



Earth and Sky

by

Ursula

Summary: Alternative Universe Crossover Slash ([X-Files](#) & Starsky & Hutch: [Mulder/Krycek](#), Krycek/Starsky, Starsky/Hutch.

Karen-Leigh wanted Starsky and Alex Krycek to have a torrid encounter. A late birthday present to my first beta reader and friend.

Additional Notes: Why don't I own the X Files? I'm still faithful and loving to the characters... Pout! Aron Spelling, you doll, you own or owned Starsky and Hutch.

Categories: Slash

Genre: Action/Adventure, AU Alternate Universe, Episode Related, Me and Thee Archive

Warnings: No Warnings Needed

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He's sitting next to me on the plane. When I move, my leg presses against his and he tenses. He's still pissed, although he's trying not to show it.

The problem was that I'd thought he was a big boy. I should have known better. How was I to know that the green agent and all that juvenile adoration were for real?

After everything life had thrown at me, I decided that I didn't care if they were trying to blackmail me. If they wanted to throw another pretty partner at me, I'd take what they gave me and enjoy it.

I wasn't mean in bed. I made him come. I didn't even shove him out of my bed until morning.

All I did was laugh in his face when he was leaning into me in the shower, face dewy and fresh, eyes sparkling. I wanted to kiss him and did. Then he wrapped himself around me and said, "Oh, Mulder, I love you."

What was I supposed to do? It was a fuck. That was all. If some part of me said it could be more, I refused to hear it. Call me Spooky. I knew Alex's job was another attempt to control me and distract me from my X-Files.

I wanted to believe that Alex felt some genuine attraction to me, but declaring love was taking it way too far. So I laughed.

His face turned a comical number of colors before he stumbled out of the bathroom and grabbed his clothing to leave.

All that drama and then, the same day, Skinner called us in and told us that we were to fly out meet some California cops. There had been a series of child snatchings. Someone figured it was up my alley as the parents were reporting the trappings of abductions.

I pointed out to Skinner that I was the one with experience in this. I didn't need green Agent Krycek.

Skinner grunted and said, "You work with a partner and Scully's not available. I want someone to watch your ass for you when you get caught up in the case."

Very funny, Skinner, you have no idea how close Krycek watches my ass.

It's unfortunate that Alex blurted out the 'L' word. It would have been so hot to share a room on company time. He was beautiful and so sexy. I had been a little surprised to find out how experienced he was in bed. Although I suspected he was planted on me, just as Scully had been, he gave out these innocent vibrations that made me feel as if I had seduced a virgin. I bet he didn't sleep with too many guys a second time if he fell all over them and said he loved them. Or was I supposed to believe that he really felt that way about me?

I tried to ignore a yearning to accept that it was true. I didn't have time for a real relationship. I could have had Scully...I really think I could have had her at least, but the fear that it would not work kept me from taking the final risk of telling her.

It takes guts to tell someone you love them. What if they don't love you back? That thought had kept me silent with Scully, with everyone after a lady named Phoebe Green tore out my heart with an amused look and a small laugh.

Oh shit, if it was real for Alex, I had fucked up badly.

OooOooO

I was packing when my phone rang. The voice on the phone wasn't Spender's. I was given a location and a time. I didn't want to go, but if I defied him, I would be punished. As it was, the Cadillac with the blacked out windows picked me up before I even reached the street corner. I sat next to Spender, terrified that he could read my mind and know what I had nearly done.

"Well? Has he taken you to his bed? You spent the night last night," Spender said. "His little friends seemed to have disabled my security measures again."

As a matter a fact, it wasn't the trio of computer hackers at all. I had taken the chance of thwarting Spender's eyes and ears while Mulder was in the bathroom. I suppose he thought it was passion when I was sweating and panting when he returned. Actually, I barely made it back to the couch after having to stand on a chair to pull out the spying eye in the ceiling after blocking it temporarily with a sweet little machine I had borrowed from Spender.

"We were working," I lied. "He wanted to go over the Duane Barry case."

"I'm disappointing in you, Alex. Perhaps I was mistaken about my son's interests. There's that sweet blonde number I have at the UN. She might suit him," Spender said.

"Give me more time," I said, "He likes me. He's getting more comfortable with me."

"You had better not fail, Alex," Spender said silkily. His voice always sounds amused when he's threatening your life.

"I won't fail," I said. "Perhaps on this trip, away from home, Mulder will relax. Don't worry."

"I never worry," Spender said. "I leave that to my subordinates. You, on the other hand, you have reason for concern."

I knew I did.

I had always had premonitions of a sort. Not the good kind that gave you a clear vision of which way to turn. It was more like the hair at the back of my neck stood up when I was in danger. It was prickling like a porcupine as Spender spoke to me.

Which way to go? Obey Spender? Hope to make myself a player in the Project?

Run? Running sounded good. Run and keep running, stealing as much of a life as I was able before the Project caught me to make an example.

Or the third way. Stay and fight.

I couldn't do it on my own. It was up to Mulder. He had to show me that he could accept the real truth, not some old movie version with all the characters wearing black and white hats. I was shades of gray, but I loved him.

Oh, Mulder, show me what to do...

Meanwhile, I'm going to give you a taste of your own medicine. I'm not going to throw myself at you. Prove to me that it's worth my life to stand with you. I'm a man with a price, but it's never been money. Never will be.

That extra sense told me that I was at a crossroad.

As Spender let me go, I saw the look in his eyes. He would enjoy having me dangle on his hook. He thought I was his bait in this game with Mulder, juicy helpless bait. He thought he knew me inside and out, but I wasn't one of his goons. Inside of me was the same rebellious spirit that made my parents run with me, that guided my grandparents out of Russia.

Someday, I would make Spender pay for my parents' death and for what he has done to me. Someday.

I didn't look forward to facing Mulder. His laughter still burned in my ears. I thought that I meant more to him than he admitted. Was I wrong?

OooOooO

Thankfully, we were too busy the rest of that day to talk about anything personal. When we took our early morning flight the next day, I would have chosen seats far apart, but Kim Cook booked us side by side and I couldn't think of a way to sit somewhere else.

I couldn't complain that Alex said or did anything inappropriate. Instead, he was the model young agent, nose buried in the neatly bound files.

As Alex leafed through the files, I glanced his way. He wasn't hard to look at, that was certain. He ignored me, although I thought I saw his eyes flicker in my direction.

"Look, Alex, we have to work together and..." I said.

"Yes, I am aware of that. I'm studying the case files," Alex replied. "You should be doing the same."

"I read them already," I said. As a matter of fact, I had read them twice. The details were stored in my head. I expected if I uncovered some new piece of information that I would make sense of the chaotic mass of facts in the files that Alex had spread across his briefcase.

A sneer crossed Alex's face. "Oh, I forgot about that much vaunted speed reading and eidetic memory of yours. It must be a burden to have to put up with mere mortals such as myself."

Under my breath, I whispered, "Don't be bitchy, Alex. We're professionals."

For which he gave me a wounded look from his beautiful green eyes.

Think I'll make my life complete when we land and go kick a puppy dog.

Life is fucking complicated.

OooOooO

Hutch doesn't know how beautiful he is to me. We had been playing our perpetual game of Monopoly. I cheated. He caught me and we ended up wrestling. I ended up on top, looking down at him. He laughed at me. I threatened to shut his mouth for him. He kept chuckling and asked how I was going to do that.

So I kissed his mouth shut.

I guess Hutch thought it was a joke. I could feel his laughter vibrate against my lips. Then he stopped laughing.

There was a moment when I was sure Hutch was kissing me back. Then he suddenly shoved at me. I tried to hold him for a moment. I wanted. Oh, how I wanted!

Then we were sitting up and Hutch was giving me that serious look he always uses when I'm out of line. I keep telling him that it makes him look as if he's constipated.

Hutch said, "We don't want to go there."

I did. I wanted to go there and stay there. I'd always loved Hutch. Now I wanted to make love to him.

There was a time I could have loved someone else, body and soul. I know I loved Terry and she loved Hutch almost as much as she loved me. We would have worked together, but I haven't met anyone since who really understood about Hutch and me. And lately, I've been thinking, why look further than someone whom I already loved?

Hutch grinned and said, "Well, you got me good, Starsk. I didn't expect that. Guess the game is finished."

My partner started picking up the pieces and I could tell he wasn't going to talk about what happened. I suppose it could have been worse, but that didn't make me any happier.

"You told me you were with a guy once or twice," I said, pushing the point.

"Yes, but you haven't been," Hutch said.

"Would you if I want to?" I asked.

"Ah, Starsk, messing up our friendship would be one hell of a way to go," Hutch said, as he carefully put the pieces back in the little slots.

"Hutch, maybe it would work," I said. "Cause I can't love anyone else, bud. I don't want to try anymore."

So Hutch gave me a hug and said, "Don't worry. You'll meet another Terry. Give it time."

You know for a smart guy, Hutch can be awfully dense.

Damn.

OooOooO

I could tell Starsky was still thinking about what had happened. He kept looking at me with those big violet-blue eyes and sighing.

I know I'm right. It's not that I'm not interested. If I let myself think about it, making love to Starsky sounds wonderful. No more trying to find a female soul mate. No more shallow souls in lovely shells.

I knew I could fully commit to my partner because I loved him that much. I knew it would be good physically because, after all, we already read each other's minds.

However, just when I worked out a good scenario in my own mind, I would imagine Starsky's face afterwards. That hurt and dazed look as he realized we had made a mistake and was wondering how to tell me. I don't think I could stand that.

Of course, a part of my mind kept yelling that if Starsky did like it that we would be so happy. He wouldn't be like the women I'd thought I loved. He wouldn't betray me, not my Starsk. I could imagine us like Simon and Garfunkel said, old friends, sitting on a park bench like bookends.

Perhaps I was underestimating him. I know he's a loyal friend yet, at the same time, I know that just a year or two ago he wasn't comfortable with the idea of a man loving another man. I also know Starsky is prone to infatuations. When it comes right down to it, I'm a coward. I can't risk losing him.

OooOooO

Hutch didn't want to talk about last night. His mouth was drawn into a firm line. He was the picture of reticence.

Gathering my wits, I said, "Well, just to make our day, we have to meet those FBI agents at the office. Betcha they're a couple of stuffed shirts."

"Probably," Hutch said. "As long as they aren't crooked."

"Probably are," I replied. "Crooked, dense, by the book."

When Dobey brought us into the briefing room, I stopped and stared. "Oh, look, Hutch, the Fibbie brought his baby. Isn't that cute?"

I was rewarded with a Hutch smile, well worth the chewing out that I knew the captain would give me.

Dobey glared at me and said, "Agent Mulder, Agent Krycek, meet Starsky and Hutch. Starsky is the one with the big open mouth."

Mulder had spiky brown hair and was the older FBI agent. He looked me up and down in a way that reminded me of how Hutch's parents looked at me the one time we met. By the time he was done, I was wondering if I had a big old booger hanging off my nose or something like that.

The younger one, clad in a suit that somehow seemed too big for him, offered his hand. I took it and ended up staring into his eyes for a beat too long. Damn, I had never seen eyes like that on anyone, male or female. I had a gut instinct that the guy was interested in me and I couldn't help wondering what those lashes would feel like, fluttering against my face as I kissed him. I took a deep breath and said, "Hi, I'm David Starsky."

"Alex Krycek," the FBI agent answered, his eyelashes lowered as he gave me a sidelong gaze.

The one with the sulky mouth and spiky hair sat down to study the newest case. He apparently didn't intend to converse until he was done.

I found myself watching Agent Mulder as he read, doubting that he could be doing more than skimming.

Krycek read the file as the senior agent finished, almost reading over his shoulder.

"Each of these so called abductions seems to have little in common with the others except the UFO-like scenario," Mulder said.

"You think these are genuine abductions?" Hutch asked, sounding intrigued. Hutch likes to read weird stuff. He reads about things that just plain give me the creeps.

"I doubt it," Mulder said. "It's probably someone's idea to cover something up. Perhaps a child sex ring or a similar crime."

"You think so?" I asked, sick to my stomach.

"It's an explanation," Mulder said. "One of the families does have a number of Child Protective Service investigations for alleged sexual abuse."

"Not founded," Hutch said, "I looked at that angle. We have six missing kids and only one family that had ever been investigated by social services. The workers couldn't prove anything."

"The workers sometimes don't have much training and they have too many cases," Krycek said. His face was a shade paler than it had been. "Not founded doesn't mean the kid wasn't abused."

Mulder took a long look at his partner and looked as if he wanted to ask him about his statement.

"The families don't have much in common. One family is rich, two are upper middle class, one is middle class, and this last one is poor," Krycek noted. "A scattering of races too and the parents don't work in defense, scientific research, military, or government occupations."

"You were thinking that it might have been blackmail?" Hutch asked.

"Something like that," Krycek said.

"A university professor and a hairdresser, a blue collar factory worker and a homemaker, a businessman and a newspaper editor, a widowed teacher, a welfare family, and the last family was unemployed," Mulder said, proving that he had read and absorbed everything in the files. "Alex, I don't think that your theory holds up."

A toss of the head and a tilt of the chin showed that junior agent wasn't as cowed by Agent Mulder as he seemed.

Dobey wore his perpetual look of resignation. He said, "Hutch, you're teamed with Mulder. Starsky, you take Krycek. They want to interview the families of the missing children again."

"What?" I said.

"Captain, you know we don't work that way. We're partners," Hutch said.

Oh man, I loved how Hutch said that word, partners. It had a world of meaning and if he would only believe me when I said I wanted to add one more level to its meaning then we would truly be one.

"I'm not reassigning you," Dobey said. "But I have the press down my neck to solve the case. I'm not going to waste a full day so you and Hutchinson can hold hands."

Oh shit, did Captain Dobey read minds or something?

Krycek sighed, looked at me, and said, "I'm all yours."

His voice rich with sarcasm, Mulder said, "I'm crushed, Alex, I thought I was the only one."

Ah, red flush of heat across Krycek's face. Was that remark more than a casual jab?

My old Starsky brain came up with a plan. If Hutch thought I would have second thoughts and resent him if he said yes, I could show him that I was more than ready.

It wasn't as if I would be cruising for any old guy to prove to Hutch that I was as open to possibilities as I said I was. Alex Krycek was almost girl pretty and he was giving out signals that I couldn't miss.

I didn't want to use Alex Krycek or hurt him, but if he swung that way, I was going to seduce him. I knew I could make it good for him, just good dirty fun, right?

OooOooO

It wasn't that I was jealous, but Starsky gave in to Dobey's instructions too easily and he was looking at that Krycek kid.

I just couldn't buy that Starsky was serious about moving our friendship, our love, to a physical level.

Don't get me wrong. I love Starsky. I love him clay feet and all, the way he loves me.

My Starsky lives right in today. Everything he feels is so intense. If he sees something he wants, he reaches for it.

I love him for it. From the first day I met him, I was fascinated with how much he enjoyed life. I've never seen anyone more alive than my Starsky.

Starsky, however, can be passionate over something or someone one moment, but over it in the next. He was always falling in love with some girl, but Terry was the only one he ever really was serious about.

I don't want to be the newest Starsky fad. I don't think I could take it to have him and lose him.

Maybe I should take the risk, but my love life always seems to go sour. Vanessa, Gillian, even Abigail. Starsky was the only love of my life that hadn't hurt me. He makes me feel like a coward, but sometimes I wonder if there isn't something fundamentally unlovable about me?

When I was a kid, I wondered why my parents didn't do things like other parents did? They never hurt me. They always wanted the best for me. I just never felt that I was all that important in their lives.

My father never wrestled with me. I never had my Mom's lipstick on my forehead to be dabbed off with spit.

If I was scared and tried to crawl into bed with them, they gave me a talk about how there weren't any monsters and sent me back to my room.

I told myself it was them. That they didn't really expect to have a kid and didn't know what to do with one when they had him. I told myself that they were emotionally distant with everyone.

The trouble was I couldn't persuade myself that it was the truth. I wondered if I let Starsky into my bed, opened up the last hidden part of my life to him, would he still care about me? Would he discover what was lacking in me that destroyed my other relationships?

I had plenty of time to think about these questions. Mulder was off in his own world when we were in the car. During the three interviews we conducted, he took the lead and kept it.

We were on our way to interview the last family to lose a child.

The picture in my head of the couple as deadbeats faded when I met them in person.

The apartment was very neat. My first glance at the couple dissolved the mental images I had painted of them. Firstly, the couple consisted of two guys, one black and one white, both very handsome and very worried.

"Our best friend in the world, Georgette, had the baby for us," Eli Cooke explained. He was tall, elegant and looked as if he stepped from an Egyptian wall carving. His black hair was a thin layer covering his long skull. His eyes were hypnotic, enormous, fringed by long lashes. They were nearly gold, black circles lining the pupils like those of a hawk. His mouth was like Mulder's, pendulant lip drooping in natural and unconscious sensuality.

His lover, John Cooke, sat bolt upright on the couch next to him. He was a bit older, blond as I was, and fair. His eyes were a soft blue, and looked bewildered. His features were so even that he looked almost doll like.

"We mixed our sperm and she was fertilized with it. She's biracial like I am," Eli said, "So we wouldn't know without having a DNA test which one of us was the biological father."

"Jason is the most beautiful kid in the world," John Cooke said. "He's bright, sweet, and he just gets a kick out of life."

The phone rang and John Cooke went to answer it. He talked for a few moments then scribbled something on a calendar.

"They're going to offer me that job," John said. "Great. It would have been happy news up to last week. Eli and I met working for Microsoft. I was a full timer and he was on one of those temporary contracts. You want to see prejudice? Permanent employees don't even look temps in the eye. I sometimes wondered if that was why I was one of the first perms to be downsized..."

Breaking off, John Cooke grimaced and said, "You must think I'm made of stone, talking about my job with Jason missing."

"I'm not judging you," Mulder said. "However, I think we need to talk about anyone who might have taken Jason. Was anyone threatening him? Perhaps upset by the two of you raising him together?"

The two men looked at each other and then said, "Our families."

"Oh," I said. "Both of them?"

"Yeah, because, as we said, we don't know which one of us is Jason's biological father. We have two equally pissed off sets of potential grandparents," Eli said.

"My father tried to have blood testing done without our consent," John added. "Since then, we don't let them see Jason."

"I can see how you would want to look at that as a possibility," Eli said.

"But you weren't there," John said. "We woke up because there was a strange noise, like a strong wind blowing. Our entire house was filled with light. There was a tall figure with a glowing head. It had Jason. We tried to get to them, but it was if we walking in slow motion. Afterwards, we realized that it must have been half an hour since he was taken. I have one of those clocks that shine the time on the ceiling. It was one thirty a.m. when we woke and when we came to our senses in the living room, it was nearly two thirty."

"Were you tested for drugs?" Mulder asked.

"Drugs?" John snapped. "We don't do that shit."

"I meant that the event you witnessed might have been enhanced by hallucinogenic drugs," Mulder pointed out.

Yeah, I had thought about that too. Unfortunately no one had bothered to test the bereaved parents before Starsky and I were assigned the case along with the FBI agents.

Eli asked, "Would anything show now?"

"No, not likely," I said. "Would your parents do something like this?"

Both men answered, "Yes."

"Only I can't imagine my parents having the imagination," remarked John.

"And my parents don't have the money to pull this off," Eli added.

"I'd like to question your parents," Mulder said.

"Yeah, we'll give you their information," Eli said, "And if they had anything to do with this, we'll press charges."

John winced, but nodded agreement.

We walked through the house, not gaining any new insight into the crime.

In the car, Mulder sat back and said, "It's not an abduction, not by aliens in any event."

"Yet all of these kids were taken in the same way?" I questioned.

"I'm not saying it's not a conspiracy." Mulder said. "But I'm sure that the alien abduction scenario is nothing more than a ruse. Each description is exactly alike. And there's nothing in the report that couldn't be created with a helicopter, some search lights, and a bit of cheap costuming, aided by drugged food or water."

OooOooO

Alex is definitely sending me signals. Or maybe he's just one of those people that walks through life reminding us all of sex on two legs.

Other than that, I get the impression that he is bright, a hard worker and that, junior agent or not, he knows his stuff.

I saw Alex change faces like a chameleon during our two interviews. We had the family that was accused of child abuse. They were the ones that seemed most likely to have harmed the baby themselves. They had been referred twice to CPS. Once the baby had bruises on her face and another time, the baby had been left unsupervised. Just before the police arrived, the mother had come home from the corner store. The manager who had reported her refused to testify. So the CPS case was closed.

Alex nudged me and jerked his chin at a new big screen TV and a pile of shopping bags on the table. "Looks as if you came into some money."

"Yeah, my Mom sent us some when she heard about the baby," Rick James said.

"She couldn't come in person?" I said.

"No, uh, it's hard for her to travel," Rick said. He glanced nervously at his girl friend.

"I see," Alex said. "Mind if I look around?"

Interesting...

I'd had the impression that Alex was somehow inexperienced, a little naïve. As he prowled the apartment, that wasn't what I saw at all. He was intense and his expression was set, his green eyes ruthless. The missing child's father tried to follow him around as he took inventory, but a quick stare left the man stumbling back and sitting down, too intimidated to protest.

I watched the parents as Alex pawed through a pile of library books. Walking over, I saw the titles, "Independent Adoption", "Black Market Adoptions", and "Baby Trafficking".

Alex held one of the books up and a clipped newspaper article fell out. I walked over to have a look. It was rows of ads placed by hopeful adoptive parents.

I met Alex's eyes and nodded. In a way, it was a relief. I had feared worse, a shallow grave and a baby girl whose life had ended at the hands of immature and emotionally unstable parents.

"A jury might feel sorry for parents who tried to get a good home for their baby. The parents might escape without a day in jail," Alex said.

"What are you saying?" Rickie-Lee James asked. She was a very thin, dishwater-blonde, who had chosen a black lace tee shirt and black jeans for the interview. Too much makeup and too little sleep had robbed her of any prettiness that she might have had. Tapping fake nails, one of them missing, on the counter, Rickie-Lee said, "You make a bunch of accusations and we are going to call a lawyer."

Alex stared into her eyes until the woman nervously looked away. He said, "I was just speculating. A lot of people might admire parents who tried to give their child a better life."

"Yeah, lots of people want babies and Donnie-Lee's a pretty baby. She cries a lot and doesn't sleep good, but she's smart as a whip. She even holds her own bottle already," the mother bragged.

"You know, Starsky's partner thinks you killed the baby and so does the prosecutor's office," Alex said. "I just knew from reading the file that you wouldn't do something like that."

"You're right," Rick James said, "Those cops are always riding me and Rickie-Lee's butts. CPS too. Man, I thought Donnie-Lee was going to be a good thing for us, but it isn't like they make it out to be."

"Yeah, babies are supposed to love you, but Donnie-Lee is always crying and fussing," Rickie-Lee said. "And she was smiling for that rich woman."

"The rich woman you allowed to adopt her?" Alex said.

"Yeah, rich bitch that thinks she can buy anything she wants," Rickie-Lee said despite a warning grunt from her boyfriend.

"You were very smart to arrange this on your own," Alex said.

"Yeah, well, there's this guy who will make arrangements, but why in hell would I give him money?" Ricky said. "He ain't the one giving up his beer money for diapers. He ain't the one the kid keeps up all night."

Both parents shut up suddenly. They realized that they had just confessed.

"You didn't read us our rights," Ricky said.

"No, I didn't. You haven't been charged with anything yet," Alex said, "But why don't you call an attorney and come down to meet with us? Child selling is illegal, but that's not half as bad as murder. That's what kind of charge they are considering."

"We didn't kill Donnie-Lee. Sure we aren't the best parents. We were just trying to do the right thing. An adoptive home is an adoptive home. It shouldn't matter that the parents paid us. I mean, they would have paid an adoptive agency that much money anyway," Ricky said.

Alex must have read me right. I was about to cut loose on these low life assholes. He gently put a hand on my arm and got me out of there before I could say what I was thinking.

"Despite the bad taste in my mouth," I said. "I'm hungry. Let's break for lunch."

"Hell, yes!" Alex said. "Mulder never wants to stop and eat when we are on a case. That sounds fine to me."

So I took him to Huggy Bear's. Hutch and Mulder were going to meet us there to compare notes. Alex and I still had another couple to interview, an Orthodox Jew and a Polish Catholic. Maybe they would turn out to be my relatives...

OooOooO

Starsky took me to some strange cross between a Mom and Pop restaurant and a nightclub. A black guy in a purple suit and a broad brimmed hat ran it. A pink feather floated above the hat. The guy had a strange face, huge eyes, and a tiny chin. I thought he looked like an oversized pixie, but his eyes were intelligent and kind.

Huggy served us two enormous cheeseburgers with homemade fries. I had no complaints. I was starved and the food looked great.

Starsky was sending out some kind of weird signals. I think he was coming on to me, but I wasn't sure. Anyway, I couldn't see why he wanted me. His partner, the blond knight, and he were so locked into each other that any man or woman who tried to love them was sure to be a third wheel.

I wondered if Starsky was looking for a commitment-free walk on the wild side? Maybe Blondie was straight and Starsky needed a good lay to continue a platonic relationship? I could do that. I needed someone to help me forget what an idiot I made myself over Mulder.

Mulder made me feel like a fool. Damn, I had never been that stupid before.

Well, maybe I had.

I can't believe Spender took me when I was fresh out of school and in college. He had a way about him when he wanted to seduce you.

No, I don't mean the way I seduced Mulder.

As far as I knew, Spender was straight. He had a thing for Mulder's mother. I knew that. He felt something for his ex-wife, Cassandra, although I hesitate to call it love with all he did to her.

No, Spender groomed me for my role. I believed that Mulder was self deluded, a rebel with barely a cause. I thought Spender was merely biding his time, waiting for the opportune moment to turn the Project against them.

It wasn't any one thing that persuaded me that Mulder was the truth. Hell, I suppose I fell in love with him and I had to believe he was on the right track.

And Spender confirmed my belief when he had me punished when I made my way to his office to question him.

I almost lost my nerve, but Mulder had touched me that day. He put his hand on my shoulder, complimented me, and told me that he respected my judgment. It was as if something inside of me that I thought dead came to life.

I thought my placement at Mulder's side protected me and I thought that Spender valued me too much to punish me for impudence.

God, I was wrong.

I was off in my own world for so long that Starsky leaned over and blew in my face.

"Earth to Alex," Starsky said. "You okay?"

"I was just thinking," I said.

"About the case? You can't let these things get to you," Starsky advised. "Here, eat up. You're too skinny."

Starsky was one hell of a nice guy. I don't think I was misreading his signals. Maybe I would. Just maybe.

I couldn't stop loving Mulder, but I could forget him for a night or two. I hoped I could.

Turning my gaze on Starsky, I smiled warmly, looking for the response I thought would be there.

Yes, I said with my eyes.

Starsky grinned at me, moving closer to me in pretext of reaching for the catsup.

That was when Mulder and Hutchinson walked in the door.

OooOooO

What the hell was Starsky up to? When I dragged Mulder into Huggy Bear's, protesting that he didn't want to waste time on lunch, Starsky was sitting so close to Alex Krycek that the man was almost in his lap.

As Mulder and I approached the table, I saw Krycek's eyes briefly meet his partner's, flutter and drop down before gazing through his lashes at MY partner.

I sure as hell did not like the way Starsky looked back at the man.

Oh, yeah, it wasn't the first time I had seen that look. Starsky could be a regular dog at times, sniffing the air when he had the scent of an available bitch. I've always wished that I could slap him into a kennel until the enticements were safely away from him. I don't want to take a deep, dark look into my motivations for feeling that way.

I glared at Krycek, trying to get the ice into my blue eyes. Now there was the male equivalent of a bitch in heat.

The asshole had the nerve to smile at me and say, "Just a second, I'll move over closer to Starsky."

Before I could object, Krycek was plastered right up against my partner. I felt tendons popping in my neck as I restrained myself from reaching out to jerk Krycek out of the booth and throw him on his round ass away from my Starsky.

"You look like you had a bad day," Starsky said.

Trying not to sound as pissed as I felt, I replied, "No, it wasn't too bad. I think we made progress."

"It's not abductions," Mulder said, sullenly.

"No kidding," Starsky remarked, garnering a really ticked off look from the senior FBI agent.

"I'm working on a theory," Mulder said, his fingers forming a steeple that I recognized from old Star Trek episodes with Mr. Spock.

"I'm sure you'll tell us at some point, Mulder," Krycek remarked, his tone bitter.

Mulder glanced at his partner and frowned. Krycek looked away.

Krycek said, "The family we saw most likely sold their baby as a black market adoption. I borrowed this."

Holding up a newspaper column, Krycek smirked as Mulder tried to snatch it. His hand moved so quickly that there was a sharp sound as air was displaced.

Giving up, Mulder asked, "What is it?"

"Personals," Alex said, "families advertising for birth mothers to place babies with them."

"You think you'll find the baby?" Mulder inquired.

"Want to bet on it?" Krycek asked.

Mulder glared at him and refused to comment on the jibe.

"So we're working on that angle," Starsky remarked. "Might as well continue the way we have it, working in our present teams."

"That's only part of the case," Mulder said, "Some of these children were older, not easily to place."

"Maybe they all have different explanations," Starsky said. "And the UFO shit is just hysteria. There have been lots of stories lately in National Enquirer."

"I don't think so," said Mulder, dropping his menu. He reached over and took a few fries from Krycek's plate. A few moments later, he grabbed a bite of Krycek's hamburger. It was the kind of thing I did to Starsky to tease him, but I was surprised to see Mulder do it.

"You know that piece of plastic-coated cardboard is called a menu. You use it to order your own plate of food," Krycek said.

"I'm not hungry," Mulder said, "I just wanted a taste."

"Yeah, you like tastes, don't you?" Krycek said. "Just as long as you don't have to commit to the menu."

I wondered if I could do some partner counseling with them? Get them hooked back together...

Get Krycek away from my partner.

OooOooO

I thought we would go out and interview some of the families in the paper; I was not looking forward to the task of trying to pry the addresses out of the newspaper, as most of the families used post office boxes as contact points or had lawyers to call.

Instead, Alex pulled out his laptop. The line between his eyes deepened as he concentrated on whatever he was doing. I was bored and wishing for some action, but none seemed on offer. Not from Alex either. He was all work.

All of a sudden, Alex was writing down names and addresses, handing them to me.

Shit, Captain Dobey would have had a fit, but it sure saved a lot of frustrating phone calls.

Alex and I drove to the first place in Hillsborough. We didn't go in right away, just observed people come and go. Finally, after we were relatively sure that baby Donnie-Lee was not there, we walked up to the door and asked to talk to Doug and Nancy Walker.

Packed boxes made me wonder if we had hit the target with the first shot.

However, Doug Walker slammed a box down and said, "We're canceling the ad. We're getting a divorce. I'm sick of this. Baby, baby, baby, that's all I've heard for five years. Yes, we got a call from those morons. I said no and told them I was going to call the cops. She wanted to deal with them. I'm a lawyer. I'd be disbarred if it was discovered that I participated in something like that."

So that was that. There would need to be a follow up interview with the family as it did sound as if Rick and Rickie-Lee had tried to sell their baby. The Walkers would be witnesses against them.

After that, we moved on to the next family. We did the same thing, observed first and then knocking on the door for an interview. Two other families had been contacted. Neither would admit that they considered the offer, although one family mentioned that it was too much money.

A social worker was leaving the next family when we went up to interview. The couple was crying for joy as they had just found out that a birth mother had chosen them for her little boy. We could rule them out.

It was getting close to dinner when we finally hit pay dirt. This family was packing as well. I watched a crib carefully placed in the moving van, followed by miscellaneous other baby equipment. Of course, it could have been stuff they bought to be ready, but...

Alex grunted and pointed at the door. I caught a brief glimpse of the lady. She was holding a baby girl.

As Alex and I flipped through the pictures of Donnie-Lee, I could feel we were both keyed up. We didn't have the answers to the entire situation, but I was pretty sure we had solved one of the cases.

I knocked on the front door. Alex went around to the rear. As I introduced myself, I heard a heart-rending scream.

Alex came around a few moments later, dragging a woman and carrying a baby. The woman sobbed, hair falling forward into her face. Makeup streaked from her copious tears and her chest heaved with her cries.

Steve Howard groaned and slumped. He said, "You don't understand how it is. We've been picked twice, both times the birth mother backed out. If we waited any longer, the birth mothers will think we're too old. It isn't fair. We would give Amanda a good home. There's nothing really wrong with what we did."

What could I say? I didn't really understand how they could have been willing to buy a baby, but then no one in my family had ever had a problem making them. My family reunions often looked like a maternity ward.

I called in, getting Child Welfare geared up and sending police officers out to arrest Ricky and Rickie-Lee James.

It was a damned shame that Donnie-Lee had to be born to those lowlife creeps.

Meanwhile, Alex held the baby as if he knew what he was doing. He made a pretty picture with the kid in his arms, his eyes drooping with exhaustion.

I wondered what Hutch was doing?

OooOooO

People ask me every once in a while whether I don't find working with Starsky exhausting. He is high energy, but it doesn't wear on me.

Mulder now. Mulder is exhausting.

I never met anyone as driven as this guy. I thought Starsky and I were bad when we were on a case. Not half as driven as Mulder.

People talk to him when he interviews, but it's not that he has a talent for charming or calming. I think they talk because, when he pins them with his eyes, they feel as if he can see right into them anyhow.

Today, I've seen people take a step back, intimidated not by his physical stature, but by the tsunami force of his personality. He asks insightful questions, his quick mind leaping from fact to fact so rapidly that I can barely follow.

Mulder has me confused. I don't know how I feel about him except that I respect him.

I don't know if he is a better cop than I am. People like to talk to me. I have the best informants anywhere. I know Dobey once said that I would have been a great psychiatrist. It surprised the hell out of me that Mulder was a psychologist, but I guess the human mind was still the ultimate frontier.

"How long have Alex and you been partners?" I asked, trying for the fiftieth time today to break the ice.

Mulder glared at me from the passenger seat. I don't care for his driving; after the one experience today, he wasn't driving my car. He said, "Alex is not my real partner."

"Oh," I said. Strange. They seemed to have so much energy between them that I thought they had been together for a while.

"They took Scully away," Mulder commented. "She's a pathologist."

"And they made her a field agent?" I asked.

"The X Files requires different fields of knowledge. I keep her busy," Mulder said.

I couldn't imagine what a woman pathologist would look like. I built two contrasting mental pictures. One was a hirsute looking Amazon and the other was a tall, blonde ice queen. "It sounds like interesting work."

"When they let me do it," Mulder said, his voice seething with resentment.

"I can identify with that, brother," I said. "Dobey is a good guy, but the Chief of Police is a politician not a cop."

"Yes, AD Skinner is a decent man at the core," Mulder agreed. "I wonder what Alex and your Starsky are doing?"

"Guess we'll find out in a couple hours," I replied. "Do you want to debrief at dinner?"

"No, I think I need to talk to Alex...about an old case," Mulder said.

"Okay, Starsky and I need to touch base too," I said. Yeah, if I had touched base for real with my partner, he wouldn't be making eyes at Mulder's.

I had that nagging feeling that I was dead wrong. I had underestimated Starsky. It wasn't that I didn't believe Starsky was incapable of loving a guy; but me? I had never been able to hold onto anyone I cared about. Every other time Starsky saved me from the fall; how could I bear it if he was the one shattering my heart?

"I want to go back and talk to Marie Gordon again," Mulder said.

"All right," I agreed. "Although I don't believe she had anything to do with her son disappearing."

As we arrived, a well-dressed woman was leaving Marie's apartment. She held her coat away from us as if afraid we would dirty it. An audible sniff delineated her attitude.

Mulder froze in his tracks and said, "Mrs. Gordon?"

"Yes?" the lady said.

"You're Marie Gordon's mother-in-law," Mulder said.

"I'm Ellen Gordon, her former mother-in-law," Mrs. Gordon said. "My son is dead and now that...that woman has lost my only grandson."

Mulder caught my eye. There was just something about the way she looked, triumphant, not grieving.

"Mrs. Gordon said you and she did not get along," Mulder said. "I was surprised to see you here."

"How did you know who I was?" the woman asked.

"Mrs. Gordon showed me a family album with pictures of her son. There were two pictures with you," Mulder said.

"Two pictures," the woman sniffed. "Taken before I was forbidden to see Joseph. I advised my son not to marry that woman, a cheap Catholic girl like that. I hardly wanted my grandson raised in some impossible Italian family."

"What were you doing here today?" Mulder probed.

"I wanted a teddy bear I gave my grandson," Mrs. Gordon, the elder, said. "Marie refused to give it to me. I wanted something to remind me of Joseph. A simple request..."

Pursing her lips, Mrs. Gordon made a show of checking her watch. She said, "I have an appointment to have my passport renewed. Excuse me."

After Mrs. Gordon left, Mulder and I went to talk with Marie Gordon. She was red eyed, sitting holding a blue furred teddy bear that wore a tiny sailor suit.

"We met your former mother-in-law in the hall," I said, sitting down next to the shattered mother.

"That bitch," Marie said. "Excuse me, but I hate her. She did everything she could to prevent my husband and I from marrying. When Joseph was born, I thought she would at least pretend to get along. Instead she did her best to have him removed from our custody. She even called child protective services but they refused to take her seriously. She's so far from real life that she couldn't come up with a feasible neglect case."

"But she gave your son that teddy bear?" Mulder asked.

"Yes, it was his favorite," Marie said.

Mulder said, "Mrs. Gordon, where do you keep your son's birth certificate?"

"In the small file cabinet over there," Marie said.

"The drawer is ajar," Mulder said, "It was closed tightly earlier. Did you open it since?"

"No, I..." Marie said, "That's strange. I don't remember opening it."

"Did you leave the room when your mother-in-law was here?" Mulder asked.

"Yes, she wanted the teddy bear," Marie said. "but she was gone when I brought it out to her. It was strange, but she's an odd woman."

"See if there's anything missing," Mulder said.

"There's nothing valuable in there," Marie replied, but she was already walking toward the cabinet. When she checked, she uttered a small sound and said, "Joseph's file is gone, shot records, birth certificate, everything."

"Are you sure? When was the last time you saw them?" Mulder asked.

"Last week when I gave copies of everything to the policeman who came," Marie said.

"Did your mother-in-law know that's where you kept them?" Mulder asked.

"Yes, we kept everything there," Marie said, "All our important documents. It's fire proof. Why would she take them?"

"There are courts that would give a grandmother custody without too many questions," Mulder said. "A faked relinquishment and grandmother can start a new life with her grandson."

Marie's eyes filled with tears. "Even if I never get to see him again, I hope that's true. I was afraid those things had killed him. Can you find my son?"

"If your mother-in-law has him, we'll get him back," I promised.

It made me glad that I didn't have kids. Ellen Gordon's perfect hair, perfect skin, and perfect cold blooded certainty that she was right reminded me all too much of my mother.

I called Captain Dobey as soon as we left Marie Gordon's apartment to arrange surveillance. Meanwhile, Mulder made some calls to check on the other grandparents. He wanted to join the surveillance, but I had a partner I needed to see.

We met at Huggy's and Mulder collected Krycek promptly. It was the first nice thing he had done all day.

Starsky was bouncing, pleased that he and Krycek had broken part of the case already. He ordered a chilidog but for once didn't shove half the violently colored concoction into his generous-sized mouth.

"Damn, that Alex is a good cop," Starsk said. "I really enjoyed working with him today."

I bet. I bet he really enjoyed walking behind him too. I saw the way he had turned as Krycek left, watching that ass twitch as if he was bouncing signals off a satellite. And I knew who the signals were for too.

As we climbed into the Torino, Starsky said, "Hutch, why don't we go out dancing to celebrate?"

"I suppose we could," I said, "Perdita's sister is in town so we could hit a club with them."

"I was thinking about the Pussycat Club," Starsky said.

Oh shit.

There was no way he could do that. There was no way we could do that.

"Starsk," I said.

He was turning his violet-blue eyes on me. He knew that killed me.

"Hutch, there's no reason to be afraid," Starsky said.

"There's every reason," I replied. "Starsky, we're under the line of fire. We can't be seen in a place like that."

Smirking, Starsky said, "All right, then take me home for the night and we don't have to go."

So that was it...he was setting me up.

"No way," I said. "Starsky, give me some time."

"Yeah, like how much time?" Starsky said. "I know you, Hutch. You're going keep thinking and thinking. The more you think the more you'll persuade yourself it won't work. Hutch, look at me! It's Starsky. You know I love you."

I did. I knew it in my heart, but my brain wouldn't listen.

I was silent too long.

Starsky said, "I'll drop you off at headquarters. I'm going to the Pussycat Club by myself."

"Starsky," I said.

"No, Hutch, you can't have it both ways," Starsky said. "I'm going to show you that I am ready for this."

OooOooO

After I dragged Alex away from Starsky, I wanted to say something, do something.

Scully never made me feel like this.

Maybe I could come on as the big brother type, although that sent a strain of Rocky Horror Picture show into my head. You know that scene where Riff Raff says, 'my beloved sister' and the audience yells, 'Incest is best'. Don't blame me. Blame Phoebe. She made me go ten times, once dressed as Riff Raff. Trying to imagine Alex was Samantha all grown up, I gave him a stern but sympathetic look.

"I'm sure Starsky is straight. According to his partner, Starsky is simply exuberant," I said.

Alex stared at me, a smirk half formed on his pretty mouth.

Right. Well that showed my typical astute psychological insight. Why can I get into the head of a serial murderer, but not someone that I really care about?

And that thought scared me. Did I just admit to myself that I did care about Alex?

Scrambling away from my thoughts, I tried to think of a way to talk to Alex about why I had reacted the way I did.

Oh, shit, I was fairly sure that there was no way to keep calm and discuss this.

Small talk. Scully tells me I don't make enough small talk. Pasting a smile on my face, I asked, "How did your day go?"

There was silence long enough to make me uneasy. Alex seemed to be trying to decide what I meant. Maybe Scully was right. I didn't have the knack of everyday conversation.

"Hutchinson wasn't as big an asshole as I expected," I offered.

"Starsky is a great cop," Alex ventured. He had finally unpacked and was in the process of struggling with his tie. I noticed he often knotted it incorrectly and tugged on it during the day, tightening the thing into a noose.

"Here let me help," I said. His face was tempting as it turned toward me when I stepped close.

Tie free, Alex took off his shirt and stood there, his tightly peaked little nipples slightly erect in the chill of the air conditioner. I shouldn't be looking. I couldn't help taking him in; he was beautiful.

Picking up a black shirt that I had never seen before and a pair of black denim jeans, Alex sat down on the bed after slipping off his trousers. He stripped off his socks and put one inside the other neatly.

"I'm going to take a shower," Alex said.

"Oh, well, I was thinking we should go out to dinner," I said. "We need to talk."

His green eyes gave me a sharp look. "About the case," I hastened.

"Can't that wait? We'll be meeting with the guys tomorrow," Alex said.

"Yes, but..." I said. Might as well take the wolf by the ears. "Look, Alex, about the other night. I was an asshole. I didn't mean it to come out the way it did. I just assumed that, well, it was part of your job."

Totally naked, Alex stood up and snarled, "Well, fuck you. Gee, I didn't see the money you left on my pillow."

"I just meant that I know they sent Scully to rein me in," I said. Oh, shit, this was SO not going well. "I thought maybe they talked to you about it too."

"Yeah, they said, let Mulder fuck you and see if it makes him act a little more human. Oh, whoops, it didn't work," Alex said. He grabbed his clothing and stalked into the shower.

I sat down on the bed and wished I were anywhere but here. I resisted the impulse to run out the door.

When Alex came out, he was even more fucking gorgeous than before. In his tight jeans and black silky tee shirt, he didn't look like any kind of FBI agent. He looked like a man on the prowl. Half boots came out of nowhere. They were designer-styled, not the kind of thing that a junior agent could normally afford.

"Where are you going like THAT," I said, sounding like a jealous lover.

"Out," Alex said, "I'm off duty. I'm going to go get laid by someone who doesn't see me as a whore. Why don't you see if they have porn on the hotel cable and jerk off? That is, if your hand wants anything to do with a creep like you."

"Alex, I'm in charge of this operation," I tried. "I'm not going to have you jeopardize it by shaking your wares at some gay bar."

"Fuck you again," Alex said. "I'm going. Report me to Skinner. I don't give a damn."

Pissed off as he was, Alex still walked out with his ass telegraphing how hot he was.

I was left alone, feeling like the jerk I was.

OooOooO

It wouldn't have hurt so much if Mulder had been less right. And yet, he also couldn't have been more wrong.

When Spender had tortured me, I screamed and pleaded as he expected, but inside of myself, I found a strength I didn't expect. I didn't want to admit that I had fallen in love with my target. I didn't want to admit that Scully wasn't the only spy that Mulder subverted to his cause.

I let them think they had broken me, but I was looking for a way out, something I could bring to Mulder that would prove I was on his side. I needed information that I could use against Spender. Once I had that information, I knew I would have him. I knew he would care about me as he cared about Scully.

I was a fool.

It took only a few questions to the right people to find a place to go. I knew there would be someone to make me forget Mulder for a few hours. That would make returning to that hotel bearable.

Walking into The Pussy Cat Club, I was amused. The place was decorated like an old time Playboy style club, but instead of scantily clad females serving drinks, the wait staff was male,

some built and looking like they were ready to go out to stud and some waif like and pretty as girls.

The clientele was prime. This was one of the hotter spots in town. My eyes raked the room, looking for the one who could lift me out of my dark mood.

Everyone looked the same. I saw no one that could distract me from Mulder.

Until...

Starsky had hooked a papa bear. The guy was a good-looking man, but Starsky didn't look comfortable trying to dance with him.

I needed to be chased a little and I wanted to give Starsky a way out if he preferred not to take a chance with someone who knew him.

As two reasonably attractive guys zeroed in on me, obviously thinking about making me the filling in their sandwich, Starsky spotted me.

The man eyed me like a drowning man would eye a life jacket. Okay, then that was it. I had to save him.

I had a gut feeling he was a virgin. Now that was a distraction.

Fuck you, Mulder.

OooOooO

Since Alex hadn't fallen for any of my inept flirting, I decided to bite the bullet by going to the Pussycat Club. Despite its name, the club was not known for pussy, but for ass. It was a meat market, a classy one, but well known as the place to find a casual lay.

I dressed as if I was going to pick up a babe at any other bar. It couldn't be too different, right?

Standing at the bar, I leaned backwards, showing off what I had. I guess that was right because a twenty something blond came over to me and asked to buy me a drink. I held up the one I had and tried to decide if this was the one.

The blond hair and blue eyes put me off. I didn't want to have any part of my casual lover remind me of Hutch. This was for me. I was going to lose my cherry so Hutch would believe that I wasn't going to freak if we made love.

The next guy who came over wouldn't remind me of the blond blintz. He had hair as dark and curly as mine. In fact, he looked a lot like me, just darker and a little taller.

Shit, he was good looking. Maybe I could do it. I let him take me out on the dance floor.

I was all left feet. I wasn't used to being led and when he put his hands on my ass, I jumped like a spinster accosted on the subway.

"Sorry," I said, "I'm kinda of new to this."

"How new?" Tom asked. He said his name was Tom Clark. Sounded like an alias, but who knew...

"Um, first time?" I admitted.

"You just let Tom take care of you," the guy said.

I really didn't think I could do it. He was so damn hairy! I wasn't sure if I would like that. Shit, Alex had been perfect. He was a guy, but, man, he was pretty.

Dancing with someone else a bit later, I winced as Tom tried to take over. The man was clueless. He said, "Come on, baby, for your first time, you want someone who can make it good for you."

At that moment, I spotted Alex Krycek. He was fending off two guys with an amused expression. Well, no more guessing. Now to see if he just didn't get my flirting or if I wasn't his type.

"Scuse me," I said to Tom. "My date is here."

Walking over to Alex, I said, "Hey, Alex. Want to dance?"

I saw Alex hesitate then he shrugged and took my hand.

Oh, bless the person who put on some slow music. Alex let me lead. He smelled good. He felt good. I rubbed his ass, liking the way it felt. His groin brushed against me and he was hard.

Leaning close as we swayed, I kissed his cheek, snuggled into his neck. He let out a puppy dog sigh and said, "You might aim higher."

Ok, I guess that was an invitation. I claimed his lips and they were soft, trembling against mine. We were barely moving, our cocks dueling in the tight clinch that passed for our dance.

Oh, yes, this was good. I could do this. Could do Alex if he would let me.

"Why don't we take this to my place?" I asked.

"You sure?" Alex asked.

"Oh, damn, I am more than sure," I said.

Alex had taken a taxi so we ended up in my classic Torino. I kept one hand on the wheel and the other on his leg, fingers just touching the hard length beneath the denim.

I wondered if I should admit I hadn't done this? Maybe I should. What if he wanted to fuck me? Was I good for that? In a way, I wanted him to try, but part of me freaked too. Fuck, I hadn't felt like this since I was fourteen putting the moves on Marie-Isabel in the local movie house.

"I'm kinda inexperienced at this," I finally admitted.

"Yeah? As in?" Alex asked.

"As in, I haven't been with a guy. Just thinking about doing it with someone," I said.

"Your Hutch," Alex stated, not giving me room to deny. "Well, he and you have something special. I can see you care about each other."

"I love him," I said. "But tonight, this is really about you. I never saw anyone except Hutch that I wanted more. I really want to make love to you."

"You want to fuck me," Alex said.

"No, make love," I said. "It won't be Hutch I'm holding in my arms tonight. It will be you, Alex."

The way he smiled, I knew that someone had hurt Alex badly. I could have punched whoever it was.

It wasn't too much different than dating a woman except that a lot of women still played games. We were both guys and we knew we were going to have sex.

We had a couple of drinks, put on some music, and ended up necking on the couch. It was strange, but good, really good, to feel someone as strong as me beneath my hands. I tugged his flimsy shirt up to nuzzle his belly. Not satisfied, I pulled the garment over his head.

His chest was beautiful. His nipples were hard and so round they didn't seem real. I wanted to suck them and it must have been right because he flung his head back and made panting sounds.

I had been so worried that something would turn me off; how wrong could I have been?

Wanting his jeans off, I was a little rough, but he smiled at me, lifting up to help me. He was naked and I was still dressed. It didn't seem right. I stood up to take my clothes off. He didn't help. He just watched with an approving expression.

When I was nude, I just about climbed on him, our bodies very similar in size. He was taller than me and well muscled. His skin was smooth. I was delighted with him. I took a deep breath and touched his cock. It jumped in my hand as if eager to come to me. I don't know what I expected. It was the first time I touched a guy like that.

All the unspoken don'ts crowded into my head, but my surge of excitement was stronger. I ended up kneeling on the floor between his sprawled legs. I touched my lips to his hot, hard flesh.

A groan of pleasure sounded so I guess I wasn't as clumsy as I felt.

There were a lot of voices in my head that screamed 'cocksucker'.

Shit, don't tell me that Hutch was right...

Nah, it was okay. I felt a thrill at Alex's encouraging moans as I fumbled around. My tongue traced the head. I winced a little at the bitter fluid at his slit, but it wasn't too bad. The big vein in his cock throbbed and I laughed at his reaction when I traced it. He liked me laughing with his cock in my mouth. I could tell by the way that he thrust, trying to get deeper.

A disappointed cry sounded when I released him, but I wanted to go to my bed with him. Pulling him to his feet, I kissed Alex again, hushing his whimper of frustration. It crossed my mind that part of this was acting, making me feel like I was better at this than I probably was. Well, maybe, but I knew I could make it good for him.

I opened my drawer and took out the lube and condoms I had bought, holding them up for his approval. He took them and started to get himself ready. I damn near came just from watching that. I knelt on the bed, hypnotized by the fingers going in and out of that little pucker. It wasn't the first time I had done this act at least.

Taking over, I moved my fingers in and out of him, hoping that he liked what I was doing. My other hand worked his cock.

I was shocked when he pushed me over, uttering a feeble, 'hey'.

However, we weren't switching plans. He quickly rolled the condom on my erection and bestrode me, lowering himself onto my hard cock until I fit in him like a hand in a glove.

It was a good move. I might have worried too much and lost my nerve. This way little Starsky just about whooped for joy.

Alex rode me, lost in his own pleasure. I kept my eyes on him, eating up his expression as he fucked himself on me. Before I finished, we switched again. I had him on his back, his legs over my shoulders. I could feel everything from the hot constraint of his hole around my cock to the smooth, soft skinned flesh of his ass against my pelvis. Both of us had lost our language. There was nothing but the connection we had made. Nothing but the pleasure we felt.

I'll tell you something about Alex... He made me think I would like being fucked.

When I finally peaked and went over the edge, I wished it didn't have to be over.

We fell away, but I kept my hand on him and when I caught my breath, I pulled him close to kiss him again. "Thank you, Alex," I said.

"Any time, David," Alex said.

Somehow it seemed right that he didn't call me Starsk like this. The way he said my name made me like it a lot and it kept that part of me that was always Hutch's separate.

Alex moved and I said, "Please don't get up and go."

"I wasn't," Alex said. "I just need to clean up. It's a bit messy."

That was right. I should go too, but I just lay there, my cock in my hand after throwing away the condom. I was grinning up at the ceiling. If Hutch thought doing what I just did with Alex would turn me off, he was wrong.

OooOooO

I woke up with David's arm thrown over me. Ah, shit, I wanted to cry like a girl. Last night, he had treated me like I wanted Mulder to treat me. He felt good and safe. My problem was that I never liked safe. When I was a little guy, before my grandmother died, I was always the one who climbed the highest, who had to eat the apples from the tree in the yard with the meanest dog, who was the first to swing out on a rope and dive into the river. The view had always seemed more beautiful, the apples had tasted sweeter, and the water felt cooler. Ah, Mulder, I already know how sweet you taste.

When I moved away, David followed me. Waking he went up on one elbow, smiling broadly, his sleepy face sexy despite, or because of, the morning beard and the bed-tousled hair. I had pulled hard on those curls last night when he brought me off the second time.

"You are so beautiful," David said, tracing my lips, stroking my eyelashes as if they were delicate flowers when I closed my eyes.

"And I couldn't have picked anyone better," David added. He nuzzled down my neck and traveled until he found my nipples again, suckling on one as he played with the other.

My fingers stroked his back. His furry body was hard upon me. The best part was that he was so different from Mulder. I knew he wasn't in love with me, but that didn't hurt. He was sweet as hell, but I knew he was in love with his blond partner. We had given each other relief, pleasure, respite from the unrequited passions we felt, each for his partner.

I wish my problems were as simple as his. He had told me about his Hutch. For a bright guy, Blondie was pretty stupid. A man like David knows his heart. The love he felt for Hutch was evident even in the way he said his partner's name. All that the blond cop had to do was reach out and take what had always been his.

If my problems were only so simple...

Ah, but right now as David sucked me and his fingers teased me open, I didn't care. Hutch had David's heart, but there was a little room for me too.

I didn't usually do all the bottoming, but I didn't think David was ready. Getting riper for it though. When I put a finger inside of him, he had been pretty enthused. If there were time, I'd rim him. I bet he would be begging me for more in no time.

Right now, what we were doing was good. I let him do all the work this time. We rocked together, his cock in me doing most of what I needed, his coaxing hand supplying the rest. His violet-blue eyes devoured me. I wouldn't have liked it if he closed them. I would have been afraid he was seeing Hutch, not me. David had too much class for that. His eyes were tender, appreciative. He made me feel beautiful with his gaze.

Oh, this was going to be long. Sweat slicked us as our nearly satiated bodies sparred with each other. "Harder," I whispered, "Harder, faster."

Smiling, David obeyed. I could see after a while he was fighting to make me come first. His hand coaxed me and I let it all go, a sunburst of an orgasm lifting me right off of earth for a splendid moment.

Afterwards, David washed me clean...interesting phrase. As if anyone could do that.

Damn, I wished it could be so simple. I might have even been content to be Mulder's Starsky if Spender didn't have his nasty hands dug deep into my soul.

When I was with Mulder that night, I had been ready. I had wanted to tell him that I loved him. I wanted to throw myself on his mercy and have him help me save myself. I believed he cared. The way he had touched me. The way he said my name when he came. I believed in him as I had not believed in anything since my grandmother's funeral and the day my uncle had brought me to the strange school, taking a wad of bills from the smirking old man, and leaving without meeting my eyes or saying goodbye.

Surely Mulder could understand that I didn't have much of a choice? I was a kid. They filled our heads with such shit that I was Spender's patsy as well as his slave. I even believed he cared about me until the first time I questioned him. It had been right after that first case with Mulder. I thought the instructors at the academy, not the FBI one, the one the Project used to rear assorted self-made orphans, had been rough. I found out that they had been amateurs at pain. By the time Spender's goons were done with me, I had pissed myself and I would have shot my grandmother to stop them.

Yet, I had been willing to risk all. I was willing to risk all if Mulder loved me.

When Spender finished punishing me, he had me chained to his bed like a bad puppy. He must have thought that I was too broken to show a spark of defiance. That's a funny thing about me. I can look broken, but there's something in me that won't lie down and die. As soon as I was alone, I started looking for the pick I kept in my thick hair. I guess he forgot that I had been trained to pick locks. I set myself loose and decided to have a look in his study when he was downstairs meeting with other members of the project. I found some shit that could lock him up and, better yet, I found the names of people he hadn't corrupted. Instead of running, I refastened the handcuffs and curled up in a pitiful appearing heap. Spender bought it, looking at me with a smirk as he set me free and told me to mind my manners.

That was what I was going to offer to Mulder, the means to bring the Project down, the evidence he needed to prove he was right. And then I found out that he didn't care. I couldn't take the risk. I wouldn't.

David didn't know what was really wrong, but he held me and kissed me, telling me that it was going to be okay. "They're going to come around to us," David promised, "Just you see."

David wasn't whom I wanted, but he was a harbor in a storm. I fell asleep in his arms, my hand clutching a handful of his chest hair, my face in his neck.

OooOooO

Hutchinson had picked me up from the hotel bright and early. "We have to swing around and get Starsky. Where's Krycek?"

"I don't know," I said. "I think he got lucky last night. You know the young ones. Got to prowl."

Of course, I didn't say that Alex had gone hunting cock instead of pussy. I wouldn't do that to my partner. I had already managed to hurt him enough. I grabbed fresh clothing for Alex and his shaving kit.

"He'll meet us at your headquarters," I said. I think I knew Alex well enough to be sure of that. He didn't shirk work. In fact, he was as good a partner as Scully and didn't argue with me quite as much.

We drove in silence. I guess we both had problems.

I was a little surprised that Hutchinson had a key to Starsky's place. After a tap at the door, he said, "He must have slept in."

The bedroom door was open. I would say he had slept in. At first, I was embarrassed and would have gone outside to wait for him to realize his partner was there. Then I heard the other voice, which belonged to the long straight back and round ass that I had glimpsed.

"Ah, shit, David, we overslept!" an unmistakably male voice remarked. The male voice of MY partner.

I barged in, not believing my ears or my eyes.

It sure in hell was Alex. The asshole had lied to me. He wasn't going cruising. He had already picked someone up. That bastard Starsky was trespassing.

"Agent Krycek," I snapped. "What the fuck did you think you were doing? I thought you were smarter than this."

Without thinking, I grabbed him by the arm and pulled him out of the room. Spotting the bathroom door standing open, I walked my unresisting partner into the room.

"Wash him off you!" I said. Even to my own ears, I sounded a hell of a lot more like a jealous lover than an angry senior partner.

"Mulder, come on," Alex said. "David's fine and his partner would never do anything to hurt him."

"Just get in the shower," I said. "I brought you a change of clothes."

The bedroom door was shut when I returned from the car. I walked into the bathroom and stood there while Alex toweled off and dressed.

"You lied to me," I said. "You said you were going cruising and you had a date with Starsky."

"I didn't. I went to a bar I heard about and Starsky was there. So I went home with him. I didn't lie to you," Alex said.

I studied his face for a few seconds. He was blushing, but I didn't think it was because he was lying. His eyelashes fluttered. Damn, there was only one answer to him.

I kissed him, flattening him against the wall, raising his arms and pinning him as if I was taking him into custody. He went limp, letting me hold up his weight. Both of us sagged, held up, I believed, only by a single point of connection, our kiss.

"Mine," I muttered, the word vibrating against his lips. He gazed back at me, eyes dark with questions. I brushed my lips against the sharp line of his cheek and then found his lips again. He clung to me, his body open to anything I might want of him.

It's very likely we would have still been kissing or that I would have fucked him right on the bathroom floor, but Starsky pounded on the door and said, "Hey, sorry, but I have to take a shower too."

When we passed, I guided Alex well away from Starsky. MY Alex.

Starsky sounded amused despite the yelling I had heard coming from his room. He winked at Alex who still looked stunned.

Alex and I rode in the back. I wanted him as far a way from this Starsky character as possible. As it was, I was left to stare at a red mark on my partner's throat. You can bet that I intended to replace that brand with my own as soon as possible.

I reached over and put my hand on his knee, fingertips brushing the inside of his thigh. I beat a semaphore of desire against the defenseless flesh. Alex looked at me and swallowed hard, making me sweat as I remembered how that felt when my cock was down his throat. Alex squirmed and I was reassured that I was making him as uncomfortable as he was making me. Funny how it's okay to be feeling so damn out of control when you know that the other person is as crazy for you.

Maybe that's why I couldn't handle the 'L' word. Maybe I knew even that first morning that he was the one. He was my kryptonite. I couldn't be superhuman Spooky with Alex.

OooOooO

What the hell was this?

If I had any sense, I'd be scared. Mulder said that our night together was a fuck, nothing more, but now he was acting like I belonged to him. I wanted to belong to him, but could I really trust him? If I admitted that I had been sent to spy on him, would he turn on me?

The way Mulder kept looking at me, I wasn't going to be able to resist him. I was nervous, squirming under his touch like a reluctant virgin.

My lips burned from his kisses. Although part of me wondered if he would change his mind again, Mulder has me befuddled, reacting like a kid with a crush rather than the person Spender had made me. When he touched my leg, moving his hand until his caress was unmistakably intimate, I parted my thighs without making a conscious decision to open for him. I'm scared. I'm frightened at how out of control he makes me feel.

What was I going to do? Should I risk telling him the truth? I had obeyed Spender even as I questioned him when I took Mulder's reports from him. I was ready to do more, to allow Spender to move against Scully. Jealous, I might have even encouraged my boss to take Mulder's ex-partner from him.

Ah shit, if Mulder really knew me, I think he would hate me.

If all Mulder feels is sexual heat, I may not survive admitting that I had betrayed him.

His eyes meet mine. I'm lost. I'm going to do whatever it takes to make him love me.

OooOooO

I was grinning from ear to ear. Hutch had yelled at me in my bedroom but when the words stopped he had kissed me. It was all that I hoped it would be. It was like gas on a fire. That one kiss and all the sparks that had been between us since the day we met flamed to life. Hutch's hands framed my face and his eyes devoured me when he broke off the kiss long enough to stare into my eyes. After that, his hands wandered until both of them ended up cupping my ass cheeks. Pretty weird. That wasn't something any women had ever done to me. I don't think I would like it from anyone else. It made me feel possessed. Hutch though...he's owned me for a long time and I own him right back.

Hutch looked over at me and said, "You have to stop smirking. So you were right. Has to be a first time."

But Ol' Blue Eyes followed his comment with his shy smile. That diffident expression I had imagined he must have had offering a flower to his Mom. Poor little Ken...dandelion clutched in his hand, knees of his new suit dirty and his mother's horrified expression as he held the weed up to her. He'd laughed when he told me that. I'd wanted to cry for him. I could cuss out his parents. How could they not have loved him? Loved him the way I did?

Hutch must have been reading my mind again. He patted my leg and said, "I'm okay, Starsk. I'm really okay now."

Just maybe...

From now on, I'm going to be showing Hutch all the love he deserved.

I glanced at the back. From the way Mulder was looking at Alex, I think Alex might be getting what he wants too. There would always be a special place in my heart for Alex. He proved to me and to Hutch that I could make love to a guy without freaking out in the morning. Maybe another guy would have done the same thing, but Alex had made my first time almost as sweet as I knew it was going to be with Hutch.

I wish Alex didn't look so frightened. It's hard for me to take. I want to get all protective over him even though I suspect he's more than able to take care of himself.

Hutch gripped my leg to bring my attention back to driving and him. Okay, I'll just make sure that Alex understands that if he needs help, I'll take care of him. I'll make my Blondie understand somehow if I have to.

OooOooO

I thought that fear was something I could handle. It wasn't that I wasn't afraid; I was just used to it.

This was something new. I wanted Mulder to love me. I needed him. I had never felt anything as totally addictive as his touch, the sound of my name on his lips.

I thought about Starsky. He had risked it all to offer his love to his Hutch. Was I half the man David was? Although I guess they wouldn't kill David if they found out. I guess he would live through losing his job as long as he had his partner.

But, you know what? I don't think Starsky or Hutch would have let Spender keep them apart. They wouldn't have even thought about it.

When I'm grown up, I want to love somebody like that. I look at Mulder and I hope someday someone will love me as Hutch loves Starsky. I want it to be Mulder.

OooOooO

Today, there was no way in hell that we were trading partners. I'd laugh at Hutch for the way that he got between Alex and Starsky every time my partner looked at his. I'd laugh, but I felt the same way.

What kills me is knowing that almost certainly my Alex is in deeper than Scully was. I remember how infuriated I was with her when she finally admitted she was assigned to debunk my theories.

I look at Alex and he devastates me. I think I knew I was in trouble from the moment I refused to shake his hand.

I remember thinking that touching him was like my favorite jerk off episode of Star Trek. The one with Elaan of Troyius and her aphrodisiac tears. Alex might not have a silver metallic robe, but he had the same effect on me. Only I wasn't sure if I would want an antidote.

I told myself if he admitted it to me, I could handle it. The faceless men who were my enemy might have sent him to me but, like I had with Scully, I could make him mine.

Alex's eyes met mine as we waited outside one of the grandparent's homes. I saw the shift in his eyes from intimacy to an alert and ready expression. He shifted from thinking about us to the case.

Alex and I had won the coin toss. We were the ones to watch Ellen Gordon. I had a feeling that she was the ringleader of what was happening.

Ellen Gordon went to a downtown store with underground parking. Alex tailed her, as I thought she would know me from the previous day. She entered an occupied car in the garage and scooted down.

We trailed her from a distance, Alex doing a good job at his task, keeping close enough not to lose her without looking as if he was following her.

Ellen's driver took the long way, but they arrived at a modest house outside of town. A demure woman met her at the door with a little boy in her arms. Mrs. Gordon looked around as she reproved the woman and hurried them back inside.

"Busted," Alex said.

"Yes," I agreed. "But the other children aren't here."

"Suppose Mrs. Gordon just set it up and left the other grandparents to make their own arrangements?" Alex said.

"Yes, that could be it," I said.

"I don't think she would last long if Captain Dobey kept her in jail," Alex said. "Maybe not past the first finger wave."

"Oh, hell, she might enjoy it," I remarked.

"Let's not get her confused with us," Alex said.

It seemed a good time to kiss his cheek. He ducked around and intercepted with his mouth, which was even better.

Before we could get too distracted, the mother-in-law from hell walked back out of the house. She carried a suitcase. Behind her, walked the woman from the house and the grandson.

Alex and I stepped out, flashing our badges. She turned her frosty blue eyes on us and flipped open her mobile phone, calling her attorney before we could even read her rights to her.

Uniformed officers showed up along with a burly female child protective services officer to take Joseph Gordon into custody until his mother could identify him and reclaim him.

"I was saving my grandson from abuse and neglect," Mrs. Gordon said.

"That woman was raising him in poverty," the woman added.

I thought about the neat middle class apartment and sighed.

The CPS worker said, "I'll have Joseph examined for signs of abuse."

I had spotted the weak link in this chain of events. The woman in a well designed but plain black dress was sobbing steadily. I zeroed in on her, nodding her into the rental car that Alex and I shared.

Like a mouse between two hungry alley cats, the timid woman peered back and forth for an escape.

Alex leaned back against the cushions as I drove. "It's unfortunate," Alex said, "I suppose that Mrs. Gordon could claim that she tracked her grandson down with private detectives and was in the process of rescuing him when we interrupted her."

"That would make a great story," I said. "I wonder if Marie Gordon would buy it."

"She might," Alex said. "She would be so glad to have her son back that she would believe anything."

"I work for Mrs. Gordon," the woman said.

Alex spread her purse contents over his lap, emphasizing his violation of her privacy. "Hattie Cross," Alex said, "Well, Hattie, here's a passport. I suppose you were going to run off with the fruit of your kidnap scheme."

"I didn't kidnap Joseph!" Hattie said. "I just cared for him until Mrs. Gordon could make arrangements. I've worked for her since I was girl. I don't have anything against Joseph's mother, but Mrs. Gordon was so unhappy. Surely, it's better for a child to have money? If I could have given my daughter a better life..."

Thinking about my family life, I shook my head. Money hadn't protected my sister nor made me happy. I didn't believe that Mrs. Gordon could raise a happy child.

"You think Mrs. Gordon is going to protect you?" Alex asked. "People like her don't protect their employees and they don't take the rap either. They use you and use you until they use you up."

Why did I have the feeling that Alex wasn't just talking about Hattie Cross? I saw the darkness in his eyes and I fought the urge to grab his hand. I wanted to tell him that I would protect him. I would take care of him as I failed to take care of Samantha.

"You think about it," Alex said. "If you testify for us, you can work a deal. On the other hand, if you remain loyal to your employer, you could get a life sentence. I imagine she will either walk or do very easy time. The rich don't often serve hard time."

"I have a daughter in college," Hattie Cross said, her voice shaking.

"You could miss her graduation," Alex said. "You could blight her future career. What's she taking?"

"Psychology," Hattie said. "They wouldn't hold what I did against her, would they? Not really..."

"What do you think?" Alex said. "And of course, without your help, can she stay in college?"

Soft sobs greeted this last question.

I felt like a cad and Alex looked as if he felt just as badly. Our job wasn't pretty.

OooOooO

I worked Mrs. Gordon's maid like the men who made me had taught me to do. I knew how to break someone, break him or her without touching him or her physically.

That was what I was supposed to do to Mulder. Gain his trust, get in his bed if I could, and then fuck him over so badly that he would be easy prey for CSM Spender. Daddy wanted his son by his side.

Of course, I don't know if I believed that Mulder was Spender's kid. I'd seen William Mulder many times during my stay at Spender's private school. I don't know if he would remember me as he always looked away with a pained expression when any of us were near. I think Spender enjoyed making him confront the reality of the Project's hideous secrets. Anyway, I don't think that Mulder looks like either Bill Mulder or Spender...thank God!

I had no fond memories of the man Mulder thought was his dad. I remember Bill Mulder was with Spender when I was being examined prior to being sent to the academy. I was totally naked and I had no right to object to their intrusion. Spender poked at me with his nicotine stained fingers as if I was prime beef, speculating on how Mulder would respond to me.

Bill Mulder had tightened his lips and said, "My son is not gay. He's simply shy with women."

Blowing smoke at Mulder, Spender had laughed and said, "Go and have another drink, Bill. Keep believing that."

At the time, I didn't know anything about Fox Mulder. He was a target, a long-range target that would allow me some blessed relief from Spender's daily intrusions into what little privacy I had. I knew with the exposure at the academy any punishments would have to leave no marks and not distract me from my studies. I had already learned to keep my heart to myself so they had no one to use against me. How was I to know that my downfall would be the man I was sent to defeat?

I could see Mulder did not like what I was doing to the maid. I didn't care. I felt for those kids. I felt for those parents. I knew my parents ran with me, trying to break free of the Project. My father took me to his mother and gave me to her. She kept me safe as she had kept him safe from

Stalin's people. That was the kind of grandparent these people should have been, not people so poisoned with prejudice that they could do something so horrible to their own children.

Hattie Cross finally broke. She said she would testify and she gave up the other grandparents along with her employer. Mrs. Gordon was the ringleader. The rest had followed her into this act of cruelty. And Hattie knew who the other grandparents were...five sets of grandparents because both John and Eli Cooke's parents were in on it.

Mulder looked at me as Hattie named the sets of grandparents. The blue-collar worker's parents were right in the house when I went to interview the bereaved couple. The wife's parents were deceased. The husband's parents were not part of Mrs. Gordon's nasty little conspiracy.

It isn't easy to lie to me. I know how to lie and I know how to detect a lie. I had to wonder if the family was somehow tied to the Project and my real employer staged the abduction. I had to talk to Mulder. I had to tell him how the project operated.

Starsky and Hutch brought in two of the sets of grandparents. I could tell Hutch was working through some sort of deep emotional pain. I also knew that Starsky would take care of him.

Drawing a deep breath, I filled my eyes with the sight of Mulder. I filled my heart with him. This might be the last time we worked together. I might have to see his face fill with hatred and contempt.

I wanted to run. I wanted to sneer at him first to ward off his loathing.

Something stopped me. Something told me that I had a choice now. I could choose Mulder. I could choose the truth or I could go on running and compromising until I lost myself a part at a time.

I didn't want to lose him. I had to take the chance.

OooOooO

The other grandparents cracked one at a time. It didn't take much to get them to turn on each other and Mrs. Gordon. They hadn't anything in common but hatred and prejudice.

The one thing that none of them could tell us was what happened to the Smith baby, the blue-collar worker's daughter.

I could see Alex was working on an idea. I wondered if it was the same as mine, a real abduction mistakenly classified with the ones that the grandparents had arranged.

When we returned to our hotel room, I reached for Alex. There wasn't anything we could do tonight. I wanted to talk to the Smith family again, see if I detected anything that Starsky and Alex had not. Tonight, I wanted him. I wanted to make every inch of him mine. I wanted to be stupid and say loving things to him. I wanted him to be sweet and yielding in my arms and to protect him from the world.

At my touch, Alex flinched. I said, "What's wrong?" I was suddenly afraid that it had all been an act.

Taking a deep breath, Alex said, "You were right."

"About the cases not being true abductions?" I asked.

"No, about me being assigned to you for a reason," Alex admitted.

"Like Scully," I said. I knew it from the first.

"Worse," Alex said.

"How?" I asked.

"Scully was sent to you to debunk your theories because it was her nature. I was sent to you for another reason," Alex said.

"Alex, tell me," I demanded.

"My boss, the one you call the smoking man," Alex said, "He sent me to you because he wanted me to seduce you, distract you, make you love me. Then when he thought it would hurt you the most, he would take me back."

"Take you back?" I asked.

"Yes, back, they've had me since I was ten, Mulder," Alex said. "I was born to the Project as you were. The Project is the conspiracy you have suspected since starting the X Files."

"What do you mean that we were born to it?" I asked. I didn't want to hear this. I could remember so many secrets. I could remember the man I saw in Skinner's office in my home, talking to my father, touching my mother.

"Your father and both of my parents worked for them," Alex said. "My parents were brought from Russia to work in their labs. Your father was brought in to control and to cover up."

"No," I said. I wanted to hit him. My fingers were forming a fist as I fought for control. I didn't want to do it. I was better than that and Alex deserved to be heard.

Eyes huge, Alex backed away as if I had followed through with the threat of my closed fist. He walked to his suitcase and picked it up.

"Where are you going?" I asked.

"Away from here," Alex said. "Where they can't hurt me and I can't hurt you."

Part of me was still afraid that it had to be a trick, but yet...

"Don't go," I said, and the words came from my heart before my brain could take them away. "I need you."

When was the last time that I had admitted my human need to anyone? When had I ever fully trusted that my need would not be seen as a weakness?

His eyes riveted me. I took a deep breath and said, "Alex, tell me about our fathers, tell me everything."

OooOooO

I knew I should walk away. If I told him, I knew they would kill me. I suspected there was a reason Mulder was kept alive. I knew it was more than Spender's belief that Mulder was his son. You can't tell me the old fuck would have any sentiment because of that. Still, if I gave Mulder everything I knew would they take his freedom from him? I think captivity would be worse than death to Mulder.

I couldn't move away. I was frozen there, standing in front of Mulder.

I felt as if he could see into my soul. If he could, I hope he could see that I meant what I said. I did love him. I was scared to death the minute I said it and it made me so angry when he mocked me with that laugh that I was nearly ready to go through with Spender's plan.

Now as Mulder looked at me, I had to decide whether to risk both of our lives. The truth...

I would give Mulder his truth.

And I would give my life to protect him from the consequences if I had to.

OooOooO

I couldn't let him leave. I couldn't stand the thought of being without Alex. I knew he was flawed. I knew he belonged to the man I hated, but I didn't want to be alone anymore.

I had a feeling that if I let Alex leave my entire life would be different. I had a feeling he was the key.

I took a step and another, my stubborn pride, my fear of betrayal slowing the magnetic draw of this man I could love. This man, I realized that I did love.

When I reached him, I took away the suitcase and then I stripped him naked. I saw him shaking, his eyes turned down, one hand starting to cover himself in some instinctive movement as he saw me looking at him. Then he stood before me, offering himself. Offering his unprotected self to me.

And I took him.

I laid him naked upon my bed. I laid him before me as a feast, as a sacrifice. I made him mine, every inch of him vulnerable to my eyes, my mouth, my hand. And I made love to him until he cried and he shook, giving it up to me with such passion that he was helpless to move.

I took him then. I entered him, closing my eyes not to deny whom I touched but so that there was no sense of mine that would not know him as mine.

Finally we lay, face to face, my leg over his hip, his head pressed to my shoulder, his eyelashes brushing my sweating flesh until I felt my nerves ring crystal with sensation.

"Tell me," I said. "Tell me everything."

And he gave that up to me too.

Alex told me how he was raised. About Spender. About his claim to be my father. About the man I thought was my father and how Spender used Bill Mulder until he sought to forget his pain in alcohol, until he could not look in his family's eyes.

And I did not forgive my Alex for being part of them. There was nothing to forgive. In silent dark, I promised him that whatever was to come, we would face it together. We would live or die as one.

OooOooO

I was afraid. I had never been more afraid. Not even when I was trapped in that car. Not when I was ravaged by drugs. I was afraid then and in pain, but I knew I would never lose my Starsky.

I still thought it could be poisoned fruit. I trembled on the edge of paradise as we walked into Starsky's house. I had never believed that I could be happy.

My partner, my love dragged me inside. He smiled at me, warm, reassuring. I saw myself in his eyes and I was beautiful. I saw how he loved me and I realized that if a man like my Starsky could love me then I was worthy of love. And I was born in his gaze. I had no family but my love. I needed no one but my partner. Me and Thee. Me and thee...so beautiful.

Pulling me into his bedroom, Starsky laughed softly as we undressed each other. Hopelessly entangled in each other, we fell onto the bed, kissing as if we were two halves trying to merge into one.

As I touched him, I realized that it felt so right. All my pretences fell away and I knew how much I had wanted this. I had hidden from myself and denied him for too long.

Joy bubbled up as we explored each other. My hands knew every part of him, but not like this. I memorized the feel of him, rediscovering all the sensitive spots that I had ambushed playfully in the past, tickling him or wrestling with him. His body had always been open to me, open to my touch, but now we were free to go further.

His hands ran up my legs; I opened to him, his thumbs made circles on the inside of my thighs, not really touching my cock yet, but I responded as if he had. He surprised me by kissing the head then briefly sucking me. I tried to control what I was feeling, but my hips jerked, shoving myself at him.

Starsky laughed again and went back to teasing me. My hand caressed the thick curls of his hair, pressed him back toward me. I knew I was the one who should be pleasing him, but I was overwhelmed. All the things, all the techniques I had used to make myself into a perfect lover, for each woman that I had hoped would complete me, fled away.

With Starsky, there was no thought, no discipline, yet I wasn't worried. I don't think I ever made love to anyone like this, giving everything freely, forgetting the need to be the perfect lover.

When Starsky touched me, I wasn't sure what he wanted. I was willing for him to take me. I wanted him to have me any way he wanted.

"I didn't give something to Alex, Hutch," Starsky said.

"I know. You love me," I said. Man, that sounded good to say aloud.

"That's a given," Starsky said. "Something else. I didn't give him this."

And my love was guiding me inside of him, leading my hand to open him for me. I knew he must have been nervous. Hell, my fingers were shaking so much that it was hard to find a way inside him. Yet he never stopped trusting me, never tried to keep me out.

We joined.

We wrapped around each other like yin and yang. My body ached with my desire for him. His voice encouraged me to come deeper, to move faster. He pushed back at me, groaning in his pleasure and no doubt in some little pain.

I couldn't wait for him to do this to me. I wished I was a virgin too so I could give this to him for the first time as he did for me.

When we came, we still clung to each other until the reality of strained muscles, exhausted bodies, and all the after thoughts of sex brought us back to earth.

I had to look in his eyes, wondering if I would see regret. I saw nothing but love and interest.

My love, my lover, said, "Next time, I'm going to have you."

"You better," I said.

We were a mess. I tugged him up. It was going to take a long shower and a remade bed before we could sleep.

I should have known. The water revitalized Starsky. As he worked shampoo into my hair, his cock kept nudging my ass. I reached behind, pulling his hips toward me until his erection nestled

where I wanted it. I arched backwards until he could kiss the side of my mouth, struggling to kiss deeply until I slipped and he caught me. Of course, he caught me.

"Too slippery," Starsky said, leading me back to the bed. Good thing we hadn't changed it yet.

I wanted to watch him as he rode inside of me. Lying down on my back, I let my legs rest on his sturdy back. I suffered a jealous moment at the confident way his fingers stretched me to enter me. Then I put it aside. He was mine. Nothing could ever change that. If Alex Krycek had proved to both of us that Starsky was all grown up and able to handle this, then I could handle him being first.

Besides as my legs pulled my Starsky deeper into me, I knew I would be best.

I didn't expect to come again. I thought it would be enough just to feel the pleasure I gave my lover. I was dead wrong. My Starsky made my body vibrate like a tuning fork and I shouted my pleasure loudly as I came a moment before he did.

We staggered as we made the bed together and wiped off half-heartedly before settling back into bed, wrapped around each other.

As I went to sleep, content, wanting for nothing, I had a prayer in my heart for Mulder and Krycek. I hoped they would find something like this perfect bliss.

OooOooO

In the morning, I woke afraid. I thought Mulder would look at me with disgust.

Instead his fingers gently smoothed through my hair. His lips claimed mine then he held me. He held me and his love was in his embrace.

When we finally had to force ourselves to get on with the day, I expected that Mulder would insist on going back and I would have gone. I would have gone despite knowing that Mulder couldn't keep me safe if we tried to continue being FBI agents.

I wasn't going to tell Mulder that. I could only follow him wherever he would lead me.

Mulder had picked up the phone to check on our tickets when it hit me.

Wide-eyed, my love looked at me and said, "Alex, he's going to kill you like Deep Throat if we go back."

My silence answered him.

"What do we do?" Mulder asked.

I couldn't believe it. He was genuinely asking.

My brain rushing for an answer, I remembered the one Consortium member who seemed to have second thoughts. The one they called the Brit had once approached me and asked me if I understood what we were doing.

I told him that I did, but I had been a fool. I had bought Spender's bullshit.

At a meeting I attended at Spender's side, the Brit said that there was more than one kind of alien, that some would stand with us if we opposed the Greys.

Spender had laughed and called the Brit naïve. He said that the rebel aliens were weak and the Greys were strong. He said that our only chance for survival was cooperation.

Looking at Mulder, I said, "There's a man who might help us, one who opposed Spender."

"What about my father?" Mulder said, pain in his eyes.

Mulder asked me. He trusted me to make the decision. I lowered my eyes, trying to guess if Bill Mulder was brave and desperate enough to stand up to Spender. I could only hope.

I said, "We'll have to take the chance."

Mulder's hand surrounded mine, his finger stroking a comforting pattern on my palm.

"Whatever happens, we'll be together," Mulder promised.

After we were dressed and had said goodbye to Starsky and Hutch, Mulder called his father. I called the Brit.

Mr. Mannerly was one of the strongest of the old men. He was the only one strong enough not to give any hostage to the Project. The others hated and feared him for that. Although he was a man of honor in his own eyes, I felt that he was as ruthless as Spender in his way. That was good. You couldn't beat Spender and the rest of the heartless quislings of the Project by being a nice guy.

The Brit didn't come in person. That was not his way. Instead, a man I did not know arrived with Bill Mulder. When we were holed up in a cabin that Starsky and Hutch said was safe, one owned by Captain Dobey and remote from prying eyes, the stranger removed a human seeming mask to reveal a horrific face, orifices sealed as if in embalming gone mad.

The creature said he was alien rebel. He said he needed us, Mulder and I.

He said he could train us, teach us, and make us into a weapon that could bring the real enemy down.

We believed.

We trusted him.

Bill Mulder didn't look happy with me, yet he gave us his blessing. He said that he respected my courage in choosing to love his son more than I feared for my life.

When Bill Mulder left, he walked with a lighter step as if he had avoided some pitfall in life as grim as the one I had avoided myself when I chose love over self-preservation. Mulder's father promised to protect Skinner, Scully, and Mulder's oddball friends. He promised to leak as much information as he could to us.

I know it was hard for Mulder to leave Scully behind, but he was happy that she was safe.

Knowing that she needed to hear it, Mulder sent her a message.

"Scully, I'm fine, Love, Mulder. I'm with Alex and we'll be back. We'll be back soon."

And when we come, Spender and the other old men better find a deep hole in hell in which to hide.

We'll take them down and the aliens with them.

THE END