

## = The Field Where I Died =

" The Field Where I Died " is the fifth episode of the fourth season of the American science fiction television series The X @-@ Files . It was written by Glen Morgan and James Wong , and directed by Rob Bowman . The episode originally aired in the United States on November 3 , 1996 on the Fox network . It is a " Monster @-@ of @-@ the @-@ Week " story , a stand @-@ alone plot which is unconnected to the series ' wider mythology . This episode earned a Nielsen rating of 12 @. @ 3 and was seen by 19 @. @ 85 million viewers upon 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 this episode , Mulder 's search for an informant inside a cult compound leads him and Scully to one of the cult leader 's wives . What they soon discover is an unexpectedly close connection with the woman involving reincarnation . Scully discovers that spirits inhabit living beings in order to tell their stories . After Mulder 's regression scene , he details all of his past lives .

Morgan and Wong wrote the episode specifically for Kristen Cloke , who had previously been the protagonist of their science fiction series Space : Above and Beyond . The two also wanted to write an episode to challenge Duchovny as an actor . The installment was also inspired by Ken Burns ' eponymous Civil War documentary . " The Field Where I Died " received mixed to positive reviews from television critics , with many praising the episode 's exploration of loss and grief as well as Cloke 's acting . Others , however , felt that the entry was bogged down by Duchovny 's performance and the entry 's over @-@ use of emotion .

## = = Plot = =

In Apison , Tennessee , authorities receive a tip from someone named Sidney alleging child abuse and weapons possession by a local cult called the Temple of the Seven Stars . The FBI and BATF stage a raid on the Temple 's compound , but are unable to find its leader , Vernon Ephesian ( Michael Massee ) . Agent Fox Mulder ( David Duchovny ) experiences déjà vu and walks into a field on the compound , where he finds a trapdoor . Inside , Mulder and Agent Dana Scully ( Gillian Anderson ) find Ephesian preparing to drink a red liquid with his six wives . Mulder stops them and handcuffs Ephesian , but he feels a strange connection to one of the wives , Melissa Riedal @-@ Ephesian ( Kristen Cloke ) .

Walter Skinner ( Mitch Pileggi ) warns the FBI and BATF that Ephesian and his wives will be released in a day unless they can track down Sidney and the Temple 's reported weapons cache . The agents question Ephesian , who states that there is no member of the temple named Sidney . When they interview Melissa , she suddenly begins to talk like Sidney , claiming that Harry Truman is president . Scully believes Melissa is exhibiting multiple personality disorder , but Mulder thinks she is recalling a past life . The agents take her back to the temple , where she takes on the personality of a woman from the Civil War period and says that the weapons were hidden in another secret bunker in the field . She also states that Mulder , in a past life , was in the field with her , and she watched him die .

Mulder has Melissa undergo regression hypnosis for her to recount her past lives . She implies that she and Mulder have met over their past lives , always to be separated or lost to each other . To confirm her events , Mulder has himself hypnotized and recalls a time when he was a Jewish woman with a son , who had the same soul as his sister Samantha ; his deceased father , who was Scully , is dead . Melissa was his husband in this life , and had been taken to a Nazi concentration camp by a Gestapo officer who was The Smoking Man . Mulder also recalls his past life from the Civil War , when he was a man named Sullivan Biddle , while Melissa was Sarah Kavanaugh ; Scully , Mulder claims , was his sergeant in the Union Army . Scully finds pictures of Biddle and Kavanaugh in the county 's hall of records and gives them to Mulder .

The FBI and BATF plan to make another search of the compound . Ephesian , realizing that he will not survive another siege , passes out poison to the cult members and all but he and Melissa die , Melissa having feigned drinking it . As Mulder rushes into the temple , Ephesian forces Melissa to

drink the poison , and when Mulder arrives he finds both of them dead . Mulder caresses Melissa , looking out into the field .

= = Production = =

Writers Glen Morgan and James Wong developed the episode specially for Kristen Cloke , both for her experience as the protagonist of their series *Space : Above and Beyond* , to translate Morgan 's feelings as his friendship with Cloke became an emotional relationship , and for showcasing her acting . Morgan stated , " I knew she did a lot of characters and voices , so I wanted to incorporate that ... I wanted to write something for her that challenged her " . Cloke did research on multiple personality disorders before filming , and based the various personalities on people she knew . Morgan also stated that he " wanted to write something for David Duchovny that challenged him . " When pitching the idea to director Rob Bowman , the writers stated they wanted " this episode to feel like the part in Ken Burns ' *Civil War* documentary where they read the Sullivan Ballou letter . " Michael Massee wanted his characterization of Ephesian to be " normal looking " and " nondemonic " , explaining , " You have to believe that he believes his own rap . When he speaks , he 's just explaining that ' this is the way it is ' ? and that 's when it gets very scary . " The name " Vernon " comes from cult leader David Koresh 's real name , and " Ephesian " is taken from one of the books of the Bible .

The Temple of the Seven Stars was built on a soundstage at North Shore Studios , one of the most expensive sets built for the show . Composer Mark Snow used samples of Gregorian chants in his score for Melissa 's death scene . The production team contacted officials of Apison , Tennessee , who sent them a real citizen 's registry from the Civil War era which was reproduced by the props department and an expert calligrapher to make those Scully finds in the county courthouse . The photographs of Sullivan Biddle and Sarah Kavanaugh are " hybrids " of different public domain photographs , with computer effects " melding " the different features taken from different photographs . The face used for Sullivan was chosen because it bore an " uncanny " resemblance to Mulder . The poem Mulder reads at the beginning and end is from *Paracelsus* by Robert Browning . The first cut of " *The Field Where I Died* " was over an hour long , an excess length record for *The X @-@ Files* . Eighteen minutes had to be cut , which included two additional personalities of Melissa , and most of a third , Lily , which only makes a brief appearance in the final cut .

Sarah Stegall later noted that the penultimate scene , which features federal agents raiding the religious compound and finding that everyone inside has committed suicide , bears similarities to the Waco siege . Stegall even points out that the real name of the church leader in the episode , Vernon Warren , also resembles the name of the compound leader during the Waco siege : Vernon Wayne .

= = Reception = =

= = = Ratings = = =

" *The Field Where I Died* " originally aired on the Fox network on November 3 , 1996 . This episode earned a Nielsen rating of 12 @.@ 3 , with an 18 share , meaning that roughly 12 @.@ 3 percent of all television @-@ equipped households , and 18 percent of households watching television , were tuned in to the episode . " *The Field Where I Died* " was seen by 19 @.@ 85 million viewers on first broadcast .

= = = Reviews = = =

" *The Field Where I Died* " received mixed to positive reviews from critics . Zack Handlen of *The A.V. Club* gave " *The Field Where I Died* " a " B + " . He felt that it worked " pretty well " and there

was a lot to appreciate about it , and while he noted that " the episode isn 't quite good enough for the conclusion to be as devastating as it should be " , he still praised the tragic ending . However , he felt it not believable that Mulder quickly accepts his past lives and Melissa 's part in it , and thought it would have worked better if he eased into believing it . Paula Vitaris from Cinefantastique gave the episode a largely positive review and awarded it three @-@ and @-@ a @-@ half stars out of four . She called the entry " unabashedly emotional episode " that is " unafraid to plumb the depths of human loss and grief " . Furthermore , Vitaris praised Cloke 's acting ; she called her " a truly gifted actor , slipping faultlessly into the skin of all of Melissa 's personalities . " She was , however , more critical of Duchovny , noting that his hypnosis scene was underacted . Sarah Stegall , in The Munchkyn Zone , gave the episode a 5 out 5 rating . Stegall wrote that while the episode is " drowned in tears and soaked in muted sunlight , [ and ] teeters on the brink of sentimentality " , it manages " to stay just this side of it for a dynamite , gripping episode that showcases some fine actors " .

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 three @-@ a @-@ half stars out of five , and wrote that , while the episode " stumbles around a lot " , it gives the viewer " the impression there 's nothing else on TV quite like it " . The two felt that the idea that Mulder and Scully were friends throughout their various lives was " one of the best things about the story " . They also wrote that the fact that Melissa and Mulder were somehow soul mates also prevented the story from being " obvious and pat " . However , Shearman and Pearson felt that Morgan and Wong added " a few too many ingredients " which yielded an uneven episode . Entertainment Weekly , on the other hand , was negative , giving the episode an " F " and describing it as " stultifyingly awful " .

The episode is a favorite of Anderson 's , who said she " loved the script " and that it made her cry . Series creator Chris Carter received angry calls after the Heaven 's Gate , a UFO religion cult , committed mass suicide less than six months after the episode had aired . He declined to comment .