What's On The Cards?

Logline: Awakening in a silent hospital, Charlie must prove he's ready to leave, though no one will say where he's going.

1 OVER BLACK 1

We hear a machine whirring punctuated by an infrequent BEEP.

DOCTOR ATKINS (PRE-LAP)
Mr Davies? It's time to wake up now.

2 INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY 2

CHARLIE DAVIES (Early 20s, thin) is sat in a large chair, his eyes blinking as they adjust to the light in his face.

DOCTOR ATKINS (40s) stands over him, large and stern, shining a torch into both of his eyes as he wakes.

DOCTOR ATKINS
Keep your eyes open, Mr Davies.

Charlie squints his eyes, still disoriented and tries to focus on Atkins.

CHARLIE
I thought I was just-

DOCTOR ATKINS
Confirm your name, please.

CHARLIE
Charlie Davies.
(Beat)
Sorry, I don't really know what's-

ATKINS holds up two cards in one hand: one white, one black.

DOCTOR ATKINS
What can you see?

Charlie doesn't speak.

DOCTOR ATKINS (cont'd)
What's on the cards, Mr Davies?

CHARLIE
(Confused)
Erm...nothing.

Atkins nods and then writes some notes on a clipboard.

He produces a small plastic tray and places it on the bedside table.

It contains identical white pills, perfectly lined up.

DOCTOR ATKINS (CONT'D)
Sort the pills into groups.

CHARLIE
Groups of what?

DOCTOR ATKINS
Whichever makes sense.

Charlie hesitates. Then picks up one pill and inspects it.

CHARLIE
They're all the same.

DOCTOR ATKINS
Then it should be easy for you, shouldn't it?

Charlie starts to group them into two random piles, hesitantly but with a facade of confidence.

Atkins watches, emotionless and makes another note.

Suddenly, sharp RINGING cuts through the air.

Charlie looks in the direction of a table in the corner of the room, on which sits a black rotary phone.

Atkins doesn't look up and continues to write.

DOCTOR ATKINS (cont'd)
Answer it.

CHARLIE
It's not my phone.

DOCTOR ATKINS
It's yours as much as it is anyone else's.
(Pause)
Answer the phone, Mr Davies.

Charlie sits up hesitantly, and slides off the chair.

Charlie cautiously lifts the receiver and the ringing stops.

CHARLIE
Hello?

There is a brief pause, and then the voice of Atkins replies, crackled and distant.

DOCTOR ATKINS (V.O.)
Thank you, Mr Davies, you may hang up the phone and return to your seat now.

Charlie lowers the phone back onto the hook, and walks back toward Atkins.

CHARLIE
How did you do that?

DOCTOR ATKINS
Do what?

CHARLIE
Talk on the phone? Was it a recording?

DOCTOR ATKINS
To which phone do you refer, Mr Davies?

Charlie turns to gesture towards where he was just stood, but as he does, he realises the table, and the phone are both gone.

DOCTOR ATKINS (cont'd)
We are done here. Please follow me.

Atkins spins around, almost on the spot and exits the room at pace.

Charlie jogs after him.

3 EXT. HOSPITAL CORRIDORS - CONTINUOUS 3

The hospital is silent and immaculately clean. There is no sign of any life, only their own footsteps can be heard.

CHARLIE
Where is everyone? Why is it just us?

DOCTOR ATKINS
You’re lucky to be here at all. Most don’t get that courtesy.

CHARLIE
Sorry, I don't remember coming here today. Did I have an appointment or something because-?

DOCTOR ATKINS
No more questions at the moment, please, Mr Davies. Thank you.

Atkins approaches an office room, the only door on a long blank wall, and opens it, stepping inside. Charlie follows.

4 INT. OFFICE - CONTINUOUS 4

DOCTOR ATKINS
Take a seat, please.

He gestures toward a seat on the opposite side of the table, which Charlie lowers himself into.

DOCTOR ATKINS (cont'd)
There’s one more thing we need to do and then you’ll be discharged.

CHARLIE
Discharged to where?

DOCTOR ATKINS
Wherever you’re going next, Mr Davies. I'm afraid I am unable to disclose any more than that.

He holds up a mirror.

DOCTOR ATKINS (cont'd)
Can you tell me who you see here please?

CHARLIE
What?

DOCTOR ATKINS
Who you can see. Who is this?

Charlie looks at himself in the mirror, staring into his own eyes.

CHARLIE
(Thinking, a moment's silence)
Erm.
(Beat)
Well, it's...
(Pause)
I'm not entirely sure.

DOCTOR ATKINS
Good.

Atkins makes another note.

CHARLIE
Should I know?

DOCTOR ATKINS
There is no should or shouldn't.
(Beat)
I do beg your pardon, I seem to have forgotten your name. Remind me.

CHARLIE
It's...erm...it's...I'm not-...I don't really...

Atkins puts down his pen and clipboard for the first time.

DOCTOR ATKINS
I am happy to discharge you now. I'm satisfied that you are ready.

CHARLIE
Ready for what?

DOCTOR ATKINS
In a moment, you're going to step out of the door behind you, the one you entered through. At first you will see a very bright light, and there will be a lot of noise and commotion. It will be very cold. Please do not worry, this is perfectly normal.

CHARLIE
Right.

DOCTOR ATKINS
You won't be able to move or breathe. Please do not panic. You will begin breathing again quite normally, and you will regain movement and speech over time.

Atkins stands and offers out his hand.

DOCTOR ATKINS (cont'd)
Best of luck.

Charlie rises and shakes Atkins' hand. He then steps towards the door, turns the handle and opens it.

White light floods in. A burst of noise.

CUT TO BLACK