

= Gethsemane (The X @-@ Files) =

" Gethsemane " is the twenty @-@ fourth and final episode of the fourth season of the American science fiction television series The X @-@ Files . It premiered on the Fox network on May 18 , 1997 . It was directed by R.W. Goodwin , and written by series creator Chris Carter . " Gethsemane " featured guest appearances by Charles Cioffi , Sheila Larken and Pat Skipper , and introduced John Finn as recurring character Michael Kritschgau . The episode helped to explore the overarching mythology , or fictional history of The X @-@ Files . " Gethsemane " earned a Nielsen household rating of 13 @. @ 2 , being watched by 19 @. @ 85 million people in its initial broadcast .

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 . In the episode , Mulder is shown evidence of alien life which may actually be part of a huge government hoax designed to deflect attention from secret military programs . Meanwhile , Scully struggles with her cancer in the face of hostility from her brother , who believes she should no longer be working .

" Gethsemane " was filmed on one of the series ' most elaborate and costly sets , replicating an icy mountaintop inside a refrigerated building using real snow and ice . Shooting for exterior scenes took place on Vancouver 's Mount Seymour , occurring just a week before Duchovny 's wedding . The episode , which has been described by Carter as pondering " the existence of God " , has received mixed responses from critics , with its cliffhanger ending frequently being cited as its main failing .

= = Plot = =

The episode opens in medias res to police investigating a dead body in the apartment of FBI agent Fox Mulder (David Duchovny) . Dana Scully (Gillian Anderson) confirms the unseen body 's identity and leaves . She subsequently appears before an FBI panel led by Section Chief Scott Blevins (Charles Cioffi) , reviewing her work with Mulder on the X @-@ Files .

In Canada 's St. Elias Mountains , a frozen extraterrestrial body is discovered by an expedition team . Professor Arlinsky , the team 's leader , sends ice core samples containing presumably alien DNA to Mulder . Scully has the samples tested and confirms the DNA 's non @-@ terrestrial origin , but is attacked by a man who steals the samples . Scully learns that her attacker is Michael Kritschgau (John Finn) , a Defense Department employee . When she tracks down Kritschgau and holds him at gunpoint , he reveals that he might be killed .

Meanwhile , Mulder and Arlinsky return to the mountains , but finds that most of the expedition members have been shot dead . The sole survivor is a man named Babcock , who reveals that he has saved the alien corpse from theft by burying it . Together , the three men bring the corpse to the United States . There , Mulder and Arlinsky perform an autopsy on the corpse , believing it belongs to a genuine extraterrestrial . After Mulder leaves to meet with Scully , a mysterious assassin , Scott Ostelhoff , arrives and kills Arlinsky .

Scully introduces Mulder to Kritschgau , who claims that everything Mulder thinks he knows about aliens is a lie . He tells him that his sister 's abduction was fabricated , that all evidence of alien biology are merely scientific anomalies , and that the alien body he has just examined was fake . Kritschgau claims that the entire alien mythos is a hoax perpetrated by the U.S. government as a cover for the activities of the military ? industrial complex . Mulder dismisses these claims until Scully tells him Kritschgau told her that she was given cancer to make him believe .

Mulder finds Arlinsky and Babcock dead , with the alien body missing . Mulder , distraught , sits in his apartment watching a conference about extraterrestrial life on television . The narrative returns to the present , where Scully reveals to the panel that Mulder died the previous night of an apparent self @-@ inflicted gunshot wound to the head .

= = Production = =

The icy caverns featured in the episode were constructed inside a warehouse which had previously

been used for cold storage ; and required the use of truckloads of lumber and 10 @, @ 000 square feet (930 m2) of Styrofoam . The set would become one of the most expensive and elaborate built during the series ' history . The set required a constant temperature of ? 21 ° F (? 29 ° C) in order to maintain the real snow and ice used to decorate it . This refrigeration allowed the actors ' breath to visibly fog up , and allowed the cast to " have a place that feels real " to aid their acting .

The outdoor scenes were filmed around Vancouver 's Mount Seymour , with weather conditions making shooting difficult enough to require an extra day of work . The episode 's production took place just a week before David Duchovny 's wedding , with his fiancée Téa Leoni visiting the set during filming . The first cut of the episode was twelve minutes too long , resulting in some of the scenes in the mountains being removed . Series creator Chris Carter re @-@ edited the entire episode two days before it aired .

Carter has described " Gethsemane " as a " big ideas episode " , noting that its main concern is debating " the existence of God " . The title of the episode is an allusion to the biblical garden of Gethsemane where Jesus was betrayed by Judas Iscariot . The character Michael Kritschgau was named after a former drama teacher of Gillian Anderson . The tagline for this episode is " Believe the lie " , changed from the usual " The truth is out there " . This episode marks the first appearance of one of Scully 's brothers since a flashback in the season two episode " One Breath " . Section Chief Scott Blevins makes his first appearance since the fourth episode of the first season , " Conduit " .

= = Reception = =

= = = Ratings = = =

" Gethsemane " premiered on the Fox network on May 18 , 1997 , and was first broadcast in the United Kingdom on Sky One on July 13th 1997 and on free to air BBC One on March 4 , 1998 . The episode earned a Nielsen household rating of 12 @. @ 7 with a 19 share , meaning that roughly 12 @. @ 7 percent of all television @-@ equipped households , and 19 percent of households watching television , were tuned in to the episode . A total of 19 @. @ 85 million viewers watched this episode during its original airing .

= = = Reviews = = =

" Gethsemane " received mixed to positive reviews from critics . Lon Grahne of Chicago Sun @-@ Times reacted positively toward the episode , calling it a " stunning " season finale . Paula Vitaris , writing for Cinefantastique , rated " Gethsemane " two stars out of four , noting that it " withholds so much information that it barely qualifies as a complete episode " . Vitaris felt that the large degree of ambiguity in the episode 's script left the actors ' performances " curiously neutral " , adding that the cast " struggle manfully " with the material . Writing for The A.V. Club , Zack Handlen rated the episode a B + , noting that " everything here has a ring of familiarity to it " . Handlen felt that the episode 's premise and ending were poorly executed , as " trying to balance possible truths while maintaining the plausibility of both is incredibly difficult to pull off on a long @-@ running show " , adding that the episode " comes down on the only side of the fence it really could " given that " there 've been too many scenes of shape @-@ changing bounty hunters and mystical alien healers to really let this idea play out know [sic] in any real way " . 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 stars out of five , noting that while it " attempts to do too much " , it " has a passion behind it which makes it gripping " . Shearman and Pearson felt that the episode 's cliffhanger ending , centering on the apparent death of Mulder , was too unbelievable , noting that it would be out of character for him to grow so disillusioned as to take his own life . In the 1999 FX Thanksgiving Marathon , containing fan @-@ selected episodes , " Gethsemane " (along with " Redux " and " Redux II ") was presented as the " Best Mythology Episode " .

The episode created speculation about whether or not Mulder was actually dead . An article in the Wall Street Journal discussed fan theories behind Mulder 's madness while a cartoon ran in The New Yorker a few weeks later surrounding Mulder 's " death " . Series creator Chris Carter noted that " the whole plot line of ' Gethsemane ' revolved around a hoax , but there are actually huge revelations in this show . And it 's an amazing thing that we could get people to believe that Mulder could actually kill himself because his belief system was stolen from him " . UGO Networks listed the episode at number 21 in a countdown of " TV 's Best Season Finales " , noting that it " rocked the core of the series ' entire mythology " . Den of Geek 's John Moore felt that the episode was " one of the finest season @-@ ends " of the series , noting that it " ended by completely pulling the carpet out from under the fans " . Moore listed the character of Michael Kritschgau as the seventh @-@ best villain of the series , adding that he shook " what we knew about the show to its core " by " provid [ing] nourishment to a seed of doubt that had been playing on Mulder 's mind for the entire season " .