

Withdrawal

by *Linda B.*

Chapter 1

“C’mon, Starsky,” Hutch complained impatiently. “Just tell Huggy no, and let’s get out of here.” Hutch glanced out the passenger side window of the red Torino, resting his right elbow on the open window frame. “We’ve got to get moving. Lunch is over and Dobeys expects us back at the station.”

Huggy leaned on the driver’s side window, maintaining direct eye contact with Starsky and ignoring Hutch. “Look...it’s a good deal. Just a little bit’a money down and you’ll be makin’ big bucks.”

“Oh, c’mon, Huggy, you can’t make money that fast—not unless it’s illegal,” Hutch exclaimed exasperated.

“Hutch, of course, you can,” said Starsky enthusiastically. “If we just take a little bit from savings and let Huggy invest it for us—”

“Do you know what you’re saying?” said Hutch disgustedly, once again amazed at how gullible his partner was. “Give it up and let’s get going.”

Starsky slowly turned to look at his partner. “If you want to be that way ‘bout it, and don’t want to use our money—”

“Our money?!”

“Yes, our money.” Starsky raised his hands in disgust. “Okay, be that way. I’ll just invest a little of my own. When you see I’m rolling in dough, we’ll just see how sorry you’ll be.”

Startled at seeing his partner suddenly exit the car, Hutch asked, “Where are you going now?”

Starsky bent down and looked at Hutch through the open door. He pointed to the red brick building on the corner. “I’m going to the bank. I’ll be back in just a minute.”

Sighing, Hutch slid down into the seat of the car, crossed his arms across his chest, and closed his eyes.

Huggy Bear slid his tall, slender frame into the now unoccupied driver’s seat of the red Torino. “Well, my man, I’ll just occupy this here seat while Starsk is gone.”

“Help yourself. He just better not be long!”

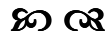


On the opposite corner of Woodward Street, a blue van slowly pulled to the curb. Inside sat three men. Tony, a dark-haired man about fifty and clearly the leader, watched the people moving along the sidewalk and entering the bank. The tall, thin twenty-three-year-old driver of the van, Billy, shifted into park.

“Are you sure this is a good location?” he asked Tony.

“Of course, I’ve been watching it for days. Traffic is light. It’ll be a breeze. We go in quick...and come out the same way.”

“And come out a hell of a lot richer.” The third occupant of the van grinned. Ricky, a curly-haired blond of twenty-eight, rested his right arm on the back of the passenger seat in front of him, and, positioning his gun across his right arm, aimed at the bank. “Bang!” he said, laughing.



Starsky hurriedly crossed the intersection and reached the door of the Hamilton Bank at the same time an elderly gray-haired man did.

“Let me,” offered Starsky, graciously bowing and letting the gentleman enter before him. Looking at Hutch slumped in the car seat, he grinned and waved. Even though his partner ignored him and didn’t wave back, Starsky decided he wasn’t going to let Hutch’s foul mood bother him.

Once inside, Starsky instinctively checked the interior of the bank. There were three bank tellers at the windows helping the five customers either being serviced or waiting in line. Glancing around, Starsky looked for the shortest lane. His eyes followed the elderly man, as he slowly and cautiously walked toward the pretty brunette teller at the far counter. Her nametag read “Katie,” and Starsky recognized her from previous visits. *For an old guy, he’s got good taste in women. I think I’ll follow ‘im and say hello to Katie myself. Hutch can just wait another minute.* Winking and wiggling the fingers of his left hand at Katie across the lobby, a grin spread across his face when she smiled back in recognition.

Starsky turned toward the counter in the middle of the lobby, grabbing a pen and a withdrawal slip. Out of the corner of his eye, he saw the security guard slowly walking across the lobby toward a man dressed in a navy blue suit, standing off to the right of an office at the back of the lobby. *Must be the manager,* thought Starsky.

Busily filling in the withdrawal slip, Starsky never noticed the three men enter the front door and separate in the lobby. Crossing the “t” in Starsky with a flourish, he reached over to place the pen back in its holder and turned in time to see the manager being grabbed around the neck by a tall, thin man. The man began waving a gun in the air, and Starsky instinctively reached for his. The security guard responded immediately, drawing his gun and aiming at the tall man holding the manager. Suddenly, a shot rang out from behind the guard, and the guard slumped to the floor, a bullet in the back.

Spinning to the right and shooting in response, Starsky gasped in pain as a bullet entered his left shoulder. No longer able to hang onto the gun, it slipped from his hand as he fell toward the floor. As the room started to spin, he saw the bank robber he’d hit also fall, blood spreading across his shirt. The last two things he was conscious of were a feeling of satisfaction that his bullet had found its target, and wondering what was taking Hutch so long.



At the sound of gunshots, Hutch shot up in the seat, turning toward the direction of the bank. In one motion, he pushed open the passenger door of the Torino, crossed the street, and ran to the buildings on the same side of the bank but across the intersection. Drawing his gun, he motioned for Huggy to stay down in the car. Pressed as close to the building as possible, he cautiously moved toward the bank, gun ready. The front of the bank was clearly visible, but there was no easy way to get closer. The intersection was only about one-hundred feet, but it may as well have been a million.

Unexpectedly, an elderly lady exited the bakery to his right and started walking toward the street. Grabbing her arm, he ordered, "I'm a police officer. A shot was just heard coming from the direction of the bank. Go back inside and keep everyone there!" With an astonished look on her face, she quickly obeyed.

Trying to move as close to the bank as possible, Hutch ducked behind the bushes at the corner of the block. Eyes never leaving the glass door of the bank, he searched for a way to get across the street unexposed. "C'mon, Starsk, come out of the building, or signal that everything is okay," he prayed under his breath. Suddenly, inside the bank he spotted a man dressed in black pants and a shirt walking toward the door. Hutch watched as the man quickly glanced at the sidewalk and down the street. Then he shut the door, hung a "closed" sign, and pulled down the shade.

Holding his breath, Hutch retreated back to the Torino. He slid into the seat and reached for the car radio. "What's goin' on?" asked Huggy, still ducking down behind the steering wheel.

"Looks like a bank robbery's goin' down," he responded. Speaking briskly into the mic, he requested back-up and added, "Officer may be down."

"Hey, man, where's Starsky? He still inside?" Huggy asked worriedly.

"It looks that way. Hopefully, that was his gun we heard."

"I sure hope that wasn't him gettin' shot," Huggy whispered, putting Hutch's unspoken fears into words. Hutch said nothing, but his worried eyes were transfixed on the bank building across the street.

Chapter 2

"Okay, everybody freeze!" commanded Tony. "You," he said, motioning to the customers and tellers. "Get over there. On the floor and don't say anything." His eyes moved nervously around the room. "Billy, go lock the front door, then check on Ricky, the guard, and that fellow on the floor. Who is he and what's he got a gun for? He some kind of cop?"

Billy moved over to Ricky, checking him over and feeling for a pulse. "He's dead, Tony," Billy said, clearly upset. He could feel the sweat rolling down his forehead as he walked over to the guard. The room was becoming very hot. "He's dead, too. Tony, we're gonna be in lots of trouble—"

"Shut up! Just do as I say and we'll get out of here."

Moving toward Starsky, Billy jumped when the detective suddenly moaned. "This one's alive but bleedin' pretty bad."

"Get his gun and give it to me. Then check his pockets for ID."

Billy picked up the gun, turned it over to Tony, and then knelt next to Starsky. Feeling his pockets, Billy found the badge and ID. "Look, Tony, you were right. He is a cop."

"That's great! What was he doing in here?"

"Looks like he was just doing some banking. Here's a slip he signed for a withdrawal."

"Some withdrawal," snickered Tony. Seeing the customers and tellers huddled together in the back corner, he turned to the manager. "And what's your name, Mr. Manager?"

"John Johnston," the manager answered nervously. "You aren't going to get away with this, you know."

"Well, Mr. Johnston, I plan on getting out of here just fine, if you and everyone else cooperates."

At the sound of sirens approaching, Tony moved to the front window to look out, keeping himself hidden behind the green draperies.

“Damn, who set off an alarm?!” Turning back to face inside the bank, he pointed his gun at the manager. “You? No, you were with me.” Walking toward the people huddled in the back, he swung his gun back and forth threateningly in front of them. “Who set the alarm off?” No one answered, but the group drew closer together, finding security in each other.

“Maybe it was the guard,” volunteered Billy.

“Nah...wait a minute...if he’s a cop,” Tony said, pointing the gun at Starsky, bleeding on the floor, “they usually come in pairs.” Silent for a moment, he added, “He just might be the insurance we need to get out of here.”

Tony walked to the manager and shoved him in the direction of the hostages, then walked over to Starsky.



Everything looked gray and fuzzy, and any movement brought pain. Starsky blinked rapidly, hoping to bring his vision into focus. Lying on his right side, he faintly made out a dark-haired man about fifty years old, waving his gun at a group of people huddled together. He then watched as the man shoved the manager toward the group, and heard him order the manager to stay put. Moving his head slowly and blinking rapidly to clear his vision further, Starsky realized the man was walking toward him. He gasped at the sudden pain from a kick in the side. “Hey, Cop, what ya doin’ here?”

Starsky didn’t answer, earning himself another kick. “Cop, I asked you a question.” A moan slipped out, and Starsky tried to turn and sit up. The room spun around as he regrettably tried to use his left arm for support. He quickly shifted his weight to his right arm, trying to push himself up against the base of the counter. Using it for back support meant the room didn’t spin quite as much.

Starsky looked up at the man standing in front of him and couldn’t help wonder where Hutch was. “I was makin’ a withdrawal; I assume you’re here for the same.”

“Very funny, Cop. This here ID says your name is Detective Sergeant David Starsky. Let me introduce myself. I’m Tony Barillo. Looks like we’re going to spend a little time together. Might as well get to know each other.”

“Look...Tony...just let everybody go. There’s no reason to keep ‘em.” Starsky found it was becoming increasingly difficult to talk. The room was beginning to spin, and his voice sounded faint and distant. Trying to concentrate on what he was saying was making his head ache. He was afraid he was going to pass out again.



After calling in the robbery, Hutch quickly returned to his lookout near the bushes, gun drawn and ready. There had been no movement in the bank that he could see.

He felt a hand come to rest on his shoulder as Captain Dobey knelt next to him behind the cover of the hedge at the end of the street. “What’s happening, Hutch?”

“Not much. The last movement I saw in the bank, was someone dressed in black locking the front door.”

“Are you sure the shots came from inside the bank?”

“Yeah, besides, no one has entered or exited since the shots were fired.”

“Where’s your partner, checking out the other side of the bank?”

“No, he’s inside the bank.” Hutch gave him time for the words to sink in. “He was in there when the shots were fired.”

“You mean he’s one of the hostages?”

Hutch turned toward Dobey and nodded. “There were several shots fired. I don’t know if he’s okay...”

Dobey looked at the blond man next to him and heard the anguish in his voice. He knew what Hutch was thinking. His partner was inside...possibly shot, possibly...

“He’s fine,” said Dobey. “You know he can take care of himself.”

“Yeah, I also know the trouble he can get himself into.”

Dobey rested his hand on Hutch’s back and motioned for one of the police officers to come closer. “Find me some binoculars,” Dobey ordered and then, turning to Hutch, said reassuringly, “Maybe we’ll be able to see a little better.”

Grabbing the binoculars the officer offered, Dobey focused them, carefully searching the front window. “Can’t see much...everybody must be in the back.”

“Any sign of Starsk?” asked Hutch, needing to know but afraid to ask.

“Not yet, but that doesn’t mean anything. Any idea how many hostages?”

“Nope, only know of one for certain.”

Dobey didn’t respond as he continued scanning the front of the bank for any signs.

“Thompson,” Dobey called to the uniformed police officer nearest him. “Call the main bank downtown and get me the president of the bank on the phone. They should have access to records showing who’s working at this branch. We’ve got to determine how many people are in there and how many suspects.”

Dobey handed the binoculars to Hutch, stiffly got up off his right knee, and returned to the patrol car. Hutch, focusing the binoculars, stared at the front windows for any sign. “I sure wish I had x-ray vision like Superman,” he mumbled to no one in particular. “C’mon, Starsk,” he pleaded, “show yourself.”

Hutch slid out from behind the bushes and stood up against the bakery wall. He hurried back to Dobey near the police car. “Okay, thanks,” said Dobey into the mic and hung up. “Main office says there should be three tellers, a manager, and a guard inside. It’s anybody’s guess how many bank customers, besides Starsky, were present at the time.”

“I remember Starsky holding the door open for an elderly gentleman,” said Hutch.

Dobey ordered the SWAT team to the area and, taking the binoculars from Hutch, went back to crouch behind the hedge. “Hutch,” he called, motioning toward him. “What’s Starsky wearing?”

“Um...the usual—blue jeans, blue t-shirt, and navy windbreaker. Why?” he asked.

“Is he wearing his blue Adidas?”

“Of course.” Hutch’s stomach started twisting into knots.

“Take a look through the bottom center pane,” said Dobey, handing Hutch the binoculars.

Hutch took them and had difficulty finding the exact location Dobey was referring to. “I don’t see anything.” Then, after a pause, “Wait, I see his sneaker. Looks like he’s sitting...or lying on the floor. He’s shot!”

Dobey placed a hand on Hutch’s shoulder to calm him and to keep his officer from running across to the bank door. “Now don’t jump to conclusions. He could have been ordered to sit there. We don’t know for sure that he’s been shot.”

“He’s in trouble, Captain, I can feel it.” Slamming his right hand on the brick building, Hutch’s frustration escaped. “I’ve got to find a way inside!”

Dobey didn’t doubt what Hutch was feeling. He’d never seen two partners more in sync with one another. Right now, though, he didn’t need Hutch to go storming off and doing something rash. Trying to keep the situation calm, Dobey said, “Look we have to wait for the SWAT team to get in position, and I’m going to get a line connected to the bank. Maybe the robbers will pick it up and tell us their demands. Until then, we have to wait. You don’t want to escalate the situation and put Starsky in more harm.” He hated to say it, but Dobey knew it was the best way to keep Hutch in control. He would never do anything to harm his partner. Dobey turned and, despite his size, swiftly returned to the police cruiser, calling in a request for a phone hook-up into the bank.

Chapter 3

Tony, pacing the lobby, stayed clear of the windows. “Billy, keep an eye on those people. I don’t want any talking. I’ve got to think.”

Billy walked closer to the hostages, waving the gun back and forth threateningly.

Katie noticed that his hand was trembling. She could see Starsky on the floor, half-leaning, half-falling against the base of the counter. By the amount of blood visible on his shirt, she knew he was losing a lot of blood. Hearing him moan slightly, she wondered how she could manage to get over to help.

“Billy,” she whispered as he came nearer. “Mr. Martin here is an elderly gentleman. He’s not feeling very well. He needs some water.”

“Shut up!” yelled Tony, but Billy cautiously moved closer to Katie.

“Look,” she said, trying a different tactic. “I’m eight months pregnant. I really need to go to the bathroom. I feel sick.”

Billy’s eyes grew into saucers as he realized she was telling the truth. “Tony,” he yelled, panicking. “There’s a pregnant lady over here!”

Tony turned to look at him and said, “Yeah, so what about it?”

“She could have the baby!”

“She’s not gonna have the baby. Just let me think.”

Katie pleaded again, “Please, Billy, can I go to the bathroom? I’m not feeling so well.”

“Tony, I’m taking her down to the bathroom.”

“Yeah, sure, I’ll watch these people. Don’t let her out of your sight.”

Katie stood up slowly and walked toward the small hallway leading back to the storeroom, break room, and bathrooms. Trembling, she moved her left hand along the wall for support as she slowly walked down the hall, with Billy following a few feet behind. All she heard was the pounding of her heart.

At the women’s bathroom, she slowly pushed open the door and started to enter. When Billy followed, she turned and looked at him, embarrassed. “You aren’t going to follow me in here, are you?”

Billy, blushing, decided to wait outside. “I’ll be right here, so don’t try anything,” he warned.

Once inside, Katie leaned against the closed door and wondered what had possessed her to think she could help in any way. Feeling the trembling in her legs begin to subside, she finally straightened. She opened a tiny closet and found a couple of old but clean towels. Taking them out

she placed them on the right side of the sink, and then she glanced around the room wondering what, if anything else, she could do. In the corner, Katie spotted a chair some of the office smokers used on their breaks. Glancing up, she saw the bathroom window above the sink. Quietly, she picked up the chair and placed it under the bathroom window. Carefully climbing onto the chair, she reached up and unlatched the window. She knew it was probably a stupid idea since she couldn't climb out, but she prayed that someone would find it and climb in. Returning the chair to its proper place, she took a few short steps over to one of the stalls and flushed the toilet, in case Billy was listening. Then, walking over to the sink, she turned on the water, washed her hands, and filled a small paper cup with water.

Exiting, Katie carried the cup and the towels. Smiling gratefully at Billy, she said, "Thank you." He glanced at the items in her hands but didn't say anything. They walked back toward the lobby. As Katie entered the back of the lobby, she could see Starsky, with eyes half-open, still in the same position, blood spreading across his left shoulder.

"What's that for?" asked Tony when he saw her returning with the water and towels.

She stopped, heart in her throat. "It's just some water for Mr. Martin. He hasn't been feeling very well, and I worry about his heart." An eternity passed while Tony stood there, looking her over, considering her response. Katie could feel herself begin to tremble again. She stood still, afraid to move. Finally, he motioned with his gun for her to go ahead.

Katie knelt next to the elderly gentleman sitting in the chair. Whispering softly, she offered, "Here, Mr. Martin, here's some water."

Mr. Martin nodded his head and gratefully took a small sip. When he finished, she dipped the corner of one of the towels in the water and wiped his forehead. He gave her a brief smile and whispered his thanks. Katie stood up wondering how far she could push her luck. She started taking small steps toward Starsky.

"Now what are you doing?" asked Tony angrily.

"Well, I found these towels in back, and I thought maybe...they could be used to stop his bleeding," she said hesitantly, pointing with the towels at Starsky.

Tony looked at her and then at Starsky. "Okay, go ahead," he motioned. "I don't want a dead cop...yet."

Katie hurried over to Starsky and knelt next to him. Finding a weak pulse, she tried to talk to him quietly. "Detective Starsky, this might hurt, but I've got to apply some pressure to stop the bleeding."

Starsky moaned and his eyelids fluttered at the sudden pain. Mumbling, "Hutch?" he tried to focus on the figure bending over him.

"Let me try to help you sit up a little better," she offered. "You look like you're about to fall over any second." She carefully put her hands under his arms and tried to help him straighten up. Starsky tried to help, bending his left leg for more leverage. While they had succeeded in shifting him to a more upright position, the movement brought shooting pains on his left side. Waiting a moment for him to catch his breath, Katie then applied continuous pressure to the wound. At his sudden intake of air, she brushed the brown curls out of his eyes, whispering to him to try and relax. Using one of the towels, she wiped the perspiration from his neck and face.

"Are you okay?" he whispered, as he noticed an uncomfortable look cross her face.

"Oh, yeah." She smiled at him and said, "It's only the baby kicking."

A look of concern crossed his face as he asked, "When's the baby due?"

"Not for another three weeks. I'm fine. You just relax."

Starsky looked beyond Katie to see where the robbers were standing. *Hutch has to be out there, he thought. He's gonna find a way in. He has to...*

Frowning, he tried to concentrate. Katie had said something, but he couldn't quite sort it out.

Blinking Katie into focus, he asked, "Katie, you..." He paused, waiting for the pain to subside. "...said the baby isn't due for three weeks?"

"Yes, that's right, why?"

"Just thinking, that's all." He was silent for a moment, as a jumble of thoughts rushed into his head and he tried to sort them out. Maybe there was a way he could get Katie out of here and get a message to Hutch. He knew Hutch would be worried about him. After all, he would be if the roles were reversed. He needed to concentrate. Concentrate, until he could come up with a plan before he passed out again.

Chapter 4

"Hutch, come look," said Dobey, excitedly holding out the binoculars.

Hutch grabbed the binoculars and trained them on the glass. This time, he knew exactly where to look. His partner's left leg was bent at the knee! "He's moved," said Hutch with a sigh of relief. However small the change was, it meant his partner was still alive!



"Katie, listen quick. You're going to have your baby."

"No, I'm not," Katie protested.

"Listen carefully. Do you think you could fake labor pains? I'm betting that they aren't going to want to deal with a lady going into labor. Look how nervous Billy is already. They'll let you go and then you can get to Hutch."

"Who?"

"My partner, Sergeant Ken Hutchinson. Tell him I'm okay and give him a layout of the office. Let him know how many hostages there are and where everyone is. He'll figure a way in."

Katie didn't answer at first. She continued applying pressure on the wound and stared at him, letting the possibilities sink in.

"Katie, do you understand?" The room was beginning to spin again and Starsky was feeling groggy. He wasn't sure how much longer he could keep his eyes open. The sudden ringing of the phone startled him and everyone else in the room.

Tony let it ring several times. The sound was deafening in the stifling silence. Finally, picking up the receiver and holding it to his ear, he said nothing.



"Captain," called an officer. "Your phone line is connected."

Dobey hurried over and grabbed the receiver. "This is Captain Dobey of the BCPD. I want you to give yourself up before anyone gets hurt."

Hutch stared at his captain and rubbed his right hand through his hair. It took all the self-control he could muster not to grab the phone from Dobey's hand and demand information on Starsky. Was Starsky okay? How badly was he hurt? What about the other hostages?

"I said this is Captain Dobey. Who am I talking to? Is everyone okay in there?"

A voice came over the line. "Everyone is just fine. In fact, we all want to get out of here."

"Give yourself up and no one will be hurt."

The voice laughed. "Give up! You gotta be kidding. I want out of here, and I want your assurances we'll be able to get away."

"Who's we?" asked Dobey.

Suddenly, there was a scream, and loud voices filled the background. "What's going on?" Dobey shouted into a dead phone.



Katie, smiled nervously at Starsky, then slowly bent over kissing him lightly on the top of his head. She whispered, "I guess I am ready to have this baby. You take care of yourself, okay. Help will be here soon."

She slowly stood up and started walking back toward Billy and the hostages. Grabbing her abdomen, she moaned and slid to the floor. One of the hostages screamed, Billy ran toward Katie. Tony yelled, "Shut up!" as he slammed down the phone receiver.

Starsky tried to move as he saw Katie hit the floor, but pain shot through him. He watched as Billy rushed over to her.

"What's wrong?" asked Billy.

Katie moaned. "I don't feel very well. I keep having pains."

"She's going to have the baby!" screamed Mrs. Richardson, an elderly hostage.

"I said shut up!" yelled Tony, turning and waving the gun at the hostages. The noise level lowered, but Starsky still heard them whispering among themselves.

Good acting job, thought Starsky. Let's hope they buy it.

Katie held on to her abdomen and reached for Billy's hand. "I think I'm going into labor. I've got to go to the hospital."

A flash of pain showed on Billy's face as Katie squeezed his hand tightly.

"Tony," he said, turning toward his partner. "I think she's gonna have the baby. Let her outta here."

"We can't let her out."

"Sure we can. I don't want any baby bein' born here."

Tony walked over to Katie. As he neared, she let out a series of low moans and curled up on her right side. He watched her for a few minutes and started pacing rapidly around the room. Stopping near Starsky, Tony kicked him out of frustration and anger. Starsky, sensing it coming, tried to prepare himself, but found nothing prepared him for the pain as it shot through his body. Katie moaned louder, and Tony turned his attention toward her. *Thanks for drawing him away, Katie.*

Vision blurring, he tried to keep an eye on Katie, but it became increasingly hard to keep his eyes open. *C'mon, Hutch, it's time for the cavalry.*

Everyone jumped at the sound of the phone ringing again, and Tony grabbed it. He waved his gun around, receiving the desired silence. "Yeah?" he said into the receiver.

"What's going on in there?" asked Dobey at the other end.

“We’ve got a pregnant lady in here who’s about to have a baby.”

Dobey covered the receiver and whispered the response to Hutch before speaking into the phone again. “Let her out. I can get an ambulance and take her to the hospital. She’s going to need help.”

Tony, silent on the other end, pondered his options and then said, “I’ll send her out, but if anyone out there makes a move toward this door, the next sound you’ll hear is a bullet going into this cop layin’ on the floor.”

Dobey held his breath for a moment and looked at Hutch before answering. “Send her out. No one will come near the door. When she crosses the street, I’m sending the paramedics out to help her. Can she walk that far?”

Tony turned toward Katie. “Can you walk across the street?”

She nodded as she awkwardly tried to sit up.

“She says she can walk.”

Tony abruptly hung up the phone and turned to Katie. “Any funny business and this cop,” pointing to Starsky, “has bought it.”

Dobey put down the phone.

“What did he say, Captain?” asked Hutch anxiously.

“He said he’s sending her out but...”

“But what?”

“But if anyone makes a move toward her before she gets across the street...he’ll shoot Starsky.”

Hutch ran his right hand through his hair and sighed as he looked around, not really focusing on anything. He knew he had to find a way in to help his partner. “Look, Hutch,” continued Dobey. “It might give us a chance to get some information about what’s goin’ down in there.”

“Yeah, I know. Look, the door’s opening.”

Dobey issued orders for everyone to stay put and not move until the woman was safely across the intersection. Ordering one of the officers to call for an ambulance, Dobey hurried next to Hutch and anxiously monitored the activity across the street.

The bank door opened slowly. Tony, with his arm encircling Katie’s neck, opened it just wide enough for her to get out. Katie walked slowly, bent slightly, holding her right side. She hoped no one would move toward her and that she looked like she really was in pain. Her heart was racing, and she prayed for the strength to make it across the street. The silence was deafening, but still she listened intently, praying that the sound of a shot wouldn’t go off behind her. As she made it across the street and friendly hands grabbed for her, she realized she’d been holding her breath the entire time. Legs shaking, she thankfully sank into the open arms.



Katie was quickly brought back toward the safety of the bakery. The paramedics gently took hold of her arms and carefully led her to the waiting ambulance.

“I need to speak with Sergeant Ken Hutchinson. Is he here?” she asked urgently.

Hutch was headed toward Katie when an officer stopped him, explaining that Katie was asking for him. The paramedics were trying to convince Katie to lie down on the stretcher as Hutch arrived.

“I’m Sergeant Hutchinson. You asked for me? Is my partner all right?”

“He’s shot in the left shoulder. He’s losing a lot of blood and goes in and out of consciousness.”

“I knew it,” said Hutch exasperated.

Just then, Captain Dobey hurried over to check on Katie’s condition and ask her some questions.

“Wait a minute,” she told the paramedics, pushing them out of the way as she sat up. “I have to talk to these two officers, and besides, the baby really isn’t ready to come yet.”

“But I thought...” stammered one of the paramedics.

“It’s due in three weeks, but Detective Starsky—”

“Detective Starsky!” “Starsky!” escaped from Dobey’s and Hutch’s mouths simultaneously.

“Yes, Detective Starsky thought if I pretended I was having the baby, they might let me out.”

“I can’t believe he endangered you that way,” said a stunned Dobey.

“Well, I agreed to the idea. He’s in bad shape. He said you’d want information on the bank layout and the people inside.” A speechless Dobey nodded.

From the back, a piece of paper and a pencil were passed up, and Katie drew a diagram of the bank layout for Dobey and Hutch. Katie explained what had transpired inside the bank, describing where everyone was currently located and the fact that one of the bank robbers and the guard were already dead.

When she finished, Dobey thanked her and ordered her to go to the hospital to be checked over. “Besides, if an ambulance doesn’t leave here soon, they will suspect something was phony, and that could put Starsky and the other hostages in greater danger.”

As she was being placed in the ambulance, Katie grabbed Hutch’s arm. “You’re mighty brave,” said Hutch gratefully. “Thank you. That was a risky thing to do.”

“Wait a minute...there’s something I forgot to tell you.”

“What’s that?”

“I opened a window.”

“What?” asked Hutch, not comprehending fully.

“When I went to the women’s restroom to get some towels to try and stop the bleeding for Detective Starsky, I unlatched the window. I don’t know if that will help at all, but—”

“You’re wonderful!” said Hutch hugging her and giving her a quick kiss on her left cheek. “Where is the bathroom located?”

Katie described the room’s location and said she thought it was, “probably the third or fourth window on this side of the building.”

After making sure Katie was settled in the ambulance, Hutch decided it was best to keep the information to himself. *If I tell Dobey, he’ll want to send the SWAT team in...and this one is mine.*

Chapter 5

Hutch quickly made for the alley, just past the bakery and the adjacent hardware store. The only way was to go around the back so he wouldn’t be seen. At the end of the alley, he checked out the street and then, crouching, he swiftly moved from parked car to parked car and made it sight unseen across the street. Standing straight as a rod against the building, he paused to catch his breath and control his rapidly beating heart. He silently made his way along the brick bank building coming up from the rear. At the fourth window from the front, Hutch knelt and carefully pushed on

the window. It didn't give. He moved slowly forward to push on the third window. The third window gave slightly, and he winced as it squeaked when he pushed it open. He hoped no one inside the bank had heard it. The window wasn't very large, though it was rectangular in shape. He carefully lowered his right leg down, finding the sink just below. He held his breath as he slid the rest of his body through the small window. Pulling his gun from its holster, Hutch silently moved up near the door. Finally, he allowed himself the luxury of a breath.

The next step wouldn't be as easy, but at least he was inside and that much closer to Starsky. At the thought of his friend, Hutch pictured him lying there, possibly bleeding to death from a gunshot wound. He recalled another time Starsky had been shot. Only that time, they had been in an Italian restaurant and Hutch had been with him. That time, he'd been there to care and protect his partner, unlike now. They'd been lucky then, and he prayed their luck would hold this time as well.

Slowly opening the bathroom door only a few inches, Hutch looked down the hallway, but there was no one in his view. There were two doorways to his right and he recalled from Katie's drawing that they were the stockroom and the break room. Katie had told them no one was in either room at the time, and he hoped that was still true. Slipping out from behind the bathroom door, he silently moved down the hall. Hearing a noise coming from the direction of the lobby, Hutch slid into the stockroom. It was still empty.

Carefully checking down the hall once again, he exited the room and took the five steps to the break-room door. Again, luck was with him; the room was still empty. Allowing himself only a few seconds to catch his breath and calm his racing heart, he again checked the last few steps of the hallway. Seeing no one, he stepped out and cautiously moved down the remaining hallway. He neared the lobby, every sense on alert. He made out the sounds of one or two people talking quietly—no, whispering—and someone pacing. A male voice startled him.

"When are they gonna call back?" asked Billy.

"I don't know. Maybe we better threaten to shoot the cop again."

Hutch heard several quick steps and then the second voice. "Hey, Cop." The only response Hutch heard was a thud and a moan. "I said, hey, Cop."

It was all Hutch could do to contain himself. He wanted to rush in there but knew if he did, he'd put Starsky at a greater risk. For now, he could only bite his lip and wait.

Starsky looked up at Tony through half-closed eyes and responded in a weakening voice, "What? Things not goin' your way, Tony? You aren't gonna get outta here and you know it. Don't keep lyin' to the kid."

His response only earned him another kick from Tony, and Starsky couldn't control the louder moan that escaped.

Okay, Starsk, keep your mouth shut, Hutch pleaded silently.

"Yeah, well, we'll just see how much they wanna keep you alive, Copper," threatened Tony.

Hutch heard the footsteps getting softer and realized Tony must have walked away again. He breathed a sigh of relief. *Thank goodness, maybe Tony will leave Starsky alone now. Hang in there, buddy, I'm comin'.*

Now, if he only knew Billy's position...

Hutch took the last few steps to the end of the hall, as cautiously and silently as possible, wishing he were invisible. At the end of the hallway, stood the large red planter, containing the tall palm, exactly where Katie had said it was located. To the right of the plant, were the teller counters, and to the left, the manager's office. Katie had said the hostages were in the back corner near the manager's office. Nothing appeared to have changed.

Hutch hid behind the planter, but realizing it provided him with only minimum protection, he prepared to move to the additional coverage provided by the teller counters. Surveying the only portion of the room visible to him, Hutch swallowed his quick intake of air as Starsky came into view. There was blood covering the left side of Starsky's shirt and windbreaker. He was slumped against the center counter, extremely pale, with labored breathing, his left arm hanging useless at his side.

Starsky blinked rapidly several times, trying to clear his vision. For a minute he thought he could see Hutch crouching behind the planter. *I must be hallucinating*, he thought.

Starsky shook his head slightly, trying to clear the image, but Hutch's blond hair was still visible behind the plant. Starsky felt some of the tension drain out of him. Hutch, at last!

Realizing the palm didn't offer much protection and that Hutch was going to need to make a break for the cover of the counters, Starsky started moving and moaning to draw attention to himself and away from Hutch's direction.

"What's the matter, Cop?" asked Tony from across the room. He was hidden behind the draperies and, using his gun, moved them aside to survey the area and street in front of the bank building.

At the sound of the moan, Hutch made his move, sliding behind the counters, crouching, arm up, and gun ready. No one seemed to have heard. *Thanks, Starsk...I owe you one*, he silently thanked his partner, knowing the pain that movement must have caused him.

Hutch was trying to get a fix on Tony's location when he heard Starsky ask, "What are you lookin' for out that window? Someone to rescue you? Hey, Billy, why don't you go over there and help your partner?"

"Billy, you stay right there," ordered Tony. "Don't listen to him, and if he says anything else, hit him 'side the head to shut 'im up."

"Tony?" asked Billy nervously. "When's that cop gonna call back? I wanna get outta here."

"Soon, soon."

Hutch leaned around the corner, staying as low as possible. He tried to catch Starsky's eye, knowing Starsky probably wouldn't look his direction for fear of giving away his cover.

Please, Starsk, just look this way once, Hutch willed his thoughts to his partner. As though on cue, Starsky glanced toward him, and Hutch gave him the thumbs up sign. Fighting the urge to smile in gratitude, Starsky returned the signal by raising three fingers on his right hand just above his right thigh. Lowering one finger at a time, he started counting down—three...two...one.

Hutch shot out from behind the counter, shooting toward the windows and Tony. Out of the corner of his eye, he saw Starsky manage to roll a few feet across the floor and trip Billy, as he turned toward the sound Hutch made. That was all the time he needed. Billy went down. Hutch's bullet hit Tony squarely in the chest, and he crumpled to the floor. Screams filled the room.

Hutch rushed Billy, knocking him back to the floor and quickly cuffing him. He then checked Tony to be sure that he no longer posed a threat. Picking up both Tony's and Billy's guns, he dropped to his partner's side.

Starsky's roll to trip Billy had caused him a great deal of pain, and the bullet wound had begun bleeding again. Kneeling next to Starsky, Hutch pulled out his handkerchief and pressed it to his partner's wound. "Nice job, there, buddy...but not a wise move. Just hang in there and you'll be at the hospital in no time."

He carefully brushed back the sweaty curls, explaining, "I've got to open the door and let Dobey in. I'll be right back. Don't go away."

Hutch stood up, walked over to the bank door, and unlocked it. He signaled to Dobby and the officers stationed around the building. He knew in just a few seconds, the place would be swarming with officers. He hurried back to Starsky. Sinking down on the floor next to him, he cradled Starsky's head in his lap. Gently brushing the brown curls from his now unconscious partner's forehead, he whispered, "Just hang in there, babe. It'll be okay. Thanks for all your help. I couldn't've done without you."

Chapter 6

Hutch felt a gentle hand on his shoulder.

"Any word yet?" asked Dobby.

"No. He's still in surgery. Lost a lot of blood, they said."

Hutch had been staring out the window of the waiting room replaying those last minutes in the bank. After he'd unlocked the door, Dobby and the other officers had swarmed the bank. Billy was quickly placed in a black-and-white and transported to the county jail. The coroner's unit was dispatched for Tony.

Starsky had briefly regained consciousness when they moved him onto the stretcher. He'd given Hutch a small lopsided grin and reached for Hutch's hand. At his touch, Hutch felt the tension in his own body lessen, but knew it wasn't over yet. Starsky's life could still be in danger. He'd lost so much blood, and there was always the chance of infection. He knew his partner would be concerned about regaining full use of his left hand. Dobby had finally given in and let Hutch ride in the ambulance, but warned him that he expected a full report on why Hutch had done such a foolhardy thing by not telling anyone, especially him, and gone into the bank alone. Hutch could still hear Dobby's concerned yet angry words. "Didn't you know you were putting your own life on the line, as well as Starsky's?!"

At the sound of footsteps coming down the hall, Dobby and Hutch turned. Doctor Miller approached them, briefly shaking hands in greeting. "Detective Starsky is still in recovery. He lost a lot of blood, as you know. He came through surgery fine, but there is the chance of infection, since the bullet was in for some time before removal. It doesn't look like there will be any permanent damage to his shoulder, but if it had hit a few inches lower...Detective Starsky wouldn't have made it. He's an extremely lucky young man."

"When can I see him?" asked Hutch anxiously.

"He'll be out of recovery in about an hour and then moved to a regular room. You can see him then, but only briefly. He'll need a lot of rest." Dr. Miller walked away promising he'd check in on Starsky before he left for the evening.

Hutch sank down in one of the cushioned chairs, sighing. He dropped his head in his hands, elbows resting on his knees.

Dobby gently put a hand on Hutch's shoulder. "Remember, tomorrow I want a full report. That was a foolish thing you did, going in by yourself. The SWAT team could have been all over you and your partner." He gave the shoulder a slight squeeze and added gently, "After you've seen him for a few minutes, go home, son, and get some rest. Starsky isn't the only one who needs it."



Hutch poked his head around the corner of Starsky's door and smiled when he saw his partner sleeping peacefully. It had been two days now, and Starsky was finally regaining strength. Hutch had spent the first night in Starsky's room, afraid to let his partner out of his sight. But other than awakening for a brief moment when the medication wore off and the pain returned, Starsky had slept comfortably. He still slept a great deal of the time, but the good news was that the medication had kept any infection in check. With plenty of rest and some therapy, Starsky would be back to his same old annoying self before too long. Hutch's smile stretched across his face at the thought.

The sound of the door closing caused Starsky to stir. Hutch sat down quietly in the chair next to the bed, hoping not to disturb his partner further. He knew he hadn't succeeded, when he saw two deep blue eyes looking at him sleepily.

"Hey, you back already?" asked Starsky.

"Already? It's been five hours. I finally finished all the reports to Dobey's satisfaction. Looks like you took a good nap. How ya feelin', buddy?"

"Better. Did you bring me any food?"

"Don't start, Starsk. You know the doctor said you could only eat—"

A sudden tapping at the door caused them both to turn their heads. The door opened as a gentleman wheeled in Katie, holding a tiny bundle. "Would you mind some company for a little bit?"

"Of course not," said Hutch answering for the both of them. He stood up to hold the door open. "Here's the lady who saved the day. How are you feeling?"

"Oh," Katie continued, looking embarrassed. "I'm doing just fine. How are you, David?"

Starsky carefully turned to hold out his right hand to Katie. "I'm doing better. Katie, I really want to thank you—"

"Wait, just a second," she interrupted. "First, I want you to meet my husband Robert, Robert Cole. Bob, this is Detective Ken Hutchinson and Detective David Starsky. I owe them my life."

"More like I owe you mine," said Starsky, as the men shook hands all around. Starsky awkwardly extended his right hand.

"Hey, wait a minute," said Starsky looking puzzled for the moment. "Uh...I thought you told me the baby wasn't due for three weeks. How come...?"

"Well, it wasn't," said Robert. "But apparently with all the excitement, it decided to come early. Both Katie and the baby are fine. In fact, we're getting ready to go home...as a family." He beamed at Katie and squeezed her shoulder.

"Oh, that reminds me," said Katie. "The main reason we came in here, besides checking on how you were feeling, was to introduce you to someone." She carefully handed the baby to Hutch, who took him gingerly. "I wanted to introduce our son to the detectives who played such an important role in the beginning of his life."

Hutch, feeling awkward, passed the baby on to Starsky. He carefully laid him in the crook of Starsky's right arm, but kept a supporting hand around the baby, in case his partner found it too difficult or tiring.

"Gentlemen, I would like you to meet Robert David Cole. Robert David, I'd like you to meet Starsky and Hutch." Katie continued, "We hadn't settled on a middle name, and after what happened at the bank we thought it was appropriate to name him after you."

Starsky looked up, incredulous. "His middle name is David? You hear that, Hutch?"

Hutch chuckled at his partner's obvious embarrassment.

Starsky blushed and stammered, “I-I-I..”

“Oh, just be quiet,” said Hutch, grinning at his partner. Turning to Katie and Robert, he offered, “It’s not often my partner’s at a loss for words.”

Starsky continued staring down at the tiny baby in amazement. Carefully touching the sleeping baby’s fingers with his left index finger, Starsky suddenly broke into a grin and looked up at Hutch with a gleam in his eyes.

“Oh, no,” said Hutch, holding up his hands in protest. “When you get that look on your face, we’re in for trouble.”

Starsky looked at his partner, grinning from ear to ear. “As soon as I get out of here, we have to go to the bank. I still need to make a little investment.”

“What do you mean an investment? I’m not going anywhere near a bank for a long time to come, and neither are you. Have you forgotten that’s how this whole thing started? You and your investments!”

“No, Hutch, you don’t understand,” protested Starsky, still grinning and with a wicked twinkle in his eye. “We aren’t going to make a withdrawal. We’re going to make an investment. We’ll open an account—a savings account for Robert *David Cole*.”

Hutch nodded. Ruffling the brown curls on his partner’s head, he laughed. “Now, that’s *one* investment I’ll make with you, partner.”

The End