

The Cost of Valor

By TibbieB and Brit

The Torino eased up to the curb and came to a stop before the building, the engine rumbling as Starsky sat behind the wheel dressed in his best jacket and tie. He waited only seconds before the passenger door opened and Hutch slid in beside him without a word. A palpable silence hung between them, and both men stared ahead dreading the task before them.

Starsky was the first to speak, his voice barely above a whisper. “Are you ready for this?”

Taking a deep breath, Hutch turned and gazed out the window toward the building, wanting nothing more at that moment than to go back inside. “No,” he answered. “No more than you are. But we have to be there.”

Starsky nodded. “Then let’s get it over with.”



The room was a sea of blue and black, and while most were seated, there was a restlessness throughout, dreading what was to come.

Starsky and Hutch paused in the entryway. Before the young man in a somber gray suit could reach them, they took a seat at the back of the gathering. Hutch folded his hands in his lap, then sat staring at them as if to find some answer there. Uncomfortable, and not just because of his suit, Starsky pulled at the knot of his tie, drawing it away from his throat as much as he dared.

It wasn’t long before the young man approached them again. “Excuse me, but I’ve been asked to bring you to the front.”

The partners nodded, almost surprised by the request, and quietly made their way to the front of the long room to join the woman who had sent the messenger. The still-raw grief in her eyes as she watched their approach wasn’t lost on them, but all they could do was reach out and grip her trembling hands.

“He would have wanted you to sit with us,” she said, her voice tender yet resolute. “He considered the two of you family.” Neither man could trust his voice to reply, so they just nodded their understanding and took their place in the pew beside her son.

The minister, a small wiry man with silver-gray hair and sympathetic brown eyes stepped up to the podium wearing the traditional dark robe, a worn Bible in his right hand.

“Dear friends, shall we begin?” he said, looking at the grieving woman and the two children she clutched protectively on either side of her.

Edith nodded and the service began.



The message the pastor gave reminded the mourners of the faith Harold Dobey had clung to throughout his life and its promise of a new life to come. Hymns were sung by those gathered and Scripture passages read, before the podium was turned over to any who wanted to come forward and share some of their memories of the fallen hero.

Family members, friends, and colleagues all trickled forward, including the mayor of the city and the police commissioner, extolling the captain’s bravery in the line of duty and his impact on Bay City. Some of the remembrances were somber, others lighter, drawing appreciative chuckles from the crowd. After many mourners had come forward, a slight lull occurred, and Edith looked expectantly at Starsky and Hutch, knowing the weight both men carried in losing their friend and mentor.

After a moment, Starsky rose stiffly and approached the lectern. He glanced uncomfortably at the group before clearing his throat.

“I, uh...there’s so many things I could say about the captain. There are a lot of things I’m going to miss about him. I think I’m even going to miss him yelling at me.” Starsky managed to smile at the small family in the front pew. “Which he did—*a lot*.”

This brought another smattering of light, appreciative laughter from the crowd. The partners had been the bane of Dobey’s existence—and his greatest reward. Starsky looked at Hutch and saw a tear slip inconspicuously down his cheek, even as his trembling lips turned up in a half-smile.

“Cap’n Dobey was the kind of man you couldn’t help but admire,” Starsky began. “The, uh, the only thing he loved more than bein’ a cop was being a husband and a father.” Starsky’s eyes sought Edith’s, the pain he saw there intensifying his own grief. “He was always there for his men, just like he was always there for his family. Just like....”

Starsky swallowed hard. “Just like he was always there for *me*. Even when I didn’t ask him to be. Even when I didn’t deserve him to be. He meant...I just wish I had told him....”

Emotion closed off his throat and he couldn’t continue. Wanting so much to honor his friend and mentor, Starsky could not step down from the podium with so much left unsaid. He hadn’t realized how much time had passed while he silently stood before the crowd until he sensed the familiar presence by his side.

Hutch rested his hand on Starsky's forearm and left it there as he spoke, giving as much comfort as he was receiving by the contact. "I don't know if many of you know about the first time I met the captain. I had just been transferred to the Ninth, right after making detective. He took one look at me and just told me to have a seat at one of the desks in the squadroom." Hutch grinned lightly. "The same desk I've been sitting at for nearly ten years now, actually. Well, a couple of minutes later, this *noise* comes rolling down the hall. It was the captain, all but dragging *this* guy..." Hutch cast a quick nod in Starsky's direction...."chewing him out for who-knows-what."

"I knew what." Starsky grinned at the memory, nodding his head at Hutch's narration. "But it wasn't my fault."

"It never is, is it?" Hutch's quip brought gentle laughter from the crowd. "Anyway, he all but shoves Starsky into the room, then glares at me—like I'm the one who did something wrong—and says 'Hutchinson, he's all yours! Try not to get each other killed.' That was the captain's way of introducing me to my new partner. Then he said, 'Try not to prove me wrong'."

Starsky's eyes crinkled at the memory. "Boy, was I ticked. College boy like you. No street smarts. I told Dobey he was making a huge mistake."

Hutch glanced back over at Starsky. "Best mistake he ever made."

Starsky tilted his head slightly, his gaze far away for a second. "Truth of the matter is," he said, "that was one of the cap'n's strengths. He knew people—most of the time, better than they knew themselves. He saw something in the two of us that made him sense that we'd be better cops working together as partners than either one of us could have ever been on his own. And he had faith in us," Starsky said, his eyes misty now, as he looked out over the crowd. "When the chips were down, we knew he would *always* be in our corner."

Hutch's hand moved to Starsky's shoulder. "Even though we sometimes don't play by the rules," he added, "he knew in his heart that we were just trying to do our job. And protecting this city and its people was what really mattered to the captain."

Both men were silent for a moment. Quiet weeping drifted from the front row as both Rosie and Cal moved closer to their mother, sensing her need for their touch.

Starsky cleared his throat once again and looked at his partner for reassurance before continuing. "I guess what we're tryin' to say is, Cap'n Dobey was a man of honor. He lived his life in a way that makes us proud to have served under him, and even more proud to have had the privilege to call him our friend."

When his partner faltered again, Hutch picked up the thread. As he did so, he withdrew Dobey's gold shield from his coat pocket and held it before him, his thumb lightly

running across its scarred face. “The captain dedicated his life to making this city better than it was when he first joined the force. Captain Dobey—”

A realization struck Hutch, and he smiled fondly. “*Captain Dobey*. I just realized that for as long as I knew him, that’s the only way I’d ever addressed him. For all our years of service *and friendship*, I never once called him ‘Harold’.”

Starsky and many of their peers chuckled again, instantly understanding what Hutch was expressing. After a moment, Hutch continued. “Harold. Somehow, that just doesn’t sound right. *Captain Dobey* was a force to be reckoned with. Fair, just, patient when you least expected it, and no one you wanted to mess with when he stood his ground.”

Hutch’s focus turned to the family. “He gave his *strength* to serving justice—he embodied what the badge stood for. He gave his *heart* to Rosie and Cal, and the love of his life, Edith. He gave his *life*...” Hutch’s voice caught. “...for *us*.”

Silence hung within the congregation for a moment as the partners stepped down from the dais. It was evident that their recent injuries still hampered their movements, but could not mar their solemn dignity as they moved toward the family in the front pew. When they stopped directly before Edith and the children, Hutch took Cal’s hand and gently pressed his father’s gold shield into it. “He wanted you to have this.”

Tears streamed down the teenager’s face as he clutched the badge. Once Starsky and Hutch took their places next to Cal, the pastor returned to the podium.

“The Lord Himself tells us in the Gospel of John, ‘Greater love has no man than this, than to lay down his life for his friends.’ Let us pray....”



The End?