

“Desperate Measures”

By *TibbieB*

Chapter Two

Bracken slammed the hood shut on the broken-down Chevy, cursing it for dying on him, cursing himself for not having a back-up plan, and cursing God and Life because nothing ever seemed to go his way. What kind of rotten luck could hit him next? He'd made a clean get away with a cool half million in unmarked bills, and now he was stuck in the middle of the damn woods and no damn way out!

He knew, by now they were looking for him. Shooting that guard at the bank had dashed any hopes he may have had of getting off with a short jail sentence if he was caught. No, he was on the run, and there was no turning back. He knew one thing for certain—he wouldn't go back to prison. Never. He'd find a way out of here, or die trying. Most likely the cops had an APB out on him. He didn't know if they got the tag number, but he was fairly certain they had a good description of the silver '67 Malibu, and at least a general description of him.

Bracken decided to roll the car down the embankment and camouflage it with pine boughs. He'd travel parallel to the road, but stay under the cover of the trees' canopy. Maybe then, they wouldn't spot him by helicopter. Not a great plan, but the only one he had at the moment.

Pushing the dead car from the road to the edge of the ravine proved to be more difficult than he'd expected. But once it started rolling and gained momentum, he just stepped back and let gravity finish the job. Sweaty and hotter than hell itself, Bracken dropped down against the cool trunk of a tree to catch his breath before trying to hide the getaway car.

All he had retrieved from the car before it plunged into the ravine was the backpack stuffed full of stolen cash, his jacket, a flashlight, and of course, the gun. He couldn't forget the gun, along with several rounds of ammo. No water, no food—not even a candy bar. So much for a well-thought-out heist.



Starsky and Hutch were worried. The thunderstorm had come out of nowhere. At first, Carl had told them, 'no big deal.' But in a short while, the flight went from bumpy, to a wild roller coaster ride, with lightning popping like the Fourth of July in every direction. Hutch looked over at his partner and noticed Starsk was a little green around the mouth.

“Ummm, Carl, you wanna give us a progress report back here?” Starsky asked, “I mean, I think my partner here is...ummm...a little nervous...” Hutch rolled his eyes. Just like Starsk to pretend HE was the nervous one.

“Chill out dude, everything's under control—I jus—” The rest of Carl's words were lost in the loud explosion as a bolt of lightning struck the right propeller, causing fire to shoot out from it in all directions.

“Oh, shit, man, this ain’t good!” he shouted above the noise of the sputtering prop as it burst into a full-fledged fire.

Starsky and Hutch looked at one another, seeking some reassurance from each other. “Talk to us, Carl,” Hutch shouted. “Are we going down?”

“May-day, may-day, this is flight K343 out of LA, do you copy? I repeat may-day, may-day, this is Carl Parks out of LA. We’ve been struck by lightning and are losing altitude fast, man. We’re somewhere over the Klamath National Forest, but my instruments are fried. Cannot, I repeat, cannot give coordinates...may-day, may-day...”

“Hutch,” Starsky’s hand clamped around Hutch’s forearm like a vice. “I’m sorry, partner. This whole trip was my idea. Now we’re probably gonna die in this piece of junk.” In spite of the seriousness of their situation, Starsky was amused that Hutch still had the awful fishing cap pulled down over his head.

Hutch was scared too, but tried to reassure Starsky. “Come on, Starsk, you know we’ve been in worse predicaments. And don’t try to take all the blame. You know, I could always have said no to this trip. You were just trying to help me.”

“You dudes better make sure your seatbelts are buckled. I’m trying to keep her in the air till I can find a clearing; but visibility is zero, man. If we go down in these trees, we’re in big trouble.” The pilot was struggling with the rudder, trying to level out the plane’s descent.

Starsky reached to the front of the cockpit and grabbed the radio mic, intending to send out the may-day again. Carl stopped him short. “No use, dude. Radio’s not working. I don’t believe anyone heard me the first time.”

The fire from the propeller was quickly climbing up the wing toward the cabin. Only the rain, coming down in torrential sheets, was slowing its approach. But considering how small the craft was it didn’t have far to travel anyway.

“Listen dudes, I’ve turned on the transponder, the homing beacon; so when we crash, even if we’re unconscious, somebody may be able to locate us from that.” Carl’s voice was almost drowned out by the high-pitch whine from the fast descent of the aircraft now.

“.....emerg.... provis....under....first aid...blanke....” They were only catching a syllable here and there above the deafening whine.

“Hutch,” Starsky reached out and gripped his partner’s hand tightly. “You’ve been the best friend a guy could ever ask for.” His voice was thick with emotion.

“Same here, buddy. And you’ve been the brother I never had.” He squeezed his partner’s hand as if to shake it for one last time. “We’re gonna make it...”

“Yeah, right...me and thee...” were the last words Starsky spoke before they were enveloped by the thunderous roar and the shrieking of tearing metal.



Bracken crouched beneath a stone overhang, trying to get out of the rain that was now coming down in sheets. His main concern was keeping the money dry.

Then he heard it, coming from somewhere overhead. First, just a hum; then a high-pitched whine, growing closer and louder by the second. Looking toward the sky, Bracken couldn’t see anything for the trees, a thick, low-hanging ceiling over the dark forest. Whatever it was, it was big.

When he heard the explosion, he first thought it was thunder. Just as quickly, it dawned on him—an airplane going down. Bracken stood up and tried to get a fix on the direction of the sound. He could tell it was northeast of him, but the distance was impossible to guess. He turned his head to the side, listening. Another loud boom—but not as loud as the first.

Maybe a search plane, or a chopper...looking for me. Maybe not. Maybe just some poor slob caught in the storm. Hey, there may be supplies on board. Even better, maybe if there ain't too much damage, it could fly me outta this hell-hole!

Bracken chuckled to himself. His experience in the coast guard, both as a mechanic and piloting sea planes may come in handy after all. He'd wait a little while and see if the rain let up. They weren't going anywhere—and he didn't want to get his money wet.



Icy cold needles, striking his face. *Where am I...why am I so wet and cold?* Gradually, Starsky struggled toward consciousness. *So cold...Hutch?*

Starsky's eyes slowly opened, still not registering where he was...what was going on. *My head, God, my head hurts! Hutch? Where's Hutch?*

Starsky raised his hand to his throbbing head, feeling disoriented and groggy, his mind trying to focus, but unable to make sense of what was happening. As the cold raindrops kept pelting his face, reality began seeping back into his brain. Starsky slowly sat up then waited a moment for the dizziness to subside.

Finally, the realization hit him. The airplane had crashed; they had gone down in the woods. *HUTCH! Oh my God, where's Hutch!*

Starsky scrambled to his knees and looked around him in every direction for some sign of his partner. His heart pounding in his chest, Starsky's eyes fell on the twisted, charred remains of the airplane. Plumes of dark smoke were twirling upward from the debris.

Oh God, no, please—! Starsky crawled toward the wreckage, afraid of what he would find, but knowing if Hutch had survived, he needed help now. No time to fall apart.

When Starsky reached the plane, he saw the front part of the cockpit was missing, and with it—Carl. He scrambled to where the passenger cabin should be, and found the seat Hutch had been sitting in lying on the other side of the wreckage. No Hutch.

His head pounding now, running a close second only to his heartbeat, Starsky wasn't even aware of the warm, sticky blood running down his face from the head wound, the source of the throbbing pain.

Like a man possessed, Starsky started tearing away the twisted metal and debris around the fuselage of the airplane, searching, frantically, disregarding the heat emanating from many of the pieces.

Please Hutch, please be okay.

As the falling rain cooled the wreckage, steam rose, causing an eerie, fog-like atmosphere.

“Hutch! Are you here? Answer me!”

Starsky saw a hand, barely visible, near the nose of the craft. He grabbed the section of fiberglass concealing the body and threw it to one side.

There, glaring back at him with glassy, expressionless eyes was Carl Parks. *Poor Carl...* Even before bending down to check for a pulse, Starsky knew there was nothing he could do. Carl had not survived the impact. This only terrified Starsky more.

Get a grip, Starsky; you can't help Hutch if you lose it.

Starsky took several deep breaths, trying to calm himself, then began systematically searching through all the debris for Hutch.

Then he spotted it—the bold red letters, ‘the One that Got Away’, lying about twenty feet from the rear of the aircraft. Beside it was one of the brightly colored sleeping bags, half covered by what appeared to be a fragment of the tail section.

Starsky half-ran, half-stumbled toward the rubble, praying in his mind that he would find Hutch alive, in one piece... “Hutch! Hutch! Answer me!” he shouted as he ran.



End of Chapter Two