

"THE BODYBUILDER"  
by Mitch Koehler

FADE IN, YOU WEAK MAMA'S BOY:

INT. WORLD CLASS GYM – EVENING

Grunts. Gasps. The sounds of dripping sweat, testosterone and machismo fill the atmosphere. Heavy steel plates smacking the ground.

KEITH HOLTON, 28, a pure, natural athlete. Keith has a warm, good guy charm about him – no macho, no bullshit, what you see is what you get. Clean brown crew cut, spiked at the top. A little 90's.

He enters the gym. This is a bodybuilder's sanctuary where stakes are raised, attitudes are in, and blood is pumping at an all time high.

RANDOM SPANISH LIFTER

Keith Holton! What's going on, brother?

The two exchange a wicked strong handshake, guns exposed, something reminiscent of the Schwarzenegger-Weathers bond in Predator.

KEITH

Not much.

RANDOM SPANISH LIFTER

You excited for tomorrow?

KEITH

You know it, man.

RANDOM SPANISH LIFTER

Hey Holt! You better work on those glutes, my friend. You got some sick competition tomorrow! I hope you're ready, buddy.

KEITH HOLTON

Ha. Why wouldn't I be ready?

All of a sudden, the glass doors of the gym kick open and HANK SALLAS and MITCH MITCHELL bust through the room like gladiators ready to take on two tigers.

HANK SALLAS, 39, Keith's arch enemy -- a prominent figure in the body-sculpting world, stops and flexes in the mirror, extending his

arm in a striking pose, bulging his bicep muscle and anchoring down against his neck with his other arm. His pose looks awesome.

MITCH MITCHELL, 42, a bigger, buffer, even more monstrous dude in a black tank that reads "M. MITCHELL" on the back and black shorts that barely cover any part of his bulging body mass. This guy's enormous!

Mitchell smacks a pretty trainer's ass.

KEITH

The hell are they doing here?

RANDOM SPANISH LIFTER

You didn't hear? Mitchell recovered from his torn meniscus. Word is he's competing tomorrow.

Instantly irritated, Keith throws down his gym bag. Embroidered in yellow on the side it reads "Can't Slow Down."

He takes a seat one bench over from Mitchell.

KEITH

I thought you were out for the season.

MITCH MITCHELL

Blame the doctors, my man. They cleared my shit. Said I was ready to take down your sorry ass.

(beat)

I know how bad you wanted this. Sorry, bud.

Mitchell pats Keith on the shoulder. Keith snuffs his hand away.

KEITH

Yeah, you'll be sorry.

Keith adds 45's to the Olympic bar.

Hank approaches and sits one bench over from him. Keith, now in the middle of two competitors he least expected to see.

HANK

What are you doing with these, 45's, Holt? You got a friend to help you lift them?

KEITH

I thought I could smell icy hot.

(beat)

I'll let you know when I'm done with the 45s. Probably be after your naptime though.

HANK

What are you doing Holton? Aren't you tired of losing year after year?

KEITH

I thought you were "retired."

HANK

Well, I heard you were back in town, so I thought I'd make an appearance. Ya know, one last hoorah.

Keith coughs and snuffs off his cocky comment.

He plugs in some iPod earphones. Cranks the music loud. Heavy rock music drowns out the sounds of the gym.

Puts on another pair of 45's – there must be six on each side. Which is absolutely crazy.

He pumps --

One pump. Two pumps. Three pumps.

Keith screams like he's about to give birth.

Fourth pump.

He drops the rack of 45's to the ground. Done.

MITCH

You make it look easy, Holt.

Keith looks up, agitated by his compliment.

One pump. Two pumps. Three pumps.

Keith lifts his neck and stares across at Hank Sallas, then back at Mitchell.

He lays his head back down.

KEITH HOLTON  
(to himself)

Come on, let's go.

With a deep grunt, Keith takes his frustration out on the weights with no mercy.

The bar clinks fucking hard against the arms of the rack.

INT. LOCKER ROOM – LATER ON

We PAN the floor of the bathroom. Passing unoccupied stalls, we stop at a pair of massive calves and fresh Saucony Shadow sneakers.

CAMERA rises and the bathroom stall door opens – it's Keith. Mop and bucket in hand. He flushes the toilet. He must work here.

The stall next door over opens up – Hank Sallas.

HANK

Hey Holt, when you're done cleaning my mighty dumps, I've got a pair of shorts with skid marks. You wanna make a buck?

Keith looks Hank in the eyes, face to face, neither giant about to flinch.

HANK

I guess I'll see you tomorrow, baby boy.

Blows Keith a kiss.

Keith doesn't speak a word. We'll settle this on the stage.

Hank struts out like he just dropped a load.

KEITH  
(sigh of relief)

Ah.

INT. WORLD CLASS GYM – MAIN AREA

Keith turns the lights off in the gym and heads toward the back.

INT. WORLD CLASS GYM – OUT BACK – MIDNIGHT

Luminescent street lamps light up the back of the parking lot. Bugs circle around the lights. Crickets chirp like little bitches in the grass.

Keith locks the doors on his way out and begins to hustle out to his car when suddenly we hear

VOICES in the background

Keith's eyes go wide.

He sneaks over behind a dumpster, peaking around the side.

Hank, Mitch, and LEROY SMALLER are clustered together, talking in hushed tones:

MITCH

What is this shit anyway?

HANK

**This** my friend is pushing me the extra mile.

MITCH

Naw, that's you dropping a dumbbell on your career.

They'll know, Hank.

HANK SALLAS

Oh really? You still think so?

Hank holds up a drug kit. A label on the side reads: CLEAN.

Hank grins. Mitch and Leroy can't help but smile.

HANK SALLAS

Been on this cycle for months. Undetectable. Makes the shit Martinez pulled back in '09 look like child's play,

LEROY SMALLER

Ha! This guy!

MITCH MITCHELL

Yo Smaller, what's a cycle run ya?

LEROY

For a month? 350.

Keith takes a look over -- CLOSE UP of glass syringes labeled Monday-Sunday.

Keith zooms in and takes a picture on his phone.

Hank pulls a glass tube out -- he flicks it with his middle finger. DINK.

HANK SALLAS

Get with the program or get left behind gentlemen.

Hank zips up the bag.

Keith's disgusted.

Kneeling down, Keith's shoe accidentally kicks the metal trashcan, causing a minor disturbance.

HANK SALLAS

Who's there?

The men hurry over.

Coast is clear.

EXT. HANK'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

A black Trans-Am, Steel Panther's "Death To All But Metal" blaring out the open window, screeches to a halt in front of a simple, ranch-style home with a dead lawn.

Hank jumps out, slams the door shut and stomps his way across the lawn to the front door. Pulls his keys out.

A moment later, a Ford Ranger truck drives by the house with its lights off.

INT. HANK'S HOUSE – BATHROOM

Hank is barely visible amongst clouds of steam from the shower.

INT. HANK'S HOUSE – LIVING ROOM

Doorknob turns. Front door opens.

A dark hoodied man with his hood up enters.

He scrambles around the living room, then to the kitchen, then back in the living room. He's looking for something.

INT. HANK'S HOUSE – BATHROOM

Hank is too busy lathering his sleek muscles to notice anything is happening two rooms away.

INT. HANK'S HOUSE – LIVING ROOM

Bingo. Two black-gloved hands are rifling through Hank's gym bag, pulling the syringes of juice out one by one, spilling a little out and sucking back up what appears to be

FORMALDAHYDE

from a glass bottle that reads Caution: XXX (for medical use only)

The man hears a NOISE. Startling him, he drops the tubes of steroids. Hank can be heard HUMMING. Gotta act fast.

The hooded man cleans up the tubes and puts them back in their case. Except for the last dose, which the man hides in his sweatshirt pocket.

INT. HANK'S HOUSE – BATHROOM

Hank turns the shower knobs. Curtain opens. His smooth, hairless chest swells with radiating heat. Humming a tune.

INT. HANK'S HOUSE – LIVING ROOM

The mysterious hands zip the bag back up.

INT. HANK'S HOUSE – BATHROOM

Steam is coming out of the bottom gap of the door. The bathroom door opens and we

SHUT THE FRONT DOOR

INT. HANK'S HOUSE – HALLWAY

Hank is singing to himself, combing his hair and sideburns.

He hops on the couch and aims the remote toward his flat screen.

HANK

Showtime!

EXT. HANK'S HOUSE – FRONT YARD

The dark truck slowly pulls away. Backing into Hank's trashcans. Cups and bottles spill out, littering onto the pavement.

INT. CAR

Keith is winding down the neighborhood trying to clear his head.

He turns on the radio. Some country song is playing – he changes channels. Some terrible pop song comes on – changes channels again.

RADIO HOST

That's the thing these young athletes don't know today. In this world, anything goes!

RADIO GUEST

But my points is, Jim, that athletes today are willing to use juice and growth hormones, regardless of the long term toll it takes on their bodies! It's just not something our youth should be aspiring to.

RADIO HOST

Well, whatever the case is, I don't want my kids looking up to these guys and being like "yeah, that's I want. That's **my** hero ... anyway, to all our locals listening out there, tomorrow is the first ever Tri-State Bodybuilding and

Weightlifting competition. I know what you're thinking – bodybuilding **AND** weightlifting?! That's right! A hybrid! Fierce and local competitors Mitch Mitchell and Hank Sallas will battle for the title. Come witness the madness of these monsters downtown tomorrow night at the Nova Center! This is a night you will not want to miss!

Keith switches off the radio. He's heard enough.

He pulls into a gas station.

INT. GAS STATION

A bell DINGS as the doors open.

KEITH HOLTON

30 on 7 please.

The clerk looks up. He obviously recognizes Keith. A big smile spreads across his face.

CLERK

Hey! Wait a second...you're that guy. You're um, Keith Holton, right?

Keith just stares back, used to this.

CLERK

I'm a huge fan. I'll be there tomorrow, ya know.

Keith smiles.

KEITH

I'll look for you

CLERK

Man, Rodriguez will be there. Leroy Smaller. Mitch Mitchell. Even Hank Sallas is making a comeback! Say, what's it been, like 5 years now?

Keith's smile fades to a blank stare. He swallows.

KEITH HOLTON

It's actually 4 years. But you know the thing about Hank? He's a cheater.

CLERK

Yeah, sorry pal. I just...you're a hero in this town, you know that?

KEITH

I appreciate that, but heroes don't come in second place.

Keith turns and walks out of the store.

EXT. OUTSIDE

Keith grabs a wiper from a bucket and flings it into the street.

Slides behind the wheel. Tears out of the gas station, nearly slamming into a beer delivery truck.

KEITH'S HOUSE

Keith pulls down a fairly nice cul-de-sack, parks his vehicle along the street and enters his house.

INT. KITCHEN

Keith's mother is making chicken and mashed potatoes.

KEITH'S MOM

Keith, dear, I made grilled chicken and veggies.

KEITH'S DAD

How ya doin' son? Eat up, your mother made plenty.

Keith doesn't say anything. He sits down at the dinner table, picks up a fork and begins eating.

Keith stops and looks up.

KEITH

You know, I'm gonna win tomorrow, dad.

KEITH'S DAD

I hope you do, bud.

KEITH'S MOM

Win or lose, you'll always be my champ. My little baby boy.

Keith's mother kisses Keith on the cheek. She squeezes his muscles.

KEITH

Seriously, guys. I'm gonna win.

KEITH'S DAD

Then do it, son. We all believe in you. Do you believe in you?

Keith locks eyes with his dad for a moment then drops his head down toward his plate.

KEITH

Thanks for dinner.

BEDROOM – MIDNIGHT

Keith is tossing and turning in his bed. Seems to be having some kind of heavy dream.

DISSOLVE TO: Keith's dreams

INT. COMPETITION

Keith is in front of thousands of people. Lights are on. Pressure is on. Keith leans down and grabs the bar in front of him. "Keith! Keith! Keith!" The crowd chants his name in unison. Something's wrong though. Keith begins to sweat heavily, struggling to pick up the bar. The sound of the crowd gets drowned out. All we hear is Keith's breathing. His face turns beet red. Trying and trying, he can't pick up the weight. He's failed himself.

KEITH

(mumbling)

NO! NO! NO! NO! NO! I can do it...

INT. BEDROOM

Keith wakes up.

EXT. GYM – MORNING

The gym manager passes by.

KEITH

Hey, Joe – you got a second?

JOE

Sure, Holt, what's up?

Keith pulls out his phone. Showing him the picture from last night.

KEITH

You know this guy on the right?

JOE

Yeah, I know that sly son of a bitch from a mile away. That's Leroy Smaller. He's from Jersey. Real scumbag type. I did some snooping around. Turns out he sells the good stuff. Found some of his shit in the lockers one day. As soon as I knew I banned him from this place. Don't need any hot head pushers around here. Totally embarrasses the sport.

KEITH

Gotcha. Thanks, Joe.

INT. COMPETITION DAY – ARENA – CAR – AFTERNOON

Keith sits in the parking lot of the huge complex. His fingers tapping against the face of the stereo. He takes a deep breath.

He pulls out the vial of liquid he stole. Flicks it.

Rolls up his sleeve. Tying a big rubber band around his arm, cutting off circulation. His veins popping out like a Popeye cartoon. He sticks the needle in his arm and slowly injects into his vein.

Keith's eyes roll back. What a feeling!

Rubbing his hands on his face.

KEITH

God dammit! Woo!

He looks in the rearview mirror, making eye contact with himself. A crazed look in his eyes. We haven't seen this look of raging greed in Keith before.

Who am I? What have I done?

He smiles like a piece of shit.

Exits the car with his gym bag.

INT. COMPETITION DAY – BACK STAGE

Leroy is doing a small chest press to get his pump on.

Keith enters the room. He locks the door behind him.

LEROY

Is that you, Holt?

Hey, spot me, would ya?

KEITH

I wouldn't want to hold you back.

Keith approaches from behind.

He lifts a little –

KEITH

There we go.

Leroy does a few reps.

KEITH

Come on. More.

LEROY

(struggling)

Hold on. I almost got it!

CLOSE IN on Keith's hands – he releases his pull. His hands go easy and flip around, switching from underneath to on top.

He begins to press down on the Olympic bar.

LEROY

Hey! Cut it out!

Keith applies more pressure.

LEROY

What are you doing, man?!

No response from Keith. His eyes are cold, dead. Leroy's face goes red as he continues to struggle—air escaping his lungs quickly.

LEROY

HELP!

Keith sits on his face. No one can hear Leroy's muffled screams.

Keith pushes down, harder and harder, suffocating Leroy.

He can't hold much longer.

Finally, Leroy's arms go limp and fall to his sides. The 400+ lb. weights cave in on his chest. His sternum and rib cage CRACK as the weight crushes him, like a boot stepping on wishbones.

Keith drags Leroy's body into a nearby closet.

INT. MAIN STAGE

Television monitors, big microphones, epic speakers dangling from the ceiling. Lights are on, almost baking the stage.

A bodybuilder finishes, waves to the audience and struts off stage.

ANNOUNCER

And now we present Milwaukee's finest young up and comer,  
Jeffrey Cumber!

Keith peeks out from curtain on the side of the stage. This is it. He can feel it. It's almost his time to shine.

The 5,000 person crowd goes wild as new guy JEFFREY CUMBER trots gallantly on stage.

His blonde, surfer boy hair makes everyone envy with excitement. His song is playing. He strikes a pose — cheers fill the hall.

And Jeffrey is impressive. His face camera ready. And his teeth, pure white.

In the crowd, a pair of young GIRLS ogle him and whisper back and forth to each other. Giggling. He's hot.

INT. BACK STAGE

A stage manager hustles around the back stage area, in a panic:

STAGE MANAGER

Where is Hank?! That dipshit goes on any minute!

INT. HANK'S HOUSE - FAMILY ROOM

From behind the cushiony chair, we see the TV is on, ESPN soundtrack in the back.

REVEAL Hank Sallas, totally frozen, like a white clay figure of himself stuck in time, with swollen hands.

His left hand faintly grasping a syringe of the good stuff.

INT. MAIN STAGE

The five judges facing in front of the stage hold up their scorecards.

7.5 -- 8.3 -- 9.0 -- 8.5 -- 7.2

Jeffrey dusts off his hands, waves and walks off.

INT. BACK STAGE

Mitch Mitchell warming up. A bronze spray tan bottle sitting on the bench.

Noticing Mitchell isn't paying attention, Keith grabs Mitchell's bottle of bronze lotion and drips something into it.

A strong vapor emanates from the mouth of the bottle.

MITCH

Hey Keith! What are you doing?

Keith hides his hands behind his back. Oops.

KEITH

Just, uh...mentally preparing myself.

Mitchell eyes him up, unsure if he believes him or not.

MITCH

Here, take this -

Mitchell tosses Holton an unopened container of bronzer. Keith catches it with his empty hand.

Keith smiles.

KEITH

Thanks, bud.

MITCH

Oh. And Holton -

Keith turns around. Uh oh.

MITCH

Good luck out there.

KEITH

You too.

INT. MAIN STAGE

Keith circles back and forth in anticipation on the side of the stage.

INT. BACKSTAGE

Mitch Mitchell squirts a big glob of bronzer on his chest. He begins to smear it in.

INT. MAIN STAGE

Mitch Mitchell's SCREAMS can be heard from the back rooms.

Keith smiles like a maniac. Competition eliminated.

ANNOUNCER

Next up, KEITH! THE HAMMER! HOLTOONNN!!!

The crowd goes buck wild.

[Power Trip's "Hammer of Doubt" kicks up]

Keith waves and smiles bigger than he ever has. This is it. This is his moment.

He strikes a solid pose. Crowd goes nuts.

Leans over to pick up a bar with lots of 45's on it. His fingers wrap around the bar. He gives it one little tug. Tenses his leg muscles. He lifts --

The bar rests upon his knees -- he picks it up even higher!

Cheers from thousands of diehard fans.

Neck veins pulsing. His face about to explode with blood.

He drops the weight. The smack of the ground echoes throughout the arena.

Judges raise their scorecards.

8.7 -- 9.2 -- 8.2 -- 7.8 -- 8.1

Not quite satisfied, Keith's smile turns to a smirk. Taking deep breaths.

Determined. Well over failure. One last shot. "You can do it" his face reads.

It's time for another clean and jerk.

Keith picks up a 1000 lb. barbell. The bar itself bending into a rainbow. The tension on this steel rod looks like its about to snap like a celery stick. Gripping it hard with his powdered hands.

He lifts -- his hands shaking with immense tension.

Bringing the bar to his knees. Done.

He jerks the bar to his chest. ALMOST.

Shaking, he lifts even higher, arms extended above his head.

Keith looks like he wants to scream, but nothing comes out.

ANNOUNCER

Keith Holton has DONE IT!

ONE THOUSAND pounds, ladies and gentlemen!

Keith holds his composure, smiling, taking in all of the lights, all of the glory. The ultimate athlete.

But before he can drop the weights to the ground, a DROP OF BLOOD falls from his nose. Then another. Then another. Before we know it, he's bleeding from his eyes, ears and nose. Mid-lift crisis.

Straddling 1000 pounds above his head, Keith's skin begins to burn and boil. His skin looks like it's about to explode. Looks bad. Real bad.

Keith's upper body and face peeling apart from severe reactions to the steroids. Or was it Formaldehyde...

The audience dying down to an awkward silence. The judges stare in horror.

Keith wobbles. He can't move. His balance uncertain. This was not part of the plan.

In a test of human strength, the massive weight Keith has over his head begins to tilt.

He loses his footing.

The weight pulls his arms behind his back, his arms RIPPING off, squirting blood all over the stage and onto the judge's table.

The judges stand up, drenched in blood. The crowd stands, hand over mouth, shocked in horror.

PAN the crowd to a a) MOTHER shielding the eyes of her 6 year-old daughter, b) a man stuck in disbelief spilling his fountain soda all over his shirt, c) the pair of little teenage fan girls bawling their eyes out, mascara running down their cheeks.

Keith's arms still attached, gripping the barbell behind him. Eery.

He stands there spewing blood from both upper sides of his body.

This armless man drops to his knees, looks out into the crowd and stares blankly.

A judge hurries over to his aid. Life ebbing out of him.

JUDGE

Stay with me son. The ambulance is on its way.

KEITH

...Did I win?

JUDGE

What?

KEITH

Did I win...did I...did i...

His body finally collapses forward and smacks the stage face first, blood spilling out into puddles on the once pristine floor.

THE END