**Summary:** Vanessa's surprise reappearance shakes the partners up in more ways than one.

**Notes:** This story first appeared in the zine, *The Fix, #16*, in 1996. published by April Valentine's In Person Press.

**Special thanks** to Keri T who uploaded all my stories from the old dot com archive to our new archive. If it weren't for her, my stories would have been the last ones moved. And thanks to Keri also for all her behind-the-scenes efforts on behalf of the archive. She and all the other volunteers who upload stories are keeping our fiction alive through their labors. I am very grateful.

**Categories:** Slash

**Genre:** Episode Related, Zinefic

**Warnings:** No Warnings Needed

**Geez, Louise, D'Ya Think I'm in Love?**

by Flamingo

You can look but you better not touch boy  
You can look but you better not touch  
Mess around and you'll end up in dutch boy  
You can look but you better not, no you better not,  
no you better not touch  
You Can Look--Bruce Springsteen

Hutch could hear Captain Dobey's raucous laughter cackling throughout the squad room as Starsky stared forlornly at what had to be the world's most expensive guinea pig.

"Hey," Hutch said quietly, trying futilely to restrain his own laughter. He didn't want to add insult to injury, but Starsky's woebegone expression was one for the books. "Maybe Dobey's wrong, buddy. Maybe Louise really is a chinchilla?" Unable to keep up the facade for long, Hutch had to turn away before he lost it completely.

Damn, but it felt good to laugh. Just yesterday, he'd thought he'd never have anything to laugh about again.

Starsky only shook his head and solemnly put the lid back on Louise's box. His expression changed subtly, and Hutch suspected that the character who had sold Louise to Starsky was about to meet with a very unhappy customer. Hutch almost pitied the guy.

With an effort, he schooled his face. "Hey look, there's never as much profit in livestock enterprises as people think. My Uncle Jake went broke on pedigreed Charolais and they were supposed to be a sure thing."
Starsky's eyes narrowed. "What the hell's a--Charley's?"

"Shar-lay," Hutch corrected patiently. "It's a big, white beef cow from France--about a ton of prime rib on the hoof. Cost a couple of grand apiece. Supposed to be the big thing a few years ago in the meat industry, but they didn't work out so well for Uncle Jake. And they cost a hell of a lot more than two hundred and fifty bucks. So, really, you got off cheap if you look at it that way."

"Hutch," Starsky said with infinite patience, "what are the chances on me springing a couple of grand for a big white cow I'd have to keep in my apartment?"

"Well, last week I would've thought the chances of you starting a chinchilla ranch in your living room were a little remote, too, but you never cease to amaze me...." The sentence trailed off uncomfortably as Starsky's blue eyes darkened.

Starsky had amazed the hell out of Hutch last week, and it hadn't been with a furry little pig, either.

 Unless you consider that cops are called pigs, Hutch thought, his brain going a little haywire as the memories flooded him. And Starsky's pretty furry. But he sure ain't little. No, sir. His face warmed as that indigo stare held him unwaveringly. Hutch's mouth went dry. He forced himself to act normal, even though there hadn't been a single normal moment for him since a week ago Tuesday.

Four days before Vanessa reappeared in my life and turned it upside down and inside out. Or had Starsky done that already?

He had a sudden, jarring flashback of the conversation he'd had with Starsky just minutes before Vanessa's first contact.

"You're a dirty old man, you know that?" Hutch had told his partner when Starsky had first announced his propagation plans for Louise. Hutch's teasing remark had been a deliberate double entendre. Starsky had glanced at him knowingly when he'd said it--because four days before that, Hutch's partner of six years, a man he'd known since they'd gone to the Academy together, had seduced Hutch in his own apartment, in his own bed.

And the really amazing thing was how totally willing he had been.

I went down like a tree, Hutch acknowledged freely. One touch, and I was his. Like I'd been waiting for him all this time. Like he'd been waiting for me to let him know.

It had been four nights of the most tumultuous lovemaking he'd ever experienced. They both knew they needed to slow down, talk it out, set up ground rules, establish parameters, expectations, something, but as soon as they were alone they'd end up in bed and then, exhausted, fall sleep until morning surprised them and they'd face a mad scramble to get ready for work.
Then Vanessa showed up. Her sudden appearance had certainly put the brakes on their unexpected affair.

"Who is this?" Hutch had said into the receiver Dobey handed him, his mind on the more mundane matters of police work like receipts and vouchers. Dobey glared at him impatiently, wanting to get on with their expense account meeting.

"The woman who wouldn't darn your socks," said the voice over the phone, tumbling him back into time, into the arms of a different lover, one he'd never expected to hear from again.

He still remembered the look on Starsky's face when he had asked--after Hutch had hung up--what was going on.

"That was the ex-Mrs. Hutchinson on the phone, wasn't it?" Starsky had asked, when Hutch had tried to dissemble.

And suddenly Hutch was totally tongue-tied, trapped between the memories of an old lover and the reality of a new one. It struck him odd that the old one would always be socially acceptable--even though she made him miserable and had hurt him in a way no one ever had before or since--while the new one--who would spill his own blood before allowing harm to come to Hutch--would never be.

"She wants to see me," Hutch had blurted inanely.

Starsky's eyes bore into him, both of them painfully self-conscious of their surroundings, the busy squadroom they worked in. Finally, Starsky asked quietly, "Gonna go?" The question had been thick with unspoken concern.

Hutch could only shrug. "Guess so." He had a moment of insecurity when he nearly blurted, "Come with me?" but he squelched it. Starsky and Vanessa were a volatile combination. She'd hated his partner from day one, instinctively jealous of a relationship she couldn't touch, couldn't tarnish--and couldn't compete with. And Starsky, while maintaining a chilly politeness, had little time for Vanessa even before the divorce. Starsky had to pick up the pieces of his friend's shattered heart and psyche when Vanessa had left.

Starsky had never said anything about her afterwards, but his eyes always narrowed dangerously whenever her name came up. Hutch wondered how Vanessa would react if she had any idea of where his relationship with Starsky stood now. Though really, Hutch wasn't a hundred percent sure of where that was himself.

As he'd left the squadroom to meet his ex, Hutch had turned around one last time to look back at his partner--his lover. Starsky stood, watching his departure, his expression anxious, worried.

From that moment, everything had gone wrong. Hutch's only constant--through Vanessa's murder, the accusations of Internal Affairs, the warrant for his arrest, his brief life as a fugitive from justice--was Starsky. Starsky, who punched out one of the IA officers just to keep Hutch from doing it. Starsky, who was ready to give up his badge, help Hutch evade arrest, and even told Dobey, "You can visit Hutch and I at San Quentin."
But even though they'd shared a bed for a few hours at Huggy's the night before last, there'd been no real physical contact between them since Vanessa's arrival. Last night, they'd been pulled to different places for meetings, bookings, reports, and hearings, and both had ended up going to their respective homes to catch up on desperately needed sleep. They hadn't even had a chance to talk over the phone. Maybe Starsky was having second thoughts. Maybe he thought Hutch was. Hutch didn't know—but he wanted to find out.

"Hey, partner," Hutch said quietly, "now that the smoke's cleared and we can breathe easy again—why don't I make us dinner? We've got reason to celebrate." He meant about getting his name cleared from the complications surrounding Vanessa's murder. Hutch had his badge back and was completely exonerated now, but he couldn't tell if Starsky read something else into the innocent statement. He paused, waiting for his partner to say something, react. Finally, Hutch added hesitantly, "Don't we?"

Starsky gave him a small smile, but Hutch could see mixed emotions in his eyes. "Sure we do. You've been cleared. That's reason enough. Is Venice Place ready for company?" A couple of hoods had torn Hutch's place up pretty bad searching for a diamond Hutch's recently deceased ex-wife had planted in his car.

"Huggy sent over the people who clean his restaurant and they put it back together. And one of his cousins does upholstery and repaired the couch. You can't even tell it ever happened." It was Hutch's turn to look uncomfortable. "They even got the blood stains out of the floor." He wondered how long it would be before he'd be able to open his front door and not see Vanessa lying there dead, shot with his own gun.

Starsky stood, leaned closer to him, then touched his arm in a familiar comforting gesture. "Hutch, I'm sorry. I didn't mean to remind you— Look, a celebration dinner sounds great. But, first I gotta see a man about a pig. And then I thought I'd drop over to give Kiko and Molly a new pet. I might be late."

Hutch smiled. It would be just like Starsky to rip off the rip-off artist. He'd shake the dude down for the money owed him and keep the guinea pig partly to prevent the guy from trying the same scam again, and partly because Hutch knew his partner was already attached to the animal and couldn't consider returning her to someone who didn't care about her.

Hutch shrugged. "Call me when you get to Kiko's. Dinner will be ready when you walk in the door."

Starsky nodded, tucking the guinea pig's box under his arm. "Sounds good. I'll bring the wine."

"Make it red," Hutch told him.

Starsky started to grin, and Hutch felt that smile all the way to his toes. "Don't tell me we're gonna be eating some of Uncle Jake's expensive cows?"

"Only the best for my partner," Hutch swore.
For a man who'd been cheated out of two hundred and fifty dollars for the cousin of a rat, Starsky looked entirely too smug. He turned around at the double doors leading out of the squad room, his blue eyes the barest slits. Hutch knew that look too well. It caused the small hairs along his spine to lift in anticipation.

"Only the best, huh? I'll remind you of that later, Hutchinson."

Hutch felt the color rise to his hairline, but before he could come up with a response that would've been appropriate for public consumption, Starsky was whistling his way down the hallway.

~~~

It wasn't that late when Starsky finally arrived, and frankly, Hutch had been glad for the delay. It had given him time to get the food—and, he hoped, his act—together. He glanced up at Starsky standing in the open door frame, and had just a moment's pause. Dressed in his customary blue jeans, red shirt, and brown leather jacket, Starsky appeared much as he had the morning Vanessa was killed.

He stood there that same way, poised, whole body as tense as a cat, knowing there was death here, danger. I didn't have to see him to know what he looked like. He swung open the door, saw her body, and let his eyes take in everything else. Then he came in cautiously. My back was to him. Before he did anything else--before he inspected the body or looked over the scene--he touched me. Squeezed my shoulder, stroked the nape of my neck. Letting me know he was there--for me.

"You gonna stand there all night," Hutch asked, pulling his attention back to the table setting as he lit the candles, "or you ever coming in?"

"Whatever you're cookin'," Starsky said admiringly, "you can smell it out here. I thought it was coming up from the restaurant, but when I opened the door, I realized-- It smells incredible, Hutch." He entered the apartment, one arm wrapped around a brown paper bag, and closed the door behind him.

"Let's hope it lives up to its advertising," Hutch said, smiling. This was good, he thought. Starsky sounded almost at ease. Maybe Hutch could, too.

Starsky put the bag down on the couch, and unzipped his jacket, hanging it in its usual place. "I've got the wine." He pulled it out of the bag and showed it to Hutch. "Good year, huh?"

"Terrific!" Hutch agreed, and tossed him a corkscrew.

As he applied himself to the task of opening the bottle, Starsky said, "Kiko and Molly just love Louise. I think they'll all be very happy together. Except that Louise ain't really Louise. I guess now she's Louis."

That made Hutch look up as he placed the potatoes and side vegetables in a bowl. "What?"
Starsky kept his attention on opening the wine. "Kiko says Louise is really Louis, and then *proved* it to me pretty graphically, if I may say so. Made me really glad I dropped the pig off first, before I rousted the bastard that sold her--*him*--to me. And here I thought I knew everything about the birds and the bees."

Starsky froze the minute those words left his mouth and colored nearly as much as Hutch usually did when he put his foot in it. Hutch bit his lip to keep from laughing as his partner eventually went back to de-corking the wine.

"Were you able to--uh--get a refund on Louis/Louise?" Hutch asked.

"Ha!" Starsky barked triumphantly, rescuing his aplomb. "You kiddin'? I made a profit! I caught that weasel just before he skipped town. He didn't know I was a cop. Told him he was part of a long-term undercover bunco investigation and if he didn't want to spend his rapidly fading youth mapping the insides of every one of LA's illustrious prison cells, he'd refund my purchase price, pay me for room and board, and give me a finder's fee for getting Louis a proper home. He thought that was a terrific idea."

"Starsky!" Hutch said, surprised. "That's graft!"

"Not really," Starsky insisted as the cork popped free. "He happened to owe Huggy a pretty good sized bar tab. I figured after the last couple of days, we really owed Huggy, so--"

Hutch nodded. "You stop by and pay him?"

Starsky smiled. "Tried to give him a hundred outta Louise's purchase price for aiding and abetting us two fugitives over the last few days, but he wouldn't take it. So I paid our bar tabs instead. Came out to about the same. He was glad to get the con artist's money, though."

"We owe Huggy for this one," Hutch agreed, going to the stove and removing the main course.

"At least I'll be able to visit Louise--I mean, *Louis*, over at Kiko's. I got real fond of her--*his*--company. Guinea pigs make real good listeners, Hutch. Betcha didn't know that. The night you left to meet Vanessa, I said, 'Looks like it's just you and me tonight, Louise,' and she chirped at me. We chatted all night, just her and me, until finally it got so all I had to say was, 'Geez, Louise, wha'd'ya think of that?' and she'd scrambled around and chirp and act all happy."

"And then you'd feed her something," Hutch guessed, as he handled the hot pan carefully.

"Yeah! How'd you know?" Starsky approached the table and poured two glasses of wine. "So, what part of Uncle Jake's *Shar-ley* is that?"

"Rib roast," Hutch announced, placing the hot pan carefully on a kitchen towel set in the center of the table.

Starsky whistled appreciatively at the perfectly done piece of beef and the roasted vegetables that surrounded it. "Wow, Hutch! You've really outdone yourself!"
"Sit down!" He gestured at a chair. "Let's eat while it's hot."

"Oh, wait!" Starsky said and darted over to the paper bag still on the couch. "I got something for you! I mean, you know, something for the table. Like a centerpiece. So, it should look nice, y'know."

He wrestled with the bag then carried something over. Hutch's eyes widened. "Starsky--that--that's an orchid plant! It's a C-C-Cattleya--in full bloom!"

Ceremoniously, Starsky placed the big, foil-wrapped pot where they could both see it. "If you say so. All I know is, it's yellow. An', just like Louise, it's got a name."

To call the spray of flowers erupting from this plant yellow was to call the sun yellow. It was a magnificent plant with six heavy golden corsage orchids touched with red at their throats. Hutch was speechless as he leaned forward and looked at the tag that gave the plant's name and heritage. There was the usual Latin nomenclature followed by some initials that Hutch knew indicated the plant came from award winning parents. But it was the common name that nearly did him in. The plant was called "Hutchinson's Golden Blush."

"Starsk--this--this--" He tried to collect his wits, and stop acting like a virgin on prom night. He sniffed the flowers. "They're not only beautiful, Starsky, they're fragrant! The scent is like a combination of vanilla and roses. It must've set you back--"

He shrugged it off. "Told ya--I made a profit on a pig. 'Sides, I figure it's an investment. If you do half as well with this as all the rest of this rain forest, we'll make a fortune on its babies. The guy at the store said orchids aren't hard to grow and they do real well in small greenhouses. So it's a helluva lot safer than another 'livestock investment.' You ever gonna cut this roast?"

"Oh, yeah! Sure!" He carved the meat and gave each of them a healthy portion, then doled out the vegetables.

Starsky attacked his meal with his usual gusto, but Hutch noticed he avoided eye contact. It was as if neither of them knew how to approach the other now that their momentum had been derailed.

Like we're each courting a stranger, Hutch thought. And that's what we're doing--courting. I made the most elaborate dinner I could think of, and Starsky--he glanced over at the magnificent flowering plant--Starsky brought me flowers.

As they completed their meal, Hutch cleared his voice, making his friend glance at him. "Listen, uh, I never, that is, I don't think I ever got the chance to thank you for--all your support over the last couple of days. I couldn't have gotten through all that without you, partner. And I know there were times when--when I acted as if you were the enemy. I'm sorry."

Starsky shrugged, staring at his plate. "It was a bad time for you, Hutch. Vanessa showing up, then gettin' killed, then IA coming down on you like that. Me and Dobey both havin' to be cops, instead of your friends. I felt pretty bad about that."
"Dobey told me, Starsk. When we went for the hearing today, when IA dropped the charges against me. He told me you'd said if you had to bring me in on murder charges you'd do it, then resign. He said you really meant it, too. I wished I'd known that when you showed up with Dryden. I'm sorry about the hard time I gave you."

_Hutch stared in total shock at the arrest warrant--where his name was written in the wrong place. He immediately struck out at Starsky. "You're awfully quiet, buddy!"

"Hey, I didn't write that thing," Starsky had protested.

"You brought it over here!" Hutch accused angrily.

"Would you have rather a creep like Dryden brought you the bad news?"

"No," Hutch said sarcastically, "it's a helluva lot more fun when a friend does it."

_But that had burned the anger out of him, leaving nothing but pain. In a choked voice, he asked Starsky plaintively, "You're not gonna take me in, are you?"

And Starsky's bottomless blue eyes had seared him as he leaned close to Hutch's face. "Dobey gave me orders to do just that." But then he added meaningfully, "And in all the years we've known each other, have you ever known me to disobey an order of Captain Dobey's?"

_That simple question had told Hutch volumes about where Starsky's loyalties lay._

Hutch shook the memories away.

"Don't apologize," Starsky said. "If the roles had been reversed, and you were coming to arrest me, I might've taken a swing at you. It must've really hurt, thinkin' your--" he paused, "your partner would actually put cuffs on you, specially for something you didn't do."

Hutch put his fork down. He was tired of skirting this thing. "You're not just my partner, Starsk. You're my best friend. And my lover." Starsky met his gaze then. "For that brief moment before I realized you had no intention--never had any intention--of arresting me, it hurt like--like--" _Like when Van left me. That much. That raw._

"I know," Starsky murmured. "I know. But we got through it. Because we are partners. And friends." He paused and didn't finish the statement.

"And lovers," Hutch reminded him. "Right?"

Starsky opened his mouth, closed it, then put his own fork down. Hutch felt ice form in his gut. _I can't believe it. My partner's gonna drop me._

"Talk to me," Hutch demanded quietly. "What's happening?"

Starsky pushed his chair back, moved away from the table restless. Hutch recognized the symptoms. Starsky always got fidgety when faced with uncomfortable confrontations. He paced around the living room, looked towards Hutch's bedroom, then turned back to Hutch.
"I know this is gonna hurt, bringin' all this back up again. An' I know I got no right to ask, but I gotta." Starsky's voice dropped an octave. "You sleep with her that night?"

Hutch blinked in surprise and for a second wondered, *Sleep with who?* and then realized all at once. Is that what this was all about? No, there had to be more.

He wet his mouth, kept his voice even. "You can ask me anything you want, Starsk, about anything at all. I have no secrets from you. No. I didn't sleep with her."

Starsky just looked at him, and Hutch could see a thousand questions in his eyes, see the doubt there. It should've made him angry, Hutch thought, but he just felt sympathy for Starsky's confusion. *I guess that's the best sign that we aren't just lovers, but really friends. I'd be pissed if a lover doubted my word. But I know Starsky's doubts are more about himself than me.*

"She wanted to," Hutch elaborated. "Brought it up again and again. Kept touching me, moving close, tried to kiss me. It only made me feel--uncomfortable, awkward. I was stuttering all night." He snorted a bitter laugh. "I told her I couldn't, that I was *old-fashioned*. Me! She knew it was a lie, but she also knew when I really meant no. I slept on the couch. She brought it up again in the morning, tried to talk me out of going for my run." He was suddenly swamped with guilt. "I still feel bad about that. I didn't have to--have sex with her that morning, but, if I'd stayed, Wheeler's hoods wouldn't have killed her."

"Or they might've killed you both. They didn't know you were a cop, then, Hutch. And--whether you went to bed with Vanessa or just sat and made small talk--your gun is usually in the closet when you're home. They would've taken you both by surprise. And I'm sorry about Vanessa--God knows I'd never wish her dead--but I'm not sorry you weren't here when those goons showed up."

Hutch picked something up in that last revelation. "Of course you didn't wish her dead, Starsk. But--what did you wish?"

Starsky's eyes roamed the room, looking everywhere but at Hutch. "I wished a lotta things. I wished she'd never called you. I wished she'd forgotten where you worked. I wished a whole lot that the last thing she did before dyin' hadn't been to use you one last time. She'd used you enough when you were married. And the thing I wished most was... I wished her comin' back hadn't reminded you how much you really loved her."

Hutch didn't know what to say to that. He toyed with his plate, then stood and collected the dishes and put them in the sink. When his back was to Starsky, his partner asked quietly, "Why didn't you sleep with her, Hutch?"

Hutch turned to face his friend. "What?"

"I know you still had feelin's for her. I could see it plain as day in the squad room. You looked like a rookie again, going home to the little lady. Expecting white lace and promises and getting a whole lot less. So, why didn't you do it? She'd would've made it real good for you 'cause she wanted somethin' from you, you had to know that. And-- And--" Starsky could only whisper the last words, "--she's a woman. A really beautiful woman."
So, there it was. A full blown Starsky insecurity attack. They were rare, but they happened. It made this normally tough, street-wise cop seem so vulnerable. Hutch almost felt relieved. He's not dropping me. He thinks I've already dropped him. Oh, Starsk!

"Is that the reason you didn't touch me at Huggy's?" Hutch asked quietly. "Cause you thought I'd slept with Van?"

"No!" Starsky denied too quickly, then shook his head and backtracked. "Yes. No. Well-- We were both wired, waiting to hear sirens comin' for us. An' Huggy was right in the other room.... 'Sides, I figured, if you had-- with Vanessa-- well, maybe you were having second thoughts about us-- what we'd been doin'. I wanted to give you some space-- I didn't wanna push you. I figured I pushed you enough the last couple of days."

"I never felt pushed, Starsky," Hutch told him. "Persuaded, maybe. But not pushed." Hutch held Starsky's gaze as he approached, so he would see the honesty in his eyes. "I couldn't have slept with Vanessa, Starz. Especially not now. Why would I sleep with her when I can sleep with someone who loves me unconditionally? Someone I've always trusted completely? Someone who'd give up everything, just to stand by me? You proved your feelings to me a dozen times over in the last few days. Vanessa was my wife for two years and she never once did anything that displayed half that much caring for me."

"Yeah?" Starsky said, looking a little relieved. His eyes had darkened into that smoky blue color that gave Hutch goosebumps when it was directed towards him.

They stood three feet apart in Hutch's living room, eye to eye, as though locked in place by invisible barriers they suddenly couldn't breech.

"That night at Huggy's," Hutch mumbled, "I was afraid that maybe you'd had second thoughts. I was afraid you regretted it."

Starsky shook his head too quickly. "Second thoughts? Shit, Hutch, the truth is I never took the time to have first ones. But I got no regrets, not a one. Though I'll tell you-- when Van called you-- it really brought somethin' home to me. Something I didn't like much."

Hutch stood poised, ready, dreading what it might be, but unable to guess.

Starsky looked him straight in the eye, the hurt showing plainly. "Your ex-wife could do any kinda number she wanted on you-- show up out of the blue, rip your heart out and hand it back on a platter, plant stolen merchandise in your car, nearly get you killed-- and she'd still have more rights to you than I ever would. Just 'cause she's a woman. She could meet you in a public place, have a drink, dance with you if you wanted, and ask you to take her home. No one would ever think twice about it. Any woman on the planet-- a complete stranger, or your worst enemy-- could do the same thing. But if we stand too close together, if I touch you the way I always have-- on the arm, on the shoulder-- there's always gonna be someone lookin' on, the Simonetties, the Drydens, ready to pass judgment on us. The way they did on Johnny Blaine. The way I did myself. We could lose it all, our careers, everything, doin' this. I haven't done you any favors, Hutch. Not by lovin' you."
Hutch could see the pain Starsky was carrying, had probably been carrying since Vanessa had called him. He wasn't sure how—or even if—he could reassure him. "For a guy who was ready to be my bunkmate in San Quentin, Starsk, you're sure letting this get to you. No wonder you socked Simonetti. You had to find some way to let some of this out.

Suddenly, it seemed the easiest thing for Hutch to do was to step closer, slide his arms around Starsky's slender body and pull him close in the kind of comforting hug they'd shared a hundred times. Only this time Starsky was rigid in his arms, his palms pushing feebly against Hutch's biceps as if trying to deny himself the very thing he wanted.

"Hutch, don't--" Starsky murmured in a choked voice. "We shouldn't--?"

"We gonna go through this every time some woman comes into our lives?" Hutch whispered in his ear. "We gonna go back to pretending we're just pals? Sit in the car day by day, an invisible 'don't touch me' wall between us, just in case someone might think bad thoughts about us or call us ugly names?" Impulsively, Hutch nuzzled his ear and felt Starsky shudder and sag in his arms.

"Hutch, don't--wait..." Starsky protested half-heartedly.

"We never gave a damn about what anybody thought before," Hutch reminded him. "And they've always wondered, always talked, always said ugly things about us. We never cared. We had each other. That's all we ever really needed. Even Van knew that. And that hasn't changed." He pressed his lips gently against Starsky's jaw and felt Starsky's arms slowly slide around him and tighten, as if against his own will. He took Starsky's chin in his hand, and made his troubled eyes meet his assured ones. "I was accused of murdering my ex-wife for money, and you stood by me, ready to take on the world. And now you want me to turn my back on what we've shared because someone might accuse me of loving you? You know, sometimes, Starsk, you are just plain weird."

And before Starsky could utter another protest, or think of another reason to refuse, Hutch did what he'd been aching to do for days. He met Starsky's slightly parted lips with his own, slipped his tongue between them, and entered his dearest friend's warm, welcoming mouth. Starsky's deep, throaty groan vibrated through them both as his body trembled urgently. Hutch sighed happily, remembering how that familiar quiver had intrigued him from the start, revealing a hunger, a need, he would've never predicted in this contained, controlled man.

*He wants me so bad,* Hutch thought deliriously, his arms pulling Starsky tight. *He still wants me!*

Their kisses went on, long, sweet, drawn out, their mouths breaking apart just enough to breathe and sometimes not even for that, the needed air whistling through their nostrils, gasped in the briefest separations.

"Hutch!" Starsky exhaled his name as an exclamation, but that was all he would allow as he tried to swallow Starsky's slippery tongue, count each of his teeth, discovering the sweet, salty taste of him all over again. "Hutch!"

Starsky's hands roamed Hutch's broad back, learning him once more, his hesitancy gone. His slender fingers spread wide as if to cover as much territory as possible, Starsky stroked every
inch of Hutch he could reach--his spine, his ribs, the small of his back, his round ass, then back up again to enjoy the soft skin of his nape. Strong fingers slid into Hutch's hair, gripping it, anchoring his head as though he had any intention of leaving.

Hutch stroked Starsky, too, but not with the same abandon. He was content for this moment to simply hold his slender body crushed against his own. That hug was everything to Hutch, keeping Starsky close, firmly against himself; he wanted to absorb Starsky through his skin, so that he'd always be with him, always giving him this pure, unadulterated, uncompromising love. He knew, at that moment, that no matter what happened to him in his life, no matter how many lovers or wives he might ever have, no one would ever love him the way this man did. Not with this power, this purity of heart. He felt totally humbled.

He pulled out of the kiss dazed, slightly crazed, to stare at that sweet, familiar, lopsided face. He was startled to find a look of sheer surprise on Starsky's face. Surprise and fear, and not a little confusion. Hutch couldn't understand.

As though he could clear it up so simply, Hutch whispered, "You love me. Go on and say it. You know it's true."

Starsky closed his eyes as if he could shutter his soul and hide the truth, but it was too late.

"You love me," Hutch insisted, his voice firm with the confidence he had in this. "Tell me. I want to hear it. You love me."


"I knew it!" Hutch said, grinning as if only a moron could've doubted that. "I've always known it. I love you, too. You know that, right?"

Starsky turned away and shook his head just like Hutch knew he would, and muttered, "Hell, I don't know. I don't know nothin'. Aw shit, Hutch, I don't know."

Hutch heard himself laughing and couldn't say why. "You don't know? You idiot! I'd take a bullet for you, stand between you and the whole world, and you don't know? Good thing I'm the brains in this outfit, since you don't know anything at all."

Starsky just kept shaking his head. "You loved Vanessa. You loved Gillian. I think you loved Abby. That's who you've loved, who you should love. I'm just your partner, your friend, just a guy who's gone a little crazy on you--"

"Stop it!" Hutch insisted, giving Starsky a shake. "We're gonna have enough problems without you denying what we feel. And don't you ever say just partners, just friends. That's everything. Everything." He crushed his mouth against Starsky's as if he could prove all the wild feelings inside him with the power of his kiss.
Starsky's body molded against his, but it still wasn't close enough. Hutch cupped his partner's luscious behind and pulled him tighter, grinding their hips, feeling their swollen maleness trying to make contact through the denim. Oh God, he wanted this man. It hurt, he wanted him so bad.

"Come on," Hutch whispered, making himself pull away. He took Starsky's hand and started walking backwards toward the bed. "I'm tired of arguing philosophy. Come to bed."

Starsky had nearly carried him in there the first night, but now he planted himself and looked anguish. "It's all I been able to think about for days, takin' you to bed, getting you horizontal. It's been running around my head like Louise on her exercise wheel, goin' round and round and gettin' nowhere. But I dunno why. Why, Hutch, why are we doing this? Didn't you ever wonder?"

"Only when you let me come up for air," Hutch admitted, making Starsky smile. Starsky took a reluctant step forward, then another as Hutch kept towing him slowly through the apartment. "Did you ever ask Louise? Maybe she knows why."

"Yeah," Starsky said with a laugh. "I'll call over to Kiko's and ask her-- 'Geez, Louise, d'ya think I'm in love-- or is my dick just bored'?"

"Don't forget, Starsk, Louise has been in drag all this time. Sure you can trust her advice?"

Starsky groaned wearily. "That's right, partner, muddy the issue why don't'cha?"

But then they stood beside the bed and the issue was crystal clear to Hutch even though he could see that Starsky still had questions. "What now?" Hutch murmured, as he started tugging the red shirt out of Starsky's pants.

"I can't help it, Hutch, I just keep thinkin' about stuff--like Simonetti--"

"Should have thought of that before you punched him into next week," Hutch chided, then kissed Starsky's jaw just before he lifted the shirt over his head and tossed it aside.

"He's gonna be gunning for us now..." Starsky's insisted.

"Maybe, but I think Dobey'll have something to say about it, if either he or Dryden try to cause us too much trouble. He came down pretty hard on them at the hearing, and they looked bad once all the evidence was in." He ran the back of his knuckles against Starsky's nipples, which caused a shudder of pleasure to travel over his bronze skin.

Starsky's hands found the top buttons of Hutch's shirt and started undoing them automatically. "And what about women, Hutch? What are we supposed to do about women now, huh?"

"I haven't the slightest idea," Hutch confessed as he leaned over to nuzzle Starsky's neck while he unfastened his partner's jeans and slid them down his narrow hips. "For some reason, Starsk, that's not my primary concern right now."

Purring as Hutch's lips traveled over his throat, then his shoulder, Starsky slid Hutch's shirt off, then moved to his beltline. "Hutch, what about...what...?"
"You need to stop thinking for awhile," Hutch murmured into the nearest ear. "Let's face it. You're just not that good at it. We don't wanna burn anything up in there. You can think later." Slipping his calf behind Starsky's knee, he pulled his partner's leg out from under him as he pushed him onto the bed, supporting and guiding his fall. Once Starsky was on his back, Hutch slid his tight jeans and briefs off his slender body, tugging socks and sneakers off at the same time. Starsky's hands reached for him, trying to undo his pants, trying to tow him into the bed.

Hutch shed the rest of his own clothes in one smooth move then clambered into the bed on hands and knees, hovering over Starsky's darker, furred body. "No more thinking," Hutch ordered gently, looking down into a face he'd learned to love a long time ago. "No more worrying. We're celebrating, remember?"

"Yeah," Starsky said, even as his eyes betrayed his concern. "Celebrating--?"

"That we're still making love here in my bed--and not in a cramped cell in San Quentin."

Starsky had to laugh. "They'd'a had to catch us first. Of course, we were in your car...."

Hutch grinned back. "Which is why we weren't spotted in three minutes flat. Y'know, I think you liked being a fugitive from justice. There's too much of the outlaw in you not to."

"The only part I liked was being with you, hidin' out with you, partner. I could've done that forever."

"Maybe you will be, Starsk--hiding out with me, like this." For a second Hutch wondered if that wasn't part of the thrill, the illicitness of their love. Like a lot of their work on the streets, they'd only be able to share it with a few trusted friends. It would have to be held close, secret, just the two of them.

"Yeah," Starsky breathed, reaching up. He grabbed a handful of Hutch's hair, and pulled them into another kiss, this one longer, more intense, more blatantly sexual. Hutch moved his leg, slipped it between Starsky's parted thighs. As soon as he did, Starsky's other arm slid around his waist, pulling Hutch down until his entire frame rested on him. Both of them were erect, their cocks hard, hot, eager. Hutch shifted until their erections nestled warmly against each other. With a contented sigh, Starsky shifted his hips, rubbing their swollen rods slowly, provocatively against one another.

"Gonna make sparks that way," Hutch warned breathlessly around their kisses.

"Uh-uh," Starsky denied. "Gonna make fire." The same fluid hips that could sway and swivel so erotically in a crowded disco now danced beneath Hutch to an inner music.

Hutch could feel Starsky's heart pounding in the velvety hot skin that tortured his own cock. "Ah, God, Starsk," Hutch sighed, as he tried to match his rhythm. Starsky's slender hands slid down Hutch's spine until they cupped his ass, moving Hutch, guiding him, teaching him these new, horizontal moves.
"Nice," Starsky purred, as he stropped himself against Hutch's straining cock. "You and me, like this."

"Nicer than nice," Hutch agreed, meeting Starsky's kiss-swollen lips again, plunging his tongue inside the welcoming warmth of his mouth.

Hutch was stroking Starsky's body, relearning all the new, familiar places again, when Starsky rolled them. Hutch went with it easily, thinking that supporting his larger frame had become uncomfortable for his partner. Once Starsky lay over him, he wrapped his slim, strong legs around Hutch's hips without breaking their kiss. Finally, he pulled away and sat up. Moving forward, he trapped Hutch's cock under his perineum, and continued his undulating moves. The moist, hot skin behind Starsky's balls was smooth and almost as seductive as the skin of his cock, but Hutch missed the intimacy of their mutual frottage. He reached for Starsky's now ignored erection, jutting blatantly from his body.

"Hey, come back here," Hutch complained, stroking Starsky's beautiful, heavy shaft. He stared at it, loving its differences. It pulsed in his hands, all wine-dark and exposed, like a living thing, a wild, alien creature that had nothing to do with either of them and yet everything to do with what they were, who they were, and how they loved. "I miss you."

"I'm right here," Starsky said. "Not goin' anywhere. How could I when I've got you right where I want you?"

"This how you want me?" Hutch asked, grinning.

"For now," Starsky admitted, humping slowly into Hutch's hand, while rubbing his bottom tight against Hutch's cock.

"You're still thinking," Hutch realized, as he stared into troubled eyes so blue they broke his heart. "You're still worried. Come on, Starsk. We'll be okay. We love each other."

"You think that's enough, huh?" Starsky said distractedly. "Maybe it is. Hutch, I wanna give you so much--"

"You already have. You always do."

Starsky shook his head as if Hutch weren't getting it. "I wanna give you everything. Everything she would've given you...."

"Oh, Starsk," Hutch said, feeling sad. Why was Vanessa's shade still hovering over their bed? "I told you I didn't sleep with her. I swear, she didn't have anything I wanted. I would have never even brought her back here except for this complete cock-and-bull story she gave me about medical tests, a tumor...." The last of all the lies she'd told him in their time together. "I'd left her in the Pits, and was heading for my car. All I wanted was to forget I'd even seen her. All I wanted was to come back to you."

Starsky shook his head. His voice was strained. "I believe you. I know you didn't sleep with her. That's not the point. You could've. You didn't have to love her to do it. An' if you had gone to
bed with her that night, you could've had something with her so much more intimate than anything you've ever had with me. Something you could have with any woman, a stranger, a hooker...."

"No," Hutch denied, shaking his head. There was nothing more intimate than what they shared, nothing as close. "That's not true."

"Yeah, it's true," Starsky insisted firmly. "It's reality. It's biology. Face it, Hutch. I have. Well, I want it. I want that intimacy with you. I want what Vanessa's had and didn't appreciate. I want what you've given her, and Gillian, and Abbey, and all the nameless, faceless one-night-stands--"

"Starsk, don't," Hutch pleaded, cupping his cheek in his palm, stroking it with his thumb, wanting to take all his hurt away.

But he wouldn't be denied. "I mean it, Hutch. I want it." He swallowed hard and his voice softened. "You said it before--only the best for your partner. Well, that's what I want. The best. I want you to fuck me, Hutch. Tonight. Now." He swallowed again.

"No," Hutch said softly.

The refusal seemed to stun him. "No?"

"Not like this," Hutch insisted. "Not to play one-up-manship with the spirit of my ex-wife. If I ever--if we ever do that it'll be because we want to at whatever moment we choose. Starsky, you don't have to prove anything to me--"

"I know that, dammit! I need to prove this to me."

Hutch blinked at Starsky's fierce tone.

"You don't get it, do ya? I need this. I need to give this to you. I love you. I wanna belong to you, every way I can. And when the moment comes--and it will--that I've got to watch you walk off with some little lady for the evening, even if it's just for a good cover, or because you got the itch--I wanna know there's nothing she's givin' you that I haven't given you just as good, if not better. I gotta know there's a reason for you to come back to me."

Hutch couldn't stop staring at the man perched over his groin. "You think that's what it takes to keep me? Don't you think what we have, what we already have, isn't right enough, special enough?"

"I think you're a man, Hutch, just like me," Starsky said. "I think, ultimately, there's one thing a man needs, and when he doesn't get it, he goes lookin' for it elsewhere. Sometimes he goes looking even when he is gettin' it. You're always asking me if that's all I ever think about. You always say it like you're too intellectual to spend any time thinkin' about it-- but I've been to bed with you enough to know. Maybe you don't think much about it, Hutch, maybe it's all instinct with you, but it's important. Nobody makes love like you do, with all of your heart, all of your soul, nobody performs like you when it's not important to them. We're gonna do this, Hutch. Tonight."
"No," Hutch insisted, shaking his head. "Not this way. Not because you want to prove something you don't need to prove."

Starsky's eyes narrowed and grew sly. "Oh, yeah? You think you can turn me down, huh? We'll see."

"Don't!" Hutch warned, but Starsky only smiled and leaned over for a kiss. Hutch started to protest but his open mouth was appropriated, ravaged by Starsky's heated lips and his possessive tongue that knew him all too well. "Starsk, wait...let's talk...." But his lover's mouth was too preoccupied with sucking the very breath out of him to consider anything as reasonable as talking.

Starsky's mouth moved lower, the tongue traveling with it, mapping every cell of his ear, writhing around the shell, dipping deep inside, suggesting the obvious, tormenting Hutch with wonderful possibilities.

"No!" he hissed, but goosebumps lifted the hair all along his arms, his spine, as his testicles tightened up hard.

"Yes," Starsky murmured seductively, clamping his legs around Hutch's hips even as his bottom kept up its dangerous dance. "Tell me you haven't thought about it, fantasized about it."

Hutch shook his head. "That's you. You're the one always thinking about it."

"What a liar," Starsky taunted. "I've caught you starin' at my ass. I've seen that look on your face. You've thought about us that way sometime, somehow."

"Maybe," Hutch admitted reluctantly. He was never very good at lying to Starsky. "But if I did, I always saw it happening the other way."

Starsky seemed surprised for once.

"You started all this," Hutch reminded him. "And you always made the first move. Before Vanessa called, I thought that night--I thought it might happen then. I thought that's what you were leading up to."

"And--?" Starsky prodded.

"And what? I hadn't refused you anything up to that point, had I?" Could I? Hutch wondered more than once, and knew the answer was no. He already belonged to this man heart and soul. He couldn't see himself bargaining over a few body parts.

"All the more reason," Starsky said, his logic, as usual, escaping Hutch. "You were willing then. I'm willing now."

"For all the wrong reasons," Hutch told him. "This has turned into some weird competition in your head with a bunch of dead or missing women--and with me! We can't afford to play games in bed!"
"No games," Starsky insisted. "This time, babe, I'm serious as a heart attack. I'm gonna have you. Willing or not."

Only Starsky could describe getting fucked as something he'd be doing to Hutch, he thought in consternation.

With a grin, Starsky bent low, mouth homing in on one of Hutch's small, brown nipples. The wet heat and strong suction was sublime and Hutch arched up into, feeling the edges of Starsky's teeth threaten his sensitive aureole.

"Oh, God!" he growled, grabbing a thick handful of dark curls. "Starsky!" His teeth nipped, teased, threatened, while his wet tongue lapped and soothed. Hutch's cock throbbed against Starsky's warm, soft skin. Helplessly, Hutch thrust against his moist flesh, trying not to think, not to imagine--

"Tell me you don't want me," Starsky whispered against his ear, his tongue flicking the lobe. "Say it. Go on. You don't want me. Don't wanna climb inside me. Don't wanna feel how hot and tight I am--"

"Stop!" Hutch gasped, his blood surging out of his control.

"Tell me you don't wanna come in me, Hutch. Go on, lie to me, to yourself. Say you don't want me."

Hutch bit his lip, suddenly fearful of opening his mouth. He grabbed Starsky by both arms and pushed him away, making him sit upright again. "I forgot what a dirty fighter you were!" he rasped, struggling for air.

As Hutch gripped his arms, Starsky dismounted, freeing Hutch's erection from its wonderful prison. Sliding his ass down Hutch's thighs, Starsky taunted, "That's right. I fight dirty. I'll do whatever it takes to win. Of course, you could make this easy on both of us." Reaching out, Starsky gripped Hutch's exposed cock hard around the base, making it jerk and its owner groan. Hutch's grasp loosened as Starsky lowered his head and inhaled the rosy red glans into his mouth.

Hutch cried out sharply as the wet furnace enveloped him, Starsky's tongue dancing over his inflamed flesh, tormenting every nerve ending. He began to suck, slowly, leisurely, as if Hutch could last forever. Automatically, he released Starsky's arms to gather handfuls of his dark, silky curls just to feel the action of his beautiful, bobbing head.

During their last night together before Vanessa's reappearance, Starsky had sucked Hutch into orgasm while penetrating him with his hand. It had been incredible, incendiary, the most explosive orgasm Hutch had ever had. He knew it was a prelude to something more intimate, and he'd been ready for it. Now, Hutch let his body relax beneath his partner's sweet loving, hoping Starsky would take the hint. You knew I was ready that night. You knew I wanted it. Do it to me now. When Starsky's slender hand slid beneath his ass, his heart tripped into double time.
But Starsky's touch wasn't possessive, but gentle. He didn't penetrate Hutch, merely teasing his anus, his perineum with gentle strokes. His touch was exciting, maddening, but all it did was heighten Hutch's incredible need.

"Starsk!" Hutch choked out. "Damn you, Starsky!"

In spite of the mass of male flesh in his mouth, Starsky managed to chuckle. Hutch rolled his eyes in frustration, hating it when Starsky outmaneuvered him.

Pulling his mouth off the furious hard-on, Starsky taunted, "Tell me you don't want me." He rubbed his bristly cheek against Hutch's cock just to be cruel, the sandpaper sensation make him jerk away and hiss. "Go on. Say the big lie. You don't wanna fuck me, do ya?"

"You bastard!" Hutch growled through his teeth, exasperated. Aching for something he didn't dare think about, Hutch sat up and grabbed Starsky's shoulders roughly. "I don't wanna hurt you! Or didn't you think that far?"

Starsky grinned, and Hutch realized with a sinking heart that he'd just lost the battle. "Gentle as you are? You'd never hurt me. Come on. I can't wait much more." Starsky clambered off him and moved over in the bed, preparing to lie down on his stomach.

Hutch grabbed an arm and used it to tug Starsky back toward him. "Not that way. I may lose the war, but I'm still gonna claim one skirmish. You want this so bad, you do it. You take it." Hutch lay down again on his back, passively crossing his arms behind his head.

_Five points for me!_ Hutch thought smugly as Starsky's expression suddenly didn't look so self-assured.

"This is your bright idea," Hutch said casually. "Go on, hotshot. You want it so bad, then _take_ it. I won't stop you."

Starsky wet his mouth. "Now, wait a minute, Hutch--"

_I can fight dirty, too, Starsk. I learned from an expert._ "What's the matter, lover? You're the one who wanted to battle Vanessa's memory. Go ahead. That was her favorite position, being on top. I'm used to it." Brazenly, Hutch reached for his night table, digging around in the drawer for something he hadn't used in a long time. Rescuing a small, half-full jar of Vaseline, he held it out to his partner.

Starsky shook his head ruefully as he took the jar, no doubt regretting his earlier choice of words. But the navy blue eyes sparkled anyway. "Okay. If that's how you want it--I'll play." He slung a leg back over Hutch's hips as he uncapped the jar, looking at the contents as if they were a complete mystery to him. "But don't think you're gettin' off so easy, blondie. You're still gonna have to help."

Hutch raised his brows questioningly. "Who me? I can't imagine what you mean."
Starsky reached for Hutch's right hand. Yanking it out from behind his head, he slapped the jar into it. "You're the one worried about hurting me. Well, if you don't wanna have to explain to Dobey why I'm sitting on a feather pillow in the squadroom for the next week, you'll have to participate, buddy. Hey, it'll be worth your while in the long run, and you know it."

"Starsk, we don't even have to do this--"

"We already had that argument, and you lost. C'mon, babe, don't make me grovel."

No, Hutch knew he couldn't do that. He stroked Starsky's cheek gently with his free hand, then slid it down Starsky's side until it cupped his generous ass. "Okay. I'll help. Though I don't know what makes you think I'd have to explain your feather pillow to Dobey." He gave his healthy buttock a squeeze, urging Starsky forward.

Starsky took hold of the elaborate brass headboard as he clambered up Hutch's body as Hutch put both of his pillows under his head for leverage. Tugging on Starsky's ass, Hutch pulled him up higher. Finally, they were positioned the way Hutch wanted, with Starsky straddling his chest.

"'M not too heavy, am I?" Starsky asked.

"A regular fly-weight," Hutch assured him, then grunted playfully. Licking his lower lip in anticipation, Hutch pulled Starsky's well-shaped cock into his mouth.

"Jeezus!" Starsky gasped hoarsely. "That's cheating!" Starsky gripped the brass bars tightly, his arms and upper body taut, his head tipped back, jaw lax in pleasure.

And I've only begun to fight, Hutch thought, pleased with himself.

Holding Starsky's beautiful ass with both hands, he managed to draw them into a lovely, rocking rhythm that was slow but intense, controlled, but deliriously exciting. For both of us, Hutch realized with a little surprise. He was always amazed how much he loved having Starsky in his mouth. It was thrilling and nearly overwhelming to be tonguing and tasting Starsky's strong cock this way. Above him, his partner's breath was coming in short panting gasps, his tensed, corded arms betraying the sensations ripping through him.

"So good, babe," Starsky groaned helplessly, peering down at him. The sound traveled down Hutch's spine, hitting him right in the balls. "But good as this is, I'm not gonna forget why we're here. C'mon, now. Do it, Hutch. Open me."

That simple request made Hutch close his eyes and shudder, as desire swamped him so hard it shocked him. Manipulating the small jar he'd dropped on the bed, Hutch managed to pull out a glob of the stuff. Sliding a hand between Starsky's legs, his fingers groped behind the tightened sac until he found the tiny sphincter. It's so small, he thought, nearly panicking. He swallowed, and stroked it tentatively with slippery fingers.

Gasping, Starsky tightened his thighs around Hutch's ribs as if he were clinging to a fractious bronc.
"Small, but sensitive!" Hutch thought anxiously, as he kept rubbing the hidden port.

"Quit foolin' around!" Starsky growled, even as he pushed himself deeper into Hutch's mouth.

Hutch looked up at Starsky's dark visage, realizing how hard he was working to control himself. You love it when I fool around, he thought, just as he carefully slipped his thumb into Starsky's anus.

Starsky went stone rigid and choked back a cry, even as a scalding bubble of pre-sem filled Hutch's mouth with his unique flavor. He moaned as Starsky tightened hard around his thumb.

"Yeah, think about that, babe," Starsky gasped, and Hutch marveled at his ability to speak at this moment. "You think about me doing that around your cock, huh?" Starsky's body spasmed hard, protesting the invader, and his eyes squeezed shut in discomfort.

Hutch used his tongue on Starsky's glans while gently manipulating the swollen sac with his free hand and in a minute, the powerful grip on his thumb eased and Starsky's body relaxed. "Yeah, Okay," Starsky breathed, clearly relieved. "That's better. Much better." Carefully he rocked, flexing around the thumb. A soft moan told Hutch what he needed to hear. There was pleasure there for Starsky. Pleasure Hutch could give him.

Carefully, Hutch removed his thumb, then reentered with his index and middle finger. Starsky froze, panted for several seconds, then resumed his slow rocking. Threading a hand into Hutch's hair, Starsky cradled his head, letting Hutch know how good his mouth was, how much he was loving everything Hutch was doing to him. "Oh, babe," he whispered low. His voice was all breath. "Oh, Hutch--!

When he slid the third finger in, he took Starsky's cock in deeper at the same time. Starsky groaned low, shuddering, and for a moment, Hutch thought he might come. But instead, he tightened punishingly around Hutch's hand and pulled out of his mouth.

"Oh no, you don't," Starsky warned breathlessly. "Oh, shit, Hutch, that was too good to be real. Too damn good."

"Come on, Starsk," Hutch pleaded, "let me finish it for you. I know you're close. Forget the rest of it."

Starsky shook his head, his eyes shining with a dark need. Sliding down Hutch's body, he once again perched over his thighs. He fumbled around in the bed until he located what he was searching for--the small jar of Vaseline. Scooping some out in his hand, he warned, "Hope you're ready, big boy, 'cause I sure am."

Hutch watched Starsky's hands shaking, his whole body trembling as he lovingly slathered Hutch's twitching erection with lubricant.

"Hey," Hutch said, touching Starsky's chin with his clean hand. Starsky's indigo eyes had gone nearly black; they looked up, wide, wild. "I love you, crazy man."
Starsky gulped and said softly, "Love you, too. Always have. Always will." Locking eyes with him, Starsky moved his rear back over Hutch's erection. Reaching beneath himself, he found Hutch's slick cock and maneuvered it until he was positioned directly over it. With painstaking slowness, Starsky lowered himself onto Hutch.

To Hutch, it was as if an incredibly small, strong mouth started swallowing him a little at a time. First, just the tip, then a bit more, until finally his entire glans was surrounded and held fast behind the ridge. He choked back a moan and held rigidly still. The effort that took was incredible; every cell in his body, every instinct he had, cried out to take total possession, quickly, immediately, to plunge his hard shaft into all that deliciously tight warmth.

Starsky's eyes rolled up and his head tipped back. He could only whisper, "My God--!

"Breathe, Starsk!" Hutch begged, barely finding the air to form the words. "Don't hold your breath."

He obeyed, sucking in a long, torturous lungful, then expelling it in a rush. The next breath was smoother, and on the third, his sphincter relaxed. It happened so fast it startled them both, and they smiled at each other. Cautiously, Starsky lowered himself further.

In an agony of pleasure, Hutch reached back, grabbing the brass rails and hung on. It was too slow to bear, too wonderful to resist. All he wanted to do was throw Starsky onto his back and ram all the way inside him. He groaned and tossed his head.

"It's too much," Starsky muttered. "There's too much of you."

Hutch bit his lower lip until it nearly bled. He was sucking in air like a bellows, but still managed to notice that Starsky's cock had collapsed, that his whole body trembled, but not from pleasure. "Starsk, don't!" he pleaded. "Don't make yourself do this. If it hurts, I want you to stop!" It was the biggest lie he'd ever told his partner.

Starsky's dark head shook a denial. "I'm okay. I can take it."

Hutch felt like he'd been slapped. He grabbed Starsky's arm to get his attention. "Dammit, I don't want you to take it! I want you to love it, or we shouldn't be doing it at all!"

Starsky just kept shaking his head, suddenly speechless. Hutch was only half way in. His cock pulsed in need, his balls so tight they ached. Reaching for the discarded jar of lubricant, he scooped out small glob and gently rubbed it on the head of Starsky's dusky cock. Starsky made a small sound as Hutch carefully gathered his shrunken organ and lovingly manipulated it, stroking it with the gel, making it slick, surrounding it with his fist.

"Come on, babe," Hutch crooned, as he reached with his other hand and toyed with one of Starsky's fur-covered nipples. "Let it go. Let me love you another way."

The added stimulus must've helped distract Starsky from the pain because his dark body shuddered and his relaxed cock started swelling once more. Hutch wet his mouth and stroked it patiently, lovingly, and was rewarded as Starsky's sphincter suddenly relaxed even more,
followed immediately by the rest of his body. Cautiously, Starsky settled himself onto Hutch's rod until his ass was seated directly on Hutch's groin.

He shut his eyes to bask, for a moment, on that incredible sensation. He was inside Starsky's body, now. Completely one with his partner. The heat was incendiary, the tightness enough to drive him insane. He sighed, the breath shuddering out of him.

"It's good, isn't it?" Starsky rasped. His voice was shattered, but Hutch could hear the smugness in it.

Reaching up, Hutch touched Starsky's mouth, wishing he could kiss it. As if he understood, Starsky kissed the searching fingertips one by one, then kissed the palm.

"Tell me it's good, Hutch," Starsky whispered, his plea so soft Hutch barely heard him.

He wasn't sure he could even find his voice. "Ah, God, babe, you're killing me!" he muttered finally. Hutch realized suddenly Starsky hadn't moved since completely enveloping him. He sat there, clenching spasmodically around his invader, but otherwise sat immobile. "But... what about you? Starsky, I'm worried. If it's not good for you--"

"It's good, Hutch," Starsky insisted, "it's just... totally overwhelming. I never felt nothin' like this before. I can't move. Can't think. Shit, Hutch! Right now, you're all there is for me. You're all inside me. All around me. You're just--everything." He stared at Hutch beseechingly. "Help me, will ya?"

Cautiously, he rose to a sitting position, surrounding Starsky with both arms, as his legs folded under Starsky's rear, tailor-fashioned. He kissed Starsky with feather-light touches on his eyes, his cheeks, his chin. "I'm here, love, I'm here. Tell me what to do, what you want."

Starsky sought Hutch's mouth and, finding it, kissed him hungrily, sliding his tongue between Hutch's lips, tasting him, then yielding as Hutch's tongue fought back. Pulling out of the kiss, Starsky murmured low, "Fuck me now, Hutch. Do it to me. I can't move."

That heartfelt plea turned Hutch's blood to vapor. His desire to comply with that request made him dizzy. Clutching Starsky to him, he clung to the dissolving shards of his self control. Grasping Starsky's ass, he lifted him as Hutch shifted his legs to get his knees beneath him. Instinctively trying to aid him, Starsky wrapped his own legs tight around Hutch's waist and clung tightly as if fearing separation.

Slowly, and with more grace than he thought he could muster, Hutch got on his knees, then lowered Starsky to the bed, easing his partner onto his back. The strong arms and legs gripping him never slipped, never relaxed their powerful grasp. As Hutch settled Starsky onto the mattress, he slid a hand down Starsky's long spine to comfort him.

"You okay?" he asked softly, searching his darkened eyes for the truth.
"Not really," Starsky confessed. "I just got flipped around like a rag doll at the same time someone was diggin' me a new ass. But I expect in a minute I'll have a whole new reality to keep me occupied."

"We don't have to do this," Hutch reminded him.

Starsky managed a short laugh. "Yeah. I'd love to see your expression if I told you to quit now."

"We can do that," Hutch insisted, telling himself he really could. Sure, he could. And he could give up breathing for a few hours, too.

Starsky only grunted. "Anybody ever tell you ya talk too much in bed?"

"What am I gonna do with you?" Hutch muttered, exasperated.

Starsky kissed the side of his face. "Just fuck me, babe. And make it good."

"You want everything, don't you?" Hutch muttered, and found that loving mouth again. A long, drawn out kiss helped relax the slender body beneath him.

When Starsky started sliding his hands up and down his spine, Hutch gathered his strength and began to move, withdrawing slowly from the paradise surrounding his cock. They both groaned low as he did, but Hutch could only pray there was as much pleasure in Starsky's throaty sound as in his. He reentered smoothly, carefully, his every muscle tight as a trip-wire. Sweat broke over his whole body as the muscles in his legs screamed for him to yield to his hunger.

He pulled out of the kiss and buried his face in the hollow of Starsky's neck and shoulder, muttering his lover's name in a senseless cadence he couldn't stop. He withdrew again, just as slowly as before.

"Goddamn you!" Starsky hissed. "You're so good at this, you're makin' me love it, Hutch! Come on. Quit playin'! You're making yourself crazy. And me, too."

"Don't!" Hutch pleaded, knowing his defenses were crumbling. Starsky's heat and pressure were all around him, enticing him, sucking on him, giving him a pleasure so intense he could hardly bear it. "Don't push! I can't--!"

"You can't resist me, can ya? C'mon, Hutch, don't make me beg for it."

Hutch's resistance slipped, the teasing growl of Starsky's voice exciting him more than it ever had. He moved in deeper, faster, his hands sliding down Starsky's sweat-sheened torso to his lush, round ass that was making him insane with need. Gripping Starsky's buttocks harder than he intended, he shifted his lover's body, manipulating him as though he were weightless.

"Oh, damn, Hutch!" Starsky cried out sharply, tightening once again around the cock plundering him. "What the hell--? What are you doin'?"
Hutch shook his head, at a complete loss for words. What were they doing? His next plunge was deeper yet, stronger, slicker. Starsky was all heat and wet strength around him. This wasn't sex, it was something else, something wilder, something far more intimate. He thrust harder, unable to stop himself, pulling Starsky's ass up to meet him. He felt like he was searching for something, something inside Starsky he just couldn't find.

They were both sweating now as Starsky rediscovered his rhythm and started to move, started to dance again in Hutch's hands, under his body, against his driving cock. Moaning loudly, Starsky's stroking hands turned to claws as he dug his nails into Hutch's back.

"Shit, Hutch, that's so good! So incredible. Damn you!" Starsky swore, the words strangled, choked out between clenched teeth.

Hutch nailed his writhing body hard, completely lost in pure animal need. Dimly, he was aware that Starsky was bitching about something, but what it was, he didn't know, couldn't imagine. He couldn't imagine, either, how this hard-bitten cop could be so warm inside, so pliable, yet so strong. He couldn't imagine how Starsky could endure the frenzied bucking, plunging lover that was frantically fucking him into the mattress. Hutch told himself to slow down, take it easy, but he didn't know how anymore. He couldn't find his controls, couldn't remember how to slow their passion.

This is the way it always happened with Starsky. Starsky always found some way to make Hutch wild with lust, senseless with need. No woman had ever affected him this way, made him lose himself in them the way Starsky did. All Hutch knew was that the sweetest pleasure he'd ever known surrounded his body right now, his for the taking, open and wanting and totally hot.

"Do it!" Starsky ordered him furiously, his mouth pressed right against Hutch's ear. "Do it! Do it!"

And Hutch realized Starsky was taking him, somehow. Even though he was on top, even though he was drilling him relentlessly, pounding him mercilessly, somehow, Starsky was in control. Somehow, Starsky was doing this to Hutch, just like he promised. That thought just made Hutch hotter.

Starsky suddenly came alive in his arms, sinking a tongue deep in his ear, then sliding it down his neck, bruising his shoulder with his teeth. The oral attack caused a rush of sensation to course down Hutch's spine into his balls. His cock swelled even more, making Starsky yell. Abruptly remembering Starsky's neglected erection, Hutch slid a hand between them. Taking the still slippery shaft in his palm, he managed to initiate a stroking rhythm. Starsky's cock twitched and grew harder.

The effect on Starsky was electric. He clamped down hard on Hutch's cock and swore, "Damn you, Hutch! You sweet, sweet fucker...!"

"No woman, Star..." Hutch gasped fiercely, "no woman ever loved me like you do. No woman ever could. Not like this. Don't you ever forget it!"

He was amazed when Starsky laughed. "Like you said--for my partner, only the best!"
Hutch labored to give him more of his best, even as he felt his desire cresting, soaring.

"Come on!" Starsky demanded hoarsely. "Hutch! Come on!"

"Yes!" Hutch promised, and obeyed.

Fearing he still couldn't get close enough to his love, he plunged in up to the hilt, erupting with a shout. The tell-tale pulsing of his cock must have pushed Starsky over the edge because he instantly stiffened in Hutch's embrace, his erection twitched in Hutch's hand, and a flood of warmth spread over Hutch's belly. Powerful internal muscles tightened around him like a giant, wet hand, milking every last bit of pleasure out until he was drained.

Starsky choked back a sob, then another, as he buried his face against Hutch's neck. "Love you," he whispered against Hutch's throat, tears in his voice. "Love you. Love you."

Hutch's arms tightened around him, but he could only nod in reply as his body trembled and convulsed in the final spasms of his orgasm.

Little by little, atom by atom, Hutch came back to himself, the insanity finally receding enough to make him fear what he'd done. "Starsk?" he mumbled tentatively. "You okay?" Oh, God, don't let him be hurt!

Starsky still clung child-like to Hutch, quivering all over, his face hidden.

"Starsk?" Hutch's breath was ragged, labored. "Come on, talk to me. You okay?"

The curly head shook back and forth, and Hutch's stomach dropped.

"You hurting? What's happening, babe?" He was afraid to move, afraid to pull out, but his cock was so happy in its new found home it wouldn't deflate.

Starsky gulped twice, then finally licked his lips. "Hutch?" he murmured in a tiny voice. "What'll we do if I--get pregnant?"

Hutch's eyes widened in alarm for a half-second, until the words fully registered. Shocked into a snort of laughter, he choked out, "I'm gonna kill you."

"Don't laugh!" Starsky ordered, the words oddly strangled. "You're still in me, dammit, and as big as a tree! You have no idea what that feels like."

So, of course, the laughter surged up uncontrollably in Hutch's throat. He tried swallowing it, but it couldn't be withheld, erupting from his nose until he had to pinch his nostrils and mouth closed to try and hold it in--which only made it worse.

"Auuggghhh!" Starsky cried out, slapping Hutch's ass. "Quit laughin', you ox! You already reamed me a tunnel down there! What are you doin' now, adding a back porch?"

"Okay, okay!" Hutch agreed, his snickers bubbling over, growing more infectious until Starsky started chortling, too.
"Oh, shit, that's worse!" Starsky insisted around helpless sniggers. "I hate this! Stop!"

Finally, their hilarity died down just as Hutch realized Starsky's legs were still wrapped around his waist. "Need some help getting down?" he asked, rubbing a hand over one muscular thigh.

"You kiddin'?" Starsky muttered. "I don't think they're attached anymore. Maybe rigor mortis has set in. I can't feel anything below my hips."

Hutch flinched. "You are hurt then."

"Don't be silly. How can I be hurt if I can't feel anything?"

"Very funny." Hutch gripped one of Starsky's legs under the knee and slowly eased it down. As soon as he did, the other one slid off on its own. Starsky groaned softly making Hutch wince.

"S'okay, blintz," Starsky insisted. "Good sex always makes me feel like I got hit by a truck."

"It does?" Hutch wondered.

"Well, it does since I've been loving you. You ever pullin' outta there, or you planning on redecorating and putting out a mailbox?"

"Now, there's an idea. But I think I've already done enough remodeling for one day. You ready?"

Starsky took a deep breath. "Yeah. Sure. By the way, my last will and testament's in my wallet."

"Cute," Hutch mumbled. "Just remember--this was all your bright idea." Slowly, and with great regret, he extracted himself from the haven of pleasure he'd discovered inside his friend.

Starsky grimaced sharply. "Oh, wow! Talk about a cheap thrill!"

Hutch checked himself surreptitiously and was relieved to see there was no blood. He reclined beside Starsky and pulled him close. "Tell me the truth now. You hurt really bad?"

"I'm not sure 'hurt's the right word," Starsky admitted a little breathlessly. "Let me sleep on it, and I'll let you know."

Hutch paused, trying to decide how best to broach another, more sensitive topic. "So, uh, how do you feel about the, uh, you know--rest of it."

"Hutch," Starsky said patiently as he cuddled into his embrace, "I feel like I just had six hours of no-hold's-barred, heart-stoppin', record-setting, mind-blowin' sex, followed by the world's weirdest proctology exam. I'm not ready for a session on the couch, too. Can we examine my innermost feelings about the irreversible loss of my manhood and my sudden urge to wear pink lacy underwear tomorrow?"

Starsky's sarcasm and obvious smirk eased most of Hutch's concerns, but he knew Starsky well enough to know "tomorrow" would probably never come. He frowned. "Just as long as you
remember that guinea pigs aren't the only ones who make good listeners. Hutchinsons make real
good listeners, too."

"I don't know about that," Starsky said skeptically, his voice sounding drowsier, "but as a lover,
you're worth your weight in guinea pig pellets, babe."

"Thanks--I think," Hutch said. "But let's get one thing straight. I'm not gonna run around and
chirp for you, no matter how happy you make me." He placed a gentle kiss at the corner of
Starsky's mouth.

"Not even if I promise to feed you somethin' nice?" Starsky wondered, pursing his lips and
kissing the air in reply. He shifted then, turning in the circle of Hutch's arms so they could spoon
together. His long spine fit perfectly against Hutch's front.

"Don't get no bright ideas," Starsky warned as he deliberately nestled his ass against Hutch's
groin. His voice was thick and drowsy. "It's nap time, blintz. And I'm gonna need some major
recovery time."

"Sure, love," Hutch promised, kissing his nape gently. "Besides--I believe the next dance is
yours. This is a partnership, isn't it?"

"Mmmmm," Starsky purred. "Sounds good to me."

Hutch cuddled against Starsky's spine, nuzzling his hair, feeling his sated body relax and start to
ease into the sleep it craved. "Love you, Starsk."

"Love you, Hutch."

"Uh-huh?" He kissed the nearest shoulder in response.

"What're we gonna do about women?"

Hutch was suddenly awake. We back to that again? He felt as if Vanessa was blowing him a
cold kiss from the grave.

"Come on, tell me. Wha'd'ya wanna do?"

"Call Kiko's," Hutch said with little humor. "Ask Louise. 'Geez, Louise, what'll we do about the
ladies?'"

"Serious, Hutch. There's gonna be women. I know you." Starsky shrugged. "I know me, too.
How'll we handle it?"

Hutch had the sudden mental picture of Starsky eyeing a girl over a beer at the Pits, something
he got to see almost every Friday night. It was the most normal thing he could think of--Starsky
flirting with some leggy lady, dancing, coaxing her to come back to his place. But Hutch's
reaction to the familiar scene was far from his normal indifference. He didn't like the sour feeling
that now rose in his gut, the intense flash of jealously. He could see himself causing a scene in the Pits, and right after that the termination of their careers. No, that wouldn't work.

*Of course, Starsky couldn't very well take the lady home if I lured her away first*--

He had no trouble seeing himself competing with Starsky for the same woman. They'd done it before, a dozen times, all in good fun, the loser always giving in graciously. *To the victor, belongs the....* But Hutch didn't like what he saw this time, didn't like the way the fantasy made him feel. *Because it's all changed now.*

Now, the stakes were higher. Hutch might not mean to, but he didn't see how he could act blasé about Starsky's future intermittent affairs. With this new intense passion for his partner, Hutch's competitive edge would be honed razor sharp. Enough to make the situation so uncomfortable that *neither of them* would win the lady. Still, it could save their *manly* reputations. Keep Simonetti and Dryden and all the other self-appointed keepers of virtue at bay. But Hutch wondered how it would affect their day-to-day relationship, their friendship, their partnership. He wondered how it would affect the desire that flared so hot between them.

He grew uneasy and held Starsky tighter against him. For a moment, he thought he could hear Vanessa's brittle laughter.

"Hutch--what about women?" Starsky asked again, his voice drowsy.

"We'll think of something," Hutch assured him, suddenly wide awake and worried. "We'll think of something."

**Well I came home from work and I switched on channel 5**
**There was a pretty little girly lookin' straight into my eyes**
**Well I watched as she wiggled back and forth across the screen**
**She didn't get me excited she just made me feel mean**

*You can look but you better not touch boy....*  
**You Can Look--Bruce Springsteen**