

KEY OF E

Written by

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BLACK.

The soft buzz of an amp fills the air, unaltered for a moment. Then amp and guitar connect through a series of distorted clicks and whirs, followed by a sharp rake of the strings.

A steady, bluesy strut is established in the key of E. The music continues as we cut to:

INT. TONY'S GUITAR SHOP-DAY

Rich sits atop the amp, leg bouncing to the beat as he strums along. Customers wander around the edges of the store, browsing instruments and equipment. None of them look at him directly. They allow themselves only a quick glance before returning their attention to the instruments on the wall.

Rich continues to strum as one courageous customer approaches. The customer has a southern drawl.

CUSTOMER

Hey, man. You're really good.

No response. Rich keeps strumming.

CUSTOMER (CONT'D)

Yeah, I've been playing for a while too. Not as long as you, but-

RICH

Yeah man, I don't work here, but those guys can help you with any questions.

CUSTOMER

Naw man, though I'd just pick your brain a little bit.

Rich stops strumming.

RICH

I don't know much, man. I just kind of play. But that guy over there-

He jerks his finger at Tony.

RICH (CONT'D)

-he owns this place. He can help you with anything, trust me.

The customer slinks off to the background and approaches Tony, who almost immediately sells him an exact replica of the guitar Rich is currently playing.

In the foreground, Rich continues to strum. The customer walks out with his purchase, and Tony approaches Rich.

TONY

You know Richie, it's not their fault they think you work here. 'Sides, it wouldn't kill you to answer one question.

Tony walks away as a YOUNG WOMAN approaches, with a LITTLE GIRL in tow.

YOUNG WOMAN

Excuse me?

Without stopping, Rich looks up.

YOUNG WOMAN (CONT'D)

(re: the little girl)

My little sister really likes the way you play. Do you have any beginner's tips for her?

RICH

Um...well. To, uh, to quote Bo Diddly, "You don't have to be down to play the blues, but it sure helps".

LITTLE GIRL

Who's Bo Diddly?

RICH

You don't know who Bo Diddly is? Well, that's where you've got to start. Bo Diddly, B.B. King-

A YOUNG DOUCHEBAG approaches.

YOUNG DOUCHEBAG.

-and Jay Sean, and Kanye and Sean Paul. You sound tight, man, but you need a little bass. I'm starting a rap group and we could-

Rich stops playing immediately and feedback fills the air once more as we

CUT TO BLACK

TITLE

INT. RICH' APARTMENT-DAY

Rich walks in the door, guitar slung over his shoulder. His roommates, ALEX and TERRY sit in the living room. Alex is sprawled out on the couch, while Terry bounces a ball of the wall.

ALEX
(muffled)
Hey Rich, where you-

He pokes his head up from under the couch and sees Rich's guitar.

ALEX (CONT'D)
Oh. You tell him.

He attempts to point in Terry's general direction, but points nowhere near him.

TERRY
Yo, man, we're heading to a party tonight. You down?

RICH
Uh...

ALEX
(muffled)
No. No! You do this every time! Every goddamn time! We try and pull you out of your box night after night, and all you do is sit in your room and jerk off on your guitar!

TERRY
We mean this in the most loving way possible.

ALEX
Yeah, man. I love you! *We* love you! Everyone loves you! And if you talked to them, I'm sure girls would love you too! But what we're really trying to say here is--

Terry beans Alex in the back of the head. Alex shoots up.

ALEX (CONT'D)
(to Terry)
Don't be a pussy!

He looks at Rich, and smiles. Terry follows suit.

RICH
Well...

TERRY
Look man, bring your guitar. Worst comes to worst, and no one wants to play with you, you can play with yourself.

Alex glares at Terry.

TERRY (CONT'D)
What?

RICH
Alright, fine. I'll come out.

Terry and Alex epic high five. Alex falls back into the couch.

ALEXD
(muffled)
You're gonna get so blitzed tonight!

EXT. PARTY HOUSE BACKYARD-NIGHT

A conglomerate of frat boys, douche-bags, and general party-goers litter the backyard, flirting, shouting, and stumbling over each other in a booze-laden fervor around a bonfire.

Clearly out of his element, Rich stands in between crowds. He fidgets with the guitar strap slung over his shoulder, and shuffles from foot to foot. He looks over at a group of people and inhales sharply, then gives up and returns to the bonfire.

In the distance, a watered-down blues progression catches Richs' attention. His ears, attuned to the sound, lead him to the source of the music:

It's the same girl from the guitar store, MALLORY. She sits cross-legged on the ground in front of the bonfire, surrounded a horde of frat boys. Rich begins to push his way through the crowd.

As she finishes the song, she looks up to see Rich standing next to her. Beat. Then there's a sign of clear recognition on her face. Rich smiles, and holds up the guitar.

RICH
Mind if I join you?

MALLORY
Sure. Should we play some blues?

RICH
Here? Now?

MALLORY
Shut up and play.

This earns taunting "ooooohs" from the crowd. Challenged, Rich sits down.

RICH
You lead, I'll follow.

Insert song here.

The song finishes, earning whistles and claps from the audience. The boys applause is noticeably louder than the girls'.

RICH (CONT'D)
Where'd you learn to play?

MALLORY
My dad taught me. He loved all those old guys.

RICH
Your dad had good taste.

MALLORY
Yeah. I like the new guys better, though.

RICH
Oh, you mean the guys who all play like this.

Rich plays a standard chord progression.

MALLORY
No, I mean the guys who play like this.

Mallory plays another standard chord progression.

RICH
But sometimes, they play like this.

Rich plays yet another standard chord progression.

MALLORY
But most of the time, they just
play like this.

Mallory plays the same chord progression that Rich started
out on. Rich watches her for a moment.

MALLORY (CONT'D)
You're pretty good. Been on
anything I've heard of?

RICH
Nah, probably not. I mean, maybe. I
record stuff in my room. But that's
about it.

MALLORY
Have you ever recorded anyone else?

RICH
Not yet, but I'm sure I could.

MALLORY
Well then.

She stops playing and looks over at him.

MALLORY (CONT'D)
Maybe we could record something
together.

RICH
Sure. Just don't make me play this.

He plays the same chord progression again. She laughs.

TONY
(V.O.)
So what happened next?

INT. TONY'S GUITAR SHOP-DAY

Tony and Rich lean over the counter, speaking to each other.

RICH
I don't know, man. I guess the next
time I see her, I'll ask if she
wants to, y'know, do something.

TONY

When's the next time you're going to see her?

RICH

About an hour?

TONY

Well what the hell are you doing here, Richie? Go get a candle, some condoms, a box of wine and go!

RICH

Alright, alright. See ya, Tony.

He strolls out of the shop.

INT. RICH' APARTMENT-DAY

Rich bursts into the room. Lysol in one hand, and trash in the other, he begins transforming the room into a place more befitting of female presence.

In the background, we can see Terry and Alex in the middle of a dance video game.

RICH

Guys, Mallory's going to be here in less than an hour. Can you try not to make a mess?

ALEX

Wait, is Rich actually talking to us?

TERRY

(breathless)

Oh no...you're not breaking my concentration this time.

ALEX

Don't be a little bitch, you lost fair and square. Right, Rich?

Alex turns around to see Rich picking the trash up off the couch. He hits Terry on the shoulder. Terry slowly turns around. They gawk, this is the first time they've seen the floor in a couple of months.

ALEX (CONT'D)

We should bring girls over more often.

Terry stands for a second, then spins around and turns to the dance.

ALEX (CONT'D)
You son of a bitch!

Alex starts dancing again.

INT. RICH'S ROOM-NIGHT

Rich closes the door behind Mallory, who takes a seat on his bed.

MALLORY
I had no idea your roommates were such good dancers.

RICH
Yeah, they're, uh...a lot of things. Have you ever done this before?

MALLORY
No, first time. Is that alright?

RICH
Yeah, pretty simple. You just play into here, sing into here, and I'll take care of the rest.

MALLORY
Oh, that's it?

RICH
Yeah, your job's pretty easy. Just tell me when you're ready.

MALLORY
Okay. Now.

Insert Recording Song Sequence Here.

RICH
That was...really beautiful.

MALLORY
Thanks. I don't really play too often.

RICH
You should fix that.

MALLORY

Maybe I should.

She gets up to leave and opens the door. The sound of techno dance music fills the air.

MALLORY (CONT'D)

Oh, before I go. I'm having a little get together, and my friends want her to play. It'd be a lot more fun if I didn't have to do it alone.

RICH

Sure. When?

MALLORY

This weekend.

RICH

Cool. I'll have the song finished by then. I'll get it to you as soon as I'm done.

MALLORY

Cool. See you at the party. Bye.

RICH

Bye.

MONTAGE

--Rich plays various instruments into the computer.

--Rich, in the early morning, busy mixing.

--Rich leans back with his headphones on. He listens for a beat, then smiles.

INT. RICH' APARTMENT-DAY

Rich stumbles out of his room, yawning, but with a cd in his hand. He places the CD on the table, and makes his way over to the kitchen, where Terry is pouring a bowl of cereal. Terry looks up and yawns.

TERRY

You look like hell, man.

Rich doesn't respond. He plops down on the couch and glances at Terry, manically scratching his head and rubbing his nose. He pauses for a moment. Looks at Rich.

TERRY (CONT'D)

Shut up.

Alex enters the apartment, fresh from a morning jog. He glances at his roommates.

ALEX

What the hell happened to you two?

RICH

Shut up.

Terry chuckles.

INT. RICH'S ROOM-DAY

Rich swivels uncomfortably in his chair as he looks expectantly at Mallory. She's got the headphones on her head but she's looking down. He can't read her expression.

Beat. She looks up.

MALLORY

It's cool, but can you make it more...simple?

Rich tries to mask his emotions.

RICH

Um...yeah.

He brushes by Mallory as he reaches for the computer. Neither of them acknowledge this. The only sound that breaks the silence is the sound of typing when:

Alex bursts into Rich's room.

ALEX

Yo, party tonight! You in?
(to Mallory)
Oh, hey! What's up?
(to Rich)
Don't be a pussy.

Alex slams the door.

INT. PARTY HOUSE-NIGHT

The house now resembles more of a venue. Someone's taken over bartending duties, and all of the party goers leave plenty of room for the musicians.

RICH

(V.O.)

Wow. You pulled this together pretty quick. Where'd you find these guys.

Mallory stands, flanked by two other musicians. A bass player and a drummer. Both are eye-fucking the shit out of her. Mallory doesn't notice, or at least pretends not to.

MALLORY

Oh, these guys? They're in my boyfriend's rap group.

RICH

What?

The douchebag, who'll now come to be known as Todd, approaches. He's wearing the exact same thing that he was in the beginning of the film.

TODD

Yo, Bo 'Diddly! You ready to join the baaaand?

Rich gawks for a moment, then turns back to his guitar. He plays quietly, even he can't hear it. It's an electric guitar.

Todd can't keep his hands to himself. She's running through the song in her head, tries to push him away. He pulls her in close, squeezes her, and gives her a peck on a cheek. She forces a smile. Rich pretends not to see this.

TODD (CONT'D)

Knock 'em dead, babe.

Todd walks away.

MALLORY

Okay. You ready?

Rich doesn't respond, but instead falls in line with the rest of the band. He turns up the volume on his guitar and hits a chord. He finally looks up.

MALLORY (CONT'D)

Great. Then let's do this.

Insert song sequence here. Rich ends on a frantic guitar solo. When the guitar stops, a dead silence consumes the party.

Alex, sitting atop Terry's shoulders, drunk as all hell:

ALEX

Dude! That was sick!

He then falls to the ground. Rich unplugs his guitar from the amp, and begins to walk away.

MALLORY

That was-

RICH

Oh. Before I forget.

He hands her the CD.

RICH (CONT'D)

Here.

MALLORY

We should do this again sometime.

RICH

Goodbye.

He walks over to Alex and Terry, helps pull Alex up off the ground, and the three stumble out together.

ALEX

Yo, man. Fuck her. Wait, did you fuck her? Nah, I'm just kidding. But really.

INT. TONY'S GUITAR SHOP-DAY

Rich sits on the amp once more, silent except for his playing. A blusey, downtrodden solo. The camera pans to reveal Alex and Terry looking around the store.

TERRY

So this is where you've been hiding out. It's a pretty cool place.

ALEX

Yeah, where are the drums?

TERRY

Fuck no. You're getting something with a volume knob.

They walk away. Tony approaches.

TONY

Only time I've heard a man play
like that is when he's lost a
woman. Didn't go well?

Rich keeps playing.

TONY (CONT'D)

Ah, don't worry about it. If you
ain't got a woman to keep you down,
you got no reason to play the
blues. Just one thing: Everyone
could use a bit of backup. Key of
E.

Rich nods, smiles. And then he begins playing again, in the
Key of E.

BLACKOUT.