

= Tainted Obligation =

" Tainted Obligation " is the fourth episode of the sixth season of the American television medical drama Grey 's Anatomy , and the show 's 106th episode overall . It was written by Jenna Bans and directed by Tom Verica . The episode was originally broadcast on the American Broadcasting Company (ABC) in the United States on October 8 , 2009 . In the episode , Dr. Meredith Grey (Ellen Pompeo) and Dr. Lexie Grey (Chyler Leigh) ' s father is admitted into the hospital , seeking a liver transplantation . Further storylines include Dr. Cristina Yang (Sandra Oh) getting nervous about losing her job , and Dr. Owen Hunt (Kevin McKidd) attempting to perform surgery on a terminal patient with Dr. Izzie Stevens (Katherine Heigl) .

Although the episode was fictionally set in Seattle , Washington , filming primarily took place in Los Angeles , California . Jeff Perry reprised his role as a guest star , while Ralph Waite and Jocko Sims made their first appearances . The episode 's title refers to the song " Tainted Obligation " , by American alternative rock group Community Trolls . " Tainted Obligation " opened to generally positive critical reviews , with Pompeo 's and Chyler Leigh (Dr. Lexie Grey) ' s performances praised in particular . Upon its initial airing , the episode was viewed by 14 @. @ 13 million Americans , and garnered a 5 @. @ 4 / 14 Nielsen rating / share in the 18 ? 49 demographic , ranking third for the night in terms of viewership .

= = Plot = =

Dr. Alex Karev (Justin Chambers) leaves his trailer for work , as he approaches a bear growling outside . He wants to move back to Dr. Meredith Grey (Ellen Pompeo) ' s house , but Dr. Izzie Stevens (Katherine Heigl) insists that they must go forward in life . Dr. Lexie Grey (Chyler Leigh) brings her father , Thatcher Grey (Jeff Perry) , who is vomiting blood , into the emergency room , and Dr. Miranda Bailey (Chandra Wilson) treats him . Dr. Mark Sloan (Eric Dane) admits an elderly patient , Irving Waller (Ralph Waite) , with skin growths , who later reveals that he wants a penile prosthesis , to which he receives . It is revealed that Thatcher needs a liver transplantation , and Stevens is assigned to a cancerous patient , Randy (Jocko Sims) , by Dr. Owen Hunt (Kevin McKidd) . Dr. Callie Torres (Sara Ramirez) wants to ask the chief of surgery Dr. Richard Webber (James Pickens , Jr .) for a job as an attending surgeon , but is nervous that he will reject her , and goes out to lunch with her girlfriend Dr. Arizona Robbins (Jessica Capshaw) .

Dr. Cristina Yang (Sandra Oh) is fearful that she will be cut from the hospital 's staff , so she tries to get her name on the surgical board . Stevens and Hunt operate on Randy , and it is revealed that he is terminal . Lexie wants to donate her liver to Thatcher , but she is not a viable candidate , so she asks Meredith to do it , who subsequently agrees . Randy and his wife are dismayed with the outcome of the surgery , and Stevens proposes a plan to Hunt on how they can save him . Hunt agrees , but when the surgery suffers complications , the patient is pronounced dead , and Hunt condemns Stevens . Meredith undergoes the surgery , and it is a success for both her and Thatcher . Yang confronts Webber , and tells him that if a cardiothoracic surgeon is not hired , she should be cut from the program . At the conclusion of the episode , Stevens sees the bear , and ultimately agrees that she and Karev need to relocate , out of the forest .

= = Production = =

The episode was written by Jenna Bans and directed by Tom Verica . Edward Ornelas edited the episode , and Donald Lee Harris served as production designer . The episode 's title refers to the song " Tainted Obligation " , by American alternative rock group Community Trolls . Featured music includes The Voluntary Butler Scheme 's " Trading Things In " and Dragonette 's " Come On Be Good " . Pompeo was pregnant during the episode , so the filming crew had to work around it . In the episode , Lexie advocated for Meredith to donate her liver , because she was unable to . Bans commented on this : " It was REALLY easy for me to understand Lexie in this episode ? ' cause that 's how I imagine she grew up with [her mother] and Thatcher . There was taco night , and movie

night , and if she had homework issues , one of them was always around to help . So now that her Dad needs some of her liver , recovering alcoholic or not , she ? s gonna do it . She 's not even thinking about the Chief 's upcoming merger ? and the fact that recovering from a major surgery will put her on the bench , out of the game , for at least a month . Lexie doesn 't blink , because family isn 't an obligation to her like it is for a lot of people - it 's a gift . " The scene in which Meredith offers her liver to Thatcher was originally intended to rekindle their relationship . Bans later changed this , following a request from Pompeo , and offered her insight :

" I thought I wrote a reconciliation story ? between Mer and her father . I thought I wrote the episode that was going to put all the bad blood behind them for good . And it did , in a way ? Mer tells Thatcher the door is open , which is pretty huge . And though it was incredibly hard for her to work up the courage to say that to him , she knew it was the only thing that would let him ? or alleviate his guilt enough - to allow her to save his life . But something happened in this story during the shooting process . It changed ? subtly , but substantially . Here 's how it started -- Ellen Pompeo came to me on the first day of shooting and wanting to change that speech she gives to Thatcher . She wanted to add a simple line , to have Mer say ' I want you to do this for her . ' Because for Ellen , this story wasn 't a Mer / Thatcher reconciliation story ? it was a Mer / Lexie story . It was a story about these two women , who have done this awkward dance around each other for two seasons now , finally becoming sisters . Ellen insisted that her main reason for doing what she does , for being completely vulnerable in front of the man who has hurt her in more ways than we can count at this point , was Lexie . She was doing it for Lexie . "

Bans called Waller getting a new penis the most emotional scene she had to write , adding : " I loved this story because I hate the idea that once you 're old , your life is over . I hate when people treat their aging parents like old furniture they want to get rid of but have to find a place for so they stick ' em in the corner and forget about them . " Bans also commented on Heigl 's character 's storyline , writing : " Poor Izzie . The girl 's living with cancer , lost her best friend , impulsively got married and dragged her husband away to live in the woods . That takes a lot out of a person . I need to seriously recover on the couch for an hour after I go to the grocery store ? I can 't imagine the emotional and physical fatigue Izzie must be feeling right now . I think by the end of this episode , after Owen tells her that channeling her experience as a patient at Seattle Grace is undermining her strength as a doctor at Seattle Grace ? she 's wondering if she made a mistake . She 's wondering if Alex and Derek and now Owen might be right ? that she came back to work too soon . That she 's not emotionally ready to be cutting into people yet . Because I think every doctor wants to believe all their terminal patients can be Izzie ? but the odds tell another story . "

= = Reception = =

= = = Broadcasting = = =

" Tainted Obligation " was originally broadcast on October 8 , 2009 in the United States on the American Broadcasting Company . The episode was viewed by a total of 14 @. @ 13 million Americans , down 1 @. @ 56 % from the previous episode " I Always Feel Like Somebody 's Watchin ' Me " , which garnered 15 @. @ 69 million viewers . In terms of viewership , " Tainted Obligation " ranked third for the night , just behind CBS 's juggernauts CSI and The Mentalist . The episode did not win in viewership , but its 5 @. @ 4 / 14 Nielsen rating ranked first in its 9 : 00 Eastern time @- @ slot and the entire night , for both the rating and share percentages of the key 18 ? 49 demographic , beating out CSI , The Mentalist , Private Practice , and The Office . Although its rating won for the night , it was a decrease from the previous episode , which garnered a 6 @. @ 1 / 16 rating / share in the 18 ? 49 demographic .

= = = Critical reception = = =

The episode was generally well received among television critics . Glenn Diaz of BuddyTV

commented that Perry 's character was " the man of the hour " , in addition to praising Pompeo 's performance , writing : " You gotta love Mer when she 's gloomy . " Diaz also called Yang not having a surgery " hilarious " , and praised the chemistry between Ramirez 's and Capshaw 's characters . PopSugar called the title of the episode appropriate , and also praised Pompeo 's performance , adding : " I felt for Meredith , but after Lexie 's heartfelt begging and pleading , I was happy that Mere finally grows up and casts her selfishness aside . Three seasons ago Meredith would never have dreamed of putting Lexie first , and I was proud of her for giving up part of her liver ? her offer to get to know her dad was an even bigger milestone . " PopSugar also enjoyed Oh 's performance , commenting that they enjoyed her " vulnerable " side , and writing that overall the episode felt " lackluster " . Cinema Blend 's Amanda Krill found Yang " babyish " and " whiny " .

TV Guide 's Adam Bryant called the scene with the bear " one of the funniest moments on TV that week " . Bryant also praised the story arc between Torres and Robbins , adding : " I really like how honest Arizona is with Callie , and the way she puts the firecracker in her place . " He was positive of Leigh 's performance , writing : " Chyler Leigh gave a powerful performance in this episode . Her speech to Meredith was a little overwritten , but she almost made you forget that with her emotion . And the bond that is growing between Lexie and Meredith is nice to see . From Meredith finally saying out loud how she feels about Lexie , to Lexie being at Mer 's side when she wakes up , I am really glad to see these sisters ' happy . " Michael Pascua of The Huffington Post gave a positive review of the episode , commenting : " I love how Grey 's Anatomy can bounce between serious and hysterical moments . Old people wanting penile implants , bears attacking a groggy Alex , counterbalanced with Mercy West drama , Cristina being ignored , and Lexie 's father arriving at the hospital hacking blood . " Pascua also praised the writing of Waite 's character 's storyline and Leigh 's performance .