

## GUARDIAN II

### *The Luck of the Draw*

by *TibbieB*

#### *Chapter 13*

Jenny lay curled in the fetal position in the far corner of the small storeroom, her quiet sobs barely audible. Hope of being reunited with her family seemed more remote than ever. The detestable, sick man holding her prisoner had promised she would be free soon, but Jenny was bright enough to reason that she could identify him; therefore, she was a liability. Once he had her father's money, she would be of no further value to him.

When she first heard the stirring outside the locked door, she instinctively withdrew deeper in the shadows beyond the single battery powered lantern. But when the doorknob rattled, she realized whoever was on the other side of the door didn't have a key. Someone was there alright, but it wasn't Bowman. Jenny scurried to the door and whispered loudly, "Who's there? Can you hear me? I need help...please."

"Jenny? Is that you?"

"Yes! Oh, yes! Please, whoever you are—please help me."

"Okay...it's okay. Just stay calm. I'm a police officer; my partner and I are here to take you home. Now, back away from the door. I'm going to pry it open. Don't worry, I'll have you out—" The detective's voice stopped mid-sentence. Jenny heard a dull thud as his knees buckled and he fell against the door, dashing her short-lived bid for freedom.



Starsky checked his wrist watch again. He'd finished searching the abandoned buildings on his side of the imaginary divide and had been back at the car for ten minutes. Either Hutch was doing a more thorough job, or he'd run into trouble. 'No heroics', Hutch had warned his partner. Now Starsky only hoped Hutch had followed his own directive.

"What do ya think, Big Dog?"

Sam, who had been sitting at attention next to Starsky, looked at him.

"Think Hutch is in trouble? Hmmm? Should we call in the Cavalry?"

The dog stood up, wagging his tail wildly, always enthusiastic for any suggestion from Starsky.

“I don’t know. Maybe we’re jumpin’ the gun. Maybe we ought to give him a little more time.” Starsky hopped up onto the hood of the Torino to wait, while Sam disappointedly sat back down and resumed his watch.



Hutch’s first sensation was a throbbing ache coming from the general vicinity of the angry looking lump on the back of his head. As his eyes opened and began adjusting to the dim light in the room, he saw an anxious, young, tear-streaked face peering down into his.

“Oh, thank God. I thought he’d killed you.” Jenny’s trembling fingers touched his cheek, assuring herself he was real. Hutch’s head lay nestled in her lap.

“Jenny?”

“Yes, I’m Jenny.”

“How long have I been out?”

“About half an hour, Detective Hutchinson.”

“How do you know my name? And where’s Bowman?”

“He took your badge and ID out of your pocket when he dragged you in here. I don’t know where he is now, but he was in a rage when he left. Does it hurt much?”

“Yeah. Yeah, right now my head feels like something out of an Excedrin commercial. Are you okay?” Hutch struggled to sit up despite still being a little woozy from the blow.

“I guess so,” Jenny answered quietly, averting her eyes as she spoke.

“Hey,” he said softly, lifting her chin so that her eyes were even with his, “did he hurt you?”

Large tears sprung to the corners of the cornflower blue eyes as she silently nodded yes. Hutch gently pulled her against his shoulder, comforting her as she wept. “It’ll be okay. My partner’s here; he’ll find us.”

Jenny pulled away and looked up at him. “Really? You think Stan won’t find him and hurt him too?”

Hutch felt his heartbeat quicken at the thought that Bowman may have already bushwhacked Starsky, perhaps even killed him. But he forced a reassuring smile as he answered. “No. Not Starsky. He’s pretty quick on his feet. Don’t worry about that.”

She smiled tentatively, wanting to believe Hutch, but afraid to get her hopes up again.

“That’s better,” he said. “Now, my friends call me Hutch. Okay? We are going to get out of here. But I need you to promise me that if I tell you to do something, you’ll follow my instructions to the T. Can you do that for me?”

She nodded agreeably. “Okay, Hutch. Do you have a plan? Is it one we can ‘take to the bank’?”

Hutch looked a little confused. “You know, like Baretta’s always saying?” she explained, a bit disappointed that an LA detective wasn’t hip enough to recognize the trademark words of her favorite TV hero.

“I’m working on a plan,” he assured her. “I just want to know I can count on you when the time comes.”

“Sure you can. And you can ‘take that to the bank’.” An impish smile lit her face.

Suddenly the door flew up and Stan Bowman stepped in, holding a gun in front of him. “So you’re awake.”

Hutch’s arm curled protectively around Jenny’s shoulders. “You’re not going to get away with this, Bowman.”

“How the hell do you know my name? I didn’t give my name to Reynolds.” Angry red splotches distorted the kidnapper’s handsome face.

“We’ve known it since the beginning,” Hutch bluffed. “The whole LA police force is looking for you. Let us go now, and I’ll ask the DA to go easy on you.”

“Damn! Everything is spoiled!” Bowman snarled. He began pacing back and forth like a caged tiger. “I *want* that money! I *deserve* it; Reynolds owes me!”

Jenny drew closer to Hutch, fearing Bowman’s next move. She hadn’t seen him this angry before, and didn’t want to be in his direct path when he exploded.

“It’s too late for that,” Hutch said with false bravado. “Right now you’re facing kidnapping charges. Let us go and it won’t become murder. Harm this child and you’ll never see the outside of a penitentiary again.”

Bowman darted forward, sticking the gun against Hutch’s forehead. “What gives you the right to tell me what to do? You don’t know me—you don’t know anything about me or what her father did to me!”

Hutch held his voice steady, knowing better than to allow his fear to show. “I know if you kill a kid and a cop, your days are numbered. That’s all I need to know.” Jenny held her breath as Stan Bowman cocked the pistol he held to Hutch’s head.

“You think you’re so smart. I’ll show you. I’ll show you all! And just for the record, this *child*, as you call her, was great in the sack. I like it when they fight.”

The only sign of Hutch’s seething anger was the twitch in his left cheek as his jaw tightened. Silently, he vowed to see this piece of garbage put away for the rest of his life. At his side, he felt the girl physically flinch from Bowman’s hateful words.

“The fact is, detective, this building, all of the buildings along this street have been wire for demolition. Convenient, I must say. All they need to go up like a Fourth of July display is a little dynamite—which I’ve carefully supplied. My plan was to wait for the money, then blow up the whole damn block. If I can’t have what’s coming to me, then the fireworks show will happen just a little sooner.” He stepped back, still holding the cocked gun in front of him.

“I have no doubt you’ll get what’s coming to you, Bowman,” Hutch stated with cold, calculated directness.

“Murder’s going to be hard to prove if there aren’t any bodies. So don’t give me your line of bullshit, pig. You’re both already dead.”

Bowman focused his attention on the terrified girl. “All because your old man is too greedy to make good on his debts. Well, thanks for the ride, sweetheart. Maybe I should take you along with me for a little entertainment.”

“No! I’d rather die. Leave me alone!” Jenny cried. Hutch pushed the girl behind him, blocking her from Bowman’s view.

“Look, Bowman, there’s no reason to kill the girl,” Hutch tried to reason. “Why not let her go. She has nothing to do with whatever beef you think you have with her father.”

Stan Bowman laughed. “Don’t you get it, man? Even if I can’t get my hands on the old man’s money, I’ll have the satisfaction of knowing I made him pay with his most valuable possession. So don’t waste my time with your arguments.”

Bowman brandished the gun, motioning for them to turn around. “Face the wall, on your knees. Hands behind your heads.” Jenny began crying, but did as she was told. Hutch reached out and laid his hand upon her shoulder.

“Take it easy. Remember what I told you.” He smiled, and added, “And you can take it to the bank.”

Trying to be brave, Jenny sniffed back her tears and bent down on her knees.

“Hutchinson, where’s your car?”

Hutch hesitated. The last thing he wanted to do was lead Bowman back to his partner’s car. Conceivably, Starsky may be waiting there for Hutch to return, and would be a sitting duck for this nut case. At the very least, Sam would be there; and it wouldn’t mean a thing to Bowman to put a bullet in the dog’s brain so he could steal the car. Hutch had absolutely no doubt that Sam *would* put up a fight if a stranger tried to enter the car without one of the two cops along.

“I took a taxi,” Hutch said sarcastically.

“Don’t get smart with me, pig. I’d just as well shoot you as blow you up.”

Hutch decided the only thing to do was lie, and send him on a wild goose chase. “I parked about ten blocks away, due east. I didn’t want you to know I was here. Was afraid you’d see my car. It’s a beat-up, green Ford.”

“Damn! I thought I’d least get a decent set of wheels out this,” Bowman complained. He stepped forward and fished in Hutch’s pocket until he found a key ring with three keys, one of which was for a Ford. Then he leaned over, buried his nose in Jenny’s hair and breathed in the fragrance of her green apple shampoo. She immediately pulled away, disgusted and frightened by his touch.

“I guess this is so long, sweet cheeks. If you were a little more cooperative, I’d take you with me. But your old man will be on my trail for awhile, and you’ll just slow me down. Enjoy the fireworks, folks, it’ll all be over in a matter of minutes. Maybe you’ll be lucky and the explosion will take you out quickly.” Bowman laughed, very pleased with himself for coming up with a plan that would give him time to escape, dispose of the hostages, and do away with any condemning evidence he may have inadvertently left behind.

The door slammed loudly behind him. Hutch was surprised and disappointed when he also heard the lock tumblers click into place. He’d hoped he and Jenny would at least be able to escape the room, and if lucky, clear the building before the chain reaction began.

## ***Chapter 14***