

## **No Way To Spend New Year's Eve**

*by TibbieB*

### *Chapter 4*

Captain DobeY paced back and forth just behind the police barrier, wearing out a path in the asphalt, waiting for Hutch to return, waiting for the firemen to do something, waiting to see his men safe again. In the background, Huggy hovered inconspicuously. Once again, DobeY was struck by the odd friendship his two detectives and the informant shared. What an unlikely alliance. Not only had Huggy cleaned up his act a good bit since getting involved with Starsky and Hutchinson, he'd actually developed a loyalty toward them that DobeY admired. Of course, that street went both ways. How many times over the past few years had they put their butts on the line for Huggy? The captain knew they'd turned a blind eye more often than was wise, but in the long run, the friendship had paid off in more ways than he could count. This was a rough town and a hell of a rough job—a man needed all the allies he could muster.

“Here comes Hutch!” Huggy shouted.

DobeY looked up just as Hutchinson slung his long leg over the barricade, clearing it with ease. “They made me leave—said I was in the way,” he told the two men before they could ask.

“What’s going on under there?” DobeY ask, stepping back to make room for Hutch.

“They’re getting ready to use that machine they sent for, Cap’n. Said I’d be in the way.”

“How’s my main man, Starsky, doing?” Huggy asked. “Is he conscious?”

Hutch ran a tired hand over his face. “Yeah, but I can’t tell how badly he’s hurt, and gas is standing all around.” He fought to keep the quiver from his voice as he continued, “It’s...it’s not good. I’m afraid they’ll accidentally ignite the tanker. One spark...that’s all it would take.”

DobeY cleared his throat. Never one for knowing the right words to say at the right time, he tried to reassure Hutch and Huggy, “They know what they’re doing. They’re trained professionals.”

The moments dragged by endlessly while the three men stood on the sidelines and watched the firefighters wrangle their heavy hoses to keep the area washed down in fire retardant foam. Beneath the truck Carlyle and his partner, Jamison, made two unsuccessful attempts before finally positioning the machine at just the right angle to pry open the mangled metal and upholstery without damaging the police officer trapped beneath the wreckage.

Once the debris was removed, the two paramedics gently transferred Starsky onto a stretcher and then into an ambulance. It seemed, in the blink of an eye, he'd been whisked away before Hutch realized he was free of the fuel tanker.

Carlyle trotted toward the barricade and was met halfway by Hutch, who'd seen the ambulance speed away. "How's my partner? How bad is he hurt? Where'd they take him?"

"Whoa," Carlyle held up his hand. "I was coming over to give you a report; figured you guys would want to take your car to the hospital. They're going to County General. From what the paramedics said, they don't think his injuries are life threatening."

Hutch felt his body go limp with relief. Starsky's not going to die. That was all that he needed to know.



Starsky sat up in bed, flipping the channels of the TV in his hospital room. The pain in his leg from having the broken bone set had subsided with the help of a strong narcotic the nurse had added to his I.V. He was feeling pretty good at the moment.

Hutch, smelling of gasoline, his face smudged and his clothes damp and grimy, poked his head around the door and grinned. "Hey, buddy. Sitting up already?"

"Hutch! Man, am I glad you're here! Look, I'm feelin' no pain—nurse gave me something terrific that took care of that—and I'm thinking if you'll help me get into my pants, we can still make that party at The Pits. Don't want to keep our two lovely ladies waiting."

"Starsk, you can't be serious!" Hutch answered incredulously.

Eyeing his partner a little closer, Starsky suddenly thought he saw the wisdom in Hutch's response. "Oh yeah, I guess you're right. You look like somethin' the cat dragged in. I couldn't be seen in public with you like that. Why don't you go home and clean up, and I'll take a short nap." Already, Starsky's eyes were beginning to droop from the effects of the injection.

"Yeah, right, Starsk," Hutch agreed, playing along for the moment. It was obvious Starsky wasn't going anywhere—with or without pants. "But first, I want you to see something."

"Oh yeah? What?"

Hutch set a large shopping bag on the foot of the bed and lifted out a box wrapped in bright red foil paper with a shiny gold bow on top. "I, uh, I brought you a gift back from Minnesota," he said shyly.

Astounded, Starsky was temporarily speechless. He reached out and tentatively touched the wrapping, as if he thought doing so would make it suddenly disappear. “You...you bought me a...a Christmas present?” He turned large, child-like eyes up at Hutch. “You bought me a Christmas present!”

“No—no—I never said it was a Christmas present, Starsky. Don’t go putting words into my mouth. It’s...it’s just a gift. From one friend to another.” Hutch was already wondering if he’d live to regret this impetuous act of sentimentalism.

“Can I open it now?” Starsky asked excitedly.

“Of course you can. I mean, Christmas is over—and—and it’s not a Christmas present anyway.”

Starsky ripped the paper with the zeal of a ten-year-old, discarding bow and all without a moment’s hesitation. Before him stood a beautiful solid cherry box, all four sides enclosed with thick, beveled glass. The craftsmanship was breathtaking. He stared at it, thinking the color of the cherry was as warm and rich as his heart felt at the moment.

“It’s...it’s for your ship, Starsk. I mean, you’ve spent so much time building the damn thing, I thought you needed something nice to display it in. This friend of mine back home has a wood shop. He only makes things on special consignment. I sure hope your ship will fit in it.”

Starsky felt the emotion rise in his throat. He wanted to say thank you, but couldn’t seem to find the right words. Swallowing hard, he looked up at Hutch, his eyes bright with unshed tears.

“Hutch...I don’t know how to say what this means to me.”

“You don’t have to say anything,” Hutch answered self-consciously.

“And, uh, well...” Starsky continued, “Thanks for sticking with me back there, partner. I don’t mind admitting I was a little scared.”

For a moment, Hutch didn’t trust his voice to speak; then, slowly, his lips began to twitch with a mischievous smile. “Well...I guess I figured no one should have to get blown up *alone* on New Year’s Eve.”

***The End***  
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