

When a Man Loves A Woman... by Xanthe

<http://www.xanthe.org/when-a-man-loves-a-woman/>

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Part One by Xanthe

The woman walked through the bar, ignoring the glances she was receiving from 99% of the male population. Even in a pair of loose, faded, blue jeans and a dull navy shirt with timberlands on her feet, she was strikingly attractive. Tall - taller than most men, with thick, wavy dark hair, wide hazel eyes and sultry, sensuous lips, she turned heads everywhere. If she noticed, she pretended not to care. She had an unconsciously masculine walk, full of nervous energy as she pushed her way through the maelstrom of bodies and found what she was looking for. Walter Skinner was seated on his own, in his usual corner. There was a blank expression on his face as he gazed into space, his beer untouched in front of him.

"Hi." She had a low, husky voice and she swung a chair round and straddled it, facing the A.D. Skinner came to with a start.

"What are you doing here?" he asked, angrily, noticing the jealous, antagonistic stares the other men in the bar were now giving him.

"I wanted a beer." She grinned. "A girl's entitled to enjoy herself after hours isn't she?"

"Not here." Skinner said firmly.

"Why not here? You drink here." She grinned again, turning around to beckon over some service.

"It's different for me." Skinner shrugged.

"I used to drink here. Before..." The woman's deep hazel eyes met his and his gaze dropped, trying not to look at her full breasts, which even the loose fabric of her shirt failed to hide.

"You never drank here. Even then." He coughed, taking a gulp from his beer bottle. "Do you even drink?"

"Occasionally. I just needed some company." The woman shrugged. "And I can't...that is, I don't feel safe going places like this alone any more. You're a big, strong guy. You'll protect me." She smirked ironically and he wasn't sure if she meant it as a joke.

"Don't," he growled, wishing she'd direct that intense gaze at someone else, anyone else but him.

"Don't what?" She gave him an innocent, mischievous look.

"Don't damn well flirt with me, Mulder!" Skinner spat. The woman shrugged.

"I'm sorry but to be honest...most people find it hard being around me since 'it' happened. Even mom and you'd think she'd be delighted. To finally have back a daughter to replace the unsatisfactory son."

"I'm sure you weren't unsatisfactory." Skinner allowed himself a slight smile. "She's just finding it hard to adjust. We all are."

Wasn't that the truth! It had been six months since Mulder had been abducted and subjected to some sort of drug that had changed the chemical composition of his body overnight. He had been transformed, apparently seamlessly and without side-effect, from a handsome, square-jawed, attractive man into a drop-dead gorgeous, anatomically correct woman in the space of 3 days. The doctors had even pronounced him/her capable of bearing children if she so chose.

"What about Scully? She still has time for you doesn't she?" Skinner asked, thanking a deity he didn't believe in that at least Scully hadn't been on the mission with Mulder that had led to his abduction. Small, red haired men with intense blue-eyed gazes spouting scientific data at him would have been one shock too many.

"Well, yeah." Mulder shrugged. "But something's changed in our relationship, sir. She's great and everything but I didn't realise how much we related to each other as, well, man and woman. Now, instead of all that jokey, male-female banter, I find myself wanting to go round to her apartment and hang out, chatting and scoffing chocolate. You know, girl's stuff and well, Scully has never exactly been that sort of girl!"

"The transformation has affected your personality?" Skinner was shocked. "I mean, I thought you were just you, stuck in a different body. Are you saying that you feel you're responding to people as a woman now?"

"Maybe." Mulder's face seemed suddenly very vulnerable. "I didn't expect it either, sir and it didn't happen immediately. It's been gradual. I feel less like I want to fight about everything and more like I want to sit down and talk!" she grinned. Skinner sighed.

"Well that seems like an improvement to me!" he murmured. Mulder laughed.

"Yeah. Right. I've been a pain in the butt. Looking back I find it hard to remember why I used to get so angry about everything. Not that I've changed completely - I still get pissed off. It's just that the anger's less physical I suppose, or I express it less physically." Mulder ignored the waiter's look of leery appreciation as he brought her the beer she'd ordered, his thigh brushing her shoulder as he passed by. "Why do people, no wait, men, keep bumping into me these days?" she asked Skinner, making a face. "Do I suddenly take up more space?"

"No. They just want to touch you for god's sake!" Skinner hissed in an agonised undertone. "Have you looked in the mirror recently, Agent Mulder?"

"Every morning. Praying for a miracle." Mulder said quietly and Skinner felt guilty. He couldn't imagine how he would feel if it had happened to him, although he was sure he would have made a far less attractive woman than Mulder. He wondered if the transformation would have given him back his hair. He'd forgotten what it was like to run fingers through your own hair. His had been quite dark - sometimes he forgot that he'd ever had hair it had been so long ago. And now he found himself staring at Mulder's hair. At first she'd cut it short, as it had been when she was a man, but now she had let it grow a little and it was cut off blunt at her jawline, accentuating her long, graceful neck. Skinner swallowed and tore his eyes away, fighting his feelings again for the hundredth time since this nightmare began. He noticed a couple of men eyeing Mulder up and tried not to bristle visibly.

"I think you should go," he said.

"Because I'm being ogled? It happens everywhere." Mulder shrugged. "If I let it bother me I wouldn't go out for god's sake. Does it make you feel uncomfortable?"

"Yes." Skinner told her frankly. "Yes it does. Doesn't it make you feel uncomfortable?"

"At first. Now...well, there are times when I enjoy it." She smiled.

"Why did you come here?" Skinner looked round, feeling as if he'd have to fight every man in this room to keep Mulder safe. It was a man's bar. There were no other women there at all, except for a small waifish barmaid and someone who was obviously so drunk they didn't care what sort of place they ended up unconscious in.

"To talk. I can't spend my whole life with Scully. She's been kind enough as it is. You wouldn't believe some of the things she's had to explain to me." Mulder blushed and lowered her attractive head in a gesture that Skinner found unbelievably arousing. "At first I thought, hey, great, no need to shave, but there are drawbacks, believe me. Monthly ones."

Skinner shuddered. "Please..." He said hoarsely, raising a hand. "There are some things a guy just doesn't want to know about."

"But that's just it." Mulder told him insistently, leaning closer, the open buttons at the top of her shirt revealing just the faintest bulge of her breasts. "All this is actually happening to me and I'm supposed not to talk about it? To deal with it quietly, without fuss?"

"You've got a shrink." Skinner offered helplessly. "You don't need to talk to me..."

"I'm touched." Mulder drew back, her face pained and Skinner felt guilty. "But the truth is I feel isolated. Nobody treats me the same. The other people at work don't know what to say to me. My next door neighbor thinks I'm my own sister and when I introduce myself to people I get all these wisecracks about "foxy ladies". I don't see why I should change my

name to fit in. I've had to change so many other things. My name, love it or loathe it," she made a face "was always at the core of my identity."

"So was your sex." Skinner pointed out brutally.

"Yes. I've lost the certainty of one. I'd like to keep the other." Mulder shrugged and swigged back her beer in an unconsciously masculine gesture.

"But...I'm not, that is...we were never exactly friends, Mulder." Skinner said. "Why pick me to chat to?"

"You saved my job for me when this first happened. You fought with people to let me keep the X Files. You've treated me with respect and courtesy when others have turned away. I've found I trust you, sir and I don't trust many people. And..." Mulder bit on her beautiful lower lip and then looked away.

"What?" Skinner stared at her, tracing invisible fingers over her mouth, along her collarbone, down to those full, enticing breasts.

"And..." Mulder's eyes met his. She didn't wear any make-up. She didn't dress like a woman, yet she had a sheer overwhelming sexual magnetism that no amount of baggy shirts could hide. "And I need to move on." She ran long fingers through her hair. "We haven't found who did this to me. We have no idea how to turn me back. I have to accept that I might be like this forever."

"Yes. It is a possibility." Skinner finished his beer and pulled his coat tighter around his body, like camouflage, like a shield, for protection.

"So I have to learn to live with it. And I am, bit by bit. But there are some things I have no experience of - some feelings that have taken me by surprise. I'm talking about sex here, sir!" Mulder's smile was forced and nervous.

"Maybe Scully would be a better person..." Skinner began. Mulder held a hand up.

"No. I'm talking about real experiences. And as I think I've made clear, my...outlook has changed somewhat since I was a man. I find myself thinking very much as a woman would. I respond, physically to certain...stimuli. I can't shirk this, sir. It won't go away and I have to come to terms with it. I've thought..." she paused and blushed, a faint tissue-pink hue that crept across her face and made the darkness of her eyes leap into focus. "I've thought about a one night stand. Going to some club, picking someone up."

"You shouldn't have much trouble." Skinner grunted, wanting another drink and yet not wanting to stay. Hating what he was having to listen to, but at the same time knowing that whatever he was going through wasn't anything compared to what Mulder had suffered.

"No. But the truth is I'm scared."

"Scared?" Skinner peered at his beautiful companion through the dark smokiness of the room.

"Well, how many 36 year old virgins looking like this do you suppose go out seeking sex?" Mulder told him. "And I suppose I am. A virgin I mean. At least technically. Can you imagine how much explaining I'd have to do to any potential partner? And if I didn't explain...well, how will I explain instead how jumpy I am, how little I know about my own body and what turns me on? That I don't know how I want to be touched or where."

Skinner was silent for a long time.

"Why are you telling me all this?" He asked, wretchedly at long last, raising his head to meet Mulder's still, intense, hazel-eyed gaze. It was a gaze a man could drown in.

"Guess." Mulder's eyes never left his.

"No!" Skinner got up. "No, Mulder. Don't do this to me. Don't...."

"Please don't go. I'm sorry." Mulder put a slim hand on his arm and he shook it off, racing for the door.

"Get off me, you jerk!" He was nearly at the door when he heard the shout and found himself turning. Mulder was taking a swing at a huge drunk who was pawing at her shirt.

"What's the matter, sweetheart!" The man leered, staggering slightly. "Why'd a pretty thing like you come in here if not for some fun!" Mulder's fist connected with the man's jaw with a popping sound and he fell back, lurching into some chairs. Mulder leaned over, clutching her fist to her chest and Skinner found that he had vaulted over two sets of tables to reach her. The drunk was back on his feet, looking angry. "You like it rough, sister?" He asked, an ugly smile on his face. "I can play it rough." And he got hold of Mulder's shirt and swung her up towards him. Even when he was a man, Mulder would have had trouble fighting someone this big. Skinner had no such worries. He matched the man in size and most of his bulk was sheer muscle, not flabby gut like his opponent. He pushed his hand into the man's face and slugged him in the stomach with his fist. For good measure, Mulder kned him in the groin as he went down. He didn't get up again.

"Thanks. But I don't damn well need rescuing! I can take care of myself. Scully never needs rescuing." Mulder rounded on him angrily.

"Scully's used to her capabilities. You, are not." Skinner told her pointedly, grabbing her by the arm and pulling her out of the bar. "Now I told you it was a bad idea for you to come here but you wouldn't damn well listen to me."

"And would you listen to me?" Mulder asked pointedly, trying to tear her arm away and failing as Skinner kept a tight grip on it. "Oh I see. If I'm not going to get pawed by that fat bastard, I get to be dragged off to your cave instead. Is that it?" She spat.

"Oh excuse me!" He let go of her arm as if stung. "I thought that was what you wanted! You're right, Mulder, you have become what you look like. You are as inexplicable to me as any other woman I've ever met!" And he stalked off down the street.

He hadn't handled it at all well. He knew that. Skinner was relieved to reach the safety of his apartment and pour himself a stiff drink, kicking off his shoes and sitting himself down, turning on some music, trying to unwind and forget about the stresses of the evening. The music blared out. "When a man loves a woman..." and he grunted sourly. If only life was that simple! But then, when had being around Fox Mulder ever been simple? He could still remember the curve of her breasts and the feel of her arm under his hand, her thigh touching his and he shivered. It's still Mulder in there, Walter, he told himself sternly. It's still that irritating, smart-ass, pain-in-the-butt agent who causes you the most trouble and work and gets you involved in cover-ups, conspiracies, lies and worse. Just because she is now as gorgeous as some goddamn supermodel does not give you the right to start behaving like a hormonal teenager. He got up, angry with himself and took a shower, changing into a pair of chinos and a navy polo neck, settling back on the couch with a book, trying to read, trying to even concentrate. There was a knock at the door and he groaned, longing for peace and quiet.

"Hi." He didn't recognise her at first. She was wearing a dress and he'd never seen her in anything but slacks before. "Scully made me buy this but I've never had the nerve to wear it." She grinned, edging into the room. She smelled delicious, like orange blossom, and she wore a faint smudge of lipstick on those wide, sensuous lips. "I keep thinking people will laugh and point to see a guy in a dress!" Mulder said. "I feel like a transvestite."

"You look...beautiful." Skinner said, meaning it. She always looked beautiful and Scully had excellent taste. The dress was not overtly sexy, just plain blue jersey cotton, loose and casual, but still, on Mulder it looked gorgeous.

"I thought I should make an effort. I thought maybe you didn't want me because I looked too...masculine." Mulder said.

"It's not a question of not wanting you." Skinner sighed, feeling his fingertips quiver with the disappointment of not being in contact with Mulder's skin when that was the only place in the world they wanted to be.

"Then what?" Mulder looked at him with wide, unaware eyes.

"Mulder, you're a subordinate, one who until 6 months ago I had a perfectly ordinary, if rather...combative working relationship with. Someone whose integrity and passion I've always admired but who I would never, ever have even contemplated taking to bed! Where does this lead us? We still have our jobs to go to in the morning. And also..." Skinner took a deep breath. "What happens if you do find a way back to being a man? What about that? How on earth will we cope with that?"

"I don't know. And right here and now I don't care. God, do I have to lay it on the line? The truth is....and I never in a million years thought I'd hear myself say this, I **fancy** you, Walter

Skinner. For the past few months, whenever we're in the same room together, I've found myself wanting to touch you. I've imagined kissing you...you have no idea what it's costing me to tell you all this. Don't think you're the only one having a hard time with this situation! But the truth is that I wasn't a gay man and I guess I'm not a gay woman either. And since I've been like this, you've reacted to me differently - I see in you things I never would have noticed as a man."

"Like what?" Skinner leaned back against the cool wall for support, watching Mulder's beautiful, troubled face.

"Like the fact that you're kind and despite the way you look and that tough image you cultivate, you're actually gentle. I need someone gentle for this, sir. I can't admit this to anyone else but I'm so scared..." Mulder's lip actually trembled and it was too much for Skinner. He had her in his arms within seconds. Mulder's bottom lip had always rather irritated him when Mulder had been male. He'd found it had a tendency to pout and quiver of its own accord in a silly fashion whenever its owner was in some sort of trouble and it was distracting. But on a woman...it was gorgeous, it was biteable, it was too enticing to resist. He pressed his lips firmly against it, too firmly, pushing Mulder's mouth open, shoving his tongue inside, his hands on her body.

"Whoa..." Mulder broke free of the embrace. "That's going just a bit too fast, sir," she said apologetically.

"I'm sorry. And look, you're going to have to stop calling me sir. It does nothing for me in the bedroom I'm afraid." He gave a wry smile. "How about Walter?"

"Walter. Alright." Mulder gave a nervous laugh. "God, who'd have thought we'd ever have this conversation! In which case you just have to call me Fox."

"Fox?" Skinner considered this. She didn't look like someone who'd be called Fox. She looked like someone who'd be called Monica or Isabella or anything but Fox. Yet she had already told him how much her name meant to her and he could hardly suggest calling her something different just because it made it easier for him. "Okay. Fox." He nodded. "Now let's start again. Can I get you a drink, Fox?" He ushered her over to the couch and she sat down, gracelessly, legs akimbo, as if she still had the camouflage of her trousers, then realising how suggestive she looked, she pulled her legs together and tucked them neatly underneath herself.

"Sometimes I think I'm never going to get used to this," she murmured. "And yes, I will have a drink. I need one I think." Skinner poured her a drink and brought it over. "You have no idea how much courage it took to get me here," she confided. "I hung around outside your door for half an hour just thinking about knocking."

"Oh, Muld...Fox." Skinner sighed, sitting down next to her. "Look, there are other guys out there. Guys who might suit you better. Younger guys. Maybe you're rushing into this."

"I want someone older, someone who definitely knows what they're doing. And I want someone I don't have to explain to. Someone I know and like and...find really attractive. And

most of all I want someone I can trust. You're all those things Walter and I don't want to wait. Why not now? If not now, then when?"

"You're sure?"

"Yes. Just don't expect me to be any good or anything!" Mulder grinned, her straight white teeth like pearls in those full lips.

Skinner rubbed his fingers gently along her arm and round her neck, brushing the hair aside lightly and she tensed, then relaxed, trying to smile, trying not to look as if she would get up and bolt at any second.

"Well let's go nice and slow then." Skinner leaned forward and tenderly touched his lips against her nose, her chin, down her neck to those elegant collarbones. "It's alright..." he murmured as she shifted beneath him, putting one awkward arm on his shoulder, her whole body stiff.

"I should do things for you. I should do things to you..." she mumbled. "Hey I know what sort of things guys like, I just never thought I'd actually end up having to do any of them!"

"Ssh." Skinner brushed his lips against hers. "Don't worry about doing anything. Just relax. Let me do it. Wait until you feel you want to, if you want to..." He licked softly at her earlobes and she lay back, going with it. He moved his face back to her lips again, touching his lightly against hers, like a whisper. She sighed and opened up, allowing him to press his tongue inside her mouth in an unhurried quest. The kiss became more passionate and she pressed her body against his then pulled away.

"Alright?" He stroked her arm continuously.

"Yes...it's just I'm getting all these sensations in places I never knew existed before. I'm not used to it!" She smiled, reaching for his head again, pulling him close, finding his lips with her own. He moved his fingers up to the front of her dress and trailed his fingertips with a light, gossamer touch over her breasts and she gasped, grabbing his sweater.

"That had an effect!" she said. "Wow, now I really understand why these are erogenous zones. You have no idea..." she told him frankly. He smiled and got hold of her hand, pulling her up.

"Shall we adjourn to the bedroom?" He asked.

"Okay." She gulped and he swung her up in his arms, grinning at her yelp of surprise as her feet lost contact with the floor.

"Alright, this is new, this is different. Nobody's ever done this to me before!" Mulder grabbed him round the neck and tried not to look down.

She was tall, but very slender and shapely and he had no trouble carrying her up the stairs and into his bedroom, placing her carefully on the bed and undoing the little buttons down

the front of her dress. She shivered as he pushed the fabric from her shoulders, revealing her white bra. He sat beside her on the bed, kissing her shoulders, his thumbs caressing the top of her breasts, pushing down into the bra, then tracing it round and down the back of her dress, undoing it. She sat quite still as he peeled her dress down to her waist, then eased the bra off her shoulders, away from her breasts, letting it fall to the floor. She felt revealed, self-conscious, and she wanted to hide this strange body that she had barely become accustomed to herself, turning from him slightly as he appreciatively took in the sight of those full breasts with the hard, rosy nipples.

"Don't be shy." He pulled her close, pressing his hands against her back, crushing her breasts against his chest, his lips rifling across her hair until she relaxed again, secure in the warm embrace. "We have all night. We can just do this all night if you want, just kiss and hug."

"No." She pulled back, took hold of his hands and put them on her breasts. "I want to feel what it's like. I want to know if it feels as good as it does in my head, when I've been imagining it. Make love to me... please..."

He gently rolled her nipples between his fingertips, then inched his head forwards and kissed each one lightly. She gave a little moan and pulled his head closer. "Harder, please..." she said and he took one in his mouth, pressing his tongue around it, sucking. "Oh shit..." she lay back, pulling him down with her so that he was on top of her, his mouth still hovering over her nipples, moving from one to the other, just teasing, soft and sensuous. He moved his hands down to the fabric of her dress which was bunched up around her waist and pushed it further down and she raised her hips to facilitate this. Then he hooked his thumbs inside her panties and pushed them down with the dress and she kicked the discarded clothing aside, off the bed and onto the floor.

Now he moved one of his hands lower, stoking her abdomen and she shivered beneath him, holding her breath.

"Tickles..." she confided. "I'm still a bit jumpy..."

"That's okay." He carried on soothing her, his fingers making circling motions on her stomach until she started to breathe normally again and then his fingers moved lower, finding the hair between her legs, stroking that, slipping his fingers inside her. She was wet, but still so tense, her body going quite still in his arms, the muscles clenching involuntarily. He moved his hand away, back up to her breasts until she relaxed again.

"This might take all night..." she apologised. "God, I never thought I'd be such a bad lay!" He looked up in surprise.

"Don't be silly." He nuzzled her ear. "Considering the circumstances you're doing just fine. And you are so, so beautiful." He let his gaze linger on her slim waist and endlessly long legs, the swell of her breasts and that devastatingly gorgeous face, with its eyes rendered even bigger by the sexual arousal they displayed. "Come here." He pulled her up and took off his sweater, placing her fingers on his chest, kissing her forehead as she tentatively ran them

through his chest hair, found his nipples, caressed them, pushed down towards his trousers and then stopped.

"Too scared. Wimping out." She confided and he laughed.

"Well you must be familiar with these." He said, placing her hand back on his stomach, undoing his chinos, pressing her hand down.

"Yeah, but I've never been on the receiving end of one before." She told him nervously. "And I've never exactly thought of them as objects of desire before either!" She could feel the hardness in his chinos and pushed more boldly, finding his erect cock and running her fingers over it. It felt strange from this angle. God knows she had jerked herself off more times than she cared to think of when she had been male, but this was so different. It wasn't her body, her cock, it was his. An unfamiliar cock, slightly wider than hers had been, a different shape, a different feel, a different smell. Everything was different. She drew back abruptly, shocked by the change in herself, the change in her desires and by the burning, throbbing between her legs, the raw, jangling arousal in her breasts that was so intense it set her teeth on edge. He watched her for a moment, then removed his chinos and briefs, sitting next to her, not moving. Her eyes went down to his massive erection and she managed a small smile.

"Well, at least I turn you on."

"Oh yes. You turn me on." He reached out a tender hand to her hair, massaging her scalp, waiting for her to make the next move and she felt a wave of gratitude. Who would have thought he'd be this nice, this gentle, this patient? She looked at his cock, remembering the force of an erection, the way it made you want to drive forward, have release, have that need instantly sated and she appreciated his patience even more.

"Come on." She reached out a tentative hand. "Come on, loverboy! Let's feel you inside me..." But her words were braver than she felt and he saw that, trailing his fingers up her legs, pushing them between her thighs again, harder than before, positioning his body over hers, his mouth once again at her breasts as his fingers thrust away, making her moan and twist against them. She found her legs went round his waist as if by instinct, the better to allow those questing fingers to find her clit and rub it, making her cry out. "Please..." she moaned incoherently. "Please, now, please...." He manoeuvred himself over her and gently disengaged his fingers, pausing to fumble for a condom, placing it over his hard cock with practised ease, then he lodged himself carefully in her entrance, easing himself into the warm, moist area between her thighs, pushing slowly. Her legs wrapped themselves more eagerly around his waist, trying to swallow him, to force him in more rapidly and he couldn't stop himself pushing hard, fast, deep into her. She let out a cry and he pulled back.

"Does this hurt? I'm sorry." He looked at her anxiously. "Do you want me to stop?"

"No. Just do it!" She said between gritted teeth. "Hurry." And he did as she asked, pushing deep into her, feeling a slight resistance, forcing on, ignoring the little whimpering cry she made as her legs encouraged his deeper thrusting, welcoming him in. They erupted into a

frenzy, a grinding, bucking ecstasy that took his breath away as he stared down on this stunning woman, her hazel eyes locked with his dark ones, her hands flailing at his chest, his around her thighs, drawing her closer until he could tell by the rhythmic, clenching spasms around his cock that she was reaching orgasm and he came at the same time, throwing back his head and taking in huge gulping breaths of air before gently laying down on top of her, his face against her beautiful, full breasts.

He felt her slender hands on his head, stroking his ears and her panting gradually gave way to slower, more easy breathing. She shifted uneasily as he drew out from her and lay down beside her, gathering her up and holding her close, nuzzling her hair.

"You were amazing," he whispered in her ear.

"I was crap. You did everything." She made a face at him. "You were something else, Walter! I don't think I could have chosen anyone better. You made this everything I wanted it to be." Her lips found his and she kissed him, relaxing in his warm embrace.

What now, though? He couldn't help thinking to himself. What on earth happens now?

"Why are you looking so pleased with yourself?" Scully asked when Mulder walked into the office with a beaming smile the next day. "What did you get up to last night and are you wearing a dress?"

"Yep!" Mulder grinned. Scully smiled back. It had taken her a long while to get used to this new Mulder but she liked the woman as much as she had liked the man. In essence the personality hadn't changed but there were subtle differences that sometimes bothered her. She had liked the flirty relationship she had with Mulder, the wisecracks and sexual innuendoes and she didn't feel comfortable trading those with this Amazonian woman. Yet Mulder had needed her now more than ever and she had done her best to be the sort of friend she would have hoped for if their circumstances had been reversed.

"Guess what?" Mulder sat down and placed her legs on her desk, crossing her shapely ankles and flicking a scrunched up piece of waste paper at the wall.

"What?" Scully grinned at her.

"I explored my sexuality last night."

"You didn't!" Scully was stunned. "You never told me you were thinking of doing that!"

"Well...I wasn't sure how to broach the subject." Mulder confessed. "But it had to happen sooner or later so I took my life in my hands!"

"And...if you don't mind me asking, Mulder. Was your partner male or female?" Scully asked tentatively. "I mean...I'm not exactly sure if your tastes have changed along with your body."

"Yeah." Mulder blushed. "They certainly have."

"It was a man then?"

"Yep." Mulder sighed. "A fabulously attractive guy who was just..." she broke off and sighed. "Well let's just say that having tried things from both sides of the fence, I think it's very possible that women have more fun than men!" She grinned.

"Are you going to tell me who and where and how or are you just going to sit there and smirk?" Scully asked, her curiosity killing her and a small pang of jealousy stabbing in her breast. She had sometimes wondered what it would be like to have a relationship with Mulder, old Mulder, not this huge goddess of a woman. Now she supposed she would never know.

"Well, I met him in a bar. He's a bit older than me and he was very understanding." Mulder said cautiously, certain that she could not confide everything, not even to Scully.

"You didn't try and tell him...?" Scully looked shocked.

"Don't be silly. I can't imagine something being more of a turn-off to your average male. Oh, by the way, 6 months ago I was a man. Do you want my cherry?"

"And it was really okay?"

"More than okay. A lot more than okay."

"Mulder you never cease to amaze me. Does this mean...that you're becoming more, reconciled to all this?" Scully asked her. Perhaps only she knew just how wretched Mulder had been in the first few weeks after the "incident", when her friend found herself having to adjust, having to explain herself wherever she went, having to re-establish herself in her job, hell, having to fight to keep her job. At the very moment when she was trying to cope with the huge changes in her body, she had also been forced to take on the faceless bureaucrats who questioned that she was who she said she was and, when confronted by the indisputable DNA evidence, made moves to oust her from the Bureau, urging her to take time away just when she needed something to cling to and a place to go to every day. Walter Skinner had been their unexpected ally in this battle, arguing that Mulder was fit and well and retained the same knowledge and memories. That she had been to Quantico, worked her way to her present position and should be treated no differently than any other agent, male or female.

"I don't know. I guess so. I suppose I knew I had to take the first steps towards moving on. Being more than just a body, finding my sexual identity in order to make it part of me again, something I can take for granted and stop worrying about." Mulder nodded. "Yes, Scully. It was a good step. A way forward. You know me - I always did want to open myself up to extreme possibilities. And they don't come much more extreme than this!"

Walter Skinner read the report and placed it back down on the desk. The words were Mulder's, they sounded just like every other report of Mulder's he had ever read, but the woman sitting in front of him was not Mulder, she was someone he had fallen in love with and someone who showed every indication of having fallen in love with him. He couldn't

fight these feelings any longer. They had been seeing each other secretly for 4 or 5 months now and he was growing more and more besotted with every passing day. It was becoming a struggle to keep these feelings from showing.

"Is the report okay, sir?" Scully asked anxiously.

"Yes. It's fine." Skinner stared distractedly at Mulder's long legs as she crossed them, itching her shoe against her shin. These two had always been famous within the FBI but now they were positively legendary. Two stunningly beautiful women who worked on bizarre and abnormal cases and about whom he worried and fretted whenever they were on a mission. It hadn't been so bad before, but their work was dangerous and even in these days of sexual equality, Skinner couldn't help feeling a pang of anxiety about two women going alone into such potentially hazardous areas. He knew he wasn't the only one. The other male agents all vied for the opportunity to accompany Mulder and Scully on missions when the need arose and he knew they all hoped they'd get lucky with one or the other of them. Enough time had passed to smooth out people's fascination with Mulder's change of sexual identity and she was too beautiful to be ignored for long. Rumours about her sex life abounded, not least because of her working partnership with Scully and he knew that many believed the two women to be having a relationship. If only they knew! In fact he was sure that it was a common wet dream at the Bureau, the idea of these mismatched women, so different in looks and temperament, the one towering majestically over the other, indulging in lesbian activity. It did nothing for him except maybe make him smile when he thought how totally and completely heterosexual Mulder was. The sex between them had just got better and better once Mulder had relaxed into the sensations she discovered in her new body. And of course, being Mulder, she had pursued this particular journey of discovery with all of her usual enthusiasm, engaging him in activities that were so pleasurable he was sure they should be illegal. She put her unique knowledge of what turned a man on to good use and was now an expert in the bedroom, exploring his body with her mouth and tongue and hands with a boldness and creativity that he had never known from any other partner. He had never felt this way about anyone, not even his ex-wife. Mulder was just...different.

And yet, of course, fundamentally Mulder was also still exactly the same. She still ran off on wild missions at a moment's notice, disappeared for days on end without telling anyone, sometimes not even telling Scully. There had still been many occasions, as of old, when he had paced around his office, ranting and raving at her for failing to follow procedure, putting herself and her partner in unnecessary danger, following her hunches, instincts and quests with a reckless disregard for everything, including her own life and his sanity. He fought back waves of jealousy whenever he saw her exchanging wisecracks with other men, unconsciously giving off signals that she wasn't even aware of, too familiar, too naïve. Yet he said nothing. Mulder was and always had been a free spirit. Any man that wanted to tie her down would lose her within days. He knew that and respected it. It was a part of her appeal and he was hopelessly in thrall to her.

"Could I talk to Agent Mulder alone, Agent Scully?" he said and Scully nodded, giving him a searching look. She had long ago discovered the identity of Mulder's secret lover although she hadn't told Mulder that. But it was obvious - she knew her partner too well to miss the way she responded whenever Skinner was around. The way she locked gazes with him in a

manner that spoke of frank and requited sexual desire. At first she had been shocked but as time went on she found them less of an odd couple. They complemented each other. Mulder was still obsessively driven by her pursuit of the "truth" and Skinner was a calming, steadying influence on the younger agent. There was something right about them. Skinner, so totally at ease with his unconscious, unstated and yet completely obvious masculinity was probably the only man in the world who could have coped with the ambiguity of Mulder's sexuality. Scully hoped their relationship would survive all the complications that were inherent in it.

She left the room, wondering what Skinner wanted to say to Mulder.

"Fox...I need to talk to you." Skinner took off his glasses and rubbed his eyes.

"Here? Now?" Mulder looked surprised. Skinner never initiated personal conversations at work. As she sat there, studying him, she noticed his discomfort, the way she noticed everything about him these days. How could she ever have been so blind to his obvious attractions for so long, she wondered? Even as a man, how could she never have noticed those broad shoulders, the hint of hard muscle under his shirt, the way he hid his feelings behind his glasses, behind a wall of silent, studied grumpiness to avoid showing too much of himself, of appearing vulnerable? And why were these things so obvious to her now? She had been in love as a man and now again as a woman and it was the same tormenting mix of giddy intoxication and fear of loss, yet different too, in ways too subtle for her to fully understand. But she knew that she did love him and had for many months.

"Yes. You know I've fallen in love with you. I've told you often enough. I want to end this pretense. There's no reason for it any more. I think we should, in effect, "come out", regardless of the effect on our careers. There's nothing in the FBI rules that says a man and a woman shouldn't have a relationship, even if they work together," he told her, leaning back in his chair with a nonchalance he did not feel.

"No. But still. We aren't just any man and woman." Mulder pointed out.

"No, but I want more than this hiding and skulking. I want to live with you." Skinner said forcefully.

"And what? We have babies, settle down in a house with a white picket fence and I bake cookies?" Mulder asked.

"Don't be stupid. You're still you. What century are you living in! I'm not asking you to become a housewife for god's sake!" Skinner exclaimed, exasperated in the way that only Mulder could make him.

"Good. Because I can't give up the X Files. Not even for you." Mulder told him. "As for moving in with you, going public, then I need to think about it. Give me time, please?" She smiled that devastating smile and he found himself nodding, agreeing with her as usual because he loved her so damn much.

Three days later he was awakened by the sound of a key in the lock and Mulder rushing up the stairs two at a time in the early hours of the morning.

"Walter...wake up. Wake up!" Mulder yelled in his ear, turning on his light and plonking herself on his bed.

"What? And what sort of damn time do you call this?" He asked, glancing at the clock which read 4.17.

"Walter, brace yourself," she said, reaching into her jeans pocket and pulling out a vial. "It's taken me nearly a year but finally I've found out who did this to me. And this is my way back." She put the vial on the bed between them. "That's right." She nodded at his look of disbelief. "In 3 days time I could be a man again. The question is...." She stared at him, reached out a hand to touch his trembling face. "The question is - do I want to be?"

THE END

Part Two by Xanthe

"So, what do you think I should do?" She asked, her hair falling into her eyes as she leaned forward over him, kissing his forehead softly.

"We've been through this. I can't tell you. It's your decision. You won't listen to me anyway. You never do. Never have done. Never will." He shrugged, running his hand along her back, twining it in her hair, pulling her down on top of him, feeling her breasts against his bare chest.

"You're entitled to an opinion though!" She protested. "You are my boyfriend."
"But I may not be for much longer," he said grimly, pushing her away when every nerve in his body wanted to hold her close and never let her go.

"What does that mean?" She sat up, silently, staring at him in the darkness, her hazel eyes luminous in their beauty, her lower lip pouting slightly.

"Don't do that thing with your lip." He growled, pulling on his boxer shorts.

"Tell me what you mean?" She stroked his stiff back softly.

"I mean that I don't fancy men and I certainly never ever fancied Mr Fox Mulder. Ms Fox Mulder is a different matter entirely of course." He made a face, unable to resist her insistent stroking, allowing her to pull him back down, her long arms trapping him on the bed, her face soft against his chest.

"So you don't love me for what I am. Only what I look like?" She asked. "I mean, if I were in an accident and disfigured, would you leave me?"

"Of course not!" He was shocked. "I love you."

"But it's the same thing!" She protested.

"No. It isn't. It's a completely different thing," he insisted.

"How is it? I'll look different, that's all," she said.

"No. Remember how we were before? We locked horns, like, I don't know, stags or something. We were men, doing all that territorial crap. Since you've been female our relationship has been different."

"Well, yeah!" She sucked on one of his nipples gently and he groaned, pushing her away then pulling her back again.

"I don't just mean that. I mean you. You told me that you weren't a gay man and if you use that vial to turn yourself back then you'll be a straight man again. You just won't want me any more. And apart from that..."

"Yes?" She ran her fingers through his chest hair and he shifted, his hands finding her breasts, unable to resist her.

"Apart from that...you turn me on!" Her hand snaked down to his shorts and reached inside.

"That's obvious," she murmured, stroking softly.

"But you wouldn't would you, if you were a man?" He whispered, groaning as her hand moved faster around his cock.

"I could still do this." She smiled.

"Yes..." He lay back, unable to think while she had such an intimate part of his anatomy so firmly in her control.

It had been 3 weeks since she had found the vial. 3 torturous weeks spent agonising over this decision. As Scully watched and waited, they played out every scenario over and over again until Skinner thought he would go insane. Then a few days after finding the vial, she had turned up on his doorstep with a load of bags.

"What's this?" He asked, bemused, staring at her.

"Well you did ask me to move in. Or had you forgotten?" she grinned.

"Of course not, but I...what about...I mean does this mean you've made your decision?" For one brief, heartbreaking second he thought that she had. That she had chosen him, irrevocably, turning her back on her past and deciding to remain as she was.

"No. I'm sorry, Walter. I haven't come to a decision." She put a gentle hand on his arm. "I just wanted you to know that you are my future. Whatever decision I come to. I can't imagine a world without you in it."

"Oh, Fox." He stared at her miserably, then, crushing back his feelings as usual, he picked up her bags and helped her into the apartment with them. He would have her on any terms of course. She did that to him. Made him feel helpless, lost in his love for her. Whatever she decided he knew he would support her, even if it broke his heart. "Fox, I can't have it hanging over me," he said. "You must make the decision - to stay or return to being male. You can't keep it as an option for years on end. That would kill me."

"I will decide." She pouted, making him want to groan and shout at her and kiss her at one and the same time. "But it's a big decision. I need time."

And who could deny her that? It **was** a big decision. When had he ever denied her anything anyway? She was his heart, his soul, his whole life. He loved her as he had never loved another being in his life before and he would have given himself to hellfire a hundred times over in order to save her from harm.

It was easy to become used to her sharing his apartment. She didn't exactly bring a woman's touch to his bachelor pad. Instead she left clothes where they fell, watched television late at night, never quite grasped the fact that food did not arrive in the fridge by magic, phoned Scully in the early hours of the morning when something occurred to her, bounced a ball around when she was bored and ran off on missions without so much as leaving a note. Skinner wasn't surprised. That was just the way she was and he never sought to change her. Equally she had a sharp intelligence, a great sense of humor and there wasn't a cold or malicious bone in her body. She pouted but she never sulked, got angry, frequently, but never subjected him to moody silences and she didn't always insist on talking about feelings endlessly. In fact she was happier talking about work, questioning him about cases other agents were working on, putting her own considerable skills to good use, finding new angles and approaches and of course there was her amazing prowess between the sheets. Skinner still couldn't believe the levels of sensory pleasure they had found since their initial, faltering coupling all those months ago. She was, in short, as near to being his ideal woman as could possibly exist. And now she was considering changing back. A part of him wanted to beg and plead and kneel at her feet, screaming "Don't leave me!" But he kept it tightly reined in. Emotional blackmail was the last thing she needed right now, but he couldn't share her optimism that their relationship could continue unchanged if she decided to become male again. He just could not imagine himself living such a life. What about his job? What about sex? He went cold at the very thought.

"If you love me, you love me. It's me inside." She said as they arrived at work the next day. "It'll still be me. I'll still know that trick with my tongue that turns you into a gibbering wreck!" She grinned.

"Ssh!" He looked around as he locked his car. She could be so indiscreet!

"How can love change?" She queried. "I mean, you either do or you don't. It doesn't matter what your body looks like."

"Oh please. Please, how many times must we cover the same ground?" He sighed and she

tucked her arm through his as they made their way to the elevator. Having decided not to skulk around, they were now openly accepted as a couple. Skinner had not yet been called into his superiors' offices to find out what the hell he thought he was playing at so he supposed that it was alright. However, would they be so understanding if she changed back?

She kissed his cheek and sauntered off down the corridor to her office and he watched her go. Why did he feel, bit by bit, that he was losing her?

When he got home that evening, she had made dinner. Not a very nice dinner admittedly, but not bad for one of her rare offerings which were usually purchased and the packaging hastily disposed of so he wouldn't guess. Then she took him to the bedroom and made love to him over and over again until he thought he would burst. When he awoke in the morning she was gone and he knew, immediately, that she had made her decision. On her pillow was a note.

Dear Walter,

I'm going away for three days. You can guess why. I know you don't really want me to do this, although you've been kind enough not to pressure me. But when you've been born to something and lived all your life as something, it's hard not to want it back. I miss so many things. My strength, my speed, my stubble! But more I miss who I was. Please wait for me. I don't want to lose you. This is my home, it's where I'll come back to. Be here for me.

All my love,

Fox.

Skinner crumpled the note in his hand and for the first time in 28 years, he cried.

"Hello." It was a voice he hadn't heard in a year, a face he hadn't seen in a year. Short hair, a well toned body, hard muscles. Mulder stood in the doorway. "Can I come in?" He asked. Skinner shrugged and opened the door wide.

"You have a key," he said. "You didn't need to knock." He held his breath as he watched Mulder enter the apartment. Mulder, Fox Mulder. Male. Totally male, not his beautiful female lover any more, transformed. Mulder turned to face him.

"I've been gone 3 days. No kiss?" He asked.

"What do you want from me?" Skinner folded his arms and leaned back against the wall, his posture defensive.

"I still love you. That hasn't changed." Mulder approached him cautiously, reaching up two masculine hands to remove his glasses, putting them down on the table and taking Skinner's face in his hands, caressing with his long, sensitive fingers.

"You have though. I'm too old for this!" Skinner drew back.

"You said something like that to me once before remember?" Mulder grinned, moving forwards again, angling his face close to Skinner's, kissing his lips. Skinner froze. "We've done this a thousand times." Mulder said. "It's no different."

"Yes it is." Skinner closed his eyes and tried to remember how it had felt to kiss her. Mulder pressed his lips against his again and he started, feeling the familiar electric surge of desire he had always felt.

"See." Mulder said. "It can still be good."

"I don't know you. I don't know this body." He protested, gesturing to Mulder's jeans and loose denim shirt.

"Well we have all the time in the world. Let's start right now." Mulder drew him close and wrapped his arms around him. Skinner struggled for a moment, then allowed the embrace, his emotions and his mind a mess. "Go with it, Walter." Mulder said. "For me. For what we had. Don't say no to it without trying."

"I..." He drowned in that hazel gaze as he had so many times before.

"Come on." Mulder took his arm and led him up the stairs to the bedroom.

He sat down in a dream as Mulder caressed his neck, kneeling behind him on the bed, their bed, where they had made love so often.

"Do you remember my first time?" Mulder whispered in Skinner's ear. He nodded, dumbly. "You were so kind, so good and gentle and sensitive. That was when I first knew I loved you, that it was more than just lust. Well, now...now it's my turn to be gentle. My turn to show you..." Mulder reached down and unbuttoned Skinner's shirt. Skinner could feel the roughness of the other man's cheek against his neck and it felt wrong! Every nerve and atom in his body told him that it felt wrong and yet...and yet it felt right as well. Mulder pulled the shirt away from him and he felt naked and exposed, telling himself not to be a fool, that Mulder had seen him like this before, but all the same, not this Mulder, not with this cropped hair and the hard, molded pectorals. As if sensing all this, Mulder ran his fingers across Skinner's chest, finding the nipples, tracing his fingers over them, pinching them lightly in the way he knew Skinner liked. Skinner sighed and leaned back, closing his eyes. Like this, he could imagine it was her doing this, her slender fingers on his body...

"No, Walter. No. Look at me." Mulder turned him round, took his face between his hands again, stared into his eyes. "It's me, you have to see me as I am. You can't be always looking back."

"Damn you! Don't lecture me." He tried to shrug Mulder's hands off and found them too strong. He was scared by the other man's strength, threatened by it and struck out. Mulder ducked backwards then hurled himself forward, grabbing Skinner by the waist, wrestling him down onto the bed and sitting astride him, pinning him there with his weight.

"Yes, it's different. But it can be good too." Mulder told him. "Now try it, damn you. Try it!" His hazel eyes were despairing. Skinner was breathing heavily, hating feeling trapped,

resenting the other man's physical strength. "Feeling powerless?" Mulder asked. "I felt like that sometimes. But you know, that feeling can be good as well. Knowing the other person is so strong, knowing they won't use that strength to hurt you ever, because they love you. Sometimes even feeling protected by it. It's nice if you can abandon yourself to it, stop fearing it. Try, Walter, for me." Mulder leaned forward and kissed him again and he pursed his lips, unyielding, but Mulder's tongue was insistent, opening his mouth, forcing himself inside and at last he gave in, accepting the kiss. Mulder still kept Skinner's arms pinned down beside his body, the pressure from his thighs and hands keeping Skinner motionless. Now he moved his hands, cautiously, allowing Skinner some freedom to move, his fingers finding Skinner's nipples and playing with them gently. Skinner reached up a tentative hand and caressed Mulder's back, exploring the unfamiliar musculature, tracing lines on it with his hand, stroking.

Mulder drew back, undoing his denim shirt and throwing it on the floor in a gesture that made Skinner laugh.

"What?" Mulder looked down on him.

"Same old, Fox. Clothes on the floor as usual." Skinner grunted. Mulder smiled.

"Same old Fox in so many other ways too." He said. He took hold of Skinner's hands and placed them on his flat chest. Skinner sighed and shook his head.

"You have no idea how much I'll miss what you had here," he said. "They were...perfect." "They were good, yeah!" Mulder grinned. "I was impressed by them. At first I couldn't stop playing with them!"

"You never told me that."

"No. Guess I was a bit embarrassed." Mulder laughed. "But my chest isn't so bad." He moved Skinner's fingers down to his nipples and Skinner tried to find some pleasure in this caress, to enjoy the sensation of the tiny tufts of hair under his fingers, the smaller nipples. Mulder put his head back and groaned and duly encouraged, Skinner continued the embrace, wishing that he could feel something himself, something inside his shorts, some evidence of life, of arousal. He wanted this to work as much as Mulder did, yet he didn't see how it could.

"What next?" He asked fearfully. "What do you want me to do to you?"

"Explore me..." Mulder guided his hand down to his pants. "What is it you said to me? 'You should be familiar with these?' Those were your words."

"And you said something along the lines that you'd never seen it as something to desire before." Skinner pointed out.

"And then you made me realise where I'd been going wrong!" Mulder smiled, pushing Skinner's hand down into his pants. Skinner found the semi-erect penis and stroked it softly, trying to imagine it was his own. In fact that was the only way he could contemplate going anywhere near it. He felt his muscles tense and bunch up and Mulder soothed him, leaning down to kiss his bare shoulders, to nibble at his earlobe and lick his neck. At last he started to relax, stroking his partner's cock more insistently now until he could feel it grow harder under his embrace.

"But what do we do with it?" he asked, scared of the answer.

"I'm not sure..." Mulder looked down on him. "We could...would you like to try me going inside you?"

"No way!" He froze again, then met Mulder's eyes.

"Trust me, Walter. Please. You always did before." Mulder said and his tone was heartrending. Skinner tried to nod.

"I want to...I'm scared..." He admitted. "I've never..."

"I know. But we have to be prepared to take risks. I took a risk when I came round here that day all those months ago. Nobody had ever been in me before either. I took a chance with you. Won't you take a chance with me? Or is it that you can't be vulnerable with anyone, not truly open yourself up to anyone? Not even to me."

"I..." he stared into Mulder's eyes and shuddered. "I never wanted to be made love to like that. That's all."

"Then how do you know whether you'd like it or not?" Mulder's fingers caressed his body, gently stroking him and he felt the beginnings of arousal.

"I suppose I don't," he admitted.

"It's not an ordeal, Walter." Mulder whispered softly. "It's a journey. Please be open to the possibilities."

"Alright, I will. I will try." Skinner nodded. "Be patient with me."

"Of course. Oh, Walter...I love you. Of course I'll be patient." Mulder reached down and undid his partner's pants, unbuckling his belt, unzipping his trousers and easing them down, slowly peeling his boxers away from his thighs. "This is a bit of a disappointment, Walter." He said, frowning down at Skinner's still unerect cock. "I'm not used to there being quite so little action going on down here!" He bent his head down and ran his tongue over the cock and it flickered into life, arcing a little.

"Perhaps I should...in you..." Skinner murmured. When Mulder had been female they had experimented on occasion, initially at Mulder's insistence but both finding some pleasure in it.

"With this? I don't think so." Mulder sighed, tutting over the still far too limp condition of his lover's penis. "Mine however, is ready and willing to go!" He fondled his cock for a moment, then turned Skinner over onto his front and ran practised hands over the other man's back. "Relax, sweetheart..." He massaged gently, finding some oil in the bedside drawer, rubbing it in, kissing Skinner's bare head, licking his neck. Skinner found his muscles loosening but they tensed up whenever Mulder went anywhere near his buttocks. "It's okay. I'm not going to rape you." Mulder laughed, inserting a finger inside his lover. "Now look, Walter, we've done this much before and you always liked it, so stop being silly." Mulder said firmly. Walter sighed and relaxed, remembering how much he had enjoyed it when the female Mulder had done this. Mulder pushed his fingers inside him, more insistently and he groaned. "I have to say, that when you entered me this way, as a woman, I quite liked it.

You might like it too." Mulder whispered. "It's worth trying once, isn't it?" He thrust his fingers and Walter moaned.

"That's not fair..." he complained. "I'm at a disadvantage with your fingers...there...." He gave himself up to the pleasure of it, opening himself up to those thrusting fingers and Mulder grinned. He found the condoms that Skinner kept next to the bed and put one on, making sure his partner was well lubricated by the oil he had used in the massage, then he gently placed the tip of his cock in his partner's opening. Skinner tensed and Mulder ran his fingers along his back.

"Ssh...it's alright. It's only me...ssh." He thrust himself in as carefully as he could, hearing Skinner's little moan - of pleasure? Of pain? He wasn't sure. He angled himself forward, enjoying the constricting feel of his lover's tight passage around his cock. Skinner moaned and bit the pillow. This was...painful, yes, but not as painful as he would have imagined and there was a peculiar pleasure to the sensation, a strange sense of being filled, possessed, owned almost. A feeling of helpless abandon. He winced as Mulder gathered speed, thrusting into him more quickly now but the oil lubricated his path and soon he found himself sliding backwards to meet the thrusts, enjoying the feel of the other man inside him, finally feeling his own cock harden. Mulder seemed to reach a frenzy and just when Skinner thought he couldn't take any more, that he was being pressed too hard, too far, too fast, Mulder came with a big sigh, easing himself out and throwing himself down on top of his prone lover, kissing his broad back, enveloping him in his arms.

"Alright...are you okay...?" he asked anxiously.

"Yes, fine. You'll be quite proud of me..." Skinner said. "Look..." He pulled Mulder's hand round to his cock and Mulder laughed.

"Well that's more like it, loverboy!" He grinned, angling his head down and taking the erect penis in his mouth, sucking it expertly in the way he knew his lover enjoyed until soon it was Skinner's turn to climax.

They lay there for a while, soaked in sweat and semen.

"So." Mulder faced his lover, taking him in his arms. "Did the earth move for you?" He asked with a grin.

"It was...an experience." Skinner admitted. "I don't know what else to say. It's all too new, too soon. I certainly didn't hate it."

"Good. You'll get used to it. I'm sure you will." Mulder smiled and Skinner closed his eyes.

Yes I will, he thought, but do I want to? And what about work? What happens there? What happens when you go back to being an insubordinate jerk and Scully starts fancying you again and your hormones reassert themselves and I have to find myself being jealous of women instead of other men? This can't work, Fox. There's just no way it can work.

Scully ran towards him and enveloped him an astonished hug.

"Mulder?" she queried. "Mulder???? You didn't tell me you'd decided."

"I didn't tell anyone," he admitted, shame-faced.

"And was it the right decision?" She asked. "Are you happy now?"

"I..." He paused. "Do you know I'm not sure? For all that I wanted to be back...I came to really enjoy being a woman and..." He flushed and put his head down.

"Skinner?" Scully said. "How's he about this?"

"Confused." Mulder admitted. "And trying hard as I knew he would. But..." He shrugged.

"It's a hard one to throw at somebody." Scully told him.

"Yes." Mulder stared at the floor. He had only just begun to realise how much Skinner must love him and suddenly he felt unworthy of that love. As if he had taken it and played with it and stretched it to breaking point just to see exactly what its limits were. And Skinner never once protested or whined or accused. He just took everything Mulder threw at him, all the way along the line and it wasn't right or fair. Mulder felt a sudden sense of guilt. He went over to his desk and stared glumly at his computer screen.

"It was the right decision wasn't it, Mulder?" Scully questioned.

"I don't know." He hung his head, feeling shamed. "I thought it was and yet...I miss that person I was. I suppose I'll get used to being this way again but what if...what if I've just thrown away something more precious than anything I've ever had in my whole life? What if I've lost him, Scully?" He felt the tears rise in his eyes. Tears he would never have been ashamed of as a woman but which now, as a man, he brushed angrily away. His eyes strayed to the evidence they had bagged up on the shelf, wondering what side effects there would be, if any, to the two massive changes his body had undergone. Tests were already being run. If the vials proved safe then they would revolutionise the treatment of transsexuals.

Skinner read the report and gazed at Agent Mulder as he sat in his office. His throat constricted as he glanced over his lover's body. It didn't arouse him specifically, not just to look at, as it had when Mulder had been female. Yet all the same there were things that Mulder could do to him in bed that would arouse him enough for them to make love. It was still good. He had been right about Mulder's hormones reasserting themselves though. Two months had passed since he had changed back and now sometimes when they were out together it felt more like they were buddies than lovers as they both surreptitiously glanced at women, flirted with them. Skinner felt so insecure in this relationship that he was tempted to end it more times than he could count but something in those hazel eyes always held him back.

"We can make this work." Mulder told him. "Because we love each other and we want it to work." And he nodded, agreed, because of what it had been like, but inside..inside he had

deep reservations. He felt himself disappearing behind a wall of silence, a wall that Mulder seemed to be taking less and less trouble to breach these days.

Mulder watched his lover as he stared at the report. He knew he loved this man - you couldn't know so much about someone, feel so much passion for someone, just to have that disappear. And yet...now when he looked at Skinner he no longer felt quite the same need to jump the man's bones. He remembered the many times when he had sat here as a woman, just imagining undressing his lover, caressing his shoulders, being as close to him as it was humanly possible to be. He felt guilty for being a parasite in the relationship, always taking, never giving anything back. Sometimes his temper and frustration got the better of him and he stormed around, making a fuss and yet Skinner never retaliated. His deep confusion about the relationship often showed in his troubled eyes but he remained steadfast. Sometimes Mulder hated himself for putting his lover through this and he knew he expressed his self loathing all wrong, taking it out on the one person he wanted more than anything else in the world to make happy.

"What is it?" Mulder asked.

"What?" Skinner looked up, frowning.

"You've been reading that damn report for half an hour and I swear I haven't seen your eyes move. You certainly haven't turned a page. What's going on?"

"Nothing. Don't talk to me like that in here." Skinner frowned.

"If you're not happy with my work..." Mulder could feel himself getting angry.

"Your work's fine!" Skinner threw the report down on the desk.

"Then what? You want me to move out. Is that it?"

"I...no." Skinner said softly, agonised. "I don't. I love you but does it always have to be such a struggle?"

"It's changed. I was wrong to think it wouldn't." Mulder said.

"It's okay. I suppose I always knew I love you more than you love me." Skinner said sadly, taking off his glasses. "You're a free spirit. You've moved on, Fox. You want to say goodbye but you're scared of hurting me. It's okay." He shrugged. Mulder stared at him, speechless. "I'll let you go." Skinner ran a tired hand over his eyes. "Please, just go quickly. No long speeches, no regrets. What we had was good." He handed the report back to his agent. "Goodbye, Fox." He said. Mulder still stared at him then got up, crossed the room without saying a word and left.

Skinner knew he would find his apartment empty when he got back and he was right. Mulder's clothes were gone, his masculine clothes at least. The feminine ones had been bagged up and were packaged away in a cupboard somewhere. He hadn't bothered to take them. His jeans, tee shirts, boots...all gone. Skinner walked around the apartment in a daze, wondering how it had come to this, trying to trace the inevitable path from the beginning of this doomed relationship to the end. Then he poured himself a drink and downed it in one

go, then another, then another. Finally he lay himself back down on the bed in an alcoholic haze.

He had no idea how long he spent waking, drinking, sleeping. A few days maybe. Then one day he woke up with a scent of orange blossom clinging to his nostrils from a dream. In his dream he had felt her hands, her soft body, her enticing breasts. Damn! He turned over and found himself scrunched up against something warm. He opened his eyes to find himself drowning in hazel.

"You're awake. I wondered when you'd finally sleep it off." She reached out a hand to caress his stubbly jaw. He struggled into coherence.

"Fox?" He queried, blearily.

"Yes. It's me. You were wrong about me, Walter. You don't love me more than I love you."

"But...you didn't do this just for me, did you?" He felt a wave of pain and shame. "I would never have wanted you to..."

"No." She kissed his forehead softly. "I found I missed it, but more than that, I missed what we had together. And I like being a woman, truly. I think the sex is better for a start although there isn't a man alive that will believe that! And without you...well, man or woman, there is no happiness for me. I have no idea what sort of strain all this changing puts on someone's body but it was a risk I was prepared to take. So far I haven't felt any side effects so we'll just have to wait and see. You do still want me, don't you, Walter?" She asked anxiously. "I mean...you haven't changed your mind...?"

"No." He pulled her close. "I love you, Fox Mulder," was all he said.

THE END

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