

House md

Season 1 episode 10

Histories

This episode deals with the plight of a homeless woman, attitudes to the homeless and why people end up on the street

Synopsis

A homeless woman goes to a club looking for 'James'. Although she has no money, the bouncer lets her inside. She begins to feel ill and ends up being knocked out after the club is raided for drugs. Dr Wilson wants to find out more about her and take care of her, but Dr Foreman is dismissive and thinks she has done something to herself to get her off the street and get a free bed and some meals. He thinks that because she is homeless, she is just scamming and he wants to kick her out. Dr Wilson won't give up and asks Dr House to take the case as a favour. It later turns out that she *did* overdose on insulin to get off the street.

No one knows who the patient is, the only clues to her identity are cartoon drawings which she makes and her quest to find 'James'. She becomes more and more ill, and it becomes more and more important to find out her story and how she came to be homeless and living on the street. Dr Foreman goes out on to the street to try and piece her story together and gives his jacket to a homeless man in exchange for information. In her tent, which is full of bats, he finds more drawings about 'Mr Fury', their home, and her continuing search for 'James'.

When Dr House has a surgical pin taken out of her arm, he is able to find her medical records. From these, they find that she is called Victoria and was in a serious car accident.

Meanwhile, Dr House is told to teach two medical students to take a patient history. They both come back with a history from the same patient but the two stories don't match. The students don't understand why the patient told them different things. Dr House tells them to work it out and that the patient's disease begins with C. Later, after they have come up with nothing, he talks to the same patient wearing a bird brooch. The patient says she hurt her wrist when she was attacked by a bird. She has Korsakov's syndrome, - inability to remember anything, and makes up stories based on visual clues around her. He also lied to the students, since her condition starts with a K. in this way, he teaches them that it takes more than making a few notes to take a patient history, or learn a person's story. You have to pay close attention to what they are saying and why they are saying it. Dr House is supremely good at finding out what people can't or won't tell from clues they give.

It turns out that Victoria has advanced rabies from the bats and that she will die. Dr Foreman, who is now very sorry that he wanted to throw her back on the street, wants to see if he can make sure that she doesn't die alone and decides to look for 'Mr Fury' and 'James'. With Dr Wilson, he uses her drawings to track down her original home which is now abandoned and disused. In a room with a

heart on the door, he finds some sad evidence. Her husband was called Paul Furier and James was her young son. There are photographs of them coming to the house as a happy family. But Paul and James were killed in the accident in which she broke her arm. She was driving and blamed herself for their deaths. That accident and the crippling blame and guilt were what put her on the street.

Dr Foreman returns the hospital and sits holding Victoria's hand as she dies. She wonders if it is James who has come to her, but he tells her it is Paul. Victoria asks 'Have you come to take me?' but Foreman says 'No. I have come to forgive you. The accident wasn't your fault'. Victoria is given peace as she dies.

At the end of the episode the story again returns to its beginning as Dr House realises there is a piece of Wilson's story which he didn't know. He realises it from the fact that Dr Wilson wanted Victoria to stay in the hospital so much and that he went out with Foreman to find out what had happened to her. Dr Wilson says that what Dr House doesn't know is that he had two brothers, but he has totally lost touch with one of them. He would like to know where he is and if he is alive.

Some excerpts to watch:

Dr House turns out Victoria's foul-smelling bag in front of the other doctors and tastes the vomit

Dr Foreman talks to the homeless men on the street

Dr House visits the Korsakov's patient

Dr Wilson and Dr Foreman find out Victoria's story in her house

Dr Wilson tells Dr House some more of his story

Some questions:

What do you feel about Dr Foreman's changing attitudes towards the homeless?

What does this episode tell us about the need to find out people's stories before judging them?

What does this episode tell us about guilt, blame and unhappiness?

What do you make of Dr Foreman's actions as Victoria dies?

How do you think Victoria actually ended up on the street?

How did you feel about the bag and vomit-tasting scene?

In what ways were your own feelings about homeless people reflected in this episode?

What did you make of the students' inability to learn the history of their patient?

What do you think Dr Wilson could do to find his brother?

Did your feelings change towards Victoria, and if so, why?

Some bible passages:

Luke 10.16

Matthew 25.34-46

Matthew 9.1-8