Soulmates

by ATTHS_TWICE

Summary

Soulmate: a person to whom you feel an immediate connection. A connection so strong and powerful, you are drawn to them in a way you will never experience again. They are your perfect other, the missing half of you, and no love will ever compare. No matter the distance, soulmates will find their way back where they belong.

The long believed alien invasion of 2012 never occurred. Since that fated night, Mulder has searched for answers to questions, but has come up empty handed. Scully has been standing by watching broken heartedly, as his obsession has begun to tear them apart.

A heart can only stretch so far before it shatters and the pieces left behind must be put back together. Sometimes a shattered heart (or two) needs extra care, love, time, and help.

Sometimes it needs guidance from someone who understands grief and pain. Someone who will not give up or back down. Someone who will see a broken heart and not declare it unfixable, but grab the tape, glue, or whatever it takes, to fix it and make it whole again.
Here it is, the story I have been working on for more than six months. I wrote this first chapter last June and it’s been patiently waiting for me to finish it. It has sat idly by during so many other stories, waiting and smiling at me. Seeing all that I have created and being so proud. Then some days, it would come knocking. It would check in and see what was going on with plans to finish it.

“No pressure,” it would say and smile as something shiny caught my attention. It would cry with me over other stories, or laugh where appropriate, but it would get my attention from time to time, until one day it stood and would not budge.

“Make a chapter outline, just to see what you could do!” it encouraged me. Well, an outline quickly became straight up writing the meat of it, 45 chapters, in a notebook, then two, then three, as separate ideas needed to be in separate places.

“It will be so easy,” it gleefully said as it saw the story began to take shape and new friends were added to it. They crowded around and encouraged even more friends to be added. But the shiny objects called and they had to be written first.

The new friends waited until they demanded to have their new friends added. I finally listened and the friends began to celebrate. They knew it was finally THEIR turn.

So, here it is, the story that has been building, been a blessing and a curse. Has made me cry, stay up late at night, get up early, and made me so incredibly happy, I’m beyond excited to share it with you. I hope you love it as much as I do, oh I hope you do.

Thanks for reading. Now- on with the story.

Can someone get the lights?

Disclaimer: These characters belong to Chris Carter and 20th Century Fox Television. I own nothing but my own words that intermingle with the beautiful ones we hear on our screens.

See the end of the work for more notes.
The Origin of Maggie Scully

Maggie had been a romantic all her life. When she was younger, around 10, she began to read from the “grown up” section of the library, the young adults area. She was always an advanced reader and devoured books. She discovered Anne, the orphan girl adopted by a brother and sister. She learned new, big descriptive words reading about Anne.

Maggie fell in love with Gilbert, a sweet, romantic, caring boy who was “fathoms deep” in love with Anne upon first meeting. She yearned, despaired, and was elated when Anne and Gilbert were finally joined together in marriage. She read of Anne and Gilbert’s children. Of Rilla, their youngest who was in love with a family friend. He went off to war and her heart was broken. She cried and mourned along with all her beloved characters. When she finished the books, she began again. She became obsessed with the love the characters had for one another.

The words she read were poetry to her young soul. She needed more. The librarian observed how often Maggie was borrowing the same books. On one of her trips to the library, when she was 12, the librarian, a “kindred spirit,” showed Maggie to the literature section. She suggested a few new books she may find interesting and Maggie’s eyes lit up. She borrowed *Emma* and *Sense and Sensibility*.

Oh … being lost in the stories of yearning love, hardships, misunderstandings, broken engagements, and true love realized, made her heart soar. She wished that she could live in her books, to know these characters, to attend balls and dance through the night.

She felt a thrill when she discovered the word ‘soulmate.’ A soulmate. It was a word she fell in love with immediately. She rolled it around and around in her mind. To think that there was someone out there destined for her, her other half, made her stomach do flip flops. She read when true soulmates had found each other, there was an unspoken understanding between them. They would feel unified to have finally found the one they had, wittingly or not, been searching for. They would be together in unity and no other happiness or joy could ever compare. Oh, how those words and thoughts had thrilled her, down to her very soul.

Reality came calling, however, no matter how a person may romanticize the world around her. Her father felt reading, especially books far beyond her age, was a waste of time. He found it “foolish for a girl to be doing, especially the books she was reading. Stories about love and romance filing her head full of frivolous unattainable things. A handsome man racing up on a horse to save her, or dying for one's true love.

Try as she might, there was no reasoning with her father. Her mother was a meek woman and she complied with her husband. Maggie’s trips to the library became obsolete. She was told to focus her attention on other things.

Her parents were devout Catholics and her time for confirmation was approaching. She was to attend the classes and study what her faith would prepare her for in her future- a life devoted to her faith, husband, and a family.

Although she obeyed, she felt that a part of her was gone without the chance to read her books and become lost in their stories. But after her confirmation, she began going to parties and meeting people. New girlfriends to gossip with, share lipsticks (of which none of them were allowed to even possess), even try out smoking, and laugh about which boys they would like to kiss.
She loved the thrill she felt being in a group of boys and girls, seeing if she might feel a spark with of them. She had not given up that she had a soulmate out there somewhere looking for her. There were boys she felt an attraction to, but it was not the same as that deep desire for a soulmate.

Then when Maggie was 20, her mother passed away. She was left with an empty hole in her life. Her father took her mother’s death extremely hard. He began to drink heavily. He was moody and depressed. But at times he was kind and emotional. During those times, he spoke of his love for his wife. How beautiful she had been, how she could light the room with her smile, how much he missed her, how lost he was without her, how he loved her from the moment he saw her, how he wished he told her more.

Maggie sat in shock. Of course she knew her parents loved each other, she was not stupid. But this ... especially from her father, left her speechless. He was tough, quiet, closed off. She had no idea he was capable of feeling that way. How naive she was, how childish in her thinking.

She was an adult, but she was still much like a child, believing love was something a person longs for, pines after, or has to suffer a huge loss to find. She saw and learned of true love, of actual soulmates that day. Not the silly little girl version she had imagined with music sounding and “happily ever after.” This was a love that ran deep and true and real.

She was emboldened by this revelation. She made a firm decision. She would not let her father drink the rest of his life away. Her mother’s memory did not deserve that disrespect. His love for her needed to be stronger than the ease at which he grabbed the bottle for comfort.

It was not an easy task, but she got him to quit. She learned things about herself during this time. Patience, understanding, and extreme empathy. Her grief was raw, but her father’s was devastating. Spending time with each other, expressing their grief, had brought them closer together. She always felt a disconnect from him, as though he did not care for her as her mother had. As they learned from each other, her heart warmed with the discovery that his love was simply quiet. He was proud of her, loved her, and wanted the very best for her. He did not say it with words too often, but his eyes and his smile told her every day.

When Maggie met Bill, she knew right away he was a good man. He was somewhat like her father—quiet, serious, stoic. Under his outward presentation, though, he was sweet, funny, romantic. He was rational and cool headed. He would be a good husband, provider, father.

She loved him, immensely, but it was not until she had Bill Jr. that she realized how much she needed and relied on him.

She was sick throughout her pregnancy, never truly gaining much weight. She could not get the baby to feed very well once they were home. She was not sleeping, had not showered, the house was a mess, and she could not stop crying. She felt like a failure as a wife and a mother.

One day, a knock sounded at the front door. Bill Jr. had just spit up all over her last clean shirt and also managed to soil his last clean diaper. Maggie felt like lying down and giving up. She did not care about the person at the door, she just wanted to sleep, cry, or scream. Maybe even all three.

The knock sounded again and a muffled voice called out, “Mrs. Scully? My name is Evelyn McCreary. Your husband works with my husband. He asked if I could look in on you. He wanted to be sure that you were okay and didn’t want you to be alone.”

Maggie began to cry. From exhaustion, embarrassment, but mostly from the caring her husband
showed by asking for help for her. She would never have asked on her own. She was a navy wife now and needed to keep that stiff upper lip. As she cried, she caught a whiff of both herself and the baby. It was not a good combination.

Her pride worn down, she walked to the door. She did not look at her reflection in the mirror by the door. She knew she looked like death warmed over. If this woman was truly here to help, she was going to see how big her job would be.

Opening the door, she found not a young woman, but an older one. White hair set in a fetching style, clothes and makeup perfect. She even had a pair of gloves in one hand and her purse in the other. This woman? She was going to help?

Maggie almost closed the door in her face. Close the door before she ruined the clothes of this poor well meaning woman. She had probably thought that Maggie was simply bored and was looking for someone to gossip with and drink some tea, maybe something stronger. Well, Maggie thought, that sure ain’t the case. She stared at this immaculately dressed stranger with a look of defiance.

The eyes looking back at her were soft and understanding. She took in Maggie’s spit up covered shirt and could smell the baby’s soiled diaper. She smiled kindly at Maggie and put her gloves in her purse with a snap as it closed.

“Well,” she said with a square set to her shoulders. “It looks like we have our work cut out for us. How about you invite me in and we can get started?”

Maggie was completely floored. She expected this woman to be aghast and walk away. When she did neither, she could not do anything but allow her in the house. Evelyn set her purse down on the crowded dining room table and turned to Maggie.

“First things first,” she said with determination in her voice. “You need to get cleaned up and I will take care of this adorable baby.”

“No,” Maggie said with more force than she actually felt. “First things first. You tell me who you are and why exactly you are here.” Evelyn smiled at her, just as kindly as before, and clasped her hands together.

“My husband and your husband have become friends. They have recently worked together and have taken a liking to one another. Your husband mentioned that you had recently had a child. My husband, Philip, had asked how you were doing. Bill was honest with him and said it had been hard. My Philip told me, and I knew I had to come right over. You see, Mrs. Scully,” she said with a brief pause as she took a breath. “I know how hard it can be. How you can feel ... alone and no one understands. I have had six children and I was unprepared for each one of them.” Maggie balked at her. Six children? God. That sounded exhausting.

“My husband and I married young,” she continued. “My mother had passed when I was a girl and I never learned about ... well many aspects of marriage.” She laughed and her cheeks flushed. “When I discovered I was with child, I was terrified. I had no idea what I would do.” She smiled at Maggie kindly and reached out to touch the baby’s foot.

“My husband was wonderful to me the entire time. He was tickled that we would be having a baby. He boasted to everyone how happy he was to be a father. How he loved that I would be giving him that honor. But then the babies came ...” she became quiet for a second, lost in her memories. Maggie shifted uncomfortably, aware once again how terrible she smelled.
Evelyn gave a little shake of her head and then smiled at Maggie. “Mrs. Scully,” she said kindly. “I would love to tell you my story when you have had a chance to clean up a little. I can imagine you don’t feel so wonderful at this moment.”

Maggie’s eyes filled with tears at the kindness in her voice. “I can’t get cleaned up,” Maggie said with a sob. “There is so much laundry to be done, and I don’t have any more clean shirts.”

Evelyn reached for the baby, and this time Maggie let her take him. She brought her hands to her face as her tears began to fall faster. Evelyn tucked Bill Jr. into her side and drew Maggie to her with an arm around her shoulder.

“My dear,” Evelyn said softly. “Please lead me to the bedroom and we will get you sorted out.”

Maggie tearfully led Evelyn toward the bedroom. She set the baby down in the bassinet that sat in the room. Evelyn walked into the bathroom and started the shower. When it was a comfortable temperature, she turned to Maggie and told her to take her time and get cleaned up. Maggie sobbed and began to unbutton her shirt. Evelyn walked out and closed the door behind her.

Maggie left all her clothes in a disgusting heap on the floor and stepped into the warm steamy shower. She let the water wash over her and cleanse her body and soul. She was so bone tired and this shower was the best experience she had in days. She stayed under the spray and felt her muscles relax. She cried and cried. Let all her anxiety out in that shower. Felt it wash away down the drain.

She washed her hair and body twice, exhilarated by the feeling of being clean. Erasing the stench of milky baby vomit and soiled diapers. She stayed in the warm cocoon until the water began to cool. Finally she had to turn the water off and return to real life.

A towel had been placed out for her and her disgusting clothes were gone. She had not even noticed Evelyn return to the bathroom. She grabbed the towel and wrapped herself in the fluffiness. God, she felt like a new person. She dried her hair with an extra towel until it was just slightly damp.

Maggie walked into her bedroom and found that Evelyn had put some clothes on the bed for her. A button down shirt of Bill’s was laid out beside a pair of pajama pants. She slipped them on, no underwear available to be worn. She did not care and she doubted Evelyn would either.

Once she was dressed, she walked out to find Evelyn in the dining room. She had cleaned up the clutter on the table and changed the baby. He was laying in the bassinet that she had moved from the bedroom.

She looked up and smiled as Maggie came in the room. She walked toward her and put her arm around her shoulder, leading her to the table. Maggie sat and Evelyn disappeared into the kitchen. She came back with two cups of tea and set them down.

“Do you take cream and sugar?” Evelyn asked kindly. Maggie shook her head. “I was able to find one last diaper for the baby, but he will be needing more. I placed a call to a friend of mine and she will be dropping off some items for you as soon as she can,” Evelyn said as she sat and drank her tea. “I have also started washing some clothes in your washing machine. Such a wonderful invention. Things took longer in my day. Once those clothes are done, I will hang them for you and start more clothes.”

Maggie was silently crying, looking down at her teacup. She was overwhelmed by everything, but
especially by the kindness this woman was showing her. She did not know her, but she was here and she was helping. She had already done so much in the short amount of time she had been here.

She lifted her eyes to Evelyn. She could not talk around the lump in her throat. She shook her head, trying to fight back her tears. She took a deep breath and opened her mouth to speak.

“Before you say anything,” Evelyn said softly, setting down her cup and taking Maggie’s hand. “Let me tell you my story. Drink your tea and just listen.”

Maggie took another deep shuddering breath and nodded. She did not know what she was going to say anyway. That she was fine? She clearly was not. She did not need any help? It was obvious that she did. She just needed to say something. Instead she took a sip of tea and waited for Evelyn to speak.

Evelyn placed her hands on the table and folded them together. She told Maggie of her hardships with her babies. How she had been wholly unprepared for caring for them. She did not know anything about children and she felt like a failure every day. She cried more in that time than any other time in her life. When the babies cried, when they spit up, when dinner was burnt, when her husband’s shirts were not ironed, or worse, when they too were burnt.

But through it all, her husband had been there for her. He was always encouraging, always positive. He ate the burnt dinner, smiling through every bite. He hid his scorched shirts beneath jackets, kissing her goodbye and thanking her for seeing that he looked respectable and loved. He was her champion, her cheering squad and she loved him immensely for it.

They moved to a new base when she was pregnant with their fourth child. Two of the children were in school during the day at that time, so she was home with only the youngest child. She was thankful for that because the fourth pregnancy had been her worst. She was sick almost throughout. She could barely eat, she was not sleeping and the housework began to suffer.

There were not scorched shirts anymore, there were simply none ready at all. Dinners were late as they had to wait for her husband to cook them and he worked late shifts. She would cry as she sat holding the youngest one and her husband served the older children soup and toast, grilled cheese, eggs. Whatever was on hand and easy to make. He would make them laugh with silly voices and songs he made up. Then they would help him clean up and head to bed.

He would come to her and wipe her tears. Tell her he loved her, she was the only person he would ever love in this lifetime and the next. He would take the little one and bathe her, put her to bed, and come find Evelyn still on the sofa, crying. He would take her to their room, help her get her night clothes on, and brush her hair. He would sing to her as he did, telling her how beautiful she was. How her hair was like spun gold and it shined brighter than the sun. He would hold her as she cried when they went to bed.

It had been two weeks and this had become their routine, until she heard a knock at the door. She opened it to find a dark skinned woman with the biggest smile she had ever seen. She told Evelyn that her husband had run into her, literally, and helped her pick up the items she spilled.

He struck up a conversation with her and found she was looking for work, but no one wanted to hire her. He said that was ridiculous and he hired her on the spot. Said he needed someone to help his wife because he loved her so much and seeing her breaking down the way she was, was breaking his heart. He cried for his wife, cried for her suffering, and asked, begged, for her help.

Her name was Tanzie and she was a godsend. She helped with anything and everything. She washed, cleaned, cooked, ironed, and cared for the children. But most important, she became the
friend that Evelyn needed. She cared for her. Cooking bland foods that she could hold down, offered up advice her mama had for pregnancy, remedies that were a wonder for Evelyn.

Tanzie helped her get back to herself and her family. She was the best friend Evelyn ever had. They shared secrets, dreams, and their lives.

“Mrs. Scully, without the love of my husband, and the care of others, I would have crumbled. I would have given up. I am a lot older than Tanzie was when she showed up that day, but I would like to be here to help you as she did for me.” Evelyn said kindly, looking into Maggie’s eyes.

Maggie sat in rapt attention, tears running down her face, through the whole story. Listening to Evelyn’s story of love filled Maggie with hope, with happiness and such immense love. She read of soulmates, saw it through her father’s eyes, knew she found it in Bill, but Evelyn’s story ... it was pure love and devotion.

And now Evelyn sat there, in a dirty house, with clutter and laundry piling up, offering her help because Philip heard about her need from Bill. A loving heart reached out to another loving heart. As a result, without hesitation, Evelyn came to help Maggie. To offer what she could, however she could.

Through her tears, Maggie smiled and nodded. “Please, call me Maggie,” she said as she grasped Evelyn’s hand, reaching out for the lifeline that had been sent to her.
The Hardest Goodbye

Chapter Summary

Scully has to make a choice. Stay and watch Mulder and everything she loves shatter around her, or go and hope that leaving will make them stronger.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

September 2014

Scully sat in her car sobbing. This hurt. This hurt so fucking much, she thought she might die from the pain.

This decision to leave him, even though she knew it was right, was killing her. Mulder was presumed dead for months and she thought that pain was unlivable. Then he was gone from her life for a year and that was unbearable. But this, Jesus ... she could hardly catch her breath as the pain threatened to choke her.

Her heart was shattered in pieces all over the car. She knew she would never be able to find them and put them back together properly. They would be in the places no one could ever reach. Once she opened the door and got out, she felt the pieces were going to float away on the breeze.

Maybe they would go back to the house and find a corner and wait. Lick their wounds, biding their time, and repairing. But she felt none of that now. Only sadness and emptiness. Hollow, she felt so fucking hollow. If she tapped her chest, she was sure there would be an echo, like the Tin Man.

She took a deep breath and sobbed anew, thinking of the warning signs and how they could have fixed things. Before her heart had broken his and left them both former shells of themselves.

His face. His eyes. The way he looked at her as she told him she was leaving. Why she was leaving. The eyes that always saw the joy and lit up with excitement were dull and sad. He was different, and it killed her.

Things were better for a while after they helped on the case with the FBI. When she came home after Christian’s surgery, she collapsed and wept in his arms. She cried until she was empty. The days and worry leading to her breaking down when it was finally done.

He held her, and then they made love. Slowly, as though they had all the time in the world. They whispered their love to one another with words, touches, and kisses. They stayed in bed for two days. Sleeping, loving, and coming back to one another.

He listened to her. He heard how the darkness was weighing on her, and she felt it was coming after them and how she did not want it. She wanted to never feel that again. He kissed her and told her again that it was an impossible task, but he would try.

He looked into and purchased tickets for a trip. The first trip they had taken in a long time. Some place warm, away from the darkness and the worry that hung around them.
It was wonderful and relaxing. Days of sun and sandy beaches. One day was spent on a small island, so private they were the only people around. The sex they had there ... she rinsed sand from her body for what seemed like days.

“The darkness would have a hell of a time finding us here,” he whispered, as they lay on a blanket, in the warm setting sun of that private island, naked and sated.

Smiling, she wrapped her limbs tighter around him, listening to his heartbeat, his fingers threading through her hair. She was content and felt better than she had in a long time.

When they came home, he seemed better, more like his old self. Happy, laughing and ready to let the darkness go. He was simply cooped up in the house too long. No longer being a marked man, he felt free to be. He met her for lunch or coffee. Called her more, was more engaged.

He tried learning to cook, and it had been disastrous. He attempted a simple meal, but he still messed up and they had to buy a new skillet. Standing in line to pay for the new skillet, she giggled. He looked over at her, and she laughed again.

“You keep laughing, and I won’t cook for you again,” he said, his voice low and sexy. She shivered, knowing he knew what he was doing.

“Please make sure you don’t,” she said with a laugh. “Our house reeks of burnt metal. I can live just fine without that stench again, thank you very much.” He laughed and pulled her close, his arm around her shoulders.

They visited her mom and had dinners there more often. Mulder was even more like his old self when he was there. Trying to get her mom to laugh with his goofy jokes. It really did not take much effort, as she adored him. Her mother came to their place more often too, and Scully watched them as they interacted. She saw the way her mother looked at him, her eyes shining, as she laughed at his jokes. Scully was thankful for the relationship they shared. Mulder deserved a mother like hers who loved him unconditionally.

Soon though, Mulder began slipping into his old ways. She came home to him in his office more and more. Days when he had obviously only left to eat and use the bathroom. Dishes from the morning, in the sink, coffee cups piling up on the counter, forcing her to wash them, not wanting messes to keep stacking up.

When the predetermined date came and went, he disappeared from her. He did not leave, but he may as well have been gone. He was gone physically and emotionally. She spent nights alone at the table, on the couch, and in bed. He was up at odd hours, sometimes not sleeping at all, but spending his days on the computer in his office. He devoured any information he could find, waking her or interrupting her, when he seemed to remember she was there.

Mulder was quiet and withdrawn some days, then there were days when he was antsy, wired, like he had too many espressos. He would ramble, hands flying everywhere as he paced around, his words tumbling out quickly.

“Scully, there is a man in Dubai who said he heard from a group in New Mexico, that there was a man in Iceland who knew a woman who heard some information in Boston. I am waiting to hear if the person in Boston would be willing to give me any information so I can share it with others. No one has had any luck with it, but maybe …”

At first she wanted to hear him, to follow along, but after a while, she just wanted it to stop. She did not want to figure out why the world did not come to end in 2012. Why did he care, if it meant
they were alive? Alive, together, and happy.

But that darkness continued to call to him, and he answered, welcoming it with little hesitancy. He was eager to find answers that were rarely forthcoming, but kept him from her and their life together.

She tried. Tried to get him to hear her, to understand, to see what she was seeing. He was in his office whether she was home or not. He grew his beard back, thicker and more unkempt than it had been in the past.

She hated it. Where before it was scratchy and a mild nuisance, now it hid his face from her, making him look haggard and old. More than that, she hated the way it felt against her lips when she kissed him, not to mention the rest of her body.

Not that he was kissing her much. They became strangers who shared a bed, when he actually came to bed. His hours were erratic, and she still had to be up early to get to the hospital. Most mornings she woke up and his side of the bed had not been slept in, the covers undisturbed.

He fell asleep in the overstuffed chair in his office, at his desk, and then once, on the couch. When that happened, she woke him up, tears in her eyes, pleading for him to talk to her, to please hear her, see what was happening to them.

“Mulder, please,” she sobbed as she climbed into his lap, clinging to him. “Please talk to me.” Hearing her tears sparked his own, and he cried with her. Pulling her close, as if trying to absorb her pain.

“Scully, I’m sorry,” he whispered, crying into her neck, his arms holding her tight. He began to kiss her neck and she did not pull away. She missed him so much. She would suffer the insufferable beard to feel him close to her. To feel anything after so long.

It was quick, but wonderful. It always was. Even when they were at odds or had been angry, the sex was always amazing. When they could not find the words, their bodies seemed to know what to say, and they did the talking.

After they finished, they lay together on the couch, entwined around the other. It was a tight fit, but it felt wonderful to hold and be held. Their breathing synchronized and they were still.

She looked at him, and they both knew nothing had been solved. This had been a band aid trying to cover a broken bone. He looked back at her, and his eyes seemed miles away. She kept their eye contact, saying nothing, relying on their unspoken communication. She saw when he was back with her, when he poked his head out of that darkness. She smiled, tears in her eyes. She stroked his cheek as he smiled back.

It was such a small step, but she felt hopeful. He untangled himself from her and silently went upstairs, leaving her on the couch, watching him walk away. She heard the shower turn on, and she sighed. She got up and put her clothes back on, then went to start the coffee. There was not much in the fridge, but she found enough to make them scrambled eggs with some veggies thrown in too. There was bread for toast, so she added some slices to the toaster.

She was ready to add the eggs to the vegetable medley she cut up, when she heard the creak of the stairs. She turned and gave a gasping sob. He had on an old pair of jeans, and a dark grey shirt. He was barefoot and his hair was still damp. Her gasp was not for that, although he looked better than he had in weeks. No, she gasped because he shaved.
She set the eggs on the counter and walked to him. She stared at him, almost unrecognizable after living with that beard for so long. She touched his smooth cheeks, running her fingers slowly over his face. She pulled him in for a kiss, soft and sweet, reveling in the feel of her Mulder. Then she kissed his cheeks, his neck, his jawline. All the places she missed seeing and touching under that hair.

She looped her arms around his neck, and he held her by her waist. “Thank you,” she whispered into his ear, and she felt him nod, as he took a deep breath.

“Something smells good,” he said, and she laughed. She pulled back and looked in his eyes again. He smiled at her, the slow one, his lips staying closed.

They walked to the counter together and finished the breakfast preparations before eating the simple meal. They spent the day talking, sitting on the porch, walking around their home, laying on a blanket in the afternoon sunshine. She laughed at something he said and then he was kissing her and all thoughts, except how wonderful he felt, left her mind.

They lay there sweaty, hearts racing, the wind cooling off their hot bodies. She felt so happy, so much like her old self. The one who woke him in the middle of the night to make love to him, to feel him under or over her, as she cried out in pleasure. Her old self who laughed at some crazy theory or an idea he shouted from the other room. She would shake her head knowing he would appear in the doorway, lean against the door jamb, and try to persuade her to his way of thinking.

He was very persuasive, as he always had been. But, differently than her life as Agent Scully, most of the time their doorway discussions led to sex wherever they happened to be. It almost always involved them laughing as they achieved completion together. She loved all aspects of their sex life but those fun, silly, and often bruised the next day in odd places sexcapades, made her feel alive. Made her feel young and so desirable, he had to have her right then. She loved him so much in those moments.

He continued to fall into the darkness, however, the good days coming less and less. She recognized the signs of depression, and approached him carefully about it. He refused to listen to her at first, to believe he was depressed.

“I’m getting out of bed every day, Scully. Still working on things, getting dressed, and functioning. I don’t feel depressed. So, what exactly do you want?” he had said, shaking his head at her.

“Mulder, please at least try,” she said, standing her ground, holding the bottle in her hand. “This will help you even out, and not live in peaks and valleys. Please, Mulder. I need you better. For both of us. Please.”

He stared her down, defiant and shaking his head. She kept her hand out, the bottle within his grasp. He finally grabbed it, and still angry, he walked into his office, and slammed the door. She stood staring after him for a minute longer and turned to leave the living room. It was all she could do.

The office door flew open and he came out, reaching for her and holding her tight. “I’m sorry. I’m such a fucking asshole,” he said, his hands in her hair, his mouth by her ear. “If you want me to take the medication, I will.”

“Mulder, it’s not what I want, but what you need,” she said, her eyes closed as she clung to him. He nodded and they stood holding one another close.

He started to take the medication, and it seemed to make things better. He was happier, more
involved, making an effort again. He would come out of his office or leave the door open, no longer closed off from her. But, again, things could not stay as they were, and try as he might to avoid it, he heard the call of the piper.

She tried. She felt like she was drowning, like his problems were slowly burying her alive. Her work began to suffer, she was no longer sleeping or eating properly, and he had no idea she was hurting. He did not seem to see her anymore. His eyes looking through her again, and her heart breaking when they did.

She tried once more, one last time for him to hear her. Opening the office door, she found him sitting on the floor - papers, photos, articles, dishes, and cups surrounding him. His clothes were ones he wore for a couple of days, his hair a mess, and that fucking beard was back. His face haggard, and his eyes bloodshot when he looked up at her. When was the last time he slept?

She knelt down, opening her mouth to bring up what she came to discuss, when he sighed in exasperation.

“Scully, come on. Move. You’re on the paper I need,” he said, annoyance in his tone.

The calm she attempted to maintain when she walked into his office, flew out the window. She grabbed the paper from under her knee and ripped it in half, then half again.

“What the hell are you doing?!” he yelled, reaching for the papers. Her anger was past the point of caring if she hurt him, and she threw the papers at him as she stood to her feet. She walked out of the office and he followed her.

“The fuck are you doing, Scully?! Those were important papers and you just ripped them up? That was so goddamn rude, you had no right to do that,” he yelled at her, and she saw red.

“You are such a selfish asshole, you know that? You care more about those pieces of paper than what I have to say? Why I came in your office?” she yelled back, disbelief on her face. He stared at her and she at him, words beginning to bubble up and spill out, no stopping them.

They yelled, their words becoming more hurtful as their voices escalated. Not one word was uttered to attempt to reach any kind of compromise. She felt like they were on separate sides of a canyon, screaming to the other, but unable to hear over the echoes of their own voices.

He stared at her, his anger evident, before he turned and went in the office, slamming the door. She waited. Five minutes, then ten, then fifteen. He did not emerge and then she heard the printer coming to life.

Her tears came fast and hot, as she fell to the floor, folding in on herself. She cried harder than she had in years, the hole in her heart that appeared the day William was taken from her, begin to fissure. How long she cried there, she did not know, but the door to the office remained shut with Mulder inside.

She stood up on shaky legs and stared at the door as she wiped her eyes, her mind made up. She had to go, to leave for her own sake as well as his. Thinking and doing were two different things and she suddenly could not make her feet move, the decision to leave seeming to convince her to stay. She lifted a heavy foot and then another, going to the stairs.

She took a suitcase out of their closet, an item she had not used in a long time. She shook her head, tears falling again as she began to clean out her drawers and fill her bag. Every item she packed felt heavy like lead. She took another suitcase out and filled it. She carried them both down the stairs.
and to her car, the printer whirring away as she walked past the office.

She took her hanging clothes and carried them by the armfuls, taking them to the car. One more bag was filled with shoes, her toiletries, and a picture of them that sat on the dresser. She put it in the car, coming back inside the house, and standing in front of his office door. Over two hours had passed and he made no effort to come out, no attempt to apologize or explain his actions. She felt again that suffocating sense of being unable to breathe, as if the walls themselves were closing in on her.

She grasped at her heart, feeling the fissures pushing and threatening to break within her chest. She had to do this, not because she hated him, but because she loved him. She loved him so much it would hurt her more to stay than to go, she knew that without question. Standing there was killing her, the decision had been made, but the motion halted.

She closed her eyes, moved her hand, and took a deep breath. She opened her eyes and turned the door knob. He was standing in front of the printer, his back to her, his shoulders slumped. The door creaked and he turned toward her, glancing at her, and then turning back to the printer.

“Look, Scully,” he said, shaking his head. “I know what you’re going to say. I don’t need to hear it again, okay?”

She looked around the room at the items on his wall. So much clutter, things were overlapping. He had papers on the floor still, stacked on the desk, even in his desk chair. How very ironic that it once again was papers and files that would be the wall between them. So fragile and easily destroyed and yet it might as well be made of steel. Her eyes filled with tears as she took another deep breath.

“Mulder,” she said quietly, her tears spilling over. “Mulder, I’m … I’m leaving.”

“Okay, I’ll see you later,” he said, not turning around.

“No, Mulder,” she said, her voice a little stronger. “I’m leaving. I … Mulder, I can’t …”

He finally turned around and his expression was annoyed. As he looked at her, he seemed to understand what she was saying. He shook his head and frowned, opening and closing his mouth.

“What do mean, you’re leaving? What?” he asked her, confusion on his face.

Strangely, as soon as she saw him look at her, she felt calm and knew this was the right choice. If they stayed where they were, they would never move forward, but continue to stay on either side of that canyon, eventually unable to hear even themselves any longer. They would move further and further away until they could no longer find their way back. This was the only way to move forward, as much as it broke her inside to do so.

“Mulder, I can’t do this anymore. It’s … Mulder, I’m suffocating with the weight of this, this constant fight with you. I’ve tried. I’ve tried to get you to hear me, to see me, but I can’t. I don’t know what else to do,” she said, her voice not much more than a whisper. “I’m … Mulder …”

“So … we have a fight and you’re going to leave? Is that how this works now?” he said, crossing his arms and shaking his head.

“A fight, Mulder?” she said softly, shaking her head. “It’s not just a fight, and you are well aware of that, so don’t say that to me. This is not easy or what I want, but I don’t know what else to do. I have tried, and I feel …”
“Scully, what do you want from me? You knew that date was important, that we had been preparing for it,” he said, pacing the room as best he was able with so much shit piled up around him. “It didn’t happen and I want to know why. What if, what if there is a different one and we’re not ready? I need to know. I don’t think it’s too much to ask for a little time to figure it out.” He stared at her, his eyes hard.

“Mulder,” she said softly, tears threatening to stop her from speaking. “It’s been almost two years. That’s more than a little time.”

He looked at her blankly, as if he could not believe it had been that long. She held his gaze, and he had the decency to look away.

“Two years, Mulder. We’ve been trudging through this and it never gets better, not for long anyway,” she said, shaking her head again. “I have tried what I could, and I can’t anymore. You don’t talk to me. You’re in here and I’m out there, we aren’t together anymore. This ... this obsession ...”

“Obsession,” he scoffed.

“Yes, obsession. I feel like I’m back in that jail cell asking you again if all of this is worth more than me, than us. Is it Mulder? Are these papers, this information you’ve found, is it more important than us? Than me, Mulder?” she asked, the tears finally falling down her face. She knew the answer, but hoped she would be wrong.

He stared at her, his jaw clenching, his hands on his hips. “How can you ask me that? I’m doing this for you! For us! All of this Scully, it’s for you and your protection! If the day comes when a new date is revealed, I want us to be ready. How can I do that if I don’t look every place available to me?” he asked her, anger flowing off him like waves.

“It’s not what I want, Mulder,” she whispered. “I would rather not know and be with you than worry about the date and lose you while you sit in the next room. But, that’s not enough for you. I’m not enough for you.”

“He stared at her again, giving her a slight shake of his head. “It’s not that simple, Scully,” he said, his anger dissipating and sadness settling over his face. “Scully, I can’t ... it’s not ...”

“I know, Mulder,” she said softly, wanting to hold him, to make it better with a kiss. “But I also know that I can’t watch this anymore. I can’t be the one holding the lifeline while you drift out to sea, the fog so thick, I don’t know if you’re even there anymore. I can’t be the one waiting while you chase monsters in the dark. I want to be enough for you. I want this life, our life, to be enough for you. Right now, it’s not and I can’t change it.” She stepped into the room and this time he did not complain about the papers she stepped on as she touched his face.

He looked in her eyes, and for a second she saw him there, the Mulder she met and followed for so long. Always chasing, running, going toward the answers he sought. His eyes had always been her safety, her place to go when she needed answers, needed calm. Today, in the moment, only empty sadness sat within his hazel irises.
“Mulder,” she whispered. “Every flight we ever took, they told us what to do in case of loss of cabin pressure, to apply our own oxygen masks before helping others. It always sounded so selfish, but it made sense. How could you help others if you were unable to breathe? Right now, Mulder, I can’t breathe. I feel as if the cabin is losing pressure and I’m fighting with you to put on your mask, but you need to finish looking for something first. I keep pushing you to put it on, but I’m losing the ability to breathe.” She put her head against his chest and took a breath. When she raised her head, she saw he had tears in his eyes.

“Mulder,” she said, her own eyes filling with tears. “We’re both going to die on that plane because I can’t help you if you won’t help yourself. That’s how I feel every day. The oxygen is being pulled from me and I know I won’t survive for much longer.”

He bowed his head and she heard him breathe out a sob. He pulled her to him, and she wrapped her arms around his neck. He cried into her neck, and she into his, neither of them saying anything. She stepped back, knowing she had to go now, before he convinced her to stay.

She touched his face again and kissed him lightly on the lips. “I love you,” she whispered. “I love you so much.” She stepped out of his arms, over the papers, and out the door. She did not look back, but kept moving, grabbing her keys off the side table and walking out the front door.

She felt a sob welling up inside her. She needed to get in the car before she abandoned this plan and ran back to him. Down the steps and into the car, not looking back, her resolve firm. She backed up and then headed out, only then looking in the rear view mirror. He was on his knees on the porch, his head down as his body shook with sobs.

She almost turned around, but knew this was right and how they would get back to where they needed to be. She did not look back again, determined to keep going.

It was not until she was a couple of miles down the road, when she had to quickly pull over as she realized he did not tell her he loved her, and the fissures threatening to crack, finally imploded.

Chapter End Notes

God, this chapter ... like I said it’s going to be ups and downs. Of course the first few will be pretty far down, but this one, it hurts so much.
Echoes of Goodbye

Chapter Summary

Mulder is alone after watching Scully walk out and not look back.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

September 2014

Mulder fell to his knees as he heard Scully’s car start and then back up. He could do nothing, say nothing, as he remained frozen on the porch. He began to cry, sobs shaking his body as he heard her car getting further away. He could not believe this was happening.

Her words were still ringing in his ears, her words of sadness, not anger. She had not shouted at him when she left, but she may as well have, because her quiet sadness hurt worse than any shout ever had. He could see her face, her tears, feel her kiss on his lips, and he felt numb and broken, sobbing anew.

It was not until his legs began to hurt that he chanced moving. As he raised his head, he saw the sun was almost set. It was early afternoon when he followed her out there. Or was it morning? He put his face in his hands as he realized he was not even sure of the time of day she left. He lost track of time, and not the nine minutes they had lost so long ago. No, this was his own doing, and what apparently pushed her to the breaking point.

He got up off his knees, his muscles crying out as he did. His feet were asleep and he welcomed the pain of it, the tingling jolts of it feeling the way his heart felt, firing out electricity as it shorted out.

He stood on the porch, his head down and his body empty. If he moved, he knew only part of him would go back in the house. Like the old cartoons when the character would die or get scared and their body stayed behind, but their soul tore away from their body. Only, in his case, it would be his heart that stayed behind, while the rest of him moved forward.

He wobbled, his feet uncertain, but he knew he had to move to do something. Chase her down? No, he knew without question that was not the answer. How could he follow her and change her mind, when he could not even do it before she left? Call her? And say what, he asked himself, “I’m sorry for being such a fuck up?” She already knew he was a sorry shit because she said as much, just quietly and sadly. Jesus Christ ...

He closed his eyes and forced his feet to move, to go back into the house and figure out what the hell happened. As he stepped back, his eyes flew open. It felt as though his heart was being pulled out, and brought to the spot where his world had stopped. It was as if he could see it, hovering for a second, before it made a new home under the floorboards of the porch. His own personal version of The Tell-Tale Heart. It would wait there, beating and driving him mad, and only he would know.

He moved more forcefully into the house, wanting to escape the image of his heart lying in wait.
He closed the door and stood in the suffocating silence of the house. Somewhere he heard a clock ticking and it made his ears ring. How could time still be passing when the world should have stopped? He looked over at his office and his stomach dropped.

He walked to the doorway and looked around, seeing it through Scully’s eyes. The papers stacked high, books, photos, dishes and cups all haphazard and in some cases smelly and collecting mold, something he knew she hated.

“It smells in here, Mulder,” she said on many occasions. “How can you sit in here with the stench of old coffee cups permeating the air?”

“It’s an acquired scent I suppose, Doc,” he said, her expression disgusted, as he cracked open a sunflower seed. She rolled her eyes before she left, closing the door with a pointed look.

Looking at the room now through a profiler’s eye, he knew this room would be a virtual treasure trove of information. Seeing it differently, he saw the madness, saw the way it must have pushed her away, but he also knew the things he had found. The contacts he had made could not all be wrong, some of them had to be right. She just did not understand what he was doing. How he was trying to save them both.

His gaze landed on his bottle of medication, had he taken it today? Is that why this happened, because he missed a dose of medicine, maybe two, and he was back to appearing depressed and manic to her? As much as he wanted to blame it on that, he knew he could not. This was his fault.

He felt anger bubbling up inside him, at himself, at her, at the fact that she would just leave him like she did. He kicked at a pile of papers and sent them flying. Then he threw them out of the chair and the room was snowing papers. He swept the desk off and his computer crashed to the floor, along with the plates and cups stacked beside it. Glass shattered and the computer screen broke. He did not care, but continued tearing apart the office, papers being pulled from the wall. Is this what she wanted? All his work destroyed? Fine, he would do it, he would show her.

His brain seemed to finally realize what his body was doing and put a halt to the actions. He panted, out of breath from the physical activity he was no longer used to doing. He looked at his ruined office, at the devastation he had caused, and he broke down. He stumbled into the wall and slid down it, his legs out in front of him. He leaned his head back as he cried out his frustration.

How could she do this to him? To them? He knew things were not perfect, but to just fucking give up? Her? She did not do that, so why did she start now?

Because, you fucking loser, you pushed her to it, his brain seemed to say as it rolled its eyes. He cried harder, knowing it was true, he had pushed her away. So many times she had tried to get through to him and he stubbornly refused to hear her.

For a while, things had been good. When all charges against him were dropped, he felt like he had a new lease on life. No longer stuck at home, cooped up in his office, he felt free, and happier than he had in awhile.

They bought a second car and he would go for drives, meet up with Scully for lunch or coffee and sometimes even meet up with Skinner, or just head out to old haunts. The wind from the rolled down car windows never felt so good.

The trip they took, away from the darkness, was amazing and exactly the warmth and sunshine they needed. Scully was so beautiful on that trip, not that it differed than how she was normally, but she had a happy glow about her. The amount of her skin he saw every day did not hurt either.
“Did you simply pack different bathing suits, and not much else?” he asked on their third day there, when she came out of the bathroom in a black one piece, with cut-outs close to her hips. It had one wide strap and the other shoulder was bare.

She reached for her cover up, but he grabbed her before she could. His fingers traced her skin through the cut-outs, and she breathed heavily. Her suit soon joined his on the floor, delaying their day at the beach.

They made love under the stars, in the ocean, and on the porch of their private deck. Lying with her, the warm wind teasing their sweaty bodies, he felt complete and happy. He told her so and she sighed, pulling closer to him, just before she fell asleep. Her soft, warm body pressed against his, pulled him under not long after.

The trip ended and they came home. For a while they still could get each other going with a look or a do you remember story. While the sex was amazing, as it always had been with them, the afterglow was almost better. They would talk and laugh about whatever and her soft gorgeous body would be wrapped around his, making him feel safe and loved. God, he loved her so much.

They took weekend trips to the vineyard sometimes and they walked around his old hangouts. He showed her where he and Samantha used to play pick up baseball games, some of the places no longer empty lots, but buildings or apartment complexes. They walked along the seaside, her hand in his, bundled up from the wind blowing across the water.

“Watch this, Scully,” he said, picking up a rock and skipping it across the water. Three hops and he looked at her with his eyebrows raised.

She smiled as he did it a few more times, before she bent and picked up a smooth, black stone. She raised her eyebrow at him, and threw hers, watching as it skipped further than any of his had. Smirking, they both knew she bested him, as she usually did.

When she was working, he would attempt home repairs. He actually did some work in their bathroom, well he supervised anyway. He had changed the medicine chest, and he made plans for a clawfoot tub to be put in for her. When it was done, his glee could hardly be contained. Her happiness and then the thank you sex was worth all the stress to finish it before she came home.

They had dinners at Mrs. Scully’s house and she came to theirs. He always enjoyed her company, as she laughed at all his dumb jokes. Both Scully women in one place was always fun. They shared stories and laughed about the past. Not knowing everyone they discussed, he simply listened and laughed at their antics.

During those dinners, he learned that Mrs. Scully was very competitive and loved to play games. Cards, board games, trivia, she loved them all. She did not always join in, but when she did, she took it very seriously.

A Scully head-to-head match was what he loved to watch most. The two women did not back down, never going easy on the other, and when the points were tallied, the winner strutted around like a proud peacock.

“Oh yeah, that’s right.” Mrs. Scully would say, as she danced around with her hands above her head, before reaching for a high five from him, with Scully sulking in the background. He laughed every time he got to see that display from Mrs. Scully. Her celebratory dance was different every time and he loved to see what she would do.

Everything was going well, but as the predetermined date began to approach, he spent more time in
his office, more time away from Scully. He was on the computer, searching for any and all information he could find. Days would go by and he would be unaware that they had. He would forget to eat and then grab whatever was closest and easiest to eat. Sometimes a box of Pop-Tarts, sometimes a meal Mrs. Scully had sent home with them.

He began to lose weight and become sallow, his hair unkempt and his beard growing back. He knew nothing of Scully’s comings and going, and one day she called him out on it. He did not understand her anger, trying to explain what he was doing, what he was preparing them for. He needed to know what to do, to expect on that day, to save them both. She walked away, shaking her head, her anger still obvious. He shut the office door and promptly forgotten she had ever been there.

The date came and he was ready, as ready as he could be. There was no planned place to convene, no place safe from the impending invasion. They stayed home, together, never apart from the other. The whole day he waited, sure it would come, the idea that it would not happen was unfathomable. He could feel Scully watching him, feel her worry for him, and it made him angry.

He pushed the screen door open, walked down the steps, and stood in the middle of the yard, his head raised to the sky.

“Mulder! Come back inside! It’s freezing out there!” she called out to him, but he did not listen, convinced he would see something if he stood and waited long enough.

A jacket was placed upon his shoulders and he put his arms inside it. She helped him zip it up and then grasped his hand. Hers was warm and his was freezing cold. How long was he standing there? She squeezed his hand and looked up with him, until he heard a beeping from his wrist. Midnight. The day had come and gone.

“What happened? Or more importantly, what did not happen? She called to him again, and he turned to look at her. Standing there in the dark, a light layer of snow on the ground, she looked so small, so alone. She said something but he did not hear her, too many thoughts pushing around in his head. He saw her posture though, saw her shoulders fall and her head drop. When she lifted her head, she had tears in her eyes, already seeming to know the path of the road ahead.

He returned to his old ways, burying himself in information. Looking, always looking. She came in his office one day, pleading with him to join her for dinner. He looked at her, confused how it could be dinner time already when he had just eaten breakfast. He glanced out the window and saw it was night, and then discovered it was also already two weeks into January. Almost a month had passed and he had no idea.

He stumbled to the dining room table and apologized to her for losing track of time. Telling her he had found some people discussing what had happened and their theories about what went wrong. He spoke through most of the dinner and then walked back into his office, not realizing that she had not said a word.

Another month passed and he made an effort to plan a dinner for Scully’s birthday. They did not really celebrate things like that, but he wanted to show her he could. He meant to, he really did, bought her a gift and everything, but the reservations slipped his mind. They arrived at the restaurant and he realized his mistake. She sighed and then looked at him with such sadness, he felt like a huge failure.
They had found an all night diner instead and it was better than the stuffy restaurant would have been. They talked, not about the darkness he insisted on jumping into, but anything and nothing. She smiled, her hand reaching for his across the table. They ate messy cheeseburgers and shared the best chocolate milkshake he ever tasted. She made him pull over on the way home. So close to the house, but unable to wait, she climbed into his lap and got enough clothing out of the way to sink down onto him. She felt so good and it occurred to him that he could not remember their last time together.

After they arrived home, her gave her the gifts he picked out for her, a book about sprites and a child’s doctor’s kit. Rolling her eyes at the book, she reached for the doctor’s kit.

“I think you might need a checkup, Mulder,” she said, setting it on the couch, and reaching for the buttons on his shirt. “I noticed your heart was beating fast earlier and I’m concerned.”

“You’re the doctor,” he said, letting her slip the shirt off his shoulders, before she moved her hands to his belt buckle.

Her eyes never left his as she told him the things she would need to check out. She gave him a thorough examination, commenting again on the fast pace of his heart as she ran her fingernails across his stomach. He grabbed her and pulled her to the floor, the doctor’s kit spilling, before he made her heart race.

That night, the office did not have a visitor.

But, it could not stay that way and he went through times where he seemed to drift from day to day, season to season. Before he knew it, it was December again and he had no new information, nothing concrete anyway. He and Scully were not the same. He saw her, but it seemed days would go by and they would not speak, or she was gone at odd hours for work.

When she approached him to eat with her or watch a movie, he would plan to do it, but then forget and when he finally did remember, hours had passed. He would find her asleep in bed and he would hate himself for who they were becoming- strangers living in the same house. He missed her but he had to find the answers he needed.

He fell asleep on the couch one night, exhausted after staring at the computer screen all night. He woke up to her crying and pleading with him to talk to her. She climbed in his lap and clung to him, saying she loved him and that this was hurting them. Her tears and her cries broke his heart and he cried with her, telling her he was sorry and he missed her, as he started kissing her neck.

It had been so long since she was that close and he was almost embarrassed at how quickly he became hard. They had not been intimate in a while, her refusing him while he had “that fucking beard.” That day though, she welcomed his touch and his love.

Quick was one way to describe it, but it was still wonderful. They held onto one another after and as they did, he made a decision to shave off his beard. It would not fix everything, but it would be something he could do for her. He left her on the couch, heading to shower and shave. He was surprised at the paleness of his skin, the sickly look to his face under all that hair.

She cried at the sight of him as he stood in the kitchen letting her tell him with her kisses and fingers how much she appreciated the small gesture and how much she missed him. He knew how she felt, he missed her touch and her love, so much. Only when he was shown it, did he seem to know how much it meant to be with her that way.

He kept his eyes closed and his head bowed as he was presenting himself to her, silently
apologizing for being an asshole, and trying to show her he was trying. He knew they were in a bad place. He could feel it, and see it, but he did not know how to change it. He did not know how to crawl out of the darkness when he needed the answers so badly. The date coming and going, no real answers after so long, it was like a weight upon his soul.

That day had been wonderful, but things began to unravel afterward. He had good and bad days, but that was how things had always been for him. So when she asked him to try taking medication for depression, he was stunned.

“I’m worried about you, Mulder,” she said, reaching for his hand. “These highs and lows you’re experiencing, it’s not good. Not for you or me. Please, Mulder.”

“I’m fine, Scully. I’m not depressed. Maybe you need the medication,” he said, knowing it was childish, but annoyed with her for suggesting it.

When she brought him home the medication, he refused it, staring her down defiantly. She stood her ground, and he finally relented, grabbing the bottle as he walked in the office and slammed the door.

He fumed but knew how hard it must have been for her to reach that point. He opened the door and grabbed her before she left the room, apologizing again for being such an asshole to her and promising he would take the medication.

It took a few tries to get his dosage correct, but when they did, he felt like he came out of a fog he had no idea he was stuck in. He felt better than he had in a while and she appeared to breathe a sigh of relief. He was more involved again, making her laugh, back to sleeping and other activities in their bed.

Then one day, an email sent him down the rabbit hole. That one email led to searches, articles, examining photos, listening to recordings, and then message boards and chat rooms. He spent days in his office trying to piece together the puzzle he had before him. He was onto something, he knew it.

But, those discoveries and excitement meant something else suffered. Until she came into his office and his annoyance at her kneeling on the papers he had carefully organized had led to them screaming at one another, he did not know things had gotten so bad. He slammed the office door, angry at her complete disregard for the work he had put into his research.

He looked again for the website where he had found the information on the paper she ripped up. It took a bit, but he found it and sent it to the printer. He forgot about their fight until he heard the office door open.

Her words at first angered him, and he let her know, pushing her buttons to get her to fight with him. She did not take the bait, and instead remained calm, and at the same time, so incredibly sad. She was leaving. She was suffocating, drowning, suffering, and all because of him. Her analogy of the oxygen masks broke through and made its way into his brain. Years of seeing those flight safety instructions, he could imagine them in that situation. Him stubbornly refusing her help while he looked at a shiny object, as she was slowly dying because she would want to help him first, broke his heart. He was not worth dying for. Not his sorry ass.

He slammed his head back against the wall, causing the things hanging on it to shake. He did it again, hoping something would fall on him, hurting him physically, the way he felt the pain emotionally. Nothing fell and he pushed himself to his feet. He looked again at the office and he
shook his head. What a fucking fuck up he truly was.

She left. *Wait*, he thought. He ran up the stairs and into their room. His breath left him as he bent over at the waist inside their closet. Her clothes were gone, completely cleaned out. He shook his head and moved to the dresser and found her drawers empty. He stumbled forward, his body hitting the dresser, not shutting the drawer as his eyes landed on the spot where her favorite picture of them sat. It was gone, along with her clothes, and the woman who wore them. He sank once again to his knees, as he realized the enormity of what happened.

He thought of the sadness in her eyes as she looked at him. He dropped his head, thinking of the feel of her body pressed against his as she held him. She felt so small and thin. Had she always felt that thin, or had she lost weight? God, he had no idea when he last held her in his arms. Could she have lost weight because of him and the undue worry and stress he put upon her, or was she trying to do so? He did not know, had not noticed, and it was like a knife to the gut knowing she was right; he stopped seeing her.

She left him. She loved him, but she left him *because* she loved him. She made sure he knew that before she walked out the door. Made sure he knew she still loved him.

With a strangled cry he suddenly fell forward, his face against the cold hard wood of the floor, as he realized that he had not told her he loved her. She had made sure he knew and he had said nothing. He lay on the floor, his world crumbling, and wept out his love for her, hoping somehow she could hear him.

Chapter End Notes

Again, these first few chapters are ROUGH. I hope you stick around as the sadness will get better, but “with the sweets comes the sour” as one of my favorite lines from Practical Magic says.

It will be better. I promise.
Maggie’s thoughts and feelings as she tries to understand the separation of Mulder and Scully.

See the end of the chapter for notes.

September 2014

Maggie drove down the dirt road toward the home Dana and Fox shared, her stomach in knots. She had been there many times, even stayed the night a few times when it was been too late or she was too tired to drive home. She loved the little eclectic house, but she was worried about what she would find when she arrived.

It had been a week since Dana arrived at her door, crying and heartbroken. A week of not speaking although she wanted to know how things reached such a point that separation was the best answer. Instead, she gave Dana the space she needed.

Growing concerned for Fox, and how he was faring on his own, she decided to drive out to see him. Needing a minute, she pulled the car over and shut it off. She could see the house, but she was still a ways off. She knew Fox would not be looking for her, so she was safe where she was for now. Her hands were shaking as she looked at the house and she held her keys in her hands.

She felt that lump in her throat she had been feeling for a while when she thought about Fox. She saw him changing, saw his physical appearance altering, but she had not pushed, and instead accepted Dana’s halfhearted excuses.

He was tired, he was taking medication, he was focused on work.

That last one puzzled her. Fox was not working and therefore she could not understand what work Dana meant. She did not push however, and Dana and not given more of an explanation. Fox stopped coming to dinners, and after a while, so had Dana.

Never would Maggie have imagined it would reach the point where they would separate. They fought so hard to get where they were and it felt to Maggie that Dana was giving up. She would be angry if she had not stood outside Dana’s old bedroom and heard her painful cries. If she had not heard the way she said his name or seen her disheveled appearance the next morning.

She knew this decision to leave him was excruciatingly painful for Dana. She was there when Fox was gone before and saw how it had torn at Dana. But this ... this was different. This was a conscious choice Dana made and Maggie knew she would fight that choice every day. She was so much like her father in that regard. A decision would be made and then he would agonize over it for days.

Maggie put her head on the steering wheel, and took a deep breath. This was going to be hard and she did not know what to do to try and help. She knew that if Dana was suffering, Fox would be as
She remembered those days and nights of uncertainty. Her own feelings dwarfed by the pain she saw on his face every time she saw him. For two months after Dana disappeared, he would show up at Maggie’s house. Random times, sometimes days apart, sometimes consecutively. She never turned him away. She knew he needed to talk to someone.

He would pace in her living room. Back and forth like a caged animal, telling her about cases he had in his filing cabinets of people who had been abducted and returned unharmed.

“I’ve read every file in there, Mrs. Scully,” he would say as he paced. “There are countless cases of people being found and returned. I know I will find the answers we need in one of them.” He would pace, talking a mile a minute, and she would let him.

Never did she approach him until he would finally stop, falling to the floor, weeping and apologizing to her, to Dana, to everyone but himself, as if accepting it was his fault and taking the burden was his punishment.

“She shouldn’t have been there, it’s my fault she was, I’m so sorry. So very sorry,” he would cry, over and over, his body sagging with the weight of worry.

When he quieted a bit, she would go to him and wrap him in her arms. She would hold him as she held her own children when they were younger. She did not know much about his past, aside from what Dana told her of his sister disappearing, but she recognized the need for love. The desire to feel cared for and the emptiness a person had who lacked it.

He never returned her embrace, but held firm, as if he would not allow himself the comfort, another way to punish himself. He stayed on her couch some nights, but was always gone in the morning.

He had not agreed with her when she purchased the headstone, wanting to bring closure to Dana’s disappearance. He said it was as if they were giving up and he would not do it. He walked out of the office angrily, pacing in the parking lot, until she came outside the office.

“This is wrong! How can you just give up on her? I told you we would find her. That I would find her. I have to,” he yelled at her, before he walked away in anger.

He turned, coming back almost immediately, apologizing to her, as he reached for her. It was the only time he initiated an embrace and she clung to him, both of them sharing the pain of losing someone they cared about.

The days began to bleed together as she drifted aimlessly, waiting to hear news of Dana. A phone call came in the middle of the night, or early morning, she could not remember, telling her that Dana had been found.

Seeing her in that hospital bed, seemed to ground her, keep her focus on one thing. It was not so with Fox. His shouts as he came to her bedside, his demand for answers, the sound of his frustration, was not something she would soon forget.

“Who brought her here? How did she get here? What’s going on? How the hell did she get here? Was it, was it paramedics, FBI, military? Answer me right now! What, you’re telling me she just appeared? Who did this to her!? I want to see her admission forms. Who did this to her? I want to see what tests have been done!”

Seeing him being physically dragged from the room out of the corner of her eye, she wanted to
weep. His fear for Dana’s safety had come to pass and now he wanted to know who hurt her to such an extreme.

“Listen, if you’re hiding anything, I swear, I will do anything, whatever it takes, I will find out what they did to her!”

His shouts echoed off the wall, his distress hurting her heart. She stayed silent and stoic by Dana’s side, but inside she raged like him. What had happened to her daughter?

After days of worry, living with fear residing in her heart, Maggie called Fox, her tears falling as she told him Dana was awake and asking for him. He walked into her hospital room, and he was a different man. His worry passed and his happiness could not be contained. His smile was radiant and while Dana was tired and beyond confusion, her answering smile was just for him.

They stared at each other, seeming to forget she and Melissa were in the room. She saw it then, but she did not know what to call it. Love was not quite right, but it was more than relief or a feeling of happiness for a friend. He had not stayed long, but the small interaction kept returning to her for the rest of her visit with Dana.

“Mom, would you mind picking up some things at my place for me?” Dana asked sleepily as they sat there and Maggie was happy to oblige.

Making a list, she left, telling her she would be back soon. A couple of hours later, she came back, a bag holding the requested items inside. Opening the door to Dana’s room, to no great surprise, she found Fox. He was asleep in the same chair she herself sat in earlier. Dana was on her side, facing him, also sleeping, their fingers lightly grasping to the other.

Maggie stood in shock. She had been wrong earlier. It was love she had seen when he walked in her room. Love trying its damndest to stay down when it knew it wanted to jump out, take a seat, and fill the hearts of everyone in the room.

Maggie had been to weddings, births, and funerals in her lifetime. She had seen love and beauty, but seeing them that way, it made her want to weep. It was incredibly small and could possibly be viewed as insignificant by another, but Maggie knew the truth. Her daughter was not always overly affectionate and she herself held Fox’s rigid frame often enough in the past few months to know he was probably the same. Yet, there they sat, fingers holding to the other, unable to let go, even in sleep.

She set the bag of Dana’s things down and left the room as quietly as possible. She made it to the bathroom down the hall before she started crying. Tears falling for the love she saw and for which she had not been prepared. Dana deviating from her plan to go from medicine and work for the FBI had boggled her mind and angered Bill. They did not understand, but in that moment she did. He had been waiting for her, her other half.

Maggie was now weeping, her tears falling fast as she thought of that one specific memory. There had been many more, but that one, so early in their partnership, was the one she called upon most when she thought of the relationship they shared. It showed the truth about who they were, the one person the other needed, before they even knew it themselves.

She sat up and dried her tears as she tried to control her crying. She took a few minutes, checked her reflection in the mirror, and restarted her car. She took a few deep breaths and then put the car in drive. She had no idea what she would find or what she would say, but she knew without a doubt she was needed there.
She pulled up in front of the house, shut off the engine, and stepped out of the car. She took a deep
breath and squared her shoulders. She walked up the steps and knocked on the screen door.
Hearing no movement, she opened it and knocked on the front door. Still, she heard nothing.

She stepped back and looked into the windows, hoping to catch a glimpse of Fox somewhere
inside. The house was a mess. Papers and books everywhere. Dishes were piled on the table and
the side of the sink. She did not see Fox, but she did see something that made her pulse race and
her breath catch.

On the table was a bottle of vodka. She could see it plain as day. She knew neither Dana nor Fox
were big drinkers. They usually enjoyed wine or beer when the occasion allowed. Looking at that
bottle of alcohol made her feel cold. It made her think of her father and she shook her head. No
chance would she let what happened in the past happen now.

She tried knocking once more on the door, but he still did not answer. She shook her head again
and walked back down the stairs. She opened up the back door and took out the basket she had
brought with her. In it was some of the food she knew he enjoyed. Lasagna, a meat casserole, and a
lemon cake she made especially for him.

She set the basket on the stairs and searched for a piece of paper to write him a note. She was
angry now, and she felt her hands shaking. She found an old empty envelope in the glovebox and a
pen in her purse. She sat on the stairs and wrote out her anger and frustration.

Fox-

_I don’t know what exactly has happened. I know you two are hurting, but drinking won’t help. I
refuse to see you walk down a path that will lead to nowhere. Take this food and throw out that
bottle of alcohol. This will nourish and that will hinder._

_I will be back tomorrow. I hope to find this basket empty, that bottle inside it, and your face when I
knock on the door._

_Please, Fox._

_Maggie Scully_

She left the basket in the shade of the porch and knocked once more, hoping he might finally hear
her. She waited, but still there was no movement. Walking down the steps, she got in the car,
looking back at the house as she started the engine. Backing up and glancing one more time at the
door, she put the car in drive and headed down the driveway.

Her heart was heavy as she drove away. She knew she was not the one to fix this problem, but she
wanted to help in any way she could. She knew loneliness and heartache and she hated it. Her one
great love had died, leaving her suddenly, taking part of her heart with him. She knew she would
never find another like him, so she had never tried.

Dana and Fox ... they were different and this was wrong. Giving up, walking away from the other
when death had not forced it upon them ... no she simply would not abide it. She would do what
she could to repair this very large crack. She was needed, she knew it. She could feel it in her very
soul.

A mother always knew.
Chapter End Notes

God, I love Maggie. I love her so much. I just feel that no matter the situation, she would be there to help Mulder, without hesitation.

Hope you are enjoying the story so far!
Chapter Summary

Scully and Maggie have a conversation about what has been happening with Mulder and what can be done for the future.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

*September 2014*

Scully woke up at an unknown hour in her old bedroom at her mother’s house. It was still dark out and she groaned, having no desire to know the time. She cried herself to sleep the night before, missing Mulder and worrying if he was okay, and now she had a terrible headache.

It had been eight days since she left him, and every one of them was excruciating. This had been the longest they had gone without speaking and she missed the sound of his voice. Missed the sounds of him puttering around the house. Missed her home and the coziness of their life inside.

Scully closed her eyes as she thought of Mulder crying as he held her, him on his knees on the porch, and how he must be faring now. Tears began to fall, and she turned to the side, crying into her pillow, no chance this headache would go away on its own, not now. She cried until she fell asleep, missing the man she loved, the way they used to be, and wondering once more if she made the right decision.

When she woke up again, it was just beginning to get light out. Glancing at the clock, she saw it was 6:15. God. She needed to be at the hospital by 9:30. She scrubbed her hands down her face and pushed the covers back, before she went into the bathroom to shower.

Dressed, hair done, makeup on, she went downstairs by 7:30 to have a cup of coffee and something to eat. As she was waiting for the coffee to brew, she heard her mother walking around upstairs. Scully closed her eyes at the inevitable conversation she knew was about to take place.

When she arrived at her mother’s house in tears, the car full of her things, her mother simply held her and let her cry. She soothed her as she had when she was younger, her hand across her back and one stroking her hair. She had not asked any questions, but brought her to her old room and helped her into bed.

Over the past few days, her mother gave her space, let her be, and not said much about her circumstances. She felt her gaze on her when they were in the same room however, but she seemed to be waiting for Scully to speak first.

Scully could tell her mother disapproved of her walking away and leaving the way she did, even without her saying anything. Her mother loved Mulder and had always been welcoming to him. She did not say anything, but her silence spoke volumes.

Scully threw herself into work, staying busy, and her mother kept silent. Scully knew that would not last however, and she had a feeling this morning was going to be the tipping point.
Sure enough, before the coffee was poured, her mother appeared in the doorway. She did not have the look about her of one who just woke up. Scully wondered if her mother had been waiting for the moment when she was sure Scully was downstairs.

“Coffee?” Scully asked her, turning back to the pot, steeling herself for what was to come.

“Thank you,” her mother said quietly, as she sat down at the table.

Scully grabbed two mugs and once the coffee was done, she poured them each a cup. She brought her mother her cup, set her own down, then went back to the refrigerator to get the cream. She brought it, sugar, and a spoon to the table, before joining her mother.

They were quiet as they drank their coffee, Scully feeling the coming conversation bubbling up, like a meal on the stove. It was almost ready, it just needed a few more minutes to simmer.

“Dana,” her mother said and looked up at her, and Scully could almost hear the ding! of the timer. She sighed as she met her mother’s eyes. It was hard to hold her gaze as she felt her mother could see inside her and know her heart.

“I know this is not something you want to discuss, but I need to try to understand. I need to know how it could get to this point, that it would be so bad, you would leave Fox,” her mother said quietly.

“Mom,” Scully said, closing her eyes and shaking her head.

“I know, Dana,” her mother began.

“No, Mom, you don’t,” Scully said, her voice rising. “You don’t know what it’s like, because you and dad never had problems like we have.”

“Maybe that’s true, Dana, not the ones you two have had, but if you think your father and I never fought, you have another think coming,” her mother said, her voice also rising, as Scully looked at her in surprise.

Her mother softly exhaled a small laugh. “Dana, do you think your father and I never fought? That we never had days of not speaking? Or nights when he slept on the couch because I was angry for some silly thing that seemed so important in the moment?” she asked her, looking at Scully with a kind but sad smile. “I think about those silly fights often. Of nights when I denied him the comfort of his bed or the warmth of my embrace, and I wish I could take it back.” She looked off in the distance, no doubt reliving those moments when she would have made a change.

Scully sat stunned at her mother’s words. Of course she had heard her parents bicker, but to that level? She never saw that, never would have imagined it from her own parents. She heard fighting and saw arguments growing up in base housing. It was a stressful life. Husbands or even wives gone for months at a time, the family at home the ones who had to deal with the day to day. People who came back changed and did not know how they fit back in with normal civilian life.

But her parents? That seemed as believable as the moon being made of cheese. She looked at her mother, unable to wrap her brain around what she was hearing. Her mother smiled at her and raised her eyebrows.

“Your father and I were two very stubborn people at times, Dana,” she said, smiling softly and reaching for her hand. Scully held it and kept her eyes on her mother. “But, even after silent days, we were able to work out our differences and move forward. To find common ground and not be angry.”
“Mulder and I have been **angry**, Mom, this is different,” Scully said, taking her hand from her mother’s and sitting back in her chair. “This is not a simple argument that has made me upset. This ... this is different, Mom.”

She looked down at her coffee cup and thought of how much she wanted to share with her mother. After all these years, saying it to someone else, the idea of an alien race or virus taking over the world, still sounded crazy and too much like science fiction. She let out a huff and shook her head.

“I wouldn’t leave because of a fight. Not like this anyway. I might leave to cool down, but ...” she said, before going quiet again. A few minutes passed before she spoke again. She raised her head and stared at her mother, almost daring her to look away. “Mulder believed that there was going to be an alien invasion and the possibility of the human race ending.”

Her mother’s reaction was exactly as she thought it would be, incredulous and shocked. She opened and closed her mouth, but said nothing. Scully felt her defiance deflate within her and she sighed as she looked down at the table.

“There was supposedly a predetermined date set, but it came and passed. Honestly, I ... I think I never thought it would actually happen, but Mulder placed so much stock in it, I could not deny it was a possibility,” Scully said as she kept her eyes on the table. She thought of his anger and his confusion when the date passed and she shook her head. “Mulder couldn’t seem to move past why it didn’t happen and be happy that we were still alive and safe. He tried, but ...”

She trailed off and felt her throat clog with tears. Almost two years later, seeing it from the outside looking in, she could see him more clearly. She could see his concern, his crazed desire to find answers, and his anger when he did not. But, she could also see herself on the other side of the office door, standing and waiting for him to stop and leave the past where it needed to be, in the past.

She shook her head and tears spilled down her face. “I tried, Mom,” she whispered. “I tried to help him move past it and at times he was his old self, but then ... he got pulled back in. I ate meals alone, sat watching television alone, I ... slept alone. I got him medication to help with the depression he was suffering from, but even that didn’t last long. I don’t even know if he was taking it regularly, or if he is now. I did what I could, I tried, but he stopped seeing me and being with me.”

She was quiet as she thought of the pain she felt when his gaze would pass through her, as if the answers he needed were behind her and she was standing in the way. She shook her head, trying not to cry anymore, but was unsuccessful as tears fell again.

“Mom,” Scully said, wiping her eyes. “Do you remember when Dad used to make us take swim tests? When we had to tread water for ten minutes before he would let us swim at the big pool with the high dive? I hated it then, but I understand why he did it now. Yes, it tired me out and sometimes I felt like I couldn’t do it, but it kept us safe, taught us to be alert. But that’s how I’ve felt for over a year, Mom, like I was treading water, trying to save myself, knowing one day I’d be too tired and I would go under and I wouldn’t come back up.”

She put her face in her hands and cried. Within seconds she felt her mother’s arms around her, and her soothing voice in her ear. She put her arms around her mother and cried into her shoulder, as she stroked her hair and let her cry.

Scully quieted after a couple minutes and pulled back, wiping her eyes. Her mother sat next to her and reached for a napkin, handing it to Scully so she could blow her nose and wipe her eyes. She did and they both were quiet for a bit.
“I had no idea, honey,” her mother said quietly. “I didn’t know that things had gotten so bad. Fox hasn’t been here much lately, but you always said he was busy or doing something at home. I never knew ...”

Her mother stopped speaking and reached for a napkin to dab at her own eyes. She shook her head and took a deep breath. Dabbing at her eyes once more, she reached for Scully’s hand and brought it to her lips, kissing the back of her hand.

“I’m so sorry, Dana. If I had known ...” she said, shaking her head as tears fell again.

“There was nothing you could have done, Mom,” Scully said grasping her mother’s hand. “If I couldn’t reach him, there was nothing that anyone could have done.”

Scully touched her mother’s face, both of them with tears on their cheeks, and gave her a sad smile, her chin quivering. Her mother put her hand over Scully’s and sighed.

“No one can help Mulder but himself. He has to make the decision and by my staying there ... I was enabling him and it was tearing me apart. I didn’t want to leave him,” Scully said, closing her eyes and dropping her hand from her mother’s face and into her own lap. “I love him, Mom. Being away from him hurts so bad, but not as bad as being in the same house and him having no idea I was there. Or him not noticing I’d been gone all day.”

She shook her head before she looked up at her mother. “I need to do this for both of us. So we can be better and we can hopefully find our way back to each other. Right now ... it feels like we are very far from one another. I hate it, but I know this is the right thing to do. I know it, but my heart is having a hard time getting onboard.” Tears fell down her face again and she took a shuddering breath.

Her mother pulled her in for another hug and they both cried again, each for different reasons, but finding strength in the other. Her mother squeezed her tight and whispered she understood and that she loved her.

Scully pulled back and wiped her eyes, glancing at the clock. “God, I have to leave in a few minutes and I’m sure my makeup is a disaster. I need to go check and fix it if it’s needed,” she looked at her mother and smiled sadly again. “It’s a lot to take in, I know, and it sounds so ridiculous, but thank you, Mom. Thank you for listening and for everything.”

“Dana,” her mother said, shaking her head.

“I know, Mom,” she said, kissing her mother’s cheek before she stood up and turned to head back upstairs to check her makeup, standing with her back to her mother. “He needs to decide what’s most important. Me and our life, or continuing to chase the demons from the past. No one can make that decision but him.”

Scully walked out of the room and left her mother sitting at the kitchen table. She did not turn around or she would have immediately had words with her mother.

She would have seen the look on her mother’s face that clearly pointed out that it may be Mulder’s decision, but that did not mean he had to make it solely on his own. Absolutely not. The determination and stubbornness set to her mother’s face would have told her exactly what she was up to, but Scully did not turn around.

Scully left for the hospital, her mind on the day ahead, but also the man in the house not too far from where she was currently. She hoped he was okay, taking his medicine, and that he did not
hate her. Not like the way she hated herself right now for not being able to help him, and not being enough to turn him from the darkness.

Chapter End Notes

Scully sitting at the table and trying to explain to her mom about her life with Mulder, yikes. You know that would have to be hard.

Also, that treading water thing ... my P.E. teacher made us do that in high school. I HATED it, it was so tiring. But guess who uses that every summer, all summer when she swims with children? Yeah, it’s tiring, but absolutely needed to survive.
Chapter Summary

The days since Scully left have blended together, leaving Mulder unsure of how long it has been. He is lost and broken without her beside him.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

September 2014

Mulder opened his eyes and groaned. His head was pounding and the light streaming through a crack in the curtains and into his eyes, did not help. He turned over and buried his face into the back of the couch.

Moving his shoulders, he groaned again, his muscles complaining about the lack of comfort they were getting of late. Since Scully left, he had not slept in their bed, but crashed at random times on the couch. He had not been upstairs to do anything since he discovered all of Scully’s clothes gone from their closet.

After he pulled himself from the floor, he grabbed his toothbrush, toothpaste, some underwear, shirts, sweats, and the blanket off the foot of their bed. He closed the door as he headed downstairs, having no desire to enter their room again. Not right now, anyway.

He dropped all the items on the coffee table, wrapped himself in the blanket, and fell on the couch. His body and soul were tired and in desperate need of rest. His dreams were fitful, with large hands pointing at him, and Scully’s voice coming from far away and him unable to find her, no matter how hard he looked.

He woke up sobbing for her and waiting for her hand to fall on his neck, telling him it was okay, and she was right beside him. When he realized that was not going to happen, he cried harder, and did not move from the couch. Not for the entire day.

The next morning, or early afternoon, he got up and used the bathroom for what seemed like forever. He brushed his teeth, rummaged in the fridge but found no food that seemed appetizing, walked back to the couch, laid back down, and fell asleep in minutes.

He woke up in the middle of the night famished and made some microwave popcorn, although it was not his first choice. He ate it rapidly and then drank two glasses of water, his stomach churning the entire time. He sat at the table and put his head down on it, his mind spinning.

Closing his eyes, he simply sat there, not caring to move, or making any plans to do anything productive. He listened to himself breathing, felt the air going in and out of his lungs, hypersensitive to every wheeze and every catch.

He could hear the clock ticking on the wall and it seemed to be mocking him. Every tick was a second longer, then a minute, then an hour that Scully was gone and not there with him. It was time that he would never get back, his mistakes realized, but no chance to put them right. He got up
from the table and went back to his cocoon on the couch, burrowed inside, and fell asleep once again.

It was later in the afternoon when he woke up, his body heavy and achy. He recognized what it was now and he fairly crawled into his office, looking for his medication. The room was still trashed, with glass on the floor, and papers everywhere.

He found his bottle of pills, opened it and took one out, swallowing it down dry. He also looked in the desk drawer for the anti-anxiety pills Scully had given him, “in case of emergency.” He rolled his eyes at the time, but took them from her. He was thankful for them now as he swallowed one down.

He sat back against the wall and closed his eyes, knowing the anti-anxiety pill would give him the bump he needed, but also knowing it was not going to be a quick fix. He simply needed something to help him feel better than he did at the moment.

He fought Scully that he was not depressed because he was still up and moving around, as if that was the only sign of depression. Such a fool he was to not listen to her then, and what an idiot he was to not recognize what was happening now.

He needed to eat, to drink something. The popcorn was not giving him any type of nourishment and he needed something else. Fifteen more minutes and he was able to push himself to his feet and stumble into the bathroom, using the toilet, brushing his teeth and splashing water on his face. He did not look at himself in the mirror, not wanting to see his reflection.

He went into the kitchen and rummaged through the cupboards, searching for something easy and quick. Finding a couple cans of soup, he made tomato soup and toast, the bread not quite gone yet. He ate slowly, his stomach clenching as he did. When he was finished he put the pot and the bowl in the sink, not bothering to wash them.

He picked up a glass from the cupboard and filled it with water, drinking it down in a few gulps. Putting the glass down, he opened the fridge, again looking for something to eat. It was pretty slim, but there was some things he could make, but not right then. He opened the freezer and spotted the bottle of vodka.

He took the bottle out, noting that there were some frozen dinners in the freezer as well. He placed the bottle on the table and stared at it. That bottle had been in the freezer for over two years. Neither he nor Scully drank much, but one night she had decided to have mixed drinks.

“What’s this?” he asked, as he took it from the paper bag. “Who’s drinking this?”

“We are,” she said, taking it from him and putting it on the table, before she added a bottle of peach schnapps, orange and cranberry juice. “We’re having sex on the beach tonight.” She raised an eyebrow at him and he smiled at her.

“Sex on the beach sounds … sandy,” he said, with a glance at her, as he reached for two glasses.

“Oh, not this type of sex. It’s very smooth and tasty,” she said in a sultry voice, handing him the vodka, her fingers sliding across his as he held the bottle.

“Just how I like it,” he responded, and she smirked.

The drinks were delicious, although she seemed to like them more than he did, as they made her very flirty. She was very handsy that night, as she reminded him of the fun they had, dancing under the stars that night on their private island.
He closed his eyes, not wanting to think of those times right now, swaying on his feet as as stood there. God, he was tired, the medicine was making him feel sluggish.

Back he stumbled to his makeshift bed, laying down and closing his eyes. He hoped the medicine would start to work soon and would help him when he woke back up. Right now, he just needed to sleep and try to feel better.

His dreams once again were strange. Scully was there and dancing around the living room, like the night they had the drinks. Music he could not place, was playing softly nearby, and she was smiling as he got closer to her. She pulled him close, and then put her mouth to his ear, whispering to him.

“You broke my heart, Mulder. I entrusted it to you and you’ve broken it,” she leaned back and her eyes were full of tears. They fell down her cheeks and filled the house, both of them floating in a sea of her tears.

She called out for him to help her, that she was getting tired trying to stay afloat. He saw her go under and he swam down searching for her. The furniture in the room blocked him as he tried to call out for her underwater. He finally found her and tried to pull her up but she just stared at him, her broken heart in her hands. She shook her head and handed him her heart, then closed her eyes.

He called out to her, trying to put her heart together, hoping that would save her, and make her open her eyes. He fumbled, the pieces slipping from his fingers, and he could not grab them again. Her eyes opened and she stared at him, her look hurting him more than any pain he ever suffered.

She moved and the pieces of her heart came to her, but she swam away from him, not looking back. He watched her disappear and he knew that he was not the one to fix her heart. He had lost that chance when he lost her. The water began to recede from the room and soon he was standing in the living room, alone and empty handed.

He woke up coughing and retching, doing what he could to dispel the water he could feel in his lungs. It felt as if her tears were drowning him and he could not breathe. Sitting up he clutched at his chest as his own tears began to fall. He did this, he did this to her, to him, to them.

He pushed the blanket off of himself and stood up. Still coughing, he walked to the table and picked up the bottle of vodka, opened it, and took a big drink. It burned in his chest, but he took another big drink before setting it down and closing it again.

This was not the answer, he knew that, but he needed it right now. He fell to his knees and thought of the pain in Scully’s eyes as he was unable to fix her heart. It was a dream, but it was also the truth. She had given him her heart, and he dropped it, letting it float away from him.

The vodka was making him feel dizzy and he leaned forward, placing his face on the floor. He closed his eyes and could hear his heart beating, the blood pumping loudly, like listening to the ocean in a seashell. He laid there, the room spinning, until he fell asleep once again.

Waking up on the floor, especially at his age, hurt like a son of a bitch. His back complained loudly as he started to stand up. He got as far as onto his knees before he had to stop and stretch his arms above his head and roll his neck. He pushed to his feet and stretched once again.

He walked to the office and again picked up his bottles of pills, swallowing one of each down, before closing the lids, and this time bringing the bottles to the coffee table. He felt better this morning than he had in the past couple of days, which meant the anti-anxiety pills at least were starting to work.
He missed a few doses of his antidepressants, and the result was not one he wanted to repeat again. He would be sure to stay on top of it now, let it catch up to where it needed to be, and not let a dosage slip his mind.

He opened the curtains, letting the sun stream in. Walking into the kitchen, he made some coffee, more toast, and some scrambled eggs. He ate them all at the table and then took his cup of coffee to the porch, needing more than just the sun from the windows. He needed some fresh air. It was hot as he stood there, no idea what day it was or how long it had been since Scully had left. He lifted the coffee cup to his lips and got a whiff of himself. He closed his eyes at the pungent smell of his body and his clothing, disgusted with himself.

Turning around, he went back in the house, closed the door, and set his cup on the table. He went into the bathroom and started the shower, glad this house had a full bathroom downstairs so he did not have to go upstairs. He took all his clothes off and stepped into the shower.

He stayed in there for what felt like hours, letting the medication, food, and warm water help him to feel better. Turning off the water, he grabbed a towel and dried off, wrapping it around himself as he walked into the living room to grab some clothes. He dressed and toweled off his hair before throwing the towel on a dining room chair.

He poured another cup of coffee and decided to sit on the porch again. Opening the door, he found a basket in the corner. His heart pounded, thinking maybe Scully had come by and tried to get in touch with him. He stepped quickly to the basket and found food in containers, and a note in between them.

He lifted the top container and immediately recognized Mrs. Scully’s handwriting. He read her note, his heart dropping, and his breath catching in his chest. He could feel her anger even through simple words on paper, and it hurt him to his core.

Aside from Scully, she was the only person he would ever want to cause pain or sadness. That she had been there and attempted to help, yet had been let down, made him feel terrible.

He read the note again and looked up, wondering how close they had been to just missing each other. Bending down, he picked up the basket and brought it inside, setting it on the table. He took out the food and found lasagna, a casserole, and lemon cake. He shook his head at the kindness she showed to him, regardless of how shitty she must think he is, hurting her daughter and causing her pain.

He opened the lasagna and the smell of it brought tears to his eyes. The first time he ever ate her lasagna, he raved about it and had three servings in one sitting. Scully had been aghast at the amount of food he ate, but Mrs. Scully had smiled and then laughed, her eyes bright and happy. Before they left, she slyly handed him a container of leftover lasagna and he grinned. She winked at him and he kissed her on the cheek. If she had not already cemented herself in his heart, that would have done it.

Smelling it now, knowing she made it specifically for him, broke his heart but also filled it with hope. He picked up a fork and ate a few bites, closing his eyes and relishing in the taste of real homemade food instead of the basic stuff he had made. He closed the container and picked up the lemon cake, opened it and took a huge bite. His stomach rumbled as if growling its approval for finally eating something fulfilling. Closing the container after a few bites, he put everything in the fridge. Turning around, he looked at the kitchen and the house in general. It was a disaster and the thought of cleaning it up before Mrs. Scully came back, made him feel tired. Shaking his head, he decided he would do it tomorrow. Right
now, he had something he needed to do.

He picked up the vodka bottle and dumped it in the sink. The smell of it turned his stomach and made him feel sick. He never really did care for it and he definitely did not like it now. Watching it go down the drain had no effect on him other than it was something he needed to take care of.

He put it in the basket, put Mrs. Scully’s note on the fridge with a magnet, picked up the basket, and opened the front door. He set the basket down, and sat in the chair on the porch. It was warm out and the breeze felt nice, but he felt like a shell of a person. Empty, dried out, and broken.

He took a deep breath, closed his eyes, and put his head back. He sat on the porch for a while, until he felt the temperature change a little. He got up and went inside, locking the door behind him, and closing the curtains. He thought of grabbing some more to eat, but decided against it and instead laid down and thought of what would happen tomorrow.

He would thank Mrs. Scully for the food and the care, but she did not need to be dragged into this with them. It was not fair to her and she had no idea what she would be getting into with him. He could not ask or expect that from her. She would understand, she was a reasonable woman.

He closed his eyes and fell asleep, no dreams to disturb him. He did not stir until a loud banging sound woke him and he sat up quickly as he looked around. He heard it again and he stumbled to the door, opening it to find Mrs. Scully standing there.

The sunlight blinded him for a few seconds, but when he was able to focus on her, he knew she would not be leaving him. She had the same determined look on her face that Scully got when she was about to prove to him he was wrong.

He stared at her, seeing her gaze falter for a second as she stared at his face, before she set it once again and put her keys in her purse. She raised her eyebrows and looked at him, before ducking past him and walking into the house.

He closed the door and turned to look at her. She was looking around at the house, her eyes staying for awhile on the couch, her face looking sad. Her eyes found his and she squared her shoulders.

“Well, Fox,” she said, giving him a small smile. “It looks like we have our work cut out for us.”

Chapter End Notes

God, this chapter made me ache and cry. Mulder so alone and broken kills me. His dream of trying to put her heart back together, ugh ... it hurts so good.
Maggie has arrived to check on Mulder. Seeing his pain with her own eyes, she will NOT be leaving, as much as he may insist he is fine.

Maggie sat back down at the table after Dana left for the hospital. She needed a few minutes to collect herself after their conversation. Aliens invading and taking over the world … it all sounded completely preposterous and like something straight out of a science fiction movie.

Fox and Dana had done some amazing things and been in incredible situations during their time at the FBI. Stories she heard over the years were strange indeed. But this? Even if it was just a story, told to make a fool of him, Fox seemed to believe it as fact. That meant whatever he believed, in his search for answers, it led them to separate and that was not right.

Maggie locked her fingers together and rested her chin on top of them, closing her eyes. She thought of Dana and Fox, of the past, and the different types of couples she had witnessed over the years.

The Navy wife who lost her husband and could not go on. The man who was devoted to his wife and labeled whipped and wore the name with honor. People who should never have married, those who should have had more time, and those who were first loves until the day they died.

“It’s not right,” Maggie said out loud, slamming her hand down on the table. “Not right. That man better answer the door today.”

She stood up and went to the fridge, pulling out the items she purchased to make a small casserole to take with her today. She turned the oven on to preheat, and began to combine the ingredients. As she did she thought of the first time she had met Fox.

She heard about “Mulder” and been intrigued. The exuberance in him that Dana described, made him sound like a puppy they had when the kids were younger. No matter how often, how long, or how many times they took him out to play, the puppy always wanted more.

After Maggie received a phone call from Dana from a quarantine camp somewhere in Washington state, she said she would like to meet this “Mulder.” She knew Dana could handle herself, but she would like to meet this man who pulled her daughter into a dangerous situation. Dana sighed but relented.

They came over a few days after they returned. Fox, for Maggie could not call him Mulder, had not been who she was expecting. He was young and incredibly handsome. He was also kind, attentive, and good mannered. He was funny and made both of them laugh at his corny jokes.

When it was time for them to go, he put on his jacket and held Dana’s for her. He turned to
Maggie, taking her hand and holding it, looking in her eyes.

“I am sorry for any worry it may have caused you knowing we had to be quarantined,” he said to her. “I assure you, that doesn’t happen all the time.” Dana snorted, and he glared at her, before glancing back at Maggie. “Thank you for dinner.”

“You’re welcome,” she said, smiling at him. He nodded and dropped her hand, turning to Dana with a smirk as she rolled her eyes.

As she watched them walk to the car, his hand on the small of Dana’s back, she came to the realization that he could be the perfect match for Dana. Witty, smart, and very handsome. Maggie was not ashamed to admit that she had fallen in love with him a little that day.

Maggie sighed as she put the casserole in the oven and grabbed the kitchen timer. She set it for forty five minutes and went upstairs to get ready for the day, anger seeming to rest just at the surface.

But anger for whom, she wondered as she stepped from the shower. They were both hurting and placing blame and being angry would not solve anything.

Still, with a glance at the timer as she began to blow dry her hair, she was angry. Angry that she had not pushed to know more when Fox was no longer showing up for family events. Angry at Dana for not being more forthcoming and letting someone help her. Angry at Fox for putting Dana in a place where she would be forced to leave him in order to care for him.

She sighed as she set the hair dryer down and closed her eyes. Of course Dana had not asked for help. That was not her way. Stubborn and determined to do things on her own, had been the way she was since she was five years old, and insisted on walking into kindergarten by herself, her red head held high.

Maggie opened her eyes and glanced once more at the timer. Seven more minutes to go. She finished her makeup and got dressed, arriving downstairs just as the the timer went off. She took the dish out of the oven and let it cool for a few minutes while she put on her shoes and picked up her purse. She placed the dish in the carrier she had purchased years ago, grabbed her car keys, and headed out the door.

The dish placed securely on the back passenger floorboard, she set off for Fox and Dana’s. Her fingers gripping the steering wheel, Maggie thought of how she had felt after that first meeting with Fox. Every time Dana would discuss him, Maggie listened and watched for any hints. She never mentioned it, never made it seem like she was looking for more than a friendship, but she watched.

Anytime she saw them together, which was not very often, she paid attention. She saw how Fox looked at Dana, how he watched her, and she saw how Dana smiled at his jokes or rolled her eyes, but she watched him, too. Maggie saw it. She said nothing, but she saw how they watched each other.

When they were separated and Dana was back to teaching at Quantico, Maggie would not admit it, but she breathed a sigh of relief. That job was not demanding the way her work was with Fox. There were no calls from quarantined places when she was teaching. Maggie felt better, but Dana was not happy.

The nights when Dana would come to dinner, or they would meet for coffee and a catch up, Maggie could see it on her face and hear it in her voice. She missed working with Fox. She missed
her friend.

Over the years, Dana had not had many friends or even dated many men. She was focused on her schoolwork and then her career. If she had a serious boyfriend, Maggie and Bill never heard much about him. She kept her relationships private and her feelings for people even more so.

With Fox though, she seemed to be unaware of how much she talked about him or how often she smiled when she discussed places they had been and things they had seen. Maggie was sure that if Dana knew, she would have stopped immediately, not wanting to let too much be known about her private feelings.

Maggie sighed and shook her head, thinking to what lay ahead, as the car whipped down the highway. She was not dishonest when she told Dana of her and Bill’s tiffs. No matter how much you love someone, anyone, there can still be days when you want to leave.

Sometimes Maggie would be so angry with Bill, she could have walked out the door and left. Never forever, but just to show him she could and to cool down. She never did and they always worked through their problems. There was not ever a time when it was a mental health issue, as it seemed it may be with Fox. This was different, but she was not going to let that deter her.

All too soon, she was exiting the highway and driving down the roads to the house. She pulled up and turned off the car, taking a deep breath before she stepped out and closed the door. As she walked up the steps she looked to the right and saw the basket was empty of the food she brought and in its place was the bottle of vodka.

She blinked back tears and blew out a breath as she opened the screen door. She knocked and got no answer, so she pounded harder. Once more, and the door was opened, her heart falling when it did.

Standing before her, blinking and squinting in the light of the sun, stood a man she would have passed on the street and not known to be Fox. He was thin, pale, and half his face was covered by a dark beard in desperate need of a trim. She felt like weeping at the sight of him, so far removed from the man she knew for so many years.

In the seconds it took before he could focus on her, she made a decision. No doubt he would say he was fine and that would not be met with her approval. She was staying and she would be helping. When his eyes met hers, for a second she faltered, but only for a second. Gone was the brightness from his eyes and it pained her heart.

Steeling herself, she stared at him, putting her keys in her bag to show she was there to stay. Not waiting for an invitation, she pushed past him into the house.

It smelled stale and almost choked her. She saw the dishes and mess she saw from the windows. Her gaze fell on the bed he made on the couch and again she wanted to weep. Her heart was breaking for this man who had become like a son to her.

The mess, the hopelessness she could practically feel, made her think of the day when she met her own lifeline in Evelyn so long ago. She thought of the words Evelyn had spoken as she stood in the middle of that filthy house, facing Maggie as she stood there equally filthy, and she repeated them now to Fox.

“Well, Fox,” she said, giving him a small smile. “It looks like we have our work cut out for us.”

"Mrs. Scully,” he said, his voice gravelly with sleep. He cleared his throat as she set her purse
down on the table.

“I think we should open the doors and the windows to let this old air out, first and foremost,” she said already stepping to the windows and opening the curtains. He stepped beside her and unlocked and opened the window.

She smiled at him and moved to the next one. He dutifully followed her and opened the window after she had opened the curtains. She walked to the back door and opened it, letting the breeze blow through the house.

“There, that’s better,” she said, looking at him again. His hair was sticking up and he looked at her with sad eyes. She walked over to him and without asking, she wrapped her arms around him, holding him close and closing her eyes.

He remained still for a couple seconds, but then his arms went around her and she felt him shudder. She knew he was crying but she said nothing about it, just held him for a few minutes.

When she pulled back, she did not look at him, but gave him a chance to wipe his face and collect himself. She stepped to the office doorway and looked inside the room. This must have been the epicenter of it all as the room was trashed. She took in all that was beyond repair, and stepped back. This was not the place to start.

She looked at him now and he had his head down, taking deep breaths. She watched him until he looked up at her and opened his mouth to speak.

“If you’re going to tell me you don’t need help and that you’re doing just fine, you can save your breath. I’m not going anywhere,” she said, shaking her head at him.

He closed his mouth and swallowed, before he cleared his throat. “Thank you for the food,” he said, his voice hoarse again, as though he had not spoken in days. He cleared his throat again and shook his head.

“You’re welcome. Thank you for doing as I asked,” she said pointedly, watching his face.

He shook his head again. “It’s not what you thought. I did drink some but .. not .. it was just the once,” he said beseechingly. “I don’t really like it, but ..” He dropped his head again and she watched him.

“Thank you regardless, Fox,” she said quietly, and he nodded. He raised his eyes to hers and she smiled at him. “Why don’t you go shower, and I’ll heat you up some food. What would you like? I have a different dish in the car, would you like that one?”

“I … Mrs. Scully …” he began, but seeing the look on her face was one that would not accept anything besides what she asked, he sighed and his shoulders dropped. “Anything sounds fine to me, thank you.” He took a towel from a chair, and disappeared into the bathroom.

When she heard the shower start, she covered her mouth and allowed herself a minute to cry. Then she began to straighten up the living room, folding his blanket and placing it on the couch. She took a pair of clothes from the coffee table and laid them on the floor by the bathroom. She gathered up the dirty dishes and put them on the side of the sink.

She went out to the car and grabbed the casserole she made and found it to still be a bit warm. She brought it inside and scooped up a serving for him and put it on a plate, warming it slightly in the microwave. Looking in the fridge, she began to make a mental list of all the groceries he would need.
Closing the fridge, she saw her note to him on the door. A part of her wanted to take it down and throw it out, but if he stuck it up there, maybe it was for a reason. The shower turned off and she turned away and walked to the sink, filling it with warm water, adding the dishes to be washed.

She heard him walk into the room a few minutes later, the majority of the dishes finished, as he was quiet behind her.

“There is a plate of food in the microwave for you,” she said, gesturing toward it with her chin as she turned to look at him. He nodded and went to take the plate out, grabbing a fork from the drawer on the way.

He sat down and she resumed her task of cleaning the dishes, rinsing down the sink, and wiping down the counters. He ate in silence, but once got up to get a glass of water, and go into the living room for some medicine on the coffee table. He sat back down and finished his food, rising to take his plate to the sink.

“I’ve got it,” Maggie said softly, taking his plate and fork, pushing him on the shoulder to sit back down. He did so with a sigh and she smiled as she turned away. “How about some of the lemon cake? I know it’s your favorite.”

“Okay,” he said in a low voice.

She took the container from the fridge and grabbed a plate as she heard him say to get a plate for herself as well. She smiled again and took out another plate, two forks and a knife, before slicing two decent sized pieces. Bringing them to the table, she took a seat, pushing his toward him. He took the fork and pulled the plate closer, taking a bite and sighing.

She watched him as he ate. He was quiet and withdrawn, not at all like the exuberant puppy she usually saw. Of course the situation more than called for his countenance, but it was more than that and she could not put her finger on it.

She took a bite of her cake and she heard him choke. Looking up at him, she watched his face crumble, his head drop, and his left hand raise to his face, covering his eyes. She immediately reached for his right hand and he grasped it tightly in his own. She said nothing, but let him cry, both of their desserts left untouched.

He cried for a few minutes, squeezing her hand at intervals and she responded with squeezes of her own. He began to calm down, but she did not let go of his hand, letting him decide when to do so. When he gave her one last squeeze, she loosened her grip and he stood up, leaving the table.

She heard the bathroom door shut softly and she let her own tears fall quietly, quickly wiping them and knowing when she left she would have a proper cry. She could hear him blowing his nose and the water running, before the door opened again.

He came back in the kitchen and opened a cupboard, taking out a box of tea. He picked up the kettle and filled it, setting in on the stove and turning it on. Two mugs were taken from the cupboard and a bag of tea was added to each of them. He kept his back to her as he waited for the water to boil. When it whistled he turned off the burner and poured water into the mugs.

He brought the mugs to the table and set them down, turning to pick up the honey and the sugar, and adding them to the table. He sat down and rocked back and forth slightly in his seat as he waited for his tea to steep.

“I’m so sorry,” he whispered, his head bent and his arms crossed on his knees. She put a hand on
his arm and said nothing. He covered her hand with his own and they sat in silence.

He looked up at her and she felt her heart break for him yet again. This man, whose eyes she had seen filled with turmoil, with rage, and now with such sadness, made her want to weep. Hearing Dana’s story this morning and her own sadness had been hard, but this, this was almost too much. She felt his pain rolling off him and she wanted to fix it, to take it from him.

She reached over and brushed his hair back from his forehead, his eyes closing as she did. She stroked his hair and stood up, pulling him in for a side hug, kissing the top of his head, as she closed her own eyes. He did not embrace her back, but she did not expect him to. She remembered again holding him this way and how he would remain rigid, not accepting her embrace.

Today it was not the same. Today he simply let her hold him, leaning into her, and allowing her to comfort him. She ran her hands up and down his arm and then stepped back, kissing his temple as she did.

“Fox,” she said quietly, and he raised his head to look at her. “I know you’re sorry. I know how much you love Dana, and have for a very long time. I know you would never willingly and in full knowledge, push her away and want her to leave. Fox, you know I know how her disappearance affected you. Affected both of us.”

He looked down and nodded his head. She sat back down and reached for his hand. He looked up again and she gave him a small smile, squeezing his hand as she did.

“When she was gone, there was nothing you could do, Fox,” she said, holding his gaze. “We didn’t know where she was, where to begin to look, or how to help her. When she came back, we still had to wait. We had to wait for Dana.” He stared at her, letting her words sink in, before he nodded again. She smiled again and held his hand in both of hers.

“But this time, it’s different,” she said, still smiling. “She isn’t gone, Fox. And there are things you can do. She’s not the decider this time. You both are. You need to decide, Fox.”

He watched her face, his eyes searching hers, before he nodded again. Dropping his head, he took a big breath, and then raised his head again. “I’m so tired,” he whispered. “I ... I am thankful you’re here, but I’m so tired, Mrs. Scully.”

She smiled again and nodded his head. She sat back down and reached for his hand. He looked up again and she gave him a small smile, squeezing his hand as she did.

“Thank you,” he whispered into her hair, before pulling back and sitting down. She covered him as he lay down fully, and she sat on the coffee table, watching him settle into the couch.

He was asleep within minutes and she stared at him as he took deep breaths, his body resting. She shook her head and looked around. Her eyes landed on the bottles of pills beside her and she picked them up. She read the names and understood why he was tired. Setting them down, she got up and went upstairs to their bedroom.

Opening the door, she walked to the dresser and opened drawers until she found his sweats and underwear. She took out a few pairs and then found his shirts in the closet. Seeing the closet half empty hurt her heart and she understood why he made a makeshift bedroom downstairs.

Carrying the clothes, she closed the door and headed downstairs. She placed them on the coffee table and then began to straighten the house. She collected the clothes she found in the room and
the bathroom, added them to a load of clothes already in the laundry room, put them all in the washing machine, added some soap and turned it on.

She glanced over at him on the couch and saw he was still sleeping. She cleared off the table and washed the dishes they had used. Putting away the containers of food, she wiped down the table, and glanced over at the office. She sighed and walked over to it.

In the next couple of hours, she straightened up papers, picked up broken glass, and took dishes to the kitchen, filling the sink to let them soak. She put the clothes she washed in the dryer and went back to the office.

The computer was too heavy for her to lift, so she did everything but that, leaving it for Fox to pick up. Once the room was clean, she stepped out and looked around at it. So many clippings were stuck to the wall and most were about topics she would roll her eyes at if she saw them in the paper. Fox, of course, would find them interesting.

She went to the laundry room and took the clothes from the dryer, folding them, and stacking them on the dryer. She found some of Dana’s clothes—some leggings, underwear, and a couple of shirts. She decided to take them upstairs and put them away, no need for Fox to see them right now.

Once she put them in an empty drawer in the dresser, she came back downstairs and watched him sleeping again. He seemed to be sleeping soundly and she was relieved. She walked back to the kitchen, washed the dishes, and then took out the trash.

She closed and locked the back door, used the bathroom, picked up her purse and her keys, quietly opened the front door, and headed to her car. She drove to the nearest grocery store, bought him some groceries, and headed back to the house.

Quietly she opened the door, and found him still sleeping. She quickly put away the groceries and put the bags under the sink, before finding some paper and a pen in the office. She sat at the table and wrote him a note, stating that there was food in the fridge, and she would be back next Wednesday to see how he was doing. If he needed anything, he should call her, but she was confident he would be okay until she came back.

She left it on the table, with an alien mug holding it in place. The windows were still open, but the breeze felt good. She closed the curtains, but left the windows open, not wanting to wake him. Brushing his head, she whispered goodbye and walked out the door with her things.

Driving away, she let her tears fall. Her heart was breaking for the two souls who were not where they should be right now. She cried for the pain they were in, for the sadness in both their eyes, and the long road she knew was ahead for them both.

It would be worth it in the end, she was sure of it. Fighting for what was right, for love, and for the person who means the most to you, was always worth it.

Always.

Chapter End Notes

Again, I love Maggie. I love her giving and loving heart and her desire to help the man she loves like family.
Peace For Christmas

Chapter Summary

The first Christmas apart, Scully spends it working in order to not think of the day. Of course, the best laid plans rarely work out the way we imagine.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

December 2014

Scully walked into her office on Christmas Day and sat down in her chair, leaning her head back and taking a deep breath. She was tired, but still had a few hours left in her shift. Swiveling her chair, she looked out the window and watched the snow falling.

It had been three months since she had left Mulder and gone to her mother’s house. Three months on her own, without the man she loved. She missed him more than she thought possible, but she knew this was right.

Three weeks ago, she left her mother’s and moved into a one bedroom apartment, closer to the hospital. She and her mother went out one day and looked at places that would fit her needs. There were two and she chose the second one.

The place was close by, but other than that, it was not something she thought much of. It was the place she slept and got ready for her day. When she was picking out furniture, she was careful to not have the place be too comfortable or too homey.

Before, her place was her escape and her sanctuary. Now, it was a place she needed to have in order to receive her mail and to sleep. Her mother kept insisting she could continue to stay with her, but Scully needed to be on her own.

Shopping for her furniture was hard and at times she wanted to break down, but she got through it. Everything had a nice clean look to it, but it was also unfeeling and lacked happiness.

At home, the stuff she and Mulder had were things they had collected for years. The couch had conformed to their bodies. The books, pictures, posters, and even the dishes were things that were home to her. She missed her home, but she also needed to have her own place for the time being.

She chose dark wood furniture for her table and chairs, coffee table, and side tables. The kitchen had a white marble gray countertop and the cupboards were white with glass fronts. Two barstools, also in dark wood sat under the counter. A cream colored area rug lay in the middle of the living room. She added a cozy cream colored throw to the back of the dark gray couch, and a pillow she found online.

One night she was up late before moving into her place. She stumbled upon the photo of the pillow and it made her smile, imagining Mulder’s reaction to seeing something like it. She found the website, purchased it, and waited until she moved in before she opened it.

When she set it on the couch, she smiled and then cried for a bit, before smiling again. It was such
a simple thing, but it did make her happy and think of Mulder. It was a small light gray throw pillow with purple stars as the background. A blue single seater spaceship with a space cat alien was the main focus. The cat was white with stripes, had pink in its inner ears, three eyes, and antenna.

A CAT-lien, or something similarly silly, she could almost hear Mulder saying. She shook her head, hoping one day he would see it.

For a reason she did not understand, the pillow had a name and it was called Lisa. Maybe it was the name of the cat, but Scully thought he looked more like a Jasper for some reason. Maybe the designer was named Lisa, but Scully had no idea. She did not mind that she did not know, she loved the pillow and every time she saw it, it made her smile.

Her bedroom had a new comfortable bed and frame, again in dark wood colors, with white sheets and a white duvet. Here the only splash of color and personality was in the bed throw pillows, four of them in different shades of blue. They made her think of the sea and it calmed her.

The only photo in the room was the one she took with her when she left, the one of her and Mulder. One day they went with her mother to a church function, a bazaar type thing where different booths had been set up. People brought foods to try, things to sell, and things to donate.

“Oh, Mulder,” she said, as they walked up to a booth. “Try this jelly, it’s so good.” She picked up the sample piece of bread and handed it to him. She knew the person who made it, and that this particular jelly packed a spicy punch.

He obediently taken the bread and tried it. As she stood watching and waiting for the inevitable moment, her mother unknowingly captured the exact second in a photo. Mulder’s eyes had gone wide and Scully had thrown her head back in laughter, her hand at her chest. She loved the joy she saw in the photo and though he bitched about her tricking him, he too smirked every time he glanced at it.

She placed the photo on the dresser so she could see it wherever she was in the room. Some days it brought her joy and some days it tore her apart, knowing they had been so happy. Yes, Mulder always had been one to overly obsess about something, but not like the past couple years.

Scully sighed, hoping he was okay. They still had not spoken since she left and it hurt. She left him text messages, one per week to tell him she missed him and that she loved him. She called and left messages on his voicemail. Short little updates, just to stay in touch, but he had not responded to any of them.

He did this occasionally, turning off his phone, and shutting out the world. Every time he did, it was maddening. After not hearing from him, she called the pharmacy and inquired if he picked up his medication recently. He had and she breathed a sigh of relief, knowing two things- he was alive (the shit) and he was taking care of himself. He would call her when he was ready, she supposed. His silence hurt, though. It hurt a hell of a lot.

She sighed again and watched the falling snow. It was beautiful and the sun was just beginning to set, her favorite time of day. The ground was now covered with snow and she was thankful she was living close by and would not be forced to stay at the hospital in order to avoid treacherous roads.

“Doctor Scully?” a voice cut into her thoughts. She turned around in her chair and looked to see who had called to her.

“Doctor Clark,” Scully said, nodding her head to the woman in the doorway. She was about her
own age, brunette with deep brown eyes, and a kind smile. She was also smart as hell and an amazing doctor.

“I’m sorry to bother you,” Doctor Clark said, stepping in the room with a smile. “But, Sydney Brown is asking for you.”

“Is she all right?” Scully asked, standing to her feet and reaching for her stethoscope.

“She’s fine, she would just like to see you,” Doctor Clark said with a wider grin.

Scully stared at her curiously. Sydney Brown was ten years old and awaiting a surgery. She was incredibly bright and loved to give Scully complicated riddles to solve. She quickly become one of her favorite patients and hearing she was asking for her worried her.

“It’s nothing medical, Doctor Scully,” Doctor Clark said, with a knowing smile. “It’s Christmas.” She raised her eyebrows and looked at her, as if that explained everything.

Scully nodded at her and walked past her toward Sydney’s room. Maybe something was wrong and Doctor Clark did not want to tell her. Oh, Christmas Day, of course. She had volunteered to work for anyone on Christmas who wanted the day off. Since she had no plans for this day, and wanting to keep her mind off missing Mulder, coming in and letting others be home with their families, was an easy decision to make.

Yesterday afternoon, her mother came over and they celebrated Christmas with a small meal and some gifts. Scully had gone to a craft store and picked out a small decorative fake tree and set it on the coffee table.

“Well, it seems you found a tree your father would finally approve of,” her mother said, touching the fake needles, smiling at Scully.

“Ahab was a tough one to please when it came to trees, that’s for damn sure,” she laughed. They made their meal together, watched A Christmas Story, laughing and groaning in all the right places, and opened gifts after the kitchen was clean. Scully got her mother a beautiful red cardigan, a white scarf, and diamond earrings.

“Dana! This is too much. I can’t accept these,” she said, shaking her head as she looked at Scully.

“It’s not. In fact it doesn’t feel like enough, Mom. Thank you for all you’ve done these past few months. For the help you’ve given me, the listening ear, and your advice. I can’t thank you enough,” Scully said, tears in her eyes. They embraced, both crying, before laughing at themselves.

Her mother gave her a purple coat that she might not have chosen for herself but after trying it on, immediately loved. She was also given fancy bubble bath and a tea kettle and fancy teas, as she did not have one in her new place.

“For the next time you need a listening ear,” her mother said as she looked at all the new kinds of tea. Scully smiled and nodded.

Considering it was just the two of them, and the reality of where she was in her life, it had been a good day. Now, as she walked hurriedly to check on a patient, she hoped she was okay and simply wanted to wish her a merry Christmas.

Arriving outside her door, she stopped to take a breath before entering, so as not to seem worried. When she walked in, she saw both parents were there, and she smiled. She usually only saw Nancy,
Sydney’s mother.

“Mr. and Mrs. Brown, hello,” she said, shaking their hands. “Sydney, hello to you as well.” She stepped over to her and squeezed her hand. Sydney grinned at her and squeezed back.

“I was told you were asking for me, are you feeling okay?” Scully asked as she put her stethoscope in her ears and started to place the end on Sydney’s heart. Sydney giggled and Scully stopped.

“Doctor Scully, I’m fine!” Sydney said with another laugh. “It’s Christmas today, you know.” Scully smiled at her and took the earpieces out, hanging her stethoscope around her neck.

“Yes, I do know it’s Christmas today,” she said, raising her eyebrows, making Sydney laugh.

“My parents brought me some gifts,” she said pointing to her table, where there were several gifts. A stuffed dog, a joke book, markers and a sketchbook, and some magazines.

“Wow, that’s a nice haul of stuff you have there, but it looks like you missed one,” Scully said, pointing at the one box still unopened. “Are you saving it for after your surgery?”

“No, Doctor Scully!” Sydney said, smiling at her. “That present is for you!”

Scully turned her head to Nancy, finding her smiling, with tears in her eyes. “Sydney wanted to thank you for all that you have done for her. This is for you.” Nancy said picking up the gift and handing it to Scully.

Scully was stunned and stood there in shock. No patient had ever given her a gift before and she felt awkward standing there holding it. She had nothing to give them and when she caught Nancy’s eye, she knew her gift had already been given. This gift was the thank you, the reciprocation of a gift to be received.

“Open it, Doctor Scully!” Sydney said, clapping her hands and smiling. “I can’t wait to see how you like it.”

Scully looked back down at the gift and started to unwrap it. The paper came off and then she took the lid off the box. Opening the tissue paper, she gasped. It was a painting, on canvas, of the ocean at night, the color of ink, with the moon shining brightly on the water. There were little stars in the sky and the bow of a boat was visible in the lower left corner, as if it were just sitting and enjoying the view.

On the boat, stood Scully, her profile prominent as she looked out at the water. She had a smile on her face and her one visible eye was very blue. She was wearing her lab coat and it was blowing in the breeze, along with her hair. It was truly beautiful and she was amazed by the talent Sydney showed at only ten years old.

“Do you like it?” Sydney asked in a tiny voice.

“Sydney,” Scully said, shaking her head. “I absolutely love it. It’s incredibly beautiful and so detail oriented. You did an amazing job painting this for me. Thank you so much. What did you name it?”

“Name it?” Sydney asked her, looking confused.

“Oh yes!” Scully said, patting her pockets for a pen. She found a black marker in it and handed it to Sydney. “All artists name their creations, what will you call yours?” She handed the painting to Sydney and pointed to the back where she could write the name down.
Sydney thought about it and then smiled. Scully watched her write “Peace for Doctor Scully” and she had to hold back a sob.

“Can you sign it for me too?” Scully asked, clearing her throat. Sydney smiled, signed her name, and gave it back to her.

“I remember you telling me that you liked the ocean and the stars, so I combined them,” Sydney said with a shrug. “I’ve never seen you in clothes besides your lab coat.”

“It’s perfect,” Scully said, looking at it again. “It’s almost like it’s a superhero costume or something like it.” Sydney laughed and Scully gave her a hug. “You know, my father was a Navy Captain, so this is extra special. Thank you, Sydney.” She touched her arm, and nodded at Nancy and Jeff, wishing them all a merry Christmas.

She quickly walked back to her office, closed the doors, and sat at her desk. Looking at the painting again, she let her tears fall. If she chose to have a more cynical view it would seem she was sailing out to sea on her own, not looking back. She knew that was not what was intended, but given her circumstances it was how she felt right then.

She dried her eyes, took out her phone and opened her text message app. There was still no response from Mulder. Although she did not expect there to be, she still sighed and felt that hurt again. She would keep trying, keep the line of communication open, even if it seemed to be jammed on his end.

*Merry Christmas, Mulder. I love you.*

Message sent, she put her phone back in her pocket. Holding the painting, she looked at her face, at the happiness Sydney had captured. The blue black inky color of the water was one she had loved for most of her life. She loved how the inviting beautiful bright blue could turn to ominous and dark by nightfall.

It was like life in that way, she supposed, the lightness had to give way to the darkness. But the light would always come around again, though it sometimes may take a while.

She leaned the painting against her coffee mug and sighed. Glancing out the window, it was completely dark now, the street lights illuminating the snow on the ground and the snow that continued to fall.

*Peace for Doctor Scully,* she thought. She closed her eyes and wished that she could find it as simply as one could write it on canvas. How easy life would be, if that was the case.

*Peace for Doctor Scully,* she thought again, taking a deep breath and waiting for peace.

Chapter End Notes

I have been looking forward to this chapter for a long time. I’ve had it written for MONTHS and I’ve been so excited for Untilwefindit to discover her little shoutout. It’s been SO hard to keep it a secret. Girl, I hope you loved it. I’m certain you will, and I know you will tell me. 😊

In case you were wondering, the space cat alien pillow does in fact exist and the photo
Untilwefindit sent me, inspired me to add it in the story. I don’t know how to add the photo here, but this is the website, if you want to see it or purchase it. 😊


And, Sydney is also real. She is a little girl I used to nanny and she just turned 11. She is AMAZINGLY talented at drawing for being as young as she is. I watched her recently for a few hours and in 20 minutes she copied a drawing from a picture so well, I was floored. She’s amazing and I had to change the original name I had to pay homage to incredible young artists.
December 2014

Christmas morning dawned and with it a cold snap that promised snow later in the day. Mulder got up to use the bathroom and shivered before getting back under the covers and going back to sleep for awhile.

Once he woke again, he saw that it was ten in the morning. He made some coffee, ate some breakfast, and took a shower. Standing in the bathroom, he wiped the steam off the mirror and looked at himself, really looked at himself.

It had been three months since Scully had left. While he was doing better than when she left, he still missed her every day. He was still sleeping on the couch and not been upstairs in all that time. He still had the beard, and the thought of going upstairs for a razor ...

He left the bathroom and dressed, turning the heat up to be a little more comfortable. Turning on the television, he saw that it was a marathon of *A Christmas Story* and he thought of how Scully loved this movie. He left the movie playing and settled back into the couch.

Years ago, when they had first moved into this house, they spent time feeling free and finally able to stop running. Of course, years of paranoia and constantly looking over his shoulder did not stop overnight.

They had escape plans ready and practiced, just in case there was trouble. It kept them busy for a while, and then Scully had found a job. She was busy and he was alone at home for the majority of the day. Dates blended together and suddenly it was Christmas Eve. He had no idea until there was a pounding at the door. Scully stood on the other side with a tiny *Charlie Brown* type tree.

She grinned as she came inside and set the tree on the dining room table. She also had some food in her car. She had stopped at her mother’s on her way home as they would not be joining her family the next day, him still not exactly a free man.

She pulled some chintzy decorations out of a bag and they decorated the small tree with them. She smiled at him and it was like a match had been thrown on a puddle of gasoline. Within minutes, they were naked, her legs wrapped around him, both of them on the brink of climax. She clawed at his back as she came, leaving scratches she would tend to the next day, before creating new ones.

After they had finished, she warmed up some food, completely in the nude. They sat eating the meal her mother had prepared, naked and basking in the afterglow of their frenzied lovemaking. She grinned at him, telling him about her day, before teasing him as she ate. Touching his foot,
licking the whipped cream slowly off her fork, sucking said fork into her mouth. He reached for her and the power went out, plunging them into darkness.

Stumbling in the dark, he swore as he stubbed his toe. “Christ! Didn’t we have candles all over this place a few days ago? And where the hell are the flashlights? We carry them for years and now, I can’t find ONE?” She laughed and he swore again.

“It really is dark, isn’t it? Be careful, Mulder!” she giggled when he hit something else, cursing again.

“A-ha!” he yelled out, his hand landing on a couple of votive candles in a drawer. He felt around and found some matches, lighting them, finding her smiling at him. Naked, and so fucking beautiful.

He walked back over to her and grabbed her hand, handed her one of the candles, and pulled her upstairs. Taking her candle from her, he set them both down on the dresser. He turned around, looking at her as she stood in the light of two small candles, her beauty magnified tenfold.

He walked up to her and kissed her, stroking her back, giving her the chills. The bed was cleared of all pillows and he laid her down, kissing his way down her body. She arched up into him and pulled at his hair, as he kissed her thighs, continuing down, worshipping her body.

“Mulder,” she moaned, her hands in his hair, holding him where she wanted him most. He kissed and licked, bringing her over the edge as she held his head tightly.

“I need you inside me, Mulder. Now,” she relaxed her tight hold on him and pulled him toward her, guiding him back to her mouth. She kissed him thoroughly as he slid inside her, and she gasped into his mouth. She gripped his ass and pulled him closer, locking her legs around him.

Slowly and almost rhythmically, they moved together, whispering the other’s name, sighing, and then crying out. Lying there after with the candle light flickering, he ran his fingers through her hair.

“I love you, Scully,” he said.

“I love you too. Merry Christmas Eve, Mulder,” she whispered, falling asleep with her head on his shoulder, her arms around him.

Shaking his head, he saw the movie had ended and the credits began, before starting over once again. Mulder felt embarrassed that thoughts of Scully made him hard as a family movie was playing. He turned the television off and put his hand in his sweats, stroking himself, closing his eyes, and thinking of the taste of Scully’s skin.

He remembered waking up early on that Christmas morning, to her mouth around him. He groaned and put a hand on top of her head, running his fingers through her hair, and breathing her name. She looked up at him and he almost came at the sight. Smiling as well as she could around him, she continued with her task. She was so good at knowing exactly what he liked, taking him to the edge, before she straddled him, and rode him to orgasm.

Mulder moaned as he felt his release approaching. He thought of the feel of her around him as she came, the breathy way she said his name, and he came. He cried out, breathing hard, his sweats a mess, immediately feeling ashamed for what he had done.

He got off the couch, changed his pants, and washed his hands. Catching a glimpse of himself in the mirror again, he shook his head and made a decision. Leaving the bathroom, he walked up the
stairs and stood in front of their bedroom door, his stomach churning.

Taking a breath, he opened the door and kept his mind on the task of getting the job done. He walked into the bathroom, filled the sink with water, rinsed his face, lathered on the shaving cream, and began to shave his face.

It took awhile, and when he was done, he almost did not recognize himself. How long had it been since he had seen his face clean and without all that hair? He was pale and now seemed even more so without the dark hair covering his face. But, he felt better, more like his old self. He took the razor and shaving cream and set them on the dresser. He took out some more clothes, long sleeved shirts specifically, picked up the other items, closed the bedroom door, and headed downstairs.

Setting the things down, he looked around the room, and then opened the front door and looked outside. He could smell snow, knowing it was coming. God, his face was cold without its healthy covering of hair. Turning back into the house, he decided to do something he had not done in a while, and go for a run.

He put on a long sleeved shirt, slipped on his running shoes and a beanie, stepped outside and stretched out on the porch. He started out slow, getting used to moving around again. It was cold out and his breath puffed out as he breathed. It felt good to be out, feeling his muscles waking up.

He ran to the left and past the house, down the road about three miles, before turning around and heading back home. It began to snow as he was halfway there. He stopped for a few minutes, closing his eyes as he raised his face to the sky, letting the cold flakes hit his naked face. He smiled as he opened his eyes and began to run again.

He turned up the driveway, his feet crunching up the road. On the porch, he paced and stretched as he cooled down. He felt good as he watched the snow falling, his breath returning to normal.

Opening the front door, he toed off his shoes and took off his beanie. He stripped down and went into the bathroom to take a shower.

Ten minutes later he was dressed and in the kitchen looking for something to eat for an late lunch or early dinner. Mrs. Scully had not been over since last Wednesday, it being the holidays and all. Grabbing a can of soup from the cupboard, he reached for a pot to warm it up, when he heard a knock at the door.

He set the pot and soup down and walked to the door. Opening it, he found Mrs. Scully with her arms full of items. He reached for the little tree she was holding and she smiled. Snow covered her head and her jacket.

He turned inside and she followed him. “I was trying to beat the storm over, but it looks like I was a little late,” she said with a laugh.

He set the tree on the coffee table, it being rather small, and turned to look at her. She was setting down the gifts in her hands and then unbuttoning her coat, placing it on a dining room chair.

“IT’s cold out. I was surprised to find it so …” she was staring at him and he saw her eyes fill with tears, as she reached up to hold his clean shaven face.

“There you are,” she said softly, stroking his cheeks with her thumbs. She stepped back and smiled at him, moving her hands from his face. She blinked back her tears and wiped at her eyes, as she took a deep breath.

“There is, uh, Christmas dinner in the car. But put on a coat, it’s cold,” she said, clearing her throat.
He nodded and went to oblige, donning a coat as she asked. He took the basket out from the backseat and brought it inside, closing the door behind him. He shook his head and took off his coat before bringing the basket to the kitchen.

Mrs. Scully already set the table when he walked past her. “We will need to warm up what we want,” she said, joining him at the counter.

He took out the containers and she began to open them, setting the lids to the side. She took the plates from the table and loaded them up, warming them up one at a time in the microwave. He found a bottle of wine in the basket and opened it, pouring them each a glass, setting them on the table.

When the food was warm, they sat down and he looked at her. She reached for his hand and bowed her head. He held her hand and she prayed for their meal, squeezing his hand when she was done. They began to eat and she reached for her wine when he finally asked her what was on his mind.

“Mrs. Scully, what are you doing here? On Christmas Day?” he asked her, watching her face. She took a drink of wine and set her glass down, folding her hands in her lap.

“Bill, Tara, and the kids are visiting her parents this year, Charlie ... well, you know he’s not been back to visit for years,” she said, falling silent. She looked down before looking up at him again and giving him a brief smile. “Dana is working today and I decided to see if you wanted some company, seeing as we’re both alone.”

She smiled at him and picked up her fork, looking at him and then his plate, silently telling him to do the same. He smiled slightly and followed her lead, thinking of Scully working on a day she loved spending with family.

“She volunteered,” Mrs. Scully said softly, as if reading his mind. “Dana volunteered to work today so someone else could be home with their family.” She looked at him and he nodded.

“Sounds like Scully,” he said quietly. She nodded and touched his arm.

They ate the rest of the meal in silence, both of them with their own thoughts. When they were finished, they cleaned up together, putting the food into the fridge. He topped off their glasses of wine and they sat back down at the table.

“You brought gifts,” he said, not looking at her, not having anything for her.

“It’s Christmas, Fox. Of course I brought gifts,” she said matter of factly, causing him to look at her.

“I don’t have anything for you,” he said, keeping his eyes on her. “Scully ... she always bought the gifts ... and I ...”

“I can see you again, Fox,” she said with a smile. “That is gift enough for me.” He chuckled and she joined him.

“Well, if that seems like a good gift, hopefully this won’t be too much to handle. How good are you at cutting hair?” he asked her smiling, as she had been after him for weeks to get a haircut.

She grinned at him, standing up to gather supplies. Soon, he had a towel draped over his shoulders, his hair dripping onto it, as Mrs. Scully combed and cut his hair.

“I used to cut the boys’ hair when they were younger, until they wanted a real haircut. I won’t lie,
that day kind of broke my heart a little,” she said with a small laugh. “I understood, but still, it was painful for a mother to hear.”

“Was it Bill? You can tell me if it was,” he said, as she moved his head around. “Next time I see him, I’ll give him a punch and say you know what you did and he’ll know.”

“Fox,” she said sternly and then laughed. He smiled, his eyes closed as she snipped away.

She was done a short time later and he went in the bathroom to check it out. As with the shave, the haircut made him feel better and more like himself. He looked younger than he had in years and it felt good.

He walked back out and smiled at her. She smiled back and gestured to his gifts. He sat at the table with her and opened the first one, finding a long sleeved Knicks shirt and a beanie.

“This is great. I actually went out for a run today. The first time in a while, so these will be perfect,” he said, making her smile.

The second gift was one he would not have expected. It was an old push button wall phone. Yellowish beige with the old spiral cord. He looked at her and she raised her eyebrows.

“If you insist on living out here, with your cell phone not on right now, I’m going to insist you have a landline. In fact, you don’t really have a choice. I already had it activated. All you have to do is plug it in and hang up the phone,” she said. “The number is taped to the back of the phone.”

He stared at her and she stared back. He turned over the phone and looked down at it, the number indeed taped to it.

“I want to be able to reach you, Fox,” she said, quietly. “Emergencies on either end. That’s all, okay?”

He looked up at her again and nodded. “It’s a good idea,” he agreed, and stood up to see about mounting it to the kitchen wall. A few minutes time and it was done.

He lifted the receiver and heard the dial tone, a sound he had not heard in a while. He hung it up and turned back to her.

“Thank you for the gifts,” he said with a smile. She nodded and they sat back down, finishing the last bit of wine in their glasses.

They visited for an hour more. The snow continued to fall and the sun was beginning to set. Mulder insisted on driving Mrs. Scully home, despite her protests that spending money on a cab home for him was silly, and she would be fine. He would not hear it and finally she agreed.

Christmas music played on the radio as they drove back to her house. She spoke of a Christmas when Scully was little and had just learned the truth about Santa.

“Fox, she was so devastated,” Mrs. Scully said with a laugh and then a sigh. “She kept saying we had lied to her and it was wrong. I tried to explain it better, but she would not listen. Christmas Eve, I found her reading *The Night Before Christmas* to Charlie in his room. He asked how Santa was able to bring gifts to every child in the world and I was sure she would spill the beans. She didn’t though. She told him he had a magic sleigh that could go fast and a magic bag that would fill and refill as it was needed.”

She smiled and was quiet for a minute, music and the wipers the only sound in the car. He glanced
at her, then kept an eye on the road.

“The next morning, there were of course gifts from Santa. Charlie kept exclaiming how Dana told him of the magic bag and how Santa could get to every house with his fast sleigh,” Mrs. Scully said, looking out the window. “Charlie never found out about Santa from Dana.”

Mulder was quiet, thinking about young Scully, how of course she would not ruin happiness for someone else. He gripped the steering wheel thinking of how she missed out, how they missed out on sharing their own Santa stories with William. Scully deserved so much better.

They were both silent after that story, arriving at her house not long after. He went inside to wait for the cab, still thinking of so many Christmas mornings of the past. Mrs. Scully came up to him and took his hand.

“I want you to have this, Fox,” she said, placing a key in his palm. “It’s a key to this house and I want you to have it with you always. Same as with the phone, I want you to have this in case of emergencies. Okay?” He held the key in his hand and nodded. She patted his hand and smiled. A horn honked outside and he looked out the window seeing cab was there. He turned from the window and gave Mrs. Scully a hug and a kiss on the cheek, wished her merry Christmas, and then walked out the door.

The drive home was quiet and he was glad of it. The snow was beginning to really stick, so he was happy when they pulled up his driveway, allowing him to get inside where it was warm.

Seeing his gifts on the table, he remembered about the phone. He walked over to it and lifted the receiver, dialing Mrs. Scully. She answered in two rings, happy he was calling to tell her he was home. She thanked him, said merry Christmas again, and hung up.

He set the phone down and flopped down on the couch. He closed his eyes and took a deep breath. Taking the key to Mrs. Scully’s house out of his pocket, he stood up and added it to his key ring, hanging it up when he was done, and laying back down on the couch.

For a day that started out rather sad and lonely, it had turned out better than he could have hoped. Mrs. Scully was a godsend, always showing up when he needed her, somehow attuned to his need for company.

He needed to tell her how much it meant to him, he really did. He turned over on the couch and closed his eyes, crossing his arms. Next time she was there, he would tell her how much it meant to have her in his corner.

Next time, he thought before he drifted off to sleep.

Chapter End Notes

Oh Mrs. Scully ... how I adore you. I love her knowing he needs her. I love their relationship, that she loves him unconditionally forever and always. She pushes, but in the sweetest way possible, how could you not love her? ❤
Hope you’re enjoying the journey.
Healing Power of Sunshine

Chapter Summary

Maggie goes to visit Mulder with a plan. Some changes need to be made and she’s going to help him figure out how to approach them.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

February 2015

It was an unseasonably warm day in early February as Maggie headed out to visit Fox. She rolled the windows down in her car, wanting to feel the spring like air, and the scent of it, made her make a split second decision.

Exiting the highway, she drove to a hardware store for supplies she would need for a new project. The last few weeks, she had been finding little projects for Fox to do around his house. The shed in the backyard had been organized, his things no longer stored in cardboard boxes, but in sturdy plastic totes.

They had worked together to clean out and wipe down the kitchen cupboards, throwing out any expired food. She made sure everything was put back in its original place, not wanting things to be different when Dana inevitably came back, as she knew she would.

Fox added some shelves in the downstairs bathroom to hold his things while he continued to use that one primarily. He had balked at this task, as simple as it was.

“Mrs. Scully, I am not handy with things. I’m more of a … planner and supervisor of said projects. Tools and I, we don’t exactly get along,” he said, shaking his head apologetically.

“Nonsense,” she said, placing the toolbox she had picked up in his hands. “I have complete faith in you.”

He looked at her before finally agreeing, and disappearing into the bathroom. After some swearing and some loud banging and hammering, he called her into the bathroom to show off his work, proud of his success.

With the toolbox in tow, she then had him fixing wobbly items around the house that simply needed a screw tightened. As they did, they talked about Dana. Not her now, but when she was younger. He did not speak much during those times, but his smile and happiness was evident. She knew he enjoyed those times with her, hearing about how Dana had been as a child.

A new project would be a good idea, she thought, pulling into the parking lot, and heading inside the large hardware store. She walked around a bit, looking at the patio setups they had on display. She looked at kitchen and bathroom displays thinking of possible future projects and then she moved to what she wanted.

“Can I help you, ma’am?” a man’s voice asked her.
She turned and found a young man with a kind smile and bright blue eyes. She smiled at him and told him what she was looking for and he nodded, telling her to follow him. He showed her the different types they had and she said she needed the simplest one possible. He laughed and showed her a kit they had, and she took that one. He said she would need a drill, and she told him she had one already, but thanked him.

She grabbed other things they would need, also some candy she knew Fox liked, and headed to the register. Items purchased, she put them in the car, and headed over to the house. She was excited for this particular project and the idea she had begun to formulate. There was also something she needed to discuss with Fox and she hoped he was willing to hear her out.

She pulled up to the house and found the front door open, the screen door letting in the warm day. The squeak of the door made her turn her head, seeing Fox coming down the stairs, a smile on his face.

“I know it’s unlikely, but if you happen to have an apple pie in that basket ...” he said reaching for the basket of food she always brought with her. She laughed and shook her head, his face falling in mock sadness.

“No apple pie,” she said, still chucking. “But there is a peach cobbler.” He exhaled a happy breath and she smiled.

They carried all the things from the car inside the house and put them on the table. Fox took out the food and opened the lid of the peach cobbler, taking a big sniff. He moaned and licked his lips, his stomach growling. She laughed as she reached for plates and glasses.

They ate lunch and then some cobbler, Fox making satisfied noises the entire time he ate it, looking at her as he took his last bite and shaking his head.

“Mrs. Scully,” he said as he licked his fork clean. “Seriously, that is one of the best cobblers I’ve ever eaten.”

She laughed and patted his hand as she stood from the table. “You say that anytime you eat a cobbler I’ve made,” she said, taking their plates to the sink.

“And I mean it,” he said, leaning back in his chair, rubbing his stomach. “Every cobbler is better than the last.” She laughed again, washing their dishes as he put away the food.

“What’s this?” he asked, and the turned her head to look at him. She rinsed off the last dish and set it in the dish rack. Grabbing a dish towel, she dried her hands off, as she turned around.

“It’s a clothesline kit. I’d like to put it up in the backyard, today,” she said, putting the dish towel down.

“A clothesline?” he asked.

“Yes,” she said with a smile. “My grandmother had a clothesline and so did my mother. When we have the ease of simply throwing clothes in the dryer, we forget the work that used to go into doing laundry. It used to be that a windy day like today, was considered a good laundry day.” She laughed as she remembered those days of sheets, towels, and clothes blowing on the line.

“My grandmother had a clothesline,” Fox said quietly. “I remember watching her hang the sheets up and running through them or hiding and believing no one could find me.”

She smiled at him and nodded. “It’s definitely something that sticks with you. And there is
something about sleeping on sheets that have hung in the wind and the sunshine. You can smell it when you lay down and close your eyes.”

He nodded, looking down at the kit again. Her stomach clenched and she took the plunge of what her secondary plan was for the clothesline.

“Fox?” she said softly. He looked up her, meeting her eyes. “Fox, I ... I think it’s time for you to move back upstairs.”

He stared at her, his hands stilling as he held the box. She held his gaze and smiled kindly at him, hoping this was the right decision and did not push him in a backward motion.

“I know ... I know it’s hard to imagine, believe me I do,” she said, thinking of how hard it was to sleep in her bed the first time without Bill. “But I also can see the change in you from the first time I came to visit. You’re doing better, Fox. I think this would be a good step to doing even better.”

He dropped his head and she saw his leg start wiggling, the sure sign he was nervous. She remained quiet and waited for him to process what she had asked. After a couple minutes, he nodded, and she breathed a sigh of relief.

“Well then, we need to get to work,” she said with a smile. “You get the tools together, I’ll strip the bed, and then we’ll get this done together. We will need the drill I brought over last time, a screwdriver, and a knife to cut the rope.” He nodded and went to find what they needed. She smiled and went upstairs to get the sheets.

The bathroom windows were opened, and the breeze was blowing through the newly opened bedroom door, as she filled the washing machine. She could hear Fox moving around outside, getting ready for their project. Closing the laundry room door, she stepped out the back door and joined him in the backyard.

He had a step ladder up and the tools in a bucket he had found. He walked out of the garage and came over to her.

“So, I’m thinking we connect it to the shed there and then to the house. That should be good, yeah?” he asked and she nodded. They set to work and as they did, he shared a story about Dana with her this time.

“So, let me see if I understand this correctly,” she said shaking her head. “You’re saying that a man was controlling the weather because he was in love with a woman and she didn’t know?” She laughed and shook her head again.

“It’s true!” Fox said, putting the hook for the clothesline pulley into the house. “He was in love with a woman named Sheila but he had never told her. They were very good friends, but she never saw him as more because she didn’t know how he felt. He tried to tell her, and she told him she was in love with me, someone she had just met. She even kissed me.” He shuddereded, apparently the kiss not one he enjoyed. Maggie laughed hysterically and he joined in, putting on the pulley and threading the rope through it.

“Mrs. Scully, I was flabbergasted, couldn’t even think what to do to stop her. And as she did, Scully came around the corner and her face ...” he shook his head and stopped talking, simply standing there.

“Sometimes nothing happens for a reason,” he said quietly a couple minutes later. He shook his head again and resumed what he was doing. She waited for him to explain, not wanting to push.
“Holman, that was the man’s name, he had asked for my advice on what to say to her, telling me, he figured the way Scully and I gazed at one another, that I was more of an expert at dating,” he said with a laugh. “I gave him the advice and told him I did not gaze at Scully.” He looked at her and she grinned.

“Fox Mulder, you told that man a flat out lie,” she said with a laugh and he hung his head with a nod. “When was this?”

“Uh, August of ... ‘98?” he said, thinking about it as he put a hand to his mouth. “Yeah, about then.”

“So, after Dana was ill,” Maggie said, her eyes on him. He nodded. “After I walked in to find you holding her hand, sitting close to her, and kissing her hand before you left the hospital room?” She smiled at him and she knew he knew what she meant.

“How could I tell her then?” he said quietly, looking in her eyes. “It would have seemed like I’d given up and I wanted her to know that I loved her before she died. It was not the right time.”

“Nothing happened for a reason?” she asked him. He gave a small smile and nodded. “Love is not nothing, Fox.”

“It’s not what I meant,” he said, shaking his head. “I know it seems we wasted so much time denying what we wanted, but ... I think it was more that we were becoming worthy of each other. Life was lining up to happen when it was supposed to. But, Mrs. Scully, if I was given a chance to do it over again ...”

He looked down and then back up at her, tears in his eyes. “If I knew then what I do now, I still wouldn’t change a day. Even this moment, this time,” he swallowed and let out a breath. “I just need to become worthy of her again. It’s the very least I can do for her.” He was quiet and she knew this was her moment. He had opened the door and she would make sure it stayed that way.

“Fox, I think ... I think it would benefit you to see someone,” she said, her heart pounding.

“Mrs. Scully?” he said, confusion showing on his face. “After what I just said, you want me to see someone?”

She laughed and covered her face as she realized the mistake. “No, no, Fox,” she sighed. “I meant, see someone as in a therapist. Someone that can help you become worthy of you. You need to remember your own worth, Fox. I think until you do, you won’t believe you are worthy of Dana.”

He stared at her, blinking but saying nothing. “I’m happy to help, Fox. To be here as I have been these past few months, but we don’t talk about everything. This is really the first time we’ve spoken at length about Dana as she pertains to your life, and not just her as a child,” she said, careful with her words, saying but not saying what she meant. “You need to talk to someone who you feel comfortable telling anything and everything. I don’t want to stifle you, it will not benefit either you or Dana.”

She held his gaze and he finally nodded slowly. She was not sure if that meant he would see someone or that he understood that they certainly did not talk about everything. She touched his hand and looked at the rope in his hand. He smiled and continued working on the clothesline.

When it was done and at the correct height, she went to get the sheets and towels she had washed. She put them in a basket, grabbed the clothespins she had purchased, and went back outside. Fox met her after putting away the tools and they hung the laundry together. She smiled as she watched
the breeze catch and pull them. She felt Fox slip his arm around her shoulders and she put hers around his waist. He hugged her tight with his one arm and she closed her eyes.

She loved this man so very much. This man who was undoubtedly created to be the person her daughter loved. She knew he had his faults and of course, in this moment, things were not right, but he was a good man and one she was proud to have as part of her family.

He released her shoulders and crossed his arms. “I’d say this work calls for another piece of cobbler,” he said, looking at her. She laughed and nodded her head in agreement.

They had the cobbler and a cup of coffee, and she decided to keep things light with more stories of the past. She told him of the time when Dana was six and came home with her dress dirty and shoes scuffed because some boy had pushed her down on the way home.

“She cried, because she loved those shoes, and she thought they were ruined,” Maggie said. “I took them and cleaned them, getting the majority of the scuff marks out. I asked why that boy had pushed her, but Dana would not say, only saying it would all be okay. For two days, she came home with her dress dirty and her shoes messed. I cleaned them every time and watched Dana as she did. She only cried that first day,” Maggie told him. “The next two days she was silent, determination written all over her face.”

She paused, remembering how she wanted to help, but Dana was determined to do it herself. “I followed a few steps behind her the next morning, wanting to see who this boy was who had pushed her. At the bus stop, I saw a boy walk up to Dana and pull her hair and my heart ached, watching this bigger boy hurting my girl. He tugged once more, and Dana spun around. She yelled at him to stop, and he pushed her, but she did not go down. She steadied herself, threw down the book she was carrying, put her hands on his chest, and shoved as hard as she could,” Maggie said with a smile. “He fell back and she stood over him, yelling at him that if he bothered her anymore, she would push him again. He lay there looking at her and then she stuck out her hand to help him stand up. He took it and then stepped away from her, his head down. After that day, she never came home with scuffed shoes.”

Fox grinned during the entire story, and then laughed hard when it was over. He told Maggie of watching Scully take down men twice her size when they had training exercises. Apparently, she had started early and that was one reason she had the upper hand.

She told him of Dana’s first crush and how devastated she was when he did not return her feelings. Maggie had been ready to walk into her room to speak to her, when Melissa stepped in front of her and gave her a look, before shutting the door. Within minutes, the sad crying she had been hearing, had turned to laughter. Melissa and Dana had come out of the room, Melissa letting Maggie know they were heading out to get ice cream. Maggie and Melissa had shared a smile as Dana was putting on her shoes. No more mention of that boy was uttered again, but Dana and Melissa shared secret looks after that day, and Maggie had sighed as it seemed Dana was growing up before her eyes.

She told him of the day her father tried to teach her to drive. She had always been her father’s favorite, even if he never said so out loud, but in this one arena the two had locked heads.

He wanted her to take her time and drive around parking lots to get the feel of the car and how a person and machine became one. She rolled her eyes and said that was ridiculous, but realized it was the only way he would agree. Bill smiled at Maggie as he left, even being so bold as to wink.

“I swear, Fox, I knew exactly what he was up to in that moment. He wanted her to get fed up and forget about driving, so he was going to make it as boring and tedious as possible,” Maggie said,
shaking her head at the memory of that wink. “His plan seemed to work too, because not long after they left, Dana came home in a huff and went upstairs, slamming her door. Bill came in a few minutes later, a huge smile on his face, apparently happy with her anger.” She shook her head, remembering how he had been so smug and happy with what had happened.

“I didn’t say anything to him, but that night, when Bill had fallen asleep, I took the car keys and knocked on Dana’s door,” she grinned at Fox and he grinned back. “I motioned for her to be quiet and showed her the keys. She understood, putting on her shoes and a jacket. We drove to a parking lot close to the house, and switched places. I let Dana drive around the lot a couple of times, to see how she handled the car. She did wonderfully, so we drove around town, just her and I, late at night, laughing and having a great time.” She smiled at Fox again, and he laughed softly.

“It wasn’t that Bill didn’t want her to learn,” Maggie said, getting up and rinsing out her coffee mug. “It was that he felt he was losing his little girl. She was growing up and if she learned to drive … well she wouldn’t need him as much, and of course he didn’t want that. But he wasn’t going about it the right way either, and so they were locking heads.” She sat back down and sighed, continuing with the story.

“The next morning Dana came downstairs and smiled at me, before hugging her father. She told him she was sorry for how she acted the day before and that she would like to have another driving lesson. She winked at me behind his back and I had a hard time not laughing,” she said, chuckling now. “We never told Bill about those secret night drives. He always boasted he had taught all his kids to drive and I just smiled.”

Fox smiled as he finished his coffee and she her story. He got up and took his mug to the sink, then turned and leaned against it, his head down. He sighed and then looked up at her.

“The sheets are done by now, I’m sure,” she said, changing the subject, as she smiled at him, and he nodded.

They went out together and found the sheets were certainly dry. Maggie smelled them, closing her eyes, thousands of memories tied to that scent. The towels were also dry and together they took everything upstairs.

Fox had a moment of hesitation at the bedroom threshold, but then he joined her, dropping his armful of laundry on the bed. They folded the towels, put them away, and then made the bed. Maggie watched him looking at the bed, his shoulders slumped, before he looked up at her. She smiled and nodded at him. He nodded back and they went downstairs.

He walked into the middle of the living room and stopped. “Uh ... what you said earlier about therapists,” he said, keeping his eyes on the floor. “I think it’s a good idea, as much as I truly don’t like the thought of it, I can’t deny it would be … helpful.” He cleared his throat and looked up at her.

“I’m happy to hear that, Fox,” she said with a smile. “I have a list of names.” She walked over to her purse and took out the piece of paper she had brought with her. “I was talking to some friends and they suggested some people that might work out, people they know or have used in the past.” She came close to him and handed him the paper. He took it wordlessly and looked it over, taking a deep breath.

“Okay,” he said quietly, looking up and nodding at her. She squeezed his forearm and stepped back.

Sensing this was a good time to make her exit, giving him time to think, she began to gather her
things. He did not move from his spot, his eyes still on the paper. She picked up her keys, put them in her pocket, and walked over to him, touching his arm.

He raised his eyes to hers and she smiled. “I’m proud of the progress you’ve made today, Fox,” she said softly. “I know it might be hard to sleep in there tonight, but I think it’s time, and a step toward healing.” He nodded and smiled slightly, putting the paper in his pocket, and pulling her in for a hug.

“Thank you,” he whispered. “Thank you for so many things, but mostly just for being here.”

She stepped back and held his face in her hands. “That’s what family does. It shows up,” she said patting his cheeks. He nodded and she stepped back.

He walked her to her car, shutting the door as she got in and buckled her seatbelt. “Next week, I hope to have heard you’ve contacted at least one of the people on the list,” she said, giving him her best mom stare.

He chuckled and stepped back from the car. “Yes, Mom,” he said, rolling his eyes and shaking his head.

“Good,” she said, putting the car in reverse and beginning to back up. She waved as she drove down the driveway, her heart lighter than it had been in a while.

The air was still warm in the late afternoon sun as she drove toward the highway. He had been open to her suggestions, all of them, and for that she was incredibly thankful. She smiled and then her breath caught.

“He called me Mom,” she said out loud. Yes, it had been in a teasing tone, but it was the first time he had called her anything other than Mrs. Scully, despite her repeated insistence he call her Maggie.

“Mom,” she said again. “I like the sound of that.” She smiled as she entered the highway and headed for home, the sun painting the sky a beautiful color of pinkish orange.

She turned the radio on and hummed along with the music, her heart full of hope and love for the man who was beginning his journey back to himself, and back to the woman he loved for longer than even he may be aware.

“Everything happens for a reason,” she said, praying once again that the ending to this story was a happy one. “It all happens for a reason ...”

Chapter End Notes

This chapter ... I had it imagined for so long. The idea of a clothesline being symbolic to his journey: needing to get out, built up, piling things on, and then letting them air out in the sunshine. Then taking them back in, but they’ve had the time to be in the light and hopefully have changed, I love it. It was all written in my head so many times before it was ever typed out.

There are a few favorites, and this is one of them. ❤
February 2015

Scully slept in on her birthday. If sleeping in until nine o’clock could be considered as such. She had no plans with anyone but herself, so there was no need to rush. She took her time taking a bath, fixing her hair, and dressing for the day.

She left her apartment, stopping at the coffee shop close by, grabbing a yogurt with granola and a coffee. She sat at a table outside, watching people walk by on their way to work, and little kids being toted around by their parents. It was a semi warm day and the sun felt wonderful as it shone down on her.

She sat until her coffee was gone, before rising and tossing her trash, continuing on her way. Her mother had asked if she wanted to do anything and she had politely turned her down. She did not feel like celebrating, not this year. Taking the day for herself, alone, and doing whatever she wanted, sounded great.

Her new place was close to many places in the city. Restaurants, boutiques, upscale hair and nail salons, pottery painting places, coffee, cupcake, and macaroon shops. She had yet to get out and explore, what with moving in and working more at the hospital, so today was her chance.

She went into the first boutique and browsed around for a bit. The clothes were cute, but not exactly her style. The salesgirl was very fashionable and her makeup was flawless. Scully felt frumpy next to her, although she had recently purchased her outfit. Even if it was the exact same as the salesgirls, she would still not look as hip as her. Scully smiled at her as she walked out of the store, feeling dreadfully out of place.

Two more stores and she found an incredibly soft navy cashmere sweater that she absolutely loved. She was tempted to wear it out of the store, but she had it wrapped instead. She also bought a dark green dress that she felt looked amazing on her. She purchased a pair of black heels that she knew were too expensive, but it was her goddamn birthday. They were beautiful and she loved the way she felt when she wore them.

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She walked past the hair and nail salon, but then doubled back. She looked at her reflection in the window and made a decision. She entered the salon and asked if they would be able to see her. Fifteen minutes later she was in a chair, a glass of champagne in hand. The hairdresser came over and Scully told her what she would like done.

Two hours later, she was back outside, a manicure and pedicure done, and her hair six inches shorter. She felt lighter than she had in awhile. She loved her hair long, but felt she needed a
change. Running her fingers through it, she smiled, the change feeling good.

A few more places, and she added a couple of more bags to her collection. Entering the last little shop, she left her bags at the register while she looked around. She picked up a few items to try on and headed to the changing room.

A man sat waiting for his wife or girlfriend, bags at his feet, his posture and demeanor tired. He glanced up at Scully and gave her a tired smile, before looking back at the changing room doors. She stopped in her tracks. His eyes were the same hazel as Mulder’s.

She made it inside the changing room, closing the door securely behind her, before covering her mouth and sliding down the wall, her items still in her hands. She cried, leaving her hand over her mouth to stifle the sound of her sobs. She could not keep her hand there for long though, needing to take in great gulps of air. She let the tears fall, as she instead held the clothes to her face, keeping her sounds as muffled as she could.

God, she missed him so much. Missed his smile and his eyes as they landed on her. She missed the feel of his arms around her at night, his voice in her ear telling her a joke, and then the rumble of his laughter as he laughed hardest at his own corny joke. She missed kissing him and the feel of his hands on her body.

She turned and lay on her side on the floor, not caring how dirty it was or worrying about her hair. She pulled the clothes closer to her and took deep breaths, her tears still falling, but her sobs subsiding somewhat. She could smell the scent of new clothes, and wished it was Mulder’s scent instead.

Minutes passed and she finally felt able to get up off the floor. She hung up the clothes and sat on the stool in the room, putting her face in her hands and collecting herself, taking calming breaths. Looking up at the clothes she had a death grip on, she knew she would not be able to try on nor buy any of those items. They would only make her think of this moment, and the utter sadness she felt laying on this floor.

She stood up, looked at her reflection in the mirror, and attempted to fix her makeup. She shook her head, knowing she would not be able to fix her puffy red eyes. Smoothing down her hair, she gathered up the hangers of clothes, and stepped outside the door, hanging the unwanted clothes on the rack provided. She walked up to the register and took back all of her shopping bags, leaving the store with her head down.

It was dark when she was back outside. She stopped for a second and thought about what she wanted to do. She said she wanted to be alone, but all of sudden she wanted nothing more than to have dinner with her mom. She shook her head, knowing her mom would be there if she asked, but knew she would be poor company when her mom arrived. Her mom had witnessed her tears enough, she did not need to see them again.

Scully stepped forward, deciding to stop and get a cupcake to take home for her own private celebration. The cupcake shop was not far nor too full when she arrived. She looked at the menu, and decided on a triple chocolate cupcake, and also a strawberry one with cream cheese frosting. They were packed up and she left the shop, walking back to her apartment.

Opening her front door, she set her bags down inside, shutting and locking the door behind her. She took the cupcake container into the kitchen and put it on the counter. She walked back to the entryway and gathered up her bags, taking them into her room.

She changed into her pajamas, one of Mulder’s shirts she took possession of years ago- a maroon
shirt with gray sleeves and shoulders. It was soft and comfortable and it made her think of his smile when he saw her wearing it. He had a hard time keeping his hands from sliding under the shirt when he was close to her because he knew when she wore it, he was going to get lucky.

She shuffled into the kitchen in a pair of her old cozy slippers, getting out a plate, a glass, and a fork. Opening the refrigerator, she took out the milk and poured it in the glass, putting it back before she sat down on a barstool at the counter. She opened the cupcake container and took out the chocolate one, putting it on her plate. She stared at it before standing up and looking through the drawers in the kitchen. She knew she did not have any birthday candles, but there were matches in one of the drawers.

Finding a book of matches, she stuck one in the frosting of the cupcake, making sure it stood up properly. Using a different match she lit it and then the one on the cupcake. She watched it burn for a second before she blew it out, no wish sent out this year. She sighed as her thoughts drifted to two years ago, the last time there had been a candle burning in a birthday dessert.

“Sorry, there is no reservation for a Fox Mulder,” the hostess said, checking one more time at the list of names on her sheet. She looked up at them and shook her head.

Scully felt the breath she was holding leave her body, defeat evident as she looked at Mulder. He looked so upset, his body sagged as he looked at her. His eyes begged her to understand and forgive him. She smiled slightly, putting her hand on his arm. He put his hand on her back and led her out the door.

“I’m sorry, Scully,” he said, his hands in his pockets, as he shook his head. “It’s your birthday and I fucked it up.”

“Mulder, it’s just dinner. We can figure something else out,” she said, knowing what a big deal it was that they were even standing at the restaurant at all. She honestly thought they would not make it here until they actually did.

He had told her he had plans for her birthday, but recently he had missed plans and broken promises. The drive to the restaurant had seemed like the old them, joking and laughing, his hand in hers. He was so excited for these dinner plans, she knew how heartbroken he was that he had messed it up.

He sighed and she saw his breath on the night air. It was cold out and she shivered as they stood there. He glanced at her and he sighed again.

“It’s not okay, Scully. Look at you, you’re all dressed up, and you were expecting something nice and fancy for your birthday,” he said, waving a hand at her outfit.

She had gotten dressed up, hoping and expecting a nice place for dinner. She had pulled an old dress out of the closet that she had always liked and she knew Mulder did as well. He touched her more when she wore that dress, and she was trying to signal to him that she wanted that tonight.

She touched his arm again, sliding her hand down to his pants pocket, grabbing a hold of his and stepping close to him.

“We’ll think of something, Mulder,” she said, her fingers grazing his in his pocket. She saw his eyes widen and watched him swallow. She smiled slowly and he shook his head at her.

“You’re a tease,” he said in a voice she had not heard in awhile. The Mulder Sex Voice that she always saw in capital letters. It made her shiver and wet all at the same time.
“Only a tease if I don’t follow through,” she said quietly, in the voice she knew got to him. He exhaled and she felt his breath on her face. She smiled and stepped back, taking her hands off him.

“I’m hungry, Mulder,” she said and he raised his eyebrows. She laughed and stepped back further. “Food, Mulder. I need some food.”

He sighed and shook his head before he reached for her hand. He locked his fingers with hers and they walked down the street. She grabbed onto his arm as she squeezed his hand. God, it felt so good to be out, happy and laughing. No matter that it was cold out, being here with him, she felt like she could breathe again. Away from that goddamn office where he would disappear from her. This was so much better.

They walked a couple of blocks and he stopped in front of an all night diner. He looked at her and gestured with his head, raising his eyebrows. She nodded and smiled. He stepped inside and she followed.

The waitress told them to sit wherever they wanted and she would be right with them. He took Scully’s coat, hanging it on the coat rack, before taking off and hanging up his own. He led her to the table, his hand on her lower back, his fingers walking in place as he did. She shivered, her body responding again.

“I had no idea it was that dress, Scully,” he said, his eyes intense as they sat down and took their menus from the holder on the table. She smiled as she looked at her menu, knowing he was still watching her. She glanced up and he winked at her.

The waitress came up and Mulder announced they were celebrating Scully’s birthday. The waitress smiled at Scully and said congratulations before she took their order. They both asked for cheeseburgers and fries. Mulder said he would also like a chocolate milkshake with two straws. The waitress smiled and nodded, walking away to place their order.

They smiled at each other and she reached for his hand. He laid his across the table and she took his hand in hers. They begin to talk about random things. Stories from the past, people they had met and places they had been. He did an imitation of Bill’s disapproving stare and they both laughed.

Their burgers arrived and she went through about twenty napkins as she wiped her hands and mouth repeatedly. He ate his food with gusto, not caring how messy his face and hands were. She felt happy and light, something she had not felt in a while.

The waitress brought the milkshake and set it between them, a lit candle in the top of the whipped cream. No one sang, and Scully was glad of that, but as the candle sat in front of her, she closed her eyes and made a wish as she blew it out. A wish, a prayer, call it whatever, but she sent out a call to whoever was listening. A prayer for them, to be whole and together once again, the way they were before the darkness started creeping back in.

She met his eyes and he smiled sadly at her, as if he knew what she had been thinking. He had mustard on the corner of his mouth and she wiped it off with a laugh, attempting to get them back to happy once again. He pretended to bite at her fingers and she laughed again.

They shared the milkshake, though Mulder drank the majority of it. When they left, his hand once again went to get lower back, his fingers circling where her tattoo used to be. She had chosen to put the tattoo there years ago to reclaim the spot where he always put his hand. She had been so angry at him, she felt that she needed to do something to mark the moment she was in at the time. She had it removed not long after she got it, the serpent no longer representing how she felt.
He helped her with her coat, grabbed his own, and they headed outside. She reached for his hand as they walked to the car. She felt happy and if she was perfectly honest, she was also feeling horny. They had not had sex in a while and she missed it, missed him. His looks and touches through the night had made her feel tingly and so in the mood for him.

They arrived at the car, got in, and he began to head for home. She sat in the car and felt overcome with her desire for him. They were leaving the city when she knew she could not take it much longer. She reached over and put her hand on his thigh, making him jump in surprise. He looked over at her and she smiled as she bit her lip. He inhaled and she brought her hand up a little higher.

She ran her fingers over his crotch and he swerved a little on the road. She giggled and he swore, telling her to watch what she was doing. She looked at him and did it once more before telling him to pull over now.

“Scully, we’re almost home,” he said, his hand covering hers as she squeezed his dick. He was getting hard and she was definitely ready for him. She squeezed once more and he pulled over quickly, turning off the car.

No one was on the road as she unbuckled her seatbelt and moved around, climbing into his lap. He grabbed her and held her steady as she dropped her mouth to his, her tongue diving right in. His hands went to her hair and she moaned in his mouth.

She pulled back and took her coat off, getting tangled for a second and cursing while he laughed. He helped her figure it out and his hands moved to her ass as she held his face, kissing him once again. His hands moved under her dress and he broke from her kiss.

“Scully,” he said, his voice dangerously low and making her physically throb. “Where ... where is your underwear?”

He groaned as his hands trailed over her naked ass and down to her center, making her cry out. She moved her hands from his face and down to his waistband. They had not had sex in awhile, this was true, but having sex in the car had been even longer.

She got his pants open and he got them down far enough to allow her to slide down his length. They both moaned and her head fell back, the feel of him inside her was invigorating. She licked her lips and then leaned forward, her hands going to his shoulders.

He leaned the seat back somehow while still keeping a hold on her. She cried out in surprise, falling forward and then raising up, putting her hands on his chest. She began to ride him, breathing his name. God, it was exquisite. He felt so good inside her, something she had not felt for some time.

He chanted her name, his hands on her hips, helping her move in their confined space. She was close already and knew it would not take long. She went faster, her nails digging into his chest. He put a hand on her inner thigh, then moved his fingers to her center again. His thumb found her clit and she cried out as he touched her while she continued her pace.

“I’m so close, Scully,” he whispered in a strangled voice. “I can feel that you are too. God, you’re so wet and you feel so good. Come, Scully.”

And she did. Convulsing around him, her nails pushing in harder, she heard him cry out and then felt him come inside her. She rode him slower as they came down from their release. Their breath had fogged up the windows and outside it was very dark, good for covering up the naughty act that
just took place in their car.

She collapsed against his chest, his hands coming to rest on her back as they lay together, their hearts pounding and bodies sweating. Dear god, she had needed that, she thought. Needed to feel him in every way and be with him again.

His heart was racing and she smiled as she listened to it. His hands traveled up and down her back as he breathily whispered her name. One hand went to her head and his short nails scratched at her scalp and she moaned. He laughed and she raised her head.

He smiled at her as he looked in her eyes. “I hope you don’t think that this constitutes as a birthday gift. I expect to find some kind of actual gift, wrapped and waiting for me at home,” she said, a playful look on her face. He laughed again, and pulled her in for a kiss.

She climbed off him soon after, carefully sitting on her dress, as her underwear was not available to be worn at the moment. He adjusted his seat and his clothing before heading for home. He reached for her hand and kissed her fingers when he held it.

They pulled up to the house a couple of minutes later, and he turned off the car, letting go of her hand so he could get out. He had not been wrong, they were not far from home, but she had to have him, the need too overwhelming to wait even a couple more miles.

She opened her door and shivered, her jacket having been tossed somewhere out of reach. She walked quickly into the house and then the bathroom, cleaning up the stickiness left behind from their fun in the car.

She came out and he was hanging up their coats. She walked over to her coat and took her underwear from a pocket where she had stashed it earlier after a trip to the bathroom before they left the diner. He watched her and he made a noise she had never heard, before he took her underwear and put them in his pants pocket.

She grinned and opened the presents he brought out to her. The child’s doctor kit he gave her, being used in a more sexual way than it had been intended, soon had them both hot and needing to have each other again. Her exam of him was thorough, making him moan. Unable to take it anymore, he grabbed her and pulled her to the floor, laughing but also making her heart race.

The cold floor was welcome on her warm body, as was the weight of the man on top of her. His back was slick with sweat, as she ran her fingers up and down, their bodies sated and still humming. He lifted his head and looked at her.

“Happy birthday, Scully,” he whispered, kissing her softly, as she wrapped her legs tighter around him, keeping him close.

He put his head back onto her neck, licking at the sweat that had formed there. She moaned and closed her eyes before he kissed her neck, and then lay still.

She ran her fingers into his hair, her eyes feeling heavy. She knew this was not the optimal place to fall asleep, but she felt if they moved, the spell would break and the power from the office would call to him. She would suffer a lumpy feeling sore back if it meant staying with him this way, feeling his body on hers.

Tonight, you did not win, she thought, looking at the office and feeling a sense of power, before sleep took hold and she held tight to the man she loved.

Tears were running down her face at the bittersweet memory. Bittersweet then and even more so
now. That night when he had stayed with her and not gone into the office had been happy and wonderful. But it did not last and here she was, in a rather sterile apartment, celebrating her birthday on her own because they could not get their shit together.

She shook her head and put her cupcake back in the container, the thought of eating it now made her stomach feel sick. She put the container in the refrigerator, dumped out her glass of milk in the sink, adding the fork and plate, before turning the lights off, and going into her room. She pushed her bags out of the way where they sat on the floor and laid down on her side on the bed. She grabbed a pillow and held it close to her, closing her eyes, feeling alone and incredibly sad.

She fell asleep, her dreams peaceful despite her sadness. She dreamt of Mulder’s laugh, the way his skin smelled after a run, the touch of his hand, the feel of his fingers running through her hair, and the taste of his kiss and how dizzy it could make her. But mostly, she dreamt of his eyes. Eyes that calmed her, could speak to her above the roar of a crowded room, and where his love for her could always be found, shining out like a light guiding a ship to safety.

Chapter End Notes

So, the past birthday was simply going to be a quick memory, a mention of the gifts and what happened that night. But flicked_switch asked for more and thus was born a side story, Cheeseburgers and Milkshakes. It fit perfectly into this sad lonely chapter giving it that bittersweet feeling.

Hope you enjoyed this chapter.
Mulder sat on the couch in the waiting room of the therapist's office, his leg bouncing. This was actually the third therapist he was meeting with, the other two had not been a good fit for him.

After Mrs. Scully left him the list of possible therapists, he stared at it for a while. He knew she was right, he did need to speak to someone, he just hated the actual doing part of it. He hated sitting in a room and answering questions like “how does that make you feel?” Well, the woman he loved more than anything had left him and it was going on six months, how was he supposed to fucking feel?

He looked up, seeing the door was still shut, and let out a breath. His leg, which had paused, began to bounce once again. There was music playing softly in the room and it was beginning to put him on edge. It had no vocals, but the melody was familiar and something he had heard with Scully. He did not know the song exactly, but he knew it was something familiar.

“Fox Mulder?” said a voice, causing him to look up and then frown.

A woman was standing in the doorway of the office, a rather young woman. She was tall, curvy, almost plump, and had long dark brown hair with blue streaks throughout. Aqua, he thought, no actually more of a teal.

She had on dark jeans, a long sleeved black shirt with a band name or something he could not quite read, and a plum colored button down short sleeve shirt worn open. She wore only socks, black socks adorned with four leaf clovers, and no shoes.

He looked at her, completely flustered by her appearance. She looked no more than twenty five, like she should be in a dorm, telling kids to turn down their music and that alcohol was not allowed on the premises. No way this was the therapist he was going to be meeting.

“You’re Fox Mulder, yes?” she asked, stepping closer to him. He stood up and found that she was only a couple inches shorter than him. He was definitely not used to that happening.

“I’m Fox Mulder,” he said, reaching out his hand. She smiled and he noticed how perfect her teeth were and then the blue of her eyes. Jesus, they were almost as blue as Scully’s.

She grasped his hand in a firm handshake. “It’s wonderful to meet you. I’m Doctor Clarke, but you can call me Rachel. Please come in,” she said gesturing toward her office.

She dropped his hand and waited for him to walk into the office, following behind and shutting the
door. He looked around the room and was again shocked by the difference between her office and the last two he had been in.

Here the walls were a light cream color and the floors were a dark hardwood with a large sage green rug set upon it. There was a charcoal gray couch and a matching chair with an ottoman that looked exceedingly comfortable and a dark wood colored coffee table and desk of the same color. Her laptop sat closed, papers and notebooks stacked neatly beside it. A small table with one of the new coffee makers, coffee mugs, stir straws, and cream and sugar sat next to the desk.

He took note of her degrees on the wall and doing some quick math, he was surprised to find she had to be at least thirty five. He looked at her and was struck again by the youthfulness of her face.

“Please, have a seat,” she said, gesturing toward the couch. He turned and walked over and sat down. There were colorful throw pillows, in different hues of blue, like the sea. He smiled at the sight of them, again thinking of Scully and her love of the ocean.

He sat down on the couch, moving a couple of the pillows around. She sat in the chair, grabbing a pad of paper and a pen off the coffee table as she did. She clicked her pen and wrote a few things on her paper before she looked up at him with a smile.

“So, as I’ve said, my name is Doctor Clarke, but please call me Rachel,” she said, sitting back in her chair and putting her stockinged feet on the ottoman. “I am a therapist with a bachelor's degree in psychology and a masters degree in psychotherapy. I have been a licensed therapist for six years and if I do say so myself, I’m pretty great.”

He looked at her, stunned she would say something like that to a client, especially one she had just met. Her mouth was curling up, trying to hide a smile. Oh, he thought, she was very different than the last two stuffy people he had met.

“Anyway,” she said when he made no comment. “I was going over your information and I saw that the online questionnaire I require my patients to fill out had not been done.”

She stared at him and clasped her hands in her lap. She raised her eyebrows and it was so reminiscent of Scully’s look, his breath caught in his chest. He had still not uttered a word, trying to get a good read on this non shoe wearing, streaks of blue hair woman. She gave not an inch and he knew one of them had to speak eventually. His leg began to bounce when he realized it needed to be him.

“Well,” he said, clearing his throat. “I didn’t have access to a computer, so I couldn’t fill it out.”

“Truth or bullshit?” she asked, holding his gaze. He blinked, stunned again at her language as well as directness, and she did not back down.

He thought of his computer at home, still cracked and a new one not yet purchased. He had done so purposely, having no desire to have access to the Internet or email. Logically, he knew the computer and the technology it brought were not to blame for the situation he was in now. Emotionally though, it was a link to Scully, and he had wanted to sever that when he had felt angry.

Along with no computer, he had also kept his phone turned off, leaving Scully absolutely no way of reaching him, unless she drove her ass over to the house to see him. As he sat there now, he realized how selfish and asshole-like that would sound if he said it all out loud.

“Truth,” he said quietly.

“Good. Well, then since you were unable to answer the questions and this is our first meeting, I’m
going to ask these of you, in more of a ... freeform. You cool with that?” she said, picking up her pen, ready to write down his answers.

He nodded and then shook his head before leaning it back. He began to clench and unclench his fists, nervous beyond anything, at the prospects of talking about what brought him to see her today.

She was not saying anything and it was making him uncomfortable. He lifted his head and looked at her. She was watching him, her expression again unreadable. *They must teach you that at therapist training,* he thought, *the right way to stare at a person while revealing nothing of yourself.*

He knew how to do that too, years of working for the bureau and questioning suspects, had given him that ability. If she wanted to play a weird chicken game of stare down, he was more than ready. He would give it this one hour, then tell Mrs. Scully this therapist had not worked out either. Yeah ... he could tough out an hour.

“Do you like sports?” came her unexpected question, her eyes watching him. He blinked at her again, unable to form an answer, and she smiled slightly. “Me, I love sports, but I’ve never really been good at all of them. We had to do most of them in elementary school and then again in high school. I was not a fast runner, or good with the fancy footwork that goes with most sports. But oh ... I loved playing baseball.”

She paused for a moment, her hands once again clasped in her lap, her thoughts no doubt on a ball field somewhere.

“I wasn’t a fast runner, like I said, but the feel of the bat in my hands, the power I held to either bunt or whack the shit out of the ball, I loved it,” she said wistfully. “I loved the audible groan I would hear from the team when I stepped up to bat, knowing I was most likely going to hit the ball far. I loved the tight grip I would get on the bat, the feel and sound as I tapped the bat to home plate, the smell of the dirt, and then the sound of the ball hitting the bat and knowing it was going way outfield. I loved it all.” She stopped and smiled, no doubt seeing the ball flying over the outfield, the opposing team trying and failing to get to it in time.

He watched her and thought of his own love of baseball, watching games with his dad and listening to them on the radio. He thought of the scent of a musty old book as he read box scores, the taste of a nonfat tofutti rice dreamsicle in his mouth, and the sound of Scully’s slight gasp when he held her and demonstrated hips before hands before they “slapped a piece of horse hide with a stick.”

Yeah, he loved baseball too.

He looked at Rachel and they smiled at one another. She waited and he knew he was going to have to speak up. He took a deep breath and nodded.

“I didn’t answer your questionnaire, but,” he paused, looking at her and she nodded. He sighed and swallowed. “My ... well she’s not exactly my mother in law, but she kindly requested I speak to someone. She asked some friends and found some people they suggested.”

He stopped and thought of the look on Mrs. Scully’s face as he told her he would see about talking to a therapist. Her face was so hopeful, and he knew he could not take seeing her face heartbroken if it did not work out.

“I uh, my ... partner, God ... she and I are not together right now. We’ve, well there’s been some, uh, I only have an hour, right?” he laughed nervously, all of a sudden close to tears. Fuck.
She smiled at him, writing something on her paper. “Yes, an hour, but we can make another appointment. We can talk about anything you want right now,” she said kindly. “The questionnaire is helpful to both of us because it helps me see what you want out of this and it gets you thinking about what you personally want out of it. I can read it and know how I want to proceed, but it’s all dependent on you.”

He sighed and nodded. He looked at the pictures she had on the wall. A drawing of a ballerina in pose, a photo of her at a football game with her head on an older man’s shoulder, both of them bundled in their teams gear, and a mesmerizing drawing of the sea with nearly the same blues as the throw pillows.

“You like the Seahawks?” he asked, looking back at her. She smiled at him and nodded, looking over at the photo.

“I used to live in Washington state. My dad and I went to many games and then we moved here when I was ten,” she said. “We always caught them when they played somewhere close. That picture is me and my uncle at the Super Bowl last year.”

“Your dad couldn’t make it?” Mulder asked, looking at the photo.

“No,” she said quietly. “He passed away when I was seventeen.”

“I’m sorry, I didn’t mean to ...” he said, feeling terrible and intrusive.

“No apologies necessary,” she said with a smile. “Are you a football fan? Do you have a favorite team?”

“Uh ... yeah I like it, but I prefer basketball and baseball, too. Basketball is the sport I enjoy most and the Knicks are my team,” he looked at her and she nodded. “No matter how their season went, they’re the team I’ve loved since I was a boy. My dad used to watch them and he took me to a few games when I was younger. It was fun and exciting. The crowd cheering, the sound of the buzzer, the squeaking of the shoes on the court, I remember loving that almost as much as the game itself.”

“The sounds and feels of things can stay with us more than remembering the scores or the players. Our minds don’t always work in numbers and stats, but when we go back and read them, we remember the warmth of the day and feel of a parent’s hand instead,” she said softly, smiling at him again.

He nodded, remembering days with his dad before his family life went to shit. Sometimes those days were hard to call upon when so many bad memories pushed their way to the top. He looked around the room and then back at her with a sigh.

“I feel like you’re waiting for me to break down or start pouring my heart out,” he said, pulling a pillow on his lap and picking at it.

She smiled and then lightly chuckled. She moved her feet from the ottoman and stood up. She walked to the coffee pot and picked up a mug, opened the coffee holder, and put something inside. She closed it down and pushed a button before turning to him.

“Would you like a cup of coffee?” she asked, tilting her head.

“Uhh ... sure,” he said and she nodded. “Just black.”

The coffee stopped dripping and she brought the cup over to him. He murmured his thanks as she walked back to make one for herself. She added some sugar and cream and then sat back down. A
few minutes went by as they both drank some coffee.

“Mr. Mulder,” she began and he choked on his coffee, shaking his head.

“I ... no,” he cleared his throat and tried again. “Mr. Mulder ... sounds like my father.” He coughed and she nodded.

“Fox,” she began again and he heard Scully’s voice coming from the passenger seat of a car from what seemed like forever ago. That same hesitation and uncertainty in Rachel’s voice was present, and he felt tears once again at the back of his throat.

“Fox? Would that be okay? To call you Fox?” she asked him, no doubt sensing his unease. He looked in her eyes, so close to the shade of Scully’s, and he knew he would never be able to hear her call him Mulder. He was Mulder only to Scully.

“Yes, Fox is fine,” he said quietly, looking down into his coffee cup.

“Fox, the endgame of therapy is not to force you to break down and cry. I’m not here to make you do anything you don’t want to do,” she said, setting her mug on the small table next to her chair. “I’m not here because I asked to be, you came to me because you must know you have things you need to discuss. I am a non biased party who will hear you out and help you to reach conclusions, that’s my role. If you choose to continue our discussions, I will create a scheduled time for you weekly or biweekly if you want it. These sessions are for you. You get out of therapy what you put into it, Fox.”

She held his gaze and he knew in that moment, she was the therapist he would be seeing. It was not just the more laid back atmosphere and attitude she had, it was the feeling he got being in this room. He felt calm with her and that he could open up without feeling judged or scolded as he had felt at the last two therapists offices.

A buzzing sound interrupted his thoughts and she glanced at her table. She picked up her phone and silenced it, placing it back on the table. She locked her hands in her lap and looked at him.

“Our time for today is up,” she said. He smiled at her and she smiled back. The past hour had flown by surprisingly fast considering he had been dreading it and ready to say it was a bust.

She stood up and he followed suit, setting his mug on the coffee table, and walking with her to the waiting area. She turned to him and reached out her hand once again. He looked down and shook it, her handshake as firm as he remembered.

“It was a pleasure to meet you, Fox. I wish you well on your journey to find the therapist who is the right fit for you,” she said with a smile.

He dropped her hand and laughed quietly. “Would this time next week work for you? Or should we do biweekly at first? I could be here next Tuesday and then Friday,” he said, smiling as he watched her smile grow.

“I can do Tuesday, or would Wednesday be okay?”

“No, Wednesdays are ... I have standing plans every Wednesday,” he said, not offering any other explanation that it was the day Mrs. Scully came over to visit. He would not change that day, he looked forward to her coming out to his house every week.

“Next Tuesday it is then,” she agreed, picking up a reminder card and writing the date and time down for him. She handed it to him and he slipped it in his pocket.
“Well, I no longer wish you well on your journey, I now thank you for your decision,” she said, placing her hands on her heart and bowing her head. He laughed and went to grab his coat from the coat rack.

“What made you decide on me, if you don’t mind me asking?” she asked, rubbing her hands together and then interlocking her fingers.

He smiled as he put his jacket on and buttoned it up. “Your story about baseball made me think back to a moment that was pretty special to me. It made me think of the scent of the evening and the sound of baseballs being hit, and how in that moment, every other problem and worry seemed so insignificant,” he said, once again hearing Scully’s laughter and remembering how it felt to hold her, even if for a brief time.

“Huh ...” she said, shrugging her shoulders. “I just thought it was a cool story.” She smiled at him and once again he felt his breath catch.

“I just thought it was a pretty cool keychain.”

If he was on the fence about her being the right fit for him, he just fell off and landed in her yard. He could almost see it happening, landing on his ass while she sighed and stood waiting for him to join her in the office, the colorful throw pillows calling to him to sit down and get comfortable. He grinned at her and nodded, walking toward the door, when her voice she stopped him.

“Fox, do us a favor and get access to a computer. I’d like to have that questionnaire to study over the weekend before our next meeting,” she said kindly. He nodded at her once again and walked out the door.

The drive home felt lighter than the drive over to her office. His worry seemed to have not disappeared, but decreased a little, and he felt he could breathe easier. He knew this was going to be rough and he would have to get out of his comfort zone, but he was willing to do it. He hated every second he was away from Scully. If this was how he got her back, he would go every day. Well, every day but Wednesday.

He pulled into a local strip mall and went into a computer store, picking out a laptop that would work for him. He put the box in the backseat, got in, and started the car. Realizing he had no food at home, he swung through a fast food place for a burger and fries.

Arriving at home, he brought in his food and computer. While he ate, he plugged in and begin to prepare his laptop. He waited as it booted up, doing its updates, whatever else it needed to do. Tossing out his trash, he sat back down and connected to the wifi. He took the appointment reminder from his jacket pocket, found the website address, and then the questionnaire Rachel asked him to fill out.

Ten questions. Who knew ten questions would break his heart and leave him sobbing into his hands. He held nothing back when he answered the questions, at least as it pertained to what he wanted to gain from getting him and Scully back to where they needed to be. He knew writing in answers and then speaking with Rachel would be two different things, but the recent silence that had fallen on the house, and especially as he sat answering those questions, was enough to settle any fears he had.

He sent his answers off before he could change any of them, and closed the laptop down. He wiped his eyes and stood up, stretching his body. It was not late, but he felt exhausted. Turning off the lights, making sure the doors were locked, he headed upstairs. He used the bathroom, brushed his
teeth, undressed to his boxers, turned out the lights, and got in bed.

He thought of the day and the questions he had just answered, his mind buzzing too much to even remember each one individually, and he took a deep breath. He reached out and touched the empty side of the bed, closing his eyes as he did.

His eyes flew open as he thought of something. He pushed the covers back and ran down the stairs. Searching from room to room, he finally found his phone and tried unsuccessfully to turn it on.

“Fuck,” he mumbled, now on the hunt for his charger, finally finding it in a desk drawer, under a stack of papers. He brought both upstairs and plugged it in by the nightstand.

Waiting for it to turn on was excruciating. He sat on the side of the bed, running his hands down his face, and then across his mouth. The sound of the phone starting up, made his heart drop. He looked down and saw missed calls and voicemails from Scully. Text messages piled up and he had a hard time seeing them through his tears.

There were weeks worth of “good mornings” and “good nights,” but mostly “I love you’s.” Simple one lined texts that cut him to the core. What a fucking asshole he had been to cut himself off from her. Why had he done that? To punish her? He had only punished himself by not seeing her messages to him.

He listened to her voicemails and like the text messages, they were short- hoping he was okay, work was going all right, and always ended with her telling him she loved him. He listened again and saved them when he was done.

He looked at the date of her last text, a week ago. As he scrolled up through her texts, he saw they were all about a week apart. If he was right, she should be texting him tomorrow. Well, he was not going to wait until then before he reached out to her.

He thought of explaining to her why he had not responded to any of her messages, but he did not want to lay all his shit at her feet. Not again. He stared at the phone, deciding what to write. Keep it simple, he thought.

Good night. I love you, Scully.

He hit send and exhaled, not expecting an answer, not right away. He set the phone down and laid back down in bed. He hoped she read the message and the simple words he sent would make her feel as good as hers did for him.

He closed his eyes and sighed. Then, he heard a beep. He reached for his phone and unlocked it. One new message and his heart felt as though it were smiling.

Good night, Mulder. I love you too.

Chapter End Notes

This chapter, was another one that was written in my mind for such a long time. Mulder meeting a cool and different person to help him on his journey. I love Rachel, I LOVE her. She’s who I wish I could be and I feel myself in her a little. The
Seahawks are my team, I would love to be a therapist, and I wish I was as cool as her. She’s just awesome. ❤

Hope you like her too.
Maggie joins a friend for some much needed time away. They spend time chatting and Maggie comes to some decisions while they are there.

June 2015

Water lapped at the dock to Maggie’s right and the sound of it caused her to sigh in contentment. It was quiet and incredibly peaceful where she was presently and she could not have been happier.

Louise McGillan, a retired Navy nurse, was one of her oldest friends. She invited her to her lake house for a week, just the two of them. Maggie told her about Dana and Fox, and how she was helping Fox out. Louise said they both needed a girls’ week and insisted they leave as soon as possible.

Louise’s husband passed away a couple of months previously, after a very long illness. Since his death, she was dealing with a lot—bank accounts to close, her house to go through and get ready to sell, her husband’s will and items to be set aside for the recipients. It was a very stressful time for her and her two children. Maggie helped her whenever she could, offering advice, dropping off a meal, or simply lending a listening ear.

Tonight was the second night they were there and Louise went inside to get some wine. Maggie closed her eyes and listened to the sounds of the water and the crickets beginning to chirp. She took a deep breath and let it out, feeling the peace brought by this place.

“I hope red is good, apparently it’s all we had here,” Louise said, causing Maggie to open her eyes and look at her. She smiled as she handed her a glass and sat in the adirondack chair next to her. “Phew, it sure is beautiful here. The quiet is nice, but only for a while. Give me the bustle of the city any day.” They both laughed and sat looking at the lake.

They drank their wine in silence, as only good friends can, knowing that words are not always needed. It soon began to get chilly and they moved inside, pouring another glass of wine as they turned on the fireplace. Covering up with the cozy blankets in the room, they started getting caught up with each other.

Louise’s daughter was coming to visit next week, to help pack up the house and consolidate items before the big move. Louise found a townhouse close to her son and he and his wife recently had a new baby. Louise moving closer would be beneficial to both parties. She would be there to help care for her grandson, and her son would be close if she herself needed assistance.

“It will be nice to help with the baby, play with him, get the snuggles, then hand him back at the end of the day and get a good night’s sleep,” Louise said with a laugh. Maggie smiled, but then she thought of how she used to care for William and the way he smelled as she held him close, and she sighed.
She knew in her head that Dana’s decision is to put William up for adoption had been the right one, but her heart broke for Dana. For _all_ of them, really. The pain she saw in everyone close to Dana made her physically ill, and mentally as well. She had gone on medication for a while after William was gone, anxiety and sleeping pills, her heart broken.

Then Dana was gone. Her boys both had their own wives and lives, and Maggie was struggling through depression with no family to care for her. A knock at her door one day led to Louise coming in and cooking her a meal as Maggie sat at the kitchen table and cried. Cried for the sons she missed, the baby she would never see again, and for the safety of her daughter and the man she loved and followed, becoming a fugitive along with him.

Louise made sure she was fed, brought her to doctor’s appointments, and sat while she cried and worried. She never told Maggie to cheer up, move on, or to stop crying. No, she held her hand and wiped her eyes, keeping her sane and among the living.

“She’s still with me?” Maggie heard Louise ask softly. Unbeknownst to her, Maggie had been crying. She shook her head and apologized to Louise.

“I had no idea I was crying. I’m so sorry,” she said, wiping at her eyes. “Louise, I’m truly sorry.”

“Maggie, we don’t apologize for our tears, remember?” Louise asked her, reaching for her hand and holding it tight. Maggie laughed breathily and nodded, squeezing Louise’s hand.

“Was it the mention of the baby?” Louise asked kindly and Maggie nodded. Louise nodded too and then was silent.

“He would be fourteen now,” Maggie said, exhaling and shaking her head. “The boys at his age ... they had been awful at times. I can’t imagine with technology and access to so much information, how William would be.” Louise nodded again and squeezed Maggie’s hand.

“Louise ... I’m sorry. This is not why we’re here ...”

“Maggie, this is _precisely_ why we’re here. To mourn and take time for _us_. We have both been helping others ... god, most of our lives, and we need some time for ourselves,” Louise said vehemently. “I don’t expect this week to be sunshine and rainbows, not by a long shot. I’m mourning and so are you because time matters not when it comes to mourning and loss. Although it was the decision that was needed, you had a massive hole ripped into your soul. It’s been fourteen years, true, but it still hurts like it was yesterday at times. I know it does and I _don’t_ expect you to hold back while you’re here. Not to be too cliché, but what happens at this lake house, goddamn stays at this lake house.”

Maggie laughed and leaned her head against Louise’s shoulder, her head then resting on Maggie’s. They both laughed until they could not breathe and then wiped their eyes. Silence fell in the room and then Louise spoke softly.

“I’m scared, Maggie,” she said, and Maggie could hear it in her voice. “I’m scared of what comes next. I’ve been busy and _doing_ for so long, I’m afraid of what happens when I stop.”

“I know what you mean, Louise,” Maggie said putting her other hand on top of Louise’s. “It’s tough at first, I’m not going to tell you it’s not, but it will get easier. Time, it’s the only thing that helps. Well, that and good friends.” They both laughed and again sat quietly.

“Selling the house, Maggie ...” she sighed. “I don’t really want to, but what will I do with it on my own? It’s too big and all I think of is John when I’m in there. How happy we were and then him
passing as we stood around him, watching him leave this earth. Most of the memories right now are sad and I avoid certain rooms if I can. The new place is nice, but it doesn’t have the same feel as home.” She said with another sigh.

“That can be said of any place that’s different and new to us. I know that leaving the old house will be hard, but for your circumstances, it will be beneficial to all of you,” Maggie said.

“I know,” Louise said quietly.

“They sat in silence until Louise sat up and shook her head, before standing to her feet and reaching for Maggie’s hands. She pulled her up from the couch and into a tight hug before pulling back and smiling at her. Maggie smiled back and held onto Louise’s hand for an extra second.

“Let’s go to bed, get up and have a glass of wine by the water as we watch the sun rise,” Louise said, picking up their wine glasses. Maggie laughed and said that sounded fabulous.

A few minutes later she was in the guest room bed trying to stop her racing mind. She was worried about what came next, too. What came next for all of them. She did not worry about Bill Junior as much, he was happy with the life and career he chose.

She worried for Dana and when she would go back to that little unremarkable house. Like Louise, she was in a new place but wanted to be back in her old one, Maggie was sure. Her apartment was so sterile and not like other places she had lived, which were always cozy and inviting. There was the alien cat pillow that Dana had laughingly shown her, but Maggie had seen her eyes fall on it many times when she visited. Dana had taken the time to purchase it, it was definitely something she had wanted. Maybe she hoped Fox would see it someday, or it would one day be back on the couch where Fox had spent so many nights.

She worried for Fox, although he seemed to be doing well with his therapist. He had nothing but good things to say about her, although he admitted she kicked his ass emotionally every week. He turned his cell phone back on and to Maggie, that was huge. She could get a hold of him anytime, and it helped her breathe easier. He was still sleeping upstairs and not falling back into old patterns. She could see he was progressing, it was simply slow going.

And Charlie. Maggie felt her heart ache at the pain left there by him. A fight, a misunderstanding, and the stubborn nature to not listen or hear what truly happened, led to years of not speaking. Maggie tried but to no avail. Charlie wanted nothing to do with any of them. Nothing could be repaired if one side of the party refused to listen to reason.

Maggie rolled over and thought of them when the kids were little. The loud dinners, laughter, and Bill’s booming voice when they got too silly. So many redheads sat around that little table and it made her smile. Her mother had red hair and Maggie loved Anne Shirley and her Green Gable adventures so much, she wanted red hair too. To have four children with the hair color she loved, she felt very blessed.

Closing her eyes, she took a few deep breaths and prayed. She prayed for peace, happiness, and understanding. She prayed for Louise and her family and the new life they were beginning. She prayed for herself, to be the help that was needed, in the way it was desired, and soon she had fallen asleep.

The next few days at the lake seemed to fly by. She and Louise slept in, stayed up late, cooked wonderful meals, drank a lot of wine, laughed, cried, and sat by the lake, finding peace in the quiet around them. The last day there, as the sun was setting, Maggie walked around alone and looked once again at the view and the beauty of the area.
She found a log that was not far from the house and just sat quietly, closing her eyes. Hearing the wind blowing through the trees, the water quietly hitting the rocks at the shore, she made a decision. When she died, she wanted her ashes scattered here, in this exact spot. She found peace here, spent time with a cherished friend, and let go of the negativity that was weighing her down.

Opening her eyes, she looked around again and nodded. Yes, this was the spot. She stood up and looked down at the rocks at her feet. She saw a few flat ones and attempted to skip them on the lake. A couple of them were good, but mostly they were duds. She laughed and then shrugged, throwing the last rock as far as she could.

She bent down as she saw rocks that struck her fancy, putting them in her pockets to take home. She would give a few to Dana for a type of decoration or paperweight. Maybe Fox would like a couple.

Weighted down, this time by choice, she put her hands in her pockets feeling the smoothness of the rocks inside, and walked back to the house, ready to head back home. Recharged and happy, she was ready for what was coming next for her, or rather continuing really.

Her path was clear and she would stay the course. She would help to reunite the two soulmates who had lost their way. Their path may lead them on separate trails, but she would be their marker in the woods, directing them where they needed to go, where their paths have always been destined to meet- in the middle.

Chapter End Notes

Sigh ... Maggie is just the best. We deserved so much more with her. She is so wonderful and such a good mom.
Chapter Summary

Scully has a misunderstanding with a fellow doctor at the hospital. It leads to an interesting conversation about Mulder, the past, and the future.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

June 2015

Scully walked down the hospital hallway, her eyes busy reading the medical chart in her hands. This patient was troubling her, and she could not figure out how to continue his treatment. His blood work was different almost every day, and it was infuriating her. She was not paying attention as she walked and she suddenly ran square into someone.

She bounced back and would have fallen to the floor if someone had not caught her. She felt hands grip her waist as she dropped her chart to the floor. Her hands met a hard chest as she threw them out to catch herself. Her legs buckled and the grip on her waist tightened.

"Whoa! Steady! I got you. Are you okay?"

Scully looked up into a pair of concerned brown eyes. Doctor Stevens. He smiled at her, and she was struck by his good looks. She flushed as she realized she still had her arms practically around him and she quickly steadied her feet and pushed herself away from him.

"Fine. Thank you. Sorry. I wasn’t paying attention."

She bent to pick the papers up off the floor, and he did at the same time, causing their heads to bang together. Both jumped back, stood up and rubbed the spots where the other hit. Scully looked at him and he stared back. His face broke into a smile. Scully looked at him quizzically.

"I am so sorry, Doctor Scully," he said still smiling. "I tried to stop you from getting hurt and here I went and did it anyway."

Scully felt her mouth curving up in a smile. She felt a small bump on her head where it had hit him and it was quite painful. “Well, considering I could have fallen, I’d say a small bump on the head is no cause for concern. Thank you for helping to avoid a worse catastrophe.”

He smiled wider at her and put out a hand. “Please don’t bend down this time. I’ve got this and we don’t want a repeat of a minute ago.”

She smiled slightly but remained standing upright. She watched as he gathered all the papers together. She sighed inwardly knowing she would have to sort them all out before she could check on this particular patient. It was entirely her fault though, so she could not be angry with him. She should have been paying better attention to her surroundings. A disorganized chart was more optimal than her falling, of course, but it was going to take time to get it all back in order.
He scooped all the loose papers back together and began trying to organize them as best he could.

“It’s okay, just hand them to me,” she said, her tone more brusque than she intended if the look on his face was any indication.

“Sorry, I just meant,” she said, her hand out and eyes looking down. “I’ll need to give it a look through, so it’s fine how you have it.” He handed over the chart and she held tight to it.

She looked up, and he was smiling at her. She felt herself flush again, embarrassed by the effect he seemed to have on her. He was young, probably barely thirty, and very attractive with blonde hair and brown eyes just like a boy she had had a crush on when she was eleven. His smile came with ease, his eyes crinkling when he did. She had seen women, older women especially, making complete fools of themselves over him. She could understand though, he was definitely handsome, and he smelled really good.

He had been working at the hospital for about a year now, though they had not worked together often. She saw him from time to time in the halls and then of course in certain meetings to discuss patients. This may have been the first time they had a one on one conversation, and it was going just swimmingly. She rolled her eyes internally at the ridiculousness of the situation.

“Again, I’m really sorry about running into you,” he said, putting his hands in his lab coat pockets, rocking on his heels.

“It was entirely my fault,” she said, motioning to the chart in her hand. “I was engrossed in the chart, and I wasn’t watching where I was going.” He smiled and nodded. She felt stuck, not knowing how to walk away quickly, yet politely.

“Well ..”

“I’m ..”

They both smiled, and he nodded toward her.

“I’m headed to a meeting about a patient,” she said. “Thanks again for not letting me fall.”

“So, if I hadn’t caught you, you would literally have fallen at my feet,” he said, dryly, his eyes on her.

She looked at him quizzically and then he smiled. She let out a small shaky laugh, her heart pounding. Was he flirting with her? She froze, not sure what to say. Jesus, he was twenty years younger than her! Not to mention, she was not interested in anything with anyone. She was about to say something when he spoke again.

“I’m just joking, Doctor Scully,” he said quietly, his eyes searching her face.

Relief coursed through her and she felt her shoulders relax. She looked down and laughed softly, thinking of a witty comeback. Raising her head, she looked in his eyes, finding his expression serious.

“Do you really need every female on the planet falling at your feet? Don’t you get that enough as a doctor with your patients and their families? Especially the .. uh .. older family members?” she asked him, raising her eyebrows.

He stared at her for a couple of seconds before his face broke into a grin. “Doctor Scully, I assure you, I do not do anything to encourage that behavior,” he said, his grin wide.
“Ah, but you don’t discourage it either, do you?” she asked him, a smile on her own face. He laughed and shrugged his shoulders, his eyes again on the floor. She could see a flush creeping up his neck, and she smiled.

“Doctor Stevens, while I am enjoying this conversation, I do need to to get to that meeting,” Scully said, readjusting the papers in her arm. “Thank you again, for not letting me become a patient.” He laughed and inclined his head toward her. She smiled and stepped away, walking toward her office where she dropped off the file to fix up later.

She hurried down the hall and was one of the last to arrive. She took a seat, and a couple of minutes later, surprising to her, Doctor Stevens stood up to address the room. His eyes landed on her, and he smiled before looking away. Now it was her turn to flush and hope no one noticed.

He proceeded to present his patient and discuss the complexities involved in his case. The others chimed in, but Scully remained silent, thinking of what he had said. There was a similarity, and she needed to get back to her office to check something.

Meeting over, she hurried back and picked up the chart she had dropped earlier. She began to go through it, arranging it and looking things over again. Six pages in, she found it.

Gathering all her information, she left the office and went to find Doctor Stevens. She passed a few patients who said hello, and she smiled, but continued walking, determined to find him and show him what she had found. She found him in the hall, outside of the patient’s room with the chart in his hands.

“Check the blood results,” she said, breathless from her fast walk to find him.

He looked up at her, and she handed him the test results that were giving her trouble with her patient. He took it, and she pointed to where she meant and his eyes widened as he looked at his patient’s chart, the bloodwork identical.

“Oh my God,” he said, looking at her, shaking his head, before turning to walk into the patient's room to speak with him and his family.

She hurried to her patient and explained to him and his family what the course of treatment would be, and they thanked her profusely, his mother crying with relief. Scully was sure to explain it was going to still mean blood tests and a few more days in the hospital, but they were onto fixing what was wrong. His mother hugged Scully, whispering her thanks before she pulled back, wiped her eyes, and hugged her son.

Scully left and went into the locker room, shutting herself into a stall, and leaning against it. She smiled and put her hand over her mouth, before her eyes filled with happy tears. She bent over and took a deep breath.

Two patients helped and all because of a run in that caused her head to still sting. She reached up and touched the bump, wincing as she did. Standing up, she leaned her head back and smiled again, laughing silently. She took a deep breath and left the locker room.

Walking back to her office, she saw Doctor Stevens coming down the hall, a huge smile on his face. He walked straight to her and stopped in front of her, shaking his head.

“You are amazing,” he said, and she laughed before shaking her head. “Seriously, I was stumped, and I was not sure what other way to go. You ...”

“If you and I had not literally crashed into each other, I wouldn’t have caught it so quickly. Since I
had to fix the papers in the chart, I looked more thoroughly. So, I guess you could say it was a team effort,” she said with a shrug.

“Well, thank heaven for happenstance then,” he said with a chuckle.

Scully froze as he continued to speak. Suddenly she could smell pie and hear Mulder’s voice saying the same thing to her years ago as she checked him for injuries. She felt her throat clog with tears, and she needed to move, but she was frozen in place.

“So, I insist. Tomorrow at seven, drinks at Dora’s, my treat,” Doctor Stevens was saying, as a nurse came by asking for his attention. “Okay? See you then, Doctor Scully.”

He walked away before she had a chance to say anything. Even if she had the chance, she would not have been able to, the lump in her throat preventing anything but oxygen to pass through. She stood there, no doubt looking like a statue before she hurried away and into her office.

She closed both doors and paced the room. What just happened? Did he ask her on a date? A date? Christ, he was so young and no ... it was not a date. Just a “thank you” for helping today. She sat down and put her face in her hands, letting the tears fall. Five minutes ago she was happy, and now she did not know how she felt.

She sat back, wiped her eyes, and blew her nose. She simply needed to find him and speak to him, tell him that she was not interested in a date, regardless of the type. She stood up and headed for the door when Nurse Charlotte knocked and opened it first, a look on her face. Scully followed her wordlessly and the rest of the day was a blur.

When she arrived home, she stripped and showered before falling into bed, the day taking its toll. She woke up the next morning, her day off, and felt dread settle in her stomach. It was ridiculous that he would want a date with her, no matter how charming he thought he was, she was still old enough to be his mother.

She threw the covers back and stood in front of her full-length mirror. She took off her pajamas and looked at herself naked, she was still in good shape, especially for being in her fifties. She could do this, right? Date someone?

No. He’s not Mulder, she thought as she took her robe from the end of the bed and slid it around her naked body. Walking into the kitchen, she turned on the coffee maker and watched it fill the pot. She closed her eyes and sighed.

Since the first text from Mulder, he had only sent two more, and they were weeks apart. As if he forgot to keep sending them, or if he simply did not want to send them anymore. That first one, after weeks and months of nothing, had left her sobbing with happiness, and an ache for him she could not quantify. But now, radio silence, regardless of the ones she sent him.

Fuck it, she thought, pouring her coffee into a mug, I’m going to do this.

Back and forth she went with how she felt all day. Happy and excited for a bit and then absolutely refusing to be there.

She dressed and fixed her hair, stopping to cry as she put on her makeup. Damn him, she thought, thinking of Mulder. She put her mascara on a little rougher than usual and looked at her red eyes.

“Goddamn,” she whispered, shaking her head. She turned the light off, grabbed a light jacket, her small purse, and headed out the door.
Dora’s was not far from the hospital, and many people met up there after work. After she parked her car, it was a short walk. Or at least, it would have been, if she did not keep walking and turning around before going back again.

Finally, she took a deep breath and walked to the door and pulled it open. It was a nice bar that was also a decent place to eat, but he had said drinks only, so drinks it would be.

“Doctor Scully!” came a call to her left and in front of her. He stood up and walked to her, reaching to shake her hand lightly. “You look beautiful, if you don’t mind me saying.” He smiled and she felt that lump in her throat again. She nodded and smiled, heading to the table. She felt his hand on her lower back, and she sucked in a quick sob.

He did not notice as he held her chair for her, asking if she wanted him to take her coat. She allowed him to help her and sat down as he hung it on the coat rack provided.

“Can I get you a drink?” a waitress asked her with a smile.

“Double scotch,” Scully said quickly, and the waitress walked away to get it for her. Doctor Stevens raised his eyebrows as he sat down. He had a drink in front of him already, and he smiled at her as he reached for it and put it closer to him.

“I’m glad we could do this,” he said, looking at her. She nodded, waiting for the lump to leave her throat.

The waitress set her drink down and Scully picked it up, drinking all of it down, before slamming the glass on the table. Taking a big lungful of air, she felt the scotch burning everywhere. She looked up and saw the waitress and Doctor Stevens staring at her.

“Another?” she rasped out, wiping her mouth. The waitress nodded and smiled at her.

She looked over at Doctor Stevens, and he was staring at her, his eyes different than before, as though he was reading her, trying to figure her out. The heat from the alcohol was reaching her stomach and making her limbs feel like they were on fire. The lump in her throat became a boulder, and she pushed her chair back, heading to the bathroom, not looking back as she heard him calling to her.

She opened the bathroom door, closed and locked it, before sliding to the floor. She put her head in her hands and began to sob uncontrollably. This was too much, being here like this. What was she doing?

She was so lonely and missed Mulder so much. Even as bad as it was before, she still saw him, heard his voice. This felt worse than when he had been dead for months. That was final and at least she knew and had her answer to what happened to him.

This ... this seemed worse. He was a drive away, and yet she would not be driving to him. He was a phone call away. Shit, she could call him right now, and hear his voice, but she would not call him. Because she knew the truth, it was bad, and this separation was the right thing to do. But she ached for him, in every possible way. She pulled her knees to her chest, crying as she wrapped her arms around her legs.

“Doctor Scully?” came Doctor Stevens’ voice quietly from the other side of the door, along with a soft knock.

God, she thought, this was going to be so embarrassing.
“Doctor Scully, I just want you to know that I’m here. Take as long as you need. I’ll redirect traffic,” he said, and she cried harder before laughing sardonically. What had she become? She did not do this... crying in a public bathroom.

*Or a dressing room,* her brain reminded her.

Jesus, she needed to get up. She shook her head and pushed herself off the ground. Dizzy for a second, she walked to the sink and looked at herself in the mirror. Mascara had smeared under her eyes, and she wiped it off. Her eyes were red rimmed and her nose was stuffy. She blew it and then washed her hands.

She turned and looked at the door, her heart in her stomach as she smoothed her clothes down. She unlocked the door and took a breath before she opened it. When she did, true to his word, Doctor Stevens stood in the hall on the other side, with her purse and jacket over his arm.

“Okay?” he asked her softly.

She nodded and reached for her things. “I’m sorry. I should go. I’m not... this... I uh, I had a...”

“Bad breakup?” he asked just as softly. She looked up at him, and he smiled. “I’ve been there. I understand. I know I’m better off, but I still miss him every day.” Scully nodded and looked down.

“Wait,” she said, looking up at him, confused. “Did you say “him”?”

He looked at her and nodded. “You’re gay?” she asked. He nodded again, and she started to laugh and then cry. She covered her face with her hands and did both at once, her heart leaving her stomach and settling in its proper place.

She moved her hands from her face, wiping her eyes as she did. She shook her head and looked in his eyes again, finding nothing but kindness.

“Did you think this was a date?” he asked her kindly. She nodded, and he smiled. “Then your actions are completely understandable. I am sorry if I wasn’t clear. I simply wanted to thank you, and this seemed like a way to do that and also to get to know you better.”

“I am so sorry,” Scully whispered, tears still close to the surface. “It was my fault completely. I should have... I’m sorry.”

“You wanna get out of here? Maybe get a coffee or some food maybe?” he asked her, a smile on his lips.

“Doctor Stevens, I would love that,” Scully said with a relieved sigh.

“Alan,” he said, reaching for her jacket and holding it open. “I think after tonight, we can be on a first name basis. So please, call me Alan.” She turned around and put her jacket on with his assistance. Pulling her hair from the collar, she turned around again.

“Dana,” she said with a smile, putting out her hand. He clasped it in both his own and smiled back at her.

“Well, Dana,” he said, offering his arm. “I’d say unless you ate prior to this, that alcohol is going to be hitting you soon. So I think we should actually get some food in there to soak it up.”

She laughed and as they began to walk out, she felt it, causing her to lean into him and moan. He chuckled and held her steady, pushing open the door, allowing her to exit first, before being sure
she had a hold on him again.

The world spun a little, but she kept a firm grasp on his arm. Turning left out of Dora’s, they walked a little ways and found a food truck selling Mexican food. He looked at her, and she smiled with a nod.

He suggested she get a table from the few that were set about the area. She told him what she would like and then sat down with a sigh. She closed her eyes briefly, shook her head, and took off her jacket, the night air warm.

“Here we go,” he said setting down two open brown boxes of food. Tacos, rice and beans, and two beers. She raised her eyebrows and he shrugged.

He pushed a box toward her and handed her a fork and spoon. He took napkins from his jacket pocket, set them on the table, and sat down. They both began to eat and as she took a drink of her beer, he nodded at her.

“You want to talk about it? Your breakup?” he asked her, with a kind smile.

Setting her beer down, she sighed. “I don’t want to constitute it as a breakup. I know it is, I know it. But that just sounds so … so final, and I want to believe,” she said, choking out a laugh and a sob, “believe that we can figure it out and get back to who we were. But, yes, we are separated right now.” She stared at her food, no longer hungry, stirring it with her fork.

“You were together a long time?”

She laughed almost bitterly. “I suppose that would depend on a few things. We worked together before we were together. But I’ve known him for twenty-two years, and I’ve loved him for every one of them.”

He looked at her, and she saw something familiar in his eyes. They may not be the same color, but something about them reminded her of John Doggett. The kindness and concern John seemed to always have as he looked at her, was echoing out from Alan’s eyes now. She took a breath and smiled as she exhaled.

She told him of working at the FBI and meeting Mulder. How he immediately was a force she was not prepared for but was drawn to like a moth to a flame. He had pushed her and challenged her, with her giving it right back. They had been great partners, close friends, and then lovers.

She kept the government conspiracy out of her story, did not mention William, or talk about their time on the run. She still had to work with him, no need for there to be any reason for him to think she was crazy.

They tossed out their trash, and put the beer bottles in the provided recycling bins. She told him of Mulder’s depression and how she had tried, that this decision was right, but it was killing her to be away from him. More than anything physical, she simply missed him, her best friend and the person she loved most in the world.

“I can’t believe I’ve told you all this,” Scully said, shaking her head and sighing. He smiled and crossed his arms as he leaned back in his chair. She stared at him and again felt that familiar feeling. “But you remind me of someone. Someone from the past, who was important to me and whom I was fond of. He was there when I needed someone to listen and prop me up when I was sure I would have fallen over.”

He smiled again and shrugged his shoulders. “Sounds like the universe has sent you another
someone who would be willing to help out,” he said, as she tore apart the napkin in front of her. “Dana, Doctor Scully, I’ve admired your work at the hospital for a long time. While we’ve not really interacted, I’ve seen you, I’ve heard of your work. You are someone I’ve wanted to get to know, but the timing was never right. I think that’s changed and if you want a friend, I’m here.” He smiled at her, and she smiled back with tears in her eyes.

“Just friends,” he said, with a teasing expression and she laughed softly.

“I’d like that,” she said quietly. “Thank you.” He nodded and stood up from the table. She stood too, put on her jacket and picked up her purse.

He walked her to her car, and she turned to him, her hand outstretched again. “Thank you. I had an enjoyable time tonight.”

He took her hand in both of his and held it. “I had a fun time too. I’ve never seen anyone drink down a double scotch the way you did tonight. If I had not already admired you, that would have done it.”

She laughed and shook her head. “Not my finest moment for sure, but it was pretty impressive, right?” He laughed and let go of her hand. She smiled at him and sighed.

“Thank you for tonight. I ... I needed to talk it seems and ... I thank you for listening,” she said, looking in his eyes. He smiled and nodded. “Just, not everyone knows about my working at the FBI, and I ...”

“I understand,” he said, with another nod. “My personal life is also my own.” She understood, and she nodded, before stepping closer and hugging him, shocking them both for a second. He put his arms around her and she closed her eyes. Not the same, but it felt good to be held as brief as it may be.

“I have a good feeling about your future,” he said quietly, close to her ear. “A really good feeling.” He pulled back and smiled at her and the lump in her throat that never quite seemed to go away felt bigger.

“Thank you,” she whispered, patting his chest. “Good night.”

“Good night, Doctor Scully,” he said, inclining his head to her. She smiled and opened her car door, got in, and headed home.

She walked through the door, hung up her jacket, and put her purse on the table. She took off her shoes and sat down, reaching for her laptop. Tara had sent her a text earlier and told her she was emailing some new pictures of the kids, and she thought seeing them may cheer her up.

Opening her email, she saw nothing from Tara, but her heart raced as she saw one from Mulder. She missed highlighting it and instead opened one about a sale for a clothing store. Cursing, she went back and highlighted Mulder’s, her heart racing and the lump in her throat standing up and stretching its muscles.

**Scully**

*I’ve debated how to start this email for a half an hour. I know what I want to say, the words unable to stop themselves from being written, but how to begin?*

“My dearest Scully” seemed to formal. “My Scully” too ... Mr. Darcy-ish. “Dana” ... no.
Scully. Who you are and who you’ve been to me for over twenty years. I’ve said it thousands of ways, in millions of places.

Scully.

She stopped reading and wiped the tears from her eyes. She could hear him typing this out as she knew he would speak as he wrote sometimes. She could picture his concern as he tried to get it all just right. Wiping her eyes again, she continued.

I know you’re probably wondering why I’ve stopped texting you. Why I hadn’t answered the others you had sent for months.

Short answer to the latter, I was being a selfish asshole. I thought if I cut off communication to you, it would hurt you and force you to come to me. I now see how fucked up that was and the thought of causing you pain was exceedingly awful.

I’m sorry, Scully.

As for the former, well I hope you’re sitting down. I’ve begun to see a therapist.

Eyebrows raised, tears on her cheeks, she stared at the word therapist, her eyes seemingly unable to move past it. Part of her was ecstatic and the other was enraged. Why now? Why not years ago? Why not one of the times it was suggested in the past? When things were better, but still something was lacking and she had felt a therapist might be of assistance? She closed her eyes as she took a breath. Opening them, she continued reading.

Yes, Scully, a therapist. I know you’re both elated and enraged with me right now and I know the feeling. “Why now, Mulder?” I can hear you saying, your eyes accusatory and hurt.

Short answer again- I’m a selfish asshole. If you had suggested this last year, Scully ... I honestly don’t know what I would have done. I was barely on board with the idea of medication. You think I would willingly have gone to discuss my feelings with a stranger? Fuck no.

I’m filled with dread at the thought of how I would have treated you if you had suggested that I see a therapist. For that, I am thankful it was not broached.

Every week for an hour, I sit and talk about myself. My past and my present. It’s been difficult at times, especially trying to keep the sarcasm tamped down and be open and honest. If I don’t succeed, she calls me on my bullshit. I think her looks of silent disapproval might give yours a run for their money.

She smiled through her tears. So, it was a woman therapist. Good. she thought. He responded better to women, always had.

I won’t say it’s been fun or easy, but it has helped. I have gotten out of my comfort zone and I have been terrified. But, I’ve also come home feeling better than I have in a long time. A really long time, Scully.

I was discussing our text messages, and she suggested I try a different path. She asked how we best communicate and I laughed. There could have been two answers to that question, and only one was truly appropriate in that setting.

She laughed and felt flushed. Yes, there were two answers to that question. The silent communication they always had, but their physical communication was even better. When there was both ... it was a surprise they never burned the house down.
I told her of before, when I was gone and all we had was emails, and she suggested we try this again. I think it might be good and rather like a journal, but my words will have more meaning because they are for you.

She posed a question to me as I agreed to do this and it floored me, stopped me in my tracks as I was leaving her office.

“What’s the happiest memory you have of your Scully?”

Thousands of memories flooded my mind, no, hundreds of thousands. Different times, places, points in our lives. How was I to choose the happiest? She said it was my homework and as soon as I knew, I was to tell you. So here goes:

Scully stopped again, needing a second. She put her face in her hands, scared to finish the email. She had told Alan tonight that this decision was right. But what if she read this and she gave in, her loneliness and love for Mulder superseding her own well being to the point of forgoing her plan to be better herself?

Closing her eyes as she took a breath, she found the strength to read what he wrote, determined to not let it change her mind to stay on the course she was taking. She opened her eyes and looked back at the screen.

So here goes:

I came home and made a list of categories, pertaining to different times- Before and After.

Before- there were memories of your laughter, your calming touch and presence, grief that we experienced and shared, times when we were a unified front, times when your health or mine turned around and we were guaranteed another day.

After- memories of firsts with you. So many firsts, Scully. Rainy nights, windy mornings, movie marathon nights where we didn’t watch much but neither of us cared, days apart only to come back together, dinners at your mother’s, the feel of you in my arms as I listened to you breathe.

So many more, but those were the highlights. I thought and thought about the happiest one and then I knew what it was, and if I don’t somehow sense you roll your eyes, I think I may have lost my touch.

She was weeping, reading all his happy memories of her, the ones she may have thought never even counted, of course, he was keeping track. That was Mulder. He always kept track and had a running tally.

I didn’t even have to think back too far because I knew when and where. Picking you up in New York from the hospital after you had been shot by Ritter, driving home instead of flying to be sure we could stop, and you could stretch anytime you needed.

You were comfortable, and I turned the radio on as we left the city. I actually thought you were sleeping, but as I changed the stations, you told me to go back. Do you remember the song that was playing, Scully? Because I do.

I remember you shifting around and starting to sing softly. I scoffed at you knowing all the words to a song from a movie where the main actor couldn’t even be bothered to speak with a British accent like the rest of the cast. You told me to shut up so that you could hear the song, and I rolled my eyes.
But I listened, Scully. I listened to the words.

During the instrumental part, you told me how you had gone to see the movie any chance you could, to escape the stress of work, and not for Kevin Costner, like most women in America, but for Christian Slater’s character. He was a brooding young man with a troubled past, floppy hair, and a quick sense of humor. You said you had a huge crush on him most of your life and this movie brought it up again.

I teased you that you must really have a type as I ticked all those boxes, especially the sense of humor, and you looked at me and rolled your eyes. But your smile, Scully ... it was as if you told me a secret, but it was still hidden away, and not quite ready to be voiced.

A few minutes later you were asleep, and I was left thinking about the words to the song and that smile. Watching you sleep, knowing you were safe and I was taking you home, I felt it. I knew I wanted to spend the rest of my life figuring out the secrets behind your smiles.

That was my happiest memory of you, my Scully, because that was when I fell completely over the edge, no going back, in love with you.

She pushed the laptop back and put her head on her arms on the table and cried. Gut-wrenching sobs that hurt deep within her body as she cried out her sadness. Her tears soaked her arms and fell to the table. She cried until she had no more tears left and then she was quiet, not moving, thinking of the time he meant.

She remembered, of course, but had no idea that particular moment would have had any significance- to anything. It was such a mundane occurrence, it hardly seemed noteworthy.

Except it was, because it was the day he knew and even though he did, he waited until she was ready. She knew it and it hurt and healed her all at once. He was telling her again, he would wait. He would sit in a car and listen to a song that he had deemed “cheesy,” if it meant he could do it with her.

Raising her head, she pulled the laptop back toward her. There was still a bit of his email left and she needed to see it. To know for sure if that was what he meant.

I’m sorry, Scully, for it taking these extremes to open my eyes and make me see.

I am so sorry.

Mulder

She scrolled up and read the email again and then again. She hit print and it began to print in the other room. Tears in her eyes and a headache forming, she closed the computer down and gathered the papers she had printed. She picked up her phone, found the Bryan Adams song they had heard and purchased it.

Not bothering to change, brush her teeth, or wash her face, she laid down in bed and listened to the song on repeat, holding a pillow close and wishing it was Mulder cracking jokes and singing along to the “cheesy” song that had been the turning point for him.

Oh you can't tell me it's not worth tryin' for
I can't help it there's nothin’ I want more

Yeah, I would fight for you
I’d lie for you
Walk the wire for you, yeah, I'd die for you

You know it's true

Everything I do

Oh

I do it for you

She fell asleep, hoping her headache would be gone in the morning. Considering the amount of tears she cried, she knew it was an improbability.

It had dissipated a bit by the time she grabbed a triple shot coffee heading to the hospital. On the way out the door she was bumped from behind and pushed into the person coming in, splashing some coffee on their coat.

“I am so sorry!” Scully said using the napkin in her hand to try to clean the mess her coffee had made.

“It’s no trouble, don’t worry,” came a soft chuckle. Scully looked up and her eyes widened.

“Doctor Kosseff?” Scully said in surprise.

“Dana!” Doctor Kosseff said, equally surprised. She reached out and hugged Scully briefly before stepping back and looking at her with a smile.

“Well, if this isn’t a blast from the past,” Doctor Kosseff said shaking her head. “How are you? Still working at the bureau?”

“No,” Scully said. “Not for a long time, actually. How about you?”

“Oh, no. I’ve been gone a few years myself, but I’m in private practice now. It’s going well and I ...” she stopped as she saw the look on Scully’s face. “Dana, are you all right?”

Scully had tears in her eyes. Here was a woman she had trusted and felt comfortable with and had not seen in years. What are the chances it would be today that she literally ran into her?

“Doctor Kosseff,” Scully said quietly, that lump in her throat showing up yet again. “Are you taking any new clients?”

Doctor Kosseff looked at her with a soft smile and nodded.

Chapter End Notes

Another chapter that I cried over as I wrote it in my head in the car. This one ... it made me so happy and also sad, but hopeful. I love them not speaking, but also still in touch. I know it’s hard to not have them together, but they are still THEM. They still are friends regardless of anything, and even without vocally speaking to one another, they
always will be. They just need some time and to get back to their roots.
No Holding Back

Chapter Summary

Mulder has another therapy session with Rachel. They have discussed many topics and they are really getting to the heart of some troubles.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

August 2015

Mulder finished writing his most recent email to Scully and saved it, not quite ready to send it yet. He glanced at the clock and saw it was getting late and he needed to hurry.

Closing the windows, he grabbed the car keys and headed out the door. It was hot today and had been for a few days now. He could already feel the sweat on his back. A few minutes down the road, the air conditioner kicked in, and he turned it up high, letting it cool down the car and him.

His mind drifted to the email he was writing before he left. He had been writing emails to Scully for the past two months as a way to communicate without speaking. They had not had vocal contact, and it hurt, and while he knew it was right, God did he miss the sound of her voice.

The emails were a great help to him. Sometimes they were long and full of information, stories or memories of the past, and then other times, it was merely a few lines. On those days, either he had had his ass kicked at therapy, or he did not have as much to say.

Scully did not respond to the emails, but he had not asked nor expected her to do so. He had said it would be like a journal and it had been. There were some he did not send her, wanting to hold onto his thoughts to share at a later date, or perhaps not at all.

He thought of the past few months and how the therapy had helped him to see things differently. He had a bachelor of science in psychology, and yet ... he shook his head at the different ways Rachel had opened his eyes and helped him.

After their introductory meeting, he had sent her his responses to the questions she asked. At his next session, she had smiled and asked him to commit to expanding on one question per session.

The first couple of weeks were easier than the later ones. He discussed his childhood, adolescence, and his parents’ divorce. He told her of his sister and her disappearance, leaving out the aliens and the conspiracies. No need for her to think he was too crazy.

His schooling and profession were also a topic of discussion, as well as tales of what he had done before, during, and after, the bureau. Again, he left out much of his conspiracy worries of the past. She had laughed at some of his stories and quietly wiped her eyes at others.

One week when he came in, she had a look on her face that he had seen on Scully’s, but never on Rachel’s. She had always been serious with him, but also jovial. That day, she had not been jovial but sad and serious. Asking him to be completely honest with her, she stared at him. He had nodded and out it came.
He told her about the conspiracies he had believed in, which he thought would have been enough for her to tell him he was insane and needed to be locked away. She remained quiet, not saying anything as he spilled out tales of spaceships and men in ranking government positions who caused harm to others.

Scully’s story of abduction and the subsequent discovery of her cancer, left him sobbing and unable to speak for a few minutes. He sat with his head down and tears falling fast, choking him as they pushed their way to the surface.

“She was sick, and I … I was helpless to do anything to save her. She was losing weight, becoming paler, weaker, and yet … she stayed with me. She kept coming to work, hid the bloody tissues from her nosebleeds from me. Always telling me she was fine but I knew she wasn’t and I couldn’t do a goddamn thing about it,” he said quietly, the memories of those days still so heavy upon his soul.

He told her of their attempt to have a child together through IVF and the sadness when it failed. Neither of them believing it would ever happen after that as she was not able to conceive.

“I wanted that for her more than anything else. Such a small thing to give, really. She already had my heart, my soul. I would have given anything if it meant she was happy and had what she wanted. Anything,” he said, shaking his head as he remembered the way she cried in his arms when the IVF ultimately failed.

His own abduction, what he remembered of it, and his awakening to discover her pregnant was discussed, as he paced the room, the anger he felt then, bubbling close to the surface.

“I … I stupidly and also rather asshole-y thought there had maybe been someone else. That … maybe … she found a way with someone else. I was unsure of where I fit anymore, and I pushed her away instead of pulling her in,” he stopped pacing and stood still, lost in his thoughts. “But then, late one night, later than had happened in a long while, she came over. I was in bed, and she let herself in with her key and woke me up. I was angry and told her to go, but she didn’t. She took off her shirt and put my hand on her belly, never taking her eyes off mine. I felt the baby move and she smiled, keeping my hand there. Even without words I knew what she was saying.”

He drifted away and thought of how they had made love that night, finally connecting again in every way possible. The feel of her belly as he held her after, the baby moving around so much, he thought they had done something to endanger it. Her laugh as she kissed him and snuggled closer was all the answer he needed.

“I never gave up on a miracle,” she whispered before she fell asleep. “For a baby or for your return. My faith was simply tested.”

William. Being sought after, a baby born to a barren woman and the possibilities of what he was before and after his birth, created more questions than answers. Mulder would not get to answer them, not with her at least, and he left them in order to protect Scully and his son.

“I had to leave them,” he said with a sob. “It tore me apart inside, but I had to go. They … they were all I cared about. I had to protect them.”

He stopped there, falling to his knees and crying, the thoughts of that last day with William and Scully taking him down. The sadness he saw in her eyes, the way William smelled as he held him close, held them both until the last possible second, and their last kiss goodbye.

He thought of his time alone and how utterly lonely he felt. His worry for Scully and the ache to
see her and William so strong, some days he would have given it all up just to hold them in his arms. The only reason he had not was because he knew they would be in danger. He would not do that to them, and instead, he stayed away, his loneliness serving as their protection.

Rachel came to him as he bent closer to the floor, doubled over from the pain of the past. She put a hand on his back, rubbing softly, saying nothing, letting him cry. He heard the timer go off on her phone and still they sat there silently, her hand comforting on his back.

As he gained control of his emotions, he sat up and she handed him the box of tissues. He blew his nose and wiped his eyes. Keeping his eyes closed, he began taking deep breaths to calm down. In through the nose, out through the mouth. 1 .. 2 .. 3 ..

When he opened his eyes, Rachel was staring at him. Her eyes red, but a kind smile on her face. She thanked him for his honesty as he left and he apologized for taking time from the next client. She smiled and shook her head explaining she always kept a time window between clients in case of things like this or to write notes. He nodded and thanked her.

When he left, he drove away but pulled over not too far from the office. He sat in the car and closed his eyes. In that moment, the thought of stopping therapy was at the top of his mind. It was too much pain to go through every week. He tried it and it was not working. It was making him feel worse.

The rest of the weekend, he thought of what he told Rachel. He took his medication, but he did not do much more than laze around the house or go for an occasional run. Not until Wednesday, when Mrs. Scully came over, did he even speak to another person.

She sussed out something was wrong and looked at him with her kind eyes. He sat on the couch with his head down and told her he wanted to stop seeing Rachel. Too many emotions and pain were brought up last time, and it hurt too much.

He heard her walk over to him, but he kept his head down. While one hand touched his back, the other rested on his arm. Tears filled his eyes as she remained silent, the hand on his back rubbing in small circles, the one on his arm simply holding tight.

They sat in silence for a while. Finally raising his head, he looked at her, but she said nothing. She simply stared at him. He took a big breath and nodded slowly. She patted his back, squeezed his arm and stood up, going to dish up the dessert she had brought.

Two days after, he sat in the waiting room, his hour approaching. Rachel opened the door, and she had the same kind smile as Mrs. Scully. He nodded as he stood and walked into the office, ready to continue down his road of healing.

Now, it had been a couple of months since that day, and while every week could be difficult, it was nothing like that one particular day. They had spoken of many things, and he had broken down many times but he stayed the course.

Pulling into the parking lot, he turned off the car and went into the waiting room. It was hot out in the August air, and the cool of the office felt good. He sat down to wait and thought of something he wanted to add to his email to Scully, a funny memory that made him chuckle.

“Fox,” he heard Rachel say as the door opened. She smiled at him as he stood and walked toward her and into the office.

“How was your weekend? And your week?” she asked him, sitting in her chair, and grabbing her
“Good, it was good,” he said, moving the throw pillows and sitting on the couch.

“I’m glad to hear it. So, anything you want to bring up or discuss?” she asked, smiling at him.

“Well,” he said, clearing his throat. “I have enjoyed emailing Scully whatever I’ve thought of and sharing things with her that I have discussed with you. I feel like it’s helping me a lot with what I need to express.”

Rachel nodded and wrote some notes down. “Has she responded to your emails?”

He took a deep breath and sighed. “I have not said specifically that I wanted her to not email me, but I also said they would be like a journal for me so ...” he trailed off and cleared his throat again.

“Is she still sending you texts?”

“Yeeeaaah,” he said, dragging out the word. “Not every week like before, but she’s still doing it. I think before, she was worried about me and had no idea how I was doing. Now she sees it in my emails, so I don’t think she thinks she needs to be as active as before.”

“Okay,” Rachel said, writing something down. Setting the pen down, she looked at him. “How are you feeling with your medication?”

“My medication?” he repeated, not sure what she meant.

“It’s been the same prescription for a while now, yes? Do you feel it’s working as it should? Are you feeling more or less like “yourself” every day?” she asked.

“Oh. Yeah, I’m taking it every day. I feel good. Evened out, is that what you mean?” he asked her.

“Yes. Do you have any side effects that you notice when you take it? Anything past or present?” she asked, looking directly at him. He stared back at her, and suddenly he knew where she was going with her questioning.

“Uh ...” he said, looking down. “I haven’t noticed that particular side effect recently for obvious reasons, but yes it was one that happened.”

“I don’t mean for this to be an uncomfortable conversation, just a factual one. Loss of sexual desire or inability to get and or maintain an erection are common side effects,” she said matter of factly. “There are others, but without trying to sound crude, that one is usually a big one.”

Mulder laughed and looked at her to find her smiling, her cheeks pink. “Well, geez Doc,” he said, his leg beginning to bounce. “Don’t mince words there.” She smiled and looked down.

“You said before that you two had a healthy sexual relationship, as you should,” she said, looking up at him. “When you started taking the medication, did that change?”

He stared at her, and his leg bounced faster. With a sigh, he nodded slightly and then looked down. It had changed with the medication, although he had not thought it was that at first. He attributed it to his age, his state of mind, but never to Scully. There was never a time when it would have been because of her.

“Did you stop taking the medication because of it?” she asked quietly.
“When I was pretty sure it was from that, yeah I did,” he said, his eyes still down. “I... we did have a healthy sex life. There wasn’t a time that I... well... The medication made me tired at first and that was okay, it said it might on the bottle. But, when I couldn’t... I... that wasn’t okay. Scully... she didn’t deserve that.”

“Did you talk to her about it?”

“You know a lot about me, but sometimes it seems like you don’t know anything,” he said somewhat coldly.

She said nothing, and he looked up at her. “Is that a constructive response? Does it further this conversation?” she asked, her face serious.

“No. I’m sorry,” he said, keeping his eyes on hers. She nodded and waited. “I didn’t talk to her about it, no.”

“So, instead you simply stopped taking your medication?”

“Yes.”

“How did that work out?”

He sighed and linked his fingers together, putting them in his lap. “It wasn’t great,” he admitted quietly.

“Mm-hmm,” she said. “I’m assuming she thought you were continuing your medication? Then, she thought it either wasn’t working or you tried to be normal, and it would backfire, leaving her even more confused.”

He closed his eyes and felt shame wash over him. He thought he was doing what was needed, what was desired for them both, but that was not how it went. Rachel was right, it had backfired many times. While the sex may have been great, the fight or avoidance later that day or the next had not been. He had only wanted wanted to maintain the closeness and the intimacy they both craved. Instead, he had created a divide that drove them desperately apart.

“I fucked up,” he said quietly.

“Well, I understand where your head was at when you did what you did,” she said kindly and softly.

“But I fucked things up regardless,” he said, looking up at her. She held his gaze and remained silent for a minute. She folded her hands in her lap and took a deep breath.

“Fox, let me ask you a question,” she said. “If Scully was not doing well, and she had access to a medication that would help her, but she didn’t take it so that she could still be intimate with you, what would you say to her?”

“That’s ludicrous!” he said, standing up and pacing the room. “First of all, it’s different for men and women...”

“It’s not,” Rachel interrupted him. He turned to look at her and she shook her head.

“How can you say that? Of course it is!” he said, his anger rising.

“How do you figure?” she asked, her voice calm. “Do you equate sexual desire with the ability to
achieve an erection?"

“What? No ... I ...” he said, but he knew that he had thought that way a lot of the time.

“Fox, if you were ... in the mood so to speak, and Scully, though taking her medication and getting better had no desire or interest, went along with it to please you, how would you feel?”

“Like shit,” he said, his shoulders slumping as he stopped moving and stood still in the middle of the room. “If she did anything like that when she didn’t want to, I would hate myself.”

“Now, what if she stopped taking her medication but didn’t tell you ... desired you the way she always did, but later she felt as if she was being swallowed up by a sadness she could not explain? Knowing she was forgoing her health to try and seem like herself, she then fought with you or pushed you away. Fox, what would you do?” Rachel asked, sitting forward and looking at him.

He stared at her as he thought of Scully being in the position he had been in and it made him want to hit something. If she had felt even an ounce of what he had felt, he would have fought with her every day to take her medication, and they would figure it out together.

"Ahh, and there it is," his mind said, shaking its head and rolling its eyes if it was able. Together. That’s where you fucked up, you dolt.

He came back and sat on the couch, deflated. He shook his head and put his head back against the cushions. He could hear Rachel shifting and writing, but he sat silent, letting this new knowledge settle in. Raising his head, he looked at her. She stared back and seemed to be waiting for something.

“I should have spoken to her about it,” he said. “I should have done a lot of things differently, but that most of all. She would have understood just as I would have if it had been the other way around.” Rachel nodded and he sighed.

“But it’s ... it’s not an easy subject to broach,” he said with an even heavier sigh. “We ... like I said, our sex life has been ... it’s been really, really great. Years of not giving in to our feelings while we worked together, and then ... well.”

He smiled, remembering that first night. The softness of Scully’s kiss and her skin, watching her undress, her stockings—dear god, the feel of her under him, the smell of her in his sheets. The first night had been the best time, in his mind. Her decision, her desire, but their love began that night.

“Fox,” Rachel said. “Any discussion of sex is difficult. But together ... it may have saved some troubles. By you not taking your medication it led to problems she did not understand since she believed you were taking them. By taking them, you felt that without sex and the closeness you shared, she would be let down. As you said, she “didn’t deserve that.” But, by not discussing it together, you were both left at a loss with no resolution.” She was silent, letting her words sink in and giving him time to respond.

“I know,” he said quietly. “So many things I can see more clearly as I stand on the outside. I think of arguments we had … times when I could see she was reaching out and I turned away from her, and that last night ...” He shook his head. If he had just gone to her, left that stupid office and found her ...

“Of course things seem easier when we look back as if with a magnifying glass,” Rachel said kindly. “But in the moment, we don’t have that same clarity. All that can be done is to learn from the past and use that knowledge to fix the future.”
“Use that knowledge to fix the future.”

Mulder thought of Rachel’s words as he drove home. She was right, and this session had been a real eye-opener. He knew that he should have spoken to Scully. If he was completely honest with himself, he knew it was something he should have done at the beginning. As soon as sex was not something he desired as much as he had, he should have told her.

It was easier to avoid the topic and stay holed up in his office. Avoid her altogether so she could not start something that he knew he could not finish. Yes, he could have taken care of her as he loved to do, but she would have been suspicious when they did not get to the main event. Maybe she would have accepted it once or twice but after that, the questions would begin.

The thought of explaining it to her then seemed like the worst thing to him. Now, it would have been worth every uncomfortable conversation, if it meant she was home waiting for him, ready to talk about her day, watch a movie, or just sit on the porch.

Of course, she was not there when he pulled up, and he shook his head. Walking in the door, he stood in the middle of the room and shook his head again. Suddenly the house felt suffocating, and he needed to get out even though he had just walked through the door.

He changed his clothes and went for a run, attempting to clear his head. He ran for a long time, no plan, no course, and by the time he came up the porch steps, it was getting dark. He took a shower and came downstairs looking for something to eat. A plate of food warming up, he stood in his office doorway and looked around.

He felt anger rising inside him that Scully should have known the side effects better than him, her being a doctor. Why had she not told him, or broached the subject herself? Did she not think of it, or hope it would not happen? He shook his head at the time he spent hiding in his office to avoid discussing how he was feeling with the medication.

The food warming up was momentarily forgotten as an idea came to him. He would take his desk from the office, into the living room. No more hiding away, he thought.

Taking out the drawers, he stacked them on the couch. Hauling the desk into the middle of the room was a difficult task. He put the drawers back and set all the remaining items onto the desk, before stepping back and looking at what he had done. No longer angry, he simply felt a sadness that it got to this point.

Heaving a sigh, he sat down in his office chair, looking around the room. It actually was kind of nice, sitting at the desk this way, it was open and airy. Yet strangely, the quiet felt almost pressing, different than in his tiny office, making him feel a bit anxious. Not enough to send him running for his medication, but just enough to make him feel uncomfortable.

His stomach rumbled and he remembered his food in the microwave. Standing up, he looked at the desk again, thinking he should put it back but needed the food first. It had to be warmed again, and he ate it quickly, not even bothering to sit down, instead leaning against the counter.

He stared at the desk the entire time he ate. Anger, sadness, contentment, irritation all presented their ugly heads. Putting his dish in the sink, he walked past the desk and went upstairs, not wanting to deal with it tonight.

As he laid down, he realized he never finished his email to Scully. He closed his eyes and tried not
to think of her sitting at her computer, hoping to hear from him, but not finding anything new. Hopefully, she was not as disappointed in him as he was in himself. He knew that some days were harder than others, but the days when he was an asshole for the sake of being an asshole, those were the days when he hated himself most.

He grabbed his phone and set his alarm for five a.m. He would get up and be sure she found an email waiting for her. At the very least, she deserved that from him.

He shook his head. No, she deserved so much more than an email and so much more than him.

Chapter End Notes

God, I love Rachel. I love her care for Mulder and how she wants to help him be better for himself and for Scully. I love that he is comfortable with her and she gets him to talk about what he is feeling from the past and the present. I love her so much.
Best Foot Forward

Chapter Summary

Maggie takes Mulder out to dinner to celebrate his birthday. They discuss the past and hope for the future.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

October 2015

Maggie put the last bit of tape on the package she had for Fox. It was his birthday, and she was taking him out to dinner. He protested at first, but she was insistent, and he finally relented.

He said any restaurant was fine, but she sneakily asked Dana about places she and Fox had been to in the past. Keeping it nonchalant, Maggie narrowed it down to three places and considering how he enjoyed pasta, she chose the Italian place. They had reservations for 6:30, and she was looking forward to it.

She put the gift next to her on the front passenger seat and drove away from the house. She thought of the past few months since her week at the lake house with Louise. Things had been going better with Dana and Fox, but not to the degree that she would have liked. Fox told her he was writing Dana emails and it was helping him. She never asked and he never volunteered what was in them, but she was beyond happy that they were finally in touch, at least.

He seemed better, but the appearance of the desk in the living room one day had given her pause. It seemed like a backward move to her. As if he was proving that he was taking over the whole house and she would need to find a way to fit back into his life. He did not say anything about it until she was getting ready to leave, her eyes falling on it once again, as it sat there like an eight hundred pound gorilla.

He admitted he moved it in anger, but once it was out of the office, he said he felt better. The office was a place that held bad memories. Being out and in the open felt like the right place to be, as if his actions were held more accountable. She stared at him, and he put his hand on her shoulder and smiled. It still niggled at the back of her mind, but she trusted him.

He had nothing but praise for Rachel and what she was doing to help him. After that one day when he wanted to quit, he did not bring it up again, even if some days were harder than others. He kept at it, and he was doing well. Maggie was incredibly pleased with the progress he was making and told him so repeatedly.

Her mind wandering through the past and the present as she drove, it seemed she arrived at the house quicker than usual. As she stepped out of the car, she heard a throat being cleared. She turned to see what he was up to and found he was in a suit, straightening his tie as he stood at the top of the steps.

“Fox,” she said, walking up the steps to him. She reached out to help with his tie, and he breathed out a laugh. “You look very handsome.” She patted his chest as she smiled up at him.
“Thank you. Feels strange to wear a suit, it’s been such a long time,” he said, running a finger under his collar and making a face.

“You didn’t have to get so dressed up,” she said, but appreciating that he did.

“Hey, Mrs. Scully asks you out to dinner, you make an effort. I even bought a new tie,” he said, grinning at her. She laughed, and he took her arm to walk down the stairs.

He asked if she would like him to drive, and she handed over the keys. They both settled in their seats, as she moved his gift to the backseat. He started the car, grinning at her again and asking where they were going. She told him the name of the restaurant and his eyebrows went up. He nodded as he backed the car up and then drove down the driveway.

“Garelli’s, huh?” he said, glancing at her as they arrived at the main road.

“Do you like that place?” she asked, knowing he did, but not wanting to let on. “It looked nice and in a cute area by the lake. If you would rather, we could go somewhere else.”

“No, no,” he said, shaking his head. “I do like it. They have wonderful pasta and great desserts.” He smiled at her and she smiled back.

It did not take long for them to arrive at the restaurant by the marina. He parked the car, and they walked in together. Maggie told them they had a reservation and the hostess smiled as she seated them at their table, where a small bunch of stick balloons sat inside a vase. Fox looked at her with a smile, and she smiled at him.

They ordered their food, had some wine, and then splurged on a dessert. Fox ordered a tiramisu, and she ordered a creme brûlée. Halfway through, they switched and both smiled again.

Maggie paid for the meal, even though he protested and insisted he pay for it. She handed the bill to the waitress, with her credit card inside, giving Fox a look as she did. He relented and sat back in his chair. Once she signed the check, they got up and left the restaurant.

“It’s a nice evening, Fox. Would you like to take a walk before we head back?” she asked him. He nodded, offered his arm, and she took it with a smile.

They walked past the restaurant and down close to the water. Fox lamented about her shoes getting dirty in the sand, and she smiled at him, telling him not to worry. They found a bench and sat down, facing the water. Quiet for a few minutes, she sighed and gave a small laugh. He glanced at her, and she smiled.

“I was just thinking that we’ve sat on many benches together,” she said, looking out at the water. He sighed and nodded his head, leaning forward with his elbows on his knees.

“That day when you told me you had no news of Dana,” she said with a shake of her head. “A part of me died inside.” He inhaled a deep breath next to her but kept his head down.

“Bill was gone, the boys were both off in their own lives, Missy had her own things going on, Dana was the only one who was steady in my life,” she said, remembering those days and nights of worry. “The boys knew she was gone, of course, but what good would it have done for them to come and sit and wait when we had no idea where she was? They cared for her, but not the way a mother cares for her child. The worry for their safety, their well being, for them.”

She leaned back against the bench and sighed again. “Even before she was taken, I worried for her. I worried she would be hurt, be shot, anything terrible.”
“I’m sure it didn’t help when she was assigned to work with me,” he said quietly.

“Well, no and yes,” she said with a smile. “I worried before she was working with you. But, while there was still danger, I knew you would be there to help her and her you. I saw it the first time I met you.” She smiled at him but he did not return it. Sighing, she reached for his hand and held it.

“You couldn’t have done anything to save her then, Fox. I know it. I don’t and have never blamed you for anything that happened to her. Not ever, Fox,” she said with a squeeze of her hand. He squeezed back but said nothing.

“I knew she was able to take care of herself, but I still worried. The night she came to my house saying you were out to get her, you had betrayed her, and you had hurt her,” she shook her head and tears welled up in her eyes. “It hurt me to hear that she felt that way about you. I wanted to keep her away from you while I figured out what to do. She was rambling and pacing back and forth, but I didn’t think to ask for her gun.”

“Mrs. Scully,” Fox said quietly, squeezing her hand.

“Seeing her pointing her gun at you,” she shook her head again, that feeling of remembered fear settling in her stomach. “I knew I needed to do something, to help how I could. Standing between the two of you, I knew it would force her to see reason and it would keep you safe. My girl, standing and pointing a gun at the man she loved,” she sighed and he laughed.

“Pretty sure she didn’t feel that way about me back then,” Fox said, letting go of her hand and again leaning forward on his elbows.

“Oh, Fox,” she laughed, as she crossed her arms and sat back. “You can’t possibly think that’s true.” He looked at her, and she raised her eyebrows at him making him smile and look back down.

They were quiet for a few minutes before she broke the silence and suggested they head back to the house. He nodded, and they stood up, walking back to the car. She held onto his arm, both of them quiet.

He turned on the jazz station that she liked as they drove home. She closed her eyes and leaned her head back on the headrest. It was not a long drive back to the house, and while quiet, it was not an uncomfortable silence.

When they arrived, he asked her to come in for a cup of tea. She smiled and nodded, following him inside, as she took his gift from the backseat. She set it on the kitchen table as he set about making them a cup of tea. Setting their mugs on the table, he looked at the gift and then at her. She smiled and handed it to him.

“Happy birthday, Fox,” she said happily. He took the gift and began to unwrap it. When he had opened the tissue paper, he sighed, seeing what was inside.

Maggie watched his face as he looked at the picture she had put onto a canvas frame. It was from Christmas a few years back. Everyone else was looking at their gifts when she noticed how Fox and Dana were sitting on the couch. They were very close, their heads bent toward one another. Her hand was on his thigh, and his hand was over her wrist. There was a small smile on her face, and it seemed he just said something to her.

He chuckled as he held the photo and then sighed again. “I couldn’t possibly tell you what we were talking about, but I really like this photo. I’ve never seen it before. So happy there,” he said quietly as he touched two fingers to Dana’s face. “She’s so beautiful.”
Maggie was quiet as she watched him look at Dana, giving him time to appreciate it. His leg was bouncing under the table, and she wondered what was making him nervous.

“I love her so much,” he said softly. “I don’t know if it’s anything that could be properly measured or categorized. I know it’s a cliché to say that I love her more than anyone else has ever loved someone, but that’s how I feel. No one could possibly feel the same way for someone, as the way I do for Scully. I feel like half of me is missing with her gone. As if my heart is only working half the way it should. I miss her so much.” He breathed out a sob and stopped talking.

Maggie had tears on her cheeks as he said those words. She knew, of course she knew how much he loved Dana. But knowing and hearing it were two different things. Hearing that her baby girl was loved so intensely made her ache. Dana need never wonder if Fox truly loved her, all she had to do was look at that picture, or any of the two of them really. His love for her shone out like a beacon, unable to be turned down.

“I know you love her, Fox. I’ve known for a long time, possibly longer than even you have known. I also understand the pain of loss, I do. My love has been gone for over twenty years,” speaking just as softly as he had. He looked at her and reached for her hand. “He was the love of my life, the one I was destined to be with, so I know. It is cliché to say that no one could love something the way we love our person, but it’s cliché for a reason. I know you and Dana love one another, but it couldn’t possibly be as much as I loved Bill. Yet, you would argue I’m wrong, and I would agree to disagree.” They both laughed softly, and he squeezed her hand. Quiet for a few moments, she sighed before squeezing his hand and letting go.

“I wanted you to have that to remind you, although I know you don’t truly need it, why you’re doing all that you are,” he looked at her, and she smiled. “Fox, I’ve never seen two people so meant to be together as the two of you. You were, and are, like two giant magnets being pulled together. You’ve had obstacles in the way before, and this might be a bit bigger, but it’s just that, an obstacle. You’ll get past it, and soon, you’ll have more moments of happiness like in that photo. It will be better this time because you’ve both come back to each other by the pull of your hearts.”

He stared at her before making a face of wonder and sitting back in his chair. “Wow, Mrs. Scully, you really missed your calling. I think you would have made a killing writing greeting cards.” She laughed and then looked at him, her expression serious. He nodded and sighed. “I hear what you’re saying, and I hope you’re right, because living without her is not the life I want to have.” She nodded and knew it was the place to stop the conversation. She had said what she wanted, and she knew he needed to let it marinate.

She stood up, and he followed suit, gathering up the wrapping paper trash and throwing it out. He walked with her toward the door, where she put her coat over her arm and her purse on her shoulder. She picked her keys up from the coffee table and headed outside.

At her car door, he pulled her in for a hug. He whispered his thanks for a wonderful birthday evening, but did not let her go.

“I’m sorry you lost Bill so long ago and you’ve been alone since,” he whispered close to her ear. She closed her eyes and tried not to cry. “I understand you choosing to not find someone new. True love only comes along once, right? That’s why it’s true love and not okay love.” She sobbed out a laugh, and he breathed one out too. “Thank you for being an ambassador of love.”

He pulled back and looked at her with a sad smile. She cupped his cheek, stroking it with her thumb, and nodded. He bent and kissed her cheek before stepping back and opening the car door. She wiped her eyes and got in, turning on the ignition. He shut the door, and she rolled down the window to clasp his hand.
“I love you, Fox,” she said, her eyes never leaving his, watching as her words settled in and made a home there. The man she saw as a son. He nodded, his mouth moving, but no words coming out. She smiled and squeezed his fingers before letting go.

She backed up the car and waved as she drove down the driveway. She had not expected a response from him, but merely wanted it known that above all else he was loved. No matter the circumstance, where he and Dana may stand with one another right now, her love was unwavering.

She smiled at his words. An ambassador of love. Ambassador Margaret Katherine Scully. She liked the sound of that. A diplomatic representative of love, reuniting those who had lost their way and simply needed that push to get their act together. Yes, she liked that very much.

“I wonder how that would look on a business card,” she said with a grin, as she got on the highway and headed for home.

Her heart felt light tonight, but it continued to beat out the steady prayer that had begun the day Dana showed up with the entirety of her physical life packed into her car.

Please, please, please …

Chapter End Notes

I once again will express my love for Maggie. I will also add here that I met Sheila Larken this weekend and I am over the moon about it. She was the sweetest person and my photos with her have made my heart so happy.
Therapeutic Thanksgiving

Chapter Summary

Scully has an appointment with Doctor Kosseff and they discuss many things that need to be brought to light. Guidance and care from her Mom also help to ease a broken heart.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

November 2015

To say that Scully enjoyed therapy with Doctor Kosseff would be somewhat misleading. She did like the feeling of the constant pressure inside her abating a bit when she left the office. She did not like the amount of crying she had done, the headaches she had suffered, and the past hurts that were dusted off and re-examined. It hurt so much sometimes, she wanted to leave and never come back.

Since bumping into her at the coffee shop in June, Scully had only seen Doctor Kosseff seven different times. Work got in the way, and while she knew her own self-care was important, she was pulled into cases, and unable to get away. Doctor Kosseff was understanding, and Scully repeatedly expressed her thanks.

Her first session was a train wreck. She broke down and cried for most of the hour. Doctor Kosseff remained silent and let her ramble and cry, her words tumbling over each other, not even sure what she was saying, only remembering the sobs. As Scully took the tissues handed to her, Doctor Kosseff smiled and sighed before nodding at her.

Her next session was better. The conversation was more structured, and Doctor Kosseff insisted Scully call her Karen. Scully looked at her and tried to respond with some coherent explanation of why that seemed wrong, but she was unable to do anything but nod.

“We may not have seen each other in a while, Dana,” Karen said with a smile. “But we go way back, and that counts for something.” She smiled, and again Scully felt tears in her eyes.

The fourth session though, that one was rough. Crying seemed to be a normal occurrence as soon as she sat on the couch in the office, but that day was worse, as if something was infecting her and causing her to behave unlike herself. Choking on her tears she began to cry out her worries for Mulder.

“I know he’s a grown man, and more than capable of caring for himself, but I’m worried about him. Is he sleeping? Taking his medication? He said he’s seeing a therapist and he’s sending emails, but how is he really? I miss him so much,” she whispered wiping at her eyes. “It’s like I’ve lost part of myself.”

Karen handed her the tissues and Scully laughed bitterly, dabbing her eyes and blowing her nose. “I’m an independent woman, I’ve always prided myself on that, but … I need him, and all these years later, it terrifies me,” she said looking at Karen and shaking her head. Karen smiled and
waited for her to continue, but no words were forthcoming.

“Does it terrify you because you don’t want to live without him or you’re worried you don’t know how?” Karen asked quietly.

Scully shook her head, wiping at her eyes again. “It isn’t that. I know I can live without him, and no I don’t want to live without him. I want to be with him. But what terrifies me are the lengths I will go to, to do so. Two years I stayed and felt like I was drowning at times, but I stayed because … I love him. I know him and I felt that if I could have just done more, I could have helped. If I had seen it earlier or demanded differently …” she shook her head, tears falling again. She wiped her eyes and blew her nose, taking deep breaths to calm down.

“Dana, I know you feel this is your fault, that you could have stopped it from happening,” she said in her soft calm voice. “But could you have done anything? Really done anything? As you say, you know Fox better than anyone. Could you have changed him or done anything to fix the situation at the time?”

Scully stared at her and wanted to say of course she could, she should have done something. This was her fault. She was the one who left. Karen’s eyes had stopped her from speaking and forced her to look down, the openness she saw in them too much for her at that moment.

“Dana, I’d like you to do something for me when you leave here today,” Karen said kindly, writing something on her notepad. “When you leave, I want you to think of the times when you think saying something or fighting with Fox would have changed the outcome of where you are now. I’d like you to do that before our next meeting.”

Scully sat at home that night, writing out all the times she could think of when Mulder had not come to bed, had pushed her past the point of anger, when he had stayed closed up in his office and shut her out. There were many instances, and seeing them there in black and white hurt in a different way than before.

She ticked off each one as she imagined a different outcome, a way it would have changed if she had barged in the office, turned off the WiFi, or demanded he sit down and listen to her. None of those times would have resulted in a change. She knew that, but she had needed to see it laid out before her to understand it completely. She shook her head as she cried, knowing once again that this, being apart, was the only decision that was right, even if it made her heart ache.

She sat back in her chair and closed her eyes. She knew it was not within her ability to change the outcome, but she had taken it upon herself and that was not fair. They were both to blame, as they had not communicated how they felt. God, they were so bad at it sometimes. Both of them held back and yet expected the other to be forthcoming. After so many years together, it would seem they would have this shit figured out, but no. Jesus Christ …

Knowing what the problem was, she felt that going back to see Karen would not help. She needed to talk to Mulder, but right now that was not going to happen. Time was all she needed, she thought with a sigh and a shake of her head.

On the agreed upon appointment time though, she was there, waiting to speak to Karen and working on moving forward. They discussed Mulder again, the outcomes she knew she could not change, and then Karen brought up the medication Scully had prescribed for him. Not until Karen pointed it out to her did Scully consider the extent of the side effects he could have been suffering. The lack of sex drive, or ability to even have sex, had not been something that was in the forefront of thought when she had gotten him the medication.
Again, she left the office not wanting to go back, her embarrassment and anger at herself simmering at the surface. Angry that she had not seen the forest for the trees, focusing on one area and missing the rest. She wanted to help his depression and other aspects were a second thought. She paced around her apartment, wanting to call Mulder, and apologize for her own neglect when it came to his care.

Thinking back to the fact that they had still been having sex, up to a certain point, it meant he must have forgone his medication. Her anger and confusion with him made sense now that she figured he was not remaining steady with taking his pills. She failed him, again. Curling up in bed, she apologized to him repeatedly, wishing he could hear her.

That was a couple of weeks ago and today, the day before Thanksgiving, she was ready to start her eighth session, finally feeling a bit more comfortable.

“Dana,” Karen said, smiling at her as she came into the waiting room, shaking Scully’s hand and she always did before ushering her into the office. “How are you?”

“Fine. I’m good. Work is busy, as I’m sure yours is at this time of year. Everyone seems to have more problems around the holidays,” Scully said with a small laugh. Karen smiled and nodded.

“Yes, it’s usually busy this time of year. Do you have holiday plans?”

“I’m spending it with my mother this year. Actually heading there after our session,” Scully said and Karen nodded with a smile.

“How are other things? Have you spoken to Fox? Or kept to the emails and texts between you?” Karen asked with a glance at Scully.

“Just the emails and texts. Though it’s been further between them at times.”

Karen smiled at her and made some notes before she looked up again. She exhaled and kept eye contact with Scully, gauging her, it seemed. Scully shifted in her seat and took a deep breath. She licked her lips and closed her eyes before looking up at Karen, knowing this was going to hurt.

“I had a dream last night. About William,” she said quietly. Karen nodded, having heard about him before, and Scully closed her eyes again. “We were walking down the street, and I could feel his hand in mine. It was so small, I could feel all the bones as I ran my thumb across the top of his hand. Then it was bigger and he was there but pulled away from me. I tried to reach for him, to grab for his fingers, but I couldn’t find him. I woke up crying, trying to grab for something that wasn’t there.” She opened her eyes, tears welling inside them before they spilled over, and she wiped them away.

“It’s been fourteen years and I know ... I know that he’s ... he has a family, parents who love him and care for him,” Scully said quietly, tears flowing freely from her eyes. “I have to hope he is okay, anyway. My head knows that, but my heart is not always so accommodating. I still can’t help but wonder ... or worry if he has ever remembered me and I wasn’t there. Did he cry for me those first few nights after he left? Did they know he liked to be sung to and rocked a certain way? Was he ... was he happy? I know, as a doctor and as a scientist, that he would have no memories of me, he was too young. But ... what if ... what if he woke up not knowing why he was dreaming of someone he didn’t know, but he felt scared and alone?”

She stopped talking and sobbed into her hands, thinking of William, and the weight of him in her arms. She remembered how she would hold him and breathe in his baby smell, the happiness of finally being a mother had been so overwhelming. His rosy cheeks and soft downy head were the
most beautiful things she had ever seen.

Letting him go, knowing it was for his protection, was the hardest decision she ever had to make, and she did it alone. Mulder did not even get a chance to weigh in and voice his opinion or the possibility of a different plan. She had agonized, cried, and screamed over the decision she made. It was she who crumbled to the ground when William was taken from her, her heart that shattered when her baby, the only one she would ever have, was given a better chance of survival away from her. It was she and her mother who clung to one another in the days after he was gone. No Mulder to mourn with her, hold her, or simply grab them both and run, never looking back.

Her sobs began to subside, although not by much. She felt the box of tissues being softly placed on her lap and it caused her to cry more. Taking one from the box, she dabbed at her eyes and wiped her face, then took some deep breaths. She still cried, but her loud and aching sobs had seemed to slow. She blew her nose and took more tissues out to again wipe her face. Keeping her head bowed, she simply sat and waited.

“Dana,” Karen said barely above a whisper. “What does Fox say when you discuss these feelings with him?” Scully shook her head, unable to speak. “Do you not discuss William? Or how you felt during that time of your life?”

Taking a shuddering breath, Scully shook her head again. “It ... it’s sort of an unwritten understanding, so to speak. We ... we talk about William in a roundabout way, but rarely directly, if at all. It hurts to talk about it, and I don’t want to cause Mulder that hurt.”

“Fox?” Karen asked, her tone sharper than Scully had ever heard it. She raised her head and looked at her, finding her face serious and somewhat hard. “Why is your worry for him, when you are affected this way?”

“He wasn’t there. It wasn’t his choice and ... and he ... he missed everything. I took that away from him, his chance at fatherhood. If ... if we talk about what we could have done or how it may have been, it would dredge up too much ... and,” Scully said, shaking her head, remembering the times they had gotten close to have the talk and the look on Mulder’s face. The pain she saw, the anguish. She hated seeing him that way, and eventually not discussing it had been easier.

“Dana, sometimes the only way to move forward is to dump out the past and wade through it. Yes, it may most definitely be painful, but leaving it tucked away and hidden ...” Karen shook her head and looked at Scully. “Keep it hidden, and it festers and rots. It becomes a poison inside that strangles you and stunts your growth. Don’t let this continue to be a poison in your life.”

Scully left the office a while later, and walked to her car, exhausted and wanting nothing more than to lay down and sleep. She got in and sat down, closing and locking the door before leaning her head against the headrest, closing her eyes, and sighing.

Exhausted, no, it was not the right word to describe how she felt. She felt boneless like her body was a heavy pile of goo, and it would remain that way forever. Everything ached and she thought never leaving the car sounded like a wonderful idea. She leaned forward and put her head on the steering wheel, her eyes still closed.

You can’t stay here, Dana. You need to get moving, she thought. Heaving a huge sigh, she turned on the car and begin the drive to her mother’s house. She was looking forward to staying with her for the holiday weekend. Some time off work, catching up with her mom, and seeing some old friends sounded wonderful. Right now though, she simply wanted to crawl in bed and sleep for the
Pulling into her mother’s driveway, she sat for a few minutes, collecting her strength, waiting for her body to become less goo-like. Taking a breath, she opened the door, took her overnight bag out of the backseat, and walked up to the front door. She used her key and called out to her mother she was there.

“Dana!” her mother said, coming out of the kitchen wearing an apron and wiping her hands on a dishtowel. “You’re early! I was thinking it would be a couple hours more before you got here.” She smiled at her and pulled her in for a tight hug.

“Hey, Mom,” Scully said, returning the hug and holding on longer than usual. Her mother looked in the eyes as she put a hand to her face.

“Rough session?” her mother asked softly. Scully nodded and sighed. Her mother also sighed and brushed her thumb across Scully’s cheek. “Well, would mixing up ingredients for pies help you at all?” Scully laughed out a sob and nodded. Her mother patted her cheek and turned to head back to the kitchen. Scully set her bag down on the couch and followed her.

For the next couple of hours, they worked together, mixing and baking pies, cutting vegetables for the next day, and setting the table. Spending time with her mother helped her feel better, but she could feel tears threatening to fall at any time. When the last chore was finished, her mother put the kettle on, grabbed mugs and tea bags, and took off her apron.

Once the kettle whistled, and the tea was made, she reached for Scully’s hand, looking at her with her kind eyes. That was all it took for Scully’s tears to begin. She told her mother of the session that day, of her dream and the discussion that had followed. Sure she had cried herself dry, she was surprised by the amount of tears she still had left. Her mother kept her hand on hers and rubbed her arm.

Scully put her head on the table and her mother moved closer to stroke her hair and speak words of comfort. Scully cried and cried, letting her mother’s love and calmness wash over her. When she had no tears left, she sat trying to calm her sobs. Her mother rested her head against her and told her how much she loved her, how proud she was of her, making Scully cry again.

Her mother helped her to her feet and pulled her in for a hug. “Dana, I know how hard this is for you, how hard it was. I remember.” Scully held her tight and cried softly. “You just go ahead and cry, honey.”

They stood there for a few minutes before Scully pulled back and stared at her mother. Her soft hands were on her cheeks, wiping her tears as she had when past heartbreaks had felt so big. Those had been nothing compared to this pain, but the comfort she felt gave her strength.

Her mother gave her a small smile and grasped her hand, pulling her upstairs to the master bedroom. Scully stood by the bed and heard the water running in the tub. She closed her eyes and sat on the bed, waiting for her mother to come as she knew she would.

She felt a brush in her hair and she sighed, more tears slipping out, as her mother softly brushed her hair. Her shoes were slipped off, her sweater slipped over her head leaving her in her camisole, and then she was pulled to her feet. She opened her eyes as she walked to the bathroom and stood in front of the tub.

The scent of lavender bubble bath surrounded her as her mother walked away, allowing her some privacy. She undressed, and stepped in, sinking into the deep tub, as she took a deep breath and
closed her eyes.

She lay in the tub, exhausted and boneless when she heard her mother’s quiet footfall. Without opening her eyes, she heard the water shut off, and then felt her mother come next to her. Her bare feet and legs came on other side of Scully in the tub, as she sat on the ledge behind her.

She began to massage Scully’s head as she hummed quietly. It was not a particular song, but it was comforting. After a few minutes, her mother put her hair up and rubbed her neck and shoulders. Scully felt her sadness lessening with each touch of her mother’s comforting hands.

Scully reached up and grabbed her mother’s hand. “Thank you, Mom,” she whispered. Her mother squeezed her hand and then extricated herself from the tub, kissing the top of Scully’s head before she left.

Opening her eyes a few minutes later, she saw that a towel and washcloth had been placed by the tub. She leaned forward and picked up the washcloth, washing her body, before relaxing for a few more minutes. Stepping out of the tub, she dried off and then wrapped the soft towel around her body.

Walking into her mother’s room, she saw her bag had been brought into the room and left on the bed. She smiled at the love and care her mother had shown as she took out her pajamas and underwear. She dressed and then hung up the towel as her mother came back in the bathroom. She smiled at Scully and motioned to the vanity.

Scully sat down and her mother stepped behind her, taking her hair down. Picking up her brush, she began to brush her hair again.

“That day, that last day,” her mother said quietly, the brush slowly stroking through Scully’s hair. “It was horrible, I will not deny that. My heart broke with yours, Dana. I know what that baby meant to you, to Fox. I know what that baby meant to you, to Fox. I know if you could have, you would have kept him with you.” Her mother paused as she took a breath and shook her head. “But I had been there, I saw the danger not only him but you were in with him there. You made the right choice, Dana. You did.”

Scully looked at her mother in the mirror and her eyes were sad, but she smiled at Scully. Her mother nodded and Scully breathed out a deep sigh, looking back down.

“It’s easier to see it clearly when it’s been so many years, I know that, but it was right, Dana,” her mother began to rub her head again, her short fingernails scratching at her scalp. “I ... I had a hard time with it after William and then you were gone. I was depressed and alone and worried ...”

“Mom?” Scully interrupted, her head snapping up and looking at her mother in the mirror. “You never ...”

“I never said ... no,” she said, looking back at Scully once again with her kind sad eyes. “I know what that decision meant to you. I know how hard it was for you to make. At the time it happened, I wasn’t going to add to your heartache. I was there with you to lessen your pain, Dana. Then Fox was on trial and your focus was understandably on his fate. You left, as you should have done, you were where you needed to be, but those of us left behind, we were left to wonder and carry on. Your friends, John and Monica, were there and they helped to pack up your place. Eventually, though, even they were gone.”

Scully sat frozen. Of course she knew that when they left there had been those behind picking up the slack, but her mind and concern had only been on her and Mulder’s safety. She had worried for her mother, hated how she had simply left her, and not had the chance to say goodbye. When every
day they had to worry about being seen, possibly recognized, and what would happen if they were, worries for those at home took a backseat. Now, she was learning it had been worse than she thought for her mother.

“Mom,” she began, but her mother interrupted her.

“Dana, I’m not saying this to hurt you, I’m telling you I understand. I understand your pain. I’ve felt it, and it took me down for a little while. It was nothing you did, but the circumstances out of your hands. As much as it hurt and continues to do so, it was the right decision, Dana. I knew it then, but the sadness still swallowed me up as it did you today,” her mother said, looking in the mirror, her hands on Scully’s shoulders. “Let the sadness in, and then let it out. You did what you needed to protect him, you, and everyone around you. He is safe because of a sacrifice you made, a painful choice you made. He is safe, Dana.”

Scully’s eyes filled with tears again and she nodded her head. Her mother wrapped her arms around her and held her close, Scully placed her hands on top of her mother’s and held her to her.

Her mother kissed her cheek and they both let go of one another and smiled. Scully stood up and pulled her mother in for a hug, her mother whispering she loved her. Scully closed her eyes and held her tighter. When she stood back, her mother smiled at her and Scully smiled back, incredibly tired all of a sudden.

“Could ... could I sleep in your bed tonight?” she asked her mother hesitantly. She nodded with a smile and Scully turned to head to the bedroom.

She laid down and pulled the covers close around her, hearing her mother let the water out of the tub, and getting ready for bed. A few minutes later, the lights were turned off, and her mother laid down next to her. Scully reached for her hand and her mother held tight.

“I love you, Mom,” she whispered, as she squeezed her hand and took a deep breath.

“I love you too, Dana. So very much,” her mother whispered back, with a squeeze of her own.

Scully closed her eyes and let her tired body relax, seeking the sleep she so badly needed. Her heart and her mind had been lovingly cared for by her mother. Now she needed to find the same relief for her body. She squeezed her mother’s hand once more before sleep found her, drawing her in to bring her comfort.

Chapter End Notes

Karen is the best therapist and we needed to see more from her. I love her for Scully so much.

And who wouldn’t love to receive the care Scully does from her mom? God, I love
Maggie. ❤
Rachel’s Story

Chapter Summary

Mulder asks Rachel to join him and Mrs. Scully for a thank you dinner, as his therapy has come to an end. Uneasy at first, she agrees and they learn of her past.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

December 2015

Christmas decorations had been up since the week before Thanksgiving, and all Mulder could think was that an entire year had passed. A year in which he had not spoken to Scully, not vocally anyway. He wrote her many emails, and she sent him messages, but God, how he missed the sound of her voice.

His therapy sessions were coming to an end and he felt bittersweet about it. He was glad to be done. The times he spent with his emotions out and exposed had been hard. Although, he also had fun. Discussing the past and fun times he and Scully shared, along with the pain they both suffered, was equal parts wonderful and terrifying.

Rachel was the perfect blend of comfort and toughness he needed. She kept him on track, let him ramble, and then opened his eyes to ways he could change. She pushed him to delve further into past hurts and mistakes and how to learn from them. When he clammed up or tried to use humor and sarcasm to answer questions, she shut that shit down.

As the last day approached, he realized she had been right at their first meeting: she was pretty great. He would miss her when he was done, he truly would.

She smiled as he walked into the office and took a seat. Asking if he would like a coffee, she walked to the coffee maker and prepared a mug for each of them. Handing him his, she sat down and picked up her notepad.

“So, it’s our last meeting today. I have to say that I have enjoyed our time together, and I am proud of the progress you have made,” Rachel said with a smile. “I know that it was difficult at times, and you may have wanted to quit, but you stuck with it, and you’ve done really well.”

Mulder nodded and then looked at her and grinned. “Thank you. You’re right, there were times when I wanted to leave, but I knew there were two women counting on me, and I couldn’t let them down,” he said, nodding his head. He raised a hand when he saw her face. “I know. You’ll say it was work I needed to do for me, and you’re right, it was for me. But Doc, it was mostly for the two women in my life whom I’ve let down.” He looked at her, sighed and smiled.

She stared at him and then nodded. Looking down at her notepad and papers, she took out his questionnaire and took a minute to look at it. Moving some of them around, she put one on top.

“I’d like to discuss one last thing with you,” she said, circling something on the paper.

“I’m ready, Doc. Lay it on me,” Mulder said, motioning with hands for her to bring it on.
She smiled at him and then clasped her hands together. “As we are coming to the end of our sessions together, I’d like to know what you’re going to do next?” she asked him, staring at him.

“Next? In the sense of what?” he asked with a frown.

“Yes, next. I don’t mean after you leave here, or tomorrow, but in regard to Scully and how you plan to approach getting her back. What are you doing next, Fox?” Rachel asked softly.

He stared at her, not sure how to answer. During all these months, he had the idea of getting back to them, but now he realized he did not have a plan as to how.

“I ... I honestly don’t know,” he said, looking down at the floor. “I don’t remember answering that question back in March.”

“No, you wouldn’t,” she said with a smile. “I couldn’t expect an answer to an ending of something that hadn’t even started yet. So I ask you now, so we can discuss it together.”

He took a drink of his coffee, and put it on the coffee table. Sitting back, he picked up a pillow and held it in his lap. He thought about how best to show Scully he had changed, the darkness no longer swallowing him.

“I think,” he said, looking down at the pillow in his lap. “I think the best thing to do at this point, would be to be on my own.” He looked up to find Rachel staring at him, her eyebrows going up, but saying nothing.

“I don’t mean because I want to be on my own, but I need to be,” he said, looking back at her. “I need to see how I do once I’m done coming here every week. It will be strange at first, but I need to figure that out before I consider how to approach her.”

Rachel nodded and smiled at him. “I think that’s a good plan. What will you do to get yourself on track? Any thoughts on that?”

“I’m going to start exercising again. I actually bought a home gym type thing,” he said with a shrug. “I’ve never really used one before, but I know it will be beneficial. I’m also running and going to the community center again to play basketball with some guys.”

“That’s great. That will help with more than just the physical aspect, getting in shape, and all that. Endorphins can help with depression,” Rachel said, giving him a pointed look. He nodded and smiled.

They chatted comfortably for the rest of the hour and soon it was time to leave. He put the pillow on the couch as he stood up and brought his coffee mug to the sink she had in the corner. He turned to her, and she was standing close to the door. He walked toward her and stopped, smiling at her.

“Well, this is it,” she said as she smiled at him.

“Actually,” he said, suddenly nervous, as he cleared his throat and clenched his jaw. “I was wondering ... I’d like to have you over for dinner on Sunday if you’re free. To thank you and also, it’s Christmas. Get two birds and all that.” He smiled nervously as he watched her clasp and unclasp her hands.

“Uh ... I appreciate the offer, but it’s not exactly ... as a therapist, your therapist ... it wouldn’t be ethical or what I should be doing. It’s ... it’s not ... I’m sorry. I don’t think I can do that, Fox,” she said, her eyes moving quickly across his face.
“Oh.”

“It’s not … don’t misunderstand … it’s just …”

“No, I understand.”

“I would love to … if …”

“Please, it’s okay.”

They fell silent after speaking over each other, her eyes unable to meet his for a few seconds. He cleared his throat, and she finally looked up.

“I didn’t think,” he said apologetically. “I’m sorry to have put you on the spot and in an awkward position. It’s okay.” He smiled at her, touched her shoulder briefly, and stepped past her to the door. She followed him out of the office and stopped as he put on his coat.

“Fox,” she started, but he interrupted her.

“It’s honestly fine. I’m sorry to have … I’m sorry,” he put on his scarf and looked at her. “I just … you won’t technically be my therapist after today. And … I wanted to say more than goodbye, and thank you. It wouldn’t be just you there, if that helps. I wanted to have you and Mrs. Scully come over for dinner. You … the both of you … I just … I just wanted to thank you both. I don’t really know what I would have done without either of you. But, I get it, I do. It’s not …”

“I’ll be there,” she interrupted, with tears in her eyes.

“You don’t … seriously it’s fine,” he said, shaking his head.

“No, I will. I just … could it not be at your house? Maybe a restaurant instead?” she asked, wiping at her eyes.

“How about at Mrs. Scully’s place? It’s a bit of a drive, but not too bad,” he said hopefully. She nodded, and he grinned with a nod. “Great. Good. Okay, so Sunday at five? Or six?”

“Six is good.”

“Okay. I’ll … I’ll email you the directions to her place,” he stared at her and smiled happily. “Thank you, Rachel.”

She nodded and walked him to the door. He waved to her as he got in the car and drove away. If he had stayed for only one minute longer, he would have seen her cover her face and cry.

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Mulder opened the door on Sunday evening to find Rachel on the other side. She was holding a bottle of wine, and she looked a bit nervous.

“Rachel! It’s great to see you! Come in, it’s freezing out there!” he stepped aside to let her come in, and she walked past him as he closed the door.

Mrs. Scully walked into the room at the same moment, and he turned to her with a grin. He put an arm around her shoulders, pulling her closer to Rachel, and introduced them.
“It’s a pleasure to meet you,” Mrs. Scully said with a smile, as she held Rachel’s hand in both of hers. “I have heard a lot about you from Fox.”

“And I you,” Rachel said, smiling back at her as she looked between them.

“Here, I’ll take that wine. You hang your coat and take a seat. Dinner will be ready soon,” he said, taking the wine from her and heading back to the kitchen.

“You sure you don’t need any help?” Mrs. Scully asked as he walked away.

“Pfft. I got this,” he said, turning around and opening his hands wide to her. “Have some faith, lady.” He heard them both laughing as he stepped into the kitchen.

He set the wine down on the counter and reached for the opener. Pouring them each a glass, he took the women theirs and found them on the sofa talking. He handed them their wine and they thanked him as he walked back to the kitchen and poured himself a glass of wine.

He told Mrs. Scully he wanted to have them both to dinner but that Rachel had been uncomfortable. Without asking, she offered her place, and he smiled. He told her he would make the meal and she would not need to worry about anything. She seemed skeptical, her eyebrow going up the same way Scully’s did, and he laughed.

True to his word, he purchased, and then made everything himself. It was going to be a simple meal, but also one he considered carefully. He emailed the directions to the house to Rachel and also asked if she was a vegetarian or had any dietary needs. She emailed back that she was most definitely not a vegetarian, and to please be sure there was something mouthwatering to go with any vegetables. He laughed and set about finding something that would fit that request.

He took down everything on the fridge door, saving Mrs. Scully’s note in a desk drawer, and put up recipes instead. Staring at them for a day, he settled on a roast, potatoes, and carrots. He went to the butcher and got the best advice on how to cook it, and then took all his purchased items to Mrs. Scully’s house. He demanded she get out of the kitchen, despite her willingness to help.

Now, looking at the meal in the oven, it indeed smelled mouthwatering. He could not wait to taste his first attempt at such a meal. A lot was riding on this thank you meal and he was very nervous with the outcome.

He put the salad he made into three fancy salad bowls and set them aside. Five more minutes, and he would take the roast out and let it rest. Turning to the right, he looked at the pink bakery box on the counter. The dessert was the only item he had purchased and not made himself. Although he had attempted to do it, the outcome was not edible.

He would not let Mrs. Scully see what he had bought, and he was excited for her to see he picked her favorite dessert. Rachel’s special thanks was the meal. Mrs. Scully’s would be the dessert.

He looked out of the kitchen and found them laughing about something and he smiled, knowing they would get along. The timer pinged a couple minutes later, and he took the roast from the oven. Setting it on the cooling rack, he took the lid off and took a deep breath. Damn, it looked delicious. Covering it with some foil, he set the timer for twenty minutes and took the salads to the table along with his glass of wine.

“Ladies, if you’re ready, the first course of dinner is ready,” he said with a flourish, and they laughed.

“First course, Fox? My, my,” Mrs. Scully teased, as she and Rachel walked to the table, their
drinks in hand. He grinned and waited for them to sit before seating himself.

He set the table with the fancy silverware Mrs. Scully suggested, poured water in each of the glasses she handed him, put out the napkins she pointed to, and lit the candles she mentioned she had in a drawer. It was quite a presentation, and he felt pride at the work they had done together.

“Ladies, a toast,” he said, raising his wine glass. “To both of you. I thank you both immensely.” He looked them in the eye before they all clinked their glasses together. He saw both of them wipe at their eyes, and he nodded.

The salad was praised and eaten before he got up to cut the roast and fill their plates. He brought their food out and then went back for his own plate, grabbing the bottle of wine as well. Both women exclaimed that it was cooked to perfection and tasted delicious. He raised his arms in the air in victory, and they all laughed.

Clearing the plates a bit later, he asked if they wanted dessert, but both refused for now. He nodded and continued to the kitchen to cover the food and make some tea, at Mrs. Scully’s request. Three cups made, he set them on a tray with a saucer. Adding some spoons, sugar, milk, and honey, he brought it to the living room and handed out the cups. They each made their tea how they wanted, and sat quietly for a couple minutes.

“So, Rachel,” Mrs. Scully said with a smile. “Did you always want to be a therapist?”

Rachel laughed softly and shook her head. “No. No, in fact, far from it. I never would have imagined that this would be what I did for a living when I was younger,” she said looking down at her cup in her lap.

“Well, speaking from experience, I can say whatever the other plan was, it was wrong for you. You are a great therapist,” Mulder said looking at her. She looked at him and gave him a small smile.

“So what was the plan? What did your younger self want to do?” Mrs. Scully asked.

Rachel sighed and dropped her head again. “I … uh … I wanted to be a ballerina,” she said softly. Mulder laughed before he could stop himself and was admonished by Mrs. Scully. Rachel looked up and smiled. “No, it’s completely understandable to laugh at that. I am not the type of person they would want as a ballerina.”

“Oh! No, that’s not why I laughed. I’m sorry if you got the wrong idea,” Mulder said apologetically. “I’ve just never met someone who wanted to be an actual ballerina. I don’t mean you in particular for any reason. Please don’t think that’s what I meant.” She looked at him and smiled, and he breathed a sigh of relief.

“It’s okay. I was not the type of person who could be a ballerina, but I wanted it so badly. I begged my mom for lessons. The words plié and jeté made my heart fairly dance on its own,” Rachel said with a smile. “When I was five, she finally relented, and I took my first lesson. I was a head taller and at least twenty fucking pounds heavier than the other girls. Sorry.” She looked at Mrs. Scully with startled eyes, but she waved her concern away.

“Well, I wasn’t terrible at it, but I was bigger and sometimes clumsier. I worked hard at it, and I got better, but I was still bigger. I adhered to a strict diet, and I was in good shape, but …” she paused for a minute. “My father passed away when I was seventeen and that same year, I was accepted to a ballet academy for three months. It was far from home, but I knew I needed to do it. My father always encouraged my dancing, and I wanted to do it for him. I was still grieving, far from home,
and also with a group of girls who were much better than me. Thinner, better dancers, and I associated it with being skinny. I ... I started not eating. I lost twenty pounds during that time and it ... it was bad. I didn’t know how bad it was until I passed out and hit my head as I did.”

Mrs. Scully gasped, and Mulder felt his stomach ache at the thought of her suffering the way she did. She nodded, keeping her head down and her eyes on her cup.

“I … I was able to talk my way out of it, and no one questioned me. As long as I kept fucking dancing. Sorry,” she said again, looking up at Mrs. Scully. She shook her head, her hand at her chest, eyes on Rachel. “I fell twice more and the last time … I lost consciousness and woke up in the hospital and I had no idea how I got there. I had stitches on the back of my head and they had to shave my hair to get to the cut.”

Mrs. Scully was quietly crying, and Mulder was staring at Rachel, unable to believe the story. She licked her lips and sniffled, before wiping at her eyes, and taking a deep breath.

“My mother came in and I could see by her face how horrible I looked. She didn’t say anything, just cried as she stood there. She stroked my hair, and we both started to cry. I was five feet, ten inches tall and I weighed a hundred pounds,” she said with a sob.

Mrs. Scully cried harder, and Mulder cleared his throat. He got up and brought both of them some tissues. They thanked him, and he sat back down. A few minutes passed, and Rachel cleared her throat.

“My mother was insistent that I stop dancing, saying it was slowly killing me. I was angry, but her face was enough to stop me. We’d lost my father, I couldn’t do that to her. She said I needed rehab, for my eating disorder, and I argued with her that I didn’t have a disorder. We sat in silence before she gathered her things and said either I go willingly, and she would visit any chance she could, or she would force me to go, and she would not come to see me,” she wiped her eyes again and took a deep breath. “I chose the former, and she sat back down.” The room was quiet, except for an occasional sniff from all of them.

“It was slow going at the rehab center. There were girls there for different reasons, and some were very angry. We had group sessions and one-on-one sessions. One girl in our group session was hard, angry and didn’t give a fuck about anything. Sorry,” she said, shaking her head and looking at Mrs. Scully again.

“It’s not a fucking problem,” she said quietly, with a wave of her hand, as she wiped her eyes.

“MRS. SCULLY!” Mulder said, his surprise and shock at her language causing them all to laugh. He huffed out a breath and shook his head. “Please continue, Rachel.” He said looking at Mrs. Scully, as she winked at him with wet eyes.

“Well,” Rachel said, laughing softly and also dabbing at her eyes. “The girl who was in group was a tough nut to crack. The therapist there, her name was Ty, was the coolest. I’ve never seen anyone like her. Nose rings and almost every time I saw her, her hair was a different color. She dressed like she just rolled out of bed and threw on whatever was closest to her when she did. She never took, nor gave any shit, she was tough and yet gentle. She just got it. One day, the girl in group, Lonnie, pushed her, physically pushed her. We all froze, and Ty just stood there. She let her push her, let her hit her and it was like we were in bizarro world. Ty didn’t normally allow that kind of thing to happen. Lonnie yelled and yelled, and Ty let her. We were all crying and then so was Lonnie. She fell into Ty, and Ty held her tightly, whispering to her. She looked at all of us, and we all got up to hug her too. Standing there, with all those other girls who were suffering in their own way, our arms around each other and seeing the results of care and help, I knew I wanted to do that,
to be a therapist, and one day help others.” She stopped talking, her head down, and all Mulder could do was stare at her.

Mrs. Scully got up and went over to her. She pulled Rachel to her feet and into a hug. She whispered things Mulder could not hear and then Rachel was crying, holding to Mrs. Scully. He looked away and tried to swallow down the huge lump in his throat.

He saw the similarities between them. Everyone had their own demons. Deciding to face them and move on or let them defeat you, that was life. She helped him the same way her therapist helped her, and he would tell her, he had to tell her. He would let her know how much she had meant to him. Far beyond this simple meal of thanks, he needed her to know. He had cried, broken down, and felt like he would never be better, but she was there and had not given up on him.

Hearing them laugh through their tears, he looked back at them. Mrs. Scully had her hands on Rachel’s face, as they looked into each other’s eyes. She stepped back and excused herself to the bathroom, Mrs. Scully directing her to which was closest.

The bathroom door shut and Mrs. Scully turned to him, reaching for his hands. He took them and she gave a little tug. He stood up, and she wrapped her arms around his waist, holding him tightly. She said nothing, simply held him to her until they heard the toilet flush. She stepped back and patted his chest. He nodded at her and smiled.

Rachel came back into the room, her eyes red, but a shy smile on her face. “So, who wants dessert?” he asked, clapping his hands and grinning, trying to lighten the mood. They both laughed and answered in the affirmative.

Going into the kitchen with the tea tray, he took out three dessert plates and opened the bakery box. He slid out the chocolate mint pie and cut them each a slice, Mrs. Scully’s just a bit larger than the others. He set all the plates on the tray, added three forks, and walked to the table to hand them out.

Setting Mrs. Scully’s down first, he was rewarded with her bright smile and her hand squeezing his, before he handed a slice to Rachel. She smiled at him too, and waited until he sat down to begin eating.

“This is my favorite pie, Fox Mulder,” Mrs. Scully said to him, giving him a look.

“I am aware of that, Mrs. Scully,” he replied taking a big bite of his own piece of pie. “Why do you think I bought it?” He winked at her and they both laughed.

“Actually, I tried to make a pie at home, wanting to make the entire meal myself, and uh ... yeah, it was not pretty. I put in too much mint flavoring, the crust stuck to the pan, and it was somehow both chunky *and* creamy. So, I spared you both the horribleness that was my first attempt at making a pie and bought one instead. You're welcome,” he said, pointing his fork at both of them in turn. They both laughed, Rachel covering her mouth as she did.

After his confession, no more serious discussion was made while they ate their dessert. Mulder told them about Clyde Bruckman and the Stupendous Yappi, and they both laughed. Rachel shook her head, and he smiled at her. She told them of her first internship and how terrified she was to make a mistake. Over thinking every situation, she got the charts mixed up, and called a man Carol for the whole session, believing it was his name. She felt good at the end of her time with him, until he kindly told her as he left, that his name was Richard. After he walked out the door, she covered her face and laughed until she cried. Mulder and Mrs. Scully both howled with laughter.

After their pie was eaten, Rachel said she should be going. It was a bit of a drive back home, and
there was a chance it might snow. Mrs. Scully got up from the table and embraced her, thanking her for coming and for being the one to help him. She closed her eyes and hugged her back.

Mulder walked her to her car, checking the weather as he did. There was definitely the promise of snow in the air. She put on her gloves as she stood by her car door and then looked up at him. He smiled at her and sighed.

“Thank you for the dinner, Fox. I am glad I came and met your Mrs. Scully. She’s an amazing woman,” she said with a smile.

“She is,” he said with a nod. “Rachel ... this dinner seems so inadequate to the thanks I want to say. You know that I met with other therapists, but they weren’t the right fit. You were the one I needed, the one who wouldn’t let me give up, who wouldn’t take any of my bullshit. You said tonight that Ty was the one who helped you and made you want to help others. Rachel, you need to know how much your help means to me.”

She dropped her head and nodded, quiet aside from some sniffling. She raised her head and looked at him, with tears in her eyes and on her cheeks.

“It ... it was my pleasure. You were worth it, Fox Mulder,” she whispered. He nodded at her and felt tears in his own eyes. She stared at him for a second, before throwing her arms around his neck, quietly crying as she thanked him. He held her tight, whispering his own thanks to her.

She pulled back and squeezed his hand, her gloved one soft and warm in his cold one. Dropping his hand, she got in the car and rolled the window down as she started the engine. She stared at him, a smile on her face, as she shook her head.

“Show her, Fox. Show your Scully how you’ve changed. Be patient, and show her,” she said kindly. He nodded and put his hands in his pockets. She smiled again, waving at him as she backed up, rolled her window up, and drove away. He watched until her taillights disappeared, before he went back inside, shivering from the cold.

He found Mrs. Scully in the kitchen cleaning up the mess from dinner. Steering her to the kitchen table, he took over putting away the leftovers, dividing them between him and her, at her insistence, and washing the dishes. She told him how she enjoyed meeting Rachel, and the dinner was wonderful. He grinned at her praise, and she came over to dry the dishes, despite his protests.

“If I help, we can have time for our own visit, before you need to head home,” she said, and he could not argue with that logic.

He asked if she would like more tea, or coffee, and she agreed to a bedtime tea. Smiling, he added more water to the kettle, telling her that she and Scully were very similar. She smiled at him and nodded. When the tea was ready, they sat quietly at the dining room table, waiting for it to cool a bit before drinking it.

“I don’t really know how to begin to tell you how much you have meant to me this last year. All that you have done for me, Mrs. Scully,” he said, before she interrupted with a click of her tongue. He looked at her and she shook her head.

“I told you before, Fox, it’s what family does. Family shows up,” she said with a smile.

“I know, but ..”

“You’re welcome, Fox. It’s exactly where I needed to be,” she said, touching his hand. They were quiet again before she spoke up once more.
“I was touched by Rachel’s story, especially the part with her mother,” she said with a glance at him. “Her mother was prepared to take on a hurt if it meant her daughter would be safe and getting the help she needed. It touched home to me, thinking of Dana and William.”

Mulder was quiet, closing his eyes at the mention of William, the one topic that was hardest to discuss. Anytime he and Scully came close to having a real, honest discussion, he would see the look on her face, and it would break his heart. He knew she internalized more than she said, even when it felt she was being completely open. It never went far, her not wanting to reveal too much, and him not wanting to ask more in order to avoid hurting her.

“Mrs. Scully ... Maggie,” he said quietly, opening his eyes and looking into hers, letting the use of her first name touch her the way he knew it would. Her eyes tearing up showed him how much it affected her. “I know there is a desire to discuss William, and I want to, but it ... it hurts more than it heals. He’s gone and ... I don’t know ... we don’t know where he is or even how to find any information about him. Would he ... he wouldn’t even know us. Our appearing in his life ... it would wreak havoc on him ... confuse him. And yet, I know what he means to Dana. Please ... Maggie ... please don’t think that means I don’t love him or care for him, I do. I just ... I’ve had to let him go in my own way. It doesn’t mean I haven’t thought of him and how our lives would have been with a child in it. Birthdays, Christmases, first days of school, random days at home, or sports he may have played. I’ve thought of it all, and it hurts like a son of a bitch, every damn time,” he said, choking back a sob. She reached for his hand, and together they cried for the boy they both missed, and for the life they were all denied.

“Fox, I know that you love him, of course you do, I’ve never thought otherwise,” she said, squeezing his hand. “I know that if you could, for Dana, you would find him. Even if only to know where he is, how he is, I know you would find him for her. There is nothing you wouldn’t do for my girl, Fox, and for that I will love you forever. Perhaps one day, we will find the answers to the questions it hurts too much to ask.”

He stared at her, at this woman who with her mother’s heart, seemed to know his own so well, and he cried. Her arms held him and he heard her tears, as they clung to each other. If he had been a religious man, he would have prayed for strength and guidance, to show him the right path to follow. Instead, he put his faith and hopes into her words.

One day, the questions that hurt so much to ask, would perhaps have an answer.

One day.

Chapter End Notes

I had this chapter written in my head for months. Months, you guys. Rachel’s story has been super important to me. To show how a person changes to become who they were meant to be and how the past lays way to the future. I wanted her to be a ballerina because it’s something that takes dedication and time and yet it was hurting her. That was similar to Mulder and his need to seek out the truth, but it was dragging him down. I like the way they mirror each other.

I hope you enjoyed this chapter. ❤️❤️
December 2015

Maggie sighed as she sat with Louise in the church pew at their friend Janet’s funeral. It was a long illness that took her, but still her death was not one Maggie had been expecting.

She, Janet, and Louise were an almost inseparable trio for years. They played cards, gone on vacations, and spoken almost every day. Now, one third of that trio was gone, and it hurt. A lot.

Louise reached for her hand, and they held tight to one another as the service began. The priest spoke about Janet, the many services she helped in, the lives she touched, and how invaluable she was to the church. Her family stood and shared stories, making everyone laugh and cry. Louise squeezed Maggie’s hand and they both took shaky breaths, as they dabbed their eyes.

They followed the family out of the church, hugging everyone they saw, and expressing their condolences. Following the processional to the burial plot, they stood together as the casket was lowered into the ground and a couple of musically inclined family members sang a hymn.

Maggie and Louise held to one another as they each said goodbye once more and then walked back to Maggie’s car. Sitting down and waiting for the car to heat up, Maggie sniffed and wiped her eyes once more.

“It was a matter of time, Maggie, we all knew that,” Louise said, sadness in her voice.

“I know, Louise,” Maggie said quietly. “It’s just ..”

“I know.”

At the reception in Janet’s home, the family welcomed Maggie and Louise, telling them of their appreciation of the long friendship they shared. Both women nodded and thanked them. Maggie took Louise’s arm, and they walked to the table laden with coffee and refreshments.

They each fixed a cup of coffee and sat down with other mourners. Everyone exchanged pleasantries and then talked amongst each other. Neither Maggie nor Louise felt much like talking, so instead, they listened.

Mixed within the stories of happiness and kindness, Maggie heard hardship and tiredness. Never vocalized, it nonetheless lingered in stories. She could hear the exhaustion in their tone and the nervous relief they felt with her passing.

Not wanting to discuss how she was feeling and what she was thinking until they left, Maggie
waited until they had gotten in the car to say what was on her mind.

“I’d like to plan for my future, when I pass,” she said, glancing over at Louise. “I know it might seem sudden, but I want to have it figured out and not leave the kids anything to worry about. I had an idea after Bill died, but I haven’t thought about it in years. We’re getting older and there is always the risk of health problems. I just ... I’d like to have it done and taken care of so it’s not something to worry those left behind.”

Louise nodded and reached for her hand. “We’ll do it together,” she said, as Maggie squeezed her hand.

The following Monday, they met at the funeral home and discussed options of burial versus cremation. Maggie immediately chose cremation, thinking of Bill and his funeral and also of the lake.

Once the paperwork was in order, and payments had been made, Maggie stopped Louise on a bench outside of the office.

“When we were at the lake house this summer, I took a walk and made a decision,” Maggie said, looking at Louise and squeezing her hand. “I want my ashes scattered at the lake. I found it so peaceful and beautiful there. I’d like to know there is a piece of me there, in some fashion.”

“I love that idea, Maggie,” Louise said with a squeeze of her hand.

“I want to change my advance directive too, but I don’t want to bother Dana with it,” Maggie said, looking down at the ground. “After hearing the exhaustion in people’s voices at Janet’s, Louise, I don’t want that for my family. I don’t want them to make tough decisions for my care, or worry if what they’re doing is wrong. I want the decision to be mine, and mine alone.”

“I understand, Maggie,” Louise said as she nodded. “After this past year, I do understand. It feels odd to discuss death when we are living, but ... I know how you feel. Better to plan than leave it to chance.”

Maggie nodded. “When Dana was missing and then had inexplicably been returned, I found out about her advance directive. It hurt at first, not understanding why she would not want to keep fighting ... to just give up. But after sitting there with her every day worried and scared, I understood it better. I understand it even more now. I don’t want that pain resting on anyone’s shoulders.” Maggie looked at Louise and squeezed her hand again. They sat quietly on the bench before it became too cold, and then they left.

Two days later, before she went to visit Fox, Maggie stopped at Louise’s, and had her and her brother Jack, a retired Navy Captain visiting for the holidays, sign her amended directive. Maggie breathed a deep sigh as she saw it become what she wanted, how she wanted to leave this earth.

“It’s a good decision, Maggie,” Louise said softly, rubbing Maggie’s arms, and pulling her in for a hug. “A smart decision and when the time is right, you will tell Dana. She will understand.”

Maggie nodded and held Louise tight, thanking Jack with a slight smile. He nodded and left the room.

After her visit with Fox, in which she was pleased to see he was still doing well with his therapy having ended, she stopped at the nearby convenience store, to buy an iced tea. Her mind was on the decision she made earlier that day, and she missed the clerk speaking to her.

“Ma’am?”
“I’m so sorry. My mind was a thousand miles away. What did you say?” Maggie asked her kindly.

The woman smiled and reached out her hand. “Here’s your change. Three dollars and a sorter.” She placed the money in Maggie’s outstretched hand as Maggie registered what she said.

“Did you say sorter? What does that mean?” Maggie asked, as she looked at the money in her hand. The woman smiled again and shook her head with sigh.

“It’s … um … something my mom used to say. She didn’t know much English when she came here as a teenager, and she was baffled by expressions sometimes. *The grass is always greener* or *Whatever floats your boat.* She said it was so strange to her,” the woman said with a chuckle. “The money one made her shake her head, always.”

“Money one?”

“Yeah. *Penny for your thoughts.* She was a very imaginative person, lived in her head, and had many fantastic adventures in there. She said her thoughts were worth way more than a measly penny,” she said, laughing as she looked at Maggie, and she joined in.

“So, one day, she says she’s going to come up with her own sayings. She couldn’t change the penny one as much as she may have tried, so that one stuck. But, she thought about it and eventually, in our house- nickels were fickle, as nothing really rhymes with nickel, dimes were for your time, it was after all during the time of pay phones, and quarters were your sorters,” she grinned at Maggie and seeing the perplexed look on her face, she chuckled again and explained. “My mother watched a lot of television to help her with learning English. She told us that so many times a serious decision would need to be made and eventually a person would dramatically flip a coin to decide their fate. Most often, it was a quarter they would flip, and the decision would rest upon heads or tails, and sort out the problem.” She said placing her palms up and shrugging.

“Quarters are your sorters,” Maggie said quietly, running her thumb across the face of the quarter in her hand. “I like that. It kind of simplifies things, doesn’t it?”

“Well, of course it’s not one hundred percent accurate, as it is a chance of fate, but it’s up to the flipper, I suppose. Same as anything in life, it’s how you interpret it, and what you do in the future that matters,” the woman said with another shrug. Maggie looked at her again and smiled.

“Thank you for sharing that story with me. I like your mother’s way of seeing things. My name is Maggie, by the way,” she said putting out her hand.

“Destiny,” the woman said, reaching for her hand, with a laugh and a roll of her eyes, when Maggie’s own widened in surprise. “I know, and it seems even stranger after that conversation we just had. But, like I said, my mother had come here as a teenager, escaped a bad situation to do it, and felt it was her destiny to be here, hence the name bestowed upon me.”

Maggie shook her head as she shook Destiny’s hand. Of all the places she could have stopped on the way home, she somehow stopped at the one she passed every Wednesday on her way to visit Fox. Today of all days, it seemed she was led to this location, to this woman.

“I don’t know what to make of this, or what your personal beliefs are, but I feel I was meant to meet you today.” Maggie said as she set her change down and grasped Destiny’s hand in both of hers. “I can’t explain it, but I know it, and I am grateful for whoever, or whatever, made me thirsty for some iced tea.” Destiny laughed and covered their joined hands with her left one, looking in Maggie’s eyes as she did.
“My mother would give me the silent glare and the click of her tongue all day, if I did not say it seems we were fated to cross paths today,” she smiled and held Maggie’s stare. “I don’t know your situation Maggie, but I feel I was meant to play an infinitesimal part in it. I understand when you say you can’t explain it, for nor can I.” They stared at one another, hands still clasped, before Maggie smiled and let go. She stepped back from the counter, about to leave, and then turned around again.

“Your mother is a wise woman. Be sure and tell her that from me, would you?” she said, looking at Destiny. She nodded and they waved goodbye to one another, the quarter weighing heavily in Maggie’s pocket.

When she arrived at home, she kicked off her shoes, and put her paperwork on the kitchen counter. She would send it to her doctor tomorrow, everything in order and done. Emptying her pockets, the quarter landed on the counter, and she sighed.

_Quarters are your sorters_, she thought. So many things came to mind that needed to be sorted. Her relationship with Charlie for one, but that had been gone over and over for years. She knew it would take more than a flip of a coin to change his mind and his heart.

She closed her eyes, the ache of not having spoken to her youngest son and grandchildren in so long, was overpowering. How ridiculous it was to let a disagreement and misunderstanding in the past be what kept you from the future. Her eyes opened and she knew what she needed to do.

Picking up the quarter, she studied it. Nothing remarkable about it, a truly unremarkable ordinary quarter. And yet...

She turned it over and over in her fingers and then took a deep breath. It felt sacrilegious to do it this way, but she felt desperate, and led to do something crazy. A year Dana and Fox had been apart, and at the moment, an end was still not in sight.

She moved to the middle of the kitchen and closed her eyes. Did she make a wish? Simply ask for what she truly wanted? If Dana and Fox would finally come back to each other? Will it into existence by flipping the coin? Her heart was racing and she felt hot, as if knowing this was a mistake. She placed the quarter on the top of her right thumb, held down with her index finger.

*Please,* was all she could think to say. *Please.*

She flipped the coin and opened her eyes, watching it spin in the air. Oh, God, what had she done? She reached for it and missed, causing it to hit the floor, and roll away from her.

“No, no, no,” she said out loud, chasing it past the table and toward the wall. “I take it back. Stop.”

Finally catching up to it, she watched it hit the wall, and bounce back. Squeezing her eyes tight, she waited to hear it fall, but the sound never came. Opening her eyes she stared and then let out a surprised gasp and sob.

The quarter did not fall over, but remained standing, neither heads nor tails. She stood frozen, staring at it in disbelief, waiting for the inevitable moment when it would tip one way or the other. It never came and suddenly she laughed hysterically, tears running down her face. Doubled over, she could swear she heard Bill’s voice in her ear.

_Your daughter, Maggie? Leaving the fate of her future with him up to this simple coin toss? Have a bit more faith in our girl than THAT._

He would be right of course, she did need to have more faith in Fox and Dana. What was a year,
really? Seven years they had been together, work partners and best friends. Then, twelve years together with many things left unsaid and unshared. Almost twenty years together and one year apart was to be enough? No. She knew it now.

Bending to pick up the quarter, she smiled. Holding it in her hand, she knew it was not an unremarkable quarter, far from it. It was something special and should be treated as such. Walking to the drawer that held the plastic baggies, she took one out, and dropped the quarter inside. Zipping it up, she grabbed a sharpie, and wrote *The Unremarkable Remarkable Quarter*, and underneath it, *Ever Faithful*.

She put the sharpie back in the drawer and put the baggie on top of her paperwork. Tomorrow she would take the papers to her doctor and then do something with the quarter. Something special.

_____  

It was not until she was driving to the doctor’s office the next day, that she thought of it. Taking a detour, and heading to the jewelers, she smiled as she thought it was the perfect idea. Walking in, she found it to be rather empty, and the man behind the counter eager to help her with her plan. He grinned as he set to work, telling her it would be a quick task.

Forty five minutes later, she walked out, the quarter saved in a necklace around her neck, and under her blouse. No one but her knew it was there, close to her heart. The unremarkable remarkable quarter, reminding her to keep faith. To know that only when the time was right, when they had figured out how to be better alone, in order to be better together, would her plea be answered.

Until that day, she would wear it, the head side up, hoping and praying those two would use their heads, listen to reason, have faith in each other, and one day find the harmony between them.

Chapter End Notes

Okay, the quarter will always be a mystery, but who’s to say that it couldn’t have been this? I love this this idea and I hope you do too. ❤
Christmas Calling

Chapter Summary

Another Christmas has come and about to go, and Scully has decided it’s time to reach out to Mulder with more than just a text or email.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

December 2015

Scully sat on the couch at her mother’s house on Christmas evening listening to the laughter and music coming from every corner of the room. Dinner had been eaten and everyone was enjoying another beverage of their choice. Scully held a near empty glass of wine and smiled as she looked at the people gathered together this evening.

Bill and Tara were unable to make it again this year. Not wanting it to be a sad or quiet affair with it being Louise’s first Christmas alone, Maggie invited Louise, her two children, their spouses and children, and her brother Jack to share Christmas with them, to ensure that she was taken care of.

Louise’s children, Marcus and Annie had been friends of Scully’s since high school. In fact, she was very much in love with Marcus when she was a senior. They dated briefly, and attended prom together senior year. The story she told the faux Mulder about that night, was still something the real one teased her about.

Annie and her now husband, Paul, were there that night. Annie still harbored anger toward Sylvia and her stupid prom date for building such a huge campfire and embarrassing them all by the need to ride back on that pumper truck.

Marcus married a wonderful woman and their kids were adorable, especially the new baby. Scully held him many times during the day, staring into his big brown eyes. He smiled and cooed and she sighed behind her own happy smile. He was a good baby and she could not help but feel the sadness of missing William. She thought of him every day, but the holidays were the hardest.

Scully looked up to see Annie coming over and joining her on the couch. She looked at her and Scully smiled. “You doing all right, Dana?” she asked.

“I’m okay, yeah,” Scully replied, smiling still.

Annie was always the coolest person she knew. She never backed down from a problem. She always stood up for herself and was not afraid to speak her mind. Scully was tough and she would scrap with the best of them, but there was something about Annie that was different. She was simply Annie and no other description was needed.

She and Scully would sneak out at night when they were in high school, a bottle of Annie’s dad’s alcohol in the backseat of her car. It never mattered what kind of alcohol it was. It was sneaking out and sharing it that made it so memorable. Annie smoked sometimes on those sneak out nights, but Scully never did after that one time she snuck the cigarettes from her mother’s purse. The taste
had put her off of them forever.

One night, when they were both back from college for the holidays, Annie picked her up and they went driving around, free of the burden of school for a little while. Pulling into the deserted parking lot of a state park, Annie took out a joint and for the first time, Scully tried smoking pot.

They sat in Annie’s car and talked about everything and nothing, sharing the joint between them. They sat for hours giggling and then sitting on the hood of the car, staring at the stars and wondering about the universe. When Scully could be trusted to not dissolve into loud giggles, they headed back home.

Annie and Paul got married when she and Mulder had been working together for almost a year. It was a crazy wedding, with a story poor Paul never lived down, worse even than the dreaded pumper truck story. He passed out and needed a few minutes to recover before the wedding could proceed. Someone also brought a dog that bit the drummer. Scully helped see to his bite, which was superficial, and Annie walked up and handed her the bouquet, much to the abject horror of the other bridesmaids. Everyone still teased Paul mercilessly about that story and he just shrugged and smiled.

Annie was now a caterer, and she loved it. She offered to make the Christmas meal as a thank you to Maggie for hosting the day, and Maggie had eventually agreed, but with the firm knowledge that she would clean it all up. Scully knew that was not going to happen, and she had been right, not with all the younger hands available and willing to help.

“So you’re still enjoying your work at the hospital?” Annie asked and Scully nodded.

“It’s hard at times, but seeing a patient recover and flourish when they may not have without the help, is truly amazing,” Scully said quietly.


“Ah, well that’s not surprising,” Scully sighed.

“I’m sorry you aren’t together anymore. Have you … been seeing anyone else?” Annie inquired and Scully laughed.

“Annie,” Scully said, shaking her head. “It’s … I … saying it’s complicated does not come close to describing our relationship. He’s … no. I’m not seeing anyone else. I honestly don’t think I could.” She sighed again and rubbed at her forehead.

“Are you two talking then? Trying to work things out?” Annie asked kindly.

“We text and email, but haven’t spoken in a while,” Scully said, and she decided tonight would be the night that ended. She would call him and extend the olive branch and see what happened.

“I’m really sorry, Dana. I wish there was something I could do to help you,” Annie said, squeezing her hand. “You wanna get stoned?” They both laughed loudly, and Scully squeezed her hand.

“That you for the offer, but not this time. I haven’t done that in many years, maybe since we did it last time,” Scully said, remembering when they had, in Annie’s first apartment, laughing and de-stressing from finals. “You know, you’re the only person I’ve ever done that with, to this day, both times. God, what a wild life I’ve lived huh?” She shook her head and laughed at herself.

“Well,” Annie laughed as she stood up and Scully joined her, walking into the kitchen to put her
wine glass on the counter. “If you change your mind, make sure you let me know.” Scully smiled and nodded, pulling Annie in for a hug. She held her tightly and then stepped back. “I hope you and Mulder find your way back to each other. I really like him.”

“Me too,” Scully said quietly and Annie smiled, squeezing Scully’s hands. She sighed and they left the kitchen.

“I’m gonna get going, but it was wonderful to see you again, Annie. Your family is, as always, beautiful. Your food is delicious and you have done great things with your life as well,” Scully said with a smile.

“Stop, you’re gonna make me blush,” she said with a roll of her eyes and Scully snorted with laughter. “Go on, get out of here and call that handsome man and talk to him.” She gave Scully a look and she nodded.

“See you later, Annie.”

“Bye, Dana.”

Scully made the rounds and said goodbye to everyone, gathered up her gifts, and headed to her car. She put her bags in the backseat and got in, starting the car and letting it warm up. Taking out her phone and being sure the Bluetooth was connected, she set it in the holder. Her stomach turned nervously as she thought of actually speaking to him. It had been so long since she had and she missed the sound of his voice.

Driving away, she had a sudden crazy idea to drive over to the house and see him face-to-face. As fast as it came, the idea left her. She felt nervous enough with just a phone call, seeing him now …

She drove for a few minutes before getting the nerve to press the talk button on the steering wheel.

“Say a command.”

“Call Mulder,” she said, and took a deep breath.

“Calling Mulder, cell.” The phone began to ring and butterflies took up residence in her stomach. One, two, three, four rings and the voicemail recording came through the speakers.

“This is Fox Mulder, leave a message.”

She heard the beep and the words she was going to say got stuck in her throat. “Uhh … it’s me. I’m … leaving my mother’s and … I wanted to tell you Merry Christmas. Maybe you’re out … I don’t … umm. Merry Christmas, Mulder,” she stammered and hung up. God, that was embarrassing.

“Jesus Christ,” she murmured to herself. “First time calling after so long and you garbled your way through like that? You fucked that up so badly.” She shook her head and felt like calling Annie and taking her up on her offer to get stoned, hopefully forgetting that phone call ever happened.

Silence filled the car as she drove the rest of the way home. What a stupid idea to call in the car anyway, she thought, shaking her head again. She should have waited until she got home, she only had about fifteen minutes to go. The rest of the drive home, she chastised herself for her stupidity.

Pulling into her parking space, she turned off the car and put her head on the steering wheel, still so embarrassed. She leaned back, put her head on the headrest, and her phone began to ring. Jumping at the sound, she looked down to find Mulder’s name on the screen. Her heart flipped as she reached to answer it.
“Hello?”

“Scully? It’s me,” he said quietly and tears sprang to her eyes.

“Yeah, hi. Did you … hear my message?” she asked, praying to all the saints that he had not heard it.

“Message? No, I uh, just saw that you called and …” he trailed off and she let out the breath she was holding, and sent up a prayer of thanks.

“Well, do me a favor and just … erase it when you get a chance. It’s … just erase it, okay?” she asked and heard his low laugh.

“That bad, huh?” he laughed, and she groaned.

They were both silent for a few seconds that felt much longer. She could hear him breathing, and she closed her eyes, missing him so much.

“So, you coming back from your mom’s?” he asked. “Your brother in town?” She smiled despite the tears in her eyes.

“Yes and no. Bill isn’t in the country this year, again. My mother invited her friend Louise and her family over instead,” she said as she wiped her eyes and leaned against the headrest again. “It was good to see them again.”

“Louise? It sounds familiar, have I met her?”

“Yeah, her children, Annie and Marcus, we went to high school together-”

“Oh, do you mean the Marcus? Pumper truck, Marcus?” he teased her, and she laughed softly, tears still in her eyes. “Did he wear his cummerbund?”

“Yes, and I’m wearing my moire taffeta dress. His wife really appreciated the walk down memory lane,” she said sarcastically causing him to laugh. “I regret ever telling you that story.”

“I think you mean re-telling me the story,” came his standard reply. “You know, since the first time you did, I didn’t hear it.” She sighed and waited, knowing there was one last thing he always said. “Because it wasn’t me you were talking to that night.”

“I never should have told you that was what we discussed,” she sighed again, but with a smile on her face. She heard him chuckle softly and she closed her eyes.

They were quiet again and though not uncomfortable, there was so much that remained unsaid. She knew what she wanted to ask him, but did not want him to think she was calling just to nag him.

“You there, Scully?” he asked quietly.

“I’m here,” she answered just as quietly. “How are you, Mulder?” She held her breath and waited, finally asking him what she really wanted to know.

“How am I?” he asked, his voice remaining low. “I’m … I’m okay, Scully. No reason to worry about me.”

“I do, though,” she said, barely above a whisper. He took a breath and she waited again.

“I’m doing all right, Scully. Better than … before. My therapy sessions have ended and … I’m
“Doing well,” he told her. “I wouldn’t have believed at this time last year that I would have said any of those words, but it goes to show how much it has helped.” He laughed softly and she exhaled a short breath.

“Did she … are you still taking your medication?” Her apology for not worrying about the sexual side effects running through her mind. It was on the tip of her tongue to say it, but felt it was not the right time.

“Still taking my meds, Doc. Told you, no need to worry,” he said, and she could hear his smile.

“I’m glad to hear it, Mulder,” she said quietly and he hummed his response. Quiet again and this time she broke it. “Well, I just wanted to … check in, wish you a merry Christmas …”

“Yeah. Merry Christmas to you too, Scully,” he said quietly and she knew she needed to hang up before she burst into tears.

“I’m on the early shift tomorrow, so I should be calling it a night. I’ll talk to you soon?” she said, waiting anxiously for his answer.

“Yeah,” he breathed. “We’ll talk soon. Thanks for calling, Scully. Good night.” And he hung up, without waiting for her answering good night. She sighed and opened her eyes. Putting her phone in her bag, she took the keys from the ignition and began to gather up her things.

Hers arms loaded with gifts, she headed to her door. She dropped everything in the entryway, took off her coat, and put her keys in the bowl. She picked up the bags and put them in her room to deal with tomorrow. Changing into her coziest pajamas, she brushed her teeth, washed her face, and got into bed.

Replaying their conversation in her mind, she tried to find any signs of anger or annoyance. Finding none, she thought of it from a different side and found nothing but acceptance and the possibility of moving forward. She would call again on New Year’s and maybe they could watch the ball drop together, like old times. Yet different, as they would not be together. Sighing with a smile at the possible thought, she turned over and fell asleep.

That New Year’s call never happened. She tried, repeatedly, but he did not answer, nor did he return her calls. She tried the next couple of days too, and still no response. Texts went unanswered, as did emails. Finally, a few lines were sent her way.

Doing okay, Doc. Don’t worry. Just needed some time to think about some things.

She tried not to worry, tried not to be furious with him and go back to her life and doing what she loved, but he set up his claim, as he had always done, and she sighed. She did that a lot in the next couple of days, until a nurse walked in and stopped her heart with a few simple words.

You have a phone call … He says his name is Walter Skinner. Assistant Director, FBI.
Dun dun duuuuuun! And so we begin to enter into season 10!

How crazy has this journey been so far? It's been amazing to see all your love and support for it. I promise to get back to everyone when I find a second. I have a few chapters to write yet, and I’m working every second I can.

20 down, 25 to go. INSANITY!
A Tentative Promise

Chapter Summary

After the wildness of meeting with Tad O’Malley, Mulder thinks about the past couple of days and how he behaved toward Scully.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Early January 2016

The fridge door closed, and Mulder sighed. He reached for the bottle opener and took the top off his beer. Dropping the cap on the table, he walked out to the porch and sat down in the chair. He slid down and leaned his head back, exhausted after the last couple of days.

He scrubbed a hand down his face and sighed, his mind still racing. So much happened in such a short amount of time, and he needed to stop and process it all. First and foremost, seeing Scully for the first time in so long had rattled him, and instead of being decent to her, he was an asshole. He knew it from the moment he saw her, but he was angry as much as he was happy.

After they spoke on Christmas, he did not answer her calls. She called a couple of times, but he let it go to voicemail and made no effort to call her back. He was angry at himself for something he did, and he took it out on her.

Every day since she left, he would reach for her when he woke up, believing she was there and forgetting she was not. After speaking to her on Christmas, he woke up the next morning and got out of bed without reaching for her. When he realized it, he broke down. Her voice was still echoing in his ear and he forgot, or was used to not finding her there, and it angered him as much as it hurt. He stopped accepting any calls after that, but she kept trying. He shook his head at his asshole ways.

After finally accepting a call from Scully, and hearing Skinner was looking for him, he agreed to meet the nut job Tad O’Malley. Of course he would not be going to meet him alone, but seeing her again still jarred him. As much as he wanted to kiss her and hold her, he acted aloof and distant. Wearing his sunglasses at their first meeting so she could not immediately see his eyes, pushing her buttons with his words, noting the way she looked at him, he knew exactly what he was doing.

* Tad O’Malley and his charming bullshit, he thought, shaking his head. It was nice to see that Scully had not fallen for it, at least not with him around anyway. Had he tried with her in private? He closed his eyes at the thought of her driving around with chilled champagne ready at her disposal.

* For better or worse, we've ... moved on with our lives.

* Yes, we have. For better or for worse.

He sighed as he thought of her words and his response to them. Her sigh and quick glance his way, made him wonder if she had shared the same memory as him. Of a night years ago, the rain
pouring down, their bodies slick with sweat, he whispered to her that he would love her for better or for worse. She laughed as she tried to catch her breath and then whispered it back to him. Her eyes shone in the moonlight, and while not a wedding, it felt like one. A promise had been made, though not binding by law. It did not stop him from asking and her refusing him each time or simply not answering, but they had an understanding.

Until they no longer did.

He knew his treatment of Sveta and his interest in her would grate on Scully’s nerves, and yet he did it anyway. His interest was piqued and he jumped straight in, no thought to the past year of counseling or Mrs. Scully’s warning voice in the back of his head. Sveta’s tale grabbed him and did not let go.

Though it should not have, Scully’s arrival at the house had surprised him. Of course she would check on him to make sure he was okay. She was still Scully, and she would forego any thoughts and feelings of awkwardness if it meant he was okay.

Watching her face as she stood on the porch with his hands on her shoulders, he saw it. He saw when she realized he was willing to jeopardize everything. To fall back into the darkness and not care how it affected them. She held his eyes, and he should have stopped right then, but he didn’t because he needed to know. The evidence was there, he just needed to dig deeper.

You know what you’re doing.

Her words held so much meaning. He was not just putting his health on the line, but risking them and that was unacceptable to her. She would not go through that again and so instead she tried to leave and walk away before she had to witness his downfall once more.

He could still hear her heels on the porch as she was leaving him again. He should have fought harder, followed her down the stairs and told her he was wrong. But he let her leave, unable to see past his own need to prove he was right, to find the truth at last.

When she sat in the car and looked at him, he remembered the dream he had of her handing him her heart and his inability to put it together. There she sat staring at him, in the flesh, and he was not even attempting to try and fix it this time. He was letting her leave and he knew, he knew, she would not be back this time. But the truth he sought for so long, what drove him for years, the possibility of finally getting answers was inside the house.

I shouldn’t have come.

What are you up to, Mulder?

Her words settled inside his mind and he hated hearing the tone in which she said them. He knew that tone. It was the same tone he had heard years ago when they fought and yelled. Each time, her shoulders had slumped and her eyes filled with sadness. It was the same look she had now. She believed she was still second to his desire to learn the truth.

He thought of how she came back inside the house and listened to the wild story he, Tad, and Sveta were telling. Of course she did not believe it, not without proof, something tangible she could hold onto. He expected nothing less of her, and yet, after all that happened in their lives, why was it so hard for her to believe? To have faith in what he was saying and take it for what it was worth?

He sighed now, the days and thoughts taking their toll on him. He took another drink of his beer before leaning his head back again and closing his eyes. He was tired, but also too wired to sleep
right now. After meeting with Skinner again, the plans to go back to the bureau after being away so long were underway. They would need to be recertified and sit through hours of orientation and training, which was not a difficult task, but just thinking about it made him feel exhausted.

And yet, he felt a stirring inside him, an awakening, as he was coming back to what he loved pursuing. Maybe this was what he needed, and by extension, what they needed. He took a deep breath and concentrated on the quiet around him.

His eyes popped open when he heard tires crunching on the gravel of the driveway. He looked over to see Scully driving up to the house. She parked, stared at him through the windshield, and with a sigh, she got out and headed up the steps. Leaning against the ledge of the porch, she dropped her keys next to her, crossed her arms and sighed.

“You look exhausted,” he said, echoing her words from earlier.

“That … is a fair assessment of how I feel,” she said in a tired voice.

“Hm. You want a beer?” he asked, starting to stand up.

“No. No thanks,” she said with another sigh.

“What did the hospital have to say?” he asked, watching the exhaustion play across her face.

“Well, they were sorry to see me go, but crazily enough they understood that this was something I needed to do,” she said, closing her eyes and taking a deep breath. Opening them, she stared at him. “We do **have** to do this, right? We really don’t have a choice.”

“I don’t think we do, Scully.”

“You know, I think I will take that beer,” she sighed and he gave her a half smile. He stood up and went inside to grab her a beer from the fridge. He opened it and headed back with hers and a fresh one for himself.

She was sitting in the other chair, which she had dragged over to sit next to him, looking out across the yard. He handed her the bottle and she nodded her thanks. Sitting down next to her, he said nothing as they both took a couple pulls from their bottles.

She sighed again and he looked over at her. “We say we don’t have a choice and we need to do this, but is it what you **want**, Mulder? Do you … after all this time away and … are you sure this will be … that you will be …?”

“Is anyone ever truly ready for what’s thrown at them, Scully?” he asked quietly.

“You know what I mean, Mulder,” she answered, just as quietly. He nodded his head and looked down at the porch.

“I do know what you mean. I understand your concern, I do,” he told her, quietly still. He raised his head and looked at her. “I’m sorry for the past couple of days. I know that … that I was chasing after the monsters in the dark and not heeding your advice. I should’ve listened. You were right—”

“I’m sorry, I don’t think I heard that properly. Could you repeat it?” she interrupted him. He smiled slightly and she returned it.

“You said I was on fire and running away with an idea, and **you were right,**” he said and she took a drink of her beer with a satisfied expression. He shook his head and drank his own beer as he
leaned forward, his elbows on his knees. He again looked down at the porch. “I can’t promise it won’t happen again. You know me, Scully.”

“I do.”

Shaking his head, he looked up at her and she smiled softly at him. “I can promise you that I’ll try. That’s the best I can do … right now. I promise to try and …” he shook his head and again looked down at the porch.

“I can work with that,” she whispered and he smiled. Sitting back, he looked at her and they came to an unspoken agreement. He nodded and she closed her eyes.

They sat in silence for a while, neither of them wanting or needing to say anything. He remembered so many nights when they sat out on the porch like this, usually she had a glass of wine, as he carried on about something or other. She would laugh, roll her eyes, and begin with her logical rebuttal.

Looking at her tonight, he knew they were far from those days. He could see how tired she was, knew how the past few days had taken a toll on her, but any words of compassion from him would be brushed aside right now. Instead he remained silent, happy in the knowledge she was there and they would soon be working together again.

She sighed again and opened her eyes, looking at him, her eyes searching his face. He smiled, and she scrunched her chin at him in that adorable way he loved.

“I should get going. It’s late and I’m meeting my mom for lunch tomorrow. She’s going to either hate or love this new plan for my life,” she said with a chuckle. He laughed with her, imagining the phone call he would be getting tomorrow after said lunch.

“Scully, it’s me. When has your mom ever been mad at me?” he said with a grin that caused her to shoot him a look as she stood up. She shook her head and brushed off her pants.

“I’d disagree with you, but it would be silly to do so since you’re not wrong,” she said with a sigh. He laughed and also stood, taking her beer bottle from her. It was a little less than half full, but she would not finish it, she rarely did. He should get some wine to have on hand, just in case.

“Well, tell your mom I said hello,” he said, walking next to her to the stairs. She grabbed her car keys and nodded as she walked down the stairs. He hated seeing her leave, but knowing he would see her soon filled him with hope.

“Oh,” she said, turning around and looking at him. “Skinner called and we have an appointment for a psych eval in three days, after that is the physical and then the weapon recertification. He seems keen to get us back quickly.”

“You, maybe,” he chortled, and she rolled her eyes.

“Mulder, don’t sell yourself short. You know he cares about you,” she rebuked him, stepping backwards toward the car.

“But I’m not as pretty as you,” he said, feeling a bit ballsy and his heart pounded.

“Maybe not to Skinner,” she teased, with a raise of her eyebrows, as she got in her car. He smiled and nodded, waving the hand that was not currently holding both beer bottles. She returned his smile and backed up her car and drove away.
He watched her tail lights until they were gone and then with a sigh, he went into the house. Taking the bottles to the sink, he finished hers and then rinsed them both out, tossing them in the recycling bin. He locked up, turned off the lights, and headed upstairs.

Staring at his reflection as he brushed his teeth, he knew this was the right path. It might be rocky, they might hit some snags, but no matter what, they were still them. He missed her, loved her, and wanted her back home, but he knew neither of them were ready. Not yet, but he hoped they would get there.

He rinsed out his mouth, used the toilet, washed his hands, stripped to his boxers and got into bed. Yeah, this was right. He rolled over and touched her side of the bed, smiling as he remembered the look on her face tonight and her smile. He pulled the pillow that was very much still her pillow close to him and held onto it as he started to fall asleep.

*I can promise you that I’ll try. I’ll try.* His words from earlier reverberated in his head, the only thing he could promise her, the only thing he could do right now. He did not put much stock in religion, instead putting his faith in Scully. He would do what was in his power to not destroy that faith.

He started to drift off as he thought of tomorrow. He could almost hear the phone ringing already and Mrs. Scully’s voice on the other line.

*Fox Mulder, we need to have a little chat.*

Chapter End Notes

Okay, I know that the struggles are not super popular, especially considering we only got SIX episodes in Season 10 and they basically bookended the entire season. I know that it seemed they were off from each other from the first meeting and hopefully this will help to explain why- at least in my own idea. I don’t HATE this episode, but it’s definitely not my favorite. It created such a “What the hell is going on with them?” that the fics are ripe for the plucking. I hope my personal explanation makes sense and it seems fitting with what is happening that we don’t see. ❤
Chapter Summary

Maggie meets up with Scully for a catch up and she discovers the turn of events that will be leading Mulder and Scully to work together again.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Early January 2016

Maggie waited at the table for Dana to arrive for their lunch date. She had been shopping next door and decided to come to the restaurant early and have a cup of tea. Looking around, she smiled at the family next to her. They had a little girl with big blue eyes and red hair in pigtails that looked so much like Dana did when she was younger. The little girl smiled at her and waved before her parents told her to turn around and eat.

“Mom. I’m sorry I’m late,” Maggie heard Dana’s voice and turned her head to see her standing by the table. She leaned down and kissed Maggie’s cheek before sitting across from her.

“You’re not late, Dana. I was a little early,” Maggie said with a smile. “I was next door at that new shop and felt I needed some tea so I came in a bit early.”

“Oh, tea sounds great,” Dana said, looking longingly at Maggie’s mug. “I skipped my coffee this morning, and I’m feeling it now.”

“Well, let’s get you some tea. I’ve seen you caffeine free and it’s not pretty,” Maggie teased her and Dana narrowed her eyes at her. Maggie laughed and called the waiter over, asking for more tea. He left to get it and she smiled at Dana. “So how are you, honey?”

“I’m good,” Dana answered with a smile, then looked at her menu.

“Just good? Nothing new to report? I know it’s only been a bit since Christmas, but still,” Maggie inquired, smiling at her. Dana sighed and set her menu down. The waiter arrived just then to bring the tea, and the conversation was halted.

When he walked away, Maggie looked back at her and Dana sighed again. “How about we order first? Then I can tell you what’s going on, okay?” Dana asked and Maggie searched her face, her worry and fears getting the best of her. “I’m not sick mom, nothing like that.” Dana patted her hand and Maggie breathed a sigh of relief.

They looked at their menus, drinking their tea as they did. Deciding on what they wanted, Maggie motioned the waiter over again. Once the order was placed and menus taken, Maggie looked at Dana, waiting for her to speak.

Sighing again, Dana looked at her. “We have been asked to come back to the bureau,” she stated, her face set and determined.

“The … the bureau?” Maggie asked, confused by the statement. Dana nodded and fussed with her
napkin, looking down at the table. “Why now? Has something happened? And … wait, we? You and Fox?”

“Yes, both of us. There has been some … new- well, some information that has come out and with our expertise, Skinner-”

“Skinner? Your old boss? He’s still there?” Maggie interrupted. Dana smiled slightly and nodded her head.

“He is still there and he’s asked us to come back.” Dana answered. Maggie looked at her, curious if this was good or bad, but saw no signs of either.

“So I take it you’ve made a decision?” she asked and Dana smiled softly.

“I have, or we have,” she said, looking in Maggie’s eyes with another sigh. “We’re going to start back in about a week. Skinner is rushing through our evals and recertifications, and we will be back in that basement office.” She smiled slowly as she looked down at the table, and Maggie knew she was thinking of the past.

“Dana, I can see by your smile that this idea is appealing to you, but … are you sure? With all you’ve told me and Fox’s depression. Are you concerned about him? That this may … throw him back down that rabbit hole?” Maggie inquired, already making plans to speak to Fox after their lunch.

“Yes, Mom. I am concerned about it. You know we spoke on Christmas. Well, after that, it was like radio silence. Then we got pulled back into the madness and while it was … hard, it was also good? I can’t explain it, really. But, Mulder and I talked last night, a good talk. Well, a good one, for us anyway. I think this will be a good step for him and by extension, us. He had been seeing a therapist, and while he was quick to jump back into his old ways the past couple of days, he apologized later. That’s a huge step for him,” Dana said, looking at Maggie beseechingly. “I’m not saying he never apologized in the past, but it didn’t always happen. We tend to just … move on. We don’t always apologize or explain things. This was different, and I think it shows how he’s changed during our time apart. The therapy he received has helped. I can tell that it’s made a difference.” Maggie stared at her, letting her words sink in, and seeing the truth in Dana’s eyes.

“Okay,” she stated with a nod. “Okay, Dana. I trust you and your decisions. You know how much I love Fox and how I’ve felt about this separation. Yes, I know it was what was needed, especially after hearing how bad it had gotten. It was for the best, but I still have prayed every day for the two of you to find your way back to each other. I know you might balk at this and perhaps roll your eyes at your old mom, but Dana, you and Fox are soulmates. You two were meant to find each other, to be together, and love one another. If this is how the two of you find your way back on that path, I could not be happier.” She reached for Dana’s hand and squeezed when she slid it across the table. Dana blinked back tears and nodded her head.

“You know, we were working with the ATF on a cult-like case years ago. There was one woman in the compound group who Mulder was drawn to, and he didn’t understand it at first. She had multiple personalities and claimed that in a past life, she and Mulder had been … together. In love,” Dana paused and pulled her hand back, clasping them together on the table. “I was skeptical, of course, but there were so many … I don’t know, signs? The woman underwent hypnosis to see if her past could help us in the present. Mom, her story broke my heart. She said she and Mulder were souls always traveling together and in this life, they were only meeting in passing. His eyes when he watched her, Mom …” She stopped talking and wiped at her own eyes and Maggie could only sit in shock at her words. Taking a breath and wiping her eyes again, she smiled sadly.
“Mulder underwent hypnosis after that, because of course he did,” she said with a laughing sob. “He claimed past lives and in every one, he and I were also always together in some way. I was his father, his sergeant. He said our souls came back together and may be different, but they were always together. They do it again and again, to learn.” She looked at Maggie and they both had tears on their faces. “While I didn’t completely believe in it, I can’t describe how it hurt to hear that I was only his protector or his friend and nothing more. We had been through so much and while we were partners, we were always more, even though I would have denied that then.” She smiled and wiped her eyes. Maggie picked up her napkin and wiped at her own eyes.

“The woman, she and the rest of the people in the compound, killed themselves. Mulder was …” she took a breath and closed her eyes. “He was quiet and sad for days after that. We didn’t talk about it much, but I thought about it a lot, much more than I would ever have admitted to him. I wondered what it meant if they were destined to be together, and only in passing, what did that mean for our souls in this life? Who were we to each other this time around? If I was indeed his father and his sergeant in the past, then how could I possibly feel the way I did … do about him in this life? I would have loved him and cared for him, but would I ache for him the way I do? How I have since the first time I laid eyes on him?” Her eyes filled with tears again and spilled down her cheeks. Maggie stood up and moved her chair closer so she could put her arms around her girl and hold her as she cried quietly.

She did not cry long before she pulled back and wiped her eyes. Maggie rubbed her arm gently and waited for her to be calmer before she spoke. When she saw she was ready, she held her hand in both of hers and looked in her eyes.

“Dana, I know your beliefs are in science, and you have your faith, but … honey, I think you have your answer by now, right?” Maggie smiled softly at her and Dana nodded, but Maggie still wanted to say it. “Souls come back together to learn. I’d say your souls have finally learned where they have always been meant to be. You are soulmates, however you come together, and this time, you got it exactly right. You two are at a crossroads now Dana, but I know the path will lead you back to each other. True soulmates can’t be separated for too long.” Maggie put her hand on Dana’s cheek and she held it there with her hand, closing her eyes.

“I’m so sorry, is this a bad time?” asked a voice. Maggie glanced up and saw the waiter standing there with their plates.

“No,” she said, moving her hand from Dana’s face and sitting up straight. “This is perfect timing. We’re finished crying and ready to eat.” Dana laughed, and the waiter chuckled as he set their meals in front of them.

“I hope you enjoy your meal. Please let me know if I can get you anything else,” he smiled and walked away. Maggie clasped Dana’s hand once again, looking at her and smiling. Dana smiled back and squeezed her hand before letting go and picking up her fork.

The meal was delicious and they finished quickly, putting on their coats and walking out to the parking lot. They said goodbye, Maggie pulling her close and holding her tight.

“I love you, Dana. I know this is going to be the answer you’ve been looking for, I just feel it,” she whispered to her.

“I hope so,” Dana whispered back. They stepped back from each other and smiled. “I love you too, Mom. I’ll see you soon.” She got in her car and Maggie waved goodbye as she drove away.

Maggie took her phone out of her purse to give Fox a call, but quickly decided against it. Smiling instead at the idea of a face-to-face chat. She had some things to discuss with him and doing so
over a piece of pie seemed like a much better choice.

Stopping at the bakery, she picked up a sweet potato pie, knowing it was Fox’s favorite. She smiled as she set it on the passenger seat and headed to the house. Her hand went to the quarter around her neck, and she worriedly prayed the entire drive.

Pulling up to the house, she grabbed the box, walked up the stairs, and knocked on the door. Waiting for him to answer, she looked at the two chairs on the porch, closer together than they had been the last time she was there, and she smiled.

The door opened at last and he wore an amused look on his face. “I was expecting a phone call,” he teased, raising his eyebrows. “But a visit with pie, well, that’s even better.” He opened the door wider and gestured for her to come inside.

He took the pie from her as she took of her coat and hung it up. Walking to the kitchen, she found he had taken out two plates and was opening the bakery box.

“Mrs. Scully,” he moaned, shaking his head. “Sweet potato pie? That’s my favorite kind of pie.” He looked at her with a smile, and she grinned back at him.

“Yes, Fox Mulder, I know it is,” she laughed. He cut them each a slice and she grabbed the forks before she sat down. He set her plate down and joined her, taking a bite and sighing with happiness. She laughed again and took a bite of her slice.

“So, you had lunch with Scully today?” he asked, and she nodded. He sighed and took another bite, looking at her, waiting for her to speak.

She stared at him and could see a difference in him. He was happier and seemed lighter than he had been recently. She smiled and shook her head, and he frowned at her, a question in his eyes.

“I think it’s wonderful, Fox, and I can see you’re over the moon about it,” she said slyly. His answering grin was all she needed to see to know she was correct. “I know what this means to you, to see her at all, but to know you will be working together closely once again.” She took a bite of pie and smiled at him. He grinned again and got up for a second piece.

“I’m sure she told you we’ll be back to the basement office soon enough,” he said as he shoved in another bite. “The place was looking pretty terrible when I was there a couple of days ago, but we should have it back to its old cluttered ways in no time.” He smiled again and wiped his mouth with the back of his hand. She shook her head at him but also smiled.

When he was done with the second piece, he set his fork down and looked at her with a sigh. “I know you must have your reservations ... I know Scully does. I have them too. I’ve been out of the world for a while and …” he shook his head and she reached for his hand.

“Fox, I have complete faith in you and this new phase of your life. The past fifteen months, and especially before, I know they were tough. I’ve told you many times you’ve done so well, and I’m proud of you,” she reassured him. “This is the progression needed. I know it will be good for both of you.” He nodded and smiled at her. She let go of his hand and finished her slice of pie.

She stayed for another hour before she picked up her keys and put on her coat. He followed her out, telling her goodbye.

“Thanks again for the pie and the visit,” he smiled. She turned around and kissed his cheek and patted his chest.
“You’re welcome, Fox,” she said with a smile. “You keep an eye on my girl and make sure she keeps both of hers on you.” He laughed and nodded, giving her a quick hug.

“You can be sure of it. She is a much better shot than me,” he chuckled.

“That doesn’t surprise me one bit,” she said with a shrug of her shoulders. She kept on down the steps and to her car. Turning around as she opened the door, she stared at him, his hands in his jeans pockets and a smile on his face. “You look happy, Fox.”

“I am,” he shrugged with a smile.

“Good, I’m happy to see that color on you again,” she smiled as she got in the car. He waved as she backed up and drove away.

She felt happy and unable to stop smiling on her way home. They were both ready for this, she could see it. They might have their worries, but she knew they would work through them together, just as she hoped would happen.

Her hand went to the quarter on the chain once again, and she prayed, but this time her prayers were of thanks. Their paths were finally merging together once more. It might not be a smooth path, but they would travel it together.

She let the quarter drop with a smile. Her heart felt at peace.

Chapter End Notes

I adore the Maggie chapters, I truly do. I love seeing her love these two dummies and care for them so deeply. I love the happiness she has at knowing they will be together again and working as they should. It might be a bumpy ride, but it will be worth it in the end.
Comfort Food and Conversation

Chapter Summary

After the events at Goldman Technology, Scully needs to talk to someone. Who would understand her feelings better than Mulder?

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

January 2016

Scully sat in her car at the end of the driveway, the engine and lights off, debating whether or not to head up to the house and speak to Mulder. The glowing porch lights and inside lights made her ache with the desire to be home. To be inside the walls, discussing the case with him, possibly over some food.

She dropped her head to the steering wheel and sighed. This case … it had been hard to deal with, though she conducted herself professionally and did not allow her own personal pain to enter into it. Not too much anyway, she hoped.

Seeing all those children locked away and kept in isolation made her heart hurt. Every child she saw there made her think of William. It did not matter the disease or situation, William was always her first thought. Goldman Technology had only served to increase her worry for him and what his life had been like in her absence.

Sitting up, she opened her door and stepped out into the cool night air. She closed the door and paced back and forth in front of the car. It had been impossible to shake William from her mind as she looked in those children’s eyes. She never voiced her fears aloud, but the seeds of fear and doubt regarding his creation had always been there, lurking in the shadows of her mind. Was she just an incubator, a vessel to advance an agenda she did not fully understand?

And what did that mean of Mulder? Was he William’s father? If not, then …

“No,” she breathed and shook her head forcefully, refusing to believe anything other than his creation as a miracle. Their love defying every odd and creating life where it was thought impossible.

“The truth we both know.”

She closed her eyes and took a deep breath. No matter what, he was theirs. The seed of doubt could remain buried deep within her mind, she would not feed it and let it flourish.

Glancing up at the house, she made a decision. Locking the car, she walked up the driveway but then paused at the stairs. No one else would understand how she was feeling except him, yet she worried it would be too much to discuss now. In order to move forward, there were going to be conversations that hurt, but tonight did not have to be that night. Tonight, maybe they could just be.

She stared up at the door and walked up the stairs, his words from earlier once again in her head.
“You're never ‘just’ anything to me, Scully.”

Taking them to heart, she knocked loudly on the screen door, and stood waiting for him to answer. She still had her key, but right now, this was not their home so she would knock. The door opened and he looked at her, surprise on his face. He pushed the screen door open as they stared at one another.

Moving aside, he waited wordlessly while she stepped inside and he closed the doors behind them. She unbuttoned her coat, hung it up, and turned to look at him. He nodded and smiled slightly.

Heading to the kitchen, he called softly over his shoulder. “Grilled cheese okay?”

“Yeah,” she said, following him into the kitchen. She watched him take bread, butter, and cheese from the fridge. Smiling, as she leaned against the counter, she saw he had a few choices of cheese and memories of him making sandwiches for them began to bubble up.

After a hard case at the hospital, one evening he made her grilled cheese and found a favorite movie she loved. He rubbed her back as halfway through she cried despite the happiness of the movie. He held her as she continued to cry and was unable to stop.

The first snow fell and he woke her up, excited as a kid at Christmas. “Scully! Wake up! It snowed!” he said, pulling at her, tugging her from the bed. He took her warm clothes out and threw them to her, hurrying her to get dressed. He put on his own warm clothes and then he was pushing her toward the stairs, her laughter following them out the door.

He opened the door and stepped out into the snow, laughing as he waited for her, before pelting her with a snowball. “Come on, Scully, let’s see what you got!” he yelled. She wiped the snow from her coat and soon he was just as full of snow as she was.

Laughing and pink cheeked, they came back onto the porch, stomping the snow from their boots. Taking off their layers, they went upstairs to get in the warm shower. Kissing with cold lips and touching with cold hands led to hot sex against the shower wall.

Dressed and warmer, he made them grilled cheese and tomato soup for brunch. Sitting on the couch after they ate, seeing the snow still falling as they cuddled under a warm blanket, she felt happy and loved. Grilled cheese and soup had always been a comfort food, but with Mulder it took on a new meaning of home and safety.

Shaking her head to clear away those memories, she watched him as he took four slices of bread out, unwrapped the small blocks of cheese, and took out the knife. He sliced cheddar and swiss for her and pepper jack for himself. The larger flat square griddle was placed on the stove and the burner was turned on.

He added the butter, letting it melt, then put the bread on to absorb the butter. The cheese was added to one half of the bread and the other pieces of bread were placed on top. He looked at her and smiled softly, before looking back at the sandwiches, waiting for them to cook.

“What do you suppose will happen to all those kids at the facility?” she asked him quietly. He sighed and shook his head.

“I don’t know,” he said softly.

“They can’t be put in a standard hospital,” she sighed. “The care they would need is astronomical. Not to mention, if they’ve been kept from others, they’re susceptible to diseases they may have never been exposed to and vice versa. They may have never been vaccinated, or been vaccinated
“too much, I don’t know.” She sighed again as she crossed her arms and closed her eyes, thinking about those children. “Who will take care of them now?”

She heard him sigh and she opened her eyes to find him staring at her. His eyes were so full of concern, her own filled with tears, and she bit her lip to stop from crying. He shook his head and looked back at the sandwiches, flipping them over to cook on the other side.

“I don’t know what will happen to them, Scully,” he sighed quietly. “We don’t even know how they came to be, if they had parents, or if they were taken like Agnes’s baby. Maybe not to that extreme, but …” he trailed off, shaking his head. She nodded and sighed quietly.

Stepping around him, she took two plates out and set them beside him. Two glasses were taken out and she opened the fridge to find a pitcher of iced tea inside. Smiling, she took it out and poured them each a glass before setting them on the table. He flipped the sandwiches again and a minute later, he put them on the plates.

He brought them to the table along with the butter knife to cut them in half. She sat next to him and he handed her her plate. Nodding her thanks, he gave her the knife and she cut hers before handing it back to him. Picking up her sandwich, she took a bite and closed her eyes.

“Good?” he asked and she opened her eyes. He smiled at her as he took a bite. She nodded and started to eat again. They ate in silence, each with their own thoughts.

With the food gone and the last sip of tea swallowed, she heard him sigh. Glancing at him, he had his head down and his eyes on his plate. His hands were in tight fists and she knew he was thinking of how to say what was on his mind.

“You asked me the other day if I ever thought about William,” he said just above a whisper. “Of course I do, how could I not? He was … everything I wanted for you. For us.” He closed his eyes and shook his head. “Thinking of what we missed out on … it hurts too much. Putting it behind me may sound cold, but the alternative, Scully … I know it’s different for you, of course it would be, but please don’t think that it means I have forgotten about him. That will never happen.” He opened his eyes and looked at her and she saw the pain inside them. Tears in her eyes, she covered his hand with hers and held to him, saying nothing.

He turned his hand over and linked their fingers together. She looked at the hands she knew so well. The hands that held her when she was scared, wiped her tears, and held their son when he was a baby. She squeezed his hand and nodded her head.

Unlocking their fingers, she stood up and put her dishes in the sink. Walking behind him, she placed her hand on his back, and stood for a second, before walking to the front door. He stayed at the table as she put her coat on, pulling her hair from inside it. She buttoned it up and turned to look at him.

He had his eyes on hers and they were full of sadness. She swallowed down her tears, for the time being and nodded at him with a small smile. He nodded back and she turned to leave, no words necessary, knowing he knew what she was saying.

Thank you for the food, thank you for reassuring me that you too think of our son.

She opened the doors and stepped onto the porch, closing them behind her. Standing still for a couple of seconds, she closed her eyes, thankful she had come by tonight. She opened her eyes and walked across the porch and down the steps. Her breath could be seen as she breathed out on her walk to the car. It was cold out, but it was welcome to her right now.
Down the driveway, she thought of all that happened since she knocked on the door. No matter where they were with their relationship, they were friends. Able to read the other better than anyone else. He saw what she needed as soon as he opened the door. He did not turn her away or question why she was there, but instead he welcomed her in and comforted her the way he could at the moment.

She unlocked the car and got inside. Sitting there for a moment before she turned it on, she looked again at the house that held so much more than it appeared it did. The man she loved was in there, hurting on his own, but still welcoming her with open arms to comfort her. She sighed, closing her eyes briefly, before turning on the car.

Looking up once more, she saw him come out into the porch and stand looking her way. He raised his arm in a wave and she smiled. Turning on the headlights, she flashed him and he put his arm down. Turning her head, she backed up down the driveway and onto the road. The porch lights turned off as she left and she sighed again.

Her stomach was full of a warm meal prepared for her, and her heart, which was still healing, felt a little more whole tonight. Sitting and sharing their grief helped to begin their journey back to where they belonged.

There was more that needed to be discussed, but for this night, what was expressed was enough. They needed to start small, so that when the big stuff came, as she knew it would, they were ready. Because if and when she came home, it would be with an understanding: no more secrets, no more darkness, only open dialogue and discussions.

Anything less would be unacceptable, not after all this time apart, missing the one who held the other half of their broken hearts.

Chapter End Notes

Oh, so much about this episode makes me ache. The fantasies of what “could have been” followed by their own separate fears, hurts badly. They needed to talk about it and not be alone in their separate grief.
Belief Restored

Chapter Summary

Mulder contemplates the fact that he met a lizard man and had his faith in the fantastic restored. He also discovers a surprise waiting for him when he gets back to the hotel to meet up with Scully.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

January 2016

Closing the car door, Mulder felt giddy and as if his happy smile would never go away. He just shook hands with an actual lizard man. A lizard who turned into man and back to a lizard again, before his very eyes. He grinned, shaking his head, remembering the conversation he just had with Guy.

“I don’t mean to get too personal, but... this has been a real trying time for me. I’ve been through a lot. But just having someone like you to ... Look, what I’m trying to say is ... I’m glad to have met you,” Guy said, extending his hand to Mulder, who looked down and shook it. When Mulder looked up again, Guy had transformed back into his true form, and it took him by surprise.

“Like …” Mulder said, his voice failing him.

He stared at Guy, not knowing what to say as he watched him turn with a funny little hop and disappear off into the forest.

Mulder stood with his hand still outstretched, completely awestruck and speechless. When he finally found his voice, he smiled, his faith in the fantastic once more restored.

“Likewise,” he said, grinning like an idiot. He shook his head and dropped his hand, looking down at the pile of clothes Guy left behind. He bent to pick them up, but thought better of it and left them-just in case. He stared into the darkness where Guy had disappeared and grinned again.

Still grinning, he started the car and headed back to the hotel. When this case started, he felt disconnected from his usual beliefs - Swamp monsters, aliens, apparitions. Looking at them through different and, yes, older eyes, they seemed silly and trite.

He saw how Scully was trying to engage him, playing along at times, more than she may have in the past. She even said as much when he arrived at the animal control shelter. He shook his head at her putting herself in a dangerous situation so that he could have time with his “lizard man,” as she put it.

Well, she was not going to believe the truth which was definitely stranger than even he thought it would be. A lizard man.

Pulling up to the hotel they moved to after the looky-loo motel, he saw Scully’s light on and went to her door. Knocking three times, he waited for her to answer. When she did, she only opened the door a crack and made no means to move. He frowned at her, and she raised her eyebrows at him.
“Scully,” he said, his frown deepening.

“Uh huh,” she answered, staring him down, when suddenly he heard a sharp bark, and her eyes widened. His eyebrows shot up and she sighed, her shoulders drooping. She moved back and he waited until he heard her say to come in.

No great surprise now, he opened the door to find her sitting on the bed, holding a dog in her arms. It was the little dog in the cage from the animal control center. He was a scruffy looking dog, but it was clear she was already in love with him. He sighed as he looked at her and she stared back.

“Scully,” he began as he closed the door, making sure the dog would not get out.

“Mulder, I know what you’re going to say: *Scully, a dog is a big responsibility*. To which I would say: *Mulder, I’ve had a dog before, in case you had forgotten*. To which I know you will say: *But, Scully, we’re in Oregon, which is not a quick drive home, how do you propose we get him there?* To which I will say: *Mulder, we bring him on the plane, problem solved*. To which I know you will say: *But Scully, are you even allowed a dog at your place? What will you do with him all day?* To which I will tell you: *Mulder, I have already spoken to my mom, and she is going to take him. For now.* She stared at him, and they both grinned. He shook his head and came to sit next to her on the bed.

“He’s not much to look at,” he said, reaching his hand to scratch at his ears. Scully scoffed and pulled him away from his hand.

“Don’t listen to him. You’re cute and very sweet, aren’t you?” Scully said, cuddling him close to her. He licked her nose, and she laughed.

“Is this the same dog that bit you earlier?” Mulder asked, looking at the dog skeptically.

“He didn’t mean it. He was in that cage, and he didn’t like it, did you buddy?” she asked and he licked her face, making her laugh again. She set him down, and he sniffed around the room.

Mulder turned to her and she sighed. “I just couldn’t leave him there,” she said quietly and he nodded. Of course, she would take the dog, that was so her.

“Your mom agreed to take him? Really?” he asked, looking at her.

“Really. I think … she might be lonely, Mulder. Having a dog could be a help to her. He’s already leash trained and housebroken. I think he is anyway,” she said with a grimace. “It’ll be fine.”

“Well, we don’t leave until tomorrow, what’s your plan for now? He needs food-”

“I got him a couple of cans of food, a bowl, a leash, and a collar,” she said triumphantly.

“And … what’s his name?” he asked with a knowing grin.

“I haven’t named him, Mulder. My mom will since he will be with her.” She stood up and watched the dog sniffing around and Mulder watched her, a happy smile on her face.

“Do you have his papers?” he asked her.

“I’m sorry, his papers? What year is it? What country are we in?” she asked him with her hands outstretched.

“His records then. He needs some information. That he’s had his shots and stuff,” he said, standing
up to watch her pick up and throw a small tennis ball. “Just the necessities, huh?” She looked at him with one of her patented glares, and he grinned.

“So, we stop by the shelter tomorrow and see if we can find some kind of information. If we can’t, then well, we’re FBI agents, so we can wing it,” she said with a shrug.

“Wing it?” he asked her.

“Yeah. You know, lay on the charm,” she said as she knelt down on the floor to pet the dog.

“Agent Scully, are you suggesting I flirt with a TSA Agent?” he asked her, crossing his arms, a smile on his face. She shrugged.

“Or I could. Whatever we need to do,” she said standing up again. “I’m not above using my charms if it will help, in this case.” She smiled at him and he raised his eyebrows.

“Your charms …” he drawled out, nodding his head.

“Mmm-hmm,” she answered, walking closer to him. Oh, he recognized that look on her face. Those eyes got him to do many things over the years. Many, many things. He loved her flirty like this, so he was happy to play along.

“I’m sorry, I’m not exactly sure what you mean by “charms,” he said using his fingers to make air quotes.

“Oh, Mulder,” she laughed, stepping closer and looking at him disbelievingly. “I know you don’t really believe what you just said.” Licking her lips and then biting the bottom one, she arched her eyebrow at him. When her hand came out and touched his tie, he swallowed hard, his heart pounding.

“Y- you, you’ve made your point,” he choked out, clearing his throat, holding onto her wrist, his thumb tracing circles on the inside. He heard her breath catch and she glanced down at his lips. He leaned closer to her, and she held her breath.

“Looks like my charms still work too,” he whispered close to her ear, before stepping back and letting go of her hand. She was breathing hard, and he smirked at her. “See you in the morning.” He took two steps back and she exhaled a breath. He thought he heard a bastard said with it, but could not be sure.

“Do you need to take the dog out? You want company?” he asked, with his hand on the doorknob.

“I’ll be okay,” she said.

“The fresh air could do you good. You look a little … flushed,” he said, opening the door and smiling at her.

That time he definitely heard the bastard.

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Seated on the plane, the dog in the carrier they picked out on her lap, she looked at him smugly. It was easier than he thought it would be to get the dog on the plane. Papers were not found on him at the animal control shelter, but he honestly had not expected to find any. Scully was not worried, and they headed to the airport.
No flirting was needed, at least not by them. The dog won everyone over and when it was said that he was going to be a companion for her older mother, well, the deal was sealed.

“See? That wasn’t so bad,” she said, opening the carrier, just enough to pet him and give him a treat.

“Hmm, now your mom just has to deal with cleaning up dog shit and taking him out for walks,” he said, shaking his head, but unable to hold back a smile.

“And she won’t mind it because he’s so cute,” she said, rubbing his ears.

“Humph,” he grunted. “He’s scruffy and likes to bite you, not exactly the best dog.”

“Then the same could be said for a certain man I know,” she replied, giving him a look, one that made him think of days and nights in their bed, when his beard was definitely scruffy. “Might not be the best but …” she shrugged and looked away.

He stared at her profile and watched her mouth twitch as she tried to stop her smile. He wondered if she was thinking of the same things as him. The way she would grip his body, hold his head where she wanted it, and how she would break around him.

This is dangerous territory, he thought, shaking his head, and looking away from her. Stop this before you screw everything up.

“He’s a cute thing, even if he is scruffy, as you say. He’s sweet too. Slept next to me all night and didn’t even hog the covers,” she said with a bump to his knee. He laughed softly, knowing she knew full well, she was the cover stealer. “He’ll learn to do better, to listen, and then he will be the best little dog.” Glancing at him, she smiled and he let it and her words wash over him.

He reached his hand in the carrier and scratched his ears, before patting his head. “Yeah, he will be the best,” he said quietly, not looking at her, but keeping his focus on the dog. “Scruffy could be a good name for him though.” She scoffed and he glanced at her.

“No, that’s not a good dog name.”

“But, Queequeg was?” he asked, sitting back and putting his hands in his lap.

“Yeah,” she answered matter-of-factly. “It was.” He nodded and the captain announced they were taking off and to be sure their seatbelts were fastened. They smiled at each other and prepared for takeoff.

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Hours later, he was pulling up to Mrs. Scully’s house. Scully had dozed off, along with the dog, out of the carrier and on her lap. He looked at them both and smiled. So many things could have been different, but nothing he could do to change the past now.

“Scully,” he said quietly, shaking her shoulder gently. “Scully, we’re here.” She groaned and stretched, causing the dog to wake and stretch with her. Mulder smiled again watching them together.

“I’ll get your bag for you,” he said unbuckling his seatbelt, getting out, and opening up the back of the car. She got out and set the dog down on the driveway, slipping on his leash. He ran out to the grass and peed before running back to her side.
She yawned as they met at the front of the car and walked to the door. He set her bag down and turned to her. “See you tomorrow?” he asked and she raised sleepy eyes to his.

“You don’t want to come in? See how she likes him?” she asked, her voice raspy.

“Nah, I’m sure she’ll love him,” he said, not wanting to intrude on their private time. “I’ll see you later. Bye, Scruffy.” He bent and patted the dog’s head before standing and smiling at her. She rolled her eyes as she knocked on the door, and he walked away.

Backing out of the driveway, he saw Mrs. Scully in the doorway, a huge smile on her face as Scully lifted the dog for her to see. Looking out the passenger window as he drove away, he saw the dog licking her face and her happy expression. Yeah, the dog would be good for her.

As he pulled up to his house, his phone beeped. He reached for it and unlocked it, finding a message from Scully. Opening it, he saw a picture of Mrs. Scully, holding the dog on her lap, happy and smiling.

*She wants to call him Pip,* was the message written underneath.

*Of course she does,* he thought with a grin, as he got out of the car and grabbed his bag. He expected nothing less than a name from *Moby Dick.* He shook his head as he opened the door and set his stuff down. Turning on the light and closing the door, he kicked off his shoes.

He typed out on his reply and sent it back to her before flopping down on the couch: *At least it’s better than Queequeg.*

*Shut up,* came her quick reply and he smiled.

He closed his eyes and was asleep within minutes, his dreams consisting of lizard men, scruffy little dogs, and Scully’s blue eyes and beautiful smile.

Chapter End Notes

Okay! I know some of you will say- “but the dog’s name is DAGGOO, you silly woman!” To which I will say - they never knew his name, or which dog Daggoo was when Scully ... um “adopts” him. ☺️ I wanted him to have a different name for certain reasons which will come to light soon.
Maggie wakes up and begins to feel short of breath, a pain in her chest. She finds herself in between life and death, needing to make a choice.

February 8, 2016

Maggie woke slowly to the sound of whining close to her ear. She opened her eyes and found Pip sitting to her left, staring at her with his little black eyes. He did not open his mouth but she could hear him whine from deep inside his body.

“Hey there PipPup,” she quietly greeted him. “What seems to be the trouble?” He laid his head down on her chest, over her heart, and whined again. “You need some scratches, buddy? Is that what it is?” She reached her right hand over and scratched him behind his ears, and he quieted a little.

He had only been with her for a few days, and she already loved him to bits. He was such a sweet little thing, always wanting to be right next to her wherever she was sitting. He hardly barked, was house trained, and loved to go for walks, and when they walked he never pulled but stayed right at her heels.

The first couple of nights, Dana had come over after work to see how they were getting along. She brought new chew toys and treats for him, but every time Pip was torn between investigating the new items and staying close to Maggie.

“Looks like you two are best friends already,” Dana laughed as he took a treat from her and ran back to Maggie. “I’m glad he’s taken to you so quickly, Mom.”

Maggie was too, and she made sure to show him how thankful she was to have him in her previously quiet home. He had everything: treats, toys, belly rubs, ear scratches, and a cozy place to lay down in front of the fireplace. She even made him dinner every night and not from processed can goods. Oh no, Pip got the real thing: chicken, turkey, or beef, and she often let him choose.

“Spoiled already,” Dana had said, as she sat at the table one of the nights, shaking her head with a smile, watching Maggie cook him his own personal meal.

“As he should be,” Maggie crooned, looking over at him. “Look how cute he is sitting there.” Dana chuckled as she shook her head again and said she knew he was very cute.

“So, Pippy,” Maggie yawned and smiled at him, as she lay in bed and looked into his eyes, petting his soft head. “What should we do today? Louise was talking about bringing the grandkids over again. You liked that last time, and they liked you. Should we give her a call?” He whined at her again, and she smiled. She turned and looked at the clock and saw it was 7:30, too early to call yet. She sighed, and closed her eyes.
“Five minutes, Pip, and we’ll get up and let you out and have some breakfast,” she yawned and stroked his back. His whining remained low and his eyes remained focused on hers. She smiled at him and then chuckled at how such a small dog could make her so happy.

Fifteen minutes later, she was up and in the kitchen, trying to get his breakfast for him, but he would not go outside to pee, no matter how she tried to cajole him. He stared at her and whined, refusing to leave her side, and when she set his bowl down he did not go near it.

“Pip, what’s the matter with you?” she asked as she stood staring at him. “Usually, you gobble it right down. Are you not hungry? Are you okay boy? Maybe you want some treats instead? Nothing wrong with eating dessert first. Let’s see what we got.” She turned around, and he barked at her, running to her legs, standing up on his back legs to reach out for her.

“Pip, what has gotten into you?” she said above the noise of his barking. “Stop that right now. You … oh … wh … oh … the phone … help.” She stumbled to her purse and pulled her cell phone out, dizzy and short of breath, a squeezing pain gripping at her chest.

Pip kept barking as she leaned over the dining room table and dialed 9-1-1. Her breath was coming out in bursts, the pain in her chest getting even tighter.

“9-1-1 what’s your emergency?”

“I … help me … my heart …” Maggie panted out, the pain unbearable. Pip continued barking, and her legs crumbled underneath her. She fell to the floor, and her last coherent thought was of Pip’s cold nose as he whined by her ear. He would be alone, and he had not even eaten his breakfast.

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Darkness and quiet pressed around her, so quiet it could not be real. Were her eyes open? She turned her head and blinked her eyes. Yes, they were open, but she could not see in the darkness.

“Ma’am, can you hear me? She’s waking up. Ma’am, just lie still. Do you know where you are?”

Bright lights, so bright it hurt her eyes, sirens so loud it was deafening. Her chest was so tight and there was a mask on her nose and mouth. She needed to say something, to get some words out. Pulling at the mask weakly, she tried to talk, her breath short.

“Charlie … please … Charlie,” she panted out trying to get someone’s, anyone’s attention.

“Charlie? Is that your son?” A voice from somewhere asked.


And then … darkness and silence once again.

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Hours passed, or it could have been seconds, she had no way of knowing. A weak light began to grow near her, and she walked toward it. When she reached it, she found she was in her dining room, the table empty. She looked around, wondering how and why she was there when she had been in an ambulance, at least she thought it was an ambulance.

She sat down and felt the table. It was so smooth, except the one spot with the scratch. This was her table, but it made no sense how she was home when she could remember the excruciating pain in her chest. She should be in the hospital. What was happening?
Footsteps approached and she looked to her left, following the sound. She stood to her feet in shock, as her wonderful Bill appeared on the other side of the table wearing his favorite pair of jeans, a blue Navy sweatshirt, and the biggest smile she had ever seen.

“Maggie Girl,” he said with a shake of his head. “Look at my beautiful wife.” He grinned, looking her up and down until his eyes steadied on her face.

“Bill? What are you doing here? What is happening?” she breathed out, her hands going to her chest in surprise.

“My love, I am so happy to see you, but I know you are confused,” he said and gestured for her to sit down. She sank down, not taking her eyes off of him. He smiled, but then sighed and shook his head again. “There’s no easy way to say this, and you know I’ve always been blunt and honest. Honey, you’ve had a serious heart attack.” She stared at him, and she knew he was telling her the truth.

“Right now, you’re in between the land of living and dead. It’s your choice whether you move on or go back. I can’t make the decision for you, or influence you one way or the other. It has to be your decision,” Bill said smiling softly at her.

“I’m dying?” she asked, looking at him, knowing he would be honest.

“You are. But there is still hope, still a chance you could leave here, and that’s your decision, Maggie Girl,” he said quietly. She let his words settle within her.

“I had a heart attack at this table, at the table I love so much. So many memories attached to it,” she said quietly, touching it with her hands. “I felt lightheaded, I couldn’t catch my breath, and my chest …” she touched her heart, and he nodded. “The dog knew, my sweet little Pip. That was why he kept whining at me, not wanting to leave my side. Oh, of course he did. His name was fitting, just as it was in the book, he understood and felt things that others couldn’t.” She cried as she thought of the little dog who had become so attached to her so quickly. He must have sensed something right from the beginning.

“Mom,” she suddenly heard Dana’s voice from the end of the long table, a light illuminating her as though she were on a stage. Maggie turned her head and wiped her eyes. There was Dana, looking not at her, but at something Maggie could not see.

Maggie got up and moved closer to Dana, looking at her sad face. She wished she could hold her and tell her she was okay, that her father was here, and she loved her.

“Hi, Mom,” Dana softly said, smiling sadly. “It’s me, Dana. I’ve been where you are. I know that Ahab is there. And Melissa. But, Mom, I’m here. Bill Jr.’s here. And William. William’s here. And Charlie … is here. Please, Mom, don’t go home yet. I need you.” She was crying, and Maggie started crying too. Her girl’s heart was breaking, and she could not help her.

“Maggie?” Bill called to her. She turned to look at him, and he smiled sadly at her. When she looked back, Dana was gone and so was the light. She turned back to Bill with tears in her eyes.

“How am I supposed to leave her, Bill? I love her so much and she needs me. She’s my baby girl.” Maggie began to sob, and he moved closer to her, standing close enough to touch her without extending his hand to do so and remaining silent as she cried. As her tears slowed, she looked up at him.

“She’s an adult, Bill, but so much has happened to her, and I need … I need to be there for her. So
many things haven’t been said, or done. I’m not finished,” she pleaded with him. “Bill Jr. and his kids … And Charlie … he hasn’t spoken to any of us in years. Years, Bill. How do I leave with that unresolved? How?”

“My Maggie,” he whispered. “That is where your decision comes into the equation. It has to be what you want. When you’re ready.” She looked at him with her eyes full of tears and he smiled kindly at her. “I am not saying this with any hopes to persuade you, but I have missed you so much.”

“Oh,” she said, stepping closer and reaching out for him. “I have missed you every day, my love.” She attempted to put her arms around him, but he stepped back, and she frowned at him.

“I’m so sorry my Maggie, we can’t touch, not being on the same plane, so to speak,” he explained quietly, his eyes on hers. “I would love to hold you, dance with you, but it doesn’t work that way, not until you’ve made your choice.” She nodded slowly, understanding but not at the same time.

“I’m not ready to do that yet,” she told him and he smiled.

“I know.”

“God, I must look so different to you,” she said, suddenly aware that she was over twenty years older than the last time he saw her, and also dressed in the cupcake pajamas she bought on a silly whim. “I’m so old. So many more wrinkles.”

He grinned at her and shook his head. “Not a chance,” he chuckled. “You look just as beautiful as the day I met you.”

“You are a terrible liar.”

“I am, and that’s how you know what I say is the truth,” he laughed softly and she smiled.

“Hey, Bill,” came Dana’s voice suddenly again, and Maggie could see her illuminated, sitting at the end of the table, not facing her but looking into the distance. “What time is it where you are? What time is your flight from Frankfurt? Oh … I think you should get here as soon as you can. Oh, I can’t … How am I to know that? I-I won't answer as to whether she's going to die before you get here. Bill, yes, I’m a doctor, but I'm also her daughter. Well, we'll keep her on life support. That's ... that's what she wanted. Yes. Mom and I talked about it after my experience in a coma. She said that she wanted us to do everything that we could to keep her alive. Her advance directive is on the Living Will Registry. Yes.” And then she was gone, the darkness of the room around them again.

Maggie sighed and sat down, close by where Dana kept appearing, not wanting to miss her if she came back. Bill sat on the other side of the table and stared at her.

“She’s an amazing woman, our girl,” Bill said to her and Maggie smiled.

“She is an amazing, wonderful woman. You would be so proud of her, Bill,” Maggie smiled.

“I am proud of her,” he grinned and then they were quiet, simply staring at each other.

“How long do I stay in between like this?” she asked him, not sure how this all worked. “Is there a time limit?”

“Like when we used to have game nights with Louise and John? When he absolutely cheated and turned the timer back over when no one was watching?” Bill laughed.
“He was a cheater,” Maggie laughed as she looked at him. He winked at her and she smiled.

“No, Maggie, there is no timeframe. It’s your decision and yours alone. We’ll stay here as long as you want,” he said, smiling kindly and taking a breath.

“I miss you, Bill,” she sighed. “I have missed you so much. I’ve been okay, but it’s been so lonely on my own. You were taken from me too soon. We deserved to see our kids become parents, not just me. You should have been there to spoil them, teach them about ships and how to respect the ocean, safely handle weapons, and hear them call you Pop or something silly.” She stared at him, her eyes sad at all he missed out on within their family.

“Oh, Maggie, my love,” he said, shaking his head. “I’ve missed you too. Leaving you was the hardest thing I ever had to do. But, I knew I would have been a burden on you and the kids if I had come back. I didn’t want that for any of you, so as much as it hurt me, I went forward.” He put his hands on the table and she did likewise, though they still could not touch. He smiled at her and she sighed. A light appeared beside her, and she knew Dana was coming.

“Nurse? Is it wise to administer a hypertonic saline to a cardiac arrest patient?” Dana asked beside her, and Maggie turned to look at her.

“Agent Scully, we had to confirm your mother’s advance directive, and it indicates that she not be resuscitated if unconscious or requires artificial respiration. She amended it last year. It’s signed and witnessed by two retired naval officers.” A nurse’s voice as she stood by Dana, handing her a folder. Dana looked confused by this new information.

“Oh, Bill, I need to tell her,” she cried as she stood up, standing in front of Dana, trying to get her attention.

She took a breath, the dining room disappearing for a moment, and it felt like needles in her body and her chest was so heavy. Trying to open her eyes, she could not do it. She came back to the dining room and she started to cry.

“I need to tell her. I didn’t get a chance. Oh, Bill,” she cried as she sat down and Dana and the light disappeared again. She put her head on the table and cried, apologizing for not taking the time to tell her before why she changed her directive, and for being unable to ease the pain she was experiencing now.

Bill sat down across from her again and stayed silent, letting her cry. They sat for a long period of time while she cried, and when she quieted, they simply sat in silence, her head on her arms.

“We have to extubate her. It’s not necessarily termination, but we not only have to honor the law, Dana, we also have to respect your mother’s wishes,” came a voice, and Maggie looked up to watch Dana and the person who must be the doctor. Dana’s head was down. The look on her face pained Maggie, for she looked lost and incredibly sad. Her phone vibrated, and she reached to answer it.

“Yeah,” she said, her voice low and tired.

“I’m here,” Maggie heard Fox’s voice say through the phone, and Dana’s head turned, the relief showing on her face as she must have seen him. Maggie looked in the direction she was looking but did not see him.

“Fox is there,” she said, smiling with relief at Bill. “She’s not alone anymore.” Clasping her hands together, she put them against her mouth. “Oh, Bill, he’s such a good man, and Dana loves him so
much. I wish you’d gotten a chance to meet him. Well, maybe back then you might have not agreed he would be the one for Dana, but I always saw it. He is perfect for her, the one she’s always needed.”

“You’ve mentioned him many times, Maggie,” he smiled and she smiled back slightly.

“Are you ready to extubate?” came a voice and the light again.

“Yes, Doctor.”

“You have a stent on hand?”

“Removing the tube.”

“On her next exhale.”

“Ready?”

“No, I’m not ready,” Maggie cried out. “Wait, please.” She stood between the people who were talking around her, trying to get them to hear her. “Just a few more minutes, please.” She looked up and saw Dana and Fox, standing together, far from her. The sadness on their faces broke her heart.

“Dana,” she called out stepping toward her, but she was pulled back, surrounded by the doctors and nurses. “Please, let me go to her. Stop.” She took a deep breath, and her head fell back, before she raised it again. The doctors, nurses, even Dana and Fox, were gone and only Bill was standing by her in the darkened room.

The table had grown and now it had more than twenty chairs on each side, pushing her away from where they had been appearing. “What’s happening?” she asked, fearing she knew the answer, but also unsure. “I … I already made my decision.” Bill nodded his head imperceptibly and she shook her head. “But I didn’t think it would be so soon. I wanted more time.”

“Don’t we all, Maggie Girl?” he quietly asked.

“But …” she stopped and looked at him. He nodded and they stared at one another. “I made the decision, to go the way I wanted. I didn’t want to force Dana to make that choice. Or Bill Junior. Or Charlie. Oh … my Charlie. He is my one regret. Letting the past hurt us when it’s all so unimportant, and yet we held it, he held it …” she shook her head and closed her eyes. “I tried Bill. I reached out and he was … he didn’t want to reconcile.”

“Then you did all you could, honey. He was always the quiet one, but he also held a grudge like no one could, you know that about him,” Bill said comfortingly. “Once he had it in his head, there was no changing his mind. You tried, I know you did.”

Maggie nodded, but still it hurt her to her soul. She opened her eyes, and he smiled at her. A light began to build down far at the opposite end of the table. Maggie moved quickly toward it as she saw Dana and Fox sitting on separate sides of the table, both looking exhausted. Dana’s head was down while Fox was watching her, and Maggie could see the worry on his face.

“Back in the day, did … we ever come across the ability to just … wish someone back to life?” Dana asked him quietly, raising her eyes

“I invented it. When you were in the hospital, like this,” Fox said, causing Maggie to smile. He certainly had.
“You're a dark wizard, Mulder,” Dana said, and Maggie stood beside her, staring at her beautiful daughter. So much pride and love for the woman she had become.

She heard Fox laugh, and she turned to look at him. So handsome, his face so full of love for Dana.

“What else is new?” he joked, his smile the one reserved only for her. Dana’s cell phone started to vibrate on the table, and she answered it.

“Hello? … Charlie … Did Bill call you? Yeah. Um … Mom asked for you. Charlie, can you just say something to her, please? Just anything. I don't know. Just ... do what I can't do … bring her back to us … okay. I'll put it on speakerphone,” Dana shakily said as she stood up. Maggie stared at the phone in disbelief. All this time, could it really be Charlie?

Dana held the phone out and Maggie waited, hoping against hope that it was him. “I've got Charlie here. He's on the phone. I know you can hear him.”

_Please let it be him. Please …_

“Mom? It's me. It's Charlie. I heard you were asking for me, so ... here I am, for once. What do you want to know? What's the big mystery?” Oh, God, it was him. Her boy, the one she prayed for and missed, after so long.

“Anything? Any reaction?” She heard Dana ask, and she knew now what her choice would be and what she would do. She knew.

“Well, her pulse rate quickened, but I didn't see her move,” Fox said.

Maggie looked at Bill and she smiled, and he nodded, his answering smile wide and happy.

“I know what to do. I know what they need.”

And then Bill was gone and this time she could open her eyes. Slowly, she blinked and felt the pain her body would be in if she stayed. The ache it would cause her and she knew. She saw Fox leaning in, his handsome face, full of such worry. She had seen enough of that from him, and so she smiled, trying to reassure him she was okay.

“Mom? She just opened her eyes,” Dana said in a relieved but worried voice.

“Do you know where you are? Do you know your name?” Fox asked and she turned her head slightly towards him, reaching her hand out to him, and smiling when he took it. She loved him so much and knew he would understand what she was going to say. Her last words, the ones they needed to hear.

“My son ... is named William, too,” she breathed out, her body already feeling weak from that small exertion. She saw him look at Dana, but then his eyes flicked back to her. She knew he understood.

So tired, so ready, she exhaled and left this earth. Opening her eyes, she saw Bill, now in a suit he wore to an anniversary dinner they celebrated years ago. His arms wrapped around her and he spun her around, laughing and crying.

“Oh my Maggie Girl, my Maggie,” he whispered, spinning her around and holding her tight. When he set her down, she saw she was in the dress she wore to the same anniversary party. A beautiful blue dress she always loved and felt so beautiful when she wore it.
She held Bill’s face in her hands and shook her head. “Oh, I have missed you so much,” she whispered and he kissed her, before pulling her in his arms again.

This was where she belonged, with her soulmate, the one destined to love her forever. She knew Dana and Fox would be all right, and that little unremarkable house would be happy and whole once again. She knew Fox would figure out her message.

Charlie was her regret, and yet at the end, when she desperately needed him, he had been there. He had come back. William was Dana’s regret and the secret pain she held inside. Fox would figure out how to find him and make things right, for both of them, but mostly for Dana. He would, and she knew it.

True soulmates … they had found each other over and over in each new life.

They would find him.

Chapter End Notes

Group hug, bring it in everyone. This chapter ... this was one I’ve had planned and written for months, although it kills me a little every time I’ve read it. I wish more than anything that Maggie could have lived, she needed to be there for all of them. To see Mulder and Scully come back to each other, to hold and help with her eventual new grandchild, but I must remain canon.

I hope this didn’t break your heart too much, as I tried to have it be happy as well as sad. ❤️
The Final Goodbye

Chapter Summary

Scully must handle the aftermath of her mother’s passing. Feeling alone, she soon discovers that would never be the case.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

February 2016

Soft music played and the air smelled of lavender, as Scully walked into Smith Funeral Home at 1:00 on Monday afternoon, to meet with Xavier Smith. Her heart was pounding as she stepped inside and up to the reception desk. The overwhelming desire to be anywhere else was strong, making her wish more than anything that she could just run away from all of this and never return.

“Hello. Can I help you?” asked a kind, smiling blonde woman seated behind the desk.

“Yes, um … my name is Dana Scully, and my mother-” she stopped, tears filling her eyes and her throat feeling clogged. “She …”

“Scully, you said?” the woman asked softly and Scully nodded, wiping at her eyes. “Okay. I see you have an appointment with Xavier, I’ll go get him. You can have a seat here if you would like.”

She handed Scully a box of tissues, stood, and ushered her to the settee.

Scully sat down and took a tissue from the box, wiping at her eyes. Her mother was gone, and her heart was hurting. Her brothers would be in the country in time for her mother’s service, but for now she was on her own. The thought of finalizing her mother’s burial was like a knife in her gut.

Unable to sit still, she got up, put her tissue in her pocket and paced the room, not really paying attention to what was around her. On her second turn around, she glanced up to find Mulder standing in front of her. She stopped and stared at him, not able to say anything. He wordlessly reached for her left hand and squeezed as she heard someone calling her name.

They both turned, Mulder keeping a firm grasp on her hand. His hand in hers was currently the only thing keeping her upright, as she saw the man who would be helping her with her mother’s final arrangements. He squeezed her hand, and she took a deep shaky breath.

“Miss Scully?” the man asked as he approached them, his hand outstretched.

“Yes,” she said just above a whisper. Clearing her throat, she tried again, as she reached for his hand. “Yes, I’m Dana Scully.” Her voice was a little stronger, and Mulder squeezed her hand again.

“I’m Xavier Smith,” he said, shaking her hand and smiling kindly, glancing at Mulder.

“This is my partner, Fox Mulder,” she said turning her eyes to Mulder. He nodded at Xavier, not willing to release Scully’s hand in order to shake his. Xavier smiled and nodded in understanding.
“Let’s step into my office. Would either of you like anything? A water? Coffee? Tea?” he asked kindly as they began to follow him to the office. They both shook their heads, and he smiled. Scully let out a breath and Mulder squeezed her hand again.

Arriving at his office, he offered them each a chair as he sat behind the desk. Mulder ushered Scully into her seat and then sat beside her, never letting go of her hand. Part of her wanted to show that she could do this without him holding onto her, and the other part knew if he let go, she would surely crumble. She chose to stay upright, thus keeping a tight hold to him.

“I was very sorry to hear of your mother’s passing,” Xavier said with a sigh. “She was a very kind woman.” Scully nodded and tried to smile but was unable to do so.

“You met her?” Mulder asked, his voice quiet but curious. “How?” Scully glanced at him and realized she had missed something. Xavier smiled again and opened a folder in front of him. He looked at Scully and clasped his hands together.

“You’re mother came in here in December,” he explained. “She and a friend of hers wished to finalize their plans for the future. She said they had been to a funeral of a close friend and it left her feeling the need to take care of things. She didn’t want to leave any loose ends and cause anyone any undue emotional stress.” Scully nodded, tears filling her eyes. Xavier pushed a tissue box toward her, and she took one.

“Sounds like her,” Mulder said quietly, and Scully nodded again.

“Her friend … Janet … she was sick, for a long time … and um, I can see mom’s logic to want to finalize things,” Scully said through her tears. Mulder squeezed her hand and nodded.

“She had everything set. Upon her passing, we received the information and are taking care of everything. She opted for cremation and has chosen the urn for her ashes,” Xavier said calmly and yet Scully gripped Mulder’s hand tighter. She had dealt with death, but this … this was different. “She paid for everything, it’s all here in the paperwork, along with some things she dropped off a couple of weeks ago.” He handed the folder to Scully, requiring her to release Mulder’s hand to take the large folder from his outstretched hand.

She held the tissue tight in her hand as she opened it and saw all the paperwork her mother had signed. She ran her fingers over her signature, tears falling again. Moving the papers aside she found envelopes. Many different envelopes addressed to different people, held together by a paper clip and organized by family group, in her mother’s handwriting. Bill, Tara, Matthew, and John. Charlie, Renee, Brandon, Michael, and Sara. Dana, Fox, and William.

Scully closed the folder and buried her face in her hands. She cried hard, her tears unable to stop. Mulder’s hand on her neck grounded her and once again kept her from crumbling too far. His fingers lightly rubbed across her skin and helped to slow her tears, lending her his strength. She took a few deep breaths and then moved her hands from her face.

A new tissue was handed to her which she used to wipe her eyes and blow her nose. Another followed and after a few minutes had passed, she felt able to raise her head again as Mulder moved his hand. No one had spoken, but she knew that this office had seen its share of tears. She was not the first person death had broken.

“As you can see,” Xavier said kindly again. “We have everything arranged and have already begun the preparations. It should be a couple of days and then we will call you to come back and pick up the urn.” Scully nodded, unable to speak at the moment. She held tight to the folder, the last letters her mother had written held safely inside.
When Xavier stood, they followed suit and shook hands. Mulder stepped back and let Scully walk out ahead of him, his hand lightly landing on her lower back as she threw out the tissues on their way out the door. Sniffling and trying to stop her tears, she kept walking out into the main lobby, ready to get out of this building and go someplace where she could cry. Her head was beginning to ache from all the crying she had done and also from what she was holding back.

“I am very sorry we had to meet under these circumstances, but please know we will care for everything and if you have any questions, please give me a call,” Xavier said as he shook their hands once again. He handed Scully his card, and she nodded. Smiling kindly at them, he walked back to his office.

Scully closed her eyes and took a deep breath. Opening her eyes, she looked at Mulder and saw the sadness she felt reflected in his eyes. She knew how her mother’s death affected him, yet he was not letting it show because he was being strong for her. Stepping forward, she held on to the folder firmly and wrapped her arms around his waist. When her cheek found its resting place against his chest, she listened to the beat of his heart, finding contentment and security in its rhythm as it reverberated in her ears.

The familiarity of being held by him, the sound of his heart, the combined scent of cologne and his own scent made her ache. Even apart, not knowing where exactly they stood with each other, he was here, holding her and sharing her grief. Closing her eyes, she let herself be held and loved by this man who would forever hold her heart.

“Do you want to get some lunch?” he murmured in her ear, his hands rubbing slowly on her back.

“I don’t think I could eat,” she whispered back, sniffling and then pulling back, opening her eyes to look up at him. He stared in her eyes and nodded, his arms still loosely around her.

“How about coffee? Maybe just a piece of pie?” he asked with a small smile. She attempted a smile, but it did not quite work. She closed her eyes and nodded before opening them again.

Stepping back from her, he glanced down at her hand and then back up at her eyes, telling her what he wanted, but letting her decide. She reached for his hand and laced her fingers with his, smiling a real smile this time. Squeezing her hand, he walked out with her to the parking lot, her hand in his.

“So, I’ll follow you there?” she asked as they arrived at her car, letting go of his hand. He shook his head and looked up at her. “I took an Uber over here. Just in case you wanted to grab a bite or a coffee, I could … we could go together.” He shrugged his shoulders, and she scrunched her chin as she realized what he was saying. He took an Uber so he could stay with her and be there for her as long as she would allow.

Stepping forward, she wrapped her arms around him again as a thank you for being there, doing what he had done, and for what he would continue to do to ease her sadness. Taking the keys from her pocket as she stepped back, she handed them to him and patted his chest, silently thanking him before she walked to the passenger side.

They drove to a diner they had been to many times in the past. It had a patio in the back that was not crowded, with the chill still hanging in the air, so they opted to sit out there to allow for more privacy. Scully welcomed the lack of people over the comfort of warmth. She had a coat, and she knew they would not be there too long.

A waitress came over and gave them some menus. Mulder asked for a coffee and with a glance at Scully, a peppermint tea. She smiled softly at him, always amazed at how well he knew her. The
waitress walked away, leaving them to sit in silence for a few minutes as they looked at their menus. Now that she was sitting and looking at choices, she realized she was hungry.

“You wanna split something?” he asked, looking over at her. “Maybe split a sandwich and a bowl of soup each? I’m not super hungry, but perhaps just a little something to hit bottom?” She nodded and he smiled.

The waitress brought them their drinks and he ordered a pastrami sandwich, a bowl of creamy chicken noodle soup, and then glanced at Scully. She asked for French onion and the waitress nodded, collected their menus and walked away.

Opening the peppermint tea bag, she placed it in her mug and poured in the hot water from the small metal teapot. She watched Mulder add cream to his coffee and she looked at him, causing him to shrug.

“I tried it the other day, and it was pretty good. Still like it just black, but this way is good too,” he said by way of explanation. She nodded and lifted the tea bag in her mug to allow it to sit.

Sighing, she looked around at all the people in and out of the diner, going on with their lives, not feeling the pain and emptiness she felt. Looking at Mulder again, she felt a sadness in her and when he looked at her, she shook her head.

“I’m sorry,” she whispered, and he kept his eyes on her waiting for her to continue. “We’ve both lost our fathers, and now our mothers. You’ve been so wonderful- at the hospital, letting me work even though you knew I shouldn’t, today …” She shook her head and reached for his hand. “I … you asked so little of me when your mother passed, and I could have done more.”

“Scully, no. I asked a lot of you. More than I should have. I couldn’t … wouldn’t be able to do an autopsy on your mother, no matter what you said to me, and I asked you to do that for me. Scully-”

“I had to, Mulder. I didn’t want to, but I understood why I needed to, and I would do it again. As much as it hurt, I would do it again for you.”

“Then we are more than even,” he said, holding her hand tightly, his eyes serious and unyielding. “You didn’t ask me for anything, Scully. You don’t need to ask. I’m here.” She shook her head, and her eyes filled with tears as she stared at him. He let go of her hand, leaned forward, and wiped her eyes with his thumbs, holding her face in his hands.

They stared at one another, and she remembered the night she came to him to tell him about his mother. The way he fell into her arms, his tears falling hot onto her shoulder as she held him close. Helping him to his feet, his room, and to his bed. His eyes on hers, begging her to stay with him. Laying there together, how his eyes looked at her lips and then he was kissing her, hard, fast, and determined. His hand went up her shirt and to her breast before she could speak, his mouth fused to hers. The look in his eyes when she pushed him back and stopped his hand from holding her breast. She ran her fingers across his lips, telling him without words that she understood. His forehead falling to hers before his tears began again, she knew the decision was the right one. If they had continued, their first time together would have been wrapped in sadness instead of a positive step made toward a hopeful future.

The waitress arriving with their food, broke the moment they seemed to be stuck in, and he took his hands from her face before sitting back in his chair. Scully took a drink of her tea as the food was set on the table. Mulder asked for an extra plate and the waitress left to get one. He glanced at Scully, and she gave him a small smile as she set her mug down.
The waitress brought the plate, and Mulder put Scully’s half of the sandwich on it and handed it to her. She took it, her stomach growling loudly. He caught her eye, and they both laughed softly before digging into the food in front of them. Either it was exceptionally good or she was hungrier than she thought, because in no time both the soup bowls were empty and the sandwich was gone.

The waitress came to clear the table and asked if they would like dessert. They both declined and the check was set on the table. Mulder picked it up, took out some cash, and handed all of it to the waitress before she walked away.

Scully drank the rest of her second cup of tea and began to feel nervous. She did not want to go back to her lonely apartment, to sit all alone, but knew she could not ask him to stay. It was too much, too far for a ... friend to go.

Because that was what they were right now. Friends, not lovers, and not a couple. Asking a friend to share this loss and be there when she needed someone to hold her as she cried in the middle of the night was too much to expect. She could not ask that of him.

“So, can I take you home? You have any good movies to watch at your place? Or is it just documentaries and Steel Magnolias?” he asked with a slight smile as he stood up. She stood too and sighed, ready to tell him it was not necessary, but a slight shake of his head quieted her.

They got back in the car, and she gave him directions to her apartment. If he was nervous or unsure about going to her place for the first time, he did not let it show. He turned the radio on, the volume low, reducing the need to speak. Her head resting against the headrest, she watched the city go by as they drove.

He pulled into her parking space a few minutes later. She picked up the folder and Mulder handed her the car keys. She locked the car as they walked to the lobby door, then down the hall to her door. As she unlocked it, she glanced at him. He gave her a small smile, and she nodded.

Opening the door, she walked in and put her keys in the bowl on the small table by the door. She stood in the entryway and let Mulder walk in and have a look around. Her coat was hung up and her shoes left by the door. She stepped into the kitchen, set down the folder and watched him look at everything. Her heart was pounding, tears threatening to spill out for more than one reason.

“It’s nice,” he said quietly. “Not like your previous apartment, and I don’t mean that in a bad way.” He turned to her and she nodded, showing him she understood what he meant. It was different than her other place.

“I’m ... I’m not here much,” she said softly, shrugging her shoulders. He nodded back and then turned around again, before looking back at her as he pointed at the cat pillow on the couch.

“What’s this?” he picked up the pillow and looked at it with a smile. “A cat alien? A ... ca-lien. No a cat -lien, that’s better.” She smiled, tears now pooling in her eyes as he said exactly what she knew he would.

“Wait, it says Lisa. Is that the name of the designer? Or is it like those things we’ve seen at Ikea? The Roger chairs and such?” he asked, as he looked at it closer, then back at her. “Scully?” He dropped the pillow down on the couch and walked over to her.

She wiped her eyes and shook her head. “I’m okay. I ... just ... I’m okay. Uh ... there are some movies in the cabinet over there, or we could find something on Netflix. I’m going to take a shower,” she said in a rush, needing to get away before she erupted in tears.
She closed the bathroom door and turned on the shower, her tears already falling. Undressed, she stepped into the shower and let her tears combine with the warm water, rinsing away and down the drain. She cried for her mother and the emptiness she felt inside at her loss. She also cried for the love she felt for Mulder and his care for her, and how easy it would be to ask him to stay, to invite him to her bed and let him love her. To let his kiss and touch take away the pain for a little while.

But that was all it would be, a little while, and neither of them deserved that right now. She knew she needed to stop those thoughts if she was going to be alone with him.

She washed as she continued to cry, trying to get a hold of herself before she had to go back into the living room. Finally feeling she was able to leave the shower, she turned off the water and stepped out. Grabbing her towel she dried off and then wrapped it around her body. She walked into her room and put on a pair of flannel pajama bottoms, an old hoodie, and some fuzzy socks. She towel-dried her hair and went back into the bathroom to hang it up.

Walking into the living room, she found Mulder on one end of the couch, Netflix set on the home screen, and two mugs of tea on the coffee table. He looked at her as she walked past him to sit down. There was a blanket on the end of couch that he must have put there for her.

“I made the sleepy tea for you,” he said, pointing to the blue mug and she nodded. “I know it’s still early, but …”

“Thank you, Mulder,” she said softly, picking up the mug and taking a drink. “Pick whatever movie you’d like, I don’t have a preference.” She leaned back and took another drink, her eyes closed.

She heard something starting, but kept her eyes closed and drank all of her tea. Setting the mug on the table, she grabbed the blanket and moved the cat alien pillow close to him, but not touching. She lay on her left side, facing the television, but still not watching or knowing what it was he chose. She covered up and sighed when her head hit the pillow. When his fingers began to stroke her hair, she would have wept if she had any tears left. No words were spoken, but his fingers softly released the remaining emotional tension of the day from her body.

When she opened her eyes, it was dark, save for one lone light. She groaned as she sat up and found not Mulder beside her, but a note by his mug-

5:30

I didn’t want to wake you, I know you must be exhausted. Called an Uber and I’m leaving in about five minutes. I took your key off the key ring. I’ll lock the door and slide it under and back inside when I’m done. Call or text when you wake up, if you want. You know I’ll be up.

She looked at the clock on the wall and saw it was now 10:15. God, she had been asleep for almost six hours, and still felt exhausted. Tonight was the first night since her mom died, that she had slept longer than two or three hours without waking up in a panic. It was the combination of the tea, the man who made it, and the care behind it.

Standing up, she walked to the entryway and saw her key on the floor just as he said it would be. She picked it up and put it in the bowl, drank a glass of water in the kitchen, and went to look for her phone. Finding it on her dresser, along with the clothes she had taken off earlier, she knew Mulder had cleaned up after her.

She picked up her phone and sent him a text:
Thank you for today.

She set the phone down on her nightstand and pulled back the covers, ready to go back to sleep. She took off her socks and laid down in bed, covered up, and closed her eyes. Her phone vibrated and she reached for it, finding a text from Mulder.

No thanks are necessary. Good night, Scully.

She smiled, put her phone back down, closed her eyes and fell asleep.

_________________

Five days later, Scully stared at herself in the mirror. The black dress she had picked out for the afternoon service was simple but elegant, something she knew her mother would have approved of. She slid on her heels and glanced at her mother’s letter that sat on her dresser.

It took a day of staring at it, before she finally opened it, both wanting to read it and also keep it unknown like a treasure, forever. She read it, however, and cried as she did and every time since then when she reread it. She would not need to read it today, she had it nearly memorized.

My darling Dana,

I know you have many questions and my answers to what I believe you would ask will be inadequate. But I will try to answer the big one, at least.

I know that finding out I changed my living will was a surprise to you. I know we discussed in the past what I would want, but after hearing of the strain of Janet’s family, I knew I couldn’t do that to mine. I didn’t want there to be confusion, disagreements, or a stress put on any of you.

I made the decision for ME, Dana. I wanted to leave this earth of my own accord.

I could’ve discussed it with you, but I knew it would’ve caused us both to worry, or argue. I didn’t want that. Not anymore. My decision was mine alone, and I know you can respect that.

Dana, I know we discussed the blame and worry you put on yourself regarding William. Worry for how, who, and where he is. I know how it sits with you at all times. A mother never stops being a mother.

I told you that you made the right decision, and I will forever carry that in my heart. He is safe because of your decision. We both need to believe that is true.

I love you, my darling daughter. My feisty tomboy who regardless of her tough outer exterior, has always felt things deeply. Who picks up the torch for those whose light has gone out and carries them with her. Who sees beauty and wonder in science when others may turn away. Who saw a man who shouted at the heavens, chased monsters in the dark, believed in the exact opposite of everything she held dear, and knew he was the other half of her heart. Two opposite poles of a magnet, unable to be separated for too long.

The magnets are being pulled further and further right now, but the day will come when everyone and everything needs to be out of the way for them to snap back together. Because when it happens, nothing will stand in their way.

I hope I’m there to see it, but life is uncertain and we’re not guaranteed anything. That doesn’t make it any less spectacular or special.
Until then, Dana, have faith.

I love you.

Mom

A knock at the door startled her. She took a deep breath, trying not to cry again as she glanced at her mother’s letter. Walking to answer the door, she wiped her eyes, as she picked up the other letters she would be giving out to her family today. Opening the door, she found Mulder on the other side. He smiled softly at her as she stood back to allow him space to enter.

He stood with his hands in his coat pockets, not walking further into the apartment. She put the letters in the purse she was bringing, picked up her phone and keys, and turned to put on her coat. Mulder already held it in his hands, holding it open to help her put it on. She slid her arms in and he lifted her hair and straightened her collar, brushing her cheek as he did. She grasped his wrist and held his gaze for a couple of seconds. They both nodded and walked out the door.

It was a quiet ride to the lake. In the backseat, in a box, was the urn Mulder asked to pick up. He called the day after their lunch and said he would like to be the one to do it, and through her tears, Scully agreed thankfully, making arrangements with the funeral home for him to do so.

Arriving at the lake, Mulder turned off the car and looked over at her. She looked back at him and he searched her face. She closed her eyes as his hand came up again to brush her cheek.

“You ready?” he whispered, and she shook her head, knowing she would never be ready. Opening her eyes, she looked into his which were locked on hers. His thumb stroked once more, and he nodded at her.

She stepped out and closed the door. She felt the cool of the day more acutely as she stood there, with the reality of what was going to happen weighing on her. Looking to her left, she saw Bill, Tara and their kids pulling up and getting out. Another car and there was Charlie, Renee, and their kids. Her heart ached at the sight of them, that it took their mother dying to bring them all together.

Charlie locked eyes with her and suddenly she was hurrying toward him, her baby brother she missed so much. He met her halfway, both of them wrapping their arms around each other and crying. Words were said, but none were understood. She pulled back and held his face in her hands. Grey hair was at his temples and yet he still looked so much like the little boy she held so long ago, when he was sad or hurt. Pulling him close again, she whispered his name and shook her head, the past, for the moment, forgotten.

He stepped back and then Bill was beside her. Hesitantly, he reached for her and though this hug was different, she clung to him. Her big brother she wished was more approving of her personal life choices. He let go of her and stepped back, his face stoic, and then harder as he glanced past her. She turned and saw Mulder standing behind them a bit, the urn in his hands. Looking back at Bill, she tried to convey her thoughts without words. His jaw set as he gave her a curt nod before she turned and walked toward Mulder.

“Should I give this to Bill?” he asked her, gesturing to the urn. She shook her head and hooked her arm through his, beginning their trek down to the log her mother specified would be the area of the lake where her ashes were to be scattered.

The rocks were tough to navigate in her heels, but with Mulder’s assistance, she made it. There was a small boat anchored out aways, and a dinghy tethered to a large rock. Louise’s brother, Jack, had volunteered to be the one to take out her mother’s ashes and scatter them as the others watched.
As they stood and waited for everyone, Scully held tight to Mulder’s arm. Tara walked up and hugged both of them, tears running down her face.

“I’m so sorry, Dana. Maggie was a wonderful woman and I loved her dearly,” she said, taking shuddering breaths. Scully pulled her to her again and they shared their grief.

Louise, Jack, Annie and Marcus came walking up together. Each of them hugged Scully, Louise in tears, unable to speak. Both her friends were now gone, in less than two months. Scully held her close, sad for everyone left behind to grieve and figure out how to move on.

The priest from her mother’s church arrived and came to each of them, expressing his condolences, and clasping their hands. He asked for the urn to be placed where everyone could see and Mulder went to oblige his request. He came to stand beside Scully once his task was complete. His hands were in his pockets and she threaded her arm through his, keeping a tight grip on him.

As the priest began to speak of her mother, Scully’s thoughts wandered. She thought of the letter her mother wrote and her words about William. She thought of her last words, directed to Mulder, about William. Why did she say that? She felt the quarter on a chain in her jacket pocket and she rubbed her thumb across it. So many mysteries left unsolved.

The priest asked if anyone wanted to speak and Scully shook her head, her throat clogged with tears. Bill stepped forward and though she saw his mouth moving, Scully did not hear a word he said. Charlie also declined and Louise was crying so hard, she would not be able to speak.

Jack quietly walked to the moored dinghy, and began to ready it. Mulder took his right hand from his pocket and squeezed Scully’s hand before stepping forward to collect the urn. As soon as he walked away, she began to cry, knowing this was it. Before she felt that she might fall, Louise and Annie were beside her, flanking her on either side.

Louise put her arm around Scully’s waist, and she did the same. Annie gripped her left hand and they all collectively took a breath. Mulder stood close to the water as Jack got in the dinghy and started the engine. As soon as he motioned to him, Mulder handed him the urn, but not before patting it and saying something no one could hear.

They all watched Jack head toward the other boat and then climb aboard, tie off the dinghy on the opposite side of their view, and reach for the urn. Mulder stepped back toward Scully and froze when he saw the women around her. Annie immediately moved so he could take her spot, and he nodded his thanks. Louise did not move, but kept a tight grasp on Scully’s waist. Reaching for Mulder, Scully got the arm of his coat and pulled him to her. He locked his fingers with hers, and she squeezed tightly.

Jack stood at the back of the boat and waved to them, a signal that he was ready. Someone must have waved back because he lowered his hand and began to pour the ashes, the wind pulling them high before they fell to the water. Scully moved her arm from Louise and wrapped her arms around Mulder’s waist, burying her face in his chest, sobs shaking her body. It was over, her mother was gone.

He held her and let her cry. She heard nothing of anyone else’s grief, her own too overwhelming. She did not hear the dinghy return, nor the words softly spoken by Jack to Mulder. Her world consisted only of her heavily weighted thoughts, the feel of Mulder’s coat against her face, his arms around her, and the silence he afforded her to cry as she needed.
When she felt ready, she turned her head and looked out at the water, her arms still around his waist. He hummed and rocked her slightly, still saying nothing. Finally feeling able, she loosened her grip on him and stepped back a little. He held onto her upper arms and looked in her eyes. She nodded and turned her head, finding out that everyone had left.

“How about we take a minute or two on the log?” he asked quietly and she nodded, her fingers finding the quarter in her pocket again. Holding it in her palm now, he helped her over to the log and got her seated before going to collect the urn and set it by her feet. Sitting down next to her, he sighed as he looked out at the water.

“It’s beautiful here,” he said. “I understand why she chose this spot.”

“Seems she was ahead of us on many levels,” she agreed quietly, the quarter feeling heavy in her hand. “It was almost as if she knew it was going to happen, as hard as that is for me to believe. It just seems to … fit somehow.” He said nothing and maybe it was his silence added with the weight of the quarter, that gave her the strength to say what was pressing on her heart.

“I know now why Mom asked for Charlie, even though he was out of her life. She wanted to know before he left that he’d be okay. She gave birth to him. She made him. He’s her responsibility. And that’s why she said what she said to us. She wanted to make sure that we’d be responsible, to know that William was okay. Even though we can’t see him. I know that as parents, we made a difficult sacrifice to keep him safe. That it was for his own good to put him up for adoption. But I can't help but think of him, Fox. I can't help it,” Mulder shook his head slightly and she continued. “I believe that you will find all of your answers. You will find the answers to the biggest mysteries, and I will be there when you do.” He looked at her and nothing would stop her words now, she had to tell him.

“But my mysteries … I'll never have answered. I won't know if he thinks of me, too, or if he's ever been afraid and wished that I was there. Does he doubt himself because we left him? What … questions does he have of me? The same that I have with this quarter?” Looking down at it in her hands, she shook her head, the tears choking her again. “And I want to believe … I need to believe, that we didn't treat him like trash.”

He stared at her and then put his arm around her, but she hesitated for a second, not wholly sure she deserved to be comforted and held. Did they treat William like trash? Put him out of sight for his safety, or was it for theirs? His arm around her tightened and she sighed, her head landing on his shoulder.

“Scully, I feel that anything I say will seem inadequate and perhaps placating,” he said quietly, and she could feel him shaking his head. “But no, you … God, Scully … you did not treat him like trash. The decision you made was made in love and the desire to protect, not to push a problem from you, or relieve a burden on you. It wasn’t a choice. He was being hunted and would continue to be so long as he was with you.”

“How do we know he’s not being pursued now, Mulder? How do we know he hasn’t been and he’s …” she was unable to finish the sentence, her thoughts racing with the most horrible images.

His arm tightened again and his head shook faster. “We can’t, but it doesn’t mean we should allow those thoughts to take precedence. I know that’s easier said than done, but we can’t. We have to believe and hope that every precaution that was taken in the past, has and is, keeping him safe.” She took a long steadying breath and nodded against him.

“It is easier said than done. Mulder …” she trailed off and he rubbed his hand up and down her arm.
“I know, Scully,” he agreed quietly, and they sat in silence for a few minutes, so much grief and worry hanging between them. Things were still unsaid, apologies for the past, thoughts not shared, but for now it was enough.

Sitting up, she looked at him and saw tears on his cheeks. She reached over and wiped at one while he wiped the other. He caught her wrist and held her hand to his face, his eyes closed, as he took a breath. Opening his eyes, she smiled softly at him, and he nodded.

Standing to his feet, he offered his hands to her and helped her stand up. He picked up the now empty urn and waited for her to take his arm, to help navigate her way over the rocky terrain once again. The symbolism was not lost on her, but now was not the time to explore it.

Driving away from the lake she closed her eyes. She felt exhausted and they still had the small reception to get through at her mother’s house. Annie had insisted on making a few dishes and bringing them over to her mother’s house, the place they all felt was best to celebrate the life of Margaret Scully.

Pulling up to the house, she took a deep breath and got out of the car, noting that everyone else was already there. They must have been sitting on that log for longer than she imagined. Mulder got out and took the urn from the backseat, and they walked to the front door together. Just before she opened it, she squeezed his hand and looked at him. He nodded and she opened the door, dropping his hand.

The next couple of hours passed by in an underwater type blur. Conversations went on around her, but she felt disassociated from most of them. Seeing Bill’s kids all grown up, and Charlie’s on their way, made her ache for William more. She caught Mulder’s eye as she walked away from Tara and Renee. He smiled at her and she attempted one back, but failed.

She looked over at Bill and his scowl detoured her plan to speak to him. Instead she went in the kitchen and found Charlie, staring at a picture on the fridge and sobbing. As she stepped closer she saw it was one of their mother and Louise, apparently taken at the lake last year.

Scully walked up to him and put her hand on his back. He turned to her and cried harder, falling into her arms. She listened to his broken sobs and understood his pain. The deep pain that came from places previously unknown. The unresolved issues he and her mother had were now burdens he would face on his own, and she knew the weight they would hold.

“Such an idiot, Dana. So … so stupid,” he said before succumbing to tears once again. She held him and let him cry, hoping to alleviate some of his pain.

After a few minutes he calmed down enough to let go of her and step back, shaking his head. “I’m so sorry, about everything. Something so small and unimportant, a fight that spiraled further than it should have, kept us all apart. And Mom …” he shook his head again, clearing his throat. She did not tell him it was okay or that it would be, she knew those words were empty. Instead, she hugged him again and hoped it expressed what her words could not.

They walked into the living room together and Renee came over to him, smiling kindly at them. Scully stood as they went to join their children and again she caught Bill’s eye. Sighing, she walked over to him, wanting to get this and the day over with so she could be alone.

“Mom left the house to you,” Bill said, his voice hard.

“She did. And she left you, and everyone else, money and things she knew you would want and enjoy,” Scully replied. “You don't live here, Bill, you or Charlie. It makes more sense to leave it to
me when I am here.” He scoffed, but did not argue. “Are we good?” He stared at her, but said nothing. Finally he nodded and she walked away and into the bathroom, needing a break from everything.

Finally, everyone began to gather up their things to leave. Goodbyes were said, hugs were given, and Scully handed them all their letters as they gathered at the door. Tara cried again as she held the letter close to her heart. Charlie was unable to speak as he looked at his letter and then at Scully. She nodded and squeezed his arm.

Louise, Marcus, Annie, and Jack were the last to leave, making sure the kitchen was clean and things were straightened up before they did. They each hugged Scully goodbye. Annie reassured her again since she took him that first day, that Pip was much loved at her house, and he was doing well with them all, eating treats and laying by the warm fire. Scully smiled and hugged her again, thanking her for taking him in and loving him.

Louise pulled Mulder in for a hug saying, “It’s what Maggie would have done,” making them all laugh softly through their tears. The door shut behind them, and finally it was just Mulder and her there alone.

She looked at him and sighed, exhaustion coursing through her. “I’m so tired,” she said quietly and he nodded, exhaling out a laugh.

“You and me both, Scully,” he said, running a hand down his face.

“Mulder, I … I think I want to stay here tonight,” she said, surprising both of them. “I know it’s a spontaneous decision, but I feel it’s right, and I … yeah, I want to stay.”

“Do you want me to stay? I don’t mi-”

“No. No, that’s okay,” she said hurriedly. “I think I’ll be okay, and you’re tired. You should … should head home, get some rest.”

He stared at her, uncertainty written across his face. “Scully, I really don’t mind staying,” he said again and she nodded.

“And I thank you for that, but I feel like I need to do this. I’m okay, Mulder,” she said and he nodded slowly, heading for the door. “Oh, your letter. I … it’s at my place. I wanted to give it to you tonight …” she said apologetically as she looked at him and he gave her a smile.

“Mine? I didn’t know … Scully, it’s okay. I can get it later,” he said taking his coat off the coat rack and putting it on, watching her the whole time.

“I’m okay,” she said again, trying to smile.

“Okay. Well, if you need anything …”

“I will. I’ll call you.”

“Night then, Scully,” he said opening the door and heading to his car. She watched him drive away, his lights disappearing down the road, before shutting the door, locking it, and closing her eyes.

Finally she was alone and able to have that cry she felt was at the surface all day. She walked into the living room and froze, as memories of the past and present began rushing in and making their presence known.
Her father’s laughter at some joke he had told a hundred times, Melissa looking her way as she rolled her eyes, and her mother shaking her head, but her eyes shining, as she too joined in the laughter.

The memory of the quiet when his jovial laughter left them all so abruptly. The sadness that seemed to settle in the house for a while, the happy memories not enough to keep it at bay.

Bringing Mulder over for dinner to meet her mother, happiness and laughter once more being welcomed in. Coming to her mother’s when fear coursed through her veins, knowing this was one place she was safe when she was sure Mulder had betrayed her. Dinners, birthdays, and Christmas mornings that were funnier and sillier, due in large part to Mulder.

Just a few weeks ago, Christmas was celebrated here with friends and loved ones. Jokes, laughter, and music was heard and today … today they said goodbye to her mother, and once more the house was silent. The silence so deafeningly loud, it was hurting her ears, and making her heart ache.

Suddenly, she was unable to breathe, as she stumbled forward and bumped into a chair. Gone. Her mother was gone and would not be walking in the room any second with her warm smile. She would not be calling to check on Scully, asking questions, and offering advice. Her mother was gone and Scully was alone in her empty house, the silence pressing in around her.

Stumbling through the living room, she reached the kitchen and found her phone. Through her tears, she dialed Mulder’s number, knowing he would come, whatever the reason. The phone barely finished one ring when he answered.

“Scully?” he asked, his voice louder than normal as she was sobbing incoherently into the phone. “Scully?”

“Mul … I … don’t … Mul …” she panted out, gasping for air as she stumbled back to the living room.

“Scully? Scully? Open the door. Honey, open the door,” he pleaded, his voice softer, as she heard a knocking at the front door.

Her tears impeding her vision, she fumbled to unlock the door, still feeling as if she would never catch her breath. When the locks were undone, she opened the door, and there he stood, his arms ready to catch her as she fell forward, unable to stand on her own any longer.

“It’s gonna be okay, Scully,” she heard him whisper to her as he pulled her close and stepped inside the house, closing the door behind him. “I’m here.” And with those simple words, she felt her lungs expand, and breath return to her body.

She was going to be okay.

He was there.

Chapter End Notes

I don’t think I need to say how much this chapter broke my heart. How it ripped it out
and made me sob. Having dealt with death with my sister, the thoughts and memories of sitting in the funeral home, are burned into my mind. Thankfully for Scully, it was all handled ahead of time. Thank god for Maggie and her foresight and desire to make the decisions herself and not to the one grieving.
Chapter Summary

Mulder is there to take care of Scully and share in the grief of losing her mother.

Chapter Notes
See the end of the chapter for notes

February 2016

Mulder held Scully in the foyer of her mother's home, as she sobbed in his arms. “Breathe, Scully,” he whispered into her hair as he stroked her back. “There you go, deep breaths, it’s okay.” He could feel her breathing deeper and relaxing against him.

He closed his eyes as he felt her shudder, her hands clinging to him tightly. “You’re okay, Scully. That’s it.” Stroking her hair, he waited as she finally was able to breathe easily. Pulling back, he looked at her, wiping her eyes, and holding her face in his hands.

“I’m so tired,” she whispered, and he nodded.

“Do you want to go? I could take you home-”

“No!” she said forcefully. “I want to stay.”

“Okay,” he smiled softly. “Okay.”

He turned and led her up the stairs to the room they usually stayed in whenever they slept over in the past. Turning on the light, he guided her to the bed, knelt down in front of her and took off her shoes, setting them to the side. Looking up at her, he reached for her hands and pulled her to her feet.

“I don’t … I don’t have any clothes to change into, and I don’t want to sleep in this dress,” she said, looking at him with tears in her eyes. “I can’t wear my mother’s clothes, Mulder, and I have nothing else to change into.” She started to cry, and he held her again before pulling back and giving her a small smile.

He took off his coat and then his suit jacket, laying them on the bed with his tie following shortly thereafter. Unbuttoning his shirt, he took it off and laid it down. He took off his undershirt and handed it to her, staring in her eyes. She took it with a nod, tears falling down her cheeks. She gripped his hand for a second before she walked to the bathroom to change.

He watched her and sighed, his heart hurting for her. He picked up his dress shirt and put it back on, buttoning it up, except a few at the top. He moved his jackets and his tie, folding them and putting them on top of the dresser. His shoes were taken off and placed beside hers as he looked at the bathroom door, waiting for her to come back in the room.

Hearing a sob, he walked toward the door and knocked. “Scully? You okay?” She cried again and he turned the doorknob, not waiting for an answer.
She was sitting on the side of the tub, her dress in a puddle on the floor. His shirt was on her knees and her face was in her hands as she cried. He sighed as he walked over to her and moved her dress out of the way, laying it across the towel rack. He knelt down in front of her and gently tugged at his shirt. She moved her arms as he took it, shook it out, and readied it to go over her head.

Seeing she still had her bra on, he stopped what he was doing, laid his shirt on the tub, and reached to unhook it for her. It slid down her shoulders and he moved it down to her elbow, gently pulling her hand from her face to pull the strap down completely.

She raised her face to his, and he smiled softly at her. Once one strap was removed, he went to the other one, sliding it down and off, holding her bra in his hands. Setting it on the floor beside him, he reached for his shirt and readied it again. He placed it over her head and waited for her to put her arms inside the holes before he pulled it down, covering her chest. Not once did his eyes stray anywhere but her face.

“Thank you,” she whispered, squeezing his hand. He nodded and smiled softly again, picking up her bra as he stood up. Reaching for her hand, he helped her stand up, his shirt falling into place at her thighs. He added her bra to her dress and stepped aside to let her walk out of the bathroom.

Following her out, he watched her pull the covers back on the bed and then look back at him, silently asking him to join her. He turned off the bedroom light, leaving the door open and the hall light on, as he walked to the other side of the bed and pulled the covers back. They laid down, covered up, and as soon as they did, she turned onto her side and reached for him.

He held her with her face buried in his neck as she began to cry again. “I can’t believe she’s gone,” she sobbed. “I need her, Mulder.”

“I know, Scully,” he whispered, stroking her hair and closing his eyes. He took a breath and then he was crying. All day he had been strong for her, but now, here in this house, holding her in his arms, he could not hold back anymore.

The woman he loved like his own mother was gone. The one who cared for and loved him like a son. He would no longer see her smile at one of his dumb jokes, hear her laugh, watch her victory dance, or eat another one of her delicious peach cobblers. Her voice would not be the one he heard when the phone rang, letting him know she was on her way over, or making sure he was okay.

Why? Why did it have to be her? Someone so loved and needed? Scully pulled him closer and they cried together as he held her tighter to him. No words were said, just tears shared, as they mourned their loss together.

As Scully’s tears subsided, Mulder felt her grow heavy against him. Soon her soft breathing could be heard in place of her tears. An occasional sob still escaped, but he knew she was asleep. As tired as he was, he would not let sleep claim him yet. He wanted to be sure she stayed asleep and was as emotionally comfortable as possible before he did.

He kept a hold of her as he thought of the past few days. The sadness he saw in Scully, after they left the hospital and continued working on their case. Work had distracted her, but as soon as they slowed down, he saw her falter. When the case was wrapped up, she came over to the house in tears, and he held her on the couch as she cried.

In the morning, as she sat on the couch wrapped in a blanket, he had made her toast and eggs, bringing it over to her. She was unable to eat more than five bites before looking at him with sad eyes. She left shortly after that, but called him later and talked to him until she fell asleep.
Showing up at the funeral home, he knew he had surprised her, but he could not let her do that on her own. He handled his mother’s estate largely on his own and remembered wishing that he had leaned on Scully more when she had offered to help him. No chance would he leave her to face those decisions and sadness alone. He owed her and Mrs. Scully that, and so much more.

He sighed, Scully sleeping soundly against him, as he thought of earlier this morning. When he woke, it had felt as if the day itself was heavy. As if it knew there were people waking up with broken hearts. He had taken a shower and gotten ready, taking special care with his grooming. His suit was fresh from the dry cleaners and his tie was the one he had purchased for his recent birthday dinner with Mrs. Scully. He tied it carefully, showing his respect in all the small ways he could.

As he had gotten ready, he thought of one of the last times she had been out to the house, the day after Christmas, just a few weeks ago. After visiting and giving him his Christmas gifts, she turned to him with a smile. “Merry Christmas again, Fox,” she said, buttoning up her coat. “I hope you enjoy your gifts.” She winked at him, and he laughed, the gifts she gave him sitting on the dining room table: a plush alien and a four pack set of Sasquatch drinking glasses and plates. He could not wait to use them.

“Yes, I will definitely get a lot of use from the gifts you’ve given me this year. Thank you,” he said with a grin. Bending to kiss her cheek, she chuckled, patting his face as he did.

“Thank you for my gifts as well, Fox,” she said, touching the scarf he gave her. It was pale blue and seemed like a ‘Mrs. Scully’ type color to him.

He also gave her an Apollo 11 keychain. A frantic and long search online, had finally led him to where he could purchase one, and it almost did not make it on time. He told her he gave one to Scully for her birthday years ago. The confused expression on Mrs. Scully’s made him laugh as he explained the history of it.

“It was just a keychain at first, and also a bit of a silly joke that went back to a case we worked on years ago,” he shrugged as she smiled curiously. “I was overly excited about this case as it involved space and Scully was nearly bored to tears. But, once again, she respected the journey and didn’t laugh too hard at my silly boyish happiness.” Mrs. Scully laughed and he smiled. “But, from a simple hokey gift, Scully found so much more meaning and symbolism, it was hard to argue once I really thought about it.”

He took the keychain from Mrs. Scully, and stared at it, smiling as he remembered finding the one he had given Scully when he was searching for John Doggett, and how he accused her of regifting.

“Scully gave hers to Agent Doggett, you remember him? Of course you do,” he said when Mrs. Scully nodded. “I felt … weird to say the least, but she was right to have given it to him. As I thought about it, her words from so long ago echoed in my mind: ‘That you must dare to dream, but that there’s no substitute for perseverance and hard work. And teamwork, because no one gets there alone.’ No one gets there alone,” he repeated, handing it back to her and she had tears in her eyes. “I’m here today, in large part because of your care. I wouldn’t have gotten here alone, so I’m giving this to you to commemorate an achievement that could be deemed as impossible as putting a man on the moon.” She laughed and pulled him in for a hug.

“Thank you, Fox,” she whispered and he chuckled.

She left not long after and the last time he spoke to her was the night she brought over pie and they discussed he and Scully going back to the bureau. He was thankful for that night. Thankful he had that memory of her, the happiness he saw on her face, knowing he and Scully were possibly
moving forward, back where they belonged.

He exhaled, shook his head, and shifted in the bed. Scully was holding tight to him, not wanting to let him go too far, even in her sleep. That was fine with him as he wished he never had to let her go again. Closing his eyes, he breathed in her scent and let his exhausted body finally fall asleep.

He woke to the sun just beginning to rise, Scully pressed against him, her back to his front. He had his arms wrapped around her and her leg was draped over his, a familiar position they slept in many times. He pulled her closer, hoping to fall back to sleep.

She moved and stretched, before she turned over and faced him, her eyes so blue and beautiful. She put a hand on his face and breathed his name, looking into his eyes. He bent his forehead to hers and whispered her name, as she sighed shakily.

“Thank you for staying with me. For coming back,” she whispered, her hand still on his face.

“I didn’t leave,” he said quietly, putting a hand on her hip. Pulling her head back, she stared at him. He shrugged and smiled slightly. “I waited until you went back inside and turned around. I wasn’t going to leave you like that, Scully.” She came back into his embrace and he felt her tears on his neck.

They lay in the warm bed, holding each other for a while longer, before she moved and stared at him. She sighed as she pulled back and left the bed, heading into the bathroom. He lay back and closed his eyes, scrubbing a hand down his face.

He got out of bed, turned off the hall light, and headed downstairs. Using the bathroom down there, he then headed to the kitchen. Filling the coffee pot with water, he added the coffee and turned it on. Taking out mugs for each of them, he opened the fridge to see if there was any milk or cream. Vanilla coffee cream was all he found, but looking at the food in there, he knew they would need to clean it out before they left today. He looked up as he heard Scully come into the room. She had changed from his shirt back into her dress, though she was barefoot.

She smiled softly as she glanced toward the coffee. “That smells good. I don’t know if there is much food in the fridge, but maybe there’s something in the freezer,” she walked over to check and found waffles inside and syrup in the fridge.

Their simple meal eaten, he suggested they clean out the fridge and she nodded. “We should do the pantry too. I’ll go get some boxes,” he said, standing up and going to get his jacket and shoes.

He drove to the closest moving company and bought some boxes. Heading back, he felt better going to the house today than he did yesterday, but it still felt weird to walk in and not find Mrs. Scully there waiting for him.

Scully had cleared most of the pantry by the time he walked back in the house. He got the boxes ready and started to load them up. “Separate them out between the two of us, I’ll never eat all this food,” she said and he nodded.

They worked in silence, getting the job done, before he loaded the car with the boxes, while she went upstairs to grab her shoes. She came down the stairs with his coat, tie, and undershirt on her arm, her shoes hanging on her fingers.

He took his things from her, planning on adding his shirt to one of the boxes she would take home, giving her something for comfort. He helped her with her coat and with a last look around, they headed out the door, Scully locking it behind them.
It was a quiet drive to her place, but a few minutes in, she reached for his hand and held it for the rest of the journey. She kept her head turned toward the window and said nothing, but occasionally squeezed his hand gently.

Pulling into her complex, he parked in the visitor spot and they unloaded the car. On the second trip up, he put his undershirt in the box and hid it under some boxes of crackers. He brought the box up and set it on her kitchen counter. She came out of her room, holding envelopes.

“This is yours and … this one is for William,” she said, holding out both letters. “I can’t have that one here for him. I … it’s too tempting to know what she had to say to him. What she might tell him … about me, you … I can’t have it here or I’ll read it.”

“I don’t think she’d-”

“No. I want to save it for him,” she said, staring at him. “Just … just in case.” She sighed and he nodded. “Could you take it home and keep it there? Put it in the safe?”

“For safekeeping?” he asked, trying to make her smile, as he took both letters from her. She exhaled, but did not smile. “Yes, Scully, I will put it in the safe.” She nodded and smiled at him.

“You want me to help you put this stuff away?” he asked, putting the letters in his inside jacket pocket and gesturing toward the food.

“No, that’s okay, I can get it done. Thank you for your help and for everything else,” she said, looking at him and he nodded. He sighed and knew he had to tell her now.

“Scully, I need to tell you something,” he sighed again and closed his eyes for a second. When he opened them, she was watching and waiting for him to continue. “After you left … about a week after, your mom came over to the house. I was in the shower and I missed her, but she left a basket of food- lasagna and that lemon cake she made that was so good.” He paused as he thought of that day and how broken he felt. “That first basket of food was just the beginning. She came back the next day with more, fed me, went out and bought groceries … hugged me and then came back the next week. And the week after. For almost two years.” She stood staring at him with her mouth open and tears on her cheeks.

“Never, not once did she make me feel anything but loved by her. She was there to help, not shame. I was to blame for what happened between us, Scully-”

“Mulder-”

“Scully,” he said, shaking his head. “We can argue about it, but the majority of the problems rested on my shoulders. Your mom … she never placed blame, but encouraged me to get better, found projects to fill the day, and suggested I see a therapist. She pushed me, but also allowed me to heal at my pace. I am so thankful she was there, I owe her so much.” He took a deep breath and let it out, tears close to the surface.

“You Scully women … you don’t back down from a challenge and you love fiercely. The world needs more women like you.” He smiled softly at her and she wiped her eyes before stepping forward and wrapping her arms around him.

“I had no idea she was doing that, not once did she say anything about it,” she whispered into his chest. “I’m happy she was there for you. Of course she would be, she loved you so much. Mulder, I’m so sorry-”

“Scully, it was the right thing to do, it was,” he said, hugging her tightly. They fell silent as they
stood there holding onto one another. She tipped her head back and smiled, tears still on her face. He moved his hands and held her face, wiping her tears with his thumbs. She closed her eyes and he kissed her forehead.

“I should get going,” he whispered, his forehead now resting against hers. “I’ve got a car full of perishables that I don’t want to spoil.” She laughed softly as she stepped back and took a deep breath. He smiled at her and nodded before picking up his keys and heading for the door.

“If you need anything, Scully, anything at all,” he said and she nodded.

“I’ll call, I promise. But, I think I’ll be okay,” she smiled and he returned it. Opening the door, he walked out, turning to wave goodbye before she closed the door.

When he arrived home, he brought in his loose clothing and laid it on a dining room chair. He took off his jacket and added it to the pile before he began to bring in the boxes of food and put them away. The cupboards were fairly bursting and he shook his head, thinking that even after she died, Mrs. Scully was still seeing to it that he was fed.

Sighing, he reached for his jacket and the letters held within. He sat down at the table, looking at the familiar handwriting, and his eyes filled with tears. He set William’s aside and opened his own, knowing this letter was going to hurt.

Fox,

I’ve sat here for ten minutes trying to figure out how to write this letter to you. It seems so odd to be writing a goodbye when I saw you just a few days ago.

I hope beyond hope that this letter is not read for years, but life is uncertain and so I would rather be prepared than leave this earth with worries on my mind.

Fox, right now, I know things seem like they are stuck and you don’t know if they will move forward, but I pray that is not the case. I have been praying for it. You two belong together, in this life and the next.

The night Dana brought you to dinner all those years ago, I knew. I saw the love you two had for one another, even if it would take years for you to realize it. You are the only person I would trust to keep my daughter safe.

We’ve had discussions about the past and you said you wouldn’t change anything that’s happened, because it’s led to the now. Even if it hurts, even if there is pain that feels never ending, I know you would still knowingly choose the path you are on now. One slight deviation and who knows where either of you would have been? This was the plan, the path chosen, and you will continue down it, believing the end will be worth it.

I know it will be. I have faith.

Fox, I love you. I’ve told you before, but I want it said here so you can look back on it anytime you need to see it. You are my son, my family. I love you.

Family is what matters. They are the people who hold you accountable, the ones who have your back, and the ones who show up when you need them. It’s what family does.

Fox, thank you for being my family and being the man worthy of my girl.

I love you.
Maggie (Mrs. Scully)

He laughed through his tears at her closing, knowing she must have had a good chuckle over that when she wrote it. He could see the sly look on her face, making a joke at his expense.

Reading her letter again, he shook his head and wiped his eyes. Taking a shaky breath, he folded it up and put it back in the envelope. He touched his name written on the outside and shook his head again. Standing up from the table, he picked up William’s letter and walked to the safe in the office.

Opening it, he found their passports, birth certificates, and other important papers. He added William’s letter and closed the safe. He hoped one day William would have a chance to read what his grandmother had written for him.

Walking back to the table, he stared at the seat Mrs. Scully always sat in, and he closed his eyes briefly. He picked up his tie from his pile of clothing and walked to her chair. Draping his tie across it, his fingers grazed the back of the chair.

“Thank you, for everything,” he whispered, before picking up his letter and his phone, and heading upstairs.

It was still early, but he was exhausted. The days had merged together and had been emotionally draining. Going to bed early felt like a great idea.

He stripped, took a shower, and put on some pajama bottoms. He made sure his phone was plugged in and the volume up high in case Scully called. Pulling back the blankets, he laid down in a bed that smelled of sunshine and held the memory of the feel of Mrs. Scully’s arm around his waist as they stood together and watched the sheets blowing in the wind.

Chapter End Notes

Jesus ... I’m not gonna lie that these three particular chapters are some of my favorites. It might sound odd, but they have helped me find closure with things I didn’t know needed closing. Things in my life I have no control over seemed to leave me as I wrote this, knowing we cannot control others, only ourselves.

I hope that while incredibly sad, these chapters may have helped you as well. If so, let me know. It would make me feel so good, knowing a piece of you has been healed in some way. ❤

Group hug!
A Smart Move

Chapter Summary

After Babylon, Scully thinks of the similarities between the case and her mother passing away. She is also faced with a decision for her future.

Chapter Notes

It seems that from Home Again to Babylon, we have a small time jump. Maggie passes in February and it seems the walk on the porch is in the spring, judging by the clothes and the weather. Therefore, we will be jumping along with it.

April 2016

Watching the water drain from the tub, Scully sighed. She tied her robe tighter around herself and then took the rubber band from her hair, letting it fall to her shoulders. The past couple of months had been hard and this recent case had hit close to home.

She walked into her bedroom and her eyes landed on her suitcase. She had been too tired to deal with it last night when they returned from Texas. Walking over to it now, she cleared it out, before putting it back in her closet. She took her toiletries to the bathroom, putting them back under the sink for the next trip out of town.

Going back into her room, she put on some comfortable clothes as she thought about the past few days. Working with agents that she could not help but see a strong similarity to, was different. Agents Miller and Einstein, were an interesting pair. Einstein was a bit rough, but Scully understood. God, did she. Twenty three years had passed since she entered that basement office, but the bureau was still very much a man’s world. A woman had to be tougher and harder most of the time.

Seeing them, then hearing Einstein call him Miller, made her smile. Not every partner called each other by their last name, but to her and Mulder it was the norm, so much so that her first name was almost foreign to her. She was Scully, but only to Mulder, and vice versa. Hearing it in other agents always made her curious about their relationship, work or otherwise.

She walked into the kitchen for a glass of water, leaning against the sink as she drank it, thinking of how she enjoyed working with Agent Miller. He was attentive, interested, and cared not only about the outcome of the case, but the person involved. His care and keen interest was what drew her to call him and ask for his help.

Sighing, she set her glass down in the sink, thinking she wished she tried to speak to her mother, the way they tried with Shiraz before he died. It was experimental, and the brain activity they witnessed in Shiraz could have attributed to him dying, but Scully chose to believe he could hear them. He experienced more activity when Agent Miller spoke in Arabic and then even more when
he heard his mother’s voice.

Thinking of her own mother, she sighed again, the recentness of her death sitting inside her like a weight. She remembered the silence around her in the hospital room, the heavy sadness as she sat by her mother’s side. Her thoughts were scattered in those moments, wondering what to do, and how to help her mother come back to them. Scully spoke to her, watching the monitors and her mother for any signs that she heard her. There only seemed to be a response when her mother’s advance directive was mentioned, as though her mother was trying to speak.

Charlie’s voice had done the job, rousing her mother from wherever she had been, just as Shiraz’s mother’s voice did for him. Charlie’s voice doing what Scully’s could not, would have felt hurtful, if she was a more sensitive person. Scully understood, though, she did. Charlie was her mother’s regret and ache that never went away.

He was her William.

Scully closed her eyes, tears threatening to fall. Taking a deep breath, she shook her head, stopping the thoughts of William that were closer to the surface more these days than they had been in the past.

Hearing her phone ringing in the other room, she opened her eyes, wiping them as she walked into her room. She frowned as she picked up her phone and answered a number she did not recognize.

“Hello?”

“Dana? Uh, Doctor Scully? It’s Alan, from the hospital.”

“Alan! Hello! How are you?” she asked with a smile. “It’s been, well, it’s been a while.”

“Yes it has,” he said with a chuckle. “I should be asking how you are. Working hard at saving the world?” She laughed at his joke and he laughed with her.

“Yeah, we’ve had some interesting cases so far, but what’s going on with you? I’m sure you’re calling out of the blue for a reason, and not just to see how I’m doing,” she said with a smile.

“Yeah, you got me,” he sighed. “It’s … well, it’s going to seem so odd when I ask you, but it’s a serious proposition.”

“Alan, we already talked about this,” she joked. “You and I would never work out. You’re gay and well, I’m in love with my partner.” He laughed and she smiled, glancing at her cat alien pillow and sighing.

“Oh, well, yeah, none of that’s changed,” he laughed again. “And it’s not that kind of proposition, lady.” She chuckled again and then fell silent. He sighed and she waited. “I applied to Doctors Without Borders and I’ve been accepted.”

“Alan! That’s fantastic!” she exclaimed. “Talk about saving the world.”

“Yeah, I’m actually really excited about it,” he said and she could hear the excitement in his voice. “But, it’s come up unexpectedly and I’m in a bit of a dilemma. I have to leave ASAP and this is where you could help me out.” He paused and her mind raced at the possibilities of what he could be suggesting.

“Okay, what’s the dilemma?” she asked curiously.
“Well, I bought a house recently, and I can’t have it sitting empty for the length of time I will be gone. I thought of who I would want to stay in it and honestly, I love all my friends, but those bitches can’t exactly be trusted,” he said, causing her to laugh. “So, I was calling to see what your situation is these days and, if you would be interested and consider house sitting, or more accurately, living here for a while.” She was quiet, as she looked around her sterile and rather sad apartment. She liked it there, but was curious about what he had to offer.

“Well, my situation hasn’t changed- much. We’re still separated, but … it’s, well, we’re …” she trailed off, not really sure how to address what they were to each other right now. “It’s been almost two years since you and I first talked about it over drinks and dinner that night, and Mulder and I are still … we’re complicated.” She sighed again and he laughed softly.

“What love isn’t?” he asked quietly and she sighed again, nodding even though he could not see her.

“Yeah,” she breathed.

“So, what do you say? You want to come over and check the place out? If you don’t want to do it, I need to choose which of these dummies will be a good second choice,” he grumbled at the end, making her laugh.

“Okay, I can come and check it out. Are you home now?” she asked.

“I am. Oh, this would be wonderful if you could do it. Seriously, I wouldn’t worry about the place knowing you were here,” he said with relief. She laughed again as he gave her the address and she said she would be there soon.

Pulling up to the house a short time later, she raised her eyebrows. It was beautiful and made her feel peaceful. She got out and looked around at the front of the house, already liking what she saw of the place.

The front door opened and Alan walked out, smiling at her. She stepped over to him and gave him a hug, saying hello as she did. He laughed as he hugged her back.

“It’s so great to see you,” he said as he stepped back. “You look really good.” He smiled and she smiled back at him. “Yeah, you leaving the hospital and going back to the bureau was a good idea. It’s made you happy and light, I can see it.” She smiled wider and nodded.

“Well, let’s head inside and I’ll show you around, see if you think this is something you want to do,” he said, gesturing toward the house. She nodded and walked toward the front door.

Stepping inside the house, she raised her eyebrows. “Wow, this place is beautiful. Very clean and modern.” She walked into the kitchen and looked around at all the modern appliances and decorations. It was a truly stunning place.

He showed her the dining room, living areas, and bedrooms. Everything was so beautiful. It looked like a place Mulder would have, if he was physically able to not clutter every space with papers, books, pictures, videos and any other thing that struck his fancy.

Everything about the house made her feel comfortable and welcome. The fireplace looked inviting and she could imagine sitting in front of it with a glass of wine after work. The colors of the place were masculine, but not overwhelmingly so, and she loved the look of it. Again, it reminded her of Mulder, like his old apartment.

“Alan, I love it. It’s beautiful and I feel immediately at home here,” she smiled at him as they
stood in the living room. “It’s a great house.”

“Wait, you haven’t even seen the best feature,” he said with a grin. Motioning her to follow him, he showed her the panel by the front door. “This controls everything: lights, heating, alarm, radio, computer, security cameras, everything. It’s all accessible remotely and it’s been amazing to have, especially with my schedule.” She stared at him wide-eyed.

“It’s a smart house,” she said quietly.

“It is indeed,” he said proudly. “It’s all hooked up to my preferences, which we will change to yours. If you want to do it.” He looked at her and smiled while she let it soak in.

“This is very different than what I’ve been around for half my life. I knew a trio of guys who would never live in a place with this kind of accessibility. I can imagine the talking to you would get for it too. The amount of times I would hear the word kid or son, from all of them would have me rolling my eyes,” she said with a laugh and a shake of her head. “You would have gotten a kick out of their conspiracy theories.” She smiled sadly as she thought of the Gunmen, missing them and their crackpot ideas. He smiled kindly at her and nodded.

“Anyway,” she sighed. “I like it here. It feels comfortable and familiar, reminds me of home, but with my tidiness.” She laughed and he joined her.

“So … you’re saying you want to stay here?” he asked hopefully. She smiled and nodded and he heaved a huge sigh of relief. “That’s great. Thank you so much, Dana.” She laughed and he led her to the kitchen to discuss what needed to be done.

Over a couple of cups of tea, he explained the features of the home to her and wrote everything down so she would be able to look back on it, in case she had any problems.

“Feel free to move anything around, make the place your own and we can always move it back later,” he said as they walked through the house again.

“Oh no, I like it all as it is, it’s beautifully decorated. And honestly, I don’t have much I’m attached to at my place. I’ve got my clothes, my bed, and a few little things there, but everything else could be sold and I wouldn’t really mind,” she said with a shrug.

“Well, we could move the mattress and put it in the guest room and then it would be ready to add yours,” he suggested. “That’s an easy fix.” She nodded and looked around the master bedroom, noting her bed would fit on the frame.

“Yeah, that would work out,” she agreed as they walked out of the room.

“We’re leaving tomorrow afternoon,” he said and she huffed in disbelief. “I know. I told you it was a time crunch, but they needed us quickly.” She looked at him with her eyebrows raised and he grinned. “Oh, did I not mention that I’m going … with my boyfriend?”

“No, you failed to mention that I believe,” she said with a grin.

“Oh did I? Huh,” he said, stroking his chin, making her laugh. “Yeah, I’ve been seeing him for a couple of months now. We both signed up, but didn’t know the other had until we each got a call. Turns out they need us both in the same place at the same time. It’s either fate or fuckery, we shall see.” Scully laughed and he chuckled beside her.

“So, we’ll move the bed and like I said, feel free to move anything else,” he said, walking to the kitchen again and opening a drawer. “These are the keys to the house, the back doors, and the
garage. There is also a garage door opener, but it’s good to have the key. I’ll call the alarm company before we leave and your emergency password will be set to Queequeg as you asked. Weird name, but whatever.” She smacked his arm as she took the keys and he laughed. “Thank you for doing this Dana, it means a lot to me.”

“I’m happy to do it and actually I think it’s what I need right now. A change, but not too much of one,” she said with a sigh. “How long will you be gone?”

“Nine months to a year, but more likely a year,” he said and she nodded, looking off into the distance.

A year. It sounded like a long time, but also perfect. A year out and she and Mulder could be in a better place. She hoped they would be.

“Fate or fuckery,” she whispered and he nodded with a quiet chuckle. She looked at the keys and nodded. “I’m choosing fate.” He smiled and she took a deep breath.

The next afternoon, Scully drove over to see Mulder. She was missing him and wanted to hear from his own mouth, what exactly he thought he was doing taking those pills Agent Einstein had given him. What he could possibly have hoped would be a good outcome to taking something he knew nothing about.

She shook her head and smiled. He was a middle aged man, and yet he still acted like a curious child. *Some things never change*, she thought, as she pulled up to the house, and she saw him on the porch.

He raised a hand to her as she stopped the car and she smiled again as she walked up the stairs, watching him take out his headphones and wrapping them around his phone. She smiled at him and he smiled back. God, he was handsome.

“Talk to me, Mulder.”

He smiled at her as she leaned against the railing of the porch, folding her hands together. “Oh ... where to begin?”

“Why didn't you tell me about your little scheme?” she asked, pushing her hair back from her face.

“Y-You were on your own mission,” he said pushing his sleeves up. “And you would've never bought that.”

Absolutely right. I have to applaud her, though, on her clever trick with the placebo,” she said, glancing around before looking at him with a smile.

“Yeah,” he agreed, looking down. “Yeah. How did that work?” He asked, raising his eyes to her.

She smiled broadly at him and shook her head. “Wonders never cease with you.”

He nodded and licked his lips. “I saw things, though, Scully.” She took a deep breath at his words. “Powerful things. I saw deep and unconditional love.”

She smiled softly at him. “I saw things too. I witnessed unqualified hate, that appears to have no end.” She said, looking away, the hatred still forefront in her mind.
“Yeah,” he said softly. “But how to reconcile the two? The extremes of our nature.”

“That's the question,” she said, looking away before meeting his eyes. “Maybe the question of our times.”

He smiled at her, giving out a quiet laugh. He got up slowly and reached for her hand.

“Walk with me, Scully,” he said as she reached for his hand with both of hers, squeezing before dropping her left hand.

They began to walk down the stairs, toward the grass. “This whole thing has got me thinking. Thinking about God,” Mulder said, his hand warm and familiar in hers.

“You, Mulder? Thinking about God?” She asked skeptically as they stepped onto the grass. The wind blowing softly, the smell of spring heavy in the air.

“The angry God of the Bible. The Tower of Babel and Babylon, scattering people violently, so as never to speak a common language,” he explained as they walked.

“Punishing man for his hubris,” she agreed.

“Well, that lesson didn't stick. But the anger sure remains,” he said.

“That's the same angry God as in the Koran. Ordering death to the infidels,” she stated, reminding him that it was not just an angry God in the Bible.

“What exactly is this God saying? Worship me and my great anger?” he asked her, trying to understand that anger.

“Well, that's a good question, Mulder. One for the ages,” she said to him.

“Well, think about the immense power in those prophecies, the power in those words to convince young men to put on suicide vests *today* and murder for their angry God,” he looked at her, his words serious.

“What are you getting at?” she asked, wondering where he was going with his questions.

“Those boys, they just swallow the pill,” he said, looking at her. “It's the power of suggestion.” He explained and she squeezed his hand to stop them walking. She looked at him with a smile, happy to see him more like the old Mulder.

“Is this received wisdom from your magical mystery tour?” she teased as he took both her hands in his.

“Mm, yes. Courtesy of ... the shrooms, something else, something to ... trump all hatred: Mother Love,” he said, holding tight to her hands.

“Whoa,” she said, his words heavy.

“I refuse to believe that mothers are having babies just to be martyrs. I want to believe that mothers have a greater purpose for all of us,” he said.

“I agree. A child is not a tool to spread hatred,” she agreed, knowing he was absolutely correct.

“But where does the hatred end, though?” he asked as he looked at her.
“Maybe it ends where it began, by finding a common language again,” she said, her words holding weight. “Maybe that's God's will.” She added, keeping it to what they were discussing.

“How can we really know? He's absent from the stage,” he questioned.

“Well,” she said quietly with a smile. “Maybe it's beyond words. Maybe we should do like the prophets and open our hearts and truly listen.” She said, the double meaning pertaining to them not lost on her.

He nodded, closing his eyes briefly and taking a breath, lifting their joined hands. She laughed softly and he smiled at her. Then his expression changed, and he looked around, to the left and right.

“What?” she asked with a confused smile as he kept looking around.

“What?” she asked again, staring at his face.

“Did you hear that?” he asked incredulously.

“I don’t hear anything,” she said watching him looking up. “Do you seriously hear something or are you messing with me?” She smiled at him and he looked down at her.

“I swear I can hear trumpets, Scully. You don't hear it, really?” he looked up again and she watched him, his hands in hers. When he looked down, he stared in her eyes.

“I really don’t hear it, Mulder. Maybe it’s a side effect of your magical mystery tour,” she grinned and he laughed softly. “How are your wounds?” Nodding toward his neck, he shifted uncomfortably. Letting go of her hand, he pulled the neck of his shirt down a little, and she sucked in a breath. He fixed his shirt and shrugged his shoulders.

“Did you put that antibiotic cream I suggested on it?” she questioned him.

“I did last night, yeah.”

“And today?” At the shake of his head, she sighed and turned toward the house. “Come on then, I’ll take a look at it and fix it up for you.” He tightened his grip on her hand as they walked and she smiled.

As they walked up the steps, she gestured for him to sit back down in the chair outside, and she continued on into the house. She found the cream sitting on the kitchen table. Washing her hands at the sink, she dried them on a paper towel, sighing as she looked around. She missed being in this little house, being with him, but she also felt it was still not the right time to come back. There was something still holding her back, and she would continue waiting until she figured out what it was.

Wetting down a paper towel and grabbing a dry one, she picked up the cream and went back outside. He had taken off his shirts so she could get to his wounds easier, and she had to stop herself from moaning out loud. She always had appreciated his physique and now when she could not run her fingers freely over the muscles she saw, she appreciated it even more.

“Figured this would be easier,” he said with a shrug as she stepped closer to him.

“Hmm,” was her answer as she handed him the antibiotic cream and the dry paper towel. Stepping even closer to him, she dabbed gently at the red angry welts on his chest. He hissed in pain, and she whispered an apology. She took the dry paper towel and fanned it to dry his chest enough to apply the cream.
“So, not only did you see Shiraz and his mother, you had a whole stoned fantasy sequence going on, huh?” she asked glancing at him. “Ending with you marked by a whip wielded by Agent Einstein, no less.” He kept his head down and she hid her smile. “Wonders truly never cease with you, Mulder.”

He shook his head and looked up at her, her expression serious, eyebrows raised in question. “Scully,” he breathed out in exasperation.

“What? I’m just speaking the truth. She told me you said she was “fifty shades of bad.” Fifty, huh?” she said, touching his skin delicately, making sure it was dry. She tried to take the tube of cream from him, but he would not let go of it. “You want to do it?” she asked and made to step back, but his hand grabbed the back of her thigh and stopped her, keeping her between his knees. Handing her the cream, she smirked at him.

His hand was still on the back of her thigh, and she had to work at keeping her breathing steady, despite the fact that her heart was racing. His other hand moved to her other thigh and caused her to stumble slightly, catching herself on his shoulder. When he looked up at her, her mouth went dry. “I didn’t choose what I saw in my vision,” he said, his fingers massaging slowly on her thighs. “Scully, I wore a cowboy hat. I was line dancing. I shimmied and did a backflip. Does that sound like me?” She tried not to laugh, but she failed, chuckling as she started to dab on the antibiotic cream.

“It doesn’t, no, but neither does the being whipped by, what I can only assume, was a dominatrix Agent Einstein,” she countered as she slowly rubbed in the cream, hearing his breath catch. He sighed, and she knew she was right. Looking back up at her, he gave her the sad eyes he did so well. Rolling hers, she knew when to stop pushing him to answer her on a certain topic.

“So, who else was there? Skinner, I know. But who else?” she asked, rubbing the cream into the other welt. He rubbed his thumbs against her thighs and she kept her attention on his wound, avoiding his eyes.

“Skinner, yeah, and the Gunmen. And lots of women dancing around our table,” he said closing his eyes, sighing loudly.

“Hmm,” she said, feeling his hands open and scratch lightly at her thighs. The cream was completely applied and so she started waving her hand over his chest again, drying the cream before he was to put his shirt back on. “I wasn’t there this time? Didn’t save the world from the Nazis?” Smiling as she asked him, remembering his declaration of love for her last time he had a vision, and her response of ‘oh brother.’

“No, you weren’t there this time,” he said, his eyes still closed, his fingers kneading softly at her thighs.

“I see,” she said, watching his face and waiting. His eyes opened and he stared in hers.

“I didn’t need you there, Scully,” he said softly, and her stomach dropped. Didn’t need her there? She tried to step back and once again he held her from moving. Staring at her, his hands firm on her thighs, her hands on his shoulders, he shook his head with a smile. “I didn’t need to envision you, Scully, or fantasize about you. No fantasy has ever lived up to the real thing. Not ever.”

She took a deep breath as his words made her stomach clench. She looked at his lips, felt his fingers push her closer, and her nails pushed into his shoulders. His eyes dropped to her lips and she started leaning in toward him, aching to kiss him after so long, when she heard her phone ringing.
Pulling back, she frowned at him as she reached in her jacket pocket and took out her phone. Alan’s newly added name and number was on the screen and she stepped away from Mulder completely as she answered the phone.

“Alan, hi. Everything okay?” she asked and she saw Mulder out of the corner of her eye, with his head back and his hands in fists on his thighs.

“Dana! Yes, everything is fine! Needed to verify the house code you wanted. Password is Queequeg I know, but the numbers for the keypad, do you have a preference? I can’t remember what you said,” he asked her.

“Oh, um, yeah. My birthday, 0223, that should be good. Easy to remember, anyway,” she laughed.

“Great. Okay, I’m changing the code now and then Brian and I are heading to the airport. Thank you again for doing this, Dana. I can’t tell you how much I appreciate it. I’ve left the instructions for everything on the dining room table. See you in about a year!” he laughed.

“Yeah. See you,” she laughed with him and hung up.

“Who was that?” Mulder asked behind her and she turned to him. He had put his shirts back on and she sighed, disappointed that the mood had shifted.

“Uh, it was Alan, a doctor from the hospital. He uh … he’s going … wow, I don’t remember which country he said, but he’s doing Doctors Without Borders and he’s leaving today,” she said, putting her phone in her pocket as she watched his face. “He asked if I would watch his place while he’s gone.” He raised his eyebrows and then frowned.

“Watch his place. You mean live there? While he’s gone? For what, like a … year?” The way he said year made her ache inside. His eyes were once again sad, but this time in a different way. After what almost happened a few minutes ago, she could understand his confusion.

“Yes, it’s probably for a year, but …” she sighed and brushed her hair back. “It’s only a year, and … is it so different than me being at my apartment?” He stared at her, his eyes traveling over her face. His shoulders dropped as he nodded with a half smile that did not quite reach his eyes. She took his hand and laced their fingers together.

“It’s a pretty great house,” she said, squeezing his hand and tilting her head.

“You say that, here? Where she can hear you?” he said, nodding toward the front door. “She didn’t mean it, girl. You’re a great house.” He touched the side of the house, shaking his head at Scully and huffing out a sigh. She laughed and squeezed his hand again before letting it go.

“Do you want to come and see it?” she asked, walking over and picking up the paper towels and cream. “I got the keys yesterday and had the tour. It’s really a nice place.” She looked at him, and he shrugged noncommittally. Raising her eyebrows, he nodded, making her smile. “I’ll put this away, and we can head over, then grab some lunch?” He nodded and she went inside, smiling as she did.

The sun was turning rosy golden as she drove away from dropping Mulder back at home. She laughed as she thought of his huge eyes upon seeing the smart house. His head shaking as he looked around.

“Scully,” he said, looking at her. “What would the guys say about this place? Frohike would have
to wear some specially made Kevlar type suit in order to visit you. Head to toe, no joke.” She laughed, and he shook his head again.

He looked all around, and she watched him, wondering what he was thinking. Finally he stopped in the dining room, his hand lightly touching the table. Turning to her, he sighed and shook his head again.

“Why is your house so much nicer than mine?” he asked with his sad eyes, and she laughed.

“It’s not my house, Mulder,” she said with a smile. “I like it, the modernness of it, but … it’s not the one I would choose to live in forever if I was given the choice.” She held his gaze, knowing he would understand what she was not saying. He nodded and turned to look around again.

They discovered a hot tub in the enclosed private backyard and she saw his eyes light up for a second then flick to hers, asking her a silent question. Yes, she did, her eyes quickly answered him, she did remember the night in a different hot tub. How it felt as she slid down his length, the warmth of the water around her, his fingers squeezing her hips as she started to ride him.

Yeah. She remembered.

Walking back inside, he glanced her way again and sighed. After gathering their things, she set the alarm and they walked to the car, ready to get some lunch. She started the car and squeezed his knee. He sighed and covered her hand with his, giving it a squeeze before letting it go. He looked at her and smiled, his eyes only slightly sad.

Over lunch, he agreed to help her move her clothes and bed over when she was ready. “We’ll rent one of those trailers that attach to the car. I’ve always wanted to use that trailer hitch, it’ll make me feel manly,” he said with a chin nod to her. She laughed, and he smiled.

When they drove back to Farrs Corner, he reached for her hand, lacing their fingers together. He smiled and looked out the window, squeezing her hand as he did. Pulling up to the house, he raised her hand to his lips and kissed the back of it, looking in her eyes. She smiled at him as he let go and got out without a word.

He walked up the steps and turned to give her a wave, which she returned before backing up and heading back to her apartment. She let out a sigh, a soft smile on her face. This had been a good day, bittersweet at times, but good. The past few months of working together were up and down. Some days she wanted to walk away, never looking back. Then some days, she wanted to crawl into his lap and kiss him until they both ran out of air. She missed him, God, she missed him so much.

But, she thought, then there were days like today. She smiled at the sweet way he smiled at her, the feel of his hand in hers, his hands on her thighs making her pulse race, and his lips pressed to her skin. She sighed with a smile at how he could still give her butterflies in her stomach after all these years.

“A year isn’t so bad,” she said quietly into the car. “Not if it means there will be days like this one. Better than any fantasy.”

Then she remembered the hot tub at Alan’s and her breath caught. Thoughts of possibly using that with Mulder at some point, clothing optional, gave her more butterflies.

Well,” she mumbled through a grin, as she got on the interstate. “Almost any fantasy.”
So, the smart house is used in Rm9 for a reason, I know, but maybe this was how it came to be. I love Alan and the decor of the smart house always seemed rather masculine to me. Scully’s previous place was always cozy and inviting and this place, while beautiful, doesn’t feel “Scully” to me. So, I’m going with it’s a buddies place, with some of her stuff added as she lives there for a while.
Sounding the Alarm

Chapter Summary

Mulder thinks back over the past year and a half before the day goes to hell. Worrying about Scully and chasing down leads takes its toll and he finally reaches his limit.

Chapter Notes

Since MS2 seems to have been a vision of what *could* or *would* transpire if action wasn’t taken, it has been skipped and we’re moving right on to MS3.

Also, as we see that it takes place in 2018, we are jumping ahead about a year and a half-ish. While it seems so sad to think of them apart for so long, it also makes the coming back together that much better. (And it creates ideas for new stories, as SO much time is in between the years 😊)

Hope you enjoy this chapter.

January 2018

Mulder yawned and then shivered as he waited for the heater to warm the car on his drive to work. It had snowed a few days ago, and though it did not stick around for very long, it left the morning air cooler than it had been recently.

He glanced over at Scully’s coat next to him on the passenger seat, smiling at the sight of it. They had gone out to grab a bite after work last night and she had a couple glasses of wine. Her cheeks became pink, and she told him she did not need her coat when they left the restaurant, as she fanned her warm face.

He loved when Scully was tipsy. She smiled, hummed, danced, and usually touched him more when she was slightly intoxicated. Watching her smile and walk a little unsteadily to the car made him laugh. He put an arm around her waist and pulled her close to him, making sure she would not fall over. Her answering hum made him smile.

The car was warmer now causing him to turn the temperature down a bit. Thoughts of last night led to thoughts over the past few months especially. Things were beginning to feel different between them, although it was moving at a glacial pace. Considering all they had been through before, he welcomed it.

Seven years they were together before there was more. As good as it was, things shattered between them. Little pieces took a long time to put back together, and he was determined to not miss one of them.

Scully was still at Alan’s place, that weird smart house that seemed so shiny and fancy. One weekend, they had packed up her apartment, selling and giving away most everything, but moving
a trailer full of things to her new place. Together they brought in boxes of items and heaved her bed down the hallway, equally yelling at each other and laughing as they avoided hitting the walls.

Falling on the bed once it was on the frame, he looked at her laying there, her eyes closed and a smile on her face. He was reminded of when they moved their furniture into their house and how the bed falling on the frame led to quick sex, despite how tired they were at the time. No sex occurred on the move in day to Alan’s, but spending downtime and the weekend with her was just as good.

Well … almost.

After her move in, cases began to come more frequently across their desk, some that made her roll her eyes, but some that led to her sad eyes on him or hidden from his view.

One case brought them to St. Louis, a seemingly innocent case involving the possibility of a child who could read minds. They interviewed the parents and then spoke to the boy. He was kind and well mannered at first meeting, but when he turned his eyes to Scully, he stared and did not blink.

“Why did you give him up?” the little boy, asked her, his brown eyes like dark murky pools.

“What?” she exhaled, her breathing halted.

“You gave him away … to protect him,” he said as he watched her and Mulder saw fear cross her face. She kept her calm and returned the boys stare. He tipped his head, watching her, before nodding and continuing his coloring.

Scully excused herself, her voice quiet, and he knew how much it affected her. He had a hard time concentrating until she came back, her eyes slightly red. She nodded at him, her silent ‘I’m fine,’ and he continued speaking to the child. No more revelations presented themselves and they left not long after.

In the past, he would have pushed, wanted to know more, but his only concern right then was for Scully. She could remain professional, put her personal feelings on pause, but he knew how much what the boy said had thrown her.

“Should we grab some dinner?” he asked on the way back to the motel. She had been quiet and breathing deeply since they got in the car. “Maybe some sushi or how about Thai?”

She smiled slightly as she looked at him and shook her head. “I’m not too hungry right now. I’d just like to head back to the motel,” she sighed quietly.

“We could get it and bring it back,” he suggested with a hopeful shrug.

“I just want to head back,” she said again, turning her head toward the window. He nodded and sighed quietly.

After her declaration following her mother’s funeral, certain she would never find her answers, he had kept an eye on her. The words she said had felt like a punch to the gut. The blame and guilt he carried since learning of losing William, expanded and created a new pain inside him. He did not voice it, but it had taken root, and he wanted to fix it any way he could.

Arriving at the motel, she got out of the car and went into her room, no words spoken to him. Watching her walk away, knowing how she was hurting, made him feel terrible. He knew she would tell him she was fine if he offered to talk or help of any kind. Sighing, he went into his adjoining room and walked to the connecting door.
Opening his door, he could hear her moving around in her room, pacing the floor. He could hear her footfall, the walls not very thick. When he heard her first sob, he inhaled sharply, his head falling against the door. Her cries got slightly louder, just for a second, before stopping altogether. Either she covered her mouth or she went into the bathroom. He waited, his head against the door, trying to wordlessly tell her he was there.

Five, ten, fifteen minutes passed and he heard nothing. He left his door open, an unspoken message that if she needed him, he was there. He sat on the bed with his head in his hands, hating himself for so many things, but mostly that in this particular area, she always suffered alone. He sighed and took off his shoes and his coat. He loosened his tie before taking it and his shirt off. His pants were next, and he laid them all on the chair by the small table. Glancing once more back at the door, he went into the bathroom.

He used the toilet, took a quick shower, brushed his teeth and put on his pajama bottoms. Standing by the door one last time, he listened but heard nothing. Sighing, he left his door open as far as possible, and went to lay down on the bed, any possibility for a meal long forgotten or desired.

Laying silently in the dark, he was more attuned to the sounds around him. He heard the click of her door lock opening, and the quiet of her feet across the carpeted floor. He heard her standing by the bed and without looking at her or saying anything, he pulled the covers back and she laid down, facing him. He looked at her and waited. He did not reach for her, making it clear he was not expecting anything from her. This was the first time they shared a bed since her mother died, and that had been months ago.

“Mulder,” she whispered, and reached for the hand that was lying on his pillow. She locked her fingers with his, closed her eyes, and sighed. She was asleep in minutes and he stared at her as she slept. Her eyes were a bit puffy. He knew she must have cried more in the shower where the sound would be muffled and the water would mix with her tears.

He reached out with his left hand and stroked her hair back from her face, staring at her beauty. She made his heart ache at how gorgeous she was, how strong, and how amazing. He had never known anyone like her, never loved anyone the way he loved her. She was it for him forever. He moved his hand and laid it over their joined ones, closing his eyes and going to sleep.

She was not in the bed when he woke, but he had not expected that she would be. He got up and dressed, before knocking on her door, his own still wide open. She answered with a small smile on her face and a nod as she looked in his eyes. He smiled back and suggested breakfast as his stomach growled loudly. Her smile widened and she nodded again, the previous night in the past.

That memory, more than any other over the past twenty plus months, had been the one that stuck and made him take stock of things. He knew that since her mother died, she thought more about William and so had he. He told her it was something he needed to put behind him, but these days it was more forefront than ever before.

He thought often of Mrs. Scully, and especially about the conversation they had regarding William. ‘I know that if you could, for Dana, you would find him. Even if to only know where he is, how he is, I know you would find him for her. There is nothing you wouldn’t do for my girl, Fox, and for that I will love you forever. Perhaps one day, we will find the answers to the questions it hurts too much to ask.’

Her last words were to him about William, it meant something and he knew what he needed to do, he was just not sure how to do it. How to find a boy that was hidden to them and to anyone hoping to find him. It was daunting and seemed impossible.
“Don’t give up,” he said quietly, the mantra they tended to live by, and now a personal promise to Mrs. Scully, he would not give up. He pulled off the freeway and headed to the bureau’s parking garage.

Getting out, he decided to stop at the coffee stand in the lobby and get them each a hot coffee. Smiling his thanks at the barista, he made his way to the basement office. He sighed as he got to the door and had to set the cups down on the shelf outside the door in order to open it.

“Scully, I come bearing gifts,” he said, seeing her coat hanging on the coat rack. “It’s past the holiday flavors, but still it’s good.” He hung his own coat and laughed as he looked toward the desk and his heart dropped as he saw her on the floor.

“Scully!” he shouted as he ran toward her, bending down to check on her. “Scully! Oh my God.” She had blood on her mouth and was not responding to his touch. Grabbing the phone, he called 9-1-1, then bent back down to Scully.

He listened to her breathing, checked her pulse, and lifted her eyelids. Her pupils were non-responsive and it scared him. “Scully,” he whispered, touching her face and kissing her forehead. He held her hand and waited for help to arrive, not wanting to move her and chance causing her added harm.

The paramedics arrived and he moved out of their way, keeping an eye on her and answering their questions. Seeing her this way unnerved him and made him antsy. They needed to get her to the hospital faster. Skinner arrived and though Mulder answered him, he was not sure of their conversation, his thoughts only on Scully.

They followed the ambulance to the hospital in silence, Mulder worrying for Scully, clenching his jaw so tightly, it began to ache. He could see Skinner glancing his way, but he said nothing.

Waiting at the hospital was excruciating. Every time the doctors walked past and left them with no information, his anger and worry grew. Skinner’s words offered no comfort as he would find none until he saw with his own eyes that Scully was okay.

“Her brain is on fire.”

“Find him.”

Finally by her side as she lay in the hospital bed, he took her hand in his and held it. The words of the doctor and Skinner were bouncing around in his head. If she was experiencing anything like he had years ago, he was terrified for her. He squeezed her hand and then sat down beside her, his head in his hands.

This waiting was even worse. Listening to her breathe, the steady blips of the monitors, answers not forthcoming. All he could do was think and worry, the usual guilt rising up and choking him. This was his fault on some level as was everything that happened to her during her time working with him. If she had just …

“Mulder ...” he heard her whisper, and he stood to take her hand as he had done hundreds of times in hospital rooms just like this one, ready to listen and help.

Her words were strained and strange. A virus unleashed by the Smoking Man. The Smoking Man? How? The thought of more conspiracies and the possibility of her being harmed as a result, made his head spin. Scully wanted to leave, find out what happened to her and where her visions were coming from, but that was not going to happen. No chance would he let her leave and not get the
help she needed. He would not risk losing her.

“Scully, I’m on this,” he said looking at her. “I’m on it.” He walked out the door, ready to do whatever it took to make sure she was safe.

Nothing else mattered to him.

Twenty four adrenaline filled hours later, Mulder sat in a hospital room, dried blood still in spots of his hands, no matter that he had washed them many times. He gave his statement to an officer, then two more as they came to the hospital. He could see Scully across the way speaking to her doctor and two different officers. She looked up and caught his eye, giving him a small smile, which he tried to return.

Walking into her room upon his arrival back to the hospital and finding her on the floor, struggling as some man was choking her, the life leaving her body, he had reacted without any thought other than saving her life. Grabbing a scalpel and doing the only thing he could think, he slit that man’s throat, killing him in order to stop him from killing Scully.

Seeing who it was, he knew they had once again been used as pawns. The man he followed to South Carolina, had walked past him and out of that house, intent on killing Scully. He should have shot him then, should have in fact shot them all. If he had not arrived when he did, that fucking bastard would have been successful with his task. He shook his head at the thought, anger and fear bubbling up inside him.

“Thank you, Agent Mulder,” said one of the officers, nodding at him. “If we have any further questions, we’ll be in touch.” Mulder grabbed his coat and left the room, going to sit outside of Scully’s, giving her all the time she needed.

He sighed as he waited. Scully and William were now both in danger and he felt damn near helpless at the thought. How was he supposed to help them? She was in a hospital and had almost been killed.

He saw her in his peripheral vision and turned his head to look at her. She stared at him as she sat down, putting her hand on his thigh and squeezing. He grasped her hand and looked in her eyes.

“That man they just wheeled out on a gurney, I know that man,” he told her.

“The Smoking Man didn’t send him,” she said, sure of her words.

“How do you know that?” he inquired.

“Because the Smoking Man won’t harm me. He’s held my life in his hands. That … was something else,” she said, looking to her left.

“Your visions, Scully. They’re not wrong.”

“My visions … are from William,” she said and he looked away from her, not completely certain. “I don’t know how, but I know that he’s guiding me. And you.”

“They’re looking for him,” he said, wishing he did not have to say it.

“The Smoking Man can’t act without William. I know that in my bones. And William knows it. They won’t find him. But he will find us.” She stared at him and he knew whatever she saw and
experienced, it was real and he needed to trust her.

“So we … just wait? Do nothing?” he asked her.

“We do our work. The truth still lies in the X-Files,” she quietly, staring at him. He held her gaze and then heard footsteps as he saw Skinner walking toward them.

“They said you were attacked,” he said, looking at Scully.

“I was calling you,” Mulder said, looking at him, as his anger once again rose up.

“I didn’t get your call,” Skinner said and Mulder knew it was bullshit.

“Where have you been, Skinner? Where you been?” he asked, standing up and stepping toward Skinner.

“Leave it alone, Mulder.”

“I asked you to look for her.”

“And I looked for her.”

“Where’d you look?” Mulder asked, knowing it was a lie even before he smelled it on him- the stench of cigarettes that made his stomach turn.

“I said leave it alone,” Skinner warned him but Mulder was done. No more lies.

“You smell like smoke,” he said before shoving Skinner, his anger no longer able to be held in check. Scully had almost died. Again.

“Mulder,” Scully said quietly behind him, but he was not going to listen to her, not right now. Skinner took a second and then shoved him back. They grabbed at each other and Mulder was ready to kill him for the pain Scully suffered.

“Whoa whoa. Break it up.” The police officers milling about yelled as they pulled at them, separating them and keeping them apart.

“Whose side are you on?” Mulder yelled at Skinner, his anger not abated.

“I said leave it alone, Mulder.” Skinner

“What are you hiding?” Mulder yelled as Skinner turned and walked away.

“Mulder,” came Scully’s voice again and he turned to look at her. Standing there, the wounds from the car crash on her face, blood from her attacker on her clothes, she looked small and exhausted. She sighed as she looked at him and he felt his anger dissipate.

He walked over, keeping his eyes on her, becoming calmer the closer he came. She touched his forearm as he stopped and stood in front of her. Looking in his eyes, she nodded and attempted a smile.

“You ready to go?” he asked softly and she nodded.

“My car was towed, I’m sure. I just need a ride-” she started and then stopped when she saw the look on his face. Sighing, she squeezed his arm lightly and nodded.
He went to speak to the doctor and get Scully’s personal things. She warned against Scully being alone right now with more seizures still a possibility, and Mulder nodded. He had no intention of leaving her alone, not after today, and not just because of the seizures. The image of her on the ground, fighting for her life, was a blaring alarm that had slowly been sounding for the past four years. Nothing mattered but her and her safety. It was time he showed her just how much.

Thanking the doctor, he touched her upper arm, causing her to nod and smile kindly at him. He left the room and found Scully waiting for him. She sighed and stepped next to him as he approached. “Come on,” he said, his hand gravitating to the small of her back. “Let’s go home.”

She leaned into him as they began to walk and he moved his arm around her shoulders. She put hers around his waist and together they walked out the hospital, intent on healing and continuing their work, while they waited for their son to find them.
Chapter Summary

Scully and Mulder come back to the house after the events in This. They make a plan to replace the ruined items and take that trip to Ikea.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

January 2018

Scully

Leaning her head back on the couch, Scully sighed deeply. She was exhausted, in desperate need of a soak in the tub, and to sleep for about a day. She rolled her neck from side-to-side and Mulder sighed beside her.

“I’m exhausted, Scully. Jesus,” he said with a huge yawn. She closed her eyes and nodded her head.

He turned off his phone to thwart off any chance of simulation Langley 2.0 getting ahold of him. Scully sighed again as she shifted her body, bumping his shoulder with hers. She breathed deeply as Mulder started to snore lightly. Smiling at the familiarity of sitting on the couch with him this way, she relaxed and was asleep in minutes.

She dreamt of stairs that went on forever, her leg muscles on fire. Mulder was just out of sight. She could hear his voice telling her to get those little legs moving. No matter how hard she tried, she never caught up.

Then, she was in a coffee shop, the taste and smell of coffee making her stomach rumble. A muffin on a plate making her mouth water.

In the way back of a bus, he was telling her she looked good, as he looked at her with the eyes that made her feel weak. He leaned in and his lips were on hers, his tongue lazily exploring her mouth. She moaned, and he pulled her into his lap, his hands on her ass. The seat tilted back and her hands went to his neck as she pushed her hips into him. He groaned her name, his mouth at her throat, his hands tugging at her hair.

His mouth moved down her throat and across the skin exposed above her top. He kissed the hollow of her throat, her necklace under his lips pressing into her skin, looking up into her eyes.

“Making out in the back of a public bus. Why, Miss Scully, you are such a naughty girl,” he said in his sultry voice that always made her wet.

“Mmm, you know how naughty I can be, Mulder, don’t act so surprised,” she murmured before devouring his mouth, her tongue licking, teeth nipping.

His hands went to her breasts and she rocked into him again. “God, I’ve missed this,” he groaned as she put her hands on his chest and arched into him. “Your breasts are perfect and fit so well in
“Your mouth too,” she moaned and he chuckled. “Mulder, I want your mouth on me.” She looked at him, and he snorted. He did it again, causing her to jump.

She opened her eyes and discovered she was not on a bus, but on the couch at their house. It was later then when they sat down, the light in the house different. They had shifted in their sleep, still sitting up, but at an angle. She was laying against his chest with her arm wrapped loosely around him. His was around her shoulder and he was snoring again. She quietly laughed out a breath at the feelings her dream had stirred up.

No, not just the dream. The dream was only exacerbating what she really did want — him and to be home again. Yet she was also afraid and did not know how to say it. It seemed easy enough, but since when was anything between them easy.

Since they started working together again, she felt a pull from him. It ramped up recently, a growing desire she had denied for too long. After she was attacked, almost goddamn killed, they came here. He would not hear of her being alone, wanting to be sure she was okay. She relented, not wanting to fully admit how much the seizures and the attack had rattled her.

When they arrived, he offered her his bed, their bed, but she could not face sleeping there. It would have been too much. Too many memories of lovemaking, cuddling, late night discussions, laughter, happiness, and tears over a patient or William. The memories of the last time she was in bed with him and what it represented still hung over her. No, she was not ready to face those feelings.

Instead, she stayed in a room ten feet from him that may as well have been ten miles. She slept in the twin bed they had originally bought for her mother, on the off chance she ever wanted to stay over after a visit. She went to bed that first night emotional and in desperate need of sleep.

Over the next few days, they settled into a temporary cohabitation. The ease at which they did, was not surprising to her. Content in the knowledge that together they knew the other was safe, they let down their walls, little by little, and slipped back into what was comfortable and familiar. She missed being there and living with him in the familiarity of that little unremarkable house.

The nights in the house were the hardest. She would lay in that small bed with her heart pounding, knowing she could simply walk across the hall and go to him. One night she gathered up the courage and stood outside their bedroom door. Her hand on the doorknob, head resting against the wood as she decided on her next move. She knew he would not refuse her. She knew it beyond a shadow of a doubt. He would welcome her and give her what she needed. He would take pity on her fear and want to make it better.

She did not want his pity, though. She did not want it years ago, when opportunities presented themselves during their early working years and the answer could have been found in the solace of sex. It would have led them nowhere but down a path of heartache. She did want pity to bring them together then, and she did not want it to be what brought them back together now. Her heart heavy, she went back to her own bed, lonely and longing for him.

She left the house the next day and went back to her place. It felt cold and empty when she got there. Everything in its place and organized. No mess, no character. No Mulder cracking seeds or yelling at the Knicks games. No soul in that house. No happiness, love, or memories.

No Mulder.
He sent her a text message later as she sat and looked around her soulless home. He said he was engulfed in a loud silence now that she was gone, and she smiled sadly. That little house must have felt as empty to him as hers did to her. She sent a message back saying she did not know how she would be content with the ease of finding things at her place, after practically needing a hunting license to find things there with the clutter being so out of hand. He responded with a smiley face emoji that made her grin. Mulder did not do emojis. He was old school.

Seeing that happy emoji left her smiling as she went to bed that night. But when she was under the covers, alone, she sighed. Her bed was empty. She missed *their* bed. The sheets at her lonely house were soft, but not like the ones at home that were worn in and full of memories. They did not have the same smell, no matter if the same soap was used. And the sheets at her place did not hold the man she loved more than anything and missed with an ache that was excruciating.

Those recent memories fresh in her head as she lay against him now on the couch, her dream still feeling very real, and hearing his heartbeat, she sighed and closed her eyes. He smelled so good, even after a couple of days without a shower. This was the scent she loved most. The one of chasing down a suspect, late night stakeouts, and long car rides. This was *her* Mulder, the one who drove her crazy in every possible way.

He was still snoring softly as she grew bold and ran her fingers across his chest. The firmness of it the same and yet different. He stepped up his workout routine recently and he was more muscular than before. How she avoided stripping him of his clothes, she did not know. She traced a heart opposite the one she could hear beating in her ear and closed her eyes, her fingers still.

He shifted and stopped his snoring, clearing his throat. His hand on her upper arm tightened and then relaxed, as he took a deep breath. She stayed still, not quite ready to move. Hesitantly, he moved his hand from her shoulder to her head, where he began to massage and run his fingers through her hair.

“What time is it?” he sleepily asked, letting her know that he knew she was awake. He always knew.

“I don’t know,” she breathed, still not moving, her eyes closed.

“The light is different, it’s been a couple of hours at least,” he yawned, his fingers at her neck. She smiled as their thoughts were the same upon waking.

“Yeah,” she answered, and wrapped her arm around him, snuggling closer. His fingers stilled and then stroked her hair again. Neither spoke, but they understood that *this* was okay, and they would welcome these little steps.

A few minutes went by before she moved, starting to sit up and disentangle from him. His hand slid from her hair and down her arm as she sat up. He looked at her and she saw the question in his eyes, but she knew she needed to leave. The past couple of days, her dream, their cuddly nap, she needed to put some distance between them, even if what she really wanted to do was kiss him until he made that noise she loved and his fingers dug into her hips.

“I should get going,” she said quietly, her eyes on his lips. He nodded, the hand that was in her hair, now on his chest. So badly she wanted to lay back down and be held by him. To go upstairs, feel him inside her, and then fall asleep in his arms.

Instead, she stood up and cleared her throat, rubbing her hands across her thighs. He sat up and kept his eyes on her, unnerving her, and making her ability to leave harder.
“This place is a mess, I could help you clean up?” she suggested and he shook his head.

“Nah, I’ll get to it, but I desperately need a shower and some more sleep,” he said, standing up and stretching. She looked away as his stomach was slightly exposed, the temptation to touch it too overwhelming.

She stepped over the files and other mess on her way toward the front door. He walked with her and sighed. “Those fuckers, seriously. I really liked that dining room table. I mean, I really liked it,” he said and she turned around to give him a look, knowing exactly what he meant.

“It was a very good table. Nice and sturdy,” she replied saucily. He raised his eyebrows at her and grinned. “You’ll need to take that trip to Ikea and see if you can find another like it.” He nodded and looked longingly at her.

Go now, Dana.

“You sure-”

“Would you-”

They both laughed and she gestured for him to continue. “I was going to ask if you wanted to accompany me to Ikea? Later today, after we’ve both showered, and perhaps burned these clothes?” he asked, making a face. She laughed and nodded.

“How about you take inventory and we can meet up to grab dinner first and then drive over to Ikea together? No sense taking two cars over there,” she suggested. He nodded with a smile and she smirked. “I’ll touch base with you after I’ve burned these clothes and smell squeaky clean again.”

“I didn’t want to say anything, but yeah … you do smell bad,” he admitted.

“You just cost yourself an ice cream from Ikea,” she said with a shrug.

“Oh come on!” he cried and she shrugged again, her eyebrows going up as well.

“You’ll have to do something to change my mind, otherwise …” she lifted her hands and shrugged once more before opening the door and heading out to her car.

“I’ll change your mind!” She heard him yell as she walked down the steps and she smiled, completely aware he would be successful.

And he would grin like a child as he ate his treat, knowing full well he knew how to get exactly what he wanted. She shook her head again as she drove away, a huge smile plastered on her face.

_________________________

Mulder

Mulder grinned as he went upstairs to shower and sleep for a few more hours. Waking up to Scully cuddled beside him was like old times and also something new. They were getting back to them, slowly but surely, and the past couple of days felt like they had never been apart.

He stripped and stepped into the shower, rinsing away the recent sweat, worry, and fear. What a whirlwind it had been, and yet he grinned. Yeah, it was scary, nerve wracking, and confusing, but it was also a rush. Like the old days- thinking on their feet, running from the bad guys, just them against the world.
Washed and feeling better, he stepped out and dried off. Slipping on a pair of boxers, he flopped onto the bed, and was asleep in no time.

He woke up a few hours later. The sun was still out, but definitely closer to evening than morning. He stood up and stretched, put on some clothes, and headed downstairs. Looking around at the mess, he sighed, no desire within him to deal with it. He stepped over and across the mess and went into the kitchen.

The table was destroyed, not salvageable in the slightest, unless bullet holes made for a talking point. Broken remnants from the quick meal of soup and crackers they enjoyed, was all over the floor. He shook his head and sighed again. What a pain in the ass.

“I’ll miss you old friend. We certainly had some good times, huh?” he said as he picked up the table and moved it against the wall. Meals, game nights, and sexual activities took place on that table. Shaking his head again as the memories presented themselves, he started to clean up the broken dishes.

Adding a few new plates, bowls, and glasses to the list, he went into the living room. A broken lamp and a small table. Not to mention the splintered wood on the stairs and the blown apart door. Well, that he would have to deal with later. Ikea did not carry everything. The landline rang, shattering the quiet of the house, and he jumped at the sound.

“Hello?”

“Mulder, it’s me,” came Scully’s voice, and he smiled.

“Hey, Scully.”

“Mulder, I’ve been trying your cell. Did you forget to turn it back on?” she asked in her Scullyest of tones.

“Ahh, I may have,” he said, walking over to the couch and retrieving his phone from the coffee table where he sat it earlier.

“What’s up, Scully?” he asked as he restarted his phone.

“We’re still on for Ikea, right?”

“Yeaaaah,” he said distractedly, as he saw he had four new texts from her.

4:45

Mulder, waking up from a nap, have to fix my hair as I fell asleep with it wet. It looks worse than those old shoulder padded suits I used to wear.

5:10

Mulder? Are you awake? Hair finally good, gonna put on some makeup and then I’m ready to roll.

5:20

Mulder? Mulder? Muuuuuuuuuuuuuuulder?

5:30

Seriously? Come on. Sushi?
The last message was followed by six sushi emojis and he smiled. Scully and those silly emojis. She loved them and he used them sometimes because he knew it made her laugh and roll her eyes at the “old school” Mulder trying to be hip and cool.

“Mulder, you there?” she asked with a sigh.

“Yeah, just reading your texts. Sorry, I didn’t have the phone turned on. We’re still on, just made a list of what’s needed. And sushi? Eh, how about tacos from Eduardo’s? I’m not feeling sushi tonight,” he said as he put on his shoes and grabbed his jacket.

“Fine,” she sighed. “But I still want to try that sushi place I was telling you about. The automated one. It’s supposed to be good.”

“I don’t know, Scully,” he told her as he got in the car and turned it on. “Automated sushi? Sounds like an accident waiting to happen.” She laughed and he grinned. He loved hearing her happy.

“All right, meet you at Eduardo’s in thirty minutes,” she said and hung up. He smiled again and turned on the radio.

An hour and a half later, they were sitting in the Ikea parking lot. “This is perfect,” she said. “They close soon, so there’s no time for your usual dilly-dallying. We’ll get in, get what’s needed, and get out.”

“Excuse me, Scully,” he scoffed, getting out of the car. “But you’re the one who’s always insistent on looking in the faux homes, so shut up.” She rolled her eyes as she stepped next to him.

“Whatever you say, Mr. As-is,” she countered.

“Hey, we found some good stuff in there, and I didn’t have to put anything together that time. So who’s laughing now?” he said with a bump to her side. She nodded and smiled but said nothing, not even a comment about his slip of the use of we. Or maybe she heard and she was happy with it.

He was not going to think too much about it. Instead, he would enjoy a normal night with her and not one where they were being chased down. She stepped to the escalator and looked at him.

“Start upstairs and work down?” she asked.

“You comin’ onto me, Scully?” he joked and she raised her eyebrows, giving him a look he could not quite place. “Yeah I need to check out the tables, then we will be able to as you say work down.” He grinned at her, and she lightly chuckled.

Heading directly to the tables, he was overjoyed to find the exact same one they had before, minus the carnage it experienced recently. He grinned at her as he wrote down the stall number on a piece of paper, his mind already imagining breaking the new one in, in due time. Picking out a small side table was easy and they headed downstairs.

The dish area created a discussion. He was fine with the plain easygoing everyday items and she thought something nicer would be better.

“Why nicer when these are fine?” he asked, holding up the blue bowls he found.

“Why not nicer when they are almost the same price? They don’t have to be considered nicer when you use them everyday, then they are just the norm,” she answered, showing him the white plates she found. “Look at the depth of the bowl, you could get a lot of salad in there …”
“Or ice cream,” he added as he set his choice down and took the one from her hand. “Okay, let’s get these.” He waited to see if she would correct him or say anything about his assumptions of them, but she only smiled.

He picked out a set of all new dishes instead of just replacing the ones that broke. If she liked the fancier everyday dishes, he would purchase all the store had to offer, if it meant she was enjoying a meal in their home again. She raised her eyebrows, but said nothing as he placed it in the cart they had grabbed.

“Now, let’s go find the matching fancy everyday glasses that go with these plates,” he said, walking toward them as she rolled her eyes.

He picked out the plain smooth glasses and she nodded. Grinning, he set them in the cart and she smiled back at him. It was a perfect combination, just like them. She classed up everything, including him.

A light was quickly decided on, and they headed for the warehouse. Row after row of items was passed until the ones they needed were discovered close to each other. He added the table to the cart first, it sticking out at funky angle, but small enough that they did not need a flat cart.

The table was next and as he went to put it in the cart, he saw a woman trying to add a box to her flat cart and having some trouble.

“Here, let me help you,” he said as he walked over to her. She thanked him profusely and they soon had it added to her collection of boxes. Thanking him again, she walked away.

“My my my, you will go to great lengths for that ice cream won’t you?” Scully said, shaking her head and crossing her arms, as he walked back to her. “You mentioned it upstairs, now you’re helping those in need, I mean …” she shrugged and started to walk away.

He laughed and grabbed the side table and added it to the cart, before he followed her down the aisle. “Told you I’d change your mind.” She smiled at him, and they walked toward the checkout line.

Considering the hour, the lines were not too long. While he waited, she went to get the ice creams. When she came back, and handed his to him, he grinned.

“Ahhh, Scully,” he said and took a big bite. She shuddered as she did every time she watched him do that, always telling him it was amazing he never got brain freeze.

“Good evening,” the checker greeted them and scanned their items. “Are you interested in adding help to assemble the items your purchasing today?”

Mulder glanced at Scully, and she frowned. “Seriously? A table and a smaller table? Surely you can handle that? Well, I suppose there was the bookshelf …”

“Hey,” he replied with a wounded tone and the checker laughed. “What exactly is it and when would it happen?” He asked as he looked at her.

“It’s a service provided, for a fee, to put together your items. And I can give you the number to check on availability,” she explained.

“No, I think I’ll see how it goes and if I run into any trouble, I’ll give them a call. But thank you,” he answered. He paid for the items and they walked out to the car. Handing her his ice cream to hold, he loaded them into the car and closed the door.
She gave him his ice cream back as he got in the car and he smiled his thanks. They drove back to her car parked at Eduardo’s in comfortable silence. Pulling up to it, she unbuckled her seatbelt and smiled at him.

“This was fun, and definitely better than the last forty eight hours,” she said, reaching for the door handle. He laughed and nodded as she opened the door. Stepping out, she turned around. “Make sure you tighten every screw on that table, Mulder. We wouldn’t want it to not be sturdy.” She smiled and raised an eyebrow before shutting the door, leaving him completely dumbfounded.

He waited until she drove away to head back home, his mind buzzing as to what her words meant. Any time she flirted with him, it left him dazed and tripping over his tongue. No matter that they were all but legally married, her flirtatiousness always thrilled him. She definitely seemed to be coming onto him this time.

Getting on the highway, he made a promise to himself. That table was going to be the sturdiest table ever. It would be ready to prove to her how sturdy when the chance arose, or he would die trying. No outside help would be required, he was going to tackle this task on his own.

A woman’s pleasure was on the line, for God’s sake, the stakes had never been higher.

Chapter End Notes

I love this chapter. This was a fantastic episode and full of super shippy moments. So many sweet and sexy things were witnessed.
Chapter Summary

Scully wakes from a bad dream, one that hit a little too close to home, and she seeks out Mulder for comfort and reassurance.

Chapter Notes

Okay ... so the next five chapters of this story are ones I have already posted. They were planned to be a part of this one, but I got too excited and had to post them early. I am adding them into the story here and not just providing a link as I want to keep the flow of the story cohesive and not have you clicking in and out.

I have cleaned up the chapters a bit as even from last year to now, my writing has improved and this story has also progressed in a different way than originally planned. I am leaving the original post as is, horrible sentence structure and all, but fixing it up in here a bit.

I hope no one finds this odd, but like I said, it IS a part of the story and just needed to be written sooner. I love them and they do tell the story and anything new I would have written, would not have been as good as these next five.

Today you get two chapters of Plus One. 😊 Thank you and I hope you enjoy them.

January 2018

Scully was running, running fast. She tripped and fell, trying to scramble up to keep going. She could hear laughing, and it sounded like her own voice. She got up, but could feel scrapes on her knees, making running harder. The laughter grew louder.

She could see Mulder off in the distance, and called out to him, but he did not hear her. She kept running limply toward him, shouting his name.

“Dried up. No use to anyone anymore. Might as well face it, honey, he could do with a better model,” she heard a voice saying, followed by a cackling laugh.

“Mulder!” she heard herself scream, but still nothing happened. He did not hear her.

Then she saw herself step close to him and he smiled. She stopped running in confusion. Then she saw herself touch his chest, sliding her arms around his neck, he stared at her and then they kissed. Kissed in a way that she missed so much, it made her ache.

She called to him, screaming that she was not her, to stop. She tried running again, but found she was frozen in place. She tried to move and she could not do it. She fell to the ground and sobbed, raising her head to call out one last time.
She met her own eyes, her own self, and saw the knife held in her hands. “He deserves so much more than you. What can you give him? Heartache and pain? You already did that, why would you do it again? Take the knife. You know what to do,” she heard herself say as she placed the cool metal in her own hands.

She stared at it, about to drop it and leave it behind, when it was grabbed and thrust into her heart. She felt it rip into her, cutting her heart in half. She heard the cackling laugh echoing around her as she took her last gasping breath and woke up in her hotel room.

She took a deep breath and rolled over anticipating seeing her double standing there like she had seen earlier. No one was there. No devil. No monster. Not even Mulder. She lay there, on her back, taking gasping breaths, trying to calm her racing heart and mind.

God ... that had felt so real, so believable. She could still feel the pain of the knife in her heart. The way it seemed to tear her in half, the same way she had felt for years now, like half of her missing. She took a deep breath, closed her eyes, and tried to calm down.

Seeing her double tonight had scared her, truly scared her. She did not want to admit it to herself or to Mulder, but it had. Considering what it could mean, she felt ... she honestly did not know the words to describe it. She knew she was extremely creeped out and after that dream she did not know what to think.

With the attacks on both of their lives recently, she felt on edge and nervous, even without this case. She was trying to move past it, but it had been unnerving. After she was almost killed in the hospital, she felt unable to face being alone, but did not want to admit to any weakness. Mulder had simply looked at her and she knew he would not be letting her leave his side. She stayed with him for a few days and had been incredibly grateful for his support and understanding.

When this new case had been brought to Mulder’s attention, she was happy. Being away meant they spent more time together, and had a chance to do their thing they had perfected over the years. They worked well together, still the same back and forth she loved, the same ability to read each other, but she missed him. Missed them. She wanted to talk. Figure things out and move forward. They just needed ... more of a push.

It was hard not to believe in signs when the universe seemed to give them the exact push they needed. Only one room, a suite, was available at this hotel. She was hesitant the same way Mulder seemed to feel completely calm. Her look to him, seemed to surprise him as he appeared to be perfectly fine settling back once again into cohabitation.

She had wanted to get away, be close again, but she did not know about that close. Him right in the other room, undressed, and all Muldery close? No. She still wanted, no needed, some space. She needed to be able to think without the distraction he caused her, and that was not going to happen while they shared a room.

She had felt better about the circumstance with the news of a pullout couch. The thought of sharing a bed was definitely too much. Being close to him that way, especially now, she was sure she would have dropped her guard. If she let him in, after all the progress she made, and then worried about it later, she knew it might not end well, and that would not do either of them any good.

Mulder took the pullout couch without question, though he did look at her longingly as he headed to bed. She shut the connecting door and stood there for a minute, wanting to go to him, but knowing she could not, not yet.

Then this case began in earnest, testing her in ways she had not been prepared for when she arrived.
Thoughts of her advancing age bubbled up, ones she had not known were so close to the surface. She could not escape the fact that she was getting older, she knew it. She could see it in the mirror every day, how her face was changing, the lines every woman worried about. Did Mulder see her that way when he looked at her or did he see the young woman he fell in love with so long ago? Sometimes it seemed that version of her was buried beneath a mountain of those hideous pantsuits she used to wear, and had instead been replaced with this older version of herself.

He was older, of course he was, but she found him just as desirable as she ever had. She loved him and did not care about the lines around his face. He simply looked distinguished, rugged, even more handsome, as it seemed to go with men when they aged. He could even get away with greying hair, while she covered hers. The lines on his face showed distinguish and wisdom, while hers just showed age.

*The double standard there could fuck right off,* she thought angrily.

She was not sure if it was her age, her lack of intimacy recently, or simply Judy’s words, but she had felt older these past couple of nights. She asked him point blank if he thought she was old, simply to see what he would say. Even after all this time, the past few years especially, she still felt the need for reassurance. To know she was still desirable, especially to him.

His smile as he sat down next to her and then his response, made her happy and made her smile. She did not show it too much though, finding no reason to encourage his cocky attitude. But, he left her feeling things she felt she should keep bottled up, at least for the time being.

Stretching as she thought about sitting on the bed with him tonight, it had been hard to resist the urge to climb in his lap and kiss him. To unbutton his shirt a bit more and lick his neck where she knew he liked and would always make him gasp. She wanted his hands on her. To feel them under her shirt, spanning across her back, moving to cup her breasts. Under her skirt, his hands on her ass as he slid his tongue in her mouth.

God, she loved kissing him.

It was for the best that she got him out of the room when she did, before she acted on those feelings. Or taken his words to heart and knocked three times on the closed door.

She took a deep breath and let it out, staring at the ceiling, shaking her head, thinking of her dream again. It was as if her own subconscious was giving her a sign. Another push since she seemed to need another one. Showing her she needed to decide if she would allow herself to kill her chances or drop the knife and move forward. She could not stay at this impasse anymore, she needed to move or stay still forever.

He had come to her many times now. Never pushing, never demanding anything from her, but letting his presence be known. She knew she needed to get up, she needed to go to him, and she had to get this started. They would never move forward if they continued staring at that starting line. No more hesitancy or fear. Time to move. Decision made, she pushed the covers back and sat up.

She slowly and quietly walked into the room. He was sleeping with his back to her so she was able to get close before he realized she was in the room. *Here we go,* she thought, *time to take that step forward."

“Oh. Speak of the devil,” he said as he rolled over.

“I can’t sleep, Mulder.”
“What’s the problem?”

“Something about this case is getting under my skin.” Keep it vague. See how it goes. No sudden moves.

“Well, we’ve had stranger cases, Scully,” he said as he regarded her, his pillow plumped up with his head resting on his hand.

Time to see what happens. She already knew what his answer to her next question would be, but still her stomach was nervous.

“How can you hold me?’ Please, she seemed to feel her heart saying, please do not refuse this request. Please see the action being taken, the steps being made.

A beat.

“Yes, I can do that,” he said as he pulled the covers back, inviting her to lie down.

Thank fucking God. The starting gun had gone off and one foot had crossed the starting line. For although they had shared a bed at random times in the past few years, this felt different.

She got into bed with him and his arms wrapped around her. She was in the Mulder cocoon she loved and missed so much. His comfort and his love, the warmth of his body against hers. So much needed to be said, so much hung in the balance. She just needed to get there. To take that next step.

“What’s gonna happen?” she asked, still keeping it vague, but asking an underlying serious question.

“What’s gonna happen when?” he responded.

“When we’re old,” she said, again asking and showing worry over her age. Was she too old? Dried up, no use to anyone, still rang in her ears ...

“What do you mean ‘when’?” he asked jokingly.

She smiled slightly, wanting so badly to ask what she needed to know, but she was being a fucking coward. She felt it. Her fear threatened to choke her.

“I mean.. sooner or later we’re gonna retire and..” she said. Yes, Dana ... keep it about the job.

“Hmm,” he murmured his agreement.

“Are we gonna spend … time together?” She missed him so much. She could not be without him again. She needed him.

“I’ll come push your wheelchair with my wheelchair,” he said, close to her ear. His voice and touch made her feel lightheaded.

They laughed quietly at his joke.

“That’s not what I mean,” she still felt like the path was blocked. Someone seemed to have placed hurdles in her path as she tried to keep pace with him.

Spit it out, Dana. He is not going to offer it up, he is waiting for you.
“Oh. I’ll always be around, Scully. Offering bulletproof theories of genius that you fail to assail with your inadequate rationality,” he said, lighthearted and noncommittal. She knew he was waiting for more. Knew it in her bones.

She exhaled a laugh, knowing she had to keep up the banter. Get through the jokes to get to the deeper stuff. Fun before serious. Hips before hands.

“And I’ll always be around to prove you wrong,” she said. She wanted to be with him, but she was still terrified to say it. She prayed that he was hearing what she was not saying.

“Hmm,” he muttered in agreement.

“Promise.” _Forever, Mulder_, she thought, and he held her tighter, shifting around a little.

“No, but that’s not what I mean.”

“What do you mean?” he asked with a sigh, as if he knew where this was headed. She sighed as she felt it bubbling. So close now. Here it comes.

_Say it, Dana. Just fucking say it._

“What if you meet someone?” There it was, her biggest fear laid out there, floating around the room. If he ever did meet someone ... she was sure it would fucking kill her.

He pulled back and she heard him sigh deeply. She felt braver asking this question when she was not facing him. She did not want him to see her weakness when it came to him, she was supposed to be strong. She always presented herself as such, but when it came to him, she was weak. It scared the shit out of her, being so dependent on him.

“What if you meet someone ... younger who ... wants to have kids?” She felt him sigh deeply, and her heart pounded. God. Please do not let that be a possibility. He would not want someone else … please ...

“Oh, that’s what you mean,” he sighed. “Well … you could do the same. You could meet someone and ... have kids,” he said, although she felt his change of tone, his hesitation to say it.

She laughed. “Mulder, that’s not gonna happen.” Finding someone else was out of the question. No one could compare to him. Besides she was too old, dried up. Who would want someone with nothing to offer?

“That’s nonsense,” he scoffed at her.

“No it’s not. I’m … I’m at the end of that journey,” she said firmly and also sadly.

“Do you want to have more kids?” he asked her seriously.

“Well ... I would have liked to have had another one,” she said not quite believing they are having this discussion _now_. It was years overdue. Why not discuss it when they could have possibly done something? God, they were so bad at communicating how they felt.

“Mm,” he mumbled against her again, and she felt the vibrations in her back.

“At the risk of sounding insensitive, what’s … stopping you?” he asked, honestly curious.

“Mmm … besides the fact that the first time was a miracle? And besides the fact that … I don’t … have anyone to have one with even if I could?” she asked sadly. No one would be good enough but
him. The Mulder family passed genetic muster. This particular Mulder set up his flag long ago, staking his claim and it was not coming down now. But they were in such a weird place right now. How could she ask him to even entertain the thought when they were not together anymore? Late night bed cuddling notwithstanding.

“You’re a woman of science,” he offered up as a way to maybe figure something out and she exhaled a laugh.

Science only went so far. She could go that route, but where was the love? The man to hold her when she was scared? To offer up bulletproof genius theories? To curse God for her? To make her laugh and feel so loved? No. This time science had failed her.

“Mulder, sometimes I think the world is going to hell and that we’re the only two people who can save it,” she said, knowing the visions she had seen and the shitshow the country was in at the moment.

“The world is going to hell, Scully. The president working to bring down the FBI along with it,” he said in a disgusted tone.

“What if we lose our jobs?” she asked him.

“Yeah. Then what would we do?” he asked back, leaving the path clear.

She lay there thinking. What would they do? This job ... it had become about him, about them. If they did not have that again, where would that lead? Separate lives? Not seeing each other again? No. That was not something she desired. She needed him and he needed her.

She wanted to go back. No ... not back, forward. She just needed to move, to take that step. The path was becoming clear again and she could almost see the finish line. Turning over, she stared at him, looking him up and down before she smiled.

Time to cross that line. Together.

“We’ll think of something,” she said with a smile. He stared and smiled back. She looked at his lips and took a breath. His hand on her stomach grounded her as his eyes bore into hers. She saw him look at her lips and she took another breath.

“Scully,” he whispered. “I’m here. When you’re ready. I’m right here.” His hand slid down to her hip, holding her, but not demanding anything.

“Mulder ...” she whispered as she touched his face, shaking her head slightly. Stroking his cheek and then his lips, he closed his eyes at her touch.

“I’m ready,” she said barely above a whisper. He opened his eyes and searched her face. She smiled at him, her hand going to his neck. “I’m ready,” she said in a stronger voice, tears in her eyes.

He smiled and kept his eyes on her. “Then kiss me,” he said quietly, a smile on his lips.

And she did. She kissed him like he was all the oxygen she needed for the rest of her life. As if she would never get a chance to breathe again. She kissed his lips, his cheeks, his neck as he pulled her close and then on top of him.

She straddled him as she kissed him deeply, her tongue stroking across his, his hands on her ass, just as she had wanted earlier. She moaned into his mouth as she felt him begin to harden under
She pulled back from him and started unbuttoning her top. He moved her hands and did it for her. As soon as her top was open, he put his hands on her waist and slid them around her back, pushing her back down to his mouth. His hands ran across her back and up to her hair, holding her against him.

Her breasts pressed to his chest made her dizzy. So many memories of this exact situation and position presented themselves to her. Rainy nights, hot mornings, afternoons where they had spent hours simply exploring each other’s bodies.

She pushed up and slipped her shirt off, tossing it behind her. She heard him groan as his hands landed on her waist and slid up to cup her breasts. She gasped as he squeezed them and then rolled her nipples. Her head fell back and she rested her hands on his thighs.

“Mulder,” she moaned as she rocked her hips against him.

He grabbed her waist and flipped them so he was on top. She giggled at the sudden movement and then sighed when he kissed her neck and licked under her jaw. He kept going down and kissing her body. She ran her fingers in his hair and smiled.

God, she missed feeling him on her. His lips, his hands, his weight. His smell surrounding her as he brought her pleasure. He stopped at her breasts and took one in his mouth, sucking and then nipping at her nipple. She cried out and felt herself get wet.

Sweet Jesus ... this man ...

He took the other breast in his mouth as he held the other in his hand. He squeezed lightly and then pinched her nipple and she bucked into him. She could feel his erection pressing into her through their clothes. She wanted him inside her so badly. It had been far too long.

“Mulder,” she gasped as he took his mouth off her breast and held both of them in his hands, staring at them, as if seeing them for the very first time.

“Scully,” he said quietly, shaking his head, as he leaned down, holding her breasts in his hands, covering her more with his weight. He looked into her eyes, so full of love. “How could you be worried about being ‘old’? You are so beautiful it makes me ache. You always have been, and you always will be. Your mind, your body. You are beauty personified. Please don’t ever doubt that you are not.” He stared at her as her eyes filled with tears and she smiled slightly. He nodded at her and then lifted up again.

He continued his descent down her body. She laid back and stroked his hair as he felt his mouth on her stomach, her belly button. Then his fingers gripped the sides of her pajama bottoms and pulled. She shimmied her hips to allow him easier access. She heard his deep exhale at finding her without underwear and she smirked. She felt the silkiness of the pants slide all the way off her body, to be replaced by his hands stroking up her legs. Jesus Christ ...

He picked up where he left off and kissed across her stomach, dipping his tongue in her belly button and swirling it around. She panted and gripped his head, feeling him smile against her skin before he kissed there once again. Then his lips were on her hip bones, kissing and licking his way across them.

She arched her body toward him and he grinned as he raised his head and looked at her. She met his eyes and he smiled wickedly. She raised her eyebrows at him and he licked his lips and looked
down, then back up at her again. She stopped breathing and felt her body respond to his look.

He moved down and held her legs open as he settled between them. She felt her legs shake as she knew where he was headed. He was so good at this act, she felt almost on the verge already. It would not take long to make her scream.

“Mulder!” she screamed, when he kissed her center and then licked from bottom to top, sucking her clit as he reached it. Her legs squeezed his head and her fingernails dug into his scalp.

He sucked harder and then licked her flatly with his tongue. He ran his hands up and down the outside of her thighs as he kissed and tongued her. She whined and thrust her hips into his face, crying his name loudly over and over. His short nails scratched along her thighs and her body shook.

He moved his hands and put one arm on her waist and brought the other to her opening. He lifted his mouth and looked at her as he slid two fingers inside her. She gasped and arched her back off the bed, his arm holding her firm.

“Mulder, oh my God. Jesus, I’m so close. Fuck ...” she cried out as she felt him sliding his fingers in and out.

“Scully, lean up on your elbows and watch me. I want you to look at me while I make you come. I want to see your face,” he said in his gravelly sex voice and her legs shook again.

It had been so long since she heard that voice, felt his mouth on her, and his fingers sliding inside her. She wanted to scream. To bring the walls down with her screams of pleasure. What did he say? Oh, right ... he wanted to watch her come. Well, it would not be long now.

She pulled herself up on her elbows and she could see his fingers sliding in and out, at the same time she could feel them. She watched for a few seconds, his fingers shiny with her wetness, and she felt her orgasm building.

She looked at his face and his eyes were so dark, so deep, she could have drown in them. He bent and licked her clit as he slid his fingers in and out all the way a few times. Then slid them in and crooked them toward himself as he sucked her clit into his mouth.

“JESUS CHRIST!” she screamed as she felt her climax explode all around her. Wave after wave of pleasure coursed through her body.

She could not keep her eyes open as they rolled back in her head and she bucked her hips hard into his face. He kept licking softly as he slowly slid his fingers in and out. She was shaking all over and felt like she was floating above herself.

Jesus fucking Christ, she thought, he was so good at that. She took a deep breath and looked down at him.

He still had his eyes on her as he licked her and then kissed her again as he slid his fingers out of her. He raised his head and sucked them into his mouth and stared at her as he licked them clean. Her heart was pounding and she was not sure she could have been any wetter, and then he did that, his eyes never leaving hers.

“Mulder ... that was ...fucking amazing. Oh ... sweet Jesus. Get up here and ... kiss me,” she panted out as she sat up and reached for him.

He pulled his fingers from his mouth and climbed over her, pushing her back down. She felt his
erect, big and hard, bump her center and she moaned. She needed a minute and he knew it. He always knew.

He loomed over her, his hands on either side of her as she wrapped her legs around his waist, holding him loosely. He came up higher and his erection prodded her stomach. She gripped the back of his head and pulled him down for a kiss.

Oh, she loved tasting herself on his mouth. She knew he loved going down on her and that he loved when she kissed him so thoroughly when he was done. It was a turn on for both of them and fucking hell had she missed it.

She moaned as his tongue slid against hers and she felt him against her. She pulled back and let go of him as she moved her legs to hold on tighter.

“Mulder, I’m ready. I want you inside me,” she said, still a little out of breath, as she reached down to grasp him and rub the head of his cock through his boxers.

“Scully,” he hissed and pulled her hand away. “I ... this ... it’s going to be very fast and be over too quickly if you do that. I ... just give me a minute,” he said apologetically as he leaned his forehead against hers.

“I don’t care if it’s fast. I ... I just want to feel you Mulder. It’s been so long, I need you right now. Please,” she begged as she wrapped her legs tighter around him, pulling him closer.

He pulled back from her and looked in her eyes. She smiled at him and she reached up with both hands and held his face. She took a deep breath and leaned up to kiss him again, running her tongue across his lips.

He sat back and she let him go. He stood up and pulled his boxers off and then his tank top. Settling back between her legs, he brought her legs up around his hips, as he began to slowly slide into her.

“It’s been awhile, right? Best to stick with the classic position. See how the old girl performs” he breathed as she gasped and gave him a look. He slid all the way in and her legs tightened around him, holding him still.

“That better not have been a crack about me ... oh fuck ...” she moaned, feeling her body stretch to accept him. Yes, this was what she had been missing.

He leaned over her, laughed and waited. She took a deep breath and exhaled, relaxing her tight grip on him. He pulled out and then pushed back in as they both groaned. He slid forward on his forearms and begin thrusting a little faster.

“Are you fucking kidding me?” he said close to her ear. “In no way was that ... a crack about you ... Jesus, Scully ... you feel so fucking good. And did I not just tell you how beautiful you are? Ahh ... shit ... well they say hearing is the first to go.”

She laughed, and clenched her inner muscles, causing him to gasp. Then it was her turn to gasp as he picked up the pace. She met his thrusts and pulled him closer to her with her arms around him. She ran her nails down his back, relishing touching skin she had not felt in so long. She turned her face and buried her nose in his neck, inhaling his scent as he went even faster. God, she was already close to the edge again. She lay her head back on the pillows and began repeating his name, louder and louder, like a chant as she felt another orgasm approaching.

“Scully,” he said in a strained voice,”I’m... shit ... I’m so close. I ...” he slowed down and she
whined. 

“No, Mulder, don’t slow down ... I need you to go faster ... please, I’m so close again. Oh ...” she cried out as he did begin to go faster again, the couch bed shaking with his thrusts, thumping into the wall.

He raised up on his arms, palms planted on either side of her head and thrust harder. She unlocked her legs and planted her feet on the bed as she met his thrusts. She knew it would not be long for either of them. She knew his tells- the way he held his breath, how his body would stiffen. He was close.

Then she felt his exhale and he cried out her name as he came, spilling inside her. His release triggered her own and she cried his name as she came again. They fell over the edge together and then he collapsed on top of her, panting and saying her name.

She tried to catch her breath as he lay heavy upon her. She was breathing hard, her body still humming with pleasure and she did not want him to move. She loved feeling him on her, inside her. She wrapped her legs around him again. It had been too long since she had been with him and she had missed everything about him so much.

He kissed her neck as he lay on her and she shivered with the feeling. She heard him whispering her name as he peppered her neck with kisses, telling her she was beautiful, so beautiful.

She ran her nails up and down his back, into his hair, then down again. He was sweaty and she loved knowing it was from their joining together again. She felt so peaceful, so happy, content.

He kissed her neck again and lifted his head. They smiled at each other and kissed slowly, tongues languidly stroking, before he began to pull back. She groaned but dropped her legs and let him go. As soon as he moved she felt the chill of the room and she shivered. Mulder slid his boxers back on and grabbed the sheet. He covered her and kissed her before he walked to the other side of the bed.

She covered all the way up, chilly as the cool air hit her sweaty skin. He slid next to her and she put her head on his shoulder. He turned his head and kissed her forehead and she hummed as she scooted closer, tired but completely sated. Then her eyes flew open.

“Oh! Mulder ...” she groaned. “I left my phone in the car. Shit ...” she whined and started to get up. He sat up and pushed her back down, covering her again.

“I’ll get it for you, Scully. You go outside like that and you’re liable to give everyone within a twenty mile radius a heart attack,” he said as he slid his tank top on again.

She laughed huskily as she snuggled back into the pillows. “Well, I was going to get dressed before I did.”

“Don’t you fucking dare,” he said as he walked out of the room and she heard the door open and close. She laughed again and breathed in the scent of his pillows.

He was back relatively quickly. She heard him drop the keys down, and her phone being plugged in to charge, and she smiled at his thoughtfulness. He came back to the bed and lay down beside her. She scooted closer and rested her chin on his shoulder, covered by the sheet to keep off the chill, as she breathed deeply and evenly.

“Thank you, Mulder,” she whispered to him, the simple sentiment holding many meanings. More than she could properly voice as her exhausted mind and body fought a losing battle to stay awake.
He hummed out a response. “Whatever you need, Scully. I’m here.”

“I’m glad to hear it, Mulder,” she said sleepily, content to be beside the man she loved so very much.

His answering chuckle and deep breath were the last thing she heard before she dropped off to sleep.

No scary dreams, only peace.
And Then They Had Sex ... Twice

Chapter Summary

Mulder contemplates the conversation he and Scully had and the activities that transpired as a result.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

January 2018

Mulder could hear Scully breathing softly next to him. Her chin resting on his shoulder and her body pressed against his. She had come in the room claiming she was unable to sleep. Well, he thought with a pleased smile, she seemed worn out now.

He sobered as his mind replayed the last hour. Not the sex, no. Although, he thought glancing at her, seeing the curves of her body the sheet created, it had been fucking wonderful. Faster than he would have liked, but it had been a while. A long while. He smiled softly as she shifted a little and moaned, breathing his name. God, he missed that sound.

He leaned his head against hers and then slightly shook it. He thought of their conversation earlier, still astounded by what she had said, the questions she had laid on him.

“What if you meet someone?”

He knew she had been searching and feeling him out. She was seeing where they were going, professionally and personally. But that question shook him. He had been comfortably holding her and feeling content and drowsy. Then that question woke him the fuck up.

He literally had to pull back from her to construct an answer. He felt anger for a second that she would take the cowards way out and asked that when she could not see his face. Not see the emotions and shock that ran across his face at the mere suggestion of finding someone else.

He knew her though and what she was asking terrified her. She was strong, so much stronger than him. Admitting she needed him, depended on him, it scared the shit out of her, it always had. He knew that, knew it in his very soul. Showing that vulnerability was hard enough for her. Asking in the dark, not facing him, was not cowardice. It was fear and she was ashamed of it.

They had not discussed anything like they should, but yet there she was, reaching out. She was trying. He knew he could not lay too much on at once, so he had bit his tongue and held back what he wanted to say to her. That finding someone else was out of the question. She was it for him. Forever. Fucking hell, he had even asked to have her with him in a simulated life.

“It wouldn’t be her.”

The fuck it would not. They would find a way. He would find her and it would be her. It would be them. He had not wanted to even entertain the afterlife without her, how could she think he wanted to live this actual one without her?
“What if you meet someone ... younger who ... wants to have kids?”

Children. More kids. They never talked about that before. Why the fuck not? Years wasted where discussions were not had. He shook his head again at their terrible lack of communicating how they truly felt and what they wanted. The past was the past, however and it could not be changed.

Still, the thought of her thinking he would leave her for something as mundane as children, broke him a little. He had never, nor would he ever, entertain the thought of leaving her because she was unable to conceive. If she was unable to have children, he was unable to have them. This was a partnership and they were in this together. For better or for worse.

They needed to talk, and not around their problems, but head on. How could they move things forward, if they kept the past closed up? This thing tonight, this was a huge step, gigantic for them, but it did not fix everything. They needed to talk. He glanced over at her again and slid out of bed, needing to use the bathroom.

He took a drink of water from the spout and then wiped his mouth, staring at himself in the mirror. He could still taste her. The memories of the sex they had made him smile.

You still got it man, he thought to himself as he smiled at his reflection.

Then he saw it, saw him, his double. Holy fucking shit. He was mesmerized and terrified all at once. He could not look away, but had to get out of there. Scully. He had to get to her.

“Scully, get up. Get dressed,” he said terrified, as he took off his tank top.

“Mmm, come back to bed,” she moaned, and he would have been there in a second, if that fucker was not possibly following him.

“They’re coming after me,” he said, trying to cut through her sleep addled thoughts.

“What are you talking about?” she asked, sounding confused.

“I was just looking in the mirror, and there he was. There I was. It wasn’t my reflection. It was my double,” he said, glancing back repeatedly at the bathroom as he put on his shirt and buttoned it up.

“I know. I-I-I saw my double too,” she said as she leaned up on her elbow, admitting she had seen hers as well.

“They’re targeting us both.”

“That’s how they operate, Mulder,” she said trying to calm him down.

“I know how they operate!” he said putting on his pants.

“You’re just playing into it,” again said with a tone of rationalism.

“Spare me the pop psychology, okay?” he said as he struggled into his pants.

“Mulder, you have to calm down,” she said with an exasperated tone.

“Scully. Scully, put a dimmer on that afterglow and get yourself to the hospital before they hang us both,” he said buttoning his pants, grabbing his jacket and keys, then heading for the door.

“Mulder, they can’t hang us. We-we can only hang ourselves if we panic,” she said trying to get through to him one last time.
“How many letters in Scully, Scully?” he asked her, as if that answered everything and proved his point. But he did not stay to try and convince her. He ran out the door and to the car, knowing where he needed to go.

Hours later, he pulled back into the hotel parking lot. He rested his head against the headrest as he turned off the ignition. God, he was worn out.

_Fighting with yourself will do that to a man,_ he thought, as he rolled his muscles around.

_Also, the sex from earlier added to it,_ he thought with a grin. _But that_ kind of worn out was welcome and most definitely enjoyed. He saw Scully was back already, hopefully not asleep, and maybe interested in doing that again.

“Play it cool man, let her come to you,” he said to himself, as he took the keys out of the ignition, got out, locked the door, and walked to their room.

He took a deep breath, then quickly made sure his shirt was good and open. Maybe a little sneak peek of the goods would get her fire burning. Oh yeah, the plan was foolproof. He adjusted his shirt and laid his jacket over his arm, breathing out and opened the door.

She looked up as he entered and then continued putting the bagged evidence in her bag.

“So, I was thinking maybe we could get a couple hours in before checkout time?” he said, leaving the double meaning out there seeing if she would pick up on it, what she would say.

She looked at him, indicating he was thinking something else and she was _not_ having it.

“I’m just talking about getting some shut-eye,” he said, feigning surprise at her suggesting he would even think of imagining something else.

“I’m glad to hear that, Mulder,” she said, though she clearly did not believe him. But she looked at his chest, he saw it. Yes ... he knew it was a good plan.

“Yeah. Uh, I guess I should hit the hay,” he said, not quite sure what to do, but not ready to leave.

“Okay,” she said dismissively, but he saw her look at his chest again. Oh, yes, that’s right, he knew what she liked.

“Yeah. But if you need anything, you just, uh, call me,” he said, letting it hang there that he was willing if she wanted him.

“I can’t imagine that I will,” she said in what others might hear as rude or dismissive.

He had known her for far too long, however, and he knew her expressions. He could read her like a book. She stared at him and he stared back. He nodded, looked her up and down, and walked out of the room shutting the door behind him.

He turned around immediately and waited, knowing she would be coming. He _knew_ it. He leaned against the door jamb and he began to count. ...5...10...15... 20 seconds and he heard the doorknob turn.

And there she was, as he knew she would be. Knew she would come, sure as the sun rises and sets every day. He smiled a small smile, happy in the knowledge he was right and he let her be the one
to make this decision. His heart began to race, and he felt a stirring in his groin, at what he knew was going to happen.

“Well, hello there. Did you need something after all?” he asked in a low voice that he knew she loved. Her smile lit up the room as she stepped inside, closing the door behind her.

“Shut up, Mulder,” she said as she grabbed his jacket from him and threw it across the room.

She ripped his shirt open and buttons flew everywhere. She grabbed his neck and wrapped her arms around him as she jumped and wrapped her legs around his waist. He was surprised for one second before he slammed her into the door. Her mouth was on his and her tongue was demanding entrance inside.

Her nails scratched the back of his neck and into his hair. He thrust his hips into her and he grabbed her ass, pushing her harder into the door. She gasped and let go of his mouth.

“God, you’re already hard,” she gasped as he thrust into her again.

“Not completely, but I’m getting there,” he said, sucking her neck as her head fell back against the door. He cupped her ass tighter and tried to hold her up. She giggled and he felt it against his mouth.

“You okay, Mulder?” she asked as she held on tighter, a little worried he might drop her.

“You’re not the only one who's getting older, Scully. This isn’t as easy as it used to be,” he said, trying to keep them both safe.

She laughed, a full throaty laugh and started to disentangle herself from him. He let go of her ass and let her down gently. Her back was still against the door and he used that to his advantage, pushing her into it as he kissed her again. His tongue mating with hers, the way he knew she liked.

She sucked his tongue and he groaned. At the same time, he felt her unbuttoning his pants. He groaned again as she slipped her hand inside and begin stroking him as best she could with his clothes still on. He gasped into her mouth and then pulled away, determined to get his pants off.

She grabbed his open shirt with her other hand and pulled him to her, not letting him move away.

“Hold still. No, actually,” she said and turned them so his back was against the door. She grabbed the waistband of his pants and started pushing them down, taking his boxers along with them.

She followed them down and was soon face to face with his cock. She smiled at it, then looked up and smiled at him. He watched her the whole time, thinking this must be too good to be true. It had been so long since she did this for him. Her nails scraped the backs of his legs as she pulled him closer and she took him in her mouth.

“FUUUUUCK, Scully!!” he cried out loudly, as his head fell back against the door and he had to fight not thrusting into her face. He knew better than that.

She brought a hand around and took him out of her mouth. She stroked him and he placed a hand on her head, not pushing, just touching. She looked up at him as he looked down. Her eyes were full of lust as she took him back in her mouth and began moving her mouth up and down his shaft.

“Jesus, Scully. That feels so fucking good. Oh my God.” He grabbed her hair and held onto it, letting her set the pace.
She made him feel so good as she altered the use of her hands and her mouth. She knew just how to please him as he knew how for her. He did not want to come too quickly, so he gave her hair a little tug and she looked up at him.

“I want to be inside you when I come,” he told her. She took her mouth off him and licked her lips, and it was almost his undoing.

She stood up and kissed him, putting her hand on him and stroking lightly. He grabbed her wrist and spun them around. He grabbed the other one, held them both above her head, and pushed her into the door. His cock trapped between their bodies.

“I don’t want you to do that again, do you hear me?” he growled at her as he pushed hard into her. She began to breathe hard and she stared at him with fire in her eyes. Oh … this was going to be fun.

 Amid kisses and touching, their clothes were quickly scattered across the room. They fell on the bed together and she crawled up his body. He let her take control. He loved her like this, so wild and free. He scooted back until he was sitting, leaning against the back of the pullout couch. She climbed onto him, straddling him. He had his face on her breasts as he held her and she went up and down, holding onto him for dear life, taking her pleasure, calling out his name.

She moaned again and used his shoulders for leverage. He bent his knees giving her some extra support. She groaned and cried out that she was close. He knew it. He could feel it, feel her tightening around him.

“MULDERRRRR!” she cried as she came and broke around him. She rested her head on his shoulder as she slowed down and wrapped her arms around his neck.

“Hmmm ... hmm ... hmm, Mulder ... oh my God. Oh ...” she whimpered into his neck as he felt her spasming around him. She shuddered again, raised her head, and looked at him.

He brushed her sweaty hair off her face and smiled at her. She could not seem to focus on him, as she ran her fingers in his hair. She dropped her forehead to his and took deep breaths.

“Oh ... wow ... Mulder ... I ...” she whispered.

“Speechless,” he said as he stroked her back. “I can’t say I’m surprised.”

“Shut up,” she told him yet again, laughing as she leaned back and looked him in the eyes. He smiled at her and pulled her in for a kiss.

“Your turn,” she whispered as she broke from the kiss and began to move again.

“Okay,” he said and flipped them over. He started thrusting fast, ready to get there with her.

“Oh,” she cried out. “Yes that feels so good. No, wait ... let me ...”

A quick scramble and she had her legs against his chest, her ankles around his neck. He was thrusting into her, surprised by her flexibility.

“Have you taken up yoga, Scully?” he asked her.

“Mulder, seriously, shut up and fuck me,” she cried and pushed against him, meeting his thrusts. He slid onto his forearms and thrust even more.
“Harder! Faster!” she cried as she impressively moved her legs again and wrapped them around his hips, digging her ankles into his ass, pushing him forward.

He did as she demanded and went harder and faster. He felt her tightening around him again and heard her panting breath. Her nails were digging into his shoulders, holding onto him.

“Oh oh oh, Mulder. Oh shit. Oh my God!!” she screamed as she came again.

“Scullllly! Fuck! Oh God!” he cried as he came, thrusting hard, the couch bed shaking as he collapsed onto her again. Both of them panting and clinging to each other, sweaty but so happy.

She was exhausted, and they both needed to sleep. She kept yawning and telling him every few minutes how tired she was. Lying flat on her stomach, her head turned away from him, the pillows somewhere on the floor, he gazed at her. He ran his fingers lightly up and down her back as he lay on his side, his head on his hand. Her skin was so goddamn soft.

“Scully?” he asked quietly, not sure if she was sleeping.

“Hmmmm ...” came her response.

“I ... I want to take this slow,” he said quietly still and placed a kiss on her shoulder. “Contrary to what we did tonight, I don’t want to rush this. Do it right.”

“Hmm … by this, you mean ...?” she asked sleepily, a teasing tone in her voice.

“Will you have dinner with me tonight?” he whispered, his mouth against her skin.

She turned over onto her side, facing him, looking at him with sparkling eyes. “Are you asking me on … a date?”

“I am,” he said, his eyes serious, hopeful. She stared at him and smiled. The soft smile. The one that made his heart pound.

“Yes,” she whispered, touching his face. He pulled her close, his heart pounding. He took a deep breath, his nose in her hair.

“Except ...” she said as she snuggled into his arms, her head in his neck, her mouth on his throat. “Can we order in, or pick something up? I want to do this again, and I don’t want to get arrested for public indecency.”

He laughed and pulled her tighter to him, bringing his leg around her hip. “It’s a date,” he said, kissing her forehead, still chuckling. She exhaled in his neck and hummed. He closed his eyes and slept better than he had in a long time.

They packed up after a couple hours of sleep, stealing glances and kisses as they did. He lifted her up against the wall again, to prove to her he could, and she laughed. He shut her up by kissing her until she was like putty in his hands. He pulled back and smirked at her dizzy expression. She narrowed her eyes and promised he would pay for that later, and he told her he was looking forward to it.

They loaded up the car, then pulled them both up by the manager's office. They planned to drop the extra one off on the way out of town. Scully headed toward the stairs to drop off the room keys and check them out of their room. There was a woman inside, so she went back and waited by the car with Mulder.
“I’d like to know what you intend to do about it,” the woman in the manager’s office demanded, with her arms crossed. Her young son stood in front of her, eating the lollipop that Mary, the manager, had given him.

“Miss, I don’t know what you would like me to do,” Mary said kindly but with a slightly annoyed tone.

“It’s Mrs.,” she said and Mary could practically see the amount of emphasis she would put if she had printed out this conversation. “Mrs. Deller. And I expect you to say something to those ... those people who were using such vulgar and loud language.”

“Well, Mrs. Deller, what language would that be?” Mary asked, hoping to get a rise out of her. God, she was a horrible woman. The exact kind she almost always hated upon first glance. The “we need fresh towels, sheets, blankets, pillows” type, even though the room had just been cleaned.

“Humph! I cannot begin to tell you everything, it was too vulgar. But,” she covered her son’s ears, “I heard loud screaming and moaning. There was banging against the wall from their “activities” and I heard the word F-U-C-K many times,” she lifted her hands from her son’s ears and gave Mary a significant look. “Also the word cock.”

“A-doodle-do!” the little boy shouted and Mary burst out laughing. The boy grinned at her and Mary put her hand out for a high five, which he gladly gave her.

“Well! I’m glad you seem to think this is so funny and acceptable. We travel this way many times a year and we will not be stopping her again,” Mrs. Deller said as she collected her things and began pushing her son toward the door.

“I’m sorry you feel that way ma’am, I hope your stay otherwise was pleasant,” Mary said with a smirk. She huffed in response and opened the door.

Her son looked back and waved at Mary, took his lollipop out of his mouth and said, “Cock-a-doodle-do!” much to his mother’s absolute horror.

Mary laughed and said it back to him. She watched them walk out and almost bump right into the woman she was complaining about. Mary heard the woman offer an apology and Mrs. Deller simply huffed again. Mary had just a second to compose her face before the other woman opened the door.

She walked in and over to the desk. The redheaded woman smiled at her. Oh yeah, bet she had a lot to smile about this afternoon. Mary smiled back, as the word cock bounced around in her head. She could still see the bitchy woman who had complained, forcefully ushering her husband and family into the car. She saw her glare over at the office and then slam the child’s car door with a furious shake of her head. God, that woman needed some cock in her life.

“I’d like to check out of the suite we were in, settle the bill, give you the keys,” she said as she handed her the keys.

“Not a problem, Miss ...” Mary said as she took the keys.

“Scully. Just Scully, no Miss,” Scully told her with a smile.

“Well ... Scully, I hope your stay was ... enjoyable,” she said with a look her way as she typed up
some information on the computer and then waited for the printer. She caught the almost secretive smile before Scully arranged her face back in a professional manner.

“Yes, it was enjoyable, thank you. The room was very ... conducive,” Scully said.

“Hmm,” Mary said jovially with a twinkle in her eyes as she looked at Scully. Right then Mary knew that Scully knew. Knew someone had heard them and said something or maybe Mary herself heard them. Scully blushed and looked down, but then raised her face back up and stared defiantly at her.

Mary stared back and smiled at her. She could tell those two were not just hooking up or involved in a clandestine affair. She had seen them talking outside their cars. Seen his smile as he looked at her. She remembered taking out the trash last night and seeing him run out in his under clothes with no shoes, and get something out of her car. Yeah, he cared for her. Her own husband would have done the same thing for her, god rest his soul.

They stared at one another and then Scully smiled back at her. Understanding and respect shared between them. The printer stopped printing and Mary grabbed the paperwork for her to sign.

“Uh ... is there a diner or someplace close by you would recommend?” Scully asked as she handed the paperwork back to her. “Maybe a place with pie?”

“Well, there’s a diner down the way, Grandma Ruby’s, they have really good food. The pie is wonderful. Of course, it doesn’t have a claim to fame, like the place where my sister used to work.”

“Claim to fame?” Scully asked, intrigued by the comment.

“Yeah, my sister worked at a place out in California for years. She loved it. They had a chocolate cream pie, she used to claim was “better than sex.” Well, _almost_. She said they had to add the “almost” after a customer insisted upon it. She has talked about that woman a lot over the years. How she was sassy and said the pie description should be changed. Mentioned her boyfriend too. How he was a good looking man in a leather jacket,” Mary said with a smile as she filed away the paperwork Scully had signed.

“Is ... this is absolutely crazy ... but by some insane chance, is your sister’s name Carol?” Scully asked her, shaking her head, completely amazed at this information.

“You know Carol?” Mary asked her incredulously, not believing this could be happening.

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Mulder looked up from his phone as he stood by the car, when he heard peals of laughter coming from inside the office. He saw Scully and the manager laughing and their hands moving a lot as they talked. Scully threw her head back and laughed, and the manager had hers down as she laughed too. What was going on?

The door opened and Scully stepped out still laughing as she said goodbye. The woman laughed and shouted it back as Scully closed the door.

“What the hell was that all about?” he asked, smiling and absolutely puzzled as she walked up to him.

“Oh my God, Mulder! You’re never going to believe this!” she said with laughter in her voice.
Inside the office, Mary was still laughing as she dialed the phone and waited for it to be answered.

“Carol!” she said as she looked out the window, and smiled and waved to Scully as they both drove off. “You are never going to believe this!”

Chapter End Notes

So these are the first two chapters that have been posted previously. Again, there are three more before some “new” chapters. Maybe some of you haven’t read these yet, I don’t know, but I hope you enjoyed them regardless. 😊❤

Oh! Also, if you’re wondering about Carol, she’s in my story After The Credits. That was my first story I ever posted, my baby, and I love it so very much. Check it out if you haven’t.
Chapter Summary

Remembering how it all was, Scully and Mulder take a journey down memory lane. It’s always best to remember the past through trails of kisses, right?

Chapter Notes

This one, is another one already posted, but it’s one of my favorites. I hope you enjoy it for the first or 15th time. ❤

January 2018

I want to remember how it was. I want to remember how it all was.

Sitting on the couch, they stared at each other, the Bigfoot Goop-O mold still wobbling, each of them thinking of the past, the way it all was. Millions of memories and definitely no Reggie. He was never there, she was sure of it.

She looked at Mulder’s lips, thinking of them on her own, and on her body years ago and again just recently. She wanted to kiss him now, but she stopped herself. They were still in limbo with them and she felt unsure how to move forward.

“I ... I should get going,” she said quietly, unlocking her fingers and running her hands along her thighs. He held his gaze on her, his brow furrowed slightly. She watched him swallow then he cleared his throat.

“You could stay, if you’d like ...” he said, low and quietly.

His voice made her pause. She was always affected by his voice when he spoke that way. Add that to the fact they were slowly beginning to come back to each other, it was a deadly combination.

The memories of the sex they had in their motel suite and then once after their date later that same night, was still fresh in her mind. It had been a few weeks, but it was still there, front and center.

The past few days had been … interesting, if nothing else. It had brought up past memories and created some pretty flirty stakeouts. It had been really fun, even if it was confusing. Like old times, really.

They still had not spoken of the future, and they desperately needed to have that discussion. Serious conversations were not their strong suit though, not when it came to them. If she stayed, the only talking that would occur would be “how fast can you get these pants off me?” Not exactly the kind of talking she meant.

Although, sometimes that was how they needed to move forward. Sex, then talking. They had always been better at non verbal actions. Maybe that was what they needed now.
It could work. But it felt like a bandaid covering an open vein. It would work for awhile, distract them, make them laugh, but it did not fix the problem.

No. Getting up and getting out, that was what she needed to do. Needed maybe, but it was definitely not what she wanted. Why was everything so hard when it came to matters of the heart with them?

She stood up abruptly and shook her head. “No, Mulder. I ... I should get going. It’s getting late.”

She heard him sigh as she stepped toward the door. She grabbed her jacket, keys, gun, and wallet. She reached for the doorknob and she heard him behind her. Close but not too close. Letting his presence be known, but saying nothing.

She froze with her hand on the doorknob. She really did not want to go back to that lonely house. It lacked the warmth and memories of this little unremarkable one. The love, arguments, laughter and tears that happened here, they were what made it their home.

“Ask me again,” she said, barely above a whisper. She knew once he asked, she would not be walking out the door. She heard his movements cease and they both stood, not facing each other, making a decision.

Five seconds and she heard his whisper.

“Stay. Please.”

She was in his arms, all her items on the floor, her mouth locked with his, in lightning speed. His hands on her ass as she dug her nails in his neck. He walked them toward the stairs and she tripped backwards, her ankle hitting the bottom step.

He grabbed at the railing and kept a hand on her waist. They slid and fell onto the stairs, her legs wrapping around him, never breaking their kiss. His hand at her waist went to her head as they landed and she almost cried at the quickness and care he showed.

Her back was pushing into the steps and his weight was adding to it, but she welcomed the feeling. They had made love on the stairs many times over the years. Quick, down and dirty sex when they were angry. Or other times, when they could not make it either to the couch or up the stairs before they had to have each other. They had been younger then, but in this moment, she felt like she was in her thirties again, when all it took was his smile to give her butterflies.

She did not want this night to end on the stairs, so she began to shift. She wanted to be in their bed, his scent surrounding her, as he made love to her. She broke their kiss and rested her head against his.

They were both out of breath. When she moved, she felt his beginning erection, and it made her weak. She had gone too long without feeling him inside her. Four years and then a few weeks was far too long. Even a day seemed too long. She needed to get up those stairs.

“Mulder, bed, now,” was all she could get out as she panted and twisted out from under him. She looked at him as she freed herself, kissing him and stroking his face, before she turned and headed up the stairs.

“I was going to do that thing you liked as you held onto the railing, but we can head upstairs too, if you want ...” he said, beginning to follow her.

She stopped at the top of stairs at his words. Oh, the railing thing ... Jesus. She did love that. Him
with his mouth on her center, making her wet as she gripped the railing, the stairs adding height and leverage in a way no other place could.

But not tonight. He could replicate that in the bed instead. Make her wet and make her come. Christ … she was already halfway there. She looked back at him and saw his smirk. Goddamn him. He knew how to get to her.

*Two could play at that game,* she thought. She reached for the bottom of her shirt, lifted it over her head, and threw it down to him. He caught it and threw it behind him. Her camisole was tossed next and he threw that behind him, too. His eyes stayed on her and she watched his chest rise and fall.

She stood there in a satin sapphire colored bra, the straps impossibly thin, with tiny white bows where they met the cups. She watched him grip the railing and put a hand on the wall. She brought her hands up to the front clasp, but he rushed up the stairs and stopped her.

“Not yet. And I’ll be the one to take that off of you,” he growled as he wrapped his arms around her and it made her shiver.

He had his mouth on her neck, kissing and licking his way around like he was following a beloved treasure map. He knew all the spots to hit to earn his reward of her moans and gasps.

Her legs hit the bed and she grabbed onto him before she fell back. His grip around her tightened and then she pushed him back. She reached to unbutton her pants, but he stopped her, with his hands and a shake of his head.

“I told you, *I* would be the one to take that off,” he said, his hands lightly stroking up her sides.

“You said the bra. You didn’t stipulate the other items of clothing,” she said, her hands resting on his chest.

“Oh, we’re going to get into semantics now? Is that what’s happening?” he asked her, his hands sliding to the straps of her bra, fingers stroking the bows, before he slipped them up to pull the strap down.

His mouth followed the strap and he kissed her shoulder, her upper arm, the inside of her elbow, before he slid the strap back up.

She looked at him with raised eyebrows, then tilted her head to the side. Silently asking him, what the hell he was doing.

“Not yet,” he said, smiling at her.

“Not yet to all of it? Or just the bra? I want to be clear here which items you will be removing as opposed to which ones I will be …”

“Scully,” he said, his thumbs grazing across her skin as his hands landed on her waistband. “I will be taking *all* your remaining items of clothing off, understood?”

His eyes and his words burned like the heat of a thousand suns. She took deep breaths as his fingers closed in on the button of her pants. She moved his hands and plopped down on the bed.
“You better start with the boots then,” she said, sticking out her foot as she leaned back on her hands.

He stared at her, a grin slowly creeping across his face, before he knelt down and grabbed her foot. He unzipped her boot and pulled it off, looking up at her as he did. She smiled as he tossed her shoe over his shoulder and it thudded to the ground.

He reached for the other one and stopped. He laughed and looked at her again. He grabbed her sock covered foot and rubbed her toes through it.

“Nice socks,” he said with a chuckle.

She raised her chin and her foot to look at what he meant. Oh, right. She almost forgot she put those on this morning. The black socks with silver UFO’s all over them. She smiled as he continued to rub her foot and look at the socks she was wearing.

“Thanks. I got them as a gift from this guy I know,” she said, watching as he took the other shoe off, looked at both socks, and smiled.

“They are great socks. He sounds like a pretty great gift giver,” he said, rubbing both her feet.

“Oh. Well, let’s see, I’ve gotten- a keychain, a snowball cake with sparklers in it, books about leprechauns, mothmen, sprites, and other woodland creatures, a child’s medical kit, a shirt with an alien on it that says ‘They see me probin’, they hatin’ and these socks. So ... I guess he’s all right,” she said in a teasing tone.

“Wow ... with all those great gifts, I’m sure he didn’t give you just one pair of socks. That doesn’t sound like him,” he said as he began to pull her socks off her feet.

She smiled, loving this act of seduction. It was so them. So geeky and adorable. She missed this so much.

“No, it wasn’t just the one pair. It was actually four pairs of socks. There were these, of course. Then bright purple ones with alien faces, yellow ones with Bigfoot ...”

“Sasquatch,” he corrected her, running his hands up her legs over her pants.

“Right, Sasquatch,” she said, a smile dancing across her lips. He rested his chin on her knees, laying his hands over her thighs, locking his fingers. He looked up at her, his eyes twinkling.

“And the last pair? You said there were ... four?” he asked, raising his eyebrows.

She bit her lip, trying to hold her smile back, but she could not do it. “The last pair ... hmm. If I remember correctly, and I usually do, these last few days notwithstanding, they were green with a blue animal of some kind.”

“Some kind ...” he said, lifting his head and moving his hands to her waist, pulling her toward the edge of the bed.

“Mmm hmm. A water monster. Oh … the … ah ... Loch Ness monster. That’s right,” she breathed out, as he stroked her back.

“You know it was supposed to be Big Blue, Scully,” his voice muffled against her stomach. He kissed her and lifted his head.
“Potato, potahto. Seen one lake monster you’ve seen them all,” she smiled as she stroked his hair.

“I’ll remember that the next time you tell me how different shaped pastas have different tastes,” his tongue tasting her skin. She laughed, throwing her head back.

Years ago, they had a heated conversation over the phone about different types of pasta, when he was sent to the store to buy some for dinner. A discussion regarding when spaghetti crossed over and became goulash. Was it dependent on the type of pasta used? She insisted it was spaghetti as long as the noodles were long and it was not mixed together, making it taste different. He argued it was all the same, no matter if it was penne or elbow or if it was mixed together. She finally told him to shut up, buy whatever the hell he wanted, and just come home. He walked in the door, threw the pasta down, turned off the pot of water, grabbed her and kissed her hard. She wound up on her back on the table and dinner that night had been very late.

She looked at him as they shared that memory and they both smiled. He reached for the button on her pants and she clutched her stomach muscles. He looked at her as he opened them and then pulled the zipper down. He bent his head to kiss her and he groaned.

“Oh my God. The underwear matches the bra. What are you trying to do to me?” he asked, dropping his head into her lap.

She laughed again. The underwear certainly did match. Blue satin, white edging, and a white bow in the middle. She knew his weakness for fancy underwear with bows. His face and exuberance when he would be seeing them eventually, definitely factored into her purchasing decision.

“As much as you may believe I wore them for you, that is not entirely the case,” she said, threading her fingers in his hair, his breath warming where she wanted him to be with no boundaries in the way.

He snorted and she tugged his hair. He raised his head and looked at her. “I had no plans beyond the day spent with you. I didn’t plan on this, so don’t let your ego get too large,” she said, raising her eyebrow. “I like wearing this kind of underwear beneath my suits. Whether anyone sees them but me, it makes me feel sexy and powerful.”

He started pulling her pants down as she lifted, helping him out. Over her hips, down her thighs, then off her calves, before he tossed them behind him.

“I’m not sure you will fully appreciate what I’m about to say, and I may live to regret saying it, but you don’t need the fancy underwear to be sexy or powerful. All you have to do is show up, open your mouth, or raise that eyebrow,” he said as he started running his hands up her legs again, his hands on her bare skin.

She laughed and then stopped. As she felt his hands on her, she realized she had not shaved her legs in a couple of days. Usually she would not care and it was not as if she had always had freshly shaved legs when they were together. But, this was coming back, almost like a getting to know each other again. The sexy underwear she chose to wear, which she could admit to herself, was a little for him, the socks- and she did not remember to shave her legs? Such a rookie mistake.

“Mulder, wait,” she said, trying to stop him. He looked up, confusion showing on his face. He leaned back on his calves, and stared at her. “I just ... it’s ... I haven’t shaved my legs recently and I know it shouldn’t matter, but I ...”

He silenced her as he ran his hands up the backs of her calves and tilted his head to the side. He went back down and up again. He stopped at her knees and looked at her.
“It’s not as bad as Wisconsin, so I think we’re okay,” he said smiling and winking, as he moved his hands up her thighs.

“Hey!” she exclaimed, a giggle bursting through. “It snowed for almost a week when we were there! Did you want me to go out and chance freezing to death? For a razor? And besides, I remember you being quite scruffy as well.”

“Did I complain then? Did I say anything that would lead you to believe I was bothered by the hair … anywhere on your body?” he asked as he began to crawl up the bed, forcing her onto her back.

“Whoa … anywhere on my body? What the hell is that supposed to mean?” she asked as she pushed against his chest, his heart pounding under his shirt, halting their movements.

“Scully, you could be hairy as a Sasquatch or bald as a mole rat, and I wouldn’t care. If you think hairy legs would ever deter me from the chance to be inside you, you really don’t know me,” he said, pressing against her harder.

She laughed and then gasped as she leaned back onto the bed, his body covering her as he rested on his forearms. She moved her legs, opening herself to him. He settled between her legs, his worn denim softly rubbing against her bare legs, and they both moaned. He rocked into her and she gasped again.

“A Sasquatch? Really, Mulder?” she breathily asked, as she looped her arms around his neck.

“Huh … here I thought you were going to find offense at the mole rat comment,” he said, lowering his head to kiss her neck.

“No. I’d much rather be bald than hairy,” she moaned as he hit a particularly sensitive spot. His head popped up and he looked in her eyes. She smiled and lifted an eyebrow.

“Is that right?” he asked, beginning to shift down her body.

He kissed between her breasts as he pushed them together, burying his face in between them. She laughed. When he did not take her bra off, she tapped his head. He looked up and she raised her eyebrows again.

“Not yet. I want to see something,” he let go of her breasts and kissed his way down her body.

She closed her eyes, her hands roaming her body, the bed, his head. She began breathing hard as he got closer to where she wanted him.

His fingers slid under the waistband of her underwear and slipped them down a little at a time. Her body shook a little, anticipation building, knowing what he was going to find.

“Ah, Scully,” he said, finding her practically bare, before he slid her underwear all the way off.

The recent night in the hotel had been unexpected. She was not exactly prepared. She had made an appointment to get a bikini wax after that, just in case. Judging by his enthusiasm as he crawled back to her, he seemed to like it.

He kissed her thighs, slowly making his way back up to her center. He kissed and rubbed against her legs as he shifted around, his hands going under her ass to bring her closer to his face.

She throbbed, laying her feet on his back, wanting to feel his mouth on her. He did not keep her waiting long before he settled in and began kissing and licking her. Slow then fast. He sucked and
licked just how she liked, knowing her so well, his eidetic memory a blessing.

He added his fingers and she cried out, gripping the sheets and pulling at her own hair. God, he was so good at that. So good at bringing her so close so fast. All these years later and still she was amazed at how quickly he could make her come.

“Mulder, oh God,” she cried out, her legs wrapped tight around his shoulders, her nails digging into her own thighs.

He sped up his fingers and sucked her clit into his mouth. She cried out, crashing over the edge, screaming his name. He kept lapping at her as she came down and relaxed her legs.

“Hmmm hmm,” she said, licking her lips. “Mulder, Jesus ... so good. So good.”

A final lick and he raised his head. He kissed his way back up her body. Stopping at her breasts again, sucking them through her bra, nibbling at her nipples. Back and forth, he laved them through the material.

She grabbed his ears and tugged. He raised his head and she let go of one ear and pointed to her mouth. He smiled and raised up, licking her chest, kissing her jaw before claiming her mouth.

She held onto his neck as his tongue rolled around in her mouth, stroking hers, as he ground his hips into hers. Still fully clothed, she felt the denim of his jeans against her bare skin. She shivered and as he rocked into her again, she felt a small orgasm roll through her.

“Jesus! Mulder, get your clothes off. I need you inside me,” she said, breaking their kiss and panting as he rocked into her one more time.

He pulled back from her and she scrambled around on the bed. He stood at the edge of the bed, pushing his shirt up and off, throwing it over his shoulder. She knelt on the bed, reached over and scratched her nails down his chest as he breathed her name.

She stopped at his waistband and opened his buttons, unzipped the zipper, and opened his pants. Reaching inside his boxers, she stroked his length and caressed the head. He hummed and leaned into her. She heard him swallow and then he put his hand on hers.

She looked up at him. His eyes were wide and dark. She loved him like this, aroused and happy. He stopped her hand and she stared at him questioningly.

He swallowed again and he stepped back. He shook his head and he looked at his feet. Oh, he still had his shoes on too. She climbed off the bed and knelt on the floor, untying his shoes and loosening the laces. He stepped out of them as she stood up.

She pushed his pants down over his ass, his hips, and then down his legs. He lifted his feet one at a time, as she bent down and pulled them off. She took off his socks too and stood up again.

They stood there still covered in one way each. He pulled his boxers down, standing nude before her. He was hard and she felt her insides ache. She wanted him inside her, wanted to remember again how he felt.

She looked at the bed and he smiled. He laid down and she straddled him. She rested at his waist, her hands on his chest.

“Wisconsin was a long time ago,” she said, looking down at him. “So many things we’ve done, Mulder. Cases, people we’ve met, places we’ve been. It was always just us, right? There was no
Reggie? It was just us?"

She moved and slid down his length. They both sighed and then moaned. She waited and he put his hands on her waist. He ran them up her body, landing on the clasp of her bra, as she rose up then back down.

“Us, Scully. It’s always been you and me. Just us. No Reggie. You and me, then and now,” he breathed, popping open the clasp of her bra, and cupping her breasts.

“You and me,” she agreed, loving the feel of his hands on her breasts. He had built the anticipation perfectly. Her bra slid down her arms, before she threw it on the floor.

There had been no Reggie riding in the backseat. No Reggie in the crappy motels where they stayed. No Reggie sharing theories or worries over either of them. It was always just them. Her and him. Learning their way together. For twenty five years. Just them, never anyone else.

“The horned beast,” she breathed out, leaning down against his chest, her hips still moving.

He laughed, putting his hands on her thighs. “Ronnie Strickland.”

She laughed into his neck. “Arthur Dales. Florida.”

“Daryl Moots. Holman. Flying cows.”

“Flukemen.”

“Genies, an invisible man.”

They kept stating cases, times when they were on the road, just the two of them. Remembering places they had been, what they had done. They had never booked three flights, three hotel rooms. It was always them and no one else.

He flipped them and he began to drive into her. He whispered remembered moments of their lovemaking. In their old apartments, in hotel rooms, their office, running for their lives, the first time in this house, then every room in it as it had been christened. Against the wall, on the floor, bent over the couch, in the shower, the bathtub. His words created desire in her veins.

She whispered remembered conversations they had had. Things they had said, words of love and hope, one in five billion, touchstones, trusting only the other.

They both cried out, reaching completion together. He fell upon her and they held tight to one another, satisfied their memories were their own. No one had wiped their minds. They knew it had always been them. Trusting each other with their lives, then their hearts, and then with everything.

They lay together after, both sleepy, but happy. He held her and breathed against her neck. She sighed her contentment as his lips grazed her ear.

“I miss you,” he whispered.

She froze. He knew she was awake. He was taking a chance, letting her know, taking another step. “I miss you, too,” she whispered back, pulling his hand up and holding it in her own.

She felt him nod against her head. He tightened his hold on her and shifted his legs, wrapping one over hers. His feet grazed her leg, then he settled it down.
“Hairy legs and all,” he whispered. She smiled and closed her eyes.

“I just wanted you to know, Scully. In case it wasn’t clear or I haven’t told you enough, I … I love you. And I miss you,” he said, and she could hear the sleep in his voice, but the underlying sadness as well.

There it was, just as she knew it would be. Physical before the emotional. It seemed to loosen their tongues better than any alcohol ever could. Adrenaline, their worry over each other in the past, then the oxytocin from a hand grasp, hug, kiss, or sex worked like a truth serum. It loosened the lid to get to what was desired on the inside.

She lay there quietly. Letting his words sink in, allowing herself the luxury of just feeling them. She knew he did not expect her to say it back. Knew he was not waiting to hear her words, or holding it against her when she stayed quiet.

It was not that she did not love him. God, no. She loved him so much she ached. Being without him was like living with a piece of her heart missing. Every day she was living a half life.

She had left, been the one to force their hand. But it had been because of his obsession consuming him, everything around him, and then their relationship. He needed to make amends, she needed to accept them, they needed to forgive and then move forward together. No more half life.

His breathing evened out and she knew he was asleep. She let her body relax into him before she knew she would need to climb out of their warm bed and head to her lonely one. She would not stay, no, she could not stay. Not yet. They were so close, but not quite.

She felt his body jerk a little while later and knew it was safe to get up. He had entered into deep sleep. She slipped out of his arms and out of their bed. She looked at him as he slept. She ached to stay, to wake up with him, but she knew it would be wrong. Not yet.

She knelt beside the bed, staring at his face. Watching him breathe. “I love you, too,” she whispered.

She found her clothes and gathered them up along with her shoes. She tiptoed out the door and down the stairs. She found her shirts, got dressed, and grabbed her jacket and other items from where she dropped them earlier. She opened and closed the door quietly. The porch stairs creaked as she walked down them, but she was safe. He would not follow her.

She drove away, tears in her eyes. She looked in the rear view mirror, expecting to see her heart on the porch, waving her back. She shook her head and stared ahead. So close. They were so close. She just needed to be patient.

Mulder woke a few hours later. He knew without reaching out, that she was gone. He knew she would leave, but it still hurt that she did. He rolled over and grabbed the pillow. Her pillow. It smelled like her again and it would have to suffice until she came back. Back with no plans to ever leave again. He would see to it. To make sure she knew he would not make anymore careless mistakes. He did not want this life he was living without her anymore.

He could feel they were close. So close to getting back to where they needed to be. He just needed to remain patient. Patient and vigilant.

He got up, used the bathroom, and took a shower. He got dressed and begin to clean up his clothes from last night. He was searching for his shoes when he noticed it. His shoes had been set upright,
paired together by the door. On top of each shoe, she had draped one of her UFO socks. He grinned, remembering how she always draped her socks over the tops of her shoes that same way in the past.

He used to tease her about it, how she planned ahead, right down to the socks. She always argued it meant she was better prepared than him and it would not hurt him to take a cue from her.

Well, he thought with a smile, as he left the shoes and socks there for the time being, it seemed she was telling him something. The time had come for him to finally listen. Really listen. He would take his cue from her and be prepared. He was more than ready for where they were headed.
Chapter Summary

Leaving the gas station after the events in Ghouli, a song helps Mulder and Scully to heal in the midst of their heartache.

Chapter Notes

Two more chapters to go before the “new” ones. I hope you all are enjoying these added and threaded into the story and their journey back to each other. I love them taking their time and falling in love again, as frustratingly slow as it may seem at times. ❤

January 2018

The rain started as they drove away from the gas station. Hard driving rain that seemed to be fitting to how the last few days had been. Incredibly draining, especially for Scully. She had been on an emotional roller coaster.

Hoping beyond hope for a reunion with William, discovering him shot, realizing he was actually alive, speaking to him without knowing it was him, then seeing him on the surveillance video, the visual proof he was safe ... needless to say, it had been a rough few days.

Mulder glanced over at Scully, her back to him as she lay turned toward the window. She had been quiet after they left the station, where they had stood and looked at a television screen, his hands on her shoulders, as she reached for his hand. There was their son on the screen, safe and sound.

Mulder approached the attendant and asked if they could please have that tape. The attendant sincerely apologized, but he could not give it to them without the permission from his boss. Mulder then watched him look over at Scully, seeing the tears in her eyes, and he relented. He handed her the tape and she looked over at Mulder as the tears slid down her face.

Mulder looked at Scully and then looked at the attendant. He thanked him, quietly staring in his eyes to express how much this meant to them. Scully nodded her thanks beside him, tears still on her face.

Mulder held the door open for her as they walked back to the car. He walked beside her with a hand on her back. When they arrived at the car, she turned and wrapped her arms tightly around his waist. He held her to him and rested his chin on her head.

“He’s okay, Mulder,” he heard her say quietly with a catch in her voice. “He’s okay.” He held her until she pulled back and smiled sadly at him, tears in her eyes.

He caressed her face and opened her door before walking around to the other side of the car. He replaced the gas nozzle, and closed the tank, got in the car, started it up, and they headed for home.
The pouring rain and her silence in the car was becoming too much, he needed some sound. He turned the radio on and randomly choose a station. Scully usually chose the music if they were not discussing a case. They might have it softly playing in the background, or blaring as they sat in a never ending traffic jam, both punch-drunk tired, but still with miles to go.

He glanced at her again as music softly filled the car. She still had her body turned toward the window. Maybe she was sleeping, but he did not think so. He wanted to talk to her, but he knew she needed time to herself right now. Needed to process what happened and how to move forward. He knew part of her wished they could follow William and speak to him.

The wipers beat a steady drumbeat as the next song started. A guitar played a song that sounded familiar, then the piano joined in and Mulder frowned. He reached for the volume and turned it up a bit. It was very familiar but different at the same time. Then the song started and he could place it.

_I could lift you up_
_I could show you what you want to see and take you where you want to be_

_You could be my luck_
_Even if the sky is falling down, I know that we’ll be safe and sound_

It was like a punch to the gut. He gasped at the words sung slowly, the words hitting him right in the heart. William had indeed taken them where he wanted them to be, showing them what they thought was impossible to see, and the sky was falling down on them. Jesus ...

_We’re safe and sound_
_We’re safe and sound_

_I could fill your cup_
_You know my river won’t evaporate_
_This world we still appreciate_

_You could be my luck_
_Even in a hurricane of frowns_
_I know that we’ll be safe and sound_

Without question, Scully was his luck. What he needed and was blessed to still have in his life. Memories presented themselves like scenes from a movie. Scully standing up for him, for them, her smiling at his crazy theories, her laughter, her tears. Cases, car rides, cold takeout, hot motel rooms that smelled and cold ones that caused shivers, weather that halted or hindered investigations, and too many damn hospital rooms.

_We’re safe and sound_
_We’re safe and sound_
_We’re safe and sound_
_We’re safe and sound_

Safe and sound
Safe and sound
Hold your ground
Safe and sound

He looked over at her, at the woman who had spent twenty five years by his side. All the times he thought he had pushed her too far, she was still beside him, partners before all else. He loved her
more than anything.

I could show you love
In a tidal wave of mystery
You'll still be standing next to me

You could be my luck
Even if we're six feet underground
I know that we'll be safe and sound

Tidal waves of mysteries, that so adequately described their work. Six feet underground, yeah, they had been there. Hallucinating on spores, they had found a way to work together to survive. When they had been rescued, he reached out for her then, to be sure they were actually safe, that they had made it. Her answering touch had been all he needed. He glanced over at her again. He ached to touch her now, needing again that reassurance that they were still them even after all this time. Still safe.

Safe and sound ... We’re safe and sound
Safe and sound ... We’re safe and sound
Hold your ground ... We’re safe and sound
Safe and sound ... We’re safe and sound

He reached a hand to the gear shift and he left it there. Letting her find him, if she wanted. Before his hand had sat there for even a second, she reached her hand behind her, searching for his. He clasped her fingers and she squeezed back. He heard her sob out a breath and he squeezed her fingers again. She turned suddenly and let go of his hand. She sat up and leaned close to him, putting her head on his shoulder. She laced their fingers together, sniffling and taking a shuddering breath.

I could lift you up
I could show you what you want to see
And take you where you want to be

You could be my luck
Even if the sky is falling down
I know that we'll be safe and sound

The sound of the rain pouring down filled the car as the song ended and before the next song began. Mulder let go of her hand to turn the radio off, the words of the song still hanging in the air.

He took her hand again and rubbed his thumb across the top of it. She breathed deeply again and he saw that she still held the videotape in her other hand. Not wanting to let go of physical proof that William was out there, he was safe, and he had sought them out. Mulder begged the universe for another chance to see him. He did not want the only time they saw their son to be on a videotape. The universe could not be that cruel.

All of a sudden, he was hit with the enormity of the last few days. He had been so strong for her, he had to be, but now he felt it catching up to him. Felt the sadness, guilt, and worry bubbling to the surface. He could not stop the sob from escaping his throat. She lifted her head and looked at him, tears shining in her own eyes.

“Oh, Mulder,” she whispered, setting the videotape on the dashboard and touching his face. “Pull over.”
He did, the rain and his tears making driving nearly impossible. She quickly unbuckled her seatbelt and climbed into his lap. She wrapped her arms around him and he held her close, his face buried in her hair. They cried together, tears falling for so many different reasons. Guilt, sadness, happiness, and relief.

“Mulder,” she said into his neck, after a few minutes. “I could not have made it through these past few days without you. You have been my strength and my lifeline. I … never would I have been able to face this on my own. I would have crumbled, I know I would have. You were there every time I needed you. Letting me have the time I needed, but pulling me back from the brink with a touch or a look. I … Mulder, I can’t express to you how much I needed you and your support. I thought … I thought I would be able to face whatever we found and I would be strong. But … Jesus, I … you were there, Mulder. I needed you and you were there …”

She stopped speaking, overcome with tears. He cried with her as he stroked her hair. His tears were for the manner in which she thanked him, as if she was surprised by his attentiveness, by his sole focus being on her. He shamefully knew that she had every right to seem surprised. His attention had diverted from her and had been a major catalyst to their separation. Stupid past mistakes had led to her feeling second place to his obsessions, loneliness, and unnecessary pain. Never again.

Her tears fell hot on his neck and he could not help but think of the symbolism of their tears being shed as the rain poured outside. As if the heavens themselves were weeping with them and attempting to wash clean the pain and heartache the two of them were suffering.

“Thank you, Mulder. Thank you,” she whispered a few minutes later, holding tighter to him, and fighting back tears. “I … I … Mulder … I love you.”

He held his breath and released it. He had not heard her say that to him in so long. He had said it to her recently and he knew she felt it, but hearing it … God. He closed his eyes, hoping this was the turning point in their relationship that he had been waiting for desperately.

“Scully, I love you,” he whispered into her hair. The only thing he could say to her, the only words he could get out, the only ones that truly mattered. She nodded against his neck, before sobbing once again.

They sat there for awhile before their tears began to subside, as did the rain. Slackening, as if it knew they had begun to move forward, their heartache beginning to heal. She pulled back to look in his eyes. He brought his forehead to hers and they took a minute to recenter.

She pulled back again and tenderly wiped his face. He did the same for her, each taking the others sadness, and adding another brick to the path they were building back to each other. Sharing in this pain was a huge step and they were both aware of it.

She smiled shakily at him, before touching her lips to his in a comforting and thankful kiss. It was brief, but it was enough. She smiled at him again, stronger this time. She stroked his face once more, both of them nodded, and then she climbed back into her seat, buckling her seatbelt.

He took a shaky breath and let it out. The wipers were still going fast and he turned them down to accommodate for the lighter rain. He looked at her, watching her take the videotape back into her hand, and holding it in her lap. She looked at him, extending her hand to him.

He took it, locking their fingers together, holding their hands on his leg. He put on the blinker, looked over his shoulder, then pulled back onto the road. She squeezed his hand and he looked at her again.
“Let’s go home,” she whispered.

With his hand in hers and the videotape in her lap, it felt for a moment, that their family was together. William may not physically be with them, but he was there, forever saved on a video they would always cherish. Their boy was safe, they were safe, and that was all they could ask for right now.

Safe and sound, her hand warm and familiar in his, they headed for home.
Finding Solace

Chapter Summary

Arriving home, Scully and Mulder talk and find strength and peace within themselves and each other.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Scully trudged bone wearily, up the front steps to their, no ... not theirs - Mulder’s home. For some reason that thought made her feel sadder than all that had transpired the last few days. This was still not her home. It was not theirs.

Not yet.

She stopped at the top of the stairs and leaned against the railing of the porch. She held the videotape in her hand, not wanting to part with it for any reason. Mulder was grabbing things out of the car. She could hear the doors opening and closing, but she stared straight ahead, her eyes landing on the one lone chair that sat on the porch.

Everything about the house these days screamed bachelor pad not home the way it had when she was there. It was still cozy, she still the place she knew by heart, but she felt out of place, like a visitor and not an inhabitant.

She closed her eyes as she heard his steps crossing the grass, then falling on the stairs. She looked up as he approached, and he gave her a quizzical look.

“Why didn’t you go in?” he asked, opening the screen door.

“I don’t have keys,” she said softly.

He looked back at her, his hand ready to put his key in the lock. Again, the same quizzical look and then sadness in his eyes for a second.

“My keys are inside. I met up with you, remember? My car is over there and I didn’t need my keys with me while we were gone,” she said, trying to ease his worries that she had not meant she no longer had keys to their home. His home. Shit.

He held her gaze as he unlocked the door and then waited while she went in ahead of him. She looked around as she walked in, the place cleaner than the last time she had been there. The Bigfoot impression was still on the coffee table, but free of the Goop-O it once held. Her cheeks flushed at the memory of what they had done instead of eating the mass amounts of the, non-taint flavored Goop-O.

He set the bags down and put his wallet and keys on the desk. Oh, she had not noticed that he brought her bag in, too. Her heart fluttered at that fact, at the hopefulness it showed in him.

She stood in the middle of the room, looking around. She missed it here, every time she visited. The creaky stairs, the drafty room in which she was always cold and he was always just right, the
burner on the stove that always gave her problems, the mountain of items stacked haphazardly all over, threatening to tip over at any minute, she missed it all. This was home, not her place at Alan’s.

Lost in her thoughts, she had not noticed Mulder moving around the room. She looked over at him as she heard him saying her name.

“What?” she asked, shaking her head slightly.

He gave her a small smile, as he knelt on the floor, and put out his hand. “Let me have the videotape, Scully,” he said softly.

He had moved the television out while she had not been paying attention. He had the VCR on and was ready for the tape. He actually had both VCR’s out. Mulder was the only person she knew who still had not only one, but two working VCR’s.

He put in a tape and then again reached a hand out to her. “I want to make a copy, just in case. And then ... that way we ... we both have one at both our places,” he said, his head down.

She swallowed down the lump in her throat, determined not to cry, as she handed him the tape. She knelt next to him on the floor and lightly squeezed his hand. A thank you and an understanding squeeze, as he put in the videotape.

He pushed play and there was William again. She inhaled, still not believing she had spoken to him, but not him.

“You seem like a nice person. I wish I could know you better.”

“Well. Safe travels.”

“Umm ...” Mulder said, clearing his throat, looking down again. “I’m ... I’m gonna rewind it and see if we can pinpoint when he shows up and the record it to the other tape.”

Scully nodded, again squeezing his hand. He picked up the remote and they sat cross-legged together, on the floor. He rewound it and they watched things moving backward. They saw them pulling out of the gas station, but the car William was using was still there.

Mulder kept rewinding it and they saw William moving around, pacing in front of the camera, looking at his watch, glancing at the road, standing around, looking around again, glancing directly at the camera. Then he got in his car and backed out of the frame.

“Oh,” Mulder whispered, letting the tape go little further back and then pushing play again, and also pushing record on the other VCR.

They watched together as William pulled in, and sat for a few seconds before getting out of the car. When he did, he looked around, he gaze landing right on the camera and nodding.

“He knew it was there,” Scully whispered, beginning to breathe faster, her heart pounding. Mulder nodded next to her.

He began to look around, glancing toward the windmill, then heading to the street, going out and then coming back into frame. He looked at his watch, glanced at the road again and then went inside the gas station.
A few minutes later, they pulled in and got out of the car. Mulder said he was going to the bathroom and Scully said she would pump the gas. He walked away and she began to get it ready.

William walked out and her focus was on his face, his expressions, and the way he looked at her. She was searching for any ill feelings, hard looks, or any hatred. Her heart pounded as she did not see it. Could he possibly not harbor bad feelings toward her, while her own feelings of doubt and worry were always just below the surface? The hole inside her heart, that was forever present, had never properly healed.

She focused again as he drove away and Mulder was there on the screen. They ran out of frame and then came back, glancing at the camera and running toward the station. The taped stopped and they were silent.

Mulder stopped both tapes and looked at Scully. They stared at each other before he rewound it and they watched again. He paused it and they stared at William, looking at the smile on his face as he spoke to Scully.

“He was waiting for you, Scully,” Mulder whispered.

“But how could he have been? Mulder, how could he know we would travel on that road? And at that particular time? What ... what if we hadn’t shown up when we did?” she said, knowing the answer, but afraid to actually believe it.

“I think he would have kept waiting until we did. That snow globe with the windmill was part of your dream for a reason. He left it for you, knowing you would most likely take it. He was trying to tell you something,” he said, looking at her, watching her face.

She stood up and paced around the room. She knew he was right, the evidence was right in front of her eyes. He had been waiting for them, or more specifically, for her. She stopped pacing and looked at him.

“He can disguise himself as anyone, Mulder. How? How can he do that?” she asked, so many questions and uncertainties surrounding him, as she shook her head.

“I don’t know, Scully,” he began, but she cut him off.

“And he looked right at the camera, he must have known it would show the real him. If he knew that, why ... why did he not just appear as himself? If he knew he would be on video, why hide that way? Why ... disguise himself, if he knew ... if he planned ...” she could not go on. She knew the answer to these questions too, but she needed to ask them anyway.

He stood up, glancing at the frozen image on the television screen. She looked too, and saw the smiles on both of their faces. They were happy, content.

“Scully,” Mulder said quietly, pulling her attention from the video. “What would you have done if it was him, as himself, in front of you?”

She looked into his eyes and she knew he knew the answer the same as she did. She would have been unable to be as collected as she liked to imagine she would be. She would have undoubtedly terrified him with her desire to want him close, to hold him, to convince him to come with them.

She knew Mulder knew what she wanted. She fought back tears, exhaling through her nose, and shrugging her shoulders. Finally, she dropped her head, and sighed.

“I ... just ... Mulder, I wanted my chance to ... tell him I was sorry. To ... apologize ... to explain
why I couldn’t keep him. Why we couldn’t keep him. I didn’t get my chance, Mulder,” she said, a sob rising up in spite of her efforts to keep it down.

He pulled her to him and she wrapped her arms around his waist, burying her face in his chest. She cried softly for a few minutes, as he rubbed her back, murmuring to her.

“You did tell him, Scully. He heard you,” he said into her hair, when she had quieted down. “I was there as you spoke to him. He heard every word you said to him.”

“I said that to what I thought was his corpse, Mulder,” she said, pushing back from him. “It’s not the same … not at all the same as face-to-face.”

“Scully,” he said, reaching for her, but she pulled away, not ready for his touch.

She felt that same feeling she had in the morgue, grossly inadequate saying all she needed to be say. Pouring out her heart,knowing she was too late, but needing him to know, to somehow hear her and have an idea of how sorry she was for everything. How every day away from him had been torture and his death being what brought them back together, felt like her heart had been scooped out and she was left with nothing inside.

She covered her face with her hands and cried. She knew she should be ecstatic he was alive. She should be celebrating his ability to apparently deceive everyone and escape. She was happy, very happy, but she still felt empty and hollow.

“I … wanted to touch him,” she said, through her tears. “I wanted to hold him. To see … see if he still smells the way I remember. I know that it’s crazy, and I no longer have a claim to him, but I wanted to know. I’ve missed so much … ”

“Scully, he gave you all he could, in the only way he knew,” Mulder said, not trying to touch her, but staring at her so kindly it made her ache. “He was scared. He doesn’t know us or if he can trust us. I don’t blame him for being precautious.”

She knew he was right. She knew that she would have done the same if she was tailing a suspect. But this was different. This was her son they were seeing. Their son. She wanted to go back in time and grab him and never let go.

“He came to you at the hospital because he heard your words and wanted to see you,” Mulder said quietly. “He wanted to get a feel for the kind of person you are. What better way to do that than see how you behave toward a stranger?”

Of course he was right. Observing the way people treat strangers was an indicator of character. It was smart of him, but she still felt cheated.

“He … he had you find that snowglobe for a reason. Maybe he had this planned all along. Not hurting the girls, but finding you. Getting us out there because he wanted to see us, see you. He waited for us, that much is obvious. He had a plan, Scully.”

She stared at him, her wild thoughts voiced by him, made her feel less crazy for imaging he wanted to see her, to know her. Jesus, William had said it plain as day, and he knew the surveillance camera would see the real him.

It was suddenly all too much and she felt as if she had hit a wall. She stepped close to Mulder again, wrapping her arms around his waist. He held her close, his head resting on top of hers.

“I’m tired, Mulder,” she whispered, her ear close to his heart. He hummed and she closed her eyes.
She wanted to stay, but she felt that old hesitation. Worry about whether it was a good or bad idea. Screw it, she thought. She needed him tonight.

“I want to take a bath. Is that okay?” she asked, still against his chest, not wanting to meet his eyes.

She felt his breath catch and his heart beat faster. His hands stilled in their movements across her back. He breathed out and his hands began to move again, stroking her back, her hair.

“Scully, you don’t need to ask. Whatever you want, whatever you need,” he pulled back and held her face in his hands. His eyes searched hers, his thumbs lightly stroking her face. “Whatever you want, Scully,” he whispered.

She moved her arms and placed her hands on his chest. She pulled gently on the lapels of the jacket he still wore and brought his mouth down to hers. She kissed him softly, feeling his hands moving to her hair.

She pulled back and laid her hands on his chest. He stared at her as he let his hands fall from her and stepped back. She sighed and headed for the stairs, taking her jacket off and laying in on the bannister.

“Do you want your bag?” he asked softly.

She turned to him and shook her head. “All the clothes in there are dirty.” She held his gaze and she knew he understood what she was implying.

“You know where my shirts are,” he said quietly, with a nod.

She nodded back and went upstairs. She crossed the threshold into their room and looked around. She had not been alone in their room in a long time. The books she had been reading were still on her nightstand. Four years and they were still there. She blinked back tears as she looked at them.

The bed had been hastily made, only one side rumpled. A half a glass of water was on his nightstand, along with books he was reading. There was also a photo of them they had taken a few years ago. They had been at a lighthouse on the Vineyard and they had asked a fellow tourist to take their picture. It was a windy day and chilly. They were bundled up and her hair was blowing in her face and in his. They were laughing and had their arms around each other. She loved that picture of them.

She stepped closer to it and picked it up, tracing her finger over their faces. She was looking at the camera, but he was looking at her. His eyes were so full of love, the way they always were when he looked at her. Except when he stopped looking at her, and looked instead, into the darkness.

She set the picture back down and walked over to the dresser. She opened what used to be one of her drawers, why she did not know. To turn the knife a little more maybe, and see the physical emptiness, as well as feel it.

When she opened it, she let out a breath. Inside lay a couple of t-shirts, a pair of leggings and some underwear. They were clothes she had not worn in years, but they were there, as if waiting for her return. They must have been in the laundry and she forgot about them when she packed her things.

She touched them as she had the photo on the nightstand. The memories attached to something as simple as these items made her stomach hurt. She closed the drawer and walked into the bathroom, shaking her head. The past was gone and she did not want to keep living there, but she felt stuck in the middle. She shook her head and exhaled.
She turned the water on and started to fill the bathtub. She smiled softly as she watched it fill, remembering the day she had come home from work to an eager and smiling Mulder. He had been fairly bouncing as he pulled her upstairs. She was tired and not in the mood for sex, but he bypassed the bed and led her to the bathroom.

The new tub sat there, shiny and stocked with supplies- bubble bath, oils, body scrubs. He filled the tub and helped her undress, taking her hand as she stepped in and sunk down in the water. He grinned at her and disappeared, returning with a glass of red wine and a calming CD playing on the portable player. She had soaked and relaxed, drinking her wine, then properly thanked him, all thoughts of exhaustion long gone.

She sighed, adding some of her bubble bath she found under the sink, still there after all this time. It made her feel the same way the books and the clothes had, confused and also happy.

She grabbed a towel and washcloth and took off her clothes, leaving them in a pile on the floor. She turned off the water, pulled her hair up in a messy bun, and stepped into the tub. She closed her eyes as she submerged all the way in, leaning her head against the back of the tub. The water was the perfect temperature, and the bubbles smelled wonderful. She took deep breaths and tried to stop her brain from overthinking everything.

There was a knock on the door and she opened her eyes. “Come in,” she said softly.

Mulder stepped in and walked over to the side of the tub, a mug in his hand. He looked sheepish as he shrugged his shoulders.

“Don’t have any wine in the house, but I made you some tea. It’s chamomile. I don’t have the sleepy kind. Guess I’ll need to make a store run soon,” he said, smiling slightly as he handed her the mug.

She felt tears in her eyes and blinked them back as she took the mug from him. She took a drink to try and push down the lump in her throat. It was just how she liked it, a touch of honey and not too hot.

“Thank you, Mulder,” she said quietly, looking into his eyes.

He nodded and turned to leave the room. She reached out a hand and caught his in her own. He looked at her again and she held his eyes. She hoped she was conveying with her eyes what she could not seem to voice.

She swallowed and took a breath. “Thank you,” she whispered, the words holding meaning for so many things. He nodded again and bent to place a kiss on top of her head. He squeezed her hand and walked out of the room.

She sat in the tub, drinking her tea, her eyes closed. Too much had happened in the past couple of days, she needed to stop thinking and relax. Assess what was true and move forward. William was alive, he had made contact with them and purposely made it known he was okay. She breathed a sigh of relief at that knowledge. She sent up a prayer that he would stay that way, but if he found himself in trouble, they would be there in time to help him.

She and Mulder were okay, both physically and emotionally. They were in a good place and for that she was most thankful. The two years they had been apart, before work brought them back together, felt like twenty. Every day she had missed him, the old Mulder and their old life. Working together again and seeing each other regularly, had given them that push they needed. They were so close now, she could feel it.
She stayed in the tub for a bit longer, adding more hot water when she felt it cooling off. She finished her tea and set the mug on the cupboard top behind her. She closed her eyes and settled in for a few more minutes. She used the washcloth and soap before pulling the plug and standing up.

She stepped onto the bath mat and grabbed her towel. She felt better now, the bath helping the way it always did. She wrapped the towel around her, opened the door, and stepped into the bedroom.

Mulder was not in bed, as she somewhat assumed he would be. He must have gone back downstairs. She stepped back over to her drawer and took out a pair of underwear, but left her shirts untouched, she wanted one of Mulder’s.

She opened the closet and took out one of his shirts, a short sleeved, dark heather grey one, that was unbelievably soft from so many washes. She slipped it on and closed the closet door. The bedroom door opened and Mulder looked her up and down. She gave him a small smile, tugging on the shirt, feeling suddenly self conscious.

She had worn his shirts to bed thousands of times, but for some reason this felt different. He stepped closer to her, but did not touch her.

“I’m going to take a shower,” he said quietly, looking her up and down again. She nodded as he headed for the bathroom.

“Scully?” he said, turning around and swallowing hard, as she looked at him. “I want you to stay.” She frowned at him, tilting her head, and gesturing to her naked bottom half.

He smiled softly and shook his head. “No. I want you to stay. Don’t leave in the middle of the night. Stay. Please?”

He stared at her, his countenance hesitant and unsure. He was holding his breath and she felt like weeping at the uncertainty on his face. She nodded and his body visibly relaxed. He breathed out and his smile widened.

“I’ll be out in a few minutes,” he said with a nod to her. He walked in the bathroom and shut the door halfway.

She heard the shower start and she went to her side of the bed and pulled back the covers. She slid in the bed and laid against the pillows. She sat up and took her hair out of the bun and leaned back again. That was better.

She closed her eyes as she listened to the shower running, the familiarity was overwhelming. He would be out soon, he rarely took long showers. She felt that sadness bubbling up again and she was anxious for him to come to bed, to hold her and tell her it would be okay.

The water turned off and she turned on her side facing away from him to give him time, the way he had for her. She heard him moving around, but she remained still. Finally, the light was shut off and she felt the covers lift and the bed dipped as he got in and laid down.

It was quiet. She knew she had to make the first move. She had to make it clear what she wanted and not feign sleep, although she doubted he thought she had fallen asleep so quickly. She turned toward him and he was lying on his side, staring straight at her. She could see his eyes in the moonlight through the window.

It made her think of him waiting on the other side of the motel room, knowing she would come to him. Tonight was different. She simply wanted to be held by him, kept safe in his arms, while the world may rage it's battles outside.
“Hey,” she whispered.

“Hey,” he whispered back.

And then she was pulled into his arms. Her face in the crook of his neck, his hands stroking her hair and her lower back. She had an arm around his waist and one tucked to his chest. One of his hands went under her shirt and began to rub her bare skin, and that was all it took.

Within seconds her shirt was across the room and she had her mouth fused to his as he lay on top of her. She was pulling his hair and moaning into his mouth. He pulled back from her and looked in her eyes.

“Slow down, Scully. There’s no hurry,” he said, before he lightly kissed her.

She had tears in her eyes again. He knew her so well, he could read her like a book. She had wanted to go fast, feel something to replace the confusion and sadness she felt. But he knew it would not have been what she needed. God, she loved him.

He was kissing her neck and moving down her body. He took a breast into his hand and a nipple into his mouth. He ran his tongue around it in a circle before lightly biting it. She arched up into him and breathed his name. He did the same to the other and then moved farther down her body.

Of course she knew where he was headed, but tonight she did not want that from him. Considering they had just started to ramp this up, she was already incredibly wet. She was ready and she wanted to feel him and be filled by him. The only man who had ever made her feel loved and also completely aroused by simply looking at her.

“Mulder,” she said closing her legs around him, and tugging on his hair. He looked up and she saw mild surprise on his face. “I just want you.” He stared at her and then nodded.

He pulled her panties off and then his boxers. He settled back between her open legs and kissed her again. She could feel him hot and hard against her. She stroked her tongue along his and rocked her body, silently telling him what she wanted.

He leaned back and smiled at her. He trailed his fingers down her body and slid them inside her, making sure she was ready. She gasped and he looked at her with another surprised look. Yes, she was more than ready.

She watched as he took himself in hand, using the same one that had been inside her. He stroked himself a couple of times and she throbbed with anticipation. He did not keep her waiting long before he slid slowly into her. They both exhaled as he leaned forward, resting his head against hers, her legs wrapping around him.

He waited until she nudged him with her ankles. He raised his head and begin to slowly make love to her. He took his time, heightening both their pleasure, until she was crying out for more. She pulled him close and he started pumping faster.

So many thoughts swirled inside her head, but the one that kept coming front and center, was her love for him. How he could still affect her the way he did after all this time. How the feel of him inside her, made her feel complete and whole. Being with him in any way, but especially like this, made her feel like she was home. He was her other half. She knew it and had known for years. She was incomplete without him.

She began to cry, thinking about how much time they had wasted being apart. She tried to be quiet, but he heard her. He raised his head and stared at her. Tears ran down the sides of her face and into
her ears. She could not stop them. It was as if a floodgate had been opened from this particular
joining together.

He started to pull back and slip from her body, but she stopped him with her hands on his hips. He
looked at her and shook his head, obviously not wanting to continue if she was upset.

“Please don’t stop, Mulder. I need you. I need ... please,” she cried as she held him to her. “I’ve
missed this so much, please.”

She was sobbing now, but still holding him and moving her hips to get him to go again. He moved
them until they were side by side, still connected, but not moving yet. He stroked her hair, kissed
her cheeks, wiped her tears, then held her to him.

She moved her leg over his hip, beseeching through her tears, for him to keep going. He moved a
hand down her back to her waist and did what she asked. He began moving slowly, her tears falling
on his neck as she cried.

She cried for the past and the decision she had to make alone and the sadness that followed it from
which she could never fully escape. She cried for the happiness they had shared in this house, and
the darkness that had been their undoing. She cried for the nights she had spent away from him and
the time right now, when he would love her the way she wanted, while she sobbed in his arms.

“I’m sorry, so sorry,” she cried over and over, meaning so many things. She heard him saying it
back to her and she cried harder.

She knew he was close and she did not care that she would not get there with him. This was for
him, for his strength and care of her for the last few days. She had no better way to thank him, to
let him know how much his presence meant to her, than to give this to him.

“Scully,” he said, in a strangled voice. He knew she was not close, and she knew he would not
want it to happen that way, but his end was fast approaching.

“It’s okay, Mulder. It’s okay. Come, Mulder. Please,” she whispered into his ear, her face tight
against his neck.

He cried out as he did, holding her close as he spilled inside her, her name a mantra on his lips.
More than his physical release, it felt as if he was giving her everything he had to give, breaking
down another wall, and adding to their path toward each other.

Her tears were slowing, but still she clung to him. His body was as close to hers as she could get
without sliding inside his skin. He smelled so good, like soap, Mulder, and home. She did not want
to leave here again and yet, the path was still not complete. They were so close, a few more stones
just needed to be placed.

Tonight though, they had gone far enough. They could take respite here and find solace. Her name
still fell from his lips and she kissed his neck, tasting her tears. He stroked her hair as she felt him
becoming flaccid inside her. She pulled him closer, her leg going higher on his hip.

“Scully,” he whispered, pulling back a bit. He looked into her eyes and she smiled slightly. “You
didn’t ... I’m so sorry.”

“No, Mulder,” she said, touching his face. “Don’t apologize. It’s okay, I promise.”

“I didn’t want it to just be about me. You know I don’t like that,” he said, his expression serious.
His hand moved toward her center and she stopped him.
“I can’t right now. I ... I just can’t,” she said, bringing his hand to her mouth and kissing his fingers. “You gave me exactly what I needed, and I wanted to give you what you needed. It’s okay, Mulder. There’s no hurry, right?”

Hearing his own words said back he to him, he nodded, although his brow remained furrowed. She traced the lines with her fingers and he relaxed, closing his eyes. He shifted them again, moving from inside her body, but remaining in the same position.

Their breathing fell in sync as they lay holding each other. His heartbeat and his fingers running circles on her skin, relaxed her. The last thing she heard was his “I love you,” before sleep claimed her.

She awoke in the morning, no longer in his arms. He was on his side facing away from her. The covers had slipped down and she could see his back, strong and muscly. She ached to touch him, but did not want to wake him just yet.

She slipped out of bed quietly and used the bathroom. She brushed her teeth with one of the extra toothbrushes she found under the sink. Years of traveling at a moments notice, had led to stockpiling items, even when it was no longer needed. She had at least four unopened toothbrushes at her own place. Old habits did indeed die hard.

She borrowed his brush and tried to make her hair a bit neater, before setting the brush down, and walking back to the bedroom. He was still sleeping, his chest rising and falling with each deep breath he took.

She slid back in bed, the sheets still warm from her body. She lay on her back and looked around the familiar room, the colors, the items, the man beside her and she began to smile. So much had changed in the past four years, but here, it was as if time stood still. The place was the same, albeit the aforementioned bachelor pad feel, but it still held the same memories and feel within its walls.

The man beside her was the one thing that had changed. She saw it, had in fact been seeing it for awhile. She was still hesitant and had her worries, but after these past few days, she felt a shift in him and in them.

Last night had been a cleansing of her soul and now she wanted to move forward. To focus on the good and not fixate on the bad. She had cried enough last night and now she wanted to be happy. To achieve a sense of normalcy in their crazy life. She closed her eyes and prayed for that chance.

Mulder suddenly stirred beside her, causing her to open her eyes. He took a deep breath and then relaxed before turning over quickly, his own eyes wild as he looked into hers.

“You’re here,” he said, his tone surprised, his eyes scanning her face.

“I’m here,” she said with a smile.

He moved closer and stared at her, as she turned on her side to face him. His hair was wild and his cheek had a crease on it from his pillow. She thought he had never looked cuter or more sexy in her life. His eyes were darting all over her face, as if looking for a sign.

“Hey,” he whispered, watching her eyes.

“Hey,” she whispered back, a smile beginning to stretch across her face. He answered hers with one of his own, still searching, before she nodded.

He leaned closer and kissed her, lightly at first, but soon his tongue was asking for permission to
enter. She gladly answered by opening her mouth and kissing him back. She felt her body respond immediately, the tears and sadness from last night, gone away in the early morning light.

He moved to lay between her legs and she felt him, already hard. He kissed her once more before pulling back and beginning to kiss across her jaw. He got to her ear and kissed before biting her earlobe. She shivered and he put his mouth to her ear.

“You taste minty,” he breathed and she closed her eyes. Only he could arouse her with those words.

He kissed her throat, her chest, her stomach and her belly button. He stopped and looked up at her, his chin resting on her stomach. He asked her with his eyes if this was okay, if she was, and if they were. She stroked his face and smiled. He smiled back and began moving down her body once again.

This time, she did not stop him.

Chapter End Notes

God, I love Ghouli. I love the emotions and the raw need they have for each other. I love Mulder being her rock, pulling her to him, holding her, his barely contained anger to others but his absolute love for her. It’s so beautiful.

There are not enough words to describe the love I have for Scully’s “discussion” with William in the morgue. It’s beautiful and sad and so good.
Chapter Summary

After being sure that Skinner is okay, Mulder and Scully head home, tired, but looking forward to spending time together. And boy, do they ...

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

February 2018

Mulder sat in the hospital waiting room while Scully was back with Skinner. She patched him up best she could back at the trailer, but he needed to go to the hospital to be properly examined.

All this time later, she was still Skinner’s emergency contact, which was something neither of them had been aware of until she was called back by the nurse. The knowledge caused Scully to smile softly as she glanced at Mulder and headed to the back to be with Skinner.

They had been back there for about half an hour now and Mulder was getting antsy as he waited for them. He hoped Skinner was okay. The wound had been deep and looked pretty terrible. Shaking his head, he looked back down at the magazine in his hands.

“Mulder?” Scully’s voice said softly, her hand on his shoulder.

“Hey,” he said, setting down the magazine and glancing at her as she sat in the chair in front of him. “How is he?”

“Okay, but they’re going to keep him here for a couple of days to keep an eye on him. They were able to isolate and stop the internal bleeding. It wasn’t significant enough to warrant a blood transfusion, but he’s weak and given the nature of the puncture wound there is concern for infection. But overall, he’s doing alright back there. Well, more than alright given that there is a blonde nurse back there making a fool of herself over him,” she laughed, rolling her eyes. “He’s very lucky. It could have been much worse,” she said, watching him as he nodded and returned her smile.

“Still his emergency contact? That’s gotta make you feel good,” he said with a smirk. She shrugged, but he could see the pride in her eyes. He nodded and stood up, glancing down at her. “Ready to go?” She nodded and stood to her feet.

“Good thing we never got to a hotel. Now we can just head home. I’m exhausted,” she sighed, walking toward the exit. He nodded and held the door open as they stepped to it, letting her walk out first.

“There is a commuter flight in an hour,” he told her as they walked to the car. She nodded with another sigh, and he smiled.

With their bags stored and seatbelts on, they both relaxed back into the seats of their second flight as they waited for takeoff. Uncrossing her arms, Scully exhaled deeply. Leaning her head against his shoulder, she settled and sighed. He smiled and leaned his head back, closing his eyes.
“Mulder,” she said, resting her hand over his leg and setting more comfortably against him as he resituated his arms to wrap his left arm around her. “Mm, you smell good.” He heard her say, causing him to smile. By the time they took off, they were both asleep.

Almost five hours later, they were heading to Mulder’s car. Both had slept for the majority of the flight, only waking about twenty minutes before the plane touched down.

Mulder unlocked the door and put their bags inside before getting in the car and sitting down. “Should we get something to eat?” he asked as they put their seatbelts on.

“Hmm, how about we head to my place and call in some Chinese for an early dinner? I want to change out of these clothes,” she said with a sigh. “And take a shower.”

“Well, if you need help reaching your back, or anywhere else, you let me know,” he said with a raise of his eyebrows and a grin. She rolled her eyes but then held his gaze, her eyes landing on his lips before turning her head and looking out the window. He stared at her and then started the car.

It was a quiet drive to her place, not taking to long before they arrived. She took her bag out, unlocked the front door, and turned off the alarm. He shook his head at the technology involved just as he did every time he was over, which was not too often.

“Why is your house so much nicer than mine?” he asked, the same as he always did. She made a face at him and put her bag on the floor as he closed the door.

“I’m going to shower, you call in the food. The usual is fine with me,” he watched her walk toward her room and sighed. After taking out his phone and placing their order, Mulder removed his shoes and walked around, looking at her place. Well, Alan’s place.

She had been there for almost two years. Alan had been asked to stay on where he was and since he and Scully were still in limbo, the additional time had worked in both Scully and Alan’s favor. Alan’s place was very well decorated and organized. Scully had not added much to it, save the alien cat pillow, a blanket or two, and some candles she enjoyed the scent of.

He was not sure if it made him glad or unnerved that she seemed to be in a constant state of simply existing in this space. As though she was waiting for something, but not sure what. Sighing, he left the living room and decided to light the candles and put them on the dining room table where they would be eating.

The doorbell rang not long after he set the table. Grabbing his wallet, he opened the front door and paid for the food, thanking the delivery guy and closing the door. He set the bags of food on the table and went down the hall to Scully’s room.

“Food’s here;” he called, after knocking on the door.

“Great, I’ll be right out,” came her muffled reply.

He walked back down the hall and began to take the containers from the bag, setting them out and opening them. His stomach growled and his mouth watered as he looked at it all. It all smelled so good, and he was starved, having not eaten all day, but he would wait for Scully.

He heard her bare feet on the floor coming toward him and inhaled sharply at the sight of her. Her hair was wrapped in a towel and she only wore a blue gray robe. He could tell she was not wearing anything on top as he could see her nipples through the robe, causing his mouth to water for an entirely different reason.
“This looks great, thanks for getting it ready. I’m starving,” she said, grabbing a container and sitting down. He continued staring at her until she glanced up at him with a frown. He reached for the other chair and sat down across from her.

They both piled food into their plates and began to eat. Neither said anything as they did, both hungry and in need of sustenance. He handed her the box of egg rolls, and she handed him the spicy beef he liked. Only the sounds of contentment were heard as they ate their fill.

During the course of the meal, she took the towel off her head and shook her hair out, combing her fingers through it. He watched her as she did, smelling the scent of her shampoo, wanting to bury his nose in it. Her robe opened a little, enough to show the swell of her breast, and confirm his suspicions. She was definitely naked up top. The lower half though …

“I was thinking about Skinner while I was in the shower,” she said, grabbing the box of rice and adding more to her plate.

“Is that a normal occurrence?” he asked, raising his eyebrows. She shrugged and put some soy sauce on her rice.

“I mean, he’s a good looking man. You can’t blame a woman for wondering,” she said, not looking at him.

“Huh, is that right?” he asked in mock annoyance. She looked up at him and her eyes burned fire, making his dick stir. She continued staring before rolling her eyes and shoving a bite in her mouth, shaking her head as she chewed.

“Just wondering if he was okay. I’ll call him tomorrow,” she said, and he nodded. Her eyes roamed across his face and chest and he wondered what she was thinking. When she reached for another egg roll, her robe gaped open again, revealing more skin.

“Scully, I have to ask. Are you completely naked under that robe?” he finally asked her, no longer able to hide his curiosity.

“Dinner took about twenty minutes, and you didn’t ask once. I don’t feel you deserve an answer for at least that amount of time,” she said, sitting back and tightening her robe. She took a bite, raising her eyebrows at him, and he grinned.

“Is that right?” he asked again, in a completely different tone. Playful and teasing Scully was in control, and they both knew it.

“It is,” she said with a small smile of her own, taking another bite.

“Hmm,” he said, brushing his hands together and wiping them on a napkin. “No answer for twenty minutes, that’s cold.” She shrugged with one shoulder, eating the rest of her egg roll, and smiling. “No answer, huh? Can I investigate?” Again she shrugged and acted nonchalant. He nodded and got up from his chair, pulling it to the end of the table and sitting to her left.

He stared at her, and she stared back. He looked at her from head to toe and reached for her chair, pulling hard and turning her toward him. Putting a hand on her knee, he opened her legs. She inhaled a breath and let it out. Holding the material of the robe between his fingers, he pulled, exposing her bare flesh. Moaning, he moved his hand up her leg, his fingers tracing the soft skin he found.

He left his chair to kneel down in front of her, knowing he would find her completely naked underneath. Both hands were on her satiny thighs when he heard her breathe his name. He looked
up and watched her chest rising and falling, her eyes dark with desire.

“Am I getting warm?” he asked, his hands closer to her hips, finding no barriers to speak of. She sighed and scooted her body down in the chair. He smiled, taking his cue from her.

He opened her legs wider and her robe fell open showing how naked she truly was underneath. Her arousal was evident as he leaned in further, reaching to untie the belt of her robe.

“No,” she breathed, blocking his hands. “That’s cheating. You said investigate. Nowhere was it stated you could completely open a case.” He laughed softly as he moved his hands, conceding to her rules. His question had been answered and he was ready to claim his reward.

Soft kisses were laid on the tops of her thighs, while his fingers scratched lightly along the sides. She moved more and he could smell how aroused she was, and he ached to taste and be inside her.

His tongue ran along her thighs and she cried out, her hand going to his head, her fingers in his hair. Closer to his goal, he kissed and licked her sweet smelling skin, finally arriving where he would live if he was allowed.

He pulled her to the edge of her chair and opened her legs even wider, his mouth dropping to her center. She cried out again as he slowly made love to her with his mouth. Kissing, sucking, and licking her, he heard her cries and felt her legs squeezing against his head.

“Mulder, ohh my God,” she panted, her fingers pulling at his hair, her legs wrapping around him. “God, I’m gonna come. Ohhhhh Mulderrrrr.” Her fingers in his hair tightened, and she froze as her body spasmed, her legs tight around him as he continued using his mouth on her.

She relaxed her grip on him and her legs loosened on his shoulders. “Mmmmulder. My God. You are … so good at that. Mmmm,” she breathed out raggedly, her fingers running through his hair. He moved, kissing her thighs and sitting back on his knees. Looking up, he saw her eyes were closed, and her robe partially open, her breasts all but exposed.

He reached for the bow on the robe again, untying it, and staring at her breasts. She was so goddamn beautiful. He kissed her thighs again, and up her body, stopping at her breasts to give them some attention before making his way to her mouth. Languidly they kissed, her arms around his neck.

She pulled back and stared at him. “So, you found your answer?” she smirked at him. He kissed her again and pushed his groin into hers making her moan in his mouth.

“I’m a good investigator,” he said against her lips. She hummed and kissed him again, her tongue licking his lips.

“Really, really good,” she emphasized, wrapping her legs around him and pulling him closer, seething as he rubbed against her.

“Well, if you’re going to do something, you should always do your best,” he whispered in her ear, before pulling back and looking in her eyes. She smiled at him and rubbed her feet against him.

“Agree wholeheartedly. And it only seemed fair to keep you in your apparent state of torturous wondering, as you’ve been doing the same to me all day,” she said, her nails scratching at the base of his neck.

“Me? What have I done?” he inquired, genuinely perplexed.
“This tight white shirt, Mulder,” she whispered, her fingers sliding under the collar. “Goddamn, do you have any idea how hot you look in it? I’ve been wet since we were in Davey’s trailer.”

“Christ, Scully,” he groaned, his head landing on her neck as his knees buckled and he fell into her.

“I feel it’s best to be honest. And you have been making me crazy with desire all day. Only seemed fair that you got a taste of your own medicine,” she said, smirking to the degree that it could be heard.

“Oh, I got a taste all right,” he said into her neck before nipping at her skin. She yelped and pulled his hair, calling him a bastard. He chuckled and pulled back, looking at her with a grin. She shook her head and smiled.

“So what was your plan to ease the desire you were feeling? Aside from wearing this robe that I feel you should wear every day, just like this,” he said looking down at her naked body on display.

“Hmm, wouldn’t get much work done if I did, as I’d get arrested before I made it there,” she laughed.

“Who said anything about you going to work?” he asked with his eyebrows wiggling. She laughed again and stared at him, her eyes happy and full of love.

“You wondered about my plan?” she asked and he nodded, looking at this woman he loved so much, his ache for her was excruciating. “Well, you remembered to pack your bathing suit in your bag right?” He looked at her, confused, and she smiled a slow, sensual smile. “You remember there’s a hot tub here, right?”

Everything froze as he remembered the last time they had been in a hot tub. The house they rented for a weekend after a long month for her at the hospital. The tiny sapphire two piece suit she wore that night, the feel of her legs tangled with his under the water. The words she said in his ear as she climbed into his lap and his hand slid under the strings to untie her suit, her breasts then pressed to his chest. The way it felt to slide inside her, everything wet and warm around them, and yet she was the wettest and warmest thing he had ever felt.

“God, Mulder,” she groaned, breaking him from those memories. “Where did your mind go? You’re so much harder than a few seconds ago. Oh, Jesus.” She pushed into him and he groaned with her.

“Sapphire bathing suit, Scully. Your tongue in my ear, your breasts against my chest, the feel of you as you broke around me,” he growled in her ear and she whimpered. “If I forgot my suit, what will …”

“Jesus, Mulder, just move,” she cried, pushing him away and standing up unsteadily. She dropped her robe and he shook his head. God, she was so fucking beautiful.

She walked up to him and her hands went to the hem of his shirt, pulling at it and moving it up his chest. When she had it off of him, she put it on the table.

“This is mine now. I’m keeping it,” she informed him, her eyes daring him to say otherwise.

“Whatever you want, Scully,” he agreed, willing to do anything she asked of him.

“Be sure you buy more though,” she said, with a smile and an arch of her eyebrow.
“Oh, I’ve got them already. You think I don’t know? Do you even know me?” He grinned at her and she smacked his chest, her fingers trailing down to the waistband of his pants, then down to the bulge held within. She squeezed and he moaned.

“Oh, I know you. Let’s get these clothes off, no more fucking around,” she said squeezing him again.

“Well, some fucking around, surely,” he teased, getting his pants, socks, and boxers off, before standing up to look at her. She reached out and stroked him, making him gasp. His eyes closed as she quickened her strokes.

“Scully … you need to stop or I’m going to take you on this table,” he moaned as he stopped her hand. She grinned and moved her hand, taking his instead and pulling him toward the backyard.

No preamble, no denying exactly why they were coming outside, they climbed in the hot tub. Each of them hissing at the heat of the water, they sank down and he pulled her to him. She straddled between their bodies as she looped her arms around his neck and kissed him, her breasts pushing into his chest.

He dug his fingers into her hips and then down to her ass, lifting her up, silently asking her for what he wanted. She raised up, breaking from their kiss as she did. Up on her knees, she guided him inside her, causing them both to moan.

“Jesus, Scully,” he whispered and she hummed in agreement. “God, you feel so good.” She raised up again and began to ride him, his hands on her ass, helping her to move.

“Mulder, fuck,” she cried out, raising all the way up, forcing him to leave her body. They both groaned before she lined them up again, sinking down hard onto him. She went faster and he watched her breasts bouncing as she did.

“Mulder, oh my God,” she breathed, slowing down, sitting with him completely sheathed inside her, and he nearly came with the feel of her tight around him.

He moved a hand to touch her, his thumb on her clit, as she started to move again, gasping at his touch. He wanted her to come again, feeling his own orgasm building.

“Mulder, yes, keep doing that,” she moaned and slid faster up and down his length, making him moan her name. “God, I’m so close. Faster, Mulder.” He obliged her and she cried out as she fell into him, her hands gripping his shoulders, as she tightened and pulsed around him. He thrust into her hard, his feet pushing on the bottom of the hot tub, and he came calling her name.

They clung to each other as they recovered. He ran his hands up and down her back, into her hair, and back down. “Oh, Mulder,” she breathed into his neck, before raising her head and looking at him. He pushed her hair back from her face and grinned at her. She closed her eyes and tilted toward his hand.

She moved up and his softening member slipped from inside her, but she remained on his lap, her arms around his neck. He hummed as he wrapped his arms around her and they sat together in the warm water.

“God, Mulder,” she said again and he exhaled a laugh.

“I concur, Scully. I concur.”

They sat in the hot tub for a little bit longer before climbing out, both of them pink and flushed.
from both the water and the activities that had taken place while inside it. Realizing they brought no towels with them, they laughingly dripped and slid down the hall to her bathroom where they wrapped fluffy towels around themselves. He kissed her, a great big smacking loud one, as they walked out of the bathroom.

Together they cleared up the leftover Chinese food, blew out the candles, and washed the dishes. She turned out the lights and set the alarm, causing him to raise his eyebrows.

“Tight white t-shirt, remember? I’m not done with you yet,” she said as she grabbed the top of his towel, where it hung low on his hips, and pulled him toward her bedroom.

She made good on her word, she was most definitely not done with him. Hours later, exhaustingly sated, she snuggled into his arms. He held her close and closed his eyes. He kissed her temple, breathing in the scent from the shower they shared, the chlorine that still lingered, and the undeniable scent that was simply Scully. He took a deep breath and fell asleep, his body spent, but his heart full.

Chapter End Notes

This was fun to write. Them happy and especially happy and having sex, makes me happy. I love how Scully is as entranced by Mulder in his white t-shirt as the majority of us seem to be. The man knows how to wear a tight shirt.

I don’t blame her, or him, one bit.
All A Buzz

Chapter Summary

After the catastrophe in Rm9.... Scully and Mulder take care of things at the house before heading to breakfast. Discussions are had, temporary decisions are made, and things begin to move forward.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

February 2018

The water was warm as Scully washed her hands in the diner bathroom. She looked in the mirror and smiled at her reflection. This night had been … well, to say insane was an understatement. A car ride from hell, a possessed room vacuum, her bedroom exploding, being chased by drones, and being shot at by printed 3-D bullets.

All because of a tip, or lack of one, she thought, shaking her head as she dried her hands and left the bathroom. Mulder was still sitting at the bar, looking at his phone when she returned. As she walked up, he turned to her with a smile, standing as he slipped his phone in his back pocket and drank down the last bit of his coffee.

“You ready?” he asked, and she nodded her head. Heading out of the diner, he held the door open for her as they walked to his car. She was tired, but oddly incredibly happy and unable to stop smiling, even after all that had happened.

Late last night, after they walked out of that warehouse, they trudged back to her place to inspect the damage the explosion caused. Not too surprisingly, no emergency services were present. The calls they tried to place before fleeing had not gone through, and the alarm system was operating with a mind of its own. None of her neighbors had appeared to be bothered enough to call it in either. More evidence that the world was slowly shrinking into its own worries and concerns.

Glass was everywhere, and they both sighed as they looked at it. Black scorch marks and areas of still smoldering smoke from the explosive ball of fire were on the carpet, walls, her bed, and dresser. There was even some damage in the bathroom, making the entire space unlivable. She was, however, thankful that the damage had at least been contained to that area versus the entire house.

Mulder looked at her, and she sighed again. Walking past the smoldering piece of metal that was once the floor vacuum, Scully walked into the kitchen and grabbed the fire extinguisher. She handed it to Mulder when she heard him behind her, and she began searching for the broom she could not find earlier.

When she finally found it on the back porch, she and Mulder worked to clean up the glass, putting it directly into one of her outdoor trash cans. The whole process took a lot longer than they had anticipated since glass had found its way into the small crevices and areas they would not normally have looked, but they eventually got it done. They even boxed the vacuum back up after they sprayed it with the fire extinguisher.
By the time they finished, the sun was coming up, making it easier for Scully to take pictures to document the damage for insurance purposes. She looked at Mulder as he stood outside, looking at the hole the shattered window left behind.

“So, what do we do about this?” he asked, opening his hands wide, gesturing to it. “Do you have any large pieces of plywood to cover this? Big pieces of plastic or anything like that?”

“Yeah, I have plywood in the garage,” she said, rolling her eyes, taking the last picture and putting her phone away.

“Well, this house is super fancy, who knows what you’ve got hidden away here,” he said stepping through the frame and back into the house. “Ooh, I’m not going to run into a Jabberwock, am I?” He grinned at her, and she rolled her eyes again.

“That’s what you might find going through the looking glass, Mulder, not a broken window pane frame,” she said, shaking her head.

“Points awarded for not insisting, incorrectly, that it’s called a Jabberwocky,” he said dryly.

“‘The Jabberwocky’ is a poem written by Lewis Carroll, Mulder, about the Jabberwock. ‘Beware the Jabberwock, my son. The jaws that bite, the claws that catch! Beware the Jubjub bird, and shun The frumious Bandersnatch! ’” she quoted and he stared at her in fascinated amazement.

“God, Scully,” he stated, shaking his head and stepping past her. “How do you make a children’s poem so fucking hot? Between your device you had on you earlier and this … how’s a guy supposed to not be aroused? Jesus Christ …”

She laughed as she watched him walk out of the room and out of sight. He obviously needed a minute, and she would give it to him. She heard him sighing loudly, causing her to giggle quietly.

After a few minutes had passed he walked back into the bedroom and stared at her.

“So, what do we do about the window? Have you called someone?” he asked, and she nodded.

“He’ll be here by 7, so less than an hour from now.” she said as he sighed and nodded his head, looking around the room.

“When he gets here, do you wanna go get something to eat?” he asked. “From a real restaurant with real chefs. No more of this automation bullshit. I’m starving.”

“Starving?” she teased him, and he shrugged.

“Unlike you, Scully, I wasn’t able to eat my dinner. All I’ve had since then is cold toaster pastries, and seeing as how you’ve offered no refreshments, I’m ready for some breakfast. Eggs and toast, some bacon. Mmm …” he moaned, closing his eyes.

“I have fruit in the fridge and there are some crackers in the kitchen cabinet next to the microwave. They have rosemary in them,” she offered, and he gave her a look of disgust. She rolled her eyes and smiled, shrugging her shoulders at him.

He grabbed two dining room chairs and brought them into the hallway to keep an eye on the place as they waited for the guy to arrive. She touched his shoulder as she went to the kitchen to cut up the strawberries she had in the fridge. She knew he would not refuse them if she offered them to him. Coming back a few minutes later, she handed him the bowl and sat down. Just as she suspected, he began to shovel them in his mouth.
She sat next to him and he offered her the bowl and she took one, eating it slowly. “Christ, Scully, come on …” he groaned, shaking his head. She laughed and took the next strawberry, eating it normally, his eyes cautiously turned away from her.

Twenty minutes later the guy showed up and Scully explained to him what happened. He whistled at the sight of the burnt room and shook his head, commenting that she was lucky to have gotten out unscathed. She nodded and thought how lucky she truly was, how close it was once again. They left for breakfast shortly after, another truck pulling up to help with the job at hand.

Now, finished with their meal prepared by real people, they were headed back to her place to check how things were progressing and to see what else needed doing. She still needed to call Alan and let him know what happened. Thinking about it made her sigh and hang her head. Mulder glanced over at her, and she sighed again.

“Not looking forward to explaining to Alan what happened,” she said, looking at him and he nodded.

“So, you’ll need to replace the carpet, fix the walls, replace items, check for any internal damage to that house,” he said, unlocking the doors so they could get in the car. They buckled their seat belts, and he put his hand on the back of her seat as he backed out of their parking spot. Putting both hands on the wheel, he headed toward her place. “So, you have all that to deal with, and you can’t possibly stay there of course. What’s your plan?”

She looked at him, smiling at what he was not saying. He shrugged, glancing at her before turning his eyes back to the road. “Once I know exactly what needs to be done at the house, I’ll make a decision,” she told him and he nodded.

“Well, just know that-”

“I know, Mulder,” she said covering his hand with her own. He grasped her hand and nodded again.

At the house, they found men pulling up carpet, the furniture placed outside in order to get the job done. Scully sighed as she began to go through the drawers of the dresser to see if anything was salvageable. Mulder asked where her suitcase was and went to get it for her when she said the guest room.

He came back with the suitcase and trash bags. “Just in case you need it,” he said. “I’m going to check the room some more.” She nodded, and he walked away.

Some of her clothing was fine and some had been singed through the wood. She put the clothes she would keep in the suitcase while with a heavy heart she tossed out her other things. Everything she packed would need a wash, but at least she had some clothing.

Mulder came back with a bag full of her toiletries and she smiled her thanks. “Do you have another bag? I’ll start loading up shoes,” he said and she stopped him briefly with a squeeze of his hand. He nodded and went to find the other bags in the guest room.

An hour and a half later, they had loaded up her car with items she would need. Some clothes, shoes, coats, toiletries, electronics, and other items. She called Alan and left a message to get in touch with her as soon as possible. Part of her was grateful she missed him, while the other part dreaded his return phone call.

The foreman in charge, Gary, said it would be a few weeks of work, at least, as they needed to
check for major damage. Scully nodded and sighed, afraid that was going to be the answer.

“We’ll do what we can today and then board up the window. That glass has to be specially ordered,” Gary said with a sympathetic smile.

“Of course it does,” Scully sighed and then smiled slightly at him. “Thank you, Gary.” He nodded and headed back inside.

“Well, this seems fitting,” she said, putting her hands in her pockets. “Honestly, I’m surprised one of our places never blew up at some point in the past.” She laughed and he smiled.

“So many other things happened, just not that,” he nodded and put his hands in his pockets too, his eyes asking questions his mouth was not voicing.

“Mulder,” she began, but he cut her off.

“Scully,” he shook his head at her with a small smile. “It’s … you do what you want, whatever makes you most comfortable. I … it’s your decision and … the room is there if you want it, but I understand.”

She smiled and stepped closer to him, searching his face. “Thank you, Mulder,” she said quietly, her hands moving to hold his face. He leaned in and kissed her softly, his hands moving to her waist. She pulled back and sighed. “I’m going to go to a hotel. I … I think that would be best.” He stared at her and nodded, a small sad smile on his face.

Stepping back, he put his hands in his pockets again. “You want me to follow you? Help you unload the car?”

“No,” she answered. “I’ll be okay.”

He nodded and shuffled his feet around. “Well … then I should probably head home, make sure the onslaught of drones didn’t destroy the house. Maybe get some sleep,” he said with a shrug and smiled again, but she knew it was forced. She sighed, and he touched her face, his thumb stroking her cheek.

Stepping back, he smiled again and this time it almost reached his eyes. “Okay, I’ll talk to you later. Next time, I get to pick the restaurant, and maybe we can avoid this kind of fiasco.”

“Oh, this was my fault?” she asked, waving her arm toward the house, her eyebrows raised.

“You suggested the sushi place,” he responded with a shrug.

“And you didn’t tip, which set off this whole chain reaction.”

“Tip a place that gave me a disgusting smelling blobfish?!” he said taking his hands from his pockets and raising his arms in an exasperated stance. “How was I to know those goddamn robots were going to freak the fuck out?”

“And damn near kill me?” she said with a pointed look, causing him to hang his head. Lifting his head, he sighed, and she began to laugh. He shook his head, and she laughed harder.

“It’s a strange thing to laugh about, Scully,” he said and she laughed harder, the night finally catching up to her making her feel punch-drunk. “Go get some sleep.” He nodded, and she tried to sober up enough to say goodbye to him, but she failed. He waved to her as he got in his car, and she waved back.
Standing there alone, she looked around at the house again and sighed. Staying there had been fun, and she loved the comforts it afforded. Now she was going to be in a hotel for who knew how long. She easily could have gone back to the house with Mulder, stayed in the guest room again, but she knew how that would end. No chance would she be able to resist joining him in their bed this time. No chance.

She sighed as she looked at her burnt bedroom furniture sitting outside before getting in her car. The past couple of months had been wonderful, but even the amount of amazing sex they were having did not make a relationship. They were, and always would be, friends before everything else and right now, that was how it felt … kind of. Not ‘friends with benefits’ because that would never be who they were. Their attraction and desire for one another was far too strong for that. But right now … it felt like they were treading water, standing still, and waiting for something to happen.

Her phone beeped and she picked it up, finding a message from Mulder.

_Hope purple is okay. Also, I thought you could do with an upgrade._

She frowned as she read it and then her cheeks flamed as the screenshot of an order he placed popped up. A new personal massager had been ordered and would be sent to the house. His house … their house. God, she hated the uncertainty she felt about it.

_In no way am I trying to persuade you to change your mind, but just letting you know it will be here. Fully charged and ready for any activities you wish to use it for. ; )_

Her pulse raced as she thought of the last time her old one was used, before it had been tossed away. She remembered the feel of it against her aroused flesh, the way it was dragged across her hot skin, the vibrations of it making her moan and shake, when it was placed exactly where she wanted and needed it.

“_I love watching you come,，“_ Mulder had whispered to her as he turned it up higher and she broke with a cry, clutching at his arm, spots dancing in front of her eyes.

The scent of chlorine from their tryst in the hot tub, had invaded her senses as she came down and pulled his hand away from her, the sensations too intense. In the fumble of limbs, it must have gotten knocked from his hand and fallen under the bed. There it had remained, forgotten, as she had not been in need of it recently.

Looking at her messages again, she zoomed in more closely at the order form, mainly the timestamp on it. He ordered it when they were in the diner, while she was in the bathroom it seemed, but he said nothing until now. God, she loved him.

Shaking her head, she typed out a response, her cheeks flushed and a huge smile on her face.

_Purple will be most welcome. And an upgrade with a couple new speed settings? Keep it charged up, and I’ll be sure to stop by and find out what all the BUZZ is about._

Sending it to him, she set the phone in the cup holder and put the keys in the ignition and started the car. Glancing down when she heard a beep, she grinned at the three words she saw as she put the car in drive.

_Jesus Christ, Scully …_

Chapter End Notes
Hey-O!!! I hope that ending was fun, because it made me chuckle. I love that of course Mulder would know right where to go to purchase a brand new friend for Scully, because we all know he bought her the last one. Oh yeah he did! But hey, now she has an upgraded buddy to play with!
**Chapter Summary**

Mulder is concerned for Scully after the case in Familiar. He decides to pay her a visit and finds that he actually needed her more than she needed him.

**Chapter Notes**

See the end of the chapter for notes

**March 2018**

Mulder sat in the parking lot of the hotel where Scully was staying, contemplating whether or not to get out of the car and go speak to her. He felt uneasy since they flew home late last night from Connecticut. The death of children was never easy to stomach or discuss, but the way the two children had died was truly horrible.

Thinking of little Andrew especially made Mulder’s stomach turn. Seeing him on the table in the morgue, he thought of seeing William the same way, and hearing Scully’s tearful words to him. He knew it was not the same, but he could only imagine how it affected her.

He shook his head as he looked at the hotel entrance and made a decision. He took the keys from the ignition and got out of the car, alarming it as he did. Walking into the lobby, he was taken in by the beauty of the place. Since she was paying for the hotel room herself, she was definitely not staying in some motel with no heat. He smiled as he remembered a few motels that had been truly awful, and yet she had always been a trouper.

He walked to the elevator, pushed the UP button, and waited for it to arrive. He hoped he was not going to surprise her too badly, but he needed to be sure she was okay. To see with his own eyes, not just hear it over the phone.

The elevator arrived and he stepped in, hitting number five. He put his hands in his coat pockets as the elevator went up to her floor. Exiting as it arrived, he turned to the left and walked down the hallway, nervous and feeling stupid for feeling so anxious.

It’s just Scully, he thought to himself, shaking his head. You’re being an idiot about this, man.

Standing in front of her door, he took a deep breath and knocked three times, smiling slightly as he did. He waited, but she did not answer. He went to knock once more and the door opened.

“Mulder?” she asked, a quizzical look on her face. “Did we have plans for dinner?” She was in her robe and possibly her pajamas, despite it being early evening. Her hair was pulled back with a headband, and her face was rather pink, the hair around her face wet. She must have just washed her face.

“No … uh … no plans. Um … I just … I,” he stammered.

“Come in,” she said with a smile and stepped back to let him enter. He crossed into the room and she closed the door behind them.
He had not been inside the room yet, just knew which hotel and the room number. He walked into the room and looked around. It was an en suite with a sitting area, somewhat like the one they shared recently. This place was better though, not too surprisingly. He turned to her, and she smiled, tilting her head to the side.

“Is everything okay? Did we get called on a case?”

“No … no … I …” he sighed and shrugged his shoulders, putting his hands in his pockets again. “This case, the kids … I just wanted to make sure you’re okay. It’s … I know how hard it is to see, and I just wanted …” he shrugged again, feeling that odd nervous feeling again.

She smiled softly and nodded. “I’m okay, Mulder. Yes, it’s always harder with children, but I’m okay.” She nodded as she stared at him and he nodded with her. She sighed and smiled softly again. “Are you okay, Mulder?”

He stared at her and the concerned look on her face. He sighed and shook his head. “I don’t think I am,” he said quietly. She nodded and squeezed his arm, before reaching for the lapels of his coat and started to take it off. He let her do it and then watched as she hung it up on the chair.

“You hungry? I could order something?” she asked as she walked back over to him. He shrugged, not sure if he was, but he had not eaten all day, his stomach and mind uneasy. “I’ll order something and then …” she shrugged and he nodded. She motioned to the couch and he sat down while she left the room to order some food.

He leaned his head back against the wall, crossed his arms, and closed his eyes. The room smelled nice and he already felt better simply being there and telling her he was not okay. He had wanted to check on her, but he also knew he needed to talk to her and express how he was feeling.

He felt her sit beside him and he opened his eyes, turning his head to look at her. She had taken off her robe and he saw she was wearing one of his old black shirts and a pair of pajama bottoms. Her headband had been taken out and she was running her fingers through her hair.

“When did you cut your hair?” he asked softly.

“Seriously?” she responded. “We’ve just spent a few days on this case, and you’re just now noticing?” She raised her eyebrows at him and dropped her hands into her lap. “Not to mention, it was like this when we went out for sushi.”

“I noticed. I saw. I guess I just didn’t say anything,” he reached up and tucked her hair behind her ear, holding her hair between his fingers. “I like it, it’s how you had it when you were younger.”

She raised her eyebrows at him and he shook his head. “I didn’t mean ‘younger’ in any odd way, but it did sound odd, and now I apologize. Let me try again.” She laughed and nodded. He sat up and put hair behind both her ears, stroking her face with his thumbs. “You are beautiful, no matter the style of your hair. But this length, that’s my Scully.” Her eyes moved over his face, before she leaned in to kiss him, her hand on his chest. He kept a hand on the back of her head, his kiss slow, but letting her know it was not why he came there tonight.

He pulled back and she smiled softly, patting his chest and sitting back on the couch. “I ordered a few things. They should be here soon,” she told him as she gazed at him. He nodded and leaned back, closing his eyes again. She took his hand and laced their fingers together, saying nothing, but waiting for him when he was ready. He squeezed her hand in appreciation and she squeezed back.

“We’ve dealt with the death of children many times, I know this,” he said without opening his
eyes. “But something about this case and those kids …” He shook his head and she hummed beside him as she leaned her head on his shoulder.

“I understand. Especially as you were just speaking to Emily before she was killed,” she sighed and scooted closer to him. He sighed in response and squeezed her hand. “I can see why you would want to check up on me, Mulder, but … I’m okay. You know since we left, well no, even while we were there, I was thinking of my mother.”

“Your mother?”

“Mmm-hmm.”

“Any particular reason?”

“Well, yes and no. She’s never really far from my mind, but it was more the case, the hurt bestowed upon a person because of the actions of others. The sheriff was cheating on his wife, and yet instead of her anger going to him, she wanted to hurt the other woman. It’s the way it is in most cases. Now, I’m not supporting violence as the answer, but it always seems the anger is misplaced,” she said with a sigh.

“Nor do people generally open the gates of hell to bring about justice and vengeance,” he said dryly. She exhaled a laugh, and he squeezed her hand.

“That is true,” she said with a small laugh.

“How did that make you think of your mom?”

“Hmm … my mother was an even tempered woman, but, especially when we were younger, if she looked at you a certain way, you knew you were in for it,” they both chuckled at her words and then she sighed. “But … even if something happened and she was angry, even then, she wouldn’t want to hurt others or have others suffer because of her actions. This woman, she was hurt, yes, but she didn’t care who else suffered as long as she got her vengeance. My mother would never have done something like that.” She sighed and he nodded, knowing she was right.

“Love makes people do crazy things,” he said quietly, and he felt her nod against his shoulder.

“It does, but it also brings out the best in people. It shows what a person’s made of when push comes to shove,” she said just as quietly. “I know I’ve never been in the place of what that woman went through, but to even consider the possibility of dark and horrible magic instead of simply speaking to someone, well …” She trailed off and they were both were quiet for a while.

“I went to her house a couple of weeks ago,” she whispered and he opened his eyes.

“Your mom’s house?”

“Yeah,” she whispered.

“I would have gone with you, if you’d told me,” he said and she squeezed his hand.

“I know, but it’s good for me to go on my own. We’re lucky that it’s been two years and it hasn’t been a quick clean out of her things. I can’t do that yet. I know it’s been a long time but …” she shook her head and sighed.

“Scully, grief has no timetable, you know that, so you take your time. The house is paid for, we have … you have money for the taxes. I don’t want to see it as anyone else’s either. It’s your
mom’s house, it’s …” he was unable to finish his sentence, but she nodded against him again and he knew she understood.

A knock sounded from the other room and she sat up, letting go of his hand and smiling at him. “Be right back,” she said, patting his knee as she stood up. He watched her walk away and then stood with a sigh.

He walked over to the table and looked at what was on the surface, seeing if he could move it out of the way. He found envelopes and little boxes with pictures and knick knacks inside — a dove, a small porcelain dog, a few small crosses, and two rosaries. He left everything where it was and sat down to wait for her to join him.

A tray was pushed into the room and she grinned as she did it. There were a few covered dishes, a pot of coffee and one of hot water, cream and sugar, and utensils and extra napkins. He stood to help her put everything on the table. When he uncovered the dishes he grinned at what he found — grilled cheese and tomato soup. He looked at her and she winked at him.

Plates arranged and everything set, they sat down to eat a meal he was now looking forward to, and not dreading with a knot in his stomach. While they ate, she showed him the pictures of her family she had taken from her moms house. Birthdays, vacations, Christmases, she had a lot of them and each one held a story.

“I was so angry at Missy when we took that photo,” she said, shaking her head as he looked at a grinning Melissa and a scowling Scully. “She told me just that morning that I needed to start wearing deodorant because she was tired of our bedroom smelling like a ‘spicy locker room.’” He laughed and she smiled, shaking her head.

“How old were you? Ten?”

“About that, yeah. She was right though, I was quite ripe most of the time. But, it was summer, it was hot, and you remember that age. The sun came up and you were up and out of the house. You ran hard, played hard, and didn’t notice or care if you smelled bad,” she shrugged as she took the picture back and handed him another one.

“Bill’s sixteenth birthday. He was such an asshole that day—”

“That day?” he said with a look to her, making her laugh.

“Seriously, he kept talking about getting a car and how he’d earned it and he was going to get so many girls,” Scully shook her head and laughed really hard. “Dad got him a new bike and a bus pass!” She laughed again, and he joined in, shaking his head as he looked at the picture. Not only was he scowling as he stood by the new bike, but Scully was behind him giving him rabbit ears. Once the photos were developed, he was sure Bill Junior was even angrier.

More pictures were shown and discussed, Scully at six opening a doll and holding it close. Melissa and Scully in bathing suits, standing by the community pool, grinning and already sunburned. Marcus and Scully’s prom picture which Mulder howled and exclaimed over, not letting her have it back, and threatening to take it home with him. She snatched it from him, and they both laughed.

The one she looked at longest was of her parents. It was a photo taken at an anniversary party they had and they were both staring at each other, not aware a photo was being taken and a memory created.

“Mom loved that dress, she told me many times,” she said quietly as she traced her fingers over the
blue dress her mother wore and she sighed. “It was so odd to see my dad in a suit that wasn’t Navy affiliated, but he was so handsome that night too. I remember watching them and feeling how much they loved each other. I knew they did, but that night I felt it, you know?” She looked up at him and he nodded. He did know, not with his parents, but with her. She smiled and shook her head, putting the photos away.

“Well, I think all that’s left are the embarrassing ones, so we’ll save those for another time,” she said with a smile, but her eyes did not meet his. She stacked up her things and set them aside as she began her add their dishes to the cart. He stood and helped her and then he pushed the cart into the hallway.

When he walked back into the room, she was closing the door to the sitting area, clearly telling him the evening was over. He sighed, but was glad for the time he spent with her this evening, as he felt better now than he had for a few days.

Noticing his jacket was not in the room, he made to go grab it, but she stopped him, her hand coming out to block him.

“Where are you going?”

“I need to get my jacket, my keys are inside and it’s cold out,” he said with a smile.

“Oh, you’re not … you didn’t want to stay?” she asked, her eyes sadly hopeful.

“I didn’t come over with any intentions for anything …” he frowned, not wanting her to get the wrong idea.

“I know.”

“I just don’t want you to think that-”

“I don’t.”

He stared at her and she smiled softly as she headed into the bathroom. He followed her and she handed him an extra toothbrush. They each stood at one of the sinks and brushed their teeth together as they had many times in the past. He caught her eyes in the mirror, and she smiled.

She finished first and walked out of the bathroom. He used the toilet and washed his hands before taking off his shoes, socks, and jeans, leaving him in his shirt and boxers, with all his other items in the bathroom. He turned out the light and went to join her in bed.

The room was dark, but he found his way over to her and slid under the covers she had pulled back for him. He could feel the warmth from her body beside him but he made no move to touch her. Aside from the fact that they had been having amazing sex recently, he did not want her to think the only reason he came over was to share sadness and get laid all in one fell swoop.

“Mulder, stop overthinking this,” came her voice quietly in the dark. “I know your intentions were not to be where you are right now. If I had thought that, well, then I don’t even know you.” He laughed softly and he knew she was smiling. “Just go to sleep, okay?”

“Oh, Scully,” he sighed with a smile, closing his eyes as he tried to relax his racing mind. A few minutes of quiet fell upon the room before he heard her sigh loudly.

“Well, are you going to hold me or not?” she asked in an exasperated tone. His eyes flew open, and he turned his head toward her. He smiled as he turned onto his side and when he made to reach for
her, he found her hand already reaching for him.

She took his hand and brought it around her middle, interlocking their fingers together, as he settled in closer to her. He sighed as he felt her all around him, closing his eyes as he breathed her in, and she squeezed his hand.

“Thank you for coming to check on me, Mulder,” she whispered, and he smiled as he sighed by her ear.

“Thank you for taking care of me, Scully,” he whispered, his lips against her cheek, and she hummed as she nodded.

“I … Mulder …” she said with a partial sob, as she held him tighter, and he kissed the back of her neck.

“I know, Scully. I know.”

So many things left unsaid, so much still hanging in the air and waiting to be put in its proper place. But sleep claimed them quickly, and for that night, the bad dreams were kept at bay as they were held and loved by the one person they needed most.

Chapter End Notes

While this episode is not top for everyone, and is absolutely creepy, there were so many great MSR moments. Mulder talking about "his son," him saying Scully is "damn good at her job," her thanking him for standing up for her and his response- "You're my homie." Ugh, I love them so much. Even not "together" they are amazing together. Friends, lovers, in any capacity, these two are beautiful.
Chapter Summary

Time spent in church, prayers, discussions and decisions, lead to conversations that should have been had years ago.

Chapter Notes

This episode ... God, it's so good. My own dialogue is added into the wonderfulness that is that of Karen Nielsen. Thank God for the beauty of her words, the COTP, and the one in front of that beautiful stained glass window.

Thank you, Karen. We needed to hear these conversations.

March 2018

Scully woke up and felt off, the same way she had been feeling for a few days now. Something was not right, and she could tell. Turning onto her back, she sighed, so many thoughts running through her head. Closing her eyes she thought of the last few days.

Mulder had come over after the case in Connecticut and they had spent the night together, each healing the other in turn. They slept together, holding tight to the other, and she had ordered breakfast for them when they woke.

When he left, his eyes were saying things his mouth was not, and she felt inexplicably nervous. He kissed her forehead and left, no words spoken, and then no call or text for a couple of days. Things were strange between them, and she felt confused and off balance.

Pushing the covers back, she sat up and sighed, making a decision. She would go to mass and see if that helped. Recently she had been doing that more often, spending time at a church near the hotel. She did not always make it for a mass, but she found simply sitting in the church to be calming and peaceful. She took a quick shower, dressed, and headed for church.

The coolness of the holy water, the scent of the candles and pews, and the beauty of the stained glass brought back so many memories from her childhood. First communion, confirmation, her rebellious pull from church, her mother’s desire for her to find her faith once again, and how she found it again following her cancer diagnosis.

She sighed as she sat and closed her eyes, listening to the priest as he began to speak, but at the same time not paying much attention, drawing strength instead from the building itself and the memories it held. She felt for the quarter on a chain in her pocket and thought of her mother. She wished her mother was there, sitting beside her, ready to listen and offer advice for the worries plaguing her heart.
Scully knew how much her mother loved Mulder. She had known for years, and she could almost hear what her mother would say - *It’s your decision, Dana. Nobody can make the decision for you.*

Yes, she might say those words, but her eyes would silently be praying and begging for her to go back to him, to find her happiness again, and for them to be *them* again.

If only it were that easy …

She sighed again, her fingers rolling across the quarter in her pocket. “I’m trying,” she whispered. “We’re trying.” Sighing again, she let the quarter go and clasped her hands together, prayers passing silently across her lips.

Communion received, her mind still racing, she felt her phone vibrate in her pocket. Glancing at the screen, she sighed and walked out of the church, heading to meet Mulder for a new case.

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Seeing the manner in which the victims were killed and the reason for it made Scully feel uneasy, because it reminded her of the case with Father Joe. She hated what that case did to her and Mulder, but it had forced them to talk in order to move forward. Following that case, a shift occurred. It was still a dark and sad time and was not something she liked to think about.

She investigated liver transplants in the area and found nothing out of the ordinary. Feeling the need to go back to a church, she texted Mulder where she would be and sent him the address. Opening the doors, she walked inside and dipped her fingers into the holy water, crossing herself as she knelt a bow at the pew before she sat down.

She sighed as she attempted to find peace in the church. So many thoughts swirled in her head, with Mulder first and foremost. She knew he was enjoying and welcoming this slow walk back to each other, and so was she, but what was the plan for the future? Were they just going to continue on this … visiting each other for comfort? Hanging out, going out to eat, and then sex if they felt like it? It was nice, very nice, but it was not enough. She wanted more, but was also scared to take that leap again.

She closed her eyes as she thought of the hurt she had suffered from their separation. The loneliness, the solitude, the feeling of missing her other half. She thought of William, or Jackson, whatever name he went by, and she knew she had failed him. His parents, the ones he had known his entire life, were dead and he was all alone in the world. A boy with amazing abilities who had no way of understanding how or why he possessed them was now alone and scared. Being young, ignorant, and powerful was a lethal combination, and she feared for him.

Opening her eyes, she looked to the front of the church and made a decision. She stood up and walked toward the candles, intending to light as many as she felt were needed to address the challenges she, Mulder, and their son now faced. Not many were lit initially and for that she was grateful. She knew she was going to be asking for a lot.

She did not want to be selfish in her prayers, so she lit one asking for peace and guidance for her family members. Nieces and nephews making life decisions they may not be prepared to undertake. She lit another and prayed for wisdom to do her job to the best of her ability and to help those who were unable to help themselves. She lit one for William, praying that one day she would have the chance to tell him the truth and be given a chance to explain why she made the decisions she made. The last candle she lit, she prayed for Mulder, for peace, understanding, and guidance that would be required for them to find their way back to one another.
As she lit his candle, Mulder appeared at her side joking about not bursting into flames as he crossed the threshold. She smiled at his joke, her prayer still in her head as she told him of the liver transplant recipients all being accounted for as he struggled to read off the information he gathered from a document on his phone without his glasses on.

“Oh, God, help me,” he said and she stared at him, amused. “Sorry.” He looked up and raised his hands as he put his glasses on, reading the screen of his phone and telling her what he discovered.

“I think we should hand this over to the NYC Organized Crime division, Mulder. I don't think this is an X-File,” she said, looking at him and shaking her head, as he raised his head in intrigue. “I'm gonna need some time here. I can meet up with you later, or you can wait for me.” He nodded and put his hand on her back before walking away.

She turned back to the candles, needing to finish her prayer. This one was for herself and she prayed for wisdom and guidance, and to not be such a fucking coward. With a small groan, she asked for forgiveness at her choice of language and crossed herself as she turned around.

What she saw made her heart skip and her breath catch. There Mulder sat, waiting for her, just as she had suggested. Though she had suggested and hoped, she had assumed he would wait for as he always had, outside, or even meeting up at a nearby coffee shop. She honestly thought he had left to do just that, leaving her standing there alone, but he was different now. They were different. Maybe her prayers had been heard after all.

“You waited,” she said quietly as she came to stand beside him. He looked up at her and away from the bible he held in his hands. Once more she had to ask for forgiveness, as the glasses he wore gave her some very impure thoughts.

“I waited,” he answered in the affirmative, sliding over so she could join him in the pew. She sat beside him and smiled as he went back to looking at the bible in his hands. Her prayers continued as she sat down, her thoughts jumbling together as the past and present began to blend.

She heard him mentioning the scripture about vengeance and she smiled, telling him it was a common biblical passage. He looked so disheartened that she felt the need to share something with him.

“Did I ever tell you how I came to believe in God?” she asked quietly, knowing he would get a kick out of the story.

“No,” he said, shaking his head.

“When my brother Charlie was a baby, he got seriously ill. I think I was about four. I later learned that it was rheumatic fever.”

“Hmm,” Mulder nodded.

“Every night, Mom would tell us to get on our knees and pray for his recovery.”

“Your prayers were answered. He lived.”

“Only, after the first couple nights, I wasn’t praying for him,” she said, thinking of being a little girl again, her prayers so big. “I was praying for a puppy.” Mulder gave a big quiet laugh, and she laughed with him. “And we got one that Christmas. I thought God had performed a miracle.”

“I finally know why I’m not a Christian, Scully. My parents never got me a puppy,” Mulder said with a smile, and she laughed quietly.
“So are you-you praying for another miracle now?” he asked her curiously.

“I don’t know if I do believe in miracles. But I do know the power of faith,” she told him softly, as she took her mother’s quarter from her pocket. “I saw it in my mom, the strength that she received.” She stared at the quarter, holding it in her fingers. “I could use some of that strength now.”

She put the quarter back in her pocket and smiled. “I need what you have. You always bear north, Mulder … no matter which way or how hard the wind blows against you.” She stared at him with a smile, and he smiled back.

“I think all I have- all any of us have are the results of all the choices that we’ve made. And at the end of the day, we just hope that we made the right one,” he said softly and she nodded, closing her eyes, her choices weighing heavy on her heart. “Don’t know if that measures to what you’re saying, but it’s what I feel.” She opened her eyes and looked at him, his smile so open. She sighed and nodded again.

“Five minutes, okay?” she whispered, and he nodded, putting his glasses back on and picking up the Bible.

“Make it ten, I’m really interested in the Old Testament. Curious what happens to this Joseph fellow,” Mulder said and she laughed, closing her eyes again.

“Oh,” she heard beside her a few minutes later. “That took a dark turn.” She heard the book close and then his deep sigh. She smiled again, both of them then quiet as they sat in a shared pew.

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Walking down the street to the church, Scully rolled her neck, fighting the crick in it since falling down the elevator shaft a few days ago. Shaking her head and then giving her whole body a quick shake, she attempted to release the thoughts of the possibility she had faced of falling to her death.

What a horrible way to go, she thought, shaking her head again.

Walking through the doors of the church, she took a second to look at the stained glass, as she always did. The colors were beautiful and this time of day, they were even more so. This was one of her favorite churches, mainly because of the beauty within the architecture and spectrums of light the windows created.

Sighing, she stepped to the candles, needing to offer up prayers again. More of the same, but one in particular. Crossing herself, she stared at them and then at the window above, admiring their beauty. She took a deep breath and grabbed a stick, lighting the first candle and giving thanks for her health and for no broken bones or serious injury in her fall. Another candle, asking for health and safety of her family. Another, for her mother, thankful for the love and advice she bestowed upon all of those around her. Another, for herself, asking for guidance and strength to do what she knew she wanted but was still afraid to voice.

The last candle was for Mulder. Well, more importantly for Mulder and her and the decision weighing heavily upon her mind and heart. Before she could offer up a prayer, the candle went out, and she heard Mulder’s footfall behind her. She would know that gait anywhere.

She turned and looked at him, and then back to the candle, the irony and humor not lost on her. He may not have burst into flames when he entered the church before, but here at the one she frequented, he apparently had some kind of power, making the last and most important candle go
“That must be a sign. I’m all out of miracles. Turn back. Give up.” He smiled and reached for a stick. “Accept your place in the numbing embrace of the status quo.”

“Mm-mmm,” he hummed, lighting the stick. “I will … relight your candle and extend your prayers through mine.” She smiled as she watched him, knowing he had no idea the intention she placed upon that candle.

“What prayers?” she asked, unable to resist teasing him.

“I can’t tell you. They won’t come true,” he said with a shrug.

“It’s a prayer candle, Mulder. Not a birthday cake,” she laughed and he chuckled softly.

“Prayers aren’t meant to be sentiment. It’s a conversation,” she said, looking down at the candles. “You can do it like a meditation, or if your needs exceed your grasp, you can ask God to act on your behalf. But you don’t believe in God,” she said, glancing up at him. “So you’d essentially be talking to yourself.”

“Well, I might not believe in God, but I believe in you. Therefore I speak to him through you.” She stared at him as he spoke, but he was not finished. “Through the transitive property of equality. If ‘A’ equals ‘B’ and ‘B’ equals ‘C,’ therefore ‘A’ equals ‘C.’ Reason and faith in harmony. Isn’t that why we’re so good together?” he asked her.

She stared at him, raising her eyebrows and moving her head, her eyes dropping to his lips. “Are we together?” He looked down, his face sad and thoughtful. He took a breath and started to answer her, but she cut him off. “You know, I believed I could protect our son, and I failed. I thought we could live together, and I fled,” she looked at him sideways, almost unable to meet his gaze head on. “I gave up on that, too.” She looked down and kept her eyes on the candles.

“If only you’d fled earlier,” he said and she looked at him. “You know how many times I’ve envisioned that scenario, where you left that basement office before I even needed glasses? You’d have your health, your dog, your sister,” he stared at her and she stared back. “You’d be Kersh’s boss at the FBI, and be married to some brain surgeon, and have a bunch of kids that you wouldn’t have to give up.”

She took a breath, waiting a beat. “Mulder, I don’t begrudge you any of those things. That’s not what I was talking about,” she said, looking down and then back up at him again.

“Well, what are we talking about, Scully? Because I don’t know if any God is listening, but I am standing right here, and I am listening. Right beside you. I’m all ears. That’s my choice.”

She stared at him, millions of thoughts running through her head. How she gave up William, gave up on them, and ran away. She did leave, but it had been for good reason, and yet … Still though, one thing had remained the same no matter the hurt and the pain they caused each other. He was there beside her, and she knew he always would be, no matter the context or label.

She looked around the church, having no idea how he even knew she would be there, and looked to see if anyone was around before she leaned forward and began to whisper in his ear. She thought about what she wanted to say, what words would be enough to convey her innermost feelings and desires.

“I’m ready, Mulder. For everything. I want my mystery answered and to stop chasing monsters.” He stood still and stared at her. She needed him to understand, to know her heart completely.
“That’s not my four-year-old self looking for a miracle,” she said, taking a deep breath. “That’s my leap of faith forward. And I’d like to do it together.”

Mulder nodded and kept his eyes on her. “I’ve always wondered how this was gonna end.” He stared at her before turning to pick up a stick and light the last remaining candle.

They stood there and watched the flame flicker and then his hand was holding hers and the tears in her eyes spilled over. “Like a conversation, you said?” he asked softly and she nodded, wiping at her eyes. He took a deep breath and squeezed her hand, keeping his eyes on the candles, as she watched his face.

“You didn’t flee, you saved us both. You didn’t give up on anything Scully, least of all me, or us. You saved us,” he turned to her and stared into her eyes. “I told you years ago that you saved me, and that is just as true today as it was then. Even more so. You’ve been saving me for twenty five years, Scully. Keeping me honest and making me a whole person. Even apart, you are what keeps me whole.” He put his hand on her face and stroked her cheek, his thumb brushing away her tears. “Your goddamn strict rationalism. Oh …” he looked up heavenward, horrified, and she laughed, putting her hand over his on her cheek.

She closed her eyes as she laughed and cried, before opening them to look at him. His face was serious, and he let go of her hand to hold her face gently, shaking his head as he did.

“I stopped seeing you. I looked too far into the dark, and my shining light got left behind. A light only lasts so long before it goes out, the darkness swallowing it up,” he shook his head and she cried harder, holding onto his wrist. “If you had stayed, your light would have gone out and we both … Scully, I can’t even fathom it. You didn’t flee, you made a decision that hurt. We were broken, and you saved us from being broken beyond repair. Any other form of breaking …” he sighed and shook his head.

She closed her eyes again, and he rested his forehead against hers. She took shaky breaths and then pulled back, looking at him, the man she loved for most of her life. She moved her hand from his wrist and stepped back, moving his hands from her face, holding them in her own. She looked down at their hands, his so large, keeping hers safe within.

“Scully,” he said so quietly, it was like a breath. He interlocked their fingers and squeezed as she looked up at him. He searched her face and she smiled softly. He glanced at the candles and took a breath. “I don’t know where to begin, how to answer our mystery, Scully. I don’t know how to find someone who is determined to stay hidden, as he should, but …” he turned his head to her and smiled gently. “Without hesitation, I would go to the ends of the earth to find him, if that’s what I need to do.”

“For the second time?” she said with a soft smile and he smiled with a nod.

“I know a guy with access to a snow cat,” he said with a shrug, and she laughed softly before letting go of his hands and stepping closer to him, her hands on his chest. He stared at her, and she sighed.

“I love you, Mulder,” she whispered. He grinned and put his hands on her waist, holding her lightly.

“If I kiss you, will the lightning hit me?” he asked softly, and she laughed again.

“It won’t, but I might if you don’t,” she said quietly, and he nodded, bending his head and kissing her softly, making her heart race. He straightened up and his hands pulled her closer, his forehead
once more falling to hers.

“I love you, Scully. More than you could ever quantify or understand,” he whispered, and she smiled.

“Show off,” she whispered back, his answering chuckle making her smile.

They stood there, in front of the light of the candles, the beauty of the stained glass beside them, foreheads pressed together, and silent prayers being said between them. She closed her eyes, her decision made, her heart at peace. He was there, holding the other end of the line, making sure to never let her go again.

Chapter End Notes

Going to say once more how amazing this episode is and how much I love it. Regardless of the wonderful fun I have had writing the new baby into life, if the show had ended here, I think I would have been okay. It is beautiful, they are together, and clearly planning to figure things out.

That being said, we are not finished though, and we have six more chapters to go ...

Hope you enjoyed this one.
Chapter Summary

Mulder and Scully have some things to tend to, and things to tell one another, before they begin their journey back home together.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

March 2018

Mulder drove the car with Scully beside him, unable to keep the grin off his face. He had been indescribably happy for the past two days, and he did not see that changing anytime soon.

“You could at least attempt to stop grinning like a fool,” Scully said, looking at him with a smile of her own.

“No can do there, Scully,” he said with a shake of his head. “Not a chance I could rein this in.” She laughed and shook her head, while he grinned wider.

“You know that feeling you got the first time you kissed someone? And you thought about it for days after, as if nothing could top it?” he asked and she nodded, raising her eyebrows. “And then you do it again and it’s even better, and you think nothing could top that. But then you have sex for the first time and … whoa.” He shook his head, spreading his hands for emphasis, and she laughed. “But then, you have sex again, and it’s even better? You know that feeling?” He glanced at her and she nodded, a huge smile on her face. “Well, all of that doesn’t even begin to measure how I feel right now. So, no, I cannot attempt to stop my smile.”

She laughed and shook her head again. “Wow. You’re really working at trying to get laid, aren’t you?” she teased, and he waved a dismissive hand at her.

“Psssh, that’s in the bag. I’m not concerned about that, it’s a done deal,” he shrugged and grinned.

“Oh, really? You know that for a fact, huh?” she asked, grinning at him.

“Oh yeah. No worries there. I mean, have you seen this?” he pulled at the dark grey t-shirt he wore and wiggled his eyebrows at her. Her eyes roamed over him, and she raised her eyebrows at him.

“Mm-hmm, I’ve definitely seen it,” she said with a wink.

“Then you know, and I know. So, yeah, it’s in the bag.” He let go of the shirt, winked, and took her hand in his, once more grinning like a fool.

“Well played, Agent Mulder.”

“Why, thank you, Agent Scully.” He nodded, and she laughed, squeezing his hand.

They were on their way to Alan’s house. The work had finished while they were recently in New York and now they had to inspect it and Scully needed to sign all the remaining paperwork. A
delivery truck was scheduled to meet them there, bringing the items Scully needed to replace, and then they were packing up any of her remaining items. After the house, they were headed to the hotel to pick up her things, before heading home.

Home. Finally.

Mulder looked over at her again and shook his head, happy and feeling incredibly lucky to have her in his life. To have this second, God no, more like his millionth chance to be with her. This time was going to be better.

When they pulled up to the house, he let go of her hand and turned off the car. They both got out and walked to the front door, finding Gary just inside the house, on the phone. He waved to them and motioned for them to head down the hall. Mulder followed her down to the bedroom where she stood and sighed as she looked around. The room looked great, everything was repaired and ready for the items that would soon be delivered.

“Hey there. Good afternoon,” Gary said as he walked into the room. “Looks better than the last time you saw it, eh?” Scully turned to him and nodded with a smile. “We had to rewire the room and repair the alarm system. The carpets, walls, window. It’s been a big job, but it looks good.”

“You did a great job,” Scully agreed and looked around again. “Hard to tell there was any damage at all.” She sighed and looked back at Gary. “Okay, let’s go see what this damage will cost me.”

“Us,” Mulder said, and Scully turned to look at him. “What it will cost us.” She stared at him and sighed as Gary wisely gave them some space. “This was mostly my fault, so I should be the one paying.”

She shook her head and turned toward the door. “Really seeing just how much that t-shirt will get you, huh?” She raised her eyebrows at him, and he grinned as she walked out of the room. As she did, through the new bedroom window, he saw the delivery truck pull up and he went outside to meet them.

The next few hours were spent unloading and arranging furniture, cleaning out closets, packing and loading up their car, and cleaning the house. The delivery guys and Gary left sometime before Scully was ready to leave. She wanted to be sure everything was in perfect condition.

Alan was coming home in two days, and she was nervous over the appearance of the house. “Scully, it looks nearly identical to how it was before, stop worrying,” Mulder said as she walked the house once more, tweaking the position of a chair or moving a bowl on the coffee table. “Besides, considering how angry he could have been, Alan was incredibly understanding.”

“I know, Mulder,” she sighed and shrugged her shoulders. “Of all the responses he could have given, hearing his gleeful laughter was not one I was expecting.” She shook her head, and Mulder smiled, remembering her look of astonishment when Alan had called back and she explained what happened. He could hear Alan laughing through the phone, and Scully looked at Mulder with wide eyes.

“I’m looking forward to meeting him soon,” Mulder laughed as she began to shut off the lights, seemingly satisfied with everything, finally.

“Yeah, that will be an interesting day,” she said with a grin and then paused, an odd look crossing her face.

“You okay?” he asked, frowning at her, as he stepped closer. She closed her eyes and put her hand
to her mouth, shaking her head and taking a deep breath.

“Ohhh … yeah I’m okay. Probably just doing too much, and I haven’t really eaten today. Think I’ll grab some of those rosemary crackers from the box in the car when we leave, then we could grab some food on the way to the hotel?” she asked with a small smile as he searched her face for any other signs of discomfort. “I’m okay. I just need to eat.” He nodded slowly, and they looked around once more before she set the alarm and closed the door.

“One down, one to go,” she said quietly as she reached for his hand. He squeezed it and grinned at her.

They grabbed a bite to eat from a taco place she liked, before heading to the hotel, Scully seeming to feel better after she had eaten. Packing up the hotel room was much faster, the majority of her things repacked into suitcases and travel bags. The items she brought from her mother’s house, were put back in a box and set by the door. Once everything was ready, they loaded up a luggage trolley and Mulder pushed it down the hall.

Scully sighed beside him and he glanced over at her, asking her questions with his eyes. She smiled softly and touched his back. “Two down. Now we go home.” He pulled her to him as they waited for the elevator to do just that, began their journey home.

The drive to the house was quiet, but her hand on his knee and head on his shoulder was not. Her fingers circled slowly around and around his knee, not overtly sexual, but it was definitely arousing him.

“Are you happy, Mulder?” she asked softly when they were almost home.

“Am I happy?” he echoed back in surprise. “After all I said this morning? First kiss, first sexual experience, all that?” She exhaled a small laugh and then sighed. “Are … are you happy, Scully?” His worries suddenly sky high.

“Mmm,” she hummed, her hand holding his thigh, her thumb rubbing softly. “Christmas morning, first and last day of school, first time having good sex, and first time really falling in love. Real love that can’t be stopped or denied. Does that answer your question?” He smiled and covered her hand, holding her fingers tight.

“Show off,” he said, bringing her fingers to his lips and kissing them as she chuckled.

They pulled up the driveway a few minutes later, and he stopped the car, turning off the engine. She lifted her head from his shoulder and turned to look at him. Staring at each other, they both took a deep breath. She squeezed his hand, and he kissed her lightly on the lips.

“I love you,” he whispered.

“I am very much aware,” she answered and he pulled back to look at her. She moved her hands to hold his face and smiled. “I love you, Mulder. Your stubbornness and relentlessness makes you who you are, and it’s why I fell in love with you-”

“Scully …” he said softly, wanting to apologize and fix the things that happened as a result of those specific traits.

“Mulder, I know. Things will be different, they already are. It is who you are and those traits can, have, and will continue to be used for good. It’s how I like my Mulder,” she whispered with a smile. He stared at her and sighed as her thumbs stroked his lips, and he closed his eyes.
“This is the beginning, Mulder,” she whispered. “When we cross that threshold, it’s a new beginning, and I welcome it. It’s the reparation we need and deserve. Four years to get back here … we’ve figured it out and come out on the other side, better than we were before.” He took a deep shaky breath and nodded, opening his eyes to look into hers. She smiled, and he kissed her softly, her thumbs stroking his face.

He pulled back and smiled at her, kissing her once more before taking the keys from the ignition and getting out of the car. Scully started to walk to the back of the car and begin unloading it, but he stopped her, taking her hand and leading her up the stairs.

“Mulder, the car-”

“IT’ll keep,” he said, locking their fingers together and stopping at the door. He looked at her and sighed, reaching for her other hand. She smiled and gripped tightly to him.

“This spot, right here,” he said quietly, looking down and she followed his eyes, before looking up again. “I fell to my knees as I watched you leave. I don’t know how long I stayed here, but … when I stood up, it felt like my heart was gone and prepared to stay here, waiting for yours to return. I swear to God, I could hear it mocking me constantly. Some fucked up version of Poe that I both hated and welcomed. I needed it, needed the reminder any time I left the house, that something was missing and yet remained.” He let go of her hands to wipe her eyes and hold her face in his hands. “Today, Scully, today I welcome it back, as we take this step forward together.” She took a deep breath and nodded, holding his wrists.

Moving his hands and pulling her to him, he held her before they opened the door and entered their home together. It was almost as though he could feel his heart coming back to him as they stood close together. A spot that was once a source of sadness, now would bring happiness. She pulled him closer, her arms tight around his waist, and he held her tightly.

Everything in the car could wait, the only thing he needed was right there in his arms. The contents of the car could, in fact, disappear for all it mattered to him. So long as she was there, their hearts healing together and finding their way home at last, nothing else was of importance.

Chapter End Notes

Thinking of them packing up, going home, and reconnecting the past to the present makes me incredibly happy. I love them finally in the place they need to be.
Scully has an appointment with a doctor, sure she knows what is wrong, but is in for a big surprise. Then the day goes to hell and their world is turned upside down.

Most important, I feel I need to state that any dialogue from My Struggle 4 is not mine. It belongs to Chris Carter and 20th Century Fox Television.

Any words you haven't heard before, those are all mine,

March 2018

The rustle of the paper under her, made Scully feel anxious. Well, more anxious than she felt when she first walked into the hospital. She had not been back for a visit or to check in with any fellow doctors since she had been back at the FBI. Except for an occasional email from Doctor Clark, and of course Alan, she had not spoken to anyone.

Today, she squeezed in time to see Doctor Clark, who hopefully could figure out what was wrong with her. She had been feeling tired, occasional dizziness, chills, and simply feeling off. She could have chalked it up to numerous things, moving recently, the healthy amount of sex she and Mulder had been having, and simply getting older, but she knew that was not it. Something was not right.

The tiredness she could understand, but the chills and dizziness added to the fact that her menstrual cycles were becoming even more sporadic than normal, she knew she needed an exam. It was the start of menopause, she knew it had to be, but she needed to be sure. The thought of cancer or some other illness crossed her mind, but as she touched the back of her neck, she knew was okay, yet she was still scared.

Better to know, than worry, she thought.

A knock sounded and then the door opened and Doctor Clark walked in, shutting the door behind her. She smiled and walked over, putting her arms around Scully. “You look wonderful, Doctor Scully, Dana. It’s great to see you,” she said, pulling back as she looked at her and smiled. “I love your hair like this, it’s very cute.”

“Thank you,” Scully said with a nervous smile. “It’s good to see you too, Charlotte.”

“So, what brings you in today?” Charlotte asked, walking to the sink to wash her hands.

“Well, I’ve been feeling … off the past few days. Something has had me feeling … I don’t know and … I think I might know what it is, but I want to be sure,” Scully said quietly. Charlotte looked
at her and smiled, raising her eyebrows, causing Scully to sigh. “I’m almost certain it’s menopause, and I’ve been in denial about it, but I can’t be anymore. I’m in my fifties, I know it’s going to happen, but …” she sighed and stared at her. Charlotte smiled and walked over to her, her stethoscope out.

“Well, let’s do a checkup and see what’s going on. Quiet those worries you’re having,” she said, listening to her heart and lungs. Blood pressure was next, and Scully felt it would be higher than normal with all the anxiety she was feeling. Surprisingly, it was still in her regular range, and she breathed a sigh of relief.

“Let’s get a blood draw and some urine,” Charlotte said and Scully nodded. She rolled up her sleeve and the sample was taken. Getting off the table, she grabbed the urine sample cup and then went down the hall to the restroom.

She stared at herself in the mirror before using the toilet, saddened by the fact that she had not ever asked her mother when she went through menopause or known when her grandmother had for that matter. She laughed out a breath as she shook her head. So much had happened to her in the past twenty-five years that she doubted her body would have behaved accordingly anyway. Sighing, she stepped to the toilet to move this along and find the answers she needed.

Sitting in the exam room and waiting for Charlotte to come back was excruciatingly painful. Glancing at the clock, the twenty minutes she had been waiting felt like two hours. Finally, she heard a knock on the door and then Charlotte walked back into the room. She turned and closed the door, taking a second before looking at her.

“Jesus, is something wrong?” Scully asked. “Is … it’s just menopause, right? Not something terrible? Charlotte … please …”

“No, it’s not menopause, Dana,” she said quietly, with a look Scully could not place. She stepped closer to her and then took her hands, causing Scully’s heart to race, knowing she was trying to soften the blow of the news.

“Charlotte,” Scully whispered.

“It’s not menopause,” she said with a squeeze to Scully’s hands. “You’re pregnant.”

Scully stared at her in utter disbelief, pulling her hands out of Charlotte’s grasp and leaning back to stare at her. Her unwavering expression was sincere, causing her pounding heart to stop beating altogether.

“What? That’s … that’s impossible. More than impossible. The test has to be wrong. I cannot be pregnant. Have them test it again. Please, Charlotte.” Scully felt tears in her eyes, and she wiped at them quickly.

“Dana, they ran the test three times. I watched them the last time so that I could be one hundred percent sure. You are pregnant,” Charlotte smiled, and Scully shook her head.

“You don’t understand, I can’t be pregnant. I …” Scully said, unable to continue.

“It’s not a regular occurrence, but it has been known to happen to women in the fifties …”

“No, it’s not the age thing. It’s … I’m not able to get pregnant. It’s not possible,” Scully said, getting off the table, feeling the need to move around … to do something. She stopped and looked at Charlotte, shaking her head. “How could this have happened?”
“Dana …” she said with a chuckle and a shake of her head. Scully felt her cheeks grow warm, and she started moving again. “Like I said … it’s not unheard of for a woman of your age to become pregnant. The body is changing and perhaps it’s a … last chance kind of occurrence. If you thought you were unable to conceive it stands to reason that you were not considering birth control. But unprotected sexual activity generally has the possibility to lead to pregnancy.” Scully stopped and stared at her. A hard stare that had made suspects confess to crimes, but simply made Charlotte laugh softly. Scully started pacing again but stopped when an arm was placed in front of her.

“Dana, how about we do an ultrasound? Let’s get a look and see how far along you are … give you some peace of mind?” Charlotte asked kindly, touching Scully’s shoulder. Swallowing hard, Scully nodded, her heart racing again.

Charlotte left the room to get the ultrasound machine as Scully stood frozen, her hand going to her stomach. No way it was true. The first time was surprising enough, but this? How? And what? This could not be true. After all these years, after everything they have been through, after … William, and praying for the possibility of a second miracle and getting nothing in return, why now? The test had to be wrong, it simply had to be.

She placed both hands on her stomach, fear and worry over what this meant, weighing heavily on her mind. Yet praying that it could be true even as her mind raced with the odds against her. A second chance … could it be? Her eyes filled with tears, and she closed them, not letting her heart be set on this hope. Just wait. Wait for the ultrasound, she thought.

“Baby,” she whispered. “If there’s a possibility that you’re in there, please understand my doubts and my worries. Please…” she wiped her eyes and put her hands back on her stomach, rubbing them around, worried, fearful and praying,

“Here we go,” Charlotte said, pushing the ultrasound machine into the room. She glanced at Scully with a smile and walked over to her, guiding her back to the exam table. “Come on, Dana, let’s see about that little one.”

Scully sat on the table, and Charlotte laid it back, guiding her into the best position. Her hand went to Scully’s forearm, giving her a brief squeeze before she went to prepare the machine. Scully closed her eyes as she listened to Charlotte typing at the keyboard, her hands on her stomach again, taking in and blowing out deep breaths.

“Okay, we need to lift your shirt and get your pants down a little. This will be cold, but you know that,” Charlotte said, as Scully lifted her sweatshirt, and unbuttoned and opened her pants. When the cold gel was squeezed onto her belly, she gasped.

“Sorry,” Charlotte said, before taking the wand and moving it around on her belly. Scully kept her eyes closed, waiting, not daring to believe it could be true.

Then she heard it, a sound she never thought she would ever hear again and she began to sob. The heartbeat, a steady whoosh whoosh that filled the room and her ears with hope. Her eyes opened and through her tears, she could see the fluttering heartbeat on the screen. Undeniable proof that she was, indeed, pregnant.

“Oh my God,” she cried, watching the screen and seeing the little person inside of her. “Look at that.” Crying again, she shook her head, amazed at the alien looking image and imagining what Mulder would say.

Oh, Mulder.
“So, looking at size here, I’d say you’re about eight weeks along,” Charlotte said, taking photos and measurements. Scully did some fast math and laughed internally. The doppelganger case, of course.

Never could they ever do anything simply or normally. The first time back to being together, and they made a baby. Or maybe it was the second time, she thought with a grin. She shook her head again at the image she saw on the screen. Not out of the realm of extreme possibilities, indeed.

The sound of pictures being printed shook her from her thoughts as she wiped her eyes. Charlotte grabbed some tissues, handing her a few, before gently wiping the gel from Scully’s stomach, smiling at her as she did. Her stomach cleaned, Scully buttoned her pants and pulled her shirt back down, her hands staying on her stomach, holding onto the child inside her.

“Everything looks great, right on track to where the baby should be at this stage, but you still need to follow up with an OB soon,” Charlotte said, taking the photos from the machine and handing them to Scully. She sat up and gazed at them, her heart pounding with fear and excitement. What did this mean? Jesus …

“I would assume an amniocentesis will need to be done, but it will be up to your OB,” Charlotte said, touching Scully’s shoulder. “I know you know this, but you need to take it easy and be aware that things are going to be a bit different now. I don’t know what your current work entails, but I’m sure it’s more physically demanding than working here. Just be careful. You’ve got some precious cargo there,” she said with a nod to the papers in Scully’s hands. Scully smiled slightly as she looked down, nodding her head as she looked again at the photos in her hands.

“Kid’s gonna be gorgeous, male or female, with the two of you as parents,” Charlotte said, making Scully look up at her again.

“How did you know it was him? Mulder, I mean? I could have been seeing someone else since you saw me last,” Scully asked.

“Dana, please,” Charlotte said with a stare. “You two were made and meant for each other. I’ve seen you together enough times over the years to see it. No, it wasn’t a lot, but it was enough. I have never seen a couple like the two of you. How he watched you, the way you had conversations with your eyes … your smile when he was around, and your lack of one when he wasn’t. When you two were in a room it was like nobody else existed. It was beautiful, and I doubt that has changed. I knew the two of you would figure out a way back to each other.” Scully stared at her, and she nodded. “Yes, I noticed you weren’t together, your face had lost its smile. But,” she gestured to the photos, “it looks like you found it again.” Scully blushed again, and Charlotte laughed.

“Congratulations, Dana. I know it’s scary and there are a million thoughts running through your head, but you’re going to have a baby. That’s fantastic,” Charlotte smiled, and Scully nodded again, her worries taking a backseat for a brief moment. She stepped off the table and hugged Charlotte.

“Thank you, for everything. Now I need to go and tell Mulder,” she said, stepping back and putting her photos into her pocket. She smiled again and held onto Charlotte’s hand, nodding at her, and heading out the door.

Fear and excitement coursed through her equally as she drove home. She could not stop the smile that sporadically came across her face, but then she began to feel anxious the closer she got to the house. Could this really be it? Somehow she had been given a chance to get it right, to be the mother she always wanted, but never truly had the chance to do.
Not long enough anyway, she thought, remembering the feel of William in her arms, the delicious baby scent of him. They were given a second chance. For everything, and right now, she was determined that nothing could ruin this moment.

Her cell phone ringing interrupted her thoughts. She answered, even though she was pulling up the driveway, believing it was Mulder.

“Hello?”

“Dana? It’s Monica Reyes.”

In a blur that left her dizzy, Mulder was gone. The words she had been ready to spill out and any happiness she felt on the drive over, gone like a leaf in the wind. She stood in the middle of the room and tried to process everything that happened in the past few minutes. Monica knew where William was, that he was in danger, and Mulder was going to find him. But it was wrong, she knew it was and she needed to stay, as much for William, as for the new child inside her. What good would she do anyone, putting herself in danger? No, she needed to be smarter, safer. Watching Mulder leave without her, running toward danger, toward what she knew was wrong, resurrected the worries from the past, and she was scared.

"Just come back alive."

God, she could not lose him again, not now and not ever. Turning to do what, she did not know, the door burst open and she spun back around. Mulder stood in the doorway, his eyes searching hers, before stepping toward her and pulling her to him. She exhaled a breath of relief and wrapped her arms around his waist, closing her eyes as she laid her head against his chest. He said nothing, just held her tight before letting go and stepping back. Looking into her eyes, he held her face in his hands and kissed her softly, twice, then stared at her again.

“I’ll find him. I promise,” he said quietly, his thumbs stroking her cheeks as he held her face. She nodded as he kissed her once more, stepping back, and walking out the door, slamming it behind him.

Wrapping her arms around herself, she heard the car drive away and closed her eyes, praying for his safety. She turned in the silence of the house and began to pace, not sure if she made the right decision. The baby needed to be protected, but what about William? What if she was wrong and he was on that plane?

She sat at the table and put her head down on her arms. Moving one hand down to her stomach, she took deep breaths, trying to calm herself. Mulder was an hour away from that airport in Maryland and yet, she knew it would be a dead end. But what if she was wrong?

Her ears begin to ring from the quiet in the house and she needed to move again. She paced back and forth, around and around the room. Putting her hands on her stomach again, she closed her eyes as she stopped walking, worry for the future weighing heavily on her.

Please God, she thought, please don’t let that life be what’s in store for this baby. I couldn’t take it, not again.

She began to pace again and decided to do some searching online, see if anything odd or different popped up that could possibly be William. Searching around, she found a cluster of lotto winners in northeastern Tennessee, maybe that was how they found him.
She tried calling Mulder, but he did not answer, and she began to pace again. Three more attempts to get to him and he answered.

“Mulder, you haven’t been answering your phone.”

“I had some payback to pay back. But you were right, Scully, he wasn’t on that plane.”

Scully felt fear and relief course through her and she sighed. “Look, I found something on the web. I think it’s how they found him. There was a lotto cluster in northeastern Tennessee. Eight recent winners in a ten-mile radius.”

“Where was the last winner?” he asked, and she heard his tires squealing.

_________________________________________________________________

Hours later, unable to stay at the house and simply wait any longer, Scully changed and went to find Skinner, needing his help. Aside from Mulder, he was the only person she trusted to ask for help where William was concerned.

Finding him in the waiting area of Kersh’s office, she felt her heart racing, but a small sense of calm came over her. Skinner would help, but how much should she tell him? Even after everything, Mulder was the only one she trusted implicitly, and Skinner was still lacking.

“You’re asking for my help. When I’ve been asked to take your badges,” Skinner said, breaking into her thoughts.

“Who said that, Kersh? Is he in there?” she demanded, stepping toward the office, but Skinner stopped her.

“Dana-”

“He doesn’t understand what’s happening right now.”

“Mulder has lit a fuse that you can’t put out. He’s made outrageous public statements on an Internet site,” Skinner told her, and she knew he needed the truth.

“That wasn’t him. That was me,” she said quietly. “And they’re not outrageous.”

“Where are they?” he asked and still she hesitated, deciding how far to go. “I can’t help you Agent Scully, if I don’t know what’s going on.”

Her phone rang in her pocket and she saw Mulder’s name on the screen. Thank God, she thought.

“Mulder,” she breathed.

“You can’t believe what just happened. I lost him, Scully. He’s gone,” he said and she could hear his exhaustion through the phone.

“Just tell me where you are.”

“I’m still in Norfolk.”

“Mulder, I’m coming down there.”

“He won’t listen to reason.”
“He’ll listen to me,” and she knew it without a doubt. “I know he will.” She hung up and looked at Skinner. “I got to go.”

“I’m supposed to rein you in,” he said, and she knew he would not be doing that.

“This isn’t about the FBI, sir. This is about our son,” she said and knew that was enough. He would be helping them.

“I’ll drive.”

Skinner’s words to her, words spoken to him by the Cancer Man, made her blood freeze. She did not trust a word that disgusting man said, he was a goddamn liar, always had been, and yet … her own fears, doubts, and thoughts after all this time, could there be any truth to what he said?

Her ears were ringing and she began to breathe hard, Skinner’s voice muffling as too many thoughts crowded in, threatening to choke her. Then she saw Mulder’s car drove quickly past and they followed him, her heart in her throat.

Running through a warehouse, she saw William run past her. She called to him, pleading with him to wait, to stop running. Rounding the corner, she ran into Mulder, and he stared at her.

“It’s me,” he said, as if she was not aware.

“I just saw him,” she told him, looking away to see if she could spot him again. Gunshots rang out and she looked back at Mulder. “That’s Skinner.”

“Wait!” Mulder called, and she paused. He stepped closer to her, putting his hand on her shoulder, and she looked at him. “He’s here.”

“I know! I just saw him,” she said, not sure why he was telling her what she already knew.

“Yeah, he doesn’t want to be found.” Scully looked at him, not understanding what he was saying.

“I just want to talk to him, Mulder.”

“I talked to him. He told me everything, what he’s afraid of.”

“I know what he’s afraid of,” she said, confusion still coursing through her.

“Stop. It’s no use.”

“What do you mean?”

“I’m asking you to let him go.”

“What are you talking about, Mulder?” Anger and confusion in her words, not understanding what he was doing.

“There’s nothing we can do.”

“We can protect him.”
“No, we can’t protect him. No one can,” he said, and held her gaze. “He knows that you love him.”

“How can he know that? How can he possibly know that?” She watched him touch his forehead and she stared at him, waiting for him to continue. Then a noise pulled her attention.

“Scully!” Mulder called, and she looked back at the man next to her, his hand squeezing and then letting go of her shoulder, before he ran away. “Stop him!”

But Scully was frozen in the knowledge that it had been William speaking to her the entire time. Her legs moved, chasing after him, Mulder somewhere close by, even as she tried to come to grips with what was happening.

William. Her son. Their boy. But … was he? He came to her, wanting her to know he knew she loved him. It was too much. Too much was happening too fast and she needed time to think, to process and break it all down, examine it from every angle.

“He’s in the other building!” She heard Mulder call out above her on the stairs.

“Go!” she shouted to him, running to find her own way out of the warehouse.

A door was up ahead when she suddenly stopped running, her breath catching as she did. She saw him, the Cancer Man holding a gun, could see him through William’s eyes, but heard Mulder’s voice as he spoke to him.

You have to let me go, William’s thoughts called out above everything else, and suddenly she could not breathe.

I can’t. Please, William, please.

I know. I do. I need you to.

I want … so much. I need …

And then she heard a gunshot and she started running again, needing to know what happened, needing to see her boy.

More gunshots and she ran faster, her heart breaking, believing Mulder was hurt. Coming out of the door, she saw Mulder’s back and she wanted to weep. He was okay. But where was William?

God, please no, she thought as she walked up to Mulder, looking over the edge of the dock into the dark water below. Someone was in there, and seeing the body she hoped beyond hope that smoking bastard stayed dead this time.

“He’s gone. He’s gone, Scully,” Mulder said beside her. “He shot him. And he shot me.” He reared back and threw his gun in the water, the splash incredibly loud over the ringing in her ears.

“Mulder … he wants us to let him go. He wasn’t meant to be.” She heard herself saying, feeling things she did not understand.

“William was our son,” he said incredulously.

“No …” she said, shaking her head, still not sure, but needing him to listen to her. To hear what he may not want.

“Scully, he was our son!” he shouted.
“No.” She stepped closer to him. “William was an experiment, Mulder.” She needed him to stop spiraling, to bring him back to the possible reality of what she had heard.

“What are you talking about?”

“Mulder … he was an idea, born in a laboratory.” Her own fears and worries manifesting, but still knowing there could be a chance.

Never give up on a miracle.

“But you were his mother.”

“No, I … I carried him. I bore him. But I was never a mother to him, I wasn’t. William … William was …” she tried to say what was on her mind, to tell him everything, but there was too much. She was not his mother. Not how she wanted to be. Not how she or William deserved. She did not get that chance. It, like so many other things, was taken from her. Taken from both of them.

“For so long, I believed,” Mulder said and she felt his sadness. “What am I now, if I’m not a father?”

She exhaled a bittersweet laugh, knowing the small bit of good to come from all this sadness. “You are a father.”

“What are you talking about?”

She took his hand and put it on her stomach. He frowned at her and she gave him a sad smile.

“That’s impossible,” he said, stepping closer to her, his hand pressing tight against her.

“I know,” she said, crying. “I know it is. It’s more than impossible.” She knew it as much as he did. And yet …

Never give up on a miracle … or the possibility of two. They defied the odds now, why not then?

He pulled her close and she cried against him. Holding him tight, they grieved for the son they lost, worried for the child growing inside of her, and found comfort in the fact that despite it all, they were still together. They clung tightly to each other knowing that if they were to let go, they would surely crumble.

Chapter End Notes

Okay, we have reached the end of the series. From here on out, it will be what I wished happened and I hope you will enjoy it.

Four chapters to go ...
The Docks

Chapter Summary

Standing on the docks, Mulder and Scully find that what they feared most, is not actually a reality.

Chapter Notes

Here we go, into how I wish it had gone once the cameras panned away. This chapter was what began my journey into writing fan fiction. I hated the way that the show ended, that Scully didn't get a chance to speak to and hold William. Yes, she spoke to him in Ghoulí, but she wasn't sure it was him and she also believed he was dead. I wanted her to have her chance and so I decided to change things a bit. I hope you enjoy it.

Also, this is written as a blend of Mulder, Scully, and Jackson. I wrote it the way I felt an episode would show them all at different times throughout a story.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

March 2018

The cold air was biting with each breath Mulder took. The adrenaline of all that had transpired over the day, and especially the last 20 minutes, was catching up to him. He took deep breaths hoping to slow down the whirlwind of his mind so he could process all that had happened.

Scully was still shaking. He could feel every gulping breath she took and hear her tears. Her arms were wrapped tight around him. They stood together, wrapped in each other’s arms, in their separate grief. Both mourned the loss of a son they never knew. Mulder’s grief however, was mixed with guilt.

He had seen William, had held him, had a conversation with him. Not some version of himself he chose to present, but him. Mulder’s heart ached with the guilt he felt that Scully had not had that chance since she had stayed behind.

It puzzled him, but now he knew, she was worried about their baby. Their baby. Mulder took another deep breath and closed his eyes. That was when he heard it.

“You gotta be fucking kidding me,” he growled through his teeth.

Scully inhaled sharply as she heard Mulder’s harsh words and he pushed her quickly and roughly from him. He took great strides to the edge of the dock, looking all around. But then she heard him exhale loudly and saw him drop to his knees.

She felt her knees buckle as she closed her eyes. Whatever he had seen, it could not be good. She did not know if she had the strength to face what Mulder was seeing.
Mulder was in shock. He was staring into the eyes of William, the real William, who was very much alive. William’s face was full of fear. Mulder saw him dart his eyes all around, looking for a way out, a place to run.

“Please.” Mulder begged him, his eyes full of pain. “Please. For her. Please. Please.”

Scully heard Mulder speaking but could not make out the words. She took a breath and then walked over to Mulder, ready to face this with him. He should not have to do it alone.

Jackson began to push himself backwards in the water. He needed to get out of there. He knew if he saw her and she saw him, the real him, he may not be able to run. “Wait, please, just ... wait,” he heard Mulder plead.

He hesitated for a brief second and then there she was, her hair shining in the night lights, staring at her partner, not yet seeing him. Jesus, he needed to go. But he could not, he was frozen. He wanted to see her, no, he had to. Then her eyes fell on him, and she cried out as she too fell to the ground. She began to gasp and cry his name like a prayer.

“William, oh God. William,” she cried as she moved to lay flat on her stomach, her hand outstretched to reach him, as if by sheer will she could pull him to her, despite his distance. “Please … we can … I’ll get ... a rope, please. Oh my god.”

She started to push up to go find a rope, when she felt Mulder kneel down, with a rope in his hands. She had not even noticed he had walked away.

Mulder looked at William and silently begged him to catch the rope and allow him to pull him back to the dock. His heart was pounding as he coiled the long, thick rope and threw it out to William.

Jackson was not looking for the rope, he had eyes only for her. He saw her physical pain, still on the ground, reaching to him, and he felt it immensely. A small part of him also felt a sick thrill that she was hurting. He did not really know her, so why should he care how she feels? Then ... her eyes ... anguish, fear, despair, and something else. As if she dared not hope but could not control it, but something else he could not place.

Mulder felt as though he would shatter from the brokenhearted pleas he heard from Scully as she lay on the ground next to him. He knew how this must be killing her. William was so close and alive. Mulder had seen the fear in his eyes, the look of flight. But he was not moving, just staying afloat right in from of them.

He pulled the rope back and re-coiled it, and threw it again. If he had to do this all night, he would. Anything to take away the anguish and pain he heard in Scully.

Jackson heard the rope splash in the water and it broke him from his gaze on her. He looked at it and knew it was now or never. He looked at her again and felt a pull from her stare. He grabbed the rope and held on.

Mulder felt the tug and his heart pounded. He started pulling him in as he heard Scully choking on her sobs. She began to scramble to get up and he grabbed her elbow to help her stand.

She wrapped her arms around herself as she could see William getting closer and felt she might be
sick. Knowing he could change his mind at any second, she felt she could not keep the feeling of losing him again out of her mind.

“Almost ... almost. Please ... oh God ... please,” she repeated in a whisper.

Mulder was pulling as quickly as he could, without causing William any harm. The rope was beginning to fall heavy on the dock. He felt it tighten as it ran over the side and he knew William was close now.

Mulder dropped to one knee and anchored himself. He wrapped the rope around his arm to give himself more leverage knowing this was going to be the hard part.

Mulder pulled and pulled the rope, with William’s weight making it exponentially heavier by the water logged clothes he wore. Mulder dropped his other knee and pulled harder.

“Help me, Scully,” he whispered, and he was immediately brought back to a different day when he said those words to her. His hands deep in the earth, desperately trying to find answers about his sister. The pain he had felt in that moment was soul crushing. Yet ... Scully had been right there beside him, as she always was, and she began to move the earth with him. To help him. To soothe his fears.

Tonight was different. This was a joint heartache and one that was made lighter when he felt her drop back down next to him, place her small hands on the rope, and begin to pull.

Mulder held tight to the rope as he maneuvered onto his stomach. He could see that William was yet some feet out of reach. Scully stood and began to walk backward as she pulled the rope, giving Mulder some tension. She caught sight of a cleat close to them and hurried to tie the rope to it.

Mulder glanced over at Scully and saw her plan. He kept his grip tight on the rope as he once again brought himself to his knees. He braced himself, took a deep breath, exhaled, and pulled. He leaned far back and felt Scully behind him. She had grabbed the rope again and as he pulled as hard as he could, she pulled with him. Stepping back to keep the rope taut.

Mulder leaned over the side again as he gathered the rope for another large pull. William was so close now, one more pull should get him to the top.

Mulder heaved and Scully pulled. Again, Mulder leaned over the side. This time, William was within reach. Mulder fell to his stomach again and reached a hand out to grab him. Scully kept walking back with the rope, holding the line.

Mulder grasped William’s forearm and pulled. As he did, he planted one hand on the dock and began to push himself up. He felt the rope move as Scully kept pulling, helping him to grasp him better. He held tight to his arm and then seized the back of William’s coat, as William’s other hand reached for the dock.

Mulder released his arm and grabbed his coat with both hands as he pulled his knees under him for leverage. Jackson had gotten both hands and now his forearms onto the dock. Mulder kept a tight grip on him, feeling the freezing clothing. He moved a hand down to William’s thigh and grasped the wet material. He used it to his advantage, making it easier for him to hold him in place. Jackson crawled his way up the dock as Mulder pulled one last time and pushed back.

Mulder fell to his back, eyes closed, breathing hard, the cold air filling his lungs. Jackson was on his stomach next to him coughing and taking big gulps of air. Neither was in any shape to move,
until they both heard her cry out.

Mulder’s eyes flew open as he saw Scully running past him to William. She dropped to her knees in front of him, but did not touch him. He rolled over, still coughing, and found her staring at him. He quickly scrambled to his feet and she followed.

Mulder pushed himself up and stood sentinel beside them. He was trying to calm his breathing, but his heart was a different matter. He could feel it pounding. Happiness, nervousness, fear, all pumped through his bloodstream.

Scully and Jackson stared at one another. Her hands were balled into fists at her sides, not trusting herself to not touch him. She wanted to hold him and never let him go, but she was afraid he may run. She raised her hands up and then dropped them down. Her breath was shaking as she stood and looked her fill of him. She could see where the bullet had struck him, but it seemed to be ... healing. He could heal himself?

Jackson was acutely aware of how cold he was, standing there in his dripping clothes. He was out of the water, safe and able to run, but once again he was frozen. This woman ... his mother ... she was a stranger ... yet she was familiar. He could not place what he felt toward her. It was there, but still lurking far in the back of his mind.

When she could no longer stand it, Scully took a step forward, whispered his name, and wrapped her arms around his waist. She turned her head, closed her eyes, and held him tight.

He was surprised at her movement and had no time to move away. He stood there in shock while she held him tight, his arms down at his side. He could feel and hear her crying, but still he did not move.

Then, the wind blew. A quick gust that swirled around them. When it did, he smelled a scent that had haunted his dreams but eluded him in the day.

He used to dream of a house, or a building, that he could not identify. He had never visited any place like it with his parents. But he would dream of it. Of warm colors, soothing voices, laughter, someone singing, and that scent. He would wake with the scent in his mind, sure he could pinpoint it this time, but he was never successful. His house did not smell that way. Nor his parents, grandparents, teachers, or friends homes. His dreams were the only place he could find it.

It was clouding his brain as he realized that scent was her. No other explanation for it. It had to be. He had not been dreaming of it at all, he had been remembering it, and subconsciously searching for it. For her. For his … his mother’s scent. He choked on a sob and he wrapped his arms around her.

Scully felt his arms go around her and she sobbed anew. Her boy ... her boy. He was alive and he was here. Years of searching, longing, dying a little every day. Wondering if he was okay, if he was loved and safe, if he ... if he hated her. Now here he was, whole and in her arms. Her boy.

She turned her head and saw Mulder staring at her. There was so much love in his eyes, it made her heart ache. She asked him with her eyes to hold them, hold both of them, but he gave her a small shake of his head and a small smile. This was her time.

Jackson was breathing her scent in, letting it fill his nostrils, permeate his senses. He let it wash over him, as if he would never again get the chance. What was it exactly? It was not a soap or
perfume. It was a smell that seemed to make his blood sing, creating a euphoria he had never experienced. His parents had loved him, cared for him, fought for and with him. But this ... this was different. He felt it in his bones. This woman ... she would die for him. Shit. How could he know that? Because of a goddamn scent? That was ridiculous. He started to feel dizzy, needing to get some space from her

Jackson let go of her and took a step back. His hand came up to push an errant strand of hair away. His eyes darted away from her and then back. He looked terrified again. A horse ready to bolt.

Scully’s hands reached to touch his face, but he took another step back. Anger adding to the fear she saw. Her heart dropped and she felt her stomach lurch again.

“William,” she said pleadingly, “please ... please don’t run. I ... I ... please ...”

“You’re all wet,” he said curtly to her.

Scully looked down and was surprised to find that her coat was wet. She had not noticed. Now though, she realized her cheeks were cold and her hair was even damp.

“I don’t care,” she said, “I’m fine. William. I ... but we need to get you out of those wet clothes. I ... we don’t have, we need to go find something. Maybe Skinner has a blanket in the trunk. Yeah, I’m sure he does. Let’s ... let’s head over there okay? Together, okay?” She knew she was rambling. She was so afraid he would run, so afraid of losing him again.

“Here.” She heard Mulder softly say. She looked at him and found he had his coat in his hand.

“Can’t do much about the wet pants, but at least you’ll be half dry,” he said to Jackson.

“Take it please,” Scully quietly said to him. Her eyes were full of tears. She had seen his anger when he stepped back. She expected it, but it still hurt.

He looked between them and finally took the coat Mulder offered. He started removing his wet clothing and turned as he got down to the last layer.

Scully looked at Mulder, tears streaming down her face. She covered her mouth as a sob threatened to come out. He stepped over to her and put his arm around her shoulders. She put her face in the crook of his neck, and took some deep breaths. His closeness brought her comfort and she raised her head as Jackson put on Mulder’s coat and closed it up, turning around again.

They stared at one another, not sure how to proceed. Mulder noticed how quickly the bullet wound was healing. He seemed to have powers like, well, like Wolverine. The hole had been slightly bigger when he pulled him out of the water. He stared at him unable to believe he was standing there breathing.

Mulder finally spoke up, wanting to make it clear how they would handle the situation. “We keep calling you ‘William’. That’s who you are to us, who you have been, but what would you prefer we call you?” he asked as he felt Scully stiffen and he squeezed her shoulder.

“My name is Jackson. I ... I don’t know William,” he said looking at Scully. She nodded, feeling Mulder’s arm tighten more, sending her silent strength.

“Jackson it is, then,” Mulder said with a nod to him as well. Then he took his arm from around Scully and held out his hand to him. “It’s beyond a pleasure to meet you Jackson. Fox Mulder, or
just Mulder, please.” Introducing himself again, he wanted William to know it was his call.

Jackson stared at his hand and felt a moment of confusion followed by understanding. They were letting him call the shots. Letting him be in control of what happened next. Time to make a decision. He counted to five and Mulder never moved his hand. Jackson reached out and shook his hand, gripping his hand tightly.

Scully followed Mulder’s lead and also stuck her hand out. “I am so happy to see you, Jackson. Dana Scully, or just Scully is fine.” She could not quite keep her tears at bay as she stood waiting for him to accept her hand.

He looked at her. Her eyes were so blue. He remembered those eyes looking at him. Remembered the love he saw in them. He grabbed her hand, harder than he intended, but she only smiled, as tears spilled down her cheeks.

Mulder felt his heart skip a beat as he saw them touch, their eyes unable to look away from each other.

“We really should get you out of those wet clothes,” Mulder said and they both turned to look at him. “I’m not asking you to do anything you aren’t comfortable with, I just want you to be dry. Will you come with us, please?”

They both looked at Jackson intently, silently begging him to come with them. He was warmer now with the jacket on but his legs were freezing. He would not get very far with these wet clothes. He nodded that he would join them.

Scully breathed a sigh of relief. She stepped back, allowing him to go ahead of her, and he began to walk back to the building. Mulder reached for Scully’s hand and squeezed it tight before letting it go and leading the way to the car. They did not speak, each lost in the thoughts of the evening.

When Mulder opened the door leading out to the car, he shouted for Scully. She hurried up to him and gasped. She and Mulder bent down to look under the car, finding Skinner on his stomach underneath. She could barely reach him, but she was able to feel his wrist. He had a pulse and when she touched him, he groaned. Scully stood up and saw Mulder over by the other car.

“Scully, come over here,” he said quietly.

She stepped over to him and found Monica with a bullet wound. Stepping up on the doorframe, Scully felt her neck for a pulse. It was faint, but it was there. She put her ear close to her mouth and felt Monica’s shallow breath. Looking at the bullet wound, she saw it was superficial, but still in need of treatment.

“Mulder, she’s still bleeding, although it has seemed to slow. She needs pressure to be applied and we need to find something to use. Do you have anything in the car?” she asked, as she turned toward him.

He was on the phone, telling the 911 operator where they were and what had happened. He nodded at her to let her know he heard her. He walked over to his car and Jackson was left there standing and staring at her.

“I can help,” he said, surprising her, but himself even more. “You should check on the guy under the car. He probably needs help more than she does right now. Besides, he’s on it,” he says with a chin jerk toward Mulder.

Scully stared at him and was not sure what to think. He stepped closer to her and offered his hand
to help her step down. She took it and he switched places with her, looking at her still standing there and motioned toward Skinner. “Go,” he said and then looked back at Monica.

She walked to check on Skinner as Mulder passed to check on Monica. Scully grabbed his arm and Mulder looked at her. “Please, don’t let him leave. Keep your eyes on him at all times. I can’t ... I need ...” she quietly pleaded as she felt tears well up in her eyes.

“I don’t think he’s going anywhere, Scully,” he said quietly with a glance at Jackson in the car with Monica, as he nodded and squeezed her hand, before they both walked away to help two people they cared about.

Mulder handed Jackson the shirt he found in his car and told him to use it to apply pressure to her wound, to not let go no matter if it was filled with blood. She needed it to stop and they would do what they could until help showed up.

Scully was on her stomach talking to Skinner. She held his hand telling him help was on the way. He groaned and said her name. She squeezed his hand as she heard sirens in the distance getting closer. Thank God.

Half an hour later, Jackson sat on the staircase with Mulder standing next to him. He was still wearing Mulder’s coat, plus some sweatpants and a shirt of Mulder’s that happened to be in a gym bag in his trunk.

When the emergency services showed up it had been absolute chaos. Questions had been asked and they did not have the answers. Mulder pulled Jackson aside and took him up the stairs. It was then Mulder remembered he had a bag in his trunk with a change of clothes. Jackson stayed put as he got it and Mulder guarded him as he changed, Mulder giving him his bag for his wet clothes.

The firemen tended to Monica first. They took her out on a board, transferred her to an ambulance and left. They had to move her car and then work on getting Skinner out. It was slow, concise work. Scully stayed with them explaining who she was and offering up what information she knew.

She then explained to the police officers, that she and Mulder had been at the docks picking up their son, when they heard gunshots. They followed the sound and found Skinner and Monica in their state. She did not know any other details. They said they wanted to speak to Mulder and Jackson. Scully stated her son was a minor and she would speak to him first. She then went to check on Skinner again.

Jackson’s eyes followed her every movement. She was commanding but not domineering. Firm but not rude. Her glance lifted to them repeatedly, her look full of longing. Every time, she stared at him, he felt a tug. Something he could not explain, but hung in the air between them. A rubber band pulled taut.

Mulder sighed making a loud exhaling sound. William looked up at him almost expecting to see anger or irritation. He was surprised to see him wiping away tears from his eyes. Mulder saw Jackson watching him and he took a breath.

“I know that we are strangers to you. That you don’t know us. But ... that woman. Your mother ...” he looked over at Scully again as she helped and talked to the emergency team. “This is so typical of her. I’ve known her for twenty five years and I am not one bit surprised that she is standing where she is right now.”

Mulder took a deep breath and tilted his head back, before blowing out his breath. “You have no
idea how she has grieved for you. Through memories, photographs, other people who remind her of you. She has wanted to find you ... forever,” his voice was shaky with emotion. “Yet, you are here and two people we have known for so long are in need and so she is there with them. She could easily have chosen to come with us once help arrived, but she is taking the burden off of us. They will want to speak with us, get our statement, but she will have concocted a story. She will claim you are a minor and need parental permission to be questioned, buying us time. I know her. It’s what we do. Protect each other, protect you, care for those in need. Her chance to speak with you might only be now, yet she is not here. She is keeping you safe from afar. That is her through and through.”

Jackson looked back at Scully with Mulder’s eyes this time, seeing her as he did. The pride, love, and even sadness he felt from Mulder ran off of him and Jackson was once again surprised and astonished, that others could not feel and see emotions like he could. How much time it would save to know how someone felt simply by seeing it with your own eyes. She looked up at them again and this time Jackson smiled, a small smile, but it stopped her where she stood.

He saw her taking deep breaths, her hand at her chest. Oh ... the rubber band between them sent a jolt of love. Much the way tin can phones work with string, he felt it. A wave of love so strong, it almost knocked him off balance. He breathed in a gasp and wrapped his arms around himself. Trying to block out those feelings, if it was possible. He was not ready to deal with that yet. Too much was happening too quickly.

She walked over to them and up the stairs and he stood up as she approached. “I told them we came down here to pick you up,” she said quietly with a glance at Jackson. “That you were out with friends and we came to get you. We heard gunshots and came to investigate and found them like they were. We don’t know anything else, but they are or were, colleagues of ours.”

“They’ll see through that soon enough,” Mulder said, looking in her eyes and then toward the scene before him.

“I know. But hopefully not before we can get out of here,” she said with a glance down as well.

An officer motioned them down as Skinner was placed on a stretcher. He was pale and breathing hard. Scully hurried down the stairs to see him, grabbing his hand and bending her head low to speak to him, as they walked toward the ambulance.

An officer walked up the stairs and took Scully’s place. He began asking questions and Jackson was impressed with the ease at which Mulder lied to him and Jackson followed suit. The officer asked him about the cut on his forehead and he reached up to touch it. It truly was just a cut now. Mulder explained that they had been repairing something at home earlier and he had walked into the open cabinet door. Jackson laughed and said it hurt his ego more than anything else. It must have been believable enough, because the officer nodded and told them they were free to go.

They followed him down the stairs, Scully meeting them at the bottom as Mulder nodded to her. He walked over to the car and got in, turning on the ignition. Scully and Jackson followed him and silently they backed up and made their way past the lingering emergency vehicles.

Scully and Jackson both watched forward as Mulder looked behind him as he navigated backward down the narrow alley. No one seemed to breathe until they drove away from the dock and got on a main road. Then, as one, they seemed to draw a deep breath.

Scully put her elbow on the window and her forehead in her hand. She closed her eyes and took some shaky breaths. Mulder took his right hand off the steering wheel and reached for hers. He locked their fingers together and they looked at each other and nodded.
Jackson watched them, so many emotions coursing through his body. Memories were popping up, sounds, voices. Things he thought he had pushed away forever, but apparently he was wrong. They were still there, just buried down deep. He caught Mulder’s eye in the rear view mirror. He held his gaze and then Mulder looked away.

“We can head home, back to our place. I’m sure you have lots of questions,” Mulder began, before seeing the panic in Jackson’s eyes. “Or we could drop you somewhere if you like. It’s up to you.” Mulder felt Scully’s hand tighten in his and heard her hold her breath.

“You could drop me off,” he said quietly.

Scully released her breath and tried not to sob. Mulder held her hand tighter and squeezed three times. Their knock, their code. She squeezed back, so thankful to have him there to hold her when she felt like falling.

They drove in silence for a bit. Not really knowing what to say to put seventeen years apart into a single car ride. Scully wished they could freeze time and stay there in that moment. No fear, just truth. She was quietly crying, but they could both hear her. Biting her lip to keep from crying out, tears were running down her cheeks.

“Here is good,” Jackson said suddenly.

They had driven past a strip mall and then a small motel. Mulder slowed and then pulled over, backing up until the motel was in sight. He stopped the car and he and Scully both got out.

Jackson got out and looked at them before walking into the office. Once he was gone, Mulder immediately grabbed Scully and held her tightly. She wrapped her arms around his waist and clung to him, sure she would be on the ground if he was not there.

“He’s alive, Scully. Alive,” he whispered into her hair. “Everything else we can handle. We can face. But losing him like that ... seeing him killed for me. Scully, I can’t ...” his voice broke as he held her closer. She sobbed against him. Feeling his pain mirroring her own, they shared their happiness and grief together.

Jackson had walked out and now stood on the step outside the office, staring at them. He looked at the love he could see shining off of them and thought of the man who claimed he was his father with his evil thoughts and his plans. Jackson had done some terrible things, but only because he did not know he could and then again because he had to protect himself. He did not want to believe he was evil.

Seeing them together, his mother, and the lengths they went through to help him and the worry they both showed, that was a parent, a father. He did not want to believe that he had been born of her and that other man. It was disgusting and improbable. Not when he could see and feel the love these two had for each other.

Watching them, the feeling he felt was like hearing the best song he ever heard, eating his favorite food, watching his favorite movie, and his first kiss all rolled into one. Overwhelming, but intensely beautiful. Seeing it around them was like staring directly at the sun. It was blinding. How they could not see it, he did not understand. It was amazing.

He had so much he wanted to ask them, so many questions, but now that he was actually able to do it, he was terrified. He needed to find another way, to figure out what he wanted before he jumped in all the way. Some distance away from them would be good.
“I got the room,” he said, interrupting their embrace. He nervously brushed his hair back from his forehead as they broke apart and came toward him.

Mulder pulled his wallet out and took out some cash. “This is all I have on me,” he said as he handed him some random bills.

“I have money. I don’t need ...”

“Take it. Please.” Mulder pushed it into his hand and also took out his business card and slipped it into his hand. “If you need anything,” he said quietly holding his gaze. “Anything, anytime, anywhere. I will get to you. We will get to you.”

Mulder pulled him in and embraced him. That Jackson did not return it, did not trouble Mulder. He got to hold his boy again. Nothing else mattered at that moment.

He stepped back and Scully stepped up. She searched his face and looked in the eyes that were different than when he was a baby. Yet, she could still see him there, and it made her breath catch.

“Take care of yourself. Please be careful and know we are here. If there is anything you need … there is nothing I wouldn’t do for you,” she said through her tears.

Her hands itched to touch him again, but she was unsure. Her connection to him was different than Mulder’s and she was terrified to do the wrong thing. He saw the hesitation in her, felt her fear and made a decision.

He stepped one step forward and pulled her into his arms. He held her and closed his eyes, imagining how it would have been to have her hug him like this his whole life. He thought of the way her body would have felt when he snuggled with her on the couch and how her hands would have soothed him when he was sick.

Her arms wrapped around him and for a moment, he was not a kid with special powers. He was not a troubled person on the run to keep people safe, he was a boy being held by his mother. He felt his heart beat out a call to hers and then elation when he felt an answer. He heard her gasp and knew she felt it too. Breathing in her scent once more, he let her go.

She stared at him and he smiled and nodded. She touched his face and held it in her hands, memorizing exactly how he looked. He touched his forehead to hers and she felt such indescribable peace. She took a deep breath and felt warmth spread through her, like sunshine invading her soul.

He stepped back and the connection was broken. She stared at him as she still held his face. She smiled and let out a disbelieving laugh. She reached up on tiptoes and kissed his cheek. He closed his eyes at her touch and then opened them as he stepped back.

He needed time to think. Some distance, from her especially, even though all he wanted to do was get back in the car with them and go wherever they would take him. But he knew that was not the right plan. He needed to be sure he was no longer followed. No longer pursued. They all needed to be safe.

Mulder came up and placed his hand on her back, signaling to her that it was time to go. She looked at him and smiled, she was ready. Mulder handed Jackson his bag of clothes and nodded to him one last time before opening the car door for Scully. He walked around to the other side and got in, turning on the car.

Scully stared at Jackson for another minute, then smiled and got in the car. She put her hand against the glass and he stepped up and did the same. They smiled at each other and he moved
back as Mulder put the car in drive.

He waved as they drove away. He saw her turn her head and watch him until she could no longer see him. He felt empty and alone now that he stood there without them. Taking out his key, he walked to his room, stepped inside, and leaned his head against it when it closed. He knew this was what he needed to do, but God, he felt so alone.

He took off his shoes, set his bag down and put all the money Mulder had given him on the dresser, placing the business card on top. He looked at it and realized that no, he was not alone. Yes, he may be physically, but there were two people out there who would be there when he was ready. They made that very clear.

He looked at himself in the mirror and saw all the proof he needed. He had literally been given the clothes off Mulder’s back and he knew they would be there if he called. He just needed to figure some things out, and then he would find them again.

He would find them.

Chapter End Notes

Oh, I hope you all enjoyed this. Thinking of Scully getting the chance to hold her boy, to spend time with him, it makes me so happy. As an Auntie-Mom, the thought of not being able to hold my boy again, it seriously breaks my heart. I needed her to have that time with him. They both needed it, but she did most.
Healing the Heart

Chapter Summary

Coming home, Mulder and Scully talk about the past, things that should have been discussed years ago. They find comfort in the knowledge that their hearts are healing.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

March 2018

Trudging slowly up the steps to the house, Mulder heaved a huge sigh. He was exhausted, dirty, and emotionally drained. Scully stopped at the door and looked at him, attempting a smile. He stared back at her with another sigh.

Opening the door, she stepped inside as he stood in the doorway, frozen, not sure how to proceed. The last few hours were catching up to him and he felt as if he was in shock.

Pregnant. Jackson was safe. Skinner and Monica were at the hospital. Pregnant.

How?

“Mulder? You okay?” Scully asked quietly as she stared at him. He shook his head as though to shake away the wild thoughts in his mind.

He stepped inside the house, closing the door behind him and walked over to her. Looking into her eyes, he held onto her shoulders and slid his hands down her arms. He moved his hands to her hips and then knelt in front of her, lifting her shirt and pressing his cheek against the warmth of her skin and closing his eyes.

“Mulder,” she whispered, threading her fingers in his hair and holding him close. He kept his cheek pressed there, knowing he could not hear the child growing inside, but still needing to feel some kind of connection.

He wrapped his arms around her and he heard her taking shuddering breaths. He knew she was crying and he took a deep breath, to stop his own tears. Turning his head, he kissed her stomach before resting his cheek there again.

“I love you, little one,” he whispered and then Scully was moving, and on her knees in front of him, clinging to him, her arms around his neck as they both cried.

They knelt there until his brain screamed at him to make her more comfortable. He held onto her and tried to stand, but his legs were tired and his feet asleep. He stumbled forward and caught her, terrified he had hurt her.

“Scully? Are you okay?” he stood up and helped her to her feet, his hand going to her stomach. She laughed out a sob and held his hand there as she nodded.

“Mulder, I ran through warehouses, up and down the stairs, and recently fell down an elevator
shaft. You stumbling a bit … that’s like a hiccup,” she said, smiling through her tears. “I’m fine.”

He stared at her, feeling her hands gently holding his in place, and he shook his head. “You knew and you still did all that, what if … if something happened? What if you …” he stopped, unable to say the words. In response, Scully just smiled, holding his hands tighter.

“Mulder, I’m two months along. A little running is not going to hurt me. Blown up bedrooms, running from robots, dropping to avoid bullets … I’d say we’re okay,” she said with a smile. “Now that I do know, of course, I need to be more careful.” He looked at her and he nodded, knowing they could not continue working at the bureau if that was the case, but that was a problem for tomorrow.

Tonight, he planned to take care of her, make sure she was okay, talk about what happened today and just hold her. “Wait,” he said, interrupting his own thoughts. “Two months? That’s … when we …” She nodded with a smile, and he barked out a laugh as he shook his head. “Talk about the realm of extreme possibilities.”

It was her turn to laugh, and he looked at her strangely. “I thought the exact same thing today when I found out,” she shook her head and sighed deeply.

He pulled her into his arms again and held her to him. He closed his eyes, his chin resting on her head, fitting together perfectly the way they always did. Things were falling into place now, the signs he should have recognized, but of course, why would he have thought pregnancy? It had not been something they considered seventeen years ago when she came to his motel room, dizzy and cold. His worry had been the possibility of her being abducted again, pregnancy had not even been on the radar.

“You’ve stopped wanting cheese, you were dizzy at Alan’s a few days ago, you threw up the other morning, but said you were just overly tired,” he recounted and she nodded. “How did we not see it?”

She laughed and pulled back from him, shaking her head. “I’m 54, Mulder. I’m not supposed to be able to conceive. Why _would_ we have considered pregnancy?” she said, shaking her head again as she laughed. He stared at her and sighed, his mind racing for what it all meant. “And please don’t mention cheese to me.” He laughed quietly and she smiled.

“You … you saw the doctor today then? Someone you know? And trust?” he asked and she nodded. “Just come back alive. That’s what you said, when I left.”

“Last time you didn’t,” she whispered, her eyes filling with tears. “I … you were gone, but there was hope, until there wasn’t. I know I couldn’t stop you from going this time. What if my thoughts were wrong, and William … Jackson … was there and we missed it? I needed, _we_ needed to know, but I couldn’t go with you. I had to … protect one but miss the other, what choice did I have?” She looked at him pleadingly, but he shook his head, not understanding her words. Was she apologizing to him?

“What are you saying, Scully? Are you apologizing for staying here, keeping yourself and the baby safe?” he asked her, astonished she would feel the need to do so. She nodded and dropped her head to his chest. “Why would you feel you need to apologize? Scully …” He pulled her from him enough to look into her eyes, tilting her chin, forcing her to look up at him.

She kept her eyes closed as she took a deep breath, letting it out shakily. Opening her eyes, she continued her uneven breathing. “I … all this time … what if I was wrong? What if he _was_ there and I was too far away, and he didn’t want to come with you, just like he did? He ran from you.
What if I had been wrong and he stayed, and I missed my chance to speak to him, because I was keeping … the new baby safe? Our baby, Mulder?” Her eyes filled with tears, causing his heart to drop and race simultaneously. Our baby … their baby.

“Scully, no,” he said quietly. “That’s not …”

“I know, Mulder,” she said, stepping away from him, wrapping her arms around herself. “I know what you’re going to say, but it’s what I feel. That I gave up one to save the other, how is that okay?” When she looked at him, the sadness he saw in them broke his heart as she shook her head and turned around, her shoulders shaking.

Seeing her like this left him at a loss for what to say. How could he make her feel better when he felt his own guilt that he did see Jackson, held him close? He wanted that for her, Jesus Christ, did he. But, if he had known, would he have told her to stay? He shook his head, the answer so obvious.

“Scully, I would have told you to stay if I had known. I wouldn’t have wanted you there,” he said forcefully, shaking his head at the thought of her getting hurt and something happening to her or their baby. She turned around and he saw her defiant expression, even through her tears.

“You would have told me to stay? As if I had no choice?” she asked him, raising her eyebrows and wiping her eyes almost angrily.

“God, Scully. No! That is not what I mean. Shit,” he scrubbed at his face, and paced back and forth. “Leaving here without you … it felt so wrong and I wanted to turn around so many times. I was running against the clock or I would have. I would have come back and demanded you come with me. I needed you there.” He stopped pacing and stared at her. “I always need you there, but if your safety is in question, no … I can’t, I won’t risk losing you.”

Her eyes softened and she came to him as she did years ago. She held him close and the knowledge that the last time he spoke those words to her, neither of them knew she was carrying their child, the one they saved tonight. He held her close and they were quiet for a while.

“When I discovered I was pregnant with William,” she whispered and he closed his eyes. “I was terrified, but … happy, and that happiness terrified me. The entire pregnancy, I worried that something would be wrong. Any pregnancy there is a chance for complications, but that pregnancy? Mulder, I was so scared. And you were gone. The one person I wanted and needed, was gone.” She pulled back and he opened his eyes, seeing hers wet once again. “I kept on, what choice did I have? But the one person I needed to hold me, to share in my worries and fears was not there. I grieved for you, Mulder, when we thought you had died. My heart felt like it had been buried with you and still I kept on. What choice did I have?” She was crying harder now, and he had no idea he was as well, until she wiped his cheeks.

“Tonight, I had a choice, and the child I have grieved for, the one I desperately wanted to hold and speak to, was somewhere close by. Yet I chose not to go with you. I selfishly chose.”

“No, Scully, not selfishly. Rationally. You knew he wasn’t there and you were right.”

“But I could have been wrong, Mulder. There was that possibility.”

“I refuse to hear that, refuse to consider you acting selfishly if it meant keeping yourself and our baby safe. I will not hear it and I don’t want you to think that way. Please, Scully,” he implored her, his hands holding her upper arms.
She took a deep breath and cried harder, her hands going to her face. He let her cry, not trying to stop her tears or pulling her closer, but simply keeping a grip on her arms, his head down as he cried with her, hot tears on his cheeks.

She quieted and his grip lessened, as he raised his head to look at her. He waited for her to move her hands before speaking. There were things that needed to be said tonight and he was going to say them. She moved her hands from her face and dropped them to her sides, defeat in her stance, her head down as she took deep breaths, and he wiped his eyes. Yes

“Scully,” he whispered, and she shook her head. “Scully, look at me.” She exhaled loudly and raised her head, her cheeks wet with tears. He wiped them and held her face in his hands. “You are incapable of being selfish. Tonight, we sat on the stairs while you tended to Skinner and Monica even after help arrived. You kept us safe, all of us. You took time away from William, Jackson, and you made sure they were okay. Tell me how that is selfish?” She closed her eyes, and he leaned his forehead to hers. “You’re not selfish, Scully.”

The house was quiet as they stood there together. She pulled her head back after a few minutes and he stroked her cheeks with his thumbs. Taking a deep breath, she nodded and he smiled softly.

“We should get you out of those clothes,” she said, stepping back, but he shook his head and stopped her.

“When I came back, woke up and found you … seeing you pregnant, I know I was an asshole to you. We’ve talked about this before, but I was beside myself. So many … there were thoughts in my head that I couldn’t grasp, I couldn’t remember things at first. I remember lying in the hospital bed, alone at night, thinking of my social security number, birth date, your birth date, my address. The things I should have known by heart, were hard to grasp,” he shook his head and closed his eyes, remembering his feeling of fear. “Then you were there, so beautiful, your smile so radiant. I wanted to grab you and hold you, but I felt incomplete and didn’t trust my own memories. How could I ask that of you? Ask for your love?” She reached for his hand, and he squeezed, his eyes staring at hers.

“The ever present reminder that your life carried on without me, it was right there, straining against your clothing. I … should have known, should have …”

“Mulder, to echo what you said earlier, how would you have thought pregnancy?” she smiled softly and he sighed, knowing she was right, but he had still been an asshole.

“I pushed you away when I should have simply asked and celebrated with you. So many thoughts and worries pushed themselves forward, I didn’t know what to think. I was so off, so angry and confused,” he looked at her and remembered that feeling, but her mere presence had calmed him down. “I was reckless and cared too much about so many stupid things, until the night you came over.”

“Yeah, I had to come over because I was beyond done with your stupid shitty attitude,” she said with a smile and he laughed softly.

“Yeah, you were,” he said with a smile. “We were good after that, and I was glad for it. I was still worried, but not about us. I knew we were okay.” He smiled at her again and she squeezed his hand, smiling softly at him. “After William was born, we didn’t have near enough time together, though the moments we had, they meant everything to me when I was gone. I would dream of you ... your smile, the sound you made as you were sleeping, the light in your eyes when you looked at William.” He sighed and he pulled her hand, leading her to the couch. He took her coat off, pushing it to the floor and not caring where it fell. He sat down and pulled her close to him as she
joined him, wrapping his arm around her so that her head could rest on his shoulder.

“I was so lonely, so ready to leave and come back to you and William. I should have, I should have run and not cared. Grabbed you both and …” he shook his head and she breathed his name. “If I’d been a better man, stronger, I could have …”

She sat up and turned her body toward him, her eyes searching his face. “Mulder, how would we have survived? With a newborn? You and I barely made it some days. But with a baby?” she shook her head as she looked down, before raising her eyes to his again. “Those nights we stayed in some wooded area, freezing in the back of the car, how would we have cared for a child living that way?” Tears filled her eyes again and spilled over, running down her cheeks.

She closed her eyes as she wiped at her face and took a deep breath. “I know that you blame me for not being able to keep him protected, for figuring something out.”

“What?” Came his voice harshly. She opened her eyes, and he was staring at her hard. “You think I blame you for the decision you made, the one you had to make on your own? The one that kept both of you safe and alive? Scully … no, I would never, never blame you. Why would you think …”

“Because we never … we never really talked about William. We talked around him or … if we ever did, the conversation would stop altogether because of the look on your face. It broke my heart and I didn’t like the pain it caused you-” she stopped as Mulder laughed bitterly, running his hand down his face. “Mulder, what-”

“Scully,” he leaned forward and shook his head. “I didn’t bring him up because of the pain I saw on your face.” He laughed bitterly again and looked at her. “I’m so sorry, Scully. We should have talked about him, every day if it was needed. We didn’t and it slowly became taboo. So many things we should have said, Scully. So many things.” He reached for her hand, but she shifted instead, wiggling and positioning herself to sit sideways in his lap with her arms around him and her face in his neck.

He held her tightly to him, whispering his apologies as she cried, her breath warm against his skin. “Oh, Scully,” he said holding her and shaking his head, the stupid decisions of the past jostling for position, showing him how stupid they had both been. “No more. No more.” He said quietly and she held tighter, her tears beginning to subside.

They sat quietly for a few minutes before she disentangled herself from him and sat up. She held his face in her hands and kissed him. “No more,” she whispered in response, her head bent and eyes closed. He hummed his response and she sighed.

She sat up and got off his lap, pulling him up with her, leading him up the stairs and to their bedroom. She turned on the shower as they walked into the bathroom and they undressed as the water warmed up. When it was ready, they stepped inside and washed the day off of them, rinsing away and watching it wash down the drain. He washed her hair and then her body. She rubbed his back as she ran the washcloth over it, releasing the tension she found there as he became clean.

When they were both done, she turned the water off and he stepped out, grabbing them each a towel. He wrapped her up and she smiled, raising up on her tiptoes to kiss him. They dressed in silence and then he disappeared downstairs as she got settled in bed. He came back up a few minutes later with two peanut butter and jelly sandwiches and a glass of milk.

She took it from him with a smile and he sat beside her as they ate their late night snack. She leaned her head on his shoulder and sighed. “Do you suppose he’s okay? No one’s bothering
“Him?” she asked quietly, taking a bite of her sandwich.

“Hm,” he grunted, shoving a bite in his mouth. “He can take care of himself, I saw that first hand myself.” Still though, he hoped he was, that he went in that motel room and did not come back out. “He’ll be okay, Scully.” She sighed and nodded her head.

When they finished their food, he took the glass from her, rinsed it out in the bathroom and set it by the sink. He turned out the light, heading to join her in bed. He slid beneath the covers and looked at her in the dark. She smiled at him as he felt her reaching for his hand under the covers and bringing it to her stomach. He smiled at her and splayed his fingers out, his hand covering most of the expanse of her stomach.

“Do you remember the nights we laid together in my apartment, before we started packing things up, knowing that once he was born I wasn’t going to need it anymore? I asked why you wanted to stay there and you said-”

“I said, because it was where we made him, where he was conceived,” she smiled and held his hand to her and he nodded. “It was where we became a family, unknowingly. I mean, making a baby wasn’t what was on my mind that night … but …” She shrugged, and he exhaled a laugh. No, the possibility of a baby was definitely not on his mind either.

“He was so cute, so bald. Laying with the two of you …” Mulder shook his head and she moved to lay in his arms, his own wrapping around her, and holding her close.

“I loved the noises he made,” she whispered. “The grunts and whimpers, so different than any noises I’d ever heard.”

“And his howl when he was hungry,” Mulder whispered back, remembering the piercing cries, and Scully’s look of surprise.

“Oh yeah,” she laughed softly. “That never changed. It was like a switch was flicked and he wouldn’t be happy until it was turned off.” They both laughed and then sighed.

“You made the right choice, Scully,” he whispered and she sighed again. “And you were a mother to him. You gave him life and brought him into this world, as you said, yes. You loved him, cared for, nourished, and worried for him. You had to make a decision, on your own, to give him a better outcome than you … we … were able to do. You protected him and sacrificed for him … Scully, you are his mother.” He felt her shuddering against him and knew his words affected her. A few minutes passed and she was quiet again.

“And you are his father, Mulder. I won’t accept another alternative.” she whispered and he pulled her closer.

She relaxed against him and it was not long before he heard her breathing evening out. He closed his eyes and exhaled, thinking of his old apartment, the feel of her close to him, her belly rolling as their baby spun around inside, and he too fell asleep, the memories playing like a dream scene in a movie.

“He’s gonna change the world, Mulder,” she whispered, her back against his chest, her hands covering his as she moved them around her stomach so he could feel every movement.

“Hmm, with you for his mother, I don’t doubt it. So it’s definitely a boy then, huh?” he asked close to her ear, making her laugh.

“I’ll never tell,” she whispered, and he pouted in mock annoyance. “Not too much longer and
“we’ll know.” He hummed and held her closer, the rolling of her stomach seeming to slow down. She sighed, and he smiled.

“I love you, Scully,” he said quietly with a kiss on her cheek.

“I love you, Mulder,” she breathed, moving even closer to him and soon she was asleep, her body more tired than usual, pregnancy taking its toll.

He kept his hands over her stomach, holding tight to both her and the child within. “I love you too little guy … or girl. I love you very much.” Feeling no answering movement, he closed his eyes and took a deep breath.

Just before he nodded off, what felt like three little taps, were felt under his fingers and his eyes flew open in surprise. He pressed into her stomach, feeling around, but nothing more happened. Grinning like an absolute idiot, he settled more closely to Scully, keeping his hand in that same spot, as he silently begs me to hum the tune to one of their songs.

‘Knock three times, on the ceiling if you want me …’

Chapter End Notes

Sigh ... I wish we had moments like this on the show. Times when they were so honest, it made you ache.

Enter the fan fiction writers ...
Scully's Dream

Chapter Summary

Scully is visited by Jackson, in what she believes to be her dream. But is it a dream or a visitation that will leave her heart truly healed and ready to move forward?

Chapter Notes

Okay, this again is a chapter previously posted. I had plans to have it be part of the story, but again, I was too excited to wait. This and The Docks were among my first stories ever posted. The finale just left me lacking and Scully needed her time with Jackson/William. I love the idea of him coming to her in a "dream" and helping her heal.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

March 2018

Scully woke with a gasp, feeling it again, as if she were stuck in place and unable to move. She opened her eyes and saw Jackson there, standing in the doorway of the bedroom. He was wearing different clothes, but still wore Mulder's jacket. She stared at him, unable to do anything else.

Then she felt it lift, as her body unlocked and she was able to sit up. She stared at him, unsure of what to do.

"Will you come with me?" his voice sounded from far away and echoey.

She stood up and looked back at Mulder. He was still sound asleep, unaware that she had slipped from his arms.

"He can’t hear me. He can’t feel me.” Jackson’s voice said as Scully stepped forward, her eyes locked on him.

“How are you able to do this? How can I see you and hear you in my dreams?” she asked him, watching him touch his forehead, moving his hair back. An obvious nervous tick.

He looked at her and then shrugged his shoulders. “I don’t know how, I just know I can. It’s ... it’s not all the time. Only when I want to and when you are receptive to it. If I try and you aren’t, it’s ... I don’t know, like trying to watch and hear through thick frosted glass.” She stared at him and he shrugged again.

Seeing him earlier tonight had left her with a myriad of emotions. Happiness, fear, excitement, but mostly hope. Hope that they would finally be together. He had not wanted to stay, however, and she understood, but it still hurt, incredibly so. He did not know them, had not been searching for her, living without her, or grieving for her, the way she had been for him. He had a family, a mother and father. She was nothing to him.
“Not nothing,” he interrupted her thoughts and she jumped. Oh, he could read her mind. “You’re not nothing to me. That’s what I want to show you. What I ... I couldn’t tell you earlier. You’re right that I don’t know you. But ... you’re not nothing to me.”

His voice was coming through a little stronger now, like he had been far away from a microphone and he finally had stepped closer. “Will you let me show you what I don’t think I know how to put into words?” he asked with a sense of apprehension, as if she would refuse him.

She looked back at Mulder then back at Jackson. “He can’t come with us,” he said, holding her eyes, begging her to understand. She held his gaze and then she nodded.

“I need ... I need to touch you. Can I?” he asked quietly, his eyes boring into her.

“Can you?” she whispered incredulously, tears filling her eyes. “This is just a dream, how can you touch me?”

He smiled and stepped closer to her. “It’s not a dream. It’s not ... it’s ... a moment? A vision? Hmm ... no that sounds so kooky.” She laughed and cried, wiping her eyes.

“Okay. Whatever this is, I’m ready,” she said taking a deep breath. He raised his hands, put them gently on her temples, and she gasped.

She was in a dark room, but she recognized the scent. Her old apartment, she was almost sure of it. There were shapes but she could not quite make them out. It was familiar, but still dark. Then she heard her own voice, but muffled. Then her mother’s voice, her low concerned tones. Again it was muffled. Almost like ... like she was underwater and someone was calling to her, but it was indistinct.

Then darkness, complete darkness. The scent was gone but she heard voices again. A man’s voice. Not Mulder’s. She closed her eyes and listened. It was Doggett, she realized as her eyes opened. Skinner. Then Reyes. Even the Gunmen. All muffled, but their voices were recognizable, passing by like the wind.

Then another room. She could make out that there were shapes, but not see them. A different scent this time. Achingly familiar, but she did not know what to think of it, how it was possible and what it meant. It was Mulder’s old apartment and she could hear his voice now too, though still muffled.

Then it was her place again. Still dark, but the scent was there. She could hear Mulder and Doggett together, then her mother. So many voices swirled around her.

A rush of loud voices were heard in the dark. Then only Reyes. Her voice muffled, then becoming clearer. She could hear herself screaming, louder and louder. Then it was quiet and bright, her own face, hazy but she could see it. Then it was gone.

She felt his hands leave her face. He looked at her, searching for a sign that she understood what he showed her. She stared at him, searching his face, the thoughts of what just happened swirling in her head.

“When I was pregnant with you ... but ... how? It’s scientifically impossible, improbable. No child has memories of the womb, or ... or for years later. I ... it ...” she trailed off, staring at him.

He smiled. “I’m pretty sure we can agree that I was not a “normal” child. That hasn’t changed with time, wouldn’t you say?” he asked her, a touch to his forehead.
She was trying to process the thoughts she was having. To put science and fact to what obviously could not be categorized, or easily referenced.

He smiled again. “It’s best not to put too much faith in science right now. Consider where you are and what we are doing.”

She exhaled, almost like a laugh. She nodded and took a deep breath. “Is that what you wanted me to see? That you remember that time?”

“No, there’s more. When you’re ready, you tell me, and we’ll continue,” he said, looking in her eyes.

She stared at him, unsure where this would lead. She knew how this went after he was born. The happiness, the uncertainty, Mulder leaving, her sadness and worry, the loneliness. He raised his eyebrows and she closed her eyes, took a shaky breath, opened her eyes again and nodded.

He touched her temples again and now she could see her apartment, but it was hazy, as if through a film, and it was odd angles. The ceiling and then her face again. She heard her voice, but could not make out the words. Then there was Mulder, his smiling face as he looked down. His eyes shining and then his smile growing wider. Now she understood what he was showing her.

These were Jackson’s memories, how he saw them. She felt tears running down her cheeks as she was there in that moment through his eyes. She saw Mulder leaning forward and kissing her as the most dazzling light filled the room.

The ceiling again and the mobile. She heard both her and Mulder’s voices, their tones sad. She heard herself crying and him soothing her with hums and then his own tears when she was quiet. Mulder’s face appeared hovering over the side of the bassinet. He was hazy and his eyes were so sad. So different than the last time he had been looking at him. His face came closer and she realized Mulder was picking William up. He cried as he held and looked at him. She could see the tears shining on his face.

Then she could hear his voice, his soft murmurs as she could only see black, as he was obviously holding William to his chest. She saw Mulder again as he bent to kiss William’s forehead.

She was sobbing now. She stepped away from Jackson, needing a minute. He understood and he stepped back, his hands in his pockets.

She did not know Mulder had done that, had gotten up and held their baby and had his own time with him before he left. Not like that anyway. They had lain in her bed with him between them as they marveled at how perfect he was, how beautiful. He had watched her nurse him and told her how beautiful she was, how much he loved them both.

She had watched him hold him, change him, rock him, but they were always together. He had cuddled him, loved him, but not without her. To know that he had done so, left her with a bittersweet feeling. He missed all of William’s whole short life with her. He did not have the chance to know him. But he loved him. She knew, but now she saw. She saw the love he had for the child they had created with their love. They had, and she would hold to that knowledge.

She stepped back to Jackson and nodded. He touched her temples again and she heard Mulder’s murmurs to William and saw him kiss him again. She saw her own face as he was handed back to her, their faces looking down at him together, then their foreheads pressed together before Mulder kissed her. Then Mulder was gone, the door shut, and it was quiet. Ten seconds and she heard and saw herself sobbing, as she held Jackson close.
She heard voices again, laughter, singing, and happiness. Different hazy faces- Doggett, Reyes, her mother, the Gunmen, Skinner even. All the people she had known and cared for her and Mulder. The ones determined to help them. But there were still times of her crying - as she nursed him or rocked him.

Then ... oh ... she heard herself crying again - a different kind of sound. She heard herself pleading, the desperation and sadness in her voice. She was looking over the crib, staring at him as she cried, touching his face and bowing her head.

Now she was crying, looking into his eyes, kissing his face, smelling his neck. Another face replaced hers. Spender’s face, with his sad eyes and grim look, took William from Scully, and then it was quiet.

Scully stepped back from Jackson, his eyes on hers. He saw her tears, saw the sadness all over her face. He was about to show her more, something different, when the room started to go dark, feeling as if it was enclosing in on them. He did not know what was happening, he had never seen or felt this before.

Scully crumbled to the ground in front of him, clutching her stomach, weeping with pain. Jackson stared at her, unsure of what to do. She choked on her sobs, trying to catch her breath, gasping and begging him to please stop this, to not put her through this pain again. He stuttered that he was not in control of this memory, that he did not know or remember this happening.

“It’s … it’s … please. Stop it ...” She knew this memory. It was the pain that ate her up inside. Her guilt and her sadness. She remembered it all. The despair, the utter agony, the complete emptiness. As if her heart had been ripped from her chest and the thought that she could lie down and die and she would not care. She welcomed it even. Death would be better than the pain tearing her apart.

She wanted to leave. Now. She begged him to go, but he stood there frozen. This was not what he wanted, not part of his plan. He never meant to hurt her like he was right now. Her heartbreaking cries were killing him. She desperately grabbed his hand and they ended up somewhere else instantaneously.

She knew where they were immediately, it was the bench by the Washington Monument. She took a deep breath and tried to stop her sobs, and the deep shudders in her breathing, as she held her face in her hands.

He was silent beside her. Looking at the Monument across the water, instead of at her. He never meant for her to experience the pain he just witnessed. He wanted to show her how he had remembered his life with her, and the way had seen her and the people around her. Show her how he remembered their voices and their faces.

There was the older woman with short brown hair, who looked at him with so much love, it rolled off of her in waves. The man with blue eyes that were always so sad. The woman with brown hair and the kindest smile, Monica, who he had helped earlier. The man with glasses, Skinner, who he had known him as simply the man who sounded gruff, but always smiled at him. And the three funny men who were always together. He had wanted to show her those happy memories, not hurt her the way he obviously had.

She finally calmed down, though a sob still swept through her, the tears had stopped. She took a deep breath and told him about this bench and why she seemed to have brought them there. How years and years ago, she and Mulder were separated at work, only one year after they started working together. Even then, even that soon, she needed him and he needed her because they were not whole without the other.
They had met on this bench to talk, just talk, their need to remain connected, a powerful pull. They balanced each other out, right from the beginning. She heard and then saw how being on his own was making him reckless. He was mouthing off to his superiors and disregarding any advice or help anyone gave him. He was lost without someone by his side. She was lonesome and she felt lost too. Their need for each other was powerful.

Sitting quietly for a while, her with her own thoughts, and him with his, the view at the bench was perfect. It was a beautiful spring day and she could feel the warmth of the day, as she looked at the cherry blossoms on the trees.

“I didn’t mean for that to happen, the way it ended back there. I ... I don’t know what that was, and I didn’t know how to stop it. I’m ... I’m sorry for the pain it caused you,” he said looking at his lap, unable to look in her eyes.

She looked at his profile and could see Mulder. His jawline, how it had looked when he was younger. Skinner’s words about Cancer Man came unbidden into her mind. His claim to William as his own, stating he was the father of the baby that she had prayed and hoped for. She felt her stomach roll and she was afraid she would be sick.

Jackson whipped his head up and his eyes burned into hers. “NO!” he said emphatically. “No, that is not the truth!” She looked at him in surprise and he took a breath.

“It’s not the truth,” he said in a calmer tone. “He was not my father. He was a liar above all else. I could see his thoughts, the plans of destruction he would bring. I know you saw it too, because of our connection. The certain future, if he was allowed to have his way.” He was breathing hard, needing to tell her what he saw, the thoughts and plans that man had wanted and desired.

“He was not my father. Not ... not in the biological sense. No. He whispered to me, like a snake. I could hear him saying I was his creation and it was time to show the world what he had created and what I could do. A ‘creation.’ That is what he called me,” he said, his voice low.

She stared at him, tears in her eyes again. “You were not a ‘creation.’ Not the way he implied. You were created, but not as he said. I refuse to believe that as truth. You were a miracle. My miracle. No, our miracle.”

She looked across the water, trying to keep her voice steady. “I ... I was told I would never be able to have children. Things done to me had left me unable to do so. I honestly hadn’t thought about it much until it was something taken from me,” she said quietly.” I loved my job. It was demanding and challenging. Children didn’t really factor in until ... until I was given a chance to possibly make it happen.”

She stopped talking, remembering the pain and heartache she felt when the IVF failed. How she cried and Mulder held her. He kept her sane, made her laugh, and took care of her.

Jackson watched her, shaking his head before he looked away again. He could feel the love she felt for Mulder.

“We tried. I tried in vitro and it failed. I thought that was it. The universe’s answer was no and nothing could change it. It was my only chance and if that hadn’t worked, nothing would,” she said, closing her eyes.

“Mulder and ... we ... we were not ... well ... not romantically involved ... until the seventh year of our partnership. We reached a point in our personal relationships and well ... it progressed and we had no reason to think we should worry about pregnancy so neither of us ... used any ... um ...”
she glanced at him and his ears were pink. She smiled a little at that sight. A sex talk of sorts with her son, how very mom like.

“I started feeling odd, dizzy, sick, not quite myself. I didn’t attribute it to pregnancy, why would I if I had thought I was unable to conceive? I passed out at work. At the hospital they ran tests and the truth was revealed,” she looked at him, waiting for him to look at her. “You weren’t planned. There was not a thought that it could happen, but oh ... you were wanted. So wanted and so loved from the first time I heard the words that I was pregnant. Oh ...” she started crying, tears running down her face.

“That ... that ... back at the apartment, you didn’t know what that was, of course you didn’t. Those ... were the memories of my darkest days. My days without you, when I didn’t have you in my arms. I … Jesus, I wanted to die. To never get up again. My heart was broken in millions of tiny pieces. I had failed you. I couldn’t keep you safe, couldn’t protect you. There were so many attempts to harm you. I knew it was just a matter of time before ... before they might kill me to get to you. That you ... would be taken away to become a lab rat. Something to be poked and prodded, and experimented on. I ... I didn’t want that for you. I thought,” she took a deep breath, her tears wetting her shirt as they fell nonstop. “I thought a normal unassuming family could care for you. Give you what I couldn’t. Safety and the care that I could not.”

She looked at her hands, her sobs coming out harder now, tears falling faster and seemingly unending. She took large gulping breaths. She had to tell him something, but she was not sure if she could get it out, not without sobbing.

“I want you to know … to … be absolutely sure of something. As much as they loved you, my love for you never ended. A part of me died the day I let you go. It created an open wound the festers and hurts. It has never healed. It might feel as if it’s getting better, things are moving forward. Then it opens again and the pain pours out, infecting me with a sickness from which there is no cure,” she paused for a breath, then another, taking a few minutes.

“I am happy ...” she stopped again and wiped her eyes. She kept her hands on her mouth and nose, a triangle holding in her sobs. Taking her pain and then letting it go in the wind when she moved. “I am happy you had a mother and father who loved you.” Again she stopped to take a few minutes.

“But I want you to know, to understand,” she said turning toward him, tears falling fast again. “Please don’t ever think that you were unwanted, unloved, or tossed aside. I would have died for you, if I knew it meant you were safe. A thousand deaths I would suffer, if I knew you would be safe and happy and whole.”

He turned away from her but she could hear him crying. Her words sunk in and filled the holes he did not know were open in his heart. He was loved. He had been so loved, it was true. He was safe and cared for by his parents and it was all he needed. Until he had smelled her scent on the breeze.

After he left them tonight, he thought about her. He thought about her scent and all the memories tied to it, how he would be confused by the dreams tied to it. The sounds, the colors, the faces, and that scent. Those past memories and the faces he could not forget had been buried deep inside.

When he thought about it tonight, of the past that he had tried to forget or push away because it confused him, he realized he no longer felt it. The overwhelming feeling he felt now, was love. From all the memories, but mostly from her.

He knew he could not let her feel that she had failed him and believe the things she had said to him when he was in that body bag. He wanted her to know that he had been happy and safe and that
was because of her. Before he can begin to tell her, she begins to speak again.

“After I had given you up ...”

“No. Not ‘given up,’ he interrupted, looking at her. “You didn’t ‘give up.’ You were protecting me.” He nodded once, letting her know the matter was settled, and she smiled sadly at him.

“Right, okay.” she agreed. “Once I had seen to your protection, Mulder was found in the desert. They claimed he had murdered someone and he was to be held on trial for his life. It was a lie and a foregone conclusion that he was already guilty. It didn’t matter what anyone said or did, he was going to be punished for his actions he was sentenced to death by lethal injection.”

She looked out across the water again, taking a deep breath. “With a simple phone call, my whole world fell apart. Again. I had lost you, and I was going to lose the person I loved most in the world.” She looked down at her hands, folding and unfolding them. Nervous energy spilling from her.

“We worked together, the people from your memories, to get him out of that prison, and he and I escaped. We ran and we didn’t look back. We were on the run for a long time. Never staying in the same place for too long, until finally it was safe to come home. Well, safe enough. Mulder was still wanted, but I was clear. No one could prove I had anything to do with his escape, not unless they outed themselves,” she smiled faintly, thinking of the bind it put some people in, like Kersh.

“I never had a chance to grieve properly for you, to address my guilt about my ... protecting you. I ... I couldn’t talk about it with Mulder. I felt that he couldn’t possibly understand how I felt. He wasn’t there, he didn’t know. I also thought he blamed me and it created a block between us that I didn’t like, yet did nothing about.”

She looked at him and smiled. “We talked tonight. Talked about a lot of things that we should have in the past. Things that would have ...” she paused, shaking her head, knowing that conversation had been long overdue. “Anyway, we talked about how we felt. We were both grieving. Both thinking the other had placed blame on what happened. There were a lot of tears and misunderstandings, but we got past it. Together, like we always do. Like we should have done years ago.”

“Can I show you something?” he asked her, suddenly, smiling.

“I don’t want to leave her yet. Can ... can we stay here for a bit still?” she pleaded, not ready for anymore painful memories yet.

“No,” he said, “we won’t leave. I want to show you a feeling.”

He touched her fingers and she closed her eyes, letting the feeling wash over her. She felt the feeling of a breeze, the sound of wind in the trees, the calming feeling it brought her as a child, and even more so as an adult. Contentment. She felt contentment.

He showed her then the visual pictures that were associated with that feeling. Mulder. All Mulder. Smiling, laughing, touching her face, looking at her. He was her contentment, her peace.

“I wish you could see how you feel when you think of the peacefulness he brings to you. It’s a dazzling yellow,” he told her softly, smiling as he looked around her.

“You can see emotions?” she asked, amazed at what he could do.

“I can. I can see your peace, but also your guilt. I see that you still carry it with you and I want to
ask you to let it go,” he said quietly, looking in her eyes. “I’m okay. You saved me and made sure I was as safe as could be expected, considering who I am. But your guilt of what you could have done, what should have been, is still blocking you. You need to let it go to be happy and completely content.”

She looked at him and he smiled at her. She sighed, still wanting to sit for a bit. She felt a breeze stir and it calmed her as she thought of Mulder. She asked if they could go home, back to her house. He nodded and smiled. She closed her eyes at his touch and then opened them. They were in the grass outside the house.

“I wish you could have known us, especially your father. He would have had so much fun teaching you all kinds of nonsense. Taken you out hunting for jackalopes, camping under the stars, introduced you to his favorite TV shows,” she smiled sadly, thinking of the memories they would have shared.

“There it is, the darkness of your guilt. I want you to stop thinking that way. I need you to and so does he,” he said, watching her. “I saw tonight the love you two share. The peacefulness you gain from him, it doesn’t compare to the love I saw. It’s blindingly white, the brightest white I’ve ever seen. As if the darkness has been completely pushed out.” He shook his head at the beauty of it.

“He’s everything to me. It’s been twenty five years and I love him more than ever. He is amazing, brilliant, and driven. He makes me crazy sometimes, but he crept into my heart and he built a home there. I can’t evict him because I would be evicting myself,” she told him. They both smiled at that thought.

“You can’t hear him though, can you?” she asked sadly, looking in his eyes.

“Sometimes,” he said, dropping his eyes to the ground. “It’s weird because I could a little more tonight when I was thinking about him. I could picture him more and see him a bit. I can hear him, but it’s faint. From far away or underwater. Maybe that old man wanted the connection broken or he was blocking him somehow or put up a filter. I’ve seen what they can do. It’s possible.”

She thought of Mulder’s brain experiments done on him by Fowley and that bastard. Could that have been what he was doing? Even then? Setting in motion a plan for her to have a hybrid child? Taking away Mulder’s ability to see visions like he was, because that smoking asshole was jealous and wanted it for himself? He took away Mulder’s ability to see his child. To have that connection. Fuck, is there nothing he would not ruin?

Jackson suddenly came to stand close to her. She felt a peace when he did that. A peace similar to what she felt earlier when he had touched their foreheads together. He asked if he could touch her once more. He had a final thing to show her.

He touched her temples. She saw him seeing her: bent over his bassinet, heard her singing as she looked at him, his fingers wrapped around her finger, the way he felt when she nursed him, the closeness, her heartbeat, her love.

Then, Jackson growing up. Happy and healthy. Learning to ride a bike, jumping on a trampoline, playing tag. His powers showing themselves. Then the tests, and the questions, but his parents only allowed so much. They loved him, but were scared of and for him. No one could protect him, not completely. He stopped touching her temples. She was sobbing.

He touched her cheek. “You saved me. You did. I know you still think you failed me, but you saved me. I wanted you to see that I didn’t feel anger toward you. Not then and not now. I don’t want this to sound like anything other than my truth. I didn’t know you to be angry or hurt. I had
the memory of your pain remember? I heard you crying. I know what the decision was to you,” he smiled at her. “But … the alternative? If you had kept me with you? I had seen their power, heard of stories, what they had done to their own children. Without my parents, without your decision to attempt to keep me safe, I would have been in a facility, treated like a lab rat. They would have used me to hurt others, possibly to kill for them. An experiment for them to use as they pleased.”

She gripped his arm as he now touched her face. She felt something different, a weight breaking up inside her and the guilt beginning to float away. He did not hate her, he understood. He believed she saved him.

She nodded at him and he smiled. He took the way out tonight to be free from their clutches, and he was here to remove her from her own, letting that guilt go once and for all. She took a deep breath, closed her eyes, and let go. She let go of all the pain, the guilt, and suffering she had carried. Let the wind grab it, and scatter it, never to be found again.

“Yes!” he shouted loudly and spun around, his fists pumping the air. She laughed and cried at the same time. But they were happy tears.

Her boy had set her free.

“It’s beautiful ... no more darkness lingering about,” he grinned and she did the same. They stared at each other, both knowing it was time for him to go, he had done what he came to do.

She grabbed his hand and squeezed his fingers. “You take your time, okay? Come to us, if and when, you are ready. I want to ask one thing if you do, okay? If you do come here, come as you. Please. No pretending to be someone else. Just you. Please.”

He smiled and squeezed her fingers in return. “It’s a promise.”

She let go of his hand and stepped away, heading for the porch. She turned around to say goodbye, but found that he was gone.

She woke up suddenly with a gasp, her eyes flew open. She was back in her bed with Mulder’s arms around her.

“You okay, Scully?” Mulder asked sleepily.

She tried to catch her breath as she looked around the room. Her eyes landed on an item next to her on the bedside table. She sat up and picked it up. It was a snow globe like the one she dropped. She smiled as she realized it had not been a dream. She shook the snow globe upside down and then back over again. She watched the snow falling on the windmill in Kansas.

She slid back into Mulder’s arms and continued to watch as the snow collected around the bottom of the windmill.

Mulder pulled her closer. “You okay, hon?” he murmured in her ear.

She smiled. Hon. He had not called her that in a long time. She turned over with one last look at the snow globe, before she burrowed into his arms again.

“Yeah,” she said softly with a smile.“I’m okay.”

Lying there, safe in his arms, her burden lifted, she felt that five words had never been more true.

*There’s no place like home.*
I wrote this portion of the story last year in a two part chapter story. I had not told anyone in my family that I was writing fan fiction just yet. I remember standing in my kitchen and bawling my eyes out as I wrote this particular chapter, thinking that if anyone were to walk in the room, they would think I was crazy. I thought of Gillian acting out this story and, ugh, it hurt even more. I know she would absolutely kill it and with it, my heart and my emotions.

I had a cover made with the title of the story, Unification, and my name on it and in October of 2018, Gillian signed it. I was over the moon and she could not have been more lovely. It is a moment I will treasure forever.

One more chapter to go ...
Epilogue

Chapter Summary

Life carries on, things change, but love remains. It may be quiet for a while, biding it’s time, but when it’s ready, it can bring down the heavens.

Chapter Notes

Well … here it is, the last chapter to this story. I can’t believe it’s come to the end already, but here we are.

This story, as I said at the beginning, was like a piece of me. It was begging to come out and be told. I’ve spent time in my own little world while I’ve written it. I’ve lived in the Unremarkable House with Mulder, traveled with Maggie to her destinations, and spent time at Scully’s apartment and smart house. I’ve had the chance to walk around their places and their lives and it has been an absolute pleasure. I feel like when I watch the episodes now or see clips and gifs of scenes, that something just before or just after happens as I imagined it, and that makes me happy. I know it’s what I personally imagined, but that doesn’t make it any less of a possibility now, does it? 😊

I hope you enjoy this last chapter and look forward to hearing what you all think.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

April 2018

The spring air smelled of pine trees, flowers that were beginning to awaken, and the lake around him. Mulder stood on the back porch and looked at the view in front of him as he took a deep breath. The last time they were there it had been for Mrs. Scully’s funeral. That day had been excruciatingly painful, but the reason for the most recent visit was a happy one.

They deserved a happier memory to replace that sad one.

He turned around and looked at Scully through window. She was in the kitchen, slicing up vegetables for their dinner. She smiled as she did, causing him to wonder if their baby was moving within her. Or perhaps she was thinking of the sex they had that morning. Either way, she was glowing. He shook his head at the realization that they were going to be parents.

Again. In their fifties.

Standing next to her a month ago as they went to her first OB appointment, he watched as the jelly stuff was placed on her stomach and the wand rolled across it. His heart remained in his throat as he watched Dr. Reynolds work the ultrasound. Noting his anxiety, Scully had reached for his hand and gripped it tightly.

When he heard the fast heartbeat whooshing through the small room, he pitched forward and fell to
his knees, crying quietly as Scully caressed his hair and murmured to him. He cried for so many things, but mostly for the second chance they had been given. For each other, for Jackson, and for this new life they created.

As Scully got cleaned up and her clothes rearranged, Dr. Reynolds handed him a printout of their baby, and he thanked her as he tried to make sense of it. She laughed and showed him where the baby was and how to read the printout. He stared at it for the longest time, thinking of Scully going through this on her own last time. How she must have felt holding proof of a miracle in her hands. A miracle just like this one.

Scully’s hand on his arm broke his gaze from the paper. Looking up at her, she smiled at him, tears in her eyes as she too looked down at the sonogram photos. She squeezed his arm and took a deep breath.

“Mulder,” she said quietly and looked up at him again. He nodded, knowing what she was thinking.

“So small,” he breathed, touching the pictures. “A little bean.” Scully laughed softly and then sniffled as she nodded.

They left the doctors office and went to get something to eat. Scully was famished, but he could not stop looking at the photos. At the little bean that was created the night they came back to each other and began their journey home. He or she was the testament of patience, love, and faith. They had never given up and this was their reward.

“Mulder, are you going to look at those the entire time we’re eating?” Scully teased, smiling at him, her eyes so happy.

“I am,” he said, propping the photos up against the napkin holder and picking up his fork. She laughed and squeezed his hand before resuming her meal. He winked at her and shoved a huge bite in his mouth, making her laugh and shake her head.

Louise called a couple of weeks after the appointment, to see how Scully was doing. She called every so often, checking in and bringing news of her family, especially tales of Pip and the fun he had with Annie’s and also Marcus’s children.

“Dana, I don’t know if you’re busy working now or not, but I wanted to extend the use of the lake house to you anytime you would like to go,” Louise said, before saying goodbye. “It sits there empty a majority of the year, so I wanted to let you know you’re welcome to it.”

Scully hung up and looked at Mulder, telling him of the offer for the house. He raised his eyebrows and looked at her with a smile. She called Louise back and asked if they could use the house that weekend.

“Stay for a week,” she said happily and told them that the hidden key was located inside the small decorative frog in the garden. She was not sure of its precise location since they moved it each time, but she described what it looked like and Scully assured her that they would find it.

They packed up and headed out two days later, the windows down, letting the early spring air whip through the car. Mulder reached for her hand and she smiled, her other hand on her belly, lovingly stroking the small bump that was growing every day. He loved watching her close her eyes and sigh happily. Lifting their joined hands, he kissed the back of hers, and she hummed.

Stopping at the only store close to the lake, they bought groceries for the week and headed to the
house. Upon arriving, they put the items away and then checked the place out. Scully had been there before, but not since she was a teenager. They found the master bedroom, and Mulder flopped down on the bed, patting the spot next to him and wiggling his eyebrows at her.

“No green face mask this time,” he said as Scully came toward the bed. Instead of laying down though, she straddled him, and his hands rested on her hips.

“If I had actually joined you that night, would it really have mattered?” she asked, rocking against him, making them both moan.

“If you had joined me like this, oh hell no,” he said, his fingers creeping under the hem of her shirt, digging into her flesh, causing her to hiss. “But really, if you had gotten onto the bed … I’m not sure how I would have reacted. Spontaneous human combustion does really happen, right?” His hands moving to her ass and she arched into him.

“It’s been documented. But wouldn’t it have been worth it to try?” she asked, wiggling her hips and then leaning down for a kiss.

“In case you forgot,” he said against her mouth, before kissing her again, his tongue stroking along hers. “I invited you to come to bed.”

“Mmmm, I know,” she said kissing his chin, cheeks, down his neck. “And it was an almost immediate regret when you left the room.” She murmured against his skin.

“Almost?” he shakily asked, her mouth and kiss making him feel dizzy with desire.

“Well yeah, I had to get that mask off before I could get off,” she breathed in his ear before biting the lobe. He yelped and arched up into her, his fingers gripping tightly.

“You … you … ” he sputtered, and she bit his earlobe again.

“Mmm, indeed I did. And I thought of you the whole time. How your hands would feel on me, how your lips would taste, your skin,” she punctuated her words with kisses, making him pant and then groan. “I wanted you so badly and had to settle for my own fantasies.” Pushing on his chest, she sat more fully across his groin. She lifted her shirt off and threw it next to her.

“Oh dear God, he thought as he saw her bra. Black lace with pink ribbon interwoven in it. Christ, she was going to be the death of him. She smirked at him, seeing his wide eyes, before taking his hands and placing them over her breasts.

“Mmmm, the reality is so much better than the fantasy,” she breathed before she was silenced by his kiss.

Clothes were scattered and hands and lips began to worship the flesh that was revealed. She showed him what she fantasized that night in that lonely bedroom in California. Astride him, their hands locked together above his head, she took what she wanted. Her cries of pleasure were heard not long after, the feeling and her own memories seeming to spur on her release.

“God, Mulder,” she panted, falling against his chest, her body convulsing around him. “That was … God … mmmm,” she worked at catching her breath, his hands releasing hers and running up and down her slick back. She was exquisite and he planned to show her exactly how much he loved her.

She raised her head and smiled at him, the sated one he loved. But they were not finished and she knew it. “You good?” he asked and she hummed.
“I could be better,” she said, squeezing her internal muscles and he flipped them so quickly she yelped.

He pulled out and thrust back in, making her moan and grip his shoulders tightly, her nails then scratching down his back. He kissed her as he continued pounding into her, chasing his release and knowing this would bring her close to the edge again. His tongue swirled in her mouth as he pushed inside her and stopped.

He sucked her tongue and then bit her lip before looking at her as he began moving again. Her arms wrapped around his neck as her legs wrapped around his waist. Looking into her eyes as he began to move again, while he did not vocalize them, the words were shared between them.

_I love you._

_You were my touchstone._

_And you are mine._

_I love you._

He crashed over the edge, spilling inside her and she tightened around him, crying out and holding him tightly. He fell onto her as he continued to empty into her. She hummed in pleasure and happiness, her feet running slowly along his ass and thighs.

Her hands moved to his hair, her fingers scratching at the back of his neck, running in his hair. Placing kisses on her neck, he tried to slow his breathing. “Better?” he murmured, kissing under her chin.


That night had seemed to open a floodgate. Since the doppelgänger case, they had been having sex more frequently, but that night and the past four days, had been like an awakening. They had sex in every room of the lake house, and every time was better than the last.

Shaking his head, he looked inside the house again and saw Scully was still preparing their dinner. Maybe he could persuade her to take a little break. No matter that she had dropped to her knees and taken him in her mouth before he carefully lifted her against the shower wall just a couple of hours ago, he was feeling the need to be inside her again.

He walked into the house and she turned to him with a smile. “Should be ready in about thirty minutes,” she said, putting the chicken and vegetable meal into the oven. He walked up behind her and wrapped his arms around her waist, pushing into her, letting her feel his desire.

“Again?” she asked with a smile, closing the oven door and setting the timer. “I would have thought the shower would have worn you out.” Turning around in his arms, he pushed them toward the counter, pinning her against it, before kissing her deeply.

Her hand moved down to palm him through the thin track pants he was wearing. She grasped and caressed him before sliding her hand inside and holding him firmly.

“God,” he moaned as he pushed into her hand, his head falling to her shoulder, craving her touch. She stroked him, her hand twisting as she knew he liked and he made an incoherent sound.

“Lift me onto the counter, Mulder,” she whispered. “God, you make me so horny. So wet.” He raised his head to look at her and her eyes flashed with desire. She squeezed him and he made the
noise again. Laughing she took her hand out of his pants, his protests not taken into consideration.

She was wearing a blue silky robe with light silver flowers on it she had found hanging on the back of a door. When she untied the belt, he discovered she was completely naked underneath. She stared at him with lust filled eyes, and he shook his head at her beauty.

Her breasts were perfect, her skin so soft and freckled in the most adorable spots. The swell of her belly with their growing child inside, made her even more beautiful to him. His hands splayed across the bump and then around to her hips to lift her onto the counter like she asked.

She was open to him and he needed to taste her. Pulling her forward to the edge of the counter, he opened her legs wider before bending and kissing her center, finding her wet, just as she had said she was. He sucked her clit into his mouth and she cried out, pushing his head to her pelvis. He slid two fingers into her and crooked them, as he continued licking and sucking at her.

“Mulder, God,” she cried out, her legs shaking and her toes digging into his shoulders. “Do that again. All of it.”

And he did, over and over, until she broke around him, his name repeatedly falling from her lips, her fingers wound tightly in his hair. He kissed her inner thighs, her belly, and up to breasts, sucking and licking her nipples.

He kissed her mouth, her right arm holding tight to his neck, her left hand trying to push his pants down. Laughing into her mouth, he helped her get his pants down enough to slide inside of her. Her legs wrapped around him and she nudged her heels into him, spurring him on.

Chuckling, he started moving. Her grip on his neck remained tight, her legs around him, and he knew she wanted it faster and harder. Happy to oblige, he pulled her closer to him and began to pump into her faster.

“Yes, Mulder,” she said, her breasts bouncing as he went faster. “God, you feel so good. Harder. Oh, yessssss.” Throwing her head back, her hand held onto his neck as he pounded into her hard. He moved his right hand and put his thumb on her clit, rubbing it as he began to reach his peak.

“Oh, Jesus,” she said, her nails scratching at his neck. “Don’t stop. Mmmmulder...” she cried as she came, arching back and held in place by his body pushing into hers and an arm around her waist.

A few more hard thrusts, her body shaking under him, he came hard and fast, staying deep inside her as he did. His fingers gripped her waist tightly and he moved his other hand to join its mate.

Her legs remained tight around him as he caught his breath. Lifting his head, he looked at her splayed out, her robe open and sliding off her shoulders. Goddess in the flesh, he thought. She raised her head and looked into his eyes.

“How do you do that?” she asked incredulously, a huge smile on her face. “Make me want you so badly? Only you, Mulder. Only you.” She sighed and wrapped both arms around his neck, pulling him down for a kiss, his thumbs caressing her hip bones and giving her the chills.

Foreheads touching, he laughed and she smiled. “Only you, Scully. Only you,” he said quietly, and then a buzzing sound was heard. She laughed and pulled her head back, her eyes dancing.

“Dinner’s ready,” she laughed and he joined her before sliding from inside her and pulling up his pants. He turned off the timer and took the food from the oven. Turning back to her, he grinned at the sight of her- disheveled and happy, her robe still open.
He stepped toward her and helped her down, holding her tightly as she got her balance. “Be right back,” she said, kissing him and heading to the bathroom. He grinned at the sight of her and then saw about getting dinner on the table.

Two days later, they were spending the last day walking around the lake hand-in-hand, skipping stones, and enjoying the atmosphere of the area. They came to the log they sat on after her mother’s funeral and for a second Scully faltered in her steps. He put a hand on the small of her back and waited until she was ready before they proceeded.

They sat on the log, neither saying anything, just listening to the quiet around them. Sitting for a few minutes, her head dropped to his shoulder, and he rested his on hers.

“I said before that she had it all planned out, Mom, I mean. Not just the letters and all that, but us. She was there to help you, and she was in my corner over my decisions of the past. She listened, led, but didn’t push. That was her, even when we were little. She guided, but it was always our decision,” she lifted her head and looked at him, gesturing between them. “This was our decision, Mulder, but she absolutely was guiding us toward this path. She loved you so much, loved us together, I know it broke her heart when we weren’t.” She looked at him with sad eyes before she smiled. “She would be so happy to see us here, to know she had done what she set out to do.”

Mulder chuckled and reached for her hand. “I think you’re right. She was a force to be reckoned with, that’s for sure. All you Scully women- stubborn and opinionated, but every one of you was exactly who I needed.” He looked at her and grinned, while she narrowed her eyes at him before smiling.

They fell silent again until he stood up, as the sun began to set. He reached for her hand and pulled her to her feet, wrapping his arms around her and holding her close.

“I love you, Scully,” he whispered into her hair.

“I love you too, Mulder,” she answered. He let her go and took her hand, walking back toward the house. He had a surprise for her, and he was looking forward to giving it to her.

He told her to sit on one of the chairs by the water and to wait for him. She frowned but did as he asked, sitting in the chair and waiting. He walked into the house and went to fetch the items he found on one of his few solo trips to town. Grabbing them, a marker and the lighter, he went back outside.

“So, I saw these at the store and thought it might be a nice way to close out the week here, a place we know your mom liked to visit,” he said rejoining her at the chairs. She looked up expectantly and saw he was holding two floating paper lanterns. He sat down and handed her hers.

“Mulder,” she breathed. “This is wonderful. Thank you so much.” She looked at him and smiled.

“If you want to write something, I have a pen. Then we light them and let them float out to sea. Or lake, as it were,” he said with a smile. He handed her the pen and she held it, as if contemplating what to write.

“I think, I’d rather just think it as we let them go,” she told him, and he nodded, feeling the same way.

He put the small tea lights in that came with the lantern and then used the lighter to light them. When they began to glow, he helped her from her chair and they walked to the water's edge. He
handed her her lantern and looked at her. Tears in her eyes, she closed them, and he did the same.

He thought of Mrs. Scully and all she had done, not just the past couple of years, but since he met her. She was always his champion, his protector, and he never deserved it from her. He was her daughter’s work partner and her friend, nothing more, but she had taken him in and cared for him.

*Fox Mulder, that’s an outright lie and you know it. You were never just her partner and friend.*

*And of course I was your protector. That’s what family does, Fox. It shows up and keeps us safe.*

He opened his eyes, practically hearing her voice speaking to him, and he smiled despite his tears. She would be right. She was exactly who she needed him to be, his protector, confidant, and friend. But more than that, she was his mother when his own had left this earth. He would try every day to be the person she saw in him.

“You ready?” Scully asked him quietly. He nodded and she smiled softly. They both took off their shoes and stepped into the water far enough to push their lanterns out to catch the small current.

They floated out slowly as Mulder put his arm around Scully. Her arms went around his waist, and they stood watching the lanterns float close to them and then drift further out. The candles inside them glowed brightly as they stood together, their feet in the water.

“Do … do you hear that, Mulder?” she asked, dropping her arms from his waist and looking around. “Tell me you hear that.”

“I don’t hear anything, Scully,” he said perplexedly, looking around with her, but hearing only silence. “Wait, does it sound like trumpets? Because I heard that before when we—”

“No, it’s not … it’s not trumpets,” she said slowly, stepping back and out of the water, still looking around. “It’s … music. A song. It’s … *Beyond the Sea*. That was my parents’ song. My mom told me years ago that … that it was playing when my father came back from the Cuban blockade. He walked off the boat, right up to her, and proposed as that song was playing and it became their song. Mulder, please tell me you can hear it?” She looked at him imploringly and he shook his head.

“Scully,” he said, stepping from the water and joining her. “I really don’t hear it. Maybe … maybe it’s meant for only you to hear.” He smiled at her with a tilt of his head and her eyes filled with tears as she nodded at him.

They put their shoes on and walked to the porch of the house. Turning around, they watched the now tiny lanterns sitting in the water, occasionally bumping away from each other, but then floating back and staying together. Mulder smiled as he watched them.

*Somewhere, beyond the sea,* Scully began to sing softly. *Somewhere waiting for me, my lover stands on golden sands, and watches the ships, that go sailing. We'll meet beyond the shore, we'll kiss just as before, happy we'll be beyond the sea, and never again, I'll go sailing.* She put her arm around him and leaned her head on his shoulder, sighing as they stood watching the lanterns get further and further away.

She squeezed his side and then looked up at him. “Let’s go to bed, Mulder,” she said with a happy smile that he answered with his own. They went inside, arms wrapped around each other, and closed the door, turning out the lights and heading to bed.

The two lanterns continued to shine on the water, while on the dock, a light seemed to appear that could not be explained. Inside it, unseen by anyone, Maggie and Bill danced and held each other,
their invisible presence creating a peace.

“We can’t stay much longer, Maggie Girl,” Bill said in her ear, and Maggie nodded against his chest.

“I know. I just wanted to see them. With their eyes on the lanterns, I thought they wouldn’t notice our presence, but our girl continues to surprise me,” she said with a chuckle. Bill laughed with her, the music surrounding them reverberated through his laugh.

“That she does, Maggie. That she does,” Bill pulled back and looked at her. She stared in his eyes and nodded with a smile.

“They’re happy. They found their way back to each other, just where they were always meant to be. And a baby, Bill. A little girl.” She smiled, shaking her head with tears in her eyes, as she took his hand, ready to go now that she had seen them. The light on the dock glowed brightly and then disappeared, leaving the night dark and quiet.

The lanterns in the water glowed brightly simultaneously once more and then extinguished. Crickets began to chirp, a frog croaked, and an owl hooted, the night peaceful.

Inside the lake house, Mulder and Scully lay entwined, flesh to flesh, each with a hand resting on the swell of life growing and changing inside of her. They sighed simultaneously, their fingers locking together before closing their eyes and sleeping.

Their dreams were peaceful, the darkness ceding to the light and restoring harmony in their lives. Their path was clear, the road smooth. Yes, there would still be times of struggle as this new journey began, but they were ready. It had taken four years to repair their broken hearts, and they were not going to let them break again.

They found their way back to one another, with the help of a guiding hand. One who loved them and championed for them. Who saw the love between them and directed them to the correct path. Behind them, gently pushing, guiding, and making sure there was no longer the rocky terrain of the past to stumble upon, the path clear.

True soulmates would always return to one another, and once rejoined, they could not be torn apart again.

Some souls just need a guiding hand to help the journey along, to be a marker in the road, and the light illuminating the path ...

It’s far beyond a star
It’s near beyond the moon
I know beyond a doubt
My heart will lead me there soon

Chapter End Notes

(And now, the story continues in the series, Family Life: The Story Beyond the Series. I hope you all check it out and enjoy the continuation of their lives- through the
pregnancy and beyond.)

So, now we truly have reached the end. What a journey it has been. They were broken, possibly forever, but Maggie would hear none of that. She nurtured and guided until those two dummies could figure it out on their own. She loved them both so much, no chance would she give up on them.

❤

Thank you all for reading this and taking this journey with me. It has been half a year of hardcore writing for me and seeing everyone’s reactions every day has made me so happy. I love reading your comments here or on Twitter, they just make me smile and they plant little seeds of loveliness in my thankfulness garden. I think of them throughout the day and I just smile.

A HUGE thank you to flicked_switch for her beta work. For the race to get it to her before our two hour time difference stopped communication for the evening. For her quick edits when I’m stress breathing into a bag as I scream, “this chapter HAS to go up tomorrow!” (No it was never that bad 😒) For her texts that said “I have a suggestion” and the story changed a bit for the better. For texts or comments in edits that said “ARE YOU TRYING TO KILL ME?” because then I knew the emotions I was feeling, were being expressed properly. For the thousands of commas added in, and restructuring of phrases, I thank you from the very bottom of my heart. Love you, girl.

To Untilwefindit who I teased out portions of the story at random times and she knew she would need to stock up on tissues. For being my cheerleader and always supportive when I would feel down or not completely sure I could accomplish this crazy feat. For my daily set of 3 excited gifs, and the occasional extra one or two that always made me smile. For being my fellow pea in our friendship pod, I am so thankful we met. Thank you for everything. Love you, my friend.

To ALL of you for your comments here and on Twitter, I thank you. For making me cry with your tweets containing my own words, or for printing out this story, for your “I don’t want this to end” tweets, I thank you. I appreciate every one of you for your kind words and support for a story that has been like a baby to me.

Thank you all so much. ❤❤

End Notes

I hope you enjoyed this. I know it’s going to be a lot of ups and downs. Lots of sadness, anger, and angst, but hey- that’s the show, am I right?

Thank you, as always to my wonderful betas:

admiralty: girl, you’re awesome and your encouragement means so much.

flicked_switch: what can I say? This journey has been amazing. Your “My god woman, are you trying to kill me?” texts are the best. I love that my words create that emotion. 😊

Thank you to everyone for reading and I hope you know how much you doing so means to
me. ❤

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!