

The Anniversary by Xanthe

<http://www.xanthe.org/the-anniversary/>

Story Notes:

This is a birthday story written especially for Sergeeva.

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I think I could sit and watch him for hours as the candle burns lower and lower, and the flickering flame illuminates the broad sweep of his jaw, and makes the charcoal depths of his eyes glow with an internal heat of their own. One side of his face is set in shadow, dark and unknowable, the other side lit up, animated. The candlelight caresses the angle of his cheekbones, making them more prominent, and reflects off the large expanse of bare skin covering his head. He's wearing a navy blue polo neck, and camel colored chinos. He looks devastatingly attractive, as always, and he dressed up and slapped on the cologne just for me because we're having dinner together at his place. Just the two of us. It's a special occasion, you see, and we're celebrating one year to the day, after...

"I got you a present." We're sitting on his couch, sipping our aperitifs in the candle-lit room. He hasn't poured himself a whisky, the way he usually does. He's sipping an orange juice instead.

"Really?" He looks up, almost shyly.

"Yeah. It's not much. I wasn't sure, you know, about romantic stuff...I'm not very good at that shit," I grin. He shakes his head at me, and I pull out the package, suddenly feeling really stupid. Not for the first time I want to take flight.

I've never been in a relationship like this before. One where I felt so safe, or loved. It scares me sometimes. I feel that if I stop for a moment, and say what I feel, then it will all disappear into the night, like Sam. Why should I have something this good after all? What did I ever do to deserve it? If he knows that he's the best thing that ever happened to me, then somehow I'd lose him. I don't know how or why, I just know that I would. So I goof around, never tell him how I feel, or what he means to me. I don't know if he guesses - perhaps the inordinate amount of time that I spend vegging out on his couch instead of my own is a clue. Or the fact that I can't spend a day in the Hoover Building without making some excuse to run up several flights of stairs to see him, even if only for a brief moment. I think it amuses him - although he never feels the need to poke his head around the door of my office every five minutes. When I'm feeling insecure I wonder why he doesn't require constant reassurance the way I do, but then again, he never draws away, says hateful things on a jealous whim, or throws a hissy fit about nothing just to get attention. He's a more secure person than I am, I suppose.

He takes the package I give to him, and shakes it against his ear, grinning at me.

"Can I guess?" He asks.

"It's not exactly difficult," I laugh. "I wanted to remind you of our first night together."

"Oh god, you're not going to throw up all over me again, are you?" he groans.

"Are you ever going to let me forget that?" I scowl, poking him in the ribs, and tickling him under the arms until he falls onto the floor in a fit of giggling that his subordinates surely wouldn't believe he was capable of. Hell, until a year ago, I wouldn't have believed it either! I climb on top of him, but he brushes my questing hands away.

"Not now, Fox!" he admonishes.

"Why not? You're looking divine, and we have the whole evening together. Alone." I lick the tip of his nose, and he melts into a series of low, rumbling chuckles.

"No," he says firmly, pulling himself together and sitting up, me still in his lap. "I want to open my present." He rips open the paper with a childlike glee. That's something else that's unexpected about the man. Who'd have thought he'd take such pleasure in wrapping paper? But he loves presents, both giving and receiving them. The surly AD is a romantic at heart. A shy, lovable romantic - and he's mine. "Oh." He looks up at me, his eyes clear and bright behind the contact lenses he sometimes wears in private.

"Rod Stewart's Greatest Hits - the Ballads," I grin, as he opens the CD case and surveys the contents.

"You remembered," he whispers softly.

"I remembered, yeah. Hell, I may have been drunk on my ass at the time, but I couldn't forget that."

"Good. I think I know the perfect place to play this," he smiles, holding out his hands for me to haul him up.

"Uh, the CD player?" I glance at it. It seems the obvious place.

"No. At least, yes, but not here. Come on." He disappears for a moment, and reappears with his portable CD player.

"Walter? Where are we...?" He hands me my jacket. "I thought we were spending the evening here...that you were cooking one of your specialties." For the first time I realize that he hasn't set the table, and there is no tantalizing smell emerging from the kitchen. Walter is an excellent cook. He's even managed to pile a couple of pounds onto my scrawny frame over the past year.

"Did I say that?" he grins.

"Well...no. I mean, that is, you said we'd be dining alone. I assumed..."

"Never assume," he laughs out loud, opening the front door for me and ushering me through.

It's a warm mid-summer evening, and the drive takes about an hour. I spend that hour watching him drive, taunting him with endless questions about our destination until he turns to me, frowns sternly, and says: "Enough already, Fox. I'm not telling you, and you know you won't wheedle this one out of me."

"Not even if I..." I place a sly hand on his crotch and he slaps it away.

"Especially not if you go anywhere near there while I'm driving. I can just see the headlines: 'FBI Assistant Director and his boyfriend in sex related car crash!'"

"Spoilsport," I pout, and he touches my knee in a tender gesture.

"There'll be plenty of time for that later," he smiles, and the promise makes my face light up. I wish my expressions wouldn't betray me like this. I'd much rather be dark and inscrutable, and retain an air of aloof mystery, but I can't seem to help myself.

He pulls up outside the Country Club, and I find myself barking out an incredulous laugh.

"Taking me back to the scene of the crime?" I ask.

"Where else?" He gets out, and I pause for just a moment, to savor the movement of those long legs, and the way his jacket stretches so tightly across the top of his shoulders that you can see the muscles underneath ripple with the movement. He turns and glances at me questioningly.

"Well?" He gestures towards the club and I follow him inside.

"This is amazing," I grin foolishly. "A table for two in an upstairs room? Somewhere quiet...discreet...?"

"No," he says firmly. "That wouldn't be right at all. That wasn't the scene of the crime, as you so aptly put it. Detail, Agent Mulder, detail." He raps my forehead with one blunt finger, and I want to open my mouth and suck on it. "As FBI agents we must always pay attention to the details. They're important."

"So..." I follow him down a corridor, where someone from management greets him, and we are both ushered along to the great hall. "Surely..." I pause, on the threshold, as the big doors are opened. "I can't believe...you didn't...?"

He's smiling as I walk into the huge ornate room, with its big wooden dance floor. An enormous mirror hangs over the massive fireplace, the French windows are flung open to display the veranda, and a five piece band is playing something classy and muted in the background.

"All this...just for us?" I whisper.

"All this...just for you," he smiles.

"You rented the whole room? But...it must have cost a fortune!" I exclaim.

"Fox." He puts his hands on each of my shoulders. "You really have to learn to accept romantic gestures in the spirit in which they're intended. Cost isn't important. Our anniversary is."

He plucks a red rose from a nearby vase, and threads it through my buttonhole.

"We're going to eat here?" I glance around. It's a huge room, we'd look stupid, just the two of us, sitting here with the band playing.

"Not quite here, no," he smiles again. "Like I said, the details are important. So...back to the scene of the crime."

He takes my hand, and leads me to the open French windows, and out onto the veranda, with its solid stone wall, and its view of acres of land. The sun is just starting to set, streaking the sky with red rays, and the air is warm and pleasant. The smell of jasmine wafts around us.

"Here." He stands behind me, holds me close so that I can feel the warmth of his body, and smell the scent of him, and the scent of his cologne, mingled with the jasmine to make a heady mix. "The scene of the crime." His shaven cheek rests against mine for a moment, and I survey the little scene. A table has been set up out here, out of sight of the band, set for two people, a champagne bucket on the side. It takes my breath away, and for a moment I feel ashamed.

"What is it?" He senses my faltering breathing, and the tears that are starting to prick in my eyes.

"Me. I'm not...you shouldn't waste something so perfect on me. All I got you was a lousy, unromantic, fucking CD." I can hardly breathe. When something so beautiful, and so right, is offered to you as if you deserve it, when you know that you don't, it hurts. I feel that if I sit here with him tonight, take from him all that he so freely gives, then in the morning it will be gone, vanishing like fairy dust. It's too perfect to exist in the Real World. Someone will be watching; someone will know that I don't deserve it, and it will be whisked away from me.

"Don't be an idiot!" He turns me around to face him. "You remembered and I remembered. That's what's important."

He goes back into the other room, every muscle moving with the perfect ordered grace that I love about him so much. He speaks a few words to the band, and they leave the room, closing the door behind them. We are alone. He plugs the CD player in, and then joins me back on the veranda. Rod Stewart's gravelly voice starts to wail mournfully: "I can tell by your eyes that you've probably been crying forever..."

"Trust us to have something so damn sad as 'our' song," I shake my head.

"We didn't choose it," he smiles. "It just happened.

"And the stars in the sky don't mean nothing to you, they're a mirror..."

He doesn't say anything. He doesn't have to. His eyes say it all. He holds out his hand and I take it, and he pulls me in close, my hand in his, my face nestled against his shoulder.

"At least this time you don't have to hold me up," I murmur into his jacket.

"And at least this time you aren't drunk on your ass," he chuckles, swaying me around the room.

"If I stay here just a little bit longer, if I stay here won't you listen, to my heart..." I close my eyes, and let the scent of jasmine, mingled with his cologne, and the sounds of the music take me back...

The Deputy Director is retiring, and since the old man has been with the FBI for millennia, they're throwing a big goodbye bash for him, and everyone's invited, even the great unwashed, and that includes me. The top brass all parade by, dressed in their tuxes and bow ties, looking...well, mainly looking as if they've spent too many hours on their asses behind their desks. **He** is the only one of them who looks as if he's used the FBI's sports facilities recently. In fact, he looks completely stunning. Great, that's all I need. An evening spent socializing with my peers, and a hard-on for my boss. Ex-boss. Remembering that I no longer work under his supervision hurts, and I grab another free drink from a passing tray in one hand, and Scully in the other.

"Let's dance," I grin at her inanely.

Scully sniffs my breath. "Mulder you're drunk," she says. "Honestly, this is supposed to be a chance for you to network, make some friends in high places, yet all you can do is get shit-faced. Don't you care about your career at all?"

"What damn career? As Kersh's whipping boy? No thanks," I make a face, swinging her around, too roughly.

"Mulder!" She elbows me in the stomach, and steps on my toe.

"Just consider yourself lucky that it wasn't somewhere more painful," she whispers, setting off for the women's room.

"Scully!" I call after her mournfully. "Scully, my little Scully!" She shoots me a look that suggests I'll be lucky to get out of the building alive, and then disappears out of the door. Another waiter passes by, and I take the opportunity to snatch one more free drink. After guffawing their way through the evening, most of the top brass leave. The lower echelons stay on, a small group of us clinging grimly to our free drinks, and our all too rare

opportunity to get dressed up, and come somewhere this expensive without having to pay a dime.

I try, drunkenly, to barge in and get myself included in a few conversations, but people want to talk to me even less than usual tonight. I can't imagine why. I'm sure that I'm being bright and witty and entertaining, but the look of faint disgust and the blank incomprehension on their faces as I talk, suggest that I might very well be babbling nonsense. The band has finished playing, but still nobody leaves. It's like one of those weddings where the bride and groom have spent a fortune on a classy but sedate band, when really everyone is itching to shake their booties to some really bad seventies disco music. It appears miraculously. Someone sneaks in a tinny-sounding CD player from God knows where, and a few people hastily snatch CD's from their cars and fling them into a communal pile, and before we know it, the dance floor is heaving with FBI agents strutting their stuff in time to Abba.

"Dancing queen, see that girl," I lurch around the room, bumping into people and inanimate objects.

"I wouldn't have thought it was such a good idea for you to be dancing to this particular song," someone murmurs to me as they pass. I look up to see Tom Colton. Two of him. No, three.

"Why not?" I leer, staggering into him and making him spill his drink.

"I'd have thought that was obvious," he smiles maliciously, and that remark penetrates even my inebriated senses, pitching me headfirst into a fit of melancholy. Wounded, I retire to the veranda, and sit down next to a pot of geraniums.

"You'll be my friends, won't you?" I gaze at them sorrowfully. "Scully doesn't like me. Kersh doesn't like me. Colton doesn't like me," I can feel the sobs welling up inside. "Nobody likes me."

That's when I see him. He's taken off his jacket and is sitting quietly, both his long legs slung up on the low wall, gazing out into the darkness. His shirtsleeves are rolled up, his bow tie loosened, and he looks thoughtful.

"Surveying your wrecked career?" I hiccup. The words take a moment to register, and then he turns and stares at me thoughtfully.

"Mulder, unlike all those other people you've pissed off this evening, I do like you. Please don't say anything that might change that." He's speaking in a low tone, and it's obvious to anyone who isn't completely out of his head, that he wants to be left alone. Unfortunately, I **am** completely out of my head, so I get up, lurch over to him, and lie on the wall facing him, my hair touching his shoes.

"You were on the short list to replace the Deputy Director, you were this close to the job," I hold up a thumb and forefinger, but the movement unbalances me, and I topple off the wall and onto the floor. He doesn't move a muscle to pick me up. He just gazes at me steadily as I crawl around under his raised knees. "This close!" I emerge around the side of his thighs and

hiccup again. "And d'you wanna know why you didn't get the promotion, Mr. Hotshot, Assistant Director, Tight-Assed Skinner?"

"Mulder, you're drunk and I can see why you don't usually drink now - you don't exactly hold your liquor very well," he comments. "In the morning you are really going to regret this. I hope for your sake that you don't even remember it."

"You didn't get the promotion because..." I giggle, grabbing hold of his arm and pulling myself up so that I can look him solemnly in the eye. "Because of me. Because of Fox William Mulder. Yessir, that's me. Spooky Mulder fucked up your career, like he fucked up his own career, and Scully's career, and...and...like he fucked up his life."

"Mulder, this isn't like you. Come on, I think someone should take you home."

He swings his long legs off the wall, and tries to pick me up, but I go limp and useless in his arms, swinging my hands around his neck and holding on.

"You making a pass at me, Skinner?" I leer, swaying drunkenly against him.

"No, Mulder. I'm not," he says seriously, trying to hold me up. I slip through his fingers, and land on the floor in a tangled heap.

"Ouch," I grin at him. "Join me, huh? Join me." I tug on his trouser leg. "We can survey our wrecked careers together from down here, in the dirt. Where I've brought you to." I start to giggle, and begin crying instead, the tears running down my cheeks. He stares at me for a moment, hands on hips, then sighs, and sits back down in his chair. I'm surprised when, a few seconds later, an enormous handkerchief is thrust into my hand.

"Mulder, you're just drunk. In the morning you'll be fine. Well, not fine maybe," he grins. "A mother of a headache might be the price you pay for tonight's fiasco, but you won't be so upset."

"You didn't deny it. It's the truth. I fucked up your career," I wail, burying my face in the handkerchief.

"No. I can take care of my own career, Mulder. If my association with you damaged it in any way, that was a choice I made freely." On some level of consciousness I register his hand ruffling my hair and lean into the gentle stroking. "You really should go home, Fox."

"You're just being nice," I wail even more loudly, clinging to his trouser leg, and wiping my eyes on the fabric. He exhales a deep, weary sigh.

"Yeah. And you're being a pain in the butt now, Agent Mulder. Snap out of it. Look, you're never going to get yourself home in one piece. I'll take you." He gets up, disentangles me from his trouser legs, and pulls me up again.

"Is that a proposition, Sir?" I smirk, holding onto him as the room sways.

"No," he answers shortly.

"It's nice just standing here."

I nuzzle my face into the side of his neck, smelling his cologne. I can smell jasmine too, from the gardens, and there's the sound of a trickling fountain outside, while inside Rod Stewart is warbling his heart out in low, sexy tones: "I don't wanna, talk about it, how you broke my heart. If I stay here just a little bit longer, if I stay here won't you listen to my heart..." I can feel his heart beating against my hand which is resting on his chest.

"If I stay here will you listen?" I mumble into his shirt. He puts both his hands around my waist in a valiant attempt to hold me up.

"You're wasted, Mulder." He sounds amused, and we hang there for just a moment, with him swaying under my drunken weight.

"We're dancing," I mutter, pulling back to smile at him. His eyes are kind, almost laughing at me, and infinitely tender. "We're dancing!" I marshal my fading senses, and lie my head on his shoulder, moving in time to the music, holding his body tight against me, and singing tunelessly under my breath.

"How you broke my heart..." It suddenly seems achingly sad to me, and time stops for a split second that lasts an aeon. I've forgotten about the room full of people next door. There's just me, and him on the veranda, and his arms around me, and his breath on the side of my face, and the smell of him, and of jasmine in the warm night air, and the sound of a fountain, and Rod Stewart serenading us.

It is one of those perfect, poignant moments. I've stopped breathing. I just want this "dance" to go on forever. And it is a dance. His feet move slightly, in time to the music, and I could swear that I feel his lips brush against my hair.

"Don't break my heart, Walter," I murmur into his strong, wide neck.

"Do I look like a heart-breaker!" he mutters, breaking the embrace, slinging one of my arms over his big shoulder, and dragging me back into the other room.

"Bye, Scully!" I wave at a passing red head who may, or may not be Scully. "Bye, Colton. Bye, Deputy Director, sir!" I yell at nobody. The Deputy Director left hours ago.

"Do you need any help, sir?" Someone asks giving Skinner a sympathetic look.

"No. He's just had too much to drink. Trust me, this won't be the first time I've played taxi driver for a drunk," Skinner grins. "I can handle him."

"Handle me, Walter," I coo into his ear. Luckily we're out of earshot.

He somehow manages to squash me into his car, although I'm alternately giggling and singing. I get out the first time he puts me in and, for no sensible reason, drape myself on the hood and lie there, looking up at the stars.

"Walter, come over here...look...look," I point. "They're up there, Walter. Watching us."

"And right now, I expect they're pissing on themselves laughing," he mutters. "Come on, Mulder, get off the hood and back into the car."

"No, no, you have to look. I'm not going anywhere until you look. Come here," I beckon him over, and, with a heavy sigh, he gets out of the car and stands woodenly beside me, as I lounge on my back. "Closer," I grin, still pointing. "You look beautiful upside down, Walter, did you know that? 'course, you look pretty good right side up as well. Now look up, up at the stars."

With the resigned expression of a man who is humoring someone, he turns his head up, and glances at the sky.

"What am I supposed to see?"

"Magic, Walter. Mystery...the answers to...you know, life, the universe, Cancerman, everything."

"Cancerman?" he frowns.

"Yeah. I bet he's got friends up there. Little alien friends pulling strings for him."

"I'm sure he has," Skinner says smoothly, grabbing me by the shirt, pulling me off the hood of the car, and trying once more to push me inside. I go stiff in his arms and cling to his neck again.

"You wanna dance again, Walter? Is that it? Why didn't you say, huh?" I belch.

"Mulder, you stink," he says, wincing. "Now come on. Let's get you home. You are going to have one hell of a hangover in the morning."

"You didn't like the stars, Walter? I showed you the stars, and you didn't like them? 'And the stars in the sky don't mean nothing to you,' I croon to him, loudly and tunelessly.

"The car. Now." He says in his best AD voice, pointing sternly.

"Yessir!" I giggle, mocking a salute. "Yessir, Walter sir."

He opens the door, and pushes me in again, taking no chances this time and locking the door as soon as I'm inside before getting in beside me and setting off.

"You mad at me, sir?" I ask, lying my head on his lap as soon as he gets in. "Hmm, upside down again. Nice chin."

"Mulder, get off." He pushes me off his lap, and I land on the gear stick, putting us in neutral. He screeches the car to a halt, sits me back up, fastens my seat belt, and glares at me. "Move again and I'll kill you," he threatens.

"With your bare hands?" I ask hopefully, beyond threats.

"With my gun. Slowly," he snaps back meaningfully, and I bang my head against the window, crestfallen and stare out onto the passing streets, descending into melancholy once more.

"I don't wanna talk about it, how you broke my heart," I sing mournfully.

"Singing is also punishable by death," he remarks, ominously.

"That's you - don't wanna talk about it," I glance at him. "The big, macho guy doesn't wanna talk about how Spooky Mulder's got a hard-on for him the size of the Empire State Building."

"Mulder, in the morning you are going to remember why you don't usually drink," he says, but he sounds amused. "But for tonight I'm going to pay you the courtesy of not listening to a word you say since you're clearly rip roaring drunk."

"Yeah, but in the morning I'll be sober, and you'll still be...you'll still be...there's a joke there somewhere, how does it go?"

"It's a very old joke, Mulder. 'In the morning I'll be sober but you'll still be ugly,'" he quotes.

"Yeah! Right. Only you won't. You'll still be cute." Even drunk I can appreciate the taut muscles on his forearms as he drives, and the square cut of his jaw, lit to perfection by the midsummer moon.

"Cute?" He wrinkles up his forehead. "Nobody has ever called me cute and lived, Mulder."

"Hey, I'm drunk," I hold up my hands, "you just said you weren't gonna take any notice of me. Not that you ever do anyway."

He slams on the brakes, and for a moment I think he's going to make good on his threat so I cower in the seat, gibbering away to myself. When two brawny hands do not descend upon me, I glance up cautiously.

"Home, Mulder." He gestures to the street, and I look out of the window.

"My home?"

"Yes, Mulder, your home."

"But...I don't have any keys," I grin at him.

"What?" he frowns.

"In my jacket." I play with the door and succeed in unlocking it, opening it, and falling half out onto the street, still attached to the seat belt.

"Which is where?" He gets out and comes around to my side of the car, unfastens me and pulls me up.

"Dunno. Scully?" I look around. "Scully - where did you put my jacket?"

Skinner sighs and gives me a very cold look.

"Are you sure that you don't have them, Mulder?"

"Yeah, but hey, never mind, we could just break in. Huh? You've done that before haven't you? Hell, everyone else has! I'm the only one who hasn't. It'll be fun." I stagger towards the door and he stops me.

"I'm going to make sure that you don't have the keys," he says, propping me up against the car.

"You don't trust me," I pout, feeling hurt. He pats my trouser pockets, and pulls out various items, none of which is my door key. Then he pats my shirt, more in hope than in expectation I think.

"This is nice. We could play cops - you could frisk me all night!" I grin.

"I don't think so." He stands back, looking at me for a long moment, shaking his head. "All right. I'm not happy about this, but I don't see any other option. Get back in the car, Mulder. You're coming home with me."

"Oh goody!" I leer, although he wipes the smile off my face a few seconds later by giving me a huge shove in the chest that sends me shooting backwards into the car where I crack my head on the hand brake. "Ow." I say resentfully when he gets in. "OW!" I say louder when he takes no notice.

"Good," he mutters under his breath, setting off again.

"I'm tired, Walter. If I don't make any noise, and I don't sing," I look at him hopefully. "Can I just lie here." I move my head slightly, so that it's resting in his lap again. He glares down at me.

"If you don't move, don't sing, and don't...vomit," he shudders, "then yes. I'm just banking on you not remembering any of this in the morning. If you do, then hopefully you'll recall that by this point I'd say anything to shut you up."

"Okay." I hiccup happily, closing my eyes.

I must have passed out in that state of rapture, because the next thing I remember is being hauled into his apartment, dragged up a flight of stairs, and flung onto a bed. Then I feel his fingers tugging at my tie, and unbuttoning my shirt.

"This is nice," I smile.

"Go back to sleep." He starts unbuttoning my trousers. I'm too far gone to have any reaction in **that** department, but my mind doesn't know that and I start to blush anyway. "S' nice," I murmur, and am rewarded with a snort. He pushes me under the sheets of the spare bed, which is a nice big double. I pat it.

"Join me?" I suggest.

"I think not," he shakes his head, the amused look back in his eyes. "Try and get some sleep, Mulder."

"Okay," I chirrup, suddenly feeling wide-awake. I stare after him longingly as he goes.

I think maybe a couple of hours pass, and I must have fallen asleep. I wake up, disorientated and with a raging thirst, and wander along the corridor, until I find his bedroom.

"Sir? Are you awake? Sir, help!"

"Mulder? What is it? Are you all right?" he asks blearily, sitting up.

"Where's the bathroom, sir?" I trip over something, and fall face down on his bed.

"Mulder? What's the matter?"

He turns the light on, and he's only wearing his shorts, nothing on his torso. I wish I had more time to enjoy the sight, but instead, as I open my mouth to tell him what the problem is, a stream of vomit spurts out in one huge convulsive action all over him, and all over his bed.

"Oops," I mutter, trying to smile, with a stream of foul smelling goo running down my chin.

He closes his eyes for a long moment, then opens them again.

"Okay, Mulder. Let's get you cleaned up, shall we?" he says grimly, clearly putting himself on auto-pilot. He wipes some of the vomit off his chest, and gets out of the bed, hauling me up by the neck and shoving me along the corridor to the bathroom.

He turns on the shower, strips off my boxer shorts, and thrusts me headfirst under the cold water, making me yell.

"Stay there," he commands, and returns a moment later with another pair of boxer shorts and a tee shirt. He drags me out of the shower and wraps me in a towel. "Can you dry yourself?" he asks. I nod through chattering teeth, but the next minute I feel a cramp in my

stomach and just manage to fling myself in the direction of the lavatory in time, leaning over it and heaving my guts out.

"I'm gonna die," I moan.

"Yeah. I know that feeling. We've all been there," he chuckles sympathetically, crouching beside me and putting his hand on my back and moving it in comforting little circles.

I throw up another four or five times, but he sits beside me, making helpful noises until I'm through. Then he shoves me into the shower again, a warm one this time. When I'm done, he dries me off, puts the shorts and tee shirt on me, guides me back to my bedroom, and disappears to take a shower himself.

I wake up with a headache the size of Miami pounding in my skull.

"Oh shit," I whisper. The small glimmer of sunlight flickering around the edge of the drapes shoots with laser-like precision through my eyes, and straight into my brain like a knife. I close my eyes again and snuggle deeper under the sheets, placing my face against something nice and warm and...hairy. My eyes snap open - an action they really aren't equipped for today. My cheek is pressed against a large, solid chest. I move my head cautiously, and look up into a pair of dark, amused eyes.

"Oh shit," I repeat, flashes from the previous night coming back to me, and making me blush a deep shade of red.

"What do you remember, Mulder?" he asks, sitting up.

"Uh...I remember lying on top of a car," I begin uncertainly, grabbing the sheet, and holding it wrapped very tightly around my body.

"Anything after that?" He has a malicious look in his eyes.

"Losing my keys..."

"And then?"

"Being sick all over you and uh...propositioning you," I shudder closing my eyes.

"Several times," he states, nodding to himself.

"You're going to have to shoot me, sir. I can't live with the embarrassment," I groan, pulling a pillow over my head.

"Later, Mulder. First you're going to clean up," he grins, plucking the pillow off me. He gets out of the bed, and stretches.

I open one eye and glory in the sight for a moment. Long, golden legs, taut, tanned biceps, skin that is so smoothly perfect you just want to cover it in kisses. Shit. Why were in the same bed? What else happened last night?

"I'm going to get dressed - I'll lend you some sweats, so that you can do the same. You know where the shower is - there's a spare toothbrush in there too. I think you'll need it. When you've finished you can come downstairs for some breakfast."

He raps all of that out as if he's giving orders in his office, and not standing half-naked in a bedroom. I just nod, wondering what the hell happened last night.

By the time I appear in his kitchen forty-five minutes later, I'm feeling slightly better. The inside of my mouth has lost that fuzzy taste, although my head is still killing me. He gives me a glass of water and 2 extra strength Tylenol, but I can't face the toast he's made.

"Are you trying to kill me?" I mutter, swallowing down the tablets.

"No. Food will settle your stomach. I told you to drink down a few glasses of water last night to lessen your chances of a hangover this morning, but you wouldn't listen to me." He's dressed in gray sweats and a tight white tee shirt. He doesn't even look tired. Of course he wasn't drinking last night. I sigh resignedly, and crunch half-heartedly on the toast while he reads his paper.

"I have to know," I blurt at last. "My recollection of last night's events is...hazy. Um, after I propositioned you, did you...did we...hell..."

"Yes, Agent Mulder?" He puts down his paper, and glances at me over the top of his glasses.

"Don't do this to me, sir. Just tell me straight - why were in the same bed this morning?"

"You've clearly forgotten that you threw up all over my bed last night, Mulder. I had to sleep somewhere," he says.

"Oh. Right. Yeah. Sorry." Somehow that news makes me very depressed.

"What's the matter? Did you think I'd take advantage of someone who was so drunk that he couldn't think straight?" he asks.

"No! I mean, of course not. Uh, thanks. I probably didn't know what the hell I was saying," I blush furiously, remembering with a sudden vivid clarity some of what I said to him. Oh god, I'm never going to live this one down.

"Because I would never do that," he states firmly, looking offended. "I told you last night that I would ignore anything that you said while you were smashed."

He gets up and comes around to my side of the table, tilts my chin up, and looks into my eyes. "Of course, now that you're sober..." With one quick, sudden movement, his face dips down, and he presses his lips firmly against mine. I'm stunned for a moment, then my

mouth opens, and allows his questing tongue inside. When he finally draws back, I just sit there, open-mouthed in surprise. "Was that what you wanted, Mulder?" he asks, a faint smile curving around his lips.

"Uh, yes," I admit, and within seconds he's pulled me to my feet and wrapped me in his arms, his lips hard against my own, like a man possessed.

The song comes to an end, but he's put it on continuous replay so it starts up all over again.

"I could do this all night," I murmur, pressing my cheek against his and allowing him to sway me around the dance floor.

"We have all night," he chuckles, and it sounds deep and vibrant, echoing inside his chest.

"I love you," I say, before I can stop the words tumbling out. "Shit." I look up, suddenly scared. He's gazing at me, an expression of deep satisfaction in his eyes.

"I know that," he says softly. "It may have taken exactly a year to hear you say it, but I did know."

"How? I never..." I flush. I've never told him before, although he's told me. Several times.

"Little clues," he strokes my cheek tenderly with his finger. "The fact that you can't go a whole day without checking up on me in my office. The fact that the guy who told me uncompromisingly on our second date that he needed his space, spends almost every night in my bed, the way you watch me when you think I'm not looking - do I need to go on?"

"I didn't realize it was so obvious," I murmur. Then I pinch him.

"Ow. What was that for?" he asks, in surprise.

"Just to make sure you're still there. I thought..." I can't look at him as I say this, so I just bury my face in his shoulder, and we continue swaying in time to the music. "I thought that if you knew you'd disappear."

"Where would I go?" His voice sounds amused.

"I don't know. I thought you'd just vanish." I cling onto his solid flesh for dear life.

"I'm not going anywhere." His arms tighten around me.

"You picked me up, took me under your wing. I was a mess before that," I confide.

"And I had nothing until that night, a year ago." His fingers run softly over my back. "I had no idea you had such feelings for me until then."

"In vino veritas," I smile. "I couldn't have told you if I was sober. Were you very shocked?"

"No. Amused maybe," he moves his face, kisses me softly on the lips. "But somehow it didn't surprise me. What did surprise me was how much I liked the idea."

'I don't wanna, talk about it...' Rod croons sadly.

"You talk now," I murmur.

"Yes. Because of you," he replies. "I didn't want the same thing to happen with you as happened with Sharon. I had to trust that the world wouldn't come to an end if I put my feelings into words, and offered them up to the person I love to distraction."

"That's me? You love me to distraction?" I grin into his eyes.

"You're a very distracting person," he grins back. "At first, when you propositioned me I thought it was the the booze talking, but as the night wore on - well you seemed to have a one track mind. After I joined you in the bed, you looked so weary, like a lost soul. I wanted to claim you, and I wanted to hold you, so I did. I was scared you'd wake up, and know what a soft touch I really am."

"Not so soft..." I run my hands over his taut, toned body, and insinuate my leg between his, rubbing suggestively. He laughs out loud.

"And as I lay there smiling to myself about you finding me attractive, I knew that I felt the same way about you. And why not? Why the hell not?"

"Why not?" I repeat dreamily, tugging his sweater out from his chinos, running my fingers up underneath it.

"Fox..." he begins.

"Hush. There's nobody here. Imagine what it would be like to do it here, in this room. Come on, Walter," I pull him close again. "We can do it while we dance. You paid enough for this room after all. And as you said before - why the hell not?"

"But..."

"Hush." I put a finger over his mouth, and loosen his chinos, feeling his cock spring to life as I run my hand inside his pants. With one arm I keep his body close to mine, with the other I rub his erect penis. He moans and thrusts against me.

Rod is wailing in the background, and Walter's hands are on my butt, drawing me close to his groin. I sway around with him in my arms, my lips stealing kisses from him, my hand caressing him. His hands have moved inside my trousers, and he's clutching my bare butt, one finger slipping inside me. I suck a line of kisses along his neck, rubbing my own straining erection against his thigh. He's close to coming, and I'm on the edge. One more hard caress,

and I feel the warm liquid spurt against my hand. He finds one of his ever-ready handkerchiefs and wipes himself and me down.

"That was..."

"Wicked?" I smile. He smiles back, and pulls me close, grinding his thigh against my cock, rubbing me against him, until I moan my release. He laughs, and passes me the handkerchief.

"The old Deputy Director would have a heart attack if he could see us now," I joke, and he kisses the smile from my lips.

"How long..." he pauses, gazes into my eyes, and clears his throat. "How long have you known? That you loved me that is?"

So, maybe he does need some reassurance. He's only human after all.

"I knew the minute you first danced with me, in this room, a year ago today, with this music playing in the background. I may have been smashed, but there was a moment when I just knew. A moment I'll never forget," I press my cheek against his, remembering. "How about you?" I ask.

He smiles at me tenderly. "It was exactly that same time for me too," he whispers in my ear. "That's why I had to bring you back here. That moment in time, this place, this music. It's engraved on my heart. I knew it was important even then."

'If I stay here just a little bit longer, if I stay here won't you listen, to my heart...'

The words of our song unite us in our new moment. Our bodies, our hearts, our souls are joined in our anniversary dance. There's just the two of us, and the music in that huge room, with the scent of jasmine and of him mingling in the warm night air. His big strong arms are wrapped around my body, my fingers run softly over his naked head, caressing the bare flesh lightly. Our bodies are pressed so close that you can't see daylight between us. It's our dance, and we're perfectly matched, step for step, two people in love.

The End.

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