

= Providence (The X @-@ Files) =

" Providence " is the tenth episode of the ninth season of the American science fiction television series The X @-@ Files . It premiered on the Fox network on March 10 , 2002 , and later aired in the United Kingdom on BBC One on January 19 , 2003 . The episode was written by series creator Chris Carter and executive producer Frank Spotnitz , and directed by Carter . " Providence " helps to explore the series ' overarching mythology . The episode earned a Nielsen household rating of 5 @.@ 2 and was viewed by 8 @.@ 4 million viewers . The episode received mixed reviews from critics ; some reviewers enjoyed the story and the show 's way of integrating an absent Fox Mulder (David Duchovny) into the storyline , whereas others felt the plot was ludicrous .

The show centers on FBI special agents who work on cases linked to the paranormal , called X @-@ Files ; this season focuses on the investigations of John Doggett (Robert Patrick) , Monica Reyes (Annabeth Gish) , and Dana Scully (Gillian Anderson) . In this episode , Scully , distrustful of both Walter Skinner (Mitch Pileggi) and Brad Follmer (Cary Elwes) , circumvents the FBI 's investigation into William 's kidnapping and performs her own , assisted by Reyes and The Lone Gunmen . Scully discovers that William has been taken by a UFO cult that believes William is destined to become the savior of mankind , but only if Fox Mulder is still alive . If Mulder is dead , William will lead the forces of evil : the alien invaders .

Co @-@ written and directed by Carter , the episode opens with a shot of a fire fight during the Gulf War and the Super Soldiers involvement therein . Many of the cast and crew were pleased with Carter 's directing , including Anderson and Gish . The episode makes reference to rubbings from an alien wreck , a direct continuation from the plots of the sixth season finale " Biogenesis " and the seventh season opener " The Sixth Extinction " .

= = Plot = =

Retired Lieutenant Colonel Zeke Josepho recounts a strange experience during the Persian Gulf War and how he claims it brought him to God : as his squad was ambushed during the Battle of Al Busayyah and on the verge of defeat , four mysterious men showed up and defeated the enemy with astonishing ease . While Josepho thinks of them as guardian angels , they are revealed to be the almost @-@ indestructible Super Soldiers . In the present , Josepho stands above the wreckage of a spacecraft in Canada .

At the FBI , Brad Follmer (Cary Elwes) discloses to a room of agents that Dana Scully 's (Gillian Anderson) son William has been abducted . Follmer notes that The Lone Gunmen are identifying the woman who took the child and ran over John Doggett (Robert Patrick) . However , Follmer leaves out any potential motive for these crimes , which causes a frustrated Scully to leave the room . Byers (Bruce Harwood) reveals that he put a cell phone in the baby 's belongings so they can track the Overcoat Woman ; Monica Reyes (Annabeth Gish) and Scully head out to find William . The two eventually find William 's car seat along with the cell phone in an abandoned SUV . Meanwhile , the Overcoat Woman reports to Josepho that she has William .

Scully goes to Agent Robert Comer , whom she was forced to shoot after his attempt on William 's life , and uses the alien artifact to heal him . Comer explains that Josepho believes a physical manifestation of God exists inside the spacecraft . According to an ancient prophecy , William is destined to become the savior of humanity , but only if Fox Mulder (David Duchovny) is still alive . If he dies , William will instead lead the Colonists . Comer claims that Mulder was supposedly killed by the cult in order for the aliens to successfully invade ; he tried to kill William to prevent him from causing humanity 's destruction . Suddenly , a nurse and the Toothpick Man (Alan Dale) arrive and ask Reyes and Scully to leave . Comer ends up alone with the Toothpick Man .

Walter Skinner (Mitch Pileggi) later reports to Reyes and Scully that Comer has died . Reyes accuses Toothpick Man and others in the room of killing Comer . Meanwhile , Scully visits Doggett , who warns her not to trust the cultists . However , Scully goes to meet Josepho near Calgary . Josepho claims to be protecting William , but demands Mulder 's head as collateral in exchange for the baby 's release . When Josepho returns to the wreck site , the Overcoat Woman relates that the

aperture of the craft began to glow when William started crying . The craft soon rises up out of the ground . Looking on the site from a distance , Scully and Reyes see the craft burst out of an enclosure and into space , lighting the ground beneath it on fire as it goes . The two find an unharmed William among the charred bodies of the cultists .

At the FBI headquarters , Follmer asks Kersh to remove his name from the final report . Instead , Kersh rebukes him and goes in to see the Toothpick Man , who is revealed to be a Super Soldier .

= = Production = =

" Providence " was written by series creator Chris Carter and executive producer Frank Spotnitz . A large portion of the episode , as well as the previous entry , was based on the ancient astronaut theory ; a theory that proposes intelligent extraterrestrial beings have visited Earth in antiquity or prehistory and made contact with humans . The themes had previously been visited in the " Biogenesis " / " The Sixth Extinction " / " Amor Fati " story arc . This episode , as well as the one that proceeds it , plays around with questions concerning traditional religion and faith . About the plot , series co @-@ star Robert Patrick later joked : " The baby 's the Messiah . I don 't understand any of it . I 'm Episcopalian ; I don 't get it . "

Carter also directed the episode ; initially , the episode was supposed to have been helmed by another individual , but no one was ever selected . At the last minute , Carter took on the role . Due to time constraints , Carter was writing whole parts of the script while the episode was being filmed . Many of the cast and crew were pleased with Carter 's directing . Gillian Anderson said that she thought " Chris has directed some of our best episodes . He 's very even tempered , and he 's quiet and gentle and quite nice to have as a director , because that energy can 't help but pervade the rest of the set [?] He 's got a clear vision , and he 's good at communicating that . " Annabeth Gish noted that Carter 's directing was " very meticulous " and that he " knows exactly what he wants " .

The episode 's opening scene depicts a fire fight during the Gulf War . This sequence , which took two days to film , was shot on a dry expanse of land located an hour outside of Los Angeles . This area had been selected due to its resembles to an Iraqi desert . Series ' co @-@ executive producer Michelle MacLaren said : " We [MacLaren and location manager Ilt Jones] were way out in the desert and we drove around this corner of these hills and I felt like we had entered another country . It was so desolate , and there were these stone buildings that looked like a bomb had gone off in them . It was perfect . " To add authenticity to the shoot , several of the extras used during this scene were former US military personnel .

Unlike many of the sets featured on the show which were filmed on a Fox soundstage , the shot of the buried alien space craft was actually filmed in the hills near Simi Valley , California . Carter wanted a full @-@ scale mock @-@ up of the alien ship to be buried in the ground . This was unusual for the show ; usually , a small portion of the ship would have been buried in the ground and the rest would have been filled in either via digital graphics , or with a scale model . In this episode , however , all of the shots of the alien ship , sans the take off , were done practically . To create the otherworldly glow of the ship , over 100 lamps were hidden within the craft . In addition , the ship itself was covered in glyphs that are supposed to be part of an unknown alien language . This was accomplished by designing fictional characters and programming them into a computer . These were then printed as letters which could be applied to the ship 's hull .

= = Broadcast and reception = =

" Providence " first premiered on the Fox network in the United States on March 10 , 2002 . The episode earned a Nielsen household rating of 5 @. @ 2 , meaning that it was seen by 5 @. @ 2 % of the nation 's estimated households and was viewed by 5 @. @ 49 million households , and 8 @. @ 4 million viewers . " Providence " was the 56th most watched episode of television that aired during the week ending March 10 . The episode eventually aired on BBC Two on January 19 , 2003 . " Providence " was later included on The X @-@ Files Mythology , Volume 4 ? Super Soldiers , a DVD collection that contains episodes involved with the alien super soldiers arc .

" Providence " received mixed reviews from television critics . Jessica Morgan from Television Without Pity awarded the episode a B + rating . John Keegan from Critical Myth gave the episode a largely positive review and awarded it a 9 out of 10 . He wrote , " Overall , this episode took the promising beginning of the last episode and delivered a strong and surprising larger meaning to the pieces of the mythology we ' ve seen over the past few seasons . I ' ve said it before , and I ' ll say it again : those who bash these episodes simply because they relate to the ' new direction ' ought to be ashamed of themselves . With this kind of creativity , this series could easily end in a way that makes the entire series one seamless tapestry . " Jeffrey Robinson from DVD Talk concluded that " Providence " , along with the previous episode " Provenance " , " does a fairly good job without including Duchovny " due to its adherence to " the series ' main storyline [about] the government conspiracies . "

Other reviews were more negative . 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 one star out of five . They called the entry " shallow and pretentious , and internally inconsistent " and derided its plot . They wrote that " at the centre of [the show 's] mythology [is] a situation dependent on Mulder and a baby . One of them is absent , and one of them can 't talk . " Furthermore , Shearman and Pearson criticized the line asking for Mulder 's head , but praised the episode 's teaser . M.A. Crang , in his book *Denying the Truth : Revisiting The X @-@ Files after 9 / 11* , also complimented the teaser sequence , calling it " glorious " , but was heavily critical of the rest of the episode 's " confused and impenetrable " story . Tom Kessenich , in his book *Examinations* , wrote a largely negative review of the episode and derided its plot . He wrote that " as this series winds down , you would think Carter and Spotnitz would be in a hurry to resolve some of the myriad of questions they 've posed . Instead , ' Providence ' was just more of what we 've come to expect the past two seasons . "