

House *md*

Season 8 Episode 20

Post-Mortem

This episode deals with issues of how a life is lived and what brings fulfilment; who a person really is; friendship

Synopsis

The episode begins with a woman in a hospital robe stretched out on a table. A doctor tries to resuscitate her, but she dies. The scene follows the removal of the body to the hospital morgue, where a doctor called Peter Treiber carefully washes his hands and begins to perform a post-mortem. He removes her heart and concludes she died from an infarction. He criticises the doctor who looked after her. Shortly after this he takes a scalpel to his own scalp. When he is discovered bleeding profusely he says he is cold.

He is admitted to House's service, where it's discovered that Treiber distrusts all other doctors except House. They don't like him either because he keeps a list of all their mistakes when he does the post-mortems. House and the team begin to discuss the options for what is wrong with him.

Meanwhile, House's best friend Wilson, who has cancer, roars into the parking lot in an expensive red sports car and parks in a disabled bay. He says he blew \$75,000 on it and doesn't care and he doesn't care about the disabled bay either. He has decided from now on to be selfish and indifferent. This is totally out of character for Wilson who always puts himself before others.

A little later, Wilson comes into House's office and says he's a different person who wants to have some meaningless fun before he finds out the result of his cancer scan in three days' time. He wants to go on a road trip to see his adolescent crush for three days and he wants his friend to come too. House says no, but Wilson says he will drug him if he has to. The result is that House and Wilson leave their phones behind and go off in Wilson's expensive car which he can barely drive.

This means House's team is left behind to solve Treiber's case. The team are worried because Treiber will only deal with House, but Chase steps to the fore and begins to take all the decisions himself, including lying to the patient to allow the diagnosis to progress. They have a frank talk about why Treiber doesn't like Chase. He tells him that he applied for the spot on House's team which Chase got, but Chase's father pulled strings and Chase got the job. Treiber says it's not that which so annoys him but the fact that Chase has never done anything with the great opportunity he's been given. Nearly ten years later he's still House's junior instead of taking it further and being his own boss.

Meanwhile Wilson is roaring along the road with House. He says that he's always had an alter ego 'Kyle Calloway', who is everything he is normally not – macho, impulsive, who doesn't think, he just

does. They end up in a broken down diner where Wilson asks for 'the Big One' a meal so huge that if you finish it in a time limit you don't have to pay. Wilson eats the lot and then vomits it back up. House says he's proud of him.

Dr Treiber gets worse and Chase goes all out to find out what's wrong with him. Dr Foreman intervenes and says Chase can't touch the patient after lying to him, so Chase goes to the morgue and tries to think himself into what Treiber might have done to make himself ill down there. He discovers that he drinks vast amounts of caffeine drinks, but the answer still eludes him.

Wilson now says he wants to have a threesome in his 'Kyle' persona. House hires a prostitute in a bar and makes Wilson play the 'cancer empathy' card to induce the female bartender to join in. We later see House sleeping in a motel car park when Wilson emerges dishevelled. He found the experience empty and 'perfunctory' on top of which the prostitute stole his wallet although he thinks 'it was just what I needed'. House points out the problem they're in. House can't use his credit cards because he's still on probation and not allowed out of the state. They have \$20 in total. Wilson says he's still going to meet up with his old sweetheart.

On the road they are stopped to let a funeral procession go past. The hearse crawls slowly by followed by all the mourners' cars. Wilson watches them stonily. Suddenly he roars the car forward and passes the entire procession at top speed on the wrong side of the road, screaming and yelling. Then he crashes the car and destroys it.

House and Wilson then start walking to find a bus or cab. They have 11 miles to go. At a bus stop they find an elderly woman who assures them the bus comes every 15 minutes. After waiting a long time, they realise she is suffering from Alzheimer's and believes she is going home to her husband in Florida. A cab arrives and House suggests he and Wilson take it. But at this point 'Kyle' disappears and Wilson says he cannot leave the woman and will stay with her until the police arrive to take her home.

Back at the hospital, Chase has a House-style epiphany when he realises that the extra strength anti-bacterial soap combined with all the energy drinks are what have caused all Dr Treiber's problems. He says he has also decided to quit. He tells his patient that Treiber, who is so good at spotting other doctors' mistakes made a serious one himself and made himself ill. Treiber says he is as good as House.

Foreman comes to talk to Chase. Chase wonders whether Foreman has come as his boss or his friend, but decides that he has come as 'House' to test his resolve. Chase brings Foreman his locker key and they say goodbye.

On the bus back Wilson admits to House that the 'Kyle' character was actually a real person who took the girl Wilson was sweet on to the prom. The person he was trying to see was an actress who looked like this girl, but he's even failed at that. Wilson wanted to be that person – successful, devil-may-care, but he's not. House points out that 'Kyle' wouldn't give House the time of day and he can live without him.

The final scene is Wilson in a hospital robe (like the woman at the beginning) having a CT scan. House is looking at the results. Chase comes in to say goodbye and to say thank you. When he

leaves, House looks at the results. We do not see what he is seeing only his look of shock. He says nothing. His friend looks over at him.

Some excerpts to watch

The House-Wilson scenes, especially when Wilson 'cheats death' by outrunning the hearse in his car.

Dr Treiber and Dr Chase talk about why Dr Treiber thinks Chase has not used his chance properly.

Some questions for discussion

At the beginning, a woman dies and Dr Treiber removes her 'broken' heart. What do you think this scene is trying to tell us about who a person is?

What do you make of Chase's decisions during the case?

What do you make of Wilson's alter-ego 'Kyle'?

Why do you think Wilson refused to leave the elderly woman?

What do you make of House's role as Wilson's friend during the road trip?

What do you think this episode tells us about what makes a 'fulfilled' life?

What do you think the final scene tells us about the relationship between House and Wilson?

Thoughts from Scripture

John 10.10

Galatians 5.13-16