

## = Musings of a Cigarette Smoking Man =

" Musings of a Cigarette Smoking Man " is the seventh episode of the fourth season of the science fiction television series The X @-@ Files . It premiered on the Fox network in the United States on November 17 , 1996 . It was written by Glen Morgan , directed by James Wong , and featured the first guest appearance by Chris Owens , appearing as a younger Smoking Man . " Musings of a Cigarette Smoking Man " earned a Nielsen household rating of 10 @.@ 7 , being watched by 17 @.@ 09 million people in its initial broadcast . The episode received mostly 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 . Mulder is a believer in the paranormal , while the skeptical Scully has been assigned to debunk his work . In this episode , Lone Gunman Melvin Frohike ( Tom Braidwood ) finds a tell @-@ tale magazine story supposedly revealing the history of The Smoking Man ( William B. Davis ) . The episode illustrates his possible involvement in several historical events and assassinations , although the reliability of the source is unresolved at the end of the episode .

Executive producer Frank Spotnitz later noted that , while parts of " Musings of a Cigarette Smoking Man " may indeed be factual , the majority is not actual canon . The production of the episode did not require extensive use of Duchovny and Anderson on screen . The former 's voice is only heard and the latter appears only in archival footage . Davis , who portrayed the title character , was pleased with the episode , although confused with some of the contradictions in the script . Although not directly furthering the series ' overarching mythology , the episode involves several of its events and characters .

## = = Plot = =

The Smoking Man , armed with a sniper rifle and surveillance equipment , spies on a meeting between Fox Mulder , Dana Scully , and the Lone Gunmen . Frohike claims to have discovered information about the Smoking Man 's mysterious past , stating that his father was an executed communist spy and that his mother died of lung cancer , causing him to be raised in various Midwest orphanages .

The narrative changes to 1962 . The Smoking Man is an Army captain stationed at Fort Bragg in North Carolina . He talks to a friend and fellow soldier , Bill Mulder , who shows him a photo of his infant son , Fox . The Smoking Man is summoned to attend a meeting with a general and several strange men in suits . They assign him to assassinate President John F. Kennedy . In 1963 , posing as a " Mr. Hunt , " the Smoking Man shoots Kennedy and frames Lee Harvey Oswald . Afterwards , he smokes his first cigarette from a pack previously given to him by Oswald .

Five years later , the Smoking Man writes a novel entitled Take a Chance : A Jack Colquitt Adventure , using the pen name " Raul Bloodworth " . After hearing Martin Luther King , Jr. give a speech criticizing America 's attitude towards the distribution of wealth at home and social revolutions abroad , the Smoking Man meets with a group of men , including J. Edgar Hoover . The Smoking Man convinces the group to have King assassinated and volunteers to perform the task . Shortly thereafter , a publishing company rejects his novel .

In 1991 , the Smoking Man meets with subordinates , discussing his orchestration of the Anita Hill controversy and the Rodney King trial . He orders that the Buffalo Bills not win the Super Bowl . He further reveals his drugging of a Soviet goaltender to ensure the outcome of the " Miracle on Ice " hockey match . One of the Smoking Man 's subordinates invites him for a family dinner . Although flattered , the Smoking Man declines the invitation and states that he is scheduled to visit family . On his way out of the meeting , he distributes his Christmas presents to each of the subordinates- all receive the same gift . The gift is a striped tie . He is next seen walking past Fox Mulder 's office .

Later , while at home , the Smoking Man receives an urgent phone call from Deep Throat , who meets him near the site of a UFO wreck . An alien from the UFO is alive . Deep Throat and Smoking Man reminisce about the multiple times they changed the course of history . They flip a coin over

who is tasked to kill the alien survivor . Deep Throat loses , and thus reluctantly shoots the alien .

A few months later , in March 1992 , the Smoking Man attends the meeting where Scully is assigned to the X @-@ Files and eavesdrops on the agents ' first meeting . In 1996 , he receives a letter telling him that his novel will be serialized in the magazine Roman a Clef . He types up a resignation letter , and excitedly finds the magazine at a newsstand . However , he finds that the ending has been changed . Bitter , the Smoking Man sits on a bench with a homeless man , giving a monologue on how " life is like a box of chocolates " . He tears up his resignation letter and leaves the magazine at the bench .

Back in the present , Frohike tells Mulder and Scully that what he 's told them is based on a story he found in a magazine he subscribes to . He leaves to verify the story . As he leaves , the Smoking Man has a clear shot . However , he decides not to kill him and quotes the last line from his unpublished novel : " I can kill you whenever I please , but not today " .

= = Production = =

= = = Writing = = =

The episode was inspired by the DC Graphic Novel Lex Luthor : The Unauthorized Biography . Glen Morgan stated that he wanted the episode to show that The Smoking Man was the most dangerous human being alive . The episode was originally intended to end with The Smoking Man killing Melvin Frohike , but the show 's executive staff vetoed the idea .

The episode contains several references to Morgan and Wong 's former series Space : Above and Beyond including the name of The Smoking Man 's novel , Take a Chance , the reference to " classified compartmentalized " , and the name Jack Colquitt . In addition , Morgan Weisser , who played Lee Harvey Oswald , was an actor who appeared on that show . U.N. Resolution 1013 , quoted by Deep Throat , is a reference to Carter 's birthday and production company . Walden Roth , the editor who buys The Smoking Man 's novel , is a reference to 20th Century Fox executives Dana Walden and Peter Roth . The Smoking Man 's ambition to be a novelist was based on E. Howard Hunt .

Davis was happy to have an episode of his own , but was puzzled at some of the contradictions in the script , such as having him assassinate John F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King , Jr . , but being concerned with something as minor as keeping the Buffalo Bills from winning the Super Bowl . Chris Carter said " I had to speak with Bill several times ; I spent hours with him on the telephone talking about the character , because the actor felt that the episode really made the character something that it wasn 't . I tried to explain to him , as I think Jim and Glen were trying to express , that even if your mission in life is a destroyer , that you still have some hope in the back of your mind that you can be a creator ? and that this all of a sudden , this vanity , is his vanity . And we see that so clearly here and it makes him sort of a silly person " .

= = = Filming = = =

Davis later said " Jim Wong [ ... ] was a big help , too . A lot of the stage directions point toward farce , but Jim told me to play against that and just let the situation play out . The Forrest Gump scene was difficult , too . When I prepared it and did it the first time , I was almost Shakespearean in my approach . Jim made me toss it off more , and it worked fine " . Chris Owens who portrayed the Young Smoking Man spent time watching how Davis smokes to ensure that he did it just like him . Owens later appeared as a young version of The Smoking Man again in the episode " Demons " , and as his son Jeffrey Spender .

The episode was the first in the series that did not feature Mulder , and featured Scully only in archival footage from " Pilot " . The episode was not intended to give the actors a week off , but ended up that way , which Duchovny was very pleased with . Producer J.P. Finn coordinated the sequence where The Smoking Man assassinates John F. Kennedy . It was filmed in a downtown

Vancouver location doubling for Dealey Plaza . The show 's costume designer contacted the costume designer for the film JFK and borrowed a reproduction of Jackie Kennedy 's pink suit used in the film . The presidential limousine ridden by Kennedy was created by picture vehicle coordinator Nigel Habgood .

= = Reception = =

" Musings of a Cigarette Smoking Man " premiered on the Fox network on November 17 , 1996 . This episode earned a Nielsen rating of 10 @. @ 7 , with a 15 share , meaning that roughly 10 @. @ 7 percent of all television @- @ equipped households , and 15 percent of households watching television , were tuned in to the episode . It was viewed by 17 @. @ 09 million viewers . James Wong earned the show 's first ever Emmy nomination for Outstanding Directing for a Drama Series for this episode , although he later lost to NYPD Blue 's Mark Tinker .

Few viewers picked up on the notion that the events of this episode were not necessarily factual . Story editor Frank Spotnitz said " In the closing scene Frohike tells Mulder and Scully that the whole story was something he read in a crummy magazine . A lot of people didn 't pick up on that subtlety . They thought that this was indeed the factual history of the CSM . As far as I 'm concerned , it 's not . Some of it may indeed be true , and some of it may ? well , never mind " .

" Musings of a Cigarette Smoking Man " received mostly positive praise from critics . Entertainment Weekly gave the episode an " A ? " , noting that " one has to wonder to what extent this episode is intended as information , and to what extent sheer entertainment " . Reviewer Zack Handlen of The A.V. Club spoke positively of the episode , saying " I love this ... and watching it now , I still do " . He ultimately gave the episode an " A " and wrote , " ' Musings ' is great because it transforms CSM from a living ghost into the walking dead ? still horrifying , still dangerous , but pitiable just the same " . Robert Shearman and Lars Pearson , in their book *Wanting to Believe : A Critical Guide to The X @- @ Files , Millennium & The Lone Gunmen* , named the episode " one of The X @- @ Files ' true masterpieces " and awarded it five stars out of five . The two praised Morgan and Wong 's combination of mythological story elements with more dry and dark humor . Furthermore , Shearman and Pearson wrote positively of the ambiguousness of the episode 's authenticity , noting that " the answers that the viewers are craving are handed out here on such a large plate , you can only take them as a delicious parody . " Paula Vitaris from Cinefantastique gave the episode a glowing review and awarded it four stars out of four . She praised the way that the viewer is able to see the " barren emotional landscape in which the Cigarette Smoking Man dwells " via the " tone of the script " . Furthermore , Vitaris applauded the Forrest Gump @- @ esque rant , calling it " a comic high point of verbal venom " .

Not all reviews were so positive . Author Phil Farrand was critical of the episode , rating it his fifth least favorite episode of the first four seasons . He criticized the entry for having an uninteresting first half , and relying on the " cliché " of the John F. Kennedy assassination . Furthermore , he was unhappy with the fact that viewers did not have any way of knowing whether the content of the episode really happened . Alan Kurtz criticized the episode for being inconsistent with the timetable of The X @- @ Files , pointing to the fact that the episode contradicts canon that was established in the third season episode " Apocrypha " . Furthermore , he derided the show for too closely mirroring the plots of the 1979 movie *Apocalypse Now* as well as *Forrest Gump* .