

THE GIRL ON THE SCREEN

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FADE IN:

INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT

BLACK. Pitch black. Eerily quiet.

An old CRT TV sits on a small rickety stand in the middle of the room.

THE TV -- suddenly switches on. The only source of light fills the room with an ominous glow.

Static screen. Static noise.

As abruptly as it started, the screen turns black. The static noise disappears.

THE TV -- an image fills the screen. It's a MISSING PERSONS poster. Bad quality. Blurry.

The picture seems to be of a little girl. Her features are almost indistinguishable. Almost alien-like.

At the bottom of the screen is a message --

KARA THOMAS. MISSING. 1991. 212-555-5555

The screen flickers for a moment. And then it goes --

BLACK.

EXT. SUBURBAN HOUSE - NIGHT

A modest, two-story house. Peaceful. A DOG barks in the distance.

INT. LIVING ROOM

A WOMAN walks into the room. Phone in one hand, glass of wine in the other. This is ROWAN (mid 20s).

In the midst of a conversation --

ROWAN
(into phone)
I think I'm pulling an all-nighter
tonight. I'm not happy about it.

On the other end --

MAN (V.O.)

I think I'm pulling one too. We're recording tomorrow, and as usual, I don't have my shit together.

Rowan plops down onto the sofa. She takes a sip of her wine, grabs the TV remote, turns the TV on.

MAN (V.O.)

How the hell can you focus with that? I need total silence.

ROWAN

(into phone)

It's just background noise. Silence doesn't do it for me.

She keeps flipping through channels, finally settling on a random news station.

Rowan sets the phone onto the coffee table, grabbing the laptop that's next to it.

ROWAN

So what's the case this week?

MAN (V.O.)

Tony Brackett. A serial killer from the early 70s.

ROWAN

(flat)

Oh wow.

MAN (V.O.)

Yeah, it's some dark stuff. This guy was a monster.

ROWAN

They always are, right?

As Rowan types quickly on her laptop --

HER TV -- turns black. Goes silent.

Rowan quickly notices this. She furrows her brow --

ROWAN

What the hell?

MAN (V.O.)

You okay?

Rowan doesn't respond. She grabs the remote, trying to flip to another channel.

The TV screen just stays black.

MAN (V.O.)
(concerned)
Rowan?

ROWAN
Yeah. I'm here. My TV is being
difficult tonight.

MAN (V.O.)
I told you to upgrade from that
dinosaur.

Rowan rolls her eyes, continues to fiddle with the remote. She gives up, tosses the remote.

ROWAN
(under her breath)
I guess it *will* be a quiet night.

She begins to return her focus to her laptop just as --

THE TV turns back on. The same news channel. Rowan looks confused.

ROWAN
Um, I guess we're back in business.
(re: Man)
You never told me how that date
went.

MAN (V.O.)
(deadpan)
It was a fucking disaster.

The sound from the TV goes silent.

AN IMAGE pops up on the TV. It's the same creepy, blurry image of the little girl. Her missing person's poster.

There's no announcement. No music. Just a soft static noise.

Rowan notices this.

ROWAN
The hell?

MAN (V.O.)
What is it now?

Rowan grabs the remote again, presses a button but it's fruitless.

The channel doesn't change. The image stays on the screen.

ROWAN

(re: Man)

Some missing person's poster popped up on the TV.

(pause; reading the text)

1991.

MAN (V.O)

What's her name? Could be something I can talk about on the podcast.

ROWAN

Kara Thomas.

MAN (V.O)

Age? Location?

ROWAN

That's all the info it gives. Well, at least what I can see. The quality is terrible.

(pause)

It's kind of creeping me out.

She glances down, grabs the phone. She raises it to the TV, snaps a pic.

Rowan freezes, furrows her brow.

THE TV - the missing poster...it looks as if the position of the girl has shifted just a tad bit. Just enough to be noticeable.

MAN (V.O.)

I'm guessing it didn't get much attention. I can't find anything. No news articles. Nothing on NamUS or the Charley Project.

(pause)

Oh wait, I think I got something.

Rowan types on the phone --

ROWAN

Kade, I just sent you a pic of it.

KADE (V.O.)

Give me a sec. This *is* kind of creepy.

ROWAN

What is it?

KADE (V.O)

So apparently, her missing person's poster popped up during the airing of some show in '91. The same vague info. Didn't get much traction.

Rowan listens, her eyes focused intently on the TV.

KADE (V.O)

The same photo reappeared in '97 during a broadcast of SNL. Weird thing is no one with that name was ever reported missing.

(pause)

No one could find any info on this girl. Where she lived, her age, relatives, nothing.

Rowan slowly stands up. Something about this image is a little unsettling.

KADE (V.O.)

Yada yada yada, theories about the whole thing being a hoax.

(pause)

And surprise surprise, she has her own urban legend dedicated to her. A weird one at that.

Rowan moves closer to the TV. The static noise grows just a little louder.

KADE (V.O.)

Uh, Rowan, what is this pic supposed to be of?

Rowan frowns.

ROWAN

It's the girl's poster. It's still on the TV. I can't get it off.

KADE (V.O.)

All I see is your old ass TV. And it's turned off.

Rowan tenses up.

ROWAN

What?

THE TV -- the image of the poster quickly cuts to a random commercial. The sudden change in sound is almost ear-piercing.

Rowan jumps back, startled. She bumps into the coffee table which --

Knocks her wine glass over, spilling it all over her phone.

ROWAN

Shit!

She snatches the phone up, tries using her shirt to wipe the wine off.

ROWAN

(into phone)

Kade? Kade?

HER PHONE -- the screen seems to be frozen.

ROWAN

Fuck!

She takes the biggest sigh ever, and turns around --

ROWAN

(low; to herself)

Nice job, Rowan.

Rowan reaches for the remote, goes to shut the TV off as --

The room goes dark. Including the TV. The lights are off.

The only light comes from Rowan's frozen phone screen.

Rowan looks around the room, spooked.

The house is completely silent.

Rowan slinks towards the doorway, flips the light switch. Nothing happens.

ROWAN

(under her breath)

Damnit.

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Rowan digs through one of the drawers, pulls out a small flashlight. Turns it on.

ROWAN
(to herself)
Now where would that breaker box
be?

INT. HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Rowan stands in a doorway, her flashlight pointed down to --

A long set of stairs leading down to the basement. The pitch black basement.

No way. Rowan sighs, closes the door. As she turns --

A CREAKING NOISE. From upstairs.

Rowan looks up.

The creaking grows louder. It almost sounds like footsteps.

ROWAN
Screw this.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Rowan speed walks to the front door as --

THE TV SWITCHES ON AGAIN. It's the same image. The same missing girl's poster.

Rowan stops in her tracks, attention on the TV.

THE TV -- the image is still grainy. Yet, the photo of the little girl seems to be just a little clearer.

Especially the eyes. The eyes seem to be focused right on Rowan.

Rowan lets out a WHIMPER. She almost slams into the front door, struggling to open it. It doesn't budge.

As she continues to fumble with the door --

THE TV BEGINS TO FLICKER. This illuminates the room in an almost strobe light quality.

Rowan spins, faces the tv --

THE TV - the once neutral expression of the girl is gone. Her face is now contorted into an angry appearance.

...and she's staring directly at Rowan.

ROWAN

W-w-what the fuck do you want?

With a startling quickness, she's yanked back on to the floor. Her head hits the edge of the coffee table.

She lets out a quick yelp in pain.

Rowan quickly comes to her senses, struggles to get up. She attempts to make a dash for the hallway.

She's thrown back again on to the floor.

ROWAN

Fuck!

She grabs onto the coffee table tightly as she's --

DRAGGED towards the TV.

ROWAN

NOO!

Rowan wiggles and squirms, kicks at whatever invisible force is dragging her.

The coffee table falls over. The stuff on top flies across the floor.

Rowan screams, tries to grab at anything. Her fingernails SCRATCH against the hardwood floor. She looks back as she gets closer and closer towards the TV.

ON THE TV -- the girl's head has tilted down, focused on Rowan.

Rowan lets out a blood-curdling scream just as --

As the TV turns off again. The room goes completely dark.

Silence.

INT. LIVING ROOM - KADE'S HOUSE - LATER

On the couch is KADE (late 20s), phone in his hand. He rolls his eyes.

From the phone's speaker is the usual voicemail greeting.

KADE
(into phone)
Rowan, this is my third time
calling you. Call me back. Like
now.

He ends the call. Returns his attention to the laptop sitting
in his lap. Reading --

KADE
(under his breath)
Who the hell is this girl?

He scrolls through whatever he's reading just as --

THE TV mounted to the wall in front of him turns on.

Kade looks up. His eyes widen in disbelief.

KADE
(confused)
What the...?

THE TV -- you guessed it. *The missing persons' poster.*

Kade sets his things to the side, stands. He inches closer to
get a better look. He then notices --

The grainy photo. But something about it is different.

As terrible as the quality is, it's clear just enough to show
that it's not the little girl.

It's a picture of Rowan -- staring straight ahead, just a
blank expression on her face.

BLACK.