

= Thief =

" Thief " is the fourteenth episode of the seventh season of the science fiction television series The X @-@ Files . It premiered on the Fox network in the United States on March 12 , 2000 . It was written by Vince Gilligan , John Shiban , and Frank Spotnitz and directed by Kim Manners . The episode is a " Monster @-@ of @-@ the @-@ Week " story , unconnected to the series ' wider mythology . " Thief " earned a Nielsen household rating of 7 @. @ 4 , being watched by 11 @. @ 91 million people in its initial broadcast . The episode received mixed to positive reviews from critics .

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 murder of a prominent doctor 's father @-@ in @-@ law , who was found with the word " thief " written on the wall in blood . After a string of follow @-@ up accidents , Mulder suspects hexcraft may be the source of threats against the doctor 's family .

" Thief " was written in a short amount of time during the show 's Christmas break after another script was dropped by the series . The main conceit of the episode was " modern medicine versus backyards supernatural arts " . The episode featured several noted actors , including Billy Drago , who played the role of antagonist Orell Peattie , and James Morrison , who was a former cast member of the science fiction series Space : Above and Beyond , which was created by former X @-@ Files writers Glen Morgan and James Wong . Series creator Chris Carter later called the episode " very well cast " .

= = Plot = =

Dr. Irving Thalbro is staying the night with his daughter and her family in Marin County , California , including her husband Dr. Robert Wieder ( James Morrison ) . In the middle of the night , Irving finds a pile of dirt shaped like a man in his bed . Irving is eventually discovered by Robert hanging from the ceiling with the word " thief " painted in Irving 's blood on the wall . While investigating the next morning , Fox Mulder ( David Duchovny ) notices the graveyard dirt in Irving 's bed and believes it may be caused by a hoodoo hex . Dana Scully ( Gillian Anderson ) , however , believes that the doctor committed suicide by slitting his own throat , writing on the wall , and hanging himself . After the autopsy , it is determined that Irving suffered from a prion disease called kuru , which has not been found in the United States before . Mulder believes that kuru was given to him by a hex that caused him to go mad . The Wieders then find a family photo missing from their bedroom , and a " hoodoo man " , later revealed to be named Orell Peattie ( Billy Drago ) , is seen placing the faces cut from the picture into various poppet dolls . Ms. Wieder collapses after another pile of graveyard dirt is found in her bed . Her skin then sprouts lesions as the " hoodoo man " stands by the pool talking to the doll .

Peattie visits Dr. Wieder at work , but refuses to tell him why he is committing these hexes against his family . Wieder does some research of his own and finds a bracelet in a Jane Doe file that he believes may be connected . Mulder consults an expert in the occult , who notes that , in order to commit hexes , the man must draw energy from a charm and place blood , hair and a picture of the victim inside a poppet in order to follow through with the hexes . Meanwhile , Mrs. Wieder is burned to death during Magnetic resonance imaging ( MRI ) , and the " hoodoo man " is found taking her doll out of the microwave . The word " thief " is also found branded in Mrs. Wieder 's chest . Dr. Wieder tells the agents that the man came to see him , and that he found a Jane Doe case that may be connected to the murders . After investigating , it is revealed that the Jane Doe was Lynnette Peattie who died last October during a bus crash . The doctor gave her an overdose of morphine , euthanizing her due to her pain . Mulder assumes the man is her father and that he feels the doctor stole his family away from him . Mulder decides to exhume the body of Lynnette Peattie and move it to Virginia , taking away her father 's power , but when they exhume the casket there is no body inside .

Meanwhile , Peattie 's landlord sneaks into his apartment for pain medication and finds the body of

Lynnette in his bed . Immediately , she contracts a flesh @-@ eating disease . After hearing about the incident on the news , Mulder goes to Peattie 's apartment and finds Lynnette 's headless body , but Peattie missing . Peattie finds the Wieder family , whom Scully is protecting , and makes a poppet with Scully 's hair and photo inside . He places nails in the doll 's eyes and Scully promptly goes blind . Peattie breaks into the house , takes Scully 's gun and stabs a poppet of Dr. Wieder , causing the doctor to collapse in pain . Mulder shows up , finds Scully 's doll and removes the nails from it , allowing her to regain her vision and shoot Peattie . He is placed in a coma and Lynnette 's body is shipped back to her home in West Virginia .

= = Production = =

= = = Writing = = =

Originally , the episode was not planned to be produced during the seventh season . However , just before the writing crew prepared to take their Christmas break , one of the scheduled scripts was removed from the line @-@ up . In order to meet the deadline , Frank Spotnitz , John Shiban , and Vince Gilligan decided to write a script about " modern medicine versus backyards supernatural arts " . Gilligan later joked that " I think I was enlisted for the fact that I 'm Southern , and they thought I was the closest thing they had to a hillbilly on the staff " .

Producer David Amann explained that the inspiration for the story was " What if you have a doctor who is prosperous but has a dark page from his past that comes back to haunt him ? " Spotnitz later elaborated that the story initially was " going to be how do you get rid of something you can 't get rid of " . However , the writers soon found this storyline difficult to develop , and , by Spotnitz 's own admission , the story " started to evolve into a Cape Fear type of situation " . The episode was finished by the writers over the Christmas break and then " handed over " to Kim Manners , who became the episode 's director .

= = = Casting , directing , and makeup = = =

Noted actor Billy Drago was brought in to play the role of Orell Peattie , a casting decision that series creator Chris Carter later called " especially lucky " . His son , Darren E. Burrows , had previously been cast as Bernard in a season six episode , Monday . Actor James Morrison , who played Dr. Wieder , was a former cast member of the science fiction series Space : Above and Beyond , and had previously been cast as detective Jim Horn in an episode of Millennium called " Dead Letters " . Both of these were written by former X @-@ Files writers Glen Morgan and James Wong . Leah Sanders , who was cast as the background character Reporter # 1 , was a childhood friend of John Shiban who had not been in contact for twenty years . Shiban was reportedly delighted to discover that his former friend had been coincidentally cast in the episode . Carter noted that the episode " was very well cast " .

Kim Manners later noted that " Theef " was difficult to shoot because the cast and crew had inadequate time to prepare . He explained , " It was kind of a rush thing and we got the script very late . We were totally winging it while we were shooting it " . Manners later stated that the episode " came together " in the editing room : " When I looked at the footage , it was like I was looking at somebody else 's film . But it cut together real nice and the end result was that ' Theef ' turned out to be a decent little episode " . Manners later admitted that the episode was his only credit for the series during which he experienced illness . With Manners out for a day due to his sickness , Rob Bowman took over directing duties for a day .

Cheri Montesanto @-@ Medcalf , one of the show 's makeup creators , was extremely pleased with Drago 's makeup in the episode . She later noted , " I remember Billy Drago was awesome ? he looked so creepy after makeup . I just wanted this guy to look super @-@ creepy and disturbing to look at , but real enough that you might be scared if you looked out your window at night and saw him standing there " .

= = Broadcast and reception = =

" Theef " first aired in the United States on March 12 , 2000 . This episode earned a Nielsen rating of 7 @. @ 4 , with an 11 share , meaning that roughly 7 @. @ 4 percent of all television @- @ equipped households , and 11 percent of households watching television , were tuned in to the episode . It was viewed by 11 @. @ 91 million viewers . The episode aired in the United Kingdom and Ireland on Sky1 on June 18 , 2000 and received 0 @. @ 71 million viewers , making it the third most watched episode that week . Fox promoted the episode with the tagline " Voodoo curse ? Tonight , the dark powers of black magic have chosen their next victim ... Agent Scully . " The episode was nominated and won a 2000 Emmy Award by the Academy of Television Arts & Sciences for Outstanding Makeup for a Series .

Todd VanDerWerff of The A.V. Club awarded the episode a " B + " , and called it " the strongest straight @- @ up , non @- @ experimental standalone the season ? s had so far , " as well as one of " the strongest ' scary ' episode since season five . " He praised the guest cast ? mostly notably Drago and Morrison ? and wrote that the writers of the episode were able to successfully make the character deaths in the episode count in a way that moved the audience . VanDerWerff 's main criticism of the episode was that it painted Peattie " as a backwoods hick and a rather broad stereotype of one . " Tom Kessenich , in his book Examinations , gave the episode a moderately positive review . Despite slightly criticizing the episode utilizing a voodoo @- @ based plot , which he called " [ not ] terribly original " , he concluded that " there 's nothing wrong with a little modern medicine vs. practical magic confrontation . And I definitely enjoyed how Scully had her envelope pushed once again " . Rich Rosell from Digitally Obsessed awarded the episode 4 out of 5 stars , noting , " writer Vince Gilligan gets fairly serious in this ep concerning a series of deadly hexes cast upon a doctor and his family , as well as some cryptic scrawlings . There 's plenty of bad mojo going around as the X @- @ Files team gets to dig deep into the dark side of the magick arts , with Scully at one point losing her sight , thanks to a vengeful hex doll . Spooky " . TV Guide later named the episode 's main antagonist , Orell Peattie , as one of " The Scariest X @- @ Files Monsters " . Paula Vitaris from Cinefantastique gave the episode a moderately mixed review and awarded it two @- @ and @- @ a @- @ half stars out of four . She concluded that " although ' Theef ' is burdened with some illogical plot developments and some underdeveloped characterization , overall it is a decent installment of The X @- @ Files " .

Several other reviews were more mixed . Kenneth Silber from Space.com was critical of the episode , noting that the main antagonist is " a veritable caricature of backwoods stupidity and thus hard to take seriously " . He did , however , compliment the sympathetic qualities of Dr. Wieder and his family . 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 @- @ and @- @ a @- @ half stars out of five , noting that the episode was " just too unambitious an X @- @ File to be anything more than a collection of moments , only some of which work " .