

= Fearful Symmetry (The X @-@ Files) =

" Fearful Symmetry " is the eighteenth episode of the second season of the American science fiction television series The X @-@ Files . It premiered on the Fox network on February 24 , 1995 . It was written by Steve De Jarnatt and directed by James Whitmore , Jr . The episode is a " Monster @-@ of @-@ the @-@ Week " story , unconnected to the series ' wider mythology . " Fearful Symmetry " received a Nielsen rating of 10 @.@ 1 and was watched by 9 @.@ 6 million households . The episode received mixed reviews from critics but later won an EMA Award .

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 the death of a federal construction worker and the destruction of various property that can only be tied to an escaped elephant . Unfortunately , the only witnesses claim to have seen no animals which might have caused the turmoil . Soon , Mulder and Scully discover the local zoo whose claim to fame is that they 've never had a successful animal birth .

" Fearful Symmetry " takes its title from a line in the William Blake poem " The Tyger " . Filming for the episode faced several hurdles . Live elephants and tigers were used . Co @-@ Producer J.P. Finn claimed that the hardest part of filming the episode was getting an elephant . The biggest hurdle when filming scenes with the tiger were keeping it " calm and warm " , due to the cool nature of Vancouver . Due to anti @-@ exploitation laws , several scenes had to be filmed in the country .

= = Plot = =

In Fairfield , Idaho , two janitors witness an invisible force storm down a city street ; a road worker is later killed by the force on the highway . The next day , an elephant suddenly materializes in front of an oncoming big rig . The driver manages to stop in time , but the elephant soon collapses and dies , over forty miles away from where it disappeared the night before at the Fairfield Zoo .

Fox Mulder (David Duchovny) and Dana Scully (Gillian Anderson) survey the damage in the city , which appears to have been caused by an elephant even though none was seen . Ed Meecham , an animal handler at the zoo , recounts how he came to the elephant 's locked cage to find it empty . His boss , Willa Ambrose , tells the agents that the zoo is in danger of closing due to other animal disappearances . She blames the zoo 's decline on an animal rights group which is known to free captive animals . The group 's leader , Kyle Lang , denies any involvement in the elephant 's release . Lang tells them that Ambrose is being sued by the Malawi government over a lowland gorilla she took from their country ten years prior .

Mulder contacts Frohike and Byers , who say that Fairfield is known for its animal disappearances and UFO sightings . They also mention Ambrose 's gorilla , who is known to communicate using American Sign Language . Meanwhile , Scully follows one of Lang 's activists as he sneaks into the zoo , running into Meecham inside . The activist attempts to free a tiger , but after a flash of light , the tiger seemingly disappears . The activist is promptly mauled to death , with the killing captured on his night vision camera . When questioned , Lang denies any responsibility for the death . Ambrose introduces the agents to the gorilla , Sophie , who has been cowering in her cage and expresses an apparent fear of light .

Scully performs a necropsy on the elephant , revealing it to be pregnant ? which is impossible , since no animal at the zoo has ever brought a pregnancy to term . The tiger reappears at a Boise construction site , and is shot dead by Meecham when it charges at Ambrose ; the zoo is shut down the next day over the incident . Mulder tells Ambrose that the tiger was also pregnant , and explains his theory that extraterrestrial aliens are impregnating endangered animals as part of " their own Noah 's Ark . " Mulder thinks that Sophie is pregnant and afraid of her baby 's abduction . Sophie confirms Mulder 's suspicions when she makes signs for " baby go flying light " .

Sheriff 's deputies order Ambrose to release Sophie into protective custody , presumably to be sent back to Malawi . Ambrose unsuccessfully seeks help from Lang , her former boyfriend , but he advises to let Sophie return to the wild . Lang later goes to see Ambrose at the warehouse where

Sophie is being prepped for shipping , but finds her cage empty . He is then mysteriously killed by a falling crate . Scully finds that Lang was struck with a cattle prod and suspects Ambrose of killing him , but she claims that Meecham is responsible . Mulder goes to arrest Meecham , who is keeping an angered Sophie at another warehouse near Boise . Meecham suddenly locks Mulder in Sophie 's room , where the enraged gorilla attacks and injures him .

A bright light appears and causes Sophie to vanish , but not before she gives Mulder a final message in sign language . When Mulder gives the message to Ambrose the next day , she says it means " man save man . " Ambrose and the agents are then called to the highway , where Sophie has been struck by a car and killed . Ambrose and Meecham are charged with manslaughter for Lang 's death . As the agents leave Idaho , Mulder says through narration that he believes alien conservationists were behind the events in Fairfield .

= = Production = =

" Fearful Symmetry " was written by Steve De Jarnatt and directed by James Whitmore , Jr . Co @-@ Producer J.P. Finn claimed that the hardest part of filming the episode was getting an elephant ; this action required a permit for the animal to pass the border into Vancouver . Finn later revealed that the elephant used for the episode , named " Bubbles " , was fantastic to work with . There was initially concern from the producers that the elephant would not run towards the truck for the episode 's teaser . Instead , however , the elephant thoroughly enjoyed the truck and the producers had difficulty getting the creature away from it .

The producers for the show ran into issues with the legality of a circus animal in public streets . Several laws had been passed in British Columbia that prohibited the " use or appearance " of these animals as a way to protect them from abuse or exploitation . In order to circumvent these rules , scenes filmed with Bubbles took place " on a quiet country road " in South Surrey , where these laws were not in effect . A live tiger was also used for the episode . The biggest hurdle when filming was keeping the tiger " calm and warm " , due to the cool nature of Vancouver . The episode 's title comes from a line in the William Blake poem " The Tyger " . The fictional construction site where the tiger appears , " Blake Towers " , is named after the poet . The elephant 's name , " Ganesha " is named after the Hindu God .

Parts of the Zoo featured in " Fearful Symmetry " were shot on location at the Vancouver Aquarium located in Stanley Park , Vancouver .

= = Reception = =

" Fearful Symmetry " was first broadcast in the United States on February 24 , 1995 , on the Fox network . In its original broadcast , it was watched by 9 @.@ 6 million households , according to the Nielsen ratings system . It received a 10 @.@ 1 rating / 17 share among viewers meaning that 10 @.@ 1 percent of all households in the United States , and 17 percent of all people watching television at the time , viewed the episode . The episode later won an EMA Award for its environmental message .

The episode received mostly mixed reviews from critics . Entertainment Weekly gave the episode a C , writing , " Aside from a well @-@ executed invisible @-@ elephant rampage , this one 's pretty much on automatic pilot " . Zack Handlen of The A.V. Club also graded it as a C , calling it " forgettable , and under @-@ baked ; not terrible enough to be a complete failure , but forgettable enough " . John Keegan from Critical Myth gave the episode a moderately negative review and awarded it a 4 out of 10 . He wrote , " Overall , this episode felt more like a statement by the writer regarding animal rights than an episode of [The X @-@ Files] . The plot doesn 't seem to know which direction it wants to explore , and ultimately , elements of the episode contradict each other . " 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 two stars out of five . The two wrote that , despite the episode having " rare anger " and a " genuine passion behind " its conservation message , the entry was not " a very good story " . Shearman and Pearson called the

plot " so confusing that all that impact [of the teaser] soon dissipates . "