

# ***House md***

## **Season 8 episode 18**

### **Body and Soul**

This episode is another in the House vs God series and concerns themes of faith and belief vs rational explanations; belief in spirits; efficacy of exorcism; what dreams 'mean'.

#### **Synopsis**

Lue, an eight year old Hmong child, is seen having a frightening dream of being choked or strangled by an 'old hag'. His mother says he is having a bad dream and tries to calm him, but he collapses. He is admitted to Dr House's service with an initial diagnosis of night terrors perhaps caused by stress. It is noticed that a number of Hmong males do die suddenly in their sleep at night. Chase says the old hag can be understood as a Hmong demon, but Taub says they have to stick to the rational. Park just says 'It's a dream. It doesn't mean anything'.

House is interested in dreams and pounces on what Park said. She says she doesn't remember dreams, but he accuses Park of having had a sexual dream about Chase.

Chase asks Lue's mother if she believes in the evil spirits of the Hmong culture. She says she doesn't.

House goes to his best friend Wilson and says he has had a dream about Dominika (the girl he married so she could become naturalised in the US). He says it was about flossing his teeth but that it obviously meant sex. Wilson tells him to go away.

Taub tries to reassure Park by saying that it's normal to dream about co-workers and says that he's dreamt about sex with co-workers before. Park insists that her dream means nothing. Taub says it could mean something else: Chase might represent 'work' and the dream would mean that she enjoys her work. At the boy's house, they find a slaughtered pig in the boy's bedroom. When they tell the mother, she realises that it is the work of her father-in-law, the boy's grandfather, who is a Hmong shaman. When she asks him what he thinks he's doing, he says 'What you should have done. I'm saving him'.

Lue collapses and Taub resuscitates him. The grandfather explains that he believes Lue has had his soul stolen and he needs to get it back by having a traditional ceremony. The grandfather also believes that his son (Lue's father) suffered the same fate, as he subsequently murdered someone and is in prison.

House continues to pester Wilson about his dream. Wilson says the flossing represents guilt because House knows Dominika has been given her naturalisation certificate notification but has not told her about it and has thrown it away. Later he tells her she'll have to wait up to another month.

Chase and Park discuss her dream. Chase says it's entirely natural but doesn't suggest he's ever dreamed about her.

Meanwhile Lue begins speaking in tongues. His grandfather identifies his speech as Hmong and that it is the speech of an evil spirit who says it is 'too late'. Lue falls into a fit. House is unimpressed and says that the doctors are taken in by what they heard. Lue was just uttering gibberish and the grandfather heard what he wanted to hear. He points out that it's easier for the grandfather to believe his son was possessed than to face that he is a murderer. The grandfather indeed tells Chase that his son was fine and happy until the bad dreams came. Chase asks him not to frighten Lue with his stories because it won't help his recovery.

Park tries suggesting that she dreamed about Taub. Taub is intrigued. She sees that as the 'right' response, but Taub says she mustn't overthink what it all means.

House takes Dominika shooting and she says to him that he should try believing in evil spirits and that they are no different from the Higgs Boson. You can't see it but you can see its effects – same with spirits.

The grandfather argues that the doctors are not looking in the right place to help Lue. Lue then has a terrible dream in which his grandfather says he has angered the spirits. The spirits are in the air and the only way to stop them is to stop the air. The grandfather then smothers Lue. The doctors reassure Lue that 'it's just a dream...it's not real'. But Lue turns out to have real bruises on his neck. The team discuss whether dreams can result in real physical changes to the body. They point out that sex dreams result in physical effects on the body.

House says that Park's dream makes her feel vulnerable; Chase now feels superior. He insists there is a physical reason for Lue's 'tongues'. Lue's mother says the nightmare has become real and when Taub says there is a medical explanation for what has happened to Lue. She counters that they haven't managed to explain anything.

A scene now occurs where Chase and Park have a fight and end up beginning to have sex – this turns out to be a dream Chase is having when he nods off. Park wakes him up.

Meanwhile Taub and Adams walk into Lue's room to find him apparently levitating off the bed. House thinks this is 'cool' but that it cannot have been really happening and repeats the trick himself to convince them. Taub and Adams still think what they saw was real though they all try to find a rational, medical explanation for levitation.

House latches on to Chase's dream about Park and now Chase says 'dreams don't mean anything'.

The issue now is whether the grandfather will be allowed to perform an exorcism. Chase asks the mother why she has changed her mind and she says she now thinks her husband must have been possessed and her son needs his soul back. Foreman, as Dean of Medicine says he thinks the ritual is just the same as having a priest or rabbi to say prayers: 'we're not ratifying their beliefs; we're respecting them' but House reminds him that some Hmong shamans slaughter animals, which will not go down well in a hospital. Foreman makes this point to Lue's mother 'this is a hospital, not a temple', but the mother counters that legally 'you can't say no to my religion'.

House now finds Dominika crying about her aunt. He comforts her and offers to stay with her.

Lue collapses again. His mother calls his grandfather to perform the ritual.

House does not want to treat the boy further for the time being because he thinks that if they manage to cure Lue now 'crazy grandpa and his magic beans' will get the credit and faith will win over science. In fact he says if it were to make the child 'have faith in faith' then he would be better off dead. Chase is aghast 'you won't save a person because one more person might embrace religion?' Adams, however, defies House. She tries to get the mother to stop the ritual, but she won't, so Adams treats Lue anyway for their latest theory for which the treatment is merely ibuprofen.

House is miserable and sulking. He tells Dominika 'either religion is killing a kid or I am'. Dominika makes dinner and offers to make love to House. But she is interrupted by a phone call about her citizenship and finds out what House has done.

Lue gets better. Adams insists it was the ibuprofen 'I know it seems hard to believe but it's true'. But Lue's mother tells Lue that the grandfather saved him. Taub says that there were two things which were impossible – one wasn't – and that's all they know.

Dominika packs her things and leaves House leaving him devastated.

Chase and Park meet in the lift. Park now agrees that their dreams mean something and if not the obvious, then it is that they like each other, they connect with each other and that they trust each other.

House moans to Wilson that there's now 'one more zealot in the world' and that Dominika has left him. Wilson then tells him that he (Wilson) is suffering from cancer.

### **Some excerpts to watch**

- The 'supernatural' sections: Lue's dream of the evil spirit; the speaking in tongues; the levitation; the Hmong exorcism ritual.
- House's refusal to let Adams test her ibuprofen theory; Adam's defiance and Lue's recovery.
- The conversations between House and Dominika.

### **Some questions for discussion**

- This entire episode hinges on whether dreams mean anything. What do you think about dreams?
- Why do you think Lue's mother changed from scepticism to belief?
- What do you think Lue made of what was happening to him?
- Do you think Lue's grandfather had access to a deep cultural wisdom or do you think he was running away from the truth about his son?
- What does this episode tell us about a clash of cultures?
- What do you make of Foreman's view and decision about the exorcism?
- Why was House so angry about the exorcism?

- What do you make of House's actions and feelings about Dominika and what effect did she have on him?

**If you are using this in a Christian setting you might also want to consider some passages from Scripture:**

- Acts 8.4-13
- Matthew 2.12 and 22
- Genesis chs 40 and 41
- Mark 5. 1-20