

= Oubliette (The X @-@ Files) =

" Oubliette " is the eighth episode of the third season of the American science fiction television series The X @-@ Files , and originally aired on the Fox network on November 17 , 1995 . Written by Charles Grant Craig and directed by Kim Manners , " Oubliette " is a " Monster @-@ of @-@ the @-@ Week " story , unconnected to the series ' wider mythology . It earned a Nielsen rating of 10 @.@ 5 and was watched by 15 @.@ 90 million people on its initial broadcast . The episode received positive reviews . Both the emotional nature of the story and David Duchovny 's performance received positive critical attention .

The show centers on FBI special agents Fox Mulder (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 the installment , a little girl named Amy is kidnapped and imprisoned by a mentally unstable photographer . Mulder discovers a psychic connection between the recently kidnapped victim and Lucy , another girl kidnapped by the same man years ago . He attempts to use the connection to help solve the investigation , but discovers that the event may be too traumatic for Lucy to handle .

" Oubliette " is the only X @-@ Files screenplay written by Craig , who exited the writing staff before the entry was produced . The extensive outdoor filming lead to several difficulties for the production crew . Amy was 12 years old in the original screenplay . The Fox network was concerned her situation was an uncomfortable parallel to the recent Polly Klaas case , resulting in her age being increased before filming could begin . Critics have complimented the thematic resonance of the kidnapping and its effect on Mulder .

= = Plot = =

In Seattle , photography assistant Carl Wade (Michael Chieffo) photographs 15 @-@ year @-@ old Amy Jacobs (Jewel Staite) for school picture day . He becomes obsessed with her following the event , eventually kidnapping her . Her younger sister is the only witness to the incident , which takes place in their bedroom in the middle of the night . At exactly the same time , fast food worker Lucy Householder (Tracey Ellis) collapses with a nosebleed . Agent Fox Mulder (David Duchovny) investigates Amy 's disappearance , drawn to the case because his younger sister was kidnapped in a similar situation . The investigation leads Mulder to Lucy , who was taken from her bedroom at age eight , twenty two years before , and held in a dark basement for five years before she escaped .

Mulder 's partner Dana Scully (Gillian Anderson) suspects that Lucy may be connected to Amy 's disappearance , based on her long criminal record and the fact that her nosebleed contained not only her blood type , but Amy 's as well . In her room at a halfway house , scratches appear on Lucy 's face and she experiences temporary blindness ? injuries identical to Amy 's , who is being tortured in the basement of Wade 's cabin . The two develop an unexplainable psychic connection ; everything that happens to Amy physically also happens to Lucy . Mulder tries to convince Lucy that she can help them find Amy , but she is too afraid to assist . Scully informs Mulder of their new lead in the case , the school photography assistant Wade , who was recently fired under strange circumstances . Mulder is adamant that Lucy , who admits that Wade was the man who abducted her , is not part of the kidnapping , and snaps at Scully when she suggests that Samantha 's disappearance is causing him to become too involved with the case .

The investigation team receives a tip from a tow truck driver concerning Wade 's location , which corresponds to the area where Lucy was found years ago . They find Wade 's cabin in the woods near Easton , Washington , discovering Lucy in the basement with no clear indication of how or why she came there . Lucy begins to feel cold and wet ; Mulder deduces that because of Lucy 's connection to Amy , she must be at the local river . Mulder and Scully rush there to find Wade attempting to drown Amy . Back with the police , Lucy begins to drown despite not even being near water . Mulder shoots Wade while Scully attempts to perform CPR on Amy , but because of the connection it resuscitates Lucy instead . Amy lies on the riverbank , dead . Mulder continues to

attempt CPR , despite Scully 's protests .

Suddenly , the process is reversed ; Amy recovers and Lucy dies . Overwhelmed by Lucy 's sacrifice and his inability to save her , Mulder breaks down sobbing over her body . He later tells Scully he suspects that she died not only to save Amy , but to forget what Wade did to her all those years ago .

= = Production = =

= = = Writing = = =

The screenplay for " Oubliette " was authored by Charles Grant Craig , a writer who at the time had little background or experience within television . Before joining the writing staff of The X @-@ Files during the third season , his most significant writing credits included episodes for Renegade and Booker . His most notable television screenplay was The New Alfred Hitchcock Presents entry " Final Escape " . Though Craig left the staff shortly before " Oubliette " entered production for unknown reasons , he was credited as a supervising producer on several installments for the third season . The title was derived from the French word " oubliette " , which refers to a pit @-@ like dungeon consisting of " total darkness " with a hole that opens from the top .

The narrative centers on Mulder 's identification with Lucy which is based on the abduction of his sister , Samantha . It was decided that time would not be spent on Scully 's sympathy with the victim , despite her own abduction experience in the second season episode " Ascension " . Despite this , Scully is gentle towards Mulder and " wanted to believe " him until the evidence pointed overwhelmingly to Lucy . After that point , Scully takes on an antagonistic role , going against the wishes of her partner . Though not originally included the script , David Duchovny added the line about how his connection to the case was not just because of Samantha .

Series creator Chris Carter stated that in Craig 's original draft Lucy was more " hard @-@ boiled " , but actress Tracey Ellis played her as a more wounded person . Fox 's standards and practices department was uncomfortable with the screenplay , because it featured a 12 @-@ year @-@ old girl being kidnapped . The network requested that she be in her late teens and that the plot would not heavily feature Amy 's ordeal or suffering . Jewel Staite had just turned 13 when she was cast , but the producers felt she looked older and even applied make @-@ up to add to that effect .

The reason for the concern was because the original screenplay featured similarities to the Polly Klaas case , which had received large public attention around the time of production . Polly Klaas was a 12 @-@ year @-@ old girl who was kidnapped during a slumber party , and eventually strangled to death . The antagonist of the episode was compared to Richard Allen Davis , the culprit of the case , who was convicted and sentenced to death for his crimes . Ngaire Genge in his novel The Unofficial X @-@ Files Companion commented that " tragically , unlike Amy , Klaas didn 't survive her abduction " .

= = = Filming = = =

" Oubliette " was shot in Vancouver , British Columbia , as were the rest of the episodes of the third season . The location of the antagonist 's house was an important factor during production . Craig 's screenplay called for a remote house in the " middle of nowhere " , but the producers required a site closer to the studio . With a production crew consisting of 60 members , it was decided to use somewhere that could appear " rustic while being next to a parking lot . " A suitable area was found near the peak of Mount Seymour , a location that had previously been used in " Ascension " . The mountain featured both a parking lot and a log cabin that met the needs of the filming crew . An issue arose because the mountain had a ski lift , which needed to be avoided while composing shots . Over 1000 prop trees had to be brought to the filming site to camouflage surroundings , to give the atmosphere a " remote " feel .

The crew encountered a larger issue with the contract with the Provincial Park committee . The park

required a seven @-@ day notice before filming of any kind was approved . The production manager had to contact the park Representative directly , who assured him that their needs would be met . For the final sequence , both the Capilano River and Lynn Headwaters were considered ; however , the Seymour River was ultimately chosen because it was the safest filming location . The filming of the episode was plagued by rain and heavy weather conditions . In one example , while directing the climax , the river had risen by four or five inches , causing the crew to move to another position to shoot at a week later . This cost the crew several days worth of production and a large sum of money . Shooting conditions were further complicated because shoots involving water are notably difficult , requiring a new set of costumes for each take .

Because of the extensive outdoor shooting , director Kim Manners hated directing the episode , commenting that " it couldn 't be fucking worse . " Despite a negative experience with shooting on the mountain , the episode " Gethsemane " from the fourth season was filmed there with similar issues . Gillian Anderson 's stand @-@ in Bonnie Hay , who appears in a cameo , previously played a doctor in both " Colony " and " End Game " and a nurse in " D.P.O. " .

= = Themes = =

The kidnapping of Amy shares several similarities with the abduction of Mulder 's sister . Mulder 's sister Samantha was abducted by aliens when Mulder was a child , before the timeline of The X @-@ Files . Both Amy and Lucy are kidnapped and victimized by the same pedophile , who represents the " logic of duplication " . Wade treats both girls in virtually identical ways , kidnapping them and photographing them obsessively in the same manner . David Lavery in Deny All Knowledge asserts that Mulder is capable of seeing beyond " simple equivalents " , caring about each individual girl separately . Lavery argues that this grants Mulder the ability to separate the case from his own personal experience with his sister . The scene that best exemplifies this trait is when Mulder attempts to comfort Amy 's mother following her daughter 's kidnapping . Mulder comments that he " knows how she feels " , not because of what happened to his sister , but because he can identify with her general sense of loss . Thematic elements concerning the concept of " remote viewing " ? the paranormal ability to perceive feelings from a distance ? are later explored in greater detail in the fifth season installment " Mind 's Eye " .

= = Broadcast and reception = =

" Oubliette " was first broadcast on the Fox network on November 17 , 1995 . It earned a Nielsen rating of 10 @. @ 2 , with a 17 share , meaning that roughly 10 @. @ 2 percent of all television @-@ equipped households , and 17 percent of households watching television , were tuned in to the episode . It was watched by a total of 15 @. @ 90 million viewers . In the UK it premiered the following year on BBC1 on October 17 , 1996 .

" Oubliette " received mostly positive reviews from critics . Todd VanDerWerff of The A.V. Club assessed it as a " B + " , commenting that it " belongs to a subcategory of X @-@ Files episodes that can often be more satisfying than the usual categories " due to the villain being a human being . He described it as " impressively dark and occasionally moving " , and praised the cinematography , editing , and storytelling . However , he was critical of Ellis 's performance as Lucy , finding that her characterization did not fit the character , and he noted that the installment fell into the trope of using women as victims . Paula Vitaris from Cinefantastique gave the program three and a half stars out of four . She felt that Mulder and Lucy 's relationship was " believable " and , in contrast to VanDerWerff , thought that Ellis 's performance was " perfect " .

Robert Shearman and Lars Pearson , in their book Wanting to Believe : A Critical Guide to The X @-@ Files , Millennium & The Lone Gunmen , rated " Oubliette " five stars out of five , noting that it was difficult and uncomfortable to watch with its parallels to the real world which made it " nevertheless one of the series ' boldest and greatest achievements " . The two praised the depth of Mulder 's characterization as well as Duchovny 's performance . Entertainment Weekly gave " Oubliette " a grade of " B- " , stating that the plot wasn 't as scary as it could have been considering

the subject matter , positively critiquing that the episode was " worth it for Lucy 's channeling sequences " . The review also criticized Scully 's " aggressive I 'm @-@ not @-@ buying @-@ it mode " .

Writer Sarah Stegall awarded the entry five out of five , commenting that the subject matter made it hard for her to watch , as a mother herself . She praised the characterization of Mulder , and the performance by Duchovny , commenting that he brought warmth to the plot . Stegall positively described Mulder as " a truly gentle man who can show compassion without being maudlin about it " , but wrote negatively about Scully , who seemed " antagonistic " towards the well @-@ meaning Mulder , and the scene in which Scully " makes a half @-@ hearted attempt to resuscitate [Amy] before giving up " . Duchovny was particularly pleased with his work in the episode , feeling that it was amongst his best acting performance during the entire run of The X @-@ Files . He later cited the episode as one of his favorites .