

Drawin' Conclusions

By Linda B.

Chapter 1

Hutch pushed open the squadroom door and strolled in, pausing a second, his hand still resting on the door. His eyes narrowed as he studied his partner perched on the back of his chair, leaning forward, intently reading the newspaper. Hutch walked past Starsky and, momentarily placing a hand on his back, asked, "What's got your attention, Starsk?"

Even in that brief touch, Hutch could feel the tension in his friend's body.

"Nothin'," Starsky mumbled.

"It's got to be something. You've only eaten half your donut," Hutch teased, trying to get Starsky's attention.

Receiving no response, Hutch reached over and picked up Starsky's coffee cup. Studying his partner, Hutch refilled the cup and set it back down in front of Starsky. "Here. Your coffee's getting cold."

Starsky glanced up. "Thanks," he said absentmindedly, finally acknowledging Hutch's presence, but his eyes instantly returned to the paper.

Hutch pulled out his chair and sat down, quietly studying Starsky. A few minutes later, Starsky folded up the section, stood up, and grabbed his coffee cup, yelping as hot coffee spilled onto his hand and the newspaper.

Hutch was instantly at his partner's side, grabbing napkins and handing them to Starsky. "I refilled it for you. Remember, Gordo?"

Starsky gratefully took the napkins and quickly wiped his left hand before mopping up what was left of the spill, as the coffee soaked into the newspaper.

He grinned sheepishly. "I knew that."

"Here, let me look at your hand."

"Don't be such a mother hen, Hutch." Starsky smiled, taking the sting out of his words. "It'll be fine in a minute." Refilling his cup and turning his chair around, Starsky straddled it, his attention now on his partner. "So tell me, how'd it go at the eye doctor?"

“Fine.”

“Fine? He certainly hasn’t seen you at target practice lately, has he? Did you tell him you haven’t beaten my score yet?” Starsky couldn’t resist teasing Hutch about the fact that the two currently held the two highest practice scores, and they were separated by only one point. Observing a subtle change cross Hutch’s face, he leaned forward. “You’d tell me if there was anything wrong wouldn’t you?”

Hutch, noticing the concern on Starsky’s face, smiled reassuringly. “Of course. Nothing’s wrong, but he did say that I should consider some reading glasses.”

“What! You’ve gotta be kidding!”

“Starsky, keep it down.” Hutch scanned the squadroom, suddenly embarrassed. “Well, I may be good at a distance, but I’ve got to admit that sometimes at night when I’m reading, and the lighting isn’t very bright, my eyes begin to feel a little strained.”

“Why didn’t you tell me?”

“Starsk, it’s really nothing to worry about. My mother and father both wear reading glasses. Don’t worry, your time will come.”

Obviously relieved, Starsky leaned back and, taking a bite of his donut, commented, “Not if I quit reading.”

Hutch chuckled. “Oh, I didn’t know that’s what you called it.”

As Starsky sent him a withering glance, Hutch decided it was time to find out what in the paper had intrigued his partner. “Okay, it’s your turn.”

“My turn?” Starsky asked confused.

“Yeah, I told you about the glasses. Now, you tell me what has your interest in that paper.”

Starsky glanced down at the coffee-soaked paper. Sighing, he asked, “Why do you think people are so cruel to each other, Hutch?”

Wondering what had brought this on, Hutch studied his partner for a moment longer. “That’s an age old question, Starsk. Man’s inhumanity to man. No one has ever been able to answer it. I certainly can’t.” He paused. “Cops deal with it every day. That’s part of our job.” At his partner’s continued silence, he prodded. “What’s so special in today’s paper?”

Starsky looked up, his eyes suddenly filled with anger. “I was just reading about an assault—and it’s the fourth elderly lady to be assaulted and beaten this month.

Somebody broke into her house and pistol whipped her, stole some money and valuables. People aren't even safe in their own homes!"

"That's nothing new, Starsk. What's with these attacks that bothers you so much?" Hutch, already sensing the answer, waited for Starsky's response.

"I wanna know why Robbery hasn't solved these cases."

"Starsk, quit avoiding the question."

Looking a little sheepish, Starsky decided Hutch wasn't going to drop the subject until he answered, but he just wasn't sure he could make Hutch understand; after all, both of Hutch's parents were alive, living together in a nice safe neighborhood. They could look out for each other. "It makes me think about Ma, Hutch. I worry about her. She's gettin' older. Why, she's the same age as the latest victim and she lives alone, now that Nick's moved out. She lives in an old neighborhood, just like..."

Hutch reached across and touched his partner's arm. "Starsk...she lives in New York, not here, and Nick checks on her. You said so yourself."

"Nick." Starsky snorted disgustedly. "You can't count on him."

"He may be a bum and may not know what to do with his life but one thing's for sure—he loves your mother just like you do, and he'll look after her."

Starsky sighed. "Yeah, I guess."

"Besides, half of New York's finest stop by your mom's for coffee and goodies, don't they?"

Starsky chuckled in acknowledgement. "Yeah, she makes the best cookies and cakes in town."

"No one would dare hurt her, Starsk. Too many people are looking out for her."

Starsky, nodding in agreement, smiled wistfully at Hutch. "I know, but sometimes it's hard being so far away."

"I know, buddy."

As Starsky sat there apparently lost in thought, Hutch reached for the case file lying on the desk, "And how far did you get in typing up this report Captain Dobe's waiting for?"

Starsky grinned sheepishly, as he tried unsuccessfully to grab the case file first. "Uhhh, I'm sorry, Hutch, I had to handle a couple phone calls, and then I took a break and..."

Hutch set the file on the desk next to the typewriter and, thrusting a blank report form into the typewriter, turned the knob disgustedly. "I'll do it, Starsk."

He wasn't really angry; in fact, Hutch was pleased to see that the distraction seemed to pull Starsky out of his melancholy mood. Besides, he couldn't miss the opportunity to make his partner feel guilty. "Don't worry, Starsk, I'll do it—bad eyes and all."

End of Chapter 1