

Play Ball

By Linda B

Chapter 8

Jumping out of the car at the sight of smoke escaping from the house, Hutch turned and grabbed the radio, but on hearing a siren approaching from the distance he threw it aside and ran to the boy coughing on the grass. As Hutch reached the boy, movement to his left drew Hutch's attention and he was stunned to see his partner climbing out the window, a young, boy hanging limp in his arms. Hutch immediately stood and ran toward his partner as Starsky struggled to carry the boy away from the burning house. Starsky's face and clothes were blackened with soot, but Hutch could still make out the blood on his shirtsleeve and leg. As he reached Starsky's side, he tried to take the boy from his partner's shaking arms.

"Starsky! Give me the boy!"

Tearing eyes closed against the burning smoke, Starsky resisted, disoriented. He thought he'd heard Hutch's voice, but it wasn't possible.

"Starsky...it's Hutch! Give me the boy."

Hutch felt his partner's trembling hands release the boy into his arms. "Hutch," came the whispered response, as Starsky sank to his knees, his legs no longer strong enough to hold him.

Hutch hurriedly carried the unconscious boy away from the house, stumbling in his haste to return to his dazed partner. Hutch gently set the boy down and turned back to help his partner who had not moved. Carefully avoiding any possible burns or cuts, Hutch helped Starsky to his feet and guided him away from the house and toward the tree. Seeing the arrival of the fire truck and the firemen pulling their hoses, Hutch yelled, "Oxygen over here!" as Starsky struggled to take in fresh air.

Two firemen grabbed tanks from the truck and rushed to their side. The first stopped by Billy; the second, carrying two tanks rushed to David and Starsky.

Starsky had collapsed on the grass where they'd stopped and seemed to be barely conscious. Hutch watched helplessly, as the ambulance crew checked his partner's vital signs. Blood was soaking through his left shirtsleeve and his right pant leg. Rivulets of blood trickled down the side of his face from several cuts. At the sight of Starsky's soot covered hands, Hutch was concerned about how badly his partner was burned. But it was the smoke damage to his lungs that worried Hutch the most. Starsky's lungs were already weakened from the shooting. *'Why did you have to go into the burning house?'* Hutch wondered, but he already knew the answer to that. He was Starsky, and no matter the condition of his own health, he would put the boys' life ahead of his own.



It hurt to breathe. The pain seared through his chest with each attempt. His eyes were stinging but he could feel a cool cloth covering them, thankfully blocking out the bright sun. He could hear voices all around him but they seemed muffled and he was too tired to figure out what they were saying. He felt hands gently inspecting his right arm and leg, and he moaned as pain suddenly shot up his leg.

“Starsk...”

Hutch’s voice. Somewhere in the fog. He tried to focus on the sound of the voice...

“Starsky...”

He tried to respond but his voice sounded weak and incoherent. Feeling something covering his mouth, he reached up to remove the weight.

“Leave it, Starsk. It’s oxygen. Just lie still and relax. The paramedic is checking you out.” Hutch kept his hand on Starsky’s shoulder, letting his partner know he was at his side.

“How is he?” Hutch asked the paramedic.

“He’s regaining consciousness now and his vitals are good. He has several lacerations on his leg, arms and face. The amount of smoke he inhaled is our greatest concern. Just keep talking to him. It’s calming him and that will help minimize any coughing. I’m going to start an IV and then we’ll transport him.”

“How’s the little boy?”

“He’s still unconscious. Your partner risked his own life to pull him out the burning house...let’s hope he makes it.”

As Starsky became more aware of the sounds and smells around him, he suddenly remembered what had happened. Jerking the mask off, he tried to sit up. “Where’s David?” he demanded but it only came out as a whispered croak. The sudden movement started him coughing and pain shot through his chest.

“Easy, Starsk.” Hutch and the paramedic quickly pushed Starsky back to the ground. “Lie still. The boys are both out of the house and are being checked over. They’ll be fine.” Hutch pointed to the right, where the paramedics were attending to David and Billy. Starsky turned his head and through blurry eyes saw Billy sitting up breathing with the assistance of an oxygen mask and the paramedics setting David on a stretcher. Relieved, he relaxed and closed his eyes. He could hear the sounds of the water hoses spraying and firechief shouting commands.

'*Save the house,*' was his last conscious thought. Starsky didn't feel himself being lifted onto the stretcher.

End of Chapter 8