

= Ability (Fringe) =

" Ability " is the fourteenth episode of the first season of the American science fiction drama television series Fringe . The plot follows the Fringe team 's investigation into ZFT and David Robert Jones , who claims that Olivia is a soldier equipped with abilities to fight in an upcoming war between two parallel universes . A skeptical Olivia must discover a way to avoid unleashing an attack that causes fatal accelerated cellular growth in its victims .

The episode 's teleplay was written by co @-@ executive producer David H. Goodman from a story by executive story editors Glen Whitman and Robert Chiappetta . It was directed by Norberto Barba , his only contribution to the series . Jared Harris guest starred as Jones , alongside actors Clark Middleton , Michael Gaston , Noah Bean , and Chance Kelly .

It first aired in the United States on February 10 , 2009 on the Fox network to an estimated 9 @.@ 83 million viewers , placing second in its timeslot . The episode earned a 4 @.@ 1 / 10 ratings share among adults aged 18 to 49 , meaning that it was seen by 4 @.@ 1 percent of all 18- to 49 @-@ year @-@ olds , and 10 percent of all 18- to 49 @-@ year @-@ olds watching television at the time of broadcast . " Ability " received mixed reviews from television critics .

= = Plot = =

A newspaper vendor dies by suffocation after receiving a two @-@ dollar bill coated in a chemical substance that causes all his orifices to close up . Walter analyzes the chemical agent as a catalyst that speeds up the protein production in scar tissue and accelerating cell growth . Meanwhile , Olivia postulates that the initials " ZFT " may not be of a terrorist organization but of a book , and discovers the German name , " Zerstörung durch Fortschritte der Technologie " , roughly " Destruction by Advancement of Technology " . Peter takes Olivia to a rare book storekeeper , Edward Markam (Clark Middleton) who gets a copy of the ZFT from another collector . Peter returns with it to Walter 's lab , learning that it is a typewritten manifesto preparing " soldiers " for an upcoming war between two universes .

Concurrently , David Robert Jones (Jared Harris) turns himself in at the FBI headquarters . Suffering from effects of being teleported out of his German prison cell by Walter 's technology , he insists on only speaking to Olivia , warning that she is the only one that can stop a bomb from going off in 36 hours . Sanford Harris (Michael Gaston) instead orders Olivia to join other agents in raiding a warehouse which they believe Jones and his men used . Evidence confirms Jones had been there , but an agent dies from suffocation after finding another two @-@ dollar bill .

Olivia convinces Harris to let her see Jones alone , attributing the agent 's death to his misfire . In the interrogation room , Olivia discovers that Jones believes she is one of the soldiers in his war , having been a test subject on a Massive Dynamic nootropic drug known as " Cortexiphan " when she was a child . Jones claims that she is special , and instructs her to a remote site with a key in his possession to retrieve a package . Olivia follows his instructions , finding a package full of strange puzzles . The first puzzle is a light box containing a number of lights which Jones ' instructions require her to disable with her thoughts only . Olivia , having learned from Nina Sharp that the only Cortexiphan trials were done in Ohio , far from her childhood Jacksonville , Florida home , is confident Jones is mistaken .

As Jones ' condition worsens and he is brought to Walter 's lab , Peter rigs the lightbox to make the lights go off automatically . Olivia performs the test in front of Jones , and he supplies her the address of the bomb . When Olivia and the FBI arrive , they find that the bomb is set to release the deadly agent across the city but can only be defused if Olivia turns off a similar array of lights as were on the puzzle . Despite faking the earlier test , Olivia is successful at disabling the lights and the bomb with her thoughts .

In the episode 's epilogue , Jones , having been transferred to secured hospital , is rescued by his men , leaving a message on the wall telling Olivia she passed . Meanwhile , Walter , who has also started reading the ZFT , recognizes a unique offset letter , and finds that his own lab typewriter produces the same offset . Olivia receives a call from Nina who had further looked into the

Cortexiphan trials and discovered a smaller case study that occurred at Jacksonville .

= = Production = =

The episode 's teleplay was written by co @-@ executive producer David H. Goodman based on a story by executive story editors and scientists Glen Whitman and Robert Chiappetta . It was Goodman 's fifth contribution to the series and Whitman and Chiappetta 's first . The episode was directed by Norberto Barba , his only directional credit with the series .

Noah Bean noted that his character Officer Kemp " meets pretty gruesome , unbelievable ends , " as Kemp 's face becomes covered with skin and scar tissue . To create the effect of Kemp 's orifices closing , the crew used a combination of make @-@ up and computer graphic effects . They created casts of Bean , including the front of his face , ears , back , and torso . They applied make @-@ up over parts of his face at different stages as the scene demanded . For Olivia 's unsuccessful emergency tracheotomy , the actress cut into a fake neck that Bean wore .

Guest actor Jared Harris made his third appearance of the season in " Ability " . At the time , the actor had not heard whether his character would be returning , though he later appeared in the first season finale and five fourth season episodes . Harris described his character as an " anti @-@ hero who is fighting for the just cause " and the episode as " a page @-@ turner ... When I read it , I said , ' Ah , this is a fantastic one . I can 't wait to see it . ' It 's directed with a lot of energy , a lot of tension . It 's a good one , a really good one " .

The episode featured the first of many guest appearances by actor Clark Middleton as the rare bookseller Edward Markham . In addition to Bean and Harris , the episode 's guest stars included Michael Gaston as Sanford Harris , Chance Kelly as Mitchell Loeb , Kenneth Tigar as Johan Lennox , Philip LeStrange as Thomas Avery , and Michael Cerveris as the Observer .

= = Reception = =

= = = Ratings = = =

" Ability " was watched by an estimated 9 @.@ 83 million viewers on its initial broadcast in the United States , placing in second in its timeslot behind CBS ' The Mentalist . Fringe was the Fox network 's fourth most watched show for the week , and received a 5 @.@ 9 / 9 rating share among all American households . Among adults aged 18 to 49 , the episode finished in fourteenth place for the week by earning a 4 @.@ 1 / 10 ratings share , meaning that it was seen by 4 @.@ 1 percent of all 18- to 49 @-@ year @-@ olds , and 10 percent of all 18- to 49 @-@ year @-@ olds watching television at the time of broadcast .

= = = Reviews = = =

Den of Geek viewed the episode positively , observing that in contrast to the previous installment , " Ability " " progresses the main plot arc in a substantial way ... I ? m now really interested to see what happens next , whereas last week I wasn ? t that bothered . " IGN 's Ramsey Isler was a little more critical and rated the episode 7 @.@ 8 / 10 . He noted that though the ending with Walter " was as good as you could ask for " and enjoyed David Robert Jones as a villain , the episode had a " number of rough patches , " as the middle was " paced slowly " and lacking in suspense , Peter 's " handiness was again reduced to ... ' that guy with connections ' " , and the audience was " once again subjected to the torture that is Sanford Harris " . After describing the Olivia @-@ Peter scene near the end as " tense and cleverly written , " Isler concluded his review by noting references to The X @-@ Files and hoping Jones would appear again soon .

Noel Murray from The A.V. Club graded the episode an A- , explaining he thought it must have been " satisfying " for those viewers tired of the " monster @-@ of @-@ the @-@ week " storylines . Murray also enjoyed two twists : that Olivia had to shut off the lights for real , and that Walter

discovers he wrote the ZFT manual at the end . Jane Boursaw of AOL TV (previously TV Squad) opined that it was a " really great episode that 's probably worth another viewing to pick up more clues , " while the Los Angeles Times ' Andrew Hanson thought it " managed to have a couple good twists to it . " Annalee Newitz of io9 praised " Ability " , remarking that " overall , this was a terrific episode , and a great way to go into a show hiatus . We got a lot of payoff when we discovered why Olivia was being stalked by the ZFT weirdos , and we learned more about the Pattern than we had in a really long time . "