

= Memento Mori (The X @-@ Files) =

" Memento Mori " is the fourteenth episode of the fourth season of the American science fiction television series The X @-@ Files . It premiered on the Fox network on February 9 , 1997 . It was directed by Rob Bowman , and written by series creator Chris Carter , Vince Gilligan , John Shiban and Frank Spotnitz . " Memento Mori " featured guest appearances by Sheila Larken , David Lovgren and Morris Panych . The episode helped to explore the overarching mythology , or fictional history of The X @-@ Files . " Memento Mori " earned a Nielsen household rating of 15 @.@ 5 , being watched by 19 @.@ 1 million people in its initial broadcast . The title translates from Latin as " remember that you will die . "

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 . When Scully is diagnosed with an inoperable nasopharyngeal tumor , Mulder attempts to discover what happened to her during her abduction experience , believing the two events to be related .

" Memento Mori " was written in only two days , when previous series writer Darin Morgan did not contribute a script for the season . Discussion between the writing staff led to the " obligatory " decision to have Scully diagnosed with cancer , although the decision was not unanimous . Guest actor Lovgren portrayed multiple clones of his character using post @-@ production techniques to merge several shots together ; while actor Pat Skipper had a scene cut from the final episode for time restraints , later appearing in the season finale .

= = Plot = =

Dana Scully (Gillian Anderson) learns that she has a cancerous tumor between her sinus and cerebrum . She initially tells only Fox Mulder (David Duchovny) and Walter Skinner (Mitch Pileggi) of the diagnosis , and is determined to continue to work . The agents head to Allentown , Pennsylvania to see Betsy Hagopian , a Mutual UFO Network member who was previously discovered to be suffering from similar symptoms . The agents learn that Betsy has died , yet find someone using her phone line . They trace the call to Kurt Crawford (David Lovgren) , a fellow MUFON member . Crawford tells them that all but one of the MUFON members Scully previously met have died of cancer . Scully is skeptical of Mulder and Crawford 's claims that a government conspiracy and her abduction are behind her illness .

Scully visits the last surviving MUFON member , Penny Northern , who is being treated for cancer at a medical centre . Meanwhile , Mulder discovers that all the abductees were childless but had been treated at a nearby fertility clinic . When Mulder is called away by Scully , an assassin , the Gray @-@ Haired Man (Morris Panych) arrives and kills Crawford with a stiletto weapon , revealing him to be an alien @-@ human hybrid . After meeting Penny 's physician , Dr. Scanlon , Scully elects to begin chemotherapy . Mulder sneaks into the clinic and finds Crawford there , seemingly alive . Mulder and " Crawford " hack into the clinic 's computer database and find information revealing Scully has a file there . Mulder sees Skinner and asks to deal with The Smoking Man to save Scully , but Skinner convinces him not to do so .

Mulder recruits The Lone Gunmen to help him break into a high security research facility where he thinks he may be able to find more information on how to save Scully . Meanwhile , Skinner tries to deal directly with The Smoking Man for Scully 's life , who tells him he will get back to him . Inside the facility , Mulder discovers that Dr. Scanlon works alongside several clones of Kurt Crawford . The clones show him Scully 's harvested ova and tell him they are trying to save the abducted women 's lives , since they acted as their birth mothers . They also hope to subvert the colonization project as an inside job . Mulder takes Scully 's ova and leaves , being pursued by the Gray @-@ Haired Man as he escapes . He returns to the hospital to see Scully , who tells him that Penny has died but that she intends to fight the disease . Afterward , Mulder thanks Skinner for advising him not to negotiate with the Smoking Man , after which Skinner and the Smoking Man come to terms on their deal in seclusion .

= = Production = =

The show 's producers decided to give Gillian Anderson 's character Dana Scully cancer early in the fourth season . Series creator Chris Carter initially discussed giving Scully 's mother cancer but decided to have Scully suffer from it instead . Carter felt the move would give the show an interesting platform on which to discuss things such as faith , science , health care and a certain element of the paranormal . Some of the writing staff felt that the decision was a poor one to make , citing it as " a cheap TV thing " . However , Frank Spotnitz felt that , given the appearances of cancer @-@ stricken abductees in previous episodes , it was an " obligatory " move to have Scully follow suit .

The episode was written by Vince Gilligan , John Shibban , and Frank Spotnitz three days after another script idea fell through . Spotnitz noted that " Darin Morgan had left the show but was going to contribute an episode . And we realized at the eleventh hour that it wasn 't going to happen , and we were stuck with nothing . John , Vince and I broke that story in maybe two days . We split up the acts , wrote it in probably another two days , and gave the crew something to prep before Christmas break . That was the worst ever . " Carter ended up rewriting the script over the holiday . The initial cut ended up being too long , resulting in a scene introducing Scully 's older brother Bill Scully , played by Pat Skipper , being removed . The character , still played by Skipper , would eventually make his first appearance in the fourth season finale " Gethsemane " . The scene which would have established the character was intended to echo a similar scene in the second season episode " One Breath " , which featured Don S. Davis as Scully 's father . Both scenes featured the actors standing over a supine Scully , wearing white United States Navy dress uniforms . Also deleted from the episode was a kiss between Mulder and Scully , which would have been the first in the series ' run . This was an ad @-@ lib on Anderson and Duchovny 's part , and was removed from the episode as it was something Chris Carter felt he wanted to make use of in the series ' film adaptation . Such a kiss was eventually deferred to season six 's " Triangle " .

The episode 's opening scene , featuring a camera moving slowly towards Scully in a harsh white light , was achieved by constructing a long narrow set covered in aluminium foil , which amplified the light being used and downplayed any colors . This shot was drained of color entirely , and was combined with a series of blurring and framing effects in post @-@ production to further enhance the intended image ? to create the impression of waking from a dream .

A scene featuring multiple clones of the character Kurt Crawford was achieved with motion control photography , allowing actor David Lovgren to portray all of the clones ? multiple takes were recorded with the actor in different positions within the scene , and by using a camera controlled by a computer to follow exactly the same motions for each take , these could be seamlessly composited together . Producer Paul Rabwin has noted that achieving these shots was difficult due to the mixture of green and blue light sources in the scene .

= = Broadcast and reception = =

" Memento Mori " premiered on the Fox network on February 9 , 1997 , and was first broadcast in the United Kingdom on BBC Two on December 10 , 1997 . The episode earned a Nielsen household rating of 11 @.@ 5 with a 17 share , meaning that roughly 11 @.@ 5 percent of all television @-@ equipped households , and 17 percent of households watching television , were tuned in to the episode . A total of 19 @.@ 10 million viewers watched this episode during its original airing .

Writing for The A.V. Club , Todd VanDerWerff rated the episode an A , calling it " an occasionally beautiful , occasionally haunting , often overwritten story " . He felt that the episode took the uncommon route of tying together several previously @-@ mentioned aspects of the series ' mythology , making it " easy to believe the pieces might come together at this point " . However , VanDerWerff also noted that the episode 's two main plot threads ? Scully 's cancer and Mulder 's investigation ? seemed " clumsily grafted " together , and did not explore the theme of living with the fear of death as well as the previous episode , " Never Again " , had done . Frank Spotnitz praised

the episode , saying , " I think that was the best mythology episode we ever did . It 's my favorite one " . Chris Carter has stated that he feels " Memento Mori " ranks " among the best mythology episodes of all nine seasons " .

This episode was submitted to the Academy of Television Arts & Sciences to represent The X @-@ Files in that year 's Primetime Emmy Awards . Episode writers Chris Carter , Vince Gilligan , John Shiban , and Frank Spotnitz were nominated for an Primetime Emmy Award for Outstanding Writing for a Drama Series . Art directors Graeme Murray and Gary Allen and set decorator Shirley Inget won the Creative Emmy Award for Best Art Direction in a Series , while actress Gillian Anderson also won the Primetime Emmy Award for Outstanding Lead Actress in a Drama Series for her work in this episode and the fourth season as a whole .