

# *House md*

## Season 6 episode 3

### Tyrant

This episode contains difficult moral decisions concerning issues of saving life, killing to save others, human choices, right action, leadership, loyalty, sacrifice

#### Synopsis

James Earl Jones plays Dibaba, an African dictator who is in the USA as a guest of the government to address the United Nations. His car is stopped by a protester who presents a civil suit, accusing him of genocide, torture and crimes against humanity. His aide says he does not have to be bothered with such things, but the president starts to cough/vomit blood. He is admitted to the hospital where Dr Foreman is still in charge. Dr House is an observer as he does not yet have his medical licence back.

Dr Taub has gone and Dr Foreman fired his girlfriend 13, so Drs Chase and Cameron (who are now married) come back to help him. They are aghast that they are being asked to heal a repressive leader who has vowed to crush utterly an ethnic rebellion in his country. Dr Cuddy tells them to do their jobs.

The team begin the process of trying to find out what is wrong with Dibaba. Because of who he is it is possible that someone is trying to assassinate him, so they think of polonium or poison. Dibaba discovers from Dr Chase that he spent a year in a seminary in the UK and remarks that when his sisters were dying of consumption it was not more priests that were needed, implying that Chase made the right choice becoming a doctor to help people.

Dr Foreman is tested when 13 asks if he made the right choice getting rid of her. He offers her her job back because Dr House will soon be back in charge. She says no and refuses to see him.

Dr Chase is approached by a man from Dibaba's country who says his wife was taken by Dibaba's Youth Labour League who are filled with drugs and alcohol and trained to torture. She was raped and dumped with their initials carved on her stomach. He says his people are regarded as cockroaches to be wiped out. Chase says he is sorry. The man says that Dibaba cannot be allowed to live and must not recover.

Meanwhile, Dr House is living with Dr Wilson and his neighbour has complained about the noise and cooking smells. Dr Wilson tries to keep him happy because he wants him to improve the back garden. He says he can't argue with him because he is a hero who lost an arm in Vietnam. When House meets the neighbour, the neighbour is angry and confrontational. House is intrigued.

Foreman gets 13 another job and she agrees to dinner. Meanwhile, a woman turns up who recovered from Lassa fever which the team are investigating as a cause of Dibaba's illness. She offers

her blood to treat him. Cameron says no, but Cuddy overrules her saying 'I'd rather have a needle prick on my conscience than the death of her family members'.

The man from Dibala's country tries to shoot Dibala. He is grabbed and beaten. Dr Chase tries to help him, saying he must get a lawyer and plead what happened to his wife. The man reveals she wasn't his wife; he was one of those forced to hurt her.

Cameron and Chase hold each other and Cameron suggests that next time, Chase shouldn't have yelled a warning about the would-be assassin.

Dr House decides the neighbour is faking to intimidate people. Dr Wilson remarks that it's easy to be nice to people you like but 'being nice to people you hate – that's a skill'.

Chase confronts Dibala about his preparations for a massacre of the ethnic population. Dibala retorts that the rebels were just as bad and performed massacres of their own. As leader he must impose order, that way he is actually *preventing* genocide. He argues that the reports in the US newspapers are not true. He acknowledges that the Youth Labour League went too far and committed abuses, which he intends to stop.

House, nosing around Wilson's neighbour's door, gets inside and finds out he is Canadian. He thinks he's lying about his past. When he confronts him, the man says he was part of reinforcements for the Peace Corps and lost his arm trying to rescue a boy from a landmine. He says he is in constant pain, something which House can understand.

Cameron muses that killing Dibala could be justified. It would be good for the world. She herself would not kill him, but....

13 suggests to Foreman that he could have stepped aside and let Cameron or Chase lead the team and so keep her on, but he won't agree, so she leaves. Foreman thinks he should be the leader and take the decisions. He won't back down.

Dibala appears confused. His aide asks if he is thinking clearly. Cameron suggests that no one can ever take anything he says as a rational decision. Anything he orders could be the delusions of a sick, mad, dying, old man.

Dibala says he realises Cameron doesn't like him, but that's not the point, she should do or shut up.

The team discuss various treatments, but Foreman telling says that the team isn't a democracy. He is in charge and they should do as he says.

Dibala accuses Cameron of trying to kill him. He knows what she said about being mad. She says she doesn't want him dead. Chase threatens Dibala and says Cameron is a better person than him, but he retorts she is simply too weak to show her true character. Dibala tells Chase that he does not know what it is like in the west to have real enemies. Where Dibala lives, the world is full of danger, bloodshed and death and this makes a man who must make difficult choices. He says he will do whatever it takes to protect his country.

Foreman says he has to be tough on decisions, but Cameron says he should learn to admit he's wrong.

Meanwhile House ties up the veteran neighbour, gags him and puts his arms in a mirror box. He says that if he believes in God then he should pray the treatment works, though he adds he might like to ask why God let his arm be blown off in the first place. The man, seeing his two whole arms in the mirror box, is relieved of the pain of his phantom limb. 36 years of pain are gone.

Dibala has a crisis and dies. Foreman agonises about where he went wrong. House says Foreman is like him, he'd need to know which of his choices led to the failure. Dibala's body is under lock and key in the morgue, but Foreman knows how to get past a locked door.

Foreman receives an unpleasant surprise, a sign in sheet signed by Dr Chase who has manipulated someone else's blood to convince Foreman to treat for the wrong disease. He did it to save the ethnic population that he was certain would be massacred by Dibala. Foreman argues that he still went against the doctor's code to do no harm, Dibala put his life in their hands and that's a sacred trust. Chase argues back that all the lives they save mean nothing if what they do leads to huge amounts of death which can't be stopped by moderates or peace talks. He points out that if Foreman tells what really happened it will make Dibala a martyr. Foreman says that Chase has made him an accomplice. Chase says he can decide whether to turn him in or keep quiet, but to let him tell Cameron first if he decides to give him up. Foreman asks him if he thinks he can kill without consequences and Chase says no.

Wilson is pleased that the neighbour is being nice and House was being nice. Together they watch an alligator on TV consume an animal in a single bite.

Chase lies awake in bed, deeply troubled.

Foreman sits in his office, burning Chase's sign-in sheet. He has made his decision.

### **Excerpts to watch**

- House confronting the neighbour in the lobby
- The Chase-Dibala scenes
- Chase and Foreman argue about what Chase did in the morgue
- The final scene

### **Some questions to think about:**

- What do you make of Dibala's claim that people in the west do not understand his culture and the need to impose order and suppress rebellion?
- What do you think about the various forms of action taken against Dibala shown in this episode?
- What do you think about the different arguments for saving lives?
- What do you think will happen to Chase, Cameron and Foreman as they reflect on what happened?

- What do you think about the way leadership is portrayed, - what makes a good leader?
- How does the episode make us think about the consequences of violence?
- What's the alligator scene about?
- What do you make of the scene where House mentions an uncaring God, but offers his neighbour an image of restoration, of wholeness?

Some passages from scripture to consider if you want to:

- Exodus 20.13 cf Deuteronomy 5:17
- Isaiah 54.14-end
- Matthew 2.16-18
- Romans 13.9-10
- Romans 12.14-end
- Revelation 12.10-12; 13.10