

GUARDIAN II

The Luck of the Draw by TibbieB

Chapter 7

Jenny opened her eyes slowly; the left one was swollen almost shut from the blow she'd had been dealt the night before while trying to fight off Bowman. She had no idea how long she'd been here. The room had no windows; no opening that would allow her to see the rising and setting sun.

Her mind was numb. Fear and pain were the only emotions she felt now. Her naiveté stripped away, she realized that mostly likely, she'd never see her parents again.

Unable to block out the ferocity of the assault, silent tears coursed down Jenny's cheeks. This person didn't care about her father's money. It was more personal than that. She'd begged for mercy, but he'd been unaffected. Even the sex seemed secondary; revenge—that's what it had been all about. But why? Her father was a kind man, a fair man. She didn't remember having ever heard a derogatory word about him from others. It was all so confusing!

Jenny whimpered when she tried sit up, her body aching from the movement. The fourteen-year-old had never known that such brutality existed. She berated herself for having believed that her father had sent this man. Since she was a small child, she'd been warned to never get into an automobile with a stranger. But that *was* her father's car, and he'd seemed so open and willing for her to check out his story.

At the sound of a key turning in the lock, she cringed against the wall. "*Oh God, please!*"

Stan Bowman opened the door, balancing a tray in one hand, holding a gun in the other. He didn't really need a weapon. What little fight she had, vanished when he raped her. Bowman felt a sudden surge of power, seeing the look of sheer terror on her face. Her eyes reminded him of an animal trapped in the headlights of an oncoming automobile; knowing what was about to happen, but powerless to prevent it.

"I brought you something to eat." He set the tray down in front of her. "I'm going to untie your hands now. No fast moves, or I'll have to hurt you again."

Jenny drew back, frightened by the threat. She had no desire to eat, but realized she had to keep up her strength if she had any hope at of all of escaping this nightmare.

Bowman cautiously untied her hands, noticing that the ropes had left red welts on the sensitive skin. "After you eat, we're going to make a phone call to your old man. I'll let you talk to him. You'd like that, wouldn't you?"

Jenny slowly nodded yes, afraid to speak, not trusting her voice to say the words without breaking.

“I thought so.” He smiled benevolently, his voice smooth as silk. “I’ll tell you exactly what to say. And you’d better not try anything cute or I’ll have to kill you. I won’t blink an eye either. I’ll cut your throat and you’ll bleed to death before the cops can get here.” He spoke slowly and deliberately, a sadistic smile twisting his otherwise handsome features. “Do you understand?”

Again, the frightened girl nodded yes. Bowman stretched out his hand to gently touch the angry bruise below Jenny’s eye, but she drew back as if she’d been jabbed with a hot poker. “I won’t hurt you,” he cooed.

She scrunched back further into the corner. “Okay. I’ll leave you alone to eat your meal. It’ll be dark soon. Then we’ll make the call.”



Starsky was quiet during the drive to Reynolds’ home. Hutch looked over at his partner, trying to read what was on his mind. It was clear that something was bugging him. Sometimes when he was quiet like this, Hutch would let it go—give him the solitude to work through whatever was eating away at him. But sometimes, it was best to bring it out into the open.

“Starsk, you wanna tell me what’s bothering you?”

Starsky glanced over at his friend, then looked back at the road. He couldn’t hide anything from Hutch. Hell, why even try? He knew better; two sides of the same coin. “Just thinkin’ about Mr. Reynolds and the hell he’s goin’ through. Hutch, why do the bad guys always pick on the innocent? For Christ’s sake, she’s just a kid, not even old enough to be datin’ yet.”

“I don’t know, Starsk.” Hutch answered quietly. “I just know it’s our job to try and save her life. And sometimes, no matter what we do, it just isn’t enough. Maybe we’ll get lucky. But you know as well as I do, she stands less than a fifty/fifty chance of ever coming home. We have to go into this realistically.”

“Yeah, I know.” Starsky sighed and gazed straight ahead.

“What else?” Hutch gently prodded. “We’ve seen a dozens of cases like this. Why does this one seem to have you more...well...disturbed?”

Starsky considered not answering. It was hard to put into words, especially without coming across all soapy. The silence stretched between them for endless seconds before he spoke again.

“It’s just, well...ever since Forest’s goons kidnapped you and shot you up with heroin, I know what it feels like. I mean, I know what it’s like for the family...the not knowin’. All that time you were

missin'...I didn't know where you were, didn't even know if you were dead or alive. It was...it was terrible."

Hutch closed his eyes momentarily, remembering the pain and fear of those endless days, hovering between reality and a drug-induced world in which he had no control. If it hadn't been for Starsky, he may never have been able to find his way back to sanity. He reached over the short distance between them and laid his hand on his partner's shoulder.

"Starsk, I know too. Don't forget I went through the same thing when Simon Marcus snatched you. It's something no one should have to experience."

Starsky swallowed hard, then looked deep into the clear, blue eyes of his friend and saw his own pain mirrored in them. "Yeah...I guess you do."

A silence fell over the car for the rest of the drive, each contemplating the ordeal that lay ahead. Finally the Torino drove through the twelve-foot high wrought iron gates and pulled into the driveway of a massive Tudor style home.

No police cars were in sight; Dobby had made certain of that. The team that was busy inside setting up the wire-tap and a command post, had arrived earlier in a plumber's truck; a precaution to keep from tipping off the kidnapers if they had the house under surveillance

"It's show time," Starsky said as they walked to the door and rang the bell.

The door swung open almost immediately answered by a short, portly man dressed in a dark suit. He had a distinguished look about him, and whether he came by it naturally, or was the result of many years' service as a butler, was unclear. "May I help you, gentlemen?" he droned.

Both detectives flipped open their badge covers as inconspicuously as possible to avoid drawing the attention of anyone who may be spying on the house. The man quickly stepped aside and allowed them to enter without further introduction or conversation. "This way please." He turned and walked briskly toward the library, assuming they would follow.

Starsky looked around the foyer and at the spiral staircase leading down from the two floors above them. Heavy, ornate carvings embellished the banisters, giving the structure an even more massive appearance than it actually was. The butler's shoes made a tapping noise as he led them from the marble foyer and down the hall, until reaching the thick, piled carpet that lead off into each of the many rooms.

He opened the door to the library and stepped back. There was a hubbub of activity underway as the two detectives entered the room. Three men were busy hooking up cameras and tape recorders in one area of the room, while another seemed to be calibrating various monitors and meters.

Captain Dobby and Mr. Reynolds sat on the sofa, near the telephone. Reynolds looked at his watch every few seconds, his hand noticeably trembling. Dobby appeared to be deeply absorbed in

conversation with the man sitting directly across from him. He was a middle-aged, dapper fellow, dressed in a black suit and wing-tip shoes that were polished so bright you could see your reflection in them. Two more men, wearing navy colored jackets bearing the printed acronym, “FBI,” were talking in hushed tones on telephones.

Dobey looked up, saw his men enter, and motioned them to join him and Mr. Reynolds.

“Good. I’m glad you two got here before they called. Mr. Reynolds received a note,” Dobey told them.

Starsky and Hutch each reached out and shook hands with Reynolds. “A note? Can we see it, Cap?” Starsky asked.

“Here. The lab’s already dusted it for prints. It’s clean.” Dobey handed Starsky the single sheet of paper which was secured in a plastic zip-locked bag. “They found one print, but it belonged to the kid who delivered it.”

Starsky scanned the note quickly, Hutch looking over his shoulder, doing the same.

“I have your daughter. She is alive and well. Will call later to discuss demands. No cops if you value Jenny’s life.”

“Cap, did anyone question the kid that delivered this note?”

“Of course we did, Hutchinson! Who do you think you’re dealing with? Some green rookie right out of the academy?” Dobey bellowed.

“What’d he say?” Starsky asked, ignoring the captain’s indignant outburst.

Mr. Reynolds sat there nervously checking his watch again and again.

“Said a man stopped him on the street where he was skate-boarding and offered him twenty five dollars to deliver it. Kid said he had to come fifteen blocks to get here.”

“I seriously doubt they’d keep her this close to home. The guy most likely just drove around the area until he found someone to do it for him,” Hutch suggested.

“Maybe he could at least tell us which direction the car came from.” Starsky added. “And how about a description?”

“Pretty vague...male, Caucasian, dark brown hair. Had on sunglasses, so we don’t know eye color. Kid guesses about five feet nine or ten—said he couldn’t be certain.”

“Terrific,” Starsky said disgustedly, “that narrows it down to about half of the male population in LA. But it fits the same description the girls at school gave us. The kid still here?”

Dobey nodded toward a skinny, freckle-faced boy sitting in the corner with a skateboard leaning against the side of his chair. “Go ahead and see if you can get anything else from him.”

The two detectives walked over to where the boy was sitting and introduced themselves. “I’ve already told the other officers everything I know,” he began.

“Yeah, we heard you gave them a pretty good description. But we thought maybe you may have remembered something else,” Starsky said casually, trying to keep the young witness from feeling intimidated. “Like, do you remember what direction he came from?”

“Umm...I think he came from the direction where the old movie theater is. I don’t go down that way. My mom told me not to. She said it was dangerous down there. They’re gonna tear down a bunch of buildings or something.”

“Can you tell us about the car?” Starsky cajoled.

“Well, it was black with dark windows, ya can’t see through. And it had a funny the thing on the front.”

“You mean some sort of hood ornament?”

“Mmmm...yeah, I guess.”

“Can you describe it?” Starsky asked hopefully.

At first the boy looked perplexed, searching for the right words. Then Bobby’s face lit up. “Oh yeah! I know what it was! One of those hippie things like kids use’ta paint on their vans. I’ve seen lots’a pictures of ‘em. You know...a peace sign.”

Hutch smiled at the boy. The kid had just described Reynolds’ missing Mercedes. At least they knew the kidnapper hadn’t ditched the car. “What’s your name, son?”

“Bobby, Bobby Romack.”

“Think you could give our artist a description so he could sketch a picture of the man?” The boy cast anxious eyes on Hutch, evidently nervous about the prospect of such a momentous responsibility.

“ I don’t know. I...I guess so.”

“Hey,” Starsky encouraged him, “just do your best. That’s all anyone expects. Okay?”

Deciding he liked these two cops, Bobby nodded his agreement. “Okay.”

Hutch placed a call downtown, requesting that the police artist come to the Reynolds' estate as soon as possible.

"Hutch," Starsky motioned him to one side. "I think I better call Gina and let her know we won't be able to make it to Sam's class tonight. Any message for Jackie?"

Hutch rubbed his forehead, willing away the headache that was threatening. "Only that I'm stuck here too. We were going for coffee after class. Damn, we aren't going to make a very good impression on Nichols, are we? After that speech warning us all about being committed, he'll probably write us off as a couple of losers."

"Hey, it can't be helped. Besides, I think we made it pretty clear that Gina would stand in for us if police business got in the way." Starsky noticed the frown furrow between Hutch's eyes; a sure sign of one of his partner's bad headaches coming on.

"Maybe you're right." Hutch looked over his shoulder at Mr. Reynolds then turned back to Starsky. "One thing's for sure. We aren't going anywhere until we find out what these kidnapers want."

"Kidnapper," Starsky corrected him.

"What?"

"Kidnapper. This is a one man job." Starsky lowered his voice and leaned close. "Note said, *I have* your daughter—not *we have* your daughter. One person."

"You're right. Guess I'm not thinking too clearly."

Starsky added, "This ain't good news. With only one kidnapper, he's more likely to hurt her. Nobody watching over his shoulder. And we shoulda heard from him by now. Kid's been missin' more than thirty-six hours. I'd be willin' to lay you odds it's somebody who's connected with the family, and—"

"And if she already knows him...he'll have to kill her," Hutch finished for him. Hutch squeezed his eyes shut tightly, riding the wave of pain that was quickly building behind his eyelids.

"Hey, you okay?"

"Yeah, just a tension headache," Hutch answered. As his concern for Jenny Reynolds grew, so did the pounding in his head.

"Give me a minute to call Gina, then I'll find you some coffee and somethin' to eat." Starsky had seen that strained look on Hutch's face before and knew it signaled an on-coming migraine. "Sit down here and try to take it easy for awhile. We have a long night ahead."

End of Chapter 7