

## GUARDIAN II

### *The Luck of the Draw* by TibbieB

#### *Chapter 10*

“Wake up, Jenny. Time to call your old man.” Bowman stood above the sleeping girl, prodding her with his foot. Slowly she came awake, reluctant to abandon the dream world in which she’d never seen or heard of Stan Bowman.

“I said wake up! Don’t you want to talk to your *Daddy*?”

Jenny bolted upright. The mere thought of hearing her father’s voice again was all the motivation she needed to come fully awake.

“It’s almost daylight. We have to make that call now so we won’t be seen.” He yanked the blurry-eyed teen to her feet roughly. “Now you listen to me, and listen good. You’re going to go with me to a phone booth, I’ll call your father, and then I’ll put you on the phone. You tell your old man to pay the ransom or I’ll kill you.” Suddenly Bowman grabbed a shock of the girl’s hair and jerked her face close to his. “Do you understand?”

Nervously, Jenny tried to nod yes, but his grip was too tight. Tears gathered in the corners of her eyes from the pain of his hand wound tightly in her hair. “Answer me! Do you understand!”

“Yes, oh yes...please...” The sob caught in her throat as she tried to assure him she’d follow his instructions.

Afraid to take the car out where it might be recognized, Stan had finally decided they should walk to the nearest phone booth. Unfortunately, that meant going several blocks out in the open; risky, but the only sensible alternative.

Bowman handcuffed the frightened girl’s wrist to his own and headed out while the sun was still an hour from rising. Hoping there would be fewer people milling about, he gave Jenny a stern warning of what would happen if she tried to escape.

“If you don’t keep your mouth shut and do as I tell you, well...I’ll give you more of what you got yesterday.” At the fearful look in the girl’s eyes, an ugly sneer contorted his deceptively handsome face. Frightened beyond reason, Jenny quickly abandoned the vague plan to escape once they were out on the street.

Bowman believed in precise planning; he would collect the money, rid himself of Reynolds and the kid, then make a clean getaway. It would entail luring Reynolds into the abandoned building at the

last possible minute before the homemade bomb went off. Making his own escape would be tricky, but he felt confident he could pull it off and be clear of the area before the dynamite exploded.

Sore from the abuse her body had taken over the past forty-eight hours, Jenny struggled to keep up as he dragged her behind him down the dark sidewalk leading away from the deserted buildings. Though she couldn't see it, she knew there a gun clasped in his hand, concealed in his jacket pocket.

After walking five blocks, Bowman spotted a phone booth. Picking up the pace, he gave Jenny a swift jerk, urging her on. "Move it! What—you got lead in your seat? Move it!"

Once they reached the booth, Bowman stepped inside and used his free hand to dial the Reynolds estate. Before he could finish, something hit the side of the phone booth. At first he thought the girl was trying to escape, then turned and saw a large black man standing just outside the booth. He wore a flashy, white, John Travolta-type suit, complete down to the flared-leg pants. Tightly molding his obese body, the suit made him a caricature of the image he was going for. Beneath the white jacket he wore a royal-purple shirt, the oversized collar open, revealing at least six gold chains of variable sizes dangling around his bloated neck. Likewise, each of his chunky fingers was adorned with rings.

"Hey, what the hell you doin in that booth, man! I got an important call comin' in there. Get the hell out'a there! You hear me?" The big man strutted around the booth and yanked the door open. Jenny shrank back as far as the handcuff would allow.

"What's your problem, honky? You deaf?" Once the man was close enough to get a good look at Jenny, he saw she was probably no more than fourteen or fifteen years old. Her bruised face and disheveled appearance made it plain something wasn't right. When he spotted the handcuffs he blurted out, "Hey man, what is this? You her pimp? I don't need no sicko around here sellin' no kid. Get the hell out'a here! I got a big score goin' down!"

Stan threw the door open and shoved the pistol under the intruder's chin. "Don't make me use this, man. How bout you take a hike."

The black man stepped back, holding his hands up before him. "Okay man, be cool. I just got a business to think about. Be cool."

"I'm only going to say this once. Get the hell out of here!"

Believing Bowman was crazy enough to shoot him with very little provocation, the black man backed away slowly, then walked as fast as his pride would allow, until he was out of Bowman's sight.



Hutch's arm flung out from the bed, searching for the ringing telephone. "Hutchinson," he mumbled into the receiver.

"Hutch, Dobby here. He called. I want you and Starsky here on the double. Got it?"

“Yeah, sure.” The words brought Hutch suddenly wide awake. “Give us thirty minutes.” He hung up the phone and dialed Starsky, saying he’d be ready in ten minutes.

When the Torino screeched to a halt in front of Hutch’s place, he was already waiting by the curb. It was no surprise that Sam was sitting in the passenger seat, and was none too thrilled about being relegated to the back seat when Hutch got in. Even so, Sam magnanimously dropped his head over the seat and licked Hutch’s ear.

“Hey, big guy. Good morning to you too.” Hutch had been in a rotten mood when Dobby woke him after only a couple hours sleep, but Sam’s good-natured greeting inexplicably improved his disposition.

“Really think he should come along, Starsk? Dobby sounded pretty short on the phone.”

“He’ll wait in the car. It’s not too warm out and I hated to leave him alone after being away from him the last few days.”

Hutch glanced over at his partner with a wry smile on his face. He still found it astonishing that a ‘tough guy’ like his partner could have a heart of gold buried under that rough exterior. This abandoned, abused animal was a prime example of the Starsky he knew. You couldn’t help but love a guy like that. He was a contradiction, never what he seemed to be. Hutch knew, even when he couldn’t count on anything else, he could count on Starsky to do what was right. If that meant caring about a big, ugly mutt that no one else gave a damn about, then that’s what he’d do. If it meant laying his life down for his partner...well, he’d do that in a heartbeat. He’d done it too many times already for Hutch to ever doubt it for a minute.

Starsky’s voice brought him back to the present. “Besides, if it looks like we’re gonna have to stay there awhile, I’ll take him back home and drop him off.”

Hutch knew Sam had missed them. Heck, they’d missed him. Giving Sam over to Starsky’s care because of the landlady’s aversion to dogs had been difficult, to say the least. It would be worth the little extra effort to keep Big Dog with them for the day.

Starsky looked in the rear view mirror at Sam sitting there like the king of the mountain. “Hutch, look at that.”

“What?”

“Look at Sam. He’s smilin’.”

“Starsky, dogs don’t smile.”

“Well, he is. Take a look, will ya?”

Hutch turned and stared at the big dog proudly observing the world from his favorite vantage point; and secretly, he agreed Sam looked deliriously happy.

“What did I tell ya? Huh? He’s smilin’.”

“Dogs don’t smile. I know what I’m talking about. I’ve been around dogs since I was a kid. They can’t smile. They don’t have lips.”

“What are ya talkin’ about? Don’t have lips?” Starsky looked at Hutch like he’d lost his mind.

“They’re not like humans, Starsk. They don’t have lips,” Hutch answered confidently. Since the chinchilla fiasco, Starsky hadn’t been all that sure of himself when it came to his knowledge of the animal kingdom.

He faltered for a split second then argued with absolute confidence, “What do you mean they don’t have lips? What do ya think that is outlining his mouth? If you weren’t so pig-headed, you’d admit that I’m right and that Sam is smilin’.”

“Starsky, just listen to yourself. For Pete Sake, it’s five a.m. and you’re sitting here trying to convince me dogs have lips.” Hutch’s head fell back against the car seat, his eyes rolled heavenward.

“Look! Look now!” Starsky urged.

Hutch glanced around at the dog once more, and could almost see a hint of a smile himself. Fortunately before he had to concede the point, Starsky steered the Torino through the gates of the Reynolds estate.

The sun had just begun to streak the sky with muted shades of mauve and gold when they pulled into the driveway. Starsky produced a rawhide chew-bone from the pocket of his jacket and gave it to Sam to pass the time. The people inside the house were all grim-faced when the two detectives’ entered.

“What’ve you got for us, Cap?” Starsky asked without preamble.

“He let me talk to her,” Reynolds volunteered. “She sounded so frightened. Please, help me find her. Please—we’ve got to hurry before he hurts her.”

The terrified man’s voice trembled with anxiety. Starsky’s heart went out to Reynolds. He wished he could guarantee they’d find Jenny in time. Instead, he could only offer vague reassurances.

“We’ll do our best, sir. You have my word. Hutch and I will do everything we can to bring your daughter back safely.” Starsky’s calm words seemed to help Reynolds maintain his fragile composure.

Laying his hand on the man's shoulder, Hutch guided him toward the sofa so they could sit down. "What did he say, Mr. Reynolds? Can you remember anything that may help us find out where he's holding Jenny?"

"He wants two million dollars. He has given us until tomorrow morning. He wants me to personally deliver it."

"Where?"

"He didn't say," Dobey interrupted. "He'll call again tomorrow morning, one hour before the drop."

"Terrific." Starsky's voice dripped with disgust. "This guy's stringin' us along like a real pro."

"And he's doing it on purpose." Hutch spoke before he thought about the girl's father sitting beside him. He and Starsky had agreed Mr. Reynolds didn't need to know the details of what they'd found in Bowman's apartment.

"What do you mean? Have you found something?" Reynolds nervously looked back and forth at the two detectives.

"Uh...well..." Hutch stuttered.

"Only that the guy's been watching your family for awhile now," Starsky smoothly covered. "We found evidence that he was keeping track of your schedules and such." The answer was vague, but seemed to satisfy the overwrought father.

Dobey saw through the ploy and made a mental note to question his detectives in private later.

"Look, Mr. Reynolds, why don't you and Captain Dobey try to get some rest. You aren't going to hear from this man again before tomorrow morning, and you both look beat." Hutch's plea was well-founded. The last time he'd seen Dobey look this tired was when they'd pulled an all-nighter with Huggy, trying to figure out where Simon Marcus's cult was holding Starsky.

Martin Reynolds ran a hand over his tired face and considered Hutch's suggestion. "I suppose you're right. I'm just relieved to have heard my daughter's voice."

"I'm sure you are. Did she sound okay?" Hutch was almost afraid to ask the question, but realized he needed to know the answer.

"Frightened out of her mind; but she's alive. Right now, that's all that matters. She kept telling me that she was fine. I didn't believe her. She's an incredibly strong child though. Even when she was small, she wouldn't admit it when she was hurt or scared." Reynolds' voice almost cracked as his memory flitted back to a time when Jenny was small enough to sit on his knee. After a moment, he

suddenly seemed to realize where he was. “My banker will handle getting the ransom money together. He was alerted yesterday after I received the first note.”

Hutch reached out and patted the man’s shoulder lightly, wanting to offer comfort, but not knowing how. Dobby stepped forward and took control of the situation. “Hutchinson’s right, Martin. Let’s both take a break. I’m sure your wife would appreciate your company for awhile. I’d like to go home and shower, and see my kids before they take off for school.” Watching Reynolds suffer through the long night of uncertainty, had compelled Dobby to see that his own children were safe and sound.

His shoulders drooped from fatigue and worry, Mr. Reynolds excused himself and went toward the master bedroom to be with his wife. As soon as he was out of sight, Dobby turned to Starsky and Hutch.

“Okay, he’s gone. Now level with me.”

***End of Chapter 10***