

House md

Season 3 episode 12

One Day, One Room

This episode is about how people contact each other, - physically, emotionally and spiritually, to heal or to hurt. It also another 'House vs God' episode.

Synopsis

Dr Cuddy makes Dr House do more work in the clinic, which he hates. He sends people home without seeing them and offers them money to disappear. He takes on a man who is running around screaming and suggests that he needs lots of expensive and time-consuming tests, although he has already noticed that he has an insect in his ear. He is fed up with seeing endless patients with sexually transmitted diseases, even though Dr Cuddy says she will give him \$10 for every patient he diagnoses without physically touching them. House does rather well in not touching patients, including one who is hoping for 'anal digital stimulation' (though he happily loses \$10 on a beautiful sexy woman). But he is seeing many people, old and young, who have suffered from the intimate closeness of sex by becoming infected with STDs

House then encounters Eve, another person with an STD: Chlamydia. To his surprise, Eve starts to cry. He suddenly realises that she is not another person who's had casual sex; she's been raped. House decides he can't cope with that and wants another doctor to look after her, but Eve, much to his discomfort, says she wants *him*.

Eve is assigned a psychiatrist, but during her first session with her, Eve overdoses on drugs. The psychiatrist insists she did all the talking, but Eve said nothing, there was no connection between them. When Eve wakes up Dr House is sitting with her.

Meanwhile, Dr Cameron encounters a homeless man who has terminal lung cancer. He has no home, job, family or friends. She admits him and takes over his care.

Dr House has no idea what to talk about with Eve. He asks Cameron who says Eve needs to hear that the world is a good place where she will be happy again. Dr Foreman says to tell Eve the world is a bad place which hurts people but she is strong and will make it through. Dr Chase has no idea. Despite consulting his team, Dr House is none the wiser.

Eve does not want to talk about anything specific, she just wants to connect. She wants something personal from Dr House, - which is well outside House's comfort zone. Eventually House tells her that he was abused by his grandmother who made him take ice baths and sleep in the yard. Eve smells a rat and accuses him of lying.

Eve tells House that she studied comparative religion at university and that she needs to know that events mean something in the context of eternity. This is easier ground for House who tells her that faith is futile and all that matters is the here and now. They argue about what gives life meaning and how human beings make sense of the bad things that happen. A further difficulty ensues when Dr Cuddy tells House that Eve is pregnant as a result of the rape.

There are now two stories: the question of whether the foetus should be aborted and the story of Cameron's homeless man. He refuses pain relief as he dies of cancer, insisting that it is only by having Cameron witness his suffering that will mean that he made a difference to the world. If she treats him and walks away he is just another patient, but if she watches him suffer and die she will not forget him. Cameron tries to reason with him, but he insists and she sits with him as he dies.

Meanwhile House takes Eve for a walk after she insists that abortion is murder and she will not terminate the pregnancy. She insists that life is sacred and that life in the context of eternity matters. House argues back, saying that termination is the best option for her and that she is ruining her life for an idea. He tests her theological ideas, asking her if she expects God to punish her rapist, whether there's some balancing cosmic justice for what happened to her. Finally, as she argues back, testing his atheist convictions, he opens up to her and admits that the abuse was real but that it was his father, not his grandmother who did it to him. As Eve realises that he is telling her the truth, she feels ready to tell him what happened to her. As a result of this connection between them, Eve terminates the pregnancy and goes home.

The homeless man dies and Cameron is seen tenderly washing his body and laying him out.

The episode is called 'One Day, One Room' because Eve says that life is a series of rooms in which you are stuck with particular people and those people are the ones you have to deal with in the here and now. When Dr Cuddy asks House finally if he is going to follow up with Eve, he says simply 'One Day, One Room'.

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This episode looks especially at how people connect with one another. On a physical level many of the patients connect through sex but don't take the necessary precautions to prevent infection. The man with the bug in his ear reminds us of unpleasant touch. Eve's experience is of violent touch. Dr House does not want to touch anyone if he can help it, and gets the patients to touch their own rashes and so on to win Cuddy's bet. Some patients want bizarre experiences of touch for pleasure; the homeless man wants to experience pain. A peculiar reminder of the way touch can lead to healing or hurt happens when House diagnoses the boy who swallowed a magnet by placing a scalpel against the outside of his stomach to determine that it will pass through harmlessly, when the surgeon was all for cutting him open with the same instrument. We see the healing hands of doctors and nurses and the gentle hands of Dr Cameron as she finally wipes the homeless man's hands, strokes his hair and his face.

This is paired with issues of emotional and spiritual connection mediated through openness and honesty. Eve wants House because he does not deal in platitudes. He is implacably opposed to her own beliefs but that does not matter, because with him she can say what she believes and feels without being fobbed off or indulged. As a believer, it is an atheist who actually allows her to try to construct meaning out of what happened to her. They 'touch' each other with their stories and make it possible for them to share openly and equally.

Some excerpts to watch:

House asks his team what to say to Eve

House and Eve talk in her room after the suicide attempt

House and Eve talk in the park

Dr Cameron talks to the dying man about his need to suffer to be remembered

Dr Cameron takes care of the dead man's body

Some questions:

What do we learn about the meaning of life from the homeless man and from Eve's experience?

Why is it so important for the homeless man that Dr Cameron remember him?

Why do you think Eve finally agreed to a termination of her pregnancy?

What do you make of the idea of life as a series of rooms?

What do you make of Eve and House's argument about whether God exists and whether faith makes any difference to the experience of life?

Some Bible passages:

2 Samuel 13.1-32

Isaiah 53.2-end

John 10.7-10