

= Darkness Falls ( The X @-@ Files ) =

" Darkness Falls " is the twentieth episode of the first season of the American science fiction television series The X @-@ Files . It premiered on the Fox network on April 15 , 1994 . " Darkness Falls " was written by series creator Chris Carter , and directed by Joe Napolitano . It featured guest appearances by Jason Beghe and Titus Welliver . The episode is a " Monster @-@ of @-@ the @-@ Week " story , a stand @-@ alone plot that is unconnected to the series ' wider mythology . " Darkness Falls " earned a Nielsen household rating of 8 @. @ 0 , being watched by 7 @. @ 5 million households in its initial broadcast , and received positive reviews , earning an Environmental Media Award for its treatment of illegal logging .

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 are called in to investigate when a team of loggers disappear without a trace . Initially suspecting eco @-@ terrorism , the agents find themselves trapped by a seemingly ancient menace lurking in the woods .

Chris Carter was inspired to write this episode based on an interest in dendrochronology , a subject that involves analyzing annual growth rings found in non @-@ tropical tree species . Carter credits the episode 's ominous ending with his experience growing up in the era following the Watergate scandal , having spent his life coming to mistrust the government profoundly .

= = Plot = =

In Olympic National Forest in Washington state , a group of loggers flee through the woods , trying to escape from an unseen force . They are eventually killed by a large swarm of small glowing green insects .

Later , at FBI headquarters , Fox Mulder shows Dana Scully a photo of the missing loggers , telling her that another group of loggers disappeared in the forest in 1934 . The two agents head to the forest , where they meet Park Ranger Larry Moore and Steve Humphreys , head of security for the logging company . While driving through the forest , their truck hits caltrops left in the ground by eco @-@ terrorists , forcing them to walk the rest of the way . Upon arriving at the camp site , Mulder and Scully find the cabins abandoned and the communication equipment destroyed . Searching the forest , they find a corpse encased in a large cocoon hanging from a tree .

While repairing one of the heat generators , Humphreys catches an eco @-@ terrorist named Doug Spinney . He tells the group that there 's a deadly swarm of insects in the forest and that they must avoid darkness to stay alive . The next morning , they find an old @-@ growth tree cut down with an unexplained band of green contained within its growth rings . Spinney suspects that an organism that was dormant in the tree for centuries was disturbed when the tree was illegally cut down . Humphreys hikes down to Moore 's truck , but is killed by the swarm at nightfall . In the cabin , everyone else is kept safe by the light . The next morning , Spinney convinces Mulder to let him hike to his colleagues with gasoline so he can return with a Jeep to pick them up . Scully and Moore confront Mulder , since this will leave them with little fuel for the generator .

The night passes with only a single light bulb lighting the cabin , going out just as morning arrives . Mulder , Scully and Moore hike down to the truck with a busted tire from camp , hoping to patch it , put on the spare and escape . They find Humphreys dead . Spinney returns with the Jeep , telling the others his friends are all dead . The Jeep hits another spike left in the ground , and Spinney is killed when he leaves the Jeep after dark . Moore and the agents are engulfed by the insects , which enter the vehicle through the air conditioning . They are found soon after and brought to a quarantined facility in Winthrop , Washington , where one of the scientists tells Mulder that the forest is being bombarded with pesticides and controlled fire in the hopes of eradicating the insects .

= = Production = =

Chris Carter was inspired to write this episode based on an interest in dendrochronology , a subject

that involves analyzing annual growth rings found in non @-@ tropical tree species , as he believed that trees that were " thousands of years old " might end up acting as " time capsules " that would shed light on past events or species . Carter also credits the episode 's ominous ending with his experience growing up in the era following the Watergate scandal , having spent his life coming to mistrust the government profoundly . The green insects in this episode were primarily computer @-@ generated and added in during the post @-@ production process . The close @-@ up shots of the bugs were done using microscopic photography of mites .

The episode was intended to be a bottle episode , meaning that it would be an episode that would be based in a single location and help save money , but bad weather plagued production , and it was one of the toughest episodes of the season for the crew . The episode was shot on location in Lynn Valley , British Columbia , in the Lower Seymour Conservation Reserve , known as the Seymour Demonstration Forest . The atmosphere amongst many of the crew had grown quite tense towards the end of the shooting schedule , and it culminated in a heated argument between director Joe Napolitano and first assistant director Vladimir Steffof , after which Napolitano did not appear on location again . " Darkness Falls " was the last episode of the series that Napolitano directed . The weather delayed production at the site so much that pick @-@ up shots and inserts had to be filmed at a later date to finish the episode . Delays were also caused by the inaccessibility of the location , as only generators , camera equipment , and first aid crew were able to stay on @-@ site , and time was wasted commuting staff in each day . Jason Beghe , who played Ranger Larry Moore , was a childhood friend of David Duchovny and helped convince him to pursue an acting career . The camaraderie between the two actors is said to have helped lighten the mood during the episode 's difficult production .

= = Broadcast and reception = =

" Darkness Falls " premiered on the Fox network on April 15 , 1994 , and was first broadcast in the United Kingdom on BBC Two on February 9 , 1995 . This episode earned a Nielsen rating of 8 @.@ 0 with a 14 share , meaning that roughly 8 percent of all television @-@ equipped households and 14 percent of households watching television were tuned in to the episode . It was viewed by 7 @.@ 5 million households .

In a retrospective of the first season in Entertainment Weekly , " Darkness Falls " was rated a B , with the episode being called an " eerie outing " set against a " torn @-@ from @-@ today 's @-@ headlines backdrop " . Zack Handlen , writing for The A.V. Club , called " Darkness Falls " an " excellent " episode that " hits the right notes " . He praised the episode 's setting , comparing it to the earlier first season episode " Ice " ; and felt that the " on @-@ the @-@ nose " approach to the environmental themes worked well . Matt Haigh , writing for Den of Geek , felt positively about the episode 's ambiguous resolution , feeling that its " open @-@ ended treatment " lent the episode " a real mysticism and strength " and finding that the episode held a sense of " weight , credibility , and intrigue " . Writers for IGN named the episode their fifth @-@ favorite standalone episode of the show , finding that it " boasts several interesting twists " and noting positively the episode 's " smart " environmental themes .

Although writer and series creator Chris Carter claims " Darkness Falls " was not written with an environmental message in mind , the episode was honored at the fourth annual Environmental Media Awards in 1994 , winning in the " Television Episodic Drama " category . The plot for " Darkness Falls " was also adapted as a novel for young adults in 1995 by Les Martin .