

# Miserable – A Continuation

*By Linda B.*

Even though he didn't open his eyes, Starsky sensed Hutch quietly walking toward him. The feel of Hutch's hand on his forehead was cool and comforting. He wanted to say something, but at the moment anything seemed like it would take too much effort. It had been a long night, with Hutch spending it close at his side. He'd been too tired to move, so Hutch had gotten him settled on the couch and that's where he had spent the night—with Hutch in a chair nearby.

He drowsily wondered how much sleep Hutch had actually gotten. Whenever the fever rose and the sweating started, he'd throw off his covers and Hutch always seemed to be there with cool, wet cloths. A short time later, the shivers would start and Hutch would tightly tuck the covers around him. *I wonder who tucks Hutch in when he's sick?* Starsky, forehead furrowed in concentration, remembered. *Oh, yeah; I do.* Then he chuckled, unaware that he'd done it loud enough for Hutch to hear.

"What's so funny, buddy?" Hutch asked, running a cool washcloth across Starsky's forehead.

"Nothin'." Starsky shifted uneasily on the couch.

"Back getting a little sore."

Starsky nodded and opened his eyes, giving in to the inevitable. He sat up a little straighter and leaned back against the pillow he suddenly found behind his back. "Whatcha still doin' here?"

Hutch laughed. "I didn't think you were quite ready to face the world on your own yet." He reached beside him on the coffee table and picked up a glass. "Here, have some water."

Starsky drank, gulping at the water.

"Hey, take it easy." Hutch reached for the glass and, with his hand tightly gripping Starsky's, slowed the water's descent. Starsky's face was flushed and his hand hot. Confirming Hutch's gut feeling that his partner's fever had risen overnight "How ya feelin', buddy?"

"Terrific." But the difficulty Starsky experienced in swallowing belied the soft smile on his face.

"I think your fever's gone up, not down. Time to see a doctor. It's Sunday, so I'm afraid that only leaves the hospital."

"No hospital, Hutch." Starsky straightened up, eyes widening in fear.

"Look, I know it's not your favorite place, but you're sick."

“The doc’s only gonna tell me I got a virus and it’ll work itself out. I ain’t goin’,” Starsky declared stubbornly, knowing full well that if Hutch decided he was going--he was going. He didn’t have enough strength to put up any resistance for long. Instead, he turned on the little boy charm that somehow always seemed to work on his partner. “I promise I’ll stay in bed and sleep.”

“And drink plenty of liquids?”

Starsky nodded earnestly; he’d promise anything to keep his partner from taking him to the hospital. “Plenty of liquids.”

Sighing, Hutch agreed. “Okay--for now. But if you start feeling worse, I don’t want to hear ‘but, Hutch’. I’m takin’ ya straight to the hospital.”

Starsky nodded solemnly, but relaxed visibly at the blond’s words.

“Let’s go.” Hutch reached for the covers Starsky suddenly had a deathlike grip on.

Confused, Starsky said, “But I said I’d sleep...”

Hutch nodded sternly, while he stifled a laugh when he saw the look of childish terror that had suddenly appeared on Starsky’s face. “You said you’d ‘stay in bed and sleep’. So let’s go. That couch has got to be uncomfortable.”

Relieved that he wasn’t headed to the hospital, Starsky willingly gave up the covers and shakily stood. Hutch grabbed Starsky’s elbow for support and helped him into the bedroom. As they neared the bed, Hutch moved slightly ahead and pulled back the covers. Finding even the short walk draining, Starsky sank gratefully onto the bed.

“Okay, Gordo, under the covers. You’re here for the duration.”

“But the TV...”

“No TV, Starsk, you promised. And I quote ‘I promise I’ll stay in bed and sleep’.”

Realizing Hutch wasn’t going to budge, at least not until there were visible signs he felt better, Starsky slid under the covers and curled up on his side. Smiling, he let himself drift back to sleep. *You’ll make a great dad someday, Hutch.*



Warm and comfortable under the blankets, Starsky buried his head deeper into his pillows wishing that whoever was shaking his shoulder would cut it out and go away.

“Starsk...”

The incessant shaking continued and Starsky grew increasingly irritated. Not only was it annoying, but the movement was making his head ache even more. Unable to stand it any longer, Starsky tried pulling out of its reach, as he mumbled, “Lemme sleep.”

“Can’t. Dobeey expects me back in twenty minutes.” Hutch was finding it hard to be patient. He knew Starsky still wasn’t feeling well, but he was running out of time. “It’s lunchtime and I rushed over here to fix you something to eat. The least you could do is sit up and give it a try.”

Starsky pulled the covers over his head, and Hutch barely caught the mumbled words. “Leave it on the nightstand. I’ll eat it in a lil’ bit.”

Hutch grabbed the top of the blanket and pulled. “No way, José. If I walk outta here, the soup will still be sittin’ here at five o’clock. C’mon, sit up.”

Reluctantly opening his eyes, Starsky knew his partner was right. He’d been sick for two days now and he’d spent most of the time sleeping. It seemed like all Hutch ever wanted was for him to drink. Drink juice, drink tea, drink water. He had to be turning into a veritable fountain by this time.

“C’mon, buddy. I’ve gotta get back.”

Starsky tried to turn and pull himself up. But finding his legs tangled in the blankets and his arms too weak to hold him up, he gratefully sank back down, figuring Hutch would at least see he’d made an attempt.

Seeing Starsky struggling to sit up, Hutch set the tray down and pulled the covers back. Starsky, finding his excuse gone, reluctantly, turned onto his back. He’d managed to sit halfway up when Hutch jammed another pillow behind him. “That better?”

“Yeah, thanks,” came the hoarse reply.

Handing Starsky the cup of tea, Hutch studied his friend’s still pale face. On Saturday, after returning early from a fishing trip with Kiko, he’d found Starsky ill and feverish. Finally getting some food into him, he’d helped Starsky to bed where he insisted Starsky stay all of Sunday and into Monday morning. The fever had finally broken last night, but it had left his partner tired and drained.

“Feelin’ any better?”

Starsky, sipping briefly on the tea, smiled to himself as he realized it was fixed perfectly: a little honey, a little lemon and a little whiskey. Coughing to clear his throat, he answered, surprise in his voice, “Actually, I do feel a little better.”

“Told you sleep was what you needed,” Hutch said triumphantly, though he wasn’t about to admit to the brunet that he’d been more than a little scared at Starsky’s worsening condition on Sunday. Truth was, Hutch had been uneasy with the deal he and Starsky made, but it seemed to

calm his partner. He'd kept a careful eye on him instead--with plans to chuck the whole deal immediately, if it became necessary. So he'd spent all of Sunday and Sunday night sitting on Starsky's couch or in the chair next to his bed watching for any change in his condition. When the fever finally broke about 3:00 AM, they both managed to get a few hours of restless sleep.

"Tastes good, Hutch." Starsky found himself eagerly reaching for the bowl of soup and crackers Hutch held out for him. "Thanks."

After watching Starsky eat for several minutes, Hutch stood up to leave. "Just put the empty bowl back on the tray and I'll wash it when I get back."

Starsky nodded, surprised at how hungry he suddenly felt. Realizing Hutch was leaving, he stopped long enough to ask eagerly, "I'm getting tired of things you can pour. Can you bring me something else for dinner?" Hutch turned at the door to look at his partner's suddenly woeful expression, anticipating Starsky's choice. "I know I'll be feelin' better by then. How 'bout some pizza?"

"You need fluids, not pizza."

"Leave me a whole gallon of orange juice. It'll all be gone when you get back. I promise. That be 'nough fluids for ya?"

Hutch shook his head, pausing briefly to wonder why he always gave in to his partner's wishes, but the smile mirrored in his blue eyes signaled his agreement. "I'll stop for a pizza. But are you gonna eat the pizza before or after the Oreo cookies?"

"Cookies? Are there cookies left?" Starsky's interest was suddenly aroused. "You wouldn't be holdin' out on me, would ya, Hutch?"

Chuckling at the obvious improvement in Starsky's health and spirits, Hutch headed into the kitchen for the remaining Oreos and the orange juice, happy to see his partner finally feeling better. Finding only three cookies left in the package, he made a mental note to stop at the grocery store--before picking up the pizza.

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