

What If?

A missing scene from “The Specialist”

By The Blintz

“What in the world are you doing?”

Starsky looked up at his partner, thoughtfully chewing the last of the hamburger he’d had for lunch. He was standing between the beds and had just taken one of the pillows and thrown it to the floor at his feet. “I’m trying to get comfortable so I can watch some TV,” he answered, crossing to the television set high up on the wall. He turned it on with a flourish and spent the next several moments flipping rapidly through the channels. “What are you doin’?”

Hutch sat in an armchair near the motel room door, sipping an already warm beer and staring at the four walls that surrounded them. “I was just thinking...”

“We’re in trouble now,” Starsky replied, finally settling on a station and plopping down on the floor. He proceeded to lie down on his back, his head supported by a pillow while each foot was propped up on the bed closest to it. As a final touch, he pulled his gun from its holster and laid it on his stomach.

Ignoring Starsky’s remark, Hutch broke his reverie long enough to study the antics of his partner. “Comfy?” he asked, his voice containing just a trace of sarcasm.

“Yes, very much so. You?”

“Yeah, I’m fine. Starsk, why don’t you just lie on the bed like normal people and watch TV from there? Do you have to sprawl out all over the floor?”

Emitting a deep sigh, Starsky rolled his eyes heavenward then turned to look at Hutch. “As a matter of fact, I do. If I tried to watch TV from either of these beds, I’d have to turn my head one way or the other and I’d probably end up with a crick in my neck. This way I can watch TV straight ahead and, voila! No crick, no matter how long we have to stay here. Is it my fault they put the TV dead center between the beds?”

Knowing there was no arguing with Starsky logic, Hutch went back to studying the walls. The sounds of gunshots and sirens coming from the television were unnaturally loud in the confines of the small room.

“Starsk...” Hutch began again, but was interrupted before he could finish.

“What?” Starsky replied, more than a little exasperation in his tone.

“A cop show? That’s all you could find to watch is some stupid cop show? That stuff on TV is so fake, all those gun battles and no one ever gets shot, or if they do get shot there’s never any blood. And, of course, the hero always gets rescued just in the nick of time. Give me a break!”

“Yeah, well, I’ve kinda lost touch with the soaps and it’s too early for the horror movies to come on, so this is the best I could do. Look. Why don’t you find somethin’ to do to occupy yourself so I can watch my program in peace?”

“Well, let’s see. I’ve already taken the tour, lunch is over, and you’ve taken the only good seat in the house for watching TV. What would you suggest I do?”

“I don’t know,” Starsky replied, turning his attention back to the television set. “But whatever it is, could you please do it quietly? I’m tryin’ to concentrate.”

Hutch ran a hand through his hair, leaning back in his seat and stretching his long legs out in front of him. His mind was working at a furious pace, the events of the past few days haunting him even though he was wide awake. Try as he might, he just couldn’t forget the smoldering remains of Mac’s car and Carl’s gruesome death mask, a silent testimony to the agony he had suffered just before he died. He closed his eyes tightly, trying to block the images, but they refused to leave. Sighing deeply, he opened his eyes to find his partner staring at him.

“You okay?” Starsky asked gently.

“Yes. No. I don’t know,” Hutch replied, leaning forward to rest his forearms on his knees. “I just keep thinking...there’s a trained assassin out there who wants us dead. What if the next time I open this door, I get my head blown off? What if we’re sleeping peacefully tonight and all of a sudden this entire motel goes up in a ball of flame? What if we’re walking to dinner tonight and we get shot full of holes? What if...”

“Would you stop it already?” Starsky interrupted hastily. “You’re givin’ me the creeps! Look,” he continued, his tone softening slightly. “We’re cops. We’ve known from the beginning that this job could kill us – it’s a risk we take. What makes this any different, huh?”

“Alexander Drew is a cold, calculating killer. That’s his job. And even his superiors admit he’s damn good at it. He’s already killed two cops, Starsk. What’s to stop him from killing two more?”

“Okay, he’s killed two cops and he wants us dead. This ain’t the first time someone wanted us dead, ya know. What’s got you so freaked out about this?”

Hutch stood from his chair and walked to the window, peeking through a small gap in the curtains while being careful not to put himself in a position where he could be seen from the outside. He leaned his left arm against the wall for support as he scratched his chin

thoughtfully with his right hand. “What do you suppose happens next, Starsk? Let’s say, just for the sake of argument, that sometime in the next couple of hours, I end up dead. What happens then? Is that it? Is this all there is? We live and work and die and then it’s over? Or is there something beyond this life? Something bigger than all this, some deeper meaning?”

Starsky sat up and turned to stare at his partner. The prospect of Hutch being dead was not one he liked to dwell on and he found he had to swallow the lump in his throat before he could speak. “I don’t know, Hutch. I guess I always thought there had to be somethin’ more. People are too important just to be gone like a puff of smoke. I always kind of figured there was some kind of afterlife—Heaven or Paradise or whatever you want to call it. It just kinda makes sense to me.”

“But why do you think that? Is that what you were taught? Or is it some sort of wishful thinking that...that eases the grief of losing someone we love?” Hutch immediately regretted saying those words when he saw the shadow that flitted across Starsky’s face. He hastily continued. “Hey, I’m sorry Starsk. You’re right, there’s got to be more and I didn’t mean...”

“Look. I don’t know why you’re askin’ me this stuff. I have questions too, but I know what I believe, or what I want to believe, and, yeah, it makes it easier. Death’s a hard thing anyhow and just that little bit of hope helps get ya through it.” The television program long forgotten, Starsky was leaning back against his pillow staring at the ceiling. Several silent moments ticked by until Starsky quickly sat upright, snapping his fingers in the process. “Say Hutch,” he said, twisting around in his spot on the floor. He began rummaging through the drawers in the small nightstand behind him. “When you wanna find out what a word means, where do ya look?”

Hutch turned to look at his partner, his brow furrowed in puzzlement. “The dictionary.”

“Right. And if you wanna know how to bake a cake, where do ya look?”

“Starsky,” Hutch replied, beginning to sound annoyed. “What do dictionaries and baking cakes have to do wi...”

“Just answer the question. Where do you look?”

Hutch sighed in frustration. “In a cookbook.”

“Right,” Starsky replied, pulling a book from the depths of the nightstand and turning to face the blond. “So, if you wanna know about life and death and heaven, where do ya look?”

Hutch stared at his partner, his expression still questioning. Without a word, Starsky took the book he held in his hands and extended it to Hutch.

“It’s a Bible,” Hutch said, taking the book and trailing his fingers across the gold embossed print on the front cover.

“Exactly,” Starsky said, once again settling himself on his pillow and staring at the TV set. “You wanna know about Heaven, ya don’t ask your partner, ya read the Bible. Pretty simple, huh?”

“Why didn’t I think of that?” Hutch asked. He opened the Bible and took another sip of his warm beer. Having no idea where to start reading, he let the volume fall open at random and began to read. Even though the language was a bit outdated, he found a strange sense of peace as he studied each line and each verse.

“Hey,” Starsky interrupted once again. At Hutch’s questioning glance, he continued. “If you see anything in there I should know about, would ya tell me?”

Hutch grinned down at his partner as he made himself more comfortable in the chair. Taking another sip of his beer, he replied. “Sure, buddy. You’ll be the first to know.”



The End