



All That Mattered

by

Jane

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Disclaimer: They're not mine, except in my head and heart.

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"Ever think about it, Starsk?"

Starsky stretched and curled back against Hutch's body. Barely awake enough to manage a quick dinner and shower, he was finally warm and nearly asleep, and here was Hutch wanting to talk.

"Bout what?"

"Bein' with someone else."

"Who're you talkin' about, blondie? Don't want anyone else."

Hutch sighed across Starsky's ear, and swallowed hard enough for Starsky to hear.

"Something wrong, Hutch?"

"No, no, nothing's wrong, Starsk, I was just thinking."

Uh-oh. "Yeah, so you said, about someone else. And nothing's wrong." Starsky took his turn at sighing. Sleep had lost its priority. No way in hell was he going to sleep and leaving this 'someone else' issue hanging. "Talk to me, Hutch."

The arms holding Starsky tightened, and Hutch spoke quietly, almost apologetically, into the dark room.

"It's just that you and me, well, neither one of us has done this with anyone else. I...I don't mean women, Starsk. Don't you ever wonder what it would be like? I mean, with another man? Someone besides me?"

"Nope." He could feel Hutch's eyes boring into the back of his head, trying to decide if he believed him. "This is your game, blondie, sure as hell isn't mine. No, Hutch, never. Now, you wanna tell me what the hell this is all about? You not happy with me any more?"

"Oh, Starsk, no, that's not it at all, babe. Aww, shit, I'm going about this all wrong. You see, I met this guy..."

Starsky stiffened and started to pull away, but Hutch just held on tighter and swore at himself under his breath.

"Starsk, please, stop. It's not what it sounds like. I'm not..."

"Suppose you just tell me whatever the hell it is you're trying to say, Hutch, so I can decide exactly where it is I wanna sleep tonight. Because right now, I think a different bed, at the very least, sounds pretty fuckin' good."

"Okay, okay, I'm sorry. Starsk, turn on your back? Please? I want to look at you when I talk." Starsky pushed away from Hutch and jerkily positioned himself on his back, roughly pulling blankets up to cover his naked body, not wanting to share a damn thing with this sudden stranger.

"Talk, Hutch. I'm tired and I want to sleep, so just tell me what the hell is goin' on."

"Starsk, there's nothing going on. Like I said, I just got to wondering what sex would be like with another

man and if you ever wondered the same thing. It has nothing to do with how I feel about you. I love you. Only you, babe. And I'm not trying to tell you that I'm going to go out and experiment, it's not that at all."

Hutch took another deep breath, hoping against hope that the tense lover beside him would hear him out without slugging him. Deciding to just get it over with, he grabbed the hand closer to him and let out the rest of his thoughts in a rush.

"I met a guy at the bookstore--he works there--and we got to talking. He's just a guy, Starsk, gay and alone right now. I don't even remember how the topic came up, but it did and he told me he's only had one lover and he's been wondering what it will be like with someone else. I told him about us and one thing led to another and that's why I brought it up to you. I don't just want to have sex with him, Starsk, not just me. I want **us** to have sex with him, you and me together. You know, a threesome."

Starsky's eyes glinted black and Hutch's hand was pushed away. Starsky resumed his position on his side, seeking the edge of their bed, as far from Hutch as he could get.

"You done, Hutch?"

Hutch stared at the muscular back turned to him. Starsky had pulled the blankets with him, covering his legs and ass, curling his hands in the fabric under his chin. His back remained exposed, muscles tense and still, telling Hutch hands off.

"Yeah, I'm done, Starsk. It was just an idea. I'm sorry, I won't bring it up again."

Hutch stayed on his own half of the bed, each man listening for the other to fall asleep. Starsky went first, giving Hutch the last thought for the night. Starsky had stayed in their bed. The idea hadn't driven him away.

*_*_*

Habit had him reaching for Starsky and finding Starsky's side of the bed empty. *Damn.* The scent of brewing coffee wafted into the bedroom and he heard the shower running. *That's better...* Further exploration of Starsky's side of the bed, the side with all the blankets, he noted and shivered, revealed still warm sheets and eased Hutch's mind. *Good, that's good. At least he stayed in our bed the whole night.* Starsky's enthusiastic singing joined the sounds of running water, and that and the warm bed and morning coffee brewing cradled Hutch with cherished familiarity and he gave himself a swift mental kick in the ass. *What kind of idiot risked all that mattered for something that mattered not at all?*

Grabbing a cup of coffee, Hutch slipped into the bathroom. Starsky was practicing scales now, water gargling in his throat enhancing the higher notes and effectively drowning out Hutch's presence. He peed, smiling at the silhouette washing behind the drawn curtain, and when Starsky's head dipped under the water flow, Hutch climbed into the tub and leaned back against the damp tiles and waited to be noticed. The mass of drenched curls reared back and shook and Starsky stopped singing. Stopped moving, too.

"That you, blondie?"

"Yeah, babe, it's me. Mornin'. Brought you coffee."

Starsky turned and Hutch passed him the cup and studied the body before him while Starsky sipped the coffee. The heat of the water had blushed Starsky's skin and he looked healthy and virile and damn sexy. Water splashed over his shoulders and its flow straightened and directed his body hair downward, tiny rivulets running over his nipples and down his belly to find and drip from his sac. That sac that hung low from his body, soft from the heat in the shower, the balls secreted away within prominent and distinct.

Starsky's cock hung low, too. Low, long, and filling. Water dripped from its tip, and Hutch was suddenly thirsty for it.

"Missed you in bed this morning."

"Yeah?"

"Yeah."

Hutch moved in and Starsky allowed the coffee cup to be taken from his hands. Allowed Hutch to turn him so that the water was at Hutch's back and his own back leaned against the tiles. Hutch started with his mouth, the first sweet kiss of the day flavored with coffee and a slight soapiness from Starsky's shampoo. Starsky's tongue was lazy and delicious in his mouth, dancing slowly with his. Hutch took the lead in their waltz, coaxing smooth strokes along each other's tongues and teeth, tiny steps on palates and lips. He left Starsky's mouth, taking the sides of his neck, drinking the water that ran from his hair, lapping down his chest to his nipples. He spent a long time there, at Starsky's nipples. Tasting wine as he nipped and sucked the dark areolae into his mouth, rolling each tiny nipple in turn in his teeth, and biting the way Starsky liked to be bitten.

Hutch centered his mouth on Starsky's chest, sliding his lips and hands over the slick body, traveling downward as he lowered himself to his knees. Starsky's cock loomed before him, deep dusky-rose rising from the nest of black curls that framed it. Hutch pressed Starsky's cock up against his belly, putting his mouth to the juncture of cock and sac and sucking, feeling the very root of Starsky's erection deep down in his scrotum, pulling the suede skin into his mouth, rolling it between his lips and releasing it, moving lower until his lips found Starsky's balls. One at a time he pulled them into his mouth, teasing with his teeth, sucking them as far back toward his throat as he could. Starsky thrust his pelvis toward Hutch, encouraging his action, willing his balls to disappear down Hutch's throat the way his cock did when Hutch sucked him. Hutch knew what Starsky liked, just how much pain he needed to balance the intensity of pleasure. Hutch knew when to take Starsky's cock in his mouth, too.

Starsky watched from above. Watched his skin disappear into Hutch's broad mouth, watched Hutch's large hand palm his cock against his belly so he could get at his balls. Starsky loved having Hutch get at his balls, loved the feel of Hutch's tongue washing him and his mouth sucking just hard enough to hurt, then releasing and letting everything that felt good take over again. Hutch's hair molded to his head in the shower, turning to deep sand, inviting Starsky's fingers to sift through it and grab hold. And that's when Hutch took Starsky's cock in his mouth. When Starsky started to play with his hair, using it to guide Hutch where he wanted him--pulling Hutch's mouth off his sac and guiding him up to the tip of his penis. Hutch took him whole, brought Starsky's cock down his throat and held him there, throat muscles, tongue, and teeth all teasing their guest. Starsky held Hutch's head still as his cock pulsed and said its own hello. When he started to fuck Hutch's mouth, he started slowly, watching as his cock moved in and out, pulling out farther to counter the depth of each thrust, exposing, then burying more of his long shaft with each movement. Finally, when the ridge of his glans bumped against the back of Hutch's teeth, he pumped harder--long, sweet strokes to the back of Hutch's throat. His right hand released Hutch's hair and moved to caress his throat before stopping under Hutch's chin and pulling up, halting movement and startling Hutch.

"Hutch?"

Starsky didn't withdraw, and Hutch could only answer question with question with his eyes. Eyes that widened in surprise as Starsky slipped two fingers into Hutch's mouth to join his cock. Not uncomfortable, but full beyond what he was used to. Different. Starsky didn't say anything else, but his eyes smoldered black-blue on Hutch's as he pushed cock and fingers to the back of Hutch's mouth, his cock traveling farther, drawing back to meet the ends of his fingers and repeating the motion harder and faster until he shouted for Hutch and came. Even as he swallowed Starsky's cum, Hutch felt Starsky play his fingers along

his own cock, the movement foreign against Hutch's tongue, but a feeling he realized he was enjoying and wanted more of--Starsky's cock and more in his mouth.

Dammit! Hutch realized what Starsky had done. Knew that Starsky knew he knew. A little variety symbolic of a third person. *What next, Starsk?* He milked Starsky's softening sex, licked Starsky's fingers clean one at a time and sat back on his haunches to wait, his own erection painfully hard between his thighs, eyes glued on his lover's face. Starsky got his bearings back and reached for Hutch, pulling him into his arms, feeling Hutch's cock huge on his belly. He traded places with Hutch, turning him to face the wall, the shower gone tepid, contrasting sharply with the heat he pressed his chest to. Reaching around Hutch's middle, he grasped his cock and began to masturbate him. Slow, hard strokes at first, pulling Hutch's foreskin up and over his weeping glans, using the fluid to turn his touch to silk, pressing his thumb over Hutch's slit, little twists added to his strokes as he pumped more quickly. When Hutch's cock swelled and Starsky's hand could barely contain it, Starsky found Hutch's anus with his other hand and slipped in his long middle finger. Hutch cried out and pressed back hard, helping the invading finger find its mark. Chanting Starsky's name, his hips moved in chorus with Starsky's hand and finger, body freezing in place as he came, splashing the tile wall before him, his cock and ass throbbing from Starsky's touching.

Minutes passed before Starsky turned him and washed him, Hutch limp and cooperative under the now cool spray of water. Starsky wrapped them both in towels, petting and soothing Hutch, taking the damp head against his shoulder, almost dancing in the small confines of the bathroom.

"Hutch? Wanna lay down for a while? I'm gonna run out and grab a paper and some stuff for the car, be back in an hour or so, 'kay?"

Bed sounded very inviting. Hutch doubted he would ever understand where Starsky was finding his energy that morning. He was led to the bed and tucked in and kissed thoroughly enough to warrant an apology and promise of later when his fledgling erection tented the sheets. Starsky didn't bother to hide his own half-hard cock, dressing in front of Hutch in a very Starskyish reverse striptease, tucking himself in as his curtain call, drawn out and dramatic about the whole thing.

Starsky stopped at the bedroom door.

"Hutch?"

"Hmm, what, Starsk?"

"What's his name?" So soft Hutch could hardly hear him.

"What? Oh, babe...don't."

"Not gonna do anything, Hutch. Just want to know his name."

"Starsk..."

"Hutch..."

"All right, shit, Ian. Ian Quinn. Don't..."

Starsky was already gone, the front door closing and locking behind him.

*_*_*

Rem's Books was located in the small town of Burris, a twenty minute drive south of Bay City. Starsky covered the drive in fourteen minutes flat. He and Hutch had come upon the place months ago while waiting

for an informant to meet them at the tiny cafe next door. The informant surprised them and showed on the dot, and they found themselves with an hour of allotted time to kill. Rem's filled the whole hour. Old, out-of-publication paperbacks, reams of magazines, and everything current under the sun, left them thirty dollars poorer and in a hurry to finish their work day. Hutch teased Starsky all the way back to Bay City about one of his chosen books--a somewhat sleazy looking paperback guaranteed to be oozing with gay sex. Starsky teased back at home that night, shoulder to shoulder in bed with Hutch, reading carefully selected passages to his lover, patiently and repeatedly removing Hutch's hand from his body until he was finished reading.

"That was good, huh, Hutch? I'll read ya some more tomorrow. 'Nite, buddy."

Starsky rolled onto his side, turned off the light, and as if the words he had just read aloud did nothing for him, looked for all the world as if he were going to sleep. Hutch stared at Starsky's back, mouth moving to speak, hands desperate to touch, cock begging for attention. It was his frustrated groan that finally got Starsky to roll back over and face him.

"You okay, Hutch? Thought I heard you moan or something."

"Starsky!"

"Yeah, babe?"

"You just...we're not...I thought..."

"Thought what, Hutch?" There it was, Starsky's best 'who me?' looking Hutch right in the eye.

Starsky lost the fight not to grin. First the tug of a smile, then his lower lip caught by teeth that failed to convince it to behave, and then the grin that told Hutch in no uncertain terms that he had been had.

"Damn you! Get over here, Starsk. Someone needs to wipe that shit-eating grin off your face."

"Sure, Hutch, any special way you want to accomplish that?"

Hutch accomplished for a good hour. With lips and tongue and cock. From that night forward, bedtime stories became the sole responsibility of Starsky.

"Can I help you find something?"

Starsky was brought out of his daydream by a soft, feminine voice belonging to a young woman with a feather duster in hand. Starsky recognized her from one of his and Hutch's many visits to Rem's, and briefly entertained and then dismissed the thought of asking her if she knew Ian Quinn.

"No, no, thank you. Just browsing." *Yep, browsing for Ian.* Starsky picked out a few magazines and headed for the checkout counter, pausing to grab a new paperback Hutch had mentioned buying next time they visited Rem's. *Probably gonna need something to make up with when I get home.* Setting his purchases on the counter, Starsky fished out his wallet and looked up at the clerk waiting on the customer before him. Ian. Spelled out on his name tag. Auburn hair cropped short, auburn goatee, tiny diamond stud in his right ear. Hutch's height, slender, lots of freckles. An ordinary man. Not an Adonis or particularly handsome, dressed simply in jeans and shirt. Ordinary. Starsky tucked his wallet away and pulled out his checkbook. The one with his and Hutch's names on the checks. His turn came and he exchanged hellos with this man Hutch had suggested share their bed. Share them. His purchase was totaled and he wrote out a check and handed it to Ian Quinn.

Ian Quinn didn't get embarrassed or feign ignorance. Ian Quinn stuck his hand out to Starsky and introduced himself.

"You're Ken's friend. He told me a great deal about you the other night. I'm Ian. Ian Quinn."

The hand that shook Starsky's was surprisingly strong, its grip damn near painful.

"Dave Starsky. Hutch told me about you, too." *Way more than I think I wanted to know, thank you.*

"Hutch?"

"I call him Hutch." *Easy, Starsky, no feelings yet, one way or the other, relax.*

"I see. Hutch, huh? Suits him. Well...he and I talked about getting together for dinner. Interested? Maybe Friday?"

Starsky was taken aback by the invitation. Hutch hadn't mentioned getting together with this guy for dinner. Only sex. He had to look away from Ian's unwavering gaze when he realized Hutch had been painfully honest with him. Hutch wasn't going to build up a friendship with this guy and then spring the 'threesome' idea. Hutch had told Starsky pointblank what it was all about, left the outcome up to Starsky because Hutch would never pressure him into the threesome, no matter how appealing it was to Hutch. Using Starsky--or even Ian for that matter--was simply not something Hutch would do.

"Friday? Let's see how our week goes...Hutch or I will get back to you. Okay to call you here?"

"Sure, Dave, anytime. Nice to meet you, I'll talk to you later."

Ian Quinn watched Starsky all the way to his car. Studied the curly hair and broad shoulders, the denim clad ass, the swagger in his walk. When the Torino was out of sight, he grabbed a piece of scratch paper and copied down two names, one address, and a telephone number. Very grateful for the tall counter that hid his hard-on from the view of the next customer.

Dave Starsky was just what he dreamed of.

*_*_*

Hutch was busy getting lunch together when Starsky returned. Not bothering to turn around to say hello, the cold shoulder he gave Starsky an iceberg in their small kitchen. Starsky took a seat on the counter and waited. Hutch would have to talk first. *After all, Starsky reasoned with himself, it was his idea in the first place.*

"Satisfied?" Hutch was definitely pissed.

"Bout what, Hutch?" Starsky was defiantly obtuse.

"You know damn well about what! What the hell were you thinking going to Rem's? You didn't have to do that, Starsky."

"Sure I did."

"What the hell for?!"

"See what I was up against."

"You're not up against anyone, Starsk. I told you, I was just curious and wondered if you ever were, too. End of story."

"No, Hutch, not quite."

"Meaning?"

"Ian wants us to join him for dinner Friday. Told him we'd get back to him."

"Fuck."

"Not right away. I mean, I don't even know the guy."

"Starsk? What are you getting at?"

Starsky didn't have a clue how to say what he wanted to say, but however it came out, he wanted Hutch in his arms when he said it. "Come here, would you, Hutch?" A very brief standoff. A matter of seconds including the time it took Hutch to cross the room. Starsky gathered his lover close.

"Babe? When you first brought up this threesome idea, I was pretty pissed. At least I thought I was pissed. But now I think...I think what I really was, was scared. Scared that you wanted someone instead of me. You know, like I didn't do it for you anymore. But that's not it, is it?"

"No, Starsk, that's not it at all. You do it for me. Christ, Starsk, I love you."

"I know you love me, Hutch. And maybe it's because I know you love me that I went to Rem's today. I'm not too sure I understand where you're coming from, but we can talk about it. Right now that's as far as I'm willing to take it. Just talk, Hutch."

"Okay, babe. Just talk. After lunch?"

"After lunch. Okay."

They both knew they ate lunch. Maybe someday they would remember what they had. But not today. Starsky took one end of the sofa, Hutch the other. Lovers, best friends, years of knowing. Each more shy than a boy on his first date. A throat was cleared, a foot shoved aside to make more room for a long leg, heavy sighs sounded from both ends of the sofa.

"Hutch? Go ahead, would you please? We're not gonna get anywhere like this. Just talk to me, tell me what got this idea in your head."

"Okay, okay, I'll try. That I'm not too sure about, Starsk. Just something that drifted in one day and took hold." Hutch took a deep breath and brushed his hair back from his forehead before he continued.

"Babe...before we found each other sexually, we had threesomes...you and me and a girl, or two girls and one of us. I always found it to be a turn-on and I guess I just wondered what it would be like to have another man with you and me. Starsk, I've had this fantasy for a long time, long before I met Ian Quinn."

"You never said anything."

"Nope, sure didn't. Took me a long time to bring it up to you--remember, Starsk? I went down there alone to pick up those books you wanted for your birthday. Anyway, it might never have come up at all if I hadn't seen a book on the counter at Rem's. I think Ian was reading it and set it down to wait on somebody. It was a gay sex manual kind of book, opened to a page with drawings of three men together. Ian saw me looking at it and started to apologize. I told him it was nothing I hadn't seen before. He came right out and asked me,

Starsk, asked if I was gay. I don't know why I even answered, but I told him I was. I was comfortable with him, babe. He started telling me about his lover who had just left him, and I told him about you and how I would feel if you left. He said he was lonely, but afraid to start anything new because he didn't want to get hurt again. And then he told me how much he missed sex, and that his lover had been his only one. And I told him you were my only and I was yours, too. He asked me if I ever wondered if I was missing anything."

Hutch stopped and held his hand out to Starsky. This would be a whole lot easier holding Starsky in his arms. At least he could keep him from running away.

"Starsk? Let me hold you?"

Starsky moved between Hutch's legs, resting his chest against Hutch's, his face hiding against the side of Hutch's neck. Hutch was actually shaking. And Hutch was hard. Starsky pretended not to notice.

"Okay, Hutch, keep going. You left off telling him you were my only."

"Yeah...he asked me what I asked you last night in bed. If I ever wondered what it would be like with another man. Maybe I should have lied and walked out, but I didn't, Starsk. I...I told him I had. I also told him I would never cheat on you."

"Makes what you're thinkin' about doin' kind of hard to do, doesn't it Hutch? The cheating part?"

"I don't think so, Starsk. If, and I know it's a huge if, we and Ian ever got together to do this, it would be something we all three agreed to do together." Hutch's voice went soft in Starsky's ear. "Babe? When you do my ass with a vibrator and suck me off at the same time, or I take your ass and jerk you off? Every time we do those things, I imagine there's another guy with us. This morning when you slipped your fingers in my mouth with your cock--that was the best ever, feeling you feeling yourself with your fingers against my tongue. You were showing me what it would be like with two lovers, weren't you, love?"

"I...dammit, Hutch."

Hutch's erection could no longer be denied. Pretending not to notice or not, Starsky's own hard-on was pointing it out.

"Yeah, babe." Hutch ran the tips of his fingers down Starsky's body, teasing him, and whispered his words back to him. "Dammit, Hutch', huh? Didn't you think I'd figure that out, Starsk? Lift up for me? I want to hold your cock while I tell you more. Is that all right with you?"

"Ever think it wouldn't be, babe?"

Jeans adjusted, and Starsky's fully engorged penis freed and captured by one of Hutch's large hands, Hutch continued.

"I want to watch, Starsk, watch you take a cock in your mouth. Want to watch one sink into your ass, and then I want to sink into the guy who's inside of you. I want to taste another man, feel his body. Everything we do, Starsk, I just want to watch it all and do it all with another man and you. Always with you. It'd be okay with me, because I love you and know you love me, and we would have agreed between the two of us to try it. If you say no, that's it. I can always imagine it, like I've been doing. I don't need Ian Quinn or anyone else in my life for love, you will always be enough for me. It's a fantasy, babe. I'm just curious, Starsk. Don't you ever get curious?"

There was no response from Starsky, not just then, but his cock pulsed in Hutch's hand and he shifted his body, pushing Hutch back and on his side, spooning with him. Hutch began stroking Starsky's shaft, rimming the head with his thumb, drawing the wet down, making it slippery. And then a hand joined his.

Starsky wiggled his fingers under and in-between Hutch's, and together they pumped Starsky's cock until he came, his semen running wet and hot over their hands.

"Hutch? Oh fuck, babe..."

"Can't, Starsk."

"What?"

"Can't fuck...came in my pants."

Starsky had to laugh. "Big kid."

"Starsk?"

"I'll think about it, Hutch. No promises. I think I understand what you need. My cock obviously does. Just give me a few days."

*_*_*

Monday and Tuesday passed as one long day. Grueling hours setting up a murderer the department had been after for nearly a year. It all came down in Wednesday's earliest hours. The deaths of six civilians and two cops revenged with the pinpoint accuracy of Starsky and his Beretta in a dimly lit alley. That the two dead cops nearly became three, and that the third was damn near Hutch, left Starsky grim and angry and scared. Terrified.

"Hutch, call Dobey, tell him we're goin' home."

"Starsk! We can't...Dobey's gonna want reports..."

"Call him, Hutch." Starsky's voice demanded. His eyes begged.

Starsky was on Hutch the second the door closed behind them. Stripping them both, pulling Hutch to their bed and using his own body to blanket him. Holding on tight as the shakes set in, not letting up until the fear eased, and Hutch's warmth penetrated the icy terror that shrouded his soul. Until he could speak again.

"Too fuckin' close, Hutch. Dammit, if that bastard had moved another few inches..."

"Shhh, Starsk. You got him, it didn't happen. We're fine. Starsk, let me love you...let me show you..."

"Hutch, I need..."

Hutch's long tongue invaded Starsky's mouth and cut him off. "I know what you need, buddy. Always do."

Hutch was rough. Buried under blankets with his naked partner, the events of the early morning pushing him. Starsky was captured against the mattress, his mouth kissed hard, his tongue sucked into Hutch's mouth, his breath pulled along with it. Hutch pinched and squeezed his way down Starsky's chest, flipping their bodies over when he reached Starsky's groin. Starsky was positioned over Hutch's cock, preparations minimal and hurried, and then he was pulled down, impaled until his balls rested on Hutch's pubic hair. Hutch grabbed Starsky's hipbones and thrust hard into the body he held firmly in place between his hands. Starsky rode him, meeting the thrusts, wanting Hutch deep, deep enough to make him forget. Starsky came first, his ejaculate as forceful as Hutch's movements in his ass, spraying Hutch from belly to neck.

That's when Hutch gentled himself. Starsky's fear had been expelled, and Hutch knew what Starsky needed

then, too. He withdrew and turned his lover onto his stomach and laid over him. His cock found Starsky's ass and slid back in, his strokes smooth and easy, caressing Starsky from the inside out. Chest pressed to back, lips spreading warmth over ears and neck and shoulders. Words of comfort and love murmured into dark curls. Hutch stretched Starsky's arms out to his sides and covered them with his own, entwining their fingers, his long legs nested between Starsky's thighs. The only movement between them now, the slow rise and fall of Hutch's ass. Hutch's orgasm was as calm as Starsky's had been violent, his ass cheeks clenching hard until he was finished and then letting go, his entire body lax and resting over Starsky. They slept, Hutch's penis eventually slipping out of his lover. Starsky stirred at the sensation, and Hutch rolled off to one side and held him, Starsky deeply asleep in an instant, Hutch very close behind.

It was daylight when the telephone rang. Starsky told it to fuck off. Hutch fumbled for the receiver, croaking his hello.

"Who?... Oh, Ian. How are you?"

Starsky managed to raise one of his eyelids. Ian Quinn calling about dinner on Friday. *Terrific.*

"Hang on a sec, Ian."

Hutch hunched his shoulders up at Starsky.

"What do I tell him?"

Starsky felt his face flush a second before he felt a tiny stirring in his groin. He swallowed hard before he answered.

"Tell him we'll meet him at Rem's at seven. We can go someplace for dinner."

"Seven okay with you, Ian? We can leave together from Rem's... Your place? Yeah, we both like steak. Hey, Starsky and I will bring the wine. Sure, sounds good, see you then."

"Starsk, Ian has... Starsk? Hey, buddy, you okay?"

Hutch was treated to what was usually one of his favorite views. Starsky's naked ass. But this naked ass was moving away from him way too fast, bypassing the john, straight into the kitchen. Hutch heard the fridge open and close and a bottle cap plinking into the sink. Starsky was having a beer. Ten-thirty on a Wednesday morning without the benefit of breakfast. Judging by the sound of a bottle clinking against yesterday's empties in the trash, he had chugged it. Hutch followed, opting to stay nude. Something telling him to keep as much on an equal footing with Starsky as possible.

"Starsk? Want to tell me what's wrong? You could have said no if you didn't want to go. I told you it would be all right with me."

Starsky seemed determined not to say what was wrong. His back to Hutch, he stared steadfastly out the window. Hutch moved close behind him. Starsky was breathing hard, his muscles tense, almost as if he were afraid. Hutch couldn't stand it and circled his lover's body with his arms and pulled him close. Held him for a few minutes before he asked again.

"What is it, Starsk? Do you really not want to go?"

Starsky covered Hutch's arms with his own. A truly miserable breath escaped as he leaned his head back against Hutch's shoulder.

"Hutch, the whole problem is I **do** want to go. And for the life of me, I can't figure out why. When you were

talking to Ian on the phone, I got hard! My head is telling me one thing and my dick is telling me another and my heart is getting in on the act, too. Because I love you so damn much and want you to be happy."

"You don't have to do this to make me happy, babe. I am happy."

"I know that, Hutch. I'm happy, too. Happier than I've ever been in my life."

Starsky turned in Hutch's arms and snaked his own arms around Hutch's middle. Kissed the mouth he cherished.

"Hutch, we can stand here and talk this thing to death, or we can meet Ian on Friday and see what happens. Let's have dinner with the guy and take it from there, after we get to know him better. Okay, blondie? Now come on, Dobby's gonna be the one havin' our asses if we don't get down to the station."

*_*_*

As horrific as Wednesday had been, Thursday passed quietly into Friday. Dobby's irate but understanding speech Wednesday afternoon about their absence after the bust, their last and only bit of excitement. But by late Friday afternoon, the air in the Torino was tense and getting tenser by the minute as quitting time approached. When Starsky cursed under his breath about how slowly an old man was crossing the street as he waited to turn, Hutch decided he better offer an out.

"Hey, buddy. You still okay about tonight? I could call and cancel, it's not too late, you know."

"Why, Hutch?"

"'Why, Hutch?' Starsky, you've barely spoken all afternoon, you're about to run down an old man, and I could cut the air in here with a knife. Let me call and cancel with Ian. Maybe some other..."

"No."

"Starsk."

"Look, Hutch. I told you before that I'm really nervous about this whole thing. I can't help that! I do want to go and see what this guy is all about. Maybe I'll hate him and that will be that, maybe I won't. Maybe he'll hate me. Won't know until we get there. So for now, just drop it, okay? Let's just go home and get ready."

They made the rest of the trip home in silence.

Starsky had to laugh when Hutch emerged from their bedroom. Faded jeans, soft cotton shirt, white to Starsky's pale yellow. Sleeves rolled back, buttons open low on his chest. Nearly identical.

"Com'ere, blondie. Think maybe I should change? Might get Ian all excited if we bounce in lookin' like twins." Starsky teased at Hutch's ear with his tongue. "Might be another fantasy lookin' to happen."

Hutch claimed Starsky's mouth before he could say more. Claimed and searched and conquered. And wanted much, much more.

"Starsky, maybe before we go we should..."

"No. Keep the edge, Hutch." Starsky groped the front of Hutch's jeans. "Looks good on you, babe."

Maybe it was actually being en route, maybe it was the kiss--whatever, the mood between them as they made their way to Rem's was good. Comfortable and good. Ian was busy with a last minute customer, and Starsky took advantage of that to shop while Hutch lounged against the checkout counter. The gay sex manual was back, balanced on top of a small pile of other books. If Hutch hadn't been so engrossed in checking them out, he would have seen Ian hurrying his way, face flushed and nervous.

"Hey, Ken, glad you came. Let me just get those out of the way--they're on hold for a customer who looks like he's going to be too late to claim them." Ian dumped the books behind the counter and stuck his hand out to Hutch. "Good to see you. Where and how is Dave?"

"He's fine, Ian, around here someplace. Think he wanted to pick up a magazine he's been talking about. Interesting selection of books you were holding. I've read a couple of them down at the station, came in handy on a case Starsky and I were involved in. There's Starsky...you about done, buddy?"

"Case, Ken?"

"Oh, yeah. I guess I didn't get around to telling you. Starsky and I are detectives--work in homicide. Been partners for a long time."

Starsky joined them just then. For the second time that week, Ian Quinn was grateful for the counter that concealed his lower body. Starsky didn't get all the credit for the raging erection in Ian's pants. Not this time. *Cops. Dave and Ken are cops.* That bit of news spiraled through Ian's body from his brain to his crotch. Dave Starsky shaking his hand damn near made him come.

"Ian? Hey, that's some grip you've got there, but ease up, would you? I need that hand."

Ian's world came back into focus. Starsky stood before him rubbing his right hand, smiling the smile Ian had already committed to memory.

"Dave, I'm sorry, guess I did it again. Here, let me ring that up for you and we can get over to my place. I didn't hurt you, did I? I have a very strong grip, sometimes I forget."

"No problem, Ian, I'm fine, really. Hungry though."

Hutch laughed. "Ian, there's one thing you need to learn about Starsky here, the man is always hungry."

Ian didn't miss the look that passed between Starsky and Hutch. Didn't miss the quiet 'always' that Starsky whispered to Hutch. His waning erection feasted on sudden anger and grew again. He followed Starsky and Hutch from the store with a jacket draped over his arm.

"This is a nice place, Ian. Live here long?"

"Thanks and no, just a few months. I moved here after Tom left me. It's quiet and I have a lot of privacy--two things I really needed at the time. Now, it's too quiet and like I was telling Ken at the store the other day, I'm lonely." Ian dipped his head and stared at his shoes. "Hey, why don't we eat outside? It's a nice night."

Steaks, salad, and wine were consumed in short order. Ian insisted Hutch and Starsky stay put on the deck with a second bottle of wine while he cleaned up. Ian froze in the doorway when he returned. Hutch and Starsky were standing at the railing, Starsky in front of his lover, enveloped in Hutch's arms. Hutch was nuzzling the back of Starsky's neck and they were laughing. A private world Ian Quinn was not privy to. Not yet. Ian took a seat in an old wicker rocker that he had picked up at a yard sale. The rocker that

squeaked and let anyone else around know you were there, too.

Hutch turned first, smiling over his shoulder. Starsky pulled away from Hutch's arms and took his hand instead, leading him to the glider placed across from Ian and his rocker, settling down side by side. Starsky didn't let go of the hand he held, and Ian didn't miss the white knuckles. *Nervous, Dave? Me too...*

The second bottle of wine was gone before they started talking about anything besides the weather and baseball. Hutch brought up books, and Ian inquired about the case Hutch had mentioned, looking properly distressed over the brief description of the fate of three gay men found strangled and slashed to death. Starsky stayed quiet, not saying much, listening to his partner and Ian talk. The wine had been good, and he was drowsy and content. And sober enough to know he had loosened his inhibitions. The conversation came around to the meeting at Rem's that had the three of them together now. Starsky leaned closer into Hutch's side. Hutch could do the driving. Hutch could handle the brakes, too.

"So, have you two come to any decisions?" Ian asked his question of an empty wine glass, avoiding eye contact. Afraid to give away how excited he had become. Hutch supplied the answer.

"Not totally, no, Ian. What we have agreed upon is that all three of us have to be in total agreement. The slightest doubt for any one of us and it goes no further than tonight."

"No further, Ken?"

"No further tonight than what Starsk and I talked about while you were inside. We're not just going to hop in the sack and have sex. We need a starting point to build from, sort of like dating and getting to know each other. Dinner was great--so was sitting around and talking. Starsk and I are pretty comfortable with you, and thought that kissing, maybe some petting, would be okay with both of us to start. Take some time and build from there. If that's okay with you, Ian."

Ian kept his voice as soft and calm as he possibly could. The emotion roaring through his body was his to keep, his secret.

"Why don't we go inside and see how we do?"

Ian had music playing low on the stereo, lights dimmed, a few candles lit. There was no time for awkwardness as he watched Hutch turn Starsky into his arms and kiss him. Something was whispered in Starsky's ear and Hutch turned him again, this time to face Ian. Hutch rested his hands on Starsky's hips and looked at Ian over Starsky's shoulder. Heat shot through Ian's body at Starsky's simple invitation.

"Ian? Join us?"

God, that voice! I dreamed he would sound like that when he asked me. "I'd love to. Dave, are you sure?"

"Sure as I'll ever be, Ian. Now or never time."

Starsky pressed back against Hutch as Ian's lips found his and let go, found him again, firmer this time. Starsky kissed back, allowing Ian's lips to part his own, feeling the tip of Ian's tongue penetrate his mouth, then withdraw and then come back for a full helping. Ian took Starsky's face between his hands and kissed him full and hard, coaxing Starsky's tongue into his own mouth, sucking him hard and backing out with soft bites to Starsky's lower lip. Hutch was kissing the side of Starsky's neck, his hands leaving Starsky's hips and sliding over Ian's arms, pulling the three of them tightly together. Ian started in on the other side of Starsky's neck, working a hand in-between and palming Starsky's chest through his shirt. Starsky was lost in the sensations--Hutch's cock was hard against his ass, Ian's cock hard against his own erection. Ian's tongue invaded his mouth again, and Starsky roamed his hands over Ian's back, moving them lower as Ian tongue

fucked his mouth, caressing Ian's ass, pressing harder with his cock.

Starsky broke away first. Leaving both sets of hands and both mouths on the other side of the room. *God! That was good...I...* Hutch was at his side before he could finish the thought.

"Starsk? You all right?"

"I'm fine, babe...just getting too close...too fast...sorry."

"Do you want to leave?" Hutch whispered his question. Ian Quinn heard it as if Hutch had shouted. *Say no, Dave. Damn you, say no!*

Starsky's hand was gentle against Hutch's face. *Yes.*

"It's okay, Starsk. Maybe we just went a little too far for a first time. It's okay. Do you want me to tell Ian the deal is off or do you...?"

"No...no, Hutch, maybe I better talk to him... I'm the one chickening out." Starsky turned back to face Ian. "Ian? Hey, I'm sorry, man. I think the wine was talkin' more than me. I wasn't as ready as I thought I was."

"Is it me, Dave?" Ian forced calmness into his voice.

"No, not at all, Ian. I just need some more time. For right now, I think it's best if Hutch and I go home and talk some more."

Ian nodded and touched Starsky's face. *And **Hutch** better damn well talk you into this, Starsk.*

Ian Quinn was left with the promise of a phone call to set up another date, another very sincere apology from Starsky, and two tender goodnight kisses. And rage. Rage that traveled through his overly strong grip to savagely beat himself off as he watched Starsky and Hutch walk to the Torino. The powerful rumble of the Torino's engine turning over swallowed Ian's scream when he came. Neither man heard Starsky's name shouted over and over again, shouted until Quinn weakened and his screams slid into sobs.

*_*_*

Half a mile from Ian Quinn's apartment, Starsky pulled the Torino into an empty parking lot, turned off the key and stared over the steering wheel into the darkness. Hutch studied his partner. Starsky had seemed to be enjoying the 'make out' session. Hutch certainly had. This was the beginning of his fantasy, watching Starsky kiss and be kissed. Feeling Starsky's body respond and desire. Watching him with another man.

"Starsk? Can we talk about it?"

Starsky looked at him for a minute, grabbed Hutch's hand, and started to speak. Quickly, before he could chicken out.

"It was good, Hutch, havin' the both of you kissing me like that, feeling each other's bodies." Starsky looked away. Shy. "I liked kissing him, Hutch...giving you what you wanted to see. But when I felt his cock pressing against me and I was hard, too--I had to stop, Hutch. It was too damn much for me to handle. I still feel like I was cheatin' on you. I...I was ashamed, babe, ashamed of getting hard for another man. I'm sorry, Hutch." Starsky leaned his head back against the headrest, sighed, and looked back at Hutch. "I wanted him, Hutch...I wanted you both."

Hutch pulled Starsky close, kissed the hand that held his.

"Don't be sorry, babe, please don't. Nothing to be sorry for. I wanted it, too, Starsk--you must have felt my cock against your ass--but nothing more happens unless you want it to. You have nothing to be ashamed of. Not a thing, babe. I don't think you were getting hard for another man so much as for the situation we were in." Starsky didn't look too convinced. Hutch tried again. "Hey, how could you be cheating on me when I'm right there holding you, huh? I won't let anything happen between the three of us unless I'm right there. I promise."

Hutch kissed his lover then. Soundly and thoroughly until the evening at Ian's was reduced to a memory and the erections they fondled were strictly from and for each other.

"Take me home, Starsk. Take me home and make love to me. Every inch of me."

To Starsky, every inch of Hutch meant every inch of Hutch. Toes were sucked, high-arches licked, ankles massaged. Shin bones, knees, down-covered thighs stroked and explored. Long and special attention paid to the juncture of thighs and torso, to the little hollows that appeared on each side when Hutch spread his legs wide and pulled his knees up. Balls were cupped and moved gently out of the way, the satin inches of skin just behind them nipped and sucked, a fleeting dart of Starsky's tongue to Hutch's anus, and then his balls were released. Released and washed and pulled into the private warmth and wet of Starsky's mouth. Long inches of penis were made love to with mouth and hands and throat. Hutch quivered and whispered Starsky's name, and his cock was released, cooled and calmed by Starsky's breath blown across its weeping head.

The journey upward continued; Starsky's face lost in Hutch's pubic hair, his tongue trailing across the sudden smoothness of Hutch's belly, delving deep into his navel. The wells between each rib, the dip in the center of Hutch's chest, the round disks of his nipples--Starsky made love to them all, hands dipping low and reminding Hutch's body where Starsky had already been and how much that body had enjoyed the visit. The hollow at the base of Hutch's neck, his chin and jawbone. His mouth. Lips parted by a tender tongue that became demanding in an instant. Demanded the soft underside of Hutch's tongue, the rougher top skin that preceded his throat, the crease where teeth and gums met inner cheeks. Starsky's tongue became tender again, washing Hutch's eyelashes and brows, trailing back down to the side of Hutch's neck, probing behind an ear as Starsky manipulated his lover's body to rest on its stomach.

Hutch's hair had grown long in the back, cascading from the nape of his neck to hide the side of his face. Starsky lost himself in that hair. Tangled his fingers in it, pulled it between his lips, smelled it, breathed it. Lifted it in parting to kiss the softness beneath and continue his journey. Hutch's shoulders, the tenderness at the back of his armpits. Long muscles a runway for Starsky's tongue and fingers, his skin on Hutch's a contrast of bronze on cream. Working lower to the small of Hutch's back, biting and sucking the mounds of Hutch's ass until they pinked and warmed under his mouth.

"Up, lover, raise up for me."

Hutch was lost. Lost in sensations that could make him come without the benefit of a hand or mouth on his cock. Starsky's tongue a demon, writhing at Hutch's center, demanding to be counted and let in. Hutch's anus surrendering, granting entry, turning devil itself. Clamping down, pulsing around Starsky's tongue. Starsky's tongue's withdrawal was as sweet as its entrance, wet heat sliding against Hutch's inner walls. Fingers found Hutch's balls, rolling them within their sac, pinching and sliding over soft, vulnerable flesh. Fingers that left and returned to Hutch's ass, stroking the sensitive opening. Not demanding--not for this. Starsky always asked for this.

"Hutch?"

The answer came in the form of an open container of lubricant passed wordlessly from trembling hand to trembling hand. The tightly closed skin glossed and slicked. And opened. Opened with a single long finger that rubbed the length of Hutch's channel, pulled out then plunged in again and again the way Hutch loved it. Touched that place deep inside of Hutch that made him see stars shooting across the sky. Another finger, the two separating inside of him, pulling muscles loose, massaging him, making him want. More than anything, making him want Starsky's cock inside of him.

"Please, babe, take me now."

Fingers withdrawn, Starsky ran his cock between Hutch's cheeks, his pre-cum as slippery as the lube he coated Hutch's insides with. Prodded the back of Hutch's balls, slid back to the top of Hutch's ass, anchored himself at Hutch's anus, and pushed. Slowly and steadily Starsky's erection sank into Hutch's body, pulling Hutch's senses along with it. Tight, tight fit--filled, stretched, claimed. Heaven. Starsky stayed on his knees and watched. Watched as his cock drew back, glistening with the lube that coated it inside of Hutch, watched himself push back in until his pubic hair tickled Hutch's cheeks. Slow, easy, deep strokes that gave way to desire and passion and he was pumping fast. Hutch arched his back and that's when Starsky lowered them to the bed and sheltered his lover with every possible inch of his own body. Starsky's hand snaked its way in and clasped Hutch's cock, and Hutch began to thrust with him, bearing the weight that pressed Starsky's cock deep inside of him and pressed his own so tightly into Starsky's hand.

"Now!"

Movement stopped, muscles froze in place. Lovers concentrating on feeling each other's orgasm. Ass and hand filled with one another, pulsing, shuddering heat that took them into each other's souls. Calling out loud for each other, their names filling the bedroom, claiming ownership. Starsky took some of his own weight back, getting his knees in between Hutch's legs, pumping a few more strokes into a channel now wet with his own semen, rubbing Hutch's cum over his softening penis, feeling the thick fluid slip warmly through his fingers to soak into the sheets. They slept for a few moments at a time, bodies gradually separating at their own pace until Starsky was completely out of Hutch's body. Curled together, they slept for the night.

Twenty minutes south of their home, Ian Quinn was still furious, pacing restlessly from room to room in his darkened apartment. Starsky's taste still in his mouth. The feel of Starsky's cock getting hard against his own reliving itself over and over. *Damn them!* In his bedroom, Ian stripped. Rifling through a drawer he found what he needed, the envelope of pictures. Pulling one out at random, he smiled. *Ahh, the screamer.* Larry, lover number two. Ian placed Larry's picture safely on the pillow and got to work on his own body. Every memory of the man who had screamed so loud for so long made him harder, brought him closer to another climax. Visions of the blood Larry spilled did it. Pulled Ian Quinn over the edge. Starsky's name was shouted again--over and over until Ian once again fell sobbing into his pillow, staring blindly at the picture of a man he had murdered. Whimpering, begging for Starsky to come back.

*_*_*

"Starsky, Hutchinson, my office."

It was early Monday. Dobey looked to his men like he had been working all night. They soon found out he had been.

"I'm re-opening a case from last year...the three gay men who were murdered..."

"Cap, that case was never officially closed...we didn't..."

"I know what we didn't do, Starsky. We didn't solve it!" Dobey ran a hand through his hair and drummed his fingers on his desk before he continued. His voice quieter now. "There was a murder during the night. Man found on a pier down by the docks. Strangled, cuts all over his body. Nude."

Starsky asked the question, made obvious only by year-old history.

"Was he gay, Cap?"

"No, Starsky, not this time, married with three kids. But he had been raped. ME found semen and Vaseline in his rectum."

"Cap, rapists don't usually take the time to prepare their victims for sex. You sure it was rape?"

"Dammit it, Hutchinson, don't you think I know that? Whatever preparation took place was minimal. The victim's anus was badly torn--had the hell ripped out of him. ME thinks something more than a penis was shoved into him after the poor bastard was dead...from the absence of interior abrasions or cuts, he thinks it was something that lacked sharp or pointed surfaces. Probably a fist. And, from the bruising around the victim's neck, the ME is damn certain it's the same killer we were looking for a year ago...the bruise pattern and size are identical. He'll confirm it when the test results are back on the semen."

Starsky swore and got up out of his chair. Hutch's eyes followed him to the coffee pot, watched him pour three cups, give one to Dobey, and bring the other two back. Only Hutch saw Starsky's hand shaking when he passed him a cup. Starsky was pale, obviously sickened by what his captain had told them. Troubled blue eyes met Hutch's, remembering the other times, the three other victims. They hadn't been raped, no evidence to support it. But they had had sex just before they died. Before the razor had found their skin and the life had been choked from their bodies.

The murderer had not been found. It all happened over a year ago, shortly after Starsky and Hutch became lovers.

"You giving the case to us, Cap?"

"You and Hutchinson are the best qualified for it, Starsky." A level look, knowing. "I want this guy caught. Yesterday. Take these files and refresh your memories. Last night's victim's file will be ready shortly. I'll see that you get it."

They made it to the door when their captain called their names one more time.

"Be careful and watch out for each other."

Half a smile from Starsky, a nod from Hutch.

"Yeah, thanks, Cap, we will."

Starsky threw the files on his desk in disgust, sitting down hard and staring off into space. Hutch silently straightened the pile, put it on his own desk and sat down on the edge of Starsky's and waited. Starsky would tell him in a minute, tell him what was bothering him the most.

"You remember, Hutch, how nobody came forward to claim the bodies of those first three victims? No missing person on any of 'em, no ID, no nothin'. Even after the coroner established identification and notified their families, nobody wanted those guys, not even enough to bury them. 'Cause they were gay."

"That's old news, Starsk, but yeah, I remember." Hutch's voice couldn't have been more gentle. "We can't change the way some people are, buddy. There's a killer out there. Let's get to work and find the guy. Maybe

this time he's messed up and left some clues."

"Yeah...hey, Hutch?"

Hutch looked down into Starsky's eyes.

"I know, Starsk...me, too."

Lunch time came and went unnoticed. The three murders that took place the previous year were rehashed and talked over until they were fresh enough to have happened just a few days ago. Four men, expressions forever terrified by death, looked up from Starsky's desk. The fourth and latest victim, Joe Bennett, the last man on the right. Starsky managed to distance himself and concentrate on the files in front of him. Four necks circled with tremendous bruises. Cuts as precise as surgical incisions crisscrossed chests and abdomens from the front, and backs and buttocks from the rear. The ME made it clear that all four men had been tortured with a razor before they were strangled to death. The first three had been openly gay and disowned by their families. Joe Bennett, whose murderer had been confirmed to be the same killer, was married and a father. Not a shred of evidence had been left behind a year ago, and from the preliminary reports gathered at the scene, nothing was found this time, either.

"Come on, Starsk, time for a field-trip before it gets dark, maybe somebody missed something."

"Yeah, and maybe somebody didn't. Shit, Hutch, if we had just figured out who the killer was a year ago, Joe Bennett would be home now with his kids. What the hell did we miss?"

"Starsky, that's the whole problem, don't you see? There was nothing for us to miss. Whoever the hell this guy is, he's damn good at what he does. As much as we hate to admit it, buddy, sometimes the bad guys are better at what they do than we are."

"Really. Come on, blondie, let's get this over with. Dobby give you the pier number?"

"Pier Eleven."

"You kiddin'?"

"Nope. Pier Eleven, the favored pier of gays looking for a spot to neck, Starsk."

The first true smile of the day graced Starsky's face.

"Hey, maybe when we're done..."

Hutch was very good with the finger he held up. He warned, caressed, and made a promise for later in a matter of seconds, all without saying a word.

Pier Eleven was cordoned off. Halfway down, the weathered wood was stained dark, the stain spreading well beyond the taped outline of a body. This was where Joe Bennett had died and where his body had been viciously violated. Out on a pier frequented by gays. Only Joe Bennett wasn't gay.

"Wonder why Bennett was out here in the middle of the night."

"Could just be a coincidence, Starsk. It was nice out last night, maybe he was just out for a walk..."

"File says he lived about half an hour from here. Long walk, babe. And any straight man walking this pier is gonna notice he's a little out of place, and walkin' alone, if you know what I mean."

"Yeah, Starsk, you got a point there."

"Two points."

"All right, two, hey maybe..."

Hutch was interrupted by a shout from the direction of one of the boats assigned to water search teams. A diver had surfaced, a small, metallic-looking object held above his head. The object was quickly passed to an officer leaning over the pier, and set down for investigation. Indeed made of metal, its shape resembling a rubber finger used for office work--a metal finger with a short, slightly hooked blade attached to its tip. A razor.

"Any idea what that is, Starsk?"

"Razor knife, Hutch, the kind used for cutting the heavy string used to bundle newspapers and magazines. Had one when I was a kid and had a paper route. Could be the blade used to cut up the victims. Damn sharp."

"Maybe we caught a break. Bag that, would you, guys? Anything else found out there?"

Responses negative and discouraging, Starsky and Hutch took a time out and strolled to the end of the pier. Evening was just coming on, the sun preparing to make its grand exit. The gulls had quieted down, and a light breeze shifted through the air, wiping away the dirt of the day.

"You know? This is really a beautiful place, Hutch. Hard to figure why so many murders happen in so many beautiful places."

Hutch turned back to the activity behind them. A cleanup crew was washing down the pier. Their last step--washing Joe Bennett into the briny water below. Officers were removing the barricades, and people were already beginning to filter back onto the pier. It was a beautiful place, or would be again very soon. The public would forget Joe Bennett. Always managed to forget and look the other way. But the cops wouldn't forget, he and Starsky wouldn't forget. Hutch placed a hand at the small of Starsky's back. Felt the body under his touch breathe and generate warmth, and was thankful, as he was thankful every day.

"Come on, babe, let's pick up some dinner and go home."

*_*_*

Late evening found two lovers too full and too tired to do anything but sit and stare blankly at the television. Both men put the murder investigation away before they left the police station--one of many home rules agreed upon and adhered to over the years together as cops. Whenever possible, leave it at the office. That being the case, sitting side by side and dozing off was enough. No talking, no thinking, just quiet contentment. A huge and noisy yawn from Starsky broke the spell and got Hutch's attention.

"Starsk?"

"Yeah?"

"Want to go to bed?"

"K."

"Sex?"

"No. But I do like to be asked, babe."

"I know, come on."

The phone rang just as the television was turned off. Hutch nudged Starsky in its general direction. Dobby.

"Starsky? I want you and Hutch at Joe Bennett's wake tomorrow and funeral on Wednesday. Nose around and listen. Try and find out what Bennett was doing out on Pier Eleven. I talked to his wife while you and Hutch were at the scene today...poor woman is just beside herself, whole family is, but maybe someone knows something they're not telling us."

"She know we're going to be there, Cap?"

"She knows I've assigned officers to attend, I didn't tell her who. Play that by ear, Starsky. If you can get away with a cover story, do it."

"Sure, Cap. If there's a big enough turnout, we can probably blend in as friends of a friend or something. What about the press? They gonna be there?"

"No, I took care of that. Uniforms will be on duty to keep them away. Before I forget to tell you, you and Hutchinson don't need to report to the station first. Wake starts at one, go directly there and come in to file your reports afterward. Same thing for the funeral. Get some rest, this looks like it's going to be a long one."

"Yeah...thanks, Cap. See you sometime tomorrow. G'night."

Starsky put the phone down and stretched. And yawned in the face that moved in front of him.

"Wake duty, Starsk?"

"Yeah, funeral, too. Cap thinks someone in the family might know a little something, wants us to snoop. Come on, I'm beat. Good news is we can sleep in the next two days."

The phone rang again.

"Your turn, blondie." Starsky continued on to the bedroom, stripping as he went.

"H'lo." Hutch had a bit of trouble concentrating on the phone. Sex was not such a far fetched idea anymore. They did get to sleep in. And sex did relieve tension. And Starsky's ass muscles had looked a little tense.

"Hi, Ken, this is Ian."

"Hey, Ian...oh, damn, one of us was supposed to call you tonight. Sorry, work was rough. Hang on a second, let me double check with Starsky...tomorrow night might be good if you don't mind driving up here."

"No problem, Ken. Check with Dave, I get off early on Tuesday...maybe around six sound good?"

"Yeah, hang on, Ian."

Hutch found Starsky nearly asleep. Sinking down next to him, he rubbed a shoulder.

"Babe, this time it's Ian. Six o'clock tomorrow sound good to you? We get to sleep in late the next day, too."

Want to give it another shot?"

"He comin' here, babe?"

"That would work out the best, Starsk. Okay with you?"

"Yeah, sure. Promised you both I'd try again. Tell him yes...and, Hutch? Hurry back to bed."

Starsky hated wakes, funerals were bad enough. But wakes? Shit. Joe Bennett lying up there in his coffin, every person in the room--and there were lots of people--knowing what had happened to the poor guy. Thank God his kids weren't there, bad enough his parents and brother were. And, of course, his wife. Starsky and Hutch had opted to stay undercover. Bennett had been the same age as they were, and Hutch prepared a story based loosely on information supplied in Bennett's obituary about meeting Bennett at a college function. He and Starsky just happened to be in town and wanted to pay their last respects. Nobody questioned them, and they moved easily through the crowd. Listening.

In the end, it was an overheard conversation that Joe Bennett's sister-in-law had with another mourner that answered one of their bigger questions. What Bennett may have been doing on Pier Eleven. Seemed Joe Bennett talked to his sister-in-law about anything and everything, considered her his best friend. Joe Bennett was the kindest, gentlest man she had ever known. Joe Bennett loved his family like crazy. And Joe Bennett had confessed to his sister-in-law, that after eight years of marriage and three kids, he was bi-curious and going to act on it. Just once, he had promised her, just once.

The night Joe Bennett died, he'd been out driving with a man he'd met near his hometown. A gay man, name unknown, someone Bennett felt he could talk to about his feelings. A man he called late in the evening from a pay phone and made arrangements with. A man Starsky and Hutch were determined to track down.

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Starsky finished his report first for a change. He and Hutch opting to type out separate accountings for the sake of comparing notes. Signed and delivered to Dobey, they made it home just before Ian Quinn rang their doorbell.

"Ian, come in, Hutch and I just got here ourselves." Starsky greeted their guest with a warm handshake and grin. "Okay with you that we ordered in? Hutch and I know a great little Greek place that delivers, be here any minute. Hutch is in the shower...have a seat, Ian. Want a beer?"

"Sure, Dave, great to see you again. You go ahead and do what you need to do, I'll be fine, and a beer sounds good."

Ian sat, accepting the beer, and gratefully excusing Starsky so that he could shower and change, too. Gratefully excusing him and taking advantage of the brief time alone to get his raging emotions under control. He'd felt himself filling the second he'd set eyes on Dave Starsky when Starsky opened the door--a hard-on he both welcomed and wanted gone. This was Dave Starsky's home, he was surrounded by Starsky's belongings, Starsky's life. This was where Ian Quinn wanted to be. With Starsky. Doing things to Starsky. But he had to control it, had to wait for the right time.

He busied his mind and catalogued the rooms he could see. Committed the layout to memory. Planned. His thinking process became dominant and his cock deflated, under control for now. He picked up from the end table a framed snapshot of Starsky and Hutch wrapped in each other's arms, grinning like fools over a trophy hoisted above their heads. Ian congratulated himself for not jumping when Hutch spoke to him from

somewhere behind the sofa. Tonight he would be calm, let Dave and Ken do the leading again. Go with and be grateful for whatever happened. Tonight he would be in complete control of himself. Tonight.

"Hello, Ian. Good to see you." Hutch grinned a grin very much like the one in the picture. Confident, happy, victorious.

"Ken! Good to see you, too." *You have no idea, Ken, no idea at all...*

Ian replaced the photo and stood, shaking Hutch's hand as he had Starsky's, mindful of keeping the pressure light and controlled. Starsky joined them, dressed much like Hutch and, Ian happily noted, himself. T-shirts, running shorts on Hutch, cutoffs on Starsky, and little, if anything else. Comfortable clothes. Easy to put on. Ian said a quick prayer for easy to take off. He watched Starsky's ass and legs as he went into the kitchen for more beer and had the grace to blush when he felt Hutch's eyes watching him.

"Starsky is a beautiful man, isn't he Ian?"

"Yes, he is, and so are you, Ken. I can't tell you how happy I am that you invited me here." Starsky came into the room with another round of beers. Passing one to each man, he sat down on the sofa next to Ian. Not close enough that their bodies touched, but still, next to Ian. "Ken was just telling me he thinks you're beautiful, Dave. I do, too."

Ian didn't miss the tender, loving look that Starsky bestowed on Hutch before he responded to Ian.

"He's just saying that 'cause he loves me. Could be as ugly as a 'possum and Hutch wouldn't care. But thanks, Ian, that's nice of you to say."

Ian and Hutch both laughed, Hutch still chuckling when the food arrived. Starsky led Ian to the kitchen to get the table ready, and Hutch listened happily as their laughter filled the house. It was good. The mood was relaxed and open to ideas. Starsky was willing to try again with Ian. *Maybe, just maybe...*

The evening air cooled after dinner, and Hutch started a fire. The three men ate baklava and drank coffee seated on cushions in front its warm glow. Starsky finished first and stretched out, his head finding Hutch's lap. Ian watched as Hutch fingered Starsky's curls and stroked his lover's face.

"You doin' good, love? Feeling okay?"

"I feel great, Hutch. Really."

Question asked and reassurance issued. Hutch leaned over to pick up Starsky's discarded plate and coffee mug, Ian taking them from him before he could stand up.

"Dave looks pretty comfortable, Ken. Let me take the dishes in, don't disturb yourselves."

"Leave 'em, Ian, we'll get them later." Ian was as surprised as Hutch to hear Starsky speak first. "Come on down here by Hutch and me."

Ian did what he was told, elated when Starsky reached up for his hand and pulled him down next to Hutch. Hutch kissed Ian softly on his mouth and tugged him down to lie on his side next to Starsky. Hutch positioned himself at Ian's back, spooning with him, but shoving a couple of cushions under his head and upper body to keep his head raised above Ian's. Satisfied that he could still see Starsky, could still touch him, Hutch reached over Ian and pulled Starsky closer, leaving him on his back. Starsky took Ian's hand again, resting it below his own on his chest. Ian could feel Starsky's heart beating. Fast. *You're doing a good job, Dave, hiding how nervous you are...but your heart is giving you away...I know...*

"Ian, I really am sorry about the last time. I had a few issues to work out in my head. Hutch and I have talked about this a lot, and I'm ready to try again. But no guarantees, Ian...I can't give you any."

"None needed, Dave. And thank you, thank you both." Ian looked back at Hutch and saw it in his face. The confidence in his lover, knowing Starsky would do anything to make him happy. Ian Quinn would do everything to see that that happened. *We'll make Ken happy, Dave, we'll be done with him soon enough...*

"Ken?"

"There is one more thing, Ian. And I think this is probably something Starsky needs cleared up as much as I do. Starsky and I both like you, Ian, very much in fact, otherwise this wouldn't be happening at all. We don't want you to think for a minute that we're using you, but on the other hand, Starsky and I are a couple. We have plenty of room in our lives for friends, but that's where it stops, Ian. We love each other exclusively. This is strictly playing out a fantasy."

"Oh, hey, I understand that. Listen, under different circumstances, if I had met either one of you guys and you were unattached, I would have loved to have loved either one of you. But like I told you when this was all just an idea we were tossing around, I'm lonely, I miss sex, and I'm still too hurt to be in a relationship. All I want is to make you both feel good, feel good myself, and help Ken live out his fantasy. That's it, I swear. No strings."

Starsky shifted against the cushions, releasing Ian's hand for a few seconds, stroking his arm, and then taking his hand back. Feeling sorry for the guy. Giving fleeting thought to how he would feel if he lost Hutch.

"Hutch? I think we all understand each other now." Starsky couldn't help the shiver that accompanied his next words. "You ready, babe?"

"Oh, Starsk, yeah, I'm ready, too, buddy. Listen, Ian, Starsky and I want this to happen, but we still need to go slow, see where the evening takes us." Hutch smiled at Starsky and added his hand to the two on Starsky's chest, his body pressing Ian's over Starsky's. Closing the small distance between them.

"We're ready, Ian."

*_*_*

They kissed for a long time--the three of them trading off faces and mouths. But it was Starsky upon whom the attention became focused. Starsky, Hutch wanted Ian to pleasure. And Ian learned quickly what Starsky liked, what made the dark blue of his eyes glaze over with want. Hutch was right there guiding him to Starsky's secrets, showing Ian how to handle the man pressed beneath him. Teaching him to suck Starsky's tongue into his own mouth and fight with it, to nip at Starsky's lower lip. To kiss him closed mouthed and force his tongue between Starsky's lips. To turn gentle and move his mouth down Starsky's neck when Starsky moaned and arched his body. It was Hutch's hand that gave permission and guided Ian's under the T-shirt Starsky wore. Hutch's hand that covered Ian's when Ian found Starsky's nipples. Hutch's fingers that played alongside Ian's, pinching and caressing. Hutch's hand that pulled Ian's lower to slip under the waistband of Starsky's shorts. And it was Hutch who lowered Starsky's zipper to make room for more of Ian.

Starsky cried for Hutch when Ian's hand wrapped around his penis and pumped him, and Hutch joined Ian, teaching him how Starsky liked his cock stroked, and when to stop and squeeze Starsky at his root to keep him from coming.

It was Hutch who took Starsky's face in his hands and asked, "Starsk? Will you let us undress you?"

Starsky looked at Hutch. He still had an out if he wanted it. He could still say no, and Hutch would be okay with it. Disappointed probably, but okay. *Fuck it.* He'd come this far and it was okay. Good. Kissing Ian was different, but definitely pleasant, different taste, different textures. The hand that held his cock was different, too. The pressure and grip strange to him. But in that strangeness was excitement, and Starsky found himself craving more from this man he and Hutch had invited into their lives. Hutch was with him, right there, waiting and willing and wanting with him. *I can do this for Hutch--with Hutch--as long as we're together.* He pulled Hutch down and kissed him and told him he loved him. Kissed him some more while he slid his hand into his own shorts. There Starsky found Ian's hand and joined their fingers together around his erection.

"Ian, help Hutch get my clothes off?"

Ian pumped Starsky's cock a few more times before he removed his hand from beneath Starsky's, savoring every bit of contact with Starsky's genitals, pulling his thick pubic hair, trailing lazy fingers over his flat abdomen. The T-shirt went first, Hutch taking one arm and Ian the other. Then the shorts, Starsky raising his ass, thrusting his pelvis upward as they were slipped down his legs--his erection hard and glorious and weeping against his belly. Hutch pulled Starsky's feet free, watching Ian as he took in Starsky's naked body. Ian's hands shook as he stroked the length of Starsky's chest, finding the nipples he had caressed, the furred stomach, the thatch of hair so low on Starsky's belly. His hand slid down, behind Starsky's balls, cupping them, massaging, working its way back up to Starsky's cock, taking it in his hand and holding it still. *Beautiful, perfect. Going to be mine. All of him.*

Hutch watched the backs of the freckled hands caressing his lover. Watched the unfamiliar fingers that circled Starsky's cock and rolled his balls between them. He watched Ian's eyes, saw the look that could only be described as rapture. Starsky's eyes were closed, his head turned away from Hutch. He turned back to his lover when Ian spoke.

"Tell me what you want me to do to Dave, Ken."

Starsky trembled and his eyes went wide watching Hutch's face ripple with emotion. The eyes got a lot wider when Hutch stripped before them, his cock at full attention. Ian's grip on Starsky's cock tightened involuntarily. Ken Hutchinson was huge. Ian Quinn felt his rectum contract. *That will be mine, too. More than once before it's over.* But the real prize, the keeper, was quivering in his hand, waiting for his lover to tell Ian where to start.

"Go down on him, Ian. Suck him until he comes in your mouth. I want to watch. And, Ian, keep your clothes on."

Ian didn't say anything, neither did Starsky, silent except for a quick in-drawn breath. Ian settled Starsky back on the cushions and petted and caressed his body until Starsky moaned and thrust his cock into the air. He laid on top of Starsky, stilling his movements, his clothing not unpleasant against Starsky's bare skin. Starsky's mouth was taken first, the not-so-much-of-a-stranger-anymore tongue forceful and filling and unrelenting. The mouth left his suddenly, and Starsky gratefully swallowed some air as Ian began his journey downward, sucking at Starsky's neck, squeezing hard at every muscle in Starsky's chest. And then he started in on Starsky's nipples. Starsky cried out, the teeth and pain way beyond what he liked, what Hutch gave him. Ian was brutal, fingers pinching hard at one side, teeth biting, really biting, the other. Starsky cried out again and pushed at Ian's shoulders. Hutch grabbed Ian's face between his hands, pulling his mouth off of Starsky.

"Ian. Ian stop, you're hurting him! What the hell..."

"Oh, God! Sorry... I'm sorry, Dave. My last lover liked it rough, real rough. I guess I got carried away...your body is so much like his...I was lost for a minute. I'm sorry. Do you want me to stop?" *Dammit! I have to*

keep control, can't risk losing him. This has to go my way, all my way, it has to!

Starsky didn't have to look at Hutch to know it was all still up to him. *Christ, Hutch, why do we want this so badly?* Want won out.

"No, Ian, it's okay. I'm okay. Just take it easy, would'ya? I'm not into pain."

"Sure, Dave. I won't hurt you again. I promise, no more pain." *Do you know I'm lying?*

Ian smiled and looked away, hiding the hard glint in his eyes, the smile he aimed at the wall turning hard and determined. He started again, washing and soothing Starsky's reddened chest, bathing the tender nipples, murmuring apologies. Starsky relaxed and smiled at Hutch. This was okay. This he could handle. Hutch settled back on his haunches. His erection had flagged when Starsky cried out, but now, watching his lover arch into Ian's caresses, he stroked himself back to hardness. This was his fantasy, watching Starsky respond to touches like his own but not his. Ian kept up the gentleness, parting Starsky's legs wide with a nudging knee, moving himself lower and lower until his mouth was at Starsky's cock. Ian swore to himself when Starsky reached down and steadied his head, whispering to give him a minute. Everything stopped. Ian watched as Starsky reached for Hutch, pulling him close, kissing him softly.

"Hutch? You sure, babe?" *There's no going back...what I'm giving him is yours... Tell me what to do, babe.*

"Yes. I'm right here...it's okay." *It's just a fantasy, Starsk, just pleasure, it's okay. I love you, only you. Hold on to me. I'm right here.*

Starsky watched Hutch's face fill with wonder as Ian went down on his cock. Hutch watched Ian. Watched Ian's tongue tease Starsky's slit, then circle round and round the head, then wash the length of it with saliva and lips. Starsky's eyes closed when Ian engulfed him, swallowing him whole, deep in his throat. Starsky gasped, and Hutch called his name. And before he could open his eyes again, Hutch was at his face, kissing him, reassuring him, and offering him his cock. Ian did all the watching then. Watched Hutch balance on knees and hands crosswise over Starsky, watched Starsky take Hutch as deep as he was taking Starsky. *Damn you! This is supposed to be my show.* Ian sucked harder, bobbing his head up and down over Starsky, lip covered teeth as tight as he dared, watching Hutch as he picked up on the rhythm. Starsky bucked hard, thrusting his cock deeper into Ian's mouth, lost to everything but what his body was feeling and what he knew he was giving to Hutch. Even as his own orgasm swelled and threatened to fill Ian's mouth, Starsky kept sucking his lover, and when Starsky came, Hutch came, too. Calling for Starsky.

Ian Quinn was pissed and determined not to show it. Not yet. He released Starsky's cock and traveled back up Starsky's body to his mouth, kissing him soundly, knowing Starsky was tasting his own cum mixed with Hutch's. He gave his mouth to Hutch, too, gave him just enough of Starsky's flavor to make Hutch groan low in his throat. Ian broke the kiss off, not surprised when Starsky took his place, pulling Hutch to lie beside him, their bodies and mouths locked like they might not ever have the chance again. *Soon. You'll be calling for me...soon... Screaming for me...*

Ian left them alone. Padding off to the john, he returned with wet washcloths and towels. A slightly longer trip brought orange juice from the kitchen. Ian watched as Hutch dried Starsky's genitals, talking to him in low tones, smiling encouragement. Starsky sprawled where Ian had left him, legs still wide to accommodate Hutch between them. Hutch slipped a hand behind Starsky's knee and bent his leg, exposing the crease of one ass cheek, pulling it from its twin, Ian concentrated on sipping juice, his eyes intent on the view. Starsky's anus was right there, the towel Hutch was using to dry Starsky's scrotum flicking in front of it like a peepshow. *That's where I'm going next. That's going to make Dave mine.*

"You guys okay?" Ian passed a glass of juice to Hutch who in turn passed it to Starsky. Starsky drained the glass. Ian laughed softly and passed his own glass to Hutch. "Drink this one, Ken...I can get more."

"Better than I thought I'd be, Ian." Starsky actually blushed. Answering Ian, but looking at Hutch. "It was good."

Ian felt his cock surge under his shorts. *It was more than good, Dave. Soon you'll admit it. Wait...you just wait. There's more...so much more...*

"Do you want to go on, Dave? Are you ready for more?"

"Yeah, Ian, I do. Hutch? Hutch, I'm ready, babe."

Good, Dave, that's the right answer. I'm helping you now... It will all be so easy...

Hutch stood and pulled Starsky to his feet and studied his face. Satisfied with what he found, and just maybe for the first time in their relationship mistaking what he saw, he kissed his lover and held him close, then spoke against his ear.

"Starsk, I want you to strip Ian the way you strip me before we make love. The same way, Starsk."

"Hutch." Question or warning, Ian couldn't be certain.

"It's what I want, babe, please. I want to watch you with Ian."

Starsky nodded his agreement and kissed Hutch again before turning to Ian and offering him his hand. Ian took it, and Starsky pulled him close and ran trembling hands over Ian's slender back, pulling his shirt up over his head and gliding his hands over skin Starsky found oddly cool and dry. Different. Exciting. He kissed Ian hard, and then Starsky's mouth was on Ian's neck, working down over his collar bone to the center of Ian's chest. The dusting of auburn hair there was a surprise, and Starsky drew back to look. He leaned in and nuzzled Ian's chest with his nose, then lips, understanding why Hutch was so fascinated by his body hair. This felt good. He liked it.

Starsky found Ian's nipples, paler than Hutch's, bigger, too. He suckled for a long time, enjoying their size on his tongue. Would have been content to stay there, but he couldn't. Hutch wanted him to do something--something lower, something more. Starsky gave a nipple a parting bite and sank to his knees, licking his way down Ian's flat stomach, delving into his navel with his tongue, aware that someplace behind him, Hutch was breathing heavily.

Ian's shorts were next, Starsky tugged them down to Ian's knees. The auburn hair reappeared just below his waist, trailed down to his groin where it blossomed into an impressive thatch of darker red that thinned out at the top of his thighs and framed his full scrotum and pale cock, pale even engorged. Ian's dick was long. Long, narrow, and very hard. Starsky tugged the shorts down and off of Ian's legs as he knelt before him. Ian was finally naked. Looming above Starsky, pale body lean and well muscled and waiting. Waiting for what Hutch wanted Starsky to do. *What I want to do. Do to Ian. Christ, I want it.* Running his hands up Ian's thighs, Starsky cupped Ian's balls with one hand and his cock with the other. *I'm liking this too much... I want it...need it. Oh, Hutch!* He whispered for Hutch to watch, and then Starsky took Ian Quinn in his mouth. The long cock slid to the back of his tongue and down his throat. Starsky felt hands in his hair, too many hands, and realized Hutch was holding his head along with Ian. *Stay with me, babe, watch me do this.*

One of them, Hutch or Ian, set the rhythm, Ian's dick sliding back and forth over Starsky's tongue, hitting the back of his throat. Starsky tried to concentrate on what he was doing, and who he was doing it to, but his mind wandered from one pleasurable feeling to the next. He felt his body reacting--his cock was filling again, and he longed for touch beyond the hands tangled in his hair. He wanted Ian to come in his mouth, wanted Ian's taste, wanted Ian's balls at his chin. Ian was good. New. Hutch moved behind Ian, and from the movement of his hips, Starsky knew he was thrusting himself against Ian's backside. Starsky reached around

Ian and held his ass tight. Hutch's cock was right there, rubbing Starsky's knuckles. Starsky parted Ian's cheeks and positioned Hutch's cock between them, so that it slid the length of Ian's crack, giving Hutch a place to bury himself. Ian cried out and Starsky took him deeper into his throat, working his cock with his throat muscles until Ian shouted his name and made demands.

"Dave! Dave, squeeze my balls hard, pull them! Bite my dick...that's it, use your teeth...harder..."

Hutch watched over Ian's shoulder, his own dick forgotten as Starsky did what Ian demanded. Starsky's teeth flashed around Ian's cock, his hand squeezed Ian's drawn up sac. Starsky hurt him, and Ian Quinn came in his mouth. Came and came, gagging Starsky with fluid far more bitter than Hutch's. Ian's fingers were hard at the sides of Starsky's head, forcing him to stay and swallow. Ian was in no hurry to leave, his softening sex stayed pushed in Starsky's mouth, his belly blocking Starsky's air until Starsky had to pull away. Stunned. He'd done it. He'd enjoyed it. Someone other than Hutch. Because of Hutch.

Ian looked down at Starsky, his eyes glazed over but triumphant. He'd done it--taken Starsky, poured himself down that silky throat. God, it had been good! And Starsky had done his bidding, pulled hard on balls that still tingled, bit his dick, forced it with his tongue to slide against sharp edged teeth. Gave him what was missing and wanted. *Pain, Dave, soon...you'll like it, too...* His ass tingled, too, Hutch had been thrusting hard, his big cock rubbing Ian's anus over and over until he stopped short to watch Starsky as Ian came in his mouth... Ian's whole body felt Hutch shudder against him and then pull away.

"Starsk?"

A big hand reached around Ian and carded through Starsky's curls, turning his face. Hutch's cock, Hutch's beautiful cock, hard once again, wept before Starsky's eyes. *Hutch...mine.* Starsky turned on his knees, away from Ian, and ran his hands up the back of Hutch's legs, cupping his ass to draw him close. Surprised when strong hands pulled him to standing, and Hutch whispered 'wait' in his ear. Hutch's mouth claimed his, his tongue washing every surface, every tooth, in Starsky's mouth. Drinking until Ian was gone, and all Starsky could taste was Hutch.

Ian watched. Keeping his furious envy inside, directing it to the place in his mind that said later.

Hutch lowered both of them to the floor, offering himself to his lover, inviting Ian to lay with them. Starsky took Hutch in his mouth, moves practiced and smooth and graceful. Hutch called his partner's name over and over as Starsky's hands roamed the body beside him, lighting fire after fire. Ian stayed at Starsky's back, running fingers over warm skin on two bodies, aching to do more, but holding back. *For now.* Hutch arched high at his pelvis, and Starsky's hands slipped behind him, holding ass cheeks tight, drawing Hutch impossibly deep in his throat. Hutch climaxed hard and Starsky swallowed him effortlessly. This was Starsky's drink, favored above any other. Ian watched as Starsky nursed on Hutch's cock, and then washed him clean it with his tongue. Starsky moved up to Hutch's mouth and shared with him, traces of semen, the taste of Hutch's sex, just the two of them.

Ian kept his touch on Starsky's back light. The effort killing him. He wanted to make it hurt. Instead, he pressed his body closer to Starsky's and held him. Kissed the back of his head and neck until the rapid heartbeat that pulsed before him calmed. Reaching around Starsky to caress Hutch, fondling his softened sex until he felt the stirrings of his own cock. He didn't speak until he was certain Starsky had fallen asleep.

"I think we've worn Dave out, Ken. Can I help you get him into bed? Maybe it would be all right if we all laid down together for just a little while." Ian stroked a hand down his own body, patted at his own penis. "You two were so incredible." Ian stretched and yawned, resting his head on Starsky's back, lifting his face to blink sleepily at Hutch. "I don't think I could stay awake to drive if I left just now. Would that be all right, Ken?"

Let me stay, Ken...we can all enjoy each other until Dave and I don't need you anymore...

Hutch smiled at Ian. "Sure. Come on, I'll need your help with this big lug."

*_*_*

It didn't take too long to wake Starsky for the short walk to the bedroom. A few kisses, some well placed hands, and the threat of a long, cold shower took care of things. Ian snagged their few pieces of clothing, separating his own from Starsky and Hutch's, placing them where he could easily reach them from the bed. Hutch was more than agreeable to Ian's suggestion of a nap. Whether or not anything more happened that night wasn't too important for the moment. Watching Starsky with Ian had been unbelievable. And Starsky taking him in his mouth while Ian watched was a deeply satisfying twist on Hutch's fantasy. Starsky had surprised him, too. Giving Ian the pain he obviously craved. That was so new, so foreign for the man Ken Hutchinson bedded nearly every night. His Starsky, who had been so hesitant and nervous, now uninhibited and eager with this third person.

Hutch dumped Starsky on the king-sized bed he and Starsky shared, laughing softly as Starsky rolled his tired body to the center of the mattress and curled up on his side, one hand groping blindly for the quilt folded near his feet. Ian joined in the laughter.

"That where he usually sleeps, Ken?"

"Sure, that's just Starsky, front and center all the way." Hutch took a moment to settle the quilt over his lover. "I'm going to grab some more juice, Ian. Be right back."

"Okay if I get in bed, Ken?"

"Of course. Hey, did you want some juice, too? Maybe some more wine?"

"Juice is fine, Ken." Ian was already slipping under the quilt behind Starsky. "Oh, I just remembered. You ran out--I brought the last of it to you guys earlier." *When I drugged you both the first time...and you couldn't tell could you?*

"No problem...more in the freezer..."

Ian Quinn was alone with Starsky.

Slipping back out from under the quilt, he grabbed his shorts and rifled through the pocket. He tucked what he found under the pillow next to Starsky's head. *You'll love it, Dave, I promise.* Curling around Starsky's backside was all Ian needed to get another hard-on. He had to move fast. Starsky was out, his breathing slow and deep. Ian slipped one hand down Starsky's side, over his hip, across one cheek, and into the cleft that separated it from the other half of Starsky's ass. Fingertips explored and found the opening he craved. Keeping an eye on the bedroom doorway, watching for Hutch, Ian slipped his middle finger into Starsky's body. *Oh, God, I'm in him! So good... Soon, Dave, soon I'll have all of you...* Starsky stirred, his anus contracting around the finger that violated it. Ian pushed and pulled, his finger surrounded by heat, squeezed tight by Starsky's insides. Starsky stirred again, his mouth opening a little as a soft moan escaped. Ian withdrew his finger and reached under his pillow. He found the tiny capsule he had hidden there and quickly inserted it into Starsky's rectum, followed again by his finger, pushing it deep into Starsky's body. Ian pulled out fast as Starsky lifted his head from the pillow.

"Hutch?"

"No, Dave, no, it's Ian. Hutch is making some juice out in the kitchen, he'll be right in. You fell asleep, and Hutch and I decided it would be a good idea to lie down for a while. You still feelin' good?"

"Yeah, feel real good, just kinda' sleepy. Thought Hutch was playin' with my ass." Starsky chuckled, and Ian knew the capsule dissolving in Starsky's body was already doing its job. "Guess it couldn't have been. Not even Hutch's dick is that long." Another laugh, and Starsky was asleep again.

Hutch stood in the doorway and watched Ian Quinn snuggle up to Starsky's back. Starsky was asleep and Ian looked to be following him.

"Ian? You going to sleep?"

The quilt moved, and Ian shifted his body and peered over Starsky's shoulder at Hutch.

"No, Ken...almost there though." Ian sat up, scooting his hips next to Starsky's head, leaning his back on the headboard. "Could use some of that juice you've got there."

Hutch obliged, handing a glass to Ian, just starting to drink from the other when the phone rang. Hutch excused himself, leaving the glass on the end table. *Perfect! Perfect, thank you...* Ian pulled a second object, a tiny paper packet, from beneath his pillow, and had it torn open and emptied into Hutch's juice almost before Hutch said hello. Ian stirred the juice with his finger, put the remains of the packet in his mouth and washed it down with his own juice. Settling back on the pillows, he listened to Hutch's half of the conversation.

"Yeah, I'll hold... Whatcha' got, Cap?"

I can tell you exactly what he's got, Ken. Seventy-three Nova, reported stolen of course, plates stolen, too, still missing. Slender, white male, long black hair tied back with a piece of leather. Mirrored aviator glasses worn even at night. Last seen cruising the beaches near the docks and piers with Joe Bennett in the passenger seat, very late Sunday night... If you're lucky, Ken, your fellow cops might find that car someday...but I don't plan on you being lucky...

"That's it, Cap? Our only witness...damn. Yeah, Starsk and I will see you tomorrow after the funeral. Night, Cap."

Hutch wrote a few notes to pass on to Starsky and returned to the bedroom. Ian was still sitting up, playing idly with Starsky's hair, his head leaning back on the wall behind the bed, eyes closed. He opened them when Hutch took the empty juice glass from his hand and settled his body down on the other side of Starsky. Hutch traded Ian's empty glass for the full one and drank.

"Everything okay, Ken?"

"Oh, sure...that was my Captain, just touching base on a murder investigation Starsky and I are handling." Hutch's hand joined Ian's on Starsky's head. "Maybe we should lie down and get a little sleep, I'm feeling as tired as Starsky looks." Hutch scooted his long body down next to Starsky's, waiting on one elbow for Ian to do the same.

"Ken? Would it be all right if I kissed you goodnight? I..I know Dave's asleep and all... I just could use a kiss, that's all, just a kiss." *For now...you'll want more real soon...so will Dave...it'll be so easy...because you want it so much already, Ken...*

Hutch's kiss was gentle and tender. A trace of tongue on lips, a nibble, a bit of pressure. Hutch pulled away first and fit his back against Starsky. Ian curled around Starsky's bottom and listened to Starsky and Hutch breathe together in sleep. Almost feeling bad about what was to come. Almost.

Starsky woke first, Hutch's fine blond hair tickling his nose. He was warm, front and back. Ian Quinn's breath on his neck reminded Starsky that he and Hutch were not alone in their bed. Starsky was very aware of waking with an erection, and very aware he wanted more sex. With both men.

"Blondie? You in there somewhere?" Starsky's long tongue found the back of Hutch's ear. "Hutch?"

Hutch turned onto his back, peering sleepily into Starsky's eyes.

"Hi."

"Hi yourself. When'd we end up here?"

"Oh, sometime last night--just a few hours ago. You were zonked. How you feelin' now, love?"

"Terrific, babe, I feel terri..."

The end of the word was lost in Hutch's mouth, Starsky's tongue flipping it away as it sought Hutch's. Starsky lowered the upper half of his body to lie on Hutch's chest, his ass-end stayed put, pressed firmly to Ian's crotch. Finally coming up for air, Starsky caressed Hutch's face while he spoke.

"Hutch, I'm really glad we decided to do this with Ian. It was good, babe, real good." Starsky kissed his lover again. "I want to do more, Hutch. With both of you." *I'm so horny I can hardly stand it...can't believe I feel this way...*

"Tonight, Starsk?" Hutch's voice was as tender as it was filled with hope and desire. His own erection grateful for the warm hand that surrounded it.

"Now, Hutch. How about we wake Ian up?"

Neither man noticed that Ian was already awake. Awake and listening.

Starsky was settled on his belly, Hutch on one side, Ian the other. Starsky felt a hand on his shoulder. *That's Ian, not Hutch. Hutch's hands are bigger and callused. Hutch's hands I'm used to...oh, fuck, who the hell is that?* A slick tongue traveled over skin where armpit met side. Hands rubbed his back hard, squeezed the nape of his neck, traveled down to his ass. A hand for each cheek, caressing, pulling, making him want.

The sheets rustled and the mattress dipped and Ian was behind him, pulling at Starsky's hips to get him on his knees. Then lips pressed against the small of his back and moved lower, kissing his ass. The bed moved again, and a second mouth was kissing him. Another shift and he could hear the sounds of Hutch and Ian kissing, their hands still busy on his body. Starsky felt his ass cheeks parted, and warm air blew across his center. Then hot wet circled him, and Starsky moaned into the pillows.

Got him every time, the rimming. A sweet memory. *Aww, Hutch, you don't have to do that...wait, Starsk, you'll see when you do me.* And Starsky had seen. He loved making love to Hutch's ass, loved it when... Starsky lost his train of thought when one of them forced his tongue inside of him--Starsky could have cared less which one it was. *Just don't stop!* Number two head slipped beneath him and a tongue circled his balls, and Starsky figured he could die then, it would be okay.

The bed dipped again and someone--Starsky decided it was Hutch since this was their place and he knew where to find things--opened the nightstand drawer; the squeaky one where they kept sex toys and lube and extra hand towels. *So, tongue number one belongs to our new friend Ian, and Ian is damned good at what he's doing.* Starsky took his face out of the pillow and turned toward Hutch as one of Ian's hands left his

hips. Hutch was lubing Ian's fingers, fingers Starsky knew were about to introduce themselves to his rectum. Sure enough, one final thrust of the invading tongue, and the hot wet was replaced by a very long and curious finger. And an invitation from Ian.

"Join me, Ken? Help me get Dave ready?"

Don't have to ask Hutch twice, Ian. Nope. Ian's finger was joined by Hutch's, Ian pulling out as Hutch pushed in, the bumping of Starsky's prostate doing double time. Starsky was helpless. This couldn't feel any better. It did when two more fingers took up residence. And when those four fingers started to dance and curl around each other deep inside of his body, Starsky came, roping semen over his stomach and chest, surprising all three of them. His knees couldn't support him any longer and he sank to his belly, taking Ian and Hutch's hands with him.

At least a couple of the fingers left Starsky's ass, there was a bit of very hushed discussion he really couldn't hear too well, then the remaining fingers pulled out, and a body lowered itself onto his back. The cock attached to that body very hard on his ass. A voice whispered in his ear, and Starsky forced himself to the surface to hear.

"Hey, buddy."

Hutch. Hutch was warming him with his body. Giving him a time out. Didn't last long before Hutch was whispering phase two.

"Starsk, I'm gonna help you turn over on your back and I'm gonna hold you, okay?" *Sure, why?* "Ian's gonna fuck you, Starsk." *Fuck. Ian's gonna fuck me. Hutch is gonna hold me. Got it.* Hutch did all the arranging, turned Starsky over, rubbed at the semen that coated his front, kissed him some more and took Starsky's upper body between his legs, ensconcing him between warm thighs. Somewhere in the numbness that was his brain, Starsky realized Hutch's erection was nestled in his hair, pressing at his scalp. *Gonna come in my hair, blondie?* He tried to get Hutch to look at him, but Hutch's eyes were glued on the cock of the man lifting Starsky's legs up over his shoulders.

Starsky's eyes joined Hutch's. Ian was kneeling between Starsky's wide spread legs, penis in hand, moving in on Starsky's center. Ian put his other hand over the right side of Starsky's chest, leaning there for balance, pinning Starsky to the mattress. Hutch was breathing as hard as Starsky, but the second Ian bumped Starsky's anus with his cock, all breathing ceased. For all of them.

It was Hutch's trembling that pulled Starsky back.

What the hell am I doing? Hutch...what are we..."

Starsky grabbed for Hutch, forcing his lover to look at his face. And Starsky saw his own fears and confusion mirrored back at him.

This is wrong! Hutch, we can't undo this after...it's too much...I can't...

The cock at his ass moved, and so did Starsky. Pushing Ian's hand from his chest and pulling his legs off Ian's shoulders. Muttering apologies, Starsky left the bed, moving across the room on unsteady legs, grabbing for his robe. He stood in front of the window, desperate to get his breathing under control, his body shaking and cold. Warm arms circled him from behind, and he pressed back against Hutch.

"I can't, babe...I'm sorry...I feel..."

"Starsk? Hey...hey, come on...it's okay. Starsky? Starsk...we don't have to do this...I felt it, too...I don't want to give us away..."

Starsky turned into Hutch's embrace. "I don't want to either, Hutch...what we already did with...I thought I wanted that...it was good...but I feel funny about it now...don't understand..." Starsky buried his head against his lover's neck and sighed. "Don't think I was thinking too straight." Starsky kissed Hutch, held his lips with his own, his emotions rejoicing in what was so familiar to him. So safe. "We have to tell Ian, Hutch."

But Ian Quinn had already heard. And Ian Quinn was already on the move.

Starsky heard Quinn's approach and turned to talk to him. Quinn grabbed Starsky's hair, and using it for leverage, smashed the back of Starsky's skull into Hutch's face. Hutch fell to his hands and knees, blood running freely from his nose and split lip, struggling to right himself, to get to Starsky who stood in stunned silence, supported by Quinn's hand still clutching his hair. Quinn's foot came down hard on Hutch's calf, and Hutch rolled to his side, the pain in his leg taking him down, exposing his ribs for a hard kick. Quinn grabbed Starsky by the throat, his powerful right hand choking him, pushing him hard against the wall until he felt Starsky's body go slack. He released him then, watching with satisfaction as Starsky slid limply down the wall. Hutch called frantically for Starsky, tried once again to get up. Ian Quinn took care of that, chopping Hutch hard on the side of his neck.

Quinn heard only his own breathing. As ragged and shallow as he breathed after an orgasm. And he relished the sound, relished the feelings coursing through his body, the feelings that paralleled sexual completion. The feelings of violence that excited him and both satisfied and enhanced his most intense cravings. For Ian Quinn, nothing was over. His taking of David Starsky was just beginning.

The lovers at Quinn's feet were quiet and still. Hutch was dealt with first. Bound and gagged and left naked. Locked away in the trunk of Quinn's car. Quinn was rough with him--paying no attention to the long limbs that banged against steps, no attention to the head that struck hard against the trunk's interior. And in the cover of night, at the end of a quiet street, Ian Quinn was rough as he treated himself to intimate contact with the unconscious man, touching Hutch, pulling at him, hitting him, leaving bruises as his mark.

Starsky began to stir just as Quinn walked into the house. Quinn was quick. Quick to gather Starsky in his arms, quick to murmur comforting words and kiss the confused face. And quick to use the chloroform-soaked rag he brought back from the car. He allowed Starsky his robe and grabbed an afghan from the couch to further wrap his body. Starsky was settled over his shoulder, and Quinn made the trip out to the car one more time, placing Starsky in the passenger seat, arranging him so that he appeared to be asleep, his head and side resting on the back of the seat. Quinn stroked his hand down the length of Starsky's body, caressing his face and petting his chest and arms. Starsky didn't stir, and Ian Quinn drove away from the little house Starsky shared with Hutch.

The stolen seventy-three Nova, which had last been used to carry Joe Bennett to his death, waited behind an old barn on a deserted farm, fifty miles southeast of Bay City. Quinn calmly unlocked the trunks on both the Nova and his car, and transferred Hutch's body from one to the other. Hutch groaned, consciousness fighting to come back to him, and Quinn was sorely tempted. Tempted by the sight of the long, pale body, trussed and vulnerable. Tempted to take what he had been denied. But dawn was coming. Only a few hours of darkness remained, and Ian Quinn had work to do. Desires to fulfill. He took his satisfaction from his fist meeting the side of Hutch's head.

Hutch was left alone in the locked trunk. In a car that would soon see the morning sun. Sun that would shine down and heat the car's interior spaces for an entire day before it shifted past the roof of the barn. No one would find him there...that was Quinn's plan. For Ken Hutchinson to die far away from the man he loved. And that man, the man Ian Quinn had chosen, would die in his possession. But not before he paid. Not before he was taken. Not before he was owned. Dave Starsky's death would be every bit as horrible as his partner's.

But it wouldn't be horrible for Ian Quinn. For him, it would be pure pleasure.

He couldn't say what woke him: the suffocating, airless heat, the cramps that took over his muscles, the taste of his own blood in his dry mouth, the sharp scratching and banging above and behind his head. Could have been any of those things. But it was the voices that pulled him all the way back. Hutch yelled, shouted as loud as he could for someone to please help him. The voices got louder, as did the scratching and banging. The trunk lid slid open. The sunlight was blinding for a moment--the harsh light, and gasps that belonged to the voices, were all Hutch knew for a few seconds.

And then someone was speaking directly to him, quickly and efficiently covering him with a blanket, making demands of the other voices. Hands helped him to sit up, untied his bonds, swung his legs from the trunk before they lifted his body to sit on the car's frame. Blessed shade and water followed, and Hutch was able to focus. Surrounded by uniformed officers from a department he was unfamiliar with, he searched their faces, looking for someone, but not finding him. Starsky. Starsky was not there.

"Sir? Sir, an ambulance is on the way...try and stay still. Damn, this is your lucky day. Couple of kids were caught trying to strip the car you were locked in. A school-group out on horseback saw them and hightailed it to a phone. The car was..."

Hutch interrupted--he knew what the car was. "Starsky? Where's Starsky?"

"Starsky, sir?"

"My partner." Hutch saw the look that traveled from one cop to another. A naked man locked in a trunk, bruises on the most private areas of his body, asking for his partner. *Damn them...damn.* "I'm a cop...my partner, Detective Starsky...he...he was with me when I was attacked."

The uniformed officer's response was cut off by the arrival of a squad from Bay City. Hutch felt a rush of relief at the sight of his captain. Dobey pushed his way through the small crowd of officers, waving his badge and calling out his identification.

"Hutch! Thank God. I heard the call go out on the car being found. When you and Starsky didn't answer my calls, and didn't show at the funeral..."

Hutch looked blankly at his captain, his thoughts scrambled, unable to get past his fears for Starsky.

"Hutch, listen to me. This is the stolen car Joe Bennett was seen riding in...Hutch...Hutch where the hell is Starsky?"

"Cap...he has him...Starsky. Oh, God..."

"Hutch!" Dobey had him by the arms now. "Who, Hutch? Who has him?"

"The killer, Cap. His name is Ian Quinn. He has Starsky."

*_*_*

Starsky woke, cold and in pain. Alone. He struggled to stay awake and concentrate--figure out where he was. A large, wooden building, plank floors, very high windows. And there was a smell...something he vaguely remembered from his childhood...lake water and fuel. *Ma's rich uncle...the one with the boat on Lake Gray...hiding from Nicky in the boathouse...* Rolling to his back and turning his head, he saw the huge, open slip, water lapping gently within a space large enough to accommodate a cabin-cruiser. The water was

surrounded on three sides by the plank flooring, the fourth side of the building accommodating a massive door, the pulleys that opened and closed it housed high up in the rafters. Smaller doors on one wall, one secured with a deadbolt, the other a bathroom--utilitarian fixtures visible through the open doorway.

Raising his upper body with his arms, Starsky was immediately taken back down by pain that seized his neck and shoulders. *What the hell? Last thing I remember...Hutch! Ian hurt Hutch...*

"Hutch? Where are you?" Starsky ignored his pain, managing to make it to his knees before he had to stop, resting heavily on hands pressed against thighs. He tried again, tried to call for Hutch, but only a whisper came out, his abused throat objecting to the effort.

"He's not here, Dave."

Ian?

Ian Quinn leaned casually against the wall behind Starsky's head. Clothed in dress slacks and shirt, a sweater tied over his shoulders. He smiled at Starsky.

"In fact, you won't ever see him again. I killed him, Dave. You're mine now...you don't need Ken anymore. You won't need anyone but me now."

"You're lying...Hutch isn't dead." Starsky forced the words out as he fought the darkness that threatened to take him back. His own breathing choking him as Quinn's hand had, panic squeezing at his heart.

Quinn's demeanor was quite the opposite--calm, his voice patient, his tone level, as if this were an everyday conversation for him. Telling a man his lover was dead.

"He's gone Dave, you'll just have to accept that. I took care of him, just like I took care of Brian and Jeff and Larry and Joe." Quinn cocked his head to one side and laughed. "I was right under your noses all along, Dave, right there! Figured it out yet, Detective Starsky?"

Starsky crumbled back to the floor, his mind swimming with pictures of Hutch, slashed and choked to death, abused like Joe Bennett. Quinn moved to Starsky's side and crouched down and grabbed Starsky's hair, lifting his face, staring into his eyes.

"Don't worry, Dave. I didn't cut Ken. Didn't rape him, either. Not saying I didn't want to--I did. I saved all of that for you, Dave. Locked Ken in the trunk of a car, and left the rest up to Mother Nature. Gets damn hot in southern California--nice sunny day like this."

"Bastard. I'll kill you."

"Now, Dave...I wasn't counting on you making me mad so early in the game. You should be grateful I'm letting you live for a while." Quinn pushed Starsky's head back to the floor and grabbed the belt to his robe, pulling it undone and baring Starsky's body. "Have to let you live for this." Overly strong hands grabbed at Starsky as he tried to get away, his movements made feeble and weak by his injuries and grief. Quinn laughed again and pushed Starsky onto his back, straddling the downed man. "I want you to kiss me now. Kiss me and make it good."

Starsky managed to spit in Quinn's face.

"Fuck off, Ian."

Quinn moved fast, his hand encircling Starsky's already bruised neck, squeezing hard until Starsky passed out. He put his hands on Starsky's body, kissing the unconscious man, fondling and stroking him until he

opened his own trousers and pulled out his engorged penis. Quinn masturbated above Starsky until he came, his semen spraying Starsky's chest, shouting Starsky's name until it bounced back from the walls, filling the wooden structure with its echo.

Quinn calmly used Starsky's robe to clean himself off, zipped his trousers and straightened his clothing. Starsky's body was dragged close to a wall and secured by the wrist to a mooring cleat. Standing beside Starsky, Quinn drew back one of his feet and kicked him hard in the ribs.

"I told you, Dave...don't make me mad."

Starsky didn't feel the blows to his body. Didn't feel his soiled robe being tucked around his battered body. Didn't hear Quinn's promise to return soon.

*_*_*

Hutch...Hutchinson, listen to me." Dobby was beside himself. Hutch, in his panicked condition, had just announced to a group of cops that a serial killer of young, gay men had his partner. And had also had him. Hutch, who was naked and cut and bruised himself. It wasn't difficult to pick up on the undercurrent of whispered conversations buzzing through the group of cops. And the body language of a number of dark shirts now turned away.

"Hutch," Dobby leaned in close, his words for Hutch only. "Don't say anymore...not until we're alone. Do you understand me?"

Dobby turned to the senior officer in the group before him and requested APBs put out on Detective Sergeant David Starsky and Ian Quinn. He supplied Starsky's information himself, reluctantly turning to Hutch for a description of Quinn and Quinn's automobile. Dobby was very quiet with his further words to Hutch.

"Do you need a hospital?"

"No."

"Are you sure, Hutch? What about evidence?"

"I'm sure, Captain...all he did was knock me out and bring me here."

Dobby helped Hutch from the trunk, holding the blanket for him, trying his best to shield him from the prying eyes that surrounded them. *Dammit, Hutchinson! How the hell am I supposed to protect you and Starsky this time? What the hell were you two doing with this killer...and Starsky, where is Starsky...?* Dobby took some of his anger out on the crowd of officers.

"Stand back! Give us some room. Somebody find this man some clothes!"

"Captain? Captain, I need his statement."

Dobby turned wearily away from Hutch, directing his gaze at the uniformed officer behind them, reading his name on the badge pinned to his shirt.

"You'll get it, Officer Falkner. But first I'm taking my man to my car and checking him over." Falkner started to protest, knocked down to silence by the quiet fierceness in Dobby's voice. "In a minute, Officer."

Hutch was pushed into the back seat of the Bay City squad. He heard Dobby's terse instructions to the officer who had driven the squad to keep everyone back, away from Hutch. Dobby leaned in close, quickly

and efficiently checking Hutch for broken bones, cuts that required stitches. Pulling gently at the blanket, he swore at the bruises he found on Hutch's lower belly and genitals. Tucking the blanket back in place, he called softly to Hutch who had kept his face turned away from his captain, staring instead out the side window.

"Hutch? Are you sure you don't need a hospital? You have some bad bruises..."

"I told you, Captain, no, I don't need a hospital. Quinn beat me up and dumped me in the trunk of that car...but that's it. He has Starsky...we have to find him. Please, Captain, let me give my statement and let's get going."

"Hutch," Dobey hesitated, needing to know, afraid to ask, "what in the name of God were you and Starsky doing with Ian Quinn? When you give your statement...dammit, Hutch! When you give your statement everyone will know about you two, your careers..."

"Do you really think that matters anymore, Captain? Without Starsky..." Hutch stopped and was quiet for a moment. Dobey hadn't said it, but it was his career, too. Dobey had protected him and Starsky for years, lied for them, fought for them, told IA just what they could do with their suspicions. But still, without Starsky...if Quinn killed Starsky... Hutch came to a decision. "I'll tell them what they need to launch an investigation from their end, Captain. No more, no less. Our personal lives stay out of it as far as they're concerned--I'll fill you in when we get home. I'm sorry, Cap...I can't begin to tell you how sorry I am. Please, let me give my statement and let's go. Starsky is out there with a madman...I have to find him."

Dobey studied his hands. One of his best was about to deliver what Dobey knew would be a highly altered account of whatever had happened at his and Starsky's home. He had to make a decision of his own. Commanding officer or friend. The answer came easily when he looked into Hutch's eyes. When Hutch's eyes turned to brown and Dobey saw his own partner. The partner whose death took Dobey off the streets, the partner Dobey mourned to this day. Dobey had lost Elmo Jackson--found the partner he loved hanging dead on a meat-hook. Lying to the cops, omitting some details, didn't seem important any more. With Elmo's voice whispering in his ear to get moving, help this cop find his partner, Dobey agreed with Hutch. Told him he was behind him.

Officer Falkner took Hutch's statement. Detectives Starsky and Hutchinson had become acquainted with Ian Quinn at Quinn's place of employment and invited the man to their home for dinner. They all had too much to drink, and it was decided that Quinn would spend the night. Quinn attacked them in their sleep during the night, dumped Hutch in the trunk of the Nova, and kidnapped Starsky. They had no idea that Ian Quinn was a murderer.

Falkner took the information supplied to him without question. Waited patiently while Hutch slipped on a set of sweats and gym shoes tossed at him. Pausing only at the end to ask, "Sergeant, you named this Ian Quinn as the murderer in a recently re-opened murder case where at least three of the victims were homosexual, and that you and Sergeant Starsky became friends with him. What kind of friends, Sergeant?"

Dobey had his fill with that question. "Sergeant Hutchinson has already answered that, Falkner. He and Detective Starsky met the man and became friends. Period. Now, I'm taking Hutchinson with me. We have an officer and a murderer to find. I strongly suggest, Falkner, you get your own investigation moving. You have any more questions, call me".

*_*_*

Consciousness came slowly and filled with grief and pain. Starsky awakened curled on his side and hurting, his belly and ribs on fire. His emotions fed his fear, and the memory of Ian Quinn stripping him of his robe and demanding to be kissed threatened to take him back under. *No! Forget it...fight...get away...* Forcing his

eyes open, he gradually became aware that time had passed to early evening--the light from the high windows came from the back of the building now, and the air was colder. He found his hands tied in front of him, the sash from his own robe providing the binding. Struggling to ignore the pain, he tried to move his legs, but it wouldn't happen. His own body was a stranger refusing to help him. He heard some soft sounds: shoes walking on the worn wood, a few breaths, and knew he wasn't alone.

"Hello, Dave."

Starsky didn't know what scared him most: Ian Quinn's voice, or the sound of a zipper and rustling of clothing, or the feeling of Quinn's naked body curling around his own. Fear ran hot through his belly, squeezing its way up past his heart and into his throat. His mind recoiled from the white hot buzzing in his ears and he fought the nausea that came with the sensation of Quinn's skin pressed against him. He watched as one of Quinn's hands moved before him, untying the sash that bound his wrists. He watched his own hands fall to the floor, useless, betraying him as his legs had. Quinn's hand rested on Starsky's hip, drawing slow circles that gradually moved lower until his hand stopped at Starsky's groin and encircled his penis.

"Don't...please don't..."

"Don't what, Dave? Don't love you? Far too late for that. Shush....no need to make this ugly, not when what's between us is so beautiful." Quinn released Starsky's penis and reached for his face, stroking his cheek, playing with his lower lip. "I see the shot I gave you has taken effect nicely. You won't be able to fight me, Dave, so just forget about trying. I have a pill for you to take...something to help you. Like I helped you and Ken back at your place. Remember, Dave, how good that was?"

"Ian...it wasn't...didn't mean..."

Starsky was silenced by Quinn's hand at his throat--squeezing just hard enough to remind Starsky what he was capable of.

"It was beautiful. Dave. I want it again. You will, too."

Quinn stood and crossed to the bathroom. All Starsky could do was listen and wait, trapped in a body unable to move. Water ran, and Quinn came back with a small glass, crouched down beside Starsky, rolled him onto his back and lifted his head.

"Here we go, Dave. Open up and take this pill and we can get started."

Starsky kept his lips tightly together and turned his head away. Quinn let out a long sigh and dropped Starsky's head to the floor and once again stroked Starsky's cheek. The gentle touch turned cold and painful when Quinn grabbed Starsky's chin, forcing him to open his mouth. The pill was in and followed by water before Starsky could react. And Quinn's touch turned sickeningly gentle once again, stroking down Starsky's throat, encouraging him to swallow.

"Good, Dave. It won't take long...soon we'll be making love...just the two of us. You took me in your mouth once before...that was so good, Dave. You're going to do that again for me. Now, Dave."

"No! No, Ian...I won't. That was all wrong..."

Starsky gagged against the fingers that roughly grabbed his tongue.

"Shut up! The others didn't talk, they only screamed. Shut up or I'll cut out your tongue!"

Shut up, Ian, don't argue with me.

Daddy..?

I said shut up! There now, isn't that good?

Quinn released his tongue. "Don't argue with me, Dave." Quinn smiled at him as he positioned himself over Starsky, his penis now bumping at Starsky's face. Starsky fought furiously against the drugs that held his body captive, able only to turn his head as far away from Quinn as he possibly could. Quinn laughed. Laughed at the futile struggle, and once again grabbed Starsky's face, his powerful grip threatening to crack Starsky's jaw, forcing his mouth open.

"Stop, Dave, stop and open your mouth. Good, that's it."

Something inside of Starsky started to die at that moment and he couldn't help the tears that came, couldn't help retching at the taste and feel of Ian Quinn in his mouth. Quinn drew back and slapped him and reached for something on the floor behind Starsky's head. Starsky caught a brief glimpse of something shining in the late-day sun just before he felt the sting as it cut into his neck below his ear. Quinn's voice was dangerous and silky and sensuous.

"You suck me off, Dave. Suck me off and make it good for me. You don't, and I cut off your ear. Come on, Dave...you know what I like. Do it!"

Starsky did it. Whatever Quinn had made him swallow was taking effect, and Starsky could feel his body betraying him, making him crave physical release even as his mind begged for what was happening to end. He was hard and he wanted to come. *Forgive me, Hutch...please, God, forgive me...* Starsky didn't fight Quinn...he swallowed his cum, and felt Quinn move down his body and take his cock in his mouth. Starsky came, too. His body at war with his mind, his body and Quinn's drugs winning the fight.

Quinn released him, moving to cover Starsky's body with his own, kiss Starsky's mouth, whisper against his neck. Quinn's words were at first terrifying, but Starsky's mind turned them to hope. Saw them as a promise of freedom.

"I'm going to miss you, Dave. Of all my lovers, you're the one I most wish I could keep. I'm sorry...I can only have you for three days. You'll have to die then. But I'm going to love you, Dave, everyday that I have you, we'll be lovers."

Starsky watched helplessly as Quinn prepared a hypodermic and plunged the needle into his hip.

"Sleep, lover. Tomorrow is day two. I'll be back in the morning."

Starsky was unconscious before Quinn left the boathouse. Didn't feel Quinn kiss his mouth and caress his face. Didn't feel the robe draped across his body. Didn't hear the "I love you" being said even as Quinn's shoe found its mark on his lower back.

*_*_*

Rem's Bookstore was their first stop, warrants to search arriving just as they did. Nothing. Quinn's employee information was all in order--except for the fact that he was a no call, no show for the last two days. No one had seen him since the day he met Starsky and Hutch at their home for dinner. The owner and every clerk had been questioned--none of them could say they were well acquainted with Ian Quinn. They all knew the same things: Quinn was gay, Quinn was a loner, and Quinn's background and family were unknown mysteries.

After Rem's, Hutch, Dobby, a team of detectives from Bay City, and another from Burris, met at Quinn's apartment. Dobby watched Hutch closely--whatever he was seeing as he stared through the sliding doors off

Quinn's living room, was Hutch's and Hutch's alone to see. DobeY knew it had something to do with Starsky and Ian Quinn, something to do with the reason Starsky and Hutchinson had become acquainted with Quinn. But whatever that reason was, Hutch was keeping it inside, and DobeY felt a frank sense of relief at that. It was far easier to focus on Ian Quinn as a murderer and kidnapper than as a friend of his two best detectives.

Hutch continued to gaze out the sliding doors to Quinn's balcony. *We laughed together here, Starsk...I held you in my arms...* "Dammit, Captain!" His hand punched dangerously at the glass. "There has to be something here...something to tell us where he took Starsky." Hutch turned back to DobeY, his hands held out before him in supplication. "Something, Cap."

DobeY didn't have time to respond, a call from the team searching Quinn's bedroom taking his attention away from Hutch, but not before he saw the fear that passed over Hutch's face. Because Hutch was a cop, and knew that evidence was one of the things that proved a theory--and sometimes made a worst fear come true. DobeY was tempted to tell Hutch to stay put, tempted to treat him more like the family of a victim, and less like a cop. Hutch himself took care of his captain's doubt, quickly crossing the living room to the bedroom, firm voice asking what had been found. One of the Bay City detectives held a small wooden box--a child's keepsake box--the lid adorned with a silver plaque bearing the engraved letters: ICQ. The box was opened, revealing several pill bottles, a neat row of tiny envelopes, and a half dozen hypodermic needles and vials.

Hutch stared hard at the box, but it wasn't the box he was seeing. He saw Starsky aggressively following Ian Quinn's demands to hurt him, he heard Starsky's voice; *"I want to do more Hutch. With both of you."* And he could still feel his own erection cradled in Starsky's hand, wanting the same thing himself. And getting it, satisfying and dangerously hot, until that moment when he and Starsky had both stopped it. Stopped it and brought Quinn's rage down upon themselves. *He drugged us...we would have called it quits long before...Starsk would never have...oh, Jesus, I'm sorry, babe...*

Hutch was shaken from his thoughts by DobeY's voice ordering that the box be bagged and taken to the lab for analysis. DobeY turned back to Hutch, his single word questions for Hutch only.

"Hutch?"

"I...I don't know, Captain...not for sure." Hutch moved away from the other detectives and DobeY moved with him. "He drugged us, Captain. I don't even know when or how, but he drugged us."

"Sex?"

Hutch looked at DobeY, his face an apology, his stance cowed with shame.

"Yes, sir...Captain..."

"Later, Hutchinson."

DobeY was called for once again--something more had been found. Pictures. Secreted away in the bottom drawer of Quinn's nightstand. Photos of four men. Three of the photos were studio head shots, the fourth, the picture of Joe Bennett, a snapshot. DobeY swore, Hutch stood perfectly still, his face a mask.

"You know these men, Captain DobeY?" The question from one of the Burris cops.

"Yes. Those are photographs of Quinn's victims. The snapshot is of his last victim, killed just last week."

"From what you've told us, I'd say there was one picture missing. If this man has your officer..."

DobeY had to restrain Hutch at the officer's off-handed response.

"What the hell do you mean you don't know? You're a chemist aren't you?"

Hutch spit his words at the man standing before him. And Pete Simmons spit right back.

"I told you, Hutchinson, the only thing I can identify for certain is the base compound. The rest of it--the powder, the pills, and the shots--are nothing I've ever seen before. Look, I can rule out hallucinogens and poisons. Let me check around, contact a few pharmaceutical companies, see what's in the works." Simmons paused, looking from Hutch to Dobey. "Hutch...whatever the drugs are...you and Captain Dobey will get the reports...you decide who sees them."

Hutch looked up in surprise.

"Pete?"

"Sorry, Hutch...but the rumor mills are in full swing. Damn cops are worse than a group of old biddies. The report from the cops who found you has been making the rounds. Just be careful, Hutch. A lot of us here in Bay City could care less about what you and Starsky...let's just say we can keep personal separate from professional. Those cops from downstate don't know you guys. I'll let you know when I have something for you."

Simmons walked away with that. Stopped at the door by Hutch's voice.

"Thanks, Pete."

Dobey paced the confines of Hutch and Starsky's living room, waiting for Hutch to finish in the shower. The lab boys had been there--dusting powder, furniture shifted, belongings out of place, all giving testimony to their presence. Dobey gazed at the three plates and coffee mugs sitting on the coffee table, the cold ashes in the fire place, and the cushions scattered on the carpet. Quietly opening the bedroom door, he took in the unmade bed, the bed pillows tossed to the floor. Dobey had deliberately sent in two officers who were close friends of Starsky and Hutch, officers he knew would look the other way at some of the things they found. The sound of a squeaking drawer had left Hutch red faced and tense, calmed only by Dobey's hushed reassurance not to worry about it, that Hutch's fellow cops knew what they were doing.

Dobey gathered up the dishes and tossed the cushions back on the sofa. He was making coffee when Hutch appeared. Wet hair the only new difference in his haggard appearance. Bruises vividly marked his neck and face, his nose and lip still swollen, eyes underscored by dark crescents. Dressed in jeans and a sweater neither he nor Starsky could ever remember the original owner of, Hutch sank into a kitchen chair, wincing at the feel of snug denim against tender flesh. Dobey set a cup of coffee in front of him and took the opposite chair.

"Talk to me, Hutch."

The story came out in broken bits and pieces. Dobey put it together, his own knowledge of Starsky and Hutch providing the cohesiveness. An idea, a fantasy gone horribly wrong in the hands of a murderer. Dobey watched as Hutch dissolved in miserable guilt, listened to him cry, looked on silently as Hutch's coffee cup met the kitchen wall.

"Hutch, I don't condone what you and Starsky did with this man, but it's not my place to condemn you, either. What's done is done, and now we have to find your partner. We all have a lot to lose here, Starsky most of all. I don't see that your private life has anything to do with this...you and Starsky are victims, just

like the others were. You'll have a fight on your hands with IA...I'm not telling them anymore than what you already stated in your report. But, Hutch...I don't see a way we'll be able to keep all of this under wraps if...if Quinn has done to Starsky what he did to the other men."

Hutch left the table and stood over the sink, staring out at the backyard. Moonlight played over the picnic table, the hammock, the kiddie wading pool Starsky had insisted upon until 'someday' came. Starsky was all around him, his beautiful lover sharing his life so closely, the two of them one in every way they possibly could be, so entwined, so in love. Hutch could feel Starsky's hands, smell his scent, knew in his heart how much he was loved. Picturing Starsky in Joe Bennett's place, cut, the life choked out of him, his body abused, was too much to bear, and the kitchen started to swim around him. Big, gentle hands guided him to the floor, and his world straightened a bit as Dobey wet his face and neck with cold water.

"Come on, Hutch, let's get you into bed. We'll start again first thing in the morning." Hutch started to protest--Dobey cut him off before he could get a word out. "Forget it, Hutch, it's late. You need rest, and so do I. We're not going to find Starsky tonight. Go to bed, Hutch, I'll pick you up at six."

Hutch stood in his bedroom, listening to the sounds of Dobey leaving. He stared at his bed for a long time, remembering the last night he held Starsky in his arms. When Ian Quinn held him, too. Hutch spent the night on the sofa, the bedroom door firmly closed.

*_*_*

Hutch? Hutch, why didn't you wake me? Feels so...

Starsky opened his eyes.

"No!"

"Too late, Dave. Just enjoy me...pretend I'm him if you need to. You were calling for him, you know. Make it good for me. Do it, Dave."

"Get off me, you bastard!" The words came even as Starsky's body hurtled toward orgasm, his mind unable to communicate with his cock, his drugged body a barrier between the two. Quinn's face floated above him, his eyes glassy and unfocused, breathing open mouthed. Starsky turned his own face away, his eyes finding the wall beside him, surrendering to the body pumping over his own. His ejaculate exploded into Quinn's body even as he whispered Hutch's name, begging as he had the first time Quinn attacked him for Hutch to forgive him.

Quinn's orgasm followed--separated from Starsky's only by the time it took to slice Starsky's chest and belly with his razor knife. Quinn came as blood welled from Starsky's cuts, his semen joining the blood that ran over Starsky's skin. Starsky cried out once at the piercing pain before falling into unconsciousness, the last thing he saw was blatant, twisted adoration on Quinn's face. Quinn sat there a long time, his legs straddling Starsky's body, watching the fluids on his chest congeal. He traced a single finger over cuts skillfully inflicted to cause pain and bleeding, but not death.

I don't want you to die yet, Dave. Hurt, but not die. Not until I say so--you won't leave me until I say so.

Quinn rose and made his way to the bathroom. He showered quickly and returned to Starsky, bringing along a basin of water and towels. He washed Starsky's body, moving the deadened limbs, taking full advantage of his power over the unconscious man. When he was finished, he laid down beside Starsky, drawing his body close, caressing the still bleeding skin, whispering into his ear.

"Daddy always washed me, Dave, after Mother went away. Sometimes he hurt me...but he always took care

of me. Daddy knows what's best for me, just like I know what's best for you."

You must always be clean for me, Ian...stop crying and turn around...let me wash you...hold still...I didn't hurt you...

Quinn fell asleep with Starsky in his arms, curled together on the wood floor. They slept for a long time, the light in the room dimming, and the air turning chill as late afternoon approached. Starsky stirred first and moaned in pain. The movement and sound woke Quinn, who stroked Starsky's face and spoke softly to him, telling him he was safe, that he would take care of him. Quinn stood and picked up Starsky's robe, covering him, tucking him in, heedless of the sticky blood puddled on the floor at Starsky's sides. Quinn dressed himself and prepared a shot for Starsky, not so strong this time because the pain was so important for Starsky to feel. Enough of the drug to keep him immobile, little enough to let him hurt. Quinn sat and pulled Starsky's head into his lap, blind to the blood that soaked his trouser legs. Running a hand over Starsky's chest, he pinched hard at his wounds, smiling his satisfaction when Starsky gasped and opened his eyes.

"I knew you would wake up for me, Dave. I've been waiting for you."

"Ian..."

"Shhh, don't talk, Dave...I don't want you to talk."

Quinn's voice was dreamy and distant. Starsky tried again, looking up at Quinn's face.

"Ian, plea..."

Quinn slapped him. His face staying gentle, his eyes vacant, the sting of his powerful hand burning Starsky's face.

"Don't ruin our day, Dave. Didn't you love it? Waking up inside of me...you came so hard, everything I ever dreamed of. Why in the world would Ken ever want to share you?" *Don't you dare embarrass me, Ian. Get in there and be good for Uncle Lawrence...he won't hurt you. Go, Ian. Be good, and I'll let you call your mother tonight...* "I'd never share you, Dave. You're mine now. Forever, Dave."

Quinn picked up the needle and rolled it between his fingers, watching Starsky's eyes as Starsky tracked his movements. Quinn smiled at him, and setting the needle down and running his hands through Starsky's hair, began to speak.

"You know, Dave? The first three, Brian and Jeff and Larry? They were so easy...nobody cared about them, nobody looked for them. So easy to fuck, so easy to kill. Practice, you know? So I let some time go by, and along came Joe Bennett. Thinking maybe he was gay. God, Dave...so sweet. He was so shy and scared...and as straight as they come. He was almost dead by the time I got him to Pier Eleven. I just laid down with him and waited...anyone walking by just thought we were sleeping. It was real late and the pier was deserted by the time he finally died. I needed more from him--you understand that don't you?--so I took the last thing I could and fisted him. A straight man thinking he was gay. Can you imagine, Dave?"

Quinn laughed. The sound sickening for all it held. The needle was back in his hand, and Starsky's robe was pushed aside, baring just enough skin for the shot. The robe was rearranged, and Quinn laid down and held Starsky once again.

"It was good, Dave, shoving my fist up Joe's ass. I was in such control over him. I decided when and how he left. Me, Dave."

Full and permanent custody is hereby granted to Mr. Clarence John Quinn. The rights of the mother, Joan Withers Quinn, are hereby terminated. Case closed.

Quinn's fist pounded once at the wooden floor before moving back to Starsky's body. A final caress, another infliction of pain, and Quinn stood and stared down at the helpless man at his feet.

"Will you dream about me tonight, Dave? I'm all you have now. And you're mine. It's perfect."

Starsky tracked the sounds of Ian leaving the boathouse, listening for the click of the lock. And then he wept until Quinn's shot and the agony of his injuries took him. He did dream that night. Of his own death. Of being found and safe in Hutch's arms for eternity.

*_*_*

Dobey was right on time, the sun up just enough to forecast another beautiful California day. He watched Hutch exit his home, carefully lock the door, and quit moving altogether. Dobby was out of the car and at his side in a matter of seconds.

"Hutch?"

"Cap...I..."

Dobey took Hutch by the elbow and steered him to the car. Got him in, closed the door, and took his place behind the wheel.

"Can you tell me, Hutch?"

Hutch couldn't, couldn't even look at his captain, knew he was too close to falling apart. Sleep had come last night, defeating Hutch in his battle to stay awake. And sleep had brought along night terrors. Starsky...Starsky. Screaming for him, bleeding, dead. Hutch had done his own screaming, every hour or so, when the visions woke him. The last time he woke, he found himself in the bedroom closet, curled on the floor, hiding from his dreams like he did when he was a little boy.

"What if... Cap, what if..."

"We deal with what we find, when we find him, Hutch. You know as well as I do that that's all we can do." Dobby's tone had no give to it. Years of experience as a cop giving him someplace to hide, too.

Hutch slumped down in his seat, turning his head to watch out the window.

"Yeah, Cap...all we can do...I know."

They made the trip to Parker Center in silence.

"Dammit! Look at this."

Dobey swore a few more times under his breath and turned the steering wheel hard, heading around to the back of the building. Reporters, at least a dozen, all over the main entrance to Parker. Dobby stopped at the back entrance and ordered Hutch out of the car, following quickly, and tossing his keys to the nearest uniformed officer. Barking orders as he went: park his car, get rid of the reporters in front, get word down to Simmons in the lab that he was in his office waiting for a report. And he wanted it now.

Turned out Simmons was waiting for them. Started talking the second they were through the doorway. Unshaven, wrinkled, and wired.

"Captain Dobe, Hutch...we may have caught a break. I have a friend, a chemist, who is also a teaching professor. Kept him up all night analyzing the drugs you gave me. He's on top of everything current and in the works because he teaches, so he's more aware..."

"Simmons! Calm down...just tell us what you and your friend figured out."

"Sorry, Captain...guess I was babbling, we literally were up all night."

Dobe grunted an apology, and Hutch took over. "It's okay, Pete, come on, sit down and tell us what you've got."

"Denny--my associate--has knowledge of a few new drugs under development, drugs barely into the testing stage. Some are sexual enhancement drugs, and others induce temporary paralysis of body limbs, but do not take away any sensations of touch or feel. Denny was able to confirm that the drugs you gave me for testing are samples of the drugs under development. The powders and capsules match the makeup of the sexual enhancement drugs, and the vials contain the paralysis compound. There were also a few vials of powerful sleep inducing drugs in that box. Dangerously powerful."

Simmons paused, Hutch was sitting very still and had turned very pale. Simmons raised his eyebrows at Dobe. Dobe's response was quiet and resigned. Hutch had to know, and so did he.

"Tell us the rest, Pete."

"We ran a further analysis on Joe Bennett's blood based on this new information. He had traces of both types of drugs in his system. Based on what Denny knows about these new drugs, I would say that Bennett was first paralyzed and then given the enhancement drugs. He had no choice in what his body was doing or what was being done to it. No control over himself whatsoever. He would have reacted sexually, had an erection and an orgasm against his will, and wouldn't have had any way to escape whoever had given him the drugs."

Dobe and Simmons watched silently as Hutch rose from his chair and left the room. Fast enough that Dobe knew his detective was about to be sick.

"Captain, should I..."

"No, Simmons, leave him be for a minute. He'll be back." Dobe leaned back in his chair, tapping a pencil against the desk blotter. "Damn, damn, damn...and this monster has Starsky. How the hell do we find him..."

A young woman in a lab coat knocked at Dobe's door and handed several sheets of paper to Simmons. Simmons thanked her, and turned back to Dobe, scanning the pages as he did so.

"What have you got, Pete?"

"Names, Captain, names and addresses of all the pharmaceutical companies in California working on the development of the kinds of drugs I described to you. Damn competitive market." Simmons passed some pages to Dobe. "Want half?"

A few minutes passed, and Dobe slapped a hand on his desktop.

"Simmons, go get Hutch, make sure he's okay, and get him back here." Dobe looked up from the page he held. "It's right here. Quinn Pharmaceuticals, Lawson Grove, California."

Two hours later, DobeY and Hutch were on their way to Claire Ridge and the estate of Clarence Quinn, co-owner of Quinn Pharmaceuticals. His brother, Lawrence, held the other half of the business. The drugs Pete Simmons and his friend had identified were high on the company's list of future money makers, waiting for the long process of human testing. The Quinn brothers were on vacation--Clarence Quinn was due back at his home that same day, the onset of fall in interior California putting an end to his boating season, Lawrence Quinn was out of the country on business. Quinn's private secretary reluctantly gave up his address, fearfully pinned to her desk by Hutch's expression and threats of naming her as an accomplice. She also provided the information that Quinn had one adult child. Ian Clarence Quinn.

"There, Captain, that set of gates...the wrought iron ones."

DobeY swung his sedan up to the gates, punching at the call box mounted off to one side. A disembodied voice asked him his business and DobeY responded--the call box meeting the ground as his front bumper met the gate. Mumbling under his breath about the necessity of warrants to good police work, DobeY slipped one hand under his suit coat, retrieving his revolver and passing it to Hutch. Hutch checked it, made sure it was fully loaded, and passed it back. His own gun was next, and Hutch found himself praying that he would have the need to use it.

The Quinn family butler opened the door, his face showing no emotion at the warrant to search shoved under his nose. Hutch did the honors, looking swiftly through room after room, running up the staircase, returning to DobeY empty handed. The butler steadfastly followed his progress from the foyer, his expression remaining bland and non-committal. It was all Hutch could do not to throttle the man as a self-satisfied smirk crossed his face when Hutch returned to the foyer empty handed. Looming over the much smaller man, his body taut with anger, Hutch made his first demand.

"Tell me what you know! Where is Ian Quinn?"

"Ian? Ian doesn't live here...there's no one here for you to find, Detective. The elder Mr. Quinn won't be back until late this afternoon, when he brings his boat in to dock. Only one maid, the cook, and I are here during Mr. Quinn's boating season.

Hutch's next question was interrupted by a young woman descending the stairs and carrying a laundry basket . She didn't look up at the men in the foyer--seemed very determined to skirt the butler. DobeY stopped her.

"Just a moment, Miss, I'd like to ask you a few questions."

The face raised to DobeY was probably quite lovely. The bruises and cut lip made it hard to really tell.

"What happened to you? Who..."

"I...I fell, sir. It's nothing. Please, let me..."

"Whose clothing is this?" That from Hutch, grabbing at a pair of tan trousers. Trousers colored dark brown at the knees and along the side seams. The girl didn't answer. Hutch stopped the butler's arm from taking hold of the slacks, his fingers biting hard around the man's wrist.

"Drop it."

"This woman has work to do."

DobeY took care of things. Slapping his handcuffs on the man's wrists, informing him he was under arrest

for the obstruction of justice, and reading him the Miranda.

Hutch turned back to the now obviously frightened maid, his voice gentle and coaxing.

"Miss, I need you to tell me whose clothing this is."

Another frightened glance at the butler and her gaze dropped to the floor.

"Are you afraid of this man?" A hesitant nod. "Don't be. We've arrested him--he can't hurt you. Did he do this to your face?"

"No."

Hutch took a chance. "Ian?"

She didn't have to answer. The tears trailing down her face did it for her.

"Honey...please tell me...he's hurting someone I love very much. Please help me."

"Down by the water."

*_*_*

"Hello, Dave. It's getting late...time to wake up."

Starsky didn't bother to lift his head, didn't bother to acknowledge Quinn's presence at all. He took himself away--the body he left behind only that. A body. A body he knew Quinn would abuse and harm. A body Starsky no longer called his own. No longer wanted. Not after Quinn.

Starsky watched listlessly as pieces of clothing dropped in a pile near his head. He trembled when Quinn sat down beside him and pulled him into his arms, but Starsky didn't fight, didn't object to the cool hands that arranged his body to sit between Quinn's legs, didn't bother to pull his head away from Quinn's shoulder. Quinn's words were hot on the side of Starsky's face. Starsky heard, but he didn't care, didn't respond.

"We've run out of time, Dave. Father is bringing the boat back, and I can't keep you here any longer. You understand, don't you, Dave? Father would hardly approve. I'm sorry...I'll try to make it good for you."

Starsky felt Quinn begin to caress him, passing his fingers over the cuts he had inflicted on Starsky's chest and belly, pulling the just-healing edges apart. Starsky knew he should be feeling pain, knew he should be trying to get away. But the life was already out of him. He didn't want it anymore, it wasn't worth fighting for. In Dave Starsky's mind, he was moving closer to where Hutch would find him.

Quinn's hands found Starsky's genitals. Still no reaction from Starsky. Quinn whispered in his ear. "No more shots, Dave, no pill this time...doesn't matter if you're hard or not. You know this is it, don't you, Dave? I'm taking you today, taking what I've been waiting for. And then I'm going to kill you."

There were no more words spoken.

Quinn moved again, pushing Starsky forward and then to his belly. Starsky didn't react as his limbs were arranged to Quinn's satisfaction, didn't object when his legs were spread wide. Quinn took him dry, in one brutal thrust. If Starsky was aware of Ian Quinn entering his body, he gave no sign.

Quinn moved rhythmically over the still body beneath him. Still in every sense but Quinn's mind. There, Starsky writhed with pleasure and demanded more, called him lover, begged him not to stop. There, Starsky

welcomed him with open arms and savored his love. There, Dave Starsky was his and his alone. Quinn's fantasies culminated with his climax--rolling off Starsky, listening as Starsky finally reacted, retching against the wooden floor.

Quinn lost what little control he had ever had when he heard Starsky beg for God to take him, to please let Hutch find him. Starsky cried one more time for Hutch when Quinn's razor cut into the skin on his back. And then he was silent. For whatever Quinn did now would release him.

When the blood was enough for Quinn, when he knew Starsky was dying, he rolled Starsky to the open slip and pushed. Starsky didn't fight the hand that gripped the back of his neck and held his head under the water's surface. He forced himself to accept the water, to welcome it, to let his lungs fill. *Hutch will find me...I want to go...* He could see Hutch now. See the beloved face wavering above him, feel Hutch's hands on his body, pulling him close, holding him. Starsky's vision cleared for a blessed moment and he saw Hutch clearly, heard Hutch calling to him.

He was found.

Hutch watched in horror as Starsky smiled at him. Smiled even as his eyes rolled back in his head and his body went limp in Hutch's arms.

"Starsk? Starsky! God dammit, no!"

Hutch got Starsky on his back, his peripheral vision picking up on Dobey's large hands poised over Starsky's chest. Dobey pumped and Hutch breathed, working frantically in tandem until Starsky's body convulsed and he began to vomit lake water. Dobey pulled Starsky onto his side and held his body safely in place while Hutch held his head, his own face pressed close to Starsky's ear, murmuring encouragement, begging Starsky to stay. When he was certain Starsky was back, Hutch pulled him close, gratefully accepting Dobey's suit coat to cover him. Shouts could be heard outside the building, and Dobey left his men alone to direct the rescue teams to the boat house.

"Starsk? Hey...open your eyes for me again? Come on, Starsk, please..."

The body Hutch cradled trembled. Starsky could hear him, hear Hutch begging him, but he was so tired, so lost. Hutch called again, and Starsky managed to open his eyes, stare at the lover he thought dead. Tears fell from both men, and Starsky answered Hutch with a single word: his own name. And then he was gone again, his body limp, eyes tightly closed. But he was breathing, he was alive. Hutch tightened his hold and whispered, "Don't go anywhere, babe...stay with me."

Hutch welcomed the cold sterility of Claire Ridge Receiving Hospital. He was here in this room because Starsky was alive. Dobey was sleeping in an impossibly uncomfortable chair, covered with a blood-stained suit coat, because Starsky was alive. And Ian Quinn was dead because Starsky was alive.

Hutch checked the hallway for any sign of a doctor or nurse bringing news before he claimed the chair next to Dobey's. Stretching long legs out before him, he gazed at his superior officer. *Don't know how I'll ever make this up to you, Cap...without you...* Dobey shifted in his sleep, and his coat fell away from his hands. Hands hurriedly washed, but still bearing traces of Starsky's blood. Hutch grabbed the coat and covered his captain, hiding that memory of the afternoon away. Pacing the small room once again, Hutch paused to lean on the doorframe, looking one more time for anyone bringing news. Still nothing. Tired, he sat back down beside Dobey and closed his eyes.

"Down that way, Captain...the boat house..."

Hutch's leg jerked in his sleep as his sleeping mind dreamed and remembered. A locked door, his leg kicking it in--the sharp, copper-edged smell of blood permeating the large space. Knowing the dark stains on the weathered wood of the floor were blood...Starsky's blood. And Ian Quinn, naked, laying beside the open slip, holding something under the water. Someone.

The surprise on Quinn's face was blotted out by a single bullet from Hutch's Magnum. The dreamed echo of the blast nearly woke Hutch from his sleep, but he kept his eyes closed, willed himself to let the dream continue. Because he wanted to see the rest. Wanted to see Quinn's head explode, watch him die. For Hutch knew if it hadn't been a bullet, it would have been his bare hands that killed Quinn. Hutch could feel his first contact with Starsky under the water, his hand finding Starsky's hair, water-straightened curls catching on his fingers. And then Starsky's skin, so cold, so unnaturally stiff in the coldness of the water. Finally grabbing an arm and pulling him to the surface, over the edge of the floor, and into his arms. Where he died.

"Detective Hutchinson?"

Hutch startled, his arm knocking into Dobe and waking him.

"Detective...Doctor Kolb will see you and Captain Dobe now. Please come with me."

Hutch and Dobe followed, taken to an office a few doors down from the waiting room. Instructed to sit, they sat. Coffee declined, fear growing.

Hutch's eyes tracked the doctor from door to desk, failing to read anything on the man's face. The doctor had barely finished sitting when Hutch asked the only question he had.

"Is he alive?"

*_*_*

"Yes...he's alive. He's going to be quite sick for a while--he lost a lot of blood and is battling a massive infection from his wounds, and the lake water he ingested certainly didn't do his lungs any good--we'll monitor him closely for pneumonia and any other problems that may develop." Doctor Kolb regarded the men in front of him, hating what he had to tell them next. "Your friend was raped...I have no doubt about that. There was some damage, that will heal, too. All of his physical wounds will heal, he's a strong, healthy man. What I am most concerned about is Detective Starsky's ability to deal with what happened to him emotionally. As a doctor, I can help his body, but he's going to need more help than that. Are either one of you close enough that he will feel comfortable confiding in you?"

Dobe gave Hutch a sidelong glance that Hutch didn't bother to acknowledge. Hutch was out of his seat and at the door before he said anything at all.

"What room is he in? I want to see him."

"Detective Hutchinson, I'm not sure that he's..."

"Doctor. Detective Starsky is my life partner...and my lover. Now where is he?"

Doctor Kolb looked to Captain Dobe who merely raised his eyebrows and gave a slight nod.

"I understand, Detective, and thank you for telling me. Your partner is in room 310. And Detective Hutchinson? Anytime you need to talk...if you think I can help, I'm here."

"Thank you, Doctor Kolb. I appreciate that. Captain?"

"You go ahead, Hutch, I'll look in on Starsky later. Go see your partner. I'm going to talk to the doctor for a bit."

Dr. Kolb turned his attention back to Captain Dobe, his brow creased with concern.

"I didn't realize, Captain, that your detectives are a couple. Actually, I'm surprised Hutchinson told me."

"I am, too, Doctor...I think Hutchinson told you that only because he feels it will somehow help his partner if you know. Pretty much the same reason the two of them confided in me I guess. Different circumstances, but still needing help--that time leaving their careers up to me."

"What do you mean, Captain? Their careers?"

"Starsky and Hutchinson are two of the best, Doctor. Fine officers...give it their all...always have. We almost lost Starsky to a shooting several years ago--I'm sure you noticed the scars. Shortly after his recovery, the two of them came to me and told me they were partners in every sense of the word...lovers...everything. And then they sat there and waited for my reaction. I gave them the speech about how dangerous it is out there for gay cops, what they were in for from their brother officers if they found out. They let me go on until I thought I was finished, and then Starsky put his feet up on my desk and asked, "What about you, Cap'n?" Dobe laughed at the memory. "I told them I wasn't even surprised and to get the hell out of my office and get to work. Starsky fell out of his chair in his hurry, and Hutch managed to trip over him and give him a black eye in the process. Anyhow, Doctor Kolb, to their credit, they don't behave any differently on the job than they ever did, they're still my two best men. If anything, they're more careful on the streets...guess they have more to lose." Dobe let out a tired sigh. "Those two have been a trial through the years. And I'll deny this if you should ever say anything, but they've been worth it. Both as officers and friends."

Dobe and Kolb sat quietly for a few minutes, Dobe remembering, Kolb absorbing what he had been told, getting to know the three men.

Kolb let out a sigh that matched Dobe's. He was bone tired...Starsky had required a lot of work: stitches he lost count of, wounds that required irrigation, fighting the infections that had his fever dangerously high. And the rape. Kolb had repaired that damage, too, more stitches, more antibiotics. Starsky would heal, return to life, return to work. It was his new knowledge of Starsky and Hutchinson as a couple that had Kolb the most concerned. He'd seen so many couples struggle and fall to the ramifications of rape. Would Starsky return to Hutch? Kolb sadly doubted it, at least not without the benefit of professional help.

"Captain? It is extremely important that Detective Starsky see a psychologist. Will the police force be providing one for him? And, Captain, more importantly, is he good?"

"Yes, Doctor, we have a fine psychologist on staff...he counseled Starsky after the shooting...counseled all of us, in fact. I'll call him after I see Starsky. I'll make sure he sees Hutchinson, too."

"Are you at all worried that the relationship between Starsky and Hutchinson will be exposed?"

"Doctor Kolb, I've worried about that for years. Long before those two...came out of the closet to me. I'm not worried about any of our staff exposing them...I am worried that their love for each other will do it." Dobe sighed heavily and gave a rueful smile. "You know? I don't think it's so important any more...the secrecy. Not to them. If Dave Starsky has proven one theory with his life, it's that life is too short. He and

Hutch have taken what they want and need. Each other. And damned be the person who gets in their way."

Heart monitor, oxygen, yards of white gauze and adhesive tape. Too many needles and tubes and bags. And under it all, the very still form of his partner. Propped on his side to keep pressure off of his back wounds, Starsky was pale and still.

"Starsk?" *I want to hear your voice... Please, Starsky...*

Hutch stroked softly across Starsky's face with trembling fingers. *Are my fingers that cold? No, no, dammit, your skin is that hot...so hot...*

Hutch sat beside the bed and watched. Watched Starsky sleep, prayed for him to wake up. He touched a hand, stroked an arm, and fought the desire to pull the sheets back and see what that bastard had done to Starsky. He'd heard enough from the doctors, had seen the damage done to Quinn's other victims, but still, so much of him struggled to believe Quinn had done those things to Starsky. Didn't want to believe. A sob broke through, Hutch's shoulders hunching up toward his head, shaking with the effort not to cry. *God, Starsk...why did I ever want it? I already had everything in the world...I'm sorry, babe, so damn sorry...*

Dobey stood quietly in the doorway watching Hutch grieve. Fumbling in his pocket, he pulled out an address book and found a phone number. Dropping coins in the hallway pay phone, he wondered to himself who would need more help. Starsky or Hutch? He'd seen it so many times--the guilt that threatened to consume one partner when the other was hurt. Starsky and Hutch had always been able to pull each other back, but this time Dobby was afraid. Afraid too much damage had been done. This time, his men needed help. A sleepy voice answered Dobby's call.

"Joe? Harold Dobby. I need your help."

Joe Reynolds stood quietly beside Starsky's bed. Starsky focused intently on the wall in front of him. This was their fourth meeting, and their least productive. Starsky hadn't said a word, just turned away to face the wall. Reynolds replayed in his own mind the questions he had just asked Starsky, searching for the trigger that had shut him off so completely.

"Dave, you'll be going home in a few days. Hutch is...well, I haven't seen him so happy in quite a long time. How about you, Dave? How do you feel about that?"

Nothing.

"Dave? Do you want to go home with Hutch?"

"Yes." The single word accompanied by a tremble that moved his body, and the tightening of his grip on his blankets.

"Are you afraid?"

Starsky's body stilled, his grip on the blankets still there, white knuckled, telling.

"No more, Joe. Don't want to talk about it any more. Please..."

*_*_*

Hutch slumped over the kitchen table, nursing coffee long gone cold. From his vantage point, he watched his lover rise from the bed and make his way to the bathroom. Hutch listened to the everyday morning sounds of life--familiar, mechanical sounds. Shower started, toilet flushed, the sounds of water hitting tile and tub, its pattern interrupted by the movement of Starsky's body beneath its flow. He listened to Starsky's silence. There was no longer singing in the shower, no invitations called out to join him. No words. Nothing.

No words...nothing. Starsky had slipped away. His triumphant return to life heralded by a single word--the strained speaking of his lover's name--was still celebrated in Hutch's heart. The spoken word that had given Hutch so much hope and played over and over again in his mind, like music trapped in his soul. But then came the quiet. Doctors and exams were tolerated in near silence, medical personnel getting monosyllable responses from their patient, if any at all. Visitors were all but ignored, quickly growing as uncomfortable in Starsky's presence as he was in theirs. Joe Reynolds had no choice but to keep Starsky on medical leave. *I can't help him if he won't speak to me...he's refusing any drugs...keep trying, Hutch...*

Hutch took Starsky home with a thin promise from Reynolds that he would open up eventually. Hutch could only hope that the pieces would be big enough for him to pick up when Starsky finally fell apart.

Starsky finished, and Hutch watched his return to the bedroom. Watched the too thin body being clothed in sweat pants and T-shirt. Watched as Starsky climbed back into bed and pulled the covers up under his chin. Waited and watched for the shivering to begin--Starsky was never warm enough anymore. The shivering Hutch took advantage of for contact with Starsky. Pulling a quilt from its stand by the door, he approached the man huddled on the bed.

"Here, Starsk."

Hutch spread the quilt over the bed, his fingers tucking, finding the back of Starsky's neck, stroking over a curl. Starsky remained silent, seemed to hold his breath, to endure rather than enjoy what had once been so welcome. His gaze never strayed from the wall in front of him and there was no acknowledgement of Hutch's presence. The life that once was David Starsky was gone, taken by the will of Ian Quinn, left someplace where Hutch couldn't find it. But Hutch couldn't give up the search. He tried again, his words sounding mechanical to his own ears, the same words repeated every morning, the only difference the time that had passed. Words repeated, but not responded to.

"Starsk? Listen...we have to talk...it's been almost a month, babe. The doctors all say you're doing real well. I...I miss you, buddy, please talk to me. Starsky?"

"No."

The lone, whispered word took Hutch by surprise. And broke his heart.

"No? No you won't talk to me? Me, Starsky?" *Come on, babe...please...it's me, Starsk...*

Starsky didn't answer, didn't speak again, and something let loose in Hutch--something more than the pain in his heart. Of all the emotions he had endured during the search for Starsky: the terror, the hopelessness, the overwhelming relief at Starsky's shuddering attempts to breathe again--even after all of that, this was worse. Dark, hopeless guilt, so much more oppressive than that he had already felt, surged from Hutch's soul and forced him to the floor beside their bed. His head found his knees, and body locked tight and defensive, Hutch began to speak. He apologized, he cried, he begged Starsky to forgive him. But Starsky remained helpless to respond, lost to Ian Quinn's insanity. Somewhere along the line, Starsky's silence shifted Hutch's emotions to anger, and he got to his feet and stood over his lover. Starsky was roughly pushed to his back, Hutch's hands gripping his shoulders.

"Are you hearing me, Starsky? I'm sorry! Dammit, Starsk...if we can't forgive..."

Hutch had only a brief glimpse of eyes he could no longer read before they closed and Starsky turned his face away. Hutch released Starsky's shoulders and whispered one more apology, crossed to the closet and pulled out a battered suitcase. Slamming it open on the floor, he began to fill it, not caring whose clothing he tossed in. He didn't hear the bare feet that approached from behind. But he heard Starsky's voice. Finally, Starsky's voice.

"Don't."

A command, a request...begging, a plea. The slightest flutter of air when Starsky's hand almost touched him. Almost. Hutch froze in place, his back to Starsky, and waited. *If I turn he'll be gone...I won't, babe, I won't...just keep on talking. Please, Starsk, please...*

"Don't what, Starsky? Don't talk? Don't leave?" *Talk to me, Starsk, tell me...*

But the silence came back, and the man Hutch saw when he finally turned didn't look at him. The anger came back, too. Because the anger was easy to find and keep. Hutch made his choice, the only choice he felt he had. The suitcase was slammed shut and pushed toward the door. Hutch followed it, throwing his next words over his shoulder.

"Don't love you anymore? That what you want?" *God, I'm sorry...I just can't do this anymore...*

His hand was on the doorknob, only the strangled sound behind him made him stay and turn back. Starsky was deathly pale, his body shaking, the face and eyes that looked at Hutch so filled with grief and fear and loss. He managed only one word before his body began to fold beneath him.

"Dirty..."

Dirty? Oh, Starsk, no... Leaving forgotten, Hutch pulled Starsky into his arms, ignoring the stiffening of his body, the weak struggle to get away. He held him tightly, held on until the struggle ended, until Starsky's body went limp in defeat.

"Starsk...listen to..."

But Starsky started to talk. His voice so low, so strained, that Hutch had to keep his face pressed close to hear.

"I should have fought...I didn't fight..."

"You were drugged, babe, you couldn't..."

"He took everything away...everything that belonged to you--to us. I didn't fight!"

"You were drugged...it wasn't a choice."

"I should have killed him...gotten away."

Starsky groaned, the sound coming from deep within his chest, filled with pain. And his body curled around it, defensive once again, pushing away from Hutch, arms clasp his legs, his head against his knees.

"Every day...every day he took me in some way, and I just laid there and let him and my God damned cock got hard for him."

"Starsk...Starsk he raped you...with his body and his God damned drugs...you couldn't have..."

Starsky pulled away completely, and the body that was too weak to stand, crawled. Found a small niche beside a chair and tried to hide there. Hutch followed and hid with him. And in that little space between chair and sofa, Hutch held his partner close to him and far away from the world. Held him and talked to him, telling him over and over again how much he loved him and shushing every protest from Starsky.

And then Hutch told him he wasn't dirty. And Starsky was out of his arms and away from him in an instant. Struggling with his breathing, looking for a new place to hide.

"Starsk...please, babe...no more."

Starsky looked at him, and Hutch felt as if he were a stranger to his lover. *Who are you seeing, Starsk, when you look at me like that? Is it Ian?*

"Starsk? It's me, it's Hutch."

Starsky choked back a cry, and Hutch knew. Knew that Starsky still saw Ian, still felt Ian. The man they had invited into their home, shared their bodies with. That man turned monster who haunted Starsky, held him captive even in death. And in Starsky's confusion, came an answer that sickened Hutch, because he knew even as he asked the question.

"Starsk? He told you to pretend he was me, didn't he?"

Starsky groaned and tightened his arms around his belly, eyes glued to the floor, body shaking hard.

"Oh, Starsk...it's okay..." Hutch crossed the room, his hands held out to Starsky. Starsky turned away. Hands off.

"Don't...just don't, Hutch. I did it...I pretended he was you. I dragged you into the whole fuckin' mess...I'm sorry...please..." Starsky's knees buckled and he began to fall.

Hutch had him then, grabbed him before he hit the floor. Listened as Starsky murmured the words dirty and sorry and please, over and over again. "No, Starsk, no. Listen to me, buddy. Ian Quinn was a sick man...a murderer. His problems were way out of our league...way beyond our understanding. He manipulated us, Starsk...he drugged us and used us and hurt us. And none of that is our fault. You survived, Starsk. I survived, too. God, Starsk, if pretending he was me got you through the things he did to you...that doesn't make you dirty. You thinking you're not good enough to be mine anymore? Is that it?"

Starsky's face gave Hutch his answer. The fear that Hutch wouldn't love him anymore, wouldn't want him, was right there in his expression. The fear he'd refused to talk about--was helpless to talk about. Keeping Hutch away with silence, not returning his touches, shutting him out. Afraid to his very core that Hutch would deny him...that Ian Quinn would win after all. Too afraid to see Hutch's love had never died...too afraid to take that chance.

"Starsk, oh my Starsk. We made a mistake. Ian Quinn was a mistake. I'm sorry--more sorry than you'll ever know. But, Starsk...I love you and what happened hasn't changed that at all. Don't you see? We've both been so fucking miserable about the whole thing...maybe we just couldn't see past the pain. But, Starsk, I have to believe that somewhere between us, you and I are still there. What makes us who we are together is as strong as ever.

"Starsky? We have to make a choice here. We let him win, or we let him die. I know what I want, babe." Hutch tightened his hands on Starsky's arms, feeling warmth spread over him--Starsky was no longer shaking. A tentative touch back to Hutch's chest...a whispered plea to please hold him, and Starsky was in

his arms. Willingly in his arms.

Ian Quinn was laid to rest in that moment. He was gone...reduced to a memory not wanted. Healing began with a touch. With a hand finding a hand.

"Hutch...don't let go...please..."

"Never, Starsk...never let go. I promise."

*_*_*

Starsky's gaze was fixed on the world that existed outside the windows of his captain's office. The meeting with IA finally drawing to a shaky close. A shaky close in his and Hutch's favor. He smiled to himself at the sound of Dobey letting out a deep breath as the door closed behind the last IA officer. Leaned into the hand that squeezed his shoulder.

"It's over, Starsk. We're okay."

"Yeah, pal, we are." Starsky turned from Hutch's eyes to Dobey's. "Captain...thank you. Without..." No more words came, Dobey didn't give them any room.

"Forget it, Starsky." A burst of anger framed Dobey's words. A little less with his next sentence. "I know we can't forget what happened...but for God's sake be more careful! Don't let there be a next time...you may not get out of a next time." Anger spent, Dobey ordered, "Go home, both of you. There's a storm coming."

The storm caught up with them. Rain and thunder with its lightning accompanying them on the dash from car to house--drenching jackets and jeans and shoes. Hutch was at his most practical, lighting their emergency candles, filling a pitcher with water. Stripping off his coat and shirt on his way to Starsky, the lights dimming, glowing, and going out with a huge crack of thunder.

"Hutch?"

There it was in Starsky's voice, the trust and need Hutch had been so afraid was lost. *All because of a thunder storm, Starsk?* Hutch smiled to himself, knowing that wasn't the true reason. *Because you know that I know and trust me with that knowledge...your fear of darkness and thunder. Oh, Starsk, be afraid of that...afraid of something so ordinary, so common. But don't be afraid of me...let me in, babe...I miss you so much...*

They had come a long way, the two of them. Starsky letting go of his fears; talking, accepting. Hutch doing the same, finally able to put some of his guilt to rest, knowing he was as powerless against Quinn as Starsky had been. Starsky working on the rest of the guilt, reasoning over and over with Hutch that he had willingly gone along with the threesome idea. Reminding Hutch that they both called it quits, both knew they had made a mistake. Starsky knowing even as Hutch accepted his words, that Hutch would carry some guilt for the rest of his life. And loving that about him...loving him so much.

They had lashed out at Ian Quinn's family. Forcing Quinn's father and uncle to admit what they had done to him, putting justice in motion for their part in ruining a life, turning a man into a monster. Starsky hadn't bothered to stop Hutch when his open palm flew toward Clarence Quinn's face after Quinn accused Starsky of being a willing participant in his son's perverted lifestyle. Hutch stopped himself. Justice would come to Clarence Quinn, the same justice he and Starsky fought for...but from a hand much more powerful than either of theirs.

But the last bit of one wall was still there, still waiting to be breached. The wall that kept Starsky from Hutch. The last bit of wall that was more enormous in its smallness, than everything else they had faced.

"It's okay, Starsk, I'm right here."

Lightning flashed, revealing Starsky struggling frantically with his pullover, buttons caught in a tangle of wet curls.

"Starsk, let me help you...stand still..."

Hutch's big hands freed Starsky, pulling the shirt and trapped arms up and over his head. Standing face to face, Hutch's belt buckle brushed cool against the skin of Starsky's belly, his breath hot against Starsky's face. Leaning forward to toss Starsky's shirt away, bare chests made contact--a quiet gasp, an intake of breath--Hutch wondered which one of them made which sound.

"Hutch?"

"I..." *Oh, Starsk, so close...please...*

Freed, Starsky's arms fell with Hutch's, bumping and tangling together. Hutch pulled away, his arms dropping reluctantly to his sides. His heart finding joy in the hands that grasped his forearms and pulled them back around the shivering body before him.

"Don't let go, Hutch. Love me...please, Hutch...now..."

"Starsk?"

"I want you so much, Hutch. I'm just so damn afraid. I..."

"Shhh, babe, it's me...never be afraid of me...never, Starsk..."

In the darkness of their bedroom, a full eight weeks after the terror that was Ian Quinn, Starsky and Hutch exorcised their memories of him from their lives. Their lovemaking was tender and slow, hands and mouths finding all they had feared lost. Taking it back, giving it to themselves. Lips brushing over hair and smooth skin, fingers caressing, tightening, and bringing release. The storm Starsky found so frightening was forgotten, reduced to a mere backdrop. Its lightning blending with candlelight to spotlight an arm, a face, a back. Finding a hand sliding over the other's body. Turning blond to silver and shooting white sparks over dark curls.

The storm passed, candles sputtering out in puddles of wax, stars and moon finding their way past clouds, the wind rising and stirring the trees. Inside the little house on the quiet dead end street, two men slept, arms and legs twined together, heartbeats slow and sure. There was no one else there--never would be again. Just the two of them, safe in each other's love.
