

xgirl's x-files fanfiction



collected works

1999 - 2001

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foreword

It was suggested to me by the first person who read *Crossing Lines* that I should consider turning it into a "novel type" publication. At the time, I hardly knew if I would be writing any more fanfic at all, never mind shooting for something on such a grand scale. As the saying goes, "funny how things turn out" because as I put my collection of completed fanfic into this volume, the total amount amazed me. Significant other authors have written reams more than me, but I just never realized that what "little" I had managed to create would add up to so many pages.

My fanfic "career" began in September of 1998 (or March 1999, depending on interpretation) and ended, for all intents and purposes, in June of 2001. It was a unique experience that I will treasure for a long time to come. I'm ever grateful for the modest bits of success that I managed to achieve and to have been given supportive feedback, recognition and encouragement from the very first moment. Whether it was the thrill of discovering that people were recommending my stories on various message boards, or the surprise of not once but twice having my work selected as the "fic of the week" at a fanfic archive, it's safe to say that I've had a memorable time.

One of life's certainties is that hobbies and interests will always come and go. It's not often, however, that one's mere hobby can have a lasting impact on others around the world. These stories are my contribution to the world of TXF fandom. I hope you'll enjoy reading them as much I enjoyed writing them.

xgirl@mindless.com, October 2001

Crossing Lines



The line between friends and lovers can be a difficult one to cross, especially when there are other unresolved issues...

Fox Mulder swiped at his forehead with the back of his hand, wondering if their new office was just a tiny bit on the warm side, after all those years of little or no heat. Their official quarters — above ground, finally — had windows; so maybe it was just the feeling of the sun shining in on him. Or maybe the air was stifling in a different sort of way. He looked up from his stack of brand new file folders and glanced across the room at his partner, who sat at her desk, fingers poised silently over the keyboard of her computer. Silent, that was the thing. What was she so suddenly absorbed in?

It was only their second day back at work after taking two weeks off. Once the official hearings into the matters of the Dallas bombing and their subsequent journey to Antarctica had been completed and the X-Files reinstated, Dana Scully had booked herself a vacation to San Diego to visit with her brother and his family. Everything seemed to be in order, but the intensity of their most recent adventure had definitely left Scully with a feeling of needing to be normal again. She also felt a need to be away — for a short time — from work and from Mulder. She wanted some time to think, to make some decisions, and ultimately clear her head.

Mulder had followed her lead and had actually gone away for the better part of a week, renting a cabin to do some writing. He had decided that it was a healthy move, one that was well-timed, given all that they had gone through in the past several months. He somehow seemed to sense that this was to be truly "off" time for the both of them. He did not turn on his cell phone, nor did he call Scully from his retreat. He spent most of his hours writing longhand in a journal, something he had done on and off throughout the years since Samantha's disappearance.

He had come in early on Monday morning — yesterday — refreshed and ready to go back to work. He felt better than he did a few months ago, when the fire that ravaged their basement office had left him feeling as destroyed as his files. Truth be told, he didn't think that he was capable of having any more feelings after the shock of that day. Combined with his own increasing disillusionment, it just seemed like it was time to call it a day, call it a life, crawl into a hole and die. Now, after Antarctica, he sensed a small renewal coming on, with new battles to fight and some semblance of hope that they might actually win some of them. What he wasn't prepared for, was the quiet tension that was now filling their new office.

Oh, it wasn't anything dramatic or overt, just palpable enough to make him focus on it for the past day and a half. It was an unfamiliar feeling. One of the most satisfying aspects of his partnership with Scully was that he never felt uncomfortable around her, not from the very beginning. He always knew something was up when the comfort level dropped. Scully herself appeared to be sufficiently renewed, with no visible signs of what had happened to her, but her conversation had taken on an almost formal tone. No, that wasn't it either. Scully had simply shut off a part of herself again.

He continued to eye her over his stack of files. They had been told to re-organize and re-build from scratch. Scully was in charge of sifting through their set of computerized backups and Mulder was attempting to put together a rudimentary manual filing system. It was all very mechanical work, no analysis involved. So why had she stopped and what was she so engrossed in? She didn't even notice that he had stopped making noise also and was watching her in complete silence.

Jesus, he hoped that she wasn't reopening old wounds by actually reading reports from some of their old cases, or her cases, for that matter. A sudden nauseating wave of guilt washed over him as he thought back to how he had insisted that he needed her to go on with his quest. Although he had also later told her to go away and be safe in private practice, sometimes he wondered just how selfish he was being. Did Scully really need to be back in the midst of all this alien conspiracy claptrap? Did she really want to be here or was she here because he wanted her to be here?

They had still not addressed what had happened between them in the hallway at his apartment that night. Strangely enough, it was not foremost in his mind at all times. It didn't really bother him that they hadn't talked about it. It was actually quite like them not to do so. He could think of any number of moments in their past that probably should have been talked about but had been left alone. He didn't like to admit it, but a part of him was grateful for that. He sighed in exasperation, wondering why he was such a coward that way. Why did he constantly feel like a 17-year-old when it came to dealing with Dana Scully, the woman?

Scully looked up upon hearing his sigh, seemingly awakened from some daydream. "Something wrong?" she finally said as she locked eyes with him.

"Penny for your thoughts, Scully?"

"I think I'd need more than a penny for these thoughts, Mulder." She said it with a sad smile, looking at him almost wistfully.

"Well, it's almost that time, I could buy you lunch in return for some edification." He tried to smile more cheerfully for her, but the shadows on her face were causing him some concern. When she didn't answer right away, he continued, "Really, Scully, you were sorta far away there. You weren't digging into any unpleasant stuff, were you? We're just here to catalogue, not to go down memory lane."

"No, actually, I just finished the D's...it's just a little hard to concentrate. I feel strange. It's like I've been here before and I don't want it to play out in the same way again." She seemed suddenly forthcoming, but had turned her gaze away from him.

"I think I know what you mean. We've been closed down and restarted before and I don't want to travel in that same old circle again." Actually, Mulder was pretty sure that things would be entirely different this time around, at least for the next little while. He hadn't told Scully, but his sources had revealed to him that while the X-Files were indeed reinstated and presently in their hands, they weren't assured of keeping them. They were naturally the ones to bring everything back to order, given their past history with the division, but Mulder had a strong suspicion that a certain agent was going to make good on his promise to run him out of town, so to speak. Without anything concrete, however, he had determined that he and Scully would simply cross that bridge when they came to it. Ultimately, they were the best team for the job, a fact that would prove itself in time anyway. Almost absently, he added out loud, "I'll make sure we don't."

Scully looked up at him and gave him that same sad little smile. She initiated her screen saver and got up. "Let's grab some lunch from the truck and go for a walk."

Mulder grabbed his suit jacket from the back of his chair and extended his arm towards the door, motioning Scully ahead. He followed closely behind, locking the door after them. Something told him that the walk would consist of some heavy duty talking as well.

* * * * *

Scully put down her sandwich, swallowed her mouthful and looked off into the distance. To her left, Mulder continued to chew, wondering why he was having difficulty tasting anything. It was

apparent that she had something to say, and for once, he was perfectly willing to let her find her own time.

"I enjoyed myself in San Diego. I almost thought I wouldn't, you know, after what happened the last time I was there." She looked at Mulder, signaling that she was okay and that it wasn't a taboo subject. He nodded briefly, thoughts swirling through his brain. "Everything seemed so homey, so ordinary, so everyday-ish. I mean, I sat in my sister-in-law's kitchen and saw the calendar marked with bake sales, fund raisers, committee meetings. There were kids' drawings taped to the refrigerator."

"And you didn't have one single conversation about killers or aliens or back-sucking flukemen," Mulder added softly, smiling as he glanced sideways at her.

"I guess our work is really bizarre when you think of it that way."

"What's happening, Scully? Are you feeling more and more like you need to settle down and do the white picket fence thing?" It wasn't as if Mulder didn't think about the same thing — for her, anyway — every so often.

Scully turned quickly to him, wanting to see his expression. "I don't know, Mulder, maybe I'm getting old. Does that make sense?"

"Well, if you're getting old, I'm getting older." He gave her another sidelong glance, losing himself temporarily in her cool blue eyes. He chose his words carefully before continuing. "I suppose though, being male, I don't quite feel the magnitude of time passing in the same way as some women do. Are we talking that biological thing here?"

"No, I don't even think that's it. I mean, I have friends who choose to remain single and childless. So I can't say that I feel that life has shortchanged me. I mean, things have happened to me that I didn't have a choice in, but I did choose my work. It's just that other people have other lives outside of their work..." [... and over the past several years, I've lost whatever life I used to have...] Mulder could almost hear her unfinished thought. It prompted something else to pop into his mind abruptly.

"Scully, when you came over to tell me that you were being transferred to Utah, was that ever an option for you? I mean, I know you said you'd resigned, but did you ever for a minute think about accepting the transfer?"

She looked at him, studying every detail of his face, before shrugging slightly. "I really don't know. All I can remember was the jumble of emotions rolling around inside of me. It was like I had lost total control of my life... no... no, I don't think I considered it at all. I think I was really ready to quit."

They looked at each other in silence for a moment, both sensing that their subsequent close call that night was going to be relived in one way or another very soon.

"And yet you changed your mind..."

"Mulder, I know we've both said that if we quit, they'll win. Does that necessarily mean that we lose? Is it that cut and dried? Over the years, I've seen things and learned things that I really, really would rather not have seen and learned. Do you ever feel that way sometimes? That none of this is real, that it can't be real? I mean, it boggles my mind how far removed I am from the ordinary lives that I see around me."

"Is that what you want, Scully, the gift of an ordinary life?" It was Mulder's turn on the sad little smile.

"This isn't just about what I want, Mulder. It's not that simple." Scully shook her head slowly, taking a small nibble of her sandwich.

"Then what is this about? I'm a little confused. Remember when I told you to go and be a doctor while you still had time? What was that, not even a month ago? That's when you gave me that 'we quit, they win' speech. But I meant what I said." Mulder took a deep breath, stilling fears that were

still very much at the surface. He dropped his elbows to rest on his knees and gazed down at his shoes. Pausing just long enough to make sure that his voice was normal, he continued. "We've learned enough over six years to know that this 'thing' that we're fighting extends far beyond what's here and now. But honestly, do I ever think it's unreal? Sometimes I just don't think that we make any difference...I mean, we survive these battles and they obviously mean for us to survive them. It's all a big game. But if we quit this game...do we lose? I don't know, Scully. I just know, by default, they would win."

"I understand that you still need answers, 'the truth' as you so often put it. But have you ever thought beyond that? Like about what happens after?" Scully leaned forward to peer at Mulder's face, trying to read him.

Fox Mulder could only think back to the truths that he had supposedly learned over the past year. His sister Samantha. Scully would find that one ironic, if she only knew: Samantha was the one who had the ordinary life. Samantha had experienced worse hell than him, but she had still managed to craft a normal existence for herself. And the truth about alien life? What he saw in Antarctica had refueled his beliefs, but until that moment? For the better part of the past year, he had convinced himself that the question wasn't important enough to answer. Maybe unconsciously, he had been trying to deal with the concept of "what happens next", knowing that he had never thought that far ahead.

Straightening up, he turned to smile at Scully and attempted to lighten the mood. "I'm just looking for that pot of gold, Scully, I don't know how I'm going to spend it or what I'll do if it turns out to be fool's gold."

Mulder's characteristic self reproach even in those simple words was not lost on Scully. She reached out and placed an open hand on his knee, a gesture that for some inexplicable reason, warmed and saddened him at the same time. "I think that's what I need to know, Mulder. I need to know what happens after we stop playing this game. I need to know that there will be an end somewhere down the road."

* * * * *

Dana Scully had spent a considerable amount of time just being by herself in San Diego. She had taken long walks on the beach, trying to come to terms with the feelings that had begun to overwhelm her over the past year. Somehow, without her quite knowing when or why, she had gone from feeling a certain "agreeable something" for Mulder to feeling full blown love for the man who had been her partner for more than six years. Six years. The mere thought of that much time passing at this point in her life was particularly depressing. She knew she wasn't prepared to wait even half that much time any more. But she was at a loss as to how to broach the whole situation.

She knew that Mulder had feelings for her beyond their working partnership. It didn't take a near kiss to convince her of that. But even after all this time, she wasn't at all sure what kind of feelings he really had for her. She didn't know if she was some kind of mother, sister, or lover figure to him. It didn't help that most of his demonstrations of affection towards her had always occurred at some moment of crisis: I'm dying, Mulder; I'm quitting, Mulder. In her darkest moments during the past six months, her feelings had begun to ache within her like a tangible physical pain, to some degree even worse than her cancer had been. She couldn't even be sure that it hadn't started to affect her work. She could not ever remember a period of time in which she had refused him so many requests. At the same time, his strangely cavalier attitude towards her during their cases leading up to the closure of the X-Files had been hard to take. Oh, she knew that he was suffering under the collapse of his belief system and had characteristically struck out at the person closest to him. But while she had no problem dealing with that kind of situation in the distant past, in recent times, their combined pain was too much for her to handle alone.

Even before witnessing their office after the fire, she had already thought seriously about leaving. What else could she do? What does anyone do when feelings became inappropriate and impossible? It had gotten to the point where she thought it would be less painful to leave than to stay. Then the entire business of the Dallas bombing brought everything to the forefront and presented her with a tidy exit. But even as she stood in his doorway announcing her plans, she

knew she was wrong; it was going to hurt like hell to leave. And the tears. She so rarely cried in front of him. Even when her father and then her sister died, she was staid and composed beyond all reason. And yet it had taken all of her resolve not to break into a million pieces right there in the hallway after he had expressed his need for her to be at his side. Never mind all of the times she had found herself weeping for seemingly no reason during those several preceding months.

After their safe return from Antarctica, they had seemed to be on a mutual emotional high. She had declared to him that — his fears for her life aside — she was prepared to stick it out with him once more. After all, they now had an even stronger reason to stick together, didn't they? Or did they? A few days removed to establish the mundane details of a new X-Files Division and an ensuing two week vacation later, Dana Scully was just not sure. And this time, she needed to be sure, in no uncertain terms.

* * * * *

Fox Mulder opened the door to his apartment, kicking off his shoes as he proceeded through to his living room. He stabbed at his answering machine and stooped to peer into his fish tank. An inconsequential message. His latest batch of fish were still mobile. He shook a few flakes at them and then lowered himself slowly onto the couch, his coat falling open around him. He leaned back and closed his eyes.

He hadn't stopped thinking about their lunch conversation all afternoon. They had worked quietly for the remainder of the day and though it seemed that some of the tension had been relieved, it was not all together back to normal; at least, not for Fox Mulder. "I need to know what happens after we stop playing this game. I need to know that there will be an end somewhere down the road." The words still echoed in his mind, along with his reply, "I'm not entirely sure what you mean."

Scully had gotten up at that moment, motioning for them to walk. She merely requested that he think about it and that they would continue the conversation later. She reiterated that she was back voluntarily and was not in danger of leaving, but that certain things had to be different. They completed their walk in relative silence, both knowing that although there was so much to say, the confines of a lunch hour just weren't going to accommodate them. But it was a start.

Mulder opened his eyes and glanced at the clock. Almost nine. He vaguely remembered stopping by a sandwich shop to read a newspaper and have a light supper, but where had the time gone? He took a deep breath and got up, leaving his coat behind. A shower would feel real good right about now. He opened his closet and then removed and hung up his suit jacket and pants. Throwing his shirt and socks in a laundry bag, he padded barefoot towards his bathroom.

He stood amidst the clouds of steam from the hot water that pelted down his back, sending soap suds swirling down the drain. How many times had he stood in this same shower entertaining thoughts about Scully... countless times? Many times it was like now, hot water fanning raw heat over his body as he wondered about her, worried over her. On other occasions, he stood here under cold water, in an effort to tame his body's reactions and stem the tide of illicit thoughts it sometimes had about his partner. In truth, those moments puzzled him. It really wasn't as if sexual tension sizzled between them on a daily basis, although he knew they had their moments. It was just that he saw them as being so much more than that, he didn't like those reactions to cheapen what they had. Dana Scully was not a release for him like his videotape collection. But it didn't take his skills as a psychologist to diagnose their relationship as being odd in a big way. From his vantage point, he knew it was a social anomaly. [We don't see other people, but we don't have a romantic relationship. We are bothered by the idea of the other seeing other people, but we are not involved with one another. We care about each other, but not in that way.] How much was truth and how much was self delusion on both their parts? Meanwhile, it did not escape Mulder that over six years had passed since they were first partnered. No matter what sort of strange circumstances they were involved in, that was a long time. For the second time that day, he wondered: was it fair to her, this hold he seemingly had on her?

Nobody had ever directly or indirectly asked him, "Do you love Dana Scully?" Not even Frohike had ever gone so far. He briefly wondered what he would say. Would he be able to lie about it? He was

never that good at lying. Does she love you? He turned and lifted his face to the water, wincing. He wouldn't be able to lie about that either. Unquestionably she loved him; he just didn't know why. Nor could he pinpoint the moment when it first occurred to him in no uncertain terms. But there were enough instances when she let her guard down, purposefully or not, that he could see it in her eyes. Her love, from its tentative beginnings to its current rollercoaster levels of intensity, had always made him feel whole and human in a way that he never thought possible. It was a totally natural reaction for him to bask in that warmth and to feel paralyzed and lost when he was removed from it.

He knew he posed a fanciful facade to others around him. While there were enough rumors floating around about him and Scully and just how close they might be, he also knew there was a certain segment of observers who believed that nothing was happening. Because they believed that Dana Scully wasn't his type and that Fox Mulder was still chasing every nice looking skirt that passed his way. In a way, he perpetuated that belief. Not by actually doing it, but he knew that with the briefest of his attentions, many females at the Bureau would fall to his feet. Fox Mulder was not a stupid boy. He was quite aware of the powers of his persuasions; sometimes he didn't even have to say a word. But it was a game to him. It was a game he even played with Scully, but with different results, which was why he respected her even more.

["But do you love her, G-Man?"] Jesus, the voice sounded annoyingly like Frohike.

"Shut up," he muttered out loud.

As much as he hated to think along those lines, here again, he wasn't stupid. He knew where that lunch conversation was going, what Scully hadn't actually put into words but was no doubt asking. The "game" and the "end" had little to do with work and much to do with their personal lives. She's telling you she'll continue to work beside you, but it can't be like it was before. She'll stick around as long as... as long as what? As long as there was a promise of something more? His head was starting to hurt.

He turned off the shower and swept a towel over himself, wrapping it around his waist as he stepped out onto the mat. He wiped the condensation from the mirror and peered at his face. Was he ready to be honest with himself and answer some difficult questions? For Scully, he knew he would do anything. Including not reacting like a 17-year-old.

* * * * *

Fox Mulder settled in for the evening, remote in hand, flipping through the channels. The sound was turned down so low that he couldn't really hear what was being said, but he was losing himself in the visual images that passed before his eyes. The sound of his phone ringing brought him back to earth. He got up, picked up the entire set from his desk and brought it back to the couch with him.

"Hello?"

"Mulder, it's me."

"Hey, Scully. Is anything wrong?" He looked at his watch: it was shortly after ten.

"No, no, nothing's wrong..." [Has it been so long since I've called him out of the blue like this? He thinks there must be something up. Did I ever initiate these calls? When did I stop having those wonderfully inane phone conversations with him? Maybe he was the one who did all the calling...maybe he just stopped and I didn't even notice until now.]

"Scully?"

"Hmm?"

"Did you want me to start?" He heard something resembling embarrassed amusement at the other end.

"Sorry, I was just thinking —"

"Good or bad thinking?"

"Well, neither, really. I just came from my mother's —"

"There's nothing wrong with your mom, is there?"

"No, no, nothing like that. Mom's fine." Even over the phone, she could almost feel him flinch at the word. "I mean, she's great. She hadn't seen me since I got out of the hospital and then I took off to San Diego, so... she just wanted me to visit, you know how moms are."

[Oh Jesus, when did Mulder last hear from his mother?] Her pause grew a little long and she realized that she was holding her breath. Her partner put her out of her misery by chuckling softly.

"It's okay, Scully. And yes, I know how your mother is. So, you were thinking?"

"About our conversation at lunch today. When you said you weren't quite sure what I meant...were you saying that you might have some idea or was that just a request for me to be more specific?"

"A little of both. Look, I know enough has passed between us for me to hazard a good guess, but now's not the time to make the wrong assumption. I don't think either one of us needs any additional humiliation or embarrassment. We're not good at this." Without the benefit of seeing his face, Scully had a hard time with the seeming harshness of his words. She decided to give him the benefit of the doubt.

"Can we talk about it?"

"Now?"

"If it's too late —"

"No, that's not... you don't actually want to do this over the phone, do you?"

"No, I'm not far. Would you mind if I came over there?"

"Of course not. I'll put on some tea."

"See you in a bit."

Mulder sat holding the phone for several seconds after Scully disconnected their call. Had he been expecting her to resume their discussion so soon? In a way, yes. While neither he nor Scully undertook to delve into their private lives all that often, on the rare occasions when it happened, they tended to get things out of the way rather quickly and painlessly. No, check that — this time, it wasn't going to be painless. By no means.

* * * * *

He put back the phone and looked out the window. Scully wouldn't be long. As his thigh touched the cold edge of his desk, he realized that his attire was a little inappropriate for their meeting. Underwear and t-shirt would not cut it. He rummaged through his hall dresser and pulled out a fresh pair of jeans, pulling them on as he ventured into the kitchen to boil some water. The kettle was just beginning to whine when there was a soft knock at the door.

When Mulder opened the door, he was struck by the somewhat unfamiliar image of her standing there, carrying a paper bag from the corner store. She was wearing a light blue anorak, over top of an oversized white t-shirt and black jeans; flat shoes. Her hair was pinned back to one side with some sort of comb. She looked so unlike Agent Scully right then, her entire body so devoid of her usual steely presence that Mulder felt a strange urge to wrap his arms around her protectively. Instead, he simply stepped aside and motioned her in with a welcoming smile, adding wickedly, "What's in the bag — economy box of Trojans for tonight?"

Scully gave him that patented "look" that she always gave him in response to those sorts of comments. "Don't make promises like that even lightly, Mulder, I might hold you to them," she responded smoothly, handing him the bag as she stepped into his apartment.

"Well, Scully, that won't be a problem because I have my own supply that's much —" he paused as he took the bag from her and reached inside, frowning as his fingers came into contact with the contents, "— much closer to room temperature than these..."

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