

= Milagro (The X @-@ Files) =

" Milagro " is the eighteenth episode of the sixth season of the American science fiction television series The X @-@ Files . It originally aired on the Fox network on April 18 , 1999 . The episode 's teleplay was written by Chris Carter from a story by John Shiban and Frank Spotnitz , and directed by Kim Manners . The episode is a " Monster @-@ of @-@ the @-@ Week " story , unconnected to the series ' wider mythology . " Milagro " earned a Nielsen household rating of 9 , being watched by 15 @. @ 2 million people upon its initial broadcast . The episode received mixed to positive reviews from television critics .

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 . Mulder is a believer in the paranormal , while the skeptical Scully has been assigned to debunk his work . In this episode , Mulder and Scully investigate a series of murders in which the heart has been removed from the victims . A writer who lives next door to Mulder is writing a novel about the murders before they actually happen and soon , Scully finds herself confused and drawn to the writer , who has a romantic interest in her .

" Milagro " was inspired by the idea of someone thinking of something so much that it becomes a reality , a topic Shiban later noted was " familiar " to anyone who had written a script . The part of Phillip Padgett had been written specifically for the actor John Hawkes . In addition , the production for " Milagro " was decidedly low @-@ budget due to its " intimate and personality @-@ driven " nature . The episode 's title means " miracle " in Spanish . The episode has been analyzed for its use of symbolism , its exploration of motive , and the role reversal of Mulder and Scully .

= = Plot = =

Phillip Padgett (John Hawkes) , a fledgling author , sits at a desk , suffering from writer 's block . He eventually retires to the bathroom to discard a spent cigarette . Without warning or concern , the man suddenly reaches into his chest and removes a bloody heart . Later , he walks down metal stairs into a cluttered basement , and opens the door of an incinerator . Noticing a beating heart amidst the flames , and unfazed by the vision , he nonchalantly tosses in a paper bag .

Dana Scully (Gillian Anderson) later encounters the stranger as she walks into an elevator . Both ride in silence up to the fourth floor , with Scully somewhat unsettled by the experience . At Fox Mulder 's (David Duchovny) apartment , Mulder and Scully begin discussing a case the pair are working on , wherein the heart of the victim had been removed with the absence of any significant physical evidence . Mulder believes the heart was removed with a technique known as psychic surgery . Meanwhile , Padgett , who is Mulder 's neighbor , stands on a chair with his ear to an air vent , listening to the conversation .

Later that night , two teenagers get into a fight in the woods . The girl , named Maggie (Jillian Bach) , runs into the woods to be alone and Kevin (Angelo Vacco) , her boyfriend , gives chase . However , he is attacked and his heart is removed . Meanwhile , the writer intensely transcribes the event on his typewriter . The next day , Mulder and Scully discuss this latest incident via phone . An unmarked envelope is discovered by Scully in the office containing a milagro , a type of pendant . While she examines the pendant , a voice @-@ over from the writer describes Scully 's most intimate feelings as she examines the unsolicited gift .

Scully later runs into the author at a church . He admits sending Scully the pendant and discusses with her the Sacred Heart of Jesus . She leaves , visibly shaken . Scully meets Mulder and relays her most recent encounter with the writer to Mulder . Later , Padgett woos Scully into his apartment with more character revelations . Mulder bursts in and arrests him based on accurate descriptions of the case murders in his novel , which he secretly read after discovering it in the mail . While Padgett is in custody , Maggie is murdered in the same fashion as Kevin . This establishes a de facto alibi for the author . Lacking concrete and connective evidence to the murders , and hoping Padgett might lead them to his partner in crime , Mulder releases Padgett from custody .

Back at his apartment , Padgett converses with the killer from his book , a deceased Brazilian

surgeon named Ken Naciamento (Nestor Serrano) . It is revealed that through some sort of psychic connection , Padgett 's Naciamento has come back to life and has been removing hearts from victims . The two discuss motivations for the killings . Realizing that his novel prognosticates Scully 's murder , Padgett heads to the incinerator to destroy his novel . Mulder intercepts him , thinking Padgett is instead simply destroying incriminatory evidence . Meanwhile , Naciamento accosts Scully . After hearing gunshots , Mulder runs toward his apartment and shockingly finds Scully on the ground , covered in blood but alive . The episode closes with a voice over from the author , explaining his final actions . The stranger lies stricken on the basement floor in front of the incinerator , his beating heart in hand , having " ... given what he could not receive " .

= = Production = =

= = = Writing and casting = = =

The idea behind the episode occurred during a conversation between John Shibana and Frank Spotnitz . The two were discussing about the particular stress of their jobs . The episode 's theme of someone thinking of something so much that it becomes real was " familiar " to anyone who had written a script , Shibana later explained . Shibana and Spotnitz created a rough draft for the episode and then sent it to series creator Chris Carter , who was busy shooting the pilot for the new television series *Harsh Realm* . Carter re @-@ wrote portions of the script , including the ending , to show that the writer , although confused , does indeed have love in his heart .

Spotnitz later called the episode " personal " . He noted that the cards that hang on Padgett 's wall were put up to emulate the original writing style of *The X @-@ Files* , saying , " in fact , that the cards that are on the writer 's wall are the same format that we wrote *The X @-@ Files* in . We would use those same cards when figuring out stories for the series . " Later , Spotnitz noted that the cards were also in his handwriting " because the prop guy couldn't do it as well as we could because that 's really the way we did it . It 's a very emotional love story and it 's really about our love for these characters as writers " . The writers eventually settled on the title of " *Milagro* , " which means miracle in Spanish .

The part of Philip Padgett had been written specifically for the actor John Hawkes . Several weeks before the casting for " *Milagro* " began , Hawkes had auditioned for the part of Pinker Rawls in the episode " *Trevor* " . Both Chris Carter and Frank Spotnitz felt that Hawkes was not right for the part ; however , they believed he possessed a " dignity and simplicity " that would prevent the main character in " *Milagro* " from becoming a simple caricature . Therefore , the script was written to suit Hawkes ' characterization .

= = = Filming and effects = = =

The production for " *Milagro* " was decidedly low @-@ budget due to its " intimate and personality @-@ driven " nature . Director Kim Manners sought to film most of the episode " very simply " , because he wanted " the characters to carry it " . Manners wanted to frame the opening scene in a way that told " the story [?] in a series of images " , and so , he utilized quick cuts between shots . Many of the scenes , such as the opening pan , were created by means of a crane shot .

The sequence wherein Mulder runs was shot on a motorcycle . Manners recalled that , because Duchovny had been able to outrun two horses in the fourth season episode " *Tunguska* " , he needed something faster to film the scene with . Several locations that were scouted for the episode proved difficult to use . Two churches that had been selected for the episode pulled out just before filming began and replacements had to be found immediately . The scenes in the woods were filmed at Griffith Park in Los Angeles . The location was chosen because it possessed " probably the only pine trees in Los Angeles " . Due to the fact that the actual park is rather sparsely populated by brush , the foliage was all created by the crew of the series . Manners shot several of the forest scenes with a 200 millimeter lens , so that the lights of Los Angeles would be disguised in the

distance . Padgett 's furnace was filmed on a set called the red / blue room . It had originally been created for the sixth seasoner opener " The Beginning " . The jail set was constructed in a large warehouse by a different production company . The X @-@ Files rented the space for several days for filming , for five thousand dollars . Finding a graveyard with " old @-@ fashioned vertical tombstones " proved a challenge for locations manager Ilt Jones . Eventually one was found in Altadena , California , east of Los Angeles . The fog in the cemetery was created by burying small " misters " that produced water vapor . The vapor was cold so that it would stay low to the group and emulate the properties of actual fog .

The sequence in which Hawkes rips his heart out was created by using a rubber heart . The fact that the faux blood begins leaking through his shirt was added to " hide the fact that [the crew was] doing a little sleight of hand " . The image of the beating heart in the furnace was created by overlapping a shot of a fake beating heart and a shot of actual fire . The two were then merged in post @-@ production by animator John Wash , because the fire would have melted the actual heart model . The beating of the hearts of Nacimiento 's victims was created via a pump that was operated off @-@ screen . The actual milagro prop was crafted several times because , according to Manners , the face was particularly difficult to get right . In fact , the second time the medallion appears in the episode , it is a different prop .

= = Music and cultural references = =

For his score , Mark Snow used the sound of recorded human heartbeats to go along with the conceit of the episode . During the graveyard scene , one of the tombstones is marked " Salinger , " with the names " Nicholas " and " Diana " visible underneath , a reference to the parents of Charlie , Bailey , Julia , Claudia , and Owen in the Fox television series Party of Five . The date on the tombstone reads 1994 , the date the series premiered . P.K. Simonds , writer and executive producer for the show was initially unaware that the tombstone made an appearance . Others , including Spotnitz , believed the tombstone to be a joking reference to famous author J.D. Salinger .

= = Themes = =

Margaret Kaner , in the book The X @-@ Files and Literature , notes that , instead of merely utilizing symbolism , " Milagro " makes " symbolism as a subject " . Kaner points out that the Christian symbol of the burning human heart is infused into the episode in a variety of different ways ? hearts are both removed from human victims , as well as burned in furnaces . The episode 's plot and the Christian symbol are connected when Padgett leaves Scully the milagro charm .

The concept of motive is also explored . When confronting Padgett , Mulder asks him why he is murdering his victims . Padgett , in turn , admits that he cannot answer the question . Kaner suggests that Padgett is representative of a version of Mulder , and that there is a direct parallel between being a criminal profiler ? who must think like the criminal ? and a writer ? who must think like his characters . In the end , however , Padgett sacrifices his personal quest ? his manuscript ? in order to be free . This presents a distinct contrast to Mulder , who will never truly give up his obsession . Michelle Bush , in her book Myth @-@ X , also notes that the episode sheds light on Scully 's motive throughout the series : she wants to gain Mulder 's attention , something she feels she does not have . Padgett eventually realizes this , and sacrifices himself for her love .

The episode also presents a temporary role reversal for Mulder and Scully . When discussing the lack of evidence at the crime scenes , Scully points out that " a crime is only as perfect as the man [?] Even if he made not one mistake , there still is a motive . If you find his motive , you find the murderer " . Kaner argues that this logic is more in line with what Mulder has subscribed to throughout the series . Furthermore , after Mulder discovers Padgett 's manuscript , he arrests him " without a second thought " . By relying on empirical logic , Mulder is acting in the way Scully normally thinks .

= = Reception = =

== Ratings ==

" Milagro " first aired in the United States on April 18 , 1999 . This episode earned a Nielsen rating of 9 , with a 14 share , meaning that roughly 9 percent of all television @-@ equipped households , and 14 percent of households watching television , were tuned in to the episode . It was viewed by 15 @-@ 2 million viewers . The episode aired in the United Kingdom and Ireland on Sky1 on June 27 , 1999 and received 0 @-@ 85 million viewers , making it the second most watched episode that week . Fox promoted the episode with the tagline " Someone 's trying to steal Scully 's heart ... literally . "

== Reviews ==

" Milagro " received mixed to positive reviews from critics . Tom Kessenich , in his book *Examination : An Unauthorized Look at Seasons 6 ? 9 of the X @-@ Files* gave the episode a positive review , writing " The power of [' Milagro 's] revelations was stunning . As was the episode . " Robert Shearman and Lars Pearson , in their book *Wanting to Believe : A Critical Guide to The X @-@ Files , Millennium & The Lone Gunmen* , rated the episode five stars out of five , calling it " a study of overwriting with all the mistakes left in " and " one of the most remarkable " episodes of the series . Shearman and Pearson also felt that Anderson 's performance was " revelatory " , and also praised guest star Hawkes as " both sinister and sympathetic " . The Munchkyn Zone reviewer Sarah Stegall rated the episode 6 stars out of 5 , writing " my congratulations to Carter , Shibam and Spotnitz on a daring experiment for commercial television " . The character of Ken Naciamento has been listed as one of the best guest roles of the series , with TV Guide and UGO Networks both listing him amongst the greatest monster @-@ of @-@ the @-@ week characters in *The X @-@ Files* .

Zack Handlen gave the episode a " B ? " and wrote that " works far better than it deserves to " , due largely to the performance of Hawkes and the " bat shit weirdness " of the plot . He was particularly critical of the " self @-@ serious " and " pompous " tone of the episode . Handlen concluded that the episode was " like watching someone 's fan fiction getting brought to life " . He did , however , write that " there is something strangely fascinating about " the premise ; in particular , he was pleased with the conclusion , calling it the moment when " things pick up " . Paula Vitaris from *Cinefantastique* gave the episode a negative review and awarded it one @-@ and @-@ a @-@ half stars out of four . Vitaris , despite noting the potential in the episode 's theme of the relationship between writer and their characters , felt that " Milagro " betrayed Scully 's personality and featured her doing things that were out of character .

Kim Manners was pleased with the episode ; he noted that he " felt it was a very interesting character study " . He later called it " one of my favorite episodes " . Frank Spotnitz considered " Milagro " to have been an " underappreciated " episode . For this reason , it was later included on the *X @-@ Files Essentials* DVD compilation , along with seven other episodes . Scully 's portrayal in the episode was given special attention . Stegall noted that " if ' Milagro ' has one message about perception , it is shown in Scully , who is seen through everyone 's eyes (Mulder , Padgett , even Naciamento) but her own . Ultimately , we can 't know which ones of these portraits of her character are ' right ' . Maybe none of them are . It 's a bravura performance from Gillian Anderson , well matched by Duchovny 's low @-@ key Mulder , acting on his instincts . " . Handlen argued that the episode reduces Scully " to a victim waiting to find out which handsome man will rescue her . " Elyce Rae Helford , in her book *Fantasy Girls : Gender in the New Universe of Science Fiction and Fantasy Television* , accused the show of " reinforc [ing] the stereotype [?] of independent women as lonely , neurotic , and nostalgic for sexual attention from men . " Anderson herself felt that the character needed to " loosen up " . She was once approached by a fan who applauded Scully as the " epitome of womanhood " because she is a character who " not only can kick ass but she [?] works with Mulder without jumping him . " Anderson , in return jokingly replied , " So the epitome of

womanhood is sexual restraint ? [?] I don 't think so . " The episode was particularly analyzed by fans of the show , and the fact that Scully was almost seduced provoked " lively internet discussion " .

== Work cited ==