

The Home Team
From Starsky's Brother
by Brit

As I watched the back of my brother's head disappear into the crowd boarding the New York-bound flight, it occurred to me how much we look alike. Well, at least from the back, anyway. But for the most part, the resemblance is there. We're about the same height and build, dark, down-cast eyes, noses crooked from unnatural causes. But I guess the resemblance stops with the physical. Nicky and I are like night and, well...I was gonna say *day*, but that ain't it. Maybe we're more like the opposite sides of the same coin—cast of the same stuff but completely different views. Or what was it he said earlier? *Two apples from the same tree*. Man, I must be tired if I'm starting to sound like a certain blond philosopher.

My brother, Nicky: The Visiting Team.

That strikes me funny somehow, that Hutch and I are the "home team," and Nick, the visiting one. I guess I never really thought too much about it, but New York's not home any more. Not the stadium for the home team. Hasn't been since...since I don't know when. I hated California when I first got here. Hated the heat, hated the people, hated it for not being New York. Now New York was the other side of the world. Something I heard about in the evening news. Buried and almost forgotten, like the little Davey Starsky Nicky expected to find here on the West Coast, only all grown up. That little boy died along side his father and childhood was ripped away by selfish, callous people. Only the man remained.

The man and his partner. *The Home Team*.

You can pick your friends, but you can't pick your relatives—right, Hutch?

Hutch. I smile a little as I turn away from the boarding gate and head to the rows of plastic seats in the waiting area. Hutch made the excuse of going to get coffee. It had been a long night after all, with Nicky pulling his latest crap. That, and an all-night pool hustle. Nicky is good for something after all, I guess. I'm sure Hutch just wanted to give me and Nick a minute to say our goodbyes. There's a tension between the two of them, but I'm not sure exactly why. I'm not so full of myself to think that there's hostility between them over me. I just don't think they like each other.

I mean, it's not like I have to choose between them. But I guess if I were completely honest, I already have. Already did without a thought. "*You're the visiting team, Nick.*" The Visiting Team from New York. Not here. Not home.

You know, I never thought about going back to New York after I joined the academy. I mean, I always knew I'd become a cop, no doubt in my mind. Growing up though, I just figured I'd be with the NYPD, like Pop was. Maybe even Nicky, too. Boy, is that a

laugh now. Maybe even be Pop's partner some day, us Starskys terrorizing the bad guys through the streets of The City. If only Pop hadn't...if only....

Awh, Pop—what if you hadn't died?

I guess I'd be in New York right now, pounding the blacktop there. Comin' over to share shabbat with you and ma. I never would have been destroyed. Never would have come to California. Never would have joined Bay City. Never would have...

Never would have met Hutch.

The enormity of that dumps me into one of the plastic orange seats. Pop, if you hadn't died, I never would have met Hutch. We never would have been partners. We never would have been best friends. Was it worth my losing—*no! No, I won't even....*there's no comparison to make and it's stupid and wrong to even think in those terms. I can't place a value on your life and our friendship.

It's a scale I don't have to balance, so I'm not even gonna try, Pop. I'm just sorry you're gone.

I still miss you. So I guess if you had to go, its okay that I turned out where I did. The way I did. I'm glad I'm here with my partner. I'm glad that he found me. I'm grateful that he reached out to be my best friend when I didn't think I could ever let anyone "in" again, you know? Losing you and everything else that happened back then...closing myself off was the only way to keep the pain at bay, Pop. It was easier not to let anyone be too close. Better protection against getting...well, destroyed again. Until him. Until Hutch. He was worth the risk.

I can't wait 'til I can introduce you to him. But, not yet—someday. We've got too much to do here yet. Too many things to make right. Too many games to play. To win.

I look away from the hands clenched in my lap. I've been staring at them for I don't know how long.

Oh, here he comes. You know I can sense The Blintz coming without even seeing him? Weird, huh? I look down the hallway and see the top of his blond head above the oncoming crowd.

The Home Team takes the field.

5/5/00