

= Chimera (The X @-@ Files) =

" Chimera " is the sixteenth 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 April 2 , 2000 , was written by David Amann , and directed by Cliff Bole . The episode is a " Monster @-@ of @-@ the @-@ Week " story , unconnected to the series ' wider mythology . " Chimera " earned a Nielsen household rating of 7 @.@ 5 , being watched by 12 @.@ 89 million people in its initial broadcast . The episode received mostly 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 investigates what appears to be the case of a missing woman from a small town , but soon turns out to be a murder by a spirit summoned from the underworld . Scully , meanwhile , must endure an uncomfortable stakeout .

Similar to the season six episode , " Arcadia " , " Chimera " was written as " a suburban parable about perfection " that examined " the evil that lies beneath a prototypical white @-@ bread suburban existence . " The episode was produced at a time when both David Duchovny and Gillian Anderson were directing their own episodes , and in order to compensate , Anderson 's role was drastically reduced in the episode .

= = Plot = =

In Bethany , Vermont , a raven frightens a little girl , Michelle Crittendon , at a park while a neighbor , Jenny Uphouse , watches . The bird is later found at her home . Her mother , Martha Crittendon , is then attacked and killed by an unseen monster . Meanwhile , in Washington , D.C. , Fox Mulder (David Duchovny) and Dana Scully (Gillian Anderson) are on a stakeout looking for a woman who is possibly killing prostitutes . Mulder believes she has the power to disappear because every time police attempt to arrest her she cannot be found . While on lookout , Mulder gets a call about the attack and leaves . Back at the office , Walter Skinner (Mitch Pileggi) tells Mulder that Crittendon disappeared and asks him what he knows about ravens . Mulder believes that the bird is usually associated with evil . Skinner tells Mulder that this case is a top priority because Crittendon is the wife of a powerful judge . At the Crittendon home , Martha 's husband , Howard , tells Mulder that his wife was cheating on him because he found birth control pills , which is suspicious because Howard has had a vasectomy . Another neighbor , Ellen Adderly , the wife of Sheriff Phil Adderly , is approached by Jenny and then sees a raven before the window of a nearby car shatters . At the Crittendon home , Michelle sees the raven outside her window again and Howard leaves to check it out , leading him to find a hand sticking out above the flower bushes . Later the police dig up Martha 's body , with claw marks all over her face .

Ellen tells Mulder that she saw a reflection in the mirror earlier , and that 's what killed Martha . Mulder believes the glass are doorways to a demonic dimension and that someone is summoning forth a demon to attack people . Ellen believes Jenny Uphouse summoned the spirits , but she denies it . Later , Ellen finds a skeleton key in her house and a raven by her baby 's crib . In a mirror , Ellen sees the reflection of a monster chasing after her , but it suddenly breaks . She hides in the closet until Phil comes home and finds her . However , he attributes the commotion to stress , believing that she is imagining things . Mulder finds the skeleton key and it matches one found in Martha Crittendon 's coat pocket . Mulder deduces that the sheriff is having an affair with Jenny . Mulder later tells him that Martha was pregnant and that he thinks he is the father . The sheriff reveals that the key opened the door to a motel , where he and Jenny met for clandestine affairs . Meanwhile , at the motel , Jenny sees ravens outside and is promptly attacked and killed by the creature .

Phil explains to Mulder that he wanted a divorce from Ellen two years ago , but she got pregnant and would not allow it . He also believes that he is the reason for this happening and that he somehow summoned the entity . It turns out that Ellen is the entity , which is given away by a cut in

her back given by Jenny during the attack . Ellen transforms into the creature , attacks Mulder , and attempts to drown him in a bath tub , but stops when she sees her monstrous reflection in the water . She is placed in a psychiatric hospital , where the doctors diagnose her with multiple personality disorder . Meanwhile , Scully reveals to Mulder that the mysterious prostitute killer was not an X @-@ File at all , but rather a man disguised as a woman who talked to the prostitutes about religion and attempted to help them get out of the prostitution ring .

= = Production = =

= = = Writing = = =

The premise behind " Chimera " was " a compelling examination of the evil that lies beneath a prototypical white @-@ bread suburban existence . " These themes had previously been explored in the season six episode , " Arcadia " . However , the show wished to explore the same ideas in a more " straight @-@ ahead scare " style , rather than supplementing the horror of the episode with humor , as was done in " Arcadia " . Series creator , Chris Carter , saw the episode as " a chance to do something bold and new . " Carter wanted the story to revolve around a crow , an image that he described simply as " scary " . With the story , he wanted to " bust pretense and perception and expose the underbelly of a white @-@ bread community . " Originally , the episode was going to feature a subterranean monster and was aptly going to be titled " Subterranean Monster Blues " .

The episode was written in " a burst of twenty @-@ hour days " . Greg Walker , who assisted David Amann , described the finished script as " a suburban parable about perfection . " Matt Hurwitz and Chris Knowles noted in their book , The Complete X @-@ Files , that " David Amman 's script is an insightful commentary on suburban repression and self @-@ delusion , which made a major comeback in the conservative late ' 90s . " The episode soon went into pre @-@ production , but first , several issues had to be addressed . Most notably , while the episode was being produced , David Duchovny and Gillian Anderson were also busy directing their own episodes ? " Hollywood A.D. " and " all things " , respectively . To cope with this hectic schedule , the writers planned " Chimera " so that Duchovny and Anderson only had to be together in a limited number of scenes . Anderson was only needed for one day of filming for her auxiliary sub @-@ plot involving the prostitute murderer .

= = = Casting and filming = = =

Rick Millikan , the show 's casting director , was tasked with finding " normal @-@ looking suburban people " for the cast . Millikan later noted that " the show necessitated casting perfect people . But it 's not that easy to find [...] normal @-@ looking people . We 've used so many people over the years that it 's gotten harder and harder to find them . Several of the individuals cast had previously played parts in " obscure genre films " : Michelle Joyner first appeared in the 1990 anthology film Grim Prairie Tales , Gina Mastrogiacomo first was noted in her 1989 movie Alien Space Avenger , John Mese had a part in the 1995 movie Night of the Scarecrow , and finally , Wendy Schaal had appeared in the 1985 film Creature .

Most of the opening scenes were shot in a local Los Angeles backyard , however , finding suitable " tree @-@ lined elements " proved difficult . Ultimately , a museum in Hollywood allowed the crew to film in a tree @-@ filled section on its grounds . The episode ran into several snags during filming . Director Cliff Bole had trouble trying to get the crows to " act on cue " . Eventually , several ravens were brought in as doubles . Bole later noted , " we got two ravens . One was very good at cawing and one was good at hopping . " The ending sequence had to be re @-@ shot several times . Producer Paul Rabwin explained , " Originally , we wanted to show a mirror image of the woman being attacked by the monster , but it didn 't really sell . " Eventually , the crew decided to glue candy glass onto a piece of plywood . In this manner , the camera was able to see the action through the shattered panes of glass .

= = Broadcast and reception = =

" Chimera " first aired in the United States on April 2 , 2000 . This episode earned a Nielsen rating of 7 @. @ 5 , with an 11 share , meaning that roughly 7 @. @ 5 percent of all television @- @ equipped households , and 11 percent of households watching television , were tuned in to the episode . It was viewed by 12 @. @ 89 million viewers . The episode aired in the United Kingdom and Ireland on Sky1 on May 7 , 2000 and received 0 @. @ 56 million viewers , making it the third most watched episode that week . Fox promoted the episode with the tagline " American Beauty ? Tonight , in a perfect small town , with perfect neighbors and perfect families ... lies an evil just waiting to show it 's [sic] ' perfect ' face . "

The episode received mostly positive reviews from critics , with a few detractors . 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 , calling the script " very stylish " . The two noted that " [David] Duchovny is very good here [?] and , as a counterbalance , [Gillian] Anderson provides some great comic relief . " Shearman and Pearson concluded that the episode was " a little too ponderously paced to be a classic episode , but it 's clever and well crafted [which makes it] a rewarding stand @- @ out . " Rich Rosell from Digitally Obsessed awarded the episode 4 out of 5 stars and wrote that " Cawing birds , spirit portals and split personalities are the order of the day in a story that doesn 't offer that much in genuine thrills , but the best moments are Scully 's occasional complaints from the field . " Paula Vitaris from Cinefantastique gave the episode a moderately positive review and awarded it two @- @ and @- @ a @- @ half stars out of four . Despite noting that the episode " gets off to an awkward start " , Vitaris concluded that " ' Chimera ' takes us into the heart of a quintessential X @- @ Files family " . Zack Handlen of The A.V. Club awarded the episode a " B + " , noting that , while the episode was good , it " falls short of classic status , trying to make a metaphor into flesh , and not quite succeeding . " Although Handlen enjoyed the way the episode explores and then connects the main characters , his main critique was that Ellen 's transformation is never explicitly explained . He explained that , " If we had a sense of where her need comes from , if there was some hint at what drove her to this point , it would work ; as is , the actress 's performance is excellent , but the character remains too generic . "

Not all reviews were positive . Kenneth Silber from Space.com wrote a neutral review , saying , " Beyond that , there is little to be said , pro or con , for ' Chimera . ' The episode is mildly interesting and avoids the puerility of recent episodes . " Tom Kessenich , in his book Examinations , gave the episode a relatively negative review . He derided the lack of Anderson 's character , summing up his feelings in the simple sentence , " No Dana Scully . "