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## **GUARDIAN III**

### **“The Chase”**

*by TibbieB*

*The poor dog, in life the firmest friend,  
The first to welcome, foremost to defend,  
Whose honest heart is still his master's own,  
Who labours, fights, lives, breathes for him alone.*  
~ Lord Byron

### ***Chapter 1***

“Come in!” Captain Harold Dobey looked up from the chaos on his desktop, obviously irritated by another interruption in his busy morning schedule. Detectives Starsky and Hutchinson entered the office and casually made themselves comfortable in two chairs located across from the captain’s desk. Uncharacteristically, the two men wore conservative sports coats and ties with their bellbottom jeans, rather than their usual leather jackets and T-shirts. Starsky, the dark-haired member of the duo, kicked back and nonchalantly propped his feet up on Dobey’s desk.

“Starsky, don’t make me tell you again! Get your feet off my desk!” Unperturbed, the younger man shrugged and planted his feet back on the floor, repeating a ritual that occurred between the two men on a regular basis.

“Come on, Cap’n, we were just brilliant in that courtroom,” Hutchinson pointed out. “Can’t you cut us a little slack?”

Starsky smiled broadly, and nodded his agreement with Hutch’s assessment of their testimony against one of the most powerful drug czars on the West Coast. “He’s got’a point, Cap’n.”

“Seems to me, you two are counting your chickens before they hatch,” the black man grumbled.

“No way the judge isn’t gonna give that turkey life.” Starsky straightened up in his chair, as he reached up and tugged at the offending tie he was unaccustomed to wearing.

“Your testimony was pretty compelling—I’ll give you that. But we all know the connections Morrisetti has.” Dobey leaned forward and looked both detectives in the eyes. “To my knowledge, Judge Herbert Brown is an honest man, and he seems aboveboard all the way.”

“But, you wouldn’t put it past Morrisetti to have a federal judge in his pocket,” Hutch finished for him.

“Well, let’s just say, we shouldn’t underestimate him.”

“Brown said he’d announce the sentence at 3:00 p.m. today,” Starsky said. He hesitated for a moment before changing the subject. “Cap’n, what about the time Hutch and I asked for. Ya know...for the Search and Rescue Competition we want Sam to enter?”

Dobey harumphed and rolled up the sleeves of his shirt.

“He’s doing great, Cap’n,” Hutch offered. “Think how well it would reflect on the department to have Sam win a competition like that. I mean, I know he’s not officially part of the LAPD, but look how many times they’ve called on us over the past year when they needed Sam’s help.”

“I suppose he has been good PR for us...not to mention how many rescues he’s been involved in,” Dobey conceded.

“Yeah, he’s a pretty terrific dog,” Starsky bragged. “Gina says our instructor still claims he’s never taught a dog with the natural talent Sam’s exhibited. He thinks Sam hasn’t even hit his stride yet, and could walk away with a first place medal at the regionals. We only need a week. They’re holdin’ the competition in Seattle. We could drive up there in a day.”

“Starsky, I told you it takes more than twenty-two hours to drive that distance,” Hutch interrupted.

Starsky grinned at his partner. “Maybe it’s twenty-two if you’re drivin’, Blondie.”

Hutch rolled his eyes skyward and shook his head. He knew he was in for another rocket ride in the Tomato unless he could wrest the steering wheel away from Starsky and convince him to stop overnight somewhere for a rest. Oh, well, he'd deal with that when the time came.

Dobey leaned back in his chair, swiveling from side to side, letting them squirm a few moments before giving them permission to take the time off. Hell, they'd earned it! And he had no doubt Sam had a better than average chance of cleaning up in the medal department. Still, he didn't want to make it too easy. They were already almost too cocky to take orders. Had to remind them who was boss once in awhile!

"Okay. You've got one week. Since I'm sanctioning this trip, you don't have to turn it in as vacation. I'll write it up as public service."

Starsky and Hutch looked at one another, then back at Dobey, their eyes bugging out at this generous gesture. The best they'd hoped for, was using their vacation time. But they'd discussed it, and decided it would be worth it to see just what Sam could do, when pitted against professional search and rescue canines. This was an unexpected gift.

Starsky was the first to react. "Thanks, Cap'n. You won't regret this. Sam's gonna knock their socks off."

Embarrassed by his own act of generosity, Dobey averted his eyes to the desk. "Just make sure you're back here on time. I'm not taking any excuses if you're not, and I'll retroactively charge the whole time off to your vacation!"

Hutch cut his eyes over at his partner, his lips twitching with a suppressed smile. Dobey didn't fool him for a minute. He was almost as fond of the big, lovable dog as they were. They both stood up and headed for the door, not giving him a chance to change his mind.

**END ORR**

"All rise," the bailiff announced, as Judge Brown entered the courtroom. Starsky and Hutch stood near the back row of seats, waiting for the judge to hand down the sentence. They had a pretty good idea of the outcome, but wanted to hear it for themselves.

Leo Morrisetti looked back over his shoulder at the two cops. A trim, nice looking man in his mid-fifties, the drug czar lifted the left corner of his mouth in a condescending smirk. The hard glint in his steel gray eyes belied any humor that may have lurked there. Having been out on bail since before the trial began, Morrisetti was dressed in a gray, tailored, Italian suit, the exact same shade as his thinning, well-styled hair. Hutch couldn't help but wonder how the rich and powerful drug lord was going to look in his prison uniform.

The judge cleared his throat and looked out across the crowd before centering his attention on the defendant. “Mr. Morrisetti, some days I regret that the State of California no longer allows me to issue the death sentence. That certainly applies in this case. Not only have you caused the pain and suffering of countless human beings on this earth, you have maliciously targeted our innocent youth. Sending your dealers into our school yards, and along the beaches our children frequent, you have found an unsuspecting market of customers considered off-limits to most of the other criminals in your line of work.

Your abhorrent actions have resulted in the deaths of at least eight high school children; and those are only the ones we have been able to document. Who knows how many homeless street people, both young and old, have used the tainted drugs you’ve distributed, bringing their short, miserable lives to an abrupt, horrible end?”

The judge paused momentarily before continuing. “Through the tireless efforts of our law enforcement personnel, such as Detectives Hutchinson and Starsky, I am at least given the privilege of sentencing you to life, plus 50 years, in Cabrillo State Prison. I am also declaring that you will NOT be eligible to seek parole. I hope you use your time there to reflect upon your deeds, and realize exactly what a despicable excuse for a human being you truly are. May God have mercy on your soul.” The judge slammed the gavel on the desk, signifying an end to the proceedings.

Morrisetti didn’t flinch as the courtroom erupted in a buzz of excited responses. News reporters rushed past the two detectives in an effort to be the first to file their stories and make breaking announcements to their television audiences. Hutch looked at his partner and nodded. Things had gone exactly as they’d hoped. One more scum bag off the streets—and it looked like this one would be permanently.

As the guard handcuffed Morrisetti, the convicted criminal turned and looked at the two detectives. His mouth silently formed the unmistakable words, “You’re dead,” before he was led from the courtroom, amidst the furor of the crowd. Starsky smiled at the judge and gave him a ‘thumbs up’ sign before following Hutch through the heavy wooden doors.

***End of Chapter 1***