

HEAD GAMES

by

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FADE IN:

INT. ELLIE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

ELLIE ROSSDALE (early 30's) is paying bills online as she speaks into a Bluetooth headset.

ELLIE
C'mon, Karl. Just this once.

An error message pops up: INSUFFICIENT FUNDS.

KARL (O.S.)
No story, no paycheck, Ellie.
That's how it works.

She closes her web browser, opens a folder labeled DOM.

ELLIE
You know I'm good for it.

KARL (O.S.)
The only thing I know is that
Huffington Post is kicking our ass.

She sorts through pics of the athletic man in the folder.

KARL (O.S.)
We need something big, and soon, or
nobody gets paid.

She hovers over a video named PRIVATE.

KARL (O.S.)
You hear what I'm saying, Ellie?

Ellie opens the video file. Light flickers across her face.

ELLIE
Loud and clear, Karl. You'll get
your story. Tonight.

She touches her headset, ending the call.

INT. GYM - DAY

DOM ALROSA (early 30's), the man from Ellie's pictures, fights a man nearly twice his size. He's loving it.

Dom sweeps his opponent's legs, takes him to the mat, locks an arm bar. His opponent pounds on the mat, taps out. Dom hops to his feet, helps his opponent stand.

(CONTINUED)

DOM
Good match, Frankie.

FRANKIE (early 30's) nods, working his shoulder.

VIRGIL (O.S.)
Dom! Lunch!

VIRGIL (late 50's), suit and tie, gabs into his smartphone, He waves for Dom to join him. Dom pats Frankie on the shoulder, jogs to join Virgil.

A BANNER hangs over the door. It reads "ALROSA VS. MILLOVICH, WWFC 77, MIDDLEWEIGHT CHAMPIONSHIP BOUT".

EXT. CITY SIDEWALK - DAY

Dom and Virgil strut side-by-side, against the flow.

VIRGIL
Tell me you're ready.

DOM
I'm ready, Virgil.

VIRGIL
Good. Cause if you're not, I'll
kick your ass.

Familiar banter. Neither Dom nor Virgil notices the smirks and snickers from the people they pass on the sidewalk.

VIRGIL
Vegas has Millovich as a three to
one favorite. He's been bragging
that he's stronger, faster-

DOM
Doesn't matter. It's not about
muscle. It's about what's up here.

Dom taps his temple.

DOM
I've got my head right. He's gonna
take one look into these eyes, and
he's gonna be terrified.

Jokingly, Dom stares down a nearby pair of TEENAGE BOYS. They LAUGH IN HIS FACE, snap a pic, move on.

(CONTINUED)

VIRGIL
Terrified, huh?

ELLIE (O.S.)
They probably saw your video.

Dom turns, finds himself face-to-face with Ellie.

DOM
Ellie?

Ellie's cameraman, JEFF (mid 20's), stands by her, rolling.

ELLIE
Care to comment on the clip that's
the talk of the web today?

DOM
You didn't...

VIRGIL
What clip?

INT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY

Ellie fires up her laptop as Dom and Virgil look on.

VIRGIL
(to Dom)
I thought you two were through.

Dom grimaces. Ellie clicks PLAY.

A younger Dom fills the screen. He's wearing JEDI ROBES,
holding a the TOYS "R" US LIGHTSABER.

YOUNG DOM (V.O.)
I'll never join the dark side!

VIRGIL
(relieved)
Christ, Dom! I thought you made a
sex tape or something.

Young Dom lashes out with his lightsaber. He trips, flails,
falls. It's embarrassing, difficult to watch.

VIRGIL
I take it back. This is worse.

(CONTINUED)

DOM
(to Ellie)
I thought you deleted this after-

ELLIE
A good reporter never passes up an
opportunity for a story.

DOM
How's this a story?

ELLIE
A hugely popular WWFC fighter is
really a closet Star Trek geek?

DOM
Wars. Star Wars.

Young Dom cuts down imaginary opponents on screen.

DOM
I can't believe you did this.

ELLIE
A girl's gotta get paid.

Ellie motions for Jeff to start rolling again.

ELLIE
Ready for that statement?

Dom knocks over the table. Ellie's laptop FLIES through the
air, hits Jeff in the head, knocks him to the ground.

DOM
How's that for a statement?

Dom storms off, Virgil close behind.

INT. HOLLYWOOD INSIDER HQ - DAY

Ellie makes her way to Karl's office. Karl sits at his desk,
his phone to his ear. He brightens at her entrance.

KARL
Ellie! Close the door.

Ellie obeys. When she turns around, Karl wraps her in a BEAR
HUG.

(CONTINUED)

ELLIE

Uh, hi?

Karl steps back, picks up a CHECK, hands it to Ellie.

KARL

This, my dear, is all yours.

Ellie does a double-take when she sees the amount.

ELLIE

You're kidding.

KARL

Your little video is a gold mine. We've had more hits today than we had in the last month. Our ad revenue is through the roof.

ELLIE

(guilty)

Great.

KARL

I need you to stay on this WWFC fighter. We need to milk this cash cow for all it's worth.

ELLIE

Trust me, we're not going to find anything else on him.

KARL

Then make something up. He's our golden ticket.

Ellie wants to protest, but doesn't.

ELLIE

Understood.

INT. FANCY RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Ellie sits alone at a table for two. She watches a YOUNG COUPLE in love at a nearby table, laughing, holding hands.

Dom enters. Ellie catches his eye, waves for him to come over. Dom moves toward her with hesitation.

DOM

What's this about, Ellie?

(CONTINUED)

ELLIE
Peace offering.

Ellie gestures for Dom to have a seat. Dom scans the restaurant, an animal sensing a trap.

ELLIE
Come on, Dom. You don't trust me?

He throws her a look.

ELLIE
Fair enough. Stupid question.

She gestures again. Dom sits. They share an awkward silence.

ELLIE
Dom, I'm sorry. I had no right-

DOM
Damn straight you had no right.

ELLIE
I needed the money.

DOM
You could have asked.

ELLIE
To post the video?

DOM
For money.

ELLIE
It's not that simple.

DOM
It never was.

ELLIE
No, Dom. It never was.

The WAITER arrives.

WAITER
Can I get you something to drink?

Ellie and Dom stare daggers at each other. Neither one acknowledges the waiter.

WAITER
I'll come back later.

He drifts away.

ELLIE
I still don't get what your thing
is with Star Trek-

DOM
Wars, Ellie. Star Wars. Christ!

She shrugs off the correction.

DOM
You don't get it because you never
had to fight for what you wanted.
You never had to stare down
something bigger than you and
convince yourself that you were
going to come out on top.

ELLIE
You don't know a thing about me.

DOM
I know everything about you.

ELLIE
Really? You think so?

DOM
I know that you fall asleep hugging
your pillow because you're afraid
to sleep alone. I know that it's
more important to you that people
know your name than it is for you
to get paid.

Dom leans in. Ellie can't look away.

DOM
I know that you feel like shit for
what you did to me.

She's speechless. He leans in closer.

DOM
And I know that you still love me.

Ellie catches Jeff staring at them from across the
restaurant. She snaps to, shakes her head.

DOM

No?

Ellie snaps her attention back to Dom.

ELLIE

(nodding)

No. I mean, yes. I mean-

Jeff sees her nod, then WHISTLES. All hell breaks loose.

On cue, half of the restaurant patrons jump up, whip out LIGHTSABERS. A mock battle ensues, a JEDI FLASHMOB.

Dom's eyes dart around the restaurant. CAMERAS everywhere he turns. The Jedi nearest him starts chanting his name. The other Jedi join in, pumping their lightsabers in the air.

Dom stands, facing Ellie.

DOM

I take it back, Ellie. You're right. I don't know you at all.

Dom turns his back, walks away.

INT. HOLLYWOOD INSIDER HQ - DAY

Ellie watches over Jeff's shoulder as he edits the footage from the restaurant. He laughs to himself.

CAMERAMAN

This is brilliant. Truly. You've outdone yourself this time, Ellie.

ELLIE

Yeah.

She pulls Dom's number up on her phone but stops short of calling him. Instead, she pulls up a web browser and Googles "comic book shop." She flips to Google Maps.

ELLIE

I'm heading out. Lock up behind me.

She leaves unnoticed. Jeff is too busy laughing at the look on Dom's face as the lightsabers come out.

INT. COMIC BOOK SHOP - DAY

A BELL RINGS as Ellie enters. All conversation stops. A DOZEN GEEKS AND NERDS stare at her in disbelief.

Then the WHISPERS start.

GEEK #1

A girl...

NERD #1

Is she even allowed in here?

GEEK #2

... Kitty Pryde, only older.

They murmur as Ellie beelines to the counter. The CLERK (late 30's) doesn't look up, keeps reading his comic.

CLERK

Next door.

ELLIE

Excuse me?

CLERK

You're looking for the Chinese place is next door. This is a comic shop.

ELLIE

I know it's a comic shop, you little twerp. I'm here because I need you to teach me everything you know about Star Wars.

SILENCE. The murmuring stops. The clerk looks up.

CLERK

Really? But... why?

ELLIE

That's my business. Now are you and your little nerdlings going to help me or not?

Every nerd and geek in the shop RUSHES toward her.

MONTAGE

They regale Ellie with Star Wars knowledge.

(CONTINUED)

Geeks stage mock battles, some life-size, some with miniatures. Nerds mimic Artoo and Threepio. The clerk shows off his collection of Star Wars VHS tapes and DVD's.

Ellie's skepticism yields to appreciation. Their passion, their excitement. She's beginning to understand.

The clerk disappears behind the counter, reappears with a NONDESCRIPT BOX. He pushes the box to Ellie. She opens it, stares at the contents in disbelief.

Ellie exchanges a look with the expectant clerk. She smiles, nods. Applause erupts from the geek-nerd contingent.

END MONTAGE

INT. ELLIE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Ellie paces around her apartment, tries to call Dom. The box from the comic shop lies on her bed.

DOM (V.O.)
I'm busy. Leave a message.

She hangs up as the voicemail greeting beeps.

INT. GYM - NIGHT

Dom beats the hell out of a heavy bag. Virgil watches him from the shadows. Dom's smartphone buzzes on the bench.

Dom steps away from the bag, catches his breath. His eyes drift from the phone to the banner on the wall.

He returns to the heavy bag, frustrated and angry.

INT. ELLIE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Ellie meanders around, nursing her morning coffee.

She sits at the kitchen table, opens her battered laptop. The Jedi flashmob video is online, tons of hits.

She pauses the video on her face. So guilty.

ELLIE
Way to kick him while he's down.

She closes the laptop lid, picks up her phone, dials.

ELLIE

Jeff? I need you and your camera tonight. We've got one more video to shoot.

Ellie's eyes drift to her bedroom, to the BOX on her bed.

INT. DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

Dom sits in a chair, head hung low. Virgil stands by him.

VIRGIL

You up for this?

DOM

Does it matter?

VIRGIL

You walk in there with that attitude, you're gonna get your ass handed to you.

Dom fiddles with the tape on his wrists.

VIRGIL

It's just a stupid video.

DOM

It's not the video.

VIRGIL

Forget her.

DOM

Not likely.

Dom stands, starts toward the door.

DOM

So you gonna come see me get my ass kicked or what?

INT. ARENA - NIGHT

Dom emerges to a ROARING CROWD brandishing TOY LIGHTSABERS. He shuffles to the ring, ready for this fight to be over.

Inside the ring, MILLOVICH (mid 30'd) stands tall, confident. He sneers as Dom enters.

Dom eyes the crowd as the ref starts the fight. The first PUNCH catches him totally off guard, sends him SPRAWLING.

(CONTINUED)

Millovich presses the attack, and Dom's instincts take over. Dom keeps Millovich at bay, but he takes a beating.

The BELL RINGS. Dom limps back to his corner, head hung low. The jeers of the crowd yield to CATCALLS.

ELLIE (O.S.)
Settle down, you bunch of primates.

Dom JERKS his head up, shocked.

Ellie stands in the center of the ring, clutching the mic. She's wearing a SLAVE LEIA COSTUME from Return of the Jedi.

She smiles at Dom, then addresses the crowd. Jeff catches every second on camera.

ELLIE
Earlier this week, I posted a video online. You may have seen it.

The crowd ROARS, brandishing their lightsabers.

ELLIE
And would you be courageous enough to face a crowd of haters if I had posted a video about you?

A hush falls over the crowd. Ellie's looks at Dom.

ELLIE
What you're forgetting is that the boy in that video turned into the man you paid to see fight here tonight. Still, no matter how badly the odds are stacked against him, Dom refuses to give in, refuses to quit. (beat) I posted a video of someone stronger than you or I could ever hope to be.

Silence. Then, THUNDERING APPLAUSE. Ellie walks to Dom, grabs him, plants a HUGE KISS on his lips.

ELLIE
For luck.

The bell rings, signaling round two. Dom grins, then LUNGES into the fight, a tiger unleashed.

When Ellie is safely out of the ring, she turns back to watch with pleasure as Dom dominates his opponent.

FADE OUT