

## **Some Kind of Justice**

**By Linda B.**

### ***Chapter Six***

Hutch pulled up in front of the store and checked his watch. *Good, Starsk's about done.* He sat there, arm slung across the back of the seat. The call at Waters Street had turned out to be a false alarm. While he was disappointed, it at least meant he was back in time to pick up his partner. Ten minutes had passed when he realized that even though the lights were on, he hadn't seen either Maria or Starsky. *Isn't it about time you started mopping, buddy?* he wondered, having already become familiar with Starsky's routine. Leaning forward in his seat, Hutch stared at the building. Still seeing no movement, his anxiety increased and he exited the car, hurrying across the dark, lonely street to the door. "Damn, it's locked."

He moved to the left, staring through the glass. It was then that he saw Maria lying on the floor covered in blood. Growing increasingly frantic, Hutch returned to the door mumbling, "Where are you, Starsk?"

He glanced down the street and realized it was a long way to the side street that led back to the alley. He hadn't seen or heard anything coming from inside the store. Maria was lying injured on the floor. Where did that put his partner? Injured, dead? Had the robbers made him as a cop and taken him as a hostage? There wasn't time and his anxiety was growing. Trusting his sixth sense that the robbers were gone, he looked around for something to break the door with. It would let him gain entry and set off a silent alarm, ensuring a black-and-white would be there in minutes. Spotting a portion of a brick lying along the curb's edge, Hutch grabbed it and threw it through the front door. Wrapping his hand in his jacket, Hutch shattered the glass near the lock and then reached in and turned the key.

Pulling his Magnum, he entered the store cautiously. He crouched behind the checkout counter and quickly moved to Maria's side. Feeling alongside her neck, he sighed thankfully when he felt a pulse.

There was no noise coming from the back, and the strategically placed mirrors hanging in the corner ceilings indicated no one was hiding down any of the aisles. Hutch straightened up and, moving slowly toward the stockroom, kept the Magnum poised and ready. Slowly entering the stockroom, Hutch quickly scanned from left to right, but it was empty. Empty except for the body lying on the floor, its two legs preventing the alley door from shutting.

Rushing to his partner's side, Hutch pushed open the door and knelt next to Starsky, using his back to prop it open. Gently touching him, he felt for a pulse. *Thank God.* His partner was alive—his right shoulder and the back of his head covered in blood—but alive. As Starsky began to moan, Hutch cautioned him, "Easy, buddy. Lie still. I've got

to get an ambulance.” Quickly glancing around, Hutch saw the blue windbreaker on the hook next to the cooler. He shoved a heavy box against the door, and then grabbed the windbreaker and tucked it around his partner. Brushing at the wayward curls on Starsky’s head, he whispered, “Don’t move. I’ll be right back.”

Hutch ran inside and, spotting the payphone hanging on the wall, dialed the operator and ordered an ambulance. He could hear the scream of the black-and-white’s siren already on its way.



“How’s your partner?” Captain Dobey asked, worry obvious in his voice as he approached his blond detective standing at the waiting room window.

“I’m waiting for the doctor right now. He regained consciousness in the ambulance, but he lost quite a bit of blood. I was worried about him going into shock,” Hutch said as he turned to face his captain, his eyes stopping only briefly on him before continuing on down the hall to the emergency room door.

Dobey nodded, his eyes following Hutch’s. “Good, he’s regained consciousness. How’s Mrs. Viviano?”

Hutch shook his head. “I don’t know yet. They took her up to surgery. I was hoping to hear something soon, so I can tell Starsky when they let me see him.”

Seeing the door of the emergency room open and a doctor, writing on a chart, exit, Hutch approached him. The doctor, sensing his approach, looked up and asked, “You’re here for Detective Starsky?”

“How is he, Doc?” Hutch asked anxiously. “Can I see him now?”

“He’s doing fine. And you can see him shortly. I’m Dr. Philip Ryan.” Dr. Ryan extended his hand to both Hutch and Captain Dobey. “You must be Hutch. Your partner said I should look for a tall blond with a scowl on his face and a furrowed brow.”

Dobey chuckled and extended his hand. “This is Detective Hutchinson, and I’m their captain, Harold Dobey.”

“Nice to meet you both. Just to let you know, we’ve given him some pain pills and he’s a little groggy from the blow to the head.” Stopping briefly to smile, hoping to lessen Hutch’s obvious anxiety, the doctor continued, “But he’s a lucky fellow. The knife wound wasn’t too deep and it didn’t do any serious damage. We did give him a pint of blood and took x-rays of his skull. Looks like only a mild concussion. He’ll have a headache for a few days, but for the most part, he’s doing just fine.”

“Can I see him?” Hutch repeated.

“In a minute. He asked me to check...” Glancing down to look at his own scribbles, Dr. Ryan finished, “...on a Mrs. Viviano. Detective Starsky became quite agitated when I didn’t have any information on her. I promised to find out something if he’d calm down and let me finish stitching him up.”

“She’s up in surgery,” Hutch explained. “Apparently, after stabbing my partner and knocking him out, the thieves entered the store and stabbed her several times before taking off with the money. I’ve been worried about her myself, but the nurses haven’t been able to tell me anything.”

“When I mentioned to your partner the idea of spending the rest of the night in the hospital, he wasn’t too receptive.” Observing a ghost of a smile play across Hutch’s face, Dr. Ryan continued, “The blood transfusion wasn’t administered that long ago, but according to his medical history he’s never had a problem or reaction after receiving blood.” Hutch nodded encouragingly. Knowing his partner’s aversion to hospitals, he knew Starsky would heal faster at home than in this place. “I think it will be safe to release him, assuming there will be someone around to keep an eye on him? I don’t expect any complications, but even with a mild concussion it’s a good idea for someone to watch—”

“I’ll take him home and keep an eye on him, Doc,” Hutch finally interrupted. “We’ve done this before.”

“Somehow, I had that feeling,” Dr. Ryan sighed. “Okay, then, why don’t you go in and see him, while I check on Mrs. Viviano’s progress? I think he’ll be able to rest easier knowing if she’s okay. I’ll send the nurse in with a prescription for some pain pills in case he needs it for his shoulder, but see that he takes them sparingly in the beginning; you’re going to need to wake him every few hours and the pills might zonk him out. He’s going to need to check back with his regular physician to take care of those stitches and arrange any physical therapy. Can you handle that?” Seeing Hutch smile in relief, Dr. Ryan patted him on the shoulder. “Go ahead. He’s in treatment room B.”

As Hutch hurried down the hall and pushed the door open, Dobby asked, “Dr. Ryan, I’ve got a question for you, if you have a moment...”



“Hey, buddy,” Hutch said, pleased to see Starsky sitting up, his right arm in a sling. “How ya doin’?”

Starsky looked up and smiled at the sound of his partner’s voice. “‘Bout time they let you in. I’ve been asking for you.”

“So I’ve heard.” Seeing Starsky’s smile widen, Hutch said a silent prayer of thanks that it hadn’t turned out any more serious than it had, and he patted his partner on the knee. “Doc says you can go home with me. Let’s get you ready to get outta here.”

“Fine by me,” Starsky said, as he started to slide off the examining table.

As his feet hit the floor, his legs suddenly seemed to turn to jello, and he was glad for Hutch’s firm grip on his elbow. “Whoa, buddy. The nurse will be coming in just a minute with a prescription, and probably a wheelchair. I don’t think you’re quite up to making it on your own yet,” Hutch warned.

Finding himself agreeing with Hutch, Starsky unhappily sat back up on the table, his pulse racing. “I just want outta here before they start jabbing me with needles again.”

“I know. But if you pass out, or hit your head again, they aren’t going to let you out at all,” Hutch admonished.

Starsky’s signaled his agreement, and Hutch was pleased when he remained seated.

Dr. Ryan pushed open the door and, tucking his pen in his pocket, chuckled, “It appears we’ll be releasing you into the custody of your partner, Detective Starsky.” He winked at Hutch and added, “I’ve always wanted to say those words.” But then, he continued on a more serious note. “I checked on Mrs. Viviano for you. She’s come through surgery fine and she’s in recovery. Though she’s lost quite a bit of blood, she suffered no damage to any major organs. I’d say you were both extremely lucky tonight.”

Starsky would have nodded in agreement, but he knew from prior experience any movement was going to cause pain. “Thanks, Doc. Now can I get outta here?”

“Sure, the nurse will be in momentarily.” Turning toward Hutch, he added, “I don’t anticipate any problems, but if anything does happen, like he gets disoriented, then get him back here right away. If he’s no longer responsive, call an ambulance immediately.”

Hutch nodded in reply as a young redheaded nurse pushed the door open with a wheelchair. “Okay, Sergeant Starsky, time for a ride.”

Starsky moved off the table more slowly this time, knowing Hutch was stationed nearby in case he needed any assistance. “Sounds good to me, schweetheart.”



Hutch pulled to a stop in front of Starsky’s apartment. “Okay, Gordo, now we get you up the stairs and into bed.” Though his partner had been quiet most of the trip—leaning back against the seat, eyes closed—he knew Starsky hadn’t fallen asleep. There had been a series of stifled moans coming from that direction, as they seemed to find every bump and rut in the road between the hospital and Starsky’s apartment, despite Hutch’s best effort to avoid them.

“Just stay seated and I’ll come around...” Seeing a scowl cross his partner’s face, Hutch’s voice faded away, but not his intent. He knew Starsky would need help for the

next few days, but his partner's stubborn streak was bound to get in the way. Reaching across in front of Starsky, Hutch pushed on the door handle and gave the door a slight shove. "Take it slow," he warned, before exiting on his side. Taking just a few long strides, he was beside his partner before the brunet even made it to the steps. Hovering near Starsky's left elbow, he found it difficult not to offer support, but he knew Starsky had a highly independent streak and wouldn't appreciate the effort.

At the top, Starsky reached into his jean's pocket for his keys and started to insert the door key, but then stopped. He turned to hand Hutch the key. "Here, you do it. It'll make you feel better."

Hutch took the key without argument. Smiling at his exhausted partner, he pushed open the door for him to enter. Seeing Starsky head toward the couch, Hutch protested, "Hey, I said to bed."

As Starsky gratefully sank into the couch, he lifted his feet onto the coffee table. "Look, Hutch, I've been thinkin'. You plan on wakin' me every few hours, for a while, right?" At Hutch's confirming nod, he continued, "Then, there's no point in getting too comfortable. I might as well watch some TV." Starsky patted the cushion next to him. "Turn on the TV, Hutch, grab us a coupl'a beers, and have a seat."

Hutch stared at his stubborn partner before going over to the TV. After hitting the power button, he headed into the kitchen and toward the refrigerator. He knew Starsky was feeling drowsy, but apparently the adrenaline was still racing through his body. They'd been up the entire night, and the concussion had to be making him sleepy. If Starsky would just allow himself to unwind a little, Hutch was sure he'd quickly fall asleep, but, for some reason, he appeared to be fighting the message his own body was sending. Rather than argue with him, and choosing to ignore the request for beer, Hutch decided on a different tactic. "What do you want to eat?"

"I'm not hungry."

Hutch moved from the refrigerator to the cupboard. "Well, there's a can of soup. I'll..."

"Hutch, it's six o'clock in the morning. Who wants soup?"

"What do you want, then?" Hutch, well aware of his partner's deplorable eating habits, anticipated the reply.

"Should be some cold pizza in there."

"Starsk, you're going to rot your gut."

Hutch, searching the refrigerator further, heard Starsky call out. "There's chili in the refrigerator. Mrs. Swanson, my neighbor, gave it to me before she left on vacation."

“Chili, at six in the morning?” Hutch asked in disbelief.

“Restaurants list chili as soup on their menus,” Starsky said smugly.

Shaking his head to the inevitable, Hutch found the chili and an empty pot. After putting it on to heat, he joined his partner on the couch.



“How’s the arm feeling?”

“If I don’t move around too much, it’s just a dull throb. Sling helps. My head hurts more.”

“Finish your chili, then go back and rest, and I’ll clean up.” Hutch watched as his partner pushed the unfinished bowl away, declaring he’d had enough, and then slowly stood. Starsky had assured him that ‘he wasn’t an invalid’ and was up to eating at the table, so before he sat down, Hutch had insisted he’d be more comfortable if he changed out of his bloody shirt and jeans and put on some sweats. Now, as Starsky wobbled a little as he walked back to the couch, Hutch tried again, “The bed would be more comfortable.”

Ignoring the suggestion, Starsky returned to sit on the couch as Hutch cleaned up the table and did the dishes.

Finished putting the dishes away, Hutch dried his hands on the dishtowel and slung it over his shoulder. Starsky was no longer sitting in front of the TV, and Hutch was pleased that he’d finally headed to bed. Hutch glanced at his watch, noting when he’d have to wake his partner, and headed to the front door. He’d noticed yesterday’s newspaper still on the stoop when they’d come home. Now that Starsky was in bed, maybe he’d have a few minutes to look at it. Opening it to read the headlines, he wandered over to lay it on the coffee table. Surprised to hear a moan, Hutch turned to see Starsky curled on his side on the couch, head propped up on a pillow against the armrest. *Just couldn’t do what I asked, could you, buddy?* he thought, chuckling.

Hutch headed for the closet and pulled out the blue blanket that he’d used on numerous occasions when he’d spent the night, either too tired or too drunk to drive home safely. Walking back to the couch, he covered Starsky. He then sat down in the chair intending to keep an eye on his partner, but it was only a matter of minutes before he, too, was asleep—a rerun of “The Andy Griffith Show” playing softly in the background.



*End of Chapter Six*