

Missing You
Post "Sweet Revenge"

By Linda B.



Hutch paced the length of the hospital room repeatedly. Usually, he tried to sit as still as possible so as not to disturb his recuperating partner. But today was different; he was anxious. Dobe had ordered him to appear in court, and that meant he would have to leave before Starsky woke up. Something he didn't want to do. Ever since Starsky had opened his eyes following Gunther's attack, Hutch had made sure he had been there—that his were the first eyes

Starsky saw when he awoke. He didn't want him waking up alone to what had become a cold, scary, pain-filled world.

But Starsky wasn't showing any signs of stirring, and he couldn't bring himself to wake him.

Hutch glimpsed at his watch for the umpteenth time, and back at his partner. Finally, he reached for the pad of paper sitting on Starsky's tray stand and pulled a pen from his pocket. He wrote quickly, folded the note, and placed it on the nightstand next to the bed. He wanted it to be the first thing Starsky saw when he woke up.



Starsky moaned. He fought the urge to open his eyes. Everything ached when he returned to the conscious world, and the reality of what had happened raised its ugly head. The only thing keeping him grounded was Hutch. Sometimes, in those first split seconds when he was reentering the world, he'd think about how easy it would be to give up. But then he'd sense those blue eyes—terrified, lonely, hopeful—watching him, and he knew he couldn't.

“Morning, Detective Starsky. How are you feeling today?”

The nurse's soft-spoken voice continued to invade his thoughts, or maybe it was the feel of her gentle hands tightening and tucking the sheets and cotton blanket around him that finally roused him.

“Hut-ch?” he whispered through cracked lips.

“Your partner isn’t here right now. But he left a note.” Starsky followed the movement of her arm and saw the folded piece of paper with the familiar scrawl—**STARSK**—written on the front.



“Do you want me to read it to you?”

“No. Just...give it...to me.”

The nurse placed the note in his hand. Starsky held it a moment, and then let his hand relax back onto the cotton cover.

“You sure you don’t want me to read it?”

“No. I’ll read it...in a minute.”

“Okay. I’ll be back in a few to check on you. It’s almost time for an IV change.”

After the nurse left, Starsky opened the note.

STARSK,

SORRY, I COULDN’T BE THERE WHEN YOU WOKE UP, BUT DOBEY TOLD ME THEY’RE HAVING A BOND HEARING FOR GUNTHER, AND I HAVE TO BE THERE. PAPER SAYS HE’S HIRED THE BEST LAWYERS IN THE COUNTRY. THAT’S NO SURPRISE. HELL, WITH ALL HIS MONEY, HE COULD HIRE THE DEVIL HIMSELF TO REPRESENT HIM. PROBABLY DID.

IT’S IMPORTANT THAT I BE THERE. NO ONE IS GOING TO SCREW THIS UP. OR THEY’LL HAVE TO DEAL WITH ME.

THE NURSE SAID SHE’D READ THIS TO YOU IF YOU’RE TOO TIRED. I’LL BE BACK WHENEVER THEY FINISH. DOESN’T MATTER WHAT TIME.

HUTCH

∞ ∞

Hutch entered Starsky's room. The lights were dim and Starsky was asleep.

"Hey there, buddy," Hutch whispered as he sat down in the chair next to the bed. He reached for the hand resting near him and was concerned at how cold it felt. "Nurses said you had a pretty good day, buddy. Sorry it took so long for me to get back."

There was no response, not that Hutch expected one. He was pleased to see Starsky resting comfortably, even if it meant he was medicated. Hutch glanced over at the nightstand. On it rested a folded note. The name "*Hutch*" was barely recognizable, but he knew who had scratched it out.

He reached for the note and leaned back in the chair. He ran his fingers across the shaky letters, then wiped his eyes with his sleeve. *Oh, Starsk, how painful it must have been for you to write this.* He opened it carefully, as if it were breakable.

Hutch,

Sorry I sleep so much. Keep missing you. Forgot to say thanks for bringing Ollie in. The nurses think he's cute. You must be so tired. Go home and sleep. Don't know how we're going to get through this.

The nurse said she'd read this to you if you can't keep your eyes open.

Later,

Me

∞ ∞

Starsky heard footsteps. He opened his eyes anticipating Hutch. Instead a Red Cross volunteer set a glass of ice water on his tray.

"Oh, I'm sorry, I didn't mean to wake you. Would you like a drink of water?"

Starsky glanced around the room, disappointed to find Hutch wasn't there. *Damn, I missed him again. I hate being on this medication all the time. It might numb some of the pain, but I can't keep my eyes open long enough to see Hutch.* He spotted a note on the nightstand and turned his head toward the teenager in blue and white stripes. "Could you...hand me that note?"

“What note?” The girl glanced around the room.

“The one sitting by Ollie, the stuffed bear...on the nightstand.”

“Oh? Sure.” She walked around the bed and handed it to Starsky. “Can I get you anything else?”

“A couple toothpicks.”

Confused, the girl asked, “Toothpicks?”

“Yeah, to keep my eyes open.”

The volunteer giggled. “I’ll get some on my break.”

Starsky smiled weakly. “Sounds good to me.”

Starsky rested the note on his chest. He wanted to read it, but not until he was alone.

As the door closed, Starsky sighed and brought the note up close. It was easier to focus that way.

STARKY,

Got your note. Don't worry about sleeping too much. Your body needs the rest. It's been through a lot. Don't worry about me. The judge denied GUNTHER bail. Said he'd be a flight risk. I guess his money couldn't buy him everything. DOBEY'S HAVING ME CHECK, RECHECK, TRIPLE CHECK EVERYONE'S REPORTS. GUNTHER'S BEHIND BARS AND HE'LL NEVER SEE THE LIGHT OF DAY AGAIN. I SWEAR TO GOD. GUNTHER WILL PAY FOR WHAT HE DID TO YOU.

THE NURSES INSISTED I GO HOME AND SHOWER. BUT I WON'T BE LONG.

OK, AND DON'T WORRY ABOUT GETTING THROUGH THIS. WE WILL. WE'VE DONE IT BEFORE. IT WON'T BE EASY. BUT DON'T FORGET... THERE'S ALWAYS ME AND...

tree.

Starsky rested the note against his chest, near his heart. He was glad the nurses had kicked Hutch out. *He sure won't listen to me.* But there was comfort in knowing it wouldn't be for long.

The Red Cross volunteer returned to find Starsky asleep. She took the note from his hand, folded it, and laid it on the tray. On top, she placed two toothpicks.



The End