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just me talking," he says. "Just Keegan."

That Keegan is a city guy who lives in Tribeca, in New York City, with his wife, Elle, a director and producer, and prefers room service to roughing it. He's a classically trained dramatic actor and a voracious reader, currently immersing himself in neuroplasticity, Formula One racing, and American history.

His own history begins in Detroit, born to a white mother and a black father, then adopted by a black father and a white mother. Shy and "angst ridden" as a child, Key came out of his shell when he fell in with the theater kids in high school. After earning a master's in fine arts, he planned to spend his career on the Shakespeare festival circuit. Instead, Key discovered comedy, stumbling onto the Second City improv group, then joining the cast of *MADtv* in 2004 for six seasons, then starring with

Jordan Peele in their eponymous, Emmy-winning Comedy Central series, producing 298 oft-quoted cinematic sketches over five seasons. (Fans still shout to Key on the street, quoting his Mr. Garvey character—the increasingly agitated substitute teacher who mispronounces the kids' names, calling Aaron "A-A-ron!" and Denise "Dee-nice.")

The series provided a turning point for Key when he realized he kept falling back on his go-to choice for comedy—and "my go-to choice is anger," he says. Key began exploring alternate reactions and, yes, "subtle-izing" his work. He learned he could do less physically for the same result—with a turn of the head or just a raised eyebrow—and he's been refining his choices ever since. "The strategy is to bet on yourself," he says. "I did it with *Key & Peele*, so why shouldn't I do it again?"



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