

= Empedocles (The X @-@ Files) =

" Empedocles " is the seventeenth episode of the eighth season of the American science fiction television series The X @-@ Files . It premiered on the Fox network on April 22 , 2001 . The episode was written by Greg Walker and directed by Barry K. Thomas . " Empedocles " is a " Monster @-@ of @-@ the @-@ Week " story , unconnected to the series ' wider mythology . The episode received a Nielsen rating of 7 @. @ 3 and was viewed by 7 @. @ 46 million households and over 12 @. @ 46 million viewers . Overall , the episode received mixed reviews from critics .

The show centers on FBI special agents Fox Mulder (David Duchovny) , Dana Scully (Gillian Anderson) and John Doggett (Robert Patrick) , who work on cases linked to the paranormal , called X @-@ Files . In this episode , Monica Reyes (Annabeth Gish) enlists Mulder ? s help investigating a killer ? s connection to the unsolved murder of Doggett ? s son , but Mulder soon finds himself clashing with Doggett .

" Empedocles " was named after the famed Greek pre @-@ Socratic philosopher of the same name . The episode marked the return of Special Agent Monica Reyes , who was first introduced in the earlier season eight episode " This is Not Happening " . Reyes would later become Doggett 's partner , in the show 's ninth season . The episode included an elaborate special effects sequence wherein actor Jay Underwood rips off his face to reveal fire underneath his skin , which was created via green screen technology .

= = Plot = =

In New Orleans , Jeb Larold Dukes is fired from his job . After he leaves the office , Jeb witnesses a car chase which ends in a fiery crash . A burning figure that only Jeb can see emerges from the wreck and seems to merge with him . Jeb , now possessed by the being , returns to his office to fatally shoot his boss and co @-@ workers .

Monica Reyes (Annabeth Gish) arrives at the crime scene and meets NOPD detective Franklin Potter , who has called her in out of his belief that the murders are related to satanism . Reyes merely answers the detective that it was not devil worship , and that the killer probably was under stress . As she is leaving , she witnesses one of the bodies carbonize into a charred corpse in front of her , only to have it revert to normal .

Fox Mulder (David Duchovny) takes a pregnant Dana Scully (Gillian Anderson) to the hospital when she doubles over in pain . There , Reyes phones him to ask about the case , but Mulder cedes to the authority of John Doggett (Robert Patrick) , who is formally running the X @-@ Files . However , Reyes says she can 't call Doggett since it is about him . Meanwhile , Jeb is in a hotel room in Georgia trying to shoot himself in the head . Suddenly , he notices something wrong with his face ; he claws at his face , peeling away the skin to reveal burning embers beneath the skin .

Mulder and Reyes meet in an FBI records room , where she divulges the story about the death of Doggett ? s son , Luke : years ago , when Doggett ? s son disappeared , the FBI were called in to investigate . Reyes was one of the agents on the case . They never found the killer , and when they discovered Luke ? s body , both Reyes and Doggett saw it transform into ashes instantly . Reyes says that Doggett has spent the last few years convincing himself he did not see it . Reyes believes it was a psychic clue , and now with the other crime scene , she has seen it again .

Doggett soon attacks Mulder for looking into his son 's case , but Reyes explains why they are investigating . She reveals that Bob Harvey , a suspect in Luke 's murder , died in the car crash in New Orleans . Reyes stresses her vision 's importance , but Doggett dismisses it . Reyes goes to visit Jeb 's sister , Katha , and learns he did not know Bob Harvey . While Reyes is there , Katha receives a call from Jeb , but tells him to call later . As Jeb leaves the phone booth , he kills a female motorist . Meanwhile , Doggett learns from Scully that she has suffered a placental abruption . He asks her what made her start to believe in the paranormal . She says she realized she was ? afraid to believe . ? Scully later tells Mulder to keep trying to help Doggett .

As Doggett approaches the body of Jeb 's latest victim , he has a flashback of when he found Luke 's body . Doggett storms off , but Reyes refuses to let it go , finally revealing her theory : she

believes that the boy 's murder was part of a ? thread of evil , ? an interconnected series of terrible events . Meanwhile , Katha returns home with her daughter and finds Jeb there . He insists that it wasn 't him who committed the murder , and pleads to his sister for help . Katha calls the agents and tries to separate her daughter from Jeb , but he realizes what she is planning and uses his niece as a hostage . Before Jeb can shoot Doggett , Reyes incapacitates him with a round to the throat .

Doggett finally embraces the memory of his vision . Mulder tells him that when he worked in violent crimes and saw the horrible things people did , he began to think of evil like a disease that infected people . Some lack immunity to this disease of evil because of some tragedy in their lives . Jeb dies while Reyes and Katha are in the room . After the doctors leave , Katha ? s eyes glow , much like Jeb 's . She hits Reyes over the head with an oxygen tank and takes her gun . Before she can execute Reyes for killing her brother , Doggett appears and wrestles her to the ground .

= = Production = =

= = = Writing = = =

The episode was written by Greg Walker and directed by Barry K. Thomas , marking his directoral debut . The episode takes its title from the famed Greek pre @-@ Socratic philosopher of the same name . Empedocles believed that out of the four classic elements ? earth , wind , fire , and water ? fire was the most superior . According to legend , in order to become a god , Empedocles threw himself into a volcano in Mount Etna . As such , Empedocles is often associated with fire .

The episode marked the return of Special Agent Monica Reyes , who was first introduced in the earlier season eight episode " This is Not Happening " . Although Reyes would later become Doggett 's partner , the series attempted to differentiate the Doggett / Reyes relationship from the Mulder / Scully relationship . Robert Patrick later noted , " We 're not going to try to duplicate [the Mulder and Scully relationship] , we 're not going to try to regenerate the magic chemistry . "

= = = Special effects = = =

In order to create the " Lava Face " effect , actor Jay Underwood 's face was painted green . A mask with pre @-@ cut slits was then placed over the skin . Underwood then tore the mask off of his own face , revealing streaks of the green coloring . A matte of the scene was then cut and various fire effects were placed into Underwood 's face via green screen technology . In order to make the " cracks " appear , digital technology was created to " smooth over " the skin and then slowly reveal the pre @-@ cut slits . Producer Paul Rabwin later joked that Underwood " had fire for brains " .

= = Reception = =

" Empedocles " first aired on Fox on April 22 , 2001 . The episode earned a Nielsen household rating of 7 @.@ 3 , meaning that it was seen by 7 @.@ 3 % of the nation 's estimated households . The episode was viewed by 7 @.@ 46 million households and over 12 @.@ 46 million viewers . The episode ranked as the 40th most @-@ watched episode for the week ending April 22 . The episode subsequently aired in the United Kingdom on the BBC Two on July 28 , 2002 . Fox promoted the episode with the tagline " The murder of Doggett 's son is about to become an X @-@ file . "

Critical reception to the episode was mostly mixed . 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 noted that the " X @-@ File in itself is an interesting concept , but left frustratingly vague . " Shearman and Pearson , however , did positively write that the episode is " a character study which gives its new leads some background and depth and , better yet , somewhere new to develop . " VanDerWerff later awarded

the episode an "C + " and wrote that "there are a lot of things to like in ? Empedocles , ? but the central conceit is just too stupid for the episode as a whole to work . " While he enjoyed the " way that [the episode] features all four FBI agents in the same episode " , he was critical of both the plot and the Mulder and Scully dynamic , noting that it fell flat .

Paula Vitaris from Cinefantastique gave the episode a negative review and awarded it one @-@ and @-@ a @-@ half stars out of four . She criticized several of the plot points in the episode , most notably how a " big @-@ city " New Orleans detective could mistake Marilyn Manson CDs as signs of blatant satanic imagery . Vitaris further criticized the " sidelined " behavior of Scully and the " shoehorned " characterization of Reyes . Tom Kessenich , in his book Examinations , wrote a largely negative review of the episode . He criticized the down @-@ sized role Mulder and Scully played in the episode , noting that they had been " reduced to mere footnotes " . Furthermore , Kessenich reasoned that , by trying to " prep for [a] future " of just Doggett and Reyes and " [connect] to the past " with Mulder and Scully , the episode ultimately " served to remind us how Doggett and Reyes pale in comparison to the magic of Mulder and Scully . "

Not all reviews were negative . Television Without Pity writer Jessica Morgan rated the episode a B ? . Sarah Stegall awarded the episode five stars out of five and noted " Being dead has done wonders for Fox Mulder . " Stegall concluded that the episode " is one of the best episodes of the new era . Mulder and Scully get one last chance to remind us why we will miss them , and Doggett and Reyes get a chance to earn their stripes . [...] If this is the season where the torch gets passed , it 's good to see that it 's got one last flare in it . "