

= Hungry (The X @-@ Files) =

" Hungry " is the third 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 November 21 , 1999 . It was written by Vince Gilligan , directed by Kim Manners , and featured a guest appearance by Chad Donella . The episode is a " Monster @-@ of @-@ the @-@ Week " story , unconnected to the series ' wider mythology . However , unlike previous Monster @-@ of @-@ the @-@ Week stories , " Hungry " is told from the monster 's perspective . " Hungry " earned a Nielsen household rating of 9 @.@ 6 , being watched by 16 @.@ 17 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 , a fast @-@ food employee with unusual cravings becomes the focus of an FBI investigation under the direction of Mulder and Scully . The victims appear with no brain and a suction hole in the forehead .

Gilligan wanted to try a " different " approach to The X @-@ Files with " Hungry " by telling the main story through the eyes of the monster . Actor Chad Donella , who portrayed the monster , was chosen because he possessed a " subtle , interesting quality , " according to casting director Rick Millikan . Manners was pleased with Donella 's performance , calling him a " great little actor . " Because both David Duchovny and Gillian Anderson were filming movies , Return to Me and The House of Mirth respectively , the production company decided to film " Hungry " before any of the other episodes , despite the fact that it would be aired third , after the conclusion of " The Sixth Extinction " arc .

= = Plot = =

In Costa Mesa , California , a young man named Donald Pankow approaches the drive @-@ thru of a Lucky Boy fast food restaurant . Despite the restaurant being closed , Pankow angrily demands service . The sheepish fast food attendant tells the man to drive to the next window , where he is attacked and violently pulled out of his car . Pankow 's body is later discovered with the brain removed from the skull . Fox Mulder (David Duchovny) and Dana Scully (Gillian Anderson) are assigned to assist the local police in their investigation .

The only clue found at the scene is a Lucky Boy employee button . Mulder and Scully check all of the employees and discover that one of the clerks , Derwood Spinks , is missing his button . Scully suspects Spinks after it is discovered he has a criminal record . Mulder , however , believes that the victim 's brain was removed by a proboscis , and suspects another employee , Rob Roberts , of committing the murder . Rob , who is actually a mutant human who wears a disguise to hide his true physical body , subsists on brains in order to survive . When Sylvia is trailed by a private investigator (Steve Kiziak) , Rob kills him and eats in order to placate his hunger , which begins to get more and more uncontrollable .

Spinks visits Rob at his home the following day , annoyed at being fired from Lucky Boy for lying about his criminal record . He confronts Rob with evidence of his role in Pankow 's murder - Rob 's diet pills (to control his voracious hunger) with a bloodstain fingermark on the lid - and attempts to blackmail him . Later that day , Rob intrudes Spinks ' residence to retrieve his pills , but hides in a closet when Spinks returns ; noticing that someone is in his home , Spinks arms himself with a baseball bat . He discovers Rob is in his home after seeing a pill bottle (belonging to Spinks) on the ground and tells him that he 's going to turn him in instead of blackmailing him . As Spinks heads to the closet , Rob takes off his disguise , opens the closet door , and reveals his true self to a stunned Spinks before killing him . Rob later meets with Dr. Mindy Rinehart , a counselor hired by Lucky Boy to consult the employees following Pankow 's killing . In session with her , Rob admits that he is battling an " eating disorder . " Rinehart sends him to an Overeaters Anonymous meeting , not fully understanding Rob 's true nature .

Before attending the OA meeting , Rob is visited by Mulder and Scully , both who inform him that Spinks has disappeared ; Mulder then reveals about Pankow 's missing brain and that a " tiny shark 's tooth " was discovered by Scully embedded in the skull . Mulder deduces that a " genetic freak " is responsible , which Rob nervously laughs it off . After the agents leave , Rob attends the OA meeting . At the meeting , he sees his kind landlady , Sylvia Jassey . Although he does not respond well to the meeting (by discreetly detailing the taste of a brain as " salty " , " juicy " , and " buttery " and especially visualizing a pulsing brain when a man turned to Sylvia) , Rob and Sylvia bond on the trip home . Unfortunately , his hunger is far too overpowering and he is reluctantly compelled to feed upon her . To cover up her murder , Rob disposes of her body and smashes up his own apartment with Spinks ' baseball bat . He tells Mulder and Scully that Spinks showed up and accused him of being the killer . Mulder then tells Rob if he recognizes Kiziak , the private investigator , but Rob says no . Both agents leave to find Sylvia .

Rinehart shows up to find Rob packing his things , intent on leaving town . After a bitter argument , with Rinehart revealing that she knew Rob murdered Pankow , Rob reveals his true self to Rinehart . However , before Rob prepares to attack her , she shows deep sympathy for him , throwing Rob off @-@ guard . At that moment , the agents arrive with guns drawn , having found Sylvia 's body . Rinehart tells Rob to be the good person she knows he is capable of being . Instead , Rob charges at Mulder and is shot twice in the chest , committing suicide by cop . As Rob lies dying , Rinehart asks , " Why ? " To which he replies , " I can 't be something I 'm not . "

= = Production = =

= = = Writing and casting = = =

When Vince Gilligan wrote " Hungry " , he wanted to try a " different " approach to The X @-@ Files . Accordingly , he decided to write an episode that featured Mulder and Scully as the antagonists , as viewed through the eyes of the monster . Series creator Chris Carter applauded this idea and called it a " really great monster show . " Gilligan 's intention was for the monster to resonate with the audience . He wrote the part specifically so that the monster would be relatable . He later said , " My intention [?] was that at the end , when Mulder and Scully show up and kill the monster , to have the audience out there hoping that they would not show up . "

Chad Donella was cast as the lead monster because he possessed a " subtle , interesting quality , " according to casting director Rick Millikan . Director Kim Manners latter described Donella as a " great little actor . " Duchovny 's stunt double , Steve Kiziak played the role of the private detective ? also called Steve Kiziak ? that Roberts kills and eats . Kiziak later said , " It was a lot of fun to be in front of the camera . " Kiziak had first appeared as Duchovny 's body double in the third season episode " 2Shy , " and would later appear as a Mulder lookalike in " Fight Club . "

= = = Filming and location = = =

As both David Duchovny and Gillian Anderson were filming movies , Return to Me and The House of Mirth respectively , the production company decided to film " Hungry " before any of the other episodes , despite the fact that it would be aired third , after " The Sixth Extinction " arc . This allowed Duchovny and Anderson to film their scenes and complete their movies with relatively little hassle . Several of the finished scenes show Mulder and Scully together , but many of these scenes were created with stand @-@ ins and doubles because of the stars ' busy schedules . Duchovny and Anderson were only available for two combined days of filming for this episode .

When it came time to design the sets , the production team found the Lucky Boy Burger restaurant to be relatively easy to create . Originally , the name of the restaurant was supposed to be Burgerlishious , but the restaurant location that was considered ideal had a " Lucky Boy " sign that could not be removed . Later , the design department faced a challenge in creating Roberts ' apartment , because the script didn 't give a detailed account of what it was to look like .

= = Broadcast and reception = =

" Hungry " first aired in the United States on November 21 , 1999 . This episode earned a Nielsen rating of 9 @. @ 6 , with a 14 share , meaning that roughly 9 @. @ 6 percent of all television @- @ equipped households , and 14 percent of households watching television , were tuned in to the episode . It was viewed by 16 @. @ 17 million viewers . The episode aired in the United Kingdom and Ireland on Sky1 on April 2 , 2000 and received 0 @. @ 68 million viewers , making it the seventh most watched episode that week . Fox promoted the episode with the tagline " Taste the terror tonight ! "

The episode received mixed to positive reviews from critics . 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 , calling the premise " Dexter a decade early . " The two concluded that " the sympathy that Donella gives Rob as he shows his true colours is very touching . [...] The final moments [of the episode] are a typically smart touch to this neglected gem of a story . " Paul Goebel of TV Squad listed Rob Roberts among his favorite X @- @ Files monsters . Rich Rosell from Digitally Obsessed awarded the episode 3 @. @ 5 out of 5 stars and wrote that the episode features a " great setup , but the climax leaves the usual open @- @ ended questions . " Zack Handlen on The A.V. Club called the episode " perfectly acceptable " and awarded it a " B + " . He was pleased with the episode 's unique format , calling it a " good gimmick " that made an otherwise " forgettable at best " episode ? had it been constructed in the typical fashion of The X @- @ Files ? into a memorable one . He was also positive towards the episode 's use of humor , noting that it " is very much on target " . Handlen , however , felt that the story showed the series ' tiredness and did not possess much suspense to keep the watcher completely engaged .

Paula Vitaris from Cinefantastique gave the episode a more mixed review and awarded it two stars out of four . She noted that the episode " suffers from a syndrome that has afflicted a great many X @- @ Files episodes in recent seasons [?] the syndrome consists of the audience finding out early on who the guilty party is . " Vitaris , however , did note that the episode 's " saving grace " was Vince Gilligan 's satiric writing tone ; she called the scene featuring Roberts hallucinating that the burgers he was frying were actually brains " sick , but hilarious " . Other reviews were more negative . Kenneth Silber from Space.com was critical of the episode , noting that , although the change in perspective was unique and interesting , " this bit of originality does not rescue the episode from a familiarity bordering on the mundane . It 's not the first time we have seen genetic mutants who have an affinity for human body parts . " Tom Kessenich , in his book *Examinations* , gave the episode a relatively negative review . Despite noting that the episode wasn 't a " horrible " entry for The X @- @ Files , Kessenich was unhappy with the characterization of Rob Roberts as well as the fact that the killer was revealed very quickly .