

= Improbable (The X @-@ Files) =

" Improbable " is 13th episode of the ninth season and the 195th episode overall of the science fiction television series The X @-@ Files . The episode first aired in the United States and Canada on April 7 , 2002 on Fox , and subsequently aired in the United Kingdom . It was written and directed by series creator and executive producer Chris Carter . The episode is a " monster @-@ of @-@ the @-@ week " episode , a stand @-@ alone plot which is unconnected to the mythology , or overarching fictional history , of The X @-@ Files . The episode earned a Nielsen rating of 5 @. @ 1 and was viewed by 9 @. @ 1 million viewers . The episode received mostly positive reviews from critics .

The show centers on FBI special agents who work on cases linked to the paranormal , called X @-@ Files ; this season focuses on the investigations of John Doggett (Robert Patrick) , Monica Reyes (Annabeth Gish) , and Dana Scully (Gillian Anderson) . In this episode , Reyes and her fellow agents investigate a serial killer who uses numerology to choose his victims . Soon , Reyes and Scully meet an unusual man who may prove more of a hindrance than a help .

" Improbable " features Burt Reynolds playing God . Reynolds was chosen after he expressed his desire to appear in an episode of The X @-@ Files to Robert Patrick . Carter approved the idea and Reynolds thoroughly enjoyed filming the episode . " Improbable " contains several elaborate effects , such as a cityscape rendered to look like Reynolds ' head . Furthermore , the episode contains themes pertaining to fate , free will , and numerology . The tagline for this episode is " Dio Ti Ama " , meaning " God loves you " in Italian , replacing the usual phrase " The Truth is Out There . "

= = Plot = =

Agent Monica Reyes (Annabeth Gish) is investigating a series of cases that she believes are linked by numerology . While explaining the case to Dana Scully (Gillian Anderson) , Scully spots another possible link - a mark made by the killer 's ring on the victims ' faces . On consulting a numerologist , Reyes ties the murders together . However , the killer also finds the numerologist , murdering her .

Meanwhile , the killer is shown meeting up with a mysterious man (Burt Reynolds) who seems to know a lot about him and his murderous ways . He speaks in an enigmatic way , but his words do not seem to make any difference to the killer . Reyes ' numerology theories do not go down well at the FBI , but the pattern of the killings , when viewed on a map , seem to show a spiral . Scully and Reyes revisit the murdered numerologist 's office and meet the killer in the elevator . Scully recognizes the ring on the killer 's hand as the agents exit the elevator , and draws her gun on him . The killer slips back into the elevator and gets to the parking lot first . Reyes and Scully arrive only to see a car fleeing the garage and the gate closing behind it .

They meet another person hiding in a car and demand that he come out . It is the strange man . To pass the time , Burt engages Reyes and Scully in a game of checkers , whose colors (red & black) are surrogates for Scully (a redhead) and Reyes (a brunette) . These are the anticipated hair @-@ colors of the next two victims . The exiting car was assumed to contain the killer , but realizing the killer might still be inside , they search the garage and are surprised by the killer . However , John Doggett (Robert Patrick) arrives in the nick of time to shoot him . The mysterious man has completely disappeared . In a nearby Italian neighborhood , a party is in progress . Two men sing a jovial song and lead a crowd through the streets . The camera zooms out to reveal that the entire neighborhood , when viewed from above , suggests the appearance of Burt 's face , hinting to the fact that he might be God .

= = Production = =

= = = Development = = =

Carter later explained that humorous episodes were important to the show , especially during the " pitch @-@ black " ninth season . He reasoned " there are the downbeats , and then you need the relief in the tension . " The name Vicki Burdick came from a high school student Chris Carter knew . Carter felt that he needed to kill the character " all out of fondness . " Before casting Ellen Greene , Carter had first spotted her on the movie , The Little Shop of Horrors both in " New York and Los Angeles . " The first scene shot for Greene 's character took a " long day " . Carter called her a " trouper " and said she was open to the direction he gave her . She had a lot of information to remember , which made the scene even more difficult . The set for that scene was created by Tim Stepeck who was the set decorator during the ninth season . Annabeth Gish later revealed that her lines were difficult to remember . She explained , " I remember learning my lines and thinking , ' Oh my God . I 've got to memorize this . It 's scary . Like physics united theory , all of that . "

This was the last episode filmed by Carter to feature Scully in the FBI autopsy scene at 20th Century Fox . The different numbers seen in this scene was used to " conceit , this idea that numerology is an important part of our life and plays a part , but it really is just used here to illustrate the idea of patterns , patterns of behavior , of the ways in which numbers rule both the universe and our lives and our ability to solve things , to solve our mysteries of life , to solve these cases , which will lead them , as we 'll see as the act comes to a close here , they are both [Scully and Reyes] believers of the numerological episode . " The tagline for this episode is " Dio Ti Ama " , meaning " God loves you " in Italian , replacing the usual phrase " The Truth is Out There . " The normal line " Executive Producer : Chris Carter " is also rendered in Italian , reading , " Produttore Esecutivo : Chris Carter " .

= = = Casting = = =

Burt Reynolds was chosen for " Improbable " after he expressed his desire to appear in an episode of The X @-@ Files to Robert Patrick . Carter approved the idea and told Patrick that he would " write something good " . He later noted that " as a young man , [Reynolds] meant something to me " and that the opportunity to work with him was " surreal " . After Carter had written the script , he presented it to Reynolds for his approval ; Reynolds approved of the script and agreed to be in the episode . Robert Patrick later noted that Reynolds " had a great time , and he loved working with everybody . " Ray McKinnon (Dead Man 's Walk , The Missing , Needful Things) plays the role of the gambling serial killer Mad Wayno .

= = = Effects and music = = =

The final scene , featuring Burt 's face superimposed onto the cityscape , was created by special effects supervisor Mat Beck . The only actual footage in the scene is a pull @-@ back shot of the carnival that was filmed 110 feet in the air via crane . A CGI cityscape was then created that resembled Burt Reynolds ' head . The two shots were sewn together , and a blur effect was added to " [make] it sell " . An alternate version of the scene was created that featured Chris Carter 's head instead of Reynolds ' . This version was included as a bonus feature on the season nine DVD set . The score for the episode , like the rest of the series , was composed by Mark Snow . Snow based much of the music in the episode on records made by Karl Zéro , on the request of Carter . Carter later noted that " I had heard his music and it was so far out and it fit with exactly what I wanted to do because I wanted to recreate [the yearly celebration in] Little Italy . [...] I wanted to create that festival . "

= = Themes = =

According to Chris Carter , the whole idea behind the episode was about numbers and that the " significance of numbers in our lives starts here on the card table where the players are being dealt a hand each . " He continued with " the idea is that we 're all dealt hands , genetic hands , and maybe even numerological hands that give us basically the tools with which we deal and / or use for our

lives . " He further stated that the idea was that it was " free will " and " fate " , continued with that fate was determined by our own genetics .

The villain in the story , Mad Wayne , had been dealt a bad hand in life . Because of his situation , he acts on his bad impulses . Carter elaborated , " Is it fate that Wayne is about , the character , this is what I was interested in exploring here . As we 'll see with the introduction in a moment of a character who throws all of this into question ? God ? we 're going to see what his place is in all of this , or at least explore what Burt Reynolds , playing God here , has to do with the character Wayne . " The main idea behind the episode , was that God knows all the numbers , because they are his numbers and he is laying them down and is in " charge of the big game " . Being that God is trying to show us the game , as it was a " game " to be " won or lost " , and Wayne has lost this game .

= = Reception = =

= = = Ratings = = =

" Improbable " first aired in the United States on April 14 , 2002 . The episode earned a Nielsen household rating of 5 @. @ 1 , meaning that it was seen by an estimated 5 @. @ 1 % of the nation 's households . The episode was viewed by 5 @. @ 38 million households and 9 @. @ 1 million viewers " Improbable " was the 57th most watched episode of television that aired during the week ending April 14 .

= = = Reviews = = =

" Improbable " received mostly positive reviews from critics . Jessica Morgan of Television Without Pity awarded the episode a " B + " . 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 four stars out of five , and called the script " very witty " . The two wrote that " the brilliance of Chris Carter 's direction " allowed the viewer of the episode to see it " from God 's point of view " . Shearman and Pearson concluded that the episode " is not as smart as it thinks it is . But it 's still pretty smart . " John Keegan , writing for Critical Myth , on the other hand , gave the episode a more mixed review and gave it a 6 out of 10 rating . He wrote that " overall , this episode was amusing enough , but there was nothing about it that would prompt me to rank it as highly as the more inspired " lite " episodes of previous seasons . And considering that the sixth and seventh seasons suffered tremendously from too many episodes like this , it 's a shame to see them do it again . " M.A. Crang , in his book Denying the Truth : Revisiting The X @- @ Files after 9 / 11 , called the episode " bizarre yet amusing " and said that the central numerology story " doesn 't feel like it 's enough to sustain an entire episode " .

The Guardian listed " Improbable " as one of the " 13 best X @- @ Files episodes ever " . UGO named God / Mr. Burt as one of the " Top 11 X @- @ Files Monsters " , noting that " as [series creator Chris Carter] imagines him , [God] is a benevolent deity , constantly prodding his creatures to look at the patterns before them , to see the overall plan that he 's laid out . He 's doomed to failure , and he knows it , though it doesn 't stop him from trying " .