

Some Kind of Justice

By Linda B.

Chapter Four

“Hello, you must be Davey.”

Starsky shook the hand of the man standing behind the cash register. He was slightly shorter than Starsky, but had the same dark hair, though more wavy than curly. A few streaks of gray were visible. Starsky couldn't help thinking that the years had been kinder to Tony than to his wife, Maria. Tony was stockier than the detective, long ago unable to shed the pounds his favorite foods, pasta and bread, added to his frame. “Dave, really. But for some reason, Maria always calls me Davey.”

“We have a nephew named Davey, and he lived with us for a while. I guess old habits die hard.”

“You gotta be Tony,” Starsky said, extending his hand in greeting.

“My wife told me she hired you, and she's real impressed with your work.”

“She's a nice lady.”

“What brings you to this part of town?”

“Just passin' through. Kinda like seeing the country while I got no ties. Stayin' with an old friend for now.”

Looking a little envious, Tony added, “Well, hope to keep you for a while—good help is hard to come by.”

“Anything special you want me to do today?”

“Got a delivery coming in about an hour. I'll need your help then. For now, why don't you check the cooler. I haven't had much of a chance to re-stock today.”

Starsky nodded and headed for the cooler, grabbing the blue windbreaker hanging on the hook just outside the door.



The afternoon dragged for Starsky, since there was only so much restocking he could do. No one had showed him how to use the cash register, so he found a few odd jobs that needed to be done and invented a few others. He hated being confined to the store, when

he knew Hutch was out with Erickson interviewing people regarding the latest liquor store heist. About six o'clock, he was filling the cooler when a group of boys, ages thirteen to fifteen, entered the store. At first he didn't pay much attention to them, but found that being inside the cooler gave him a great advantage—he could watch the kids and they didn't know he was doing it. *Kinda like the interrogation rooms with one-way mirrors*, he thought, chuckling. When he saw one of the larger boys start hassling two boys about seven or eight years old, he decided to make his presence known. Exiting the cooler, he came to a halt at the end of the candy aisle. He nonchalantly leaned against the potato chip display at the end of the aisle and cleared his throat.

The three older boys glanced up and moved away from the younger ones, feeling a pair of deep blue eyes trained on them in warning.

“Guess, I'll grab me a candy bar,” the tall blond said, and added with bravado, “and a pack of cigarettes.”

“Don't you know smoking's bad for your health?” Starsky threw out casually. “Besides, you're too young to be buyin' cigarettes.”

The blond stared at Starsky and, finally breaking eye contact, walked to the counter to pay.

“Pack of Camels,” he ordered, knowing that his two friends were right behind him.

“Sorry, not today,” Maria said. “You heard Davey. You're too young to be buying cigarettes.”

“They're for my mother,” he laughed, winking at his buddies.

“Gotta note?”

Embarrassed and angry, the boy answered sarcastically, “No, I don't got a note.” Then, seeing Starsky's movement toward him, he threw down some money. “That should cover the candy bar,” he growled. With a searing stare at Starsky, he exited the store, his two friends on his heels.

“Who's that mouthy kid?”

“That's Paulie, been coming here a long time. I've watched him grow up.”

“He's got rotten manners.”

Maria shrugged it off. “Aw, he don't mean nothin' by it. Just showin' off for his friends.”

“Sure.” Starsky moved behind the counter, closer to Maria. “How come you asked him if he had a note? What’s a note gotta do with it?”

Looking embarrassed, Maria answered, “Sometimes parents are too busy to come in, so they send their kid in with some money and a note. Then, I sell the kid the cigarettes. Figure he’s just carrying it for his folks.”

“I never heard of anything in the law that says ‘if you have a note’ it doesn’t matter what age you are. Seems to me you’re still breakin’ the law.”

Blushing, Maria answered, “Guess there’s not.”

Starsky winked at her before moving back toward the cooler. “You might wanna rethink that policy, or one of these days your kind heart’s gonna get you in trouble with the police.”

“Oh, go on,” Maria dismissed him with a wave of her hand. “Those police have bigger fish to fry than me.”

Starsky grinned and walked over to the two young boys still standing in the candy aisle.

“Thanks, Mister,” one said, as Starsky neared.

“My pleasure. I think those boys are long gone now. What did he want anyway?”

“He was trying to get us to give him our money. Paulie lives down the block from us,” the smallest boy remembered to add, as though that excused the behavior.

“That’s no reason to take money from you. Go on, pick out what you want, and then pay Mrs. Viviano.”

The two boys picked out some candy and hurried to the counter. “You workin’ here now, Mister?”

“Yeah, I’m helpin’ Mrs. Viviano. You’d better spread the word.”

The boys nodded solemnly and, after picking up their change, rushed from the store.

“The kids will be mindin’ their p’s and q’s with you bein’ around here,” Maria said, impressed.

“What’s wrong with kids these days?” Starsky wondered out loud, shaking his head, remembering the days when he and Nicky would practically live in the corner candy store. There was never a thought of stealing candy or money from other neighborhood kids. *’Course, who knows what Nicky did after I left the city,* Starsky couldn’t help wonder.

“They’re neighborhood boys. They don’t mean no harm.”

“I hope you’re right.”



“Can you believe it, Hutch? A fifteen-year-old trying to extort money from an eight-year-old?”

Hutch chuckled at the exasperation in his partner’s voice. “Starsky, it happens every day. It’s just kids being kids.”

“Well, I think it’s terrible. Where are their parents?”

The conversation had continued in this vein for over thirty minutes, and Hutch was growing tired of it. “Look, Starsky, let’s drop it. You aren’t going to change the kids roaming the streets. You want to play social worker, then you’d better switch to Juvie.”

Starsky stared in disgust at his partner. “Terrific.”

“You want to know how my evening went?” Hutch asked, taking another swig of beer and trying to change the conversation for the third time.

“It’s gotta be better ’n mine.”

“Don’t count on it. I traveled between five liquor stores in a twenty-block radius and saw absolutely nothing. My butt’s going numb from sitting in the car all night.” Seeing a grin spread across Starsky’s face, Hutch continued, “Got nowhere interviewing people. No one knows anything. No one’s seen anything, though one person recalls seeing a tall, dark-haired stranger in the neighborhood the day before the last robbery. Can’t identify him any more than that, and I can’t find anyone to collaborate his story. We’re getting nowhere—fast.”

“At least there haven’t been any more robberies.”



The ringing phone woke Starsky, and he glanced at the clock—4:30 a.m. He had fallen asleep only two hours earlier, having decided to stay up and watch an old movie.

“Yeah?” he managed to mumble into the receiver.

“You spoke too soon.”

“Huh? It’s four in the morning, Hutch, make sense.”

“Remember how you said there weren’t any more robberies? Well, don’t look now, but I just got a call from Erickson. There was a robbery at the all-night store over on Arnold. He wants us over there.”

“You gotta sound so cheery about it? I just went to sleep.”

“Pick you up in ten minutes.”

“Terrific,” Starsky replied automatically, but he knew it was into a dead phone line, having heard the click of Hutch’s receiver as soon as he’d finished.



“You’re late,” Starsky quipped, looking at his watch—twelve minutes had passed.

“You on time study now?”

“Nah, just practicing for Dobey.” Grinning at his partner, Starsky needed details. “So what did Erickson say?”

“Not much. Just that it went down and the store clerk was shot.”

“Looks like they’re getting their thrills now by shooting people. How’s the clerk?”

“Hanging in there. He was shot in the belly and is probably in surgery already. Too soon to know if he’ll make it.”

“Just our luck.”

Hutch pulled up behind one of the back-and-whites already on the scene. The two men hurriedly exited the car and headed inside, searching for Erickson.

“Starsky. Hutchinson. Glad to see you.” Erickson acknowledged their presence immediately. “Looks like the same two guys, though it will take some time to run the bullets through ballistics and prove the match for sure.”

Starsky left Hutch standing next to Erickson and wandered about the small store, hands clasped behind his back, noting details. “They enter through the front door?” Starsky stopped to ask one of the patrolmen.

“Looks like the back door, sir. They’re checking for fingerprints now.”

Starsky nodded and moved toward the small back room. Glancing around at the men at work, he nodded at the patrolmen standing nearby and then walked back toward his partner, catching the tail end of the lieutenant’s conversation. “...a little different MO this time. This store is just outside their usual area and they came in through the back.”

“Maybe they picked up on the fact that we’ve staked out stores around town, and they’re better hidden entering from the back.”

“Could be,” Erickson agreed. “Well, it looks like we may have to expand the area we’re staking out.”

“We can’t go undercover and stake out every store. And the patrols will keep getting thinner and thinner, making it easier for them to strike...” Starsky pointed out.

“You don’t have to tell me that, Detective Starsky. I’m well aware of the number of liquor stores in this town,” Erickson said angrily.

“Yeah, too damn many,” Starsky couldn’t resist adding.

Hutch reached out and held Starsky’s forearm, warning him to cool it as Erickson moved closer into Starsky’s space. Starsky glanced at Hutch, and then backed off. “Sorry, Sergeant, I guess I’m tired.”

“We all are. See you guys later this morning. You are planning on attending Lieutenant Jackson’s father’s funeral, aren’t you?”

Starsky grimly nodded in agreement before he and Hutch exited the building.

“Let’s hope the clerk makes it. Maybe we’ll get lucky for once and can get a positive ID,” Hutch suggested hopefully.

Starsky stopped as he opened the car door and looked at his partner across the roof of the car. “That’s not the way our luck’s been running.”

Shrugging, Hutch said, “It could change, you know.”

Starsky nodded before they climbed into the car.



“You didn’t get much more sleep, did you?” Hutch asked, looking at the drawn face of his partner reflected in the bathroom mirror.

Starsky finished straightening his tie before answering. “Nah, I kept dreaming about the liquor store all shot up, the glass all over, and I’d see Mrs. Walters lying on the floor, blood covering her, and then, suddenly, it would turn into Mrs. Viviano.” Feeling Hutch’s hand on his shoulder, he smiled grimly.

“Not a pretty picture, buddy. Try to forget it. Unfortunately, going to a funeral isn’t going to help.”

“Just how I wanted to spend my morning off.” Looking around the bedroom one last time, Starsky nodded to Hutch. “Let’s go. It ain’t gonna get any easier.”



Starsky pulled the Torino into the funeral home parking lot. Following the direction of a tall, solemn-looking man in a black suit, he parked the car in the last space in the row. Almost immediately, a second man walked over and placed a flag on the car indicating they would be members of the funeral procession. Starsky, staring at the flag for a moment, felt his partner squeeze his shoulder. He turned to wink at Hutch, and then the two exited the car. Just inside the entrance, they spotted Captain Dobey and headed toward him.



End of Chapter Four