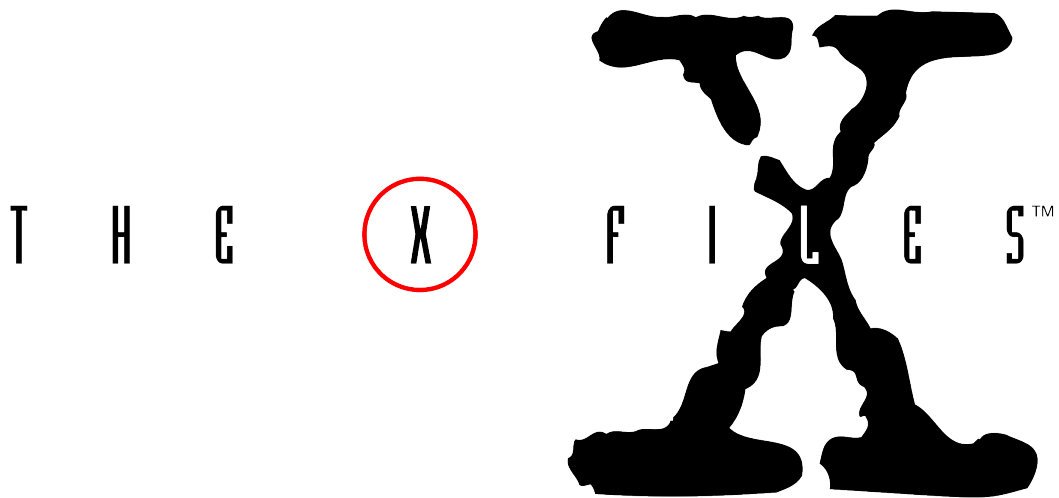


THE X-FILES - AN EPISODE:

BIG IN '86

BY ROB PLUMPTON

NOTE: This exercise involved the development of a pitch for an X-Files reboot which comprises: Premise; Character Bios; Treatment; Step Outline



PREMISE (48 WORDS): An errant FBI agent, known to MULDER from his Quantico days, is connected with a series of righteous killings. Themed by the Four Apocalyptic Horsemen, three killings have taken place. The final death, linked with Famine, is yet to occur. Mulder and SCULLY are pressed to prevent this.

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CHARACTER BIOS (456 WORDS)

THE ERRANT AGENT: There are two personalities within this physical frame. First, FRANK BUSS and second, WALTER LAMB.

FRANK BUSS: Born in Yale New Haven Hospital, Connecticut, Buss is a similar age to Mulder. They trained together in Quantico and, although close during their training, they drifted apart following their graduation in 1986.

In 1992, Buss was assigned to undercover work, investigating a sex trafficking ring known as 'The Fulfilled'. After witnessing several acts of brutality and cruelty, Buss lost his grip on his sanity, which resulted in the development of Walter Lamb.

WALTER LAMB: This is a personality linked with several acts of arson which, in every case, resulted in death. Buss believes lamb to be a benign demon who offers a mode of being that justifies retributive action; Scully labels Lamb as a dissociative personality developed by Buss as a cognitive protection measure.

Considering himself 'The Lamb of God' (John 1:29), this character claims to summon flames of Hell from his victims' physical core. Note that, prior to their immolation, Lamb's victims are tortured and mortally wounded anyway.

Lamb summons Mulder to this case as, by theming his killings on the Apocalyptic Horsemen, he believes that he will bring The Rapture and intends to take Mulder as witness plus herald to his ascendancy.

AGENT JESSWICK: Aged thirty six, this agent had contact with Agent Buss through his own involvement with the investigation. He was, effectively, Buss' handler. Through repeated contacts, Buss, qua the burgeoning Lamb, radicalised Jesswick a couple of years prior to his capture.

Jesswick agreed to realise Lamb's vision of The Rapture via the assisted capture and terminal torture of what both parties describe as "Human detritus". He fails to understand why Mulder and Scully would be so concerned about the final victim, given his involvement with the sex trafficking ring and well-documented acts of a grotesque nature.

AGENT TAYLOR: Aged forty seven, this character is a straight-laced agent who is not Mulder's biggest fan. He possesses an inflated sense of self importance but is somewhat squeamish, as is utilised early on in the episode for comedic effect to provide relief from suggestions of people getting tortured to death.

This character is considered a 'herald' by Lamb, who believes that he began the closing process of Lamb's killings by handing a padded envelope, containing all evidence, to Mulder. This allows him to become witness and herald to Lamb.

ANNIE-MAY: Aged four, Annie-May is the four year old daughter of two people who were involved with a sex trafficking ring whom Buss investigated. She is present when WALTER LAMB immolates her parents (although she does not witness this) and, trapped in their house, is rescued by Walter Lamb leading to his capture.

TREATMENT (647 WORDS)

Phoenix, Arizona. Distant view of the Phoenix skyline that segues into a SKINNY YOUNG MAN trapped in a mid-sized cage. He bangs on the bars with an empty metal mug. There is minimal lighting and he is distressed.

Baltimore FBI Bureau. SCULLY and TAYLOR walk down a corridor discussing a weird case. Taylor expresses concerns as Mulder trained with the apprehended killer - an errant former agent named FRANK BUSS - in Quantico. Scully defends Mulder, who is handed a large padded envelope that contains various pieces of evidence. There are suitcases in his office, and they are ready for a journey to Phoenix.

A single passenger jet traverses the sky, segueing into these agents' arrival at the Phoenix Bureau. They are greeted and briefed by AGENT DANIELS, who provides a list of agents with whom Buss had worked closely. An accomplice is suspected.

Portrayed via a very short montage, several agents give Mulder and Scully the cold shoulder. The hostility continues until they interview JESSWICK. He suggests that a journey to Buss' property could be useful, to determine whether there have been visitors. He also suggests accessing Lamb's house to gain "The ambience", but emphasises that his meagre possessions are seized as evidence.

Mulder and Scully access the property whilst Taylor continues to interview Buss' colleagues. Jesswick explains that Buss was an ascetic, so there was not a lot of evidence to take. Upon accessing, however, a couple of items are immediately visible: a coffee table, on which a music cassette player is placed, alongside Buss' leather-bound *Holy Bible*, within which a number of passages are marked and highlighted: Genesis 22:2; Psalm 55:5; John 1:11; John 1:29. Mulder plays the music cassette, which is labelled with "Big in '86"; the tune is *Wasteland* by The Mission. Jesswick, oddly disinterested, exits.

Now alone in the house, Mulder discovers a polaroid photograph of one masked man and a crucified scarecrow. He shows it to Jesswick, and demonstrates the need to find out who actually took the photograph. There is a message on the reverse: "Mere servants to a great immolator!"

Returning to the Phoenix Bureau, Mulder and Scully finally gain an interview with Frank Buss. Scully delineates the general congenial attitude of Buss' colleagues, towards him. However, Mulder presents Buss with several pieces of evidence that triggers his alter-ego: WALTER LAMB, into appearing. Lamb insists that he is no monster, instead existing "To aid the weak and wounded" following Buss' close contact with gruesome behaviours whilst investigating a sex trafficking ring undercover.

Expanding on the above, he talks through the rescue of ANNIE-MAY and his subsequent - intentional - capture whilst in the capacity of Frank Buss, who wants this killing spree to end. Whilst in control, Buss advises that he knows, approximately, where the final victim is. This prompts a co-ordinated search. Jesswick drives Mulder and Scully to the specified location - a disused industrial estate.

The three agents enter a warehouse. Jesswick turns a gun on Mulder, Scully and Taylor, shooting the latter in his leg to demonstrate fortitude. At gunpoint, Scully uncuffs Buss, who immediately transitions into Lamb. The Skinny Young Man notices a crucified scarecrow in front of his cage. Out of shot, he combusts with screams. The fire spreads, Scully drags Taylor out; Jesswick motions to shoot Mulder but Buss, returning to the fore, shoots Lamb's accomplice dead. Scully runs back inside, having heard the gunshot. Mulder emerges from the smoke and flames - he was unable to rescue any of those caught in the conflagration.

Mulder recovers within St Joseph's hospital, where he is treated for minor burns and smoke inhalation. Scully and Taylor visit; the former advises that only one body - that of The Skinny Young Man - was discovered. Buss and Jesswick could not be found. Scully shows Mulder a photograph of one charred corpse with its limbs intact. The killings are continuing.

STEP OUTLINE & KEY SCENES (2,861 WORDS).

EXT. THE PHOENIX SKYLINE (DUSK):

Partially illuminated skyline of Phoenix, Arizona, set against a blood red sky. The sun sets. A Voiceover - belonging to THE SKINNY YOUNG MAN, can be heard.

THE SKINNY YOUNG MAN (O.S.)
Hey! Hey! Somebody! Somebody?

INT. DISUSED WAREHOUSE, LAIR (DUSK):

Lit through a small window, a mid-size cage accommodates a Skinny Young Man who calls for help, but nobody can hear.

Three cages in a dimly-lit, undisclosed, location. The Skinny Young Man is imprisoned here. He bangs an empty metal mug against the bars of his cage.

THE SKINNY YOUNG MAN
Hey! Anybody! Please! Anyone?

A door opens, illuminating this area. The Skinny Young Man looks up fearfully.

INT. CORRIDOR, FBI BALTIMORE (DAY):

Mulder and Taylor walk down a corridor towards Mulder's office, discussing Mulder's history shared with Frank Buss.

INT. MULDER'S OFFICE (DAY):

Mulder is handed a padded envelope, it contains several pieces of evidence. The three agents prepare for travel to Phoenix.

EXT. CLEAR SKY (DAY):

A single passenger jet flies across the clear summer's sky.

EXT. ENTRANCE FBI PHOENIX (EVENING):

The three agents are greeted at the entryway by Agent Daniels, who acknowledges the origins of Buss' insanity.

INT. EVIDENCE ROOM, FBI PHOENIX (EVENING):

Mulder and Scully are presented with several pieces of evidence including crime scene photography.

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INT. CORRIDOR, FBI PHOENIX (EVENING):

Mulder, Scully and Taylor drag wheeled suitcases through the corridor.

INT. MULDER'S HOTEL ROOM, PHOENIX (NIGHT):

Mulder looks over the evidence, in particular photographs that show charred corpses with intact limbs.

INT. SCULLY'S HOTEL ROOM, PHOENIX (NIGHT):

Mulder knocks on Scully's door. She invites him in and they discuss the idiosyncrasies of this odd case.

INT. BRIEFING ROOM, FBI PHOENIX (MORNING):

A number of agents are gathered with Mulder, Scully and Taylor. They are advised that interviews will follow.

INT. INTERVIEW ROOM, FBI PHOENIX (MORNING):

Several agents who worked closely with Frank Buss are interviewed. Jesswick offers to help significantly.

INT. OUTSIDE THE INTERVIEW ROOM, FBI PHOENIX (DAY):

Taylor agrees to stay behind and interview more of Buss' colleagues while her and Mulder exit.

INT. FRANK BUSS' HOUSE, ENTRANCE (DAY):

A dusty, sparsely decorated entryway that, on first impressions, indicates asceticism.

SHORT MONTAGE, OUTSIDE VARIOUS HOUSES (DAY):

Scully knocks on several doors, and speaks with people who are generally congenial.

INT. FRANK BUSS' HOUSE, LIVING ROOM (DAY):

A coffee table is dead centre of the living room. A Holy Bible, cassette player and music tape are on it.

MULDER

Did the team leave this for a reason?

JESSWICK

We took everything, Mulder.

(MORE)

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JESSWICK (CONT'D)
However it got there, well, it
couldn't have been Buss.

Mulder picks up a bible off the coffee table. There are four passages marked and highlighted (Genesis 22:2; Psalm 55:5; John 1:11; John 1:29).

JESSWICK
Think this is for your benefit? I
mean, I can leave you to it if
that's what you need.

MULDER
Do what you need to do.

Jesswick steps outside to smoke. Mulder continues to look through the items. He plays a music cassette that is marked with the phrase, 'Big in 86!' (the song 'Wasteland' by The Mission can be heard).

INT. FRANK BUSS' HOUSE, BEDROOM (DAY):

A single bed and bedside cabinet are here. One polaroid picture of one masked man plus a crucified scarecrow.

INT. INTERVIEW ROOM, FBI PHOENIX (EVENING):

An interview with the killer, who flits between two characters (Frank Buss and Walter Lamb) when triggered.

Wearing his bright orange prison uniform, FRANK BUSS sits in a sparse, clinically-decorated, interview room. The walls are white as this room's tube lighting. There is a two-way mirror on one wall. MULDER and SCULLY open the door and walk in.

Mulder and Scully sit opposite FRANK BUSS. Mulder regards him with a mix of curiosity, affection and disdain. Frank Buss is hooked up to a polygraph machine. This machine has an operator who is also present.

THE ERRANT AGENT - QUA FRANK BUSS
Do you remember Jenny Maur? That
lovely young woman from Quantico?

MULDER
Frank, we have a lot of questions
and not much time!

THE ERRANT AGENT - QUA FRANK BUSS
Level with me. Do you think I'm a
monster, fox?

MULDER
What do you think, Frank?

The polygraph remains stable. Minimal movement.

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THE ERRANT AGENT - QUA FRANK BUSS
 You think I am. But I'm no
 monster, Fox. No monster at all.

The polygraph begins to move more significantly.

SCULLY
 We know. But we also know that
 there's something else. How did
 you disassociate from your
 victims?

Frank Buss grows agitated. The polygraph goes wild.

THE ERRANT AGENT - QUA FRANK BUSS
 I never did! I never did!

Scully becomes more direct, almost blunt, with her
 questioning as Mulder sits in silence.

SCULLY
 There is someone there. Someone
 dangerous. Say his name, Frank.

THE ERRANT AGENT - QUA FRANK BUSS
 Fox? Can you help me?

In silence, Mulder stands. He plays a VHS cassette that was
 provided within the padded envelope earlier. It depicts a
 scene where The Skinny Young Man is prodded with a broom
 handle.

SCULLY
 This is you, Frank. It's you!

Frank Buss grows anxious, throwing off the polygraph machine.

THE ERRANT AGENT - QUA FRANK BUSS
 It's not!

Frank Buss' demeanour changes significantly as he transitions
 to WALTER LAMB. Mulder sits down opposite Walter Lamb. In a
 different voice that is cold and flat, Walter Lamb addresses
 his interlocutors.

SCULLY
 Do we have Walter Lamb?

The polygraph immediately stabilises.

THE ERRANT AGENT - QUA WALTER LAMB
 Yes.

SCULLY
 And what is your role in the
 murders?

THE ERRANT AGENT - QUA WALTER LAMB
Murders? Murders? I absolutely am
not a murderer!

SCULLY
But you killed three people.

THE ERRANT AGENT - QUA WALTER LAMB
Yes. I did. I killed them, but it
was no murder. Murder is wrongful
killing. My three crimes, well,
they were righteous.

Mulder leans forward and addresses Walter Lamb.

MULDER
So, tell us. What is your role in
this?

THE ERRANT AGENT - QUA WALTER LAMB
Fox, Fox, Fox. I'm just here to
help the weak and wounded.

MULDER
The Frank Buss I knew in Quantico
was strong. Moral.

THE ERRANT AGENT - QUA WALTER LAMB
No! I am not Frank Buss! He saw
things working undercover. That
damned case, that collapsed. The
things they did! And here I am, a
response. A helper. I'm just here
for the weak and wounded.

INT. OBSERVATION ROOM, FBI PHOENIX (EVENING):

Taylor and several Phoenix-based staff observe the interview
from behind a two-way mirror.

Agents TAYLOR, JESSWICK and DANIELS watch the interview
through a two-way mirror.

SCULLY
You killed one man in situ. In
his house as his daughter slept.
Annie-May. Remember her? The
victim had no role in the case
you investigated.

THE ERRANT AGENT - QUA WALTER LAMB
Of course I do! That was just an
exercise. A textbook entry. I did
it as a service to Buss. I love
him.

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MULDER

Are you saying that this was
Buss? The man in there with you?

THE ERRANT AGENT - QUA WALTER LAMB

I introduced him to murder. The
guy we burned, he was scum.
Ripping off old ladies, conning
the weak.

The Errant Agent leans in to address Mulder.

THE ERRANT AGENT - QUA WALTER LAMB

So Frank was coached. I taught
him the value of judgement. And
its inevitability. For I am The
Lamb of God. And Annie-May, well,
we had to prove our value after
the act. All we did, Fox, was
snuff out the detritus.

INT. INTERVIEW ROOM, FBI PHOENIX (EVENING):

Mulder shows Buss the polaroid photograph, and reads a
message left on the reverse.

The Errant Agent's demeanour changes back to that exhibited
by Frank Buss.

MULDER

You killed a man, Frank. Not your
cover. Not your disassociation!
You!

There is an awkward silence as Frank Buss returns fully.

THE ERRANT AGENT - QUA FRANK BUSS

I can take you to the fourth
victim. Lamb, he thinks I can't
read him. But I can. I can! I
will take you. I'll take you
right now!

Scully looks to Mulder.

SCULLY

If he's killed as Buss and Lamb,
can we really trust him?

MULDER

No. No we can't trust him. But I
do know him, and the unassuming
guy from Quantico is still in
there. I know he is, Scully.
Somewhere.

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INT. OBSERVATION ROOM, FBI PHOENIX (EVENING):

Lamb is heard describing the circumstances of his character, stating "I'm not a monster, Fox!"

INT. INTERVIEW ROOM, FBI PHOENIX (EVENING):

Mulder reexamines the polaroid photographs. He notices a scar, matching that on Jesswick's forearm.

INT. OBSERVATION ROOM, FBI PHOENIX (EVENING):

Following Mulder's description of the scar, Taylor notices a matching one on Jesswick's arm.

INT. INTERVIEW ROOM, FBI PHOENIX (EVENING):

Lamb clarifies his reasons for committing the crimes, stating he simply responded to Buss' cry for help.

INT. OBSERVATION ROOM, FBI PHOENIX (EVENING):

Buss returns to the fore as he offers to assist Mulder and Scully by taking them to the final victim.

EXT. ENTRANCE, FBI PHOENIX (EVENING):

Scully, Mulder, and Buss enter one car. Jesswick and Taylor get into another one.

EXT. DISUSED WAREHOUSE, FORECOURT (EVENING):

Taylor and Jesswick are left behind. Scully attempts contact but her radio is disrupted.

The dusky sky lends a rusty feel to a derelict warehouse that has been abandoned for a very long time. Scully receives a disrupted, garbled, radio message from Taylor.

TAYLOR (O.S.)

Scully! We've broken down.

SCULLY

Taylor? Please repeat!

TAYLOR (O.S.)

We've broken down. We-

Taylor's voice gives way to a weird, shrill utterance in an unknown language.

SCULLY

Mulder, they've broken down.

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THE ERRANT AGENT - QUA WALTER LAMB
Time is something he doesn't
have, Fox. Before the fire! Tick-
tock, tick-tock!

Mulder turns to Scully, with a look of steely determination.
Scully is still trying to get a radio message out to Taylor.

MULDER
Take us there, Frank!

THE ERRANT AGENT - QUA WALTER LAMB
Frank? Frank isn't here, Fox.
Only me, The Lamb of God. One
last death. One last death and
it's all over.

Whilst adjusting her radio, Scully speaks.

SCULLY
Mulder, we need to find this man!
If he burns like the others,
there's no saving him. No
justice.

Walter Lamb shouts angrily.

THE ERRANT AGENT - QUA WALTER LAMB
There is no justice! None! Only
me! Me!

MULDER
Let's go in!

SCULLY
Without support? There's an
accomplice - you know that!
Somebody had to take the
pictures!

Mulder looks at the photograph of a masked Walter Lamb
standing beside the crucified scarecrow.

MULDER
We're going in, Scully. Let
Taylor catch up!

INT. DISUSED WAREHOUSE, ENTRYWAY (EVENING):

Mulder, Scully and Buss enter. There are many scarecrows,
akin to that in the polaroid, are in plain sight.

View of the side doorway, which is now open. Mulder, Scully
and Walter Lamb enter the warehouse. Silhouetted against the
red dusky sky, it looks like they are walking in Hell.

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There is a lot of spooky Christian paraphernalia, some of which indicates a degree of radicalisation. Walter Lamb smiles wryly. As Mulder looks at a series of maps with locations marked. Lastly, they find a row of crucified scarecrows.

MULDER

Locations of your victims? Jesus, Frank!

THE ERRANT AGENT - QUA WALTER LAMB

Like I said, Fox, Frank's not here! Address me by my name. Mine!

MULDER

Frank? I know you're in there.

THE ERRANT AGENT - QUA WALTER LAMB

It's Walter! Walter Lamb! Herald to Rapture. Now kindly uncuff me, or nobody is saved. Remember, you have to be right all the time. I only need to be right on one last occasion!

Mulder motions to uncuff Walter Lamb.

SCULLY

Mulder that's not a good idea!

THE ERRANT AGENT - QUA WALTER LAMB

Dana! Just accept that it's a good idea! A great one!

Mulder stops what had started.

THE ERRANT AGENT - QUA WALTER LAMB

Well if that's your attitude, maybe we should go to the office. Give you a written warning!

INT. DISUSED WAREHOUSE, CORRIDOR (EVENING):

Mulder feels like he is being watched by the numerous crucified scarecrows. Distant shouting can be heard.

INT. DISUSED WAREHOUSE, OFFICE (EVENING):

Mulder, Scully and Buss are joined by Taylor plus Jesswick (the accomplice). Under duress, Scully uncuffs Buss.

Taylor and Jesswick arrive.

TAYLOR

We had to get another car!

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Jesswick holds a gun to Taylor's head. He demands Walter Lamb's release. Scully obliges, removing the handcuffs. Jesswick passes Taylor's gun to Walter Lamb. He points it at Mulder.

JESSWICK

The scum couldn't survive,
Mulder. The 'Victims' - they're
all bad. Ready for judgement when
Judgement comes.

MULDER

Frank. Come on. Come out to us,
Frank!

A distant voice, that of The Skinny Young Man, can be heard.

THE SKINNY YOUNG MAN (O.S.)

Hey! Hey! Somebody! Somebody?

The agents look towards the sound's locus.

THE ERRANT AGENT - QUA WALTER LAMB

Well, there's victim number four.
I hope you find him in time for
the show.

INT. DISUSED WAREHOUSE, CORRIDOR (EVENING):

Mulder, Scully and Taylor are walked at gunpoint by Jesswick and the emergent Lamb. Taylor resists.ISTS.

Taylor and Jesswick arrive.

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I hope you find him in time for
the show.

INT. DISUSED WAREHOUSE, LAIR (EVENING):

The Skinny Young Man continues his pleas for help. A gunshot is heard, taking him aback significantly.

THE SKINNY YOUNG MAN
Get me out! Please! I'm here! Get
me out!

INT. DISUSED WAREHOUSE, CORRIDOR (EVENING):

Taylor, having been shot in the leg, lays on the floor. Scully is helping as Buss and Lamb fight for control.

INT. DISUSED WAREHOUSE, LAIR (EVENING):

A crucified scarecrow is suddenly visible to The Skinny Young Man. Out of shot, flames erupt with screams.

INT. DISUSED WAREHOUSE, LAIR (EVENING)

The Skinny Young Man's pleas continue. As before, he shouts and bangs a metal mug against the bars of his cage.

THE SKINNY YOUNG MAN
Help me! Please! Help me! Come
on!

There is a gunshot in the distance. It startles The Skinny Young Man.

INT. DISUSED WAREHOUSE, CORRIDOR (EVENING):

Smashing glass can be heard as fire progresses from the lair. Jesswick is distracted as Buss regains control

INT. DISUSED WAREHOUSE, LAIR (EVENING):

The Skinny Young Man continues his pleas for help. A gunshot is heard, taking him aback.

A shadowy presence reveals itself to The Skinny Young Man, from behind a crucified scarecrow. The Skinny Young Man recoils in terror.

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THE SKINNY YOUNG MAN
Hey! Please, no! No! Not like the
others!

Out of shot, The Skinny Young Man combusts. Red flames erupt from the scene's periphery. The shadowy figure simply walks away at a leisurely pace, unconcerned by the crimson flames that surround him.

INT. DISUSED WAREHOUSE, CORRIDOR (EVENING):

The rows of scarecrows catch fire one-by-one. Mulder fights Jesswick as Scully drags Taylor away.

Rows of crucified scarecrows catch fire one-by-one. The red flames spread rapidly. Jesswick is dead on the floor, killed by Frank Buss. Frank Buss, having returned to the forefront, holds a smoking gun. Seemingly unaffected by the conflagration, Frank Buss then grabs Mulder, who is suffering with smoke inhalation.

EXT. DISUSED WAREHOUSE, FORECOURT (EVENING):

Scully and Taylor exit. A single gunshot is heard. Scully runs back towards the disused warehouse.

INT. DISUSED WAREHOUSE, CORRIDOR (EVENING):

Flames are getting near. Buss, having regained control, holds a smoking gun. Jesswick is dead, Mulder flees.

INT. DISUSED WAREHOUSE, ENTRYWAY (EVENING):

Scully helps Mulder to his feet. They both exit, as emergency personnel arrive.

Mulder looks at Frank Buss as Scully arrives. Mulder then stumbles, as does Frank Buss.

SCULLY
Lamb! Put down the gun! Now!

MULDER
Scully, he's back! Frank is back!

Scully helps Mulder up. After, she attempts to help Frank Buss, who rejects all assistance. Mulder and Scully are forced to flee the flames. Looking over his shoulder, Mulder notices a shadowy figure within the crimson flames.

EXT. DISUSED WAREHOUSE, FORECOURT (EVENING):

Mulder coughs violently as an ambulance crew see to him.

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In the distance, a figure stands in the flames.

EXT. DISUSED WAREHOUSE, FORECOURT (EVENING):

A fire crew has put the blaze out. The surrounding area is cordoned off.

INT. ST JOSEPH'S HOSPITAL, WARD (DAY):

Three days later. Mulder is being treated for minor burns and smoke inhalation.

INT. AT JOSEPH'S HOSPITAL, CORRIDOR (DAY):

Scully and Taylor walk towards the ward in which Mulder is admitted. Taylor limps with great severity.

INT. ST JOSEPH'S HOSPITAL, WARD (DAY):

Scully advises Mulder that only one body was recovered, and that there has been another killing. She departs.

INT. ST JOSEPH'S HOSPITAL, WARD (DAY):

Mulder looks at the photographs, and inside an envelope is a picture of Buss and Mulder from 1986.