

## **Play Ball**

**By Linda B**

### **Chapter 4**

Startled, Starsky opened his eyes and tried to orient himself. A noise—the sound of pots and pans banging—had startled him awake. After a quick glance at the clock, which read 6:30, and hearing more sounds coming from the kitchen, Starsky realized Hutch was working on dinner. After dropping David off at his house, he'd come home and stretched out on the bed. Now three hours later, he was waking up. The sounds of Hutch puttering in the kitchen brought a smile to his lips. *'What would I have done without you buddy...always taken' care of me...worryin' about me...'*

Starsky stood up and walked to the bedroom door. After silently watching his friend for a moment, he asked, "Need any help?"

Startled, Hutch looked up and smiled, "Sleep well?"

"Guess so...whatcha' makin'?"

"Some lasagna." Pleased at Starsky's sudden interest in food, Hutch set the salad bowl in his hands on the table and pulled out a chair. "Come have a seat. The garlic bread and lasagna are just about done."

"So how did the afternoon go?"

"Not much new info. I interviewed the three owners previously robbed and I also talked to about 20 waitresses."

"Twenty?...Uh...tough assignment, hey?"

"Yeah, I had a few stuff their phone numbers in my hip pocket." Hutch grinned. "If you eat nice, maybe I'll share a few."

Hutch filled Starsky in on the interviews, while keeping a watchful eye on how much his partner ate. And while it wasn't anywhere near his former eating habits, Hutch was pleased to see Starsky eating more than picking at his food for once.

"It seems all three bars were robbed after they'd been closed for the night. Two men entered through the back door leading to the alley when all the customers and most or all the employees were gone. Looks like they stake out the place until it's empty. Unfortunately, one employee didn't leave soon enough and ended up in the hospital with a concussion when he refused to cooperate but he couldn't identify anyone."

"Couldn't or wouldn't?"

Hutch shrugged, "Couldn't, I think."

"Anybody notice any cars hanging around?"

"Nothing unusual. All the bars have city parking lots nearby so a car could easily park for quite awhile and go unnoticed."

"What's up for tomorrow?"

"I guess we'll continue checking out the employees and see if they've got any records, or see if we find any connections. Nothing's obvious but who knows."

The rest of the evening they watched some TV and Starsky even cajoled Hutch into a couple of chess games; Starsky winning both, much to Hutch's chagrin. Relaxed and enjoying his friend's company, Hutch forgot about Starsky's distracted behavior at lunch.



"C'mon buddy, let's take a break." Concerned, Hutch watched Starsky rubbing his tired eyes. "We've been going over these employee records and files for a couple of hours and aren't coming up with anything. "Let's get out of here before Dobe decides to load something else on us."

It had been a frustrating morning. They'd been buried in paper all morning and nothing had turned up. Twice they had thought they were onto something, but their suspicions were quickly thrown out when they learned both suspects were currently behind bars.

Starsky looked up and nodded. "Sounds good to me. I could use a break." He stood up and headed toward the door, Hutch close at his heels.

"Starsky! Hutchinson!" The loud bellow came from their captain's closed office door.

Hutch looked at his partner and shrugged. Grinning, Starsky opened the door and they disappeared down the hall.

Dobe pushed his office door open and walked into the squad room. "Starsky! Hutchinson!"

The three remaining officers looked up at their captain, and one brave soul pointed out, "They're not here, sir..."

"I see that, Lopez," bellowed Dobe. "Tell 'em to get in my office as soon as they're back!" With that, Dobe turned on his heels and walked quickly back into his office, letting the door slam behind him.



“Here ya go. It’s gonna be high and to the left,” yelled Starsky as he threw the ball to David. They’d been playing catch for over an hour and Starsky’s arm was starting to tire. As David caught the ball, Starsky yelled, “Let’s sit down for awhile.” He headed for the bench nearby.

“You’ve got a good arm,” he told his young companion, as David ran over toward him.

“I told ya I’m gonna be a ball player when I grow up.”

“And what position do you want to play?”

“Outfield and I want to hit them out of the park, just like Babe Ruth.”

Starsky sank gratefully into the seat, but he couldn’t help smiling when David asked, “You tired already?”

“Yeah, remember I’m an old man.”

“No older than my dad and he can play a long time before he gets tired.”

At the first mention of his dad, Starsky couldn’t resist asking, “Where is your dad?”

“He’s in Chicago. My mom and him had a big fight and we moved out here.” David tossed the baseball into his mitt several times before continuing softly, “Me and Billy miss him.”

Starsky ruffled David’s hair and mumbled to himself, “Yeah kid, I know what you mean. I miss my dad, too.” Starsky’s thoughts drifted back to the warm summer nights in New York when he and his dad played catch in the front yard. He remembered tossing the ball to his dad until twilight hit, stopping only because they couldn’t see the ball anymore. It was easy to imagine his dad throwing the ball and yelling “high and to the outside,” as he’d run back to catch the long ball...

“Wanna’ ride on the swings?”

Startled from his memories, Starsky answered, “No, you go ahead. I’ll just sit here.”

Watching David run over to the playground, he couldn’t help but smile when the sunlight bounced off his blond hair reminding him of his partner.

An hour later the Torino pulled up in front of David’s home, both its occupants tired from the sun and fresh air, ice cream cone and strawberry shake purchased and devoured. Starsky turned to David, as he shifted into park. “I’ll see ya tomorrow, okay?”

David nodded, “Kay. Can we play ball again?”

Starsky chuckled, “I don’t know if this old man’s arm can hold up, but sure it’s okay with me. I’ll be back same time tomorrow. You’re sure your mom’s okay with this?”

“Yeah, I told her ‘bout the bike, you fixin’ it, and us playin’ ball. She said it was okay. ‘Better I played ball with a cop than be picked up by one.’”

Starsky laughed, “Your mom’s a smart lady. Okay, go on inside. I’ll see ya tomorrow.”

Starsky watched until David was inside, then shifted into gear and drove off for home and a welcome nap.

*End of Chapter 4*