

GUARDIAN II

The Luck of the Draw **by TibbieB**

Chapter 15

A cloud of murky dust filled the air around them. Jenny woke first. She found herself sheltered by Hutch's body, his weight making it difficult for her to breathe.

"Detective Hutchinson, can you hear me?" She tried to squirm out from under him, but found it impossible to move in any direction. "Detective Hutchinson...Hutch!"

Hutch woke slowly, his lungs sucking in air and dust, setting off a coughing fit. As soon as he caught his breath, he tried to move, but found they were boxed into a small space, framed on all sides by fallen timbers, concrete, and steel girders.

"Jenny? Are you okay?" Hutch blinked several times in the darkness, trying to clear his vision. Through the murky atmosphere he spied a small, weak beam of light; the battery lantern Bowman had left behind. Hutch realized any sudden movement could cause an avalanche of debris to come raining down on them.

"I think so, except I can't breathe. You're...you're... too heavy."

"Oh, sorry. We'll have to take it slow, but I'm going to try and move now. Cover your head and keep your eyes closed. I don't want you to get dust in them. Okay?"

"Okay," Jenny agreed.

Using his back and all the strength he could muster, Hutch slowly lifted up far enough to take his weight off her. He waited a couple seconds to be certain nothing would slide or fall on Jenny, then slowly lowered his body next to hers onto the cold, concrete floor. They both sighed with relief when the rubble didn't cave in and cover them.

"Okay now?"

"Yes, that's much better." They lay silently for a few seconds before Jenny spoke again.

"Hutch, where's your partner? You said he'd find us. Why hasn't he come?"

"He will," Hutch answered with confidence. "You don't know Starsk. He's as hardheaded as an old billy goat. He's probably trying to dig us out with his bare hands right now." A smile played at the corners Hutch's lips, as he saw Starsky in his mind's eye, doing exactly that.

“What if we run out of air? Or what if the building catches on fire?” Hutch heard the panic mounting in her voice.

“Don’t worry, the building’s not on fire. I’m sure the gas and electricity have been shut off. And we aren’t going to run out of air; there’re plenty of openings for the oxygen to come in.”

Hutch struggled to keep his voice light. He knew Starsky would come—if he could. But the thought that Bowman may have gotten to him worried Hutch more than he wanted to admit, even to himself. “Besides, I’m sure by now the fire department is on its way. Someone will find us soon. I promise.”

“I hope you’re right,” she said, sniffing back her tears. “And I hope Stan Bowman got blown up!” she added maliciously.

Hutch chuckled softly. “Yeah, me too.”

Looking about the dimly lit space, he could see that they only had about three feet of open area above them. So much for trying to dig their way out. They were blocked in from every direction. He just hoped Jenny wasn’t claustrophobic. He’d have to keep her mind occupied until someone found them.

“If he wasn’t blown up here in the building, the police probably have him in custody by now,” Hutch said.

“Soon as we get out of here, I’ll take you back to your folks. They’ve been pretty worried about you.” Hutch looked over at Jenny, but could only see the outline of her face in the shadows.

“I know. I’ve felt really bad about what they’ve been going through,” she said quietly. “When I get home, I’m going to try and make it up to them for all the times I’ve caused them trouble.”

Hutch’s voice was tender as he reassured her. “They talked about you a lot to my partner and me. Your Mom talked about what a good girl you are and how proud she is of you. Your Dad bragged about you being an honor student.”

“Daddy’s probably going to ground me for the rest of my life for getting into the car with a stranger,” she whispered. Hutch could almost make out the worried pucker of her brow. He reached over and lay a comforting hand on her arm.

“Jenny, I promise you, your Dad will be so happy to be able to put his arms around you and hug you, he won’t be mad at all. And your Mom...well, your Mom is a nice, gentle lady from all I saw. I know she won’t be angry either.”

“I hope you’re right,” she answered. A few seconds passed before either spoke again; then she turned her head toward Hutch.

“Tell me about your partner. Is he a good detective? Is he smart like Barretta?”

Hutch smiled in the darkness, wondering what Starsky would think about being compared to the TV cop. Was Starsky like Barretta? He mulled it over a moment before answering.

“I guess in some respects. Starsky’s a streetwise cop. He grew up in New York City, ran with a rough crowd in his earlier days. He’s not scared of anything. I guess that comes from having to fight his own battles his whole life.”

“What do you mean?”

“Well, his Dad was killed when Starsk was just a kid, and it kind of toughened him. I think that’s one reason he’s a good cop.”

“Have you known him a long time?” she asked.

“Since the academy.” Hutch was quiet for a second. “He’s the best friend I’ve ever had; and no one could ask for a better partner. Actually, we’re more like brothers than partners.”

Jenny could hear the affection in the detective’s voice. “He sounds really special,” she whispered

“We’ve been through a lot together,” he continued. “I can’t tell you how many times he’s gotten me out of a tight spot.” He knew by now Starsky must be going nuts. If the tables were turned, he’d be out of his mind with worry.

Jenny giggled. “Tighter than this?”

Hutch laughed too. “Yeah, believe it or not...tighter than this. That’s why I know he’s out there right now. He’ll move heaven and earth to find us.” Overhead, a beam creaked and groaned, showering small particles of drywall dust down on them.

“Hutch...”

“Hmmm?”

“Would it be alright if I hold your hand? It’s really scary in here.”

Hutch’s heart wrenched at the sound of her frightened voice. He could only imagine what she’d been through the last few days...deprivation, fear, uncertainty...rape... “Sure you can. Hang onto me, and we’ll get through this together.”



Starsky had to make a choice: hang back and help the firemen search the demolished buildings at their pace, or trust his instincts and follow Sam. Based on past experiences, he was usually better off going with his gut feeling. It wasn't a tough decision.

Sam, nose to the ground and tail in the air, relentlessly sniffed and snorted his way through the rubble of the first two buildings. It had been over an hour since the explosion, but debris was still shifting and sliding at the slightest touch. Starsky held his breath a couple of times, hoping he'd made the right choice, and that he and Sam weren't doing more harm than good.

"Hutch, can you hear me? Jenny! Answer me!" Starsky called out every few minutes, hoping one or both were conscious and would answer, narrowing down the search. The air was filled with the sounds of rescue workers and the loud speaker on the fire engine, blaring out orders and directions. It seemed as though every time Starsky looked around, another rescue vehicle of some sort was pulling onto the scene.

Still at the site of the second building, Sam stopped for a moment, then began turning in circles, sniffing the ground. After a few seconds he lifted his head high, sniffed the air, then looked at Starsky anxiously.

"What is it, boy? You got somethin'? Huh?" Starsky squatted down to eye level with the dog. Sam took advantage of the closeness and one more time, buried his nose in Hutch's jacket, which lay draped over Starsky's arm.

Picking up the scent again, the dog dropped his nose to the ground once more, and plowed toward the third building. To Starsky's surprise, Sam bypassed that building entirely, and went to the fourth, his tail wagging furiously now. He zigzagged back and forth, covering the same patch of ground several times.

Starsky watched in amazement until Sam came to a sudden halt, and began clawing at one of larger piles of rubble. After a few seconds the dog stopped, and looked up at him expectantly. When Starsky didn't react immediately, Sam barked at him impatiently, then resumed digging at a frenzied pitch, churning up dust and debris in all directions.

"Hey! Hey, you guys! Get over here! Quick! I think we got somethin'!"

End of Chapter 15