

Compromise Campground

By Linda B.

“Starsk, I’ve been thinking.”

“Yeah?” Starsky answered absentmindedly, intent on erasing yet another error on the report he was typing.

“We have a long weekend. Let’s go do something. I’m tired of hanging around this hot city.”

Wary, Starsky raised his head to look at Hutch. “Whatcha have in mind?”

“Camping.”

“No way.” Starsky turned back to his typing, now intent on ignoring his partner. “You know I hate camping.”

“But I found this great place—”

“Hutch, when are ya gonna learn that what you think is a great place is not great to me?”

“It’s a compromise campground. It’ll only be for a couple of days, and we’ll get out of the heat of the city and into the cool woods.”

Stymied, Starsky stared at Hutch, reluctant to ask the question he knew Hutch was waiting for. Finally, he gave into his curiosity. “Okay, I’ll bite. What’s a compromise campground?”

“Well, I always take you up into the woods away from everybody...”

“...and everything.” Starsky nodded emphatically getting up to refill his coffee cup.

“Yeah, everything.”

“So, what’s different this time?”

“Well, I found this private campground not too far from here, and it will satisfy us both.”

“How do ya figure that, Hutch?”

“Well, there are about a hundred campsites and they are near each other. We won’t be hundreds of miles from civilization. There’s running water...”

“Bathrooms?”

Hutch nodded, encouragingly. “Bathrooms, with showers, even electricity on each site.”

Starsky continued to watch Hutch skeptically. “And so...why do **you** want to go there?”

“Like I said, I want to get out of the city and we have a three-day weekend.” Hutch looked at Starsky hopefully. “It’s only a couple hours away.”

Starsky studied the drawn, tired face in front of him, so earnestly trying to convince him to go along with the idea. He knew Hutch needed time away. It had been way too long since they’d been able to go anywhere, and the strain was obvious on his partner. He also knew the woods was the best place to get Hutch to relax and regain some equilibrium.

Starsky, deciding he wasn’t going to give in too easily, pressed for more details. “So, why should I go?”

Hutch sighed, knowing his partner was purposely baiting him. “You’ll get away from here...”

“I like it here.”

“Starsk, there’s a nice beach, with plenty of pretty ladies.” Seeing his partner’s interest perk up, Hutch decided to use it to his advantage. “You can sit and relax on the beach, while I go hiking in the woods. We’ll both be happy.”

Not yet ready, Starsky asked, “What about snakes?”

“Starsk, they don’t allow snakes in this park—there’s too many people.” Hutch knew his answer didn’t make any sense, but he really didn’t care. Starsky was on the verge of agreeing, and he’d say anything to convince him. “Remember...we won’t be off in the wilderness alone. C’mon, give it a try.”

“You’re sure?”

“I’m sure.”

At Starsky’s reluctant nod of agreement, Hutch said excitedly, “When we get done here, I’ll drop you off at your place to get your sleeping bag, clothes and whatever else you want, and I’ll pick you up in about two hours. Okay? I’ll even stop for food before I pick you up.”

“Hutch?” Starsky inquired, turning on his best little boy act, knowing Hutch probably wouldn’t refuse him anything since he’d just agreed to go.

“What?”

“Fresh air always makes me hungry. What kind of food are you gonna bring?”

“Everything makes you hungry.” Hutch laughed, patting Starsky’s right shoulder. Happy that Starsky had agreed to go, though reluctantly, he quickly moved to reassure his partner. “Don’t worry, Starsk. I’ll bring stuff you like. Promise. We’ll cook it over the fire.”

Figuring there wasn’t too much that Hutch could do with health food over an open fire, Starsky sat back in his chair relieved. “Okay, then help me finish this paperwork so we can get outta here.”



Five hours later, food bought, car packed and Starsky asleep in the passenger seat, Hutch pulled into the entrance of the campground. Gently shaking Starsky, he said, “C’mon, Starsk, wake up. We’re here.”

Groggily sitting up, Starsky rubbed his eyes and looked around as Hutch exited the car to go into the office and register. *Hope me goin’ to this ‘compromise campground’ makes ya feel better, Blondie*, thought Starsky. *’Cause so far it ain’t thrillin’ me.*

Coming out, Hutch slid back into the seat and attached a white piece of paper to the visor.

“What’s that?” Starsky asked, mildly interested.

“It shows we’re registered and we’re on Site 98.”

“Ninety-eight. How many are there?”

“About 120, I think.”

“That many?”

“Yep. We lucked out. Site 98 is at the very end of the road on the right, and there’s woods on one side and at the back. We’ll both be happy.”

Seeing a shadow of uncertainty cross Starsky’s face, Hutch patted him on the knee. “Don’t worry, Starsk. Like I told you, this is a compromise—woods for me, people and the amenities for you.”

Receiving a weak grin in response, Hutch started up the car and headed deeper into the campground.

Looking around, Starsky was amazed at how full the campground already was—people and kids walking or riding bikes, plenty of tents and campers in view. When Hutch pointed out the bathroom and showers, Starsky finally relaxed, deciding that maybe Hutch really was compromising. “Okay, I guess I can put up with it for a few days, if you can.”

Hutch, feeling some tension disappear at Starsky's approval, grinned. "See, I knew you'd like it. Hey, you know what?"

"What?"

"They even have a little store inside the office, and they sell candy bars and ice cream there."

Curiosity aroused, Starsky started observing his surroundings with a little more interest. *Maybe this wasn't going to be so bad, after all.*



By the time they'd finished setting up and had the fire going, it was dark. "Why don't you go for a walk and check out the place. I'll put dinner on," Hutch offered.

"Kay." Starsky's ready agreement surprised Hutch. "I'll go check out the girls...I mean the place."

Hutch chuckled. "Yeah, you go check out the 'place,' but be back in about thirty minutes. Dinner won't take too long."

Watching Starsky casually saunter down the road, Hutch called out. "Hey, Starsk, the beach is the other direction!"

As Starsky shot him a nasty look and turned to go in the other direction, Hutch grinned, pleased with himself. *Maybe this wasn't such a bad compromise after all. The campground's a little too civilized. I want the woods to get lost in, to get away from the people. Starsky thrives on people, gets his energy from being around them. Maybe this way we'll both be happy. At least when I get done hiking tomorrow, I'll know where to find him.*



"That was a great meal," Starsky said, leaning back in his lawn chair, rubbing his stomach appreciatively. "The steak was perfect."

"Thanks"

"What's for breakfast?"

"Starsk! You just finished eating."

"I know, I know, but I'm curious. Worried about what you might be concocting for me to eat."

"Well, don't be. I told you I'd bring food you'd like. Don't you trust me?" Hutch asked, not so innocently.

“Well...” Starsky looked at the glint in his partner’s eyes. “...no, not when it comes to food.”

Feigning his disappointment, Hutch asked, “What happened to ‘me and thee’?”

“Sorry, buddy, ‘me and thee’ is when we’re out on the streets looking after each other’s backs, not each other’s stomachs.”

Hutch laughed, stirring the fire one last time before standing up. “Don’t worry, there’s pancakes and sausage for you, but you’ll have to get up early to eat, ’cuz I plan on hitting the trails early.”

“Early?” Starsky protested.

“Yep, you heard me, early. Besides, that’ll give you more time at the beach.” Allowing Starsky to ponder the idea, Hutch continued, “I’m going to take a shower. I’ll be back in a few. Just keep an eye on the fire and stay out of trouble.”

Starsky, happily contemplating breakfast and a full day at the beach, nodded as Hutch left for the showers, with a towel and change of clothes in hand.



Hutch enjoyed walking back, passing the quiet campsites, watching as campfires lit the faces of the people sitting and talking around them. Pleased that he’d been able to find a way to satisfy both his partner and himself, he was looking forward to the morning’s quiet hike in the woods. As he approached their campsite, he stopped abruptly and stared.

“Starsky!”

Starsky, head nodding restfully on his chin, was startled at his partner’s noisy return. “Hutch, back so soon?”

“What did ya do?”

“Do?” Starsky feigned surprise.

“You know what I mean!”

“It was getting dark, so I put up some lights. Something wrong?” he asked innocently.

“Starsk, those are Christmas lights!” Hutch said amazed, as he studied the strand of red, green, blue and orange lights strung across from one corner of the tent, to the top and back down. “We look like a Christmas tree.”

“What’s wrong with that? I know you don’t like the ‘euphoric sentimentalism’ of Christmas, but—”

“It’s July, Starsk!”

Starsky shrugged, nonplussed at Hutch’s response. “So?”

“Where’d you get them?”

“They were layin’ next to my sleeping bag in the closet, and since you said we’d have electricity, I thought I’d bring them along just in case.”

“In case of what?”

“Well, it’s pretty dark out here and I thought I might need some city lights.”

“But Christmas!”

“Didn’t ya ever hear of Christmas in July?”

“Starsk…”

“Don’t ‘Starsk’ me, Hutch,” Starsky said, disappointed, as he turned to admire his handiwork.

Hutch stood there stunned, not sure what to say, taking in the lights and his partner.

“I’m beat. All this fresh air is makin’ me sleepy. I’m goin’ to bed since ya said I hafta get up early to eat breakfast.” Starsky yawned as he stood up and stretched. Looking at Hutch, he inquired, “Ya comin’?”

Hutch nodded slowly and moved to follow Starsky into the tent. “Aren’t you going to unplug them?” he asked, holding up the tent flap, studying the colorful lights strung just above his head.

“Nah,” Starsky said, sliding into his sleeping bag and pulling it up tightly around him, already half asleep. “I wouldn’t wanna… I wouldn’t want **you** to get lost in the dark, Blondie.” Snuggling under the covers, Starsky added, “Besides, maybe we’ll start a new trend.”

The End