

## carry me home tonight

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# carry me home tonight

by [geez](#)

## Summary

She hadn't wanted to go out. Let the record show that Karen had had a miserable week and was looking forward to watching Parks and Recreation for hours on end, Halloween be damned.

~ part of the "U Never Lie To Me" series by @darlinghookshipper87 and @KastleInTheSky:  
Frank carries a drunk Karen home ~

## Notes

I'm back!

I was inspired by the collage that these two made and decided to volunteer my services to their joint series. Hope you guys enjoy it and don't forget to check out the other works!

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

She hadn't wanted to go out. Let the record show that Karen had had a miserable week and was looking forward to watching Parks and Recreation for hours on end, Halloween be damned.

Karen had gotten into her comfiest sweatpants, taken off her makeup, put some popcorn into the microwave her and Jessica shared, and was just browsing Twitter when Foggy burst into her room like an overexcited child.

"Kare, come to the lounge, it's an emergency!" He yelled frantically, not waiting a second before darting back down the hall.

Karen looked down at her phone, checking her messages to make sure she hadn't gotten an "sos" text from Jessica or Trish, before resigning herself to social interaction. God knew she loved her friends but there were just some days when they were Too Much™.

She grabs her popcorn out of the microwave, slips on her flip flops, and trudges down the hall. Jesus, she can hear the excited yelling from here.

"What's wrong?" Karen asks on a sigh, announcing her presence to friends that look like they are decidedly not having an emergency.

Jess darts her eyes towards Foggy before looking at Karen. "You wanna go out tonight?"

Karen's immediate answer is no but she lives with Jess, who while a nice person still vaguely terrifies her, so she decides to stall for a bit. "Where?"

"Luke just invited Claire to the football house." Foggy explains. "He said she could bring some friends."

"Claire are you going?" Karen asks her friend, hoping that she'll say no. Claire certainly doesn't *look* like she's planning on going out tonight, highlighter in her hands and biology textbook spread open on her lap. Maybe she can get out of this.

But Claire, the traitor, shrugs and says, "Yeah, probably. Football team always has the best booze."

"Great!" Jess says, jumping up from the couch. "So we're all going then."

"Guys I was going to just watch Netflix tonight." Karen whines, trying very hard not to stomp her foot. "I have pajamas on!"

"You don't have to go if you really don't want to, Kare." Foggy responds, ever the understanding one in their group. "But you had a really shitty week and we think you should let yourself unwind."

"You're wound really tight, Kare, and I can't live with a psycho roommate. I think I claimed that title." Jess says, staring down at her phone to minimize the odd affection in her words.

“Besides,” Claire adds, highlighting one last section before closing the textbook. “Frank will be there.”

Foggy scrunches his nose in distaste, still not convinced that Frank Castle isn’t just like every other football player they’ve met (with the exception of Luke), but Karen frantically tries not to blush.

“...Fine.” She finally grinds out. “But only because you assholes need a chaperone!”

“I’ll go get the alc!”

“Come down to our room, Nelson.” Jessica calls to Foggy, who is already halfway to the stairs.

“Okay!”

~

So they’d gotten ready, Karen in a cream colored shirt that did, to quote Jess, “miracles for your boobs, Christ”, Jess and Claire in classic black, Foggy in the bitchin’ pink polo that he always wore when they went out together.

Once Foggy had come down with the handles of Fireball and Smirnoff, Jess got to work putting together mixers of juice and gatorade. “Everyone gets five shots of vodka each.” She said, leaving little room for argument.

“Who wants to take Fireball shots before we go?” Foggy asked, pulling little plastic red shot glasses out of his pocket.

“Ooh, me!” Claire jumped off of Karen’s bed and grabbed for a cup.

“Kare, you in?”

Karen shrugged, decided she might as well have fun if she was going out tonight, and took a cup from Foggy. “Just one, though.”

Foggy just laughed at her, “Okay.”

~

They walk to the address slightly buzzed but overall feeling good. Karen was loosened up, Jess and Claire were laughing together freely, taking god awful selfies and sending them to the rest of their friends. Foggy was jumping around in his seat next to Karen, excited at the prospect of a good party.

They were some of the first people at the football house, meaning they got the strongest jungle juice. Jess went straight for it, pushing the second string running back out of the way of the cooler.

“Hey!”

“Don’t test me, buddy.” Jess just said, filling a solo cup and then immediately downing it.

Karen followed her, eying her roommate carefully. “Is it any good?”

“Hell yeah, have some.”

As Karen filled her own cup she noticed that the jungle juice was neon green and kind of scary looking. Apprehensively, she took a sip. Karen widened her eyes and looked at Jess, who just nodded solemnly in understanding.

“That shit will get the job *done*.” Karen couldn’t help but agree. She took a fuller swig of the alcohol. Maybe tonight would be fun after all.

~

It’s all...a blur after that. Karen isn’t exactly sure how many she’s had. It might be five, it might be seven. Who can say?

The only thing she knew with any certainty was that she was drunk, which was kind of a great feeling. It was like her head was floating, and nothing mattered, and everything was fantastic. The only thing she had to focus on was dancing in a circle with her friends, Marci Stahl grinding on Foggy a little too enthusiastically but Karen not caring in her inebriated state. Claire was sitting on a couch with Luke, both of them looking smitten. Jess and her were dancing with any guys who came up to them, bouncing out of their grasp the moment they grew bored.

Frank was on the periphery of her sightline nearly constantly, talking to his friends, laughing, can of beer in hand. She’d met his eyes dancing a few times, had flashed him a shy smile that he returned in that small way of his, but even drunk Karen was still too nervous to do anything except that. So she smiled at him, and danced with an extra twist to her hips when she knew he was watching. His eyes on her made her burn in the sweetest way. She felt so warm, so full, happy in the way you can only be when you’re living in the moment.

In short, it was great. Tonight was great and Karen was so glad that they’d convinced her to come along.

Then she sat down, and the room kept on spinning. “Shit.” She whispered, putting a hand over her eyes. “Shit, no.”

“Hey, Karen, you good?” Claire asked, leaving Luke to sit next to her friend.

“I think I should go to the bathroom.” Karen muttered, definitely not feeling the greatest.

“It’s just upstairs.” Luke said, pointing to the staircase on the left.

“Thanks, Luke.” Claire smiled, hoping to convey her gratitude. Luke was a nice guy, even if he was a football player. “Come on, Kare, let’s get you upstairs.”

“You’re such a good mom, Claire. You’re the best.” Karen grasped Claire’s hand and followed her to the bathroom.

“You’re great too, hon. Let’s get you to the bathroom, okay?”

“Okay.”

Claire knocked loudly on the bathroom door and nodded Karen inside once she was sure no one was in there. “Do you need me in there with you?”

Karen shook her head. “No, I’m just gonna pee. I think I’m okay.”

Claire looked with narrowed eyes but let her be. “Alright, I’ll be right here.”

Karen fumbled with the button of her jeans but soon enough was sitting on the toilet, going through her snapchats. She decided that it was the perfect time to make a video. “I’m peeing, I’m okay, I’m just *super* drunk. I’ve never been this drunk before, it’s great! Will I remember this? I hope so.” There was a knock on the door, Claire’s voice asking if she was okay. “It’s locked!”

Karen looked back down at her phone, trying to decide who to send the video to. Definitely Jess, Foggy, and Claire. Trish too, since she was at a mixer with her sorority and couldn’t be there. Colleen and Danny, they would get a kick out of it. Who else? Who...oh. Definitely a good idea, the best idea. Good job, Karen, she thought to herself as she tapped Frank Castle’s name and hit send before she could take it back.

She flushed the toilet, washed her hands with the horribly cheap smelling soap, and then went back out to Claire.

“All good?” Her friend asked, looking about ready to drag Karen home herself.

“Great! Let’s go back downstairs.”

Karen wobbled towards the stairs, grabbing onto the bannister heavily, Claire hovering right beside her. “Karen, I really think we should get you back.”

“No, let’s just stay a little longer, please!” They reached the bottom of the stairs, and Karen hopped onto the sticky carpet, arms splayed wide. “See? I’m fine!”

Claire was unimpressed, eyebrow fashionably quirked in that classic take-no-shit expression. “You should sit down at least.”

Karen was about to argue but she’d spotted Luke again- and he was talking to Frank. Beautiful, kind, respectful, fluffy haired Frank Castle. She sighed, taking him in. He was perfect. “Yeah, let’s go sit down.” Karen agreed, dragging Claire along with her.

Luke noticed them first, his face lighting up when he saw Claire but he still made a conscious effort to be nice to Karen. “Everything good?”

“Perfect.” Karen replied, pushing Claire down next to Luke with a smirk. “Hey Frank.”

Frank gave her a greeting nod, his brown eyes deliciously warm. “Ma’am.” He said, mischievous grin on his face.

Karen rolled her eyes and pushed lightly at his shoulder. It did nothing to throw Frank off balance but made her stumble slightly. "I thought I told you not to call me ma'am. I'm younger than you, Frank! It's weird."

He laughed at her around a swig of beer. "Yeah but you're bossy."

She huffed and tentatively took a closer step. He didn't back away. "I can't help it if people need a lot of direction."

"Oh is that it?" Frank asked, tilting his head to the side.

"Yeah, that's it." She replied, voice almost too soft for the loud music playing throughout the house.

They were standing in an inopportune place in the living room, in the way of everyone trying to get through to the kitchen. It was only a matter of time before someone bumped into them. A burly guy in a too-tight polo shirt was leading a girl down to the basement to dance, they both jostled Karen's shoulder in quick succession. Normally, it wouldn't have been a big deal, she might even have used it to get closer to Frank. But tonight, it was the deathblow to her tenuous control. They bumped into her, she stumbled (and not in a cute way) into Frank Castle, and just like that Karen Page was done for the night.

"Kare, you okay?" Claire asked from her spot on the couch.

Karen could only shake her head, but even that was unbearably painful. "I think I need to go..."

"Okay, we can go." Her friend said immediately, jumping away from Luke. Karen only now noticed how close the two of them had been sitting. Shit, she was an awful person. She was a bad friend. Claire could actually be having fun instead of having to take care of her. "Let me just text Foggy and Jess."

"No, no, Claire, come on. You stay. You're having fun and we can make it home on our own."

Claire just looked anxiously between Karen and Luke, unsure of what to do. Karen was trying to be nice as usual, and Luke wasn't the type of guy to ask someone to stay when their friend was in trouble. It was her decision but she didn't know what the right choice was. Or rather, she knew but was also excited about where things could possibly head with Luke tonight. "I don't know, Kare..."

"Yeah, come on, just stay. Foggy and Jess can't be that bad."

"Actually, uh," Frank spoke up, "They're both completely trashed. I don't know where Jess is exactly but Foggy is definitely passed out upstairs. That's what I came to tell Luke about."

"Karen needs to go home, like right now." Claire said. "But I can't just, like, leave Jess and Foggy here."

"...I can walk her home." Frank offered.

“You can?” Karen and Claire asked at the same time, one voice hopeful and the other cautious.

“It’s no problem, seriously, and then you can round up the other two.” Claire stilled looked unsure. “She’ll text you the moment she gets home, send you a selfie, even. I promise- I’ll keep her safe.”

Claire regarded Frank suspiciously, not really holding against him personally. She just had a healthy distrust against dangerous looking white boys. But Luke was always talking about how much he liked Frank, and that was good for something. “Yeah, okay.” Claire acquiesced. “But I want you to FaceTime me the *moment* you’re in your room, okay?”

“Absolutely.” Karen agreed, nodding emphatically.

Claire made sure that Karen had her ID out and an opened bottle of water in her hand before she hugged her and went off to find the other two numbskulls she was friends with. She stood for a minute at the doorway and watched as Frank kindly let Karen loop her arm through his, thinking to herself that they made a pretty picture walking through the city night.

She smiled slightly to herself and closed the door.

~

Karen felt much better in the night air, with the cool breeze against her face she almost felt human again. Her head was still faintly swimming but the uneasiness of her stomach was calmed, enough that she was coming back to herself bit by bit. God, this was why she didn’t like to go out.

“That’s the fifth time you’ve sighed in like five minutes.” Frank remarked, looking ahead down the lonely street. “Something on your mind?”

“I just...don’t like embarrassing myself.” Karen admitted, hair falling into her face. She was still clinging to Frank’s arm, not so much out of necessity as it was nice to be using his strength a little bit.

“You were having fun, Karen, people are allowed to have fun.” He said, chancing a glance at her. “You didn’t break anything, or throw up anywhere. You just reached your limit. But first, you had fun, and that’s what you’re supposed to be doing.”

“What I’m *supposed* to be doing is getting a good education and bettering myself as a person.”

“Way I see it- a person can’t be go, go, go all the time. There has to be a balance.”

Karen scoffed. “That’s kind of hypocritical of you. You’re in ROTC, you have a full course load, and you’re a captain on the football team. Where exactly is your balance?”

“I box,” Frank answered with a shrug. “And I go to most the same parties you do, I just don’t weigh one hundred and twenty pounds.” Karen looked away, mouth twisted in distaste. “You



just need to be easier on yourself, Karen.” He said softly, a tender look in his eyes that she didn’t see.

“Probably.” She relented, finally meeting his eyes. There was a moment of blessed understanding between them as they stood still in the midst of a city that never stopped. Karen was just this side of lost in Frank Castle’s dark gaze, milliseconds from falling into the abyss. As for Frank himself, well, he’d resigned to the brilliance of those blue eyes a long time ago. “Frank...”

He stepped into her space at the whisper; his scent was everywhere, invading her senses, making her head spin just a bit more. Usually such an action would be an unwelcome intrusion, but this wasn’t just anyone. This was Frank. It was a wonderful feeling, having him so close.

“I’m going to kiss you.” He said, a statement rather than a question but Karen had no doubt that if she stepped back Frank wouldn’t follow. Not that it even popped into her mind to leave the realm of his body warmth.

Frank’s kiss was glorious hesitation and sweetness. The rough hand that found its way to her waist was a caress instead of a hard grasp. The lips that moved over hers were soft and pliant, letting her set the pace for all that Frank had made the first move. The power he was giving her in that moment was heady and Karen twined her fingers into his unruly hair to bring him just that much closer. All thought fled her mind and all Karen could think about was how she was gloriously, completely, *finally* warm.

A honking car broke them apart, but only barely. Their noses still brushed together and for once Karen was glad of her height. It made it all that much easier to look into his eyes. Frank was gazing at her fondly, a crooked smile on his face. The hand that was on her waist brushed down her arm, stopping to twine their fingers together. “I should probably get you home.” He said softly, stepping away to lead her down the street.

The rest of their journey was spent in a contented bubble. Neither of them said much but their hands were grasped together tightly and occasionally they would give each other brilliant smiles. The sounds of the city seemed muted, as if New York itself knew not to disturb them.

When they finally reached the door to Karen’s building she wanted nothing more than to pull him inside with her, if only to avoid saying goodbye. Standing there staring at him, Karen didn’t quite know what to say.

She settled for the obvious. “Thanks for walking me home.”

Frank smiled, eyes crinkling at the understatement. “There honestly isn’t anything I’d rather be doing tonight.”

Karen stepped forward quickly and kissed his cheek, suddenly overcome with nervous energy. “Good night, Frank.”

“G’night, Karen.” He murmured, hand dropping from hers and waiting for her to swipe into the building. She was halfway into the door when Frank called, “Hey, Page.”

Karen swung around, breathless with glorious anticipation. “Yeah?”

Frank just watched her, a mischievous smirk on his face. “I really hope you saved that video from earlier, it was hilarious.”

He didn’t wait for her to respond, just laughed and turned to go to his own building. Karen’s face scrunched in confusion, combing through her foggy memory to remember what he was talking about. Heat rushed into her cheeks when she finally remembered. “Oh my god.” She whispered with horror. “Never bring that up again, Castle!” Karen hollered down the street, still stuck between the chill of the night and the warmth of her building.

Frank just answered back with a laugh and a “Yes, ma’am.”

Karen shook her head, a smile playing on her lips despite the embarrassment.

Despite the late hour, it felt like a beginning.

## End Notes

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