

= Christmas Carol ( The X @-@ Files ) =

" Christmas Carol " is the sixth episode of the fifth season of American science fiction television series The X @-@ Files . It was written by Vince Gilligan , John Shiban and Frank Spotnitz and directed by Peter Markle . The episode explores the series ' overarching mythology . The episode premiered in the United States on December 7 , 1997 on the Fox network , earning a Nielsen household rating of 12 @. @ 8 and being watched by 20 @. @ 91 million people in its initial broadcast . It received moderately positive reviews from television critics , with many complimenting Gillian Anderson 's performance .

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 , Scully , on Christmas vacation with her family , receives a mysterious phone call that leads her to a case involving a little girl that she believes to be the daughter of her dead sister , Melissa .

" Christmas Carol " is the first of a two @-@ part story that concludes with episode seven , " Emily " . The episode was inspired by the 1951 British film Scrooge , starring Alastair Sim . The young actress who originally played Emily was terrified of the hospital setting in the episode 's sequel " Emily " , and as a result the producers had to recast the role and reshoot all footage featuring her including her scene featured in this episode . Gillian Anderson 's younger sister , Zoe , was chosen to play Scully in a flashback sequence .

= = Plot = =

Dana Scully ( Gillian Anderson ) and her mother visit her brother Bill and his pregnant wife Tara around Christmas time . Scully answers the phone , and the person on the other line , who sounds just like her dead sister Melissa , tells her that someone needs her help . Scully traces the call to a nearby home in San Diego where a group of cops are investigating the suicide of a woman , Roberta Sim . The lead detective , Kresge , tells Scully that it was impossible for Roberta to have dialed , as she died before the telephone call was made . That night after dinner Scully reveals to her mother that due to her abduction and cancer she is unable to bear children . Scully flashes back to when as a child , she hid her pet rabbit from her brother in a lunchbox , only for it to suffocate and die . Scully receives another telephone call from the same person on her cell phone , which was once again made from the Sim home . Roberta 's husband , Marshall , is meeting with two dark @-@ suited men inside his house and has no desire to listen to and help Scully figure out what is going on .

Scully visits Kresge , wanting to look further into Roberta Sim 's suicide , despite the fact that the police think it is a simple suicide . Scully finds a striking resemblance between the Sims ' daughter , Emily , and her sister Melissa from when she was that age . Scully flashes back to a funeral she attended when she was a little girl but imagines Marshall Sim holding her hand . Scully insists on performing an autopsy on Roberta , thinking that she was murdered . Scully finds a needle puncture in Roberta 's foot , causing her to believe that she was anesthetized and her suicide was staged . The police search the Sim 's house and find a used hypodermic needle , which Marshall claims was used for injecting the anemic Emily with treatment . Scully spots the dark @-@ suited men watching from a nearby car . Scully receives DNA data on Melissa , and matching it up to Emily 's finds them nearly identical , causing her to believe that Emily is Melissa 's daughter . Scully believes that Melissa gave birth to her while on the west coast and gave her up for adoption without ever telling the rest of the family . Scully flashes back to when she and Melissa were teenagers and were given cross necklaces from their mother for Christmas .

Kresge comes to see Scully , telling her that the Sims received several large payments from a pharmaceutical company , Prangen Industries . The two visit Dr. Calderon , who tells them that Emily was part of clinical trials and that Roberta was paid the money to keep her from pulling Emily from the program . Marshall Sim is arrested for the murder of his wife . Scully visits Emily and gives her the cross necklace . Marshall confesses soon after , but is found dead in his cell shortly after

being visited by the two dark @-@ suited men . Bill shows Scully a photo of Melissa , who is clearly not pregnant , shortly before Emily was born , which he thinks proves that she isn 't Emily 's mother . Scully meets with someone from an adoptive agency , wanting to adopt Emily . The woman is very hesitant considering Scully 's job and the fact that Emily is a special needs child . Scully flashes back to talking with Melissa around Christmas time shortly before she joined the FBI . On Christmas morning Scully receives the results of a DNA test from the FBI proving that Melissa is not Emily 's mother ? she is .

= = Production = =

= = = Writing = = =

During the second week of October 1997 , David Duchovny was scheduled to be away from Vancouver for promotional purposes for the movie *Playing God* . As a result , the producers delayed shooting of the episode " The Post @-@ Modern Prometheus " and developed a Scully @-@ centric episode to take its place in the queue . With the episode scheduled to air during December , Vince Gilligan , John Shiban , and Frank Spotnitz decided to craft a Christmas episode and put Dana Scully into a situation similar to that of Scrooge in the 1951 film *Scrooge* , starring Alastair Sim . After failing to write an episode paralleling that story , the writers decided instead to feature Scully being visited by earlier versions of herself , resulting in the flashback sequences appearing in the episode . They also decided to have her be taken on an emotional journey by her descendant .

= = = Filming = = =

The young actress who originally played Emily was terrified of the hospital setting in the episode 's sequel " Emily " , and as a result the producers had to recast the role and reshoot all footage featuring her including her scene featured in this episode . The show 's casters replaced her with Lauren Diwold , who had previously appeared on an episode of *Millennium* . Due to the show 's shooting schedule , the producers were unable to use Gillian Anderson to reshoot the necessary scenes in " Christmas Carol " , resulting in Anderson 's double being used instead , with the footage pieced together in the editing room .

Props specialist Ken Hawryliw claimed the biggest challenge in producing the episode was finding Christmas paper from the 1980s for the flashback sequences . Casting director Corrine Mays had difficulty finding an actress to play Dana Scully 's 1976 self before executive producer Robert Goodwin came up with the idea of using Gillian Anderson 's fourteen @-@ year @-@ old sister Zoë for the role . Gillian Anderson , while liking the finalized episode , believed that she never was able to capture the complex relationship between herself and Emily , stating : " I felt in the end that I was a little low energy , a little too melancholy . It was hard to find the right attitude for Scully in dealing with a child that 's apparently hers ; to find the right flavor of relationship to her and this disease she 's going through , all mixed up with the aspect of the paranormal . " Anderson also admitted that another issue she had was that " she had no history with this child " so she was unable to " play the kind of attachment I would feel if my own daughter , Piper , were going through the same thing .

= = Reception = =

" Christmas Carol " premiered on the Fox network on December 7 , 1997 . This episode earned a Nielsen rating of 12 @. @ 8 , with a 19 share , meaning that roughly 12 @. @ 8 percent of all television @-@ equipped households , and 19 percent of households watching television , were tuned in to the episode . It was viewed by 20 @. @ 91 million viewers .

The episode received moderately positive reviews from television critics . Zack Handlen from *The A.V. Club* gave the episode an A and called it " generally a terrific episode " . Handlen wrote that he was " delighted to get another Scully @-@ centric episode [ especially ] one that doesn 't end up

with her looking pale and deathly in a hospital bed . " Despite his approval of the script , he slightly criticized the series for writing Scully @-@ centric episodes based solely on the idea that " something is being done to her " as opposed to against or with her . John Keegan from Critical Myth gave the episode an 8 out of 10 , and wrote " Overall , this episode was an interesting and uncommon in @-@ depth look at Scully 's psychology . The writers rarely had such an opportunity , and along with Gillian Anderson , they run with the opportunity . The religious metaphor is a bit thick throughout , but this is actually a bit more subtle than would become the norm . Making the child sick works for the mythology , but in a lot of ways , it seems like a plot contrivance . "

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 four @-@ and @-@ a @-@ half stars out of five . The two wrote that the script was " really sharp " and features " natural dialogue " that disguises the stumbles in the character study . Shearman and Pearson also praised Anderson 's performance , calling it " terrific " and noted that her acting " hint [ ed ] years before it happens to the relationship Anderson will enjoy with Robert Patrick " , the actor who would go on to portray agent John Doggett . Matt Hurwitz and Chris Knowles , in their book The Complete X @-@ Files called the episode " a showcase for Gillian Anderson 's startling acting chops . "

Paula Vitaris from Cinefantastique , on the other hand , gave the episode a negative review and awarded it one @-@ and @-@ a @-@ half stars out of four . She described the episode as " one [ where ] disbelief isn 't suspended so much as hung by the neck until dead " . She heavily derided the episode 's " overnight DNA tests " , " helpful couriers that deliver the results at Christmas " , and the fact that Scully fills out an adoption paper and is visited by a Social Service agent on Christmas Eve .