

= Leonard Betts =

" Leonard Betts " is the twelfth episode of the fourth season of the American science fiction television series The X @-@ Files . It premiered on the Fox network on January 26 , 1997 . It was written by Vince Gilligan , John Shiban , and Frank Spotnitz , directed by Kim Manners , and featured a guest appearance by Paul McCrane as Leonard Betts / Albert Tanner . The episode is a " Monster @-@ of @-@ the @-@ Week " story , unconnected to the series ' wider mythology . " Leonard Betts " was Fox 's lead @-@ out program following Super Bowl XXXI and was the most watched episode of the series , receiving a Nielsen household rating of 17 @. @ 2 , being watched by 29 @. @ 1 million people in its initial broadcast . The episode received positive reviews , with critics commenting positively on the character of Betts and McCrane 's performance .

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 . Mulder is a believer in the paranormal , while the skeptical Scully has been assigned to debunk his work . In this episode , Mulder and Scully investigate the supposed death and regeneration of an emergency medical technician (EMT) named Leonard Betts , a mutant who subsists on cancer and can regenerate severed body parts .

" Leonard Betts " was a story milestone for the series , introducing the detection of Agent Scully 's cancer , which would go on to play a larger role in the latter part of season four and much of season five . In addition , the episode has been analyzed for its themes of physical drives and psychological egoism . The production for the episode required several physically exerting stunts coupled with special effects in order to bring the illusions of the episode to life .

= = Plot = =

In Pittsburgh , Leonard Betts (Paul McCrane) , an EMT paramedic , is decapitated when his ambulance collides with a truck . Later , at the morgue , his headless body leaves its cold chamber , knocks out the attendant , steals his clothes , and escapes . Fox Mulder (David Duchovny) and Dana Scully (Gillian Anderson) visit the morgue , where they find Betts ' head in a medical waste dumpster . Scully attempts a cranial examination , but the head 's eyes and mouth both suddenly open when she begins the procedure . Meanwhile , Mulder goes to Betts ' apartment , where he finds the attendant 's discarded clothes . When Mulder leaves , Betts ? who has regrown his head ? rises out of his iodine @-@ filled bathtub .

Mulder interviews Michelle Wilkes (Jennifer Clement) , Betts ' former partner , who recollects his ability to detect cancer . When an interior slice of Betts ' polymerized head is examined , the agents discover that his frontal lobe displayed signs of pervasive cancer . Mulder has Chuck Burks (Bill Dow) subject the slice to an Kirlian photography test ; the final image shows corona discharge that takes the appearance of human shoulders .

Using fingerprint records , Scully learns that Betts had an alter ego named Albert Tanner . The agents visit his elderly mother , Elaine (Marjorie Lovett) , who claims that " Albert " died in a car accident six years previously . Meanwhile , Wilkes tracks down Betts at another hospital and confronts him . After an apology , he gives her a lethal injection of potassium chloride ; Betts is then pursued and captured by a security guard . After he is handcuffed to his car , Betts escapes by tearing off his thumb . The agents search the car the next morning , finding disposed tumors in a cooler in the trunk . Mulder believes that Betts subsists on the tumors , and that his nature makes him the embodiment of a radical leap in evolution .

Upon learning that the car is registered to Elaine , the agents have the police search her home . Elaine recounts how her son endured bullying as a child " because he was different " , and says that " he had his reasons " if he killed anybody . Meanwhile , Betts accosts a bar patron and kills him to obtain his cancerous lung . Later , in a storage unit , he seems to shed his body and create a duplicate . When the agents come across the storage unit , the duplicate Betts attempts to flee in a car , which explodes when fired upon and seemingly kills him . Scully suggests that Betts ' first " death " as Albert Tanner was staged , but when they exhume Tanner 's casket , they find his body

still inside . Mulder becomes convinced that Betts can not only regenerate his body parts , but his entire body itself . Because of this , he believes that Betts is still at large .

At Elaine 's behest , Betts removes a cancerous tumor from her body before summoning an ambulance . The agents , already staking out Elaine 's house , encounter the paramedics when they arrive . Scully accompanies Elaine to the hospital while Mulder conducts a search of the neighborhood . However , after arriving at the hospital , Scully realizes that Betts has stowed himself away on the roof of the ambulance . Betts locks her inside the ambulance with him , calmly but apologetically telling her that she has " something [he] need [s] . " This leads Scully to realize that she herself has cancer . After a struggle , Scully kills Betts by pressing charged defibrillator paddles against his head . Scully remains silently stunned by the revelation of her illness . Later , in her apartment , she wakes up with a nosebleed , confirming her disease .

= = Production = =

= = = Writing = = =

" Leonard Betts " was written by Vince Gilligan , John Shiban , and Frank Spotnitz and directed by Kim Manners . Scripts written by Gilligan , Shiban , and Spotnitz would later go on to be humorously referred to as creations of a " John Gillnitz " ? a portmanteau of the three writers ' names . According to Spotnitz , the script for " Leonard Betts " was " not particularly well @-@ loved at the time " . Spotnitz later noted , however , that the episode became " one of [his] favorite monster shows " . Originally , the episode " Never Again " was supposed to come before the episode . Vince Gilligan explained , " [series creator Chris Carter] really wanted to grab viewers who had never seen us before [the Super Bowl] , and we knew the best way to do that would be with a really creepy stand @-@ alone monster story . " Thus , the air date of " Leonard Betts " was flipped with " Never Again " in order to ensure that the former episode , which featured the show 's two stars in their traditional roles , aired after the Super Bowl . Anderson has said that she would have played the part differently in " Never Again " ? which featured Scully acting notably out of character ? had she been aware that Scully would get cancer at the time , as Scully only discovers this at the end of " Leonard Betts " .

The episode is notable in that it was the first episode of the series to confirm Agent Scully 's cancer . Reportedly , when Chris Carter informed Gillian Anderson that her character would be diagnosed with cancer , she was " delighted " that she would be able to play her character in a different way . John Shiban considers the episode to be " a great X @-@ Files story " and very important because it established the story @-@ arc featuring Scully 's cancer . However , the audience receives an early indication of Scully 's cancer in the episode " Unruhe " (which aired earlier in the same season , also written by Vince Gilligan) , when Gerry Schnauz kidnaps her in the episode and says he can see Scully 's " unrest " , and points to the bridge of her nose ? exactly where her cancer would be .

Additionally , in the last scene of the episode , Scully wakes up in a coughing fit at 2 : 08AM . Episode 2 @. @ 08 " One Breath " is the episode where Agent Scully is returned from her abduction . Leonard Bett 's call sign as an EMT after his regeneration is also 208 , as heard on the radio by his partner Michelle after her return to work . Later , she asks after him to another ambulance team , who refer to him as " the new guy " .

= = = Casting and filming = = =

Actor Paul McCrane , who later went on to play the noted role of Dr. Robert Romano on ER , was cast to play the role of Leonard Betts . Director Kim Manners urged McCrane to play the role of Betts with " emotional conviction . " Manners later explained that " I found that if you take the absurd and base it in the reality of human emotion , the audience is going to buy it as if it actually exists . You know ? "

McCrane had to spend hours in makeup in order to get the right effect and his eyes were colored with specially made contact lenses . Many of the scenes were physically exerting . The autopsy

scene involved McCrane positioning himself through a hole in the table and sitting perfectly still , giving the illusion of a disembodied head . The scene in the bathtub required McCrane to spend several minutes motionless underwater . The shot in which a new Betts emerges from the old one 's mouth was created by Toby Lindala . Lindala used shots of McCrane intercut with shots of a puppet with full @-@ functioning mouth and eyes . Laverne Basham and Lindala were later both nominated for an Emmy for Outstanding Makeup in a Series . In addition , the machine that created a slice of Betts ' head was designed by Ken Hawryliw .

= = Academic analysis = =

= = = Themes = = =

According to Jan Delasara , one of the major themes of " Leonard Betts " is the exploration of " irresistible physical drives . " In Betts ' case , his desire to kill is due to a biological need , not a malevolent desire to murder . The A.V. Club 's Todd VanDerWerff , in his review of the episode , wrote that " It also helps that Leonard 's such an understandably human monster . On some level , he just wants to survive , and he 's not happy about what he has to do to be able to survive . " " Leonard Betts " serves as the first story in a multi @-@ season story @-@ arc that features Agent Scully being diagnosed with terminal cancer . Richard Edwards , in the chapter " Some Philosophical Reflections on ' Trust No One ' " of their book *The Philosophy of The X @-@ Files* , argue that Scully withholding the knowledge of her cancer from Mulder is an example of psychological egoism in a protagonist . They reason that by not telling her partner , she is withholding the information in an act of self @-@ interest .

Elyce Rae Helford in her book *Fantasy Girls : Gender in the New Universe of Science Fiction and Fantasy Television* notes that the episode contains themes of " maternal sacrifice and maternal monstrosity " that are common throughout the series . In " Leonard Betts " , the titular character 's mother nearly sacrifices her own life to give her son the cancer he needs in order to escape death . Helford argues that these motifs concerning maternal figures are most notable in the season four and five " Monster @-@ of @-@ the @-@ Week " episodes , such as " Home " .

Betts ' condition , in which he is " riddled with cancer " but can " see the sickness within people " , according to Amy Donaldson , is a metaphor for someone who " has let sin or evil become the regular course of life " . Although Betts can detect and consume the illness , his motives are derived from " his own self appetite " . Donaldson contrasts him with the soul eater , from eight season entry " The Gift " . In the episode , Agent John Doggett , played by Robert Patrick , stumbles upon a creature that altruistically absorbs the diseases and ailments of others . The soul eater is the polar opposition of Betts , in that takes the illness to help others , rather than to harm them and keep living , which is Betts ' mode of operation .

= = = Scientific research = = =

According to biology professor and science advisor to the X @-@ Files Anne Simon , the manner in which Betts can regrow limbs is somewhat similar to the way in which amphibians and newts can regenerate tails and other limbs . She notes that many amphibian cells can " turn back the clock [and] revert back to an [embryonic] time when any fate was possible " . In humans , only two types of cells ? blood cells and liver cells ? are able to regenerate , however , the process is different via the stem cell . Simon also postulates that Betts was able to regenerate because he had a specific relationship between his immune system and his cellular growth . She notes that what Scully and Burks mistook for tumors were actually blastema , or masses of cells capable of growth and regeneration into organs or body parts . Simon also suggests that , for Betts to truly be composed entirely of cancer cells , he would have to lack functioning p53 , the tumor suppressor protein . This condition , however , is always fatal .

= = Broadcast and reception = =

= = = Ratings = = =

" Leonard Betts " premiered on the Fox network on January 26 , 1997 immediately following Super Bowl XXXI . The episode earned a Nielsen rating of 17 @. @ 2 with a 29 share , meaning that it was seen by 17 @. @ 2 % of all 18- to 49 @- @ year @- @ olds , and 29 % of all 18- to 49 @- @ year @- @ olds watching television at the time of the broadcast ; this made the episode the highest @- @ rated episode in the series ' run . The episode was viewed by over 29 @. @ 1 million people , making it the most @- @ watched episode of the series . David Lavery , in his book *The Essential Cult Reader* , argues that the Super Bowl switch that the series made with " Leonard Betts " in order to make the episode more appealing to non @- @ viewers was instrumental in the trend that favored programs being aired sequentially later on during syndication .

= = = Reviews = = =

The episode received largely positive reviews from critics . The A.V. Club gave the episode an A , noting that " ' Leonard Betts ' deserves to be remembered [...] There 's very little in this episode that doesn 't work . ' Leonard Betts ' isn 't the best episode of *The X @- @ Files* , but it signifies that we 're moving into one of the show 's very best periods , and it does so with a confidence and verve that the series didn 't always display . " Many critics praised the tenacity of the writers for airing an episode featuring such a creepy character after the Super Bowl . Writing for *Den of Geek* , John Moore listed Betts as one of his " Top 10 X @- @ Files Baddies " , writing that " Fox had the Superbowl [sic] , the Superbowl happens on a Sunday , Fox decides to run the show in the prime slot after the big game ... [...] So , did , they soft @- @ pedal things in order to grab a wider audience ? Er ... no . Instead they decided to feature a cancer @- @ eating living tumour that could re @- @ grow his own limbs at will . That 's why I love the X @- @ Files . "

Paula Vitaris from *Cinefantastique* gave the episode a positive review and awarded it three stars out of four . Vitaris praised the episode 's balance of humor and horror , noting " Although ' Leonard Betts ' is not a comedy , the three writers take such pleasure in the story that you buy the situation . There 's a lot of situational (and scary) humor in the script . " Furthermore , she noted that the ending revelation that Scully has cancer and the following conversation between Mulder and Scully was " one of the season 's best scenes . " 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 . The two wrote positively of the " amiable quality to the story which makes its finale moments all the more of a kick in the teeth . " Shearman and Pearson noted that " Leonard Betts " was the first episode " to come along [in the fourth season] which feels light and frothy , and it deliberately makes the unkindest cut of all . "

The character of Leonard Betts itself has also attracted positive criticism . Connie Ogle from *PopMatters* ranked the character among the " greatest " monsters @- @ of @- @ the @- @ week , describing him as someone who could " grow back his own head after being decapitated , a feat that resulted in the show 's best @- @ rated episode . " The A.V. Club 's Todd VanDerWerff praised the humanistic way Betts was presented .