

Summary: Alex is a mother, all right.

Categories: [X Files](#) Characters: Skinner/Krycek

Genres: Slash

Warnings: None

Challenges: None

Series: None

Chapters: 1 Completed: No Word count: 17527 Read: 287 Published: 12/12/2010 Updated: 12/12/2010

Story Notes:

Disclaimer: Not mine, never were, I have no money.

Notes: Baby rats are called kittens, like cats. I know. I looked it up. I'm mental. This was a challenge, all right. A fun one! I love it! It's set before "Patient X/The Red and the Black", so a lot of canon is not applicable. I'll see how much I can "forget" about what happened. Thanks to Vixx for giving me Alex's obsession and a reason to connect with Walter. Thank you Erynn for letting me prattle on about this, even though it squicked the shit out of you. Thank you most of all to Ursula for the fast beta, I love you for it. This isn't going to be as I originally intended, but then again, is anyone's story ever like that? This is for the X-Files Fuq-Q-Fest. It is from the list of pick one hard challenges, #10. I couldn't see Alex as a hermaphrodite, he loves that his peepee works, so it's just your average, run of the mill mpreg. Minus the bogus "oh my baby" shit. Enjoy!

## 1. [Chapter 1](#) by Amazon X

### Chapter 1 by Amazon X

Lights and that smell. I hate that smell. Hospitals, labs, asylums, they all have the same smell: Lysol. Yuck. I had to stay there, though, if I wanted the new arm. I had to lie there and take it and live with what they did to me.

It all started out innocuous enough, actually. There was an underground whisper that the Syndicate scientists could use alien technology to re-grow my arm. They don't have the same problems as other doctors do, getting approval to use stem cells. I was the guinea pig, but the sentiment was right. If doctors could re-grow limbs, there would be more strong, healthy people to fight the future.

That's what all this was about, fighting the future, the impending invasion by off-worlders who wanted the place for what? Our natural resources? Hosts to grow their young? Who knew? And more importantly, who cared? No one did, really. All they cared about was stopping the invasion, and worry about the whys and what-fors later.

So here I lie, coming out of anesthesia, looking down at the bandage on my stump. A familiar look to me, and I knew things would be crazy from there on in.

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Walter Skinner walked into his outer office and noticed that his inner office door was ajar. He never left it that way, and neither did his secretary. He quickly drew his weapon, then slowly made his way into the office. He stopped briefly, to try and smell the cigarette smoke, but it was suspiciously absent. He then thought of Krycek. He hid his weapon at his side and stepped slowly into the room, only to be greeted by a vision of a handsome man sitting on his leather couch. No one knew his name, but he was always so well dressed, his hands and fingernails manicured perfectly.

"Mister Skinner, I've been waiting for you. No need to ask how I entered the building. You already know that."

Skinner reholstered his weapon and walked fully into the room. He laid his briefcase on the desk

and slipped off his outer coat. After hanging both that and his suit jacket on the coat rack in the corner, he sat at his desk. "What can I do for you?"

"That always seems the case, Mr. Skinner, what you can do for us, the Syndicate. What I'm going to ask you to do is a personal favor."

Skinner took a deep breath and sat back in his chair. Rustling from the outer office alerted him to the arrival of his assistant. As if on cue, she walked in with his mail in her hand and said, "I'm sorry, sir, I...didn't mean..."

Skinner thought that the presence of the other man was a bit unnerving to her. He was a new guest in the office. "It's OK, Arlene. Please close the door, thank you."

She did as he asked quickly and they were alone again. "Mr. Skinner, I know of the rendezvous between you and a certain former agent of yours." Skinner reddened under the scrutiny. "I'm not judging the encounters. We are busy men, with complicated lives. If one derives pleasure in a legal way, in opposition to many of the members of my circle, I have no objections. But you will be surprised the next time you see him. He is markedly changed. And you must do everything in your power to protect him."

Skinner smirked. "What makes you think we haven't gone our separate ways?" Skinner asked.

"I have every reason to believe that before he went off to Russia, he did not spend the entire night on your balcony. And I also know that you have comforted him since his return home from his adventures in Tunguska. As I've stated, this is not my concern at the moment. I am, however, concerned with Alex Krycek's health and well-being."

"What does that mean?" Skinner turned a curious look on the man.

"He visited you not too long ago, about four months ago? Wanted you to see his new limb, I imagine?"

"Is my apartment bugged?" Skinner spat, thumping a fist on his desk.

"No, Mr. Skinner. Suffice to say, Alex isn't as guarded with me about his secrets as he is with everyone else. Usually, I don't betray his confidences. This time, I must make an allowance. When next you see our Mr. Krycek, you will entreat him to stay with you. Your country home in Pennsylvania, your parents' old home. Take him there. You will find all you need to handle the situation."

The well-dressed man stood and held his hand out to Skinner. "Wait, hold on, you expect me to take Krycek to my parents' home while he's ill? Hell no! I have work to do!"

"Mr. Skinner, you will find your work doesn't need you right now. Alex needs you. And if you are the man I think you are, you will go where you are needed most." The look in the watery blue eyes before him was of wisdom and compassion. Skinner stood and shook the man's hand. "When I'm sure that all is well, I will contact you."

He turned and left the office. Skinner didn't bother to follow the man. He allowed the information to wash through him and decided he'd keep the advice in mind when next Krycek visited him. If there were marked differences in Alex's appearance, as the man said, he would make his decision.

After two weeks, he was awakened in the night by the sound of glass breaking in his kitchen. Immediately on alert, grabbing his weapon from his nightstand, Skinner crept down the stairs, as if entering an unsecured area, looking for an UNSUB. The litany of Russian swearwords

muttered, followed by the sound of broken glass being swept up, only to have dust brush and pan dropped and the sound of violent retching echoing through the spacious living room alerted Skinner that the bright light turned on in his kitchen was to illuminate the way of his sometimes lover, and full time annoyance, Alex Krycek.

Stepping around the corner, Skinner immediately lowered his weapon when he recognized the familiar form bent over his sink, washing out his mouth. Krycek stood up and turned around, taking in Skinner's state of dress, being only a pair of light blue pajama pants. "Sorry about the glass. I'll replace it."

Skinner stepped forward into the kitchen and avoided the glass, being barefooted. Krycek went back to his task of clean up, only to be brushed aside by Skinner. "Sit, I'll get this." Krycek, not entirely up to an argument, did as told. After procuring a sturdy broom, Skinner made quick work of the broken glass.

"What did you want, Alex? Water or juice?" Skinner pulled another glass from his cabinet and made the decision of juice for Krycek when he saw the younger man bent over the table, head resting on his folded arms. He placed the glass on the white marble-print Formica top and brushed a hand through Krycek's hair. It felt unwashed, a few days without benefit of water and shampoo. Krycek was also emitting a sour odor of sweat and sick. This worried the big man.

"Ok, forget the juice. Come upstairs. We'll get you a shower and some sleep." Krycek laid his head back down on his arms and mumbled something unintelligible. Sighing, Skinner knew what he needed to do. He went to his bedroom, laid a fresh bath towel across the foot of the bed and filled large marble sink with warm, soapy water. He went back down to the sleeping Krycek and manhandled him up the stairs to lie across said towel. He wrestled the raunchy clothing off the young, lithe body and was shocked by what he saw.

The body he always found alluring for it's strength and sturdiness was now thin and pale. Bones protruded where there were once smooth joints. Sinew that had once rippled under golden skin had become stringy ropes under dry, paper-thin membrane. All except the rounded belly. Right where his hard, six-pack abs used to be was a rounded, solid-looking lump. Skinner reached out to touch it, and it moved under his hand. Not a jump or a thump, but a small flutter, and all Krycek had done was breathe.

Skinner did not want to consider the first thought that jumped into his head. He'd read Mulder's case file report on the hermaphrodite/changling perp that murdered several people in Steveson, Massachusetts. Krycek wasn't involved in that case. He hadn't even graduated from the academy at that time. Skinner carefully wiped all the grime and stink from Krycek, using his favorite sandalwood and musk soap that Krycek had left there. Skinner kept it in a special travel soap case, only taking it out on special occasions.

Standing in the shower with the bar pressed to his nose, Skinner would bring himself erect and jerk off thinking of his errant and scarce lover. With the man there on his bed, he was more than happy to clean him up. Skinner ran the wet washcloth over the man's hair, as well, silently promising a proper shower in the morning. After finishing up, he settled them both in the wide bed to sleep. Not letting the odd feelings of dread encroach on his dreams, he slept the sleep of a man secure in his home, in the arms of his lover.

In the morning, Skinner woke to the smell of coffee and frying bacon. He rose from his bed and slipped into a pair of boxer shorts. He noticed the pair that had been on top of them was missing. Skinner cautiously walked down the stairs and smiled when he saw the picture in the kitchen. Three pans were going, bowls were set out on the counters and there were smells that made Skinner's stomach rumble.

"Think you're making enough?" he asked. Krycek whirled around and stared at him. Then he

went back to cooking.

"I didn't know you could cook, Alex," Skinner said softer.

"I can only do breakfast and pasta. Other than that, I'm pretty lost."

Skinner stepped up behind him and asked, "What's on the menu? I could use some myself."

"Eggs, bacon, pancakes and coffee. Get plates and shit," he growled, flipping and stirring food around.

Skinner went about setting the table and laying out the silverware while Krycek cursed and slammed pans on the stove. Skinner did his best to hide the wince at every bang and crash. Within fifteen minutes, there was hot food on the table, glasses of juice and mugs of coffee. Krycek was silent as he sat to dig into his food. Skinner watched as the other man ate ravenously, as if he hadn't had a meal in ages. It could very well be the case, but Skinner didn't want to consider that fact.

After fifteen minutes of nothing but silverware scraping plates and sips of fluid, Krycek uttered, "Oh shit..." and jumped up from the table. Skinner watched him go, hear the frantic foot-pounding of the stairs and then the sounds of breakfast reappearing. He slowly made his way up, trying to give Krycek enough privacy to finish up. He made it around the corner to hear the flush and found Krycek rinsing his mouth in the sink.

"You OK, Alex?" Skinner asked, not entering the room. The problem with Krycek was if you spooked him, he would bolt like a frightened animal and it would take months to coax him back. Skinner had to act with great care when approaching him and dealing with him. The younger man was comfortable being aggressive, and somewhat open, while they were in bed. And open meant he would express pleasure, or direct Skinner to more pleasure. Other than that, the man was tight-lipped about himself, personally.

"Yeah, just peachy, can't ya tell?" he said, then guzzled a mouthful of Listerine straight from the bottle.

"Have you been sick for a while?" Skinner asked, as he lowered the toilet seat lid for Krycek to sit on, after noticing the white-knuckled death-grip he had on the vanity top. Krycek followed the gentle push of his shoulder and sat on the closed lid.

"A few weeks. Every goddam morning, and then I get hungry all damn day. And I don't have fucking time for this bullshit, Walt. I barely have time for food."

A big hand stroked the wan, pale cheek before him. The cheek that he'd kissed and slapped so many times before. "Alex, we have to talk. The Englishman came to see me. And he told me I have to do something for you."

"Fuck! They want you to kill me, right? What the fuck did I do? Jesus, great, fuck this, I'm out of here," he said, and tried to stand. When he swayed from dizziness, Skinner took hold of his shoulders and sat him back down.

"Alex, he wants me to take you into hiding. He said there's something wrong with you. He didn't tell me what. But I have an idea. I need to make a call, and we're going to visit some friends of Mulder's."

"No! Do not tell Mulder I'm around! The last thing I need is to get beat up while I'm sick. Son of bitch thinks I'm his personal punching bag."

"I will not let Mulder hit you. I promise." Skinner helped Krycek into the shower to wash the sour sweat from his body and hair, and afterward wrapped Krycek in his own robe, opting to just swath his hips in a towel. Krycek just sat back and allowed Skinner to rub his hair dry with a fresh towel, then finger-comb it down. When a man loses his hair, he likes to play with others' just to remember.

While Krycek cleaned the kitchen, Skinner sat at his desk and made arrangements with the Lone Gunmen to visit and use their homemade sonogram machine. Krycek had mentioned that the scientists who re-grew his arm used stem cells with beta radiation to see if they could regenerate a limb. He said it was better than they'd hoped for; believing the DNA signature left by the Purity inhabitation helped it along. The pain was excruciating, but they loaded him with morphine.

What if...no, couldn't be. Even if the fetus was female...Skinner shook his head and decided to consult Scully on the matter, albeit discreetly. He watched Krycek dress in the same clothes he arrived in, and Skinner was not happy. "Do you have extra clothing at your apartment? I'm going to be taking you someplace where you can rest and get well in safety. And my clothes won't fit you."

Krycek turned the charm on, sliding his arms around Skinner's neck. "Can't I just stay naked?"

Skinner's arms went about Krycek's body, pulling the man closer. "As much as I would love it, what would the neighbors think?"

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LONE GUNMEN HQ  
TAKOMA PARK, MD

He says nothing as we go to my little hole. It's nothing. I keep nothing. I lost it all in that initial escape after Skyland mountain. I want my extra few changes of clothes, though. And my photo of my family, the whole family. The cookout when I was twelve. It's the only piece of my old life that I have left.

How did I let Walt talk me into this? I'm lying on this old dentist's chair, cold blue gel on my stomach and the little man is running a dick-shaped wand through it. He's shaking his head. He, the bearded one, the long hair and Walter are staring wide-eyed at the screen.

Walter looks down at me. "Alex...you're pregnant..."

When the blackness takes me, I let it.

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Skinner moved Krycek to the couch after he passed out, cleaned the conductive gel from his body, and instructed the Gunmen to make a video of the sonogram. "Already done that, Skinner," Frohike informed him. "Just dubbing you a copy."

"No, you keep it. In case we need it for anything. Mulder trusts you guys with his life, apparently. I'm sure I can at least trust you with the first pictures of my child."

"Yours?" came the chorus from the three. Skinner nodded his head, sadly.

"One thing I'm sure of, Alex is sleeping with no one else. He doesn't trust people. He barely trusts me. And whatever you do, do not tell Mulder about this unless something goes wrong," Skinner said, using his full height, breadth and AD bark. Skinner wrote all pertinent information on a sheet of paper and handed it to Byers. "I trust you to act the most discreetly with this information, Byers. Do not let me down."

Skinner half walked, half carried an unsteady Krycek back to the Lincoln, and then started driving. And driving. And didn't stop driving until he reached the outer limits of the town of Fogelsville, Pennsylvania. Skinner watched the familiar scenery go by, the places of his childhood. He watched Penn State at Lehigh Valley go by, the college where his father taught history, where he grew his love for learning and reading. He watched as his elementary and middle school both went by.

Krycek awoke when Skinner made the last turn down the quiet, tree-lined lane where he'd once lived as a child. The house was at the end, bordering on a large wooded area, a good distance from the other houses on the sparsely inhabited street. It ensured privacy for both men.

"Where the fuck are we?" Krycek muttered, rubbing his eyes with the heels of his hands.

"The town where I grew up. Welcome to sunny Fogelsville, Pennsylvania." Skinner smiled at Krycek before shutting off the engine of the car and getting out. He strode to the front door, looking down at the gravel path that used to make him trip and fall as a toddler, gave him ammunition as a boy and annoyed him that it scuffed his shoes as a teen. Even back then, Walter Skinner had a certain sense of style when it came to how he dressed.

Krycek was slow to get out of the car, still sleepy. Skinner didn't wait for him and pulled the keys from his pocket to open the door. The Englishman suddenly gave Skinner a headache. The house was immaculately clean, as if his mother was still alive and just finished dusting. But Skinner hadn't been in the house since his wife died. It was a favorite place for her to visit when the rigors of city life became too pressing on her.

Skinner went to the kitchen to find it sparkling clean and stocked with fresh foods, freezer full of meat and ice cream and vegetables, bowl of fresh fruit on the table. The two gallons of milk in the refrigerator didn't go by without notice as well.

"Nice place," Krycek called from the living room. He was sitting in the recliner, looking around the room. Skinner stood in the doorway and just looked at him. "What? I like it, really. It's nice. Thanks," he said, quietly, and looked down.

"Are you hungry? Or do you want to see everything?" Skinner asked, trying to bring an air of normalcy to a situation that was anything but normal. Krycek joined him on a tour of the house, his parents' bedroom, his childhood bedroom that had been converted into a guest bedroom after he entered the FBI academy, the den where his father would grade the papers of his college students. Krycek was surprised to learn that Skinner's father, Martin, was a history professor at Lehigh Valley State College. The shelves of books in the den were impressive.

"You can start your own library, Walt," Krycek remarked. He ran a reverent hand over the spines.

"My father tried. He died my second year in grad school. Mom didn't want a thing in here touched. I left everything the same after she passed, too." Skinner thought about the phone call he got informing him of the heart attack and the drive home, the funeral and helping his mother set the estate in order. Martin Skinner wasn't a foolish, frivolous man. He'd saved a good amount of money to ensure his wife and son were provided for.

Taking a different tack from his previous anger and annoyance, Krycek wound his arms around Skinner's neck and said, "So, are we gonna sleep in your parents' bed, as if they're on vacation? Or are you planning on being celibate while we're here?"

Skinner covered Krycek's mouth with his and kissed the younger man until he was pliant in his arms. "As much as you can manage, Alex."

Krycek stiffened and pulled away. "Look, whatever the fuck you thought you saw on that thing, it's bullshit. I'm a fucking man, Skinner. Men don't get pregnant. So don't fuck around with all this delicate shit. You can pound me as hard as you always do. I like to bleed."

Skinner stepped back a bit. Bleed? The last time they were together not only didn't they use protection, but the lubricant was inferior, and yes, Krycek did bleed a little. Could the sperm have been absorbed through that tear and somehow...Skinner turned toward the window and raised his glasses to pinch the bridge of his nose and massage away the pressure that was starting to build. He didn't want to tax his brain thinking about something that would be explained at a later time.

Krycek made his way up the stairs and to the bathroom again. Skinner waited for the flush, but heard a loud string of cursing instead. The door opened and banged against the tile wall in the room. "Get the fuck up here, Skinner. Now!"

It hadn't gone unnoticed by Skinner that Krycek was referring to him by his last name. Skinner trotted up the stairs and walked in the open door. Krycek was standing in the middle of the bathroom holding a blister package of pills. "What's that?" Skinner asked.

"Prenatal fucking vitamins. The instructions written on the note tell me to take one each day." He threw a crumbled piece of paper at Skinner's chest. It bounced off and landed on the royal blue bath rug. He bent to pick up the note. In an artistically flourished hand, the note read: Dearest Alex, Please be sure to take a pill each day to ensure your health, and the health of the expected child. Walter will protect you both. Always, CBH.

"CBH?" Skinner asked. His thick eyebrows were high and wide.

"The Englishman, Clarence Barstow Higgins. He was the one who saved my life. Thinks he's my father, I suspect. More like a patron, really. When Spender wanted me dead, he made the case that I'd gotten out of a lot more shit than they could throw at me and kept going back to them. So, he saw some kind of strength in me, I guess."

"Do you think he had anything to do with your condition?" Skinner asked, starting to wonder if this all hadn't been planned.

"Who the hell knows? I mean, it would make sense, wouldn't it? I've survived the black oil...and had the serum...do you think they didn't intend this?"

Standing in the bathroom with Krycek, figuring out why he was in the predicament seemed ridiculous to Skinner for a moment. The giggle escaped his lips and he soon coughed it away. Krycek glared at him. "I'm glad you find this so fucking funny. They've completely fucked me."

"I thought I did that," Skinner murmured.

Krycek looked up at him and smiled. "Look, I'm hungry. Let's get some food or something. And we can deal with this later."

"Agreed. We'll go to the diner in town, our only Greek family and I think they still own it." Skinner walked out and heard Krycek pop the tablet from the blister pack, run a cup of water and swallow the pill. This was the strangest time of his life.

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We're sitting in this greasy spoon, and the waitress keeps staring at me like I'm her next meal. I like that. It's making Skinner slowly boil. We've never done this. It's our first date. I love it, actually. He's just quiet as he eats the huge Greek salad. He likes anchovies. Yuck. I don't think I've ever

eaten more in my life. Burger, fries, he makes me get a salad. I wanted a beer but I get a chocolate shake instead.

In the back of my head, I'm chanting, "This is not happening, this is not happening." I know it can't be. Of all the monsters they created in those labs, and I've seen all of them, I am NOT one of their creations. I am NOT going to be one of their fucking projects. I will NOT let them take me...or my baby.

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Skinner quietly endured the constant flirting of the waitress and actually felt a bit of pride in that, under the annoyance. The man who sat across from him quietly shoveling the pie a la mode into his mouth was going home with him. The young man ate ravenously, much to Skinner's amusement. After his burger, fries and shake, he had a grilled cheese sandwich, mashed potatoes and then a huge slice of peach pie with vanilla ice cream and another chocolate shake.

"My word, you sure can eat a lot, can't ya?" the young woman drawled, taking away the last plate.

Alex looked up at her through his thick, dark lashes. He could see the waitress shiver as Alex, in his pudding-smooth voice says, "I like to eat. That's not the only thing I like to do."

Her blush was adorable and she giggled.

"Well, are ya'll here visiting?" she asked, looking specifically at Krycek.

"I grew up here," Walter interjected. She turned to him and smiled.

"Well, welcome home! I'm sure ya'll be in regular, then?" she asked, tilting her head toward Krycek.

"Yes, I think my brother will bring me in here a lot," Krycek stated. Skinner and he met stares and Skinner dropped his gaze, nodding. Yes, the perfect cover. Brothers, through marriage. Or something like that. Skinner would cover it.

"You're brothers? How wonderful!" she exclaimed.

"Sort of," Skinner corrected. "When Alex was younger, I was assigned to him as a big brother since his parents had died and he was raised by his spinster aunt. This was when I was in college in Texas."

Krycek took the hint and quickly adjusted his speech to let a little of the Texas accent he'd heard slip in and out, as if he was trying to hide it. "Yes, ma'am, that's true. But Walt, here's always treated me as if we were real blood."

Skinner barely covered the smile. The language was authentic, and the trace of accent hinted out was dead on perfect. "Can we get our check, please? Alex here is recovering from being very ill and I'm sure he's exhausted."

"I'm not that tired, Walter. We can stay a little longer, can't we?" he whined, smiling widely at Skinner. The big man broke into a laugh, unable to restrain it any longer. It was the first time the two men had genuinely had a good time together, teasing and joking.

Skinner paid the bill and eventually Krycek disappointed his newest fan, Leah Wakefield, who pouted as they left. Skinner leisurely drove them back to the house where Krycek noted he didn't have any pajamas.



"You're not going to need any," Skinner purred, coming up from behind Krycek to pull the man against his chest. Both men were swept up in the complete easiness they were feeling around each other. It was as if they weren't themselves. The new environment and certain level of anonymity were having a narcotic effect, causing both men to feel a certain level of romanticism.

In the master bedroom, Skinner pulled back the spread to find fresh sheets on the bed and lay his lover on them, starting on looking for supplies. He found a large tube of KY jelly, but there were no condoms anywhere. It was then that he realized the futility of that search. Obviously, Higgins had known Krycek did not have any communicable diseases and therefore didn't see the need of the barrier. Skinner completely agreed.

Krycek concurred with the decision, preferring the searing touch of Skinner's bare cock in his ass than the antiseptic stench of a condom. Skinner took his time, kissing Krycek's face, eyelids, cheeks, and gently teasing the younger man's mouth with his tongue and teeth, trying to taste all of his lover. Krycek responded to this new closeness and intimacy with relish. Their previous couplings had usually been fast, furious, two bucks rutting and sweating. Both somehow seemed to know they had time to touch and taste and feel, time to play, time to love. The Sword of Damocles wasn't hanging over them this time.

Entering Krycek was like coming home to Skinner. He was excessive with the lube, wanting to take his time and enjoy all parts of Krycek. He employed every different stroke he ever learned when he was married, causing the man under him to squirm, moan and wiggle. It was as close to heaven as Skinner could get. He couldn't hold back any longer and came, pumping into Krycek's body, burying his face in the succulent neck before him.

Skinner collapsed conspicuously beside Krycek and tried to get his breathing back to normal. Krycek stroked Skinner's back and just sighed. "What's that about?" Skinner asked, the smile evident in his voice.

"Huh?" Krycek asked, then placed a kiss on Skinner's neck.

"Your sigh. You didn't come, Alex? I'm an old man, so you'll have to be patient with me. I think I can make it up to you," he said, before disappearing under the covers. He smiled widely at the gasp and moan Krycek emitted when he completely engulfed the still hard and weeping erection the other man sported.

They had never been this intimate, gone this far. Although Skinner had touched Krycek's cock, hell, he'd jerked the man off many times, he had never gone down. It wasn't new to him. Skinner had a few lovers in his time, before he got married, but knew where his true sexuality lay. Krycek didn't last very long after Skinner deep throated his cock and spurted semen onto his gluttonous tongue. With greedy delight, Skinner swallowed all of Krycek's cum, smacking his lips loudly.

Krycek giggled and looked down at Skinner's swollen mouth and glistening chin. "You're a damn good cocksucker, you know that, Walter?"

Skinner didn't know whether to take that as Krycek's twisted version of a compliment, or a cheap shot to hurt him in such a vulnerable moment, so he didn't bother with either. He simply wiped his mouth on the sheet and crawled up beside Krycek to settle him. He reached behind him, in an impressive display of chest and arm muscles, to turn off the light beside the bed. Krycek wolf-whistled appreciatively.

"Thank you, Walter, really. I didn't think you did that," Krycek admitted, burying his face in Skinner's armpit. Skinner felt the blush rise in the skin pressed to his.

"Alex, we never talk. About anything. So, I think I should mention that I've had other male lovers. Before I was married." Skinner felt a great release of weight from his shoulders at that admission.

He'd never said it out loud. But one must admit to one's bisexuality after swallowing the ejaculate of one's male lover.

"So, I'm not the one who turned you? Well, fuck, that takes all of the fun out of it," Alex pouted.

Skinner chuckled and placed an affectionate kiss on Krycek's head. "If it makes you feel any better, you're my favorite lover."

Krycek stiffened a bit. "Even your wife?"

That sent Skinner for a loop. He'd only meant the men. Sharon was different. She was...he couldn't even put into thoughts that made words. All he brought up were feelings and visions. Courting on the campus of the college, the senior formal, honeymoon at Niagara Falls since they were broke, the three miscarriages Sharon suffered and how he eventually stopped pressuring her to have sex at all. Then her death and his gravitation to Krycek.

"We should get some sleep," Skinner said, quietly. Krycek nodded against him, but didn't move away. Skinner held the warm body against him all night, like he'd always tried. Pregnancy made Krycek a cuddler, which was just fine with him.

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I'm hot as Hell. The man is a fucking human radiator. That's why his wife stopped fucking him. He must have burned her twat. Christ, and he likes to hug and shit. How do I tell him to lay off? Maybe he'll feel me sweating.

It's nice, though. I'm safe here. I don't have to worry about someone tailing me, or the local cops or whatever. I know that tonight, with him here curled around me, I can sleep deeply, and maybe dream. It's funny. You'd think I'd have nightmares, with everything I've seen and done, but no, I'm usually dream-free. I sleep so lightly, I never get to that point. I can never afford to sleep deeply enough to dream, good or bad.

As I slip off, I don't even notice, being a little dizzy. It's the mattress, so soft and plush, I love it. Supportive, but when I roll over, my hip dips nicely into the softness. I do feel better every time I sorta sit up in bed to look at the bright red numbers of the digital clock on Walt's side of the bed. After I finally drift off, nothing, just blackness, no dreams. Just as well.

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In the morning, Skinner rolled over to meet face to face with a deeply-sleeping, angelic-looking Krycek. The man's mouth was open slightly and he was breathing gently. His lips were glossy with drool. All Skinner wanted to do was kiss him, but he didn't. He'd never woken up beside Krycek and didn't know if the man would be a violent waker. He'd woken folks and gotten a snoot full of fist before, mostly in the Marines. He didn't feel like spending the day with cotton shoved up his nose.

He did lay there until he felt a minute change in Alex's breathing. The man was awake and pretending to sleep. Skinner decided to play with him a bit, stroking the man's belly and chuckling. "My baby," he murmured.

Krycek sat up quickly, then jumped from the bed and ran to the bathroom. The door slammed behind him, but Skinner could hear the retching, then the flush. He opened the door and watched as his naked lover washed his face, then drank mouthwash. Higgins thought of everything.

"Alex, do you need some help?" he asked, cautiously. Asking if the man was well was a moot point.

"Fuck off, I'm fine," he rasped, rinsing his mouth again.

"I'm sure you're fine. I want to know if you need help. Or would you like me to start coffee and breakfast?" Skinner was trying his best to be gracious. Whether or not the pregnancy was real, whether or not Skinner could realistically get his brain around it, the bottom line was, Krycek was ill. He looked ill. And even when he'd come back from losing his arm, he didn't look sick. Yet, after three months of a mystery illness that presented more and more like what Alex continually denied, he looked as if he needed continual rest and to be fed like his mother would have insisted upon.

Skinner turned quietly and donned his robe and quietly went down the stairs. He started with something easy, oatmeal, better for Krycek's upset stomach. Krycek sauntered in a few minutes later, still naked. Skinner appraised the sprawling body in the chair as he set the steaming bowl on the table.

"What's this? Oatmeal? I'm not six, you know," Krycek complained, but still picked up the spoon and scooped up some to blow on and then eat. He slurped down the bowl and then said, "So, what shall we do today?"

Walter smiled over at him as he washed the few dishes and set them in the drainer rack. "I think we should spend the day resting. I'm an old man, Alex," Skinner sighed.

"Old man? Fuck you! An old man did not make my ass sore. An old man did not make my fucking toes curl when I came last night. But I see your point." Alex then punctuated the decision with a yawn.

They righted the bedroom, washed each other thoroughly in the shower and settled on the couch to watch mindless morning television. He settled on a made-for-TV movie, and after about twenty minutes, he looked over at Krycek. The man was curled on his side, fast asleep. The crisp Pennsylvania late October morning gave Walter pause and he spread his mother's afghan across Krycek's sleeping body.

Skinner made his way up the stairs to his childhood bedroom again and looked around. Every memory and nuance of his youth was gone. He knew where everything was, up in the attic space. He would have to go up there and pull it all down. Not today, he thought to himself. He went back down to his father's study to look around.

The warmth of the leather binding the books, the chair where he'd seen his father sit so many times, the couch where he'd fallen asleep countless nights reading, it became too much for him all at once. Dropping into his father's high-back leather chair, he buried his face in his hands and began to cry. This was not the reaction he wanted.

Was this the way his father handled having him? When his mother told him she was pregnant, did he weep with happiness? Was he really happy? A baby was going to be born, most likely of his genetic line, and he would have to pony up and take care of it. Is that what he wanted? Did he want to be a father? Yes, Sharon had been pregnant, but it wasn't real in the same way. The Syndicate never did anything half way. This infant would be born. But how?

"If he grows a vagina, I'll shit myself," Skinner said out loud.

"Fuck you, Walter," came the response from the doorway.

Skinner looked up and quickly tried to wipe his eyes under his glasses.

"Too late, I saw. What are you crying about?" he asked, sitting on the couch. He was sitting in the

same place where Skinner himself had sat as a boy, watching his father as he worked. Krycek of course slumped down, as he was never allowed to sit. No, Martin Skinner's son had a straight back at all times.

"It's nothing, Alex," he said quickly. Then he noticed Krycek's left hand resting on his belly.

"Alex, this is real. You are gestating a life inside you. However it got there, part of it is mine. And I want it."

Krycek looked down at his stomach thoughtfully. "I knew you'd say that. You can have it, you know. I was raised Russian Orthodox, so I think my mother would haunt me if I aborted this."

"Your mother passed on?" Skinner winced internally at the euphemism for death. Normally, he and Krycek would speak frankly, the few times they spoke about anything. In light of what they were discussing, he felt it was necessary to soften the level of language.

"She died after I joined the FBI. My father went shortly after her." Krycek didn't speak after that. He looked around the room, especially at the wide expanse of books. "What did your dad do? A lawyer?"

"History professor at the college. He was head of the history department, actually. He wrote papers about Gettysburg, edited texts, wrote two textbooks, and even spoke about it. The man knew every bullet shot, every wounded soldier's name, every regimen on the field, where they stood, where they walked. He reenacted the battles every year." Skinner knew he had a wistful look in his eyes thinking about his father. The man was his life as a boy.

"North or South?" Krycek asked quietly.

"North, of course. We're Union men. I never really...got into the reenactment stuff, but I did it a few times with him. Bonding stuff."

"That's why you joined up, huh? Wanted his respect, do the military thing. School wasn't your bag, was it? You're real smart, but preferred football and fucking, huh? Dad didn't dig on that."

Skinner stared into the crystal green gaze of the man who had just told him his life. Not even Mulder knew these things about him. And Mulder thought he knew everything.

"So, what did he think about you taking a taxi and coming back? You get his ultimate respect that way? His prized boy, his only son, the fruit of his loins, the love of his life, died for his country and then was brought back to head up the eff bee fucking eye."

"You say that like it's a bad thing, Alex. Didn't your father love you?" Skinner immediately regretted the words as they tumbled from his tight lips. Krycek ignored it as if he were deaf.

"So, does this boring burg have a mall or something? I need shit to do, maybe movies or a video game or something. And I'll need internet access."

Skinner realized that he was subtly informed there was a change of discussion and there would be no more talk of Alex's parents.

The men suddenly found themselves in an entire new situation in their lives: domesticity. It was neither welcomed, not was it something either of them had any intention of ever entering into, especially with each other. And there they were, getting in each other's way in the morning, in the kitchen, in the bathroom, in the study, in the bedroom. That was where they had the least amount of trouble, it seemed. Both enjoyed making love, and soon, that's how they thought of it, and that's how they asked for it.

The autumn was beautiful. Krycek spent many afternoons in the back yard, reading a book from Skinner's immense library, watching the myriad of colored leaves fall from the trees. "Walt, you're a lucky man, he'd said one day. "This place must have been amazing to grow up in. Grass to play on, trees to climb, fresh air..."

"I guess so. Where did you grow up?" Skinner mentally crossed his fingers, hoping Krycek would let him in a little.

"Cleveland, Ohio. A place called 'Little Bohemia'. After that, we moved to Garfield Heights, in my freshman year of high school. What a hell that was, for about a month." Krycek looked up from his book straight into Skinner's eyes.

"Let me guess how it went. You were stared at for about a week like you were an alien until the girls saw how pretty you were, and you let them chase you around. Then, you found another boy as pretty as you were, and you two played urologist and proctologist until you both had to find beards for the prom."

For long moments, Krycek just stared at Skinner, eyes gone hard emerald, until the smirk donned those plump, cherry lips and he said, "Am I that transparent?"

"I just know you, Alex. Better than you think I do."

"Oh? And I'll bet you think it was hysterical, don't you? 'Little faggot Krycek, but don't say that to his face or he'll turn you inside out.' I tore open bigger men than you."

"I'm not mocking you, Alex. I don't care what you did as a youth. I just love the idea that you were a normal youngster, grew up in a real town, and not under the thumb of the Syndicate. For some reason, I had this weird idea that you'd been hatched, or grown in a lab."

Krycek chuckled. "Nope, I came from between my mother's legs, just like everyone else. Last time I ever was near a pussy, actually." Krycek stood and held his hand out to Skinner. "Come on, big boy, come fuck me and make me scream." They went into the house, and got lost in each other.

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Fuck, I hate throwing up every morning. You'd think the weird things I want to eat would be enough, but no, I have wake up to this vomitous symphony every morning. Walter is fucking nice to me. What, is he really under the impression that were gonna be some nice, happy family? We've been here three weeks so far, and he's been sweet, kissed me a lot, was gentle in bed with me...I'm nervous.

Fuck it, maybe I'm just getting my due. About time someone was nice to me, huh? I'm trying to be nice to Walter, but my clothes are getting tight. I need jeans that fit. My boots are getting tight. I hate this!

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By the end of October, after three weeks of constant Krycek care, Skinner was sure he'd need to return to his office to clear up business. He sat and stared at the phone in the study. "It won't dance or sing, you know," came the sarcastic remark from the sarcastic man standing in the doorway. "You actually have to pick it up and dial if you want it to work, Walt," he said.

"I don't want to call the office."

"Then don't."

"What if I've 'quit' my position?" Skinner knew Krycek understood exactly what he meant by that.

"Call, Walter. That's a fucking order." Krycek closed the door behind him after leaving the room. Skinner lifted the receiver then dialed the familiar number of his office. His astute assistant picked it up in the middle of the second ring.

"Assistant Director Skinner's office," she said.

"Arlene, it's Walter," he said to her.

"Sir! How is your nephew? When I received your letter, I was surprised! I didn't even know you had a nephew. Will you be coming back soon?"

Think quickly, he mused to himself. "Arlene, I'll be coming back Monday, to check in and see what's going on. My nephew is doing better, but I'm still not sure how long I'll be away. By the way, how much time do I have on the books?"

"Time sir? You mean, sick or leave time? The Director assured me you were welcome to use as much time as you needed to care for your nephew when he brought me the letter from you," she said, a touch of fear in her voice. The Director? Shit, thought Skinner. It went as far as the top, obviously.

"I mean, time in the bureau, exactly," he stated. He heard her tapping keys. "Well, sir, you graduated the academy in 1977, you'll have 21 years in next August. You're not thinking of retiring sir, are you?"

Skinner smiled to himself. Damn she was good, read him like a book. Should have dated her.

"No, I'm not. Just considering my history. I'm going to give you the number of where I'm staying, and if anything should come up, don't hesitate to call me. My other nephew may answer the phone, so don't worry if you don't hear me at first. Just ask for me and he'll get me. OK?"

"Of course, sir. If there's anything that I can do for you, please let me know," she offered, and knowing her as well as he did, he knew she was serious about helping.

"Thank you, Arlene. I'll keep that in mind." He hung up with her and went out into the living room. Krycek was smiling on the couch.

"I'm your nephew? I like that."

"You were eavesdropping? What's wrong with you?" Skinner was exasperated.

"I can hear you through the door, you know. I wish we could contact Higgins so I can know what's going on. This fucking sucks, man. Why the hell am I..."

Krycek stopped speaking suddenly and his face dropped. He looked away from Skinner and rubbed his eyes, effectively obscuring any expression.

"What, Alex? What were you going to say?" Skinner coaxed, sitting on the couch beside him.

"Man, I know why I'm here in hiding. If Spender got his hands on me..."

"Who's Spender?" Skinner asked quickly.

"Charles Gibson Benjamin Spender. The smoking man, as you know him. I know this wasn't his intention. If it had been, I'd be living in a lab cell right now."

Skinner sat beside Krycek and took a good look at the man. He looked healthier, the dark circles were gone from under his eyes, and he'd put back the weight Skinner enjoyed seeing on his solid frame. "A lab cell? What do you mean?"

"I mean that I'm not an experiment. The arm was, the fetus isn't. If they intended me to grow a fetus in a uterus, I'd still be..."

"Where? Where is the lab, Alex? Tell me, please. We can go there, they can be stopped, it can all be stopped. You'll be free. \*We'll\* be free."

Krycek looked at Skinner with tear-reddened eyes and smirked. It turned into a full, sarcastic laugh. "It will never stop, Walter. There will always be a lab somewhere. Most of the medical operation isn't even in this country. I had the restoration done in Tunisia. That's where most of everything is. What's even funnier, the leftover sets from the Star Wars films are what Spender likes to use. He's really fucking weird."

Skinner laughed. "Mulder would find that interesting. I'm surprised he hasn't shown up to try and find me," he said quietly. He could feel it in his bones, Mulder and Scully were itching to find him, know where he was. Then again, it was Mulder he was talking about. That man had the unique ability to remember everything he'd read, seen or heard, yet forgot the rules, or people around him as it pleased him. Skinner respected the man's knowledge and abilities as an agent, but he sucked as a friend.

"Mulder will show up soon, you know that, right? I mean, Walt, if he doesn't have his nose in everyone's business, he's not happy." Krycek wiped at his cheek, finally indicating to Skinner he felt things other than pleasure and anger.

"When he does come by, I'll protect you. I will not let him hurt you in any way, Alex. I promise you that." He placed a gentle kiss on Krycek's forehead, then pressed one to Krycek's mouth. Krycek kissed back, sweeping both men over with a great wave of heat and passion. Skinner let Krycek bend him backward, let the man undress him, kissing each bared bit of flesh, allowed that talented mouth to work his cock hard, then soft again, only to give an equally explosive blowjob back.

They lay in each other's arms on the couch, just holding each other. Krycek placed a small kiss on Skinner's chest and said, "This is as close to comfortable I've been since I left home for college, Walt. Thank you."

Skinner kissed the top of the dark head and chuckled. "You'll have to tell me about those college days of yours sometime."

"If you tell me about yours," he countered.

"Done deal, boy. Now get your ass up, my leg's going numb."

A swat to Krycek's ass as he stood up and the two men proceeded to go about their day.

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He's loving, caring and protective. I feel like a wife. Fuck that. I need to hunt something, or break something, shoot a gun. I'm a man for Christ's sake. You'd never know. I grew tits. Believe that shit? I grew tits and leaky nipples. I have to tape gauze on my chest to keep it from soaking my shirt. Website says this is normal.

My feet are all swollen, again, normal, but fuck! I'm a guy, goddamit. I'm a guy. A man. I have a cock. And I like to have it sucked. By Walter, preferably. Maybe it's the hormones that my body is producing. I have no idea where they're coming from since I don't have ovaries that will create all the estrogen. Whatever the hell the Purity did to me, I'm not happy with it.

It's almost Thanksgiving. Walter wants to cook, which is fine by me. I can't do more than the salad anyway. He cooks. Took a class to calm his nerves, he said. I like that. And I don't. He was calming his nerves over me. He's been away from DC for a month, now. He drove back a couple of times, to get mail and stuff, but other than that, he's been here with me.

He likes to play chess. I'm not that good at it, since I've never had much of a chance to play. Toby tried to teach me in high school. I preferred strip poker, though. I think about him a lot, where he is, what he's doing. I dare not speak to anyone from my past. Papa paid the price for my weakness. As if losing Mama wasn't enough, they tortured him to death...making sure I knew where I belonged.

What I need to know is, how did Clare know I was carrying a fetus?

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Skinner reached for the kitchen phone on the third ring. "Hello?" he said, not wanting to reveal anything he didn't need to.

"Mr. Skinner, it's John Byers. Agents Mulder and Scully are on their way to your location as we speak."

Panic struck Skinner and vibrated through him. "When did they leave?"

"About ten minutes ago. I'm sorry, sir. Scully threatened to shoot me if I didn't tell them. I hope you understand."

Sighing deeply, Skinner rubbed the bridge up his nose. "Of course, Byers. If it were Mulder with the gun, I'd question you telling him. Scully's an excellent shot. Thank you for the warning."

Skinner hung up and went looking for Krycek. He found the man sitting in the living room, watching "A Hard Day's Night" again, laughing at jokes he must have heard a dozen times already. "Oh, Walter, thanks again for this tape. I absolutely love the Beatles, from when I was a kid. My all time favorite music. This is just hysterical! I never saw this movie."

"I saw it when it was first released. Obie Matts' older brother went with his girl and said we could tag along." Skinner sat on the couch beside Krycek and watched a little of the film.

"Obie?" Krycek asked.

"Obadiah. This is Christian country, Alex. Names straight from the bible and such."

Krycek just nodded. He let a beat go by before saying, "So when do they get here?"

Skinner turned to him in shock. "How did you know?"

"I heard you tell Byers that Scully is a better shot than Mulder. I can add two and two, you know. I'm pregnant, not stupid."

Skinner remained silent, but the moment was significant. It was the first time that Krycek had mentioned being pregnant, and not simply "carrying a fetus in my body." It was the first time he



claimed the fact that, through whatever unfortunate circumstances he was put through, he was creating a life inside him.

"I know. I didn't think I was speaking that loudly." Skinner let the feeling of sweetness wash through him. Krycek was pregnant. He was showing, as well. Realistically, he looked as if he were growing a pot belly. His pectoral muscles were plumping up, looking like breasts, and the nipples seeped clear fluid occasionally. Of course, he made a federal case out of it, according to Skinner, making bandages for his chest, but Skinner just took it all in stride.

This was the time in his life he needed to savor and pay attention. This was a time when he wanted to observe all he could, while he knew he was safe. Higgins had called two weeks ago, saying that they were still well hidden and no one was looking for Alex. Skinner decided to upgrade his parents' home, getting cable installed, new televisions, new cordless scrambled telephones and more extensions. He was going overboard and he knew it. He didn't care. He wanted comfort in this time. Spending money wasn't a problem for him. The mail brought him thousands of dollars each week from Higgins. He never needed to extract cash of his own. Which helped, not having his ATM or credit cards tracked.

"Alex, when they get here, stay upstairs in our room. At least until I explain everything to them. When I've determined that Mulder won't hurt you, I'll call for you. OK?"

"You don't owe him an explanation, you know. When either of them made the slightest attempt at treating you like more than a boss, they've fucked it up. Mulder cares about no one but himself, and Scully is his co-dependent enabler. You're better off stopping them at the door and telling them to piss off."

"Piss off? You're not watching BBC anymore."

Skinner and Krycek shared a laugh at that then settled to watch the rest of the movie. After the sun had set, Krycek was startled by the headlights shining into the house as the car swung into their driveway. He slid off the couch and started up the stairs as Mulder knocked heavily on the door. Skinner waited until he heard the bedroom door close to answer the wrapping.

"Where is he?" Mulder shouted and tried barreling past Skinner into the house. But the big man was smarter and shoved his shoulder into Mulder's chest, throwing him back into Scully's tiny, advancing form. Both bounced off each other comically like pinballs.

"Agent Mulder, you will greet me with the respect my title commands and you will treat my parents' home with greater respect than that. Am I clear? Or you can turn around and go back to DC immediately." The look in Skinner's eyes was that of a man neither agent wanted to trifle with.

Scully pushed past her errant partner and looked up at Skinner. Even in high heels, she was the tiniest woman he'd ever known. "Sir, the Gunmen showed us a video. They told us the fetus in the sonogram was in the belly of Alex Krycek. I do not believe it. We came here to see for ourselves. May we please speak with him?"

Skinner puffed out his chest and stretched to his full height and breadth. "I will not tolerate any fighting, verbally or physically, under this roof. As I stated, this is my parents' home. I grew up here. They've passed away, but I want you to treat their home as if they're still alive and right upstairs. Alex has."

The two agents looked at each other and Skinner could hear the echo of "Alex?" in their heads. He stepped back and allowed them into the living room, closing out the cold November evening. He accepted their coats and hung them in the front closet. Mulder noticed the familiar leather jacket hanging there. "Please, sit down. Can I get you something to drink?" Skinner asked, attempting to be civil.

"No, sir, thank you. I just want to talk to Krycek. Scully wants to examine him. Can you get him for us, please?"

"No, Mulder, I will not. You're not going to hurt him, poke and prod him, interrogate him. No."

"It's OK, Walter, I'll talk to them," Krycek said, startling everyone. He walked slowly down the stairs, hand across his stomach. He'd gotten new clothes from the big and tall man's store, so that he could wear actual clothing and not just sweats and Skinner's huge t-shirts. He was, however, barefooted, as he preferred to be in the house. Mulder and Scully watched as Krycek slowly walked over. He wasn't showing like a regular pregnant woman, but he was larger than they had ever seen him, looking as if he was eating too much and exercising too little.

Scully stood and stared at him open-mouthed and wide-eyed. "My God, Krycek...you're...here."

"See, that's why you're such a great agent, Scully, those amazing powers of observation!" Krycek said, sassily wagging his finger at her.

"You smug son of a bitch!" Mulder shouted, jumping up and starting to stalk toward Krycek. Skinner, anticipating his agent's thoughts, grabbed Mulder by the shoulders and swung him into a headlock. It wasn't the first time, and both men knew Mulder should give up before Skinner hurt him. Skinner was not in the mood to play.

"OK, sir, I'll be good," Mulder ground out. Skinner tossed the man toward the couch, into Scully. Skinner felt a moment of remorse in case he'd hurt her, but she just helped settle her disheveled partner.

Krycek settled in the chair across from them and put his feet up on the ottoman in front of him. "OK, you can ask some questions, but I'm not letting that bitch touch me."

"Bastard!" Mulder shouted, while Scully answered, "Krycek!" Skinner was the loudest, and fiercest with "Alex!"

He only looked at Skinner and said, "She is not touching me, and that's that."

"Fine, but watch how you speak to her. I asked them for their best behavior, I'm asking you the same. No name calling, no swearing." Skinner sighed when Krycek rolled his eyes.

"Whatever. Ask your questions."

Mulder sat up and said, "Where did you get the arm from?"

Krycek began the complex explanation of what was done to regenerate his arm, and what he and Skinner hypothesized was the reason he grew a uterus and a fetus grew in him. Scully looked surprised at what she was hearing. "Sir, that's impossible. He's male."

"Yeah, no kidding, Red. I didn't want this. This was done to me. And the sooner it's out, the better for all of us." Krycek sat back and farted. Scully recoiled in disgust, Mulder shook his head frowning and Skinner just stared at him.

"Was that necessary?" Skinner asked.

"Gimme a break!" Krycek said, exasperated.

Scully stood and composed herself, walking over to stand before Krycek's chair. "I would like, for my own personal knowledge, to examine you. I will treat you with the utmost respect. Please, let

me just...touch you."

Krycek laughed out loud. "Write that down, Walt, Scully begging to touch me. I need to write this in my journal..."

"Alex! Stop it and let Agent Scully examine you externally!" Skinner shouted. He was at the end of his patience with everyone. He'd tried to be kind to his agents, but they took too many liberties in his private life. Whether or not they were altruistic or not, it was getting on his nerves.

Krycek had the decency to look a bit startled. He slouched further in the chair and flipped up the front of his shirt. He unzipped the fly of his pants and lay back, folding his arms behind his head. He even allowed her to sit on the ottoman beside his legs. Scully looked fascinated, pressing on his abdomen. The sight of the lightly-haired flesh gave Skinner a small tingle, one that he always felt seeing parts of Krycek's body. He wasn't, however, pleased when Scully pressed particularly strongly on Krycek's loins and he farted again.

Krycek laughed openly as Scully stood up quickly and stepped back. "Hey, what did you expect? This shit in me presses on my intestines."

"Shit?" Mulder repeated, reaching to lead Scully back to the couch. "You arrogant bastard! If that sonogram is correct, you're a medical miracle! And you call it shit? How can you? Do you know how many women will never be able to do what you are right this moment?"

The disgust on Mulder's face was almost enough to hurt Krycek. Almost. He turned to Scully and smirked annoyingly. "You know what, Red, if I could give this thing to you, I would. You think I like this? All I wanted was a fucking arm. I did not want to be a medical freak! I didn't want to be an experiment! I don't want this thing, and I never will. So, when it comes out, if you want it, it's yours. You and Mulder can set up a little house somewhere and feel superior to me all you want. But don't for one minute think you'll make me feel guilty. Superior fuckheads, that's what you are. And kiss my ass, Walt. This is your fucking fault, too. Don't fuck my ass so hard and you won't knock me up, OK, asshole?"

Krycek lifted himself from the chair and stomped back up the stairs. The slam of the bedroom door reverberated through the house. Mulder turned a cold gaze on Skinner. Ignoring the blush heavy in his features, Skinner readjusted his glasses and said, "Don't even think about questioning me about my private life, Agent Mulder."

"Sir, I was just going to say that..."

"Say what? You don't think it's a good idea for me to be gay? Or it's not a good idea for me to sleep with a wanted man? What, Mulder? Please, enlighten me with your advice. Impart upon me the wisdom that keeps your love life so full and rich," Skinner spat.

Mulder winced as if slapped. The offense cut too deeply for Mulder not to react, as was Mulder's way. "Sir, my restraint and your lack thereof is a direct explanation of why I succeed with my quest, and you don't. I'm proud of my life and the way I've lived it. I'm proud that no one can call me a cocksucker."

Skinner stood and stalked to the door, holding it open for the agents. Mulder was first out, but Scully was slower. She stood by the open door and looked up at Skinner. "Sir, I don't care about your personal life. But if you'll ask him if I can come back, alone," and that word caused Mulder to turn back and glare at Scully, "I would like to speak with him more. And examine him again. Obviously he can't visit a doctor of hospital, but he will need regular medical care. If he will agree to it, I can do that for him."

Skinner softened his features and said, "I'll ask him and call you at home with his answer. But

you must come alone. I don't want him agitated."

She nodded and walked out to where Mulder waited for her. They glared at each other a moment before Scully walked away to let herself into the passenger seat, and close her own door. Skinner shook his head at the stiff way Mulder got into the driver's side and slammed the door. Skinner waited to see them drive off the street and then slowly closed the door.

When he walked back into the living room, Krycek was descending the stairs again. The men looked at each other, and Krycek quickly held his hand up. "Don't say a fucking word to me. I tried my best, but man, she pressed on me! And all that broccoli at lunch, what was I supposed to do? Come on, tomorrow is Thanksgiving. We have a turkey, all the trimmings, and watch football, Miami's playing Dallas. You know you wanna."

The smile spread across Skinner's face. "I guess so. Can I suck you tonight?"

Krycek laughed. "As if you ever had to ask." They kissed.

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He actually put up a Christmas tree. It's gorgeous. He just came home with it one day, strapped to the roof of the Expedition that Clare left for us. Walter's car disappeared one night and the Expedition was there. There are registration and insurance papers in the name of some dummy corporation. Inisglas Enterprises, whatever that means. Clare is taking care of too much, and I'm frightened of what he's going to ask for in repayment.

Walter is pretty happy, though you'd never know it. He doesn't whistle or hum when he works around the place. He's bought a Bowflex and treadmill for the basement, and he doesn't listen to music when he works out. He doesn't smile much, unless we're playing around. He likes to just read and be quiet. Although, I'm sure that after the New Year, he's going to try and get back to work.

He wants to make a traditional Russian Christmas dinner. I told him wait two weeks to make it. He wasn't amused. My parents raised me strict Russian Orthodox, so I know when the holidays fall. He was raised Episcopalian, a.k.a. Catholic light. So he has a few notions of religion, but he doesn't seem to understand the deep traditions of the Russian Orthodox holidays. I won't disillusion him, that's for sure. And I've forgotten most of the traditions off the top of my head. If I went to a mass, I'd have no problem remembering it all, though.

I want to be comfortable here. I want to think that Walter will make me happy and keep me safe, after they take the fetus out, but I know that life isn't like that. And this thing will be delivered and it's going straight to a lab. And so am I. So fuck it, why not be comfortable until I have to go. I'll let Walter tell me all his stories and about his life. And I'll curl up with him, let him think I'm gonna be fine. And when the bottom drops out, I'll be ready.

\*\_\*\_\*\_\*

Skinner awoke to the sound of ripping paper. He opened his eyes and tried to focus on the clock beside the bed. The

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