

## GUARDIAN II

### *The Luck of the Draw*

by TibbieB

#### *Chapter 3*

Hutch was sitting on the hood of his grungy Ford when Starsky screeched up to the curb the next morning. Hutch didn't seem to be out of sorts, in spite of Starsky running twenty minutes late and driving like a bat out of hell. He hopped off the car and reached for the door of the Torino as soon as it came to a halt. Starsky prepared himself for a lecture, knowing he deserved it.

Surprisingly, Hutch smiled as he settled into the passenger's seat. "Good morning, partner," he said cheerfully.

Starsky plunged headlong into an apology. "Listen, I know I'm late, but the stupid alarm clock never went off."

"Don't worry about it." Hutch brushed off the excuse before Starsky could finish. "Beautiful day, don't you think?"

"Yeah, beautiful." Starsky agreed. Caught off guard by the warm reception, he glanced away from the road and looked at his partner's happy face. *Only one explanation.* "Jackie... Pretty cool, huh?"

"Yeah, I guess you could say that." Hutch grinned from ear to ear.

"I hate to say 'I told you so', partner. But...I told you so."

"Yeah, for once you didn't screw up."

"Hey, is that anyway to talk to the guy who just fixed you up with a terrific lady?"

Hutch tipped his head to the side, conceding the point. "Okay, I'll admit it. I like her a lot. And I'm pretty sure the feeling was mutual."

Starsky's glanced at him again, considering his next words carefully. "Listen, Hutch. I think you should take it slow. I mean, I'm glad you two hit it off, but there's somethin' you should know."

Instantly, Hutch's expression turned apprehensive. After what had happened with Gillian, the two friends had vowed to never again keep secrets from one another about the people with whom they were involved.

“Jackie’s just come out of a bad relationship. She was with the guy four years, and she’s kind of vulnerable right now. Gina said she doesn’t think Jackie’s ready for anything serious.” Starsky glanced at Hutch for his reaction before continuing. “All I’m sayin’ is—take it easy, okay? I don’t wanna see either one of ya hurt again.”

Hutch smiled. “Oh. You had me worried for a minute there. She told me about that last night.” He smiled at Starsky. “Don’t you see? That’s the beauty of it. We’ve just met, and already she feels safe enough to open up and be totally honest.”

Starsky nodded. “Got to admit, it’s a good sign.”

“Must be my charming personality that won her over,” Hutch said tongue-n-cheek.

“Must be.” Starsky smirked. “Sure not your good looks or your sense of modesty.” Constantly amazed at his partner’s uncanny success with the ladies, Starsky shook his head and smiled. It didn’t seem to require any effort on Hutch’s part at all.

Starsky whipped the Torino into the parking lot of a McDonald’s. “I don’t know about you, but I need at least three more cups of coffee before we get down to business at the firin’ range.”



Stan Bowman sat in the stolen car outside Parkview Junior High. He checked his watch for the umpteenth time. Two fifty-five. The kids should start coming out any minute now. The anticipation building, Bowman fidgeted with the key chain dangling from the ignition. *Maybe this wasn’t such a good idea*, he thought.

After spending three days watching Martin Reynolds’ home—learning his routine, spying on his family—Bowman had decided the quickest way to get what he wanted was to hit Reynolds where he was most vulnerable. His beautiful fourteen year old daughter, Jenny was obviously the apple of her father’s eye. After watching the family chauffeur drive the girl to school and back every day in the family’s late model Mercedes, an idea had taken root.

So earlier that morning Bowman followed the chauffeur after he dropped Jenny off. The man went straight to a club over on Central that was openly known as a front for a numbers racket. Three hours later, he drove to a swanky neighborhood for a rendezvous with a rich socialite who apparently enjoyed naughty little trysts with the hired help.

Bowman waited, giving them time to hit the sack, then he hot-wired the Mercedes and casually drove away without anyone noticing. He smiled confidently as the picture-perfect neighborhood became only a small dot in the rearview mirror.

It would take hours for the chauffeur to gather enough courage to report the car stolen. Without a doubt, he’d be reluctant to admit where he was and what he’d been doing when the thief made his getaway, and would put off as long as possible notifying his boss or the authorities. Just to be safe,

Bowman switched out the license tag as soon as he got home. Then he lay low, keeping the car out of sight until time to be back at the school house.



As Jenny approached the car and spotted the stranger, she was apprehensive. Bowman stood leaning against the back door of the Mercedes. She stopped about three feet from the automobile. “Who are you? Where’s Thompson?”

“My name’s Stan. Thompson wasn’t feeling well. I work for your father, and he asked me to pick you up.” Bowman hoped he sounded nonchalant about the change in routine. He smiled at the girl, opening the car door, but not pushing too hard to convince her.

“Look, if you’re not comfortable coming with me, just go inside and call your dad. He’ll tell you.” Bowman reached into his pocket, retrieved a dime, then stepped forward and handed it to the teen. “I don’t mind waiting. I work in the warehouse, and frankly, this is a real nice break for me. Take all the time you want.”

His suggestion relieved her suspicions about the substitute driver. Surely if he hadn’t been sent by her father, he wouldn’t be encouraging her to call. And besides, he had such a nice face. In fact, he was quite good-looking, wearing his dark brown hair fashionably long, dressed in clean, carefully pressed trousers and a navy and green plaid shirt. Not exactly normal uniform for a chauffeur, but he *did* say he worked at the warehouse.

“That’s okay,” she said at length. He held the door open and she willingly climbed into the back seat. Bowman pulled away from the curb and drove in the direction of the Reynolds Estate.

Stan looked into the rear view mirror at the pretty face with large, expressive blue eyes framed by long, curling lashes. Her bouncy, naturally blond hair was cut in the popular Farrah Fawcett style. Even the navy and white school uniform didn’t detract from her good looks. *Fourteen going on twenty*, he thought. Bowman gloated to himself that there may be perks to this job he hadn’t considered. Yes, there was more to take into consideration here than just the ransom.

When he took a sudden left turn off the normal route, Jenny sat forward and looked around. “Excuse me. Where are we going? This isn’t the way home.”

“Just have to run a couple errands for your Dad. Don’t worry; he’ll let your mother know you’ll be a little late.”

Bowman glanced at the rearview mirror and made eye contact with the girl, hoping she was convinced. Then slowly, she sat back, seeming to accept his explanation—at least for the moment. The next turn took them into a more secluded, rundown section of the city. She sat forward again.

“Mister...uh...Stan, I think maybe you’d better take me home now, and run Daddy’s errands after you drop me off. I have to study for a biology test.” Despite her best efforts, Jenny’s voice quivered as she spoke.

“Relax. We’ll only be a few minutes.” He steered the automobile down a litter-strewn, vacant back alley. He’d sought out this area—isolated, abandoned buildings—all scheduled to be torn down soon to make way for government-subsidized housing. The area had been cleared out weeks ago. Warning signs were posted every few hundred feet to keep people out of the area; even the vagrants were gone.

Stan decided he’d found the perfect hiding place. If things went as he planned, he would not only come out of this rich, but he’d use Jenny to lure her father to his death. The girl would have to be killed too; he couldn’t risk her identifying him. Glancing at the rear view mirror again, he felt a pleasurable tightening in his groin. With her ultimate fate decided, there was no reason not to have a little fun.

“I want to go home now!” she insisted firmly.

Bowman pressed a button on the steering column, automatically locking the vehicle’s doors. He was excited by the look of alarm that sprang to the blue eyes as she began to comprehend what was happening. “Sit back and shut up!” he snapped, dropping all pretenses.

“No! Let me out now!”

Bowman brought the car to a screeching halt, turned, and slapped the girl hard across the face with the back of his hand. Shocked, she yelped as the burning sting of the blow brought tears to her eyes. She drew back, her hand covering to her cheek protectively.

“NOW, do you understand? Another word, and I’ll get out of this car and beat the living hell out of you! And don’t think I won’t. In fact, I really enjoyed that. Maybe I’ll beat the hell out of you just for the fun of it. So shut your damn mouth now!

An eerie hush fell over the Mercedes, except for the quiet sobbing of the terrified girl.

“That’s better,” he said more calmly. “You do what I tell you and in a couple of days I’ll let you go running back to your precious ‘daddy’.” As he talked his voice became louder. “I just want what’s rightfully MINE. And you’re my meal ticket. Don’t give me any trouble and this’ll all be over soon.”

Bowman slammed the car into reverse and backed through the open garage door of what had once been a high rise apartment building. Turning off the engine, he got out and lowered the large, rolling door. He unlocked the car door and yanked the frightened girl out. Twisting her arm behind her back, Bowman pushed her ahead of him toward the stairwell to the basement.

“Nobody can hear you, so don’t waste your breath screaming. The cops cleared everyone out two weeks ago.” The panic-stricken girl stumbled, and he jerked her back to her feet.

“If you try to escape, I’ll find you. I know every nook and cranny of this place. And you don’t even want to know what I’ll do to you then.”

Jenny said nothing. The tears silently streaming down her face, she allowed herself to be commandeered down the dingy, smelly stairwell which reeked of mildew and urine. Never having been exposed to anything so vile in her young, pampered life, Jenny was almost paralyzed by the fear of what was to come.

*End of Chapter Three*