

COMING TO LIGHT

By Jeff Dunne

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## CHARACTERS

DANIEL	A teenage boy, recently turned fifteen. Proud, honorable, but not as worldly as he thinks he is.
KEITH	A younger boy, perhaps ten or eleven, who is getting abused in his home.
LINDA	Daniel's mother. Concerned and smart.
ANGELA	Keith's mother. A woman with severe issues hiding under a veneer of suburban propriety.

## SETTING

A shed in the backyard of Daniel and Linda's home.

SCENE

*(Keith is in a shed, nervously peeking out the door or window. He is holding a partially-eaten hot dog, and a juice box is nearby. Also in the shed is a hair brush that has been sawed in two, and the saw that was used. After a moment, Daniel enters with a container of honey-mustard.)*

DANIEL

Here you go.

KEITH

You're sure that...

DANIEL

Yeah. It's fine. Just eat.

*(Keith starts putting the mustard on his hot dog.)*

KEITH

Danny... I... Thanks. I don't know what I woulda done if...

DANIEL

Don't mention it.

KEITH

I don't want you to get in trouble, for, you know. I mean, it's not your problem, and—

LINDA (OFF)

Daniel? Daniel!

DANIEL

Oh shit.

KEITH

Oh no! What are we gonna—

DANIEL

Hide! Hide!

You shouldn't—  
KEITH

Yes I should. Now hide!  
DANIEL

Where—  
KEITH

Over there. Under the tarp.  
DANIEL  
*(Looking around, then...)*

*(Keith starts to put down the food.)*

No. Take it. I don't eat mustard and—

*(Keith just gets under a tarp when the door to the shed opens and Linda enters.)*

Why didn't you answer?  
LINDA

I did. Didn't you hear me?  
DANIEL

*(Linda narrows her eyes at him, then...)*

What are you doing out here?  
LINDA

Nothing. Just thought it would be a cool place to hang out. You know, for some quiet. *(Silence.)* You know Libby gets so annoying. I just wanted someplace I could get some privacy, ya' know?  
DANIEL

Daniel?  
LINDA

What? I just wanted... wanted a change for a bit. I'm fifteen now, and...  
DANIEL

LINDA

Uh huh. You're practically an adult, so you wanted some... solitude to enjoy a juice box?

*(Daniel looks at it, and we can see in his face that he knows he's sunk. Still...)*

DANIEL

That's been there for a while.

*(She walks over, picks it up, feels that it's still half full.)*

LINDA

Where'd it come from?

DANIEL

How should I know?

LINDA

We don't buy that brand, Daniel. Now do you want to tell me what's going on, and why you've suddenly decided to start lying to me, or do you want to get grounded?

DANIEL

You can't ground me—

LINDA

Now listen, baby. I'm not—

DANIEL

I'm not your baby! I'm fifteen—

LINDA

Enough! Start talking.

DANIEL

I *am* talking. Can't you hear me? This is me talking.

LINDA

Who else is in here?

DANIEL

Nobody! It's just—

LINDA

I saw you take the mustard in here, and I'm now out of patience. You can either tell me what's going on, or—

*(Keith emerges from his hiding place.)*

KEITH

Danny, I don't want... I don't want...

DANIEL

Keith, just... *(Turning to Linda.)* Please. I don't want you involved in this. Keith just needed someplace to stay for a little while, so I told him he could hang out here.

LINDA

Oh my god.

DANIEL

His parents kicked him out. They're keeping quiet about the whole thing, because they don't want to upset the neighborhood. He needed a place to stay until his grandparents could...

*(He fades off as Linda stares at the boys. The silence grows tense.)*

LINDA

Your parents kicked you out?

*(Keith looks at Daniel, who nods ever so slightly for him to say yes.)*

KEITH

Uh huh.

LINDA

Keith, are you sure there isn't anything else going on?

DANIEL

I told you—

*(He stops short at a glare from Linda. After a long pause, she makes a decision. Linda takes out her car keys and hands them to Daniel)*

LINDA

Daniel, would you please go out to the car and get the stack of flyers in the front seat?

*(He looks like he is about to object, but can see that arguing with his mother further is not a good idea. He takes the keys and exits. Linda looks around in the meantime, and spies the hairbrush.)*

Is that your hairbrush?

KEITH

Yes, Ms. Kennedy.

LINDA

You cut it in half?

KEITH

Mm hmm.

LINDA

Why?

KEITH

*(Stunned, but finally coming up with an answer.)*

We wanted to see what was inside. You know, like if it was hollow.

LINDA

They don't work as well when they're cut in half.

KEITH

Right.

LINDA

Is there anything you want to tell me?

*(Keith just looks at her, clearly scared out of his mind.)*

Like maybe why your parents kicked you out?

KEITH

I don't know. I think maybe 'cuz I broke something.

LINDA

I see.

KEITH

Something real expensive.

*(Daniel enters. He has a box of missing person pamphlets with him, which he puts down after he hands the car keys back. Linda looks at him expectantly.)*

DANIEL

Mom. You can't send Keith back.

LINDA

Daniel...

DANIEL

You just can't!

LINDA

Daniel... He has to go home. His parents are worried sick about him.

DANIEL

No! He has to stay here!

LINDA

Why?

DANIEL

Because they... He just has to!

LINDA

Hon, if you were missing, I'd be scared out of mind. You can't keep someone's child hidden away. Rick and Angela have been—

DANIEL

I don't care! We can't send him back! He has to stay here!

LINDA

Why? Tell me why.

DANIEL

I... I can't. I promised.

*(There's another long pause, as they consider each other.)*



LINDA

I'm sorry. I have to call and let them know he's okay. I have to.

KEITH

Please, Ms. Kennedy. Please just let me stay here. Just until tonight. Me and Danny.... We were playing a game, and we just want to finish. I'll go home after that. And I'll pay you back for the hot dog. I promise.

LINDA

Keith... Are you scared to go home?

*(Keith just stares at Linda.)*

It's okay. You don't have to answer. I'm sorry.

*(Linda is clearly torn, but finally makes a decision. She gets out a cell phone and dials.)*

Hi, Angie. It's Linda. *(Pause.)* Yeah, I found him. He's okay. *(Pause.)* In our shed. He and Daniel were playing a game, and I think it just got a little... *(Pause.)* Of course.

*(Linda hangs up. Daniel is glaring daggers at her.)*

I know this doesn't make sense to you, Daniel, but... I wish you'd be honest with me. I know it doesn't seem like it, but it really is the best thing to do.

DANIEL

You want me to be honest? Fine. You're think you're so smart, but you're not! You're stupid! You think you know what's best for everyone, but you don't. You don't know *shit!*

LINDA

Daniel!

DANIEL

Like that! You're all upset because I swore, like that's such a big deal, but you can just send Keith back home like...

*(He suddenly grows silent.)*

LINDA

Keith... Your mom is coming over. She'll be here in a minute or two.

KEITH

I know.

LINDA

I want you to know that... that... (*Muttering to herself...*) Oh god. Look, Keith. If... If something should... happen... If you... you know... accidentally get hurt or anything...

*(Linda, just completely at a loss for words, falls silent. Keith stares at her, and she realizes that there's simply no winning in the situation.)*

Just remember that you can always come back and... and play with Danny, okay?

*(Keith continues to stare at her, and a moment later Angela rushes.)*

ANGELA

There you are! Don't you realize that daddy and I have been worried to death about you!?! How dare you worry us like that!

*(She looks hard at Keith.)*

Well? What do you have to say for yourself?

KEITH

I'm sorry, mom. I...

ANGELA

You what?

*(Linda watches, trying to understand how Angela would not immediately embrace her son.)*

KEITH

I'm sorry.

ANGELA

Well, we'll discuss this tonight. You get home and go straight to your room!

*(Keith runs out of the shed, and Angela turns to Daniel and Linda. She looks at Daniel with an unreadable expression, then she turns to Linda and her expression softens to one of grief mixed with relief.)*

Thank you. Thank you so much for calling. I can't begin to tell you what a relief this is to us.

LINDA

*(Uncharacteristically cool and reserved...)*

This must have been very traumatic for everyone.

ANGELA

You can't imagine. Rick and I've been going out of our minds. I mean, can you imagine if Danny ran away? Or Libby? You invest everything in your children, and... well... thank heavens he's safe.

LINDA

Yeah. Safe.

*(Angela turns to leave, but stops when Linda speaks...)*

Angie?

*(Angela turns around. Linda points to the brush.)*

I think that's your hairbrush.

*(Angela looks at the brush, and then back at Linda. Linda never stops watching her.)*

Isn't it?

*(The two women stare at each other, Linda's expression is hard, and a look of worry/guilt comes over Angela's face.)*

Angela?

ANGELA

As a matter of fact, I think you're right.

LINDA

So funny that Keith would cut it in half like that.

ANGELA

Well, you know how boys are.

*(She starts towards the brush while saying...)*

Always breaking things just to see how—

*(Linda walks between Angela and the brush.)*

LINDA

I'll throw it away for you.

ANGELA

I don't want to put you out. You've already done so much—

LINDA

Nonsense. I'm glad to help. Well, you must be exhausted from worry after these last few days. Why don't you go home and get some rest.

*(Angela pauses, trying to find a way to take the brush, but the pressure of Linda's expressionless and unrelenting stare finally grows too uncomfortable.)*

ANGELA

Well, thank you again.

LINDA

Don't mention it.

*(Angela exits, and Linda turns to look at Daniel. Her expression has softened into one of pride, but he doesn't notice.)*

DANIEL

Let me guess. I'm grounded for, like, forever.

*(Linda shakes her head no, a smile of pride growing even bigger.)*

LINDA

Fifteen already... Seems like just yesterday you were my little boy.

*(She picks up the broken hairbrush, puts an arm around Daniel, and starts to lead him out.)*

Come on. We have a difficult phone call to make, and there are some things we should talk about first. You're not an adult yet, and you don't know everything. It's okay to get help with the big problems.

*(She stops, and looks at him directly.)*

But Daniel?

DANIEL

Yeah?

LINDA

I want you to know... I'm really proud of you.

*(They exit. Lights out.)*