

Blasphemers

A missing scene from "Starsky and Hutch on Voodoo Island"

by Brit

"*Blasphemers!*" Papa Theodore spat at the stunned detectives. "Let this serve as a warning to all who would oppose me!"

Starsky and Hutch entered the dim room, quickly taking in their surroundings and its occupants—evaluating the threat and the odds of escape, and desperately forming a plan to get themselves and Charlotte out alive. But as the bocor advanced, they were unprepared for the powdered hallucinogen flung into their faces, instantly absorbed through their involuntary inhalation and contact with their skin.

Hutch's vision was already blurring and his muscles contracting as the drug slammed into his central nervous system like a freight train. Starsky had stumbled as well, the hallucinogen coursing savagely through his body. Within seconds, they were on their backs, muscles contorting wildly, as if struck by an electrical current. The bocor laughed, the power of his "magic" making him heady. "Neither Day nor Night shall shield!"

Starsky struggled in vain to control his body, enraged that whatever the witchdoctor had thrown at them was stronger than his own will. When his muscles began to calm from their wild bucking to violent spasms, he was able to see Hutch out of his peripheral vision. The blond was still, his head fallen to one side. Fear pierced Starsky with the revelation that Hutch might already be dead. His hazy vision swung back to Papa Theodore, who was again chanting and ringing a thin silver bell to set a tempo for the scantily costumed tribesmen dancing in a circle around the prone detectives. For an instant, Starsky was stabbed with a sense of *deja vu*—another dirt floor, another chilling confrontation with a soulless evil that frightened and enraged him.

Starsky fought against the crippling pain and, with a determination fueled by fury, was able to struggle onto his side, then to his knees. He was sweating from the exertion by the time he was able to raise his head and meet the astonished gaze of Papa Theodore.

If his vision had been clearer, Starsky would have seen the flicker of fear in the other's eyes before the witchdoctor grinned and stopped waving a musk-scented candle around them. "So, the Dark One does not wish to sleep like his friend."

The flute music quickly trailed off as the dancers again ground to a halt in the dusty stillness. Starsky's gaze left the bocor to look over his right shoulder at the tribesmen. He had no doubt that he and Hutch would be dead with a word from the witchdoctor. Muscles trembling beyond his conscious control, he edged over to Hutch's lax body. He remained on his hands and knees, but placed his left arm on the other side of his partner's waist. There was no way he could protect himself, let alone the two of them, but he would at least first act as a shield from whatever happened next. The gesture seemed to amuse the bocor, his laughter booming through the small hut.

Starsky's eyes gleamed fiercely, his intent clear. Papa Theodore looked at the detective thoughtfully. "Not terror, but...what? Anger? Hatred? You do not fear the devil's Papa Legba—the Keeper of the Gate, Ruler of the Crossroads?"

The bocor moved away from the altar and took a machete from one of the dancers, then advanced toward Starsky. When the tip of the weapon hooked under his chin, Starsky could barely feel it. He tried to shove the blade away, but began to topple as soon as he shifted his weight. The drug running through his system again contracted his stomach muscles, forcing him to curl in on himself, and it took all his energy not to give into the pain and fall on Hutch. When the wave passed, Starsky straightened, panting from the exertion, and lifted his head to again face their tormentor.

The witchdoctor was confounded by the detective's tenacity. "So, little fool, you do not fear. But it does not matter—you *will* die when the Papa Legba has said it to be. You will not run in fear, not like Walter Healey. Not like the others before him. They feared, and now they are dead. No..." The bocor crossed his arms as he thought for a moment. "It is not fear, but your hatred of me, toward the dark arts, that will cause your death."

He looked thoughtfully at Starsky, taking pleasure in envisioning how the detective would bring about his own end. "But is this hate enough to extinguish your life?"

The large man squatted before Starsky and grabbed a fistful of the detective's hair, jerking his head up higher. Starsky instinctively leaned away, his body further shielding Hutch from the madman. The movement didn't go unnoticed by the bocor. "Is that it? You do not hate me because you fear for yourself, but for the Light One?"

Papa Theodore studied Starsky's face for a moment before standing. His sudden blow across Starsky's jaw knocked him away from his partner to lie still in the dirt. A signal from the witchdoctor brought four tribesmen forward to lift Hutch by his arms and legs. Two more of the dancers quickly crossed the room and pulled forward a crude plank altar. The wood was unadorned, but Starsky's heart skipped a beat when he realized its surface was darkened with dried blood. Once the structure rested before the bocor, Hutch was unceremoniously dropped onto the altar.

Starsky again rose unsteadily onto his hands and knees, willing himself to creep forward. Papa Theodore watched his determination with grim amusement before moving his candles closer to Hutch's sides. Philippe placed the still-bloody boar's head inches from the blond's face. "I wonder what will make you hate me enough to kill, Unbeliever? I serve a darkness you cannot understand, and he is pleased by the death of blasphemers. He is pleased by their blood."

The bocor reached inside his robe and withdrew a long, thin blade and almost casually placed the tip over Hutch's heart. He glanced down at Starsky. "Have you ever drunk human blood while it is still warm, Dark One? Have you ever felt a human heart strain for life in your hand?"

Starsky's bellow of rage was little more than an agonized moan as he threw himself forward, only to sprawl in the dirt before the altar. Papa Theodore flicked the knife in Starsky's direction. "Lift him so he can watch."

Two men grabbed Starsky by the arms and hauled him to his feet. He blinked rapidly to clear his vision and struggled in vain against the hands that held him upright.

Almost faster than Starsky could follow, Papa Theodore slashed the blade downward, but at the last instant, drove it deep into the altar mere inches from Hutch's throat. The bocor smiled as Starsky thrashed even harder against his captors. Closing his eyes, Papa Theodore began chanting as his hands gestured an incantation over Hutch's still form. One of the female dancers silently appeared at his side, bearing a roughly hammered silver bowl filled with what Starsky instantly recognized as blood. Horror caused him to cry out against the macabre nightmare they found themselves in, but no sound came from his tortured throat.

Three fingers of the bocor's right hand dipped into the basin before turning back to Hutch's body. As the tribesmen resumed their chant, trails of blood became symbols and patterns on Hutch's pale skin. The witchdoctor's hand returned repeatedly to the bowl and Hutch's face, throat, chest, and stomach. Torchlight waved across the remains of the calypso makeup on Hutch's face, joining with the drying blood to become his death mask.

Starsky felt himself slipping into unconsciousness. More than once, it wasn't until his head fell forward with a jerk that he was able to grapple his way back to the horrific present. Finally, he realized, the chanting had stopped.

The flickering torches cast a demonic light across his now-bloodied partner, laid out like a dark sacrifice on the crude wooden altar. In the silence of the hut, Papa Theodore pulled the ceremonial dagger out of the altar. Extending his free arm, he swiftly nicked a vein of his wrist. Blood pooled, and as he moved closer to Hutch's face, it began to run freely down his arm. An unnatural stillness sucked the life out of the rude structure as its occupants watched expectantly.

Papa Theodore's eyes bore into Starsky's. "This shall mark the Light One when I call you, Blasphemer. At the appointed time, when you look upon him, you shall see only *my* blood, *my* face, and you will obey!"

Starsky tore his eyes away as a large drop of blood fell from the bocor's wrist directly onto Hutch's lips. The low chanting resumed as Papa Theodore sheathed the knife, then moved his arm to drop more of his blood onto Hutch's stilled body, marking his throat, heart, and stomach.

While not understanding what was happening, Starsky still could sense a smothering presence of something he could not name—something *evil*—creep into the room like a mist and, with an extreme effort, was able to rip his arms free of the distracted tribesmen.

In the throes of the ritual, Papa Theodore was unprepared for Starsky's maniacal lunge across the altar, shoving the bocor backwards and into the woman bearing the ceremonial basin. As the witchdoctor's arms flailed, the bloody vessel was knocked from her hands, splashing the gore over him and the two detectives.

The chanting stopped abruptly, many of the tribesmen gasping at the blasphemy before them. Starsky panted from the exertion, black dots blocking out part of his vision and forcing him toward the comfort of oblivion.

Papa Theodore bellowed in rage, brandishing his stiletto in Starsky's direction as the detective sprawled across the altar and Hutch, blood dripping off the side of his face. But the fury in the witchdoctor's face was met measure-for-measure with Starsky's own. "*Blasphemer*, I was content to let you merely end your *own* miserable life, just as those who came before you—those who tried to stop the Papa Legba. But no more! No more!"

One violent shove was enough to dislodge Starsky from his weary hold on the altar. The witchdoctor stormed around Hutch's inert form to tower above Starsky lying sprawled on his back. "Before you face eternal night, you will be pierced with the knowledge that you first took the life of the one you fought in vain to protect!"

Starsky's eyes widened and unconsciously moved to Hutch's bloody form. Papa Theodore's face creased in a feral snarl. "Yes! Yes, *that* shall be your legacy, Unbeliever!"

Starsky shook his head, the horror of such a thought stealing away his breath. Conquering his fear, he glared at the bocor. With a snarl of defiance, he forced himself to struggle to his knees. With another supreme effort, he lunged to the altar and managed to pull himself up to stand shaking at Hutch's side.

Confounded, Papa Theodore watched Starsky place a trembling hand over his partner's heart, desperate to feel it beating. The slim knife waved toward them as the bocor growled. "You did not answer me, Blasphemer—have you ever tasted a man's blood?"

Starsky twisted to deliver a backhanded blow as quickly as his tortured muscles would allow. The witchdoctor anticipated his retaliation and nimbly stepped back to let the swipe pass harmlessly by him. The momentum sent Starsky reeling before dropping him to one knee, but the glare that bore into Papa Theodore promised violence.

"Philippe." The bocor's gaze never left Starsky's murderous one. "Bring forth the chest."

Philippe silently advanced with a hinged wooden box and ceremoniously presented it to his master. Papa Theodore accepted it and ran one hand aimlessly across the smooth wood as he watched Starsky. "You would kill the Papa Legba if you could, would you not?"

"And smile while I was doing it," Starsky ground out, finally able to speak for the first time since the drugs coursed through him.

A throaty laugh ripped up from Papa Theodore's belly. "Oh, you fool. Such pleasure I will have when you strip the life from the Light One, then *take your own!*"

"Like hell, I will." Starsky grimaced as a spasm ripped through his stomach. "You're nuts."

"Perhaps, indeed. But you are the mad one to think your feeble strength is greater than the power of the Dark Lord." The bocor's grin was vile, as he snapped his fingers. "Bring the blasphemer to me."

Tribesmen rushed to Starsky's side and wrestled him to the front of the altar. Papa Theodore held the box before him and reverently lifted the lid so Starsky could see inside. More of the hallucinogen, in both powdered and liquid forms, lay in clear bags and bottles on one side of the

box, while an assortment of needles and thin blades lay to the other. The dancer to his left grappled Starsky's arm forward and thrust it toward the bocor.

"No!" Starsky managed to wrench his arm free from the sweaty grip and knocked the chest away. The witchdoctor was prepared for the desperate move and, at the last second, slammed the lid on Starsky's hand as it passed, catching his thumb in the box's grip.

Starsky grunted in pain as he pulled his hand away, but was instantly pinned in the dancers' grips.

"Bring his left hand to me." Papa Theodore set the chest next to Hutch's legs and withdrew a small vile of the hallucinogen and a delicate pair of tweezers. Deft hands unscrewed the bottle, and the instrument dipped into the clear liquid. When the tweezers withdrew, Starsky could barely make out a small, dark sliver of something. "Hold him steady."

Starsky lunged backward against his captors, but his failing strength could no longer free him. Papa Theodore wrapped one meaty hand around Starsky's fingers, crushing them. Then, with the care and precision of a surgeon, he inserted a tiny dark thorn under the detective's thumbnail.

Starsky drew an unsteady breath as the wood pierced his skin and disappeared into his flesh. When the bocor released his hand, Starsky quickly drew it back to see where the thorn was now imbedded.

A deep moan from Hutch broke the silence of the room, and Starsky's attention immediately focused on his stirring partner. But before he could speak more than Hutch's name, Papa Theodore's hands dipped back into a small bowl next to the altar and flung the powdered hallucinogen into the partners' faces.

Starsky was dropped to the floor as the tribal music and dancing resumed at an even more frantic and fanatical pace. His muscles again contracting and bucking, Starsky watched in horror as above him, Hutch's unconscious body responded as well. A few grotesque convulsions toppled his friend from the altar, leaving him in a twitching heap only a few feet from Starsky on the dusty floor.

Papa Theodore's distorted features loomed before Starsky as the bocor laughed and taunted him. "You *will* obey, Blasphemer! Will obey the darkness that has claimed you in blood! When I call, hatred will consume you, and Dark shall conquer Light. The thorn of sorrow lies within you now—no bigger than your feeble strength—and it shall be your downfall. With each passing heartbeat, each breath, the magic of the thorn will become one with you until it is no more and your blood is turned to poison. There is nothing you can do to stop its call, Unbeliever. Yes, when the Keeper of the Gate calls you, you will obey. When I call, *you will obey!*"

Overcome, Starsky lapsed into a stupor, barely conscious of the tribesmen who lifted him and Hutch from the floor and carried them outside. To Starsky, it could have been seconds or an eternity passing as they were carried down a narrow path through the jungle, then unceremoniously dumped onto the bottom of a small boat.

The cool evening breeze and salt spray misting over the bow revived Starsky marginally, and he forced his uncooperative muscles to turn his head enough to see Hutch lying in a heap next to

him, as still as death. With a supreme effort, he clumsily moved his hand to Hutch's chest to assure himself that his partner still lived. He left his hand resting there, although his thumb throbbed and he couldn't for the life of him remember how he had come to hurt it. Somewhere in the back of his mind, he wondered what had happened to Charlotte, but the thought quickly dissipated as he watched the shallow rise and fall of Hutch's chest.

The rumble of the outboard motor changed its pitch as the boat slowed, and Starsky barely heard Philippe's order for the partners to be thrown overboard. His desperate struggle against the hands that hauled him to the side of the boat only brought laughter from his captors, and he barely had enough time and presence of mind to hold his breath when he was callously shoved over the side.

Thrashing wildly, Starsky managed to break the surface just as Hutch's unyielding form hit the water and disappeared. Starsky didn't waste any time watching the boat speed away or calling for help, but instantly went back under to pull his partner to the surface. With one arm draped across Hutch's chest, Starsky began kicking and clawing his way toward the shore, its white sands reflecting the sunrise's meager light. The ocean seemed determined to claim the pair as the waves rolled over them, dragging them under until Starsky was able to pull them back to the surface.

Exhausted, Starsky was about to give up hope when his trembling legs found purchase on the ocean's unstable floor. With the beach now no more than a dozen yards away, he staggered forward through the surf, pulling Hutch's limp form along side him. More than once, the incoming tide crashed against them and knocked him back down. Grasping Hutch by his shirt, Starsky staggered forward until his partner was safely out of the ocean's grip and onto the beach, forgetting that the incoming tide would soon come creeping over their haven. Believing Hutch was finally safe, Starsky gave into exhaustion and slumped forward, accepting darkness's sweet embrace.



Less than an hour later, the incoming tide came crashing over Hutch, reviving him. For an instant, panic gripped him as he struggled to identify where he was. The last thing he remembered—and only vaguely—was being surrounded by machete-wielding tribesmen escorting Starsky and him into Papa Theodore's hut.

Ignoring the nausea and fierce pounding in his temples, Hutch scrambled over to Starsky's limp body as the waves poured over him. Fearing his partner had drowned, Hutch grabbed Starsky by the arm to turn him over and begin rescue breathing. Relief made his knees weak when he heard Starsky groan and stir.

“I thought we were dead. Why aren't we dead?”

Hutch had no immediate answer. A cold fear rippled down his spine as he struggled to help his partner up. Starsky's question brought with it a foreboding he could not explain. “I don't know....”





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