

One-Sided Triangle

By

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"Karen, will you shut up?" Tammy screamed. She knocked everything off the dresser top and struggled to push the piece of furniture across the bedroom door, but on the carpet, it was like trying to push a parked car for all she strained.

Karen sat balled up and crying, in the far corner of the room beside the bed, nursing a bleeding slash on her left arm. Her matted blonde hair was plastered to the side of her face with sweat. Tears wet her cheeks.

"Karen!" Tammy strained against the dresser, teeth gritted. "Come help me you fuckin' bitch!" She rammed her back against the dresser and pushed. Her thighs burned and veins stood out in her neck. Finally, with a muffled scrape on the carpet, the dresser lurched forward and slid into place to barricade the bedroom door.

It was the only way in or out of the small room. There were no windows, not even a shallow closet; No place else for them to run or hide.

Tammy sat on the floor a moment to catch her breath. She wiped sweat from her brow not realizing she left smudges of blood on her forehead. Karen's constant crying was like a dull drill piercing her skull. She snatched a hair brush from the cluttered mess on the carpet and hurled it

at the woman.

“Shut up!” She growled.

Karen jerked as the brush smashed against the wall beside her head and broke in half.

Michael moaned from the bed, and Tammy leapt to his side.

“Michael! Michael? Are you okay?” She caressed his face.

He was barely conscious. His eyes fluttered and rolled back into his head. She lifted his shirt to check his wound, and a deep gash sneered up at her from his abdomen. Blood spilled down his sides to soak the bed sheets under him.

“Shit, shit, shit!” Tammy clawed through her dark hair. She had to do something fast. She had to stop the bleeding. She folded a bed sheet and pressed down on Michael’s wound. His body arched sharply under the pressure and he groaned. He flailed sluggishly as he tried to push her away.

“Michael? Can you hear me? Please, just hold on!” She fought against his hands. The blood wouldn’t stop. He was so pale now. “I’m trying to stop the bleeding, sweetie!” tears watered her shaky voice.

Michael moaned breathlessly. His mouth was moving, trying to form words. Tammy leaned in to hear, but only empty rasps fell from his lips.

“What is it, Michael? What are you trying to say, baby?” she wiped tears from her eyes with the heel of her hand and left a streak of blood on her cheek. She knew he was going to die. Beyond the walls, police sirens flared to life. Tires screeched. Car doors slammed.

“Is...is he okay?” Karen sobbed.

“Shut up!” Tammy barked.

“Please, Tammy, we have to get—“

Tammy lunged off the bed and grabbed Karen by the shoulders.

“Shut up! Just be quite!” she shook her.

Karen cringed with blood shot eyes.

“If you don’t be quite, they’ll hear us, and if they hear us, you’re dead!” she searched Karen’s eyes for acknowledgment. “Do you understand me? Do you?” she whispered.

Karen pursed her lips then nodded.

Tammy smoothed Karen's hair back from her cheeks, and tried to wipe away smears of blood, but the woman shied away from her hands.

Karen took a deep breath. "What are you going to--"

Tammy slapped her. "Didn't I tell you to shut up?" Her palm and finger tips burned.

"Okay, okay!" Karen nursed her cheek.

The woman was losing it, but Tammy couldn't blame her. She was surprised at herself for handling things as well as she was. Everything had become so weird so fast.

She thought she heard something outside the bedroom door, behind the barricade. She clamped her hand around Karen's mouth, to muffle her sobs, and listened to the air. Her eyes darted as she scanned the room, as if she could see the sounds.

There was a shuffling noise in one of the other rooms.

Tammy eyed the kitchen knife lying just beside the dresser. She turned to Karen and brought her index finger up to lips. Karen nodded with tearful eyes. Tammy went for her knife. She snatched up the bloody blade, leaned back against the dresser, and listened to the silence. Michael moaned again, and Tammy was back at his side in a heartbeat.

"What is it, baby?" she laid the knife beside him and ran her fingers through his hair, more to comfort herself than him. The folded sheet that covered his abdomen was nearly soaked through with blood now, and she pressed down on his wound again to stop the bleeding. It was futile she knew, but she had to do something. She felt so helpless.

His lips moved again and she leaned in to listen.

"se...le...ren...o" he rasped.

"What? Say it again, baby!" she took his hand in hers and squeezed. His hands were so cold. He was dying.

"P...please, le...let Kar...en go." He forced the words from of his mouth.

Tammy pulled back and frowned at his words. "What? No, no, no, I can't do that, baby." She shook her head.

"Don't...h...hurt her." He coughed blood and gasped for air. "She...didn't...do anything."

Tammy grabbed the knife off the bed and squeezed the handle until her knuckles turned

white. A ball of pressure expanded within her chest, and she took a deep breath to keep it in.

“Don’t hurt her? Why? What’s so fucking special about her?” her hands were shaking. “Look at her! She won’t even fight back! I don’t understand you, Michael! Why the fuck do you want her? *I love you!*”

Michael squirmed and moaned under Tammy. She was pressing down on his wound so hard that her arm shook from the strain. Her chest heaved with the anger she held at bay.

“Please, don’t hurt him again?” Karen squeaked. “We have to get him to a hospital!”

“You don’t fucking listen do you?” Tammy snapped.

“Tammy, stop!” Michael rasped.

“Since you like talking so much, what is it about you, Karen?” Tammy squinted down at her. “Is it your hair, your eyes, your lips?” She fixed on the woman.

“Tammy!” Michael called.

“Shut up, Michael!” she spat over her shoulder.

“Tammy!”

“I was his cheerleader! I believed in his dreams! I was there when he needed someone to talk to!” Tammy accentuated each point with a short jab of her knife.

“Tammy, stop it!”

“Where the fuck were you, Karen? Oh, yeah, you were in Puerto Vallarta with your Sorority sisters! Why do you get the benefits off of all *my* hard work?”

“Tammy—“

“*I said shut up, Michael!*” she plunged the knife into his chest. “Why won’t you ever *listen* to me?” she stabbed him again and again. He gasped and struggled to breathe.

Karen jumped to her feet and screamed. Tammy vaulted off the bed, grabbed her by the throat, and slammed her back against the wall.

“Shut up!” She brought the bloody knife point up to Karen’s bulging eyes. “I want you to tell me when you first started seeing him again. How long were you two sneaking around?”

Tears crept down Karen’s cheeks. “I...I don’t know w—“

“Don’t *lie* to me!” Tammy slammed Karen's head back against the wall. “How *long?*”

There was pounding at the bedroom door.

Tammy covered Karen's mouth with her hand. "You make a sound and I'll cut your fucking throat!" She warned.

"Who's in there?" a voice shouted from behind the door. "Open the door it's the police!"

Tammy stared threateningly into Karen's eyes and brought the point of her knife up to the woman's throat.

The police pounded on the door again. "Open up! Whosoever in there, open up! It's the police!"

"If you tell me how long you were sneaking around, I'll let you go." Tammy whispered. "Just tell me how long. How long have I been a fool?"

"I.." Karen swallowed. "I don't know what you're talking about." she rasped.

"Stop playing games, Karen! How long?"

"I said I don't know what you're *talking about!*" Karen yelled and pushed Tammy back against the dresser. Lightning shot through Tammy's lower back when the corner of the dresser dug in. She fell forward on her hands and knees hissing at pain.

"Help me! Help me!" Karen yelled. "The door's blocked! She's gonna kill me!" She ran around to the front of the dresser and tried to pull it away from the door, while the police on the other side tried to bash the door in.

Tammy sprang to her feet and spun towards Karen with her blade whipping through the air and split the back of Karen's blouse open. Karen screamed as a streak of red parted her flesh. Tammy reared back to strike again, but Karen turned and caught her arm as the blade arched for her chest. They struggled against each other, grunting and twirling in erratic dance of life and death.

The police pounding on the door fed the tempo.

Karen smacked Tammy across the face, and she fell back on the bed on top of Michael's limp body.

Karen lunged, but Tammy caught her with a foot to the gut and kicked her back against the dresser. The knife flashed in the light as Tammy charged. They twirled again. The blade shook and jerked back and forth as Tammy tried to sink it into Karen's throat. Karen bit into Tammy's forearm and clawed at her eyes.

Tammy screamed under Karen's teeth ripping her flesh and kned her in the stomach. Karen staggered back with a grunt, and Tammy struck like lightning and cut a jagged line of red across Karen's breasts. Karen fell back into the corner of the room and Tammy was on her like a beast.

"Stop!" Officer's yelled behind her. "Drop the knife! Now!"

Tammy froze over Karen, knife poised to strike.

"I said drop the knife!"

Tammy spun towards the two officers. Gun barrels flashed.

Tammy jumped nervously at the deafening blasts and dropped her knife. She staggered back, tripped over her own feet, and collapsed. She stared up at the popcorn ceiling and gasped for air. For some reason, it was so hard to breathe now. She tried to sit up, but her limbs would not respond. She coughed on the warm liquid filling her throat, swallowed it, and stole a gulp of air.

One of the officers stepped over her. "Are you okay, Miss?"

He wasn't talking to Tammy.

A second officer knelt down beside her as she struggled to breathe and placed his fingers on her neck. His fingers were so warm on her flesh. Why was he touching her like that?

"Is she okay?" the officer kneeling over her asked his partner.

He wasn't asking about Tammy either.

"She has some cuts." His partner answered. "Miss, are you okay? What happened here?"

"She...she's crazy!" Karen shrieked.

*No, I'm not!* Tammy couldn't speak.

"She stabbed Michael and tried to kill me! She's crazy!"

*No, I'm not!* Tammy tried to speak again, but could only suck in air. *Why does everybody call me that?*

The officer kneeling over her glanced down at her briefly, and she thought he had kind, gentle eyes. He looked very young, very handsome. Tammy thought the look they shared might have meant something even though it only lasted a moment.

The handsome Officer spoke into the radio on his jacket and requested back up and

paramedics. A female voice responded over a static transmission.

Karen was still crying in the background.

*I wish that bitch would shut up!*

“We have one male Caucasian dead at the scene with multiple stab wounds, a female Caucasian with minor lacerations. The suspect is down, a female Caucasian with gunshot wounds to the chest. She may not make it.

The handsome officer moved out of Tammy’s field of view, but she heard him speak.

“Miss, can you tell us what happened? Do you know this woman?”

Tammy managed to turn her head to the side to see both officers kneeling over Karen in corner of the room.

*Why?* She wondered. *What was so special about Karen?* Why did no care about her? Not her family, her so-called friends back home, not Karen, not Michael! Not even the Officers cared about her.

“Her name is Tammy, and I told you, she’s crazy!” Karen muttered. “Michael and I were just hanging out watching movies. She came over, uninvited, and just barged in yelling at us and accusing us of sneaking around behind her back!”

“So, she and Michael were in a relationship?”

“What? No! Michael is *my* boyfriend...was...my—“ Karen cried.

*No, he was mine!*

“So, why did she think you two were sneaking around? Could Michael have been seeing her without your knowledge?”

“No, no, she just moved here two weeks ago, or so she said.”

“How do you know her then?”

“School, she’s in my psychology class. She was put into our group for a class project. She said she didn’t know anybody here, so we decided to show her around because she was alone.”

*I’m always alone!*

“Oh my god! I think she killed Cheryl too! Oh my god! Oh my god!” Karen trails off into deep sobs.

“It’ll be okay. Don’t worry. Everything will be fine.” The handsome Officer put an arm

around her. “Now, tell me who Cheryl is.”

*It's not fair! It's never fair!* Tears fell from Tammy's eyes and blurred her vision. It felt like she was breathing through a straw now even though her mouth was wide open, gasping for air. *No matter how hard I try, I'm always overlooked! I'm always...alone! Nobody...ever cares...about...m-*