

THE ART OF WAR

Written by

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FADE IN:

EXT. DEED RESIDENCE - NIGHT

The house sits on an acre lot, hidden behind thick poplars and rows of manicured hedges.

The loop driveway gives way to a single detached family home.

It's a mid century, ranch-style home with some modern upgrades, including a few roman pillars tucked beneath the second floor awning.

A stream of people leave the quaint dwelling, dressed as GHOULS and GOBLINS, a pair of STUMBLING VAMPIRES follow a pair of SEXY OFFICERS.

INT. DEED RESIDENCE - NIGHT

The interior is spacious and modern. Hardwood floors, vaulted ceilings, paintings, all the comforts a warm inviting home could need.

SAM and SARAH DEED (30's) a smart and good looking couple stand by the door, smiling to the guests as they head home.

Sam is dressed as CAPTAIN MORGAN from the rum bottle, his beard is poorly attached as it slowly peels from his face.

Sarah on the other hand is dressed in a tight fitting red coca-cola dress with a silver tiara tucked into her auburn hair.

She reaches across Sam's cheek and tries to adjust the beard, affixing it back to his temple.

The last to leave is A MAN DRESSED AS PLUTO (40's) stocky and a bit overweight, he stops in front of the couple, clearly intoxicated.

MAN DRESSED AS PLUTO

Sam, Sarah, this was an awesome party. Thank's for inviting me this year.

SAM

Sure thing FRANK, glad you could make it!

Sam gives him a playful pat on the shoulder.

FRANK

Yeah, it's too bad ALICE couldn't make it. I would've love to have bobbed for her apples.

He smiles a toothy grin, eyeing Sam with the glint of an inside joke.

SARAH

Okay Frank...

Sarah guides him through the front door.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Thanks for coming.

Frank turns just in time to see the door slam in his face.

Sam's thick brows furrow as he looks at Sarah, a bit annoyed.

SAM

What was that?

Giving a sarcastic laugh, Sarah shakes her head and enters further into the home.

INT. DEED RESIDENCE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Sarah begins clearing a table of red solo cups and used napkins, stacking them one on top of the other.

Sam follows into the spacious kitchen and leans against the fridge.

SAM

What's wrong?

SARAH

Frank's a pig.

SAM

He's just drunk, what's the big deal?

SARAH

All your friends are pigs.

SAM

Like who?
(beat)

SARAH

My only request tonight was no inappropriate costumes. There were lots of kids if you hadn't noticed.

SAM

CARL told me he was coming as an albino pickle. How was I supposed to know?

She sighs, placing the cups on the table.

SARAH

Does everything I say have to be turned into a joke?

SAM

I find jokes are the best way to diffuse any situation.

Sarah shakes her head in frustration and returns to stacking cups.

SAM (CONT'D)

Oh come on Sarah, I thought we had fun tonight.

Sam walks over and grabs her hands, forcing her to take a break.

She tries to avoid his gaze but is eventually caught by them.

SAM (CONT'D)

Look I'm sorry, okay. I promise I'll make it up to you.

SARAH

Oh yeah? Like how?

SAM

How about we start with my world famous foot massage?

Sarah smiles at the thought.

SARAH

No.

(beat)

We can finish with that, you can start by checking on the kids.

SAM

(in a pirate accent)

Aye, aye, captain.

He pulls her in as they share a brief kiss before Sam heads upstairs.

INT. DEED RESIDENCE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Sam cracks the door to a bedroom.

It's bathed in soft blue light which emanates from a globe night light.

Posters of superheroes and race cars adorn the walls, a few toys are scattered about.

A bunk bed houses two SLEEPING BOYS, their blankets rising and falling to the rhythm of their breath.

Smiling, Sam begins to close the door, but just as it shuts, we hear it, a SCREAM.

Its distant and barely audible, but it's pain filled and tortured.

INT. DEED RESIDENCE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Sam bursts into the kitchen.

SAM

What happened!

Sarah is leaned against the kitchen island trying to hang some pots onto a brass colored pot hanger.

SARAH

What?

SAM

You didn't scream?

Sarah gives him a concerned look.

SARAH

Are you feeling alright?

Sam scratches at his head.

SAM

I could've sworn I heard someone scream.

SARAH

Wasn't me, but can you give me a hand?

She points to a garbage bag on the ground by the island.

SAM

Yeah sure.

Sam bends down to grab the bag, placing his hand on the on the kitchen island for support.

But just as he grabs the bag, a thick bottomed pot comes crashing against his hand, causing him to recoil and tumble against the kitchen floor in agony.

Sarah gasps, rushing to his side, crouching beside him.

SARAH

Sam! Are you alright? I'm so sorry.

She takes his injured hand into hers and examines the wound.

A couple of his knuckles are split, but it looks superficial at best.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Oh my poor baby, does it hurt?

Sam takes back his hand and examines it himself.

SAM

Nah. I won't even need a band-aid.

SARAH

You sure?

Sam nods.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Well go run it under some cold water, might help with any swelling.

She rises to her feet while helping him to his.

She gives him a quick kiss as he heads for the first floor bathroom.

INT. DEED RESIDENCE - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Sam runs the water, the white noise fills the room as he moves his hand into the stream. The red follows the drain moving in a hypnotic swirl.

A painful SCREAM, filled with sorrow, breaks the swirl.

Sam head snaps to attention, the tap goes quiet. It was faint, but real.

He looks at the vent cover screwed into the wall and places his ear against it.

A couple of SOBS fill his ears.

Sam springs from the bathroom, sprinting into the kitchen.

INT. DEED RESIDENCE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Sam marches up to Sarah, who's busy wiping down a counter.

SAM
Okay, tell me you heard that?

SARAH
You heard another scream?

SAM
Tell me you're messing with me...
Halloween and all that.

SARAH
Tell me you're joking.

SAM
You're not messing with me?

Concerned, Sarah approaches Sam, placing her hand on his forehead.

SARAH
Have you been taking your
medication?

Sam grabs Sarah's hand and removes it from his forehead, offended.

SAM
It's epilepsy, not schizophrenia. I
don't hallucinate voices...

SARAH
I didn't mean anything by it.
(beat)
I'm just a bit freaked out.

SAM
You're not the one hearing the
screaming. I, I think it's coming
from the vents.

She snaps her fingers...

SARAH

Here, I got just the thing.

Sarah grabs a couple of garbage bags, maybe half full and thrusts them into Sam's chest.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Take these into the basement.
Halloween decoration's that can go
on hiatus.

Sam eyes the bags now in his possession.

SAM

And how is this, "*just the thing*"?

SARAH

The basement freaks you out...
(beat)
You'll be putting all your energy
into not pissing yourself. And who
knows, maybe that's where all the
screams are coming from.

Sam rolls his eyes.

SAM

Ha ha, funny.

Sam lets out a nervous sigh.

INT. DEED RESIDENCE - BASEMENT - NIGHT

The door opens, the light entering the basement covers Sam in a dark silhouette.

He reaches forward and pulls a string, a single bulb dangling on a rope illuminates the stark stairwell. It's very different from the rest of the house.

The walls are bare and expose layers of red brick forced between mortar, the stairs are unpainted and stained from years of use.

He breaths deep and begins to descend the stairs.

Reaching the bottom, he skips the last step and lands on the bare cement floor.

The unfinished basement is dark, Sam fumbles with an electric switch before finally managing to hit it.

The basement flickers with its florescent bulbs, hung in rows from the ceiling.

As his eyes adjust to the harsh sterile light, a horrifying scene begins to take shape.

In the middle of the basement, strapped to a chair is a BLOODY WOMAN.

She wears a blood stained tank top and a pair of panties, a puddle of what can only be urine pools beneath the chair. Numerous cuts and bruises cover her body. She sits quietly, her breathing labored.

Her head is obscured, covered by a plastic opaque dome, akin to a large Chinese lantern. Numerous duct tubes snake their way from the head piece and connect to the air vents.

Sam drops the bags at the sight.

SAM
What the fuck!

Sam cautiously approaches the woman.

SAM (CONT'D)
Are you okay?

The woman lets out a feeble moan from under the dome.

Sam crouches beside her and begins to pull at the headgear, its taped firmly in place around her neck.

Peeling one end, he begins to unravel it.

Finished, he pulls the dome free from her head.

SAM (CONT'D)
Alice?

Her face is beaten and her mouth firmly gagged with a piece of cloth. Her shoulder length blonde hair is matted with blood and clung to the side of her face. A strange collar with a black box attached to it is securely tethered to her neck.

Acting quickly he unties the gag from her mouth, the bloodied rag comes lose as he meets her gaze.

Tears stream from her battered eyes as she weakly looks at Sam.

ALICE

Sam, your wife. She's fucking
crazy...

The collar around her neck lights up, sending a pulsing
current of electricity through her body.

She screams a painful, tortured scream as the volts tear
through her neck.

The sudden scream and sounds of electricity cause Sam to
tumble backwards, hitting the ground with a thud.

Sam goes to stand but a threatening click garners his
attention.

He look to the direction of the sound.

A menacing visage of Sarah standing at the bottom of the
stairs causes Sam to flinch.

She wears a pair of leather gloves, a .45 revolver pointed
at Sam in one hand and a small black button in the other.

Her face is bloodied and battered, her left eye almost
swollen shut.

Alice sobs at the sight of her.

SAM

Sarah? What the fuck is going on!
What happened to your face?

SARAH

Oh this?

Pointing to her injuries.

SARAH (CONT'D)

You did this.

She grabs a the shoulder of her Coca-Cola dress and tares the
strap, exposing her bra.

SARAH (CONT'D)

I found out about your sick
fantasy. Torturing a helpless
woman, rigging the house so you
could torture me with her screams.
How could you? Your laptop is
filled with rape videos and animal
torture. You're sick. And when I
stumbled into this chamber of
horrors, you beat me.

Sam looks at his knuckles, split and swollen.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Thank god I fought you off before you could get your gun. I ran straight out of here. Ran out into the dark, right to BILL and MARTHA'S.

SAM

You're insane.

He begins to push himself off the floor.

SARAH

I wouldn't if I were you.

Sarah pulls out a small, high intensity flashlight and it begins to strobe wildly in Sam's face, causing him to recoil and grab at his head.

He lurches forward and pukes on the ground.

SAM

(weakly)

Sarah, please...

SARAH

What did you think Sam, that I wasn't going to figure it out? That you were going to leave me for this fucking slut?

ALICE

(weakly)

Fuck you, bitch!

Sam puts one of his hands out trying to shield his sensitive eyes from the flickering onslaught.

SAM

Sarah, it's not what you think.

Sarah's eyes stream with tears.

SARAH

Oh please, I have all your texts, all your secret conversations. Your plans of running away together. To leave me and the boys.

ALICE

He doesn't want you because you're
a depressed little cunt who can't
find the energy to live life.

Sarah presses the button in her hand.

The shock collar activates, causing Alice to scream.

Sarah marches to a corner and grabs a plastic foot stool.

She places it down in front of Alice and climbs on top of it.

SARAH

(To Sam)

How tall are you?

SAM

Sarah please, it doesn't have to be
like this.

SARAH

Five-eleven right? Probably six
with those shoes?

She slightly raises the balls of her feet and aims the gun
right at the center of Alice's head.

Alice sobs uncontrollably, staring into the barrel of the .45

ALICE

Please!

SARAH

(to Alice)

You're pretty, but dumb. Dumb
enough to get yourself killed.

She fires a deafening shot, the bullet enters the crown of
her forehead as the back of her head explodes. Chunks of grey
matter and splinters of skull fragments slop against the
floor behind her.

Alice slumps, now as inanimate as the chair she's strapped
to.

She steps off the plastic stool and kicks it into the corner.
Turning her full attention to Sam, who recoils in terror.

SAM

What did you do! Sarah, what did
you do?

SARAH

Boy, you think your medication would've saved you from almost having a seizure. Luckily I switched them out a couple of weeks ago. I wonder why you stopped taking them?

Sarah methodically steps towards Sam, he desperately reaches for the air, trying to gain some sense of his surroundings.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Let your plans be dark...

She puts her hand out, letting Sam grab hold of it.

SARAH (CONT'D)

And impenetrable as night...

She begins to help him up while pressing the gun into his hand.

SARAH (CONT'D)

And when you move...

She guides his hand along with the gun against his temple.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Fall like a thunderbolt!

She squeezes his finger against the trigger, the .45 roars, the flash of light is blinding as the bullet tears through Sam's skull.

The spray of material exit his skull at high velocity. He collapses, dead, gun held firmly in his hand.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Sun Tzu, The Art of War.

Sarah looks over the carnage and gingerly steps over it, she walks to the base of the stairs and sits.

She stares quietly before tears begin to stream from her eyes.

She begins to cry uncontrollably, sobbing wildly.

But the sobs turn to a chuckle, which turns to a laugh... a sick, manic laugh.

FADE OUT: