

Out in the Country

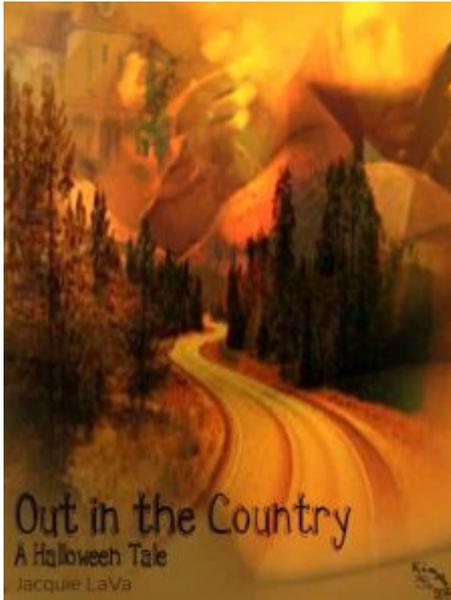
A Halloween Tale

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Kimberly
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Contents

[Return to main Out in the Country page](#)



TITLE: Out In The Country

Author: Jacquie LaVa

Category: MSR, Challenge Fic

Rating: NC-17-ish; for sexual frolic and naughty language... and disturbing food imagery

Spoilers: None

Disclaimer: In my MSR world, there is peace and love and Smut-Aplenty...

Author's Notes: My answer to a challenge put forth from MSR-Smut... additional notes at the end of the story!

THANKS TO: Tess, for a thorough beta and a thumbs-up! And to Three Dog Night (wherever they are) for the song title!

COVER IMAGE: Kimpart

SUMMARY: A drive into the country to retrieve an heirloom gives our heroes quite a full day... in more ways than one!

She awoke to kisses, a lot of small, sweet kisses scattered with precise abandon over the exposed plane of her back and shoulders. Warm, tender lips rubbing her skin; slipping over the nape of her neck where she was so sensitive... nibbling down the arm flung above her head. Scully moaned under her breath; too sleepy to know for sure if she was awake or still dreaming. His mouth felt so good it didn't matter - asleep or awake it was perfect. She moved her head aside just a little, making it easier for him to reach the underside of her ear. His lips followed the movement and he buried them against the tender skin. She shuddered, still only partially aware; sighing into the pillow beneath her cheek as his tongue stroked her ear and he pressed the length of his body atop her. Long-fingered hands skimming up the sides of her body and burrowing underneath to cup her breasts; strong

thighs brushing her; the rough silk of his skin heating her... she felt those hands turning her until she lay beneath him, face to face.

Through half-closed eyes she watched him, thinking how utterly beautiful he was, as he continued to kiss and caress every inch of her body. So thorough in his loving of her, so determined to please her... Even so, he missed a spot on the underside of her chin, and she whispered to him until he went back to that spot, and tasted it with his tongue; another neglected bit of flesh right at the juncture of arm and shoulder demanded, and received, his full attention. Her arms encircled him as his kisses grew more intense, less playful. Her body ached for him, even as part of her adored the slow seduction. Her need was far outdistancing everything else, and her small hands became more and more restless upon his back. He trailed his mouth down the center of her body, between her breasts, and she wound her hand into his hair and tugged at him until she could reach that mouth, and latch onto it, hard... the same way he pushed himself between her trembling thighs, and pressed himself home...

Hard...

" - Hard to see, Scully... Scully? Come on, my little Navigator, wake up! I need you to look at the map..." She came awake with a hoarse gasp, her sticky lashes forcing themselves open; enough to see she wasn't in her bed at home, with Mulder... she was in the car, driving down an unmarked road. Well, at least she was with Mulder... who had stopped at the side of the road, half-turned in his seat, staring at her. "You okay, Scully? You were squirming in your seat and muttering. Sweating, too..." He touched her damp brow with a forefinger. Scully stared back, unable to move or look away from him. She tried to suck in a deep breath; to calm herself. The dream was so real... she still trembled from the force of what he'd made her feel. She forced a slight smile, and shook her head.

"Just a dream, Mulder... sorry I fell asleep on you, after promising to stay awake and keep you company! I think we need coffee." She rooted around on the floor by her feet for the thermos she'd filled that morning. She could feel Mulder's penetrating stare, and felt her cheeks burning. He had to have known what she'd been dreaming - and if he made even one smart-assed crack, she'd flatten him... but aside from a soft little chuckle, Mulder behaved himself, and merely answered her question.

"There might be a cup left; go ahead and take it. When we get to town, I'll get some more. Which reminds me... what's the name of this place?" Scully set the thermos back on the floor, and opened the map, rubbing the last of the sleep from her eyes. She'd highlighted the route in yellow, and found the tiny dot easily.

"Casanova... we go to Casanova. I'm sure there's a joke in there, somewhere -" A sideways glance at Mulder confirmed it; he was biting back a snappy retort of some kind. Scully sighed, and gestured with the map, as if to say, 'Be my guest'... Mulder snickered and started the car. As he guided it back onto the highway, he murmured to himself, but loud enough for her to hear.

"After the night I gave you, not to mention the dream you just had... we have to run off to Casanova, huh? Missing out on some romance? You're insatiable, Scully..."

"Oh, shut up, Mulder..."

Actually, she'd been the one to awaken him, earlier that morning. She'd arisen and used

the bathroom, then placed a quick call to her mother. One glance into the bedroom while she waited for her mother to pick up, assured her Mulder was still sleeping; she'd moved into the living room so the call wouldn't wake him up.

"Mom, are you sure you don't need anything else? What about groceries? Is there anything I can pick up for you? Mulder won't mind." Her mother's reply was firm.

"Thanks, honey - but I have everything I need. The Larson boy next door picked up those painkillers, and I have plenty of easy-to-fix food. I'll be fine! I have a stack of magazines and books, and about six videos to work through. Besides, I'll be seeing you tomorrow!" Maggie Scully had sighed in her daughter's ear. "I still cannot believe a simple activity such as walking could become a hazard for me!" Scully bit back a chuckle; her mother was usually so graceful. But she'd walked out of her front door just two days ago to collect the morning paper - and had somehow twisted her foot at just the wrong angle. The resulting swollen sprain had her laid up on her sofa, and pissed off at her clumsiness.

"Mom, anyone can sprain their ankle! You're lucky you didn't break it. Now, get your mind off the injury, and tell me about this clock." Her mother's voice had brightened with enthusiasm as she replied.

"Oh, it's the most amazing thing. A Regulator, mantle-style, carved out of one solid piece of mahogany. Very rare and valuable. I remember it well; that last Garden Club dinner we had out at Turner House. It sat on the dining room mantle and was just the loveliest clock I have ever seen. I still can't believe Mrs. Parkinson willed it to me." Mrs. Parkinson was the owner of Turner House and the founder of the Sterling Rose Garden Club; Scully's mother had been a member for years and had made wonderful friends there, including Mrs. Parkinson. After the dear lady had passed away, she had willed each Garden Club member one of her personal possessions; Maggie had gotten the clock. With the rest of the Parkinson belongings going to auction within the week, it had been imperative the clock be picked up very soon - which Maggie had intended to do, the morning she sprained her ankle and found herself laid up.

"Dear, do you know how to get to Casanova? It's at least two hundred miles one way - are you sure you and Fox have time?" Her mother fretted about the silliest things sometimes, Scully thought fondly. She hastened to assure her.

"We have lots of time, Mom - in fact, it'll be fun. We've both been working so hard lately; we need a break. And it's got to be a lovely drive; Mulder likes to take all the scenic back roads as much as he can... wait a second. Did you say 'Casanova'? There's really a town with that name? Mulder will have an innuendo-laden blast with that one!" Her mother chuckled in her ear, and Scully grinned, then caught sight of her kitchen clock and groaned.

"I'd better go, Mom - it's almost nine and I think we should leave early and give ourselves plenty of time in case we get lost." After a few more words and after exacting a promise from her mother to take it easy, Scully hung up and wandered into the bedroom. It wasn't until she'd seen herself in the full-length closet door mirror that she realized she'd spoken to her mother in a complete state of undress...

She paced slowly back to bed and had sat next to his sprawled body, which had filled the empty spot she'd left in the bed as soon as she'd stood up. Scully had run a hand through his tousled hair. What a bed hog... she'd shaken his shoulder lightly and he'd groaned and burrowed into the bedclothes. She looked at the clock and sighed; they had so much driving

to do – she shook him again.

“Mulder... time to wake up.” He’d buried his face deeper into the pillows, mumbling in a sleep-thickened voice.

“C’mon, just five more minutes, Scully...” She had frowned at him, and tried a firmer voice.

“Mulder, let’s GO! You promised to help me with Mom’s clock.” He’d raised his head a small bit, just enough to open one bleary eye; had struggled to focus and managed to zero in on the face leaning down into his, then that eye did a little more traveling, in a downward direction, and noticed...

“Hey, you’re naked, Scully... I got a Naked Scully in my bed...” He had reached out a finger or two and touched the nipple closest to him, squinting a little to see past the sleep in his eyes and observe how his caress made the tender skin flush and pucker. “Enchanting, first thing in the morning...” Scully had snorted and grabbed hold of his hand.

“Yes, enchanting, Mulder – and it’s after nine in the morning, not ‘first thing’. And I’d gladly stay in bed with you for the next week or so...” Scully leaned in and ran her tongue over his bottom lip, tasting last night’s wine, this morning’s breath and a whole lot of delicious Mulder. Before he could become aware enough to even think about responding, she’d moved away and was sitting on the edge of the bed looking very prim and proper – for a naked woman.

She’d ruffled her hand through his bed-hair, and grinned at him. “You did promise to help me today, remember? I’m holding you to it. So, let’s go; up and at ‘em. I’ll make breakfast... whatever you want.” One last kiss and Scully had stood up, stretching unashamedly in front of the sunlit window. Mulder lay back on the pillows and stared at her, the look in his eyes conveying exactly what he was thinking, even before he opened his mouth and said it.

“You are so gorgeous in the morning, Scully... all glowing skin and rounded softness, delicate bone structure and fiery hair. Mine... all mine.” He’d grabbed her in mid-stretch and pulled her on top of his already-aroused body. Winding his arms around her, Mulder pressed her down, hard; Scully moaned at the tight contact and pressed back, even as she tried to talk him out of it.

“We don’t really have time, Mulder! We’ve got so much to do... come on, a promise is a promise. I’ll pay you back later – and that’s a promise, too.” She’d tried moving again, but his grip tightened, and he buried his face against her breast and mumbled a protest into her skin.

“Don’t wanna wait. We’ve got lots of time... it’s Sunday, you know. Besides, there’s an old Reticulan saying which goes, ‘Any day that starts with a good fuck can’t be all bad’...” Scully shook her head and giggled, resting her full weight on Mulder and letting him nuzzle at her.

“Obscenities in the morning, Mulder? What a potty mouth. And since when did you start spouting Reticulan?” The lips nuzzling at her stopped abruptly, and she’d grinned down into his surprised face, knowing exactly what he was thinking... Dana Scully, actually accepting, and participating in... Reticulan Banter. After one shocked gape, Mulder resumed his tactile activities, muttering into her skin.

"Ooh, Scully... you're getting me all hot and bothered. Are you telling me you agree with that particular saying? Not to mention the morning obscenities... are you okay with that as well? Because you seemed to be in a big rush just a few minutes ago, and you know these things can't be rushed." He licked along the sensitive artery in her neck, and Scully shuddered, her entire body tensing with need. Mulder whispered the next words; lips feathering over her tender lobe.

"I'll make it very easy... all I want for breakfast is you." He'd bitten her ear and slipped a gentle hand up and down the elegant curve of her back; Scully could feel tiny shivers erupting beneath his touch. She let herself relax completely, covering Mulder like a flesh-and-bone blanket, and likewise whispered her reply.

"Who, me? Wanting to rush? You must be thinking of some other naked lady who likes to pour herself all over your bones." She wiggled her hips until they were perfectly aligned with his, and shivered again at the rasping groan he sent into her ear. And she breathed an additional, "That last bite of yours has altered my whole perspective on the subject of rushing, Mulder. I've decided I just love to take my time in the morning..." She licked her way from one side of his collarbone to the other, loving the way he hissed in a breath and his muscles bunched underneath her. Lifting her head, she smiled into his eyes, then moved to one side and slid off his body, raising herself up on hands and knees and wriggling a nicely-curved ass in his face. She peeked at him over her shoulder, duly noting the hot glaze of his eyes as he absorbed the sight of her. She'd thrown a wicked grin his way.

"Come on, Mulder... start my day... and make it good."

After she'd arisen from bed the second time, exacting a sleep-laden promise from Mulder to move his ass pronto, Scully jumped into the shower. She leaned her head against the tiled wall, aching all over in the most pleasurable way. Mulder had loved her very, very thoroughly... her legs still trembled from the force of her climax. She poured shampoo into her palm and worked it through her hair, trying hard to concentrate on their tasks for the day - but instead feeling again the large hands which had bitten into her hips and had held her tightly against the driving body of her lover. So good... just as she'd requested. It was a miracle she'd survived it, especially since she'd provoked it...

Scully smiled to herself as she rinsed the last of the soap from her skin and turned off the faucet, shivering a bit. She would have liked nothing better than to have Mulder share the shower with her and keep her warm, but his stall wasn't big enough. Stepping out, she wound a towel around her damp body and scooped up the tee shirt and boxers lying on the floor. She held them to her face, inhaling the pure essence of the man she loved. So much better than that flowery bath gel she'd used... if she could bottle Mulder's natural body musk, she'd be a very rich woman. The thought made her chuckle.

Walking into the bedroom, she'd found Mulder dozing sideways in the bed, an arm and a leg dangling over the footboard. Scully shook her head in exasperation; not ten minutes ago she'd yelled for him to get himself in the shower, and he'd answered as if he was awake and ready to go... what a slug. She unwound the towel around her head and gripped a handful of wet hair, squeezing water over his chest. He jerked awake with a gasping, "Jesus, Scully!" He sat up and wiped at the droplets chilling his skin, as Scully snickered and slipped the tee shirt over her head. She'd looked up as she pulled on the boxers; they were sliding down her hips and she tucked the tee shirt inside the waistband to hold them up. Mulder was gaping at her in horror.

"Scully... that's my underwear! God... is that the set I left on the bathroom floor? I played basketball in those, yesterday! You take a shower and get all squeaky-clean, then put on my funky underwear?" Mulder was comically disgusted; it showed in his face. Scully calmly sat down to pull on a pair of socks, cuffing them neatly around her ankles before she'd deigned to answer him.

"Mulder... not a half hour ago we exchanged bodily fluids in some interesting places; I believe I kissed, licked or bit you in any number of what you like to call 'funk collectors'... and you think I'm worried about wearing your smelly underwear?" She leaned over and kissed his mouth lingeringly, dripping more wet hair on him. This time he hadn't seemed to mind as he twined a hand through her damp strands, and kissed her back. She pulled away a little and regarded him with love.

"I adore the smell of you... I get myself all clean and squeaky, as you so nicely put it - and I smell like roses or tulips or whatever the hell I left over here to shower with - and that's just not a real smell. Then I see your unmentionables on the floor, and when I pick them up they smell so good... I couldn't resist. It's like wearing you."

One more kiss, and she stood up and moved into the kitchen, calling over her shoulder, "Omelet sound good - that is, if you have anything resembling food in your fridge?" As she rounded the corner of the bedroom, one of her socked feet lifted and flashed at him; big, thick and baggy socks -

"Scully! You're wearing my gym socks! Jesus, are you nuts? I probably have athlete's foot!" He jumped off the bed, stark naked, running after her; she snorted and her muffled reply wafted out from the depths of his fridge.

"Share and share alike, Mulder..."

As he drove, Mulder sneaked glances at her out of the corner of his eye; she had been staring pensively out the side window. He cleared his throat. "Did you leave me any coffee, Scully? I'm feeling sluggish right now. I'm sure it had nothing to do with how you wore me out this morning..." At his words she turned her head and smiled at him, then lifted the thermos and waved it nearby his ear so he could hear the liquid sloshing around. She unscrewed the cap and poured him some, placing it in the cup holder. Mulder waited until he slowed down for a stop light before taking a healthy sip. As he waited for the light, he studied the woman who meant the world to him.

In the early-afternoon sunlight she looked breathtaking; the pale blue of her sweater setting off her hair and the navy slicker accentuating her flawless skin. Head down, she was studying the map; a thick strand of hair kept falling in her eyes and Mulder reached out a finger and tucked it behind her ear; murmuring, "You want me to head out on 211? Then what?"

Scully checked the route she'd highlighted. "Yeah, 211 to 15; then we take County Road Two, right into Casanova." She sneaked a peek at his face as she said the name of the tiny burg, waiting for another of his smart-ass retorts. Mulder didn't let her down.

"Casanova... can't believe you're making me drive you to Casanova. Surely you don't feel overly deprived, after what you put me through this morning... and last night?" Scully rolled her eyes at him.

“Oh yeah – I can feel myself drying up into a shriveled lump of spinster, which is why you must take me to this sacred place... now, before it is too late!” Scully spoke in a melodramatic voice, then shook her head and issued a few more directions. “Mulder, Casanova is just some little hamlet we have to pass through to get to Turner House. We take the first road past the town square, and drive until we run out of road. Turner House is at the end of that road, which according to Mom, doesn’t have a name.” Scully re-folded the map and tucked it into her pocket, then laid a hand on Mulder’s thigh. He covered her hand with his, and slipped it higher on his leg, until he had it cupped over his fly. He grinned and shot her a quick leer.

“Lousy aim, Partner... this is the right spot. So this Turner House... is it really haunted? Anyone living there? Come on, Scully, entertain me; I’m still in danger of falling asleep at the wheel, thanks to you and your ‘start my day’ demands... Gimme the real skinny on this little adventure of ours.” Scully opened her mouth, probably to give him grief for his smart-ass remarks, then must have thought better of it; Mulder knew she secretly loved it when he teased her like this. And on a slow Sunday afternoon with miles of gorgeous autumn-shaded country road in front of them... fun was the gravy on the fries. She sighed and settled more comfortably in her seat, letting her hand stay where Mulder had pressed it. She thought for a moment.

“Well, according to Mom, the house has been haunted for about one hundred years. Horace Turner built the house in 1893, for his bride Mildred. Horace was a very possessive man, homely and lacking in social graces; it was rumored Mildred married him for his money, since she was young and lovely and could have had anyone in town. Horace was very jealous; all during the building of the house he kept suspecting his bride was messing around with the son of the head builder. But he could never prove it; she acted with proper wifely primness and kept him happy at night – but he was so insecure, and he worried about it all the time.

“It took a year to build the house; Horace kept adding things to it, hoping that by making it truly impressive, Mildred would never want to leave. The first possession to be brought into the house was Mildred’s Regulator mantle clock. Horace had bought it for her as a wedding present, and she adored clocks, I guess. Well, Mildred herself carried it in, and set it upon the dining room fireplace mantle. She called out to Horace to come look at the clock, but he was nowhere in the house. A few of the builders were still on the grounds, doing clean-up work; amongst those left behind to finish was the head builder’s son. He had been harboring a crush on Mildred for months but Horace was always around... apparently he came in the house to get his tools, saw her standing in front of the clock admiring it and knowing hubby was outside talking to his father, decided this was his chance to steal a kiss. It’s doubtful he wanted anything more than that.” She ignored Mulder’s muttered, “What a wienie-ass”, and continued.

“He crept up in back of her and wound his arms about her waist, spun her around and bent her over backwards, and kissed her passionately. She never had a chance to scream. Horace just happened to be walking in the front door right about then, saw the kiss – and went out of his mind. He ran into the dining room, yelling; the builder let go of his wife and turned to face the furious Mr. Turner, who wanted to kill – but the room was empty of anything weapon-like... except that Regulator clock on the mantle. So Horace rushed to the mantle, picked up the clock and brought it down on the hapless builder’s head. He went down and probably died instantly; those clocks are heavy and have sharp edges. Then Horace turned to poor Mildred, wound his fingers around her throat and throttled her to death, refusing to listen to her screams of innocence.” Scully paused, and gulped some

bottled water. Mulder was fascinated. He adored ghost stories and legends of hauntings. Scully took a few more sips and continued.

“When Horace realized what he had done, he really went berserk. He ran outside and yelled at the builders to get help. The head builder ran into the house to see what had happened, found his son in a bloody pool in the empty dining room with the equally-bloody clock nearby the body, and also went berserk. He whipped a pronged hammer out of his carpenter’s apron and went after Horace, and crowned him about six times with the hammer, before the other men pulled him off. Horace died on the way to the hospital, and the builder was arrested and later hung.” Mulder digested her story, vaguely noting that they’d just passed the county line and were only about ten miles from Casanova.

“So, Scully... who does the haunting? Old Horace, or the pretty wife?” He stopped for another light and stared at Scully, who returned his regard with a frown of concentration.

“Mom didn’t really get into that aspect of the story... I would bet Mildred haunts the place, since hers was the unnatural death. And I think the builder’s son haunts as well. I seem to remember something Mom said, about the ghost of Mildred being chased up and down the stairs, trying to get away from the builder’s hot lips of passion.” Mulder chuckled at the term, as he moved through Casanova and took the first road past the town square.

“Mmm, ‘hot lips of passion’? My kind of lips, Scully...” He leaned over her way and stole a kiss from her lips, slowing down to a crawl behind a huge Caterpillar driven by an old man in faded overalls. He pulled away and smiled at the way her cheeks flushed from the little kiss, and continued thinking aloud.

“So, Mildred haunts the place, and I suppose the Regulator clock sits on the dining room mantle to this day.” At Scully’s nod, Mulder nodded as well, not surprised at his accuracy. “Typical ghost scenario, I guess. Does the clock drip blood? Are there screams in the night?” Scully shrugged and pointed out the windshield; ahead of them in the distance sat a large Victorian house. Mulder stared at it as they approached, noting the general lack of upkeep on the grounds and the increasing potholes and ruts in the road, which now looked as if it had turned into a driveway. He slowed down to a crawl, doing his best to avoid the bad spots. As they got closer they could see the house needed a good coat of paint, but overall the structure looked sound and the front porch was not sagging or broken. There was something very familiar about the architectural style of the house; Scully couldn’t put her finger on it... until Mulder’s exclamation brought it into sharp, unpleasant focus.

“Scully, that house looks exactly like the Bates house in the movie ‘Psycho’...”

Scully decided the last thing she wanted to do was walk up those creaking porch steps, and knock on the door. She slipped her hand into Mulder’s, ignoring his yelp as her cold fingers met his much-warmer ones. There were ten steps up to the porch; with every step Scully’s heart pounded a little faster. It was irrational and ridiculous and she could no more stop it than fly. She stopped dead in her tracks on step number five. And Mulder came to a halt beside her and gave her a look of concern.

“Hey, you all right? You look very pale.” He brushed at her cool cheek, and Scully nodded against his hand, hating the feeling of dread taking her over.

“I’ll be okay, Mulder... just the creeps. You know why...” Mulder stared at her, then at the

house, and nodded with growing enlightenment; he'd obviously just now remembered. Scully had real issues with the Bates house from the famous Hitchcock film. Poor guy, he'd heard all about it, late one night not so long ago... he'd been channel surfing and had found the movie playing on Sci-Fi; had gotten all excited, realizing he hadn't seen it in years. Scully had been in the kitchen; by the time she came out with a beer bottle under each arm and a large dish of nachos, Mulder was settled in and completely engrossed. She'd set the food and beer down on the table in front of them, had taken her place next to him and was reaching for a nacho when she heard a scream emanating from the TV, and looked up... and screamed herself. Mulder had jumped about a foot, and turned to gape at the sight of Scully, cowering in the corner of his sofa, staring at the screen in horror.

After he'd pried her off the arm rest and wrapped her up in his arms, Scully managed to tell him what was bothering her. It seemed she and her family had done the typical 'Pilgrimage to Disneyland and All Points Nearby', back when she was just a little girl. They'd gone to Universal Studios and walked the famous streets and sets, and there in a rather remote section of one of the lots, sat Bates House, just as eerie looking as in the movie. She started walking toward it, morbidly fascinated... and her idiot brother Bill had come up behind her and grabbed her around the waist, making evil screeching noises and pretending to slash at her neck with his "Pirates of the Caribbean" Captain Hook dagger... and Scully had come unglued. It had taken hours and hours to calm her down. She had never been able to watch the movie since; it always scared her shitless. And it was the most irrational, stupid thing in the entire world...

"God! This is so irrational and stupid, Mulder! How old am I? Look at some of the horrors we've faced... I can't believe a dumb prop house can still have this level of power over me!" Scully glared up at Turner House; trying to see a lovely old Victorian mansion instead of the dark and forbidding Bates House, as it had appeared in the film. It was tough; the overall architecture was very similar, and the Turner House was in about the same stage of disrepair. She looked up at Mulder and tightened her grip on his hand, taking a deep breath and moving up to the next step.

"I think it's time to put this idiocy behind me... then maybe the next time I see Bill I can punch him in the face for giving me such paranoia in the first place." Mulder grinned up at her from the step below, then took a step up and kissed her mouth gently.

"Atta girl... toughen up! I'm all for seeing you lay your brother out cold, any day of the week." He slipped an arm about her shoulders and gave her a warm squeeze. "Now, let's go get your mom's clock..."

Turner House was even creepier on the inside, Mulder decided, as they were ushered into the main parlor by one of Mrs. Parkinson's nieces. Flora Tinsdale had met them at the door and had shaken their hands, exclaiming in a motherly way over the iciness of Scully's grip. She had clucked, "Typical chilly fall weather, my dear - sunny as can be, but my lands, that wind is cold! Come into the parlor and I'll get you a nice hot cup of tea. Then if you like, I'll walk you through the house. It was just lovely in its day, before Aunt Lavinia became too ill to care for it. And she would never let anyone help her." Flora led them into a huge, high-ceilinged room with two sets of bay windows; all the furniture was shrouded in drop cloths except for a wingback chair and a lovely fainting chaise, both upholstered in beige satin brocade. On a small cherry table sat a polished silver tea service; Flora served them both a cup of tea, and sat in the chair facing them. Mulder looked all around, fascinated by the old

house. He drank half the tea, then addressed Flora.

“Mrs. Tinsdale... is the house truly haunted?” Flora nodded vigorously, causing the silver curls upon her head to bounce.

Oh, do call me Flora! And yes, most assuredly the house is haunted. Sightings have happened many times over the years, and Aunt Lavinia has actually held conversations with the spirit of Mildred. Poor thing; to be cursed to spend eternity running from her fate. Horace also haunts the place; he paces in front of the mantle, staring at the clock. That’s the only room in the house we have been able to see him, unlike Mildred, who seems to go just about anywhere in the house she pleases.” Flora poured more tea, and offered Mulder and Scully a tray of gingersnaps, which they both declined. Scully stared at the ornate ceiling and the lovely chandelier overhead.

“Flora, I couldn’t help but notice that Turner House looks very much like the Bates prop house from the film “Psycho”. Eerily so, as a matter of fact – is that a coincidence?” Flora smiled and gave another curl-bouncing shake of her head.

“Oh, no my dear! Not at all – it was very deliberate! You see, over the years many photographs have been taken of Turner House, in all its glory, and especially during a renovation phase in the Forties. This would have been when a Turner still lived in the house, since Aunt Lavinia didn’t acquire it until the late Sixties. Well, the owner at the time – I believe it was maybe 1960 or so – received a letter from Alfred Hitchcock himself, asking if his production team could use the outer facade of Turner House as a base for creating the Bates House. Turner was flattered and gave permission. The Bates prop house was then created, and altered just a tiny bit here and there, to give it some character of its own. That’s why it immediately rang a bell for you.” Scully nodded, and glanced at Mulder, who had a slight smile on his face as he realized Scully was slaying a few ghosts of her own, by reducing down a childhood traumatic event into simple explanations. He winked at her. Scully winked back, and turned to Flora.

“Thanks for explaining, Flora – I used to be afraid of the look of that old house in the film... but I think I can now justify it more sanely in my mind, and rid myself of such an irrational fear.” Flora clucked again, and shook her head at Scully.

“Now, now; the visual is a strong supporter of the mental state, you know! If you were afraid of that house in the film, little wonder your partner had to drag you up the steps!” At Scully’s dropped jaw, and Mulder’s delighted chuckle, Flora felt compelled to explain. “I was watching out the window, dear – I saw that look of fright come over your pretty face. Luckily for you, wasn’t it – that your strong, handsome partner could lend you his strength!” Her blatant flattery caused Mulder to laugh out loud, and he reached over and gave Flora’s hand a gentle squeeze. Scully groaned and blushed.

“I can’t believe you saw that... I DID have a silly fear of this house; too long of a story to go into, but suffice to say I am seeing it much differently now.” She stood up and stretched her legs, nudging Mulder’s knee with hers. “I would love to see the rest of the house, Flora; then we need to pick up the clock and get going. We still have a long drive ahead of us and I would like to check in on my mother before we go home.” Flora nodded and stood; Mulder was already on his feet and had taken hold of Scully’s hand. Flora smiled fondly at the sweet sight of their linked fingers, and moved them toward the door, replying with a touch of regret in her voice.

"So sorry you can't stay longer! I had actually planned on asking you to join me for a late lunch; I had brought some food from home, and I really have way too much just for me! I brought some lovely fried chicken, and homemade coleslaw... and I even brought a nice fruit salad for dessert. I made it fresh this morning; grapes and apples and pineapple in red cherry Jell-O..." She broke off at the sound of the horrified gasp Mulder emitted; Scully turned to stare at him as well. Mulder looked petrified; his face had drained of color. He stammered out a few hoarse words.

"R-red Cherry... J-J-Jell-O... oh, God..." Without another word he dropped Scully's hand and bolted from the room, his fingers pressed over his mouth; Flora ran after him, calling, "First door on the left, Mr. Mulder!" And as Mulder made a beeline for the bathroom, he heard Flora exclaim to Scully.

"Well! It must have been something he ate, don't you think?"

"Mulder? Are you all right? Can I come in?" Scully knocked lightly on the bathroom door, her ear pressed against the varnished wood. Aside from a few faint gagging noises, she hadn't heard a thing since she'd first rushed to the bathroom and rattled the knob. She knocked again, harder. "Mulder, come on! You're starting to really worry me. Open up and let me have a look at you..." she stared at the door, willing it to open, becoming more and more concerned. After about five more minutes, the door finally opened, and a disheveled, pink cheeked Mulder stared out at her, wiping at his mouth. Scully pressed her hand to his forehead; it was cool and damp. She slid the hand over his cheek and cupped the lingering pink of it, feeling him release a shuddering sigh.

"I'm okay, Scully, really. Sorry to freak out on you that way. Must have been something I ate earlier..." His voice petered out at the look on her face and the negative shake of her head.

"Bullshit, Mulder. I don't believe that for a minute. You and I ate the same thing and I feel just fine. Try me again." She kept her hand under her chin when he would have dropped his face; Mulder sighed again, and covered her hand with his, clasping her fingers.

"It was the mention of the... um, the... oh hell... you know! The stuff! I can't say it, Scully; I'll puke again." Scully's eyes widened in sudden comprehension; she studied his now-pale face.

"You want to tell me why? Without actually saying the words, of course. You may as well, Mulder; we're not leaving here until you do." Mulder nodded and walked to the front door, pulling Scully behind him. They stepped onto the porch and sat on the narrow old steps, Scully retaining hold of his hand. Mulder looked once more through the open door into the darkened hallway, wondering aloud where Flora Tinsdale had gone. Scully followed his gaze and replied, "She stood at the bathroom door and fretted about you until I shoed her away and told her you'd had bad shrimp for lunch. She's probably in the back of the house doing any number of odd things that one does in a haunted house... now, tell me." She turned a bit on the step, and faced him, holding him pinned in place with a relentless stare, until he rubbed a hand over his own eyes, and began to speak.

***** It was the first 'Haunted House' Halloween party he'd ever attended, when he'd just turned seven. It had been at the Thomas's house, around the block from his house. He'd

been dressed like Batman and was angry to find three other Batmen at the party, one of whom was Nancy Frederick from three doors down. He'd found a few of his buddies and they'd had a blast running around acting stupid... until it was time for everyone to go through the actual Haunted Room which had been set up in the basement. One by one they'd been sent into the inky black room, with the girls screaming hysterically as their hands reached out and touched all sorts of truly nasty-feeling things, while a disembodied voice (belonging to Mr. Thomas) hissed out the most hideous descriptions.

Mulder had waited his turn, poking fun at the silly screeching girls, right along with his friends... not noticing at first that his heart was beating too fast and he was sweating and achy. His stomach was twisting in knots – but he thought it was just excitement. Then he got to go in the room... and put his hands in assorted repulsive bowls of glop. He made it through the 'Ghoul Eyeballs' made of peeled grapes, and the 'Vat of Inhuman Slime', mostly made of raw eggs and cooked spaghetti noodles. His stomach was getting more and more queasy but again he didn't think twice about it; most seven-year- old boys didn't care about stuff like that.

Then he got down to the last bowl, still feeling his way along in the dark with Mr. Thomas's fiendish voice supplying the thrills... and just as he slid his hands into the cold, slippery and slimy mass of what the voice called, 'Murdered Boy With His Guts Turned Inside Out'... somebody behind him turned on the lights – and he looked down in horror to find both of his hands buried up to the wrists in a truly terrible looking and smelling bowl of red cherry Jell-O, raw hamburger, lumps of pinkish cottage cheese and assorted rubber bands, all cut into strings. His poor stomach lurched and clenched, and he began hyperventilating in a hopeless attempt to keep from vomiting... to no avail. He found himself hunched over the Inside Out Guts, heaving noisily into it, and making the mess even worse looking and smelling. As from a distance he heard his friends and other party guests fleeing the room in horror, the girls squealing in disgust... while Mr. Thomas the Narrator rolled around on the floor and laughed himself silly.

And to Mulder it didn't matter that he would have been just fine if he'd not been coming down with stomach flu, which was why he gotten sick in the first place. It took months and months to live it down, in the hallways of his school – and to this day he could not stomach red Jell-O. And though it was true that to Mulder's color handicap the color of it wasn't a true red, it didn't matter... the very words 'red Jell-O' were enough to do him in...

"Poor baby..." Scully rubbed slow, soothing fingers through Mulder's hair, as he finished his pathetic tale. She tried very hard not to laugh; after all, Mulder hadn't laughed at her when she'd stood on this very porch just a short time ago, losing it big-time. She continued stroking his scalp, picturing an adorable little boy in a Batman costume, sick as could be through no fault of his own... she murmured it again. "Poor thing... no wonder you tore off for the bathroom. And you've had the same reaction all these years! How have you been able to avoid that stuff in everyday life? It's everywhere, you know." Mulder managed a smile, and pressed a kiss on her cheek.

"It's easier than you'd think, Scully... I stay away from hospital cafeterias and buffet-type dives. And Mom never had the stuff in the house; one of the more considerate things she did for me." Mulder stood, and pulled Scully up and into his arms, hugging her hard. She snuggled into his embrace and laid her ear against his heart, loving the strong beat of it beneath her ear. Just like a well-tuned clock, that beat... like her mother's Regulator clock.

They stood on the old yet grand porch of a haunted house and listened to the utter stillness around them; layered with wisps of voiceless sound from the long-dead throats of the spirits who were still earth-bound, after so many years.

After a nice, long snuggle, they decided it was time to hit the road, and Mulder started the car while Scully picked up the clock, thanking Flora Tinsdale once again for her kind hospitality. Neither of them mentioned Mulder's little spell in the bathroom, or Scully's fright attack on the front steps. She carried her valuable burden carefully to the car and placed it in a padded box in the trunk, then she and Mulder waved one last time to the elderly lady, and drove away. The sun was just beginning to set, and it had turned a bit colder – but it was still a beautiful day.

Another pretty autumn day drawing to a close, Scully thought; as she and Mulder drove down the unmarked country road toward Route 211. She was very glad they'd had a chance to spend it in the country instead of a cold, crowded city. There wouldn't be very many of these days left – and as she watched the sun flickering on the red and gold foliage of the trees lining both sides of the car... the words of a favorite song came to mind, and she hummed them very softly, so softly that Mulder never heard her.

'Whenever I need to leave it all behind or feel the need to get away I find a quiet place far from the human race-Out in the country.

When all the breathing air is gone Before the sun is just a bright spot in the nighttime-Out where the rivers like to run I stand alone and take back something worth remembering...

Whenever I feel it closing in on me And need a bit of room to move When life becomes too fast I find relief at last Out in the country -'

She smiled, and directed the full flash of it toward Mulder, who caught it and bounced it right back at her, then took her hand and held it as he drove, and she watched the colors of the day float by.

Scully was mostly pensive all the way back, thinking about poor old Horace Turner, and how unreasonable jealousy had done nothing but pull his world apart and doom him to eternal unrest. She stole a sidelong glance at Mulder, driving with one hand while the other toyed with her fingers, there on the seat between them. Her lover was a possessive man; this she knew. But could he ever be driven to feel that level of blind jealousy? Scully honestly did not know... nor did she care to put it to a test. She knew he loved her beyond sane reason – as she loved him. But, still... one had to wonder –

"Mulder? Have you ever been jealous of anyone?" She spoke the words quietly, within the warm confines of his car. Mulder glanced at her curiously, but answered truthfully.

"Sure, Scully – a lot of times. I get jealous around you all the time." She gaped at him in shock; Mulder, that green-eyed all of the time? She didn't think so. She said it aloud, and Mulder shook his head and brought her hand up to his lips, kissing it.

"Scully, you should see the way men look at you... I'd like to kill them all. They drool, I swear to God. You have never bought into the idea of your own beauty, you know – never as long as I have known you. But you are absolutely breathtaking, baby – inside and out. I feel like the luckiest man in the world, because you're with me... and hell, yes – I get jealous. But I never have to worry, because I know you love me back – and though it took a long time getting used to it... I know I don't have anything to worry about. I know we'll be

together for many wonderful years; until we're both old and toothless. Except you'll be sexy-toothless whereas I'll just be toothless..."

Scully laughed, fighting to blink back stinging tears at his sweet words; squeezed his hand and retorted, "So you'll still need me, Mulder? Still feed me..." And as if it had been planned, the radio began playing the perfect accompanying song, to her teasing words...

"When I get older, losing my hair - many years from now; Will you still be sending me a Valentine - birthday greetings - Bottle of wine?"

They both looked at each other in delight, at the same time - and both began singing along on the same verse, Mulder's voice a pleasant low baritone and Scully's slightly flat tones blending surprisingly well...

"Will you still need me, will you still feed me - When I'm sixty-four?"

The song played out softly on the radio, and their voices sang along just as softly, as the sun dipped low behind the hills surrounding the empty country road with no name. Mulder decided this day had been one of the best in a long time. He didn't want to go back to the city... just wanted to drive on and on, listening to old songs on the radio and holding Scully's hand. He stole a sidelong look at her as the twilight deepened outside the car. She lay against the headrest, eyes half-closed, completely relaxed. He squeezed her fingers gently and she turned a bit, enough to send a wide smile his way. Mulder returned it and murmured, "Scully... let's not go back." Scully raised her head and regarded him as if he'd gone loopy on her.

"Not go back? You mean, back to town? Mulder, where do you think you'd like to go? I'm not sure I follow." Mulder shook his head, knowing she didn't understand what he was feeling, at least not yet. He let go of her hand long enough to slow down and pull over to the side of the road, turning the engine off but leaving the lights on. He turned in his seat and slipped an arm around Scully's shoulders, snuggling her close. He dropped a kiss on her mouth, and replied in a low voice.

"I'd love it if we didn't have to go back to DC, I really would. Sometimes I get so tired of it all; the daily shit we have to deal with. Idiot Bureaucracy and the non-stop danger. I know it's our jobs and our lives, and we'd probably never be satisfied doing anything else... but sometimes I wish we were just a guy and a girl, driving home after a relaxing Sunday into the country, collecting an antique clock and looking forward to nothing more strenuous than a Monday working the most innocuous, boring jobs imaginable." Scully nodded, meeting his serious gaze with one of her own.

"Oh, Mulder... I feel the same way, more often than I'd like to admit. And today was so nice, even though I wimped out and you tossed your cookies..." They both laughed softly, thinking about their silly phobias finally emerging into the stark light of day. Mulder stroked a hand over Scully's bright hair, and thought about what would make their day complete. He tightened his hand in her hair, and pulled her forward to kiss her again, whispering against her lips.

"You know, it's still early... we don't have to be back quite yet. It'll be a clear, starry night in about half an hour, with a full moon, no less. A perfect night for parking... how about it, baby? When was the last time you made out in a car, hmmm?" He nuzzled her ear and

smiled against the delicate shell of it when he felt her shiver. "I want to do it with you, Scully - right here under the moon. How about it? You gonna make my night?" She moved away, far enough to look him in the eyes, and see for herself the mingled love and mischief lurking in their hazel depths.

"You want me to compromise my reputation in the back seat of your car, Mulder? Want us to 'do it', as you so eloquently phrased it? Right out in the middle of God's country for all the world to see?" She gestured to the windows, as if hordes of lurking voyeurs might be out there, gawking at them. Mulder glanced out the same windows, dark and empty, and grinned at her, catching her hands in his and tugging her closer.

"Well... yeah, I do, as a matter of fact. So, what d'ya say, Scully? Wanna live dangerously, just this once?" He pulled her the rest of the way into his arms, pressing his upper body against her. She shivered again, and her mouth breathed a reply into his.

"Okay..."

Scully had never made love in the back seat of a car... and tonight was no different.

That was because she made love in the front seat, and loved every minute of it. There was something very naughty about sex in a vehicle. It was awkward - not a lot of room in the front seat of any car; she and Mulder did a bit of fumbling, at first. He'd put the passenger seat back as far as it would go, and had unbuttoned the fly of his jeans, while Scully blushed in the dark and was inanely glad the night hid that pink in her cheeks as she pulled at her clothes. Silence in the car, except for the hiss of their accelerated breathing... Mulder got the rest of his clothes loosened and grasped Scully around the waist, pulling her onto his lap. She whispered frantically, "Wait, Mulder; I don't have my panties off..." He muttered into her neck as he positioned her hips against him.

"Don't care... God, I can't wait any longer... I'll take care of it, hold still..." And he grasped the waistband and pulled at them, hard; until the thin cotton and lace tore. His mouth covered hers hungrily and he held her head in place with one hand as he maneuvered himself into alignment, and pressed her down onto him. They both groaned as he slipped in, very deep. She braced her hands on his shoulders and let him move her up and down, his heat penetrating through her - aimed straight for her heart. In the tight confines of the car, Scully could move around very little. But she didn't have to; the connection between them ran so deep she could feel it in every pore.

She wound her arms about his neck and held on, pushing her breasts against his face and gasping as he took her nipples into his mouth one at a time. He kept her hips molded to his and guided them in ever-tightening circles, the feel of him scorching her, there within her body. His hands slid up her sides and tangled themselves in her hair, pulling her head back so he could look into her eyes as he thrust harder. His voice was a low rasp demanding, "How does it feel? Tell me..." She struggled to collect enough breath to answer him, and her words came out as one long sigh.

"I... can't find the words... oh, Mulder..." She was almost beyond anything as mundane as words; at that moment she barely knew her own name. They'd been lovers for months but this felt like the first time... no, not the first time; better than that. Their first time was stiff and a bit awkward and she'd blushed all the way through it. She'd had one hell of an

orgasm, but only because Mulder had been unbelievably patient with her; had stroked her and kissed her and made it build and build until she'd found it impossible to do anything but climax. And she'd cried all over him afterwards... and he'd kissed away each tear and had told her how much he loved her. As amazing as that first night had been - this was better, hotter, stronger... sweeter.

Maybe it was the idea, there in the back of her mind - that they were out in the open, just parked on the side of a fairly well traveled road; mostly unclothed and under a bright moon, where anyone could look in the windows and see them. Maybe it was the knowledge that Mulder had admitted to being a possessive and jealous, albeit confident and secure lover, and secretly that excited her... probably it was nothing more complicated than the sheer wonder of loving Mulder. Whatever the reason, Scully found herself so ready, so soon... hovering on the edge of it forever, and all the muscles in her body shaking with it. Each push of him, so far inside, so much of him absorbed within her... She never wanted it to end, yet she wanted to topple over and crash, now - and the need to jump that ledge was making her light-headed. She found herself moaning in a continuous frenzy of near-pain, "Please oh please Mulder I love you God I'm dying make me come Mulder..." His responding growl of agreement was pushed into her ear as he slammed her down upon him with one strong hand, and rubbed against her tender flesh with a few well-placed fingers of his other hand.

Five strokes later, the force of Scully's climax about shook the glass out of the windshield... and only the feel of Mulder's arms tightly around her shuddering body - and the loving kiss he pressed into her mouth as he allowed his own release - kept her from splintering into a million pieces. She let herself melt into him, all rubbery limbs and softened bones; felt him cradle her and listened carefully to the hoarse words of love he poured into her ear. Her mouth curved into a smile that she placed against his strong throat, the warm beat of his heart a comfort and a promise, just for her.

The buzz of Scully's cell phone made him jump, and Mulder was quick to grab it before the noise would awaken Scully. He glanced at her briefly; she was deeply asleep, leaning back in her seat. Still flushed from the aftermath of their loving; looking innocently lovely... well, as innocent as possible, considering what she'd done to him a very short time ago. Mulder still trembled just thinking about it.

He flipped open the phone and spoke into it. "Mulder."

"Fox... did I dial your number by mistake?" It took him a moment to recognize the caller; his brain was still sex-fried...

"Mrs. Scully! No, you dialed correctly. Dana's asleep; I grabbed her phone before it could wake her. How are you feeling?"

"Oh, I'm fine! But I sure hope I didn't wake Dana. Doesn't surprise me that she's asleep; she always fell asleep in the car when she was little, too! I just wanted to see how it went. You got the clock?"

"Oh, yeah; what an amazing piece of history! Scully told me the story; I found it really fascinating."

"Well, Mrs. Dickinson was the one who told me, years ago. She loved the idea of living in a

genuine haunted house! Now, which aunt was there to let you in? Was it Fauna, or Flora?"

"Fauna... you're kidding, right? Who would name their girls Flora and Fauna? And next I suppose you're going to tell me they're twins..."

"Well, yes... they are! Identical twins, in their sixties, I would imagine. So which one was there?"

"Flora. Nice lady - made us lunch. Neither of us could eat it though - my stomach was queasy and Scully had a panic attack when we got close to the house..."

"Oh, Lord... I had almost forgotten! Guess I should have warned you about her 'Bates House' phobia! Is she all right?"

"She's fine - I, um, sort of took her mind off her troubles..."

"Well, I'm glad! That must be why you're still on the road, this late..."

"I don't have to beg your forgiveness for that, do I, Mrs. Scully?"

"Well, of course not! You know, Fox - someday I hope you're comfortable enough around me, to call me Maggie. Now, I have one more small favor, if you don't mind..."

"Anything... Maggie. What can we do for you? Need more medicine? Less boring food?"

"No, nothing like that! I just remembered an errand I was supposed to run tonight, and of course I didn't remember until just a few minutes ago when I'm already in bed - I need you to run to the nearest A&P, and pick up a few things for me. I promised the Garden Club I would help them with the Haunted House they are putting on for the children in the county homeless shelter, on Halloween - and I am making something called "Great Gobs of Guts..."

It was at this point that Mulder's stomach tried to get in touch with its inner child, and curl up into a fetal position there in his body... God. He just knew he was going to dread the next words...

"... So I was wondering if you could pick up about six boxes of red Jell-O, and some cottage cheese... Fox... are you there, Dear?" As the car swerved wildly and jerked to a stop at the side of the road, Scully came slowly awake, in time to see Mulder flinging open the door, and bolting from the car with both hands clapped over his mouth. What the - She picked up her cell phone, and spoke into it.

"This is Scully - who's there... Mom? Hi - listen, what did you say to Mulder..."

end

AUTHOR'S NOTE: This was the answer to a Halloween challenge on the MSR-Smut list. The elements were:

A haunted house A cell phone The color red Jell-O A Beatles song An antique clock A long drive into the country An Alfred Hitchcock reference

And, of course, the best part - Smut!

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[Return to main *Out in the Country* page](#)