

Summary: Mulder discovers true happiness with the men of his dreams.

Categories: [X Files](#) Characters: Alien Bounty Hunter, Baby William, Dana Scully, Doggett/Other, Ensemble, Fox Mulder, John Doggett, John Fitzgerald Byers, Melvin Frohike, Mulder/Doggett, Mulder/Skinner, Original, Other Female, Other Male, Richard Langly, Skinner/Other, Walter Skinner

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1. [Chapter 1](#) by Jo B

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Author's Notes:

Author notes: I couldn't help myself.

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Monday, July 30, 2001

A white mist rolled in off the Chesapeake Bay, snaking inland along the sandy shore, filling the low-lying trenches and hollows along the Maryland coast.

On a cliff above, a lone man stood looking out over the misty predawn waters of the bay. His hand rested on his protruding belly as he reached an inner peace. Taking a trembling breath, he stepped off the cliff. His body somersaulted twice before breaking on the rocks below.

University of Maryland

Monday, July 30, 2001

Outdoors the sun was shining warmly and the birds were singing. For such a beautiful summer day, the lecture hall was standing room only as Professor Mulder strolled back and forth enthusiastically across the front of the room, clicking the button on the overhead projector as he gave his lecture. His students sat mesmerized, listening as he explained the workings of a serial killer's mind.

Most in the audience were female, and while captivated by the lecture, they were equally fascinated watching their professor, who was dressed in a pair of worn jeans and a gray T-shirt with a tweed jacket over it. The T-shirt and jeans were Mulder's concession to the hot summer day, instead of his usual shirt, tie, and slacks.

"Most serial killers displayed many behavioral problems early in childhood that would not be considered normal. While individually some of these traits would be little cause for alarm, but if the child displays many of these traits it may indicate a future problem. The traits are: excessive daydreaming, compulsive masturbation, isolation, chronic lying, bed wetting, cruelty to other

children, cruelty to animals, self-mutilation, convulsions, temper tantrums, fire setting, destroying possessions, stealing--" Mulder glanced over toward the doorway, leading into the hall. Doctor Charles Burks stood there pointing at his watch.

"That's all for today, class. You can find the rest of the traits on page fifty-four of your textbook. Tomorrow we'll be taking a field trip to the Annapolis city morgue. Those with sensitive stomachs may wish to play hooky." Mulder started collecting his notes.

"Hey cool! Are we going to see dead people, Professor Mulder?"

Mulder gazed up at Brian Morris, a twenty-one year old with a nose ring and a pierced tongue. Morris was one of his more enthusiastic students. "For you, Brian, I've arranged for us to view an autopsy," Mulder said.

"Wow! Thanks, man!"

"Brian, were you a bed-wetter as child?" Mulder asked with a straight face.

"No way, man!" Morris gave him a sweet smile as he picked up his backpack. "I did like to set fires and masturbate."

Mulder chuckled as Morris sauntered out of the room.

A young woman dressed in a tight blue skirt and angora sweater approached the front of the room.

"Professor Mulder, will you be available later this afternoon to go over my paper with me?" Melanie Gagne gave him a perky smile.

"Sorry, Melanie, I'll be out this afternoon. Why don't you drop your paper off with my assistant and I'll look it over before the field trip tomorrow?" Mulder said, packing his papers and slides into his leather satchel.

"Kay, I suppose," she sighed, giving him a disappointed pout before heading toward the door.

Burks moved into the room as she stepped out into the hallway. "Mulder, you're the envy of every male teacher at our humble university."

"How so?" Mulder asked, slinging the satchel over his shoulder.

"You've only been teaching here three months and already you have the most popular class on campus with the hottest female students. All willing to do anything for a C-." Burks proceeded Mulder out the door and they made their way toward the cafeteria.

Mulder sighed. "It's rather a nuisance, Chuck. When I took this job I thought I'd be teaching students that were interested in learning about criminal profiling and the paranormal. Not over-sexed college groupies."

"My heart bleeds for you, Fox," Chuck quipped.

"At least the seminars I teach for local law enforcement agencies are doing some good," Mulder said as they stood in the cafeteria line.

"Fox, we really should go into business together. With your intuition and brains, and my science we could corner the market on investigating the paranormal."

"If my academic career doesn't pan out, I'll take you up on that offer, Chuck."

Quantico

Monday, July 30, 2001

Scully spoke into the microphone as she examined the body of the John Doe found at the bottom of a cliff just north of Annapolis. The subject's abdomen was grotesquely extruded. Thoughts of the last corpse that had a similar protruding stomach weren't far from Scully's mind.

"The subject is a Caucasian male, age approximately...." Scully looked at the bloody face and broken body, frowning. "...early to late thirties, height six feet, weight 197."

She placed her gun within easy reach as she picked up a scalpel and carefully made a deep incision into the bloated abdomen, cutting up from just above the man's groin to his sternum.

Fluid rushed out of the incision. Scully set the knife down and pulled the flaps of skin aside, exposing the reason behind the man's bloated belly. "Oh my!" She quickly glanced down at the man's sex organs, before reaching her gloved hands into the corpse and lifting out the body of an infant. She placed the tiny body with the umbilical cord still attached on the man's chest.

"Agent Scully, I have the identity of your John Doe," Agent Sawyer said, stepping into the autopsy room while covering his nose against the smell. His eyes widened as they fell on the body of the infant. "Is that a baby?"

She ignored his question, not ready to answer until she was finished with the autopsy. "What do you have, Agent Sawyer?"

"The man's name is Samuel Jacob. He was reported missing by his wife over eight months ago. The detective in charge of the case turned up no leads."

"Do you have the phone number and address for his wife?"

"Yes. It's in the case folder. I'll put it on your desk--" Sawyer's eyes kept wandering back to the two bodies as he crossed the room toward the door.

Scully stripped off her gloves and went across the room for the lab's camera to make a visual record of what she had discovered.

Six weeks later

Tuesday, September 11, 2001

Special Agent John Doggett drove by a basketball court on his way to Mulder's apartment building. He noted a tall lanky white man amongst the many mixed hues from the neighborhood vying for the ball. Parking his car across the street, Doggett climbed out and crossed over to the other side and walked up to the wire mesh fence where he stood silently watching the game for several minutes. Most of the players were African American, a few Latinos, and one of mixed race. Mulder was the only white man on the court and he was holding his own pretty well. Doggett couldn't help but admire all the toned and sweaty bodies, especially Mulder's, and the grace with which they moved. The men ranged in age from their late twenties to mid forties.

It was over six months since Doggett had last seen Mulder. He had thought of calling him a few times over the months. But he couldn't think of an excuse other than one of his X-Files cases,

which was out of the question since Kersh had forbidden him from involving Mulder in any of his cases. So Doggett spent a few minutes taking in every detail of Mulder's sweat glistening body. The low riding sweatpants, the slender waist, the sweep of hair going down from his bellybutton and disappearing inside his sweatpants. The telltale bulge that made Doggett believe the tales about men with big feet, and Mulder had very big feet. Doggett loved a man with nice nipples and Mulder's were exceptionally nice. He shook his head clearing his thoughts; he couldn't forget the real reason he was here.

Doggett called out, "Mr. Mulder, I need a word with you!"

The game stopped and everyone turned to stare at the man in the suit, while forming a protective circle around Mulder.

"Milk, you need us to run interference so you can get away?" A tall muscular black man in his early-forties asked quietly, while glaring at the suit.

"No thanks, Sam. I know this man. He probably wants a piece of my ass for sticking my nose into one of his cases," Mulder said, smiling over at Doggett and nodding. Mulder ambled over to the bench and picked up his discarded T-shirt, using it to wipe the sweat from his body as he walked out the gate to where Doggett was waiting.

"Do you want to tell me what the fuck--" Doggett's voice rose with each word.

Mulder interrupted, "Not here, Agent Doggett, my friends might not take kindly to you threatening me. I need a shower, so I suggest we go back to my apartment." Not waiting for Doggett to agree, Mulder started across the street on his way to his apartment building on the corner.

Doggett followed him, while secretly breathing in the heady smell of musk wafting off Mulder's hard, toned body. He noted how much better Mulder looked since the last time he'd seen him. Unfortunately, the smell and the sight of the shirtless man made his heart beat faster and sent blood rushing down to his dick. By the time they entered Mulder's apartment, Doggett was glad for the suit coat he was wearing.

"I'm going to grab a quick shower, help yourself to a beer or an ice tea in the fridge."

Doggett didn't try to stop him. Currently he was more concerned with getting his libido under control. It had been years since another man had stirred such strong feelings in him, and this wasn't the first time he'd gotten a woody being around the infuriating former Agent Mulder. He looked up at the clock as he opened a beer. It was after four o'clock in the afternoon. Close enough to quitting time.

He wandered around the living room, stopping to stare into the fish tank at the familiar fish. A pile of student papers was stacked up on the coffee table. He spent a few minutes leafing through them. Each had a grade marked in the corner and throughout was detailed comments in Mulder's handwriting. He had heard somewhere that Mulder was teaching at the University of Maryland. Doggett then noted the new computer on Mulder's desk along with several file folders next to it. They resembled FBI case files. He opened one and discovered the photograph of Senator Malcolm Woods' only child, Marcus. It was clipped to several sheets of handwritten notes and diagrams. Marcus Woods was abducted five days ago while jogging along the riverfront in Baltimore. Doggett wondered what Mulder was doing with the file.

"Senator Woods asked me to check into his son's disappearance." Mulder's voice startled Doggett as the young man padded barefoot across the room and took the file from him. "These are my personal notes." Mulder was shirtless wearing only a pair of tight fitting jeans, a combination that had Doggett's heart racing again.

"That's not why I'm here, Muldah. You've been looking into one of my X-File cases," Doggett said gruffly, angry with himself at how Mulder was affecting him.

"I've been looking into cases that I believe are tied to Marcus Woods' abduction," Mulder said, walking into his kitchen and taking a beer out of the refrigerator. "The Senator promised me that my investigation into his son's disappearance would not be interfered with."

Doggett swore under his breath. Senator Woods was a powerful man in Washington. He chaired two important committees and had the President's ear. The Senator was also a close friend of FBI Director Morris. It would not be good to get on Woods' bad side.

Doggett was surprised that Woods would ask Mulder to look into his son's abduction. There was already a massive effort underway to find his thirty-two year old son. It involved a large FBI task force and detectives from the Baltimore PD. To date they'd turned up nothing. "Does anyone at the FBI know that you're looking into this case for the Senator?"

"Counting you? One."

"Just what type of connection have you found between Samuel Jacob and Marcus Woods?" Doggett couldn't figure out how a dead hermaphrodite could tie into this abduction.

"That Jacob and Woods, in addition to two other men and four women were all kidnapped by the same unsub over a span of five years. Only one of them is still alive." Mulder sipped his beer and sat on the sofa, propping his feet up on the coffee table. The impromptu game of basketball was the first break he'd taken since meeting with the Senator three days ago.

"Do you want to share these connections of yours?"

Mulder frowned. He wasn't ready yet to share anything with the FBI. Then again he could use the FBI resources to speed up his investigation. Time was running out for the Senator's son and Jennifer Summers. "Maybe we can work together on this...?"

"Kersh will not go for it!"

"One call to Senator Woods and Kersh will have no choice," Mulder said. He had the Senator's word that he'd have a free hand in investigating his son's disappearance and any interference would be dealt with swiftly. The Senator had particularly stressed that where the FBI was concerned. It was the first time Mulder had met the Senator, but he took the man at his word.

"Really? One call...I'd like to see that." Doggett was surprised by Mulder's cool confidence.

"My advice to you, Agent Doggett, is to go back to the FBI and arrange for my full involvement in the case. I want a VIP pass to the FBI facilities, not a visitor's pass. Full access to their labs, databases, and personnel to handle research. Then I'll share my leads with you and we can proceed together on this investigation." Mulder knew that if Doggett refused, he'd have to share his leads anyway. He could not allow pride to get in the way of rescuing Marcus and Jennifer.

"Kersh is not going to like this, which is why I'm willing to go along with your request, Mulder." Doggett set his beer can aside, opting not to finish it, since he was going to have to go back to the bureau now. "Do you have anything that will convince them you have a real lead?"

"Have these two graves exhumed. According to my reports neither victim was properly autopsied. I want Scully to perform the autopsies. It should be enough to convince you of the connection." Mulder handed Doggett two file folders from his desk. He had the information stored on his hard drive, and an additional copy had been sent to the Gunmen.

Doggett glanced inside the folders and noted that both cases were from two years ago. The man, Philip Egan, committed suicide by hanging himself from a tree in his front yard. The woman, Anna Travis, was found decapitated five months prior. The causes of death were obvious, so only a cursory autopsy was performed. He couldn't see how either case was connected to Marcus Woods' abduction. "These cases tie in how?"

"I'll tell you during the autopsy." Mulder was worried that if he told Doggett now, the man would refuse to have the bodies exhumed due to the outlandish nature of his theory.

Doggett had heard all the stories about Spooky Mulder's uncanny ability at pulling leads out of thin air, so he decided to go along with him for now. "I'll get working on it, Mulder," he said, walking to the front door and opening it. "I'll see if A.D. Skinner will approve your VIP pass without us having to go through Kersh."

"Thanks, Agent Doggett."

Mulder closed the door after Doggett departed, locking and bolting it. He wandered over to the window and stared down at the sidewalk until Doggett walked out of the building and up the street toward his car. Mulder hadn't realized how lonely he'd been lately. Although he met dozens of people a day at the university, he still missed the company of his peers. A knock sounded on the front door as he was heading into his bedroom for a shirt.

He peered through the peephole before opening the door.

"Mr. Mulder, the Senator would like to see you. I'm here to drive you to his estate," the chauffeur said.

Mulder let the man in. "Give me a minute to dress." He headed back into his bedroom to change into a suit and tie.

Two people sat huddled in the corner of a dirty, foul-smelling cellar. There was one dim light bulb hanging directly above where they sat. The light didn't reach the far corners of their prison, nor to the locked door that prevented them from leaving. The light was enough to keep the rodents away. The man and the woman clung to each other for warmth and comfort as they listened to the muffled sounds of a foghorn and the crashing of waves against the shore. Demetrius peered through the small, barred window in the door, secretly watching his captives. The male, Marcus, was beautiful, just as he liked them. The woman was as close to a carbon copy of Marcus as he could find. He hoped that Marcus would accept his gift, and not commit suicide, like Samuel and Philip had.

It had saddened Demetrius when he learned of Samuel's death over a month earlier. Samuel hadn't been able to deal with his elevated status. Only one of the three men accepted Demetrius' gift without ending his life. Demetrius had mistakenly assumed Samuel would be like Andrew who was currently living happily with his wife Gloria and their four-year-old daughter. The couple had tried for over a decade to conceive before Demetrius kidnapped Andrew and solved their problem for them. Andrew and his wife had kept his pregnancy a secret. She was a registered nurse and assisted her husband during the birth of their daughter.

Glancing back into the dimly lit room, he smiled. Tomorrow the cleansing ceremony would begin. Once the moon was full, the sacrifice would be made and he would impregnate Marcus.

Senator Malcolm Woods maintained a calm exterior, but on the inside he was in emotional

turmoil over his son's kidnapping. He learned from his twenty-five years in the U.S. Senate how critical it was not to show any sign of weakness. The Senator studied the restless young man in the seat across from him with great interest. Fox Mulder was a handsome man, seven years older than his son Marcus, but to the Senator he appeared younger. When Woods had met with Mulder three days ago, he'd been too upset to study the man. Now he took in every detail.

A gentle breeze lifted the silky strands of Mulder's hair as he sat uncomfortably under the Senator's scrutiny. They were sitting outside on the veranda of Woods' D.C. mansion. Mulder lifted the wineglass to his lips and took a sip as he waited for the Senator to address him.

"Mr. Mulder, I can see by looking at you that the rumors were true."

"What rumors are those, sir?"

"After your abduction...when you were returned, your body had been heavily scarred. Now all the scars have miraculously healed, including old bullet and knife wounds I was told. Your skin is smooth--flawless, even wrinkles have vanished."

Mulder fidgeted looking at the dignified Senator with mild surprise. "That was classified information, how do you--"

"I know all about you, Mr. Mulder. Ever intimate detail. The sexual relationship you had with Senator Matheson. Your career with the FBI, including all of your X-File cases." The Senator paused, meeting Mulder's eyes. "I'm a believer, Mr. Mulder...I'm also a powerful man, more so than Richard Matheson ever was. I can get you rehired at the FBI as it's new Deputy Director if it suits me." Woods enjoyed watching the younger man's growing unease. It was a game with him to keep people off balanced.

"Why are you telling me this? Are you propositioning me?" Mulder was ready to stand and walk out on the Senator. He never would allow anyone to use him again.

"No...I'm hopelessly heterosexual." The Senator smiled sadly, the grief he felt over his son's abduction making an appearance for the first time. "Mr. Mulder, my son Marcus is gay. I want you to know how much he means to me. I've always been supportive of his life style, even though it meant he would be the last in our family line. He is my life, Mr. Mulder! I will do anything to get him back alive. If you help find him, I will give you anything...just name your price."

Mulder nodded relaxing, satisfied with the Senator's answer. "Senator, I have uncovered a connection between your son's case and seven other cases. If my lead proves correct your son will be returned to you alive within seven days--"

"This is great news! What leads? Do you know who's holding him?" The Senator rose to his feet.

Mulder frowned. "Senator, before you get your hopes up there's more. It might be too out there for you to believe."

"I told you, Mr. Mulder, I'm a believer." The Senator read the disbelief on the younger man's face and realized Mulder needed convincing. "I'm also the head of a secret society that's been studying the paranormal for over thirty-five years. It's one of the reasons I ran for the Senate. I wanted to be in a position to make a difference--affect change. Most of my society's members hold high profile jobs in business, law, medicine, and government. Your cases have provided us with a plethora of knowledge over the last nine years. So feel secure in the knowledge that whatever you tell me will be viewed with an opened mind." The Senator often thought about approaching Mulder and offering him membership into their exclusive group. The only thing holding him back was Mulder's high profile--and the fact that several different groups were watching him closely.

Mulder took a deep breath. "When your son is released, he will be pregnant."

"What?" This was something the Senator wasn't expecting to hear. "That's not--"

"Possible." Mulder smiled weakly. "Over the last five years three men and three women have been abducted, all three women were brutally murdered. During the autopsy on the bodies of two of the women it was discovered that their reproductive organs were missing. The third was buried without a thorough autopsy being done. Six weeks ago, one of the men, Samuel Jacob leapt to his death. When his body was autopsied--"

The Senator interrupted. "I know it was discovered he was eight months pregnant." He had read Agent Scully's autopsy report. "How have you tied this Samuel Jacob's case in with that of my son's abduction?" Woods marveled at the cool intelligence he saw behind Mulder's eyes. He knew, however Mulder had tied the two cases together it would be dead on.

Mulder picked up his satchel and rifled through it, pulling out eight photographs. He laid the first six out on the table in front of the Senator. "This is Andrew Riley and Margaret Hood, they were abducted five years ago. This is Philip Egan and Anna Travis, they were abducted over two years ago. This is Samuel Jacob and Nancy Jones, they were taken nearly one year ago. Do you notice anything unusual about them?"

Woods nodded, looking at the pictures. Both Riley and Hood were blue-eyed blondes and had similar facial structures. Egan and Travis had dark brown hair and brown eyes. Jacob and Jones had black hair and gray eyes. "Each pair looks as if they could be twins."

Mulder then laid Jennifer Summers' photo in front of the Senator. Woods gasped picking up the photo of the young woman who bore an uncanny resemblance to his son. "Who is she?"

"Jennifer Summers. She was abducted in Providence, Rhode Island two days before your son's abduction."

"Mr. Mulder, just what is going to happen to my son and this young woman?"

Mulder frowned and ran his fingers anxiously through his unruly hair. "I believe that the person who abducted them has the power to transform the male into a hermaphrodite by stealing the woman's reproductive organs--"

"So the man is a Doctor?"

"No. Both Margaret Hood's and Nancy Jones' organs were removed without any sign that surgery was performed. In Hood's case they assumed that she was born without reproductive organs, since she was single and came from an impoverished family that didn't have health insurance. Her mother gave birth to all of her children at home and other than the required childhood shots, there was no record that Margaret ever saw a doctor. Jones on the other hand was more of a mystery. She was married and had given birth to one child. Neither of the two cases were ever connected."

"What about Anna Travis?"

Mulder nodded, the Senator had been paying attention. "Travis' body was never given a complete autopsy. They listed the cause of death as decapitation."

"Isn't that unusual in a homicide?"

"It's more usual than most people would like to believe. I have asked Agent Doggett to have her

body and Philip Egan's body exhumed and sent to the FBI to be autopsied."

"This Philip Egan, how did he die?"

"He hung himself."

"What about Andrew Riley?"

"Riley returned to his home in Delaware four days after Hoods' body was discovered in Maryland. The police never tied the two cases together. Riley denied any memory of what had happened to him while he was missing for those two weeks. Nine months after Riley returned home, his wife supposedly gave birth to their only daughter--"

"Supposedly?"

"Gloria Riley's medical records had listed her as barren. The Riley's had tried for more than a decade to conceive. Then suddenly Mrs. Riley is mysteriously pregnant, but she doesn't go in for any prenatal tests and ends up having the baby at home. Three months prior to their daughter's birth, Andrew drops out of sight, refusing to see anyone. Gloria told relatives that he was having a difficult time coping with her pregnancy and his abduction."

"So you think that Andrew Riley gave birth to their daughter? That he possesses Margaret Hoods' reproductive organs?" the Senator asked, leaning forward intrigued.

"Yes."

"Is there anyway we can have Riley submit to a thorough medical examination?"

Mulder shrugged his shoulders. "Not legally."

"This is most fascinating." Senator Woods leaned back in his chair happy in the knowledge that his son was not going to be killed by his abductor. It disturbed him that Marcus might return similarly to how the other men were returned. He would see that Marcus was given the best private medical care available. "Mr. Mulder, I would like to make one request of you. When Marcus is found and if he is with child, I would like that information suppressed. I don't want him turned into freak before the nation."

"Sir, I can understand how you feel. I wouldn't want your son to experience anymore pain over this incident than is necessary. With luck we'll be able to rescue him and Miss Summers before the unsub has a chance to carry through with his plans," Mulder replied.

"If you need my help expediting anything, just give my assistant a call. It was a pleasure talking with you, Mr. Mulder. Sometime in the future I'd like to have a lengthy conversation about the paranormal and aliens with you."

Mulder shook the Senator's hand. Then he was led out of the mansion by the butler. The limousine was waiting to take him home.

Senator Woods walked over to the wrought iron railing surrounding his veranda and looked out across his grounds. His thoughts were warring with each other. On the one hand he wanted his son back safe and sound, but on the other he secretly craved a grandchild. No, he could not allow his selfish desires to get in the way of his son's welfare or the life of the young woman abducted with his son.

His thoughts turned to Mulder and his uncanny ability to see the most obscure patterns in a case. The former FBI man's mind did not function the way a normal human's did. Woods wondered if

this was the result of the experiments conducted on the young Fox as a boy.

Hoover Building

Wednesday, September 12, 2001

Heads turned as Mulder strolled purposely down the corridor of the Hoover building. He had taken extra care with his appearance today, including dressing in a new Italian black silk suit. Whispers followed him as he walked into the reception area outside of Skinner's office.

"Hi, Kim, is the A.D. in?"

When Kim realized she was staring, she closed her mouth and stammered, "A-Agent Mulder...ah...no...I mean, Mr. Mulder. A.D. Skinner is in a meeting with Deputy Director Kersh. If you'd like to take a seat, he should be back in about ten minutes."

"Thanks, Kim." Mulder smiled and took a seat against the wall.

She noted the VIP pass clipped to his pocket. "Would you like a cup of coffee?"

"No. I'm fine."

"You're looking fine. Your new job must agree with you." She wondered what he was doing for a living now. Going by the suit he must be making a ton of money.

"My work has been interesting. When I'm not consulting with various law enforcement agencies, I teach a course at the University of Maryland. My friend Doctor Burks convinced me to take the position."

"What type of class? Does that make you Professor Mulder?"

"Criminal profiling and a study of the paranormal. Yes, it does make me a professor."

"Is there much interest at the college in criminal profiling?"

"Not when it was first listed, but word of mouth seemed to have gotten out. Now there's a waiting list to get into my class."

Kim smiled knowingly. She'd sit through any class, no matter how boring, if she could stare at Professor Mulder. "It's been quiet around the bureau since you left."

"I'm sure Kersh must be happy."

Kim glanced around then walked over to where Mulder was sitting. She whispered, "I don't know about that. Agents under Kersh's command have dropped the ball on three high profile cases in the past five months. Director Morris was not happy. Rumor has it that your name came up during the dressing down he gave Kersh over the last one."

Mulder looked into her blue eyes, intrigued. "Really? In what context?"

"That you could have solved those cases blind-folded while standing on your head, if some pompous jackass hadn't fired you, and that Kersh better not screw up another case or he'll be out the door." Kim's satisfied smile turned slowly into a frown as she added, "A.D. Skinner has been working around the clock on the Marcus Woods' abduction case. Kersh is really riding everyone hard."

As if on cue, Skinner walked through the door. Mulder noted his tired expression and the way his shoulders were slumped with exhaustion.

Skinner lips turned up in a slow smile when he saw Mulder sitting outside his office door. "Mulder." He held out his hand and they shook. "John informed me that you'd be assisting in the Woods' investigation. He said you had a lead on the case."

"Walter, shall we go into your office and discuss it?" He grinned at the look Skinner gave him over the use of his first name. Now that Mulder no longer worked for Skinner, he decided it was time they dealt with each other as peers.

"Sure, Mulder." Skinner allowed Mulder to proceed him into the room. Instead of taking a seat behind his desk, Skinner chose to sit on the sofa.

"You look like shit, Walter," Mulder said, sitting on a chair next to the sofa.

"I feel like shit."

"When did you eat last?"

"I don't remember," Skinner answered truthfully. "The hours have all started blurring together."

Mulder stood and pulled Skinner to his feet. "C'mon, Walter, I'll buy you a garlic roast beef sandwich and fries at Casey's. We can talk there as easily as here."

"Make it onion rings and you have a deal." Skinner stifled a yawn as Mulder led him out of his office.

Kersh was standing by Kimberly's desk with his arms folded across his chest. He had a scowl on his face as he looked at Mulder. He snarled, "Mulder, I heard you were in the building. I'd like a word with you in my office."

Mulder smirked. "Alvin, it's nice to see you, too. I can't talk now, but I'll catch you after lunch." He casually pulled his cell phone out of his pocket and dialed the basement extension as he and Skinner stepped into the hallway. Kersh followed them as Mulder spoke on the phone. "Agent Doggett, would you and Agent Reyes care to join A.D. Skinner and me for lunch down at Casey's? I'm going to fill him in on the case and I would like to discuss the progress you've made. Okay, we'll meet you there."

Kersh blocked their way. "Mulder, if you leave this building before talking to me, I'll suspend your VIP pass--"

Agents paused in their daily activity to listen to the exchange of words between their Deputy Director, who looked like he hadn't slept in days, and the former Agent Mulder who looked like he just stepped off the cover of GQ magazine.

"Look, Alvin, I doubt you'd want to do that. I was having a glass of wine with Senator Woods on his veranda last evening and he promised me the total cooperation of the FBI." Mulder knew that Kersh knew that not only was Woods good friends with the Director, but one of the Senator's committees wielded a lot of power over the FBI.

Kersh reluctantly stepped aside. "I want to speak to you when you get back from lunch, Mulder."

"I'll stop by your office some time this afternoon," Mulder said offhandedly, stepping onto the elevator with Skinner at his side.

Both men were stone faced as the elevator headed down to the parking ramp. Then Skinner started to snicker and it soon turned into a full belly laugh. "Oh, my God, Mulder, remind me never to get on your bad side. I thought Kersh was going to piss his pants when you mentioned you were having wine with Senator Woods last night!"

Mulder sighed contentedly. "I've dreamed of taking that arrogant bastard down a notch."

"I think you've succeeded." Skinner followed Mulder over to his car and climbed in the passenger side.

Mulder slid in the driver's seat and buckled his seatbelt. He backed out of his parking space.

"I've missed you, Mulder."

"Well, I've missed working for you, Walter. Life gets pretty damn lonely at times," Mulder said wistfully as he drove out of the parking ramp.

"I thought you were happy teaching?"

"There's a bit of a generation gap between the eighteen to twenty-two years old I teach. Most have no idea what it's like to stare down the barrel of a gun or race against time to stop some madman from killing again."

Skinner studied Mulder carefully. Beneath that perfectly groomed exterior was a lonely man who was hurting badly. There was a time when Mulder wore his pain and loss like a second suit, now it was carefully tucked away. "You should have called. I would have loved to spend some time with you in my off hours."

Mulder smiled over at him. "I'll do that, Walter. Sometimes it helps to have someone to talk to-- someone who would understand." Mulder pulled into the parking lot of Casey's. Doggett's car was already in the lot.

They found the agent sitting alone in a booth. Mulder slid in next to him while Skinner sat across from them.

"Where's Reyes?" Mulder asked.

"She's driving to Quantico. Philip Egan's and Anna Travis' bodies just arrived. She wanted to be present when Scully started the autopsy." Doggett took a sip of cola. "Now, Muldah, do you want to tell us what you expect Agent Scully to find?"

Mulder sighed at the way Doggett pronounced his name. It was hit or miss whether he'd pronounce it correctly. "I expect her to find that Ms. Travis' body doesn't have any reproductive organs."

"What? Are you suggesting that the unsub removed them?" Doggett asked in astonishment.

"Yes. And I expect that we'll find them in Philip Egan's body along with a five month old fetus."

A waitress walked up to their table. "Gentlemen, what may I get you?"

"I'll have the garlic roast beef, fries, and an ice tea," Mulder said.

"I'll have the same, but with onion rings instead of fries," Skinner replied.

The waitress turned to Doggett.

"The cheese steak sandwich and onion rings."

After she left Doggett turned back to Mulder. "Do you want to tell us how Egan, Travis, and Jacob figure into the Marcus Woods' case?"

Mulder nodded, and started filling them in on everything he told Senator Woods last night. The waitress came back with their meals halfway through Mulder's explanation. They ate while listening to him.

"Whoa, Mulder, do you honestly expect anyone in their right mind to buy this theory of yours?" Doggett asked.

"I buy it, Agent Doggett," Skinner growled.

Doggett turned his steely blues on Skinner. "Sir, no one has the power to magically transfer the reproductive organs from a female into the body of a male, turning him into a fully-functioning hermaphrodite. It's just not possible!"

Softening, "John, I think Mulder has done a fine job explaining that it is possible. How would you explain Samuel Jacob?"

"He could have been born a hermaphrodite."

"His wife said he was one hundred percent male." Skinner took a sip of his ice tea wishing for something stronger. "If the DNA from Nancy Jones' body matches up with the reproductive organs found in Jacob would that convince you?"

Doggett sighed. "I couldn't argue with hard science."

Mulder chuckled. "I don't know...I've won countless arguments with Scully over the years. Her hard science against my wild theories."

"Well, none of your theories have given us any clues on how to find this unsub!" Doggett said.

Mulder knew he was right. "I think we'll need to bring Andrew Riley in for questioning."

"And if he doesn't want to cooperate?"

Skinner spoke firmly, feeling revitalized. "We'll show him Margaret Hood's photo and remind him just what it cost her. And what will happen to Jennifer Summers if we don't find her in time."

Mulder smiled at Skinner. It felt good working as part of a team again, even if it was only temporary. They finished their lunches and Mulder decided to head back to the bureau to talk to Kersh, while Doggett and Skinner drove out to Quantico to view the autopsies.

Demetrius sensed that something was wrong as he clicked on his television set to watch the daily press conference being held by the FBI. The press conferences were meant to keep the public informed on their progress in the search for Senator Woods' son. Demetrius had been watching their conferences over the last four days only this time something was different. Standing to the left of the podium, where the stocky black man was speaking, was a tall, beautiful, white male wearing an expensive suit. He felt a stirring in his loins for this attractive man, enchanted by the full pouty lips and the sexy mole on his cheek. The way his soft brown

hair fell across his forehead. Unfortunately, he couldn't make out the color of the man's eyes over his television set.

His attention was suddenly drawn back the black man at the podium. "With the assistance of Mr. Mulder...." The black man nodded to the beautiful man standing to his left. "We've been able to link Marcus Woods' abduction with several other unsolved cases. Due to the sensitive nature of this case we're not at liberty to disclose any further information at this point."

A reporter in the audience shouted. "DD Kersh, does it have anything to do with the bodies of Philip Egan and Anna Travis that were exhumed this morning and sent to the FBI labs in Quantico?"

"No comment," Kersh said gruffly. "Now if you'll excuse us, we have work to do."

Demetrius stood stunned. He had no idea how the FBI could have connected Egan and Travis to Woods. His eyes stayed focused on the image of the beautiful man being led out of the press conference by DD Kersh and two beefy agents. He tapped a manicured, painted, nail to his lip. "Mulder, who are you and just what assistance are you providing the FBI?" Demetrius was determined to find out everything about this tall beauty.

Walking into his bathroom, he stopped at the sink to freshen up his makeup. Then he selected a dark shade of lipstick from his makeup case, applying it with professional ease to his lips. He strolled into his bedroom, stripping off the robe and tossing it on the unmade bed. Choosing a pair of leggings and an oversized sweater from his closet, he walked back into the bathroom and hung them on the hook on back of the door, before digging through the cabinet for a fresh tampon. He placed one foot on the toilet and reached under his balls for the string hanging from his vagina. Tossing the used tampon into the trash he inserted the new one.

Demetrius dressed and slipped on a pair of flats. The final touch was a long black wig that fell in waves over his shoulders. He smiled at his image. It was impossible to tell that he wasn't one hundred percent female. No Adam's apple was evident and his face was smooth and hairless.

Before leaving his house, Demetrius walked over to the altar he had set up inside a walk-in closet. He scrapped a long nail over the ancient tome resting on it. The secrets of the universe had been revealed to him inside this book. The more he learned, the closer to a God he became.

Mulder arrived at Quantico just as Scully was finishing up the last autopsy.

Walking anxiously over to Agent Doggett, he asked, "Well?" Despite the confidence he had in his theory, there was always a chance that he could be wrong.

"It was as you said, Mulder. Egan has female reproductive organs in his body with a mummified fetus inside the womb and Travis was completely sexless. Agent Scully has sent tissue samples from both victims to try to match the DNA from the female organs inside Egan with Travis," Doggett said, growing a whole new respect for the ex-agent.

Skinner walked over to them. "How did your meeting with Kersh go?"

Mulder shrugged his shoulder and sighed, "He decided to use me in his dog and pony show to the press. I suspect if we don't rescue Marcus Woods, I'll be the one getting the blame for it."

Skinner looked disgusted. "If we do rescue him, Kersh will be the one getting the credit."

"What else is new?" Mulder glanced through the doorway at Scully as she removed her soiled

gloves. Agent Monica Reyes was hovering closely by her side. Mulder hadn't been surprised when Scully told him that Monica had moved in with her. He'd suspected that the two women had become more than just friends over the past several months.

"What's our next step?" Skinner asked.

"We need to bring Andrew Riley in for questioning," Doggett said, looking at Mulder for confirmation.

Mulder nodded in agreement and added, "We'll also need to get DNA samples from the fetus and Jacob's dead infant. We'll need a court order to get a DNA sample from the Riley's little girl so we can match them against the unsub when we capture him."

"You think the unsub is the father?" Doggett asked, his eyes never leaving Mulder's handsome face.

"I'm banking on it."

"Look, Mulder, I'd like to discuss this case further with you. If you're free tonight...say for dinner. My treat," Doggett said. His desire to get to know Mulder on a more personal level was taking precedence over his common sense. He didn't even know if Mulder would be open to a sexual relationship with another man.

"Sure. Where?"

"My place...say around seven o'clock. I make a mean chili."

"Okay, I'll see you tonight." Glancing down at his watch, Mulder sighed. "I need to get over to the university. I have papers to grade."

Neither man noticed the look of confusion and sadness on Skinner's face.

Mulder paused on his way out the door and turned back to Skinner, he smiled. "Walter, call me sometime."

Skinner forced a smile. "I'll see you tomorrow, Mulder."

As the chili bubbled away in a pot on the stovetop, Doggett used a wooden spoon to stir the spicy concoction. He hadn't been able to get Mulder off his mind since seeing him playing basketball yesterday. His decision to invite him for dinner had been impulsive, but he was glad he had. The timer went off on the stove and he pulled the cornbread out of the oven while thinking back to the last man he had a sexual relationship with--Tom. His relationship with Tom had lasted longer than any of his previous relationships, including his marriage. Tom had been killed in the line of duty three years ago. Mulder was the first man, since Tom's death, he wanted to get to know on a more intimate level.

The doorbell rang and he nervously rubbed his sweaty palms on his faded jeans as he went to answer it.

Mulder was standing on his stoop wearing a worn leather jacket over a black T-shirt. He also wore a mischievous grin on his face. Bringing his hand up from where it was hidden behind his back, he handed Doggett a colorful bouquet of wildflowers. "One of my students informed me that it would be rude not to bring you flowers, if you're cooking dinner for me."

Doggett took the flowers and looked at him warily. "You discussed us having dinner with your students?"

"My students are mostly female and they seem to have taken an interest in my personal life. Would you like to read the stack of love letters I've received over the last two months?" Mulder asked, following Doggett into the living room and taking off his jacket.

Doggett chuckled. "So you used having dinner with me as a means to discourage their advances?"

"I was getting desperate." Mulder draped his jacket over the back of a chair.

"I better put these in water," Doggett said, walking into the kitchen. He opened the cabinet trying to remember if he even had a vase. His eyes landed on an oversized beer stein. Pulling it off the top shelf, he filled it with water, then plopped the flowers in and carried the stein into the dining room and placed it in the middle of the table.

He glanced into the living room where Mulder was going through his CD collection.

"Go ahead if you want to put some music on," Doggett said, coming up to stand beside him.

"You have a nice collection." Mulder selected Billy Joel's The Stranger CD.

"Mostly old favorites." Doggett watched as Mulder popped the CD in and waited for the first notes of Movin' Out to start playing. "Dinner's ready if you want to take a seat at the table, I'll be right out with it."

"Do you need any help?"

"No. Just relax, Muldah."

"John, it's pronounced, Mul-der or Fox take your pick."

"Hey, it's not my fault your name is so hard to pronounce. So I guess I'll go with Fox as long as it's all right with you."

"Yeah, it's all right." Mulder took a seat at the table, noting that Doggett had taken the time to set it and light candles. He wondered for the second time if Doggett had more on his mind than discussing the Woods' case.

Doggett returned with a pitcher filled with margaritas and a basket of cornbread. He filled their glasses. "I've been watching my sodium intake, so I hope you don't mind that I didn't salt the glasses. I didn't bother buying salt at the liquor store."

"No. I don't mind." Mulder picked up the glass and took a sip while Doggett headed back into the kitchen. He came back with two bowls heaping with chili and placed one in front of Mulder then took a seat at the table. "It smells good." Mulder slowly brought a spoonful to his lips.

Doggett smiled at the cautious way Mulder tasted the first spoonful. "Don't worry, it's not too hot."

It was hot, but not too bad. "Mm, John, this is really good. You wouldn't believe some of the bad chili I've had, where the only two ingredients seemed to be Tabasco sauce and habanero peppers."

"I've had some of that chili. It gets you coming and going."

They ate for a few minutes in silence and listening to the music. Before Mulder found the courage to ask what was on his mind. "John, you didn't really want to discuss the case tonight, did you?"

"It wasn't my main reason for inviting you," Doggett confessed.

"What was your main reason?" Mulder asked softly, watching the guilty look on Doggett's face.

"I wanted to get to know you better. Look, Fox, I find you attractive and interesting." Doggett waited for Mulder to laugh or make some sarcastic remark. When he didn't Doggett looked over at him and saw a deeply troubled man.

"What's wrong?"

Mulder looked at him with sad eyes. "Just what are you suggesting, John?"

Doggett realized that Mulder wouldn't be satisfied with anything but the truth. "I'd like to pursue a relationship with you, if you're inclined."

Mulder stirred his chili, so he wouldn't have to meet Doggett's eyes. "My one and only sexual relationship with another man ended badly. I haven't had another since Richard."

"Richard? Do you want to tell me about it?"

Mulder shrugged his shoulders. He hadn't talked to anyone about his six-month affair. "It was twenty years ago. I was working as an intern for Senator Matheson while attending college--"

Doggett interrupted, his eyes widening. "*Richard* Matheson? You had an affair with a U.S. Senator?"

"Yeah. Unfortunately, my dad found out. Him and Richard were friends. It was how I got the job as the Senator's intern. I've never seen Dad so mad in my life. After Samantha was abducted he virtually avoided any contact with me, but for some reason finding out that his friend was fucking me sent him into a rage. It ended with me being sent away to college in England." Mulder looked sadly down at his meal. "I really hated disappointing my dad, so I stayed away from men after that incident."

"None of your relationships with women have worked out, have they, Fox?"

"No. John, I'm gay...I finally accepted that fact and stopped dating altogether."

"It was noble that you wanted to please your father, but, Fox, you should never have allowed him to dictate how you lived your life. You're an adult...you should put your happiness first." Doggett placed his hand on top of Mulder's. "Let me show you how good it can be...that is if you're interested?"

"I-I." Mulder hadn't given any thought to starting a relationship with anyone. He swallowed nervously. Feeling slightly nauseous as his nerves became tangled between his desire to accept what Doggett was offering, and the desire to flee. "Just what are you proposing, John?"

Doggett saw the look of fear in Mulder's eyes and realized the younger man was scared to death. He rose and knelt next to Mulder's chair. "I don't want you to be afraid of me, Fox. We don't have to do anything if you don't want to. We can start by being friends...having dinner together, going to ballgames, watching TV together. If we move our relationship past friendship, it will be your decision."

"You'd be willing to settle for us just being friends?" Mulder sucked on his lower lip, beginning to

relax a little.

"I find you fascinating, Fox. I've never met anyone like you before and I seriously want to get to know you better."

Mulder sighed with relief. "Okay, I'd like to get to know you better too, John."

Doggett smiled. "Finish your dinner, Fox."

They spent the remainder of the meal talking about sports. Doggett was happy to discover that they were both Knicks fans. Mulder insisted on helping Doggett with the dishes. By the end of the evening, each had a better understanding of the other.

Doggett watched sadly as Mulder pulled on his leather jacket. He was willing to wait for Mulder to be ready to move their relationship to the next level, but he still desired to touch and taste the other man.

"Thanks, John...I really enjoyed having dinner with you. I'll see you at the bureau tomorrow." Mulder wasn't sure if he wanted to kiss Doggett or not, he was still worried about rushing too quickly into another doomed relationship. Instead, he held out his hand. Doggett shook it firmly keeping the contact a bit longer than was normal.

"Fox, my cousin has a cabin in the Blue Ridge Mountains...once this case is over I'd love to take you there. We can do some hiking and maybe a little fishing. Just kick back and relax."

"That sounds good. I could use some downtime, but it might have to wait until fall break."

Doggett chuckled. "Fox, you've been hanging around those geeky friends of yours too long. Downtime is for computers. Vacations are for people."

Mulder grinned sheepishly. "I'd love to take a vacation. Nothing could be more beautiful than when the fall colors are at their peak up in the mountains."

"I can think of one thing more beautiful," Doggett said, staring intensely at Mulder.

There was no doubt in Mulder's mind what he meant. He blushed. "I-I better get home...I need to get up early tomorrow."

"Bye, Fox." Doggett stood in the doorway and watched Mulder walk to his car.

Once home Mulder walked into his bathroom and stared at his reflection in the mirror. What was there about him that would interest John Doggett? Long ago Mulder had put up defensive blocks around his heart in the form of self-effacing sarcasm. He couldn't stand the pain of being hurt again. Dana Scully was the only person he'd ever let behind his shields, and even she had hurt him to the point that he was having a hard time letting anyone else close.

He walked out of his bathroom and picked up his old FBI nameplate that was residing on his bookshelf. It had rested on top of his basement desk for nearly a decade. He had rescued it once when Jeffrey Spender briefly took over his basement office. Only to have Dana Scully, years later, put it into his desk drawer as a means to shut him out of her mind so she could move on with her life. Maybe he should be grateful that she hadn't tossed it into the trash. It had hurt him, finding out that the one person he trusted above all others had given up on him after only two short weeks. Every one of his friends had moved on with their lives. No one even had the time to mourn his disappearance for long. No one really seemed to care.

Now John Doggett wanted to get to know him better with the promise of more. Mulder wasn't sure if he could handle another rejection. Then again, he wasn't sure he could go through life knowing that no one really loved him. It was a conundrum.

Kicking off his shoes, Mulder sat on the sofa and pulled his feet up. He lay on his side still clutching his nameplate and fell into a troubled sleep. The sound of his telephone buzzing woke him. He snatched it off the hook.

"Mulder?" he mumbled tiredly.

"Fox, we're bringing Andrew Riley in for questioning. I thought you'd want to be here?" Doggett's voice was filled with concern.

Mulder glanced at his desk clock...it was close to noon. "Damn. I'm sorry, John, I must have overslept. I'll be there in an hour."

"Are you okay?"

"I'm fine. Did I mention that tequila and me don't get along?"

"You only had one margarita last night."

Mulder smiled at the concern he heard in Doggett's voice. "See...tequila really hates me." His voice softened, "John, I'll be there in an hour." Hanging up, he picked the nameplate off the floor and dropped it in the trashcan. "It's time to let go of the past," he whispered.

When Mulder walked into the Hoover building, he was wearing his best gray suit and had the VIP badge displayed on his pocket. Men and women went out of their way to greet him as he strolled down the corridor as if he were some long lost relative. Doggett was pacing the basement office when he arrived.

"Fox, we need to get up to interrogation room three. Kersh has already assigned someone to interview Andrew Riley."

"Who?"

"ASAC Tom Colton."

"God, that asshole will ruin the case!" Mulder grumbled as he and Doggett hurried out of the office and up to the second floor's interrogation rooms.

They stepped into the observation room where Skinner and Kersh sat secretly viewing the interrogation. Kersh glared at Mulder. "Your theory that Riley was a victim of our unsub is falling apart, Mulder."

Mulder angrily got into Kersh's face. "My theory is sound, it's the jerk off you have interviewing him that's fucking up this case. Agent Doggett or A.D. Skinner should be conducting this interview not Colton! They know what questions to ask!"

"Get out of my face, Mulder! I'm the Deputy Director not you! I'll decide who interviews Andrews!"

"You're the DD today, but one call to Senator Woods and you'll be out on your ass! Is that what you want?" Mulder shot back.

Skinner and Doggett both stared at Mulder with their mouths hanging open.

"You're bluffing."

Mulder pulled his cell phone from his pocket and dialed the Senator's number.

"Senator Woods office," a soft female voice answered.

"This is Fox Mulder. Is the Senator in?"

"I'll connect you, Mr. Mulder."

"Mr. Mulder, how may I help you?" the Senator asked.

"Sir, I'm receiving some interference from Deputy Director Kersh. He's insisted on having an unqualified agent conduct the interview with a prime witness into your son's abduction--"

"Let me speak to him, Mr. Mulder."

Mulder handed the phone to Kersh.

"Senator?" Kersh said. His palms were sweating as he held the phone.

"Mr. Kersh, do you like your job?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then why are you trying to get your ass fired?"

"Sir?"

"Continue to interfere with Mr. Mulder's investigation into my son's abduction and you'll be eating out of garbage cans before this week is out. Do you understand me, Mr. Kersh?"

Kersh gulped. "Yes, sir."

"Good day, Mr. Kersh."

The DD handed the cell phone back to Mulder. He pushed the intercom button to the interrogation room. "ASAC Colton, Mr. Mulder and Agent Doggett are going to be taking over the interview."

Doggett's face remained unemotional as he and Mulder walked out the door and entered the interrogation room. Inside he was laughing his ass off. He'd kiss Mulder if he knew the younger man wasn't still skittish.

"Mr. Riley, I'm Special Agent John Doggett, this is Mr. Fox Mulder. We'd like to ask you a few questions."

Riley was an attractive man in his late thirties. Doggett thought there was something slightly effeminate about him.

"I've already told that other agent everything. I don't know why I've been brought here. I'd like to talk to my lawyer--"

"You're not being charged with anything, Mr. Riley. So there is no need for your lawyer...unless there is something you're hiding?" Doggett asked.

"I'm not hiding anything."

Mulder sat on the chair across from Riley. He opened his satchel and pulled out a series of photographs, lining them in front of Riley. "Do you recognize the woman in these photographs?"

He watched Riley's expression when he placed the photograph that showed Margaret Hood's decapitated head in front of him.

"I don't recognize her," Riley whispered, feeling nauseous.

Mulder said softly, "Look again, Mr. Riley, I think that you might be mistaken. Think back five years ago when you were abducted. Miss Hood was abducted the same time as you were by the same man--"

"I don't know her!"

"You have her uterus and vagina inside your body. I can get a court order to prove that fact, so I suggest you cooperate with us."

The color drained out of Riley's face. "I have no idea what you're talking about."

Mulder leaned forward. "I believe you do, Mr. Riley. I know that you gave birth to your daughter Caroline."

Riley slumped down in his chair. "What do you want from me?"

"We want your help in capturing the man who murdered Margaret Hood and turned you into a hermaphrodite. Mr. Riley, the same man is responsible for four other deaths, six if you count the unborn fetuses." Mulder placed two more photographs in front of Riley. "Please help us stop him from killing again. Help us rescue Marcus Woods and Jennifer Summers."

Riley looked at the photograph of the Senator's son and the young woman. He swallowed. "The witch who abducted me is like I am now a hermaphrodite. The creature could pass as either male or female. Mr. Mulder, I don't know how to find the bitch. The only thing I remember was that we were held in the cellar of a house near the ocean or bay. I could clearly hear the sound of a fog horn and the sea."

"I'd like you to work with a sketch artist so we could get a composite of this person," Doggett said.

"I'll never forget her face for as long as I live. I'll help you on the condition that you don't bring my name into this case. I don't want my family to become a circus sideshow."

"Agreed. Mr. Riley, we'd also like to have you examined and a blood sample taken from your daughter for a DNA test. The examines will remain classified," Mulder promised.

"No. I won't allow you to touch my daughter. You can examine me but you have to keep her out of this." Riley trusted the government only slightly more than the creature who abducted him.

Mulder and Doggett exchanged looks, silently communicating with their eyes.

Doggett turned back to Riley. "Okay, Mr. Riley, you have a deal," he said. Picking up the telephone, he arranged for a sketch artist. Then for Riley to be examined by Agent Scully.

Early evening

Thursday, September 13, 2001

Doggett walked into the task force room followed by Mulder. Skinner was there along with all the agents that had been assigned to the Woods' case, eight long days ago. He walked to the front of the room while Mulder strolled over to stand beside Skinner.

"People, listen up," Doggett said. "We have our first real break in the case." He handed the nearest agent a stack of fliers. "Pass these out, Roger." Doggett kept one and held it up. "This is a composite sketch of our suspect. We have already sent copies by courier to the newspapers and the television stations. It will be up to us to man the phones to weed out the loonies from the serious callers."

One of the agents looking at the sketch whistled. "Damn, I wouldn't mind dating her! Six feet four inches is a bit too tall, but damn she's hot."

Doggett looked at him sternly. "Dale, it's a he or more precisely a hermaphrodite."

"Well scratch that, I'm no faggot!" Dale said.

"Agent, watch your language!" Skinner barked.

Dale swallowed nervously. "Sorry, sir."

Mulder stifled a laugh as he smirked sideways at Skinner. It was good to see that his former boss still had the ability to make agents quiver in their shoes.

"Mulder, if you start laughing I'll have you thrown bodily out of the building," Skinner hissed under his breath.

"Sorry, Walter, you're just so cute when you're all surly."

"Maybe I should send Kersh a box of chocolates for firing your ass," Skinner quipped.

"Be nice, sir, or I'll ask Senator Woods to get me my old job back."

Skinner met his eyes. "Maybe, I want you back," he said softly.

Mulder raised an eyebrow, looking at him questioningly. Before he could ask what Skinner meant, Doggett came up beside them.

"Well, we're all set. I have a really good feeling about this."

Annapolis

Friday, September 14, 2001

It was early morning as Demetrius paused at the newspaper dispenser outside a convenience store. A cold sweat broke out over his body as he inserted coins into the slot and pulled out the paper. On the front page was a sketch of him in his female persona.

He needed to get back home and pack. It was only a matter of time before one of his neighbors contacted the FBI. Hopping into his car, he started for home.

He scanned his neighborhood as he drove down his road. The homes were nicely spread out

with his nearest neighbor's house being a hundred yards away. He opted to park down the road from his house. Demetrius didn't have that much to retrieve; he mainly wanted the tome and his potions. He regretted having to leave Marcus and Jennifer, but there wasn't enough time to bring them along.

Hoover Building
Friday, September 14, 2001

Agent Stewart hung up the telephone and handed Doggett the slip of paper he had been scribbling on.

Doggett studied it and went over to the wall map where dozens of pins had been inserted. This was the third call they had received about a strange man who liked to dress in women's clothing that lived at a house over in

[Back to index](#)

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