

Man-Eater of Bowling Green

An X-Files Story Based on a Classic Avengers Episode

(With several excerpts from the original and all apologies to Phillip Levene!)

by Myrtle Groggins

Act I

Scene 1

Bowling Green, Kentucky.
Friday.
11:21 a.m.

A greenhouse. A scientist bends over a microscope. Through the window, a young woman, also presumably a scientist, is seen rushing to the greenhouse. She has a potted plant in her hand.

Laura Burford: Alan? Darling? Look! It's taken. Do you see?

Alan Carter: I think you're right.

Laura: Oh. Reared from seed. *Centaurea cyanus bacchanalis*. The first and only hybrid of its kind. And it'll blossom too. I promise you.

Carter: You're a very clever girl!

Laura: Yes, of course I am! I caught you, didn't I? < Alan bends to kiss her.> Hey! You'll get me the sack. Come on.

<They hurry outside the greenhouse.>

Carter: Don't forget my good morning kiss!

<They kiss.>

Laura: See you later!

Close up on Laura. She walks a few paces, then pauses. Vacant look in her eyes. Drops her valuable potted plant, turns on her heels back towards the greenhouse. Carter can be seen back inside the greenhouse. She passes by her beau, taking no notice.

Close up on Carter. He's wearing a hearing aid and is oblivious to Laura. Cut to close on Laura. She tramples through flower beds, then through thick shrubs. Totally impassive face. She reaches a road. A chauffeur is waiting with a Rolls-Royce. She enters the car, and it drives away.

Scene 2

Interior. Mulder's apartment.
Saturday.
6:34 a.m.

<Enter Scully. She drops a large leather weekender bag on a chair. Mulder is feeding his fish.>

Scully: Okay, Mulder. You got me over here on a Saturday morning. This better be interesting.

Mulder: These fish, Scully. They have the perfect life.

Scully: Oh? And why is that?

Mulder: Think about it. They're totally adapted to their environment, and their environment is completely controlled for their optimal comfort. A mysterious, magical hand twice a day drops food from the sky. No enemies, no unforeseen dangers, no life-threatening conspiracies... unless you count the city's chlorinated water policy. All they have to do is swim around and dirty the tank. I mean, I could live like that.

Scully: <Spying a red Speedo and swim cap lying on the coffee table.> I'm tempted to say you already do.

Mulder: You know... you're ravishing in the morning.

Scully: I'm immune, Mulder. It's way too early. So what's going on? It's got to be about more than your fish.

Mulder: Bullseye!

Scully: What is it this time?

Mulder: Missing persons.

Scully: You're joking, right? Mulder, that's a regular Bureau matter. Or the local police.

Mulder: Not in this case.

Scully: <Slightly sarcastic> Why? Are they aliens?

Mulder: No, domestic. Four experts, all well-known in the field of horticulture, have just disappeared. Professors Taylor and Knight and a Dr. Connelly, all disappeared without a trace. Another one joined the club yesterday, a Laura Burford. Graduate student. Walked out of a greenhouse, trampled across a lot of prized plants, and hasn't been seen since.

Scully: Does this have anything to do with mind-controlling spores?

Mulder: Pay attention, Scully. We solved that case, remember? But, the local police haven't been able to turn up a thing with this one. What's more...you haven't heard the best part.

Scully: Which is?

<Mulder digs a map out of his desk drawer.>

Mulder: They all disappeared in this area - Bowling Green, Kentucky.

Scully: When?

Mulder: Within the past month. And, I got a call from the Bureau's regional office in Lexington late yesterday requesting our help.

Scully: Which is why you call me up at five in the morning, telling me to pack my bags. We're going to Kentucky, right?

Mulder: That rapport, that instant connection. It's like telepathy.

Scully: Does Skinner know about this?

Mulder: Well, yeah. Sort of.

Scully: Mulder...

Mulder: I left a voice mail. What's the problem? It's okay. It's the weekend. Besides, he expects this from us by now.

Scene 3

Interior. The same greenhouse as before.
Southern Kentucky State University
10:58 a.m.

<Enter Mulder and Scully, flashing badges.>

Mulder: Mr. Carter? I'm Agent Fox Mulder with the FBI. This is Agent Dana Scully. We're here investigating the disappearance of your fiancée and the other scientists.

Carter: I wish there was more I could tell you, but the simple truth is I can't believe she could go like this.

Scully: What happened yesterday, Mr. Carter?

Carter: It depends on how you look at it. Nothing really. One moment she was here, happy and excited, and then the next...

Scully: Did you see or hear anything unusual?

Carter: No, but then I might not. I have a bad habit of turning the volume down when I'm concentrating. I was here, working. Laura stopped by for a moment. We talked about a seedling she was growing, then she left. But it was the way that she went. You see there? Trampled the flower bed, smashed through frames of glass, destroyed months of research. As though it didn't matter anymore. Such a waste.

<Carter is silent, his eyes sadly scanning the wreckage around the greenhouse.>

Carter: If you'll both excuse me, I've got to go. There's a meeting of the botanical society this afternoon. Ordinarily, I'd cancel it, but the president's ill, and I've got to stand in for him.

<Carter leads them to the door.>

Scully: Who is the president?

Carter: Dr. Lyle Peterson. He's the head of our department. It's the first meeting he's missed in ten years. Everything seems to be going wrong lately.

<He pauses.>

Carter: I would be grateful if...

Mulder: ... If we find anything, we'll be in touch.

Carter: Thank you.

< exit Carter >

Mulder: What's that about the eternal triangle?

Scully: Laura and another man?

Mulder: It's been known to happen.

Scully: Sure. It's possible. And it's also a coincidence that Dr. Peterson, an eminent horticulturalist himself, is missing his first meeting in ten years. Just a single day after another of his colleagues goes missing in this area.

Mulder: Spooky, isn't it?

Scully: You'd be the one to know.

Mulder: <Realizing he set himself up.> See what else you can find out about Burford and the others.

Scully: Where will you be?

Mulder: I'm gonna make a house call on a doctor.

Scene 4

Interior. Peterson's house.

<Mulder waits for Peterson in a bizarre drawing room full of mannekins and creeping vines. He meanders here and there, eating sunflower seeds.>

<Cut to a group of people leaving a table with papers in hand.>

<Cut to Mulder reacting to the noise from the other room. He goes to the double doors, peers through.>

<Cut to the group of people walking down a hall. Mulder sees them. The group is exiting through a side door.>

Voice: That's all for the moment. Have the reports later today. Ah, Miss Burford, didn't have the chance before. Welcome to our little group. If there's anything you want, don't hesitate to come to me.

Laura: Thank you.

<Laura exits. The man in the hallway is met by another man who whispers something to him. The man looks toward the door where Mulder is hiding. He closes the door and quickly rushes back across the room. Peterson enters the room.>

Peterson: Mr. Mulder?

Mulder: It's Agent Mulder, Dr. Peterson. I'm with the FBI.

<Flashes badge.>

Peterson: Well, this is not completely unexpected. Please come in. We can talk in my office.

< Peterson and Mulder enter the office.>

Peterson: What can I do for you, Agent Mulder?

Mulder: Well, for starters you can explain to me why I just heard you talking to Laura

Burford.

Peterson: Is that so odd?

Mulder: Yes, actually, considering her fiance is pacing a trench in his greenhouse and half the Bowling Green PD is looking for her.

Peterson: There's no mystery here, Agent Mulder.

Mulder: There's not?

Peterson: No, it's been a simple misunderstanding.

Mulder: Really. How's that?

Peterson: I assume you've been in contact with Mr. Carter? Yes, I thought so. Mr. Carter doesn't approve of me, Agent Mulder. Every theory I've ever had has been diametrically opposed to his. Don't get me wrong. He's a brilliant student. One of the best doctoral candidates I've ever had. But he is just that... a student. And he doesn't want Miss Burford working with me.

Mulder: Why not?

Peterson: Petty territorial reasons, I should assume. I really wouldn't know why. This is a wonderful opportunity for Miss Burford. He should feel proud for her.

Mulder: Just what is it you're working on?

Peterson: Well, the fact is that I'm engaged on some research with great commercial possibilities. A new flowering shrub. Naturally, I gathered the greatest team of experts I could find.

Mulder: And you consider Miss Burford an expert?

Peterson: Oh no. I didn't mean to give that impression. She too is just a student. But every team needs its assistants, Agent Mulder.

<Mulder surveys the room. His eyes come to rest on a model of what looks to be an oil derrick on a side table in the office.>

Mulder: Is this part of your research?

Peterson: Yes, it's experimental. Controls soil temperature and water supply. There's no substitute for first-class equipment. Or brains.

Mulder: Dr. Peterson, none of what you told me excuses the fact that a lot of time and effort have been spent by a lot of law enforcement personnel, myself included, for a simple misunderstanding. Why haven't the authorities been notified that these people are working here under their own free will?

Peterson: Maybe I've been too cautious, Agent Mulder. The fact is, I never thought there was anything wrong.

Mulder: Well, the press has been full of stories about their disappearances.

<Drops local newspaper on Peterson's desk>

Mulder: Do you bother to read the paper?

Peterson: No, actually, I don't.

Mulder: And you've not been contacted by the authorities?

Peterson: I have Lennox handle all my activities, Agent Mulder. I don't like to be disturbed when I'm working on a project.

Mulder: Who is Lennox? I'd like to see him. And Miss Burford too, if that won't disturb your project too severely.

Peterson: Then let's have them in. <Hits intercom.> Lennox, would you send for Miss Burford, please? And bring yourself along too.

Lennox: <through intercom> Right away, sir.

<Lennox and Miss Burford enter the office.>

Peterson: This is Agent Mulder from the FBI. He has some questions for you.

Mulder: <Moves closer to Laura> First of all, are you okay, Miss Burford?

Laura: Yes, of course. Why?

Mulder: I saw your fiance today. He's not a happy camper with your vanishing act.

Laura: Yes, I can imagine. But it's not often one gets an opportunity like this. It was such an exciting project, so when Dr. Peterson called me, I just dropped everything.

Mulder: What exactly are you doing?

Laura: What?

Mulder: The project?

Peterson: I already told you we're experimenting with a new flowering shrub.

Laura: <Vaguely> Yes, a new flowering shrub.

Mulder: Right. With great commercial possibilities. What about you, Mr. Lennox? Do you always blow off the authorities when they question you about missing persons?

Lennox: Well, they weren't missing, were they? I mean, I knew they were here the whole time.

Mulder: <Incredulous> What kind of an answer is that?

Lennox: Look, maybe I should have said something. But I knew that Dr. Peterson wanted to keep this project under wraps. He said a lot of money was involved.

Peterson: Agent Mulder, if there's anyone to blame, you can see it's me. But really, what harm has been done? You've seen Miss Burford, and the others are working through here.

<Peterson and Mulder walk to a window looking out the back. Three middle-aged men in white lab coats are working around a table in the yard.>

Peterson: See? Nothing untoward here, Agent Mulder.

<Mulder looks semi-convinced.>

Mulder: Since this is the jurisdiction of the local PD, I'm going to clear this with them. If it was up to me, I'd haul you in. Don't go making any long trips.

<Exit Mulder>

<Cut to Peterson with weird look on his face.>

Peterson: Lennox.

<Cut to Mulder. He's in the drawing room, dialing Scully.>

<Cut to Lennox outside at Mulder's car. He's rubbing a bristly plant similar to a cactus on the steering wheel of the car.>

<Cut to Mulder on the phone.>

Mulder: Scully? Where are you?

Cut to Scully: I'm at Laura Burford's apartment. I've been talking to the neighbors, but truthfully, Mulder, I haven't found anything more than what the police already know.

Cut to Mulder: Forget about it. She's here at Peterson's. They all are.

Cut to Scully: What?

Cut to Mulder: Yeah, meet me at the police station. I'll explain it all to you. I'm sorry, but it looks like I dragged us out here for nothing. <Hangs up>

<Cut to Mulder getting in the car. He grips the wheel and winces in pain. A barb has stuck in his finger, drawing a tiny drop of blood. Mulder sucks his finger, wipes the wheel with his handkerchief, but thinks nothing more of it.>

Scene 5

Interior. Police station.

<Mulder walks in, shaking his hand like the barb still stings.>

Scully: Hey, what's up?

Mulder: I stuck my hand on something at Peterson's. A barb or spine. I think it's still in my finger. It's a tiny puncture, but it won't stop bleeding.

Scully: Come into the light so I can look at it. <She examines the wound> What did you do, Mulder? Get touchy-feely with a cactus?

Mulder: No, it was on the steering wheel.

Scully: Really? Weird place for a spine.

Mulder: Weird stuff all over Peterson's house. He's got a do-it-yourself oil derrick.

Scully: You're kidding.

Mulder: That's what it looked like anyway. He said it was a research model.

Scully: <Concentrating on Mulder's hand> Yep, it's still in there. Officer, get me a first aid kit.

<Scully enters doctor mode and uses tweezers to remove the barb.>

Mulder: Ow!

Scully: Oh, come on. It wasn't that bad.

<She pauses, watching a change come over Mulder.>

Scully: Mulder? What is it? What's wrong?

Mulder: I'm having trouble breathing. My throat's closing up.

Scully: <Very calmly to officer> I think we're going to need a hospital here.

<Cut to Mulder's point of view. Hazy at first, then clear. He's looking up at a very institutional ceiling. Scully's face drifts into his field of vision.>

Mulder: What happened to me?

Scully: You had a severe, albeit delayed, allergic reaction to whatever was on that barb.

Mulder: That's never happened to me before.

Scully: That doesn't surprise me. Most allergic reactions aren't this intense. Normally, people come into contact with something that causes a mild reaction, then they avoid that food or material as much as possible in the future and minimize their problem. This substance got you the first time. Basically, you were just unlucky, Mulder.

Mulder: I don't know. I could have had the reaction while I was driving. You might not have been here. I could have fallen and split my pants. I really was lucky, if you think about it.

Scully: <Smiling> Okay, you were lucky. Now, what's this about Peterson?

Mulder: The scientists, all the missing scientists, are working for him. Even Burford. They're at his place right now.

Scully: Why wasn't anyone notified?

Mulder: Peterson's got some dimbulb assistant who thought he was protecting the good doctor's little project. He never told the authorities they were there.

Scully: What is the project?

Mulder: A new flowering shrub.

Scully: What? That's a lot of hassle for a plant.

Mulder: About as much of a hassle as finding a bitchy little barb on the steering wheel of a car, don't you think?

Scully: I have to agree. I also believe Dr. Peterson bears closer scrutiny.

Mulder: Definitely.

Scully: You might find this interesting.

Mulder: What's that?

Scully: The comment you made about the oil derrick puzzled me. So, while you were being treated, I called around. Whatever they're drilling for, it's not oil. There is no oil in Bowling Green.

Mulder: You found the equipment company?

Scully: Yeah, Peterson placed two orders about a month ago. One was for his estate.

Mulder: And the other one?

Scully: They're calling me back. It was supposed to go to some farm or other, but at the last minute, Peterson cancelled.

Mulder: Did they say why?

Scully: No. <Phone rings on cue.> Agent Scully. Would you repeat that? Yes, I've got it. Denby's Farm.

Mulder: <A mischievous gleam in his eyes> It's worth following up on while we're here. How long was I out anyway?

Scully: Not long at all, but long enough I could check that your pants weren't split.

Act II

Scene 1

Exterior. Mulder and Scully arrive at the farm.

Scully: Well, there may not be any oil here, but I can vouch for the natural gas.

Mulder: <Laughs> No wonder Peterson cancelled his order.

Scully: Where should we start?

Mulder: This old barn, I guess.

<Flashlights in hand, the agents survey the old barn, complete with doves living in the rafters.>

Scully: Did you ever go to places like this as a kid, Mulder?

Mulder: What? Ramshackle barns in the middle of nowhere?

Scully: No, petting zoos. County fairs. That sort of thing.

Mulder: I'm not really a country boy, Scully. I wasn't very good with the family pets either. We had a cat when I was about 10, which I'm convinced to this day was possessed by the spirit of a deceased serial killer. It's probably why I joined the FBI.

Scully: So now the full story comes out. Why the fish then, if you don't like pets?

Mulder: I didn't say I didn't like them. I'm just not good with them. Besides, fish aren't really pets. They're ornamentation. A dog... that's a pet. A fish... that's a knick-knack.

Scully: <Playfully> Why don't you just give them away and get a dog?

Mulder: <Mock outrage> Never!

<They continue to search the farm. Scully finds an odd haystack.>

Scully: Mulder! Over here!

Mulder: Looks as though there's been a fire.

Scully: I think there's something under here.

<Mulder digs with a pitchfork. Turning over several forkfulls of hay, he finally strikes something metallic. Under the hay is a space capsule. Digging through more hay, the duo find a skeleton wearing an astronaut's garb.>

Scene 2

Exterior. Same farm.

<Close up on a sign that reads "Department of Defense - Road Closed - Positively No Admittance." In the background, Mulder and Scully drive up again, escorted by two motorcycle-riding soldiers. Mulder salutes the guard posted at the farm entrance. Much activity is going on around the burned haystack. A crane has been erected, and a swarm of people are moving over it.>

Colonel: Agents Mulder and Scully? Well, we have a clear identification.

Scully: And?

Colonel: A spaceship launched about a year ago.

Scully: What happened to it?

Colonel: A technical failure just after launching. Poor guy died, up there, alone, 5,000 miles up. We tried to hush the whole thing up, of course. Since then, the ship and the body have been circling in orbit.

Mulder: What caused re-entry?

Colonel: Ah. That's the question. Collision.

Scully: Collision? With what?

Colonel: That we are about to find out.

<The three look on as workers hoist a large, tendrilled plant out of the haystack.>

Mulder: You don't see that every day.

Colonel: Looks like some sort of deranged squid.

Mulder: Well, what was it doing in near space?

Colonel: The dent it made in the spacecraft. . . the impact must have been enormous.

Probably weighs half a ton.

Mulder: Animal, vegetable, or mineral?

Scully: <determined> It's vegetable.

Colonel: Vegetable?

Scully: These aren't tentacles. They're pappi.

Mulder: Oh! Pappi.

Scully: They crown the top of fruit and aid in their dispersal. <Mulder gives her a surprised look.>

Scene 3

Exterior. Same farm.

<Close up as an elderly woman bends over a microscope.>

Dr. Cynthia Sheldon: Thirty years of botany and I've never seen anything like this before.

Scully: But it is of plant origin?

Sheldon: Oh, of that there is no doubt. Come, I'll show you. Now then, look. This is the seed case, containing the embryo and reserves of food. Ha. Rather damaged in collision, I'm afraid. And these are undoubtedly pappi.

Mulder: <to Scully> I think you could take Final Jeopardy, Scully.

Colonel: Which family of plant life does it belong to?

Sheldon: Well, it's unusual. Very unusual. It's not tropical. Of that I'm certain. Of course, I should want a complete analysis.

Colonel: Uh, just a guess, Dr. Sheldon.

Sheldon: Well, don't hold me to it, but I think it's a Compositae.

Mulder: Really?

Sheldon: You know it better as a parachute seed. Dispersed on the wind, like the common or garden dandelion.

Scene 4

Exterior.
Bluegrass Motor Court
4:23 p.m.

<The agents exit the car. Scully bends to pluck a dandelion and blows out the seeds.>

Scully: Just as Dr. Sheldon said. . . like hundreds of little parachutes.

Mulder: Dispersed on the wind. So where did this demon seed come from?

Scully: Mars.

Mulder: Mars?

Scully: <Smiles> Beat you to it, Mulder. I actually don't have the slightest clue.

<Mulder's cellphone rings>

Mulder: Mulder. Yes, Colonel? I see. Thank you for calling. <to Scully> Message has just come through from the Air Force radar control. They've checked back and found that a meteorite was reported on the 4th of last month. Fits in with all this.

Scully: You think the meteorite was the spaceship re-entering?

Mulder: Could be. Fourth of last month. . . that's the day Knight, Connelly and Taylor disappeared.

Scully: Is there any connection?

Mulder: I'm sure Dr. Peterson could tell us.

Scully: Or maybe we should consult some specialists of our own.

Scene 5

Interior. Mulder's motel room.

<Mulder has a laptop set up and is positioning a video camera. Scully is visible in the background.>

Mulder: Wake up, you vampires.

<We see an image of a semi-dark room full of technical equipment. A face comes into view.>

Frohike: I'm here. What is it, Mulder?

Mulder: Something told me you'd be home alone on a Saturday night, Frohike.

Frohike: Byers and Langly just went out to the video store.

Mulder: Oh, yeah? You boys getting rowdy tonight?

Frohike: I'll say. A guy in Oregon came up with a frame-by-frame breakdown of the 1968 Bear Valley sasquatch film. He claims it distinctly shows a zipper on the sasquatch's back.

Mulder: And to think I'm missing all this.

Frohike: Is that the lovely Agent Scully I see in the background?

Scully: <Smiling> Hi, Frohike.

Frohike: Why are wasting your time with Mulder? You should come hang out with a real man, Scully.

Scully: I'll think about it.

Mulder: Alright, cut the crap, Frohike. We need your help.

Frohike: Shoot.

Mulder: What do you know about a spaceship supposedly launched about a year ago

which experienced a technical failure on the way up and left the astronaut as an orbiting space popsicle?

Frohike: Hang on. Let me look. <Fiddles through a three-ring binder> Yeah, we heard some squawk about that, but it was hushed up right away. We think it was part of the Rising Phoenix project.

Scully: Which is?

Frohike: Transportation of goods and supplies to the orbiting space stations up there.

Scully: How many are up there?

Frohike: There's lots of 'em. Stop by some time, and I'll show you my star chart.

Mulder: Do you know anything about the craft's re-entry or have any reports of a large meteorite coming to ground in the Bowling Green area?

Frohike: Nah. Meteorites hit the ground all the time. I can't help you there.

Mulder: Alright, Frohike. Thanks for the help. We'll be in touch. Don't get too worked up over that monkey suit.

Frohike: Bye, Scully!

<Mulder switches off the screen.>

Scully: Well, that was interesting.

Mulder: Which part? The sasquatch video or Frohike's star chart?

Scully: No, that was just strange. I'm talking about the Rising Phoenix project, Mulder.

Mulder: You think they were transporting the seed to the space station?

Scully: I don't know. How much do we really know about what they're doing on those stations?

Mulder: You've been hanging around me too long. You're starting to sound like me.

Scully: Well, it's all just speculation at this point. Have you talked to Carter since you found Miss Burford?

Mulder: Aw! No, I forgot.

Scene 6

Interior. Carter's apartment.

<Carter's on the telephone with Mulder>

Carter: The police told me she had been found, but they didn't say much more. Where is she?

Mulder: She's with Dr. Lyle Peterson.

Carter: If this is some kind of joke, I think it's in the worst possible taste.

Mulder: Well, that's where she is. She's working for him.

Carter: Working for him? But she loathes him. Peterson's one of her pet hates. They don't agree on any theoretical level. She'd no more work for him than fly to the moon.

Mulder: Funny, but he said the same thing about you. They're all with Peterson, to be exact - Knight, Taylor, and Connelly.

Carter: What are they doing there?

Mulder: Same as your fiancée. They're developing some new flowering shrub, according to Dr. Peterson.

Carter: But you can't lift or graft shrubs at this time of the year.

Mulder: Well, that's what I heard. Look, Mr. Carter, as much as it chaps my behind to say so, there's really nothing more we can do. She's not being harmed, and she's there of her own free will.

Carter: So, I should just call her? After she walked out on me without a word?

Mulder: Reach out and touch someone. Five-five-five-one-zero-one-three.

Scene 7

Interior. Scully's room.

<She's on the phone.>

Scully: My name is Agent Dana Scully with the FBI. I'm trying to reach Joe Mercer from Farmer's Supplies. Is he at this number?

Voice: Yes, hold on. <Calling out.> Joe, there's someone for you.

Joe: Joe Mercer.

Scully: Yes, my name is Dana Scully, and I'm with the FBI. I'm trying. . .

Joe: Hang on a second, will you? My hearing aid is acting up. <A moment.> Okay, go ahead.

Scully: I'm trying to find out about some supplies you sent to Dr. Lyle Peterson.

Joe: He's my best customer. I supply him with everything. . . wire fencing, insecticides, and polythene sheets.

Scully: What's the polythene for?

Joe: Conserves heat and moisture and helps seedlings to germinate. The fact is, I don't have much of it left. Same with the fertilizer. He's had every ounce in the place.

Scully: What's he growing up there?

Joe: I wouldn't know, but I must have supplied him with 20 tons in the past month. In fact, the last truck load's just gone up.

Scene 8

Exterior.

<A flat-bed truck is stopped by the side of the road. A group of workmen emerge from the bushes and begin unloading bags of fertilizer from the truck. Lennox emerges from the bushes to supervise. The truck driver stands by and watches the proceedings with a confused look.>

Act III

Scene 1

Interior. Mulder's motel room.
Sunday, 7:14 a.m.

<A knock at the door. Mulder rises sleepily, wearing boxers and a N.Y. Knicks T-shirt.>

Mulder: <Opening the door a little.> Oh, Mr. Carter. It's you. What can I do for you?

Carter: <More agitated than we've seen him before.> I've been thinking about what you said. About Peterson and Laura. It doesn't make sense. Why should she work for him? She's got a good job and full research facilities.

Mulder: Money. Brains are marketable.

Carter: But that's just my point. Laura's clever. I was a grad assistant in one of her classes. That's how we met. But she's got a lot to learn.

Mulder: That wouldn't be sour grapes?

Carter: Look, if Peterson had approached me, I would have said no. I'm surprised he didn't. Or for that matter, if I were looking for the most able botanist, I wouldn't have picked Connelly, but Dr. Sheldon. And why all this secrecy? Why didn't she discuss the matter with me?

Mulder: Ask her.

Carter: I would if I could reach her.

Mulder: Well, I'll do my best. <Phone rings.> Excuse me. Yes, Agent Mulder speaking. Hello?

Carter: I'm not going to wait any longer. I'm going over to Peterson's to see what it's all about, and I'll break in if I have to.

<Exit Carter>

Mulder: Oh, Dr. Sheldon. Mr. Carter? Mr. Carter! Uh, yes. You what?

Scene 2

Exterior.

<A close up on Carter's back as he sneaks up to Peterson's place, which can be seen as a wide angle in the background. He crawls under a fence. Crosses a road. Ducks into some bushes. Spots the derrick. Rushes up to a gate made of chainlink fencing.>

Carter: Laura! Laura!

<She turns but does not seem to recognize him.>

Carter: Laura! Laura! Laura!

<Carter tries a lock on the gate to no avail, then begins to climb the fence. He grabs some barbed wire at the top, and is instantly electrocuted. Laura sees it happen. Walks to the body, pauses, then walks away.>

Scene 3

Interior. Peterson's meeting room.

<The group of scientists sit around a table, perusing the derrick model before them.>

Peterson: And now, as our project is nearing completion, I should like your reports in order of priority. Germination, Prof. Taylor?

Taylor: Satisfactory. Expected at 1800.

Peterson: Undersoil heating, Prof. Knight?

Knight: The specified temperature is being maintained.

Peterson: Irrigation, Dr. Connelly?

Connelly: All channels tested and working normally.

Peterson: Excellent, excellent! And finally, pest control?

Laura: All preparations on schedule, Dr. Peterson.

Scene 4

Close up on a microscope slide showing cells which look very much like dendrites.

Scully: These cells. They look very similar to human brain cells.

Sheldon: Yes, but the shape. In my opinion, this is the seed of a climbing plant. A bean stalk. Now, then, where are we? Yes, the average bean is about half an inch long and would grow, say, four or five feet high. Proportionately, this would grow to, well, say, 200 times higher than the Empire State Building.

Mulder: Ho, ho, ho... Green Giant.

Sheldon: And think of the tendrils! Reaching out for miles!

Scully: Like fingers of kudzu.

Sheldon: If it were allowed to seed, it would cover the earth in, well, a matter of weeks.

Mulder: Beans, beans. Good for your heart.

<Scully jabs Mulder with her elbow.>

Sheldon: Ah! But this isn't the common or garden vegetable. If it has brains, it has reflexes. These tendrils would move, feed, protect it! <Swings her arms and brushes Scully.> Oh, I beg your pardon. Now then, what puzzles me is its digestive system. To germinate, this would require tons of fertilizer, enormous heat, and endless supplies of water.

<Enter Colonel>

Colonel: Dr. Sheldon, this has just arrived.

Sheldon: A-ha! Now I should be able to tell you something. A report from the laboratory. I sent some specimens up for analysis. Hah, hydrochrome oxydase. A chemical enzyme present in the tissue.

Scully: But enzymes are perfectly harmless.

Sheldon: Yes, but essential for growth. Ha ha! We should think ourselves lucky that this

was damaged.

Mulder: Why?

Sheldon: On earth there's only one source of hydrochrome oxydase - man.

Mulder: Man?

Sheldon: Yes, this was a man-eating plant. If it had germinated, it would have required us just as much as we require green vegetables. Oh, it's lucky there's only one of them.

Scene 5

Interior. Peterson's house.

<The group of scientists are hard at work twiddling knobs based on the ruminations from Peterson, who appears to be in some kind of mind-meld with the killer plant.>

Peterson: Increase temperature 5 degrees. Please indicate rate of growth.

Voice: Three hundred and rising steadily.

<Close up on Peterson and the rest of the group as they watch the activity of the workers around the plant's seed bed under the derrick. The workers pause, dropping their shovels to stand around the polythene. A mysterious shape tries to push up from under the sheet of plastic.>

Scene 6

Interior. The agents' rental car.

<Scully reacts to the door opening as Mulder enters.>

Scully: Where's Dr. Sheldon?

Mulder: Selecting the herbicide.

Scully: If there is another seed, she better be quick, or we'll all be on the menu.

Mulder: That's only one of our problems.

Scully: Oh?

Mulder: The missing horticulturalists... they must have been under some sort of spell.

Scully: <Skeptical.> How's that?

Mulder: Well, take Peterson. He orders supplies, a special drill for planting at the right depth. Well, how did he know? He must have been directed. Those missing scientists were hand-picked by the plant.

Scully: Mulder, no. That's ludicrous. A plant that casts spells?

Mulder: Well, maybe not a spell in the magical sense, but plants can certainly influence human thinking. Think back to your college days, Scully. Didn't you ever sample one of those poorly rolled cigarettes?

Scully: I did not inhale.

Mulder: More than that, what about the effects of opium or peyote? All I'm saying is that it's not beyond the realm of possibility to suggest that this plant may have some effect, chemical or otherwise, on the human brain.

<Mulder wags his sore finger near her face. Scully gets the point.>

Scully: Okay, if that's your working hypothesis, then why didn't Peterson pick Alan

or Dr. Sheldon? They were much more qualified.

Mulder: Why not indeed. Now, put that on.

Scully: A hearing aid?

Mulder: We're going back to Peterson's place. Now, go on. Put it on.

Scully: So, if Alan and Dr. Sheldon...

Mulder: ...Were immune, what did they have in common?

Scully: Ah!

Mulder: How does it work?

Scully: Mulder, I'm a scientist, not an electrical engineer.

Mulder: <Stares blankly at Scully.> Yeah, well, for whatever reason, it seems to work. Don't lose it, okay?

Scully: Why not? Attack of the Killer Tomatoes?

Scene 7

Exterior. Peterson's place.

<The same workmen as before are standing around the sheet of polythene. The same strange movements are going on under the sheet.>

Peterson: Temperature to maximum.

<Cut to more knob-twiddling. The workmen look very docile, yet interested in the movements under the sheet.>

<Cut to Peterson and the others, intently regarding the little knot of unfortunate workers out under the derrick.>

<Cut to a slowly moving tendril inching from under the plastic.>

<Cut to Scully and Mulder sitting in the car as Dr. Sheldon walks up with a plastic bottle.>

Mulder: This herbicide, are you sure it will work?

Sheldon: Oh, yes. Nothing more effective than propryonic acid. A teaspoonful of this would kill a large oak tree.

<She enters the car.>

Scully: Good, well, let's hope the plant's no bigger by the time we arrive.

Mulder: Let's find Carter and get over to Peterson's.

<Car drives away.>

Scene 8

Interior. The university botany department.

<A student is inside Carter's greenhouse working. Other students come and go. The student reaches for a bag of fertilizer, then close up on his hands as we see him pause and drop the fertilizer in the floor.>

<Cut to close up on Peterson.>

Peterson: Excellent, excellent! My friends, you've done well. And I promise you your services will not go unrewarded. Your experience will prove invaluable. Have no fear, no fear. Protection will be afforded to you all. When we have complete control.

Scene 9

Exterior. The university.

<Scully drives the car up to the botany department. The merry trio disembarks and heads inside, but not before Mulder spots the flat-bed truck. It's running and the driver's door is open. He shuts it off.>

<Cut to interior of botany department. No one's home, yet everything is left as it was.>

<Close up on Mulder as he notices water running in a sink surrounded by various plants. The crowd has only recently left.>

<Pan out to wide angle as the group surveys the greenhouse. Scully turns off the water. Mulder notices the spilled bag of fertilizer.>

Scully: Well, where is Carter? Where is everybody?

<Mulder notices a student sitting on a bench outside. He's wearing a hearing aid, smoking a ciggie, and completely oblivious to the fact that everyone's gone.>

<Cut to exterior of Peterson's place.>

<Mulder is leading the ladies through the same dense trees and shrubs we've seen before around Peterson's place. They're looking to sneak in. Along the road, they find various implements, guns, pieces of clothing, etc., scattered about.>

<Cut to Lennox running to view with a shotgun. The group spots him and hurries away as he fires. Lennox runs up and fires again.>

<Cut to Mulder racing through thick bushes with the ladies behind. They duck as Lennox continues searching for them.>

<Close up on Scully.>

<Cut to Lennox as he pauses to reload.>

<Cut to group as they hide in the bushes.>

<Close up on Mulder.>

<Cut to Lennox rushing away in another direction.>

<Cut to the group. Two screams are heard off-screen. Close up on group reactions.>

<Wide angle as the group emerges from the bushes.>

<Close up as they spot Peterson's house, unguarded.>

<Close up on the group.>

<Shot of three pairs of feet jumping over a shotgun on the ground. Scully picks it up and checks to see if it's loaded. It is. She removes the shells and props the gun against the outside of the house.>

<Cut to shot of Lennox outside, still holding his gun. He's looking for the group.>

Scene 10

Interior. Peterson's house.

<The group enters the anteroom before Peterson's big meeting room. They walk slowly across the room, which appears darker. The agents pull out their flashlights and handguns. Before the double doors, they pause.>

<Cut to Lennox sneaking up behind.>

<Cut to Mulder.>

Mulder: Watch out!

<He notices Lennox and pushes Dr. Sheldon to safety. At the same time, Scully wheels and fires her handgun, hitting Lennox and knocking him back out of the room. Lennox got off a blast which strikes one of the mannekins standing about the room. It begins to teeter eerily, more than from the effect of the blast.>

<Cut to Sheldon, who spots a particularly interesting plant.>

Sheldon: Ooh! Yukon gloriosa! You should see it in the summer.

<A shadow falls across the room. Dust drifts down. The group follows the sound around the room.>

Sheldon: It's the roof. The foliage. The rate of growth is fantastic. You can actually see it moving.

Scully: It's growing darker every second.

Mulder: Peterson's office. The controls are in there.

<Mulder rushes to the double doors, but can see the plant's tendrils moving through the panes of glass. Meanwhile, Dr. Sheldon spots Lennox's body being dragged away by a huge tendril behind them.>

Sheldon: Oh!

<The group is appropriately horrified. Mulder and Scully go to work on the door, breaking it open. Tendrils can be seen everywhere. The house is surrounded.>

<Cut to Peterson's control room. It's a mess. Debris strewn all over.>

Mulder: There's the panel.

<Scully picks up something off the floor.>

<Cut to Peterson entering the room with a shotgun.>

Peterson: Don't touch that! Get away from it, you hear me?

<He sees Mulder and Dr. Sheldon, but doesn't notice Scully where she bent to pick up the object on the floor. She hides near a table. Peterson eventually spots her, but it's too late. Scully springs on him and wrestles him to the floor.>

<Cut to Mulder walking over the Peterson where Scully has him pinned and placing an extra hearing aid in his ear. This serves to calm him down.>

Peterson: <Now lucid and on his feet.> It's taken them all. Every one. You try, but you can't resist it.

Scully: Here. Breathe deeply.

<She breaks some smelling salts under his nose.>

Peterson: <Weakly.> Thank you. It's covered the whole building! In a few hours, it will seed!

<Cut to Dr. Sheldon as she picks up the gun. Unnoticed behind her, a tendril inches its way to her.>

<Cut to Mulder helping Peterson to a chair. He attempts to remove the hearing aid.>
newline Mulder: Keep it in. For whatever reason, it seems to block the plant's effect.

Scully: What we can do?

Peterson: Nothing.

Mulder: <Moving to the panel.> I refuse to stand idly by waiting to become something's lunch. How does this work?

Peterson: Oh, it's too late for that. It's out of hand. Like the "Little Shop of Hor-

rors." The only chance is a powerful herbicide.

<Cut to shot of tendril moving to Dr. Sheldon.>

Mulder: We've got some.

Scully: Dr. Sheldon!

<The good doctor is being dragged away none too nicely by one of the tendrils. Mulder and Scully rush to the rescue.>

Mulder: Where's the herbicide?

Scully: You had it last.

<They exchange annoyed glances, and Scully rushes off to find the herbicide.>

Act IV

Scene 1

Interior. Peterson's beleaguered house.

<Mulder picks up a machete and begins hacking away at the tendril pulling Dr. Sheldon down the hallway.>

<Cut to Scully searching for the herbicide.>

<Cut to Mulder whacking at the tendril.>

<Cut to Scully fighting with the plant, using her flashlight like a club.>

<Cut to Mulder whacking.>

<Cut to Scully fighting.>

<Cut to Mulder whacking.>

<Cut to Scully fighting.>

<Scully fires her handgun at the tendril, then goes to pick up the herbicide, but gets inadvertently whacked on the head by another flailing tendril. This succeeds in knocking her hearing aid out of her ear, and putting her under the influence of the plant.>

<Cut to Peterson and Mulder helping Dr. Sheldon back to the control room.>

Sheldon: Oh! I'm alright. Thank you so much. <She spots another tendril.> Aah! Ooh! Whoo!

Mulder: <To Peterson> Look after her.

<Mulder rushes back down the hallway and is surprised to find Scully dumping the herbicide on the floor. He rushes over to stop her and they begin tussling. They go through the entire agents' field manual of fighting moves, then they begin some serious wrasslin'...knocking the herbicide bottle over, setting it right, only to knock it over again.>

<Mulder spies the hearing aid on the floor and attempts to put it back in Scully's

ear. Scully will have none of it, and knocks the hearing aid back across the room.>

Mulder: Scully, this is no time for Celebrity Death Match.

<The tussle begins again.>

<Enter Peterson and Dr. Sheldon. Peterson shoots a tendril advancing behind Mulder's back with a shotgun.>

<After several more Hulk Hogan moves, Mulder finally succeeds in knocking Scully unconscious.>

Peterson: It's all around us! We won't be able to get out!

Mulder: Get me the herbicide!

Sheldon: What?

Mulder: The herbicide!

<Exit Sheldon for the herbicide.>

<Cut to shot of Peterson rushing about looking for a way out.>

Peterson: Get a move on! We're surrounded!

<Cut to Mulder pouring herbicide on an unconscious Scully's body. Tendrils are going crazy, flopping around everywhere. Dust permeates the air.>

Mulder: Come on!

<Exit Mulder, Peterson and Sheldon.>

<Leaving Scully in the other room, the three watch as the tendril makes off with the unconscious agent.>

Sheldon: Do you think it will work?

<The three wait anxiously for signs that the herbicide is having an effect. Sure enough, the tendrils begin to shake uncontrollably, pulling back from the house. Sounds vaguely like screams can be heard. Once the shaking stops, Mulder is the first to remove his hearing aid. All clear.>

<Cut to Scully lying unconscious.>

<Mulder wakes her and helps her sit up.>

Scully: <weakly> I feel... like hell.

Mulder: You should've had a V-8.

Scully: What happened to the thing <pointing upwards> with the thing?

Mulder: Indigestion. Must've been someone it ate.

Scene 2

Interior. A technical dreamworld... the Lone Gunmen's lair.

Monday

1:08 a.m.

<Mulder, Byers, Langly, and Frohike are watching a video monitor. On screen, the pictures look like some kind of military salvage operation.>

Langly: Even though you wussed out on us about the sasquatch video, we figured you'd wanna take a look at this, Mulder.

Mulder: Bigfoot gives me the creeps. So, what are you showing me?

Byers: Something you'll be very interested in. Frohike, stop it right there.

<The frame freezes.>

Byers: Zoom in on that insignia.

Frohike: Zooming.

<The four men watch as a somewhat grainy, but still recognizable object comes into focus... a firebird.>

Mulder: Is that what I think it is?

Langly: You bet your sweet bippy.

Mulder: Where did you get this? Where did it come from?

Byers: An old buddy of yours. Although he may be late and lamented, his collection lives on through his sister.

Mulder: <Thoughtful.> Max Fenig strikes again.

Langly: Exactamundo.

Mulder: Are you sure this is the Bowling Green crash site?

Frohike: Trust us.

Mulder: Okay, get me a printout of this frame.

<Mulder gets the picture and starts to leave.>

Mulder: Say, how did that sasquatch video turn out?

Byers: We believe it to be genuine.

Mulder: What? The original or the re-analyzed version?

Frohike: Both.

Scene 3

Interior. Assistant Director Skinner's office.
The following Wednesday
11:52 a.m.

Skinner: <Perusing their report.> So what you're telling me is that a giant plant was responsible for the deaths of five scientists and a half dozen other people?

Mulder: <Sitting low in his chair.> That is essentially exactly what happened.

Skinner: Right. What I don't understand is how.

Scully: <Hesitantly.> Well, sir, based on the autopsies I performed and the few tests done on the plant's cells, in addition to the eye-witness accounts, I believe the plant released chemicals which caused auditory hallucinations in these people, thus making them believe they were under its control.

Skinner: And this plant actually ate people?

Scully: Well, no sir. One man was electrocuted on a hotwired fence. We found that the other bodies actually exhibited signs of major concussive trauma.

Skinner: Concussive trauma?

Scully: Breaking of bones and crushing of the internal organs due to a fall from a great height.

Skinner: So, the plant pulled the people into the air with its... tendrils... and dropped them?

Scully: Actually, we believe they were trying to climb the plant.

Mulder: Like "Jack and the Beanstalk."

Skinner: "Jack and the Beanstalk?" Uh-huh.

Scully: Their hallucinatory state certainly contributed to this behavior, sir.

Skinner: Well, you two have certainly pushed some doozies across my desk before, but this one...

Mulder: ... Excuse me, sir?

Skinner: What is it, Agent Mulder?

Mulder: The biggest surprise of all is what's not in this report.

Skinner: And that is?

Mulder: Rising Phoenix.

Skinner: Help me out here, Agent Mulder.

Mulder: Ostensibly, it's a transport project for moving goods and supplies from ground zero to the orbiting space stations. We, that is I, have reason to believe something far more sinister was going on. Something with far-reaching repercussions.

Skinner: Like what?

<Scully gives Mulder one of her patented knitted-brow looks.>

Mulder: I believe this plant was being carried back to earth from the space station, but it escaped from the craft before it landed, thus causing the crash.

Skinner: Escaped?

Mulder: I have it on good authority that the so-called dent in the spacecraft was no dent at all. It was, for want of a better term, an exit hole.

Skinner: Uh-huh. So the plant didn't like being in a can and decided to bolt for freedom. That's interesting, Agent Mulder. Do you have any proof of this?

Mulder: Yes. Yes, I do.

<Drops video printout on Skinner's desk.>

Skinner: What is this?

Mulder: It's a picture of the Bowling Green crash site as the DOD salvage operation was ongoing. The Rising Phoenix insignia can clearly be seen on the side of the damaged craft, as well as the exit hole I referred to.

Skinner: <To Scully> Why wasn't this provided in the report?

Scully: Sir, I believe the validity of the source of that picture is highly questionable at best. Agent Mulder and I discussed the inclusion of the picture as evidence before presenting our report and decided against it.

Skinner: Is that true, Agent Mulder.

Mulder: Yes.

Scully: <Quietly to Mulder.> Let's go... now. <To Skinner.> Sir, do you have any other questions?

Skinner: Questions? No, no questions at all.

Mulder: <Slightly indignant.> Scully, you said it yourself. How much do we really know about the experiments taking place in orbit? What if something happened up there, something unforeseen which quickly got out of control?

Skinner: Until you can bring me some conclusive evidence of this Agent Mulder, instead of grainy video captures, there's nothing more to say. I'll look over your report again. As for now, you're both dismissed.

Mulder: I know what I saw. I know it was real.

<Exit Mulder and Scully.>

<Cut to hallway outside Skinner's office.>

Mulder: You were there, Scully. It had you in its control.

Scully: I don't remember anything, Mulder. I was unconscious.

Mulder: What will it take for you to believe, Scully?

Scully: Something beyond the facts here, Mulder. These people were under an effect all right. A chemical hallucinogen introduced into their systems. Why is that so hard for you to accept?

Mulder: I don't disbelieve it.

Scully: Is there anything you don't believe? You seem to want it both ways.

<She touches his hand gently, a conciliatory gesture.>

Mulder: Who wouldn't want to have their cake and eat it too? <Softening.> What I really believe is that it's time for lunch. How about a veggie burger? Tofu? Bean burrito? Salsa verde? A garden salad? Maybe some raddichio?

<Fade to black as Mulder rattles off several more vegetable dishes.>

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