

= Covenant (Millennium) =

" ' Covenant " is the sixteenth episode of the first season of the American crime @-@ thriller television series Millennium . It premiered on the Fox network on March 21 , 1997 . The episode was written by Robert Moresco , and directed by Roderick J. Pridy . " Covenant " featured guest appearances by John Finn , Michael O 'Neill and Sarah Koskoff .

Millennium Group consultant Frank Black (Lance Henriksen) travels to Utah to construct a profile on a convicted murderer (Finn) who is asking for the death sentence . Reconstructing the crime , Black begins to doubt the man 's guilt .

Elements of " Covenant " were inspired by real @-@ life murderers Albert Fish , Susan Smith and Arthur Shawcross . The episode was viewed by approximately 6 @.@ 7 million households in its original broadcast . It has received positive reviews , with Moresco 's script praised for its subtlety .

= = Plot = =

Millennium Group member Frank Black (Lance Henriksen) travels to Provo , Utah to meet Calvin Smith (Michael O 'Neill) , the prosecutor in a local murder case ; and Didi Higgins (Sarah Koskoff) , a pathologist for the County Medical Examiner 's office . Smith and Higgins have been involved in the trial of former sheriff William Garry (John Finn) , who has been convicted of killing his three children and wife . Garry pleaded guilty to murders , and forensic evidence has linked him to a wood @-@ carving chisel used to commit the murders . Black has been asked to construct an offender profile for Garry , to determine whether the man is sufficiently dangerous to society for a judge to issue a death penalty . Garry himself is asking to be executed .

Black travels to Garry 's home with a deputy , Kevin Reilly (Steve Bacic) . Daubed in blood on the kitchen window are the numbers " 1 28 15 " , which Reilly notes no one has been able to understand . Black also listens to a recording of Garry 's confession , which details the murders meticulously . Black convinces Garry 's attorney to allow him an interview , insisting he will be entirely impartial . Garry tells Black he had planned the murders for some time , motivated by hatred for his wife and monetary concerns . Black refutes this , pointing out that Garry had carved a wooden angel as a gift for his wife that same day , using the chisel that was the murder weapon . Smith , realizing that Black does not believe Garry to be guilty , dismisses him from the case .

Black discovers that Garry had been having an affair , having previously believed that Mrs. Garry was the unfaithful one ; he also realizes that Garry was unaware that his wife was pregnant . Black has Higgins help him in getting the bodies exhumed , allowing the two to see that Mrs. Garry 's wounds were not defensive , but self @-@ inflicted . Black also determines that the message written in blood was in fact " 1 28 15 " ? Book of Isaiah , chapter 28 , verse 15 ; which is concerned with lies and falsehoods . Black pieces together the actual events of the night of the murders , realizing that Mrs. Garry killed her children before committing suicide ; before she died she blamed Garry for her actions , causing him to seek atonement by admitting to the crimes . Reilly admits to having helped Garry rearrange the crime scene to incriminate himself ; Black urges him to come forward with the real events to save his friend 's life .

= = Production = =

" Covenant " was written by Robert Moresco and directed by Roderick J. Pridy , and was the first contribution to the series by either of the two . Moresco would go on to write " Broken World " later in the first season , and also acted as a producer during the series ' run . Pridy would return to helm the second season episode " The Mikado " .

Guest star John Finn would go on to appear in Millennium 's sister show The X @-@ Files , playing the recurring character Michael Kritschgau in several episodes beginning with season four 's " Gethsemane " . Sarah Koskoff , who portrayed assistant pathologist Didi Higgins , also had a minor recurring role in The X @-@ Files , making several appearances as an alien abductee . " Covenant " featured the last appearance in the series by Don MacKay as the Black family 's neighbour Jack

Meredith . MacKay had previously portrayed the character in " Pilot " , " Gehenna " and " Weeds " .

The premise of a repentant murderer seeking to atone for their actions appears to have been based on the real @-@ life case of Albert Fish , who practised severe self @-@ harm after killing twelve @-@ year @-@ old Grace Budd . Fish would insert needles into his perineum and force rose stems along his urethra to be forcibly pulled out . However , the actual murders may have been inspired by the case of Susan Smith , a mother of two who drowned her children by sinking her car in a lake . Mention is also made in the episode of Arthur Shawcross , whose recidivism is cited by Garry 's prosecutors as an example of why murder should warrant a death penalty . Shawcross was released from prison after serving a sentence for killing two children , only to kill eleven women while on parole .

= = Broadcast and reception = =

" Covenant " was first broadcast on the Fox Network on March 21 , 1997 . The episode earned a Nielsen rating of 6 @.@ 9 during its original broadcast , meaning that 6 @.@ 9 percent of households in the United States viewed the episode . This represented approximately 6 @.@ 7 million households , and left the episode the sixty @-@ third most @-@ viewed broadcast that week .

The episode received positive reviews from critics . The A.V. Club 's Todd VanDerWerff rated the episode a B + , praising Moresco 's script for its subtlety . VanDerWerff noted the premise 's similarity to the Susan Smith case , and felt that the episode " actually gains strength from a certain distance from when it originally aired . Back then , it was just another ripped @-@ from @-@ the @-@ headlines tale of a murderous mother . Now , it ? s a crafty mystery that doesn ? t reveal its cards until late " . Bill Gibron , writing for DVD Talk , rated the episode 4 out of 5 , noting that the episode " broke clichés and trampled all over formulas " . Robert Shearman and Lars Pearson , in their book *Wanting to Believe : A Critical Guide to The X @-@ Files , Millennium & The Lone Gunmen* , rated " Covenant " four @-@ and @-@ a @-@ half stars out of five , calling it " Millennium 's version of Twelve Angry Men " . Shearman praised Morseco 's writing , noting that the episode was " tightly plotted and boast [ed] extremely good dialogue " . Shearman felt that Koskoff 's acting showed a " naivety that isn 't as subtle as the script demands " , but overall felt that the episode was " fresh and exciting " .