

= The 12 Days of Christine =

" The 12 Days of Christine " is the second episode of the second series of British dark comedy anthology series Inside No. 9 . It first aired on 2 April 2015 on BBC Two . It was written by Steve Pemberton and Reece Shearsmith , and directed by Guillem Morales . The episode tells the story of Christine , a young woman living in a small flat , over 12 years in her life , focussing on key days and life events in that time . Christine is played by Sheridan Smith , while those who play an important part in her life are played variously by Tom Riley , Stacy Liu , Michele Dotrice , Paul Copley , Pemberton , Jessica Ellerby , Jack Little and Dexter Little . Shearsmith plays the Stranger , an unknown figure apparently haunting Christine .

" The 12 Days of Christine " departed from the usual black comedy of Inside No. 9 to instead focus on drama . The story was interpreted in a number of different ways by commentators , who differed in their understanding of Christine 's life and confused perspective , and the identity of the Stranger . Reviewers responded extremely positively to the episode , which was awarded five out of five stars in both The Times and The Telegraph . Critics variously commended the performances of the actors , particularly Smith , the poignancy of the plot , and the impact of the unforeseen ending .

= = Production = =

The second series of Inside No. 9 was written in 2014 , and then filmed from the end of 2014 into early 2015 . " The 12 Days of Christine " follows the life of Christine over 12 years , with the story told through scenes showing the key events in that time . Shearsmith described this as a very unusual episode structure and storytelling method , but felt that , in this case , it was effective . Upon penning the script , Pemberton and Shearsmith immediately thought of Sheridan Smith as a performer who would be suitable to play Christine . Both had previously worked with her , and the pair hoped that she would be willing to accept the role . Smith had been a long @-@ time fan of the writers ' work , and enjoyed the way the format of Inside No. 9 allows standalone stories . She was " gripped " by the script , and accepted the role ; during filming , she said she was " over the moon " to be working with Pemberton and Shearsmith .

As each episode of Inside No. 9 features new characters , the writers were able to attract actors who might have been unwilling to commit to an entire series . " The 12 Days of Christine " starred Smith as Christine , around whom the story revolves . Adam , Christine 's partner , was played by Tom Riley , and Stacy Liu played Fung , Christine 's roommate . Christine 's parents ? Marion and Ernie ? were played by Michele Dotrice and Paul Copley , while Christine 's son Jack was played by Joel Little and Dexter Little . Christine 's colleague Bobby was played by Pemberton , and Adam 's colleague Zara was played by Jessica Ellerby . Shearsmith plays the Stranger , a mysterious man who repeatedly appears to Christine . For the second series on Inside No. 9 , Pemberton and Shearsmith were permitted to build two sets ; the first was for " La Couchette " , the first episode of the series , and the second was for " The 12 Days of Christine " . The two were built alongside each other at Twickenham Studios . Smith described the fake flat as " lovely " , explaining that it was " a full set ; bedroom , bathroom , working taps ? everything " . She considered the flat 's 1970s decor " really cool " and " funky " .

= = Plot = =

Christine (Smith) arrives home to her flat with Adam (Riley) , whom she has just met at a New Year 's party . Thirteen months later , it is Valentine 's Day and Christine chats with her flatmate Fung (Liu) at home . Christine is dating Adam , but receives a card from her first boyfriend , whom she has not seen since childhood . On Mother 's Day , Christine 's mother Marion (Dotrice) visits . Marion reveals that Christine 's first boyfriend died as a teenager , which Christine had forgotten . Marion urges Christine to marry Adam ; Christine 's father Ernie (Copley) has Alzheimer 's disease and is deteriorating . The following year , Adam moves in with Christine at Easter . Christine begins to prepare a surprise for him , but is disturbed when an egg smashes on a nearby wall . In her

kitchen , she is approached by an unknown man , the Stranger (Shearsmith) .

Christine , now pregnant and married , awakens on a May bank holiday . Thirteen months later , it is Father 's Day and Adam tends to their son Jack (played variously by Joel Little and Dexter Little) in the night . Christine hears the Stranger 's voice , but eventually finds Jack with Adam . Christine celebrates her birthday thirteen months later . Ernie no longer recognises Christine , while Adam is more interested in his colleague Zara (Ellerby) . Marion blindfolds Christine for a game of blind man 's buff . Christine hears noises from behind a door and removes her blindfold to step through . Thirteen months later , Adam is packing a case for a family holiday . Ernie has died , and Christine 's relationship with Adam is strained .

Now divorced from Adam , Christine films Jack as he gets ready for his first day of school . Left alone in the flat , Christine is comforted by Ernie as she cries . On Hallowe 'en of the next year , Christine dresses up with her friend Bobby (Pemberton) , a colleague at Clarks . Someone Christine assumes to be Adam enters the flat to pick up Jack . When Adam calls at the door , Christine goes to Jack 's room and finds Jack in the arms of the Stranger . On Bonfire Night , Christine arrives home with Jack , who has burnt his hand . Marion finds that Jack is not injured , but says that Christine was burnt when she was Jack 's age .

It is Christmas , and Christine is having dinner with Marion , Ernie , Fung , Bobby and Adam . Christine unwraps her present to find an album of photos from her life . She says that she feels as if her life is flashing before her eyes , and then realises what is happening . Christine sits in a car wreck as emergency services attempt to free her . The Stranger is explaining to the police that he stepped into the road , causing the crash , and , though he could free Jack , he could not reach Christine . At the dinner table , Jack enters dressed as a Nativity angel . Marion says it is time for Christine to move on . Christine says a final goodbye .

= = Analysis = =

" The 12 Days of Christine " was a departure from the typical " claustrophobic black comedy " of Inside No. 9 ; the episode has more limited use of humour , though comedic elements do remain . For John Dugdale , writing in The Sunday Times , it resembled an arthouse film . From the beginning of the episode , there are clues to the content of the closing scenes , including the sound of a heartbeat , sounds associated with cars , and blue flashing lights . There are also a number of allusions to horror films ; Fung is referred to as " the grudge " , the Stranger 's appearance evokes Don 't Look Now and the throwing of eggs may be associated with Ghostbusters . The name " Christine " , too , can be seen as a reference to Stephen King 's Christine .

= = Interpretation = =

For Chris Bennion , writing in The Independent , the events of " The 12 Days of Christine " are a life review ; the viewer shares Christine 's visions of her life as she lies dying . However , like Christine , the viewer does not realise this until the end . For Bennion , Christine does not merely relive key moments of her life , but attempts to " snatch at lost moments " as she longs " for second chances " . Julie McDowall , who reviewed the episode for The Herald , also considers the viewer " totally immersed in one character 's confused and flawed point of view " . She argued that " there was no thunderclap moment when the story 's twist is spectacularly revealed . There was just the slow and terrible realisation which we shared with Christine . We were with her , thinking ' Oh god no , not that . Don 't let it be that ! ' " Ultimately , claims McDowall , the oddities and confusion in the episode 's plot is revealed to be the product of Christine 's " brain slowly fading , her memories blinking out , light by light , into darkness " . Phoebe @-@ Jane Boyd , whose review of the episode was published on entertainment website Den of Geek , likewise saw the episode as Christine 's life flashing before her eyes , with a variety of elements from the scene of the crash ? police cars , car sounds , the song on the radio ? indicative of " her consciousness ... becoming muddled as parts of the car accident crash through into her memories " .

Andrew Billen argued that the episode used the link between the " breaches of realism " in ghost

stories and the " transgressions " of comedy in order " to make a serious statement about the supernatural " . For him , the episode was a story about " human memory 's spasmodic grasp " and Christine 's " friable mental condition " . The fact that Christine has forgotten about the death of her first boyfriend ? that Christine has a " memory like a sieve " ? is , for Billen , " inexplicable " . The haunting element of the story , Billen suggests , is indicative of mental illness ; specifically , Christine 's early @-@ onset Alzheimer 's disease . That Christine is afflicted with the condition means that her life has become a " nightmare version " of blind man 's buff . The motif of blindness ? Christine 's mental blindness juxtaposed with physical blindness ? again emerges with the recurrence of " Con te partirò " , performed by Andrea Bocelli , who is blind . Billen conceded that his interpretation may be incorrect , and that the episode may have been a single " dying dream " . McDowall noted that , with Christine 's growing unhappiness and increasingly disheveled appearance as the episode progresses , it is easy to see the story as about a mental collapse .

The episode can also be seen as a story of revenge ; it can be imagined that Christine has repressed the memory of her first boyfriend , and that he " has come back into her life seeking revenge " . On this interpretation , the Stranger is the boyfriend , and causes the crash by stepping out in front of Christine 's car . McDowall suggests that the oddness early in the episode suggests that the story may be about " an obsessive ex [or] a stalker " . There is also indication that the episode is a ghost story . While Boyd sees this as misdirection on the part of the writers , for Benji Wilson , writing in the Daily Telegraph , the story is about ghosts , " but not in the normal way ? by the close you realised everyone 's life is a ghost story , it ? s just that your memories are the ghosts . "

= = Reception = =

" The 12 Days of Christine " was extremely well received by television critics . It was awarded five out of five stars by Billen (The Times) and Wilson (Daily Telegraph) , who , respectively , called it a " masterpiece " and " a quiet elegy , terse and polished , in many ways perfect " . Comedy critic Bruce Dessau said he could not " speak highly enough of this episode " , while McDowall (The Herald and The National) said it was the " best thing [she had] seen all year " , and " surely the best thing the ingenious Shearsmith and Pemberton have done " . Bennion (The Independent) finished his review of the episode by saying that Inside No. 9 was " one of the best pieces of British television in years " , and , in a review in i , the episode was described as " unmissably good " . After the conclusion of the second series , Victoria Segal and Julia Raeside , writing in The Sunday Times , described " The 12 Days of Christine " as " emotionally affecting and brilliantly crafted " , highlighting it as the strongest episode in the series .

David Chater , writing in The Times , said " The 12 Days of Christine " was " not quite perfect " , as the " spooky " elements suggested that the writers " may have spent more time with The League of Gentlemen and Psychoville than is strictly healthy " . Nonetheless , he felt that " the episode is a distillation of accurate observation that says more about the hope , messiness and disappointment of life in half an hour than most dramas say over an entire series " . There was , he thought , " something infinitely poignant " about the way the episode showed the difference between what could have been and what was .

For Bennion , it was " a credit to the two creators that they can pack in such a depth of emotion into 29 minutes " . Similarly , Wilson praised the writers for achieving " genuine poignancy " in half an hour , and critics in the Metro said that the episode " packs more drama and suspense into 30 minutes than many a five @-@ part series " . Mulkern said the episode was a " superb piece of drama , imbued with an increasing sense of dread " . The story 's ending was praised , with Dessau saying that " One of the skills of actor / writers Reece Shearsmith and Steve Pemberton is the way they plant seeds and gradually leak out details . They do it so expertly here that one really doesn 't see what is coming . " McDowall expressed a similar thought , saying that the " writers so cleverly threw us off the scent , making the eventual realisation so agonising " . Wilson called the ending " devastating and unforeseen " .

Bennion praised the performances of Smith and Riley , but said that Smith was " undoubtedly " the

star of the show . Vicki Power , writing for the Daily Telegraph , agreed that Smith was the star , calling her " brilliant " , while Patrick Mulkern , writing for Radio Times , said that Smith offered " another multi @-@ faceted , stunning performance as the troubled Christine " . Chater said that Smith 's role was " superbly performed , as always " , and Billen said that Smith offered " tragic depth " to her character . Wilson commended Smith 's " arresting performance " , saying that " No one does girl @-@ next @-@ door naturalism better ? she has the actor 's elixir of making you think you know her , just by a smile or an inflection . " Dessau commended the writers for allowing other actors to play the lead roles , praising the performances of Ridley and , especially , Smith .

Critics commended the episode 's music , with Mulkern comparing the use of " Con te partirò " in " The 12 Days of Christine " to its use in Benidorm , in which Pemberton starred , but noted that in " The 12 Days of Christine " it was used " with devastating effect " . Ellen E Jones , writing in The Independent , said that the song " was deployed on the soundtrack to devastating effect - we 'll be humming it uneasily for another 12 days to come . " Writers for i said that viewers would be " mournfully humming " the song " for 12 days to come " .