

The Call
From Sweet Revenge
by Brit

There's something wrong.

I can't explain. I don't even understand it, but there's definitely something *wrong*. I can just...well, feel it. Usually he's the one that operates on those "gut feelings." Not me. I'm the brains of this outfit: the thinker, the analytical. Not the half that runs around half-cocked because they "felt something."

Right, who am I kidding? I'll take my partner's intuition over the worthless piece of paper I call my degree any day. If I had half the brains I claim to have I would've figured out who was behind this already instead of sitting here in this darkened office with a stupid ping pong ball. I should be sorting through that mountain of case files which might actually give me a lead. But my brain's not working. It's just me, the ping pong ball, my overactive gut, and the empty chair across from me. My partner's empty chair.

Geez, why does this office feel like a tomb all of a sudden? And why do I feel like there's something wrong? Maybe I should call the hospital.

Don't be stupid. You haven't been away that long. Huggy or Dobby would've called if ...if anything.... Dear God if anything more were to happen to him, anything else, if we lose him I'd—

I'd what? Give up? Go on without him? If there's no "him," there's no "us." And if there's no "us," then is there still a "me?"

You're being maudlin, Hutchinson. Of course you're still you. It's just that the you who's half of a whole is a far sight better than who you are on your own. Then why do I feel like only half a man here?

Oh, stop it! You've got work to do. Quit staring at his chair and get back to the files. You're never gonna find out who killed...who shot him this way. Maybe I should call the hospital. Except that Huggy and Dobby will think I'm nuts. The hairs on my arm and the back of my neck just stood up. My gut keeps wrenching around. What's going on with me?

Probably losing it, Hutchinson. Too much pressure, too much stress. Too much, too fast. Too much blood. His blood on my hands. My own blood joining his.

Oh, God—why is my chest so tight it feels like my heart stopped beating? Too much coffee. Maybe Starsky's finally given me an ulcer.

Starsk. The ping pong ball feels hot in my hands and reminds me that I owe you dinner. I owe you a heckofalot more than that. I owe you...I can't begin to tell you what I owe you, pal. Hang on, Starsk. I need a few more years to pay you back.

I'll call. It can't hurt to call the hospital, just to check in, find out how's he's coming. I want to be there when he wakes up. I'll just call. Why are my hands shaking so badly? I can hardly dial the numbers. Take a breath, Hutchinson. Act like you're just casually checking in and not that you're about to jump out of your skin and scream because you know that something's terribly wrong and your gut's about to explode. Dial. Relax your hand before you crush the ball. Clear your throat, keep your voice normal. Take a breath. Ask for Dobby.

"How's he doing, Cap'n?"