

Summary: Poor Mulder...he's in 'trouble'...(again)

Categories: [X Files](#) Characters: Cigarette Smoking Man, Dana Scully, Ensemble, Fox Mulder, Mulder/Skinner, Walter Skinner

Genres: Slash

Warnings: Alien Conception, Brain-Insane, m/m, Scientific Conception, threesome

Challenges: None

Series: None

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Story Notes:

Disclaimer: I found them hiding under my bed...obviously I invited them to join me... I don't own them...yet.

A/N: Once more the mpreg gods have told me they demand another X- Files sacrifice...I offer my Mulder most humbly. Pairing(s) still in limbo, may actually swap around and/or join together. I'm thinking at least M/Sk, possibly M/K...maybe even M/Sk/K...and Doggett's trying to bribe me into joining, too...we'll see. Nikita makes the rules here, boys... :) This story definitely smells like another long series in the making...sound good?

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Chapter 1 by Nikita

Mulder retched into the wastebasket, heaving one last time before wiping his mouth with the back of his hand. He had nothing to throw up in his stomach, but it continued to churn as he swallowed uneasily, leaning back into his chair. Two months. He'd had this sickness for two months and it didn't appear to be going away.

At first he'd thought it was the case he'd been working on, the mutilated bodies he'd investigated in Montana. The results of botched alien experiments that have been dumped back on Earth for god-knows-what purpose. The bodies had reminded him disturbingly of his own recent experiences and he'd passed the daily worshipping of the porcelain deity off as a mental and emotional sickness, not physical. But two months...that was just too long, and it was far too consistent - every single morning: from the time he woke up until about 9 in the morning.

Closing his eyes, he focused within; yes...the nausea was easing, finally. Like clockwork...he was suddenly hungry - famished. As if he hadn't just been puking his guts out over the wastebasket. Digging into his desk, he pulled out the bag of sunflower seeds. Not enough. This kind of hunger called for chocolate! Pulling out a Snickers bar, he tore into it.

"Healthy breakfast choice, Mulder. Geez, slow down will you?"

Mulder looked up sheepishly as Scully closed the door and set a cup of coffee on his desk. "Hungry" he mumbled around a bite.

"I see. You look like a lion ripping into a gazelle. How's it going down here, anyway?" Scully pulled a chair over to his desk and sat down with her own coffee mug. She might not be his partner anymore, but she still came down to check on him every once in a while. Mulder supposed he should be grateful...

And he was...but he missed her. Desperately. John Doggett was a damn hard worker and he was reliable - Mulder could trust him to watch his back. But, the man was even more of a skeptic than Scully...and...well, he wasn't Scully. Years of a good strong partnership in which the two nearly read each other's minds was hard to give up. Even if he did feel a bit better about Scully's safety as she worked in the labs now.

"Fine. Quiet actually..." He licked his fingers and tossed the wrapper into the trashcan, which was luckily empty or his secret would have been given away. He pushed the can under his desk anyway. Out of sight, out of mind.

Scully and he made chitchat for a few moments before Doggett finally came in with a stack of paperwork. Mulder watched out of the corner of his eye as they exchanged a few words at the door. He wasn't sure, but he had strong suspicions about the two of them. He knew Doggett was interested in Scully, but he wasn't sure how much of the attraction was mutual. Nor how far it had gone. Scully often seemed a bit uneasy around the other man...

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Another day...another morning spent in the corner stall of the bathroom attempting to stifle his gag reflex.

Mulder knelt before the toilet and squeezed his eyes shut. God, he was tired...so tired of this... He heard the door open to the bathroom and scrambled to his feet.

"Mulder?"

Shit, Skinner. Apparently he'd been hiding in here too long. Mulder flushed the toilet and left the stall. He felt light headed and the floor swayed dizzily before his feet. Staggering against the wall, he became aware of hands clutching his arms.

"Mulder? Are you hurt? What's wrong? Mulder?!"

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Mulder woke to a paramedic taking his blood pressure. He managed to wave them off with some excuse about not eating recently and a headache. Signing a waiver, he got them to leave but he couldn't avoid the stern eye of his boss across the room.

"Why haven't you been eating?"

Ugh, geez, he didn't want Skinner acting like a mother hen...even if it was a mother hen that looked more like he was going to kick his ass than tuck him into bed with a bowl of chicken noodle soup. "Oh...I've been busy...it slipped my mind. I'll be sure to eat lunch. Sorry I took a header on you in the john." As soon as he said it he realized the sexual connotation of his words and averted his eyes. Whoops. "I mean...sorry I-"

"I know what you mean, Mulder" the other man interrupted, but he didn't sound angry. Mulder risked a glance and saw that the A.D. was biting his lip...apparently to keep himself from laughing. Relieved, Mulder grinned a bit. He'd been so careful never to bring up the subject before this...

Skinner sighed and dropped his hands from their crossed position and sat down on the couch next to him. They were in Skinner's office, which was the closest private spot available from the bathroom Mulder had collapsed in.

"I was worried about you. You left the meeting so quickly and you looked green. When you didn't come out of the restroom after a while...I thought you might be sick - turns out I was right."

"I was just a bit sick...from not eating. I'm fine now."

Skinner looked at him closely for a long minute, making Mulder squirm slightly under the scrutiny, before nodding. "Time for an early lunch - or a late breakfast. My treat." Skinner got up and grabbed his jacket while Mulder started to protest.

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It was positively odd, escorting Mulder out of the office, one hand on his elbow lest the man take another tumble. He'd resorted to ordering the younger agent into joining him for a meal. Mulder kept his eyes on the floor as they headed towards the elevator. Was it the attention they were garnering or was the man 'that' reluctant to going out to lunch with him?

It was only once they reached the nearby café that Mulder perked up. Ordering a bacon cheeseburger, fries, and milkshake, he ate every bit with great relish. Skinner hid a grin at the sight of Mulder licking ketchup from his fingertips. It was a damn erotic sight and Mulder was blissfully unaware of his exhibitionist behavior before his boss - well, superior and former boss. Of course...that thought reminded him that he'd once been a bit more than just his former boss...

"Are you going to finish that?"

Skinner glanced down at the remaining french-fries on his own plate and shook his head, pushing the plate towards Mulder. "Nope. You can't 'still' be hungry..."

Mulder shrugged and reached over for more. "Guess I found my appetite."

"Apparently. So, how's it going down in the basement?"

Mulder grimaced as he popped the last french-fry in his mouth. "Everyone keeps asking me that lately...fine. Not quite the same without Scully...or you. Kersh isn't quite as understanding or willing to listen to some of my theories as you can well imagine."

"Watch your step with him, Mulder. I think he's dirty...very dirty. He blocked us every step of the way when we were looking for you."

Mulder nodded, eyes flicking back to the table and Skinner regretted bringing up the subject. He wondered how Mulder was handling his abduction experience...those months he'd been missing had been particularly difficult to deal with. The funeral had been brutal - Scully had needed him to be strong and he'd had to hide his own feelings beyond friendship... And after they'd dug him up...god... seeing the man in the hospital bed - looking like a corpse...and then the choice that he'd been forced to make...

He could only thank god that Mulder had somehow benefited from his choice...that in turning off the life support, they had somehow managed to kill off the alien within. The fact that Scully lost the baby a few days later anyway had been a terrible blow.

"I'm keeping my eyes open...anyway, thanks for lunch." Mulder wiped his hands and stood. The sudden feeling of loss in knowing he had no further excuse to sit and talk with Mulder spurred an

impulsive idea.

"How about dinner after work? There's a great new Greek restaurant down the street I've been wanting to try."

Mulder paused in the act of pushing the chair under the table. "Dinner? Are you trying to fatten me up?" he joked.

Walter nervously stood up as well, focusing on pushing his own chair in and grabbing the check. "Well, someone has to see that you eat...and well..." he fumbled, feeling unaccountably flustered at such a small awkward moment.

"I'd be glad to" Mulder said, smiling.

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Dinner led to coffee and dessert. Mulder ate a large piece of baklava, licking his lips with delight. Skinner was relieved to see that Mulder's appetite had held...and if anything, expanded. The best part, though, was the honey that glistened on that plump bottom lip.

" - are you listening to me?"

"What?" Walter blinked and drew his eyes back up from Mulder's lips to his eyes.

"I asked if you were listening to me, but don't bother - obviously you weren't. Are you feeling all right?"

"Fine. Sorry, I was just...lost in my thoughts. Mulder, do you ever think about our relationship?"

Mulder raised both eyebrows and set down his fork at this. Steepling his fingers together, he set his chin on them. "Well, I was under the impression that we 'didn't' have a relationship. You were pretty adamant about that, if you remember."

Skinner winced inwardly; he deserved that. They'd spent a few nights together. Mainly when Skinner had felt the need - the urge...in the end, he'd broken it off, stating that he couldn't in good conscious continue a physical relationship with a subordinate. It had been a lie, mostly. In truth, he'd felt...edgy. Nervous about being in a relationship that seemed to be growing into something more than he'd originally planned. His thoughts had become consumed with Mulder: their nights together, Mulder's laugh, the way it felt to lie in bed next to him...the passionate lovemaking... The feelings that had stirred within him were so foreign to him - nothing he had ever felt with Sharon. And the feeling of being lost in a relationship like that...it had disturbed him. So he'd put a stop to it...before it could become something more.

"Yes. I remember" Skinner looked into hazel eyes and saw great sadness there.

He'd been thinking of himself at the time. And now...he wondered just how much he had hurt the other man. Somehow he'd never really considered the possibility that Mulder would have felt the same way about him...that he might want something more. Cutting him off like that...

"But...I think I made a terrible mistake..." Skinner clutched his napkin beneath the tablecloth, trying to keep a hold on his feelings. Diners all around them chatted and clinked their utensils, oblivious at the sudden quiet tension that fell upon their table.

Mulder continued to stare at him quietly, chin on his fingertips. Slowly, he raised his head and dropped his hands onto the table, one reaching out to him, palm up. Walter dropped his eyes to stare at it and slowly...carefully...reached a hand up to take it. He looked up at Mulder,

swallowing with difficulty. Did this mean...?

Mulder smiled gently and clasped his hand hard. "Maybe we could try again..."

That night, after they had made love, Skinner watched the other man sleep, light from the moon, gleaming a soft pearly light on his features - making him seem otherworldly.

Leaning down, he kissed his way down Mulder's torso...trailing the kisses down to the stomach, where he placed one last lingering kiss on Mulder's stomach...wondering why he felt such a tender gentleness at that very moment. Resting his head there lightly...he dreamed...

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Chapter 2 by Nikita

Author's Notes:

AU notes - takes place after M's been dug up - but conveniently 'forgets' what happens after that although pieces and parts may pop up in mutilated versions. In my world - Mulder went back to the X-Files and Scully was bumped aside to the labs while Doggett becomes his partner. The way I think the show really 'should' have gone.

Dedicated to: JoB. For the wonderful, wonderful fic that she wrote: 'Life From the Ashes', which woke me up to the fantastic world of Mpreg and for her continued efforts on the Mulder slash front. From one Mulder lover to another.

Someone was gunning a motorcycle next to his ear. Mulder cracked an eyelid and noted that the unearthly loud roar was in fact Walter Skinner snoring. Loudly. Smiling ruefully, he pushed on a shoulder until the other man rolled over onto his side, facing away from him. The snoring eased into an occasional soft rumble.

Waking up in someone's bed was a fairly unusual experience for him. No, scratch that - waking up in a 'bed' was unusual for him. He'd never been able to sleep well in one and he never really wanted to think about why - he just couldn't. So waking up in a large warm bed next to a large warm man - make that 'naked' man, was an experience that he needed practice with.

Lots of practice.

"Mmmmm," Mulder moaned happily and rolled over to drape his arm over the other man's side, fingers brushing a large furry chest. 'Mine, all mine...' he thought. A ridiculous and rather delicious thought - to think of having Walter Skinner all to himself...to know that the other man had instigated their current relationship. Wanted to be committed.

To Fox Mulder.

Someone really should really warn the guy - Fox Mulder isn't known for being all that stable. Definitely not relationship material. But just now, right before dawn, he was quite content to let that matter lie.

"Hm. What time's it?" Walter's voice was low and husky from sleep.

"Too early. Go back to sleep" Mulder's arm tightened, trying to restrain the other man from getting up.

It failed to keep his lover from seeing the alarm clock, however, and his arm was soon being pushed aside.

"Can't. Got an early meeting I need to get ready for."

Mulder let him slide out of bed, but propped his head up with a pout. "Aren't you A.D.'s supposed to be ready for these kinds of meetings ahead of time?"

Skinner glared at him before disappearing into the bathroom. "Well, 'someone's' been doing a good job of distracting me in the evenings lately..." came a scolding voice through the open door.

Mulder smirked, "Guess I'm doing my job right, then..." but even as he said it, he began to feel a familiar churning in his stomach. 'Don't...not yet...not yet...' he chanted.

Walter poked his head out of the bathroom, mouth full of toothpaste, his toothbrush in hand. "You've always excelled in that task, Mulder."

Mulder smiled weakly and was relieved when Walter ducked his head back behind the door. Getting up from bed, he tiptoed past the door and hurried down the stairs. Rushing into the half-bath, he turned on the faucet before finally throwing up in the toilet.

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Damn it...he was living a secret that he knew he couldn't keep much longer: he was still sick.

Nothing helped - he ate better, tried to get more rest, avoided truly disturbing case photos...damn it - he was even taking a multivitamin for the first time in his life and nothing, NOTHING was helping.

It was enough to drive him to confessing to Scully. He needed help. Badly.

"What other symptoms do you have?" Scully asked as she took his temperature. Why did she do that - ask him questions with a thermometer in his mouth? If she had to interrogate him at that moment she could at least have used one of those ear-thermometers.

" 'maptsmstvinkrd'"

"What?" She removed the thermometer and checked it.

"I SAID - my appetite seems to have increased. I'm hungry all the time. After I've thrown up in the morning, at least. I've developed a strange craving for Snickers and Mars bars. My sunflower seed supply is dangerously depleted and I can't seem to skip a lunch or dinner lately."

Scully raised an eyebrow at that. "Considering the fact that you usually work right through those meals, I'd say it's an improvement on your diet, Mulder. But I never knew you to be a candy bar freak. I thought you didn't like chocolate."

Mulder shrugged. "I don't usually crave it, but I don't dislike chocolate... I just prefer salty snacks usually. But lately...just about anything looks good and I crave chocolate with nuts."

Scully wiped the thermometer down and pursed her lips. "You know...you remind me of how I felt when I was pregnant. I ate all of the sunflower seeds in your desk and you 'know' I don't usually like sunflower seeds.

Mulder nodded, but inside he felt terrible thinking of Scully alone and pregnant in their office, digging through her missing partner's desk for stale sunflower seeds. He should have been there for her. When he'd agreed to 'donate' for her, he'd always imagined helping her out with pickles and ice cream on late nights.

He'd wanted to be a part of that pregnancy. She'd wanted him to be a part of it, too. That was why she'd picked him.

"Was it...was it awful? Being pregnant, I mean." She looked so sad suddenly, that he immediately

regretted his question, yet he was dying with curiosity.

Scully shrugged, but her face was tense with emotion. "No...it was damn inconvenient at the time. I was so worried for you and... But no - I liked it. I guess I didn't mind all the aches and pains and nausea - I'd been wanting a child so badly..." She choked on the final words.

He reached a hand out and took her little one in his. She squeezed back hard - a tear escaping before she cleared her throat, pulled her hand back and wiped it away. "I'm concerned about your long term nausea Mulder, are you sure it's only in the mornings?"

"Yep. Like clockwork." This morning had been a close call. Normally he woke up before Walter did and managed to toss his cookies downstairs before returning to the bed. Skinner hadn't noticed his morning queasiness yet, but it was only a matter of time... There was a knock on the door and their impromptu examination was interrupted and both were too busy to talk about it the rest of the day.

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It was only later at night that he remembered her words.

'You remind me of how I felt when I was pregnant.'

As Skinner grunted and turned over in his sleep, one arm coming to rest on Mulder's stomach, Mulder's sixth sense suddenly gave him the utterly ridiculous, but no less true explanation to the problem.

"Oh, shit" he muttered.

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The Next Morning

No one would believe him - it couldn't possibly be true. It was absolutely ridiculous and completely improbable. But since when had that stopped him from believing?

He was pregnant. No doubt in his mind now. A hand on the now slight bulge of his midriff gave him irrefutable evidence. And even more damning - he could feel it. The slightest flutter of life within - only now making its presence known.

Where had it come from? The birds and the bees were no help just now. If he went by the nausea - he must be at least 3 months or more along. And his sex life was only just now being revived after an absence of roughly 3 years. The abduction? Hard to say - he'd been 'dead' and buried for months and he hadn't had the nausea until roughly four months after that.

Sitting on the edge of the bed, he wished desperately he had someone to share this scary information with. Scully was his obvious choice, but proving it would be a pain in the neck - she'd put him through a battery of medical tests before she'd even 'think' of believing this. And the problem with that was the fact that ever since his abduction - no even before that - he'd come to dread hospitals and all they stood for. The tests he'd had for the brain tumor were simply to fresh in his mind.

He didn't want to ever be subjected to those kinds of medical examinations again...and this would certainly require some major medical probing and scanning. If this were true, how on earth would he give birth to it?

He was still a man; he had no qualms about that. And certainly Skinner would have told him if

he'd changed at all in the obvious spots, so how exactly would his body handle this? So many questions and all of them led to telling Scully.

Eventually.

For now, he pushed the matter aside and focused on his most recent X-File: a few sightings in Maine and a disappearance, which he knew were linked.

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John Doggett was a private man, definitely not the type to intrude on another man's business normally. But after watching Mulder eat three chilidogs in a row plus a large bag of BBQ potato chips, he'd finally felt the need to intervene.

"Mulder, you sure you want to eat another one of those chili dogs? We're about to visit a crime scene..."

Mulder gave him a dirty look and ordered a corn dog instead. "I'm hungry. Besides, the crime scene consists of a rather large empty field with a few burnt trees - I think I control my gag reflex, thanks."

John threw up his hands in surrender and sat back to watch the corn dog rapidly disappear with a generous amount of ketchup. This kind of behavior was rather unusual for a man that normally had to be reminded to take a lunch or dinner break on a case. Maybe he had one of those tape worms. He certainly wasn't fat; in fact...he looked good. Too good. His skin looked rather...tanned, maybe. He seemed happy, too. Definitely a rare sight. Maybe it had something to do with the fact that Mulder didn't seem to be living at the office anymore. Not that the man didn't still work obsessively, he just seemed to have something to go home to at the end of the day.

It was a bit of a mystery and one he wasn't likely to hear a word about from Mulder himself. The agent was an intensely private man; he never spoke to John at all about his personal life. If anyone knew, it'd be Scully.

Opening the case file again, he reviewed the facts of the case they were currently investigating.

"So Mulder, what are your feelings on this case?"

Mulder wiped his mouth and tossed the napkin on the plate. "The sightings reported all match with the records listed with MUFON for the area three years ago. There were no disappearances at the time, but just last week a man named Jonathan Davids disappeared during the evening on his way home from work. His car was found abandoned on the road just outside the forest where three of the sightings were reported. You really need to ask me what I think?"

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Mulder was right; the crime scene was nothing more than a set of tracks that led into a clearing of the forest where the footsteps ended. Beyond that there were no clues beyond a few pine trees half burnt at the tops. Doggett glanced around the edge of the forest with little interest, as Mulder seemed lost in thought, staring at the center of the field.

He was therefore shocked when Mulder suddenly grabbed his belly with a grunt, squeezing his eyes shut.

"Mulder! You okay?" John ran up to him and tried to pry Mulder's fingers away from his stomach, looking for a wound.

Mulder gasped, tears squeezing out of the corners of his eyes as he jerked his head back. His hands finally released their grip and Doggett frantically pulled the man's shirt up to look, but there was nothing but a smooth expanse of skin. Pressing his hand just to be sure, he was surprised at how hard the belly seemed despite a slight bulge.

Looking back up at Mulder's face, he noticed that the man's hands were now clutching his head tightly. "What's wrong?!"

Mulder shook his head savagely and then turned away, throwing up on the grass beside him. Slowly...jerkily...he took deep stuttering breaths until his head slowly dropped, muscles relaxing. Belatedly, Doggett remembered his phone and pulled it out.

"No. I'm fine..." Mulder shook his head wearily.

"You are NOT. I'm calling an ambulance."

Mulder grabbed his phone, canceling the call. "I'm fine," he pushed himself to his feet and John followed him towards the car. The other man sat down shakily in the passenger's side and waited for him to get into the driver's seat.

As they drove down the road towards the town to the interview with the missing man's wife, Doggett found himself casting worried looks every few moments.

Mulder just shook his head ruefully. "Guess you were right about the chili dogs, huh?"

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They finished the interview with Mrs. Davids and returned to the motel room with no further incidents. Mulder managed to finally convince his partner that he simply needed rest before shutting the adjoining door.

As he sat down on his bed shakily, he wearily remembered what had happened earlier that day. The clearing...it had reminded him of the one in Oregon. The one where he watched Billie Miles first walk into the light. He'd been thinking about that when he'd felt the first pain grip him in the belly.

He hadn't even been aware of Doggett approaching him. Only that the pain had suddenly shifted to his head. The pain... Mulder touched his temple gently, but the pain had long since dulled to a faint ache. It scared him, though...it was the pain he had felt before...during his illness right before his abduction.

His cell phone rang and he absently pulled it out. "Mulder."

"Hey, got a minute to talk?" It was Walter, making sure he was free to talk privately. Smiling at the interruption, Mulder glanced at the closed door between his and Doggett's door before answering.

"Sure...miss me?"

There was a small chuckle on the other end. "Miss what? The piles of laundry you leave around the place? Or maybe your chewed up sunflower shells on my couch?"

Mulder stuck out his bottom lip, even if the other man couldn't see it. "No, I was thinking more along the line of the incredible blow jobs I give you in the shower..."

"Mmm, yeah, I must admit, I 'do' miss that...How's the case going?"

"Fine, fine. Walked the scene and interviewed the wife. Tomorrow I'll check up on the sightings and interview the witnesses...but I don't really need to. It's one of the hot spots...I suspect there'll be more disappearances over the next few weeks. I've already warned the local pd, not that it'll do much good."

They talked for several more minutes and Mulder contemplated telling his lover about the incident on the site, but finally decided it would necessitate revealing his condition and he simply wasn't ready yet. Besides, it was something one did face to face...not that he had any experience in the matter.

"...Alright, I'll let you go...be careful, Fox."

Mulder frowned at the name and didn't respond right away. There was a tense silence before he finally muttered, "Okay, goodnight."

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Walter listened to the 'click' of the line closing and slowly put the phone down. He hadn't really meant to use the name, but even so...he'd secretly coveted being able to use it. It was something taboo to all others and he wanted to be the one that was allowed to use it.

Still, he should have asked first, obviously. The pause on the other end had been excruciating. It was one of the few things he really couldn't understand about his lover. Why was he so ashamed of the name? So it was a bit odd - so was the man, but he never seemed to care what others thought. The name suited him: unique and sexy.

"Fox..." he said to himself, enjoying the way the name sounded so foreign, yet so right. Surely Mulder would get over his strange little quirk about his name if his lover wanted to use it.

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Two Days Later

Doggett shut his suitcase and glanced around the room one last time to make sure he had everything. Knocking on the adjoining door, he wondered what was keeping Mulder.

"Mulder? We've got to get going if we're going to make our flight." He grabbed his jacket and luggage and paused by the door again, knocking. There was no answer so he tried the door. It swung open and he found the bed empty, sheets strewn all over and trailing towards the bathroom.

"Hey, Mulder?" He cautiously peeked into the bathroom, which was open. Mulder sat on the floor with his head resting on the bathtub. Doggett wrinkled his nose and reached over, flushing the toilet.

Mulder tilted his head slightly to give him a weary smile before closing his eyes. His face looked flushed and sweaty.

Doggett shook his head, "I told you not to eat those burritos last night."

Mulder's brow furrowed before he scrambled onto his knees and retched over the toilet once more.

"Sorry..."

XXXxxxXXX

Crystal City

4:58 p.m.

Mulder wearily shrugged out of his coat and placed his keys on the small table by the coat rack. It had been a long drive and his partner was driving him up the wall with his patronizing eyes about everything he ate. It was bad enough that the man had to witness him getting sick twice, but now it seemed like he watched what Mulder ate like a hawk.

Picking up his suitcase, Mulder headed towards the bedroom. Over the last couple of weeks, Walter had encouraged him to leave more and more clothes and belongings at his apartment. He'd all but moved in by now. Only returning to his apartment for files or to check his messages.

Right now he just wanted to take a nap and forget about the case and all the paperwork he had waiting for him tomorrow. Walter would be home in a few hours and maybe they'd order a pizza.

A large pepperoni pizza...with black olives and mushrooms and... Damn, but he was hungry. He opened the door of the bedroom and stepped inside.

And was quickly grabbed from behind.

Dropping his suitcase he reached up to break the hold the other man had on his shoulders.

"I missed you, sexy..." Walter's voice was low and husky in his ear. It took Mulder a minute before he relaxed into the arms.

"What're you doing home? Is the FBI aware of - mmmph" The rest of his sarcastic comment was lost as Skinner spun him around and silenced him with his lips.

Forgetting what he was going to say anyway, Mulder gave in and wrapped his arms around his lover, deepening the kiss.

When they finally came up for air, he was amused to note that Skinner's lips looked quite swollen, he looked well-kissed. "So you 'did' miss me..."

Walter growled and backed him up, throwing him down on the bed and then pinning him at the wrists. "Shall I show you how much?" Hips ground against hips as the two battled for dominance in the position.

Later, as they lounged in bed eating pizza and watching the news, Mulder found himself humming with contentment. No matter how bad a case or how bad he was feeling about his own problems, Walter always seemed to make him feel secure somehow. Setting his piece of pizza down, he leaned over and kissed his lover's greasy lips.

"What was that for?" Walter smiled, a bit surprised at the unexpected affection.

"Just because..."

Skinner smiled and kissed him back. Mulder idly wondered if Skinner had ever wanted kids.

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Crystal City

10:13 p.m.

Alex slipped inside the apartment and shut the door. The noises from up the stairs made him grind his teeth. A month - one fucking month he was gone and the rug had been pulled out from beneath him.

Mulder was in Skinner's bed. Living with the bald son-of-a-bitch. Playing house. It was so fucking domestic, it made him sick. Or as close as Mulder ever was to being domesticated. He was still haring off on his own whenever he smelt an X-File in the wind, but from what Alex's sources told him...he always returned to Skinner's apartment.

And this ate him up inside. He'd never imagined Mulder would go back to Skinner. That they'd had a disastrous affair once had been bad enough. The sounds upstairs finally ceased and Alex smirked. 'Can't keep it up for long, huh, Wally?'

Alex was tempted to creep up the stairs and take a peek, but decided he wouldn't be able to keep himself from putting a few new holes in the thick-necked bastard.

Besides - he knew his Fox. Settling back into the shadows he waited.

Sure enough, fifteen minutes later a soft creeping figure came down the stairs, heading towards the living room. The TV flickered to life, muted and Alex watched from his hiding place as Mulder lay down on the couch, head on the crook of his elbow, staring mindlessly at the screen.

Alex squinted in the dim light, trying to gauge just 'how' satisfied Mulder was these days. A sudden noise on the stairs again sent him ducking back behind the Ficus plant.

"Mulder?" Skinner asked with a sleepy low rumble.

"Oops, caught," a dry chuckle as Mulder sat up, clutching the remote.

"What's wrong?"

"Nothing. Just couldn't sleep. Sorry I woke you."

Skinner shook his head and walked over to the couch, holding his hand out. "I missed you, that's all. Come back to bed."

Alex watched with slitted eyes as Skinner led the other man back to bed like a recalcitrant child. Didn't Skinner even know about Mulder's rampant insomnia? That he didn't like lying in bed, staring at the ceiling all night with no hope of respite? The nightmares that plagued him when he 'did' finally fall asleep? That he couldn't be held too tightly at night - be crowded in - trapped when he woke from those dreams...

Alex knew.

Knew everything about Fox William Mulder. He'd been studying the man for over 10 years and he knew the man's past - his fears - his needs... He knew every idiosyncrasy...every quirk.

And as he watched the two disappear up the stairs, he felt the burning rage within grow - he knew Fox Mulder perfectly.

And Fox Mulder was HIS.

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Chapter 3 by Nikita

Author's Notes:

Summary: Something's up...Mulder and Skinner's domestic bliss is about to be disrupted.

Disclaimer: Don't own 'em, they own me. Otherwise I might have a life of my own. Not that I'm complaining...

Warnings: M/M slash, mpreg, angst, h/c, relationships, triangles. All the really great stuff. Oh, and schmoop - this chapter's got a great heap of schmoop, but there'll be plenty of angst as well, not to fear.

Author's Notes: I don't live in New England - I live in the Midwest, so if you 'do' live there and find my geography and/or logic screwy...please forgive me. :) All counties named are real, but unrecognizable to the point of fiction...which this after all.  
7:45 a.m.

Mulder woke to an empty bed. Apparently coming home early yesterday had meant Skinner would leave early today. Rubbing his eyes, he slowly sat up and groaned as his morning nausea woke along with the rest of him.

Using the master bathroom, he threw up according to his custom and then luxuriated in a hot shower before dressing for work. He felt an unusual fatigue this morning. Despite their evening together, Mulder had ended up rather restless last night, unable to sleep as he worried about telling Skinner about his 'sickness'. He'd tried to sneak down to the TV in the living room, but hadn't counted on his lover waking up. He still had no idea what he was going to do about the pregnancy...he had to tell Walter and Scully, but he was dreading the confrontations. And he was so tired...

As he walked to his car, which was parked in the guest slot of the parking garage, he felt the hairs on the back of his neck prickle.

He was being watched.

Casually glancing around the garage as he opened his door, he noted several empty cars, but no one nearby. The nagging feeling didn't cease, however, as he pulled slowly out of the garage. He was careful driving to work but no cars seemed to tail him.

And yet the feeling stayed with him all the way to the Hoover building.

XXXxxxXXX

Hoover Building  
8:55 a.m.

"Hey, Mulder...what's the matter, man? You don't look so good." Doggett tossed the folder on his desk and walked over to Mulder's. The man was hunched over the desk and seemed rather tired.

"Thanks. Have you finished that report yet? Kersh's on the warpath again. Looking for an excuse to deny the case I'm trying to open." Mulder avoided his eyes and stared at the papers in front of him.

John shuffled the paper on his desk and handed him a copy of the report. "I talked with the local p.d. again. Still no sign of Davids, but no further disappearances have been reported. It doesn't really match your pattern, Mulder. It's entirely possible the man just left his wife or he was hijacked...any number of explanations."

Mulder barely glanced up at him before returning back to his work, dismissing both Doggett and his comments. Sighing, John returned to his desk and went back to his own paperwork.

The day was uneventful and fairly quiet except for the occasional grunt from Mulder. Each time

John looked up, he noticed the other man rubbing his temple or popping an aspirin. He knew better than to say anything, though. It was only when Scully appeared at lunch with takeout that Mulder finally seemed to come to life a bit.

"Hey, Scully. Slumming it?" Mulder joked as he pulled a folding chair out for her. He seemed both pleased and nervous around her.

"Yep. I got you the usual, burger and fries; I give up on you and nutrition. And, John, I got you the same. Is that okay?" Doggett smiled as he found himself included in their ritual. Usually the two disappeared for lunch once a week without a word to him.

"Yeah, thanks." He pushed some more papers out of the way to make room for her lunch on the space on his desk. Mulder's was unusually full.

"...And a salad for me. So any news on the Davids' case?"

Doggett listened with half an ear while Mulder muttered on about UFO sightings in the general area while he watched Scully dig into her salad. She was so unusual - a combination of no-nonsense FBI agent, yet still feminine and soft underneath. Her fingernails, for instance, gleamed and were carefully manicured. Her heels were unusually high and showed off the curve of her leg. And her personality was so striking and intriguing. She was a focused, intelligent woman on the job, but often showed glimpses of an interesting background and belief system.

He often found himself wondering what she was like in her off-hours. What did she like to do? Read, watch movies, go out? When he'd met her she had been so focused on finding Mulder and afterwards...well, losing the baby had been tough on her obviously. She'd switched over to Quantico so fast; Doggett hadn't had as much time to really get to know her.

Not that he had much of a chance anyway. She was utterly devoted to Mulder - anyone could see it. She had worked many years as his partner and her dedication and sheer determination in finding Mulder had led John to believe there was something 'more' to their relationship than mere partnership.

Which was why he'd been surprised that he hadn't seen much more of a personal relationship between the two of them. They were close, yes, but beyond friendship they were strictly professional. They still consulted one another on the job and occasionally went out to lunch together, but that was all as far as Doggett could tell.

Perhaps it was Mulder who kept the relationship from going any further. Maybe Scully had moved on to Quantico to put distance between the two of them because of it... Doggett wondered if it were a case of unrequited love that kept Scully single and so obviously sad at times.

As he considered this, Scully caught his gaze on her and quirked an eyebrow. Doggett quickly added his own thoughts on the case to cover and was somewhat relieved when she turned her focus off of him once more.

Finishing her salad, Scully crumpled her napkin and tossed it into the paper takeout bag. "So, Mulder how are you feeling? Is the nausea any better?"

Doggett quickly glanced over at Mulder who was wincing.

"Uh, yeah...somewhat." He avoided her eyes as he stuffed his wrappers in the trashcan; he glanced up at Doggett and caught his eye. 'Don't contradict me' his eyes clearly said.

Doggett kept his mouth shut and Scully narrowed her eyes, but nodded. "Well, your color seems a little better. You'll tell me if you have any more symptoms, won't you? When was the last time

you saw a doctor anyway?"

"I'm looking at one right this minute," he answered with a grin.

Scully rolled her eyes and took her leave.

As the door shut behind her, John leaned back in his chair. "So what's this about being sick? And why are you trying to hide it from everyone?"

Mulder glared at him as he turned back to his computer. "It's just a touch of the flu. I'm fine; I just don't want her on my back about it. She's been fussing after me ever since -" he stopped in mid sentence and abruptly stood with his coffee mug, heading out the door.

Doggett watched him go before finishing the sentence. "Since you 'died.'"

XxXxX

Crystal City  
7:45 p.m.

Mulder parked his car in the visitor space with a weary sigh. Finally...it had been a long day. Scully's visit had only served to remind him once more that he really needed to confront his situation with both her and Skinner soon. But he felt a crippling dread whenever he thought about it.

Setting his car alarm, he walked briskly toward the elevator. Skinner had called him that afternoon to invite him to dinner. It happened every evening he was in town and inevitably ended up with him spending the night. Being that it was Friday, Mulder looked forward to a nice long weekend in bed if he could help it. The thought cheered him up and he found himself smiling slightly with anticipation.

As he waited for the elevator car to arrive, he whistled tunelessly. It was only as the doors began to open that he had the 'feeling' again.

Someone was watching.

Turning to scan the parking lot behind him he saw only empty parked cars. One hand on his gun, he took one last look before entering the elevator. Silence. The feeling remained, however, as the doors closed and Mulder found himself tense - all thoughts of sex and relaxation gone.

But the tension slowly eased as the elevator opened on the third floor and he approached his lover's apartment. Not bothering to knock, Mulder used his own key to get into the apartment. He'd been pleasantly surprised when Skinner had tucked it into his jeans one night whispering that he wanted Mulder to feel welcome anytime. Since then he'd used it several times, but each time he pulled it out of his pocket he was reminded of that night and it made him smile no matter how tired or edgy. Tonight was no exception, as he slipped the keys back into his pocket, he felt the usual smile on his face as he set his suitcase down.

"Hey, honey, I'm home," he called out. Sure enough, his lover poked his bald head out of the kitchen with a mock frown.

"Are you ever going to get tired of that joke?"

"Nope," Mulder grinned unrepentantly, "what's that I smell?"

Skinner dropped the fake frown and smiled smugly. "Spaghetti, hungry?"

"Starved." Mulder loosened his tie as he strolled into the kitchen. Apparently Walter had been busy since he'd gotten off of work. The kitchen was a wreck, cutting board full of snippets of onion and green pepper, three opened cans of tomato sauce, various opened herb bottles scattered on the counter...but the biggest mess was the red splotches of spaghetti sauce liberally decorating the stove top. Skinner was humming as he stirred what looked like a large vat of spaghetti sauce.

"Um...what's going on here?" he asked cautiously as he skirted a red stain on the kitchen floor.

"Told you - spaghetti. My grandmother made the best spaghetti sauce in the world and I wanted to make it for you. It's been a while, but I remember the recipe." Skinner turned and held out a large orange-stained wooden spoon out. "Here, try it, it's almost done."

Mulder wisely repressed any further comments and obediently opened his mouth. And promptly burned his mouth. "Ow, I mean...yum. I'll just go take a quick shower and freshen up." Mulder tried to rub a burnt bottom lip surreptitiously.

Walter nodded, oblivious to his pain, and turned back to his masterpiece. "Don't be too long, the noodles are nearly ready." As Mulder left the room, he noticed that his lover was humming again. He wondered if it were the same tune he was hearing in his mind, the twilight zone theme.

It turned out that Skinner 'did' indeed cook a good spaghetti dinner. Once sufficiently cooled, the sauce was rather spicy, but sweet. After a second bowl, Mulder proclaimed it the best he'd ever eaten to a very proud Skinner who passed him another piece of garlic toast.

"My grandmother taught me to cook a bit. She was Italian and insisted that tomato sauce from a jar was sacrilege. If I had more time I could have made it from fresh tomatoes and skipped the cans, but I was too hungry for that. Did you really like it?"

Mulder smiled fondly and reached for the other man's hand. "I really liked it. It was even better than Mrs. Scully's and I thought her food was heaven compared to my usual takeout."

Walter sipped his wine and leaned back in his chair, relaxed. "What about your mom? Was she a good cook?"

Mulder stared at his own glass of water; he'd declined the wine saying he was tired. "Oh...she was all right, I guess. But she didn't cook much after Samantha...she kind of let those things go. We ate out sometimes, but mostly I cooked for myself. I make a mean bowl of Wheaties."

"Hey," Skinner said softly.

Mulder looked up from his glass and saw a sad smile on his face. Mulder smiled back, but the mood had been broken. Standing, he began to pile the dishes. "Since you cooked I'll do the dishes." He went into the kitchen before Skinner could respond. It was only once he looked around the kitchen again that he realized that there was a fate worse than talking about his childhood. He groaned and grabbed the 409 and a roll of paper towels.

XxXxX

The kitchen relatively clean and dishes finally in the dishwasher, Mulder put his feet up on the coffee table with a tired sigh. He was so tired...he didn't even have the energy to turn on the TV. He'd rather just sit here on the sofa and snooze...

The couch dipped suddenly and something was pressed into his hands. He opened his eyes to look at the object in his hands, a piece of chocolate cake on a paperplate. Skinner chuckled softly as he flourished his own piece.

"I thought you could use a reward after all that hard work. I bought this on the way home at that bakery across the street. It looked so good I couldn't help myself. And look - a paper plate so you won't have to do anymore dishes...I've got better plans for you anyway..." he said huskily, leaning in for a kiss.

Mulder felt himself slowly relax once more as they enjoyed their dessert together. Skinner rambled on about his childhood and his old neighborhood while Mulder listened quietly. After awhile the rumble of Skinner's voice softly drifted off and Mulder found himself drifting quietly to sleep.

He woke to a tug on his arm. "Come on, Fox. Off to bed with you..." Mulder protested, but finally allowed himself to be shuffled along to the bedroom.

As they passed the bathroom, Mulder's bladder woke him enough to make a detour. He could hear his lover in the other room turning down the bed and undressing. It was such a domestic scene that he smiled to himself in the mirror as he brushed his teeth. It was so comforting...Skinner always took such good care of him lately...making sure he ate and slept in a real bed snuggled against him...for the first time in his life he felt...loved.

That word made him look at himself closer in the mirror. Love. Could he really feel that? Did Walter feel that way? Thinking back on it...neither one of them had actually said it. They teased, they kissed, but neither one had actually said the 'L' word. Mulder hadn't dared approach the word himself until now.

After all...the relationship had been so unexpected, a kind of second chance that was only possible because Walter said he'd regretted breaking it off with him once before. And it hadn't been about love before; Skinner had made that quite clear. So was it something more this time? Would the other man even admit it if it was? He seemed to show it, but from what Mulder could observe, the other man rarely said it. To anyone. Supposedly it was part of the reason Skinner's marriage had failed. His inability to be open up with his wife. Which meant it might be up to Mulder to say...and he didn't have much experience with saying 'I love you.' His parents had never said so. They never gave hugs or kisses beyond perfunctory and stiff greetings during their last years.

"Mulder? Are you all right in there?" Walter's voice was muffled through the bathroom door.

Mulder snapped out of his reverie and rinsed his mouth out. He didn't want to end up like his parents...he didn't want to never say the words. Life was too damn short.

Opening up the door suddenly, he took a surprised Skinner in his arms and held him close, looking into warm brown eyes, large and vulnerable without their glasses.

"I love you, Walter." He kissed the startled face before him and felt a swell of relief and happiness when the kiss was returned, arms coming around him to embrace him suddenly. As he leaned back, breaking the kiss, Skinner gave him the most beautiful smile.

"I love you, too, Fox."

Mulder forgot his tiredness for the time being as he tugged Walter with him towards the bed. Later on, as Skinner snored softly behind him, Mulder pulled the large hand draped over him down to his belly. "I hope you take the rest of the news as well," he whispered.

XxXxX

Walter woke to the tickle of hair in his face. Snorting as the hair tickled his nose, he pulled his

head back and smiled as Mulder snuggled closer, brown hair tickling his nose once more. Remembering Fox's words the night before, he smiled wider and kissed the top of the head.

"Mmmph," Mulder grunted into his chest.

"Good morning, Mary Sunshine."

That earned him a glare as Mulder rolled away. "You better not start calling me girly names. Fox is bad enough," he muttered into his pillow. Skinner frowned at that, but then grinned as he tickled the armpit as Mulder clutched at his pillow. His lover squealed a bit...a rather girly squeal he noticed, and promptly threw the pillow at him.

"Enough! What is it with you this morning, anyway?" Mulder grumped as he ran a hand through his unruly hair.

Skinner tucked the pillow under his head and grinned. "Just enjoying the view." The sheets were tangled at their feet and Mulder leered right back at him.

"Oh? I'm enjoying it myself. What did you have planned-" but suddenly he paled, clamping a hand to his lips. Mulder jumped out of the bed and raced to the bathroom before he could ask what was wrong.

The horrible retching sound that greeted him in the bathroom made his stomach twinge in sympathy. He grabbed a hand towel, wetting it before kneeling down beside Mulder. The younger man gasped and retched in turn before he finally slumped to the side, clutching the towel Skinner had handed him.

"Sorry," he whispered.

Skinner closed the lid and flushed the toilet. "Don't be silly, are you all right now? Should I call a doctor?"

"Oh, no. I'm fine now. See?" Mulder stood and smiled weakly before turning to rinse his mouth out. "In fact...I'm kind of hungry. How about some toast?"

Walter watched his lover wearily for any further signs of sickness, but the younger man seemed to recover completely from the bout of nausea as he trotted down the stairs towards the kitchen.

They sipped hot coffee and munched on toast while Mulder insisted on watching the cartoons. Skinner watched with amusement as his lover chuckled to an old Marvin the Martian cartoon. Life just wasn't boring with Mulder. As he glanced out the window at a beautiful day he was reminded of other things.

"Mulder. Mulder?"

"Hm?" Mulder glanced at him before looking back at the TV.

"You were asking me earlier what I had planned?" Mulder looked up at that and grinned knowingly. "No, not that...or rather, that AND I had hoped we might take a little trip this weekend. To my cabin."

"You have a cabin? Where?"

"It was my parents' place. It's not too far from here, about three hours away. I know it's a bit late to be asking, but if we packed now we could have lunch by the lake. It's really nice this time of year."

XxXxX

Alex watched in his side view mirror as the two men loaded up Skinner's car with bags and large cooler. Mulder looked happy and relaxed in a baseball cap, t-shirt and jeans. Skinner was his usual uptight self in khakis and a polo shirt. What in the hell did Mulder see in the man?

Obviously the two were planning some weekend trip out in the country. Alex watched the car pull out of the parking space and leave. Turning the engine on, he turned the car around and followed.

XxXxX

Doggett muted the game on TV and answered his telephone.

"Doggett."

"Agent Doggett? This is Sheriff Collins of the Knox County office. I was told to contact you or an Agent Mulder of the FBI if there were any further disappearances similar to the Davids case..."

XxXxX

The radio was playing loud as Mulder drove down the highway. Skinner had started out driving, but when he'd stopped for gas, Mulder had hopped into the driver's seat. Apparently Mulder had control issues, but it didn't bother Walter much. It gave him the opportunity to watch as Mulder sang loudly (and rather badly) to every song that came up on the Top 20.

As they finally pulled up to the cabin, he was happy to see how delighted Mulder seemed with the place. He watched as Mulder walked around the outside of the cabin, taking in the porch, roof and windows before finally entering. Every room and closet was investigated thoroughly: the kitchen, the living room and both bedrooms. He leered at Skinner as he bounced lightly on the mattress in the master bedroom, but had agreed to eat lunch first.

It was then that Walter was able to show him the best part of the land, the lake only twenty feet from their back door. He'd already carried the small boat down to the small private dock and it bobbed merrily beside it. Mulder enjoyed the view and regretted not having his swim trunks.

"Well...we could always skinny dip at night" Walter suggested with a grin. "But, I thought you might like a boat ride. Or to go fishing tomorrow morning."

Mulder gave him an uneasy look and glanced over at the boat. "Oh...uhhh...I don't think so. I tend to get seasick. I don't like boats much."

"You swim like a fish, but you don't like boats?"

Mulder shrugged and stared out at the lake without answering. It was a quiet lunch, but warm sun and fresh air was pleasant. Walter would have been perfectly content if he didn't suspect Mulder of keeping quite a few secrets about his past. Would the man ever come to trust him enough to share that part of him? What else did Mulder hide?

XxXxX

Doggett swore as he dialed the Scully's phone number on his cell phone. He'd been trying to get in contact with Mulder for the past four hours and the man wasn't answering his home or cell phone number. He'd even called the office, but Mulder hadn't been working weekends lately. What was going on with the man, anyway? He used to be fanatical about the X-Files and his

work.

"Scully."

"Agent Scully, this John Doggett. I'm sorry to disturb you on a weekend, but I was wondering if you knew where I could find Agent Mulder."

There was a pause and John wondered for a moment if she was looking at Mulder that very minute. Sitting in bed...smirking over the phone at being caught...

But the jealous little bubble popped when Scully answered with some concern. "There's no answer on his cell?"

"No, nor his home or at the office. I have some important information on a case he was interested in, but I can't contact him."

Scully let out a frustrated sigh on the other end. "Well, it's nothing new, really. Mulder's been known to take off on his own whenever he gets a tip or a theory. He might already be investigating that case on his own. There's not much you can do. Will you let me know when you do hear from him?"

John agreed and hung up, wishing he hadn't alarmed the woman on her day off. It was just like Mulder to go off on his own on this case. The man was probably already at the scene of the latest abductions. There was nothing to do but go up to Knox on his own for now.

XxXxX

Rockingham, Maine  
Sunday  
5:56 a.m.

Mulder had been fast asleep when Walter had left, apparently because the bed was cold on the other side when he woke. Whatever had possessed the man to get up before dawn to catch fish? As for himself, Mulder was quite content to lie in a warm bed with his big comfy pillow without a care in the world.

For once his morning sickness didn't appear as soon as he woke. He allowed himself to wonder...was the nausea finally going away? It would be wonderful if the headaches did, too. They had begun to frighten him lately with their frequency and intensity. They hadn't been like this since...since his illness before his abduction.

His train of thought was beginning to depress him so he decided to get up and go for a walk. The lake was quiet, but he could just make out the boat with Skinner in it at a distance. He thought about how lucky he was Walter hadn't pushed him to go. The rocking of the boat...the feeling of being trapped out there in the small boat...it made him shudder and quickly turn away, heading off into the forest.

He walked quickly through the forest, trying to lose himself in the peaceful sights and sounds of the forest. He knelt down to retie his shoelaces and suddenly froze.

Someone was watching.

A dull pain in his head blossomed as he felt his own mind stretching out...searching for the source. The pain increased, but there was a murmur...a whisper of thought.

//..he's stopped...why?...movement...from the edge of the woods...ALIEN - STOP!! - MULDER!!!

Mulder leapt to his feet and whirled around. Out of the corner of his eye he saw a dark figure in black leap out from behind a tree.

"Mulder!"

Alex Krycek was reaching out, running towards him. Mulder automatically reached for his weapon, but he had left it in the cabin. He looked again at the man racing towards him, but Krycek's hand seemed empty.

He was pointing behind Mulder. At that moment he realized the threat was not the man before him, but a being behind him. As he turned to face it - the world suddenly went black.

XxXxX

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Chapter 4 by Nikita

Author's Notes:

Author's Notes: Ah, yes, the long awaited: Walter finds out the truth scene. This chapter was difficult to write because I wanted so much information to come out and be resolved - I don't want to drag out the discovery scenes because I have so much more of a story to tell...so, I hope this is satisfying enough, because I want to move on and reveal more information about Mulder's pregnancy in the next chapter and I needed all three of our heroes to be on the right track for that to happen.

Alex watched in horror as Mulder crumpled in the hands of a large alien bounty hunter. Screaming his rage, he whipped out his stiletto as he leaped at the alien. There was a fierce struggle, but the hunter was at a disadvantage with the dead weight in his arms hampering his movements.

With one great thrust, Alex buried the weapon in its neck and jerked back, away from the bubbling green acid that poured from the small hole. Mulder was silent and still in his arms as he pulled the man away from the rapidly dissolving body.

"Mulder?! Damn it!" He tugged the body up and over his left shoulder, prosthetic pressing the legs to his chest as he hiked towards Skinner's cabin. His eyes continued to scan the forest for further threats.

XxXxX

Walter whistled as he walked up the path back to the cabin. The fishing had been good and he was quite pleased with the string of fish he'd brought back for lunch. As he approached the cabin, he paused at the sight of the back door wide open.

"Mulder?" There was no answer. He inwardly cursed himself at leaving the cabin without his gun. Pulling out the long hunting blade from his bag, he cautiously entered.

There were traces of mud on the floor - boot prints, and there was a knocked over lamp in the living room. The lamp made him dismiss the idea that Mulder had simply forgotten the door. He softly crept towards the bedroom door, where he had left his gun.

The door was slightly ajar and there was a figure on the bed, wrapped in blankets, Mulder's nose just distinguishable above the covers.

"Hold it, right there." The voice behind him was low and dangerous; Skinner recognized it instantly.

"Krycek."

Alex Krycek stepped out from behind the bathroom door, hand holding the familiar and hated object of Walter's obedience: the palm pilot.

"What have you done to him?" he growled, knife still gripped tightly in his hand.

"I saved him. Drop the knife. Now."

Walter hesitated. Not so much for himself, but for Mulder. If he dropped the knife, he'd have no way to protect his lover who might be seriously injured.

"Mulder still needs our help, Skinner. Drop the knife and I'll let you go to him. If you don't, I'll kill you and deal with him myself."

The knife dropped with a dull thud as Walter walked over to the bed, eyes flicking between Mulder and the man in the corner. As he reached his side, Walter gently pulled back the blankets. Mulder didn't move and his skin seemed flushed and feverish, but he could see no obvious wounds or blood.

"What happened? What did you do to him?"

"I did what should be 'your' job. I protected him. You're doing a lousy job, Skinner. Mulder is still at risk and yet you leave him to go off fishing?! I should just finish you now."

Skinner growled, but managed to tamp down the anger enough to answer. "And I'm supposed to believe that 'you' care about his welfare? Why is he in danger? What do your people want with him now?"

Krycek stepped forward, hand still brandishing the palm pilot. "I work for no one. The consortium is all but dead. It's the colonists that we must deal with now. They're looking for him and you led him right into their trap even after I took steps to keep him from it."

"What trap? What steps? Quit speaking in riddles."

"The case in Maine - the abductions that are being reported in the area. He's being led back to their ship, but I intercepted his calls. And then where do you take him? Maine. They must've picked up his signature somehow."

"Why? Why do they want him back? Why now?"

Krycek's arm dropped to his side, palm pilot still in his hand, but he seemed to slump slightly in defeat. "I don't know yet. They want 'something' from him."

"I have a theory..."

The weak voice from the bed startled both men as they quickly looked down at Mulder.

"Fox? Are you all right?" Skinner asked as he helped Mulder sit up against the headboard.

Krycek made a sound in the back of his throat, but he seemed interested in a response as well.

Mulder waved him off and cleared his own throat. "I'm fine," he rubbed his temples and squeezed his eyes shut. Krycek watched this closely and Mulder slowly looked up at him, gazing back just as intently, their eyes locked - they were both silent. Walter watched this uneasily, aware that 'something' was taking place between the two of them, but uncertain of exactly 'what'.

"Fox?"

Mulder blinked and looked back at him, his hazel eyes seemed dulled with pain. "I'm all right, Walter. But it seems my telepathic abilities are returning. As they did when the artifacts were near me. And I think it was the same...before Oregon. They had disappeared after I woke up in the hospital, but they've come back for the third time."

Walter swallowed heavily over a sudden lump in his throat. "Is it...is it the same? You hear voices?"

"I hear your thoughts. And Alex's. But that's all for now. I'm not sure what would happen in a crowd or in the city. I have to really concentrate at it. I have to be 'listening' to hear you."

Alex. He'd called Krycek, Alex. And the other man had noticed if the smirk was any indication. Walter repressed the jealousy and tried to focus on the situation at hand. Fox squeezed his hand.

//I love you, Walter. There's nothing to be jealous about.//

Skinner jumped at the voice in his head, his mouth hanging open. "Fox..."

//It's me...it's okay. I figured it was the easiest way to get you to believe me...//

"I believe you. Is this why you think the colonists are looking for you?"

"No....or rather, I don't think that's all of it," Mulder said aloud in a tired voice. "I've been keeping something from you. Something I was afraid to even think about, really. But I'm going to have to face it now... There's something...odd...about my body."

Krycek stepped closer, his knee brushing the bed. Mulder glanced at him, but didn't otherwise react. Skinner wished the man would leave, but Fox shook his head slightly at the thought.

"What is it, Fox? You can tell me anything."

Mulder sighed and tried to sit up straighter on the bed, tugging his hand as if to pull away. Walter hung on, though and squeezed it reassuringly.

"All right...Walter, I'm pregnant."

XxXxX

Knox, Maine

"Damn it!" Doggett swore as he stuffed the cell phone in his pocket. He still couldn't get through to Mulder, wherever he was and the case wasn't going well. Four more people were missing and it was beginning to seem like Mulder was one of them. He was going to have to contact Scully again.

Dialing her number, he tried his best to regain control of his temper.

"Scully."

"Agent Scully - "

"Have you heard from him?" she interrupted, much to his irritation.

"No, that's why I'm calling."

There was a brief pause before she answered. "That's it. I'm going over to his apartment and see if I can find anything. You check the office and keep trying his cell."

John opened his mouth to respond, but she'd already hung up. Damn, the woman was tenacious when it came to Mulder. What would it be like to have someone feel that way about him? His wife sure hadn't.

XxXxX

Mulder watched anxiously as Walter's face showed a series of emotions: confusion, shock, incredulous humor and then blank.

"Huh?" he finally said.

Mulder opened his mouth, but Alex beat him to it, snickering with derision.

"He said: he's pregnant, Wally. You knocked him up. You know...put a bun in his oven-"

"Alex." Mulder's voice was low and dangerous as he glared at the snarling man in the corner. He really wished Alex would leave just then - he was only making the whole matter that much worse. Yet at the same time...he didn't want Alex to go anywhere. There was something about the idea of him leaving...disappearing...that made him every bit as anxious as the thought of Walter leaving.

As he looked back at the other man sitting next to him, he began to fear that that was 'exactly' what Walter would do. His lover continued to sit unnaturally still next to him. He hadn't even reacted to Alex's taunts; he was still staring at Mulder with an impenetrable expression. His mind seemed awash in conflicting emotions so strong that Mulder couldn't read the other man's thoughts.

"Walter?" he asked cautiously. Skinner blinked and his eyes drifted down to Mulder's belly without speaking.

"Look- I know this sounds insane and you don't believe me, but-"

"I believe you" Walter said quietly, his eyes still focused downwards.

"You do?" now it was Mulder's turn to stare incredulously at his lover.

Walter looked up with a small smile and chuckled, he reached over and grabbed Mulder's hand and squeezed it hard. "I don't know how or why...but I know that it's true. I believe you..."

They were staring at one another intensely for several minutes before they heard a cough.

"Ahem...well, I hate to break up this lovely little scene, but aren't you two the slightest bit curious as to HOW?" Alex's voice was rough, but Mulder saw only casual disdain when he looked up at the younger man. Mulder tried to listen to his thoughts to see what he was thinking, but Alex's mind was blank...as if he had thrown shields up.

"I'm not sure how, actually. And no, Alex - he couldn't have 'knocked me up,' if my symptoms are anything to go by I was pregnant at least a month or two before we were - before we got back together."

Mulder noticed that Alex seemed to relax at this bit of news, his eyes lost a bit of their flinty coldness and he sat down on the edge of the bed.

Walter, on the other hand, looked...sad. As he 'listened' to his lover's thoughts he realized his lover regretted that it wasn't his child. And he definitely didn't like Alex sitting where he was. His thoughts had turned to lunging for the palm pilot still held in the other man's hand.

Mulder decided that the standoff occurring over his head really needed to be neutralized. If they were going to figure this thing out, he needed both men at peace - or at least a truce.

"Alex." The younger man looked up at him again and Mulder found himself gazing into green eyes once more. They were so mesmerizing...their intensity...the fact that he was somehow shielding his thoughts from him made him want -- something. "I want you to give Walter the palm pilot."

Alex shot to his feet. "No."

Walter stood just as quickly, leaning over the bed. "Give it to me!"

The two traded insults and Alex's thumb was threateningly close to the pilot's controls. Mulder rubbed wearily at his temples before shouting: "Damn it! Stop, both of you!"

There was a sudden silence as both stared down at him.

Mulder threw back the covers and swung his legs down, intent on standing up. Walter moved to help him, but Mulder waved him off, wanting to do it himself. He stood, albeit shakily, on his own two feet and glared at the two of them.

"Walter, Alex did save me today - no matter what his motives, I believe we can trust him to that extent. And Alex, either hand over the palm pilot or put it away - there is no need to threaten ANYONE here. We've got enough to deal with from the aliens, I need to be able to trust the two of you not to kill each other."

Neither one of them had the grace to look apologetic, but Alex did put the palm pilot into the inside pocket of his leather jacket. Walter continued to watch the other man and both waited awkwardly for Mulder to continue.

"Thank you. Now, if no one minds, I'd like to clean up and eat something. Walter, you stink of fish - go take a shower. Alex and I will make some breakfast and then we'll all figure something out."

XxXxX

42 Hegal Place  
9:45 a.m.

Scully knocked briefly before letting herself into Mulder's apartment. It was empty. She kept her gun out as she cautiously stepped into his living room; the apartment was silent and still - the air musty as if it had been shut up for a long time.

"Mulder?"

There was no response as she slowly took in the state of the apartment. The coffee table held a few scattered magazines and papers, but nothing important. Seeing his answering machine blink rapidly, she pressed play. There were 28 messages in all, several were from her or Doggett and there were a few from the lone gunmen. Most of them were recent, but a few were as old as a week ago - why hadn't Mulder erased them by now? Glancing at his desk she noticed it seemed cleared off and there was a faint layer of dust.

She turned on his computer and glanced at the fish tank while she waited for it to boot up. There were two fish floating belly-up. Wrinkling her nose, she turned back to the computer, but she had no success with logging on - Mulder had changed his password again and none of the usual words or phrases worked.

She abandoned the desk and moved on into the bedroom, his room was the same mess the last time she'd checked it, but the closet seemed rather empty of clothes. Checking his dresser, she found a few t-shirts and a pair of sweat pants. The hamper was practically empty as well. Where were all of his suits and casual clothes?

The bathroom was fairly clean, but looked unused, the medicine cabinet was practically empty - no razor, shaving cream or toothbrush. Scully walked slowly back through the apartment and went into the kitchen. Mulder didn't usually keep much food there at the best of times, but a quick inspection confirmed that there wasn't a bit of food in his refrigerator that wasn't moldy beyond recognition.

As she locked up after herself, she frowned in worry. Mulder hadn't been living in his apartment for some time now.

XxXxX

Walter scrubbed briskly with the soap and washcloth. He hadn't wanted to take the time to shower with the threat of aliens in the forest and especially Krycek inside the cabin, but Mulder had looked faintly nauseous from the fish smell.

And now he knew 'why' Mulder had thrown up yesterday morning - morning sickness. The thought made him pause in his washing. Pregnant - Mulder was pregnant. It made his head swim a bit at the oddity, but at the same time it made him smile. The thought of a child - one that might call him 'daddy' made him feel amazingly happy. He'd never seriously thought about kids. Sharon's doctors had told them that she was barren five years into the marriage and he'd taken it in stride at the time. Neither one of them had discussed adoption and he'd been content to let the matter drop. After all, he'd been busy climbing the career ladder and a child would mean more bills, stress and responsibility. Once they'd divorced, he'd told himself that they were lucky not to have any kids to disappoint or fight custody over.

He'd told himself that...but it was only now that he realized he'd been lying to himself.

He quickly rinsed himself off and grabbed a towel as he hurried to get ready. He wanted to talk to Mulder - start making plans and figuring out what they would do. As he dressed, he heard the faint chatter in the kitchen and frowned. Krycek. The bastard had no place here.

Walter walked quietly towards the kitchen, as he neared the door, he stopped, listening.

"You can't be serious about the man, Mulder. What do you see in him?"

"He loves me, Alex. Why are you acting so jealous?"

Peeking around the door, Walter saw Krycek's eyes narrow. "Jealous? Of 'him'?" Mulder's back was to him, but Walter knew his lover was raising his eyebrows at him, and he had a point - Krycek 'was' acting like a jealous lover.

There was a painful pause before Krycek finally responded. "I've been watching you for years, Mulder. Before I was ever assigned as your partner. I never agreed with the consortium, I didn't want to hurt you. I did everything I could to avoid it... I 'know' you, Mulder. I know how you can't sleep at night. Why you can't stand boats, why you can't stand up to your mother no matter how many times she's hurt you. I know about your past and what you need... I know everything and I

love you."

Walter gripped the doorjamb painfully to keep from speaking. The bastard 'dared'...but he wanted to hear Mulder's response - he 'needed' to hear Mulder's response to that.

Mulder's shoulders were tense and he set down the pan in his hands, turning to face the other man. "You 'don't' know me Alex. You've been watching me for over a decade? That means nothing. I love Walter. I belong with him. He cares about me and he doesn't betray me." The words were harsh, but the tone seemed sad.

Krycek flushed, opening his mouth to argue. But Mulder wouldn't have it. "No. Just stay quiet. I'm 'happy' Alex. If you really cared about me you'd be happy 'for' me. I like being with him. Spending time with him... I fall asleep in his arms and sleep like a baby most nights. He's THERE for me. You've never been there before..."

Walter felt a surge of warmth at the words and he felt ashamed to have doubted Fox's love. He stepped into the kitchen and Krycek snapped his mouth shut on whatever it was he was going to say and turned back to the coffee maker and poured them each a cup of coffee.

Mulder didn't glance up, simply turned his attention back to the stove where he was scrambling eggs. Walter realized that Mulder must have sensed his presence at the door and knew he'd been eavesdropping. Deciding to ignore what had happened, he put some bread in the toaster and set out the cream, sugar and butter. Krycek sat down with his coffee, eyes focused on his cup without a word.

It was a tense breakfast as they all sat down to the eggs and toast. Well - Mulder ate, his eyes on his plate, but Walter only picked at the food feeling guilty. Krycek ignored them all and continued to stare into his coffee, food untouched at his side.

The tension was thick enough to cut it with his butter knife, but Walter studiously spread margarine on his toast instead. His cell phone chirped suddenly nearly making him drop the knife. Mulder and Krycek looked up with interest.

"Hello?"

"Sir, this is Agent Scully...I'm sorry to disturb your weekend, sir..." her voice was nearly frantic.

Walter glanced up and looked into Mulder's eyes. "That's fine, Agent Scully - what can I do for you?"

"Sir, I'm looking for Agent Mulder. Agent Doggett has been trying to contact him for the past two days, but he's not answering either his home or cell phone..."

Walter glanced at Krycek, what had he done to Mulder's phone, anyway? "Perhaps he's simply taking some time off..."

Scully was quick to head him off, "Sir, I went by his apartment - I was worried about him. And from the state of his apartment...sir, I don't think he's been staying there much lately. I'm concerned-"

Mulder looked ready to take the phone out of his hand, but he held his hand out to forestall him. "I understand, Agent. Have you talked to A.D. Kersh?"

"No, sir, but Mulder isn't technically missing unless he doesn't show up for work tomorrow morning -"

"Good. I think we should discuss this in private, Scully. I'm not currently at home, but I can meet you there within two hours, is that acceptable?" He raised an eyebrow at Mulder who nodded.

"Yes, thank you, sir." Scully sounded so relieved that he felt guilty for withholding Mulder's whereabouts even that long.

As he hung up, he looked back at the other men. "All right, Fox, I suppose it's time she found out the truth about us. And the baby."

Mulder nodded with a weak smile. "I would have told her sooner, but I'm not looking forward to being poked and prodded. She'll put me through every test imaginable."

Krycek finally spoke up, "You should take better care of your health, Mulder. You need to make sure both the baby and you are healthy."

Walter resisted glaring at the man for taking the words right out of his mouth. It was hard enough to say, "He's right, Fox."

Mulder waved in mock surrender, "I know, I know...it might actually be worth it just to see the look on her face, though," he added with a grin.

Walter nodded sympathetically on Scully's behalf, "She'll be a bit shocked to find out you're pregnant, I suppose," he said dryly.

Mulder's grin got wider. "No, after the X-Files, I think she'll be more surprised about the two of us."

Krycek stood, clearing his throat. "Your apartment is probably under surveillance, your little disappearance this weekend has likely been noticed by more than Scully and Doggett. And as for the bounty hunter - his disappearance will be noted as well, probably already."

Mulder nodded. "How is it that he found me here, anyway? You intercepted my phone calls to keep me away from the area where they're waiting for me."

"Yes, but Wally here led you close enough - I think they might have picked up your signature, they've had you on their ship before. The experiments..."

Mulder looked away quickly and nodded. "Yes, I guess the best thing to do is to leave now, anyway. They might come back."

Walter watched him leave the room hurriedly and found himself alone in the room with Krycek.

The other man turned to glare at him. "Are you going to let them take him from you again, Skinner?"

"I didn't -"

"You DID. He was standing ten feet away from you and they took him right out from under your nose. And today you were out fishing. Who's going to protect him?!" he yelled.

Walter stalked forward, grabbing Krycek's jacket and shoving him against the wall behind him. "I will," he growled.

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Chapter 5 by Nikita

Author's Notes:

Author's Notes: Plenty of action and revelations in this one, folks. : ) Also, // means telepathy just

in case that wasn't obvious. This story shifts in points of view - a break in the story usually marks a shift in pov - I hope this isn't too difficult to follow.

Once again - I want to remind you that I am altering events past season 8 - making up my own mytharc as I go from there. No supersoldiers, Knowle, or any of that silly season 9 junk. I find the Smiths, hybrids, and the bounty hunter far more interesting, personally. I've manipulated the myth to my own ends. Enjoy.

Mulder shoved the last of his and Walter's clothes into their bags, wanting to get out of the cabin as soon as possible, but as he zipped his bag up he felt a sudden wave of dizziness and had to sit down on the edge of the bed.

He briefly considered calling out to Walter, but decided he just needed a few moments alone. The tension and animosity between the two men in the other room was wearisome. But he couldn't help but think of the events that were quickly changing his life in a matter of hours.

Alex Krycek had decided to pop back into his life again. It really should be no great surprise to him since the man always seemed to turn up like a bad penny in his life, but this time had been different - he'd saved him from the Bounty Hunter and seemed genuinely concerned about him. The thoughts and emotions he'd sensed from the man upon waking up (other than hostility to Skinner) had been solely concerned with Mulder's health and well-being.

Mulder had been taken aback at sensing such a depth of emotion - he'd pushed deeper into Alex's mind, hoping to finally get the truth from the man, and found that those feelings extended into the past and how much Alex regretted how his actions had betrayed Mulder's trust. But the flow of thoughts and emotions had stopped suddenly as soon as Mulder had revealed that his regained abilities. Alex was somehow shielding everything from him. Mulder wondered at the possibility of blocking...could it work in reverse? He might need that skill if the thoughts of others became a problem for him again - he'd do anything to avoid the pain and illness he'd suffered the first time he'd experienced this ability. The idea of ending up in a padded room again was enough to make him shudder.

Curious, Mulder decided to check on Alex's ability and tried once more to sense the young man in the next room...he was still blocked. In contrast, Walter's emotions were broadcasting loudly, Mulder flinched as the waves of anger, resentment, guilt and fear hit him. Mulder stood, ignoring the renewed wave of dizziness and headed back towards the kitchen. The first two emotions didn't shock him much, after all - Alex was out there, but the last two...

"...going to protect him?!" Alex yelled.

As Mulder reached the doorway, he saw Walter stalk forward, grabbing Krycek's jacket and shove him against the wall. "I will," he growled.

// Stop it! //

Walter's grip loosened slightly as he turned to look at him and Alex suddenly shoved the older man backwards, freeing himself.

Mulder stepped forward, but suddenly lurched and collapsed to his knees. The room was spinning. He squeezed his eyes shut, trying to keep his stomach from churning along with his head. Hands touched his shoulders and face and voices murmured incomprehensible syllables, but he was unable to respond he was so focused on his inner turmoil.

After a while, he had no idea just how long, but it seemed like hours, he became aware of the commotion he'd caused around him. Walter was picking him up off the floor and Alex was barking out questions and orders that made no sense to Mulder. But it was the emotional chaos of the two that made the biggest impact on him. The broadcast of emotions and thoughts were so

loud they worsened his burgeoning headache.

Concern, fear, love, impatience, want, urgency, worry...the emotions were mixed and varied from one moment to the next. As Mulder focused on trying to sort out the emotions and chatter of thoughts, he realized that he was receiving from 'both' men. Whatever barrier or shields Alex had put up before were gone and he was broadcasting as loudly as Walter.

Mulder lifted his head and looked at Alex. The younger man's face was open for the first time since Mulder had known him. A vulnerable mix of love, concern and worry - at that moment Mulder felt his own heart pound with the dawning realization that he felt the same love for Alex...

"Fox? Are you all right? Should we call a doctor?" Walter asked uncertainly.

Mulder looked over at his lover, wondering if Walter had noticed his reaction to Alex. It was tough to tell - his lover looked concerned but there was also something else - something harsh in his tone. Mulder blinked and focused on the question.

"Yes, I'm fine. I don't think doctors or hospitals are going to be in my near future, anyway. It's too risky. Besides, I just got a little dizzy, I'm tired and I moved too fast. I feel a bit better already."

XxXxX

Walter had felt his heart jump into his throat when Mulder had collapsed in front of them moments ago. He should have realized that Mulder was worn out and feeling sick, but instead of taking care of him, he'd been wasting time fighting with Krycek. Not wanting to make the same mistake again, he watched Mulder closely for further signs of illness, but his lover did seem a little better. The color was back in his cheeks and his eyes were focused.

"Are you sure?" Walter frowned down at his lover in concern, but Mulder simply nodded.

"I'm sure," Fox answered a bit impatiently. Walter decided that Scully would be better able to determine Mulder's health than he could.

"Then I guess we should get going. Scully's expecting us..."

Fox looked over at Krycek at that point and Walter slowly turned to look at the other man as well.

Where he and Mulder were going, back to his apartment which he now shared with Mulder - back to their life together, Krycek had no part in and Walter could see the realization come across his face like a physical blow. The younger man nodded curtly in acknowledgement and headed towards the door.

Mulder stood suddenly and Walter felt his heart begin to pound. As Fox stepped forward and Krycek froze, turning back to him. He wondered if they were communicating telepathically, but in the next moment Mulder spoke.

"Alex...thank you. You were there for me today." Krycek nodded, his face a stone mask as he continued to stare at Mulder.

Walter cleared his throat. "Yes, I want to thank you, too..."

Krycek's eyes darted in his direction and he gave one last jerk of his head in acknowledgement before he headed back towards the door.

"Alex, wait!" Mulder reached out and grabbed the sleeve of his jacket - stopping the other man in his tracks.

"What?" The tone was choked, but still abrasive. Skinner felt shocked at the level of hurt he could hear in the man's voice - was he really that human...that vulnerable?

Mulder tugged him back in, holding both shoulders now. "You'll always have a place in my heart, Alex...I do love you," and kissed him briefly on the lips.

Walter was jealous, of course he was, his lover had just kissed his archrival in his attentions and said he loved him.

He was jealous, and yet - even now, Mulder was letting go of Krycek's jacket and backing up a step. Krycek's eyes flashed on his own once more before whirling away from both of them and slamming the door behind him. Walter looked from the door to Mulder, who had wrapped his arms around himself, his knuckles white as he gripped his biceps. Reaching out, he pulled Mulder close to him and wrapped his own arms around the now trembling man. Mulder resisted at first, but then buried his face in Walter's neck.

Why did love have to be so damned complicated?

XxXxX

Scully tapped her fingers on the dashboard of her car as she stared at the entrance of Skinner's apartment. She sipped her Starbucks coffee and wondered for the hundredth time just 'how' long she was going to have to wait. Skinner's two hours had expired over an hour ago and she was getting restless - not to mention the fact that she 'really' needed to use the bathroom by now. She put her coffee back into the cup holder and returned to her rhythmic tapping.

A pedestrian passed her car as he walked down the sidewalk and she briefly glanced at him out of boredom. She only got a glimpse of his face and then the back of his head as he walked away from her - did he look familiar? She glanced back to take another look, but he was gone. She looked around but couldn't see him in any of the cars near her or on the stoops of any of the buildings near her. Mentally shrugging, she turned her gaze back to the apartment across the street.

'Come on, come on...' she chanted in her head.

Finally, another twenty minutes later, she recognized Skinner's car pull into the apartment's parking lot. Pulling her own car into the lot behind him, she pulled into the first visitor's spot she saw and walked over to the car.

Skinner emerged from the driver's seat and she opened her mouth to call out to him, but froze as the passenger door opened to reveal another occupant.

"Mulder!" she exclaimed.

"Hi, Scully...heard you were looking for me."

Irritation and relief warred for dominance as she reached Mulder's side. "Where in the hell have you been?"

He shrugged and smiled lopsidedly. "Walter wanted to show me his cabin and my cell phone hasn't been working, apparently."

Walter? Scully stole a glance at the A.D. to see his reaction, but he had a pleasant face on as he removed luggage from the trunk. Raising an eyebrow, she stepped back and observed the situation with a discerning eye. Something was going on - both men wore casual attire, there

were bags for both of them and as Skinner closed the trunk and walked around the side...he stood awfully close to Mulder. Almost as if...

"Scully? I think we've got a lot to talk about," Mulder said just as Skinner put an arm around his shoulders.

'Oh my god...'

XxXxX

Walter hung up the phone and listened absently to the muted conversation in the next room. He'd ordered pizza and salad for the three of them while Scully examined Mulder in the living room. He hadn't wanted to leave, but Mulder had informed him that he was starving and wanted a Hawaiian pizza with extra cheese and pineapple - right that minute. Skinner knew it was mostly a plea for privacy, but he couldn't help but wonder what exactly Scully was doing in the next room.

She had taken the news of their relationship fairly well, that is to say that she hadn't fainted or run screaming from the building yet. Walter could tell that she wasn't thrilled - perhaps it was her Catholic upbringing...or maybe it was because she wanted Mulder for herself. But as she'd stared at Mulder's hangdog expression, she'd slowly nodded and congratulated the two of them.

As if that hadn't been enough to absorb, they had then shared the news of the encounter with the Bounty Hunter, Alex Krycek's return and rescue, and finally - Mulder's revelation. Scully's immediate response was her classic eyebrow raise followed shortly by a demand for evidence to support his wild claim. Mulder had listed all of his symptoms as well as his theory for it being the reason for the attempted abduction.

And now...she was examining him. As much as Scully might doubt Mulder's pregnancy, she 'had' looked concerned at his list of symptoms - chronic nausea, dizziness and headaches. They hadn't even told her of his renewed telepathic abilities yet...Mulder was likely saving it for after dessert.

There was a soft cough from the doorway.

"Uh, sir? You can come back in now." Scully stood at the door looking a bit discomfited.

He followed Scully back into the living room where Mulder had a sardonic grin on his face as he pulled his shirt back down. He winked at Walter and then patted the seat next to him on the couch.

"I think Dr. Scully's about ready to eat her words about now," he joked.

Skinner sat down and couldn't help an inward smile at the exasperated look on Scully's face.

"Mulder - all I said was that what I found in your exam...I'll admit, I can't readily explain. You need to see another doctor, have some tests run-"

"No. No hospitals. No other doctors...what do 'you' think."

Scully sighed and sat down on the chair opposite of them. "What I found...I...if you were a woman...I'd say you were likely pregnant, but, Mulder, this doesn't make any sense! How? You say the Bounty Hunter is somehow involved in this - why? Why would they do this?"

Mulder shook his head. "I don't know...maybe it has something to do with my abduction...maybe this has even happened before - I need to look into all recent abduction reports. All I do know is that I only started noticing this a couple months after the abduction."

Scully glanced at Skinner and then back at Mulder. "Was this after...?"

Mulder smirked, "No, before. Everyone's pretty quick to blame Walter."

"Who's everyone?" she asked.

"Just Alex." Mulder looked uncomfortable at having mentioned him again. Scully noticed this and there was another glance in his direction.

"Mulder...why is it you think you can trust Krycek? He's betrayed us over and over again, just because he 'seemed' to help you this time - "

Mulder leaned forward in his seat. "Well...there's something else I haven't told you..."

XxXxX

Mulder kicked off his shoes with a tired groan. He was exhausted; the day had been one of the longest ones he could remember and certainly one of the most taxing. He could hear Walter showering in the bathroom, the rhythmic patter of the water was lulling him to sleep sitting up. He took off his T-shirt and lay down on the bed.

Scully had finally left after talking and experimenting with his telepathic abilities for a couple of hours. She now believed him on that note - it was kind of hard to ignore his voice in her head - but she was still skeptical of the pregnancy and was planning on running several tests on him as soon as she could arrange them privately.

Mulder wasn't looking forward to that part, a flash of memory concerning a bright light and the sound of a drill made shake his head viciously. 'No...it's not going to be like that at all...'

The shower stopped and Mulder turned in the bed so he would face the door when it opened. Skinner's silhouette made him smile and forget his momentary anxiety.

"I thought you'd be asleep already," the other man said with a touch of amusement.

Mulder pulled back the covers invitingly and chuckled as the other man hopped into bed. "I was waiting for you..." and leaned over and kissed him, moaning appreciatively at the hand trailing gently along his side. He sighed as the kiss ended and rested his head on the hairy chest and asleep as a hand softly stroked his hair. Safe.

XxXxX

Hoover Building  
8:05 a.m.

Mulder had the misfortune of waking with morning sickness once more that morning, but Skinner had been most considerate and had even brought him saltines. He'd followed that with some toast and decaffeinated coffee - apparently things were going to get rather healthy around the apartment if Walter had any say in it.

But now he was safe and sound in his office and his A.D. lover was upstairs and quite busy with own work...

"No caffeine, Mulder."

Mulder jumped at the voice and glanced wildly over his shoulder.

Scully.

"If you 'are' pregnant...and I'm not saying you are...then you shouldn't be drinking regular coffee." She stared pointedly at his cup, which he'd been just about to fill.

"Party pooper," he said and thrust the pot back into the machine. Filling his cup with water instead, he sat down at his desk with a sigh. "So what're you doing down here? And where's my partner?" he asked with an afterthought - no sign of Doggett and the man tended to be painfully punctual.

Scully frowned and sat down opposite of his desk. "I don't know, actually. I left him a message that I'd contacted you and told him to call A.D. Skinner if he needed to talk to you."

Mulder wondered just what else she'd left in the message, but then turned his thoughts back to the man in question. "He didn't answer his cell phone? Did you try his apartment?" he asked as he picked up his own phone. Both numbers went to answering services and he hung up in frustration.

"Looks like we've got another missing person..."

XxXxX

Doggett shifted in the chair uncomfortably and stared at the man - or whatever he was - before him. "So, are you the same Smith that disappeared from our custody?"

The man seated across from him smiled politely. "No, I am another - he died bravely. He did not betray the resistance."

John sighed, "So, why am I being kept here? I told you - Mulder's missing. I'm trying to find him, myself, I can't help you."

"He will come soon enough. I do regret detaining you, but he is under rather close surveillance by multiple sources. I am hoping it will be easier for him to come to me. I have much to tell him."

XxXxX

"Mulder, I really think I should drive. What if you have another dizzy spell?"

Mulder gave her a sardonic glance as he drove down the highway. "Scully, are you trying to tell me a pregnant person is crippled in some way? Doesn't sound like the feminist I know and love. I'm fine. Besides, I told you - the seat adjustment bar doesn't work in this car. It is stuck permanently in just the right position for my legs."

"A likely story..." she muttered, but turned back to look at the passing scenery. They were headed towards the last known heading of Doggett by the local PD. He had been heading to talk to one last witness before his planned return to D.C. Apparently, he'd never made it, but Mulder was following his own hunch as usual.

Several moments of sullen silence passed before Scully finally deigned to talk again. "So...did you tell 'Walter' where you were going?" She smirked at his irritated scowl.

"No, I report to Kersh, who happens to think it's a worthy cause to look for my own missing partner. I didn't bother to mention that you were coming - he might have had second thoughts."

"I see. And the fact that we're heading back to the area of abductions - an area you should

probably avoid considering your own recent predicament - you don't think this would concern your...lover?" she nearly choked on the last word, but managed to level him with a pointed look.

"I'm a big boy, Scully. Besides," Mulder slipped his plam out of his coat pocket and handed it to her, "I came prepared."

XXX

They pulled onto a gravel driveway of a rundown secluded house. The windows were grimy and the paint was crumbling off, but otherwise it appeared whole and livable. Mulder surveyed the surrounding property before heading up to the front door, Scully at his back.

The door creaked open at his knock and Mulder was surprised to see John's tired face peaking back at him.

"So...he was right. Where have you 'been'?"

Mulder opened his mouth to answer, but was interrupted by the face that appeared next to his partner. Smith. His fingers itched to reach for his plam, but merely waited for the morph to speak.

"I am sorry for the deception, Mr. Mulder, but I must speak with you, won't you please come in?" Smith moved carefully back, inviting them in and showing them his weaponless hands.

Scully moved first, her eyes watching both the morph and Mulder carefully as she spoke to Doggett. "Are you all right, John?"

"Fine, just tired. What about Mulder? Where was he?"

Smith closed the door after them. "Perhaps you two could discuss that in the next room, I wish to speak with Mulder in private."

Mulder nodded to the other two and they reluctantly moved towards the back of the house. Smith gestured towards two chairs on the other side of the room and Mulder shook his head impatiently.

"What is it you have to say?"

Smith remained standing as well, his face impassive. "I understand you had an unfortunate encounter with the bounty hunter recently. And that you might have some clue as to why."

Mulder narrowed his eyes, his hand brushing against his stomach. "Some clue - I suppose I do. What do 'you' know about it?"

The morph sat down on the chair with a sad smile. "That is a long story..."

Mulder sat down with a growing feeling of both dread and raging curiosity. Finally, he might get some answers, but he suspected he wouldn't like some of them.

"You know by now of the collusion between the Syndicate and the Colonists in return for the safety of their families and a select few through the process of hybridization. The Colonists deluded these men into thinking that this was the only way their race could survive the colonization force."

Mulder leaned forward in his chair, "And it isn't?"

Smith shook his head, "Haven't you ever wondered the reason why the colonists would bother with the Syndicate? Why such a powerful and technologically advanced race such as they would

need human help in their endeavors? And yet - they have been on this planet for a long time - their plans for colonization have been delayed and altered numerous times. They continue to need to study and experiment on humanity - why? The real reason behind their experiments and the delay in colonization lies in humanity's own ability to successfully resist colonization - the key is in their own dna."

"What do you mean?"

"Of all the planets the Colonists have seeded and exploited to their own ends, only Earth has ever shown a natural resistance."

"What of the rebel aliens? The ones with whom you claim to fight with against the Colonists?"

"They are resisting, that is true, but their resistance comes in the form of technology and strategy. They fight back consciously. Humanity has a natural resistance. In your own work, you came across several instances of seemingly unnatural abilities and transformations by otherwise ordinary human beings. These people are considered freaks, their existence hidden from the rest of 'normal' humanity..."

"Like Gibson Praise," Mulder whispered.

"One of several, but yes - he's an excellent example. He possesses abilities that go far beyond the current level of human evolution, but he is far from alone. Humanity has great potential and the Colonists fear this. If humanity were to discover this - if these 'mutations' were to become more prevalent..."

"And these 'mutations' - they can somehow stop the Colonists? How?"

Smith shook his head, "Not on their own, no, but together - if these mutations were encouraged, utilized efficiently...perhaps. The greatest hurdle for the Colonists has been that they do not understand the mutations or how to irradiate them from what they consider their 'cattle' - they cannot risk using them without first removing the threat and those that are naturally resistant to the oil. The vaccine alone isn't as much of a threat."

Mulder sighed and rubbed his head. "And how does any of this lead to my current situation?"

"There are those that have the most advanced mutations - those that have already proven resistant to the virus, if they were to propagate and increase the numbers..." Smith smiled at Mulder's exhalation, "Yes, you are one of them. You have proven it time and time again. As a child - you were the chosen child for hybridization. You were tested many times and showed naturally evolved traits that fascinated the scientists assigned to the experiment. Only you didn't respond as hoped in the manipulations as an alien hybrid test subject. Samantha Mulder took your place - she was moderately useful."

Mulder choked down on his rage at the dispassionate denouncement of his sister. He thought back to all of the holes and conflicting memories of his childhood - it was possible... He looked down at his belly, resting one hand there; he was beginning to feel the odd flutter there again.

Smith continued, "We first intercepted to aid your attempt with Miss Scully to produce a child. The first attempt by regular means failed, you were unlikely to have a successful birth using current human technology. We improved the process and it seemed successful at first - we were very hopeful at first...but she failed to deliver a healthy child. You, on the other hand, are stronger and healthier - you will succeed where she failed."

Mulder pushed himself up from the chair and leaned forward threateningly at the morph who simply stared back placidly. "I'm not a broodmare - or some Virgin Mary for the second coming!

Whose child am I carrying?!" Mulder's voice was panicked.

"Yours. And those who were chosen to protect you. You know them."

"Them? More than one? Who?!"

"We have taken steps to further improve the chances of a successful birth."

"What steps?"

"The chosen barer is stronger...more mentally in tune with the child and its needs..."

Mulder grit his teeth at the implication that Scully had been weak and unsuited. He slit his eyes, but stepped back from the chair and gestured for the alien to continue.

"...And the chances have been doubled in this particular endeavor."

"Doubled?"

"You carry two viable fetuses within you. The chances are doubled for a successful birth."

Mulder's mouth went dry. "Twins?" he choked out. His hand automatically went to his belly as if to confirm it.

"Fraternal. They both contain your genetic code, but with different fathers. Again, this increases the chances of a successful product. If one does not successfully integrate the desired traits and strength, the other should."

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Chapter 6 by Nikita

Author's Notes:

Information on ultrasounds, amnios and twins were obtained from online research.

Skinner was just finishing a bit of paperwork before he planned to take a trip down to the basement to check on Mulder when his phone rang.

"A.D. Skinner speaking."

"It's 1 o'clock, do you know where your lover is?" Krycek's snide voice immediately put Skinner on the defense, but an instant before he could respond he registered the warning.

"Where is he?"

"Well, just think...where's the very 'last' place he should be? Maine."

XXX

Mulder struggled to control the fury that threatened to overwhelm him at Smith's words. How dare he talk about children this way...about innocent unborn babies as if they were merely the result of an experiment?

Which they were...but they were 'his' children, damn it. And William...he didn't even speak of his dead son as if he had been human...no matter how advanced.

Smith was quiet as Mulder sat down once more in his chair, his hands unconsciously still cradling his stomach.

"Who - you said there were two fathers, who are they?"

Smith glanced at the window next to him, but it was covered with a tattered dirty curtain. He then looked back at Mulder and answered. "One of them was chosen for his own acquired resistance to the oil. He has proven to be strong, resilient and has worked for the resistance."

"Alex," Mulder whispered.

The morph nodded once before continuing. "The other was chosen not only for his strength and abilities, but also for his relations with you in the past, his emotional connection with you is even stronger than Krycek's was observed to be."

"Walter Skinner." Mulder marveled at just how much the aliens seemed to know about his personal life and his past. They seemed to know more about him than he did in some ways.

"Yes. Both men were compatible with your DNA, but also likely to respond appropriately in protecting you and the children."

Respond appropriately...Mulder stared at the morph and wondered just how much interference in emotional responses had occurred. He started to ask, but was interrupted by the front door opening.

Alex stepped in, eyes quickly scanning Mulder for injuries and then moving on to glare at the alien still sitting in the chair. "Am I interrupting?"

XxXxX

Scully had listened to the entire exchange in the next room with growing horror. The information she'd learned during the last half hour had been difficult to listen to - most especially that concerning her own pregnancy. The morph alien claimed that her son had been the product of an experiment - an attempt to create a more 'perfect' human. That she had been chosen to carry that child...and had failed.

Failed. She'd FAILED... The word continued to resound in her head as she clenched her fists - nails digging into her palms until they bled.

"Agent Scully...we can't take this - any of this - at face value," Doggett whispered. She turned to the man standing next to her and nodded jerkily. She reached up with one hand to tuck a strand of hair behind her ear and noticed the blood for the first time. John pulled out a handkerchief and she gave him a brief grimace of thanks as she blotted the blood on it.

They continued to listen as Mulder guessed the names of the fathers - Skinner? And Krycek?!

It was too much. She was just about to step into the next room and question the alien herself when she heard Krycek's voice.

XXX

Alex noticed Scully and Doggett step out of the next room, but his attention was still focused on the potential threat before Mulder. The morph had his normal placid look upon his face, but it did nothing to ease Alex's peace of mind.

"No, of course not, Mr. Krycek. Our presence reassures me that at least one of the protectors is doing his job. Where is A.D. Skinner?"

"On his way. Why? Does Mulder need protection from you?" Mulder glared at him, but he ignored it. He had a bone of his own to pick with Mulder - when they were alone.

The alien shook his head. "I have informed Mr. Mulder of his circumstances, nothing more. His well-being is in all of our best interests."

"I'm glad we agree. Scully? Perhaps now would be a good time for us to leave."

Mulder chose that moment to lose his temper. "I do not need you to tell me what to do, Alex!"

There was movement outside, just visible behind the curtain. Doggett noticed it as well and pulled back the curtain. In the distance were three rebel aliens with their usual melted faces.

Alex caught the look from Doggett's eyes and nodded. He watched the agent move over to Scully and take her by the arm. Alex reached out to do the same to Mulder, but the other man resisted him - jerking his arm out of Alex's grasp. "Damn it-" Mulder growled again.

// There are several rebel aliens heading this way. I suggest we leave before they decide to take you for safekeeping. Move, Fox. NOW. //

Alex wasn't sure if it was the use of his first name or the mental shout, but he saw Mulder flinch and then look in the direction of the window.

"Alex is right, we'll be leaving now." Mulder stayed just out of Alex's reach, but he moved towards the door of his own volition. Smith nodded with a small indulgent smile. Alex slipped his hand into his pocket and gripped the plam hard.

"Take care of him, Mr. Krycek..."

Alex glanced one last time at Smith's face in the doorway as he hustled Mulder into his car. He was surprised when Mulder didn't argue with him, and instead docilely climbed into the passenger seat, but there was no time to comment as he gunned the engine and tore down the driveway heading towards the road. In the rear view mirror he noted that Scully and Doggett were following in the other car. A cloud of dust rose as they made their escape, partially obscuring the advancing figures coming around the side of the house.

As Alex turned out of the driveway and onto the road, he noticed the aliens suddenly halt at the edge of the property and stand still.

XXX

Mulder was unnaturally silent in the seat next to him. Alex glanced at the man several times, but Mulder ignored him, his face turned away from him to stare out the passenger's side window.

"Are you all right?"

Nothing. Mulder continued to stare out at the passing countryside, but a hand went to his belly.

"Are you in pain? Do you want me to stop? Scully can-"

"Scully can't do anything about this. I'm fine. Just fine....I'm carrying two babies as an experiment in stopping the colonization force on our planet. I'm just peachy." His voice was strained and bordering on hysteria. Alex checked the rearview mirror and knew if he pulled over he'd only have Doggett and Scully interfering. Mulder needed to talk about what happened, and Alex was dying of curiosity as to what had happened in that house with Smith.

"Two babies - Smith said something about children, plural. You're having twins?"

Mulder looked over at him finally at that. "Weren't you listening at the door?"

"No. I was a bit busy tracking you down and contacting Skinner - I came in when I got there. All I heard was something about your DNA and protecting 'the children'. What did he say?"

Mulder stared at him. Several minutes of tense silence passed before he finally spoke. "I'm carrying twins...to double the chances of the right 'result'."

"What result? Why impregnate you?"

Mulder turned away again, but not before Alex saw him swallow hard. "Apparently I'm a genetic mutant and mutations in the human race make it difficult or even impossible for the colonization to occur. The rebels hope to increase the percentage of the population with these mutations and further impede the colonizing force."

"How?"

Mulder put a fist up to his mouth and shook his head. "I don't want to talk about it right now. Just drive."

"Well, what about the babies? Are they completely human then?"

Mulder shrugged and then nodded, still not looking at him. Alex was getting both concerned and a little pissed off at Mulder's avoidance. What was wrong with the man, anyway?

"Well...whose are they? Besides yours?"

Mulder suddenly grabbed the door handle. "Pull over! I-"

Alex jerked the car over onto the grass and stopped as Mulder opened the door and heaved. The car behind them stopped as they did and Scully came running out.

Doggett started to as well, but halted as he saw what the problem was. Alex decided to let Scully handle the situation and walked over to the other man. "What happened in there, Doggett? What did Smith tell him about the pregnancy?"

The older man's blue eyes pierced his own and then looked over at the side of the car where Mulder was leaning against the car. Scully was murmuring to him and he nodded jerkily, avoiding her gaze as he wiped his mouth.

"I think that's for him to say..."

XXX

Walter Skinner sat waiting in the small caf that Krycek had directed him to after he had called him and told him Mulder was safe. The restaurant was almost empty and the waitresses were in a corner gossiping over the coffee machine. The wait was aggravating for him. Ever since he'd first heard from Krycek his stomach had been turned into knots.

Why had Mulder run off like that into danger without at least telling him first? Didn't the man care at all about his own health, especially now that he was carrying a baby? If nothing else, this situation proved that Mulder couldn't be trusted to take sufficient precautions. Once he had the man in front of him he was going to shake him (no...that wouldn't be good for the baby) well, he'd find something he could do to get the man's attention...

The door jangled as a group of people entered the caf. Scully led the way, followed by a tired

looking Doggett, a sulking Mulder, and Alex Krycek, who looked as alert as ever as he surveyed the place.

Skinner was aware of the sudden attention from the waitresses and kitchen staff and so remained seated, but his gaze was directed at his lover. Mulder's head was bowed and he barely glanced at Walter before sitting down heavily in the other side of the booth. He looked faintly green. His anger cooled as the concern took over his rage and he decided to save his argument for later.

"Are you all right?" he asked Mulder.

"Hey, folks, what can I get you to drink?" A chirpy waitress plunked menus down in the center of the table before anyone could respond. Skinner waited impatiently as they ordered drinks.

Doggett and Krycek ordered sodas, but Scully intervened before Mulder could speak and ordered him a large milk, juice and water. He scowled at the tabletop, but made no protest. After ordering herself a cup of coffee, she waited until the waitress departed before answering his earlier question.

"He was sick on the way here. I think he's dehydrated and his pulse was a little thready. He should eat something and go home to rest."

Mulder smirked at that, "I'm fine, Scully."

Scully gave him a look over Mulder's head that clearly said 'you deal with him.' He ignored it and focused on his lover once more.

"So tell me what happened, Mulder. Why did you come back to Maine - what happened?"

Mulder looked up at him finally and met his gaze. His eyes were a swirl of grey and green and seemed full of pain. "Agent Doggett was missing..."

They were occasionally interrupted by the waitress, but the story finally came out about Smith and the experiment. At the mention of Scully's failed pregnancy, the tension at the table was unbearable. The entire story was shocking to Skinner, but the biggest surprise was the revelation that Mulder was carrying two babies.

"Twins?" Mulder nodded and seemed absorbed in his empty soup bowl. Walter tried to wrap his mind around the thought of TWO babies to take care of. It was daunting and yet at the same time...amazing. But whose babies were these other than Mulder's?

He was about to ask, but Scully suddenly spoke up. "I think it would be prudent to run some tests before we take any of this new information for granted. A friend of mine has a private practice and we could conduct the examination and tests there..."

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"Well, there they are..." Scully pointed.

"So...it's true? I'm having twins?"

She nodded and looked back at the monitor, "You can see both heads - here and here," she pointed them out in the ultrasound picture.

Mulder stared in awe; Walter was clutching his shoulders, leaning over him to look at the picture as well. Doggett and Krycek were somewhere in the background, just beyond his sight.

"And if you don't believe the picture..." she fiddled with a control and suddenly the room was filled with rapid heartbeats, "...that is the sound of two fetal heartbeats..." she looked at Mulder and smiled widely at his reaction.

He was stunned to hear the heartbeats...the faint fluttering, the morning sickness...none of it had really sunk in until now. It was real...the pregnancy, the twins...he was going to have children. It was a scary, but thrilling thought.

"What sex are they? Can you tell?"

Scully shook her head, "No, not yet. Determining the sex from an ultrasound is only accurate after the nineteenth week when the male testes have descended and are visible. Another option to determine the sex is an Amniocentesis, in which a small sample of the amniotic fluid is drawn from the sac surrounding the baby. Since this fluid contains the entire genetic code for the baby, it is possible to find out its sex. The advantage of this method is that one can do this test as early as the sixth week. The drawback is that it exposes the mother and the baby to unnecessary risks."

'Mother.' Mulder flinched inwardly at the term - he was a man, but technically he supposed he was the mother of these children... He pushed the thought aside and returned his attention to what she'd told him. "But, we could look at the genetic code of the babies - to see any abnormalities they might have...any mutations?"

Scully started to answer, but Walter suddenly interrupted, "What risks are you talking about?" he asked.

She sighed. "Well, there's a risk-benefit ratio which should be considered every time you make a decision to perform any invasive procedure during pregnancy. There are three major risks concerning an amniocentesis: infection, trauma and miscarriage or preterm labor. If the placenta is punctured, a significant amount of fetal blood can be transfused to the mother, which can be problematic if she - " she glanced at Mulder before continuing, "or in this case 'he' begins to build up antibodies against these red blood cells. An ultrasound done during the procedure reduces this risk, but it does not eliminate the risk. And if it were necessary to repeat our attempts at testing, the risks would go up quite a bit."

Mulder shifted out of Walter's grip and laid his head back on the table. He couldn't risk it. He couldn't stand the thought of endangering the babies' lives...

"Wouldn't you also be able to tell the paternity of the children?" Walter asked.

Scully gave Mulder one of her looks and he sighed before nodding to her. It was time to reveal one more little piece of information. Wiping the gel off of his stomach, he swung his legs over and faced his lover. Over Walter's shoulder he could see John and Alex feigning disinterest in the corner.

"There's something else Smith told me about the pregnancy...apparently they are fraternal twins and there are two different fathers. One of the babies is yours."

"Mine? How?" Mulder watched as his lover sat down on the edge of the table, his eyes wide with shock.

"Well, that's a good question. Apparently I had a little visit from the rebel alien fairy at some point. I'm trying to think back to when I might be missing some time, but I'm not sure...and then there's the question of how they got samples of your DNA..."

Walter took a minute to absorb that, his eyes coming to rest on Mulder's stomach. "You said one of them is mine...what about the other one?"

Scully crossed her arms at this point and stared in the corner where Doggett and Krycek were still standing, though they had dropped all pretense of minding their own business. Mulder was irritated at her reaction and took Walter's hand as he stood up and faced Alex as well.

"According to Smith...Alex is the other father."

XXX

Scully watched as Krycek took a sudden step forward and then halt, staring incredulously at Mulder. He seemed genuinely shocked, but she wasn't completely convinced. The rebels had apparently abducted Mulder at some point in order to perform this experiment and the last time he'd been taken, Alex Krycek had sent him right into the trap.

Had he helped the rebels in return for impregnating Mulder? His behavior lately had suggested he was unusually possessive of her former partner. As for Skinner's DNA being used, Krycek still had the palm pilot last she knew - he could easily have incapacitated the A.D. long enough to get what he needed.

It was enough, on top of all of the past betrayals and lies, to make her seriously doubt his sincerity.

Mulder, for some reason, didn't seem to despise the fact that he admitted that Krycek could block his telepathy at will.

She wasn't sure, but she thought that Doggett agreed with her assessment.

"Well, you can always do a paternity test 'after' the birth, isn't that right Agent Scully."

Scully nodded and gathered the printouts she'd made from the ultrasound. "Yes, if Mulder wants to wait... And as for the birth - well, obviously it will have to be a surgical procedure..."

Krycek was still absolutely silent, but he took one of the printouts still on the table and traced the outline of one of heads that was visible in the picture.

XXX

Skinner watched his lover turn off the bathroom light and walk around the bed to his side. He was wearing a white bathrobe and the contrast with his golden skin made him seem exotic. The slightest bulge at the belt line only enhanced that.

Mulder lay down with a weary sigh before rolling over to face him. "I'm exhausted. I don't know how I'm going to manage to get up in the morning..."

"You should take a sick day - in fact we should arrange for additional sick time for you. I can talk to Kersh-"

"I'm sure he'd be thrilled - and I really don't want to try and explain to him that I'd be needing maternity time in a five months." Mulder rolled his eyes and unbelted his robe, the slight rise of his stomach fascinated both of them for several minutes.

"You're going to have to take a leave, you know...or quit all together. You're starting to show and it won't be long before people are talking about Spooky Mulder's amazing abilities."

Mulder didn't look at him or even smile at his joke. "I know," he said quietly.

It was time to change the subject. "So now we have a free loader on our couch out there - what are we going to do about him?"

Mulder chuckled finally. "Charge him rent. He's part of this, Walter...whether we like it or not."

Now it was Walter's turn to sigh. "I suppose so..."

XXX

In the den Alex lay listening to the faint murmur of Skinner and Mulder's voices coming from the bedroom. The light from the balcony was just enough to be irritating.

Hell, just the 'sight' of the balcony was irritating. He remembered being handcuffed to the railing all those years ago - shivering and struggling to find the least painful position to sit in. It was a memory best left forgotten in some cubbyhole of his mind, but the damn light and sound of Mulder chuckling at something Skinner said made him grit his teeth further.

What was he doing here? His life did NOT revolve around Mulder and his little mishaps. He used to have goals...plans...places to go, people to see. And here he was sleeping on Walter Skinner's white fucking couch while Mulder slept in a big comfy bed with his lover.

Alex growled and grabbed his jacket as he got to his feet to leave. A piece of paper slipped from the inside pocket and fluttered to the ground. He bent and picked it up, it was the picture he'd taken from the doctor's office. The blurry figures of the babies held him in thrall once more.

Damn it...he couldn't leave. He dropped his jacket and lay back down on the couch, gun under his pillow and picture clutched in his hand as he finally fell asleep

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Chapter 7 by Nikita

"...[I]f a woman carrying a single baby feels like there is no more room inside her at eight months, imagine what a mother carrying twins must feel like after only six months." Dr. DiLeo, M.D. 'Expecting Twins.' [www.babyzone.com](http://www.babyzone.com)

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Doggett watched out of the corner of his eye as Mulder shifted in his chair with a weary sigh for the nth time that day.

"Why don't you go home?"

"What?" Mulder barely spared him a glance; he seemed focused on his own aches and pains.

"I said - go home. You're tired, achy-"

"I'm FINE."

"...and not to mention bitchy. It's been a long day. Go home."

Mulder finally spared him a look, but it was more of a glare as he slammed a file down on his desk. "I don't need you telling me what to do, too. I get enough of it from upstairs and at home, thank you very much."

He had to resist smiling at that; Mulder was an independent man by nature and the constant 'help' by Skinner, Scully and Krycek was obviously driving him insane.

"They're just worried about you. Scully told me you're health is rather delicate and that you're not

taking very good care of yourself."

Mulder rolled his eyes and leaned back in his chair, rubbing at his temples. "Oh, don't even get me 'started' on Scully...she watches everything I eat and then pokes and prods me until I'm black and blue all over. Last night she took at least a pint of blood and various 'samples'..." he shuddered.

Doggett found himself shuddering, too, in sympathy. "Well, I can't imagine pregnancy is easy on 'anyone', much less a guy. All the more reason to go home now and get some peace and quiet while everyone's at work."

Mulder smirked at that. "Ah, but you're forgetting my shadow. Alex is always there..."

"He's still staying at your apartment?"

"Walter cleaned out the den and we put my old bed and dresser in there. I think he likes the waterbed - he's kinky."

John laughed, "Well, it was 'your' bed."

"Yeah, but I never could figure out where it came from..." Mulder stretched and winced with pain. "You know...I guess I'm going to take your advice for once. My back's giving out on me. It's all this sitting and hunched over the desk all day."

"I think you're lucky Skinner let you come in at all the last couple of months. He's really pulling some strings with Kersh to let us stick with desk duty lately. Well, I'll be sure to tell Scully you left early - I'll get brownie points for making you take care of yourself today."

The pregnant man grinned evilly at that. "Oh, what happens when you rack up enough points?"

John felt his ears turn red as he returned his attention to his reports. "Just go home, Mulder..."

Mulder's laughter rang in his ears as the other man left the office.

XXX

The hall that led from the basement to the parking garage seemed to get longer every day he made the trip. His back was killing him...going home to take a long hot bath was sounding better and better with each step.

Mulder resisted the urge to place his hand at his mid back to relieve the pressure - it was just too telling of a sign if anyone saw him. He was using Walter's somewhat larger trench coat to help him hide the bulk that was quickly growing around his midriff. At almost six months, he was definitely beginning to show.

He hid out in his office all day behind his desk. Doggett ran all of the errands and hardly a soul ever saw Mulder at work at all besides his partner, Scully and Skinner.

Walter wanted him to stop coming into the office - he was too big and one glimpse of Mulder without his camouflage and desk in front of him and his secret would be out. Mulder had pointed out that (as his whole career proved) people believed what they wanted to and refused to see the unexpected, even when it was staring them at the face. So a rather large man waddling down the hall would be seen as just a rather large man with a weight problem - who would ever imagine he was pregnant?

But the sad truth was - Walter was right. He needed to take a leave of absence now. If not for the

fear of discovery, then because he was quickly becoming a liability at work. Doggett was chained to the desk because of him and should the need arise for John to have to do field work - he'd be working without a partner to watch his back. It was unfair to his partner...and unfair to his children if he continued to jeopardize their health.

Scully was seriously beginning to scare him with her little medical facts and jargon on the risks of carrying twins. It was bad enough that she was always on his case about getting enough rest and eating healthier, but now she was giving him information on multiple pregnancies and it wasn't all pretty.

She continued to harp on about the necessity of constant vigilance in monitoring pregnancies involving twins. The number of risks involved were numerous: one of the twins might get more of its share than the other, and therefore their growth rates might not be the same, and then there was the risk of umbilical cord entanglement, preeclampsia, lack of space and abnormal positioning at the end of term... The list went on and on and he didn't want to hear anymore of them.

As if he didn't have enough on his mind dealing with aliens, mutations, and the fate of the world falling on the successful birth of his children.

Yes, now that he stopped to consider it, he definitely needed a break...

XXX

Mulder was never so happy to see the inside of an empty apartment in his life. There was no sign of Alex - an unheard of event. The man had tailed him everywhere he went for the last two months. Work was generally considered Walter's domain and it was far too dangerous for Krycek to hang around, but the moment he entered their apartment building, he was on Alex's turf.

"Hello? Alex?"

No answer. He was relieved - finally a moment to himself. His lovers took good care of him and he appreciated their concern and help...but he was used to being by himself. He was, by nature, a loner. No matter how much he might crave love and acceptance, he needed his space. And he wasn't letting this chance pass.

He knew exactly what he was going to do: take that hot bath alone in peace and quiet. But as he leaned over to turn on the tap, he was struck by a worrying thought. What if he couldn't get out by himself? The last time he'd taken a bath, Walter had had to help him a bit. It wouldn't do to be trapped in here. His lover wouldn't be home for several more hours and who knew when Alex would get back? Alex...that gave him an idea.

The room was neat as a pin. There was no sign of dirty clothes, scattered papers or stray shoes - Alex must be as much of a neat freak as Walter was. The bed was a neatly made, crisp sheets, and a soft folded blanket. It looked wonderful. The few times he'd used the bed, he'd enjoyed the cushy water effect it gave and he hoped the temperature control would make it almost as warm and therapeutic as a bath.

Lying down was a bit tricky since the bed swayed with his weight and shifting. Laying flat on his back was often uncomfortable with both babies squirming around inside so he tried to shift on his side. As he struggled into a comfortable position, he realized his mistake - a waterbed gave him even less leverage than a bathtub. Getting out by himself would be even harder, if not impossible.

"Shit," he muttered to himself. One of the babies poked him in the kidney. "Am I going to have to watch my language already?" he asked mildly. He finally found a comfortable position and

relaxed. The babies quieted and he absently stroked his stomach as he drowsed.

His children...but even more accurately - his sons.

Last month they had finally found out the babies' sex on the ultrasound. Both twins were confirmed to be healthy, active 'boys'. Mulder had been stunned at the thought of raising two sons of his own, and from the looks of both Alex and Walter's faces...they were pretty amazed, as well. Walter had torn off his glasses to wipe at tears as he crushed Mulder's hand in his own.

His lover was definitely in touch with his paternal side. He'd already begun to buy little matching outfits and as a special touch for Mulder's sake - two junior sized basketballs and jerseys. And every night since, he said goodnight to his sons through Mulder's belly. It was touching that Walter didn't single out only his own genetic son, but considered both to be his children.

And Alex...? Actually, he wasn't quite sure 'how' Alex felt. He had a hunch that he was hiding some rather powerful feelings behind the heavy mental shield he carried around Mulder, but he'd yet to see any proof of his feelings towards his son. Yet at the same time, he guarded Mulder and the babies' safety with fanatical zeal.

As always, Alex was insisting on being an enigma. It was frustrating, but so far Mulder had let the younger man have his space and his privacy. The whole situation was rather shaky emotional territory for the three of them and it was best to safeguard the truce that reigned in the apartment...

It wasn't long into his pseudo nap that his hunger arose and he found himself digging into Alex's bedside table. Knowing Alex, there had to be some chocolate in there somewhere. Never mind that Scully wouldn't approve - what she didn't know wouldn't hurt her - and hopefully him.

"Ah ha! The good stuff..." Mulder crowed as he tore open the wrapper. Ghirardelli dark chocolate with raspberries - his favorite and Alex's, too, apparently. Walter didn't have much of a chocolate tooth, but he'd noticed that Krycek would always accept a square of chocolate or a piece of chocolate cake when offered. It was rather pleasant to see that they had something in common, however small.

He finished the bar quickly enough and reached back in the drawer to search for more. His fingers brushed a stiff piece of paper and his curiosity got the better of him as it always did. It was one of the ultrasound pictures from his last visit. Both boys had shown up rather well on the monitor and there were some notations on size and positions made by Scully.

He hadn't realized that Alex had taken a copy. He knew that his and Walter's copy graced the door of the fridge in the kitchen where they could admire it every time they passed.

Alex's copy looked well worn; the edges were faintly creased, but straightened with obvious care. He must have handled the picture quite a bit. Mulder dug deeper into the drawer with questing fingers. What else did Alex keep as treasure?

"What are you doing?"

Mulder started at the voice and dropped the picture. It fluttered down to land somewhere beyond his reach on the floor by the bed.

Alex frowned from the doorway and then stalked over to pick it up. The younger man quickly smoothed out any imaginary wrinkles in the picture before shoving it back in the drawer and slamming it closed.

Mulder felt horribly guilty at his invasion of privacy suddenly. When they had given Krycek the room to stay in, it had been understood that it was Alex's space only.

"Sorry, Alex. I was just looking for some more chocolate. You've been holding out on me..." Mulder brandished the crumpled chocolate bar wrapper as evidence.

"Oh...well, Skinner told me you weren't to have any more chocolate so I thought it was safe in my drawer. Apparently not." Alex seemed to relax a bit, though he raised his eyebrow at the realization that Mulder was lying in his bed. "So...why are you in here, Mulder? Walter kick you out of his room?"

"No, my back hurt and I was hoping the heat and water would help. Only...I can't get up again."

Alex snorted at that, but he held his hand out obligingly. He ended up having to offer more than just his hand. After a few heaves and using the prosthetic as a brace, they managed to get Mulder onto his now shaky legs.

"Oof, thanks. I don't know how I can possibly carry them for another three months...my body's not built for this." Mulder tried to walk to the door on his own, but his knees buckled on him.

"Whoa! Easy, Mulder. You've worn yourself out again today, haven't you?" The younger man insisted on guiding Mulder all the way back up the stairs and into the room he shared with Skinner.

It was obvious that Alex was uncomfortable being in the room, but he helped Mulder lay down on the bed and began to tuck his blankets and pillows around him in a rather expert way.

"No, wait...I have to pee." It was a horribly embarrassing and annoying fact that the babies were continually pressing on his bladder. He was just lucky that he hadn't had an accident while stuck in Alex's bed - he never would have lived it down.

A quick trip to the restroom and a glass of water later, Mulder was safely ensconced in the big comfy bed with plenty of pillows supporting his back and legs and the large TV that Walter had moved for him was turned on at the foot of the bed. Alex made as if to leave then and Mulder was suddenly loathe to see him go.

"Wait, Alex...would you like to watch the game in here? Skinner's got a great TV in here..." He couldn't explain why, but he really didn't want to be alone all of a sudden. Perhaps it was the thoughts he'd had earlier about the medical risks of his pregnancy...or maybe it was the need to get closer to Alex after seeing the picture in the drawer and how much he guarded it.

He must've sensed Mulder's desperate need for company because he reluctantly shrugged and sat down on the edge of the bed to watch the baseball game in silence.

XXX

The game was over and the TV show that followed it was horribly banal, but Alex continued to sit quietly on the bed. The pregnant man lightly snoring and he didn't want to so much as reach for the remote lest he wake him. This was one of the rare times he could be so close to Mulder without having to worry about guarding his thoughts or actions.

Mulder shifted in his sleep slightly, one hand on his round belly. Alex's eyes drifted from Mulder's face down to where his hand lay. Reaching out carefully, he lightly laid his hand next to Mulder's.

Ever since he learned that one of the babies was his own he had been in a constant state of happiness and terror. He'd never imagined that he would ever have the chance to have a family of his own. Hell, he never really believed that he would have lived this long in the first place. He was a survivor, no doubt about it, but one could only dodge bullets and aliens for so long before

your luck ran out.

He'd never had much of a personal life and his family didn't even bear speaking of anymore. After all these years and everything he'd had to go through - he'd never had anything to lose except his own life. And now suddenly he had a son, waiting to be born. Another pawn in a game that he couldn't control and was only barely surviving in by himself.

How could a man like he ever hope to raise a child? He couldn't guarantee its safety and he was far from a good role model for any kid. Skinner had authority, a good career, solid morals and a stable income. He was a veteran, a boxer, and no criminal record. Any son of his would grow up strong, proud and brave, no doubt.

And Mulder? He was brilliant, witty and an honest man. He had a belief in the goodness of mankind despite all of the evidence to the contrary that he had encountered in his work as an agent and profiler. He had a strong belief in family and no matter what Mulder might think...he'd be a good father. A great one. He wouldn't repeat the mistakes of William Mulder by selling his children out or blaming them for things beyond their control. He wouldn't withhold his love or acceptance on the basis of his child's performance or abilities.

Mulder and Skinner would be better parents than Alex could ever hope to be. His son would be far better off without Krycek as a father.

But he couldn't leave yet and he wouldn't. Mulder and the babies were far too vulnerable. They needed his protection and he would gladly give it for as long as they needed it. He'd bow out when the time came, but for now he was here to fight for them.

A small movement broke his train of thought and he looked down at Mulder's belly once more. There was another kick where his hand laid and he smiled at the strength he felt in that tiny little foot.

It really was a miracle - no matter how sappy it sounded... There was another kick and a flutter of movement, as the babies seemed to shift and turn inside. Alex continued to stare, transfixed at the slight changes in the shape of Mulder's stomach at their contortions.

"Active little buggers, aren't they?"

Alex looked up to see Mulder smiling wryly at him. He started to remove his hand, but Mulder grabbed it and held it.

"No, that's okay. You haven't really felt them move before, have you? They started kicking a month ago and they haven't stopped since. It must be getting pretty crowded in there."

Krycek wondered at the good-natured humor Mulder was exhibiting until he noticed the tension in the other man's eyes.

Mulder seemed to notice his observation. "It's not that bad...but...sometimes, when I'm dreaming...I dream that it's not the babies in my stomach - it's a hatchling. Last night I dreamt that it burst out of my stomach while I was still alive. Like the man I found in his living room..."

That explained the shouts he'd heard from their bedroom last night. He'd raced up the stairs to their door, but Skinner had stopped him from entering, telling him that it was just a nightmare.

Mulder shrugged then. "But otherwise it doesn't bug me too much. Actually, I'm often relieved to feel it during the daytime. It reminds me that they're both alive and healthy. If they'd just stop playing soccer with my spleen, I could actually get some sleep once in a while. And now, I've got to use the restroom again..."

XXX

"Krycek seemed awfully quiet at dinner. Did you two fight or something?" Walter asked as he stripped for bed.

Mulder's face was carefully blank as he continued to surf the TV channels. "No. Well, he caught me in his room eating his chocolate and rooting through his bedside table, but otherwise we had a quiet afternoon in this bed."

"Excuse me?" Walter knew that Mulder had to be yanking his chain, but he found himself looking around the room for evidence of their supposed tryst.

Mulder chuckled and tossed the remote down on the bed. "What's the matter, Walter? Jealous? When I got home he wasn't here and I was just trying out the waterbed for my back. I scrounged around for some chocolate and then he caught me snooping. He put me into bed and sat with me while I fell asleep to the game - that's all. Scout's honor." Mulder held out his hand with fingers parted solemnly. The fact that it was the Vulcan salute didn't escape Skinner.

"I have a feeling you weren't a boy scout, were you, Mulder?" Skinner climbed into bed and Mulder shrugged at him before nestling as close to him as his belly would allow.

"No, my dad didn't approve of the boy scouts for some reason. All those good deeds and belief in honor, I suppose... What gave me away?"

"I don't remember Mr. Spock ever getting a merit badge for building a safe campfire, for one thing."

Mulder shifted up to look at him incredulously. "You're a trekkie?"

Walter tried hard not to laugh. "Um, no. But, believe it or not, I do occasionally watch television and I have seen an episode or two."

"Oh." The sound of the disappointment in Mulder's voice as he put his head back down made Walter almost wish he'd lied.

He settled for holding Mulder closer and relishing what little time he got to spend with his lover during the week. "So...you would have wanted to join the scouts? Did you like camping?"

Mulder snickered, "Not really...I just wanted to learn how to tie good knots. Still do...although I wouldn't use them to tie up my little sister anymore... Know how to tie some knots, Walter?"

Skinner felt himself stir at the words. He reached down and grabbed Mulder's wrists, pinning them at his sides. "I don't need to..."

Mulder squirmed and mock-struggled in between gasps and throaty chuckles. As he licked and bit his way down Mulder's body, he couldn't help thinking that he'd make Mulder forget all about whatever happened with Alex on this bed...

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Chapter 8 by Nikita

As Walter snored next to him, Mulder watched the shadows silently dance on the bedroom ceiling. He couldn't sleep. It wasn't the babies, they were quiet and still for once, and it wasn't even his usual insomnia - it was a headache. A bad one.

He'd been suffering for headaches for some time, but lately they had been getting worse. The last few months had been stressful and so he'd pawned off the increase in frequency and pain as

simple migraines. But tonight, as he tried to focus on the ghostly shadows above him, he was unable to ignore one very important fact - along with the pain were the voices. And the voices were all around him...

Walter was dreaming that he and Mulder lived in a small house in the country. No jobs, no consortium or aliens...just a normal life with two small boys playing in the backyard.

Alex wasn't asleep - he was pacing his bedroom thinking of various problems that might come up during Mulder's pregnancy and trying not to think about Mulder sleeping upstairs with another man in his bed when it should be him.

The neighbor next door was watching an old black and white film while munching on dry cereal and trying to figure out how he would pay his credit card bill.

The neighbors across the hall were laying in bed wide-awake fuming over an argument that neither would admit responsibility for.

Across the street was a homeless man digging through a dumpster in search of food.

Two blocks away a young man was breaking into a car, calculating how much money he could get for it and how much drugs that would buy.

Hundreds of voices and images assaulted his senses as he tried to shut them out. So many unhappy people...so many vivid nightmares or dreams...so much pain...

Mulder grunted and clutched at his head as the cacophony rose and drowned out his own thoughts and any measure of control he had had on it. Tears were streaming out of his eyes and he was panting heavily.

"Mulder? Mulder?!" Walter shook his shoulder and shouted into his ear.

There was a sound of rapid footsteps up the stairs and Alex burst into the room, gun in hand.

"What is it?" he asked as he scanned the room for threats. Turning on the light he faced an angry Skinner as he sat holding Mulder in his arms.

"I don't know! Call Scully, tell her-"

Mulder held out one hand and shook his head, the sounds were fading fast and his control was returning. "No. No, I'm fine...just a dream..."

Walter turned his lover in the light, looking into his eyes. "You were in pain, Fox...you're all sweaty and pale..."

Mulder shuddered and lifted his eyes to meet his. "It was a dream...it just seemed so real. I'm fine. Sorry I woke you..."

Walter looked at him skeptically for a long moment before turning to meet Krycek's eyes. The younger man peeked out the blinds of the bedroom window looking for outside threats one last time before sitting down on the foot of the bed to look closely at Mulder.

It took a full twenty minutes to convince the two men that he was all right. In the end they settled for a cool washcloth on his face and Mulder's usual trip to the bathroom. Walter then tucked him back into bed as Alex reluctantly left for his own room.

As Mulder finally drifted off he marveled at the fact that the two men were able to band together

for the common cause of cossetting him. It was embarrassing to be so vulnerable before the two of them and yet at the same time...rather nice. He wasn't used to such caring and love. His last thought before succumbing to his exhaustion was that he was rather lucky...

XxXxX

The next morning it seemed as if the incident really 'had' been a dream. There was no sign of a headache and the only 'voices' he heard in his head were the two men who lived with him. And those he was able to block out easily behind the shields that Alex had taught him to make.

His bladder forced him out of bed, as usual. He took a shower and was toweling his hair dry as he passed by the bedroom door and heard the muted sound of voices arguing forcefully just down the stairs.

Scully's voice was sharp and urgent. Mulder paused and leaned closer to the doorway and the words came clearer to him. "...pregnancy is difficult for him. Multiple births are always hard on the mother, but Mulder is a man and it's an unnatural state for the male body to be in. There's no telling what the medical repercussions could be in the future. And if you're right about his other symptoms..."

Alex interrupted, "I think it's the same kind of pain he had from the alien artifacts. He seems to be having headaches of the same intensity." There was a tense silence and Mulder found he was grinding his teeth as he waited for them to continue, how did Alex know this? Was he reading his mind?

Walter's voice sounded weary and sad when he finally spoke up. "I think he's right. Mulder's been downplaying the pain and he's having nightmares - horrible nightmares that are getting worse all the time. The other night he seemed almost altered."

"This kind of stress isn't good for him - he should be resting more and if his blood pressure is high..." Now even Scully sounded subdued. There was another silence and Mulder decided he couldn't take it anymore. Wrapping his robe tighter around his waste, he headed down the stairs.

XxXxX

"Don't you think I should be included in this little discussion?"

Scully winced as she saw her former partner stalk down the stairs with damp hair and a white bathrobe cinched at the waist. She felt a twinge of guilt, but repressed it in order to face him head on. "Yes, you should, Mulder. We were just waiting for you to wake up before we talked to you."

She couldn't help but notice how both Krycek and Skinner's attention were absolutely riveted on Mulder. Both tried to subtly steer him towards a chair, but Mulder soundly ignored them and crossed his arms above his belly, glaring at her.

"And what were you going to tell me?"

Now why was she the bad guy here? "Walter has some concerns for your health and your stress level. Krycek mentioned you were having headaches..."

There - now he was glaring at the two men, too. She couldn't help feeling a smidgeon of naughty glee - well, good. Let them share some of his anger. It was obvious that Mulder was really irked by the whole idea of them discussing his health - especially without his input.

Mulder shared a 'look' at all three of them equally and said quietly, but pointedly. "I'm fine, thank you very much for asking."

Skinner had the grace to look a bit guilty at that, but Krycek simply narrowed his eyes. "You're lying."

Mulder flinched at that and Scully felt a sudden surge of curiosity and worry. He 'was' lying and he was afraid of being caught at it. What was it he was hiding?

"Mulder, I think we should all sit down and talk about this in a calm manner. No one is accusing you of lying, necessarily..." she gave Krycek a warning glare, not that the young man deigned to notice it of course, "...but if you are feeling discomfort or symptoms of something out of the ordinary in your normal health it's important that you not dismiss them."

Mulder's shoulders slumped and he dropped his arms in defeat. "Out of the ordinary? I haven't felt ordinary in a long damned time - you'll have to be more specific." His voice was weary, but held his usual trace of dry humor.

Now he was starting to sound more open to communication, she needed to foster that feeling. It was still tense in the room - far too much to get Mulder to open up. "Maybe you'd like to talk about it in private with me first? And let me examine you?"

She was hyperaware of the other men's displeasure at her suggestion, but Mulder seemed grateful at her offer.

They headed up the stairs and closed the door to the bedroom. After taking Mulder's blood pressure and listening to the babies' heartbeats with her stethoscope, she sat down next to him on the bed. "All right, Mulder, talk."

XxXxX

Walter paced the room while Scully and Mulder went into the next room alone. He hated this feeling of helplessness. Something was bothering Fox, but his lover wouldn't share it with him - didn't he trust him by now? Didn't he know that his safety and well-being were foremost in Walter's mind? It hurt to realize that Mulder was probably sharing his secrets and troubles with Scully instead of him. He still trusted his former partner over Skinner - a fact that had always hurt him when the two had still worked together and he had been their supervisor.

"Relax, Skinner - Scully will get him to talk and convince him not to act like a stubborn ass. She has a knack at it."

Walter glared at the young man leaning against the patio door with a smirk on his face. "I know."

"And that's what's really bugging you, isn't it?"

"It doesn't bother me - Fox needs someone he can talk to - she's his best friend," he insisted.

Krycek chuckled at that and rocked on his heels before leaning back against the door again. "It drove me nuts, too. Very first time I saw them together they flaunted their special bond like it was a little fraternity I wasn't allowed into. Pissed me off."

Walter's eyebrow rose at this.

"But over the years I've come to realize something...they are partners whether they are working on the X-Files or not, but they don't work out romantically. They've shared too much horror and heartache. They're kind of like war buddies."

Before Walter could absorb that the door opened once more and Scully and Mulder emerged

looking very serious. Scully looked grim and determined, while Mulder looked resigned and defeated. He quickly stepped closer to his lover, but clearly read the signals that said 'don't touch me' and kept their respective personal space between them. Skinner turned to look expectantly at Scully for answers.

She sighed and shifted her medical bag in her hands as she spoke up. "The pregnancy looks as if it is still progressing well and the babies heart rates are strong and steady. No signs of distress, though I'm going to arrange for another sonogram for later this evening so he should drink plenty of water for that..." she paused and seemed reluctant to continue, though she did, "I am a bit concerned for Mulder, though. He says that he's been having disturbing dreams and a few headaches, but is otherwise fine. I think that it is likely normal levels of stress and discomfort that come with carrying twins, especially at this stage of the pregnancy. But I do think every measure should be taken to ease it - his blood pressure is within limits, but on the high end."

"What should we do?" Skinner had to resist brushing a hand against Mulder's, though he sorely wanted that contact.

"We have to minimize his stress and discomfort. No more work, and he should restrict his movements. Plenty of bed rest...maybe the best thing would be to get out of the city. A quieter environment."

Walter looked over to see Mulder's reaction to Scully's words, but his lover refused to meet his eyes and looked instead out a window. He was tightlipped and distant.

"Is he all right, though?"

Scully shared his look at Mulder before answering, it was obvious that she was very worried for her former partner. "For now. I want to keep an eye on his blood pressure, though. Pre-eclampsia's a real danger if he doesn't take it easy."

"I know of a quiet out of the way place," Krycek spoke for the first time since Mulder had returned to the room. "It's secure. State of the art security system and no one knows of it."

Skinner sighed and rubbed at the bridge of his nose where his glasses rested. "I can't leave for at least another week - it'll attract attention if I miss certain meetings. I need to schedule vacation time..."

"I'll take him now and you can meet us there in a week."

He looked at Krycek and saw the challenge set there - would he trust Krycek or not? "You're right...he shouldn't have to wait. I'll get whatever additional supplies we might need as well."

Scully seemed pleased to see them cooperating so well. "I can help you with that...in fact, there are some medical provisions we'll need to make. Supplies to get, arrangements...would it be possible to use this place for the birth?"

They continued to discuss the details and arrangements in earnest - eager to finally be making concrete plans for the upcoming event. None of the three noticed when Mulder quietly slipped out of the room and headed upstairs without a word.

XxXxX

It was nearly an hour later before Mulder heard footsteps approach the bedroom. He turned off the TV that he'd been staring blindly at all that time and decided to face the upcoming conversation.

"Fox? Are you all right?" Skinner closed the door behind him and sat beside him on the bed.

"Didn't you already ask Scully that?" he snapped, but then shook his head apologetically, "I don't know, really...last night...I didn't tell Scully because I didn't want to admit it, but I had an...episode, I guess is the best word for it. My telepathic abilities seemed to go haywire...like they did a few years ago."

Mulder watched the color drain from his lover's face and instantly regretted telling him. After all, Walter was the one who had witnessed the worst of his sickness from the space ship's artifacts over four years ago.

"Do you - do you think it's happening again? That it will get that bad?" Walter's voice was hoarse and he looked truly terrified. Mulder reached out and took his lover's large hands in his own.

"I don't know..."

XxXxX

Two days later Mulder and Krycek were ready to leave. Mulder wore new sweats that Krycek had bought for him from a large men's clothes store and his bags held more stretchy pants and large shirts for the remaining months until the birth. He had dawdled long enough in saying goodbye, but he couldn't seem to bring himself to go just yet. His lover seemed to feel the same way. Walter pulled him into another hug at the door. Mulder leaned into the embrace, closing his eyes and nuzzling his lover's neck one last time.

"I hate this..." Walter whispered into his ear.

"I know," Mulder mumbled against his neck.

"Be careful..."

"You know I will...and Krycek will be there just in case."

The arms around him tightened as Walter reacted. "I don't trust him as much as you do."

Mulder tried to pull back to look into his eyes, but the arms were too tight around him. "He genuinely cares about my health...not to mention the babies..."

"It's not that...I don't trust him not to try and take advantage of the situation."

Mulder chuckled at that and pulled against the embrace once more. Skinner reluctantly loosened his hold and Mulder was able to put a hand down on his belly and look into his lover's eyes. "Really, Walter, I seriously doubt he's going to jump my body 'now'." His hand rested on the definite swell there that showed even through his baggy clothes.

Walter raised an eyebrow at that, "Why not? I did last night..." but he cracked a reluctant grin after that and Mulder felt the tension lessen. "Just promise me you'll be careful and take care of yourself...I'll join you as soon as I can."

He then turned to Krycek and gave the younger man his steeliest look. "You better take damn good care of him..."

Green eyes glittered back, serious and startlingly sincere, "With my life. I love him, too - nothing will happen to him, I promise, Skinner."

XxXxX

In a dim and neglected room of a small non-descript building, humid air moved sluggishly through the room as it was slowly stirred by an ancient ceiling fan. An old-fashioned hospital bed was shoved against the wall of the small room to accommodate various medical equipment. A shadowed figure lay on the bed wheezing as two men bent over the bed talking quietly, but intently to the invalid as he listened.

As the men fell silent, the man on the bed gestured towards his bedside table and one man quickly obeyed his demand by taking out one of the cigarettes from the pack emblazoned 'Morley' and producing a lighter.

A deep draw and a hacking breath later, the prone man gave a satisfied sigh followed by a dry chuckle. "Fox Mulder pregnant...will wonders never cease?"

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