Teaser

MILITARY CAMPUS, EXT.

Open to military privates training on a course. Sergeant can be heard in background. After a few shots of the recruits training, the focus changes to the significantly more serene sight of old military veterans watching from a distance away and talking amongst themselves.

Man #1: [sidelong, lifting a hand and pointing] Has that wall always been so low? It’s like they cut it in half since we were their age.

Junior: It’s always much bigger when you’re climbing the thing, isn’t it?

Man #1 agrees and they share a casual laugh. One of two men cease talking to each other, one addressing Junior and prompting the other to look to him as well.

Man #2: Junior, Burbank doesn’t come to the VA anymore. It’s been almost a year now since we’ve seen him. You only live a block away from him, right? Is he doing alright?

Junior: Ever since his wife passed on, he’s been trying to get his son to support him, at least that’s what he told me last I’d seen him; at the funeral, I mean. Problem is, his son’s some big-shot in the city. Left his roots ages ago and can’t even spare the time to help his father anymore.

The talk of death has harkened the attention of other nearby veterans.

Man #3: He can’t drive or walk, given his legs.

Man #2: We could arrange some kind of car pool for him. Maybe have one of us stop by and give him a lift.

The veterans look among themselves as if determining who would volunteer. Junior simply nods, offering an unconvincing smile.

Junior: I’ll have to ask him.

Man #1: Reminds me of the stories you’ve told us about your son, huh?

They laugh, and Junior shares the sentiment although there’s clearly a thought lingering in his mind. The camera returns to the training course, showcasing several recruits finishing the remainder of it and jogging to the starting line again. Junior begins to rub the side of his upper leg as if experiencing discomfort. One veteran looks away briefly from a conversation with another man, noticing Junior.

Man #1: Junior...You alright?

Junior: Yeah, just a bit of numbness from standing still so long. Just have to move it a bit, just…

Junior’s leg eventually gives way, forcing him to land harshly upon his hip. Junior reels in pain upon the ground still gripping his leg, and the veterans gather around him in concern.

Man #1: [to another veteran] Get the campus medic! Go on, go!

The directed man enters the building behind the scene, all while Man #1 tries to prop Junior up to no avail. The distant privates nearby stop jogging, having spotted the event, prompting the drill sergeant to turn around as well. It takes the sergeant a moment, concern clearly rising within him as well, but he demands the privates continue. They do so and the sergeant continues pensively observing the situation. The scene ends on the sight of Junior, still clearly in pain.

End of Teaser

Opening Credits

Act 1

HOSPITAL DIAGNOSTICS, INT.

Chase, Adams and Taub are present. House enters, takes a moment to seat himself.

House: Alright, let’s cut to the Chase.

House pauses, looking to Chase. Chase returns the look, the doctors present look to him as well.

Chase: …What?

House: That was a joke. Felt like the room was a little too tense and could use some humor. Way to drop the ball.

Brief shot to Chase looking confused. House continues.

House: Anyway, sixty-six year old man. Spends the early afternoon on a military base with his war buddies from way back when. Loses feeling in his leg, collapses and gives himself a contusion on his right hip. Nobody can prop him back up, campus medics can’t command his leg to stop slacking off and he’s transferred here. Autonomic and somatic reflexes are all normal with the exception of this leg, which according to the patient loses and gains feeling every few minutes.

Chase: The leg also has enough forty year old shrapnel in it to make a Buick. It’s a miracle he’s even walking.

Taub: The reports don’t say anything about him having ever used a cane; wasn’t found with it, bragged to the nurses that he’s never needed one. How was this guy even moving around?

House: You’d be surprised at how agile you can be with a leg injury. Trust me, I would know.

Taub: I’ve never seen you without a cane.

House: I’ve never seen you ride on horseback to the hospital either but that doesn’t mean it can’t be done. I don’t have any hospital nurses or jarheads to show off to, so practicality trumps egotism in this particular case. Point is our veteran has lost any and all feeling in his left leg yet all blood work and the neurological exams appear to be fine.

Chase: Could it be that his body’s finally just given up after having so much foreign material lodged in it for so long?

House: If it did, the build-up to this point would have been gradual. His body may have gotten used to the pain over time but that doesn’t mean he’s ignored it entirely. Any daytime physician would have noticed over the years, even a military one.

Adams: What about his nervous system?

House: His neurological reports don’t show any abnormalities. Pay attention.

Adams: I mean his saphenous or peroneal nervous systems. The shrapnel in his leg may have been injuring the musculature in his leg resulting in the slow but sure severance of communication to these nerves.

House: If that was the case his nerves would be dead, not turning on and off. Nerves aren’t like Christmas tree lights; once they’re cut they don’t come back. His nerves are dying but not dead, which points to…?

House beckons those around him briefly, but it’s clear no one has any sort of answer.

Chase: Neurological report looks much too clean for any motor damages.

Taub: [flipping through a collection of papers incredulously] We’re never going to get anywhere with these army reports. They spelled ‘erythrocyte’ incorrectly.

House: Good point. That’s why we’re going to conduct a whole new MRI, another neurological exam and maybe even an electromyography. We’ll get a whole new spectrum of what’s going on in every part of his body and we’ll narrow it down from there.

Taub: We’re going to waste valuable time on more tests we already have results to?

House: That’s the sort of thinking that got us this. [Tosses the medical report upon the table.] We can’t waste time, but we can’t work with what we’ve been given. That’s why we’re going to start from square one and build up from there. Keeps the framework secure and stops stupid mistakes. MRI, neurological exam and electromyography. [to Adams] You and I are going to have a chat with our veteran. Let’s go.

House, Taub, Chase and Adams stand, leaving Diagnostics. Adams and House depart in one direction while Chase and Taub move in the other. The camera follows House and Adams, who are side by side.

HOSPITAL HALLWAY, INT.

Adams: You and I are going to be doing the gruntwork, huh?

House: No, the other two are the ones telling the nurses to conduct the necessary tests. We’re visiting the patient because I need more to work with.

Adams: And here I thought I might be seeing the rare, empathetic side of Dr. House.

House: Don’t be ridiculous, I don’t have an empathetic side. I just like to stay ahead of the game and keep a little more information up my sleeve than the rest of this flock of blind sheep I call a medical team.

Adams: …’Flock of sheep?’

House: You know what I mean.

Adams: So I’m not seeing the empathetic side. Just the uninformed, desperate one looking to keep up appearances.

House: Not quite; that would be the case if I wasn’t given anything at all in diagnostics, and even then I could make an educated guess. Not to imply those military physicians have helped us in any way. Taubs wasn’t wrong when he said those medical reports we were given were crap, and while it’s not exactly a secret government healthcare is overworked and under-qualified I was hoping they could at least conduct a simple check-up.

Adams: The man’s leg gave out and he nearly fractured his innominate. This was anything but normal.

House: Nothing in medicine is normal; if you’d worked here as long as I have, you’d know that. Still, it’s comforting to know that our government institutions can’t even tend to its citizens on a singular level, let alone a national one.

Adams: Comforting? Why’s that?

House: It means we won’t be going out of business any time soon.

Adams: Opinions of government healthcare aside, just what exactly are you hoping we’ll get out of consulting this patient without any tests of our own? We already know feeling in his leg sporadically comes and goes and I doubt any new symptoms will have arisen in the few hours since he’s arrived.

House: There’s more than one way to get information out of a patient. If you think we’re talking to this guy just to see if we can rely on his word, one: I’m surprised you don’t have more faith in me than that, and two: I don’t think you’re creative enough to do what I need you to.

Adams: Creative? Just what are we doing, Dr. House?

House: You’ll see. [Patting Adams on the shoulder as he begins to head down another hallway.] Entertain the patient. I’ll be in there shortly.

Adams looks to House in sudden confusion.

Adams: House!

Receiving no response, Adams sighs and continues down the hallway.

OTHER HOSPITAL HALLWAY, INT.

Chase is leaning back against a desk reading a report with Taub leaning upon it next to him, apparently waiting for something.

Chase: Nice to know we’re doing the gruntwork.

Taub: Oh, you know. Anything to get House alone with the pretty girls.

Taub receives a clipboard and a pen, resulting in the pair making their way down a hallway together. Chase looks to Taub for a moment.

Chase: I didn’t really think Dr. House was that kind of man.

It takes Taub a moment to respond but he glances at Chase, laughing slightly.

Taub: He’s not. I’m just kidding.

Chase: [smiling, though clearly out of discomfort] Seems I’ve been missing the humor of this place a lot as of late. [looking to Taub] Do you think Dr. House was just kidding about being able to walk without a cane?

Taub: Dr. House suffered from necrosis of the thigh brought on by infarction and had to have much of it removed. I’d imagine he’s in a great deal of pain on a regular basis, and I’d also imagine those canes he carries around aren’t for show.

Chase: Our patient never used a cane. I’m sure it’s not healthy but he’s certainly gotten around without it. You saw how much shrapnel was left in his tissue.

Taub: He’s also in a hospital bed because of that very same leg losing the ability to function.

Chase and Taub enter another wing of the hospital. Park enters the scene nearby and is within close earshot, working on something.

Taub: Neither he or Dr. House would be able to function without a cane.

Park: …Dr. House could most likely walk without a cane.

Taub: I almost can’t believe you two are doctors.

Chase: I’m sorry, doesn’t Dr. House own a motorcycle?

Taub: The point is neither Dr. House nor this patient could *function* without some kind of aid. Failing to use a crutch or a cane just because of pride places unnecessary amount of strain upon injured or weak parts of the body, leading to further injury in the future as demonstrated by one of those two men lying in a hospital bed at this very moment.

Chase: We don’t know for certain the cause of Mr. Herring’s leg injury. Besides, you said he couldn’t function without a cane. What exactly is it you’re implying?

Park: [to Chase] Who’s Mr. Herring?

Chase: [aside] Recent patient, collapsed on a bum leg.

Taub: I’m implying exactly what I’ve said. Dr. House relies on that cane to go through his daily routines, particularly *walking*, and to take it away from him wouldn’t benefit him in any way. If anything, it would hurt him.

Park: It sounds like you two will never know the answer to this theoretical scenario unless you test it.

Chase: What do you expect us to do, take away House’s cane?

Park: You could. He has two in his office, both of which he keeps as spares, and very likely some at his house. If you could deprive him of those and take away the one he’s using at this very moment, you could very likely observe him and determine whether or not he really-

Taub: [interrupting and obviously irate] This is becoming absurd. I’m not having any part in this. [beginning to stand]

Chase: Not even for a friendly wager?

Taub: No. We’re doctors, not gamblers. We’re not going to use someone residing at our hospital as a guinea pig for some bet, especially another doctor.

Chase: You seem awfully sure of your theory is all. It doesn’t seem like you have anything to lose.

Taub: Enough. I’m not playing this game.

Park: I could probably get the canes. House never locks his office on the fourth floor.

Chase: I believe her. What do you say, Dr. Traub? A hundred dollars?

Taub: I don’t… [pause] Fine. If you [to Park] want to jeopardize your career by breaking in to another physician’s office and you [to Chase] your wallet by watching Dr. House stumble around this hospital, I won’t stop you.

Chase puts out his hand.

Chase: Go on then.

After a brief pause, Traub shakes Chase’s hand. Park extends her hand as well, which Traub does not immediately shake.

Park: What? I’m the one getting the canes.

Taub: I’m not going to pay you to steal something. You can share Dr. Chase’s winnings, assuming he ever gets them.

Taub leaves Park and Chase.

OUTSIDE JUNIOR’S ROOM, INT.

House and Adams approach the room. Junior and a younger adult man can be seen within the room arguing with each other. Their conversation is interrupted by House briefly knocking on the door frame, prompting both to stop.

House: Not interrupting anything, am I?

Junior: Oh…no, no. Nothing at all.

House and Adams enter the room.

Adams: How do you feel, Mr. Herring?

Junior: Awful. My left leg here has been losing feeling and getting it back every few minutes, and whenever it does have feeling it’s like someone’s sticking pins in it. You know, that feeling you get when you sleep on your arm or something and you get off it, and the feeling seeps back in. It hurts.

Adams: Has your leg ever given you any pain before?

Junior: No, not really.

Frank: Well, wait. You always told me that you’d get aches in your legs every morning when you woke up.

Junior: That’s right, but it was never anything like this. I ended up with pains in my legs because lying in bed all night meant I never really moved them or exercised them, so it felt like the muscles got all tense. Once I started moving them again, they felt fine.

House: What were you arguing about before?

Junior and Frank are silent for a moment.

Junior: Oh, that… wasn’t arguing. We were just discussing familial things. My son here, who’s once again failed to introduce himself, thinks my leg is from working too hard or something.

Frank: It *is* from working too hard. [To House and Adams] My father wakes up every morning at five o’clock on the dot, gets on his exercise machine, drives straight to the VA, does whatever they ask him to and he doesn’t stop-

Junior: [interrupting] You make it sound like I’m their butler. I fixed the entire ceiling paneling of that old building just so we’d stop dust from falling on the backs of our necks whenever we played pool. If you knew the value of work, you’d realize-

Frank: [interrupting] You’re just like grandpa, dad! You’re going to end up working yourself to death, going blind and deaf from all this unnecessary stress!

The argument begins to pick up again between Junior and Frank. Adams gives House a dirty look before attempting to intervene; House, meanwhile, leans outside the door frame and gestures to someone. The pair calm down, though it takes a moment to get their attention.

Adams: Mr. Herring, I just wanted to see how you were doing and to let you know we’ll be conducting blood tests, neurological tests and an electromyography in order to determine just what’s going on with your leg.

Junior: I already had all that done down at the base. All except for the electro-, uh…

House: The tests conducted down in that government clinic weren’t exactly the quality we needed to diagnose you properly, Mr. Herring. We’re hooking you up to quality equipment with quality care this time to ensure we actually get a good look at the specifics of *you* rather than some vague collection of symptoms and descriptions.

Junior: What was wrong with the tests? They had me in there for days.

House: Unprofessional, ineffective, vague…I could go in to details, but something tells me if you actually knew anything about medicine you wouldn’t have let them categorize you they way they did. It looked more like I was ordering off a fast food menu than reading a diagnostic.

Adams: House…

Junior: That’s a nice theory, doctor, but I’ll have you know that I’ve known my regular physician on that base for the past twenty years. He knows what he’s doing.

House: Seems more like he knows how to stave off retirement.

Brief shot of Junior obviously becoming angrier.

House: The nurses will be here in a few minutes to get you fastened in for your MRI, first and foremost. We’ll be conducting other tests shortly after that, likely in the absence of your son who, from what I’ve seen is little more than a blight on your stay here in this hospital.

Adams: House!

Though Junior is visibly angry, Frank simply leans back in his chair, looking downward without a rebuttal.

Junior: A blight? You wait a goddamn minute, I’m not going to let some, some doctor come in here and tell me that my son-

House: [interrupting, gesturing to a tray beside Junior] Would you mind handing me a glass of water?

Junior: What?

House: There’s a stack of Styrofoam cups beside you right there. Pour me a glass if you could.

Junior is clearly growing more upset, but looks beside him anyway and begins to reach for the pitcher and a cup.

Junior: I don’t know what you’re getting at, ‘doctor,’ but when I was your age we didn’t go in to patients’ hospitals rooms, insulting their family no matter what we thought of…

It is clearly taking Junior a few tries to reach for a Styrofoam cup not even a foot away from him. Though he makes grasps at it his hand is always beside the cup, his fingers often failing to flex despite approaching the object. Adams, Frank and House notice this, and after a moment Junior stops trying, looking curiously down at his own hand.

Frank: …Dad? Are you alright?

Junior: [losing color in his face, most likely out of shock] Yeah, I…I don’t…

House approaches Junior, standing directly beside him as he examines the man closely. He lifts a hand in an arm-wrestling motion.

House: Can you grab my hand?

Junior looks to House then down at the hand, lifting his own momentarily. Junior seems to resolve that he can’t do it, though his hand doesn’t lower.

Junior: No, I can’t, I…

Frank: What’s wrong with my father? What’s going on?

Adams: Mr. Herring, lie back and relax, I’m going to have a nurse in here shortly. [to Adams] She should be right outside. Bring her in.

Adams immediately exits the room, leaving House to examine Junior. The pair stare at each other intently with Frank glancing between the pair in alarm.

Frank: *Hello*? What’s going on? Can somebody answer me?

House: [standing straight again] Something tells me your father’s leg isn’t the only part of him we have to worry about.

End of Act 1

Act 2

HOSPITAL HALLWAY, INT.

Adams: This was your plan?

House: Just about.

Adams: You’ve frustrated a patience out of his motor skills, nearly gave him a panic attack and worried the only family he has visiting him at this hospital. That wasn’t “creative,” it was cruel.

House: Oh please, you act like I haven’t given us some very useful information. Well, maybe not *you,* but-

Adams pointedly stops House’s stride, facing him.

Adams: Excuse me but *I’m a doctor*. I’m here to help people, not torture them and see what happens.

House: Look. The patient clearly lost his basic motor functions under anxiety; ‘doctor’ or not, I think you can agree that isn’t normal. By getting the patient worked up, I’ve successfully confirmed my suspicion that if a part of his body is working particularly hard, it gives way. This is made evident in his leg and, as you’ve just witnessed, his mind. My verbal attack, in addition to his prior arguments with his son, degraded his pathogenic nervous system and caused it to temporarily black out. He’s obviously suffering from something entirely unrelated to the shrapnel in his leg.

Adams: So you’ve given him brain damage to prove he has brain damage.

House: Not likely. His leg has stopped functioning after years of continuous, repetitious amounts of force. Given how old the injury is, I don’t think the nervous dystrophy really began until very recently; that said, I think the age of the injury has played some role in his loss of feeling, making it more susceptible to whatever it is he’s suffering from.

Adams: And just what is it you think he’s suffering from?

House: [pause] I’m not sure.

Adams: We’ve learned nothing. I have a feeling if we talk to this Mr. Herring about his day-to-day life, or even talk to his son, I think we’ll be on the road to a much quicker diagnosis than your experimenting, borderline sociopathic methods.

House: And you’re entirely welcome to try. In the meantime, I have a few tools upstairs in my office that I think will help us squeeze a little more information out of our patient.

House and Adams stop at an elevator. House pushes a button, prompting the door to open.

House: But please, go discuss the intricacies of carcinogenic nosociomial latrogenesis with our patient. I’m sure your findings will far surpass mine.

House offers her a facetious smile before boarding the elevator. Park can be seen exiting the elevator, a remarkably large messenger bag upon her shoulder. Neither House or Adams appear more than passively interested in the sight.

HOSPITAL CAFETERIA, INT.

Chase begins to drink from a coffee mug Park arrives, placing the large messenger bag upon the table. Chase looks at it, momentarily confused.

Park: The canes.

Chase: You actually managed to get them?

Park: Like I said, Dr. House never locks his office. He barely ever spends time in it.

Chase: How did you even know where they were?

Park: I’ve had to look through his things once or twice. You’d be surprised at just how many people around here need things only Dr. House has access to, or just want to know what he’s doing since he never tells anyone.

Chase: And you’re somehow the most qualified person to do this?

Park: I knew a guy in medical school who picked locks in his spare time. It’s not hard, it’s really just a manner of jiggling the right knobs.

Chase examines the messenger bag apprehensively, nudging it once or twice.

Chase: It’s … heavy.

Park: It turns out Dr. House has far more canes in his office than I thought. Who knew?

Chase: Right. I, uh… I think it would be better if *nobody* knew.

Park: What do you mean?

Chase: This is all becoming a little ridiculous. I mean, we… [lowering his voice] we broke in to another doctor’s office. We stole his property; not just any property, but property that helps him with a crippling ailment. Now we’re carrying it around in a bag like it was contraband.

Park: You and Taub are the ones who wanted to find out if House could walk without his cane or not.

Chase: I didn’t think you would actually do it.

Park: So, what, you and Taub aren’t in on this bet anymore? You reconciled your differences and I stole all these canes for nothing?

Chase: No, but I’m starting to think that’s the solution to all of this.

Chase stands, beginning to lift the bag.

Chase: If it’s such a big deal to you, I’ll bring these back to House’s office. He’ll never know they were missing.

Park: Hey, wait! What about the bet?

Chase: Forget about the bet. Why do you even *need* a hundred dollars? We’re doctors. Just don’t bring it up with Taub and we can pretend all of this never happened.

The camera pans behind Chase, revealing Taub standing in the cafeteria with food.

Taub: Don’t bring up what with Taub?

Park: Dr. Chase doesn’t want to go through with the bet anymore.

Chase: Dr. Park stole House’s canes from his office and put them in this.

Taub: I see… well, good. Now you and Park can deal with the consequences of stealing someone else’s property while I pretend I never saw this. Excuse me.

Taub departs, leaving Park and Chase. There is a brief moment of silence.

Park: Dr. House really *does* lock his office, by the way.

Chase: So I’m going to need your help bringing these back after all.

Park: That’s right.

Chase: You *will* help me, right?

Park: Sure, I will. But I’ll need a hundred dollars.

Park holds out her hand momentarily. Chase stares at her a second time.

Park: To reconcile for the lost bet.

Chase glares at her, only to stand and grudgingly lift the bag.

Chase: [mumbling] Forget it, I’ll take it back myself.

HOSPITAL WAITING ROOM, INT.

Frank is waiting, seated. He is clearly distraught and has been here for quite some times. Adams enters.

Adams: [with a smile] Hi.

Frank: [looking up to Adams] Oh, um, hello. Is my father alright?

Adams: He’s doing fine. We have him stabilized and he seems to be much more comfortable. We’ll have the results of his MRI and neurological scan back soon, and we’ll do a few more tests on him to see how his motor functions are holding up.

Frank: Oh, good… why did the nurses remove me?

Adams: We believe that, considering how your father reacts to the onset of stress, it would be best if he not have any visitors for the time being until we can determine just what is wrong with him.

Frank sighs.

Frank: Yeah, I get it. I’ve always made my father feel that way.

Adams: What do you mean?

Frank: My father has always had this “work hard and work often” philosophy. My grandfather did too, which is probably where my father got it from. I never really bought in to all of that myself, though. It makes more sense to me to do what you have to so you can get by, and then enjoy yourself through what you have.

Adams: You think your father works too hard.

Frank: Too hard and too often. I don’t think I’ve ever seen him settle down or relax; him lying in that bed is probably the first time he’s ever sat still for more than a minute. My father wouldn’t agree, though. He usually just passes it off as me being lazy or having no work ethic. Since I don’t stress about everything as much as he does, he just passes off everything I say without considering it. “No true Scotsman,” you know?

Adams: I see. I just wanted to know if maybe you could give me some insight in to your father’s personal life, maybe his daily routines. It would help us determine just what he may be suffering from a little faster.

Frank: From six in the morning to twelve at night, he never stops doing things. Fixing the house, fixing his VA club, doing everything he possibly can for his old war buddies… I’m amazed they can even function without him down there right now. He did everything they would need to hire a handyman for, and he did it for free.

Adams: And he never showed any signs of fatigue? Never complained?

Frank: Complain? He absolutely loved doing all of that stuff. It’s like he lived off these friends of his giving him a pat on the back and a simple thank you, even for the sort of stuff you would need three guys to do. He always told me he learned all of that stuff from his own father, and he tried to teach it to me too. I learned *some* things, but…

House enters the waiting room.

House: Oh, there you are.

Adams: Did you need something, Dr. House?

House: I just thought you might like to see my next diagnostic test. I think you might get a kick out of it.

There is a brief pause where Frank and House exchange stares.

House: For purely medical reasons, of course.

Adams: I’ll be with you momentarily.

House: Glad to hear it.

House leaves the waiting room.

Franks: He’s…

Adams: Eccentric. But an admittedly impressive doctor at heart.

Frank: Do you think my father will make it? From what you’ve seen so far?

Adams: It’s really not my position to say. All I can tell you is we’re doing everything we can to ensure your father will make it through this. From what we’ve determined so far, there’s really no reason he shouldn’t.

Adams stands.

Frank: Can I come with you?

Adams: Right now, it’s best for your father if we keep him calm and secluded. But I can give him a message if you like.

Frank: No, no. Nothing like that. I just… want to be with him is all.

Adams: I’ll talk to the nurses about allowing you back inside.

Frank: Thanks. That’s all I can really ask for at this point, I guess.

Adams leaves the waiting room.

JUNIOR’S ROOM, INT.

Junior is attached to significantly more medical equipment than before but otherwise seems healthy. House and Adams enter, a nurse exits.

Adams: Mr. Herring. How are you feeling?

Junior: Well… they won’t tell me just what they think is wrong with me. I’m hooked up to all these medical machines again. Nobody knows the results of these tests I’ve taken twice now. Everything’s feeling a bit surreal from lying her for so long. And they won’t let my son back in the room.

House: That was entirely at my discretion. We feel your son caused you unnecessary stress which, considering your unusual reaction, we simply can’t have any more of.

Junior: [flustered] *You’re* the one who caused me unnecessary stress.

House: *I* caused you stress to determine your reaction to it. Because of that, we were able to determine your fine motor skills seem to falter under a continued amount of anxiety. Regardless of whether or not you approve, what I did was purely medical and served a beneficial purpose.

Junior: It was downright unethical.

House: Maybe a little.[Opening his coat.] Now, knowing this, I’m going to ask to you cooperate with me this time and undergo one more experiment. This will help me gain just a little more insight until we can finally get our hands on the results of your exams.

Junior looks to Adams pleadingly.

Adams: I can assure you that everything Dr. House does is for purely medical reasons.

House: Thank you, Dr. Adams.

House retrieves two plastic Nerf dart guns from his jacket pockets. He places them upon the bed, retrieving a small package of darts as well. Adams and Junior are clearly confused.

Adams: Dr. House?

House: Dart guns, Dr. Adams. Toys. I asked security about bringing real pistols for this exercise, but their reluctance prompted me to bring these instead. Given they’re about the same size and a third of the weight, I feel they’ll serve largely the same purpose.

Junior: Your medical test is playing with toys?

House: [Looking down the sights of his toy gun] Dr. Adams, if you’ll kindly stack a few Styrofoam on the desk in the hallway. Also, ask two of the nurses outside if they can come help move Mr. Herring’s bed.

Adams is clearly reluctant, but simply does as asked, leaving the room.

Junior: Wait, you’ve lost me. What does this have to do with…?

House: Please, Mr. Herring. I’m the doctor here.

FOREMAN’S OFFICE, INT.

Foreman is sitting at his desk with Chase standing before him, hands in his jacket pockets, with a familiar messenger bag upon the desk.

Foreman: So let me get this straight… you and Taub made a bet to see if Dr. House could walk without his cane, [lifting his fingers for emphasis] “*someone”* overheard, broke in to his office and left this dufflebag of walking sticks in your possession.

Chase: That’s right, sir.

Foreman: I’m not sure which is more absurd. The fact that two medical professionals would gamble over the physical state of a crippled man or someone actually going through all the trouble to break in to House’s office and steal these canes just because they happened to eavesdrop on a bet.

Chase: With all due respect, Dr. Foreman, I’m as disturbed by the situation as you are. I just want to return these to Dr. House’s office before he returns and forget any of this ever happened. You’re the only one with a key to Dr. House’s office, which makes you the only person who can help me right now.

Foreman: [Sigh.] I would help you if I could, but security doesn’t just let us keep office keys after temporary changes in management, no matter how tightly knit or personal our medical team happens to be.

Chase: Well what can I possibly do then, leave the bag outside of his office door? Dr. House is already paranoid and judgmental of us as it is, I don’t think I want to know how he’ll react to the knowledge someone broke in to his office.

Foreman: Honestly? This *is* partly your fault for making the bet to begin with.

Chase: I didn’t tell someone to break in to House’s office and leave me this bag of walking sticks.

Foreman: Have you talked to Taub about this?

Chase: No, but he knows. There’s no way he’ll help me; he distanced himself from the bet the moment he found out House’s canes were in this bag. No way to convince him otherwise.

Foreman: I can certainly convince him. The two of you made this bet together, and whether you like it or not you’re both at fault here, especially if we have no idea who this mystery burglar is. Find Taub and tell him this: you’re both going to give this bag to House, explain the situation, apologize and move on. I don’t care if House chews your ears off for the rest of your time in this hospital, because if you don’t return his property to him, both of your careers are being put on the line for theft. Have I made myself clear?

Chase: …Yes sir.

Foreman: Good.

Chase leaves the office with the bag.

JUNIOR’S HOSPITAL ROOM

Upon firing a dart, House lowers his toy gun.

House: Well, Mr. Herring, I must admit. You’re twice the shot I’ll ever be.

Junior: [sarcastically] It’s amazing what years of basic firearm experience will do for you. So, are you going to tell me just how this was supposed to help figure out what’s wrong with me?

House: [setting his toy upon a nearby tray] All we can do now is wait for your tests to return. This was just one test of many that I hope will give me some insight on just what the root cause of your illness may be.

Junior: And to think all of this started up from my damned leg…

Adams: I’ll ask the nurse to return your bed back to its original position. Thank you for cooperating, Mr. Herring.

HOSPITAL HALLWAY, INT.

House: What did we learn?

Adams: Our patient can hit Styrofoam cups with a dart gun?

House: The cup-shooting was a distraction. Did you notice the way he held the gun?

Adams: I was far too amused watching you fail to shoot foam darts with more proficiency than a sixty year old man.

House: [Stopping, turning Adams to face him.] He held the pistol like a tea cup; one hand beneath the grip, the other actually on the grip. [House gestures in this way for emphasis.] They don’t teach that in the U.S. army. By their strict regiment, both hands go on the grip of the handgun, not beneath it. It keeps it steadier. [House’s hand moves on top of his opposite for emphasis.]

Adams: Which means…?

House: Memory loss, of course. He wasn’t holding the weapon in the way he was trained, he’s holding in a way he probably saw recently. Probably on some unrealistic television drama where the actors always hold the pistol like a teacup.

Adams: You’re basing this diagnosis solely on the way he held his plastic gun? In an exercise he didn’t take seriously? What if, in his retirement, he’s found he just prefers to hold handguns in this ‘teacup’ position?

House: Impossible. No former member of the armed service will throw away routine like that, especially when it comes to firearms. It’s onsetting slowly, but I’m positive-

A sudden crash down the hall, followed by a woman’s scream. House and Adams rush down the hallway, only to see Junior holding a woman by the neck with his arm. He appears to be threatening her with a plastic knife and babbling incoherently.

OUTSIDE JUNIOR’S ROOM, INT.

Adams: Mr. Herring?!

End of Act 2

Act 3

OUTSIDE JUNIOR’S ROOM, INT.

Junior continues to hold the nurse hostage, attracting a large and frantic crowd. As orderlies and others attempt to calm Junior down he tosses the nurse forward, lifting a nearby IV stand. Junior looks to Adams, who is amid the crowd.

Adams: Mr. Herring! Mr. Herring, it’s going to be alright!

Junior lifts the IV stand above his head, attempting to slam it upon Adams. House manages to shift between the two, lifting his cane and preventing injury to Adams. Both men fall to the floor. Junior is quickly subdued by orderlies and security.

Adams: [helping House to his feet] Dr. House! Are you okay?

House: I’m fine, I’m fine.

House makes his way to the nearby nurse’s desk with Adams’ help. He looks to his cane, revealing it is bent in half and useless.

House: [to Adams] You should really keep away from the crazies.

Adams: I guess you could say it’s always been a weakness of mine.

Frank enters the hallway, watching his father become subdued by orderlies. Junior is weak now, having fallen a second time, and is being successfully calmed by those around him.

Frank: What’s going on?! What happened?

House: Your father just displayed a sudden onset of paroxysm. [lifting his cane] Impressive display of strength for a man we thought may be suffering from muscular dystrophy.

Frank: How could this have happened? I thought you said you were helping him!

Adams: Mr. Herring, we have been doing everything we can to accommodate your father. This outburst was completely unexpected and we’ll be doing everything we possibly can to determine just what caused it.

Frank: Let me in to his room, maybe I can calm him down.

House: Not a chance. We’re going to need him fastened down, sedated and completely calm before we allow anybody near him again.

Frank: Sedated? Wait a minute, you can’t do that without my permission, or his.

House: We can if you want him to continue being treated in this hospital. If he’s going to be attacking nurses and swinging IV poles there’s no way we can possibly help him, and if we can’t help him he’ll be on his way to another medical institution. That could mean anything from a military center to an asylum.

Adams: The sedation will just be enough to keep him calm. Once he’s secured, you’ll be allowed back in to his room to speak with him.

Frank: This is insane. I thought the problem was his leg gave out. Why is he suddenly attacking people?

House: Looks like that’s what we’ll be working to figure out. [to a nearby orderly] Nurse, escort Mr. Herring to the waiting room, please.

Frank: I don’t need an escort. Ever since my father’s arrived at this hospital it seems like whatever he has, has only gotten worse. I haven’t slept in nearly three days now and nobody is any closer to figuring out what the problem is. What have we done other than wait for some tests to come back? How has anybody in this hospital helped him?

House: We’ve helped your father the only way we can. If you want to bring him to another hospital just because his condition has escalated, be my guest. We aren’t obligated to help him and we could just as easily place him under new care.

Frank: Not obligated? Some hospital this is.

House: Yeah, sure. Take him back to his military campus if you think we’re doing a poor job. The same campus that couldn’t even diagnose him properly enough to begin his treatment sooner.

Adams: The both of you need to calm down. We can’t move Mr. Herring to a new hospital in this condition and we’ll never know what the problem is if we can’t keep him in one place. Now Mr. Herring, if you’ll please wait in the-

Frank: Fine. I’m going.

Frank exits, leaving Adams and House.

Adams: [to House] You know how I said I was hoping I would see an ‘empathetic’ Dr. House?

House: You’ll have to forgive me, given I was just attacked by a sixty year old man. One who apparently still keeps in relatively good shape.

Adams: That’s no reason to tell a patient’s family—their only family at this hospital—that their loved ones don’t belong in this hospital.

House: [attempting to step away from the desk] I’m not going to stand here and argue with you, largely because I can’t *stand* at all.

Adams: Wait. Let me escort you upstairs, you can’t-

House: I don’t need your help. Go tend to the younger Herring while I get head up to my office. I’ll meet you in diagnostics with the results of older Herring’s MRI and neurological exam.

Adams: You expect to make it up there by yourself?

House: [while using a wall to keep upright] I can walk just fine. Now go.

Adams: Amazing. Even when in blatant need of assistance, you can’t accept help from anyone. What are you going to do if you collapse on the way up? If your leg gives out just like the patient’s?

House: It’s a good thing I’m in a hospital then, isn’t it?

Adams sighs in exasperation, following after Frank. House continues down the hallway, still using the wall for support.

HOSPITAL SURGICAL OFFICE, INT.

Taub reviewing something medical, only for Chase to interrupt him and place the messenger bag of canes nearby.

Taub: Oh no, you’re not-

Chase: Foreman’s orders. We present this to House in person or both of our careers are on the line. The bet is off anyway, what harm could it do?

Taub: Other than the fact that House despises me?

Chase: House despises everyone.

Taub: What did Foreman say about Park? Why isn’t she in on this?

Chase: I didn’t let him know about her. He would have fired her in an instant, and knowing Park she’d probably try to kill one of us.

Taub: I don’t see a problem with that. I can defend myself.

Chase: Good, then you can also defend yourself from House too. It’s not like I’m not going to be taking heat for this either, so we should just get it over with and hope House doesn’t hold it against us if we explain the situation.

Taub: Hmm…maybe. I mean, it’s not like either of us took the canes.

Chase: Exactly.

Taub: Will House actually buy that? I mean, we didn’t magically come in to possession of these things. We need an alibi.

Chase: I don’t think the solution to getting out of this is lying.

Taub: It’s better than having no explanation at all.

Chase: All House has to know is we came in to possession of his stash of walking sticks somehow and we’re interested in giving them back. That’s it. No stories, no alibis.

Park looks in from the hallway.

Park: Hey, did you two hear? House nearly got pummeled by an old man with an IV pole.

Chase: Is he alright?

Park: He’s fine. He had to use his cane to protect himself and the patient nearly split it in two.

Taub: So, in other words, he’s without any of his canes right now.

Park: Well, yeah, if that you two still have-

Chase lifts the messenger back momentarily.

Park: Ah.

Taub: You know, Dr. Chase, we don’t have to give those canes back to him just yet.

Chase: [to Taub] What are you saying?

Taub: House is wandering around this hospital without a cane. Maybe, just for the day, we can watch him and determine if-

Chase: No. I’m through with this. We’re taking this bag to Dr. House right now, giving him his canes back, apologizing for a crime [to Park] we didn’t actually commit [to Taub again] and moving on with our lives. I regret ever mentioning this bet to either of you.

Chase exits the scene. Taub speaks to Park.

Taub: Strange. You’d think he would have gone for that opportunity.

Park: It’s a good thing he didn’t.

Taub: Why’s that?

Park: I saw House limping in to an elevator. He can barely move without holding on to a wall or something for support; Chase would have lost that bet easily, and I would have broken in to House’s office for nothing.

Taub: I guess that explains why you didn’t go to any trouble to encourage him.

Park: I’m not sure, Dr. Taub. Maybe I’m developing a moral compass and can no longer bear to see other people suffer, whether it be Dr. House, or you, or Dr. Chase. Or maybe I don’t want to lose my job.

Taub: *Or* maybe you didn’t want to lose a bet.

Park: You have the satisfaction of knowing you were right; you’ve got what you wanted. The very least you can do, even if you don’t keep that fact from Dr. Chase, and present the bag to House alongside him. Now if you’ll excuse me, we have to present a neurological scan to Dr. House whenever he can manage to get himself back down here.

Park leaves Taub in room, which Taub lingers in.

HOSPITAL DIAGNOSTICS, INT.

Adams, Taub, Chase and Park are seated. House strides in with an awkward hurried gait, showing he can walk to a degree. Taub and Park briefly look at each other.

Chase: Feeling alright, Dr. House? I hear you were attacked.

House: I’m fine, let’s get this ball rolling. I’m impatient, I’ve doubled my pain medication and those nurses can only keep this Frank kid cooped up in the waiting room for so long. If we spend any more time on this we’ll be treating him next for exhaustion. Park, what do you have for me?

Park: We had to rush the scans, but nothing is at all out of the ordinary. The patient’s brain activity appears to be normal and healthy.

House: Except for his recent outburst.

Park: He does have a degree of mononeuropathy in his left leg, but it’s nothing that would cause him to attack an orderly. His brain, however, doesn’t have any recognizable damage. No trauma, no tumors, no abnormalities.

Adams: The patient appears to be suffering from hallucinations; when asked, he thought the woman entering his room set down a combat knife.

House: A knife, huh? What was she actually carrying? Anything?

Adams: Nothing. He thought she was a spy come to kill him, she was trying to hide the plastic knife from him and perceived the other orderlies to be wearing the same uniform. He’s been transferred to the neurological wing, but he’s calmed down considerably since.

Chase: There’s nothing abnormal about his MRI, other than a leg injury we’ve already known about. Additionally, his blood testing came back without a hitch; biologically, he seems to be a perfectly healthy older male.

Park: We can give him another neurological exam, but I’m not sure how much the patient will have changed in the past few days.

House: He may not have changed at all. Hallucinations aren’t likely to be reported by an older man who apparently lives by himself, let alone one so focused on being independent and ‘useful.’ No recognizable damage to brain matter means it’s almost likely not Alzheimer’s.

Chase: It’s not hormonal, either.

Taub: How can this man possibly seem so normal while being so obviously ill?

House sighs, carefully lifting himself from the table.

House: Three different tests and we know about as much as we did by simply observing the patient. The way I see it, the only way we’re going to get any more insight on this is if we do what’s been working so far. [to Park] I want you to have good, long look at that neurological exam again. Drag either of these two jokesters with you if you see fit. [House gestures to Taub and Chase]

Taub: Jokesters?

House: Foreman clued me in on the little prank you decided to pull on me. Or “somebody” who mysteriously cared a good deal about some bet they heard in a hallway.

Chase: We had nothing-

House: I don’t care. It’s not like I haven’t done worse. Neither of you are punished. Just give me the damn bag; we have bigger fish to fry.

Chase and Taub look to each either briefly. Chase then lifts the messenger bag of canes from beneath his chair, offering them to House. House briefly rummages through them, retrieving a walking stick

House: Dr. Adams, let Frank back in to his father’s room. Stick around a little, ask the two how they’re doing…you know, the usual empathetic doctor stuff. Older Herring is probably strapped so firmly to a mattress he won’t have the heart to argue anyway.

Adams: Of course.

House: As for me, well. I’m going to take these back to my office, first and foremost. [House gestures to the bag] Then I’m going to call a locksmith and get one of those fancy, electric push-dials installed. Maybe even one of those fancy fingerprint scanners. Any idea how much one of those cost?

Taub: Too much for the budget.

House: Whatever. Back to work, everyone. We have more focus now, so let’s start narrowing down our options here.

House and company exit the room.

HOSPITAL HALLWAY, INT.

Park, Taub and Chase walk together through a hallway.

Park: So you two decided not to sell me out after all.

Taub: I guess you could say we developed something of a moral compass.

Park: Oh please. House caught you with your pants down, mostly because Dr. Chase thought it would be a brilliant idea to tell Foreman about the bag.

Chase: If anything, *I’m* the only person out of any of us with moral compass. What did you two do about this bag? It’s your [to Park] fault we even had it in the first place.

Taub: I was going to present it to House with you.

Chase: Sure you were.

Taub: Why wouldn’t I? I knew I was right about the bet, considering couldn’t even walk properly without his precious cane.

Chase: Couldn’t walk? [Stopping alongside Taub near an elevator] You saw House walk in to diagnostics. He was fine.

Taub: He was stumbling in like a penguin about to topple over.

Chase: But he was still walking, wasn’t he? He could *function*. That was the bet.

Taub: The best lawyer on the planet couldn’t call that crippled hobble ‘functioning.’

Park: Oh for god’s sake. [preparing to enter the opening elevator, looking back] Let me know if you two forge another bet and need more lock-smithing.

The door opens, Foreman standing inside and having clearly heard Park. Park, exasperated, merely stands beside him. Chase and Taub smile, holding back laughter as the door closes.

JUNIOR’S NEUROLOGICAL ROOM, INT.

Adams and Frank standing outside of a neurological room; Junior is inside, resting on a mattress.

Adams: You’re free to go in, you know.

Frank: [clearly uncomfortable, arms crossed] I can’t.

Adams: The head of neurology gave you clearance. Did someone stop you?

Frank: …It’s not that.

Frank begins to enter the room, gesturing Adams to follow him. Sitting beside Junior, he begins to stare at the pair, eyes often looking far off to either side as if unable to control it.

Adams: Good evening, Mr. Herring.

Junior fails to respond, examining Adams curiously. Frank leans in a bit closer.

Frank: Dad.

Junior looks to Frank, smiling as best he can. His speech is moderately impeded.

Junior: Frankie. When did you show up?

Frank: Just a minute or two ago…one second, dad.

Frank then stands, looking to Adams as he begins to exit the room.

Frank: Watch this.

As Frank exits out of sight, a confused Adams returns her attention to Mr. Herring.

Adams: How are you feeling today, Mr. Herring?

Junior: Oh, fine, fine…why am I in this bed?

Adams: We’ve moved you to the neurological wing, Mr. Herring. We’ve narrowed your symptoms down and have received the results of your tests back.

Junior: Tests?

Adams: Yes. The MRI, neurological exam and blood tests.

Junior: Oh. When did we do those?

Adams: [smile fading] Just a few days ago. This is the second set of tests we’ve done in the past-

Frank reenters the room, looking to Adams briefly. He then moves to sit beside Junior, leaning in closer to him.

Frank: Dad.

Junior looks to Frank, smiling as best he can. His tone of voice is nearly identical to before.

Junior: Frankie. When did you show up?

Frank looks to Adams, his composure clearly on the verge of breaking in to tears. Adams is alarmed, looking between the pair.

Act 4

INTERIOR

Frank and Adams are outside of Junior’s room, likely far enough where Junior is oblivious.

Adams: He didn’t recognize the nurse who brought him here, either, the same one he attacked; that should have been a signal. How long ago did you find out?

Frank: I only showed up a few minutes ago. I asked him how he’s been, how you’ve been treating him, what the food is like…nothing. He can’t remember any of it. He can’t even remember why he’s in this hospital. Look at him.

Frank looks through the window upon a delirious Junior.

Frank: I told him. I told him about how he can’t act like he’s thirty anymore at this age. He’s worked himself to death.

Adams: I’m sorry. We don’t know for certain if this is related to stress, but we have narrowed it down to a strictly neurological cause. We have our best neurologists working to help him through this.

Frank: I don’t know if I can support him, you know. Not with the work I have. I’m lucky this hospital is covered by his military benefits, but those will dry up in a few years. And once he’s back at home? If he can’t work anymore?

Frank lifts a hand, wiping a tear from his eye.

Frank: God, we’ll have to sell the house. I can barely keep up the façade that I support myself, let alone support him with me.

Adams: We’re not through yet, Frank. We don’t know if his condition is that serious.

Frank: Really? You can honestly tell me that this situation doesn’t look bleak? Attacking people, not recognizing his own family, where he is? It’s only gotten worse in the past week. How much worse could it possibly get? How can anyone have faith in a situation like this?

[There is a brief silence between Frank and Adams.]

Frank: I’m just glad he doesn’t know how serious this all is. His father died deaf and blind, went terrified…he’s just delirious. [smiling sadly] Makes me wonder how I’m going to go.

Adams: …Your grandfather, his father. He was deaf and blind?

NEUROLOGICAL STUDY, INT.

Park is handling neurological scans. Chase and Taub are nearby, observing them on a nearby light.

Taub: Awfully surprising how House just let us off the hook, huh?

Chase: You’re making it awfully difficult to forget.

Taub: I expected more from him. Either this case means a lot or he was just glad to get his walking sticks back.

Chase: I’m sure. Good deal of pain in that leg, probably tortured him every time he moved.

Taub: Enough to impede his daily life and cripple him further.

Chase: Or just cause him pain.

Park: Shut *up,* you two. [working with a precision medical device] It’s bad enough you won’t stop arguing about Dr. House’s stupid leg. I had to walk with Dr. Foreman all the way to his office and explain to him how what I did wasn’t technically burglary.

Chase: You did deserve it.

Park glares at Chase for a moment.

Taub: The both of you deserved it. I never encouraged the bet to begin with.

Park: And I don’t want to talk about it anymore.

Park approaches the light, lifting another neurological scan. The three examine the small collection of scans.

Park: What do you see?

Chase: Four perfectly identical brains.

Park: Not so much as a speck out of place in each one. We would need at least an extra day or two to examine every minor detail, machines and all.

Taub: Mm.

The three continue to examine them for a moment. Park suddenly appears enlightened.

Park: …Taub.

Taub: What?

Park: Can you get the lights?

Taub: What for?

Park begins to remove the scans from the light, placing them upon a nearby table. She then moves across the room, beginning to position a chair nearby.

Park: Trust me. Chase, grab me that flashlight over by that EMG.

Chase looks around, spotting the EMG. He returns with the flashlight, the lights of the room dimming considerably.

Park: Alright, now turn it on and face it up to the ceiling.

Chase turns on the flashlight, creating a circle of light upon the ceiling. Taub returns, looking upward. Park steps down from the chair, lifting the collection of neurological scans.

Taub: What is this, Park?

Park: Watch.

Park positions the scans over the flashlight, effectively creating a shadow puppet of a brain.

Park: See the brain?

Taub: Of course.

Park removes one slide.

Park: Still see it?

Taub: Yes.

Park removes another. The image of the brain begins to show barely noticeable holes.

Park: Notice anything different?

Chase: Actually…

Chase moves beyond the pair, standing upon the nearby chair. He carefully examines the shadow.

Chase: Add one.

Park returns one of the slides to the small pile, adjusting them. The holes disappear.

Taub: He’s…

Park: Holes. Tiny, tiny little holes in the tissue of his brain.

Chase: Nowhere near the exterior. [looks down to Park] How did you not notice before?

Park: The holes don’t shift or move, they just get a little more intense. Look.

Park shifts the frames a few times, emphasizing.

Taub: He may have Alzheimer’s after all.

Park lowers the slides, moving across the room. She returns with a new pile of neurological scans from a new angle. The holes remain in the center of the brain’s body, not near the edges.

Park: I know Alzheimer’s, and *that* is not Alzheimer’s.

House: No. Not at all.

House is revealed to have been standing within a doorway, looking in upon the three. He enters, his eyes falling upon the ceiling as well.

House: Somehow I knew putting the three of you in a room together would pay off, considering all the meddling you’ve been doing.

Chase: You only discovered our meddling when Foreman told you.

House: So you think.

Taub: This almost looks like precision methamphetamine poisoning.

Chase: His blood tests were perfectly clean. There’s no way that’s possible unless he did it during his time in Vietnam.

Park: Could he?

House: We would only uncover that with a great deal of personal questioning. Which, if my investment in his son has paid off…

House gestures to the door, Adams appearing there a moment later. She spots the group, entering.

Adams: House. I think I have a diagnosis. How are the neurological scans?

House: Not too bad. Hear anything about meth lately?

Adams: What? No, look, I’ve been talking with James’ son. His grandfather died deaf and blind back when his family worked with farms in New York. I finally got the name of the hospital out of him, called them and was able to have them dig through their records. He had recorded hallucinations, consistent memory loss and dystharia before he finally began to lose his motor functions. He refused treatment for all of them.

House: Not to mention if you’ll kindly turn your head upward, Dr. Adams, you’ll find that our little brain excavators have found some unusual holes very faintly visible with the subject’s brain.

Park: Holes so small several different tests yielded nothing clueing us in.

House: *Hereditary* holes, by the sound of it.

Adams: Alzheimer’s?

House: Worse. Prions. Spongiform encephalopathy. A very rare, very hereditary and very fatal disease.

Adams: [to House] Are we too late?

House: No, we were never late. With a disorder this out of the ordinary, I knew the only way we would ever come across a diagnosis is if I put all of your heads together and forced you to cooperate.

Taub: What do you mean?

House: I assigned you all—Taub, Chase, Park – to different pieces of this patient because I couldn’t determine it by myself. Only when each and every one of you began to pick apart the pieces was I able to move one step ahead and re-coordinate you all in the right direction. You [to Adams] empathized with this Frank kid. The other three did their little ‘doctoring’ thing, which was only made all the more effective once I found out they were playing game with each other. I played the role of chess master, and you were my pieces. That is how we won the game.

Adams, Park, Taub and Chase look among each other.

House: Our patient was doomed from the start, but at the very least we have something to tell his son and we can treat him as best we can.

Chase: So…that’s it? There’s nothing we can do?

Park: That can’t be, we aren’t even sure what this is.

House: It has prions, it has genetics and it’s managed to deteriorate the cognitive health of our patient in less than a week’s time. Shove your scans back in a machine, confirm we’re right and move him in to surgery.

House begins to exit the room.

House: Oh, and, give yourselves a pat on the back. You did good.

OUTSIDE SURGICAL OBSERVATION, INT.

Frank is peering through a window, in to surgery. The window reveals his father, Junior, surrounded by surgeons. Adams is relatively close.

Frank: “Gerstmann-Straussler-Scheinker Syndrome.” It’s a mouthful.

Adams: It is. Once we knew what to look for, it took very little time at all to confirm that your father is suffering from it, as did your grandfather.

Frank: It’s hereditary.

Adams: Yes.

Frank and Adams are silent for a moment, Frank’s attention never moving from the window.

Adams: I’m sorry. A disease like this is literally one in a hundred million. Only a few cases have been confirmed over the past several decades, but your father and grandfather fit every potential symptom.

Frank: I understand. Insurance cleared, too; my father will be staying in a military medical institution south of here, about a half hour or so if you drive.

Adams: Good. Good.

Frank: …I think…when I can finally hold down a career—not a ‘job,’ but a real *career* – I’m going to have him stay with me. Find a house big enough for the two of us, afford to spend time with him every day. Support him for once.

Adams: You have all the time in the world to do it. Thirteen years, maybe even more.

Frank: Yeah. With this surgery, maybe even longer. [finally turning to look at Adams] Thank you, Dr. Adams.

Adams smiles politely, leaving Frank to the window.

HOSPITAL HALLWAY, INT.

Adams makes her way down the hallway. House begins walking next to her.

House: So, did you butter him up?

Adams: He’s accepting it, slowly but surely. I think with the pressure of his father off of his shoulders he’ll really be able to forge his own life now.

House: I don’t know about that. To tell you the truth, the kid’s a bit of a wiener to me.

Adams: I think you just don’t want to admit that getting close to him really solved this case. For once, actually talking to the patient and getting straight facts really paid off.

House: [sighing] Adams, the patient didn’t give this diagnosis. You did, along with the rest of them.

Adams: So after all this, you can’t admit that showing empathy didn’t have a profound effect on how we found all of this out?

House: Makes about as much sense as attributing a victory to one individual player. Face it, Adams, I may be the Michael Jordan of this team but you four were my Bulls. We all worked together as a team, including myself.

Adams: That almost sounded like a compliment, Dr. House. Am I finally seeing the empathetic side of you I’ve been expecting.

House: Please. Empathy is for *nerds*.

HOSPITAL ENTRANCE, INT.

House stretches, cane in hand.

House: Speaking of difference, I’m going to try something new today.

House offered his cane to Adams, who reluctantly took it.

Adams: What are you doing?

House: I’m going to take a brisk stride around the block and see just how far I can make it. Be a good girl and leave that outside of my office when you’re through.

As House looks beyond the entrance, he steps aside and allows a considerable number of decorated veterans through; many of whom the audience will recall from the teaser.

House: [gesturing to the passing veterans] Who…?

A veteran approaches the help desk, smiling to the secretary.

Veteran: Hey there. We’re here to see a James Herring.

Secretary: James Herring…[after searching her computer] He’s in surgery at this very moment. I’ll have to get clearance to allow you all access to the viewer’s window.

Veteran: That’s just fine, ma’am. We have all the time in the world.