

Movie: *Child's Play* (1988)

Synopsis

Child's Play is a classic horror film that chronicles the actions of Chucky, a red-haired "Good Guy" doll possessed by the soul of a serial killer. Charles Lee Ray, known as the "Lake Shore Strangler," was fatally shot by police outside of a local toy store. Prior to dying, Ray entered the store and performed a voodoo ritual to transfer his soul into a talking "Good Guy" doll. After Ray's soul is transferred to the doll, a widowed mother unknowingly purchases the possessed doll for her son Andy. This doll evolves into the character of Chucky, one of the most iconic antagonists in the horror film genre.

When Chucky is introduced to Andy, a series of events occur that turn his life upside down. Ray, in an effort to communicate with his crime accomplice who betrayed him, uses Chucky to commit horrifying acts of violence. The doll is portrayed as being responsible for the deaths of Andy's babysitter, Maggie, and Eddie, the crime accomplice. When Andy is found at the scene of Eddie's death, he is presumed to be implicated in the murder and is sent to a psychiatric hospital. Chucky soon learns from his former Voodoo teacher that the only way to escape the doll's body is to possess Andy. In a series of violent and dramatic events, Andy and his mother attempt to outrun the possessed doll before it is too late.

How it relates to the field of psychiatry

The film *Child's Play* has an interesting relationship to the field beginning with Andy's inpatient psychiatric hospitalization. The police believe that Andy is responsible for the murder of Eddie, Ray's old accomplice, subsequently bring him to a psychiatric facility. Although the possessed doll, Chucky, was responsible for the murder, Andy's hospitalization serves as a framework for a discussion of Conduct Disorder and Antisocial Personality Disorder.

Conduct Disorder is characterized by behavior that violates either the rights of others or major societal norms. The disorder is diagnosed prior to the age of 18 and must cause significant impairment in social, academic, or occupational functioning. Males are more commonly affected, with a prevalence three to four times higher than that of females. Risk factors include low SES, strained family relations, and a history of childhood abuse. Although Andy did not commit the violent murder of Eddie, Conduct Disorder would likely be very high on the differential of the treating psychiatrist. Given that Andy is believed to have committed Eddie's murder, the treating psychiatrist would likely entertain the following other diagnoses when considering Andy's presumed behavior: Oppositional Defiant Disorder, Intermittent Explosive Disorder, Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), substance abuse, and mood disorders.

Antisocial Personality Disorder (ASPD) may be conceptualized as the adult continuation of Conduct Disorder. Charles Lee Ray, a known serial killer who becomes the soul of Chucky, illustrates the key concepts of ASPD. ASPD is a cluster B personality disorder marked by patterns of behavior that show a disregard for and violation of others' rights. Ray's extensive history of committing violent acts towards others certainly makes a diagnosis of ASPD very likely. The course of this disorder is chronic, however, some cases may resolve over time as individuals learn to better adapt to society. Of note, individuals who suffer from ASPD have been found to die prematurely from accidental deaths, suicides, or homicides.

Inspiration for Child's Play

Chucky can move and talk like Robert the Doll, a toy once owned by (painter and author) Robert Eugene Otto. The doll was given to Robert in 1904 by a Jamaican nurse who practiced voodoo. After the doll was created, it soon became evident that it was cursed. When Eugene died in 1974, the doll was left in the attic of his house until it was sold. The new family included a ten-year-old girl, who became the doll's new owner. It wasn't long before the girl began to talk with Robert. More than thirty years later, the woman still says that Robert was alive and wanted to kill her. Today, the doll can be found in the Fort East Martello Museum in Key West where it is featured in a number of ghost tours (<http://www.toptenz.net/top-10-real-events-that-inspired-scary-movies.php>).

Keywords: ADHD, Antisocial personality disorder, conduct disorder, dolls, mood disorder, murder, voodoo, Robert the Doll

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