

"The Curse"

By

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"THE CURSE"

FADE IN:

INT. STAIRCASE - DAY

Hazy images.

A Slinky sits atop a massive oak staircase.

A child's hand reaches out, toppling the metal spring.

The toy begins somersaulting rhythmically down the steps.

At the bottom of the stairs, the Slinky comes to rest in a puddle of blood.

CUT TO:

EXT. SIDEWALK - DAY

SARAH, a quiet six year old, is splayed out on the sidewalk and surrounded by sticks of chalk. She colors intensely.

Down the street, a BOY and a GIRL play catch with a super ball. The ball gets away from them and bounces down the road. It stops in the grass next to Sarah.

The Boy and Girl look at each other in horror. They speak in whispers.

BOY
Well, go get it.

GIRL
You threw it.

BOY
You should have caught it.

GIRL
What are you, scared?

Sarah rises and picks up the super ball. She looks at the boy and the girl down the road who just stare back, frozen in silence.

Sarah throws the ball. It bounces back towards the kids and rolls up to their feet.

The boy and girl scatter, leaving their ball behind.

Sarah sadly returns to her masterpiece.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Sarah's MOTHER watches her daughter through the window.

MOTHER
She breaks my heart.

Sarah's FATHER paces the room.

FATHER
This isn't the answer.

MOTHER
He can help her.

FATHER
She doesn't need any help. She's
just a sweet, sensitive, precocious
little girl.

Sarah's mother turns away from the window.

MOTHER
You don't believe that.

Sarah's father stops pacing.

FATHER
I don't want him coming here.

MOTHER
I don't care what you want anymore.
He's coming.

CUT TO:

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Sarah's parents sit at the dining room table with DR. THOMAS,
a middle-aged man with dark eyes and a solemn expression.

FATHER
My wife tells me you're a doctor.

DR. THOMAS

Yes, I am.

FATHER

A medical doctor?

DR. THOMAS

I have a Ph.D. in Parapsychology.

FATHER

(sarcastically)

That's a good one.

MOTHER

I have to apologize for my husband.
He has his doubts about this.

DR. THOMAS

Me, too.

MOTHER

I beg your pardon?

DR. THOMAS

I appreciate your call and your
concern, but I should tell you, I
think this is probably just a wild
goose chase.

FATHER

That's what *I* said.

MOTHER

I don't understand.

DR. THOMAS

I've been researching supernatural
phenomena my whole life and, except
for one time, all I've found are
some coincidences and a few cheap
parlor tricks.

MOTHER

What happened that one time?

DR. THOMAS

There was a young boy. He had the
gift.

SARAH'S FATHER

The gift?

DR. THOMAS
Telepathy. He knew things,
secrets. He could see inside
others, their thoughts and dreams.

FATHER
I don't believe it.

DR. THOMAS
The boy, he was my brother and I
assure you, his talent was very
real.

MOTHER
How is he now? Does he still have
visions?

DR. THOMAS
He's passed away, I'm afraid.

MOTHER
I'm sorry.

DR. THOMAS
Don't be. It was a long time ago.
It was probably for the best. I
call it the gift, but it was more
of a curse. It was very hard on
him. He was feared and envied,
hated and haunted. Our parents
were at a loss for what to do with
him. My life's work has been spent
studying this mystery so if this
ever happened to another child, I
could try and help. I could make
things different.

MOTHER
How will you know if Sarah is...
telepathic?

DR. THOMAS
I'd like to do a few simple tests.

FATHER
Tests?

DR. THOMAS
Nothing painful, I assure you.

Dr. Thomas reaches into a leather satchel and draws forth a
deck of cards. He spreads them face up on the table,
squares, circles, stars, crosses, and wavy lines.

DR. THOMAS

These are Zener cards. There are 25 cards, 5 different shapes, and 1 shape on each card. I will simply ask her to identify the hidden symbol on each card. An average person will get 5 right. If your daughter has some ability, she might get 10 out of 25. Does this sound acceptable?

Sarah's parents look at each other and nod.

DR. THOMAS

I think it's time I met Sarah then. Would you bring her to me?

Sarah has quietly walked into the room.

MOTHER

Here she is now.

DR. THOMAS

Hello Sarah, my name is Dr. Thomas.

SARAH

I know who you are.

DR. THOMAS

(to Sarah's parents)
Can we have some privacy?

CUT TO:

INT. DINING ROOM - LATER

Sarah sits across from Dr. Thomas. They are alone.

Dr. Thomas holds up the first card, a cross.

Sarah has a faraway look.

DR. THOMAS

Sarah?

SARAH

A circle.

Dr. Thomas selects the next card, a star.

SARAH

A square.

Dr. Thomas pulls another card, wavy lines.

DR. THOMAS
Think, think hard.

Sarah closes her eyes, concentrating.

CUT TO:

INT. STAIRCASE - DAY

A dark collage of images.

A boy tumbles down the stairs, out of control, smiling.

His body crumples on the floor, his head twisted unnaturally.

Blood drips from his mouth.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Sarah's parents wait nervously as Dr. Thomas enters the room, his face ashen. Sarah wanders in behind him, head down.

MOTHER
So?

DR. THOMAS
She missed them all.

MOTHER
Are you sure?

DR. THOMAS
I did the test three times.

SARAH
I'm sorry.

FATHER
It's okay, sweetie.

Sarah's father pulls his daughter into his embrace. They both smile.

FATHER
I guess we have our answer then.

DR. THOMAS

Not so fast. I don't think Sarah *is* sorry.

MOTHER

What do you mean?

DR. THOMAS

I mean she missed them *all*. Every one. 75 cards. Zero correct. That's just not possible. To get them all wrong, you have to give the wrong answer every time. To do that, you have to know what the right answer is.

Sarah's father releases his daughter.

FATHER

Is this true?

SARAH'S MOTHER

You can tell us.

SARAH

I don't want to be different.

MOTHER

We're your parents, we love you, no matter what.

SARAH

You're scared of me.

FATHER

Of course we're not. Don't be silly.

SARAH

I know. I know what you're thinking. All the time.

Sarah's parents are speechless.

DR. THOMAS

It's not easy being different, Sarah, but you are special. You have a gift.

SARAH

People will hate me. Like you hated him.

DR. THOMAS

What?

CUT TO:

INT. STAIRCASE - DAY

Shadowy images.

A boy kneels at the top of the stairs, playing with a toy.

A dark figure sneaks up behind him.

He pushes him down the steps.

The dark figure, his younger brother, is left standing at the top of the stairs, his face full of fear.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Dr. Thomas drops to the floor in anguish.

SARAH

You pushed him.

FATHER

You killed your brother?

DR. THOMAS

Yes. No. I mean, I didn't mean to.

MOTHER

What are you saying?

DR. THOMAS

He knew. He knew I was there. He *always* knew. He could have stopped me. He wanted me to do it.

Sarah's parents are in shock.

DR. THOMAS

Don't you understand? He could have stopped me, but he wanted me to do it. I had to and he knew I would. Don't you understand?

Sarah walks over to Dr. Thomas. They look deep into each other's eyes.

SARAH
(quietly)
I understand.

Dr. Thomas takes Sarah into his arms as he dissolves into tears.

FADE OUT.