

= Roadrunners (The X @-@ Files) =

" Roadrunners " is the fourth episode of the eighth season and the 165th episode overall of the science fiction television series The X @-@ Files . " Roadrunners " is a " Monster @-@ of @-@ the @-@ Week " story , unconnected to the series ' wider mythology . The episode first aired in the United States on November 26 , 2000 on Fox and on March 1 , 2001 on Sky1 in the United Kingdom and Ireland . It was written by Vince Gilligan and directed by Rod Hardy . The episode earned a Nielsen household rating of 8 @.@ 3 and was watched by 13 @.@ 6 million households . The episode received mixed to positive reviews from television critics .

The series centers on FBI special agents Dana Scully (Gillian Anderson) and her new partner John Doggett (Robert Patrick) ? following the alien abduction of her former partner , Fox Mulder (David Duchovny) ? who work on cases linked to the paranormal , called X @-@ Files . In this episode , Scully , working alone , pursues a cult that worship a slug @-@ like organism and believe it to be the Second Coming of Jesus Christ ; but in her efforts to save an injured stranger , she discovers she is in over her head .

The episode was written by Gilligan to be intentionally " creepy " . Furthermore , Gilligan wanted to show the audience that John Doggett was a good person and an ally of Scully 's . The parasitic creature that was used in the episode was designed to look like a banana slug and was created via animatronics . Several of the scenes were so gruesome that producer Paul Rabwin later noted that some of the cameramen " start [ed] to lose it " during filming .

= = Plot = =

In the desert near Cedar City , Utah , a hitchhiker catches a ride from a passing bus , which soon stops without explanation . The hitchhiker watches a man with crutches leave the bus , joined by the other passengers . Following them , he sees them stone the man to death . They later surround the hitchhiker as he futilely tries to escape .

FBI special agent Dana Scully (Gillian Anderson) goes to investigate the murder . The victim , a twenty @-@ two @-@ year @-@ old backpacker , now shows signs of body decay usually associated with old age . Later , at a pay @-@ phone , she asks her partner , John Doggett (Robert Patrick) , to check the X @-@ Files for cases mentioning glycoproteins . While discussing the case with Doggett , the bus passes her , and she follows it to a gas station in the middle of the desert . A man with an injured hand learns that she is a medical doctor and fills her car with gasoline laced with water . Scully returns to the gas station and is told that rain got into the gas canisters .

The attendant tells Scully that Mr. Milsap is the only person with a working phone , but she discovers that the line is dead . Mr. Milsap offers Scully a room at the local boarding house , but Scully tries the rest of the town only to be ignored by everyone ; they are all too engrossed in Bible study groups . Disturbed by the turn of events , she keeps her gun close at hand . The next morning , Mr. Milsap tells Scully that there is a man who needs help downstairs . She goes with him and finds the hitchhiker from the teaser having a seizure . She advises them to take him to the hospital , but they pretend that they do not have any cars . While examining the man , Scully discovers a strange circular wound on his back . Meanwhile , Doggett calls the local sheriff and learns that Scully has not arrived yet , and so he sets out to find her .

The sick man begins to recover and Scully talks to him while the townspeople are gone . He does not seem to know who he is or how he arrived . She inspects his wound again and finds a lump moving along the man 's spine ; digging into the open wound , she pulls out a piece of a large worm . Scully talks with the hitchhiker , whose name is revealed to be Hank , about the creature and thinks she cannot get it out without killing him . Scully goes to find a car but , moments after leaving , Hank immediately tells the townspeople what she is up to and that " another swap " is needed . Concurrently , Doggett arrives in Utah and informs the Sheriff about a series X @-@ Files involving similar back wound and death by stoning .

Scully is eventually captured by the townspeople and the worm is inserted into her body . Eventually , Doggett finds Scully , cuts the worm out of her , and shoots the creature dead . Later ,

Scully is packing her things in the hospital when Doggett comes in to inform her about the trial of the cult members ; they are offering little defense except that they claim that they are being persecuted for their religious beliefs . Scully muses that they thought the worm was the Second Coming of Jesus Christ . She apologizes to Doggett for going out on the mission alone and promises to never do it again .

= = Production = =

= = = Writing = = =

" Roadrunners " was written by Vince Gilligan and was inspired by the 1955 thriller film *Bad Day at Black Rock* . The script , called " uncharacteristically brutal " for Gilligan ? who had been noted for his comedic episodes like " *Bad Blood* " and " *X @-@ Cops* " ? was written with the expressed intent to make , according to Gilligan , " a really all @-@ out scary , creepy , get under @-@ your @-@ skin ? literally and figuratively ? *X @-@ File* . " Furthermore , the episode was written to show the audience of *The X @-@ Files* that John Doggett was on the side of the heroes . Gilligan explained , " I wanted this gangbusters episode , one that showed Doggett was a good guy ; someone to be counted on . " Many fans were unhappy with Doggett 's condescension towards Scully during her apology . Robert Patrick , the actor who portrayed Doggett , however , had a different interpretation : " The whole essence of the scene was , ' Look , I 'm here for you . I 've got your back . We 're partners now . ' And you give that the weight of a marine saying to someone , ' I 'll jump on a grenade for you , so you can trust me . ' The idea was to really assure the fans that the show was continuing on . "

Several of the characters in the episode were named after real @-@ life individuals . The character of Hank was named after the brother of Vince Gilligan 's girlfriend , Holly . Mr. Milsap was named for famed singer @-@ songwriter Ronnie Milsap . Finally , Sheriff Ciolino was named after Gilligan 's mortgage broker .

= = = Directing = = =

The episode was directed by Rod Hardy , making it his first credit for the series . Hardy was offered the role after an unknown individual working at *The X @-@ Files* saw his TBS remake of the film *High Noon* . The parasitic creature that was used in the episode was created via animatronics and was designed to look like a banana slug . During the scene where the creature is inserted into Scully 's back , the production crew created a false fiberglass back for Gillian Anderson . To create the illusion that the creature was crawling up the body , the fiberglass was pressed against . Anderson later described the scene as " fun to shoot . " However , she did notice that the scene " was exhausting , though , struggling on that bed for so long . Not hogtied , but tied down , my arms to the headboard and my legs to the footboard . Paul Rabwin later noted that he had several cameramen " start to lose it " during the scene .

= = Reception = =

= = = Ratings = = =

" Roadrunners " first aired in the United States on Fox on November 26 , 2000 . The episode earned a Nielsen household rating of 8 @. @ 3 , meaning that it was seen by 8 @. @ 3 % of the nation 's estimated households . The episode was viewed by 8 @. @ 37 million households , and 13 @. @ 6 million viewers . The episode ranked as the 38th most @-@ watched episode for the week ending November 26 . In the United Kingdom and Ireland , the episode made its first appearance on television on March 1 , 2001 on Sky1 . " Roadrunners " was the seventh most watched program that

week and received 0 @. @ 67 million viewers . Fox promoted the episode with the tagline " A desolate town . A bizarre cult . A horrifying ritual . And Scully may be the next victim . "

= = = Reviews = = =

" Roadrunners " received mixed to positive reviews from critics . Den of Geek writer Juliette Harrisson named the episode the " finest stand @-@ alone episode " of the show 's eighth season . Harrisson praised the character development in " Roadrunners " and noted that the episode " effectively brings [Scully and Doggett] together as partners . " 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 note that , " for the first half @-@ hour , this works as a slow burn horror story ... It 's the transition of Gillian Anderson 's performance from wry exasperation to outright paranoia ... which makes this so effective . " Shearman and Pearson did , however , slightly criticize the cutting of John Doggett 's role to a minimum . Todd VanDerWerff of *The A.V. Club* awarded the episode a " A ? " and wrote that it " is an episode that ? s dedicated to helping us move past the Mulder era . " He praised the creepiness of Gilligan 's script , as well as the characterization of Scully , writing that even though she is in a situation that is over her head , she is still smart in her attempts to escape ; he also praised Anderson 's acting . However , VanDerWerff was more critical of the final scene , noting that it made Doggett come across as " kind of an asshole " . Paul Spragg of *Xposé* wrote positively of the episode , saying it features a " return to the body horror stories that had worked so well in the early seasons " . Spragg added that " Roadrunners " is " certainly close " to the highly acclaimed first season episode " Ice " .

Not all reviews were positive . George Avalos and Michael Liedtke of the *Knight Ridder Tribune* wrote that the episode 's slug " continued the series ' fine tradition of monsters that made us queasy as we squirmed in our seats " . Despite enjoying the gore and the reality of Scully 's isolation , the two were critical of the cult 's motivations , writing that " we were given absolutely no clue as to why the Utah cult members believed the slug represented the Second Coming of Jesus Christ . " The two ultimately concluded that " Roadrunners " fell " well short of a classic . " Sarah Stegall highly criticized the episode , calling it " a bad mix of *The Fly* and *The Kindred* , with plenty of X @-@ Files classic paranoia but none of the finesse we 've seen before . " Paula Vitaris from *Cinefantastique* gave the episode a scathing review and awarded it no stars out of four . She heavily derided the plot , sarcastically referring to Doggett as a " man 's man " and the parasite a " phallic @-@ shaped giant slug " . Furthermore , she criticized Scully 's actions to go off on an assignment without telling her partner . Dave Golder from *SFX* criticized the episode and called it a retread of the first season episode " Ice " .

= = = Work cited = = =

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