

GREETINGS FROM KEY WEST

"Come on vacation, leave on probation."

by
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Based on the book
'Key Waste: Swinging With Savages in the Conch Republic'
by Jag Allan

FADE IN:

TITLE ON BLACK: CONCH [KONGK] (DEF): 1 - A TROPICAL MARINE MOLLUSK WITH A HARD SPIRAL SHELL THAT MAY BEAR LONG PROJECTIONS AND HAVE A FLARED LIP. 2 - THE FABLED SHELL TRUMPET OF THE TRITONS. 3 - SLANG: SOMETIMES DISPARAGING. A NATIVE OR INHABITANT OF THE FLORIDA KEYS.

EXT. OCEAN OFF OF KEY WEST - SUNSET

The Florida sun melts into the horizon. A small motorboat drifts on the sparkling water.

The captain is TRICKY - Caucasian, fifties, shirtless.

The sole passenger is AL - Caucasian, mid-twenties, handsome. On board are a few crab traps, crabbing gear, a crate of pig's feet, a spear gun, and a pile of shredded rope.

Al is studying a hand-drawn map written in red crayon on the back of a cardboard beer box.

AL

This must be the spot.

Tricky throws the anchor.

TITLE ON SCREEN: KEY WEST, FLORIDA 1992

TRICKY

Well, what you waiting for, Slim?
Go ahead. Dive in.

Al hesitates. Tricky sparks a joint.

AL

You don't believe in curses, do you?

TRICKY

No.

AL

I didn't think so.

TRICKY

Then again, I'm a Conch. Which means I believe in *everything*.

Tricky laughs maniacally. Al looks worried.

AL
Aren't you going to wish me luck?

TRICKY
Good luck, boy.

Al makes the sign of the cross, takes a deep breath and, mask in hand, dives in the water. Tricky picks up the spear gun.

TRICKY (CONT'D)
You're gonna need it.

FADE TO:

INT. AL'S APARTMENT - CAMBRIDGE, MA - DAY

TITLE ON SCREEN: 5 DAYS EARLIER...

It is grey and hailing outside.

Al is preparing to move. Boxes are scattered about, some half-packed. There are two maps on the wall. A street map of Boston, and one of the whole United States.

Al lies on a futon studying two items. One is a job offer letter from Oracle Software Corporation. The other is a postcard. The front reads: "GREETINGS FROM KEY WEST."

Al flips the postcard over. On the back is hand-scrawled just one line: "WITHOUT ADVENTURE THERE IS NO FORTUNE!" Below that is a phone number with a 305 area code. It is not signed.

The phone rings. The answering machine picks up.

BEEP.

MOM ON ANSWERING MACHINE
Hi honey, it's Mom. I just wanted to call and say congratulations again on getting that great job! All your hard work finally paid off. I just wish your father was here to see it. He would have been so proud of you! I know you have some time before you start work and you were thinking about driving down to the Keys to try to find your uncle...

Al gets up and walks to the map of the U.S. on the wall.

He pins the Oracle letter to Northern California, and pins the postcard to the Florida Keys.

Al stares at the map. After a moment he traces his finger down the Eastern Seaboard from Boston to South Florida.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ROUTE 1 - SOUTH DIXIE HIGHWAY, SOUTH FLORIDA - DAWN

CUE MUSIC: *OF COURSE* BY JANE'S ADDICTION

Sunrise over the Everglades. A late 80's sedan zooms down the two-lane parkway that cuts through the swamp.

A road sign reads: KEY LARGO 51 MILES, KEY WEST 145 MILES.

MOM ON ANSWERING MACHINE (V.O.)

... But I really don't think that's a good idea. I'm glad you decided against it. You need to focus on the move. Don't forget how important it is to make a good first impression. Get yourself some nice suits. I hope you like the ties I sent. Love you. Bye.

INT. AL'S APARTMENT

A terribly unfashionable necktie that has been fashioned into a noose swings from the arm of a floor lamp. Al is gone.

INT. AL'S CAR - SOUTH FLORIDA - DAWN

Al drives alone, tapping the steering wheel to the music. On his finger is a large MIT graduate ring with a beaver motif. Styrofoam coffee cups and Coke cans are littered about.

EXT. DRAWBRIDGE - KEY LARGO, FLA - DAY

Al's car stops at a raised drawbridge. He stares at the old charter boat that passes through. On deck a CREW MEMBER is arranging scuba gear for TOURISTS.

A large banner on the boat reads: HAPPY JACK'S TREASURE DIVE ADVENTURE.

The Captain steering the ship is MAYOR - mid-thirties, muscular, dressed like a rock n' roll pirate.

On his shoulder sits a capuchin monkey wearing pirate pants and a hoop earring. This is HAPPY JACK.

Al is enthralled. He has entered a foreign land.

TITLE ON SCREEN: THE FOLLOWING IS INSPIRED BY TRUE EVENTS

EXT. TOM THUMB MINI-MART - STOCK ISLAND, FLA - DAY

Al exits his car and approaches the store. He notices a blue flag hanging outside. It reads: "THE CONCH REPUBLIC" in white letters above a fiery yellow sun with a conch shell in the center.

FOUR SKATE PUNK PRE-TEENS are hanging around the side of the store, smoking. Al eyes them and enters the store.

CUE MUSIC: *BRING THE NOISE* BY PUBLIC ENEMY

INT. TOM THUMB MINI-MART - DAY

The store is completely empty.

CUE MUSIC: *BRING THE NOISE* BY PUBLIC ENEMY

The music plays over the store stereo. It is LOUD.

Al gets a whiff of something cooking, grabs a case of beer from the cooler, and brings it to the unmanned register.

There is an open porn mag on the counter called "PLUMPERZ."

Taped up behind the counter are newspaper clippings about a recovered shipwreck full of treasure. The Mother Lode wreck.

Out from the back comes CHEF TOM - Caucasian, thirties - wearing a conch tongue necklace. He is rapping along with the song as he walks.

CHEF TOM

"Bass! How low can you go? Death
row, what a brother know? Once
again back is the incredible, rhyme
animal..."

Chef Tom turns down the stereo and discreetly puts the porn mag away, then surveys Al's purchases.

CHEF TOM (CONT'D)

Will that do it, cuz?

AL
Yeah. Oh, and one of those
disposable cameras.

Chef grabs the camera from behind the counter but doesn't
ring anything up.

CHEF TOM
Let's call it fourteen beans even.

Al is puzzled but hands Chef a twenty. Chef reaches in his
pocket and gives Al four singles, a handful of coins and a
bent joint. He grabs the joint back and pockets it.

AL
You owe me six dollars. This is
four dollars and seventy-two cents.

Chef grabs a pack of Kools, drops them on the counter, winks.

The door opens and a BEAUTIFUL GIRL enters. This is ANGELA -
twenties, gorgeous, dressed like a sexy tomboy. Al is agog.

CHEF TOM
Hey, Angie.

ANGELA
Chef.

CHEF TOM
What can I do you for?

ANGELA
Just some Tabasco. We're out.

CHEF TOM
Right on. You know where it is.

They both watch her walk. Chef turns back to Al.

CHEF TOM (CONT'D)
You the one called yesterday
looking for Tricky?

AL
Yeah, I am. How did you know?

CHEF TOM
Recognized the voice. I got an ear
for these things. I'm a musician.
Rapper, actually.

AL
You don't say. So are you...?

CHEF TOM
 (extends his hand)
 Chef Tom.

AL
 ... Al.

Chef initiates a convoluted handshake. Al tries to keep up.

AL (CONT'D)
 I don't know why he gave me this
 number. Doesn't he have a phone?

In lieu of answering, Chef bursts out laughing.

CHEF TOM
 Man, it's hard to handle Tricky
 having kin. Always thought he got
 beamed down from some spaceship or
 something.

AL
 He's my mother's brother. But I
 haven't seen him in a long time.

The phone rings.

CHEF TOM
 Hold that thought.

Chef answers the phone.

CHEF TOM (CONT'D)
 What? ... No! I told you already. I
 ain't telling you. You know why and
 it ain't even an issue no more. I
 got the solution to the pollution
 right here...

Chef shakes his head at Al, dismissing the comment.

CHEF TOM (CONT'D)
 That's what I said, ain't it? Look
 dog, I gotta go. I'll holla at ya
 later. Peace out.

He hangs up then turns back to Al.

CHEF TOM (CONT'D)
 Sorry about that. Just a little
 static.

AL
 So, is he around?

CHEF TOM

Who?

AL

My uncle, Tricky.

CHEF TOM

Oh, hell yeah. He's around. He's expecting you. Probably just caught up in the usual.

AL

What's the usual?

CUE MUSIC: *WELCOME TO THE JUNGLE* BY GUNS N ROSES

INT. / EXT. TRICKY'S TRUCK - SAME TIME

TRICKY drives wildly while toking on a spliff. Music blaring. No windows or doors. No seat belts. He wears science lab goggles to protect against the elements.

BOOM! Something explodes in the engine bay.

Tricky swerves violently, then whips into the Tom Thumb parking lot and parks. He jumps out and opens the hood.

There is a handmade wire basket configured to the engine. A can of government issue beef stew, now exploded, rests in it. The engine compartment is dripping with slop.

Tricky dips his finger in the slop, tastes it.

TRICKY

Not bad. Over-cooked it a little.

INT. TOM THUMB MINI-MART - SAME TIME

AL

Did you hear that? Sounded like a gun shot.

CHEF TOM

Shit. I hope it's not my ex.

Chef, worried, ducks behind the counter. Al looks out the window but sees nothing unusual. Tricky is out of his view.

Angela approaches and leans over the counter, next to Al, who is frozen in love.

She taps the crouching Chef on the head. He rises slowly into the view of her cleavage. He stares. She lifts his chin up.

ANGELA

There's no Tobasco, only Texas
Pete's.

CHEF TOM

Look over by the salsa.

EXT. TOM THUMB MINI-MART PARKING LOT - SAME TIME

Tricky is scraping the stew onto an irregularly shaped piece of cardboard with a stolen gas station squeegee, when a meat company delivery truck pulls in and parks next to him.

This meat truck driver is BOBO - Caucasian, forties, rotund - wearing a Grosso Meat Company work shirt with his name on it.

Bobo gets out, unlocks the back, and pulls out a case of hot dogs. He leaves it unlocked and approaches Tricky.

Tricky takes a bite of stew off the squeegee, makes a face.

BOBO

Whachu got there? Manifold stew?

TRICKY

Yeah. Breakfast of champions. I forgot about it and it popped.

BOBO

(sarcastic)
Looks good.

TRICKY

The engine grease gives it flavor.

Bobo chuckles.

BOBO

I'll stick with do-dos and coffee.

Bobo enters the store. Tricky eyes Bobo's truck.

INT. TOM THUMB MINI-MART

BOBO

Case of weiners.

CHEF TOM

Just drop it in back.

Bobo brings the case to the store room.

CHEF TOM (CONT'D)

(to Al)

See them dogs spinning over there?

Al looks at the store's rotating hot dog grill.

AL

Yeah.

CHEF TOM

I ain't changed them in a month.

AL

Jesus. Doesn't anybody ever buy one?

CHEF TOM

Once in a while. But if they do, they never get another one.

Bobo returns from the store room, goes over to the donuts.

BOBO

Hey Chef, these fresh?

CHEF TOM

Fresh as your cute little sister.

Angela finds the last dusty bottle of Tobasco.

ANGELA

Here it is. Last one.

She tosses a dollar on the counter and heads out.

ANGELA (CONT'D)

Thanks Chef. See ya.

CHEF TOM

See you later, baby. Be good.

Al is nonchalantly reading tourist brochures displayed on a rack by the door. He catches her eye.

ANGELA

Find anything fun?

AL

Oh sure. Lots of interesting... I'm thinking about checking out the shipwreck museum later.

ANGELA

(coyly)

Why? So you can drool over somebody else's treasure?

AL

No.. I .. Well, I... I also thought I might head down to Mallory Square. I hear that's...

ANGELA

To see the freak show? Stick around. You can see that right here...

EXT. TOM THUMB MINI-MART PARKING LOT

Tricky casually approaches Bobo's truck, opens the back, jumps in, and comes out with as many steaks as he can carry. Bobo sees him from his vantage point in the store.

BOBO

Oh no! Son of a...

Bobo rushes out. Tricky hops in his truck and tears out of the lot, hood still up, HOWLING WITH GLEE. He sticks his head out the side to see. Bobo fires up his truck and gives chase.

INT. / EXT. TOM THUMB MINI-MART

ANGELA

See?

Al is bewildered. Angela exits.

ANGELA (CONT'D)

Take it easy, college boy.

EXT. TOM THUMB PARKING LOT

As Bobo turns onto the main road, the truck starts losing supplies from the open back.

Angela bends seductively and picks up two steaks from the ground, then keeps walking like nothing happened.

She turns around, takes a few backwards steps looking at Al, winks at him, turns again and continues.

The pack of skate punks immediately run over and grab the rest of the steaks, then return to their loitering station.

Al walks outside, yells after her.

AL

Wait, how did you know I...

Without turning around, Angela raises her hand over her head and wiggles her ring finger. Al looks at his ring.

AL (CONT'D)

Oh...