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'I MOVED ON HER VERY HEAVILY'

TWO WOMEN, TWO BREASTS, TWO DECISIONS

'I Moved on Her Very Heavily': Part 2

By E. Jean Carroll

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*In her 2019 memoir, *What Do We Need Men For?*, E. Jean Carroll accused Donald Trump of rape, in a Bergdorf's dressing room in the mid-1990s. After the president denied ever meeting her and dismissed her story as a Democratic plot, she sued him for defamation. Carroll was not, of course, the first woman to say that Trump had sexually harassed or assaulted her, but unlike so many other powerful men, the president has remained unscathed by the #MeToo reckoning. Which might seem surprising, until you remember Trump's modus operandi: He escapes the consequences of one outrage by turning our focus to another, in perpetuity. So in the run-up to the November 3 election, Carroll is interviewing other women who alleged that Trump suddenly and without consent "moved on" them, to cite his locution in the Access Hollywood tape. "I'm automatically attracted*

to beautiful—I just start kissing them, it's like a magnet ... And when you're a star, they let you do it. You can do anything. Grab 'em by the pussy." Carroll's lawsuit remains in progress; a White House spokesman denied all of the women's allegations, calling them "decades-old false statements" that had been "thoroughly litigated in the last election and rejected by the American people." Read [Part 1](#) and [Part 3](#) here.



Karena Virginia

Photograph by Gillian Laub

FIFTY OR SO MILES OUT OF NEW YORK CITY, in a hamlet so rich, it makes Mar-a-Lago's Palm Beach look like a John Mellencamp video, there lives a beautiful woman by the name of Karena Virginia. Today is a brilliant Monday. The sun pours down like Fort Knox gold. Karena has conducted an angel sanctuary over the weekend—connecting her friends (she calls clients “friends”) with the supernatural beings she believes are as real as each of us—and later today she is teaching friends to breathe in tune with the ocean waves for “Yoga on the Beach.”

When I pull up in my car, Karena is standing in the road. To welcome me, she raises the brim of her enormous beach hat and holds a pose on one foot, lifting her arms to the gods like a forest sprite. If William Blake—the poet and artist who conversed with angels in the nude—could see Karena in her turquoise sarong and turquoise bikini bottom with the circle clasp on the hip, her long, golden-brown hair streaming down her back, he would paint her with wings.

Donald Trump once spots Karena at the U.S. Open tennis tournament as she waits for a car, but he doesn't paint her. It is 1998, and she recalls that he says to his male pals, “Hey, look at *this* one. We haven't seen her before.”

“I am wearing a short, black, sleeveless A-line dress,” continues Karena, who can also tell me the exact skirt, sweater, and shoes she is wearing when she meets her husband a year later. “I call my friend immediately after I get in the car and tell her what happened and ask if she thinks it is because my dress is too short. I remember thinking my protective Italian father would have been appalled at my outfit, because Trump, as he is walking toward me with his entourage, says: ‘Look at those legs.’ It's my fault that I allow him to grab my arm without my pulling away. And then he goes further”—she demonstrates, quickly sliding her knuckles back and forth on the right side of her bust—“and he grabs my breast.”

Now let us leave Karena and visit a handsome apartment on the Upper West Side. It is 21 years later, June 2019. A lawyer sits in an armchair suckling a newborn. The child is about the size of a basset hound—he weighed nearly 10 pounds at birth—and the lawyer, a peach-complexioned looker (yes, reader, *another* pretty woman, but we are dealing with a man who, you'll recall, denies that he attacks women by claiming they're not “his type”), glances up from the giant baby. “This is off the record,” she announces to her companions, several women who are being interviewed about sexual assault.

The lawyer is not taking part in the discussion, but her story is so on point that she couldn't help but chime in. The journalist is *The New York Times*' Megan Twohey, who in 2016 reported some of the earliest sexual-misconduct allegations against Trump and who, along with Jodi Kantor and Ronan Farrow, won the Pulitzer Prize for breaking the Harvey Weinstein story.

“Of course,” Twohey says, off the record.

And the lawyer says: “Trump grabbed my boob.”

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SO THIS IS A FEW WORDS ABOUT Trump and a few more words about breasts. One of the breasts belongs to a woman who, three weeks before the 2016 election, comes forward and warns the world not to vote for a man who gropes women. The other belongs to a woman who has stayed quiet. Which woman is happier with her decision? Is it the yoga teacher/angel connector, or the attorney? We must go back and forth in time to find out.

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I MEET KARENA IN 1994, when we both work for Roger Ailes at his NBC cable network, America’s Talking. (It later becomes MSNBC, and Roger goes on to create Fox News.) I am the host of the live, one-hour *Ask E. Jean* show. Karena, a theater major straight out of Ithaca College, is starring in one of Roger’s experiments called *Cable Crossings*, a 30-second soap opera airing “in the cracks” between the talk shows.

I tell you with a straight face that Karena is not a normal human. For instance, Karena finds most things on Earth pleasant. She has seen angels since she was a little girl. One of her yoga workshops, for women who are trying to get pregnant, is called “Mommies and Miracles.” She believes “energy is everything.” She texts with Oprah (with whom she collaborated on a seven-part 2015 documentary about spirituality across the globe called *Belief*). I suspect that Karena’s spleen has wings raised for flight, and, yes, she has been told by dullards that she needs to “get a grip.”

So in the countdown to the 2016 election, when America is caught in the *Groundhog Day* time loop of women coming forward to tell of Trump—the truffle pig—rooting around their bodies, Karena is in the family room on the chaise lounge (“One day I want to toss that thing! It brings back PTSD”), watching the 6:30 news and admiring the courage on display. At the same time she is thinking, *I could never tell my story. I could never do it*, and feeling deeply ashamed.

Then one day a woman—Karena can’t remember who—comes on TV and calls Trump’s accusers liars. Karena’s very corpuscles tighten. She starts shaking. She cannot understand why women don’t believe other women. Karena says to herself: “I teach women to be empowered through yoga. I tell women they are goddesses of the divine, and here I can’t even talk about the truth?”

The next night she confesses her shame to a perfect stranger at a party in the Rainbow Room for the New York screening of *La La Land*. The stranger tells her, “You must stand with these women!” After teaching her morning yoga class the next day, Karena calls an attorney recommended by a friend. The attorney is Gloria Allred. “I had no

clue who she was,” Karena says. Twenty hours later, she is sitting behind a phalanx of mics in a hotel conference room and reading her eight-minute, 39-second statement to the world press.

You remember it. She is as firm as Kamala Harris and chokes up like Bette Davis in *Now, Voyager*. Joan of Arc at the stake could not have been more dramatic.

It is a disaster. “The fallout from the press conference,” Karena says, “is a million times—a million times—worse than being groped by the president.”

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THE SCENE NOW SHIFTS TO Santa Monica in 2006. The lawyer with the peach complexion is booming her new BMW—a law-school graduation present from her mother—up the circular drive of a Santa Monica Beach hotel, when who should emerge through the front door?

Oh my God, Donald Trump, thinks the lawyer, who agrees to tell her story as long as she isn’t named. *Fine, whatever—like, he’s old*. It is about five months after Trump pushed Natasha Stoyanoff up against a Mar-a-Lago wall and shoved his tongue down her throat, according to Stoyanoff. The sun is about to set. Trump lasers his eyes through the lawyer’s windshield.

She pulls up to the valet-parking stand. She alights from the car, smooths her black sheath (her new lawyer dress!), and, as her three friends tumble out of the vehicle in a merry burst, ready to celebrate their last day at law school—excited to be alive, thrilled to be dressed up and arriving in such a hot ride—and as the valet is saying, “I’m sorry, the hotel bar is closed for a private event,” Trump appears next to her.

“He comes in from the side,” says the lawyer, who is Zooming with me. The giant baby is now a year old and is nearly the size of a race-horse jockey—“and he comes around and puts his meaty arm around me and his hand goes ...”

The lawyer places her own hand on the top part of her breast. “And so I am *immediately* uncomfortable,” she says, “and he is like, ‘Hey, you want to get into the bar? I can get you in. Just *you*. Not your friends.’ And at this point, he is just *rubbing* my breast.”

I am sorry, reader, I must ask: “The entire breast?”

“The top of the breast, the nipple. He just, like ...” She kneads her breast like it’s a ball of pie dough.

“And I had this whole-body visceral reaction,” she says. “I was like, *I have to get out of here right now*. I didn’t say a word. I turned around. I still had my keys. I got in the car and I was like, ‘Get in, everyone. We’re going.’ They hadn’t seen it happen. They

were facing toward the hotel. We did not talk about it. We fell out of touch pretty quickly after passing the bar. I was in shock.” (The White House called the allegations “an anonymously sourced smear.”)

When I try to determine the timelines of Melania Trump giving birth in Manhattan and her husband feeling up a young law-school grad at a Santa Monica hotel, the lawyer emits a bitter, sarcastic chuckle. “I don’t think Melania being perfect or giving birth would stop Trump,” she says. “I don’t think anything would stop him. He probably did the same thing to 10 different women *that night*. That’s the thing. I was not special.”

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THOUGH KARENA IS AS ETHEREAL as Thoreau’s wood nymph, the paradox is that the life she has created for herself with her lawyer husband and two children is chock-full of good cheer and success because she is also tough-minded and confident as a businessperson. In 2001, when her “kids are babies,” she starts teaching prenatal yoga, then yoga with moms and babies, then yoga for women who *want* babies. How good is she? Gloria Allred gets a message after the press conference from one of Karena’s former clients—excuse me, *friends*—to pass the following news on to Karena: “I was in your ‘Mommies and Miracles’ workshop, and I am now a mother!”

Before we start talking about the hideous aftermath of her press conference, as a sort of warm-up, I ask Karena: “What do you *wish* you would’ve done when Trump knuckled your breast?”

I ask because I know that I’m not the only Trump accuser to imagine punching him repeatedly between mandible and eye socket.

Karena pauses a moment to ponder. We are sitting outside her friend’s house in two of the most comfortable deck chairs ever built by human hands, on an emerald lawn, by a blue pool, near a willow so weeping that it is practically moaning, and we are overlooking—get this—a canal down which float rich people on pontoons, kayaks, and canoes.

Karena turns to me with her answer.

I lean in, hoping she is about to describe a groin kick that sends Trump rolling over and over across the DecoTurf of Arthur Ashe Stadium until he is picked up by the ball girls, stuffed in a bag, and carried away.

She says: “I would look Trump in the eyes and ask, ‘What kind of man are you?’”

Yogis! Bah.



Gloria Allred comforts Karena at the press conference, October 20, 2016.
(Jemal Countess / Getty)

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“DID YOU THINK ABOUT coming forward before the 2016 election?” I ask the lawyer.

“I thought about it a bunch,” she says. “But in the scheme of things, it wasn’t a rape. It was a forcible touch. I wondered: Is it worth associating my name with *that*?”

“Forever,” I say.

“Forever. And as a woman, if you ever come forward with any allegation, it’s like you’re *tainted*. They pick apart your work. They pick apart your appearance.” (Indeed. Tributes to my devastating beauty have been offered daily since I accused Trump of raping me. This tweet, from @blumrln75—a.k.a. “God Fearing American, Florida saltwater cowboy”—is one of my favorites: “He [Trump] wouldn’t do you with Joe Biden’s wiener!”)

“So are you glad you *didn’t* come forward in 2016?” I ask the lawyer.

“I was worried about my career. It’s already been hard enough to get where I am as a woman.”

“Do you want to come forward—now—on the record?”

The lawyer graduated with distinction from a prestigious midwestern university before she went to law school in Los Angeles; she is now married to a writer. In 2019, she joined a new law firm, when the couple moved from New York to California.

“That’s the thing,” says the lawyer, trying to frown, but a grin zings across her face.
“I’m up for partner!”

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FOR KARENA, THE CONSEQUENCES of speaking up are swift and severe. “Did you think you were going to get killed?” I ask her.

“Oh, yeah,” she says.

“Why?”

“Because people were *telling* me that they were going to kill me. I was getting death threats.”

After the press conference, four close friends take up arms and quickly begin deleting the hundreds of hate messages on Karena’s YouTube channel, her Instagram and Facebook accounts, and her yoga video on Amazon. “I couldn’t look at any messages from anybody,” she says. “Even the good ones. I just needed to hide. I started to feel like my skin was burning. No way of explaining it, unless you’re in it. It was as if there were millions of little needles in my skin.”

“You walk down your driveway,” I say, “and open your mailbox—?” This is the driveway that leads to the house that is nestled in one of the boskiest Republican enclaves on the Eastern Seaboard.

“I got clippings cut out of the newspaper with daggers drawn through my eyes. They come in with, like, ‘You’re going to die.’ And swears and awful things. My husband and I took them to the police. Brutal.”

And the reaction from her neighbors?

“The people in the town,” says Karena, with about as much aspersion as she is capable of, “are very *elegant*.” In other words, the shoulder Karena receives from the town is so cold, she needs an ice pick to leave the house. “Lots of silence.”

Do you want to hear my theory about why the response to her press conference is so savage? (A) She looks like she’s just left a lawn party at Jay Gatsby’s. (B) People think the tears she sheds—and dew rolling down an anemone could not fall more gracefully—are because she’s making a big deal about Trump seizing her breast. In fact, she is overwhelmed by “the cameras and the clicking,” as she puts it, and she feels unaccountably moved by the thought of all the other women who have suffered in silence. And what with the pressure inherent in publicly accusing a man who is running for president of the United States of something sexual—*of course* she cries. Who wouldn’t?

KARENA SAYS SHE LOSES CLIENTS, has to cancel a big book-signing at Barnes & Noble, and is dropped or not invited back to do “wellness” appearances on TV shows such as *The Doctors*, though the show’s producers deny that. (“It would have been a huge launching pad for my brand. I still sometimes think about it. Then I remember I have integrity.”) She gets an email from a famous retreat center canceling her planned appearance, lest Trump supporters feel uncomfortable. She reads the email and calls her husband. “I’m crying. I am gasping for air, and I say, ‘This (*gasp*) just (*gasp*) happened (*gasp*). *I ruined my career!*’”

Does she regret coming forward then?

“My whole entire life, I’ve been considered super sensitive. But the past three and a half years have been a time of real, true empowerment for me. When I die, I’m going to know that I stood up for women. And you know what? It’s been awful seeing how impulsive Trump has been as president. So in the end, my close friends have said to me, ‘Karena, can you imagine if you had never said anything and had to watch this?’”

SO THERE YOU HAVE IT. Both Karena and the lawyer are happy with their decisions.

And by the by, the lawyer does, in fact, tell one person about what Trump did to her *before* the 2016 election. She tells her mom. I know her mother. She is a doctor, a scientist, an abortion-rights woman, a southern belle, and she loves her daughter. Guess whom her mom votes for in 2016, *knowing* he has assaulted her daughter? That’s right. She votes for Trump: “He’s so good at business.”

Her mother is a busy woman, however. She may not have heard about *all* of the women Trump allegedly manhandled. “So I am speaking to support the women,” Karena tells me. “For those people who were not able to hear it then, I hope you hear it now. Because the only reason I am putting myself in this situation *again* is because this cannot happen again.”

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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