

= Fresh Bones =

" Fresh Bones " is the fifteenth episode of the second season of the science fiction television series The X @-@ Files . It premiered on the Fox network on February 3 , 1995 . It was written by Howard Gordon , directed by Rob Bowman , and featured guest appearances by Kevin Conway , Daniel Benzali , and Matt Hill . The episode is a " Monster @-@ of @-@ the @-@ Week " story , unconnected to the series ' wider mythology . " Fresh Bones " earned a Nielsen household rating of 11 @.@ 3 , being watched by 10 @.@ 8 million households 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 . In the episode , Mulder and Scully discover a voodoo symbol drawn on a tree after a soldier , Private Jack McAlpin , crashes his car into it following two separate hallucinatory incidents . This leads the two to a processing center for Haitian refugees where suspicion falls on one of the Haitians identified by the colonel in charge .

Howard Gordon was inspired to write the episode after reading two articles involving suicides of servicemen in Haiti . The Haitian refugee camp was shot in a derelict building in a North Vancouver shipyard ; originally , the producers wanted to set the episode in Haiti and actually film in the country . This endeavor , however , proved unsuccessful .

= = Plot = =

In Folkstone , North Carolina , Jack McAlpin , an agitated Marine Corps private , drives his car into a tree after several hallucinatory episodes and is apparently killed . On the tree is a veve , a drawn voodoo religious symbol .

McAlpin is the second purported suicide among troops stationed at an INS compound processing refugees from Haiti . Fox Mulder and Dana Scully visit the compound to investigate McAlpin 's death . There , a young boy named Chester Bonaparte sells a good luck charm to Mulder . After meeting with Colonel Wharton , head of the compound , Mulder meets with an imprisoned refugee , Pierre Bauvais , and an associate of McAlpin 's , Harry Dunham . When Scully attempts to perform an autopsy on McAlpin 's body , she finds a dog carcass in its place at the morgue .

While driving down the road , Mulder and Scully discover a still @-@ living McAlpin , who doesn 't remember what has happened to him . Tetrodotoxin , a chemical Mulder believes is part of Haitian zombification rituals , is found in McAlpin 's blood . The agents go to the local graveyard to investigate the corpse of the other dead soldier , but find the grave robbed . They also find Chester , who collects frogs at the cemetery and sells them to Bauvais . Dunham approaches Mulder , telling him that Wharton has begun abusing the refugees as a means of retaliation against Bauvais ; Wharton denies the accusations , but later has Bauvais beaten to death .

Scully cuts her hand on the thorn of a twig left in her car . When she drives off , a veve is seen on the ground under her car . Mulder has a meeting with X , who tells him that he and Scully will soon be called back to Washington and that the camp will be restricted to military personnel only . Mulder believes Wharton is persecuting the refugees after the suicide of some of his men during a previous trip to Haiti . Scully finds Dunham dead in a bathtub , and Mulder catches McAlpin with a knife nearby . Although he has no recollection of the event , McAlpin confesses to the murder under the influence of Wharton , who tells the agents that Bauvais committed suicide and that their investigation is over .

McAlpin 's wife provides the agents with a photo of Wharton with Bauvais in Haiti , causing the agents to go through his office . They find that both Dunham and McAlpin had filed complaints against Wharton over his treatment of the detainees . The agents head to the cemetery , where Wharton is performing a voodoo rite over Bauvais ' coffin . When Mulder confronts him , Wharton harms him through sympathetic magic . Meanwhile , in a hallucinatory episode , a man emerges from the small cut in Scully 's hand and strangles her , but the illusion disappears when she grabs the charm Chester sold them . Bauvais appears and stops Wharton by blowing zombie powder in

his face . Scully arrives to assist Mulder and pronounces Wharton dead .

The next day the agents say goodbye to McAlpin , who reveals that Chester was a boy who had died in a riot six weeks earlier . The episode ends with Wharton being unwittingly buried alive by the graveyard watchman .

= = Production = =

Writer Howard Gordon was inspired to write the episode after reading two articles involving suicides of servicemen in Haiti . The refugee plot was used due to the producers being unable to film in Haiti . Colonel Wharton was portrayed by Daniel Benzali , who later went on to star in the ABC series Murder One . While the producers agreed that he did not look like a military man , they felt he had the quality they were looking for in the role . For the sequence where a man emerges from Scully 's hand and strangles her , a male actor pushed his gelatine covered fingers through a mechanical hand . The episode started production in late December 1994 , and after a Christmas break was completed in January 1995 . The Haitian refugee camp was shot in a derelict building in a North Vancouver shipyard . Sump pumps had to be used on the graveyard of the episode 's ending as it was shot during a particularly rainy January .

= = Broadcast and reception = =

" Fresh Bones " premiered on the Fox network on February 3 , 1995 . The episode earned a Nielsen rating of 11 @. @ 3 , with a 19 share , meaning that roughly 11 @. @ 3 percent of all television @- @ equipped households , and 19 percent of households watching television , were tuned in to the episode . It was viewed by 10 @. @ 8 million households . " Fresh Bones " was the highest rated episode of the first two seasons .

The episode received mixed to positive reviews from critics . Writer Gordon stated that director Bowman did a great job in mining his script for chills . In their book , X @- @ Treme Possibilities , authors Keith Topping and Paul Cornell praised the episode , including Benzali 's performance and the sequence in the graveyard at the end of the episode . Series creator Chris Carter called the episode one of the ones he was most proud of from the second season , stating that Gordon did a good job with the script and Bowman did a great job with the directing .

Not all of the reviews were glowing . Entertainment Weekly gave the episode a B- and a more mixed review , writing that the episode was " Not one for the ages , despite some jarring moments (car meets tree , Scully 's hoodoo hallucinations , and that final shot ? whoa) . " Reviewer Todd VanDerWerff of The A.V. Club gave the episode a C , and wrote that " the biggest problems here are the lack of focus and the chaotic pacing . The episode rumbles along in first gear for about three @- @ quarters of its running time and then abruptly shifts into high gear at the end , moving toward an apocalyptic finish that doesn 't feel wholly earned . There 's good stuff in ' Fresh Bones , ' but the bulk of the episode disappoints . "