

**Summary:** Crossover with [the Professionals](#) fandom, told from the point of view of both Hutch and Bodie. The Professional lads are in Bay City to pick up a British serial killer. Hutch is the CI5 agent's liaison with the local police and invites Bodie and Doyle to stay with him and Starsky. As they search for the killer, the similarities and differences in their relationships are compared and contrasted.

**Story Notes:** This story was originally printed in [Code 7, #III](#), published by Bound in Leather Press in 1984.

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**Warnings:** No Warnings Needed

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## Crying for the Moon

by Dargelos

I knew they were lovers from the moment I saw them. It wasn't that they were obvious about it--not the types to be pawing each other--but there was something in the way they acted together that marked them as a couple. I guess it was the same thing that Starsky and I shared, something people on the outside called empathy or a perfect partnership or any of a number of other things that circumvented the truth gracefully. I'd call it a kind of complete awareness of each other. You don't get that--especially not the physical part--by being partners only in a working sense. You have to be bed partners too. And they were that; I was willing to bet on it.

Doyle was the one you noticed first. He was all ruffled curls and slanted eyes and the life in him was like quicksilver. He glowed with it. He was the one who was the most immediately attractive. But the other presence was as strong in its own way. Bodie. The Heathcliff type, I decided on that first meeting in my office on a greyish October afternoon. Large, dark and brooding, and curiously handsome in a way that Doyle was not, he was uncooperative, even sullen, taking exception to everything I said. Only a look from Doyle seemed to settle him. Like I said, a couple.

I figured they were going to be trouble...oh, not in the sense that they were going to be obstructive in any way: if I'd thought that I'd have found some way to get them out of my way double quick, but trouble in an emotional sense. How to explain? There was something boiling beneath the surface--a mix of sexual tensions, fatigue, frustration, anger...any number of disquieting things. And so I was surprised when I heard myself offering them the use of the guest bedroom (or rooms, rather; I wasn't about to let on that I'd guessed) for the duration of their stay,

which I and they (judging from Bodie's black mood) hoped would be mercifully short. I was even more surprised when they accepted. Funny the way the subconscious works.

I sent them off to collect their bags and called Starsky to tell him to get the rooms ready. I told him about my feelings and he laughed at me.

"You're a real romantic, Hutchinson," he said. "Should I put the KY in the nightstand?"

"Oh be discreet by all means. Do you mind having houseguests?"

"Nah. They good looking?"

"That does it. I'm sending them to the Y," I said and he laughed again, that sound that always sends a pleasant chill up my spine.

"What time will you be home?" he asked. I heard Bear barking in the background. "I'll run out and get Chinese for dinner. Everybody likes Chinese, right?"

"We're leaving in a few minutes." Which was time enough for a carry-out since it's a good hour's drive from Metro to home.

They were waiting in the parking lot. Bodie looking less irritable than he had in my office, and Doyle a little flushed with a half-smile tugging at the corners of his full mouth. Kissable that mouth, I decided, and clamped down on that line of thought very fast. It doesn't do to notice such things in my position.

It turned out Doyle had been a policeman before joining CI5, and was interested in American police procedure. "The lads in New York were not very forthcoming. The ones in Denver were downright rude," he told me. "Of course we weren't particularly happy about the job they were doing and we said so," he admitted. I could just hear Bodie telling off some harried New York cop.

"You'll have to tell us your American adventures over dinner. All I know is what the file told me."

"Which is?" Bodie asked from the back seat. He looked uncomfortable, which wasn't surprising since the back seat of my car seems to have been designed for children under ten.

"Stretch out if you want to, Bodie. It's a long drive." He propped his feet up and sighed. "I know you work for CI5, but I'm not quite clear as to what sort of organization that is. I can't get much information on it out of the computer."

"We're not in the phone directory either," Ray volunteered with a little laugh. "Very hush-hush."

"James Bond stuff, huh?"

"Something like that."

"So why are you here? I mean, what is so important about Evans? He's a particularly nasty killer but hardly the stuff that intrigues are made of." My question, surprisingly, seemed to make them a little uneasy.

"To be quite frank, Lieutenant Hutchinson..."

"Hutch, call me Hutch."

"Evans is the son of a prominent and very powerful man. I think we have to consider our presence here as in the nature of a personal favor from our boss to that man."

It was smooth coming from Doyle, and I wasn't quite ready to accept it as the whole truth. There was a lot more to this case than either of them were willing to discuss. "Do you mean," I asked, determined to pursue this thing to whatever limits they decided to set...and beyond perhaps, if I was feeling perverse... "that your agency is spending all this money to have you wait here until he's caught, when the outcome is going to be the same as if you were ordinary cops? I mean, he's going to jail regardless." They both gnarbled indistinctly and I had the feeling that Bodie's gnarbling was unrepeatable, but the gist of what I got was, yes, their agency was etc. I wasn't satisfied.

Neither, apparently, was Bodie who asked if he could read the file while we traveled. Now as fate would have it, I had a secret or two of my own that I didn't want revealed too soon, and so I had been very careful to leave the file at the office, misfiled to prevent anyone but me from reading it just yet. Only Dobey and I knew where it rested. I told them that I had to leave it at work for the night people but that they could look it over the next day. Of course the night people were going to misplace it. That's the beauty of shifts. You can blame anything on anyone and it's months before you get found out. They weren't happy but neither of them were willing to ride the whole way back to headquarters to get a copy.

Starsky's new car--that damn flashy red number that replaced the flashy red number that replaced the Torino (where he gets his taste in wheels is beyond me, but then my opinions on that are well-documented) was hogging most of the driveway. I considered scraping it as I squeezed in beside it but I figured it would mean divorce city. I swear he cares more for that car than for me. "What kind is that?" Ray asked and I grumbled something about having to ask Starsky, all I knew was that it was red and I hated it.

The front door opened and Bear flew out, jumped up to lick my face and knocked me into a flowerbed. He's a big, affectionate black cross-breed, Labrador and horse, I think, and is hard to resist...in more ways than one. Recovering your dignity while supine in the petunias is not an easy thing, and the barely controlled sniggers from Bodie didn't help. Doyle was a bit nicer about it, he just laughed outright and helped me up and brushed me off.

"How nice." It was Starsky, lounging in the doorway, watching us with the expression that meant anything from "I'm horny" to "you're in big trouble." "Which is which?"

I introduced them both and realized suddenly that Bodie's eyes were the same color as Starsky's. For some reason that troubled me, though I couldn't think why. Anyway, Starsky smiled and everything was okay again...I guessed. He seemed to be trying to put the two Brits at ease, and he was succeeding with Bodie--which was a surprise--but not quite so well with Ray.

"Are you two hungry? I've got Chinese for dinner which Hutch should have told you...did he tell you?" he asked, fixing me with the Starsky "I'll-bet-you-fucked-up-again" look that he gives me from time to time. Ray said yes and Bodie said no and nobody seemed very happy, so I decided that a timely retreat was in order.

"I'm going to have a quick shower, Starsk, why don't you show them the rooms?" I said and went upstairs, figuring that he could handle them for a while.

A little later, when I came out of the shower I found Starsky lounging on the bed reading the paper. "Shouldn't you be doing something to dinner?"

"It's all ready. I'm just keeping it hot." He folded up the paper carefully and put it on my side of the bed. (He's very particular about things like how the paper is folded and how many dirty shirts I throw on the floor of the closet to get them out of the way.) "You were right about them, you know."

"Why do you say that?" I rummaged through the drawer trying to find a clean shirt and realized for the thousandth time that there was something to keeping up with the laundry. "Can I..."

"You wear it you wash it, Hutch."

"I swear I will do the wash for a month when this case is over."

"They told me...Bodie did."

"Bodie! I can't believe it. He's been irascible since the moment we met." I chose a light blue pullover that always looked better on me than on Starsk.

"Maybe it's your personality, lover. Anyway, he didn't tell me in so many words, but he's the one who said that the king size would suit them that they didn't need the other room."

"It wouldn't hold up in court," I reminded him.

"I thought you were the one who was convinced they were an old married couple."

"Okay, okay. Do I have any clean socks?" Starsky grinned at me.

"They're a young married couple, I think," he said as he came up behind me and put his arms around my waist. The feel of him was always so sweet. "Remember when we were new at this?"

"Honeymooning? How could I forget?"

"Well," he said, releasing me and closing the drawers I'd left open, "the honeymoon's over for them and they're just starting to realize what they've gotten themselves into."

I sat down on the bed and put on my socks. "You're feeling analytical tonight, aren't you?"

"You were the one who started this. You got me interested. It's on your head. I'm going to put the stuff on the table. Knock on their door on your way, will you? I think they've forgotten about dinner." He disappeared down the stairs leaving me to dress and consider what he'd said. I wasn't one to discount Starsky's perceptions of people, in fact, if anything he was a better judge of character than I was-- particularly where women were concerned. Thank God, I thought, that's in the past.

What he saw in them was something different than what I had seen, and that was part of the reason why we were always such a good team. I saw lovers and he saw new lovers. A new dimension. That was, perhaps, the tension I had felt on first meeting them. Maybe that's what was making Bodie fractious.

I knocked on the door as Starsky had asked and sure enough, from the look of them they'd forgotten all about dinner. "Shall I tell Starsky to keep it warm?" I asked Bodie. Ray said no very quickly--too quickly. I made a note to ask Starsky what Ray's reaction had been when he offered the king size instead of separate rooms.

Starsk had done the whole exotic route with a seemingly endless assortment of dim sum. We'd be eating dumplings for months, I thought. Bear would swell to epic proportions with the scraps. But as it turned out, Bodie was as bottomless as Starsky and he loved Chinese food. His looks were growing on me and I found the thought disquieting.

"You were going to tell us your American adventures," I reminded Ray.

"Oh yeh, the search for Evans." He put down his chopsticks and sat back, cradling a cup of tea between his hands. I wondered if he'd let slip any information that would help me get through the labyrinth of this case. I needed ammunition. "Apparently they caught him in New York about a month ago. We were notified, and Bodie and I were sent out to bring him home. Unfortunately for all of us, especially those poor girls, he got lost."

"Lost?" Starsky exclaimed. "You're joking."

"Wish I was. No, they lost him somewhere in transit. I still haven't been able to sort out just how, but that, thank heaven, is not our job. We're not diplomats."

"I'd noticed," I mumbled without thinking and Starsky gave me a sour look. "Just kidding."

"We'd finally been recalled after being cooped up in a tatty hotel for a fortnight, and were about to go home when he, or rather his m.o. turned up in Denver. So we flew out to Denver, which is much pleasanter than New York..."

Starsky's face got that frozen look, but he was too polite to say anything.

"...and hung about there for almost a week while they decided that it wasn't him, then that it was him, and finally that they weren't sure."

"And all the time he was here, killing hookers. What was the problem? Copy-cat killing?"

"Must have been. He's a lot of things, is Evans but I haven't heard that he can be in two places at once...unless you've got a copy-cat and he really is in Denver."

"Oh, I think we've got the right one," I said.

"You positive?" Bodie asked. "This is the land of fruits and nuts, isn't it?"

"We have our share. We don't need yours, thank you very much. We have a couple of positive I.D.'s."

"You know what they say?" Starsky asked as he began to clear the table. "Once a year they tip the country on its side and everything loose falls into California. That's how I got here." He smiled at Ray very sweetly. "I'm originally from New York."

"Oops, sunshine," said Bodie, and he laughed--the first time I'd heard him laugh. "How's that boot taste?"

Ray covered his eyes with his hand. "Shall I apologize or just pack my things?" And the tension was broken.

I wanted some time to sort out what I'd heard, and I wanted to compare notes with Starsky. Even though we don't work together any longer I rely on his judgment. (Starsky got a place teaching at the Academy after coming out of the hospital, and I took the Lieutenant's exam. It was better that way considering our relationship.) He still helps me on all my cases, even if that just means rubbing my back after a long day. "I suppose it's my turn to do the dishes?"

"Big deal, loading the dishwasher. I suppose you want out...again."

"No, not at all. Keep me company?"

He looked at me and nodded, having picked up the signal. We're still a fantastic team. "If Bodie and Ray don't mind, that is."

"Fact is, I've a touch of jet lag," Bodie confessed.

"He just gets sleepy after a big meal," Ray told us, earning a frown from Bodie. "If you don't need any help, I could use a shower and a good night's sleep."

"By all means."

Starsky wanted to talk but I made him wait until I was sure they were upstairs. When the shower began to run I felt safer.

"You're getting paranoid, Hutch." He was scraping the table scraps into Bear's bowl. "You think they're lurking in the dining room?"

"Starsk, they're not cops like you and me. I don't know what they'd do to find out what they want to know." He handed me the dishes as he finished and I rinsed them and put them in the washer. "Besides, I wanted to ask you what you thought of that little recitation over tea. What did you hear?"

He thought about the question for a minute while he added a can of dog food to the mess in the bowl, and put it down on the mat. "I can't figure out why they're here, Hutch."

"Exactly! They shouldn't really be here. I mean, it's a waste of manpower, isn't it, to have them mooching around the U.S. in hopes of catching up to Evans in some city?"

"But Ray said that they were contacted when the N.Y.P.D. picked up Evans." He leaned against the counter and watched as I finished the plates. "So what exactly does CI5 do?"

"Well, I can't get a straight answer out of anyone on that, but the nearest I can figure is that it's something like the CIA or the FBI--internal not international."

"What kind of authority do they have?"

"Not much...at least I don't think they have much outside their borders, unless for some reason they have some sort of diplomatic status. I have the uncomfortable feeling they're going to try to pull that on us when we get Evans."

"Give him diplomatic status, you mean?"

"And spirit him back to England. That's exactly what I mean, and I don't know how to deal with that. I don't know what to do to stop it." I closed and locked the washer and poured myself a glass of milk.

"What if they do?"

"If they're willing to go that far, he's special. He's probably not going to be charged for the murders he committed over there." I felt very tired suddenly. "He hasn't been charged yet. That much is in the file."

"What about the ones here?"

"Can't make 'em stick, Starsk. Not one of 'em. Not enough evidence." He'd gone a little green at that bit of news. "Even if I could, diplomatic immunity would cover that nicely, wouldn't it?"

"Would it?" he asked. I wasn't sure.

Starsky stayed downstairs and read for a while--he was studying for the Lieutenant's exam--and I went up to read the paper. I was well into the financial news when I heard the unmistakable sounds of lovemaking coming from the guest room. Impossible to concentrate while that was going on so I sat back and listened, wishing Starsky was with me. Of course, it wasn't a nice thing to do--my mother would've been shocked--but it was hypnotic. I found myself imagining them making love, imagining their bodies twining together. When I opened my eyes Starsky was standing in the doorway, a little smile on his lips.

"Hard to ignore, huh?" He kicked off his sneakers and climbed onto the bed. "How about it, fella? You like nice Jewish boy?"

"I can think of one I love," I told him.

If there's one thing we've gotten good at, it's undressing in a horizontal position without breaking our kiss. Of course our clothes end up on the floor and Starsky kvetches about having to pick them up afterwards but we don't lose a moment, no wasted effort.

And we've never grown tired of each other's bodies in the years we've been together. I worried about that in the beginning when neither of us were sure that what we felt was love and not some sort of itchy desire for a new experience. (Perhaps I ought to point out that both of us had been basically straight before we'd become lovers. Oh, there had been the occasional experiments on both sides, but nothing like the way we seemed to need each other.) I guess time proved that what we felt was love better than analysis could have. Starsky had said "wait and see" and he was right. We've changed, grown older, and the changes have registered on our faces and bodies as well as our hearts and minds. Still, when he touches me I soar. Like a Harlequin romance, nu? I'm sort of romantic and sloppy about what I feel for him and I make no apologies. I think everyone should have someone they feel that way about. It's a lovely feeling.

I couldn't help but wonder as we listened to our guests enjoying themselves, and each other, if the two of them ever got romantic. They didn't seem the type, quite frankly. As I said to Starsky, they weren't like us and I thought that held true in the emotional sense as well as the professional one. There was something hard about them that was unnerving, as though some of the more human parts had been excised at an early age. Bodie in particular seemed to have a wall around him. It never really came down, though occasionally one got little flashes of something through the chinks.

Starsky and I giggled a little afterwards. "Gosh, that was better than the adults only cable stations, wasn't it?" he asked, and it was true. Listening to them had been exciting in a kinky sort of way. "Loud, too."

"So are you when you get going," I reminded him, wondering if I ought to get up and wash off or just pass out where I lay and hope I wouldn't regret it in the morning.

"Oh, shit!"

"What?"

"I have to go down and start the dishwasher before I can sleep." He rolled out of bed and pulled on one of my bathrobes. "I don't know why we can't train Bear to do it."

"You know him, he'd start demanding six meals a day instead of five. That's the life, isn't it? Next time around I want to be someone's dog."

"You're my little Chihuahua, Hutchie," he said as he slipped out of the room. A.K.A., Mexican hairless, emphasis on the latter. I know how Starsky's mind works. If he came back to bed while I was conscious I'd bite him, or maybe I'd shed on him.

When the phone rang I woke with a start and grabbed for the receiver. Starsky had long since come back to bed and snuggled against my side, nose buried in my left armpit. (He doesn't appear capable of sleeping untangled--though I'm not complaining.) The call was from Captain Zavalla who gave me the address of a hotel just off Sunset where another hooker had just been killed. It was near Chinatown.

I woke Starsky and told him about it and asked if he would be willing to chauffeur our guests to the scene of the crime if they decided they wanted to see it. "Why don't you take them?" he asked, grumpy and uncooperative. He's never quite as sweet after being pulled from a sound sleep.

"I'm in a hurry and I don't want them hanging around there until I've had a chance to do my stuff, okay?"

"Yeah, sure...of course it's okay." He shook his head and those wonderful curls of his flopped in his face. I'd noticed them greying recently. He looked very elegant with a slight dusting of grey. "I'll get 'em going about..." He peered sleepily at the clock, glowing bright red in the darkness "...about five-thirty. That gives you almost two hours head start. Kiss," he demanded, turning his face up to be kissed before he'd let me go. Whatever did I do before I had him to wake up beside?

It didn't take long to do my stuff. The forensics team was already on the job when I arrived, so we stumbled over each other for the better part of an hour, then someone brought me a cup of coffee and I talked to a couple of locals who both said they'd seen Margaret (that was her name--unlikely name for a streetwalker, but what the hell?) with a tall...a very tall blonde guy, in Gogie's about two that morning. They couldn't figure it, they said, she wasn't much of a talker. All business was Margaret. Yeah, well, I'd seen Evans' photo, and even if it flattered him a little I could see why Margaret had been willing to sit and talk to the guy. He was easily the handsomest human being I'd ever seen. Strange eyes. And he was a positive genius with a knife. The last one...Jesus, he'd cut her heart out and taken it with him.

Anyway, I flashed the photo of Evans at them and they said, yeah, no doubt about it, that was the guy. Him, you'd remember.

The street was full of people--more than usual even at this hour. Lot of hookers, you could tell, all wondering if they'd be next. In the few weeks he'd been in Los Angeles, Evans had killed five of them. And the pisser was that I didn't have enough evidence in any of the cases to convict him. Oh yeah, a lot of circumstantial stuff, but I sure wouldn't want to bring him to court on that. He'd walk. That was my little secret and I was damned if I was gonna let Bodie or Doyle know until I had to. I wanted Evans formally charged in the U.K. They had the evidence they needed to put him away for six lifetimes.

Starsky showed up a little past five with our two guests. Bodie looked depressingly wide-awake, but Doyle was dragging a bit. They both needed a shave. Starsky looked chipper, shaved and combed like a prize show dog. He gave me a lopsided grin and apologized for not being able to hold them off any longer. "They started prowling about half an hour after you left; heard the car and managed to put two and two together. I putzed around in the shower and shaved and fed the dog and made them eat before we left. Best I could do, lover."

"S'okay," I assured him. "We wrapped up the messy part pretty fast. I talked to a couple of people who saw her with a guy they've unofficially identified as Evans." I shrugged. "Nothing watertight. I'll wait to see what forensics have to say."

"Hutch, d'you mind if we see the body?" It was Ray at my elbow. He sounded a lot sharper than he looked. I nodded and took them to the room where the body lay alone, covered with a sheet, waiting for the coroner to claim it. The forensics people were outside having coffee and doughnuts and discussing football.

Ray and Bodie took a look around the room, then at Margaret. What surprised me was Bodie's response. He went white and turned away. "I don't like seeing women cut up like that," he confessed. Ray, the ex-cop, seemed less perturbed.

"Always this many people on the street at this hour of the morning?" Bodie asked as we left the hotel.

"It's always crowded. This is a twenty-four hour part of town." I was about to point out that Chinatown began a few streets over when Bodie froze.

"Bodie?" Ray began. "What's..."

"Evans," Bodie hissed, and he pelted off down the street with Ray at his heels. I could only presume that Bodie had spotted the man--I surely hadn't seen him in the crowd. I went after them, swerving past Starsky to bark "Evans" at him. He followed me, and the four of us, spaced out by a few hundred yards, dashed down the street like lunatics from the Doo-dah parade.

Bodie and Doyle were a lot faster than either Starsky or myself and it was a blessing considering that Evans with his long legs was just as fast as they were. As I ran, I saw him turn to face Bodie, and it looked as though they were speaking, then they were grappling. There was the flash of a knife and Bodie caught the hand that held it. If he could just hold on for a moment we'd be there; Ray was already nearly on top of them. But Bodie gave a yell of pain and Evans was up and

running again. Too late--Ray caught him with a spectacular flying kick and they both went down in a heap. The smaller man was up first and his second kick got Evans in the face, and was, perhaps, a little gratuitous in its force. But if it had been my partner bleeding on the sidewalk I'd not have been gentle either. Starsky joined the fray just as I arrived on the scene, and he and Ray wrestled Evans to the ground and got him cuffed.

"Well," I said, feeling old and utterly useless in the face of all this youthful expertise, "I'll just go get myself another cup of coffee."

Ray ran over to where Bodie lay, clutching his thigh. "How about it, sunshine, you gonna die on me?" he asked, a quaver in his voice betraying the emotion there.

"Get him?" Bodie asked between clenched teeth. Ray pried his hands free and examined the wound.

"Yeah, we got him. Cor, that's bad. Let's get you to hospital, Bodie."

"Oh shit!" Then Bodie's eyelids fluttered and he slid out of Ray's grasp.

BODIE:

The only thing that didn't hurt was my leg.

"I've just been reading your horoscope, Bodie." Ray was perched on the window ledge holding a newspaper that proclaimed: "Ripper Captured." "It says you'll have a sex- change operation today."

"Very funny." That, like the wound, was a little close for comfort. Evans had very nearly made a girl out of me. "What's yours say?"

"That a career change is in the cards."

"Oh, get off..."

"No, honestly, look."

"Don't want to. I hurt."

"I'll just bet you do," he said with a sympathetic little frown. He hopped down and felt my forehead.

"What's that for?" I demanded. "I don't have a fever."

"Mum always used to. It made me feel better when she did." And come to that, I did feel better at his touch. He's the only one since my Mum died that could do that to me. That's why I don't mind

being sick around Ray. He doesn't fuss, he just offers whatever you want of help and sympathy and otherwise stays out of your way when you feel most miserable.

"He had a second knife, a flick knife, up his sleeve. That's what he cut me with, not the big Bowie he used on the girls."

"I know. The coppers found it in the street. You're just lucky, old son, that it wasn't the Bowie."

"I want to go home." I was hurting and unhappy and I didn't give a damn what happened to Evans now. I was more than willing to settle the matter unofficially with a bullet in his ear.

"U.K. home or just out of the hospital home?" Ray asked, playing with the controls on the bed so that I sat up and lay down several times. I got to laughing over that and so did he. We were both tired and depressed and it seemed a wonderful joke.

"Both or either. I don't care at the moment."

"They want you to stay overnight."

"Oh, Ray, tell them no. I don't like hospitals."

"Don't I know it? Sorry, Watson, but orders is orders. You'll stay the night. Look at that--you're hooked up to a bloodmobile, Bodie. They're keeping you alive by main force."

"Sod you, Doyle," I snapped. "I'm perfectly healthy."

"That's why you're the colour of pasta, is it? Bodie, be a good boy. I have to talk to Cowley today. I don't need any more headaches."

I was suddenly interested. "Why?"

He took a couple of bites of the lunch they'd brought and made a face. "Hutch. He says that if Evans isn't charged in the U.K. they'll keep him here to stand trial."

"Aw, bloody 'ell."

"Right, mate, and you know who'll get the business end of Cowley's reaction to that?" He tapped his chest. "They trying to kill you with this food?"

"Why do you think I hate hospitals? What else did Hutchinson say?"

Ray smiled a little. "He's sharp, that one. Doesn't miss a thing. He was asking all kinds of questions about Evans, even asked did we know him."

"Think he's sussed something?"

"I think he's reaching...but in the right direction. That's another reason I've got to talk to Cowley today." He gave me a pat on the arm. "You rest and get better. I'll take you out of here when you stop looking like Count Dracula."

Trouble--I'd known it from the moment I saw him. At first I thought it was because of Ray, because he took one look at that gorgeous little golliwog and started itching for a taste. It's not that Ray and I have an exclusive relationship, mind, it's just that I hate it when he notices other men. And he was noticing Hutchinson. And then he was noticing Starsky and I was feeling a little like a plate of leftovers. It's not that I expect him to stop noticing men- -or women for that matter--but I'd rather he did it with a little less enthusiasm is all. It hurt.

Still, our private life, as The Cow loves to point out to us, is the least of our worries. His view of our affair is tolerant to the point it interferes with our work and then one or the other comes to an end. That's how it's been laid out to us and I don't think there's too many options. The important thing is, I know how Ray would choose. Dumb crud, I am, for falling in love with him.

Well, Hutchinson seemed to be causing me all kinds of trouble, not all of it to do with Ray. The truth of it was that I knew Evans--had known him in the SAS. He went on to MI6 when I went to CI5, and I'd encountered him occasionally over the years. He was always a strange 'un, and I never really liked him much, but he was good at his job. Problem was, he was too good. His breakdown turned a lethal weapon on the world. We were ordered to bring him back quietly, avoiding all publicity, and he'd be committed by his family. MI6 was embarrassed, the SAS was embarrassed, the government was embarrassed, his bloody family was embarrassed and Evans kept on killing girls and getting away with it.

The funny part, if there was anything funny about this situation, was that we were supposed to keep Hutchinson from doing just what we both thought should be done. This assignment didn't sit well with either of us and we'd told Cowley so in the beginning. And, as usual we were given the standard lecture about how our personal feelings were unimportant etc. Then he confessed, off the record of course, that he agreed with us but that at the moment his hands, and ours therefore, were tied.

Starsky stopped by to see me later that afternoon and brought me some Mexican food. "Best thing when you've lost blood," he confided with a wink. Then he described each item to me in loving detail...and helped me eat it. I'd never had a chimichanga before. It was loaded with sour cream and I could almost hear the howls of outrage from Ray who would have lectured me about how my poor, overloaded heart was going to go bang one day. I told Starsky and he said, "My heart stopped once. It's easy."

"Yeah, that's what Ray said, too."

I told him about it, about the time I almost lost Ray, and he told me about his own brush with death. It was nice being with him with no case between us. I liked him a lot. We talked old movies, sports and finally sex. He was very frank about his relationship with Hutch, and I found myself talking about Ray more than I was used to doing. He was easy to talk to.

"It's been seven years we've been lovers," he said, "and I think he's getting itchy for something new and exciting."

"An affair, you mean?"

"Yeah. You, Ray...he's attracted to both of you, you know." I hadn't known that and told him so. "Cold comfort." He said, "Anyway, it's not a big deal or anything. We never made any promises. It's just that, well, we've had our little flings with women, but never with another man."

The nurse came in and glared at the food wrappings. "Where did this come from?" she demanded and Starsky and I both shrugged.

"Little guy looking for 'Tia Conception'," he said. "He forgot to take it with him." Starsky looked seraphic and the nurse crumpled up the papers with a growl, but said no more. When she finished checking to see if I was still alive, she left, looking a bit insulted.

"I'm not a very good patient," I admitted.

"Neither is Hutch, and he's very vocal about his feelings for the medical profession. If he ever gets hurt again we might as well just shoot him and be done with it. They won't have anything to do with him."

"Tell me, you said never with another man..."

"Yeah, well, we've both done our experimenting, mostly as kids, but we're both basically straight. What about you?"

"Ray's like that, though he's done more than experiment in his time," I told him. "Me, I've never cared much one way or the other, though I've had more girls than anything else."

Starsky produced a chocolate bar from his pocket, broke it in half and offered a piece to me. "I'm not worried so much as a little apprehensive. It'd be easy to consider this just another fling and look the other way...or to do the same. You two are very attractive," he said with a casual frankness that shocked me slightly. The situation was rapidly becoming awkward. "Only, well, maybe I am worried that if anything happens we'll start to feel that infidelity isn't important. That's the death knell for relationships like ours. I don't even like it when we see women, but I do it occasionally. Don't know why." He looked very depressed.

"I'd say something helpful, but I'm not sure what would help."

"Are you two exclusive?" I shook my head. "How long have you been together?"

"Eighteen months give or take. It's just..." I began, and clamped down hard. I'd been about to say that it was just sex between us, but I couldn't lie to him. For me, anyway, it was much more than just sex. "We're new to this. I don't think you can compare."

"You're more like us than you know," he said, but didn't elaborate. "Well, I've gotta go. Anything you need?"

"I need to get out of here," I grumbled. He grinned at me and I knew why Hutch loved him. He was bright and beautiful, just like Ray.

"I promise I'll come and get you tomorrow afternoon, okay?"

"Morning."

"If they let me." He bounced out of the room and it seemed suddenly dark and lonely. There was a bit of chocolate left on the bedside table and I ate it slowly, thinking a lot about what he'd told me. I'd have liked to reassure him, but I couldn't. I knew that Ray was interested in both of them, and I couldn't answer for him. There were days when I couldn't answer for myself.

After an uninspired supper, I was rotting my brain with American telly, when Hutch arrived with, bless him, more food.

"I hear you hate hospitals," he said as he made himself comfortable.

"I hear you do."

"I studied medicine in my youth." He flicked off the set and sat back. "So, how are you feeling?"

"Terrible, starving." I peered at the food he'd brought. "Pasta Primavera?"

"Umhm. Like it?" He produced a shaker of cheese from his pocket and passed it to me.

"It's fine, thanks."

"I've had an interesting day," he said, and I had the feeling it had something to do with CI5. "Your Major Cowley is a difficult man."

"He's in a difficult position," I said, not liking the criticism, implied or otherwise.

"Oh, yeah, I know that. But so am I and that's what he doesn't seem to understand." I waited. He waited. There was a long time when there was no sound but chewing. "I was wondering if you, or Ray, would be willing to help me out a little."

"We've got an assignment, Hutch."

"I'm not asking you to forget that."

"What are you asking?"

He rubbed his face with both hands. He looked very tired. "I want information. I want to know what I'm up against."

It was only fair, I thought. "Has Ray told you anything?"

"No more than you have."

"I'll talk to him," I promised. "I can't do more than that right now." He nodded and closed his eyes. "You don't have to stay, you know."

"Don't you want me to?"

"Sure. It's lonely here, but if hospitals put you off..."

"I'm not that bad. You play cards?"

"Like Happy Families and Snap?"

"No, like Old Maid and Go Fish." He produced a battered deck. "Gin?"

"I won't complain."

While we played, he talked about Starsky and the more I heard, the more sure I was that nothing could come between them. Even the seven-year itch, as Starsky had called it, was a minor consideration. They had something together that I desperately wished for with Ray, but felt was impossible. It didn't seem likely that we'd discover any dammed-up reservoirs of emotion after all this time. Funny. I told him I thought he was damned lucky and he seemed surprised.

"You sound like you envy me."

"I do, quite frankly," I admitted. He was winning every hand. I must have been dopier than I'd imagined.

"Why?"

"Because you love each other," I said. It seemed like the moment for truth.

He frowned at me and lay down his hand. "Gin...again." I groaned as he totalled the points. "You mean that what's between you and Ray has nothing to do with love?"

"How much do I owe you?" I asked. He took the hint.

When the nurse came in to shoo him out for the night I owed him one hundred million Swiss francs (it was the only currency we could agree on) but we cancelled the debt when he confessed he'd been cheating. Just like Ray.

HUTCH:

When I got home that night, Starsky and Ray were playing Scrabble in the dining room. "How is he?" Ray asked.

"Lonely." I hung up my jacket and Starsky looked pleased. "I talked to his doctor--he can be released tomorrow. What are your plans?" I asked Ray.

"That rather depends on you, doesn't it?" He set out his tiles and Starsky looked them over carefully, then he looked hard at Ray.

"I'll let it go," he said, "but if I find out you made it up..."

"Would I do that?"

"You bet you would. Have done already."

"Yeah, and you caught them all."

"Hmmm."

Ray looked up at me. "Cowley might be willing to negotiate with you," he said.

"You let me know what he says. I need a shower."

To tell the truth, I was so sick of the whole situation that I was almost willing just to let Evans go. Almost, but not quite. My overworked sense of justice wouldn't quite let me go that far. I'd take responsibility for the world if anyone was inclined to let me.

What disturbed me most was what I was feeling about, and for, the two Brits. The attraction was undeniable, but the strangest thing was that it wasn't Ray that I was most drawn to. I figured that it was his superficial resemblance to Starsky that had attracted me initially, but he was Starsky-like only on the outside. He was more me than anything else. It was Bodie who was most like Starsky in the final analysis. I couldn't explain why I felt that way, but I knew it was true, it drew me to Bodie in a way that a physical attraction never could.

And I felt sorry for them because theirs was a rocky relationship in a rocky phase, and if I had to be honest I'd have said that I wouldn't have given two cents for their chances together. Still, people had made more out of less many times over. And of course, I felt guilty for feeling attracted to them at all; guilty because of my relationship with Starsky and my love for him, and guilty because it would be so easy to take what I wanted from Bodie and Ray without a thought to how it might affect their relationship. Starsky once said that I thrive on guilt the way other neurotics thrive on stress or anger or big emotional scenes, and I guess he was right because I found myself enjoying the pangs of conscience. I'm a self-indulgent bastard when it comes to emotion.

I was towelling off in the bedroom when Starsky came up with a load of clean clothes--mostly mine--and began to put them away. "Who won?" I asked and he smiled.

"I was so busy accusing him of cheating that he never imagined I was. Here you go, clean clothes at last. You're stretching my shirts." He patted my stomach proprietarily and I caught hold of his wrist.

"Starsk, tell me you love me, will you?" I asked, and he went a funny reddish color, like a young girl with a crush. "Because I love you very much."

He put his arms around me and nuzzled against my chest. "Maybe we need a honeymoon if you have to ask me for that," he admitted. "I love you Hutchinson, and I ought to tell you so every day--every hour maybe."

"Well, let's not get carried away, huh?"

He began to laugh, and his warm breath on my skin was very arousing. "I don't ever want to end up like those two poor bastards. They can't tell each other how they feel, can they?" I was pulling him towards the bed and he was still chuckling. "I know what you're after."

He let me undress him, savoring the feel of his skin and the smell of sunshine on it. He's very tan these days. The hair on his chest was beginning to grey too and my feelings about that were mixed. It was sort of bittersweet--aging, but aging together like a married couple ought. Everything about him was sweetly familiar like the road you take going home, the taste, the smell, the feel of him, all familiar and all special. We weren't bothering with anything complicated, no acrobatics. We just held each other close, doing what felt best--a slow friction of body against body, the feel of his cock against mine, his naked, damp skin against mine, holding on tight when the moment came, silent and worshipful for the thing we still shared.

"You'll have to wash again," he said sleepily. "Love you."

"S'all right. Love you too." I was almost asleep in his arms. "Starsk, where's Ray?" I'd had a sudden vision of him waiting downstairs over the Scrabble board, planning his first move of the next game.

"He wanted to call Bodie before the switchboard closed."

"I hope he says something special to him. I hope it's not just business." I felt sorry for them all over again.

"It's not business. I'm pretty sure it's not that."

**BODIE:**

In the end, it wasn't necessary to give Hutch the ammunition he'd been asking for. Cowley'd had enough and I guess he delivered an ultimatum to the people who'd insisted on secrecy. The

upshot of it was that Evans' extradition papers came through about two days later. He'd been formally charged with ten counts of murder in U.K.

I never saw him again. Someone else came to take him back to stand trial since I couldn't walk. We stayed with Starsky and Hutch until the day we were to leave the States and they were good to us. Neither of them ever again mentioned the things we'd discussed while I was in hospital for which I was grateful, and yet, I had the feeling I'd not come to know them very well. That was sad, really, because I think I would have liked them quite a lot.

I was glad to go home in the end because watching them together made me unhappy. What they had together I desperately wanted with Ray, and to see them so happy made me ache--a dull, constant pain under the breastbone. Oh, I know it's different situations; that we're different people in different situations, and what Ray and I have is special- -I believe that and so does he, I think. I guess it's madness to always want more, to always be crying for the moon.

But I'm haunted by the thing Starsky said to me that afternoon in hospital. He said that we, all of us, aren't so very different in the final analysis. It makes me wonder what the possibilities are. It makes me wonder if there are any more that I'll never know about.

end