

YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT THE FUCK YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT

It was a small island in the Caribbean, excluded from the world, which seemed impossible.

There was a small open bar at the end of the dock. Joe, smoking, saw a few canoes fishing in the water.

The jeep arrived. It was Banta.

"Joe. That you? Give me a hug. You cool?"

"I've had a couple. Nice view."

"That's nothing. Hop in."

The roads were steep, sharp... The jeep didn't have a roof... They kept going up and up... Everything, including the island, was owned by Banta.

As the sun set -- one of the most beautiful sunsets Joe ever saw -- the jeep reached a gate.

The gate opened. Beyond the gate was a mansion of glass. Joe could see inside, through to the end. Everything inside was white. Joe asked Banta if anybody else was around. Banta said, apart from the servants, it was just the two of them.

Banta took Joe's bags, led him to the door. As they neared, the door opened. "Mi casa."

"Wow. I can't believe it."

"See that fireplace? Rub your feet on that rug."

"Yeah. It's great."

"I knew I wanted this home to the exact *inch* since I was twelve years old. I never wrote anything down, just memorized the design in my mind, promised myself one day I'd build it."

"Huh."

"Yeah. Here, in this perfect house, is where two great artists will write their masterpiece."

"Can't wait. Mind if I use the restroom?"

"Sure. Down the hall, first door to the left."

Joe and Banta sat out on the veranda, drinking, eating dinner.

"You done cocaine, Joe?"

"Huh?"

"Cocaine?"

"Yeah."

"How many times?"

"Couple."

"Don't like it?"

"Not my thing. Don't get much out of it, to be honest."

"Do you think it's because you haven't done enough?"

"To be honest, I have a tendency to get hooked."

"What do you mean?"

Joe gestured with his cigarette. "Alcohol, cigarettes."

"Would you mind doing cocaine for me?"

"I guess. Is it essential?"

"I think so."

"Okay, then."

"I thought about it a lot. You know, I approach each project a different way... You know, I'm very judgmental... You know, maybe I have low self esteem. I think the project's a rush, and if you're on coke when I tell it, I think you'll understand it."

"Okay."

Joe had tried good coke before, but never as good as Banta's.

"*Alright, Banta!* Let's hear it!"

"A man's discovered in a boat. We see the boat, *drifting*, alone, in the Pacific Ocean. The man is in rags, burnt *bad* by the sun. How did the man get there? What *happened*? A commercial liner passes, spots the man. It picks him up. The man is on board. They're asking him, *what happened? What happened?* He ain't talking. It's too *painful*, man, you can *see* it in his *eyes*. This guy, Joe, this *guy*, he's, he's--"

"Yeah?"

"He's the most *incredible*-- He just has to have this *look*. He's obviously been through some *shit*. He's *gorgeous*, too. He's got *angst*, *courage*, Joe-- *always* in the eyes."

"Do you want to play him?"

"Nope."

"Sounds like you know the part."

"Nope."

"Okay."

"The man regains his strength. A nurse takes a liking to him, she's walking him back to health. They screw. One day, one of the sailors on board, he's a real nasty son of a bitch, the sailor *bumps* into the guy. The sailor asks him, 'Are you tryin' to start something?' The guy won't bite. The sailor asks why the guy ain't defending himself. Is he some sort a fuckin' *coward*?"

"They fight?"

"Yeah. The sailor *throws* a punch, *hits* the guy. Then they're at it... Everybody comes, sees them *rolling* on the floor. Suddenly the guy's *SCREAMING! CRYING!* He's *FREAKING OUT!* It takes *three* people to hold the guy down. By that time, there's this *BIG* crowd, the doctor's *plowing* through, *trying* to get to the guy-- They give him a sedative. Later, the guy wakes up, he's in the recovery ward. He calls for the doctor, the nurse, they *rush* in. The guy tells them, he's *ready*, he's *ready* to tell them his story..."

"Huh."

"...and that's it."

"Okay."

"What do you think?"

"That's it?"

"Yeah."

"Interesting."

"A flashback."

"Right."

"Pretty great start, so far, huh?"

"It's good. But let me ask you something. What happened?"

"I *knew* you'd ask that. *Ha ha!*"

"That's it?"

"Yeah."

"Okay..."

"What's wrong? You don't like it?"

"No, it's not that... The thing is... We've got to figure out what *happened*. I mean, what's the story?"

"Right."

Joe woke up, heard laughing.

Banta was tickling a supermodel on the couch. Banta and the supermodel were giggling.

"Banta."

"*Hey, baby!*"

"Banta, what happened?"

"This gorgeous girl's Sheila. She's stopping by."

"Hi, Joe!"

"I need water."

Banta said something. A servant appeared with a glass of water.

"Any good news?"

"I don't know what you mean."

"I mean, did anything come to you? My best ideas have all come on that shit."

"Cocaine?"

"Pawkqotl."

"Pak-kotl? I thought it was coke?"

Sheila *laughed*.

"Banta," said Joe, "I don't think I can handle that. Please, let's not do that again."

"Sure."

"Joe, I *love* your movies!"

"Thanks."

"Sheila's got some friends stopping by later."

"Oh, yeah?"

"We're gonna kick it, Joe. Relax tonight, don't worry about a thing."

Banta tried making dinner with Sheila. They gave up, had the servants fix it.

Joe woke up the next morning, in bed with two girls.

"Okay," said Banta, "the guy runs into some pirates?"

"He's smuggling something. How about he was hired as a captain, but deceived? They told him it was government business."

"Yeah, yeah, he could be pleading ignorance. He's a *Bogart* kind of guy, straddling the line?"

"And the guy who hires him. What's his motive?"

"They know he's untrustworthy. If the price is right, he'll do anything."

Joe imagined living permanently on the island with the villagers. He would gradually lose his language, acquire their customs, drink, grow old, fuck, watch perfect sunsets every night...

"Joe," said Banta, "I have to take off for a few weeks..."

"Okay."

"If you want, you can kick it here."

"A few weeks?"

"Yeah."

"I can keep working."

"Cool."

Joe got as much down as he could. One afternoon, Joe followed a trail. Joe saw the dock and bar a few miles away. He decided to keep going. By the time Joe reached

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the bar, Joe was dying of thirst. The bar was locked. Joe took a rock, *busted* the window.

Joe woke up, saw canoes in the water.

Joe knew he'd have to hike it back up the mountain. He thought about asking one of the locals to get the jeep for him, but the only one who could speak English was a guy named Marco. Joe decided he'd tough it out.

Joe returned to the mansion at 2 AM.

Two weeks passed. Marco said the boat wasn't arriving. The boat carried food supplies. Joe wanted to work, but was starving. Joe called Banta and got his voicemail.

Finally, the boat arrived. Joe watched Marco via telescope. When Marco reached the mansion, Joe helped Marco unpack.

Joe, inspired, wrapped up the outline. He felt good about it. He set a copy on the coffee table, ready for Banta.

"Joe, baby! How are you?"

"Jesus Christ! Oh my GOD! BANTA! Oh, MAN! You have no IDEA how it's been!

I was going INSANE!"

"Cabin fever?"

"We ran out of *food!*"

"No way? How's it going?"

"It feels like it's been a fucking *year!*"

"Ha ha!"

"How was the trip?"

"Good. How's the writing?"

"The writing's *great.*"

"Fresh."

"Got a cigarette?"

Banta read Joe's notes.

A half hour later, Banta came out...

"What's up?"

"I'm still thinking."

Two days passed. Banta and Joe drove to the beach for a swim. Banta forgot to check the gas in the jeep and the engine died: they coasted to the bottom.

"*Shit!*"

Banta hoped someone from the village would appear as they swam, but nobody did.

"You know how many hours it'll take to get back up there?"

"Yeah."

"The sun's *baking*. It ain't fucking happening."

Two hours later, a group of children from the village passed. Banta intercepted the children, told them to grab Marco...

An hour and a half later, Marco arrived. Banta told Marco to run up and get some gas for the jeep.

"That ungrateful *SONOFABITCH!*"

"He won't do it?"

"I've done *EVERYTHING* for him. Yeah, he's getting the gas... That *COCKSUCKER!*"

"What happened?"

"He claims it's *no-work* day, 'cause they spent last night doing some *fucking dance*."

"Shit. I'll get the gas."

"No. Don't worry about it. *Jesus Christ*, I pay for the entire *fuckin'* village, you'd think I'd get something back."

"Joe, I need you to clear out your room for me."

"What's up?"

"My friend, he's coming over. He needs the room. You know, I think I'll keep workin' on the script. I appreciate your hard work."

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Joe stood alone on the dock -- watched the plane land, float up. The pilot looked out at Joe, *waved* at him to come aboard as someone else got out.

Years later, people came by looking for answers.

When asked about his career, Joe said: "I just went with it."

When asked if he had any advice, Joe said: "Just worry about the story."

When told he'd led a life to be envied, sometimes Joe'd say: "Yeah, I suppose so."

Other times, Joe said: "You don't know what the fuck you're talking about."