

Blindfold by Xanthe

<http://www.xanthe.org/blindfold/>

The Confessional. Church of Our Savior, tonight, 8pm. Skinner read the note and glanced around the room. What did this mean? How had it arrived on his desk? He got up and went out to his secretary's office.

"Kim? Did anyone go into my office while I was at lunch?" He asked. Kimberly looked up, surprised.

"I don't think so, sir," she replied.

"You don't think so?" Skinner pushed, frowning. Kimberly frowned back at him. She disliked his habit of occasionally querying her statements as if he were conducting an interrogation.

"No, sir. I did have to leave the office for a few moments though. It's possible someone went in then," she told him firmly. She had long ago realized that Skinner's bark was worse than his bite and she was not as completely in awe of him as the rest of the Bureau. Sometimes it made her laugh to watch the agents he supervised as they waited for a meeting with him. They invariably sat there biting on their fingernails and tugging at their clothing as they mentally rehearsed their impending encounter. She wondered if he knew the effect he had on them. Probably not. In fact she thought he would probably be quite surprised if he did. He was just very...focused. People read that the wrong way sometimes.

"You left your office? Why?" He demanded, his frown deepening.

"To use the bathroom," she retorted and was pleased to see the faint flush on the tips of his ears. His ears were very expressive - she had discovered that they were barometers of his emotional state. He gave little away in his eyes and he certainly never discussed his feelings with her - a PA needed something to go on!

"Oh. Right." He backed up into his office, shutting the door.

Skinner sat himself back down and read the note again. What the hell was this? Someone playing games with him? He clenched one fist furiously. He didn't like games. On the other hand it could be a legitimate avenue of investigation. A lead on some case or other. But why him? He stared at the note for a long time, then crumpled it up in his fist and chucked it into his "shredding" box. Whoever it was had access to his office - if they wanted to meet up with him they could just make an appointment like everyone else. He was too busy to indulge in games of hide and seek.

Skinner worked until 7.30 p.m. This was his customary habit. Sometimes he worked much later but he never left any earlier. It had been a long afternoon - two meetings, a disciplinary hearing, a mound of paperwork to be negotiated and a tense 5 minute exchange with Agent Mulder about use of Bureau resources. He was tired - Agent Mulder had that effect on him.

He sat back and rolled his shoulders, feeling the tightness in his neck. He wished he had a massage booked instead of another long evening alone in his apartment with only the latest John Grisham novel and a bottle of wine for company. He got up, knocked his pen off the desk, bent to retrieve it and caught sight of the crumpled note in the box waiting for shredding. He straightened, the catch in the back of his neck making him wince slightly as he considered the note. The Church of Our Savior was only a couple of blocks away. He had time to get there by 8. What else was he going to do? The weather was freezing - snow was forecast later. It was as good a night as any for dying, if this were a trap. Grimly, Skinner opened his desk drawer and got out his gun, checking it thoroughly as only an ex-soldier would do, slamming it into its holster and pulling on his warm winter coat. He grabbed his briefcase, turned out the light and set off for his date with destiny.

It was icy underfoot. Skinner stepped gingerly out of his car. He had sat there for 15 minutes watching the entrance to the church but had seen nothing to alarm him. A group of parents had ferried their kids in - it was 3 weeks before Christmas and some sort of nativity play was being rehearsed. Skinner waited until 5 past 8 and then he got out and went into the church.

It was warm and bustling as the kids rushed around. Skinner frowned at them in some sort of reflex action, then caught himself doing it and relaxed. They were just kids. He hoped his presence here wasn't placing them in any danger. He ran the fingertips of his gloved hand over the gun, reassured by its familiar, heavy presence, then got out the note and re-read it. The confessional? Skinner wasn't Catholic. He eschewed any religion with the same rigor as he tore apart every substandard report about UFO's and monsters that Agent Mulder laid on his desk. Bring me proof and I'll believe, he said. It was his approach to life and it hadn't failed him so far. Nobody had brought him any proof of God. His own life had brought him none - even his own near death experience had failed to enlighten him as to the nature of the afterlife, if there was any such thing. So in the absence of proof, Skinner didn't believe. He didn't take anything on trust and he didn't much like churches.

He caught himself frowning again as he located the confessional, opened the door, sat down on the little bench inside. He hoped he wasn't going to have to give a real confession and cleared his throat experimentally. How did it go? *Bless me father for I have sinned?* Was that it? Oh yes, he had sinned, many times.

Skinner held himself ready, and alert. What constituted a sin? he wondered idly as he waited. Killing someone? He'd done that. Several times. Hurting people? He'd done that as well, physically, emotionally, mentally even. It was the nature of his job. Adultery? Coveting his neighbor's wife? He hadn't done that. Pure as the driven snow, that's me, he thought to himself with a snort. He didn't even know who his neighbors were. Never set eyes on them. The Crystal City complex where he lived was like that. You paid for the privacy to be able to handcuff felons to your personal balcony all night without anyone asking you any awkward questions. Privacy was important to Skinner. He wrapped it around himself like this thick winter coat. Nobody got in. Not even his wife. *Forgive me, father for I have sinned...*

Sharon was long gone. He had sinned against her, as maybe we all sin against those we love most. In his silence she had found distance when he had intended protection. In her

questions he had found intrusion where she had intended concern. The love had been lost somewhere along the path from A to B. From fresh-faced newly weds to grim-faced ex's. She deserved better than that. She deserved someone who could let go, unwind, give more than he could, vocalize more than he could. He had loved her though, and he missed her more than he would ever have the words to express. Bless me, father for I have sinned. I have no words. I cannot speak. My crime one of silence, a sin of omission. Hear my thoughts, judge me by my actions, my deeds, my concern for those under my command. Judge me for what I have given up, the risks taken to keep my people safe, to uphold the law and justice, such as I understand it. Judge me for the bullets taken, the hardships endured, the pain and sacrifice but do not ask me to confess. I have no words. A mood of melancholy settled over him, as cold as the winter evening outside. He felt as if he had been trapped in this coldness for a very long time. He was tired of it. He wished summer would come.

"Are you alone?"

He sat upright, his fingers on his gun once more. The voice was a whisper.

"Who are you?" He spoke in a low, angry snarl.

"Don't ask." It was a woman's voice - probably. It was hard to tell when every word was whispered in a sibilant hiss.

"Why did you bring me here?"

"I didn't. You came because you were curious." Definitely a woman. A hint of some sort of perfume. Not musky, or flowery - clean, sharp, intoxicating and curiously confusing.

"Don't play games with me!" He hissed back.

"Why not? I've been watching you. I think you need to play. In fact, if ever a man was in need of a bit of R & R it's you."

Skinner reeled, his mind going from conspiracies, bank robberies and crime to a woman suggesting some "R & R", in one lurching jolt of incomprehension. "Is this some kind of joke?" He growled.

"Not unless you want it to be."

He wished she wouldn't whisper. He couldn't work out if he knew her voice when she hissed every word like that. "What do **you** want?" He asked.

"You." She purred. "Give it up. Play with me for a while."

He closed his eyes, remembering what had happened the last time he had "played" with a woman.

"I don't think so," he said. "I'm not in the mood for an entrapment this evening."

"No trap - and not this evening," she told him. "I'll say when, and where. You don't have to do anything but play along. Have some fun. Let go. Enjoy."

"Enjoy?" He queried incredulously. "What exactly is this?"

He felt suddenly angry and he felt angry because for one second he had been aroused by her suggestion. Let go...let go...sometimes he longed to. He wondered if she had tapped into that place in his heart that he kept private and dragged one of his secrets out into the open. He got up and exited the box quickly, went around to the other side, and burst into the other part of the confessional. Empty. He glanced around the church - there were dozens of people, but none he recognized. Not that he necessarily **would** recognize her. There was no reason why he would ever have met her before. He went to the open door of the church, looked around outside. A cold lick on his head made him look up. Snow. The first flakes already falling on his unprotected scalp. Quickly, Skinner got into his car. He felt unsettled, out-maneuvered. He drove home in a silent fury.

Nothing happened. Not for days. Skinner felt as if he were walking on a knife-edge. She started this then didn't finish it? She didn't give him a chance to find her, hunt her down, expose her little "game"? He felt cheated. He brooded on it, snapped a bit at Agent Mulder but then that never did any harm. He felt Scully's blue eyes fixed on him questioningly.

"Anything wrong, sir?" She asked him.

"Nothing," he replied forbiddingly, quelling her concern with one cold glance. This wasn't anything he could talk about, however much he wanted to. *"I was propositioned by a mad woman in a church. She could be working for the Consortium, setting another trap for me, or maybe she just wants to use me as some sort of sex toy. Your advice please, Agent Scully."* No, it was ridiculous. He stayed silent.

Kim was no use either. She jumped half-way out of her skin whenever he went into her office. Granted, he was behaving somewhat tersely at the moment, but still - he hated it when people responded by scurrying around him and trying to anticipate his every move. It was very irritating. Couldn't a man just be distracted for a few days without everyone becoming so fidgety about it?

The next note was waiting for him when he awoke the following day. It had been pushed under his door. So - she knew where he worked and she knew where he lived. Why did he feel like he was being hunted? As if he were a fly caught in her web, waiting until she descended on him and swallowed him whole. Damn, now was not the time to get an erection and besides what was it about this scenario that could possibly be turning him on like this? He opened the note with a savage movement of his hand.

This afternoon, 3 p.m., the park across the street. By the pond. Sit on the bench and wait for me. He sniffed at the envelope, recognized her scent. "Well this time I'm going to catch you," he promised her. "This fly is not going to just sit in your web waiting to be devoured."

He felt like a kid playing truant from school as he left the office at 2 p.m. to return home. The park was deserted and covered with a thin film of snow. He trudged wearily through the

ice-encrusted grass until he found the pond. He had no idea that the pond even existed and realized, with a start, that he had never been here before. Maybe that woman was right - maybe he was in need of some R & R. She had chosen well. There was a bench overlooking the pond and beside that, a bandstand, which was closed up and surrounded by evergreen shrubs and trees. Someone could hide behind the bandstand and then disappear into the trees and elude him. Not if he was alert though. He checked out the bandstand but there was nobody behind it. He glanced at his watch. Twenty past three. Why was she always late? She really was a very irritating woman, whoever she was. He gave in and sat on the bench as instructed, suddenly feeling certain that she wouldn't show up unless he did. He had a feeling that having her instructions followed was pretty important to her.

"You were thinking..."

He started, began to turn, then felt the gun pressed into the back of his neck. *Knew it! It's a trap - and you walked right in. Fool.* He felt a strange sensation of disappointment that this wasn't for real, that all that talk of R & R had just been a ruse. It had been rather appealing.

"Don't turn around. You were thinking that you might catch me." Her voice was still the same husky, sexy whisper and that scent clung to her and to him - clean, clear, compelling. "I don't care to be caught. It's no fun. And we do want to have fun, don't we, Walter?"

"Who...?"

"Hush." He felt a gloved finger insert itself under the collar of his shirt and he shivered. It was unbelievably erotic to be touched there, to be touched in such an intimate way by someone he didn't even know. To be touched and not to be able to say no.

"I understand you, Walter. I can give you what you want."

"You wouldn't know where to begin," he snarled.

"I already have. Begun that is," she purred. He felt her warm breath on his ear and considered whether to turn, grab her hand, disarm her...but the cold metal of the gun was pressed into his neck. One mistake and he would be dead. She didn't seem to be intent on harming him. It wasn't a risk worth taking. He cleared his throat.

"Where is this going?" He asked.

"Uh-uh." He could hear the tinkle of her earrings as she shook her head. "My call, Walter. I say where - you don't need to know. And I say when and how. When will you let go?"

"I don't trust you," he growled.

"Delicious, isn't it?" He could hear the amusement in her whispered tone. "Give yourself up to the mystery, Walter. Reality is so dull."

"I don't like being made a fool of," he muttered.

"I want you. I'll have you," she told him. "Be ready."

"You can't just expect to...I don't know. Seduce me. Set me up like this. It's absurd!" He complained.

There was silence. He didn't dare move, holding his breath, waiting for her to speak again. He could still feel the cool metal of her gun against his neck. He waited, and waited, but nothing. Across the park he saw a woman jogging, her coat wrapped tightly around her, a scarf obscuring her face. She faded into the snowflakes that were starting to fall again. It was getting dark. Only half past 3 and getting dark already. Skinner shifted, felt something fall and rattle to the ground. He looked down and picked up a twisted piece of metal, small but heavy. Cunning! She had planned this down to the last detail. He found himself admiring her.

Christmas Day. Skinner got up late, wishing he could go into work but resisting the urge. His brother had invited him over for lunch with his family but he had politely declined. He hated Christmas. He went down the stairs, made himself a cup of coffee, paused, staring at the card on his dining table. It hadn't been there last night. He shivered, went to his desk, found his gun. There was no sign of a break in - he examined the door meticulously. What then? His mystery intruder had keys? The card was garish - red and green holly. He opened it.

Seasons Greetings! Typewritten as they had all been. *The Panorama Hotel. 9 p.m. But only if you want to play. No trap. Let it go.*

9 p.m. He glanced at his watch. It was only 11. What was he going to do? He paced, took a shower, ate some food, paced again. Wished Agent Mulder would get into trouble somewhere so that he would be forced to pull lots of strings to get him out of it and end up being tied up all day and all night. *Tied up...let it go...* Skinner went back to the shower and made it a cold one this time. How long had it been? He knew exactly how long. Too long. Didn't he deserve some fun? Some R&R? With a woman whose face you haven't even seen? he asked himself incredulously.

He pondered the options as to who it could be. Who did he know? Nobody that he could imagine behaving like this. Someone at work? He ran through the women he spoke to on a regular basis. Most of them were happily married. He finally nailed the list down to four.

Kim - she was seeing someone but she wasn't very happy with the relationship. Occasionally she let slip a remark that indicated that she might have a wild side. He wasn't convinced though.

Agent Scully? She was so cool and restrained that he found it hard to imagine her ever thinking up something so naughty, so wicked and so...Skinner flushed and moved on to the next option.

Holly from Communications. She had once attacked him and kicked him heartily. Of course she had been under the influence of Pusher at the time but since that day she had taken rather too much of an interest in him, he felt. Maybe she wanted to kick him again. Maybe that day had given her a taste for it. He wasn't keen on that idea. Some Christmas - being

walked over by a woman in high heels. He felt himself simultaneously wincing and being aroused at the same time. It really has been too long, he thought wryly, laughing at himself.

Then there was always Sharon. She could probably have gained access to his office if she had really wanted to. She certainly wouldn't have had any trouble getting into his apartment. Not that he had given her a key, but she was still friendly with his family and his brother had a spare key. But he hadn't spoken to Sharon since their divorce - why would she suddenly take it into her head to seduce him in this manner? It wasn't like her. Unless she had changed which was possible. Still, this was verging on the kinky and Sharon had never been that. *More's the pity...* he found himself thinking and stopped that thought in its tracks.

He was running out of options. Kim, Scully, Holly or Sharon. *Take your pick, Walter.* Perhaps it wasn't a question so much of which of them it was, as which of them he **wanted** it to be. A red head, a blonde, two brunettes. None of them exactly ugly, a couple of them quite stunningly attractive. In his opinion. Not that he had really **noticed**, you understand...not really. Only in passing. He looked at the note again. Did he want to play? Yes. Yes he did. Have some fun, take a risk, do something daring. She knew him well, this woman, whoever she was. What had he let slip? Hadn't he always tried to keep himself a mystery, private? Wasn't she playing him at the same game? It was maddening. He wanted to know her, he wanted to find out about her and all she was doing was manipulating him and demanding that he capitulate to her. The odd thing was how much he wanted to.

He dressed carefully. Chinos, dark sweater. Casual-chic. The Panorama Hotel was nice. Plush, discreet, relatively expensive. Could Kim afford this, he wondered? Or Holly? Scully - maybe, Sharon - definitely. He wished he could stop thinking and just enjoy himself but it wasn't easy. He hadn't been told to bring anything but he felt he should have. A bottle of wine? Flowers? Chocolates? Somehow he thought a gift would annoy her. She didn't want any surprises, she wanted to be in charge. He went to the check-in desk.

"Mr Skinner? Yes, sir, we have a reservation. Room 302." He pondered that for a moment. An in-joke, a reference to FBI paperwork, or just the only room they had available this Christmas evening? Skinner found himself walking up the red-carpeted stairs like a man going to meet his executioner.

He knocked on the door. No reply. He pushed it open. The room was lit by 8 or 9 large candles, making it look like a cross between a Gothic castle and a brothel. There was a warm, sensuous atmosphere, which was in contrast to the bitter cold outside. He couldn't see anyone in the darkness.

"Hello?" He whispered.

"Come in," she whispered back. He still couldn't see her. "Take your coat off, put it on the floor, then sit down."

There was a chair in the center of the room. He unbuttoned his coat and let it drop to the floor, then he sat down in the chair, feeling like a fool.

"Don't look around," she told him and her voice was behind him. Had she been waiting behind the door? "Put your hands behind you, round the back of the chair."

He thought about this for a moment, then did as she said. He wrestled with his desire to turn round. Was she standing there? It would solve the mystery. She seemed to read his mind. "If you see me you'll never know what might have been," she told him. He decided not to risk it. Suddenly it seemed like there was too much at stake. He heard her shut the door and the click of a lock. The hair on the back of his neck was standing on end and he had an acute sensation of impending danger. She could come up behind him, put a bullet in his head and he wouldn't even know it. Dead - dead as the result of a stupid assignation and the promise of sexual adventure. It wasn't worth it. He started to move, then felt her hands on his shoulders. "Relax," she whispered. He caught the scent of her - clean, sharp, delicious and he found himself stifling a moan. "It's hard isn't it?" She rubbed his tense shoulders gently but firmly. "Giving up. I can make it easier - take away the burden. Would you let me blindfold you?"

He wanted to look round - he could feel her hair brushing against his ear, but the room was dark and he wasn't sure he'd get a good look at her before she fled. What was she wearing? Something velvety, something that rustled and felt smooth and good against his hand. He wanted to stroke her.

"All right," he growled, surprising himself.

"Say please," she teased.

He hesitated. "Please," he said grudgingly.

"Ask properly!"

He took a deep breath. "Will you blindfold me, please. Would you like me to call you "Mistress" as well while we're at it?" He queried. Her low, throaty chuckle awoke a fire in his groin.

"It's not necessary - but if it turns you on...Close your eyes." He felt a rustle and then his glasses were removed and something soft was placed over his eyes and tied behind his head. She was right. It was a relief to have the responsibility taken away. Of course he could still turn round, rip the blindfold off, see who she was...

"You might also like to ask me to handcuff you," she whispered, as if reading his mind again.

"And then again I might not," he replied.

"It'll be much easier if you do. Then you can stop wrestling with all this and give in to it. You won't have any choice then."

"No. I'll be helpless. You could do anything to me."

"Don't you want me to?" He could feel her lips very close to the back of his scalp and his cock burst into life in his pants, surprising him with the force of his desire.

"I don't want to wake up tomorrow to find incriminating photographs of myself plastered all over my office. I don't want to be blackmailed and I don't want, I especially don't want, to be shot and killed," he told her.

"Trust is difficult isn't it?" Her tone was understanding. "It's a huge risk. Throw yourself into the abyss and hope to land on something soft, or maybe get swallowed up by the dark. I can't help you with that, Walter. I'm not going to hurt you though, for what it's worth. I just want you helpless. That's not too much to ask is it?"

"Why?" He spoke through gritted teeth. "Why this charade?"

"Because this is the only way you'll let me do this. You won't let go any other way. You'd find things to stand in our way."

"This is a bad idea." He shook his head. "Why pick me for this mad fantasy?"

"I told you before - I've been watching you. You're beautiful."

"Please!" He grunted. "Nobody's ever called me that before."

"They should. You are. I've watched you and wanted you for a very long while. You've been tense recently. Your neck aches, you want to be massaged but you can never find the time."

Skinner was silent, dumb-struck. How had she known that?

"And more than that - you want a more intimate kind of massage - you resent paying someone who doesn't love you to touch you. You want to be caressed."

"I..." He opened his mouth to protest, or to deny, but stopped. She was right. Nobody knew him this well. Nobody. He hid these things like an expert. Not even Sharon had got this close to knowing him. "Handcuff me. Please," he told her. "I want to stay."

"I know."

He felt her move, experienced once more that urge to turn round and tear the blindfold from his eyes, but then it was too late. The touch of her fingers against his wrists as she fastened the soft cuffs was like a relief. They felt so right. Not hard and metallic which was what he had expected when she used the word "handcuffs". That had been the image that had sprung unbidden into his mind. He used handcuffs in his everyday work and they were of the un-erotic variety, not soft and sensuous as these restraints on his wrists were. He tensed against them, pulled them experimentally.

"They won't move. You're mine now," she whispered. "Truly. You have to give in now." She was right. He couldn't fight her now - she'd easily evade him. He was at her mercy. The pressure of his erection was becoming uncomfortable. She laughed. "Now a little reward for

your co-operation so far." He heard her move around, then felt the pressure of soft lips against his mouth. He opened up and her tongue slipped inside his mouth, exploring, drawing back, dipping in again, leaving him frustrated, wanting more. He moaned.

"Tease," he muttered weakly.

"Naughty!" She tapped a knuckle lightly against his head. "Do you want me to gag you as well?"

"Not really."

"Then be polite."

He felt fingers tracing along his jaw, small, wet kisses planted behind his ears, a warm languid tongue moving infinitely slowly over his naked head. He shivered.

"You like this?" She asked.

"Yes." He wished he didn't but he did. It was wonderful. "Couldn't I...?" He began.

"Yes?" She paused her licking.

"Touch you?" He finished. "Feel you? Hold you?"

"Not yet. Maybe later. Maybe not ever. You're mine to play with, Walter. I want to explore you all over first."

"**All** over?" He queried, attempting playfulness. Her tongue darted down the back of his neck and he gasped, his wrists straining against the handcuffs.

"Don't fight it," she whispered.

"I don't want to...I'm trying..." He whispered back.

"Try harder." Her teeth closed around the flesh on the back of his neck and pinched lightly, making him breathe in sharply. She released him.

"Stand up." He did as he was told. "This way." Her hand was on his arm, guiding him. It felt strange to be so helpless, not knowing the layout of the room or where she was taking him. He felt unsteady, unsure of his steps, as if he might fall and was glad of the feel of her beside him. A tug on his arm brought him to a halt. He could feel what he assumed was a bed against his knee.

"Sit," she whispered firmly.

"Like a goddamn dog?" He queried. That earned him another rap on the forehead.

"Are you going to argue with every order I give you? If you are then this is going to take a **very** long time."

He sighed and sat down, relieved to find that it was a bed and not something more sinister.

"Good boy." He could hear the grin in her voice and she patted his head as if he were a pet labrador.

"Boy?" He queried with fake petulance.

"That whole gag thing is starting to seem **very** appealing," she murmured. He grinned in her direction and then yelped as he was flung back bodily onto the bed, his arms trapped underneath him.

"Ow," he muttered.

"Ssh." She rolled him over, undid one of his cuffs, and fastened the other quickly to the headboard. He had a free hand. Briefly he was tempted once more to whip off the blindfold and see what he was dealing with, but then he caught the scent of her again, and his cock sprang back into action, reminding him why he had agreed to this so far.

She was leaning over him, her breath warm against his cheek as she pulled his sweater slowly and sensuously up his torso. She tugged on the sleeve of his free arm, pulling it down so that his arm was released from it, then passed the garment over his head. Quickly she reattached the cuff to the bed. Then she undid the other cuff briefly from the headboard, removed the sweater and re-attached him. He was tied tightly to the bed now, there wasn't even the smallest chance of escape. He was aware of his chest rising and falling heavily, of his naked torso, feeling exposed. He sensed her watching him, staring at his newly revealed chest and he knew his ears were starting to go red, the flush spreading out over the rest of him. He felt like a horse being examined by its new owner and wondered if she was finding his body pleasing or not, hoping, suddenly and unexpectedly, that she did.

There was a contented little sigh and he relaxed a fraction.

"Are you just going to stare..." he began but he found his words swallowed by her lips as she dipped her tongue deep into his mouth.

"You really are very...combative," she told him when she had finished. "You're going to have to learn who is calling the shots round here. Stop being defensive and start submitting."

He didn't make a reply because at that moment he felt her fingers running over his chest, her mouth nuzzling at his nipples and he leaned back into the caress, his breathing heavy. Normally at this point he'd take a woman in his arms, caress her, take the lead, explore her body, indulge in some foreplay, but that was denied him. It felt so strange, this acceptance of love without being able to return it. He wasn't used to it, and he didn't know how to handle it. More than that, he was shocked by how erotic it was and how turned on he was.

"Give it up," she murmured into his ear, licking softly. It was only then that he became aware of how tensely he was holding himself, how his wrists were straining at the cuffs. He made a conscious effort to relax.

"Good boy." She ran her fingertips along his head and down his neck, tangling them in his chest hair, scratching a nipple lightly. He groaned, twisting in the cuffs.

"I'm not sure..." he began in a low, choked voice, "that I'm going to be all that good at this giving it up stuff."

"I've only just begun," she purred. "You just need time. We've got plenty of that. You're not going anywhere."

"And supposing I change my mind? Would you let me go?" He asked, trying to remember things he'd read about B&D scenarios. Wasn't there something about safe words? Escape words?

"Do you want to be let go?" She asked, her fingers now on his belt, unbuckling it slowly. He felt his cock strain to be released once more and sighed.

"No," he whispered.

"Then just calm down and let me do everything." She unbuttoned his pants, unzipped his fly. "Lift up your hips," she ordered. He found himself obeying and she removed his pants. He thought somehow that she'd dive straight into his briefs so he jumped when instead he felt her touching his feet. "Lie still." She unlaced his shoes and pulled them off, then slowly she removed each sock, her fingers tickling him under the toes, making him squirm.

"You're going to tickle me to death?" He queried.

"Only if you insist on being this naughty." She ran her fingers lightly over the soles of his feet and he wriggled so frantically that he dislodged her and he heard her bump to the floor.

"I can cuff these as well," she murmured reprovingly, tapping his ankles.

"I have no control over my reflexes," he said by way of apology. "If you're going to insist on touching my feet then you'd better tie me up pretty damn tight."

"You wish." There was another laugh in her voice and then he felt her hands on his feet again, massaging firmly. It was easier to take this harder caress and after a tense few moments he found himself relaxing a bit more, no longer feeling ticklish. "I'm going to suck them," she said, "so if you kick out now, you'll hurt me. I suggest you keep control of yourself." He found himself tensing up again as her warm mouth descended on his toes but instead of making him writhe, this wet caress was actually deliciously erotic, reminding him of somewhere else he wanted to be sucked.

Her tongue snaked down over the tops of his feet and up his legs as if she had read his mind. He moaned and thrust his hips forward but she just laughed.

"Not yet," she whispered. He felt her sit astride him. She wasn't heavy and she was still wearing that velvet dress. He could feel it settle over his chest like a shroud. "Not that I'm one of those cruel women who won't let a man come," she purred into his ear, nipping the lobe gently with her teeth. "You can come whenever you like - so long as you remember that I'm going to keep playing with you until I'm satisfied. And that means that I expect you to be hard for me when I want you. But I anticipate you climaxing more than once this evening. I'll take it as something of a personal insult if you don't."

"I'll do my best to oblige then..." he croaked, feeling as if he was going to come right here and now. He felt himself drowning in her luxurious dress, in the rich scent of her and the heavy warmth of her thighs against his naked flesh. He gasped for air as he fought the unbearable eroticism of being bound and nearly naked underneath her, the sheer pleasure of the fingers that were walking themselves along his neck and the wetness of her lips as they sucked at his nipples. "Someone once told me..." he panted "that drowning is the easiest, most pleasurable way to die."

"I'd heard that as well," she murmured.

"I never believed it - all that water in your lungs, not being able to breathe, struggling to stay alive."

"The pleasure comes when you stop struggling and accept the inevitable."

"I do," he murmured, wishing he could stroke her hair as her lips once again bit fiery darts of sensation in his nipples.

She caressed him for so long that he lost track of the time, drowning in the moment. His bound arms didn't matter any more, or the blindfold over his eyes, or who she was, or what he was doing here allowing her to treat him this way. All that mattered was the pleasure of those fingers and that mouth on his body. Then he realized that she had stopped. She rolled off his body and he found that he missed the weight of her on top of him.

As if in a dream he felt her unfasten one of his wrists. In that moment he could have struggled again, caught hold of her by the throat, pushed her down and made love to her, but he was too languid, he didn't want to. It was nice to just allow himself to be rolled over, to feel her tie him again. Soon he was lying on his stomach, nice and comfortable, both arms stretched out in front of him, loosely, each still bound to the headboard of the bed.

"I'm going to undress," she whispered.

"Can't you let me see you?" He pleaded.

"No. Just imagine. First my dress." He heard a rustle and sensed that the dress had been discarded. "Now my bra." He pictured her round breasts, loosened from their restraint, pale, with perfect pink nipples. "Next my panties." He heard another rustle and tried to imagine what color the hair between her legs was. If she was Scully, then red - at least he assumed so. Holly would be very dark, Kim...he stopped himself. These weren't thoughts he

was comfortable with. Supposing it was none of these women? He couldn't fantasize about what color pubic hair his colleagues had - it was perverted!

"Time to see to that massage," she whispered, pouring warm oil into the hollow between his shoulder blades. Then he felt her bare legs straddling his back, her warm, smooth skin against his hips.

She was good - her fingers covered every inch of his flesh, finding the deep tension knots in his neck, massaging them until they popped, and disappeared.

"You an expert at this?" He murmured.

"No, but I am an expert on you," she whispered. "I told you, I've wanted you for a very long time, and I've especially wanted to do this for a very long time."

"I needed it..." he sighed. Her fingers moved lower, slipped inside his briefs, pulled at them and he found himself moving his hips to aid her. At last he was fully naked and more totally relaxed than he had felt in a long while. Her insistent, oily fingers rubbed his ass cheeks, cupped them and then slipped inside him. He opened his mouth to protest.

"Ssh." She anticipated the objection, quelled it. He wasn't sure about this, but she seemed to know exactly what she was doing and soon he was groaning, rocking himself forward, feeling the hardness of his cock as he rubbed himself against the sheet. "Do you want to come?" she whispered.

"Yes..." he moaned, unable to bear the pleasure of those thrusting fingers deep inside him.

"Then come. You're allowed." Her fingers became even more active and he arced up to meet them as they explored him until finally he climaxed, flopping back down on the bed, panting with the pleasure of it.

"Has anyone ever done that to you before?" she asked him.

"Not like that. Not anything like that," he replied.

"Good." She lay down on his back and he felt the perfect softness of her breasts against his skin.

"Please let me touch you," he begged.

"Sweet boy." She kissed the back of his head. "But no. I haven't finished with you yet. There is a way you can serve me though."

He was rolled onto his back once more, re-fastened. He didn't even think of escape this time. He wanted to know what she had in store for him. He soon found out. He felt her knees around his head as she lowered herself down onto his face. The scent of her sex was overpowering and made him giddy - he knew what she wanted from him before she came close and the idea made his cock stir again.

"Will you?" she whispered.

"Anything," he replied, abandoning himself to her, opening his mouth, licking up inside her body as she rocked up and down. She still insisted on controlling him, allowing him to find her clit with his tongue, then drawing away, her fingers on his head, caressing him, her body teasing, maddening, lowering and rising, just out of reach, giving him the opportunity to worship her with his mouth and then being snatched away again. He found himself moaning in frustration.

"I want... I want..." He was unable to vocalize it, seeing only the darkness, smelling the heady scent of her, wanting to crush her in his arms, keep her still, make her accept his caress.

"You want whatever I allow you to have," she whispered and he felt his cock harden again at her words. "That's good." She moved away from him and for the first time she touched his penis and he was immediately erect. "Very good!" She laughed. "I said I'd make you come more than once - I'm glad you're being obedient about that much!"

She snaked up his body, her flesh damp and sweaty against his own, then he felt her fingers on his mouth, opening his lips slightly and the soft pleasure of a breast against his tongue. He quickly took advantage of the moment, finding the nipple between his teeth, rolling it gently, then more insistently, enjoying her little gasps of pleasure. He released it and moved his mouth, nuzzling his way to her other breast, licking over it with his tongue, locating the nipple again, hard and firm and sweetly salty to taste.

She rocked on top of him, her fingers clutching at his shoulders and despite the restraints he knew that he had gained some small measure of power over her, his mouth working hard and fast to bring her pleasure. He longed to thrust his fingers up into the wetness between her legs and instead realized that there was something else that he could do. He brought his knee up, nudged it between her thighs, feeling her open up. He moved his knee back and forward while he nipped and sucked at her breasts, enjoying the sweetness of her gasps, the way she rubbed herself upon him, wriggling her hips, thrusting down onto his knee. She moved away from him, her hand circling his hard cock, rolling a condom onto it, then, without warning, she sank down upon his erection, taking his breath away as she clasped him tight between the slick muscular embrace of her thighs.

He could feel the sweat pouring off him as she rode him, his body naked and abandoned to her pleasure, unable to please her in any other way than with his erect cock, unable to touch her with any other part of his body. She screamed as she climaxed and he felt an explosion of pure pleasure in his penis, in every nerve fiber of his body. She didn't move as he went limp inside her, sitting on him still, leaning back, her hands on his knees.

"That was..." He began.

"Don't speak," she said softly. "Just be. Be with me for a moment."

The silence was blissful, erotically charged. He could feel the sweat cooling on his body, the pressure of her thighs around his, the imprints of her hands on his knees. He longed to cover her body with tiny kisses of gratitude but not to abandon the glorious darkness of the

blindfold. Instead, to kneel naked at her feet, no need for cuffs, her servant - her adoring slave, to be kept in darkness for as long as she wanted.

Finally she slid off him, nestled herself down on his chest with a contented little sigh.

"Aren't you glad now that I made you let go?" She whispered.

"Oh yes..." He moved his face down and kissed the top of her hair gently. "Very glad."

It was dark when he awoke and he wondered what time it was, then realized that it was dark because he was still blindfolded. The memories came flooding back and with them a sensation of pain in his wrists and arms. She was still curled up on his body, keeping him warm, but he had bad cramp. He shifted slightly and let out a curse.

"What is it...?" She stirred, sat up sleepily.

"I'm sorry. I didn't mean to wake you but my arms really hurt," he told her.

"Oh god, don't apologize! It's my fault. I never meant to hurt you. I really am sorry - I shouldn't have fallen asleep," she whispered hurriedly. He felt her fingers on the cuffs and first one hand and then the other was freed.

"Shit..." A wave of bad cramp shot through him and he was surprised to feel her hands grasp his wrists and massage them deftly, relieving the pain.

"I am sorry." She pressed her lips against one of his hands and he found himself touching her shoulders, caressing her. Then suddenly they both froze. He hesitated, sensing his new freedom, aware that he could take off the blindfold, destroy her little ruse.

"I'm in your hands," she whispered. "You can do it if you want but I'd rather you didn't. I'm naked, I'm at your mercy now. If you take off the blindfold you'll know who I am, but you'll ruin everything." He ran his hands over her shoulders, thinking, trying to decide.

"Remember how good it felt not knowing, no control over anything." Her tone was imploring. "I can't give you that again if you know who I am."

"You could..."

"You wouldn't let me," she whispered.

"Why? Why wouldn't I?" He demanded.

"You'd find a reason. You'd feel too vulnerable."

"We work together don't we?" He asked, feeling his heart racing.

"Yes," she whispered. He sighed. Not Sharon. That thought was strangely a relief. "Please." She kissed his nose, his mouth, her lips working his open, that delicious tongue robbing him of coherent thought for a moment, giving him the kiss he'd wanted earlier, the one she'd

denied him - deep, lasting, longing. "You don't look twice at the women you work with," she said. "You're scared of getting involved but you're lonely." She kissed him again.

"How do you know me so well?" He felt bruised, exposed, needy. He wasn't used to such feelings.

"I told you." The tease had come back to her whispered voice.

"Yes. You've been watching me," he sighed.

"Touch me - without being able to see me. Touch me," she said.

"Another order?" He queried, one hand raised to the blindfold. She caught the hand and his other one, held them tight in her own.

"It can be, if it turns you on."

"Hell, everything about you turns me on." He broke free of her grasp but didn't remove the blindfold. Instead he ran his fingers over her breasts, feeling her shiver under his touch. He cupped them, enjoying the heaviness of them in his hands. "Men are supposed to be visual creatures..." he murmured. "But I haven't even seen your body and I want you."

"Touch, smell, suggestion...they can all arouse, it's more erotic. People forget how to play. You forgot how to play a long time ago. I wanted to make you remember."

"Thank you." He ran his hand down her back, kissed her neck, gently explored the hair between her legs, pushing his fingers inside her, feeling the wetness he had known he would find there.

"You were badly betrayed once. Nobody deserves that. You least of all."

How did she know this? How did she know what it felt like, living with the knowledge that the last woman he had slept with had been paid off, then murdered?

"It wasn't surprising you found it hard to let go," she whispered, moaning slightly as he probed her with his fingers. "Or to trust," she murmured. "Did I give you that back?"

"Yes." He thrust his fingers deep inside her, exploring her as he had longed to do. He felt a surge of affection for her, maybe even of gratitude. He liked the feel of her body - she wasn't too thin or fat - she felt just right. He could still smell her perfume, even through the combined scents of their sweat and come. Her fingers closed around his hard penis and moved firmly along the shaft, back and forward. Filled with desire, he pushed her back, crushed her under his body, thrust into her, feeling her thighs wrap themselves around his body, her arms tighten around his back until they were one bucking, gyrating creature, both moving rhythmically together in perfect tune, their grinding hips, locked in one synchronous movement of perfect pleasure that exploded in a haze of pure sensory bliss. Skinner blinked inside the blindfold, unable to believe the experience they had just shared as they fell back down on the bed together, a tangle of arms and legs.

"I told you I'd make you come more than once," she whispered. He laughed. "I like that sound. You never make it at work." She kissed him gently on the mouth. "Merry Christmas, Walter."

"Now **that** was what I'd really call a Christmas present," he murmured.

"Just what you always wanted?" She teased.

"Better." He grinned.

He cradled her in his arms and fell asleep again.

When he awoke he was alone. He sat up.

"Are you there?" He called, but he already knew there would be no reply.

Gingerly, shaking, he took off the blindfold. The room was in darkness - the clock told him that it was nearly 6 am. All the candles had long since burned down. He got up, crossed the room, tripping over various items of his clothing as he went, his eyes unable to focus after the intense blackness of the past several hours. He turned on the light and surveyed the room, squinting. She had gone. There was nothing to show that she had even been here. The bed was a rumpled mess, the room looked less magical in the harsh light - not as sensuous as it had when lit by candles. He sat on the side of the bed feeling drained and strangely saddened. How was he ever to get her back if he didn't know who she was? He tried to place her voice - he definitely knew it but she had whispered continuously and he was unable to identify her from that sibilant hiss.

He took a shower and got dressed wearily. As he pulled on his shoe he found something inside it.

"I'll be in touch." Hand-written, but the words in capitals to disguise her writing. His mood brightened immediately and he smiled to himself as he left the room. She had taken care of the bill but he checked just in case, then he drove home, whistling happily to himself as he went.

The first day back at work after the break and Skinner found himself blushing furiously the moment he walked through the door of his office to find Kim sitting at her desk.

"Um...morning." He put his head down and practically ran past her.

"Sir? Agent Mulder just called - he needs to see you urgently," Kim told him just as he reached the relative safety of his desk.

"Give me five minutes." Skinner sighed. He looked up, watched as Kim smiled and nodded, going back to her chair. Had it been her? he wondered. She looked normal enough. No blushes on her cheeks, just efficient, cheerful Kim. He got up and hung around aimlessly at the interconnecting door between their offices.

"So...nice Christmas?" He asked her casually. She looked up in surprise - the expression on her face making it obvious that she was puzzled by his sudden desire to indulge in small talk after all these years.

"Very nice thank you, sir," she told him.

"What did you do?" He queried.

"Not much. Very quiet." She smiled at him. "How about you?"

"Me? Oh yes. The same. Very quiet." If she was wondering about the bright shade of purple he had gone she was kind enough not to mention it.

Skinner returned to his desk, sat down, opened his briefcase, wondered what Mulder wanted and whether he'd bring Scully with him...Scully! The blush returned to his face as he thought of Agent Mulder's beautiful little partner. Had it been her? He shook his head. He had to stop this, it would drive him mad.

Mulder ranted on at some length, pacing around his office. Skinner allowed the tirade to go over his head, casting surreptitious glances at Scully as she sat in her usual chair, with her usual demure expression on her face, her legs crossed. She was wearing an ice blue suit, which made her look very attractive indeed.

"So - nice Christmas?" He asked Scully as Mulder broke off for a second. Mulder opened his mouth, a look of bemused hysteria on his face.

"Lovely, yes." Scully shrugged, looking as surprised as Kim had at his foray into small talk.

"I didn't." Mulder informed him. "I was up to my neck in..."

Skinner stared at a spot over Scully's shoulder, thinking back dreamily to that magical Christmas evening. Had it been Scully's exquisite little body he had crushed beneath him and made love to? Had it been her teasing orders he'd obeyed, her fingers that had caressed him so intimately? His erection brought him to his senses and he turned his attention back to Agent Mulder's tirade. Nothing like Mulder in full torrent of nonsense to bring a man back down to earth with a bump. The FBI equivalent of a cold shower.

Some time later, Skinner found a reason to visit the Communications Department. Holly was doing some filing. He watched appreciatively as she straightened her skirt, and stood up. She really was sweetly pretty.

"Can I help you, sir?" She asked, coming over to him. She had been endearingly anxious to please ever since that business with the CS spray. He got hot under the collar as he remembered the way she'd kicked him as he lay on the floor then sobbed in his office about it later. She had been horrified by her behaviour, poor thing.

"Not really. Just passing through." It was her turn to look puzzled now. Since when did AD Skinner ever "just pass through"? "Nice Christmas?" He queried, starting to feel like a parrot.

"Oh yes, sir. Thank you." She smiled and he found himself smiling back. This was stupid - it was getting him nowhere. Whoever it was had no intention of slipping up now. They were playing it cool and so should he. He returned to his office, resigned to not knowing who his mystery seductress had been.

He was sitting at his desk with his back to the door when he heard it open. He was about to turn round when he smelled the scent. Her scent. Newly applied - overwhelming and overpowering, reminding him of hot kisses and damp bodies.

"Don't move," she whispered. "You've been trying to figure out who I am."

"Yes. I want to know." He stayed still, undecided.

"Let me tell you a story. Close your eyes." He did as he was told and she crept up close and removed his glasses from behind, her hands going over his eyes. He could feel her warm breath on his neck. "Do you know the legend of Orpheus and Eurydice?"

"I'm not sure...Greek mythology?"

"That's right. Orpheus and Eurydice were married but Eurydice died. Orpheus loved her so much that he followed her to the underworld and begged Hades to allow her to return with him to the world of the living. Hades was so moved by their love that he agreed. However he told Orpheus that he must have faith - he must make the journey without looking back to see if Eurydice followed him. Orpheus was nearly there when he turned around and saw Eurydice - and she was condemned to return to the underworld. Don't make the same mistake, Walter. Don't turn around, don't try and see me. I'll still be here, I promise."

"All right." The words burned in his throat. Her hands were like fire across his eyes and the scent of her perfume was intoxicating him - he wanted her badly!

"Keep your eyes closed," she whispered, removing her hands. He clenched them tightly shut and heard her move around his chair, touch her lips briefly against his own. His cock came instantly to life. She laughed, her hand skimming his pants. It took all his self-control not to open his eyes.

"One day, when I've got you well trained, you'll go hard as soon as you smell this perfume," she told him. "I'll wear it only for you." She bestowed a little kiss on each of his closed eyelids. He heard her footsteps as she left the room.

He leaned back in his chair and smiled to himself. Outside it had started to snow again, but inside - inside he noticed a definite thaw.

THE END

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