

= Hellbound (The X @-@ Files) =

" Hellbound " is the eighth episode of the ninth season of the American science fiction television series The X @-@ Files . It originally aired on the Fox network on January 27 , 2002 . It was written by David Amann and directed by Kim Manners . The episode is a " monster @-@ of @-@ the @-@ week " episode , a stand @-@ alone plot which is unconnected to the series ' wider mythology , or the overarching fictional history . The episode earned a Nielsen household rating of 5 @.@ 1 and was viewed by 7 @.@ 8 million viewers in its initial broadcast . It received positive reviews from television critics .

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 , Reyes takes the lead while investigating an X @-@ File case surrounding a man found skinned alive . When she discovers that he had visions of a similar thing , she calls on Scully ' s expertise to help with the investigation .

" Hellbound " was written to take Gish ' s character into a darker area . The episode ' s plot is similar to mythology surrounding the Aztec agriculture god Xipe Totec . To create the skinned human bodies , the makeup team sprayed a mannequin with layers of latex . The layers were then peeled off and positioned onto other mannequins that had been designed to resemble the actors . The faux skin was created to look " moist " and was composed of over 200 prosthetic pieces .

= = Plot = =

In Novi , Virginia , a group of ex @-@ convicts , led by Dr. Lisa Holland (Katy Boyer) , meet ; the members discuss atoning for their sins . Terry Pruitt (Don Swayze) tells the others that , since he has discovered the group , he has made amends for his past . However , another member , Ed (Cyril O 'Reilly) , tells him that humans are unable to change and that they are both destined for hell . Ed ' s friend , Victor Potts (David Figlioli) , tells Holland that he ' s been having nightmares involving people being skinned alive . That night , he has a vision of Ed skinned . Several hours later , Victor is murdered . Monica Reyes (Annabeth Gish) asks John Doggett (Robert Patrick) and Dana Scully (Gillian Anderson) to examine Potts ' body . Reyes explains that , because Potts had a premonition of his death , the case is an X @-@ File . Meanwhile , at a butchery , Terry and Ed get into an argument . Terry later has a vision ? similar to Victor ' s ? in which Ed is skinned alive . That night , he is attacked and brutally flayed .

Reyes and Doggett arrive in Novi and talk to Detective Van Allen (James McDonnell) , who seems apathetic about the case . At the same time , Scully contacts Dr. Bertram Mueller (George D. Wallace) , a former medical examiner who autopsied several bodies in the 1960s that were skinned in a manner similar to Potts . Mueller tells Scully that the sheriff at the time did not pay much attention to the cases , emphasizing that there was more than one victim , and that he later killed himself . Reyes and Doggett receive news of Terry ' s attack and arrive at the local butchery to find him strung up among the pigs . While looking around the crime scene , Doggett discovers that Terry is still alive ; Terry weakly says Ed ' s name . Doggett and the local police arrest Ed , who claims that he is innocent . Reyes believes him and admits that she too is having similar visions . Ed is freed , but not before having a vision in which Dr. Holland is skinned . In the meantime , Scully discovers that Potts and Terry were both born on the same day that two of the 1960s murder victims died .

Doggett , acting on Reyes ' insistence that Ed is in danger , stakes out his house . Ed , however , is skinned regardless of Doggett ' s attempts to protect him . Reyes admits to Doggett that she is having flashes of the same premonitions that the victims are experiencing . She tells Doggett that Ed ' s body was gagged with a rag coated in coal dust from a mine , even though she has never seen his body . Reyes and Doggett head to the mine from which they believe the dust originated . Doggett finds the skeleton of a sheriff who killed himself in 1909 .

Reyes finds newspaper clippings explaining the story : In 1868 , a group of four miners murdered a man . The murderers ' souls have been reincarnated several times since , only to be brutally skinned

by the soul of the victim . In each case , the avenger is a prominent figure of the law .

Reyes soon stumbles onto the collected skin of the victims , but is attacked by Van Allen . Doggett eventually finds her unharmed . Reyes explains to Doggett that Van Allen is avenging his own murder and that all the murders that are linked to the case have been in groups of four . Reyes believes Van Allen takes his own life each time in order to restart the series of murders . Reyes frantically calls Holland , informing her that she is the fourth victim . Van Allen arrives at the church , but is stopped by Reyes . Later , Reyes muses to Scully that in the past , she had always failed to stop Van Allen 's spirit . In this life , however , she managed to succeed . The shot changes to Van Allen dying , only to be reincarnated into a newborn baby .

= = Production = =

" Hellbound " was written by supervising producer David Amann and directed by Kim Manners . The entry was Amann 's fourth episode written for the series , after season seven 's " Rush " and " Chimera " and season eight 's " Invocation " . Executive producer John Shiban later explained that , since Doggett and Reyes were in control of the X @-@ Files , the producers needed to give one of them a drive . Executive producer Frank Spotnitz was interested in taking Annabeth Gish 's character into a darker area . According to Mat Hurwitz and Chris Knowles in their book *The Complete X @-@ Files* , the episode deals with themes of " reincarnation and the idea of karmic justice . " Shiban noted that the conceit of the episode was whether Reyes was " a good person or a bad person ? Did she fight evil , or did she let evil happen . " It has been noted that the episode 's plot is similar to mythology surrounding the Aztec agriculture god Xipe Totec . In mythology , Xipe Totec is often represented wearing a flayed human skin , usually with the flayed skin of the hands falling loose from the wrists .

The production crew was tasked with building a refrigerated building the size of a warehouse for the slaughterhouse scenes . In order to achieve the shots , an old dairy was converted for filming . 300 slaughter pigs were brought in for the sequences , as well as 200 rubber pigs . The skinned human bodies in the episode were created by spraying a mannequin with a layer of latex . The layer was then peeled off . Makeup technicians then took the " peeled skin " and positioned it onto other mannequins that had been designed to resemble the actors . According to Hurwitz and Knowles , the effects were " a level of detail and sophistication never before seen on series television . " The makeup staff worked quickly ; according to Robert Patrick , the team " literally did a 36 @-@ hour day to pull off some of " the effects . The faux skin was created to look " moist " and was composed of over 200 prosthetic pieces . Fake veins were then overlaid on top of the skin . Makeup department head Cheri Montesanto @-@ Medcalf later claimed that " seven makeup artists work [ed] seven hours on each person [for] ten days .

= = Reception = =

= = = Ratings = = =

" Hellbound " originally aired in the United States on the Fox network on January 27 , 2002 , and was first broadcast in the United Kingdom on BBC One on January 5 , 2003 . The episode 's initial broadcast was viewed by approximately 5 @.@ 4 million households , and 7 @.@ 7 million viewers , making it the seventy @-@ first most watched episode of television that aired during the week ending January 27 . " Hellbound " earned a Nielsen household rating of 5 @.@ 1 , meaning that it was seen by 5 @.@ 1 % of the nation 's estimated households .

= = = Reviews = = =

" Hellbound " received generally positive reviews from critics . Jessica Morgan of *Television Without Pity* awarded the episode a " B " . John Keegan , writing for *Critical Myth* , gave the episode a

positive review and complimented its exploration of Reyes ' character . He rated it an 8 out of 10 and wrote that " overall , a wonderful unexpected look into the underlying motivations of a character that , until now , has been only vaguely drawn for the audience . Thankfully it is completely consistent with what we have seen before " . Keegan added that the " greatest drawback may be that we are unlikely to see this theme explored much further , since this is now officially the final season . 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 four stars out of five . The two wrote positively of the entry 's plot ? comparing it to the first season episode " Squeeze " and the fourth season episode " The Field Where I Died " ? calling the writing " delightfully subtle " . They praised Amann 's misdirection , noting that the episode contains several red herrings . Shearman and Pearson also praised the episode 's effects , calling the skinless bodies " the high point of the series ' trading in gore " . M.A. Crang , in his book Denying the Truth : Revisiting The X @-@ Files after 9 / 11 , called the episode " unexpectedly entertaining " and praised the script 's attempts to shed more light on Reyes ' character .