

Drawin' Conclusions

By Linda B.

Chapter 4

Three victims and numerous neighbors later, they were still no further ahead and Hutch felt discouraged. It had been a wasted day. Interview after interview and they'd gotten nothing new to go on. If he was discouraged, he hated to think how Starsky felt. Starsky had become quieter and more morose as the day went on, his good mood having long disappeared. They still planned on talking to some of Rose Ferguson's neighbors before calling it a night.

Walking up to the first neighbor's porch, Hutch hoped someone here would give them a possible lead. He put his arm across Starsky's shoulder. "Come on, Starsk. We're almost done and we can call it a night soon. I don't know about you, but I'm looking forward to a few cold beers."

Reaching for the doorbell, Starsky grinned weakly, but it didn't extend to his tired eyes. A moment later, a brown-haired lady in her mid-fifties pulled open the door. "Well, hi, there. What can I help you two good-lookin' guys with?"

"I'm Detective Hutchinson and this is Detective Starsky."

"I'm Dorothy. Dorothy Franklin." Dorothy extended her hand first to Hutch and then to Starsky, eyes taking them both in approvingly. She smiled invitingly.

"We'd like to ask you a few questions about Mrs. Ferguson."

"Oh, I was really sorry to hear about old Mrs. Ferguson. It's terrible what happened to her."

"Yes, it is," Hutch agreed, and then continued, "can you tell us something about her? Who her friends might be? Any clubs she might belong to?"

"Well, I've only lived here a few months, but she'd told me that she has a daughter who lives back East. New York, I think. She was pretty active in her church. She and Mrs. Grayson, who lives across the street seemed to be pretty good friends." Dorothy pointed to the house directly across the street, as she chewed her gum and flirted with Hutch. "But don't plan on talking to her anytime soon. She's in the hospital. Just had gall bladder surgery."

"Did you hear anything, see anybody in the neighborhood two nights ago?"

"No, I was out on the town with my boyfriend, Ray. Raymond White. Everything was quiet when we got home."

Feeling it was a lost cause, Hutch ended the conversation. “ Thanks for the info, ma’am. If you think of anything else, here’s my card. You can contact either myself or Detective Starsky at that number.”

“Well, I’ll be sure to keep this here card handy, Detective.” Taking the card, Dorothy ran her fingers down the back of Hutch’s hand, winking at him.

Starsky turned on his heel and, rolling his eyes at his partner, stepped off the porch and headed to the Torino; Hutch followed close on his heels. They were halfway to the car when Dorothy yelled out, “Oh, I forgot to mention—Mrs. Ferguson used to volunteer at the library a couple times a week. It’s the one only a couple of blocks from here. She used to walk there all the time.”

As they climbed into the car, Hutch returned her wave goodbye. “Let’s go buy some beer. I’m ready for it.”

Starsky turned right at the intersection and then again two blocks later. Hutch looked confused. “Where are we going?”

“Thought we’d stop at the library first. It’s just a couple blocks from Rose’s home. Maybe someone she worked with can help us.”

“Haven’t you had enough for today, Starsk? It’s hot and I’m tired.”

“One last stop, Hutch. It’s on the way.”



The checkout counter was centered in the middle of the library. The two large rooms on either side of the desk were lined with books, and more shelving units extended to the center of each room. Several people were seated in the chairs and at the tables, reading and working quietly. An old marble staircase led to the second floor. Seeing no one except the person working the desk, Hutch joined the line waiting at the checkout.

“Where is everybody, Hutch? They all gone to lunch?” Starsky whispered.

“No, Starsk. Dinner.”

Starsky, increasingly impatient at the slow-moving line, wandered off, leaving his partner to stand in the line alone. Hutch watched Starsky wander into the wing with a “NONFICTION” sign overhead. *What are you going to look at now, buddy?* Hutch wondered. *Books on photography or Mexican art?*

“Can I help you?”

Hutch turned back toward the counter and smiled at the lovely auburn-haired, brown-eyed lady in front of him. Glancing at her nametag, Hutch said, “Well, yes, Tanya. I need to talk to the librarian.”

“I’m the head librarian. What can I do for you?”

Displaying his credentials, Hutch said, “I’m looking for some information. I understand Rose Ferguson volunteered here.”

“I heard what happened to her. It’s horrible! Simply horrible that someone can’t be safe in their own home.”

“My partner and I can use your help in finding the individual who’s responsible. Is there anything you can tell me about Rose?”

“I’d be happy to tell you whatever I can. She volunteered here two afternoons—Tuesday and Thursdays. Volunteered the same afternoons for years. She was a real fixture around here. A lovely lady. She’d shelf books, catalog, and work at the information desk. She’d pitch in and help any way she could.”

“Do you know of anyone she might have had an argument with?”

“No,” Tanya replied, after careful consideration. “As far as I know, everyone loved her. But she did come in contact with a lot of people over the years.”

“Well, here’s my card. I’d appreciate a call if you think of anything.”

Tanya smiled warmly at the tall, blond officer standing in front of her, as she reached for the offered card. “If I think of anything, I’ll be sure to call.”

Returning the smile, Hutch set off in search of his partner, heading into the non-fiction room he’d previously seen Starsky enter. After circling the room and walking between the shelves several times, Hutch didn’t find Starsky. He walked across the center hall and into the fiction section. Again, circling the shelves, his search proved fruitless. *Okay, Starsk, where’d you go off to now?* Hutch muttered to himself.

Spying the staircase, Hutch climbed the steps and entered the section marked “CHILDREN.” Spying Starsky sitting on the floor searching through a row of books, he asked, “What are you doing up here, Gordo?”

“Lookin’ for a book.”

“Well, that’s pretty obvious, but in the children’s section? Isn’t it about time you upgraded your reading?”

Starsky mumbled something under his breath as Hutch chuckled. “Well, what’s the name of it?”

“Can’t remember.”

Exasperated, Hutch threw up his hands and sat down on the miniature table behind him, his knees almost reaching his chin. “Well, how do you expect to find it? There are tons of books in this library.”

“Well, I’ll just keep looking, then.”

“Starsk, that could take all night!”

Starsky glanced at his watch. “Library doesn’t close ’til nine.”

Seeing the determined look on Starsky’s face, and hearing his own stomach growling, Hutch knelt down next to him. “Here, let me help you. What is it about?”

“A purple crayon.”

“A purple crayon! Starsk, have you gone mad?”

Starsky looked at Hutch, his eyes sincere. “Yeah, a purple crayon but I can’t remember the title. I remember reading it over and over as a kid.” He began flicking through the books again.

“I hate to tell you this, but this could take forever.”

Looking at the books filling the room, Starsky suddenly jumped to his feet. “You keep lookin’, Hutch. I’m gonna go ask someone.”

As Starsky strolled away in search of assistance, Hutch shook his head, unsure whether his street savvy partner would ever grow up.

A few minutes later, Starsky returned, a grin spreading across his face. “I just asked this lovely auburn-haired lady downstairs, named Tanya, and she remembered the book, too. She looked it up in the card file. The author’s name is Johnson, and the title is ‘Harold and the Purple Crayon’.” He announced triumphantly.

Heading to the ‘J’ section of the authors, Starsky knelt down as he rifled excitedly through the books. “Here it is, Hutch!” Holding up the book for his partner to see, Starsky’s grin lit up his face.

Hutch couldn’t help responding to Starsky’s excitement with a grin of his own. “You happy now? What brought that book to mind?”

Starsky shrugged, “I don’t know. For some reason, I thought of it and wondered if it was still around.”

“Well, now that you found it. It’s time to go. I’m starving.”

Starsky stood and headed down the steps, book still in hand.

“Starsk, you need to leave that here,” Hutch said, following his partner down the stairs.

“Why?” Starsky asked confused.

“It’s a children’s book.”

“So-o-o?”

“It needs to stay in the children’s section.”

“But I’m gonna check it out.”

Utterly amazed, Hutch stopped at the last step, watching as Starsky reached into his back pocket, pulled out his wallet, and extracted a library card.

“Hi, Tanya. I found it.” Starsky, flashing a dazzling smile at the librarian, held up the tiny book.

“Great!” Tanya smiled back, taking the book and card from him, date stamp in hand.

Spying a bowl of candy sitting on the counter, Starsky reached over and helped himself to a couple. Unwrapping one and tossing it in his mouth, he slipped the rest in his coat pocket.

“Hey,” said Tanya, playfully slapping his hand. “Leave a few for the rest of us.”

Starsky grinned as he took the book from her. “Okay, schweetheart.”

Walking past Hutch still standing at the bottom of the steps, mouth open in wonder, Starsky, eyes twinkling, said, “Better close that mouth, Hutch. You’re catching flies.”

Shaking his head in amazement, Hutch followed Starsky out the door.



Dusk had fallen, dinner eaten, and the dishes washed and put away. Hutch was tired of picking at Starsky’s guitar and watching his partner wander around the apartment aimlessly. “Hey, why don’t you relax and find something to do?”

Starsky shrugged, and then spying the library book on the coffee table, picked it up and sat down on the sofa. It took him only a few minutes to read it and then he started over.

“What is it about that book that you like so much, Starsk?”

Starsky looked up at his friend and partner, smiling weakly. “I don’t know. I read it a lot when I was little.”

“There has to be more to it than that.”

Shrugging, Starsky continued, “I always liked the story because the boy drew his own world. He drew anything he needed or anyplace he wanted to go.” Pausing, he added, “It was a world where he could draw himself out of any problem and still return home safe and sound.”

“Every kid would love a world like that, Starsk.”

“Yeah, it’s too bad we can’t do it as adults.” Restless, Starsky stood up and started pacing the room again, the book still in his hand. Hutch waited, sensing there was more to come.

Eventually, Starsky leaned against the back of the couch, his back to Hutch. Opening the book to the last few pages, he stared at them for a while. Finally, he continued, “After my dad died, I used to spend a lot of time alone. Sometimes I’d draw. One night, I drew a picture of the moon with my dad coming home by its light. I drew it with a purple crayon and hung it next to my bed.”

Closing the book, Starsky stared out the window at the moon now visible in the night sky. “It hung there a long time, Hutch, but it didn’t help. He never came home.”



End of Chapter 4