

After Thanksgiving Sale

By Linda B.

“Tasted real good, Hutch. Thanks,” Starsky added as he slowly pushed his chair away from the table.

Hutch looked across the table at the half-eaten plate sitting in front of his partner. Starsky had eaten a few bites, tasting everything to please Hutch, but in the end he had really spent more time playing with the food than eating it. Hutch had hoped the turkey, stuffing and gravy would entice Starsky to eat more than his usual meager fare. Thanksgiving was a favorite holiday of Starsky’s, second only to Christmas. “There’s plenty more in the kitchen. Why don’t you eat...?”

“Can’t.” Starsky swallowed hard, looking uncomfortable. “Not even sure I can keep down what I already ate.”

It had been two months since Gunther had made repeated attempts on Starsky’s life. Two months that had sent Starsky to hell and back. Two weeks since he’d been released from the hospital. There was no denying the thrill of having Starsky home again. Home for Hutch to look at, to care for--to ensure that nothing ever happened to him again. But the healing process was far too slow for Hutch. He’d told God repeatedly since the shooting that he’d give anything to have Starsky healthy and back at his side, and he meant it. Whether they could be cops again was another issue, one they’d deal with later. They would always be partners--no one could ever change that.

For now, he just wanted his friend back. And he knew at times he pushed too hard. Like today...

He really thought it had been an inspired idea. Granted, it was July. But that didn’t stop him. People might say Starsky was the stubborn one of the partnership, but when it came to helping his partner, well, Hutch was as tenacious as they came. So while Starsky took a late morning nap, he’d headed to the grocery store. It took the butcher a few minutes to hunt through the back of the refrigerator but eventually he’d come out, triumphantly holding a twelve-pound turkey in his hands. After that, it had been easy. Hutch, searching his memory for the fixin’s Starsky always drooled over, hurried through the store searching for stuffing, gravy, yams, and green beans. He couldn’t find a pumpkin pie, but figuring an apple pie with whipped cream would do just as well, he tossed it in the cart. His greatest find had been the can of cranberries. It wouldn’t come close to the homemade sauce Starsky’s mom always made and sent them, but it would do.

Hutch enjoyed Thanksgiving dinner as much as anyone, but watching Starsky eat a Thanksgiving meal always amazed him. He’d never seen anyone else, even Dobey, come close to packing away as much as Starsky did on Thanksgiving. Why his partner wasn’t hugging the toilet bowl

the next morning always left him astounded. So he'd thought the smell of the food would entice his too thin partner to eat. Only now it looked like he'd be the one eating it all.

"Why don't you go lie down for a bit? Maybe that will help. I'll clean up."

Seeing Starsky nod and awkwardly try to rise out of his chair, Hutch was instantly at his side, ready to offer whatever support necessary.

"Guess sitting in that hard chair wasn't such a good idea," Starsky said, moving stiffly, arms wrapped around his chest protectively.

"Maybe having Thanksgiving dinner..."

Starsky reached to hold onto Hutch's upper arm. "Hutch, it was great. I'm just not up to eatin' much yet."

Hutch nodded. He wanted to kick himself. He knew that. He knew how little Starsky could eat yet he couldn't help himself. He desperately wanted Starsky to get better, and he knew food would give him the needed strength.

"C'mon, let's get you tucked in." Hutch walked slowly toward the bedroom door, mindful of the fingers lightly touching him—their presence a physical reminder of the man amazingly standing next to him. It happened several times everyday. He'd catch himself staring at Starsky, staring in awe. Still unbelieving that God had fulfilled his selfish prayer. And it was selfish. Selfish because of the pain he saw his partner dealing with daily. Sometimes he wondered if maybe Starsky hadn't wanted to come back, maybe his wish had been to end it all. God, and medical technology, had given him back to Hutch and he was thankful. Now it didn't matter what day of the year it was. He was thankful--as thankful as he'd ever been. The day Starsky had opened his eyes and met his eyes in recognition had been the day he'd felt most thankful. But every day since then, he'd given thanks over and over again. He couldn't help it. So that's why celebrating Thanksgiving in July didn't seem like such a crazy idea to him.

Pulling back the covers, Hutch waited while Starsky slowly sank onto the bed, a painful sigh escaping from his lips.

"Just sit there a second," Hutch ordered and headed to the bathroom.

Starsky stared at him curiously as Hutch returned, a wastebasket in hand.

"Just in case..."

Starsky weakly chuckled, then, raised a hand in protest. "I don't plan on losing your terrific dinner. Not after all the hard work you put in to makin' it."

“Well, ya never know. I certainly wouldn’t take it as a reflection of my cooking.” Hutch, trying to return the smile despite the pain he felt seeing Starsky struggle to accomplish such an everyday task as getting into bed, reached for the covers. “C’mon, slide under.”

“Why’d you do it?”

“Do what?”

“Make Thanksgiving dinner,” Starsky asked curiously, as he sank back against the pile of pillows Hutch had fluffed up for him.

“Huh, I don’t know. I heard a radio promo advertising a ‘Christmas in July’ sale and it made me think of the holidays, I guess. Started thinking of how much we had to be grateful for.” Hutch’s voice dropped off and he shrugged his shoulders, embarrassed.

Starsky searched Hutch’s face, thankful for the blond lug standing next to him. Hoping to forestall a soapy scene, he asked innocently, “So when do we celebrate Christmas? I could go for a few presents.”

Hutch picked up the newspaper lying on the chair next to the bed, where he’d left it when he went to the grocery store, and playfully swatted Starsky on the head. “Christmas? I haven’t even done the dishes from Thanksgiving yet.”

Starsky grinned back at him and shifted his head to the right, anticipating Hutch’s move, stopping only when the muscles in his chest protested.

Seeing the grimace cross Starsky’s face, Hutch pulled the covers up and reached for the pain pills and glass of water sitting on the nightstand. “Here, take these and get some sleep.”

“I don’t wanna take ‘em. They’ll knock me out for the night and half the morning,” Starsky protested half-heartedly, but took the pills and water from the extended hand.

“Good. Doc said you need plenty of rest.” Hutch walked over and pulled the shades down. “If it’s dark in here, it’ll be easier to sleep.”

“Don’t fuss,” Starsky yawned. “I take them pills, and a ton of elephants racing through here won’t wake me up.”

Hutch moved toward the door, but he stopped before exiting and glanced back. “Sleep tight. See you in the morning.” Flicking off the light, he could barely make out Starsky already asleep on the bed.

As he pulled the door closed behind him and headed toward the kitchen, cleaning up the turkey leftovers the first item on his list.



Starsky carefully returned to his back. He'd found if he moved slowly and tried to ignore the pain, he could usually manage to get onto his right side and sleep relatively comfortably, at least for a little while. Ever since he'd been in the hospital and had been forced to lie on his back for lengthy periods of time, he relished sleeping on his side whenever possible. He looked forward to the day when he would actually be able to curl up on his side, his favorite way to sleep, but for now his muscles protested louder than he could stand. Sighing, he wondered if things would ever get back to normal.

Starsky stared up at the ceiling, intrigued by the colorful lights playfully shining above him. Confused as to where they were coming from, he awkwardly tried to push himself up and made the mistake of turning toward the left at the same time. Pain shot through his chest and he sucked in air hard, before sinking back into the pillows.

"Hutch." The sound was more a whisper than a call for help--too quiet to carry through the closed door. He turned his head to see what time it was. The sunlight outlining the window shade led him to believe it was morning. But it was the object on the nightstand that made him lean forward and try again, a little louder this time. "Hu-u-u-tch."

It didn't take long for his anxious partner to push the door open and enter. "Starsk...you okay?"

Slowly taking a breath, Starsky replied, "Yeah, I'm fine, though I shouldn't've moved so fast."

Hutch rested his hand on Starsky's shoulder, growing concerned at the brunet's pallor, "You okay? Did you have a nightmare?"

"No," Starsky shook his head. "That." Pointing at a two-foot Christmas tree, covered with tiny multi-colored lights and ornaments, sitting on his nightstand, Starsky looked back at the disheveled blond standing in front of him, suddenly noticing how worn out and tired Hutch looked, as if he'd been up all night.

Hutch sighed in relief and ran his fingers through his hair. "What about it?"

"How'd it get here?"

"I put it there."

"Well, I didn't think the elves did it. Why?" Starsky pressed, irritated, wincing as he remained awkwardly staring at the little tree, its tiny lights sparkling in the darkness.

"You asked when we were going to celebrate Christmas, didn't you?"

"Sure, but I was teasing."

“Well, I started thinking about it.” Hutch shrugged. “Figured if we could celebrate Thanksgiving in July why not Christmas.”

A grin started spreading across Starsky’s face, a twinkle appearing in his eye. “Does that mean I get presents?”

Hutch, thrilled to see a spark of the old Starsky, shook his head. “Don’t press your luck.”

Starsky continued staring at the tree, entranced. “Thanks, Hutch. Makes me feel better. Can I keep it until December?”

Hutch laughed. “If you want to, buddy. Whatever makes you happy.” Hutch wagged his finger in warning. “I just don’t want you bugging me about presents. You won’t get those until December 25th, no matter how much you whine.”

Starsky turned back to look at the tree again, his face filled with childish wonder. “Where’d you get it?”

“After Thanksgiving Sale.”

Starsky looked at the blond dubiously. “But it isn’t really Thanksgiving, Hutch.”

“Sure it is.” Hutch studied the brunet lying in bed, watching him intently. Suddenly, he struggled to put into words all the emotions he felt, how overwhelmed, how fortunate he was to have the man in front of him in his life not only as his partner but as his best friend. “From now on, every day is Thanksgiving Day. Guess I just feel like I have lots to be thankful for...”

“Hutch.”

The soft voice broke into his thoughts, and he met the deep blue eyes looking at him intently. “It’s not just you who has lots to be thankful for.”

“I know, Starsk. It’s ‘me and thee’.”

Starsky looked at him solemnly, nodding in agreement. He added, “You look like you could use some sleep. That must have been one hell of a sale.”

Hutch laughed in relief, the intensity of the moment gone.

“Yeah, I had a heck of a time beating off all those other shoppers. You ready to get up?”

“Nope, I think I’ll just lie here for a while and watch the lights.”

Hutch relaxed, seeing some of the tension disappear from Starsky’s face as he leaned back against the pillows, watching the lights reflected on the ceiling. “Can I get you something before I take that nap?”

“How about a turkey sandwich?”

Hutch grinned. “Coming right up.”

The End
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