

= Grey Matters (Fringe) =

" Grey Matters " is the 10th episode of the second season of the American science fiction drama television series Fringe . The episode was written by Ashley Edward Miller and Zack Stentz , and directed by Jeannot Szwarc . It centered on three mental patients who mysteriously became sane again after shapeshifters from the parallel universe removed a piece of foreign tissue from each of their brains ; this tissue is later revealed to have been taken from the brain of Walter Bishop years before . The fringe team of Olivia Dunham , Peter Bishop , and Walter investigate and face a new enemy , Thomas Jerome Newton (guest actor Sebastian Roché) , whose purpose is to decipher the missing parts of Walter 's brain and find out how to move between universes .

The episode features the first scene between Walter and his old colleague William Bell (played by guest actor Leonard Nimoy) . At the time , it fulfilled Nimoy 's commitment to the show , though he later returned for the season finale . " Grey Matters " first aired in the United States on December 10 , 2009 on Fox to mostly positive reviews . An estimated 6 @. @ 33 million viewers watched the episode , and it received a 2 @. @ 3 ratings share among those 18 ? 49 .

= = Plot = =

In a Boston mental institution , Thomas Jerome Newton (Sebastian Roché) performs brain surgery on a patient , Mr Slater , who keeps repeating " Heather " " flowers in her hair " , and a " girl in a red dress " . Newton successfully removes part of his brain , but he and his team are forced to leave before they can seal the man 's head back up . The Fringe team of Olivia (Anna Torv) , Peter (Joshua Jackson) , and Walter (John Noble) arrive at the institution and learn that Slater 's paranoid schizophrenia was apparently cured by the operation , and that his brain is still structurally intact .

While viewing security footage , Olivia recognizes Newton , the leader of the shapeshifters who was reanimated from a cryogenically frozen head at the end of " Momentum Deferred " . Astrid and Walter research the patient 's physician , Dr. Paris , and learn he set up an indefinite prescription fourteen years ago for Slater as well as two other patients in the same week . Peter and Olivia interview one of these other patients , who constantly thought about the number 28 , but was recently cured of her obsessive compulsive disorder by Newton . She tells them she was originally sent to the hospital by Dr Paris for mild postpartum depression , and that her obsessive compulsive disorder started soon after . Peter and Olivia also hear of a third patient who was mysteriously cured two days ago . Walter realizes that all the patients were given constant doses of organ transplant medication , and that foreign brain tissue was stored in each of their brains .

Walter undergoes a CT scan , and the team learn Walter had three pieces of his brain tissue removed from his Hippocampus which is the primary repository for long term memory . The pieces were then apparently stored inside the brains of the cured patients fourteen years ago . Knowing only Walter could comprehend the memories concerning how to open a portal to another reality , the shapeshifters kidnap him . By the time the others find Walter , Newton has already learned what he needs to know and escapes . Olivia manages to stop them , but is forced to choose between seizing Newton and saving Walter , as he has been given a lethal dose of a neurotoxin that will kill him unless Newton gives them the correct directions . Olivia chooses to save Walter 's life , and Newton replies " Now I know how weak you are " .

Broyles eases Olivia 's concerns that she made an emotional choice by assuring her that her decision to save Walter was a logical one as Walter is highly valuable to the team .

As Walter undergoes a follow @- @ up MRI , he flashes back to a past surgery , where he is being operated on by William Bell (AKA Dr Paris , played by Leonard Nimoy) , who removed Walter 's brain fragments and hid them in the patients ' brains to prevent anyone else from gaining the information .

= = Production = =

" Grey Matters " was written by screenwriters Ashley Edward Miller and Zack Stentz , and was directed by Jeannot Szwarc . In an interview the following year , Miller noted that " Your characters will often assert themselves , and remind you who they really are . In ' Grey Matters ' there 's a moment where pre @-@ madness Walter wakes up in the chair ? that beat emerged on the page . We had no idea it was going to be in the script until we were writing the scene . As a writer , you live for that . "

" Grey Matters " marked the first episode that featured a shared scene between actors Leonard Nimoy and John Noble , whose characters are old colleagues of each other . At the time , it was Nimoy 's third episode and consequently last commitment as a guest actor on Fringe , and he had expressed his reluctance in interviews to return for further episodes . Nimoy however later agreed to a reappearance in the two @-@ part season finale " Over There " . The visual effect of making Walter and Bell appear younger was produced by Zoic Studios . Fringe 's visual effects supervisor , Jay Worth , explained " The guys at Zoic had to walk a fine line between too plasticky , stretched , morph effects and something that naturalistically looks younger " . During filming for " Brown Betty " , Noble described the episode in an interview , " ' Grey Matters ' was a very important episode for Walter because it helped to explain to some degree his apparent behavior . His eccentricity . His obsessiveness . His forgetfulness . Because we found out that he had certain memory parts of his brain removed . "

In a deleted scene set after the end of the episode , Walter talks with the first patient Joseph Slater , who wonders why he was chosen to have a piece of Walter 's brain . Walter responds it was a matter of circumstance , as Slater shared his blood type and had a young resilient brain . Walter also says he himself cannot be cured , as his madness had nothing to do with the missing parts of his brain .

= = Cultural references = =

William Bell 's secret alias was a reference to Leonard Nimoy 's character in the television series Mission : Impossible , whose character was also named Dr. Simon Paris . Thomas Jerome Newton is named after David Bowie 's character in The Man Who Fell to Earth . Dunwich Mental Hospital , where they meet the second mysteriously cured patient is a reference to the fictional town of Dunwich , Massachusetts , created by H.P. Lovecraft .

= = Reception = =

= = = Ratings = = =

In its original American broadcast on December 10 , 2009 , " Grey Matters " was watched by an estimated 6 @.@ 33 million viewers according to Nielsen Media Research . The episode earned a 2 @.@ 3 ratings among people 18 ? 49 , slightly above the season average of 2 @.@ 2 ; it was down 0 @.@ 2 ratings points from the previous week .

= = = Reviews = = =

The episode premiered to near universal critical acclaim . Ramsey Isler of IGN gave it 9 @.@ 6 / 10 , and thought it was " one of the most balanced and well @-@ executed episodes of the series , Fringe fans get action , suspense , emotion , and best of all , some revelations ! ... This episode is nearly everything a Fringe fan could have asked for ... Besides the awesomeness with the Bishops , Olivia finally returns to taking an active role in an episode ... But the most important thing is that the overarching Fringe plot finally progressed , and it 's going in a pretty damn good direction " . Jane Boursaw from TV Squad enjoyed the episode because it had a " few reveals and a nice cliffhanger . " She liked the interactions between Walter and Peter , and also praised the scene between Olivia and Newton . Josh Wigler of MTV was pleased that the " mystery of the week " also tied into the

ongoing plot , and that answers were provided to certain mysteries , such as why Walter 's behavior and personality is " a little ... off . Pretty interesting stuff . It 's nice to finally have a reason to point at for Walter 's craziness " .

Ken Tucker of Entertainment Weekly thought it " was one of the best Fringes yet for the way it wove its sci @-@ fi with its emotional subplots with such tight , artful braiding " . Television Without Pity rated it an A , while A.V. Club 's Noel Murray gave the episode an A- , explaining " This was , I think , the best Fringe of the season , and I ? m only docking it a notch because it was less about themes and character than it was about plot . But man , what a plot " . Various critics lauded Noble 's performance . Website blogger io9 listed " Grey Matters " as one of the few " crucial " episodes new viewers must watch to get into the show . In January 2013 , IGN ranked the episode the sixth best of the entire series , explaining that the " story is brilliant , with twists and turns and remarkable acting by both John Noble and Joshua Jackson as they portray a bond that 's closer than anything else up to that point ... This fantastic episode was an early Christmas present for Fringe fans . "

= = = Awards and nominations = = =

Director Jeannot Szwarc submitted " Grey Matters " for the Primetime Emmy Award for Outstanding Directing for a Drama Series category at the 62nd Primetime Emmy Awards .