

**Summary:** Starsky is back East, helping his mother. Hutch has a temporary partner. They both find being apart stressful. Will their love survive?

**Story Notes:** I was told this type of story wasn't really 'done' in this fandom. I have always been a bit of a rebel. I really couldn't see this happening, but I tried my best to write the best story I could.

Max Collins is an original character. My very own little Russian Studmuffin.

**Categories:** Slash

**Genre:** Action/Adventure, Romance

**Warnings:** Author Chooses Not to Use Archive Warnings

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## Dining At the Guilty Café

by **ksstarfire**

Hutch shifted in the car seat, trying to stretch out his long legs. Though he was trying to be quiet the movement woke up the other man in the car. "Cramped?"

"Yeah, damn long legs."

"They look like damn *fine* long legs to me!"

Hutch turned to see his temporary partner grinning at him. Pale blond hair almost the same shade as his own. Blue eyes a shade between his and Starsky's. He was so handsome, and with that faint Russian accent, Hutch guessed he was a real ladies man. He had struggled to figure out who he reminded him of. All of a sudden it clicked in his mind.

"Illya! I mean David McCallum, the actor who plays Illya Kuryakin!"

"Oh God, not you, too?"

Hutch snorted, "Hard not to make that connection, when you look like you do and you have that accent." He shifted in the seat again.

"Look, why don't we change places? You can stretch your legs out better over here in the passenger side, and I'll fit okay under the wheel."

"I don't want to risk someone seeing us open the doors and move."

"So? I'll lift up and you can slide under me." He braced his hands and arched his body up, waiting for Hutch to slide under him. Just as Hutch slid over, Max's hands slipped off the dash

and door where he had placed them and he landed right in Hutch's lap. They both moved at the same time, causing him to grind into Hutch.

"Stop! Let me help lift you, before you hurt something vital!"

"Oh, partner," came Max's teasing voice, "I would hate to hurt... *that!* Do you have a permit to carry that concealed? You *know* I wouldn't mind if you want to practice... open carry! I'll even *carry it* for you!"

Hutch laughed even as he felt his face heat as he helped shift Max off his lap. He realized he was semi-erect from the friction and movement. And if he were totally honest, with how hot his temporary partner looked.

He had been working this undercover assignment for two weeks with Max while Starsky was back in New York helping his mom who had been ill. Max was a huge tease. Hutch was finally getting used to it, but sometimes...

They had a lot in common, a love for the law, for the same books, movies and music. Unlike the differences he and Starsky had. They'd shared a lot of stories about how they grew up. Stories of their time as police officers. They'd developed a friendship and respect for each other. It wasn't what he and Starsky had, but it was good.

Maxim Cooper was as American as they came, except for his accent, which he claimed he couldn't lose as long as his Russian grandmother still lived with his family. He was shorter and more slender than Hutch, and really did bear a striking resemblance to David McCallum. He was slightly taller than the actor, muscular and toned. They had been forced into close proximity during this stakeout. Sometimes this fostered a quasi-intimacy.

Noticing the blush on Hutch's face, Max said, "Hey, don't worry about it. I can't help that I am so sexy and things like this happen, a lot. And well, you *are*...hot! I'm not trying to make you uncomfortable, and I'm not suggesting anything, but I've been attracted to you since the first day I met you." Seeing the blush get redder and spread, Max continued. "I'm sorry, Ken, I'm too open sometimes with what I'm thinking. Forget I said anything, okay?"

Hutch tried to cool his heated face by turning it toward the car window. "It's ok, Max, it's just been a crazy couple of weeks. We've been stuck in this car on this stakeout. And Starsk has been gone, and I-I-I miss him."

"Ahhh, so it's like that with you two?"

Hutch realized what he had implied and quickly tried to backpedal. "Oh, no, Max. I mean, Starsk and I are just very close. Not that we, that he and I..."

"It's ok, my friend. I understand. More that you may know. I'm bi-sexual. There are certain parts of my life that I have to hide in order to stay in the job that I love. I get it." Max looked at his partner. "But I do find you very attractive. And if you should change your mind?"

Hutch laughed. "I'll be sure to let you know, Max."

"How is Starsky's mom doing? And Starsky?"

I'm not sure. The last week, when I've called, Starsk seems to be... gone. His mom said she's doing much better and that Dave is out with some old friends. I talk to her a while and tell her to have him call me, but I haven't heard anything for almost a week now. I'd be worried, but his mom says he's ok."

"It's hard to be separated from a partner. I'm sure he's ok and probably missing you just as much as you're missing him." Max reached out and gripped Hutch's shoulder. Funny, Hutch thought, how the touch was so like how Starsk and he touched each other.

Max looked at his watch. "Time for us to call it a night, Ken. Ah, there's Simmons and Babcock pulling in on the other end of the alley. Let's head back to Metro to fill out our boring shift report then let's head out to have a beer."

"Sounds good. Huggy's?"

"Where else?" Max laughed.

He sat down at Starsky's desk when they got back to Metro and began typing up a report that basically said nothing. Hutch did the same at his desk. They finished at the same time, put the reports in Captain Dobeys box and left the station.

Hutch drove to Huggy's and they headed in and up to the bar. "Hey, Huggy! A coupla' beers and some chips n' dip, if ya got 'em?"

"Comin' right up my friend. What do you hear from your darker half?"

"Not much. His mom's better so he's been out with some of his friends. Touchin' base with his old hangouts, I guess." Hutch tried not to let his worry show. He and Starsky usually didn't go for more than two days without talking. But it had been almost seven days since he had talked to him.

They shared three beers and talked over the case. They shared other information about themselves. Hutch couldn't help but think that Starsk would like Max as much as he did.

When they called it a night, Hutch dropped Max off at his place and drove home. His worry and feelings of loneliness increased when he let himself into his apartment. It was too late to call Starsky's mom again. "Starsk? Where are you? And what are you doing?" he said aloud to the empty-feeling apartment.

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"What the hell am I doing?" Starsky whispered.

He hadn't talked to his blond partner in a week, and he missed hearing his voice something fierce. But then he remembered Hutch going on and on about his 'new' partner the last few times they had talked. And he got mad again.

"This is *his* fault!" Starsky put Hutch out of his mind, turning back to his friends at the bar.

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The next night, they were back on stakeout, only in Max's car. They were three hours in and everything had been quiet. There was talk at the station that they might give up on this tip as nothing seemed to be happening. Hutch and Max were talking about a movie they both wanted to see when it premiered next month.

"Max!" Hutch pointed to someone sneaking in one of the doors of the warehouse they had been watching. "Call it in, and let's get closer." He waited for Max to call for backup. Hutch made sure the dome light was turned off and they eased their doors open, slipping out to melt into the shadows at either side of the alley.

They both froze as a truck entered from the other end of the alley and quickly entered a door someone opened from the inside. Hutch could see three men in the cab and a couple more jumped out of the back to help close the door. So, at least 6 against 2. Not the best odds. He glanced across the alley to see Max shrug his shoulders.

Max nodded and indicated he was up to going ahead instead of waiting for backup. When Hutch nodded back, they both began to work themselves forward again. When they were about five feet from the door, Max quickly and quietly moved across the alley to the other side of the door. They both listened at the door. When neither heard anything, they moved to the edge of the doors. Max pulled his gun out and carefully pushed the door open a few inches. Hutch had his gun out and they listened again to see if anyone was going to respond to the door opening.

Silence greeted them. Hutch nodded and slipped quietly into the warehouse. Max waited a few seconds and followed him. They saw the truck parked at the back with eight to ten guys surrounding it, off-loading boxes. They again looked at each other, silently asking a question.

Their decision was made when one of the guys yelled and guns started firing at them. Max knocked Hutch aside as a bullet slammed into the crate he had been standing in front of. They quickly scrambled behind the crates, and returned fire once they were more concealed.

"Thanks, Max." He nodded to his partner as he aimed and fired, hitting one of the drug dealers.

"Welcome." Max replied as one of his shots took down a second man.

Hutch heard a noise and turned to look behind them, pulling his gun around at the same time. "Down!" He heard Max slide down the crate as he shot the man sneaking up behind them.

Max stood back up and started firing at the men hiding in and around the truck. "Even, partner!"

Hutch nodded and reloaded his Python. He started to tell Max he was going to try to circle around, when he heard sirens. He stayed where he was, knowing backup would be coming in from all sides of the warehouse and there was less risk of friendly fire if he and Max stayed together.

They continued firing, dodging incoming fire that tore chunks of wood out the crates surrounding them. They both had scratches on their faces from some of the flying splinters.

"Police! You're surrounded! Toss out your weapons and get on the ground face down with your hands behind your heads!"

Hutch relaxed slightly as he heard Captain Dobeys voice calling out. He glanced at Max only to see him diving toward him. Max pushed him down and covered his body as he sighted his gun behind where Hutch had been standing.

The roar from Max's gun almost deafened him. But he heard a body hit the ground somewhere behind him.

Two officers appeared by them and quickly went to check the downed man.

"You ok, Ken?"

"Yeah, guess I owe you one, partner." Max was still lying on top of him. He looked up into his face and smiled. It's a record. Saved by 'The Man From UNCLE' twice in one night."

They both started to laugh. Max rolled off him and laid there by his side as they heard the police arresting and reading the bad guys their rights. "Thanks." They said to each other at the same time.

"Hutch! Sta...Max!" Dobeys voice boomed out through the echoing space. "Where are you?"

They helped each other up and dusted themselves off before stepping out from behind their shelter. "Here, Cap'n." Hutch said.

"Both of you okay?" At their nods, Dobeys turned to check the scene behind him. "It's Friday, you guys've had a long couple of weeks. Head out and get some rest. Come in Monday and fill out your reports." He hesitated a second. "Good work, Collins. You too Hutchinson. Now get out of here."

They didn't hesitate. They reloaded and holstered their guns and headed out the door of the warehouse, heading back to Max's car.

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Starsky stumbled into his mother's apartment around four in the morning. He tried to be quiet but he was more than a little drunk.

"David? That you, son?" Starsky flinched when he heard his mother's voice. He had hoped to avoid this.

"Yeah, ma, it's me. Sorry, I didn't mean to wake you up. Go back to sleep. I'm going to take a quick shower and head to bed."

His mother came walking into the living room, pulling on her robe. She turned on a lamp by the end of the couch and sat down. "Where have you been? You keep staying out so late. Every night. Ken called. I told him you were out with friends. He's worried about you. So am I. Why are you avoiding him? Why don't you want to talk to him?"

"Stay out of it, mom, please?" he said wearily "I'm sorry if I've made you worry. I'm ok. Just don't have much to talk to... him... about right now. Go back to bed, ma."

"Come over here and sit down."

He slowly walked to the couch and sat down by his mother. He hung his head, dreading what she was going to ask him. Unsure of what to tell her, or how to tell her. She put her hand on his arm.

"David? What's going on. Why don't you want to talk to Ken? You two have been closer than brothers for years. Did you two have a fight? No, that can't be right because you talked the first two weeks you were here. Everything seemed to be okay then. What happened?"

Starsky took a deep breath and looked at his mom. "He kept talking about the guy who's working with him while I'm here. I guess I felt... jealous... or something."

"I see. And where have you been so late at night for the last week?"

"Out with old friends, ma." He saw his mother stiffen. Before she could answer he continued. "Yeah, some of 'those' friends."

"Oh, no. You and Ken... are you saying... what are you saying?"

"I don't know, mom. I love Hutch. I didn't think I could live without him. But...now...after what I..." He stopped talking, closed his eyes and leaned his head back on the couch.

"Do you think Ken has cheated on you with this Max? I just can't see him doing that. Did he say that he had? Oh, my... did you... those old friends of yours... did you...?"

"Leave it, ma. Just leave it. Please? I don't want to talk about it tonight." He stood up and bent down to kiss his mother's cheek. "Go back to bed. I'm going to take a quick shower and head to bed too."

Rachel stood up and walked back to her bedroom. Her heart was heavy. She was so afraid for her boys. Afraid that if they didn't really talk soon, one of the other would do something they would regret. Something that would change everything.

He stepped into the shower and turned it on as hot as he could stand it. He dropped his head and rested it against the tile. He hit his fist against the wall. "Damn it! Damn him! Damn ME! What the hell did I...?" Tears streaked down his cheeks. He was too tired and too drunk to deal with this tonight. He washed quickly and stepped from the shower to dry off. "I have to call him tomorrow. I... we have to talk. God, what...?"

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They left Huggy's and headed to Max's house. They stopped on the way to buy some more beer and a couple bottles of wine. Hutch followed him into the house and dropped down on the sofa. Max went into the kitchen to put the beer in the refrigerator. He grabbed a couple of glasses and returned to the living room with the bottles of wine and an opener. He set the bottles down on the coffee table and opened one. He poured two glasses and handed one to Hutch.

"Job well done partner!" They touched glasses and each took a drink. "For a while there, I thought your snitch had lied about the drugs coming into town.

"I wasn't sure myself, Max. He's usually reliable, but you never know in this business."

"Do you have plans for the weekend, since we're off?" Max sipped his wine and watched Hutch over the rim of his glass.

"No, not really. I need to see if I can get ahold of Starsky and find out why I haven't been able to talk to him. A little laundry. Maybe get the oil changed in my car. How about you?

"I thought I would stay home the rest of the night and watch a couple of old movies. You wanna stay, Hutch? I have a couple that you've mentioned that you like."

Hutch thought about it. Thought about his lonely apartment and his non-communicating partner and decided it sounded like a good idea. "Sure. Want me to order a pizza or something?" When Max nodded "yes", Hutch got up and called for pizza. He knew what Max liked since they had picked pizza up several times to eat during the stakeout.

Max put a movie in and they settled on the couch, with their wine. When the pizza came, they each grabbed a piece and continued to watch. After the first movie was done, Max put in the second one. By that time the pizza was gone and most of the second bottle of wine. Max refilled their glasses and turned off the light on the end table. It had been the only light left on in the room.

Hutch shifted a little on the couch, his back hurting from sitting in the same position all evening. Max put a pillow across his lap and against the arm of the sofa, and pulled Hutch over, to recline across his lap. Hutch started to sit back up, not comfortable with the position.

"Lay still, my friend. You weren't comfy, and maybe this will help. I don't want your back to start cramping up. It's okay. Just imagine me as part of the couch." Max grinned at Hutch.

He had to admit it felt better than when he had been sitting up. "Thanks. Let me know if I get too heavy for you."

They watched the second movie in companionable silence. At some point during the movie, Max had started petting his hair, finger combing it. It was soothing and felt good. The movie had a sad ending and he was feeling the sadness more keenly than usual because it made him think of Starsky and the rift that seemed to have developed between them in the last week. He sighed and started to sit up.

Max pushed against his shoulders, pushing him back down and lowered his head to touch his lips to Hutch's. It was a light touch. Nothing heavy or suggestive.

"Sorry... I... you just seemed so sad. I wanted to let you know you weren't alone."

Hutch sat up and looked at him. He thought of Max saving his life twice earlier. He thought of how alone he had felt this week.

Hutch slowly pulled Max into his embrace and tipped his head to the side to kiss him back. His tongue ran along the seam of Max's mouth and he opened immediately for Hutch. They pulled each other closer. Kissing each other as deep as they could.

Hutch knew this wasn't right. It was so wrong, but he was confused with how Starsky had been acting, and missing him. Plus he still felt the adrenalin rush from the shootout at the warehouse. His eyes were closed. He was wrapped in strong arms. He was with someone who wanted him.

The kiss got hotter and deeper. Max had slowly turned Hutch and lowered him to the couch. He was half lying on top of him. Max ground his erection against Hutch's through their jeans. Max reached between them and worked to get Hutch's and his jeans undone. Soon their cocks were skin to skin. They began rubbing against each other.

Max began to speak as he planted kisses all over his face. With his increased arousal, his accent became more pronounced. "Damn, Hutch! Everything about you is big. I can't wait to take you in my mouth...and up my ass!"

Hutch suddenly froze and gently pushed Max off him and sat up, running his hands over his face and back through his hair. Max's accent had finally made him realize who he was with. And what he was risking. "Max, I-I-I can't do this. I love Starsky and as much as I might want this... you... right now, I can't do this to him. It's cheating. I can't."

He stood up, tucked his penis back into his jeans and fastened them. He looked for the coat he had thrown over a chair by the door. "I have to go. I'm sorry. I didn't mean to lead you on. I-I-I've just been so lonely but, I just can't."

Max walked over to him. "Hey, it's okay. I understand. Emotions got out of hand." He looked Hutch in the eyes. "He will never hear this from me, Hutch. I sort of knew it was wrong, but I couldn't help myself. You are an intriguing and intoxicating specimen of a man." He stuck his hand out. "Forgive me?"

Hutch shook his hand. "Yeah. I forgive you. Now if I can only forgive myself. And if Starsky can forgive me?"

"You don't have to tell him. I won't say anything to anyone. That's not my style. You have my word on that."

He nodded at Max, and made his way to the door. "Are you okay to drive, Hutch?"



Hutch looked back at him. "Yeah, I'm pretty sober right now. After..." He let the comment trail off.

"See you Monday, then, Hutch. Hey, Hutch? Starsky is a very lucky man." Max watched as Hutch gave a half-hearted smile and walked out the door.

"Well, that went well, Max." He turned off the television and headed into his bedroom.

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Starsky got up the next morning with a hangover. He smelled coffee and decided to see if it would make him feel human again. He got up, went to the bathroom, used the toilet and washed his face with cold water. Then he went out to the kitchen, to face his mother.

"Morning. Sit down, the coffee is ready."

Starsky pulled out a chair and sat. He accepted the cup of coffee his mom handed to him. He watched as she sank down in the chair across from him. He took a sip and waited for his mom to tear into him.

"I love you, David. And I love Ken. But if things aren't working for you, and you feel like you need to make a change, that won't stop me from loving you anymore."

His head snapped up and he stared at his mom. "No mom. I haven't stopped loving him. And I don't think he's stopped loving me either. It's just this time we've been apart. He understood and encouraged me to come here and make sure you were ok. He would have come with me, if he hadn't had this big case to work.

"It's just we haven't been apart for this long since we...well since we admitted we love each other. I guess I got jealous of how much he talked about this Max guy. And I worried that he was maybe replacing me with him."

"Oh, Davey, Ken would never do that to you. He loves you so much. I see it in his eyes when he looks at you. This will pass and you two will be closer than ever."

"I hope you're right, mom. I hope you're right." He bent over his coffee cup so his mom wouldn't see the emotions in his eyes.

"You know I'm feeling good. I know you were going to stay another week, but, why don't you see if you can get a flight out today? Go home. Talk to Ken and get this straightened out. Okay?"

"Are you sure you're ok, ma?" He was both happy and scared to think of going home early.

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Hutch left his house Monday morning to head to work. He hadn't tried to call Starsky over the weekend. He hadn't figured out how to tell him what had happened yet. He'd decided he had to do it face to face, not over the phone.

Starsky hadn't called him, either.

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Starsky did leave New York that afternoon, only to have his flight diverted to Minnesota where all flights were then canceled due to a major winter storm. He spent the weekend in a motel close to the airport watching the snow fall and pile up. And trying to avoid the fears that he was too late to fix what was wrong between Hutch and himself.

He picked up the phone a hundred times to call, but couldn't make himself dial. This needed to be taken care of face to face. And hopefully, arms in arms.

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Hutch finished his report and put it in Dobby's box. He didn't have anything else to do at the moment so he sat back in his chair and closed his eyes.

"They pay you to sleep now, Hutch?"

"Starsk!! When did you get back? How's your mom? Why didn't you tell me you were coming back today? I would have come to pick you up."

Neither moved to touch the other, as they normally would.

Starsky walked around and sat down on his side of the desk. "I got in this morning. Ma is doing good. I called Huggy to pick me up and had him drop me off at my place so I could get my car. Had some things I needed to do before I came in. I figured you might be busy this morning. Saw the news about the drug bust. Nice job, Hutch."

Hutch looked at Starsky. They were saying the right things, but something was off. He knew what was wrong on his side, but couldn't figure out what Starsky's issue was.

Dobby's door opened. "Starsky! Good to see you back. You two need to head to the car wash on 156th. Got a call about a body. Get moving."

They stood and headed out the door. "I'll drive."

Starsky flipped the siren on as Hutch put the MARS light on the roof of the torino.

So normal.

So why weren't they talking?

"Your mom is feeling better?"

"Yeah. She told me I was gettin' on her nerves and I should come home."

"I'm glad she's doing ok. I was worried."

"You gonna get another commendation on this bust? You and...Max?"

"Dobey hasn't said."

"Where is your new partner today?"

"He had to testify on a case from his precinct today. And he was my temporary partner."

"Yeah."

"Starsk..."

"Hutch..."

They started to talk at the same time. Both fell silent as the car wash came into view. Hutch took the light off the roof and Starsky killed the sirens. They got out and walked toward a small crowd of people standing near the dumpster at the back of the business.

Ten minutes later they were back in the Torino. "Zebra three to base."

"Go ahead, Zebra three."

"Body found at car wash was a mannequin. Cancel any other responding units. Zebra three out."

"Roger, Zebra three."

"Well, that was easy." Starsky glanced at his partner. "Where to now?"

Hutch shrugged. "Cruise our beat?"

Starsky headed the Torino up and down the streets of their regular beat. They didn't speak. They didn't look at each other with anything longer than a glance. Quickly looking away when the other noticed. There were no touches. There was an uncomfortable feeling in the car that was so foreign to each of them, but neither knew what to say or do to change it.

When their shift was over, Starsky dropped Hutch back at Metro to pick up his car.

"You, ah, wanna come over?"

"Nah, I got some errands to do. Uh, not sure what time I'll be done."

"I'll be up if you change your mind."

"I'll see what time I get done. I'm kinda' beat."

"Yeah, me too. Ok, see ya'."

"See ya'."

Both drove off. Confused and unhappy. Guilty and not knowing how to fix things. They each spent a long lonely evening. Each picking up the phone to call the other, only to hang up without dialing. Each tossing and turning and sleeping little.

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"Hey! You up?"

"Yeah, for an hour or so."

A long silence ensued as each held tight to the receivers, wanting to talk, but not knowing what to say.

"Look, Starsk..."

"Hutch, I..."

"Go ahead."

"No, you go ahead."

Silence again.

Hutch took a deep breath. "Starsky, we...I need to talk to you. Can we..."

"Hold on, Hutch, someone's at the door."

Hutch waited. He could hear someone talking in the background, but couldn't make out what was being said or who the visitor was.

"Hey, Hutch, Babcock just came by. Said Dobey was trying to get us on the phone. We need to go in." Before Hutch could say something about picking him up or being picked up, Starsky said, "I'll meet you there." And hung up.

After hanging up, Hutch sighed and strapped on his gun, grabbed his keys and jacket and headed out to his car.

Once they were both in Dobey's office, Hutch sat in one of the chairs in front of the desk. Starsky leaned against the door across the room. Dobey gave them a questioning look, but before he could say anything the other door opened and Max walked in.

"Hey Hutch! Captain Dobey!" He sat in the chair next to Hutch and reached out to cup his shoulder, only then seeing Starsky leaning against the far wall. "Hey, Starsky. Welcome back." He smiled at the dark haired Detective.

Starsky looked at Max sitting where he himself usually sat. He looked at the hand on Hutch's shoulder and turned so he was facing Dobey and couldn't really see Hutch and Max. He didn't acknowledge Max at all.

"Collins, you did a great job filling in for Starsky. I sent a commendation letter to your Captain."

"Thanks, Captain Dobey, I appreciate that. It was a pleasure to work with Hutch. I learned a lot from him." Max again reached out and patted Hutch's shoulder.

Starsky reached behind him, opened the door and slid out with a, "Gotta hit the little boys room, Cap. Be back." He quickly left the room and closed the door behind him.

Hutch stood, "Cap, I... uhh... gotta ... too much coffee... be right back." He exited the other door, heading after his partner.

Captain Dobey looked from one door to the other then back to Max. "Well, that's strange. You know what's going on here?"

"No, Sir. I haven't got a clue."

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"Starsk?" Hutch faced his partner by the sinks in the men's room.

"What?" Starsky snapped back.

"That's what I want to know. What was that all about?"

"Hey, you wanna make sure I know where I stand, Partner, you did it."

"What are you talking about, Starsk?"

"Your new... best friend... with his hands all over you!"

"Starsk..." Hutch had to stop as two officers walked in.

"We need to get back and see what Dobey wanted."

They walked back in the same door, but Starsky again moved to the other side of the room, taking up his place, leaning against the wall.

"Collins' Captain wanted to know if you guys would be willing to help them out if they need it. The drug bust here has connections there. IF they need back up, he wanted to know if you guys would be interested?"

"Sure, Cap. I'd be okay with that." Hutch nodded.

"Starsky?" Dobey asked, when Starsky hadn't said anything.

"Yeah, why not."

"Wow, that would be great." Max said.

"I wanted to talk to the three of you together or I would have waited until Monday. Max goes back to work up there then. Thanks for coming in. Enjoy your weekend. And, Starsky, I'm glad your mom is better."

"Thanks, Cap'n."

Max and Hutch walked into the squad room. "I'm gonna miss working with you, Hutch." Max pulled Hutch into a quick hug.

Starsky walked into the room in time to see the hug. He turned for the door and slammed out of it. Here he had been feeling guilty and it looked like he had no reason to.

"Starsk! Wait up!" He heard Hutch call out to him, but took the stairs two and three at a time to the garage and into his car. He saw Hutch come out the door as he floored the Torino, tearing out of the building. He was done feeling bad. He didn't have anything to feel bad about.

Hutch ran to his car and tore out after his partner. He had to tell him what had happened. It was obvious Starsky knew or thought something had happened. They had to talk before this...killed what they had between them. He HAD to confess and ask Starsky to forgive him. He couldn't live like this.

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He wasn't too surprised to see Hutch pull in right behind him, other than that Hutch's rust bucket could have moved that quickly. He was a bit surprised to see Hutch slam the door and head his way with... what, murder in his eyes?

He headed for the door, unlocked it, walked in and sat on the couch. Might as well get this... them... over with, he thought, sadly.

Hutch came in the room and just stood there by the couch where he was sitting.

"I-I-I need to talk to you Starsk."

After running a hand over his face, Starsky said, "Yeah, I need to talk to you too. Sit?"

Hutch took a seat in the chair across from the coffee table. "I have to tell you something, and I don't know how to do it."

"I know what you mean, Hutch. I, uh, need to tell you something too." He paused and took a deep breath. "I'll go first." He stood up and started pacing the room. "I...when I talked to you...when you would call...You kept talking about Max... how fun he was to work with, what you guys did together. I thought you were replacing me with him."

"Starsk, no..."

"Let me finish. I got jealous. So, I made sure I wasn't there when you called. Ma was doing good, so I went out. I hit places I haven't thought about in years. Saw people I used to run with."

"Your mom told me you were out with old friends."

"Yeah, old 'friends'. Hutch, I got drunk one night. Really drunk. And an old friend invited me his place. We...we kissed and...it just happened."

"You CHEATED!?"

"No...not really...I mean..."

"What, you tripped and ended up in some other man's arms and ass?" Hutch stood up and was pacing the room too.

"No, it was just oral sex. And we...I didn't finish. I couldn't. We never made love."

"So, when you have me deep in your throat, we aren't 'making love'?" Hutch didn't know why he was so mad. What Starsky had done was almost what HE had done with Max. All at once he stopped and closed his eyes. He dropped his head to his chest. It was too much. He felt himself tear up.

"Hutch?"

"Starsk...oh God, Starsk. I'm so sorry." He fell to his knees, unable to stand. He put his hands over his face as he let the tears fall.

"Hutch!" Starsky came around the couch to pull Hutch up to sit beside him. "What? What's wrong? Talk to me! I'm sorry, God you have no idea HOW sorry I am. I never meant to cheat on you. I love YOU. Please, talk to me."

He took a deep breath and dropped his hands so Starsky could see his face. He owed his lover that. "I... we... Max and I... after the bust, we went to his place. I almost did the same thing, Starsk. I hadn't been able to talk to you. I felt so alone. I almost cheated on you. I didn't know how to tell you. I was so ashamed. I didn't want to hurt you. I thought I could just forget it, but I couldn't. I'M sorry, Starsk. I... can you forgive me?"

They sat on the couch and stared at each other, neither saying anything.

Suddenly Starsky started to laugh. He kept looking straight into Hutch's eyes. And then Hutch started laughing too. "Only us, lover." Starsky said as he reached out and pulled Hutch into his arms.

Hutch hugged him tight and turned his head to kiss him. "Me and thee... always in sync, in good AND bad." He stopped laughing. "I'm sorry, Starsky. I promise... never again. You are all I want and need in this world. You are my heart. No one can or will ever replace you in there."

"I'm sorry too Hutch. I don't know what I was thinking. You're all I've ever wanted in a friend, partner, lover. No one can or will ever replace you in my heart either. I promise never to shut you out again. I'll never cheat on you ever again. You're my world. I'm lost without you."

"I love you." They said in unison. Both felt that connection click and fall back into place in their minds and hearts. That thing that had been missing the last couple of days.

"Wanna' come to my bedroom and see my etchings?" Starsky wiggled his eyebrows at his lover.

"Etchings, huh?" Hutch said. "I'm more interested in seeing what you used to make those etchings."

They were both laughing as they stripped and fell into bed.