



'Resurrection' Review: A Claustrophobic Thriller Elevates Off The Performances From Rebecca Hall And Tim Roth | Sundance 2022

Posted by Murjani Rawls | Jan 26, 2022 | Film Reviews, Reviews | 0 | ★★★★★



At first look, it appears Margaret (Rebecca Hall) has it all. She works as a biologist in an upscale, cozy office and lives in a roomy, modern home. She's entangled in an affair with a married man named Peter (Michael Esper), to which Margaret has clearly defined the sexual boundaries to follow. Abby (Grace Kaufman), her teenage daughter, is getting ready to go away to college. Naturally, there's some trepidation a single mother's only child is about to leave the nest — but overall, life is good. During a late-night get-together, Margaret divulges to Peter that she used to love drawing — an activity that she hadn't done in almost 18 years. It's mighty peculiar for somebody to drop a beloved hobby for that long, but in the unsettling mystery of *Resurrection*, even the most minor behaviors have a backstory.

Writer-director Andrew Semans isn't going to hand the answer to the psychological riddle that easily. Odd things happen, like Abby finding a human tooth in her wallet. Now, that seems like a very random event, but the slow crawl of hysteria forms in Margaret's mind — further compounded by a sudden accident to Abby later. Like any parent, they want to keep their children safe, and it seems the prospect of Abby being in a different place is starting to hit Margaret. However, at a conference, she catches a glance of a face from the past. David (Tim Roth) seems innocent, but his presence loosens something inside Margaret—sending her off in a panic.

Delivered in a captivating monologue by Hall to Gwyn (Angela Wong Carbone), an intern she gives relationship advice to—the fog of her past clears. Soon, the film turns into a cat-and-mouse chess match between Margaret and David. Is he appearing in these places she goes, or is it a repressed memory of a traumatic past jarred loose by sudden stress? *Resurrection* could go down a path of the least resistance; however, it ventures down a road where the most improbable conclusion is possible. Wyatt Garfield's cinematography, which shifts between surreal nightmare and escalating paranoia, joins with an excellent performance from Hall. We discover Margaret and David were in a previous relationship when she turned 18 — complete with a multitude of events of emotional abuse and physical challenges called "kindnesses," leaving her with physical scars.

Roth's calm demeanor is unsettling — cascading as someone who claims to operate with Margaret's best interest in mind. He's an anxiety trigger and a key to a dark secret. When his gaze turns to Abby, Margaret unravels further — electing to go into full overprotective mode. But who can she turn to for support? *Resurrection* leaves enough room to make it seem like Margaret is an unreliable narrator, even though it's indisputable that these events occurred. Could the emotional asphyxiation be from Abby's impending departure and the realization that Margaret's steady fixture going out of place? That could be another reason. But with nobody to turn to, Margaret falls back into the painful physical pillars consistent in her abusive relationship in hopes David leaves.

Hall's physicality morphs into the desperation pushed upon her by the cold and calculating David — often imbued with tired eyes and aching bones. There seems to be only one conclusion *Resurrection* could go, but even that subverts any expectations. Margaret is a toy David has claimed ownership of, but Margaret's independence is in a war with the panic she experiences protecting the thing she loves most. While the film could have just focused on a parent's anxiety to a growing teenager and a woman's trauma as a basis for a Hitchcock-like slow-burn nightmare, the conclusion doesn't take the easy way out. Because a union like this could only end up at a gruesome end — one that's worth enjoying the twists and turns.

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