

THE ULTIMATUM

by

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Address
Phone Number

FADE IN:

INT. SUBURBAN CONDO - MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

CARL BLACK (26) Strong arms, stiff neck, insecure smile. He sits propped up in bed looking at his new prized possession: a bootleg album of unauthorized Beatles recordings.

Laying beside him is his bride of two weeks, KAREN BLACK (24). Smart and sassy by nature, loving and caring by choice, she twirls a strand of hair between her fingers as she stares up at the ceiling.

KAREN
Honey, I've been thinking.

CARL
Hmm?

KAREN
I really miss singing.

She pauses. He readjusts his posture.

KAREN (CONT'D)
I thought I'd start back with just that, one night a week.

CARL
You want to go back?

KAREN
Not do everything like before. That was a lot, I admit.

CARL
Damn right.

KAREN
It was only because I was planning our wedding; I got overwhelmed.

Karen pauses. Carl waits.

KAREN (CONT'D)
I really miss the worship, the singing,
(closing her eyes)
how it feels to be in the middle of all that amazing blissful harmony...

CARL

I don't understand. You want to go back to the way things were?

Karen opens her eyes, and she turns her face toward Carl.

KAREN

I didn't say that.

CARL

(incredulous)

You want it both ways. Well, you can't have it both ways.

Karen turns toward Carl.

KAREN

Why are you getting so upset?

CARL

I assumed you would give all that up once we got married. I thought you wanted a God-centered home.

KAREN

(sitting up)

I do. These are church groups we're talking about.

CARL

How long before you are right back where you were, gone three to four nights a week? You can be blissful here, at home with me.

KAREN

Yes, I can. And I can also want other interests in my life.

(discerning)

You don't want a God-centered home, you want a Carl-centered home.

CARL

If you really loved me, you'd give up this hobby.

KAREN

But its not just a hobby, its been a part of me for as long as I can remember, its who I am. If you really loved me, you'd never ask me to give it up!

CARL

The bible says a woman must submit
to her husband.

Karen gets up from the bed, and stands facing him.

KAREN

Really? Of all the wisdom and
knowledge contained in that book,
that's what you take away? Oh, I'll
submit.

(looking up toward heaven)

Your Honor, I submit that this man
is selfish, jealous and insecure!

CARL

(jumps out of bed)

You're calling me selfish? Who's
trying to get away from their
commitments?

KAREN

I don't understand where all this
is coming from.

CARL

You are always flitting off to be
with other people, doing something
"amazing."

KAREN

I do it because it feeds my soul.
It makes me feel whole.

CARL

(vulnerable)

Whole? I thought I did that.

(admonishing)

God made woman out of man's side
that she should leave her family
and home and cleave unto him.

KAREN

I don't believe it! The only time
you ever quote the Bible, and you
do it now?

CARL

(desperately)

I mean it, Karen. I need to know
what's important to you. You need
to choose: me or it.

Dismayed and disillusioned, Karen slowly sits on the edge of the bed.

Carl stands his ground, staring at the back of her head, waiting for her response. Tears well up in Karen's eyes.

CUT TO:

EXT. SIDEWALK CAFE - DAY - 25 YEARS LATER

Blue sky, bright sunshine, and a yellow and white awning creates welcome shade for KAREN BLACK (49) and CONNIE DACUS (50). Connie smiles broadly. They are catching up.

CONNIE

What'd you do then?

Karen, holding up her empty wine glass, indicates another to the nearby waiter.

KAREN

I divorced his ass. But not before we had Sean. You have three, right? Must all be in college by now.

CONNIE

All but Jack. He's a senior this year.

KAREN

If you think about it, there's always something you wish you had said, or done, or didn't do.

CONNIE

I wish I had said yes to sex sooner.

KAREN

Don't we all.

The waiter appears with a fresh glass of wine for Karen. Glass in hand, Karen gestures to Connie with it, enticing her to have one.

KAREN (CONT'D)

What else you gotta do?

CONNIE

Hey, I resemble that remark.
(nods to the waiter)
Its only two in the afternoon.
Might as well be "two for two!"

KAREN
 (imitating Bette Davis)
 "Fasten your seat belts. Its going
 to be a bumpy night."

CONNIE
 That was truly terrible.

KAREN
 I wish I had learned to do a better
 Bette.

CONNIE
 I wish you had learned to do a
 better Bette.

KAREN
 I wish I had said, "Fuck you."
 I should have told him to fuck off,
 but I wasn't saying fuck then.
 Regret is a terrible thing, Connie.
 She lurks around corners like the
 shadow of your former self, always
 ready to leap out and remind you
 what you could have been or done.
 (pause)
 He asked for my soul and I fucking
 gave it to him.

CONNIE
 Yeah. But you won't do that again.

KAREN
 (laughs)
 And we're back. Just another
 example of why I love you. That,
 and I can never really tell if
 you're wise or just a wise-ass.

CONNIE
 I know.

Waiter arrives with Connie's second glass of wine.

They clink a "cheers" to each other.

KAREN
 So what does Suzy Homemaker make
 for dinner when said Suzy is drunk
 off her ass?

FADE TO BLACK.