

= Small Potatoes (The X @-@ Files) =

" Small Potatoes " is the twentieth episode of the fourth season of the American science fiction television series The X @-@ Files . It premiered on the Fox network in the United States appropriately on April 20 , 1997 (4 / 20 , also the number of the season / episode) . It was written by Vince Gilligan and directed by Cliff Bole . The episode is a " Monster @-@ of @-@ the @-@ Week " story , unconnected to the series ' wider mythology . " Small Potatoes " received a Nielsen rating of 13 @.@ 0 and was viewed by 20 @.@ 86 million people in its initial broadcast . The episode received positive reviews from critics , with many applauding the entry 's humorous tone .

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 , and the skeptical Scully has been assigned to debunk his work . In this episode , a small town is ? blessed ? by babies being born with tails . Mulder and Scully arrive only to encounter a suspect , Eddie Van Blundht (Darin Morgan) , who proves nearly impossible to identify .

" Small Potatoes " was written by Gilligan in an attempt to write a lighthearted episode ; he did not want to develop a reputation for only writing dark stories . Gilligan asked former series writer Darin Morgan , who had penned four episodes in the second and third seasons , to play Eddie Van Blundht . In fact , the role was written specifically with Morgan in mind . In the original script , the babies were born with wings instead of tails . The effect was eventually changed to tails , because , according to Gilligan , they were funnier .

= = Plot = =

Agents Fox Mulder (David Duchovny) and Dana Scully (Gillian Anderson) investigate the birth of five babies in the town of Martinsburg , West Virginia , who were born with tails . The mother of the most recent baby , Amanda Nelligan , tells the agents that the father of her baby is Luke Skywalker . By researching the baby 's chromosomes it is discovered that all five share the same father . The parents of the children blame the local fertility doctor , who had used insemination to impregnate all of the mothers but Nelligan . Mulder spots a janitor nearby with signs that he formerly had a tail . When he runs Mulder chases him and catches him . The janitor , Eddie Van Blundht , is discovered to be the father of all of the children . Scully believes Eddie used a date rape drug although Mulder questions how he could be in the position to give it to the women .

Eddie escapes by transforming his face into that of the booking cop and knocking him out with a blow to the head . Mulder and Scully visit his father , who still has his tail and is a former circus performer . Mulder and Scully soon realize that he 's actually Eddie when he addresses Mulder by name without having been introduced . The agents give chase but Eddie escapes . He then transforms into one of the husbands of the women he had previously slept with and goes and hides out in their house . When the real husband comes home early , he next transforms into Mulder and leaves the couple seriously confused . Mulder and Scully meanwhile discover the dried up body of Eddie 's actual father hidden up in the attic , thoroughly desiccated . Performing an autopsy on the body , Scully finds that he has an extra sheet of supple muscle under his skin , which Mulder believes Eddie also inherited and can use to transform his appearance .

Eddie takes on the appearance of Mulder and visits Nelligan , showing him a photo of Eddie . Nelligan tells him that she went out with him in high school , but views him as rather a loser lacking in any drive or ambition . The disappointed Eddie leaves , just as the real Mulder shows up . Realizing that Eddie just visited Nelligan in his guise , Mulder searches for him down the hospital corridors . He finds the fertility doctor and a security guard nearby and handcuffs them to each other , believing one of them to be Eddie . The real Eddie , however , is hiding in a vent above . He gets the jump on Mulder and locks him up in the hospital basement . Eddie takes Mulder 's form and tells Scully that he feels the case is a waste of time and they should return to Washington .

Eddie returns to Washington as Mulder and , along with Scully , reports to Skinner on the case with a poorly written report . Eddie visits Mulder 's office , then his apartment , being surprised at what a

loser Mulder appears to be (though highly pleased with how attractive a man he now is in Mulder 's face - as he admires himself and practices his ' agent moves ' in the mirror) . Later that evening Eddie visits Scully with a bottle of wine and tries to get her drunk , as well as seduce her . As a reluctant Scully is about to give in to a kiss , the real Mulder breaks in and interrupts them . Revealed , Eddie sheepishly reverts back to his actual form , as a shocked Scully just about jumps out of her own skin at the revelation . A month later , Mulder visits Eddie in a prison visitation room at Eddie 's bidding . Eddie complains at being given muscle relaxants to prevent him from turning into someone else , asking if that was Mulder 's doing . Eddie then tells Mulder that he was born a loser , but Mulder is one by choice and that he should seriously " live a little " .

= = Production = =

Writer Vince Gilligan , who came to The X @-@ Files having written six comedy movies , decided to write a more lighthearted episode ; he did not want to develop a reputation for only writing dark stories . Gilligan also wanted to " lighten up " the fourth season , which featured many grim episodes and was the introduction for the dark point involving Scully 's cancer . After getting approval from series creator Chris Carter , Gilligan asked former series writer Darin Morgan , who had penned four episodes in the second and third seasons , to play Eddie Van Blundht . In fact , the role was written specifically with Morgan in mind , as Gilligan had seen Morgan acting in a student film he made at Loyola Marymount University and considered him a funny actor .

In the original script , the babies were born with wings instead of tails . While research revealed that such an occurrence was possible , the wings were changed to tails in the final version of the script because they were not considered cute enough . Gilligan later explained that " tails were just funnier " , and also that the wings would be harder to add in post @-@ production . The tails were created through computer @-@ generated imagery , with a green mark being painted on the babies ' backs as a reference .

The cast and the crew of the show thoroughly enjoyed the episode . David Duchovny was pleased with the script , describing it as a " great " episode that was fun to film . Gilligan complimented both Duchovny for his comedic performance and Gillian Anderson for acting as the " straight woman " in the installment .

= = Reception = =

" Small Potatoes " was originally broadcast in the United States on the Fox network on April 20 , 1997 , and was first broadcast in the United Kingdom on BBC One on February 4 , 1998 . This episode earned a Nielsen rating of 13 @. @ 0 , with a 20 share , meaning that roughly 13 @. @ 0 percent of all television @-@ equipped households , and 20 percent of households watching television , were tuned in to the episode . It was viewed by 20 @. @ 86 million viewers .

The episode has received largely positive reviews from television critics . Author Phil Farrand rated the episode as his fourth favorite episode of the first four seasons in his book The Nitpickers Guide to the X @-@ Files . Reviewer Todd VanDerWerff of The A.V. Club gave " Small Potatoes " an A , saying that it " isn ' t the very best X @-@ Files episode (though it ' s certainly up there) , but it ' s perhaps the easiest episode to call your ' favorite , ' the most approachable episode , if you will " and that while Gilligan penned better X @-@ Files installments later , " he ' s never written one as effortlessly playful and inventive as this one . VanDerWerff later called the episode one of the " 10 must @-@ see episodes " and named it " Gilligan ' s finest comedic achievement " . John Keegan from Critical Myth gave the episode a largely positive review and awarded it a 9 out of 10 . He wrote , " Overall , this episode was a wonderful respite from the dark material of the season 's character arcs , taking a humorous look at Mulder and his complete lack of a life . Gilligan channels Darin Morgan in many scenes , especially when it comes to making scathing observations about Mulder through the soft stick of humor . " Furthermore , he praised Duchovny , saying that his " nuanced performance " was " easily one of his best . " Topless Robot named " Small Potatoes " the eighth funniest episode of the series . Starpulse listed it as the eighth best episode of the series . The

episode is popular with fans , specifically for the scene where Eddie , who has changed into Mulder , tries to seduce Scully in her apartment . 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 five stars out of five and wrote that " this is what Vince Gilligan has been working towards all season . " The two praised Gilligan 's writing , applauding his decision to critically examine Mulder rather than merely tell jokes . Furthermore , the two commended the acting of Morgan , calling his casting " apt " . Paula Vitaris from *Cinefantastique* gave the episode a rave review and awarded it a rare four stars out of four . She described it as a " four course meal of comic riches " and praised the writing style of Giligan , calling him " the believer who writes from inside the characters ' heads " .

The episode , however , was not without its critics . Tor.com reviewer Meghan Deans was more critical of the episode , writing that it had a " flawed construction that diminishes what should have been one of the series ' smartest and most affectionate demonstrations of self @-@ parody " . She found the way it attempted to depict Van Blundht as a sympathetic villain and play rape for laughs to be unsettling . However , she did praise the way the episode continued the comedic tradition of making fun of Mulder . Cyriaque Lamar from i09 called Eddie Van Blundht one of " The 10 Most Ridiculous X @-@ Files Monsters " . The reviewer , however , did amend his article , writing , " Some readers are concerned that I 'm hating on ' Small Potatoes , ' which is not the case . That episode was definitely fun , but Eddie impregnated a woman while impersonating Mark Hamill . If that 's not a ridiculous monster @-@ of @-@ the @-@ week , I don 't know what is . "