



Reach Out and Touch

Characters: Dr Lo, Bax, Ted, Daisy, Alysha, 1st Woman, 2nd Woman, Man, Nurse, Steve, Mrs Li, Jenny, Mr Yang, Loretta

Synopsis: Bax and Bart interview four HIV/AIDS clients at the Eastern Clinic. Later they interview Loretta at AIDS Concern. Alysha's father stops her going to the HIV Clinic and AIDS Concern and Daisy doesn't go to either because she doesn't want to. But when Daisy hears about the way the local residents at Wealthy Gardens screamed abuse at Bax and Ted she decides to pay a little visit of her own.

Scene 1 Reprise: Dr Lo's Office

Dr Lo: Now for your next assignment you're going to tackle prejudice. Now there are many forms of prejudice racial prejudice ... age prejudice... gender prejudice... but the prejudice I want you to write about is prejudice against people with HIV.

Aly: AIDS?!

Dr Lo: Yes Alysha. Your second assignment is to write a story on people with HIV AIDS... and expose the negative attitude of some Hong Kong people towards them

Bax: But we don't know anything about AIDS Sir.

Dr Lo: You soon will Bax... Tomorrow I'm sending you to the eastern Clinic in Kowloon.

Aly: To an AIDS clinic Sir?

Dr Lo: Yes Alysha

Brief music

Daisy: No way am I talking to people with AIDS!

Ted: Hey Daisy... you got to, this is a group project Daisy... and you are a member of that group.

Daisy: I'll help with the web site okay... you give me the story and I'll put it up

on Cyber News.

Bax: You got to come Daisy.

Brief music

(SFX: Street sounds)

Bax: Where's Alysha? We're gonna be late for our appointment at the clinic if she doesn't come soon.

(SFX: Ted's mobile phone rings)

Ted: Wai?

Aly: (Upset) Hi Ted, it's me Alysha.

Ted: Hey Aly... where are you... we're gonna be late!

Aly: (Very upset) Ted... I'm really sorry.... I (Overcome with emotion) I can't come Ted.

Ted: Why not?!

Aly: (Upset) I told my brother I was going to do an interview at an AIDS clinic and he told my Dad and my Dad said I mustn't go.

Ted: Did you tell your Dad it was for an assignment?

Aly: (Upset) Yes... and he got very angry and he said he wanted to speak to Doctor Lo.

Ted: Oh boy!

Aly: So I can't come Ted... my Dad would go crazy... he's mad enough as it is... and I can't slip out because my brother's watching me like a hawk! My Father told him to.

Brief music

Ted: There it is.... Wealthy Estate... that's where the clinic's supposed to be.

Bax: We're ten minutes late!

Ted: I know I know.... Now where exactly is the clinic?

Bax: Let's ask someone. Look, that old guy... he'll know. (Pause) Um... excuse me Sir.

Man: (Unfriendly) What?

Bax: Can you tell us where the... um.... the AIDS clinic is please?

Man: (Calling to his neighbours. Unpleasant tone) Hey.... over here... they

wanna go to the AIDS clinic.

1st Woman: (Angry) Who? Him?

Man: And the other one.

2nd Woman: What's going on?

1st Woman: These two wanna go to that AIDS clinic.

2nd Woman: (Angry) Go somewhere else... we don't want you or that filthy place here.

Man: We don't want your kind around here!

2nd Woman: Filth!

1st Woman: There are children here... families.... take your AIDS somewhere else!

Man: We don't want your sort here!

1st Woman: You should be ashamed!

2nd Woman: Look at them coming here.... Shameless!

1st Woman: With their filthy diseases.

Bax: Hey... we haven't got any diseases.

1st Woman: We know what you've got.

Man: AIDS!

Bax: But we haven't!

2nd Woman: You should be ashamed!

Bax: If you must know we are first year journalism students at UUCC and we're here to....

Man: (Interrupting) Clear off!

2nd Woman: Take your filthy illness somewhere else!

Ted: Hey Bax... I've just spotted the clinic... it's over there. Come on, let's get away from these loonies.

Bax: These people are seriously nuts!

Brief music

Bax: Nurse Yang?

Nurse: Yes, and you must be the students from UUCC.

Ted: That's right.

Nurse: I thought there were supposed to be.... four of you?

Ted: Um... yes there were but... two of them were sick... w... with colds... they had colds.

Nurse: Right... so... you're studying journalism.

Bax: Yes.

Nurse: And you're writing a story about HIV AIDS in Hong Kong for your

newspaper?

Ted: Right... Cyber News, it's an on-line newspaper.

Nurse: Good. Well in a minute I can introduce you to some of our regular clients who have agreed to talk to you.

Bax: Thanks Nurse.

Nurse: Before I introduce you... is there anything you'd like to ask me first?

Bax: Yes... like... who are those crazy people outside?

Nurse: Crazy people? Oh... you mean the local residents?

Bax: They screamed and shouted at us... they were like really horrible.

Nurse: They probably thought you were clients.

Ted: They said we had AIDS and we were filth and they told us to go away.

Nurse: They're worried about the price of their property.

Bax: What?!

Nurse: Yes... they think with the clinic so close to their homes it will reduce the resale value of their flats.

Bax: Is THAT what all that was about?!

Nurse: If you'd like to come through here I have three of our regular clients waiting to talk to you.

Ted: Thanks Nurse.

Scene 2 In a clinic reception room

Nurse: This is...

Bax: Bax.

Nurse: Bax and...

Ted: Ted.

Nurse: Students from the Urban U Community College studying journalism.... and this is... Mrs Li.

Mrs Li: Hello.

Jenny: Hello.

Nurse: Mr Tang.

Mr Tang: Hello.

Ted: Hi.

Bax: Hi.

Nurse: Jenny:

Ted: Hi Jenny.

Jenny: Hello.

Nurse: And Steve.

Steve: Hi.

Ted: Thanks for agreeing to talk to us.

Steve: You're welcome.

Nurse: (Slight pause) If you need me for anything I'll be outside, okay?

Mrs Li: Don't worry Nurse... we'll look after them. (Slight pause) Tea?

Bax: Um.... no thanks.

Mrs Li: Are you sure... look, and we've got chocolate biscuits. Ted?

Ted: Um... maybe later.

Jenny: Can I have some.

Mrs Li: Of course Jenny.

Bax: (Silence) Um... Who' s going to start?

Ted: Um... why don't you Bax.

Bax: Okay... um.... could I ask you some questions please Miss.

Mrs Li: Mrs Li... I'm married... two children.

Bax: Mrs Li... thanks (Clears throat. Embarrassed) And um....

Mrs Li: Would you like me to tell you my story.

Bax: (Relieved) Yes please.

Mrs Li: This is for your student newspaper?

Bax: Yes... we've got this internet newspaper called Cyber News and students from like all over the world can read it.

Mrs Li: That's great... I think it's good for young people to know what's going on... there's so much ignorance about HIV AIDS... but the young should know so they don't end up like... the people round here.

Bax: Those crazy people out there?

Steve: Did they get you?

Bax: Yes, they yelled at us.

Steve: Thought you were clients.

Bax: I guess.

Steve: We get that every time we come here.

Bax: Really?

Steve: I got spat at once.

Bax: Spat at?!

Ted: Write that down Bax.

Bax: (Hurriedly) Yeah yeah, I am I am.

Steve: I spat back.

Ted: Wow! I don't blame you.

Mr Tang: They think we're bringing the price of their property down.... that's why they hate us.

Bax: Yeah, that's what Nurse Yang was saying.
Mrs Li: It's true.
Bax: That's horrible.
Steve: Sometimes I think they're more sick than we are.
Ted: Write that down Bax... that's a good quote.
Bax: I am, I am.
Mrs Li: Okay... d'you want to know how I got AIDS?
Bax: Y... you've got AIDS?... like.... you've got it?
Mrs Li: We all have.
Ted: But you don't look sick... none of you do.... in fact... you all look really healthy.
Mrs Li: Thank you.
Steve: We're on drugs that can control our blood levels... you know... keep our cell count up.
Ted: Right.
Mrs Li: (Pause) We're all friends here... so we don't mind sharing our stories together.... in fact.... it helps to talk about it.
Bax: So, um.... how did you get AIDS Mrs Li?
Mrs Li: (Pause) From my husband.
Bax: Your husband?!
Mrs Li: Yes... he's a businessman... and he often had to go over the border to Shenzhen.... and while he was there... well.... we're separated now....(sighs)... He slept with prostitutes.
Bax: Wow! Did he... like tell you that?
Mrs Li: No, that was the problem.... he didn't... If he'd have told me I would have insisted that he wear a condom.
Bax: A condom?!
Mrs Li: Yes.... we were married... so we didn't use condoms... I didn't think we needed to... But we did... He was too ashamed to tell me he'd been using prostitutes... so in the end he must have slept with someone who had HIV.... and passed it on to me.

Brief music

Ted: Um.... Steve... how about you.
Steve: How did I get HIV?
Ted: Yes.
Steve: I'm not sure who it was.

Ted: Oh, right.... not your wife then.
Steve: I haven't got a wife... I'm gay.
Ted: Oh... right. Of course.
Steve: It could have been a guy I met at a club... or a guy I met in the street....
I'm not sure... I only saw them once.... you know... I mean... spent the
night with them... and I lost both their phone numbers.... But I think it
was one of them... the second one hopefully.
Ted: The second one? Um, why the second one?
Steve: Because if it had been the first one... I might have infected the second
one.
Ted: Oh right.
Steve: I was dumb... I didn't use condoms... I didn't think I had to.

Brief music

Bax: How about you Mr Tang?
Mr Tang: (Pause) Needle.
Bax: (Pause) Sorry?
Mr Tang: I shared a needle.
Bax: A needle... um... what kind of needle?
Mr Tang: For shooting up.
Bax: (Puzzled) Shooting up?
Mr Tang: Drugs... you know... smack... white stuff... heroin.
Bax: (Surprised) You took... heroin?!
Mr Tang: Yeah... I'm clean now but.... I've got this.
Bax: So, you shared a needle and that's how you got AIDS?
Mr Tang: Yep. You get it though the blood. If someone has HIV and they stick a
needle in their arm and then they give it to you and then you stick it in
your arm... you get infected.
Bax: But you don't do that anymore?
Mr Tang: Nope. I'm clean. And I'm going stay clean. And I'm gonna fight this.
And I'm gonna win.

Brief music

Ted: Um... how old are you Jenny?
Jenny: Sixteen.
Ted: And how did you get...um.... AIDS?

Jenny: When I was little I was in a car crash and I had to go to the hospital and they had to give me blood.

Mrs Li: A blood transfusion.

Jenny: Yes, a blood transfusion.

Ted: And that's how you got AIDS?

Jenny: Yes. The blood the hospital gave me was infected... and that's how you get AIDS... through blood.

Steve: Not only blood Jenny... you can get it from sexual fluids too.

Jenny: Right, yes I knew that.

Steve: Yeah I know you did..... but maybe Bax and Ted didn't.

Ted: Have you written that down Bax?

Bax: Yes, yes I have. Have you?

Ted: Um. Yes, I'm writing it down now..

Ted: So, um.... you've like had AIDS for a long time Jenny?

Jenny: Since I was eight.

Ted: Wow! But you look so well.

Jenny: Not always... but at the moment I'm okay.

Ted: That's good... well I hope you stay okay.

Jenny: Thank you.... Mrs Li... I feel tired.

Mrs Li: It's okay Jenny... I'll take you home soon. ... (To Ted) We live near each other... so we often come here together.... Jenny's Mother works you see.

Ted: Right, well thank you all very much.

Bax: Yes, thank you... I've learned a lot... really.

Mrs Li: Just put it in your newspaper... tell your young readers to take care.

Steve: And always wear a condom when having sex.

Mrs Li: And even if they love and trust their boyfriends... they should be careful if they decide to sleep with them.

Mr Tang: Don't share needles.

Bax: Yes, but... I... I don't think they will.

Mr Tang: They might.

Jenny: And if you have a blood transfusion... you just gotta hope the blood is pure.

Baxi: How do you check that?

Steve: You just have to hope you're in a responsible hospital... and even then... you never know.

Mrs Li: Share all these things with your young readers won't you boys.

Bax: Yes.

Ted: Yes we will.

Interval

Scene 3

Daisy: What was it like?
Ted: You should have come Daisy?
Bax: I couldn't believe it.
Ted: They were all so nice.
Bax: And they looked so healthy.
Ted: And they talked about all sorts of stuff.
Bax: Sex.
Ted: Drugs.
Bax: This woman... Mrs Li... but we've got to change her name for the story.
Ted: Yes, all names have to be changed.
Bax: She got AIDS from her husband!
Daisy: What? How come?
Ted: He slept with... (clears throat) prostitutes in Shenzhen and he didn't tell her and he infected her.
Bax: He didn't wear a condom.
Daisy: Wa! Listen to Bax talking about condoms!
Ted: Hey Daisy... don't mess around... it's serious... they all kept saying that we had to tell our readers to use condoms!
Daisy: Wa! our readers?! Do you think our readers will need condoms?!Ted: Some of them might.
Daisy: Wa! Ted, Bax! You come back from that clinic talking dirty.
Ted: Daisy... come on, grow up... this is serious stuff and we've got to write a story about it.
Daisy: You gonna put all that condom stuff in?
Bax: Of course.
Bax: And one of the guys was gay.
Daisy: Wa! He told you that?!Ted: And there was this sixteen year old girl who got HIV from a blood transfusion.
Bax: Hey look... here's Alysha.
Aly: How was it?
Ted: Amazing... we learned a lot.

Aly: Look guys I'm really really sorry I couldn't come but if I'd gone my Dad would have gone ballistic! And I can't go to AIDS Concern either.

Ted: It's okay Alysha... we understand.

Bax: Sure... don't worry about it.

Aly: Thank you... I was so upset but...

Bax: (Interrupting. Busting to tell the story) D'you know what happened outside the clinic?

Aly: Um... no, what Bax?

Bax: These crazy people started shouting at us!

Ted: Local residents.

Bax:: Calling us filth?

Daisy: What?!

Bax: They were like deeply deeply prejudiced!

Ted: They thought we had AIDS coz we were going to the clinic.

Bax: And they told us to go away!

Ted: They screamed at us... it was horrible.

Bax: They told us we should feel ashamed.

Daisy: Why? Why did they do all that?

Ted: Nurse Yang told us it was because they thought that having the AIDS clinic on their estate would bring down the price of their property!

Daisy: That's why they were screaming at you?

Ted: Yeah.

Bax: And that's what it must be like for Mrs Li and Jenny and Steve and Mr Tang whenever they go there.

Ted: Like they got this HIV ADDS thing to cope with AND those people screaming at them!

Aly: That's terrible.

Daisy: Huh... I wish I was there... I would have shut them up.

Bax: Yes but Daisy... (pause) you weren't there.

Scene 4 At AIDS Concern

Loretta: So you're Doctor Lo's journalism students.

Ted: Yep.

Loretta: But I thought there were supposed to be four of you.

Ted: There were.

Bax: Two of them got colds.

Loretta: Oh right.... shame. Well... I'm Loretta and I'm happy to answer any questions you want to ask.

Bax: Thanks.

Ted: Um... Loretta.... you work for AIDS Concern right?

Loretta: That's right.

Bax: But you don't like.... have AIDS?

Loretta: No, no I don't... but Bax... I hope you don't mind me saying.....

Bax: Y...yes?

Loretta: You don't... well... normally ask people that question so directly... it's better to.... well... let people tell you if they want to.

Bax: Yes yes of course... sorry.

Loretta: That's okay. It's just that... well.... you know what I mean....

Bax: Shh... sure.

Ted: Um... could we start by asking you... what does AIDS Concern do and what is your position in it.

Loretta: Sure, well...I am the Deputy Chief Executive in AIDS Concern. We are non-governmental organization, which provides various support services to people with HIV AIDS and prevention programmes to vulnerable communities. I am in charge of the development and provision of support services to those who were infected.

Bax: Em...what type of prevention programmes?

Loretta: Well...we actually outrange to different communities like people who cross the borders from Hong Kong to China and the gay community and also the sex industry.

Ted: So how do you actually gather your funds?

Loretta: Well...we try to look for funding from the government, so every time we need money, we will write proposals to the government. And sometimes we have to do our own fund-raising activities.

Bax: So how long have you been working for AIDS Concern?

Loretta: Wow...for more than five years.

Bax: O...really? Do you enjoy your job?

Loretta: Yeah, I like it a lot.

Ted: Em...well...Loretta, we keep hearing people saying HIV and AIDS, are they the same thing? I mean...like...is HIV AIDS?

Loretta: Actually, they are not the same. HIV is the human immunodeficiency virus, it is the virus which cause AIDS. When a person is infected by HIV, the virus will attack his or her immune system. If one immune system deteriorates to a certain level with a combination of specific

illnesses, then we will say that person has full-blown AIDS. (Slight pause) And therefore HIV and AIDS are different, you can have HIV and not have AIDS.

Ted: So how long does it get to reach the full-blown AIDS?

Loretta: Well...it varies from person to person...em...if a person's immune system is good, then it might take him or her longer to progress to...to full-blown AIDS.

Bax: So how do people get infected with AIDS?

Loretta: Well...there are four transmission rules, which are sex, sharing needles, mother to baby and blood transfusion.

Ted: Does that mean we will not get AIDS by eating with...with the person that has AIDS?

Loretta: Of course not.

(Ted laughing)

Bax: O...Loretta, the other day when we went to the Eastern Clinic in Wealthy Gardens, a lot of local people were being rude and unfriendly...

Ted: (As an aside) To put it mildly.

Bax: So what would you say is the attitude of Hong Kong people towards people with HIV AIDS?

Loretta: Well...generally speaking, as you found people's attitude quite hostile towards people with HIV AIDS. It is understandable because these people have a lot of misconceptions on the transmission of HIV and they also think those who are infected are bad people. However, I came across some people who have a basic knowledge on HIV and their attitudes are more layback.

Ted: What can be done to improve these attitudes?

Loretta: Well...I think the most important thing to do is education, em...but...the importance of educating people is not just about HIV knowledge but also focus on behaviour and attitude change.

Ted: How can that be accomplished? What kind of publicity measures are taken?

Loretta: Well...I think we should focus more on promoting acceptance of people with HIV AIDS instead of simply talking about HIV is.

Ted: A lot of our friends don't think AIDS has got anything to do with them, for example, they don't inject themselves with drugs, they don't have

sex, they're not gay and they don't usually have blood transfusions.

Loretta: Well...to be honest, all of my clients say the same thing. People always underestimate their risk of HIV infection by saying 'I'm not gay, I'm not drug user and I'm not a prostitute.' Hey, I would say people take risk because they are too optimistic of not getting HIV. One should be responsible for one's own health by taking precautions such as using condom during sexual intercourse will help him or her avoid HIV and STD infection.

Bax: Then what do you think is the main reason for people's ignorance towards AIDS? I mean...em...except for being too optimistic about AIDS, are there any other reasons for that?

Loretta: Well...I think people are trying to avoid the issue and they pretend they...they understand what it is but indeed they don't, so I think getting people to do the right thing is the most important thing.

Bax: So what can be done to improve these attitudes?

Loretta: Well...I would say that will involve different parties, such as, I mean...in school, we should have teachers and parents and even students to work together, so that we can have a more acceptable atmosphere for people living with HIV AIDS.

Bax: Okay...so as a teenager, what can I do?

Loretta: Well...you can do a lot. First of all, try to understand what is HIV and what is AIDS, and then spread the word. And if you can, you can do some volunteer work in different organizations, such as, Teen AIDS, which is an organization doing a lot of work in the school for the teenagers.

Bax: Okay...that should be all, Loretta. Thanks! It has been great talking to you.

Ted: Yeah...thanks, we learned a lot. It's great that there are people like you in Hong Kong.

Bax: Hey, did you write it all down, Ted?

Ted: Em...well...some of it.

Scene5 At Wealthy Gardens

Daisy: Excuse me... can you tell me where the AIDS Clinic is please?

Man: (Calling to his friends) Hey! It's another one of them!

1st Woman: Get out of here.

2nd Woman: Filth!

Daisy: What did you say?!

2nd Woman: You heard... she called you 'filth' and that's what I'm calling you too!

Daisy: You're calling ME filth?

1st Woman: You should be ashamed of yourself.

Man: Now clear out of here... we don't want you and we don't want your filthy clinic either.

Daisy: Now you just listen here you cockroach!

1st Woman: Did you hear what she called him?!

2nd Woman: What do you expect from filth... they've got no shame coming here with their diseases and us with children to care for and decent families.

1st Woman: They should build a covered walkway to that place...

2nd Woman: And have someone to wash the floor after they walk by.

Daisy: You know what you three are don't you? You're scum.

1st Woman: Did you hear what she called you?

Man: Call the police.

2nd Woman: Yes call the police, I'll be a witness.

1st Woman: And me.

Daisy: (Furious) Doesn't it ever cross your tiny little minds that the people coming to this clinic are in need of some help and understanding... doesn't it ever cross your little minds that THEY have families too... doesn't it ever cross your mind that they are human beings like you... with feelings like you!

1st Woman: They're filth.

2nd Woman: Garbage.

Man: They deserve what they've got?

Daisy: And you know what you deserve.... you deserve to have the price of your property fall and fall and fall until you're up to your necks in negative equity.... and then... when you're thrown out on the streets... maybe then... you'll remember what it's like to be a human being.

(Stunned silence)

1st Woman: (Almost speechless with outrage) Well! Who does she think she is?!

Daisy: A human being.... (Pause)... unlike you.

1st Woman: (Gasps in noisy outrage)

The End