

Season 4



1996



A Mulder, Smith (Roy Thinnes) and "Herrenvolk" clones



Top, Scully summons X in "Herrenvolk"; above, the skin-deep "Teliko"; left, Pruitt Taylor Vince sizes Scully up for an "Unruhe" lobotomy.

73 Herrenvolk

WRITER: CARTER DIRECTOR: GOODWIN

Mulder and Smith are pursued by the Bounty Hunter to Alberta, Canada, an apparent nursery for drones—both bees and mute adolescent clones; the girls are all replicas of Mulder's sister, Samantha. Meanwhile, Scully unravels the real purpose of Smith's work at the Social Security Administration. **Historic moments:** Mulder's mother—who has had a stroke after her confrontation with Cancer Man in "Talitha Cumi"—is healed by the Bounty Hunter at Cancer Man's directive; X is seemingly shot dead, directing Mulder to his could-be successor, UN operative Marita Covarrubias (where do they come up with these names?). **Critique:** The episode makes good use of locations, particularly in its *Children of the Corn*-like opener. And we're happy that the fate of sympathetic crusader Jeremiah Smith has been left unresolved—but then, this chapter opens the door to all sorts of potentialities. It also finds Mulder with a new bad hairdo. **A-**

74 Home

WRITERS: MORGAN/WONG DIRECTOR: MANNERS

The Texas Chainsaw Massacre meets *Brother's Keeper* as our dynamic duo encounters a hotbed of genetically induced depravity in a Norman Rockwell-esque town called Home. **Historic moment:** Mulder and Scully examine their feelings about parenthood—perhaps their scariest moment in an episode packed with them. Indeed, this episode will never be repeated on Fox because of backlash from conservative US viewers. **Creative casting:** Local Canadian Karin Konoval as the fiercely protective mother/sister/daughter of the Johnny Mathis-lovin' Peacock boys. **Critique:** Simply put, one of television's most disturbing hours. At the same time, a

KEN STANFORTH/FOX (12)

cinematic feast for the eyes, packed with audacious wit (and one excellent *Babe* reference). **A**

75 Teliko

WRITER: GORDON DIRECTOR: CHARLESTON

African-American men are turning up dead, with all the pigment drained from their bodies. The suspect? A ghost creature from West African folklore who can transmogrify into any size or shape. **Critique:** Basically, a sub-Saharan "Squeeze" (episode 2) without as, uh, colourful an antagonist. **C-**

76 Unruhe

WRITER: GILLIGAN DIRECTOR: BOWMAN

Gerry Schnauz, a paranoid schizophrenic turned kidnapper, is giving lobotomies to young women he deems troubled. Mulder and Scully track him through the only clue he leaves: a Polaroid depicting his vision of his victim's distress. **Creative casting:** Pruitt Taylor Vince (*Heavy*, *Murder One*) as Schnauz gives new meaning to shift-eyed. **Critique:** An interesting concept, "Thoughtography", quickly devolves into boilerplate Scully-in-distress shtick. **C**

77 The Field Where I Died

WRITERS: MORGAN/WONG DIRECTOR: BOWMAN

A botched federal raid on a David Koresh/Jim Jones-style cult leaves our agents 24 hours in which to come up with a prosecutable case against the zealots. In the process, one of the sect leader's six wives is found to be channelling past lives (one sounding suspiciously like Joe Pesci in *GoodFellas*), and Mulder becomes convinced he's shared one with her. **Critique:** There's an evil conspiracy afoot, and it's the creative team responsible for this stultifyingly

awful episode. The only thing Duchovny is channelling here is *Star Trek*'s William Shatner. **F**

MRS PEACOCK

Home is where the heart is

78 Sanguinarium

WRITERS: VALERIE MAYHEW/VIVIAN MAYHEW
DIRECTOR: MANNERS

A devil-worshipping cosmetic surgeon in search of immortality compels his colleagues to commit murder through overly enthusiastic liposuction and chemical peels, turning a Windy City hospital unit into Chicago Hopeless.

Creative casting: Richard Beymer (*West Side Story*, *Twin Peaks*) as the doc who takes face-lifts to a new dimension. **Critique:** Lots of juicy gore redeems this instalment, but the fourth consecutive phoned-in performances by Duchovny and Anderson have us worried. **B-**

79 Musings of a Cigarette-Smoking Man

WRITER: MORGAN DIRECTOR: WONG

In a *Forrest Gumpian* retrospective, Cancer Man reviews his life story through an eavesdropped conversation between Lone Gunman Frohike and Mulder and Scully. We are told of his seduction as an Army officer into the black forces, and that he is responsible for virtually every major event since then—from President Kennedy's assassination to who wins Oscars. **Historic moments:** Just a sample from this box of chocolates: Fellow Army officer Bill Mulder tells Cancer Man of his 1-year-old son Fox's first words ("JFK"); and we learn the true pain underlying Cancer Man's desolate demeanour (he's a failed writer of Tom Clancy-style spy novels under the *nom de plume* Raul Bloodworth). **Critique:** Given its incredibly arch, near-satiric tone and absurd allegations, one has to wonder to what extent this episode is intended as information, and to what extent sheer entertainment. Then again, this is Frohike's version of Cancer Man's life, so the truth is probably still out there (see Top Secrets, page 31). **A-**

80 Tunguska

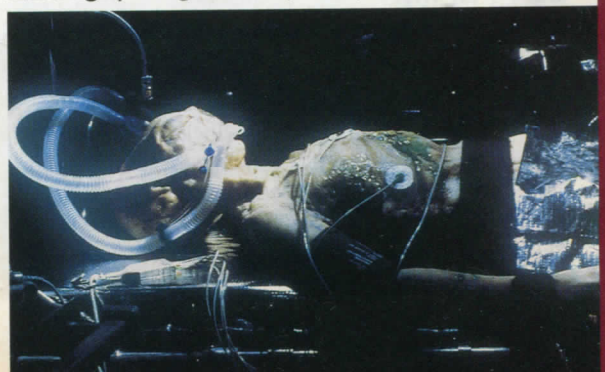
WRITERS: CARTER/SPOTNITZ DIRECTOR: MANNERS

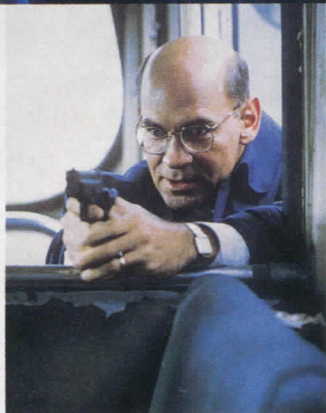
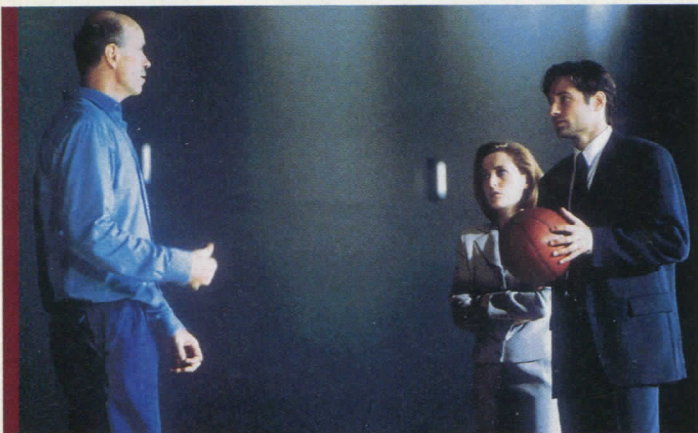
Ratboy lives! When an odd alien rock is smuggled into the US from Russia, Alex Krycek (in cahoots with a right-wing militia group) leads Mulder on a globe-spanning quest that ends in a Siberian gulag. Seems the rock contains 4-billion-year-old toxic worms coveted by both Russkies and Yanks (and



you thought the Cold War was over). Scully is left defending Mulder to a US congressional committee investigating his connection to the death of the rock-smuggling diplomat. **Historic moments:** Mulder, needing a Russian visa, meets a scantily clad Marita Covarrubias (Laurie Holden) in her apartment—oddly suggestive since it leads nowhere; we learn that Well-Manicured Man keeps racehorses in Virginia (even despots bent on world domination need a hobby). **Creative casting:** Crusty Fritz Weaver as Senator Sorenson, head of the congressional committee. **Critique:** Krycek's smarmy duplicity has been missed from the so-called mythology chapters. And that last image—of chicken-wire cocooned Mulder being force-fed inky worms—is a stunner. **A-**

Above right, "Sanguinarium"; below, a "Musings" alien





Top, Roche (Tom Noonan) catches Mulder's attention in "Paper Hearts"; more "Paper Hearts" above left and right; below, Paul McCrane, co-star of the 1980 movie *Fame*, as the carcinophilic title character in "Leonard Betts".



81 Terma

WRITER: SPOTNITZ/CARTER DIRECTOR: BOWMAN

Mulder learns that those worms (from Tunguska Rock, a meteor which crashed in 1908 in Russia) carry a deadly toxin known as Black Cancer, and he's a Gulag guinea pig for the vaccination. Furthermore, Krycek deliberately led him to this fate. In a preposterously easy prison escape, our hero takes Ratboy hostage, only to lose him to a renegade band

of one-armed men. Back home, Mulder and Scully uncover a Florida nursing home full of freshly poisoned, worm-ridden seniors. **Historic moments:** Properly introduces retired KGB assassin Vassily Peskow (Jan Rubes), sent to America by Krycek (aka Comrade Arntzen) to destroy all evidence of black worms, including Well-Manicured Man cohort and small-pox authority Dr Bonita Charne-Sayre. Turns out she's behind the nursing-home testing, an attempt to beat the Russians to a Black Cancer vaccination (curing this potential bio-weapon equals controlling it—and apparently the Russian inoculation works since Mulder, who got a shot in the back of the neck at the end of the last episode, manages to escape with no apparent infection). We also learn of Senator Sorenson's ties to the Syndicate. **Critique:** Even the KGB couldn't figure all this out. Among the burning questions: What's the connection between Black Cancer and smallpox vaccinations (other than Krycek clapping with one hand from now on)? **B-**

82 Paper Hearts

WRITER: GILLIGAN DIRECTOR: BOWMAN

Mulder is haunted by a 1990 case, "Paper Hearts", named for serial murderer John Lee Roche's "trophies" (the 13 heart-shaped pieces of fabric collected from the nightgowns of his prepubescent victims). When a recurring nightmare leads Mulder to discover more bodies, he confronts the vacuum-salesman turned killer. Roche's revelation—that a 16th heart belonged to a girl abducted in 1973—sucks Mulder in beyond his wildest dreams. That girl, Roche claims, was Samantha Mulder. **Creative casting:** Veteran psycho Tom Noonan (*Manhunter*) as Roche. **Critique:** Do profilers and profilees share a psychic nexus? That grave has been dug up before, but Noonan's seductive mind games—plus luscious photography—keep this one fresh. **B+**

83 El Mundo Gira

WRITER: JOHN SHIBAN DIRECTOR: TUCKER GATES

Aliens again, but this time the terrestrial kind, as Mulder and Scully examine bizarre deaths in a California migrant workers community. Are they caused by killer fungus from outer space—or, as the illegal immigrants fears, by El Chupacabra, a "goat sucking" demon (que?) of ancient lore? **Creative casting:** Rubén Blades as the Immigration and Naturalization Service cop torn between rational Western thought and the mythic imaginings of his people. **Critique:** Shades of "Teso Dos Bichos" (episode 66) as the show strikes out again with Latino superstition. It also manages to reduce Mexicans to hot-blooded, vengeful caricatures, and a serious social issue to weak metaphor (America's illegal migrant community as an invisible workforce). **C-**

84 Leonard Betts

WRITERS: GILLIGAN/SHIBAN/SPOTNITZ
DIRECTOR: MANNERS

An ambulance nurse has an uncanny ability to make bullseye, on-the-spot diagnoses in his patients. (Hooray!) That's because he's a regenerating, iodine-bathing, genetic anomaly who lives off malignant, cancerous growths. (Oh, no!) **Historic moments:** At episode's end, Scully suffers an inexplicable nose bleed, a harbinger of what will be the season's most serious subplot. **Creative casting:** Paul McCrane (*Fame*, *RoboCop*) as oddly sympathetic zombie Leonard. **Critique:** Strangely, a stand-alone episode which nevertheless launches a conspiracy-related plot: Scully's rapidly accelerating—and possibly alien-caused—cancer. As for Leonard, not only does he stand head to head (to head) with the best of *Files*' genetic freaks, but his particular mutation allows for great body-part puns (that "slice to go" request, for instance). **A**

85 Never Again

WRITERS: MORGAN/WONG DIRECTOR: BOWMAN

"Why don't I have a desk?" wonders Scully, as Mulder heads off on his first holiday in four years. It's a question which triggers a walk on the wild side for our Dana, including a date (yes, a date) with Ed Jerse, a downtrodden divorcee with a nagging tattoo that drives him to murder. **Historic moment:** A festival of introspection for Scully, as she examines her role at work (is she simply a flunky to Mulder's personal obsessions?), her attraction to controlling men, and a general lack of a life; Scully gets a tattoo on her lower back (the infinity snake from *Millennium*—nothing like a little free publicity for Carter's other show). Last but not least: A wacky Mulder moment as he visits his spiritual home—Graceland. **Creative casting:** Jodie Foster has a field day as the voice of misogynistic "Betty"; Rodney Roland as Jerse captivated Anderson on-screen and off (see page 8). **Critique:** We love the two interludes of sniping (and revealing) Mulder/Scully banter which bookend this episode. As for the rest, while we appreciate the necessity of a buttoned-down Scully, her descent into the dark subculture of dive bars and tattoo parlours—reminiscent of Mulder's kinky fling in episode 30—provides a welcome whiff of lust (although it's unclear whether she and Jerse actually do the deed). **A-**

86 Memento Mori

WRITERS: CARTER/GILLIGAN/SHIBAN/ SPOTNITZ
DIRECTOR: BOWMAN

"The truth is in me," says Scully of her newfound brain tumour. She also learns that all but one of the 11 female abductees she met in episode 57 have been wiped out by identical cancers. Meanwhile, Mulder and the Lone Gunmen stumble upon a feder-



Above, a scan for cancer-stricken Scully in "Memento Mori"; right, from the same episode, Mulder with clone-incubator tanks; below, freeing Weiss (Groh) in "Kaddish"



ally-operated fertility lab with Scully's ova on file—that, and a staff of lab-coated alien/hybrid clones (the good kind . . . we think). **Historic moment:** To save Scully's life, Skinner makes a deal with Cancer Man, who promises to set things right—for an unspecified price. **Critique:** Leaves you breathless and moved, thanks both to Anderson—who won an Emmy (her first) for this affecting performance—and Duchovny, who successfully juggles bullet-dodging action sequences with touching devotion to his partner. **A-**

87 Kaddish

WRITER: GORDON DIRECTOR: MANNERS

After Isaac Luria, a young Hasidic Jew, is brutally murdered by white supremacists, his killers start turning up dead. Evidence leads straight into—and out of—the dead Semite's grave. **Creative casting:** Sitcom vet David Groh (*Rhoda*) as Jacob Weiss, the Holocaust survivor father of Isaac's fiancé.

Critique: "Body without soul" is the definition of *der Golem*, a monster fashioned from the clay of the earth. It also sums up this muddy excursion into Jewish folklore mysticism. **D+**

88 Unrequited

WRITERS: GORDON/CARTER DIRECTOR: MICHAEL LANGE

Chris Carter meets Oliver Stone, as Nathaniel J. Teager, a Green Beret "killing machine" presumed dead, apparently returns. His mission: Off the Army brass responsible for neglecting POWs. His advantage: The ability to render himself invisible. **Critique:** A "naturally occurring blind spot" is the unsatisfying explanation for Teager's disappearing act. Equally disappointing: Mulder's cockamammy "policy of denial" theories, instigated by a gratuitous Marita Covarrubias appearance. Worse still, M & S are little more than spectators in this suspenseless race against the clock. They really ought to give the Vietnam Vet-exacting-revenge bit a rest. **C-**

89 Tempus Fugit

WRITER: CARTER/SPOTNITZ DIRECTOR: BOWMAN

In the first of a two parter, multiple abduction victim Max Fenig (episode 9)—on his way to deliver a government-coveted parcel to Mulder—dies in a mysterious plane crash. After being contacted by Fenig's sister Sharon, Mulder and Scully rush to confirm Fox's suspicion—that Max was the target of aliens yet again—before the evidence is covered up. **Creative casting:** Joe Spano (*Hill Street Blues*) as the air-crash specialist who suddenly believes. **Critique:** This non-mythology conspiracy episode (*à la* the first Max hour, "Fallen Angel") offers just workman-like suspense, but hold on for a jolting closer. (Is this the end of Agent Pendrell?) **B-**

90 Max

WRITER: CARTER/SPOTNITZ DIRECTOR: MANNERS

In answer to the above question: Yes. And here's another titbit: Sharon's no sister to Max; she's an aeronautical engineer who's spent time in mental institutions. She's also the key to finding the three interlocking pieces of alien technology Fenig was delivering to Mulder. **Historic moment:** Mulder witnesses an abduction—and, of course, loses the memory. **Critique:** Anti-climactic to the max; in fact, its tacky production values and elementary story make it feel more first-season than fourth. And pity Anderson, who gets saddled with some real dialogue doozies: "Men with spartan lives, simple in their creature comforts, if only to allow for the complexities of their passions." No wonder she never gets laid. **C+**

91 Synchrony

WRITER: GORDON/DAVID GREENWALT
DIRECTOR: JAMES CHARLESTON

In the series' seventh stab at mad scientists, univer-

Below, Laurie Holden as Marita Covarrubias in "Unrequited"; right, fatal thaw in "Synchrony"



sity eggheads are devising a method of time travel using cryogenics—that is, until one of them returns from the future to undo what they have done. **Critique:** We wondered when they'd deal directly with time travel. Particularly cool stiff, too. **B**

92 Small Potatoes

WRITER: GILLIGAN DIRECTOR: CLIFF BOLE

Mothers at a West Virginia hospital are giving birth to babies with tails. The culprit? Edward Van Blundht (our old favourite Darin Morgan), a dumpy, shapeshifting janitor with a tell-tail scar in his plumber's crack. When Mulder suspects the truth, Van Blundht attempts to fill his mopey shoes. **Creative casting:** Gilligan talked Morgan into his first acting part since "The Host" (episode 25). **Critique:** Morgan may not have penned this inspired bit of whimsy, but his off-kilter, Mulder-skewering fingerprints are all over it. And Duchovny—playing Van Blundht playing Mulder—is deadpan perfection. Best line in an episode full of 'em, Van Blundht's final reproach to Mulder: "I was born a loser, but you're one by choice." **A+**

93 Zero Sum

WRITERS: GORDON/SPOTNITZ DIRECTOR: MANNERS

The bees (episode 73) are on the loose and bloated, smallpox-infected corpses are piling up. With Scully back in hospital, Mulder works solo. Trouble is, evidence is being immaculately destroyed—by Skinner posing as Mulder. **Historic moments:** Hubba-Hubba, Skinner in his undies! OK, more significantly, the assistant director is erasing clues as part of his Scully-saving deal with Cancer Man (episode 87); the Fat Man first speaks of "The Trial Run", presumably Syndicate code for the unleashing of the bees in a schoolyard (a scene recalling Hitchcock's *The Birds*). **Critique:** Skinner's dilemma (he clearly regrets deceiving Mulder) offers Mitch Pileggi a rare chance to sink his teeth into his role, rather than simply grit them. As for the bees, Carter says, "they



Above, the two faces of Skinner in "Zero Sum"; below, Mulder is under suspicion in the weak "Demons"; right, a long-frozen alien—or is it just another part of the lie?—in "Gethsemane".



double murder. He obviously didn't kill anyone (duh!), and Scully gets to help him prove it. Their clues: Vague flashbacks of Cancer Man with Fox's family. **Critique:** A promising if somewhat tired concept (amnesiac must prove his innocence) degenerates into a turgid and humourless whodunit. **C-**

96 Gethsemane

WRITER: CARTER DIRECTOR: GOODWIN

A shocker of an opener finds Scully examining Mulder's corpse, then denouncing him to an FBI committee examining his supposed suicide: "It is my scientific opinion that he became a victim of his own false hopes . . . and his belief in the biggest of lies." Told in flashback, the episode traces Mulder's twin discoveries: His "Holy Grail"—a perfectly preserved, 200-year-old alien body frozen in a Yukon glacier—and a Pentagon agent with proof that everything Mulder has seen with regard to aliens is a cleverly orchestrated government hoax (hello, José Chung). Indeed, it covers up much more serious misdeeds. **Historic moment:** Introduces yet another authoritative male to browbeat Scully—navy brother Bill (Pat Skipper)—and Michael Kritschgau (played by John Finn and named for a school classmate of Anderson's), the Pentagon flunky who reveals not only that the government has created the lie of intelligent alien life, but that they've given Scully her cancer to make Mulder believe. Note also telling use of Mulder kindred spirit Carl Sagan. **Critique:** More than the usual smoke and mirrors, even for a cliffhanger, and we're not buying any of it: That Scully has betrayed Mulder, that Mulder has met his last File, that all those bug-eyed green guys are as fake as they look in this episode. Aside from Carter, Duchovny and Anderson being contractually obliged to make another season, there's a dead giveaway in the opening credits: "Believe the Lie." **B**

have a correlation to the mythology of our show . . . aliens are coming down and colonising the globe and honey bees are doing the same thing." Whatever, they are our least favourite conspiracy twist. **B+**

94 Elegy

WRITER: SHIBAN DIRECTOR: CHARLESTON

"What is that look, Scully?" asks Mulder. This time she isn't buying into the idea that the soon-to-die are seeing ghosts of the recently killed. But when Scully sees her own Casper, self-doubt and awareness of her terminal condition force her off the case. **Critique:** The pre-death phenomenon is never adequately explained. More irksome, however, is that we don't meet the culprit, a deadly Nurse Ratched type, until the last five minutes, which is just bad mystery writing. What saves this outing is our duo's nicely escalating tension: Scully's stubborn stoicism leaves Mulder feeling shut out as he tries to support her through her battle with cancer. **B-**

95 Demons

WRITER: GOODWIN DIRECTOR: MANNERS

Mulder wakes up in a strange motel room, holding a gun, covered in blood, and the prime suspect in a