

Any Way You Say It
Missing Scene from "The Fix"

Linda B.

I'd turned the corner into the alley when I heard the roar of the engine. Glancing over my shoulder, I couldn't help recognize the red car with the white stripe. Who could miss it? Even the streetlights glowed off of it. I bolted to the nearest doorway and slid inside, hoping to hide in the shadow. But I should've known that I was the focus of the driver's manhunt.

I slunk as far into the entrance as I could, but there was no chance I'd escape notice. The only thing I'd managed to do was cut off my avenue of escape.

The driver's door opened, and in seconds he was standing in front of me. "Mickey, I told you I'd be back." His voice was controlled—cold, ice cold. "You screwed up—bad."



His steel blue eyes were glaring at me, and I shivered. Always thought it would be a bad idea to cross this guy—now I knew it. I should have gotten out of town when I could've. The last words he said to me in the bar said it all, "If I ever find out you're lying, you're gonna have to find a whole new city to drink in."

Even though my throat was closing up in fear, I managed to squeak out, "St-Star-sky. Let me—"

He grabbed my shirt collar and tie. Then he began wrapping his hand around the material, pushing me back even farther into the corner.

"St-Starsky. I didn't do anything. Honest."

"You turned my partner over to Monk and his goons."

"No, no...I left a message for *you*. He came instead." My back against the wall, I could feel his hand twisting, tightening, my air supply being cut off. Starsky's eyes grew narrower, meaner. "You lowlife, you meant to set me up, didn't you? You knew I'd come if it involved Hutch." Starsky moved in closer and closer, and I slid down the wall as he loomed over me. My ears were ringing and I was afraid of passing out. I found myself trembling, not like when I needed a drink, but the deep life-and-death kind of

trembling. Like the kind when you know you won't see tomorrow. Starsky's eyes said he meant to do a whole lot more damage than just running me out of town.

In the distance, I heard the opening of a car door, soft steps approaching. Thank God, someone was coming...

"Starsk."

I recognized the voice even though the man hadn't spoken above a whisper. My life was definitely at its end. Hutchinson—Starsky's partner—wasn't going to be of any help to me. He'd only cover for his partner. Everybody on the street knew how tight they were.

At the bar, Starsky had been worried and angry, but also deadly. I knew then and there that anyone who killed—no, who even *hurt*—the blond wouldn't stand a chance of living if Starsky got his hands on him. And here I was—on the receiving end of those hands.

Starsky moved a little to the left, and I could see Hutchinson standing beside him. Hutchinson didn't look much better than when I saw him in the bar. His face was still bruised and ashen, and he was visibly shaking as he stood there, looking like he could pass out any minute. Out of the corner of my eye, I saw him reach for the doorframe to balance himself. Then, he leaned in a little and whispered, "Starsk, I went to the bar...it was my choice...I thought...if he had any info..."

"Doesn't matter. He told you there was a scam. The only scam happening here was him selling us out for money." Starsky's gaze was fixed on me. Suddenly, I felt myself being physically lifted up, my face stopping within inches of his. His voice was terse. "Your life ain't worth shit around here. You hear me, Mickey? You'd sell your soul to the devil if it meant getting a drink, wouldn't you?"

"Starsk?"

I could have sworn I heard a quiet warning, or was it a plea, in Hutchinson's voice.

I swallowed, trying to answer, nod, do something, anything, to let Starsky know I understood. Then Starsky released his hold on my clothes and tossed me back down to the grimy ground. "Get out of this town, Mickey. I don't want to see your ugly mug around here ever again. You understand?"



Yanking the collar of my shirt away from my neck, I loosened my tie and knelt on the concrete, thankfully sucking in air. I'd promise him anything. I was still alive, thank God—rather, thanks to a certain blond cop. Could it be possible that Hutchinson wanted to save my life instead of kill me? Now, if he could only convince his partner.

“C’mon, Starsk. Let’s go...we’ve got Forest under lock and key, and...I think Mickey understands. Right, Mickey?”

I nodded anxiously. Hutchinson was right. Message received and understood. I didn’t need or want Starsky to repeat anything. I just wanted him out of this alley—while I still had my life.

Starsky straightened. There wasn’t a sound, so I tilted my head slightly to see what was happening. Their eyes were locked, and I think some kind of message was sent from one to the other because all of a sudden, Starsky nodded slightly and a glimmer of a smile crossed Hutchinson’s lips. I wanted to hightail it out of there, but I couldn’t. I was immobilized by my fear and the fact that a certain inflamed cop blocked my escape.

I’d blown it. Sure, I got a few bucks from Monk for setting them up, but it would be gone by the end of the week. As long as I came up with some good info once in a while, Starsky showed his “appreciation” by giving me some money. It wasn’t regular like a job, but if I played it right, I usually came out with a few bucks to see me through. But not now, not anymore. I was stupid to try to play both ends.

I watched the pair turn to leave. Hutchinson swayed a little, and Starsky slung his arm across the blond’s shoulders, pulling him close, kind of like a brief hug. Though, I suspect it was a way to keep Hutchinson on his feet. He wasn’t looking the steadiest at the moment.

Hutchinson slid his arm around Starsky’s waist, and the two walked side by side to the car at the end of the alley. I looked down at my dirty, disheveled clothes and my shaking hands, and I couldn’t help feel not only relief but a little envy. I had absolutely nothing left—no home, no character, no dignity. They had each other, and that seemed to be enough.

Starsky held the car door open for Hutchinson. When his partner was settled, Starsky walked to the other side. He opened the door, put a foot in, and stopped. He looked over the doorframe directly at me. “Get out of town, Mickey. I don’t want to see your ugly face in this city again, you understand?” His eyes bore into mine. There was no misreading the threat in his voice, in his stance, in his eyes. “Next time, my partner might not be around.”

I knew I’d be leaving. Goodbye, farewell, adios, ciao. Any way you say it, I’d be out of this town tomorrow. There was no way I wanted to cross paths with Detective David Starsky again.

I scrambled to my feet, picking my hat up off the ground, and hid in the shadow of the doorway as the Torino backed out of the alley and into the street. With a roar of its engine, they were gone.

Tomorrow—I would be, too.

The End