

# Miserable - A Silhouette

*By Linda B.*

Hutch rolled onto his left side and reached across to swat the alarm clock before swinging his legs over the side of the bed. Slowly standing up, he stopped, stretched and then headed toward the kitchen. The sun's rays illuminated the edge of the shade, and, as he pulled it up, his smile was instantaneous as the feel of the rays hit his face. It was going to be a great day for fishing. Glancing at his watch, Hutch realized he had only about forty-five minutes before he had to pick up Kiko. He started toward the shower, and as he passed the phone he impulsively picked it up and dialed.

"Starsky," came the mumbled reply on the other end.

"Mornin', Starsk. Hope I didn't wake you."

"Nah, I was up already." Knowing that his partner normally slept late on Saturday mornings, Hutch was a little surprised to find his partner already up and apparently moving around. Hutch hesitated a second, hearing something in the tone or inflection of Starsky's voice that made him sound a little strained or tired. *Heck, Starsky hated getting up early in the morning, no wonder he sounds tired.* "What's up?" Starsky asked, breaking into his reverie.

"Kiko and I are going fishin'. Just wondered if you wanted to join us." When he reached for the phone, Hutch knew it was probably a hopeless cause. Starsky hated fishing. Said it always made him feel dumb when a little wiggling fish managed to yank on the fishing pole and get away. And to date they'd all managed to elude his curly-haired partner. But he had hoped that Starsky would still want to spend the day with them.

"Nah, thanks for the offer, but you know me and fishin', we don't exactly get along. Besides, I have plans."

Hutch tried to hide his disappointment. Starsky didn't enjoy fishing, but regardless of Starsky's lack of enjoyment Hutch liked having him around and he knew Kiko did as well. The last time the three had gone out, Kiko had spent half the time trying to teach Starsky some card tricks he'd learned at school. And Starsky had bothered Hutch the entire evening until he let him try them out on him. He chuckled at the memory. "You sure, Starsk? We'd love to have ya come."

"Thanks, buddy. Maybe next time."

At the words 'maybe next time', Hutch decided to drop the idea. He knew Starsky would undoubtedly go along if he continued to pressure him, but that was being selfish. After saying goodbye, Hutch headed for the shower, briefly wondering about the inexplicable, uneasy feeling in the pit of his stomach.

+++++

“Look, Hutch!” yelled Kiko. “I got one!”

“Here, let me help.” Hutch hurried over to Kiko’s side and the two reeled in the fish, laughing as they struggled. Amazed that one fish could put up such a struggle.

After unhooking the fish, Hutch held it up for Kiko to inspect. “I finally got one, Hutch!” Kiko beamed. It was only the second time they’d gone fishing, and it was the first fish he’d caught on his own. He examined the fish proudly and then frowned. “It’s too small to keep, isn’t it, Hutch?”

“Let me have a look.” Hutch reached for the fish, eyeballing its length. “Fraid so. Looks like we’ll have to throw it back in. Sorry, Kiko.”

“Oh, that’s okay. It took me all day but I still caught one.” Kiko’s smile still lit up his face. “Did Starsky?”

“Did Starsky what?” Hutch asked, as he bent down to pick up his rod.

“Did Starsky ever catch a fish this big?”

Hutch laughed and placed his arm around Kiko’s shoulder. “Nope. Can’t say that he’s ever caught any fish. Starsky and fishing don’t seem to get along.”

“That why he didn’t come today?”

Hutch thought back to his morning conversation with his partner. “Nope. Said he already had some plans.” Watching Kiko walk over to the dock’s edge to throw the fish back in, Hutch couldn’t help remembering the uneasy feeling he’d had when he and Starsky had talked. Their conversation kept popping into his head at the oddest times, and he couldn’t shake the feeling that there was something Starsky hadn’t told him. For what felt like the hundredth time, he reran the few words they’d spoken through his mind. There was something in the sound of Starsky’s voice that he couldn’t quite pinpoint.

Suddenly, Hutch sat straight up and started packing up their supplies and food. *That was it! Starsky’s voice. The last time he sounded so raspy and defeated, he’d gotten sick—seriously sick—with bronchitis.*

“Kiko?”

“Yeah, Hutch?”

“I’m sorry to break this up, but I’ve got to head into town early.”

“Sure,” Kiko grinned. “I already caught my fish.”

Kiko joined Hutch in quickly packing up the fishing gear and loading it into the trunk of the car; Hutch's thoughts centered on his partner the entire time. He became more and more convinced that Starsky hadn't been honest with him about his plans and that he was really sick.

+++++

Hutch dropped off Kiko and headed toward Starsky's apartment. As he rounded the corner, he spotted the neighborhood store and impulsively pulled into its lot. Walking quickly, he headed directly to the cookie aisle. He searched the shelves, trying to remember which brand Starsky had once laughingly told him his mother gave him to make him feel better. Spying the Oreos, he grabbed a bag and then briskly walked to the cooler to grab a gallon of orange juice. Something Starsky's refrigerator would no doubt be lacking.

For reasons unbeknownst to him, on the ride home Hutch had recalled Starsky's story of what he considered 'the best medicine'. Several years earlier when Starsky had been home sick, Hutch had found his partner wrapped up in blankets, feeling terrible and eating Oreo cookies. He'd reached for the bag to take them away, but Starsky had grabbed them back. A look of fear filling his eyes. While munching on a cookie and guarding the bag, Starsky had shared a boyhood memory about the time his mom had brought him a bag of Oreo cookies and how they had made him feel better. Hutch had laughed at the whole idea, but it was obvious from the look on Starsky's face he still believed that the cookies held some kind of healing power.

Hutch pulled up in front of Starsky's apartment and turned off the ignition. The lights were out but the Torino was there. Certain his hunch was correct, Hutch reached for the grocery bag and smiled. *Well, Starsk, it's time to test your theory. We'll see if Oreos are the best medicine in the world. If they work, I'll buy you a whole cupboard full.*

***Linda B  
April 2001***