

= Invocation (The X @-@ Files) =

" Invocation " is the fifth episode of the eighth season of the American science fiction television series The X @-@ Files . It premiered on the Fox network on December 3 , 2000 . The episode was written by David Amman and directed by Richard Compton . " Invocation " is a " Monster @-@ of @-@ the @-@ Week " story , unconnected to the series ' wider mythology . The episode received a Nielsen rating of 8 @.@ 2 and was viewed by 13 @.@ 9 million viewers . Overall , the episode received mixed reviews from 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 , a little boy mysteriously reappears after having been kidnapped for ten years . However , he has not aged one bit after his disappearance . While the case stirs up painful memories for Doggett , suspicion stirs that the boy is not all he seems .

" Invocation " would introduce both the character of Luke Doggett , the deceased son of John Doggett , as well as a story arc involving his father trying to solve his murder . A majority of the episode was filmed in Pasadena , California .

= = Plot = =

In 1990 , Billy Underwood goes missing at a school fair in Dexter , Oklahoma . Ten years later , Billy 's mother Lisa Underwood arrives at the local elementary school to find the principal and staff waiting for her . Billy has mysteriously re @-@ appeared at the school , but doesn 't seem to have aged in the decade he was missing .

Dana Scully (Gillian Anderson) and John Doggett (Robert Patrick) arrive at the police station to see Billy . Doggett interviews the boy , who seems to be mute . In attempt to get Billy to speak , Doggett keeps his backpack from him . This infuriates Lisa and leads Scully to question Doggett ? s expertise in child abduction cases . Scully suggests that Billy is an alien abductee , but Doggett believes Ronald Purnell , a local delinquent , may have been involved in the boy 's disappearance . Doggett questions Purnell , who expresses confusion when the agent suggests that he should meet Billy . As Doggett sits in his car , he pulls out a photo of his deceased son , Luke .

When Billy is returned home , his brother and father are uneasy about his presence ; Lisa is blind to these problems . While Lisa and her husband argue about Billy , he goes into his brother ? s room with a knife . The next morning , Lisa finds a bloody knife in his brother 's bed , although the boy is unscathed . Billy stands in the room staring at Josh . Forensic analysis shows the blood to be Billy 's , although there are no injuries on him . The knife bears a symbol that Billy drew while being interrogated by Doggett , which was also drawn by a psychic investigator ten years earlier . Meanwhile , Cal Jeppy shows up at Purnell 's trailer and hassles him . Purnell goes into the woods and digs up a skull . Later , Jeppy blackmails Purnell into silence over something related to Billy .

Scully and Doggett bring the psychic , Sharon Pearl , to meet Billy . After touching Billy , Pearl says that she feels powerful forces acting through him , and that she senses emanations from Doggett as well . She then goes into a seizure , the mysterious symbol forming on her forehead . Scully and Doggett later notice Purnell drive up to the Underwood home . Purnell panics when he sees Billy in his car , but after a short pursuit , Purnell is arrested . The agents fail to find Billy in the vehicle . Elsewhere , Josh Underwood is abducted at a gas station while looking at a horse trailer . The symbol appears on the trailer .

After interrogation by Doggett , Purnell confesses to snatching Billy in 1990 on behalf of someone else . Doggett recognizes Purnell was also a victim , and with enough prodding , gets a name : Cal Jeppy . The police and the two FBI agents go to Jeppy ? s home and find Josh in a compartment under the floor of his horse trailer . Doggett chases Jeppy into the woods , catches him , and discovers the skull of Billy that Purnell dug up earlier . As the Underwoods stand over the shallow grave of their long dead son , Scully and Doggett discuss the case . Scully believes it was justice from beyond the grave and that the important thing is that it saved Josh Underwood .

= = Production = =

" Invocation " was written by producer David Amann , and marked his fifth script contribution to the series . " Invocation " was the first of two episode of The X @-@ Files to be directed by Richard Compton ; he would later go on to direct the eighth season episode " Medusa " . Although the episode was the fifth aired in the season , it was actually the sixth one filmed , as evidenced by its production number . A majority of the episode was filmed in Pasadena , California . Many of the extras from the episode auditioned via General Casting , a casting agency . The song that Ronald Purnell sang to Billy to keep him quiet and that was featured as a backmasked message on Scully 's tape @-@ recorder is a traditional African American lullaby from the southern United States called " All the Pretty Horses " .

In the episode , Doggett is told by a psychic that his very own son was kidnapped and murdered ; thus , " Invocation " would mark the first appearance of Luke Doggett , the son of John . Luke 's story would develop into an arc featuring Doggett trying to find out the truth about his son 's murder . Robert Patrick noted " [' Invocation ' started] a very important arc , because you start to see the vulnerability of the Doggett character , what drives him . That 's where we first realize something 's happened to him . There 's a tragedy that 's involved with him . "

= = Reception = =

" Invocation " first aired on Fox on December 3 , 2000 . The episode earned a Nielsen household rating of 8 @.@ 2 , meaning that it was seen by 8 @.@ 2 % of the nation 's estimated households . The episode was viewed by 8 @.@ 27 million households , and 13 @.@ 9 million viewers . The episode ranked as the 41st most @-@ watched episode for the week ending December 3 . The episode aired in the United Kingdom and Ireland on Sky1 on March 8 , 2000 and received 0 @.@ 64 million viewers , making it the eighth most watched episode that week . Fox promoted the episode with the tagline " How can a child disappear for ten years ... and not age a single day ? Tonight , a family 's miracle may be a gift from hell . "

Television Without Pity writer Jessica Morgan rated the episode a B ? , and , despite the moderate praise , finished her review with the statement , " I miss Mulder . " Zack Handlen of The A.V. Club awarded the episode a " B ? " , writing that it is " an okay entry that ? s kept from being completely forgettable by some memorable shots [?] and some decent Scully / Doggett banter . " Handlen held a mixed feeling toward 's Doggett 's backstory , noting that its introduction " does push the character in ways that undermine some of his strongest traits " .

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 two @-@ and @-@ a @-@ half stars out of five . The two praised Amman 's ability to " elicit real @-@ world reactions out of fantastical situations " . However , Shearman and Pearson took issue with the way Doggett 's backstory was extrapolated . They noted that Doggett had been portrayed , up to the point in the series , as a " solid and reliable " character . However , " Invocation " sees him " [break] protocol and [behave] like a bully " because of a case reminiscent of that of his deceased son 's , a situation that , the two reason , is too similar to Mulder 's own search for the truth about his sister , Samantha . Paula Vitaris from Cinefantastique gave the episode a mixed review and awarded it two stars out of four . Vitaris bluntly wrote , " ' Invocation ' is a masterpiece , but only if you grade it on a ' Roadrunners ' bell @-@ curve . " She elaborated , calling it " a run @-@ of @-@ the @-@ mill stand @-@ alone , a combination of ' Revelations ' and ' The Calusari ' "