

= Essence (The X @-@ Files) =

" Essence " is the twentieth and penultimate episode of the eighth season and the 181st episode overall of the science fiction television series The X @-@ Files . The episode first aired in the United States on May 13 , 2001 on Fox , and subsequently aired in the United Kingdom . It was written by executive producer Chris Carter and directed by Kim Manners . " Essence " earned Nielsen rating of 7 @.@ 7 and was viewed by 12 @.@ 8 million viewers . The episode received largely positive reviews from critics .

The show centers on FBI special agents John Doggett (Robert Patrick) and Dana Scully (Gillian Anderson) ? as well as ex @-@ FBI agent Fox Mulder (David Duchovny) ? who work on cases linked to the paranormal , called X @-@ Files . In this episode , Mulder , Walter Skinner (Mitch Pileggi) , and Doggett come up against the horrible consequences of the Syndicate ? s pact with the aliens , as Billy Miles (Zachary Ansley) ? reprogrammed as a soldier ? attempts to erase all evidence of the tests ? including Scully 's soon @-@ to @-@ be @-@ born baby . Upon hearing information from Alex Krycek (Nicholas Lea) , the men reluctantly call upon him as well as Monica Reyes (Annabeth Gish) to help them .

" Essence " is a story milestone for the series . It was one of the later season eight episodes , starting with " Per Manum " , that introduced the story arc about super @-@ soldiers , which would continue throughout the ninth season . The series was the first part of two , and concluded with the season finale " Existence " . In addition , Nicholas Lea reprises his role as Alex Krycek , who temporarily switches sides and aides Mulder and Scully .

= = Plot = =

While preparing for Dana Scully 's (Gillian Anderson) baby shower , her mother , Margaret , invites a woman named Lizzy Gill to help Scully around her apartment . Unbeknownst to Scully , Gill tampers with her pregnancy medications . Meanwhile , Billy Miles , satisfied with the research conducted at Zeus Genetics in Germantown , kills a scientist (Dr. Lev) and burns the laboratory . All of the evidence at Zeus Genetics is destroyed , including the viable hybrid fetus .

Fox Mulder (David Duchovny) informs John Doggett (Robert Patrick) of the fire at Zeus Genetics , and asks to go along to survey the crime scene . Mulder reveals that Dr. Lev is connected to Scully 's former obstetrician , Dr. Parenti . While searching Dr. Parenti 's office , the agents find another storage room containing hybrid fetuses . They confront Dr. Parenti , who denies everything .

Back at Scully 's apartment , Gill leaves for the day . She gets into a car driven by Duffy Haskell , and tells him she thinks Scully trusts her .

At the lab , Agent Crane derides Doggett for dealing with Mulder . Mulder and Doggett leave the office , during which time Miles appears and decapitates Dr. Parenti . The agents confront Miles ? Mulder is thrown through a glass barrier while Doggett shoots him several times with no apparent effect . While Mulder and Doggett are distracted , Miles escapes .

The two go to Scully 's house to regroup . Gill overhears and contacts Haskell , who is at an illegal human @-@ cloning facility . At the other end , Haskell is also decapitated by Billy Miles . As Doggett , Skinner and Mulder survey Haskell 's murder scene , Scully catches Gill in the act of tampering with her medications . Later , Gill confesses that she , along with Haskell and others , have been monitoring Scully 's pregnancy as part of the Syndicate 's plans . However , she tells the agents that Scully 's baby is a perfect human child with no human weaknesses .

Mulder , fearing for Scully 's safety , prepares to take her away . Doggett and Agent Crane receive a call from Miles claiming to surrender , but this turns out to be a distraction . Miles instead goes after Scully , just as she and Mulder escape . As Miles is about to catch Mulder and Scully , Alex Krycek (Nicholas Lea) runs him over and takes them to Doggett and Walter Skinner (Mitch Pileggi) , just before Miles gets back up . At the FBI , Krycek confesses that Billy Miles is one of a new type of aliens that are trying to wipe out humanity 's ability to survive the invasion ? including Scully 's baby , which Krycek states is a special child that the aliens fear .

Mulder tells Doggett to send for help . Monica Reyes (Annabeth Gish) arrives as Miles shows up

at the J. Edgar Hoover Building . Scully is able to sneak out of the building with the help of Krycek , Doggett and Reyes . Mulder and Skinner , meanwhile , lead Miles to the roof , where Mulder pushes him off into a waiting garbage truck , which then compacts him . Scully and Reyes pull away . The episode ends with Agent Crane pointing them to safety , then turning around , revealing to the camera protrusions on his spine .

= = Production = =

" Essence " was written by series creator Chris Carter . The episode , which was the first part of two and concluded with the season finale " Existence " , was written during a time of uncertainty for the series . Near the end of season eight , it was unclear whether or not the show would continue onto a ninth season . Carter had maintained for sometime that he would not continue the show without lead actor David Duchovny . However , Duchovny announced that after the end of the eighth season , he would leave the show for good . In addition , lead actress Gillian Anderson 's contract also expired at the end of the eighth season . Anderson had expressed her growing disinterest in the series ever since the beginning of the eighth season , saying " For a lot of people , if you don 't like your job , you can quit your job , I don 't necessarily have that option . " Anderson cited the fact that " eight years is a long time " as a contributing factor to her indifference . However , Carter soon changed his position and announced he would remain on the show and continue only if Anderson agreed to do another season . Eventually , Fox offered Anderson a " generous " incentive to stay , resulting in the retention of Carter and Anderson and a final season of the show .

The episode marks the return of Nicholas Lea as Alex Krycek . In previous episodes , Krycek was one of the series ' main antagonists . However , in " Essence " , he temporarily switches sides . As such , portraying actor Lea explains the character 's motivation : " Toward the end , he realizes that it 's possible that the world could completely go down the tubes ? then he 's got a stake in trying to keep that from happening . That 's when he starts giving the information to Mulder so that he can use it . "

= = Reception = =

= = = Ratings = = =

" Essence " first aired on Fox on May 13 , 2001 . The episode earned a Nielsen household rating of 7 @. @ 7 , meaning that it was seen by 7 @. @ 7 % of the nation 's estimated households . The episode was viewed by 7 @. @ 87 million households , and 12 @. @ 8 million viewers . The episode ranked as the 41st most @- @ watched episode for the week ending April 8 . In the United Kingdom and Ireland , the episode made its first televised appearance on June 28 , 2001 on Sky1 and was the third most watched program that week , receiving 0 @. @ 65 million viewers . Fox promoted the episode with a poster parodying the 1968 horror movie Rosemary 's Baby . The episode 's tagline was " Scully 's baby is born . " The episode was later included on The X @- @ Files Mythology , Volume 4 ? Super Soldiers , a DVD collection that contains episodes involved with the alien super soldiers arc .

= = = Reviews = = =

" Essence " received mostly positive reviews from critics . Zack Handlen of The A.V. Club awarded the episode a " B + " , noting that while much of the episode was a " blur " , it was nonetheless exciting . Handlen was complimentary towards the installment 's " tremendous sense of purpose [that] builds to a fever pitch that makes questions of who exactly wants what largely irrelevant . " While he offered a pessimistic opinion in regards to the series ' mythology as a whole , Handlen concluded that the eighth season 's sense of purpose , as exemplified in " Essence " , made the episode successful . George Avalos and Michael Liedtke of Contra Costa Times praised the episode

, writing " where have nifty episodes like [" Essence "] been the last two years ? " Tom Kessenich , in his book *Examinations* , gave the episode a largely positive review . Praising the storyline , he noted that " Thanks to ' Essence ' , I 've become a believer again . " John Keegan of *Critical Myth* gave the episode a 9 out of 10 rating and wrote " overall , this was a wonderful episode that served to prepare us for the final installment of the alien mythology (presumably) and managed to keep us in our seats the entire way . " Gareth Wigmore of *TV Zone* was positive toward both " Essence " and " Existence " . Wigmore gave the episodes a 9 out of 10 rating and wrote " the reason that this two @-@ parter works is that its plot is simple enough for the audience to still have a handle on " . Jessica Morgan of *Television Without Pity* awarded the episode a B + .

Not all reviews were so positive , however . Robert Shearman and Lars Pearson , in their book *Wanting to Believe : A Critical Guide to The X @-@ Files , Millennium & The Lone Gunmen* , gave the episode a more mixed two stars out of five . The two cited dense dialogue and bizarre characterization ? most notably the fact that " there 's usually one FBI agent so angry that he interrupts [...] only to be stopped by a calmer counterpart " ? as detractors . Shearman and Pearson , however , did praise the final ten minutes , noting that the final act was " so good [...] that it almost makes up for the episode which sadly returns to the style of the traditional mytharc exposition " . Paula Vitaris from *Cinefantastique* gave the episode a scathing review and awarded it no stars out of four . She heavily derided the plot , noting that the episode turned Scully into a " passive , mostly silent Virgin Mary who is about to give birth to ? Jesus Christ . " She concluded that the episode " raise [ed] the [misogyny] to a whole new level " .