

“Hell Hospital”

Film Premise by William Peter Blatty

1. James Remington (Harrison Ford) is a neurologist at Georgetown University Hospital. Divorced. Has a young son who died from a neurologic disease from which Remington failed to save him. Guilt-ridden. And when we first meet him he also depressed over the recent death of another patient.

2. Remington does the “spirit voice” experiment with tape recorder. Thinks he hears his dead son’s agonized voice pleading, “Help me.” Afterwards, shaken and distracted, as he crosses a street he is hit by a car. He awakens in a dream-like state in a kind of “near death” experience in which he is confronted by a ghostly tribunal reviewing his past life. One of his judges is his wife. He knows she is alive and therefore that this is just a vivid and lucid dream. It grows more bizarre, even frightening, as his dead young son appears, screaming “Dad, help me!” as he is dragged away by faceless hooded beings. The “dream” ends as:

3. Remington awakens in Intensive Care unit of his own hospital. The car accident. Some brain damage suspected. There are windows in the IC unit, but outside Remington sees only fog. And though they all seem to know him, he recognizes no one on the hospital staff. How long has he been comatose, he asks. Six months. That accounts for the staff turnover.

Or does it?

4. There are policemen roaming the corridors. Remington is told that while he was out there have been two horrifying murders in the hospital, the victims both totally exsanguinated. The killer is at large and probably a doctor there in the hospital.

5. At night, Remington is kept in traction. By day he wanders about in a motorized wheelchair. He is puzzled as a passing Attendant remarks, “You’ve forgotten all the people you’ve helped. What on earth did he mean? And then while passing a hospital room Remington is stunned on seeing his dead father standing in the room, looking out a window. The father turns, says, “Why, Tom! What are *you* doing here?” A nurse in the hall calls into the room. Remington turns, and when he looks back his father is gone. What’s wrong? Is it the suspected damage to his brain? He asks to see the resident neurologist, a friend. But the resident is gone. And the man in his place – Remington is stunned as he recognizes him as one of the Tribunal judges in his dream.

6. Remington's alarm accelerates wildly when into his room one day comes nurse. But it's his wife! What is she doing there? Why suddenly a nurse? t the nurse seems befuddled, has no idea what Remington is talking about. As she backs out of the room, unnerved, Remington is screaming at r. He is given an injection. And awakens in the middle of the night to find a bizarre and somehow quietly terrifying man sitting in a chair at his bedside. Dressed only in a sheet draped over his head and body, his face is reddish, totally tattooed. Remington is now in traction. The man then identifies himself as the hospital serial killer, and that his next intended victim is Remington. "Unless." Unless what? "Unless you solve the puzzle." He produces a gleaming, long and terror inducing surgical knife. A nurse enters to ask Remington about a sleep medication for the night. She appears to be oblivious to the presence of the hooded killer. Remington, beside himself, stammers, breathless -- but when he looks back to the tattooed killer, there is simply no one there. What's going on? Another hallucination? The damage to his brain? Someone else comes in. The resident neurologist. Remington tries to pin down what he knows about the possible lesion in his brain, but also quizzes the neurologist about the nurse who was the image of his wife. The neurologist doesn't know who he's talking about. After the neurologist leaves, Remington tries to make a phone call. At the other end of the line, there is an endless ringing. But no one is answering. He calls for a nurse, and when she comes he demands she take him out of traction. Later, he wanders the silent hallways in his wheelchair. And is startled when a door at the end of a long corridor bursts open, his dead son appears, crying out, "Dad!" in terror, then is quickly seized by someone and dragged behind the door. Remington speeds down the hallway, goes through the door. No sign of anyone. He returns to his room, is about to ring for the nurse to help him back into bed, when he sees, standing squeezed in a corner, the Tattooed Man. And his knife.

What is going on here?

The Truth: It is in fact less than an hour since Remington's car accident. He is in surgery and having a near-death experience. But the experience is real. His son is in danger. And he must save him from Hell Hospital, where both are doomed to remain, until ...

"Until you solve the puzzle," the Tattooed Man informs him cryptically.

What is the puzzle?

Note: When he has solved it, Remington will wonder whether or not he's dreamed it all. Until he discovers that his ex-wife died just prior to his automobile accident.