

= One Breath (The X @-@ Files) =

" One Breath " is the eighth episode of the second season of the American science fiction television series The X @-@ Files . It premiered on the Fox network on November 11 , 1994 . It was written by Glen Morgan and James Wong , directed by R. W. Goodwin , and featured guest appearances by Melinda McGraw , Sheila Larken and Don S. Davis . The episode helped to explore the series ' overarching mythology . " One Breath " earned a Nielsen household rating of 9 @.@ 5 , being watched by 9 @.@ 1 million households in its initial broadcast . The episode received mostly positive 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 the episode , Scully is found comatose in hospital after her abduction in the earlier episode " Ascension " . Mulder attempts to investigate what has happened to her , but finds himself hindered by a man he had believed to be an ally .

Anderson returned to the series only days after having given birth , missing the previous episode due to her pregnancy . Morgan and Wong attempted to create a version of the earlier episode " Beyond the Sea " , this time centered on Duchovny 's character Mulder . The episode also introduced the character of Melissa Scully , an attempt to provide a romantic lead for Mulder which was later dropped .

= = Plot = =

= = = Background = = =

FBI special agent Dana Scully (Gillian Anderson) is currently missing , having disappeared after being kidnapped by a deranged multiple @-@ abductee in the two @-@ part episodes " Duane Barry " and " Ascension " . Her partner Fox Mulder (David Duchovny) has continued his work without her , but is still investigating her disappearance , believing her to have been abducted by aliens . His investigations into similar abductions in the past have been aided by The Lone Gunmen , a trio of conspiracy theorists made up of John Byers (Bruce Harwood) , Melvin Frohike (Tom Braidwood) and Richard Langly (Dean Haglund) .

= = = Events = = =

Scully 's mother , Margaret , (Sheila Larken) tells Mulder a story about Dana shooting a snake with her brothers as a child and regretting what she did afterwards . She indicates she is ready to let go of Dana , and shows Mulder Scully 's gravestone . Mulder , however , refuses to give up .

Scully then turns up mysteriously at a hospital in a coma . An out of control Mulder demands to know how she got there , and is escorted out by security but later calms down and meets with Dr. Daly (Jay Brazeau) , who reveals that no one can figure out how she got there or what 's wrong with her . He tells Mulder and Mrs. Scully that she has a living will that dictates she be taken off of life support when her condition falls to specific criteria . At Scully 's bedside , Mulder meets her older sister Melissa (Melinda McGraw) . Scully has a vision of sitting in a boat , attached by rope to a dock where Mulder and Melissa stand , and nurse Owens behind them . Frohike visits Scully and sneaks out her medical chart , which the Lone Gunmen later investigate . Byers finds that Scully 's blood contains branched DNA that may have been used for identification but now is inactive and nothing more than a poisonous waste product in her system .

The mysterious Nurse Owens visits Scully at her bedside , trying to reach her in her coma . Later Mulder visits Scully while another nurse takes her blood . When distracted , a mysterious man steals Scully 's blood sample and runs . Mulder chases him down to the parking lot where he is confronted by X , who demands that he stop pursuing what happened to Scully and let her die . He then executes the man who stole her blood . When Assistant Director Walter Skinner (Mitch Pileggi)

calls Mulder to his office regarding the incident , Mulder denies any involvement and claims that the Cigarette Smoking Man is responsible for what happened to Scully . Mulder demands to know where he is but Skinner refuses to tell him .

In another vision Scully lies on a table and is visited by her deceased father . Mulder , sitting with Melissa in the hospital cafeteria , is asked by a woman for change for the cigarette machine . When she says that a pack of Morleys is already there and leaves , Mulder opens it and finds the Cigarette Smoking Man 's address inside . Mulder bursts into the Cigarette Smoking Man 's home and holds him at gunpoint , demanding to know why Scully was taken instead of him . The Cigarette Smoking Man claims he likes the both of them , which is why she was returned ; he reveals that he told Skinner it was Mulder who shot the man in the parking lot , although he didn 't believe this to be true , incidentally revealing himself as unaware of who did shoot the man , namely X. He tells Mulder that he 'll never know the truth if he kills him , and Mulder decides not to .

Mulder returns to FBI headquarters and types out a resignation letter that he hands into Skinner . Skinner visits his office as Mulder is packing his things , and relates an out @-@ of @-@ body experience he had in Vietnam . Skinner refuses to accept Mulder 's resignation and Mulder realizes that he was the one who provided him with the Cigarette Smoking Man 's location . Heading to the parking garage , Mulder is met by X , telling him that he 'll have a chance for revenge that night when men , believing him to have information on Scully , will search his apartment at a specific time . Mulder is waiting with his gun at his apartment when Melissa arrives . Although he initially refuses to leave , Melissa is able to convince Mulder to see Scully , where he holds Scully 's hand and talks to her . Returning home to find his apartment trashed , Mulder sits on the floor and cries .

The next day , Scully awakens . Mulder is called to the hospital and sees her , returning her cross necklace , where she indicates she heard his voice while in her coma . Scully tells him she doesn 't remember anything after being kidnapped by Duane Barry . Later Scully asks one of the nurses if she can see Nurse Owens , as she wants to thank her , but the nurse tells Scully that no nurse named Owens works at the hospital .

= = Production = =

Gillian Anderson , who had just given birth to her daughter Piper days before this episode spent the majority of the episode in a hospital bed .

The episode title , " One Breath " comes from a line from Scully 's father when he talks to her during the episode . The character ' The Thinker ' , who later appears in person in the episode " Anasazi " was named after online X @-@ Files fan ' DuhThinker ' . The episode introduces Melinda McGraw as Scully 's sister Melissa . McGraw had previously worked with writers Glen Morgan and James Wong , who specifically wrote the part with her in mind . Thoughts were given to having a romantic interest between Mulder and Melissa , but the concept never came to pass .

Writer Glen Morgan said of the episode , " Duchovny challenged us to do a " Beyond the Sea " for him . The show had been so dark and bleak , and Jim and I feel that there is a side to the paranormal that 's very hopeful . We wanted to do that side of it . I thought it would be a great opportunity for Duchovny , but then the situation came up with Gillian 's pregnancy . We needed to get her off her feet anyway . There 's a line in there where Scully 's sister says ' Just because the belief is positive and good doesn 't make it silly or trite ' . It was the whole theme of the show . "

Chris Carter described the opening scene ? in which Scully discovers the truth about death , sadness , and sorrow ? as " a way he would never imagined an X @-@ Files episode to begin with " , and that the related scene with Scully 's tombstone was " a soft but beautiful opening " that " sets up the episode in a frightening way " . The image of Scully in the boat was meant to symbolize " being tethered to something very tenuously , and that there was a chance for you to be cut adrift and slip into the unknown " . Skinner facing the Smoking Man placed the character as " both an antagonistic and institutional figure " that tries to be both an FBI agent and an ally of Mulder and Scully ? his refusal to allow the Smoking Man to smoke in his office " speaks of [Skinner 's] alliances and allegiances to Agent Scully and his hatred of this man he cannot vanquish , he cannot get rid of , but he has to tolerate " .

= = Reception = =

= = = Ratings = = =

" One Breath " premiered on the Fox network on November 11 , 1994 , and was first broadcast in the United Kingdom on BBC Two on October 16 , 1995 . The episode earned a Nielsen household rating of 9 @. @ 5 with a 16 share , meaning that roughly 9 @. @ 5 percent of all television @- @ equipped households , and 16 percent of households watching television , were tuned in to the episode . A total of 9 @. @ 1 million households watched this episode during its original airing .

= = = Reviews = = =

" One Breath " received mostly positive reviews from critics . The Munchkyn Zone reviewer Sarah Stegall gave the episode a glowing review and rated it 6 sunflower seeds out of 5 . Stegall stated the episode " works on several levels " and called it the " best yet " . John Keegan , writing for Critical Myth , gave the episode a favorable review and rated it a 10 out of 10 . Keegan stated " this is easily one of the best episodes of the series , if not the best " and concluded it is " truly a masterpiece " . Nina Sordi , writing for Den of Geek , ranked the episode as the eighth best in the series ' run , calling it " just too unforgettable " . Sordi added that " verbal sparring matches between Mulder and Scully 's equally feisty sister , Melissa , created an interesting dynamic in the absence of Scully 's perspective " . Nick De Semlyen and James White of Empire named it the fifteenth " greatest " episode of the series , considering it a " testament to the X @- @ Files writing staff 's ability to turn the temporary loss of one of the stars into a compelling , suspenseful and worthwhile piece of the overall mythology " . In a retrospective of the second season in Entertainment Weekly , the episode was rated a B. Its " absurd symbolism and the introduction of Scully 's dopey New Age sister " were criticized , but it was felt that these elements did not prevent " One Breath " from being a " richly layered installment " . It was also felt that the episode featured " arguably Duchovny 's best performance " . Reviewer Zack Handlen of The A.V. Club hailed " One Breath " as an essential episode of the show . He felt that there was a " sloppiness to the mythology " and that " the resolution of the whole coma situation is weak " . However , the " incredibly moving moments " and highlights such as Mulder attacking the Smoking Man and Skinner 's speech about Vietnam turned it into an episode " more about the moments than the big picture " .

In 1996 , Chris Carter declared " One Breath " to be one of the series ' most popular episodes . Co @- @ writer James Wong also enjoyed the episode , saying " I really love that show " . Director R. W. Goodwin said of the episode , " What 's so unusual about " One Breath " is that it had very little to do with our usual X @- @ File stuff . It was more about human emotions , drama , relationships " .

= = = Awards = = =

" One Breath " earned a nomination for an Emmy Award by the Academy of Television Arts & Sciences for Outstanding Cinematography - Series .