Essential Self-Defense

by Adam Rapp

Essential Self-Defense is a play written by Adam Rapp. It is set in a self-defense studio and follows the story of Yul Carroll, a disgruntled misfit who takes a job as an attack dummy in a women's self-defense class. The play explores themes of self-defense, identity, and the complexities of human relationships.

The story begins with Yul, a former TV manufacturer who has recently been fired. He is struggling to cope with his unemployment and is drawn to the self-defense studio for a sense of control and purpose. The class is led by Cheryl Lynn Bowers, a no-nonsense instructor who stresses the importance of self-defense techniques.

As the play progresses, Yul forms a connection with SADIE, a young woman who is taking the class for the first time. SADIE is dealing with her own personal issues, including a difficult relationship and a sense of isolation. Yul and SADIE develop a complex relationship that challenges traditional notions of gender and power dynamics.

The play's title, Essential Self-Defense, reflects the central theme of the work. It explores the idea that self-defense is not just about physical protection, but also about finding one's place in the world and asserting one's identity. The play questions the conventions of battle homes, and the art and science of Jeet Kune Do, and how it is effectively applied in self-defense situations.

Essential Self-Defense touches on issues of identity, power, and control, and it invites the audience to consider the role of self-defense in contemporary society. The play is a thought-provoking and engaging exploration of the complexities of human relationships and the challenges of navigating a world that often feels unforgiving and demands constant vigilance.