

Killing Time

A missing scene from "The Trap"

by Linda B.

Starsky leaned heavily against the wall, his breathing labored from the exertion of snagging and tying up one of the thugs that had trapped them in the now-flaming barn, while favoring the leg with the bullet still inside. He held his thigh tightly, trying to relieve the pressure and pain radiating down his leg. "Well, I'm glad to see my plan worked."

"What do you mean *your* plan?" said Hutch.

"Well...if that's the way you feel about it, give me back my watch."

"All right." After handcuffing Bagley, Hutch rose and headed into the kitchen. Spotting the watch on the floor, he bent down, picked it up, and handed it to Starsky who, supporting himself against the counter, was trying to catch his breath. Starsky stared at his now-mangled watch, which Hutch was dangling in front of him.

"Excuse me. I have some business in the john." With a slight grunt, Hutch headed into the bathroom to secure the felon he'd hidden in there earlier.

Holding up his destroyed watch, Starsky placed it next to his ear. Not a sound. Disgusted, he tucked it into his coat pocket and hobbled into the small living room. Through the window, he could see the flames rising higher and higher from the barn.

"Get off that leg, Starsk," Hutch called from the bathroom. "I'll be done in a second."

A guttural cry and slamming door sent Hutch rushing out of the bathroom in search of his partner. Through the window, he glimpsed Starsky scrambling as fast as he could toward the burning barn. He was half hopping, half dragging his leg. Hutch yanked open the front door. "Starsky! What—?" He stopped abruptly, realizing where Starsky was heading.

"My car!" Starsky shouted. "It's gonna go up in flames!" Using his arm to block his face from the intense heat and smoke, he jerked open the car door and slid into the seat. Without bothering to shut the door, he gunned the engine and kicked it into reverse, spraying dirt everywhere. The Torino slammed back from its location near the barn, and Starsky accelerated it toward the house just as the walls of the barn imploded.

"Are you crazy?" Hutch shouted at Starsky as he rushed toward him. "Your car could have exploded with you in it!"

Starsky leaned on the roof of the car, sucking in air, trying to calm his racing heart. "It's okay, Hutch. There's not a scratch on it."

"Well, there is on you! Or did you forget you have a bullet in your leg? What the hell do you think you're doing running around like that?" Hutch knew his voice was rising, but he couldn't

help it. He was coming down from the adrenaline rush, and all the possibilities of what could have happened were beginning to hit home.

“Hutch...look, I’m sorry. I couldn’t watch my car go up in flames again.” It had been barely a year since he’d watched fire ruin his car. They had been investigating the murder of Joe Durniak and the truth about Terry Nash when they’d stopped to help a girl whose car wouldn’t start. What a setup that had been!

While Starsky’s mournful tone helped defuse Hutch’s anger, he couldn’t—and never would—understand Starsky’s love for that car. “Starsky, it’s only a car. It can be replaced.” He didn’t add, *But you can’t be*. His partner would only shrug him off. “C’mon, get in the house. I’ve got to hunt up a phone so I can call for back-up. They tampered with the radio, remember?”

At that moment, sirens could be heard in the distance.

“Joey beat ya to it. Her sneakers really must have flown. Sounds like the reinforcements are already on their way,” Starsky said.

“C’mon.” Hutch slid his arm across his partner’s waist. “Let’s take a load off that leg.”



A fire truck and two black-and-whites had pulled up, their occupants immediately jumping into action. The three criminals were deposited in the back of the police cars. The burning barn was now a huge heap of smoldering wood, the dry hay fueling the fire, helping it to collapse quickly into itself.

With a few quick strides, Hutch reentered the house and was pleased to see that Starsky had remained on the couch with his leg propped up, despite all the activity around him. Starsky had barked orders in the beginning, but those had eventually died out. Now, he sat quietly, head resting on the back of the couch, lips taut. “Everything’s wrapped up, Starsk. Time to get you to the hospital.”

“I ain’t ridin’ in any ambulance,” Starsky declared. “I can walk on my own.”

“Don’t worry. I already canceled the ambulance.” Since they were out of their jurisdiction, Hutch had immediately gone outside and identified himself and Starsky to the first officers on the scene and explained the events leading up to that moment. Upon hearing of an injury, particularly of a fellow officer, one had immediately called for an ambulance. Hutch, knowing Starsky’s abhorrence of ambulances and anything medical, quickly canceled the order, explaining he’d bring in his partner himself since the wound wasn’t life threatening.

“Well, let’s go.” Hutch held out his hand, offering leverage and making it easier for Starsky to extricate himself from the couch. As Starsky pulled himself up and put weight on his right leg, he winced and sucked in his breath.

“Hurts?” Hutch asked, observing Starsky’s leg and jeans still covered in dirt, straw, and blood.

“Could be worse.” Clenched teeth told Hutch that his partner was in deeper pain than he was willing to admit. “Let’s get this over with so I can go home. I’ve got a date with Sally tonight.”

“Starsky, I don’t think you’ll be going anywhere tonight.”

“Course, I will.”

“We’ll see what the doc has to say about that,” Hutch muttered, as they headed out the door toward the Torino.

Hutch felt Starsky leaning into him a little more with each step. “Looks like it stiffened up.”

“Yeah,” Starsky grumbled. “Good thing Sally and I only planned on going out for dinner and then staying in and watching a horror flick on TV.”



A doctor in scrubs entered the hospital waiting room and, after scanning the room, called, “Detective Hutchinson...Ken Hutchinson?”

Hutch quickly turned away from the window where he’d been standing. To observers, it appeared he’d been studying the incoming and outgoing traffic of the large parking lot, but Hutch had absorbed nothing, his thoughts focused on the afternoon’s events and how they had been his fault. Johnny Bagley wanted him dead, and Bagley didn’t care who he took with him. Starsky and Joey had equally become targets. And it was Starsky who was once again suffering because he was Hutch’s partner and friend. “I’m Ken Hutchinson.” He extended his hand in greeting to the doctor. “How’s he doing?”

“Detective Starsky is doing fine. We removed the bullet from his leg, and, with some physical therapy, he should be fine. He was lucky. The bullet entered the muscle, missing the bone and artery entirely.”

Hutch, the tension building ever since Starsky had gone into surgery, relaxed a little. “When can I take him home?”

“We’re going to keep him overnight for observation because he’s running a low-grade fever, and, while I don’t expect any problems, I’ve started him on some antibiotics. There’s nothing to worry about. It’s just a precaution. When we extricated the bullet, it was obvious the bullet had been in there a while...”

“*Hutchinson, you got an hour,*” Johnny Bagley had warned them, and they’d been trapped in the barn far too long trying to figure out how to escape. They had gotten Joey out safely, but then Starsky was shot—making their escape Hutch’s responsibility. He should have been smarter. It was almost two hours before he’d actually gotten Starsky to the hospital.

“...and it required extra time to clean out the wound. There was a fair amount of dirt and—”

“We were trapped in a barn,” Hutch offered weakly, but didn’t explain further.

Mumbling something about “the strange life of a cop,” the doctor continued. “It’ll probably be for only twenty-four hours. He should make a full recovery, but he’ll have to stay off his leg for a few days.”

Hutch nodded. “Not a problem. I’ll make sure of it.” He had already planned to stay at Starsky’s place for a while, knowing from his own past experience that Starsky would need some assistance. Getting around on crutches wasn’t easy. He’d had to use them far too long following his broken leg.

Hutch still shuddered at the memory of being forced over the edge of the canyon road and lying in the canyon for days until his partner finally rescued him. Following that, Starsky had been at his side practically every minute of the day, mother-henning him.

Now it was his turn to reciprocate.

“He’ll certainly need to exercise it, but he shouldn’t run a marathon...”

“That’s not likely,” Hutch mumbled. The thought of Starsky in a marathon brought a smile to his face. Starsky preferred sleeping too much to even join him on his morning runs.

Realizing the doctor had stopped talking and was expecting an answer, Hutch said, “Don’t worry. It won’t be easy, but I’ll keep him off his feet, Doc...Doctor...”

“Tillerman. Mark Tillerman.”

Hutch again shook hands with Dr. Tillerman. “Thanks. Can I see him now?”

“He’ll be on the seventh floor. Just check with the nurses’ station up there.”

Hutch nodded and headed toward the elevator, already contemplating how he was going to break the news of this unexpected overnight hospital stay to Starsky. In typical fashion, his partner was probably going to whine and demand to go home, but Hutch knew most of that would be an act—an act to hide his fear of hospitals. Starsky had a strong aversion to hospitals and emergency rooms. Not only from their frequent visits to the hospital as a result of injuries acquired during the line of duty, but also from his own childhood when Starsky’s father had been shot and taken to the hospital—never to return.



At the nurses’ station, they informed him that Starsky had been brought up only moments before. While Hutch was anxious to see how Starsky was doing, he didn’t want to intrude on the nurses settling him in. After impatiently waiting a few minutes, Hutch gently pushed open the door to Room 714.

Starsky was asleep, and a nurse was checking the IV drip as Hutch entered. She looked back at him and whispered, “It’s okay; you can come in. He’s resting now.”

“How’s he doing?” Hutch immediately closed the distance between himself and Starsky. His partner looked comfortable, but his face was drawn and a little flushed, probably a result of the fever.

The nurse, pausing to take Starsky’s pulse, replied, “Fine. A little groggy. The anesthesia hasn’t worn off fully yet.”

Hutch understood. He’d been there before—somewhere between reality and dreamland, resisting the urge to return to the painful reality on the other side.

“He’ll probably sleep a little longer.” She raised the blanket covering Starsky’s leg, checking the bandage before tucking the blanket back in. She then made several notations on his chart, prior to hanging it back at the end of the bed, and then looked up at Hutch. “He’s mumbled a few times, something about Hutch and a dead watch. Do you have any idea what he’s referring to?”

Hutch sighed. “Yes, I know exactly what he’s talking about.”

The nurse nodded, pleased to have the mystery somewhat resolved. “Well, I’ve got to check on a few other patients. I’ll be back in a while to take his temperature again. If he needs anything, the buzzer is within easy reach.”

Hutch noticed the call button inches from Starsky’s fingers. “We’ll be fine.”

After the nurse left, Hutch brushed the back of his hand briefly against Starsky’s cheek. He didn’t want to wake him, but it did confirm his suspicion—it was warm to the touch.

Hutch moved over to sit in one of the plastic chairs next to the bed. No doubt it was going to be a long night.



“Hey, buddy.” Relieved, Hutch stood and walked stiffly to the bed. Starsky had finally opened his eyes and was rather groggily inspecting his surroundings.

“What am I doin’ here?”

“The doc removed the bullet from your leg.”

“This Recovery?”

“No, the nurses just settled you in your room.”

Starsky considered the answer for a moment, and then his eyes narrowed and quickly shifted to Hutch. “When do I get to go home?”

“It’s just for the night. You’re running a slight fever, and the doc doesn’t want to release you yet. He’s just being cautious.”

“Cautious, mautious. I have a date tonight, and I wanna go home.” Starsky started to throw off the covers and swing his legs over the side of the bed. “What time is it? Sally’s going to be expectin’ me.”

Hutch looked at his watch. “It’s seven o’clock.”

Starsky’s head jerked up. “I’m already late. Hand me my clothes. I won’t even have time to go home and change.”

“Um...” Hutch swallowed nervously. “...while you were sleeping, I called Sally and canceled your date. She was very...”

“You what?”

“...understanding.”

Starsky sank back against the bed, rolling his eyes at the ceiling.

“Don’t worry, Starsk. She fully understands. In fact, she offered to come here, but I told her you needed to rest.” Starsky’s eyes bore into his, and Hutch sank back into the chair, giving his partner a weak smile. “I had the TV hooked up so you and I can watch the horror flick.”

Hutch wasn’t a fan of horror movies—especially ones Starsky had made him sit through a million times—but at this point, Hutch was willing to humor him with just about anything. Besides, if he got Starsky interested enough in the movie, maybe he wouldn’t remember what shape his watch was in.



Please send comments to [Linda B.](#)