

A Few Surprises

By Linda B.

“Oh, my!” Rachel Starsky’s hands covered her mouth. “Davey! What are you doing here? And Ken...”

“Hi, Ma!” Dave Starsky threw his arms around his mother. “Surprise!”

Rachel pulled her son tightly to her and then stepped back to glare at him. “What do you mean, ‘surprise?’ Do you want to give your mother a heart attack?”

The twinkle in Rachel Starsky’s eyes was obvious to Hutch as she looked beyond her son to wink at him. He returned her smile, knowing she was pleased despite what she said.

Starsky held his mother at arm’s length. “You’re lookin’ good, Ma. Whatcha been doing? You got a new man?”

Rachel smacked her son on his forearm and laughed. “Get out of here! A man? Ken, what have you been teaching my son?”

“Now, now...don’t blame it on me, Mrs. St-Starsky,” Hutch stammered.

Realizing that she’d embarrassed her son’s best friend, Rachel reached for Hutch’s arm and led him into the living room. “I’m just teasing, Ken. And remember, you’re supposed to call me Rachel. You’re part of the family; no reason to be so formal. Come now, both of you make yourselves at home. I was just gonna put the coffee on. I’m sure there’s some cake or sweet rolls left from yesterday.” Rachel headed into the kitchen.

Starsky grinned at Hutch, then slumped onto the couch and placed his feet on the coffee table. He patted the seat next to him. “Here, have a seat. Told ya Ma would be surprised.”

“Well, who wouldn’t be? You never called to tell her we were coming, Starsk.”

“There wasn’t time, remember? Dobby sent us out here at the last minute.”

“So why are you here? How long are you staying?” Rachel called out as she glanced through the kitchen doorway into the living room. “And why didn’t you call me ahead of time, David? You know I would have made your favorite meal.”

Hutch leaned over to Starsky and whispered, “You must be in trouble; she called you David.”

Starsky grinned mischievously. “It won’t last, just watch.”

As his mom entered the room, Starsky stood up. “Here, Ma, let me help you with that.” He took the wooden tray filled with coffee cups, cheesecake, and cinnamon rolls from her hands and placed it on the coffee table. “Just give me a chance and I’ll explain.”

Rachel wiped her hands on her flowered apron and beamed at her son. “I still can’t believe you’re here, and you too, Ken.” She looked approvingly at both of them and bent down to pick up a cup. “Here you are, Ken. Do you like it black?”

“Yes, ma’am.” Hutch took the cup and sipped on the hot coffee. It had been a late night and early morning for them, and the coffee felt warm and satisfying.

Rachel watched her son stir in several spoons of sugar and shook her head. “So tell me...”

“Okay, okay.” Starsky held up his hand indicating it would be just a second, as he took a sip of coffee and sighed his approval. “Well, it happened like this...late yesterday afternoon we, Hutch and me, were gettin’ ready to call it quits for the day, when Captain Dobey...you remember Captain Dobey, don’t ya?” At his mother’s nod, Starsky continued, “Well, Captain Dobey called us in his office and said this prisoner had to be in New York by this morning for a court appearance. One of the two officers who were supposed to bring ‘im got sick, so Dobey assigned us the task. Only thing was, we had about twenty minutes to go home, pack a bag, and get to the jail to pick up the prisoner, and then we headed straight to the airport. We barely made the plane.” Starsky stopped to take another sip of coffee and a bite of cheesecake.

Rachel waited expectantly and Hutch decided to fill the void. “Well, it wasn’t a direct flight to begin with, and then we had a delay in Chicago. It was almost midnight before we left Chicago for New York. By the time we landed, got the prisoner to the jail, processed in and bedded down, it was almost...” Hutch looked down at his watch to calculate the time change. “...eight a.m. Starsk...uh, *we* never had a chance to call.”

Starsky swallowed a second bite before he joined in. “Hutch is right, Ma. We would’ve called if we could’ve. Honest. There just wasn’t time.”

Rachel’s look shifted between the two of them and she frowned. “That means you haven’t slept and probably haven’t eaten, and here I am chattering away.”

“It’s okay, Ma.” Starsky set his cup down and reached for her hands. “This tastes great and we took turns sleeping on the plane. We managed to convince Dobey to let us have a full day here before taking a flight home tomorrow morning at eight.”

“That soon? Couldn’t your boss have given you some extra time? Maybe I should call him.”

Starsky straightened and hurried to reassure her. “No, you don’t have to call him. He was really being kind giving us an entire day, wasn’t he, Hutch? He knew I’d want to see you, but we can’t stay here at the taxpayers’ expense. It wouldn’t be right.”

“Well, I guess not, but it certainly doesn’t give us much time, especially when you need to sleep.”

“That’s okay, Rachel, we don’t need a lot of sleep. We’re used to getting by on just a little,” Hutch explained. The words brought a worried look to Rachel’s eyes, and Hutch immediately regretted saying them. He didn’t mean to give her another reason to worry about her son.

“Well, I’m hosting a small party tonight, and I don’t want you boys falling asleep in the middle of it.”

“A party?” Starsky’s face lit up. “Who’s comin’?”

“It’s just a neighborhood get-together, not much of a party really. You remember the O’Brien’s? Lived three houses down--”

“Sure, Colleen and I used to play together all the time. But I thought they moved away.”

“Colleen got married and moved to Virginia. She’s in town this week at her mother’s. She has a little baby girl, and all the neighbors are dying to see her. So, I’ve invited everyone over here.”

“That’s really nice, Ma.”

“Well, that means you two need to get upstairs and get some sleep. Much as I want to spend some time with my boy, I have food to get ready and the house to clean.”

Hutch glanced around the living room and defied anyone to find a shred of dust or anything out of place. “Everything looks great to me, Rachel.”

“What would a couple of bachelors know? Come, come. You two need to get some rest. Nicky is out of town visiting some friends for a couple days, so you can use his bed, Ken.” Rachel stood and herded them toward the stairway.

“Isn’t there something we can help with?” Starsky asked. He held onto the banister, hesitant to go upstairs.

“Later I’ll need your help setting up. Right now, I just need to bake and you’d be in the way. Besides, your eyelids are starting to droop and you look like you’re going to fall asleep standing there.”

Hutch chuckled at Rachel's apt description. His partner did look like death warmed over. Starsky had managed only a few hours of sleep on the flight, and dark circles were beginning to appear under his eyes.

Starsky glared at him. "What are you laughing about, buddy? You don't look much better than me."

"I know, Starsk, but I agree with your mom. We need to get some sleep, or in a couple hours we'll be useless. Besides, she wants to show you off to all her friends and neighbors. Right, Rachel?" At her nod, Hutch continued, "If you get some sleep and shave off that five o'clock shadow..." Starsky unconsciously ran his hand across his face. "...you'll be ready to turn on that Starsky charm for everyone."

"Okay, okay. Let's go." Starsky gave Hutch a push. "Grab the bags by the door and I'll show you Nicky's room."

Rachel smiled and motioned for them to head upstairs. "Good boys. Get some sleep now."



Starsky rolled over in bed and stretched. He opened one eye and quickly squeezed it shut again. He grabbed the pillow and flung it over his head to keep out the light. It took him a moment to realize he was in his bed, not his bed in Bay City, but in New York. He pulled the pillow back and glanced around the room, trying to remember the how and why of his being there. Running his hand through his hair, he looked at the clock on the nightstand and realized it was 3:00 in the afternoon.

He could hear the sound of the radio playing in the kitchen, and he smelled cookies baking. The realization that he was home in New York, smelling the aromas and hearing the sounds of yesteryear, flooded him with memories. He felt like a little boy again and he wasn't ready to get out of bed yet. It was fun to relax into the sights, sounds, and smells and to pretend he was back in time and a kid again. Time to grab a baseball glove and a ball, and head...

Suddenly, he heard Hutch humming in the next room and smiled. Why should he go back in time? Today, with his best friend, was where he wanted to be. There'd been a lot of pain and sorrow in this place, too, and it was easier to push the memories back than bring them to the forefront and face them. No, Hutch was in the next room, his mother downstairs, and there would be a neighborhood get-together soon. Living in today was much better.

Starsky pushed back the blankets and stood up. He grabbed his jeans off the back of the desk chair and slid one leg into them. He was inserting his second foot, when there was a knock on the door. He moved toward the door and tripped. "Just a sec," he called out, as he grabbed onto the back of the chair to support himself. Straightening up, he inserted his

foot the rest of the way. “Be right there,” he said, as he zipped and buttoned his pants before pulling the door open.

Hutch stood there. “Hey, buddy, I thought I’d heard a noise coming from your room.”

“How long you been up?”

“Only about forty-five minutes. I took a quick shower and shaved. Just wanted to let you know the bathroom was free.”

“Uh, thanks. Ma need any help?”

“I was about to go down and see. Why don’t you shower? I’ll tell her you’re up and moving around and will be down in a few minutes.”

“Thanks.” As Hutch turned to head down the stairs, Starsky called after him, “And don’t eat all the goodies by yourself; leave some for the company.”

“You mean leave some for you.”

Starsky grinned sheepishly.

“Well, if I know your mom, I’ll bet she’s made double, so there’ll be plenty for us to take home.”

“True, true. Tell her I’ll be down in a few minutes.”



“Davey, put those folding chairs over here.” Rachel pointed to the corner of the dining room. “Ken, I need you to help me put the food on the table, please. Follow me into the kitchen.”

Starsky rolled his eyes and laughed, as he watched Hutch follow his mother. At the sound of the doorbell, he hurried to the door.

“Mrs. Herkowitz, come on in.” Starsky held open the door for his neighbor. “Here, let me take that platter from you.”

“What are you doing here, David Starsky? Your mother didn’t tell me you were home.”

“Just got in this morning; it was a surprise.”

“Maxine? Is that you?” Rachel rushed to the door. “Isn’t it wonderful? Now we have two surprises to celebrate. Davey here...” she patted his cheek “...and Colleen and her baby. Davey, you can put that food on the dining room table.”

Starsky shook his head, delighted to see his mother so happy, and went into the dining room. He looked at Hutch. "It's gonna be a long night."

"Just remember we have to be up early to make that eight o'clock flight. Dobe won't accept any excuses if we're late."

Fifteen minutes later, the room was filled with chattering people. Hutch was overwhelmed at the friendliness of everyone. In Minnesota, the neighbors were polite but not overly demonstrative. Here, they welcomed him with hugs and seemed to know an amazing amount about him. *Starsky must tell his mother everything during his weekly calls, and then she must share it with everyone she knows*, he thought. *I'm gonna have to talk to him about that.*

"Hutch, Hutch!" Starsky waved frantically at him. "Come here. I want you to meet Colleen."

Hutch weaved between the guests, finally making it to the front door.

"This is Colleen O'Brien, I mean Colleen Greenley, Hutch. We used to play baseball together as kids. Colleen, this is my best friend, Hutch. Uh, Ken Hutchinson."

Hutch extended his hand to the pretty, petite red-haired woman standing next to his partner. She took his hand, but pulled him into a big hug. "I feel like I've always known you. David's mother is always talking about you."

Hutch glared at his partner over her shoulder, but Starsky didn't blush, he just looked on proudly. "It's nice to meet you, too, Colleen. Starsky told me you're quite the baseball player."

Colleen laughed. "Make that *used* to be quite a baseball player—"

"So where's this beautiful baby I've heard so much about?" Starsky interrupted.

Colleen glanced around the room trying to spot someone. "I think Grandma has her."

"Well, I should have guessed that. C'mon, let's go find her." Starsky patted Hutch on the shoulder and let him follow Colleen through the crowd.

As they reached the dining room, Starsky could hear his mother's voice coming from a small group in the corner. "Oh, Katherine, she looks just like Colleen as a baby. She even has her dimple and strawberry blonde hair."

The group parted as they approached, and Rachel looked up at her son. "Isn't she beautiful, Davey? Looks just like her mother."

Starsky took the baby from his mother and rested her against his chest. “What’s her name?” He patted her on the back and tried bouncing her up and down, afraid she’d begin to cry.

“Shannon,” Colleen replied, as she wiped the baby’s mouth with a cloth. “You look pretty natural there, David.”

“Don’t let it go to your head, buddy,” Hutch said. “Looks to me like you need some more practice.” The baby had just wound up and let out a cry. Hutch laughed as Starsky quickly handed the baby back to her mother.

“I think she needs to eat,” Colleen said. “Rachel, is there a room I could use for a little while to feed the baby?”

“Of course, dear, let me take you upstairs to David’s bedroom. You can have some privacy there.”

“Ma,” Starsky protested, “I didn’t have time to make the bed...”

Colleen laughed. “It’ll be just like old times, David. You never made it as a kid.”



Hutch placed the refilled coffee pot on the table and turned to Mrs. Starsky, “Anything else you need me to do?”

“No thank you, you’ve been so helpful already. Here, let me refill your cup. You sure you don’t want a beer? I think Nicky has a few in the basement.”

“No, this will do fine.” Hutch held out his cup and then took a cookie to munch on. He turned and leaned back against the dining room table. From there, he could see Starsky sitting on the couch, his feet propped up on the coffee table, and Shannon nestled against his legs. He leaned forward, eyes intent on the tiny jewel he held. Hutch couldn’t hear him, but he imagined Starsky cooing to the baby and smiled. Starsky’s left hand was moving in the air, tiny fingers wound tightly around his index finger.

“He looks pretty natural, doesn’t he?”

Hutch nodded. “Sure does. Your son loves kids and they love him. He talks about wanting a family.”

“I know, and that’s why I keep wondering when he’s going to make me a grandmother.”

Hutch laughed. “Oh, I’m sure that’s not too far off.”

Rachel raised an eyebrow. “Is that so? What aren’t you telling me?”

Hutch blushed. “Why—”

“Is there something I don’t know? He’s always got a new girlfriend. I lose track of them. Are you telling me he has a steady girlfriend?”

“Uhhmm.” Hutch set the cup down on the table and tried to figure out a gracious way to leave.

“Oh, it’s okay, you don’t have to tell me. I’d just like to see him settle down with someone.”

“I think he should tell you himself.”

“Look at him over there, making silly faces at that baby.” Both Rachel and Hutch laughed at Starsky’s antics. “He’s just a big kid himself.”

“Well, I can’t argue with that. I am sorry we have to leave so quickly, but we really have to get back. Besides work, we have a basketball game tomorrow night.”

“A basketball game? I thought baseball was Davey’s game.”

“Oh, it is, only we made a promise to be at a school to help at a basketball game.”

“How nice.” Rachel observed her son a few minutes. “Is she a teacher?”

Hutch almost choked on the bite of cookie he’d taken. He hesitated and then answered, “Yes, she’s a teacher.”

“It must be serious, if he hasn’t told me about her. Is she nice?”

“Terry’s a great person.”

“Terry. What a nice name.”

Hutch, realizing he’d revealed way too much, cautioned her, “Rachel, I shouldn’t have said anything. It’s your son’s place to tell you, not mine. Don’t let on—”

Rachel patted his arm. “Don’t worry, I won’t say a word.” She walked away mumbling, “Terry Starsky. Has a nice ring to it.”



“C’mon, Starsk. Grab a pillow and get in your seat. Everyone’s waiting for us, so the plane can take off.”

“It’s not my fault we almost missed the plane. You were still eating when the cab pulled up.” Starsky carefully set the pastry box filled with his mother’s goodies on the overhead shelf and reached for a pillow.

“I know, but I enjoy your mother’s cooking.”

“And she loves you for it, Blondie.” Starsky settled into his seat and snapped his seatbelt in place. “I can’t wait until we get back. I hope Terry won’t be upset that we missed practice yesterday.”

“She’ll understand. Besides, we’ll make it to the big game today. Don’t worry. The Blond Blintz’s Buffalo’s will win.”

“I know.” Starsky grinned at him. “You know, it’s only been two days, and I’m really missing her.”

“Maybe she’s the one.”

“Yeah...maybe. At least I’m beginning to think so.”

“Did you tell your mom about her?”

“Heck, no, if I did, that’s all she’d ask about.” Starsky picked out the in-flight magazine from the pocket in front of him and started to flip through it. “I want to be sure first.”

Hutch, eager to change the subject, said, “Colleen seems like a lot of fun. So you two were baseball buddies?”

“Yep, she had one hell of an arm. She played out in left field, and I’d cover second or play shortstop. She could hit the ball out of the field, too. Her tiny size always fooled the other team, but not for long.” Starsky paused. “Shannon sure is a beautiful baby.”

“She certainly is. Don’t worry, you’ll have a little bundle one day.” Hutch opened the book he’d brought along and started to read.

Starsky laid his magazine in his lap and glanced at his partner. “Hutch, did you say anything to Ma about me and Terry?”

“Why? Do you think I would?” Hutch kept his eyes on his book.

Starsky looked out the window, watching the ground grow smaller as the plane ascended into the air. “I guess not, but it was kinda strange. Last night, before everyone left, Ma sat on the couch next to me while I held Shannon. She joked about cute baby names. She said she liked names like Ann Marie Starsky, Molly Starsky, and the last one she mentioned was Terry Starsky. Said that was her favorite. Kind of surprised me, and I thought it was a little odd. What do you think?”

Hutch never looked up from his book. “I don’t think it’s strange, Starsk. It’s probably just coincidence. I kind of like the name myself.”

The End