

BLASTER

by

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BLASTER

Characters

KARL, 20s-30s, dressed in business casual.

BOY, early teens, in shorts and logo T.

BRIDGET, roughly the same age as Karl, in full business attire.

Time

Now.

Setting

A bench next to a trash can in a public park.

BLASTER

KARL enters. He looks around and checks the time on his cell. He sits on the park bench. He turns on a tablet and settles in to read. After a moment, BOY enters with an assault-style water gun. He approaches KARL unseen and lets him have it at point-blank range. KARL flinches.

KARL

What the...!

BOY laughs and dances out of reach.

BOY

Gotcha, mister.

KARL jumps up.

KARL

What'd you do that for, you little shit!

BOY

Bad word. Bad word.

BOY blasts KARL again. KARL shields his tablet and retreats behind the bench.

KARL

Cut it out, goddamnit!

BOY

Blast-phemy.

BOY blasts KARL once more. KARL dodges and recalculates.

KARL

OK, I get it. You can put the gun down. No need to shoot. I'm cool.

BOY lowers gun. KARL comes out from behind the bench, cautiously.

KARL (CONT'D)

I'll just sit here quietly. Minding my own business. And you're free to run along.

BOY

Don't want to. I like it here.

KARL

It's a big park. Plenty of room. Why don't you go shoot ducks over by the pond?

BOY

Rather stay here.

KARL

Why? What do you have against me?

BOY

Don't even know you.

KARL

Then why the fuck are you bothering me?

BOY

Bad word.

BOY blasts KARL, who cowers.

KARL

All right! OK! Je-sus!

BOY

Our Lord in vain.

BOY blasts KARL, who reflexively holds the tablet up as a shield. KARL is near tears.

KARL

Who are you?

BOY strikes a superhero pose.

BOY

Profanity Police! Curse Cop!

KARL

What do you want from me?

BOY

A swear-free vocabulary. And 10 dollars.

KARL

What?! You little mother--.

KARL stops himself as BOY brandishes gun with a warning.

BOY

Uh, uh, uh-uh...

KARL
No, no, don't shoot. You're right. You're right. No more swearing.

BOY
And 10 bucks.

KARL
Yes. Ten. Ten...

KARL holds up one hand protectively while setting the tablet down with the other. KARL fumbles through his wallet. Gives up.

KARL (CONT'D)
All I have are 20s. Can you make change?

BOY
Twenty's good.

KARL
But--

BOY raises the gun in one hand while reaching into his pocket with the other.

BOY
With 20 you get a paper towel.

BOY holds out paper square with his free hand, making sure to keep KARL covered. KARL hesitates. BOY squeezes off a warning shot that falls short, making KARL jump. KARL holds out the \$20 bill. The two make the exchange.

KARL
We all good now?

BOY
Are you good, you mean.

KARL
Yeah. Yes. I am.

BOY
No more swears?

KARL
No more swears.

BOY

Good for you. Have a nice day, mister.

BOY exits, pocketing the money. KARL, furious but helpless, watches him go. After a moment, he collapses onto the bench, wiping futilely at his tablet, even as he continues to drip more water on it. Perhaps 15 seconds of utter despair pass before BRIDGET enters.

BRIDGET

Sorry I'm late, honey, I--

BRIDGET stops dead.

BRIDGET (CONT'D)

Karl, what happened to you? You're soaking wet.

KARL takes a deep breath. When he finally speaks it is with the barely controlled diction of a man looking over the precipice of insanity and wondering Why not?

KARL

No shit I'm soaking fucking wet. Some fucking little vigilante monster with a fucking water-blaster assault rifle fucking attacked me while I was fucking sitting on this fucking park bench minding my own goddamn business...

BRIDGET

Oh, Karl. I've told you a thousand times I don't care for that kind of language. You must stop or I'll be forced to impose consequences.

KARL

Consequences?

BRIDGET

Yes. You know. A denial of some sort. Of a physical nature.

Sobbing, KARL buries his face in his hands, a picture of the most abject resignation.

BRIDGET (CONT'D)

Oh, Karl, you're being overly dramatic now.

KARL

You don't understand.

BRIDGET

Of course, I understand. We've been over this before. Lots of times.

KARL

But, but, but--

BRIDGET

You've run out of excuses, Karl. You know that.

KARL

Please. Listen. It wasn't my fault. I was...I was provoked.

BRIDGET

That's your most clichéd excuse.

KARL

It's true. He...taunted me. He wouldn't let up.

BRIDGET

OK, I'll play along. This one last time. Who exactly?

KARL

I don't know. A complete stranger. That's just it: There was no reason for his onslaught.

BRIDGET

A monster you called him.

KARL

That's right. I'm telling you. I'm innocent. I was just sitting here. And...and he came up. And without warning.

BRIDGET

He spritzed some seltzer down your pants.

KARL

Yeah.

(Long, bitter beat.)

Basically.

BRIDGET

Well, we gotten off the point again, haven't we? The subject is the way you express frustration. All this storytelling is a diversion. It doesn't matter, really, who or what was the object of your outburst, but the fact remains that once again you chose to spew filth from the very lips I adore.

KARL

I'm sorry.

BRIDGET

Of course, you are. Again.

KARL

What can I do?

BRIDGET

Take advantage of this one last chance. Because I've decided I've had it.

KARL

Last?

BRIDGET

I believe so, yes. I can't live this way. Not knowing when some idyllic moment is going to collapse into a tirade of "F-and-G-bombs."

KARL

But it's been months. I was doing so well. And this was different.

BRIDGET

How? Because it was justified? It always is, isn't it?

KARL

I was assaulted!

BRIDGET

With water. Don't be silly. You're an educated man. You don't need to resort to such a crude means of expression.

KARL casts about for an escape from this dreaded argument. Suddenly he spots something in the distance.

KARL

Bridget, look! There he is.

BRIDGET

Who.

KARL

The monster. My tormentor.

BRIDGET

I don't see anybody.

KARL

There! Squirting ducks in the pond.

BRIDGET

Him? A kid?

KARL

Yeah, some delinquent running loose in the park. Don't pretend it's not possible. Kids can be sociopaths too. This one was a...a friggin' Nazi.

BRIDGET

Karl, really. Don't take me for a fool. You claim to be the victim of a child.

KARL

Bridget, please listen. This was totally out of character for me. For my new character.

BRIDGET

Well, that's true. Up to now your run-ins have been with adults.

KARL

Please, please forgive me. It won't happen again. How could it? It was like being ambushed by a...a highwayman. How could that ever happen twice? I swear...I mean I insist you can walk away if it does.

BRIDGET

You've had ultimatums before. They haven't worked.

KARL

This will be the last. The ultimate ultimatum. Honest. I can kick this. I just need another chance and a little help.

BRIDGET weighs her answer.

BRIDGET

What do you propose? For this. One. Last. Time.

KARL

A reminder. Something to consult when I'm tempted to lose control.

BRIDGET

Like a...mantra?

KARL

Yeah, like that. Something to defuse my anger.

BRIDGET

We've tried that before. You have a whole vocabulary of euphemisms.

KARL

Yeah, "fudge," "gosh," "heavens to Betsy".

BRIDGET

Perfectly acceptable alternatives.

KARL

Sure, for my grandpa. No, I'm thinking of a different, more modern approach.

BRIDGET

What do you have in mind that we haven't already tried?

KARL picks up his tablet, finds that it has died. Muttering inaudibly, he tosses it in the trash can and takes his cell phone out of his pocket.

KARL

Well, suppose...suppose whenever I was provoked, you know, when I felt put upon, I could listen to what I'm trying to avoid saying. Hearing how awful my old habits sound would prevent me from giving in to them.

BRIDGET

An inoculation.

KARL

Yeah, exactly. Inoculation, I like that.

BRIDGET

And what do you want from me?

KARL

Your voice on my phone, saying the bad stuff--that's the preventative. So that every time I get frustrated I can hear what it would sound like to say what I don't want to say.

BRIDGET

Let me get this straight. You want me to record profanity for you as a reminder of how bad losing control would sound.

KARL

Right.

BRIDGET

That's absurd.

KARL

No, no, it would renew my resolve to keep silent. Especially hearing the forbidden words in your voice.

BRIDGET

I don't know--

KARL

--Come on, please. Desperate times, et cetera, et cetera.

KARL holds up the phone. BRIDGET gives him a long, skeptical look.

KARL (CONT'D)

Record it for me. My worst. Let me have it.

BRIDGET

(Beat, then tentatively.)

Fuck.

*KARL nods enthusiastically,
encouragingly.*

BRIDGET (CONT'D)

Fuck. Fuck. Fuck. Goddamn. Goddamn fuck. Shit, damn, goddamn fuckity, fuck-fuck.

BRIDGET has had enough. Primly, she waves him off. KARL taps his phone.

KARL

OK. That's good. That'll work. That's all I need.

BRIDGET

So embarrassing. This is it. And it better work.

KARL

Oh, it will. I'm sure of it.

KARL steps forward. Waving his arm, he shouts into the distance.

KARL (CONT'D)

Hey. Kid.

(Beat.)

Kid! Yeah, you. Come here.

BRIDGET

Karl, what are you doing? That's him. That's the monster who you said attacked you.

KARL

That's right.

BRIDGET

What are you doing? This can't be safe.

KARL

Oh, come on, it's just a kid. You said so yourself.

BRIDGET

But I didn't mean...

(Lowering her voice.)

He looks...unpredictable.

KARL

I'd say that's the least of our worries.

Karl, please...
BRIDGET

BOY enters, blaster at the ready.

BOY
What do you want, mister? Refresher course?

KARL raises his phone, tapping the screen.

BRIDGET'S VOICE
Fuck. Fuck. Fuck. Goddamn. Goddamn fuck. Shit, damn, goddamn fuckity, fuck-fuck.

KARL points at BRIDGET with an expectant look. BRIDGET backs away. BOY threatens her with the blaster.

BRIDGET
No. No. You wouldn't. Don't. Please.

BRIDGET turns--exeunt, pursued by BOY. While BRIDGET shouts from O.S., KARL puts his phone away and pulls out his wallet, sitting down on the bench to compose himself.

BRIDGET (O.S.) (CONT'D)
No! Stop!...Fuck! No! Stop it!...Damn, are you crazy?!...Shit! Stop!...No! No! Back off, you little fucker... Back off or I'll break your goddman, motherfucking face!

After a few moments, BOY re-enters. KARL pulls out a \$20 bill and hands it to him wordlessly in exchange for more paper towels. BOY exits, smug. After a moment, BRIDGET re-enters, bedraggled and fuming. Breathing heavily, she stares at KARL with an expression of shame and defeat.

Impassively, KARL pats the bench next to him, inviting BRIDGET to sit and take the paper towels from his hand. She hesitates, dripping, as...

Fade to black.

THE END