

THE CONCH REPUBLIC

Written by

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Inspired by actual events

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FADE IN:

EXT. OCEAN (KEY WEST) - DAY (JUN 1975)

A commercial fishing boat trolls the waters off Key West. FISHERMEN, leathery skin burned rusty brown by the tropical sun, monitor their thousand pound test fishing lines plunged 300 feet below the sapphire blue waters.

As they wait for a catch, the crew smokes Cuban cigars, drinks Cerveza Cristal and shares stories. (Conversations are a mixture of English and Spanish. It's common for a question to be posed in one language and answered in another.)

On board, KITTENS sniff the chum bucket. Looking closely at the litter, we see they all have six toes. EDUARDO (late 20s), eyes the brood.

EDUARDO  
Why all the gatos?

HECTOR (30s) pets one of the kittens.

HECTOR  
My daughter's cat had babies.

EDUARDO  
Take them to Hemingway's house.  
There's a thousand cats. And every  
damned one has six toes.

Hector, a very animated story teller, continues.

HECTOR  
Coño, I did! The puta went loco,  
hissing and spitting. She dragged  
the comemierda kittens back home.

The men laugh as we cut back to MAMA preening her kittens.

In the distance, a SHRIMP BOAT passes by. Its outrigger booms hoisted and its beam trawls stowed. In other words, it's not looking for shrimp.

The CREWS wave and call to each other.

HECTOR (CONT'D)  
Good catch?

SHRIMP BOAT CREW  
Plenty of square groupers! No  
shrimp! Too many sharks!

We see fins circling the waves several hundred feet from the boat. The shrimp boat chugs away.

Time for the fishermen to get to work. They fling chum into the water. Sharks swim closer, going into a feeding frenzy.

Hector grabs a kitten and hooks him on the fishing line. Mama hisses as he throws her baby into the water.

The kitten thrashes in terror, attracting more sharks. A 10-foot MAKO swallows the little fellow whole, getting hooked on the line. Hector fights to haul him in.

One-by-one, the fishermen bait hooks with the kittens. Throw them into the water. Immediately, sharks eat them alive.

From below deck, FELIX (30s) a burly fisherman, drags RAMON SANCHEZ (20s) into the sunlight. Struggling, bound at the wrists, Sanchez has already had the shit beat out of him.

SANCHEZ

I swear man. You gotta believe me.  
Please. It wasn't me.

Felix whacks him across the mouth. Sanchez crashes into the side of the boat and goes down. Lying prone on deck, a yellow pool forms between his legs.

FELIX

Damn, he pissed himself!

Sanchez begs for his life.

SANCHEZ

I don't know who told the cops.  
All I did was drive the truck to  
Miami. I didn't even know what was  
in it.

FELIX

Mierda! Manny saw your name on the  
witness list. You was gonna  
testify against Artie.

SANCHEZ

No! Artie's mi amigo. It was all  
a mistake. I swear!

Felix kicks Sanchez in the gut.

SANCHEZ (CONT'D)

Please, you gotta believe me. I  
don't wanna die.

FELIX

No me vengas con teques, embori.  
Emboris mueren.

Felix tosses Sanchez overboard like a little kitten. We hear terrorized screams as sharks tear him to shreds.

Back on deck, the mama cat winds herself through Hector's legs, purring sweetly. As if she knows where her fate lies.

EDUARDO

You want to throw her over too?

HECTOR

You loco in the cabeza? My daughter will kill me if anything happens to her fucking cat.

SUPER DATE: ONE MONTH EARLIER

INT. SQUAD CAR (MIAMI) - DAY (MAY 1975)

CLOSE ON: CARMEN SOTO (early 20s), a spark plug of a Cuban-American chica. She rides with her partner, CAL LAKEWOOD (40s), old school law and order type. He commands the space with both his seniority and his personality. Carmen looks out the window while he tells war stories.

LAKEWOOD

Finally, after she's been missing for three days, I get the landlord to open the door and holy mother of fuck, I'm knocked on my ass by the stench. It smelled like someone ate a decomposed rat, shit it out, ate it again, then puked it up.

Carmen looks at him blankly. He's expecting to gross her out. Instead, she makes a point of taking a bite of her mollette (a Cuban-style Sloppy Joe). Chews, defying his attempt to get to her. He's both humbled and impressed.

LAKEWOOD (CONT'D)

I go into the bedroom and she's passed out on the bed. She's got her head in a bucket on the floor. And the bucket is full of vomit.

CARMEN

Let me guess...