

= Schizogeny =

" Schizogeny " is the ninth episode of the fifth season of the science fiction television series The X @-@ Files . It premiered on the Fox network on January 11 , 1998 . It was written by Jessica Scott and Mike Wollaeger , directed by Ralph Hemecker , and featured guest appearances by Bob Dawson , Myles Ferguson , Katharine Isabelle , Chad Lindberg , and Sarah @-@ Jane Redmond . The episode is a " Monster @-@ of @-@ the @-@ Week " story , unconnected to the series ' wider mythology . " Schizogeny " earned a Nielsen household rating of 12 @. @ 9 , being watched by 21 @. @ 37 million people in its initial broadcast . The episode received mixed to negative reviews , with several critics calling it the worst episode of The X @-@ Files .

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 become convinced that a greater evil may be lurking in the community when a teenager is suspected of murdering his father .

" Schizogeny " , written by first @-@ year staff writers Scott and Wollaeger , became humorously known as " The Killer Tree Episode " amongst the cast and crew . Many of the scenes shot for " Schizogeny " were filmed on a real orchard named Hazelgrove Farms near the small town of Fort Langley , British Columbia . The episode utilized various post @-@ production techniques , in order to clear up vocal issues and to censor one line , which Fox 's standards and practices department had issues with .

= = Plot = =

In Coats Grove , Michigan , teenager Bobby Rich is berated by his stepfather Phil for not finishing his lawn work outside the house . Bobby runs into a nearby orchard and Phil gives chase . When Bobby 's mother , Patti , follows them into the orchard , she discovers Phil 's body partially buried , seemingly drowned in mud . Kneeling beside Phil is Bobby , his eyes wide with terror .

Fox Mulder ( David Duchovny ) and Dana Scully ( Gillian Anderson ) are assigned to the case . At the scene , Scully hypothesizes that Bobby dug the pit that trapped his stepfather , and speculates that he had an accomplice . Patti tells Scully that , from her point of view , it appeared as if Bobby was attempting to help Phil out of the orchard pit when he died . She also reveals that her son has anger management issues and has been undergoing therapy for several years . When Mulder and Scully meet with Bobby 's therapist , Karin Matthews , she describes Bobby as the victim of physical abuse . Mulder expresses his belief that Bobby is not to blame for Phil 's death .

Bobby tells a fellow student , Lisa Baiocchi , that she must stand up to her overbearing father just as he had done with Phil . When Lisa returns home , a window explodes and a shadowy , arm @-@ like appendage grabs her father by the throat after he demands she stop seeing Bobby . His lifeless body is discovered lying on the ground outside the house . Though Scully concludes that Mr. Baiocchi died as the result of being pushed out the window , Mulder discovers evidence suggesting he was pulled out by an outside force . Later , the agents learn that Lisa is another one of Karin Matthews ' patients .

Mulder finds a small splinter of fresh wood embedded in Mr. Baiocchi 's neck , and matches the fragment to a tree outside the Baiocchi home . A short time later , the agents are approached by a man named Ramirez , who claims that the trees are all dying because of a " very bad man . " Meanwhile , Karin invites Lisa to stay at her home until her aunt can pick her up the following day . As Lisa listens from her bedroom , she overhears an argument between Karin and a male voice . When she descends into Karin 's root cellar , she discovers the skeletal body of a man . Terrified , Lisa turns towards the door , only to have the door close and lock .

Mulder discovers that Karin 's father was pulled from the mud of an orchard twenty years earlier . Ramirez tells him that the death brought about an end of a blight affecting the trees . Later , Mulder digs up Mr. Matthews ' casket and finds it filled with roots , his body missing . When Lisa 's aunt , Linda , arrives at Karin 's house to retrieve her niece , she is attacked and killed by an unseen force

as tree branches sway in the wind above her . Karin enters the root cellar , and is revealed to be the source of the male voice Lisa heard earlier , due to her having Dissociative personality disorder brought on by abuse from her own father .

When Mulder and Scully search Karin 's house , they come upon the corpse ? belonging to Karin 's father ? in the root cellar . They then find Lisa , frightened but unharmed , in the kitchen . Karin drives to Bobby 's house and chases him into the orchard . Suddenly , Bobby is dragged downward into the mud . While attempting to rescue the teenager , Mulder simultaneously encourages Karin to break the cycle and to fight the voice inside her head . A tendon @-@ like root snakes out of the mud and begins to drag Mulder downward . Ramirez appears , his axe in hand , and decapitates Karin , killing her . Mulder and Bobby are released by the unseen force .

= = Production = =

= = = Conception and writing = = =

" Schizogeny " was written by first @-@ year staff writers Jessica Scott and Mike Wollaeger , who had previously worked on The X @-@ Files in non @-@ writing jobs . Due to the episode 's tree @-@ based conceit , it eventually became known as " The Killer Tree Episode " amongst the cast and crew . Executive producer Frank Spotnitz noted that " Schizogeny " underwent an abnormally lengthy writing process and was edited several times . He later said that the episode " went through many , many incarnations and versions . " The title is a reference to the scientific term for asexual reproduction .

= = = Casting = = =

When it came time to cast the character of Bobby Rich , Chad Lindberg , who played a cystic fibrosis sufferer on the medical drama ER , was chosen . Katharine Isabelle , who portrayed Lisa Baiocchi , was the daughter of Graeme Murray , the production designer for The X @-@ Files . Kate Robbins , who portrayed Lisa 's aunt Linda , had previously appeared in the third season episode " D.P.O. "

Several lines in the episode were re @-@ recorded . During post @-@ production , editors feared that Rich 's mumbly voice would make it hard for viewers to understand what he was saying , so he was brought back in to re @-@ record his dialogue , which was then dubbed over the footage . In addition , during the scene wherein Mulder tells Scully that Bobby 's nickname at school , the original version featured Mulder audibly saying " Dickweed . " Fox 's standards and practices department made the show change the name to " Dorkweed , " which required David Duchovny to re @-@ dub his line .

= = = Set and score = = =

Many of the scenes shot for " Schizogeny " were filmed on a real orchard named Hazelgrove Farms near the small town of Fort Langley , British Columbia . Other shots , mostly involving the sinking mud scenes , were shot on a soundstage at Lion 's Gate Studios that was fitted with over 200 hazelnut trees . The mud pit was made out of a large tank filled with peat moss , mud , and water . The mixture was heated so that the actors would not be uncomfortable during the sinking scenes . The shot that called for Karin Matthews ' lifeless body to sink into the mud required a stunt woman to be slowly lowered into the pit . The crew found it necessary to supply her oxygen during the shot because of the depth of the pit . Toby Lindala and her art department created all of the props used in the episode , including the moving tree roots and the skeletal remains of Karin Matthews ' father .

Several of the sets were chosen because of their proximity to large trees . Lisa 's house , for instance , was built next to a large willow . An additional tree limb that was more than twenty feet long was attached to the real tree to give it a more menacing feel . The tree limb that attacked

Mulder 's car was a branch of a massive tree that had fallen on a nearby plot of public land . The producers secured permission from the Canadian government and hoisted the tree with a crane and then dropped it onto a former police cruiser . Nigel Habgood , the series car coordinator , was able to refurbish the cruiser and it was later used in the episode " Kill Switch . " Mark Snow , composer for the series , was particularly proud of the music he wrote for the episode , noting that the story was a " dark tale with a wonderful aura about it . " He credits this ominous feel to woodwind instruments .

= = Broadcast and reception = =

" Schizogeny " premiered on the Fox network on January 11 , 1998 . This episode earned a Nielsen rating of 12 @. @ 9 , with a 19 share , meaning that roughly 12 @. @ 9 percent of all television @-@ equipped households , and 19 percent of households watching television , were tuned in to the episode . It was viewed by 21 @. @ 37 million viewers .

The episode received mixed to negative reviews from critics , with several reviewers dubbing it one of the worst episodes of the series . Francis Dass of the New Straits Times Press referred to it as " one of the weaker episodes " of the fifth season . The A.V. Club reviewer Todd VanDerWerff gave " Schizogeny " a D ? , and wrote that " ' Schizogeny ' just might be the very worst episode of The X @-@ Files " , noting that " the tone [ of the episode ] is off . " Furthermore , VanDerWerff felt that " the more Scott and Wollaeger try to continue explaining this and tie it into the idea of child abuse , the less it attains any of the power or tragedy they want it to have . " Starpulse , in a run @-@ down of the best and worst episodes and villains of the series , named the killer trees the worst monster @-@ of @-@ the @-@ week and wrote , " [ Schizogeny ] proved that even the X @-@ Files ' writers can come up completely dry on their scary creeps sometimes . " Critical Myth 's John Keegan gave the episode 4 / 10 , and , while praising the " interesting concept " of the episode , concluded that it was filled with " odd inconsistencies , [ and ] is definitely not one of the better episodes of the season . " 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 three @-@ and @-@ a @-@ half stars out of five . The two wrote positively of the first part of the episode noting that " director Ralph Hemecker [ brings ] the eeriness to the fore , and [ makes ] this a more honest @-@ to @-@ truth scary slice of X @-@ File than has been offered in ages . " Shearman and Pearson , however , argued that the episode 's references to Psycho and its " lack of explanation " result in the episode approaching " nonsense . " Paula Vitaris from Cinefantastique gave the episode a mixed review and awarded it two stars out of four . She wrote that , " the plot of ' Schizogeny ' is more tangled than the episode 's paranormal root system , but underneath lies some powerful themes . "