

The Silver Archive #8

MILLENNIUM



By Stacey Smith?

THE SILVER ARCHIVE

MILLENIUM

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To Sienna Armstrong,
for the gift of sin

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Biography

Overview

Title: Millennium

Creator: Chris Carter

Original transmission dates: 25 October 1996–21 May 1999, plus a crossover episode of **The X-Files** aired 28 November 1999.

Running times: 42 minutes

Regular Cast: Lance Henriksen (Frank Black), Megan Gallagher (Catherine Black), Brittany Tiplady (Jordan Black), Terry O'Quinn (Peter Watts), Kristen Cloke (Lara Means), Klea Scott (Emma Hollis)

Guest Cast: Bill Smitrovitch (Lt. Bob Bletcher), Stephen James Lang (Detective Giebelhouse), CCH Pounder (Cheryl Andrews), Sarah-Jane Redmond (Lucy Butler), Allan Zinyk (Brian Roedecker), Stephen E. Miller (Andy McClaren), Peter Outerbridge (Barry Baldwin).

Critical responses:

'**Millennium** was a show that was utterly unlike anything else on television, even shows that shared genres. It was very hard to classify, but that seemed to be the point. [...] The second season is quite possibly the best season of television that Ten Thirteen ever produced, a strong thematic season that builds perfectly from the opening teaser of the first episode to the closing credits of the last.'

[Darren Mooney, *The MOvie Blog: Millennium*]

'With Glen Morgan and James Wong taking the reins from the overworked Chris Carter in Season 2, **Millennium** goes from being too anthologized to being too serialized. When reviewing Season 1, I lamented that there was too much sameness in the Serial Killer of the Week hours. I have the opposite complaint about Season 2: sometimes it gets so weird that I longed for a simple throwback episode just to catch my breath.'

[John Hansen, 'The Top 10 episodes of *Millennium* Season 2', *Cold Bananas*]

Synopsis

Retired FBI profiler **Frank Black** moves his family to Seattle and begins working with the Millennium Group, an organisation of former law-enforcement experts in extreme crimes who believe that the forthcoming millennium is exacerbating violence.

Frank has the ability to see what the killer sees, in flashes, giving him deeper insight than most. However, Frank is recovering from a breakdown due to his family being photographed by a man known only as the **Polaroid Stalker**.

At the conclusion of the first season, Frank's wife **Catherine** is kidnapped from Seattle airport by the Polaroid Stalker, whereupon Frank learns that his colleague **Peter Watts** and the Millennium Group know far more than they have led him to believe. As the millennium approaches, Frank learns that the Millennium Group is far older and possesses many more secrets than he could have possibly imagined.

Episode List

Season 1

<i>1.1 Pilot</i>	<i>1.12 Loin like a Hunting Flame</i>
<i>1.2 Gehenna</i>	<i>1.13 Force Majeure</i>
<i>1.3 Dead Letter</i>	<i>1.14 The Thin White Line</i>
<i>1.4 The Judge</i>	<i>1.15 Sacrament</i>
<i>1.5 522666</i>	<i>1.16 Covenant</i>
<i>1.6 Kingdom Come</i>	<i>1.17 Walkabout</i>
<i>1.7 Blood Relatives</i>	<i>1.18–1.19 Lamentation/Powers, Principalities, Thrones and Dominions</i>
<i>1.8 The Well-Worn Lock</i>	<i>1.20 Broken World</i>
<i>1.9 Wide Open</i>	<i>1.21 Maranatha</i>
<i>1.10 The Wild and the Innocent</i>	<i>1.22 Paper Dove</i>
<i>1.11 Weeds</i>	

Season 2

<i>2.1 The Beginning and the End</i>	<i>2.12 Luminary</i>
<i>2.2 Beware of the Dog</i>	<i>2.13 The Mikado</i>
<i>2.3 Sense and Antisense</i>	<i>2.14 The Pest House</i>
<i>2.4 Monster</i>	<i>2.15–2.16 Owls/Roosters</i>
<i>2.5 A Single Blade of Grass</i>	<i>2.17 Siren</i>
<i>2.6 The Curse of Frank Black</i>	<i>2.18 In Arcadia Ego</i>
<i>2.7 19:19</i>	<i>2.19 Anamnesis</i>
<i>2.8 The Hand of Saint Sebastian</i>	<i>2.20 A Room with No View</i>
<i>2.9 Jose Chung's "Doomsday Defense"</i>	<i>2.21 Somehow, Satan Got Behind Me</i>
<i>2.10 Midnight of the Century</i>	<i>2.22–2.23 The Fourth Horseman/The Time is Now</i>
<i>2.11 Goodbye Charlie</i>	

Season 3

<i>3.1 The Innocents</i>	<i>3.12 The Sound of Snow</i>
<i>3.2 Exogenesis</i>	<i>3.13 Antipas</i>
<i>3.3 TEOTWAWKI</i>	<i>3.14 Matryoshka</i>
<i>3.4 Closure</i>	<i>3.15 Forcing the End</i>
<i>3.5 ...Thirteen Years Later</i>	<i>3.16 Saturn Dreaming of Mercury</i>
<i>3.6 Skull and Bones</i>	<i>3.17 Darwin's Eye</i>
<i>3.7 Through a Glass Darkly</i>	<i>3.18 Bardo Thodol</i>
<i>3.8 Human Essence</i>	<i>3.19 Seven and One</i>
<i>3.9 Omerta</i>	<i>3.20 Nostalgia</i>
<i>3.10 Borrowed Time</i>	<i>3.21–3.22 Via Delorosa/Goodbye to All That</i>
<i>3.11 Collateral Damage</i>	

X-Files Crossover

Millennium (The X-Files Season 7 Episode 4)

CHAPTER 1: THE DEATH OF SECURITY

Millennium is the greatest show you've never watched. And its second season is a particular highlight, perhaps one of the most perfect seasons of television ever shown.

Millennium focuses on Frank Black, a middle-aged criminal profiler who associates with a shadowy organisation, the Millennium Group. In Season 1, the group was a loose connection of background players who assisted in solving crimes, many of them related to serial killers. In the second season, the group's origins and role are examined, with its hold over Frank becoming increasingly cult-like. The second season also expands the supernatural elements of the show, with angels and devils taking human form. It sees the breakdown of Frank's marriage, the loss of his refuge and the introduction of an investigative partner who is a younger (female) version of him, complete with a mental breakdown.

This book takes as its focus the second season of **Millennium**, which in many ways was a very different show to the first (and can be enjoyed without having seen the freshman year). The second season took televisual risks in both form and content, expanding the idea of what both **Millennium** and television itself could be at a time when TV was undergoing an enormous shift. Naturally, we discuss some aspects of the first season along the way and talk about the third, as well as the crossover episode of **The X-Files** that concluded the show, but it's the sophomore season that really stands out as arguably one of the single best seasons of television in the 1990s, if not beyond.

The show hinged upon the mood of its time: the idea that the Year 2000 was coming and life as we knew it was going to end. This took multiple forms, including Y2K, the Nostradamus prophecies and the dominant role of serial killers as the embodiment of terror that's out of our control. **Millennium** built upon these very adult fears, making a show that was as terrifying as it was possible to be. It was the feeling you had watching **Doctor Who** as a kid, only transplanted to the adult world.

One of the notable things about the three seasons of **Millennium** is that it was essentially three distinct shows. **Millennium**'s first season was often 'serial killer of the week', with Frank up against a variety of serial killers, each with their own twist. One kills the clergy¹. Another blows people up². A third invades open houses in order to show up our misplaced faith in security systems. Individually, these are (usually) great stories, but the cumulative effect can become wearisome, and the show rapidly lost viewers after receiving record-breaking ratings for *The Pilot* (1996).

Millennium came about because of the massive success of **The X-Files**, with creator Chris Carter given carte blanche to create any TV show he wanted. Carter pitched 'Seven in Seattle'³.

Where **The X-Files** dealt with the paranormal, focusing around an attractive conspiracy theorist and his sceptical partner, **Millennium** dealt with the evil that ordinary humans do, focusing around a middle-aged family man who was essentially having a mid-life crisis. Both Fox Mulder and Frank Black worked in the Behavioural Sciences Unit of the FBI, profiling serial killers⁴, but where Mulder diverged to chase conspiracies, Frank Black only stopped because he had a mental breakdown⁵. Frank rarely uses a gun and, when the show began, lived with a wife, Catherine (herself a psychologist), and daughter, Jordan, in a yellow house that

¹ *Kingdom Come* (1996).

² 522666 (1996).

³ *Order in Chaos*, Making of Season One DVD documentary. *Seven* was the seventh-highest-grossing film of 1995 and was praised by critics for its dark style, brutality and themes.

⁴ **The X-Files: Tooms** (1994); **Millennium: Lamentation** (1997).

⁵ Established in *The Pilot*.

represented sanctuary.

The first season combined serial killers with poetry and religion, producing a show unlike anything seen on TV before, but one that viewers found too dark⁶. One of the hooks of the show was Frank's visions, which were never fully explained. The tagline was 'He sees what the killer sees', which was achieved by rapid flashing of images; these were shot in 16mm film (instead of the usual 35 mm), run 'off speed', transferred to tape to reduce the amount of information and strobed to increase the light on fast-moving images⁷. The visions were explained in *The Pilot* as an intense clarity, but Jordan clearly experiences something similar in *Sacramento* (1997), suggesting a genetic link (something that the second and third seasons delve into in greater detail).

Season 1 had an ongoing story arc, focusing on the Polaroid Stalker, established as backstory in *The Pilot*. Before moving to Seattle in that story, Frank and his family had lived in Washington DC (where the show would return in Season 3). Frank, then working for the FBI as a criminal profiler, had been mailed photographs of his wife and daughter by person or persons unknown, triggering a breakdown, whereby he couldn't leave his house. He'd recovered, left his job and moved the family to Seattle to start anew. He'd been offered a job as a consultant for the Millennium Group, a collection of former FBI agents who worked on cases involving serial killers, assisting local law enforcement. However, at the end of *The Pilot*, Frank was mailed photographs of his wife and daughter in Seattle, showing that the stalking continued.

This arc is relegated to the background in most of Season 1, with only the occasional reminder, such as the photos in *Lamentation* (1997) — although they aren't directly connected to the Polaroid Stalker — and the wheeze of the 'film developing' fade-in for each episode. Instead, the broader arc of Season 1 sees the rise in serial killers reflecting the accelerating end times, linking the police-procedural nature of the bulk of the show with the demonic aspects of its occasionally supernatural side. This is exemplified in *Powers, Principalities, Thrones and Dominions* (1997), a follow-up of sorts to *Lamentation*, where Frank sees the villain struck down by mystical energy from the angel Sammael, but the camera also shows us a more mundane viewpoint of Sammael shooting the villain with a gun.

The first season's fascination with serial killers mirrored America's own. This fascination has a long history, dating back to Herman Mudgett (aka Dr. H.H. Holmes) in the late nineteenth century, a conman and hotelier who had secret torture rooms in his Chicago hotel and may have killed around 200 people⁸. Although the prototype began in the popular imagination in the UK with Jack the Ripper⁹, America embraced the serial killer as a particularly American threat. Rather than the careful intellectual approach of the Ripper, whose precise cuts were widely believed to indicate medical training¹⁰, the American serial killer was resolutely One Of Us. John Wayne Gacy was the son of an auto machinist¹¹; Eddie Adams was a barber¹²; and Ted Bundy was a good-looking, all-American boy scout, who had a paper route, did backyard clearance and mowed lawns for pocket money¹³.

⁶ Mooney, Darren, *Opening The X-Files: A Critical History of the Original Series*.

⁷ Chamberlain, Adam and Brian A. Dixon, 'The Painter of Light', in *Back to Frank Black*, pp397–403.

⁸ *Serial Killers: A Shocking History*.

⁹ Seltzer, M, *Serial Killers: Death and Life in America's Wound Culture*.

¹⁰ Hurren, E, 'Dissecting Jack-the-Ripper: An Anatomy of Murder in the Metropolis', *Crime, History & Societies*, 20, pp5–30.

¹¹ Cahill, T, *Buried dreams: Inside the mind of John Wayne Gacy*.

¹² Reed, N, 'Serial Killers: Edward J. Adams OR William J. Wallace, Depending on Who You Ask'. *Enormous Crime*, 11 Sep 1999.

¹³ *Serial Killers: A Shocking History*.

The serial killer was the bogeyman du jour in the 1990s¹⁴, where evil had an ordinary American face¹⁵, inheriting the invisible menace of the communist of the 50s. Reds under the bed were replaced with the quiet neighbour, a description famously applied to Jeffrey Dahmer, who worked conscientiously in a chocolate factory by day, but by night lured victims back to his apartment for necrophilia, mutilation and cannibalism¹⁶.

The percentage of murders committed by strangers or unidentified perpetrators increased from about 20% in 1964 to over 50% in 1994¹⁷. Serial killing (defined as the slaying of three or more victims previously unknown to the murderer¹⁸), and mass homicide generally¹⁹, was also on the rise. In the five years predating **Millennium**, there had been 219 mass-murder offenders. In the five years before that, it was 157. A further five years before, and it was 134²⁰.

Before 9/11 instigated a media fascination with terrorism, the serial killer 'was the most provocative news event that reporters could have come across their desks'²¹. Serial killers 'provide an ambivalent place of refuge; they are familiar and allow us to maintain a pleasing image of ourselves as civilized and non-violent; it is they who are violent, not us'²². Neighbourhood Watch was established in the seventies²³ to guard against threats that lurked within seemingly safe suburbs²⁴.

The 1990s led to a change in America's geographical makeup. Inner city violence resulted in 'white flight', with vast relocations of white, middle-class residents to the suburbs, including gated communities, to keep the ever-present stranger out. **Millennium** explicitly preys on these fears in its first season, with *Weeds* and *Wide Open* (both 1997) showing that safety in such communities is merely an illusion; the threat can as easily come from within (*Weeds* has a member of a gated community murdering children to highlight the sins of their parents) as without (*Wide Open* sees a serial killer infiltrate open houses, hiding inside otherwise secure homes until dark).

This idea of the horrific lurking among us is a well-trodden fear, which Season 1 exploited in a variety of iterations. *Weeds* and *Wide Open* are the most obvious examples of our security under assault, but the show also deals with incest and domestic violence in *The Well-Worn Lock*, telemarketers reaching into homes in *Gehenna* and the lure of murder for fame in *522666* (all 1996).

The geographic polarisation along racial lines changed the way that people perceived race: when everyone lived in urban cities, your neighbours didn't always look like you; when white flight took the middle class outside, they saw fewer black faces in their neighbourhood²⁵. This had the effect of simultaneously outsourcing the existing threat (the imagined 'other' now lived somewhere else and wanted to take what you had, but they could at least be easily recognised if they strayed into your neighbourhood) and forcing a new one to emerge

¹⁴ Jarvis, B, 'Monsters Inc.: Serial killers and consumer culture'. *Crime, Media, Culture* 3, pp326–344.

¹⁵ Schmid, D, 'Serial Killing in America after 9/11', *Journal of American Culture* 28, pp61–69.

¹⁶ *Serial Killers: A Shocking History*.

¹⁷ Fox, JA and J Levin, 'Multiple Homicide: Patterns of Serial and Mass Murder', *Crime and Justice* 23, pp407–455.

¹⁸ Haggerty K and A Ellerbrok. 'The social study of serial killers', *Criminal Justice Matters*, pp6–7.

¹⁹ Some mass-murder offenders killed the majority of their victims in a single massacre, whereas serial killers spread their offenses over months or years.

²⁰ Fox, JA and J Levin, 'Multiple Homicide: Patterns of Serial and Mass Murder'.

²¹ Rossi, CT, 'Guns—Not Political Correctness—Will Thwart Terrorists and Killers,' *Free Congress Foundation*, 12 August 2002.

²² Schmid, D, 'Serial Killing in America after 9/11'.

²³ Cirel P, Evans P, McGillis D and D Witcomb, 'Community Crime Prevention Program: Seattle, Washington: An Exemplary Project', *US Government Printing Office*.

²⁴ Bennett, T, Holloway K and D Farrington, 'A Review of the Effectiveness of Neighbourhood Watch', *Security Journal* 22, pp143–155.

²⁵ Chappell, DL, 'Did Racists Create the Suburban Nation?' *Reviews in American History* 35, pp89–97.

from within (the serial killer of the 1990s was uniquely white in the cultural imaginary²⁶).

Millennium's setup emphasised the terror of suburbia. Frank flees urban DC to suburban Seattle, but he can't escape the darkness. He wants to protect his family, but the fears haunt him, as exemplified by the Polaroid Stalker's simultaneous relocation to Seattle in *The Pilot*. The most shocking development of Season 1 is the murder of Bob Blecher (Frank's colleague and best friend) in Frank's basement²⁷, showing that Frank's attempts to keep the evil out are for naught. However, the murderer here is not a serial killer; it is a devil in the form of Frank's nemesis Lucy Butler, who will tangle with him on several occasions in Seasons 2 and 3.

Season 1 of **Millennium** concluded with the first onscreen appearance of the Polaroid Stalker, helping direct another serial killer in the season finale, *Paper Dove* (1997). The Polaroid Stalker isn't named and only appears in the shadows, wearing sunglasses and a goatee. After returning to Seattle, Catherine is drugged and kidnapped from the airport by the Polaroid Stalker, further emphasising the futility of Frank's attempt to keep the darkness at bay.

The second season sees an entire change of both production staff and tone. Chris Carter had **The X-Files** to concentrate on, as well as prepping for the 1998 feature film *Fight the Future*, so he handed over control of the series to Glen Morgan and James Wong, who'd previously written several **X-Files** scripts and had come fresh from overseeing **Space: Above and Beyond**.

Morgan and Wong were no strangers to **Millennium**, having written three scripts for the show's first season. Some of these pushed the boundaries, such as having a character study of a man beset by visions (Millennium Group candidate Jim Horn, in *Dead Letters* (1996)), just as Frank is, but without the grip on his sanity that Frank had regained following his breakdown and recovery before the show began. However, Morgan and Wong's Season 1 stories otherwise showed little sign of the (sometimes outrageous) direction they were to take the show in for the second season.

Although the second season opens on a contiguous follow-up to the cliffhanger from *Paper Dove*, the show immediately marks itself out as different. Most obviously, the aspect ratio has changed, from 4:3 to 16:9, as television was undergoing a transition around this time²⁸, and **Millennium** was one of the first shows to benefit from the upgrade²⁹. The Polaroid Stalker removes his sunglasses and goatee in the opening minutes and is now played by a different actor. The titles have been updated, with new scenes and the tagline changing from 'wait worry' (reflecting the anxiety of Season 1's serial killers) to 'this is who we are' (which will become a recurring catchphrase of the Millennium Group, both past and present, throughout the season)³⁰. Episode titles now appear onscreen (which occurs for Season 2 only), replacing the quotes that opened Season 1 episodes.

Another distinct change is the nature of Frank's gift. Season 1 had used Frank's visions in order to further the plot and provide viscera, often with very direct visual information that would make sense once the appropriate plot decoding had been undertaken. Season 2 changes **Millennium's** most distinctive feature from the outset. Instead of seeing what the killer sees, Frank's vision in this episode is a repeated series of white lines, ultimately revealed to be lane markings as viewed from beneath a vehicle, where Catherine is held for much of the episode. Instead of seeing what Evil sees, in a fairly straightforward way, Frank now sees what Good sees, in a tangled way.

²⁶ Brandon, A, 'African American Serial Killers: Over-Represented Yet Underacknowledged', *The Howard Journal of Criminal Justice* 52, pp1–18.

²⁷ *Lamentation*.

²⁸ In December 1996, the US FCC had approved a TV standard that left the choice of aspect ratio to broadcasters (Grant, August E and Jennifer H Meadows, *Communication Technology Update*).

²⁹ 'Millennium: This Is Who We Are'.

³⁰ It changes back to 'wait worry' again for Season 3.

Indeed, this thread will run throughout the entire season, with Frank (and occasionally others) frequently lamenting that his gift has changed. Almost no episodes of Season 2 use his visions in the manner of Season 1³¹, while we will see other characters experiencing even more obscure manifestations of their abilities in later episodes³².

Where **The X-Files** fundamentally dealt with fears of the paranormal, **Millennium** initially dealt with fears of the everyday. **The X-Files** was powered by Mulder's inherent ability to believe, while the first season of **Millennium** is powered by Frank Black's inherent goodness. *The Beginning and the End* (1997), the opening episode of the show's second season, is set up to question this, showcasing Frank's profiling abilities, only for the conclusion to be exposed as a red herring, thanks to the Polaroid Stalker's knowledge of Frank's methods. Instead, the second-season opener is far more interested in moral complexity than anything we saw in the first season: the climax of *The Beginning and the End* sees Frank stab the Polaroid Stalker to death (partly due to the Polaroid Stalker's own manipulations) in front of Catherine, in a shocking moment for a man who previously exuded calm in the most unsettling of situations and almost never carried a gun.

Killing the recurring villain from the first season in its opening episode is another flag in the sand that indicates that the second season will be a very different beast to its predecessor. It sharply indicates that the show is less interested in serial killers (they will continue to appear throughout the season, but in ways largely unlike the monotony of the first) and has drastically torn up the rules the show originally set in place.

It's through management of the consequences of the Polaroid Stalker that the Millennium Group demonstrates their control. They withhold support for Frank's investigation in the first half of *The Beginning and the End*, then override any legal consequences for Frank in the episode's coda. While the latter is obviously to Frank's benefit, it's done with a ruthlessness that will come to define them later in the season.

However, Catherine is less forgiving, despite the fact that his actions saved her life. This sets in motion a rift between the two, rupturing their marriage. Having fulfilled the trope of the Angel in the House³³ during Season 1, Catherine presented as the perfect wife, but with little to do. She and Jordan were symbols of what Frank was protecting — and unable to protect — but this meant that the female co-star had a limited narrative function in the show³⁴.

While giving Frank someone to protect is excellent motivation, that role is — as both Seasons 2 and 3 will demonstrate — better served by Jordan. Protecting an innocent is a lofty goal, and having a child represent that innocence is reasonable, especially when the child is played by an excellent young actress³⁵. Forcing the show's co-star to also represent that innocence is not only redundant, it removes much of Catherine's agency.

Season 2 shakes up this *status quo* in multiple ways, starting with Frank and Catherine's separation in the second episode. The reasons for their separation aren't entirely clear. It might be the fact that Catherine was forced to witness her husband murder a man in front of her. It might be that her connection to him is what led to her abduction. It might simply be that she needs time to process — and is sick of — his lies (even if done for the best reasons), something that will come up later in the season. Removing her from the marriage gives her

³¹ The major exception is *A Single Blade of Grass*, which features more screentime devoted to Frank's visions than any other episode, due to production necessities on an underrunning episode (Chamberlain, Adam, 'Darren McGavin's Cat: A Conversation with Erin Maher & Kay Reindl', in *Back to Frank Black*, pp175–193).

³² *Monster* (1997) onwards.

³³ Otberg, DM, 'The Angel in the House', *The Toast: Feminism*, 1 November 2013.

³⁴ This was widely compared with the more meaty role that Agent Dana Scully played in **The X-Files**, which owed a large part of its success to the balance between the two main characters, something **Millennium** tried to emulate in its setup but clearly lacked in its narrative.

³⁵ Brittany Tiplady was nominated four times for Best Performance in a TV Comedy/Drama in the category 'Supporting Young Actress Age Ten or Under' in the years 1997–2000 and won the 1998 award.

a greater role in some ways but also sidelines her for much of the season and occasionally makes her into an antagonist for Frank, which only works when he's in the wrong.

There's another change to the show's appearance, but it's only revealed slowly. Season 1 kept the supernatural elements to the occasional demon, mostly relegated to hints³⁶. Season 2 ramps up the supernatural elements, with more and more demons appearing openly, which will culminate in four of them starring in *Somehow, Satan Got Behind Me* (1998), with Frank relegated to cameo appearances. Frank's gift was originally described as a natural outgrowth of intense profiling, rather than a psychic ability. Season 2 posits that it is likely genetic³⁷ and will introduce other characters who have a different version of the gift³⁸.

This pivot also applies to the Millennium Group itself. The Millennium Group had been based on The Academy Group, a real-life organisation of former FBI profilers, who performed much as Season 1 outlined: they assisted local law enforcement in solving difficult cases. Members of The Academy Group were brought in as consultants to the show, and actor Lance Henriksen had been particularly impressed with their work and integrity³⁹.

One of Morgan and Wong's primary concerns going into Season 2 was the role played by the Millennium Group. The two men found it difficult to find drama in a group of experts who did their jobs well; instead, they became fascinated with how such an organisation might come about and function. They decided, therefore, to drastically alter the Millennium Group's function, giving it a backstory and sinister purpose⁴⁰. That becomes clear in *The Beginning and the End* when we discover that Frank is not — as previously assumed — a **member** of the Millennium Group, but is instead only a **candidate**. While this doesn't directly contradict anything said in Season 1, it's a bold new direction for the show, overturning one of its basic assumptions, dating back to *The Pilot*.

Placing Frank at a distance from the Millennium Group serves the purpose of letting him — and us — discover more about their origins as the season progresses. Rather than simply being a group of professionals who assist police, we'll learn that the Group is much, much older and much, much more cultish than we'd been led to believe. Where **The X-Files** had a Cassandra-like Mulder pitted against a shadowy organisation, Season 2 of **Millennium** puts an unwitting Frank inside it⁴¹.

This focus on serial killers and shadowy conspiracies (the latter inherited from **The X-Files**) is peak 1990s. However, the serial killer as American cultural bogeyman barely outlasted **Millennium**, essentially vanishing with 9/11. The terrifying image of the lone killer in his van roaming small-town USA was replaced by the terrifying image of the Middle Eastern terrorist. There still were post-9/11 serial killers, but their power in the popular imagination had been neutered⁴².

After the opening episode, the remainder of Season 2 goes a different way. The second episode, *Beware of the Dog* (1997) transposes the serial-killer format, complete with quirky small town, except that the 'serial' killers are dogs and the town holds clues to the ancient history of the Millennium Group. *Beware of the Dog* is where

³⁶ The major exceptions are Sammael, seen in *Powers*, *Principalities*, *Thrones and Dominions*, and Frank's ongoing nemesis Lucy Butler, first seen in *Lamentation* but who will make several appearances in the second and third seasons.

³⁷ *Midnight of the Century* (1997).

³⁸ *Monster* (1997).

³⁹ Maddrey, Joseph, 'Frank Black and America's *Fin de Siècle*', in *Back to Frank Black*, pp25–37.

⁴⁰ Chamberlain, Adam and Brian A. Dixon, '98% Less Serial Killers: A Conversation with Glen Morgan & James Wong' in *Back to Frank Black*, pp107–126.

⁴¹ Indeed, the stubbed-out Morley cigarette in the second-season finale suggests that these two organisations may overlap.

⁴² Schmid, D, 'Serial Killing in America after 9/11'.

Season 2 starts in earnest, with a format-twisting narrative and the introduction of the Old Man, who we later learn is the Group's leader and its moral centre.

From there, we move to twisted science experiments (*Sense and Antisense*), child abuse (*Monster*), Native American prophecy (*A Single Blade of Grass* (all 1997)) and onward from there. The next serial killer doesn't show up until Episode 11, in *Goodbye Charlie* (1998), and even that's debateable as to whether we're dealing with a human killer or an angel in disguise. Indeed, the only 'proper' serial killer story in Season 2 is *The Mikado* (1998), which mixes up the format considerably, by virtue of the fledgling internet.

The opening of Season 2 is thus predicated around change. Despite being the second half of a two-parter, the first episode stakes out a bold new direction for the show, one that sets the tone for the season to follow, while casting off much of the shackles of the first season. What's lost here is security in the show's setup, Frank's relationships and the viewer's assumptions. Whatever else can be said about Season 2, it is anything but predictable.