

= Sanguinarium =

" Sanguinarium " is the sixth episode of the fourth season of the American science fiction television series The X @-@ Files . " Sanguinarium " was written by newcomers Vivian and Valerie Mayhew and directed by Kim Manners , and is a " Monster @-@ of @-@ the @-@ Week " story , a stand @-@ alone plot which is unconnected to the series ' wider mythology . It first aired in the United States on November 10 , 1996 on the Fox network , earning a Nielsen rating of 11 @. @ 1 and being seen by 19 @. @ 85 million viewers upon its initial broadcast .

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 . In " Sanguinarium " , bizarre murders in a hospital 's plastic surgery unit lead Mulder and Scully to suspect a supernatural force may be responsible . As the uncontrolled killings continue , Mulder discovers a link between the victims ' dates of birth and key dates on the witchcraft calendar .

The episode started as a spec script written by two fans of the series . It features several references to real life witchcraft sources . " Sanguinarium " received mixed reviews from critics ; negative criticism was given to the number of inconsistencies in the plot . The episode 's use of gore also drew a mixed reaction ; some critics felt that the gore helped , while others felt that " Sanguinarium " relied too heavily on it to cover up weaknesses in its storyline .

= = Plot = =

During a routine liposuction operation in Chicago , Dr. Harrison Lloyd (John Juliani) suddenly begins to violently remove such large amounts of fat from a patient that the patient dies . Following the unusual experience , Lloyd tells Fox Mulder (David Duchovny) that he killed the patient due to being spiritually possessed . Dana Scully (Gillian Anderson) is skeptical about Lloyd 's claims , believing he 's only making it up to escape legal consequences . Mulder inspects the operation room and discovers pentagrams burned into the floor , suspecting witchcraft as the cause .

Upon reviewing the tapes of the operation , Mulder decides to check what type of medication Lloyd was taking . Meanwhile , the staff at Lloyd 's clinic are shocked when another plastic surgeon , Dr. Ilaqua (Paul Raskin) , murders a patient under unusual circumstances . Scully interviews Ilaqua , who claims to not be able to remember anything from what happened . Scully deduces that both Ilaqua and Lloyd were taking the same medicine . Mulder 's belief in the cause for the unexplained phenomena strengthens when he reviews the tape of the second murder , observing a pentagram @-@ like pattern on the stomach of the victim .

Worried by the events , the staff tells Mulder and Scully about a similar series of deaths that occurred at the same hospital ten years prior . They suspect Rebecca Waite (O @-@ Lan Jones) , a nurse who is the only person present at all the death scenes . The agents visit Waite 's house , discovering evidence that she practiced witchcraft ; however , the evidence has been planted there by a staff member of the hospital . Elsewhere , Dr. Jack Franklin (Richard Beymer) is non @-@ fatally assaulted at his house by Waite . Attempts to question Waite are prevented when she starts to vomit pins , and then dies shortly after .

Mulder deduces that the birthdays of all the victims match up with the dates of the Witches ' Sabbath , meaning that continued murders will occur . Back at the clinic , another patient is murdered when her face is melted by acid . With no suspects left to turn to , Mulder uses the hospital 's computer program to determine what Franklin would look like under heavy plastic surgery . He is shocked to find that Franklin is actually Dr. Clifford Cox , a cosmetic doctor who presumably died during the first spree of murders . Cox attempts to murder his fifth and final victim in a quest to gain eternal youth . He removes the skin on his own face , using a ritual to make him appear younger . Cox is never caught , with the episode ending with him successfully applying at another medical hospital .

= = Production = =

In the 1990s , spec scripts were widely used in television , wherein inexperienced writers could write a teleplay for their favorite shows . The X @-@ Files had a large staff of writers , however occasionally to fill the large amount of ordered episodes per season , the staff would have to take a risk on a teleplay written by a freelance writer . " Sanguinarium " was such a case , being written by sisters Vivian Mayhew and Valerie Mayhew , their first experience with writing a one @-@ hour network program . They would later be responsible for several episodes in the television series Charmed . The sisters asked staff writers Glen Morgan and James Wong for suggestions . Morgan and Wong stated that " the scariest things are those which repeat every day " . After Vivian was paged by a number she did not know , she concluded that a pager qualified as a scary thing because an unknown person could connect with its owner . Then the Mayhews went from the pagers to a class that normally uses them , doctors , and concluded that doctors losing control and being bewitched could be a good plot . After writing the spec script , they presented them to Morgan and Wong , who suggested they change the villain from a woman to a man as " plastic surgery is related to vanity , and everyone expects that from a woman , but not a man . " The spec script written by the Mayhew sisters was chosen to become a full episode . " Sanguinarium " stands as the siblings ' only work in The X @-@ Files .

After the spec script was picked , series creator Chris Carter and the show 's staff reworked the ideas into a teleplay . Carter focused the plot on the themes of greed and vanity , and executive producer Howard Gordon created some of the most graphic moments , such as a phrase written in blood on Franklin 's bathroom . Vince Gilligan named Theresa Shannon after actress Shannon Tweed . After Carter had the idea of placing a subtle pentagram on the reunion table , production designer Graeme Murray decided to take this further by creating rooms with five sides , and having the plastic surgery unit with five operating rooms represent an imaginary pentagram . Like previous episode " Home " , Fox Standards and Practices objected to the graphical content , and Carter had to intervene to help retain some scenes .

The episode features references to witchcraft and occultism . The nurse from the episode , Rebecca Waite , was named after a friend of the writers called Rebecca White , with a slight change as a real nurse also called White existed in Chicago . Viewers ended up finding Waite 's name as an unintended reference to Rebecca Nurse , an innocent woman prosecuted during the Salem witch trials , and the Rider @-@ Waite tarot deck , the most popular tarot deck utilized in the world . The episode itself references Gerald Gardner , a wiccan known for publishing several books on witchcraft and founder of the Gardnerian Tradition . While the Mayhew sisters tried to depict occultism without offending anybody , not connecting Franklin and Waite to any known cult , many Wiccans sent angry letters and e @-@ mails to Fox regarding the portrayal of their beliefs .

= = Broadcast and reception = =

" Sanguinarium " premiered on the Fox network on November 10 , 1996 . This episode earned a Nielsen rating of 11 @.@ 1 , with an 18 share , meaning that roughly 11 @.@ 1 percent of all television @-@ equipped households , and 18 percent of households watching television , were tuned in to the episode . " Sanguinarium " was seen by 18 @.@ 85 million viewers on first broadcast .

Gillian Anderson described " Sanguinarium " as " one of the most repulsive scripts I ever shot " , explaining that she could not watch scenes such as the doctor stabbing a patient . David Duchovny stated that " I didn 't understand the plot , but I liked the script " , noting that Carter and his team improved a weak teleplay and director Kim Manners " did an excellent job " . Entertainment Weekly gave " Sanguinarium " a " B ? " , feeling that it was " redeemed " by the gore . However , they were " worried " by the " fourth consecutive phoned @-@ in performance by Duchovny and Anderson " . Todd VanDerWerff of The A.V. Club was more negative , grading it a " D " . He felt that the episode was " too much " , with gore shown directly instead of suggested . He also criticized the characterization , especially Scully 's , the " predictable " scares , " ludicrously bad " dialogue , and a story that did not make much sense . Despite this , he did praise the " strong " guest acting . Sarah Stegall awarded " Sanguinarium " two stars out of five , commenting that " several things went

wrong " , and also noting the reliance on gore . She mused that she thought it was odd that the " bad " magic seemed to succeed , noting that the " good " magic seemed useless , summarizing , " Where 's the logic in that ? " In addition , Stegall thought the episode 's biggest flaw was its lack of logical writing , and that it required too much suspension of belief from the viewer .

Tom Kessenich in *Examinations : An Unauthorized Look at Seasons 6 @-@ 9 of the X @-@ Files* commented that the ending of " Sanguinarium " was similar to the ending of episode " Signs and Wonders " , wherein the antagonist manages to get away . Frederick S. Clarke from *Cinefantastique* gave " Sanguinarium " a mixed review , writing that the episode " combines plastic surgery and black magic into an unsatisfying mix that fails to lampoon our obsession with beauty . " Not all reviews were as negative . Writer Preston Nichols took a liking to the episode , having viewed it " eighteen times and counting " . Michael Avalos and George Liedtke , writing for *Knight Ridder* , speculated that " Sanguinarium " provided viewers with " haunting memories " . Mark Davis of *The Daytona Beach News @-@ Journal* , in 1998 , named the episode one of the " Best of The X @-@ Files " .