

= Unrequited ( The X @-@ Files ) =

" Unrequited " is the sixteenth episode of the fourth season of the American science fiction television series The X @-@ Files . It was written by Howard Gordon and series creator Chris Carter , and directed by Michael Lange . It originally aired in the United States on February 23 , 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 . This episode earned a Nielsen rating of 10 @.@ 9 and was seen by 16 @.@ 56 million viewers upon its initial broadcast . " Unrequited " received mixed to negative 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 , the murder of a U.S. Army Lieutenant General has Mulder and Scully struggling to stop a seemingly invisible assassin . The two agents soon learn that they are doomed to failure from the start , as the U.S. government is attempting to cover up the existence of American POWs still being kept in Vietnam .

Gordon was inspired to write the episode after viewing an installment of the news series 60 Minutes that dealt with American secret agents the CIA left behind during the Vietnam War . The eventual concept that the assassin could create blind spots came after the writer spoke with his ophthalmologist brother . The entry featured a finished replica of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial , and various Canadian locales substituted for various locations in Washington , D.C.

= = Plot = =

The episode begins at the National Mall , where Major General Benjamin Bloch ( Scott Hylands ) gives a speech to a crowd of Vietnam War veterans . Fox Mulder ( David Duchovny ) , Dana Scully ( Gillian Anderson ) , and Walter Skinner ( Mitch Pileggi ) patrol the crowd , searching for a potential gunman . However , when the agents see the gunman , he repeatedly disappears and makes their efforts to track him difficult . Mulder finds himself aiming his gun towards the panicked crowd , desperately searching for the gunman as he had disappeared right in front of him .

Twelve hours earlier , at Fort Evanston , Maryland , Lieutenant General Peter MacDougal ( Bill Agnew ) is shot in his limousine by the gunman . Skinner briefs the agents on the killing , noting a king of hearts playing card ? used by the soldiers in Vietnam to mark their kills ? was left at the scene . The FBI suspects a far @-@ right paramilitary group , the Right Hand , of killing MacDougal in an effort to stop an upcoming re @-@ dedication of a Vietnam war memorial in Washington .

Mulder and Scully head to Virginia to question the Right Hand 's leader , Denny Markham ( Larry Musser ) . A search of his fenced @-@ off cabin uncovers ammunition and a photograph showing him in the company of a Sergeant Nathaniel Teager ( Peter LaCroix ) . After being arrested , Markham reveals that Teager was a soldier in Vietnam who was left for dead as a prisoner of war . Meanwhile , at the Vietnam memorial , Teager approaches a war widow and claims that her husband is still alive as a POW . After giving the woman her husband 's dog tags , Teager mysteriously disappears .

Skinner informs the agents that Teager is officially dead , and that his remains are at the Army 's forensics lab . However , Mulder learns that the lab only possesses Teager 's dental remains , and that the cause of his death was recorded as " inconclusive " . Mulder believes that General John Steffan ( William Nunn ) , who signed Teager 's death certificate , is his next target . Teager makes his way past Pentagon security and kills Steffan in his office . Upon seeing Teager on the Pentagon 's surveillance tapes , Mulder notes the frequent unexplained appearances and disappearances of Viet Cong troops reported by POWs in Vietnam .

During a meeting with Marita Covarrubias ( Laurie Holden ) , Mulder learns that Steffan , McDougal , and Bloch were all involved in negotiations concerning POWs . Meanwhile , as Bloch 's motorcade makes its way to the Mall , Scully spots Teager in the crowd , only to see him vanish in an instant . Mulder tells Skinner and Scully that the government has arranged for their investigation to fail in an effort to cover up the truth about American POWs still being kept in Vietnam .

In the present , during the re @-@ dedication ceremony , Mulder realizes that no one can see Teager if they are in his line of sight . Teager follows Skinner and Bloch to the motorcade , where he unsuccessfully shoots at the general and Skinner suffers a flesh wound . Teager is shot in turn by the agents as he tries to escape . As he succumbs to his wounds , Teager repeats his Army identification . Afterwards , the Pentagon states that the assassin was a different person ? which Mulder denounces as a lie . He leaves Skinner to silently ponder his own service in the Vietnam War as he looks upon Teager 's name on the memorial wall .

= = Production = =

After producer Howard Gordon saw on 60 Minutes episode about the American secret agents the CIA left behind during the Vietnam War , he was intrigued and decided to develop a future script based around this . Howard was scheduled to only write one episode of the season , the nineteenth entry " Synchrony " . However , Gordon met with Chris Carter and Frank Spotnitz the day before the holiday break to pitch his idea . After getting frustrated developing the episode 's plot summary , Gordon requested Carter 's help in exchange for a shared writing credit . Gordon then wrote the script during the break .

Gordon had been considering a man that turned invisible in the political and metaphorical sense for a while , but he still needed a way for physical invisibility . The eventual concept came after the writer spoke with his ophthalmologist brother , who told about blind spots regarding malfunctioning retinal spots or optic nerves , which do not impair humans due to a brain compensation . Gordon noted , " these stories come from scientific research ... So I said , what if someone could actually create a field of vision where none actually exists ? " Gordon decided to use a Vietnam War veteran given " they are getting old , and like the Holocaust survivor of ' Kaddish ' , starting to die " , and the opportunity would allow a larger role for Skinner . General MacDougal was named after the show 's editor , Heather MacDougall .

The episode featured a finished replica of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial that was first featured in an incomplete state during " Never Again " . The replica was first put on Vancouver 's Jericho Park due to the locale 's " expansive , groomed , flat " characteristics . Only portions of the wall were real , whereas the rest were created via computer generated imagery ( CGI ) . Day scenes at the monument were shot at Jericho Park , whereas night scenes took place at Ballantyne Pier , which was a large warehouse . The grandstand that had been assembled at Jericho Park was dismantled and reassembled in the warehouse . The replica had fake names created by the sister of art assistant Kristina Lyne due to legal reasons , which included names of The X @-@ Files cast and crew . In addition , two of them , " Jesse R. Ellison " and " Harlan L. Hahn " , referenced noted writer Harlan Ellison and model Jessica Hahn . The crowd for the memorial 's reinauguration scene , which at times was duplicated through CGI , consisted of 500 extras , fifty of which won the opportunity to appear on the show in local radio contests .

A civilian underpass in Stanley Park doubled as Freedom Plaza . During the filming in the park , several public photographers sought out Anderson . Because of a stipulation of filming in parks , the police cannot deny anyone access . To compensate for this , many of the available crew and production staff members formed a " human blockade " to prevent the paparazzi from disturbing the shots . The terminal for the Canada Place waterfront building served as a stand @-@ in for the interior of the Pentagon .

= = Reception = =

" Unrequited " premiered on the Fox network on February 23 , 1997 . This episode earned a Nielsen rating of 10 @.@ 9 , with a 16 share , meaning that roughly 10 @.@ 9 percent of all television @-@ equipped households , and 16 percent of households watching television , were tuned in to the episode . " Unrequited " was seen by 16 @.@ 56 million viewers on first broadcast . The episode first aired in the United Kingdom on January 7 , 1998 on BBC One .

Todd VanDerWerff of The A.V. Club gave the episode a " B ? " . He wrote that " Unrequited " " isn 't

a very good episode " of the series , but that it is " a potent one all the same " due to its " great ideas " that are unfortunately never expanded upon . VanDerWerff felt that the episode 's biggest problem was that it started in media res and revealed the episode 's conclusion , writing " it 's a pretty great starting point for an episode . Instead , it 's actually the endpoint " . Despite the negativity towards the plot , he wrote that the entry was " a good episode for Skinner " in that it gives him a mission and alludes to his past in a realistic way . Furthermore , VanDerWerff also applauded the way the show used the Vietnam War in a way that felt " fresh " . Independent reviewer Sarah Stegall awarded the episode a two out of five and derided it as a " pseudo @-@ political story " . She was negative towards the " lack of emotional investment " , which she felt was what damaged the episode ; she called Teager a cipher who was portrayed as a " Twitchy Vet " rather than a " Tragic Hero " .

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 stars out of five . They heavily criticized the episode for taking place before the events of " Kaddish " and " Memento Mori " in an attempt to not deal with Scully 's cancer . Furthermore , the two criticized the episode for being " thin stuff " and heavily padded ; Shearman and Pearson note that the long teaser is replayed in the episode " to no new dramatic effect " and that Covarrubias 's appearance offers no new information . Paula Vitaris , writing for *Cinefantastique* , rated " Unrequited " one star out of four , writing that it " collapses under the weight of its message " and that it " fails to bring to life any of its guest characters " . Furthermore , she criticized the reusing of the teaser , noting that it " just comes off as a writer 's device " .