

## **Some Kind of Justice**

**By Linda B.**

### ***Chapter Three***

“You finished yet, Davey?”

“No, ma’am. Got a couple more cases to open,” Starsky called through the open door of the cooler.

“Well, take it easy and save something for tomorrow.” Starsky exited the cooler and shut the door. “Just doin’ what I’m paid for.”

“My husband, Tony, will be real happy with your work. Don’t find too many people these days that work as hard as you do.”

Sitting down on the cases of pop stacked in the corner, Starsky watched the elderly lady smile as she took some pennies from a little boy, who Starsky figured to be around eight years old, standing at the counter. “Looks like you’re short a few cents again, Billy.”

Starsky stood up, reached into his jean pocket, and tossed some change onto the counter. “That cover it?”

“Keep your money, Davey. Billy and me got an understanding. I keep a little tab of what he owes me, and he works it off later on by helping me out around here. Right, Billy?” At Billy’s solemn nod, Maria laughed and put the candy in a small bag. “Go on, get out of here. It’s dark and your grandma’s going to be looking for you.”

Billy grabbed the bag from the counter and, smiling at both Maria and Starsky, ran from the store.

“He’s a good boy. Doesn’t mean any harm. He lives just around the corner. His papa left him and his momma, so Billy’s grandma watches him while his mom works nights.” Glancing at her watch, Maria continued, “Grandma must have fallen asleep for him to be out this late. It’s almost closing. You about done?”

“Just gotta mop the floor. Your husband back tomorrow?”

“Yeah, you’ll get to meet him then. He usually works days, and I take the night shift after I’ve fed the kids.”

“Isn’t it pretty late for a woman working by herself? Aren’t you frightened, working alone?”

“Most of the time, no, but lately, with the robberies happening all over town, it makes me a little nervous,” Maria admitted. “Course, that’s changed now.”

“How’s that?”

“You walked in that door looking for a job.” Maria smiled at him, and Starsky couldn’t help but wish it were that easy. “Go on now, finish up.”



Sitting in the LTD waiting for Starsky, Hutch scanned the street. It was after midnight and the street was surprisingly quiet. He’d made the rounds, checking out liquor stores in the neighborhood several times during the evening. He’d found only one problem—the silence. He was actually missing Starsky’s incessant talking.

Hearing the car door open, Hutch turned to greet Starsky. “So, how’s the stocking business?”

“Just fine,” Starsky replied, watching Mrs. Viviano enter her beat-up station wagon and drive away.

Sensing Starsky’s contemplative mood, he proceeded cautiously, “Nice lady?”

“Yeah, too nice, I think. She reminds me of the lady that ran the corner store back home...”

“Starsk, everything reminds you of something from back home.”

“Well, let’s hope I’m wrong this time.”

“Why?”

“Mrs. Walters used to run the store, and I’d go in there almost every day to buy Nick and me some candy.”

“Sounds like some nice memories.”

“Yeah, only one problem. One night, two guys came into the store and shot it all up.”

“So she closed the store?”

“No, her family did after they buried her. She took two bullets in the heart.”

Hutch reached out and gripped Starsky’s shoulder in comfort. “Let’s go get something to eat. Huggy gave me a call earlier and wanted us to stop by.” Taking Starsky’s sigh as a

sign of agreement, Hutch pulled away from the curb, but he had the strangest impression that he'd left his partner back at the store.



“Well, well, look what the cat dragged in.”

“Greetings to you, too, Hug.” Hutch nodded as he slid into the back booth and their friend approached. “Got a message you wanted to see us.”

“What? No shootin’ the breeze? And I thought you was showin’ up just to tease.”

“Cut the jive, Hug. Whatcha got for us?” Starsky said, running his fingers through his curls.

“My, my, if my curly-haired friend isn’t a bit restless tonight.”

“How about bringing us a couple of beers and some info?” Hutch suggested.

“Okay, okay. I can tell you got only one thing on your mind.” Huggy threw the towel he held over his shoulder and headed to the bar.

“Lighten up, Starsk. Huggy’s not the enemy.” Hutch watched as his partner sank back in his seat.

“I know. I know. It’s just that I don’t have a good feeling about this case and we’ve just started.”

“Here’s what the man ordered,” Huggy said, setting two glasses on the table. He then turned toward Starsky and placed a plate of french fries in front of him. “And just for you, my friend, I’ve brought over some munchies. Better you take a bite outta *them*, than my head.”

“Sorry, Hug,” Starsky apologized to his friend, as he squeezed ketchup all over the plate of fries Huggy had laid in front of him. He held out the plate, now a delightful shade of red, to Hutch who held up his hand, grimacing. He never could figure out how his partner could eat that stuff so late at night and not gain twenty pounds. Shaking his head in amazement, Hutch slid over to make room for Huggy.

“Well, rumor on the street is there’s a couple of heavy dudes from outta town tryin’ to score big.”

Curiosity aroused, Starsky stopped before shoving a couple of fries into his mouth to ask, “Score big on what?”

“That’s the question, my friend. Drugs, jewels, prostitution—no one seems to know on what or how much, yet.” Huggy shrugged before continuing, “Near as I can tell, they hit town a few months back and have played it pretty cool. Lately, they’ve been stretching their wings, so to speak, trying to gather some little birdies into the nest. Heard tell they’re trying to expand their operation and it appears they are making it hard to refuse.”

“How’s that?” Hutch asked.

“You remember Whiskey? Fellow about forty-five, always wearin’ old army clothes, always carrying around a bottle of his namesake in his pocket? Been picked up for some penny-ante stuff in the past?” At Starsky’s nod, Huggy continued, “Rumor has it that he got approached a few weeks back, and yesterday he showed up in the morgue.”

“Sounds like somebody pushed him out of the nest,” Starsky said sarcastically.

At Huggy’s solemn nod, Hutch asked, “What makes you think it’s these two fellows that did it?”

“The fellow that found ’im said there was a whiskey bottle with a broken neck lying next to Whiskey with a note on it.”

“Go on,” Starsky urged, irked at Huggy’s need for dramatics.

“Note said—‘Don’t refuse or this could happen to you’.”

“It might not be the same two characters,” Hutch warned.

Huggy shook his head. “Gotta be. Whiskey was harmless; nobody from around here is gonna wring his neck.”

“You got any description of these two fellows?” Hutch asked.

“Nope, though I heard one’s tall and ugly.”

“Geez, that fits half the stiffs in this town—the other half being short and ugly,” Starsky quipped. “Thanks, Hug. We’ll keep an eye out for ’em, maybe they’re tied to the string of robberies we’re investigating.”

Huggy shrugged, “Could be.”

“C’mon, Starsk. Let’s clear outta here,” Hutch urged, as he started sliding out of the booth. “It’s getting late and it’ll be a long day tomorrow. We’ve got a couple meetings in the morning, and it’s back to the liquor store for the afternoon and evening.”

Starsky sighed in acknowledgment and laid a few bucks on the table. “That cover it?” At Huggy’s nod, Starsky patted him on the arm. “Thanks for the info; we’ll see what we can find out.”

As he headed toward the door, Starsky stopped, snapped his fingers and turned back to Huggy. “Where’s Lester?”

“Lester who?”

“Your cousin, Lester,” Starsky explained, exasperation clearly in his voice.

Huggy contemplated Starsky and his answer. “Whatcha need Lester for?”

“I gotta a notice from the IRS.”

“Ouch, that hurts, man.”

Starsky nodded. “Yeah, well, I need his help on this audit.”

“Sorry, man, Cousin Lester’s outta that business.”

“What do ya mean?” A worried expression crossed Starsky’s face.

“Yep, decided he didn’t like messing with the Feds. Thought it might land him in jail one day.”

Swallowing repeatedly, eyes widening in fear, Starsky asked, “Well, how can I get a hold of ’im?”

“Beats me,” Huggy shrugged. “I heard he’s left for Reno. Left no forwarding address.”

Hutch walked back from the door where he’d been standing and pulled on Starsky’s arm. “C’mon, buddy. Let’s go.”

Starsky nodded and silently followed his partner out.

Once seated in the Ford, Hutch asked, “You okay? You’re looking a little pale.”

Starsky looked straight ahead. “I’m fine. Just contemplatin’ my future, which is lookin’ a little bleak at the moment.”



*End of Chapter Three*