

GUARDIAN III
“The Chase”
by TibbieB

Chapter 19

The ride to the hospital was uneventful, with Hutch protesting all the way. “I don’t see why this is necessary,” he complained only loud enough for Starsky’s ears.

In one of his more philosophical moods, Starsky defended Dobey’s edict. “I think he’s got a point. I mean, you were blind. Then all of a sudden, you can see again.”

“Get to the point.” Hutch’s impatience was outweighed only by his exhaustion.

“All I’m saying is, if you could get it back that quick—no warnin’, what’s to say you might not wake up tomorrow morning blind again?”

Hutch’s brow crinkled in consternation. He hadn’t considered such a possibility. He’d been too happy to see again, to question the how and why. “But you’re the one who said, right from the start, that it was a temporary thing.”

“I know...I know...and I still believe that’s true. Personally, I think the Big Guy Upstairs was definitely along on this trip. But can’t ya just get a professional medical opinion? I mean, I know I’m brilliant, but I’m still a few credits shy of an MD in brain surgery.” Starsky held the serious expression as long as he could, but when Hutch peered at him from under hooded eyes, a look of disgust on his face, he couldn’t stifle a grin.

The ambulance rolled up to the tiny hospital’s emergency entrance and came to a grinding halt.

“Let’s get this over with.” Hutch leaned in toward Starsky, lowering his voice to exclude the EMT. “I don’t know about you, but I think we can still make it to Seattle in time to make the finals.”

Starsky’s brow puckered, betraying his concern that Hutch may be rushing things a little. But rather than shoot down the suggestion, he went along with it for the moment. “I’m ready—just as long as the doc says you’re okay. If not, then there’s always next year. And think how much better Sam’ll be by then. Won’t be any reason for those other dogs to even bother entering.”

Hutch laughed softly, relishing Starsky’s customary optimism.



The doctor switched off his pen light and nodded to the nurse to turn on the bright overhead fluorescent.

“So, what’s the verdict?” Hutch asked warily.

“I’ll admit that it’s remarkable you’re recovering from such a head trauma so quickly, but it’s not unheard of. Have you experienced any vomiting or dizziness in the past twenty-four hours?”

“Some,” Hutch admitted. “I actually vomited only once, right after being shot, but the dizziness lasted until a few hours ago.” He turned to Starsky for confirmation. “Last time was at the top of the ravine, remember?”

Starsky nodded solemnly, recalling his fear that Hutch would take an unintentional nose dive into the ravine.

“Well, that’s a good sign. And did your sight return gradually? Were you seeing glimpses of shapes, or perhaps a flash of light here and there?”

“Yes. In fact, things were still pretty blurry until about thirty minutes ago.”

“I’d say what you’ve described is pretty common in an injury of this nature. Just to make certain we aren’t missing anything, I’ve ordered a series of cranial x-rays and a CAT Scan.”

“Do you really think that’s necessary?” The last thing Hutch wanted at the moment was to be poked and prodded anymore.

“Awww, come on, Hutch. It’s just a little x-ray,” Starsky cajoled. “Don’t give the doc a hard time, okay?”

“Thank you, Detective Starsky.” The doctor removed his spectacles and absently polished the lenses with the bottom of his white jacket. “While the technicians are getting pictures of your partner, I’ll have just about enough time to check you out too.”

Starsky’s smile froze, gradually turning down at the corners of his mouth. “Me? I’m fine, Doc. You don’t need to waste your time on me,” he hedged.

“Awww, come on, Starsky,” Hutch drawled. “It’s just a little check-up. Don’t give the doc a hard time, okay?”

Knowing he’d backed himself into a corner, Starsky glared back at his partner, with an ‘if looks could kill’ expression. “Tell ya what, Blintz. I’ll stay here and get checked out while you go down and have those tests run. Fair enough?”

Hutch tipped his head to the side, conceding the stand-off. Before he could change his mind, he was seated in a wheel chair and whisked off to x-ray.

Turning to Starsky, the doctor smiled. "Your turn...."



The two detectives sat in the out-patient treatment room, Hutch clad in a hospital gown, Starsky still wearing grungy jeans and a filthy shirt. They'd been waiting over an hour for Hutch's rest results to come back. In the background, a nasally voice paged doctors and nurses over distorted intercom speakers. Starsky stared down at the Scrabble Game board spread out on the portable tray table between the two men, while nimbly shifting the ice pack from his right eye to the left. Concentrating, he carefully placed his letters on the board and sat back, a self-satisfied look on his face.

"B-O-H-U-N-K-U-S? Starsky, what the hell is that?" Hutch stared at him incredulously. "There's no such word."

"Sure there is. My Grandfather used it all the time," Starsky replied smugly.

"Oh yeah? And what does it mean?"

"You know, like, 'Get your bohunkus in here now, Davey!'"

"What? What're you talking about? I've never, in my entire life, heard anyone say that," Hutch argued. "What's it supposed to mean?"

Starsky rolled his eyes, implying Hutch sorely lacked a good command of the English language. "It means...well, you know...your butt."

Hutch ran a hand down his face. "I swear, every time I play this game with you, you come up with something more ridiculous than the last time. I don't know why I even bother."

"Awww, you just have your nose outta joint because I wanted to play somethin' besides Monopoly for a change."

Not about to let Starsky skirt the issue, Hutch persisted. "Oh, give me a break!"

"I'm tellin' ya, it's a word. You wanna hear it in another sentence? Fine! 'He sat on his bohunkus all day, while his partner did all the work!'"

"Or," Hutch added, getting into the swing of things, "His partner kicked his bohunkus out of his hospital room because he couldn't spell his way out of a brown p-a-p-e-r bag!"

Starsky raised a warning finger, about to deliver a smart come-back, when Dr. Thomas came into their room.

“Good news, Detective Hutchinson. Your tests came back confirming just what I suspected.”

“So, he’s gonna be okay?” Starsky asked, forgetting the Scrabble dispute for the moment.

“Yes, he should be.” The doctor pulled up one of the guest chairs, took a seat, and continued his explanation. “You see, sometimes when a person suffers severe head trauma, there is increased intracranial pressure. That, in turn, can cause swelling of the optic nerve. As the swelling decreases, there’s a likelihood that the patient’s sight will return. I feel certain that’s what happened with you, Detective Hutchinson. As I told you earlier, it’s unusual, but not unheard of.”

“So, you don’t think I have to worry about the blindness recurring?” Hutch asked.

“Not really, unless you do something to cause the swelling to return. What I’d like to do is keep you here overnight, and part of tomorrow, and administer an osmotic diuretic. Since the swelling has begun decreasing on its own, I believe the medication will simply help it along. I don’t expect there to be a reoccurrence of the symptoms, except perhaps, a headache and a little residual swelling. I’ll have you moved to a regular room so you can get some rest tonight.”

Relieved, but not happy about having to stay overnight, Hutch pressed the doctor for more information. “So, tomorrow I can go back to normal activity?”

“I’d say ‘limited’ activity. No running, climbing or getting shot again for at least two weeks,” the doctor said, humorously.

“I’ll keep an eye on him, Doc,” Starsky volunteered.

“I’m glad to hear that. Now, I know you said you were on your way to enter your police dog in some sort of competition, and wanted to go on from here. I don’t see a problem with that, as long as you are the one to put the dog through his paces, Detective Starsky.”

The doctor turned to Hutch. “You, on the other hand, will have to be content to cheer them on from the sidelines. Understood?”

Disappointed, but willing to follow any orders that would get him released from the hospital, Hutch agreed.

“Okay.” The doctor stood up. “If you have no other questions, I need to get on with my rounds. I’ll go ahead and sign the release papers, dating them for tomorrow. If,

during the night, you develop any of the symptoms we talked about earlier, report it the nurse immediately. She'll give me a call."

"Right, I understand."

Dr. Thomas walked toward the door, then turned back and looked at Starsky. "The hospital is practically empty right now. I told the nurse, since Detective Hutchinson will be in a semi-private room, to let you use the other bed, if you like. I know you don't have a car, or anyway to get around, so you're welcome to stay overnight."

"Thanks, Doc." Starsky flashed him a grateful smile.

Moments after Dr. Thomas left the room, Captain Dobey bustled in, his arms laden with shopping bags. "How are you feeling, Hutch?" He dropped the bags onto a night stand next to the bed.

"Better, Cap'n. What's in the bags?"

"I picked up some clean clothes for the both of you, plus toothbrushes and combs. I know they've got a shower around here you can use." Dobey looked around. "And Starsky, do something about your hair. It look's like a bird's been nesting in it."

Too tired to take offense, Starsky just mumble in response, "Right, Cap'n, got it."

"I just spoke with the doctor in the hallway. Told me you two want to take Sam and go on to Seattle. Personally, I think you should come on home, but he said there's no reason to cancel your trip."

"I think we've missed most of the competition, but we've come this far, and the exposure should be good for Sam," Hutch told him.

Looking around, Starsky realized Sam wasn't with him. "Where's Big Dog now, Cap'n?"

"In my motel room. I knew the hospital wouldn't let him come in." Dobey pulled up one of the guest chairs and sat down. "Okay, here's what we'll do. Since all this happened because of Morrisetti, I'm counting the time you spent in the woods and the hospital as duty days. Go on to Seattle, and take an extra couple of days to rest up when you get back."

Turning to Starsky, he continued. "I know your car was destroyed, Starsky. I've rented a station wagon, and in the morning, I'll drop it and Sam off here. You can use the car to finish out your vacation, and drive back home. Lt. Combs will drive me back to where I left my car yesterday."

The two detectives looked at each other, surprised, and touched by Dobby's generous gesture—so much so, Starsky didn't even grumble at the prospect of driving a 'station wagon'. The captain stood up to leave. "Well, I'll see you two in the morning. I'm going back to the motel to feed Sam, and give Edith a call to let her know I'll be home tomorrow. The motel has a great all you can eat barbeque buffet." Dobby grinned, before adding, "See if you two can stay out of trouble until morning."

Hutch was the first to break their stunned silence. "Good night, Cap'n."

Dobby walked to the door, but stopped at the sound of Starsky's voice. "Cap'n...thanks."

The End