

= Ascension ( The X @-@ Files ) =

" Ascension " is the sixth episode of the second season of the American science fiction television series The X @-@ Files . It premiered on the Fox network on October 21 , 1994 . It was written by Paul Brown , directed by Michael Lange , and featured guest appearances by Steve Railsback , Nicholas Lea , Steven Williams and Sheila Larken . The episode helped explore the series ' overarching mythology .

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 . However , the events of " Ascension " are a continuation of the plot of the preceding episode , " Duane Barry " . Following the kidnapping of Scully by an unhinged alien abductee Duane Barry ( Steve Railsback ) , Mulder races to track her down .

The decision to have the character of Scully abducted was driven by necessity , as Anderson had become pregnant and required time off from production . " Ascension " earned a Nielsen household rating of 9 @. @ 6 , being watched by 9 @. @ 2 million households in its initial broadcast , and received positive reviews from critics .

= = Plot = =

Upon hearing the voicemail showing Dana Scully 's ( Gillian Anderson ) kidnapping by Duane Barry , her partner Fox Mulder ( David Duchovny ) heads to her apartment and surveys the crime scene . He meets with Scully 's mother , Margaret , who claims to have had a dream about her being taken away . The next morning , Assistant Director Walter Skinner tells Mulder that he is " too close " to the case to be involved , and orders another FBI agent , Alex Krycek ( Nicholas Lea ) , to escort him home . Meanwhile , Barry speeds down the Blue Ridge Parkway when he is pulled over by a highway patrol officer . When Scully ? locked in the trunk ? tries to get the officer 's attention , Barry kills him . Mulder reviews a video of the traffic stop , and sees that Scully is still alive .

Mulder realizes that Barry is heading to a ski resort at Skyland Mountain , the location of Barry 's original abduction ; he is attempting to follow through with his original plan of having the aliens abduct someone there in his place . Krycek informs the Smoking Man ( William B. Davis ) of these findings before departing with Mulder . When they arrive , Mulder boards the resort 's aerial tramway in the hopes of reaching its peak before Barry . However , Krycek tries to delay Mulder by sabotaging the tramway 's journey upward . Mulder manages to complete the journey and witnesses a strange light in the area . Upon finding Barry 's car , Mulder sees no trace of Scully except her necklace . He then encounters a joyous Barry , who claims that she was taken by " them . "

When Mulder interrogates Barry , he becomes so enraged that he nearly strangles him , only to stop himself . When he leaves the room , he orders Krycek to not let anyone inside ; however , he finds Krycek talking to Barry when he returns . When Skinner arrives minutes later , Barry breaks into convulsions and dies . Later , at the FBI Academy in Quantico , Mulder attempts to question the doctor who performed Barry 's autopsy ; she refuses to provide details since it was performed by the military instead of the FBI , claiming no other doctors were available . Mulder and Krycek are ordered to take a polygraph test about Barry 's death .

Krycek meets with the Smoking Man , and suggests that they kill Mulder . However , the Smoking Man orders that Mulder be left alive , unless they want to risk " turning one man 's religion into a crusade " . A desperate Mulder tries to visit Senator Matheson , a patron of his work , only to be discouraged from doing so by his secretive informant , X ( Steven Williams ) . In his car , Mulder finds spent cigarettes from the Smoking Man 's meeting with Krycek . Realizing Krycek 's role in Scully 's abduction , Mulder submits a report to Skinner accusing Krycek of impeding his investigation and killing Barry . Skinner summons Krycek to his office , only to learn that he has disappeared . Skinner then announces to Mulder that he is officially re @-@ opening the X @-@ Files .

Mulder meets with Margaret Scully in a park , and tries to give her Scully 's necklace . Margaret returns the necklace to Mulder , asking that he give it to Scully when he finds her . Margaret also

says that she had the dream again about losing her daughter ; Mulder takes this as a hopeful sign that Scully may still be alive . A mournful Mulder later returns to Skyland Mountain , to the field where Scully was abducted . Seemingly alone without her , he looks up into the stars .

= = Production = =

The idea to have Scully abducted originated when Gillian Anderson became pregnant in the middle of the first season . While initially upset , those in charge of the show never considered dropping the actress from the show . Ideas such as having Scully give birth to an alien baby were dismissed and ultimately the writers decided to work around the pregnancy by closing the X @-@ Files , separating Mulder and Scully , and eventually having her be abducted . This permitted the producers to have an explanation for Scully 's absence ( she appears in only two scenes in " Ascension " and not at all in the next episode , " 3 " ) . Series creator Chris Carter commented that both the censors and the producers were reluctant on showing Scully in the trunk , but he " fought for that image " as he considered it conveyed the sense of danger to the character . Carter added the scenes of the experiment were meant to be ambiguous on whether Scully was abducted by aliens , the military , or both .

" Ascension " featured guest appearances from Steve Railsback , Nicholas Lea , Steven Williams and Sheila Larken . David Duchovny provided his own stunts in this episode , including being dangled in the aerial lift , shot in a single day at Grouse Mountain in North Vancouver , British Columbia . The backdrop for Barry 's drive was done in a neighbouring mountain , Mount Seymour . The tagline for this episode is " Deny Everything " , replacing the usual phrase " The Truth is Out There . "

= = Broadcast and reception = =

" Ascension " premiered on the Fox network on October 21 , 1994 , and was first broadcast in the United Kingdom on BBC Two on October 2 , 1995 . The episode earned a Nielsen household rating of 9 @. @ 6 with a 16 share , meaning that roughly 9 @. @ 6 percent of all television @-@ equipped households , and 16 percent of households watching TV , were tuned in to the episode . A total of 9 @. @ 2 million households watched this episode during its original airing .

In a retrospective of the second season in Entertainment Weekly , the episode was rated an A , being described as " an expertly paced race against time " . The handling of Anderson 's pregnancy was called " creative " , while the re @-@ opening of the X @-@ Files unit and the revelation of Krycek as a villainous character were noted as highlights . Writing for the A.V. Club , Zack Handlen called " Ascension " an " essential " episode , adding that it serves to " raise the stakes without losing the core of the show 's appeal , and solve a technical problem in the most creatively satisfying way possible " . Handlen also praised Nicholas Lea 's portrayal of agent Alex Krycek , but felt that the character 's role as a double agent was revealed too soon in the series . Critical Myth gave this episode 9 / 10 , stating " [ a ] s convoluted and bastardized as that plot thread would become , at this stage of the game , it was one of the best episodes of the series to date . "