

THE FIVE STAGES OF KEITH

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06.03.2016

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INT. BAR - NIGHT

KEITH (20s), dressed to the nines, anxiously fiddles with a beer list at a high-top table. He rearranges two glasses of water as he surveys the room, trying to spot his blind date. He stuffs tissues inside his shirt's armpits to slow the waterfall.

AVA (20s), dressed casually, really casually, like "these aren't even my best sweats" casually, enters the bar and spots Keith. She hides her disappointment poorly as she crosses the room.

Keith stands to greet her, bumping the table and spilling a drink. He shakes her hand, then, not knowing how to close, pulls her in for a brother hug.

AVA

Oh God...

KEITH

Sorry. I'm not even sure you should sit down.

AVA

No. This is a favor for Trish. A big favor.

KEITH

Gotta love my sister. So I'm Keith.

AVA

Yes, I know. Ava.

KEITH

Can I be totally honest with you?

AVA

You'd be the first.

KEITH

These. Never. Go. Well.

AVA

Blind dates?

KEITH

Any dates. With me. Run now. Save yourself.

Ava chuckles, then sits. Her chair is wet. She deals, then gestures for Keith to sit.

AVA
I'm not a runner. So you're
covering the check.

KEITH
I appreciate you dressing down.

AVA
Off to a great start, buddy.

KEITH
No offense. I like... casual.

AVA
I didn't ask.

KEITH
Seriously. I look like a banker.
You look comfortable.

AVA
Thanks?

KEITH
Do you know about the stages of
loss?

AVA
I'm well aware.

KEITH
History has shown you'll hit all
five before your second Cosmo.

AVA
That's ridiculous.

KEITH
Denial. Check.

AVA
I just hate Cosmos.

KEITH
Four to go.

AVA
So...

KEITH
So...?

AVA
Anger?

KEITH

Right. Challenge accepted! Let's start with the myth of the gender gap in pay.

AVA

New record, Keith.

Ava stands to leave.

KEITH

Gotcha! Kidding. Though I always say something stupid.

She sits. Hesitantly.

AVA

You get one. Tell you what, you pay for my Uber, I'll stay.

KEITH

Deal. And that's called--

AVA

Bargaining. Wow. You're right.

KEITH

You said "well aware". I hope your loss wasn't recent.

AVA

Boyfriend. Two months ago.

KEITH

Oh. Wanna talk about it?

AVA

He's not dead. Well, he's dead to me. Nice try on stage four though.

KEITH

Depression. Man, I subconsciously try to sabotage every date.

AVA

Or consciously. I prefer to know now. You're saving me future heartache. Like finding you in bed with your "just a work friend, I swear".

KEITH

Oh, I've never cheated.

AVA
Another first. Admirable.

KEITH
You're kind of exceptional.

AVA
And here comes the bullshit.

KEITH
No bullshit. You are the first person to actually *talk* to me in a long time. I hate chit chat, disingenuous flattery--

AVA
Superfluous use of unnecessarily big words.

KEITH
Touché!

AVA
There has to be something about you that's interesting.

KEITH
I read.

AVA
We all read. Go bigger.

KEITH
I rap. In Pig Latin. It's tricky to ock-ray an yme-rhay.

AVA
That's not an ing-thay. Come on! Gun to your head. Tell me something you're proud of.

KEITH
When I was eleven I called out a racist in my neighborhood for bullying a young, black girl. I got my ass kicked, but she got home.

AVA
Would you do it again?

KEITH
In a heartbeat.

AVA
Own that.

KEITH
YEAH!

AVA
Confident. Not cocky.

KEITH
Yeah. No more me talk. Who is Ava?
What does she like? What does she
hate? What makes Ava tick?

AVA
I like honesty. *That's* why I've
stayed. Well, that and morbid
curiosity. Want to order some food?

KEITH
Really? I mean, sure!

AVA
Stage five.

KEITH
Acceptance.

AVA
It's a limited time offer.

Keith waves his hands abruptly.

KEITH
Menus! Could we have some menus?

Keith is downright giddy.

KEITH
I've never gotten to the food. So
what does Ava hate?

AVA
The way you say Ava.

KEITH
Sorry.

AVA
It's actually Ah-vah.

KEITH
I am really sorry.

AVA
I am really kidding. It's Ava. And
it's not an interview. You can
learn more next time.

KEITH
There's never been a--

AVA
Confidence, Keith.

KEITH
Right! Whatevs.

AVA
But not cocky.

KEITH
Right.

AVA
I still need to see the Uber money.

KEITH
Winky face.

AVA
Up front.
(beat)
Hashtag winky face, Eith-kay.

Keith checks his tissue "pads".

KEITH
Hey! I stopped sweating.

AVA
We really need to work on your
game.

Genuine smiles. They toast with a clink of their waters.