

*In memory of my mother, who always believed in me
A special thanks to my beta reader, JackieHSH*

“Desperate Measures”

by TibbieB

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Chapter One

It was Monday morning and Starsky had made a point of showing up for work early. He had thought about it all weekend—now he was anxious to spring the plan on Hutch. Starsky just hoped he could get his stubborn partner to go along. Lately, Hutch hadn't gone along with much of anything that he'd suggested. But desperate situations called for desperate measures, so Starsky was going for broke.

When Hutch walked through the door, Starsky noted the tell-tale dark circles under his eyes, a sure sign his friend had had another sleepless night. But this time Hutch hadn't called during the early morning hours like he usually did when he had nightmares about the murder scene in Gillian's. Starsky had passed many nights lately on the telephone, talking his buddy through the insomnia. It worried Starsky that lately the internal turmoil and grief was even apparent in Hutch's physical appearance.

“Mornin', partner,” Starsky said. He closed the file he had been working on and tossed it back on the desk. Hutch nodded slightly, walked directly to the coffeepot, and poured himself a mug of the disgustingly strong brew. Starsky picked up his own cup and joined him.

“Another bad night?” Starsky asked, his face mirroring concern for Hutch. He knew there were more bad nights than good.

Hutch looked over at his friend, smiling faintly. “No worse than usual.”

Starsky knew his partner had a tendency to downplay his emotions. Hutch looked like hell this morning, and any doubts Starsky had about his plan vanished. He had to take some action to get Hutch back on his feet.

“Listen, partner,” he began, “you know, it's been three months and...well...I'm startin' to get a little worried about you.” Hutch opened his mouth to speak, but Starsky put his hand up, delaying him. “Just let me finish, hmmm?”

“I've *been* where you are now, Hutch, and I know you're hurtin'. Hell, I'm hurtin' just watchin' you. But you've got'a get focused here.”

He looked Hutch in the eyes as he spoke. “It doesn't mean you didn't love Gillian, it's just that...well, you know...you've got'a stop blamin' yourself. There's nothin' you can do to change things...it's time to move on.”

Hutch looked away, gazing on some non-existent target in the distance. He really didn't want to have this conversation.

“I know this is the same speech you gave me when Helen died,” Starsky went on. “At the time, I thought it was just words. But I finally realized you were right, buddy,” Starsky laid his hand on Hutch's shoulder.

“Now, you need to listen to *me*. Trust me, partner...it’s gonna get easier as time goes by.”

“Look, Starsk,” Hutch interrupted, “you and Nancy have been great, dragging me around like a third wheel; and I appreciate your attempts to fix me up with someone, but it’s just too soon.”

“I’m not talkin’ about match-makin’, Hutch—just gettin’ on with your life.” he answered with empathy. Then Starsky flashed one of his killer smiles, eager to lighten the mood.

“Listen, I got’a plan I think you’re gonna like,” he hurried on before Hutch could interrupt again, “It’s gonna be terrific.”

Hutch took a deep breath and stirred an extra packet of sugar into his coffee. *Oh, boy, here we go. What kind of wild scheme have you hatched up in that head of yours now, buddy?* He walked over to his desk and sat down, waiting for the other shoe to drop.

“Okay, Starsk, lay it out. What’s the plan?”

Starsky’s eyes brightened with excitement now, as he came around the desk and perched on the edge. “Here ya go,” he said, plopping open a brochure filled with brightly colored photos of young, healthy, men and women backpacking and fly-fishing in the great, clean outdoors of northern California. *Right up Hutch’s alley. He won’t be able to resist this!*

Starsky waited a beat for his partner’s reaction, all the while nodding his own approval, anxious for a response. “What do ya say...huh?”

Hutch looked at the brochure, then looked up from under hooded lids at his friend’s enthusiastic face.

“Starsk—buddy—you don’t even like the woods. What are you suggesting here? And you know we can’t get any time off right now. Our caseload is way too heavy. Besides, trips like this are expensive.”

“Not a problem—the vacation time nor the money. Piece of cake.” Starsky beamed. “Done worked it out with Dobey, AND I have a friend at a travel agency who’s gonna get us the deal of the century.” He smiled like the cat who ate the canary, confident that he had the answers to everything. “Pretty terrific, huh?”

“Oh, yeah? How did you convince Dobey to let us take off?” Hutch truly was curious, all too aware of how much time he’d lost when Gillian died.

“Told him I won a sweepstakes and got this great vacation for two—free.” Still grinning like a silly little boy, Starsky continued, “Told him we had to take it now or forfeit my prize. Couldn’t argue with that.”

Hutch’s eyes rolled back in his head as he envisioned the performance Starsky must have given to get Captain Dobey to buy that story!

“I reminded him of all the overtime we put in on the Amboy case and told him we deserved a little comp time. Couldn’t argue with that either.” Starsky’s blue eyes sparkled as he warmed up to his subject.

“Money.” Hutch pointed out, “Trips take money. I don’t know how much of a deal your friend is going to give, but unless it’s less than \$200, it’s out of my class.”

“Already taken care of.” the grinning Starsky answered. “Just say you’ll come. I’ve got everything under control.”

Hutch stood up and walked back over to warm his now room-temperature coffee. “I don’t know Starsk. I’m not really good company right now. And like I said, you wouldn’t enjoy a trip like this.” He turned and looked at Starsky, unable to hide the sorrow in his eyes. “You don’t have to baby sit me, you know.”

“That’s not it,” Starsky said. “I just think you need a change of scenery, Blondie. And if I can get us a vacation out of it, why can’t you just humor me—huh?”

Starsky lowered his voice and said more seriously, “Look, Hutch...I mean it. I really am worried about you. I mean, you’re my partner—the best friend I have in this world; and I see you fallin’ apart right in front of my eyes.” He laid his hand firmly on Hutch’s shoulder to emphasize his point. “I think a change of pace, you know, doing somethin’ you really enjoy, will be good for you.”

Hutch shook his head and smiled at his partner. “Let me think about it, okay?” he said. Starsky agreed, then dropped the subject to begin the day’s work.



“This is IT? We’re supposed to fly to Klamath in this? Starsk, I don’t know,” Hutch stared at the small airplane in disbelief. It hardly looked sturdy enough to keep from collapsing on the runway, much less become airborne.

“Aw, come on, Hutch.” Starsky walked toward the twin prop plane, an obvious old junker that had been somewhat restored. When Artie said the flight would be cheap, and no frills, Starsky hadn’t expected he’d have to bring his own rubber bands to hold it together. He put on a confident face, though, afraid Hutch would back out at the last minute.

Hutch walked to the back of the craft, looking as though he knew what he was doing. Starsky followed, “It’ll be fine,” he was saying, as much to convince himself, as to convince Hutch.

Crouched at the rear of the plane was a scruffy man with a shock of flaming red hair, tied back in a ponytail. The part of his face not covered by a red, bushy beard was sprinkled liberally with ruddy freckles, making him to look like he had a permanent sunburn.

“Hey, dudes—looking for somebody?” He stood up, wiping his grease-covered hands on the front of his khaki green coveralls. The man was least two inches taller than Hutch, so Starsky had to look up at him as he spoke.

“Yeah, right,” Starsky answered, “I’m Starsky, he’s Hutchinson. We booked a charter with Classic Flights to go up to the Klamath National Forest to do some fishin’. This the plane?”

“Yeah, man, ain’t she a beaut? I’m Carl Parks; she belongs to me. I’m the pilot-mechanic-owner and flight attendant. You must be the dudes Johnny Whitecloud is expecting. We’ll be ready to take off in about thirty minutes. I’m about to wind up here. You can go ahead and put your gear on board.”

Clearly, Hutch wasn’t reassured. He walked around the plane twice more, checking it from every angle. Starsky knew for a fact that Hutch didn’t know anything about airplanes, so he saw this as an exercise in futility.

Finally, Hutch headed back toward the parking lot, motioning with his head for Starsky to follow. When they were out of range for Carl to overhear, Hutch turned to his partner and said, "I don't know, Starsk, I just don't feel good about this."

"Don't be a baby, Hutch," Starsky teased. "I'm sure this guy probably flew hundreds of missions in Nam and's a crack pilot. They wouldn't give 'em a license to fly now, would they, if he didn't know what he was doin', huh?"

"It's not the pilot I'm worried about, it's this World War I relic he's flying. I think we should call it off, Starsk, and get your money back."

Starsky fidgeted, looking down at his sneakers as he mumbled, "Can't do that. No refunds. That's how I got such a great deal on the tickets."

"What? You accepted those terms without seeing the airplane? Starsky, how lame-brained could you be?" Hutch was clearly irritated and wasn't trying to cover it.

"Where'd you get the money for this trip anyway? You've been secretive about that from the beginning. Now level with me."

"You don't need to know where it came from, only that I got it. It wasn't illegal or nothin' like that. Let's just say I had raised some cash for an investment that never happened. I had the cash on hand."

It hit Hutch like a ton of bricks. This was the money Starsky had scraped up to give Gillian when he tried to convince her to leave LA and open a boutique in Chicago. When Starsky found out Gillian was a high-priced hooker, he'd offered her a bribe to leave town before Hutch discovered the truth. Rather than accept the money, Gillian had convinced Starsky she was in love with Hutch and was going to sever her ties with Al Grossman once and for all. This had led to her murder.

Hutch knew Starsky was carrying around a whole load of guilt, blaming himself for not being there to protect her. But Hutch also knew Gillian's fate had been sealed long before he met her—when she hired on as one of Grossman's girls. So, this was Starsky's way of trying to ease Hutch's pain, as well as his own. Hutch knew this trip was more than a vacation to Starsky; it was a peace offering...an apology...a penance...Still, Hutch was astounded at what Starsky had done.

"You're talking about the eighteen hundred dollars you had saved? My God, Starsk, I can't believe you paid eighteen hundred dollars for us to fly on this hunk of junk!"

"Well, not all of it went for the charter, Hutch. There were other expenses. You'll see; it was money well-spent. Now, stop yellin' at me and help me get our gear outta the car."

Starsky popped the trunk lid on the red Torino where a treasure-trove of spanking new fishing gear was stored: fly-rods, wading boots, nets for scooping up their catch and camouflage vests sporting a variety of hooks, tackles and shiny lures and spinners that glittered when the sun touched them. There were even two small wicker fish baskets for carrying their catch.

Starsky reached into the trunk and plucked out a fishing cap with, "You Should See the One that Got Away!" printed across the front in bold red letters, and plopped it onto Hutch's head, crushing his blond hair down over his forehead. Then he stepped back and gave a thumbs up sign to show his approval.

Wearing the goofy hat, Hutch stood there as Starsky dug further back into the trunk and retrieved two brightly colored sleeping bags, a lantern, two back-packs, and

two canteens. Hutch had thought their two duffel bags, hastily tossed in the back seat were their only luggage.

Hutch was speechless. He turned to look at his partner and found Starsky grinning from ear to ear, apparently waiting for Hutch to show a little enthusiasm. Hutch knew his friend had no clue what he was doing when he bought all this gear, and obviously had given no thought as to how they were going to carry it as they hiked the forest and streams in search of the “big catch”. The humor of the situation suddenly struck him. He couldn’t help himself—it first began as a chuckle, then grew louder and louder until he was hooting with laughter.

“What? What? Come on, Hutch, what’s so funny?”



From the outset, it seemed impossible that all the junk Starsky had bought could be crowded into the cabin of the small Cessna; but somehow, it was. The take-off went smoothly enough, though Hutch had his doubts as he listened to the overworked engine sputtering during the lift off. Starsky seemed to be having a ball, not in the least bit concerned about such things.

“Say, where you dudes from?” Carl asked over his shoulder. A small 8-track tape player was in the front of the cockpit next to the pilot. Starsky leaned forward a little to speak above Gracie Slick and the Jefferson Airplane who were belting out “White Rabbit,” a vintage hit from Carl’s hippie days.

“LA,” Starsky shouted back.

“Oh, yeah? Whatdaya do there?”

Hutch looked over at his partner, gesturing with his eyes (*here we go again*).

The corner of Starsky’s lip quirked into a wicked little smile. “Cops—we’re two bad-ass cops in LA.” *Here comes the reaction, Hutch.*

“Whoa...faaar out, dudes.”

No smart-aleck comeback? This had to be a first. Starsky & Hutch exchanged a look of surprise.

“Cops that fish...imagine that, man...imagine that,” was the pilot’s only reply.



End of Chapter One