

DEFENSE MECHANISMS

Written by

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FADE IN

ON SCREEN: "Courage is not the absence of fear, but rather the judgement that something else is more important than fear."

-Ambrose Redmoon

INT. VOID

The screen is WHITE. There is a gun shots and a baby cries.

1 EXT. A STREET - DAY 1

A YUPPIE FEMALE is walking down the street with her dog unleashed. The woman is more concerned with her Blackberry than the dog. The dog takes a poop and continues. The woman crouches down with a plastic baggie reading a message as the leash drops out of her hand. The dog trots off.

2 EXT. AN ALLEY 2

A RESTAURANT OWNER exits a building into the alley mumbling.

RESTAURANT OWNER

Whoever left this meat out is
losing their job today, I'm tired
of this shit!

There are 2 dumpsters and a strange cube with a hazard sign..

The R. OWNER (not paying attention) throws a large plastic bag towards the dumpsters and returns to his kitchen.

The bag is filled with expired meat that is half in and half out of the dumpster. Dripping on the cube and ground.

The dog (w/o yuppie) turns the corner into the alley. It begins following a scent towards the meat.

The dog sniffs and claws at the cube. A piece of meat falls from the cube and the dog begins licking. The dog returns to clawing at the cube and it topples over. Liquid flows from the cube onto the meat on the ground. The dog barks, sniffs continues eating the meat.

3 EXT. THE STREET 3

The yuppie is frantic looking for her dog.

4 EXT. AN ALLEY

4

The dog is standing and growling.

The yuppie turns the corner and breaths a sigh of relief seeing the dog. She goes to the dangling leash.

The dog makes a strange noise.

YUPPIE

Here you are. I've been looking all over for you.

She grabs the leash and rubs the dog, it doesn't move.

She sees the rotting meat and begins yelling at the dog.

YUPPIE (CONT'D)

Ew! Don't frakin' eat that! I spend shit loads on organic dog food and you're going for dumpster delights?

The dog twitches, turns towards the Yuppie.

The yuppie gasps.

The dog lunges for the Yuppie.

-CREDITS-

5 INT. PURGATORY

5

A MAN and WOMAN are seated at a metal table. The man is wearing Sweats and has a bullet hole in his chest. There is a black satchel in front of him. The woman is wearing a white night gown and overcoat that is totally drenched in water which is dripping to the floor. She too has a black satchel. The two (JOHN and AMY) stare at each other for a long moment.

AMY

It's begun.

JOHN

We know.

AMY

Are they worth it?

JOHN

Yes.

AMY

Love isn't enough.

JOHN

Perseverance has always been
answer.

AMY

Hope is overrated.

They are both jarred from staring.

There is now a letter and chess board on the table. Amy opens the letter and reads. Tears well in her eye. She hand the note to John.

As the view opens on the two, the space that they are in is metaphysically unnerving (Think-UZUMAKI-CGI). Things that should be still (like the table) are moving and vice versa. With a more open view of the two people the two bullet holes in the man's chest are blood crusted around the holes. The woman is wearing a long sleeve blue night gown and trench coat. She is drench in water.

6

EXT. BROOKLYN BOTANICAL GARDENS

6

ELLA, a petite friendly looking woman dressed in all black under a cherry blossom tree. The scrunchie in her hair shows she's not from New York. In her arms is MADDIE. Maddie is a an adorable black & white mixed infant. Ella stares at Maddie as she plays in the grass. Ella's phone rings.

ELLA

Hey.
I'm doing o.k.
Maddie's fine. The service was
really beautiful.
It's o.k., I know you have work.
Really, it's o.k. I think I needed
to do this one solo, anyway.
Yeah my mom tried, but the cemetary
was just much for her. (Pause)
I love you.

7

INT. A MOTEL ROOM

7

DANNY (DANIELLE) is sitting on the edge of a bed. She is a definite "alpha" female. Another woman's body legs are stretched down the bed behind her.

DANNY

I love you too. (Pause) About
keeping Maddie.
(MORE)

DANNY (CONT'D)

Rose is really attached to her and well it being her only granddaughter, I just don't think we're... What I mean is, we never talked about the whole kid thing and well... I don't know if we're kid...you know what, this is not a phone conversation. We can talk later. I love you too.

Danny hangs up and slumps down.

DANNY (CONT'D)

I'm an asshole.

The woman leans up and caresses Danny's shoulders.

WOMAN

Honestly, I don't understand why you stay with her.

Danny stares blankly.

8

EXT. A STREET

8

ANGELA (an arts student) rushes into a campus building lobby with her classmate MARK who is limping in lots of pain. There are large bites and blood stains on his leg. The PERSON at the desk stretches their neck to see.

ANGELA

(To the person at the desk)

Call an ambulance?

(to MARK)

What the hell did you do to that dog?

MARK

I didn't say anything. I looked down the street and saw a limping dog. (Pause) As it got closer, I could see blood and shit. I freaked out, rabid dog and started running.

Mark passes out.

ANGELA

Mark. Mark? Mark!

(To the person behind the desk)

Don't just stand there, get someone!

The person nods and takes off. Angela continues.
 Fucking idiot. Like people driving
 slow past car accidents, only good
 for gawking.

Angela turns back towards her friend.
 Mark!

Mark attacks Angela.

9 INT. ELLA'S LIVING ROOM - AFTERNOON 9

ELLA is at home in her 1 bedroom condo that she shares with her partner Danny. There is a stack of baby books and supplies on their table next to a bottle of opened wine and a full glass that Ella is sipping out of.

10 INT. LOBBY 10

Ella rifles through her junk mail, as her neighbor LILA enters the building. Lila is an attractive tall and slender woman wearing blue medical scrubs. She is carrying flowers and wine. The two smile at each other at the mailboxes. Ella sees Lila pull a victoria Secrets Catalogue out of her mailbox. Slightly tipsy she tries to engage her neighbor with a little conversation.

ELLA

I love Victoria's Secret. Their
 body collection saved my love life.

(No response)

You live in 2A right above us? Lila
 Whitford right?

LILA

Yes.

ELLA

Hey. Nice to finally meet you. Ella
 Reid. I'm in 1A with my partner
 Danielle Parsons.

LILA

Hi.

ELLA

(Looking at the wine bag)
 That's a great wine store. They
 have some really great Malbecs.

Ella leans in and notices a familiar bottle.

(MORE)

ELLA (CONT'D)

Great minds think alike. That's our favorite Malbec. I'm actually in the middle of making lasagna for dinner. I do Italian really well. You should come over for dinner?

LILA

Thanks, but...

ELLA

Knowing your neighbor is important. Knowing people, connecting is really important.

(Pause.)

You never know when you're going to have a cup of sugar emergency.

(Lila crack a half smile)

That's the only thing that gets me down about the city, you could spend 20 years next to someone and never know them.

LILA

Tonight's not a good night.

ELLA

I'm sorry. I didn't mean to put you on the spot. I just thought I'd extend the offer.

LILA

Thanks anyway.

ELLA

See you around.

LILA

Sure.

11 EXT. ALLEY - EARLY EVENING

11

As The latino radio stations pours from the window, the Restaurant Owner opens the back door of his restaurant to have a quick smoke. He is in the deep throws of a conversation not noticing the yuppie's body which is a few steps down behind him.

RESTAURANT OWNER

I'm going to be late. I don't know, late. (Pause) Why do you ask so many questions. What could I possibly have to hide. I'm here night and day.

The Restaurant owner puts a brick in the door, walks down the steps and sits.

His phone beeps. He sees the word "Samantha" on the display.

RESTAURANT OWNER (CONT'D)

Look, they need me back on the floor. I got to go. Ok. Ok, ok! I love you too, alright! Bye.

(He presses a button on his phone)

Hey, baby. I was in the middle of a produce order. Yeah, I saw it was you, but that was work.

The yuppie comes to and is swaying in a disorientated manner.

I can't wait either. Yeah... yeah...uh huh.You're little black panther is gonna give it to ya real good. Grrr.

Someone in the kitchen of the Restaurant ownerturns the music up. The salsamusic is blaring.

RESTAURANT OWNER (CONT'D)

What baby? I can't hear you over that. Guillermo turn that mambo shit down!

The yuppie gaze is jerked in the Restaurant owners direction. She attacks him.

RESTAURANT OWNER (CONT'D)

Fuck! What the fuck, mother fucker!

The man's topples forward.

The Yuppie continues attacking him.

MAN

What the fuck? Crazy bitch!

He pushes her off and heads for he door. She jumps on him, biting into his skull.

He goes down.

Once the commotion stops the yuppie become dazed and somewhat docile..

A waiter inside the restaurant yells out.

WAITER

Michael! Michael! Come quick some homeless guy is attacking the customers!

The restaurant owner isn't moving. The yuppie turns in the direction of the voice and walks up the steps into the restaurant.

12 INT. ELLA'S LIVING ROOM 12

Ella is straightening up the living room. She picks up Danny jacket. A bill from the W hotel falls from the pocket. Ella stares curiously. Maddie begins to cry.

13 INT. ELLA'S BEDROOM 13

Ella is playing with Maddie, when her cell phone rings.

ELLA

Hey.

DANNY (V.O.)

Hey babe, I forgot my keys. Can you buzz me in?

ELLA

Can't buzz you in. They're working on the system. I'll come out and get you.

14 INT. LOBBY 14

Ella exits her apartment and heads to the door.

As Ella exits her apartment and turns the corner she smiles as she sees Danny through the glass doors. Danny smiles back half-heartily.

Danny swints down the street as she sees what appears to be a very sickly looking dog.

Ella reaches the first door, pushes the button to exit.

There is a strange look of concern on Danny's face, which puzzles Ella.

Ella reaches the second door and pushes the second buzzer but it doesn't open.

The dog continues down the street getting closer to Danny.

DANNY
Open the door.

ELLA
I'm trying. The locking mechanism
must be stuck. I told you they
were working on it.

Ella pushes the button again in succession, it doesn't open.
She taps/pushes on the glass. Danny taps on the outside
intercom.

DANNY
Of all fucking days for the system
to be down. Shit!

ELLA
I told you they were working on it.
Don't yell at me.

DANNY
What a piece of crap system!

Danny hits the concierge button.

DANNY (CONT'D)
(to the camera)
For the money we pay, somebody
better open this door now!

The dog takes note of Danny who is now yelling and tapping on
the intercom and begins picking up speed towards Danny.

DANNY (CONT'D)
Buzz me the fuck in!!

The dog charges Danny, foam flowing from its mouth. Danny's
eyes widen and Ella is rapidly hitting the faulty unlock
button. The dog reaches Danny and jumps for her. Danny ducks,
dropping the wine she was carrying, but is still caught.

The dog returns for her leg. It attacks

DANNY (CONT'D)
Open the door!

Danny quickly catches her balance as the door opens and
scots in.

The dog stares at Danny growling.

There is a scream heard down the street.

The dog twitches and takes off after the noise.

15 INT. ELLA'S LIVING ROOM

15

The two women enter the apartment. Danny is limping and holding onto Ella's arm. Ella helps Danny to the couch, then dials 911.

There is a busy signal.

Surprised, she clicks the "last called" button to check to see if she dialed the wrong number. The display says "911". She tries again with no success. She goes to her house phone and tries 911, still busy. She leaves the room and returns with a wet towel as Danny sits on the edge of the couch trying to take her jeans off.

ELLA
This isn't good?

DANNY
You think?

ELLA
I mean the bites are...

Ella helps Danny remove her jacket and exposes a large gash on the back of her neck.

ELLA (CONT'D)
You should go to the hospital.

DANNY
It's that bad?

ELLA
Wait, Lila's home. I saw her today in scrubs, maybe she's a doctor?

DANNY
No she's a vet. Ow!

ELLA
Well she's got to have something better than the few band aids we have. I'll be right back.

Ella exits the apartment.

16 EXT. PURGATORY

16

The man and woman stare at the board. They are in a forest. Behind the man there appears to be babies.

Whereas behind the woman there is just forest. Their table is wooden. Both have taken 5 of the other's pieces. Babies are crying are all that can be heard.

AMY

Stop!

JOHN

What's wrong?

AMY

Them! Don't you hear that?

The noise changes to birds chirping.

JOHN

The birds?

AMY

The crying. Make it stop.

17 INT. HALLWAY

17

Ella goes up a flight of stairs and knocks on her neighbor Lila's door. Lila's looks startled as she opens the door.

ELLA

Sorry to bother you again, but I have a bit of a medical issue. Can you come down for a second?

LILA

I'm busy.

Ella notices the scene behind Lila. There are candles, music, strawberries and a chocolate fondue set-up and the same Malbec that she and Danny drink.

ELLA

I wouldn't ask if it weren't really important. My partner was attacked by a wild dog and...

LILA

(surprised)
What?

ELLA

She's got gashes and there's blood and...

LILA
Give me 5 minutes.

ELLA
Thanks so much. I just...

LILA
5 minutes. (Curt)

ELLA
Right. Thanks.

18

INT. ELLA'S LIVING ROOM

18

Lila enters the open door to the apartment. Danny is laying on the far end of the couch. There is blood everywhere, Ella looks frantic.

LILA
I thought you needed advice,
(To Ella)
She needs to go to the hospital.
Um, I need towels and boiling
water.

Ella nods. She turns on the kettle and exits for the bathroom.

Lila kneels over to Danny and looks at her wounds, speaking in a hush tone.

LILA (CONT'D)
What the fuck happened?

DANNY
I was picking flowers.

LILA
You wanna joke?

DANNY
I got attacked by fucking Cujo.

LILA
At the motel?

DANNY
No. When I got back.

Lila looks at Danny's leg and notices puss and blood oozing from the bite mark on her leg.

LILA

Wow.

DANNY

It got my neck too.

Lila helps Danny remove her shirt. Her entire back is blistered and puss ridden. There are large and small boils on the verge of popping. Lila Gasps.

DANNY (CONT'D)

What?

Ella returns. They quickly collect themselves. Lila hand Ella her keys.

LILA

(To Ella)

Can you go to my place and get my medical kit? It's the black bag under the kitchen sink.

ELLA

OK.

Ella exits.

19 INT. LILA'S APARTMENT 19

Ella enters Lila's apartment. She goes directly for the medical bag under the kitchen sink. En route she stops as she sees Danny's keys which have a picture of the 2 of them hugging. She stares at the photo on the key chain.

20 EXT. PURGATORY 20

John and Amy are in the ocean at the same metal table continuing their game. John is winning.

AMY

This isn't real.

JOHN

No, but I'm ok with it.

21 INT. ELLA'S APARTMENT 21

As Lila tries to clean Danny's wounds, Danny begins panting. Lila leans her over the tub and reaches for a towel to dampen and put on Danny's head.

LILA

(In a brisk tone.)
 Now if you had just said on the phone: Ella I'm threw with the marriage. Then climbed back in bed, you wouldn't be in need of the world's greatest tetanus shot. Really, I know you feel guilty leaving her with Maddie, but it's not even your kid. That's her family mess not yours. She knows you never wanted kids. It's not really fair for her to have. I'm not trying to be a dick but it's just a fact weather you want to acknowledge it or not.

Lila wrings out the towel over a bowl as Danny fades. Lila deflates for moment, realizing she may have pissed Danny off and is the cause of the silent treatment.

LILA (CONT'D)

I'm a jerk. But I can admit this.
 Damn! This whole situation just pisses me off!

Lila turns and freezes mid-sentence. Danny has passed out. Lila begins CPR.

22 INT. ELLA'S LIVING ROOM - A COUPLE OF MINUTES LATER 22

Ella enters her apartment. She drops the medicine bag on the table. She sees Lila arched over Danny.

ELLA

You fucking cunt! Both of you.

She tosses the keys onto the counter. Lila jumps startled.

I'm the idiot that never saw it coming! Of course you don't want to have dinner with us! You're fucking my wife!

Danny slumps to the side as Lila stands up.

LILA

There is a much bigger issue here than Danny showing pity on you and wallowing in this sad situation you call a marriage. If she'd stayed in bed with me instead of rush home to you, she wouldn't be needing medical attention.

Ella's eyes widen as she realizes the "Work" that Danny had to do today, which prevented her from coming to the funeral.

ELLA

I hope you fucking rot in hell! You repulsive whore!

As the words leave Ella's lips Danny springs up in Ella's direction but attacks Lila who is in her path.

Ella falls backwards in shock.

23 INT. PURGATORY - SKY 23

John and Amy are in the sky midair. The game is tied.

AMY

What happens after this?

JOHN

I'm not sure.

24 INT. ELLA'S KITCHEN 24

Danny venomously stares at Ella.

Both women are silent.

Lila is mangled and out as she lies on the ground.

Ella is crouched in uncertainty.

Maddie begins crying from the other room.

Danny jerks, Ella takes note.

Danny takes off in the direction of the noise.

Maddie's cries pierce the air.

Ella, panic stricken, reaches for Danny's foot, taking her down right at the hallway entrance.

25 INT. ELLA'S HALLWAY

25

The two women crash into the hallway wall, Ella attempting to restrain Danny who is clawing to break free and hunt the child whose screams continue.

Ella claws her way up Danny's body.

Ella reaches Danny's head, Danny bites her.

In a split second Ella snaps Danny's neck.

Ella slumps against the wall, exhausted.

Maddie continues to cry.

Tears well in Ella's eyes as she drags the two women outside of the apartment.

26 INT. ELLA'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

26

The apartment is dark.

There is a pounding on the door as Ella pours bleach and several cleansers on her wound.

There are alarms going off in the street outside as the sounds of random but numerous screams are heard.

Ella tries 911 again, busy signal.

Ella goes to Maddie who is sleeping and looks for a moment.

Ella twitches.

She goes into the living room drops the keys on the table.

Ella takes out her cell phone.

She is beginning to daze.

She dials her mother ROSE.

ELLA

Rose?

ROSE (V.O.)

Ella?

ELLA

(pause)...Mom?

MOTHER (V.O.)
I've been watching the news. Are you, Maddie and Danny ok?

ELLA
Aggression. They're...we're triggered by aggression.

MOTHER (V.O.)
What are you talking about.

ELLA
I'm infected but Maddie's almost safe. (Ella twitches) Come get her please.

WOMAN (V.O.)
I don't understand. What happened?

ELLA
I can't.

Maddie's cries start again.

Ella twitches.

Please hurry, and bring dad's gun.

27

INT. PURGATORY

27

John has won.

FLASH BACK

A) AMY LOOKING STRESSED OUT HOLDING MADDIE ARGUING WITH JOHN.

B) JOHN TRIES TO CONSOLE AMY.

C) AMY TAKES PILLS.

D) AMY IS CRYING AND POINTING GUN AT JOHN WHILE HOLDING MADDIE.

E) AMY SHOT IS HEARD AS A BABY CRIES (EXACTLY THE SAME AS OPENING).

F) AMY WALKS DOWN A LONG DOCK TOWARDS THE OCEAN.

END OF MONTAGE
FLASHBACK

28 INT. PURGATORY

28

John takes the card that reads: Soul 456,989,777,002 Ella Reid.

John and Amy are standing, no table or chairs.

AMY
(audible)
I'm afraid.

JOHN
I love you. Always have, always
will.

Amy is jerked back towards a dark and foggy tunnel.

John turns and walks toward a light filled tunnel.

29 INT. ELLA'S LIVING ROOM

29

Ella has tissue in her ears and is clutching a paper and photo in one hand and a butchers knife in the other. She lays the photo and paper down and walks to her front door.

She takes a deep breath and opens the door.

Nothing.

A moment later Lila drag Ella out as Ella swing her knife and reaches for the door, pulling it shut.

On the table there is a funeral program that has the pictures of John and Amy. It says "In loving Memory of John and Amy Reid who are survived by their Mother Rose, Sister Ella and Daughter Maddie". Next to this is a picture of John and Ella hugging.

30 INT. PURGATORY

30

Danny is seated (at the same table) as Ella walks up to her and sits down. Ella opens the envelope on the table it reads: Soul 456,989,777,454: Rose Reid. They begin a new game.

-BLACK-