

KAREN AND THE WEED

A VOCABULARY-BOOSTING SHORT
STORY



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BIG WORDS MADE SIMPLE.

Karen and the Weed: A Vocabulary-Boosting Short Story

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“On my count, and...*go*.”

Clad entirely in black, from her headband to her yoga pants, Karen **scrabbled** over the fence into her neighbors’ yard.

She’d hoped to be more elegant about it. James Bond-like, even, **harkening** back to her days as a gymnast. But she landed with a *thud* on her **ample posterior** before springing to her feet.

“I’m in position,” she radioed back to Mr. Karen. “God, it’s even worse close-up.”

Before her, a weed the size of a small child **loomed** against the back fence. Like a Venus Fly Trap, it seemed to be **luring** her in.

Karen **donned** her industrial-strength gardening gloves, ready to end the battle that had been **waging** — in her head, mostly — for months.

At first, Karen was amused by her neighbors’ disinterest in their lawn. Even the weeds didn’t bother her, thanks to her HOA’s **insistence** on sturdy wooden fences between homes.

But you know those weeds that look like prickly lotus plants? Well apparently, if no one cuts or sprays them, they grow. Not just out, but *up*.

Clad- Wearing; clothed (in)

Scrabbled - Scramble or crawl quickly

Harkening (back) - Evoking something from the past

Ample - Plenty; more than enough

Posterior - A person’s bum/backside

Loomed - Appeared as a shadowy form, especially one that is large or threatening

Luring - Tempting (someone) to go somewhere or do something, usually by offering a reward

Donned - Put on

Waging - Carrying on; raging on

Insistence - Maintaining that something must or should be done

When this one became the size of a small ruler, Karen **summoned** her husband to take a look. She had a prime view of her neighbor's backyard from the window of her home office.

"I mean, they've *got* to pull it now," she said. "Who can ignore that?"

Their neighbors could, apparently. And the weed continued to grow, its impact **crescendoing** in Karens' consciousness until she could take it no more.

"It's not like I can just ask them to pull it," Karen remarked to Mr. Karen one morning over coffee. "How do you even start that conversation? 'Hey, your yard's starting to look like something out of Jumanji...The old one, I mean... Maybe take care of that?'"

Mr. Karen got a **speculative** gleam in his eye. "We could try to lasso it. Or I could try to spray some heavy duty weed killer over the fence."

Karen **stifled** a laugh, then **muttered**, "Too far away...It would be so easy, though..."

Approaching the **wretched eyesore**, Karen recalled that **catalyzing** conversation.

"I'll make this quick," she whispered to the weed, which up close, rose almost to her chest.

Crouching down, she grabbed the overgrown **greenery** near the base and *yanked*. It loosened its grip on the earth with surprisingly little resistance, trailing a **gnarled** ball of dirt and roots.

Summoned - Called upon someone (usually of lesser power) to be present

Crescendoing - Growing/increasing in loudness or intensity

Speculative - Thoughtful

Stifled - Restrained

Muttered - Said in a low, barely audible voice

Wretched - In an unfortunate state

Eyesore - Something that is ugly or not pleasing to the eye

Catalyzing - Causing (an action or process) to begin

Gnarled - Rough and twisted, especially with age

“Make it quick!” Mr. Karen hissed into his walkie. “I just saw a light.”

Karen’s eyes flashed to the house. A downstairs light was, indeed, on.

She froze, holding the weed at arm’s length for what seemed an **interminable** time. The sound of her breathing **mingled** with the howls of a hound in the distance. What would she do if caught red-handed? Dirt-handed? Was there even a phrase for weeding someone else’s yard?

The moment the light turned off, Karen hurled the **odious** plant back over the fence like an Olympic discus thrower.

Not appreciating its **callous** treatment, the weed shot a fine spray of dirt in her eyes as a parting gift.

“Pfft...” she wiped her eyes, then hopped the fence with far more **alacrity** than she had the first time.

Disposing of the remains in a black trash bag, her husband pulled her in for a hug. “It’s not like they’ll notice,” he said. “You did them a favor, really.”

THE NEXT MORNING

“Mommy, it *worked!*” the neighbor’s child pulled on his mother’s hand, dragging her across the yard.

Karen and Mr. Karen were having breakfast outside, partially because it was a nice morning, partially because they were monitoring for **fallout**.

“My science experiment! It *worked!*” he squealed.

Interminable - Endless

Mingled - Mixed together

Odious - Repulsive; hated/hateful

Callous - Insensitive

Alacrity - Brisk and cheerful readiness

Fallout - Adverse side effects of a situation

“What in the blazes is he talking about?” Karen **muttered** to her husband, barely moving her lips.

Mr. Karen raised his eyebrows, **craning** his head to hear better.

“But, honey...” Mrs. Next Door said to her son. “Even if you killed it using only those ingredients...where did it go?”

There was a heavy pause, then the child let out a **primal** cry of satisfaction. “I invented *disappearing potion?!?!*”

Karen shot a panicked look at Mr. Karen.

“Mrs. Olson will give me an A for sure!” he continued. “And this year, I’ll finally make the finals at the science fair! Oh my gosh, *disappearing* potion using only natural ingredients!”

The boy, who, to his credit, looked to be little older than eight, started running in circles with his hands overhead in victory.

“Eeegghh,” Karen made a low voice in her throat.

That’s when Mrs. Next Door spotted them. Karen didn’t need to say anything. Guilt was **writ** large on her face.

“Karen,” Mrs. Next Door said. “You didn’t have something to do with my son’s **miraculous** science experiment, did you?”

Muttered - Said in a low, barely audible voice

Craning - Stretching out in order to see something

Primal - Relating to an early stage in human development; from one’s most basic self

Writ (large) - Clear and obvious

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