go with the assignment.

Other rules aren't written down. Unspoken ones, I guess. Like what you do and don't do because you know that's the way things are. Like some things between friends. Between us. *Thou shall not ever give thy partner reason to doubt you...*

Now ever since we've been partners, we played fast and loose with the written rules. Rules about how an officer of the law conducts himself while on assignment. Some of those rules are impossible. Some are just plain stupid, and some...well, it doesn't hurt to stretch them a little, especially if it means we get the results we need. Stretched the rules. Ripped them a bit, maybe. But never out and out broke them. Well, not on purpose anyway. Often.

But we've never—and I mean *ever*—broken the unwritten ones when it came to us. The rules about friendship. The rules about respect. The rules about trust.

Until now.

Now, it's like they never even existed. Before Kira, before *this* got in the way, we always knew when to stop. Draw the line on how far we'd go, you know, with the jokes, competing with each other at ball or pool, vying for a lady's phone number, crap like that. There was always that unspoken code—the *rules of the assignment*—we held on to, lived by. The only time we ever came close to blowing it out of the water was with that stupid stunt of yours after I crashed the Torino. *Amnesia—of all the asinine stunts, Hutch!* But it didn't go too far, and I knew I was partly to blame and I forgave you for reacting out of anger. And hurt. And fear. You were as afraid for me as well as yourself. I can understand those things. You lashed out to pay me back for what I did—that I was careless. But this...*this!* What did I do to deserve this from you?

I tried to remind you at the apartment and the dancehall, remember? This was all going too far. Either you follow the rules of the assignment or you find yourself another assignment. You know I meant that for both the written rules and the unspoken ones. You called me a stuffed shirt. I never would of believed the choice you made. *Never.*

It was so weird this morning. Awkward. I can't remember a time I was *awkward* around you. Hutch, didn't you hear me? I said "I love her." How much clearer did I need to be? *What happened to the rules of "me and thee?"*

I can't tell you how I felt when I pulled up outside of her place and saw your car there. It felt like somebody put a knife in my gut and twisted it. I remember closing my eyes and thinking, "No, no it can't be like that. Maybe they got a lead on the assignment while I was picking up a present for Kira. That's got to be it." But when I walked in the door and asked where you were, it was obvious she was nervous, that she didn't want me there. But when you walked out of her bedroom with your shirt untucked....

It was like....

It was like every time that you were sick or missing. The feelings of helplessness and horror all came rushing back to me and it made me sick. Man, I never wanted to puke so badly in my entire life. Then knowing you had been taken and me being so stupid helpless to do anything about it. During those times, *and there were so many, buddy*, I thought I was going to lose my mind because you had been taken away from me and I couldn't get you back. Only this time, it was worse. This time, you weren't taken away.

You *gave* yourself away. And in the process you gave *us* away as well.

Tell me, was it worth it?

I hated you like I never thought I could. I *trusted* you. Trust was the one line we agreed never to cross, the one rule we vowed we'd never break. And it was so easy for you, wasn't it? Do you know...do you have any idea what this did to me? *To us?* Do you know how hard it is for me to tell people that I love them? Do you? Besides my family, do you know how many people I have actually told "I love you" to?

Five.

Helen. Terry. Rosie. Kira.

You.

But you broke the rules, pal. They're broken and I don't know how to fix it. I'm not so sure I can. And worse than that, I'm not so sure you want it fixed. Whenever life gets screwed up I bring it to you and you're the one who unscrambles it and makes it right. No matter what, it's been "me and thee." And now...somehow, now there is no more "me and thee." It's back to just "me," and I don't know how do that anymore. Everything I believed in, all the rules that defined my life...they're all gone like there never were there.

Yesterday, I said *the way I see it, you come in to this world alone, you go through it alone*. I didn't mean it. But now I know I was right—maybe those are the rules after all.

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