

Play Ball

By Linda B

Chapter 3

“What the hell was that?” Starsky exploded as soon as Dobey’s door was shut.

“Starsk, let’s take it outside,” Hutch offered softly seeing the heads of their fellow officers shoot up at Starsky’s explosion. Hutch grabbed Starsky’s arm and steered him toward the hallway door.

Starsky shut his mouth, pulled his arm out of Hutch’s reach and glared at the staring officers, daring anyone to speak. The only thing he could think of was that his partner didn’t trust him anymore.

Starsky barely controlled his anger until they made it outside the precinct door.

“Let’s go get some coffee, Starsk.”

“Coffee!! I want to know what the hell you’re thinking. ‘We’ll just work from the office in the morning and you’ll check out the leads in the afternoon!’ And...” Starsky could feel himself warming up. “Johnson and Barnes in charge and us assisting!”

“Starsk, I didn’t mean it the way it sounded,” said Hutch trying to placate his partner and calm him down enough to have a rational discussion. And watching his partner’s reaction, Hutch realized that was going to be a near impossibility.

“Didn’t mean it the way it sounded!” Starsky sputtered. “Since when did you start liking working alone?”

“I don’t buddy. I don’t...just let me explain.”

They’d walked down the sidewalk to the small park on the corner and Starsky sank into one of the black park benches. Hutch could already see signs of weariness in his partner’s face and he was sorry he’d upset him. “Look, Starsk. I know you’re itching to get back out on the street. I want that too but we still need to take it a little slow...”

“Quit mothering me!!!”

Hutch took a deep breath and continued, “I was just trying to buy us a little time. Dobey’s given us a chance here to work a real case and there’s always things to do before we hit the streets—talk to Barnes and Johnson in Robbery, review similar crimes, check release dates from previous felons. I can do some follow-up in the afternoon—like interviewing witnesses by myself. You’re tired now. Over the next couple days you’ll build up some more strength and we can then go out together. If you start too soon, or do

too much you'll wear yourself out. And you know DobeY will be watching. If he suspects we can't do it he'll pull us with out blinking an eye."

Starsky sat glumly staring at his folded hands. He'd caught Hutch's verbiage. 'If he suspects we can't do it', knowing Hutch was taking part of the responsibilities. '*What you should have said is if DobeY suspects I can't do it,*' thought Starsky.

After several minutes of angry silence, Starsky relaxed and sighed. He knew his partner had a point. "Okay, let's just go back to work. I'm too tired to argue with you. I have to save it up for Johnson and Barnes."

Hutch stood up and reached out a hand to help Starsky stand up. "Come on, pal. Let's go back to the office. We'll solve this case and get back on the street doin' it."

Starsky's smile didn't quite reach his eyes, but he reached for Hutch's extended hand and stood up.



The majority of the morning had been spent meeting with Johnson and Barnes, reviewing casefiles and shaping strategy. Hutch had sat back and let Starsky handle the meeting with Johnson and Barnes and as always his partner's instincts and intensity amazed him. And while Starsky wasn't satisfied with the situation, Hutch was thrilled when he saw his partner quickly drawn into the facts of the case. It was good to see him back at work—really back at work—not just sitting at a desk doing busy work. Looking at his partner's deep blue eyes alive and sparkling despite the pale face, Hutch couldn't help but feel his partner was back.

Starsky had been unusually quiet at lunch and Hutch figured he was mulling over the facts they'd learned that morning. Reluctantly Starsky had agreed that Hutch would question the other robbery victims, while he'd search the casefiles for similarities or any possible leads.

Hutch was pleasantly surprised that Starsky didn't gripe anymore about the situation. Actually, his partner seemed lost in thought several times during lunch and when Hutch had questioned him, he'd just shrugged him off. '*Something besides this case has to be bothering him*' thought Hutch, '*I'll find out what it is tonight.*'



Starsky walked up the front steps and knocked on David's front door. When no one came to answer it, he knocked harder and listened for any sounds. Hearing the TV, he knocked louder and, still not receiving a response, tried the doorknob. Finding it unlocked, he pushed it open and yelled. "David!"

When David didn't come, he walked into the small livingroom, glanced in the kitchen and, then, hearing the sound of TV emanating from the bedroom to the right, knocked on it's door.

The door opened a crack and David peeked out.

"Hi!" he yelled in recognition.

"Well, hi there. Didn't you hear me knock?" At the shake of the blond head in front of him, Starsky admonished, "You should turn the TV down and you shouldn't leave the front unlocked. It's not safe. Anyone could walk in."

The smile on David's face disappeared and Starsky felt terrible. "C'mon, there's a new tire and light for your bike in my trunk."

David's smile flashed back. He pulled the bedroom door open and ran to the front door. "Well, c'mon," he said enthusiastically, motioning for Starsky to get moving.

Starsky couldn't help grinning back and he quickly followed him out the door.

"Well, there you go." Starsky stood up, wiping his hands on his already dirty jeans. He picked up his tools and returned them to his trunk.

David jumped on the repaired bike and rode swiftly down the street.

"It works great!" he yelled back, as he turned at the corner and returned. Starsky, leaning against the Torino, arms across his chest, smiled at David's pleasure.

David rode up to Starsky and jumped off the bike. "Thanks!"

"Glad it works," Starsky replied as he rumbled David's hair. "Hey, you want to go for ice cream?"

"Sure!"

"Well, put the bike away and get in the car. We'll drive to the ice cream store."

David hurriedly walked his bike over to the side of the house and leaned it against the tree nearby. He then jumped in the front seat of the Torino.

"Is this going to be alright with your Mom?"

"Yeah, I told her a cop was gonna fix my bike."

“Did you tell her how it got broke?” Starsky asked, concerned about what David’s mother thought about him and the incident and if she’d call the precinct to complain about him being so careless.

David hid his face. “No, ‘cause I know she would’ve said I should have been watching for cars.”

Starsky glanced at him as they drove down the block. “Well, it was my fault, too. I guess neither one of us was doin’ our job.”

David looked up, relief on his face.

At the ice cream store, David quickly ordered a large cone with a double scoop of chocolate ice cream.

After watching Starsky pay for the cone but order nothing for himself, David inquired, “Don’t you like ice cream?”

“Sure, but I don’t feel like havin’ any today.”

Noticing a park across the street, Starsky offered, “C’mon, there’s a park. Let’s go sit over there.”

The two waited for the traffic to clear and hurried across the street. Sitting on a park bench they watched a neighborhood ballgame in progress, cheering when the underdogs hit a homerun.

“So, you like baseball?” Starsky asked.

“Yeah,” David answered, the ice cream dripping down the side of the cone and his arm. “Member, I want to be a ball player?”

“That’s right,” said Starsky remembering their earlier conversation. “You play on a team?”

“Nah, but I catch real good. Billy and me play all the time.”

Starsky was silent for a few moments and then suggested, “How about I come over tomorrow afternoon and we play some ball?”

Excited, David turned toward him, large blue eyes staring at him “Really?”

Starsky put his arm around David’s shoulder. “Really? I’ll be by tomorrow afternoon. C’mon, I better get ya home before your mom starts worryin’ and calls the cops.”

Sliding into the driver's seat, Starsky noticed two, large chocolate spots on his jeans. 'Boy, am I glad we decided to go sit in the park.' Images of chocolate stains covering his beloved car seats made him cringe.

End of Chapter 3