

what is sweet and what is terrible

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](http://archiveofourown.org/works/12421059) at <http://archiveofourown.org/works/12421059>.

Rating:	Teen And Up Audiences
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	F/M
Fandoms:	The Punisher (TV 2017) , Marvel Cinematic Universe
Relationship:	Frank Castle/Karen Page
Characters:	Frank Castle , Karen Page
Additional Tags:	inspired by the most recent trailer for the punisher , and that goddamn NON PLATONIC TOUCHING , it is unclear what exactly this is , but it is something , Not Canon Compliant
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2017-10-19 Words: 673 Chapters: 1/1

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by [geez](#)

Summary

He's reaching for her before ration can stop him. His hand comes up, slowly, so slowly, his thumb brushing along her jaw, hand finally settling on the back of her neck, fingers threading into her hair.

Notes

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

The explosion catches him off guard. It doesn't matter why.

It definitely was not because Karen was with him and he was more focussed on keeping her behind him than he was with observing their surroundings. Frank'd promised himself that he would keep her safe the moment she'd decided to get herself caught up in his shit. If Karen was going to go mucking around in his darkness, he was damn well going to make sure that she got out unscathed.

In hindsight that was way too ambitious and Frank should have known better.

He sees the fuse in enough time to grab Karen's hand and push her behind the wall. The force of it sends them to the floor with a harsh thud. The breath is knocked out of him, his head slams against the tile. Frank's vision goes dangerously black.

There are a few precious seconds where he loses himself, the flurry of spots in his sight are only barely calming down, the ringing in his ears calming to a dull roar. Frank coughs, the dust in the air making his lungs ache. Karen stirs next to him, craning her neck around, looking for him in the aftermath. "Frank?"

"I'm here." He grunts, inching closer to her, scanning her body for injuries. She's banged up, same as him, but there's nothing terribly wrong with her. Still- it's too hurt than Karen should ever be. Stupid, stupid, to think he could keep her safe.

Her face is scrunched in discomfort but she looks him over the same way he did for her, making sure he isn't hurt. Karen's eyes come back up to meet his and the blue of them is too mesmerizing for his definitely concussed head. "Are you okay?" She whispers, reaching for his hand.

They cling to each other like children and Frank is struck by the enormity of the situation he's gotten her into. This is some deep shit they're in, with the goddamn federal government involved, and every step closer to the truth is that much closer to danger he can't keep her from.

"Don't worry about me." He says, eyes going to the cut near her eyebrow and a pang settles into his gut. Frank's entire being is consumed by that cut, by what it means, by the damn implication that Karen is hurt and it is his fault. He's reaching for her before reason can stop him. His hand comes up, slowly, so slowly, his thumb brushing along her jaw, hand finally settling on the back of her neck, fingers threading into her hair.

Karen just watches him steadily and he feels her hand settle onto his chest, right over his heart. "Frank?"

His eyes bore into hers and it registers in Frank's mind that he is probably much too close to her but honestly- he couldn't give a fuck. Karen says his name again and Frank finally comes back to himself. He clears his throat, but doesn't move his hand from her neck, doesn't pull away. "You've got a cut, ma'am."

Karen smiles breathlessly, and everything seems okay for that split second. “I’ll be alright. I’ve got the big, bad Punisher to protect me.”

Frank scoffs then goes very quiet. “I shouldn’t have even let you get involved in this.”

“You can’t control me, Frank. I chose to help you. We’re in this together.” The look she gives him is tender and sweet and so much more than he deserves. His thumb brushes against her ear and Frank is very, very close to kissing her when Karen says, “We should probably get up now.”

He quirks his lips at her, an approximation of a smile, and finally frees her from his grip. Frank gets up slowly, Karen coming to her feet right alongside him. They look around at the damage, taking in the violent aftermath of the explosion and Karen sighs deeply, looking vaguely exasperated. “What?”

“You’re gonna kill this guy, right?”

Frank grins with a smile fit for war and replies, “Yes ma’am.”

End Notes

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