

= This Is Not Happening =

" This Is Not Happening " is the fourteenth episode of the eighth season and the 175th episode overall of the science fiction television series The X @-@ Files . The episode first aired in the United States on February 25 , 2001 on the Fox Network , and subsequently aired in the United Kingdom . It was written by executive producers Chris Carter and Frank Spotnitz , and directed by Kim Manners . The episode received a Nielsen household rating of 9 @.@ 7 and was watched by 16 @.@ 9 million viewers , making it the highest @-@ rated episode of the season . " This Is Not Happening " was received positively by television critics .

The series centers on FBI special agents Dana Scully (Gillian Anderson) and her new partner John Doggett (Robert Patrick) ? following the alien abduction of her former partner , Fox Mulder (David Duchovny) ? who work on cases linked to the paranormal , called X @-@ Files . In this episode , Scully , Doggett , and Walter Skinner (Mitch Pileggi) discover several returned alien abductees . Doggett calls on another agent , Monica Reyes (Annabeth Gish) , to assist the case . Scully ? s fears about finding Mulder come to a head with the sudden recovery of one of the abductees seized at the same time .

" This Is Not Happening " was a story milestone for the season , returning Mulder from his alien abduction which started with " Requiem " . In addition , the episode introduced the character Monica Reyes (Annabeth Gish) , who would become a main character in season nine . Gish 's character was introduced as a possible replacement for Anderson , who was considering leaving the series after the end of the season .

= = Plot = =

In Helena , Montana , Richie Szalay is chasing a spaceship . As the spaceship stops , it dumps a naked female and cloaks itself . The woman is later revealed to be Theresa Hoese , who was abducted the same time as Fox Mulder (David Duchovny) . Walter Skinner (Mitch Pileggi) , John Doggett (Robert Patrick) and Dana Scully (Gillian Anderson) visit Hoese in the hospital to get information about Mulder 's whereabouts .

Later in a motel , they interrogate Szalay , whose friend Gary had been abducted just before Mulder ; Szalay was investigating the UFO reports in Montana in an attempt to find him . Doggett reports that fresh footprints from Nike shoes were noted in the area Hoese was found , making Doggett skeptical about Szalay 's claims to alien sightings . Meanwhile , Jeremiah Smith has assumed the form of a doctor and arranges for Hoese to be transferred . Having learned of Hoese 's disappearance , Doggett calls Agent Monica Reyes (Annabeth Gish) . Reyes assists in the investigation , believing that Mulder may have joined a UFO cult . In a derelict compound , Smith cures Hoese of her injuries , as observed by a man called Absalom .

Reyes ' car stalls just before she sees a UFO . Stopping , she sees Smith and Absalom taking a body . She also finds Gary 's body . Reyes is able to retrieve the license plate number on the truck used to kidnap the abductee . It is later revealed that it belongs to Travis Clayton Moberly , better known as Absalom , the leader of a doomsday cult . The FBI storms the cult 's compound , and arrests Absalom , but Smith is not found . Absalom tells Scully and Doggett that he has been saving abductees that had been left for dead by the aliens . Examining video of the compound raid , Scully , Reyes and Doggett watch Smith step through a doorway and transform into Agent Doggett . Doggett is stunned , and the agents realize that Smith is still in the compound .

Scully runs into the cult compound and , identifying Smith by his Nike shoes , tells him she knows who he is and what he 's doing . She is distracted when Skinner tells her they 've found Mulder 's body in the woods . Scully sees Mulder 's lifeless body and races back to the compound hoping that Smith can heal him , but a UFO directs a beam of light into the room where he is being held ; when she enters the room , he is gone . Distraught , Scully yells , " This is not happening ! " , and weeps .

= = Production = =

== Background and effects ==

" This Is Not Happening " marked the return of David Duchovny as Fox Mulder . After settling his contract dispute with Fox , Duchovny had quit full @-@ time participation in the show after the seventh season . In order to explain Mulder 's absence , Duchovny 's character was abducted by aliens in the seventh season finale , " Requiem . " After several rounds of contractual discussions , Duchovny agreed to return for a total of 11 season eight episodes . " This Is Not Happening " marked the fifth appearance of Duchovny in the eighth season : his character had appeared in cameos in " Within " and " Without " , as well as in flashbacks in " The Gift " and " Per Manum . "

The opening scene required the crew of The X @-@ Files to create a UFO chase . In order to do this , the scene was filmed entirely in a mountainous area that was lit up to give the shot a more alien @-@ like feel . The UFO that seen flying at the opening of the scene was actually a helicopter , disguised using various techniques . A so @-@ called " cloaking @-@ effect " , created on a computer and consisting mostly of digital fog and " wiggled lights " , was used to make the " spaceship " appear and then suddenly disappear .

== Casting ==

This episode marked the first appearance of Monica Reyes , played by Annabeth Gish , who would become a main character in season nine . The character was developed and introduced due to Gillian Anderson 's possible departure at the end of the eighth season . Although Anderson would remain on until the end , Gish later became a series regular . When creating the character , series creator Chris Carter wanted to give the character a personality who had much in common with both Fox Mulder and Dana Scully . At the same time , however , Carter wanted the character to be different from Scully 's character in a way that Doggett was different from Mulder , saying , " as much as Robert Patrick was unlike Mulder , we needed someone who was equally unlike Scully . " Gish later noted that , " Chris really wanted Monica to be a sunny force , which is hard to play sometimes . But it 's a natural instinct for me ; I can find happiness in the midst of darkness . "

The casting process for Monica Reyes was unconventional . Gish received a call from her agent , who informed her that The X @-@ Files were looking for a new female character . Gish applied for the part , but instead of having to do a reading , she only had to meet with Chris Carter and Frank Spotnitz . After receiving the part , Gish 's first shot was scheduled four in the morning ; her first scene in the episode was to run down a hill to discover a former abductee .

== Reception ==

" This Is Not Happening " premiered on February 25 , 2001 on American television on Fox . The episode earned a Nielsen household rating of 9 @. 7 , meaning that it was seen by 9 @. 7 % of the nation 's estimated households . It was watched by 9 @. 91 million households and 16 @. 9 million viewers , making it the highest @-@ rated episode of the season , as well as the highest @-@ rated episode of the series since the seventh season episode " The Sixth Extinction " . Fox promoted the episode with the tagline " Tonight , the search for Mulder ends . " The episode was nominated for an Primetime Emmy for Outstanding Cinematography for a Single @-@ Camera Series . The episode was later included on The X @-@ Files Mythology , Volume 4 ? Super Soldiers , a DVD collection that contains episodes involved with the alien super soldiers arc .

Critical reception to " This Is Not Happening " was mostly positive . Todd VanDerWerff of The A. V. Club awarded the episode a " A ? " and called it " one of the strongest episodes of the season , give or take a Monica Reyes . " He applauded the reintroduction of Jeremiah Smith ? a character he felt " the show had mostly forgotten about " ? and wrote highly of Scott as Absalom , calling him a " one of the episode 's highlights . " VanDerWerff also wrote that the episode , along with the previous episode " Per Manum " was a showcase for Anderson 's acting ability . 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 . The two noted , and praised , that the true tragedy of the episode is the fact that , despite her increased role as the reluctant believer , the way Scully deals with Absalom and Jeremiah Smith " in a strictly scientific way " , instead of taking the " leap of faith " , prevents her from finding and saving Mulder in time .

Not all reviews were positive . Paula Vitaris from Cinefantastique gave the episode a negative review and awarded it one @-@ and @-@ a @-@ half stars out of four . She called the episode " unexciting " and concluded that the final scene was " anti @-@ climactic " . In addition , Vitaris noted that the introduction of Monica Reyes was not satisfactorily explained .