

SWEET TOOTH: The Ballad Of Kola Kubes

by Mark Staniforth

Trisha dreamed of being a Playboy Bunny since the days she still had buck-teeth and fried egg boobs. She blu-tacked page threes above her bed-head and had me snap topless Polaroids till they littered the floor. She told me to imagine she had 36DDs and peroxide blonde hair. I used to wish like hell that she wasn't my cousin.

When she was fifteen Trisha started putting out for the boys in the Kwik-Save car park for a tenner a time. She said she was an entrepreneur, not a prostitute. She started going steady with a kid called Keith. He was a fryer in the fish and chip shop. He had a future and a Ford Cortina. She got a job waitressing and she worked all the hours she could. Keith couldn't handle me and Trisha being as close as we were. Especially the time he caught Trisha bending over me in nothing but a frilly market stall thong while I worked the angles best I could to get a dangle-shot.

Next night he took her in the car park woods and doped her up to the eyeballs. He took out a bottle of India ink and told her he would etch the love-heart she'd always wanted. Instead, he safety-pinned the word 'inbred' into her arse.

Trisha's step-dad tracked the spits of blood and found her sobbing in the bathroom of their long-stay static. It didn't take him long to slap out the truth. He went straight round to Keith's place with a crow-bar and did enough damage to make sure he'd need more than laser treatment to put things right. Keith wasn't rolling in spare change so Trisha's step-dad took the Cortina as payment in lieu of her getting herself fixed up. Trisha got me to stash the Cortina up the lane at the back of Boyes' farm. Weekend nights, I drove her out to the dual carriageway truck-stop where she found a faster way to make her fortune in the fogged-up cabs.

One night Trisha headed back out of the orange glow and told me she was hitching a ride to London with a trucker called Greg. She leaned in and kissed me on my forehead. She had nothing but a pair of jeans-shorts and a Frankie Says Relax tee-shirt. I drove home alone over the black moors. I still smelled her cheap peach scent. An anchored tanker blinked in the bay. I felt pleased for her.

She stripped for pennies-in-pint-pots in the pubs around King's Cross and said it was a means to an end. She said Greg had a friend of a friend who was going to make things happen. It sounded like bullshit to me but around a year later she sent me a photo. She had a gleaming fluoride smile and her fried-egg boobs had been whipped up into a perfect pair of those 36DDs she dreamed of. Her hair was buffed-up and golden bright. She strained out of a snow-white wedding dress. She asked me to pin the photo up on the fish and chip shop cork-board. 'Fair play,' lisped Keith through splintered teeth. He figured it was good for business.

Next I heard, she'd dumped Greg and filed for divorce. She got a break on page three and started sprawling in soft-core centrefolds. She promoted herself through footballer boyfriends till she hit on one called Carl who had a big enough name to get her in the gossip columns. When that went tits-up she consoled herself with a bigger boob-job. Her 32Gs got her more media than any top footballer ever could. She changed her name, first to Trisha-Marie, then to Kola Kubes. In an interview to launch her own line of adult movies, she said she got her giant boobs from the beef dripping they put in the chip shop batter back home. She said: 'I swear I gained a cup size with every portion. I must've ate a lot of portions.'

She scored three nominations for the AVN Adult Movie Awards. She flew to Las Vegas where she table-danced for a Miami Dolphins line-backer called Larry. She won best newcomer for 'Sweet Tooth II'. Next morning she and Larry celebrated by getting married in the Doo Wop Diner Wedding Chapel. He wore a tore-open dress-shirt and designer jeans. She wore the same cocktail dress she'd had on the night before. Champagne stains stuck in her front. She slurred her lines. On a late-night Las Vegas chat show, she flashed a

wedding ring with a diamond the size of a spam fritter. She pointed her arse at the camera, hoiked up her dress and showed off her 'inbred' tattoo. 'I keep it there to remind me where I come from,' she said. Asked about her upbringing, she said: 'It was tough. I got beat up. I ate dog biscuits. I had to get out of there.'

Larry said: 'she's my lover, and my soul-mate.'

Trisha's step-dad moved himself and her mother out of their long-stay static and turned it into a sort-of tourist attraction. He stuck her early glamour shots up on the walls and strung a couple of her early A-cup bras from the curtain rail. There was a stack of pirated videos, each with a knock-off autograph. They sold at twenty pounds a time. Her step-dad told a local TV news programme: 'Too right we're proud of her. It takes guts to do what she did.' He said: 'Sure, we had our differences like any family does. But we're more than willing to put the past behind us.'

Keith sold his story to a tabloid newspaper. His scarred face stared out from behind the chip shop counter over a two-page spread. The headline said: 'Sweet-Talking Kola Left Me For Dead'. Greg sold his story. He said: 'I gave her everything and she left me broke.' Her first footballer said: 'I scored with her six times a night.' Three different men claimed to be her biological father. Her step-dad launched a defamation suit over the beat-up claims. He said: 'I'm sorry it's come to this.' I was offered money for the Polaroids. I was barely scraping by. It was almost a year's wages. As far as I knew, there were no other pictures of Trisha as a plain old buck-toothed, flat-chested kid. But there was no way.

Soon after, Trisha called me. It was the first I had heard from her in almost two years. She giggled her words. She said she was done with porno. She had other projects. She spoke about starting a family. She said, 'if it's a boy, I like Skywalker.'

I said, 'what about Luke?'

She laughed and said, 'Luke? That's what I like about you, Bobby.' Then she said, 'I've got a job for you, anyhow. I'm coming home.'

I met her at Manchester airport. She swirled through the arrivals hall trailing assistants and zoomed-in by a TV crew. She was

wrapped in a full-length white fur coat. She threw it open to hug me. People gawped. She burst into tears and said, 'it's been too long, Bobby.' She held me tight to her hard breasts and I said, 'you look great.' She took my hand and led me to a stretch limo. The film crew bundled in alongside. We toasted ourselves with three bottles of champagne. She patted my knee and nuzzled my ear. I was drunk when we reached the city hotel. We had the penthouse suite. She phoned out for pizza and more champagne. She had her assistants knock randomly on the doors of the other guests and invite them up to join the party. She lounged on her bed in just a G-string. I said, 'where's Larry?' She said, 'fuck Larry.' She told me about the house she was having built in Las Vegas with a pool shaped like a breast with a hot-tub for a nipple. She told me she loved me. She said again: 'fuck Larry.' She said I was the only one she could trust. I told her about the Polaroids. She said, 'shit, Bobby, you still got those Polaroids?' Her producer had me sign a stack of waiver forms, ready for morning.

Next day we drove out over the moors. She stared through the tinted glass. She said, 'I see the sea!' The sun shone off the sides of the buildings. The milk bottles were bright white. A paper-boy stopped to watch the limo roll past. Trisha buzzed the tinted window and lifted her top and gave the paper-boy an eyeful of her 34Gs. She giggled. The camera-man said, 'that's the shot!' Her eyes darted for memories.

They took still-shots on the village green, in the Kwik-Save car park. We went in the Kwik Save. She cradled drink in her arms. She said, 'I had my first time here.' She laughed. 'And the second time, and the third time, and the fourth time. Shit, I miss those times.' A thin girl on check-out asked for her autograph. She wrote on a receipt roll: 'To Deborah, follow your dream — Kola.'

We walked right in the fish and chip shop. Keith took one look and said, 'oh, shit.' He was older, fatter. She hooked up the back of her skirt and said, 'remember this?' Keith gurned. She said, 'I forgive you. Now give me some chips.' She said, 'I forgot how good they taste.'

We went to the static she once called home. We rattled the door and her step-dad appeared from the next-door van. He rubbed the dust from his eyes and said, 'fuck, it's you.' He looked at the camera and said, 'what is this?'

Trisha said, 'where's mum?' She went in the van. She said, 'no cameras.' Her step-dad put his hand up at the camera and said, 'we've got to talk money.' The producer looked at me, sighed. He said, 'this bombs. This really does.'

We went to the pub. The producer said, 'you really gotta liven things up a bit.' She tore open her blouse and said, 'well, boys, what do you reckon to these?' She fed the jukebox and danced topless on the pool table. She sloshed her drink and sang out of tune. She stuck her heel in a pocket and fell to the floor. We carried her back to the limo. She fell unconscious. Her ankle swelled. We took her to hospital. I tucked her breasts back in.

A month or so after she went back to Vegas, she called again. She sounded drunk or high, or both. She would scream and cry. She swore repeatedly. She said, 'they've axed the show.' She said, 'I'm scared, Bobby. I'm still in plaster, Bobby. I can't get work. Why didn't you come back with me, Bobby? Where were you when I needed you? You're just like all the rest.' Eventually, I hung up on her. I felt bad. She called back twice. She asked me to send her the Polaroids. She said, 'I'm broke.' I pulled the phone from its socket.

Two weeks later, I got another call. It was the middle of the night. A deep, cracked voice said, 'Billy?'

I said, 'Bobby.'

'Uh-huh,' said the voice. 'Bobby, it's Larry.' He paused. 'It's Kola.'

'Trisha,' I said.

'Uh-huh,' said the voice. 'Kola, Trisha, what the fuck, man. It's bad.'

The post-mortem stated that Trisha died from a seizure brought on by an allergic reaction to creams prescribed to ease soreness after tattoo removal. It concluded that she already had an exceptionally high level of drugs in her body. They most likely also contributed to her demise.

They burned her in Vegas in front of Larry and a handful of co-stars from the Sweet Tooth series. They held a wake at the Tropicana resort hotel. They ate fish-sticks and fries. They drank champagne. Larry said: 'it's what she would have wanted.' Then they sent her home. Pink smeared the sky. Her mother propped on two sticks and tossed her ashes in the salt-wind. I bunched up the Polaroids. I burned them too, and threw them up after her.

