

The **X** Files**Conspiracies**  
*by Adam Webb*

Memorial Park  
Washington D.C.  
Day One  
7:12 a.m.

It was shaping up to be a fine summer's day. Those already taking advantage of it included a handful of joggers, one bleary-eyed Romeo only just making his way home, and two casually dressed men out for a brisk, early morning walk in the park. One of these men had a face that was a familiar sight to anyone who regularly watched any of the national television news programs. Although now sheathed in the veneer which came with success and power, his rugged frame and alert manner spoke of tougher times, when he'd lived by his wits.

Leaving the park by the New Jersey Avenue entrance, the older man brought his companion to a halt with an out-swung arm.

Senator Peter Van Thewsen, Chairman of the Senate Committee for Defence Systems Development, inhaled deeply. Almost immediately his craggy features wrinkled in disgust.

"This is Washington D.C. The very heart of government," Van Thewsen rumbled like a rusty tank, lecturing his aide as if the man had no idea what city he was in. "And the air smells like a God-damned Cuban whorehouse!"

"Yes, sir," the Senator's assistant replied doubtfully. Never having been in a Cuban whorehouse, or for that matter any other kind, he didn't feel qualified to comment further. Besides which, word had it that contradicting the Senator one to many times was what had cost his predecessor a promising career.

"Yes sir," Van Thewsen mocked. "Is that all you can say, Revenau? Doesn't it make you sick to your stomach? No, don't bother answering," he warded off another automatic agreement with a scowl. "Today, Revenau, we're going to do something to redress the imbalance. Today, we're going to say no to the Hawks. Those four-star sons-of-bitches aren't getting another dime for their war toys!" Clapping the younger man on the back he continued, "Then, when the hullabaloo has died down, we'll take a few million of those tax payers hard-earned dollars and use them to make this a better place." Revenau nodded enthusiastically. Although he agreed with the Senator one hundred percent, he was smart enough to be very careful about who knew it. Van Thewsen was a powerful figure, but then so were some of those who opposed his anti-armament stance. And then there were the strange, dark-clad men who seemed to cling to the Senator like some weird sort of honor guard. Joining the Senator for his early morning constitutional was about as much of a public statement as it was prudent for someone in his position to make.

"Come on, Revenau," the Senator said, smoothing back thick strands of iron-gray hair. "Time for breakfast. We've got work to do, and the world won't wait."

The two men stepped off the curb and began to cross New Jersey Avenue, taking a slalom-like course between the many potholes which marred the tarmac's once smooth surface. Being a good twenty-five years younger than the Senator, Revenau heard the noise a second or two before his boss. He turned quickly, and was shocked to see a sports car bearing down on them, its driver making no attempt to stop. There was no time to shout a warning, no time to do anything except try to stay alive. Survival instincts kicking in, Revenau flung himself backwards, a hand grabbing for the Senator's jacket collar. He caught the material, but felt it ripped from his grasp, as Van Thewsen hesitated a fraction too long.

With a sickening thud, the blue Mustang plowed into Senator Van Thewsen, shattering his legs on impact and hurling him several feet into the air. The driver touched the brakes, and in that split second the body tumbled landing hard and sliding to a stop on the road in front of his vehicle. Anxious to complete his job, the driver's foot came down hard on the accelerator, sending the Mustang racing forward. Van Thewsen barely had time to raise a warding arm before the car was on top of him.

Revenau heard a sickening pop, as the tires bounced over the Senator's body, then the car was speeding away. Forcing himself to look, Revenau saw that the old man's head had been crushed like

an over-ripe melon, leaving a red and gray tire track which stained the road for several yards. Fighting down the urge to vomit, Revenau tried to collect his senses. The police would want him to be very clear as to what had happened. The grating noise of an explosive collision from further down the road snapped him back to alertness. Scrambling to his feet the aide looked in that direction and saw a pall of thick black smoke rising from the overturned wreck of the blue Mustang. Surely an accident was too much of a coincidence. Either the maniac was high on drugs, or he'd just been the victim of what appeared to be fatal justice. Revenau looked around nervously, and was relieved when he could not see any of the Senator's mysterious shadows. He had no idea whether the men in black were official protectors, or private hirelings. Either way, Spooks were trouble. He'd made a point of looking the other way whenever they were around.

"Jesus!" Revenau said, suddenly feeling dizzy. Lowering himself to the ground he sat on the edge of the curb. In the distance he could hear the sound of a siren.



BI Headquarters,  
Washington D.C.  
Day Two,  
8:00 a.m.

In a nondescript briefing room on the first floor of the imposing J. Edgar Hoover Building, eight Special Agents were seated behind bare, functional tables arranged in a U-shape. Director Skinner stood at the apex of the formation, reading from notes attached to a clipboard which he held like a shield. The pages were summarized evidence pertaining to the suspicious death of Senator Peter Van Thewsen, which the FBI had been ordered to investigate as a possible conspiracy. At the present time, nobody knew if Van Thewsen's death was a lone event, or part of a larger plot against the Senate Committee which he'd chaired.

Dana Scully was paying careful attention to everything that was said, hoping to spot something that had previously been missed. Being chosen for the task force was the first really interesting job she'd been given since the closing of the X-Files. Someone was giving her a break, and that made her all the more determined to shine.

"Kremmer and Schultz," the Director nodded at the pair, "I want you to cover the medical angle. According to forensics, our mystery man's fingerprints were surgically removed. Very recently and expertly," Skinner informed them. "I want to know who did the job." Pausing momentarily he glanced at his notes. "He hasn't had any facial alterations, as far as the lab can tell. At least not in the last five years. So the chances are that this guy's mug is in someone's files." Focusing on the two agents seated the farthest from him, he said, "Now. Scully and Drake."

To the left of his new partner, Special Agent Nick Drake was leaning forward, elbows on the table top and cigarette wedged in the corner of his mouth. He'd already got the case pretty much worked out, but knew better than to come right out and say so. In almost twenty-five years with the FBI he'd learned that each type of case had its own predetermined length; an amount of time that was considered appropriate for a full and professional examination of the facts. Even if the solution was the most obvious thing in the God-damned world, that time could not be screwed

around with. Smart guys knew it, and went with the flow. "Your assignment is to take a fine tooth-comb, and use it on Van Thewsen's past. There may be something there that can help us determine the killer's true ID," Skinner said.

Great, Scully thought, another indoors job with the chain-smoking Nick Drake. Another day that would end with her clothes and hair reeking of stale nicotine. Eyes flickering briefly to the face of the man standing in the corner of the room Scully saw that, as if picking up on her discomfort, he too was lighting up another cigarette.

The smoking man had made no comment and taken no active part in the briefing. Scully still didn't know who he really was, and didn't want to know. Knowing too much was the reason she'd been reassigned.

"Okay, let's go," Drake said as if issuing an order. Hauling himself out the seat he crushed the remains of his smoke into an ashtray and immediately delved into his jacket pocket for another cigarette. "Hey," he shook the packet, "I'm nearly out. Mind if we stop at the machine on our way down to the computer room?"

"Not at all." Dana smiled icily. "In fact you can stop there just as long as you like."



**BI Building**  
**New York City, New York**  
**Day Two**  
**2:10 p.m.**

In a windowless corner of the open-plan general office, Fox Mulder sat behind a desk busily annotating a report. The desktop was littered with stacks of paperwork. A small computer workstation was perched on the edge of the desk, its monitor black and dead. Ever since the closure of the X-Files, Mulder didn't trust electronic data systems. Contrary to official policy, he rarely made use of his terminal.

"Hey Mulder, I got big news," Special Agent Carrabelli said, almost succeeding at his attempt to sound sincere. When his new partner looked up, Johnny quoted from the newspaper held open between his hands. "Says here that 22% of Americans believe Elvis was right to shoot TV sets!" Grinning in delight he twisted around in his chair to see Mulder's face. "How about that, Spooky. You think we should maybe start a file."

"No," Mulder said impassively. Features deadpan he added, "I already have a file on Elvis."

The bleeping of Mulder's telephone mercifully interrupted Agent Carrabelli's retort. Taking care that his expression gave nothing away, Mulder scribbled down a note, then replaced the handset in its cradle.

"Gotta go."

"Hey, wait up." Carrabelli started to rise.

"Sorry." Mulder smirked darkly. "You're not invited. My informant is easily 'spooked'." Without giving his partner the chance to think of an argument, Mulder snatched up his trenchcoat and headed for the exit to the street.

He'd walk for a few blocks before hailing a cab. That way he could be reasonably sure that no one was following. These days he watched every shadow. There was little in the way of real evidence, but he was convinced that he was under surveillance. Whether by FBI agents, or those loyal to the Alphas, he had no way of knowing.

The call had been a coded message requesting a meeting. By using the phrase *bad weather*, the caller had revealed that the information came from the Lone Gunman investigative group, and was urgent. Mulder didn't know the caller's name, and intended to keep it that way. Since his unnerving encounter with the MIB in Dayton, and the fiasco of the Ehrlenmeyer Flask, he preferred to keep all information on a need-to-know basis. What he didn't know, he could not be forced to reveal.

The minute that Mulder was out of sight, Agent Carrabelli propelled his swivel-chair over to his partner's desk. Retrieving the notepad he squinted at the spidery scrawl that was Agent Mulder's handwriting. The message read; ELVIS LIVES!



ew York City  
Lower East Side, New York  
Day Two  
3:35 p.m.

In the lounge of a borrowed fifth floor apartment, Mulder took the go-between's invitation to sit. The worn sofa faced a large TV set which was on, but with the sound turned down. The CBS News broadcast was showing more pictures of Senator Peter Van Thewsen. On the journey, his contact had said almost nothing. But it was clear that he was scared by whatever had prompted the meeting. Whether that fear resulted from the information itself, or the possible consequences of possessing it, was not yet clear.

"Okay," Mulder offered a friendly smile. "You want to tell me why I'm here?"

"Sure." The young man nodded, causing his long fair hair to fall over part of his face. Sweeping it back in an often used gesture he knelt before the TV, and pressed a button on the video player housed below it. "They told me to say this was taken just over a week ago. The place is a few miles outside of Harrisonburg. That's about eighty miles southwest of Washington D.C, as the crow flies."

When the screen flickered into life, Mulder felt a chill of dread. The video, apparently shot at night in open country, showed an image that had been branded into his mind. In a moonlit, star-filled sky there was an object which should not have been there. It hung in the air like a Christmas bauble, seemingly spinning about its own axis. Exactly as he remembered, the craft which had been codenamed *Zeitgeist 516* dropped at speed and hovered motionlessly above a dense grouping of pine trees. The intense white glare which had surrounded the craft winked out, leaving a large black shape which was difficult to see against the sky. Moments passed during which nothing appeared to be happening. Then, just as Mulder was about to ask a question, five pencil-thin rays of green laser light lanced groundward from the bottom of the craft.

"Here it comes," the go-between warned. "Keep your eyes on the left of the screen, down at ground level."

"What exactly am I looking for?" Mulder probed, eyes unblinking as he tried to extract as much data as possible. The cameraman seemed to know what he was doing, and the equipment was good. Though almost inevitably the picture was not as sharp as he would have liked.

"Just keep watching," the young man said nervously. "You'll see soon enough."

A shadowy shape appeared for a fleeting instant within the area defined by the lasers. Mulder had time to see only that whatever or whoever it was definitely travelled in a downward direction, then the guide beams were gone. There was the impression of movement from the unlit UFO, and the camera tilted abruptly upward, recording a brilliant white light shooting straight up at incredible speed.

"Now," the young man said, drawing Mulder's attention back to earth even as the camera was hastily refocused on what appeared to be two figures, emerging from between the trees.

Mulder let out an involuntary gasp. One of the men was dressed in black. The other wore casual attire, but there was something familiar about him. Possibilities tumbled like dice inside Mulder's mind for the seconds it took the cameraman to zoom in for a brief close-up. As the famous, craggy face, framed by thick iron-gray hair, came into clear focus, the lensman was heard to mutter, "Holy shit. It's him!" The video finished without warning, leaving Mulder to presume that the Lone Gunman team had done what *he* would have done at that point, and gotten the hell out.

Rendered temporarily speechless, Mulder found himself wishing desperately that Scully was there to confide in. Then, regaining control over his emotions, he was glad that she wasn't. He wanted Scully nowhere near this. Taking a deep breath he looked at the young man. His steady gaze was returned by one of apprehension, as if the go-between feared that he'd be arrested on the spot.

"They were right," Mulder confirmed. "It was Van Thewsen." Saying the name out loud seemed to break the almost palpable tension which had invaded the room. "Now, you're obviously quite a smart guy," Mulder continued. "Smart enough to know how dangerous this information is. Correct?" The young man nodded once. "It's okay, you're not in trouble. Just as long as you listen to me and do exactly what I tell you. Is that absolutely clear?"

Speaking quickly but calmly, Mulder told the go-between to record over the tape, and when that was done, pass on a verbal message to the Lone Gunman group. They were to be informed that the safest course would be to destroy any remaining copies, and to forget what they'd seen. If asked for a reason, they were to be told that what they'd stumbled upon was something that was classified above top secret. Something they were simply not equipped to handle.

As Mulder shut the door of the apartment behind him, he found that he was shaking. He didn't know whether the Lone Gunmen would take his advice, but was certain that if they didn't, some of them would end up dead. Since discovering the truth about Zeitgeist, he'd thought about little else. Making discreet inquiries on his own time had revealed little, other than the frightening fact that the Men In Black had a very long reach. But what might happen to the Lone Gunman group wasn't the reason that he had the shakes. That had to do with his ex-partner. He'd heard through the grapevine that Dana Scully had been assigned to the Van Thewsen case, and been pleased for her. Until he'd seen the evidence captured on video. Whether the Senator had been one of the so-called Alphas, or merely a high-level messenger, was the burning question. It was something he now had to find the answer to, before Scully got wind of the high-level conspiracy.

Exiting the building, Mulder automatically checked for signs that he was being watched. He'd taken about a dozen steps when he spotted Johnny Carrabelli. His partner was standing on the opposite side of the road, grinning like a hobgoblin. Carrabelli said something into his mobile phone, and the next thing Mulder heard was the unmistakable sound of breaking glass. Realizing that it was coming from somewhere behind and above him, he turned on his heel and looked up.

The go-between fell screaming like a fire engine, and struck the sidewalk head first. Shards of shattered glass landed all around him; deadly rain peppering the sidewalk. Mulder didn't need a doctor to tell him that the young man hadn't survived the impact.

Pulling his gun from its holster, Mulder wheeled around, orienting on Carrabelli's position. But his murderous new partner had vanished. Mulder turned and ran full pelt, shouldering his way past those who were gathering to see what had happened. He had no idea where he was running to, only that he had to get away. The day that he'd been secretly dreading had finally arrived. Someone, the Alphas or the government, had just implicated him in a homicide. Heart pounding he sprinted down a side street, and lost himself in the shadow of a stairwell. After a few tense

minutes he concluded that no one was following. He was free for the time being, but that didn't stop him feeling like a drowning dolphin hopelessly tangled up in the grip of a drift net.



omputer Room  
FBI Headquarters  
Washington, D.C.  
Day Two  
3:46 p.m.

Fingers gliding smoothly over the plastic keys, Scully coaxed information from her terminal. She was currently linked via modem to a secure database maintained by NASA. Stored in its electronic files were the details of everyone who had ever worked for the organization, including one Peter Van Thewsen; a civilian analyst who'd worked on attachment to NASA's lunar information collation program between January 1972 and February 1973. Van Thewsen had a string of glowing testimonials from his former employers, and during his second month had taken a battery of physical and mental tests, which all personnel were required to take on a yearly basis. The tests included an IQ assessment, in which Van Thewsen had achieved the staggering score of 195. A person only required an IQ of 135 to join Mensa, the society for anyone considered to be a genius. The strange thing was that the results of the same tests, administered just twelve months later, showed an IQ that was only slightly above average.

"I guess this must be an error," Scully thought aloud. "All other records show the Senator as normal."

"Sure," Drake agreed, exhaling a cloud of dirty gray smoke. "What else could it be? Now, you've got that bee out of your bonnet, maybe we can get back to some real work. Huh?"

"Real work is what I'm attempting to do, Agent Drake," Scully's eyes flashed fire. "We were taught to be thorough at Quantico. If you can remember that far back."

"You prissy little bitch —"

Special Agent Drake's coming diatribe was interrupted by the unexpected entry of Johnny Carrabelli. Dana twisted away from the monitor as her name was called. Even if Carrabelli's body language hadn't given it away, the tone of his voice would have been enough to warn of trouble.

"Hey, Scully. You're wanted in Skinner's office. Right now."

"Is something wrong?"

"Uh-huh," Carrabelli responded. "I've been temporarily reassigned to take your place on the Van Thewsen case. The boss man thinks you'll be more useful on a new line of inquiry."

Scully was confused. "What's going on here?" she asked, trying to catch Carrabelli's eyes. "Come on, Johnny. This sounds like it's serious. Tell me what's happened?"

"It's your crazy ex-partner, Red," Carrabelli lied flawlessly. "He just murdered a man in cold blood. Threw him right out of an apartment window." Carrabelli gestured with his hand. "The poor sap did five floors in as many seconds."

"Mulder murdered someone!" Scully responded, unable to keep an element of shock out of her voice. "There must be some mistake. He wouldn't do anything like that."

"We got him on tape entering the building taking the elevator to the victim's floor," Johnny said. "Next thing we see is a guy crashing through a pane of glass. Mulder leaves the building about a

minute later. When he sees me, he pulls his gun. Right about now there's a warrant being issued for his arrest. He's considered A&D."

"Wait a minute," Scully frowned. "Back up a little. You said this incident was recorded on tape." She hesitated, almost afraid to ask the obvious question. "Does that mean Mulder was under Bureau surveillance?"

"Hey, don't give me a hard time," Carrabelli shrugged. "I was just doin' my job."

"Why was he being watched?" Scully demanded, already halfway sure that she knew the answer.

If Mulder was being watched, it was the result of what he'd discovered during their last X-File case. All that she knew about the contents of the Ehrlenmeyer flask was considered hearsay. But Mulder had actually seen with his own eyes the results of what might have been alien gene manipulation. Perhaps he'd seen more than even he realized.

"You know better than to ask that," Drake chipped in. "Give the guy a break, for Christ's sake. Anyone would think you had somethin' goin' with old Spooky."

"Oh, we did," Dana said, coldly furious. Rounding on her obnoxious partner she added, "It's called friendship. Something that you wouldn't know much about, Drake."

Carrabelli coughed politely into his hand. "Skinner's waiting."

Nodding curtly in response, Dana stood and walked out of the room. No matter what the evidence might seem to be, she knew Fox Mulder. Under certain circumstances he might kill. As would any FBI Agent. But he would never deliberately hurl an unarmed man to his death. Something was going on, and it smelled very much like a set-up.



ullman's Warehouse  
Hoboken, New Jersey  
Day Three  
11:37 p.m.

Crouched down behind a large packing crate, Mulder was ready. He'd chosen the warehouse because it offered a lot of cover and three possible routes of escape. Both advantages might be required if Johnny Carrabelli brought company. The meeting had been set via a call made from a public phone booth to Agent Carrabelli's home number. Mulder knew that his "partner" had an answering machine hooked-up, and that he wouldn't be able to resist an opportunity to continue what he'd started. The real problem was in deciding how deep the conspiracy against him went. For some reason, Carrabelli and at least one other accomplice had set out to frame him.

Alone in the darkness, Mulder sighed. The only thing in his favor was that his persecutors didn't seem to want him dead. What had happened was probably as a test, conducted to see what he'd do under such dire circumstances. Or more specifically, whom he'd turn to for help. That was the only answer which made any kind of sense. The truth of the matter was that he hadn't told anyone about Operation Zeitgeist or the Alpha's incredible plot. But they couldn't know that. Someone was obviously concerned enough to take drastic action.

A loud metallic grating noise brought Mulder fully alert. Someone was entering the building via the side door, and they obviously didn't care who heard them.

"Agent Mulder," an unfamiliar voice called out. "You can come out now. I'm not armed."

Mulder peered around the edge of the crate and saw a man standing in the beam of an overhead fluorescent tube. The man was holding open the flaps of his jacket, which like his trousers and

tie, was colored black. Memories ran like a slideshow inside Mulder's mind, flickering past until he came to the one he wanted.

"I know your face. You were with Major Starlin, in Dayton."

The man grinned lopsidedly. "I was told you had a photographic memory. We were never formally introduced, but you're right. My name's Draeger. Al, to my friends. I was one of Major Starlin's aides. You'll remember the other one."

Gun aimed at Draeger's heart, Mulder stepped from behind his cover and walked slowly toward him. The sequence of events had taken yet another unexpected turn.

"How do I know whose side you're on now?"

"I guess you don't," Draeger admitted. "Maybe it'll help if I tell you that by this time tomorrow, you'll no longer be wanted by the FBI. We've been watching Agent Carrabelli for some time."

"Carrabelli," Mulder repeated. "Where is he?"

"Right at this minute, he's at home sitting in his favorite armchair. Unfortunately," the lieutenant smiled, "Johnny has an extra hole in his head, and a gun in his hand."

"So how does that clear my name?" Mulder asked.

"It doesn't." Draeger smirked. "But, when your former colleagues check Johnny's pockets, they'll find certain damning evidence. No one will doubt that he planned the hit on Van Thewsen, on behalf of a political extremist group. Other evidence will point to him setting you up because you were close to discovering his duplicity."

"But he didn't plan Van Thewsen's death," Mulder stated, seeing something in Draeger's eyes.

"Of course not. We arranged that."

"Because Van Thewsen was an Alpha?"

"No," Draeger shook his head. "The Senator had to be taken out because he was about to cast the deciding vote as Chairman of the Senate Committee for Defence Systems Development. That vote would have severely limited funding for a new missile project. The missile is a cover for a black program, developing a device that can interfere with the automatic guidance systems of Zeitgeist craft."

"Jesus." Uncocking his weapon, Mulder returned it to its holster. "So what am I supposed to now? Go back to work?"

"Not for the FBI," the lieutenant winked. "You're still a wanted man, Mulder. Wanted by Operation Zeitgeist." Reaching into his jacket pocket, Draeger produced a folded sheet of paper. "Take a look at this list. These are individuals we've identified as Alphas. I believe you'll be familiar with some of the names."

Mulder quickly scanned the list, and as predicted recognized about a third of the people. One name in particular caught his attention. It was another reason why he could never go back.



**BI Headquarters**  
**Washington D.C.**  
**Day Four**  
**10:00 a.m.**



The phone on Dana Scully's desk began to ring. Answering, she found herself talking to Fox Mulder, who hurriedly explained that he wouldn't be coming back to work.

"Why not?" Scully asked. "You're in the clear."

"Yeah, I know, Dana. It's not that," Mulder said, evidently uncomfortable with the situation. "I have a new job, and that's all I can really say. You know how it is."

"I know that we used to trust each other," Scully said, hurt to discover how things had changed.

"Dana, please believe me," Mulder begged. "I do trust you. It's just that there are some things I'm not allowed to discuss. Even my new job title, stupid as that probably sounds. God, I don't believe I'm saying this, but it's for your own good. Things are going to happen, Scully, and no one is invulnerable. I won't risk your life because someone may think you have privileged information. All I can tell you is that what I'm doing now might make a difference."

"Okay," Scully said, caught between emotions. "I won't pretend to be happy about it, but I guess I can understand. Maybe we could meet for lunch, some time?"

At the other end of the line, Mulder sighed deeply. "No, that wouldn't be a good idea." For a long moment he was silent. When he spoke again it was with genuine regret. "If there was another way, I'd take it. I'll miss you, Dana."

"Me too," Scully admitted, choking up despite her efforts to stay detached. "Hey, Mulder. Send me a post card, okay? That can't be against the rules."

Mulder chuckled. "I will." Pausing for a second, he added, "Trust no one."

The line went dead.



Director's Office,  
FBI Headquarters  
Washington D.C.  
Day Four  
10:03 a.m.

The small speaker of the telecommunications monitoring system on Walter Skinner's desk announced the end of former Special Agent Mulder's conversation with his ex-partner.

"Do you think she knows anything?" Skinner asked the man who sat perched on the corner of the desk.

"Agent Scully knows a great deal." Drawing in smoke through the filter-tipped cigarette which protruded between his fingers, the man held it for a second, then exhaled a gray-blue cloud. "Though nothing of significance where you are concerned."

"For now," Skinner said humorlessly. "Although she does suspect me of aiding and abetting those who would obscure the truth. At some point, our clever agent will have to be dealt with."

"Terminated?" the smoking man asked.

"Turned," Skinner replied with a quick shake of his head. "Someone with Dana Scully's qualities has much potential. She is clearly wasted among the Betas."