

= Synchrony (The X @-@ Files) =

" Synchrony " is the nineteenth episode of the fourth season of the American science fiction television series The X @-@ Files . It was written by Howard Gordon and David Greenwalt and directed by James Charleston . The episode aired in the United States on April 13 , 1997 on the Fox network . The episode is a " Monster @-@ of @-@ the @-@ Week " story , a stand @-@ alone plot which is unconnected to the series ' wider mythology . " Synchrony " earned a Nielsen rating of 11 @.@ 3 , being watched by 18 @.@ 09 million people upon its initial broadcast . The episode received mixed to positive reviews from television critics .

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 this episode , Mulder and Scully investigate a murder for which the suspect presents an incredible alibi ? that the death was foretold by an old man able to see into the future . Upon investigating the case , the duo discover an increasingly bizarre series of events that leads Mulder to believe time travel is involved .

Gordon and Greenwalt wrote the episode after being inspired by an article in Scientific American about time travel and quantum physics . The idea of a scientist trying to stop the invention of something terrible was inspired by Manhattan Project physicist J. Robert Oppenheimer , who complained to Harry S. Truman about the 1945 atomic bombings of Japan .

= = Plot = =

In Cambridge , Massachusetts , MIT cryogenics researchers Jason Nichols (Joseph Fuqua) and Lucas Menand (Jed Rees) become embroiled in an argument as they walk down a city street . They are approached by an old man (Michael Fairman) , who warns Menand that he will be run over by a bus at 11 : 46 pm that evening , but Menand ignores him . After the man is arrested by campus security , his prophecy is proven true when Jason tries , but fails , to save Menand , who is promptly run over by a bus and killed at the exact time (11 : 46 pm) .

Fox Mulder (David Duchovny) and Dana Scully (Gillian Anderson) investigate the case , learning that Jason was taken into custody after the bus driver told police that he pushed Menand into the path of his vehicle . However , Jason tells authorities that he was trying to save Menand . The security guard who arrested the old man is found frozen to death after exposure to a chemical refrigerant . Mulder interviews Jason , who explains Menand threatened to go public with a claim that Jason had falsified data on a research paper .

The old man kills Dr. Yonechi (Hiro Kanagawa) , a Japanese researcher , by pricking him with a metallic stylus , introducing an unknown chemical into his body . The agents approach Nichols ' girlfriend and colleague , Lisa Ianelli (Susan Lee Hoffman) , who recognizes the chemical compound as a rapid freezing agent that Jason had been engineering for years . However , she claims that the compound has not yet been invented and that if Yonechi was injected with the chemical , he may not be dead . With Lisa 's help , Scully and a team of medical personnel successfully resuscitate Yonechi , only for his body temperature to rapidly increase until he bursts into flames . Police receive a tip that the old man is living at a nearby hotel . Inside the old man 's room , the agents discover a faded color photograph picturing Jason , Yonechi and Lisa toasting champagne glasses in the cryology lab . Mulder realizes from the picture that the old man is a time traveller who is attempting to alter that future , and that he is none other than Jason Nichols .

Lisa locates the elderly man and confronts him ; however , he injects her with the chemical after explaining that Lisa will be responsible for the coming future . Scully successfully resuscitates Lisa . Jason confronts his elderly self in the computer mainframe room at the cryogenic lab , where the old man has erased all of Jason 's files from the computer . The old man tells Jason that the success of their research made time travel possible , but also plunged the world into chaos . Jason lunges at the old man , choking him . Wrapping his arms around his younger self , the old man bursts into flames , and the fire consumes them both . Later , Lisa sets to work at the cryonics lab , attempting to reconstruct the chemical compound .

= = Development = =

After Howard Gordon and Chris Carter finished their work on " Unrequited " , Carter introduced Gordon to David Greenwalt , who had been added to The X @-@ Files producers , and asked the duo to create a script for an upcoming episode . Gordon and Greenwalt got together in Simi Valley and had difficulties in creating a good plot ; the one they initially worked with the most , involving a prisoner that gets free by changing his body with another man , was eventually discarded as Gordon felt it was too similar to other episodes written by him . Eventually the duo saw an article in Scientific American about time travel and decided to work with that , following the magazine 's reports that , while classical physics does not allow for temporal displacement to happen , quantum physics does allow for the possibility .

Gordon decided that to make " time travel in an X @-@ Files way " , the best way was with " a guy that turns out to be you " . He therefore added the plot about a regretful scientist trying to stop developments from ever occurring . The scientist 's character was inspired by a story Gordon heard about Manhattan Project physicist J. Robert Oppenheimer berating Harry S. Truman on the 1945 atomic bombings of Japan , and the writer wondered " What if Oppenheimer could go back to the past and ' uninvent ' the bomb ? " . Eventually Gordon and Greenwalt found another philosophical question that becomes Jason 's motivation to halt his own research ? " Life itself is about the unknown and discovering what is in front of us . But if everyone , or maybe some people , knew what would happen , that would create a new set of horrors , and it would need to be stopped " . The script took over a week of writing , with sessions of 15 daily hours and the contributions of John Shiban , Frank Spotnitz and Ken Horton . Gordon was still reworking the teleplay the weekend before shooting began in Vancouver , including the removal of two " useless characters " that included a Stephen Hawking @-@ inspired scientist in a wheelchair . David Duchovny declared that a few scenes were created during production " because no one could know if the audience understood what was happening " .

Gordon stated that " In the end , I think it worked , but it 's getting there that 's really difficult . " The experience was hard enough for Gordon to consider giving up and not delivering the script at all , and he eventually swore he would never work with time travel again .

= = Reception = =

" Synchrony " originally aired on the Fox network on April 13 , 1997 . This episode earned a Nielsen rating of 11 @. @ 3 , with an 18 share , meaning that roughly 11 @. @ 3 percent of all television @-@ equipped households , and 18 percent of households watching television , were tuned in to the episode . It was viewed by 18 @. @ 01 million viewers .

The A.V. Club 's Zack Handlen rated the episode a " B- " . Handlen considered that while " ' Synchrony ' has all the pieces of my favorite kind of episode , [it] doesn 't really work as well as it should " due to an emotional detachment that made him not care about the scientists and their story , and his finding Old Jason 's actions to be illogical . Paula Vitaris from Cinefantastique gave " Synchrony " two out of four stars , considering it a middling episode with some effective moments , but complaining about plot holes , " not particularly compelling " supporting characters , and feeling that time travel " takes away from the reality that is this show 's foundation " . 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 , praising the " high concept that is told without pretension " . The two also called the episode " solid and watchable " despite flaws such as the underdevelopment of the script and not fully exploring the " concept with such potential " that is time travel .