

= Kaddish (The X @-@ Files) =

" Kaddish " is the fifteenth episode of the fourth season of the American science fiction television series The X @-@ Files . It was written by producer Howard Gordon and directed by Kim Manners . The episode originally aired on the Fox network on February 16 , 1997 . The episode is a " Monster @-@ of @-@ the @-@ Week " story , a stand @-@ alone plot which is unconnected to the series ' wider mythology , or overarching history . The episode received a Nielsen household rating 10 @. @ 3 and was viewed by 16 @. @ 56 million viewers . It received moderately positive reviews from critics .

The show centers on FBI special agents Fox Mulder (David Duchovny) and Dana Scully (Gillian Anderson) who work on cases linked to the paranormal , called X @-@ Files . In the episode , Isaac Luria (Harrison Coe) , a Jewish man , is killed by a group of teenagers working for a racist shop owner . One of the assailants , however , is soon strangled to death and the fingerprints on his neck are Isaac 's . Despite other factors , Mulder becomes convinced that a Golem is attempting to avenge Isaac 's murder .

" Kaddish " was written by Gordon due to his fascination with the legend of the Golem from the Kabbalah . Originally , the script called for the antagonist to be an African American " Louis Farrakhan @-@ like " character , but Fox was concerned that the show 's increasing popularity with black viewers would be damaged by this , and Gordon agreed to make the villains into , in his words , " cartoonish neo @-@ Nazis " . Gastown , Vancouver stood in for many of the exterior shots that were supposed to be Brooklyn . No Jewish synagogue would rent out their space for the episode , so Shaughnessy Heights United Church was renovated to look like one . This included completely redecorating the pews , carpet , and light fixtures , as well as crafting a Jewish altar . The episode 's title is a reference to the Jewish mourning prayer service (Hebrew : ?????) . Furthermore , " Kaddish " has been critically examined for its themes concerning love and hate .

= = Plot = =

In Brooklyn , New York , a group of Hasidic Jews gather at a cemetery for the funeral of Isaac Luria (Harrison Coe) , who had been beaten and shot to death by a gang of three young Neo @-@ Nazis . The last to leave is Isaac 's betrothed , Ariel (Justine Miceli) , and her father , Jacob Weiss (David Groh) . During nightfall , a dark figure enters the cemetery and crafts a man @-@ shaped sculpture out of mud .

When one of Isaac 's assailants is found strangled with the dead man 's fingerprints on his body , Fox Mulder (David Duchovny) and Dana Scully (Gillian Anderson) are called in to investigate . Scully suggests that the murder was an act of retribution , and argues that the evidence was staged to look like revenge from beyond the grave . When the agents visit Ariel and Jacob , their request for the exhumation of Isaac 's body angers the old man .

Mulder and Scully then interview Curt Brunjes (Jonathan Whittaker) , a racist owner of a copy shop across the street from the market where Isaac worked . Mulder tells Brunjes that the other two boys , who work for Brunjes , are in danger . Scully mentions that there is a rumor spreading that Isaac has risen from the grave to avenge his death . The two boys , who are eavesdropping on the conversation , are terrified at this prospect .

That night , the boys dig up Isaac 's grave and find his body intact . While retrieving tools from the car , one of the boys is brutally murdered . The next morning , Mulder and Scully find a book on Jewish mysticism buried with Isaac 's body ; it mysteriously bursts into flames . On the book is Jacob 's name . The agents search for Jacob , finding him in a synagogue with the hanged body of the last remaining boy . Although Jacob admits to both of the murders , Mulder believes that a Golem ? a creature from Jewish mysticism ? is the true murderer .

Later , Brunjes is found murdered and Mulder and Scully watch the shop 's surveillance tape . They discover that the Golem has features similar to Isaac . Mulder deduces that , because Ariel and Isaac were not officially wed in a Jewish synagogue , Ariel created the Golem out of love to serve as a surrogate for her late husband . The two agents arrive at the synagogue to find Ariel and the

creature exchanging wedding vows . After an intense fight , in which Jacob and Mulder are both wounded , Ariel declares her love for Isaac and returns the creature to dust .

= = Production = =

= = = Writing = = =

" Kaddish " was written by producer Howard Gordon and directed by Kim Manners . The episode was dedicated to the memory of Lillian Katz , Gordon 's grandmother . The episode 's title is a reference to the Jewish mourning prayer service . Gordon was inspired to write the episode based on his heritage . He noted , " I was always compelled by the Golem mythology . We had never dealt with the horrors of anti @-@ Semitism and the power of the word [on The X @-@ Files] . And because I 'm Jewish , it was something that was really compelling to me personally . " The idea to create a story centering on a Golem , however , had been proposed several times before by " probably every Jewish writer who 's passed through " , according to Gordon .

Gordon claimed that he had wanted to write a story like " Kaddish " since the first season , but that the " emotional basis " had eluded him . The inspiration for Gordon was the communal ring featured in the episode . The ring was a real Jewish relic owned by a rabbi who survived the Holocaust . In fact , the rabbi had used it to wed two of Gordon 's friends . During that wedding , Gordon developed a " Romeo and Juliet @-@ like " story that revolved around themes of love and wanting to bring a loved one back from the dead .

In order to ensure his story would be chosen to air , Gordon decided to play up the elements of anti @-@ Semitism . Originally , however , the script called for both the protagonists and the antagonists to be African Americans , and the main protagonist to be a " Louis Farrakhan @-@ like " character . Gordon later rewrote the script because he realized " black anti @-@ Semitism is a very subtle and difficult subject and not what I needed in my dramatic structure . " To create the kind of hate propaganda that Brunjes and his printshop made in the episode , Gordon contacted the Anti @-@ Defamation League and requested samples . The articles that were presented were used in the episode , with only " minor alterations " .

= = = Casting and characterization = = =

Justine Miceli was chosen to play the role of Ariel ; she based her character 's sorrowful demeanor on the memory of her own father 's death due to cancer . Although she is not Jewish , Miceli was assisted by a friend 's rabbi in order to successfully play the part ; he helped her learn the proper pronunciation for many of the Jewish prayers used in the episode . Gordon was adamant that he did not want Jacob Weiss to be portrayed in a stereotypical way . Initially , he was dismayed when actor David Groh affected a distinct Yiddish accent , for fear that Weiss ' scenes could " lapse into parody rather easily " . Gordon , however , stated that Groh had a " certain verisimilitude " and that it was " the right choice " to have the accent .

Many fans on the internet were hoping that the episode would reveal whether or not Mulder is Jewish . In the episode , however , Mulder is unable to identify a Jewish book , states that he does not know Hebrew , and quips that Jesus returned from the dead . When asked whether or not Mulder is Jewish , Gordon said that he did not think that he is , nor did he think he is " even half @-@ Jewish " . He did , however , note that " there 's something about David [Duchovny] that could be Jewish or that has a Jewish sensibility . "

= = = Filming and music = = =

The scene featuring the burning book was difficult to film . For some unknown reason , the pyrotechnics required to create the fire refused to cooperate . David Duchovny and Gillian Anderson ended up spending hours trying to shoot the scene . Gastown , Vancouver ? described as " the only

area in Vancouver that even remotely resembles residential Queens in New York " ? stood in for many of the exterior shots . Shots at the Weiss ' apartment were filmed at the Winter 's Hotel . Originally , the production team was going to remove the hotel 's neon sign , but director Manners , instead , decided to " move the camera another five feet " to prevent " prohibitive " expenses .

Unfortunately for the series , no Jewish synagogue would rent out their space for the episode . The scenes in the synagogue were actually filmed at Shaughnessy Heights United Church . The church was chosen because it possessed a " gothic interior " and " stained glass windows " that " resembled many New York synagogues " . The church was booked for two weeks so that the entire interior could be redecorated to look like a legitimate Jewish temple . This included completely redecorating the pews , carpet , and light fixtures , as well as crafting a Jewish altar . During the construction of the altar , a Hebrew translation of the Ten Commandments was scheduled to be created . However , the series ' on @-@ set Hebrew advisor was not available and so , according to art director Gary Allen , the staff ended up " faking " the text .

Series composer Mark Snow mixed in " clarinet , violin , and cello solos " to the episode 's score . In addition , he admits to borrowing elements of J.S. Bach 's Fugue in G minor , " Little " , BWV 578 piece . He noted , " the aim was to wind up somewhere between a Klezmer band and Schindler 's List . "

= = Themes = =

Gordon said that love is the central conceit of the episode . Although , in the myth of the Golem , the creature is soulless , Gordon took " some liberties " with the legend . He wanted " Kaddish " to " literally be about resurrection " . Ariel creates an imperfect reflection of her husband by crafting the Golem from mud . In essence , she is trying to play God , a role that Gordon later likened to Victor Frankenstein , the scientist from Mary Shelley 's famous novel Frankenstein ; or , The Modern Prometheus (1823) . However , Ariel and Frankenstein differ in the fact that Ariel 's flaw was related to her " loving [Isaac] too much , not being able to let go , because of the cruelty and injustice of what she suffered . " In this manner , Ariel 's motivation for creating the Golem are " slightly more romantically skewed " .

Robert Shearman and Lars Pearson , in their book Wanting to Believe : A Critical Guide to The X @-@ Files , Millennium & The Lone Gunmen , analyzed Gordon 's portrayal of racism and anti @-@ Semitism . They wrote that Gordon " makes [a] very convincing point " when he argues that hatemongers like Carl Brunjes ? who are openly hateful of other cultures but would never , personally , hurt them ? are " just as guilty " as openly violent individuals , such as the " three Nazi thugs who beat and shoot a defenceless man . "

= = Broadcast and reception = =

" Kaddish " originally aired on the Fox network on February 16 , 1997 , and was first broadcast in the United Kingdom on BBC One on December 17 , 1997 . This episode earned a Nielsen rating of 10 @. @ 3 , with a 15 share , meaning that roughly 10 @. @ 3 percent of all television @-@ equipped households , and 15 percent of households watching television , were tuned in to the episode . It was viewed by 16 @. @ 56 million viewers .

The episode received moderately positive reviews from television critics . Andy Meisler , in his book I Want to Believe : The Official Guide to the X @-@ Files Volume 3 , called the episode " one of the best non @-@ mythological episodes of the fourth season " due to its " seamless integration of character development , social commentary and the supernatural . " Juliette Harrison of Den of Geek named " Kaddish " the best stand @-@ alone episode of season four and called its conceit " absolutely real and utterly tragic " despite being " highly fantastical " . Zack Handlen of The A.V. Club rated the episode " B + " , claiming that , while it was " the sort of episode that works best if you enjoy it for its style and presentation without getting too caught up in the script " , it felt " appropriate " . Handlen did , however , criticize the episode 's characterization of Scully , noting that her scientific counter @-@ arguments were " becoming less about applying common sense to madness

, and more just arguing for arguing 's sake . "

Shearman and Pearson awarded the episode three stars out of five and called it " one of [Gordon 's] best " . Furthermore , the two praised many aspects of the script , particularly the " real anger " which made the episode " something special " . Despite this , they felt that the plot " offer [ed] nothing unexpected " and that its position , after the revelation that Scully has cancer in " Leonard Betts " caused it to look " as if it 's cheating on the consequences of Scully 's illness " . Paula Vitaris from Cinefantastique gave the episode a positive review and awarded it three stars out of four . She called it a " flawed yet unusually affecting episode " . Vitaris cited the Golem 's disintegration as " a leitmotif , a reminder of death , a beautiful way to translate into visual terms the depth of Ariel 's grief . "