

*A Fair Trade*  
*Missing Scenes from "Gillian"*  
By TibbieB

When I pulled back the curtain and saw Gillian sitting there, her hands all over that slimy councilman, I felt like I'd taken a blow to the gut. A million thoughts rushed through my mind, but the one that screamed loudest was, *Hutch can never know.*

It took every ounce of willpower I had to go out to the car and climb in next to my best friend, knowing what I knew—and knowing I'd do whatever it took to keep him from finding out. He questioned me casually about why I didn't stay and get a massage for my shoulder, and I mumbled some vague excuse about all the girls being busy and not having time to give a "legitimate" massage. He bought it. But then, he didn't have any reason to be suspicious.



The rest of that afternoon crawled by as slow as a visit to the dentist. I tried to carry on a conversation, but I couldn't stop thinking about the little scene I'd happened in on. What was she doing there? Was I mistaken—had I seen what I thought I saw? What if it had been Hutch instead of me who'd innocently peeked behind that curtain?

He didn't make it any easier either, goin' on and on about Gillian. *Beautiful, brilliant, love of his life Gillian.* I'd never heard him talk about a woman like that. I began to think the day would never end. In fact, Hutch was getting on my nerves to the point I really didn't think I could keep up the act much longer. After all, this was *Hutch*, who's usually a good judge of character, capable of seeing right into a person's soul. Yet Gillian had apparently deluded him into believing she was something she'd never be. I found myself wanting to protect him from the truth, but at the same time, wanting to shout at him to open his eyes and see her for what she really was.

I couldn't do it. Couldn't hurt him like that. Couldn't burst those stupid red balloons he kept talkin' about.

I don't know how long I sat at my kitchen table that night, flipping through the newspaper, trying to get that lurid episode at the massage parlor out of my head. But it was no use. I was about to climb the walls, so I decided this problem wasn't goin' away on its own. Maybe I should just take the bull by the horns and talk to Hutch. I mean, we've always been able to talk when something was eating at one of us.

I picked up the phone and punched in his number.

"Yeah, make it fast," he snapped.

"Hey," I said, already having second thoughts.

"Yeah, whadya want?" he asked, mildly impatient.

"Nothin'. How you doin'?"

"I'm going out, that's what's doing." I could almost hear him shifting his feet, wanting to get me off the line.



"Mmm...oh, yeah. With Gillian," I said, stating the obvious.

"No, the Boston Strangler," he shot back, a smile in his voice. "Of course with Gillian."

I took a deep breath. God, this was hard! I couldn't tell him. Not like this...not on the phone. And not before I had proof.

"Well...have a good time," I said quietly.

"Yeah, thanks, Mom," he answered facetiously. "Oh, I'll be in early," he added before hanging up. I could almost see him dashing out the door, anxious to be with her.

I stared at the phone. Proof. I needed proof before I destroyed this image he had of Gillian. Hoping what I'd seen was a fluke, something that could be explained logically, I figured I could start by digging into her past. I knew exactly where to start. I picked up the phone again, this time dialing Huggy.

A woman picked up on the third ring. "Yeah, is Huggy there?"

“Just a minute,” she said.

“Thanks.” Gazing out at the city lights, I waited for Huggy to come to the phone. He always seems to know everything about everybody, or know someone who does. I felt confident he could find the answers I needed.

“This is Mr. Bear,” he said self-importantly when he picked up the receiver.

“Yeah, Hug. Starsk.”

“Starsky, my man. What can I do ya?”

Right from the beginning, it felt all wrong...calling him. But the way I saw it, I had no choice.

“Yeah, uh, I need a favor.”

“You need but ask, and Huggy will do the task,” he came back smoothly.

“Yeah, I want you to, uh, see what you can find out about a girl by the name of, uh, Gillian Ingram.”

“Say again?”

“Gillian. That’s with a G.”

“Gillian. Cool name.”

“Yeah, pretty name.”

“Unusual.”

“Yeah.”

“Never heard of her. This chick new in town?”

“Yeah, I...think she might work for Grossman.”

“The dude I told you and Hutch about?”

“Yeah.”

“If she’s working for that cat, she’s bad news, Starsky. I’ll see what I can dig up.”

“Okay.” I started to hang up, then thought about the seriousness of what I was doing. “Hey, Hug... Look, uh, this is just between you and me. You got that? Not Hutch. Just you and me.” *The final knife in the back.*

There was a pause on the other end of the line. I knew my request for secrecy took him by surprise, but he was cool.

“Sure, Starsky. Sure. I’ll get back with you as soon as anything turns.”

Thankfully, he didn’t push it. I can always count on Huggy—especially if he thinks one of us is in trouble. To some people, he’s just a stoolie—a third-rate con man out to earn an easy buck. But, they don’t know the man I know. Aside from Hutch, he’s the best friend I have, and more than once, he’s come through when one of us was in a jam.

“Right. Yeah, thanks.” I placed the receiver back on the hook. I’d taken that first step. There’d be no turning back now.

Knowing that, if what I’d witnessed this morning was for real, I’d have to do something about it, I decided I’d better be prepared. Fortunately, in my line of work I’ve known my share of women like Gillian. They all want the same thing—a way out. They want all the good things money can buy, but they want respectability to go along with it. I’d make sure she got what she wanted. More importantly, I’d see she got out of Hutch’s life and didn’t look back.



The next morning Hutch was on top of the world. He seemed consumed with Gillian and couldn’t talk about anything else. He went on about how he could spend hours just looking at her—how good she smelled—how he could be happy just being with her, not doing anything special. He seemed to really be in love this time. Well, at least he thought he was. He never actually used the word love, but it was written all over his face—in his voice. After the way Van had treated him, Hutch

was reluctant to let his guard down with women. And then, when he finally fell for someone— God, if he’d only known the truth... For the moment, I just played along, but said as little as possible.

Finally, he looked over at me with concern. “You’re awfully quiet today,” he said.

“Didn’t sleep much last night,” I answered shortly. I couldn’t very well tell him I’d tossed and turned all night because I suspected his dream girl was actually a prostitute working for that sleaze bucket, Grossman.

“Really? You feeling okay?”

“Noisy neighbors,” I lied. I nearly choked on the words. Lyin’ to Hutch isn’t something I’m accustomed to doing. I wondered fleetingly if practice would make it easier, but didn’t plan to ever have the occasion to find out.

I glanced over at Hutch, at the light-hearted, goofy expression on his face that had been so common since Gillian arrived on the scene. *Too bad he can’t stay this happy all the time, I thought. But I know what I’m doin’ is the right thing. Sure, he’ll be hurt when she leaves, but he’ll get over it. He’ll realize she didn’t really give a damn about him, and he’ll move on. It’ll be easier this way.*



It was turnin’ out to be a hell of a morning. First, a call came in that Grossman’s goons had hit again, but by the time we got there, they’d already split. But the worst came minutes later at the scene of a hold-up in progress when we were chasin’ two armed suspects down an alleyway, bullets flyin’ everywhere.

It was pretty hairy. I’ve never seen Hutch react like that before. He froze up. For a minute there, my heart almost stopped when I thought he’d been hit. I’ve always known Hutch was there to cover my back—but this time he wasn’t. It was a hell of a bad feeling. When I reached him, he was shaking like a leaf, admitted to me he was scared.

I tried to shake it off, tell him it was no big deal, make excuses for him that his mind had been elsewhere. But I knew this thing with Gillian had to be resolved soon. I could see my partner getting in deeper with each passing day. The longer he went on believing in this fictitious woman she’d created, the harder the truth would be to swallow.



I’d been thinking and working out a plan since last night, but I still hadn’t heard from Huggy, and I wanted to wait for confirmation from him before putting things into motion. I guess I was still hoping there was a logical explanation for what I’d seen at the massage parlor. But in my gut, I knew I wasn’t

wrong. I knew it would be up to me make this as easy on Hutch as possible.



When we returned to the station to file our report on the alley incident, the phone was ringing. I snatched up the receiver before Hutch had a chance.

“Starsky.”

“Hey, Starsk, this is the Bear.”

“Yeah, whadya got?”

“Well, you know that chick you put me on to—Gillian?”

“Yeah?”

“Well, the most I could find out is she’s a high class hooker. And you were right about her working for Grossman. She came out from Cleveland with him and his mother.”

I felt my heart drop. Although I’d expected this news, hearing it was tough. “Yeah, okay, thanks,” I said, trying to keep my voice level. “Yeah, I’ll be right there.”

Hutch didn’t look up, didn’t seem interested in my conversation. I just needed to play it cool ’til I could get out of there, and maybe this whole ugly thing would be over soon.

“Uh, tailor shop,” I explained. “I gotta pick up some tan flares.” I started for the door. “Look, uh, you fix up that shooting report, huh?” I looked at my watch. Plenty of time to get to Gillian’s before our shift was over. “I’ll be back in...uh...no time.”

He simply nodded. We’d covered for each other plenty of times, so he had no reason to think anything was wrong.



“Are you *sure* you want to close your savings account, Mr. Starsky? Wouldn’t you like to leave a little on deposit and keep the account open?”

“Actually, I don’t think it’s gonna be enough to cover what I need to do. Do you think I could speak to someone about a loan?”

The teller, a painfully skinny lady with tightly curled ginger-colored hair reminded me of my cousin, Nelda, right down to the large black-rimmed glasses overshadowing her angular face. Trying to be nice, she leaned over the counter and lowered her voice. “Do you have any collateral, Mr. Starsky?”

“Collateral?” *Me? Collateral? When I’d just cleaned out my entire savings account?*

“Yes, you know—to put up as guarantee for your loan. I mean, you could use your savings, but if you’re going to close your account...” she let her voice trail off.

I felt the color start creepin’ up the back of my neck. It was pretty humiliating to realize I had a job where I worked fifty to sixty hours-plus every week, put my life on the line daily, and only had sixteen-hundred bucks and a few personal possessions to show for it.

When I didn’t answer, she asked, “How much do you want to borrow?”

“Uh...I guess about three thousand. Look, I don’t have anything for collateral, except maybe my car, but I’m a cop and I get paid every week.”

She smiled at me politely, but I can’t say that anything in her expression was very encouraging. “I’ll be glad to let you speak to a loan officer,” she said.

Ever wonder why banks think in order to borrow money you have to *have* money? Makes no sense to me. All I did was waste another half-hour tryin’ to convince some guy in a gray pinstripe to make an exception to their crazy rules. Sixteen-hundred lousy bucks. Gillian could never be bought off for sixteen-hundred dollars. She probably gets that much in a week turning tricks.



I spent the next half-hour drivin’ around, trying to figure out how to come up with another three thousand. Taking a mental inventory, I realized I owned only one thing worth that kind of money.



“Starsky, you jive turkey, are you crazy, man?”

The short, wiry man in the grease-slick overalls whipped a red rag out of his back pocket and wiped his dirty hands on it. “Man, that’s your ride you’re talkin’ about. It may have that cheap white stripe painted down the side, but it’s cooler than a lot of the rods I see on the street these days. Man, you got potential—but a dude just don’t part with his ride! Whatchu gonna do for wheels? Tell me you ain’t gonna be seen ridin’ around in that ‘green-bad-scene’ of your partner’s.”

“I’ve got an uncle who’s in the used-car business. I’m sure he can fix me up,” I answered, irritated at having to explain myself to him. “Look, Merle, can you find me a buyer or not? I need cash and I need it fast.”

He cocked one eye at me and seemed to be considering for the first time that I might be serious about doing this. “You in some sort of trouble, Starsky?”

“No. Not at all. I just need money. How much do you think I can get for it?”

“Three Gs, maybe two. I don’t know, man. If you want to move it fast, you won’t get as much. You want me to give it a cool paint job? It might bring in a little more. I can paint it for you for two hundred.”

“I can’t afford to have it painted, Merle,” I snapped at him angrily. “If I had the money for a paint job, I wouldn’t be sellin’ it!”

“What about your partner, dude? Keep your ride, man, and borrow the bread from him.”

By now, I was losing my temper. “Look, will you help me find a buyer or not?”

He eyed me warily. “Not to be harsh, you know...but, like, what’s in it for Merle the Earl? Not even the cost of a paint job? I mean, like I’m runnin’ a business here. You know—the Customizing Pearl. Can ya dig it?”

Knowing he was my best bet for moving the Torino, I relented. “Okay. Find me a buyer and I’ll give you a C-note.”

“Make it two and it’s a deal.”

“One-fifty, and that’s my final offer.”

Satisfied he’d struck a shrewd deal, he slapped my hand, giving me a “high five.” “You got it, man. You can count on the Earl. I’ll have a brand new home for this baby within the week.”

One more stop and it’d be a done deal. I had no doubt Gillian would take the money. Women like her always do.



When I pulled up in front of her apartment, I did a double take. Pretty ritzy, even for a high-class call girl. With his usual intuition, Huggy had gone ahead and provided me with her address, along with the rundown on her seedy career in low-budget porn films. I suppose when he realized what Hutch had gotten himself into, he knew without being told that I’d be paying the lady a visit for a little heart-to-heart.

The apartment building had a doorman. When I asked for Gillian’s apartment number he answered quickly, without checking, then gave me a knowing, man-to-man wink as I started down the hall. I noticed he didn’t bother offering to announce me.



My stomach was doing flip-flops. I'd rehearsed my speech non-stop after leaving Merle's, but was still knotted with apprehension. Oh, I was sure Gillian would take the money, but what her initial reaction would be was anybody's guess. Denial? Indignation? Anger?

I took a deep breath, shoring up my courage to take whatever she had to dish out. After all, Hutch's future was at stake here. What should I care if she raised a little hell before accepting the inevitable? I just hoped she'd clear out right away—take the sixteen hundred and go. I could wire the rest next week when I collected on my car.

My car.

I refused think about it. This was one of those things a guy just has to do without thinking about it. Otherwise, your priorities might get outta whack. Like Hutch has so aptly pointed out on more than one occasion, "It's just a hunk of red and white metal."

Checking the numbers on the doors as I walked down the carpeted hallway, I could hear the keys of a typewriter clicking in the distance. There was almost a rhythm to it, not at all like the one-handed hunt-and-peck method I use when slugging my way through the daily mounds of paperwork Dobey's always yellin' at us about. As the sound drew nearer, I realized it was coming from Gillian's apartment. Then I remembered Hutch saying she was a freelance writer. Yeah...right.

I hesitated only a minute before knocking.

"Who is it?"

"Dave Starsky. Ken's friend."

I remember the look on her face when the door opened. She was friendly, polite. But I could see a glint of wariness in her eyes. I don't know what was goin' through her mind,



but she seemed to sense something was up. I entered the apartment, apologizing for interrupting her writing. She was pleasant enough, but uncomfortable. I glanced around the apartment, made the customary small talk about how nice it was, and tried to find a casual way to bring up my proposition.

"Hutch told me about that shop...that boutique you want to open up."

“Oh?” she said, a little surprised.

I hurried on before she could interrupt. “Well, I’ve been lookin’ for an investment, so I uh, I figure this, uh, this might help you as a kind of start. There’s, uh, sixteen hundred there.” I placed the envelope on the table before her. “I’ll be able to get about three grand by next week.”

Now I really had her attention. I tried to sound casual as I laid out my plan, but even to my own ears, my motives were as transparent as spring water.

“I don’t understand,” she said, forcing my hand.

“Well, it’s an investment—you know. Like we’re partners.” After a few seconds, I added, “There’s one hitch.”

I watched her spine go all rigid, and I knew the jig was up.

“I think when, uh, you decide to open your boutique,” I continued, “it shouldn’t be here in town. It should be back east—like...maybe, Cleveland.

I saw the tears suddenly well in her eyes. *She really was a beautiful woman. I could see how Hutch fell for those eyes.*



“You love him, too, don’t you?” she asked.

I met her eyes, not denying it. I knew there was no point in tryin’ to explain to her the bond Hutch and I share.

“How’d you find out?” she added icily, dropping all pretenses.

“Yesterday, when we went to Grossman’s. I just happened to look in the back.”

I found myself almost feeling sorry for her. I mean, how many times had I seen girls in this same trap—struggling to break out, start a new life for themselves? Somehow, the lady’s intentions just didn’t seem as noble when her plans involved lying to and deceiving my partner. I tucked my sympathy away in a dark place, knowing I couldn’t let it sway me from my mission.

“He’s gotta be told,” I said firmly.

She seemed to have trouble finding her voice, then she said tearfully, “Starsky, I love him. *I love* him. ’S that count for anything?”

I wanted to tell her it did, but knew I couldn’t give an inch on this. Too much was at stake.

“He’s gotta know. One way or the other...he’s gotta know,” I told her, making it clear the point wasn’t negotiable.

“Then I have no choice,” she replied. “I have no choice. I’ll tell him tonight.”

Reaching for the doorknob, I answered, “If you don’t...I’ll tell him in the morning.”

“Starsky?”

I paused and looked back at the bleak expression in her eyes.

“It’d be nice to be Hutch. In one lifetime, you have two people love you so much.”



I closed the door quietly behind me, then leaned against the wall to steady my shaking knees. Will she tell him? If she doesn’t, I will. I guess my scenario of her riding quietly into the sunset just isn’t in the cards.

There was one thing I hadn’t considered when I was putting my little plan together. Gillian actually loves him. In spite of that, I know that no matter how it turns out, Hutch is gonna be hurt. The hell of it is, there’s not a thing I can do to stop it.

But I’ll be there—like always. Whether that means getting drunk with him and listening while he rambles on all night about those damned red balloons, or even sellin’ my car to help Gillian start a new life without him.

My car for Hutch’s happiness. In the scheme of things, it’s more than a fair trade.

*The End*