

= Medusa (The X @-@ Files) =

" Medusa " is the twelfth episode of the eighth season of the American science fiction television series The X @-@ Files . It premiered on the Fox network on February 11 , 2001 . The episode was written by Frank Spotnitz and directed by Richard Compton . " Medusa " is a " Monster @-@ of @-@ the @-@ Week " story , unconnected to the series ' wider mythology . The episode received a Nielsen rating of 8 @.@ 2 and was viewed by 13 @.@ 8 million viewers . Overall , the episode received mixed reviews from critics .

The series centers on FBI special agents Dana Scully (Gillian Anderson) and her new partner John Doggett (Robert Patrick) ? following the alien abduction of her former partner , Fox Mulder (David Duchovny) ? who work on cases linked to the paranormal , called X @-@ Files . In this episode , a string of bizarre deaths in the tunnels of the Boston subway system sees Doggett join a team of professionals underground to investigate . Meanwhile , Scully has to defy the train authorities above land , who are determined to get the trains up and running within hours .

" Medusa " was allotted a " huge budget " , due mostly to the fact that a replica of the Boston subway had to be recreated . Robert Patrick later called the eventual set " the biggest damned thing I 'd seen in my life . " Cheri Montesanto @-@ Medcalf and Matthew Mungle , the show 's make @-@ up effect producers , used several unorthodox ingredients to create the effect of melted flesh ; in addition to the use of normal prosthetic make @-@ up , the two also used a combination of figs and Fruit Roll @-@ Ups .

= = Plot = =

In Boston , an undercover cop waits for the subway , alone . Suddenly , a suspicious man appears , jumping the fare barrier . Eventually , they both get onto a train and the police officer draws his gun as the man starts to walk towards him from behind . Suddenly , the subway comes to a screeching halt , flashes of light are seen , and the train loses power . Later , when the train is back up and running , a batch of commuters enter the subway car and find the undercover cop with the flesh on half his face and his left arm stripped down to the bone .

Agents Scully and Doggett arrive at the operations center to investigate . However , they are rudely greeted by Deputy Chief Karras and Lieutenant Bianco of the transit police ; the two eagerly want the FBI to get the job done fast in order that subways can be reopened in five hours , and Karras is also irritated that Scully performed an autopsy on the body . Even after an autopsy , Scully has no idea what killed the man , and the CDC is unable to find any biological or chemical agents in the subway .

Doggett and Scully are soon introduced to a strike @-@ force that will be going into the subway to investigate . The group includes Steven Melnick , a structural engineer and Dr. Hellura Lyle , CDC employee specializing in pathogens . Scully , however , decides the plan will work better if Doggett acts as her eyes and ears while she analyzes the situation from up in the CDC . Using cameras and microphones , she will watch and hear what is happening . After the plans are made . Doggett leads the team into the dark tunnel .

While in the tunnels , Melnick gets a burn on the back of his neck suggesting a chemical leak . However , the test of the nearby puddle shows nothing dangerous : It is just salt water . Melnick mentions that the tunnels run along the harbor in some places and that they get sea water leakages from time to time . Moving ahead , the team finds an abandoned section of the subway tunnels . Out of the tunnel bursts a man with his rib cage and teeth exposed who knocks Doggett down : he is the suspected robber , eaten away like the other man . His condition proves that he did not kill the man and that there may , in fact , might be a contagion . While looking around , the teams discover three bodies with the same gruesome injuries , wrapped in plastic . It soon becomes clear that someone is covering up the problem in the subway .

Lyle spots an unknown person running away from them in the subway and the team follows . When the group approaches the spot where the train lost power , Melnick starts crying out in pain . Visible electrical flashes start destroying the skin on his left arm . Scully tells Doggett to pour water on it ,

which stops the flashes . Lyle takes the badly injured Melnick to the surface and Doggett continues onward with Bianco . When Melnick returns to the surface , he seems to be getting worse , but Lyle appears healthy . Scully then sees the three bodies being taken away by non @-@ CDC hazmat people . When Scully confronts Karras about this , he says that he is organizing it . Scully tells Karras that she has already organized the CDC to collect the bodies and accuses Karras of attempting a cover @-@ up . Although Karras tries to deny his involvement , he eventually allows her to send the bodies to the actual CDC .

Back in the tunnels , Doggett notices a green glow on Bianco in a dimly lit former subway station . As such , he refuses to allow the lieutenant to leave . Bianco runs away , forcing Doggett to give chase . He learns from Scully that Karras has gone ahead of plan and allowed the passengers onto the platforms and the subway will start back up , despite the danger . After analyzing various water samples found at the scene , Scully meets with Dr. Kai Bowe , a marine biologist , who explains that the sample contains a unique microscopic sea creature called a medusa which are made out of calcium and are bioluminescent . However , Bowe does not know why the electrical reaction happens . When Doggett finds the wounded Bianco , he finds that his condition has gotten worse . Doggett then carries Bianco on his back and helps him continue through the tunnels . They soon encounter a boy with no signs of the luminous green substance on him . Scully realizes that sweat is causing the chemical electrical reaction since it is conductive to calcium ions . The boy does not have well developed sweat glands yet so the medusas are not affecting him . Doggett follows the boy to a major leak from the bay with the green glow on all the walls . Suddenly , an oncoming subway approaches the group ? Karras has allowed the subway to resume schedule . Doggett uses Bianco ? s gun to connect the third rail with the water and kill the medusas , preventing further exposure .

Later , Scully comes to see Doggett in the hospital . Scully informs him that Bianco and Melnick are with plastic surgeons , the boy is with social services , and no criminal charges will be pressed against Karras since the electrical charge of the third rail destroyed the proof of the medusas in the tunnel .

= = Production = =

" Medusa " was written by executive producer Frank Spotnitz and directed by Richard Compton . Reportedly , because of the scope of the episode , a " huge budget " was allotted for the entry . Because the episode was written to take place in a subway system , a set meeting the requirements of the script had to be created . The eventual set was designed to mirror the actual Boston subway , a system that serves more than 700 @,@ 000 people a day . According to star Robert Patrick , " They got us in there , and we did it , and they built a huge subway tunnel set on a soundstage . " Patrick later described the set as " the biggest damned thing I 'd ever seen in my life . " In real life , the Boston subway system is " fondly " called the T , short for the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority . In " Medusa " , the " T " , was changed to an " M " " for fictional purposes " .

Cheri Montesanto @-@ Medcalf and Matthew Mungle , the show 's make @-@ up effect producers , used several unorthodox ingredients to create the effect of melted flesh ; in addition to the use of normal prosthetic make @-@ up , the two also used a combination of figs and Fruit Roll @-@ Ups . Several of the characters in the episode were named after real @-@ life individuals . The characters of Hellura Lyle and Kai Bowe were named after two Writers Guild trainees on The X @-@ Files staff who served during the first part of the eighth season . Furthermore , the character Steven Melnick is named after the Vice President of Media Relations for 20th Century Fox Television . Melnick had formerly served as the publicist for the series .

= = Broadcast and reception = =

" Medusa " first aired on Fox on February 11 , 2001 . The episode earned a Nielsen household rating of 8 @.@ 2 , meaning that it was seen by 8 @.@ 2 % of the nation 's estimated households . The episode was viewed by 8 @.@ 27 million households , and 13 @.@ 8 million viewers . The

episode ranked as the 41st most @-@ watched episode for the week ending February 11 . The episode subsequently debuted in the United Kingdom on the BBC Two on May 26 , 2002 . Fox promoted the episode with the tagline " Underneath the street lies the ultimate in terror . "

Critical reception to the episode was mostly mixed . Television Without Pity writer Jessica Morgan rated the episode a " B " . Despite the moderate praise , however , Morgan did make a jest at the portrayal of the subway in the show , noting that it was not realistic ; she wrote that the set was the " cleanest , emptiest subway station in world [?] No urine . No trash . It 's nicer than my apartment , really . " Robert Shearman and Lars Pearson , in their book *Wanting to Believe : A Critical Guide to The X @-@ Files , Millennium & The Lone Gunmen* gave the episode a mixed review and rated it two @-@ and @-@ a @-@ half stars out of five . Despite writing that " on paper [' Medusa ' is] the right episode at the right time " , the two criticized the episode , noting that " the teaser never really makes sense in light of the relations offered , the appearance of the mute boy is a messy contrivance , and the ending is too abrupt . "

Zack Handlen of *The A.V. Club* awarded the episode an " B ? " . While noting that the episode possessed " a few decent ideas , and a wasted setting " , the " story never sparks " . He largely blamed the episode 's antagonistic organism , noting that they are not " all that memorable " and " not even all that monster @-@ y " . Despite this , he wrote positively of the show 's use of Scully , arguing that , " the fun of the episode is watching Scully watch Doggett and his team ? slowly work through the closed off subway tunnels , finding bodies wrapped in plastic and other mysteries beside . "

Paula Vitaris from *Cinefantastique* gave the episode a slightly negative review and awarded it one @-@ and @-@ a @-@ half stars out of four . Despite noting , " after episodes about butt @-@ crawling and vomiting , it 's a relief to have one in which people die when their skin and muscles are fried away by microscopic sea creatures called medusas " , Vitaris was critical of the plot , likening it to " cliché [d] " 1970 's movies that featured the " obstreperous official insisting the plane must fly or the skyscraper is fire @-@ proof , even when the potential for catastrophe is staring him in the face . " Spotnitz later admitted during a Reddit IAmA that the episode was his least @-@ favorite that he had written because " the concept just wasn 't clear or compelling enough to sustain the hour . "