

RUSS. The ink is dry.
KARL. And we all understand your reasons and no one holds that against you.
RUSS. Truck's coming on Monday.
KARL. Fully aware.
RUSS. And that's all there is to that.
KARL. *However.* *(Beat.)* There is *one* possibility.
RUSS. Nope. Nope.
KARL. If you'll hear me out.
RUSS. Don't see the point.
KARL. Because we went ahead and made a counter-offer to these people.
BEV. Who did?
KARL. The Community Association.
BEV. An offer on *this* house?
KARL. Very reasonable offer.
BEV. *(Baffled.)* But, but, but, they just *bought* it, Karl!
KARL. As opposed to the amount for which *you* offered the property, Russ, which was *far* below the assessor's value —
RUSS. *(Overlapping.)* Well, we're entitled to *give* it away if that's our prerogative.
KARL. *(Continuous.)* — for this type of residence, all of which is neither here nor there, since the family *rejected* our offer. However:
BEV. *(To Russ.)* Why are we even *talking* about this?
KARL. Don has pointed out to me, that, as the seller of the property, you do have a sixty-day option to place it in receivership with the transacting bank to indemnify yourself against liability. Now, that's generally with *commercial* properties, but in this instance —
RUSS. *(Slowly, overlapping.)* Nope. Nope. Nope. Nope. Nope.
KARL. *(Continuous.)* — I think that, inasmuch as Ted *deceived* you about the buyers, that the bank *could* still halt the sale and it would be a simple —
RUSS. *(Overlapping.)* Karl?
KARL. *(Continuous.)* — matter of a signature, if I could finish?
RUSS. Prefer it if you didn't.
BETSY. Kaahhhh?
BEV. And for all we know this family could be perfectly lovely.
KARL. Well, that's hardly the point, is it?
BEV. Maybe it's a point to consider.

KARL. Bev, I'm not here to solve society's problems. I'm simply telling you what will happen, and it will happen as follows: First one family will leave, then another, and another, and each time they do, the values of these properties will decline, and once that process begins, once you break that egg, Bev, all the king's horses, et cetera —
BETSY. *(Overlapping.)* Kaahhh?
KARL. *(Continuous.)* — and *some* of us, you see, those who *don't* have the opportunity to simply pick up and move at the drop of a hat, then *those* folks are left holding the bag, and it's a fairly *worthless* bag, at that point.
BEV. I don't like the tone this is taking.
RUSS. *(To Karl.)* Okay. Tell you what.
KARL. And let's imagine if the tables were turned. *(Re: Francine and Albert.)* Suppose a number of *white* families started marching into *their* commun — ? *(To Francine and Albert.)* Well, actually that might be to your *advantage*, but —
RUSS. *Karl.*
KARL. — you do see my point.
RUSS. Need you to stop now.
KARL. Sorry. *(Beat.)* Maybe not handled with the —
RUSS. It's all right.
KARL. — utmost delicacy.
RUSS. But maybe time to let it drop.
KARL. Didn't mean to turn it into a public referendum. *(Beat.)* But you do understand —
RUSS. No no no no no. That's it. You hear me? Done. All done. *(Pause. In the near distance a church bell begins to ring.)*
JIM. *(Quietly looking at his watch.)* Is it four o'clock?
KARL. Well, Russ, if I might —
RUSS. Nope. Nope.
KARL. If I could just say this:
RUSS. No. Karl?
KARL. Well, if you'd let me —
RUSS. No. No more.
KARL. Uhhh ... *(Chuckling.)* Bev? I get the impression your husband is telling me I'm not permitted to *speak*.
RUSS. Don't think it's a good idea.
KARL. Well, Russ, I'm going to ask you at least to keep an open — ?
RUSS. *Karl!* What'd I just ask you?
KARL. Well, I think you're being a tad unreasonable.

RUSS. Well, *I* think we've reached the end of this particular discussion.

KARL. Is that right?

RUSS. Afraid it is.

KARL. Just like that.

RUSS. Just like that. (*Another pause.*)

KARL. Then what about this:

RUSS. *Karl?!*

KARL. Well, I believe the Constitution endows me with a *right* to speak.

RUSS. Well, then you can go and do that in your own home. (*Russ crosses and opens the front door for Karl to exit.*)

KARL. Bev...? (*Laughs.*) He's not being serious, is he?

RUSS. Karl?

KARL. (*Laughs.*) Am I being *silenced*?

RUSS. Not going to ask you again.

KARL. Well, this is a new experience for me.

RUSS. So be it.

KARL. Bit like the Soviet Union. (*Laughs.*) I am truly surprised.

RUSS. Well, *surprise*.

KARL. And a little disappointed.

RUSS. Sorry to disappoint you.

KARL. (*Shakes his head.*) A real shame. For all concerned.

RUSS. Well, that's the way things go sometimes.

KARL. Apparently so.

RUSS. Anyway. Appreciate you stopping by.

KARL. I see.

RUSS. Betsy, too.

KARL. Very well.

BETSY. Kaaaaahhhh?

RUSS. Okay then? Okay. (*Silence. Karl stands and looks to Betsy. The two of them slowly exit through the open door, Russ quietly closing it as they go.*)

BETSY. (*Quietly, before the door is closed.*) Kaahhh, whaah happaaahh?

FRANCINE. (*Carefully.*) Miz Stoller, if we're done talking here?

JIM. (*Rising.*) Yes, you know, I think *I* will take this opportunity — (*But Karl abruptly returns, Betsy following.*)

KARL. However:

JIM. (*Quietly.*) Karl, don't.

KARL. (*Very slowly.*) I *don't* imagine that ... this particular family are *entirely* aware of *why* they've found such an agreeable price for

the property. Don't suppose they know *that* aspect of it, do they? And let's say someone was to *inform* them of those facts. Let's say *that* was to happen.

RUSS. (*Chuckles dangerously.*) Really don't know when to quit, do ya?

KARL. Because I think that might be an interesting conversation to have.

FRANCINE. (*To Bev.*) So I'll be seeing you on Mon —

RUSS. (*Maintaining control.*) Well, Karl? You go ahead and do what you think is right, but I'll tell you one thing. What you're going to do right now is —

KARL. (*Overlapping.*) Well, I have a responsibility to the community as a whole. I can't afford to —

RUSS. (*Continuous.*) — you're going to take yourself right through that door and out of this house.

KARL. (*Overlapping, continuous.*) — simply pursue my own selfish interests.

RUSS. (*Maintaining calm.*) Man, what a son of a bitch.

BEV. Russ, *don't*.

RUSS. (*To Karl.*) If you honestly think I give a rat's ass about the goddamn —

JIM. (*Overlapping.*) Okay. Okay.

RUSS. (*Continuous.*) — what, ya mean the *community* where every time I go for a haircut, where they all sit and stare like the goddamn grim reaper walked in the barber shop door? *That* community?

KARL. (*Overlapping.*) My wife is two weeks away from giving birth to a *child*.

RUSS. (*Continuous.*) Where, Bev stops at Gelman's for a quart of milk and they look at her like she's got the goddamn plague? That the community I'm supposed to be looking out for?

KARL. A community with *soon-to-be* children.

JIM. The Apostle Matthew —

RUSS. (*To Jim.*) Oh no no no. *I'm* talking now.

BEV. (*To Francine and Albert.*) I am ashamed of every one of us.

BETSY. (*Tugging at Karl's sleeve.*) Kaaaaaah?

KARL. Betsy, wait in the car.

RUSS. Well, you go right ahead and you tell those folks whatever you want, Karl. And while you're at it why don't you tell 'em about everything *the community* did for my son. I mean *Jesus Christ*, Murray Gelman even goes and hires a goddamn *retarded* kid, but *my* boy? Sorry. No work for you, bub.

