

## Mrs. Krycek by Xanthe



<http://www.xanthe.org/mrs-krycek/>  
**Story Notes:**

Posted: 3rd June, 2001

This one is pure whimsy on my part. I have no idea what anyone else will make of it. This wasn't beta'd. It just slipped into my brain and out again so there might be huge mistakes in it

Third Place:



Outstanding Other Series Character Characterisation  
(Samantha)

Outstanding Krycek Characterisation

Outstanding Other Series Character Romance

Mrs. Krycek by Xanthe

"Mrs. Krycek?"

The man at the door is so big I swear he blocks out all the sunlight. I look up at him, and he flashes me his ID. My heart flips as I read the words on it - FBI. What can the FBI want with

me? His gaze sweeps over my disheveled hair and dirty face, and his eyes widen in surprise as he takes in the swell of my pregnant belly. Numb with shock, I open the door, and he steps inside. It's only then that I see he has company. Another man follows him into our little house. He's almost as tall as the first. Maybe there's some kind of height requirement to get into the FBI? I don't know. I'm not very good with these things. Alex laughs when I say something dumb but I think he likes it too because his green eyes look at me so kindly, and he tells me I'm a princess. His princess. Nobody ever treated me like a princess before. Not me with my raggedy hair and clumsy feet. He acts as if he never sees the old needle marks up and down my arms, and the scars running over my scalp like fault-lines, and he's never freaked out by my fugue states. Crazy Annie he calls me when I start babbling my nonsense about aliens and UFOs and experiments and the like. He just holds me against his big strong chest until it all calms down inside my head. I asked him once who this Annie was, the crazy one he talked about, and he laughed and told me it was a phrase, like Hopalong Cassidy, or Buffalo Bill. It didn't mean anything.

The second man, the one following the bald man - he worries me. His name stays with me, in a way that the first man's doesn't. I feel a chill creep up my spine as he tells me that name. Mulder. Fox Mulder. I don't like the way he's looking at me. I don't like anything about him. He scares me. It's as if...I'm not sure what it is, but there's something about him, something that makes me want to fugue just looking at him.

I gather my wits together, stop staring at Fox Mulder, and show both men into my living room. I gesture to them to sit down, and ask them if they want anything to drink or eat. Alex says this is how polite folks behave but I wouldn't know. I just know that if I'd journeyed this far up the mountain on a hot afternoon to reach this tumbledown old shack, then I'd want something to ease my dry throat a little.

The big man with the shiny bald head looks all grim-faced and scary but he has kind eyes - like Alex. He's looking at me half as if he thinks I'm a ghost and half as if he wishes I was so I'd disappear. I don't understand and I'm feeling a bit frightened now. I'm not used to visitors. Alex tells me I should get out more, but the truth is that I never could get the hang of people. What would happen if I fugued around them? They might call for the doctors and then I'd end up in one of those places. Insane asylums Alex calls them. I don't want to go back to one of them. So, I keep myself to myself. There are neighbors nearby, and they're kind to me - I think Alex asks them to drop by and keep an eye on me when he's away working. I don't know why he does that but it's one of the reasons why I love him so much. It's the little kindnesses, the thoughtful touches. He's so good to me. He worries I'll fugue when he isn't around to take care of me, and sometimes I do, but I never tell him that or he'd worry even more. I know he'd like nothing better than to sit around here with me, but his work is vital - he's a very important man, very good at what he does, although he never tells me exactly what that is. I think that's because he knows I'd worry if he told me. Maybe it's something dangerous, like being a fireman, or an undercover policeman. Whatever it is he doesn't have to wear a suit and tie like these two men sitting so stiffly on my couch right now. I wonder what Alex would look like in a suit and tie? I think he'd look just fine - he's as tall as these two men, slim, with dark hair that I cut for him myself, and the greenest eyes you ever did see. I love his eyes - they tell me everything I need to know about how he's feeling, whether he's hurting inside, or in a loving mood, or laughing at me. We laugh a lot. I

never met anyone who tried so hard to make me laugh before. When he's not here and I fugue, I haul myself off down to the barn, and lie down with the dogs and horses and chickens, and that calms me. Not as much as his strong arm wrapped around my waist, pulling me close to his chest, holding me tight, but nearly. I love animals - I feel more comfortable with them than I do with people. Well, with all people except Alex anyhow.

The big man with the kind brown eyes is still gazing at me intently and I realize I'm staring off into space. Damn - I mustn't fugue while they're here. The FBI would send me to an insane asylum for sure, and Alex might not know where to find me - at first. He'd track me down eventually. He's good at tracking things down. He tracked me down after all.

"Sorry, did I offer you coffee and cookies?" I ask the bald man. "I forget things sometimes."

Fox Mulder's gaze is sharper, and his hazel eyes aren't so much kind as curious. He doesn't know what to make of me with my forgetful ways, dirty face, and wild, unkempt hair. Well, most folk don't - and I don't always look like this but I've been out helping my mare foal all night and there's bits of straw in my hair and blood and dirt streaking my hands and face so I know I don't exactly look my best. I scrub up all right - or at least Alex says I do. Oftentimes he'll creep into the bathroom while I'm sitting in the tub, singing to myself, and he'll kiss the back of my neck and make me holler and squeal because I'm ticklish all over. One of the things he loves is washing my long dark hair. I don't know why, but he can spend half an hour or more lathering shampoo into my scalp, and pouring water over my head, and he's so gentle. He's a very gentle man. The gentlest I've ever known. I shudder because that's not a good thought. I've known some bad men in my time.

"Thanks for the offer, Mrs. Krycek, but no," the big man says. I search for his name. He did tell me, when he flashed his ID, but as I said, I'm not very good with remembering things, especially names. "This isn't a social call," he adds, in a gentle tone. My heart seizes up then.

"Oh my. It's not about Alex is it?" My hand rises to my throat and I can feel my world spinning around me. "He's okay isn't he?"

The two men exchange glances, sort of puzzled and concerned at one and the same time.

"We didn't even know he was married," Fox Mulder says. "We want to make sure we have the right house. The right Mrs. Krycek. We wouldn't want to upset you unduly, Ma'am."

"Upset me? Why? What's wrong?" I stand up. I can feel myself swaying back and forth, and I know a fugue will come on if I let it. I can't. Not now. Not with these stern-faced men in their stiff suits watching me. What do they know of my world or I of theirs? They're from a place where they sit in little rooms all day wearing those clothes, waving those little plastic ID wallets around, carrying their guns, shooting at folk. I live out here in the wild, with just my dogs and horses for company when Alex isn't home. I don't understand their world and I don't want to. Bad enough that Alex has to venture out in it so often - but I never do. That's why we live up here. It suits us well enough. Sometimes I worry that Alex would prefer to live in a regular house in a regular neighborhood, but he just laughs when I mention it.

"Hell, I've rested my boots in places far more out of the way than this before. I like it here. It's home. You're here." He says that every time. *Home. You're here...* I like being his home. I like being what he comes back to.

"Do you have a picture of your husband, Ma'am?" the bald man asks in that same soft, gentle tone, jolting me out of my reverie.

A picture? What do they want with a picture? I run to the dresser and dig around in the mess inside, searching for the one picture I have of Alex. I'm not a very tidy person, but he never seems to notice or care. He's tidy though. Fastidious. Everything in its place, all his clothing neatly pressed, and hung in the closet. Sometimes I wonder how he can live with someone as scatter-brained as me - I leave my clothes all over the place because I forget. I honest to god forget where I've left things the whole time. I start doing one thing, turn around, and find myself doing something else. That's the way I am and Alex doesn't mind. He says it's part of why he fell in love with me, but sometimes, after I've fugued and he's running his hand through my hair to soothe me the way he does, I think it's more than that. He always strokes my hair when I'm fuguing, and it helps a little. He traces the hard ridges of the scars on my scalp, and he always looks so sad when he does that. He says that if he could have gotten me out earlier then he would, and I believe him. He's never lied to me.

I have one picture of him. Alex doesn't like me keeping pictures - I don't know why but I have just this one which I keep hidden from him. If he knew he'd be angry with me, but his anger doesn't last for long. It just flashes around in his green eyes and he takes himself off for an hour or two, and when he comes back he's my kind, gentle Alex again. He's never hit me, or hurt me in any way. I don't think he knows how. He'd die rather than harm me. It's not in his nature. He's good with the animals too. He has that kind of personality. He'll sit up with me all night if one of the dogs is whelping. I couldn't love a man who didn't love my menagerie but he does. The dogs adore him, especially Kai - he's Alex's special dog. He's a big, black, curly-coated retriever. Alex bought him for me the day after we got married, 4 months ago, but it was Alex Kai fell in love with, not me. I'm just the stand-in who feeds and cares for him until his Master gets home. You see, Kai was a rescue dog. 5 years old, he'd been badly treated by his former owners, but he seemed to know instinctively that Alex wouldn't hurt him. They got along right from the start and they look so good together. You should see them out walking on the mountain, Kai trotting beside Alex. They look like they belong with each other. Kai acts so lost when Alex isn't around - last Thursday, he stood out on the mountain and howled at the moon for hours just before dawn and nothing I could do or say would shut him up. I think he was just missing Alex.

What am I doing? I come back to myself to find that I'm kneeling in front of the dresser.

"You were looking for a picture for us, Mrs. Krycek," the bald man prompts.

"Yes. A photo. That's right." I nod, trying to act as if I hadn't just gone off on one of my 'moments,' as Alex calls them.

I have the picture hidden inside an old pitcher. That's how I remember its hiding place. Pitcher - picture. You see? That's what Alex calls my 'Crazy Annie' logic, but I think it makes

sense. I pull out the photograph, and it's a bit bent around the edges, because often I'll get it out and look at it and curl it up in my hand when he's away. I get lonely when he isn't here and he comes and goes so often. I didn't take the photo - our neighbor, Emily, did. Alex didn't even know she had a camera until it was too late. She snuck up on us when we were sitting on our porch, talking one evening, just after the sun went down. That's what I like about the picture - it shows him just as he was at that moment in time. He's looking at me, and his expression is so loving. His green eyes are shining and he's smiling. He's brushing some of my long strands of hair away from my face with his tender fingers, and his other arm, the artificial one, is resting lightly on my shoulders. I never mind about that old arm. It's part of Alex, the way all my scars and the needle marks on my arms are me. We don't care much about that stuff - he's the most handsome man I've ever known, so drop dead gorgeous that it takes my breath away each time I look at him, and he says I'm his beautiful princess, which makes me feel so good because I know that to his eyes I am, despite all the scars. Truth be told I'm not ugly - my hair is thick and wavy, and my eyes are large, and brown, but I don't think I'm as beautiful as he is. Strange to call a man beautiful, but it suits Alex. Not that there's anything about him that isn't 100% masculine, as I can testify! From his hard body, to the rough stubble on his face when he can't be bothered to shave, but it's just he has the longest eyelashes and the most intensely colored eyes I've ever seen. He **is** beautiful, with a rough, manly kind of beauty. I'm gazing back at him in the photograph like a love-struck teenager, and we look so happy. That's why I treasure this photo so much. The flash going off distracted us a few seconds later, and Alex freaked out. Of course Emily had only just been given the camera that day as a birthday present, and she was taking pictures of everything that moved. Later on, the camera disappeared, and nobody ever knew what happened to it. Alex said it was for the best - he hates having his picture taken and he hates folks creeping up on him. I know he always carries a gun, even when we're alone, and a split second after Emily took that photo he had it in his hand and I swear his finger was tight on the trigger ready - I've never seen anyone draw a gun so fast. It took me a couple of hours to calm Emily down in the kitchen and she was always scared of Alex after that, no matter how often I told her that he wouldn't hurt a fly.

I steal a glance at Fox Mulder to find that he's looking at me, with that intense, hazel-eyed gaze. I look away quickly, flushing, wondering if he noticed I was staring at him, and hand the photograph over to the other one. He takes it with a nod, and they look at it together. I think it's bad news, judging by the little glances they give each other.

"Well, I think that answers your question, Mulder," the bald man says.

"Yes. Strange to think of Alex Krycek being married." He gives a wry shake of his head.

"Stranger still to see him looking like **this**," the bald man replies, still frowning as he looks at the photo. He gazes at me for a moment, his expression sad and thoughtful, and then he hands back the picture.

"Is Alex okay? Tell me he's okay," I plead.

His brown eyes grow dark, and solemn. "Mrs. Krycek, I'm sorry. I'm afraid I have some bad news," he says softly. I know what that means before they say it. I can feel my legs giving

way beneath me, and the bald man catches me just as I fall. He swings me up and places me on the couch. The other one disappears and returns with a glass of water, which he hands to me.

"He's gone isn't he?" I whisper, still clinging on to the big man's shoulder.

"Yes. I'm afraid so. He died a few days ago," he replies.

"How? Where? How did it happen? Was he working for you? Was that it?" I ask. "I always thought that maybe he worked for the government - secret work, spying, not regular work. He used to tell me not to worry but I did anyway. I knew it had to be dangerous."

I can imagine Alex, my Alex, dying for his country, giving up his life nobly, and selflessly. That's just the kind of man he **was**. Oh, I know he had his dark side, his brooding side, when he would disappear out onto the mountain for hours on end, needing to be alone with his thoughts, but that was just Alex. I can understand and respect that. I love the mountain too - it's a wonderful place to find peace, and respite from the turbulence of your own emotions. And Alex did have a passionate soul. He felt deeply about things - and I speak from experience having been the focus of those intense emotions. He poured every part of himself into whatever he felt strongly about, whether it was loving me, or his work.

"Alex Krycek wasn't working for us," Fox Mulder says, sitting down opposite me, and leaning forward, gazing at me intently. "To be honest we're not sure who he worked for, Mrs. Krycek."

"How did he die?" I close my eyes, trying not to imagine my beautiful man, dying slowly, in pain, without me by his side. "Did he suffer at all?"

The bald man eases himself away from me, but not before I catch the look in his eyes. I'm not sure I can explain that look but it's haunted. He looks as if he's about to say something, then stops, exhales deeply, and turns to the younger man for help.

"No, Mrs. Krycek," Fox Mulder tells me, taking over. "He didn't suffer. It was very quick. He was shot."

Somehow I'm not surprised. I suppose I always knew that someone like Alex, who was so careful to always have a gun by the bed, and a knife strapped to his body somewhere, had to have enemies out there. All the same, knowing that's how he died doesn't help. I close my eyes to stop the tears from spilling. I don't want to cry in front of these men, who have taken away my entire world. I don't like the way they're talking, so stiff and formal, and yet also guarded, as if Alex was someone bad - a criminal, or a murderer. As if he deserved to die. There's a sound at the door, and then Kai pokes his head around it, and bounds into the room. He stops, sniffs the two strangers suspiciously, and then looks at me, a question in his intelligent brown eyes.

"It's okay, Kai. They're not here to hurt us. They just came to..." I pull him close, and bury my face in his dark fur. I wonder if he knows? Sometimes dogs sense things that we

can't...When did Alex die? They said it was a few days ago... "Was it last Thursday?" I ask them. "Just before dawn? Was that when Alex was killed?"

The two men exchange startled glances.

"Yes," Fox Mulder says. "Do you know something about your husband's work, and what he was doing that night, Mrs. Krycek?" His tone has changed. He's interrogatory. He thinks that just because I know the time Alex died that somehow I have information? Me? It's absurd. I can't remember my own name half the time.

"No...it's just that's when Kai started howling. He must have known. He was Alex's dog."

"Alex Krycek had a dog?" Fox Mulder sounds almost amused.

"Well, technically speaking he got the dog for me, as a wedding gift, but Kai was always closest to Alex," I tell him. He seems torn between confusion and amusement.

"Sorry, Ma'am," he murmurs, seeing my obvious distress. "It's just...what we knew about Alex Krycek didn't lead me to believe that he led any kind of regular life. To find that he had a wife, a dog...it doesn't fit with what I know of the man."

"Well then you didn't know him very well," I reply sharply.

"No." He inclines his head. "Maybe I didn't," he comments.

"If you did you'd know he was a good man. A kind man. A gentle man - in all senses of the word. I know he would have died for something he believed in."

"It would seem that the Alex Krycek you knew and the one I knew are two very different people," Fox Mulder snaps. "Because the man I knew was a liar, a killer, and a traitor. He never acted for any other reason than to save his own ass." I don't think he meant to say that, or to hurt me with his words, because he looks sorry as soon as they leave his mouth, but the truth is he meant them - even if he knows how inappropriate it was to say them to me.

"Mulder," the bald man murmurs, in a warning tone.

"You're wrong." I get to my feet, slowly. I feel as if all the blood has drained from my body and I can barely stand. I sway, and the bald man reaches out a hand to me but I brush it aside, trying to muster as much dignity as I can. "You're wrong about Alex. He was a good man. When my father died, he took care of me when nobody else would. He didn't have to do that. He didn't have to buy me the horses and the dogs. He didn't have to let me stay here, where I'm happy. He could have left me in that place where he found me."

"And where was that, Ma'am?" Mulder leans forward again. He has the most vivid hazel eyes. They seem to sparkle when he's curious, and become so intense. I'm not sure I like that gaze. It scares me. It's making me remember...and I feel a fugue coming on as a result.

"Leave...please leave..." I implore them.

"Mrs. Krycek...we have a few more questions to ask...There was a letter in Kry...in Alex's pocket," the older man says. "It was addressed to Mulder. It directed us to this house, and told us to ask for Mrs. Krycek."

"That's me. We were married 4 months ago. Just after I found out about the baby. Alex said...Alex said he wanted the child to bear his name." I don't think I can stand it any more. I don't think I can stand here and think about a future without Alex. Who will take care of me now? Who will help me with the baby? Alex meant nothing to these people. They don't know him, or like him. They're just here to ask their questions, and then they'll walk out of my life and leave me with nothing but my grief.

"Ma'am?" The bald man is looking at me with a concerned expression on his face. His eyes flicker back and forth, between my face and my protruding belly. "I think you should sit down, Mrs. Krycek."

Fox Mulder says nothing, but his eyes are haunting me, burning me...making me go somewhere I don't want to go - and then it's too late. The fugue is coming - I know I won't be able to stop it. I spin around, blindly, needing to get out to the barn, to be safe, and warm, with my animals who understand. Kai is already on his feet, nudging me with his nose. He knows what's about to happen.

When it comes it's like an earthquake moving up my spine to my brain. I dozen little ripples give way to one almighty spasm, and then I'm gone, lost in the past, in my own memories. On this occasion, perhaps unsurprisingly, I find myself reliving the last time someone came to bring me news of a death in the family.

I was crouching in the corner of a room, shivering. I heard the door open, and then two shiny black shoes appeared in front of me. Men's shoes. That could only mean...

"Daddy?" I looked up, but instead of gazing into my father's familiar, craggy features, I found myself staring into a pair of angry green eyes instead.

"What the hell is she doing here, crouching in her own filth like this?"

The man looked back at the nurse. I knew his name...I'd seen him before with my father...Alex...that's it. His name was Alex. The nurse shrugged, defensively.

"We didn't know you were coming. Her father always calls beforehand, gives us a chance to get her ready."

"Well maybe he shouldn't have done that - maybe he should have dropped in unannounced to find out how you really treat her," Alex snapped.

"She's her own worst enemy. She tries to get out, to escape. We locked her in here for her own protection," the nurse said, bristling at his criticism.



"I just wanted to feel the sunlight on my skin," I whispered. "They don't like me to go outside."

"It's all right. I'm taking you away from these bitches," he snarled. "Clean her up, pack her things, and bring her outside."

"You can't do this!" the nurse gasped in dismay.

"Can't I?" He gave her a grim, utterly evil smile and she shrank back against the wall. "Stand in my way and I'll kill you," he told her, and she and I were both in no doubt at all that he would.

"What about her father? He hasn't given authorization..." She began.

"No. I know. And he won't. You won't be seeing him again. I'm paying you off. This operation is being shut down."

He crouched down in front of me, reached out a hand to me, as if I were a cat or a dog, and I found myself sniffing it curiously. He just waited there, rocking on his haunches, without saying a word, waiting for me to relax and get used to him. It was the best thing he could have done. I studied him intently, and found his green eyes curious, and, when he was looking at me at least, without malice. In fact they were full of pity. I gazed at him for a long time, and then, finally, as he remained unmoving under my scrutiny, I offered him a tentative smile. He returned it with one of his own, and that's the moment I fell in love with him. It was as if the sun had come out on my world. He was so beautiful when he smiled, his teeth so straight and white. His head was on one side, and his gaze was fixed on me as if I was the only person in the world who existed at this moment in time.

"Come on, sweetheart," he murmured gently. "I'm not going to hurt you."

I reached out, cautiously, and touched his fingers, then took his whole hand and he smiled all the time, encouraging me.

"Where's my father?" I asked him. "He's the only one who visits me usually." His smile faltered and I cowered away from him, scared by the sudden change in his appearance.

"Hush...it's all right, little bird." I don't know why he called me that, but it's how I felt. Like a little bird, frail and thin and lost, and he was standing there, trying to tempt me out of the darkness, and into the safety of his hand. "I won't lie to you, little bird," he said softly. "Not now, and not ever. People have lied to you enough in your life. Your father is dead." He was very still as he said those words, his eyes never leaving my face, his expression grim.

"Daddy?" I tried to remember the smell of my father's suits, and the way he would always cuddle me on his lap. His visits were few and far between but he was never unkind to me. Even so, his death was abstract to me. How could I, who did not even understand life, hope to wrap my damaged mind around the concept of death? His fingers reached for mine again, and soothed their way up my arms, tracing the little needle marks as they went. His expression hardened as he found them.

"I won't let them hurt you again," he told me softly, although in truth they long ago stopped hurting me. For years when I was a child they would come for me in the night and take me away to the bright lights. In the morning all I would remember was the sound of my own screams, and all I would have left to give me some clue as to what had happened to me were the marks on my body; the needle marks from the injections, and the scars from whatever else it was they did to me. They took me apart piece by piece and left my mind with more gaps than Swiss cheese. That's how it always feels to me anyway. Sometimes I can go for days feeling completely normal, and then a fugue hits and I'm lost again - and nobody ever knew how to take care of me when I fugued until Alex came along. Alex set me free that day and I never looked back.

Fugues are a strange mix of memories, one after the other, all jumbled together like a dream, and yet clearer than any dream. Sometimes I am in two places simultaneously. This is the most exhausting state to be in, and the one I'm in right now. I am watching the memory from the present, with all I know and all I have just experienced, and I'm in the fugue at the same time, lost in a memory from a time nearly a year ago. I am dimly aware of Fox Mulder helping me onto the couch, and Kai snuffling around my face, licking me. Mulder has taken my hand and the other man is talking to me loudly, and urgently, trying to get my attention but it's no use. The fugue is taking me again, and I'm sitting watching myself as if from a great distance, a participant and an observer at one and the same time.

Alex took me first to a grimy room in a large tenement block. I hated it. The concrete walls closed in around me, and I would spend all day crouched in a corner of the bathroom, which was the only place I felt safe. Alex didn't dare leave me alone and I could tell this frustrated him. It took me a while to become used to his strange mix of kindness and brooding moodiness.

"What is it you want?" He asked me, on the third day, as he tried, despairingly, to coax some food down my unwilling throat. It was the first time anyone had ever asked me that question, and for a while I was confused. What did I want? Who cared what I wanted? Who had ever cared?

"It's all right, you can tell me," he said softly. "What is it you want, little bird?"

"A place to fly," I replied, with a smile for his choice of pet name for me. He grinned back. To this day I don't know why he took care of me back then, when I must have seemed so crazy. I don't think that Alex intended to take me in. He intended to find me someone else to take care of me, a new nurse, another place to live, but then, once he had coaxed me out, and made me trust him, he found that it wasn't so easy to let me go. He was like that, my Alex. He had this outer shell that was hard, and uncaring, but underneath he was a lost soul, like me, and he couldn't turn his back on a bird with broken wings, however much he wanted to. All I know is that I loved him the way Kai loved him, and the way all animals loved him. We loved him because we could see beneath the shell, to the center of the man beneath. I don't know what happened to him in his life to make his outer shell so brittle, or to make a man like Fox Mulder hate him so much. All I know is that he was the first person to ever ask me what I wanted, and then to give it to me, and for that he will have my love to my dying day.

"A place to fly," he repeated, nodding his head. "Well, we'll see what we can do, my princess."

That was the first time he ever called me that, and I liked it better than little bird. I wanted to be his princess. Later that night, when he went out, I ran myself a bath, washed my hair, and then gazed at myself in the mirror. It had been a long time since I'd seen what I looked like and it wasn't as bad as I'd feared. When he came back, he looked at me in surprise.

"I thought..."

"That I can't take of myself? I can. I just...sometimes I forget things, but then nobody ever gives me the chance to remember them," I told him.

He nodded, understanding, because there was a kind of connection between us. He **did** understand me, even when I was at my least coherent. Ours was a meeting of souls rather than minds. We asked nothing of each other, and for that reason, and that reason alone, were somehow able to give each other everything.

The next day he took me in his car up a long, winding mountain road, and there, near the very top, was a rundown little house. I knew I'd come home the moment we arrived. I ran out of the car and sniffed around the house and barn like a dog. This was where I belonged. This was where I would stay. He stood there, one arm wrapped around his body which was the closest he could approximate to crossing his arms, and just grinned insanely, delighted by **my** delight.

"Could you fly here, little bird?" he asked me.

"Princess." I made a face at him. "Yes. I can fly here, Alex, high up in these beautiful hills. Thank you."

I ran up the stairs and he chased me, and I was giggling and screeching before we found the bedroom. I don't think he intended to make love to me that night - or any night - but I know that I very much intended him to make love to me. I think, probably, that it was my first time with a man, but I can't be sure. There were such a lot of tests you see, and so much that I don't remember. I do remember turning, still laughing, and pulling him close. His green eyes were wide, and startled as I pressed my lips against his. I swear the world stopped turning. He went very still and I drew back, and put my hand to my mouth.

"I'm sorry. Was that wrong? Did I do the wrong thing? I wanted to taste you. I used to dream...when I was locked up...I used to have such thoughts." I smiled at him. "They gave me books. I know what I want to do to you."

"What you want to **do** to me?" He grinned. My phrasing is sometimes strange. I'm not used to conversation, although I've read avidly so conversely I have a very wide vocabulary.

"Did that sound wrong? Alex..." I placed my hands on his shoulders, stood on tip-toe and kissed him again. A shiver went up and down my spine. This time he responded. His hand went to my waist, and his lips devoured mine, hungrily. He burned, did my Alex. His lips

burned, his touch burned. He made me burn inside. I felt molten with need, consumed by his fire. Wherever he pressed his mouth I felt that part of my body come to life, as if waking from a deep, deep sleep.

"Are you sure, princess?" he asked me, his fingers trailing their heat all over my flesh. I didn't have a verbal answer. I just knew that by touching me, he was healing me, the way he later healed Kai, the way he just **did** with the lost and the damaged. It was his gift I think. The only shame was that we could never heal him in return. He was too lost and too damaged on the inside, and too strong on the outside. His strength kept him from ever truly being able to accept our healing, although I think we both went some way to at least consoling him in his loneliness. I pressed my entire body against him in reply to his question, like a shameless little cat on heat, loving the delicious melting feeling of being close to his skin, of smelling his scent. I nipped at his neck, and stole little kisses from the side of his face, loving the sensation of his stubbled jaw against my own soft flesh. He didn't need any more prompting. He took me in his one arm, and I was skinny enough back then that he could lift me without any problem at all, and he whirled me around and around the tiny, dusty bedroom, before laying me tenderly on the bed.

He undressed me slowly, as if I were a precious possession to be unwrapped. My dress had buttons all the way up the front, and he unbuttoned each and every single one of them, never taking his eyes off my face, making love to me with his fingertips and the expression in his eyes. When he was done, I thought I would explode with need. He slid the fabric from my shoulders, revealing my bra and panties, and then he just gazed down on me, a strange expression on his face.

"What is it? Am I ugly?" I didn't know then whether I was or not but he laughed, and shook his head.

"No, princess. You're beautiful," he whispered, lowering his face to my belly, and gently blowing on my tummy button. That's when we both found out how ticklish I am. I started to giggle, and he gently brushed his fingertips over my skin, until I stopped giggling, and started sighing instead. His fingers smoothed my bra first from one shoulder and then from the other, and I wriggled, and sat up enough to undo it myself, allowing it to fall away from my breasts. He smiled, and then reached out and cupped one lightly, running his fingers gently over the nipple. He leaned forward, and took the other in his mouth, softly caressing it with his tongue and I almost jumped out of my body in surprise. This wasn't just like being on fire - it was like being consumed by flames of the most perfect arousal. I wrapped my arms around his shoulders and stroked his hair as he tongued my nipples, taking his time, working on each of them in turn until I was a moaning, quivering wreck beneath his ministrations. I was aware of so many new sensations, including the moist warmth between my own thighs. I had felt this before, when I'd touched myself during long, lonely nights in various secure medical units, but this was different. This was him touching me, healing me with his fingers, his mouth - with his entire body.

I pushed his leather jacket from his shoulders, and he sat back obligingly, and helped me undress him. His tee shirt came off, to reveal his prosthetic. I touched it wonderingly, a thousand questions on my lips, but he just shook his head and the expression in his eyes

warned me not to go there. I was to become used to that expression. There were so many no-go zones with Alex, but I was happy to only go to the places that he was comfortable sharing with me. I didn't need to intrude on his private grief or those places in his heart that he couldn't share with anyone, for whatever reason. Somehow, I knew that if I did he would leave me. It was the price for keeping him. He removed the prosthetic, stood, and undid his jeans, then slid them down his thighs. He kicked them off, and stripped off his boots and socks, then removed his briefs. He was beautiful, standing naked in front of me. I hungered and thirsted for him - he was my feast after so many years of famine. He threw himself onto the bed and pulled me close, naked, flesh on flesh, which is what I wanted. I felt like a wild creature, needing sex like some kind of primal instinct, needing the raw, earthy scent of him in my nostrils, the feel of his hard length inside me, the touch of his warm lips on my skin. It was the passionate, unrestrained coupling of two people who each needed what the other could give. Maybe I needed more from him than he did from me, but I think I gave him something back in return.

Alex Krycek made me human that night. He took this little bird and mended her wings, so that she could fly for the first time ever.

I watched him sleep later that night, his face turned towards mine, his breath warm on my face, his hand still resting on my naked thigh. I knew I loved him then. I don't know when he came to love me, but I think he did - at least a little. Maybe I can understand why they don't know him, these men from the FBI, who are standing over me, hovering, helplessly. I can see them in my peripheral vision, even as I re-live that first, beautiful night Alex and I spent together. I can understand why they think badly of him, because he's so closed off. Lying here, sleeping in my arms, I have the real Alex, and I'm keeping him safe. I refuse to believe that there is any other Alex, whatever they say about him. When he slept I saw the true Alex, lost and vulnerable. When he woke, the mask would slip so easily back into place. There were so many things he never told me. Who he worked for, why, why he kept so many weapons around the house, why he was afraid of having his photograph taken, why he took me out of that bad place where he found me, and into his heart, why he loved me - even how my father had died. I asked him that last question once, and his green eyes darkened as if the memory pained him.

"He was killed, princess," he told me, in a low, rasping tone, his deep voice husky with some emotion I couldn't read. "Someone killed him." He gazed at his hand for a moment, then glanced back at me.

"Who? Did you find the man who did that?" I asked.

"Yes. I found him. Don't worry. He won't hurt you. He could never hurt **you**." He smiled at me softly, and brushed the back of his hand gently over my cheek, and I covered it with my own. There were some things I didn't need to understand. Things that would hurt me too much. I trusted Alex to know what they were, and I trusted him to keep me safe.

Nobody can ever really say they understood Alex Krycek, not even me, but I do know that whatever he did he would have done from the best of motives and the best of intentions. I know, also, that he didn't sleep easily at night. I never found out what troubled his

conscience, but he would often wake, screaming, and nothing I could do would comfort him. He would get up, dress, and take Kai out for a walk on the mountain, and the next day it would be as if nothing had happened.

The fugue shifts, overwhelming me with memories and I find myself on the day I discovered was pregnant. Alex took me in his arms, and shook his head in wonder. I was so pleased - I had worried about how he would take the news, but he seemed genuinely happy about it.

"We'll get married," he declared.

"Because I'm pregnant?" It didn't bother me. I felt like the dogs or the horses. They mated, gave birth, and brought up their offspring all without the benefit of a piece of paper. I was happy enough.

"No." He shook his head, looking thoughtful. "No...I want to marry you, princess. My Crazy Annie. I want you to have my name. Mrs. Krycek." He grinned. "Mrs. Krycek. How does that sound?"

"It sounds very nice." I grinned back as he danced me around our ramshackle kitchen. "Mrs. Krycek. I like it."

I didn't like the trip we had to take into town to make it happen though. I clung to him all the way there and all the way back, until we were safe once more in our little house on the side of the mountain. I don't remember one thing about the ceremony, I just know I had a happy feeling once we got home. We were Husband and wife, with a baby on the way. I had never dared dream during my long, weary, incarcerated existence, that life would end up this good.

I was lucky. In those final few months I had him to myself more often. Since he found out about the baby he would spend more and more time with me. Time spent walking out on the mountain, hand in hand, or sitting on the verandah together. Sometimes he'd strum to me on his guitar. He was rusty at first, said he hadn't played for a while, but he soon picked it up again, even though he was stuck with just playing the basics, one-handed as he was. It wasn't the music I listened to though - it was his voice. He had a beautiful voice and he used to sing just for me. I'd rest my head on his shoulder and look up at the stars and he'd sing to me, with his deep, comforting voice that wrapped itself around me like a blanket, keeping me warm.

I always knew he'd have to go back to work eventually. He told me that he would try to come back as soon as possible, that he'd try and find new work as soon as he could, that he'd try and leave the past behind, and I think he believed it when he said it, but we both knew it couldn't happen. Whatever the ties were that bound him to the past, they were too strong for him to ever really unshackle himself from them.

I jolt out of the fugue with a start, to find myself looking into a pair of concerned hazel eyes.

"Mrs. Krycek? We're worried about you. We phoned for paramedics," Fox Mulder says.

"No! Send them away!" I struggle to get up, but my limbs are heavy as lead in the aftermath of the fugue, and I'm still shaking. Alex would hold me at times like this. "Where's Alex?" I cry, needing the warmth of his arm and his solid chest. "I need my husband. Where's Alex? I need him to hold me. He's the only one who understands when I fugue...the only one..." I glance out of the window, hoping to see his car in the yard, only to find that the sun is fading outside and his car isn't there.

"Mrs. Krycek, we told you," the bald man says softly. "Alex is dead."

"You had some kind of dissociative episode," Fox Mulder tells me, those hazel eyes so curious and intense. "Is that something you've experienced before, Mrs. Krycek?"

"Yes. It happens all the time. I'm used to it. Alex...Alex...he knew how to deal with them. He'd take care of me when I had one. He'd hold me, whisper to me, stroke my hair...and now he's gone." I feel my face crumple and that's when I give way to the tears. Fox Mulder looks startled and confused, but I guess it's hard not to offer comfort to a pregnant widow, however much you might have loathed her husband, so he puts an awkward arm around my shoulder and allows me to weep into his shirt for what feels like hours. If I close my eyes I can make believe he's my Alex, even if only for a little while.

The paramedics duly arrive, and examine me. They want to take me to the hospital but I'm hysterical at the very mention of it.

"I'm not going back there!" I scream. "You can't make me. I won't go through it again. I won't!" Fox Mulder tries to calm me down, while the other man stares at me helplessly, as if he has the weight of the entire world on his shoulders. Finally Fox Mulder sends them away, and I lie back on the couch, relieved. Mulder touches my arm and traces the needle marks on my skin.

"Were you an addict, Mrs. Krycek?" He asks. I stare at him blankly and then down at my arms. Realization dawns.

"Oh no. Nothing like that. I was...I was taken." I can't hold on to reality any more. It's slipping in and out of focus. Alex told me never to talk about my experiences in my childhood - the abductions, the experiments, but Alex isn't here any more and I'm not really sure what I'm saying. The fugue has exhausted me, as they always do, and I'm too tired and grief-stricken to even care. "They took me...injected me. I don't know what it was. Alex was surprised when I got pregnant I think. Maybe he thought I couldn't...I don't know...we never took any precautions...he set me free, Mr. Mulder. He was the only one who ever asked me what I wanted. They always just took. Never asked. Over and over again. Alex asked. He was the only one who ever did."

Maybe Mulder thinks I'm a prostitute who Alex rescued from a life of drugs on the street. I don't know. He just nods, and glances at the other man - his boss? The sun is setting outside the window, and I desperately want them to go.

"Please. I'll be fine now. You've done your duty. Is there...what about the body? Can I see it?"

"If you want. It's in the FBI morgue. You might..." Fox Mulder raises his head to gaze at his boss again, but the other man has his arms wrapped tightly around his body, as if to ward off pain. "You might find it distressing, Mrs. Krycek. Alex was shot three times. Once in the hand, once in the stomach - and once in the head. That was the fatal shot."

"Who would do such a thing?" I ask, my stomach turning over, cold with sorrow for my lost love.

Mulder glances at his boss again. "We have reason to believe that Alex Krycek was a very dangerous man. He was a known felon, and a murderer," he says, as softly and gently as he can. I think about that for a moment, because the Alex I knew was none of those things - and yet...and yet I think, in my heart, I know he had the capacity to be, if there was reason enough for it. Alex was someone who traded peace of mind and his own integrity for a higher cause, and if he ever had reason to regret that he wasn't someone who dwelt on such regrets. I honestly believe there is some part of Alex's story that Mulder doesn't know - or maybe doesn't want to know.

"All I know is that he was my husband, and that he was gentle, kind and loving," I tell Mulder softly. "Now, if you'll excuse me, I need some air."

I manage to lever myself off the couch, and, Kai never leaving my side, I walk out onto the verandah and gaze at the setting sun. It's nearly done, and a few minutes later it slips from my sight. I think if it weren't for the baby I'm carrying, that I'd join my lost love in death, but I have to keep going for the child's sake, and I will. I might have a fragile grasp on many things, but I know that I love this child, and that he or she is the last link to Alex left on this earth. I'll protect my child with my life, the way I would have protected him if I had only known what would befall him out there, in that world that scares me so much. I can hear the FBI men talking inside, although I'm not sure what they're saying. The stars are just starting to come out and I sit down on the rocking seat Alex and I used to share, and gaze at the night sky. I can feel the fugue near me. It's going to be with me a lot in the next few days I suspect. Maybe it's Alex's death - or maybe it's the unsettling feelings I have about Fox Mulder, with his strange hazel eyes. The way he looks at me worries me. I don't know who he is or anything about him but there's something about the way he speaks, the way he moves his head...something that upsets me.

"Mrs. Krycek?" I must have fugued again, because now it's dark and the stars are twinkling in earnest. Fox Mulder is kneeling in front of me, giving me another of those looks. The other man is nowhere to be seen - maybe he's still in the house. "We still have some questions, Mrs. Krycek, but we're more concerned about your welfare right now. Is there anyone who can come and stay with you tonight?"

"No. I don't have many friends."

"Any relatives?" He asks.

I shake my head. "No," I reply softly. "None that I know of. Nobody to take care of me. I'm all alone."



He stands up, biting on his lip uncertainly, and I can tell that he's unwilling to leave me like this.

"I'll be fine," I murmur. "Do you have any children, Mr. Mulder?" I ask him, stroking my belly. He's surprised by the question and maybe I'm surprised to be asking it.

"Yes. A son. William. He was born a few days ago." There's a proud look on his face.

"A few days ago? You should still be at home with your wife then," I chide.

He smiles and nods. "I would be but...this was something I really needed to do. I was surprised, you see. I've known Alex for a number of years - we were even partnered together once at the FBI - but I didn't know about this side of him. The man I knew...well, let's just say that he doesn't sound the same as the man you knew."

"Alex was a very private person. Very few people knew him. There were many things I didn't know about him but I do know that he was a good soul." I gaze up at the stars. "Thank you for coming to give me the news yourself, Mr. Mulder. If you've got a new baby then I appreciate you giving up your time to do that."

He looks a little guilty. I think my words have shamed him.

"Mrs. Krycek, I'll be honest - I came out here for another reason. Alex said something in his letter, something I don't understand." He gets the letter out of his pocket, and I swing the rocker back and forth, gazing out at the stars. The fugue presses in close and Kai nudges me again.

"Fox Mulder...do you ever look at the stars?" I ask him. "I mean really look? When I was a little girl I used to look up at the stars and imagine there was a whole world up there, full of laughing, happy children."

"I understand what you mean." His hand is still touching mine. We gaze at the starlight together.

"That's why I love it up here on the mountain so much," I tell him softly. "I feel so close to them up here. Sometimes, when I'm fuguing, I see that place again. I know that's whimsical...I...I didn't have much of a childhood, so I think I created a fantasy land out there. Somewhere that was safe, welcoming, and kind. A home. Alex took away that need. He gave me all those things so I didn't have to fantasize about them any more." I smile at him. His hazel eyes seem very large in the darkness, fixed on me, drinking me in. The fugue is still close. I can see memories swirling just out of reach.

"My own childhood wasn't that great," he confides, with a faded smile. "I can understand the appeal of creating a fantasy land where you can be happy. Mrs. Krycek, about the letter? The letter we found on Alex's body?"

I tear myself back into the present with a great act of will. The memories are so close I can hear them whispering to me, gently undulating in my mind.

"Yes. Alex's letter." My body is trembling with the effort of fighting off the fugue. It is him, I think. It is Fox Mulder who is bringing on these fugues, not the news of Alex's death. That has affected me in a different way, no less profoundly, but differently. It has settled into my heart, a pain that will stay with me until my dying day.

"Can I read it to you?" He holds it up so that it's illuminated by the light shining from the window. I nod, rocking absently back and forth.

*"Mulder, if you're reading this then I'm dead. I make no claim on you, brother, save this one thing. Go to the address below, and ask for Mrs. Krycek. She'll need someone to take care of her if I'm gone. After all that she's been through she'll need you. I know that you'll be there for her, Mulder, whatever you might feel about me. Alex Krycek."* Mrs. Krycek, why do you suppose Alex wrote that?" Fox Mulder asks. There's a frown creasing his forehead.

"He was always thinking of me." I smile at him through my tears, and he shakes his head, puzzled. "Even after his death. I wonder how long he carried that letter in his pocket? I'll miss him so much."

Mulder's hands are warm as he puts his arms around me, and I know that I've been here before. I've laid my head on his shoulder before, cried into his neck before. Suddenly that much is very clear to me. "Fox..." I whisper, and I'm a little girl, before the bright lights came, and he's here, my big brother, hugging me tight as I cry about something stupid - a lost doll, or a scraped knee. The fugue takes me with horrifying force, slamming into me, making me cry out loud in disoriented pain and I'm five years old again.

"Mrs. Krycek..." *"Samantha."*

The words merge from great distances in time, a man's voice and a boy's. I cry into his arms, five years old, and thirty-five at one and the same time.

"They took me, Fox," I tell him, studying his face. He's nine years old, and thirty-nine, but his hazel eyes haven't changed. They're fixed on me, bright, puzzled, uncomprehending, trying desperately to understand. "They took me away into the bright light. At first it wasn't so bad. They did things to me...I used to keep a diary...then I tried to run away and after that I wasn't the same. They locked me up...Daddy used to visit and then he was gone and there was only Alex to take care of me. He took me away from that bad place, and brought me out here. He loved me, Fox...he was the only one who ever did. He was the only one who ever asked me what I wanted."

"Mrs. Krycek..." His voice sounds very distant and strained. "What are you telling me, Mrs. Krycek?" He asks in a hoarse tone.

"Samantha," I whisper softly, holding onto his hand. "Call me by my first name, Fox." He tries to draw away from me, his eyes wide and shocked. "Samantha," I tell him insistently. "I always knew you'd find me one day, Fox." I didn't know that was true until I said it, but now the memory comes back easily, and with it so many others, all tumbling into my fugue-like state until I'm not sure where I am. He pulls his hand away from mine, and raises it to my face, pushes my dirty hair away from my eyes, and looks at me.

"Samantha?" He whispers. I nod, the tears falling from my eyes as I cry for my lost husband and my newly found brother. "Samantha."

He knows the truth of it, even if he doesn't understand how, or why. His arms go around me once more and he holds me tight as if he'll never let me go again.

"I looked for you. I need you to know that I looked," he tells me, in a choking voice.

"I do. I do know that," I reply, clinging to him as the memories wash back and forth on the seashore of my damaged mind.

"Alex...when I last saw him he called me 'brother'. He does it again in his note. I didn't understand."

"We were married. You **were** his brother - in law." I smile through my tears. He looks stunned, as if this is further than he can go.

"Samantha...I'm sorry. Sorry for your loss...Sorry for all of it," he says, stroking my dark hair softly.

I pat the space on the rocking seat beside me, inviting him to sit there and he does. He puts his arm around me, and I lean my head on his shoulder. He isn't Alex, but he will take care of me and my child. Maybe I can bring up my baby with his. Maybe he can give me a kind of healing that even Alex couldn't give me. I don't know how he'll feel about that, about helping me raise Alex's child when he seems to hate Alex so much, but I do know, looking into his eyes, that he will always be here for me and my baby.

"I thought I found you once before," he murmurs, looking at the stars. "Out there - in that other world you mentioned. I thought I went there, and saw you."

"Maybe you fugued," I tell him, smiling at him.

"Maybe I did." He smiles back, and tucks a curl of my hair behind my ear, the same way Alex used to.

I don't pretend to understand things. I never could. My mind can only hold onto things fleetingly, and there's so much that's too complicated for me to ever really grasp. I don't know why I was taken as a child, or why Alex rescued me. I don't know why he loved me. I don't know why I was separated from my brother for so long, or why he hates my dead husband so much. I don't even really know who my father was. I have memories of two fathers and I don't know which one was really mine. In some ways the fugue takes away some of the pain and that's good. I need that right now because the pain hurts too much for me to bear. The fugue makes things hazy and unfocused, it keeps me dazed, and almost serene.

"It's strange," my brother says as we gaze at the stars. "Of all the things I expected to find when I came up here today, you were the very last thing imaginable. I looked for you for so long. To find you here, now, after all this time...to find you married to Alex Krycek of all

people, carrying his child...It defies belief." He gives an amazed little chuckle, and I squeeze his hand with my fingers. "A few days ago, with the birth of my son, I found a truth that I didn't even know I'd been looking for," he tells me, softly, whispering in my ear, like a confessional. "Then today I find one I **have** been looking for, all my life. It's...as if my whole world has slotted into place in the space of one week."

I smile at him, genuinely happy for him. The chair rocks back and forth, back and forth, squeaking slightly in the night air, and sometime soon I'll have to face the morning, and the grief of my husband's funeral, but for now it feels all right to just sit here, with my baby stirring inside me, Kai's head on my lap, and my long-lost brother's arm around my shoulders.

The fugue stirs, billowing around me, comforting and distancing at one and the same time, and I'm with Alex again, saying goodbye to him that last time he left. He's dressed in black, and his green eyes are shining down at me. He puts his hand on my stomach, and smiles.

"Goodbye, princess," he says huskily, and then he gives me the kind of kiss that takes my breath away.

I stand in the doorway of our house, and watch him as he walks out of my life forever.

"Goodbye, Alex," I whisper.

**The End**

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