

Timelines by Xanthe

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Scully could feel herself falling, the ground coming up to meet her too fast, her gun jolted out of her hand, slipping away...and then the man was on her, his fist raised. She slid along the ground, her outstretched hand reaching for the gun, her fingers finding it, trying to bring it up, trying to protect herself...

"Ssh, Will! You don't want to wake your mom."

Dana yawned, and opened her eyes, closed them again, opened them. Something felt strange. Where was she? She had a sense of dislocation...of time being ripped apart to let her through. She felt...strange. She got up, wondering at the unfamiliar night attire. She felt slightly fatter, her hair was longer than she was used to, and she smoothed it back, out of her eyes. Where was she? The room was in darkness, but it was daylight outside. The curtains were still drawn. She looked at the clock. 9 a.m. She was late for work. Stifling a yawn, she crossed over to the door, wondering if this was her bedroom. It felt familiar, yet not quite right. She opened the door, and tripped over something cold and plastic. Frowning she picked it up. A toy duck? She went down a flight of stairs, wondering if this was the right direction for the kitchen. It was a big house. She could smell coffee. She pushed open a door, looked in, frowned.

"Oh you're up." He smiled apologetically. "I was trying to keep him quiet. I wanted you to have more of a lie-in, honey." She stared at him, and then at the child. A boy, about 3, with thick dark hair and blue eyes, a serious frown of concentration on his face and a batman cloak around his shoulders.

"Will..." she began, knowing that this was the child's name, and yet not understanding.

"Daddy says I can't go out without my shoes on, but I can, can't I, Mom?" Will came running up to her, flinging two sticky hands around her legs.

"I..." Will? Mom? She found herself picking the child up, kissing his cheek. He was beautiful, adorable...her's?

"Let me get you some breakfast. You still look tired. I wish you'd stay in bed, sweetheart." He looked so anxious, so caring, so...different.

"What are you doing here?" she asked him puzzled. "What am I doing here? Shouldn't we be at work? I don't..."

"Dana, it's okay. You're on some special medication, we knew there might be side effects. It's the weekend remember? We don't need to be anywhere but home which is a good thing

- you look so tired. Will, come here."

"No!" Will clung to her, his baby breath sweet against her cheek.

"I said, come here." A stern tone, but laughing, loving eyes. Will pouted, and reached out his arms to be swung from his mother to his father.

"Daddy, Daddy, Daddy..." Will kissed his father on the cheek, leaving a sticky red mark. "Will you play with me, Daddy?"

"Yes, when I've made your mom some breakfast. Now why don't you run along."

"Want to be carried." Will wound his hands around his father's neck and he sighed.

"Okay. But you are getting too heavy for this, batman."

Dana sat down on a stool, watching as her...husband (?) carried her son (?) around the kitchen, pouring her some coffee, buttering her some toast, smiling at her, bending down to kiss her cheek.

"Are you sure it's worth this?" he asked. "I mean...we've got Will. Maybe that's enough. I'm not getting any younger!"

"We've been through this," she said without thinking. When? She wondered. What on earth was going on? What was she talking about? "I had brothers and a sister and I don't want Will to be an only child."

"But he's a miracle in himself. Aren't you, Batman?" He grinned and kissed his son's dark hair. "How many miracles do we need in our lives?"

"I want another baby," she said. Another baby? A minute ago she had been astonished to find she had one. And with this man? Really?

"Well, I'm not saying that the making them isn't nice." He smiled at her over their son's head. "But I'm just worried about the medical process, Dana."

"Don't worry. You worry too much."

"I love you," he said, sincerely. "Without you there was nothing in my life. With you...you're everything to me, you and Will."

"I love you too." She stared at him, wondering at her words. When had she come to say such words so easily? "But...I don't understand...something's not right." She passed a hand across her eyes, and swayed. Within seconds he had deposited Will on the floor, and was at her side.

"Come on. Sit down. I knew those damn tablets weren't any good for you." He swung her up into his arms, and took her over to the couch, laying her down gently.

"What's going on?" She asked, staring at him. "Why am I here? Where is here? Why are you here, sir?"

He frowned at her. "It's been a long time since you called me that." He crouched on the floor beside her, gently flicking her long hair out of her eyes.

"I've forgotten...what is this? Are we married?" She asked.

"Yes, we're married. We have a son. Dana, you're scaring me."

"Walter?" She reached out a hand to touch his worried face. He looked a little older, not much but a little. And so much happier. Not grumpy at all, or surly or remote or distant. How had she ever thought him those things? He was her dear, kind, tender, sweet-natured husband, who helped around the house and was the most brilliant father in the whole world, as good as her own dad had been to her, and that was saying something.

"Hey. Am I interrupting? Door was open." A man walked in. Tall, disheveled, unkempt. "Hey, sport!"

"Uncle Mulder!" Will ran screaming with joy into the man's arms. He was scooped up, and thrown into the air. Walter frowned, and Dana placed a warning hand on his arm.

"Hello, Mulder. You're back in town again then?" She got up, feeling her head clear, and went to kiss him.

"Yeah. Can't keep me away." Mulder turned Will upside down, and held onto him by the ankles. "William Sergei Skinner, I swear you've grown!"

"Kids do that." Walter said, coming up and tickling Will's bare midriff. Will screeched. "And it's been a long time, Mulder. What brings you back?"

"You know." Mulder shrugged. "I'm onto something I think."

"You're always onto something." Walter remarked with a sigh.

"Scully are you okay? You're looking pretty pale." Mulder stared at her and she blushed.

"I'm fine. Just some treatment..."

"Treatment?" Mulder looked anxiously at Skinner. "What for? You're not ill are you, Scully?"

"No. It's just that I, we, want another baby." Dana reached for Walter's hand, and clung onto it. He wrapped his arm around her neck and kissed her hair.

"Oh. I see."

She saw the guilt cross his hazel eyes. The uncomfortable knowledge that he indirectly carried some small portion of the blame for her difficulty having children. She had been told that she could never have them after her abduction, but a new treatment had become available, and she had talked Walter into it, despite his protests about being too old. She was glad that she had. Will was perfect, everything she could have wanted. Was she greedy to want more?

"What can we do for you?" She asked Mulder, pouring him some coffee. He downed it gratefully in one gulp. Walter sighed, going to open the fridge and get their visitor some food. Why was Mulder incapable of taking care of himself and why did Dana always cluck around like a mother hen whenever the man dropped by. Or why did he, for that matter? What was it about Mulder that everybody took care of him?

"Nothing. Maybe it's what I can do for you." Mulder smiled.

"What do you mean?" Walter asked.

"Well you look like you could do with a break. Both of you. Why don't I take care of the little guy today while you two just chill out?"

"I don't know." Walter frowned.

"Yes please!" Dana smiled. Mulder was good with Will, in short doses at least. She could see that longer term he might end up dragging her son off on silly missions, but for a day he was probably safe.

"Come on, Walter." Mulder smiled at him reassuringly. "I promise I won't tell him anything about how mean you were to me when we used to work together."

"Unlike last time. Poor kid thought I was a monster!" Walter exclaimed.

"I was only teasing." Mulder grinned.

"And no aliens or mutant stories either." Walter warned. "You have no idea what it's like getting up five times in the night to a child who thinks there are mutants living in the toilet."

"No, sir! I promise." Mulder swung Will round by his ankles, and Will gurgled with helpless laughter.

Scully sat on the bed, relieved to have some time to think. Mulder had taken Will off their hands, and Walter had insisted that she return to their room for some rest.

"I'm not an invalid," she protested.

"No. But you did have a funny turn back there. I'm thinking of calling the doctor."

"No need." She had done as she was told, lying back on the bed, trying to work things out. Was it just the medication making her woozy, or something else? Shouldn't she be somewhere else? Somewhere else? What was the last thing she remembered? That was it, a man, with a gun...no, she had the gun, the man raised his fist, he was about to hurt her. Did she find the gun in time before he hurt her. Did she shoot him? When had all this taken place?

"Dana." Walter put his head around the door, and she was jolted back to... to where? Or when? The present? Or a hallucination? Since when had she had fantasies about setting up home with her boss? "How you feeling?"

"Fine. Come and join me." She patted the bed, gazing at him. She didn't recall ever having seen him dressed so casually before. No glasses, or starched suit. Instead, a pair of faded jeans, a checked shirt. Just a regular guy, her husband, not her boss any more. Since when?

"Tell me about us," she asked.

"What about us?" He sat down next to her, then rearranged them both, sitting behind her, his back against the headboard of the bed, cradling her body between his thighs, bending his knees so that their legs were entwined, nestling her head against his chest, his arms lying lightly along her arms.

"Tell me the story again...about how we got to together." She knew this story, it was in her mind somewhere, but lost, displaced...

"You know how we got together." He kissed her head.

"Yes, but tell me anyway. Please."

"Okay." He lay back, his fingers caressing her arms. "Well...I was working late and you came into my office and said that if I didn't go out for dinner with you, you'd resign..."

"I did what?" She looked up at him.

"Yeah, you were pretty insistent. You said you were fed up with us dancing around our emotions, and I had to make a choice. Dinner or I lost my best agent. Well, what was a guy to do?" He grinned at her, kissing her hair again.

"Take me back further. Where was Mulder?" She asked. Walter frowned at her.

"You don't want me to go through all this? You do remember this, don't you, sweetheart?"

"Yes of course. But I just want to hear a story. To hear you speak. I like listening to you."

"I'm better than I was!" He said defensively. "I talk more with you than I ever did with Sharon."

"I wasn't criticising." She lay back against his broad chest, feeling secure and loved. "Please, Walter. For me." It felt strange, saying his name like this, in this intimate setting. Their bedroom, where they had made their child.

"Okay. But I don't want you getting upset. It all turned out alright, didn't it?" A trace of anxiety, of insecurity in his voice.

"Yes. Of course. Go on."

"Right. Well, I suppose we should go back to the hospital."

"No. Before. The man who... the man who attacked me?" She urged him softly. Had the man attacked her, or had she shot him?

"I don't like remembering you like that. What he did to you."

"Please, Walter." She squeezed his arm.

"Alright." A deep breath. "You were working on something with Mulder, some man who might have had information about his sister. You were chasing him. Mulder was a long way behind. I can't remember why now. You caught up with the guy, but he knocked you down. You reached for your gun, but it was too late. He...he..." Walter hesitated, trembling. "He hurt you. He hit you." Walter's arms flexed around her chest, drawing her close and tight, protecting her. "When Mulder caught up you were unconscious. You went to hospital. I visited you every day. I pretended it was duty, one of my agents, all that crap but it was a lie of course. I was in love with you even then, although I couldn't admit it. You were so sick. Mulder was furious. He took himself off after that guy and tracked him down. I'm not sure what he did to him. Something pretty bad I guess. We know Mulder's got a temper, and I'm not the only one who thought you were something special."

"Mulder wasn't in love with me!" She protested, looking up.

"Wasn't he?" Walter looked at her seriously, and she noticed how dark and sad his eyes were. "Isn't he still, just a little bit?"

"I don't know." She shook her head. "Go on."

"Anyway, Mulder got some information out of this guy, something about his sister. He took off half-way around the world and next thing we know he's been reported dead."

"Dead?" She looked up, her heart in her mouth.

"Yes. You were distraught. And it didn't help your recovery. I had to talk you back into living. I was pretty upset myself. I may not show it, but we all know I've got a soft spot for Mulder."

"Yes." She gripped his hand, squeezed it. "I'm glad."

"Anyway, I finally managed to motivate you into getting back on your feet through a combination of sweet talking and hard talking. You came back to work, you even worked on the X Files for a bit, but it wasn't the same. So I gave you some special assignments. You liked them, and I looked forward to working more closely with you. After a while we were meeting up all the time, ostensibly to talk about work, for you to give me reports, but really because we liked being together. After Mulder's "death" I found myself talking to you in a way I never managed with Sharon. I only forced myself to do that because I wanted to help you, and you responded. We became close. Then finally you asked me out. Which was a good thing. I was too shy to do any asking!" He smiled softly, and she reached up to touch his face, tracing her finger over his lips. "We made love for the first time that evening." "On a first date!" She protested, grinning.

"We weren't exactly strangers. Or kids." He grinned back. "We fell head over heels in love and then...and then Mulder came back from the dead. One year later." "Oh." She found herself trembling in his arms, and he soothed her, wrapping her tighter in his warm embrace.

"He was...different. Bitter maybe, more manic, more obsessed. He wouldn't come back to work at the FBI. He wanted to be on the outside. He felt betrayed - oh not by us, by the famous "them". He had a rough time of it during that year away. We were his only friends. He became a kind of maverick, living hand to mouth, taking himself off on whatever quest he wanted to pursue, making a name for himself, becoming a minor celebrity in a way, I suppose. The weird guy they trot out for interviews whenever someone reports seeing an alien, or a mutant or whatever. We got married. He was our best man." "He was?" She craned her neck to stare at him.

"Yeah. You asked me to do that for him." "But I never asked you to give him money," she whispered softly.

"What?"

"I saw you. Downstairs. After you sent me off up here. I saw you writing him the cheque. How often do you do that?" She asked.

"Sometimes." Walter shrugged. "He's run through all his inheritance, and the money he gets from interviews and the books and stuff just goes with the way he pursues things. He doesn't have a job, Dana. And it's not as if he spends the money on himself. He wouldn't accept it from me if he did. It's always for the work, to keep the work going. I swear he'd use every cent for the goddamned work rather than eat. Someone has to take care of him." "And it's always us." She smiled. "I don't mind, Walter. I'm pleased. We have enough."

"Anyway...that was about, what, five years ago? Five or six years since that accident that landed you in hospital." "I see." She closed her eyes, snuggling against him. "Walter, could we make love?" She asked suddenly. His fingers were like a breeze along her arm. If this were a fantasy she should at least make the most of it, she rationalised to herself, and he felt so good under her. She could feel the hard outline of his muscles, and she knew that she wanted him.

"Are you sure you're feeling okay?" He asked.

"Because I want to make love? Are you implying that makes me unwell?" She grinned.

"You know what I mean." He nestled down beside her, his lips against her neck, sucking her earlobes softly. She felt a shiver of desire. Making love to her boss, to her husband. What would it feel like? What did his body look like? She should know, and yet...yet she didn't. Some part of her that she could only access in small pieces knew. It whispered that she loved this man, that she trusted him, that she desired him, and she found that all this was true.

She turned over and kissed his lips, firmly, with her own, reaching up to undo his shirt, pushing it back from his shoulders. His body was hard and muscular - he was handsome, sexy. She felt a quiver of sensation. She wanted him. She wanted him inside her. She wanted to see him naked, to feel his lips on her skin, his hands on her breasts. Surprised by herself, she pulled him close, undoing his jeans, reaching inside to find his cock, making it harden as she caressed it, drawing him close to her. His hands were now on her back, smoothing away the long tee-shirt she wore to bed until she lay naked on top of him. Her stomach was more rounded than she remembered it, her breasts fuller. His lips found her nipples and he nuzzled at them, roving from one to the other. She groaned with pleasure, and he rolled them both over, pressing her underneath him, his tongue tasting her body, languidly licking in long strokes along her neck, over her breasts, beneath them, down her abdomen, slowly, sensuously. Finally his tongue ended up between her legs, and she opened herself up, sighing and moaning with pleasure.

"In me..." she murmured, and his tongue was removed to be replaced by his hard cock. She reached up her arms to caress the hair on his chest, his nipples, staring into his eyes, finding a part of herself that did not think this strange, that thought it the most natural thing in the world, that she would want this man's body inside her own, his hands on her breasts, his children growing within her. "I love you," she whispered, knowing it was true.

"I love you too." And she saw in his eyes that he did, before the pleasure of their lovemaking took her away to a place too intense for thought.

Darkness. She was running, chasing, then she fell, her gun crashing to the ground. The man was upon her, she had to find the gun, to raise it, to aim, to protect herself...

"Who's there?"

It was dark. She glanced at the clock. 9am. Why was she still sleeping? She got up, and tripped over an empty pizza box and several discarded cans of coke. Damn, but why was this place always such a mess?

"Hello, baby. Miss me?" He was leaning in the doorway, covered in dirt and blood, and with a ridiculous grin on his face.

"Oh thank god! I was so worried when you didn't come back. Why do you do this to me? Why?" She bashed him on the arm and then led him back into the other room, opening the curtains to let in the daylight.

"She cares." He made a face.

"You know damn well that I care!" She got out her medical kit, and sat him down, frowning at him, and he laughed at her.

"Don't be angry, Sculls. Please." The little boy lost look. Her tender fingers found the wound on his forehead, and she faltered, swaying slightly.

"Where am I?" She asked, turning to stare at the bare room with its debris on the floor.

"No, that's my line. I'm the one who's been hit over the head," he smirked.

"I'm sorry." She passed a hand over her eyes. "I'm tired. You've been gone so long. I didn't sleep."

"You shouldn't worry so much, Scully." He pulled her close, wrapped a hand around her waist, drew her onto his lap, and kissed her softly on the lips. She clung to him like a child, overwhelmed by emotions. Love, worry, fear, anger, reproach. Why was life with him like being on a rollercoaster?

"Dana," she murmured. "Is it too much to ask my own boyfriend to call me by my first name?"

"Only so long as you promise never to call me by mine!" he grinned.

"Fox." She taunted. "I'll call you Fox if you call me Scully."

"Threatening an injured man? You are a monster, Dana Scully." He grappled her to the floor, and sat astride her, bending over her to kiss her lips. She found herself falling into that hypnotic hazel gaze.

"No." She turned away from his questing lips. "You're dirty and you smell!" She wrinkled up her nose. "Go and get washed and then I'll take a look at that cut on your head."

"Okay, doctor." He got up and went to the bathroom, while she set about clearing up the room. It was a tiny apartment, a small room. It didn't take long to clear, but even tidied it was a shabby mess. She heard him singing to himself in the shower, and smiled. She stopped for a moment to stare at herself in the mirror. She was thin - too thin and her hair was shorter than she remembered it, cut into a neat, businesslike crop. It made her look gamine, waifish. Her clothes were too big, hanging off her small frame. Had she slept in her clothes? She supposed she must have done.

"You haven't packed up." He appeared behind her, clad only in a thin towel. She let her gaze linger on his body, taking in the smooth chest, the long legs, the attractive face. He was a beautiful man, her boyfriend. Beautiful - was that the right word to use about a man? Yes. Beautiful.

"Ooh stop, Scully. You're making me blush!" he exclaimed, going over to the fridge and pulling out a bottle of juice, swigging it back in one go. "And we need to pack up. We're moving on again tomorrow, remember?"

"Remember? No...I'd forgotten." She stared at him dumbly, wondering what he was talking about.

"Moving day. The third of each month. So "they" don't catch up with us!" He grinned, and patted her head like a patronising elder brother. "Earth to Scully!"

"I guess I'm a bit preoccupied. You should have told me where you were going last night!" She twisted out from under his hand.

"I didn't want to tell you." He shrugged. "In case you tried to stop me."

"I wouldn't...where did you go?"

"To see an old friend."

"Who?" She felt a rising sense of panic.

"Walter Skinner."

"What?"

"Yeah, I know. I said I'd never go to him, but I did. He's been promoted, did you know that? He runs the whole show now."

"What?"

"Stop saying 'what', Scully. It ruins your sophisticated image, and we all know I'm only interested in you for your image." He leaned forward and kissed her open mouth, before disappearing into the other room, his towel dropping to the floor as he did so. He seemed unconcerned by his nakedness, prancing around, throwing some of their belongings into the open case on the floor.

"Talk to me, Mulder. Tell me about Skinner," she demanded.

"He's prepared to have me back. If I'll toe the line, work in psychological profiling."

"What about me?" she asked softly.

"An ex-con like you? No way he'd let you back in." Mulder gave her an infuriating grin.

"However if I go back, then he'll give me access to all the data on your case. We can get more evidence, clear your name..."

"NO! We tried all this before. You did all you could back then, Mulder. So did Skinner. The jury found me guilty..."

"It was a set-up!"

"I know. But you and Skinner worked yourself to the bone over it. You didn't succeed then, and you won't succeed now. I thought we agreed to put all this behind us!"

"We did. But you don't really like living like this. It doesn't bother me, but it bothers you."

"I..." She glanced around the tiny room. "I don't deny I'd like my job back, but I'm happy enough working in the morgue."

"With all the stiffs!" He grinned. "You always did keep strange company. Is that what you

see in me?" He asked. She allowed her gaze to travel down his body, and linger on his perfectly soft penis.

"Not yet. But I will." She advanced on him, and he ran away, laughing, pulling on his sweat pants and a tee shirt.

"We're expecting company, so you take your lascivious hands off me, Dana Scully!" He told her.

"Company?" She queried.

"Skinner. He'll be here soon. I knew you'd have a load of questions for him, so I asked him around."

"Oh god!" She looked around the place. It looked so sparse and dirty. Trust Mulder not to give her vital information about visitors. And this visitor of all people! A thought occurred to her. "Mulder - Skinner didn't give you that cut on the head." She frowned at him, wondering what he hadn't told her.

"Um...no, that was the other, other business." He wouldn't meet her eye, and she scowled, about to interrogate him further, when there was a knock at the door. Mulder sighed with relief, gave her his best "forgive me" smile, and went to answer it.

Skinner. He looked a lot older. No hair at all now, his eyes colder, more distant and remote than ever. She went to shake his hand, and he looked straight through her, as if he did not really see her, as if he did not want to.

"Ms Scully." He nodded. She almost flinched at the formality of the address.

"Sir." She gestured him to a seat. He looked all closed up, like someone who never talked to anyone he liked or cared about or trusted.

"You don't work for me any more, Scully," he told her. "You don't have to address me as sir. It isn't appropriate."

"No. It's just...what do you want me to call you?" She asked.

"Walter if you like. Mr Skinner is a bit formal for someone I've known for close to 10 years."

"Alright." She took a deep breath, and sat down, fighting a wave of dizziness. "Then you must call me Dana."

"Dana." He rolled the name over with his tongue, as if he had wanted to use it for years, but not like this, not in these circumstances. His eyes were pained.

What was all this about? She did know, a part of her did, but some other part wasn't so sure. Mulder leaned against the wall, watching the proceedings. An observer, not a participator.

"Has Mulder told you about our conversation?" Skinner asked her.

"Yes." She nodded. "But..." she bit on her lip.

"You have your reservations?" Skinner stared over her shoulder.

"Yes."

"I can't give Mulder the X Files back." Skinner shrugged. "They're dead and buried. But I've always had great respect for his work. He's welcome to return to the fold."

"As what? Your own personal lackey?" She asked. He frowned.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that he'd be in the perfect position to do exactly what you want, no questions asked, because you know he's desperate. I won't sell out his integrity like that." She was surprised to find that she meant it, but she understood little of what she had just said. It was as if she was on auto-pilot, just watching from a great distance while someone else, an actress, said her lines.

"Very well. That seems clear." He got up to go. "I'm sorry, but I was under the mistaken impression that you wanted my help." He found the door, opened it, left without looking back.

"Scully!" Mulder turned on her. "Why did you do that?"

"To save you. You don't want to go back like this. Why did you even leave?" She asked.

"You know why!" He caught her up in his arms, and kissed her gently. "Because of what they did to you. Framing you over the murder of that guy, the one with information about Sam."

"I did kill him..."

"In self defense!"

"That's not what the witnesses said."

"They were paid off! Christ, he knocked you to the ground! If you hadn't found your gun in time, and shot him, who knows what he would have done to you? You were acting on instinct, not a cold blood desire to kill! God, if you'd hesitated, you might not even be here today. You know I couldn't stay at the FBI after you'd been sent to prison."

"It was only a short sentence. It could have been worse. My good record, mitigating circumstances..."

"Yes. I know." He kissed her again, and she found that she was trembling.

"You waited for me didn't you? You resigned, and you waited for me."

"Well yeah! I was outside the prison gates when they unlocked your cell. I visited you every time you'd let me. I used to fight with your mom for the privilege!" He grinned.

"I never knew you loved me until then." She found a memory. Him, waiting for her in his car. Running over on her release, gathering her up, kissing her lips, kissing her properly, like a lover.

"And I never stopped fighting for you, Scully. You know that."

"But you're happy now, being one of the Lone Gunmen aren't you? I mean, I know we don't have much money, but we get by don't we?" She said. "You get to follow up all the things you want to without the Bureau breathing down your neck."

"And without the help that the badge gave me as well!" He sighed.

"Yes, but still. We're okay aren't we?" She asked, anxiously. "I don't want you being Walter Skinner's puppet, Mulder! You're worth more than that."

"He's not so bad. He was on our side remember? He did his best to get your conviction

overtaken, just like me." Mulder told her.

"I know. But he's so remote, so cold. He scares me." She shivered. "I think we're better off as we are, Mulder. Unless you really want to go back. I won't stop you if you do."

"No. I don't want to. I just thought it might be worth a try. For you."

"No." She stopped him saying anything more by pressing her body against his, tiptoeing a little to find his lips with her own, and opening his mouth with her tongue. "I missed you last night," she whispered. He smiled, grabbing her by the waist, and wrestling her onto the couch, while she laughed. He tickled her armpits, and she squealed.

"Ssh!" He put his finger over her mouth. "You'll wake Frohike."

"Frohike?" She looked around, noticing the closed door leading to another room for the first time.

"Yeah. He lives with us remember?"

"He does?" She was astonished.

"Yeah. What planet are you on today, Scully? And can I join you?" He leered at her in an unbecoming way, and she made a face.

"Only if you get your trousers off!" she smiled.

"The pantless planet? Is that it? I like the sound of that one!"

He pushed down his pants and tugged his shirt off, then turned his attention to her clothing, unwrapping her like a parcel, his long fingers playing her like a musical instrument, caressing a patch on her inner thigh, behind her ears, her nipples, all the places he knew she liked to be touched. Like making love by numbers.

"Better be quick!" He jerked his head in the direction of Frohike's room, and grinned. She grabbed his hair in her hands, and pulled him down on top of her, surprised to find that the thought of being interrupted turned her on, made her want him all the more in this snatched, furtive way.

"You great hunk of a guy." She whispered in his ear, caressing his quickly hardening cock.

"You turn me on. I want to feel you hard, I want to..." she murmured on, loving the little sounds he made. She had soon worked out that the quickest way to arouse him was to talk to him like this. It made him go all gooey, and it amused her anyway. She felt a sense of power, being able to turn this brilliant, gorgeous man from a paranoid, obsessed bundle of energy into panting, eager clay in her hands, just by whispering a few words. He was soon hard, and she didn't waste any more time, putting her legs around his back, drawing him into her, deep and satisfying, and stifling a laugh as they both orgasmed together whilst trying not to wake the sleeping Frohike.

"I love you, Mulder." She whispered into his ear.

"I love you too, Scul...Dana!" he grinned.

Darkness.

"Where am I?" she called. Nobody answered. She stared at herself, watching as she fell, her outstretched hand reaching for the gun, finding it, trying to pull it around, to aim it. Then the scene froze.

"Why was I shown this?" she asked. "Why?"

"Two outcomes." A voice replied. "Which one do you want, Dana? You have a decision to make."

"I can't make that decision!" She protested.

"Why not? Every action has a consequence, Dana, but some are more serious than others. This act is the most important of your life. It changes your life, and you have to choose."

"But - it isn't just my life it changes. It's theirs too!" She protested. "Can I condemn either of them to loneliness? I can't make that choice. I can't! I care about them both too much."

"But you can only have one of them. Which one, Dana?" The voice was insistent in the darkness.

"No. I won't make that choice. I'd rather die."

"That isn't an option, Dana. And you mustn't think of them. They are incidental to this equation. You do not know whether in ten years time your lives change again. One of them could find a soulmate, one of them could be knocked down by a car and die...happiness or unhappiness can be just around the corner. I don't give you guarantees. Just a choice. And it has to be about you, not about them. About what you want most."

"I need time." She was lost, spinning in the darkness.

"You don't have time. You'll have just one split second to decide, and you must decide on instinct alone. You won't remember this, Dana. I promise you that. There'll be no guilt."

She saw her own body rushing towards her and then she was inside it, her fingers reaching for the gun, trying to protect herself, the metal cold under her hand as she brought the gun up, aimed and...hesitated.

THE END

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