

= Underneath (The X @-@ Files) =

" Underneath " is the twelfth episode of the ninth season of the American science fiction television series The X @-@ Files . The episode first aired in the United States on March 31 , 2002 on the Fox network . The episode was written and directed by executive producer John Shiban . The episode is a " monster @-@ of @-@ the @-@ week " episode , a stand @-@ alone plot which is unconnected to the mythology , or overarching fictional history , of The X @-@ Files . The episode earned a Nielsen rating of 4 @.@ 4 and was viewed by 4 @.@ 64 million households and 7 @.@ 3 million viewers . It received mixed reviews from critics .

The show centers on FBI special agents who work on cases linked to the paranormal , called X @-@ Files ; this season focuses on the investigations of John Doggett (Robert Patrick) , Monica Reyes (Annabeth Gish) , and Dana Scully (Gillian Anderson) . In this episode , Doggett is determined to find an error in the DNA evidence that freed the convicted Robert Fassel , the " Screwdriver Killer " , whom he nearly caught in the act 13 years earlier . In the end , it is revealed that Fassel has a mental condition that splits him into two parts : the religious innocent and the vengeful killer .

" Underneath " marked the directorial debut of Shiban , who had been a writer for the series for several seasons . Reportedly , the episode contained " so many problems " that the Fox executives nearly refused to allow the finished product to air . At the last minute , however , they relented , and allowed the episode to be aired later on in the season , several weeks after its intended air date . Shiban originally wanted to film the sewer scenes in Los Angeles ' actual sewer system , but due to the events of September 11 , a sewer mock @-@ up was built on Stage 11 at the Fox studios .

= = Plot = =

Thirteen years before the present , Robert Fassel (W. Earl Brown) sits in his van . He later approaches a home and claims to be there to repair the cable . As Fassel holds up a piece of paper to show it to the family who called for the repair , blood spatter splashes across the paper . He looks up and sees the house 's occupants with slit throats in pools of blood . Abruptly , two police officers burst into the house and apprehend Fassel . One of the officers who goes to check out the kitchen , turns to reveal he is John Doggett (Robert Patrick) as a young NYPD officer .

In the present , Monica Reyes (Annabeth Gish) discusses Fassel 's release ? due to DNA evidence ? with an outraged Doggett . Dana Scully (Gillian Anderson) confirms that the test results conclusively disprove Fassel as the killer . Meanwhile , in court , Fassel notices a mysterious Bearded Man . After being released , he stays in a room belonging to his lawyer , Jana Fain , where he clutches a Rosary beads and prays frantically . When the Bearded Man appears , Fassel begs for the man not to hurt her . While Fain is unharmed , Fassel learns that the housekeeper , Mrs. Dowdy , has gone missing . Fassel finds her body , cleans up the blood , and dismembers her remains to cover up what has happened .

Scully tells Doggett that while the DNA test disproves Fassel 's culpability , it implicates a possible blood relative ; Fassel , however , is an only child . Reyes proposes that the murders are being conducted by an entity rather than a person . Meanwhile , Fassel approaches Assistant District Attorney Damon Kaylor and begs to be sent back to prison . Kaylor refuses , but is killed by the Bearded Man . After hearing of Kaylor 's disappearance , Reyes theorizes that Fassel 's piety and his unwillingness to acknowledge his darker half has given him the unwanted ability to physically change into another , more violent person .

The Bearded Man demands that Fassel kill Fain , beating him up when he doesn 't comply . As she tends to Fassel , Fain first sees the Bearded Man in his place . While staking out Fain 's house , the agents see the Bearded Man flee . Doggett pursues the Bearded Man while Reyes finds Fain alive . In the pursuit , Reyes falls through into a sewer , where she finds the remains of the Bearded Man 's victims . After a struggle with the Bearded Man , Doggett ends up apprehending Fassel , much to his confusion . Reyes tries to remind him that it does not matter as long as the case is solved .

= = Production = =

" Underneath " was written and directed by executive producer John Shibban . This marked his directorial debut . According to Shibban , part of the inspiration for the episode was that the series production staff had " actually talked for some time about doing a Jekyll / Hyde story but never quite found a way to do it " until the idea to use DNA came into play . Another inspiration for the episode was the 1949 film *The Third Man* , which featured a climactic chase through a sewage system .

The episode , which explores John Doggett 's backstory as a New York City police officer , was described as containing similar themes as those " explored on the *Millennium* series . " The episode guest @-@ starred Arthur Nascarella , who was a friend of series co @-@ star Robert Patrick . Patrick was essential in getting Nascarella cast on the show ; he later joked " I stole [Nascarella 's] New York accent in *Copland* [sic] and I stole it to do *The X @-@ Files* , but I got him cast in *The X @-@ Files* show . "

As the ninth season progressed and the show 's ratings began to plummet , Fox became more and more actively involved in the show 's style and direction . Although " Underneath " was the twelfth episode aired , it was actually the ninth episode produced during the season ; reportedly , the episode contained " so many problems " that the Fox executives very nearly nixed the finished product . At the last minute , however , they relented , and allowed the episode to be aired later on in the season , several weeks after its intended air date .

Shibban originally wanted to film the sewer scenes in Los Angeles ' actual sewer system , but the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power vetoed the idea and stated that " there 's a moratorium on shooting there since September 11 " , a position that Shibban called " understandable . " In order to make up for this , series art director Corey Kaplan was tasked with building a sewer replica ; she used the blueprints from the 1952 version of *Les Misérables* as an inspiration . Eventually , a complete set was built on Stage 11 at the Fox studios .

= = Reception = =

" Underneath " first aired in the United States on March 31 , 2002 on the Fox network . The episode later debuted in the United Kingdom on February 2 , 2003 on BBC One . The episode earned a Nielsen household rating of 4 @.@ 4 , meaning that it was seen by 4 @.@ 4 % of the nation 's estimated households and was viewed by 4 @.@ 64 million households and over 7 @.@ 3 million viewers . " Underneath " was the 71st most watched episode of television that aired during the week ending March 31 .

The episode received mixed reviews from television critics . Jessica Morgan from *Television Without Pity* gave the episode a B ? rating . John Keegan from *Critical Myth* gave the episode a negative review and called it " easily the worst of the season " . He awarded it a 4 out of 10 and concluded that , " We can only hope that none of the remaining episodes are Shibban @-@ related , and pray that he can do a much better job when he writes for *Enterprise* next 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 , and called the entry " solid and efficient " . The two complimented Shibban 's directorial efforts , noting that " as a director [he] makes ' Underneath ' shine " , but were critical of some of the " trademark X @-@ File moments " , citing " the surprise appearance of a face in the bathroom mirror " and " the climactic fight in a sewer " as examples . Shearman and Pearson , however , wrote positively of Shibban 's realistic depiction of Doggett . M.A. Crang , in his book *Denying the Truth : Revisiting The X @-@ Files after 9 / 11* , wrote that the episode felt " very familiar " but was impressed with the production design on the sewer set .