

= Force Majeure (Millennium) =

" Force Majeure " is the thirteenth episode of the first season of the American crime @-@ thriller television series Millennium . It premiered on the Fox network on February 7 , 1997 . The episode was written by Chip Johannessen and directed by Winrich Kolbe . " Force Majeure " featured guest appearances by Brad Dourif , Morgan Woodward and C. C. H. Pounder .

Millennium Group consultant Frank Black (Lance Henriksen) investigates a pair of suicides connected to a cult which has been experimenting with human cloning . Black is dogged on his travels by a strange man interested in both the Millennium Group and doomsday predictions .

" Force Majeure " features stock footage of the 1996 Saguenay Flood , and makes mention of a conjunction of planets which occurred in May 2000 . The episode was viewed by approximately 6 @. @ 9 million households during its original broadcast , and has received positive reviews from critics .

= = Plot = =

During a hailstorm in Roseburg , Oregon university students run to find shelter . One girl , Lauren (Kristi Angus) , stands in the rain , lights a cigarette , and goes up in flames . Millennium Group consultant Frank Black (Lance Henriksen) travels to the university to interview witnesses to the death . A teaching assistant tells Black that the dead girl was highly intelligent , pointing out an armillary sphere Lauren had constructed . She also tells Black that the previous Millennium Group contact had taken great interest in this sphere . Black did not realize the Group had sent another member , but on leaving , he meets the man in question ? Dennis Hoffman (Brad Dourif) . Hoffman describes his theories to Black , detailing how when several planets achieve syzygy on May 5 , 2000 , a series of natural disasters will bring about the end of the world . Hoffman believes that this cataclysm will be preceded by strange events and weather patterns .

Black later contacts another Group member , Peter Watts (Terry O 'Quinn) , who tells him that Hoffman had attempted to join the Group years earlier , and although he was refused admission , has continued to track the Group 's activities harmlessly . Watts also finds that Lauren is not her parents ' biological child , but cannot find any record of her adoption . Group coroner Cheryl Andrews (C. C. H. Pounder) finds traces of accelerant on the body , and rules the death a suicide . She also finds an astrological symbol representing conjunction carved in the girl 's thigh .

At a waterfall , another girl commits suicide by drowning . The girl , Carlin , looks identical to Lauren . Andrews performs an autopsy on Carlin as well , finding the same astrological symbol . It also becomes clear that the two girls are related ? identical twins , born seven years apart . The girls are clones , produced using a technique similar to that used to create identical cattle . Black believes that this is connected to Hoffman 's Earth Changes theory , that someone is breeding offspring destined to survive May 5 , 2000 .

Hoffman provides the Group with information leading them to Pocatello , Idaho , where a group of even more cloned girls is found living in a commune . The police fear that a cult @-@ involved suicide may be being planned , and they take the girls into protective custody . The girls are taken onto a bus as Black speaks to their biological father , a preacher confined to a negative pressure ventilator (Morgan Woodward) . The man reveals to Black that he attempted to create a caste of pure and innocent people who could repopulate society benevolently after the cataclysm . He contacted some of the girls to let them know he would die before the apocalyptic date , and they committed suicide shortly afterwards . That night , a power cut stops the man 's ventilator , killing him .

When Black leaves to meet with the girls in custody , he finds that the bus driver was another of the man in the ventilator 's offspring , and has escaped with the clones ; Hoffman has also disappeared . Black realizes that the building they found the girls in is located in an area of extreme geological stability , and is built on shock absorbing foundations ? Black does not know where the cult has escaped to , but he does know where they will be on May 5 , 2000 .

= = Production = =

" Force Majeure " was the second of four episodes helmed by director Winrich Kolbe , who had previously worked on " Kingdom Come " , and would return later in the first season for " Lamentation " and " Broken World " . The episode also marks the second writing credit in the series for Chip Johannessen , after the earlier " Blood Relatives " . Johannessen would go on to write an additional eleven episodes across all three seasons , including the series ' final episode " Goodbye to All That " . After Millennium 's cancellation , Johannessen would also contribute an episode to its sister show The X @-@ Files , 1999 's " Orison " . Johannessen would also become one of the series ' executive producers during its third season , alongside Ken Horton .

Footage used in the episode to demonstrate cataclysmic flooding was taken from stock footage of the 1996 Saguenay Flood , a series of flash floods across the Saguenay @-@ Lac @-@ Saint @-@ Jean region in Quebec . The " little white house " visible in the footage has since been converted into a museum . The episode features the third appearance by C. C. H. Pounder as Millennium Group pathologist Cheryl Andrews . Pounder would appear in four other episodes as the character , appearing across all three seasons .

The conjunction of several planets which Brad Dourif 's character Dennis Hoffman speaks about was reliably predicted at the time of the episode 's broadcast . The effects of such an alignment had been debated for some time , with studies both linking conjunction to several major earthquakes and debunking the theory entirely . Several similar alignments have occurred in the past without resulting in any additional natural activity on Earth . The predicted conjunction did occur in May 2000 , with no consequence on Earth .

= = Broadcast and reception = =

" Force Majeure " was first broadcast on the Fox Network on February 7 , 1997 . The episode earned a Nielsen rating of 7 @. @ 1 during its original broadcast , meaning that 7 @. @ 1 percent of households in the United States viewed the episode . This represented 6 @. @ 9 million households , and left the episode the sixty @-@ third most @-@ viewed broadcast that week .

The episode received positive reviews from critics . The A.V. Club 's Zack Handlen rated the episode an A ? , describing it as " sort of kind of pretty much batshit insane " . Handlen felt that the episode " was a lot of fun to watch , though , even if it didn 't entirely come together . The script is Carter and company 's usual hodgepodge of crackpot theory and weird extemporization , but it 's a huge relief to shift away , even for a week , from the grind of heavy @-@ handed murder parties that define so much of the series " . Bill Gibron , writing for DVD Talk , rated the episode 4 @. @ 5 out of 5 , calling it " superb " and " very atmospheric " . Gibron praised Dourif 's guest role , and noted that the episode helped to lay the groundwork for the direction the series would take in its second season . Robert Shearman and Lars Pearson , in their book Wanting to Believe : A Critical Guide to The X @-@ Files , Millennium & The Lone Gunmen , rated " Force Majeure " five stars out of five , describing it as " rich and dark " . Shearman felt that the episode 's plot was " borrowed from The X @-@ Files " , and came across as " just a collection of ideas " . However , he praised Dourif 's " barnstorming performance " , comparing it to his role in The X @-@ Files episode " Beyond the Sea " , and noted that " Force Majeure " was " an episode which bravely redefines what [Millennium] is capable of " .