

**GUARDIAN III**  
**“The Chase”**  
*by TibbieB*

*Chapter 2*

Sam sat on the bed, his eyes following Starsky’s every move, as he watched him toss socks and underwear into the open duffel bag. The dog was worried. This generally meant ‘The Dark One’ was going away.

Though he recognized Starsky and Hutch by their rightful names, Sam still persisted in thinking of them in the same terms he had the first day they met...Starsky, being ‘The Dark One’, and Hutch, ‘The Light One’. They were unlike any humans he’d ever known. Granted, they were humans, speaking their own strange language, their moods shifting like the sand; but they were different from the others. They’d opened their hearts and their homes to him, given him a life free of neglect and fear. And when he was separated from them, he was miserable. So, the prospect that Starsky, and most likely Hutch too, would leave him, even for a short while, was very upsetting.

Starsky looked at the dog’s solemn expression, almost hearing his thoughts. “Don’t worry, Big Dog, you’re comin’ too. This is our vacation, a chance for you to show those other dogs how smart you are. You know, strut your stuff.” He gave Sam a lop-sided grin and was rewarded with a loud, affirmative ‘woof.’

After a few minutes of pillaging through the closet, Starsky pulled down a green and white nylon, zippered bag from the top shelf, and threw it on the bed next to his own. This initiated an onslaught of cheerful tail swishing and excited barking from Sam, who recognized the bag as the one that held all his treasures. Inside were his favorite bowl, a water bottle, leashes of varying lengths, assorted chew toys, and a box of giant milkbones.

Opening the bag, Starsky tossed in a plastic bag of kibbles, and three cans of dog food he’d set on the dresser earlier. “Not so worried now, are ya?” He scratched the dog’s ears until the canine rolled over on his back, presenting his tummy for a rub. “Listen, ya big goomba, I don’t have time to give you a rub down. We still have to finish packing, and gas up the car.”

Sam jumped off the bed and disappeared down the hallway. Starsky resumed sorting through his socks, trying to find at least two the same length, not riddled with holes, or long-since-sprung elastic tops.

At the sound of the water turning on in the adjacent bathroom, he looked up from the drawer, and listened for a moment. Dropping the socks, Starsky walked into the bathroom and turned off the bathtub spigots. Used to this recurring event, he casually reached down into the water, and unplugged the drain.

Over the last several months, he and Sam had learned to coexist with their unseen guest, who persisted in turning on the water, and drawing a bath at the most inconvenient times. Starsky looked around the room, uneasily. Although he knew the unexplained presence seemed harmless, it unnerved him every time something weird happened. Aside from this minor inconvenience, it was a great house; lots of character, spacious rooms, and a big, fenced-in yard for Sam to romp in. Still, if the rent wasn't dirt cheap and the dog welcome, he would probably have moved out the first month.

Starsky returned to the bedroom, and picked up where he'd left off with his packing. He looked down as Sam trotted back into the room and dropped a shiny, red ball at his feet. The ball was the big dog's most cherished possession. Sam remembered the day Starsky gave him the ball, and their first play session in the park. It had been a turning point in their relationship. From that day forward, the dog had been devoted to The Dark One, even risking his own life to save Starsky's only days later.

"What's this? You wanna play ball instead of packin'?" Listen, big guy, life ain't all play, ya know." The dog cocked his head quizzically, then gave a loud bark. Starsky picked up the ball and tossed it into the air. Sam jumped straight up, all four paws leaving the floor, and caught the ball in his mouth before it even began to fall. He trotted back to Starsky and laid the ball down again. "Awww, come on, Sam. I told you, we got'a pack and gas up the car. And what about eating? Aren't you hungry? We don't have time to play."

At the word "eat" the rottie scooped up the ball, and tossed it into the air, letting it fall to the floor at Starsky's feet again.

"You tryin' to tell me something?"

Sam bounded onto the bed, and poked his snout into the green bag. After a few moments of serious rooting around, he finally dug out the bag of kibbles, and turned hopeful eyes to Starsky.

"Oh...I get it. You wanna be fed. You wanna eat?"

Sam ran back to Starsky, picked up the ball again and tossed it higher than before. The man chuckled, then reached down and retrieved the ball. "I know your game now, ya big con artist. You wanna trade your ball for a little grub, right?" Sam chuffed loudly, clearly impressed by his human's ability to understand the most ancient of languages—"Dog."

"Okay, but not this food. This is for the trip. We'll go to the kitchen and scrounge up some dinner."

In the bathroom, the water faucets in the bathtub came on again. Sam heard it too. He lifted his head and listened, ears twitching. As Starsky walked toward the door,

it slammed shut with a resounding thump, startling both man and dog. It wasn't the first time he'd witnessed this newest phenomena, but it shook him up a bit, just the same. It'd happened three times before--each time, the door slamming only when he approached it.

Starsky watched the dog, interested in his reaction. Sam stood staunchly, back arched, feet planted, and every hair on his broad neck raised defensively. Rather than being reassured by the dog's reaction, Starsky was more ill at ease.

On the other side of the door, he could hear the water slowly filling the bath. "Sam, Heel." The dog relaxed his stance and moved up beside Starsky, in front of the door.

"You go first," Starsky suggested. Sam looked up, not understanding the command, but knowing he would really rather be in the kitchen having dinner. He decided maybe he'd just wait and see what his human did next.

Understanding perfectly the dog's reluctance to enter the bathroom, Starsky reached out cautiously and touched the doorknob. When nothing hideous happened, he gripped the knob firmly, and opened the door in one rapid movement. Stepping inside, he saw the water still running in the tub, stopper in place. Sam peered around the door warily, intending to keep his distance from the spooky bathtub, unless forced to do otherwise. Once again, Starsky turned off the water, unplugged the drain, and went back into the bedroom.

"Some watchdog you are," he grouched. "Come on, let's go eat. What say we leave old Charlie to take his bath in private? Huh?" As Starsky and Sam left the bedroom, they heard the sound of the bathroom door closing again.



Hutch threw the last of his clothes into the duffel bag, and checked the windows, before going out to wait on the front steps for Starsky and Sam. As usual, his partner was late. But Hutch, having learned over the years to expect that, wasn't the least bit annoyed. If he wanted to be somewhere by 10 a.m., he told Starsky they had to be there by 9:30. Worked like a charm. But they weren't on a timetable with this trip. In fact, if things went according to plan, they'd arrive a day before the competition, and have a little time for sight-seeing. He'd visited Seattle before, but this would be a first for Starsky, and Hutch was hoping to show his partner the usual landmarks, like the Space Needle and the famous open air fish market, one of the oldest in the nation. There would be plenty to see and do.

The Torino screeched up to the curb, Sam's head hanging out the window, the perpetual, canine grin greeting Hutch. "Mornin."

Starsky smiled at Hutch as the tall blond took his place in the passenger's seat. "Sorry we're runnin' a little late. I was waitin' on Huggy's cousin Leon—you know, the carpenter—to come by and give me an estimate on a new bathroom door." He checked the side view and rear view mirrors before pulling away from the curb.

Hutch shook his head in resignation. “Starsky, when are you gonna quit spending money on trying to fix things in that old rattle-trap of a house, and accept that some things just aren’t fixable?”

“What do ya mean?” Starsky immediately went on the defensive. “It’s fixable. The frame’s crooked. Leon said he’ll have to put in a new frame and door, then it’ll work perfectly.” He constantly found himself defending the weird phenomena that continued to occur in the old Victorian home he and Sam shared.

“How many plumbers have you had come there, and tell you there’s nothing wrong with the faucets in the bathtub? Hmmm? And it still comes on by itself, all hours of the day and night, doesn’t it?”

Starsky shrugged. “Well, yeah...but the door’s a different thing. It just kinda falls shut.”

“Falls shut? Falls... shut? Starsky, what the hell does that mean?”

“Ya know. I open it, and in a few minutes, it kinda closes, real hard-like.”

“Let me guess.” Hutch feigned a studious expression. “It wouldn’t just happen to be the door to the same bathroom with the running water problem, would it? The bathroom where ‘Charlie’s’ body was found floating in the tub?”

Starsky gave him a sheepish grin. “Well, yeah...but—”

“Starsk—so now another one of Huggy’s relatives is gonna rip you off for the cost of installing a brand new door which will, in all likelihood, swing shut on it’s own, exactly like the door you have right now.”

Starsky stared at the road, embarrassed to admit that his partner was probably right.

“How much?”

“Huh?”

“How much for the new door and the installation?”

“Only \$150,” Starsky answered in a small voice.

“What? A hundred fifty dollars?” Hutch ran a hand over his face.

“What’re you gettin’ so excited about? You’re the one who says there’s no such thing as ghosts. If ya believe that, why can’t you come up with a logical explanation about all this? You think Sam and I like livin’ in the house with a dead guy?”

Hutch was quiet for a moment, having no answer. Logic told him the house wasn’t haunted; yet, he, himself, was completely puzzled by the things that went on in the rambling, old, two-story home. He enjoyed teasing Starsky, all right. But when it came right down to it, Hutch had no theories on why the strange occurrences seemed to be commonplace in the old house.

Starsky flashed him a grin. “Hey, ready to set the Search and Rescue world on its ear?” he asked, abruptly changing the subject.

“Yeah, right.” Hutch smiled back, always amused by his partner’s enthusiasm and confidence where Sam was concerned. Secretly, he was relieved to talk about something other than the ‘haunting’ of Starsky’s home. “Don’t forget—we just enter him in the beginners’ competitions. There’s no way he can compete with dogs who’ve been doing this for awhile.”

“Yeah, I know, I know. Still, I bet they’ve never seen a dog as smart as Sam, with only one year in the field,” Starsky shot back.

Recognizing his name, the rottweiler popped his head over the back of the seat and nuzzled Starsky before going over to Hutch and repeating the gesture. Hutch, his mood quickly improving, absently scratched the big dog under the chin. “You’re probably right about that. Still, don’t be disappointed if he doesn’t win anything. Sometimes, I think we expect too much from him.”

“I guess you’re right. Hey, let’s just have a good time, okay?” Starsky’s boyish grin brought another smile to Hutch’s face. He wasn’t sure who was more excited about this trip—Starsky or Sam. In any case, Hutch was going to enjoy it.



Felix Pinson had never been a nervous man until he became involved with Lou Morrisetti and his underworld drug machine. These days, he jumped at his own shadow. The money was great—more than he’d ever hoped to see, but now Pinson woke every morning with the feeling that today might be his last. Unfortunately, he’d seen what happened to others who decided they wanted out; and it wasn’t a pretty sight. Yes, he was in for the duration—good or bad, there was no escaping the corner he’d unwittingly backed himself into, when he accepted a job with Morrisetti.

The clanging of the iron bars on the conference room door startled Pinson from his inner thoughts, as he watched Lou Morrisetti enter the room, handcuffed, dressed in a drab, gray prison uniform.

“Good morning, sir.”

Morrisetti looked back over his shoulder and snapped at the guard, “Get the hell out of here. I want to talk with my attorney alone. It’s my right.”

The guard scowled at the drug czar, but left the room as ordered, aware that the prisoner was entitled to private conversations with counsel.

“Thanks for coming, Felix.” Morrisetti sat down at the plain, wooden table.

“Sure, Mr. Morrisetti. Anything for you. But, I’m afraid I haven’t found out anything new yet. I filed the appeal, just like you said.” Pinson nervously played with the ball point pen he was holding.

“I know, I know. I’m sure you’re doing your best,” Morrisetti said magnanimously. “That’s not why I asked you to come.”

Worried, Pinson looked up at his client, waiting for the other shoe to drop. What now? Thoughts began to swirl in his mind.

Morrisetti glance toward the door, then lowered his voice. “I want you to make arrangements to have those two cops wasted. Starsky and Hutchinson,” he said calmly. “When my appeal comes to trial, I want them out of commission. Make them disappear—now.”

The steel gray eyes penetrated Pinson, leaving no doubt that Morrisetti expected nothing less than complete obedience. “Uh...I...understand how you feel, sir...but...” Pinson chose his words carefully, “don’t you think the judge will know it was you? Could backfire on us, sir.”

Lou Morrisetti looked down at the attorney’s trembling hands. If there was one thing he hated, it was a coward. This despicable excuse for a man was going to balk at burning a couple of two bit detectives. He should have known!

“Now, you listen to me, you low-rent piece of garbage—I said waste ‘em, and that’s exactly what you’re going to do. Regardless of the outcome of my appeal, I want those two DEAD.” His voice was emotionless, and measured. “I don’t give a damn if you pull the trigger yourself, or if you have to hire someone to do the deed, but there will be NO connection with me. Do you understand?”

Pinson nodded his head, quick little jerks, up and down. “Y-y-yes sir, understood. You’ve got it.”

Satisfied with the frightened response from his attorney, Morrisetti stood up and walked to the door. Looking back over his shoulder, he added, “I mean it, Felix. NO connection.” He spoke to the guard through the bars. “I’m ready.”

As the door closed behind his boss, Felix Pinson took a deep, calming breath. This was the worst thing his employer had ever told him to do. Killing cops was a dirty business, one that could cost him his life. Of course, if he didn't follow orders, it **WOULD** cost him his life. No doubt about that. Pinson realized he'd better find a professional, someone who would leave no loose ends. Like it or not—he'd do as he was told.

*End of Chapter 2*