

The Healer

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Based upon the BBC film by G.F. Newman

9.15.07

CONCEPT:

The Healer is a fresh take on the medical drama: a character-driven series about curing people instead of symptoms...about how becoming involved in the lives of others in a positive way is the greatest force for healing in the world.

Because *The Healer* is about issues greater than the diagnosis and treatment of disease, our protagonist is not a doctor: he is a seemingly ordinary young man with the mysterious ability to heal the sick by laying hands...but his gift comes with a price...

Whenever the Healer lays hands, he takes on his patients' pain -- effectively downloading their memories, regrets and unfinished business into his own consciousness.

The Healer cannot rid himself until he has aided his patients in fixing what is wrong with their lives...until he has healed them both body and soul.

The Healer's name is JOHN SIMEON (late 20's, imagine him as Don Cheadle). Because of the personal cost of his gift, John has done all he can to pull himself out of the world. When we first meet him, he is alone and closed off...

...but by the end of our pilot, John Simeon will have met someone who will not only push him to engage with the human race and use his gift to better the world...but who also give him the greatest challenge of his life.

That man's name is DOCTOR RALPH RAEBRYTE (late 30's -- imagine Clive Owen in *Children of Men*). Once a promising physician on the fast track, Raebryte took a series of wrong turns in life and now finds himself an attending at San Fernando Hospital in downtown Los Angeles: a big city hospital struggling with budget cuts and the profit motive of its owners.

Ralph Raebryte is a deeply practical man who can apply a kind of wisdom to any situation but his own -- he's cool under pressure and collected for the world...but his personal life and psyche are falling apart as a result.

Simeon and Raebryte are the two opposing personalities at the heart of *The Healer*: and San Fernando is their arena, and the starting point of every story in the series.

Unlike the antiseptic glass and steel of *Grays Anatomy* and *House, M.D.*, San Fernando is lived-in -- closer to a M.A.S.H. unit. This isn't a series about medical investigation or procedure, it's about character -- and San Fernando has its own: far from the brightest and best, this is the Hill Street Station of medicine.

Always out-manned and out-gunned, the doctors have nicknamed it "San Inferno," and Raebryte is at the center of the maelstrom...facing his own breaking point: his idealism crumbling under the strain of careless management and a city bent on providing an unrelenting flow of patients in need of help he cannot always give. He is a man in desperate need of a miracle.

When it arrives in the form of John Simeon, Raebryte will do everything in his power to rein the Healer in, to use his abilities to stop the suffering of his patients...and maybe to use him as a short cut when all that is needed is his native medical skill...

...and John Simeon will find in Ralph Raebryte a broken soul in dire need of help, someone he must push to become everything he was always fated to be.

PILOT STORY:

TEASER

IRAQ -- 2003: Specialist John Simeon drives a newly-arrived OFFICER to his unit when the two pass a village that has been gassed by retreating Ba'athists. We get a strong sense that Simeon is an impulsive, emotionally-driven young man as he insists that they check out the village. The village is laden with the sick and dying. The officer races back to the Hummer to radio for help...

...and then hears SHOUTS OF JOY. The Officer re-enters the village and finds himself crowded by parents and children: people he just moments ago saw dying in the throes of chemical sickness, reunited...fully healed...and at the center of the village, unconscious...John Simeon...

FLASH FORWARD TO THE PRESENT DAY...

...to the curbside of San Fernando Hospital, where DR. RALPH RAEBRYTE argues with one of his colleagues, DR. MARTHA FAIRBRASS (20's, on her first job as a doctor, a series regular) about the disposition of an indigent, alcoholic patient with a herniated disc.

The patient, who is almost paralyzed, has no insurance and nowhere to go. With a cool, practical perspective, Raebryte argues that everything that could be done for this patient has been done -- and the longer they stand here arguing, the longer they deprive other patients of care.

Martha relents -- Raebryte puts the patient in a cab and gives the driver a voucher, asking him to take her to a shelter...and then he watches her go, knowing that all his arguments are lies...and then we see the driver of the cab...John Simeon.

ACT ONE

...begins with Raebryte playing a game of roof hockey against fellow resident DR. PAUL WEM (30's, series regular, dry and science driven -- the kind of guy who would experiment on his patients if it were legal). Raebryte lays down a lot of money on the game, and loses to the more aggressive Wem, who demands his cash once the game is over.

Raebryte's defeat takes him to his rounds: one of his patients is a boy, PABLO, in need of a liver transplant due to biliary atresia. Time is running out, and a match has yet to surface...they boys mother, father and brother keep a vigil by his side...

...depressed, Raebryte leaves the hospital to take solace in a private card game. Again, he bets way over his head, against the advice of one friend at the table, PETER SPINKS (a shady private investigator in his late 40's, think John Spencer).

As he exits the card game, Raebryte is assaulted by a pair of thugs -- who, in between punches, urge him to pay off his debts. Spinks pulls Raebryte from the scuffle, giving a sense that he is Raebryte's protector...but even Spinks is concerned about Raebryte's future if he keeps up his current spiral.

Grabbing breakfast at the Grand Central Market, Raebryte walks to a table by a Pupuseria and exchanges angry words with SINGH: his bookie. Singh is an older Asian man permanently hooked up to an Oxygen tank due to emphysema. Singh denies being behind the attack on Raebryte while cautioning him to get ahead of his markers.

Raebryte's conversation with his bookie is interrupted when he spots a woman walking animatedly down the midway -- the same paralyzed woman he put in a cab in the teaser!

Raebryte chases down the woman and demands to know how she can be out there, walking. Was she running a scam? Trying to get drugs from the hospital? The woman tells him she's on her way to an AA meeting -- and then explains that the man in the cab healed her, and then told her to straighten out her life...told her things that no one could have known.

"That man," she tells Raebryte, "was an angel."

ACT TWO

Switches the focus to John Simeon. We follow as he turns in his cab and refuses his dispatcher's invitation to

breakfast, Simeon walks the downtown streets alone to the room he rents in a large house in the Adams corridor.

Simeon's landlady, ABIGAIL, has an ailing dog -- in his last days. Simeon -- who seems infinitely patient with his chatty landlady -- ultimately heals the dog, much to her delight, before going upstairs to the spare, undecorated room where he sleeps during the daytime.

That night, Raebryte signs in for work. As Fairbrass looks over the wounds he received during his fist-fight, the two are quickly called in to the ICU: Pablo is having a crisis. Ultimately pulling the boy from the brink, Raebryte knows that Pablo is at death's door: nothing short of a miracle is going to bring him back.

Stepping out of the hospital for some air, a frustrated Raebryte notices Dr. Wem pushing a patient -- a man with multiple sclerosis -- into a cab in a scenario similar to the teaser. His curiosity peaked, Raebryte tries to stop the cab, but when Simeon keeps going, Raebryte grabs a bicycle and follows through the dark L.A. night.

Raebryte finally sees Simeon pull the cab over and heal his passenger. He watches -- speechless -- as the twisted, wheelchair-bound man rises from his chair and walks at the hands of John Simeon...

ACT THREE

....finds Raebryte cornering Simeon and demanding answers. Simeon wants nothing to do with Raebryte, but Raebryte finally convinces him to come to the hospital and meet Pablo and his family.

Entering San Fernando, it is clear that Simeon is uncomfortable here...more so when, as Raebryte has to leave him alone for a few seconds, he finds himself in conversation with an OLD WOMAN in a private room.

In a cryptic exchange, Simeon tells the Old Woman that he cannot heal her. She replies that she understands, but that he was destined to come to this place nonetheless. Off this strange, and vaguely supernatural exchange, Raebryte takes Simeon to see Pablo...

...and Simeon is so moved by the young boy's plight that he lays hands on him and heals him...

...and as Raebryte watches in awe...

...Simeon rushes away from the boy's bedside, exits the ward and finds Pablo's father in the hallway -- raining down on him with his fists!

Raebryte tries to peel Simeon off the overwhelmed man, as his wife and children cry for help, but it's not until a pair of COPS who have been waiting at the ER rush in and cuff Simeon that the onslaught ends.

It's all Simeon can do to explain himself to Raebryte as Pablo's father insists that he be taken away. Simeon explains that he knows something secret about the boy's father: he has been taking out all of his frustration over Pablo's condition on his brother in the form of beatings.

The cops insist on taking Simeon away to the police station in spite of Raebryte's protests...the act ends as Raebryte steps over to Pablo's brother, and raises the boy's sleeve to see the bruises on his arms.

ACT FOUR

...begins with Raebryte receiving test results on Pablo. The boy's liver functions are normal -- he is 100% healed. Doctors Wem and Fairbrass interrogate Raebryte along with an GILL MAJOR (female, thirties, also a series regular), and administrator from the hospital's parent company (imagine the female version of Robert Duvall in *Network*).

Without implicating John, Raebryte tells his colleagues that a miracle must have happened -- surely it's worth still having faith in those.

In a wrenching scene, Raebryte confronts the boy's father, who expects an apology for being attacked in the ward. Raebryte tells him that he is going to straighten out his life with the help of Child Protective Services and then pointedly explains how he will do it...Raebryte may even indicate that his son's miracle may not last in the face of bad karma.

Raebryte then meets with Spinks, who has investigated Simeon. Simeon was in Iraq in 2004, Spinks explains...and after an incident in a village, he was in a coma for three years, at which time he vanished from a Veteran's Administration Hospital...in short, John Simeon is still AWOL and a wanted man.

In this scene, we also reinforce that Raebryte's gambling debts have him in hot water and that Singh's men will be coming for him again if he cannot pay.

Raebryte goes to the police station and bails Simeon out. Raebryte makes it clear that he has called child protective services on Pablo's father: he has checked the mother and children in with a counseling center. The family secret is in the open and they are on their way to healing.

Raebryte asks every question imaginable about Simeon's powers -- and he refuses to answer each and every one of them.

Raebryte finally tells Simeon that he has a plan. He will get Simeon a job at the hospital, as an orderly or security guard on the night shift. Simeon can then heal people without being discovered and make a better living than he can as a cab driver.

Simeon explodes -- he will not be Raebryte's puppet. Simeon explains how he knew about the child abuse. He experienced the memories and felt the boy's pain: every one of the father's punches, the sting of his every abusive word.

He doesn't want to live through that every day.

The discussion gets heated: who cares about the healer's private pain when the patients are being fixed! Raebryte tells Simeon that if he had the gift, he would use it and damn the consequences.

And it is clear from Simeon's response to Raebryte that he once saw his gift the same way -- but that his impulsive use of his abilities (as in the village in Iraq) has taken something from him. Simeon makes it clear: he won't expose himself to the anguish of doing this every day at another person's bidding.

Raebryte finally tells Simeon that he has no issue telling the military where he is. Raebryte is not above blackmailing Simeon for his abilities, and suggests that he think long and hard about what he is going to do.

Simeon gets back to his home, only to find every one of Abigail's friends waiting there with their sick animals. Wearily, Simeon gets down to the task of healing them all...

...and later -- as Simeon lies down to rest, he is visited by the Old Woman he saw at San Fernando...

...in a sequence INTERCUT with the hospital ICU, we see that she has crashed in her bed...and Wem and Fairbrass are struggling to bring her back...

...the Old Woman tells Simeon that his destiny is at San Fernando. He has to face the truth of his gift and learn to control his emotions...and as this sequence plays out, a third element enters the INTERCUT...

...Raebryte arriving at the hospital parking structure, only to be set upon by SINGH'S MEN, who administer a savage beating. Raebryte tries to fight back: reaching for a gun tucked in one of the men's belts...the gun FIRES in the struggle...Raebryte falls...his vision comes in and out of focus...and finally drifts into darkness.

Until Simeon calmly walks over to him and lays his hands...in an amazing moment of catharsis, Raebryte is healed.

ACT FIVE

Simeon and Raebryte -- overwhelmed by his experience -- meet at the hospital's morgue, where the Old Woman lies on the slab. Simeon tells Raebryte that he could not heal her: her destiny was to bring them together. Raebryte rolls his eyes -- great, now he has a destiny and a healer who knows all his secrets.

Simeon looks at Raebryte and tells him that he knows nothing about him. For the first time in his life, when he laid hands on Raebryte, he saw nothing: no memories, no download of emotions, nothing.

Raebryte is a void that The Healer could not read.

Simeon makes clear what he thinks happened. Raebryte is not someone he should have been able to heal, but the Old Woman...or whoever is behind her...brought him to Raebryte and allowed for the healing to take place.

"You are the one man I can't heal," Simeon says, "this is a sign."

With that, Simeon agrees to take a job at the hospital: and the two men decide to keep Simeon's gift a secret.

Simeon will walk the halls on the night shift, healing people, learning their secrets: watching Raebryte closely, expect him to mend his ways...just as they are going to have to do with anybody on whom he lays hands.

"What ways?" Raebryte asks "you said you don't know anything about me."

Simeon reaches into his pockets and pulls out Raebryte's markers...he found them on Raebryte after the beating.

"You'd better find yourself a meeting or something," Simeon says plainly, "I can't cure you of this."

Simeon then turns to walk out of the morgue...

"So what am I, an orderly or a security guard."

"How about an orderly?" Raebryte answers, "I think I prefer you unarmed."

And off Raebryte, as Simeon leaves, agreeing to clock in on the next shift...

...our final scene takes place at a pupuseria in Grand Central Market, where Singh sits at his table, hacking away, until Simeon sits next to him and puts his hands on him...

...Singh is healed...and Simeon tells him to make sure that Raebryte is never touched again: or Singh's secrets -- which Simeon knows by heart -- may just find their way to

the police, and Singh may just have to live a long, healthy life behind bars.

Simeon walks the streets of LA...and finds a pigeon on the sidewalk, wounded...he picks up the pigeon...

...and as the wounded bird responds to Simeon's touch, flying up into the city sky...

THE SERIES:

Although our pilot is an origin story, *The Healer* as a series has a uniquely robust narrative engine that can drive episodic stories for seasons to come...

Every week, new patients come to San Fernando: The Healer lays hands on them and takes away their physical ills at the same time he experiences their inner pain...and it is in the fixing of that inner pain that our dramatic exploration of character lives and breathes.

Once John Simeon learns what's wrong with a patient's life, he must investigate and -- with the help of Dr. Raebryte -- do whatever it takes to get the patient to atone for sins, repair damage, or finish unfinished business, lest he be forced to carry the pain as his forever.

As medical shows have demonstrated over the history of the medium, hospitals are a venue for unlimited drama -- a revolving door of stories coming in week after week: *The Healer* brings to that formula a dramatic reason compelling our heroes to get out of the hospital and become involved with the lives of the guest cast.

Add to that a strong core relationship...two men bonded by the need to keep *The Healer* and his abilities a secret...

...and a unique setting, the vibrant downtown of a city that -- though widely filmed -- is seldom portrayed in media in all of its bustling and colorful reality...

...and the endless variety of ethical, procedural and personal stories that can occur within a medical franchise, as well as several series-length mysteries (who is *The Healer*? why does he have his powers? who sent him? why are there people he cannot heal?)...

...and you have series with unlimited potential.