

**NEVER BETTER**

"Bully"

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ACT ONE

INT. KEITH AND ALLISON'S KITCHEN - MORNING

A tasteful house on a tree-lined street in an upper middle class suburb of Baltimore. KEITH (33) pours himself a cup of coffee. While charming and well-intentioned, Keith's a guy who has trouble avoiding or even recognizing his worst impulses. Think MATTHEW PERRY.

ALLISON (32) is packing lunches. A former wild child, Allison settled down when she became a parent, although her wild side pokes through occasionally. TOM (7), a quiet, serious boy, and LUCY (4) eat oatmeal and watch cartoons.

KEITH

Tom, we're leaving in ten minutes.

TOM

Can I steer like last time?

Keith gives Tom a "that was a secret" look, then offers Allison an "I don't know what he's talking about" shrug.

ALLISON

I've seen you drive. You can use the help.

Keith grabs a bag of Oreos, dumps six onto a plate. Busy with the lunches, Allison doesn't see what he's up to.

ALLISON

Hey, so thanks for taking Tom to school today.

KEITH

No problem. I'm happy to.

Allison looks up and notices Keith at the counter. She watches Keith pull apart an Oreo and lick out the filling.

ALLISON

What are you doing?

KEITH

What?

Keith pops the Oreo in his mouth.

ALLISON

(glancing at the kids)  
The cookies.

KEITH  
(mouth full of cookie)  
You want one?

ALLISON  
Keith, it's breakfast.

KEITH  
I realize it's not the... It's  
just this woman I met in the  
program said if you're craving a  
drink, sugar can help you over the  
hump. A bunch of people there  
agreed it was a good idea. Not  
this one guy.  
(derisive)  
A dentist.

ALLISON  
(concerned)  
You're craving a drink?

KEITH  
No, this is more of a pre-emptive  
strike.

Keith pulls apart an Oreo. It doesn't pull apart cleanly.

KEITH  
Damn it.

ALLISON  
It's just I'm trying to get the  
kids to eat something healthy...

KEITH  
(finally understanding)  
Right. The kids. Sorry.

ALLISON  
Keith, I know this is new for you.  
It's new for me too. I'm not trying  
to make it harder.

KEITH  
No, I get it. I'll just...

Keith puts the cookie in his hand back on the plate, pushes  
the plate deeper back on the counter and heads for the table.

ALLISON  
If you feel like you need the  
cookies as a... pre-emptive--

KEITH  
Allison, it's okay. Seriously.

ALLISON  
Thank you.

Keith sits down. He looks at his kids and smiles, then casts a longing glance at his Oreos.

KEITH  
(quietly, but not that  
quietly)  
God, I could really go for a drink  
right now.

Allison sighs and puts the plate of cookies in front of him.

INT. CAR - DAY

Keith's driving Tom to school.

TOM  
Dad...

KEITH  
Yeah?

TOM  
When you were at school--

As he approaches the school, Keith's small car is cut off by a GIANT BLACK HUMMER.

KEITH (CONT'D)  
What the--?

Keith hits the horn. It's a pathetic toot, barely audible.

KEITH (CONT'D)  
(to himself)  
SUVs. I'd like to crush you under  
the wheels of your stupid SUV.

Keith pulls in by the curb in front of the school. In the rearview, he sees Tom is wide-eyed, disturbed by the image.

KEITH (CONT'D)  
Not really. Just, you know,  
they're bad for the environment.

There's a loud RAP on Tom's window. Keith and Tom jump. A menacing boy, MILO, has his face pressed to the glass, having just emerged from the back of the Hummer. He stares at Tom.

KEITH (CONT'D)  
(friendly)  
Hi.

The boy gives Keith a disparaging look. Keith makes a face back like it's a joke, but the boy has already moved on.

KEITH (CONT'D)  
(noticing clock)  
You should probably go in now.

Tom doesn't move.

KEITH (CONT'D)  
Tom, I really need to get to work.

Only when Milo has joined two other friends and entered the school does Tom exit the car.

KEITH (CONT'D)  
Bye. Have a nice--.

The door slams shut. Keith looks at the closed door for a second, concerned. He starts to pull out, sees he's boxed in by the Hummer, and abruptly hits the brakes. The Hummer dwarfs his car. There's no one in it. Keith looks around.

He sees MILO'S MOTHER talking and laughing with another mother by the door to the school. Keith lowers the window. On a level with the lower part of the Hummer's door, Keith has to crane his neck awkwardly to be seen.

KEITH (CONT'D)  
Excuse me, is this your car?

Without turning or breaking off her conversation, Milo's mother dangles her keys at him, instructing him to wait.

KEITH (CONT'D)  
You what? I'm sorry, what?!

Milo's mother doesn't move. Keith beeps the horn. He's exasperated at its puny beep. Unhurried, Milo's mother gives her friend a hug, climbs into her car and starts the engine.

KEITH (CONT'D)  
Thanks.

Milo's mother lowers her window and smiles at Keith.

KEITH (CONT'D)

(friendly)

Sorry, it's just there are a lot of spots. You didn't need to--

When the window's fully lowered, her smile slips and she leans on her horn. It's deafeningly LOUD. Keith jumps. She pulls away fast, leaving him humiliated.

INT. CHURCH HALL - EVENING

An A.A. meeting is about to begin. DOUG (50) unstacks and arranges chairs. An unmarried, unfulfilled mall security guy, Doug relishes his authority as group leader, and doesn't like Keith, whose disruptive presence often undermines him. A few others join Doug in setting up chairs, as Keith enters.

KEITH

Hey, Doug.

DOUG

(annoyed)

Oh. Keith. I thought you switched to the Thursday meetings.

As Doug and the others arrange chairs, Keith grabs a muffin.

KEITH

I did. It just started feeling really hard making it all the way to Thursday, and-- Actually, can I be honest? It's mostly because they moved when "Lost" is on.

As Keith bites into the muffin, he realizes he should help and begins to move a chair.

DOUG

We're finished now.

Keith moves the chair in front of him a few inches.

DOUG

It's finished.

LINDA, 40s, Keith's no-nonsense sponsor, enters. Stern but caring, Linda is alternately annoyed and amused by Keith. Keith waves and starts heading in her direction.

KEITH

Linda, hey.

Keith reaches her. There's an uncomfortable beat.

KEITH

So I'm still figuring out how this whole sponsor-sponsee thing works. Do we hug, or--?

LINDA

We don't need to--

Keith gives her a big hug.

LINDA

Okay.

She awkwardly hugs him back.

LINDA

About last night, Keith... you're really only supposed to call me if it's an emergency. Not because you couldn't sleep and were bored.

KEITH

Right.

(beat, joking)

What if I were really bored?

LINDA

Even then. When someone I sponsor calls, I need to answer. And I could be in the middle of something important. Like last night for instance.

KEITH

It was midnight. What could you be in the middle of at-- Wait, did you have someone over? You did, didn't you? Alright, Linda.

LINDA

Yes, okay. I had someone over. It's not a big--

KEITH

So... do you like this woman?

Linda gives Keith a long look.

LINDA

I'm not a lesbian.

KEITH

(beat)

I know.

INT. CHURCH HALL - LATER

The A.A. meeting has started. Doug chairs it. Ten participants, all shapes and sizes, sit in a few rows of chairs. SHAUN (30s) is giving testimony. Keith, sitting next to Linda, listens dutifully.

SHAUN

I'm sober forty days, I've got a new job, selling cars. I don't see the point of delving into my childhood.

DOUG

To really let go of the past, Shaun, we have to face it.

SHAUN

It's just we have these weekly quotas at work, and I'm short again. I really need to focus my energy on that.

CLAIRE, late 20s, attractive, a former prom queen with a profound sense of superiority, chimes in.

CLAIRE

No one's saying it's easy. When I was drinking, I was completely out of control, a total nymphomaniac. I did unspeakable things with men I barely knew. Really dirty, nasty things. Trust me, it's not something I like talking about.

KEITH

(sotto)

Obviously.

CLAIRE

But once I opened up about my life, I felt a clarity, and was able to find God and reclaim my virginity.

KEITH

(sotto, to Linda)

How do you get back your virginity?



LINDA

(sotto)

Don't ask me, I'm a lesbian.

KEITH

(sotto)

I said I was sorry.

DOUG

Keith, do you mind? We're talking about people's pasts here.

CLAIRE

Why do you even bother? He doesn't get it. Keith obviously hasn't had a tortured history like some of us.

KEITH

If by "tortured history" you mean screwing half of Baltimore and then declaring myself a virgin, you're right, I haven't.

LINDA

(rescuing Keith)

The important thing is to not hide from our past.

KEITH

For your information, I went through things too, Claire. As a kid. With my brother. Really hard stuff, okay?

Silence. The others wait expectantly.

KEITH (CONT'D)

I'd be watching TV and for no reason at all he'd pin me to the ground. He'd hold me down and he would... sit on my face. And...

(painful)

Let loose an air attack.

Exasperation from the group.

KEITH (CONT'D)

It made me feel so--

SHAUN

(blurting out)

I was abused in a group home.

KEITH  
(lost in thought)  
Powerless. I guess that's the word  
I'm looking for.

The group is stunned that Keith is continuing talking about himself after Shaun's pronouncement. Keith notices.

KEITH (CONT'D)  
(to Shaun)  
You go ahead. I can remember mine.

INT. KEITH AND ALLISON'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Keith is getting ready for bed. He talks to Allison, who's in the bathroom.

KEITH  
I just don't get why this mother  
even has one of these gas-guzzling  
monstrosities. Hummers weren't  
designed for taking kids to school.  
They're military vehicles.

ALLISON (O.S.)  
Keith, forget about it.

KEITH  
What do you think's going through  
her head when she buys it? "I  
probably won't be invading France,  
but I'd like that option."

Allison enters from the bathroom, wearing sexy lingerie.

KEITH  
Wow.

ALLISON  
Good answer.

She pushes him back on the bed, and they start going at it.

INT. KEITH AND ALLISON'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Keith rolls off of Allison, post-sex. By the looks of things, it was pretty intense. They lie back in the afterglow for a beat, catching their breath, then:

KEITH  
Every time she gets behind the  
wheel, it's like she's thumbing her  
nose at the earth.

ALLISON  
And we still haven't moved on.

Allison gets up and puts on a large t-shirt.

KEITH  
Sorry. It makes me crazy.

ALLISON  
When did you become such a hard-core environmentalist?

KEITH  
Yeah, I should be more apathetic. Starting tomorrow I'm going to start spraying aerosol cans everywhere and clubbing baby seals.

ALLISON  
Maybe spray the aerosol at the baby seals. Disorient them, they'll be easier to whack.  
(then)  
So did Tom say anything to you today?

KEITH  
About what?

ALLISON  
I don't know. Something at school maybe. I told him to talk to you.

KEITH  
He didn't say anything.

A beat as they both consider, concerned expressions.

KEITH  
Do you think you can get the horn changed on a car?

ALLISON  
You wanted to be more involved. You wanted to make up for lost time.

KEITH  
I do. I am. Allison, he didn't say anything. I'd remember.  
(to himself)  
Maybe you can get the volume turned up. That'd probably be easier.

ALLISON

Was he acting weird at all?

KEITH

I don't think so. Whatever was bothering him, it obviously cleared up. Tom and I have fun when we're together. Just spending time with me probably made him feel better.

Keith turns out the light.

EXT. KEITH AND ALLISON'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The house is completely dark, peaceful. Through a window, we see a light go on.

INT. KEITH AND ALLISON'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Tom stands in the doorway, sleepy-eyed, anxious.

TOM

I had a bad dream.

ALLISON

Sweetie, come here. What was your dream about?

Allison looks to Keith over Tom's head, motioning towards Tom with her eyes, prompting Keith to get involved.

KEITH

Yeah...

Keith tries to think of something to add, but can't.

KEITH

What was your dream about?

Tom climbs into bed with them.

TOM

Milo Stephens.

ALLISON

Is that a boy in your class?

Tom nods. Keith is putting two and two together.

TOM

He was crushing me. He was driving over me in a car.

KEITH  
(to Allison)  
That's quite common. Crushing  
dreams.

TOM  
He said he was going to kill me.

ALLISON  
No one's going to kill you. Daddy  
won't let them.

KEITH  
That's right.

TOM  
Milo said Dad's a pussy.

KEITH  
What? Really?

ALLISON  
No one's going to hurt you.

KEITH  
This... "pussy remark"... was that  
in the dream?

TOM  
In real life.

KEITH  
So he used those words: "Your Dad's  
a pussy"?

Allison shoots Keith a look, saying drop it. Keith signals  
back, "consider it dropped."

ALLISON  
Let's just go to sleep. We'll talk  
about this tomorrow.

Everyone closes their eyes. It's quiet.

KEITH  
A seven-year-old with any guts  
would've said it to my face, but  
whatever.

INT. CHURCH HALL - EVENING

Usual crowd, tense atmosphere as Shaun talks about his abuse.

SHAUN

If you weren't feeling well, you'd have to go to the sick room, which was in the basement, totally isolated. Mr. Ross would say "You look a little pale, you must be coming down with something." Or he'd say, Shaun, you want to go for a ride? I've got a Three Musketeers for you in my car.

KEITH

(sotto, to Linda)

He fell for the candy thing?  
That's like pederasty 101.

DOUG

Keith, is there something you wanted to share with the group?

KEITH

No.

As Doug turns his attention back to Shaun:

KEITH

Well, actually, there was this incident at the mechanic today. I was trying to get the horn turned up on my car...

DOUG

I wasn't asking you to--

KEITH

Turns out you can't. Anyway, this mechanic thinks it's hilarious. He's on the P.A.: 'This jerkoff wants his horn turned up.'

DOUG

What does this even have to do with your drinking?

KEITH

I'm just saying it was a difficult experience to go through. I had to stand there like an idiot pretending to think it's funny. It's the sort of thing that really wrecks havoc with your self-worth.

SHAUN

I was abused.

KEITH

I know.

SHAUN

In a group home.

KEITH

I realize it's not the same thing.

SHAUN

By the people who were supposed to take care of me. People I trusted.

KEITH

Yeah, I didn't trust this mechanic. So obviously there wasn't the same level of betrayal.

INT. CHURCH HALL - EVENING - POST MEETING

Linda and Keith talk quietly and urgently.

KEITH

I wasn't equating them. I'm just saying there are things in my past too. Things that happened to me.

LINDA

Tell me you're not talking about your brother farting on you.

Beat.

KEITH

That was a horrible experience.

LINDA

It sounded more like horseplay.

KEITH

Horses don't do that. Horses don't pin you down while you're trying to watch TV. And there weren't Tivos then. You couldn't just rewind. I missed things. It all ties in to how people treat me now. The mechanic, the mother at the school.

LINDA

Why do you want to make those connections?

KEITH

I don't know.

LINDA

Maybe you should figure it out.

Linda heads out.

KEITH

You're my sponsor. Aren't you supposed to tell me?

LINDA

Good night, Keith.

KEITH

What if I threaten to drink again if you don't?

Linda smiles and shakes her head.

LINDA

Good night, Keith.

INT. KEITH'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Keith gets home. Tom is sitting on the floor watching TV. Beside him is an impassive overweight boy of the same age, KYLE. The boys are in pajamas. Keith is unable to tear his eyes away from Kyle.

KEITH

Hi.

TOM

Hi Dad.

KYLE

Hi.

KEITH

Hello.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Keith enters, gives Allison a kiss hello. As he talks to Allison, he remains distracted by the thought of Kyle's size.



ALLISON

So I spoke to a child psychologist today about Tom. She said we shouldn't make a big deal out of the bullying.

KEITH

Uh-huh.

ALLISON

The important thing's to not let Tom get isolated from his peer group.

KEITH

Got it. Who's the fat kid in pajamas?

Allison's annoyed at the remark, but continues.

ALLISON

That's Kyle. He's sleeping over. Having friends here is supposed to help.

KEITH

And if the bullying doesn't stop Tom's got something to hide behind.

ALLISON

What is wrong with you?

Keith opens a cabinet and begins looking for something.

KEITH

I'm sure Kyle's a nice kid, but do you really think if Tom's standing next to him at school, he going to get bullied less?

(not finding what he's looking for)

Where are my Oreos? There was like half a--

Keith peers out at Kyle. He's got his answer.

KEITH

Never mind. So I think I'm going to teach Tom how to box.

ALLISON

(chuckles)

Yeah, because you're a boxer.

KEITH

I boxed in college.

ALLISON

We went to college together.  
Remember me, the really hot  
freshman who puked on your shoes?

KEITH

(slightly chastened,  
slightly nostalgic)  
Oh yeah.

ALLISON

I just don't think Tom learning how  
to fight is the answer. Violence  
always makes things worse.

KEITH

Not always. World War II.  
Greatest generation.

ALLISON

Fine. When Milo Stephens attacks  
Pearl Harbor, Tom has my permission  
to kick his ass.

KEITH

Our son is being bullied. That's  
going to stay with him for the rest  
of his life if we don't do  
something about it. Something more  
than encouraging him to hang out  
with the class whale.  
(finds Oreos)  
Wait, here they are.

EXT. KEITH AND ALLISON'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Completely dark, peaceful. A light goes on.

INT. KEITH AND ALLISON'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Keith and Allison are in bed. Tom's in the doorway.

TOM

I had another nightmare.

KEITH

(sotto, to Allison)  
So much for the healing power of  
friends.

Allison reacts, then turns her attention to Tom.

ALLISON

Do you want to sleep with us?

Tom climbs into bed. Keith and Allison notice Kyle standing in the doorway, unsure what he's supposed to do.

ALLISON

You too, Kyle.

Kyle runs over to the bed and jumps in between Tom and Keith. Inches from Keith's face, Kyle smiles. Keith gives him a tight smile back. Allison kisses Tom.

ALLISON

Good night.

Kyle looks at Keith expectantly, waiting for his good night kiss.

KEITH

No.

Kyle's eyes get sad. Keith sighs.

KEITH

Fine.

Keith gives him a quick peck.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

The beginning of boxing instruction. Keith holds up both hands, instructing Tom.

KEITH

Okay, hands up, thumbs outside your fists. Now imagine this Milo kid comes up to you and calls you a--

Tom hits Keith very hard above the eye. Keith puts his hands to his face and keels over in agony. Tom's face is full of anger as he lands a kick on Keith's prone body.

KEITH

(through his hands,  
upbeat, encouraging)

Good.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

INT. RICHARD'S MEDICAL OFFICE - LATE AFTERNOON

An exam room in a typical medical office. Keith's best friend, RICHARD (32), is stitching Keith's eyebrow. Charismatic but self-centered, Richard was Keith's primary drinking buddy and takes his sobriety as a personal insult.

KEITH

He looked so angry.

RICHARD

Teenagers, what are you gonna do.

KEITH

Tom's seven.

RICHARD

Seriously?

KEITH

You were at the house last week.  
You're his godfather.

RICHARD

Right, Tom. Who am I thinking of?

KEITH

I don't know.  
(wincing as needle enters)  
Are you supposed to use an  
anaesthetic for this?

Richard shakes his head, dismissive.

KEITH

Obviously, this bully situation is  
really hard on him. And he's  
looking for me to fix it. Not only  
am I not fixing it, I'm making  
things worse.

RICHARD

Sounds rough. Let me get you a  
drink.

Richard notices Keith's withering glance.

RICHARD

(with attitude)  
Right, you can't because you're an  
alcoholic.

(MORE)

RICHARD (cont'd)  
What ever happened to the good old days when people drank until they lost everything or died?

KEITH  
Sorry to disappoint you.

RICHARD  
It's not your fault. It's the culture.

As he continues, Richard gets increasingly agitated and starts swinging the needle around, unsettling Keith.

RICHARD  
I swear I have no one left to drink with. It was bad enough when Allison decided she had to clean up her act. She wasn't even an alcoholic. She was just pregnant.

KEITH  
(re: needle)  
You want to put that down?

RICHARD  
Sorry, I'm just a little-- A drink might calm my nerves. Do you mind?

Keith looks at the needle in Richard's hand.

KEITH  
Yes.

RICHARD  
Fine.

KEITH  
I'm supposed to be setting a better example for my kids, right? I mean, it's a big part of why I stopped drinking. And what's Tom see? His father getting honked at in his puny car with its puny horn.

Richard thinks on it, then:

RICHARD  
Did you check about getting the volume turned up?

KEITH  
Apparently the only way to get a louder horn is to get a new car.

A light goes on in Keith's head.

INT. CHURCH HALL - EVENING

Post-meeting, the usual crowd is milling about. Keith is with Shaun. Keith has a bandage above his eye (it's there for the rest of the episode).

SHAUN

You want to buy an SUV?

KEITH

A really big one. Do you have anything you'd classify as gigantic?

SHAUN

Actually, we just got something in that'd be perfect. It's previously owned, but in excellent condition.

KEITH

And it has a good solid horn?

SHAUN

Yeah.

KEITH

I'll take it.

SHAUN

It's pretty expensive, Keith.

KEITH

We'd set aside some money for a family vacation to Hawaii, but what's Hawaii got that we can't get in Ocean City? Plus we'll be in a real state, not one of those ones that's not attached.

SHAUN

You're serious? Because I really need this sale, so if you're screwing with me...

KEITH

I could give you a down payment tonight.

SHAUN

Do you know how much I need this?  
Do you know how much this is going  
to save my life?

KEITH

(falsely modest)

That's why we're here, right? To  
save each other's lives.

SHAUN

Who would've thought you'd be my  
miracle? Thank you for this.  
(looking heavenwards)  
Thank you.

Keith half waves upwards in sheepish acknowledgment of God.

SHAUN (CONT'D)

Thank God for Keith.

The others look on, surprised. Keith's slightly embarrassed,  
but glows.

SHAUN (CONT'D)

Thank God for Keith.

Keith gives a little bow.

EXT. SUPERMARKET PARKING LOT - DAY

Allison and Keith are packing their new SUV with supermarket  
bags. Lucy and Tom are strapped in the back.

ALLISON

A seven day test drive. That seems  
long.

KEITH

It's pretty much par for the  
course.

ALLISON

Did you buy this car, Keith?

KEITH

No, of course not. I wouldn't make  
that sort of decision without you.  
Come on, give me a little credit.

INT. SUV - DAY

Keith gets into the front passenger seat.

KEITH

Anyway, it's a very safe car. High marks on the crash tests.

Allison reverses out of the parking space. She presses the button to lower her window. It descends extremely slowly.

KEITH (CONT'D)

And kids love SUVs.

The kids are completely without expression.

KEITH (CONT'D)

Plenty of room for their friends.  
(under his breath)  
Kyyyyyle.

Allison shoots Keith a look.

KEITH (CONT'D)

He's not listening.

ALLISON

(pressing the button for  
the window again)  
I don't like what these cars do to  
the environment.

KEITH

(derisive)  
The environment.

ALLISON

The other day you were completely  
gung ho about the planet.

KEITH

People change, Al. We live, we  
learn, we grow.

ALLISON

(rolls her eyes)  
Uh-huh.  
(then)  
What's wrong with these windows?

KEITH

We can get them fixed.

ALLISON

The car's not ours. Why would we  
get the windows fixed?



KEITH

As a gesture. You know, because they were gracious enough to let us have the extended test drive.

ALLISON

You did. You bought this car.

KEITH

Maybe also get them a nice bouquet of flowers.

ALLISON

If you spent our Hawaii money, I will kill--

KEITH

(indicating back seat)

Shh. Lucy's suddenly very attentive.

ALLISON

Did you or did you not buy this car?

KEITH

No. What do you--? No. It's a test drive. I'll take it back.

Allison looks at Keith.

KEITH (CONT'D)

I'll take it back.

Keith looks worried. Then, as they exit the parking lot, Keith sees Milo Stephens' mother loading her black Hummer.

KEITH (CONT'D)

Can you pull over?

ALLISON

Why?

KEITH

Yeah, right here.

Allison pulls up. Keith leans over to the steering wheel and presses the horn down hard. Milo Stephens' mother jumps and shouts "What the fuck" as she turns around sharply. Keith gives her a salute wave.

KEITH (CONT'D)  
(to Allison, as he waves)  
Okay go. Go, go, go.

Milo Stephens himself looks over the back seat, meeting Tom's eyes as the car pulls away.

ALLISON  
What was that?

KEITH  
What was what?

Keith turns to face Tom. Tom looks back, happy.

INT. TOM'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Keith checks on Tom. He's sleeping soundly in his bed. Keith closes the door, smiling, happy with his achievement.

INT. SUV - NIGHT

Parked outside the church hall. Shaun and Keith observe a slowly descending window.

SHAUN  
Of course it appears slow. When you're staring at it.

KEITH  
Shaun, it's not just the windows. I need to give this car back.

SHAUN  
Don't do this, Keith.

KEITH  
It's just, it's not the car for me.

Shaun stares at Keith for a few seconds.

SHAUN  
In the home I grew up in...

Keith sighs, knowing what's coming.

SHAUN  
I was abused. Incessantly.

KEITH  
Yeah.

SHAUN

People would take turns.

KEITH

How is that relevant to--?

SHAUN

It's happening again. At the dealership.

KEITH

(concerned)

Oh my god, they're actually...?

SHAUN

They treat me like garbage.

KEITH

Oh. You meant it in a figurative--

SHAUN

I'll be about to close a deal, and one of the other salesmen will mysteriously call me away, so his buddy can swoop in and get the commission. Happens all the time.

KEITH

Shaun, you can't let them push you around like that.

SHAUN

What am I supposed to do?

KEITH

Stand up to them.

(beat)

You know, I stood up to a bully recently and I gotta tell you, it was a great feeling.

SHAUN

Really?

KEITH

Set a very good example for my son as well.

SHAUN

I would love to tell them: "No. No, you will not disrespect me."

KEITH

So say it.

SHAUN

You know what? I'm going to.

KEITH

Good for you.

SHAUN

And when I'm done, I'm going to ask for your down payment back.

KEITH

Whatever. If that feels right in the moment, go for it, but it's not what this is about.

SHAUN

If I really press the point, I can probably get you back half of it.

KEITH

Or all of it. You know, whatever feels right.

INT. SUV - DAY

Parked in front of the school, Keith smiles as he watches Tom with Milo and other boys, coming out of school laughing. There's a knock on the car window. An overweight man Keith's age gestures for Keith to lower the window. It's KYLE'S DAD. Keith pushes the button. The window moves very slowly.

KEITH

Sorry.

KYLE'S DAD

You're Tom's father, right? I'm Kyle's dad.

KEITH

Oh hi. We love Kyle. He's great.

KYLE'S DAD

Could you tell Tom to stop picking on my son?

KEITH

What? That doesn't sound like--

KYLE'S DAD

He's being teased about his weight.  
Apparently, Tom's the ringleader.  
Something about the class whale.

KEITH

(feigning ignorance)  
Oh, that's horrible.

KYLE'S DAD

And there being plenty of room for  
him in an SUV.

KEITH

Where do they come up with--? I  
blame rap. All that stuff about  
bitches and hos and... fat kids in  
SUVs.

KYLE'S DAD

Just tell Tom to-- What happened to  
your eye?

KEITH

This? Tom did this

KYLE'S DAD

Tom hit you?

KEITH

And kicked me when I was on the  
ground.

Kyle's dad looks at Keith, alarmed.

KEITH

Oh, it's not like that. It was my  
idea. Completely. My wife put up  
quite a fight in fact. Not that we  
were fighting fighting. We weren't  
hitting each other. Or kicking.

Kyle's dad walks off, shaking his head. Keith thinks about  
explaining it better, then shrugs it off.

KEITH

(calling after him)  
Nice meeting you.  
(trailing off)  
Tell Kyle I said hi.

INT. CHURCH HALL - EVENING

Usual crowd. The meeting's just beginning.

DOUG

Welcome to the Thursday meeting of  
St. Peter's Alcoholics Anonymous.  
I'm Doug and I'm an--.

SHAUN

(interrupting)  
I lost my job.

DOUG

Shaun, I was in the middle of--

SHAUN

And then I started drinking.

Shaun pulls out a flask. Shocked looks around the room.

SHAUN (CONT'D)

Somebody in the group - I'm not  
going to say who - somebody told me  
to stand up for myself at work.

People look around, trying to figure out who it was. Keith  
appears trapped, then fakes looking around himself.

SHAUN (CONT'D)

See, at first this person did  
something really amazing for me.

Heads turn towards Keith. Linda closes her eyes.

KEITH

Shaun, you really shouldn't be  
drinking here. It's against a lot  
of what AA stands for.

SHAUN

But it was like he only did it so  
he could take it away again. He  
told me that if I stood up for  
myself they'd respect me. But they  
didn't respect me, they fired me.

KEITH

I'm sure he didn't think that would  
happen.

CLAIRE

Everybody knows it was you.

KEITH

It actually wasn't me, Claire.

SHAUN

It was him.

Keith is caught in the glare of the group.

CLAIRE

You made him relapse.

KEITH

You can't blame someone like that. Shaun's problems go a lot deeper than some advice he got two days ago.

Shaun breaks down, weeping freely. Everyone regards Shaun with sympathy as he continues to cry.

KEITH

(vindicated/weak)

See?

(then)

I mean our problems are our problems. And they probably all have reasons. But we can't just keep blaming everything that's wrong with our lives on other--  
(realizing, to Linda)

Oh my God, that's what you were saying. About the connections.

LINDA

Keith, not now.

SHAUN

(wailing)

I was only sixteen.

KEITH

I just wanted someone to blame. For everything I've done, for everything I keep doing. Wait, you were sixteen and you fell for the candy bit? Forget it, it doesn't matter. What's important is that I realize now I need to take responsibility for my own actions.

(to group)

This is actually a valuable lesson for everyone in here.

LINDA  
They already know, Keith.

KEITH  
Right. Good work, guys.

INT. SUV - NIGHT

Keith drives down a freeway. Shaun is slumped in the back.

SHAUN  
Sorry I blamed you for the relapse.

KEITH  
It's okay.

SHAUN  
What you said, it's true. This is  
my addiction. I need to deal with  
it.

Shaun is still drinking, Keith looks at him in the rearview,  
concerned. After a beat:

KEITH  
Before they fired you, you hadn't  
reached any arrangement about the  
car, had you?

SHAUN  
I'm going to be sick.

KEITH  
Okay, I'll pull over.

SHAUN  
There's no time.  
(beginning to wretch)  
Where's the window thing? Make the  
windows go down. Make the windows  
go down.

Keith frantically presses the window button. The windows  
move down very slowly. Too slowly.

INT. FOUR WHEEL DRIVE - DAY

Keith and Allison are in the front (Keith driving) and the  
kids in the back.



KEITH

(to Tom, sincere)

Sometimes when people are bullied they feel ashamed. And sometimes that can make them feel angry. And they lash out at the wrong people.

LUCY

The car is smelly.

KEITH

No it's not.

ALLISON

It is.

KEITH

I cleaned it all up.

ALLISON

Just open a window.

KEITH

I'm trying.

Keith pushes the button. The window opens very slowly.

KEITH

Tom, the only person who should feel ashamed is someone who hurts another person. Do you understand what I'm saying?

TOM

Yeah.

KEITH

Good. So who's up for a movie?

TOM/LUCY

Me!/I am!

ALLISON

Great, and maybe on the way there, you can pawn my great-grandmother's jewelry and buy us an elephant.

KEITH

Al, I feel really bad about Hawaii, and--

ALLISON

Keith, don't. Just don't.

Keith looks at Allison, decides she's serious, and doesn't say anything.

TOM

Dad, roll them up. It's too windy.

LUCY

No, it's smelly.

Keith pulls up to a red light.

KEITH

Okay, here's what we're going to do. When the light turns green, I'll give the signal, which means everyone take a deep breath. Then I'll roll up the windows and you hold it for as long as you again. At the next stop, I'll open them again and everyone take another deep breath. Got it?

The kids nod.

TOM

Dad, can I invite someone to the movies?

KEITH

Sure. Who do you want to ask? Milo Stephens?

TOM

No. Milo Stephens is a pussy.

ALLISON

Tom, don't say "pussy." It's not a nice word.

KEITH

In this context. It's only nice in one context.

The light changes. Keith gives "the signal." Everyone takes a deep breath, the kids with their cheeks puffed out, as the car moves off and the windows rise. Allison looks at Keith wondering about contexts for "pussy." The car stops at a red light, the windows go down, and they breathe again.

KEITH (CONT'D)

(as he exhales)

Cats.

TOM  
So can I invite Kyle?

KEITH  
I thought you and Kyle--

TOM  
I apologized. He said we could be friends again.

KEITH  
Good.

Keith glances at Allison.

KEITH  
Very good actually. You're lucky to have someone like Kyle in your life, someone who cares about you so much that he's willing to look past the dumb things you do and know you're not a bad person. Someone who's knows you're not perfect, but loves you anyway.

TOM  
I don't think Kyle loves me.

KEITH  
He does. He has to. Because without it, you'd be totally lost.

Tom looks utterly confused.

KEITH  
And you love him too. It's why you're trying to be a better person. True, you're not that good at it, but you're trying.

The light turns green.

LUCY  
(pointing)  
Daddy, the light.

KEITH  
Okay kids, here we go. Deep breaths.

The windows begin to slowly rise again. Keith and the two kids breathe in deeply and hold their breath, all three puffing out their cheeks. Allison looks over at Keith.

She shakes her head and chuckles, then takes a big breath and puffs out her cheeks too. She looks around to the kids, takes in the family bonding, and smiles at Keith. It's a warm family moment.

They stop at a pedestrian crossing. Before Keith can push the window button so they can breathe out, Kyle and Kyle's Dad cross the street. Kyle glances into the car.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Kyle and his dad stare, shocked at what they see. Keith, Allison and the children, all with puffed cheeks and bulging eyes in what looks like a crude mockery of their weight.

END OF SHOW