

**Summary:** Starsky and Hutch are set up at a dock. Both think the other is dead.

**Note:** This story has been in my brain for years. Finally decided to complete it.

**Categories:** Gen

**Genre:** Action/Adventure

**Warnings:** No Warnings Needed

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## **Broken Hearts**

by **ksstarfire**

### **Chapter 1**

"Starsk, I am telling you right now, that I AM going to Dobby and requesting a transfer! I have HAD IT with you!" Hutch pointed his finger at his partner and shook it, angrily. "WATCH OUT FOR THAT VAN!!! Damn it, slow DOWN!! We are just going to see a snitch, it's not the Indy 500!!" Hutch grabbed at the dash to keep from sliding across the seat into Starsky as they turned a corner and sped toward the docks.

"And I am telling YOU that you are blowing this all out of proportion!! Aw come on, Hutch, it wasn't that big a deal! Lighten up! And I missed that van by a mile!" Starsky risked a quick glance at his blonde partner. Boy, he still looks steamed, he thought. They had been arguing since they left their apartments for the Station this morning.

Starsky pulled the Torino to a stop about 20 feet from where the dock ended and turned the car off. He opened his door, slid out and watched across the roof of the bright red car as Hutch uncurled his tall frame from the passenger side, slammed the door shut and started around the rear of the Torino toward him.

"Now see what you made me do!?!?" Starsky gave him a blank look as Hutch pushed him away from the car and reached in to pick up a piece of paper from the middle of the seat. As he straightened back up, he caught movement out of the corner of his eye on the ocean. Something? Moving rapidly in their direction. Boats? But something didn't feel right.... the hairs on the back of his neck stood up... what?? Sunlight reflecting off glass...??

"Starsk!! GET DOWN!!!" Starsky was standing by the end of the wide door with his back to the ocean. Hutch grabbed Starsky with his right hand on his head and the left grabbing his right arm to shove him in the seat of the car. He grabbed for his gun as Starsky fell into the seat, yelling.. "wha???"

"What the hell, Hutch???" Starsky looked up at the blonde and heard a shot. He saw blood bloom on Hutch's right shoulder and watched him be spun away from the open door to land hard on the wood decking of the dock. "Hutch?"

"HUUUUTCHHHHH!!!"

Hutch picked up the gun he had dropped with his left hand and transferred it back to his right hand. He rolled to his stomach, braced his weakened right hand with his left and started shooting at the boats still heading toward them and looked at Starsky. Bullets were slamming into the dock and the car. The windshield became a spider web of lines. Starsky grabbed the radio mike and tried to call for help but the radio was dead. Pieces of the deck were being gouged out close to where Hutch was laying. "Get out of here! Call for help! Go, Starsk, go!!!"

Starsky looked at him, not wanting to leave him. So much was spoken, silently, in the few seconds their eyes met.

"Get help. We've been set up. I'll be ok. We need backup, partner. I'll hold 'em off till you're out of range, then I'll work my way back." His shoulder felt like it was on fire. This wasn't looking too good. What if? A pause, and Hutch fired off two more shots. He darted a quick look at Starsky... "I love you, Starsk... I love you. Now GO!!!"

Starsky started the car and began to back away from the boats he could hear approaching. He heard Hutch firing again, and saw him rolling behind some crates at the edge of the pier. Bullets were slamming into the car in rapid fire.

He'd almost made it back to where he could turn the car behind a warehouse when he heard a huge explosion. He looked toward the area where Hutch had been and saw flames and debris exploding toward the sky. "HUUUUUTTTCHHH!!!" Then the Torino was hit by the shock wave and lifted in the air just to slam, quickly, back to earth, causing Starsky to hit his head on the dash. As his vision wavered, he saw a fire raging where he had last seen his partner. Weakly he called out "Hutch...nooooo" as his heart broke and the world went black.

## **Chapter 2**

"Easy, son, easy."

Captain Dobey put his hand on Starsky's shoulder when he saw Starsky's eyes fluttering. "You're at Memorial Hospital. Lay still, you have a concussion and possibly a broken collar bone."

"Cap'n?" Starsky blinked his eyes open then shut them immediately. The lights above him seemed to sear into his brain. "Ohhhhhh.....my head.. Wha? Wha hap'n?"

"Do you remember where you were today?"

Starsky shook his head, then thought better of doing that. "Damn... my head." He kept his eyes closed and head still as he tried to remember. "Yea, me'n Hutch went to meet some snitch at the

docks. We were... " he stopped that thought. That was between Hutch and him. No one needed to know they had been having a royal knock down drag out fight. "Hutch got outta the car... " He struggled to remember what had happened.

He cautiously squinted his eyes open and looked around the room he was in. Something wasn't right. Think Starsk! He saw Captain Dobey standing by the bed he was laying on. Wait!!!

"Explosion! There was.. Hutch was shootin'. By some crates. Fire. Captain!! Where's.. where's Hutch?? OH GOD, he was right where the explosion happened! Is he here?" Starsky tried to sit up, but didn't get far before Captain Dobey was again pushing him back down on the bed. "Cap, he was right where the explosion happened!! Is he here? He was hit! Where is he?"

Dobey's eyes dropped and he took a deep breath. "We don't know where he is, Dave. Hutch is" .. he hesitated.. "We haven't been able to.." he hesitated again.. "locate him yet."

" Wha'da'ya' mean.. locate?? Cap'n Dobey.. he was at the edge of the pier.. why can't you find him?"

"Calm down. I'll tell you what I know so far. Calm down."

As Starsky subsided, Dobey walked to the wall, turned and walked back. "Dave, whoever was in the boats, fired two.. torpedoes or some kind of missiles. They both hit the pier close to where Hutch was. There was a massive explosion, large fire and smaller explosions because of what was in the crates Hutch was behind....."

"And?? Cap.. what??"

"They're still digging through the destruction. They found his gun. It was partially melted. They also found this. " He reached inside his jacket pocket and handed Starsky a plastic bag.

"Hutch's badge." Starsky pulled it out of the plastic bag, noting the strong smell of smoke. The cover was charred and scorched. He was able to pry the wallet open to see the gold badge bent and partially melted. "It's all they've found so far, Dave. They're still looking."

Starsky looked at Dobey with a stunned expression, "Are you sayin'.. " Starsky closed his eyes and took a deep breath. "Cap'n... are you saying.. Hutch is.. Hutch .. is he dead?"

Dobey grabbed the hand Starsky held out. "We don't know for sure, Dave. They're still searching, but the explosion and fire pretty much destroyed that part of the dock."

"Oh, God.. no.. not Hutch.. no.. no .. NOOOOO!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!" Starsky jerked his hand out of Dobey's hand and put his hands over his eyes. Tears began to leak underneath them.

Dobey stepped out of the room and asked a nurse to get the Doctor to give Starsky something.

He walked back to Starsky's side and put his hand on his shoulder. "We aren't sure yet, son. You know Hutch, he's beat so many attempts. He's strong. We have to be strong too."

"You don't understand Cap. We were havin' a fight. About something so stupid. Hutch said he was going to ask for a transfer! Then he saw something and pushed me into the car." Starsky was trying to speak through his sobs. "He told me to get down, and I heard a shot and he was spun away from the car. He rolled behind some crates and told me to get out of there, to get help..... " Starsky looked up at Dobey. "He was so mad at me... and he still saved my life! Cap. He CANT be dead!"

Captain Dobey waited, knowing there was more. Starsky took a couple more deep breaths and tried to get his emotions under control and finished, "He.. he said.. 'I love you, Starsk.. I love you'. I started the Torino and began backing up to get into the alley by the warehouse. I saw him bracing his right hand because he was hit in that shoulder, and he was firing. Giving me cover. Giving me .. time.. It's like.. like he KNEW he wasn't going to make it. OH GOD!!!" Starsky didn't notice when the Dr stepped in and gave him a shot in his left arm.

Dobey stood by him, with his hand on his chest, until the sobs began to fade and Starsky's eyes closed.

### **Chapter 3**

Geri felt her house shake and heard an explosion at the same time. What the heck? She moved to the window facing the ocean, pulled the curtain aside and looked out. Large waves were fanning out from the loading dock a few blocks north of her place. She could see a huge fire burning.

She was about to turn away from the window when something in the water caught her eye. "Oh, my goodness!!" she said to herself. She watched the waves intently, not sure she really had seen what looked like a body. A wave crested and again she saw a body being carried away from the fire, toward her place. She ran to the back door then stopped with her hand on the top lock. Fear warred with years of training and instinct. She took a deep breath and turned the top lock, then the second, then the lock on the door knob. She pulled the door open and quickly ran down the small area of shore line between her house and the ocean.

A quick scan of the ocean revealed the waves calming and for a minute or two, she didn't see anything. There!! A movement! Not a dead body! Whoever was in the water, was trying to swim. She could see a man making feeble attempts, but still attempts. She quickly ran into the water and began to swim toward the man.

As she neared him, she slowed her strong strokes and approached carefully. She knew sometimes people were drowned while trying to help a drowning victim. She swam to within five feet of the man. It was clear he was at the end of his ability to keep himself afloat.

Geri swam up to him from slightly behind him. "Mister? I'm going to help you, ok? Can you hear me?" No response other than the man trying to make one more stroke, which failed. He began to sink beneath the water.

Making a grab for his arm, Geri pulled him up and turned him on his back, putting her arm under his right arm, across his chest and beginning to swim back toward the shore, towing him along.

He was a tall man, powerfully built and it took all her strength to pull him behind her. He wasn't moving or trying to help at all now. She said a quick prayer, "Lord, let him be ok. Give me the strength to get us both back on shore safely."

It seemed to take a lifetime, but was really only a matter of minutes and she was struggling to pull him onto the small area of beach behind her house. She was thankful for the last year of training and effort she had put into making herself as strong as she could be. Without it, there was no way she could have pulled him across the sand almost to her back door.

She quickly checked for a pulse and breathing. Finding both, if weak, she rapidly assessed him for injuries. She started at his legs and worked up. His clothing was charred in places, and she noted small burn marks on his legs and abdomen through the holes made in his clothing by the fire.

"No!" Horrified, she saw blood on the man's right shoulder. She pulled what was left of the coat away from his body and saw a bullet wound about an inch above his collar bone. Her first instinct, as much as she regretted it, was to run back into her house lock the doors and hide herself. But she fought that urge and made herself stay by the injured man. She wasn't that person anymore she mentally reminded herself.

She carefully felt beneath his right shoulder and found an exit wound. He had a lump and bruising forming on his left temple. Instinctively categorizing his injuries, she tapped him on a cheek. "Sir? Can you hear me?" She shook his left shoulder and tried again, "Sir!"

No response, but he began to cough and she turned him onto his left side as carefully as she could. He coughed up some water and when it seemed he was done, she eased him back onto his back. "I have to get you help. I need to call for an ambulance. I'll be right back. Just need to call." She started to stand and was shocked when he grabbed her wrist.

"No. Please? No." Hutch knew there was a reason to stay hidden. Things were just so blurry in his mind right now.

Again she fought the strong urge to defend herself, to run... to protect.

The grip was strong, but not hurtful. "Help.. me... need help... was set up..." Speaking seemed to drain his strength and he let go of her wrist.

She absently rubbed at the area, but not from pain.

A quick look toward the dock, that was still burning, revealed emergency equipment and people swarming the area. She saw one ambulance leaving the area with lights and sirens going. She could easily call 911 and have them take this man off her hands. But the sight of so many people so near, made her want.. no.. NEED to lock herself in her house.

He seemed to be between consciousness and unconsciousness. Firming her resolve and making a decision she said, "Can you stand? Can you help me get you inside my house?" No answer so she put her arms around his shoulders trying to avoid jarring his right one, and began to set him

upright bracing his back with her body. She put her arms around his waist and pulled him as near to the door to her place as she could.

Grateful that there were no steps, she stopped to rest for a minute. She pushed the door open and bent back to her task of getting him inside. "There's going to be a small bump. Bear with me. I'll try as hard as I can not to hurt you." She pulled him over the door sill and over the wood floor to the edge of her couch. She heard him moan with the bumps and the pressure on his shoulder from her pulling him across the floor. But he didn't fight her. She leaned him against the sofa. "I'll be right back."

Geri quickly ran into her bedroom and grabbed a sheet and some blankets. She returned and saw he had slumped forward. She removed the throw pillows from her couch and quickly covered it with a blanket, then a sheet. Kneeling beside the man she said, "Now the hard part. I need to get you on the couch. This is going to hurt. I'm sorry. I'll try to be as gentle as I can."

Balancing her weight, she bent and placed her arms under his shoulders, gripping her wrists in front of him. "On the count of three, ok?" She kept up a steady stream of conversation, not knowing if he heard or not. The side of his head rested on her shoulder and she tightened her grip. "Ok, one... two.. three!!" She pushed with her legs and rose. Using all her strength she was able to get his upper body onto the couch. He moaned and his head moved back and forth. "I know. I'm sorry. I know that hurt." She shifted his upper body as close to the back of the couch as she could then moved to lift his legs onto the couch.

Panting, she took a minute to catch her breath. He had lost one shoe at some point. She removed the other and his socks. Then she picked up a pair of scissors from the end table. Carefully, she began to cut off his jeans. When she had pulled them off of him, she started on his coat and shirt. She hesitated when she saw the empty leather holster. She unbuckled it and managed to remove it without jarring him too much. She would think about why he carried a gun later. Lastly, she cut away his wet underwear. She put a couple of pillows under his feet and a blanket over him so she could leave to get what she would need to clean him up and tend his wounds.

As she returned to her patient with her arms loaded with a basin of warm water, washcloths, dressings and her stethoscope, blood pressure cuff and thermometer she did another quick assessment. Short, somewhat shallow breaths. Skin pale. The wound in his right shoulder seeping blood. She put her supplies on the coffee table, kneeled by the sofa and quickly set to work starting with the gunshot wound.

Geri sat back on her heels and decided she had done all she could at the moment. She had bathed him quickly, dressed his burns and put pressure dressings on his shoulder wounds after carefully cleaning them. His vital signs were ok. Normal for someone in his condition she thought. She had checked his pupil's reaction time and been heartened when they both responded normally. She left the blanket off while she just looked at him for a moment. Long and lean but with sleek muscles, he looked to be in the prime of health despite his injuries. His longish blonde hair and mustache fit him. She remembered his sky blue eyes from when she had checked them. She was sure he broke hearts wherever he went. She felt a blush stain her cheeks as her gaze skimmed over his private area. "Grow up, girl!"

Shaking off that thought she covered him with two blankets to keep him warm. She gazed at him and thought... what am I doing? Why, after all this time did I bring you here, into my home?

And what am I going to do with you now that you are here?

## Chapter 4

Starsky woke the next morning when Captain Dobey walked into his room. He was a bit groggy from whatever shot he had been given the day before. His dark blue gaze zeroed in on Dobey's face. "Hutch? Has Hutch been found?" When Dobey didn't answer and wouldn't look Starsky in the eyes, he steeled himself and said, "What? What don't you want to tell me, Cap?"

Captain Dobey took a deep breath and looked at Starsky. "They found one of Hutch's shoes on the beach late last night. Lab said it had burn marks and blood on it. The blood was Hutch's type."

"That's it? A shoe?" Starsky shook his head. "Maybe Hutch dived in the water and made his way to the beach. Maybe he has amnesia. I need to get out of here and go look for him, Cap!"

"Starsky.... Dave.. there weren't any footprints near where they found the shoe. And with the tides last night there would have been" he paused "if Hutch had made it to the shore. I'm sorry. They've cleared the site of the blast, and haven't found any evidence that Hutch lived through it. The fire was so hot it melted bolts holding the dock together." He looked his Detective right in the eyes, "They think he was killed instantly. They don't think he even knew what hit him."

"No, no Cap'n. There has to be some other reason we haven't found him. There HAS to be. I..I would KNOW if Hutch were dead. I would FEEL it, Cap." Starsky tried to brave it through. Tried to convince Captain Dobey but really was trying to convince himself. He HAD seen how the flames had consumed the area where Hutch had been when he last saw him. He had been so far from the site yet even he had felt the blast of heat.

"Dave. I'm sorry, son. I loved him too. I had hoped, but.. " He watched Starsky close his eyes and turn his head away. "I'm going to call Hutch's parents when I leave here. Your doctor said he might release you tomorrow. Do you want me to come and pick you up?"

"No. I'll.. I'll call a cab. Thanks Cap'n. I need to be alone for a bit. Sorry, I just need some time." Starsky turned back as Dobey started to walk out of the room. "Cap? Would you tell the Hutchinsons.. that I.. that Hutch meant.. " He couldn't go on.

"I know Dave. I know. And they know how much Ken meant to you. But I'll tell them. Do you need anything?" When Starsky shook his head 'no', Dobey left the room, pulling the door closed behind him. He stood outside the door with his hand flat against it. He could hear muffled sobs through the door. He looked down then started to walk down the hall. He paused at a water fountain to get a drink to clear his throat. He would give anything to not have to make the call he had to make now.

## Chapter 5

It was near one in the afternoon when Geri heard the man moving somewhat restlessly on her sofa. She had been curled up in a chair across from him reading. She had checked his vital signs and pupil reactions every hour since she had pulled him from the ocean around nine that morning. With what she found on her checks he was stable, if a little shocky. She had decided if he hadn't shown some signs of waking up by two she would call for help. She really didn't want to do that but would if she had to. She would rather have strangers, even if they were police or EMTs at her house during daylight hours.

As she uncurled from her chair she went to the window facing the dock area and looked out. The fire was still burning and she could see police, firemen and ambulances still in the area. She let the curtain fall back in place and walked back toward the couch. She had taken a quick shower and washed the salty ocean water from her body and hair. She had redressed in jeans and a sweatshirt to help remove the chill her swim in the cold water had seemed to settle on her.

The man wasn't moving much, just his head shifting slightly side to side. Geri picked up her blood pressure cuff and put it on his left wrist. His right wrist had a couple of bad burns on it so she had avoided using it. When she noted that his blood pressure and pulse were better than they had been she breathed a sigh of relief. Hopefully he would wake up and be able to leave on his own power saving her the need to do any more than she had already.

She started to open his left eye to check the pupil's reaction and he turned his head away, moaning. "Mr. Hutchinson? Can you hear me? Kenneth?" When she had been taking his cut up jeans to the trash, she had found his wallet and knew his name was Kenneth Hutchinson. "Ken?" She placed her palm against his cheek and turned his face back toward her. "Open your eyes for me, Kenneth? Let me see those beautiful blue eyes."

Hutch heard a soft voice calling his name and felt a gentle touch on his cheek. Everything seemed so foggy to him. It was like his brain was wrapped in cotton. He heard his name spoken again and tried to push up through the fog. He tried to speak but coughed instead. The soft touch moved from his cheek to brush his hair back from his forehead. He remembered a touch like that from when he was a child and sick. "Mom?" It didn't come out as strong as he wanted it to but the hand remained on his forehead.

"No, Mr. Hutchinson. I'm not your mother. My name is Gerline. Geri. I helped you this morning. You were hurt." Geri took her hand off his face and he turned his head as if to follow her hand. "It's ok, I'm still here. Can you open your eyes for me?" She watched as his eyelids fluttered then opened slightly. She smiled at him. "Good job, Kenneth. Is your vision blurry?"

She gave him a little time to look around, but his gaze came quickly back to her face. She knew what he was seeing if his vision wasn't impaired. An unremarkable face with dark blue eyes, blonde hair, a hesitant smile. "Pre.. tty." He reached a hand toward her face and she had to steel herself not to pull back. She thought she saw his eyes register her almost movement then his fingers were touching her cheek. They shook slightly as he tested the softness he found. "Who.. wh-wh-what...?" She picked up a glass of water that was sitting on the side table and turned the

straw in it toward him. She put her arm behind his head and helped raise him so he could take a sip.

"Slowly. Small sips." He complied and she put the glass back as she helped him lean back against the pillow.

Hutch cleared his throat and looked at her again. "What h-h- happen'd? Where?"

"I am not sure of all that happened. Do you remember anything from this morning?" At the negative shake of his head, she said, "There was some kind of explosion. I saw you in the ocean. You were trying to swim, to keep your head above water."

"H-h-how here?"

"I swam out and pulled you to shore. My place is on the edge of the ocean and I got you in here. I think you might have a concussion, it looks like a bullet wound in your shoulder and you have some small burn areas scattered around. I, um, I was... am a nurse and I did what I could to help you." Geri stopped talking and glanced away from those blue eyes. "I kept checking you every hour and would have called for help if you needed it. But you seemed stable and there was a lot of activity by the docks with the fire following the explosion and I didn't want to take the emergency crews away from there if there wasn't a reason to." She made herself stop, realizing how rapid she had been talking. She took a deep breath and said, "Now that you're awake, I'll call them and they can take you to the hospital."

## **Chapter 6**

Hutch tried to replay everything the woman had said. Something niggled at the back of his mind. Something important. It was just out of his grasp. He shifted on the couch and a shaft of pain shot through his right shoulder. He winced and looked down. There was a dressing covering what he remembered her saying was a bullet wound. "Starsky!! Oh my God, where's Starsky? My partner. Is he here?"

"I'm sorry. I don't know who he is. You were alone in the water. 'Partner'?" She stopped there as 'partner' could have different meanings. She was surprised to realize a small feeling of disappointment that this gorgeous man might have a significant other.

"I'm a detective. My partner and I were going to see an informant. We were set up. Do you have a phone? I need to check in and see about him."

"I do, but it seems the explosion must have cut some of the lines. I tried to call a friend about twenty minutes ago and it was dead. The lines for this side of the bay run along the edge of the dock that was burning. I'm sorry. I...need... I need go to the little store where I shop. It's not far. There are some things I need and I could make a call for you. You're too weak to go too far and I don't want to risk you starting your shoulder wound to bleeding again."

Hutch gave her the number to Metro and told her to ask for Captain Dobey. She was to ask about a Detective Dave Starsky.

"You need to remain as still as possible. It shouldn't take me more than a half hour or forty five minutes to go and be back. Is there anything else you need? The water is here on the table. Small sips still, please. Here, let me turn on the radio for you. Maybe some music will help you relax. Just rest." She turned on the radio to her favorite oldies station picked up her purse and moved toward the door. "I'll hurry, Kenneth."

"Hutch."

"What? I'm sorry, what did you say?" She hesitated by the door.

"Call me Hutch. 's what my partner calls me."

"Ok, Hutch" she gave him a small smile, "I'll be back as quick as I can." She unlocked the locks and slipped out re-locking them from outside.

Hutch closed his eyes and tried to relax. His mind replayed over and over what had happened today. Had Starsky been far enough away from the blasts that he was ok? He thought he had seen the Torino starting to back into the alley behind the warehouse.

Please let Starsky have gotten to safety. He tried to figure out who might have set them up, but his mind didn't want to cooperate with him. He didn't remember much after the first blast hit. He had no idea how he had ended up in the ocean. He glanced around the room he was in just now realizing that it looked like a warehouse of some kind that was converted into living space. Looking at the two windows he noted security bars and that the glass was tinted, probably with one-way coating. Looking more closely he realized how re-inforced the walls seemed. He could barely hear the ocean outside over the sound of Chuck Berry singing "I found my thrill.." That brought a smile to his face, recalling Starsk singing that. The smile faded as the song was interrupted with a news bulletin.

"This is a breaking news story about an explosion and fire by Dock 421. Early reports say two boats fired some kind of missiles at the dock in an attempt to kill two Bay City Detectives. The police aren't releasing any information at this time. But sources, who asked not to be revealed say the two Detectives were scheduled to testify at a high-profile case against one of the largest drug cartel leaders next week.

"Sadly, it is believed both Detectives were killed in the attack. Their names have not been released pending notification of next of kin.

"We will keep you updated as more information becomes available. Now back to all oldies, all the time."

Hutch closed his eyes, stunned. "Starsk... oh God.. no.. Starsky!" He had no idea he was yelling to the empty room. He put his left hand over his eyes, trying to see in his mind where the Torino had been. Surely it had been a safe distance? "Damn." His eyes closed and he rolled his head to

the side. He felt a tear slide out of his eye and squeezed them shut tighter. He allowed himself a few moments to mourn then gathered himself, wrapping his anger around himself.

"I'll get 'em, Starsk. I swear... I'll make them pay."

## Chapter 7

"Huggy? I need you to come pick me up from Memorial. Now."

"Starsky, they lettin' you out already? You were outta it when I was there last time."

"Huggy, just come and get me, k? I'll be out front." Starsky hung up knowing Huggy would be there. He had been in here often enough as a patient and when Hutch...he stopped and took a deep breath.. when Hutch had been in here to know the routines and how to evade the doctors and nurses. He found his clothes in the closet, stripped off the hospital gown and slipped into them. Captain Dobby must have taken his gun and holster while he was in ER. He pulled a dressing off his right hand and used his pocket knife to cut the identification bands off his wrist. Part of the trick was not looking like you belonged IN the hospital in order to walk OUT of it without being stopped. He had to lean against the inside of the door for just a bit as the room was spinning slowly with all his exertions.

He peeked out the door and saw the hallway deserted. He quickly stepped out of his room, shut the door and moved to the middle of the hallway. Moving toward the elevator he punched the down button. He would have preferred to take the stairs but wasn't sure he was up for that just yet. The elevator arrived and he stepped in and to the back. No one else entered and he found himself on the ground floor within minutes. Keeping his head tilted down slightly he stepped out under the portico to wait for Huggy. Within a couple of minutes Huggy pulled up beside where he was standing. "Your chariot awaits."

"Thanks, Hug." He quickly rounded the car and slid in. "Take me to the docks, Huggy. I need to look around. Then I need a ride to the station, Dobby told me they towed my car to impound."

"Starsky, you sure you wanna go down there? Ain't much left of that dock."

"Just drive, Hug, just drive."

The drive was quiet. Each was keeping their thoughts to themselves. Huggy finally broke the silence. "Captain Dobby know you're out?" He quirked an eyebrow at his rider.

"I'll call 'im in a bit. I just need to look around. Hug.... I can't make myself believe it. I don't.. FEEL it. I need to look. To be sure nothing was overlooked." He glanced at Huggy to see his slow nod.

"I can dig it, man." The rest of the ride was spent in silence. There was still yellow police tape around where the explosion had been. Starsky got out when Huggy stopped by the tape. He flashed his badge at the two officers who approached and ducked under the tape.

"Careful, some of the boards aren't safe, Sir."

"Yeah, thanks." He replied absently, gaze focused on the end of the dock. Or what was left of it. God, he thought. Maybe he IS gone? There was nothing that resembled where Hutch had been. Nothing at all. He stepped carefully to the edge of the gaping hole and looked down. He could see the tops of some of the broken support posts and water. Dark green, swirling water. He KNEW divers had searched that water. He KNEW it, but still wanted to dive in and search it himself. He looked to the south, along the shore, eyes straining to see anything that might be his partner. Or any clue as to what might have happened to him. He saw a small warehouse sitting close to the water and briefly thought of making his way to it to see if anyone had any info. But there weren't any cars around that he could see. And he needed to get his own car out so Huggy wouldn't have to drive him around.

He started to walk away then glanced back down the shore line toward that small building. Something...almost like a chill went up and down his back.... It seemed like.... He shook his head and walked back to Huggy's car casting a last look at the building. "Impound, Hug, then I guess I better call Dobey. Have you heard anything?"

"Sorry man. But I'm keepin' my ears open. Soon as I hear something, I'll call."

## **Chapter 8**

Hutch managed to get to a sitting position on the couch. He was stunned. Starsky couldn't be dead. He just couldn't be. He would KNOW. He would feel it. He had to get out of here and go find his partner.

He pulled the blankets off and realized he was naked. He didn't see his clothes as he looked around. Damn. He couldn't walk out of here wearing nothing or just a blanket. He grabbed the blankets and pulled them back over himself as he heard the locks on the door being keyed open.

Watching, he saw the small blonde woman struggle in the door with several sacks in her arms. He would have gotten up to help her if he thought he really could and wasn't naked. She seemed slightly out of breath.

"Ken.. Hutch. You're sitting up!" She walked into the room and set the bags on a table near the couch. "How are you feeling? Are you dizzy? Is your vision clear?" She walked over to him and placed the inside of her wrist against his forehead. "No fever. That's good. I wasn't sure how much water you swallowed out there."

Hutch watched her quickly return to the door to lock all the locks. She looked around the room as if to be sure nothing had been disturbed. She walked back to the table and pulled a newspaper from one of the sacks. "I.. I hurried back because I saw the headlines in the paper. Someone tried to kill you. And your partner. The paper says you are both dead. I'm sorry. If it's true. I.. I got worried.. that someone might have seen me pull you out of the water. They might know you are still alive. I had to be sure you were ok." She stopped, realizing she wasn't giving him time to respond to anything she had said.

"I heard a news report on the radio. I don't believe Starsky is dead. I have to get out there and look for him."

"I can understand that but there are a lot of boats on the water right now. News crews, police, and others. What if the people who did this are out there watching, waiting? I think you should wait. At least until tomorrow when you're stronger. When there aren't so many... people around." She went back to the table and lifted a sack and walked back toward him. "I got you some clothes at the thrift. I had to cut yours off, they were burned and torn. I guessed at the sizes." Rambling again. Something she didn't usually do. "Let me help you to the bathroom. Or I can help you dress...?" Her face heated from a blush.

Hutch tucked the blanket around his waist and tried to stand. The woman... Geri... was instantly at his side. With her hands at his waist he was finally able to stand, if a bit wobbly. She shifted to his left side and he put his arm across her shoulders. She held the bag of clothes in her left hand as they made their way slowly across the room to the bathroom. He noted it was done in the same neutral colors as the living room had been. She closed the cover over the stool and helped him to sit.

"There was a pack of new underwear. They may be the wrong size but I thought it would be more comfortable than going commando.:" She stopped, blushing again. She used to tease like this. Before...

"They'll be fine. Thank you. I'll pay you back for them." Hutch pulled a shirt and jeans and the package of underwear from the sack and put them over the sink. He saw socks and some moccasin-type shoes at the bottom of the sack. There was also a comb, toothbrush and paste and deodorant. Geri was pretty and efficient.

Geri moved back into the room and said. "Move slow. You could be dizzy. Call me if you need help. I'm going to make you something to eat. I won't be far away." She closed the door and moved to pick up the grocery bags and headed toward her kitchen.

## **Chapter 9**

Geri set the food she had prepared on the table. She kept her hearing concentrated on the bathroom where Hutch was getting dressed. She had heard the shower start and was concerned that he had the strength to shower. She heard it go off after a few minutes and heard the commode flush. She was setting glasses of juice on the table when the door opened.

She hurried over to lend her strength to him as they moved to the table. He sank into a chair with a soft groan. "Man that helped. I feel better. I tried to keep my dressings dry but you may have to check them."

"Let's eat then I'll check them." She looked at him. The jeans were a bit big but the t-shirt was snug on him. It defined his muscles and reminded her of how.. big... he was. She had to remind herself that he was a Detective. One of the good guys. "I wasn't sure what you liked to eat but I thought it should be something on the lighter side."

"It looks great, thank you. Actually, it looks just like what I eat all the time." She had fixed a salad with yogurt and fresh fruit in it. She had a green salad with sprouts and a light dressing. And she had thinly sliced some roast beef to pair with bread she had made the day before. "You didn't have to go to this much trouble."

"It was no trouble. I made the roast and bread yesterday and picked up the salad items when I went to the store today." She watched as he started eating. His manners surprised her a bit. Then again, his entire demeanor seemed to proclaim him a gentleman.

Hutch took a bite of the sandwich he had made and groaned. "This is great. You make your own bread all the time?" He took another bite and turned his sky blue eyes on her.

"Yes." She glanced down then back up at him. "I like the aroma as it bakes. My mom used to make bread all the time. It makes me remember her. It was just her and me. My dad didn't want the responsibility of a wife and kid. I lost her three years ago."

"I'm sorry. Both my folks are still living. They're in Minnesota."

"I can see you there, in Minnesota. Wrapped in furs with a battle axe hanging from one hand and a long spear in the other. A Viking helmet on your head...." She trailed off... and just looked at him, her face flushing red. "I.. I'm sorry. I read too much and dabble in writing. I guess I let my imagination carry me away. I'm sorry. I didn't mean to.."

Hutch interrupted her. He was charmed by her blush and her description of how she saw him. "It's ok. I don't mind." He chuckled. "I guess there is some Viking blood in my family. Starsky calls me a blonde blintz.... " He stopped, closing his eyes against the pain that swamped him. It seemed to settle in his heart, making it feel so heavy. Heavy enough to break.

"Hey, Hutch. The paper said YOU were killed. That's not true. Maybe he's still alive too." She reached out and laid her hand over his on the table. It was an instinctive move.

He opened his eyes and turned his hand over to grasp hers. He nodded. "You're right. And I DO believe he's still alive.

Geri had frozen when he grabbed her hand. She tried not to show her unease as she gently removed her hand from his grasp.

Concerned blue eyes met cautious ones. "Geri, I'm sorry. I didn't mean to make you feel uncomfortable. I've noticed you're a little skittish. And your house seems very secure." He waited a second and continued. "Are you afraid of me?"

She averted her eyes for the briefest of seconds then met his gaze. "No, Hutch. Not you." She remembered her therapist telling her not to shy away from talking about her fears. About what she had gone thru. She had told Geri that sharing, telling her story would lessen its' hold on her. Maybe it was time she opened up to someone.

"A little over a year ago I was on a date with a man I met where I worked. He seemed nice. He was so handsome and I enjoyed being with him. We went out to eat and afterwards he said he

wanted to stop by a friend's house. I agreed." She stopped to take a drink of juice. "He drove into a part of town that I had never been to. It was dark and seedy looking. A lot of bars. People just standing around on the streets. I was uncomfortable and asked him where we were going. He said it was a surprise.

"He pulled up by this motel and reached in to help me out of the car. But his grip hurt. It was more like he drug me out. I tried to pull away but I couldn't. He took me into a room and there were two other men there." She couldn't tell the details. She just couldn't. "They all raped me. He pulled a knife and was going to kill me. I was screaming the entire time and fighting but I couldn't fight off all three of them. Someone heard my screams and called the police. They were arrested and sent to prison. But I... I..."

"Hey.. it's ok... You don't have to tell me any more. I'm sorry. I wish.."

"I'm a nurse. I worked in the ER. But I couldn't go back. I was scared of too much. Therapy helped some but I just couldn't face it. I had money and lucked into this warehouse. I had it redone and moved in here. I don't go out much, never at night. I have some scars from the knife. I guess I retreated from the world to protect myself.

"But when I looked out my window and saw you, swimming, trying to save yourself.... I just HAD to help you. I couldn't let you drown. I guess.. I guess maybe it's time I rejoined life." She had tears running down her face by the time she finished.

Hutch got slowly to his feet and moved toward Geri. "I want to hug you. Nothing else. I just want to hold you. Will you let me?" Hutch stood there, arms out and waited.

Geri looked at him. Looked in his eyes. So blue, so clear. Nothing threatening there at all. She stood and walked into his arms which closed loosely around her pulling her gently against that hard chest. She laid her head over his heart and with that steady beat so comforting, let loose and cried. Silent tears carrying away her hurts, her fears, the terror she had continued to carry. She let it all pour out as he just stood and held her rubbing his large hands up and down her back. After a few minutes she heard his voice over the beat of his heart, "Shhh.. it's ok.. it's going to be ok.... Shhhhhh.. You are a lot stronger than you think You left your sanctuary to swim out and save me. it's ok.. "

She pulled away and wiped the tears from her cheeks. "Thank you. I think I needed that." She brushed at the wet area on his t-shirt. Sorry. I got your shirt all wet."

"It's ok. It was worth it. And ~I~ am the one who needs to say thank you. Thank you for saving my life, for patching me up, for giving me shelter. Thank you, Geri." Hutch pulled her carefully in for another brief hug.

"Now, with more of your help, if you will give it, I need to find Starsk. Are you in?"

"Yes, I'm in. All the way. It's time I got my life back. And how better to do that than to give you back your life... your partner."

## Chapter 10

Starsky stared at the Torino. He had forgotten how many bullets had hit it and the damage that had been done. "You need something to drive until you get her fixed?" Starsky turned to the impound officer at the question.

"Yeah, I guess so. Can you call Merl and have him tow it over there?" At the man's nod, Starsky said, "Thanks, What have you got that's ready to go?" The officer grinned and motioned for Starsky to follow him. The officer led him to a car with a tarp over it. He pulled the tarp off and waved at the midnight blue paint job on a shiny Camero. "WOW. She's a beauty. What's the story?"

"Picked up in a drug bust. It's gonna be sold in a couple of months but I don't think anyone would mind you takin' it til the Torino is up and runnin' again. I uh, put a police band radio in it when I saw what the Torino looked like." He grinned at Starsky, turned and ran into the building. He came out with keys that he handed to Starsky. "Got a full tank of gas. I checked it over closely and she's good to go."

"Thanks Matt." Starsky shook the officer's hand and climbed into the sleek sports car. He started it up and sat for a few seconds. He put the car in gear and drove out of the lot heading toward Metro. He had some quick research to do and had to talk to Captain Dobey.

When he got to the station he stopped by R and I before heading upstairs to Dobey's office. He hoped by the time Dobey had finished chewing him out R and I would have what he had requested on his desk.

He had no sooner stepped into the squad room when Dobey stepped out of his office and yelled, "STARSKY! My office. NOW!" He walked slowly toward the door and slid into a chair in front of Dobey's desk.

"Cap, I know, ok, I know. But I had to get outta there. I have to do everything I can to find Hutch. He's not dead, Cap. I KNOW he isn't. I gotta feeling. I have to try, Cap, so yell all you want but make it quick so I can get out there and find my partner."

Captain Dobey stared at Starsky. "Dave," he sighed and shook his head "OK, get to it. Let me know what I can do to help."

"Thanks, Cap." He got up and walked back into the squad room in time to see Lacy from R and I put an armful of maps, charts and other information on top of the desk he shared with Hutch. He nodded thanks to her as she smiled at him and left.

He spread out the maps and photos and files and started looking for.. well for whatever would point him to his missing partner. He started with maps of the small dock area. It was an older dock and used mainly for local shipping. A lot of the warehouses had been abandoned or converted to storage area. The one where they were supposed to have met the snitch was empty. He looked at photos, both pics taken before and after the explosion. Seeing the destruction of the dock where Hutch had last been made his stomach queasy. He read the reports of the divers and first-responders. Nothing.

He leaned back in his chair and tried to figure out how Hutch might have survived. He HAD to have gone into the water. No prints on the beach. No body. No John Does turning up at any nearby hospitals. He shuffled through the files and found one with the tides schedule in it. The tide had been coming in with a somewhat southern flow. He grabbed the maps again and looked at what was south of the destroyed dock. There was a small collection of houses around an even smaller shopping area. A couple of the warehouses had been converted into apartments and small stores. As he looked at each building he jotted down what it was on a piece of paper.

When he had listed all the closest ones he cross-referenced them against property lists. He spent over an hour and was no closer to knowing anything than before he started. He picked up a picture shot from the bay, of the shoreline. His eyes ticked off each building and what it was. This wasn't getting him anywhere!! He tossed the picture on his desk and rubbed his eyes with the heels of his hands. The answer HAD to be here. He KNEW it. He had missed something.

Starsky picked the photo up again. He started to set it back down when his eyes picked out the small warehouse he had seen from the dock. He quickly scanned his notes but didn't find any reference to what it was or what it was used for. Rechecking all the files he still didn't have a clue. He picked up the phone and dialed R and I. "Lacy, there's a small warehouse just south of the docks. I can't find any information on it. Can you get me anything more?"

A few minutes later Lacy called him back to tell him it had been converted into a private residence and the owner was a woman who listed no information other than her name. There was no listed phone number. He grabbed his coat and ran from the squad room. About fifteen minutes later he was pulling up a short distance from the small building and getting out of the Camero. He checked that his gun was loose in his holster and started down the embankment to the small shore area. He felt that 'pull' again.

When he reached the shore he looked at the house, carefully. There were lattice bars on the windows which were tinted to prevent anyone from being able to see inside. A door with two heavy-duty deadbolts sat almost on the ground. He hadn't noticed any other cars where he had parked.

Pulling out his gun, he slid against the building and knocked on the door with the barrel of the gun.

## **Chapter 11**

Geri and Hutch both turned toward the door when they heard the knock. Hutch motioned her to silence and put himself between her and the door. He recognized the sound as that of a gun barrel hitting the metal door. They had just been getting ready to leave, to find out what happened to Starsky. Hutch had pulled on a baggy black jacket and the moccasins. She had given Hutch a floppy hat to hide his long blonde hair and sunglasses to try to disguise him, in case the killers were still close and looking.

She motioned for him to follow her. They quietly worked their way to the back of the house. When they were far enough from the door she risked a whisper to tell him, "There's an

emergency exit at the back. I.. I .. didn't want to ever be trapped. The door is hidden in the back wall. We can get out that way." They moved to the back of the house.

Starsky thought he heard a slight noise. It sounded like it was moving away from the door. He quickly looked around and decided to move toward the back of the building. He silently crept toward the rear.

When they got to the back door Hutch moved Geri behind him and reached under the jacket for his gun, forgetting he had lost it. Geri moved in front of him and whispered, "It's ok. Follow me. We'll go to the right and into the next building over. It's a bunch of small shops and we can get lost there. Trust me, Hutch, I know what I'm doing." At his nod she eased the door open and stepped out. Hutch looked over her head and scanned the area. He saw a dark blue Camero in the lot but no one around.

They moved out of the building and Hutch put his hand on Geri's shoulder.

"Freeze! Let the woman go and put your hands up!" Hutch felt a gun shoved into his back. His first thought was how to get himself and Geri out of this.

Neither Hutch nor the gunman was quite sure what happened next.

Geri swung around Hutch pushing him out of the way and with a swift, agile kick, sent the gun flying from the attacker's hand. As he grabbed his hand and yelled she landed a punch to his nose and another to his abdomen. His nose started to bleed profusely.

"OWWW!!!"

She dropped to the ground and used a sweeping kick to knock his feet out from under him. As soon as he was on the ground she scrambled to his head, lifted him onto her lap and put a choke hold on him.

"HUTCH!! Get his gun!!!"

Hutch just stood there stunned. Looking at her and his partner on the ground.

He started laughing and couldn't stop. He laughed so hard he had to sit down on the ground. Tears were streaming down his face as he pointed at them.

"Hutch!! Get the gun!!!"

Geri wrapped her legs around the gunman's waist with a heel resting with pressure against his crotch. She stared at Hutch trying to figure out what was wrong with him.

Starsky froze then took in as deep a breath as he could without causing himself further damage. Thru the choke hold he said, "Uh, Partner, you wanna call off your pit bull?"